

**The Gypsy 'Menace': Populism and the New Anti-Gypsy Politics.** Edited by MICHAEL STEWART. Pp. 311. London: Hurst & Company. 2012. £18.95. Paperback. ISBN: 9781849042208.

The relationship between Roma minorities and majority populations poses a pressing – and oftentimes explosive – problem for contemporary European countries and their governments. *The Gypsy 'Menace': Populism and the New Anti-Gypsy Politics*, a collection of fifteen essays written by social scientists from a vast array of countries and disciplines, features an anti-Gypsy symbol from Noua Dreaptă (the Romanian ultra-nationalist 'New Right' party) on its cover, but the stigmatized skull and the sign 'anti-Gypsy campaign' could easily belong to any of the xenophobic organizations ranging from Bulgaria to Ireland, via France, Italy, Hungary, and the Czech Republic. Geographically dispersed throughout the region, the Roma constitute the most disadvantaged and marginalized minority in Europe. Highly distinct from majority populations in terms of culture, ethnicity, language, and customs, the group has been historically a frequent target of various forms of official and unofficial discrimination and social and political exclusion.

In the past six to seven years, Europe has seen a shift in political discourse towards explicitly racist and exclusionary ideas, which has been accompanied by a surge in interethnic violence and hate crimes against marginalized minorities in general, and the Roma in particular. Therefore *The Gypsy 'Menace'* comes at a time in which minority integration and the situation of the Roma community have become the centre of political attention. Michael Stewart, the volume's editor and author of the foreword and first chapter, has spent the better part of his academic career as an anthropologist researching Roma issues. He has deservedly received high praise by anthropologists, political scientists, and activists alike for bringing a compelling, if controversial, topic to the forefront of the discussion on political dynamics and European integration – namely that of the relationship between state policy, democratic public culture, and the rise of anti-Romany hate speech and politics.

The compilation of essays was born from an OSCE-sponsored conference held in 2009 at University College London, and the central questions addressed in the book can be summarized as follows: what is the nature of the anti-Romany sentiment that has risen so abruptly and spread so rapidly across Europe? Why are governments generally so reluctant to address such xenophobic movements? How should institutions and civil society reset the agenda for thinking about Europe's largest minority? How can we counter the causes and consequences of such a hefty social, cultural, and political phenomenon?

Theoretical approaches to the issues of (European) citizenship, ethnic violence, and populist politics generally fall into one of two categories. Either the focus is put on the (in)efficacy of institutional design and mechanisms, political leadership, and representation, or a completely different, anthropological approach is taken that addresses issues of identity and ethnicity through cross-cultural comparison and cultural relativism. *The Gypsy 'Menace'*, however, deliberately situates itself halfway in-

between, risking being attacked from both sides. On the one hand, Stewart gives a critical (though indeed highly readable and quite exhaustive) assessment of the reasons behind interethnic violence and hate crimes. On the other hand the book touches upon a number of interesting case studies (from Belfast to Paris, Rome to Bucharest) that go beyond the classic CEE examples. Yet it does not elaborate or even try to systematize them into an overarching theoretical argument that goes beyond very generic and somewhat predictable conclusions (European polities face a rising tide of xenophobia stemming from a feeling of loss of sovereignty, disillusionment with political elites, and having to confront the challenges posed by the culturization of political collectivities). But this is, in a sense, the point of the book.

While the overall structure of the book does not have a real 'core', and the volume itself falls short of offering a systematic and rigorous analysis of a country-by-country situation within the EU, it provides an insightful, accessible, and compact overview of what the limits of our social imaginary are. A noteworthy contribution that *The Gypsy 'Menace'* makes to the growing literature on populist politics and anti-Romany sentiment is the stress that is put on the need for stronger European democratic legitimacy. The EU's failure to establish its motto 'solidarity as strength' is symptomatic of a more general difficulty in securing broad public consent for policing, and the 'quest for legitimacy' is not usually framed as the driving motor of the issue.

The picture that emerges from the fifteen essays – divided into three sections, of which the first two are more descriptive, while the last advances some proposals for combating extremism – is that a country's quality of democracy is deeply intertwined with the ways in which it treats and represents its minorities. While the stakes are particularly high for those countries with high levels of inequality and large Roma populations, minority integration has become a widespread, cross-cutting economic and social concern, which is not necessarily tied to specific nationalistic discourses. In any human society, linguistic, cultural, ethnic, or religious diversity has both advantages and drawbacks; it can be a source of enrichment but also a source of tension. However, the European ideal is founded on two inseparable conditions: the universality of shared moral values and the diversity of cultural expression. Whether Europe will be able to address the rise of identity politics and the challenges that the Roma minority faces today is not only a question of extreme right movements, but also a matter of whether it is capable of living up to its core principles. As Misha Glenny puts it in the preface, it 'does all come down to what it means to be European' (p. ix).

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