

Gypsies Must Stop Roaming in Russia

Soviet Government Closet Open Road to Them.

The Hinsdale Tribune

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Washington. — Gypsies must stop roaming!

The Soviet government has issued the fiat. Three years of grace are allowed the gypsies. Then there must be no more wandering through all the Russias. The covered wagon, the swarthy soothsayer in brilliant rags, wild gypsy music at the roadside campfire, must take up the trail to limbo.

“Of the many new decrees and programs at the Soviet republic, settling the gypsy on the’ land probably has as little hope as any of accomplishment,” says a bulletin of the National Geographic society from its headquarters in Washington. “Many nations in many ages have tried to control that strange figure, the gypsy—and have failed.

The Flame of Nomadism.

“Since the early part of the Nineteenth century students and scholars have tried to understand the gypsy. They have compared the gypsy of Russia to the gypsy of Hungary, Spain, England and America. They have charted his westward advance. They have examined his language and linked it with Sanskrit and tongues of India. They have set down his customs. They have accounted for nearly every characteristic of the gypsy race except the one that sets the gypsy apart from all other races. Why has the flame of nomadism lived in the gypsy? Why can’t he deny the call of the open road? That is the real mystery. It stands unexplained.

“Gypsies have had inducements to settle on the land in nearly every nation they have invaded. In Scotland they paid for vagrancy with their necks in the time of James y. A few countries can report permanent communities of gypsies, but generally the law glides over their black heads and falls to mold them into ‘good, solid citizens.

Another Gypsy Mystery.

“Another mystery of Gypsydom. the capacity for keeping the race strain pure, although they wander the world over and mix with men of all nations, is easier to explain. Strict obedience to three precepts of gypsy law has saved their individuality from the world’s melting pot, according to George Borrow. This British missionary studied the gypsy nearly 100 years ago, yet so fine is his prose, so accurate were his observations, and so unchanging is the gypsy, in both lineage and language, that Borrow’s books to this day are treasures of lore. The three commandments of Romany are:

Separate not from the husbands.

Be faithful to the husbands.

Pay your debts to the husbands.

“‘Rom’ means ‘min’ in the gypsy tongue. The first and third commandments are directed to the Tom.’ The second is directed to the women whose position in the tribe

is hinted by the repetition of the word ‘husbands.’ Indeed, ‘Romany’ may be translated ‘the sect of husbands.’

Abrogates Debtor Custom.

“The first injunction, ‘separate not from the husbands.’ is responsible for the maintenance of the tribal spirit and the language. That the second has been strictly observed, there is ample testimony by the fact that gypsies the world over have staring black eyes, rich black hair, and a swarthy complexion. The last commandment has lost force because civilized law will not permit operation of the old gypsy law compelling the defaulting debtor to serve as slave to the lender for a year and a day.

“The name gypsy itself is the perpetuation of an error. The first tribes arriving in England told the British they came from ‘Litill Egypt.’ In the rough-and-tumble of language ‘Egyptians’ became ‘gypsies.’ The French fell into error, too, and their mistake has been transplanted to English. Thinking gypsies’ came from Bohemia, the French called them Bohemians. With the big ‘B’ become dwarf, we have a label for a ‘light-hearted, sophisticated man-about-town.’ A Bohemian, perforce, is a ‘root’ relative to Bohemia, the eastern knob of Czecho-Slovakia, which is not particularly famous for light-heartedness, sophistication or men-about-town.

“The Soviet edict was probably directed to the ‘Zlganl.’ This appellation is far more accurate than ‘gypsy’ and may be regarded as the true universal root name by which the rare itself prefers to be known. In the Balkans it becomes Tslgan; in Greece and Turkey, Tshingian; in Italy, Zingari; in Germany, Zigeuner. Their international name may not have escaped the English language entirely, for some authorities find it in our word ‘tinker.’ The gypsies were the peddlers and the itinerant repairmen of Old England—the tinkers.”

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