

It was to help such cases that the Gypsy Council was set up in 1966 and I was later asked at a meeting of Gypsies to take over the secretaryship from Grattan Puxon. I attended as an interpreter at all four international Congresses about which Cohn has doubts. (It would certainly be useful to establish attendance lists of those present before memories fade and documents such as hotel and restaurant bills, notes of speeches, *etc.*, disappear.)

Finally, in my defence, I have to say I simply am a non-Gypsy (not “a self-professed non-Gypsy”) and I do cite both of Cohn’s favorite authors, Ljungberg and Yoors (where relevant, though I have considerable doubts about the reliability of the latter as a historical source).

Dr Donald Kenrick  
London 1992

To the Editor:

I would like to comment on the criticisms made by Jiri Lipa and Werner Cohn of Ian Hancock’s article.

I do not have the time (and I doubt your journal would provide the space) for a line-by-line analysis of Dr. Lipi’s and Professor Cohn’s letters. Both, I fear, suffer from that dreadful intellectual disease, hardening of the categories; both argue that *their* position is right, Hancock’s is wrong.

To ‘prove’ this, both assume there exists a world of neutral, impartial, value-free, verifiable, objective ‘facts,’ there to be simply observed and collected; ‘facts’ which will reveal, and thus help to ‘preserve,’ the real, true, authentic, genuine Gypsy folk culture and practices.

These epistemological assumptions are quite at odds with the intellectual underpinnings of current social science, do not recognize the fluid, changing, problematic, constructed nature of behavior and ‘reality,’ and do not recognize the variety of Romani adaptations and responses to widely differing circumstances in different countries.

All too often, an appeal to ‘objectivity’ is not just epistemologically outdated, but is a reinforcement of hegemonies of privilege, power and control. Academics who have their own agendas, contribute to such reinforcement. Having said all this, the *real* issue is...what?

An *embryonic* Romani Nationalism, must, by definition, start from small beginnings, and evolve. We believe there is a right and proper role for such political activity *by and for* Romanis.

There is no dispute that an International Romani Union exists; there is no dispute that there are many national Romani organizations affiliated to the International body, and there are indeed many Romani groups that are *not* affiliated, but who operate as independent organizations. All these, however

small, however scattered, however unrelated to the 'real (sic) Gypsies' of Lipi and Cohn, however alien to the agendas of academics, do constitute an embryonic organization. Whether this eventually evolves into a larger and more powerful body, or whether Gypsies become a 'conventional ethnic minority,' whether a 'real' Gypsy nationalism can be created or not—all this is uncertain. But what is certain, is that Dr Lipi's and Professor Cohn's assertions that Gypsy Nationalism *cannot and should not* happen, must be challenged, shown to be erroneous, and rejected.

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To the Editor:

I am writing this letter in response to the statements by Mr. Werner Cohn and Mr. Jiri Lipa. By way of identification, I am 100% Gypsy, and to the best of my knowledge my ancestors were also 100% Gypsy, Russian Kalderash.

The comments of the letters suggested that Gypsies have to meet a set of behavior standards to be considered true Gypsies. This is a totally thoughtless statement. Do you stop being a Gypsy once you get educated? I have met thousands of Gypsies in the United States and Europe who range the social spectrum just as any other people. The big difference is that those who reach a higher standard of living and education often feel that they have to hide their identity, and in most of the circumstances that is understandable.

I have a video of the meeting of the most recent World Romani Congress. The conference was well represented from many countries, including the United States. More recently, I attended a conference in Romania at which there were representatives from every part of that country. I estimate that there were over 200 Gypsies there, ranging from peasants to factory foremen and teachers. The topic of this meeting was to try to form some type of alliance, to have one Gypsy voice at voting time in the upcoming national elections.

It is true that we Gypsies are not as well organized as we should be, but that is due to the conditions of our people: lack of funds and education, racism, *etc.*, and not because we do not have the desire to accomplish this goal. Gypsies such as Ian Hancock, Nicolae Gheorghe, Vasile Costel and Mateo Maximoff have made many things possible for our people because of their efforts. What they are doing should be supported.

At present, we are applying to different human rights foundations to fund or contribute to a conference by Romani activists meeting some time this winter. Such a conference is very important at this time. Since the fall of communism, the attacks on Gypsies in Eastern Europe have increased tragically,