

**RE-THINKING ROMA RESISTANCE
THROUGHOUT HISTORY:
RECOUNTING STORIES
OF STRENGTH AND BRAVERY**



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Table of content

| | |
|---|-----|
| Preface by Ethel Brooks | 5 |
| Introduction. “Re-thinking Roma Resistance: Recounting Stories of Strength and Bravery” by Anna Mirga-Kruszelnicka and Jekatyerina Dunajeva | 13 |
| PART 1: REGIONAL PERSPECTIVES ON ROMA RESISTANCE | |
| Chapter 1. “Roma Resistance and the Struggle for Historical Justice in Norway and Sweden” by Jan Selling | 28 |
| Chapter 2. “Roma Resistance in Serbia, Slovenia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro and Macedonia during World War II” by Danijel Vojak | 45 |
| PART 2: COUNTRY CASE STUDIES OF ROMA RESISTANCE DURING THE HOLOCAUST | |
| Chapter 3. “Roma Struggle in Lithuania: Strategies of Survival and Impulse to Resist” by Aurėja Jutelytė | 68 |
| Chapter 4. “Roma Holocaust in Hungary: Importance and implications of Roma Resistance” by Jekatyerina Dunajeva | 98 |
| Chapter 5. “Roma Resistance in the Independent State of Croatia, 1941-1945” by Danijel Vojak | 120 |

| | |
|--|-----|
| Chapter 6. “Roma Resistance in Occupied Poland” by Justyna Matkowska | 145 |
| Chapter 7. “‘How I became a partisan’. Filmmaking as a Resistance Strategy against Oblivion” by Vera Lacková | 169 |
| Chapter 8. “The German Sinti and Roma at the Time of National Socialism” by Bildungsforum gegen Antiziganismus | 187 |

PART 3: ROMA RESISTANCE THROUGHOUT HISTORY

| | |
|---|-----|
| Chapter 9. “From Roma Slavery to WWII – Roma Resistance in Romania” by Adrian-Nicolae Furtună | 200 |
| Chapter 10. “Roma Resistance in Spain” by Nicolás Jiménez González | 220 |
| Chapter 11. “French Roma and Travellers’ Resistance: a Long Struggle” by Lise Foisneau | 233 |
| Biographies | 247 |

Preface

By Ethel Brooks

In 2020, seventy-five years after the end of World War II, and seventy-six years after the destruction of the so-called *zigeunerlager* at Auschwitz-Birkenau, the Memorial for the Murdered Roma and Sinti under National Socialism in Berlin is under threat. Erected in 2012, today the Deutsche Bahn plans a new railway line connecting Potsdamer Platz to the Reichstag. Sitting directly across from the Reichstag in the Tiergarten, the memorial is in the middle of Berlin, and, while new possible routes are being mapped and alternate plans are being made – including the addition of an information centre in the rail station under the memorial – the very fact that, only eight years after its inauguration, this memorial is under threat, shows the importance of continued vigilance, continued resistance and continued commemoration. The Memorial came thirty years after Germany officially recognised the racially-based motives for the annihilation of Roma and Sinti. Its inauguration occurred nearly forty years after the first activists began calling attention to the losses suffered by Roma and Sinti communities after their persecution had gone unacknowledged for decades after the end of World War II. At the inauguration of the Roma and Sinti Memorial, Romani Rose, head of the German Council of Sinti and Roma, a Sinto activist who lost 13 members of his family at Auschwitz-Birkenau, said, “There is not a single family of Sinti and Roma in Germany, who have not lost immediate family members. It shapes our identity to this day.” The Holocaust claimed the lives of three-quarters of the Roma and Sinti population in Europe; in some areas, such as the Czech Republic and parts of Poland, the Romani population was decimated. There are multiple areas of research, documentation and analysis that are yet to be carried out, including creating a better archive, a stronger analysis and a clearer understanding of Roma and Sinti lives.

Persecution of Roma and Sinti predated the Nazi era, with historiographic

evidence of pogroms, harassment and genocide reaching as far back as the Middle Ages through the nineteenth century.¹ While under Article 109 of the Weimar Constitution, Roma and Sinti were accorded full and equal citizenship rights, by 1926, Bavaria required registration of all Sinti and Roma and instituted measures for “Combatting Gypsies, Vagabonds and the Work-Shy.” In 1936, a central office for “Combatting the Gypsy Nuisance” opened in Munich, and the Interior Ministry set up directives authorising police to conduct raids on “Gypsies” in preparation for the Berlin Olympics. That same year, Roma became subject to the Nuremberg Race Laws, and many Roma who came under the scrutiny of the state were forcibly sterilised. The first concentration camp for Sinti and Roma (called *zigeunerlager*, or Gypsy Camp, by the Nazis) was established at Marzahn, on the outskirts of Berlin, on July 16, 1936. Located between a sewage dump and a cemetery, the camp imprisoned Roma and Sinti who had been rounded up during the pre-Olympic period. Directly after, local municipalities established concentration camps for Sinti and Roma throughout Germany and beyond, set up by the Nazis and their allies throughout Europe.²

It is important for us to remember and document, Romani and Sinti experiences of life before the Holocaust; to understand that the widespread use of identity cards with anthropometric measurements and racial categorisations were part of the founding of Interpol; and that the roundups and internments of Roma and Sinti began in Nazi Germany in the mid-1930s. To remember and to work to document all that we lost – the hundreds of thousands of individuals, the families, the communities, about whose fate we know nothing, and whose stories are not told in history books; nor, most likely, are they commemorated in national archives.

While concentration camps are the best-documented sites of wartime atrocity by the Nazis and their allies, their prisoners tortured, worked to death, gassed and murdered by other means, they are just one facet of the genocidal project of the Holocaust in Europe. Approximately twenty thousand concentration camps were set up across Europe, some for transport, others for forced

1 For an historical account of anti-Gypsy laws, persecution and oppression, see Ian Hancock, *The Pariah Syndrome: An account of anti-Gypsy slavery and persecution* (Ann Arbor, 1987: Karoma Publishers).

2 United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, *Sinti and Roma: Victims of the Nazi Era*; Internet; available from <http://www.ushmm.org/education/resource/roma/roma.php>; accessed June 13, 2013.

labour, and still others for mass murder. Along with the concentration camps that imprisoned millions, ghettos were set up in major cities, set apart by brick walls, barbed wire and armed guards, housing Jews, Roma and Sinti, and others. In Poland, the Czech Republic and beyond, German troops (*Wehrmacht*) and police murdered countless Roma and Sinti, who were buried in mass graves in the countryside.³ Along with official and unofficial pogroms throughout Europe, mobile death squads – *einsatzgruppen* – were deployed across the countryside as the Nazis pushed eastward into the Soviet Union. The numbers of Roma and Sinti who perished in the camps is only part of the story – the excavation of mass graves – most unmarked – and the identification of those buried in them is still being carried out in the eastern part of Europe in the present day. There is much work to be done to document Romani experiences of the Holocaust, and still much more to determine an accurate estimate of the numbers who were murdered, both inside the camps and by mobile killing squads, pogroms and other forms of violence. In the seventy years since the end of World War II, we still have no accurate count of the Romani and Sinti lives lost during the Holocaust, especially in the areas in the East, where the Romani population was greater and, we can assume, the number of those murdered rose accordingly.

It is crucial for us to hold memorial ceremonies and set aside spaces and monuments to those who were murdered, to those who lost family, loved ones and community, to those who returned from the camps or hiding only to find their cultures and life worlds decimated; to those who survived genocide. Furthermore, it is important not only to remember the dead and commemorate the survivors but also to celebrate the heroes, those who reached out beyond their families, beyond their communities, who – in the work of saving the lives of others – ran the risk of losing their own.

What about Roma and Sinti resistance to the terror and destruction carried out by the Nazis and their allies? One of the most significant but understudied, and, according to recent research, perhaps apocryphal acts of resistance carried out by Roma and Sinti prisoners occurred on May 15-16, 1944 in the *zigeunerlager* of Auschwitz-Birkenau. Roma and Sinti prisoners were deported to Auschwitz in family groups, and at least 23,000 were murdered in the gas

3 Gerhard Baumgartner, “Concentration Camps,” for Project Education of Roma Children in Europe, Council of Europe, <https://www.un.org/en/holocaustremembrance/docs/Roma%20concentration-camps%20OSCE%20.pdf>; Internet; accessed June 13, 2013.

chambers there; throughout the network of death camps and mobile gassing units, Jews and Gypsies were the two groups systematically targeted for murder.⁴ By the end of 1943, the Nazis had imprisoned 18,736 Roma and Sinti in Birkenau Gypsy Camp; by May 1944, 6,000 remained, with the others having been gassed or deported to other camps for forced labour.⁵ On May 15, 1944, prisoners in the *zigeunerlager* discovered that the Nazis planned to gas all 6,000 of those who remained; when the SS guards, armed with machine guns, surrounded the camp for the transport to the gas chambers:

...[T]hey met armed resistance. After stealing scraps of sheet metal, the prisoners had sharpened the metal into crudely fashioned knives. With those improvised weapons, and with iron pipes, clubs, and stones, the Gypsies defended themselves. Guards shot some resisters.⁶

Unnamed heroes carried out this armed resistance to the SS guards, over the course of those two days in May. The resistance of the prisoners in the Gypsy Camp prevented the camp from being liquidated in May, although not for long: the final liquidation of the *zigeunerlager* took place on August 2, 1944, when guards gassed 2,897 men, women, and children in the middle of the night. Even at that last moment, there was resistance; according to documents located in the Memorial Museum at Auschwitz-Birkenau, “The prisoners attempted to resist, but the SS crushed their opposition brutally.”⁷ The near-impossible uprisings by Roma and Sinti men, women and children at the death camp of Auschwitz-Birkenau are part of a larger story of passive resistance and mutual support documented in survivor testimony – including those of Ella Davis, Julia Lentini and others – along with other forms of resistance in which Roma and Sinti played a part. We have no documentation on Romani participation in ghetto uprisings, but Roma and Sinti were active in resistance activities, camp uprisings and efforts to save individual lives from murder by the Nazis and their allies.

As an American Romani woman and a scholar, I sometimes find it a strange

4 United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, *Resistance During the Holocaust* (Washington, DC, nd: USHMM Miles Lehrmann Center for the Study of Jewish Resistance), 23.

5 United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, *Resistance During the Holocaust*, 28.

6 United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, *Resistance During the Holocaust*, 28.

7 Teresa Wontor-Cichy, “Sinti and Roma (Gypsies) in Auschwitz;” Internet; accessed June 13, 2013.

and new experience to research and write about Holocaust testimonies of Romani survivors. I grew up in a Romani community that did not talk about the losses our people suffered in Europe in the Holocaust; my community has been in the United States since the 1880s and did not know the extent or the details of what our brothers and sisters were suffering in Europe. Still, all of us lived under the cloud of that unspoken genocide. My father and uncles⁸ fought against the Nazis in World War II. Before they died, I never thought to ask them whether they were part of any camp liberations, or what they witnessed during that period of their lives, or what work they had carried out during their time as soldiers. They, too, were part of the resistance against the Nazis, yet this, too, was unspoken in our family and in our community.

As community members, scholars and policymakers, it is important for us to record, to analyse and to publish the numbers, stories, data and historical facts pertaining to the persecution and genocide of Roma and Sinti, much of which remains untold and undocumented. We need to also tell these stories of resistance and struggle, of heroes and heroines, and how the common compassion that people have for one another can help fight the worst forms of oppression. A focus on rescue, on mutual support amongst Romani and Sinti who were deported, who were in ghettos, camps and who survived pogroms and mass murder, can teach all of us to look for, and to emulate, the courage of those who stood up against dehumanisation and genocide. This theme points us to lessons that we can learn from those whose kindness, and humanity, remained strong even as fascism and barbarity swept through Europe.

Take, for example, the story of Dutch Romani survivor Zoni Weisz, who, as a seven-year-old, was saved, along with his aunt, by the kindness of a guard who kept them on the platform while Weisz's parents, brothers and sisters boarded the trains that would transport them to concentration camps, and, eventually, to their deaths. At the ceremony inaugurating the Berlin memorial, Weisz recalled the last glimpse of his family before the trains took them away, the vivid blue colour and the feel of the soft wool of his sister's coat as he held onto it when his family was boarding the train. That was his last memory of his family, haunting him even as he remembered the quietly heroic actions of the platform guard.

The Belgian photographer Jan Yoors recounts in his autobiography that

8 Members of my family who served in the US military during World War II include my non-Romani father and uncles from both sides of my family, Romani and non-Romani alike.

Roma and Sinti across Europe took part in partisan and resistance activities. Yoors lived in France with a Lovaro Romani family during World War II, and his autobiography is a record of day-to-day life during that time and the work that those Roma and Sinti who were not deported carried out with the partisans. Yoors documents how Roma and Sinti were able to help the Resistance:

Roma... used their wagons to transport refugees and smuggle small arms and explosives. The frequent movement of those Gypsies also allowed them to accrue ration cards under different names in a variety of places. Those ration cards were important in supplying food to resistance fighters. When German authorities began tighter scrutiny of rations, the Yoors group joined French partisans in raiding ration distribution posts. They also brought the partisans news heard on BBC radio broadcasts.⁹

Another way to resist was to save the lives of children, hiding them from Nazi persecution and near-certain death. Such is the example of Alfreda Markowska, whose story is also included among the pages of this book.

This year, our grandfather, Holocaust survivor Raymond Guerème, passed away at the age of 94. We had looked to him for our history – for his stories of loss, survival and for lessons about the Holocaust. We had also looked to him as an example of resistance throughout his life. After twice escaping internment, Raymond, while in hiding, would bring food to his family who were still in the camps, helping them to survive. He joined the French Resistance as soon as he was able, and, after World War II, married his wife Pauline, and found his parents and other surviving family members. He continued to work and live and fight for recognition of his status as a survivor – which he received in 2009 – and resist anti-Romani racism in every aspect of his life. His life, stories, and example are ones that we continue to follow and value, so that we continue to resist, fight, and work to make the world a better place. We remember Raymond Guerème; we remember the victims of the Holocaust, we recognise the survivors, the resisters – those who are gone and those who are still with us.

When we start to look for them, in the footnotes of history, in the hundreds of oral and video testimonies of Roma and Sinti survivors, there are other moments of compassion, other heroic acts and other heroic lives, such as those Sinti and Roma who were part of the resistance to the Nazis and their nation-

alist collaborators. Take Amilcare Debar, who worked with the Italian Resistance in reconnaissance, scouting and delivering messages, procuring weapons and carrying out ambushes and other military operations as a member of the communist partisan group the Garibaldi Brigade. Or, Iosif Teifel, a Rom from Czechoslovakia, worked clandestinely in the Mukacevo ghetto. Through his work with the partisans, he was able to hide people, provide food aid and carry out resistance activities inside and outside the ghetto during the war.¹⁰

As I ponder how much my people had to go through to survive attempted mass extermination, it gives me great pleasure simply to repeat the names of these true heroes: Zoni Weisz. Raymond Guerème. Amilcare Debar. Iosif Tiefel. Alfreda Markowska.

These are just a few of the lives that have been marked by the enormity of the Holocaust.

They are just a few of the Romani survivors whose stories make us aware of the power and meaning of resistance, mutual aid and heroism that saved lives during the Holocaust. I fully concur with the architect of the Berlin Memorial to the Murdered Roma and Sinti, Dani Karavan, when, at the inauguration, he said the following in Hebrew: “I feel like my family was killed and burned with the Sinti and Roma in the same gas chambers and their ashes went with the wind to the fields. So we are together. It is our destiny.” Our destiny is documented in the work of remembering the dead, listening to survivors and giving credit to the heroes.

Hundreds of thousands of Roma and Sinti were murdered during the Holocaust. The death toll could be significantly higher than half a million, with countless casualties more still to be documented in the search for mass graves and unmarked massacre sites throughout the Nazi-occupied areas, especially in the eastern regions. I welcome the opportunity to speak up and recall the names of some of our Roma and Sinti survivors, of some of our heroes, and to mark our place in the resistance against the Nazis. It is time for the world to listen to our histories as part of the history of the Holocaust and that of Europe.

There is also the resistance, the counter-narratives, the attempts to retell our stories that happened after the war. Much work still needs to be done by

¹⁰ The complete testimonies of Amilcare Debar and Iosif Teifel can be found in the Visual History Archive of the Shoah Foundation Institute at the University of Southern California.

us, Roma and Sinti, historians, leaders and activists to fully document it, but also to recognise and honour the victims and survivors of this genocide in official commemoration and everyday acts of remembrance. We need to recognise our victims and that which we lost, but also the heroism that saved lives and preserved even a small part of our culture. This recognition includes continuously fighting against discrimination, persecution, and racial and ethnic violence, by which, unfortunately, Roma and Sinti are still targeted in many places in Europe in the current moment.

Memorial ceremonies, events of remembrance and scholarly articles alike are fitting places to raise such concerns: We need all to be vigilant and stand up against xenophobia, hate crimes, discrimination against anyone, including against our minority. Just as ordinary kindness and compassion could help to spare lives during the Holocaust, there remains a need for solidarity, compassion and heroism in our uneasy times, in which some politicians, nation-states and extremist groups alike throughout Europe are renewing calls for our destruction.

Even as we remember the dead, we honour the living – the survivors and heroes among us – and we renew our commitment to documenting, listening to and claiming our histories as part of the larger history of the Holocaust, the history of Europe and the world. In so doing, we also renew our commitment to the legacy of those who rose up in the face of imprisonment, gas chambers and death squads; to the legacy of individuals such as Raymond Guerème, Amilcare Debar, Iosif Tiefel, and Alfreda Markowska; to the legacy of countless unnamed heroes who rose to the occasion and risked their lives in the face of xenophobia, intolerance, extremist violence and mass murder.

Introduction

Re-thinking Roma Resistance: Recounting Stories of Strength and Bravery

By Anna Mirga-Kruszelnicka
and Jekatyerina Dunajeva

Towards Romani Historiography

The Roma are the largest ethnic minority in Europe, with a population of over 12 million scattered throughout the continent, and another four million living in the rest of the world. While the Roma's presence in Europe dates back over 700 years, Romani history remains largely unknown, invisible and marginalised in national and European canons of history (van Baar 2011; Mirga-Kruszelnicka, Acuña C., and Trojański 2015). Roma are rarely included in history textbooks, historic sites or commemorative events, while historic Romani figures remain forgotten. The role Romani individuals and communities played in the historical struggles of European nations still remains largely ignored. Likewise, Romani contributions to European social, cultural, economic, political, artistic, and even linguistic fields are still unrecognised or appropriated.

Even the greatest tragedy in the history of Roma – the Roma Holocaust during World War II – remains a footnote in textbooks, if it is mentioned at all (Spielhaus et al. 2020). For years, the 20th-century genocide of the Roma was referred to as the “forgotten Holocaust”. Indeed, for decades it was. We consider this book an important step toward better understanding the Roma Holocaust and its victims so that they are not forgotten. We have a responsibility to recognise and commemorate the events, as well as hearing the voices of Roma who suffered at this time, “getting their story told not as an after-

thought, but as a vital part of European history,” according to the USC Shoah Foundation (2017).

Over the last decade, some progress has been achieved: from growing interest among researchers and historical institutions, expanded practices of commemoration and memorialisation, to political resolutions from the European Union¹ and the Council of Europe², the “forgotten Holocaust” is today gradually being remembered. The unveiling of the Memorial to Sinti and Roma Holocaust Victims in Berlin in 2012 or the removal of the pig farm from the Roma Holocaust site in Lety u Pisku³ should be considered as both symbolic and tangible milestones. These are the achievements of decades of struggle of Romani civil society for recognition of the Roma Holocaust. Thanks to Romani activists and scholars and their non-Roma allies' tireless work, general knowledge of the Roma Holocaust has gradually increased and became a widely accepted historical fact. New research and expanded commemoration practices continue to play a relevant role in positioning Roma as inseparable from the mainstream history of Europe.

More importantly, one can observe a shift in the master-frame of Roma history, particularly regarding the Holocaust. With a growing number of scholars of Romani origin inquiring about the fate of their ancestors, the concomitant emergence of Critical Romani Studies and the parallel development of institutions safeguarding Roma historical memory, the approach towards how Romani history should be told has changed. Over the last decade, more voices have emerged articulating the Roma's need to revisit their history and craft their own narratives of a collectively shared past.

Firstly, this novel approach challenges the common anonymity in historical accounts – instead of speaking of the history of Roma as a collective whole which denies the individuality of its members, greater attention is be-

1 In 2015, the European Parliament declared 2 August the annual "European Roma Holocaust Memorial Day" to commemorate the 500,000 Roma victims (the text of the Resolution can be found here: [https://oeil.secure.europarl.europa.eu/oeil/popups/ficheprocedure.do?reference=2015/2615\(RSP\)&l=en](https://oeil.secure.europarl.europa.eu/oeil/popups/ficheprocedure.do?reference=2015/2615(RSP)&l=en)). This call was reiterated in an October 2017 EP resolution on “Fundamental rights aspects in Roma integration in the EU: fighting anti-Gypsyism” (https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/TA-8-2017-0413_EN.html).

2 Among other initiatives, in July 2020 the Council of Europe approved a historic “Recommendation on the inclusion of the history of Roma and/or Travellers in school curricula and teaching materials”. For more information: https://search.coe.int/cm/Pages/result_details.aspx?ObjectId=09000016809ee48c

3 More information about the new Memorial which will be built on the site of the former camp can be found here: <https://www.newmemorialety.com/>

ing placed on personalised narratives, which convey subjective experiences and stories. The role of oral histories, and cultural products such as poems or songs treated as artefacts and encapsulating intimate memories of past events, is very relevant in this context. Secondly, new Romani historiography demands a shift from treating Roma as objects of history towards perceiving them as its protagonists. Indeed, Roma have often been portrayed as passive victims who exist at the periphery of major historical events, and whose fate is a mere form of collateral damage in the struggles between great powers and peoples. More recently, Romani history is being narrated not only through the victim's perspective but also from an agent's standpoint. The process of revisiting Romani history increasingly sees it move beyond focusing exclusively on Roma victimhood and martyrdom stories to include individual and collective stories of Roma heroism and bravery, thereby shedding light on Roma contributions to national and European struggles for democracy, justice and independence. Accounts of Roma resistance, in particular, have been receiving more attention among activists and scholars alike.

In fact, in recent years, the topic of Roma resistance during WWII has grown into a powerful symbol that contrasts the notion of Roma victimhood with the acknowledgement of Roma agency and survival. From researchers to the media, stories of Roma resistance during WWII have begun to gain momentum (Ryder 2017; Verhás, Kóczé, and Szász 2018). Inspired by various testimonies of the Roma uprising at the Auschwitz-Birkenau concentration camp on May 16, 1944, the date has been embraced and celebrated by Roma communities across Europe, particularly by Roma youth. In this sense, Roma resistance has become a powerful reference point for Roma social and political mobilisation. As “Roma Resistance Day” becomes acknowledged and commemorated by a growing number of stakeholders, some scholars (Kubica and Setkiewicz 2018) have posed the question of whether there was an uprising at all⁴. In the face of this new research, there is a risk that a very narrow reading of the history of Roma resistance – limited to the event of

4 In a Twitter statement published by the State Museum of Auschwitz-Birkenau on May 16th 2019 it is argued that “the recent research of @AuschwitzMuseum historians shows that there was no revolt in the Roma camp. The case of passive resistance of #Roma prisoners that took place in early April 1944 (not 16 May 1944) had a different context”. Based on a recent historical research conducted by the historian at the State Museum of Auschwitz-Birkenau, it is argued based on archival records of the Museum that there was no uprising on May 16th in the Roma camp. <https://view.joomag.com/memoria-en-no-10-july-2018/0531301001532506629/p6?short>

Roma uprising in Auschwitz – will reverse the transformative, emancipatory and mobilising potential that the stories of active resistance represent.

Research into other stories of Roma heroism - during different historical periods and in different regions of Europe - is only gradually being developed today. Simultaneously, as the “era of the survivors” is coming to an end, the unique stories of Roma resistance fighters are fading away. A lack of tangible objects that recount and represent Roma resistance stories and the absence of proper commemoration of personalities and sites of Roma resistance are a significant blind-spot in the evolving trend around “Roma Resistance Day”.

ERIAC and the “Re-thinking Roma Resistance” Project

Romani scholars and Roma-led institutions have primarily produced the growing multiplicity of Roma resistance discourses. Mandated with safeguarding and shaping Roma historical memory, they seek to focus explicitly on the empowering potential of stories of overcoming and survival in the face of injustice and oppression that Roma have faced throughout history. The European Roma Institute for Arts and Culture’s (ERIAC) work should be understood within this broader context.

The European Roma Institute for Arts and Culture e.V. (ERIAC) is a joint initiative of the Council of Europe, the Open Society Foundations, and the Roma Leaders’ initiative – the Alliance for the European Roma Institute for Arts and Culture. ERIAC is an association registered under German law on June 7, 2017, in Berlin, Germany. It has a unique mandate as the transnational, European-level organisation for the recognition of Roma arts and culture. It exists to increase Roma's self-esteem and decrease the majority population's negative prejudice towards the Roma using arts, culture, history, and media. As a membership-based organization, currently of around 150 Roma and non-Roma individuals and organizations, ERIAC acts as an international creative hub to support the exchange of ideas across borders, cultural domains and Romani identities.

Historical research and remembrance remain at the core of ERIAC’s work. In fact, according to the ERIAC Statute, “the Holocaust is a central element in the history of Roma in Europe; remembrance of the Holocaust will constitute a central reference for the work of the association. The association will reflect in its work the 600-year history of Roma in Europe, which has produced a rich

diversity of cultural and artistic traditions and historical connections between Roma and their home countries.” Furthermore, one of ERIAC’s thematic sections is “History and Commemoration”, which brings together leading Roma and non-Roma individuals and organisations working in this field, including the German and Sinti Documentation and Cultural Centre in Heidelberg or the Museum of Romani Culture in Brno. Through dialogue with its members, ERIAC has begun to focus on the topic of Roma resistance, building on the current momentum and responding to the challenges mentioned above.

As a result, between October 2019 to December 2020, ERIAC has led the project entitled “Re-thinking Roma Resistance”. Financed by Stiftung Erinnerung, Verantwortung und Zukunft (EVZ foundation), the project seeks to provide a new and broader reading of Roma acts of heroism during World War II and immediately in its aftermath, as well as during different periods of history. Furthermore, it aims to propose strategies for the proper documentation and commemoration of Roma resistance, including:

- Expanding the definition of Roma resistance to embrace a more comprehensive array of acts demonstrating Roma opposition to injustice
- Shedding light on new Roma resistance chapters by expanding chronological (beyond WWII) and geographical research scope. In particular, the project recounted Roma stories emphasising different dimensions of resistance both before the war and in its aftermath
- Reinforcing understandings of Roma agency through shared stories along with detailed bibliographies of Roma heroes, and by identifying physical sites of resistance. In doing so, the project aimed to build on the culture of remembrance among Roma and non-Roma and highlight the role of Roma in broader national and European historical struggles
- Challenging the dominant historical narrative which regards Roma as victims by focusing on individual and collective Romani stories of overcoming and survival, and by celebrating Roma resilience in the face of adversity and injustice
- Building specific educational strategies and tools through which sto-

ries of Roma resistance can be told, represented and taught, including formal and non-formal educational by way of developing online and offline educational tools, and by using art and cultural products to complement historical and archival research

The project sought to initiate change in the European historical and cultural narrative concerning Roma, seeking to challenge dominant discourses that regard Roma as victims. Instead, it focuses on individual and collective stories of Roma heroism and bravery. To this end, twelve Roma and non-Roma researchers with diverse backgrounds, selected through a competitive open call, were involved in the project, tasked with documenting Roma resistance stories around Europe and promoting a new narrative of Roma history, told from the perspective of Roma survivors. More specifically, the researchers:

- Investigated different manifestations of Roma resistance in multiple locations, based on existing sources (primary, secondary) as well as providing new evidence to the extent possible
- Presented and documented stories of Roma resistance heroes, including short biographies of selected protagonists
- Contributed to the mapping of historical sites of Roma resistance
- Identified artefacts and objects related to Roma resistance stories (including personal memorabilia, archival records, letters, photos, as well as artworks)
- Contributed to the development of an annotated bibliography on Roma resistance

Through a series of public and internal workshops, the project team developed a joint methodology which guided the project's implementation. During the Roma resistance workshop, "Roma Tangible Heritage Symposium,"⁵ hosted by Dr. Anna Mirga-Kruszelnicka, Dr. Pierre Chopinaud and Dr. Jan Selling, and held in Stockholm on November 28, 2019, participants discussed the term "resistance", not simply as a modern political movement, but in the broader

5 For more information regarding the event, see: <https://eriac.org/roma-tangible-heritage-symposium-stockholm/> ; the video summarizing the symposium, including the conclusions of the Roma resistance workshop, can be found here: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=I2_9BsAd9bs&t=242s

sense as a response to Romani oppression and as a strategy of survival. What does this term mean? How should we define “Roma resistance”? What types of behaviours and actions, individual and collective, can be considered as different dimensions of “Roma resistance? The Roma and non-Roma scholars, historians and activists participating in the workshop concluded that “Roma resistance is an active response to consciously confront the historical and contemporary phenomena of antigypsyism, collectively or individually”. In this sense, Roma resistance is not a term which refers to one historical event (i.e., the uprising in Auschwitz-Birkenau concentration camp). Instead, it shall be interpreted as a concept which describes an attitude, a mindset and a strategy. Thus, resistance refers to a continuum of behaviours, ranging from insubordination to armed struggle, and can be understood as a process that includes multiple and diverse acts, events, and rituals. Such an approach opens up possibilities for recovering intimate family histories and reinterpreting Roma history, including public and political discourse on the subject. The discussions revealed a plethora of inspiring stories of Roma heroism which are conserved as oral history in the collective memory of Roma families and communities, but which continue to be undocumented, unwritten and invisible to broader audiences.

About the Book

This book is one of the tangible results of the “Re-thinking Roma Resistance” project⁶. This book greatly benefited from the expertise of a diverse group of researchers, most of whom are Roma. It amounted to a unique view of history that we see as “counter-discourse”. According to Michel Foucault, counter-discourse “aims at clearing a space in which the formerly voiceless might begin to articulate their desires, to counter the domination of prevailing authoritative discourses” (Moussa and Ron Scapp 1996, 88). Importantly, Foucault has pointed out, “where there is power, there is resistance; [there is] a multiplicity of points of resistance [and] these points of resistance are present everywhere in the power network” (Foucault 1990, 95-6).

6 Other outputs of the project include an interactive map of Roma resistance sites, selected bibliography of Roma resistance, an educational “Roma Heroes” game and detailed biographies of over 40 Roma men and women heroes. The project’s outputs can be discovered on the ERIAC website <https://eriac.org/re-thinking-roma-resistance/>

The chapters in this book are organised in three sections: the first and second sections consider regional and national examples of Roma resistance during the Holocaust, highlighting individual and collective actions of courage and strength in the face of extreme oppression during World War II. In these sections, each author brings the voices of the powerless to the surface, each a testament of brevity, perseverance and strength. Moreover, each story narrates practices, rituals, networks, and actions that helped Roma resist the dominant power. The third section reflects how Roma resistance has shaped Roma identity and national government relations. Although there is a wide variation in what authors chose to focus on and how they approached Roma resistance, all acts of resistance reaffirm the individual and collective agency of Roma and demonstrate the ongoing struggle for social justice that Roma have engaged in for centuries.

Each author proposes a definition of resistance, but comparably each points out the multiple forms of resistance Roma engaged in throughout history. Indeed, in the case of Roma, centuries-long discrimination has led to a “distorted” view of history, as Adrian-Nicolae Furtună calls it, and hence recognising, remembering and commemorating the stories of Roma becomes imperative for historical justice. Nicolás Jiménez’s plea for justice revolves around this same view, which he calls a “history where the protagonists are the powerful Gadje”. As Jan Selling points out in his chapter, “we cannot change history but the way we talk about history and address its legacy in material and immaterial terms is fundamental to how we define ‘the other’ and ourselves. Equally strong, it defines power relations and distribution of resources: fighting for historical justice is fighting for equal rights.”

The book begins with two regional perspectives: an analysis of Scandinavian Roma and Roma struggles in the reformer Yugoslavia. Jan Selling, in his contribution entitled “Romani resistance and the struggle for historical justice in Norway and Sweden” uniquely analyses Roma resistance from the viewpoint of historical justice. Beyond a detailed analysis of Roma acts of resistance contextualised in Scandinavian political and social realities, this chapter’s significant contribution is a discussion of Roma Holocaust memorialisation through Katarina Taikon’s writings to other literary and media coverage of the topic. However, there are still considerable omissions and gaps in memorialisation and academic research.

Daniel Vojak’s ambitious chapter on former Yugoslavia covers an impressive number of cases: his analysis comprises of Roma resistance in Serbia,

Slovenia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro and Macedonia during World War II. The most captivating part of this chapter is the stories of active resistance, and especially the heroic acts of Roma who participated in partisan units. In this chapter, the author shows that Roma bravely participated with their entire families in anti-fascist movements, organised escapes and participated in passive resistance, such as through cultural activities (e.g., playing military music).

In the second part, national case studies begin with the chapter “Roma Struggle in Lithuania: Strategies of Survival and the Impulse to Resist”, by Aurėja Jutelytė, who immediately acknowledges the academic neglect to uncover forms of resistance during oppression. Dedicating part of her chapter to discussing the challenges she faced in analysing Roma Holocaust resistance in Lithuania, which has a comparatively small Roma population and little existing research on the topic, Jutelytė aptly labels the condition of “archival silence” in the country. This article reaches a similar conclusion: that Roma resistance during the Holocaust should not be considered a singular event. Rather, resistance to oppression should be seen as a pattern and response to injustice; the author maintains that “Roma resistance was a consistent feature of Roma survival strategies” throughout history.

In describing Roma resistance during the Holocaust in Hungary and its aftermath, Dunajeva’s contribution is twofold: first, she elaborates on the difficulties conducting research, given the traumatic topic and limited available resources. Second, she offers a broad understanding of resistance, which includes discursive practices, such as curses, songs and poems, as well as “symbolic punishment of the enemy, imagination of future revenge and preserving love and humanity in the face of dehumanising circumstances”. Dunajeva argues that “everyday” forms of resistance must be considered, and for that, we must recognise existing power dynamics.

Danijel Vojak contributed to this section with his chapter about Roma resistance during the Holocaust in Croatia in a historically sensitive context—his expertise is truly unique as he is the author of the only scientific paper on Roma resistance in the Independent State of Croatia (Vojak 2017). Vojak looks at resistance holistically, incorporating acts such as evading deportations, escaping from camps, participation in partisan movements and other forms. Given the limited sources -- not only academic but also archival evidence -- the authors primarily relied on oral testimonies of Roma Holocaust survivors and presented personal stories of bravery, heroism and struggle.

Then, Justyna Matkowska presents a Polish case study, a unique case as public awareness of Roma resistance during the Second World War is exceptionally high. Importantly, Matkowska highlights Romani women's participation in saving Jewish and Roma children, which is a particularly important contribution to the overall study of resistance. Moreover, through exhaustive research, the author goes beyond the relatively well-researched Roma uprising in the Zigeunerlager in Auschwitz-Birkenau camp that occurred on May 16, 1944, and illustrates other forms of resistance, presenting testimonies from Roma heroes, archival research of military service books and other relevant documents.

Some contributors chose a personal writing style, to either reflect on their family's experiences of persecution during World War II or as a way to speak for their community collectively. For instance, Vera Lacková writes about her great-grandfather in her chapter "How I became a partisan. Filmmaking as a resistance strategy against oblivion". In an engaging and personal essay, Lacková shares her journey of becoming "one of the few female Roma filmmakers". In her professional career, she decided to uncover her great-grandfather's story and with that, the struggle of all partisan Roma in Slovakia and Czechia. Through this essay, we not only learn about the history of the Holocaust in Czechoslovakia, but with personal stories, Lacková makes it evident that Roma were not victims of persecution but resisted and fought against the oppressive regime. Importantly, Lacková also provides a carefully selected list of sources with witness statements, recorded interviews and scholarly work that documents various stories of resistance and bravery.

The chapter that concludes this section is written by the Educational Forum against Antigypsyism (Bildungsforum gegen Antiziganismus), based on the institution's teaching-materials about German Sinti and Roma at the time of National Socialism. This chapter presents stories of brave Sinti and Roma who resisted persecution, imprisonment and mass-murder in Germany in the 1930s and '40s. Forms of resistance were multifaceted, from confronting members of the SA (Sturmabteilung, the Nazi Party's paramilitary organisation) to appealing economic discrimination or simply preserving a sense of ordinary life, even under arduous conditions. Importantly, while this essay acknowledges that there are significant gaps in our knowledge regarding the stories of Roma resistance, biographies that are recounted in this and other chapters are a confirmation that Roma indeed showed bravery and determination in resisting an oppressive system. This chapter also reminds us of the

importance to remember and learn about these stories, so that Roma are not merely seen as victims of persecution, but as “as active individuals who used their limited means to stand up for themselves and others.”

What permeates all the chapters in this section is a need, or even a demand, to recognise the Roma's contribution to European history through awareness-raising and historical research; all authors take what Dunajeva calls an “agency-focused approach acknowledging that Roma both fought and resisted” during the Holocaust. All authors emphasise that Roma actively shaped their personal destinies, even under the most arduous circumstances. This approach strongly differs from the mainstream historical narrative, which tends to position Roma as passive victims of discrimination and persecution.

A truly unique aspect of the book is the authors' predominant reliance on the actual voices of Roma, gathered through interviews, archives, academic and non-academic sources, as well as stories from their own families. By focusing on individual and collective stories of Roma resistance, from participating in partisan groups to rescuing children and adults and expressing their love or desire for revenge through poetry and songs, the authors of this volume not only shift the narrative from victimhood to empowerment but also actively fight antigypsyism. To quote Lacková's words, “With the increasing trend of far-right beliefs and racist attitudes which have seeped into our public discourse once again, it seems to be crucial to remind the names and deeds of the forgotten heroes. Therefore, I hope that historians will shed more light on this missing chapter of our past. Not just of Roma history, nor intended only for Roma themselves – but as a chapter of the wider European history of which Roma are an integral part.”

The last section, “Roma Resistance throughout history” takes a broader look at Roma resistance throughout (European) history. In this section, all chapters suggest that in the case of Roma, resistance should not be seen as a response to any particular historical period, but rather a pattern of existence in the context of prevailing anti-Roma sentiments. Furtună's chapter, “From Roma Slavery to WWII – Roma resistance in Romania,” powerfully shows that Roma “reacted to every form of oppression to which [they] were subjected”. Through a careful analysis of Roma in Romania, the author focuses on forms of resistance during slavery, a period that lasted for almost five centuries from 1385 to 1856, and during the Holocaust. Relying on detailed archival evidence, Fortuna aptly points out that we must be critical with the data we use to reconstruct history. He claims that resorting to official documents in

the archives “written by representatives and leaders of an oppressive system” only shows the “perspective of the oppressor”.

Nicolás Jiménez acknowledges that history has been written from the non-Roma perspective; moreover, he claims that dominant narratives of history maintain diverse manifestations of antigypsyism. In his chapter, Jiménez simultaneously reveals Spain's discriminatory history - with a particular focus on the 18th century - and highlights Roma agency throughout times of oppression, demonstrating their “ability to resist against the ominous power of the [Spanish] State.” The history of Roma in Spain also serves as a reminder of the various forms of resistance that characterised the very existence of Roma vis-à-vis majority society and the state for centuries: Roma resisted through uprisings, escapes, riots, legal acts and armed struggles.

Lise Foisneau similarly discusses Roma resistance in broad terms in her chapter “French Roma and Travellers’ resistance: a long struggle”. The author aptly reminds us that resistance can be seen as a response to perennial “discriminatory state mechanisms”, rather than as exceptional instances of defying oppression and intimidation. Compelling stories in this chapter are a stark reminder that resistance is not only characteristic of the past, but Roma continue to engage in acts of resistance to confront discriminatory treatment. For example, the author narrates stories of disobedience and attempts to negotiate with local authorities as resistance strategies.

Throughout the months during which this project was developed, it became clear that the research developed so far is only the tip of the iceberg. The researchers identified dozens of physical sites of Roma memory, most of which remain without any form of commemoration or protection. There are a multitude of tangible and intangible objects that carry intimate memories of Roma past including memorabilia, personal letters or even artefacts of culture (like poetry, songs). At the same time, archival sources of historical knowledge, in its vast majority developed by Roma oppressors, need to be revisited and reinterpreted through the perspective of the Romani victims. Finally, there are hundreds of powerful stories of brave, strong, resilient and fearless Romani men and women, whose names we should know and whose courage should be a source of inspiration and pride for generations to come. By “re-thinking Roma resistance”, the project provided evidence of multiple ways in which Roma fought against oppression and injustice, as well offered a vivid testimony of Roma contributions to national and European struggles for freedom, democracy and justice. This testimony needs to be an integral part

of the national and European canons of history, to demonstrate that the Roma history is not peripheral to that of the majority population but is at its centre – where it should belong.

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Part 1

Regional Perspectives on Roma Resistance

Chapter 1

Romani Resistance and the Struggle for Historical Justice in Norway and Sweden

By Jan Selling

Introduction

By discussing Norwegian and Swedish cases relevant to contemporary emancipatory discourses, this essay will expand the notion of Roma resistance beyond what is associated with May 16 (Romani Resistance Day) in a geographical, chronological and thematic sense. First, as Sweden stayed outside of the war and – for reasons explained below – no Roma were officially on Norwegian territory during the German occupation 1940-1945; hence there was not and could not have been any direct acts of Roma resistance in Scandinavia against German Nazis during WWII. However, this statement may also be modified since many people self-defining as Romanis (Romani), also called Reisende, have lived in Norway throughout modern history, including the Nazi years. However, this group is not included as part of the officially recognised Rom minority, which only refers to Roma of Vlach origin whose ancestors immigrated to Norway in the 19th century. Norwegian Reisende also refrain from being categorised as Roma and are instead recognised as a minority of their own. Nevertheless, Reisende use Romani language. Their analogue Resande in Sweden is considered to be part of the Roma diaspora, they have been subjected to antigypsyism and must, for all these reasons, be included. Thus, this essay must also be titled Romani, rather than Roma, resistance.

Second, the acts of resistance discussed in my chapter were certainly “active responses to consciously confront historical and contemporary phenomena of antigypsyism, collectively or individually” as the working definition de-

veloped during the ERIAC workshop in 2019 in Stockholm,¹ but in most cases not with the conflict intensity and mortal danger perhaps associated with the term “heroic”. Of importance is that Sweden and Norway – except for Norway under the German occupation 1940-1945 – were democracies. Nevertheless, I find this expansion justified since, following antigypsyism theory, and despite its disruptive continuity and mutability, all forms of antigypsyism are related and boil down to constructions of “the Gypsy” as the exotic and inferior other (Selling et al. 2015). For example, in the 1920s, racial biology was equally strong in defining Scandinavian antigypsyism as in the German case, only historical circumstances made the outcome different. Thus, all resistance against antigypsyism is related.

The multidimensional concept of historical justice may serve as an analytical tool for broadening the analysis of resistance and connect to discourses of collective memory. From this point of view, the historical acts themselves and their memorialisation are political: struggles for recognition, apologies, compensation, memorials and memorial days, emancipatory discourses on history and awareness-raising activities (Selling 2019a). Obviously, we cannot change history. But the way we talk about history and address its legacy in material and immaterial terms is fundamental to how we define both “the other” and ourselves. Equally strong, it defines power relations and the distribution of resources: fighting for historical justice is fighting for equal rights.

Methodology

My research results have developed in several steps and are mainly based on grounded theory and discourse analysis. In a recently published study (Selling 2020), I carried out a meta-analysis of historical findings from a large number of countries, collected by myself and other researchers of the RomArchive Civil Rights Movement Section 2015-2019. For this current research, I have narrowed down an actor-based perspective on Roma emancipation in

1 Based on my research, I find this definition usable, with the slight adjustment that the act of resistance retrieves meaning by the context it occurs in, as well as by the context in which it is memorialised or communicated. For example: resistance of Roma is resistance against antigypsyism only if directed against conditions, which we interpret as antigypsyism. Also, it is important to note that also non-Roma may be involved in Romani resistance: the subject position and not his/her ethnicity is decisive.

Norway and Sweden. By selecting a few personalities, I have aimed at covering major areas of general international interest. For the in-depth research, I have followed the snowball method and concentrated on communication with key actors: relatives of the heroes and scholarly experts. I then followed up on their statements by revisiting resources available on the Internet, including literature, media archives and public reports. The intense political processes around historical justice in Sweden and Norway in recent years have produced a substantial amount of public reports, which were transparently produced by experts in dialogue with representatives of Romani civil societies and published with open access. I have used this material both for analysing contexts and as a way for spotting single facts and identifying omissions in collective memory.

What to Resist: the Contexts of Sweden and Norway

The ideological frameworks of antigypsy persecution in Sweden and Norway during the first part of the 20th century were almost identical. They were based on racial biology and prescribed two different policies to the two major groups. First, the oldest Romani group in Scandinavia, who commonly self-denominates Resande / Reisende, and who were referred to by outsiders of the time as “Tater” / “Tattare”, were considered as citizens, but an unwanted racial mixture of Roma and Gadje. The resulting policy was forced assimilation, which was outsourced in Norway to the ecclesiastical organisation – Mission for the Homeless. It included forced child foster care, family labour camps and reproduction control by sterilisation (Selling 2013; NOU 2015:7). In Norway, forced lobotomies were also used (Den norske Helsingforskomité 2011). Second, Roma groups of Vlach origin, which immigrated at the end of the 19th century, were considered unwanted foreigners. The goal of antigypsy policy was to prevent further “racial mixing”, the settlement of Roma, and the denial of their civil rights to make life for them as hard as possible to make them leave the country. In addition, the borders of Norway and Sweden were explicitly closed for “Gypsies” before and during WWII (Selling 2013; Rosvoll et al. 2015).

Consequently, Roma could not escape Nazism by entering Sweden – two exceptions, Polish Roma Holocaust survivors Hanna and Sofia, are presented below. Swedish Roma feared the prospect of what would happen if Germany

occupied their country. In 1934, the Norwegian state had already managed to become “Gypsy free”, as the small group of existing Norwegian Roma, who had been travelling in Europe, were denied re-entry. Almost all Roma became victims of the Holocaust (Rosvoll et al. 2015). The Norwegian Reisende had justified concerns of becoming deported, as every Reisende was registered, and many of them kept in forced assimilation camps and foster homes during the Nazi occupation of Norway. There is evidence that Norwegian Nazis were pressing to develop a “final solution” (Living History Forum and Voksenåsen 2019).

There were a few individual acts of resistance, both from Swedish Roma and Norwegian Reisende during the 1930s and the 1940s, mainly by writing petitions. Relevant to mention are the petitions by Swedish Roma, Johan Tainkon in 1933, Rupert Bersico in 1947 (Selling 2019b), and the protests against the Norwegian Mission, led by Reisende Godin Hagvald Nikolaysen in the 1930s (NOU 2015:7, Vedlæg 4). But there was hardly any contact with international organisations, and the harsh antigypsy policies made mobilisation almost impossible. New possibilities developed in the 1950s as racial biology was deemed outdated, and the openly repressive policies appeared to be in contrast with the developing Social Democratic welfare systems. In this new climate, Roma in some cases could find allies in majority society, such as lawyers, journalists and politicians. During the 1960s, Swedish Roma also contacted international Roma organisations and other social movements of the time. The preconditions for Reisende mobilisation were even worse: In Norway, the forced assimilation system existed well into the 1980s. After WWII, there was no official policy in Sweden. Still, fear and psychosocial repression, including constant threats of sterilisation, forced child foster care and systematic harassment in schools, effectively suppressed this minority until the end of the 1990s when their official recognition enabled open mobilisation. Until then, few Reisende dared to state their ethnic identity in public (Selling 2019b; Fagerheim Kalsås 2019).

Scandinavia and the Roma Holocaust

Only in recent years has the Roma Holocaust become publicly known and recognised. My research indicates that one explanation for the long silence was the official reluctance to include the Roma genocide in conceptions of the

Holocaust, for example, by the Swedish public authority Living History Forum (Selling 2011). This changed gradually since, in 2014 up to 2017, the authority was assigned to specifically address the history of antigypsyism, including the topic “Roma during the Holocaust”, as it was framed. The activities involved the inclusion of Roma in the Holocaust Memorial Day manifestations of January 27, collaboration with German experts and representatives of the community, and re-publication of the story of Holocaust survivor Sofia in a free e-book *Sofia Z-4515* (Lundgren and Taikon 2014) supplemented with teaching materials. In 2015, Sofia’s story was republished in the format of a magazine, and 60 000 copies were sold in Swedish cities by Romanian Roma in only a few months as part of a solidarity project of the Norwegian organisation *Folk är folk*, (Stenqvist 2015).

In the following year, the European Parliament’s resolution on August 2 combatting antigypsyism (European Parliament 2015) received attention, not least since Swedish Roma MEP Soraya Post had contributed substantially to its development. All these important activities related to Romani memory politics coincided with a peak in Sweden on the topic of Roma in general, following the revelations of an illegal police register in 2013, and a polarised debate on EU migrants’ begging (Selling 2019c).

Growing awareness around Roma Holocaust memorialisation simultaneous occurred in Norway. The fate of Norwegian Roma during the Holocaust, and the country’s sharply antigypsy immigration policy (as explained below) which led the country to be declared “Gypsy free” in 1934, became public knowledge thanks to a research report of the Norwegian Centre for Holocaust and Minority Studies in 2015. The report was a government response to the Roma community, who had demanded an investigation, an apology and compensation (Rosvoll et al. 2015). This report proves that the explicit prohibition of “Gypsy” immigration (the so-called “Gypsy” paragraph) was a direct cause of the Nazi extermination of 66 out of 69 Norwegian Roma during the war: on January 22, 1934, at the Danish-Norwegian border station of Padborg, Roma who had been travelling in Europe were refused re-entry into their country; it should be noted that Sweden was also responsible since the Norwegian Roma, shortly before, had been stopped in an attempt to cross the Swedish border on account of the Swedish immigration prohibition of the time. The report also showed the bureaucratic arrogance and open hostility against Holocaust survivors after the war, as in other countries. But what is important for this essay is that the documents bear evidence of repeated resistance, which eventually

compelled the abolition of the antigypsy immigration prohibition: after the 1934 Padborg rejection, newspapers reported vehement verbal and physical resistance, especially by the women. Shortly thereafter Czardas Josef told the Danish “gypsiologist” Johan Miskow that the rejection was a scandal since they were born Norwegians, and if necessary, would “walk back and forth a hundred times... in order to return to Norway” (Rosvoll et al. 2015, p. 5).

Only a few Norwegian Roma survived the Holocaust. Czardas Josef and his wife Jeannedica made history in 1954. After crossing the green border, they managed to regain their legal status and forced the Norwegian state to return their daughter and family to Norway, their expulsion having been deemed illegal by the court. In 1955, the “Gypsy paragraph” was abolished. The Czardas family were victorious as they never gave up the conviction that they were entitled to civil rights in Norway, and because times had changed, and they found support from journalists and lawyers. Notably, the press reported sympathetically on their case, and declared it to be a civil rights violation, though they did not put the story in the context of Nazi persecution (Selling 2020, 88–89).

Returning to the Swedish case, my findings illuminate that the Roma Holocaust was not a new topic for Swedish readers. Besides the debate on missing Roma representation at the Stockholm conference in 2000 (Hancock 2010, 238), in 2006, *Sofia Z-4515* had been published as a graphic novel – in Swedish and Romanes – in collaboration between Sofia Taikon and author Gunilla Lundgren. Less well known is that Katarina Taikon, as early as 1976, had presented Sofia’s story in a fictional format in her children’s novel *Katitzi Z-1234*. In 1996, the story of Hanna was presented in a book by her daughter, Berith Kalander. Hanna and Sofia’s stories are interesting in many ways: they provide frank depictions of the Roma Holocaust as part of Swedish history, and their exceptional fate made the readers aware of what the implications of the immigration ban of 1914-1954.

Sofia and Hanna were cousins. They partly grew up together in Poland, and their paths crossed several times during the Holocaust. Both were rescued by the “White Busses” of the Scandinavian Red Cross shortly before the end of the war, however, not with the same transports. Both lived the rest of their lives in Sweden but they had little personal contact, and they never mention each other in the published stories of Lundgren and Kalander, respectively. For historical research, one major issue is to clarify how and why they were allowed to cross the Swedish border. According to a common myth, they did

so by “pretending to be Jews” (Mohtadi 2012). However, there is no evidence of this, and, as Lundgren and Kalander both conclude, it is highly unlikely since they had their identifications on their arms. More likely is that the Red Cross personnel took them on board for humanitarian reasons and that the Swedish border control didn’t check identities of the rescued persons in the “White busses”.

Since very few witnesses are still alive, and the exceptions which enabled them to defy the Swedish “Gypsy” immigration ban were probably made off the record, it will be difficult to find evidence of what really happened. A surprising finding is that both received economic compensation from the West German state in the 1960s, even though most non-German Roma at the time were excluded by the compensation law *Bundesentschädigungsgesetz* of 1953, and even in the case of the 1965 revisions (Deutscher Bundestag 1986). To find documentation, which would explain why they were compensated, despite this letter of the law, requires further research in German archives. However, a forgotten fact is that Hanna’s fight for compensation in 1964 made the headlines in Sweden and was even mentioned in a German newspaper. It should be noted that the Swedish papers did not express antigypsy sentiments and were sympathetic with her fight. This might be explained by the fact that the openly antigypsy paradigm of politics and media had begun to fade (Selling 2013) – a fact which contradicts previous assessments of Swedish media discourse of the time as “cohesive racist” (SOU 2010:55, 193). Moreover, the articles about Hanna described Roma as targets of the Nazi extermination policy. One paper wrote: “in the Nazi ideology, they [the Roma, author’s remark] were one step below the Jews” (Stensson 1964). Another interesting finding is that Hanna managed to press through her claims aided by the head of Taikon’s organization Zigenarsamfundet (Gypsy association), journalist Evert Kumm. The case was facilitated by the fact that Kumm worked on the case together with the German exiled former resistance fighter Walter Pöppel, a clandestine ally of Willy Brandt, chairman of the German Social Democratic Party (SPD), since 1964 (Scholze 1993). A closer study of the case would be of general interest for the understanding of how the German compensation law was implemented.

Resisting Scandinavian Non-Nazi Persecution

Acts of resisting oppression and inhumane conditions always deserve respect. Moreover, the historical importance of individual or isolated acts of resistance can only be judged retrospectively. But the historical record is often fallible, and collective memory is highly selective. The history of Norwegian Reisende Johan Lauritzen is a perfect illustration for selective memory. He was himself a victim of the Norwegian system of forced assimilation run by the Mission for the Homeless (*Norsk Misjon blant hjemløse*) and spent 12 years in orphanages. After this, he could not find regular work, and never established a family of his own. But he was to become the spark for a political process that finally ended the degrading system of forced assimilation. In April 1973, in a full-page newspaper article, he demanded the end of the Mission, and urged the Reisende to overcome their fear and stand up for their rights (Harnag 1973). After contacting freelance journalist Vibeke Løkkeberg, his words became broadcast on national television in a 30-minute documentary film disclosing the reality of the labour camp Svanviken (Løkkeberg 1973). Subsequently, the interpellation in parliament, which led the government to launch an inquiry into the Mission (NOU 1980:42) explicitly referred to the film, but Lauritzen was not mentioned (Stortinget 1975). His name is also missing in the Norwegian Romani Glomdal-museum in Elverum, created in the early 2000s as an act of collective compensation to the Reisende (Stortinget 2000). Further, he was not mentioned in the second major expert commission report on the assimilation system of 2015, though it carried the title “Assimilation and resistance” (NOU 2015:7). Even finding out his date of birth and death proved to be impossible without extensive archival work.

This oblivion is astonishing and unjustified, as Lauritzen’s act was heroic and of great historical importance. A survey among Norwegian experts, which I conducted in 2020, gives the impression that this oblivion is accidental. For example, historian Per Haave, one of the 2015 commission report authors, states: “I have no explanation why Johan Lauritzen has not become the place that he definitely deserves in this part of the history. I regret that the commission, which I was part of did not give him this. As far as I can recall, nobody mentioned him”. (Haave, p.c. 2020)

Historians often rely on the same sources, and oral witnesses tend to repeat the same stories because they serve a certain purpose in collective memory. So Lauritzen remained forgotten, simply because there was hardly any

information about him, and nobody cared to remember him. Yet, the meagre source material not only reflects his resistance but also provides us with other information. First, Lauritzen himself used the word *Reisende* and not “*Tater*” in the film but was quoted in the newspaper interview as saying “*Tater*”. Referring to Lauritzen’s statements, an anonymous *Reisende* paid respect to Lauritzen in an article but also emphasised that *Tater* is an unwanted pejorative word (Olin 1973). The same critique is quoted from other *Reisende* in the interpellation mentioned above. This is interesting for two reasons. First, why is the word *Tater* still - or once again - being used by members of the group, as by outsiders in Norway, whereas in Sweden the term *Tattare* is considered to be clearly antigypsyist. It is interesting that resistance against a pejorative exonym occurred among Norwegian Romani (*Reisende*) already in the early 70s, at the same time the issue had become a principle topic among the international Roma movement, to which this group was not associated. Second, it may serve as a critical note to the common justification of “*Zigeuner*”, “*Tattare*”, and “*Gypsy*” as being source concepts: the newspaper journalist seems to have faked Lauritzen’s expression since he was most probably not using the *Tater*-word. Another piece of information provided by the aforementioned anonymous *Reisende* is that the Romani language was being used for communication across the assimilation camp gates of Svanviken to maintain some privacy from the guards. Such speech acts violated the camp’s purpose, which explicitly aimed at the “extermination of a people’s distinctive character and language”, as stated by the Svanviken director in 1963 (NOU 2015:7, 79). This illustrates that language may be used as a tool for resistance: as an internal means of communication and as defiance against language bans. This topic seems to be under-researched, and further research might add to the understanding of some Romani groups’ reluctance to give their language away to linguists.²

Katarina Taikon is, in some ways, the exact opposite of Lauritzen. She was an intellectual writing documentary books, articles and children’s books; she has not only become recognised for her effective Roma rights activism, but she is also more famous than any other Swedish Roma. The successful film *Taikon*

2 This was already observed by 18th century gypsyologists, such as Heinrich Moritz Grellmann (1787). Cf. the position of German Sinti, as expressed on the homepage of the Central Council of German Sinti and Roma, <https://zentralrat.sintiundroma.de/arbeitsbereiche/kultur-elle-teilhabe/>

by Gellert Tamas and Lawen Mohtadi in 2015 marketed her as a “Swedish Martin Luther King”. Of course, there is an obvious risk that she turns into a myth, which for relatives and close friends may be painful since she seems to be the property of everyone, and also raises questions about in what way she is remembered. An indication that she was not regarded as a “Swedish Martin Luther King” by all Roma is that she was not invited to the First World Romani Congress in London in 1971. It would be of interest to find out if she was considered for attendance at all. Apart from the fact that, as described in the film, she was burned out at the time, she was also controversial for political reasons and for being a Romni living with Gadje and criticising patriarchal traditions such as child marriage. She was feminist in her attitude, a radical Social Democrat, and the strongest voice for Roma rights Sweden has ever had (Selling 2013; Mohtadi 2012). Both her daughter Angelica Ström, and close friend Hans Caldaras, urge me not to forget to mention the importance of allied journalists for her struggle.

In the film, her political struggle is narrated as a classic tragedy: it starts from her personal experience and grows into a social movement. In 1967, Taimon experienced victory in defending the rights of Roma refugees to stay in the country, and suffered defeat in 1969 as a group of 47 Roma were deported to the French ghetto Romainville. On account of this latter event, she resigned from politics and started writing children’s books about Katitzi, which contained a political message. However, Hans Caldaras and Gunilla Lundgren (p.c. August 2020) pointed to a fact which did not fit into this narrative: the campaign for the 47 continued and, in the end, was successful. Detailed information about conditions in Romainville was collected, and finally, the migration board in 1971 was forced to revise their decision so that the 47 could return and live in Sweden. This omission has become reproduced in, for example, the Digital Museum exhibition by Hälsinglands Museum in collaboration with Romska kulturcentret i Malmö (Romska bilder 2019) and regrettably also in a monograph of my own (Selling 2020).

In historical and international comparison, Swedish post-WWII antigypsyism was of low intensity. Nevertheless, it was clearly repressive and rooted in racial biology. The public inquiry on Roma issues of 1956 marks a distinctive shift: Swedish Roma obtained civil rights, and their devastating social, educational and health situation was acknowledged. One key aspect of the openly repressive policy had been the constant harassment and physical exclusion of Swedish Roma. Of particular importance for 1956 was a court case regarding

the eviction of Roma from a campsite in the town of Ludvika in 1954 (SOU 1956:43). This had happened countless times before: Roma without papers were evicted in a police action without formal sanction, which normally leaves no documentation, and thus remains invisible for archival researchers. Only this time, a newspaper editor, who also happened to be leading the national investigation commission for Roma issues (*Zigenarutredningen*), discovered the case and took it to court. Subsequently, for the first time in Swedish history, this kind of police action against Roma was condemned. The Roma involved were reported to have performed passive resistance: they protested verbally to the police and did not assist in breaking their camp. And most importantly: they contributed substantially to the independent investigation of circumstances, which ultimately led to a change of a police practice, which had been a cornerstone in antigypsy policy. As the hopes awoken by the 1956 report were only partly fulfilled, it laid the ground for the activism of Katarina Taikon in the 1960s (Selling 2013).

This illustrates that little actions by anonymous persons may change history, and at the same time, that iconic rebellions must occur at the right time and in the right context to become historic. What components make a social movement successful? According to Jack Greenberg, lawyer and protagonist of the American desegregation movement, there were three key elements to the Afro-American civil rights movement's success: juridical struggle based on legal documents, mass mobilisation, and strong leadership. Greenberg also concluded that European Roma movements have, in general, been strong on the first front, but not on the latter two (Bhabha 2017). It is interesting to reflect on the Norwegian and Swedish scenarios from this perspective. In many ways, emancipatory gains had structural reasons, such as Social Democratic hegemony and the development of welfare states. Lauritzen called for mobilisation, but was before his time; instead, journalism and politics achieved the change he wished for. In the cases of Czardas and Ludvika, the first of Greenberg's key elements - juridical struggle - were fundamental, but there was no actual movement behind the cause. The survival and the compensation cases of Sofia and Hanna were indirectly connected to the international Roma struggle. Today, their biographies are important for Roma Holocaust awareness, and they serve to mobilise Roma politically. Katarina Taikon and the organisation *Zigenarsamfundet* that she co-founded is the closest Roma in Sweden have ever been to possessing all three keys that Greenberg mentioned. For today's emancipatory struggle for Roma rights in Sweden, it is perhaps

more accurate to speak of Roma civil society than of a social movement: mediators and mother tongue teachers perform liberating work on a day to day basis, and activists and intellectuals express themselves in media, partake in policy developments, negotiate between the perspectives of different Roma groups, and search and sometimes find allies among Gadje.

Historical Justice

In recent decades, confrontation with different forms of historical antigypsyism has become increasingly important for strengthening political awareness and raising emancipatory demands among Scandinavian minorities. In Norway, pressure from the self-organisations of Reisende, which emerged in the 1990s, highly contributed to a process of historical justice. A milestone was the Reisende's protest in May 1995 against the planned honouring of eugenicist Johan Scharffenberg, who in official memory was regarded as a Norwegian patriot, and the main ideologue behind the racially motivated sterilisation program against Reisende (Øwre 1996; Minken 2009, 150–151). Since then, every year, Reisende gather at the memorial Stone of Shame, close to the mass grave of Gaustad psychiatric hospital, and read a manifesto honouring the victims and calling for major society to take historical responsibility (Taternes Landsforening 2013). In 1998, an official apology for the misdeeds was received from the government and the church. Collective compensation was paid in the form of the Glomdal-museum and a foundation for Reisende cultural purposes.

Yet, the activists were unsatisfied and secured an investigation into state abuses against Reisende from 1850 to the present by an independent expert commission (NOU 2015:7). In 2015, the successor of the Mission for the homeless, now called CRUX, apologised (Dehli and Liessem 2015). However, there is still no memorial of any kind at the physical sites of oppression, e.g. Svanviken. Also, the apology did not mention the lobotomies. The recognition of Roma as a minority also provided opportunities for the other, numerous weaker group called Rom. In 2012, they achieved the goal of a state investigation into the Roma Holocaust from a Norwegian perspective. Three years later, as the report was issued, Prime Minister Solberg apologised for Norway's treatment of the Rom (Selling 2019a). Another outcome of this process is that Norwegian Rom, since 2018, have a cultural centre, the Rom Kher.

The Norwegian process was inspirational for Swedish activists. In 2000, activists successfully secured an apology from the government to the Rejsende, and in the same year, the church claimed historical responsibility. A major state report suggested that Sweden should follow the Norwegian example, but instead, testimonies of victims of antigypsy abuse were collected in a so-called White paper (Regeringskansliet 2014). After severe criticism that this was insufficient, and, especially since the Swedish police in 2013 was revealed as having an illegal, purely ethnically-defined Roma register, a special Commission against antigypsyism was assigned for 2014-2016; it proved to be a mistake to treat historical antigypsyism as something separate from the present (SOU 2016:44; Selling 2019c).

Still, Roma organisations are weak in Sweden. Also, the social situation and the agendas of the many different Roma sub-groups are not always the same. There is no major permanent location for Roma history and culture, and Romani resistance is scarcely commemorated. At present, a permanent authority for Roma issues is being planned, but it is not yet clear to what extent it will include memorialisation work. At the same time, there has been a political momentum for Roma rights for some years. Both the White paper and the Commission have internationally been regarded as “good practices in combatting discrimination against Roma” (ODIHR 2014; Selling 2017). Given this situation, relying on cooperation with the state has appeared to be a logical choice of strategy.

The described processes, which resulted in recognition, commissions, apologies, collective compensation in Norway, a Swedish White paper and a possible authority for Roma issues, were joint ventures of Roma and non-Roma, based on a common understanding of the connection between historical responsibility and present obligations. The results have been more or less well-informed and consistently implemented, but perhaps also less easily wiped away since they were tied to collective memory discourse. Also, the dimension of historical justice tends to reconnect the Nordic countries and the international discourses of Roma politics from a different angle than the ethno-political discourse on pan-Romani identity or simulating cultural homogeneity in terms of “strategic essentialism” (Selling 2020, 15f; Grosz 1985). The topics have been local, such as commemorating the antigypsy 1948 riots in Jönköping; national, such as the memorialisation of specific modes of national forced assimilation; and international, such as Holocaust memory. It has produced tangible results, including memorials and compensations, as well as

intangible apologies and other speech acts, awareness-raising activities and Romani commemoration days, such as August 2 and April 8, all of which contribute to a sense of common identity and a common political cause (Selling 2019a). This is important, both as a means of dismantling antigypsy myths and since historical resistance becomes memorialised and inspirational for present-day resistance.

From the perspective of society at large, the most substantial result has been the discursive events in themselves since they raise awareness among both Roma and non-Roma. In Sweden, association with the discourse on historical responsibility for the consequences of Swedish neutrality policy during WWII enhanced these dynamics. This was intensively discussed during the 1990s and resulted in the creation of the authority Living History Forum and the Swedish initiative for the Stockholm Conference, making Sweden an international leading actor in the universalisation of Holocaust memory (Selling 2015). Initially, this discourse had nothing to do with Roma history, and the understanding of the term Holocaust was narrow, implying the Shoah. This delimitation may initially have been directed against apologetic relativisations of the Nazi crimes, but it became a provocation for Roma Holocaust memory activists in practice. Today, discussions in Sweden are again running high about definitions and Roma representation at the planned new international Holocaust conference in Sweden and the Swedish Holocaust museum (SOU 2020:21; Lundqvist 2020). The circle is closing.³

3 What this implies is the topic of the forthcoming CEPS research project “Paving the way for Truth and Reconciliation Process to address antigypsyism in Europe: Remembrance, Recognition, Justice and Trust Building” of which I am part. In this “promising experiences” from Sweden and Germany will be analysed and the possibilities for exchanging concepts with Romania and Spain will be analysed in depth.

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Chapter 2

Roma Resistance in Serbia, Slovenia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro and Macedonia during World War II¹

By Danijel Vojak

Introduction

Roma populations have lived on the territory of former Yugoslavia since the 14th century, coexisting alongside the rest of the population for centuries, making them an integral part of local society. Here, as in other European countries, Roma faced repressive measures including assimilation, though, despite this, some managed to maintain a nomadic way of life. During World War II, Nazi and fascist authorities pursued a policy of persecution against the Roma, who were imprisoned, tortured and killed in camps. Roma were also victims of reprisals by Nazi occupation authorities in Serbia, who shot a hundred Roma for each German soldier killed,

Roma who resisted the oppression of the Nazi authorities and their allies did so by joining the anti-fascist movement or fleeing camps. Such cases of Roma resistance are insufficiently acknowledged, and, in this paper, I will analyse these examples of Roma resistance during World War II in the region. The topic of Roma resistance still remains insufficiently researched, similar

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to many other issues related to Roma history in most European historiographies. Despite such marginalised historiographical interest, the issue of Roma resistance is an important area of research, as it points to Roma as active individuals in the fight against Nazi authorities and their allies during World War II. Thus, the Roma become an integral part of the wider history of resistance against the Nazis in Europe.

In this paper, I will define the concept of resistance in the context of Roma participation during the Second World War, and I will analyse all the forms of resistance towards Nazi policies of extermination and that of its allies. Furthermore, during World War II, Roma women had an active role in the resistance, and this topic is the most under-researched theme in the context of the Roma genocide during World War II. This topic will be specifically analysed in this paper as a unique aspect of this research.

Short Notes on the History of the Roma during World War II in Serbia, Slovenia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro and Macedonia, 1941–1945

To better understand the position of Roma in the countries of the former Yugoslavia, it is necessary to briefly highlight some of the most significant events in their history. Roma have inhabited the areas of Macedonia, Serbia, Bosnia and Herzegovina and Montenegro since the 14th century and 15th centuries. In the 16th century, Roma settlements already existed in Skopje, and their migration spread to more urban areas. The Roma mostly converted to Islam and engaged in trades such as blacksmithing, music, shoemaking and weapon making. The Roma, like other inhabitants of the Ottoman Empire, enjoyed some degree of protection, including of their language and customs, provided they paid their taxes regularly. Most of the Roma belonged to the “*raja*” - non-Muslim subjects who were obliged to pay the tribute (Đurić 2007, 71–73; Crowe 1996, 197–202; Mujić 1953, 144).

Most of the first Roma settlers in Montenegro were nomadic. Some researchers believe that the Roma were deterred from settling in large numbers in the Montenegro area because of the “*patriarchal way of life and tribal organisation*” (Lutovac 1987, 12). Roma populations migrated to Slovenian territory by the 14th century, in all likelihood from Austria, Croatia and Hungary. Roma also settled in more significant numbers in Slovenian territory in

the 17th and 18th centuries. The Habsburg rulers, Maria Theresa and Joseph II, sought to systematically regulate the Roma via policy throughout the entire empire (Šiftar 1970, 35–37; Klopčić 2006, 39).

In later centuries, there were new waves of Roma migration to the area, such as the arrival of Bayash (Boyash) Roma from the Romanian territory in the middle of the 19th century. At the beginning of the 19th century, Roma participated in Serbian uprisings against the Ottoman rule (Đurić 2007, 76–77). There were about 46,000 Roma in Serbia at the end of the 19th century, most of whom lived in rural areas. Their bravery distinguished Roma soldiers in the Serbian army during the Balkan Wars (1912–1913) and World War I (1914–1918). After World War I, the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes was founded (since 1929, the Kingdom of Yugoslavia); covering Montenegro, Slovenia, Serbia, Bosnia and Herzegovina with Croatia, more than 70,000 Roma, mostly Muslims, lived on its territory before World War II (Vojak 2013, 86). In the interwar period, Roma in Serbia began to organise themselves culturally and economically, founding societies and newspapers (Romano lil, 1935) in Belgrade, an indication of their integration into Serbian society (Acković 2009, 197–224).

In April 1941, the Axis Powers quickly defeated the army of the Kingdom of Yugoslavia and created the Independent State of Croatia and the Kingdom of Montenegro. Hungary and Bulgaria partially annexed Serbian territories, and central Serbia was placed under the direct administration of the German authorities, becoming the "Military Administration of Occupied Serbia". At the same time, the Banat region was ruled by the German population there - the Volksdeutscher. From September 1941, the German authorities ruled the occupied Serbian territories with the help of Milan Aćimović, and later Milan Nedić, who formed a special government (Đurić 2007, 75 – 81). In parallel with the persecution of the Jews, the persecution of the Roma followed. The first anti-Roma legislation, passed in May 1941, excluded Roma from public life by banning them from doing certain jobs. At the end of the same month, the Roma were considered in the same legal category as the Jews. They were ordered to wear a yellow ribbon with the inscription "Gypsy." In July 1941, the German occupation authorities issued orders not to persecute Roma who proved to be "honest" and had been permanently settled in a particular area before 1850 (Pisari 2014, 41–50; Đurić 2007, 82–83).

Occupying forces in Serbia continued to persecute Roma even after the outbreak of the anti-fascist uprising in the summer of 1941, and the increasing

military activity of Četnik military units, which sought to restore the Kingdom of Yugoslavia (and create an ethnically pure “Greater Serbia”). These military operations led to the death of German soldiers, in retaliation for which occupying authorities implemented a system of revenge: for every German life taken 100 hostages were killed, and for every German soldier wounded 50 hostages killed. As early as October 1941, Roma held at the Šabac camp were shot dead along with Jews in retaliation for German soldiers killed in a by partisan unit attack near Topola (Pisari 2014, 50–64; Đurić 2007, 81).

In October 1941, German occupying forces enacted new and stricter provisions against Roma, who were considered by the authorities to be “an unreliable element, thus representing a threat to public order and security”, useless to society, required to be kept hostage (Pisari 2014, 65–66). Thereafter, Roma were deported in great numbers to extermination camps and killed. Roma who managed to prove their presence in a certain area before 1850 were considered Serbs and, thus, were not registered by the occupation authorities. In August 1942, the German occupation authorities informed the higher Nazi authorities that the “Gypsy issue” had been resolved in Serbia (Pisari 2014, 67 - 69).

During World War II, the territory of Bosnia and Herzegovina became an integral part of the Independent State of Croatia led by the pro-fascist Ustasha movement. Initially, it pursued a single genocidal policy towards all Roma. In July 1941, the authorities conducted a census of all Roma. The census of Roma (“White Gypsies”) in the Tešanj area provoked a reaction from part of the Muslim community, which condemned the actions of the Ustasha authorities. This was followed by the formation of a special commission, composed of prominent Muslim intellectuals. The commission presented a study to the Ustasha authorities, in which they argued that “hite Gypsies” must be considered an integral part of the Muslim population—a fully “assimilated,” “Croatised,” and Aryan part of the NDH population. The Ustasha authorities accepted the propositions in this study and, at the end of August 1941, determined that these Roma (“White Gypsies”) must be exempted from the census.

Subsequently, however, the Ustasha authorities ignored this provision and, in May 1942, began mass deportations of all Roma in the Independent State of Croatia, including “White Gypsies,” to the Jasenovac concentration camp. Muslim Roma from the Travnik area were also deported, which is why 27 prominent Muslims intellectuals from Zenica drafted a special Resolution (Zenica Resolution), emphasising the need to protect “White Gypsies” as part

of the Muslim community. On May 29, 1942, the Ministry of the Interior of the Independent State of Croatia suspended further deportations of the “White Gypsies,” stating that they were Muslim Roma, who were racially defined as Aryans. Thanks to that decision, a significant part of the local Muslim Roma community was saved (Hadžijakić 1984, 1313–1317; Džemaludinović 1971, 72–77; Jaliman 2012, 55–57).

The former Slovenian territories of the Kingdom of Yugoslavia during World War II were divided into three parts: German, Italian and Hungarian. Shortly after the occupation, Nazi authorities imprisoned all Roma from Gorenjska and Carinthia in camps in an attempt to resolve the “Gypsy question” (Šiftar 1984, 1327). Some Slovenian Roma were deported to the Auschwitz concentration camp (about 77 Roma were deported on December 2, 1943). At the same time, Italian occupation authorities also pursued a policy of Roma internment, especially in the Ljubljana area (July 1942) (Studen 2015, 174–175).

Similar to Slovenia, the territory of Macedonia was divided between Greater Albania (under Italian control) and the Kingdom of Bulgaria. Bulgarian authorities did not systematically regulate the Roma, so - unlike the Jews - they were not specifically targeted by any restrictive laws. Roma were only mentioned in several notes of some laws (Marušiakova and Popov 2009, 100; Saliu 2019, 39–40; Ivanova, Krastev 2017, 1–2). Following the example of Nazi authorities, Bulgarian authorities sought to “eradicate” the Roma, isolating them socio-geographically, preventing their nomadic lifestyles and forcing them to settle (Marušiakova and Popov 2009, 100–102; Ivanova, Krastev 2017, 3). Most Roma from the Macedonian territory survived the war without “repressive seizure of property, deportation or physical obliteration” (Ivanova, Krastev 2017, 2).

Based on the above description of the Roma predicament in the countries of the former Kingdom of Yugoslavia during the Second World War, it is evident that they were persecuted by the Nazi authorities and their collaborators, alongside the Jews. Roma persecution was particularly severe in Serbia, Slovenia and Bosnia and Herzegovina, in contrast to Macedonia and Montenegro where Roma were persecuted to a lesser extent. The difference in the intensity of Roma persecution in these countries can be partially explained by special political-historical circumstances. Accordingly, government regulations were inconsistent with regard to Nazi policies to exterminate Roma, as, for example, in the case of the Bulgarian occupation authorities in Macedonia or Italian occupation authorities in Montenegro. Nazi authorities in control of Serbia

and Slovenia pursued a repressive policy toward the Roma.

Resistance – in Search of a Definition

To better understand Roma participation in the resistance against Nazi authorities, it is necessary to define the content and the scope of the term ‘resistance’. Some scholars state that about 1.5 million Jews participated in military units against the Nazi authorities, especially in Soviet, American, and British military formations (Marrus 1995, 92), with 30,000 Jewish partisan fighters in resistance movements across Eastern Europe (United States Holocaust Memorial Museum 1997, 3). In all the occupied countries, the risks associated with participating in the resistance were “immense”; of the 112,000 French resisters sent to German concentration camps, for example, only 35,000 returned (Bourke 2001, 45).

It should be noted that there is no single definition of resistance. Rather, it is necessary to point out the peculiarities of its different forms. Acts of resistance against Nazi forces during the Second World War were varied. Thus, Bourke mentioned that in France, by wearing certain colours on holidays or by greeting Jewish neighbours, people demonstrated their resistance to the occupying authorities (Bourke 2001, 41). In the Netherlands, forms of resistance included hiding persecuted individuals, such as Jews, or participating in strikes to protest the repression of the occupying authorities, which can be understood as “more active” forms. More dangerous forms of resistance include acts of sabotage, espionage, or armed struggle itself. It is interesting to note that the intensity of resistance was influenced by the geographical characteristics of a particular area, i.e. resistance was stronger in geographically inaccessible areas, such as mountains and forests, compared to open plains (Bourke 2001, 41 - 42). Bourke notes, “Resistance was never easy, although there were innumerable gradations of risk. Symbolic resistance was understandably the most common form of resisting enemy occupation” (Bourke 2001, 41), and, “the greater the individual and group threat, the greater the resistance” (Bourke 2001, 42).

Roger Gottlieb held that resistance included actions motivated by the intention to prevent or limit the power of the oppressor, while Detlev Peukert points out the difference between Nonkonformitat (nonconformist behaviour) and Widerstand (resistance), defining resistance as a public form of provoking

the regime (Marrus 1995, 90–91). Swiss historian, Werner Rings, proposes five kinds of resistance, defined by the kinds of commitments resistors made and what they managed to do: (1) Symbolic Resistance, or “I remain what I was”, (2) Polemic Resistance, or “I tell the truth”, (3) Defensive Resistance, or “I aid and protect”, (4) Offensive Resistance, or “I fight to the death”, and (5) Resistance Enchained, or “freedom fighters in camp and ghetto” (Marrus 1995, 93). Such methodological frameworks, especially of Jewish World War II resistance, should also be applied to non-Jewish victims such as the Roma and Sinti. By applying this methodological concept, this paper will analyse Roma and Sinti resistance in two main forms: Active resistance (i.e. armed resistance as participation in anti-fascist, partisan military units); and passive resistance (i.e. spiritual resistance as organisation of various educational, religious, cultural and political activities, for example, organising schools and libraries in ghettos, collecting and recording documents related to the Holocaust, organising cultural events and religious practices) (United States Holocaust Memorial Museum 1997, 26 – 38).

Active Resistance of the Roma and Sinti during World War II

During World War II, Roma and Sinti in Serbia, Slovenia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro and Macedonia, as well as in other parts of Europe, were persecuted by the Nazi authorities. Consequently, many Roma were killed by Nazi occupation forces and their collaborators. Repressive policies enacted against the Roma saw their mass confinement, killing and torture. According to existing sources, instances of Roma resistance to policies of persecution occurred in the area, primarily by participation in the anti-fascist (partisan) resistance movement. Other forms of resistance included escape from cruel and repressive persecution by occupying authorities.

In the case of Serbia, in his research, Rajko Đurić stated that many Roma participated in the national liberation struggle, and during 1941 they were “reluctantly accepted into partisan units”, though they were not permitted to command any units (Đurić 2007, 85 - 86). Despite the caution in accepting Roma into partisan units, some “showed astonishing courage”, something which is still insufficiently researched today (Đurić 2007, 85). Roma resisted the repressive policies of the occupying authorities in different ways. The most common form of Roma resistance was their participation

in the anti-fascist (partisan) movement led by Josip Broz Tito. A significant number of Roma were listed as fighters in various partisan military units. Thus, in the Fourth Serbian Strike Brigade fighters, 24 Roma fighters were listed (Gončin 1996., 669, 695, 705, 711, 712, 726, 730, 782, 798, 816, 818). An analysis of data from this list shows that most Roma joined the partisan resistance movement in 1944 (15 of them), two in 1945 and one in 1943. Regarding the remaining six fighters, the exact year of their joining the partisan unit is unknown.

Further analysis demonstrated that five of the listed Roma partisans were killed in battle, while six were wounded and two disappeared. The Roma were distinguished for their brave military action, as is the case of Miodrag Jovanović from the First Battalion, who was awarded the Medal for Courage for his bravery. Many Roma were deported to camps in Serbia, and one of the reasons for their deportation was that they were part of or had collaborated with anti-fascist (partisan) resistance movement. In the list of Roma inmates at the camp Niš, those who were deported because they were part of the partisan movement are singled out (Ozimić et al. 2014., 62, 66, 81, 86, 100, 161, 214, 268, 269, 287, 397, 448, 524, 538, 539, 318, 330, 356, 366, 368, 369). A number of Roma joined the Twentieth Serbian Brigade at the time of its formation, and most were musicians, workers or farmers. All these Roma survived the war, although one of them died nineteen years after its end as a result of wounds sustained during the war. Four Roma are listed as partisan fighters in the brigade (Mirčetić 1986., 322, 323, 384). All Roma who joined the brigade in 1944 were killed fighting against German occupation forces. Interestingly, they were all blacksmiths by profession. One Roma soldier of the Ninth Serbian Strike Brigade is mentioned out of a total of just under 5,000 soldiers; a brigade encompassing fighters of 17 different nationalities (Božić et al. 1995, 433). A large number of ethnic groups were to be found in the Twelfth Vojvodina Strike Brigade: alongside Roma, there were Serb, Croat, Slovakian, Hungarian, Romanian, Ruthenian, Albanian, Macedonian and Montenegrin fighters (Popov Miša 1983, 11, 47). Roma are also referenced in the Fifth Serbian Brigade; together with Serbs, Montenegrins, Macedonians, Croats, Slovenes, Hungarians, Italians and Russians, they formed a “true unit of brotherhood and unity” (Jovanović and Mirčetić 1989, 386).

Roma and Sinti also participated in Slovenian partisan units. The Municipal Association of Fighters of the Municipality of Črnomelj states that there was a total of 14 Roma in partisan units from the area of this municipality

(Šiftar 1984, 1333). According to the data from Kočevje Municipal Veterans' Association, several Roma had the status of veterans, invalids and activists in the area. Only one Roma was listed as a member of the Bela Krajina Brigade according to Novo Mesto Municipal Veterans' Association 1942 records. The 15th (Slovenian National Liberation Strike Brigade) of Bela Krajina lists nine Roma, all of whom joined in September 1943. One among them held the rank of captain, and four held the rank of sergeant (Šiftar 1984, 1333). Vita Zalar wrote in her dissertation "Roma and Sinti in Slovenia during World War II" about the participation of Slovenian Roma in partisan units. She researched information about Roma partisans in the Slovenian veterans' organisation - The Union of the Associations for the Values of the National Liberation War. According to this data, Roma were part of the partisan detachments in the Ljubljana province, Vrhnika, Borovnica, Cerknica, Črnomelj, Grosuplje, Logatec, Metlika, Novo Mesto, Ribnica, Semič and Krško. Additionally, there was one Roma partisan in the West Dolenjska detachment, and two Roma partisans in the Kočevje area (Zalar 2015, 21).

In Macedonian territory, Roma also took part in the anti-fascist (partisan) movement led by Josip Broz Tito. Dennis Reinhartz states that a "large number" of Roma from Macedonia and the Bulgarian part of Kosovo joined the partisan movement (Reinhartz 2009, 101). Some of these partisan units were composed of numerous minority groups. Such was the case of the Fifteenth Partisan Corps (Mitrovski 1986a, 286). Similar mention is made regarding the Third Macedonian National Liberation Brigade, stating that this brigade consisted of Macedonians together with, among other minorities such as Roma, which is why it was considered a "brotherhood and unity brigade" (Грујица 1976, 348).

In the territory of Montenegro, Roma supported the partisan movement during World War II, and this was especially evident in the Roma group Gabelj:

During World War II, they fled headlong from the Germans, taking refuge in refugee camps and in the forests. They knew how to dodge and hide from the enemy. They also moved with partisan units. Several of them were fighters of the Lovćen partisan detachment, and the Montenegrin strike brigades, so they are witnesses of partisan participation, recognition of veterans' rights and other things, about which more will be said. The Roma themselves state that nowhere in Montenegro, including the cities and the villages, were they as safe, as on their way through the mountain ravines. During the war, Montenegrins gladly informed the Gabeljs about the movement of the Germans so they could promptly take shelter and avoid

attack. They helped them with food and clothing to keep them from starving and cold. The Gabeljs were always sympathetic to the Montenegrins because of their resourcefulness and perseverance. (Lutovac 1987, 91)

In Bosnia and Herzegovina as well, Roma joined the Yugoslav partisan units led by Josip Broz Tito. The partisan movement brought Roma together, as it did other minority groups (e.g. Jews, Hungarians, Germans, etc.) in the areas from Slovenia to Macedonia, into a single anti-fascist resistance movement against the Nazis and their allies. Two Roma were recorded in the list of fighters of the Eighteenth Croatian East Bosnian National Liberation Strike Brigade. The first of them was Sinan Likić, born in 1917 in Modrac (municipality of Lukavac in Bosnia), he joined the brigade on October 10, 1943, as a fighter of the Second Company of the Third Battalion. He was sent home two months later due to a serious illness (“Spisak boraca 18. hrvatske” 1988, 584). Roma Mehmed Mujić was born in 1922 in Kiseljak and joined the Brigade on July 20, 1944, as a machine gunfighter in the First Company of the First Battalion. (“Spisak boraca 18. hrvatske” 1988, 651). Roma are mentioned as partisan fighters in the Twenty-first Tuzla East Bosnian People’s Liberation Strike Brigade and the Mostar Partisan Battalion (Tihic 1988, 136; Grebo Hāmo 1955, 184). Roma, Rasim Dedich, from the village of Žeravica (near Bosanska Gradiška) pointed out the reasons why Roma joined partisan units:

Many Roma were with Partisans, including three members of my family. That is why we were attacked, because we joined the Partisans. Many non-Roma who lived around us were reporting that Roma were joining the Partisans. We were attacked because we were with Partisans, but we had to join to save our heads from the Germans and Ustashe. (Polansky 2008, 15–16)

Hasan Bajrich from Zavodici, who was also a partisan, recalled the dangers encountered by Roma partisans in Bosnia and Herzegovina:

I heard there were Roma who went with the Partisans. I joined them too, but only in 1945, just before the war ended. ... I was with Partisans in Tuzla, Zvornik, Lاسanicama, Han Pesak, Gorazde; Cajnice and Foča. Our unit was called Tuzlanski odred. There were some other Roma with me in the Partisans. There was Zajko from Lukovac. ... It was dangerous being in the Partisans. We didn’t have much to eat and we travelled long distances [by foot]. I had a gun, which I fought with. The Partisans gave us something to wear and they gave us shoes. I was in the Partisans until January 25, 1945. (Polansky 2008, 111, 112)

There were Roma and Sinti in the partisan units distinguished on account

of their heroism. Rajko Đurić states that the Roma were “among the initiators and organisers of the uprising” in Knjaževac (Đurić 2007, 85). Roma Slavko Cener recalled a military clash between Roma partisans and Germans in Slovenia. Roma partisans hid in Borejci and attacked German soldiers from there. The Roma fought without the support of the local non-Roma population, which “saw no point” in fighting the Germans. At one point, German military units almost outnumbered the Roma, but then they were aided by the Russians, who helped them repel the attack. The Russians later praised the courage of the Roma partisans among the villagers (Zalar 2015, 24–25). Lutovac mentions prominent Roma individuals and their families who participated in the anti-fascist movement. Among others, Lutovac mentions A. Salkanović as an “activist and fighter.” Salkanović was a pre-war member of the Communist Party of Yugoslavia and, during World War II, he participated in the organisation of the July 13 Uprising. He was a distinguished partisan fighter and received special recognition for participating in The National Liberation War in 1941 (Lutovac 1987, 200). Roma S. Ramović from Konik (a district in today’s Podgorica) distinguished himself as a fighter in the Lovćen partisan detachment, and members of his “brotherhood” were partisans and bearers of partisan participation testimonial (Lutovac 1987, 129). Mahmut Salkanović is another Roma mentioned for his courage among the partisan units. In the spring of 1943, he helped 26 Montenegrins escape who had been held hostage by the occupier, by cutting the wires of the Italian camp in Nikšić. His family members were also partisan fighters. After the war, a monument was erected in his memory owing to his role in the partisan struggle near the ‘Boris Kidrič’ Ironworks in Nikšić. It is the first marked grave of Roma in the area of Nikšić and Montenegro. On the tombstone, the following is inscribed:

Hey traveller when you get through here,
You come to the monument to Mahmut,
Sit down and rest yourself
At Mahmut’s eternal house
Here lies a war invalid - Montenegrin Mahmut Salkanović.
(Lutovac 1987, 200–201)

The courageous actions of Roma partisans in the fight against the German army and its allies remain insufficiently researched. All these examples of Roma participation in partisan units in this area demonstrate how they became actively involved in the anti-fascist (partisan) movement and actively opposed the extermination and genocidal policies of the Nazi authorities and

their allies.

Escapes – Active Resistance

Escape must undoubtedly be understood as a form of resistance because it enabled the survival of Roma and Sinti victims of Nazi persecution. Roma were arrested by the occupying authorities and their allies and deported to concentration camps. Some Roma managed to escape from them and in doing so, resisted the occupying forces. Roma Daut Selimov, born on August 25, 1924, in the village of Miratovac, was imprisoned in a Bulgarian camp, from where he managed to escape. He recalled:

The Bulgarians gathered up the Romani men and took us to Simitia in Bulgaria. The Bulgarians collected us Roma one month after they collected the Jews. It wasn't important for the Bulgarians if they were gathering up young or old Roma. For them the important thing was that Roma could work. ... After they took us to Simitia, in Bulgaria, some of us also went to work in Kistendil, Plovdiv, and Blagojograd. But we were mostly in Simitia. We worked on the roads, and in the fields. We were working for Bulgarians. I was in Bulgaria for three months. Our life in Bulgaria was miserable. All we did was work. Four or five of us organised once an escape from the camp in Bulgaria. Nedjip, Tahir, me, and one more man ran away. Another who was with us didn't manage to escape. We escaped from the camp at night. We didn't know where we were going or how the road looked. I'll tell you now how we escaped from there. We were sleeping in some huts. In the camp were guards. But we saw where one of the walls was broken, so we managed to escape over that broken wall. It was very early in the morning. Near the camp was a mountain. When we started on the road for the mountain, we saw one house with light on. We entered into that house and asked where we were, what the name of village where we were was, and which way to Kistendil, and that we had lost our way. Those people showed us the way to Kistendil. We walked through the mountains until we reached home. Skopje is not so far from Kistendil, not even 100 km. We saw no checkpoints because we went all the way through the forest. (Polansky 2008, 334–335)

Fazlija Adovich, born on May 9, 1933, in the village of Belopavlice (near Danilovgrad), described in detail how she and her family fled from the enemy (occupation) army:

I remember very well the bombings. When the bombing started, we were in Belopavlice. That was a very dangerous bombing. Hitler bombed us. We escaped through the Zeta River. We had to destroy our camp so the occupier wouldn't think it was a concentration lager. Our women forgot their children, because they were running so fast to escape. Later they returned to the place where our tents were and found

their children. With great suffering, we survived this situation. Then we escaped to Sjevne, but Hitler bombed there too. From there, we escaped through Mala Rjeka, Vijakuca, Bjeleblje, and Nozica. Then we came down to Moraca River, through the mountain, and got to Kolasin. On the road, while escaping, we walked over dead people. In Kolasin, it was very dangerous too. My mother had to step on dead people to get closer to us. My God, that was terrible to see. (Polansky 2008, 405)

It is logical to assume that what happened to Fazlija Adovich during World War II, happened to most Roma in the wider (ex -Yugoslav) territory. Namely, they were victims of persecution by the Nazi authorities and their allies. Indirect casualties were, like in case of other residents, caused by combat operations. The example described by Fazlija Adovich shows the high level of trauma Roma women experienced due to such military operations and the chaos of war so that some who fled forgot their children. Fortunately, they soon returned for them. Furthermore, this example shows how Roma tried to find salvation in the mountains and forests because such places allowed them to hide and were less accessible to the enemy.

Passive Resistance of Roma and Sinti

One of the Roma's main occupations, especially in Bosnia and Herzegovina and other parts of the former Ottoman Empire in the Balkans, was playing music, and it was in this capacity that they were part of the Ottoman military units (mehtari). Some sources indicate that some Roma acted in similar roles in the partisan units from the area. One type of Roma resistance to the occupying authorities in the former area of the Kingdom of Yugoslavia was through their cultural activities. This is especially true of the activities of Roma musicians within the cultural detachments of partisan units. Thus, some Roma from the vicinity of Belgrade formed the Wind Orchestra in one of the partisan units of the Main Staff of the People's Liberation Army and the Partisan Detachments of Vojvodina. This is documented in a photograph of the orchestra taken in December 1944 in Hungary (Pajović and Uzelac and Dželebdž 1979, 143). There was a Roma brass band in the Seventeenth Serbian Partisan Brigade, which consisted of about seven to eight Roma musicians with several musical instruments and a drum. Such Roma musical formations are called Balkan Brass or Pleh music (germ. Blech = sheet metal, i.e. brass), and its roots are in Austrian and Turkish military music and Roma musical

folklore. Their arrival in this brigade meant “a serious strengthening of the cultural and artistic team of the brigade” (Milenković 1989, 191). Then, in September 1944, a cultural and educational group was established in this brigade at its headquarters, and several Roma musicians from Pečenjevac were among the first to join it (Milenković 1989, 287). A brigade orchestra was founded in the Eighth Serbian Partisan Brigade, which consisted of the so-called pleh (i.e. brass) band, and it included Roma from Vranje and Vranjska Banja—this band “accompanied the brigade from the liberation of the Vranje region until the end of the war” (Damjanov 1995, 245). Among the first members of the military music band of the Tenth Partisan Brigade was “Dragan, the famous gypsy from Vlasotince,” who played bass (Timotijević 1991, 147). Within partisan units in the Macedonian territory, the Roma were responsible for a significant part of military music. Nailje Suljeđman, a Roma woman, born in 1927 in Bitola, recalls: “When my father went with Partisans, he knew how to play. He had to play for the army. He played a wind instrument, the zurla” (Polansky 2008, 384).

Joleta Abramović, a partisan fighter, recalled an anecdote of “Commander and Trumpeter” about a Roma musician in the Sixth Montenegrin People’s Liberation Strike Brigade. The anecdote describes a joke made by one partisan fighter to a Roma trumpet player because they could not stand the sound of the trumpet as it accompanied every one of their unit commander’s orders. The partisans made fun of the Roma by taking a part of his trumpet (“the whistle”) and then advising him to urgently report its disappearance to the partisan unit commander who was resting in his tent after military exercises:

The gypsy, scared to death, announced a diversion to the battalion commissioner Radisav Brađović, who sensed the joke being made and told the trumpet player to report it personally to the commander. Even the best television cameras today could not faithfully convey the way the trumpeter woke the commander, and I could not describe the hustle and bustle that arose when the commander's dream broke. I know that parents were mentioned, most often mothers—of all gypsies, musicians and musicians. This case not only remained on that, but we also had to deal with it at the meeting of the Battalion Committee. The trumpet was no longer heard in the Zvečan valley, even if it was a Jericho trumpet. The merry trumpet player ended up as a horseman. (Abramović 1983, 799–800)

This case shows that some Roma participated as musicians within partisan units, which can be considered a form of resistance through cultural action. For example, Petruša, a Roma woman who lived in Milino Selo, pointed to the

participation of Roma musicians in the Ozren partisan detachment as “unofficial propaganda” (Vujasinović 1979, 130). A partisan field station was established in the area of Seković, and, among other things, numerous cultural and artistic events were held there. Oskar Danon, a partisan, recalled one such event, stating: “This meeting ended with a real ceremony, like one could not remember in this area. Gypsies also played various circle dances and partisan songs” (Danon 1971, 646). A similar celebration took place in the summer of 1942 in the village of Bunarić, where partisans celebrated the first anniversary of the uprising. Roma musicians were also present on that occasion:

More than two thousand men and women gathered from the surrounding villages on Bunarić in the century-old Bišina forest to celebrate the First Anniversary of the Uprising. Meeting. Flags. Speeches and shouts. And then, on the clearing, next to the forest, a large, long sofa². Bleached linen cloths, napkins and loose tablecloths, and laid out colorful bags. Around them are two long, long lines of fighters, hosts, women, girls. Under the big beech three or four violins, one bass, Gypsy singers from Raševo and a circle dance, a tireless circle dance”. (Donlagić 1970, 42)

Roma Women in the Resistance

Most of the available documents and sources related to the topic of Roma resistance in the area of former Yugoslavia - but probably in other European countries as well - identifies men as resisters. At the same time, Roma women with children are mainly referenced as victims of deportations to camps or mass killings. However, some sources identify Roma women as members of partisan military units. For example, Stana Mihailović, a Roma woman, was arrested and deported to the Banjica camp in Belgrade because she was a partisan courier (Begović 1989, 150). Among the female Roma partisans, Milica Katić's story from Grabovac particularly stands out. In August 1941, she informed the partisans about the movement of German forces. After that, she joined the First Posavina Partisan Battalion with her two sons (Bojić 1964, 17, 331). Because she cooperated with the partisans, she was arrested by the Četniks, who handed her over to the Germans. She was tortured and then deported to a camp in Smederevska Palanka. In July 1942, she was transferred from there to the Banjica camp (Begović 1989, 192; *Women of Serbia in the National Liberation War* 1975a, 191, 201; Đurić 2007, 85). Records kept of the

Banjica detainees state that she had been in the camp since June 18, 1942, and was shot on May 25, 1943 (Micković and Radojčić 2009, 425). Twenty-one years after her death she was written about in a book about her partisan unit, the Posavina partisan detachment:

Milica Katić, a Roma woman from Grabovac, was also killed due to her connection with the detachment. She spontaneously became an informant. One night the Germans suddenly stormed her area and asked her to take them to a partisan camp. Milica fled in front of the Germans and informed the detachment headquarters that they were being surrounded by Germans. The blockade was evaded, and Milica continued to help the detachment units. During the withdrawal of the 1st Battalion, she went with her 14-year-old son as a fighter of a company. She lost touch and returned to a village. She was hiding with her friends. She was discovered and arrested in February 1942. She was handed over to the special police, where she was terribly tortured. She never betrayed anybody. She was sent to the Banjica camp and shot on 25 May 1943, along with a large group of internees. (Bojić 1964, 335)

There are other brave Roma women known about who participated in the resistance. On December 25, 1943, the Četniks slaughtered Milica Andjelković, “a sympathizer of the People’s Liberation Movement” (Women of Serbia in the National Liberation War 1975a, 226). Another partisan, Stana Bislimović, was captured by Četniks on January 14, 1944, “while she was going on a mission to Vučje” and killed in Bunuški Čifluk (Women of Serbia in the National Liberation War 1975c, 744). Anđelija Janković’s fate, who had been helping the partisans in Donja Trnava since the beginning of the anti-fascist uprising (in the summer of 1941), was similar:

In Donja Trnava, from the first days of the uprising, the gypsy woman Anđelija Janković worked for the People’s Liberation Movement with her entire family. She was very brave and performed every task. During the fiercest terror, she sheltered party workers in her house and accepted partisans. Četniks discovered her work and slaughtered her on 12 September 1943. (Women of Serbia in the National Liberation War 1975b, 239)

Djulega Mehich was born in Banovice Cubrunc. She was eight years old when World War II began in the Kingdom of Yugoslavia. She spoke about her aunt, who was a partisan, alongside other Roma women who participated in the partisan movement in Bosnia and Herzegovina:

My father’s aunt (his half-sister) was in Partisans. Her name was Ametovich Zlatija, but there were many other people with the Partisans as well. There was Arif, who received a medal from the Partisans, and Osman Muhich, and many others. There were as well Romani women in the Partisans, like Hana Osmanowich. The women

were fighting and cooking for the Partisans. (Polansky 2008, 103)

These examples show that Roma women were not passive in their actions toward Nazi authorities and their allies in the countries of the former Yugoslavia. Some Roma women actively participated in the resistance, either by joining the partisan (anti-fascist) movement or by helping with intelligence from the field (such as information on the movement of enemy military units). Because they participated in the resistance, Roma women were captured and taken to camps, where they were tortured and killed.

Conclusions

Roma across the former Yugoslavia were faced with repressive Nazi policies during World War II. Roma were deported to concentration camps and killed en masse. Forms of resistance to the Nazi authorities and their allies during World War II were varied. In this paper, documented resistance of Roma and Sinti in the territories of Serbia, Slovenia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro and Macedonia took two main forms: active resistance (mostly referring to their participation in the armed resistance or fleeing from camps or from places of their persecutions), and passive resistance (referring to their participation in various cultural activities).

Research shows that active resistance among Roma took place in all countries of the former Yugoslavia, particularly as active participants in the anti-fascist (partisan) units led by Josip Broz Tito. It was the partisan movement that brought together Roma, and other minority groups (such as Jews, Hungarians, Germans, etc.) from Slovenia to Macedonia into a single anti-fascist resistance movement against the Nazis and their allies. Roma and Sinti partisan members distinguished themselves on account of their heroism and several played key roles in the anti-fascist uprising. Evading persecution by the Nazis and their allies and escaping from camps is also considered a type of active Roma and Sinti resistance. Numerous examples are provided in which Roma and Sinti joined the partisans after successfully escaping from Nazi camps, thereby participating in the broader resistance movement.

Passive resistance is defined in this paper as a form of spiritual resistance, for example, the organisation of various educational, religious, cultural and political activities. This form of resistance among Roma and Sinti was espe-

cially evident through their inclusion in military orchestras, which can be understood as a form of cultural resistance. Research also shows how Roma and Sinti were traumatised due to military operations and the chaos of war in general; escaping to the mountains and forests, they tried to find salvation in remote places where they could hide and evade the enemy.

In this paper, a specific focus was placed on analysing the participation of Roma and Sinti women in the resistance movement. Research shows that these women were not passive during the Nazi onslaught in the countries of the former Yugoslavia. Some actively participated in the resistance movement, as a result of which they were captured, taken to camps, tortured and killed.

The research demonstrates that Roma and Sinti in the countries of former Yugoslavia actively and passively participated in various forms of resistance in the face of the genocidal policy of Nazis and their allies. However, these findings also point to the need for further continuous and in-depth scientific research. This topic is one of the many still insufficiently researched chapters of Roma and Sinti history of during World War II, not just in the countries of the former Yugoslavia but more broadly, in European historiography.

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Part 2

Country Case Studies of Roma Resistance during the Holocaust

Chapter 3

Roma Struggle in Lithuania: Strategies of Survival and the Impulse to Resist

By Aurėja Jutelytė

Introduction

This research thematically investigates the different manifestations of Roma resistance in Lithuania during the Second World War. Based on various primary and secondary sources written mainly in Lithuanian and translated by the author, this research reveals the specificity of modes of behaviour of Lithuanian Roma between 1941-1944 and highlights elements of resistance uncovered in historical, anthropological, and autobiographical materials on Roma during the Second World War. The main argument behind this paper is that there is academic neglect towards the elements of resistance to oppression, persecution and systemic violence of Roma during the Second World War in Lithuania, and in some cases in the post-Second World War period, referred to below as “archival silence”. This, I argue, should be challenged by revisiting survivor stories and reappraising them with the narrative of resistance in mind to arrive at new ways of thinking about Roma as resisting agents during the Roma Holocaust in Lithuania.

Structure of the Paper

This paper is structured into three main sections. The first section presents a review of the existing historiography of the Roma Holocaust in Lithuania, aiming to identify examples of historical research on Roma resistance. I con-

tinue by introducing my findings, which are grouped thematically according to dominant elements of resistance identified in different stories encountered. Then, I present challenges I faced during the research, such as scarcity of historical documents and prevalence of oral rather than written collective memory amongst Roma.

Before proceeding, I wish to briefly outline what I mean by using the word “resistance”. The Oxford Dictionary defines the noun “resistance” as comprising four different, albeit similar, meanings: a dislike or opposition to a plan, a refusal to obey someone, the power not to be affected by something, and as a force that stops something from moving or making it move more slowly (The Oxford Dictionary n.d.). For the purposes of this research, I emphasise a slightly different interpretation of resistance. This is primarily because Roma resistance often involved heroism through acts such as helping other vulnerable groups (e.g. the Jews), thereby deviating from standard definitions provided by tools like the Oxford Dictionary. Treated as such, and following Wiener Holocaust Library’s definition, resistance in this research aims at emphasising acts that involved resisting the power-hold of the Nazi regime (and, in some cases, Stalinist regime) over the bodies and lives of affected Roma subjects (The Wiener Holocaust Library n.d.). In the context of this research, resistance is marked by hiding (taken both as concealment and hiding in plain sight), escape, physical retaliation, the rescue of non-Roma groups, and uprisings as a part of army or partisans. Trying to both highlight notable cases and find similarities linking stories in a pattern, I divide the evidence of Roma resistance into the following groups: hiding, escape, active attack, participation in the army or partisan activities and helping Jews. Based on the collected information, I emphasise the importance of hiding and escape in Roma narratives as strategies of survival and planned, conscious efforts to resist persecution.

Finally, I seek to maintain a high level of self-reflexivity in this research by applying critical self-conscious thinking to recognise my own biases. I plan to evaluate my research plan and difficulties encountered during the process, as well as to assess the way I approached my findings. Based on that, I provide ideas and recommendations for future research both in Lithuania and in the wider region (the Baltic states and Lithuanian-Belarusian border territory).

Research on the Roma Holocaust in Lithuania

The time frame chosen for this investigation is the interval between 1941 and 1953. This includes Lithuania's occupation by Nazi Germany from 1941 to 1944, and the first 9 years of the second occupation¹ of Lithuania by the Soviet Union (from 1944 to 1953). The latter is important for this research because it analyses Roma involvement in the Red Army and interaction between Roma and (under different circumstances) anti-Nazi and anti-Soviet partisans, as well as Lithuanian freedom fighters.

Although Nazi Germany occupied Lithuania from 1941 to 1944, the repressions of Roma began later than other groups. In Vytautas Toleikis' "Lithuanian Roma During the Years of the Nazi occupation," this is corroborated by Roma survivors who remember the detained Jews and, later, Lithuanians led in the streets by German soldiers (2005, 58). According to the International Commission for the Evaluation of Nazi and Soviet Occupational Crimes, the larger-scale repressions and mass arrests of Roma in Lithuania started in 1942 (Komisija 2002). Detained Roma were transported to concentration and labour camps in Germany and occupied France. In total, approximately one thousand Roma were deported, but most of them returned to Lithuania (Romų platforma n.d.). According to official sources, during the occupation, no less than 500 Roma were killed in Lithuanian territory, accounting for one-third of all Roma who lived there at the time (Toleikis 2001, 20).

However, it is assumed that the real number of Lithuanian Roma victims is higher, as it is impossible to determine the number of Roma killed by mobile Nazi paramilitary units that operated on Lithuanian territory (Jutelytė 2016, 5). According to Lithuanian researchers, there is not a single Roma family in Lithuania in which there are no memories of relatives who were killed, taken to concentration camps or who disappeared during the period of Nazi occupation (Simoniukštytė 2018). Aušra Simoniukštytė claims that "there is no doubt that Roma are one of the most affected ethnic communities in Lithuania" (Simoniukštytė 2007, 136). Vytautas Toleikis expresses a similar opinion: "I have not met a family of [Roma] whose relatives would not have suffered in one way or another during the Second World War: shot, imprisoned in con-

1 During the Second World War, from 1940 to 1941, Lithuania was occupied by the Soviet Union, from 1941 to 1944 by Nazi Germany, and in 1944 it was again occupied by the Soviet Union.

centration camps, taken to forced labour sites, Lithuanian prisons, at least hiding” (Toleikis 2005, 57).

Nevertheless, the Roma Holocaust in Lithuania remains a highly under-researched topic. Historian Arūnas Bubnys addresses problems such as lack of documents and other historical sources faced by researchers investigating the Roma Holocaust in Lithuania:

If we talk about the genocide of Roma and the persecution of Roma in various forms - not only massacres, but also arrests, imprisonment in labour camps, concentration camps, deportations to Germany and other Nazi-occupied countries, the biggest problem is the problem of documents and sources. The Roma of Lithuania themselves hardly wrote and did not leave many memories, there are too few such documents left by various Nazi and other institutions operating in Lithuania for us to reconstruct the image of [Roma] genocide in Lithuania. (Bubnys 2019)

Just as it is challenging to gather information about Roma Holocaust victims, it is even more difficult to find information about Roma resistance in Lithuania. In rare works on Lithuanian Roma developed in the post-war years, questions related to resistance were not asked. To my knowledge, there has been no research focusing exclusively on elements of resistance in survival strategies of Lithuania Roma. However, it does not necessarily mean that examples of resistance do not exist in historical, autobiographic, anthropological works on the Holocaust. In this paper, I attempt to restore otherwise unnoticed instances of Roma resistance in Lithuania by critically reading existent works as well as looking for new evidence in the framework of independent research.

When compared to well-known Roma resistance cases from countries with large Roma populations such as France, Germany and others, the understanding of such cases in Lithuania, a country with a comparatively small Roma population, is not adequate. This is due to a lack of research on the topic and “archival silence” on the issue. In that sense, important insights presented by Dr. Volha Bartash in her recent article, “Towards Ethnography of Archival Silence: Romani Memory of Nazi Genocide Confronts the Soviet Records” (Bartash 2020), guided me when dealing with the challenges mentioned above. Although in her article Dr. Bartash does not focus on Roma resistance per se, she presents her ethnographic-historical study on memories of the Roma Holocaust in a village near the Belarusian-Lithuanian border region. In doing so, she identifies significant gaps between Soviet archival records and the narratives of the community based on oral memory. Examining the archival silence

and the underrepresentation of Roma resistance in research on the Roma Holocaust in Lithuania opens up space for further research on the Roma Holocaust and resistance, including documentation and artefacts produced by perpetrators (Nazis and collaborators). Asking how such artefacts illustrate certain power dynamics, how researchers critically receive them, and what can be done to make witness stories and narratives of Roma communities visible can help gain more weight vis-à-vis perpetrator discourses. Whilst my research does not address all these points, I attempt to address archival silence on Roma resistance in Lithuania during the Second World War and open up new avenues for research. In that sense, Dr. Bartash's ideas on archival silence helped me approach the issue of scarcity of data productively, directing my focus both on what is present and what is missing.

With that in mind, this research comprises the first step towards a research agenda uncovering layers of Roma resistance during the Second World War in Lithuania, and beyond. I reappraise some stories and view them through the lens of resistance to emphasise that Roma in Lithuania during the Second World War were also resisting agents, rather than just victims.

Therefore, this research provides significant information on the extent of the resistance by uncovering previously overlooked patterns of Roma resistance in one of the Baltic states. This is relevant because it supports the argument that Roma resistance was not an exceptional, one-time phenomenon. Rather, the argument is that Roma resistance was a consistent feature of Roma survival strategies, found even in generally overlooked cases, like the one of Roma in Lithuania. In the next section, I discuss limitations I have experienced in my research that have affected the information gathered as well as the breadth, and scope of the paper.

The Research Plan and Reflection on its Limitations

My original research plan was to diversify the sources of information by applying four different strategies. First, I intended to communicate with researchers, historians, professionals coordinating minority-related policies, people working for Roma-related NGOs, other experts in their respective fields, evaluate existing research and get insights on the current discourse of Roma resistance in Lithuania. Second, I planned to carefully read the existing sources about the Holocaust and Roma in Lithuania after the Second World

War, expecting to find whether there is evidence of Roma behaviour during the Holocaust demonstrating elements of resistance, and if so, how it manifested itself. Then, I planned to compose a list of archival locations to search relevant museums and archives about documents and other primary sources, confirming or clarifying the data gathered after implementing the first two steps. Finally, I anticipated a series of interviews with members of the Lithuanian Roma community who are willing to cooperate and can potentially provide information and examples of oral history prevalent in their community about their relatives and other community members during the Holocaust, as well as to identify cases of Roma heroism familiar to them, and to verify the information I have gathered from other sources.

Due to the COVID-19 crisis-induced quarantine and travel restrictions, I had to redesign my research strategy. It allowed me to expand the scope of my initial desk research and develop a framework for classification of the elements of resistance according to their nature, based on which some recommendations for the future research were made. In addition to the desk research, I contacted Lithuanian researchers whose works are quoted both here and in the annotated bibliography prepared as an annexe to this essay for additional information and clarification of certain details found in their work. Although Lithuanian archives remain closed, I contacted the Genocide and Resistance Research Centre of Lithuania and found important evidence in the archives of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum. Finally, I was in regular contact with Svetlana Novopolskaja and Vida Beinortienė who have long-term experience working with Roma communities in Vilnius and Panevėžys. They provided me with information on oral histories with elements of resistance circulating within the Roma communities with which they work.

As a result of the efforts mentioned above, I have gathered excerpts from anthropological interviews with Roma, footage of oral history interviews and preserved stories of witnesses (both contemporaries and currently living relatives). An in-depth reading of this material has revealed a lack of supporting information in some of the cases: names, dates and locations are sometimes missing in personal narratives. Vida Beinortienė, who worked closely with Panevėžys Roma community, had the opportunity to speak to Holocaust survivors and their families while they were still alive. Beinortienė reflects on similar problems she encountered while gathering information in Panevėžys: “It is difficult to establish the length of imprisonment in concentration camps or their geographic locations. Only a few Roma have archival documents on

the deportation or imprisonment of their relatives. Some look for them but cannot find anything. Perhaps the Nazis destroyed those documents when they were retreating” (Beinortienė 2016, 21). I have encountered similar problems in already published sources. For example, in a source provided by the International Commission for the Evaluation of the Nazi and Soviet Occupation Regimes in Lithuania, there is unclear information regarding Roma imprisonment locations.²

Finding archival information is challenging in the Lithuanian context because of the lack of sources and the fact they remain largely non-digitised. According to historian Arūnas Bubnys, currently, there are approximately 60,000 cases of imprisoned and deported persons who returned to Lithuania after the Second World War. These cases are not digitised, and there is no database providing information on different groups of people affected by repressions. To find out how many Lithuanian Roma were imprisoned and deported to Germany and other locations, it is necessary to review the 60,000 cases manually, thus making the endeavour rather complicated. Since the surnames of Lithuanian Roma are often similar to ethnic Lithuanians, Russians, and people of other nationalities who lived in Lithuania during the Second World War, multiple variables should be taken into account to determine whether the case file belongs to a persecuted Roma individual (Bubnys 2019a, 17:55-20:20).

Lithuanian anthropologist Aušra Simoniukštytė, who faced similar issues during her research, suggests that due to the severe lack of documentary sources on interwar, and especially wartime, Roma oral history significantly fills this gap (Simoniukštytė 2007, 136-137). In light of Simoniukštytė’s guidelines, this work aimed to focus on witness stories, oral history, and narratives within Roma communities. This brought yet another challenge to my research: at first glance, some of the stories do not seem to be entirely coherent, thus cre-

2 The document “The Nazi Occupation of 1941 – 1944. The Holocaust and Other Nazi Crimes. The Persecution of Non-Jews Lithuanian Roma During the Years of the Nazi Occupation CONCLUSIONS (Approved on June 19, 2002)” states that “Roma to be deported were lodged temporarily at police detention cells or prisons, then sent to the Pravieniškės labour camp which served as a distribution point. Later on, they were transported for work to the Stuthoff and Buchenwald concentration camps, the Brandenburg airplane factory in Germany, as well as the Boiling, Faring, and Versailles camps in France.” I did not find available data supporting the information on imprisonment locations in France. A thorough investigation is needed to examine the origins of this information. See https://www.komisija.lt/wp-content/uploads/2016/06/V.Toleikis_Roma_app.concl_.pdf

ating an impression of rather fractured memories and inconsistent narratives. In some oral accounts, witnesses call themselves or other Roma by their nicknames, unable to state the personal information provided in their documents, making it challenging to discover by what names they went to concentration camps.³ For example, Aleksas Aleksandravičius⁴ claims to have been deported to occupied France, but, despite his very firm account, locations mentioned in his story initially did not match any known French imprisonment sites. It should be noted that this does not delegitimise Mr. Aleksandravičius's account, especially as he gives verifiable information about German locations to which he was transferred. Rather, this offers an insight into the complex nature of Roma memory documentation in Lithuania.

At the beginning of this research, the discrepancies mentioned above seemed like an obstacle to gathering consistent information about Roma resistance activities in Lithuania. However, a thorough reading of collected material has shown that the same names, nicknames, and places of Roma resistance actors appear in different sources, thus creating an impression that fragments of Roma resistance exist in scattered memories and narratives. These bits and pieces of history (both written and oral) can be assembled into a clear enough image of Roma resistance in Lithuania. As a researcher, I find the work with their stories challenging as I try to ensure that the dignity of witnesses is preserved, and their oral history statements are heard.

Acknowledging that Roma voices are still not given significant attention and are often lost to archival silence and perpetrator narratives, I have made a decision to base my storytelling on the accounts of survivors and other witnesses to give their stories a new significance (i.e. the one of resistance). As stated at the beginning of this paper, this way of reappraising stories to offer new insights into neglected aspects of Roma resistance in the Second World War helps portray Roma in Lithuania as consistently resisting agents. It is a principled stance that acknowledges the unique experiences of Lithuanian Roma during the Second World War as well as their oral culture and narratives of resistance nurtured within Roma communities.

3 Vida Beinortienė writes about this issue in her book: “Roma know the names by which [their relatives] were called in the community, but cannot say the names, surnames, or date of birth recorded in the documents” (Beinortienė 2016, 20).

4 Born in 1919, see more information in the resistance hero profile.

Memories of Resistance, Narratives of Heroism

In the following part of this essay, I will present the findings of my research by grouping them into two blocks: completely documented resistance stories and fragmented resistance stories presented as an assemblage of important, albeit incomplete narratives on Roma resistance coming from a variety of sources. I chose to incorporate these into this essay according to their dominant themes presented below. These stories include a variety of the above-mentioned elements of resistance that were overlooked by previous research and are central for this research and its argument.

Aleksas Aleksandravičius⁵

A. Aleksandravičius remembers that during the first year of the German occupation, the scope of Roma persecution was limited to confiscation of horses and wagons. When the intensity of repressions increased, Aleksandravičius continued to travel in his region, avoiding arrest, or escaping detention by running away on foot and even breaking away from a moving train: “we ran, we would run away many times. It was the Germans who were not so cunning at the beginning, we would jump off the trains.”

After German soldiers killed his uncle and arrested many Roma, Aleksandravičius joined seven to eight Roma families in the woods. He remembers finding shelter in the density of trees from 1942 to 1943, and constantly moving in the forest-rich part of the country: “Hiding was necessary. We went from one forest to another. The Germans were afraid to go to the woods, so we went into distant forests, hiding deep. We hid in the winter, we hid in the summer. They would take us, but we would run away again.”

On March 6, 1943, Aleksandravičius was arrested and taken to Pravieniškės camp, where he witnessed deaths of Roma elderly and children (Toleikis 2005). From there he and a group of prisoners were sent to locations in France. Aleksandravičius was imprisoned in several different camps and was eventually transferred to Germany, where he remembers being forced to do hard labour, including digging pits and trenches. When he and a couple of

5 The quotations in this biography are taken from Aleksas Aleksandravičius' oral history interview by Saulius Berzinis. United States Holocaust Memorial Museum Collection, 1998. Video file. <https://collections.ushmm.org/search/catalog/irn508587>

other prisoners got caught in a crossfire between German and Allied forces, they used the opportunity to break free: “There was a forest with a couple of spruces, we climbed up to that forest and did not go to that work. We did not go to work, we stayed for three weeks under the spruces”.

The group walked for several weeks until they were recaptured by German soldiers and detained in a nearby town. Aleksandravičius escaped again by mingling with a group of women who were allowed to walk to a hospital in Mainz. Having witnessed Mainz burning after the bombing, he survived the air raids and, along with other prisoners, was sent to Leipzig by American forces. From there he walked approximately 1,200 kilometres back to Lithuania.

After the Second World War, Aleksandravičius continued his life in Soviet-occupied Lithuania. He remembers protesting against the Soviet government, for which he was deported to the Komi Republic in Siberia: “There was a village with a church near Šiluva, we guys – you know, villagers – went there. There was a poster with Stalin’s portrait and we ripped it in every way, desecrated that portrait. And someone reported us, after the report they caught all of us. I was sentenced to seven, others – ten, fifteen years in the North.” After serving his term, Aleksandravičius returned to Lithuania.

The story of Aleksandravičius is unique because it combines elements of resistance to persecution by both Nazi and Stalinist regimes. Aleksandravičius spent the first two years of Nazi occupation hiding and escaping small-scale attempts of his arrest. He subsequently moved into the woods where he hid until his arrest in 1943. After detention in Pravieniškės camp, Aleksandravičius was transferred through France to Germany, where he escaped a concentration camp, was recaptured and escaped again. After the Second World War in Soviet-occupied Lithuania, Aleksandravičius performed an act of civil disobedience by desecrating Stalin’s portrait and was consequently deported to Siberia.

Zofija Beresnevičiūtė-Sinkevičienė (1925-2016)

Zofija Beresnevičiūtė-Sinkevičienė did not hide before her detention in 1943 because her family did not expect to be imprisoned. During her time in Pravieniškės camp, she developed a modus operandi based on resilience and active resistance, leading to at least two escapes from concentration camps, the rescue of fellow prisoners, physical retaliation against a Nazi soldier, and

destruction of Nazi documents.

In January 1943, Beresnevičiūtė-Sinkevičienė and her family were taken to the Panevėžys ghetto by Nazi soldiers and their local collaborator (Beinortienė, Tumasonytė 2016, 76). After a week, they were relocated to Pravieniškės concentration camp. She managed to escape the camp while walking to the forced labour site, and, although she was shot in the leg, walked 120 kilometres back to her family home in Panevėžys. Soon after that, she was arrested again and tortured to disclose the names of the people who helped her along the way. Refusing to name them, Beresnevičiūtė-Sinkevičienė was returned to the Pravieniškės camp, where she learned of the impending massacre and was instructed by her acquaintance how to survive the mass shooting. It is implied in her testimony that those Roma who saluted Hitler when called by the list were spared: “he put ‘good’ on my last name when I raised my hand in German way” (Beresnevičiūtė-Sinkevičienė 1998). Beresnevičiūtė-Sinkevičienė saved several other Roma by instructing them both in Romanes and Lithuanian to raise their hands. Some children, including two of her brothers, she saved by physically pulling them out of the cue.

In late 1943, those Roma who survived the shooting were transported to a labour site in France. Beresnevičiūtė-Sinkevičienė remembers how she attacked a German soldier who was violent towards her and other prisoners: “He kicked me so hard, I fell backwards [...] I took a big tree branch, I hit him hard in the head, his hat fell off” (Beresnevičiūtė-Sinkevičienė 1998). As punishment, she was thrown into a freezing pit of water, but continued resisting the Nazi officers who came to take her back to work: “they wanted to take me from there, I didn’t go, I thought to myself, go to that water yourselves now” (ibid).

On June 15, 1944, Beresnevičiūtė-Sinkevičienė was relocated to several camps in Germany, the only identified camp being Buchenwald concentration camp (Beinortienė, Tumasonytė 2016, 86). She escaped the camp at least once; as mentioned in her testimony, she ran to look for food and brought some bread to her fellow prisoners (Beresnevičiūtė-Sinkevičienė 1998). In her witness statement, she recalls sabotaging Nazi administrative activities by destroying some documents in an office facility she was ordered to clean: “Me and that girl washed that floor and saw some folders there. That girl read the last names, everything [...] I took an inkwell from the table and poured it on those files and poured it out. The German beat me. I poured. [...] he beat me very much for that folder” (ibid).

Beresnevičiūtė-Sinkevičienė remained imprisoned in Buchenwald until its liberation in April 1945. Before leaving Buchenwald on May 9, 1945, she was given a chance to move to the West instead of the Soviet Union, but she chose to come back to occupied Lithuania.⁶ It is known that she spent an unspecified period of time in an NKVD inspection station Nr 8129 in Luckenwalde and returned to Panevėžys on October 15, 1945.⁷

Teodora Jablonskaitė (1914-1980)

The story of Teodora Jablonskaitė is different from the first two as her heroic behaviour involved rescuing children under difficult circumstances. Before and during her detention in Pravieniškės camp in 1943, Jablonskaitė developed a way to hide children in large traditional Roma pillows and used them to rescue toddlers who would otherwise have been killed as they were unable to work.

In January 1943, Jablonskaitė and her family were arrested in their then home in Panevėžys, Lithuania. They were taken to Pravieniškės concentration camp, where her mother and aunt were killed in April 1943 (Beinortienė, Tumasonytė 2016, 23). After some time, she was relocated from Pravieniškės to several unspecified labour sites in France, and, eventually, was transferred to a concentration camp in Germany.

The heroism of Jablonskaitė acts, to save children by hiding them to escape or avoid the Nazis both before her and during her imprisonment in Pravieniškės forced labour camp, stand out. Based on the available information, it can be assumed that Jablonskaitė saved both Roma and non-Roma children even before Lithuanian Roma were subjected to heavy Nazi persecution in early 1943. Her daughter Grafinė Jablonskaitė remembers: “My mother rescued children which were not her own, she would take them in, sometimes even forge documents proving that they are her children, thus saving their lives. When Roma travel, they always carry big pillows with them, my mother would put a tiny child inside of a pillow and pass through the Nazis, this is how she would save his life” (Platūkytė 2019). While in Pravieniškės forced labour camp, Jablonskaitė saved young children, who, along with the elderly, were

6 Certificate No. 12/200-96 issued by the General Prosecutor’s Office of the Republic of Lithuania on February 19, 1996.

7 Central State Archive of Lithuania, LCVA. F. R-754. Ap. 4. B. 431. L. 10.

regularly exterminated by the Nazi soldiers because they were unable to work (Nanook journalist collective, 2019). Although the fate of the children rescued by Jablonskaitė remains largely unknown, we now know of one instance where a child rescued by her from Nazis survived into adulthood. Steponas Arlavičius, also known as Gadžioro (born in 1940 and died in 1987 in Lithuania), survived the Pravieniškės concentration camp because Jablonskaitė hid him, as a toddler, in a feather pillow (ibid).

After the Second World War, Jablonskaitė returned to Lithuania and tried to adopt the daughter of her sister, who was killed in Pravieniškės, but the local authorities in Soviet-occupied Lithuania did not permit it (Beinortienė and Tumasonytė 2016, 44). Jablonskaitė died in 1980 in Panevėžys. She is buried in Panevėžys Christ the King Cathedral Cemetery with her husband, Jurgis Orlovskis, and their two sons (ibid 46).

The three stories above are important to this research as they exemplify clear cases of resistance to both Nazi and, in one case, Stalinist regimes. Additionally, they are important because they represent clear patterns of resistance through hiding, escape, other forms of violence or general disobedience against oppressors. These stories are also documented in their entirety, either through personal interviews as in the case of Aleksandravičius or through various testimonies, like in the case of Jablonskaitė whose children provided a lot of information on her activities.

The following examples of resistance are less developed than the stories of Aleksandravičius, Beresnevičiūtė-Sinkevičienė and Jablonskaitė, but are no less important and valid. These stories are classified by dominant elements of resistance found in the actions of Roma survivors, such as hiding, escape, retaliation/active resistance, the rescue of Jews, the rescue of children and army/partisan activities. I include them here because of two main reasons. First, they expand the scope of our understanding of how Roma resistance manifested itself across different strategies (e.g. hiding or escape). Second, they are stories that were documented and preserved in their fragmentary nature (that is, not as complete stories but rather as aspects of stories of survival) but never formed a part of a coherent research narrative focusing on Roma resistance. By including them into this research, I attempt at giving them a new layer of significance not just as stories of lived experiences, but also as part of a wider research agenda focusing on Roma agency, especially as a form of resistance.

Hiding

This research has revealed an abundance of cases of hiding, which became an integral part of the daily routine of those Roma who survived the Holocaust. In autobiographical stories, as well as narratives about Roma survivors existing in their respective communities, hiding is generally perceived as an activity of a dual nature. On the one hand, the Holocaust is at times perceived as a “natural disaster” (Simoniukštytė 2015), with the need to continuously change location and remain unnoticed a fact of life during the Nazi occupation. On the other hand, while some Roma internalised hiding as a part of life, reflections of some survivors reveal that others managed to reclaim this strategy of survival as a way to resist, especially when emphasising hiding as a strategy to conceal themselves (as opposed to hiding as an action carried out in fear) and with an intent to mislead Nazi and collaborating soldiers. Considering this, I argue that hiding, based on a conscious intent to avoid subjugation to Nazi policies, is a form of resistance.

As the Nazi persecution in occupied Lithuania continued, Roma adopted a strategy of hiding in woods or on farms. Additionally, some decided to seek employment and settle down, adopting a sedentary way of life (Simoniukštytė 2007, 143). The stories of those presented in this paper, who survived the Holocaust, engaged in various forms of resistance with hiding and avoiding arrests being the most common way to defy the rules established by the Nazis and their collaborators. Moreover, more complex forms of resistance, such as escapes from places of detention and concentration camps and active confrontation were also built on this foundation. With that in mind, the analysis of Roma stories in this research suggests that those Roma who were initially in hiding, later consistently chose other forms of resistance. It is, therefore, important to note that in these cases, Roma were more inclined to a series of actions rather than isolated acts of resistance. The narrative of consistent resistance then, as presented earlier in this paper, seems to gain new importance when it comes to understanding Roma actions during the Second World War in Lithuania.

According to Vytautas Toleikis, the beginning of the occupation caused the initial surge in hiding. Most of his interviewees remember running away from the city, hiding in forests or in villages where their Lithuanian acquaintances lived (Toleikis 2005, 58). It should be noted that in the subsequent years of the occupation, Roma often tried to escape from detention and imprisonment

sites and concentration camps in Lithuania. They often succeeded and would return to hide in forests and in Roma camps with their relatives (Toleikis 2005, 60).

An example of hiding as a strategy is found in Ona Arlauskienė's story. Arlauskienė, born 1926 in Simnas, Lithuania, shared her story in an interview for the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum. She recalled the strategy she and her family used to mislead their persecutors and avoid arrest: "[...] we travelled. We did not stay in one place. We would leave our [empty] tents in the woods, and at night we would go somewhere in the fields, we would find a bush and hide in that bush. We would hear the dogs barking, someone walking [around our tents]" (Arlauskienė 1998). Another way of using hiding as a strategic mode of resistance is visible in the example of Elžbieta Jablonskaitė (1905–1984) from Panevėžys. Jablonskaitė was the only person from her household who avoided being taken to a concentration camp because: "At a time when the Germans were catching everyone, Elžbieta was hiding, riding around the villages on horseback and they could not find her" (Beinortienė and Tumasonytė 2016, 36).

In some cases, non-Roma actors (Lithuanian officers, neighbours, or others who facilitated Roma escapes) encouraged Roma strategies of survival. But their subsequent actions demonstrate Roma having full, independent, agency in their struggle. For example, Jonas Brižinskas remembers that his mother escaped arrest and saved her nine children from imminent death in Pravieniškės camp because she was warned by a police officer to hide: "One militiaman came, I remember the last name, Balisevičius, he told my mother, Veronika, do you want to raise your children? Leave. [...] She took us away driving the carriage and she hid us. Only one family was left, and the others, about a dozen families, were taken" (Simoniukštytė 2013, 880). Had she not acted on the police officer's warning, Brižinskas' mother, his siblings and he himself probably would not have survived

According to the evidence gathered, escape is another widespread strategy of resistance. Roma would escape both individually and in groups, often taking the weaker ones, especially children, with them. Instances of Roma escape can be divided into two categories: pre-imprisonment and post-imprisonment. The former represents cases of escape during transportation to places of detention (for example, jumping out of trains) and in local places of arrest and intermediate sites of detention. The latter is specific to concentration and labour camps and required more complex strategies of escape. Due

to the nature of Nazi persecution of Roma in Lithuania, elements of both can be found in many stories of Roma escapees. As the arrests intensified towards the beginning of 1943, some Roma who initially escaped detention were recaptured and later repeatedly escaped confinement. Most known cases of such escapes took place in Pravieniškės forced labour camp, which was also used by Nazi authorities as a distribution point for later transfers. According to the International Commission for the Evaluation of Nazi and Soviet Occupational Crimes, Roma were sent to Pravieniškės from police custody or prisons and then transported to concentration, and forced labour camps in Germany and German-occupied territories, such as Buchenwald, Stutthof and others, as well as to some labour sites in occupied France (Komisija, 2002).

Anthropologist Aušra Simoniukštytė conducted a field study during which she collected valuable information about the Roma Holocaust in Lithuania, including how Roma in Pravieniškės perceived threats and reacted to them. Her informant, Marija (born in 1926), told a story about Anton Stankevič from the Kryšų family, who, when imprisoned in Pravieniškės camp, got his arm stamped with a number. According to Marija, only Roma condemned to shooting received such numbers. When he was stamped, Stankevič decided to escape the camp to avoid death: “The Germans handed such numbers on to those who were about to be killed. [...] He had the number that he will be shot, here, it was written here [pointing to her hand], then he ran away” (Simoniukštytė 2007, 144).

Vanda Stankevič was arrested when Roma persecutions in Lithuania were being carried out to the full extent. She remembers that many Roma, including herself, were already in hiding at the time. It can be assumed that it happened sometime in late 1943. Stankevič spent at least six months in Pravieniškės camp and escaped in March 1944. After realising that her whole family was killed while she was at a forced labour site, she made the decision to run away and rescue her 14-year-old brother-in-law from the concentration camp. Stankevič remembers: “And then what? I decided that I will run away. And I ran away. I thought, let them shoot, life is still gone. There is no more life. I took the boy. In the evening, maybe at 5 or 6 o’clock. We walked all night, daughter [addressing the interviewer], the whole night. We would tear our clothes down and wrap them around our feet. Somehow we discovered our relatives and found shelter with them.” (Simoniukštytė 2007, 145).

Stefanas Volonsevicius (born in Vilnius, 1892) remembers escaping a mass killing in a village near Vilnius, where he and other Roma families were sur-

rounded and forced to dig pits by German soldiers and local collaborators: “I was there with my brother-in-law Grybo [...] seeing what would be done here, we decided to run away from this hell together. We thought that if they open fire, they might as well miss us, and if we are shot, well then what can you do. I was not young then. My legs carried me by themselves. I only had one thought, to run as far away from that place as I knew what was going to happen there” (Aleksandravičius 2011, 11).

These accounts are especially important because they confirm the narrative of escape as a strategy of resistance. For example, in Stefanas Volosevičius’ story, he and his brother-in-law wanted to escape not just out of fear, but because they realised that, even at the risk of getting shot, escaping would save their lives. Because of the way Stankevič told his story, it seems that for them (him and his brother-in-law) the fear of death was surpassed by its self-evidence (if not acceptance). Consequently, it allowed them to strategise their escape. This is especially visible when he says, “we thought if they open the fire, they might as well miss us”, and, “well then, what can you do”. The certainty of death was accepted as the most likely outcome, which in turn made it even more desirable strategically to escape. They were conscious of the certainty of death in the one instance (had they stayed in their village), and, in spite of the uncertainty of escape in the second instance, chose escape as a legitimate attempt to save their lives, thus transgressing the influence of fear. This is important for the narrative of this research, precisely because it corroborates the narrative of resistance as a way for Roma to reclaim their subjectivity and agency, even in the face of almost certain death. In Stankevič’s story, the anticipation of death, symbolised by the number he was stamped with, served as a determining aspect of his own resistance (performed by escaping). Staying in the camp, not trying to resist, would have meant certain death for Stankevič. Instead, he escaped, and in doing so, not only avoided certain death but resisted his own objectification (symbolised by the stamp).

Another example of escape as a strategy of resistance is found in Ona Arlauskienė’s account. Arlauskienė, whose story is also presented earlier in this paper, escaped the Pravieniškės camp while she was working in a potato field near the camp. She tried to hide a few potatoes in the nearby forest but was confronted by a guard and decided to flee. Despite shots fired at her, Arlauskienė ran away and crossed the river Nemunas on a ferry to safety (Arlauskienė 1998). Like Volosevičius’ story, Arlauskienė’s attempt cannot be merely ascribed to “fear” because when viewed from the perspective of resistance, it

gains a new meaning. Much like in her previous story, Arlauskienė confirms that resistance is often a continuous process, spread across different strategies like hiding or escape. It is interesting to note that some memories of escape are intertwined with distinct memories of nature markers, such as rivers. Arlauskienė remembers: “As I ran, I ran through the forest up to Nemunas [...] And then, after I crossed Nemunas, then it did not matter to me anymore” (ibid). Natural borders and boundaries seem to be chronotopes⁸, distinct representations of space and time, places of meaning-making remembered when recalling specificities of lived experiences. For Arlauskienė, her escape lasted until a certain point (passing the river) - she had to reach that point in order to know for sure that she would be safe. The goal of the strategy of escape, then, is spatio-temporally limited by the existence of a determining boundary point. She could not rest before crossing the river, but after crossing it, “it did not matter to” her anymore. Whilst this research does not analyse these chronotopes, it points to their relevance in constructing narratives from gathered memories. In further research on Lithuanian Roma resistance, focusing on chronotopic representations may help uncover additional layers of complexity and nuances of memory representations.

Svetlana Novopolskaja, director of Lithuanian NGO, Romu Visuomenės Centras, noted a story about an escape from Pravieniškės camp preserved among Roma in the community she works in. Mr. Marcinkevič (family name Marcinkevič, name unknown, born in Ukmergė) attempted to break out of the camp twice. Unfortunately, the information gathered did not specify the date and time of his attempted escape nor his successful one. Whilst the first attempt was unsuccessful, the second attempt was successful and Mr. Marcinkevič escaped by crossing a nearby river (Svetlana Novopolskaja, email to author, April 22, 2020). This story has dual significance for this research. First, it confirms the notion that escape as a strategy of resistance is not an isolated, singular event, but that it exists in a certain continuum, manifested by the fact that Mr. Marcinkevič tried to escape twice, even if the first attempt was unsuccessful. Secondly, it indicates that orally transmitted

8 First defined by Mikhail M. Bakhtin in 1981 as distinct representations of space and time, places of meaning-making, remembered when recalling specificities of lived experiences, this concept is used by anthropologists and sociologists exploring intersections between people, landscapes, and history. According to Bakhtin, “Time takes on flesh and becomes visible for human contemplation; likewise, space becomes charged and responsive to the movements of time and history and the enduring character of a people” (1981, 7).

stories of survival and resistance during the Second World War still resonate in Roma communities in Lithuania.

Historian N. Latvytė, a researcher of the Paneriai concentration camp and killing site, collected data about witness statements made by Yurii Farber on Roma in Paneriai. According to the witness, Yurii Farber: “In late April 1944, approximately 50 Roma bodies were found lying at the end of the railway branch in Paneriai, shot to death, probably the entire Roma settlement which was brought to Paneriai the night before. As they were trying to escape, bodies were scattered on all sides” (Latvytė 2020, 54). Paneriai is known as a death camp and the site of mass killings; escapes from this location were rare. Therefore, the evidence of an unsuccessful Roma attempt to escape the site should be interpreted not as an example of failure, but rather as an example of the will to live and resist in a situation where the chances of survival are small.

Retaliation and Active Resistance

Cases of active resistance, including armed struggle, are relatively rare amongst Roma in Lithuania. Only a few stories featuring physical retaliation by Roma, be it self-defence or an attack, were identified by this research. However, this does not mean that they deviate from the definition of resistance applied in this research. On the contrary, they fit the pattern of Roma resistance during the Second World War in Lithuania presented in preceding stories.

The most developed account of physical counterattack is the oral history statement by Zofija Beresnevičiūtė-Sinkevičienė, in which she remembers attacking a Nazi officer with a tree branch: “I hit him hard in the head, his hat fell off” (Beresnevičiūtė-Sinkevičienė 1988). Another example is the example of Marija Tamarevičienė, collected by Svetlana Novopolskaja. Tamarevičienė’s story was collected as an oral story, passed across generations of Vilnius’ Roma community. Marija Tamarevičienė was taken to Pravieniškės concentration camp with a baby and resisted a Nazi officer to defend the baby. She was supposed to be shot for retaliation against an officer, but the officer, impressed by her resistance, he did not impose the death penalty on her. Instead, the officer continued to watch Tamarevičienė, moderating her workload, and contributing to her survival (Svetlana Novopolskaja, email to author, April 22, 2020).

These two stories are important because they represent physical retaliation

tion against oppressors by two Roma women, one of whom, as told in the story, impressed her captor so much that he contributed later to her survival (e.g. by moderating her workload in the camp). In the case of Beresnevičiūtė-Sinkevičienė, we see a visceral account of the confrontation with a Nazi officer. In her case, this is just one of many actions (as indicated earlier in this paper) of resistance - others included hiding, escape and burning of Nazi documents. Beresnevičiūtė-Sinkevičienė's story gives further credence to reappraising Roma stories from the angle of resistance because the continuity of patterns of resistance present in her stories is noticeably clear. In Tamarevičienė's case, we do not just see an act of resistance through physical retaliation. We see a relational aspect to resistance where the protection of one's child by way of physical resistance helped contribute to one's survival, monitored as she was by the person she retaliated against. I have not managed to find other stories that record a similar result of retaliation. Contrary to expectations of punishment, Tamarevičienė's story speaks to the idea of the reassertion and maintenance of subjectivity through an exercise of agential capacity that is, in turn, rewarded. Additionally, Tamarevičienė's case is another confirmation that stories of Roma resistance live on in oral histories and memories of Lithuania's Roma community.

One other case confirms the risk Roma in Lithuania took to resist Nazi oppression. In a one-page telegram⁹ Nr. 620 from Vilnius security police to the chief of the security police and security service in Lithuania, there is a report of an armed Roma uprising and their subsequent execution in the forced labour camp - Organisation Todt. Namely, on the night of July 9-10, 1942, shots were fired at Organisation Todt, near the Vilnius-Minsk railway section (Bubnys 2015). A camp platoon sent to search the territory discovered a group of Roma in the nearby forest. Upon arrest, approximately nine men fled, the rest - 40 men, women, and children - were arrested. The interrogation revealed that those arrested were the ones shooting. Those members of the Roma group who were armed fled the arrest. On July 10, 1942, the remaining

9 Vilnius security police. Telegram Nr.620, To the Chief of Security police and security service in Lithuania, 1942.VII.13 15,00. Kaunas. The original document written in German is kept in the Central State Archive of Lithuania (LCVA, f. 1399, ap.1, b . 10, 1. 6). A translated (German to Lithuanian) copy of the document authenticated by Vytautas Toleikis (Toleikis 2018) is submitted as Artefact number 4.

An alternative source (Bubnys 2015) confirms the existence of such document and refers to: DFR Prosecutor's initiation of the case of 1968 October 23, Bundesarchiv Branch in Ludwigsburg, B 162/7919, p. 85 ; B 162/7920, p. 145.)

Roma were executed by a motorised German gendarmerie platoon. This case is the only found documented example of organised and armed resistance of a Roma group in Lithuania (in 1941-1944, the Belarussian territory bordering southeast Lithuania was part of Lithuania under German occupation).

Army/Partisan Activities

Although in some countries, Roma resistance was demonstrated through their direct and frequent involvement in military operations, this was not the case in Lithuania where Roma took part in military operations (including the Soviet army, paramilitary structures, partisan movement) somewhat rarely. However, this does not mean that there were no recorded examples of their active (exemplified by direct participation in military affairs) or passive (exemplified by assistance to soldiers) involvement. Furthermore, the notion that Roma did not participate in an organised way in military operations does not in any way diminish the importance of recording and understanding instances of military actions with Roma participation (whether active or passive) in the context of research on Roma resistance to the Holocaust. On the contrary, when observed through a prism of continuous resistance, these stories gain new meaning.

From the end of the Second World War until 1953, the forests in Lithuania, where Roma usually hid, were a site of guerrilla warfare between the Soviet military and Lithuanian partisans who opposed Soviet occupation (and the subsequent creation of the Lithuanian Soviet Socialist Republic). Namely, as forests were a site from where Lithuanian partisans organised their guerrilla warfare, they were often inspected by Soviet soldiers. Because of that, combats often ensued. Whilst existing research does not provide extensive information on Roma participation in forest guerrilla warfare, Simoniukštytė makes the case that Roma living in the forests of south-western Lithuania did not take part in the guerrilla war but rather withdrew to the territory of Kaliningrad (Simoniukštytė 2013, 887). Simoniukštytė notes that after the Second World War, when the guerrilla war broke out in Lithuanian forests, Roma from the Vilnius region did not seem to have much understanding of war's motives and avoided getting involved (Simoniukštytė 2007, 146). Because there were both Lithuanian and Polish guerrillas in the forests, Roma considered the Second World War to be ongoing. The end of the war in the memories of some Simo-

niukštytė's informants, especially in the Vilnius region, coincided only with the death of Stalin in 1953, when the guerrilla movement was suppressed (Simoniukštytė 2007, 138).

A female Roma partisan is briefly mentioned by Vida Beinortienė and Daiva Tumasonytė (2016). As her name is not known, she is referred to by her nickname, Senda, and her husband's surname Bagdonavičienė. Senda was born in a Belarusian Roma family. It remains unclear whether Senda's partisan activities took place in Lithuania or Belarus (Beinortienė and Tumasonytė 2016, 42).

Tamara Majauskienė remembers the story of how in approximately 1944, around Seredžius village, a Roma family hid Soviet soldiers. As the family lived near the forest, they built a reinforced underground shelter to hide the soldiers and provided them with medical attention and sustenance. Eventually, the family's activities were discovered by Nazi soldiers and the family was punished: the Nazis captured the soldiers, hung the Roma, and burned their house (Simoniukštytė 2013, 881). This story confirms notions, presented below that Roma involvement with military activities had passive elements.

Even if rare, Roma interactions with militaries are still remembered. For example, Vytautas Toleikis concludes, based on his interviews with Roma survivors of the Second World War, that interactions between Roma and Soviet partisans did sometimes take place in different sites in Lithuania. He also confirms the fact that there were several Roma who served in the Soviet army (Toleikis 2005, 61). For example, Steponas Grachauskas (1920 – December 28, 1979), a Roma from Panevėžys, was a lieutenant in the Soviet Army. He was wounded in the shoulder during a battle, hospitalised, and deported to a concentration camp in Germany (Beinortienė and Tumasonytė 2016, 59). Another example was Jonas Visockis, also known as Račkus (?–1967), who was a Soviet army soldier and served in the navy. When the ship in which he was serving crashed during a battle, Visockis floated in open water for three days until he was rescued by the Germans soldiers who sent him to a concentration camp in Germany (Beinortienė and Tumasonytė, 63).

In a brief description of the fate of the Bagdonavičiai family during the Holocaust, Vida Beinortienė and Daiva Tumasonytė mention a Roma woman, Ženia Bagdonavičiūtė, as a “Lithuanian military officer wearing three stars”, in reference to her higher military rank (Beinortienė and Tumasonytė, 56). Although the extent to which Ženia Bagdonavičiūtė was active after the Nazi occupation of Lithuania is not specified, it is confirmed that she was killed in

Pravieniškės concentration camp (ibid).

Another example is found in the story of Jurgis Orlovskis, who served in the army of Independent Lithuania during the interwar period (the period of Lithuania's interwar independence lasting from 1918-1940). It is unknown whether he was involved in military activities after the Nazi Germany occupation in 1941. According to his relatives, Orlovskis and his family disobeyed Nazi demands and confronted them, even spat on a soldier's face (Beinortienė and Tumasonytė, 45). Consequently, the soldiers shot Jurgis' maternal aunt, wife, children, and cousin. Orlovskis and the rest of the family fled Lithuania (ibid).¹⁰

The preceding stories help illustrate how Roma participated in armed activities during and after the Second World War and how they interacted with the Soviet military. In the context of this research, I have divided them into active and passive participation. I have not managed to uncover organised Roma participation in military activities. In the context of Roma military activities in the post-Second World War period and concerning guerrilla warfare between Lithuanian partisans and the Soviet military, I have not managed to find instances of Roma involvement. This provisionally confirms the assertion from the beginning of the section that Roma generally perceived the post-Second World War guerrilla warfare as both a continuation of the war and something that was not their concern. Additionally, stories featuring passive aspects of participation in military activities are equally important to active ones because they demonstrate that resistance need not be active to be effective. This is crucial from the aspect of foregrounding Roma resistance in Lithuanian research by reappraising the recorded stories and giving Roma who resisted a voice in the otherwise resounding emptiness of archival silence.

Rescue of Jews

Although cases of Lithuanian Roma helping each other in hiding and escapes are not rare, this research has revealed some interesting examples of Roma resistance (and heroism) demonstrated through assistance to Jews,

¹⁰ Although the cases presented here indicate some Roma-military interaction in Lithuania during and after the Second World War, to gather additional information and support existing sources with further data, archival work is needed.

especially during the early years of Nazi occupation. I limit myself to presenting and discussing Roma helping Jews as my sources have emphasised such activities, as opposed to Roma helping other persecuted groups. The stories presented below demonstrate how overlapping experiences of Jews and Roma resistance can aid in constructing a new research narrative of Roma resistance to the Holocaust in Lithuania from the perspective of the non-Roma (i.e. Jews).

German soldiers punished Ona Arlauskienė's father (name unknown) for throwing food to the Jews over the ghetto fence (based on the locations mentioned, the ghettos in question may have been those of Vilkija, Kaunas district municipality, Lithuania). Arlauskienė remembers that mainly Jews were imprisoned there at the beginning of the Nazi occupation and Roma from the same town tried to help them: "the Jews were locked in the ghetto, you would throw them a loaf of bread... starving people, starving" (Arlauskienė 1998).

According to Vytautas Toleikis, cases of Jewish children being hidden by Roma were not uncommon during Nazi occupation. During his research, Toleikis received information about one previously unheard case of a Jewish woman from Samogitia who, as a baby, was given to a Roma family by her parents and was raised as Roma (Toleikis 2005, 61). Another source mentions a testimony from Valentina Freiman, a Latvian Jew, about the assistance given to her by Roma (Eternal Echoes n.d.).

In his memoir, Abraham Sutzkever, a Lithuanian Jew, documented important facts about Roma-Jewish interactions during the Nazi occupation. In a subchapter titled "Gypsies", he remembers an encounter with a group of Roma in late 1941, before active arrests of Roma in Lithuania had started. This group saved Sutzkever's acquaintance, Chaim Gordon, by hiding him disguised as Roma. Gordon survived an execution of Jews and managed to escape:

Early in the morning of the next day from his hiding place he saw the Gestapo officer Weiss, who came with a Gypsy caravan taken there to transport the bodies of those killed to the pit. When Weiss left, Gordon got out of the rye and asked the gypsies to take him along. Their leader Fyodor, after considering the situation, took him to the carriage. [...] He told Chaim, "Tomorrow or the day after tomorrow, it can happen to me too" (Sutzkever 2011, 43-44).

Abraham Sutzkever was invited to stay with them under the same conditions: "Chaim suggested me to join them, [saying that] Fyodor is a golden man, he will not object. My white face would be covered with dog fat and I

would have looked like him - no one would have recognized me” (Sutzkever 2011, 44). This example suggests that, although primary sources with Roma witness accounts are rare in Lithuania, stories of Roma heroism and resistance can be found by looking into the history of other groups of Holocaust victims, especially Jewish memoirs, interviews, and other sources.

Conclusions and Further Insights

Materials collected from a variety of sources have revealed the manifold nature of Roma resistance in Lithuania. The image of Roma resistance during the Second World War in Lithuania, although assembled from different stories (and many fragments), helps identify manifestations of Roma resistance and heroism in Lithuania such as hiding, escape, rescues of Jews and various forms of physical retaliation. It can be concluded that these manifestations are best described as the will to withstand and hold out against Nazi repression. Consequently, survival strategies were intertwined with elements of resistance. Moreover, the fact that evidence of various types of Roma resistance can be found even in a country with such a small Roma community contributes to the perception of Roma resistance as a global phenomenon. It accordingly encourages the extension of research to cover more countries characterised by similar demographic and socioeconomic factors. This is not to say that resistance is more likely to occur in countries with large Roma communities. Rather it serves to emphasise that even in small Roma communities, whose legacy of resistance is often overlooked, there are interesting and important examples that deserve to be researched and understood.

Presented below are some insights on the implications of my research, as well as recommendations for further investigation of this topic. First, I would like to emphasise the importance of Roma oral tradition and the role oral stories, either recorded as witness interviews or collected from Roma communities, play in restoring different aspects of Roma resistance. Engagement with sources like this contributes to research by revealing an oft-overlooked struggle of the poorly documented history of Roma Holocaust in Lithuania. Therefore, where it is still possible, it is recommended to allocate resources for the documentation and preservation of memories circulating within Roma communities. As the research above shows, memories and remembrance of Roma resistance in Lithuania is still alive and is preserved by Roma communities. I

believe it is critical to engage the preserved stories (and fund research doing that) because it would allow researchers, descendants of survivors, activists, and the general public in Lithuania to better understand the significance of the Roma Holocaust for our understanding of what the Roma endured and how they resisted. Hopefully, it would help portray a picture of Roma as agents, rather than just victims left at the mercy of Nazis.

Furthermore, critical reading of the existent sources of Nazi repressions suffered by Roma also provides useful information on how to perceive the different ways of Roma resistance. Namely, as this research has shown, often neither Roma witnesses themselves nor historians and anthropologists, emphasise certain aspects of Roma stories as having elements of struggle. Resistance as a narrative seems to be suppressed. This research makes the case that, when examining different stories, it is important to focus on wartime memories and see whether there were changes in the way Roma lived. This includes whether unusual patterns of travelling can be identified, indicating hiding, or if there are other aspects, patterns, or formulations of stories that would help uncover different modalities and strategies of resistance in the face of oppression. Even if Roma do not mention particular locations, it is important to see whether the narrative of escaping, running away, breaking free from certain places appears in their stories. If possible, it is worth investigating the causes of punitive action(s) performed by Nazi soldiers and local collaborators. In this way, a thorough re-reading of known sources can reveal previously unnoticed evidence of Roma resistance. In that sense, this research is important for Holocaust studies, Romani studies, and Memory studies in general because it tries to emphasise the aspect of resistance in Roma experience in Lithuania during the Second World War.

Another implication of this research is that looking for non-Roma communities to find events, moments, stories in which Roma resistance is documented can be helpful in crafting a new narrative of their agency in the face of oppression. For example, there are many well-preserved sources about Lithuanian Jews during the Holocaust. Their stories are covered in detail in various documents, historical works, artworks, memoirs. Although the persecution of Roma started later than that of Jews in Lithuania, the two groups interacted under various circumstances and their experiences overlapped. It can be assumed that there are more unexplored stories, such as the account of Roma hiding a Jew within their group in Abraham Sutzkever's memoir. Therefore, to look for evidence of Roma resistance in Jewish history could be

a good strategy to reveal not only the dynamics of the two groups during the Holocaust but also actions of Roma documented in the background of Jewish stories. In addition, looking for evidence of Roma resistance in non-Roma and non-Jewish history (that is, in the history of other groups) could help us to better understand the dynamics of cooperation, resistance, and mutual help amongst different persecuted groups during the Second World War.

Finally, and as noted several times in this paper, it should be taken into consideration that the wartime borders of Lithuania were different from the country's current borders. For example, after occupation by Nazi Germany, Belarussian territory bordering southeast Lithuania was part of the Reichskommissariat Ostland. Therefore, an additional perspective can be added to this research by exploring evidence and cooperating with researchers from Belarus. This strategy can bring interesting results about Roma resistance in the Belarussian-Lithuanian border region and provide us with insights about differences and similarities in researcher's approaches to Roma history in different contexts and traditions of historiography in Lithuania and Belarus. In addition to that, to broaden regional understanding of Roma actions during the Second World War, I recommend expanding the research to Latvia and Estonia and comparing the findings and insights with findings on Lithuania.

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Chapter 4

Roma Holocaust in Hungary: Importance and Implications of Roma Resistance

By Jekatyerina Dunajeva

Introduction: Towards a New Narrative about the Roma Holocaust

This research contributes to an ambitious objective of (re)narrating Holocaust history by incorporating the experience of Roma.¹ I focus on Hungary, and rely heavily on available witness testimonies as authentic accounts of the past, including experiences of collective trauma. In Hungary, since the 1990s, more attention has been given to the topic of the Roma Holocaust, first referred to as cigány holokauszt (Gypsy Holocaust) and later as roma holokauszt, and finally as Pharrajimos.² Ian Hancock first used the term porrajmos, which was then adopted by Seres László in 1997 in his report about the action of commemoration by the Roma Civil Rights Foundation (Roma Polgárjogi Alapítvány; Szalayné Sándor 2017). Various spellings of the word exist, conveying different meanings in various dialects of Romani language; thus, there was much disagreement and even objections to the use of certain spellings.

1 Throughout this chapter, I use the term Roma, except for quotations, in which case I always use original terminology, spelling and capitalization.

2 This term is increasingly used in cultural events, news and academic references, for example by the Holocaust Memorial Center (<http://hdke.hu/emlekezes/emleknepok/roma-holokauszt-pharrajimos-emleknepja>), scholars such as János Bársony and Ágnes Daróczi, or various news outlets, for instance Népszava (https://nepszava.hu/1065407_eleg-a-holokauszt-borzalmaibol-ma-is-van-gyuloletpropaganda).

In Hungary, since the beginning of the early 2000s, *Pharrajimos* became a common spelling, also preferred by János Bársony and Ágnes Daróczy, who use this term as the title of their edited volume, *Pharrajimos: The Fate of the Roma During the Holocaust* (2008). Hence, in this study, I use this spelling as well.

Throughout this study, I highlight the importance of agency, which, on the one hand, challenges the hegemonic interpretation of the Holocaust, and on the other hand recognises Roma agency in their effort to show signs of defiance and resistance to the Nazi order. Revealing the multiple instances and ways in which Roma faced and defied official power, and, importantly, how they generated practices and rituals to resist that power, brings to the surface the voices of those perceived as powerless. In recent years, a growing number of initiatives and research approaches contributed to a shift in Holocaust narrative(s) to be more inclusive and sensitive to the experience of Roma victims.

Indeed, as Kóczé and Szász aptly put it, “The challenge of the master narrative of the Roma Holocaust constitutes an act of resistance” (Verhás, Kóczé and Szász 2018, 18). Some scholars have not only consciously included, but also highlighted the need to challenge dominant narratives of the Roma Holocaust, and position Roma not as “silenced victims” but as acting agents. In Hungary, the dominant narrative and most instructive academic source regarding the Roma Holocaust until the early 2000s was the work of László Karsai; this narrative was challenged, among others, by Katalin Katz (2005) as well as János Bársony and Ágnes Daróczy (2008) (Dupcsik 2006).

Pro-Roma institutions’ contribution to constructing a new narrative is also noteworthy. The project “Roma and Resistance during the Holocaust and in its Aftermath,” for example, was a joint project of the Tom Lantos Institute together with *ternYpe* – International Roma Youth Network and *La Voix des Roms*. As a result of this project, an important volume of studies was collected by Evelin Verhás (managing editor), Angéla Kóczé and Anna Lujza Szász (editors). The Centre for Gypsy History, Culture, Education and Study of the Holocaust—which was located in Csepel, one of the poorest district in Budapest, closed in 2017 due to the lack of funding. Another noteworthy initiative was that of the Budapest-based Roma Press Center; with their publication of *Recollections of Roma Holocaust Survivors* in three languages (English, Hungarian, Romanes), their aim was to contribute to an “authentic narration” of events concerning Roma and let them tell their own stories, “most of them never told before, instead of being subject of the narration” (Bernáth 2000, 2).

The current efforts of the European Roma Institute for Arts and Culture, to which this chapter contributes, similarly aims to move beyond the notion of Roma victimhood and expand the notion of “Roma resistance” during World War II based on international research. This chapter unpacks the experience of Hungarian Roma and broadly consists of three parts: a synthesis and revisiting of existing knowledge to highlight the agency of Roma during the Holocaust, an analysis of survivor testimonies to unpack the concept of resistance, and a discussion of various efforts of commemoration and public acts of honouring Roma victims. My definition of resistance builds on James Scott’s notion of “everyday forms of resistance,”³ which allows us to conceive of resistance in its broader meaning to include symbolic and discursive acts of resistance as well.

Research Methodology

Witness testimonies used in this study are the ones publicly available: I have researched databases (e.g., USC Shoah Foundation), identified printed and online literature, and examined audio-video resources with recorded testimonies. Through extensive desk research, I uncovered manifold interviews and studies that recorded Roma experiences during the Holocaust. I worked with both Hungarian and English language resources. Given my stated objective to incorporate witness testimonies as much as possible and focus on various forms of resistance, I read those interviews with this goal in mind. More precisely, “acts of resistance might not be visible or self-evident and require the alertness, courage and capability of the reader/researcher to excavate, analyse or dispute the memory to provide a different, and deeper understanding of the past, as well as of the operation of power and the ways in which it is contested” (Verhás, Kóczé and Szász 2018, 15).

There are several challenges researchers of the Holocaust face. First, by the time researchers started more actively inquiring into the Pharrajimos, there were too few survivors left. In addition, the collection of oral testimonies while survivors were still alive was challenging due to the taboo and traumatic na-

3 Scott studies political action and argues that “much of the politics of the subordinate groups falls into the category of ‘everyday forms of resistance’”, and these constitute “ordinary means of class struggle” (Scott 1989, 33).

ture of the topic (Rona 2011). Some of the recorded interviews lack specific details. As Rudolf Krasznai, a Hungarian Roma Holocaust survivor aptly explained the challenge in trying to remember dates and places: they were like “crazy people, who did not know what day it was...we slept, were woken up and taken somewhere, that’s all we did day after day” (Krasznai 1999). Mrs Vilmos Holdosi compared their physical and mental state to the “living dead” (Bársony and Daróczi 2008, 126). Nevertheless, while some details may not be revealed from first-hand survivor testimonies, they remain an irreplaceable source of historical investigations of the Holocaust, incorporating lived experiences of survivors.

Michael Stewart proposed a relevant observation when working with Roma survivor testimonies; he claimed these stories show an inherent paradox of wanting to forget and remember at the same time. Stewart writes: “At one and the same time the Gypsies conspire to forget the trauma of their persecution and to hold on – though in silence – to a hidden, collective memory of it. It is this paradoxical combination, of retention and amnesia, which an investigation of the Romany Holocaust has to explore”⁴ (Stewart 2000, 11). In her interview, in addition to these mixed feelings, Rozália Vajda also felt a sense of gratification that her stories would be remembered: “You know, I don’t like to talk about [my memories of the Pharrajimos] and I have already forgotten many things. Nobody has ever asked what happened to us. More than fifty years have passed and nobody said anything, nobody asked anything. And now it will be a legend” (Bernáth 2000, 72).

Finally, it is worth noting that recent inquiries into the Roma Holocaust have highlighted that much of the earlier collected research data is not available for secondary investigation. For example, fieldwork data collected about the Pharrajimos may not be accessible or appropriately stored, and there is “semi-exclusive” research data, which is not publicly accessible, though the authors are willing to share their findings during workshops, exhibitions or other events (Szász 2015, 6).⁵

4 Spelling and capitalisation follows original text.

5 Szász (2015) does provide examples of accessible databases, such as that of the Roma Press Center or Peter Szuhay, a well known ethnographer.

Roma Holocaust in Hungary

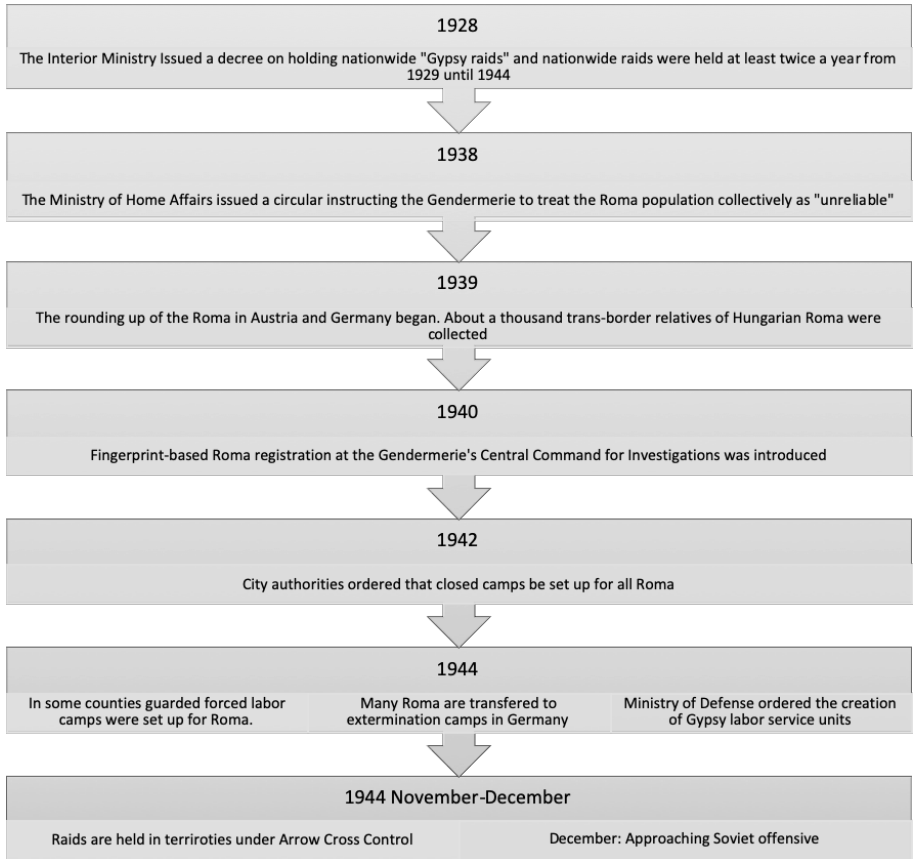
In 1939, approximately 100,000 Roma lived on the territory of Hungary. The so-called Gypsy politics (*cigánypolitika*) of the Horthy regime⁶ were initially focused on “nomadic” Roma (*Holokauszt Magyarországon* [Holocaust in Hungary] n.d.). In fact, numerous anti-Roma measures were already in place in the 1920s and ‘30s, which worsened with the introduction of military measures (Bársony and Daróczi 2008, 32)⁷. Scientific racism dominated the discourse in those decades, with the “Gypsy race” deemed to be inferior. Demands to establish concentration camps for “criminal Gypsies” were widespread in the country, often citing the German example (*Holokauszt Magyarországon* [Holocaust in Hungary] n.d.). For instance, in 1939, Győző Drózdy, a member of the Party of National Union and Parliament called for a special Roma census in the name of racial preservation. Ferenc Orsós, the later President of the Hungarian Medical Chamber, insisted on the adaptation of German race laws in Hungary during his address to the Upper House of the Parliament in 1941 (Bársony and Daróczi 2008, 32; *Holokauszt Magyarországon* [Holocaust in Hungary] n.d.).

A concise timeline below, adopted from Bársony and Daróczi (2008, 18-20), shows the more significant events leading up to and during the *Pharajimos*. County officials began deporting Roma for forced labour from 1939 (Szita 2002, 59). The local *Gendarmeries* were instructed to register all Roma in 1940⁸, and “Gypsy identification cards” were issued in several counties (Bársony and Daróczi 2008, 32). In Hungary, individual districts and counties could treat Roma at their discretion (and hence the documents are scattered in county archives; Kovács, Lénárd and Szász 2011, 340). Although it was nearly impossible to collect data on every Roma in the country, the available and carefully collected personal data amounted to a registry, which was kept at the *Gendarmerie’s* office, and was later vital in identifying and stigmatising the Roma population.

6 Vice-Admiral Miklós Horthy served as regent of Hungary from 1920 until 1944.

7 See a detailed description of anti-Roma measures and pogroms during the 1920s, ‘30s and 40s in Purcsi (2004).

8 “Nomadic” Roma were to be registered as early as 1916 (Szalayné Sándor 2017).



An intensified wave of anti-Roma atrocities began in 1944 when the Hungarian Arrow Cross assumed power. That year, local newspapers informed the population of the establishment of Gypsy ghettos – a decision that was broadly welcomed by much of the (non-Roma) Hungarian population (Szi-ta 2002, 65-67). Yet, in some testimonies, Roma expressed their gratitude to (non-Roma) Hungarians who had helped them to survive. As one survivor recalls, “The Hungarians wept for us...these kind Hungarian people brought food for us...if these [Hungarian women had not been here..., we would have starved” (Bernáth 2000, 75-6). After October 15, 1944, Roma in Hungary were systematically rounded up in “Gypsy ghettos” or collection points and some were transported to German concentration camps (Szalayné Sándor 2017, 4). Many Roma became victims of mass shootings, which happened in Szolgaegyház, Nagyszalonta, Doboz, Várpalota, Lajoskomárom and Lengyel, among other places where hundreds of Roma, including women and children, were shot to death.⁹

By 1944, there were at least 30 ghettos or work camps in the country, where tens of thousands of Roma were forced to labour in inhumane conditions (Szalayné Sándor 2017, 4). Victims were often collected unexpectedly: “I was still a girl, 14 years old when I was deported...[first held] at the kindergarten...that’s where they were collecting us...I was asking them why they weren’t letting me go and where they were taking me, but nobody said anything...we knew that something terrible was going to happen. We were too afraid to ask,” recalled Mrs Vilmos Holdosi (Bársony and Daróczi 2008, 125). József Kazári also stressed their lack of awareness about the political situation: “We knew nothing about nothing, but one morning they came for us with a long wagon” (ibid., 129). Raffael Ilona’s testimony also reveals that Roma were often lied to: “They [the gendarmes] said they would take us to harvest sugar-beets in Hatvan. They did not say they would transport us to Germany” (Bernáth 2000, 58). Many Roma were rounded up from different parts of the country to ghettos in selected locations before their deportation; one of the main collections points for Roma from Budapest and surrounding areas was the Óbuda brick factory, guarded by Arrow Cross soldiers (Bársony and Daróczi 2008,

9 Holokauszt Magyarországon [Holocaust in Hungary], “A magyar cigánység üldöz-tetése” [The persecution of Hungarian Gypsies]. Accessible at http://www.holokausztmagyarorszag.hu/index.php?section=1&type=content&chapter=9_1_4

144; Szita 2002, 76); the other major collection point was the Csillagerőd (Star fortress) near the town of Komárom.

Thousands of Roma were hauled to the infamous Csillagerőd near Komárom, on the bank of the Danube, the horrors familiar to many. Ilona Lendvai recalls her time there: “We arrived to Komárom...I have never seen so many dead bodies. Every day there were lots of dead, young and old. Many died from hunger” (Beszélő 2000). József Kazári remembered how they arrived: “We had to lie on the bare cement floor and couldn’t even change clothes. Many got lice and the children were dying in droves” (Bársony and Daróczi 2008, 130). Julianna Lakatos arrived at the Csillagbörtön (Star prison) when she was only fourteen years old: “We were taken in cattle-wagons to Komárom, to the ‘Csillagbörtön’. No straw, nothing, we lay on the ground in the bunkers. We fit in the room by lying topsy-turvy...The soldiers gave us this big landle of food, muddy potatoes and mush, that was what they gave us” (Bernáth 2000, 50). Many Roma perished from hunger or inhumane living conditions in Csillagerőd.

From Csillagerőd, Roma were often transported to concentration camps in Dachau, Bergen-Belsen, and Ravensbrück; with many Roma women were sterilised in the latter camp. The transportation itself was devastating: “They put me and my sister on a wagon [from Csillagerőd], destination Dachau. It was a two or three day’s journey. ... We did not get food, not even water. We did not. The window frame got frosty. We got up early in the morning and licked the iron so we had some moisture in our mouth. It was terribly cold,” recalled Julianna Lakatos (Bernáth 2000, 51). After being transported over several days, they arrived at concentration camps. The conditions of the camps were horrid: “It was so darn cold we nearly froze to death in those flimsy clothes...They wanted us to die...There were so many dead every morning,” recalled Mrs Vilmos Holdosi (Bársony and Daróczi 2008, 126-7).

According to the testimony of survivor Rozália Vajda, “they deported people from Komárom to Poland. I was lucky because I was sent to the last camp and was not gassed. It was already towards the end, Russians came from all directions...there were all kinds of Roma in Komárom. Boyash, Romungro, ‘knife-grinding’ Roma. There were Boyash from Muraszombat... days passed by very slowly, we just waited when we will be killed” (quoted in Szita 2002, 81). Magdolna Hódosi, who was a victim of medical experiments, recalled her experience in the following way: “We were [in Komárom] for two weeks... after two weeks we were put in wagons again...we were transported to Dachau

over several days... we were in Dachau for two weeks and then brought to the Ravensbrück women camp... we had a red triangle [badges] with the camp number... In the barrack number 22 many people died every day. There were mainly families with children. Only Roma. They mainly died of diseases, hunger, filth” (Szita 2002, 82-84).

In concentration camps, Roma of all ages suffered. Many survivors remember the misery of children with agony and anger. Mrs Vilmos Holdosi still recalls her time at Dachau with much horror and anger: “They took us to Dachau...there were so many of us spilling from the train. Little babies were carried by Jewish women...children were crying and the women were crying... They bawled their poor heads off but [the Nazis] took the children anyway... They were sick from starvation because they never gave them any food either – God rot their guts” (Bársony and Daróczy 2008, 125). Raffael Ilona shared an equally traumatising memory: “There were about fifty children [in the concentration camp near Berlin]...many of them were still nurslings, and in many cases, by the time their mother had arrived, they were already dead. They could not eat, could not suck, nobody took care of them. Many Romani children died. None of those got home. All of them died there. There was no mercy” (Bernáth 2000, 63).

Overall, many Hungarian Roma died in concentration camps outside of their home country and very few returned. For example, in Dachau labour camp, of a total of 1,126 Hungarian Roma, 144 were liberated, 161 died and 818 transferred (Szita 2002, 84). Some estimate that 3,300 Roma were killed at the infamous Auschwitz-Birkenau camp, of which 34 were Hungarian (Holokauszt Magyarországon [Holocaust in Hungary] n.d.). Overall, over 23,000 Roma were rounded up from 15 countries to various concentration and death camps (ibid). In total, scholars estimate that up to half a million Roma perished during the Pharrajimos; in Auschwitz-Birkenau, Roma were the third most populous group of victims (Márton-Tóth 2015).

In 1944, there was an uprising in the Birkenau “Gypsy Camp,” which resulted in the camp’s postponed extermination. Secret documents containing a list of names were hidden in a bucket near the fence, allegedly by Polish resistance fighters in Auschwitz (Szita 2002, 29). When the list was revealed in 1949– which contained missing and illegible names – they found over 1,500 German Roma with Hungarian names (e.g., Ádám, Faragó, Horváth, Sárközi, Holdosi, Újvári, etc) who were deported from Burgenland, near the Hungarian border, and 34 Hungarian-Roma citizens (Szita 2002, 29).

The exact number of victims of the Pharrajimos in Hungary is still under debate; numbers are difficult to estimate as many deaths were unaccounted for and countless bodies lay in mass graves. Moreover, some sources suggest that not all Roma wore the infamous brown triangle designating “Gypsies” in concentration camps, with some assigned and transported under a different group, such as asocials (wearing a black triangle) or political prisoners (Fábiánné Andrónyi n.d.). In Hungary, in particular, there are still unidentified mass graves (Tóth 2019). Some—among them the historian László Karsai—place the number of Roma victims in Hungary at around 5,000, with thousands more persecuted. Others, including Menyhért Lakatos, a well-known Roma literary figure and writer, place the estimate at 50 thousand, or somewhere in between (Tóth 2019; *Holokauszt Magyarországon [Holocaust in Hungary]* n.d.). Some suggest at least a third of the Hungarian Roma were exterminated (Márton-Tóth 2015; Fábiánné Andrónyi n.d.).

Based on survivor testimonies and available archival sources, some estimate that Roma were deported from around 600 Hungarian towns and cities (Tóth 2019). There is some historical research into what happened at this time in certain towns and regions, with attempts to understand how many Roma victims may be unaccounted for until today. For instance, in 1944 and 1945 in Doboz, Lengyel, Lajoskomárom and Lenti, Roma families – men, women and children – were shot to death, many of whom still lie in unmarked graves (Szita 2002, 95). János Ury researched a detailed account of deportation and annihilation of the Roma population of Várpalota under the Arrow Cross regime through available archival sources; Ury analysed witness testimonies and numerous court documents and found inconsistent information regarding the number of murders (Ury 2004). Ury concluded that it remains unclear where the bodies of the victims are buried, adding that not all guilty parties were held responsible for the atrocities. Considerably more research is needed to identify and honour the Roma victims of the Holocaust – an effort well underway with the leadership of Roma civil society and activists in Hungary (the chapter discusses the state of commemoration and politics of memory below).

Roma Agency and Resistance during the Holocaust

What constitutes resistance?

Available research (and knowledge, more broadly) about the Roma Holocaust has been framed in terms of suffering, oppression and victimisation, and only recently was there a shift in focus towards survival, resistance and opposition (Sárközi 2017). This new narrative may strongly contribute to liberating and empowering Roma communities today. In her powerful speech to commemorate the Roma Holocaust, Ágnes Daróczi highlighted the importance of appreciating acts of resistance committed by Roma in concentration camps such as Auschwitz to contemporary efforts of resisting growing discrimination: “They [Roma participating in the uprising of Auschwitz] were brave to stand up for themselves. But are we brave enough to say ‘no’ to the growing racism and hatred? Will we join forces, we, who know and have learnt where scapegoating leads?” (Daróczi 2008, 287).

Hence, there is not only a need to inquire more into the Roma Holocaust, but it is also imperative to recognise the agency of Roma throughout their persecution during the Second World War. For instance, there is relatively little knowledge about armed resistance or Roma in the army at this time in Hungary. Individual accounts, such as the story of József Kakuczi, indicate that Roma not only served in the Hungarian military but that they also defied military orders as an act of resistance against a system that deported Roma (Szász 2015). Kakuczi, aware of the anti-Roma measures and intensifying persecution of Roma in Hungary, decided to ignore the draft call he received in 1942 and wrote the following: “I couldn’t be a patriot, only a military fugitive” (ibid.). During the war, his life was defined by constant struggle and escape, yet his eagerness to survive was beyond doubt, even at the cost of defying orders.

Resistance is often narrowly regarded as a fight for one’s life. In the context of Pharrajimos, it is imperative to recognise resistance in its broader meaning, “not exclusively a fight for life, but small sets of activities motivated by love or by conscious attempts to defy the Nazis and save [lives]” (Verhás, Kóczé and Szász 2018, 15). I loosely adopt James Scott’s notion of “everyday forms of

resistance,”¹⁰ especially its focus on “invisible power” as subtle forms of power often overlooked by researchers (Scott 1985). In witness testimonies, there are many instances of “everyday” resistance, which may have served many purposes, such as symbolic punishment of the enemy, imagination of future revenge and preserving love and humanity in the face of dehumanising circumstances.

Possibilities for resisting during the Holocaust

Various acts of resistance and attempts to escape from the inhumane conditions of concentration camps clearly emerged from the numerous testimonies examined in the course of this research. Raffael Ilona, taken from Dachau to a concentration camp around Berlin, whose name she no longer remembers, explained the deterrence methods that the Nazis used: “Many had tried to escape, but the Nazis caught them. Then the whole lager had to stand outside and they showed us that they would kill those who try to escape. They were hanged or shot dead. Or they beat these people until they died” (Bernáth 2000, 63). Deterrence measures were seemingly successful in discouraging some to escape; as Magdolna Hódosi, a Roma survivor deported to Ravensbrück recalled: “It was impossible to escape from there or to show resistance. That would have been a sure end. If they noticed that someone stayed outside, tried to steal from the kitchen, they were severely beaten” (Beszélő 2000). Yet, many survivor accounts demonstrate that Rome nevertheless did not cease to resist and find ways to overcome the brutality surrounding them.

In Ágota Varga’s film, *Porrajmos* (2000), four Roma women recount the day of their deportation. When the interviewer asks about possibilities to escape or resist, all four give heated responses simultaneously: “We were told we were going to the ghetto... and the burner... but how would we have done anything? We haven’t thought of escaping! We wouldn’t have even thought... we would have never thought we’d be taken to Germany...and we wouldn’t even dare... there was always a gendarme by the door” (Varga 2000). Another survivor recalled the gruesome details of punishment of those who dared to disobey: “Next to the kitchen there was some coke [fuel], taken out of the

10 Scott studies political action and argues that “much of the politics of the subordinate groups falls into the category of ‘everyday forms of resistance,’” and these constitute “ordinary means of class struggle” (Scott 1989, 33).

stoves, they put people there, people who stole for example...it is so difficult to talk about it....we heard the screams and try to go as far as we could, our hearts were breaking...they slowly burned to death” (Varga 2000). So the question arises: how was it possible to survive such conditions, maintain a sense of humanity and dignity, and sustain compassion for others? How do we understand resistance in these circumstances?

Forms of resistance

Recognition of Roma resistance has been rare and scattered until recently. However, witness testimonies reveal that individual-level, as well as group resistance efforts, were not rare among Roma during the Holocaust. Witness testimonies and stories of survivors show a wide range of forms of resistance that Roma engaged in; more precisely, three forms of resistance emerged as important during inquiry and will be presented in more detail below: escaping, saving fellow Roma, and discursive resistance.

There were several attempts to escape, and while many Roma were recaptured, others succeeded. For example, according to the recollections of a retired train driver who was tasked with transporting Roma to the infamous fortresses of Komárom, there were attempts to escape: “There was an entire Gypsy train from Komárom through Hegyeshalom to the West. They were escorted by gendarmes. We stopped at the forest in Ács. By then, Gypsies in one of the “G” wagons...cut out the door fastener and kicked out the door. A whole wagon of Gypsies escaped. They were shot at, but in the dark it was difficult to catch them” (quoted in Szita 2002, 79). There is no research revealing the fate of those who escaped from the trains, but their very act of escaping speaks of courage and audacity.

Another Roma survivor, Jenő Sárközi recalled: “Once I escaped because they were putting us in trucks. I escaped once but they took me back, ‘cause I lost my way. It was all Germany territory, I had no idea where I was” (Bársony and Daróczi 2008, 142). Gyula Balogh also attempted to escape with his uncle from an ammunition factory, where they were taken after Buchenwald: “In the factory courtyard where we worked, the fence in one place was rather low. We jumped over it and ran, barefoot in the snow. The Germans came after us...[but] they couldn’t catch us...[then] we were stumbled upon by the forest wardens...I was taken from one captivity to another” (ibid., 151-2).

We also know that there were efforts to save family members or even fellow

Roma strangers, according to survivor testimonies. Lendvai Ilona recalls: “We were taken to Devecser. Everyone from the Gypsy community, only one family stayed behind. Somehow, they managed to escape. And that one family then went after their kin to Komárom, they redeemed them. The gendarmes were paid off, that’s how it was: money talked...” (Beszélő 2000). And although the emphasis in this excerpt may seem to be on the corruption of the gendarmes, it is noteworthy that the only surviving family was not frightened by the brutality of the regime, and decided to save their folks. From the same testimony, we also learn about a woman who “lent” two of her younger children to other young Roma women – when the gendarmes were gathering people to be transported to concentration camps, only women with families could stay. Hence the woman lent her two children, and because “nobody checked” she could save lives (Beszélő 2000).

József Kazári shared the story of his heroine, Ibolya Nyári, who saved his life: “...I noticed...that the Germans were coming and taking the men away [from Komárom]. Then I noticed there was this girl from Badacsonytomaj – God bless her I say to this day...this Gypsy gal with her big loose skirt, she was sitting on me and they couldn’t see me...I crouched down and she spread it over me, covered me with her skirt” (Bársony and Daróczy 2008, 131). Similarly, many survivors vividly remembered individuals whose acts made their time at the concentration camp a bit more bearable, or who simply diverted their attention from the horrors that surrounded them. Sárközi Mária recalled the care of Aunt Mariska, whom she knew from before the deportation to Auschwitz: “They took us to the place where corpses lay. Aunt Mariska...threw her coat over our heads, so we wouldn’t see the corpses. She said: ‘Don’t even peek that way...!’ Then we understood to what sort of place they had taken us” (Rona 2011, 142).

Discursive resistance is an important and yet often overlooked concept to consider. As an under-researched topic, discursive resistance may constitute a new avenue for research, analysing the role of arts and music, for instance, in not only resisting, but also highlighting the creative forms of agency of Roma. During the Pharrajimos, Roma collective memory of the past embodied through songs tells the story of resistance, struggle and desire to survive. Some lyrics are vengeful and unforgiving, explicitly voicing specific revenge

upon the murderers. According to Károly Bari,¹¹ camp songs (lágérénekek) have incorporated lyrics rooted in Romani cursing songs (átokdalok) and borrowed some cultural elements, helping them to persevere in the dire conditions (Szita 2002, 85). Some songs demand supernatural forces or Almighty God to punish the Germans and Hitler (Szita 2002, 84). Klára Majoros recorded one of the few preserved songs, which was later published by László Karsai in 1992 (Szita 2002, 84-85). The lyrics of the translated song contain elements of resistance, hope and bitterness:¹²

A komáromi gettó szoba
 Tudja aztat minden roma
 Sírva mondja a családjának
 Jaj, de büdös a gettó szoba.
 Én a gettóban raboskodom
 Erről tudják, hogy ott lakom,
 Műrostos az egész tagom.
 Jaj Istenem tégy egy csodát,
 A Hitlerből egy szarvasmarhát
 Kötelel is a nyakára
 Úgy hajtsák ki a Fő utcára.

The ghetto room in Komárom
 Is well known by all the Roma
 We cry to our families
 Oh, how stinky our ghetto room is.
 I am a prisoner of the ghetto,
 I live there and they must know
 My whole body is worn out.
 Oh God, make a miracle come true,
 Make Hitler into a bull
 With a rope around his neck,
 To drag through the city's main street.

Én a gettóban vagyok
 Lenyírták az én hajamat
 Jaj Istenem mit csináljak
 Szaladjak-e vagy megálljak?
 Ha szaladok agyonlőnek
 Ha megállok agyonvernek

I am in the ghetto still,
 With all my hair cut down to skin,
 Oh God, what am I to do,
 Should I run or should I stop?
 If I run, they will shoot me.
 If I stop, they will beat me

11 Károly Bari was a leading Roma intellectual and a defining figure of the 1970s and 1980s Hungarian poetry, who later in his life turned to translations and research into Romani folklore. See more on the RomArchive website: <https://www.romarchive.eu/en/literature/literature-countries-and-regions/romani-literature-hungary/>

12 Songs translated by the author.

In sum, there were numerous acts of Roma resistance, undermining Nazi authority, inspiring hope and strengthening perseverance to survive. These were small acts of love and empathy, which also meant a source of encouragement for many. These acts were often inconspicuous such as the drive to finding inner strength, which was also a form of resistance: “I kept saying to myself,” shared Sárközi Mária, “I can’t submit to hopelessness, because then I will never get out of here” (Rona 2011, 142). These acts, however, and their power, should not be underestimated, especially in the context of isolation, dehumanisation, starvation, and illnesses of ghetto life.

Aftermath: Commemorations and Politics of Memory

The Roma were not recognised as victims of the Holocaust immediately after the Second World War was over. In Hungary, the “discovery” of suffering that Roma experienced did not occur until the 1970s, when Peter Szuhaly and Istvan Kemeny, among Hungary’s most well-known sociologists and Romologists, conducted the first representative national survey and research of Roma in the country. During the study, the social scientists, to their surprise, learned about personal stories the fate of Roma during the Holocaust (Szász 2015b). Their work facilitated a consolidated and comprehensive discourse among scholars, journalists and Roma intellectuals about Pharrajimós in Hungary, though relatively late in the day (Szuhay 2005).

There are still gaps in our knowledge regarding this historical period, and there is still sporadic knowledge about how memories have been incorporated into Roma culture, ritualised and narrated to the next generations. In fact, in 1996 there was a public acknowledgement regarding the scarce knowledge we have about the Pharrajimós. During the memorial service in Nagykanizsa, the head of state claimed: “there is no list of names to account for Roma victims of the Holocaust...we don’t know their exact number, they never received compensation either” (quoted in Vidra 2005, 126). Recognising the inability to commemorate victims is the necessary first step to inspire more research and construct a revised narrative of the Holocaust.

Regarding political acknowledgement and commemoration of the Pharrajimós in Hungary, the first memorial for Roma victims - a tablet on the wall of the school where Roma were rounded-up before their deportation - was erected in 1984 in the town of Torony (Szalayné Sándor 2017, 7). Then, in 1991 in

Nagykanizsa, in 1993 in Nyíregyháza, and a year later in Szombathely, further memorials were erected. Importantly, these memorials signified the beginning of formal commemorations of the Roma Holocaust in Hungary (Szuhay 2005). In Budapest, a central Pharrajimos memorial was erected in 2006 in Nehru Park, on the embankment of the Danube. Since 2005 in Hungary, the Parliament has officially designated August 2 as a remembrance day for the Roma and Sinti Holocaust, an important political step towards recognising the Pharrajimos.

Memorialisation of the Roma Holocaust must be seen as an integral part of the Roma emancipatory movement, and commemoration and recognition efforts are largely the powerful work of Roma civil rights activism and Roma intellectuals (Szász 2015a). In the 1990s, when the commemoration of Roma victims of the Holocaust was increasingly visible and held in public spaces in Hungary, these acts of remembrance contributed to the revision of the dominant discourse about the Holocaust. Teleki László,¹³ on the Pharrajimos wrote: “The [Hungarian] general public has come to learn about this loss much later and to a much lesser degree than of that of the Shoah, the atrocities committed against the Jews [and] today we would like to tell our story, through educational programmes, public events and exhibits, because the deaths of Roma men, women, and children become sacrifices only if we understand the ‘why’ and don’t shut our eyes to the ‘how’” (Teleki 2009).

Undoubtedly, pro-Roma civil society and activists are contributing a great deal into constructing a narrative and cultivating a memory of the Roma Holocaust that properly acknowledges the bravery and agency of Roma, rather than focusing on victimhood. Their contributions range from uncovering and disseminating first-hand accounts from victims and witnesses, revealing and commemorating sites of importance for the Roma Holocaust, and participating in events, memorials, and marches dedicated to Roma victims of the Holocaust. These efforts appear to have successfully contributed to the changing discourse and narrative of Roma resistance, bringing to the forefront the power and will of Roma to resist, act and overcome.

Moreover, the collective experience of Pharrajimos has inspired Roma intellectuals, artists and literary figures to express the meaning of Phorrajiji-

13 From 2000 to 2002, he was the President of the National Alliance of Roma Organizations, and from 2002 to 2006 he was Deputy Minister of Roma Affairs for the Prime Minister’s Office.

mos through their work. Romani culture increasingly incorporated elements of Holocaust remembrance: since the 1980s and '90s Romani literature increasingly recounts Second World War atrocities, as well as visual art and film (Kovács, Lénárd and Szász 2011, 340). Choli Daróczi József, a prominent Roma activist, writer, poet, educator and translator, wrote the following poem (quoted in Teleki 2009):

The Gypsies were taken away

The many Gypsies were taken away,
Large, deep ditches to dig on the way.
The ditch slowly deepens, work without rest,
“Till water has bubbled up from its depth (excerpt)

What is still needed is the construction of a comprehensive Holocaust narrative, to which the Pharrajimos is integral – a process well underway in many countries nationally as well as internationally. Contribution of this narrative has taken many forms: 1) public commemorations; 2) monuments and historical memorials; 3) research; 4) political acknowledgement. What is imperative is to make the narrative publicly accepted and visible. Indeed, recognising and educating about the Pharrajimos is a crucial tool to fight against anti-Gypsyism (Lajčáková, Hojsík and Karoly 2020), and may prove to be a “useful tool for building a pan-Romani identity...and means of empowerment” (Pakier and Wawrzyniak 2015, 93). What is beyond doubt is the significant implications of this narrative in not both combatting anti-Roma sentiments and empowering Roma society in Hungary and beyond through shared memories portraying Roma as actors shaping history, rather than passive observers.

Conclusion

In sum, there has been a growing body of research into the Roma Holocaust over the last few decades, though it remains mostly fragmented. In Hungary, a constant struggle nearly all Roma Holocaust researchers face is incomplete or missing archival sources and documents regarding the Roma victims (Vidra 2005). Nonetheless, there has been a definite shift in research focus, away from the victimisation of Roma during the Holocaust, to an agency-focused approach acknowledging that Roma both fought and resisted. With this new

phase in research, “oral history” and witness testimonies became an increasingly prevalent methodology to uncover memories from the time, and academic research about the Pharrajimos has become deeper and more focused on recognising memories of Roma victims.

Attention to the testimonies and memories of the Roma victims of the Holocaust and in particular the recognition of various acts of resistance offers space for an empowering perspective on history to evolve. Reinterpretation of the Holocaust narrative also allows to see Roma not as deprived, forgotten, denied and silenced, but rather as creative, strong, and courageous peoples who deeply honour family bonds and express their solidarity even in the grimmest times. In turn, commemoration and recognition of Roma suffering and resistance is imperative to strengthen Roma collective memory, as collective memories are constructed and maintained through commemoration. Without commemoration of trauma, or when commemoration of trauma is denied, suppressed or outright forbidden, a part of Roma shared identity is denied and Roma become victims of discursive discrimination.

Personal memories not only put a human face to historical suffering but also show the power of compassion and kindness. I wish to conclude this research with a story of survival, empathy and support that saved lives. The story is a testament to the power of humanity that transcends ethnicities, cultures, and religions:

Coming home with me was a Jewish man whose child was saved by Gypsies. When they started coming for the Jews, the man took his two-year-old son to horse traders he knew in Pesterzsébet to have them take care of him until he comes home. And they took care of the child. Of course they had to hide themselves in that time too since after a time, Gypsies had to hide too, but they survived somehow. The whole family and the Jewish child, too. When we got home, the father went looking for him....he found the horse trader Gypsy, and get this, the little Jewish child couldn't talk to him because he only spoke Gypsy. So he was talking to his father in Vlach Gypsy and that one, he was just kissing him and weeping. This is how these things were... (Bársony and Daróczi 2008, 152; originally published in *Múlt és Jövő* [Past and Future] 3, 1991, p. 36, interviewer: Károly Bari)

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Chapter 5

Roma Resistance in the Independent State of Croatia, 1941–1945

By Danijel Vojak

Introduction

The history of the Roma¹ in Croatia is still a relatively unknown subject, not only for the general public but also for the academic community. Although certain shifts in historical research of the Roma—one of the oldest and largest minorities in Croatia—have been more evident in the last decade, there are still gaps in our understanding regarding their history, culture, and language. One of the key periods in the history of Roma in Europe was the Second World War, during which the Roma faced genocidal policies under the Nazi authorities and their allies. This led to the destruction of many Roma communities across Europe, including Croatia, where Roma suffered genocide at the Usta-sha authorities' hands.² After World War II, the Roma genocide was pushed to the margins of scientific research, which is why this topic was often called the “forgotten Holocaust (genocide)” (Bernadac 1980). However, recently there has been an increase in scientific and other (public) interest in researching this topic in many European countries, including a focus on Roma resistance against the Nazis and their allies during World War II, and other authorities thereafter. This paper focuses on whether Roma in the Independent State of

1 In this paper I will use term “Roma” but when referring to the original terminology in archival records or direct quotes I will use the term “Gypsy”.

2 Croatian fascist movement that ruled the Independent State of Croatia during World War II led by Ante Pavelic.

Croatia³ during the Second World War resisted the genocidal policy of the Ustasha authorities and their allies. If the Roma participated in such resistance, it is necessary to answer how and in what ways they fought against the Nazis and other authorities.

Methodological Remarks

After the Anti-Fascist victory in the Second World War, Roma survivors in Europe continued to face social, educational and economic discrimination. In some states, authorities continued to implement policies of forced assimilation and prohibit Roma customs, culture and language. Most of the Roma after the Second World War were politically and economically marginalised, and the Romani community lacked a home country that would protect their rights. Thus, the marginality of Roma was reflected in their suffering and victimhood in the post-war era. In world historiography, the suffering of Roma was, compared to that of the Jewish population, reduced to a footnote and secondary importance in scholarly research and other official publications. It took almost 20 years for the first account of Romani suffering in the Second World War to be published (Hans-Joachim Döringy, *Die Zigeuner im nationalsozialistischen Staat*, Hamburg, 1964). Aside from this, Romani victims were not given appropriate acknowledgement or other compensation, and authorities did not commemorate their suffering. It was not until 1982 that German chancellor Helmut Schmidt officially recognised the Roma genocide. In some respects, this process of recognition ended in October 2012, when German chancellor Angela Merkel unveiled a monument to the Sinti and Romani Victims of National Socialism in the centre of Berlin (Knesebek 2011; Stewart 2004). In Croatia, after World War II, which was then part of socialist Yugoslavia, the Roma continued to be socially marginalised, which was also reflected in commemorative practices. Roma persecution was recognised as part of the Nazi policies of the Independent State of Croatia, but the crimes against them were not explicitly acknowledged. Roma victims were simply subsumed among the “victims of fascist terror” because of the dominant ideological socialist (communist) policy model of brotherhood and unity (Vojak and Tomić and Kovačev 2019, 139). At the same time, in Croatian historiography, little

3 Herein referred to as ‘Croatia’

research has been conducted on the suffering of Roma during World War II in Croatia, another reflection of the socially marginalised position of Roma. The topic was neglected in Croatian (Yugoslav) historiography. It was not until the mid-1980s that the first scientific papers on the Roma in the Independent State of Croatia were published. A lack of interest in Roma historiography was present among historians in Croatia until about ten years ago when a systematic study of the history of Roma suffering began. This change was mainly due to the intensified political and social activities of Roma communities that initiated the commemoration of Roma victims and engaged in systematic scientific research into their suffering in World War II (Vojak 2018c, 247–248). Simultaneously, a lack of interest among Croatia's scientific community concerning Roma suffering prevailed in the wider Croatian public. The Roma community began to organise itself culturally and politically in the 1980s, but it was only after 2002 that Roma were recognised as a national minority in the Republic of Croatia. Then, through their representatives in the Croatian Parliament, especially Veljko Kajtazi, - Roma began to systematically emphasise the need to commemorate their victims during World War II, and at the same time conduct scientific research on their suffering (Vojak 2017b, 141).

On account of a lack of interest among the scientific community and general public, only one scientific paper on Roma resistance in the Independent State of Croatia has been published (Vojak 2017a, 9–16). Socialist Croatian (Yugoslav) historians published numerous works on the period before and during World War II, including documents from the anti-fascist (partisan) movement, and unpublished documents of the Ustasha and Četnik authorities. In addition, documents from the German, Italian and Hungarian occupation authorities were published.⁴ The analysis of these works showed that the Roma are mentioned only in passing in a small number of documents, and very rarely in the context of resisting the Ustasha regime and other authorities in the Independent State of Croatia.

This research paper is based, in part, on the analysis of the oral testimonies of Roma survivors of the war. They are hugely valuable because they allow us to understand Roma participation in the resistance better. The analysis of relevant literature in this paper covers not only analytical scientific papers and collections of published documents but also local historical works pertaining

4 During World War II, parts of the pre-war Kingdom of Yugoslavia were occupied by Hungary, Italy and Bulgaria.

to towns and villages. This was followed by numerous historical works on the wartime activities of partisan military units, including those in which prominent individuals described their experiences of World War II. No special attention was given to the Roma in these works either—they were mentioned only in passing, mostly as collateral victims of the Ustasha genocidal policy in a particular area (Vojak 2015a, 354–369; Vojak 2018a, 144–154; Vojak 2018b, 111–115). However, the handful of references to Roma participation in these documents signals that further research is required to unravel how Roma resisted against the genocidal policies that targeted them.

A Brief History of Roma during World War II in the Independent State of Croatia

Roma populations settled in Croatia during the 14th century as a part of broader migration in Southeast Europe. Roma were initially well-received in Croatian lands, but the authorities' and general population's attitude towards Roma took a turn for the worse as early as the first half of the 15th century. This marked the start of repressive and assimilative anti-Gypsy policies toward Roma, who were perceived by authorities and local populations as "outcasts" (Vojak 2013, 9–39). During the Habsburg monarchy in the 18th century, Enlightenment-inspired measures against Roma were implemented with the aim of assimilating them into the Habsburg state. These legal provisions determined that the Roma as *Neubauern* (New peasants) should be permanently settled, "raised as good Christians", and should be working as soldiers or farmers (Vojak 2013, 15–17; Vojak and Kovačev 2018, 285–304). In the 19th century, the Croatian state and local authorities continued their repressive policy measures against Roma. Authorities enacted a series of regulations that aimed to monitor and control the nomadic Roma and, in the end, amounted to their colonisation (Vojak 2005, 145–162).

After World War I, Roma in Croatia became part of the new Yugoslav state with the rest of the population. The number of Roma in the interwar Yugoslav state was officially around 70,000, most of whom lived (15,000) in the country's eastern and northern parts. Most Roma existed on the margins of the economy and lived in rural areas, where they worked mostly as craftsmen and traders. Most Roma were of Roman Catholic faith, without formal education, and they lacked any form of political, economic, cultural, or other institutions.

The new policies of the Yugoslav state authorities toward Roma were identical to that of previous Austro-Hungarian authorities, characterised by numerous unsuccessful attempts of repressive assimilation and forced sedentarisation (Vojak 2013, 66–207).

However, the peak of repressive and assimilative government policies towards the Croatian Roma occurred during World War II. In April 1941, the Kingdom of Yugoslavia's army capitulated and collapsed after a brief military conflict with the Axis Powers. Then, with the help and support of the Axis Powers, a pro-fascist movement called the Ustašas, led by Ante Pavelić, came to power as they declared the establishment of the Independent State of Croatia (*Nezavisna Država Hrvatska or NDH*), recognised only by the member states of the Tripartite Pact. One part of the Croatian population began to resist the new government and worked together with the anti-fascist partisan movement led by Communists, with Josip Broz Tito at their helm (Pavličević 2007, 399–461; Goldstein 2008, 205–349).

Pro-fascist Ustasha state authorities implemented racial laws in April 1941. They persecuted various minority groups, including Jews and Roma, who were regarded as “parasites” that should be removed to create a racially pure Croatian society (Lengel Krizman 2003, 32–33). In May 1942, most of the country's Roma were deported to the Jasenovac concentration camp and killed. Unlike other prisoners, Roma were not officially recorded as individuals, but as numbers of a “railway carriage”, which were transported to the camp. On arrival at Jasenovac, all possessions were taken away from the Roma, some were immediately executed, while others were sent to the village of Uštica. There they were forced to stay in empty Serbian homes, which were left vacant after their owners had been deported to Ustasha camps, and now served as part of the Jasenovac concentration camp. Due to their numbers, some Roma were sent on to the village of Gradina, where most were killed upon arrival. From July 1942, there were almost no Roma in Jasenovac, except a few who worked as pit-diggers and were later killed at the beginning of 1945 (Lengel Krizman 2003, 47–53; Biondic 2004, 38–39; Hrečkovski 1985, 36–37). The result of Ustasha policies was the almost complete genocidal eradication of the pre-war Roma population, though official data remains unreliable due to methodological and other problems related to conducting a census of nomadic Roma, including ethnic mimicry. This is the reason why estimates of the number of Roma killed in Croatia range from a few thousand to as many as 100,000, but most scholars state that the actual number of Roma killed was

between 15,000 and 30,000 (Vojak 2015b, 55–57).

Roma Resistance in Croatia

I define Roma resistance in this paper based on military action (e.g. participation in the anti-fascist resistance movement), cultural action (e.g. participation in military orchestras), or through escape from enemies (either from camps or from deportations and killings). Scholars studying Jewish resistance applied a similar understanding of resistance during World War II. In this context, it is noticeable to point out how post-war Jewish organisations built their identities on the heritage of resistance (Poznanski 1995, 129). Swiss historian, Werner Rings, proposes five kinds of resistance, defined by the kinds of commitments resistors made and what they managed to do: (1) Symbolic Resistance, or “I remain what I was”; (2) Polemic Resistance, or “I tell the truth”; (3) Defensive Resistance, or “I aid and protect”; (4) Offensive Resistance, or “I fight to the death”; (5) Resistance Enchained, or freedom fighters in camp and ghetto (Marrus 1995, 93).

Evading Deportations

During World War II, Roma in Croatia resisted the Ustasha and other (Nazi and Fascist) authorities. Shortly after coming to power in Croatia, the Ustasha authorities began deporting Roma to camps, along with Jewish and Serbian populations. Initially, Roma deportations were unsystematic and occasional. That changed at the end of May 1942, when repressive Ustasha police and army institutions determined that all Roma from Croatia must be deported to the Jasenovac concentration camp. In the next few months, most Roma from Croatia were deported to the camp, where they were tortured and killed. A small number of Roma were deported to Germans labour camps (Gruenfelder 2007, 100).

The Roma resisted the Ustasha policy of genocidal extermination in various ways. The first dimension of resistance was escaping deportation to forced labour camps. One of the more prominent cases of Roma resistance to deportation occurred in June 1942 in the Uljanik municipality (Daruvar district). In late June 1942, Daruvar district authorities informed various NDH political

bodies, such as the Ministry of Interior, the Directorate for Public Order and Security, the Ustasha Surveillance Service and others, that the “Gypsies” had learned about their planned deportation before their arrest from the newspapers, leading over 30 of them to flee the Uljanik municipal area into the woods. Four of those Roma stood falsely accused by Ustasha authorities of breaking into the house of the local peasants, who then proceeded to kidnap, torture and rob them, on account of their joining the partisans (State Archive in Bjelovar, HR-DABJ – 1106, box 1, No. 204/1942).

A similar case happened when Roma from Habjanovci (Valpovo district) in mid-1942 rebelled against their deportation to camps and tried to resist. The Ustasha therefore “beat [these Roma] with clubs” and forcibly deported them (Šovagović and Cvetković 1970, 99–100). At about the same time in Donji Rajići near Novska, a number of Roma participated in armed resistance against the Ustasha authorities during their deportation to the Jasenovac camp (Bulajić 1988, 94). During this deportation, the case of the Rom Partisan fighter Đuro Kajčić has emerged.

Kajčić Đuro, a Serb Roma, aged 31, managed to escape the Ustašas that night [in May 1942, during the deportation of Roma from the village of Rajići, A/N] and to join the partisans. (He was given the partisan name “Cigo.”). In the fall of 1943, while Đuro and the Borovac partisans were digging shelters over the village of Borovac, he was betrayed. He started to flee, but the Ustasha wounded and captured him. He was beaten and tortured and then taken to a hospital in Nova Gradiška. Đuro did not betray anyone. When he was cured, he was hung in the fall of 1943 in Nova Gradiška (Marić 1988, 33).

Four Roma from the village of Bobota (Vukovar district) managed to avoid deportation during this period and soon after joined the partisan movement (Kokanović 1985, 127). Similarly, in mid-1942, a Roma woman by the name of Danica Nikolić managed to avoid deportation from the village of Negoslavci (Vukovar area), where she joined the partisan movement (Bulajić 1988, 120.).

Some sources mention that NDH authorities began deporting Roma because they were afraid they would start assisting partisans. One such case was the deportation of Roma from the Zemun area in June 1942, when the Ustasha government accused Roma of spreading rumours and collaborating with “Tito’s partisans” (Bulajić 1988, 88; Korb 2013, 76). Similar accusations were levelled by the local authorities in Derвента in May 1943, who claimed the reason for the “removal” of Roma from the area and their relocation to camps was their disloyalty to the NDH and their tendency to assist “partisans and

četniks” (Bulajić 1988, 168). Another Roma who managed to avoid deportation was Mile Radosavljević from Vrbanja. When the deportations began, he was in the forest making charcoal. Upon his return home, some of the locals warned him about the deportations, so he and his five family members fled into the woods and joined the Partisans (Kokanović 1985, 51, 127). On August 31, 1942, the Deputy County Chief (*podžupan*) of the Posavje Great County (*Velika župa*) sent a report to the NDH Ministry of Interior in which he referred to this event. In his report on the “situation in the Županja district,” he mentions that the “outlaws” (partisans) had been joined by “the Gypsy Mile Radosavljević and his family” (Croatian State Archives, HR-HDA-223, box 29, no. 7540).

Roma Resistance in the Camps and Escape from the Camps

Cases of Roma resistance were also recorded in the Jasenovac camp. It should be noted that the Jasenovac camp was the largest Ustasha camp in Croatia, a poignant location for the suffering of many Croatian Roma. A number of Roma were forced to work on the construction of a local embankment, but they too were soon killed. It is believed that there were no Roma in Jasenovac after July 1942, save for a small number of gravediggers, who were killed at the beginning of 1945 (Lengel Krizman 2003, 47 – 53; Biondich 2002, 38 – 39; Hrečkovski 1984, 36 – 37). This is why not many examples of Roma resistance in the camp were recorded. However, one instance of resistance occurred in early 1942, when a small group of Roma revolted and attacked the camp guard. Sadly, they were overwhelmed and killed. Milko Riffer, one of the survivors of Jasenovac camp, recalled:

So, for example, today it seems incredible to me that of those countless crowds of detainees who were taken to Gradina with their hands tied, almost none of them rebelled and tried, even with their teeth, to sell their lives as expensively as possible. I was told that only once a group of Gypsies, sometime in early 1942, had rebelled and stormed the guards. They were, of course, killed by bullets from rifles and machine guns, during which a large number of detainees in the camp itself were killed. (Riffer 1946, 75–76)

One form of Roma resistance against the Ustasha camp authorities were their attempts to escape. On account of post-war testimonies, we know that

some Roma managed to escape from the Jasenovac camp. One of the first recorded statements recounting the successful escape of Roma was that of Josip Joka Nikolić from the village of Predavac (Čazma area), who had been deported to the camp in mid-1942. Taking advantage of a guards' negligence, he fled the camp to his home village, only to learn the Ustasha had burned it to the ground. He then decided to join the partisans and remained with them until the end of the war (Croatian State Archives, HR-HDA-421, box 128). The cited examples of Roma resistance in the Ustasha camps and escape from them indicate that some Roma did not react in a passive way in the face of their helplessness before the enemy, but actively found ways to resist the repressive genocidal policy of the Ustasha authorities. In the context of the Jasenovac camp, the position of the Roma was all the more difficult because they were killed immediately upon arrival at the camp, which limited their ability to resist. Although resistance to the enemy sometimes seemed hopeless, the Roma opposed them, which often cost them their lives.

Roma in the Partisan (anti-fascist) Movement

Roma actively participated in the Croatian (Yugoslav) partisan (anti-fascist) movement, where, together with other minority groups—such as Germans, Czechs, Slovaks, Hungarians and Jews—actively resisted the Ustasha genocidal policy. Thus, Roma from Croatia must be understood as part of broader Roma participation in anti-fascist resistance movements in Italy, France, Slovakia, Montenegro, Bulgaria, Macedonia, Serbia, Greece, and Albania. The participation of Roma in the Croatian (Yugoslav) anti-fascist movement was not widely known of, but some of the Yugoslav political elite highlighted World War II as the key period for the beginning of Roma “emancipation” and their equality in socialist Yugoslavia. In this context, Marinko Gruić, a prominent Croatian communist official, wrote in 1982:

The Roma fought for freedom together with other peoples and ethnicities. They were an active factor—subject of freedom. Unfortunately, few of them survived the war. The occupiers and the Ustasha slaughtered the vast majority of them. A part of them died in the national liberation struggle. The sacrifices and suffering of the Roma oblige us to recognise them. As does another thing: the feeling of patriotism, deep loyalty and love for our socialist Yugoslavia. (Gruić 1982, 21)

Scientific research on the history of Roma in Croatia has revealed their participation in the anti-fascist (partisan) movement. Within Croatian parti-

san military units, in July 1942, the “Gypsy partisan unit” near Daruvar was formed. The partisans found several Roma families, around 40 people in total, in the forest between Kreštelovac and Goveđe Polje (Daruvar area), who had fled there due to fear of Ustasha deportations. Krsto Bosanac, one of the prominent partisan fighters, had spoken about it after the war:

The Ustasha terror against the Roma, as well as against the Serbs, began in the Daruvar area very early, immediately after the occupation and the establishment of the Independent State of Croatia. I know for sure that among the first to be killed was Roma Joco (I don’t remember his last name), a forester in Vrbovec. In mid-July 1942, the partisans learned that in a forest between Kreštelovac and Goveđe Polje, in the plain part of the Daruvar municipality, several Roma families who had escaped the Ustasha terror and the deportation to the Jasenovac camp were hiding. I was sent there to establish contact with them and to persuade them to take refuge in a safer place, on Papuk, and those who were military fit to join the partisans in battle. I did that one night. I found about 40 men, women and children—hungry, scared and distrustful. Of the weapons, they had three hunting rifles, several axes. Until then, they had lived in various places in the Daruvar and Garešnica municipalities. Nowadays, I cannot remember a single name or surname of these Roma. Their arrival in the free partisan area was later organised by someone else, and in August or September 1942 in Bijela, where they settled, a Roma partisan platoon of about fifteen fighters was formed. They did not want to separate from their families, and—from what I learned later from the fighters—they most often performed the tasks of requisitioning weapons and material goods from residents supporting the enemy in the plain part of Daruvar municipality, which was under enemy control. They performed these tasks, as far as I remember the information obtained in passing, successfully and very conscientiously. This Roma unit, certainly not stronger than a platoon, operated in Bijela for a short time, perhaps until the fall of 1943, because some of its fighters were sent to larger partisan units, and their families, together with the Serb population of this area, retreated deeper into Papuk. (Šteković 1998, 49–50)

Vicko Antić Pepe, a prominent partisan commander during World War II and a post-war communist official, stated in an April 1984 interview that “one-tenth of his division was made up of Roma” (Duhaček 1984, 76–77). This statement further indicates the existence of a Roma partisan unit. Still, the problem in researching its military activities is that it existed only briefly, incorporated as it was into other partisan military units. Also, no testimonies of Roma partisans were found, nor did any of the non-Roma partisan fighters publish memories of its activities.

Some Roma partisan fighters stood out for their courage. Vladimir Dedijer wrote about the courage of Roma partisan fighters within the Seventeenth Brigade, who found themselves surrounded by enemies in the summer of 1943.

At the time, the brigade received an order from the Croatian General Staff to “break through the enemy environment and transfer across the Sava River to the Banija area.” During the breakthrough, the “Gypsy troop” stood out in particular:

A fairly large stream had to be conquered urgently. There were no means of crossing it, no materials for building the bridge. Then the commander of the Gypsy troop volunteered to build a bridge. Together with his fighters, he cut whole handfuls of reeds, threw them into the water, and immediately placed a man standing on them so that the water would not take them away. Thus, the crossing was made possible not only for the infantry, who waded the stream, the water being up to their waists but also for carts. (Dedijer 1981, 469–470)

In addition, these Roma partisan fighters distinguished themselves in sabotage operations:

Duško tells me that this troop made up of Gypsies was quite brave. Once, in the summer of 1942, a Ustasha official (tabornik) had to be liquidated in a Slavonian village. This troop volunteered to do it. The next day, the commander of the Gypsy troop reported to Duško that the tabornik had been brought alive. He was stolen by the Gypsies while sleeping, tied up, taken out of his house and brought to our headquarters. (Dedijer 1981, 469–470)

At the beginning of January 1942, three local Roma⁵ guardsmen fled from the Home Guard⁶ barracks in Jezerane. One of them had previously cooperated with the partisans by handing them “mail and six rifles” during the partisan attack on the barracks. The Roma tried to transfer the heavy machine gun to the partisans but failed to succeed because they did not know how to dismantle it. They also secretly transferred partisan leaflets to the barracks, presumably to demotivate soldiers fighting against the partisans (Rubčić 1971, 735). This example shows how some Roma at the start of the Second World War immediately joined the anti-fascist movement, helping the partisans by supplying them with weapons at the cost of their own security. In addition, they were involved in spreading partisan propaganda among ISC soldiers aimed at demotivating them. It should be noted that since 1942, the Ustasha military

5 The non-Roma population in Croatian areas often differentiates the Roma population in the context of their way of life into: local (sedentary Roma) and foreign (nomadic Roma) (Vojak 2004).

6 Home Guard was the part of the Land Army of the Independent State of Croatia.

authorities banned Roma from being members of their military units (Vojak, Papo, Tahiri 2015, 308).

Writing on the history of the Third Banija National Liberation Strike Brigade, Jovo Borojević recorded the words of a Roma fighter in the village of Bović, a member of the Fourth Brigade, who was wounded in May 1942 in the wider area of Banija:

The news that the brigade was also returning with the seized cannons and prisoners reached the village much earlier. It was brought by the wounded, among whom was the brave fighter Cigo, who—with three wounds in his chest and both arms broken—sang, ‘Our struggle requires that one sings while dying. (Borojević 1969, 23)

This quote shows the great sacrifice of a Roma partisan, who, despite severe injuries sustained in battle, sang about the need for sacrifice in the war in pursuit of higher goals. Unfortunately, it is unknown if the Roma fighter survived his injury, but he is yet another example of the courage of Roma displayed in the anti-fascist armed resistance movement in Croatian territories.

It is unknown exactly how many Roma participated in the anti-fascist resistance movement in Croatian territories. Rare military reports, such as lists of participants and fallen resistance fighters, often name only a few Roma partisan fighters of particular partisan military units in specific areas. In spite of this, there are a few available sources that testify to the mass of Roma joining partisan units. In this context, on April 20, 1944, the Regional Committee of the League of Communist Youth of Yugoslavia for the Zagreb area reported to the appropriate Regional Committee of the Communist Party of Croatia for the Zagreb area that:

Recently, about 100 young people from certain villages have volunteered for our army, who went to the Bjelovar and Bilogora Detachment and to the Orovac troop, and 30 young Gypsies from Pitomača have also joined our army. (Građa za povijest narodnooslobodilačke borbe 1988, 481–482)

Lists of Participants and Fallen Resistance Fighters

Lists of participants and fallen resistance fighters are an important source of research on the participation of Roma in partisan movements. These lists were often compiled and published after the war as part of the history of a particular location, or as part of the history of a particular partisan military

unit. One of these lists mentions that the 22-year-old Roma Joso Štević from Kirin (Vriginmost/Gvozd area) joined the partisan detachment in his home village on August 2, 1941, and died of his wounds only ten days later (Baić 1980, 576). This shows that some Roma joined the partisan movement before the mass deportations in late spring and summer 1942. Joso Štević probably joined the partisans because the local Ustašas conducted mass killings of his compatriots.

The list of fallen partisans from Slunj mentions the Rom Vale Jurković from the village of Cvitović (Slunj area), who joined the partisan movement in mid-July 1942 and fought as a member of the Third Brigade of the Eighth Division. He was killed in action in November 1944 near Plaški, aged 25. His fellow villager Roma Petar Jurković joined the partisans that same day. He served in the same partisan unit and was killed in action in December 1944 near Vaganac, aged 20 (Peremin 1988, 965).

The 25-year-old Rom Stevo Ugarković from Duga Resa joined the partisan movement in mid-March 1943 and served as a “sapper/saboteur” in the First Platoon of the Karlovac Partisan Detachment. He was killed in action near Bosiljevo six months later (Travica 1986, 1071). According to data on the fallen partisans of the Eighth Kordun Assault Division, there were two Roma among a total of 2,682 dead men, while six of the 920 fallen partisans from the Pože-ga area were Roma (“Popis palih boraca Osme divizije” 1977, 914; Vranešević 1984, 522). This shows that some Roma actively participated in partisan units, most likely as a reaction to the violence of the Ustasha authorities.

The list of killed partisan fighters of the First Krajina Strike Proletarian Brigade includes Ilija Radosav Stevanović, a Roma who was born in 1921 in the Serbian municipality of Mladenovac and joined the brigade on October 4, 1944, in a “troop of accompanying implements”. He died on 3 May 1945 near Grubišno Polje. (Gončin and Rauš 1981, 420)

These lists also mention Roma Arandel Marković Crni, a fighter (courier) of the First Lika Proletarian National Liberation Strike Brigade “Marko Orešković” from September 1944 (Popović 1988, 733). The list of fallen Roma partisan fighters demonstrates only some elements of their resistance. It should be noted that in some lists of killed partisan fighters, their nationality was not mentioned, which significantly complicates the research on the participation of Roma in partisan units.

Other Forms of Roma Resistance in Croatia

Roma did not resist the Ustasha authorities only through direct armed struggle, but also other ways, like expressing controversial political opinions or hiding political enemies from state authorities. One such case was reported to the Supreme Armed Forces Command of the Independent State of Croatia by the commander of the First Armed Forces Regiment on March 16, 1942, as part of the report on partisan activities in the Vukovar area:

On February 25 this year, a gypsy, Janko Radulović, was arrested in the village of Komletinci because, when he went to the bakery of Marijan Antunović for bread, he lifted it up and shouted ‘Long live Stalin!’ (Zbornik dokumenata i podataka 1958, 56)

What happened to Janko Radulovic, who publicly supported the policies of Josef Stalin who were at war with the Croatian (Ustasha) authorities, is unknown. At the same time, the question arises as to why Radulović acted so openly, but his action can certainly be understood as a form of resistance. The Roma hid communist political activists during World War II—it should be noted that the Ustasha authorities considered the communists to be enemies of the state. Žarko Milićević writes about this, stating that Marijan Milivoj Miško, a student and member of the local communist organisation from Bjelovar, acted as an “illegal” in the summer of 1941 in establishing communist organisations. Then, the Ustasha authorities discovered him and tried to arrest him, and for a week, he was hiding with Roma in the Bukovac forest between Dubrava and Srpska Kapela (Milićević 2010, 49).

Personal Stories of Roma Heroes

It is also important to note that some witnesses of Roma suffering in the Jasenovac camp mentioned instances of Roma escaping and joining the partisan movement, as did Roma in other European countries. Individuals who managed this include Josip Joka Nikolić from the village of Predavac (Čazma area), Janko Gomen from Novoselec (Zagreb area), Milan Radosavljević from Jankovci (Vinkovci area), Štefan Nikolić from Zagreb, and others.

Josip Joka Nikolić

The testimony of Josip Joka Nikolić, a Roma from the village of Predavec (Čazma district), is one of the first known testimonies to the suffering of Roma in Croatia. The testimony he gave in March 1952 as part of the Pavelić-Artuković indictment describes how he was deported by the Ustašas and gendarmes in April or May 1942, along with other Roma from the Čazma area, to the Jasenovac camp. In Ivanić – Kloštar [Kloštar Ivanić, A/N], Roma from the surrounding area (villages of Lipovec, Šćapovec, Šarampov) were gathered, and about 30 Roma families were “stuffed” into three or four livestock carriages, by which they were taken to the Jasenovac camp, where their property was confiscated, and they were left in a fairly wide area surrounded by barbed wire:

That same day, around sunset, we stopped at the Jasenovac railway station, where the carriage doors were opened, and we were ordered to disembark. Here we were met by a group of armed Ustašas, who took us to the concentration camp. There, under some hovels, we were forced to give up all our valuables, such as money, jewellery, etc. They threatened us that anyone found concealing some valuable item would suffer. After that, they took us and our luggage, mostly containing bed sheets and some food, to an open space enclosed with barbed wire. (Croatian State Archives, HR-HDA-42, box 128)

He was then transferred with other Roma to the southern bank of the Sava, after which the men were separated from women and children. On that occasion, his brother Milan was already thinking of escaping. Ustasha camp guards then began mass executions of Roma in small groups. Nikolić then decided, with another Roma, to flee:

The Gypsies from my group also figured this out and began to run while I was undressing, first two of them and, a few seconds later, the remaining two. They ran into the darkness in a direction away from the riverbank but fell into an ambush and came under fire. At the same time, the Ustasha who were with us began running after them and opened fire, so only one Ustasha was left beside me. Taking advantage of the situation, I ran, but towards the river, so as to avoid falling into an ambush. The Ustasha fired a few rounds after me, but couldn't hit me, so I jumped into the water and came to a halt a few meters from the riverbank, where the water came up to my neck. The riverbank and that place were covered in small trees. I heard the officer questioning the Ustasha whether all the fugitives from my group had been killed, and they answered that four were dead and one had been driven

into the Sava. After this, they began searching for me in the thicket, illuminating the terrain with hand-held battery-powered torches and, judging by their conversation, I deduced that they had noticed me since the shrubs next to me were moving. I immediately let the current take me downriver and swam towards the middle of the river while they, standing on the elevation along the riverbank, fired several rounds at me. However, since it was a night with average visibility, they were obviously shooting at random, so that only one bullet grazed me in the upper left arm. I heard one of them shouting that I've been hit, and so they ceased firing. (Croatian State Archives, HR-HDA-42, box 128)

In his escape, Nikolić saw many corpses of killed detainees, and at the same time, he witnessed mass executions. After a few days, Nikolić managed to reach his village of Predavec, where he soon joined the partisans. It is interesting that he especially emphasises the participation of other Roma in partisan units:

During my time among the Partisans, I met Goman Janko, a Gypsy from Novoselec, who had also managed to escape from Jasenovac. He told me that he had seen how the Gypsies in that camp were executed. According to his recounting, holes 20–30 meters long and 2.5 meters deep had been dug on the southern bank of the Sava; in these pits, Ustašas, dressed only in boots and pants, killed the Gypsies using axes and large hammers. In these pits, they also had whole decanters of rakija [fruit brandy], which they drank all the time during their bloody work. That Goman, who was killed in action as a Partisan in 1943, had already been taken to that pit, but began to run with a group of Gypsies and somehow managed to save himself (Croatian State Archives, HR-HDA-42, box 128)

Janko Nikolic's testimony shows two forms of Roma resistance to the Ustaša authorities. The first was fleeing from the Jasenovac camp, which he did successfully thanks to the preoccupation of Ustasha guards with other Roma attempting to flee the camp. The second was by his joining the partisans, on account of which he became actively involved in the anti-fascist resistance movement.

Milan Radosavljević

Roma Milan Radosavljević gave a witness statement on March 10, 1952, at the District Court in Vinkovci in the criminal case against Andrija Artuković. He was born in 1909 in Novi Jankovci (Vinkovci district), where he worked as a day worker and charcoal burner. He married Kaja (born 1922) and had three

children. In his statement, he described how he was deported by the Ustasha authorities in May 1942, along with 830 other Roma from Novi Jankovci, first to Vinkovci. The following day, Milan was taken to the Jasenovac camp along with other Roma, where, immediately upon arrival, the men were separated from the women and children. That evening, he and other male Roma, heard the cries of Roma women who had been tortured and raped by Ustasha camp guards. The next day, Milan worked in the camp, digging pits, where he witnessed Ustasha mass crimes against Roma detainees. On one occasion, he witnessed the failed attempts of the Roma to escape from the camp. After twelve days of pit digging, Milan and other Roma themselves decided to flee:

Since we were afraid that we would be executed like the other men from our camp, one night, when it was raining, and there was a thick overcast, we dug a tunnel under the wires and began to run. We were fired upon, and some of us were killed, but I don't know who, since I was among the first who had moved beyond the wire. I later met up with Gypsies Tošo and Milan Mitrović, who had escaped from the camp on the same night as I and managed to save themselves. I joined the Partisans soon after our escape and remained with them until the end of the war. (Croatian State Archives, HR-HDA-42, box 128)

In his statement, Milan did not describe in detail how he joined the partisans or the activities he engaged in once he joined. Milan's resistance to the Ustasha authorities was primarily his survival of the Jasenovac camp, during which he witnessed numerous Ustasha crimes against Roma detainees. Like Nikola, he managed to escape from the Jasenovac camp and join the partisans. All of Milan's actions can be primarily analysed in the context of his resistance to the genocidal policy of the Ustasha authorities towards the Roma.

Štefan Nikolić

Roma Štefan Nikolić, like Milan Radosavljević and Josip Joka Nikolić, gave a witness statement in the criminal case against Andrija Artuković. He gave a statement on March 10, 1952, at the District Court in Zagreb. Štefan was born on December 11, 1918, in Bistra, and from 1937 till the middle of May 1942, he lived with his family—his wife and three-year-old daughter—in Zagreb, where he worked in transportation. In mid-May 1942, he was deported to the Jasenovac concentration camp, together with his family and other Roma. He was transferred to the camp from Zagreb in livestock carriages. In the camp itself,

he met his relatives, who had previously been deported to the camp:

That same day or the next one, I met my kinsmen Nikolić Janko and Antun from Pušća Bistra, who had been in that camp for two weeks. They were so skinny and unshaven that I didn't even recognise them. They told me that they were supposed to have been killed in that camp, that they had already dug the pits into which they were supposed to have been thrown but were eventually spared and sent to join the group doing hard physical labour. Nikolić Janko told me that the Ustašas killed Gypsies on the other bank of the Sava and that he had buried some of the killed victims, finding among them his own wife and children. (Croatian State Archives, HR-HDA-42, box 128).

Like Milan Radosavljević, Nikolić worked in the camp digging pits and saw numerous corpses of killed detainees:

Every day we encountered the same scenes. In the pits we had dug the day before, we found killed Gypsies—men, women, and children—most of them dressed only in their underwear, while those wearing poor clothing had been killed while still wearing it. Most of them were killed using hammers, so their skulls were broken. During our time working there, usually in the afternoon, we saw groups of Gypsies brought from the camp on the northern bank of the Sava and placed into some abandoned houses on the southern bank of the river. They were probably liquidated at night after our departure since every morning we found whole piles of dead people in the pits we had previously dug. (Croatian State Archives, HR-HDA-42, box 128)

Fearing that he himself would be killed, he decided to flee the camp:

Since working in the camp was very stressful, and we received very little food, I soon began losing strength and saw that I wouldn't be able to work like this for much longer. Since it was known in the camp that those unable to work anymore would be killed, I and a group of Gypsies, who had been digging pits with me, decided to flee from the camp at the first opportunity. One night, on the 14th day of my stay in the camp, I managed to crawl under the barbed wire and escape. (Croatian State Archives, HR-HDA-42, box 128)

Nikolić managed to escape from the Jasenovac camp to Slovenia, where he was arrested by German authorities in July 1942 and sent to the Austrian concentration camps in Garmisch and Salzburg. He was then transferred to the Dachau concentration camp, where he was released (Croatian State Archives, HR-HDA-42, box 128).

In this case, too, the extraordinary courage and sacrifice of Roma Štefan

Nikolić, who managed to survive and escape from the Jasenovac camp is clear. Sadly, later, on the run, he was arrested by German authorities and deported to German camps.

Janko and Tihomir Nikolić – resistance

Janko Nikolić was born in 1884 in the village of Budrovci (Đakovo area) and lived with his wife, mother and 11 other Roma family members. Tihomir Nikolić, his son, was born on March 2, 1918, in the village of Budrovci, where he married and had two children. The Ustasha authorities tried to deport them in mid-1942— Nikolić junior states this happened in late spring, while his father stated that this happened in August 1942. Nikolić senior testified on August 18, 1951, in the District Court of Vinkovci: “One day at the end of August 1942, early in the morning, while we were still sleeping, the Ustasha came and surrounded our house, but only my son Tihomir and I escaped and hid away in the village of Budimci, and later we crossed over to Bačka” (Croatian State Archives, HR-HDA-42, box 128).

In the fall of 1941, the Ustasha authorities arrested them and returned them to the village of Budrovci, but they were not deported to the Jasenovac camp until January 1943. Nikolić junior worked in the Jasenovac camp as part of Working Group D, which buried the detainees. In his testimony, Nikolić senior described his detention in the Jasenovac camp, from which he managed to escape, after which he joined the partisans: “As a Jasenovac camp internee, I occasionally went to the forest for forced labour, and one day, while there, I managed to escape. Wandering through the forest, I came across partisans, applied for a fighter, and thus stayed in the People’s Liberation Struggle until the liberation in April 1945” (Croatian State Archives, HR-HDA-42, box 128).

Nikolić junior remained in the Jasenovac camp until the end of the war. During the liberation of the Jasenovac camp in April 1945, chained, he hid in a barrel filled with lime, which was used to cover the corpses in the tombs. During the night he successfully escaped from the camp and fled into the woods. He moved exclusively at night and fed on reeds. He managed to return to Budrovci, where his father did not recognise him at first because he was covered in wounds and scabs. Only when his shackles removed did he recognise him, though he was left with wounds for the rest of his life. After the war, he lived in Vinkovci, where he remarried and worked as a horse trader. He died on January 20, 1988 (Croatian State Archives, HR-HDA-42, box 128).

Janko and Tihomir Nikolić's stories of survival are probably the most complex in the context of resistance. Their first form of resistance refers to their joint escape before arrest and deportation to the Jasenovac camp. The second form of resistance refers to their escape from the Jasenovac camp. Nikolić senior violently injured an Ustasha guard during his forced labour excursion to the forest. He then joined the partisans, which was also a form of resistance. Nikolić junior remained in the camp and in the last days took part in a mass escape of camp inmates.

Conclusions

The history of the Roma in Croatia is still an insufficiently researched area of inquiry—particularly in relation to their suffering during World War II. In that context, numerous questions remain unanswered, such as the exact number of Roma victims, the attitude of the Nazi, fascist and Ustasha authorities towards them, and so on. One of these unanswered issues is to what extent and in what ways the Roma resisted the genocidal policy of the Ustasha authorities in Croatia. This paper aimed to investigate the issue of Roma participation in resistance to the Ustasha authorities and its allies in Croatia. The research showed that there are stories which demonstrate how Roma resisted the Ustasha genocidal policy, which were based on racial laws and primarily carried out in the Jasenovac concentration camp. The forms of resistance developed by the Roma were versatile. Some Roma escaped deportation to concentration camps, not trusting the Ustasha authorities, who claimed they would be taken to another area — such as Kosovo or Bosnia — where they would continue to live. Cases have been researched in which Roma detainees in camps have successfully survived suffering torture and humiliation, and this must certainly be seen as part of their resistance. Some Roma managed to escape from the camp or at least tried to do so at the cost of their lives- this is yet more evidence to support the proposition that Roma did not accept their fate as Ustasha victims, but actively resisted their racial policy. The issue of Roma participation in the anti-fascist (partisan) movement led by Josip Broz Tito in Croatian territories is still insufficiently researched, but this investigation showed numerous cases in which Roma joined the partisan resistance movement. In fact, a special Roma partisan unit was created in the vicinity of Daruvar, which was the only such unit documented in Croatian territories

during the Second World War. Some Roma stood out for their courage and sacrifice within partisan units. The Roma also resisted by helping and hiding the partisans, endangering their own lives. All these examples show that the Roma in Croatian territories resisted the Ustasha genocidal policy, making them a significant part of the overall Roma resistance in Europe during the war.

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Chapter 6

Roma Resistance in Occupied Poland

By Justyna Matkowska

Introduction

From the 1980s, the Roma and Sinti¹ Genocide² has been increasingly recognised and commemorated in international Roma circles and has become a topic of public and scientific debate. The growing presence of Roma and Sinti discourse is the result of efforts of Roma activists and scholars to increase awareness of their struggles and experience of genocide during the Nazi period. Unfortunately, it still remains on the margins of the dominant Holocaust narrative, commonly unacknowledged by the broader public, and widely ignored in the education system. Research into the persecution and genocide of Roma and Sinti is challenging because it concerns stories of people and families which remained unmentioned until long after the war, even within the communities themselves. Therefore, the extermination of Roma and Sinti is called “The Forgotten Genocide”.

Compared to other European countries, the Polish case of Roma resistance has a unique character. There is relatively high public awareness of Roma resistance during the Second World War in Poland on account of the phenomenon of Romani women saving Jewish and Roma children, and the crucial Roma uprising in the Zigeunerlager in Auschwitz-Birkenau camp resistance

1 In this paper, I use terms Roma and Sinti referring to the community being the topic of my research. The pejorative terms Gypsy and Gypsies are used in the text only in quotes of the historical documents and statements.

2 In this paper in referring to the Roma and Sinti experience during Second World War I use the terms Genocide, persecution, and extermination.

event on May 16, 1944.

This paper summarises and discusses the key findings of my research on Roma resistance in occupied Poland conducted between February and June 2020. The main goal of the study is to present the activities and stories of Roma resistance, which took place in occupied Poland during the Second World War. This study aims to provide a regional perspective on Roma heroism and to contextualise the historical research of Roma and Sinti Genocide. The research is particularly important because of its intent to raise awareness of Roma resistance, as well as promote a deeper understanding of the Roma and Sinti Genocide during the Second World War and associated discourse.

The first part of this paper discusses the historical context of Roma in Poland and their experiences under occupation. The next section describes Roma resistance events such as the individual escape attempts from ghettos and camps, Roma and Sinti uprising in Auschwitz-Birkenau, as well as uprisings in the Warsaw ghetto, and the Roma revolt in Karczew. The following part presents outstanding stories of Roma heroes in the Polish Armed Forces and in the Polish resistance movement. The last part of this paper shows a notable case of Romani women's participation in the resistance.

State of Research

The existing Polish literature on the topic of the Roma and Sinti fate during the Second World War primarily focus on general issues of the genocide. The valuable and important monographs published in Poland are *Voices of Memory* vol 7. *Sinti and Roma in KL Auschwitz*, published in 2011 in Oświęcim by the International Centre for Education about Auschwitz and the Holocaust, *Naród z popiołów. Pamięć zagłady a tożsamość Romów* (A nation of ashes. Memory of extermination and the identity of the Roma) by Sławomir Kapral-ski (Warsaw 2012), and *Prześladowania i masowa Zagłada Romów podczas II wojny światowej w świetle relacji i wspomnień* (Persecution and mass extermination of the Roma during World War II in the accounts and memories), edited by Jerzy Dębski, and Joanna Talewicz-Kwiatkowska (Warsaw 2007). Another important publication is *Beyond the Roma Holocaust. From Resistance to Mobilisation* (Cracow 2017) under the editorship of Thomas. M. Buchsbaum and Sławomir Kapral-ski.

The Roma and Sinti Genocide is a topic of many publications written by the

expert, Adam Bartosz: *Małopolski Szlak Martyrologii Romów*, (Malopolska trail of the Roma Martyrology; Tarnów 2015), *Tabor Pamięci Romów* (Roma caravan's memorial; Tarnów 2003), and chapter in *Nie bój się Cygana. Na dara Romestar*, (Do not be afraid of Roma; Sejny 2004). The Roma and Sinti persecution in Auschwitz-Birkenau is discussed in the valuable monograph *Cyganie na polskich drogach*, (The Gypsies on Polish roads) written by Jerzy Ficowski (Warsaw 2013). Ficowski also collected local histories about Nazi executions of Roma and Sinti families, resistance stories, and Auschwitz songs. Besides monographs, so far, several authors published chapters and articles about the Roma and Sinti Genocide. However, none of them bridged the gap in research on Roma resistance in occupied Poland. That is the reason why this study is scientifically important.

Roma and Sinti resistance is part of the permanent exhibition in Block 13 of Auschwitz-Birkenau Memorial and Museum, which opened on August 2, 2001. The project was undertaken and conducted by the Documentation and Cultural Centre of German Sinti and Roma in Heidelberg in cooperation with the Auschwitz Memorial, the Association of Roma in Poland, the Cultural Association of Austrian Roma, the Museum for Roma Culture in Brno, and organisations from the Netherlands, Hungary, Serbia, and Ukraine. The exhibition plays a significant role in sharing the Roma and Sinti experience in the Auschwitz-Birkenau camp and genocide during the Second World War.

Research Methodology and Sources

Roma resistance in occupied Poland has been described in some sources³, but – as mentioned above – it is limited mostly to the subject of Roma Upris-

3 See Joanna Talewicz-Kwiatkowska. 2018. "Research report. Resistance and Survival of the Roma and Sinti in Auschwitz-Birkenau" In. *Roma Resistance during the Holocaust and in its Aftermath*. Collection of Working Papers, edited by Evelin Verhás, Managing Editor Angéla Kóczé and Anna Lujza Szász. Budapest: Tom Lantos Institute; Ficowski, Jerzy. 2013. *Cyganie na polskich drogach* [The Gypsies on Polish roads]. Warszawa: Nisza Press; Helena Kubica, Piotr Setkiewicz. 2018. "The last stage of the functioning of the Zigeunerlager in the Birkenau camp (May-August 1944)". *Memoria*. No. 10 (July) 2018: 6-15; Jerzy Dębski. 2001. "Ucieczki Romów z KL Auschwitz" [Roma Escape from Auschwitz]. *Dialog-Pheniben*. No 1: 4-20.

ing in Auschwitz-Birkenau and the story of Alfreda Noncia Markowska⁴. To uncover more stories and dig deeper into existing materials, my research was based on the data-collection method. The study mainly consists of archival materials, documents, and journalistic articles. The research was also based on seeking new knowledge and evidence through new archival and testimonial evidence and oral histories. As a part of the research, I conducted interviews with Roma survivors and their family members, including Monika Sternal, Helena Siwak, Jan Chojnacki, and Roman Chojnacki. My research also included testimonies of Roma collected by Romani Historical Institute in Oświęcim. I used qualitative methods to analyse the findings.

The collected data consist of testimonies of Roma heroes, archival statements, military service books and documents of the Romani Historical Institute in Oświęcim and the Institute of Romani Heritage, Memory and Holocaust's Victims based in Szczecinek. My research also included Roma resistance stories collected and quoted by Jerzy Ficowski in the monography *Cyganie na polskich drogach* (The Gypsies on Polish roads) and the report on the Romani resistance event written by Auschwitz-Birkenau prisoner – Tadeusz Joachimowski, quoted in *The National Socialist Genocide of the Sinti and Roma*. Catalogue of the permanent exhibition in the State Museum of Auschwitz, edited by Romani Rose.

The collected data reveals new knowledge: new archival and testimonial evidence of Roma resistance in occupied Poland. On the one hand, valuable testimonies and military documents confirm outstanding Roma resistance heroism. On the other hand, analysed materials represent a novel, deeper perspective of the Roma fate during the Second World War.

Definition of Resistance

Firstly, it is essential to clarify the definition of resistance I adopt for this research. Resistance studies are an emerging and developing field of social science within which “exists a plurality of concepts and definitions of actions

4 See Gierliński, Karol Parno. 2006. “Piękne życie Alfredy Markowskiej” [Beautiful life of Alfreda Markowska], *Romano Atmo*, No. 5: 10-11; Jakimik, Elżbieta Alina, and Gierliński, Karol Parno. 2009. *Kobieta w środowisku romskim* [Woman in Romani community]. Szczecinek: Polish Roma Union Press.

that are seemingly equal or related in one way or another to resistance” (Baaz, Lilja, Schulz Vinthagen, 2016, 137). Resistance can be defined in various ways, depending on different contexts, relations, and targets. I based my analysis on Bob Moore’s definition, which describes resistance as “any activity designed to thwart German plans or perceived by the occupiers as working against their interests” (Moore 2000, 2).

Researching Roma resistance against Nazism and Fascism in occupied Poland is challenging because of its many facets. Polish Roma not only survived persecution but actively participated in the Polish Resistance Movement, as well as the Polish Armed Forces⁵. While Polish resistance was defined as a response to occupiers, the goal of Roma resistance was not only to resist anti-Roma persecution, but to survive.

Historical Context

Before the Second World War, approximately fifty thousand Roma lived in Poland. An estimated thirty-five thousand of them were murdered during the Second World War (Bartosz 2004, 65). The Second World War began on September 1, 1939, with the Nazi German invasion of Poland. Soon after that, on September 17, the Soviet Union invaded Poland from the East. The Polish Army was defeated after a month but never officially capitulated. Government-in-exile, the military and intelligence services were organised abroad.

Soon after the outbreak of the war, the Nazis started deporting thousands of Polish Roma and German Sinti to the “General Government”⁶ established in the territory of occupied Poland. They were taken to and murdered in the ghettos of Warsaw, Łódź, Siedlce, Lublin, Kraków, Tarnów, Lwów and to the Nazi extermination camps of Auschwitz-Birkenau, Treblinka, Chełmno and Nerem, Majdanek, Sobibor, Belzec.

Roma were also murdered in pogroms and executed – often together with Jews – by SS, police, Gestapo, gendarmerie, and Ukrainian fascists (in Nazi

5 Polish Armed Forces in Exile also known as Polish Exile Army (pol. Polskie Siły Zbrojne) - organised by the Polish government in-exile in September 1939, after the occupation of Poland to fight against Nazi Germany and its alliance during WWII.

6 The General Government (Ger. Generalgouvernement, Pol. Generalne Gubernatorstwo) – German zone established in the territory of occupied Poland.

service or Ukrainian Insurgent Army bands). Significant numbers of Roma who lived in occupied Poland were executed en masse (Ficowski 2013, 150). Especially harsh was the fate of Roma on Eastern Borderlands, as local police often helped German Nazis in committing vicious and horrendous crimes against Roma (Bartosz 2015, 7).

Roma Resistance in Occupied Poland

The Roma resistance in occupied Poland assumed a variety of forms and types. The following sections will discuss the notable resistance efforts of Roma and Sinti in occupied Poland such as escape attempts from the ghettos and camps, Roma and Sinti uprising on May 16, 1944, in Auschwitz-Birkenau, the Roma revolt in Karczew and the uprising in the Warsaw Ghetto. It should be emphasised that even though some of these resistance acts had a violent character, this analysis focuses only on Roma intentions and objectives of resistance.

Escape attempts from camps and ghettos

In discussing the topic of Roma resistance, one cannot ignore individual acts of resistance. Escape attempts of Roma and Sinti prisoners from camps and ghettos during the war can be defined as a particularly unusual revolt reaction against Nazi persecution. Undoubtedly, escape attempts were motivated by extremely hard living conditions inside the ghettos and camps. Prisoners made risky decisions to escape spaces of oppression to survive. In this paper, I mention only several cases of Roma who successfully escaped from the camps, ghettos, pogroms, massacres or transports to places of extermination.

The information about Roma - who escaped from the ghettos, camps and mass execution places - appears in archival documents and testimonies. The section about the escape attempts is also part of the Roma and Sinti exhibition in Auschwitz-Birkenau State Museum mentioned previously. The exhibition also includes information about Polish Roma, Aleksy Kozłowski, who escaped from the concentration camp in Lublin, and Mieczysław Pawłowski, who escaped from the slave labour in Germany to England.

In the archives of Auschwitz-Birkenau camp, there is evidence of 38 Roma and Sinti who managed to escape; 31 of them did not survive: 30 were re-cap-

tured and put in the “bunker” in Block No. 11 in the main camp and then executed at the “death wall”; one man was shot during an attempted escape. There is no information about the other seven. However, it should be emphasised that most of the attempts to escape ended tragically: “Captured prisoners were often executed at the Death Wall, and their bodies, ridden with bullet wounds and dog bites, were paraded through the camp in order to deter other prisoners” (Talewicz-Kwiatkowska 2018, 115).

Roma and Sinti Uprising on May 16, 1944, in Auschwitz-Birkenau

Undeniably, one of the most critical Romani resistance events from the period during the Second World War is the Roma Uprising in Auschwitz-Birkenau Nazi concentration camp. On May 16, 1944, the SS wanted to start the liquidation of the “Gypsy Camp”, sending the Sinti and Roma still living there to be murdered in the gas chambers. The political prisoner, Tadeusz Joachimowski warned the prisoners about the planned action. Roma and Sinti prepared to fight by arming themselves with stones and tools. They barricaded themselves in the barracks and were ready to ward off the threat of extermination (Rose 2003, 287). The report on the Romani resistance action, written by KL Auschwitz-Birkenau prisoner Tadeusz Joachimowski states:

The last camp leader (Lagerführer) and also Rapportführer of the gypsy camp was Bonigut. [...] On May 15th, 1944, he came up to me and said it looked bad for the gypsy camp. There was an order out for the destruction of the gypsy camp. He had received a corresponding order from the political section by Dr. Mengele. The gypsy camp should be liquidated by gassing all the Gypsies remaining in the camp. There were about 6,500 Gypsies in the camp at that time. Bonigut instructed me to tell those Gypsies, in whom I had full confidence, about this [...] The next day at about 7:00 p.m., I heard a gong, which indicated the onset of the camp curfew. Vehicles drove up in front of the gypsy camp, and an escort of around 50 to 60 SS-men equipped with machine guns got out. The SS men surrounded the barracks inhabited by the gypsies. A few SS-men went into the housing barracks and shouted: “let’s go, let’s go.” There was complete silence in the barracks. The gypsies gathered there were armed with knives, spades, crowbars, and stones and were awaiting further events. They didn’t leave the barracks. The SS men didn’t know what to do [...] After a while, I heard a whistle. The SS men who had been surrounding the barracks climbed up onto their vehicles again and drove off. The camp was no longer sealed off.” (Rose 2003, 288-289)

During the spring and summer of 1944, the Nazis deported an estimated 3,000 Roma and Sinti to other Third Reich concentration camps. The approx-

imately 3,000 Roma left in KL Auschwitz-Birkenau – mainly children and older adults – were murdered in the gas chambers on the night of August 2-3, 1944 (Rose 2003, 290). In remembrance of the victims of Roma and Sinti persecution and genocide, the European Parliament in 2015 declared August 2 Roma Genocide Remembrance Day (to be commemorated annually). Besides August 2, May 16 has become a significant date in the commemoration of Roma and Sinti Genocide.

In addition to Joachimowski's testimony, there are three testimonies and statements of German Sinti survivors - Walter Winter, Otto Rosenberg and Hermann "Mano" Höllenreiner – who described the revolt in Zigeunerlager. Joanna Talewicz-Kwiatkowska states that despite the controversy of the Roma resistance event and lack of official documents and testimonies confirming the uprising at Auschwitz-Birkenau State Museum, three new pieces of evidence "might provide partial support for the information included in his [Joachimowski] testimony" (Talewicz-Kwiatkowska 2018, 123). Despite this, the event of May 16, 1944, is increasingly promoted and commemorated by Roma and Sinti communities, activists, scholars, and governmental and non-governmental organisations.

Roma revolt in Karczew

In addition to the Auschwitz-Birkenau uprising, another significant revolt took place in Karczew, where Roma fought against the gendarmerie. Jerzy Ficowski, in the monograph *Cyganie na polskich drogach* (The Gypsies on Polish roads), cited two interesting testimonies about the battle in Karczew. The first came from a Roma man (unknown name) who survived the event. His family was subsequently caught by the Nazis in Miłosna and taken to the ghetto in Jadowo. From there, they managed to escape and hid in Karczew. The Roma man was quoted with the following words:

But there [in Karczew], there was no peace either. Soon after, the Germans began murdering the Gypsies. There were two houses of Gypsies. They are already killing Gypsies in one house and another. They throw small children onto the pavement from high windows, full of blood. I jumped out of the window, and when I fell, I shattered my knee. I hobbled to a restaurant where two brothers were drinking vodka, and they did not know anything about what Germans were doing with our Gypsies. I told them, and we ran away. One brother had a revolver, and when the Gestapo started chasing us, he killed two. (Ficowski 2013, 154)

The second testimony about Roma resistance in Karczew quoted by Ficowski⁷ says:

“An armed robbery took place in the town of Karczew. German investigators, based on testimonies of witnesses, stated that the Gypsies carried out the robbery; it was also quoted that the traces in the snow lead to the Jewish camp. Gendarmerie arrived to murder the Gypsies. Between the Gendarmerie and the Gypsies ensued a fight. Fifty Karczew Gypsies noticed the gendarmes and, knowing the situation, opened the fire. As it turned out, the Gypsies were equipped with handguns and fought to the last bullet. However, the colony did not survive.” (quoted in Ficowski 2013, 154-155)

The quoted testimonies were the only ones found in research that mention the resistance of Karczew Roma. There are no other statements which could provide more information about this event. The two statements present different perspectives on the Roma revolt in Karczew. The first is the perspective of a Roma man and witness, who, together with his family was a target of oppression, who found himself in the middle of the combat. The second is the perspective of a non-Roma witness.

Although historians are careful in reconstructing past events, it should be noted these two testimonies provide evidence of Roma participation in the combat against the oppressor. Despite discrepancies, both narratives seem to describe the same Roma revolt. According to both accounts, resistance was the reaction to the attack on Roma. Resistance in Karczew shows the Roma's attitude against the Nazis. Roma did not choose nonviolent and passive resistance. They fought to survive.

Roma Revolts in the Warsaw Ghetto

The Warsaw Ghetto (also known as Warschauer Ghetto, and *getto warszawskie*), established in October 1940 and demolished in the aftermath of the revolt, was the largest Nazi ghetto during the Second World War (an estimated 450,000 Jews were imprisoned inside⁸). The Warsaw Ghetto Up-

7 Jerzy Ficowski quoted the story from the historical monograph in Yiddish language published in Germany (B. Arensztajn, *Zagłada Otwocka, Falenicy i Karczewa, Bamberg*). Ficowski was a translator of Russian, Romani, Hungarian and Yiddish languages.

8 See August Grabski “Warsaw Ghetto 1940-1943”, Warsaw Ghetto Museum official website, accessed October 3, 2020, <https://1943.pl/historiagw>.

rising began on April 19, 1943 as the prisoners organised an armed revolt to prevent deportation to the camps. By May 16, 1943, the Nazis had crushed the uprising, and sent the remaining ghetto residents to the extermination camps in Treblinka and Majdanek. The Warsaw Ghetto Uprising was the largest Jewish revolt during the Second World War history.

Besides the Roma revolt in Karczew, Ficowski cited another Roma resistance story from the Warsaw Ghetto Diary of Adam Czerniakow. Roma prisoners from Warsaw ghetto were transported to Treblinka camp and murdered in the gas chambers (often together with Jews). Ficowski is quoting a fragment from a manuscript about Roma in Warsaw ghetto written by doctor Edward Reichter:

I stayed in the Jewish ghetto in Warsaw from its establishment until January 25th, 1943. At the end of 1941 or early 1942, the Germans placed a large group of Gypsies in the Jewish prison on Gęsia Street. These Gypsies were under the supervision of the Jewish correctional officer consisting of officers of the Jewish service (Jüdischer Ordnungsdienst). One day, the Gypsies revolted, overpowered the prison service, and got free. (Ficowski 2013, 165)

He goes on:

In early October 1942, the Germans began to bring Roma from the Aryan side. In November 1942, the Gypsies in several dozen tied a keyman, ripped out the keys, and got out of prison, trying to get to the Aryan side. The Germans noticed them near the walls and started shooting, killing many of them. The rest were sent back to prison and sent to Treblinka in January 1943. (Ficowski 2013, 166).

The above-mentioned stories about the revolt in Warsaw Ghetto shed new light on Roma resistance. Despite the lack of official documents confirming these events, and issues related to the scarcity of sources, these two outstanding cases of resistance allow us to gain some understanding of Roma attitudes and reactions to Nazi persecution. According to doctor Reichter's writings, Roma took extraordinary attempts to escape from the Warsaw ghetto. Both fragments of Warsaw Ghetto Diary seem to describe a well-planned and organised resistance action by Roma.

Roma in the Polish Armed Forces (Polskie Siły Zbrojne)

The Polish Armed Forces in exile (pol. Polskie Siły Zbrojne) was created to fight against Nazi-Germany and its allies during the Second World War. The Polish Armed Forces created in the West fought alongside the Western Allies. The Polish Armed Forces in the East (called Polish Army in the USSR), created in 1941 as the consequence of Polish-Soviet Sikorski-Mayski agreement fought against the Nazi Germany alongside the Soviet Union. Both were loyal to Polish Government-in-exile.

Following the war, the goal of the Polish government was to dismantle anti-communist and political structures of the Polish Underground State with its organisations. As a result, former underground soldiers and partisans were persecuted for their participation in the war by the officers of the Department of Security *Urząd Bezpieczeństwa* (UB) (1945-1954) and later the Security Service (SB) *Służba bezpieczeństwa* (1956-1990). Between 1945 and 1990, officers of UB and SB arrested, tortured, and murdered many former soldiers of the Polish Armed Forces.

Vast Polish literature devoted to the Second World War ignored the participation of Roma soldiers and partisans in military service in occupied Poland. In fact, they took up arms and participated in battles, often shed blood, and lost their lives. Roma and Sinti were in active military service during the outbreak of the Second World War and on the entry of German troops into Poland in September 1939. Roma in the army were integrated with Polish society. They were treated as ordinary recruits in the army, so in the military records, they are not listed as members of the Roma minority.

Roma soldiers who survived the Second World War hid their wartime experiences from family members due to war trauma and fear of repressions from the communist government. Survivors often did not want to share their stories for fear of their own safety due to the post-war persecution of former Polish soldiers and partisans, who suffered mass arrests, torture and deportation to Soviet labour camps at the hands of Communists. Even after 1989, following the end of the communist era in Poland and the return of democracy, former Roma soldiers and partisans were still afraid to discuss their past. Furthermore, at the time, many Roma survivors were already dead, old, sick, or still distrustful of the government. A whole generation of Roma who fought against the Nazis in the Polish resistance movement have passed away, forgot-

ten. However, there are testimonies and pieces of evidence of Roma participation in combats during the Second World War.

The Roma soldiers of the Polish Armed Forces during the Second World War displayed both heroism and Polish patriotism. One among them was Stanisław Nazarewicz (September 3, 1916, Potelicz, Poland – unknown) who, at the outbreak of war found himself in Lviv (Polish Lwów, present-day Ukraine). Serving in the Fortieth Children of Lviv Infantry Regiment, he participated in the defence of the “Warsaw-West” section and then the protection of the bridges on the Wisła river during the invasion of Poland until the fall of Warsaw.

Afterwards, captured by Germans, Nazarewicz became a prisoner of war. Eventually released, he returned to Lviv, where he became a subject of the mass arrests carried out by the Soviets and was deported to the Krasnojarski region. There he struggled to survive, facing extreme conditions including frost, hunger and malnutrition, diseases (on account of poor hygiene), and gruelling work. However, he managed to survive these extremely harsh conditions, and eventually returned to his homeland.

Thereafter, Nazarewicz joined the Polish Armed Forces under the command of General Władysław Anders, serving first in Turkmenistan near Samarkand, and then in Iran. Later, Nazarewicz took part in the famous Battle of Monte Cassino, where he was injured. He fought in the ranks of the Fourth Carpathian Rifle Battalion, part of the Second Carpathian Rifle Brigade. During the Italian Campaign, he also took part in the Battle of Ancona, and participated in the offensive to break the fortifications of the Goth Line at Cattolica. During the three-day battle, Nazarewicz was wounded once again. After the war, in 1947, he finally returned to Poland.

Nzarewicz received many decorations for his bravery and heroism including the Monte Cassino Commemorative Cross, Cross of Valor for acts of bravery during the Second World War, commemorative badge of the Second Polish Corps of the Polish Armed Forces, and the medal For participating in the 1939 Defensive War - a tribute to persons who actively took part in the war in September 1939 against the Nazis. Nazarewicz also received the Africa Star (British Commonwealth award for participation in hostilities in North Africa) and Italian Star (British military award established by King George VI for participants of the hostilities in Italy between June 11, 1943, and May 8, 1945). (Kwiatkowski 2018, 60-62)

Nzarewicz’s story is particularly important because it represents the phe-

nomena of a decorated soldier who is simultaneously a Polish and Roma war hero, as well as Roma resistance hero. His testimony, military book service and received distinguished service medals and decorations present strong evidence of his active participation in battles, and extraordinary bravery in defending his motherland. Nazarewicz is an outstanding example of Roma heroism, who was awarded for his military service.

The Romani Historical Institute in Oświęcim (Poland) has archived documents pertaining to other Roma who served in the Polish Armed Forces, such as Navi Karol Iglencic⁹, as well as Wawrzyniec Racki and a man named Hyło, who fought in the Battle of Monte Cassino and was seriously injured. The Auschwitz exhibition also presents instances of Roma military personnel such as Mieczysław Paczkowski – a Roma taken to a German forced labour camp, who escaped to England where he joined the Polish Armed Forces. Altogether, the findings strongly suggest that Roma exhibited Polish patriotism and a willingness to fight and to prove themselves as courageous and brave soldiers. Roma demonstrated devotion and a sense of attachment to their Polish homeland. They became symbols of Polish and Roma pride.

Roma in the Polish Resistance Movement

The Polish Resistance Movement was part of the Polish Underground State. Polish resistance covered German and Soviet zones of occupation. The dominant partisan organisation in occupied Poland was Armia Krajowa¹⁰ (Home Army), loyal to the Polish government-in-exile (estimated 400,000 members). There were also other large partisan organisations, such as Armia Ludowa¹¹, Bataliony Chłopskie¹², Narodowe Siły Zbrojne¹³, Obóz Polski

9 See the statement of Władysława Jaglencicz, Karol Iglencic's daughter: <http://www.stowarzyszenie.romowie.net/Wladyslawa-Jaglencicz-184.html>

10 Armia Krajowa (The Home Army) – the dominant Polish resistance movement in occupied Poland during Second World War formed in February 1942. The organisation was loyal to the Polish government in exile in London.

11 Armia Ludowa (People's Army) – communist partisan force set up on January 1, 1944 by the Communist Workers Party by order of the Polish State National Council. They supported the Soviet Army and fought against Nazi German forces.

12 Bataliony Chłopskie (Polish Farmers' Battalions) – Polish resistance movement, guerrilla and partisan organisation created in 1940s by the agrarian political People's Party. In 1944 it was partially integrated with the Home Army.

13 Narodowe Siły Zbrojne (National Armed Forces) – Polish right-wing underground or-

Walczącej¹⁴, Narodowa Organizacja Wojskowa¹⁵, Gwardia Ludowa WRN¹⁶, Konfederacja Narodu,¹⁷ etc. The Polish resistance movement in the Second World War period was the largest underground resistance in all of Nazi-occupied Europe, and one of the largest in the world. Post-war communist government in Poland declared the anti-Nazi resistance movement as “illegal”. Between 1945 and 1990, thousands of members of the Polish resistance movement were persecuted, prisoned in the Gulag, and murdered by UB and SB officers of the Polish communist government.

The research on Roma participation in the Polish resistance movement¹⁸ is highly problematic. Members of resistance movement groups used nicknames instead of real names, making it challenging to identify Roma partisans among the fighters. Another issue is that the graves of soldiers and partisans – including Roma – are located in mass or individual graves, most often with the inscriptions “NN”, meaning unknown. The records and documents of the members of military and partisans’ units were classified. Currently, unclassified Polish resistance movement’s documents are archived in the Institute of National Remembrance (Instytut Pamięci Narodowej).

The variety of valuable information about Roma in the Polish resistance movement during the Second World War is provided in the research conducted by Jacek Edward Wilczur – a Polish historian, lawyer, political scientist, and a former soldier of the Polish resistance movement. He worked as a member of the Chief Commission of the Prosecution of Crimes against the Polish

ganisation of the National Democracy movement set up in 1942. They mostly fought against Nazi Germany and communist partisans’ groups, but also with the Home Army.

14 Obóz Polski Walczącej (Camp of Fighting Poland or Fighting Poland Movement) – minor part of Polish resistance movement operated in 1942-1944. Group was created by former members of political party Obóz Zjednoczenia Narodowego (Camp of National Unity).

15 Narodowa Organizacja Wojskowa (National Military Organisation) – Polish resistance movement organisation created in October 1939, politically related with the Stronnictwo Ludowe National Party.

16 Gwardia Ludowa WRN (People’s Guard of WRN) – Polish resistance movement organisation created in 1939.

17 Konfederacja Narodu (Confederation of the Nation) – Polish resistance movement organisation created in 1940 by the far-right political party named Konfederacja Narodu.

18 The notes of the Roma in the Polish Resistance Movement also appear in the Auschwitz exhibition. The display includes the information about Reinhold Buriański who fought in the ranks of the Polish resistance movement and Józef Kwiatkowski who was arrested and taken to Auschwitz while helping the Polish Resistance Movement.

nation. He was also founder and director of the Institute of Romani Heritage, Memory, and Holocaust's Victims based in Szczecinek. His study *Roma in the Polish resistance movement during the Second World War and the German occupation of Poland*, published in 2007 in the series *Roma yesterday and today*, bridges the gap in knowledge about Roma resistance.

Wilczur stated that during the Second World War in occupied Poland, Roma took part in the Polish resistance movement and several partisan units. He described stories and examples of Roma resistance heroes in several Polish resistance units including: the partisan group under the command of Sergeant "Kmicic", the partisan unit of Major "Jarema", and the group commanded by Józef Madej (nicknamed Jerzy). According to Wilczur, Polish Roma fought in Polish resistance units in the area of Nowogrodzic, Kielce, Lublin, Białystok, Wilno, Cieszyn, and Podhale. They gained a reputation for being great, brave, courageous, loyal and disciplined soldiers. Most Roma in the Polish resistance movement described by Wilczur had escaped from ghettos, camps, sites of pogroms, massacres, or in transit to sites of extermination.

Roma members of Polish resistance movement, however, were not only survivors of the Nazis extermination attempts. Within Roma communities in Poland, memories of individual Roma partisans¹⁹ are preserved. In his autobiography, Edward Dębicki, a Romani musician, composer, and poet, speaks of his cousin, Niemo, who served in The Home Army: "Niemo during the war served in AK [Polish: Armia Krajowa]. He did not hide it because he thought, as we all, that fighting for Poland was a huge honour" (Dębicki 2004, 208). After the war, Niemo was sent to prison and murdered by communists for his participation in the Polish resistance movement. It can be assumed that the case of Niemo was not an isolated instance and that there were other Roma partisans like him. Thanks to Roma post-war memory, some oral histories have survived and are still recollected among Romani families.

Available sources documenting Roma participation in the Polish resistance movement exist mainly in the form of oral histories. Stories document aspects of underground resistance activities, which allow us to deepen our understanding of Roma attitudes and reactions to persecution. Roma did not accept their fate and had the will to fight. In the case of Roma who escaped

19 My family also keeps the memory of my uncle Piotr Ondycz – the brother of my grandfather who was a Roma partisan in Polish resistance movement and got wounded in the fight with Ukrainian Nationalists.

from the places of oppression and extermination and joined the Polish resistance movement, they demonstrate instances of double resistance. On the one hand, there are acts of resistance against persecution to survive, on the other, active resistance against Nazi-occupiers of Poland. Instead of hiding, they chose to fight.

Romani Women Resistance

Besides Roma men, brave Romani women also took part in resistance efforts during the Second World War and were involved in the Polish resistance movement. Romani women were often considered as valuable to Polish resistance movements, particularly as lookouts, emissaries, messengers and couriers. Partisans' sent Romani fortune-tellers to spy in enemy-controlled areas and supply valuable information about the number of soldiers, and the equipment and weaponry in their possession. Romani women also risked their lives to save Jewish and Roma children being transported to extermination camps and pogroms. These are examples of outstanding and unique Romani heroism²⁰.

Karol Parno Gierliński and Elżbieta Jakimik, in their book *Kobieta w środowisku romskim* (The woman in the Roma community), mention several Polish Romani women who saved children during the Second World War. Among them, Noncia, Mamcia, Koto and Zolka (Gierliński, Jakimik 2009, 18). These are only Romani “nicknames”, which makes it difficult to identify the women. In my research, I only found information pertaining to two of the women – Noncia and Mamcia.

Alfreda Markowska (in Romani “Noncia”; born in 1926)²¹, is a Romani woman hailing from the ethnic sub-group, Polska Roma, who gained widespread respect across Poland. She is often referred to as “Romani Irena Sendlerowa.”²² In 1941, in the forest near Biała Podlaska, the Nazis murdered her

20 See Jerzy Ficowski, *Cyganie polscy – szkice historyczno-obyczajowe*, Państwowy Instytut Wydawniczy, Warszawa 1953; Jerzy Ficowski, 2013. *Cyganie na polskich drogach* [The Gypsies on Polish roads]. Warszawa: Nisza Press.

21 See https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Alfreda_Markowska; <https://www.romarchive.eu/en/collection/p/alfreda-markowska/>; https://encyklopedia.wimbp.gorzow.pl/m/markowska_alfreda/markowska_alfreda.html

22 Irena Sendlerowa (1910-2008) was a Polish humanitarian, social worker and nurse. During the Second World War she was smuggling Jewish children out of the Warsaw Ghetto. She

family, including her parents, siblings, and other relatives (in total between 65 to 85 Roma). Markowska was the only one to survive. She spent days searching the forests for her family's mass grave before she would find it. She then searched for relatives, who she hoped survived the forest massacre, looking for them in places where there were known to be larger Roma groups, including the ghetto in Bełżec, Łódź.

In 1942, at the age of 16, Markowska married. She and her husband were arrested by Ukrainian nationalists, who then handed them over to the Germans. They were sent to the ghetto in Lublin. They managed to escape and settled back in Rozwadów, where, under conditions of forced labour, Roma were made to work on the railways. This gave Markowska access to trains transporting Roma and Jews to extermination camps, including Auschwitz. During transport stops, she managed to save children, given to her by their mothers. Among the children she saved was then three-year-old Karol Parno-Gierliński, later a well-known sculptor, prose writer, and poet.

Markowska wanted to save everyone, especially the children who had witnessed the pogroms and massacres. She secretly travelled to places where the Nazis murdered the Roma in search of child survivors. After returning to Rozwadów, Markowska organised false documentation for rescued Roma and Jewish children. She raised them by herself or secured refuge for them with other Roma families. She also returned some of the rescued children back to their families. During the Second World War, she saved approximately fifty Jewish and Roma children from death (Gierliński 2006, 10-11). In 2006, Markowska was the first person of Romani origin to be awarded the Commander's Cross with the Star of the Order of Polonia Restituta²³ by the President of Poland. In 2017, she was also awarded the title of Honorary Citizen of the City of Gorzów Wielkopolski. She became the subject of a documentary film entitled *Phuri Daj*, made by Agnieszka Arnold. Portraits of Markowska are also the subject of two murals in Poland, in Warsaw and Gorzów Wielkopolski²⁴.

was providing them false documents and sheltered them in Polish families, orphanages, etc.

23 See "Wyjątkowe bohaterstwo" [Extraordinary bravery], last modified October 17th, 2006. President of Poland website, accessed June 16th, 2020, <https://www.prezydent.pl/archiwum-lecha-kaczynskiego/aktualnosci/rok-2006/art,150,1064,wyjatkowe-bohaterstwo.html>

24 Alfreda's Markowska murals adorn the walls of Primary School No. 1 in Gorzów Wielkopolski, and Junior High School No. 20 in Ochota, Warsaw.

The story of Markowska's rescue missions has been proven by the testimonies of her family members who bore witness, and – most importantly – by the survival of those she saved. Even though some of the rescued children – mainly Jewish – left Poland, Markowska stayed in touch with some of them. It should also be noted that it is likely that some of the children saved by Markowska were unaware of her help. Thanks to the effort of Roma activists and the Polish Government, Markowska's story has received widespread publicity so that now she is a well-known and celebrated public Roma figure in Poland. This has raised awareness of Roma resistance so that it is now a publicly-known fact. Aside from popularising Roma resistance, it helps to fight antigypsyism and promote awareness of the fate and genocide of the Roma and Sinti during the Second World War.

The second brave Romani woman mentioned by Gierliński and Jakimik is Zofia Chojnacka (1913 – 1986), referred to in Romanes as “Mamcia” or “Chomyca”. Like Markowska, Chojnacka was a traditional Romani woman from the Polska Roma sub-group. Between 1939 and 1942, Chojnacka's family stayed in Warsaw. There, she and other Roma women hid and sheltered Jewish children placed in their care. In 1942, during one of the Nazi inspections to search for hiding Jews, the family was targeted. During the search, officers found and killed Jewish children, including a boy hidden by Chojnacka in her room. The rest of the Jewish children were mistaken for Roma by the Nazis and managed to avoid execution.

As punishment, officers gathered the Roma in the Grochów district square in Warsaw and shot a total of 30 Roma, including men, women and children. They then deported the rest of the Roma to the Treblinka extermination camp, including Chojnacka's husband. He managed to escape from Treblinka to Warsaw, but unfortunately, after a week, he died in one of the Warsaw hospitals due to exhaustion and lung contusion²⁵.

Chojnacka, together with several other Roma and the children, managed to survive. Soon after, however, they were sent to the ghetto in Siedlce. There, Chojnacka rescued Jewish children from mass shootings. Later, thanks to the help of a Sinti guard, who warned her about the planned liquidation of the Roma, Chojnacka and most of her family escaped the ghetto the night before. They fled to the forest where they stayed with the partisans, and the younger Roma began participating in the Polish resistance movement.

Due to the realities of war, Chojnacka's family often changed their whereabouts. They mostly lived in rural stations, which they rented from local hosts. Finally, Chojnacka and her family ended up in the Rzeszów region. There, she continued to rescue Roma and Jewish children, travelling to pogroms to help save survivors, and looking after Jewish children left in her care. Despite being a widow with four children, she risked her own life to protect orphaned Roma and Jews.

During the Second World War, Chojnacka saved approximately thirty Roma and Jewish children. She displayed extraordinary heroism, courage, and kindness. After the war, she and her family led a nomadic lifestyle until 1964 (the year the forced settlement of Roma was enforced in communist Poland). The family settled in Sławno. Chojnacka was reluctant to talk about trauma, pain, losses, and wartime. Up until her passing, she was respected among the Roma community²⁶. For years, Chojnacka's story was only known inside the Polish Roma community. Although Chojnacka's story is similar to Markowska's one, she did not live to see the day her heroism was publicly recognised. She did not receive any official awards; instead, she was awarded inside the Roma community with great respect for her service, courage and commitment.

Another brave woman, whose story is present in the collective wartime memory of the Carpathian Roma community, was Weronika Goga (1905-1977). In January 1943, the Nazis burst into Goga's house in Mordarka and arrested all Roma adults, leaving the children behind. The arrested Roma were transported to KL Auschwitz-Birkenau, where they were murdered. Goga miraculously survived, as the Nazis did not notice her among the crowd of children. Goga was the only adult left behind, alongside her four children and her relative's thirteen children.

Despite the war, and the constant danger Goga experienced as a lone Romani woman, she took it upon herself to feed, care for, and raise the 17 children. Her heroism, sense of duty of care and efforts to raise the Roma children, were admirable²⁷. Goga's story was not an isolated case in the Carpathian Mountains region, where Nazis often arrested adults and left children behind. Pelagia Siwak and Sawko Bladycz from Powroźnik town took care of fifteen Roma

26 According to the statement made by Zofia Chojacka's son - Jan Chojnacki and grandson Roman Chojnacki.

27 According to the statement made by Monika Sternal – Weronika Goga's granddaughter.

orphans left by the Nazis during the Second World War²⁸. According to the biography of one of the most famous Romani Poets – Papusza Bronisława Wajs (1908-1987) - she also adopted and raised an orphan of the war, whose family had been killed in a pogrom. She named him Tarzanio²⁹.

Interpreting these events is difficult, and the exact number of such cases is unknown. It is not clear why the Nazis left and did not arrest the children together with the adults, and instead chose to leave them behind. Despite the lack of official sources, the above-mentioned testimonies and stories preserved in the memory of the Roma community are evidence of unique resistance among the Roma. Roma people – particularly women – supported, cared for and attended to other vulnerable people during the war, and especially Jewish and Roma children and orphans.

Conclusions

Romani resistance during the Second World War is a particularly important part of the history of Roma and Sinti. The research addressed the increasing interest in the resistance of Roma and Sinti in Europe. Collected and analysed materials – mainly of scarce and fragmentary – may partially bridge the gap in the research of Roma resistance in Poland. The results of my study point to the significant participation of Roma in the different types of resistance in occupied Poland.

Collected and analysed materials present a novel, deeper perspective of Roma Resistance in occupied Poland during the Second World War. The archival materials, documents, as well as new testimonial evidence, and the oral histories of survivors and their family members present strong evidence of Roma resistance. Roma resistance in Nazi-occupied Poland has a unique character because of the variety of forms of resistance and outstanding acts of heroism, courage and bravery. During the Second World War period, Roma fought and resisted, both individually and collectively. Unfortunately, for the

28 According to the statement made by Helena Siwak – a Romani woman saved with 14 other Roma orphans during Second World War by Pelagia Siwak and Sawko Bladycz in Powroźnik town.

29 See Kajan, Tadeusz. 1992. “Spotkania z Papuszą”[The meetings with Papusza] In Papusza czyli wielka tajemnica (Papusza – a great secret) p. 9, edited by Krystyna Kamińska, 8-17. Gorzów Wielkopolski: Gorzów Publishing House.

most part, Roma heroes remain mostly anonymous.

Roma resistance events in occupied Poland such as individual escape attempts from the camps and ghettos, the Roma and Sinti Uprising in Auschwitz-Birkenau on May 16, 1944, the Roma revolt in Karczew, and the Roma uprising in the Warsaw Ghetto represent outstanding examples of resistance against Nazi persecution. Despite problematic issues related to the scarcity of sources, these unique stories shed new light on Roma resistance and allow us to gain some understanding of Roma attitudes against the Nazis and their reactions to oppression. They were motivated to fight for their survival. Resistance was a Roma response to the attack the minority faced.

Available sources prove that Roma participated in the fight against the Nazis as soldiers in the Polish Armed Forces and partisans in the Polish Resistance Movement. Roma people in the Polish Exile Army such as Stanisław Nazarewicz, Karol Iglenc, Mieczysław Paczkowski, Wawrzyniec Racki, and Hyło took part in several important battles against the Nazis, including the Battle of Monte Cassino. Roma in the Polish resistance movement also fought bravely against the Nazis. It should be noted that the Roma, who escaped from places of oppression and joined the Polish resistance, are examples of double resistance: against persecution and Nazi occupiers. Roma soldiers and partisans demonstrated patriotism and a strong will to fight for Poland. They proved themselves to be courageous and brave citizens. Roma heroes made sacrifices, sometimes even laying down their own lives, and should be remembered and acknowledged by society. Sadly, the participation of Roma soldiers in the Polish Armed Forces and Roma partisans in the Polish resistance movements in the combat against the Nazis during the Second World War remains under-acknowledged in the mainstream discourse of Polish history.

The resistance of Roma in occupied Poland has a unique character in the case of Romani women. Romani female figures such as Alfreda Markowska Noncia, Zofia Chojnacka, Weronika Goga and Pelagia Siwak saved and sheltered orphans and children in need. Roma women saved and rescued Roma and Jewish children from pogroms, camps and other places of extermination. Romani women made sacrifices to provide rescued children with care and food in extremely challenging wartime conditions, which was especially harsh due to Roma persecution.

Thanks to the efforts of Roma activists and the Polish Government, Roma resistance in occupied Poland has received public acknowledgement, including official recognition and commemoration. This narrative is limited mostly

to Alfreda “Noncia” Markowska and the Roma Uprising in Auschwitz-Birkenau. Aside from raising knowledge and awareness of Roma resistance and the Roma and Sinti Genocide during the Second World War, it also helps to create combat antigypsyism, challenge stereotypes and promote awareness of Roma contributions to European and national history.

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Chapter 7

“How I became a partisan”. Filmmaking as a Resistance Strategy against Oblivion

By Vera Lacková

Introduction

Since I was a child, I have loved my grandmother’s mysterious stories. As well as fairy-tales and Roma stories, my grandmother would often tell me about my great-grandfather, Ján Lacko. A Roma partisan, he lived through a lot both during and after the Second World War. His story influenced the course of my family’s life and also profoundly impacted mine. Today, however, many Second World War stories are gradually being lost, and even more have been forgotten entirely.

I became one of a very few female Roma filmmakers and decided to explore the significance of the partisan struggle in which my great-grandfather and other Roma partisans participated. In my documentary film, *How I Became a Partisan*, which will premier in 2021, I travel back into the past to wipe away the layers of oblivion from the history of Roma participation in the resistance movement during the Second World War. The film presents my great-grandfather’s story alongside the Roma resistance movement in Slovakia and the Czech Republic. During that time, Roma resistance fighters identified themselves as Slovak or Czech, or as inhabitants of Czechoslovakia, and fought for their country. This piece of history completely challenges two deeply-rooted stereotypes about the Roma: 1) that Roma people don’t consider the country they live in as their home and 2) that they were merely victims of fascist oppression. Inspired by these stories, I decided to become a modern “partisan” and save the history of Roma resistance from oblivion by making my film and

shining a spotlight on it in wider society.

This essay reflects the process that went into making my movie, including my personal research. Inspired by the story of my great-grandfather, it is largely based on oral history. This essay is divided into various sections. First, I focus on the story of my great-grandfather. Starting with the fragmentary memories shared with me by my grandmother, I went to the archives to find out more about my great-grandfather's life during the Second World War.

Second, I describe the historical situation of Roma in Slovakia, because it is necessary to understand the time when my great-grandfather lived. During this research stage, I discovered he was not the only Roma to participate in the resistance. This finding brought me to undertake research in the Czech Republic, which I also briefly describe in the essay. I contrast the national historical accounts of the two countries against oral history accounts of actual survivors, including descendants of Roma resistance fighters to demonstrate how these events are remembered within Roma communities.

As I was conducting my research, questions arose: How is it possible that society is not aware of any Roma heroes? Why are Roma presented only as victims of the Second World War? There are still gaps in our knowledge. Later, I describe the reasons for, and examples of Roma Holocaust denial, and the suppression of Roma memory. I found out that neither Slovakia nor the Czech Republic conducted in-depth research on Roma resistance. Therefore, there are no books dedicated to the topic. There are, however, exceptions, and I focus on them later in this essay (in the sub-chapter focusing on existing literature in Slovakia and the Czech Republic).

The vast majority of Roma who participated in the resistance have passed away, except for Ján Bučko, whom I managed to get in touch with during the research for my film. This was an additional barrier to my research. Various relatives of World War survivors provided me with partial information, which I verified in the archives later. In some Roma families, the war was not discussed, which was the case of my great-grandfather. War memories were so dreary that Roma tried to block them out. They did not share them with their family members for various reasons – but I speculate that they tried to protect their children from the horrors they endured or maybe out of fear that the war might return. I am convinced that researching Roma resistance is crucial for understanding history, not only that of the Roma's but of the wider society.

Approach to Research

My research started with the story of my great-grandfather. My grandmother, who first told me about my great-grandfather, shared a few of her memories with me, and I promised to find out more. I started with field research in archives in Slovakia and the Czech Republic. I also used secondary sources and data such as, for example, death certificates, books, newspaper articles, registries and registry books. Little by little, I found more stories of Roma partisans and visited the families and relatives of Roma partisans, among which were living witnesses. I decided to record these oral histories and verified memories again in the archives.

Regarding the terminology used in this paper, two comments should be noted. Firstly, when I cite any source, I always stick to the original author's terminology, even if they use the term "Gypsy". Otherwise, in this essay, I always use the term "Roma". Secondly, I use the term Roma Holocaust when referring to the Roma's fate during the Second World War.

The story of Ján Lacko, my Great-grandfather

The story of my great-grandfather resembles the stories of many Roma at the turn of the 20th century. My great-grandfather was born on June 18, 1901, in Dolný Turček in the Turčianske Teplice District, where our family had lived side by side with the majority for centuries. Dolný Turček was a German village, and Germans and Roma had good relationships at that time. In fact, my great-grandfather's godfather was German. With the beginning of the Second World War, however, relations between local German's and local Roma people began to change.

The Slovakian State started to use the term "Gypsy", and the Ministry of Defence began to inquire into the racial origin of its soldiers. Accordingly, the Ministry of Internal Affairs on June 18, 1940, issued a decree stating that to be considered "Gypsy", both a person's parents should be "Gypsy", live nomadically and be unemployed (Nečas 2006, 41). It was up to the authorities to subjectively decide who was "Gypsy". As a result, many Slovaks were mislabeled as "Gypsies" and sent to labour camps. Meanwhile, many Roma were regarded Slovak and had to join the army, which they often left and volunteered instead to join the Slovak National Uprising – the armed insurrection forces organ-

ised by the Slovak Resistance.

My great-grandfather made his living by selling fabrics from door-to-door, and he was a musician. He played the violin, cello and bass. Local regulations banned Roma from entering the city. This ghettoisation ruined Roma economically, socially and ethically. Roma had to travel around the country to work in their traditional crafts and professions (Hubschmanová 2006, 103). Yet, the authorities regarded such Roma as “vagrants and idlers”. It is for this reason that my great-grandfather was imprisoned several times. The first time, on September 12, 1942, the Dolný Kubín District Council assigned him to the labour camps in Dubnice nad Váhom (letter from the captain of the labour camp in Dubnica over Váh to the Ministry of Internal Affairs’ praesidium, 1943). My great-grandfather escaped from the camp a few months later on January 11, 1943 (letter from the gendarme of the labour camp in Dubnica over Váhom to the gendarme station in Horná Štubňa, 1943). He was arrested again on March 9, 1943 (letter from the gendarme station in Horná Štubňa to the central criminal office in Bratislava, 1943). He was released on June 4, 1943 (release letter from captain of the labour camp in Dubnica over Váh to the Ministry of Internal Affairs praesidium, 1943).

Shortly after that, my great-grandfather joined the partisan movement. According to the stories my grandmother told me, and the documents I discovered in archives, he was a member of the Kremnica Unit of Gejza Lacko, First Partisan Brigade of M. R. Štefánik, under the command of P. A. Veličko and the Jegorov Group, Second Partisan Brigade of M. R. Štefánik, led by Major Žingor. Both partisan units contributed to the defence and stabilisation of rebel territory (Ján Lacko’s application for a certificate according to law 255/1946, 194). For his part in the resistance movement, my great-grandfather was imprisoned in the autumn of 1944 and taken to Ilava, and later to the detention (concentration) camp at Dubnica over Váhom.

In the meantime, the Nazi army torched my great-grandfather’s house. When his family members returned from the Banská Bystrica region to Turček, the Gestapo detained them for interrogation on suspicion of harbouring partisans. The next day, on November 3, 1940, the Gestapo took them to the mountain of Puš (in the village of Turček) and shot them in cold blood – Valéria, two months old, Rozália, two years old, Gabriela, 14, Margita, 17, Rozália, 36, and Mária, 69 (Police report, 1945). In spring 1945, my great-grandfather returned from the concentration camp and learned about the tragedy that had befallen his family. He found his mother, wife, and four children lying inert in

the forest, covered with leaves and pine needles. To bury them, he took them to the cemetery himself.

The story of my great-grandfather is not unique - there are many more stories like his. Roma resisted, and fought for our countries' freedom, risking their lives, as well as that of their relatives. To better understand the Roma predicament during the Second World War, in the next chapter, I will provide an overview of the historical context in Slovakia during the Second World War.

Slovakia: 1939 - 1945

After the collapse of Czechoslovakia on March 14, 1939, an independent, clerical fascist Slovakian state came into existence. Slovakia fell under the decision-making bodies in Berlin. Jozef Tiso, a Roman Catholic priest and politician, became the chief, and later president of the newly established state. He was also the Hlinka guards' chief, a semi-military organisation of the Slovak People Party between 1938 and 1945. Slovakia became an ally to Nazi Germany - it entered the war against Poland and the Soviet Union and declared war against the United States of America and Great Britain. After the war, Jozef Tiso left Slovakia but was captured and returned to Czechoslovakia. There the national judiciary sentenced him to death, and he was executed in April 1947.

Alongside Jews, Roma were listed as non-Aryans preventing racial purity according to the September 15, 1935, Nuremberg Laws (Lužica 2002, 51). This served as a pretext for murdering Jews and Roma. Slovakia adopted these racial laws from Nazi Germany as if they were their own. Any ambiguities concerning who the term "Gypsy" referred to were clarified by the official explanation of Regulation No. 127 published on June 18, 1940, which stated the following: "According to paragraph 9 under law No.130/1940 of the Slovak legal code, a gypsy should be understood as those members of the gypsy race with both gypsy parents, who live a nomadic way of life or are settled, but avoid work" (Lužica 2005, 9). According to the Defense Act from January 18, 1940, "Gypsies" and Jews were excluded from the military. Had they already joined the army, they were to be released from duty without any credentials. Jewish and Roma recruits (or released recruits) did not perform their duties in military facilities but in special work units (Nečas 2006, 43). These units were located in Očová, Most over Ostrov and Trnava. Their existence did not last

long, and they were cancelled by 1941. However, other work camps were established in 1942. The biggest ones were situated in Dubnica over Váh (1942–1944) and work units in eastern Slovakia, for example, Hanušovice over Topľa (1942–1943; Kumanová 2013).

The Slovak National Uprising (SNU) emerged in response to German occupation and in protest against the Slovak fascist state, which was a German satellite. The SNU started on August 29, 1944, and, as a result, Slovakia was regarded a victor. However, by the end of October 1944, the uprising was quashed by the German army, leading to considerable repression of the domestic population.

The active participation of large numbers of Roma in the uprising is not common knowledge, despite their contribution to the armed struggle. Various historians did not consider the partisans' ethnicity and listed them all as Slovak. However, there were concrete reasons for the active participation of Roma in the partisan movement. To deal with the so-called "Roma question", the Ministry of Interior issued two regulations, one on April 20, 1941, and another on July 23, 1943. The first regulation cancelled all travel documents and their owners were required to return to their domicile address. This regulation had direct consequences for those Roma living nomadically, as well as those settled. Roma who lived close to any roads were required to move and build their homes separately from other citizens, in specially designated locations (Nečas 1994, 169). The authorities designed settlements in remote places and Roma were displaced to rural, forested areas. As an indirect result of these new regulations, the participation of Roma in the uprising struggles increased. Roma were acquainted with local forests, were knowledgeable about the various paths and crops, and thus served as a link between the partisans and the locals. They provided partisans with local news, information concerning location and movement of enemy troops, food and supplies.

Displacing Roma from towns and villages had a paradoxical effect. Partisan attacks in unknown forested terrains worried the Germans, so they did not concern themselves with Roma in rural settlements located near the woods (Hubschmanová 2005, 56). In the fall of 1944, the Slovak National Uprising was suppressed. Reprisals targeting locals started immediately after that, resulting in one of the cruellest periods ever. People were murdered, deported to concentration camps, and settlements were burned down. The reprisals were especially hard for Roma because even a hint of suspicion had drastic consequences.

The violent murders and burning of houses were carried out by German military and police units. They were assisted by the Hlinka Guard and “Heimatschutz”, consisting of German-Carpathian inhabitants in central Slovakia from the region called “Hauerland”. The reprisals aimed for total control over the designated area and the Slovak Republic’s final months were particularly hard on the Roma population. Roma were not only punished for their active participation in, and support of the uprising, but gradually became the target of openly racist hatred. Brutal murders and the burning down of Roma settlements and houses were partly motivated by retaliation and partly by arbitrary despotism. Historical evidence is not and cannot be exhaustive, but it does suggest the deep-seated evil leading directly to the Holocaust (Nečas 1944, 165). Between the end of 1944 and the start of the following year, German soldiers and emergency divisions of Hlinka’s guard murdered 747 people in Kremnička; at least 109 victims were of Roma origin. Roma were murdered in large numbers in other villages as well – Kvetnica, Tisovec, Čierny Balog, Dolný Turček, Zvolen, Nemecká, Žiar na Hronom, Brezno, Pohorelá, Lopej, Motyčky, Hriňová and others (Nation’s Memory Institute). We do not know how many Roma were shot to death and how many families were murdered because of just one family member being a partisan (or being suspected of ties with the partisans). We assume that this is not documented and will never be fully uncovered (Hubschamnová 2005, 57).

Roma men who were discharged from military service or escaped from concentration camps joined the partisan movement. Many Roma were part of the First Regiment of the Czechoslovak Military Corps. Milená Hubschamnová mentions: “In no relevant publication are we able to read anything about Roma participating in Svoboda’s army, which they joined after defecting from Tiso’s army or escaping from Russian prison camps. By relevant I mean books on the Slovak army during World War II, on Svoboda’s army, or wider historical publications on these particular times or even the fate of Roma during the Slovak state” (Hubschmanová 2005, 204).

There are many accounts which attest to the participation of Roma in the partisan movement. Witness Elena Berkyová was 15 years old during SNU, living in Dolná Bzová. Her father, grandfather and two uncles were captured and taken on November 12 or 13 to Zvolen. Later they were murdered during the mass execution in Kremnička because they were partisans. Until recently, Elena did not know where her relatives were buried, only that they have a grave at the Jewish cemetery in Zvolen. The priest could have saved them

with just a small gesture – a confirmation that they did not help the partisans. The priest denied his help, since, as Elena claims, he was a fascist. After the execution, the Germans burnt down their houses. The same priest who did not save her relatives' lives performed her wedding ceremony after the war in 1947 - the officials did not allow her to have the wedding ceremony elsewhere, in another parish.

During the shooting of my film, I met with Ružena Ďord'ová, a nephew of Roma soldier Imrich Horváth. When she was 11, her mother brought home Imrich Horváth, who was ill and living in Plzeň. Imrich Horváth was a Czechoslovak soldier of Roma origin, born in the city of Seňa in Slovakia. He was forced to join the Hungarian Army; later, in 1943 he joined Czechoslovak troops fighting against the Nazis in the Western part of the Orenburg region in Russia. He actively participated in battles over the Dukla Col as part of General Ludvik Svoboda's army. Later, he was deported to a concentration camp in Germany. When American troops were getting closer, he organised a riot together with other prisoners and escaped the camp. Ružena Ďord'ová directly witnessed Horváth's recounting of his actions during the war and was one of the few people who were in touch with him before he died. She donated his war decorations to the Museum of Roma Culture in Brno; her private possessions contain family photographs. Unfortunately, Imrich Horváth's postwar story is not currently known. He died April 28, 1977, in Plzeň.

As Roma participated in the partisan movement and the resistance, their relationship with Slovak comrades-in-arms was reconsidered and reestablished on new grounds. This was based on solidarity and patriotism stemming from antifascism, and often on communist ideology (Hubschmanová 2005, 57). The family of Branislav Oláh, Roma writer and journalist, claims local Roma joined the antifascist resistance in large numbers. According to Oláh, there is not a single family without a partisan, and each family has among them victims of the Roma Holocaust. Contrary to many Roma families, his relatives were not silent about their suffering during World War II, and they shared their war experiences with their descendants. Branislav Oláh's paternal grandfather and his brothers were partisans, members of the "Za slobodu Slovanov" group. After the uprising was quashed, his two brothers Mikuláš and Josef were captured and transported to the Mauthausen Concentration Camp. Only Mikuláš returned home later; Jozef did not survive his suffering in the camp.

Bohemia: 1939 – 1945

My film production and personal research brought me to the Czech Republic. The situation in the country was different from that of Slovakia. However, we can find cases of Roma resistance there too.

The Czechoslovak Republic fell apart as a result of the Munich Treaty, and on March 15, 1939, the Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia came to existence. The Protectorate was included in the Third Reich, which controlled the collaborationist government and the military.

There were two camps established in the Czech Republic, both of them designed initially as internment camps – in Lety near the city of Písek, and Hodonín near Kunštát. From August 2, 1942, when Roma were directed exclusively to these sites, they became “Gypsy camps” (Holomek 2014, 9). The decision was confirmed in December 1942 by SS Commander Heinrich Himmler’s regulation “on the deportation of Gypsies and Gypsy half-breeds” to the Auschwitz-Birkenau concentration camp, where a special so-called family “Gypsy camp” (*Zigenuerlager*) was created. The majority of Roma were deported to this complex of concentration camps from spring 1943 to July 1944 (Horváthová 2002, 46).

According to historians, almost 90% of Czech Roma were killed during the Roma Holocaust (Nečas 1944). Based on the military evidence of criminal headquarters in Prague, the total number of Roma men, women and children deported to the concentration camps reached 4,870. Out of this number, only 583 Roma men and women returned to their homeland after the war. The majority of Roma residing in the former Protectorate did not survive the concentration camps (Nečas 1944, 93). However, several Roma joined the resistance in the Czech Republic. In Bohemia, Roma joined the resistance in fewer numbers than in Slovakia, usually when escaping concentration camps in Hodonín and Lety.

This was the case of Josef Serinek. Czech historian Jan Tesař published the book *Česká Cikánská rapsodie* (Tesař Jan, 2017) based on Serinek’s memories, and thus he remains one of a few known Czech Roma partisans. Serinek was captured and together with his family transported to a concentration camp in Lety near Písek. In just a short time there, he witnessed some 17 deaths by torture. Expecting a similar fate, he decided to escape. He planned to return to his family, but Czech police officers pursued him, and he had to hide in the woods. In the end, he discovered that some members of his family had died

in Lety, and others in Auschwitz Birkenau. He managed to reach the Vysočina region (Czech Republic), where, with the help of locals he established the partisan division “Čapajev”. Serinek’s grandson - Zdenek Serinek - persuaded his father to permit Jan Tesař to publish Serinek’s memoir. Since Serinek died when his grandson was just six years old, Zdeněk remembers him as a child. He grew up near the city of Svítavy, where his grandfather lived after the war. Zdeněk knew about his grandfather being a partisan since he was ten years old, even though nobody talked much about it at home. Zdeněk started to research his grandfather’s war past when he became older.

The second case is Antonín Murka, born in Újezd in Zlín region. Since 1942, he was incarcerated in the “Gypsy camp” in Hodonín. In 1943, he was ordered to dig the water holes for the camp, and together with his three friends, he managed to escape. First, he hid with the Wallachian smugglers, and later he joined the Jan Žižka partisan brigade, led by the legendary major Dajan B. Baranovič Murzin. He recalled, “We were divided into smaller groups. I was in the first one, together with Jirka and a guy from southern Yugoslavia, Teodor Simin. Then there was a group consisting of 10 Russian captives and 11 local boys... I was a leader and my nickname was, “Tonda the Gypsy”” (Murka’s written record of memories, 1923). He participated in liberating the town of Vizovice. His father, mother, siblings, and uncles and cousins, died in the concentration camps.

These two stories are very important. Thanks to their ability to resist, Roma were able to stand up against the Nazi regime side by side with majority freedom-fighters. While Roma participation in the Czech Republic resistance was limited since most Roma fell victim to the genocide, there are cases of Roma resistance fighters such as the two partisan stories described above. There are certainly more Roma partisan fighters’ stories, but the majority of them remain to be discovered.

Gaps in our Knowledge

Roma resistance is an underrepresented topic and stands in the shadows of the Roma Holocaust, the existence of which is still denied by both politicians and others. In this section, I describe examples of Roma Holocaust denial, and the reasons why Roma participation in the antifascist resistance is not known about nowadays.

Not long ago, there was a pig farm on the site of a concentration camp in the village of Lety where Roma genocide took place. Fortunately, after persistent and long-term pressure from various activists, the government bought out the private farm two years ago. As a representative organisation, the Museum of Roma Culture in Brno, after 75 long 75, will build a dignified memorial. However, some politicians and residents in Lety still deny the concentration camp's existence and insist on labelling it as a work camp, designed to teach "the asocial" to work. Last year, archaeological research at the site of the former concentration camp in Lety confirmed its existence. Both the original camp was found, which had been covered by the farm, as were prisoners' graves. Last year, new evidence was found that affirmed that it was not a work camp, as politicians had suggested. The excavations uncovered one grave with a female prisoner's remains, under 40 years of age, and a grave of a newborn, whose skeletal remains were almost untraceable since the pit was quite shallow. They found seven other graves. According to documents, there should be 120 prisoners buried in total, including 70 or more children; with the graveyard extending over an area of 400 square meters (Berkyová, Bikár, Ryšavý, Tokárová2019).

Even with these facts in mind, we still tend to forget Roma resistance fighters. The mainstream narrative labelled resistance fighters automatically as Slovak as if there were no Roma in the resistance. This is not about treating Roma as martyrs, but joining the resistance and fighting for their home country strongly subverts persisting stereotypes which treat Roma as unable to stand up for society.

One of the reasons for the lack of remembrance of the Roma Holocaust and Roma Resistance is the Roma's silence regarding these harrowing times. It was very difficult for them to prove the crimes they suffered or document their participation in the resistance. They blocked out their memories in the subconscious defence of their cultural identity. Erasing the era when basic principles of their identity were subverted was one way they protected their identity (Kapralski 2006,162). Some authors explain the lack of interest in Holocaust memory and remembrance among Roma as a result of their "art of forgetting". Such a position is dangerous since it shifts the responsibility from authorities and those in power onto the victims. Moreover, it supports (romantic) stereotypes portraying Roma as a people without memory and therefore without a memorable past. The hegemonic narrative of war omits Roma suffering (as well as that of others). However, it seems their experience would

be displaced anyway if we consider the nature of official Slovak commemorative acts. If their suffering was mentioned, it was only in reference to their antisocial way of life, thus reproducing Nazi racist theory again (Fotta 2006, 7-8). Discrimination and repressions against Roma during World War II were kept secret or belittled. For example, memorials and commemorative plaques dedicated to the victims of the war contained victims' names. However, those unable to identify Roma surnames never knew that those people died due to their different ethnical background (Mann 2013, 37).

Together with Roma partisans' descendants, I visited those memorials containing names of their ancestors killed during the SNU, but their ethnicity is not stated anywhere. This information is absent from the lists of resistance fighters as well, which were created by historians. Roma were not even included in the list of the SNU Museum, containing those 32 nations and ethnicities who joined the uprising. This was the case up to 2016 when the civic association, In minorita, took charge. In cooperation with the SNU Museum, they installed a commemorative plaque dedicated to Roma.

During annual commemorations of the Slovak National Uprising, an official state holiday, nobody mentions Roma participation in the uprising. The Roma were included in the celebration for the first time only last year, due to the opening of the "Roma in the resistance" exhibition¹, which I organised. This event was included in the official commemorative program in Banská Bystrica on August 29, 2019, as part of celebrating 75 years since the SNU. The president of the Slovak Republic, Zuzana Čaputová, attended the opening, as well as the ombudsman Prof. JUDr. Mária Patakyová, PhD. and the State Secretary of the Ministry of Education Milan Krajniak. Other politicians did not attend the opening.

Existing Research on Roma Resistance in Slovakia and Bohemia – the importance of oral history

The Communist regime played a significant part in suppressing Roma memory since their goal was to assimilate Roma. Roma heroes and role models had no place since they would lead to Roma emancipation. As a conse-

1 More information about this exhibition can be found here: <https://www.webnoviny.sk/foto-v-zahrade-chavivy-reik-na-75-vyrocie-snp-otvorili-vystavu-romovia-v-odboji/>

quence, Roma histories remain undocumented and untold. Shortly after the war, the methodology of oral history was not considered as a valid research tool, as I found out through my interview with Jan Tesař, the author of the book about Roma partisan Josef Serinek:

The historians did not understand me chasing down some gypsy histories, I was a laughing stock. The traditional and proper historical process was to learn how to gather archival documents and then going through the amassed paper file. I chose this partisan topic, a conspiracy, and you do not have written evidence of that. If you do, the conspiracy aspect is out, it was revealed. On top of that, successful partisan units created forged documents in order to protect themselves. As a historian, you work with these false documents. The resistance fighter was prosecuted, he tried to cover his back in the courtroom, yet he carried on with his resistance as well. As a result, as a historian you have the evidence confirming the lies of the captured resistance fighters. How they carried on with whatever they did before.

(Tesař Jan, 2017; interview)

Jan Tesař's three-volume book, *Czech Gypsy Rapsody*, is divided into three sections. The first part contains memories of Serinek and descriptions of protagonists from Serinek's oral accounts. The second part focuses on the author's comments on Serinek's narrative, and the last section contains maps, tables and diagrams. Jan Tesař recorded memories of Josef Serinek during 18 meetings that were held between March 27, 1963, and June 20, 1964 (Tesař Jan 2016, 13).

The Roma Holocaust topic in Bohemia and Slovakia was researched by the Czech historian, Ctibor Nečas, in the 1970s. As a result of his research, several crucial books on the life of Roma in Slovakia during World War II were published, including *Českoslovenští Romové v letech 1938-1945* (Nečas, 1994), *Romové na Moravě a ve Slezsku 1740-1945* (Nečas, 2005), *Našti Biteras* (Nečas, 1994), and *Holocaust českých Rómov* (Nečas, 1999). In his book, *Československí Rómovia v rokoch 1939 – 1945* (Nečas, 1994), in the chapter "Repression against Roma in 1944-1945", he mentions Roma resistance. For example, the author writes about the Roma settlement in Tisovec. According to his account, local Roma were persuaded by Nazi collaborators to destroy a bridge near a local paper factory. Roma confessed that they were in touch with partisans and agreed to go forward with the assumed action. During the night, the police took them out and made 14 men dig out trenches; they were shot to death over their graves. Some 34 women and children were taken from the village to their execution in Kremnica. The author remembers Pohorelá

settlement, which was burnt down because local Roma provided refuge for partisans.

Romani Studies scholar Milena Hubschmanová chose the oral history method in the 1990s as well. She collected and recorded Roma memories, resulting in the first volume of her book *Po Židoch cigáni. Svědectví Romů ze Slovenska 1939-1945* (Hubschmanová 2005, 750). Currently, the publishing house Triáda is preparing the second volume for publishing. Her book contains memories of Roma partisans as well. Among them is Ján Tumi, nicknamed “Koro”, who was in the army and joined the partisans after his release. “And then in 1944 the uprising broke out. And so I joined it in Valaské.” (Hubschmanová 2005, 750). Apart from Tumi, Ladislav Tancoš and Ladislav Petík also joined the partisans after serving their time in the military. Additionally, Hubschmanová presents the testimonies of various indirect participants of the resistance, for example, that of Anna Virágová, Jozef and Vilma Abrahám, Agnesa Horváthová, Irena Kroková, and Roma writer Elena Lacková, who mentions a Roma partisan group. One of the accounts, described by Hubschmanová, tells the story of a Roma Partisan Unit:

In Chmeľov (Slovakia) there was a Roma called Oračko who had four sons. Oračko went to see Kukurelli, a leader of a partisan unit, and they agreed that the Roma will establish their own independent Roma partisan unity. Their task was to put mines under the bridges. Oračko took his four sons and a few other Roma from Hanušovice and Pavlovce. Kukurelli armed them – he was an important person, and they went together with the “whites”. (Hubschmanová 2005, 832).

In the 1990s, in cooperation with Yale University, Milan Šimečka’s Foundation recorded statements of Roma who witnessed persecution and genocide. In my opinion, these video recordings are very important since such material does not exist in Slovakia. Among the testimonies, we can find the accounts of Ján Bučko, Juraj Bučko, Ján Bartoška, Ján Škrvňan and resistance soldiers from Svoboda’s army and the Czechoslovak Army (Michal Demeter, Andrej Gombár, Ondrej Gujda). The statements were recorded by the ethnologist Rene Lužica, who published some of the materials in his books *Keď bola vojna nebol som doma* (2004) and *Zabudnutí a zatratení* (2002, together with Július Tancoš). Based on this project, Milan Šimečka’s Foundation published a book called *Rómovia a druhá svetová vojna* (2006).

From the video witness statements included in the Milan Šimečka Foundation’s collection, the only living Roma partisan who I found was Ján Bučko.

He was born in Sasová, and today he is 95 years old. He lives in a retirement home, where I visited him as a part of my research. He told me he joined the partisan brigade - Ján Žizka - when he was only 17 years old. After returning home, he found out that his parents, grandmothers, and three uncles were murdered in Kremnička and the lime kiln in Nemecká. They were murdered because he took part in the uprising. Only his two sisters stayed alive. After the war, he requested the exhumation of the mass grave in Kremnička, so that he could recover their bodies and provide them with a proper burial.

The Museum of Roma Culture (Brno, Czech Republic) dedicates a small part of the permanent exhibition to the topic of Roma resistance. Last year, the museum exhibited medals and decorations belonging to Imrich Horváth - a Roma soldier in the Czechoslovak army. Among other artefacts are partisan certificates including those of Roma fighters Vojtech Boldi, Karol Baláž and Ladislav Bukaj, a fragment of Josef Serinek's recollections which were later published in *Česká cikánská rapsodie*, and a written record of Antonín Murka recollections.

Conclusions

Initially, my research was influenced by my great-grandfather and took me on a journey of filmmaking. Gradually, I started to become more interested in the topic of Roma resistance during the Second World War and began my research. I discovered that my great-grandfather was not the only one Roma who participated in the anti-fascist resistance. Thanks to my investigations, I know that Roma participated in partisan movements in a number of occupied and allied countries (including USSR, Yugoslavia, Bulgaria, Slovakia, Italy and France), and were part of the regular armies fighting against Germany (mainly in the Soviet Union and, towards the end of the war, also in Bulgaria and Romania), as well as in the Slovak National Uprising (Marushiakova, Popov 2017, 6). However, society is largely unaware of this fact.

Stories of Roma who participated in the resistance were shared among families, mostly orally. Today, one of the possible means of recording Roma partisans and antifascist fighters' memories is through their surviving family members and ancestors, through which their memories live on.

My archival research was very difficult - many documents have been lost, and most of them are still yet to be processed in Slovakia and the Czech Re-

public. For example, documents from the detention (later concentration) camp in Dubnica over Váhom, where I needed to find information about my great-grandfather, are still not accessible to the public; for my research, the archival staff gave me special permission. Even though this history is relatively recent – dating back 75 years - only a few historians are interested in this topic.

With the increasing trend of far-right beliefs and racist attitudes that have swept into our public discourse once again, it seems to be crucial to remind people of these forgotten heroes' names and deeds. Therefore, I hope that in the future, historians will shed more light on this missing chapter of our past, not just of Roma history for the Roma themselves – but as a chapter of broader European history of which Roma are an integral part.

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Chapter 8

The German Sinti and Roma at the Time of National Socialism

By Bildungsforum gegen Antiziganismus [Educational Forum against Antigypsyism]

Persecution—Self-determination— Resistance

The following essay is based on teaching-materials that the Educational Forum against Antigypsyism published in cooperation with the German Resistance Memorial Center in 2019. As part of the Heidelberg-based Documentation and Cultural Centre of German Sinti and Roma, the Educational Forum goal is to educate the public about antigypsyism as a specific form of racism. Specifically, it seeks to raise awareness of the particular stereotypes, mechanisms and manifestations of antigypsyism and the effect it has on Sinti and Roma communities in Germany and throughout Europe.

Though the educational forum is concerned with mostly contemporary antigypsyism, the history of the National Socialist genocide of Sinti and Roma is also a relevant topic in the work of the forum. At a cooperation event held with the German Resistance Memorial Center on Sinti and Roma resistance against National Socialism, it became clear that there are educators, both from formal and non-formal education settings, interested in the topic. Yet there are no teaching-materials for them to use. That is how the idea of a shared publication was born.

Biographies of Sinti and Roma who resisted persecution, imprisonment and mass-murder in different ways are at the core of the published materials. They are presented through their oral testimonies, as well as selected historical documents and photographs. Along with these biographies, the publica-

tion contains essays about the broader context of persecution and resistance of Sinti and Roma under National Socialism, and pedagogical advice and proposals on how to use the materials. Statements by Sinti and Roma on what historical resistance means to them today are also included, to spark conversations about the connection between past and present.

The materials are suitable for people aged 15 and above; most texts are featured in long and short versions to make them accessible for different learning-groups. The physical publication consists of a book containing all texts and separate handouts for the classroom or workshop. All materials are also available free of charge as a PDF-file to download from the websites of the institutions involved.¹ The biographies of Oskar Rose and Johann ‘Rukeli’ Trollmann presented in this publication are based on that project, while the biography of Ceija Stojka presented here was written especially for this publication.

Since Sinti and Roma resistance against National Socialism is a topic virtually unknown to the general public, it seems necessary to start this essay by making some remarks about the pre-war situation of the minority within Germany.

The genocide was preceded in National Socialist Germany by classification according to ‘racial biology’, followed by the systematic disenfranchisement and exclusion of Sinti and Roma, without which the genocide could not have taken place. There were various forms of discrimination against Sinti and Roma in Germany even before 1933. For example, the police collected data on the minority, prior to suspicion of having committed any specific crime. They were seen as potential criminals simply because they were Sinti and Roma. However, when the Nazis came to power, racism became state doctrine, and the situation for the Sinti and Roma in Germany dramatically worsened. Intensified persecution and police-surveillance limited the possibilities to resist racial discrimination further. There was no popular resistance movement against National Socialism in Germany, which Sinti and Roma could join. This is an important point of differentiation from other countries at the time, such as France or Yugoslavia, where, for example, minority groups also participated in the fight against the German occupation.

1 “We do not submit to them” Educational Material to the Resistance of Sinti and Roma against National Socialism, Bildungsforum gegen Antiziganismus und der Gedenkstätte Deutscher Widerstand, Berlin 2019. Find the PDF here: https://gegen-antiziganismus.de/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/Bildungsmaterialien_zum_Widerstand_von_Sinti_und_Roma_2019.pdf.

When it comes to the term ‘resistance’, the activities, behaviours or attitudes which could be defined as such have been contested in academia and the context of broader memorial-culture. Since Nazi persecution of “Gypsies” sought to capture and eventually murder people categorised as such, it is appropriate to define resistance in the broadest sense of the term. The actions available to the persecuted were extremely limited, and often they were barely able to survive. Therefore, all activities in response to such persecution must count as resistance aimed at disturbing the process of persecution and extermination, from escape to the preservation of humanity in such desperate circumstances.

The increasingly radical measures of persecution determined tactics of resistance. This essay will look at attempts to protect pre-existing normalcy, especially in the first years of National Socialism, for example, in the economic sector. Escape and evasion was probably the most common form of Sinti and Roma resistance to Nazi persecution, so it will also be addressed in this study, though historical sources are scarce. Hiding was often made possible with the help of allies, but it also allowed Sinti and Roma to assist others facing persecution. There are also examples of resistance in the desperate conditions of the concentration and extermination camps.

Protecting Pre-existing Normalcy

From 1933, Germany’s Sinti and Roma were exposed to severe discrimination and increasingly excluded from social life, but systematic persecution did not begin right away. In these early stages of National Socialism at least some Sinti and Roma were involved in politically motivated resistance against the Nazis. Historian Ulrich Opfermann, in a study into the history of the Sinti in Berleburg, refers to Sinti close to the German Communist Party and involved in conflicts with the SA and SS (Opfermann 1997).²

Bernhard Pabst is another example of a Sinto who refused to put up with racist abuse and confronted members of the SA. After a fight with some of them he was arrested, and, on May 6, 1934, was registered as prisoner number

2 Cf. regarding this also the biographical sketches about Heinrich, Karl, Konrad und Wilhelm Janson, online under: <http://widerspruchundwiderstandimnsinsiwi.blogspot.de/verzeichniss/biografische-skizzen/> (25.01.19).

5860 at Dachau Concentration Camp. After circa a year and a half, he was released from the camp and drafted into labour service. During WWII, he served in the military and was injured in Smolensk, but became a survivor of the war. Until his death in 1992, he hardly ever talked about his imprisonment in the concentration camp.³

Economic exclusion also sparked resistance. For example, Anton Rose, who ran a successful cinema in Darmstadt with his family, was to be expelled from the Reichsfilmkammer (Chamber of Film in the Third Reich) in 1934. He appealed with initial success. Eventually, in 1937 he was again expelled. In 1943 he was deported to Auschwitz, where he was murdered (Rose, 1999, 82).

The Nüremberg Racial Laws enacted in 1935 represented a turning point in the lives and self-determination of Sinti and Roma in Germany. These laws were designed to exclude and isolate German Jews socially. However, these laws also referred to “Zigeuner”, and thus Sinti and Roma faced the same outcome. They were, for example, prohibited from marriage and intimate contact with German “Aryans”. Many did not want to abide by these laws which interfered in their private lives.

Such is the story of Sinteza Christine Lehmann, born in 1920 in Duisburg. After her parents and siblings were deported to the Generalgouvernement (the General Governorate for the Occupied Polish Region) in 1940, Lehmann lived together in Duisburg with Karl Hessel, who was categorised as an “Aryan,” with whom she had two children. They were first summoned by the police at the end of 1941 and warned that their relationship would no longer be tolerated. They then officially lived in separate apartments, but de facto continued living together. Their second child was born during this time. Betrayed by a welfare worker, Lehmann was again summoned by Duisburg police and was threatened with deportation to a concentration camp if she did not separate from the father of her children. After this threat, Lehmann went into hiding with initial success but was later arrested, taken into “preventive custody”, and later deported to Auschwitz. Due to the conditions at the camp, she perished in March 1944. Her two children were also taken to Auschwitz and lost their lives there. The grandmother of the children, Karl Hessel’s mother, fought for the release of at least the children so that she could take custody of them. A file note for her query says:

I request that the widower Hessel be orally notified, that the transfer of gypsy per-

sons to the Gypsy Camp in Auschwitz took place based on the orders by the Commander of the SS (SS Reichsführer) and the Reichsminister of Interior. A transfer of the gypsy children Egon und Robert Lehmann from the Gypsy Camp to the mother of the German blooded father is declined by the Central Criminal Investigation Department (Reichskriminalpolizeiamt). Releases of Gypsy persons from the Gypsy Camp Auschwitz categorically do not take place. (Rose 1999, 45)

From 1935, municipal forced labour camps were established in various German cities, including in Köln, Düsseldorf, Frankfurt am Main and Berlin. In his memoir *My Hundred Lives*, German Sinto Ewald Hanstein describes that while interned at Marzahn detention camp he was allowed to visit a restaurant near the factory in which worked, and was even permitted to play music with the other guests. The innkeeper and the guests were, according to Hanstein, mainly members of the working class with anti-fascist attitudes. They warned him about informers, so he could avoid attracting attention and imminent arrest (Hanstein 2005, 34). Like most of the inmates of the Marzahn camp, Hanstein was later deported to Auschwitz-Birkenau. He survived and lived in eastern Germany after 1945. In 1954, he escaped the GDR and went to live in western Germany. While living in Bremen, he was active in the civil-rights movement of German Sinti and Roma. Hanstein passed away in 2009.

Even under the extremely difficult conditions of a detention camp like Marzahn, some, like Hanstein, managed to preserve some aspects of ordinary life. Since isolating those deemed ‘racially’ unfit from the rest of society and taking away their self-determination was an objective of National Socialist persecution, this needs to be regarded and appreciated as an act of resistance.

Escape, Going Underground and Support

With time, the Nazis persecution of the Sinti and Roma became more radical, and measures taken to capture and segregate members of the minority were enhanced. One way to evade repressive measures, and often death, was through escape and hiding. This may have been the most common form of resistance available to and practiced by Sinti and Roma. Given that going into hiding requires that no traces are left, there are hardly any historical sources available on this topic. German Sinto Adolf Heilig described what his family’s escape looked like:

My father, a soldier decorated with the ‘First Class Iron Cross’ and the ‘Honorary

Cross for front fighters' for an operation at the Somme, occasionally met former soldiers at a pub where we parked our caravan. One of the men, a Berlin city employee, warned my father: 'You and your family must disappear from Berlin. There is an order to arrest all 'Gypsies' found in Berlin. The order says: Berlin must be 'gypsy-free' for the Olympic Games.' As if to confirm this warning, that same evening uncle Julius, a brother of my mother, showed up, who managed to escape from the Marzahn camp. He called us: 'Throw your things on the caravan. There is no more time to waste. You must get out immediately!' By the innkeepers' horses our caravan was driven to the Berlin city limit. Only there was it re-attached to the car of uncle Julius. As it turned out from the conversation between my parents they were heading towards Bremerhaven. (Heilig 2017, 12)

According to Adolf Heilig, their escape was part of a plan to flee to the USA. It turned out otherwise. In 1944, he was conscripted as a junior German navy assistant (Marinehelfer) and thus – probably with the protection of his superiors – escaped the threat of arrest and deportation. At the end of the war, he assumed that his family fell victim to the Nazis. Yet in August 1945, he found his parents and siblings in Southern Germany: "What was unthinkable till a short while ago happened: people believed dead, embraced each other." (Heilig 2017, 38)

Only Heilig's brother was missing; he had lost his life whilst trying to escape from a detention camp.

In many cases, we do not know the stories of how persecuted Sinti and Roma escaped the grip of the authorities. As for Leipzig, Historian Kai Müller, for example, established that the authorities captured between 1933 and 1944, 395 Sinti and Roma. Of these, 234 people were taken to concentration camps. At least 129 were murdered there, most of them in Auschwitz. Sixty-three survived, and the fate of the remaining 42 is thus far unknown. Concerning the act of underground hiding, the fact that 111 Sinti and Roma persons captured in Leipzig in 1940 did not appear in any official prosecutor documents following this date is significant, and, as far as it is known, they were not deported either (Müller 2014). We don't know what happened to these people. Most probably, they did not survive the war. However, the assumption that at least some evaded persecution by going underground seems plausible.

To go into hiding successfully, the persecuted necessarily required help. Help was to come first and foremost from people, who themselves were not directly affected by persecution. These allies, usually due to their social standing, had more scope for action, and, unlike the persecuted Sinti and Roma, enjoyed a certain degree of protection. Paul Kreber should be mentioned as an example. As a member of the criminal investigation police in the German

town of Wuppertal under the Nazi regime, Kreber was responsible for “Gypsy Affairs” and used his position to save his friends Hugo and Antonie Weiss and their five children from deportation to Auschwitz. For a while, he even hid the family at his home (Okroy 2012).

One Roma individual who received no protection at all, but was directly affected by persecution, was Polish Alfreda Markowska, whose biography is remarkable. She barely escaped death and lost numerous relatives. Having been transferred to a forced labour camp by German occupiers, she searched for locations of mass shootings to look for and help survivors. She is so far known as having saved 50 children, both Roma and Jewish children among them, by hiding them and providing them with forged documents (Randjelović 2018).

Anton Rose and his attempts to resist expulsion from the Film Chamber has already been mentioned above. When most of his family members were arrested and deported, Rose’s son Oskar managed to go into hiding. He continued living underground under the name Alexander Adler. In April 1943, he requested an audience at the Munich residence of Cardinal Faulhaber, to inform the Cardinal about the desperate situation of the Sinti and Roma and urge him to intervene. Faulhaber, however, refused to see him. In the following weeks, Rose addressed anonymous letters to the Breslau (Wroclaw) Archbishop Cardinal Adolf Bertram, back then Chairman of the Fulda Bishops’ Conference, and to Archbishop Conrad Gröber in Freiburg. His requests for help failed to evoke a reaction - the Catholic Clergy did not take a public stand against the persecution of the mainly catholic German Sinti and Roma (Reuter 2017).

Even though the attempts of Oskar Rose were unsuccessful, they are of utmost significance. There is no other documented case of a member of a persecuted minority group in Nazi-Germany attempting to stop the genocide entirely or to at least obstruct it. Rose’s resistance was not limited to petitions to the Catholic Church. In August 1944, he managed to free his brother Vinzenz Rose from the Neckarelz sub-camp of the Natzweiler-Struthof concentration camp. Both of them managed to go into hiding until the end of the war, and both survived (Awosusi, Pflock 2006). After 1945, the two brothers were among the first to instigate a social discussion about the crimes against Sinti and Roma. By founding the Association of Non-Jewish Victims of Racist Persecution in 1956, they became the pioneers of the German Sinti and Roma civil rights movement.

Facing despair – Resistance in Concentration and Extermination Camps

People incarcerated in the SS concentration camps were brought to breaking point and subjugated. To this end, prisoners were isolated and pitted against each other in a merciless struggle for survival. Thus, when prisoners maintained their dignity and fighting spirit and practiced solidarity with other prisoners, they were resisting the SS.

An example of this type of resistance can be found in Mano Höllenreiner's reports. Being a German Sinto, he was abducted together with his family and sent to Auschwitz at the age of nine. From there he would be taken to Ravensbrück concentration camp, and from there to Sachsenhausen concentration camp. To help his father and uncle, one day he stole some custard meant for SS-members. He was captured and endured harsh punishment. However, the stolen custard was by this time already consumed. This is indicative of more than just the mental resilience of young Mano Höllenreiner. Considering the systematic hunger in the camps, in this case, additional nutrition could be the difference between life or death.⁴

Fleeing from the camp was one way to defy the claim to total power by the SS. Escape attempts, if discovered, were punished hard with the aim of deterrence. Nevertheless, escape attempts by Sinti and Roma are documented, and some of them were successful. For instance, Sinteza Philomena Franz, who was arrested in her home-town Stuttgart and then deported, escaped from two camps. After her first escape, she was captured and incarcerated again. Shortly before the end of the war, she managed to escape from the satellite camp Wittenberg that belonged to Sachsenhausen Concentration Camp and go into hiding where she remained until liberation by the allied forces (Franz 1985).

May 16, 1944, represents a special date for Sinti and Roma resistance. Survivor Willi Ernst, a German Sinto and Holocaust-survivor, describes the events of this day in Auschwitz-Birkenau as follows:

Our block elder, a Dutchman, told us in May 1944 that we would be gassed. As a result, all those who could, armed themselves. I myself had a knife, another man a stick etc. There was block curfew, and we were not allowed to leave. However, the Sinti in all blocks were armed in this way. We did not want to go to the gas

chambers without a fight. The SS obviously noticed and gave up on the planned extermination.⁵

The importance of this act of resistance for survivors is clearly shown in the memories of Hugo Höllenreiner, Mano Höllenreiner's cousin. He was taken to Auschwitz-Birkenau from Munich along with his family at the age of nine in 1943. His father, a former soldier in the German army, was one of those who defied the orders of the SS:

The SS thought, when they come in, maybe they shoot some of us, but our people killed some of them as well. They wanted to save themselves. It must have been the case in other blocks as well. What if it were to spread to other sections of the camp as well. Maybe they believed that all men in the barracks stood there ready to knock them down. [...] I am proud of it even today, it was rare. (Tuckermann 2005, 135)

In the following months, between 2,000 and 3,000 imprisoned Sinti and Roma in the "Gypsy Camp" were taken to other concentration camps for forced labour. Those, who in the eyes of the SS, were no longer fit to work, predominantly children, old and ill people, were left behind. During the night of August 2-3, 1944, the remaining circa 4,300 persons were murdered in the gas chambers. Today, August 2 is the international Memorial Day for the Victims of the European Sinti and Roma Genocide. Even if the situation was hopeless in the face of the armed SS forces, people in despair defended themselves. A witness in the Auschwitz trial in Frankfurt testified: "The Gypsies screamed all night. [...]. They fought for their lives till the end." (König 1989, 132)

There are also reports of Sinti and Roma resistance at other locations of mass-murder. For example, according to the testimony of a Jewish survivor of Treblinka extermination camp, Sinti and Roma deported there fought to resist their murder in the gas-chambers (Rose 1999, 328).

Conclusions

As we've seen, there are many examples of Sinti and Roma who resisted the genocidal policies directed against them in the time of National Socialism.

5 Interview with Willi Ernst on August 6, 1994, Collections of the Documentation and Cultural Center of German Sinti and Roma.

They fought to keep their place in society, evade persecution and help others – friends, family, loved ones, and sometimes even people they didn't know personally. Fighting against their persecution was especially difficult for German Sinti and Roma since there was no popular large-scale resistance movement, which they could join. Furthermore, subjected to police-surveillance, they were robbed of the means and resources that could have supported their resistance.

The bravery and determination of those who resisted deserve our respect, and to be widely remembered. Learning more about their stories and sharing them is also significant for us who live today. Focusing on resistance as a crucial aspect of the Holocaust makes it easier to see those who were persecuted not just as objects and victims of segregation, persecution and mass-murder, but as active individuals who used their limited means to stand up for themselves and others. This is a vital element of a culture of remembrance that acknowledges and respects the perspectives of Sinti and Roma affected by anti-Gypsyism, both historically and in the present-times and thus might help tackle anti-Gypsyism as a challenge faced by European societies today.

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Part 3

Roma Resistance throughout History

Chapter 9

From Roma Slavery to World War II – Roma Resistance in Romania

By Adrian-Nicolae Furtună

Introduction

Roma resistance is a relatively new topic in the historiographical landscape. It marks a departure from the traditional manner in which Roma have been portrayed as “perpetual victims”, particularly in association with three major historical events: slavery in Romanian, the Holocaust and forced assimilation initiated by the Communist regime in post-war Romania.

A closer look at the above-mentioned historical periods shows that an essential element of the narrative is missing, namely the Roma position towards the institutions or regimes that exploited or oppressed them. Take, for instance, the institution of slavery. Some scholars claim that the 500-year-long period of slavery in the Romanian Principalities contributed to preserving Romani language and cultural identity in Romania. For example, Damian argues: “Here they lived under a proper juridical regime, the only place in Europe where they received a particular legislation that offered them the liberty to conserve their identity” (Damian 2018).

With regards to the Holocaust, Roma survivors are still confronted today with denial of their genocide. This is one of the main reasons I place such high value on the conservation of oral testimonies of the Roma Holocaust collected through interviews with Roma survivors. In 2007, when I started collecting interviews with Roma who survived the 1942 deportations, I did not prioritise asking them about the forms of resistance in Transnistria. Still, they always took care to mention them to me and to bring them to my attention. In this context, discussions about Roma resistance are critical since it allows the “other” side of the history to emerge.

In this chapter, I demonstrate that Roma, despite the persecution they suffered in Romania, refused to be relegated to a passive role (being just “spectators of their history”). Instead, they reacted to persecution by engaging in two forms of resistance: institutional and cultural. The definition of resistance that I will use in my research has two: first, an institutional form through which Roma victims tried to seek some form of redress for the injustice suffered, and second, a cultural form through which they attempted to preserve the memory of the injustice they suffered.

Starting with a number of archival documents regarding Roma slavery, which I identified in the period 2015-2018, I will first make a brief presentation of forms of resistance during slavery in the Romanian Principalities, to demonstrate that Roma, as a people, reacted to almost every form of oppression to which they were subjected. I will use qualitative methods to examine the written (archival) and oral (interviews) sources pertaining to the period of slavery.¹

Literature Review

In Romania, the academic discussions regarding Roma slavery are still in their early stages. Existing literature favours political and legal developments during the first half of the 19th century, particularly the abolitionist measures and emancipatory laws adopted by Moldova and Wallachia (Achim and Tomi 2010; Ionescu 2000). Studies concerning the Roma’s demographic evolution and social history in Romanian Principalities remain scarce (Mateescu 2015). One of the things most of these studies have in common is their treatment of Roma as “passive objects”. Conversely, my research attempts to restore Roma’s voices in 19th-century debates concerning the adoption of emancipation laws. More concretely, I am bringing to the readers’ attention the role of Romani slaves’ formal requests for legal emancipation in Wallachian courts in the broader struggle for resisting enslavement. Sadly, this is not a very well-known fact in Romanian historiography. Several other 19th century cases of demands for freedom made by Romani slaves in court have remained largely

1 The archival documents were transcribed from Cyrillic to Latin alphabet by Dr. Claudiu Turcitu. I would also like to thank Chiriac Bogdan for revising the English translation of the Romanian archival documents.

unresearched. Taking advantage of more recent discoveries in the Central Romanian National Archives, my article intends to address this gap in existing knowledge.

I believe such an initiative could not be more relevant and timely, given the current state of remembrance of slavery in Romania. On February 20, 2011, the Romanian Parliament voted to mark the day as a national day of commemoration to mark the abolition of Roma slavery. However, this commendable initiative has not been accompanied by wider awareness-raising efforts to ensure the dissemination of accurate information concerning this historical phenomenon. There are still several controversial, unresolved points in academic and public debates concerning this topic, for example, the frequent assimilation of slavery with other medieval forms of social and economic dependence such as indentured serfdom, which serve to minimize or even deny the damaging, long-lasting effects of slavery on the Roma population and on relations between Roma and non-Roma. In a sense, the lack of public awareness of what slavery represented perpetuates the ambiguity surrounding the concept itself. Slavery seems to have become normalized in dominant perceptions of Roma as a marginalized and excluded minority. A lack of policies to preserve the memory of slavery at the national level has weakened the intercultural dialogue between Roma and non-Roma. It has also strengthened nationalist ideas that claim that ethnic Romanians are the only inhabitants entitled to stake a historical claim on Romanian territory.

Regarding the history of Roma living in Romania, reconciliation with the past has not yet taken place. No monument of slavery has been erected in urban public spaces in Romania, even though this shameful institution lasted for five centuries and its long-term economic, social and cultural effects continue to persist.² However, a few salutary steps have taken in recent years to address this situation, most notably the inclusion of new information concerning Roma slavery and the Holocaust in the history curriculum for secondary schools.

2 See the exhibition “164 years since the abolition of Roma slavery – Oral maps from the present” organised in 2020 by “Romane Rodimata” Centre for Cultural and Social Research.

Institutional Forms of Resistance during Slavery: the Case of Ioana Tinculeasa Rudăreasa

Between the late 14th and early 19th century, relations between slaves, masters and other inhabitants of the Romanian Principalities were regulated by both customary and written laws. In the eyes of the law, slaves were considered the property of their masters, be they the princes that ruled the land, rich monasteries or powerful noblemen (boyars), and represented a source of free and cheap labour. The masters' dominion also extended over the slaves' marital choices, sometimes with devastating effects. One Roma woman, Ioana Tinculeasa Rudăreasa, a determined female slave challenged her former masters' ownership claims over hers and her children's freedom in a court of law. I decided to present this particular case because I consider it representative of several other Romani slaves' efforts to challenge their masters through the legal means available to them at that time (Furtună 2019).

In 1843, against the backdrop of the emancipation of Roma slaves belonging to the Crown (state slaves), a Romani woman named Ioana Rudăreasa, a slave belonging to the Brăiloiu boyar family, filed a lawsuit against her master in hopes of gaining freedom. Born a slave of the Crown, she was forced to marry Nicolae Cincea in her youth, a slave belonging to the Brăiloiu boyar family. According to the law of the land, every wife had to assume her husband's legal status. Rudăreasa thus became a slave belonging to the Brăiloiu family. However, after the declaration of the emancipation law of 1843 in Wallachia, Rudăreasa claimed she had been born a slave of the Crown, and so the new law should extend to herself and her six children born out of the marriage with Cincea.

The trial with the Brăiloiu family lasted for more than ten years. A local tribunal (court of first instance) ruled in favour of Rudăreasa and declared her a free woman in 1845. However, the defendant (boyar Brăiloiu) contested the decision and pushed the case to be heard by an appeals court. This led to the revision of the entire case. Rudăreasa brought witnesses to court that she knew from childhood, but their testimony was dismissed as slaves did not have the right to bear testimony before a court of law. The appeals court reversed the initial ruling of the local tribunal in 1847, ruling that Rudăreasa was indeed a slave of the Brăiloiu family and thus, the law of emancipation did not extend to her. But she did not give up hope and decided, with the help of a lawyer, to present her case before the Supreme Court of Wallachia. In a

surprising turn of events, this court ruled in Rudăreasa's favour, declaring her once and for all "free from slavery". Here is an excerpt from the court decision, issued on October 13, 1858:

To the Honorable Minister of Justice,

The President of the Dâmbovița Court,

Following the honoured Minister of Justice's order no. 1671 of July 17, 1853, fulfilled by the honourable local administration's instructions by ordinance no. 4641 of July 27, the same year, which was confirmed by the provisions included in decision no. 18, hereby declares free of slavery the individuals involved in the trial. As there is no need for any further procedures, the presidency of the court respectfully submits these papers to the Ministry following the adjourning of the proceedings [...].³

In close to ten years of legal wrangling resulting in a lengthy paper trail, there is no indication of Rudăreasa's intention to ever resign in the face of her powerful boyar owner. These records (over 40 pages of hand-written documents detailing Rudăreasa's appearances in court and her repeated pleas for freedom for her and her six children are a testimony of her resolve to pursue the fight for freedom, despite overwhelming odds. Considering that the initial suit was filed in December 1843, nine months after Crown slaves had been legally emancipated (March 1843), it is clear Rudăreasa kept up with the times she lived in and took advantage of new legal opportunities to secure her freedom.

The early 19th century archives of the Ministry of Justice contain several other petitions for emancipation filed by Romani slaves, an indicator that they were attempting to use the courts of law to legally escape slavery to an extent never known before. The list of "freedom suit files" is quite long. Among them are petitions issued by Maria "the Gypsy" for the emancipation of her two children owned by Serdar Nicolae Nica; another by Ioana⁴, Rada's daughter

3 Central National Historical Archives of Romania, Collection Ministry of Justice, Department of Civil Justice, Inventory number, 2393, documentary no. 567, available online at <http://sclavia-romilor.gov.ro/items/show/2677> - Online database of National Centre of Roma Culture from Romania, project coordinator Adrian-Nicolae Furtună.

4 In the first half of the 19th century, no surnames were given in the Romanian Lands, the identification of persons was still made on genealogical, paternal in general, or maternal lines as in the present case, mentioning the father's or mother's first name after the first name of the person concerned.

who filed suit against Sergeant Zincă Carabuloaia; and the formal request for emancipation made by the daughter of late Musa “the Gypsy” who was owned by Teodor Văcărescu.⁵

These documents, stored for more than a century in improper conditions, can today be found in the repositories of the Central National Historical Archives of Romania. Often regarded as “the graveyard of memory”, these archives need to be researched in-depth to bring back to life the voices of other Romani slaves who struggled to gain their freedom. Such initiatives are likely to cast a new light on the destiny of brave men and women who, perhaps more than others, deserve posterity’s recognition.

Forms of Resistance among Roma during the Holocaust in Romania

Just as they had done under conditions of slavery in Romania, Roma responded to persecution and injustice with strategies of resistance during the Holocaust.

In this section, I highlight the main forms of Roma resistance, i.e., institutional and cultural, during the Holocaust in Romania. I will also discuss the forms of resistance manifested by the daring escapes from the Transnistrian camps and the forms of armed resistance in which Roma engaged. First, I will analyse institutional forms of resistance, in the form of petitions by Roma deportees or their relatives exempt from deportation, addressed to Marshal Ion Antonescu, the de facto ruler of Romania during 1940-1944. These petitions were mainly written by Roma men who had been drafted and were serving in the Romanian Army ranks and who requested the repatriation of their families. Some of these petitions were drawn up by individuals; others were filled in a group’s name (collective petitions). Second, I will discuss selected forms of cultural resistance, namely the artistic productions of Roma deported to Transnistria. I will focus primarily on several folk songs and poems that I collected during my interviews with Roma Holocaust survivors. I will also distinguish between cultural forms of resistance among sedentary and nomadic Roma.

Institutional forms of Roma Resistance during the Holocaust in Romania

The analysis of petitions, a form of Romani resistance against the Antonescu regime's deportation measures during World War II, has already been discussed in other works (Chiriac 2018). The classification proposed by Chiriac takes into consideration the following criteria: 1) petitions written by those Roma who had been deported to Transnistria in 1942, seeking to have the deportation measure rescinded by the Romanian authorities; 2) petitions written by Roma men and women whose family members were deported while they were away from home, either plying their trades, visiting relatives or, in the case of some men, serving in the army; 3) petitions drafted by Roma individuals or groups who had been exempt from deportations in 1942, but still lived under the threat of being deported to Transnistria. This classification is based on the degree to which petitioners were affected by the deportation orders.

The alternative classification I suggest assigns a distinct place to the petitions sent by Romani soldiers, whose families were deported to Transnistria. I am proposing this because the said petitions, when examined through the lens of eugenic and biopolitical theories, help us acquire a deeper understanding of the racial underpinnings of the deportation policies. During that time, military service was considered "a service of honour", from which Jewish men were excluded as a result of the adoption of racial laws in Romania (August 8, 1940). This exclusion did not extend to the Roma population. Thus, the abusive deportation of Romani soldiers' families in 1942 raised a set of special problems for the central authorities in Bucharest. According to Marshal Antonescu's orders, the families of soldiers were to be exempt from deportation. However, the local authorities took advantage of the ambiguities in the original deportation orders and included some of these families in the category of "nomads" or "undesirable" Roma, thus contributing to their inclusion on the list of deportees. This misinterpretation of the central authorities' orders produced a number of problems that the system did not anticipate. Some of the principles of the state have been violated, and several special commissions were established to assess the petitions submitted by Roma claiming to have been erroneously included on the deportation lists.

Most of these petitions were addressed to Marshal Ion Antonescu, King Mihai or Queen Mother Elena. A report written by the General Inspectorate

of the Gendarmerie in December 1942 showed that 498 Roma men (war invalids, discharged soldiers or even some on active duty) were deported between June and December 1942, together with their wives and children, amounting to a total of 3,678 people.⁶ Here is a translation of soldier Nae C. Ilie's petition to Marshal Ion Antonescu:

Dear Mister Marshal,

I, the undersigned soldier Nae C. Ilie, Contingent 1938, from the 1st Pioneers Regiment, currently residing in Craiova, Cantemir Street, Nr. 108, come to you, Your Excellency, with tears in my eyes to submit the following complaint.

I have been serving from the time the war was declared until the present day when I was discharged from the army. I participated in all the battles [on the Eastern front]. I am married with three children and have three younger brothers.

Upon my return from the front, I was surprised to find that my family was not at home. My wife had been wandering up and down the roads, starving with our young children.

My parents, namely Stan Gheorghe and his entire family had been sent to Transnistria; the circumstances being of such a nature.⁷

I appeal to you for clemency and request to have my parents brought back to Craiova, considering that my father was neither a robber nor a burglar, but a simple, hardworking man.

At your orders!

The undersigned, Soldier, Nae Ilie.⁸

The tone of this petition is reserved, calm and gentle but emphasises the injustice suffered. One fact to keep in mind is that the soldiers were addressing the supreme leader of the army. The argument advanced by these Roma soldiers was that they were loyal to the fatherland, but the homeland had not

6 ANR, fund IGJ, file no. 43/1943, vol. II, page 87 (see also V. Achim, 2004, vol. II, doc. nr. 278, p. 76- 77).

7 The petition is formulated so as not to harm the authority and decisions of Marshal Ion Antonescu towards the Roma.

8 ANR, fund DGP, file no. 191, page 98, available on-line on www.rholo.research-center-rodimata.com.

been faithful to them as their families suffered while they sacrificed their blood and lives for Romania. Advancing such an argument was a show of courage in the eyes of a dictatorial regime which sought to reduce Roma soldiers to the status of obedient fighting machines and not faithful “sons of the fatherland” who deserved the same honours as Romanian soldiers. The petitions submitted by Roma soldiers during wartime represent, as a group, a major act of resistance against a repressive regime that condemned them to hunger, cold and, eventually, death. By all intents and purpose, these petitions helped unveil the racial underpinnings of the ideology fashioned by the wartime Antonescu regime, pointing to the fact that the deportations of Roma in 1942 were based on racial rather than social criteria.

The analysis of this special case provides us with the necessary tools to examine the phenomenon of Roma deportations to Transnistria through the lens of eugenic and racial theories. By deporting Roma families who had at least one member serving in the army, the Romanian authorities reluctantly admitted that “an error” had been made. By deporting thousands of Romani wives and children while their fathers, husbands and sons were shedding their blood for the fatherland, a number of eugenic and biopolitical core principles of the wartime establishment of the Romanian state were violated.

During the Antonescu regime, the concept of “neam” (translated as “nation” in English) became the framework for redefining and rebuilding a stronger, more racially homogenous Romanian nation. “Neam” was defined as the organic relation between the individual and their fatherland, ancestral traditions, history and blood. The Antonescu regime showed a willingness to include certain groups of Roma in the Romanian nation (“neamul românesc”) mainly because the long period of slavery in the Romanian Principalities had accelerated their assimilation and intermixture with the Romanian population. A number of Romanian researchers in the field of demographics and biopolitics stressed that it was almost “impossible” to distinguish these “half-mixed Gypsies” from the mainstream Romanians. However, nomadic Roma, who had conserved many of their traditional cultural and linguistic traits and showed reluctance to marry outside their communities were labelled as “unassimilable” and were targeted for deportation measures, along with sedentary Roma categorised as extremely poor and perceived as “dangerous” on account of their so-called “propensity” to mix with ethnical Romanians. In line with these principles, all Roma men enrolled in the Romanian Army during World War II were seen as part of the Romanian nation on account of their willing-

ness to defend the fatherland.

Upon realising the extent of the problem, the Romanian authorities decided, in the first instance, to remove all nomadic Roma from the army. Moreover, a distinction needs to be made between individual and collective petitions. On the one hand, individual petitions were sent by Roma who wanted to intervene on behalf of family members on deportation lists or that had already been deported to Transnistria in 1942. Such is the case of a Roma locksmith from Călărași, who issued a petition addressed to Marshal Antonescu for the repatriation of a family member - his 88-year-old mother in law:

Dear Mister Marshal,

I, the undersigned, Grigore M. Dobre, a locksmith at the Călărași-Ialomița Depot, Plevna street Nr. 53, in the name of justice and truth and with the deepest respect, come to you with tears in my eyes to ask the following:

On September 9 this year, by order of the Călărași Police, my mother-in-law Neacșa Drăgan, aged 88, was taken from her house without prior notice and sent to Transnistria. I have no intention of opposing the measures taken by the authorities because I have always been a law-abiding person, but I consider that an injustice was committed when an 88-year-old woman was forcibly removed from her home, a woman who owns property in Călărași, who is, hence, not a beggar and who could not be of any use in Transnistria at her age, especially since she can't walk because of her old age.

Based on the above-mentioned reasons, I wholeheartedly ask you, Mr. Marshal, to issue an order to the competent authorities for the repatriation of my mother-in-law to her home, considering that in doing so, you will have done a great act of justice, knowing that she will be taken care of.

My deepest respect,

The undersigned, Grigore. N. Double.⁹

Archival records indicate that this petition, together with many others, was examined on a case-by-case basis by the competent authorities. The documentary trails left show that these petitions managed to bring the Romanian authorities' attention to the injustices suffered by hundreds and hundreds of

⁹ ANR, fund DGP, file no. 190, page 145, available on-line on www.rholo.research-center-rodinata.com.

Romani families. Through these documents, Roma soldiers and war veterans had the audacity to criticise the failings of the dictatorial Antonescu regime, exposing the abominable deeds perpetrated by the local policemen and gendarmes against them and their families. Grigore M. Dobre, in his petition, exposed such abuse when he emphasised that his elderly and ill mother-in-law, “an 88-year-old woman was forcibly removed from her home”.

With regards to collective petitions, I have identified in the archives a telling example (a proper term of reference) of Romani resistance during World War II. The document discovered is, in fact, a hand-written complaint written on a postcard by a group of Roma from Pitești, deported to the Iedorofca commune in Transnistria. The postcard was addressed to Marshal Antonescu and contained several memorable words that cast a crude light on the discrepancy between vein promises made by the local authorities prior to the deportations (the many things that “they will receive in Transnistria”) and the sad reality of life in Transnistria. The words “do not discard us like rags” illustrate the cruel and unjust treatment they received at the hands of the Antonescu regime. The following is the petition translated by myself.

Dear Mister Marshal,

Respectfully, we Gypsy owners from Pitesti, who served for the nation during the Great War, and now, during the Holy War for the enlargement of our beautiful Romania, come to you with a heart torn by grief. We did not sell out our country - we fought to keep it, and even now we still cry: let us fight! [for the fatherland] instead of being left on the fields, starving to death, with our children full of lice, beaten by the gendarmes and, without any shelter, numb from the cold. Excellency, we beseech you [in] your kindness, to adopt measures to have us returned to our homes. Keeping in mind that we have no criminal records and are honest people, do not discard us like rags. We ask you forthrightly, without any reservation, to send us into battle.

Long live, Romania! Long live His Majesty, King Mihai I! Long live His Excellency, Marshal Antonescu!

The undersigned, Gypsy owners from Pitești,
Argeș County, Iedorofca commune, Ociakov County
Via Odessa station.¹⁰

10 ANR, fund DGP, file no. 192/1942, page 105 – 105v, available on-line on www.rholo.researchcenter-rodinata.com.

The document presented here is an artefact of great importance to the collective memory of Roma deportations due to the scarcity of collective petitions sent directly from forced labour camps or villages from Transnistria. Conversely, the number of collective petitions sent by groups of Roma who lived in fear of being deported is significantly higher. The petitions sent by Roma from Moinești, a town from Bacău County, is telling. The local police force, in a curious display of “excess zeal”, decided to include virtually the entire local Roma community on the list of deportees in 1942. Fear of being deported among the anxious Roma led them to write a collective petition to the Council of Ministers, asking to be exempted from the deportation orders on account of the fact that they had completed their military duty for the country, and were loyal citizens who owned properties and businesses in Moinești.¹¹

These two collective petitions show that Roma did not fit the role of “passive victims” and mobilised, whether in Transnistria or in Romania, to protest either despicable living conditions in the labour camps or the abuses perpetrated by the local police forces tasked with drawing up the list of Romani deportees. Despite these brave protests, Roma efforts did not usually produce immediate or concrete reactions from the authorities. Since their pleas for repatriation were not heard, many Roma resorted to other means to save their families from hunger, cold and, eventually, death, for example by escaping from Transnistrian camps.

Escaping from Transnistrian Camps – Other Form of Resistance during the Holocaust in Romania

The issue of escapes created serious problems for the authorities in Transnistria, but also for those in Romania. To escape from the labour camps and secure passage across the borders, some Roma offered bribes to the train drivers and soldiers guarding them. Such an episode is presented in my book “Roma from Romania and the Holocaust: history, theory, culture” (Furtună 2018). This collection of oral testimonies includes an interview with two survivors: Dura Lențica and Stratan Valentina from Pietriș village, located in Iași County. Lențica recounted how her father escaped from the Covalevca camp and arrived at his home in Romania, where he got hold of some money and

11 National Archives of Romania, Fund: General Directorate of Police, file 189/1942, tabs 6-31

then returned to Transnistria to secure the escape of his whole family:

DURA: All of his four brothers were sent to Transnistria, including their wives and children. He was lucky. He managed to escape, and left us there, in Bug, travelling from Covalevca to Pietriș. We had an uncle living in a village near Pietriș, where he sold his cows and oxen. With the money he returned to Bug so that we too could escape, as we needed to bribe soldiers to escape through the fields.

FURTUNĂ: But how did he manage to escape from Bug?

DURA: In hiding, in the front of the train, where the locomotive was held.

FURTUNĂ: In the locomotive?

DURA: Yes, in the locomotive. He gave some money to the train driver and he hid him there. They didn't search there. That's how he got to Romania. He was almost home when the police caught him and almost beat him to death. They made him strip and struck him on his backside. Left his pale as death. He returned to us, crying, "I'm done, they murdered me!"

FURTUNĂ: But did they release him?

DURA: Yes, they did. They beat him close to death, but they released him. Father cried, "Let me go, I have kids there!" The Romanian authorities asked him, "Where?" "In that village," replied my father. "Then you better go straight there," they replied. "Yes, I will go straight there!" He responded. And they released him. He was pale as death when he reached home. He was crying by the time he arrived. But at least they didn't take his money. He brought us all the money."

Roma who escaped from the Transnistrian camps and were captured by the authorities were sent back to Transnistria; the testimony of two survivors confirming this. Lențița Dura's father returned clandestinely to Romania to obtain enough money from his relatives to ensure the return of his entire family from Transnistria. The money was needed to pay-off soldiers who were demanding higher than bribes than usual to turn a blind eye to the escape of an entire Romani family.

Apparently, the Roma who was behind this daring escape plan from the Kovaliovca camp in the Odessa region was Vasile Stratan, Dura Lențița's and Valentina Stratan's late uncle (the two sisters I interviewed). The entire family was deported from Pietriș village in former Fălciu County (nowadays in Iași County). In 2009, in an interview with Radu Alexandrina, a Roma survivor from Gulia village, Suceava County, she mentions a certain Vasile Stratan as an important figure in the Kovaliovca camp, describing him as having "a big pillow full of Romanian money" (Furtună 2015, 87). A report issued by the General Inspectorate of the Gendarmerie in 1944 showed that more than 35 people returned clandestinely to Pietriș village from Transnistria; Vasile

Stratan and his brothers, Dumitru Stratan and Gheorghe Stratan were mentioned in this document.¹² There is evidence that this was a mass Roma escape from Pietriș (Dolhești) from the Kovaliovca camp. Other sources of oral history reported dozens of other cases of Roma escapees from Transnistria (V. Achim 2004, 324-327).

Iancu Zîmziana, a Holocaust survivor from Fața Luncii neighbourhood (Craiova), remembers one method for returning home was to secure blank repatriation tickets by bribing the Romanian authorities issuing them. Such tickets were not filled with the name and surname of the person whose repatriation was approved by the authorities, in order to facilitate the efforts to forge the official stamps.

Forms of Armed Resistance

Regarding armed resistance, the historical sources regarding the deportation of Roma to Transnistria reveals only one such instance. In 1942, a group of 50-60 Roma from Preajba village attacked the gendarmes who had arrested Petre Moarte, a Roma from their community, in preparation for his deportation. Up to the present day, it is the only known case of mass revolt during the evacuations to Transnistria. Seven of the above-mentioned Roma, considered leaders of the rebellion, were arrested and deported without any other formalities to Transnistria as punishment for this “iniquity”.

Cultural Forms of Resistance among the Roma Deported in Transnistria during the Holocaust in Romania

Conserving the memory of Roma Holocaust through cultural artefacts such as poems or songs constitutes a form of resistance. Since 2007, I started collecting interviews with Roma survivors of the deportation to Transnistria, allowing me to discover different folk songs that can be interpreted as a form of cultural mnemonics regarding the Roma Holocaust in Romania.

One example of a mnemonic device that I wish to present is a poem collected from a Holocaust survivor, Kvec Bacro, deported in June 1942 on account of being a nomadic Roma. Bacro was born in 1931 in Poland in a family of no-

madic Kalderash¹³. After the invasion and occupation of Poland during 1939, as many as 50,000 Poles, military and civilians took refuge from the Nazi oppression in Romania. As a result, for Bacro, aged 11, Romania became his new home, but only for a short while. In June of 1942, the Romanian state decided to deport more than 25,000 nomadic and sedentary Roma to Transnistria, including Bacro and his family.

After surviving the horrors of Transnistria, Bacro became aware of the need of preserving the memories of the Roma deportees. In an act of cultural resistance, he established a museum in his home to ensure the preservation of the memory of nomadic life among the Roma, and the tragedy of the deportations to Transnistria. The ad-hoc “museum” is located in one of the rooms of his house, on the first floor. He invites his grandchildren and great-grandchildren inside his museum and recites to them this poem:

| | |
|---------------------------------|--|
| Mar Devla le’Antoneskos | May God strike Antonescu |
| Vi les, vi leske karaja | Him and his soldiers |
| Ke ov dinea ordin pe-l gava | Because he gave orders concerning the villages |
| Te tzirden le Romen sea | To take all the Roma nations |
| Le Romen le nomatza | The Roma, the nomads |
| Kai ci keren e armata | Who were not drafted into the ar |
| Nakhabghia len trjn paja | He crossed them over three water |
| Thaj shutea len ando-l lagărea. | And he put them in the camps |

The poem starts by cursing Marshal Ion Antonescu and his acolytes because he was responsible for the deportation of the nomadic Roma. In reference to the fact that the order concerned “all the villages, the poem underlines that the life of nomadic Roma in that period was closely linked to the rural Romanian population, who generally benefited from the crafts practised by Kalderash Roma. Moreover, the poem makes a very important distinction between the deportation of the nomadic and the sedentary Roma. The latter were not deported en masse in September 1942, like the nomads were a few months before. The reference to the “three waters” refers to the rivers Prut, Dniester and Bug that nomadic Roma had to cross during the deportations. The last line of the poem can be considered as a statement against those who still deny the Roma Holocaust, stating clearly that the nomads were interned

13 The Kalderash are a nomadic sub-group of Roma who were traditionally tinsmiths who made various household objects such as cauldrons, pots and boilers for distilling alcohol.

in camps. Lastly, the poem shows the distinguishing trait of nomadic Roma was that they were not drafted in the army. In the eyes of most nomads, this was the main reasons they were targeted for deportation. It is also important to stress that these songs make the link between eugenic ideology and Roma folklore, showing that Roma understood their deportation as being based on racial as opposed to social criteria.

However, there are archival documents showing that there were many nomadic Roma serving in the Romanian Army in 1942. For example, the report no. 219,701 / 942 of the Ministry of National Defense, General Staff, Section II, to the Ministry of Internal Affairs, signed by Lt. Colonel V. Nicolae, head of the section, states the following:

I am honoured to announce that the units continue to report the dissatisfaction of the concentrated nomadic Gypsies, whose families have been sent east of the Dniester.” A report written by the General Inspectorate of the Gendarmerie on September 5, 1942, stated that “[t]he execution of the evacuation of nomadic Gypsies in Transnistria found that among those evacuated were some families whose heads of families were at the date of evacuation mobilized on the front. [...] The evacuation of these families was done on the grounds that they lived in dwellings (sălaşe), from which they did not want to separate and without the support of which they could not [have] earned their living alone.” This report recommended a series of remedial measure: “[...]collecting a statement from the families who openly consent to being colonized separately from the other nomadic Gypsies; [...] granting special material advantages, i.e. land, the possibility of living and working; [...] In this way we will see a distinction made by the state between the nomadic Gypsies fighting on the front and the others and through this recognition, the state has nothing to lose.

With regards to cultural forms of resistance among sedentary Roma, I have also collected a number of songs and poems from several Holocaust survivors. Produced by Roma who survived deportation, these forms of folklore hold a special place in my Holocaust research projects. In effect, researchers are virtually racing against time to collect as many interviews as possible from a slowly disappearing Romani population group, i.e., Holocaust survivors aged 75 or even older. Radu Ioanid was one of the first that collected interviews at the beginning of the 1990s. The interviews he published (Ioanid, Kelso and Cioabă 2009) have a higher accuracy due to the fact that the informers were closer to the tragic events that took place during World War II. For example, a survivor he interviewed during the 1990s was typically aged between 70 and 80, meaning that he or she was in his early 20s or early 30s during

the wartime deportations to Transnistria (1942-1944). Thus, the recollections of the interviewed Holocaust survivors during the 1990s were more detailed compared with the interviews I have been conducting since 2007. Despite this fact, I was able to collect from Radu Alexandrina (aged 82 in 2007), a Roma Holocaust survivor, a folk song that resumes the entire phenomena of Roma deportations through the eyes of the victims:

Foaie verde de-avrameasă
 Sâmbătă de dimineață,
 Mi-a sosit jandarmii-n casă,
 N-a sosit ca să mai stea
 A sosit ca să ne ia
 Măi țigane: “Hai la Bug!”,
 “Iaca sula, nu mă duc!”,
 La Transmisia frumoasă,
 Să vă dea pământ și casă,
 Pământ, case nu ne-a dat,
 În colhozuri ne-a băgat,
 Și să vezi țigăncile cum fac
 mămăligile
 Dar să vezi rusoaicile cum își
 plâng căsuțele
 Brigadiru după noi, cu măciuca
 pusă-n mână
 Să facem robotă bună
 Să facem robotă bună

Green leaf of Gratiola
 Saturday in the morning
 The Gendarmes came into my house
 They didn't come to stay, oh
 They came to take us away, oh
 You Gypsy, come with us to Bug
 Well, look at me, I don't want to
 To the beautiful Transmission
 To receive land and houses
 Land and houses they didn't give us, oh
 To the collective farms they took us, oh
 You can see the Gypsy women, oh, How they're
 making maize porridges, oh,
 But you should see the Russian women, oh,
 How they cry after their houses, na na na
 The brigadier was after us With a club in his
 hand, oh
 So that we do a good job
 So that we do a good job

This song reflects the abruptness of the entire deportation operations in 1942. The evocation of “beautiful Transnistria” and the fact that the Roma were promised lands and houses once they arrived in Transnistria are related to the general rumour launched by certain gendarmes and village mayors to convince Roma that they were supposed to be “settled”, not “deported” to Transnistria. Some Roma, particularly those in need, believed this rumour and decided to join the deportation convoys.

The next line of the poem shows how disillusioned the Roma deportees were when they were confronted with the harsh reality of life in Transnistria. Not only they did not receive land or houses, but they were forced to work in labour camps under the brutal supervision of local gendarmes. It should be noted that the Roma did not exclusively lament their cruel fate, but also

that of the local Ukrainian population who were forcefully evicted from their homes. The song ends with mentioning the harsh labour regimen to which the deportees were subjected. This song can be seen as an organic reaction to the treatment Romani deportees were subjected to, and a form of resistance in the Transnistrian camps. Compared to the forms of institutional resistance (petitions, letters, memoirs), these forms of cultural resistance manage to better capture certain aspects of the everyday difficulties experienced by Romani deportees in Transnistria.

Conclusions

My study aimed to demonstrate that Roma, throughout much of their history, were not passive in the face of the oppression to which they were subjected. The forms of resistance developed by Roma in Romania under slavery and through to the Holocaust assumed two main forms: institutional and cultural. The use of institutional forms of resistance during slavery shows that Roma desired to acquire the same rights conferred to “free people”, while during the Holocaust they illustrate a certain desire to return to normalcy and be treated as “regular citizens”. There are no official statistics that centralised the number of freedom case trials. Similarly, we do not know the total number of petitions sent by Roma deportees and their relatives asking for repatriation or, respectively, exemption from deportation orders. What we do know is that the number of Roma petitioners is significant, and archival sources support this claim.

In addition, the official documents written by members of the wartime Antonescu regime need to be complemented by oral sources produced by Roma Holocaust survivors. Most of the official documents preserved in Romanian archives were written from the oppressors’ perspective, being totally at odds with the moving testimonies produced by Roma deportees. However, one should not overlook the difficulties raised by interviewing a Holocaust survivor almost 80 years after the deportations took place. Nonetheless, the details that might be gleaned from such interviews are indeed important for reconstructing Romani resistance acts in the camps of Transnistria. Cultural manifestations, such as songs and poems, have the role of preserving memory at the community level and constitute a form of spiritual resistance. Specific examples of songs and poems of the sedentary and nomadic Roma demon-

strate forms of Roma cultural resistance.

My essay highlighted the main forms of Roma resistance during slavery and the Holocaust. It falls to our generation to preserve and publicly promote the fact that Roma, historically, were not passive, but have always strove to preserve their dignity and freedom in the face of a system that was against them, even when faced with insurmountable odds.

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Chapter 10

Forms of Resistance during the Great Round-up (Spain, 1749-1763)

By Nicolás Jiménez González

The resistance of the Romani People to the rules of the capitalist system was neither ideological nor ethical, it was vital.

- Pastora Filigrana¹

Introduction: the Roma Perspective on History

As a Spanish *Gitano* man, and a sociologist situated within the decolonial school of thought, I find it important to use the decolonial perspective to create a counter-narrative of the history of Roma people. In doing so, I believe that it is imperative to place our capacity for action and agency in the foreground. Hence, my motivations for raising this counter-narrative from a decolonial perspective are twofold:

1. Even though Spain is often proclaimed a model of Roma integration, Spanish Roma are currently in a situation of socio-economic and political stagnation. Despite years of policies aimed at improving the situation of Spanish Roma citizens, their levels of education, health, housing and employment, remain nowhere near the level of the non-Roma majority population. Furthermore, the socio-political position of Roma

1 Pastora Filigrana, *El Pueblo Gitano contra el sistema-mundo. Reflexiones desde una militancia feminista anticapitalista* (México DF: Akal, 2020), 18. There is no English version.

- our visibility and our weak political influence - are seriously deficient; and we continue to be subjected to stereotypes. Structural exclusion, in short, does not allow us to enjoy full citizenship.

2. Roma across Spain remain largely ignored by both the public and the academic community. A lack of interest in the history of the Roma in Spain is reflected among Roma people themselves. As a result of this ignorance, Roma often perceive themselves as a community with no history, language or culture. This is magnified by the lack of Roma history and culture in school curricula, the media, and the mainstream institutions of culture and history.

This is why it is essential that we – as Romani scholars and activists – recover the often-forgotten stories of the past to create our own interpretation of Roma history, putting Roma people as protagonists at the centre. In this way, we challenge the ignorance about who we are as people, which still prevail both among the non-Roma majority and ourselves.

As an activist and a scholar, in this essay, I will focus on one of the darkest chapters of Roma history in Spain – the Great Round-up, which lasted between 1749-1763 – to show how Roma fought against injustice and engaged in diverse strategies of resistance.

A Note on Terminology

In this essay I use the word “Rom”, and its derivatives, to refer to the Spanish *Gitano* population; with this terminology, I wish to imply that we, the Roma from Spain, are part of the larger Romani ethnic group. The Spanish word *Gitano* is pejorative. In fact, the normative and official dictionary of the Spanish language defines it in racist terms: alluding to nomadism and physical features and, even, making it synonymous with “trickster” and “swindler”. However, both in popular discourse and in the associative, academic or institutional spheres, we use *Gitano* with pride to define ourselves. We use it as an adjective to describe those things or creations that we consider our own. In Spanish, I usually use the Spanish expression “Pueblo Gitano” (Romani People), written with capital letters, to highlight my will to fight for our ethnic community’s political emancipation.

In this essay, I use the word resistance in a broad sense, that is, to mean the various strategies used by Roma to avoid oppressive state actions and its institutions, on the one hand, and, to ensure the survival of the community, on the other.

A Note on Methodology

Furthermore, a short note on methodology is necessary. When I was 16 years old, I started my activism in the Asociación Nacional Presencia Gitana. There, I accessed its well-stocked library, and I was fortunate to meet Antonio Gómez Alfaro – a scholar who, at that time, was preparing his doctoral thesis² on the general imprisonment of Roma (Great Round-up) of 1749. He was the first scholar who revealed this unknown chapter of Spanish history. Thanks to him, I was able to see the original documents recovered from different historical archives that decreed the attempted extermination of my ancestors.

This discovery ignited a spark that I have always kept in my memory even though I have not devoted my professional attention to it. As a sociologist by training, I have dedicated myself to understanding and solving the social problems that the Romani People face. However, after my long experience trying to fight antigypsyism, I have understood that promoting knowledge about an episode as tragic as the attempted extermination during Great Round-Up of 1749 is necessary to restore a better social image of the Romani People in Spain. This realisation has guided my work since and led me to recently publish *Resistencias Gitanas*³, written together with Silvia Agüero.

In this essay, I rely on the study and analysis of secondary sources, especially, the various comprehensive works by Antonio Gómez Alfaro and Manuel Martínez Martínez, the main researchers on the Great Round-up in Spain.

2 Antonio Gómez Alfaro, “El expediente general de gitanos” (PhD diss., Universidad Complutense de Madrid, 1989). The paper remains unpublished. There is a short version: Antonio Gómez Alfaro, *La gran redada de gitanos* (Madrid: Presencia Gitana, 1993), available in English [The great Gypsy round-up: Spain, the general imprisonment of Gypsies in 1749] and in French [La grande rafle des gitans: Espagne, l’arrestation générale des Gitans en 1749]

3 https://libros.com/comprar/resistencias-gitanas/?fbclid=IwAR2Uv1jZDNdyvqG-g2IzAs33-Dais7PsrswWXI8dHdRfAY3T_uuJDNJG48

XV Century: the Early History of Oppression and Resistance

It is important to highlight that the 1749 mass imprisonment of Roma in Spain did not appear out of anywhere; on the contrary, over two centuries of anti-Roma legislation provided the social and legal foundation for the Great Round-Up to happen. State-driven anti-Roma persecution in Spain began at the end of the 15th century when the so-called Catholic Monarchs issued the first Pragmática⁴ against the Roma on March 3, 1499,⁵ ordering the Roma to abandon their characteristic way of life, adopt a sedentary lifestyle or be permanently expelled from the Spanish territories.⁶ From that time on, a legal framework was created that made it impossible for Roma to live in Spain and maintain a distinct Romani identity. This is why, since the Roma's presence in the Spanish territories, our ancestors used various resistance strategies to ensure our cultural survival.

The reading of this first anti-Roma Spanish legal text reveals a peculiar immigration law that permitted Roma to stay in its territory on the fulfilment of two requirements. From that point on, it became the backbone of all subsequent official policies, including those aimed at eradicating nomadism and laws regulating certain professions, such as jobs in agriculture under *Gadjikano*⁷ landowners. This created economic dependency and a submissive relationship that would confine Roma status to that of slaves or vassals.

Since then, over 250 more laws were issued against Roma (Gómez Alfaro 2009, 9). Designed to eradicate the Roma people as a distinct ethnic group, they banned and punished everything that sustained Roma cultural identity (for example, Roma way of dressing, Romani language, our way of living). The 1499 *Pragmatica* is the basis of contemporary Spanish antigypsyism, and it is

4 In the Spanish legal tradition, a *pragmática* is a law of the highest rank, issued by the highest authority, with the aim of regulating fundamental aspects of the State.

5 Juan Ramírez, *Libro en que estan copiladas algunas bullas de nuestro muy santo padre concedidas en fauor de la jurisdiccion real de sus altezas et todas las pragmáticas que estan fechas para la buena gouernacion del reyno* (Alcalá de Henares: Estanislao Polono, 1503), 170-172

6 The *Pragmatica* ordered: "Egyptians to take trades or live with lords or leave the kingdom within sixty days". If they were captured within sixty days, they would receive a hundred lashes as punishment and be banished. The second time they were captured they would receive a cut on the ear (as a sign of having been captured) and would be imprisoned for 60 days. When they left prison, they would be banished again. If they were captured for the third time, they would become the slaves of their captors.

7 Meaning "non-Romani", in the Romani language; used as an adjective.

against this institutional and legal framework that the Spanish Roma people have been employing resistance strategies.

Importance of the Roma Resistance Discourse in Spain

Discovering, collecting and interpreting different Roma resistance strategies is a relatively new phenomenon inspired by the Roma Uprising during World War II at the Auschwitz-Birkenau concentration camp in 1944. This event of Roma resistance resonates powerfully among Spanish Roma. In Spain in the 20th century, Roma also had to employ strategies of resistance. During the Spanish Civil War,⁸ many Romani individuals fought against fascism, especially as part of anarchist movements. Such was the case, for example, of a well-known Roma artist and a revolutionary Helios Gomez.⁹ Later, during WWII, in which Spain remained neutral, many Roma of Spanish origin. He was in France when the war broke out and was held captive in French internment and concentration camps. Unfortunately, an in-depth investigation has not yet been carried out to properly document the suffering of Roma people of Spanish origin during this period. For this reason, we are unaware of the participation of Spanish Roma in resistance movements or other acts of heroism.

Although the entire history of Romani People in Spain can be characterised by their resistance to state oppression, in this essay, I will focus my analysis on one historical event: the attempted genocide¹⁰ known as the Great Round-Up,

8 The Spanish Civil War erupted in 1936 and lasted until 1939. During the Spanish Civil War, the Republicans loyal to the left-leaning Popular Front government of the Second Spanish Republic, in alliance with anarchists, of the communist and diverse syndicalist fractions, fought against a revolt by the Nationalists, an alliance of Falangists, monarchists, conservatives and traditionalists, led by a military group. The Nationalists won the war and Spain was ruled under the dictatorship of General Franco until his death in November 1975.

9 Helios Gómez (Seville, May 27, 1905-Barcelona, September 19, 1956) was a trade unionist, anti-Francoist, painter, poster artist, poet and representative of the artistic avant-garde of the early twentieth century. Gómez is known internationally for his avant-garde black and white graphics. In the 1930s he fought against fascism for an ideal of social justice, using his political drawings to this end. He continued to fight after the war and, after spending three years in the concentration camps of France and Algeria, he painted and wrote in solitude and seclusion in rebellion against Franco's dictatorship. He also holds a record for the number of times he was arrested by the authorities, totalling seventy-one times across numerous countries, facing forty-two legal proceedings. Gómez led an extraordinary life, full of events and risks, in the service of revolutionary causes.

10 The term "genocide" was coined by Raphael Lemkin in his 1944 book *Axis Rule in*

perpetrated in the mid-18th century. The analysis of this historical chapter will allow me to propose a succinct taxonomy of resistance strategies carried out by Roma people during that time.

The 1749 Great Round-up¹¹ (La Gran Redada)

Generally, it is left aside that the General Imprisonment of Roma represents an inherently racist process of accumulation of capital and an inherently capitalist radical attempt at racial extermination.

- Helios Fernández Garcés¹²

The 18th century was a time of recovery and reforms in many areas of Spanish life. The first Bourbons¹³ adopted various centralising measures to establish a more efficient state and carried out an internal policy intended to rebuild the economy, politics, and society. During this time, the *Gitano* problem was not a priority in the Court of Philip V when Ensenada¹⁴ was called to power in 1743. However, measures were taken against Roma to exert greater control over this population, starting with the censuses, and continuing with attempts to concentrate Roma in certain physical locations. Specifically, the first Bourbon maintained his predecessors' laws, but incorporated one novelty in the new anti-Roma Pragmatics of 1717 – Roma families were only allowed to settle in one of 41 cities. These localities were chosen because they met the criteria of having sufficient police resources and infrastructure to monitor and control the Roma population.

Occupied Europe, and is defined as the intentional action to destroy a people in whole or in part.

11 Gómez Alfaro called this historic event *la Gran Redada* (translated into English as the Great Round-up) but also used the expression “general prison for gypsies,” while Martínez Martínez often referred to this episode as “attempted extermination.”

12 H. Fernández Garcés, “*La Gran Redada de los Gitanos desde una perspectiva decolonial*” (unpublished), conference given at Instituto Alicantino de Cultura Juan Gil-Albert (Alicante, Spain, February 22nd, 2017). Translation is my own.

13 Bourbon (*Borbón* in Spanish) is the current reigning royal house of the Kingdom of Spain. It comes from Philippe of France, Duke of Anjou, grandson of Louis XIV of France, proclaimed as King of Spain in 1700 under the name of Philip V (1700-1746).

14 Zenón de Somodevilla y Bengoechea, 1st Marquess of Ensenada (April 20, 1702 in Hervías, La Rioja, – December 2, 1781, Medina del Campo, Valladolid). He came to occupy the positions of Secretary of the Treasury, War and Navy and the Indies. He was State Councillor during three reigns, those of Philip V, Ferdinand VI and Charles III.

In this context, the attempted extermination of the Roma people of 1749 - also known as the Great Round-Up or General Imprisonment of the Roma - took place. The raid was set in motion simultaneously across Spain on July 30, 1749, and aimed at capturing all Roma in the Spanish territory. The Round-up was authorised and organised by the Spanish authorities, the Monarchy and the Catholic Church, leading to the arrest of almost all Spanish Roma, ranging between 9,000 to 12,000 people.

The stated objective of the Great Round-up was “to exterminate them [Spanish Roma] at once” (Martínez Martínez 2014, 26). In doing so, the authorities were ruthless: men and children over seven years old were imprisoned in the marine arsenals of Cartagena (Murcia), La Carraca (Cádiz) and Ferrol (La Coruña) to rebuild the Spanish naval power lost after the War of Succession; women, girls and boys under the age of seven were incarcerated in hospices, hospitals and houses of mercy in Saragossa, Valencia and Málaga (Martínez Martínez 2014). More than 600 Romani women with their children under seven years of age were imprisoned in the Real Casa de Misericordia of Zaragoza,¹⁵ in the exact space where the Pignatelli Palace stands today, home to the Autonomous Government of Aragon.

During the Round-up, the prisoners’ properties were confiscated by the authorities; an inventory and closure of the houses were carried out to prevent their looting. After being announced at a public auction, properties were auctioned to finance the operation itself.

Although the objective of the Great Round-up was to capture and apprehend all Roma residing in Spain at the time, some people managed to escape - especially nomadic families, and those who for various reasons were absent from their usual places of residence. On August 12, 1749, to complete the capture of all these people, an additional raid was carried out (Gómez Alfaro, 2009, 243). On the other hand, given the disorder in the classification of ethnicity, some Roma were granted the status of *castellanos viejos*¹⁶ (Old

15 José Luis Gómez Urdáñez, “La Real Casa de Misericordia de Zaragoza, cárcel de gitanas (1752-1763)” in *Estudios en Homenaje al profesor Teófanos Egido*, ed. María de los Ángeles Sobaler Seco and Máximo García Fernández (Valladolid: Junta de Castilla y León, 2004), 329-343.

16 A Pragmatic of May 4, 1633, prohibited the use of the name “Gitano” (Gómez Alfaro 2009, 114) effectively erasing the Roma from historical sources. From there, the Roma began to be called “castellanos nuevos” (new Castilians). Immediately, this new denomination became as well known as the previous one, which is why some Romani families who were settled for several generations looked for ecclesial certificates that affirmed their condition as “castellanos viejos” (old

Castilians). Due to the authorities' mistakes, there were several individuals with this status among those captured, which led to various complaints to the authorities.

In fact, on September 7, 1749, a meeting of the *Junta de Gitanos*¹⁷ (Board of Gypsies) at the Council of Castile was called to analyse the development of the raid in the city, concluding that those captured persons who possessed a Castilian status or were legitimately married or "living in a correct manner" should be released. This partial pardon, produced through the Royal Instruction of October 28, 1749 (Gómez Alfaro 2009, 247), led to the liberation of many Roma. However, more than 2,000 people remained in prison until 1763 (Martínez Martínez 2014, 52).

The General Imprisonment of Roma lasted until 1763 when the general pardon was decreed. On June 16, 1765, King Charles III authorised Julián de Arriaga, Secretary of State for the Navy, to communicate his resolution of pardon without the need to open new procedures, thus, ending the Roma extermination project (Gómez Alfaro 1993, 113).

It should be highlighted that the 1749 Great Round-Up is the oldest-known attempted genocide against the Roma people carried out in the Spanish territories. To understand this better, a note of clarification is necessary. The term "genocide" did not yet exist in the language of the time; in official documents, the term "extermination" was used. However, the authorities did not intend to immediately "exterminate" the Roma population in prisons. Instead, they wanted the destruction of Roma people to be the consequence of imprisoning men and women separately, making it impossible for a new generation of Roma to be conceived. Therefore, from today's perspective, the General Imprisonment complies with the contemporary definition of the term "gen-

Castilians). Being "old Castilian" meant not residing in Romani neighbourhoods but mingling with non-Roma neighbours, not meeting other Romani families in public or in private, marrying non-Roma people, and fulfilling the obligations of being Catholic.

¹⁷ Junta de Gitanos was created inside of the Consejo de Castilla (Council of Castile, the chief body dealing with administrative and judicial matters of the realm) in 1721 to find a strategy aimed at ending the *Gitano* problem (Martínez Martínez 2014, 22). To date, neither the composition of this board, nor what its functions were, is known in depth.

ocide”¹⁸. Furthermore, the consequences of the Great Round-Up persist until today: the family structures were destroyed and, therefore, the traditional channels of cultural transmission were broken. Thus, eventually, the capacity to use the Romani language was lost; until today, the Romani language in Spain has not been revived.

Types of Roma Resistance during the Great Round-Up

The desire to return to their freedom makes them so resolute and still angry that it is rare the day that they do not commit one or another attack.

- Governing Board of the Royal house of Mercy of Saragossa¹⁹

Still today, the Great Round-up is a historical episode which remains little known to the general, non-Roma public, nor has academic historiography paid much attention to it. Furthermore, to date, there is no comprehensive study on our people’s resistance during this time.

Nonetheless, there is evidence that our ancestors carried out different acts of resistance both at the time of the Great Round-up and throughout the period of incarceration. Below I describe the typology of these different acts of resistance which aimed at the physical but also cultural survival of the Roma people, ranging from “looking for inclusion” (creating first Spanish Romani organisation), to confrontation (uprising and escaping) and legal resistance (using legal tools).

Looking for inclusion

In 1753, in the midst of the General Imprisonment, a group of Roma from

18 The Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide defines genocide as: “any of the following acts committed with intent to destroy, in whole or in part, a national, ethnical, racial or religious group, as such:

(a) Killing members of the group; (b) Causing serious bodily or mental harm to members of the group;

(c) Deliberately inflicting on the group conditions of life calculated to bring about its physical destruction in whole or in part;

(d) Imposing measures intended to prevent births within the group;

(e) Forcibly transferring children of the group to another group.

19 Report sent to the Marquis de la Ensenada on September 4, 1753.

Triana²⁰ (Sevilla) led by Sebastián Miguel de Varas y Miranda, who had managed to avoid prison, decided to establish the first brotherhood of Roma in Spain - Hermandad de Señor de la Salud and María Santísima de las Angustias²¹, aka “Los Gitanos”, in Seville. Although it is a religious organisation, the creation of this brotherhood had the objective of improving the Roma’s social image by emphasising their true faith and religious commitment through active participation in ecclesiastical acts. This strategy did not free Roma people from prison but did create the idea that there are Roma families that are respectable, integrated, and part of society.

Confrontation

During the period of imprisonment, organised armed resistance also took place. For example, a group of 13 Roma fleeing troops took refuge in the Monastery of Santa María de la Victoria (El Puerto de Santa María, Cádiz) where they resisted for two weeks. Finally, on August 12, 1749, they were captured when the ecclesiastical authority authorised the Army to enter the Monastery (Martínez Martínez 2014, 33). Another example of armed resistance happened in the hermitage of San Andrés (El Viso del Marqués, Ciudad Real) during the first days of August 1749, where a group of more than 40 Roma managed to resist arrest in the massive imprisonment action of the authorities. The Army’s intervention and the justices of El Viso del Marqués and Calzada de Calatrava were necessary for their capture (Martínez Martínez 2014, 40).

These two examples show that, at least in part, our ancestors were not willing to be captured peacefully, and they resisted as they could. We must consider the relevance of these acts of resistance, taking into account that they were families (men and women of all ages) who faced professional and armed

20 Triana was a *gitanería* (a Romani neighbourhood, a mahàla) from the 16th century till 1957, when Civil Governor Hermenegildo Altozano Moraleda, in collusion with the City Council, carried out the destruction of the Triana Romani community on account of speculative urban development. Triana was one of the places where flamenco art was born throughout the 19th century and part of the 20th, with mythical dynasties of Romani bullfighters and singers such as the Cagancho and the Pelaos. On July 20 and 21, 1936, at the beginning of the Spanish Civil War, Triana was the scene of heavy fighting between rebel soldiers and leftist militants who tried to prevent the triumph of the military coup. After the victory of the Francoist troops, Triana suffered a harsh repression.

21 “Historia”, Hermandad, Hermandad Sacramental Los Gitanos <https://www.hermandadde losgitanos.com/historia/>

soldiers. Furthermore, there is evidence that our Roma ancestors, men and women, rebelled against the Great Round-Up from its start. Roma eagerness to regain their lost freedom prompted them to engage in continuous escape attempts to return to their places of origin, searching for their relatives, particularly wives and children. In fact, according to Martínez Martínez, between 1752 and 1765, a total of 335 escape attempts by Roma boys and adults were recorded; it is estimated that 85% of these attempts were successful (Martínez Martínez 2014, 72). Such acts of resistance - armed uprisings and escapes - happened in La Carraca where a first mutiny took place on August 8, 1749 (Martínez Martínez 2014, 55); and in Cartagena, where after completing the work, 16 Roma prisoners destined for the galleys, led by Juan Castellón, rebelled and fled in the first massive escape attempt of July 22, 1750 (Martínez Martínez 2014, 71).

It is important to highlight that there are also multiple examples of Romani women rebelling against their imprisonment. On the night of January 18 to 19, 1753, after having opened a breach in the wall armed with nails that they had previously pulled from the roof beams, 52 Romani women fled (Martínez Martínez 2019, 85) from the Royal House of Mercy in Saragossa.²² This massive escape was led by a Romani woman named Rosa Cortés (Martínez Martínez 2015, 291). Likewise, at the end of August 1753, 40 women escaped, helping each other climb the four and a half meter-high wall; 12 Romani women imprisoned in the Royal House of Mercy in Saragossa organised a riot in June 1758 (Martínez Martínez 2019, 87).

Legal resistance

During the time of the Great Round-Up, many Roma knew the law and used available legal tools to resist unjust treatment. The legal resistance was of such intensity that on November 15, 1751, it prompted the Madrid Chamber of Mayors to order all Roma who approached the Court with the request of freeing their relatives to be sent to prison (Gómez Alfaro 2009, 253).

Another moment of legal action was in 1753 when after four years, the Great Round-up came to an end. Although Roma people had been imprisoned because of their ethnicity, they have often been regarded as vagrants and beggars, with existing anti-vagrancy legislation applied to them. Trying to benefit

22 The Royal House of Mercy in Saragossa, current headquarters of the General Council of Aragon, that is, of the Aragonese Government, served as a prison for more than six hundred Romani women.

from an analogical interpretation of the law on vagrants and beggars – which established a 4-year sentence for such “crimes of vagrancy” – several Roma presented a request asking for their freedom after having been imprisoned for four years (Gómez Alfaro 1993, 97-98).

Conclusions

These few stories of resistance show, contrary to popular perception, that we as a people have not been apathetic and passive in the face of our own historical destiny. The three types of resistance proposed (inclusion, confrontation and legal resistance), practised during the Great Round-up, show that our ancestors used the means at their disposal to resist against the ominous power of the State.

Knowledge of Roma history in Spain is still largely unknown, both among the Roma community and the general public. Greater awareness of this aspect of the history of Spanish Gypsies would contribute to improving the social image of Roma people and, in this way, combat antigypsyism. The Roma must be included as part of the main canon of Spain’s history, as its integral participants. Therefore, it is necessary to implement public policies to support historiographic research and dissemination on the Roma past, which must be well endowed financially and planned and developed by Roma experts and researchers.

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Chapter 11

French Roma and Travellers' Resistance: a Long Struggle

By Lise Foisneau

The role of Roma and Travellers in the French Resistance has only been described very recently, and its study is not without many methodological, epistemological and political challenges¹. Knowledge of the French Resistance has only been able to progress thanks to oral and written testimonies. However, those of Roma and Travellers' resistant fighters are lacking. How can this be explained? And how can one write today a history of a clandestine struggle that has left almost no written record, without the testimonies of actors and witnesses? Has the contemporary historian come too late?

Yet, contrary to what may have been written about Roma remembrance, memories of the war are the subject of continuous transmission between the different generations of French Roma and Travellers. Therefore, the historian's work must shift from analysing the narratives of direct witnesses to investigating the history of the memory of past suffering and struggles. From this perspective, resistance among Travellers and Roma during World War II echoes multiple forms of resistance: those that were deployed well before and after this world conflict, well before and after the genocide, from the most spectacular to the humblest.

The following essay is an invitation to interpret resistance to discriminatory state mechanisms not as exceptional historical moments, but as a necessity

¹ The first thematic study on Roma and Traveller resistance during World War II in France was carried out by Lise Foisneau and Valentin Merlin in 2018. It was based on the analysis of more than 60 departmental archives and the collection of testimonies. (Foisneau and Merlin, 2018).

that shapes the conditions of existence of French Roma and Travellers in the long run². This paper was written a few days after the fire at the Lubrizol factory in Rouen (France) in September 2019, alongside the inhabitants of the Petit-Quevilly caravan site. Their grandparents lived through World War II in internment camps for “nomads” in Rennes, as a result of which their ability to travel was reduced. Their current place of residence is a dedicated caravan site, one of the fenced areas in which gens du voyage³ are legally obliged to live. It was set up only a few dozen metres from the Lubrizol factory. On September 26, 2019, inhabitants of the caravan site, were left alone in the face of the disaster, and received no help, despite their significant vulnerability. A multi-faceted resistance was organised by all generations of the Travellers of Petit-Quevilly in response, a battle which would not be their first.

Introduction

French Roma and Travellers’ uprisings are among the most spectacular of the last decade: Saint-Aignan, Moirans, Roye.⁴ They have also been among those most severely repressed by the state and have failed in attracting the general public’s sympathy. Yet, the reasons for rebellion concerned life and death: the murder of a young man by police during a routine car check, or the request that a son or brother in prison be allowed to attend a funeral. It is only in the face of death, when there is nothing more to lose, that Travellers’ action becomes direct.

The absence of splinters the rest of the time does not mean that the battle is not continuous. “Every day is a permanent struggle for survival, but silence

2 This article is a translation from French of a text published in *Lundi Matin*, in October 2019. <https://lundi.am/Resistances-voyageuses-un-long-combat> The translation of this text has been improved thanks to Camellia Bojtor. To her go my sincere thanks for helping me improve the original text.

3 In France, gens du voyage (“people who travel” or “travellers”) is a term used by the government to categorise various itinerant populations. The legal definition of gens du voyage is rather broad, and includes all persons having had neither home nor fixed residence for more than six months in a member state of the EU. In reality, people defined in that way belong to Romani groups that have been traveling around France for several centuries.

4 These three cities are places where uprisings have taken place. French media spoke about these events as looting, vandalism or riots: <https://www.lefigaro.fr/actualite-france/2010/07/18/01016-20100718ARTFIG00170-des-gens-du-voyage-saccagent-une-commune-du-loir-et-cher.php>

is de rigueur for our peace,”⁵ says Anna Lagréné-Ferret, born in 1942 in a Nazi camp in Belgium. On the dedicated caravan sites,⁶ on private land owned by Travellers or on land occupied illegally, Travellers, Manush, Roma, Sinti, Yenish and Gypsies are under uninterrupted surveillance. This surveillance is carried out by administrations “specialising in *gens du voyage*”: police officers, gendarmes, social workers, educators, caravan site managers, caravan site guards, etc. Why? “Because they want to keep Travellers, they want to keep us like that, as eternal needy people”, explains Marius Lussi, born in 1935, nephew of one of the liberators of the city of Grenoble in August 1944.

Travellers – or *gens du voyage* according to the official category defined by French law – are victims of a system based on a surreptitious form of house arrest: administrative constraint is the tool of a sedentarisation policy. In response, French Roma and Travellers have put in place daily and discreet tactics of nonviolent resistance, which metamorphoses from time to time into sudden blows of force. To understand these tactics, we must recall how a will to control the so-called “nomads,” then the “gens du voyage,” was expressed within the context of the French Republic. For it is indeed in this repressive framework, over a century old, that resistances are built, transformed and perpetuated.

French Attempts to Assimilate So-called “Nomads”

In 1907, a question was raised in the Chamber of Deputies: “How does one recognise a *romanichel*?” No one questioned it. The deputies simply proposed criteria that said more about their prejudices than about the populations concerned. “It is a nomad who does nothing.” “They go to the South in winter and to the North in summer.” “They are people without nationality determined by

5 The quotations are taken from interviews conducted by Lise Foisneau and Valentin Merlin as part of their research on the role of Roma in the French Resistance.

6 In France, a dedicated caravan site (*aire d'accueil*) is a site reserved for caravans and camping cars that belong to people whom the French government calls *gens du voyage* (“people who travel” or “travellers”). A caravan site is a fenced-in area, somewhat like a parking lot, completely paved with asphalt, and with a gate controlling access. The state and local councils are legally obligated to construct these caravan sites and therefore they select their location and design (Foisneau 2017).

7 Question from Mr Jourde. Inquiry by Fernand David. Session of October 29, 1907. Chamber of Deputies.

a regular civil status, without a profession and without domicile.” A member of parliament added: “You can recognise *Romanichels* by the following signs: first there is a sign of race that you know as well as I do.”⁸ But as it would have been unconstitutional to put forward such a “sign of race”, the parliamentarians agreed to create a new administrative category from scratch, that of “Nomad”, which identifies *Romanichels* with an itinerant way of life, presumably their peculiar one. However, they explicitly introduced into law the notion that the individuals who were to be targeted by this category were dangerous: in other words, the “exact idea that the nomad is, almost always, a criminal.”⁹ Since this population was considered dangerous, deputies concluded that they should be permanently surveilled: the law of July 16, 1912, ordered all “nomads” over the age of 13 to carry an anthropometric booklet which had to be stamped each time they stopped in a village or left. The “nomad” booklet was accompanied by a “collective booklet,” in which all members of a “family” were registered and required to travel together (Delclitte 1995).

Under the Third Republic, control of “nomads” equated to surveillance of the “family” or “tribe”, because in the eyes of the French legislator and administration, the relationship between “nomads” was based solely on kinship. There is no better way to deprive a group of political recognition than to make it a “tribe”. Unsurprisingly, two dominant stereotypes describe “Gypsies” as being “all cousins” and “knowing each other”. Since the Third Republic, when an incident in the news concerns a “nomad” or a member of the *gens du voyage*, the public authorities explain it using family vocabulary that immediately depoliticises the event. In other words, in the eyes of the French governments, if Travellers rebel, it is to defend a son or a brother, driven by consanguinity or solidarity, but not to defend their rights or fight against injustice.

Thanks to the transgenerational recording of “nomads” and their families, even before Pétain was appointed head of the state in July 1940, the prohibition of travel among “nomads” was decreed on April 6, 1940 (Hubert and Filhol 2009). In over fifty internment camps in the occupied and free zones, about 10,000 “nomads” were interned, while another 30,000 were assigned to residence or hid throughout the territory of occupied France¹⁰. Those who

8 Inquiry by Fernand David. Session of October 29, 1907. Chamber of Deputies.

9 See F. Challier, *La nouvelle loi sur la circulation des nomades : loi du 16 juillet 1912*, Thèse pour le doctorat, Université de Paris, Faculté de droit, Paris, 1913, p. 318.

10 To be assigned to residence [assignation à résidence] is a form of house arrest. So called “nomads” were not allowed to walk outside a certain perimeter around their trailer or house.

were assigned to residence, deprived of the right to travel and therefore to engage in itinerant income-generating activities, lost all their possessions during the war: their clients, their wealth, their animals, their movable property, and their trailers, which they sometimes had to burn for heating. The internees were confronted with the brutality of the French concentration camps, with the *gnouf* [camp's prison], starvation, cold, deportation and the death of their loved ones.

Facing such conditions, Roma and Travellers managed to establish networks of solidarity, rescue and, in many cases, participated in armed resistance. Thus, the voice of Angèle Siegler, 20 years old in 1941, rose from the concentration camp of Choisel (Loire-Atlantique): “You have rotten blood, you bunch of cows! We will make a revolution in the camp and I don’t care if I get ten years in prison!” (Foisneau and Merlin 2018). Roma and Travellers who were assigned to residences were among the first to refuse the *Service du travail obligatoire* (Compulsory Work Service)¹¹ and to join the *maquis* (underground resistance) in large numbers in their areas where they lived. Despite Roma being among both the liberators and concentration camps internees did not prevent the provisional government in 1944 maintaining the prohibition of travel and internment of “nomads” until July 1946.

The story doesn’t end there. In a July 1946 telegram bringing the compulsory residence and internment of “nomads” on French territory to an end, the Ministry of the Interior ordered prefects to “take advantage of certain happy results”¹² of the policy targeting “nomads” during the war. Furthermore, he asked for the law of July 16, 1912, to be applied once again with great severity. But most “nomads” were unable to return to the road, as the war had left them impoverished, and very often deprived of their homes and means of transport. The opening of the French camps was a particularly unworthy moment in national history: even though many of them no longer had shoes or trailers, “nomads” were obliged to present their anthropometric booklets daily. Little by little, some families eventually left the places where they were assigned to residence without compensation for what they had lost (Foisneau 2020). The authorities did not concern themselves with those who did not come back

11 Service du travail obligatoire organised the transfer of hundreds of thousands of French workers to Germany, against their will.

12 Telegram from the Ministry of the Interior to prefects. 22 July 1946. Saône-et-Loire Divisional Archives. 1 W 475.

from the Nazi camps.

In March 1949, an Interministerial Commission for the Study of Questions of Interest to the Nomadic Population was established. It was agreed that the outcome of this commission would be “the voluntary sedentarisation of most of the people concerned”. In a note, the members of this commission wrote that “the massacres [...] (the Germans sent many Gypsies to the crematorium or used them for medical experiments) have revealed the danger of these measures, which are all too often inhuman and ineffective” (Bordigoni 2013, 174). The need to repress “nomads” was reaffirmed and the Roma genocide was analysed as a shift away from “ineffective” repressive policies. The same commission then proposed replacing these policies with “a more comprehensive policy aimed both at enabling the normal human development of Gypsies and at eliminating the disadvantages inherent in their presence for the populations in whose midst they live” (Bordigoni 2013, 174). It is in such a context of state hostility that Travellers, Manush, Roma, Sinti, Yenish and Gypsies resumed the course of their lives after six years of being assigned to residence or imprisonment.

In the 1960s, the Ministry of Public Health and Population ordered a major survey on “the living conditions of populations of nomadic origin.”¹³ The purpose of this survey was to gather ideas on the best way to “hasten the evolution towards a sedentary lifestyle for the nomads”. The idea that had the most success was to propose the creation of “parking centres that could help the settlement and reintegration into society”.¹⁴ These centres were to have “specialised” schools – because “if the young nomad is clever, he is used to an unconstrained life”. This was in addition to workshops “that would encourage the transformation of itinerant jobs” and a system of surveillance allowing “better public security (end of thefts, improvement of hygiene).”¹⁵ This survey undoubtedly foreshadows contemporary “dedicated caravan sites for gens du voyage”.

Shortly after this survey, the 1912 law was abolished. By the law of January 3, 1969, the anthropometric booklet was replaced by the *carnet de circulation* (circulation booklet) which had to be stamped every three months by

13 French National Archives, 19870256/2.

14 Answer by Bordeaux prefecture to survey n° 1 on nomadic populations or of nomadic origin. May 1960. Gironde Departmental archives. 584 W 84.

15 Ibid.

the police. At the same time, despite freedom of movement being a constitutional right, municipal orders prohibiting parking became more and more frequent throughout the 1970s. On account of the prohibitive environment, the first “parking centres for Travellers” were opened, such as Laval, 1968, or Angoulême, 1973. Other experiments were carried out, for example at Plan-de-Grasse in 1966, where the “Hameau tzigane” (Gypsy Hamlet) was created, conceived as a place of sedentarisation. Prefectural reports described it as the “mother unit” of a three-stage project: “conditioning period, pre-socialisation period, socialisation period” (Foisneau and Merlin 2019). Of course, this experiment was never presented in these terms to the inhabitants who had to pay rent to live in a supervised place.

At the same time, the Besson law of May 31, 1990, legally obligated municipalities with more than 5,000 inhabitants to build a caravan site, forcing *gens du voyage* to stay in a location not of their own choosing. Whereas the Third Republic had introduced individual and family surveillance of “nomads”, the Fifth Republic introduced collective surveillance by controlling spaces and defining the places where *gens du voyage* were allowed to live. In administrative lexicon, this transformation resulted in the replacement of the singular “nomad” by the plural “gens du voyage”: the Fifth Republic was no longer concerned only with the travel of the “family of nomads”, but also with controlling of their residences. Indeed, what could be easier than to control a group by assigning it a residence?

Dedicated caravan sites were gradually implemented throughout France. The so-called *gens du voyage* were forced to park in “dedicated caravan sites” to “encourage their adaptation to the constraints of social life”. Legislators conceived these caravan sites as places of “social action” where the trinity of integration (health, schooling, professional integration) was to reign. In addition to providing accommodation for caravans, social workers, educators or, again, child medical protection were ever-present at the site to encourage adaptation among a population deemed to be resistant. The caravan sites implied not only forced residence but also submission to the constant observation and solicitation of mediators and social workers, not to mention the frequent passage of the police.

On top of the system of mandatory nomadic encampment, there are two disparate but convergent conditions of such camps: the caravan sites are located in polluted environments, and are managed by private or public companies whose practices very quickly proved problematic for inhabitants. The

places chosen for the construction of the caravan sites were mostly neglected areas that could not be used for other purposes: they were in close proximity to motorways, busy roads, electrical grids, factories (sometimes classified as Seveso¹⁶), railways, waste disposal sites and so on. Even though the legislator's declared intention was to set up a policy to improve the health of *gens du voyage*, local authorities very often chose locations for caravan sites that created health and environmental inequalities (Foisneau 2017). It is therefore not surprising that a 2009 WHO sponsored report written in partnership with local authorities states that if *gens du voyage* suffer from certain diseases, it is on account of their lifestyle; more specifically because they live in caravans, with no mention of the high-risk environment in which they are forced to live.¹⁷

Besides a generally high level of pollution, the caravan sites often presented deteriorated internal health and environmental conditions linked to their management. In the 1990s, companies "specialising" in the construction and management of caravan sites were set up. As new neo-liberal public policies promoted the delegation of public services, towns and cities gave a small handful of companies a virtual monopoly on the public caravan site business. While these companies have expertise in construction and administrative management, some of them present themselves as "specialists of Travellers". A company of this type, L'Hacienda, explains that its "management participates in an essential principle: the accountability of the Traveller". Where do such companies derive their legitimacy? Vago, for example, became famous in the business because of its management software of water and electricity. The delegation of public service was determined by a computer algorithm that controls, manages and pays for water and electricity, with obvious economic interests at stake. As an example, the holding company New Deal Concept, to which Vago belongs, presents itself as a "specialist in the management of caravan sites", and had a turnover of 14,000,000 euros in 2014, of which Vago's activities generated 11,000,000. Financial analysts anticipated that in 2015 the holding company's turnover would reach almost 30 million euros by

16 The term "Seveso" refers to the European "Seveso" Directive which requires the identification of industrial establishments with major risks.

17 *La santé des gens du voyage*. Comprendre et agir, Réseau Français des Villes-Santé de l'OMS, 2009

2020¹⁸. Not only are *gens du voyage* forced to reside on designated sites, but they also have to pay a significant price in order to live there.¹⁹

Contemporary Forms of Oppression and Resistance

In addition to legal provisions that restrict the freedoms of French Roma and Travellers and force them to live in difficult conditions, the population also faces other unspoken threats.

The first type of intimidation occurs when residents criticise the maintenance or management responsible for the caravan sites. Managers excel at finding reasons to evict those who complain too openly: exceeding parking time, accounting reasons, accusations of damage, accusations of carrying out an unregulated activity in the area, and so on. By way of rules that they interpret as they see fit, the managers of the caravan sites have discretionary power over the inhabitants. When they succeed in evicting residents who have expressed opposition to them, some managers put them on a list of undesirable persons. This blacklisting practice is well known but completely illegal. However, it makes it impossible for certain *gens du voyage* to fulfil the legal conditions for stopping since the caravan sites have become inaccessible to them (Foisneau 2018).

Tensions can become even more wrought when managers frighten *gens du voyage* with threats of legal action. It is not uncommon for some managers, in retaliation for residents' claims, to say that they might alert the "police" or the "financial authorities". For a variety of reasons, *gens du voyage* do not have much chance of convincing a court even when they have acted on the right side of the law (Fassin 2015). How many Roma or Travellers know someone who has spent several months or even years in prison for a crime or misdemeanour they did not commit? Travellers also know that sentence reduction when living in a caravan is not possible any more than wearing an electronic bracelet. Intimidation by the threat of a lawsuit is, therefore, a very effective means of discouraging *gens du voyage* from claiming their rights.

However, the most violent way of intimidating *gens du voyage* is to

18 Bassin d'Arcachon. "La gestion des aires d'accueil des gens du voyage porte la croissance de New Deal Concept", *Le journal des entreprises*, 19 février 2015.

19 To read more on French anti-Gypsyism (Mile 2020).

target them as parents. It is easy to put pressure on Travellers by keeping a close watch on their relationships with their children. How many Travellers have at one time or another experienced extreme fear of having their children taken away? This deep seated fear is easily evoked. For example, a caravan site mediator visits the site on a Wednesday afternoon and comments on the fact that the children are still in their pyjamas. Such remarks are sometimes enough to make the inhabitants suddenly leave their place of residence. What can you do when you are classified as *gens du voyage* and live in a caravan, however well kept, to convince the social services that you are a good parent? Everybody knows that sometimes the threat becomes reality: the child is placed in foster care.

Confronted with a regime of control and encampment, French Roma and Travellers developed subtle resistance tactics, engaging in disobedience without putting their families at risk or losing their freedom. The first form of resistance is to mock the administration or the police as soon as their backs are turned, thereby challenging the power dynamics between the authorities and the Roma. For example, an identity check turns into a coded farce through the use of Manouche or Romani language, thereby going unnoticed by the police. Prior to 1960, many police reports recorded the identity of Mr. Minch (pussy) or Mrs. Gaitcho (sperm) (Foisneau 2016). The second form of resistance is more direct: to protest against the poor state of the caravan site or the lack of functional sanitary facilities. One after the other, the inhabitants gradually stop paying for the caravan site where they are parked and end up leaving without settling their debts. Finally, there is sometimes open resistance: deciding to block a caravan site, demonstrating at the entrance and preventing staff from accessing their offices. This was the case in the town of Castelsarrasin in 2016, where Travellers blocked the caravan site to protest against the introduction of a badge requiring the prepayment of water and electricity. Equipped with banners stating: “No to the Badge. We are not dogs,” the inhabitants managed to hold the caravan site for a few hours.

Outside of the caravan site, in public, the most common and visible Roma and Travellers resistance strategy is to block traffic (“Operation Snail”) with a convoy of caravans. By blocking access to a road, or slowing down traffic, Travellers demonstrate against the absence of municipality caravan sites, which effectively criminalises them, with all the associated consequences. While some Travellers give up travelling during the winter months, they get back on the road in the summer months. As caravan parking is problematic in

most districts in France, Travellers form large groups during the summer season. They travel together in large numbers in a bid to impose themselves on local authorities, announcing their arrival several months in advance, but the authorities rarely permit them to stay. The only option left available is to set up “stopping places” without permits. Every summer, roadblocks take place almost everywhere in France to demonstrate against the lack of legal places to stop. In most cases, the local press relays only the voice (or actions) of mayors who complain about the “invasion” or “savage occupation” of such areas by *gens du voyage*.

Finally, it is not only on account of finding a place to stay that the so-called *gens du voyage* rise up, but also when it comes to questions of honouring the memory of someone who ought to be buried, or the death of a loved one killed by the police. When a gendarme killed Luigi Duquet during a road check in July 2010, Travellers stormed the town of Saint-Aignan and its gendarmerie. Three hundred soldiers were deployed in the small town who reacted with violent repression. In August 2015, Travellers blocked the A1 motorway near Roye for several hours to protest against the refusal to release a member of the community out on bail to attend his father’s funeral. In October 2015, in Moirans, train traffic was interrupted for more than 12 hours after Travellers blocked the station, while inmates of the Aiton prison in Savoy refused to return to their cells. Travellers were angry toward the justice system for refusing a young man in prison permission to attend his brother’s funeral. The government reacted as if to a war or a terrorist attack and sent its Minister of the Interior to the site. In addition to these examples, three further poignant episodes could be added: confrontations in Pau in June 2017, in Le Mans in 2019, and in many other places with less media coverage, such as in Castres in March 2018, where Travellers proclaimed their anger at the mayor’s decision to cut off their access to water.

When there is nothing left to lose, uprisings erupt, but while there is hope, other strategies of resistance emerge; strategies which operate within the law, by negotiation with local authorities. In 2014, for example, a women’s collective in the Hellemmes-Ronchin caravan site in Lille formed to protest against the living conditions they faced.²⁰ Their dedicated caravan site is lo-

20 About the struggle of the women of Hellemmes-Ronchin, see the film documentary *Nos poumons c’est du béton* [Our lungs are concrete], 2016, 22 minutes: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uVvTxTEwfc0>

cated between a concrete factory and polluted fields. They requested that the caravan site be relocated, but since the creation of the collective, Lille Metropolis has taken no action along this course. This strategy was adopted by the inhabitants of the caravan site of Petit-Quevilly (Rouen) who were the first to suffer the fire of the Lubrizol plant (September 2019). By lodging a complaint and requesting assistance from the Metropolis of Rouen, they hoped for emergency relocation, which has still not occurred months after the incident. “We never win. We’ll never be right,” said a resident of the site.²¹

Conclusion

While associations assisting *gens du voyage* have been supporting the creation of dedicated caravan sites for more than thirty years, long-term resistance of Roma and Travellers remains unacknowledged, except in the case of boxer Christophe Dettinger,²² and the unpopular snail operations (Peillon 2019). For the so-called *gens du voyage*, there is ample fear that, should they attempt to stand up for their right, their efforts will see them suffer negative consequences. So far, fleeing or silence seem to be the only two options available to those who only aspire to live in peace. “We run as long as we can,” was the last sentence that Angelo Garand said to his sister before he was shot dead by the GIGN [French gendarmerie intervention squad] in March 2017 (Fassin 2020).

Encampment is a system supervised by administrative, public health and police authorities. Unlike their name in French suggests, *aires d'accueil* (welcoming caravan sites), the caravan sites are anything but welcoming and their name should not encourage this illusion. As soon as the gens du voyage of Petit-Quevilly heard a famous radio speaker’s news bulletin, which was supportive of their struggle,²³ they dared to file an official letter of complaint to the manager of the caravan site in the Metropolis of Rouen for endangering the lives of others. For their struggle to result in the destruction of their en-

21 To hear the inhabitant of Petit-Quevilly speak about Lubrizol, see <https://lundi.am/Lubrizol-les-gens-du-voyage-en-premiere-ligne>

22 Christophe Dettinger is a French professional boxer. In January 2019, during the Yellow Vests demonstrations, he fought two gendarmes that he had seen hitting a woman.

23 Claude Askolovitch’s radio chronicle, France inter, October 2, 2019. <https://www.franceinter.fr/emissions/la-revue-de-presse/la-revue-de-presse-02-octobre-2019>

campments, forces in support of the gens du voyage must also be present on the other side of the fences and automatic gates. I urge others to go to the dedicated caravan sites and see where France is keeping “its Gypsies!”

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Biographies

Ethel Brooks

Ethel Brooks is an Associate Professor in the Departments of Women's and Gender Studies and Sociology at Rutgers University (USA) and a Tate-TRAiN Transnational Fellow at the University of the Arts-London, where she was the 2011-2012 US-UK Fulbright Distinguished Chair. In 2016, President Obama appointed Brooks to the United States Memorial Council. She holds a PhD from New York University and a BA from Williams College. Brooks is also the author of several books and academic articles, including *Unraveling the Garment Industry: Transnational Organizing and Women's Work*, which was awarded the Outstanding Book of 2010 by the Society for the Study of Social Problems, and is co-editor of the special issue of *Women's Studies Quarterly* on "Activisms".

Professor Brooks is currently working on two book projects: *Disrupting the Nation: Land Tenure, Productivity and the Possibilities of a Romani Post-Coloniality*, and *(Mis)Recognitions and (Un)Acknowledgements: Visualities, Productivities and the Contours of Romani Feminism*, both of which focus on political economy, cultural production and the increasing violence against Romani (Gypsy) citizens worldwide.

Jekatyerina Dunajeva

Jekatyerina Dunajeva is a consultant, advisor, researcher and political analyst for international and local NGOs, think tanks and other institutions. She received her PhD at the University of Oregon in 2014. To complete her dissertation, entitled "'Bad Gypsies' and 'Good Roma': Constructing Ethnic and Political Identities through Education in Russia and Hungary," she was

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Lise Foisneau

Lise Foisneau is an anthropologist and a historian. She holds a PhD in anthropology from Aix-Marseille University, France in 2018 and an MA in history from Sciences Po Paris, France in 2014. She is also an associate researcher at IDEMEC (CNRS/AMU) and has worked on historical and anthropological projects such as collecting testimonies of Second World War Roma resistant fighters and survivors. In 2017, she was part of the "Roma Resistance during the Holocaust and its Aftermath" research project (Tom Lantos Institute/La Voix des Rroms). Her research provided rich empirical evidence, based on systematically reviewed French administrative divisional archives about French "Nomad" resistance from 1939 to 1946. She has published several historical and anthropological articles in scientific journals, such as *Ethnologie française*, *Tracés*, *Health and Human Rights Journal*, and book chapters.

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Adrian-Nicolae Furtună is a researcher, sociologist and founder of the Center for Cultural and Social Research "Romane Rodimata" in 2011. He earned his BA at the Faculty of Sociology and Social Work in 2008, and his MA in "Advanced Sociological Research" in 2013 at the University of Bucha-

rest. Since 2010 he has published a series of oral history papers and scientific articles on the deportation of Roma to Transnistria, the last of which, “Roma in Romania and the Holocaust. History, theory, culture,” was published in 2018. Currently, he is a PhD student at the Quality of Life Research Institute of Romanian Academy with a topic related to the social memory of Roma slavery in Romanian Principalities.

Nicolás Jiménez González

Nicolás Jiménez González, born in Madrid, Spain, in 1968, is a sociologist and co-author of *la Guía de Recursos contra el Antigitanismo*. He holds an MA in Organisational Consulting and Educational Research. In addition, he has been a reading teacher for the past three years on the subject “Roma from Spain. History and Culture” at the University of Alcalá de Henares. González writes and edits the blog *Prendemos gitanizar el mundo* where he seeks to educate and raise awareness on Romani culture and history, proposing a new counter-narrative, in which the Roma are protagonists and not only passive objects. Currently, he is working as a staff member of the Human Rights Observatory from the Autonomous Government of La Rioja (north of Spain).

Aurėja Jutelytė

Aurėja Jutelytė holds a BA degree in Political Science from Vilnius University and an MA degree in International Relations from Central European University. Her academic work focuses on the Roma Holocaust, Holocaust commemoration and various international and state-level Roma-related policies. Jutelytė cooperates with Lithuanian media to ensure fair representation of the Roma community in the news and provides national public authorities with Roma-related expertise. In cooperation with the Lithuanian Department of National Minorities, Jutelytė edited a book on Roma Holocaust in Lithuania in April 2020.

Vera Lacková

Vera Lacková is a film director and producer from Slovakia. She studied media and journalism in Brno at Masaryk University, Czech Republic, and has set up a production company, Media Voice, in 2015. Lacková provides a unique view from the inside of the Roma community. In addition to commercial production, she has also participated in the international documentary film project EUROPE: “Homeland for the Roma”, which focuses on the stories of Jewish and Roma survivors of the Holocaust. She also directed a short documentary “Alicia”. Lacková’s film about Roma resistance – “How I Became a Partisan” is her feature debut and will premier in 2021. Through her film productions, she gives a voice to the unheard stories of Roma, fights against stereotypes and tackles discrimination.

Justyna Matkowska

Justyna Matkowska is a Roma activist and researcher. Matkowska earned her PhD in Humanities at the University of Wrocław in Poland in 2020. She holds both an MA and BA in Polish Literature and Language Studies from the University of Wrocław. Matkowska is also a graduate of the Postgraduate Romani Studies Program at the Pedagogical University of Cracow, Poland, and the Hawai’i English Language Program at the University of Hawai’i at Mānoa in the USA. In 2016-2018, Matkowska worked as Plenipotentiary of the Governor of Lower Silesia for the National and Ethnic Minorities in Poland, and in 2019, worked as an adjunct faculty at the Hawai’i Pacific University in the USA. Most recently, in 2020, Matkowska had a visiting research position at Central European University.

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Anna Mirga-Kruszelnicka is an anthropologist and Roma activist born in 1985 in Krakow, Poland. She earned her PhD in Social and Cultural Anthropology at the Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona (UAB) in 2016. She holds an MA in European Integration from UAB and an MA in Comparative Studies of Civilisations from the Jagiellonian University in Cracow (UJ). She is the

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An employee, member, founder, and collaborator of numerous Roma organisations in Poland and Spain, from 2013 to 2015 Mirga-Kruszelnicka was an Open Society Foundations Roma Initiatives Fellow. There, she conducted a comparative study of associative Roma movements in various Latin American countries and Europe. From 2015 to 2017, she was the coordinator and curator of the Academic Section (aka. Roma Civil Rights Movement Section) in the RomArchive – Digital Archive of the Roma. Between 2017-2018, she was a Post-Doctoral Research Fellow of the Romani Studies Program at the Central European University (CEU) in Budapest. Since 2018, she serves as the deputy director of the European Roma Institute for Arts and Culture (ERAC).

Jan Selling

Born in Sweden in 1967, Jan Selling is a senior lecturer in pedagogy and coordinator of the Forum for Romani Studies at Södertörn University, Stockholm. He defended his PhD on German collective memory discourses on nationalism, commemoration politics and the Nazi past in 2004. He has conducted several research projects on memory politics in Sweden and Europe, including discourse analysis on the establishment of Swedish Living History Forum (2011), and research on theoretical concepts of antigypsyism and Swedish history (2013 and 2015). In 2017, he published a research article on the ICPC Swedish connection and antigypsyism.

As a curator for the civil rights section of the RomArchive, together with leading international scholars, he researched the history of Roma and Sinti emancipation and published a historically and internationally comparative monograph in 2020. In 2013, he organised the Uppsala International Conference, “Antiziganism – What’s in a Word,” and was the principal editor of the resultant conference volume (2015). Selling’s latest publication is *Frigörelsen. Romers och resandes emancipation i Sverige och andra länder* [Becoming free. Emancipation of Roma and Resande in Sweden and Other Countries], (2020).

Danijel Vojak

Danijel Vojak is a research associate at the Institute of Social Science “Ivo Pilar” in Zagreb. In 2011, he received his PhD from the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences at the University of Zagreb. He has published books and papers on the history of Roma in the First and Second World War and has worked on several international and domestic projects regarding Roma history. In his work, he focuses on analysing the relations between the majority population and the Roma minority. His current research is concerned with the position and extent of Roma suffering during the Second World War in the fascist Independent State of Croatia.

Bildungsforum gegen Antiziganismus (Educational Forum against Antigypsyism)

The Educational Forum against Antigypsyism is part of the Documentation and Cultural Centre of German Sinti and Roma, an institution with roots in the civil-rights movement of German Sinti and Roma of the 1970s and 1980s. In its work, the Educational Forum has two main objectives - combatting antigypsyism and empowering Sinti and Roma. The centre publishes various educational materials for non-Roma to help raise awareness about the stereotypes, mechanisms and manifestations of antigypsyism, both in the present and historically. Furthermore, the organisation works to empower Sinti and Roma by creating safe spaces for the minority to meet and share their perspectives and experiences to strengthen their participation in society.

This book contains unique research from a diverse group of researchers who are engaged in re-telling history from the perspective of Roma. With a focus on Roma agency, chapters uncover various forms of resistance and survival strategies that Roma engaged in throughout history. Authors provide personal stories of collective and individual resistance, signs of defiance, as well as acts of love and humanity in the face of persecution – stories that have never been told before.

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