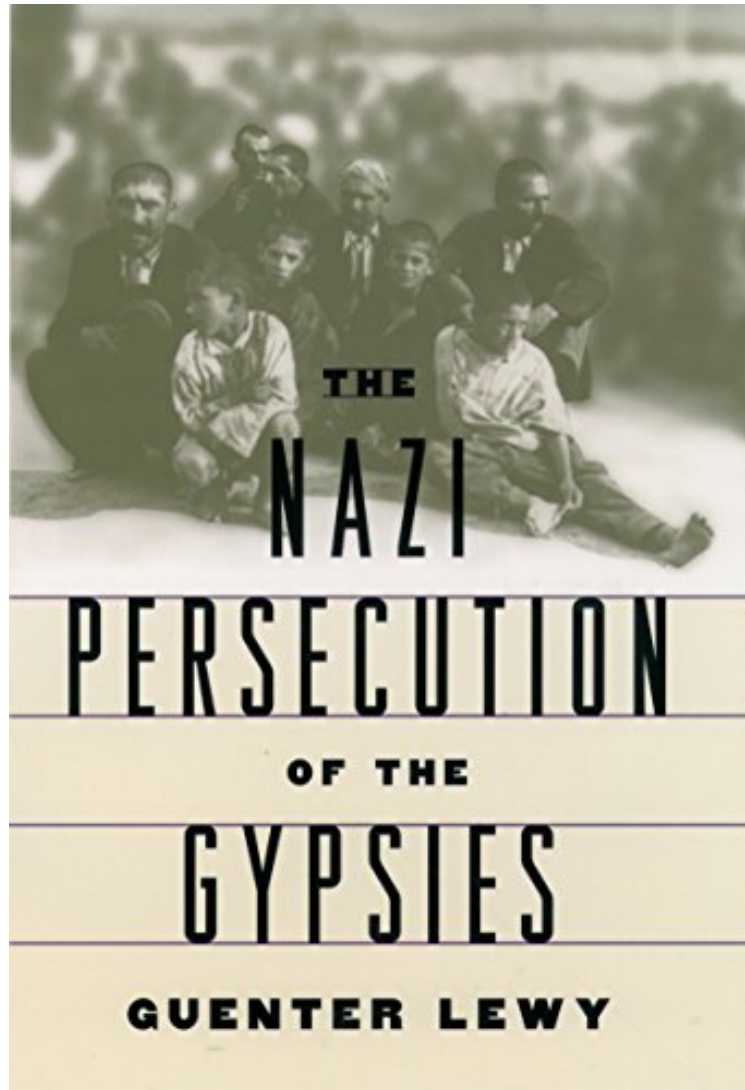


[Download free pdf] The Nazi Persecution of the Gypsies

## The Nazi Persecution of the Gypsies

*Von Guenter Lewy*

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**Von Guenter Lewy : The Nazi Persecution of the Gypsies** before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised The Nazi Persecution of the Gypsies:

KundenrezensionenHilfreichste Kundenrezensionen0 von 0 Kunden fanden die folgende Rezension hilfreich. A Frightening Account of Germany's Extermination of GypsiesVon Barron LaycockThis is an absorbing, well-written and quite readable text book by a noted 20th century historian, Guenter Lewy, and it constitutes a disturbing, graphic and poignant overview of the Nazi campaign against the gypsy population of central Europe. The German national socialist regime, always in search for helpless, infirm and unwell sectors of the population to scapegoat and persecute,

found in the gypsies an ideal target by way of a collection of powerless, rootless, and socio-politically unsavory groups of individuals to prey upon. Yet this persecution has not been widely publicized or recognized until now largely because of the nature of the gypsy population, i.e. due to their own lack of social and political visibility, no one has paid a lot of attention to their plight or to the multitude of ways in which they were persecuted, along with Jews and other political groups by the Nazis. This book remedies that egregious oversight, painting a vivid, quite compassionate picture of the gypsies' dilemma, and at the same time marshaling a damning indictment of the general campaign of mistreatment, disenfranchisement, torture, and murder conducted by the Third Reich against all subjugated peoples both in greater Germany and also in the countries conquered as they pushed both east and west during the prosecution of the war. According to the author, the policy seemed to evolve as the Nazis encountered such groups in their conquests, and whatever policies as emerged did so more in relation to the local officials' negative views of the gypsies as being thieves, trouble-makers and undesirables than due to any overall pre-planned approach. Of course, this sort of insight shouldn't come as a total surprise to students of Third Reich social policies. Even Himmler's well-documented plan for the "Final Solution" is now considered by a number of noted historians to owe more to the requirements of exigent circumstance that evolved as the Wehrmacht rolled through Poland during Operation Barbarossa than from any long-term plan to systematically exterminate all European Jews. The Nazis realized they could not feed or shelter the Jews and maintain their schedule for populating the hinterlands, and the extermination program was conceived of as a way out of that dilemma. It should also be noted that the Nazi bureaucracy was rife with duplications and redundancies, and that this led to disorganization and confusion. As a result, it was exceedingly ineffective and inefficient. The history associated with the conduct of the army and its special branches toward extermination also reflects this disorganization and amateurish, rigid and unfocused leadership and direction. In spite of this lack of leadership or any clear and unambiguous policy, the local officials often improvised, with gruesome effect. As history shows, they were a deadly, murderous crew. The campaign as described in this well-documented and painstakingly researched book reflects that lack of coherent policy and disorganization in the actions taken against the gypsies. However, this lack of specific focus does not mean they were not massively and negatively affected by government policies. On the contrary, from the inception of programs against the gypsies began in 1938 to the bitter end, they suffered the fates of so many others; deportation to concentration camps, exclusion from school, work and social life, slave labor, involuntary sterilization, torture, medical experimentation, and extermination. This book fully documents the place of the gypsies as a class of victims in the Holocaust, and fills a void too long left vacant by scholarship and public recognition. This is an excellent book, carefully researched, well documented, and compassionate in its comprehensive consideration of the plight of European gypsies at the hands of the Third Reich.

**Kurzbeschreibung** Roaming the countryside in caravans, earning their living as musicians, peddlers, and fortune-tellers, the Gypsies and their elusive way of life represented an affront to Nazi ideas of social order, hard work, and racial purity. They were branded as "asocials," harassed, and eventually herded into concentration camps where many thousands were killed. But until now the story of their persecution has either been overlooked or distorted. In *The Nazi Persecution of the Gypsies*, Guenter Lewy draws upon thousands of documents--many never before used--from German and Austrian archives to provide the most comprehensive and accurate study available of the fate of the Gypsies under the Nazi regime. Lewy traces the escalating vilification of the Gypsies as the Nazis instigated a widespread crackdown on the "work-shy" and "itinerants." But he shows that Nazi policy towards Gypsies was confused and changeable. At first, local officials persecuted gypsies, and those who behaved in gypsy-like fashion, for allegedly anti-social tendencies. Later, with the rise of race obsession, Gypsies were seen as a threat to German racial purity, though Himmler himself wavered, trying to save those he considered "pure Gypsies" descended from Aryan roots in India. Indeed, Lewy contradicts much existing scholarship in showing that, however much the Gypsies were persecuted, there was no general program of extermination analogous to the "final solution" for the Jews. Exploring in heart-rending detail the fates of individual Gypsies and their families, *The Nazi Persecution of the Gypsies* makes an important addition to our understanding both of the history of this mysterious people and of all facets of the Nazi terror. From Publishers Weekly The Nationalist Socialist dream of a pure society demanded elimination not only of the Jews but of all those who challenged the homogeneity of a racial and cultural utopia. Europe's Gypsies presented a particular problem for the race-obsessed Nazis: on the one hand they were viewed as antisocial liars and thieves, as "work-shy" and as wanderers without a homeland. Yet they supposedly descended from "Aryan" roots in India. Hence Lewy finds policies concerning them to be often contradictory and fluctuating. A professor emeritus of political science at UMass (Amherst), Lewy has plumbed the archives and, through meticulous documentation and a painstaking reconstruction of events, arrived at a startling new interpretation of the Nazi policy toward the Gypsies. Lewy argues that in contrast to the Final Solution of the "Jewish Question," the Nazis had no comparable plan to exterminate the Gypsies. And when the latter were sent to the concentration camps for extermination, it was not solely because of their biological existence, like the Jews, but because their wandering way of life challenged the social and

cultural construct of the Third Reich. An important facet in the Gypsies' fate, according to Lewy, was ordinary Germans' insistence on measures against them, something the Nazi regime did not have to foster. Lewy shows how Nazi persecution of the Gypsies evolved through the 1930s: at first, local officials were responsible for measures of control and harassment; eventually, the racial laws written against Jews were directed against Gypsies. Lewy traces this sequence of events in detail; his theory may be controversial, but he argues his case carefully. 20 bw photos. (Feb.) Copyright 2000 Reed Business Information, Inc. From Kirkus sA distinguished historian explores the fate of the Gypsies during the Third Reich. The Gypsies had been a reviled and often persecuted minority for many centuries, wandering from place to place, often accused of witchcraft and theft, but they were initially of not much interest to the Nazis. When Hitler became chancellor in 1933, they numbered no more than 26,000. Yet by the end of the war, according to varying (and, Lewy notes, not verifiable) estimates, the total number of Gypsy victims in Nazi-occupied Europe may have been as high as 219,000. Lewy (Political Science/UMass Amherst; Peace and Revolution, 1988, etc.) here strives to make sense of the confusion of Nazi policy towards the group. Much of its impetus, he suggests, came not so much from the Nazis themselves as from local officials who saw Gypsies as shiftless, thieving, anti-social, and hard to control. Their often dark complexion raised the further complaint that they were an alien, non-Aryan influence. In 1938, for the first time, the Nazis began to treat the Gypsy problem as a racial problem. Thousands in Germany and Austria were sent to the concentration camps, and on the outbreak of war their situation deteriorated further, ranging from expulsion from the schools to compulsory work, regulation of marriage and sexual relations, involuntary sterilization, removal from the Reich, and incarceration in concentration camps. Their plight was somewhat abated by Himmler's uncertainty as to whether the lighter Gypsies might not be of genuinely Aryan origin, but not much attention was paid to these reservations in the brutal atmosphere of the time. Still, Lewy argues that, despite their fearful fate, including forced sterilization that conforms to the definition of genocide, ``there existed no overall plan for the extermination of the Gypsy people, and . . . none was ever implemented. A moving account of the fate of a small people caught in a maelstrom. (20 halftones) -- Copyright 1999, Kirkus Associates, LP. All rights reserved.