



SANDULENCO PROCOP / SANDULENCO GAVRILA

(Сандуленко Прокоп Гаврилович / Сандуленко Гаврила Гаврилович)

The following memoir was given by Roma Ruslana Sandulenko, 50 years old, head of the local Romani NGO, on May 30, 2020, at her home in the village of Nerubayske, Biliayivca county, Odessa region, Ukraine:

“From the stories of my father Volodymyr Sandulenko, I know that we are ancient Ukrainian Roms who roamed Ukrainian lands for hundreds of years. My paternal grandfather, Prokop Gavrila Sandulenko, belonged to the Ukrainian Romanies who lived here over 100 years. He was born ‘under the wheel’ between 1909 and 1912. Sometime in the 1930s, Stalin began his program of collectivisation, which affected us Roms. I do not remember the exact dates, but there were special decrees or laws on the use of land for Roms, and the establishment of Romani collective farms¹.

We do not know where and how my grandfather’s tabir² roamed the lands, but we do know that the whole tabir became a collective farm, at a guess in 1934 or 1935. Where it happened precisely is unknown. Probably in the Chernihiv region, or maybe the Vinnytsia region. But it was definitely not the collective farm where M. Sandulenko, a relative of my grandfather, headed³. Before the war, my grandfather’s tabir remained in this collective farm, where they worked and carried out plans, and in the late 1930s, nobody was repressed.

They also worked for the Germans, and the Germans understood that there were few farmers left, so at first, us Roms were not affected. But the harvest in 1942 was very small, and the Germans were furious. They drove everyone to work and, like the NKVDists⁴, extinguished the villages, and searched for those who did not hand over grain, eggs, and milk. My papu (grandfather), Procop, **was the head of the collective farm and hid grain for the partisans**. The Germans somehow found out about it and interrogated and tortured Procop for a long time to find out about other grain and

1 E.g., Resolution of the Central Committee of National Minorities under the All-Ukrainian Central Executive Committee (Government of the Ukrainian SSR) dated October 1931 “On the accelerated attraction of small national minorities (Assyrians and Gypsies) to agriculture” (Central State archives of highest authorities of Ukraine, rec. 413 Central Commission for National Minorities at the All-Ukrainian Central Executive Committee, Kharkiv, inv. 1, file 548, but still is unpublished).

2 Tabir – a group of Roms related by kinship and at the same time living together (not obligatory nomadic).

3 This collective farm existed in the village of Olenivca in the Kyiv region in 1935 – 1937

4 NKVD (Narodnyi komissariat vnutrenikh del; People’s Commissariat for Internal Affairs). One of the main repressive organs before the war. NKVDist – a person in the NKVD’s service. It’s noteworthy that Sandulenko, when telling this history in Ukrainian, used the Russian abbreviation NKVD instead the Ukrainian NKVS.

products. But he said nothing, and in the end, they burned him in 1942, in October perhaps.

I must say that Roms began to learn from the partisans and their commissars how the Nazis destroyed the Roms here and there. So when these bastards burned papu, all **the Roms from this farm went into the woods and became real and true partisans**. My grandfather's older brother, whose name was Gavryla Gavril Sandulenko, was arrested and hanged for being a partisan, after he had been rounded up either by police or the Germans while on duty in the city, and was discovered with ammunition in his jacket.

Where was it and when?

Maybe in 1942, maybe in 1943. Our generation does not know. We were fools that didn't record or save anything, but it's good that at least we listened to the elders and their stories. It's up to you, brother, to dig in the archives, but you yourself know that you won't find much about "*Gypsies*". It is unlikely that whites⁵ wrote something about us."

This biography has been written by Niko Rergo

5 Whites – traditional general word for nonRoms, = gade