

Citizenship and the Gypsies, Roma, Travellers



- An ancient concept of limited democracy from the Greek city States and the Roman Republic
- Pressed into modern use by 18th Century republicans
- Appropriated by Palmerston for the British constitutional Monarchy: “*Civis Britannicus Sum*” (actually he was a British Subject)
- Co-opted for Social Democracy by T.H.Marshall (1965) who turned it into a “theory”, suggesting the 19th century saw the achievement of mass political citizenship in the UK, while the 20th century saw the achievement of mass economic citizenship.

What's wrong with citizenship as a theory?



- It assumes progress is “natural”
- What happens in politics and society is assumed to be the result of policy, i.e. Benevolent politicians having good ideas and implementing them.
- After the industrial capitalist countries achieved welfare states, economic inequalities (till then shrinking) remained constant or even grew within them, and even more so in the world as a whole.
- Relegates “foreign” social theory (Marx, Weber, Durkheim, Parsons) to chapter one of text-books, to be got out of the way before the practical matters.

The continuing influence of “citizenship”.



- T.H. Marshall elected President of British Sociological Association as an old man in 1976
- Although Giddens (1994, 1998) and Turner (& Isin 2007), the 2 leading sociologists mostly based in Britain, are dismissive of each other, both still see the concept of citizenship as central to political progress.
- Trade Unions, Ethnic Minority Organisations and even Feminists (Lister, 1997) couch their struggles in terms of achieving full citizenship.
- Even the USA, which preaches universal human rights abroad, sticks to restrictive citizenship at home.

Reasons for Roma to be worried



- *Laws* about citizenship in Europe do not elaborate on welfare, or rights, or obligations or any of the panoply of citizenship ideology; they refer exclusively to immigration status: who is to be denied rights.
- In a world of nation states, you have to be a national to belong
- The ideology of citizenship as the goal of progress mushrooms at the same time as the apparatus of immigration control in Western Society.

Roma, citizenship and the collapse of communism



- From 1945 to 1989, Europe slowly accepts a new Romani politics; from the 1st World Romani Congress (1971) the citizenship model is grudgingly applied in some respects to Roma, as a nation among nations.
- After 1989, the drive to improve the circumstances of Roma in Western Europe falters as preventing the migration of Eastern European Roma becomes top priority. US, Germany and EU promote Human Rights as part of the EU accession process.
- Denying immigrant Roma citizenship rights becomes top priority in the West.

The Blair Government and Inclusion



- For years the “Social Inclusion Unit” set up in the Prime Minister’s office excludes all consideration of Roma, Gypsies, Travellers; eventually, under Brown, it looks at “mobile minorities”.
- Home Secretary Jack Straw attacks Travellers for being law-breakers in planning and other stuff: ASBOs (anti-social behaviour orders) given disproportionately to Travellers
- “Asylum-seekers” especially Roma, become the new focus of anti-immigration campaigners.
- Policies on inclusion seem first to define who is NOT to be included – it is still all about finding the good enemy.

Are 'Human Rights' an alternative to citizenship



- After 1989 The Project on Ethnic Relations and the Open Society Institute sponsor Human Rights work for Roma in Eastern Europe.
- Human Rights 'theory' proposes that one's rights depend on being a member of the human race, rather than a particular nation, or one's domicile
- European Roma Rights Centre brings an American model of civil rights via litigation to Eastern Europe and scores some notable court victories.
- But these advances are undermined by growing repression against migrant Roma (associated with growing racism against local Roma) in Western Europe.

Roma Responses



- Attempting to use citizenship as a vehicle of group mobility (c.f. Acton & Gheorghe, (1995)
- Proposing the idea of “A nation without a territory” at the 5th World Romani Congress (c.f. Acton & Klimova (2001)
- But sometimes recognising that this “playing with our identity” is playing the oppressor’s game. (cf Gheorghe 1993)
- The priority for international Romani rights is defending the human rights of non-citizens. This leads to adopting position in favour of free-er international travel, and progressive limitation (and eventual abolition) of national sovereignty and the de-legitimation of the power of artificial majorities,

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