



Racism and Anti-gypsyism

Helmut Samer

A discussion of the 19th century needs to begin by looking at the theoretical basis for later persecution and extermination of the "gypsies" during the Third Reich:

As early as 1855, Count Gobineau published an essay called "Essai sur l'inégalité des races humaines", in which he claimed the existence of superior and inferior races. According to his opinion, "Arians" belong to the category of superior races, which was headed by the so-called "Nordic peoples".

Convinced that so-called "half-breeds" were inferior, he firmly rejected any form of inter-racial mixing. Gobineau's theories greatly influenced the philosophical and political thinking of his own time, especially in Germany.

A few years later (1868), the Dutchman Richard Liebich coined the expression of "unworthy life", which was to serve the nazis as a pretext for the systematic slaughtering of Roma.

The final decades of the late 19th Century furthermore saw the development of biologism, a scientific theory which regarded biological and genetic dispositions as fundamental for human existence. Soon, such biologicistic thoughts found their way into criminology. Along with the common racial theories, they formed an alleged "scientific" basis for the "preventative combating of crime" and later, genocide. Of determining influence in this respect was a publication by Cesare Lombroso in the year 1876 called "L'uomo delinquente", which for the first time related the high proportion of criminal acts among the Roma to an alleged "genetic disposition".

In 1920, the psychiatrists Karl Binding and Alfred Hoche coined the term "ballast existences" and propagated the killing of all those who were a so-called "burden" to society. This group included the Roma, who were generally seen as a "human pest".

Starting in 1933, the concept of the "life unworthy of living" acquired central importance in the racial politics of the Nazis. On the 14th of July of that same year, the theory of the races was finally adopted into legislation.



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