

SYNOPSIS :

« **GYPSY RESISTANCE** »

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Historically the Roma people were often humiliated, tracked down, slaughtered and evicted ... The collective memory concerning the Roma was and still is today that of poultry thief, or a hostile foreigner, or just perhaps an exotic nomadic bohemian, that evokes non-nomadic people's curiosity. This is a world and another way of life to escape to, away from the dissatisfaction of the static western life style that most of us experience. Despite the "humanitarian" intentions, the photography generally depicts Roma as resigned down trodden people who exclude themselves from main stream life "where we all should be". They are portrayed as a group of misfortunate, victims of a series of accidents which one cannot give a political sense to ; a people who are resigned to suffer and put up with their negative experiences and which the community at large deplores and commiserate about their terrible plight, or not. These images encourage the lack of political commitment, and as a result, it leaves the solutions of the severe social problems of the Roma to charitable goodwill. However, there are also the images of men challenging their oppression and taking part in making their own History. These photographs reveal men struggling to achieve their human rights and dignity. The difficult situation of the Roma and their suffering is a result of human institutions and the society. This situation can be reversed by the same human institutions and solutions can be found if the human will is there.

**Tract distribué au cours de la manifestation du 17 juillet 2004 :**

*« Men without rights in Europe. We are Roma from Romania living in France. We are in France so that our children have a better life, so that they can go to school, have better clothes and food and benefit from a civilised society. We left Romania driven away by poverty, lack of work and racial discrimination. In Romania our children are not accepted at school because they are dicriminated against and therefore illiterate. They refuse us jobs because we are Roma, all doors are closed on us. In Romania, there is not medical care for the Roma people. If you do not have money, you have no medical care, you die. We do not want to be evicted any more from shanty towns to shanty towns because our children go to school here and even if it costs us our life we will not leave France. We would like to have legal papers and the right to work. This would give us a better life and we would not need to beg any more. We would like French lessons for adults as this would allow us to integrate into French society. We need health care in order to have a decent life. We live in shanty towns and are often victims of police violence, who break our windows and accommodation and also confiscate and destroy our papers before evicting us. »*

Roma of St-Denis and Montreuil.