

Nya Pressen, 19.04.1969

Some time ago Veijo Baltzar appeared in a TV program. During the program the so-called Gypsy question surfaced, of which his opinion differs greatly from his kinsmen. In the article below, he explains his point of view.

Gypsy Oppression is Political – Not a Question of Race.

– By Veijo Baltzar

I have received a letter and multiple phone calls in which I have been asked to speak of why I left the Gypsy Association, why everyone has accused me and if they were angry with me. Firstly, I need to say that someone else should answer the question of whether they were angry. Personally, I believe so. Perhaps they were a little angry, it probably depends on whether we, as people, are egocentric and unable to accept other's opinions. We ourselves think that we are always right; that our neighbour is the one who has it wrong.

Everything in that debate went by so quickly that it was difficult to justify anything. Therefore I would like to explain here just what my justifications were.

Since I am writing this article, I should know who I am writing for. In other words, are Gypsies reading this? In the debate I was accused of using terms that they didn't understand. I personally think that I used typical or easy language - something I have always strived to maintain.

Gypsy etiquette

Someone accused me of having written chapters that were unacceptable regarding Gypsy etiquette. Naturally, they are talking of the chapter in which Viktor has intercourse in a stable, or some other equivalent.

I believe it was necessary. I want to give the following answer to these people: Should I write a book for Gypsies alone when, for example, one

hundred of five thousand might read it, with maybe twenty who would actually buy my book? I

believe that was the case for *The Burning Road*. I think that I would be inclined to do so if I could be sure that Gypsies would read this article:

We need to appeal to the white

We are not able to help each other. We must appeal to white people. At the very least I am going to try and fasten the interest of white people. For this reason, I didn't write a book solely for Gypsies. I wrote for the entirety of Finland's population, possibly for other folk too.

Therefore, I believe that it is absurd to insist that my book should appeal to a small number of Gypsies, until at least one person of that small group reads the book.

Perhaps I would like to write a book solely for Gypsies if they really wanted it, if I knew that they would all loan it out from the library.

But the overall tone of that book would be completely different. In that book, I would talk about wrong-doings and the weaknesses of the Gypsies – they wouldn't possibly be able to bear that. In any case, the book would be of huge benefit to the Gypsies, especially the younger generation. I would disclose the discrimination and pettiness from within their own circle that can be taken to extremes.

If you are interested then all you need to do is ask me to write it. You will get it.

Racial discrimination

The main reason why they are angry with me over this tv-program is probably because I said that there isn't any biological racism here in Finland. Most didn't understand what that meant, they just gasped and said:

- Hey now, what are you saying? It doesn't prove anything if you haven't been hated against - we have suffered from it first-hand.

I answered that I don't deny that in practice, but I deny the root causes and claim that the base of the problem is political.

No one believed my response: - You are too young to know anything, we have been oppressed. We haven't been accepted here, nor there. We don't give a damn about politics – we know they racially discriminate.

To which I answered: Please people, if you would read my book or my articles, you would have noticed that I don't deny that we are discriminated against or oppressed, quite the contrary. This didn't register for them either.

The Gypsy question is political

I continue to maintain that the question is political, specifically social-political. It isn't at all a question of real racism. From my understanding, racism is when no one of a specific race is accepted, regardless of whether he is rich or poor. Here in Finland the person is always accepted if she is rich, if she has power and if she has had success. Regardless of which race she belongs to. The core of the problem is we are not politically oriented and politicians have not shown interest in us due to there not being many votes that will come from directing their interest towards us. Three factors have caused the myth that it is a racial issue: we have not received education, we have not received a socially grounded position...

The church

And then we have the church.

The church is one of the biggest reasons. Some hundreds of years ago, the clergy forbid anyone from associating with Gypsies. This meant that God did not accept the Gypsies. The bible has given people the first understanding that one can

hate a race: For example, killing the Philistines, or you are my chosen people. So has the myth of racial hate built itself from so-called belief circles.

Secondly, I am surprised over how the Gypsies themselves strongly relate it to a racial issue that it leads to one beginning to actually believe that it is a question solely about racial differences. The younger generation is on the way to distancing themselves from such ideologies, for them it is unnecessary to relate it to racial hate.

Let us hear what the Gypsies have to say when they have been given education and homes. Will they continue to say that it is an issue of racial hate?

I don't think that they would continue to think so. They would be accepted, which means that it was never racism.

I have many reasons for why I left the Gypsy Association. Those who can read between the lines understand without me needing to elaborate further. One of the reasons is that I am in principle against the Gypsy curators. Just now I read in the press that the current counselor wants to have five counsellors in Helsinki.

According to me, they could make it one hundred if it was the right solution.

The Gypsies don't know that they are giving the white people moral support. I mean that white folk can say: see here, you have Gypsy counsellors. What more do you want? You cannot possibly say that we don't want to help solve your problems.

In response to that, one must naturally say: Of course you are trying, there are examples of it.

I cannot grasp why the Gypsies do not understand this. Do they think that if one fills Finland with Gypsy counsellors to whom one can go and complain, that the issue is solved?

Of course the answer is that isn't the case, but it is a step forward. To that I would reply that yes, it is a step forward but at the same time it would create moral support for white folk, which means that any further improvement would be at a much slower pace.

When one hundred Gypsies receive a counsellor and a home, the rest starve. Children continue to grow without schooling or further education. In

one hundred years maybe all Gypsies will have a home.

I think that this is an alms for the Gypsies and if it is not realised now then nothing will be done about it. I am convinced that when the Gypsies become enlightened they will realise this. Until then, I'll be waiting and hoping that I am alive when it happens.

To white folk I would like to say: Choose the most expensive road. Give us some middle ground. You have made the same mistake so many times in the past. Just give each Gypsy a counsellor – what more could we need. Taxes have also be thrown out before.

All people, all children, are equally worthy. This means that all Gypsy children should be given the chance to go to school at the same time, not like things are now with these temporary solutions; that a small carefully selected group that gets taken care of is given the chance.

There is money!

To this one could answer that many of the children are already attending school. I would like to ask: Are they? I do not think it is acceptable when they are sat in their seat struggling with hunger instead of their homework!

The state should at least come up with a holistic solution for the children and the generations to come. It is unnecessary to state that there isn't enough money. There's no need to widen a ten-kilometre stretch of road somewhere in Kainu. I think that money should instead be used to help

the Gypsies become a productive group for the entirety of Finland.

But if you want us to remain an unproductive group, then give us intermediaries. If the deciding entities here in Finland want the people to pay taxes that cannot be used to benefit either the Gypsies or whites*, then it is only a matter of continuing to choose the most expensive alternative.

But do realise, then the day will come when both the Gypsies and white folk will say that I was right. With that I do not want to say that I am always correct, I have been wrong many times. I know, at the very least, that Gypsy counsellors are not needed, partial solutions In this way are not necessary.

**In the Finnish language the traditional word for the Roma/Gypsy has been mustalainen. In this context the word valkolainen has been created as an opposite comparative. While talking about the Gypsies within Finnish society there is often a reference made to the white (valkolainen) and dark (tumma/mustalainen). This is a means of talking about the different nationalities within Finnish society and is not meant as a "white vs dark" way.*