

Suspicion, Hostility & Aggression

passing places

For as long as Travelling people have existed, their way of life has always been viewed with discrimination and hostility. No persecution was more horrific than the Holocaust.

When we think of the Holocaust, we tend to think of the mass extermination of Jews, but other groups were also cited for extermination, including Gypsies.

From the early 1920s, the oppression of Gypsies in Germany grew to such a degree, that it is now believed that somewhere between 70-80% of the Gypsy population in Germany were exterminated.

Events leading up to and including World War II in Germany.

- 1920** Gypsies were forbidden to enter parks and public baths.
- 1925** A conference on "The Gypsy Question" was held resulting in laws requiring unemployed Gypsies to be sent to work camps "for reasons of public security," and for them to register with the police.
- 1927** All Gypsies, including children, had to carry identification cards showing fingerprints and photographs.
- 1929** The Central Office for the "Fight Against the Gypsies" in Germany was established in Munich.
- 1933** Nazis came to power. Gypsies know this period as 'O Porraimos' or the 'Great Devouring'.
- 1935** The Nuremberg Law for the Protection of German Blood and Honour, forbade intermarriage between Germans and "non-Aryans," specifically Jews, Roma and people of African descent.
- 1937** The National Citizenship Law stated that Gypsies and Jews were second-class citizens. Heinrich Himmler issued a decree entitled "The Struggle Against the Gypsy Plague," which stated that Roma of mixed blood were the most likely to engage in criminal activity.
- 1938** 'Gypsy Clean-Up Week' took place throughout Germany which, like Kristallnacht for the Jewish people that same year, resulted in Gypsies being rounded up, beaten and imprisoned.
- 1940** First mass genocidal action of the Holocaust took place when 250 Romani children were experimented on and murdered in Buchenwald concentration camp. Hitler ordered the liquidation of "all Jews, Gypsies and communist political functionaries in the entire Soviet Union."
- 1944** 4,000 Roma were gassed and cremated in a single action at Auschwitz-Birkenau, in what is remembered as Zigeunernacht.

Up to 1,000,000 Gypsies were killed in Europe by the Nazi Regime.



"Three little Gypsy Children at the camp are happy just because they are free"
Italy rehabilitation camp for prisoners of war and refugees, January 1944
Image: Imperial War Museum Ref: K6947