

General Editor: Andreas Umland, *Shevchenko University of Kyiv*, umland@stanfordalumni.org

Editorial Assistant: Olena Sivuda, *Dragomanov Pedagogical University of Kyiv*, sivuda@ukrcognita.com.ua

EDITORIAL COMMITTEE*

DOMESTIC & COMPARATIVE POLITICS

Prof. **Ellen Bos**, *Andrássy University of Budapest*
Dr. **Ingmar Bredies**, *Kyiv-Mohyla Academy*
Dr. **Andrey Kazantsev**, *MGIMO (U) MID RF, Moscow*
Dr. **Heiko Pleines**, *University of Bremen*
Prof. **Richard Sakwa**, *University of Kent at Canterbury*
Dr. **Sarah Whitmore**, *Oxford Brookes University*
Dr. **Harald Wydra**, *University of Cambridge*

SOCIETY, CLASS & ETHNICITY

Col. **David Glantz**, *"Journal of Slavic Military Studies"*
Dr. Rashid Kaplanov, *Russian Academy of Sciences*

Dr. **Marlène Laruelle**, *EHESS, Paris*
Dr. **Stephen Shulman**, *Southern Illinois University*
Prof. **Stefan Troebst**, *University of Leipzig*

POLITICAL ECONOMY & PUBLIC POLICY

Prof. em. **Marshall Goldman**, *Wellesley College, Mass.*
Dr. **Andreas Goldthau**, *Stiftung Wissenschaft und Politik*
Dr. **Robert Kravchuk**, *University of North Carolina*
Dr. **David Lane**, *University of Cambridge*
Dr. **Carol Leonard**, *University of Oxford*

ADVISORY BOARD*

Prof. **Dominique Arel**, *University of Ottawa*
Prof. **Jörg Baberowski**, *Humboldt University of Berlin*
Prof. **Margarita Balmaceda**, *Seton Hall University*
Dr. **John Barber**, *University of Cambridge*
Prof. **Timm Beichelt**, *European University Viadrina*
Prof. em. **Archie Brown**, *University of Oxford*
Dr. **Vyacheslav Bryukhovetsky**, *Kyiv-Mohyla Academy*
Prof. **Timothy Colton**, *Harvard University, Cambridge*
Prof. **Paul D'Anieri**, *University of Kansas, Lawrence*
Dr. **Heike Dörrenbächer**, *DGO, Berlin*
Dr. **John Dunlop**, *Hoover Institution, Stanford, California*
Dr. **Sabine Fischer**, *EU Institute for Security Studies*
Dr. **Geir Flikke**, *NUPI, Oslo*
Dr. **David Galbreath**, *University of Aberdeen*
Prof. **Alexander Galkin**, *Russian Academy of Sciences*
Prof. **Frank Golczewski**, *University of Hamburg*
Dr. **Nikolas Gvosdev**, *"The National Interest," DC*
Prof. **Mark von Hagen**, *Arizona State University*
Dr. **Guido Hausmann**, *Trinity College Dublin*
Prof. **Dale Herspring**, *Kansas State University*
Dr. **Stefani Hoffman**, *Hebrew University of Jerusalem*
Prof. **Mikhail Ilyin**, *MGIMO (U) MID RF, Moscow*
Prof. **Vladimir Kantor**, *Higher School of Economics*
Dr. **Ivan Katchanovski**, *University of Toronto*
Prof. em. **Andrzej Korbonski**, *University of California*
Dr. **Iris Kempe**, *Boell Foundation Tbilisi*
Prof. **Herbert Küpper**, *Institut für Ostrecht München*
Dr. **Rainer Lindner**, *Stiftung Wissenschaft und Politik*
Dr. **Vladimir Malakhov**, *Russian Academy of Sciences*
Dr. **Luke March**, *University of Edinburgh*

FOREIGN POLICY & INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS

Dr. **Peter Duncan**, *University College London*
Dr. **Taras Kuzio**, *George Washington University, DC*
Prof. **Gerhard Mangott**, *University of Innsbruck*
Dr. **Diana Schmidt**, *University of Bremen*
Dr. **Lisbeth Tarlow**, *Harvard University, Cambridge*
Dr. **Christian Wipperfürth**, *N-Ost Network, Berlin*
Dr. **William Zimmerman**, *University of Michigan*

HISTORY, CULTURE & THOUGHT

Dr. **Catherine Andreyev**, *University of Oxford*
Prof. **Mark Bassin**, *University of Birmingham*
Dr. **Alexander Etkind**, *University of Cambridge*
Dr. **Gasán Gusejnov**, *University of Bremen*
Prof. em. **Walter Laqueur**, *Georgetown University*
Prof. **Leonid Luks**, *Catholic University of Eichstaett*
Dr. **Olga Malinova**, *Russian Academy of Sciences*
Dr. **Andrei Rogatchevski**, *University of Glasgow*
Dr. **Mark Tauger**, *West Virginia University*
Dr. **Stefan Wiederkehr**, *DHI, Warsaw*

Prof. **Michael McFaul**, *Stanford University, California*
Prof. **Birgit Menzel**, *University of Mainz-Germersheim*
Prof. **Valery Mikhailenko**, *The Urals State University*
Prof. **Emil Pain**, *Higher School of Economics, Moscow*
Dr. **Oleg Podvintsev**, *Russian Academy of Sciences*
Prof. **Olga Popova**, *St. Petersburg State University*
Dr. **Alex Pravda**, *University of Oxford*
Dr. **Erik van Ree**, *University of Amsterdam*
Dr. **Joachim Rogall**, *Robert Bosch Foundation, Stuttgart*
Prof. **Peter Rutland**, *Wesleyan University, Middletown*
Dr. Sergei Ryabov, *Kyiv-Mohyla Academy*
Prof. **Marat Salikov**, *The Urals State Law Academy*
Dr. **Gwendolyn Sasse**, *University of Oxford*
Prof. **Jutta Scherrer**, *EHESS, Paris*
Prof. **Robert Service**, *University of Oxford*
Mr. **James Sherr**, *Defence Academy of the UK, Swindon*
Dr. **Oxana Shevel**, *Tufts University, Medford*
Prof. **Eberhard Schneider**, *University of Siegen*
Prof. **Olexander Shnyrkov**, *Shevchenko University, Kyiv*
Prof. **Hans-Henning Schröder**, *University of Bremen*
Prof. **Yuri Shapoval**, *Ukrainian Academy of Sciences*
Prof. **Viktor Shnirelman**, *Russian Academy of Sciences*
Dr. **Lisa Sundstrom**, *University of British Columbia*
Dr. **Philip Walters**, *"Religion, State and Society," Leeds*
Prof. **Zenon Wasyliv**, *Ithaca College, New York State*
Dr. **Lucan Way**, *University of Toronto*
Dr. **Markus Wehner**, *"Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung"*
Dr. **Andrew Wilson**, *University College London*
Prof. **Jan Zielonka**, *University of Oxford*
Prof. **Andrei Zorin**, *University of Oxford*

* While the Editorial Committee and Advisory Board support the General Editor in the choice and improvement of manuscripts for publication, responsibility for remaining errors and misinterpretations in the series' volumes lies with the books' authors.

Soviet and Post-Soviet Politics and Society (SPPS)

ISSN 1614-3515

Founded in 2004 and refereed since 2007, SPPS makes available affordable English-, German- and Russian-language studies on the history of the countries of the former Soviet bloc from the late Tsarist period to today. It publishes approximately 20 volumes per year, and focuses on issues in transitions to and from democracy such as economic crisis, identity formation, civil society development, and constitutional reform in CEE and the NIS. SPPS also aims to highlight so far understudied themes in East European studies such as right-wing radicalism, religious life, higher education, or human rights protection. The authors and titles of previously published and forthcoming manuscripts are listed at the end of this book. For a full description of the series and reviews of its books, see <http://www.ibidem-verlag.de/red/spps>.

Note for authors (as of 2007): After successful review, fully formatted and carefully edited electronic master copies of up to 250 pages will be published as b/w A5 paperbacks and marketed in Germany (e.g. vlb.de, buchkatalog.de, amazon.de). English-language books will, in addition, be marketed internationally (e.g. amazon.com). For longer books, formatting/editorial assistance, different binding, oversize maps, coloured illustrations and other special arrangements, authors' fees between €100 and €1500 apply. Publication of German doctoral dissertations follows a separate procedure. Authors are asked to provide a high-quality electronic picture on the object of their study for the book's front-cover. Younger authors may add a foreword from an established scholar. Monograph authors and collected volume editors receive two free as well as further copies for a reduced authors' price, and will be asked to contribute to marketing their book as well as finding reviewers and review journals for them. These conditions are subject to yearly review, and to be modified, in the future. Further details at www.ibidem-verlag.de/red/spps-authors.

Editorial correspondence & manuscripts should, until 2008, be sent to: Dr. Andreas Umland, DAAD, German Embassy, vul. Bohdana Khmel'nitskoho 25, UA-01901 Kiev, Ukraine; umland@stanfordalumni.org.

Business correspondence & review copy requests should be sent to: *ibidem*-Verlag, Julius-Leber-Weg 11, D-30457 Hannover, Germany; tel.: +49(0)511-2622200; fax: +49(0)511-2622201; spps@ibidem-verlag.de.

Book orders & payments should be made via the publisher's electronic book shop at: http://www.ibidem-verlag.de/red/SPPS_EN/

Recent Volumes

- 74 *Alena Vysotskaya*
Russland, Belarus und die EU-Osterweiterung
Zur Minderheitenfrage und zum Problem der Freizügigkeit des
Personenverkehrs
Mit einem Vorwort von Katlijn Malfliet
ISBN 978-3-89821-822-1
- 75 *Heiko Pleines (Hrsg.)*
Corporate Governance in post-sozialistischen
Volkswirtschaften
ISBN 978-3-89821-766-8
- 76 *Stefan Ihrig*
Wer sind die Moldawier?
Rumänismus versus Moldowanismus in Historiographie und
Schulbüchern der Republik Moldova, 1991-2006
Mit einem Vorwort von Holm Sundhaussen
ISBN 978-3-89821-466-7
- 77 *Galina Kozhevnikova in collaboration with Alexander
Verkhovsky and Eugene Veklerov*
Ultra-Nationalism and Hate Crimes in Contemporary Russia
The 2004-2006 Annual Reports of Moscow's SOVA Center
With a foreword by Stephen D. Shenfield
ISBN 978-3-89821-868-9
- 78 *Florian Küchler*
The Role of the European Union in Moldova's Transnistria
Conflict
With a foreword by Christopher Hill
ISBN 978-3-89821-850-4
- 79 *Bernd Rechel*
The Long Way Back to Europe
Minority Protection in Bulgaria
With a foreword by Richard Crampton
ISBN 978-3-89821-863-4
- 80 *Peter W. Rodgers*
Nation, Region and History in Post-Communist Transitions
Identity Politics in Ukraine, 1991-2006
With a foreword by Vera Tolz
ISBN 978-3-89821-903-7
- 81 *Stephanie Solywoda*
The Life and Work of Semën L. Frank
A Study of Russian Religious Philosophy
With a foreword by Philip Walters
ISBN 978-3-89821-457-5

Vera Sokolova

CULTURAL POLITICS OF ETHNICITY

Discourses on Roma in Communist Czechoslovakia

ibidem-Verlag
Stuttgart

Bibliografische Information der Deutschen Nationalbibliothek

Die Deutsche Nationalbibliothek verzeichnet diese Publikation in der Deutschen Nationalbibliografie; detaillierte bibliografische Daten sind im Internet über <http://dnb.d-nb.de> abrufbar.

Bibliographic information published by the Deutsche Nationalbibliothek

Die Deutsche Nationalbibliothek lists this publication in the Deutsche Nationalbibliografie; detailed bibliographic data are available in the Internet at <http://dnb.d-nb.de>.

Cover picture: Bill Thompson, III

∞

Gedruckt auf alterungsbeständigem, säurefreiem Papier
Printed on acid-free paper

ISSN: 1614-3515

ISBN-10: 3-89821-864-3

ISBN-13: 978-3-89821-864-1

© *ibidem*-Verlag
Stuttgart 2008

Alle Rechte vorbehalten

Das Werk einschließlich aller seiner Teile ist urheberrechtlich geschützt. Jede Verwertung außerhalb der engen Grenzen des Urheberrechtsgesetzes ist ohne Zustimmung des Verlages unzulässig und strafbar. Dies gilt insbesondere für Vervielfältigungen, Übersetzungen, Mikroverfilmungen und elektronische Speicherformen sowie die Einspeicherung und Verarbeitung in elektronischen Systemen.

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in or introduced into a retrieval system, or transmitted, in any form, or by any means (electronical, mechanical, photocopying, recording or otherwise) without the prior written permission of the publisher. Any person who does any unauthorized act in relation to this publication may be liable to criminal prosecution and civil claims for damages.

Printed in Germany

Contents

Acknowledgements	7
Introduction	9
Structure of the Book	17
I Theoretical and Conceptual Frameworks	23
I.1 The Problem of Writing Romani Culture	25
I.2 Discursive Frames of Social Control	39
I.3 Political Location of Power	44
I.4 Gendered Frames	54
II Reframing Injustice: Towards New Politics of Ethnicity	63
II.1 Gypsies as a “Foreign Element”	66
II.2 On the Road to Socialism	82
II.3 The Anti-nomadic Legislation and the Process of Implementation	91
III Culture as a “Tool of Incarceration”	103
III.1 Genealogy of the Gypsy Myth	105
III.2 Roma Images in Popular Culture	114
III.3 Romani Culture in Academic Writing	121

IV	“Amare Nevo Drom”	133
IV.1	Romani Renaissance in the late 1960s	137
IV.2	The Union of Gypsies-Roma	143
IV.3	Economic Problems and Dissolution of the Union	158
V	Becoming a Gypsy: Social Scientific Discourses	177
V.1	Anthropology of Deviance	179
V.2	Demographic Constructions of the “Gypsy Family”	187
V.3	Education as a Civilizational Frontier	197
VI	Planned Parenthood behind the Curtain: Sterilization of Romani Women	207
VI.1	Czechoslovak Population Policy	213
VI.2	“Enlightened Racism” in Medical Discourse	222
VI.3	The Gendered Nature of Romani Sterilization	234
VI.4	The Thin Ice of Genocide	240
	Conclusions	247
	Xenophobia and Racism in the Past and Present	247
	“Free to Hate”	253
	The “Gypsy Question” Reframed	258
	Bibliography	263

Acknowledgements

In researching and writing this book I benefited from the support and help of many people and institutions. First and foremost, I would like to acknowledge and thank for the institutional, financial and intellectual support my graduate Alma matter, the University of Washington in Seattle, especially the departments of history and anthropology, where this research project began. Professor Uta G. Poiger, her work, energy and support, have for many years been the driving inspirational force guiding my own intellectual and academic development, for which I would like to take this opportunity to deeply thank. Professor James R. Felak never let me get away with an argument or thought without a fierce battle, forcing me to always think through the furthest implications of my suggestions and conclusions. These exercises, which I loved and hated at the same time, have left a deep impact on my ability to critically scrutinize texts of others as well as my own arguments. Many of my friends and colleagues both at the University of Washington and elsewhere have participated in reading and discussing various aspects of this book. In particular, I would like to thank for friendship, support and intellectual inspiration over many years to Kari Tupper, Kate Brown, Jitka Malečková, Rob Mitchell, Teri Balkenende, Paulina Bren, Robert Self, Ali Igmen, Katherine David-Fox, Norman Wacker, Mirek Vodrážka, Gabriela Vorlová, Hanka Bartošová, Bridget Alexander, Heidi Strupp, Marie Noe, Miroslav Noe, Jana Štěpánová, and Nicole Borůvka.

The research for this project and writing of this book could not have been carried out without the generous financial support of many fellowships and grants, which I held over the years from the University of Washington (Aldon Duanne Bell Award in Women's History, Chester Fritz Fellowship, Rondeau Evans Fellowship); Association of Women in Slavic Studies; Social Science Research Council; Wodroow Wilson International Center for Scholars in Washington, D.C.; the Ford Foundation; Open Society Fund; the New School for Social Research in New York; Center for Advanced Holocaust

Studies USHMM in Washington, D.C.; and the School of Humanities of Charles University in Prague.

After my return to Prague, my work and intellectual interests grew in new exciting directions, especially thanks to the working environment of the budding department of gender studies at the School of humanities of Charles University in Prague. This milieu has opened new research questions and theoretical intersections in front of me, which have been reflected in the pages of this book. In particular, I would like to thank my friends and colleagues Kateřina Kolářová, Petr Pavlík, Hana Havelková, Blanka Knotková-Čapková, and Zuzana Kiczková, who have provided tremendous help and support in the past several years, as I was trying to finish this project. Also, many of my students have brought meaning to my work, have challenged my thinking, and have provided inspiration to my research and writing. I would like to thank them all.

On a personal level, I would like to thank especially my mom and my brother, who have always supported me in everything and anything I have done. Last, but certainly not least, my deepest thanks and love go to Michael L. Smith, my life partner and companion, who has contributed a lion's share to everything I do. Without his presence, support, intellect, patience and wisdom this project could not have been completed.

To end with, I would like to thank very much dr. Andreas Umland and *ibidem*-Verlag for their interest in my work. As well, the anonymous reviewer provided insightful and useful commentary, which I believe has significantly improved the final version of this book. Of course, all responsibility for the arguments, assertions and conclusions on the following pages is purely my own.

Introduction

This book maps out the history of the linguistic and social practices directed at the Roma during the communist period and explains how contemporary Czech society has come to understand the Romani population in terms of inherited social, medical and juridical ideas.¹ Rather than focusing on the Roma as the object of analysis, I problematize assumed notions of “Gypsiness” and “Czechness” in mainstream society by highlighting the role of a number of different socialist discourses in constructing images of the Roma as socially deviant and abnormal. By uncovering the lines of continuity in the intersections of ethnic discrimination, social deviance and citizenship from the 1950s to the collapse of communism, this book comes to terms with a variety of questions that have not been so far adequately addressed in the literature. What under-

¹ This book uses several terms to refer to the Roma: Roma, Romani, Romany, Gypsy, and gypsy. The usage of these terms makes an effort to be historically and conceptually consistent. When referring to arguments I am making, when I discuss the present context and when I use or point to the present self-identification of the Roma, I use the term “Roma.” “Romani” indicates a modifier referring to, for example, Romani population, Romani parenting, Romani behavior, etc. Following the main linguistic trend, I use “Romany” to designate the standardized Romani language. When discussing primary documents, the work strictly adheres to the terminology used in the sources, thus predominantly using the term “Gypsy” or “gypsy,” depending on whether the documents themselves use a capital or lower “g.” However, since the main arguments of the book relate to the discursive production and perception of “Gypsiness,” the term “gypsy” is also used in all contexts when I am trying to demonstrate “gypsy” as a constructed concept. When commenting on rhetoric used in documents, I leave the term as it is. When I refer to Roma as *perceived* as “Gypsies,” I use parentheses to indicate the constructedness of the term. A detailed discussion of my conceptual and theoretical understanding of the construction and “reality” of “Gypsiness” and Romani culture in chapter one makes it clear that I do not consider “Roma” to be some authentic, primordial identity that would signify the “real” essence as opposed to their constructedness as “Gypsies.” Rather, I see both concepts as constructed. The crucial aspect of my distinctive usage of these two terms is the context in which they are constructed and used, how they are politicized and what significations they carry in public discourses. Since “Roma” has been primarily used by people who either identify themselves as such or for various reasons claim to speak on their behalf, while “Gypsy” historically bears the connotations of speaking about the “Other” from the superior position of the “Self”, in the general narrative of the book I maintain this distinction.

lying assumptions informed the socialist regime's understanding of "Gypsiness," and how did these conceptions relate to notions of citizenship, equality and normality? How and why did the meaning of the terms "Gypsies" and "Roma" become imbued in popular discourse with perceived unhealthiness and social deviance? And finally, what implications does this historical process of translating the perceived lifestyles and culture of the Roma into non-ethnic frames of reference have for understanding racism² and ethnic sensibilities in the country today?

Two historical examples can illustrate the fundamental questions this book will address. First, in 1958, the communist regime passed a law prohibiting nomadism. Nomads were defined as people who "wander from place to place, even if they are permanently registered in some village, and avoid honest work or support themselves through dishonest activity."³ Second, in 1972, the Ministries of Health of both federal republics of Czechoslovakia issued a Sterilization Decree designed to prevent the involuntary and ill-informed sterilization of all Czechoslovak citizens by outlining strict requirements an applicant had to fulfill in order to be granted permission to undergo the procedure.⁴

These two laws, passed almost fifteen years apart, had three important traits in common. First, they both claimed to be "protective" laws. Second, nowhere in either law was there a mention of race or ethnicity. And third, both laws were used to target the Roma, denying them basic civil and human

² This book uses a specific definition of the concept of "racism," which is not connected primarily to the usage of the term as derived from physical anthropology. This argument posits that 'racism' is useful only when used and applied in connection with the concept of race and the ensuing fixation on "typical" racial traits. In this sense, this usage describes the racist attitudes of the late 19th and first half of the 20th centuries, referring to the physical mergers on the background of the idea of evolution. The concept of "racism" that this book is using adheres to the argument that racism consists in intentional practices and policies and unintended processes or consequences of attitudes towards the ethnic 'other'. Thus, this book argues, it is not necessary to possess a concept of 'race' in order to describe and analyze prejudices and discrimination towards other peoples.

³ "Law About Permanent Settlement of Nomadic Persons" (*Zákon o trvalém usídlení kočujících osob*) č. 74/1958 Sb. Ustava ČSSR.

⁴ "Decree on Sterilization, Bulletin of the Ministry of Health of the Czech and Slovak Socialist Republic" (*Věstník Ministerstva Zdravotnictví České a Slovenské socialistické republiky*,) Part 1-2, Volume XX, February 29, 1972.

rights. In compliance with the first law, Czechoslovak nomadic Roma, who constituted less than ten percent of the overall Romani population of Czechoslovakia, were suddenly and forcibly settled. Through the same law, many of the settled Roma were deliberately categorized as “nomadic” or “half-nomadic” based on their alleged “deviant” lifestyle or behavior, and had their names placed on a registry, which made them vulnerable to constant surveillance, harassment and discrimination. As a result of the second law, Romani women were sterilized at an astonishingly higher rate than non-Romani women and forced into sterilization either through threats by social workers or through state-promoted financial incentives.

The application of these two laws, arguably the most extreme examples of repressive policies used against the Roma, raises urgent questions about the politics of ethnicity in Communist Czechoslovakia: How and why were these ethnicity-neutral and “protective” laws translated into practice as punitive laws that distinguished the Roma by ethnicity? Why did Czechoslovak doctors, lawyers, educators and social scientists read these laws as a license to enact a policy of Romani assimilation? How and by whom were the boundaries between “Gypsies,” “Czechs” and “Slovaks” drawn and what consequences did these definitions have?

This book explores the “Gypsy question” (*cikánská otázka*) in communist Czechoslovakia and examines what state policies toward the Roma tell us about citizenship and the relationship of state and society under Czechoslovak communism. It illustrates how the Czechoslovak state treated the Roma as a problem, indeed an obstacle to progress, and how it inconspicuously tried to assimilate them out of existence.⁵ However, many laws and policies that in practice targeted the Roma, denying them basic civil and human rights, were in theory ethnicity-neutral, treating the “objects” of the policies as “socially backward or pathological” elements. Though there were occasional references to Romani distinctiveness as cultural difference, gradually

⁵ There is, of course, a fundamental difference between the end of the existence of the Roma per se and the end of their existence as a distinct ethnicity or culture separate from the Czechs and Slovaks. Despite the disturbing practice of encouraged and forced sterilization of Romani women, discussed in detail in chapter six, the main process of “disappearance” of “Gypsies” happened in the discursive realms of demographic statistics and scientific studies, based on the Roma’s ability and willingness to conform to the mainstream behavioral and social norms.

“Gypsy” came to be defined primarily in terms of social deviance. The book traces this process of the discursive production of knowledge *about* the Roma under communism, investigating how and why this rhetoric of deviance replaced the rhetoric of ethnicity as the fundamental framework of state policies dealing with the Roma.

The dismissal of Romani ethnic difference as mere social deviance allowed the non-Romani majority to collectively deal with its anxiety about “Gypsies” without explicitly referring to their ethnicity. Though a more general study of the perception of the Roma by Czechoslovak society at large would be valuable, my work focuses on the political and broadly social arena where state bureaucrats and local political officials used the rhetoric of deviance to specifically target, subordinate and assimilate the Romani population. Focusing on the discrepancies between written laws and policies (that were ethnicity neutral and promoted as “protective”) and their implementation (which resulted in punitive practices directly targeting the Roma), this book seeks to expose the intricate relationships between official beliefs, institutional policies and popular consciousness under the communist regime. For it was these relationships that informed each other and together created the mechanisms of social control that enabled the discrimination of Czechoslovak Roma to flourish under the guise of social welfare.

It is impossible to blame exclusively the “regime,” “Roma” or “people” for the discrimination, because there was no main agent or perpetrator that masterfully carried out a plan of coercion and assimilation. Instead, the peculiar shape of discrimination against the Roma was made possible and framed by popular discourses about health, socialization and normality that were reinforced by official communist ideology. Because such discourses were key instruments of power and social control under communism, the following chapters have a strong Foucauldian undertone. At the same time, human agency does matter. For one, the Roma were not passive recipients of their fate. They found means to engage the production of categories and policies, largely aimed at their subordination, in ways that benefited them. For example, at least some Romani women used sterilization, available to them thanks to discriminatory attitudes of Czechoslovak doctors and social workers much more readily than to non-Romani women, as a defense tool against their own

unwanted pregnancies. The Gypsy-Roma Union, even though established as an assimilative institution which was designed to reeducate the Roma into “Czechs” and “Slovaks” and gradually strip them of their own culture, never gave up the struggle of articulating a distinct Romani ethnicity in the face of its continual dismissal. And the profound Romani segregation, both in housing and in the educational system, which was a living contradiction of the official rhetoric of inclusion and equality, throughout the years of the communist regime played a role in providing a sense of cohesion and group consciousness among the Roma, based on which they were able to start building their political identity after 1989.

Perhaps even more importantly, by focusing on local bureaucrats and officials who implemented official policies and projected popular discourses into their evaluations, my work argues that discriminatory policies were in practice a direct outcome of the activities and judgments of local actors who used popular conceptions of “Gypsies” as their frames of reference. Without these local actors, the sometimes well-intended and egalitarian welfare policies of the regime would not have been implemented in such blatantly discriminatory ways. Focusing on the construction of “Gypsy” as a label of social deviance, this work disrupts the comfortable assumption that Roma were easily identifiable subjects whose history can be non-problematically separated from the history of “Czechs” and “Slovaks.”

The discursive shift of replacing the ethnic and cultural content of the term “Gypsy” with ideas from social pathology (for the purposes of assimilation) was accompanied by a redefinition of “Gypsy culture” and Romani collective values with allegations of their filthy lifestyle, incompetent parenthood, unhealthy reproduction, unnatural sexuality, etc. The articulation of the cultural difference of the Roma depended largely on the binary opposition of “normal,” meaning Czech or Slovak, and “deviant” or “backward,” meaning “Gypsy”. The perception of social difference was integral to articulating ethnic difference without using the rhetoric of ethnicity.⁶ As a result of these negative and pejorative projections, many Roma tried to escape stigmatization by dis-

⁶ For a similar argument in a different context, see an insightful article by Eric D. Weitz, “Racial Politics without the Concept of Race: Reevaluating Soviet Ethnic and National Purges,” *Slavic Review*, 61:1 (Spring 2002):1-29.

tancing themselves from these notions of “Gypsiness,” which in turn facilitated a social erosion of a potential unified Romani ethnic and cultural identity.⁷

As sociologist Jan Průcha argued, the communist past has produced a certain paradox. Current generations of Czechs (and Slovaks), aged 30 to 60, grew up in an artificially homogenous society, where various kinds of diversity – racial, ethnic, cultural or sexual – were presented as matters distant in time and place. Despite its overbearing ideological component, social education under communism was based on ideas of humanism and equality that instilled in many Czechs and Slovaks the belief that racism is something wrong, detestable and foreign.⁸ At the same time, in the aftermath of the Second World War people very rarely encountered difference and diversity, and when they did, they were generally taught to understand such differences as social pathologies. The paradox is that while classical “scientific racism” or explicit racial discrimination were virtually absent in the official public sphere under communism, today’s nationalism, xenophobia and implicit racism have in fact deep historical roots in communist society. In the recent study, Průcha aptly expressed the essence of the problem when he argued that “for millions of Czech the only standard of humanity is ‘decency’ (*slušnost*) – behavior appropriate to generally accepted norms. At the same time, since childhood we are taught that there exists only one decency. To dehumanize the ‘indecent’ ones then is very easy.”⁹

⁷ However, this is not to argue that there otherwise certainly would have been a unified Romani ethnic and cultural identity. Even today, Romani unity is mostly regional, often based around clan/family affiliations, with a fair amount of inter-familial rivalry and clash. Rather, this was to point out that the circumstances of the pejorative and negative projections effectively prevented any possibility of even working on a positive and unified Romani identity.

⁸ Jan Průcha, *Multikulturní výchova: Teorie, praxe, výzkum*. (Praha: nakladatelství ISV, 2001). For a valuable treatment of contemporary Czech ethnic tolerance (or the lack thereof) toward the Roma from the Western perspective, see especially Rick Fawn, “Czech Attitudes Towards the Roma: ‘Expecting More of Havel’s Country’?” *Europe-Asia Studies*, 53:8 (2001): 1193-1219. Fawn also argues that there is a paradox between the derogatory and often discriminatory treatment of the Roma on the one hand and “the ethos of liberalism and tolerance accorded to Czech society by many of its own citizens, intellectual and law makers, and especially by its admirers and supporters abroad” on the other hand. (p. 1193).

⁹ Průcha, 11.

In fact, decency – or what I have been calling normality – was used by the communist regime as a mechanism of social control (often in the guise of social welfare), and applied to perceived patterns of Romani behavior, such as their educational habits, sexual habits, forms of public congregation, and so on. However, most authors writing on the Czech Roma, and East European Roma in general, have fairly positive assessments of the communist machinery of social welfare and praise the efforts and intentions of the regime to enhance the economic conditions and possibilities of the Roma. These authors acknowledge that discrimination and repression were taking place, but attribute these shortcomings to the structural impossibilities of communism and resulting inadequacy of the system.¹⁰

On the one hand, these authors praise communist bureaucrats for their egalitarian values and just intentions, regardless of the final outcome of state policies toward the Roma. On the other hand, they see the assimilative policies toward the Roma as a necessary side effect of the communist ideology and the paternalistic efforts of the regime in general. In many ways, these authors identify “intentions” in a context-free way. What is not adequately addressed in their analyses is an examination of how even “the best of intentions” were inscribed within an institutional and discursive context that transformed intended policy goals from the start, and with the help of local officials “from below,” led to discriminatory policy outcomes quite opposite from what one can purport those intentions might have been.¹¹

Another group of scholars, analyzing the high degree of racial discrimination and ethnic violence in Eastern Europe after 1989, argue (or at least assume) that these are relatively new phenomena that emerged as an effect of the democratic and economic transitions after the collapse of commu-

¹⁰ Among these authors belong, for example, Zoltan Barany, David Crowe, Tomáš Grulich, Vladimír Šedivý, or Viktor Mároši (all discussed and cited later) or the edited volume by Will Guy, ed., *Between Past and Future: The Roma of Central and Eastern Europe* (Hatfield: University of Hertfordshire Press, 2002).

¹¹ A notable exception to this trend is a recent excellent and quite critical study of the institutional treatment of the Roma in the Czech lands during the communist regime by Czech historian from Ostrava University Nina Pavelčíková, *Romové v českých zemích v letech 1945-1989*. SEŠITY Úřadu dokumentace a vyšetřování zločinů komunismu č. 12 (Praha: ÚDV, 2004).

nism.¹² As a number of political analysts have theorized, economic “shock therapy” could lead to social backlashes against reformist ideas in the name of nationalism or protectionism.¹³ The successive shocks on Czech and Slovak society after 1989 – democratization, immigration, globalization, market reforms, and insecurity in a new world – are all seen as determinants of xenophobia and intolerance toward minorities.¹⁴ As a correlate to this view, the communist regime is seen as largely a-xenophobic and neutral on the question of race. According to sociologist Pavel Říčan, “the Roma were accepted quite well [...] Racist aversion against them – if it existed at all – was low.”¹⁵

While not disparaging the significance of post-communist political and economic shocks, my work emphasizes the historical continuities between contemporary xenophobia and the strategies the communist regime used to deal with the “Gypsy question.” Rather than seeing democratization and post-communist shocks as historical ruptures that produced xenophobia from within themselves, my work argues that these events simply facilitated the explicit manifestation of xenophobia, while the origins and underlying motivations for xenophobic and racist behavior were rooted in the kinds of political practices and popular discourses this book will narrate.¹⁶ The communist re-

¹² The proponents of this view include, for example, Eric Hockenos, *Free to Hate: the Rise of the Right in Post-Communist Eastern Europe* (New York: Routledge, 1993); Timothy Garton Ash, *History of the Present: essays, scetches and dispatches from Europe in the 1990s* (London: Penguin, 1999); also by the same author: *Magic Lantern: the Revolution of 1989 witnessed in Warsaw, Budapest, Berlin and Prague* (New York: Vintage, 1993); *The Uses of Adversity* (Cambridge: Penguin, 1989); or Paul Polansky and Marcus Pape (discussed and cited later.)

¹³ For example, Adam Przeworski, *Democracy and the Market: Political and Economic Reforms in Eastern Europe and Latin America* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991).

¹⁴ Renata Salecl, “How to Identify with the Suffering Other” and Gyorgy Csepeli, “The Role of Fear in Ethnic and National Conflicts in Eastern Europe”, both in *Grappling with Democracy: Deliberations on Post-Communist Societies, 1990-1995*, ed. Elzbieta Matynia (Prague: SLON, 1996).

¹⁵ Pavel Říčan, *S Romy žít budeme – jde o to jak*. (Praha: Portál, 1998), 25.

¹⁶ Other authors, who have argued in similar ways, include Toby F. Sonneman, “Old Hatreds in the New Europe: Roma After the Revolutions,” *Tikkun*, 7:11 (1992):52 or Rodolfo Stavenhagen, *Old and New Racism in Europe. New Expressions of Racism: Growing Areas of Conflict in Europe* (International Alert, ed., SIM Special No. 7. Utrecht: Netherlands, Institute of Human Rights, 1987).

gime's obliviousness to issues of ethnicity and racial discrimination was embedded in the post-WWII self-perception of Czechoslovakia as a country of ethnically homogenous society of Czechs and Slovaks. This belief, which was in direct contrast with the relatively progressive attitudes towards ethnic minorities during the interwar First republic, enabled the communist state to approach the Roma not as an ethnic group, but rather as a socially deviant and backward segment of the population that ultimately led, I suggest, to the visible radicalization of xenophobia and ethnic tensions in Czechoslovakia after the collapse of communism in 1989.

However, this is not to argue that the xenophobic, ethno-centric tendencies in communist Czechoslovakia, which this book explores and narrates, are somehow specific only to Czechoslovakia, Eastern Europe or Czechs and Slovaks. Parallel legislative and social examples of the processes of linguistic labeling toward the Roma are readily available also in Western Europe, in countries such as Germany, Austria or the United Kingdom. Mechanisms of social control, aimed at diverse minorities and social groups are also not reserved only for undemocratic and totalitarian regimes but are an integral part of functioning democracies as well, as is discussed in detail in Chapter one.¹⁷

Structure of the Book

Chapter One introduces the theoretical and conceptual framework of the work and contextualizes this study within the relevant, mostly anthropological and historical, scholarship. The chapter is divided into four sections. The first section discusses the limits and benefits of different concepts of culture and applies those debates to my attempt to define "Gypsiness" in constructivist

¹⁷ The discursive processes, which this book describes, can be perhaps better labeled as a form of tribalism, or ethnic nationalism, as analyzed and put forward especially in the works of Ernest Gellner and Benedict Anderson. I am grateful for this argument and observation to the anonymous reviewer for *ibidem*-Verlag, who commented on my manuscript. See, Ernest Gellner, *Nations and Nationalism* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1983); Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (New York: Verso, 2006); Peter F. Sugar and Ivo John Lederer, eds. *Nationalism in Eastern Europe* (Seattle, London: University of Washington Press, 1994, 3rd ed.).

terms. I also discuss the problems of writing a history of a “culture” and explain the strategies I will use in relation to this issue. The second section of the chapter is devoted to a discussion of discourse analysis, which reflects the influence on this study of Foucauldian concepts of decentralized power and discourse as a mechanism of social organization and control. The third section takes the totalitarian thesis as its starting point. Cold war histories of East European communist regimes often envisage these regimes as artificial, monolithic leviathans that controlled and hegemonically ruled over a mass of relatively passive people. By critiquing this thesis as well as institutionalist conceptions of power, I open up a conceptual space to articulate an alternative conception of power based on the domination of certain types of discourses in politics and society. I then compare the politics of race in the United States with the politics of ethnicity in the “Gypsy question” in Czechoslovakia to argue that despite differences in regime type both countries exercised similar forms of power to marginalize a significant segment of the population. Finally, in the fourth section I discuss the politics of gender in communist Czechoslovakia and explain how the discourse of “normalcy” was used to subjugate Romani women in quite different ways than Romani men.

Chapter Two introduces the context of the immediate post-WWII situation, where my narrative of Czechoslovak strategies to the “Gypsy question” begins. The chapter analyzes how the Roma came to be regarded as a “foreign” and “filthy” element in society and interprets these stereotypes as part of an exclusionary and xenophobic process of nation-building, manifested in the widely-supported expulsion of ethnic Germans and Hungarians from Czechoslovakia. Inherited policies toward Gypsies from the interwar period, such as Law 111/1927 on “wandering gypsies,” played a significant role in infusing cultural norms into the Roma legislation of the first two postwar decades. The chapter traces the continuities of these norms and analyzes how they became integrated with communist ideology in the 1950s – particularly with regard to the anti-nomadic law of 1958 – to create a composite notion of “Gypsy asociality.” The product of this and other laws in the 1950s and 1960s, I suggest, was the evolution of a new type of discriminatory cultural politics of ethnicity grounded in official perceptions about how Romani social behavior failed to correspond to socialist norms of decency.

Chapter Three examines the presence of the “Gypsy myth” and stereotypes in Czechoslovak popular discourses. It discusses the world of imagery, fact, and fiction about “Gypsies” that created the frameworks for interpretations and implementation of policies that legitimized Roma’s assimilation and discrimination in terms of elevation backward, inferior and dangerous people. The chapter shows that stereotypical images of “Gypsies” were not only available to the Czechoslovak population during the post-WWII era, but that they were being used and reproduced in the production of Czechoslovak fiction, entertainment and academic writing about the Roma throughout the communist period, providing a “sense-making space”¹⁸ for scientific studies allegedly proving Roma’s mental inferiority, tendency to sexual promiscuity and propensity to criminality.

The following three chapters delve directly to the heart of the communist assimilative efforts from three substantially different angles. Building on the foundational analysis developed in the first part of the book, they focus on different political and social arenas where Czechoslovak society’s recognition of Romani identity only in terms of demeaning, asocial expectations was particularly paramount. These chapters comprise the major case studies of the book and focus on how official socialist rhetoric was translated into practice by political actors at the local level, producing significant discrepancies between official policies, their implementation, and their concrete effects on Romani lives.

Chapter Four discusses the life and death of the only political body that the Roma were allowed to create during the communist period. The Union of Gypsies-Roma (*Svaz Cikánů-Romů*) was created in the hopeful atmosphere of the second half of the 1960s, leading up to the Prague Spring in 1968. The circumstances of the establishment and dissolution of the Union reveal that the regime actively sought to suppress Romani attempts at articulating Romani ethnic identity and thus to fill the category of “Gypsy” with positive valuations. The regime permitted the establishment of the Union only in exchange for its function as a primary organ of assimilating the Roma. The records of the activities of the Union disclose that on several occasions the Union lead-

¹⁸ This concept is borrowed from Kathleen Stewart’s analysis of production and existence of culture and identity in Appalachia and explained in detail in Chapter one.

ers sought official recognition for Roma as an ethnic national minority. This struggle for recognition resulted in a number of different power tactics by the Party, such as cutting the Union's budget and ultimately dissolving it for "failing its integrative function."

Chapter Five discusses education as the primary site of the socialization of Gypsies into proper "socialist citizens." It first examines the "Gypsy question" in the world of the social sciences, following the shift in the Czechoslovak social policy in the early 1970s that facilitated the rise of anthropological, psychological and criminal studies of "Gypsies," thus gradually transforming the "Gypsy question" into a discourse of social deviance. Educational texts also romanticized Roma as "wandering gypsies," were both fascinated and repulsed by their "wildness," "filthiness" and "primitiveness," and employed the colonial rhetoric that Czechoslovak society was "civilizing the savage." These sentiments unconsciously reveal how fanciful yet harmful images of Roma as the "Other" became a significant way in which Czechoslovak society attempted to deal with Romani difference without having to recognize the Roma as a distinctive ethnic group. Further, the chapter discusses the inextricable link of "Gypsy" parenting and family environment with social pathology, showing how these notions led to discrimination against Romani children in the educational system. The ways in which both Roma and non-Roma were educated about issues of difference, normalcy and pathology go far to explain the presence of xenophobia in society at large and its resurgence after the end of the Cold War.

Chapter Six is concerned with the disquieting practice of sterilizing Romani women, analyzing its circumstances and consequences. It traces the shift in Czechoslovak population policy toward emphasizing "quality rather than quantity" in the early 1970s and the gradual conversion of these concerns into a discourse of social deviance and sexuality. This shift in focus allowed the Czechoslovak state to define respectable citizenship in terms of "proper" gender relations and restricted definitions of "proper" parenthood to the nuclear family, excluding the Roma from meaningful membership in the national community without explicitly referring to their ethnicity. "Gypsy" sexuality and parenthood during the communist period were defined explicitly in terms of primitiveness, unhealthiness, and ignorance, while "Czechoslovak"

sexuality and parenthood were defined in terms of civilization, healthiness, rationality, and progress.

This juxtaposition of “normalcy” and “deviance,” which supplanted ethnic difference, enabled Czechoslovak (non-Romani) society to deal collectively with its anxiety about “Gypsies” without comprehending the ethnic and racial dimensions of those encounters. From the testimonies of sterilized Romani women as well as from the documents written by local medical doctors and social workers, it is clear, for example, that much of the initiative to pressure Romani women to undergo sterilization came from these local health practitioners. The doctors, shielding themselves with the rhetoric of population policy, insisted they were solving a socio-economic problem. Yet, at the same time, by urging Romani women to undergo sterilization they clearly interfered with Roma’s reproductive rights and reintroduced biological difference into the organization of Czechoslovak society.

Finally, the *Conclusions* provide a conceptual ending to the book by bringing the preceding chapters together in a discussion of current patterns of explicit and implicit ethnic intolerance and xenophobia that were built up through the communist period. It discusses the consequences of the policies and rhetoric used under communism on the ethnic sensibilities and tolerance of Czechoslovak society after the collapse of the communist regime. The popular rhetoric used after 1989 to describe the Roma reveals how much current racist and xenophobic attitudes are embedded in the history of Czechoslovak society’s attempts to deal with the “Gypsy question.”