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The Evolution of International Policing against “Gypsies” in Central Europe: 1870–1945

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Abstract

This article explores the rise of international cooperation and policing in solving the so-called “Gypsy question” between 1870 and 1945. Situating this issue within a broader phenomenon of illiberal internationalism, it demonstrates how the central European powers often pursued international action to serve their own national agendas. In doing so, this study shows how the shared concern of cross-border Gypsy itinerancy and migration in central Europe prompted several international policing initiatives that eventually crystallized under the International Criminal Police Commission (or ICPC) in 1931 into a transnational framework for controlling Gypsies. Against this background, the article also investigates whether the role of Switzerland and Austria as major frontrunners for anti-Gypsy international measures changed once the ICPC was under Nazi control. By closely examining critical activities and antiziganist ICPC discourse between 1933 and 1945, it reveals how the ICPC created a matrix of surveillance that eased the way toward the Gypsy genocide.

Keywords: Gypsies; central Europe; Nazi Germany; Interpol; illiberal internationalism

From the late nineteenth century, peripatetic communities in central Europe described by authorities as “Gypsies” were subjected to a series of persecutory measures aimed at criminalizing their behavior and pushing them toward a sedentary, settled way of life.¹ These measures, spelled out within varying frameworks of local, state, and federal law, were subject to a process of cumulative radicalization that culminated under the Nazis in a genocide during the latter stages of the Second World War.² This genocide is known by many as the *Porrajmos*, or “the devouring.”³

¹ In this article, several groups will be included under the term *Gypsy*, which should be read throughout in silent quotation marks. Not because this term denotes an existing social or racial category, but because it was under this category that a disparate subsection of society was targeted with measures that saw them imprisoned, sterilized, separated from their families, forced into labor camps, and ultimately murdered. Although the Roma and Sinti were at the center of this process, measures against “Gypsies” also included numerous people outside these two communities, including the *Jenische* (Yenish), who resided in Switzerland. As such, this article retains the broad category used at the time without endorsing the connotations it carries, now or carried then. For more on the groups of “Gypsies” living in central Europe, see Sybil Milton, “Hidden Lives: Sinti and Roma Women,” in *Experience and Expression: Women, the Nazis and the Holocaust*, ed. Elizabeth Roberts Baer and Myrna Goldenberg (Detroit, MI: Wayne State University Press, 2003), 53–55.

² Originally coined by the German historian Hans Mommsen, “cumulative radicalization” is the notion that genocide emerged from a process of radicalization and unforeseen circumstances rather than a preexisting plan. For more on this, see Hans Mommsen, “Cumulative Radicalisation and Progressive Self-Destruction as Structural Determinants of the Nazi Dictatorship,” in *Stalinism and Nazism: Dictatorships in Comparison*, ed. Ian Kershaw and Moshe Lewin (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 75–87.

³ The term *Porrajmos* has elicited strong criticism because of its sexual connotations of “violation” or “rape.” Although an alternate and more neutral designation is *Samudaripen* (meaning “mass murder”), this article still

Focusing on communities living in Germany, Austria, and Switzerland, this article explores the rise of international cooperation and policing in solving the so-called “Gypsy question” between 1870 and 1945. It situates these globalized anti-Gypsy policing efforts within a broader phenomenon—illiberal internationalism—to demonstrate how the central European powers often pursued international action to serve their own national agendas. In doing so, the following shows how the shared concern of cross-border Gypsy itinerancy and migration in central Europe prompted several international policing initiatives that eventually crystalized under the International Criminal Police Commission (ICPC, often referred to as “the commission” hereafter) in 1931 into a transnational central European framework for controlling Gypsy populations. This article also illuminates how the changing power dynamics within the ICPC significantly impacted the direction and execution of international Gypsy affairs. It finds that although Switzerland and Austria were driving forces behind antiziganism of the ICPC before 1933, this changed after the ICPC fell under Nazi control in 1938. With its structures, logistics, and personnel institutionally linked to Nazi police frameworks, the ICPC created a matrix of surveillance that eased the way toward the systematic murder of Gypsies, once that decision was made by the Nazis in late 1942.

For almost fifty years, historians have investigated how different states across Europe developed their own policies and methods for dealing with their respective Gypsy populations long before the Nazis seized power. Donald Kenrick and Grattan Puxon were among the first to offer a pan-European perspective of the Gypsy persecution in their 1972 publication titled *The Destiny of Europe’s Gypsies*. By tracing the long history of Gypsy persecution and oppression in European society, Kenrick and Puxon concluded that “deeply rooted prejudices” against Gypsies played a crucial role in their treatment under Nazi-occupied areas of eastern and western Europe.⁴ Since then, a wealth of historical works have offered further details of how Gypsies were persecuted by individual nation-states throughout Europe. Cases of antiziganist discrimination and stigmatization have been documented in Austria, Belarus, Bulgaria, Croatia, Czechoslovakia, France, Great Britain, Hungary, Italy, Netherlands, Poland, Romania, Russia, Sweden, Switzerland, Ukraine, and Yugoslavia.⁵ Certainly, these national studies have made important contributions to the history of Gypsy populations that were harassed and oppressed throughout Europe. With the exception of the studies by Jennifer Illuzzi, Michael Zimmermann, and Thomas Huonker, there are few works that situate antiziganism in a transnational framework that evaluate the dimensions of central European cooperation and collaboration before and during the *Porrajmos*.⁶ This

opts to employ the term *Porrajmos* because of its broader usage. For more on this see, Karola Fings, “Genocide Holocaust, *Porrajmos*, *Samudaripen*,” *RomArchive*, November 10, 2022 (<https://www.romarchive.eu/en/voices-of-the-victims/genocide-holocaust-porrajmos-samudaripen/>). For an overview on the historiography surrounding the status of the *Porrajmos* as a genocide, see Julia von dem Knesebeck, *Roma Struggle for Compensation in Post-War Germany* (Hertfordshire: University of Hertfordshire Press, 2011), 26–29.

⁴ Donald Kenrick and Grattan Puxon, *The Destiny of Europe’s Gypsies* (London: Sussex University Press, 1972).

⁵ See for example, David Crowe, John Kolsti, Ian Hancock, ed., *The Gypsies of Eastern Europe*, 2nd ed. (New York: Routledge, 2016); Anton Weiss-Wendt, ed., *The Nazi Genocide of the Roma: Reassessment and Commemoration* (New York and Oxford: Berghahn Books, 2013); Celia Donert, *The Rights of the Roma: The Struggle for Citizenship in Postwar Czechoslovakia* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017); David Cressy, *Gypsies: An English History* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018); Roni Stauber and Raphael Vago, ed., *The Roma: A Minority in Europe* (Budapest and New York: Central European University Press, 2007); Michael Zimmermann, ed., *Zwischen Erziehung und Vernichtung. Zigeunerpolitik und Zigeunerforschung im Europa des 20. Jahrhunderts* (Stuttgart: Franz Steiner Verlag, 2007); Jennifer Illuzzi, *Gypsies in Germany and Italy, 1861–1914* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014); Donald Kenrick, ed., *The Gypsies during the Second World War: The Final Chapter*, vol. 3 (Hertfordshire: University of Hertfordshire Press, 2006).

⁶ Illuzzi, *Gypsies in Germany and Italy, 1861–1914*; Thomas Huonker, “Roma, Sinti, Jenische Strukturen, Haltungen, Entwicklungen in der Schweiz vor, während und nach dem 2. Weltkrieg. Unabhängige Expertenkommission Schweiz–2. Weltkrieg Forschungsmandat Huonker, Stand Teilbericht 22. Oktober 1998,” in *Roma, Sinti, Jenische Schweizerische Zigeunerpolitik zur Zeit des Nationalsozialismus*, ed. Thomas Huonker and Regula Ludi (Zürich: Chronos Verlag, 2001), 73–75; Michael Zimmermann, “Zigeunerpolitik und Zigeunerdiskurse im Europa des 20.

article aims to expand this transnational approach by placing global anti-Gypsy policing developments within a wider context of illiberal internationalism, which illustrates that international cooperation does not fundamentally serve liberal or progressive principles but could often promote and reflect nationalism. It also clarifies why anti-Gypsy policing initiatives initially failed to gain international approval and, once eventually implemented, how they changed over time.

First, this article explores why creating a solution to ostensible “Gypsy plague” became an urgent international matter after the turn of the twentieth century. It then analyzes how the central European powers, including Germany, Austria, and Switzerland, responded to several international initiatives for controlling Gypsy movement and itinerancy. Against this background, the following will explain why this central European framework, which had continuously failed due to competing national interests, was eventually realized under the ICPC in 1931. It then examines the gradual shift in the international direction of anti-Gypsy policy after the nazification of the ICPC and describes how the Nazis attempted to use the ICPC’s networks and personnel to further its own nationalist and ideological agenda. Finally, this article explains how the ICPC was revived in the postwar era, indicating that the Gypsy genocide was not necessarily the end point of globalized policing.

The Origins of Antiziganistic Transnationalism

The origins of the international efforts for combatting the so-called “Gypsy plague” can arguably be traced back to before the twentieth century. During this period, throughout central Europe, Gypsies were commonly viewed as a criminal subpopulation believed to pose a serious threat to public safety, and their nomadic tendencies were likened to a plague (*Zigeunerplage*). The increasing presence of these mobile communities, particularly in Germany, Switzerland, and Austria, prompted authorities to implement regulatory and legal mechanisms targeting their respective Gypsy populations that were designed to protect citizens from their putative criminality. To eradicate the danger allegedly posed by Gypsy itinerancy and to control the movement of Gypsies, the German, Austrian, and Swiss officials oscillated between two strategies: forcible sedentarization and deportation. Immobilizing Gypsies was often thought as a means of “civilizing” them and transforming them into productive members of society. Deportation, on the other hand, involved the forced removal or denial of citizenship via expulsions across local, national, or imperial frontiers.⁷

Even though several states across Europe, including Germany, Austria, and Switzerland, had implemented their own policies and methods for dealing with their respective Gypsy populations, the push for an international solution to the “Gypsy plague” was fueled by the frustration of local and state officials who frequently complained about the endless cycle of neighboring countries dumping unwanted Gypsies into their territory. Because Gypsies often lacked the required paperwork and the authorities tended to doubt the statements that they supplied, it gradually became more challenging for officials to accurately distinguish between Gypsies and non-Gypsies, as well as foreign and citizen Gypsies. This was compounded by the absence of a legal, authoritative definition of the term *Gypsy*, as the traits ascribed to them were primarily observed or imagined social behaviors. An Austrian government worker, Hugo Högel, asserted in 1894 that “a large percentage of

Jahrhunderts eine Einführung,” in *Zwischen Erziehung und Vernichtung. Zigeunerpolitik und Zigeunerforschung im Europa des 20. Jahrhunderts*, ed. Michael Zimmermann (Stuttgart: Franz Steiner Verlag, 2007).

⁷ For an overview of local, state, and national regulations targeting Gypsies in Germany, Austria and Switzerland, see Matthew Fitzpatrick, *Purging the Empire: Mass Expulsions in Germany, 1870–1914* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015); Illuzzi, *Gypsies in Germany and Italy, 1861–1914*; and Franz Egger, “Der Bundesstaat und die fremden Zigeuner in der Zeit von 1848 bis 1914,” *Studien und Quellen* 8 (1982): 49–74; Tara Zahra, “‘Condemned to Rootlessness and Unable to Budge’: Roma, Migration Panics, and Internment in the Habsburg Empire,” *American Historical Review* 122, no.3 (2017): 706; Florian Freund, *Oberösterreich und die Zigeuner. Politik gegen eine Minderheit im 19. Und 20. Jahrhundert*, (Linz: Ööla, 2010).

the Gypsies possess so much that is typical and so little that is individualizing that recognizing them is not so easy even with good intentions.”⁸ This meant that expelling Gypsies without a certifiable *Heimat* (place of origin) to a neighboring state was not always possible. In these cases, authorities would attempt to sneak Gypsies across the national borders and shift the responsibility of identification, research, and repatriation onto officials in neighboring states. Because several European states, including Germany and Switzerland, had enforced similar regulations to keep foreign Gypsies out of their territory, states began to routinely bounce Gypsies back and forth across their frontiers, resulting in endless cyclical expulsions.

The growing concern with the cycle of deportation on European frontiers was expressed in the June 1898 issue of the *Voralberger Volksblatt*, which declared that “the local police, the strengthened gendarmerie, [and] in case of emergency the well-organised fire company all arrive with water-filled hoses ... to drive the whole party over the border, including men, women, children, horses and dogs ... and so the cycle continues, but the result is always the same: the Gypsies come back, like insects that you believed had been exterminated.”⁹ Local and state officials were also alarmed by the endless cycle of neighboring countries dumping unwanted Gypsies into their territory. A case of foreign Gypsies deported into Swiss territory by German border officials was reported to the police headquarters in Zurich in a missive from January 29, 1907.¹⁰ According to this document, a twenty-four-member Gypsy group of German nationality was apprehended at a train station in Rafz and subsequently escorted by Zurich police officials to the German border for removal. The German border officials, however, refused to accept them on the grounds that they did not carry the requisite identification papers. Because direct deportation to Germany was no longer possible, the Gypsies and German gendarmes both traveled in the direction of Nack—whether this was on account of German initiative, though, was unknown. The police department of Schaffhausen later reported that this same group of Gypsies had been transferred directly to their area, presumably to shift responsibility for managing their identification and repatriation.¹¹ Consequently, the report raised the question of whether Swiss authorities should make efforts to identify the Gypsies or opt for their expulsion across the German border. Officials cautioned that identifying everyone would result in substantial state expenses for transportation and living costs. Consequently, because these Gypsies were likely to be of German nationality, the authorities recommended expulsion to the German border via Rafz as a cheaper option.

To permanently resolve the general issue of pushing Gypsies back and forth across the Swiss and German frontiers and free the Swiss population from the Gypsy “scourge,” the Zurich police urged for the federal authorities to settle this question internationally.¹²

To this end, by mid-1907, concrete plans for an international conference had started to take shape. A seventeen-point program was drafted by Eduard Leupold, a federal councillor from the Swiss Federal Department of Justice and Police, which aimed at a central European approach to combating the so-called “Gypsy nuisance.” For the first time, an official definition of the term *Gypsy* was offered, determined solely by a behavioral rather than racial criterion: “The term ‘Gypsy’ will be understood as those nomadic persons who roam about, either individually or in families or gangs, without a permanent residence, and earn their

⁸ Hugo Högel, “Die Zigeunerplage,” *Österreich Zeitschrift für Verwaltung*, August, 9, 1894, 1.

⁹ “Die Zigeuner,” *Voralberger Volksblatt*, June 15, 1898, 1.

¹⁰ StAZH, P 197.2 (2), Polizeikommando des Kantons Zürich an die hohe Justiz und Polizeidirektion des Kantons Zürich, “Fremdenpolizei, Vaganten und Zigeuner Allgemeines, 1878–1908,” January 29, 1907.

¹¹ StAZH, P 197.2 (2), Polizeikommando des Kantons Zürich an die hohe Justiz und Polizeidirektion des Kantons Zürich, “Fremdenpolizei, Vaganten und Zigeuner Allgemeines, 1878–1908,” January 29, 1907; further details of the case reported by the Schaffhausen authorities can be found in StAZH, P 197.2 (2), Die Polizei Direktion des Kantons Schaffhausen an die Direktion der Polizei des Kantons Zürich, “Fremdenpolizei, Vaganten und Zigeuner Allgemeines, 1878–1908,” January 15, 1907.

¹² StAZH, P 197.2 (2), Polizeikommando des Kantons Zürich an die hohe Justiz und Polizeidirektion des Kantons Zürich, “Fremdenpolizei, Vaganten und Zigeuner Allgemeines, 1878–1908,” January 29, 1907.

livelihood by practicing itinerant trading, begging or another irregular fashion, unless their nationality has been unequivocally determined by official identification papers.”¹³ The initiative proposed that all individuals “considered to be Gypsies” be apprehended and rigorously interrogated about their date of birth, place of origin, religion, marital status, occupation, and current residence. Furthermore, the Swiss recommended the collection of biometric data, such as descriptions of bodily features, fingerprints, and photographs. Significantly, the Swiss program also included a plan for each government to create a national Gypsy registry, which would serve as a cumulative database for the international exchange of intelligence concerning Gypsies. Finally, the most controversial aspect of this proposal was that other states adopt the Swiss model of forced Gypsy naturalization in the state corresponding to their origin, suggesting that “any Gypsy who does not have verifiable citizenship should be naturalized within the state of which he belongs or by origin of descent.”¹⁴ The program for the conference as well as the invitation to meet in Switzerland to discuss and sign an international agreement for dealing with the Gypsies were circulated in 1909 to central Europe’s major states: Italy, Austria-Hungary, Germany, and France.

The Swiss proposal was ultimately rejected by its neighbors, however, primarily on the grounds that they were not prepared to naturalize their respective Gypsy populations.¹⁵ Prussian correspondence reveals strong objections to the proposal of simply naturalizing Gypsies whose citizenship could not be ascertained. In response, Prussia framed this measure as an encroachment on their sovereignty, as the idea of accepting the very Gypsies they were trying to remove from their territory seemed to completely contradict their policy aims. Furthermore, Prussian officials believed that assigning permanent resident status to Gypsies would only disadvantage Germany, declaring that it was not “desirable to force Germany into enforcing fixed norms via an international agreement, as Germany currently seems to have a better routine than other states for getting rid of foreigners that do not please them.”¹⁶

The Italians, too, refused to sign onto an international agreement and claimed that a conference would only complicate their current regulations, which focused more generally on dangerous foreigners rather than the Gypsies specifically.¹⁷ France was also skeptical of the initiative and opposed the idea of forced naturalization because of the major changes currently occurring in French legislation.¹⁸ Austria-Hungary, on the other hand, expressed its interest in international collaboration, although Habsburg officials declared that their cooperation was contingent upon the participation of the other European countries.¹⁹ They also voiced their reservations about Gypsy naturalization and stated that they could only undertake this legislative action if the eastern neighboring states of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, particularly Russia, Romania, and the Balkan states, agreed to

¹³ Schweizerisches Bundesarchiv (BAR) E21 1000/131 20603, Die schweizerische Bundesanwaltschaft an das schweizerische Justiz und Polizeidepartement, Bern, “Entwurf eines Programms, welches den Beratungen einer internationalen Konferenz zur Regelung der Zigeunerfrage zu Grunde gelegt werden könnte,” July 24, 1907.

¹⁴ BAR E21 1000/131 20603, Die schweizerische Bundesanwaltschaft an das schweizerische Justiz und Polizeidepartement, Bern, “Entwurf eines Programms, welches den Beratungen einer internationalen Konferenz zur Regelung der Zigeunerfrage zu Grunde gelegt werden könnte,” July 24, 1907.

¹⁵ Geheimes Staatsarchiv Preußischer Kulturbesitz (GStAPK) IHA Rep. 77 Ministerium des Innern, Tit. 423 Nr. 53 adh/2 Bde 5, Der schweizerische Bundesrat an die Schweizerischen Gesandtschaften in Berlin, Paris, Rom und Vienna, Bern, July 2, 1909, Bl.326–34; BAR E21 1000/131 20603, Das Justiz und Polizei Department der Schweizerischen Eidgenossenschaft an der Schweizerischen Bundesrat, Bern, June 26, 1909.

¹⁶ GStAPK, IHA Rep. 77 Ministerium des Innern, Tit. 423 Nr. 53 adh/2 Bde 5, Königliches Ministerium der auswärtigen Angelegenheiten an den Herrn Minister des Innern, Berlin, October 19, 1909, Bl.324–325; GStAPK, IHA Rep. 77 Ministerium des Innern, Tit. 423 Nr. 53 adh/2 Bde 5, Reichsamt des Innern abgehalten kommissarisches, “Besprechung über die Bekämpfung des Zigeunerunwesens,” May 21, 1909.

¹⁷ Illuzzi, *Gypsies in Germany and Italy, 1861–1914*, 76.

¹⁸ Egger, “Der Bundesstaat und die fremden Zigeuner in der Zeit von 1848 bis 1914,” 64.

¹⁹ BAR E21 1000/131 20603, schweizerische Gesandtschaft in Wien das Ministerium des Außen an die schweizerische Gesandtschaft, Vienna, March 21, 1910.

analogous naturalization legislation and also changed their citizenship laws.²⁰ Given that the major central European powers were not prepared to change their current policy directions regarding Gypsies and naturalize their respective Gypsy populations, the Swiss proposal was ultimately rejected. The Swiss were also accused of acting within their own self-interests given they had already denied the existence of citizen Gypsies (meaning *ipso facto* that, unlike Germany or other states, they would not have to accept Gypsies as Swiss residents) and were far more concerned with tightening the border controls and deportation practices between their neighboring states. The Swiss proposal was a prime example of illiberal internationalism, which confirms that international anti-Gypsy policy coordination was difficult to engineer because of domestic political constraints and nationalist ideologies. As a result, the Swiss initiative was dropped and the European powers opted to deal with their respective Gypsy populations by imposing their own state-level regulations.²¹

The Renewed International Push to Restrict Gypsy Movement

The local challenges to building an international approach to the “Gypsy question” persisted after the outbreak of the First World War. Even though the Swiss attempt to spearhead central European action against Gypsies had failed, the cyclical pattern of expulsion between international frontiers continued to clash head on with new regimes of border controls, particularly at sea and rail ports within Lake Constance. The result was rising diplomatic tension. Recent work by Tara Zahra describes one case, in which after failed attempts to deport a group of foreign Gypsies, the Swiss authorities resorted to hiring a smuggler to clandestinely transport these Gypsies over the Austrian border in a small private boat departing from Lake Constance. These expellees were apprehended by Habsburg officials and were subsequently sent back to Switzerland. As a result, the Habsburg officials demanded that the Swiss authorities “cease and desist in its efforts to dump ‘foreign Gypsies’” on Austro-Hungarian soil.²²

Similar diplomatic conflicts also broke out between Austria-Hungary and Germany. Even though from 1890, Bavaria and Austria-Hungary had maintained an agreement to deport foreign Gypsies found residing in their respective states, this relationship had deteriorated significantly in the first decade of the twentieth century. A report from Lindau officials, dated February 6, 1907, offers a useful insight to the complexities of international border jurisdiction between Germany and Austria-Hungary. It describes how a German Gypsy family arriving in Lindau via railway from Friedrichshafen was denied passage onto their connecting train to Bregenz by Austrian immigrations authorities.²³ Despite carrying legitimate registration papers, a German passport, and a valid permit for overseas travel, the entire family was refused entry to Austria on the grounds that they were foreign Gypsies. After failing to secure alternative transportation via ship and being refused a longer layover, the family was sent back across the Württemberg border.

According to Article 11 of an 1870 treaty between Austria-Hungary, Germany, and Switzerland, “Each state is responsible for the railroads within its own

²⁰ BAR E21 1000/131 20603, schweizerische Gesandtschaft in Wien das Ministerium des Außen an die schweizerische Gesandtschaft, Vienna, March 21, 1910.

²¹ Illuzzi, *Gypsies in Germany and Italy, 1861-1914*, 76; Zahra, “Condemned to Rootlessness and Unable to Budge,” 720.

²² Zahra, “Condemned to Rootlessness and Unable to Budge,” 717-18.

²³ BayHStA, Munich Abt. II, MA 92791, K. Gestandtschaft in Wien an das K. Staatsministerium des Innern, Lindau, February 6, 1907, K. Staatsministerium des Innern an das K. Staatsministerium des Königlichen Hauses und des Aeußern, Munich, November 12, 1908, Betreff: Handhabung der Sicherheitspolizei in Bezug auf die Zigeuner; Königl. Bayerisches Staatsministerium des Königl. Hauses und des Aeußern an das K. Staatsministerium für Verkehrsangelegenheiten, Munich, December 17, 1908; Der Magistrat der kgl. Bayerischen Stadt Lindau an die kgl. Regierung von Schwaben und Neuburg Kammer des Innern in Augsburg, Lindau, April 11, 1908, Betreff: Handhabung der Sicherheitspolizei in Beziehung auf Zigeuner.

territory.”²⁴ Because the family was denied entry while still on Bavarian soil, the German authorities viewed this action as a clear violation of Bavarian sovereignty. However, they recognized that the leader “Jakob Pfister” was registered in Alfred Dillmann’s *Zigeunerbuch* under the alias “Jakob Reinhardt,”²⁵ an individual who had incurred several penalties and whose citizenship status and place of origin were unknown.²⁶ In their response, the Viennese officials reasoned that international customs laws permitted their chosen course of action and that their own border restrictions prevented the entry of foreign Gypsies. According to them, “The Gypsies in question could only have originated from a non-Austrian port on Lake Constance with a ship that stopped in Bregenz, and thus there is no reason to tolerate their entrance into Austria.”²⁷ Ultimately, the Bavarian interior ministry agreed with the Lindau authorities and protested that the foreign ministry’s treaty with Austria had created a “restriction on freedom of movement” and unfairly prevented the Gypsies from traveling on the train, even though anti-Gypsy policies in Bavaria imposed similar border entry restrictions.²⁸

What both cases illustrate is that despite having proper identification, anti-Gypsy policy overrode ordinary regulations regarding border crossings. Like Bavaria, Austria-Hungary was unapologetically severe in its application of anti-Gypsy measures and strictly denied the entry of foreigners they suspected were Gypsies. The cases further demonstrate how matters of international border jurisdiction were further complicated by disparate state policy settings, solidifying the need for transnational cooperation. Given the difficulties associated with Gypsy expulsions across national borders, the German government came to believe that international cooperation with their neighboring countries, including Austria-Hungary and Switzerland, was necessary to achieve a centralized approach. To that end, at the suggestion of the Baden administration, on June 22, 1911, a meeting between administrative and railway representatives of the Lake Constance riparian states took place in Konstanz. The discussion focused on the international regulation of Gypsy rail and sea transport within the Lake Constance region, given the increasing complaints regarding border jurisdiction within this area.²⁹

The conference minutes revealed that the Baden representative proposed for shipping inspectors determine whether a Gypsy should be admitted or denied passage, based on a particular set of behavioral criteria, although the specifics of this criteria were not specified.

²⁴ BayHStA, Munich Abt. II, MA 92791, BayHStA, Munich Abt. II, MA 92791, K. Gestandtschaft in Wien an das K. Staatsministerium des Innern, Lindau, February 6, 1907; K.Staatsministerium des Innern an das K.Staatsministerium des Königlichen Hauses und des Aeußern, Munich, November 12, 1908.

²⁵ Created by the Bavarian police chief, Alfred Dillmann, in 1905, the *Zigeunerbuch* was a publication that contained detailed statistical information of approximately 3,350 Gypsies living in Bavaria, including their place of origin, registered birth, marriages, deaths, and any criminal transgressions; see A. Dillmann, *Zigeuner-Buch*, Dr. Wild’sche Buchdruckerei, Munich, 1905. For more on the book’s purpose, see Fitzpatrick, *Purging the Empire*, 191–95.

²⁶ BayHStA, Munich Abt. II, MA 92791, K. Gestandtschaft in Wien an das K. Staatsministerium des Innern, Lindau, February 6, 1907. K. Staatsministerium des Innern an das K. Staatsministerium des Königlichen Hauses und des Aeußern, Munich, November 12, 1908; Königl. Bayerisches Staatsministerium des Königl. Hauses und des Aeußern an das K. Staatsministerium für Verkehrsangelegenheiten, Munich, December 17, 1908; Der Magistrat der kgl. Bayerischen Stadt Lindau an die kgl. Regierung von Schwaben und Neuburg Kammer des Innern in Augsburg, Lindau, April 11, 1908.

²⁷ BayHStA, Munich Abt. II, MA 92791, K. Staatsministerium des kaiserlichen und königlichen Hauses und des Aeußern an dem königlich bayerischen außerordentlichen Gesandten und bevollmächtigten Minister, Herrn Heinrich Freiherrn von Tucher, May 23, 1908. See too, Illuzzi, *Gypsies in Germany and Italy, 1861–1914*, 114.

²⁸ BayHStA, Munich Abt. II, MA 92791, K. Staatsministerium des Innern an das K. Staatsministerium des Königlichen Hauses und des Aeußern, Munich, November 12, 1908. Also see Illuzzi, *Gypsies in Germany and Italy, 1861–1914*, 114.

²⁹ The general purpose and resolution of the conference can also be viewed in BayHStA, MIIn 66437, Denkschrift über die Bekämpfung der Zigeunerplage. Other cases of cyclical expulsion of Gypsies within the Lake Constance region during 1906 have been briefly mentioned in Harster’s *Denkschrift* from the Munich Conference on December 18–19, 1911, under section 18; see BayHStA, MIIn 66437, Denkschrift über die Bekämpfung der Zigeunerplage.

The Bavarian spokesperson, however, refused to take part in the negotiations on the grounds that only the ministry should decide the issues under consideration. He emphasized that under current regulations in Bavaria, foreign Gypsies were not permitted to enter Bavarian territory and any encountered Gypsies without citizenship found within their borders would face immediate expulsion.³⁰

The representative of the Austrian administration, too, declined to participate in the discussion because the Austrian political authorities did not believe that it was their area of jurisdiction. Furthermore, they argued that the solution to the “Gypsy question” should remain tightly bound to their state provisions, which they felt they had implemented with some success. For example, the Austrian law of 1884 had prohibited Gypsies from “traveling together in gangs,” while the general constitutional principles effectively ensured the swift expulsion of foreign Gypsies from Austrian soil.³¹ The Swiss ambassador also appeared to be unenthusiastic about the proposal and pointed out that such regulation was unnecessary because according to the Swiss provision of 1906, the transportation of Gypsies traveling on steamboats and rail was forbidden, a provision that also applied to the seaports and train stations in Lake Constance.³² The idea was soon abandoned once the German officials from Bavaria, Württemberg, and Baden identified a major difficulty that would arise from the practical implementation of such a proposal; namely, the time-consuming and costly process of ascertaining whether Gypsies were carrying counterfeit or insufficient identification papers—an issue that, they claimed, arose quite frequently.³³

In view of this obstacle, the conference delegates agreed to request that authorities apply the following amendment of Section 16 of the Lake Constance Operating Regulations to prohibit Gypsies from traveling on steamers: “people who would be likely to harass fellow passengers in their vicinity, on the grounds of a visible illness or other reasons; in addition, Gypsies or persons who wander like Gypsies, could be barred from travelling or continuing [their] journey.”³⁴ Subsequently, this amendment was discussed when the Steamship Administrative Board for Lake Constance and the Rhine met in Freiburg on March 14 and 15, 1912. According to the conference minutes, the governments of Bavaria, Baden, and Württemberg approved the revision of the Lake Constance Operating Regulations. Strikingly, Austria firmly rejected the changes on the grounds that they refused to discriminate against a certain ethnic group, even though the Augsburg representative pointed out that the term *Gypsy* was not a racial definition, but rather a social one relating to “wandering people living in the Gypsy lifestyle.”³⁵

Switzerland, too, did not wholeheartedly approve of the amendment. Unlike Austria, this was due in large part to legal concerns regarding a potential breach of the recent agreement between Switzerland and Germany that had been negotiated on October 1, 1911. Under the terms of this agreement, Swiss authorities were required to repatriate any Bavarian and Württemberg citizens they came across to border officials in Lindau and Friedrichshafen directly via Lake Constance. Because the Swiss police did not have the legal authority to accompany Gypsies being transported on Austrian or Baden railways headed for Bavaria

³⁰ BayHStA, Minn 66437, Niederschrift über die Verhandlungen betr. Beförderung von Zigeunern auf dem Bodensee in Konstanz am 22. Juni 1911.

³¹ BayHStA, Minn 66437, Niederschrift über die Verhandlungen betr. Beförderung von Zigeunern auf dem Bodensee in Konstanz am 22. Juni 1911.

³² BayHStA, Minn 66437, Niederschrift über die Verhandlungen betr. Beförderung von Zigeunern auf dem Bodensee in Konstanz am 22. Juni 1911.

³³ BayHStA, Minn 66437, Niederschrift über die Verhandlungen betr. Beförderung von Zigeunern auf dem Bodensee in Konstanz am 22. Juni 1911.

³⁴ BayHStA, Minn 66437, Niederschrift über die Verhandlungen betr. Beförderung von Zigeunern auf dem Bodensee in Konstanz am 22. Juni 1911.

³⁵ BayHStA, Minn 66437, Vereinigte Dampfschiffahrtsverwaltungen für den Bodensee und Rhein: Protokoll Nr. 69 über die Verhandlungen der ordentliche Verbandsversammlung in Freiburg am 14. und 15. März 1912.

and Württemberg, the Swiss representatives consequently suggested permitting police escorts of Gypsies on steamers, which would guarantee their repatriation.³⁶

Although the German officials were prepared to accept Switzerland's request, the plans to amend this agreement ultimately foundered on Austria-Hungary's refusal to be involved. As a result, the chairman proposed for each administration to proceed in keeping with their internal legal regulations. Even though it was agreed that the cyclical expulsion of Gypsies was a pressing international matter, transnational action to combat the "Gypsy plague" collapsed, once again, due to perceived conflicts of national interest between the different central European states. Consequently, the European powers were left to deal with their respective Gypsy populations by imposing state-level regulations.³⁷

Creating a Central European Framework for Controlling the Gypsies

Although several prewar attempts to create a central European framework for controlling Gypsies had failed due to conflicting nationalist agendas, these attempts were finally successful after the inception of the ICPC in 1923. In the interwar period, but prior to the Nazi era, cross-border police cooperation in intelligence and information exchange was seen as the most efficient way for states to control highly mobile Gypsies moving through rural communities. The aftermath of the First World War saw a sharp rise in international criminal activity and the ICPC was founded in 1923 by representatives of several European and non-European countries in an effort to strengthen police cooperation and to coordinate the fight against cross-border crime.³⁸ The main task of this international organization was crime prevention, the identification of international criminals, and the centralization of police data. In this way, the ICPC became the first supranational body in professional policing.³⁹

Besides combating "ordinary criminality," creating a solution to the "Gypsy question" became a special subject of interest among police representatives in the ICPC. Leading the push for international action against the Gypsies was, once again, Switzerland, continuing its role as a forerunner at the beginning of the twentieth century in developing a "model for a strictly antiziganistic policy."⁴⁰ The Swiss approach was explained in a report dated September 23, 1931, from the Swiss chief of police, Heinrich Rothmund, to the Swiss delegate to the Conference of the ICPC, Dr. Heinrich Zangger. Drawing on the success of the *Zigeunerzentrale* (Central Office for Gypsy Affairs) established in Bavaria in 1899, as well as Dillmann's 1905 *Zigeunerbuch*, which served as a key policing tool for identifying and dealing with any Gypsies encountered in Germany, he implored the ICPC to consider the creation of an international office for handling Gypsy affairs, declaring that "an assessment of the current Gypsy population in each country and the transmittal of identification materials to an

³⁶ BayHStA, Minn 66437, Vereinigte Dampfschiffahrtsverwaltungen für den Bodensee und Rhein: Protokoll Nr. 69 über die Verhandlungen der ordentliche Verbandsversammlung in Freiburg am 14. Und 15. März 1912. Further details of the German-Swiss agreement, as well as Switzerland's stance of the proposed amendment can be found in BayHStA, Minn 66437, Eidgenössisches Post und Eisenbahndepartment Eisenbahn-Abteilung an die Generaldirektion der schweizerischen Bundesbahnen, Bern, December 23, 1911.

³⁷ BayHStA, Minn 66437, Vereinigte Dampfschiffahrtsverwaltungen für den Bodensee und Rhein: Protokoll Nr. 69 über die Verhandlungen der ordentliche Verbandsversammlung in Freiburg am 14. Und 15. März 1912.

³⁸ Paul Knepper points out that this surge of worldwide criminality during the interwar period was based on speculation about the effects of war on domestic and international crime rather than hard statistical evidence, which prepared the way for accepting the necessity of international responses. For more on this see, Paul Knepper, *International Crime in the 20th Century: The League of Nations Era, 1919-1939* (England: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011), 9-32.

³⁹ James Sheptycki, "Brand Interpol," in *Trust in International Police and Justice Cooperation*, ed. Saskia Hufnagel and Carole McCartney (Portland: Hart Publishing, 2017); Knepper, *International Crime in the 20th Century*, 60.

⁴⁰ Huonker, "Roma, Sinti, Jenische Strukturen, Haltungen, Entwicklungen in der Schweiz vor, während und nach dem 2. Weltkrieg," 19,62.

international central office could serve well.”⁴¹ Furthermore, as a solution to the international problem of Gypsy mobility, he suggested that the ICPC implement the earlier Swiss proposal to naturalize Gypsies whose citizenship could not be ascertained by the authorities, urging each state to “try to gradually sedentarize the Gypsies situated in their territory and integrate them into the body politic [*Volkskörper*].”⁴² Although anti-Gypsy regulations under the ICPC initially aimed at restricting their movement and settling Gypsy populations via forced assimilation, these measures became the basis for later, more radical approaches when the ICPC gradually came under the control of the Nazis.

Switzerland was not, however, the only European state to exert significant influence on the direction of international anti-Gypsy policy and use the commission as a guise for furthering its own nationalism, as Austria was an equally decisive force behind the antiziganism of the ICPC. Owing to its growing expertise in combating international crime, the ICPC headquarters were situated in Vienna and the chief of the Viennese police, Johann Schober, was elected as the first president of the ICPC, while his assistant, Dr. Oskar Dressler, was appointed secretary general. Because the commission had no resources of its own, the Austrian government agreed to provide financial support, office space, and staffing for the organization’s activities, and the Austrian police files operated as the nucleus for international criminal records.⁴³ The solidification of Austria’s leading position within the ICPC consequently suggests that this organization functioned as an extension of the Austrian state police and provided scope for Austrian ICPC officials to pursue international anti-Gypsy policies in accordance with their own interests. To this end, in addition to expressing their desire to create a national Gypsy law, on July 15, 1931, the Austrian Federal Chancellery issued a circular that invited the ICPC to recommend additional international provisions for controlling Gypsies in Europe.⁴⁴

This became a subject of discussion among police experts at the ICPC conference in Paris from September 28 to 30, 1931.⁴⁵ The conference report from Zangger confirms that the Swiss idea of forced naturalization of Gypsies was still rejected by the ICPC conference representatives, presumably because of conflicting state interests.⁴⁶ The Swiss calls for the establishment of an international headquarters for dealing with the Gypsy affairs was, however, echoed by the then-president of the ICPC and vice president of the Viennese police, Bruno Schultz. He proposed that this agency house all information regarding citizen Gypsies residing within each state, as well as those who had been seized at border entry points or within state territory. It was to contain personal details of each Gypsy, including their name and biometric data, such as photographs and fingerprints.⁴⁷ This proposal was also endorsed by the Czechoslovak representative, who further advocated the creation of

⁴¹ BAR E4260C 1000/837 Nr. 45, Der Chef der Polizeibteilung Sig. Rothmund to Prof. Dr. Zangger, September 23, 1931.

⁴² BAR E 4260C 1000/837 Nr. 45, Der Chef der Polizeibteilung Sig. Rothmund to Prof. Dr. Zangger, September 23, 1931.

⁴³ Knepper, *International Crime in the 20th Century*, 60; Fenton Bressler, *Interpol* (United Kingdom: Mandarin Paperbacks, 1993), 18.

⁴⁴ ÖStA BKA 20/2 Kt 4750, 108.881/1931, Bundeskanzleramt. Generaldirektion für die öffentliche Sicherheit, an das Bundesministerium für Justiz, Finanzen, Handel und Verkehr, Unterricht, soziale Verwaltung, Land und Forstwirtschaft, das Amt der niederösterreichischen Landesregierung in Wien, burgenländischen Landesregierung in Eisenstadt, die Bundes-Polizeidirektion, Vienna, July 15, 1931.

⁴⁵ The conference decisions can be viewed in Politisches Archiv des Auswärtigen Amtes R 48773, Beschlüsse der “Internationalen Kriminalpolizeilichen Kommission” in Wien (Gefaßt in der VIII. ordentlichen Tagung vom 28. Bis 30. September 1931 in Paris.)

⁴⁶ BAR E 4260C 1000/837 Nr. 45, Bericht über die Verhandlung der International Kriminalpolizeikommission vom Prof. Dr. Zangger an der Polizeibteilung, Zurich, October 12, 1931.

⁴⁷ Schultz’s proposal is also mentioned in the position paper titled *Kampf gegen die Zigeuner*, presented by Josef Vanasek at the ICPC conference in Vienna, September 1934. See BAR E4260C 1000/836 Nr. 47, “Kampf gegen die Zigeuner” *Internationale Kriminalpolizeiliche Kommission*, X. Tagung, Nr. 15, as well as in the address given by Bruno Schultz at the ICPC conference in Copenhagen in 1935. See BAR E4326A 1991/157 Nr 3., Dr. Bruno Schultz,

national registries within each state and suggested that nomadic Gypsies in other states should be required to carry passports. Additionally, he advised the employment of tighter border checks, involved the immediate identification of encountered Gypsies, as well as the verification of their descent and place of origin, which would subsequently determine the appropriate course of action.⁴⁸

As a result, a committee was set up within this session, consisting of representatives who were most interested in pursuing action against the Gypsies: Hungary, Czechoslovakia, Germany, France, and Austria. The committee was then presented with an international initiative for combating the so-called *Zigeunerunwesen*, which was recommended by the Austrian Federal Chancellery, based on their analysis of the existing Gypsy policies enforced in Czechoslovakia and Bavaria.⁴⁹ Owing to the failed attempts to promulgate a federal Gypsy law in Austria, it is certainly possible that the Austrian officials drafted these guidelines so as to advance their own national plan to strengthen Austria's anti-Gypsy legislation and use the ICPC as an apparatus for pursuing more radical action.⁵⁰ The ICPC representatives approved principles to regulate the *Zigeunerfrage*, which targeted wandering Gypsies and similar "nomadic" persons living in a Gypsy manner, rather than settled Gypsy communities. The measures included mandatory registration, photography and fingerprinting for these individuals, who were required to carry a personal identification (*Zigeunerlegitimation*) with a photograph and fingerprint. Wandering was allowed only with an itinerant trading license (*Wanderschein*), potentially indicating authorization for handling a specific number of horses. Sanitary and veterinary measures were deemed necessary, while accompanying school-age children without adequate educational provisions was prohibited, and group travel was not allowed. Additionally, campsites required allocation by local authorities, and an obligation to provide identification before local authorities was established. Depending on circumstances, individuals might also be subjected to treatment under the Vagabonds Act (*Vagabundengesetz*). Possession of weapons and ammunition was prohibited, and foreign Gypsies or similar individuals were to be immediately deported. Furthermore, horse and livestock trading was banned, and political rights of these individuals were restricted. Crucially, the proposal also recommended establishing "a central registry for Gypsies in each country and also an international database within the International Bureau of the ICPC."⁵¹

These provisions signified a decisive step toward building a transnational approach for combating the ostensible Gypsy crisis. By pooling their expertise and aligning existing anti-Gypsy regulations in ICPC member states, the police representatives intended to heighten existing regimes of control and surveillance, hinging on the expulsion of foreign Gypsies and assimilative, sedentarizing regulations against domestic ones. Though these policies were based on behavioral rather than racial criteria, the clause to restrict the political

Errichtung einer "Internationalen Zentrale zur Bekämpfung des Zigeunerunwesens" im "Internationalen Bureau am Sitze der Bundes-Polizeidirektion in Wien" Internationale Kriminalpolizeiliche Kommission XI. ordenlichte Tagung, Nr. 8.

⁴⁸ BAR E 4260C 1000/837 Nr. 45, Bericht über die Verhandlung der Internationalen Kriminalpolizeikommission vom Prof. Dr. Zangger an der Polizeiabteilung, Zurich, October 12, 1931; Donert, *The Rights of the Roma*, 25.

⁴⁹ BAR E4322 1991/156 Nr. 46, *Die internationale Zusammenarbeit auf kriminalpolizeilichem Gebiete*, Handbuch herausgegeben von der Internationalen Kriminalpolizeilichen Kommission, Vienna, 1934, 109–10; also confirmed in Oscar Dressler, *Die Internationale Kriminalpolizeiliche Kommission und Ihr Werk* (am Kleinen Wannsee 16, Herausgegeben für den Dienstgebrauch von der Internationalen Kriminalpolizeilichen Kommission in Berlin-Wannsee, 1942), 97–98; BAR E4326A 1991/157 Nr. 3., Dr. Bruno Schultz, *Errichtung einer "Internationalen Zentrale zur Bekämpfung des Zigeunerunwesens" im "Internationalen Bureau am Sitze der Bundes-Polizeidirektion in Wien"* Internationale Kriminalpolizeiliche Kommission XI. ordenlichte Tagung, Nr. 8.

⁵⁰ To view more on Austria's attempts to build a national approach to combating the "Gypsy plague," see Freund, *Oberösterreich und die Zigeuner*, 107–22.

⁵¹ The original proposal from the Austrian government can be found in ÖStA BKA 20/2 Kt. 4750, 108.881/1931, Abschrift, Vienna, October 14, 1931. Similar copies can be viewed in BAR E4322 1991/156 Nr. 46, *Die internationale Zusammenarbeit auf kriminalpolizeiliche Gebiete*, 109–10, and Dressler, *Die Internationale Kriminalpolizeiliche Kommission und Ihr Werk*, 97–98.

rights of Gypsies nonetheless shows how increasingly radical steps were being taken by the ICPC authorities to control and shape their respective Gypsy populations, measures that preceded the Nuremberg laws enacted by the Nazis in 1935.⁵² Furthermore, the calls for an international database for Gypsies, as well as the creation of national registries, show how increasing cooperation and exchange of intelligence between ICPC member states was growing prior to *Anschluss*.⁵³ Most importantly, the resolutions of the Paris conference in 1931 show that Switzerland and Austria initially led the charge for coordinating international operations targeting central European Gypsies and used the commission as a vehicle for advancing their own nationalist goals and agendas, indicating a continuing trend of illiberal internationalism.

At the next ICPC conference, held in Rome from October 15 to 20, 1932, Swiss interest in the subject appeared to have declined. In his 1932 report, Zangerer noted that the *Zigeunerfrage* had little relevance to Switzerland “because 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 interned or required to leave.”⁵⁴ Nevertheless, other central European countries continued to argue that the “Gypsy plague” was still a major issue. Such was the case for various Balkan states, including Yugoslavia, as large numbers of Gypsies immigrating from Russia were said to be endangering their local populations.⁵⁵ The Yugoslavian representative further insisted that the “Gypsy plague” was no longer an issue concerning individual states; but rather, it had become “a general international question.”⁵⁶ Accordingly, the administrative board of the ICPC was instructed to study the question thoroughly. More importantly, to prevent the problem of cyclical expulsion, it was agreed that the earlier proposal to set up an international bureau to coordinate the “fight against the Gypsies” could function similarly to the information bureau for international criminals.⁵⁷ Even though the groundwork was laid to create such an agency, the rise of National Socialism in Germany soon diverted attention from these plans.

The matter was, however, mentioned again at the ICPC conference in Vienna, which took place between September 17 and 21, 1934. In his policy report, the Czechoslovak representative, Josef Vaňasek, urged the immediate establishment of an international office for handling Gypsy affairs in Vienna. Such an agency, he argued, would “collect news concerning so-called international Gypsies ... [and] provide the necessary information, required by other states, concerning Gypsies arrested within their territory.”⁵⁸ For this organization to be successful, he recommended the creation of Gypsy administrative offices within each country, tasked with compiling information of known Gypsies including their fingerprints, name, tribal or group members (*Stammes oder Gruppenmitglieder*), personal documents (such as their passport and itinerant trading license), and any criminal convictions. With this data, he continued, police officials would be able to draw up “family trees” (*Stammbäume*) of international Gypsies that could be transmitted to the international office in Vienna and circulated to the relevant authorities.⁵⁹ The commission responded positively to Vaňasek’s

⁵² The Nuremberg Laws can be viewed in “Gesetz zum Schutze des Deutschen Blutes und der Deutschen Ehre vom 15. September 1935,” reproduced in Wilhelm Stuckart and Hans Globke, *Kommentare zur Deutschen Rassengesetzgebung*, vol. 1. (Munich: C. Beck, 1936), 36–37; “Reichsbürgergesetz vom 15. September 1935,” reproduced in Stuckart and Globke, *Kommentare zur Deutschen Rassengesetzgebung*, 31.

⁵³ ÖStA BKA 20/2 Kt. 4750, 108.881/1931, 108.881/1931, Abschrift, Vienna, October 14, 1931.

⁵⁴ BAR E4260C 1000/837 Nr. 46, Kommissions-Berichte, Mittwoch, October, 19, 1932.

⁵⁵ BAR E 4260C 1000/837 Nr. 46, Tagungen Rom, Kommissions-Berichte, Mittwoch, October 19, 1932.

⁵⁶ Donert, *The Rights of the Roma*, 26.

⁵⁷ BAR E 4260C 1000/837 Nr. 46, Beschlüsse der „Internationalen Kriminalpolizeilichen Kommission“ (Gefaßt in der IX. ordentlichen Tagung in Rom vom 15. Bis 20. Oktober 1932).

⁵⁸ BAR E4260C 1000/837 Nr. 47, Dr Josef Vaňasek, *Kampf gegen die Zigeuner*, Internationale Kriminalpolizeiliche Kommission X. ordentliche Tagung, Nr. 15.

⁵⁹ By collecting as much information as they could surrounding a Gypsy’s identity and criminal history, Vaňasek believed that the authorities would be able to use this as an effective weapon for combating Gypsy vagrancy. BAR

remarks and agreed to establish the Gypsy headquarters in Vienna as soon as possible. Additionally, the conference participants decided to set up a permanent committee for handling Gypsy matters, which was assigned the task of continuing to study the “Gypsy question” and assisting in erecting the central department for international Gypsy affairs.⁶⁰

The Beginnings of Nazi Influence in the ICPC

After Adolf Hitler was appointed chancellor of Germany in January 1933, a crucial shift in the international approach toward the *Zigeunerfrage* emerged, owing to the Nazi infiltration of the ICPC. Although the Nazi police authorities did not strive for immediate control over the ICPC, they opted to gradually exert their influence through their active participation at meetings and communicate their experiences in dealing with international crime. In this way, the National Socialists came to be “accepted as a viable partner in international affairs, a nation among nations.”⁶¹ They sought to use the ICPC as a platform for espousing their radical attitudes and regulations for controlling Gypsies, validated by the notion, broadly accepted as science at the time, that Gypsies were asocial parasites belonging to an alien race that purportedly threatened the racial purity of Germany’s national community (*Volksgemeinschaft*).

The NSDAP’s biologically racist understanding of Gypsies was largely driven by the radicalization of eugenics and racial hygiene (*Rassenhygiene*) in Nazi ideology, as well as the rapid developments in criminal biology, a field of study that considered criminal behavior to be determined by hereditary factors. Since the early 1930s, a prominent German racial scientist named Robert Ritter advanced the “born criminal” theory, originally devised by the Italian criminologist, Cesare Lombroso, in the nineteenth century. From 1932, Ritter studied the family relationships and descent of “asocial” inhabitants of Germany, including Gypsies who were living in a poor neighborhood on the outskirts of Tübingen. Using their criminal records and welfare data, he created extensive genealogical charts, which traced several generations of ancestry. Ritter discovered, as he put it, that the members of this population descended from “vagabonds, *Gauner* [habitual criminals], and robbers” who had formed a *Gaunergesellschaft* (society of criminals) during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Ritter concluded that these individuals were “born criminals” and “born vagabonds,” genetically inclined to lead an asocial and criminal life.⁶² As Ritter’s research flourished under the Nazi regime, he created a racial distinction between the “racially pure” (*Vollblütige*) and “mixed blood” (*Mischlinge*) Gypsies. In his view, the former did not pose a danger to the national community and should be permitted to continue with their way of life and traditional itinerant professions. Because of intermarriage with other “asocial” elements, however, Ritter claimed that entirely “pure Gypsies” were seldom found in Europe. “Mixed-blood” Gypsies, on the other hand, made up approximately 90 percent of the Gypsy population and were stigmatized as degenerate criminals and “mixed-race asocials” (*asoziale Mischlinge*) who endangered the safety and health of the German people. Because Ritter believed that Gypsy *Mischlinge* were incapable of social adaption and sedentarization,

E4260C 1000/837 Nr. 47, Dr Josef Vaňasek, *Kampf gegen die Zigeuner*, Internationale Kriminalpolizeiliche Kommission X. ordentliche Tagung, Nr. 15.

⁶⁰ The committee members consisted of ICPC representatives from Czechoslovakia, Italy, Germany and Austria. See BAR E4260C 1000/837 Nr. 47, Beschlüsse der “Internationalen Kriminalpolizeilichen Kommission” (Gefaßt in der X. ordentlichen Tagung in Wien vom 17. Bis 21. September 1934).

⁶¹ Mathieu Deflem, “The Logic of Nazification: The Case of the International Criminal Police Commission (‘Interpol’),” *JCS* 43, no. 1 (2002) 27–28; Mathieu Deflem, *Policing World Society: Historical Foundations of International Police Cooperation* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 195.

⁶² Robert Ritter, *Ein Menschenschlag: Erbärztl. u. erbgeschichtl. Untersuchgn über die durch 10 Geschlechterfolgen erforschten Nachkommen v. “Vagabunden, Jaunern u. Räubern”* (Leipzig: Georg Thieme, 1937), 51, 59, 60–61, 80, 86, 110, 111.

he proposed to have them interned in “preventative detention in work camps or guarded close settlements” and sterilized.⁶³

Because the Nazis took an increasing interest in Ritter’s research, he was appointed in 1936 as the head of the Research Institute for Racial Hygiene and Population Biology (*Rassenhygienische und bevölkerungsbiologische Forschungsstelle*, or RHF), a division of the Reich Health Office. Here, Ritter and his team worked closely with the Nazi police authorities to register and gather information about Gypsies and *Zigeunermischlinge*, including their anthropological measurements, fingerprints, photographs, and blood samples. The compiled data was subsequently organized into genealogical tables used to classify generations of German Gypsies in accordance with a criterion—full-blooded Gypsies, mixed-blood Gypsies, or Gypsy-like itinerants—that specified their degree of racial “purity.”⁶⁴ This laborious process of conducting racial evaluations of individual Gypsies eventually culminated in a legal racial classification system, decreed in a circular by the Reich Criminal Police Department (*Reichskriminalpolizei*, or RKPA) on August 7, 1941. To assist in determining the racial status of individual Gypsies, the following scheme of racial notation, devised by Ritter, was to be used, which based the classification of Gypsies on the “racial makeup” of their parents and grandparents:

- 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*).⁶⁵

These “expert assessments” (*gutachterliche Äußerungen*), based on Ritter’s classification system, were then sent to the regional Criminal Police (*Kriminalpolizei* or Kripo) offices and formed a portion of the police registry on Gypsies, which grew to approximately 30,000 files by 1942.⁶⁶ The assessments would later assist in rooting out assimilated Gypsies from the general German population and treating them in accordance with the relevant decrees, including Heinrich Himmler’s order, from December 16, 1942, to deport Gypsy *Mischlinge*, Romani Gypsies, and Balkan Gypsies to a concentration camp in Auschwitz.⁶⁷

⁶³ Robert Ritter, “Die Zigeunerfrage und das Zigeunerbastardproblem,” *Fortschritte der Erbpathologie, Rassenhygiene und ihrer Grenzgebiete* 3 (1939): 2–20.

⁶⁴ BA Berlin R73 Nr. 14005, “An die deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft,” mid-June 1937; Martin Luchterhandt, “Robert Ritter und Sein Institut. vom Nutzen und Benutzen der ‘Forschung,’” in *Zwischen Erziehung und Vernichtung: Zigeunerpolitik und Zigeunermischlinge in Europa des 20. Jahrhunderts*, ed. Michael Zimmermann, (Stuttgart: Franz Steiner Verlag, 2007), 321–28; Michael Burleigh and Wolfgang Wippermann, *The Racial State: Germany 1933–1945* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 54; Guenter Lewy, *The Nazi Persecution of the Gypsies* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), 43.

⁶⁵ IfZ, DC 17.02, “Vorbeugende Verbrechensbekämpfung Ersammlung 1941,” Auswertung der rassenbiologischen Gutachten über zigeunerische Personen, August 7, 1941. On the parallels between the racial classifications of Jews and Gypsies, see the authoritative commentaries on the Nuremberg racial laws by Stuckart and Globke, *Kommentare zur Deutschen Rassengesetzgebung*.

⁶⁶ BA Berlin R165/181, “Einteilung der Zigeuner nach rassischen Gesichtspunkten”; Donald Kenrick and Grattan Puxon, *Gypsies Under the Swastika* (Hertfordshire: University of Hertfordshire Press, 2009), 15.

⁶⁷ Himmler’s original order is mentioned in the implementing regulations for the Auschwitz decree, issued on January 29, 1943; see IfZ, DC 17.02, “Vorbeugende Verbrechensbekämpfung Ersammlung 1941”, Schnellbrief, Betr. Einweisung von Zigeunermischlingen, Rom-Zigeunern und balkanischen Zigeunern in ein Konzentrationslager, Berlin, January 29, 1943.

Thus, as Ritter's system for defining, cataloguing, and identifying Gypsies gradually changed under the Nazi regime, it arguably became part of the process of cumulative radicalization that led to the Gypsy genocide.

During the early years of Adolf Hitler's Germany, Nazi officials enthusiastically adopted biologically racist views of Gypsies similar to those of Ritter and openly expressed them at the ICPC Copenhagen meeting in 1935. For example, in a position paper on the National Socialist approach to the persecution of Gypsies, Dr. Kurt Bader, an undersecretary from Karlsruhe, proclaimed in front of his international audience that "the Gypsies, in so far as they are pure-blooded, constitute a race of a special kind. In it, the instinct to wander is congenital and anchored in the blood. If this instinct to wander is forcibly suppressed, then one can expect a phenomenon of degeneration to occur. This really functions to turn the Gypsy into a criminal."⁶⁸ Given their alleged racial predisposition toward migratory instincts and criminal tendencies, Bader deemed Gypsies an "alien element" that could not be rehabilitated. Admitting that the German efforts to completely assimilate Gypsies into their host communities had, so far, been unsuccessful, Bader declared that non-sedentary Gypsies "must be persecuted with ruthless severity" through their incarceration in workhouses and expulsion from German soil.⁶⁹ In the foreseeable future, he revealed, the Nazi administration was planning to include "incurable Gypsies" in the sterilization law, approved in Hitler's cabinet meeting on July 14, 1933, indicating a discursive shift toward an increasingly biologically racist treatment of Gypsies and an alignment with Ritter's views.⁷⁰ Alongside this, Bader mentioned that "a uniform and modern law on combating the Gypsy nuisance" was currently in development, which would entail the establishment of a Reich-wide Central Office for Gypsy Affairs (*Zigeunerzentrale*) to assist with the exchange of information between the German states. This, he concluded, would facilitate effective international discussions and solutions for dealing with the "Gypsy problem."⁷¹

Karl Zindel, a senior official of the Reich Interior Ministry, who at the time was working on the aforementioned national Gypsy law, also gave a presentation regarding the "fortunate success" of the Third Reich's measures against criminals.⁷² Here, he was referring to the Law against Dangerous Habitual Criminals (*Gesetz gegen gefährliche Gewohnheitsverbrecher*) of November 24, 1933, which allowed the unlimited "preventive police custody" of convicted "dangerous habitual criminals," even after the end of their prison sentences.⁷³ These presentations were positively received by the conference delegates. As a result, they recommended that other states still tackling the "problem" of the Gypsies to adopt the Nazi model of mass incarceration in concentration camps without any legal proceedings.⁷⁴

Even though the presence of the Nazis within the ICPC was growing, still-independent Austria remained a key player regarding Gypsy matters. To reinforce the urgency of a database for international exchange of intelligence concerning Gypsies, Bruno Schultz, president of the ICPC, presented plans for the long-standing "guidelines concerning the establishment and management of an international central agency for the fight against the Gypsy

⁶⁸ BAR E4326A 1991/157 Nr. 3, Dr. Bader, *Bekämpfung des Zigeunerunwesens*, Internationale Kriminalpolizeiliche Kommission XI. ordentliche Tagung, Nr. 9.

⁶⁹ BAR E4326A 1991/157 Nr. 3, Dr. Bader, *Bekämpfung des Zigeunerunwesens*, Internationale Kriminalpolizeiliche Kommission XI. ordentliche Tagung, Nr. 9.

⁷⁰ BA R43 II/720, Sitzung des Reichsministeriums aus der Niederschrift über die Ministerbesprechung, July 14, 1933.

⁷¹ BAR E4326A 1991/157 Nr. 3, Dr. Bader, *Bekämpfung des Zigeunerunwesens*, Internationale Kriminalpolizeiliche Kommission XI. ordentliche Tagung, Nr. 9.

⁷² BAR E4260C 1000/837 Nr. 48, Beschlüsse der "Internationalen Kriminalpolizeilichen Kommission" (Gefaßt in der XI. ordentlichen Tagung in Kopenhagen vom 17. Bis 20. Juni 1935.), 2.

⁷³ Gerhard Werle, *Justiz-Strafrecht und polizeiliche Verbrechensbekämpfung im Dritten Reich* (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1989), 86–107.

⁷⁴ BAR E4260C 1000/837 Nr. 48, Beschlüsse der "Internationalen Kriminalpolizeilichen Kommission" (Gefaßt in der XI. ordentlichen Tagung in Kopenhagen vom 17. Bis 20. Juni 1935.), 2.

nuisance.” This proposal stipulated that the international headquarters for Gypsy affairs would store and exchange information on “roving Gypsies and other persons traveling in a Gypsy-like manner” who were stateless, had left their country of nationality, or whose identity or place of origin could not be ascertained by the authorities.⁷⁵ Responsibility for the transmission of data was to be determined by the governments of each country, and the ICPC was to be informed about which authorities had been entrusted with this task. The information regarding registered Gypsies to be stored within the international database included their names, personal details, and biometric data (such as photographs and fingerprints, to be kept in a special collection), as well as known criminal records or prosecutions.

A more radical feature of Schultz’s initiative, however, was his suggestion of tasking the ICPC with producing “reliable genealogies” (*Stammbäume*) of individual Gypsies—a model that appears to be based on the early research methods of Robert Ritter and the prior suggestion made by Josef Vaňasek.⁷⁶ With the unqualified approval of the conference delegates, the decision was made to collect genealogical data and information regarding the Gypsies in order to build an international registry in Vienna, which would function in a manner similar to that of the Central Gypsy Affairs Office in Nazi Germany.⁷⁷ The police delegates opted to endorse Nazi race theories and adopted early Nazi techniques for mapping the genealogy of Gypsies, demonstrating Nazi influence on the commission’s policies and agenda. This influence slowly increased thereafter. German power within the ICPC was, however, still limited at this point, as Austria continued to be the most influential actor in matters of transnational Gypsy policing. Furthermore, because the conference delegates failed to establish a clear and comprehensive definition of those who could be termed or registered as *Gypsies*, a nazified racial criterion for identifying individuals based on their ancestral backgrounds was never adopted. Instead, the ICPC members preferred to employ the broader behavioralist categorization of European Gypsies, presumably because it served as a “catch-all” term for itinerant groups and individuals who behaved in a “Gypsy manner,” signaling a critical departure from the Nazis’ biologically racist categorization of Gypsies.

Following the Copenhagen meeting, the Austrian ICPC commissioners began immediate preparations for creating an international office for handling Gypsy affairs.⁷⁸ On March 18, 1936, the ICPC general secretary informed the commission delegates that the International Central Office for Combatting the Gypsy Nuisance had been set up by the Federal Police Directorate in Vienna. This confirmed the creation of an international database network, containing genealogical and biometric data, such as photographs, fingerprints, and criminal records, of Gypsies whose information had already been collected and compiled by local and national registries of ICPC member states.⁷⁹ A German memorandum from June 5, 1936, confirmed the creation of the ICPC office and subsequently instructed the German police to work in full cooperation with the ICPC, confirming a close liaison between these two institutes.⁸⁰

⁷⁵ BAR E4326A 1991/157 Nr. 3, Entwurf Richtlinien für die Anlage und Führung der “Internationalen Zentrale zur Bekämpfung des Zigeunerunwesens.”

⁷⁶ BAR E4326A 1991/157 Nr. 3, Entwurf Richtlinien für die Anlage und Führung der “Internationalen Zentrale zur Bekämpfung des Zigeunerunwesens.”

⁷⁷ BAR E4260C 1000/837 Nr. 48, Beschlüsse der “Internationalen Kriminalpolizeilichen Kommission” (Gefaßt in der XI. ordentlichen Tagung in Kopenhagen vom 17. Bis 20. Juni 1935.)

⁷⁸ The draft plans for this office, which began around December 1935, can be viewed in ÖSTA 4751.

⁷⁹ The establishment of the International Office in Vienna was confirmed in ÖSTA 4751 Bundespolizeidirektion in Wien an das Bundeskanzleramt, Generaldirektion für die öffentliche Sicherheit, Wien, on July 26, 1937. The directive can be found in BAR E4260C 1974/34 Nr. 307, “Richtlinien für die Anlage und Führung der ‘Internationalen Zentralstelle zur Bekämpfung des Zigeunerunwesens,’” Internationale Kriminalpolizeiliche Kommission an alle Mitglieder der Internationalen Kriminalpolizeilichen Kommission, Vienna, March 18, 1936; BAR E 4322, *Richtlinien für die Anlage und Führung der Internationalen Zentrale zur Bekämpfung des Zigeunerunwesens*.

⁸⁰ IfZ MS 410, “Bekämpfung der Zigeunerlage” Runderlass des Reichs und Preußischen Ministers des Innern, June 5, 1936.

The establishment of this international Gypsy cataloguing system represents a key turning point in the transnational effort to combat the so-called *Zigeunerplage*. This international database would chart the transnational networks of central Europe's Gypsy populations, enabling the identification, policing, and deportation of European Gypsies to be managed in a swifter and more centralized manner via stricter border controls, coordinated sweeps, and intensive exchanges of information and intelligence among ICPC member states. As such, it is clear that prior to the *Anschluss*, a partially centralized and transnational approach to the "Gypsy question" had already been achieved. The long-standing aim of central European states to establish an international headquarters for handling Gypsy affairs had finally been realized.

The ICPC after *Anschluss*

After the *Anschluss* in 1938, the ICPC came under the firm control of the National Socialists, offering them a strategic apparatus for advancing their own approach to policing Gypsies, which was gradually radicalizing. Only those Austrian police officials deemed relatively loyal to the Nazis were exempted from dismissal, consolidating the nazification of the ICPC. Oskar Dressler, who had been the secretary general of the ICPC since 1923, managed to maintain his position and was not among the Austrians held under political arrest following the *Anschluss*.⁸¹ He persisted in collaborating with the ICPC president, Otto Steinhäusel, in editing the ICPC editorial. The publication was renamed *Internationale Kriminalpolizei*, and his contributions furthered the process of aligning international policing with Nazi ideology. In the March 1939 issue of the commission's magazine, for example, Dressler promoted the book of Dr. Wilhelm Stuckart, an architect of the Nazi Nuremberg Laws, and declared that "racial care is of immense importance in combating criminals."⁸²

Gypsies remained a subject of international interest following the *Anschluss*. On March 23, 1939, Zindel circulated a report to the ICPC commissions ahead of their meeting scheduled to take place in Berlin in September 1939. A crucial component of this report was dedicated to the international progress made toward combating the alleged Gypsy nuisance. To procure an extensive collection of intelligence concerning Gypsies for the international headquarters, Zindel requested the transmission of data to the newly established ICPC Gypsy office and also urged individual states to establish their own national Gypsy registries.⁸³ The report noted that several European countries communicated that the "Gypsy question" was no longer a matter of significance, either because the existing regulations already dealt with citizen and foreign Gypsies or because Gypsies had not been found residing within their territory. Crucially, Switzerland was one of the countries who shared this view, with the Swiss representative stating that although a few citizen Gypsy families resided on Swiss soil, they had not encountered any foreign Gypsies within their borders.⁸⁴

Zindel's missive further stated that both the German and Latvian representatives had requested that the ICPC have at its disposal a collection of existing anti-Gypsy laws already being enforced in different areas of Europe. As such, drawing on the information that they

⁸¹ Deflem, *Policing World Society*, 184.

⁸² Bressler, *Interpol*, 50; Deflem, *Policing World Society*, 184.

⁸³ BAR E4260C 1974/34 Nr. 276, Internationale Kriminalpolizeiliche Kommission: Internationale Bekämpfung des Zigeuner-(Nomaden)-Unwesens, March 23, 1939.

⁸⁴ It cannot be ruled out that this ostensible lack of interest was related to the increasing nazification of the organization. Other countries that had little or no interest in the "Gypsy question" included Denmark, Danzig, Finland, Great Britain, Ireland, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Norway, and Portugal; see BAR E4260C 1974/34 Nr. 276, Internationale Kriminalpolizeiliche Kommission: Internationale Bekämpfung des Zigeuner-(Nomaden)-Unwesens, March 23, 1939. Regula Ludi documents in detail one case in which during the mid-1920s a Gypsy family was taken in from Italy and allowed to reside on Swiss soil after being apprehended at the Swiss border; see Regula Ludi, "Swiss Policy Towards Roma and Sinti Refugees from National Socialism: Defensive Walls Instead of Asylum," in Kenrick, *The Gypsies during the Second World War*, 126–29.

had received from several ICPC representatives, the report summarized provisions to combat the “Gypsy nuisance” in Bulgaria, Denmark, Danzig, Lithuania, Hungary, Switzerland, and Czechoslovakia. Other European nations, such as Belgium, Finland, Ireland, Luxembourg, Norway, Portugal, and Yugoslavia, by contrast, had not promulgated specific anti-Gypsy regulations; rather, they had opted to deal with their respective nomadic populations through legal provisions that targeted vagrancy more generally.⁸⁵

Additionally, Zindel discussed the increasingly radical anti-Gypsy regulations implemented in Germany, which had been scientifically legitimized by Ritter’s ideas of criminality and asociality as a biological condition. Zindel declared that, pursuant to Himmler’s December 8, 1938 decree, a centralized registration system had been successfully established for all Gypsies, Gypsy “half-castes,” and those “vagabonding in a Gypsy manner.” This registration system was being coordinated by the Ritter institute and implemented by the RKPA, headed by Arthur Nebe.⁸⁶ Zindel concluded his report by calling for the international circulation of biometric data such as photographs and fingerprints of Gypsies whose identities could not be determined by the authorities.⁸⁷ Though the 1939 meeting was initially postponed, it is possible that Zindel aimed to integrate the German police’s efforts against the Gypsy issue with those of the ICPC, potentially advancing Nazi objectives. Nonetheless, Zindel’s report demonstrates that by now the Nazis wielded significant influence upon the direction of international action against Gypsies. It highlights, too, a striking example of illiberal internationalism, as the Nazis attempted to increasingly centralize European policing practices and the collection of Gypsy data, which would, in turn, assist them in persecuting their own Gypsy population. More importantly, the activity of the nazified ICPC also points to the continuation of a pan-European movement for combating Gypsies, which included European nations apart from Germany, Switzerland, and Austria that had introduced measures aimed at controlling them.⁸⁸

There is considerable controversy in the literature regarding the course of the ICPC after the Nazi infiltration. Some scholars, such as Michael Fooner and Peter Lee, have contended that the commission ceased to function following the *Anschluss*, while others, including Mathieu Deflem and Fenton Bressler, have argued more persuasively that the ICPC was strategically utilized to advance Nazi goals.⁸⁹ Although there were no annual conferences convened between ICPC members after the outbreak of the Second World War, the members of the commission maintained communication via written correspondence. A 1940 report in *Die Deutsche Polizei* further confirms that the ICPC remained functional during the war, by declaring that “all the states of the commission—except of course England and France—continue international criminal-police collaboration in the frame of this Commission.”⁹⁰ Furthermore, there is evidence that reports regarding “wanted” criminals continued to be published in the official ICPC magazine during the war. For example, there was an alert about a woman, presumed to be a Gypsy, pursued by the ICPC for alleged fraud and theft. The notice detailed her activities in Prague between April 21 and 26, 1944, where she used deceptive means to extract large sums of money and valuables from individuals of German and Czech

⁸⁵ BAR E4260C 1974/34 Nr. 276, Internationale Kriminalpolizeiliche Kommission: Internationale Bekämpfung des Zigeuner-(Nomanden)-Unwesens, March 23, 1939. Further information regarding Gypsy treatment in Hungary, Yugoslav, and Norway can be viewed in Kenrick, *The Gypsies during the Second World War*, 47–103.

⁸⁶ BAR E4260C 1974/34 Nr. 276, Internationale Kriminalpolizeiliche Kommission: Internationale Bekämpfung des Zigeuner-(Nomanden)-Unwesens, March 23, 1939.

⁸⁷ BAR E4260C 1974/34 Nr. 276, Internationale Kriminalpolizeiliche Kommission: Internationale Bekämpfung des Zigeuner-(Nomanden)-Unwesens, March 23, 1939.

⁸⁸ BAR E4260C 1974/34 Nr. 276, Internationale Kriminalpolizeiliche Kommission: Internationale Bekämpfung des Zigeuner-(Nomanden)-Unwesens, March 23, 1939.

⁸⁹ Michael Fooner, *Interpol: Issues in World Crime and International Criminal Justice* (New York: Plenum Press, 1989), 40; Pei Ling Lee, *Interpol* (New York: Stein and Day, 1976), 19; Bressler, *Interpol*, 55–75; Deflem, *Policing World Society*, 180–95.

⁹⁰ *Die Deutsche Polizei*, 1940, 8:305, cited in Deflem, “The Logic of Nazification,” 30.

nationality, accumulating damages that exceeded KR 150,000. The woman, who used the name Madeleine le Croix, falsely claimed to be the “daughter of a former French ambassador,” as well as an “artiste or film actress.” Described by the authorities as a “travelling confidence trickster, who [was] certainly not the person she [had] claimed to be,” she spoke multiple languages and had detailed knowledge of various cities. As a result, the authorities issued a request for an ‘energetic search and arrest’ based on her fraudulent activities.⁹¹

The Nazi intention to take over the ICPC presidency and logistics was accelerated after the death of Otto Steinhäusel, the Nazi-appointed ICPC President, in June 1940, and Nazi control of the ICPC was solidified through pseudo-legal means. After his candidacy “passed unanimously,” Reinhard Heydrich assumed the presidency of the commission.⁹² As a result, the ICPC headquarters was moved to the RKPA offices in Berlin and the commission’s new leadership was, as Deflem has argued, “institutionally linked with Nazi police structures.”⁹³ The Nazis’ authoritative position within the ICPC was firmly entrenched in a circular issued by Himmler on December 8, 1941, which reiterated that the ICPC would work closely with the RKPA. It stated that the central institutions of the ICPC “must be increasingly expanded under the new German leadership into a genuine global criminal police headquarters.” To establish or promote international relations with the police forces of other countries the Commission required the “support of all German police authorities, who must make it a point to continually highlight the ICPC and its goals during negotiations with foreign police forces,” especially when hosting representatives from abroad in Germany.⁹⁴ By adapting to historical circumstances and opportunities, the Nazis pursued what Deflem describes as a “two-step” process to dominate the ICPC, which followed the foreign policy of the Third Reich and reflected its overall aim for ruling central Europe. This involved a strategic shift from seeking influence through active international participation to striving for total control of the ICPC by securing its presidency, which consequently allowed the Nazis to use the commission as a tool for advancing their aims.⁹⁵ Deflem rightly points out, however, that in practice, the coordination of the ICPC did not function as planned, and with the exception of the passport issue, the nazification of the ICPC did not ultimately achieve any concrete results. Even a staunch anti-communist like the director of the US Federal Bureau of Investigation, J. Edgar Hoover, was reluctant to cooperate with the ICPC following the *Anschluss* because he was aware of the growing Nazi influence on it. Hoover clarified that the commission had “assumed a distinctly Austro-German atmosphere,” which was deemed the US “principal objection to joining” it. After the ICPC headquarters moved to Berlin, the FBI leadership decided to “terminate all communications” with the commission.⁹⁶

Even though the Nazi goal of achieving an SS-dominated policing order was ultimately unsuccessful, the Nazi takeover of the ICPC nonetheless illustrates a prime example of illiberal internationalism. By adapting to circumstances and opportunities, the Nazis harnessed the ICPC police organs to not only create systematic networks of information exchange, which assisted in cross-border crime fighting, but also to pursue their nationalist goals of persecuting antagonists or racial enemies of the Nazi state.⁹⁷ Some scholars, such as Thomas Huonker, have asserted that the increasing collaboration between the ICPC and *Reichssicherheitshauptamt* (Reich Main Security Office, or RSHA) implies that all structures, networks, personnel, and logistics of the ICPC were at the disposal of the Nazis, and thus

⁹¹ Reproduced in Bressler, *Interpol*, 77.

⁹² In reality, only twenty-seven police officials representing fifteen states consented, while the countries that could not be addressed were not counted and those that had abstained were considered as not voting against the motion; see Deflem, “The Logic of Nazification,” 25.

⁹³ Deflem, *Policing World Society*, 184–85.

⁹⁴ The Himmler’s decree of December 8, 1941, is reproduced in “Zusammenarbeit mit der ‘Internationalen Kriminalpolizeilichen Kommission,’” in Dressler, *Die Internationale Kriminalpolizeiliche Kommission und Ihr Werk*, 25–26.

⁹⁵ Deflem, *Policing World Society*, 180–95; Deflem, “The Logic of Nazification,” 30–33.

⁹⁶ Cited in Deflem, *Policing World Society*, 180.

⁹⁷ Deflem, *Policing World Society*, 180–95.

the ICPC played a decisive role in the genocidal policies directed at European Jewry and Gypsies.⁹⁸ Given the limited evidence on the subject, it is difficult to discern the exact extent of such activities, though it is certainly possible that the preexisting networks among German and other European police organs were instrumental in furthering the racial and political aims of the Nazis. What is clear, however, is that the fight against transient communities remained a matter of international interest, pursued through a transnational approach under a thoroughly nazified ICPC.

After the collapse of the Nazi regime in 1945, the ICPC was in serious disarray. The turbulence of the post-Second World War era resulted in a striking resurgence of international criminal activity. This arguably served as the motivational basis for rebuilding the ICPC, at the suggestion of senior Belgium Police Officer Florent Louwage, who expressed the “dangers resulting, since the cessation of hostilities, from the moving about of international criminals” who “have more and more, a tendency to transport their criminal activities, successively, into different states.”⁹⁹ With the strong support of France, Scandinavia, and the United Kingdom, in June 1946, a meeting took place in Brussels that led to the revival of the ICPC. The participants—approximately fifty officials from seventeen countries—decided to move the ICPC’s headquarters from Vienna to Paris, where a secretary general would manage the organization’s daily affairs.¹⁰⁰ They also appointed Louwage as the commission’s inaugural postwar president and established an executive committee comprising five officials from different countries to secure its autonomy, neutrality, credibility and effectiveness in addressing international crime.¹⁰¹

At the twenty-fifth session of the General Assembly, held in Vienna in 1956, the ICPC was officially renamed “Interpol.” Its members adopted a new constitution, which reinforced the fundamental rules and principles that existed before the Nazi takeover, except in one respect. Interpol would continue to “contribute effectively to the prevention and suppression of ordinary crimes” by ensuring and promoting “the widest possible mutual assistance among all criminal police authorities within the limits of the laws existing in the different countries.” On account of its prior nazification, however, the organization was strictly forbidden from “[undertaking] any intervention or activities of a political, military, religious or racial character.”¹⁰² By remaining politically neutral, Interpol aimed to ensure its independence as a global police organization, to consider universal principles of international extradition law, and to protect individuals from persecution.

Even though Interpol officials were keen to ensure continuity in its functions, statutes, and organizational structure, this had certain limitations, especially with regard to international representation. Some police institutions, including those from Germany, Austria, Italy, and Spain, had not initially been invited to rejoin Interpol, on the grounds that they “were not sufficiently well organized and independent enough to participate,” indicating a stunning shift from the power dynamics of ICPC, in which Germany and Austria had played a leading role in globalizing policing matters.¹⁰³ Although Interpol’s activities in the postwar

⁹⁸ Huonker, “Roma, Sinti, Jenische Strukturen, Haltungen, Entwicklungen in der Schweiz vor, während und nach dem 2. Weltkrieg,” 70–75.

⁹⁹ Federal Bureau of Investigation Headquarters, Freedom of Information/Privacy Acts (FOIPA), 6/234, reproduced in Deflem, *Policing World Society*, 205. Crucially, Deflem notes that there was a lack of concrete evidence supporting concerns about an “upsurge” in crime. Thus, the necessity for rebuilding international police cooperation reflected the “self-understanding of police, much like it had more than two decades before.”

¹⁰⁰ The countries in attendance at the Brussels Conference included Belgium, Chile, Czechoslovakia, Denmark, Egypt, France, Iran, Luxembourg, Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Sweden, Switzerland, Turkey, United Kingdom, and Yugoslavia; see Interpol, *The International Conference in Brussels from June 3, 1946*, October 12, 2022 (www.interpol.int).

¹⁰¹ Members of this Executive Committee were Florent Louwage (Belgium), Louis Duloux (France), Werner Müller (Switzerland), Ronald Howe (United Kingdom), and Harry Soderman (Sweden); see Interpol, *The International Conference in Brussels from June 3, 1946*, October 12, 2022 (www.interpol.int).

¹⁰² International Criminal Police Organization (Interpol), *Constitution of the International Criminal Police Organization-Interpol*, June 13, 1956, (I/CONS/GA/1956 [2008]), Oxford International Organizations Database, OXIO 245.

¹⁰³ Quoted in Deflem, *Policing World Society*, 206.

years largely concentrated on improving existing structures and technologies to facilitate effective cross-border communications between national police institutions, it does not appear to have been explicitly involved in managing international Gypsy affairs, because other supranational institutions, including the Council of Europe, now handled these matters.¹⁰⁴ Nonetheless, the postwar creation of Interpol shows the surprising ability of police institutions to recover from killing policies and cooperate again under different conditions.

Conclusion

This article has demonstrated that a centralized, transnational approach to the so-called “Gypsy question” was achieved as early as 1931 under the auspices of the ICPC. The foundations for this international framework were built upon earlier attempts to increase central European cooperation to deal with Gypsies by resolving the ongoing difficulties with migration control and the “cyclical expulsions” of Gypsies. Switzerland was the first European country to lead this push by creating a seventeen-point plan to eradicate Gypsy vagrancy, though it foundered on conflicts of state interests and concerns about national sovereignty, indicating the beginning of the broader phenomenon of illiberal internationalism. German efforts to coordinate international action for restricting the movement of Gypsies on international railways and waters followed soon after. This too failed because of the perceived clash between state jurisdictions and border agreements. The attempt to pursue stringent international action against the Gypsies was, however, revived after the inception of the ICPC in 1923. With Switzerland once again leading the push, supported by Czechoslovakia and Austria, the conference delegates agreed upon a common central European set of procedures for resolving the “Gypsy question,” confirming that an international approach was at least partially achieved before Hitler’s rise to power in 1933. This approach was consolidated after the establishment of an international headquarters for handling Gypsy affairs in 1936, where the long-standing aim of several central European states to create a centralized Gypsy cataloguing system finally met with success.

For its part, the ICPC shaped the professionalization of European policing practices for fighting cross-border crime, which they saw as including Gypsy mobility. Despite its independence as an expert bureaucracy of criminal policing, however, the ICPC was susceptible to being politicized by whoever was in control of the organization. The annexation of Austria on March, 12, 1938, for example, permitted Nazi officials to infiltrate the ICPC, which had traditionally been under Austrian leadership, and gradually to bring the commission’s activities under Nazi control. In this way, the Nazis attempted to advance their own nationalist and political agenda through international police matters, showing a continued trend of illiberal internationalism. The ICPC thus prepared the groundwork for Nazi officials later to carry out the elimination of the Gypsy population. While there is no conclusive evidence indicating the ICPC’s involvement in the *Porrajmos*, what remains clear was that during the postwar years, the Commission successfully distanced itself from harmful and genocidal policies. It managed to rebuild its initiatives in tackling international crime and implemented new measures to ensure its independence, credibility and efficiency in addressing global crime while promoting trust and collaboration among member nations.

¹⁰⁴ Postwar international interest in Gypsies was aroused by rapid influx of Gypsies migrating from certain Balkan states (such as Romania, Bulgaria, and the former Yugoslavia) to areas of western Europe (mainly Italy, France, Germany, Spain, and the United Kingdom) so that they could obtain political asylum or a temporary residence. From the 1960s on, the European Council played a major role in promoting and protecting Gypsy human rights. In a resolution from September 30, 1969, the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe urged their member states to “take all steps necessary to stop discrimination, be it in legislation or in administrative practice, against Gypsies and other travellers” by adopting national legislative programs encouraging the social and economic integration of Gypsy communities. For an overview of their accomplishments, see Jean-Pierre Liégeois, *The Council of Europe and Roma: 40 Years of Action* (Strasbourg: Council of Europe Publishing, 2010), 33–51.

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