Foreword

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In their excellent collection of essays, Nidhi Trehan, Nando Sigona and their collaborators have told a story that is sad, but also fascinating, and vital for the future of the European continent. It is sad, because it describes what is probably the oldest, but also one of the most brutal and vicious patterns of exclusion in Europe today, with its consequences of prejudice, stigmatisation, discrimination, and overt or covert violence. For the first time, it proposes a comparative and cumulative account at the level of Europe, drawing upon the consequences of the recent reunification of the continent, and the incorporation of "Eastern" nations into the framework of the European Union. This comparison shows that – from the point of view of the Romani people – the European process of unification certainly has opened some hitherto nonexistent possibilities of communicating among themselves and claiming their rights in a more efficient, more legitimate manner. But it has not altered the basic pattern of persecution, or perhaps it has added new dimensions to it. It is also, for the same reasons, a fascinating story: what was largely invisible becomes visible, and a whole side of European history becomes understandable. Finally, it is vital for the future of Europe: it cannot be built on exclusions, it is not an Empire. Officially, it presents itself as a space for the realization of democratic rights, and the common happiness of its peoples. Practically, it will win legitimacy in the minds and hearts of its citizens (something more difficult than initially imagined) only if it amounts to an *advance* towards more democratic institutions, and a culture with more solidarity, not less. In this respect, the persecution of Roma in Europe, shifting over time from one country to another, in a process of negative emulation as it were, is not a problem for each country separately, it is a "common" and a "communitarian" problem. By addressing it as such - most of the time having to work against the grain -

Europeans will not only eliminate a source of internal conflicts and violence that could become unbearable, they will construct their common citizenship. And, by claiming their rights, raising their voice from the cultural to the civic level, finding the institutional interlocutors and popular allies they need, Roma from all over Europe will win an integration that concerns us collectively.

Being no expert on Romani history and sociology myself, but a European citizen and a philosopher who has worked on other aspects of exclusion and their impact on the development of democracy, I do not want to evaluate the scholarship of this research, but to react to what I perceived in it to form three major questions at stake. The first concerns exclusion and citizenship, and their transformations at the pan-European level. As the contributions show in great detail, Romani people (also called Gypsies, Sinti, etc.) are deprived of certain basic rights in many European countries and in Europe as such, in spite of the fact that they are European citizens, since they are full citizens of the Member States. These basic rights include circulation, residence, employment, education, health and cultural rights. Romani people are forced to stay in certain areas, from which they can also become arbitrarily expelled. They are targeted either as "nomads" or as nationals coming from certain countries. They are *a priori* labelled a delinquent or a dangerous population. They are never admitted or grossly underrepresented in most manual and intellectual professions (with rates of unemployment that reach absolute maxima). Needless to say, these include within public offices. These phenomena are either illegal or legal, under the cover of rules and interstate agreements which concern hygiene, social security, employment policies, and cultural norms. They take place within a background of persistent "popular" extreme violence which is also carried on by neo-fascist groups and criminal gangs, only verbally condemned by many European Member States. Only the most outrageous *pogroms* are reported nationally or internationally in the press. The construction of the EU has had very contradictory effects, which are one of the primary objects of investigation of this book. It has produced a *categorization* of the Romani people as such at the European level, since they have come to be treated as a "problem" in their own right by the EU. This is a preliminary step in the new

racialization of the Roma. It puts them in the same category as the "migrants" of extra-communitarian origin, in the general framework of what I have labelled the emerging *European apartheid*, the dark side of the emergence of a "European citizenship" (Balibar 2003). The difference comes from the fact that "migrants" (and descendants of migrants) are seen as an *external other*, whereas "Gypsies" are seen as an *internal other*. This indeed reinforces the old stereotype of the *enemy from within*, which has murderous effects.

In spite of dramatic historical and social changes, especially after World War II and the end of the Cold War, which have led Europe very far away from its past, these phenomena testify to a lasting trace of persecutions in European history.[1] The comparison is inevitable with the much more publicized case of the persecution of a "racial group" in European history, namely the Jews. The two "pariah groups" have been jointly targeted by the Nazi genocide (as were also several "deviant" populations). They represent entirely different cases of religious and economic trajectory, but – it is important to note – they both played a central role in establishing connections between the different cultures of Europe (especially in the artistic realm, in the case of "Gypsies"), incarnating the "cosmopolitan" element without which "national" cultures remain isolated and sterile.[2]

This leads me to considering a second question, which more specifically concerns trends of racialization in Europe. Some years ago, I had asked whether one should admit that there is something like a "European" racism or neo-racism, which would have the same relationship of complementarity and excess to the "supra-national" construction as traditional racisms (anti-Semitism, colonial racism, etc.) had to the nation-state and the classical imperialist constructions (Balibar 2002). One has to be very careful in proposing such formulations. Nevertheless, disturbing phenomena can be observed, which give credit to the hypothesis, placing Roma in the unfortunate position of a test case. At the very least, it could be said that the unification of Europe has made the racialization of the "Gypsy-problem" more *visible*, because it shows such a

blatant contradiction with the general *official* trend towards the overcoming of ethnic and national prejudices, on which the "new Europe" is built. From this point of view, there are at least three phenomena that I find particularly relevant:

1. One of them concerns the tendency of European nations to *project* onto Roma their own racial prejudices *vis-à-vis other nations*. Clearly, it is the case that the French press, for example, is eager to report on pogroms taking place in Italy or Hungary, or discrimination in Romania, but remains almost silent on the way in which local councils in France reject "nomads" from their territory, or the way in which the French border police expels Romanian and Bulgarian citizens to maximize their official records, knowing full well that, as EU citizens, they will soon be returning.

2. We are thus led to the phenomena of scapegoating, and more precisely, the way in which European "nations", officially considering each other as members of the same community, having surmounted their age-old hostilities, are in fact still full of mutual resentment and distrust – which to some extent comes from the fact that the European construction, has remained suspended half way. They tend to be projected onto "deviant" groups. The Roma are like a *nation in excess* in Europe, which is singled out for hate not only because it is spread across borders, but because it incarnates the archetype of a *stateless people*, resisting the norms of territorialization and cultural normalization (all the more ironic given that, in many respects, this singularity is itself the result of persecutions).

3. This problem, as we know, is exceptionally acute when considering the relationship of "western" and "eastern" Europe. The fact that the Soviet-type regimes in Eastern Europe during the Cold War, in countries which also had important Romani populations, combined a coercive and normative policy with programmes of economic integration, helped label them "*protégés* of socialism" in countries where (for how long?)

the majority of the population saw admission to the EU as the quickest way towards full economic and social liberalization. Within the other half of the continent, "Western" countries and public opinions perceive them as perfect illustrations of the poverty and deregulation with which the enlargement of the EU threatens its old members. In both cases, they are rejected and seen as "Oriental" rather than properly European.[3] This is where the choice of the book to closely associate the situation of Romani people with neoliberal economic and social policies, and more generally a neoliberal conception of European governance, becomes particularly relevant.

With this remark, we reach the third aspect of these contributions that I find important for the European constituency as such. A protracted assignment of the Romani to the negative condition of "stateless" community (*de facto* rather than *de jure*: they certainly live under the jurisdiction of states, but are seen as both unable and hostile to entering the institutional fabric of the modern state), which lies at the roots of their discrimination, also reveals the limits of the construction of the public sphere in Europe. It could be compared with a "statism without a state". Such a dubious situation, combined with other factors, tends to exacerbate various forms of "popular racism", especially in the form of an obsession with security. On the other hand, it has led to the creation of a rather dense network of institutions and organizations dealing with the "Roma question" at the European level. As the book finely explains, some of these organizations and governmental initiatives can enhance the development of an autonomous consciousness and civic practice in the Roma community, while others tends to reduce them to the status of a group which is monitored, protected and placed under surveillance. This dilemma seems to me to refer to another crucial problem, concerning the *roads to emancipation* offered to the Romani people in Europe. Abstractly speaking, there are two roads, as in other similar cases: one could be called "majoritarian", and it relies on claiming the end of the "exception", the actual recognition of basic rights which, in their principle, belong to every citizen. The other one could be called "minoritarian", and it relies on a growing sense of identity and solidarity amongst

Romani people, across national borders, leading to a greater cultural autonomy, and therefore a greater visibility as a "quasi-national" group struggling against exclusion within the multi-national Europe. Clearly, the first road heavily depends on general advances in human rights and a return to inclusive social policies against the "neoliberal" current, whereas the second is premised on a capacity to use the discourse and institutions of the European Union in order to establish an autonomous voice of their own. Neither is easy, nor probably sufficient. This book very powerfully shows that it will be the responsibility of the Romani people themselves to forge the most effective combination. But it is also our responsibility, and our interest, *qua* European democrats, to support them in this process, fighting the resurgences of racism in our midst and inventing a "more perfect Union".

Endnotes

[1] Although R.I. Moore does not explicitly refer to "Gypsies" in his classical book *The Formation of a Persecuting Society, Authority and Deviance in Western Europe 950-1250* (Moore 2007), many of the institutional and ideological structures he describes would apply to them: possibly because the persecution in their case mainly crystallized in the early modern era (17th to 18th century), when "strong" territorial nation-states were built, targeting "nomadism" as a public danger, and to some extent, even needed "nomads" to enforce security policies. They are mentioned prominently in a passage of Hobbes' *Leviathan*, Chapter 22, concerning unlawful associations.

[2] I rely in particular on the work of the great French expert on the history of Gypsies/Roma in Europe, Henriette Asseo (see Asseo 2006).

[3] As documented in the book, Socialist Yugoslavia was the only country in Europe, whether socialist or capitalist, where the Romani people had been granted the rights of an autonomous nationality. The ethnic wars which plagued Yugoslavia after the break-up of the Federation, and especially the conflict in Kosovo, have dismantled this relatively privileged situation and transformed much of the Romani population into refugees. It would be important to discuss the extent to which this situation is replicated outside the "borders of Europe", in the countries of the former Soviet Union, which are not part of the EU, but are also "European" in a different sense.

References

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