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**IN LEAGUE WITH NATIONS: BIOPOLITICAL DEVELOPMENT
TARGETING CENTRAL EUROPEAN ROMANI (1918-1934)**

Thesis submitted to the Department of Historical Studies,

Central European University Private University, in partial fulfillment of the requirements of the

Master of Arts degree in Historical Studies

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Central European University Private University

Vienna, Austria

May 2025

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For bibliographic and reference purposes this thesis/dissertation should be referred to as: Stephens, T(ylar). 2025. In League with Nations: Biopolitical Development Targeting Central European Romani (1918-1934). MA thesis, Historical Studies Department, Central European University, Vienna.

Author's Declaration

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Abstract

The League of Nations in the interbellum period (1918-1934) maintained a system of minority protections, appropriately called the Minority Protections System, as a peace precaution that anticipated irredentism after the First World War. This system sought to protect member states minorities, who consisted of religious, national, and linguistic identifications. Most minorities had a *kin state* that could represent their interests, such as German minorities in Czechoslovakia. However, Jewish minorities had no kin state and were also protected in this system. Consequently, Romani populations of member states had no protections in the League of Nations, and there was no archived debate that can explain the reasoning within the League itself to leave out Roma.

At the same time, the lack of protection coincided with an increased biopolitical surge of targeted institutionalization by international police agencies who coalesced in the International Criminal Police Commission (ICPC). The following research highlights the archived documents of ICPC members who *did* debate the technology and registration techniques, such as *Bertillon photography*, *dactyloscopy* (fingerprinting), and increased demography to be used to securitize and criminalize Roma populations in Europe. Without any intervention from the League, Roma communities were left vulnerable to increased racialized police operations and nascent enactment of genocide that happened in WWII.

Acknowledgements

Thank you to my friends, old and new, for starting me on this journey, supporting me through its progress, and seeing me to completion. Most especially, Tim Vodder, Nick Kuffel, Joseph Losee, Nell Chatterton, Allan Guthrie, Caitlin Motter, Thai Kongchunji, Paul Jones, Paolo Phillips, Gentian Doci, Cory Dudka, Shannon Landheer, Carlie Goode, Michal Mižigár, Anika Olbrisch, and Esther Holbrook.

Thank you to my supervisors, Angéla Kóczé and Balázs Trencsényi, for your patience and consultations.

Thank you to the Comparative History cohort of 2023 for their comradery.

Thank you to the Historical Studies Department for its flexibility, the Comparative History Program for the edification, and the Romani Studies Program for its incredible insight and inspiration.

Thank you to my family for their encouragement.

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Introduction

The League of Nations in the interbellum period (1918-1934) maintained a system of minority protections, appropriately called the Minority Protections System (MPS). This system sought to protect minorities of member states who consisted of religious, national, and linguistic identifications. Most minorities had a kin state that could represent their interests, such as German minorities in Czechoslovakia. However, kin states were not the only prerequisite for protections, and consequently, Romani populations of member states had no protections in the League of Nations. This seems puzzling as Romani populations had their own language(s) and their own spiritual belief(s), but they did not have their own national territory or kin state.¹ A reasonable interjection from the reader would be to point out that Jewish minorities were protected by the League of Nations' MPS, despite not having their own national territory. The distinction is that Jewish minorities were able to organize and lobby for political representation for protections under the MPS.² Romani populations had no such privileges, leading to their invisibility at the institutional

¹ Erin K. Jenne, "Preventative Diplomacy in Interwar Europe," ch. in *Nested Security: Lessons in Conflict Management from the League of Nations and the European Union* (Cornell University Press: 2015), 48-79.

² Jenne, "Preventative Diplomacy," 49. See addition notes in *Nested Security*, 201.

level. The invisibility of Romani voices is especially apparent when interrogating the archival material of the League of Nations, housed within the United Nations archive in Geneva.

The League of Nations archive does not contain debate that would indicate the inclusion of Romani within the MPS. This lack of minority protection coincides with an increased *biopolitical* surge of targeted institutionalization by international police agencies who coalesced in the International Criminal Police Commission (ICPC) between 1931 and 1934. The following research highlights the archived documents of ICPC members who *did* debate the technology and database techniques, such as *Bertillon photography*³ and *dactyloscopy* (fingerprinting) to be used to securitize and criminalize Roma populations in Europe, in order to justify racialized police operations. Furthermore, their debates and agendas were documented in English and collected within the League of Nations archive. The League of Nations had an interest in the discussions of the growing international policing organization, and by 1934, had already collected the debates of the ICPC and its goal of targeting Central European Romani communities.⁴ These ICPC debates provide historical

³ Bertillon photography, also known as mugshot photography, was developed by French policeman Alphonse Bertillon at the end of the 19th century.

⁴ In this temporal context, the ICPC referred to peripatetic communities of Romani as [gipsies] in the collected documents from the League of Nations archive. This particular spelling is found only in these ICPC documents within the League's archive. Generally speaking, during this time frame "gypsies" or "gypsy" is the typical English spelling.

insight into the early planning stages of genocide, as ICPC delegates promoted plans of action to solve the so-called “[Gipsy] Nuisance” with systematic assimilation, expulsion, and arrests years before the outbreak of the Second World War.

While the interwar literature emphasizes *scientific racism* and its ideological enactment for Nazi and collaborator policies that gave rise to the Roma holocaust, the sources for these discussions at the level of policing are not in English and are from state archives that require specific access credentials. However, freely accessible digitized archives in English exist that give insight to the debates of nascent policing networks from an international position, and these sources are found in the League of Nations archives and are in English. This study will highlight particular sources and their actors who were primary movers in the transnational policing strategy that would create the registration infrastructure used by Nazi and collaborator state-apparatuses. The necessity to showcase this information is to highlight the emergent groundwork of policing and policy creation to understand the legacy of their impacts on Romani communities in 21st-century central Europe.⁵

⁵ This thesis will also include text from previously written term papers that were completed while matriculated in CEU (2023-2025). Additionally, information regarding the biography of Czech Police Director Josef Vaňásek is originally in the Czech language, and this information was translated into English by Google Translate.

This simultaneously clarifies the relationship between eugenicist ideology and developing anti-crime policies and some of their actors.

Literature

The contemporaneous literature about the ICPC's involvement in the interwar Central European transnational policing schemes is documented in Charissa Kurda's article, "The Evolution of International Policing against 'Gypsies' in Central Europe" and provides a fount of information to link the increased policing of Roma communities during this timeframe. This article is an expansion from Kurda's doctoral thesis "The Porrajmos: A Biopolitical and Transnational Perspective." Charissa Kurda's Doctoral Thesis (2021) offers a transnational history of the *Porrajmos*⁶ which carefully examines the development of anti-Gypsy policy in Central Europe between 1870 and 1945. Kurda's research within the German state archives provides corresponding sources of the ICPC's committee meeting documents, emphasizing the archival continuity between nation states and the League, although they are originally in the German language.⁷ Furthermore,

⁶ Charissa Kurda, *The Porrajmos: A Biopolitical and Transnational Perspective*. Doctoral Thesis. (Flinders University, 2021).

⁷ The English versions of these meetings were found in the League of Nation's archive.

the benefit of Kurda's extensive research is that she details the locations of the German policy actors as they adapt demographic data to the ideologies of German race science. However, in Kurda's extensive research, there is a lack of emphasis on the specific rhetoric used by ICPC delegates. While Kurda traces the racial science ideology in parallel with the ICPC involvement in central European policy formulation that targeted Romani populations, more attention could be paid toward the word choice in the delegates documents themselves.

In complement to Kurda's analysis and illustrate, Paola Trevisan notes that the border areas of Central Europe, particularly the Habsburg Monarchy and the Kingdom of Italy at the beginning of the 20th century, created an "ideal place to observe how the state and 'Gypsies' confronted each other."⁸ This literature helps to set the stage of actors and communities that provide insight to the continuities of state *biopolitics*. The Kingdom of Italy and the Habsburg Monarchy subjected some Romani families with expulsion with claims that Romani didn't belong within their borders and resulted in families being bounced between nations.⁹ Trevisan effectively provides a touchstone for us to reference the historiography of the Central European region before the interwar, and we can

⁸ Paola Trevisan, "Austrian 'Gypsies'" in the Italian archives: Historical ethnography on multiple border crossings at the beginning of the twentieth century", (Focaal, 2020), 63.

⁹ Paola Trevisan, "Austrian 'Gypsies'," 65.

use this to provide context for the continued discrimination and ill-treatment of Romani that continued after Trevisan's case-studies.

A historiography of Romani voices are also present in the comprehensive literature from Elena Marushiakova and Popov Vesselin in *Roma Voices in History*, which offers a transnational history of Central European Romani political representation during the interwar.¹⁰ Despite the rich history in *Roma Voices*, there is a lack of detail regarding the structural policies that were enacted against Romani communities in German-speaking regions. Celia Donert, whose book *The Rights of Roma*, references foundational policies in Czech lands during the interwar that discriminated against Roma.¹¹ These three pieces of literature cover a lot of academic ground on the topic of interwar Romani communities and their discrimination and persecution by central European nation states; however, the authors do not detail the specific rhetoric and agendas of the ICPC delegates reports, which is what I will present in this thesis.

¹⁰ Elena Marushiakova and Popov Vesselin, *Roma Voices in History: A Sourcebook*, (Brill Publishing, 2021).

¹¹ Celia Donert, "Legacies of 1919," ch. in *The Rights of the Roma: The Struggle for Citizenship in Postwar Czechoslovakia*, (Cambridge University Press, 2017) 14-47. Donert does not go into specifics about the delegate's name, or the details of the policies and their protocols and their formations.

Archival Sources

I focused my time on the League of Nations digital Archive, in Geneva, which is housed within the United Nations Archive. These documents highlight an awareness of League of Nations' members of the exacerbation of the ICPC's centralization efforts, the control of Romani communities, and the unjust treatment of Roma in general between 1931-1934. Specifically, the documents from the ICPC to the League highlighted the shift between the ICPC's focus from counterfeiting, opium trade, and human trafficking to the institutionalization of policing against traveling Roma in Central Europe.

This leads to the historical trajectory of the ICPC's primary police focus to begin its institutionalization and development of an international database that would finely detail the identifying traits of Central Europe's Roma populations between 1931-1934. This information is pieced together to provide a chronology of the League's perspective as it digests information provided to it by the ICPC. The ICPC's methods of discrimination and obstruction of traveling Roma across state borders also served to solidify national identities of those nation-states against Roma at the same time. Therefore, the League of Nations was aware that the ICPC had a clear intent of gradual ethnic erasure.

The League of Nations MPS focused on the linguistic, religious, and ethnic minorities of its member states. The League's intent to protect minorities through a lens of human rights and international peace is also contradicted by the invisibility and dismissal of Romani people in the League's archive. In the League of Nations Archive, the fonds of "League of Nations Secretariat, 1919-1946" contains the Secretariat Fonds that comprises all the material produced or received at the headquarters of the League of Nations. The folder, "*Penal Administration - Correspondence with Commission Internationale de Police Criminelle* [International Criminal Police Commission]" contains numerous typed reports from the ICPC, in French, German, and English. The English translations were provided to the League by the ICPC and are new to the literature of the interbellum Roma historiographies.

The documents I will summarize are the following:

- "Suppression of the Gipsy Nuisance."
- "Fight against the Gipsies."
- "Establishment of an 'International Central Office for the Suppression of the Gipsy Nuisance' in the 'International Bureau on the seat of the Federal Police Directorate in Vienna'."
- "The Repression of Gipsies. Report on the Results of a Gipsy Control in 1934."

All of these documents help to elucidate the chronology of biopolitical discourse that the ICPC developed. These debates were to pivot current policy toward the policing of the Central European

Roma populations. Additionally, they also provide national source material that would further discrimination and oppression of the Roma communities in Central European nation states before the Second World War. The location of the documents in the League of Nations archive indicates an awareness by the League that the ICPC were systematically targeting Roma. This is apparent through the efforts of member state delegates in the ICPC and begs the human rights question, for starters, about why the League didn't intervene or even debate the topic. In addition, another point of League intervention

The additional questions that motivated my thesis research were the following: What was the interaction of the League of Nations with member state Romani? How did the development of international policing affect Roma communities? What political representation was sought by Roma within League member states? What were the intellectual debates at the League of Nations that involved Roma communities? How did the ICPC debate the increased policing of Roma, and what were the materials that the ICPC used referenced to fortify their anti-Roma policing? The archival material found in the League's collection, analyzed through Foucaultian *biopolitics*, aided in the formulation of responses to these questions.

Archival Preview

The ICPC held various sessions in which they would discuss topics of importance to

international policing. The League of Nations has three fonds, “League of Nations Secretariat, 1919-1946”, “Refugees Mixed Archival Group (Nansen Fonds), 1919-1947”, and “League of Nations External Fonds, 1920-1937”, which have all been digitized. According to the League of Nations Archives, the fonds are described as follows:

- The Secretariat Fonds that comprises all the material produced or received at the headquarters of the League of Nations.
- The Refugees Mixed Archival Group Fonds (Nansen Fonds) , which is linked to the activities of Fridtjof Nansen as League of Nations High Commissioner for Prisoners of War from 1920 and as High Commissioner for Russian Refugees from 1921.
- The External Fonds that combines all the groups of files constituted outside the Secretariat by more or less autonomous bodies established by the League of Nations, such as the Administrative Commissions or units directly responsible to the Secretariat such as the branch offices to fulfill some administration or other obligations imposed by the Treaty of Versailles.

For the sake of my research, the only applicable fonds was the Secretariat Fonds, and it has become my central area of focus in searching for material that pertains to Roma during this time period and how their communities were being perceived by the League of Nations.

“Suppression of the Gipsy Nuisance.”

This document is authored by Dobrica Matkovitch (1887-1973), who was a World War I veteran and head of the Department for State Protection in Yugoslavia since 1929. At the ICPC’s

9th session in October of 1932, Matkovitch provided a report that emphasized a brief history of Romani migrants from frontier border regions.¹² This report entails the connection from Yugoslavia's past with essentialism of Roma behavior and uses rhetoric that both dehumanizes Romani people and victimizes non-Roma Yugoslavian citizens.

“Fight Against the Gypsies”

At the Tenth Meeting of the ICPC, Josef Vaňásek (1877-1938), Member of the Administrative Committee of the ICPC in Prague from the Police Directorate, presented his report “Fight against the [Gypsies]”.¹³ In this manuscript, Vaňásek reflected on the statistical information that he ascertained from the Czechoslovak Republic's so-called “[Gipsy] Bureau,” where the fingerprints of all [gypsies] from the country are recorded and stored. He discusses the validity of the documentation process of the country's attempts at institutionalizing the database methods to “fight

¹² United Nations Archive at Geneva. “Penal Administration: Correspondence with International Criminal Police Commission”, Dobrica Matkovitch, “Suppression of the Gipsy Nuisance.” *International Criminal Police Commission: 9th session*. League of Nations Archive, Geneva, CH. Oct. 15-20, 1932. 1-3.

¹³ United Nations Archive at Geneva. “Penal Administration: Correspondence with International Criminal Police Commission”, Josef Vaňásek, “Fight against the Gypsies.” *International Criminal Police Commission: 10th Meeting*. Nr 15. League of Nations Archive, Geneva, CH. Sept. 1934. 1-6.

against the [gipsies].” A more detailed biography of Josef Vaňásek will be provided in Chapter 2 to help contextualize this document.

“Establishment of an ‘International Central Office for the Suppression of the Gipsy Nuisance’ in the ‘International Bureau on the seat of the Federal Police Directorate in Vienna’.”

In the document “Establishment of an ‘International Central Office for the Suppression of the Gipsy Nuisance’ in the ‘International Bureau on the seat of the Federal Police Directorate in Vienna’” Bruno Schultz (1872–1954) connects the Austrian Federal Government with the ICPC by means of the “[gipsy problem]”, through a chronology of events that led to the creation of an ICPC central office in Vienna. In his report, Schultz provides a trajectory of ICPC centralization, and recounts the development of how the ICPC provided assistance to the nations that saw peripatetic Romani as threats. This report also provides an additional detailed document that would show police how to document features of Roma who were arrested.

“The Repression of Gipsies: Report on the Results of a Gipsy Control in 1934.”

This report provided by Kurt Bader details the results of the control measures taken by the district of Baden in Germany, 1934. The biopolitical regulations set by the district authorities targeting Roma populations over the course of three days for the “repression of [gipsies].” The purpose of including this information is to highlight the actual results of the policies that were sought by the ICPC, as well as connect the documentation that was being read by the League of Nations. In 1922, Baden had introduced the regulation of identity papers for its province. Bader interpreted this as a “success” that could be utilized at an international level. This in turn maintains the thread that the League of Nations was aware of the increasing repressive tactics being utilized by states involved with the ICPC in 1934.

Methodology and Methods

I will utilize Ruth Wodak’s *discourse-historical approach*, which centralizes context dependent practices of speech, to the rhetoric and language selection of the ICPC delegate

manuscripts from the League of Nations archive.¹⁴ I will interrogate the rhetoric of the manuscripts from the ICPC delegates and committee members in the following ways, asking:

- How are persons, objects, phenomena/events, processes and actions named and referred to linguistically? What characteristics, qualities and features are attributed to social actors, objects, phenomena/events and processes?
- What arguments are employed in the discourse in question?
- From what perspective are these nominations, attributions and arguments expressed?
- Are the respective utterances articulated overtly; are they intensified or mitigated?

The answers to these questions will be analyzed through the methodology of *biopolitics* as communicated by Michel Foucault and further clarified by Roberto Esposito during the interwar.

¹⁴ Ruth Wodak & Michael Meyer, "Discourse-Historical Approach," *Methods of Critical Discourse Studies*. 2015. 23-61.

In Michel Foucault's "Society Must be Defended," Foucault explains the chronology of state power and racism, which combines to create *biopolitics*.¹⁵ Established in the 19th century through *demography*, the necessity of states to use data to document populations, religious minority groups, and so on, in order to better legislate governmental strategies, Foucault continues his understanding into the 20th century. This thesis will employ the understandings of Foucault's *biopolitical* arguments in order to help explain the context and background of archival documents found within the League of Nations. While biopolitics is the epistemology I am using to understand the landscape of these manuscripts, the *discourse-historical approach* is the method this thesis uses to critically deconstruct, emphasize, and categorize the discourse that the delegates use when referring to Romani communities in this time period. However, Foucault's analysis is further enriched with Roberto Esposito's clarifications.

Roberto Esposito locates interwar "race science" and state configurations in the discourse of German zoologist Baron Jakob von Uexküll's *Staatsbiologie: Anatomy, Physiology, and Pathology of the State* (1920), thus pinpointing an intellectual point of departure for German academics who would reify the German state in biological metaphors: an organism with pathologies. According to

¹⁵ Michel Foucault, "Society Must Be Defended" ed. Mauro Bertani and Alessandro Fontana, trans. David Macey (Picador, 2003) 242-253.

Esposito, Uexküll's threateningly prophetic conclusion is that one needs to create a class of "state doctors" to fight the parasites, or to confer on the state a medical competency that is capable of bringing it back to health by removing the causes of the disease and by expelling the carriers of germs. He writes: "What we are still lacking is an academy with a forward-looking vision not only for creating a class of state doctors, but also for instituting a state system of medicine. We possess no organ to which we can trust the hygiene of the state."¹⁶ Esposito's contribution to the context of the treatment of interwar Romani will be expounded on later in the thesis.

Finally, there is an invisibility of a debate or discussion about the ICPC's increased systemic development from focused policy efforts that securitized and criminalized Romani. As will be discussed later, the modernization of population controls by Central European nations also meant an increased focus on Roma details, exemplified in expanded passport requirements.¹⁷ The evidence of the ICPC material in the League of Nations' archive indicates an awareness that the League, and yet no debate exists despite the precedence of the MPS. What conclusion are we to draw

¹⁶ Roberto Esposito, "The Enigma of Biopolitics" ch. in *Bíos: Biopolitics and Philosophy*, trans. Timothy Campbell, (University of Minnesota Press, 2004). 17-18.

¹⁷ New passport requirements will be argued by Czech government councilor to the ICPC Josef Vaňásek in Chapter 2.

from this other than the Romani populations of Europe being devalued and discriminated against by the League's neglect.

Chapter 1: Interwar Biopolitics and the Targeting of Central European Romani

This chapter provides the background for *biopolitics* and provides multiple examples of *biopolitics* in the actions of Central European states, like Switzerland, Austria, and Germany, as well as more information on the League of Nations. The combination of ICPC protocols and strategies were combined with state requests to control and police Romani communities. Originally, these requests were veiled as targeting *parapetic* or itinerant Roma, but this was a precursor for the targeting of any Romani person, as states were finding that their definitions were too broad and was being applied to Roma and non-Roma together. In addition, this chapter also connects policing with state demography, showing how ICPC strategies were being combined with *scientific racism* in Nazi Germany.

Biopolitics

As mentioned in the Introduction, Michel Foucault's comments in his lecture "Society Must be Defended" establishes a turning point in the temporality of *biopolitics* in the 19th century. Rather than the sovereigns of previous epochs right "to take life or let live," Foucault argues that the new

political right is established, “the right to make live and to let die.”¹⁸ As 19th-century demography began to document and archive its findings, new syntheses developed on how to implement this newly collected sociographic knowledge. Statistics for a nation’s population became the vehicle to drive a state’s policies toward investing more infrastructure or resources to document the ethnicity and religious data from populations of minorities in national borders. In the interwar period in central Europe, this collected demographic data would merge with race science ideology and attempt to establish a eugenic order of society. Modernized policies erupted that utilized new data to justify state actions, born by racism, such as forced settlement or state expulsion that targeted Romani.

Foucault defines racism in two ways. The first way is that racism is a break into the domain of life that power controls, the break between what must live and what must die, creating hierarchies of races, and further fragmenting the field of the biological that power controls.¹⁹ The second way is by situating the war-like relationship that *the other* must die so that the nation may continually

¹⁸ Foucault, “Society,” 253. Readers of Foucault will remember his quote from *The History of Sexuality*: “For millennia, man remained what he was for Aristotle: a living animal with the additional capacity for a political existence; modern man is an animal whose politics places his existence as a living being in question.” Michael Foucault, *The History of Sexuality Vol. 1* (Pantheon Books: 1978), 143.

¹⁹ Foucault, “Society,” 254.

survive into a *purser and healthier* future.²⁰ These two definitions provide state control with a conceptual means to enact state policy against Romani in ways that they did not against other “races” of Europe. During the interwar period, the Romani of central Europe were perceived in biological terms, and the rhetoric for the development of these terms and conceptions are captured in the archival documents of the League of Nations, discussed later in this chapter.

The transformation of seeking knowledge about Romani populations became seeking control of Romani populations. As the League of Nations’ archival documents discuss, the historiography of central European policies to control Romani, based on primarily racial interpretations of people and society in race science, established in the late 19th century, lines up with Foucault’s general narrative of *biopolitics*. Central European nations utilized their sociological knowledge to implement control measures over human beings, a biological problem which became a political problem, as a Foucaultian reading may imply.²¹ The Roma of central Europe thus became the target, the intersection, of state and biological power, due to the perception of governments and police that labeled them as itinerant, nomadic, and biologically prone to certain behaviors that were

²⁰ Foucault, “Society,” 255.

²¹ Foucault, “Society,” 244.

deemed a danger to the non-Roma populations.²² In the context of interwar Central Europe, the modernization of health and police forces combined with the *securitization* of Romani people during this time. In the Czech lands, Josef Vaňásek, a budding police officer who eventually became a government councilor to the International Criminal Police Commission, oversaw the growth and strengthening of departments that interacted with Roma.²³ Vaňásek considered the security of the Czech state and its people to be dependent on the police documentation and control of Roma in the country. Securing Romani people meant security for the new nation. But police measures weren't the only concepts on which *biopolitics* relied, as exemplified in the sphere of medical and national health conceived in other parts of Central Europe.

As mentioned earlier in the Introduction, Roberto Esposito locates interwar “race science” and state configurations in the discourse of German zoologist Baron Jakob von Uexküll's *Staatsbiologie: Anatomy, Physiology, and Pathology of the State*.²⁴ Esposito writes that Uexküll's emphasis on the state *as a biological organism*, complete with organs, is reminiscent of *organicism*,

²² This will be apparent later in the examination of the document written by Kurt Bader from the ICPC in Chapter 2.

²³ This will be fully detailed in Chapter 2.

²⁴ Roberto Esposito, “The Enigma of Biopolitics” chapter in *Bios: Biopolitics and Philosophy*, trans. Timothy Campbell, University of Minnesota Press 2004. 13-44.

insofar as the viewpoint is viewing the state and society as an organism, and the constituent parts of society's institutions and functions as being similar to a living body.²⁵ Specifically, Esposito says that the German body is the one that is mentioned, and that "parasites" organize themselves to the disadvantage of other citizens, i.e. *real Germans*.²⁶ Aside from *parasites*, Uexküll also discusses "symbionts" who are the "different races who under certain circumstances can be useful to the state."²⁷ Ultimately, the result of Uexküll's analysis is that the state and its citizens must fight parasites and bring the nation state back to health. This interpretation of races in association with the state helps to identify the early white nationalism of the Nazis, who systemically exercised Uexküll's writings, the result being stark *biopolitics* against Romani people in Germany and Central Europe. This is despite Uexküll's writing being from 1920 but still served as a foundation of conceiving *nation* in the context of health, an arguably core component of modernity after it was published.²⁸ As Vojtěch Pojar identifies in Esposito's argument, the self-preservation of the health of a nation was also closely tied with the security and existence of the nation itself during

²⁵ Esposito, "The Enigma," 17-19.

²⁶ Esposito, "The Enigma," 18. Emphasis mine.

²⁷ Esposito, "The Enigma," 18.

²⁸ Vojtěch Pojar, "Experts in post-imperial transitions : entanglements and diverging trajectories of eugenicists between the Habsburg Empire and the 'miniature empires', c.1900-1939," PhD diss., (Central European University, 2024).

modernization, unleashing destructive forces connected to perceived political survival.²⁹ The state's acquired knowledge of health and demographic data provided it with power to ultimately control both life and death.

Biopolitics is sought in this dual position of life that at once places it in the realm of the biological environment, and also within the historicity of knowledge and power, largely controlled by the state.³⁰ Post 1920, we saw an increase of the racial components of policy making as the ICPC members argued for the legitimacy of policies that targeted Roma, based entirely on their "racial behavior." This correlated with two historic trajectories, one is the increasing frustration of German-speaking nations, who express their frustration in maintaining borders and thus, the "national" character of their states, and second being the gradual rise of Hitler's Germany in 1933. However, I think it is apparent that the states of Central Europe sought complete control over Romani movements, settlements, persons and communities well before Hitler came to power. As we'll understand from the ICPC documents collected from the League of Nations' archive, the rhetoric of biopolitics and securitization surged with the inclusion of race science ideology, and the

²⁹ Pojar, "Experts in post-imperial transitions," 14.

³⁰ Esposito, "The Enigma," 31.

essentialization of Romani people as criminals or undesired people at the national border(s) became much more apparent.

The League of Nations' Minority Protection System

Importantly, the necessity of minority rights in the League was less about moral values for the underrepresented, or giving a voice to the voiceless, and more about attempting to avoid conflicts from irredentist groups after the resolutions of WWI. Historically speaking, minority rights weren't new with the League's MPS. For example, the Austrian December Constitution of 1867 provides rights for nationalities, religious freedoms, and ethnicities,³¹ but this did not apply to Austria's Romani populations then, and it did not change with Austria's membership in the League, either. In her chapter "Preventive Diplomacy in Interwar Europe," Erin K. Jenne writes that the League of Nations signed "minority treaties" with member states and developed the aforementioned Minority

³¹ The Basic Law on the General Rights of Nationals (1867) is a bill of rights stipulating, among other things, equality before the law for all the empire's ethnicities (articles 1, 2, 3, and 19), the end of all forms of serfdom (art. 7), freedom of the press (art. 13), freedom of religion (articles 14 and 15), freedom of assembly (article 12), and secrecy of correspondence (art. 10). December constitution (*Dezemberverfassung*) -- First Charta of Fundamental Rights (*Staatsgrundgesetz über die Allgemeinen Rechte der Staatsbürger*) -- State Basic Law about the general rights of citizens.

Protection System for conflict prevention to maintain the fragile post-WWI peace.³² Importantly, all newly created Central and Eastern European states were required to sign the treaties, or issue declarations to protect national minorities on their territory, thus the League's MPS "was developed for cooperative conflict management and not the advancement of universal minority rights."³³ It is here that we see the League's perspective of conflict resolution and avoidance, which is one through international cooperation, rather than one of justice for minorities, ultimately protecting nation states interests at the expense of any one minority, particularly justice for Romani.

This would seemingly imply that all minorities in League member states would be protected, however this was not the case. An affinity with one's kin state was more likely to garner protections, especially if your kin state was German or German-speaking. Some German-speaking nations, such as Austria, had some minority protections legislation before the League's MPS, which impacted arguments about the fulfillment of minority obligations during delegate deliberations. Jenne writes, "because of their size, territorial concentration, economic power, and active patronage of revisionist

³² Jenne, "Preventive Diplomacy," 48.

³³ Jenne, "Preventive Diplomacy," 48.

states, the German... minorities of Central and Eastern Europe enjoyed far greater leverage than did smaller, unsupported minorities such as the Roma and the Jews.”³⁴

While Jenne notes that Central and Eastern European Jewish minorities “enjoyed the support of Jewish organizations in the West, which lobbied for their protection,”³⁵ Romani communities seemed to enjoy no such protections. This reality positioned Romani people as a significantly under-protected minority in Central and Eastern Europe, and unlike Jews, Romani did not have political representation or lobbying on their behalf, leaving them vulnerable to persecution from police and the gendarmerie of nation states. Though this was not especially new to the interwar period. For example, as early as 1908, Romani families were being bounced between territories that refused them based on their “alien” status, often leaving families on borders at the mercy of legislative and police decisions.³⁶

Importantly, it should be mentioned that the expanded development of postwar passport systems was an area in which the League did attempt to make an intervention. Between 1920 and

³⁴ Jenne, “Preventive Diplomacy,” 49. Jenne also notes Hungarian minorities along with German.

³⁵ Jenne, “Preventive Diplomacy,” 201.

³⁶ Trevisan, “Austrian ‘Gypsies’,” 61-74.

1926, the League opposed the developing “wartime” passport systems and favored the prewar conditions of open borders.³⁷ Peter Becker writes that the impetus of the League to avoid the wartime passport restrictions on mobility was driven by Article 23 of its Covenant.³⁸ This, he argued, allowed the League to feel competent in the postwar border-travel discussion, but ultimately positioned the League against the existing passport regime. The open-border system that the League favored could not overcome the regional (external and internal) postwar mistrust of the newly established nations.³⁹ Partly as a result of a once integrated Habsburg empire, which had a free individual mobility prewar system, the War and postwar mobility restrictions were emboldened by antagonisms, which overshadowed the efforts of the League.⁴⁰ Therefore, it is no wonder that the regional void of the League’s influence was filled by police and legislative decisions that continued in Central Europe after the War. With the creation of the International Criminal Police Commission

³⁷ Peter Becker, “Remaking Mobility,” *Remaking Central Europe: The League of Nations and the Former Habsburg Lands*. 2020. 193-211.

³⁸ Becker, “Remaking Mobility,” 197. Article 23(e): “will make provision to secure and maintain freedom of communications and of transit and equitable treatment for the commerce of all Members of the League.”

³⁹ Becker, “Remaking Mobility,” 201.

⁴⁰ Becker, “Remaking Mobility,” 205.

in 1923, regional cooperation between police and administrations contributed to the passport regime(s) fortitude, as it began to focus its restrictions on Roma.

The International Criminal Police Commission and Nazi Germany's Entanglement

One year after his resignation as chancellor of the Austrian Republic, the International Criminal Police Commission (ICPC), an international organization for the cooperation of police, was founded in 1923 by Johannes Schober, still President of the Viennese Police Department, along with 22 other delegates.⁴¹ Schober's difficult task was to somehow provide a legitimate institutional presence for police officials, and he held an international police congress to discuss cross-border crime in the region with Austria's neighbors.⁴² Of course, the previous histories of the region also meant that residual antagonisms from the recent War were also an obstacle, which made the necessity of a police congress even more prescient to ICPC founders. The conference served to promote closer regional integration through police cooperation. Additionally, Schober handed down the task of

⁴¹ David Petruccelli, "Fighting the Scourge of International Crime." *Remaking Central Europe: The League of Nations and the Former Habsburg Lands*. 2020. 241-258.

⁴² Petruccelli, "Fighting the Scourge," 245.

creating an institutional presence to Bruno Schultz, a police official at this time.⁴³ Schober tasked Schultz with the development of establishing an institutional presence in Austria by constructing a series of catalogues that would serve to develop into an International Bureau attached to the Vienna police.⁴⁴

Mentioned earlier, from 1923 until 1931, the primary purposes of the ICPC were to develop international standards of police protocols, updates on contemporary technologies to be used in policing, and organize meetings to disseminate ideas and tactics for identifying and capturing criminals and discuss pendant cases.⁴⁵ At this time, the organization's focus was on human trafficking of women and children, narcotics manufacturing and distribution, and the counterfeiting of currency and identity forgeries. Importantly, its founders sought agendas that also encouraged informal administrative communication between police officials that could both circumvent political and legal channels while maintaining respect for national sovereignty.⁴⁶ In

⁴³ Petruccelli, "Fighting the Scourge," 246.

⁴⁴ Petruccelli, "Fighting the Scourge," 246.

⁴⁵ Petruccelli, "Fighting the Scourge," 246.

⁴⁶ Petruccelli, "Fighting the Scourge," 246.

1931, the ICPC would become a transnational Central European framework for controlling Romani populations and further utilized by the Central European nations.

In ICPC committee meetings, Austrian officials sought advice from the ICPC for solutions to the so-called “Gypsy question”. In 1931, Bruno Schultz, once vice president of the Vienna Police Directorate and permanent rapporteur of the ICPC, wrote in a report to the ICPC, “The Austrian Federal Chancellery requested the Austrian Ministers to hold a discussion on the legislative measures to be employed against nomads; and, in an invitation to the Federal Police Directorate in Vienna, the ICPC was asked to suggest an effective method by which “gypsies” might be repressed.” The Austrian state believed that Romani populations in its territory were a threat to rural Austrians, as well as a threat to the national identity of Austrians in general. Additionally in the same year, Schultz addressed the League of Nations, stating of the “Gypsy question,” “this is a question of cosmopolitan criminals, who know neither nationality nor morality, spread unfortunately to the entire civilized world, a scourge of all humanity”.⁴⁷ These rhetorics from ICPC delegates and political influencers both discriminated against and essentialized Roma as criminals, and permeated beyond Austria and throughout the region.

⁴⁷ Petruccelli, “Fighting the Scourge,” 258.

In Nazi Germany, German “racial scientist” Robert Ritter (1901-1951) rose to prominence with the support of the regime in 1932. Ritter, being an anthropologist, studied familial relationships of so-called “asocial” denizens of Germany, which included Romani populations living in poor neighborhoods, particularly in Tübingen. Ritter thought that the population of Romani constituted a society of *Guanergesellschaft* (society of criminals) that formed during the 17th and 18th centuries, concluding that the Romani communities were “born criminals and vagabonds” genetically inclined to asocial and criminal lives.⁴⁸ His research flourished under the Nazi regime, as Ritter adapted his anthropological understandings and hypotheses toward the Nazi German conclusions.⁴⁹ Therefore, in conjunction with Nazi German ideology, Ritter used science as a tool to serve the genocidal fascist trajectory of Nazi policy. The configuration of the State-controlled science

⁴⁸ Charissa Kurda “The Evolution of International Policing against ‘Gypsies’ in Central Europe: 1870–1945.” *Central European History*, 2024, 1–22

⁴⁹ “Ritter created a racial distinction between the “racially pure” (*Vollblütige*) and “mixed blood” (Mischlinge) [Gypsies]: Z pure or full-blooded Gypsy (*Vollzigeuner or stammechter Zigeuner*). ZM + half-Gypsy (*Zigeunermischlinge*) with predominantly Gypsy blood (five or more Gypsy great grandparents). ZM half-Gypsy (*Zigeunermischlinge*) with equal parts German and Gypsy blood (four Gypsy grandparents). A ZM 1st Grade is a person who has one German and one pure Gypsy parent. A ZM 2nd Grade is a person who has one German and one ZM 1st Grade parent. ZM –, half-Gypsy (*Zigeunermischlinge*) with predominantly German blood (four Gypsy great grandparents). NZ non-Gypsy (*nicht Zigeuner*).” For more, see Charissa Kurda, “The Evolution of International Policing against ‘Gypsies’ in Central Europe,” 14.

of Nazi Germany, practiced by Robert Ritter, enabled arguments and logic of “race science” and utilized biopolitical policies to target Romani communities in Germany.

Baden, as mentioned earlier, exercised a perspective of the German nation with “race science” to police Romani communities to protect German citizens from the perceived putative criminality of Roma. Bader argued that “a uniform and modern law on combating the [Gypsy nuisance]” was in the works, and that Hitler’s sterilization law of 1933 would include [gypsies].⁵⁰ This corresponded and aligned with Ritter’s racial views, as well. Race science will be further utilized in the discourse of ICPC delegates’ reports. Of course, as mentioned earlier, Germany and Austria weren’t acting as independent and exclusive nations with the creation and enforcement of policies against the Romani. Schultz’s address to the League of Nations in 1931 provides context and evidence for the relationship between the League and the ICPC. More explicitly, the League was clearly aware of the ICPC’s intent to target Romani populations that did not readily fit into the new nation-state models. This is said with confidence due to the complete lack of systemic protection from the League that addressed Romani people specifically.⁵¹ This, combined with ICPC member Bruno Schultz’s address to the League in 1931 provides us with a grim understanding of the pathways of *biopolitical*

⁵⁰ Kurda, “The Evolution,” 15.

⁵¹ Mentioned previously in Jenne, “Preventative Diplomacy,” 49.

development set in motion by Austria and Germany at this time frame. This will be analyzed in the next chapter, where the *discourse-historical approach* will also be employed to illuminate the rhetoric of *biopolitics* and its continuity in Central Europe.

Chapter 2: English Manuscript Discourse Analysis from International Criminal Police Commission committee meetings 1931-1934

This chapter applies the methodology of *biopolitics* from Chapter 1 with the method of *discourse historical analysis* to the documents gained by archival research from the League of Nations archive in Geneva. The methodology of Foucaultian *biopolitics*, previously clarified through Roberto Esposito, will be applied to the discourse found within the four archival documents, in order to highlight two things: the first being the contextual historiography of biopolitical policies targeting Romani in some Central European nations from the 19th century through the interwar period. By placing a point of departure, we can better understand the continuity between Central European nation states and their *biopolitics* against Romani through to 1932, where our first document takes place. The second being that the conclusion of this historiography is collected by the League of Nations, which emphasizes the complicity and complacency of the League in the exacerbation of ethnically-driven policies of member states who were conjoined with the ICPC. The League watched and had no debate or discussion about Romani, while the ICPC and Central European nation states debated, planned, and established anti-Roma policies that calibrated more and more toward the genocide of Central European Roma.

Discourse Historical Analysis

As mentioned in the Introduction, the application of Ruth Wodak's *discourse-historical approach* (DHA) will be used to engage the documents supplied by the ICPC to the League of Nations. Before going into those documents, it is important to understand the definition and context of the DHA to see why its application is warranted.

Mentioned earlier, the core questions that the DHA asks of materials and media are centralized by power. Appropriately, one of the aims of the DHA is to deconstruct the hegemony of specific discourses, by deciphering the ideologies that serve to establish, perpetuate or resist dominance.⁵² Put succinctly, *discourse* is understood as a cluster of semiotic practices that are socially constitutive and constituted, and use argumentation about truth and validity to relate to macro topics.⁵³ In the case of Central European states and Roma, the reports from ICPC members capture the language that refers to symbols of race and science, to imply or explicitly state the assimilation of Roma communities through state or police actions in text. The arguments we'll read from the ICPC

⁵² Wodak, "Discourse-Historical Approach," 26.

⁵³ Wodak, "Discourse-Historical Approach," 27.

members will relate to macro topics about transnational and international protocols to surveil and physical control Romani people, all within the document texts themselves.

Importantly, text allows the discourse to be recorded and durable over time, and also allow for the text to be assigned to a *genre*, which can be understood as a pattern of communication that fulfills a social function within social contexts.⁵⁴ The ICPC members apply their rhetoric of race, science, white supremacy, and hegemony to the macro topics at hand, which include topics about “settlement,” “menace,” “inferiority,” and other phrases which will be linked to *biopolitics*. The *genre* of *systemic racism*⁵⁵ against the Central European Romani becomes evident in the ICPC members rhetoric.

To better understand how we uncover this information, the concepts from the DHA will accompany the following questions⁵⁶ to the archival documents produced by the ICPC delegates: How are persons, objects, phenomena/events, processes and actions named and referred to? What characteristics, qualities and features are attributed to social actors, objects, phenomena/events and

⁵⁴ Wodak, “Discourse-Historical Approach,” 27.

⁵⁵ Systemic racism can be understood as deeply embedded institutional discrimination, based on race, that is reflected in policies and practices of a given society, resulting in the harmful treatment of less-advantaged groups of people, such as Roma.

⁵⁶ Reiterated here from the Introduction.

processes? What arguments are employed in the discourse in question? From what perspective are these nominations, attributions and arguments expressed? Are the respective utterances articulated overtly; are they intensified or mitigated?⁵⁷ A common pattern of speech that will be utilized by the ICPC delegates falls within the genre of *systemic racism*, for example.

“Suppression of the Gipsy Nuisance”

In October 1932, the ICPC held its 9th session in Rome, Italy, and Director of Administration for the Yugoslav Police in Belgrade, Dobrica Matkovitch,⁵⁸ provided a report about the Yugoslavian police’s experience with “wandering [gipsies]” from 1920.⁵⁹ In the report, Matkovitch says that the [gipsy] populations in the frontier border regions “mercilessly devastate” and “steal what they can steal” from the country people.⁶⁰ These phrases reflect the *systemic racism*

⁵⁷ Wodak, “Discourse-Historical Approach,” 32.

⁵⁸ Dobrica Matkovitch (1887-1973) was a World War I veteran and head of the Department for State Protection in 1929 in Belgrade, Yugoslavia.

⁵⁹ United Nations Archive at Geneva. “Penal Administration: Correspondence with International Criminal Police Commission,” Dobrica Matkovitch, “Suppression of the Gipsy Nuisance.” International Criminal Police Commission: 9th session. League of Nations Archive, Geneva, CH. Oct. 15-20, 1932. 1-2.

⁶⁰ Matkovitch, “Suppression,” 2.

genre as discussed prior. Romani people are essentialized here by Matkovitch as thieves and harmful geographically, insofar as he states Romani “devastate the region” including the environment and the people who interact with it. This also implies that the region and people need to be protected from the Romani, positioning the state as guardians of the land, and the Romani as unwanted outsiders. This is a common racist logic represented throughout the documents and additionally serves to put the state in the position of a hero who will come to the rescue of the non-Roma.

Matkovitch continues his report and says, “the Kingdom of [Jugoslavia] has had many unpleasant experiences when 126 Russian [gipsies] moved into Bulgaria and committed thefts,” because they were “semi-savages” and “full of bloodthirsty instincts.”⁶¹ Here, Matkovitch’s civilization rhetoric overlaps with depictions of Romani people being primitive, with primitive associated with a lack of emotional and bodily control, leading to violence. By labelling Romani in this way, Matkovitch also securitizes and essentializes Roma, by implying that they must be controlled by the state due to their perceived threat and that their traits are *essential* to their “race.”

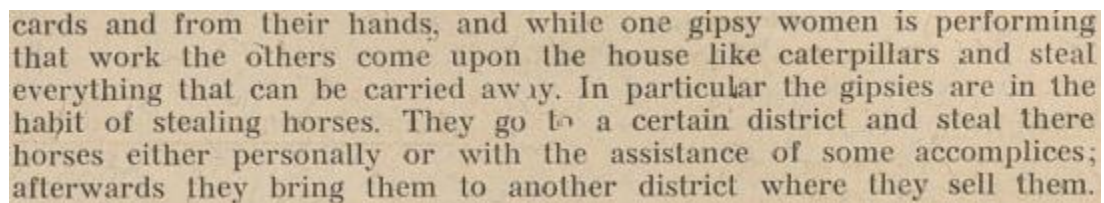
⁶¹ Matkovitch, “Suppression,” 2.

The Kingdom of Yugoslavia has had many an unpleasant experience with those unwelcome guests, one of the most unpleasant with a group of travelling gipsies who hailed from Russia. 26 families of those gipsies numbering 126 persons, found in 1920 a possibility of repairing from Russia to Bulgaria. From there they entered Yugoslavia with a number of Russian refugees and have since lived here. It is evident that they have no means of subsistence. They have no occupation and do not want either to do some regular work, and thus this group of Russian gipsies constitutes a permanent menace to public safety. They committed various criminal offences, not to speak of the thefts, for these people are semi-savages and full of bloodthirsty instincts. As a principle they make their living by sending their children on begging tours while the women go in groups to the villages and try to enter the farm-houses just when the owners are on work outside. They tell the women their fortune from

Matkovitch then advocates for institutional conventions that would relate to “wandering [gipsies]” through legitimate means, a registry at the international level in Vienna, ultimately combining local, state, and international policy interests, and realizing Johannes Schrober’s original intent for the ICPC. Furthermore, if we remember Schultz’s address to the League in 1931 a year earlier⁶², Matkovitch is complying with the ICPC’s intent to police and control “cosmopolitan criminals” which were the “scourge of humanity.” At this point in time, it is clear that ICPC affiliates are talking about Romani people, while in 1931 the language wasn’t so specific. Despite this, Matkovitch understands Schultz’s rhetoric in a more sinister tone.

⁶² Mentioned in Chapter 1.

The State's interest in policing and controlling Romani people is emphasized when Matkovitch says, through a dehumanizing prose, that attempts to "settle" Romani led to Roma killing each other "like wild beasts".⁶³ The equation of Roma to creatures, or less-than-human, is also apparent when Matkovitch refers to Romani women as "caterpillars" and thieves.⁶⁴ This also continues the rhetoric of "civilizing" the Roma.



cards and from their hands, and while one gipsy women is performing that work the others come upon the house like caterpillars and steal everything that can be carried away. In particular the gipsies are in the habit of stealing horses. They go to a certain district and steal there horses either personally or with the assistance of some accomplices; afterwards they bring them to another district where they sell them.

Interwar racism drew on analogies of Romani as animals or insects, and Matkovitch's narrative about Romani activities from 1920 are interwoven with racism from the 1930s, which created a continuity of *biopolitical* logic and framework for the ICPC and its delegates.

"Fight Against the Gipsies"

⁶³ Matkovitch, "Suppression," 2.

⁶⁴ Matkovitch, "Suppression," 2.

Before getting into the document itself, it is important to put a spotlight on the police biography of Josef Vaňásek, which is painstakingly detailed on the Police of the Czech Republic's website and authored by police historian Miloš Vaněček.⁶⁵ Vaňásek joined the Police Headquarters on October 15th, 1904, and passed the practical political exam in 1907. He reportedly received superb marks in the assessments of his character and competence as reported by journalists and service evaluations between 1907 and 1913. Vaňásek continued to the Škoda factories in Pilsen during the First World War. In 1918, after the War, the Police Headquarters in Prague came under the services of the Czechoslovak state, and while the basic organization and competences of the office stayed the same, some personnel and administrative changes occurred.⁶⁶ In 1919, Vaňásek became the chief of the Security Department (known as Department IV) after he successfully organized a security service focused on suppressing numerous and extensive thefts on Czech railways.

By the 1920s, Department IV had multiple sub-departments that were responsible for different fields. It had departments dedicated to the railways, postal offices in Prague and Pardubice,

⁶⁵ Miloš Vaněček, "Josef Vaňásek", Police of the Czech Republic, National Anti-Drug Headquarters of the Police of the Czech Republic. <https://policie.gov.cz/clanek/josef-vanasek>. Accessed July 2015. Vaněček's historical focus on the Czech Police is directed toward Prague Police Headquarters and on Josef Vaňásek. The website only has information about Vaňásek in the Czech language. Translation from Czech to English was facilitated with Google translate.

⁶⁶ For example, management positions had some changes in personnel and Czech became the official language instead of German.

a morality department, a registration department, theft department, and an investigative office responsible for the official collection of photographs and dactyloscopic records for the entire Czechoslovak Republic.⁶⁷ Needless to say that Vaňásek potentially oversaw a massive amount of reported knowledge of Czechoslovak investigations and the data derived thereof. He would then utilize this statistical and sociological data in 1934 at the ICPC's 10th session in Vienna.

At the 10th Meeting of the ICPC, Josef Vaňásek reported the “Fight against the [Gipsies].” In this document, Vaňásek details the statistical information that was collected from the Czechoslovak Republic's so-called “[Gipsy] Bureau,”⁶⁸ where the fingerprints of all [gipsies] from the country are recorded and stored.” He used these records to validate the State's “fight against the [gipsies]” explained through historical, sociological policies. Vaňásek states that between 1931 and 1933, the ICPC held various sessions in which they would discuss topics of importance to international policing that targeted Romani people. He starts with the ICPC's 9th session in Rome of October, 1932, where the Yugoslavian Dobrica Matkovitch provided the aforementioned

⁶⁷ Vaněček, “Josef Vaňásek,” 5. Vaněček continues to include the following departments: correspondence; pickpocket prosecution; prosecution of counterfeiters of currency, checks and securities; criminal records (lost and found department); and a police prison administration department. It also included an editorial office of police newspapers, and a police dog station with training facilities in Bratislava.

⁶⁸ Vaňásek, “Fight Against,” 1.

document titled “Suppression of the Gipsy Nuisance.” This is where Vaňásek continues from while introducing the “situation” in Czechoslovakia.

Vaňásek, now in the government position of Supreme Police Councilor, utilized the demographic data of the country to implement race science in the ICPC. In Foucault’s explanation of biopolitics, demographers aid state power by recording the ratios of births to deaths, rate of reproduction, and fertility of populations in statistical terms, targeting the populations the state seeks to control, which were the Roma of Czechoslovakia.⁶⁹ According to Vaňásek, the Czech state initiated laws to register travelling Roma, resulting in “full records and identifications of all [gipsies] living in the territory of the Czechoslovak Republic” including full knowledge of Roma abodes and “their movements.”⁷⁰ Fingerprints from Romani were taken, and in exchange Roma had to carry a “[gipsy] pass-card”. “By the end of May 1933,” Vaňásek claimed “7,650 [gipsy] families with together 31,200 heads had been registered at the start of age 14.”⁷¹ Importantly, the 10th Session of

⁶⁹ Foucault, “Society,” 243.

⁷⁰ United Nations Archive at Geneva. “Penal Administration: Correspondence with International Criminal Police Commission”, Josef Vaňásek, “Fight against the Gipsies.” *International Criminal Police Commission: 10th Meeting*. Nr 15. League of Nations Archive, Geneva, CH. Sept. 1934. 1-5.

⁷¹ Vaňásek, “Fight against,” 2.

the ICPC in Vienna focused on the trafficking of girls and children, which in the context of Vaňásek's report, implies that Vaňásek associated Romani people human trafficking.

Throughout the document, Vaňásek continued to link state policies with biological rhetoric, referring to “the whole nature of vagabond [gipsies] *makes* them refrain from applying for ordinary travelling passports.”⁷² In addition, Vaňásek concludes his report by including continued essentialist rhetoric when he states that Romani have “special criminal character.”⁷³

At the end of the present proposae. I beg to direct attention to the fact that the special criminal character of the gipsies who are a real nuisance of the open country, fully justifies the necessity of the gipsy central office arranging the dactyloscopic cards of gipsies in a special

collection which is easily accessible, under the condition, of course, that these cards are to be found also in the general collection of the national criminal central office. This demand is so clear and so necessary out of technical-criminal and tactical reasons, that there seems to be no need to defend it. In its favour speak not only reasons of organisation, but also the fact that in the general national dactyloscopic collection the cards must be found of all dactyloscoped persons, so that enquiries made by national and foreign offices as to the identity of some person may be fully answered, for it must not be known abroad that the person in question is a gipsy, and that in that collection prints may be looked up which correspond to the impressions found at a place of crime of a non-gipsy character, although the crime may have been committed by gipsies.

⁷² Vaňásek, “Fight against,” 3. Emphasis mine.

⁷³ Vaňásek, “Fight against,” 6.

The “special criminal character” of Romani is also attached by Vaňásek to the protocols of police technology and state registers. Vaňásek makes it clear that the registration of Romani should be kept in a “special collection,” furthering the continuity and chronology of the ICPC’s increased focus on controlling Romani within the jurisdictions they operate in.⁷⁴ Most importantly, Vaňásek was in the most privileged position to disseminate his views of Roma upon other police officers within the country and used his power to securitize Romani people. Years later, at the 11th ICPC meeting in Copenhagen in 1935, Vaňásek proposed passports should contain fingerprints and photographs, and this proposal was directly targeted at Roma, as he believed they were a security threat that would traffic people and narcotics in and through the Czechoslovak state.⁷⁵

Biopolitics were in effect against Romani communities in Czechoslovakia, especially against those communities who travelled from one country to another, exemplifying the ICPC’s continued campaign to control Romani whose rhetoric existed in a *genre* of system racism. Thus, in the position of a Czech government councilor to the ICPC, Vaňásek argued not only for the success of Czech registration policies to be extended to all European nations because they would ultimately be able to supplement a central office in Vienna, but also that the perception of the Czech state in racializing,

⁷⁴ Vaňásek, “Fight against,” 6.

⁷⁵ Vaněček, “Josef Vaňásek,” 5.

securitizing, and criminalizing Romani was a viable strategy in the “fight against the [gipsies].”⁷⁶ The goal being to reduce the number of migrating Roma between nation state borders, in which Czechoslovakian policy outcomes could be utilized as examples, as evidenced by the dwindling number of “foreign [gipsies] apprehended” in the territory due to increased, stricter measures against Roma.⁷⁷ For Vaňásek and other members of the ICPC, securitization and police control of the Roma meant security and peace for the nation of the Czechoslovak Republic and the region as a whole. His goal to control the mobility of Roma represented two convergences within modernity, eugenicist logic and tightening legal strategies against transnational crime.

“Establishment of an ‘International Central Office for the Suppression of the Gipsy Nuisance’ in the ‘International Bureau on the seat of the Federal Police Directorate in Vienna’.”

In the document “Establishment of an ‘International Central Office for the Suppression of the [Gipsy] Nuisance’ in the ‘International Bureau on the seat of the Federal Police Directorate in Vienna’,” Bruno Schultz connects the Austrian Federal Government with the ICPC by means of the

⁷⁶ Vaňásek, “Fight against,” 1, 5.

⁷⁷ Vaňásek, “Fight against,” 2. For more information on Czech anti-Roma policies, see Celia Donert “Legacies of 1919,” ch. in *The Rights of the Roma: The Struggle for Citizenship in Postwar Czechoslovakia*.

“gipsy problem,” through a chronology of events that led to the creation of a central office in Vienna from 1931-1934. This also includes what documents and what role the office would serve to the ICPC. Schultz states that on July 15, 1931, the Austrian Federal Chancellery requested that, “the Austrian Ministers to hold a discussion on the legislative measures to be employed against [nomades]; and, in an invitation to the Federal Police Directorate in Vienna, the ‘International Criminal Police Commission’ was asked to suggest an effective method by which [gipsies] might be repressed.”⁷⁸ This was the focus of the ICPC conference in Paris from September 28th to September 30th, 1931, where ICPC delegates would debate policies they viewed would solve the “[Gipsy] nuisance.” The combination of these debates with the State’s request(s) emphasizes the ubiquity of state-led *biopolitics*, and thus the message of these delegates is clear. They represent the repressive apparatus of state interests, and the interest was evidently focused on discrimination of Romani communities.

⁷⁸ United Nations Archive at Geneva. “Penal Administration: Correspondence with International Criminal Police Commission”, Bruno Schultz, “Establishment of an ‘International Central Office for the Suppression of the Gipsy Nuisance’ in the ‘International Bureau on the seat of the Federal Police Directorate in Vienna’.” *International Criminal Police Commission: XI meeting*. League of Nations Archive, Geneva, CH. c.1934, 1-5. See also Charissa Kurda “The Evolution of International Policing against ‘Gypsies’ in Central Europe: 1870–1945.” *Central European History*, 2024, 1-10.

In emphasis, Bruno Schultz's recommendation for a solution wasn't born in the vacuum of Viennese politics but is chronologically based decades earlier in Switzerland. Beginning as early as 1899, the Bavarian *Zigeunerzentrale* [Central Office for Gypsy Affairs] and the later 1905 *Zigeunerbuch* were cited to Swiss ICPC delegate Dr. Heinrich Zangger⁷⁹ as being "successes" for the purposes of Swiss naturalization of Romani citizens within its borders.⁸⁰ Both the *Zigeunerzentrale* and the *Zigeunerbuch* served as policing tools for identifying and processing Roma in Switzerland. Therefore, in the September 1931 ICPC conference that Zangger attended, he and Schultz recommended the Swiss policies to be extended to the ICPC, declaring that "an assessment of the current Gypsy population in each country and the transmittal of identification materials to an internal central office could serve well" to coerce and gradually sedentarize Swiss Romani and integrate them into the body politic [*Volkskörper*] of each nation.⁸¹ However, by 1932, Swiss interest in this debate would decline due to Swiss laws that stated, "since the war it no longer permits Gypsies to settle in the country, and at the beginning of the war, all Gypsies present on Swiss soil were

⁷⁹ Kurda, "The Evolution," 10.

⁸⁰ Kurda, "The Evolution," 10.

⁸¹ Kurda, "The Evolution," 10.

interned or required to leave.”⁸² The biopolitical policies to control Central European Romani were already, by 1932, established and exacerbated throughout the region.

By 1934, Schultz had combined both the Austrian Chancellery’s 1931 consultation request of the ICPC with the report from Zangger, and further validated by the 1932 report at the “9th Ordinary Meeting of the Commission in Rome” from Josef Vaňásek, Schultz recommended that the ICPC house all information regarding citizen [Gipsies] in Vienna, and document biometric data like *Bertillon photographs* and dactyloscopy, to be distributed to policing agencies of the world “interested in the subject.”⁸³ This request was originated by Czechoslovak representative Josef Vaňásek at the same ICPC meeting in 1934. For three years from 1931 to 1934, the ICPC debated the creation of an international policing agency to be housed in Vienna, what biometric data would also be included there, and what networks would have access to those materials. These arguments were based on the equivocation of behavior with racial characteristics, a hallmark of race science at the time, as the previous archival documents chronical.

⁸² Kurda, “The Evolution,” 12.

⁸³ Schultz, “Establishment of an International Central Office” 1-5.

Schultz recommended that police protocols document details of Roma, or those “moving about in the manner of [gipsies],” including names, fingerprints, photographs, group members, permits, passport, licenses, and criminal convictions, as outlined in the archival documentation:

International Suppression of The Gipsy Nuisance.

Informant Authority (Name, Residence)

Date: _____

Reference No.: _____

Concerns: _____

A Person Moving About After The Manner Of Gipsies.

To the

International Bureau on the seat of the Federal Police Directorate

(International Central Office for the Suppression of the Gipsy Nuisance.)

Vienna, IX.,

Roßauerlände 7.

Communication

Concerning Persons Nomadizing After The Manner Of Gipsies:

1. Surname (in the case of married women or widows, also their maiden name, or the name of a former husband)
2. Christian Name
3. Nicknames
4. Aliases (together with the respective personal data)
5. Day, Month, Year, & Place Of Birth (district, country, etc)
6. Gipsy Or Nomadizing Person?
7. Nationality. Appertaining To
8. State (unmarried, married, divorced, widowed).
(In the case of married or widowed persons quote the date of the wedding ceremony and the nome of the authority before which the ceremony has taken place)
9. Confession of Faith
10. Account of the Documents Found on the Person, Together With the Exact Name & Residence of the Issuing Authority, Place and Date of Issuance, Number
11. Occupation
12. Permanent Address
13. Previous Addresses
14. In Case of Departure, Place of Destination
15. Surname, Christian Name, Nickname, Aliases, of the Father. Day, Month, Year and Place of Birth, Nationality, Occupation, Address
16. Surname, If Possible, Maiden Name, Christian Name, Nickname, Aliases, of the Mother. Day, Month, Year, and Place of Birth, Nationality, Occupation, Address
17. Maiden Name, Cristian Name, Nickname, Allases, of the Wife. Day, Month, Year, and Place of Birth, Nationality, Occupation, Address
18. Surname, Christian Name, Nickname, Aliases, of the Husband. Day, Month, Year, and Place of Birth, Nationality, Occupation, Address
19. Surnames, Christian Names, Birth Data, of the Children, Differentiating Between Those Accompanying the Person, and Those Living Separately
20. Surnames and Christian Names of the Companions (a separate form is to be filled in for each):
21. In Case the Person Has Committed an Offence: Brief Account Thereof, Special Form of Crime (Modus Operandi), Accomplices, Legal Proceedings
22. What Authority Effected the Arrest, and Why? — Final Decree (Reference No.)

23. Brief Description: Height
Shape of Face
Eyes
Teeth
- Ears
- Hair
- Nose
- Figure
- Beard
- Chin
24. Permanent Characteristics, For Instance, Tattooing, Scars, Maimed or Crippled Limbs, Excrescences:
- I. (Left Hand):
II. (Right Hand):
III. (Left Arm):
IV. (Right Arm):
V. (Face and Neck):
VI. (Chest):
VII. (Back):
VIII. (Left Leg):
IX. (Right Leg):
X. (Feet):
25. Previous Convictions:
26. Remarks: a) Concerning the Dactyloscoped Person (for instance: dangerous, fires at policemen, simulates madness, breaks out, etc. and accomplices):
b) Technical Remarks Concerning the Bertillon Photographs or the Fingerprints (for example: „On account of a wound, it was impossible to take the print of the little finger of the left hand“, or: „Left cheek swollen by an insect sting when the photograph was taken“ etc.):
27. Country, District, Town Whither the Arrested Person Intends to Go After His Release, Together With the Clues Which Led to This Supposition:

As shown in the previous document, the reports over time to detail the specific features of communities or individuals that the state considered “gypsies” went from a relatively basic set of questions and feature descriptions and exacerbated through Bruno’s recommendations. Thus, the mechanism increased its details of surveillance and registration, leading to an increased accuracy when the state sought to control Romani people through violence and genocide during the Second World War, through the usage of Robert Ritter’s sociological interpretations of race for the Nazi regime.

“The Repression of Gypsies: Report on the Results of a Gypsy Control in 1934.”

Importantly, the continuity of state registration of Romani expanded significantly from the previous decades to the 1930s in Germany, well before Hitler’s rise to power in 1933. The document by Kurt Bader details the results of the control measures taken by the district of Baden in Germany, from the time periods of 1908, 1922, and 1934. Bader was an undersecretary from Karlsruhe and explained Baden’s persecution of Romani people to his audience at the Committee Meeting in 1934. In each example, Bader essentializes the behavior of Romani people with biological or “natural” outcomes, such as crime. The race science jargon of “breed” also appears, and links race science with the biopolitical aim of population control, additionally dehumanizing Roma in the same statements.

In his document, we are provided with an arc of state perspectives on Romani people within German borders, with increased surveillance and criminalization, which escalated from simple identity registration documents in 1922, to the frighteningly detailed document provided by Bruno Schultz, mentioned in the previous section from 1932.

Bader explains that as early as 1908, Baden had attempted a legislative scheme to “settle [gipsies] of German nationality... to prevent them from moving about and being a *burden* to the population.”⁸⁴ However, despite this perspective of Baden in 1908, the settling of Romani was not a solution that Bader approved of. He explains that [gipsies] cannot be settled and have an instinct for nomadic life, and this will always be the case, and the proof is that “no country had succeeded to keep [gipsies] settled.”⁸⁵

⁸⁴ United Nations Archive at Geneva. “Penal Administration: Correspondence with International Criminal Police Commission”, Kurt Bader, “The Repression of Gipsies” *International Criminal Police Commission: XI meeting*. League of Nations Archive, Geneva, CH. c.1934, 1-5.

⁸⁵ Bader, “The Repression,” 3.

After 1908, Bader states that Baden authorities had expanded their procedures against Roma with even more identity papers, but this was also seemingly contested by Roma who were found to possess false documents.⁸⁶

“Whatever the authorities hoped to gain by the introduction of identity papers in 1922, has been realized since. A considerable number of the controlled [gipsies] — 25 % in fact — were found to possess false documents. In many cases civil, as also criminal, registers were corrected by the help of the material obtained in the course of the control.”⁸⁷

Bader highlights here that the regular registration and harassment for documents from Baden’s Romani communities serves both to maintain the registers and to establish new ones, based on the “success” of the Baden authorities, thus perpetuating the State’s control over Roma, settled or otherwise. Furthermore, Bader extends the “success” of Baden’s policies to an international level, recommending these strategies to his colleagues and contemporaries. From 1922 to the 1935, scientific racism (aka “race science”) was used to justify the discrimination and genocide of Romani populations. During the post-WWI reconfiguration of nation-state boundaries, some perceptions of national identity were formulated with the expressed vision that did not see Roma as part of the national community. In particular, the nation-states of Germany and Austria utilized biopolitical

⁸⁶ Unclear what he means here by false documents.

⁸⁷ Bader, “The Repression,” 2. Figure 2.

policies to begin forcibly assimilating and settling or expelling their Roma populations. As early as 1922, and expanded by institutional force by 1935, the German province of Baden subjected Romani to institutional targeting from the state and its police in order to identify all Roma within the province. This state-led policy was hailed as a success by members of the ICPC, who interpreted “race science” as justification for police measures that would securitize and criminalize Romani, thus essentializing Roma as a perpetual other in central Europe, despite them having settled throughout the continent for hundreds of years prior.

During the interwar period mentioned previously, scientific racism was accepted throughout the international scientific community, and utilized knowledge from anthropology, craniometry, and evolutionary biology. The ICPC utilized these “scientific” understandings to justify their own international protocols for police and criminal suspects. Police would utilize “race science” to discriminate against Central European Romani, who were essentialized as a less-desirable social race within the new nation-state formations. Thus, the “science-” backed state policies to expel, arrest, or assimilate Romani exacerbated.

The conclusion that we draw from the documents is that the language and practice of *biopolitics* had matured before the 1930s and can be located beyond the conceptual boundaries of German-speaking nations. Czechoslovakian ICPC member Josef Vaňásek utilizes the demographic and police data from years of collection to argue that Romani people should be policed and

ultimately repulsed from borders, based on “practical results”.⁸⁸ Vaňásek also gave us a historical insight into the protocols of Czech police when they arrest Romani people and establish identities. He ends his document by stating what he believes are the essential biological characteristics of Roma that justify racial policing against them:

The special criminal character of the [gipsies] who are a real nuisance of the open country, fully justifies the necessity of the [gipsy] central office arranging the *dactyloscopic* cards of [gipsies] in a special collection which is easily accessible, under the condition, of course, that these cards are to be found also in the general collection of the national criminal central office. This demand is so clear and so necessary out of technical-criminal and tactical reasons, that there seems to be no need to defend it.⁸⁹

It is valid to say at this point that by 1934, biopolitics was a consistent bedfellow of anti-Romani policies and legislation, echoed transnationally in ICPC meetings, and further fortified within legal “crime fighting” justifications. Bader continues the same racist rhetoric earlier established by Vaňásek.

⁸⁸ Vaňásek, “Fight against,” 3.

⁸⁹ Vaňásek, “Fight against,” 6.

Bader states explicitly that Romani people come from an “uncongenial race” and those who don’t settle (despite the argument from other delegates that settling doesn’t serve the interests of the state (such as Switzerland) cannot hope for anything but a future of workhouses and prison.⁹⁰

Coming from an uncongenial race, a gipsy will never become a satisfactory member of the people whose hospitality he is enjoying; the mere fact that a conference of criminologists engages in the problem, proves that the gipsy question is principally a question for the police. A gipsy who causes trouble or breaks the law, must not expect any indulgence. For a profitable solution of the problem, it would seem essential to provide opportunities for those gipsies and semi-gipsies, who are ready to settle down and work. The rest cannot hope for anything but either to be kept in custody (workhouse or prison), or to be expelled; in addition, there might be considered (for Germany only, at present) the possibility of including incorrigible gipsies in the list of persons who come under the law of sterilization.

Based upon the various experiences in the past, a novel and uniform law concerning the repression of gipsies, will soon come into force in Germany. At the same time, a German Central Office for gipsies will be established; this office will carry on a constant interchange of information with other countries. Thus, a way has been discovered for an international discussion of the gipsy problem — a typical international problem — which will finally lead to a satisfactory solution.

This of course would be exacerbated once Hitler took power in Germany in 1933, but the international gears of the anti-Roma machine were certainly turning toward soft genocide,

⁹⁰ Bader, “The Repression,” 4.

maintained and developed by the ICPC, while the League seemingly offered no rebuttal or obstruction.

Conclusion

In the wake of the First World War, the League of Nations Minority Protections System represented a pivot in 20th-century diplomacy. The impetus of its inception, which was largely a fear of irredentism leading to another war, coincided with the manifestation of the League's creation as well. However, while the League's original intent may have been to avoid the outbreak of another world war, it was woefully unequipped to intervene into the growing anti-Roma policy agendas from other institutional actors. The delegates of the International Criminal Police Commission, influenced first by the need to standardize police protocols in member nations, transitioned from protocol development to enactment of racialized policies that targeted Romani people in Europe. This development of the ICPC during the interwar was being recorded and collected by the League of Nations, and not behind closed doors.

To that end, from 1931 to 1935, the development of transnational police networks, combined with the entanglement of state actors, infused a biopolitical schema to the previous law enforcement policies. While the ICPC developed its infrastructure during the 1920s, the progression of racial rhetoric for the arguments of registration centralization in Vienna is captured in the documents from the ICPC and collected by the League during the 1930s. Through these documents,

the exacerbation of racial language is exemplified in the reports by Kurt Bader, Josef Vaňásek, and Dobrica Matkovitch, and show the transnational continuity of race combined with police policy.

Thus, two international institutions in the interwar, the League of Nations and the ICPC, both contradicted and complemented each other. The ICPC developed the racialized infrastructure and did this under the observation of the League. The League, whose Minority Protection System offered a process of appeals to *some* minorities, ultimately failed the Romani people of the League's member states. The League, after the War, also failed to convince states to abolish their passport systems, without which nations were freer to develop local, repressive regulations against Romani citizens. Passport checks became places of trauma for Roma who were targeted and often detained on suspicion. While some of the connections and continuities of interwar institutions like the League of Nations and the ICPC were exposed in this thesis, it could be enriched by more grass-roots archival research that would illuminate the interwar period and shed light on the historical shadows cast on the Roma by aforementioned institutions of power.

For example, more contextualization of the League's involvement with the ICPC could help elucidate why the League avoided debate that would include Romani for the MPS. Additionally, an extensive source critique of the archival documents provided in this thesis could help us understand the relationship of translation and archival power, since the documents in this thesis are only in English, and other languages, like German and French, are also in the archival fonds. Who are the

translators of these documents, why did the translators refer to Romani as “gipsy” rather than the normalized English spellings that were from the same time period, such as “gypsy”? A myriad of questions erupted from the mere scratching of the historical surface and could provide researchers with opportunities to contribute to Romani historiography. This would give contemporary educators, policy makers, and the general public an increased understanding into the mechanisms of genocide and state power and the importance of institutional protections.

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