

enterprises, and Lend-Lease supplies. It also ignores the mass civilian deaths from starvation.

This book is essential reading for all teachers of Russian history, 1900–1940. Researchers will find it an important, if controversial, contribution to the economic history of that period.

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Those Who Count: Expert Practices of Roma Classification. By Mihai Surdu. Budapest: Central European University Press, 2016. xvi, 276. Notes. Bibliography. Index. Tables. \$60.00, hard bound.
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There are few groups in the western world that have suffered as much from negative stereotypes as the Roma, even though they have lived in Europe and North America for centuries. Many suffered as slaves in Wallachia and Moldavia while others were often forced to live as nomads and relegated to the lower socio-economic rungs of society. Over time, Roma were able to better integrate into society, although they still faced a deep-seeded prejudice driven by stereotypes that depicted them as lazy, thievish ne'er-do-wells. The Nazis institutionalized these stereotypes, which led to the mass murder of most of the Roma and Sinti in the Greater Reich.

The devastating nature of such prejudice is what led Roma leaders in the 1960s to begin to search for a new name other than “Gypsy” (“Egyptian”) for this very diverse “group.”¹ Surdu argues that they did this for political reasons, which is partly true. But they also wanted to find a new term—“Roma” (Romani)—that was not laden with deep prejudicial meanings like “Gypsy” was.

The communization of eastern Europe after World War II, where the bulk of the continent’s Roma lived, forced its new leaders to come to grips with the multiple problems that this highly-marginalized minority faced regionally. Each country in the Soviet bloc adopted different policies to deal with their Roma, which did dramatically little to improve their lot and, in many instances, enflamed prejudice towards them. In Romania, which was home to Europe’s largest Roma population, this hatred exploded into violence in the weeks after the overthrow of Ceaușescu in late 1989. The newly-free press unleashed a tirade of articles that included claims that the Ceaușescus were of “Gypsy extraction.” In the midst of such journalistic outbursts, Ion Cioba, the chief of the *Kalderaș* (*căldărași*) Roma, stated that “whatever is no good, every reject, is left at the Gypsies’ door.”²

1. Iлона Klímová-Alexander, *The Romani Voice in World Politics: The United Nations and Non-State Actors* (Burlington, VT, 2005), 13–14.

2. David M. Crowe, *A History of the Gypsies of Eastern Europe and Russia*, 2nd ed. (New York, 2007), 144–45. For more on *Kalderaș* (*căldărași*) Roma, see Viorel Achim, *The Roma in Romanian History* (Budapest, 2004), 89, 124–26.

One of the things that triggered this violence was the explosion of Roma political, literary, and cultural activities throughout Romania. This “Gypsy” renaissance underscored the fact that the Roma were not a monolithic group, something that numerous scholars have emphasized in their research and writings.³ One could argue, in fact, that viewing the Roma as a monolithic group has enabled some of the non-Roma who have played a role in writing their history over the past few centuries to foster the stereotypes that have haunted them.

According to Mihai Surdu, this trend has continued in the post-communist era. He argues that organizations like the World Bank, the Council of Europe, the European Roma Rights Centre, the UN, and others, as well as an array of scholars and NGOs, have used research and analytical models that perpetuate “highly Roma-related themes . . . such as poverty, lack of education, unemployment, and welfare dependency.” The result of these efforts is the creation of “an iconic depiction of the Roma” (4).

Using what he calls “socialist constructivist literature” (32), he analyzes the various approaches that non-Roma have used to study and categorize the Roma over the past few centuries. While there is merit to some of his arguments, they are weakened by the lack of a Roma voice in his study.

This voice is extremely important to those of us who have worked as activists for, educators, legal consultants, or scholars of Roma in eastern Europe and North America over the past three decades. Over time, some of us became quite close with many Roma. What we learned from these rich interactions, whether they took place in a rural village in Romania or Bulgaria, New York City, or a small community in Wisconsin, is that the only way to begin to understand the Roma and the challenges they faced was to sit, listen, and learn from what they chose to share with us. The lessons that we took away from such experiences were far more valuable than what one could glean from reading dry, distant, theoretical studies.

This omission adds to other concerns about some of the author’s principal ideas and conclusions. In one chapter, for example, he discusses the Nazis’ misuse of census data to promote their racial ideas about the Roma and Sinti, and concludes, without any qualification, that “the concept of race is still in place [today] as an objective category in censuses, research, and generally in scientific literature” (110).

Elsewhere, he uses what he calls a “bibliometric approach” (153) to analyze what he considers the 251 most important post-1989 publications in English on the Roma. He created this list by looking at the abstracts of 1000 publications on Google Scholar (GS).⁴ Surdu narrowed this list to 251 by choosing those publications most cited by others. For those of us who have served on journal editorial boards, this bibliometric approach is often used by publishers to determine the success of a particular journal. But it is difficult to determine if Surdu read all of the books and articles on his list of 251 publications or just the abstracts since he uses few citation notes in this section of his book.

3. Michael Stewart, *The Time of the Gypsies* (Boulder, CO, 1997), pp. 8–9; Klimová-Alexander, *Romani Voice*, pp. 30–31.

4. Today, the site lists “21,600 results” for “Roma” or “Gypsies.”

There are similar concerns about his evaluation of some of the key studies that he argues “frame” Roma identity in eastern Europe by emphasizing their widespread poverty, substandard living conditions, and traditional values. While he is correct in pointing out the dangers of oversimplifying the complex challenges that the Roma faced in the decades after the collapse of communism, he tends to downplay the intent of such studies, and the role they play in trying to draw the western world’s attention to the desperate plight of the Roma in central and eastern Europe. Unfortunately, he does not offer any suggestions about alternative ways to discuss these issues without falling prey to the use of the language he thinks perpetuates such stereotypes. Moreover, one cannot apply the same standards of evaluation to works published by important international organizations, whose sole purpose was and is to help the Roma, to those from an earlier period that were driven by less than altruistic goals.

Surdu is particularly critical of a series of studies by the World Bank (WB) from 2000–2010 that underscore the complex problems that organizations and NGOs face when dealing with the diverse Roma communities in central and eastern Europe. For example, in the WB’s 2000 and 2005 studies, *Roma and the Transition in Central and Eastern Europe* and *Roma in an Expanding Europe*, respectively, he criticizes the organization’s claim that the various, changing reasons for Roma parents’ hesitation to send their children to public schools is to protect “Roma cultural identity” (181). While there is some merit to this idea, he fails to explore the fact that some Roma parents hesitated to send their children to public schools because of how badly Roma children were occasionally treated in school. Some Roma children, particularly in rural areas, often just spoke Romani at home, and were not linguistically prepared to attend schools where the classes were in Romanian. Public school officials often reacted to this problem by placing these children in special schools for students with “learning problems.” According to Gabriela Hrabanova, 70% of the Roma school children in the Czech Republic in 2006 were in such schools.⁵ In the end, such issues have far less to do with cultural identity *per se* than with the fact that Roma in some parts of central and eastern Europe continue to face societal prejudices that fortify their suspicions of the *gadje* (non-Roma) world.

In the end, while Mihai Surdu’s study is interesting and reminds us of the importance of being sensitive to words and ideas that might unintentionally promote age-old stereotypes, he offers no alternatives or suggestions about how to address the complex points he raises. This, coupled with the lack of a Roma voice, also raise questions about the merit of some of his conclusions.

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5. Gabriela Hrabanova, “Anti-Gypsyism in the Czech Republic,” in Valeriu Nicolae and Hannah Slavik, eds. *Roma Diplomacy* (New York, 2007), 168.