This volume uses the framework of genocide to analyze patterns of persecution of the Roma in Nazi-dominated Europe. The new archival evidence presented in this anthology confirms the earlier findings that placed the victimization of the Roma within the definition of genocide. Without departing from the actual wording of the UN Genocide Convention, the contemporary legal practice in establishing criminal intent suggests a common design that rendered the comprehensive destruction of the Roma communalities unequivocally genocidal (3-8). Naturally, the extent and means of persecution varied from country to country and the differences sometimes overruled commonalities. The context, in which the process of destruction evolved, however, invites certain generalizations (8-21).

The genocide during WWII was merely the apotheosis of centuries of persecution throughout the Roma's tragic European history. Although awareness of the Romany Holocaust is now well established, few people know that for five and a half centuries, thousands of Romanies in eastern Europe were bought and sold as slaves. According to Ian Hancock in his book, *We Are the Romani People*, “In the 16th century, a Romani child could be purchased for 32p. By the 19th century, slaves were sold by weight, at the rate of one gold piece per pound”. (Hancock 2002, 26)

The true numbers of Roma and Sinti people murdered by the Nazis will never be known - official estimates vary between one quarter and half a million, although many Romany experts believe a million might be nearer the mark. What is indisputable is that the Roma and Sinti were persecuted to roughly the same percentage of their population, around 85%, as Jewish people - and for the same racial reasons. Where the two genocides differ is that although the Jewish Holocaust was always openly racist, the Roma and Sinti were initially persecuted for being "asocials" and, for many years, successive German governments refused to recognise the racial element of the Nazis' actions.

The volume focuses mainly on the countries and regions outside Germany proper. Written by experts in the field, using a variety of sources, in half a dozen languages, its detailed case studies of France, Austria, Romania, Croatia, Ukraine, and Russia generate a critical mass of evidence that indicates criminal intent on the part of the Nazi regime to destroy the Roma as a distinct group. However inconsistent or geographically scattered in the beginning, the mass murder acquired a systematic character over time and came to include ever larger segments of the Romani population, regardless of the social status of individual members of the community. From the long-term Nazi perspective, anything that contradicted this pattern was only a temporal deviation. By closely examining mass atrocities committed in the occupied Soviet territories, Holler and Mikhail Tyaglyy concur that the Nazis had murdered all Roma irrespectively of their social status. Romani and non-Romani survivors alike frequently observed a particular animus on the part of the German police and the military coated in the allegations of treachery and penchant for spying. Tyaglyy eloquently sums up the factors that accelerated the destruction of the European Roma, dividing them roughly into chronological, geographical, administrative and circumstantial. The occupied
Soviet territories, which until now have received only scarce attention from historians, serve as a compelling illustration of the widening circle of genocide that engulfed the European Roma.

As Anton Weiss-Wendt eloquently demonstrates (1-26), the chapters in this collection suggest two patterns that came to play a complimentary role in the destruction of the Romani minority during World War II. With the bewildering number of contradictory decrees and regulations issued by various agencies, the ultimate fate of the Roma usually rested with the local authorities. As a rule, the civil, police, or military authorities went beyond their powers, acting on their own. Consequently, criminality became a collective label and police surveillance often led to incarceration, children were separated forcibly from their families, many sedentary Roma were included in the category of *itinerants*, mass deportations degenerated into indiscriminate shootings, and mass murder escalated to genocide. While some Roma survived due to loopholes in legislation and the chain of command, many more perished for that very reason. In short, the lack of centralized decision making with regard to the Roma rarely ameliorated their situation, but rather aggravated it. An apolitical, stateless minority, the Roma were rarely a priority on the list of potential enemies anywhere in Nazi-dominated Europe. The arbitrary interpretation of a potential security threat, then, constitutes the second aspect that made genocide possible. This duality enabled a malicious interpretation according to which the sum total of the Roma’s purportedly inherent social traits amounted to a certain negative racial type. This false reasoning made some military commanders and civil administrators in the dismembered Yugoslavia and the occupied Soviet territories collectively label Roma as spies and saboteurs.

This volume is a substantial contribution to Roma and Sinti Genocide scholarship. Each of the essays in this collection adds both substantively and substantially to our expanding understanding of the murder of European Roma and Sinti during WWII. All of the pieces are thoughtful and learned, and encourage both deeper reflection and a reexamination of present understandings of a wide variety of elemental historical aspects related to the racial and political anti-Gypsy policies of the Third Reich. Each in its own way—by focusing on specific religious and national Roma groups, and a variety of important, yet often neglected, geographical locations—helps us to piece together more fully and adequately the overall narrative of what happened with the Roma across Nazi-occupied Europe. The range of geographical locations and comparative histories taken up and analyzed by the contributors, all of whom possess a deep knowledge of the local history of the state or region being reviewed, is wider than ever before. Moreover, this collection’s local histories reveal how the common ideological and political policies emanating from the center of the Reich in Berlin were significantly affected by factors that one might fairly describe as indigenous.

However, as recognized by the editor, the volume is not exhaustive (3). Comprehensive studies of a number of countries with a substantial Roma minority (e.g., Italy, Greece, Bulgaria, Hungary, Poland, and Slovakia) are yet to come. A specific aspect of the genocide that has not yet found its historian is the Nazi treatment of Soviet prisoners of war who happened to be Roma (3). The concluding chapters of the book, covering current political and historical debates, lead us to a better informed perception of the need of a so-far-missing conceptual analysis of the resilient post WWII discriminatory practices toward
Romani communities throughout Europe. Such analysis should definitely be interdisciplinary and involve, among others, comparative historical sociology and anthropology. It should lead to better understanding of Romani culture and wider European policies, implying ways of enhancing the Roma’s own creative potential for socio-political inclusion and integration. Obviously, this instructive book is both for newcomers in the field of Romani 20th Century history, as well as for scholars already familiar with comparative studies of the plight of Roma in the past five centuries. Moreover, the reviewed anthology may be regarded as a very competent call for further research and discussion.

Hancock Ian F. *We Are the Romani People*. (Hatfield, UK: University Of Hertfordshire Press, 2002).

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