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**The National Socialist Genocide of the Roma
in the German-occupied Soviet Union**

Report for the Documentary and Cultural Centre of German Sinti and Roma

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Introduction: State of research and source material

The National Socialist genocide of the Sinti and Roma was suppressed from the collective memory of German society for a long time after 1945. This gradually changed only because of the civil rights movement of the Sinti and Roma at the end of 1970s. Academic research on this important subject has made enormous progress in the past two decades. Relatively detailed information on the process and the extent of the "Gypsy" persecution in the "Reich", i.e. in Germany and Austria, is available in the meantime. Some gaps in the research have also been closed since the eastern European archives have been opened up. This particularly applies to the countries of south and east central Europe.¹

However, the persecution of the Soviet Roma is one of the least investigated areas in the academic assessment of the National Socialist genocide of the Sinti and Roma. At the same time, the Soviet context plays a key role in the assessment of the German policy of extermination during the Second World War. Firstly, the attack on the Soviet Union marked the transition to systematic mass murder of Jews, Roma and other "undesirable elements". Secondly, the Soviet Roma represent a significant proportion of the total number of "Gypsy" victims murdered by National Socialism.² And thirdly, the example of the Soviet Union is repeatedly used to derive evidence about the overall character of the National Socialist persecution of the Roma in spite of the deficiencies in the research.

After the pioneering study of Kenrick and Puxon, it was Wolfgang Wippermann who was the first to point out the great importance of the German-Soviet war for the overall assessment of the National Socialist "Gypsy policy". In this respect, Wippermann proceeded from a consistently systematic extermination of the Roma in the Soviet Union which was motivated by racial ideology. He considered the presumption of a putative distinction between nomadic and sedentary Roma to be "as grotesque as it is meaningless" in a practical respect, since

¹ Only a selection shall be mentioned here: Achim, Viorel: Die Deportation der Roma nach Transnistrien. [The deportation of the Roma to Transnistria.] In: Hausleitner, Mariana; Mihok, Brigitte; Wetzel, Juliane (publisher): Rumänien und der Holocaust. Zu den Massenverbrechen in Transnistrien 1941-1944. [Romania and the Holocaust. On the mass crimes in Transnistria 1941-1944.] Berlin 2001, pp.101-112; idem: The Roma in Rumanian History. Budapest/New York 2004; Ionid, Radu: The Holocaust in Romania. The Destruction of Jews and Gypsies under the Antonescu Regime, 1940-1944. Chicago 2000; Biondich, Mark: Persecution of Roma-Sinti in Croatia, 1941-1945. In: United States Holocaust Memorial Museum – Center for Advanced Holocaust Studies (ed.): Roma and Sinti. Under-Studied Victims of Nazism. Symposium Proceedings. Washington D.C. 2002, pp.33-48.

² Only estimates about the extent of the crime have been available so far. The number of 30,000 victims, which was derived from Soviet censuses of the pre- and post-war period by the British authors Donald Kenrick and Grattan Puxon at beginning of the 1970s, was most widely quoted. See Kenrick, Donald; Puxon, Grattan: Sinti und Roma – die Vernichtung eines Volkes im NS-Staat. Göttingen 1981, p.105. The English edition was published in London in 1972.

especially the latter had fallen victim to "the campaigns of murder of the *Einsatzgruppen* [mobile killing units] and other murderers in uniform", so that it was doubtful whether any sedentary Roma were still living in the occupied German Eastern Territories in 1943."³ The German and non-German perpetrators in the east [had] indeed murdered every 'Gypsy' who they had been able to identify and apprehend"⁴ This was not so simple, however, since the Roma sought to conceal their identity or escaped extermination by fleeing.

On the other hand, Michael Zimmermann put forward the thesis that although the persecution of the Soviet Roma was an intended genocide, the extermination as such was not conducted with the same intensity and systematic approach as in the case of the Jews.⁵ That is to say, Roma were mainly regarded as "spies", "vagabonds" and "anti-socials", which is why they ranked behind the "Jewish world enemy" in the hierarchically classified enemy groups of the Nazis. Although sedentary and "socially assimilated" Roma, who did not correspond to the stereotype of an "itinerant group", had also been included in the campaigns of murder, the mobile killing units had not specifically searched for them. On the contrary, the persecution methods were normally restricted to random pick-ups, prison checks and denunciations by the local population. Systematic registration and summons for "resettlement" "did not cross the minds" of the persecutors of "Gypsies", which, according to Zimmermann's opinion – which will be shown to be erroneous – was also connected with the fact that "Gypsies" in the Soviet Union did not live together in compact settlements.⁶

Zimmermann's research results were simplified in a questionable manner by Yehuda Bauer, who seeks to prove on the basis of the Soviet example that the National Socialist persecution of the Sinti and Roma was "not a Shoah".⁷ In particular, Bauer sees "no evidence that the Germans had tried to track down sedentary Gypsies, or that they had carried out 'campaigns' to identify and register non-sedentary Gypsies with the objective of murdering them".⁸ As will be shown, conjecture of this kind is not borne out by the results of empirical investigation.

³ Wippermann, Wolfgang: Nur eine Fußnote? Die Verfolgung der sowjetischen Roma: Historiographie, Motive, Verlauf. In: Meyer, Klaus; Wippermann, Wolfgang (publisher): Gegen das Vergessen. Der Vernichtungskrieg gegen die Sowjetunion 1941-1945. Frankfurt on Main 1992, pp.75-90; 89-90.

⁴ Wippermann, Wolfgang: "Auserwählte Opfer?". Shoah und Porrajmos im Vergleich. Eine Kontroverse. Berlin 2005, p.121.

⁵ Zimmermann, Michael: Rassenutopie und Genozid. Die nationalsozialistische "Lösung der Zigeunerfrage". Hamburg 1996, p.259-276; idem: The Soviet Union and the Baltic States 1941-44: the massacre of the Gypsies. In: Kenrick, Donald (publisher): In the shadow of the Swastika. The Gypsies during the Second World War. Hertfordshire 1999, pp.131-148.

⁶ Zimmermann: Rassenutopie und Genozid, pp.262-263.

⁷ Bauer, Yehuda: Die dunkle Seite der Geschichte. Die Shoah in historischer Sicht. Interpretationen und Re-Interpretationen. Frankfurt on Main 2001, pp.90-93.

⁸ cf. Bauer, Yehuda: Zigeuner. In Enzyklopädie des Holocaust. Die Verfolgung und Ermordung der europäischen Juden, Band III (Q-Z), p.1630-1634; 1634. Guenter Lewy argues in a similar manner in his overall view: "Rückkehr nicht erwünscht". Die Verfolgung der Zigeuner im Dritten Reich. Munich/Berlin 2001, p.217.

The main problem of the contributions to the discussion to date is that they are mainly based on surviving German sources and the results of the Nuremberg Trials, in which the genocide of the Sinti and Roma was not considered in detail. In addition to this, the relatively narrow basis of researched written sources makes their contextual classification more difficult. For instance, executions of "Gypsies" by shooting are only recorded with scant details in the incident reports of the *Einsatzgruppen* and the few quoted numbers evade unambiguous interpretation as a result of inaccurate and inconsistent categorizations of the victim groups.⁹ In particular, only isolated murders of Roma are recorded by the *Einsatzgruppen* A, B and C, from which it is impossible to obtain a clear picture. The stated points of view are therefore unavoidably hypotheses of a speculative nature.

Nevertheless, a result was achieved in that the Roma are also perceived as a specific victim group in the Soviet context and no longer disappear in "footnotes", as Wolfgang Wippermann complained about with justification at the beginning of the 1990s. Valuable historiographical papers on the overall character of the National Socialist occupation and policy of extermination in the Soviet Union have been published in the past few years, in which a separate sub-chapter or, at least a detailed digression, has been devoted to the question of the persecution of "Gypsies". In the western research, this applies *inter alia* to the work of Christian Gerlach on Byelorussia, Dieter Pohl on East Galicia and, in particular, Anton Weiss-Wendt on Estonia.¹⁰ The Crimea provides most information about the persecution of the Roma in the militarily administered regions of Soviet Russia and East Ukraine, thanks to Andrej Angrick and Norbert Kunz.¹¹ The stated articles managed to supply useful empirical details, something which contributes to the gradual completion of the state of knowledge. However, most authors were not in a position to develop new individual interpretive approaches as a result of their different formulations of the question and thematic areas of focus; instead they mostly accepted the prevailing research, which was primarily influenced by Michael Zimmermann. Some of the western authors did consider archives of Soviet

⁹ See Zimmermann: *The Soviet Union and the Baltic States*, p.136.

¹⁰ Gerlach, Christian: *Kalkulierte Morde. Die deutsche Wirtschafts- und Vernichtungspolitik in Weißrussland 1941 bis 1944*. Hamburg 1999, pp.1063-1067; Pohl, Dieter: *Nationalsozialistische Judenverfolgung in Ostgalizien 1941-1944. Organisation und Durchführung eines staatlichen Massenverbrechens*. Munich 1997, pp.114-115, 397-398; Anton Weiss-Wendt has devoted a chapter to the extermination of the Estonian Roma in his dissertation on the Holocaust in Estonia. The latter is also available in essay form. See Weiss-Wendt, Anton: *Extermination of the Gypsies in Estonia during World War II: Popular Images and Official Policies*. In: *Holocaust and Genocide Studies*, volume 17, Number 1 (Spring 2003), pp.31-61; also based on Estonia, but with some very inconsistent statements on Roma: Birn, Ruth Bettina: *Die Sicherheitspolizei in Estland 1941-1944. Eine Studie zur Kollaboration im Osten*. Paderborn 2006, pp.185-189.

¹¹ Angrick, Andrej: *Besatzungspolitik und Massenmord. Die Einsatzgruppe D in der südlichen Sowjetunion 1941-1943*. Hamburg 2003, pp.342-343; Kunz, Norbert: *Die Krim unter deutscher Herrschaft 1941-1944. Germanisierungsutopie und Besatzungsrealität*. Darmstadt 2005, pp.191-194.

provenance in their research, but their systematic evaluation with respect to the genocide of the Roma is still at the beginning.¹² It is therefore all the more encouraging that Russian and Ukrainian historians have also increasingly turned to the subject recently. In the Soviet historiography, the discussion of the subject was restricted to mentioning individual executions by shooting, which did not provide the basic results which would have resulted in a substantive correlation.¹³ In the middle of the 1960s, the author and journalist, Lev Ginzburg, worked on an overall view of the genocide of the Roma, which was not published for unexplained reasons, however.¹⁴ After the break-up of the Soviet Union, the persecution was considered more frequently as part of the nascent assessment of the occupation and the extermination of Jews, but most of the authors have also restricted themselves to general references or individual examples so far.¹⁵ On the other hand, the information content on this subject is usually extremely limited in general accounts on the history of the Roma in Russia.¹⁶ In the meantime, there is a ray of hope with a essay by Michail Tjaglyj on the National Socialist Roma persecution in the Crimea, which I will consider further on.¹⁷

Considered as a whole, it must be stated that there is still no specific, academically founded and territorially overlapping monograph on the overall progress of the National Socialist genocide of the Soviet Roma.¹⁸ There is no doubt that the prerequisite for this lies in a systematic analysis of stocks of documents of Soviet provenance. There are several different types of sources available in the archives of the former Soviet Union which promise new information, even if certain methodical difficulties have to be taken into account in each case:

¹² The authors are also very aware of this. For instance, Christian Gerlach refers to general estimates and evaluations from the secondary literature, since his own empirical investigations only concern individual examples or random samples. In order to obtain detailed information, he writes, "All the post-war investigative reports of the White Russian cities and rayons, which usually record the respective campaigns, would have had to be gone through. This was not possible, however." Gerlach: *Kalkulierte Morde*, p.1066.

¹³ This particularly applies to collections of documents for individual areas, such as: *Smolenskaia oblast' v gody Velikoi Otechestvennoi voiny 1941-1945. Dokumenty i materialy*. Moscow 1977.

¹⁴ *Rossiiskii Gosudarstvennyi Archiv Literatury i Iskusstva (RGALI)*, f.2928, op.1, d.74, ll.1-31.

¹⁵ Al'tman, Il'ia: *Zhertvy nenavisti. Kholokost v SSSR 1941-1945 gg.* Moscow 2002; Kovalev, Boris Nikolaevich: *Natsistskaia okkupatsiia i kollaboratsionizm v Rossii, 1941-1944*. Moskau 2004; Semiriaga, Mikhail I.: *Kollaboratsionizm. Priroda, tipologiia i proiavlennii v gody Vtoroi Mirovoi voiny*. Moscow 2000.

¹⁶ Kalinin, Val'demar: *Zagadka baltiiskikh tsygan. Ocherki istorii, kul'tury i sotsial'nogo razvitiia baltiiskikh tsygan*. Minsk 2005; Demeter, Nadezhda; Bessonov, Nikolai; Kutenkov, Vladimir: *Istoriia Tsygan. Novyi vzgliad*. Voronezh 2000; Druts, Efim; Gessler, Aleksei: *Tsygane. Ocherki*. Moscow 1990.

¹⁷ Tiaglyi, Mikhail: *Chingene – Zhertvy kholokosta? Natsistskaia politika v Krymu v otnoshenii tsygan i evreev, 1941-1944*. In: *Odessa i evreiskaia tsivilizatsiia. Sb. materialov IV mezhdunarodnoi nauchnoi konferentsii: Katastrofa, soprotivlenie, pobeda (31 oktiabria – 2 noiabria 2005 g. Odessa)/ Evreiskii obshchinyi tsentr "Migdal"*. Odessa 2006, pp.140-175.

¹⁸ A monograph of the Moscow Roma expert and independent author Nikolai Bessonov dedicated to the genocide of the Soviet Roma is still in the making. The project has the working title "Tragediia tsygan" (The tragedy of the Gypsies).

- a) Documents captured from the German occupation authorities and collaborating domestic local authorities offer the most direct insight into everyday life under the occupation, but these are widely dispersed over a large number of regional and local archives, something which demands an enormous research effort.¹⁹
- b) Partisan reports to the Moscow centre also contain immediate and sometimes astonishingly detailed references to German massacres of the civilian population, but frequently incorporate things which were seen, heard or only supposed to form a whole which is hard to unravel.
- c) The Red Army had already its own commission which gathered information on National Socialist crimes against the Soviet civilian population, but the reports were prepared under great time pressure as a result of the on-going course of the war and therefore only provide rough details.²⁰
- d) The records of the Extraordinary State Commission are stored in the Central State Archive of the Russian Federation (GARF) in Moscow, but there are also records from sub-commissions and suchlike, for whose inspection regional archives have to be visited.
- e) The informative value of Soviet tribunals is frequently reduced by the evident show trial character or the completely unconstitutional form of secret internal trials of the NKVD/KGB, nevertheless the testimonies offer useful insights into correlations which can otherwise not be determined.
- f) The interrogation records of the NKVD of arrested domestic "traitors to the fatherland" are far more detailed as a rule, but there are several bureaucratic (and other) hurdles to be overcome before the secret service archives can be accessed.
- g) Materials are stored in the Central Archive for Literature and Art of the Russian Federation (and the respective counterparts in the other CIS states), which indirectly provide information on the National Socialist extermination policy through the reminiscences and correspondence of surviving intellectuals or, as in case of the Roma, through the works of the "Moscow State Gypsy Theatre 'Romen'".²¹
- h) Finally, written memoirs and oral testimony of survivors and other contemporary witnesses provide a useful supplement to the possibilities offered by the archives, even if the problem of historical accuracy emerges here once again.

¹⁹ In addition to this, a systematic search is made more difficult by the fact that an estimated 95% of such records consist of documents which have little or no relevance to the reconstruction of the history of the persecution, such as minor accounting items, laundry lists or questions about building cleaning. There are also chaotic records management and finding aids in many Russian and Ukrainian regional archives.

²⁰ Nevertheless the chronological proximity to the event gives the dispatches of the Red Army stored in the Central Archive of the Ministry of Defence of the Russian Federation (Tsentral'nyi Arkhiv Ministerstva Oborony Rossiiskoi Federatsii) an unquestionable relevance. cf. Sverdlov, F.D. (sost.): Dokumenty obviniaut. Kholokost: svidetel'stva Krasnoi Armii. Moscow 1996.

²¹ cf. Rossiiskii Gosudarstvennyi Arkhiv Literatury i Iskusstva (RGALI), f.2928.

In particular, the extensive files of the "Extraordinary State Commission for the recording and investigation of the crimes of the German-fascist invaders and their allies as well as the damage they caused to citizens, collective farms (kolkhozes), social organizations, state-owned enterprises and government agencies of the USSR"²² stored in the State Archive of the Russian Federation are of central importance.²³ The commission was brought into being by a decree of the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet on 2nd November 1942 and began its investigations directly after the liberation of the first territories by the Red Army. The investigative methods included witness interviews, statistical recordings and exhumations.²⁴ Some of the results of the investigations were also used as evidence in the Nuremberg and post-war trials in the Federal Republic of Germany.

Nevertheless, it must be considered in the evaluation of the ChGK files that the work of the commission was politically motivated to a high degree.²⁵ Stalin aimed (with success) to persuade the western allies to grant geographical concessions and agree to demands for material reparations from the conquered adversary and the liberated countries of East Central Europe by proving that the Soviet Union had suffered the biggest losses and greatest destruction in the war against Hitler's Germany.²⁶ It was precisely for this reason that the Extraordinary State Commission had the general tendency to adjust the Soviet losses upwards. Another typical Soviet characteristic consists in the frequent omission of details about the ethnic identity of the victim groups for ideological reasons. Although the fact that Jews and Roma were killed in huge numbers was not denied, the specific character of the two genocides was concealed or relativized through indiscriminate classification in the overall

²² "CHREZVYCHAINAIA GOSUDARSTVENNAIA KOMISSIIA po ustanovleniiu i rassledovaniuu zlodeianii nemetsko-fashistskikh zakhvatchikov i ikh soobshchnikov i prichinennogo imi ushcherba grazhdanam, kollektivnym khoziaistvam (kolkhozam), obshchestvennym organizatsiiam, gosudarstvennym predpriiatiiam i uchrezhdeniiam SSSR" (ChGK). Referred to in the following as "Extraordinary State Commission" or ChGK.

²³ Gosudarstvennyi Arkhiv Rossiiskoi Federatsii (GARF), fond 7021, opisi 1-153. The total volume of the archived Commission documents amounts to 43,305 files.

²⁴ cf. Mironenko, S.V. (editor): Putevoditel'. Tom 3. Fondy Gosudarstvennogo arkhiva Rossiiskoi Federatsii po istorii SSSR. Moscow 1997, pp.387-391; Feferman, Kiril: Soviet investigation of Nazi crimes in the USSR: documenting the Holocaust. In: Journal of Genocide Research (2003), 5 (4), December, pp. 587-602; 589-592.

²⁵ cf. see *inter alia* Karner, Stefan: Zum Umgang mit der historischen Wahrheit in der Sowjetunion. Die "Außerordentliche Staatliche Kommission" 1942 bis 1951. In: Wilhelm Wadl (publisher): Kärntner Landesgeschichte und Archivwissenschaft. Festschrift für Alfred Ogris zum 60. Geburtstag. Klagenfurt 2001, pp.509-523.

²⁶ However, the political instrumentalisation becomes most clear in case of the Soviet "processing" of Katyn near Smolensk. In this connection, the Soviet government, with the help of the Extraordinary State Commission, subsequently attempted to present the Soviet execution of thousands of Polish officers by shooting in 1940 as an alleged Nazi crime from the German-Soviet war. On the Katyn case cf. *inter alia* Lebedeva, Natal'ia: Katyn'. Prestuplenie protiv chelovechestva. Moscow 1996. However, it must be emphasized that the Katyn case should be considered as an extreme ideological case and therefore an exception with regard to the work of the ChGK.

losses of the USSR.²⁷ With regard to the victims lists, the euphemistic generalization "peaceful Soviet citizen" was therefore used in many documents when reference was made to executions of Jews or "Gypsies" by shooting.²⁸

Irrespective of all this, the documents of the Extraordinary State Commission are the probably the most important source for assessing the National Socialist persecution of Soviet Roma. And if some basic principles are considered in the research and analysis, some extremely precise results can be obtained. During my research work, I discovered that the quality and the character of some of the ChGK investigations differ considerably from area to area. The earlier the investigations started, the more detailed the statements about the ethnic identity of the victims. The territories of the Soviet Union which had already been liberated in 1943 and at the beginning of 1944 therefore offer the clearest and probably also the most reliable information.²⁹ A similar tendency can be observed with regard to the various Commission levels: the higher the authority reported to, the greater the inclination to subsume murdered Jews and "Gypsies" under the term "peaceful Soviet citizen".

Apart from ideology, there are also problems of a purely technical nature which cannot be completely solved; in many cases, the Commission could not determine an exact *date* of executions by shooting because e.g. a witness could not remember exactly or several statements contradicted each other. The dating problem mainly concerns the extermination measures against Jews and Roma, since most of the incidents happened two to three years before the date of the interview – unlike the massive crimes committed against the civilian population during the struggle against the partisans and the withdrawal of the *Wehrmacht* in 1943/44. With regard to the German *perpetrators*, the interviewed witnesses from the civilian population could naturally only make precise statements in very rare cases, so that it is frequently not clear whether particular executions by shooting were carried out by *Einsatzgruppen*, army units or others. The interviewees mostly talked about "retaliation units", "Gestapo people" or simply "the Germans". However, inaccuracies sometimes also crept into the descriptions of murdered Roma, who – in keeping with the well-known cliché – were regarded as "nomads" (*kochevniki*) in many villages, although they were refugees or evacuees from other areas, as were so many other people. Moreover, Roma settlements or quarters were frequently referred to as "tabor" (Gypsy camps) by the witnesses, something

²⁷ In case of the Jews, this development was also motivated by a specific Stalinist "state antisemitism". cf. Kostyrchenko, Gennadii Vasil'evich: *Tainaia politika Stalina. Vlast' i antisemitizm*. Moscow 2001.

²⁸ cf. Al'tman: *Zhertvy nenavisti*, pp. 413-415. How Jewish victims disappeared step by step out of the reports of the Extraordinary State Commission until the end of 1945, Kiril Feferman showed in detail at the example of the Kiev region. See Feferman: *Soviet investigation*, pp. 595-598.

²⁹ This conveniently applies primarily to the areas in Soviet Russia and East Ukraine administered by the German military, which form the main area of this investigation.

which can also cause confusion.³⁰ These methodological difficulties have to be considered without fail when working with the files of the Extraordinary State Commission and assessing their contents.

Furthermore, the prerequisite for a careful interpretation of the researchable German and Russian sources with regard to the genocide is a consideration of the objective living conditions of Soviet Roma at the beginning of the war. Studies which abstract from the pre-war history of the Roma in the Soviet Union run the risk of accepting ideologically influenced "images of the Gypsy" without further reflection, something which can unfortunately be frequently observed in the literature. The living conditions of Soviet Roma were influenced by the effects of the general Stalinist policy towards nationalities of the 1920s and 1930s, which they felt in the complete ambivalence of the promotion of culture and repression.³¹ Although the Roma were a comparatively small ethnic group and were part of the 2% of the population which was distributed over the entire country, a relatively large effort was made to integrate them in the propagandized development of socialism. The keywords for this were literacy, nurturing awareness and professional productivity. In the first place, the first Romany alphabet on the basis of Cyrillic letters was developed, which enabled the publication of fiction and poetry, magazines, newspapers and textbooks in "Gypsy language (tsyganskii iazyk)". Special "Gypsy classes" in Russian schools and even individual "Gypsy schools" in which classes were to be taught in Romany were established, but the ambitious goals were not reached in most cases owing to a shortage of teachers and the omnipresent organisational defects of the system. The foundation of an autonomous territory for the settlement of Roma was also intensively discussed from time to time – even if this discussion was fruitless. One of the core objectives of the policy towards nationalities was the so-called "rooting (korenizatsiia)" respectively indigenization, by means of which the nationalities were to be put in the position to administer themselves. The "All-Russian Gypsy Union" (Vserossiiskii Soiuz Tsygan – VSTs) was therefore founded in 1925 but was dissolved after only three years.³² The state claimed sole jurisdiction in "Gypsy questions" from this time on, but individual Roma were integrated in public authority work as professionals and "instructors".

³⁰ The Russian word "tabor" refers to the camp "of travelling Gypsies" but is also generally used colloquially for Roma settlements. The respective witness accounts could therefore erroneously suggest that the sedentary inhabitants of the urban "Gypsy quarters" were nomads or semi-nomads.

³¹ This aspect is considered at length in my still unpublished dissertation with the title "Sowjetische Nationalitätenpolitik am Beispiel der Roma, 1923-1939" ["Soviet policy towards nationalities taking the Roma as an example, 1923-1939"]. cf. on Soviet policy towards nationalities in general. Martin, Terry: *The Affirmative Action Empire. Nations and Nationalism in the Soviet Union, 1923-1939*. Ithaca and London 2001.

³² cf. GARF, f.1235, op.120, d.27, l.30; GARF, f.1235, op.140, d.752, ll.12-22.

In the meantime, the short life of the Roma umbrella organization had become symptomatic for most of the Soviet "Gypsy" projects: the settlement of Roma in "national Gypsy kolkhozes" ordered by the centre was usually undermined by the local authorities of the areas concerned with all conceivable means, so that a majority of the new facilities disintegrated after short time or did not really materialize. It was a similar case for industrial cooperatives and cultural institutions of the minority. It is all the more surprising that some Roma organisations were not only able to socially assert themselves but even survived the year of change of the Soviet policy towards nationalities (1938) without harm.³³ In addition to some showcase kolkhozes in the Smolensk area and the North Caucasus, these included the "Moscow State Gypsy Theatre 'Romen'", which was founded in 1931 and still exists today. The Bolsheviks claimed to have liberated the "Gypsies", allegedly the "most wretched of all nationalities", from the "yoke of tsarism" and also to be the first state in the world which had looked after the "forgotten people".³⁴ This perception may apply to education and the promotion of culture but cannot obscure the fact that the new rulers followed in the footsteps of the demonised pre-revolutionary system in some respects. In fact, the "Gypsy policy" of Tsarist Russia assumed a special position in the European context, since the Roma were not subject to any comparable state persecution or suppression and had even become an integral component of Russian culture as a result of the tradition and popularity of the "Gypsy choruses".³⁵ The audience for these choruses was initially mainly composed of representatives of the Russian high nobility. The resulting affinity between the Russian aristocracy and Roma artists found its clearest expression by famous female chorus members marrying into the aristocracy.³⁶ Roma were also not subject to the discriminatory special law for so-called "aliens (inorodtsy)".³⁷ Municipal right of abode as well as access to guilds and livery

³³ cf. inter alia Martin: *The Affirmative Action Empire*, pp.432-461, on the change in the policy towards nationalities in 1938, as a result of which indigenization and promotion of culture were restricted to the titular nations of the individual Soviet Republics.

³⁴ cf. GARF, f.3316, op.19, d.588, ll.72-74; Bril', M.: *Trudiashchiesia tsygane v riady stroitelei sotsializma*. In: *Revoliutsiia i natsional'nosti*, 1932, No.7, pp.60-66; 60. The liberation from the tsarist "prison of the people" (Lenin) was also claimed for the other nationalities of course, but specific oppression was identified in the case of "Gypsies", whereby historical developments in other countries were conferred on the Tsarist Empire, however.

³⁵ In spite of its ideological orientation, the most documented account of the history of the Russian "Gypsy choruses" is Shteinpress, B.: *K istorii "tsyganskogo peniia" v Rossii*. Moscow 1934. cf. also Shcherbakova, T.: *Tsyganskoe muzykal'noe ispolnitel'stvo*. Moscow 1984.

³⁶ cf. the detailed examples in Baurov, Konstantin A.: *Repertuary tsyganskich khorov starogo Peterburga*. St. Petersburg 1996, pp.19-25; Crowe, David M.: *A History of the Gypsies in Eastern Europe and Russia*. New York 1994, pp.166-169; Rom-Lebedev: *Ot tsyganskogo khora*, p.16; Demeter; Bessonov; Kutenkov: *Istoriia tsygan*, p.161. In the family of the Russian author Lev Tolstoi, both his great uncle and his brother Sergei married a Romni.

³⁷ On the aliens, cf. primarily Slocum, John W.: *Who, and When, Were the Inorodtsy? The Evolution of the Category of "Aliens" in Imperial Russia*. In: *Russian Review*, Vol.57, No.2 (April 1998), pp.173-190. On the

companies were normally open to wealthy Roma.³⁸ In addition to this, numerous measures for sedentarization and integration in agriculture, which the Bolsheviks extolled as an innovation, clearly had their precursors in the period before 1917. There had already been large-scale sedentarization projects with the establishment of Roma settlements in Bessarabia in the 1830s under Nicholas I.³⁹ The contents of decrees of the Soviet state on the allocation of land and further benefits for Roma willing to sedentarize were oriented towards the tenor of the historical legal texts of the Tsarist Empire to large extent, partly even literally.⁴⁰ In this respect, it is significant that the establishment of "national Gypsy kolkhozes" in the 1930s led to quantifiable results almost exclusively where Roma had lived in villages and pursued agriculture for generations. Another continuity can be observed with respect to the Soviet national Roma elite, which played a leading role in all the self-administration and cultural institutions ("All-Russian Gypsy Union", editorial offices, "Romen" theatre⁴¹, etc.) That is to say, it was composed almost exclusively of representatives of famous chorus dynasties and previously wealthy urban horse dealers, who could move up the social ladder in the Tsarist Empire and had the relevant educational opportunities at their disposal.⁴²

Nevertheless, even the beginnings of the individual elements of the Soviet terror of the 1930s, which also concerned Roma, can be traced back to the end of the Tsarist Empire. In addition to Jews and Germans, Roma were also affected to some extent by Russian deportations from areas near the front during the First World War.⁴³ The discrimination against so-called "foreign Gypsies" since the end of the 19th century was also a precursor of subsequent developments. The Stalinist repressions, which reached their climax between 1933 and 1935

general policy towards nationalities of the Tsarist Empire, cf. Kappeler, Andreas: *Rußland als Vielvölkerreich. Entstehung, Geschichte, Zerfall*. Munich 2001².

³⁸ cf. inter alia decree no. 24795 of the 28th September 1811 "O prichislenii Tsygan k gorodam i seleniiam". [Concerning the inclusion of Gypsies in towns and villages.] *Polnoe Sobranie Zakonov Rossiiskoi Imperii (PSZ) I, Tom XXXI*, pp.855-856.

³⁹ cf. Zelenchuk, V.S.: *Naselenie Bessarabii i Podnestrov'ia v XIX v. Etnicheskie i sotsial'nodemograficheskie protsessy*. Kishinev 1979, pp.213-219; Antsupov, I.A.: *Gosudarstvennaia derevnia Bessarabii v XIX veke (1812-1870gg.)* Kishinev 1966, pp.41-43; Kryzhanovskaia, I.: *Iz istorii krepostnykh tsygan Bessarabii v pervoi polovine XIX veka*. In: *Trudy Tsentral'nogo Gosudarstvennogo Arkhiva Moldavskoi SSR. T.1*. Kishinev 1962, pp.221-241.

⁴⁰ This applies e.g. to the Soviet decrees of the Central Executive Committee and the Council of the People's Commissioners of the 1st October 1926 "O merakh sodeistviia perekhodu kochujushchikh tsygan k trudovomu osedlomu obrazu zhizni" and the relevant executive order for Soviet Russia on the 20th February 1928 "O nadelenii zemlei tsygan, perekhodiashchikh k trudovomu osedlomu obrazu zhizni". GARF, f.1235, op.121, d.31, l.12; GARF, f.3316, op.19, d.588, ll.112-113.

⁴¹ On the role of the Moscow "Romen" theatre, cf. Lemon, Alaina.: *Roma (Gypsies) in the USSR: The Moscow Romani Theatre*. In: *Nationalities Papers*, 19 (1991), pp.359-372; idem: *Between two Fires. Gypsy Performance and Romani Memory from Pushkin to Postsocialism*. Durham; London 2000.

⁴² Ivan Rom-Lebedev, who was one of the co-founders of the "All-Russian Gypsy Union", vividly describes this development in his memoirs. cf. Rom-Lebedev, Ivan I.: *Ot tsyganskogo khora k teatru "Romen"*. Moscow 1990.

⁴³ cf. Lohr, Eric: *Nationalizing the Russian Empire. The Campaign against Enemy Aliens during World War I*. Cambridge/Massachusetts; London 2003, pp.150.

in the case of the Roma, were not directed against the Roma as a whole at any time, but primarily concerned individuals with foreign citizenship or descent. This also applied to the deportation of more than 5,000 "Gypsies" from Moscow to Siberia in the summer of 1933.⁴⁴

Two aspects from the Soviet pre-war period are of particular significance with regard to the research and analysis work on the German occupation and the National Socialist extermination of the Roma:

1) Several statistical surveys of the population of the Soviet multi-ethnic empire from the 1920s and 1930s are available, including three large-scale censuses. The results of these counts must be treated with great caution, however, as a look at the numerical data for "Gypsies", who were listed as an individual nationality, makes clear: 61,229 "Gypsies" were recorded in the census of 1926. The number decreased to an incredible 2,211 individuals in the census of 1937, which was declared invalid, before it increased to a total of 88,200 "Gypsies" in the USSR in 1939.⁴⁵ The reasons for these enormous fluctuations, which can also be observed in other nationalities to some extent, can be found in the technical collection methods and in the external conditions of the respective survey period.⁴⁶ A basic principle of all three censuses was the self-definition of those questioned, i.e. the census takers were required to ask the individual family members about their nationality and accept the answer. As emerges from the reports of the nationalities department of the All-Russian Central Executive Committee (Vserossiiskii Tsentral'nyi Iсполnitel'nyi Komitet – VTsIK), a large number of Roma preferred to register as "Russian", "Ukrainian", "Belarusian", "Tatar", amongst others.⁴⁷ The enormous decrease in the number of "Gypsies" recorded in 1937 could therefore be explained by the experience of the terror, which (a) cost the lives of many victims and (b) necessitated an increase in the use of mimicry as a reliable survival strategy.⁴⁸ In

⁴⁴ cf. Raport pomoshchnika nachal'nika GULAG I.I. Plinera zamstiteliu predsedatelia OGPU G.G. Jagode o chistke g. Moskvy ot tsygan. 10 iulija 1933 g. GARF, f.9479, op.1, d.18, l.7. (Kopija). Abgedruckt in: Vert, N.; Mironenko, S.V. (publisher): Istorija stalinskogo Gulaga. Konets 20-kh – pervaja polovina 1950-kh godov. Sobranie dokumentov v 7-mi tomach (T.1. Massovye repressii v SSSR). Moscow 2004, p.155. Similar cases were also repeated to lesser extent in the border areas of the Soviet Union and in several large cities, including Leningrad.

⁴⁵ cf. Tsentral'noe Statisticheskoe Upravlenie SSSR: Vsesoiuznaia perepis' naseleniia 17 dekabria 1926g. Kratkie svodki, vypusk IV: Narodnost' i rodnoi iazyk naseleniia SSSR. Moscow 1928, pp.6-7; Zhiromskaia, V.B.; Kiselev, I.N.; Poliakov, Ju.A.: Polveka pod grifom "sekretno": Vsesoiuznaia perepis' naseleniia 1937 goda. Moscow 1996, p.86; Crowe: A History of the Gypsies, p.180.

⁴⁶ On the changes in the census criteria and the role which ethnographers and political interests played, cf. Hirsch, Francine: The Soviet Union as a Work-in-Progress: Ethnographers and the Category of "Nationality" in the 1926, 1937 and 1939 census. In *Slavic Review* 56, no 2 (1997), pp.251-278.

⁴⁷ cf. *inter alia* GARF, f.1235, op.123, d.27, ll.159-159ob.

⁴⁸ A strong tendency to conceal ethnic identity was also observed in regard of Kazakhs and Ukrainians in the 1930s. However, the large fall in population also had other causes in these two groups, since they were among the main victims of the famine of 1932/33. cf. Hirsch: Soviet Union, p.272

addition to the increased 'pressure for success'⁴⁹ on the census takers, the fact that the number of recorded Roma had increased by almost a third in 1939 compared with 1926, is associated with the progressive consolidation of the ethnic groups, which ethnographers and linguistic scientists consistently promoted by order of the state authorities. The number of officially recognized nationalities across the Union was reduced from 172 in 1926 to just 59 in 1939.⁵⁰ In case of the Roma, Bosha and Karachi from Transcaucasia and Liuli, Dzhugi and Mazangi from Central Asia, who had been listed separately in 1926, were all subsumed under the nationality "Gypsy" in the census of 1939.⁵¹

Unambiguous information about the number of Roma in the Soviet Union is therefore unobtainable, which is why mechanical comparisons of censuses of the pre- and post-war period would not offer the prospect of reliable results for the number of murdered Roma. Nevertheless, there is a minimum number of Roma recorded in the surveys of 1926 and 1939. In addition to their citizenship, they were also identified in all official and personal documents from their Soviet inland passport to their employment record with "Nationality: Gypsy". The examples from Smolensk and the Crimea in the main body of this work will make the far-reaching consequences this could have for their chances of survival under German occupation very clear.

2) The density of the Roma population fluctuated considerably from area to area. The highest density was in the cities of Moscow and Leningrad, which were not affected by the subsequent occupation. The rural core settlements were in the North Caucasus, the Volga Region, the West Russian territories as well as parts of the Ukraine. The centres of the "kolkhoz movement" of the Roma were located in the North Caucasus and around Smolensk, where Roma had been active in agriculture for generations to some extent. These two areas will be a central testing ground for assessment of the systematic approach to the persecution, because definitively neither the way of life nor the social status of the other inhabitants differed here. In addition to this, the "national Gypsy kolkhozes" offer the most reliable statistics, since complete lists of names from the 1930s are usually available here and can be compared with the general victims lists of the post-war period prepared by the Soviet commissions. Such an evaluation method could also form the basis for a memorial book of

⁴⁹ Stalin had predicted an improved standard of living and broad population growth for the 1930s, especially for the 'liberated nationalities'. The insipid results of the census of 1937 were therefore interpreted as an "act of sabotage", which some of the 'responsible people' paid for with their lives.

⁵⁰ cf. Hirsch: Soviet Union, pp.255-275. In this respect, population groups whose ethnicity was not clear were sometimes subsumed into a nationality under duress and a standard "mother tongue" specified. In some cases, nationalities were even artificially created, such as in Central Asia.

⁵¹ cf. Poliakov, Iu.A. (ed.): Vsesoiuznaia perepis' naseleniia 1939 goda: Osnovnye itogi. Moscow 1992, p.247.

murdered Russian and Soviet Roma, but this must be left to future research projects owing to the amount of work and time which would be required.

The task of this report is to make an initial binding assessment of the progression, extent and systematic approach of the National Socialist extermination of the Roma in the core areas of the German-occupied Soviet Union. In this respect, the study concentrated on areas under military administration, since very little information about these has been available so far. First and foremost, the files of the Extraordinary State Commission were analyzed and supplemented by random sampling from the other source types stated above and interviews with contemporary witnesses. It was impossible to obtain a complete overview of all the areas and regions under military administration in the time-limited research project. Of necessity, certain territorial areas of focus had to be specified in the research, whose selection is derived (a) from the awareness of the ethnographic and historical circumstances and (b) from some particular features of the state of records. For example, the *operations area of Heeresgruppe Nord* [Army Group North] was a military area from which a specific order of the military commander concerning the different treatment of sedentary and "itinerant" "Gypsies" is recorded. The administrative reprimand which a subordinate military unit received for the unauthorised execution of "128 Gypsies" by shooting in Novorzhev (Pskov region), is regarded as evidence for the practical implementation of this order in many historiographical accounts. In order to test the soundness of such hypotheses, I endeavoured to carry out the most comprehensive analysis possible of the files of the Extraordinary State Commission for *the operations area of Heeresgruppe Nord*. Starting from Novorzhev, the other directly and indirectly neighbouring regions of the Pskov region were examined, before the research was extended to the regions of Leningrad, Novgorod and Velikie Luki.

In the case of the operations area of *Heeresgruppe Mitte* [Army Group Centre], the geographical focus was on the Smolensk area, which – as already mentioned – was characterized by its "national Gypsy kolkhozes". The selection of the regions to be examined was automatically derived from the knowledge of the locations of these collective farms. In addition to this, the Briansk area was looked at very closely and random sampling taken from the Orlov area. In particular, the findings from the Briansk area brought a surprising amount of evidence to light.

In the south of the occupied Soviet Union, the state of knowledge of the existing research was almost exclusively restricted to the Crimea, which was part of the operations area of *Heeresgruppe Süd* [Army Group South]. In addition to broadening this aspect, the main

concern was the investigation of the fate of the first "Gypsy village soviet" in the Mineral'nye Vody district in the area of Stavropol' (at that time Voroshilovsk) in the North Caucasus – the second large national kolkhoz centre of the Soviet Roma. When an analysis of the records of the Moscow central archives did not provide the expected answers, I extended the research to the regional archives of Krasnodar and Stavropol', which unfortunately also turned out to be fruitless. However, I finally managed to fill in the gaps in the records in the archives, at least partially, and obtain valuable information by means of revealing local interviews with contemporary witnesses and a decedent's private estate.

As far as the Ukrainian areas under military administration are concerned, Stalino (today Donetsk) and Chernigov were selected for pragmatic reasons. In the latter case, a reference in a memorial book helped to view and analyse a key document from local captured documents.⁵²

For the sake of clarity, the structure of the following main body is oriented towards geographical aspects and, roughly speaking, leads from north to south, whereby an individual chapter is dedicated to each Army Group. The account in the individual chapters primarily follows the chronology of events. The most important findings of the empirical analysis are then summarized in a conclusion under thematic aspects, in order to arrive at an interim overall assessment. Finally, the question as to how the National Socialist genocide of the Roma was and is remembered after 1945 in the Soviet and post-soviet period is examined in an outlook.

⁵² Thanks go to Nikolai Bessonov from Moscow for informing me of the existence of this key document.

1. Army Group North

The advance of *Heeresgruppe Nord* [Army Group North] was accompanied by *Einsatzgruppe A* (*Sonderkommandos* [subdivisions near the front] 1a and 1b and *Einsatzkommandos* [subdivisions in the rear] 2 and 3). Already at the 17th June 1941, Lithuania, Latvia, Estonia and large parts of “Weißruthenien” (Belarus) were officially put under civil administration. Together they formed the so called “Reichskommissariat Ostland” under the control of the newly established *Reichsministerium für die besetzten Ostgebiete* [Reich Ministry of the Occupied Eastern Territories]. Hinrich Lohse became *Reichskommissar Ostland*.⁵³ The factual beginning of the civil administration came step by step, as far as the different zones of the Baltic and Belarusian regions had to be pacified in the first⁵⁴

On the other hand, the north-west of Russia, which came under German occupation with the advance on Leningrad, remained exclusively under military administration, since it was located in the direct vicinity of the active operational areas of the *Wehrmacht*. The Russian regions of Pskov, Novgorod and Leningrad were administratively part of the so-called 'Leningradskaia oblast' (territory) until the German occupation and were therefore one administrative district. In the course of the war only part of the Leningrad territory was occupied: while the Pskov Region was completely occupied, just under half of the Novgorod Region and a quarter of the Leningrad province remained unoccupied.⁵⁵

The territory between Lake Peipus and Lake Ilmen, simplified as Northern part in the following, together with its forests and swamps – especially to the north and east of Pskov – was an ideal fallback area for partisans, and the German occupying forces never had the situation there under control. As a result, the occupying forces generally acted brutally towards the civilian population – not only the "responsible" *Sonderkommando* 1b but also *Wehrmacht* units, above all, the *Geheime Feldpolizei* [Secret Field Police] (GFP).⁵⁶ The

⁵³ See Zellhuber, Andreas: „Unsere Verwaltung treibt einer Katastrophe zu...“. Das Reichsministerium für die besetzten Ostgebiete und die deutsche Besatzungsherrschaft in der Sowjetunion 1941-1945. München 2006.

⁵⁴ Ibid., pp. 130-136. Estonia was a special case, because it remained administratively a mixture between military and civil administration. See Weiss-Wendt, Anton: Extermination of the Gypsies in Estonia during World War II: Popular Images and Official Policies. In: Holocaust and Genocide Studies, volume 17, Number 1 (Spring 2003), pp. 31-61.

⁵⁵ The northeastern part of the later region of Velikie Luki, which was part of the Leningrad and Kalinin territory before the German invasion, also fell under the sphere of influence of *Heeresgruppe Nord*. On the changes in the German strategy towards the town and province of Leningrad see Hürter, Johannes: Die Wehrmacht vor Leningrad. Krieg und Besatzungspolitik der 18. Armee im Herbst und Winter 1941/42. In: Vierteljahreshefte für Zeitgeschichte, 49. Jahrgang, Heft 3, Juli 2001, pp. 377-440.

⁵⁶ On the unsuccessful German struggle against partisans and the SS terror against the rural civilian population, cf. Wilhelm, Hans-Heinrich: Die Einsatzgruppe A der Sicherheitspolizei und des SD 1941/42. Munich (inaugural dissertation), w/o year (1974/75), pp.232-295. On the other hand, Alexander Hill demonstrated in his publication that the actions of the partisan movement until 1943 were far too weak to have any actual influence on the course of the war. See Hill, Alexander: The War Behind the Eastern Front. Soviet Partisan Movement in North-West Russia. London 2005.

German occupation policy in the north-west of Soviet Russia differed considerably from the Baltic States, where the security situation was easier for the occupying forces, who could count on the support of the local population, which the Nazis levelled “racially higher” than the Slavic people. I will examine how this influenced the treatment of the Roma in the following.

The territory under military administration had a widely dispersed resident Roma population.⁵⁷ "National Gypsy kolkhozes", as had been established in several centres of population under the Soviet policy towards nationalities of the pre-war period, were the exception in the Leningrad and Pskov region.⁵⁸ The only important centre of population with a relatively large number of Roma in this area was the city of Leningrad, which escaped the occupation. However, a large number of Roma fell victim to the three-year starvation blockade.

In the Northern part existed basic written orders about the treatment of “Gypsies”. A distinction between sedentary and nomadic "Gypsies" was expressly made in the order of the Commanding General of the *Rückwärtige Heeresgruppe Nord* [Rear Area Army Group North] of the 21st November 1941: while supposedly "itinerant Gypsies [were] to be taken to the next *Einsatzkommando* of the SD", which effectively meant that they were handed over to be killed, "sedentary Gypsies who had lived at their place of residence for 2 years" and were "politically and criminally beyond suspicion" were to be "left" there.⁵⁹ The assessment of 'political reliability' provided the local police and military units with extremely wide discretionary powers, which made the exemption granted for sedentary Roma practically superfluous. This woolly definition also apparently remained in force. At all events, the instructions of the 281st Security Division from 1942 and 1943 expressly referred to the order of November 1941⁶⁰.

The extent to which a practical distinction was actually made between so-called "itinerant" and sedentary "Gypsies" as well as the scale of the extermination are almost impossible to ascertain from the scant *German* sources. In any case, the term "itinerant" has to be treated with extreme caution in view of the ideological prejudice of the occupants and the masses of

⁵⁷ The Jewish population was also comparatively thin on the ground, because the area was historically outside the former pales of settlement. A further factor were the Soviet evacuations at the start of the war. See Wilhelm: Die Einsatzgruppe A, p. 239; Hill: The War Behind the Eastern Front, pp. 30-34.

⁵⁸ However, there were also several Roma farmers in the Pskov region, who had been engaged in agriculture since the end of the 19th century.

⁵⁹ The complete order has not been preserved, but is partly paraphrased in several subsequent orders. As in STA Nürnberg, ND, NOKW 2022, 281. Sdv., Abt.VII/Ia, Tgb. Nr. 457/43 geh., 24.3.43, an Feld.-Kdtr. 822. [State Archive Nuremberg, ND, NOKW 2022, 281. Security division, Dept. VII/Ia, day report no. 457/43 secret, 24.3.43, to Field Com. 822]

⁶⁰ STA Nürnberg, ND, NOKW 2072, 281. Sich.Div., Abt., Ia/Ic/VII – 297/42. 23.6.42; *ibid*, NOKW 2022, 281. Sdv., Abt.VII/Ia, Tgb. Nr. 457/43 geh., 24.3.43, an Feld.-Kdtr. 822.

uprooted war and famine refugees. The massive refugee problem was the result of the merciless famine policy, which the military administration implemented after initial doubts against the local civil population. Roma had to share this with the other population. Anyway, the question of sedentariness did not play a role *in the practice* of the genocide, as will be shown.

Four cases of Roma executions by shooting are known from the incident reports of *Einsatzgruppe A*. "Several hundred" checks were carried out in the Leningrad area at the beginning of January 1942 as part of the struggle against the partisans, and 93 people, "including a band of Gypsies in the vicinity of Siverskaia who were up to no good", were "executed".⁶¹ The execution of 71 "Gypsies" by shooting was also reported from the Leningrad area,⁶² and "38 Jews and one Gypsy" were shot dead in a special action in Loknia on 1st February 1942.⁶³ In addition, there is the execution of 128 Gypsies by shooting by the *Ortskommandantur* [Local Commandant] of Novorzhev⁶⁴, i.e. a military division, which will be examined in more detail.

The records of the Extraordinary State Commission offer the chance to find out more precise details about the intensity and extent of the persecution. In this respect, it is apparent that the operational reports which refer to the extermination of Soviet Roma only offer a small part of the spectrum:

No mass shootings of Roma are recorded in the area examined for 1941, however two "Gypsies" were victims of individual shootings. A 30-strong German "Vergeltungseinheit [reprisal unit]"⁶⁵ (karatel'nyi otriad) entered the village of Botanok (rayon Dno) on the morning of 7th November 1941 and first of all arrested a 60-year-old Russian, whom they shot a short time later. According to eyewitness accounts, "two Gypsies from the village" were also shot on the same day.⁶⁶ The reason for the shooting is not recorded for any of the victims, nevertheless, the murders took place during a kind of 'political cleansing' campaign in the late autumn of 1941, in which a large number of villages in the Pskov and Leningrad

⁶¹ cf. Wilhelm: Die Einsatzgruppe A, p.242.

⁶² Zimmermann: Rassenutopie und Genozid, p.260.

⁶³ Wilhelm: Die Einsatzgruppe A, p.239. According to Soviet investigations, there were 37 Jews killed, because what Einsatzgruppe A did not know was that a twelve-year-old boy by the name of Filanovskii had survived the night-time massacre; the bullets went through his cap without injuring his head. Filanovskii managed to escape unnoticed from the mass grave and made his way to the Soviet back area. Thanks to his statement, the precise course of events of the shooting could be reconstructed. cf. Protokol doprosa [Kopiia] Filanovskogo Soliu Grigorevicha, 12.2.1942. GARF, f.R-7021 (ChGK), op.20 (Velikolutskaia oblast'), d.13, ll.14-15ob.

⁶⁴ Rendered as Noworschew or Noworschew in German documents.

⁶⁵ This word is normally used to refer to *Einsatz- and Sonderkommandos* in Soviet Commission reports. However, this expression is also sometimes used to denote military units in witness accounts gathered from the population.

⁶⁶ GARF, f.7021 (ChGK), op.39 (Pskovskaia oblast'), d.316, ll.4-5; 70-70ob.; 71.

region were searched for communist activists, "Soviet intelligentsia" and Jews.⁶⁷ Heads of kolkhozes and teachers were also shot in these "cleansings" from time to time. No details are known about the two Roma in Botanok, neither their names nor occupations. In this respect, it remains open whether the *Einsatzkommando* had definite 'grounds for suspicion' or whether the victims were regarded as 'subversive elements' solely on account of their ethnicity.

Nevertheless, this shooting appears to have been an individual case. The treatment planned for Roma in the early phase of the military administration in operations area of *Heeresgruppe Nord* cannot be inferred from the records of the Extraordinary State Commission. However, several things indicate that the Soviet Russian Roma were first of all to be placed under the supervision of the Security Police and used for forced labour, as is sometimes also recorded for the Baltic area.⁶⁸

Several Roma families, a total of 26 people, were deported from Luga to the Gdov region in 1941. They were billeted with local Russian farmers in village of Filippovshchina in the Shcherpeckii village soviet and used as ancillary workers in agriculture. The deportation was therefore primarily economically motivated. However, the work assignment did not last long, because the Roma of Filippovshchina were victims of an early and extremely brutal mass shooting which took place in *Rückwärtiges Heeresgebiet Nord* [Rear Army Area North] shortly afterwards. At the end of February 1942, a "retaliation unit", which is said to have consisted of Germans, Finns and Estonians, entered the village. At a temperature of minus 30 degrees, the half-dressed Roma were all driven from their houses and made to stand on a bridge at the entrance to the village. The families were forced to dance in front of the assembled villagers for the "odious entertainment" of the murderers, before they were shot with three machine guns. After the shooting, the Russian villagers had to bury the bodies. A ten-year-old boy, who had only been wounded in the hand in the 'action', attempted to flee with the aid of the villagers but to no avail. He was caught and, according to witnesses, buried alive at the command of a German officer.⁶⁹

Two aspects of the shooting are of particular relevance for assessing the motivation of the perpetrators. Firstly, "the whole nightmare" took place in front of the shocked villagers. "A German soldier" had explained to them that "the Gypsies [had had] contact with the partisans", although there had been "no investigation or interrogation of any kind".

⁶⁷ The region was 'combed' in a coordinated campaign between October and November 1941. cf. Wilhelm: Die Einsatzgruppe A, pp.242-244. The exceptional intensity of the persecution was also recorded by the Soviets in this period. cf. AKT o zlodeianiiakh nemetsko-fashistskikh zakhvatchikov i ikh soobshchnikov v Oredezhskom raione Leningradskoi oblasti. GARF, f.7021, op.30 (Leningradskaiia oblast'), d.245, ll.3-9; 3-4.

⁶⁸ cf. Weiss-Wendt: Extermination of the Gypsies in Estonia, pp.40-44.

⁶⁹ AKT o zlodeianiiakh nemetsko-fashistskikh zakhvatchikov i ikh soobshchnikov po Gdovskomu raionu, za period ego okkupatsii. GARF, f.7021 (ChGK), op.39 (Pskovskaia oblast'), d.457, ll.1-17ob.; 6-7; 6-6ob.

Furthermore, the "completely innocent Gypsies" initially followed the armed SS men "quite calmly". The partisan pretext was therefore not believed. Instead the witnesses were deeply dismayed by the "savage punishment" (*dikaia rasprava*) which the "German-fascist criminals (*zlodei*)" had in store for the "defenceless Gypsies and their children".⁷⁰

Secondly, the manner of the execution, in which stereotyped imaginations of "Gypsies" are employed, is revealing from a psychological point of view. Music and dance, which have a fundamental significance for the cultural representation and perception of the Sinti and Roma in Europe, are used to humiliate the victims. The Roma of Filippovshchina are forced to perform their 'last dance' in freezing temperatures surrounded by three machine guns pointing at them. The symbolism of this cynical *mise en scène* is comparable with the humiliation of orthodox Jews by cutting off their beards and has the object of the symbolic annihilation of the entire culture. The romanticised 'Gyps life' as imagined by the SS perpetrators, is showcased on the 'stage' (village bridge), ridiculed and wiped out together with its representatives.

The murder of the Roma of Filippovshchina was the prelude to a whole series of mass shootings in the spring of 1942, which claimed a total of between 700 and 900 Roma victims according to the data of the Extraordinary Commission, which is far from complete. The mass murders were geographically distributed over the entire area, but were carried out by different groups of perpetrators.

Thus, 21 Roma together with the Jews of the village were murdered in Moglino (Pskov region) "in the spring" of 1942.⁷¹ The ex-KGB man, Mikhail Pushniakov, described the murders in his memoirs: "The Germans killed the Gypsy population with particular cruelty. [...] The witness Teinbas said that the members of the 'Sonderkommando' tore the babies from the arms of the women and smashed their heads in with a blow against the vehicle wheels, in order to save cartridges. They then threw the dead babies into the ditches. This entire barbaric act took place in front of the mothers."⁷² A similar scenario was repeated shortly afterwards in a neighbouring village where "30 Gypsies and Jews" were shot.⁷³

A total of four mass shootings are recorded in April. Two of these took place in the Slantsy region. At the end of April 1942, a 60-man "retaliation unit" entered the village of Krivitsy in the Viskatskii village soviet and arrested 15 "Gypsies", including "children from 3 to 14 years

⁷⁰ *ibid*, ll.6ob.-7.

⁷¹ *Doklad ob itogakh, ushcherbi i rassledovaniiu zlodeianii, chinimykhnemetsko-fashistskimi zachvatchikami v Pskovskoi oblasti*. GARF, f.7021 (ChGK), op.39 (Pskovskaia oblast'), d.455, l.20.

⁷² cf. The unpublished memoirs of Mikhail Pushniakov: "Moglinskoe delo" Pskov 2002, p.1. (unpublished manuscript). My thanks go to the historian Boris Kovalev from Velikii Novgorod, who allowed me to view the text.

⁷³ GARF, f.7021 (ChGK), op.39 (Pskovskaia oblast'), d.455, l.20.

old". Nine of them were lined up against a fence and shot one by one "in an irregular sequence" (neocheredno). The 'action' was subsequently repeated with the remaining six "Gypsies".⁷⁴ Another 25 Roma were murdered in the nearby village of Savinovshchina in the same way⁷⁵, so that the murders were probably carried out by the same *Einsatz-* or *Sonderkommando*.

Whereas the mobile killing units were to blame for the murders in the previous cases, the extermination of the Roma in the regions of Oredezh and Utogorsh (Leningrad territory was planned well in advance and logistically coordinated by the "SD headquarters", i.e. most likely the Security Police, in Oredezh. First of all, 72 Roma living in the city of Oredezh were arrested in April 1942 and shot at the former estate of Vasil'kovichi, where the *Sicherheitsdienst* "resided" during the occupation.⁷⁶ A short time afterwards, 120 "Gypsies" from the neighbouring Utogorshskii rayon, which appeared to be under the sphere of responsibility of the Security Police of Oredezh, were deported to Oredezh station in a goods wagon, also taken to the "estate of the SD" and all of them murdered.⁷⁷ The example of Oredezh is significant, because the complete extermination of the Roma there functioned almost perfectly, primarily thanks to the support of the Russian "traitor", Anna Ershova. The witness, Anastasiia Grokhovskaia, herself a surviving Romni, stated that Ershova "went to the gendarmerie"⁷⁸ almost every day for a lengthy period and reported about the "Gypsies". During the arrests, Ershova had shown the Germans "who of the Gypsies was hiding where".⁷⁹ The informer Ershova was put on the list of wanted National Socialist criminals and collaborators together with *SS-Obersturmführer* Bauer, who, according to the Soviet investigations, was the

⁷⁴ AKT No 21. Slantsevskoi raionnoi komissii. 29.11.1944. GARF, f.7021 (ChGK), op.30 (Leningradskaiia oblast'), d.250, ll.4-5; 5.

⁷⁵ Ibid.

⁷⁶ AKT o zlodeianiiakh nemetsko-fashistskikh zakhvatchikov i ikh soobshchnikov v Oredezhskom raione Leningradskoi oblasti. GARF, f.7021, op.30 (Leningradskaiia oblast'), d.245, ll.3-9; 3-6. Nine of the total of 72 victims were identified by the surviving Romni Anastasiia Grokhovskaia: another 15 names were subsequently determined by the Extraordinary State Commission. cf. *ibid.*, ll.10-10ob.; 18. Wolfgang Curilla mentions a further shooting of "15 male and female Gypsies" "under the command of the SD" in Oredezh, which must have taken place in the same period of time. "The Gypsies had to kneel at the edge of a pit and were shot by Russian auxiliaries in the neck. [...] The delinquents were shot for the single reason that they were Gypsies." See Curilla, Wolfgang: *Die deutsche Ordnungspolizei und der Holocaust im Baltikum und in Weißrußland 1941-1944*. Paderborn 2006 (2., durchges. Auflage), S.283.

⁷⁷ Ibid.

⁷⁸ The *Ortskommandantur* is probably referred to here. If this is the case, it would be an example of the close cooperation of the military administration and the Security Police in the extermination of the Roma.

⁷⁹ Zaiavlenie v raionnuiu gosudarstvennuiu komissiiu [...] ot grazhdanki Grokhovskoi Anastasii Kuzminichna. GARF, f.7021, op.30 (Leningradskaiia oblast'), d.245, ll.19-20; 19ob; PROTOKOL DOPROSA – Grokhovskaia Anastasiia Kuz'minichna, 12.10.1944. *Ibid.*, ll.21-22ob.

Chief of the Police of Oredezh.⁸⁰ However, she could not be apprehended as she left with the Germans when they withdrew.⁸¹

The frequently cited massacre of Novorzhev occupies a special place. In this case, detailed information about the crime is available both from German and the Soviet side which has fundamental differences. Extraordinarily detailed evidence is available on the German side, because the shooting of "128 Gypsies" in the territory of the 281st Security Division of Rear Army Area North by the *Ortskommandantur* of Noworschew (russ. Novorzhev; Pskov Region) at the end of May/beginning of June 1942 brought an administrative investigation in its wake.⁸² In a letter of explanation to the commander of *Heeresgruppe Nord*, the Division Commander justified the "taking of drastic measures" by the *Ortskommandantur* because of a general suspicion of partisans, which "was almost always the case" with "Gypsies" as a result of their "itinerant lifestyle". Furthermore, "all the Gypsies", who included "many men of fighting age", had made "an extremely bad and mendacious impression" and "frequently contradicted themselves" during their interrogation by Secret Field Police Group 714. Although the guilt of the suspects was "not clearly proved", the divisional commander concluded that their shooting was appropriate "for security and espionage reasons", also in retrospect.⁸³

After liberation of the Pskov Region in June 1944, the Extraordinary State Commission also worked on the case of Novorzhev, whereby some of the results were published in the local press. According to these, the course of events was as follows: in May 1942, the German occupation authorities had summoned "all Gypsies" of the Novorzhev und "Pushkinskii" [Pushkinskie Gory?] regions for "resettlement" to southern Russia. Several families followed this call, whereupon they arrived with "their livestock" and "all their belongings".⁸⁴ The "German *Feldgendarmarie* [military police]" then "herded together" the "Gypsy families", including "many old people and children", in the prison of Novorzhev. There they were

⁸⁰ Bauer and Ershova are explicitly held accountable for the murder of the Roma in the list. "There it says that: [...] 105. Bauer: German, *Obersturmführer* "SS". shot 72 Gypsies who lived in the settlement of Torkovichi, and approximately 120 Gypsies who lived in Utorgosh. = Head [of the Security Police]; 106. Ershova Anna: Russian. During the shooting, she showed where the Gypsies were hidden. = Traitor. " GARF, f.7021 (ChGK), op.30 (Leningradskaia oblast'), d.1611, ll.40-41.

⁸¹ At least not in the immediate post-war period, when the file ends.

⁸² See Krausnick, Helmut: *Hitlers Einsatzgruppen. Die Truppe des Weltanschauungskrieges 1938-1942*. Frankfurt am Main 1985, pp.243-244; Zimmermann: *Rassenutopie und Genozid*, pp.265-266; Lewy: "Rückkehr unerwünscht", pp.204-205.

⁸³ STA Nürnberg, ND, NOKW 2072, 281. Sich.Div., Abt., Ia/Ic/VII – 297/42. 23.6.42.

⁸⁴ Kopylov, S.: *Nemetskie izvergi*. In: *Put' kolkhoznika*. Novorzhev, March 17, 1945, No.1,p.2; Petrov, P.I.: *Nemtsy – ubiitsy zhenshchin i detei*. In: *Put' kolkhoznika*. Novorzhev, No.31, July 23, 1944. Cited after: Kalinin, Val'demar: *Zagadka baltiiskikh tsygan. Ocherki istorii, kul'tury i sotsial'nogo razvitiia baltiiskikh tsygan*. Minsk 2005, pp.63-64.

subjected "to all possible tortures", before they were transported in trucks to the former kolkhoz of "Krasnyi Lebedinets" and shot. The witness, Mariia Chistiakova, from the village of Orsha, described her impressions of the location of the mass shooting, which she had visited two days later: "A number of bodies had no heads, severed (otrublennye) hands and feet lay around everywhere, and also hair which the Germans had pulled out of the heads of the women when they tortured them. Murdered babies lay beside their mothers."⁸⁵ The exhumation of the corpses, which the forensic expert commission documented with photographs, confirmed the account of the witness: "Execution by several shots to various parts of the body. Murder by blows to the head with various objects with shattering (razdroblenie) of the skull. Slashing (rasparivanie) of the abdomen with bayonets and knives. Murder by poisoning with toxic substances. Burial alive, especially children. Furthermore, the examination of the corpses revealed that many bodies had traces of physical torture and violence, such as: broken limbs, severed hands, feet and heads, which were found separately from the torsos." A total of "more than 330 bodies" were found.⁸⁶

The Soviet account fundamentally contradicts the German statements. The number of victims is much higher, and they were obviously sedentary families, some of whom were also known to the inhabitants of the neighbouring villages and kolkhozes by name.⁸⁷ According to the Soviet version, the Roma were also not "hunted down", but were deceived by a German summons for "resettlement".

How should the discrepancy of the contents from the German and the Soviet perspective be interpreted? As emerges from the documents of the 281st Security Division, the German military administration in the Novorzhev region was suffering an increasing number of partisan attacks in May 1942.⁸⁸ The Secret Field Police and the *Ortskommandantur* counteracted the growing pressure through the extermination of the local Roma population, whereby they used the methods employed against the Jews. However, the unauthorised torture and execution of the "Gypsies" represented a breach of competence, since the army units were instructed to hand over suspect "Gypsies" to the Einsatzgruppen.⁸⁹ This also applied to the order of *Feldkommandantur* [Field HQ] 822, according to which "Gypsies were *always* to be treated like partisans", which the lower military instances had created for the purposes of self-

⁸⁵ Archiv Novorzhevskogo raiona Pskovskoi oblasti, f.2, op.1, d.14, l.1. Published in Kalinin: Zagadka baltiiskich tsygan, pp.62-63. This description can also be found under GARF, f.7021 (ChGK), op.39 (Pskovskaia oblast'), d.319, ll.15, 24-25.

⁸⁶ Zakliuchenie, 5.6.1944. GARF, f.7021 (ChGK), op.39 (Pskovskaia oblast'), d.319, ll.15-16; 15.

⁸⁷ In the witness accounts, it was stated that "Comrade Kozlov" and his family were also among the victims.

⁸⁸ STA Nürnberg, ND, NOKW 2072, 281. Sich.Div., Abt., Ia/Ic/VII – 297/42. 23.6.42.

⁸⁹ cf. *ibid.* The fate of the arrested "Gypsies" would probably not have been very different if they had been handed over to the Security Police "in the correct manner". See Wilhelm: Einsatzgruppe A, pp.232-295.

legitimation and which was revoked by the divisional command.⁹⁰ In view of the unexpected criticism on the part of higher military instances, the Security Division therefore resorted to the widespread anti-Gypsy stereotype of vagabonds and spies, in order to substantiate the suspicion of partisan activity in retrospect. For this purpose, however, all the Roma of the region first had to be turned into 'itinerant Gypsies', who went "begging from place to place". With the note that the shooting had furthermore been "substantially justified", as "no more attacks [had] taken place" since then, the command of the Security Division ultimately stylized the murders of defenceless civilians and children as an alleged "success report" in the struggle against the partisans.⁹¹

The Extraordinary State Commission also arrived at contrary results in this point. In addition to further verification of the facts, it considered the motives of the perpetrators in its final assessment: "[...] 2. The methods of torture, violence and murder used were of a planned [and] methodical nature with the objective of the complete extermination of an entire ethnic group (narodnost') – the Gypsies."⁹² In view of the "complete innocence" of the victims, the charge of partisan activity was considered to be purely a pretext.

The other incidents in the immediate jurisdiction of the 281st Security Division justify the assessment of the commissioners.⁹³ A second mass shooting took place in the region of Pushkinskie Gory, which is to the west of Novorzhev, at exactly the same time. And here too an *Ortskommandantur* was to blame for the murders. At the end of May 1942, the German occupying forces and Russian auxiliary police arrested more than 300 people over the entire region of Pushkinskie Gory and held them for several days in a former secondary school building which had been converted to a prison. According to the information of the Soviets, the order for the mass arrests came directly from "Commandant" Singer (Zinger) and a colonel by the name of Amel. The prisoners included about 70 "Gypsies" "from babies

⁹⁰ The order is paraphrased in STA Nürnberg, ND, NOKW 2072, 281. Sich.Div., Abt., Ia/Ic/VII – 297/42. 23.6.42.

⁹¹ The *Einsatzgruppen* also regularly resorted to manipulated "success messages" cf. the introduction of Peter Klein in *ibid* (publisher): *Die Einsatzgruppen in der besetzten Sowjetunion 1941/42. Die Tätigkeits- und Lageberichte des Chefs der Sicherheitspolizei und des SD.* Berlin 1997, p.10. Einsatzgruppe A reported e.g. the shooting of a dangerous group of partisans in April 1942, which had been led through the countryside by Bolshevik leaders. In fact it was a group of mentally ill, who had been accompanied by nursing staff. cf. Wilhelm: *Die Einsatzgruppe A*, p.263.

⁹² GARF, f.7021 (ChGK), op.39 (Pskovskaia oblast'), d.319, l.8. Alexander Hill mentions that at the same period of time the German authorities asked the local volost' leaders for information on "Gypsies", what also indicates the systematic character of the persecution. See Hill: *The War Behind the Eastern Front*, p. 33.

⁹³ The reference to "200" murdered "Gypsies" in the Pozherevitsy region in a report of the Novgorod district commission apparently concerns a geographically inaccurate account of the events in neighbouring Novorzhev, because the details correspond (children poisoned in front of their parents, amongst other things). The inaccuracy may have occurred because the information comes from second-hand sources. cf. IZ DOKLADNOI ZAPISKI NACHAL'NIKU POLITUPRAVLENIIA SEVERO-ZAPADNOGO FRONTA. General-maioru tov. OKOROKOVU. 1.3.1944. GARF, f.7021 (ChGK), op.34 (Novgorodskaia oblast'), d.760, ll.72-84; 83.

upwards".⁹⁴ The eyewitness, Konstantin Fedorov, recalled: "I was arrested in May 1942 together with other residents. [...] All the prisoners of both sexes and also children were together in one room. Zinger was in command. [...] I saw how the Germans shot 40-50 people from the room every day for 6 days; it was mainly the Gypsies – men, women and children – who were shot. They [the Germans] shot 23 children aged from one month to 12 years, and altogether 300 people were shot in these 6 days. The shooting took place to the east of the village of Rakhovo and 500 metres from the regional centre of Pushkinskie Gory."⁹⁵ Closer investigation revealed that the Roma children had been separated from their parents on the day of their shooting and were shot in the direct vicinity of the school of Rakhovo. The bodies of the adult Roma were found near the other mass graves.⁹⁶

Collectively, the mass murders of Pushkinskie Gory were therefore not a separate "Gypsy action" but generally focused on communists and alleged 'partisan helpers' among the civilian population. While individual 'suspects' and people picked up at random were concerned in the case of the ethnic Russian population, however, whole families of the Roma of the town were arrested and exterminated. As in the case of the extermination of Jews, the ideological equation of "Gypsy" and "partisan" also played a decisive role here. In this respect, the population was very aware of the special position of the Roma victims. The orthodox priest, Iosif Dmitriev, who had initiated the investigations of the Extraordinary State Commission with his application, described the differences most accurately. In addition to the murders of countless prisoners, the Germans also carried out "racial shootings (rassovye rasstrely) of Gypsies and their children aged 6 and also babies". "All told, the Fascists shot 70 Gypsies, including 23 children, who they buried 50 metres from the secondary school building."⁹⁷

25 "citizens of Gypsy nationality" were also murdered in families in Porkhov located to the north-west of Novorzhev. After their arrest, the victims were held prisoner in a detainee camp for civilians and murdered shortly afterwards.⁹⁸

The evidence of the Extraordinary State Commission shows only too clearly that the extermination of the Roma in the territory of the 281st Security Division was systematic and

⁹⁴ AKT No 71, pos. Pushkinskie Gory, 25.3.1945. GARF, f.7021 (ChGK), op.39 (Pskovskaia oblast'), d.336, ll.1aob., 5ob., 8ob., 11ob.

⁹⁵ Protokol doprosa Federova Konstantina Fedorovicha. 12.5.1945. Idem, ll.7-9; 8-8ob. Fedorov himself was assigned to the last group, which had to bury the bodies of those who had been shot in a total of 11 pits. Afterwards he returned to the prison and was released after a few days.

⁹⁶ GARF, f.7021 (ChGK), op.39 (Pskovskaia oblast'), d.336, ll.1aob., 6ob.

⁹⁷ 20.4.1945. [Zaiavlenie] V ChGK [...] sviashchennika Dmitrieva Iosifa Dmitrievicha. Idem, ll.6-6ob. With "racial shootings", Dmitriev expresses the racist motivation of the perpetrators and the intended complete annihilation of the Roma.

⁹⁸ AKT po Porchovskomu raionu, 30.04.1945. GARF, f.7021 (ChGK), op.39 (Pskovskaia oblast'), d.328, ll.40, 79. A more precise date is not available for this murder, but I think the period from March to June 1942 is very likely in view of the other events.

was the responsibility of and carried out by the military administration itself. The *Ortskommandanturen* in the south-east of Pskov killed every Roma they were able to catch. The generalized equation of "Gypsies" and "partisans" meant nothing more than the practical equation of the Roma with the Jews, i.e. the deliberate and total extermination from newborn babies to the old. The pretext and specific orders which were resorted to in this genocide were basically irrelevant.

An example from the Novgorod region shows how little the top level of the German military administration had to do with the practical reality of the local situation. In a letter from the local agricultural administration of Soletsk to the Starost (headman) and elders of the Klevitskii rural administrative district (Klavitskaia volost'), it is ordered what should happen to itinerant Roma: "We inform you that that if nomadic Gypsies are found in the territory of your administrative district (volost'), you are obliged to confiscate the horses and give them to villagers (grazhdan selenii) who need horses. The Gypsies are to be sent to the nearest *Kommandantur* [command post] for the purposes of putting them to work."⁹⁹

It can be easily guessed from the overall context what would be in store for the Roma in the *Kommandantur*. The practice of mass murder is also documented in the Novgorod region and here it also affected sedentary as well as nomadic Roma. The argument of Boris Kovalev that the shootings of Novgorod had been motivated by "the unwillingness and the incapacity" of the nomadic "Gypsies" "to carry out any work" is therefore a crass misinterpretation.¹⁰⁰ It was surely no coincidence that a military unit was also to blame for the 'cleansing' of the Novgorod region which had taken place in May 1942.¹⁰¹ The accusation of "partisan activity" also played a part in its justification.¹⁰² First of all, 30 allegedly "nomadic Gypsies" were "picked up" in the Novgorod region and taken to a POW camp located on the site of a former sovkhos (state farm) by the name of "Zaveriazhskie Pokosy" in the village soviet of Borkovskii. The Massal'skii family of eight was also arrested on the same day and taken to the camp. After being "put together" with the other Roma, the special prisoners were taken to the so-called stockyard, which also served as a place of execution for prisoners of war. Boards had been laid over an open trench, all the children and adolescents were driven on these first

⁹⁹ Soletskoe Raionnoe Sel'khozupravlenii – Volostnomu starshchine Klevickoi volosti. g. Sol'tsy , 21 iulia 1942g., No 722. Gosudarstvennyi istoricheskii arkhiv Novgorodskoi oblasti (GIANO), f.R-2113s (sekretno – rassekrecheno), op.1, d.6, l.13.

¹⁰⁰ Kovalev: *Natsistskaia okkupatsiia i kollaboratsionizm*, p.250.

¹⁰¹ According to a Commission report, the arrest and mass shooting was ordered by a German officer by the name of Hoffmann (Gofman), the "Commandant of the German military forces" in the Novgorod region. GARF, f.7021 (ChGK), op.34 (Novgorodskaiia oblast'), d.368, l.3. However, Hoffmann is only referred to as "officer of a street battalion" and commandant of the village of Borki in other places. But this would also be a military unit.

¹⁰² *Ibid*, l.81.

and shot in front of their parents. Then it was the turn of the adults.¹⁰³ The local civilian population who had been forced to leave their village to prevent witnesses could clearly hear the "heart-rending screams" of the dying Roma in spite of being about a kilometre away.¹⁰⁴ Apart from the Massal'skii family none of the victims was known by name. Interestingly enough, the Massal'skiis were also referred to by most witnesses as "itinerant Gypsies", although they were sedentary villagers who were known personally by each of those interviewed. Semen Massal'skii worked as a railway guard on the Staraiia Russa - Leningrad line.¹⁰⁵ The automatic equation of "Gypsy" and "nomad" was therefore not only a self-evident truth for the perpetrators, but also frequently characterized the "image of the Gypsy" for the indigenous Russian population – regardless of the Soviet nationalities and settlement policy of the pre-war period. This shows how cautiously witness statements have to be treated in this respect. The fact is that every Roma who could be seized in the Novgorod region in May 1942 was murdered.

The extent and intensity of the extermination process reached their climax in May 1942. The majority of the Roma living in the operations area of *Heeresgruppe Nord* had probably already been murdered by this time. However, further shootings took place at irregular intervals until the summer of 1943. And in spite of contrary orders, all the documented cases showed that representatives of the military were responsible for carrying out the murders. Two cases are known from the late summer of 1942. Both murders were committed by "Kommandantur no. 705", correctly *Ortskommandantur 705*, which was stationed in the Strugi Krasnye region and is said to have suffered from the "spectre of the partisan (*stradala prizrakov partizanshchiny*)" to a particularly high degree.¹⁰⁶ 22 "Gypsies" of various ages were shot "in front of everybody" in the village of Khredino in the Khredinskii village soviet in August 1942.¹⁰⁷ Beforehand they had been held in prison for two months and used for forced labour together with the children.¹⁰⁸ And although this meant that the Roma could no longer be a danger, also in the view of the Kommandantur, they were murdered. Obviously the systematic extinction "of the Gypsies" had priority over efficient exploitation.

¹⁰³ cf. the testimony of Danila Kuznetsov, who referred to the report of a prisoner of war who was an eyewitness to the shooting. GARF, f.7021 (ChGK), op.34 (Novgorodskaiia oblast'), d.368, ll.110-111ob.; 111.

¹⁰⁴ GARF, f.7021 (ChGK), op.34 (Novgorodskaiia oblast'), d.368, ll.3, 81, 117-117ob., 120.

¹⁰⁵ cf. *ibid.*, l.108.

¹⁰⁶ GARF, f.7021 (ChGK), op.39 (Pskovskaia oblast'), d.339, l.363.

¹⁰⁷ AKT, Khredino, 17.5.1945. GARF, f.7021 (ChGK), op.39 (Pskovskaia oblast'), d.339, ll.48-48ob.; 48ob. cf. also *ibid.*, l.6.

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, l.363.

The following example shows that unidentified Roma may also have been refugees – who were possibly previously sedentary. A group of 122 Roma refugees (*gruppa tsygan-bezhentsev*) "including many women with babies" was arrested in the Loknia region in the extreme south of the operations area of *Heeresgruppe Nord* "at the end of 1942". The refugees were driven to a forest where they were shot and their bodies "simply left lying on the snow".¹⁰⁹ A "citizen of Gypsy nationality" had already been included in a shooting of Jews in the same region on 2nd February 1942, as both German and Soviet records confirm (see above). A bus which transported 38 Jews to the shooting drove to the prison of Loknia beforehand and collected the Rom detained there.¹¹⁰ Auxiliary policemen shot two "Gypsy women" living in the Samolukovskii village soviet at the order of the gendarmerie in the summer of 1942. And finally another five "Gypsy families" were arrested in the village soviet of Loknia and deported; nothing is known of their fate.¹¹¹ According to Soviet information, the orders for the arrests and shootings which took place in Loknia from the summer of 1942 came from the "commander of the [*Feld*]gendarmerie". They were carried out by Russian auxiliary policemen under his authority.

The fate of the Roma depended to a high degree on the attitude of the local civilian population towards the persecuted people. In spite of support from the auxiliary police, the mostly understrength stationary units of the security police and military command posts were far from able to exercise efficient control. This particularly applied to the rural areas, where the occupying forces were dependent on the help of the village leaders, so-called Starosty (headmen) or elders. Ivan Alekseev, the Starost of the village of Savino in the Pozherevitskii region, was apparently one of the 'loyal' collaborators, which would subsequently cost him his life.¹¹² In March 1943, Alekseev denounced 23 "Gypsies" who had come to the village "for their business" to the "*Feldpolizei*" in Pozherevitsy. The families of traders (eight men, eight women and seven children) arrived in Savino "on seven carts with their possessions" and "made a short stop". "Five German officers of the gendarmerie" – other sources refer to the "*Feldpolizei*" – and two Russian auxiliary policemen arrived in Savino on the same day.¹¹³ The "Gypsies" were arrested and taken to the temporarily commandeered hut (*izba*) of Andrei Lukashev, the most important witness. Lukashev described the further course of events to the Extraordinary State Commission: "A German officer checked the documentation of the

¹⁰⁹ 15.12. 1944. AKT, gorod Loknia. GARF, f.7021 (ChGK), op.20 (Velikolutskaia oblast'), d.13, l.2ob.

¹¹⁰ cf. GARF, f.7021 (ChGK), op.20 (Velikolutskaia oblast'), d.13, ll.9ob., 14-15ob. His name was not discovered.

¹¹¹ Ibid, ll.2ob.-3.

¹¹² Alekseev was killed by partisans in 1943.

¹¹³ GARF, f.7021 (ChGK), op.39 (Pskovskaia oblast'), d.325, l.4ob.

Gypsies and wrote everyone down (perepisal), whereupon they were taken to another room. [...] I also saw how the two Russian auxiliary policemen went to the storehouse. One German officer went to stand on a hill, then the other German officer led out two men [Gypsies] and took them to the storehouse, from where he returned alone. He then led out two more men and took them to the storehouse. Afterwards the policemen went to the bania¹¹⁴, where the German officer then took the two women. [...] After the German officers and the two policemen had distributed the Gypsies' possessions, they left our village. On the evening of the same day, I went to the storehouse and the bania where the German officer had taken the Gypsies. There I saw the men and women, they had been shot dead; there were also children with the executed Gypsies."¹¹⁵ The Pozherevitsy region is geographically located in the direct vicinity of the Novorzhev region and therefore in the jurisdiction of the above mentioned 281st Security Division. As a result, it is highly likely that the reason for the second admonition to *Feldkommandantur* 822 not to liquidate "Gypsies and Jews" itself but "to take" them to the Security Police was connected with the shooting of the 23 Roma in Savino.¹¹⁶

The arrest of the "Gypsies" in the village of Savino therefore appears to be a random event. The situation is different with the Roma of the city of Ostrov (Leningrad Region) in the summer of 1943, who were the last (recorded) victims of the National Socialist "persecution of Gypsies" in the operations area of *Heeresgruppe Nord*. Only "the Germans" are named as perpetrators in the Soviet files, but the type of extermination operation, which was simultaneously directed against Jews and Roma, points to the Security Police. The summary Commission report tersely states that "In the summer of 1943, approximately 200 residents of the city of Ostrov of Jewish and Gypsy nationality, including old people, women and children, were arrested and robbed of their possessions. They were driven from the region to the city of Pskov and shot."¹¹⁷ The actions followed at an interval of a few days. First of all, around 100 Jews were arrested one night and taken to a special camp, from where they were taken towards Pskov in trucks, where their trail is lost. In the opinion of the witnesses, the Jews were shot near Pskov, since "not a single Jew returned to the city" and all the possessions of the victims were sold at auction and distributed. According to the same pattern, all the "Gypsies" of the city – according to witness accounts, there were "somewhat more than [the previously deported 100] Jews" – were arrested another night, placed under detention for a

¹¹⁴ A Bania is a kind of Russian sauna.

¹¹⁵ 29.3.1945. Protokol doprosa – Lukashev, Andrei Grigorevich. GARF, f.7021 (ChGK), op.39 (Pskovskaia oblast'), d.325, ll.3-5ob.

¹¹⁶ STA Nürnberg, ND, NOKW 2022, 281. Sdv., Abt.VII/Ia, Tgb. Nr. 457/43 geh., 24.3.43, an Feld.-Kdtr. 822. Unfortunately it is not stated in the Soviet sources which division of the *Geheime Feldpolizei* (Secret Field Police) carried out the massacre.

¹¹⁷ AKT, gorod Ostrov, 28.8.1944. GARF, f.7021 (ChGK), op.30 (Leningradskaia oblast'), d.1736, ll.2-4;3.

short time and then deported towards Pskov. The possessions of the Roma were also offered for sale.¹¹⁸

The Jews and Roma were apparently used for forced labour for almost two years before the German occupying forces decided to exterminate them. What prompted this relatively late decision? It is possible that the approaching military defeat forced a rapid 'evacuation'. A further indication for this is that, according to the Extraordinary State Commission, the systematic murder of Soviet prisoners of war in the camps around Ostrov had started in the same period.¹¹⁹

The chronology of events makes it clear that the murder of the Soviet Russian Roma in the sphere of influence of *Heeresgruppe Nord* proceeded in several phases. Two individual shootings are recorded from the first months of the occupation, which do not allow any firm conclusions to be drawn about the treatment of the other Roma. The transition to systematic genocide occurs in the period between February and March 1942 and reaches its climax in May and June 1942. The majority of the "Gypsies" in the north-west of Soviet Russia were murdered in the first half of 1942. In the process, no difference was made between itinerant and sedentary Roma, so that the latter had apparently already been completely exterminated in most areas.¹²⁰ This might also explain why the intensity of the persecution was reduced in the second half of the year.¹²¹

The progression and extent of the extermination of the Roma in the Northern part therefore appear to be a coordinated mass operation, particularly in the spring of 1942. It cannot be verified that a specific extermination order was issued in secret in the preliminary stages of the attack on the Soviet Union or in the winter of 1942.¹²² However, this appears to be highly probable in spite of a contrary official command status. On the other hand, the individual phases of the extermination, which were carried out by different groups of perpetrators, provide indirect information about this. From January until April 1942, the murders of the

¹¹⁸ cf. GARF, f.7021 (ChGK), op.30 (Leningradskaja oblast'), d.1736, ll.2-4;3, 141-142, 149-150, 179-180.

¹¹⁹ GARF, f.7021 (ChGK), op.30 (Leningradskaja oblast'), d.1736, l.3.

¹²⁰ In this respect, the assumption of Wolfgang Wippermann (relating to the entire occupied Soviet Union), according to which it is doubtful whether there were any sedentary Roma at all remaining alive in the occupied Eastern Territories in 1943 is confirmed in the operations area of Army Group North. cf. Wippermann, Wolfgang: *Nur eine Fußnote?*, pp.75-90; 89-90.

¹²¹ However, the number of unrecorded cases of murders of nomadic, semi-nomadic or Roma who were simply fleeing could be far higher, since the latter only became known to the commission in exceptional cases owing to the lack of eyewitnesses.

¹²² The head of *Sonderkommando 1a* stationed in Estonia, Dr. Martin Sandberger, maintained at the Nuremberg Trials that there had been a specific "Order of the *Führer*" for the extermination of "Gypsies", Jews and Commissars. On the other hand, he claimed to know nothing about the order of the General in command of the Rear Army Group North Area of the 21st November 1941. cf. Weiss-Wendt: *Extermination of the Gypsies in Estonia*, p.55.

Roma were committed by mobile killing units – in all probability by *Sonderkommando* 1b. The special 'Gypsy operation', for which a *Sonderkommando* is said to have been dispatched to the Pskov region from Tallin, as a witness at an Estonian war crimes trial testified in 1960/61, also probably occurred during this phase.¹²³ The killing units made hit-and-run attacks on Russian villages, killed their victims directly after arrest and moved on. The shootings were officially carried out under the auspices of "fighting the partisans" and also in public as a deterrent. As a rule, the other villagers were even forced to watch the executions and bury the bodies of the murder victims.

The murders of the Security Police of individual regions in April 1942 and the summer of 1943 were far more elaborately prepared. The registration of the Roma population preceded the arrests, and the victims were deported from their place of residence for shooting. The 'thoroughness' of the persecution also resulted in far higher numbers of victims than in the case of mobile operations. The deterrent effect did not play an important role for the SS perpetrators, instead the aim was to exterminate as many "Gypsies" as possible in their area of responsibility.

It was a similar situation in the mass shootings of May and June 1942, for which *Ortskommandanturen* and sections of the Secret Field Police or of the *Feldgendarmarie* were to blame. The murders resulted from carefully 'combing' individual regions and were directed against the entire Roma population. It is certainly no coincidence that this phenomenon occurred in three regions at the same time in May 1942. That is to say, the murderous involvement of the *Ortskommandanturen* came during a period, in which the military administration generally attempted to reduce the influence of the Security Police and the SD and take the lead in "combating enemies".¹²⁴ This may also explain the exceptional cruelty of the "Gypsy" murders of Novorzhev. The inclusion of sedentary Roma was also a matter of course for the military, it only had reservations with regard to the style. With the order of *Feldkommandur* 822 to "always [treat] Gypsies like partisans" issued on 12th May 1942, the executive instances in the area of the 281st Security Division therefore created simply a 'legal' self-legitimacy.¹²⁵ First and foremost, however, the facts about the murder of any "Gypsies" who could be arrested should be allowed to speak for themselves. When the murders by the *Ortskommandantur* at Novorzhev were investigated by the commander of the 281st Security

¹²³ This was the statement of Kurivskij at the "Mere-Gerrets-Viik" trial in Tallin in 1960/61. cf. Weiss-Wendt: Extermination of the Gypsies in Estonia, p.54.

¹²⁴ cf. Wilhelm: Die Einsatzgruppe A, pp.267-268.

¹²⁵ However, they still seemed to be conscious of exceeding their authority, which is the reason why they attempted not to allow any direct eyewitnesses from the civilian population. In Novgorod, the local population was even forced to leave their villages for the duration of the shooting.

Division following pressure from the High Command of Army Group North, the fate of the Roma in the entire territory was sealed. The lenient form of the reprimand and the absence of any consequences for the *Ortskommandantur* make clear that there was a *de facto* all-round consensus about the general necessity for the "Gypsy" extermination, even if *de jure* contrary orders had to be complied with. With regard to processing the incidents, the responsible military force was ultimately less concerned about the legitimacy of the murders of the Roma *per se* than about the question of who had the authority to carry them out.

Although the order of *Feldkommandantur* 822 had to be revoked, the local military administrations continued to adhere to its principle in practice. From the late summer of 1942, any Roma encountered in the regions were normally liquidated by smaller, stationary groups of *Feldgendarmarie* and Secret Field Police.

Deployment of the anti-Gypsy stereotype of spies and partisans was common to all groups of German perpetrators in Northern part, no matter whether they were from the Security Police or the military, in order to justify the murders of the "Gypsies" to the inhabitants of the towns and kolkhozes. It is clear from the outraged reactions of the Russian eyewitnesses just how little this sweeping condemnation had to do with reality. At all events, it is significant that none of them believed the accusation that they were partisans.¹²⁶ The intention of the perpetrators to exterminate all the Roma was probably too obvious.

The Extraordinary State Commission also regarded the suspicion that the "Gypsies" were partisans as purely a pretext to conceal the real intention, namely the extermination of the entire Roma people from the young to the old. According to the district commission of Novgorod, the Massal'skii family was shot only "because they were born as Gypsies".¹²⁷ The Leningrad commissioners summed up Oredezh by stating there that had been "no accusations whatsoever" against the murder victims of April 1942 "except that they were Gypsies".¹²⁸ The commissions of Pskov and Loknia argued in a similar manner.¹²⁹

Moreover, after months of dealing with the National Socialist crimes in the former operations area of *Heeresgruppe Nord*, it was a self-evident truth for the individual commissions that the

¹²⁶ The civilian population could certainly distinguish between cases where the "retaliation units" were really hunting partisans and where the accusation was only used as a pretext for the intended extermination. Time after time, a distinction was made in the witness accounts between "communists" and "partisans" on the one hand and "completely innocent [uninvolved] civilians" on the other. The shooting of "Gypsies" was not connected with actual partisan activity in any of the cases examined.

¹²⁷ 4.2.1945. AKT 30. 28 members of the Borkovskii sel'sovet Novgorodskogo raiona Leningradskoi oblasti. GARF, f.7021 (ChGK), op.34 (Novgorodskaja oblast'), d.368, l.105ob.

¹²⁸ Dokladnaia zapiska ob itogakh rassledovaniia i ucheta uchsherba, prichinennogo nemetsko-fashistskimi zakhvatchikami na territorii Leningradskoi oblasti, 1945. GARF, f.7021 (ChGK), op.30 (Leningradskaja oblast'), d.1611, l.8.

¹²⁹ GARF, f.7021 (ChGK), op.39 (Pskovskaia oblast'), d.319, l.8;

extermination of the "Gypsies" was on a par with the murder of the Soviet Jews, both with regard to its totality and intention.¹³⁰ The evidence was far too damning: "The German monsters spared nobody. They murdered men and women, the healthy and the sick, children and old people. By putting their misanthropic Nazi theory based on bestial moral standards into practice, the monsters in human form carried out the complete extermination of Soviet civilians – Gypsies and Jews – who lived in the territory of the Pskov Region. The only reason for the shootings in this case was the nationality. [...] Apart from the Jews, the Gypsies faced complete (pogolovnoe) extermination in all districts of the Pskov Region, as is evident from the materials of the commission."¹³¹ The regional commission of Loknia, which was subordinate to the regional district commission of Velikie Luki under the Soviet administration system, also explicitly underlined the special status of the extermination of the Jews *and* the Roma: The Germans had shown "exceptional cruelty" "to the Jews", who they shot "with the objective of the physical extermination of the Jewish population." And after listing the individual crimes against the Jews, the commission continues: "The German-fascist invaders settled accounts with the Gypsies in a manner which was no less barbaric. They physically exterminated Gypsies on a massive scale because they suspected them all of being associated with the partisans."¹³²

¹³⁰ The Soviet commissars practically anticipated Lemkin's definition of genocide from the outset without mentioning "genocide" as a term. The investigations carried out over several months did not permit any other verdict.

¹³¹ DOKLAD ob itogakh ucheta ushcherba, prichinennogo nemetsko-fashistskimi zakhvatchikami i ikh soobshchnikami gor. Pskovu i Pskovskoi oblasti. GARF, f.7021 (ChGK), op.39 (Pskovskaia oblast'), d.455, ll.19-21.

¹³² 15.12. 1944. AKT, gorod Loknia. GARF, f.7021 (ChGK), op.20 (Velikolutskaia oblast'), d.13, l.2ob.

2. Army Group Centre

On the basis of the Soviet administration system of the post-war period, the militarily administered area of *Heeresgruppe Mitte* [Army Centre]¹³³ consisted of the eastern parts of Belarus (Vitebsk, Mogilev, Bobruisk and Gomel regions) and the Soviet Russian regions of Smolensk, Velikie Luki (central and southern part), Briansk, Orel, Kursk and Belgorod.¹³⁴ The regions of Kalinin (today Tver') and Kaluga were also included in the military area for a short time during the advance on Moscow in the autumn of 1941 but had to be vacated after a few weeks. The troops of the *Wehrmacht* were followed by *Einsatzgruppe B*, which consisted of a total of 650 men and had two *Einsatzkommandos* (8 and 9), two *Sonderkommandos* (7a and 7b) and a so-called "Vorauskommando Moskau [Advance Command Moscow]", which was merged with the other units after the defeat at Moscow.¹³⁵ According to its own information, *Einsatzgruppe B* was responsible for the murder of 142,359 people by March 1943.¹³⁶ These included a large number of Roma, and some of the murders from the Belarusian area are mentioned or recorded in German sources. The first shootings of Roma were reported from the Belarusian part of the military area as early as 1941. In September 1941, *Einsatzkommando 9* killed 23 Roma at Lepel, who had been handed over by *Feldkommandantur 181*.¹³⁷ The Mogilev region, in which *Einsatzkommando 8* carried out several 'Gypsy actions' between October 1941 and March 1942, developed into one of the centres of extermination.¹³⁸

In the Soviet Russian part controlled by *Heeresgruppe Mitte*, the Smolensk region is of great importance for drawing definite conclusions about the systematic approach of the National Socialist "persecution of Gypsies" in the military areas as a whole, since the resident Roma population reached a relatively high density there. A large number of Roma had been engaged in agriculture in the vicinity of Smolensk since the end of the 19th century. Several "national Gypsy kolkhozes" were organized on this basis in the 1920s and 1930s, so that the region developed into a propagandistic showpiece of the Bolshevik "Gypsy policy".¹³⁹ The Roma in

¹³³ Like the Baltic States, the "Generalkommissariat Weißruthenien [General Commissariat of Belarus]" to the west of *Rückwärtiges Heeresgebiet Mitte* was part of the *Reichskommissariat Ostland*, whereby it was under civil administration.

¹³⁴ On Belarus, see Gerlach: *Kalkulierte Morde*.

¹³⁵ See Krausnick: *Hitlers Einsatzgruppen*, pp. 156-162.

¹³⁶ See Gerlach, Christian: *Die Einsatzgruppe B*. In: Klein, Peter (publisher): *Die Einsatzgruppen in der besetzten Sowjetunion 1941/42. Die Tätigkeits- und Lageberichte des Chefs der Sicherheitspolizei und des SD*. Berlin 1997, pp. 52-70; 62.

¹³⁷ See Wippermann: *Nur eine Fußnote?*, p. 86; Gerlach: *Kalkulierte Morde*, pp. 1062-1063;

¹³⁸ See Gerlach: *Kalkulierte Morde*, pp. 1062-1063.

¹³⁹ In this respect, the collectivization of the "Gypsies" was celebrated as "sedentarization of destitute nomads", although kolkhozes such as "October" mainly consisted of long-established Roma farmers. GARF, f.3316 (TsIK

the national kolkhozes lived mainly in enclosed ethnic settlements, but Russian families were also increasingly accommodated from the middle of the 1930s. In spite of the year of change of the Soviet policy towards nationalities in 1938, in which the self-determination rights of national minorities were greatly reduced and a large number of establishments closed, the Smolensk "Gypsy kolkhozes" remained in existence until the outbreak of the war.¹⁴⁰ It follows that a large number of Roma in the Smolensk region lived in clearly demarcated settlements and as such were a great deal easier to identify than was the case in most of the other regions of Soviet Russia.

The region around Smolensk was taken by *Heeresgruppe Mitte* on 16th July 1941 and remained under military administration during the occupation, which lasted a good two years.¹⁴¹ From August 1941, the city of Smolensk was used as a central location by the command of *Einsatzgruppe B*, which obviously had an effect on the intensity of the National Socialist terror. According to Soviet information, a total of 87,026 civilians and 81,682 prisoners of war were murdered in the Smolensk region alone.¹⁴² Of the mobile killing units, *Einsatzkommandos* 8 and 9 were both active in the Smolensk region. On the face of it, they embarked on a systematic persecution of Roma in the spring of 1942, as Kenrick and Puxon had already supposed.¹⁴³

Detailed information on the persecution of the Roma in the Smolensk region is available, because the Extraordinary State Commission consistently distinguished between the ethnicity of the victims of the occupation.¹⁴⁴ Furthermore, much more statistical data was available than was the case in other areas owing to the 'Gypsy kolkhozes', which were in existence until

SSSR), op.28, d.794, ll.144-144ob.; GARF, f.1235 (VTsIK), op.123, d.28, ll.70-70ob. See also the extensive documentation in *Arkhivnoe upravlenie administratsii Smolenskoï oblasti; Gosudarstvennyi arkhiv Smolenskoï oblasti* (ed.): *Sud'by natsional'nykh menshinstv na Smolenshchine, 1918-1938. Dokumenty i Materialy*. Smolensk 1994.

¹⁴⁰ See Kiseleva, Tat'iana F.: *Tsygany Evropeiskoi chasti Soiuzna SSR i ikh perekhod ot kochevaniia k osedlosti*. Moskva 1952. (Kandidatskaia dissertatsiia), p.168. Only the "Gypsy secondary school" in the city of Smolensk was closed in August 1938. See GASO, f. 2361, op. 1, d. 37 (Prezidium Smoloblistpolkoma), ll. 499-500: O reorganizatsii belorusskikh, evreiskikh i tsyganskikh shkol v russkie. On the policy towards nationalities see Martin: *The Affirmative Action Empire*.

¹⁴¹ See Krausnick: *Hitlers Einsatzgruppen*, p.160. The regional capital of Smolensk was retaken by the Red Army on 25th September 1943. See GARF, f.7021 (ChGK), op. 44 (Smolenskaia oblast'), d. 1083, l. 117ob. The region was deemed to be completely liberated on 6th October 1943. *Administraciia Smolenskoï oblasti; Departament Smolenskoï oblasti po delam arkhivov* (ed.): *Vse sud'by v edinuu slity. Po rassekrechennym arkhivnym dokumentam. K 60-letiiu osvobodzheniia Smolenshchiny ot nemetsko-fashistskikh zakhvatchikov*. Smolensk 2003, p. 6.

¹⁴² See GARF, f.7021 (ChGK), op. 44 (Smolenskaia oblast'), d. 1083, l. 19. In this respect, the murders of the other police formations and the military units are included.

¹⁴³ In this respect, Kenrick and Puxon assume there were several thousand murdered Roma in the Smolensk region, whereby they draw their information from oral accounts. See Kenrick; Puxon: *Sinti und Roma*, p.104.

¹⁴⁴ Amongst other things, this could be connected with the fact that Smolensk was one of the first regions to be retaken by the Red Army. The Smolensk district commission began its work on 12th March 1943, i.e. before the final liberation of the Smolensk region. See *Vse sud'by v edinuu slity*, pp.92-93.

1941. The commission carried out a particularly detailed investigation into the events which happened in Aleksandrovka near Smolensk in April 1942.¹⁴⁵

Before the German occupation, the ethnically mixed village of Aleksandrovka was part of a 'national Gypsy kolkhoz' by the name of "Stalin's Constitution" (Stalinskaia konstitutsiia), which had been founded in 1937. In the early evening of 23rd April 1942, two German officers appeared in the village of Aleksandrovka and instructed the bookkeeper to prepare a list of residents according to family and nationality.¹⁴⁶ At about 5 am the next morning, armed SS units¹⁴⁷ entered the houses in the village and herded all the inhabitants to a location at the nearby lake. Shortly afterwards, several families from the neighbouring village of Devkino were brought there, too. A German officer, who "could speak good Russian", subsequently read out the list of names, according to which the Russians and the "Gypsies" were divided into two groups. After the selection had been completed, the Russian inhabitants were sent home, while the "Gypsies" were placed under close guard. The strongest men were chosen to dig two pits with shovels. At about two pm, the Germans "drove" the women, children and old people to the pits "like cattle", "beat [them] with sticks and whips", whereby "many [were] beaten to unconsciousness". This caused panic, and some people managed to escape in the confusion.¹⁴⁸ Anxiety grew in the remaining "Gypsies" after it became clear what was to happen to them. Several women asked for mercy and said they were Russians. They were then "undressed by the Germans" and subjected to a kind of 'racial examination'. According to the witness accounts, skin and hair colour played a decisive role.¹⁴⁹ Finally, the men were also subjected to the same procedure, as Andrei Semchenkov recalled: "The officers began to examine the Gypsies, lifted up their clothes and inspected the naked bodies of the men and women. [...] The officers inspected my body, touched my chest and hands, grabbed my nose

¹⁴⁵ The official name of the village was Aleksandrovskoe. However, this was used by hardly any of the inhabitants. GARF, f.7021 (ChGK), op.44 (Smolenskaia oblast'), d.1091, ll.1-44. O rasstrele fashistami sovetkikh grazhdan – tsygan v d. Aleksandrovskoe Smolenskogo raiona 24 apreliia 1942g.

¹⁴⁶ GARF, f.7021 (ChGK), op.44 (Smolenskaia oblast'), d.1091, ll.37ob.-38. Record of the oral testimony of the female bookkeeper Fekla Riabkova (Russian). 11.10.1943.

¹⁴⁷ The perpetrators are referred to in the final report as a "retaliation unit" (karatel'nyi otriad) consisting of SS men. Ibid, ll.1-3. Spravka o rasstrele tsygan. 21.10.1943. In addition to this, "Gestapo men", "German soldiers" or "German criminals" are also spoken of in the witness accounts.

¹⁴⁸ GARF, f.7021 (ChGK), op.44 (Smolenskaia oblast'), d.1091, l.9ob. Record of the oral testimony of Mariia Lazareva (Romni). 10.10.1943.

¹⁴⁹ This was how e.g. Proskov'ia Timchenkova described her unexpected rescue: "The German officer pulled open my dress, examined my chest and hands, took off my headscarf and looked at my hair, after which he acknowledged that I looked like a Russian and took me to one side." Timchenkova's parents and one of her brothers were also set free, while the rest of the family were shot. GARF, f.7021 (ChGK), op.44 (Smolenskaia oblast'), d.1091, l.25. Record of the oral testimony of Proskov'ia Timchenkova (Romni). 11.10.1943. On the 'physical examination' see also the other witness accounts.

and reached behind my ears, and then let me go home."¹⁵⁰ One woman was even allowed to return home under guard to fetch her Russian identity card.¹⁵¹

The other "Gypsies" had to undress in a barn beside the pits and hand over their valuables. The eyewitness, Lidiia Krylova, gave the commission a haunting account of the events of the shooting: "Each family was taken to the pit individually, and if somebody did not go up to the pit, they were beaten and dragged to the pit. A German soldier used a pistol to carry out the executions. First of all, the children aged from 10-12 years were shot in front of their mother, and then they snatched the babies from the mother and threw them into the pit alive. And only after all this was the mother shot. Some of the mothers could not stand the torment and jumped after their babies. [...] But not only children were thrown into the pit alive. I saw how they threw Leonovich, a sick old woman, into the pit; she was unable to walk and had been wrapped in a blanket by her daughters and carried there."¹⁵² After the shooting, the male "Gypsies" had to fill in the mass grave with earth, before they themselves were shot in the second pit. When they returned to the city of Smolensk, the Germans took the valuables and some of the clothes of the murder victims with them.¹⁵³

The exhumation of the corpses revealed that a total of 176 people had been shot on 24th April 1942. 143 of them – 62 women, 29 men, 52 children – could be identified. 33 people had no documents or family registers.¹⁵⁴

Amongst others, the adult victims included women teachers, educators and kolkhoz farmers. However, the degree of social assimilation and sedentariness did not play a role in the mass shooting in Aleksandrovka. And no interrogations concerning possible partisan support were carried out by the Germans whatsoever. The Roma were exterminated as Roma. The double selection by means of lists of names and 'physical examinations' demonstrate the racist ideological motivation of the perpetrators beyond any shadow of doubt.

Mobile and stationary killing units also committed further mass murders at the other Roma settlements in the Smolensk region. Four "Gypsies", who had been accused of supporting the

¹⁵⁰ Ibid, ll.28-28ob. Record of the oral testimony of Andrei Semchenkov (Russian; Romni mother). 11.10.1943.

¹⁵¹ See GARF, f.7021 (ChGK), op.44 (Smolenskaia oblast'), d.1091, l.13. Record of the oral testimony of Lidiia Krylova (Romni). 10.10.1943.

¹⁵² Ibid, ll.13ob.-14. Statement of Krylova. Krylova herself was set free as a "Russian" at the last moment, after she had already been taken to the pit for execution. "About 70 people" had already been shot beforehand. See *ibid.*

¹⁵³ Ibid, ll.1-2.

¹⁵⁴ GARF, f.7021 (ChGK), op.44 (Smolenskaia oblast'), d.1091, ll.4-4ob., 42-44. Two Roma from Korenevshchina and five from another village who were in Aleksandrovka by chance on the day of the shooting were among the victims.

partisans, had already been shot in Krasnyi Bor, a suburb of Smolensk, in March 1942.¹⁵⁵ *Einsatzgruppe B* reported the killing of 45 "Gypsies" in the Smolensk region in the same month.¹⁵⁶ This also seems to have been the period, in which the *Einsatzkommandos* began to carefully 'comb' the rural areas searching for Roma. According to Soviet information, the "entire Gypsy population of the *kolkhozes*" was exterminated¹⁵⁷: The 'Gypsy *kolkhoz*' "Freedom" (*Svoboda*) of the village soviet of Kardymovo was completely destroyed by the "German-fascist occupiers". All the members (90 people) were transported away in groups in several trucks and shot outside the *kolkhoz*.¹⁵⁸ A "gas van" (*dushegubka*) is also said to have been used to exterminate the Roma in another *kolkhoz*.¹⁵⁹ According to the account of an eyewitness, a "Gypsy camp" (*tabor*) in the vicinity of Dukhovshchina with more than 100 people was taken by "the Germans" and completely exterminated.¹⁶⁰ "Not a single Jewish and Gypsy family" survived in the city of Dorogobuzh and the surrounding region.¹⁶¹ And a mass shooting from Rodnya is also recorded.¹⁶² The last murder action took place in the first few days of September 1943, when a "Gypsy family" with seven members was shot in the village of Rai near Smolensk during the German withdrawal.¹⁶³

Einsatzgruppe B focused its attention directly on the identifiable Roma settlements. From what has been determined so far, the extermination of the Roma in the Smolensk region¹⁶⁴ can be described as systematic and total – at least in intention. The chairman of the Smolensk district commission, Popov, also came to this logical conclusion in his final report for the Moscow central office: "Exceptional racial atrocities (*rasovye izuverstva*) were carried out [by the Germans] against the Jewish and Gypsy population. Jews and Gypsies were completely (*pogolovno*) exterminated everywhere."¹⁶⁵

¹⁵⁵ cf. GARF, f.7021 (ChGK), op.44 (Smolenskaia oblast'), d.1091, l.19.

¹⁵⁶ cf. Lewy: "Rückkehr unerwünscht", p.207.

¹⁵⁷ Plan raboty po rassledovaniuu nemetsko-fashistskikh zverstv v gorode Smolenske. GARF, f.7021 (ChGK), op.44 (Smolenskaia oblast'), d.41, ll.16-20;18.

¹⁵⁸ GASO, f.1630 (ChGK), op.1, d.369 ll.82-87; 84. Akt chlenov ChK. Kardymovskii raion. 10.2.1944. (Kopiiia).

¹⁵⁹ See Anfimova, Anna: Genotsid tsygan v Smolenskoii oblasti v gody natsistskoi okkupatsii. In: Tum-balalaika: antifashistskaia gazeta vol'nykh ezhej, No 15-16, April-August 2000, pp.10-12; 11.

¹⁶⁰ Tsynman, I.: Bab'i Iary Smolenshchiny. Smolensk 2001, p.133. The Russian term "tabor" normally implies that these must have been itinerant Roma. However, "tabor" is sometimes also colloquially used for settlements of sedentary Roma.

¹⁶¹ Fedorov, G.: Krovavaia tragediia v Dorogobuzhe. In: Rabochii Put', 19.9.1943 (No 193). Archived in GARF, f.7021 (ChGK), op.44 (Smolenskaia oblast'), d.1082, l.27ob.

¹⁶² Kenrick speaks of approx. 1,000 murdered "Gypsies". See Kenrick, Donald: Gypsies under the Swastika. Hertfordshire 1995, p.95. The number is probably too high, however.

¹⁶³ See GARF, f.7021 (ChGK), op.44 (Smolenskaia oblast'), d.1091, ll.19, 39ob.

¹⁶⁴ So far I have only been able to view a part of the extensive inventory of the Smolensk Extraordinary State Commission, so that in all probability even more mass shootings will be found.

¹⁶⁵ GASO, f.1630, op.2, d.29, ll.182-213: DOKLADNAIA ZAPISKA ob itogakh ucheta ushcherba i zlodeianii nemetsko-fashistskikh zakhvatchikov v Smolenskoii oblasti. Predsedatel' Smolenskoii oblastnoi komissii D. Popov [*inter alia*] – CHREZVYCHAINOI GOSUDARSTVENNOI KOMISSII SSSR. cf. Vse sud'by v edinuii slity, p.136. Can also be found under GARF, f.7021 (ChGK), op.44 (Smolenskaia oblast'), d.1083, l.19. The

The Extraordinary State Commission therefore also reached the conclusion that the totality and intention of the extermination of the "Gypsies" in the Smolensk region was on a par with the murder of the Jews. To judge by initial random sampling, this also applied to the other Soviet Russian territories in the sphere of influence of *Heeresgruppe Mitte* during the war. Roma and Jews are always listed together in the summarizing statistics when there was an (estimated) complete extermination. This was also the case in Novosokol'niki in the Velikie Luki region¹⁶⁶, which was located in the extreme north of central military area: "According to statistical data of the local authorities (raionnoi upravly) of Novosokol'niki of the 1st September 1941, 74 Jews and 53 Gypsies lived in the villages (v sel'skoi mestnosti), and they were all shot by the Germans."¹⁶⁷ The fact that the local authorities, which had cooperated with the occupying forces, had statistics of this kind at their disposal indicates that Jews and "Gypsies" were registered separately directly after the occupying administration had been set up, because the Velikie Luki region was occupied on 19th August 1941.¹⁶⁸ As a result, the requirements for subsequent physical extermination had already been created.

On the face of it, the *Ortskommandantur* [Local Commandant] was responsible for the murders of the Jews and Roma together with the *Geheime Feldpolizei* [Secret Field Police]. At all events, Grafunder, the commander of the *Ortskommandantur*, is referred to as the main person responsible for the murders in the region, and one of the principal witnesses gained an insight into the "work" of the *Geheime Feldpolizei*.¹⁶⁹ In the spring of 1942¹⁷⁰, 14 people "of Gypsy nationality" were shot in the village of Bashkovo in the Runovskii village soviet. A more precise reason was not known, even if it was "said" that they had had "contact with partisans". It does not emerge directly from the statements whether they were sedentary Roma or not. According to the testimony of a witness, the "Gypsies", whose names were unknown, lived in their "tabor" (Gypsy camp) in the village.¹⁷¹ It is very possible that the murdered

expression "racial atrocities" apparently refers to atrocities which are racistly motivated or directed against 'races'.

¹⁶⁶ Except for the northern part around Loknia, the Velikie Luki region, which was newly established in 1944, was part of the rear area of Army Group Centre during the German occupation. Today Velikie Luki is no longer an independent regional centre, but is largely part of the Pskov Region, with a smaller part included in the Tver' region.

¹⁶⁷ AKT goroda Novosokol'niki, 21.11.1944. GARF, f.7021 (ChGK), op.20 (Velikolotskaia oblast'), d.16, ll.1-1ob.; 1ob.

¹⁶⁸ cf. Al'tman: Zhertvy nenavisti, p.250.

¹⁶⁹ GARF, f.7021 (ChGK), op.20 (Velikolotskaia oblast'), d.16, l.7.

¹⁷⁰ A precise month is not stated, but the statements cover the period between March and June 1942.

¹⁷¹ See the witness account of Sidor Gardeevich Akhipov. GARF, f.7021 (ChGK), op.20 (Velikolotskaia oblast'), d.16, ll.88-89; 89; AKT. Runovskii sel'sovet, ll.80-80ob. Strictly speaking, the word "tabor" implies an itinerant way of life. However, the term is also used colloquially to describe permanent Roma settlements and even whole urban districts.

Roma were refugees who had found a place to stay in Bashkovo. In this respect, it is also not clear whether the 14 murder victims were considered in the cited list of the local authorities or not.

The example of Novosokol'niki indicates that the extermination of Jews and Roma was planned and prepared in a single step in some parts of the military areas. However, it is not clear whether this also applied to its practical implementation. This was apparently the case to a certain degree in the Briansk region, which is located south-east of Smolensk and was part of the Orel region before the war.¹⁷² This phenomenon occurs in a conspicuous number of cases in the Klinty area, the south western extension of the Briansk region. *Sonderkommandos* 7b and 7a were successively at work here. As in most regions, the extermination of Jews in this region proceeded in several phases: in the first few weeks of the occupation, the able-bodied men were murdered first of all by *Sonderkommando* 7b, while the remaining Jewish population was registered, concentrated and marked with an insignia (white armbands or Star of David). The first wave of mass murders, in which whole Jewish communities were eliminated, followed in November and December 1941. After the withdrawal of *SK* 7b to Orel, *SK* 7a carried out a second mass extermination operation between February and April 1942, after which there were practically no Jews left.¹⁷³ The extermination of the *Roma* in the *Briansk* region occurs in the period of the second extermination wave against the remaining Jews. In the *Klintsy* area, *Sonderkommando* 7a not only put all "Gypsies" on an equal footing with the Jews from the spring of 1942, but also murdered both groups together in extermination operations. The neighbouring regions of Klimov and Churovichi, which formed one administrative unit during the occupation, are perfect examples of such a development. Here the Jewish inhabitants of the city of Klimov [Klimovo] were first of all concentrated and gradually liquidated according to the above described pattern, so that only a fraction of the Jewish urban population remained alive at the end of 1941.¹⁷⁴ *Sonderkommando* 7a then began to murder the remaining Jews of Klimov and 'cleanse' the rural areas in the spring of 1942. Roma were also included in the second extermination wave. The witness, Marfa Lagutina, recalled: "The Jews from the village (selo)

¹⁷² No precise details of months are given for the persecution of the Roma and Jews in the summary reports of the Briansk division of the Extraordinary State Commission, which makes the reconstruction of the exact course of events more difficult. For lack of time, I did not manage to look through the extensive records with the most important witness accounts. However, the generalizing data is adequate for an initial prognosis.

¹⁷³ On the movements of the *Sonderkommandos* in the Klinty area and the Briansk region see Krausnick: *Hitlers Einsatzgruppen*, pp.158-161. On the phases of the extermination of the Jews see Al'tman: *Zhertvy nenavisti*, pp.261-264.

¹⁷⁴ See Protokol doprosa – Dolgov Andrei Semenovich, 11.7.1944. GARF, f.7021 (ChGK), op.19 (Brianskaia oblast'), d.5, ll.169-169ob.

of Churovichi and the Gypsies from the village (selo) of Novyi-Roisk, who were also shot on this day, were taken to the place of execution. A total of around 400¹⁷⁵ people were shot. Towards evening, the police forced the inhabitants of Klimov to bury the bodies. The policemen collected all the clothes of the murder victims and loaded them on a cart. Two carts were loaded. All those who were shot lie in a common pit today."¹⁷⁶ 42 "Gypsies" (12 men, 13 women and 17 children) and 35 Jews (11 men, 12 women and 12 children) were murdered in the Churovichi region alone.¹⁷⁷ In its summary opinion, the regional Soviet commission of inquiry adjudicated that the "Hitlerites" and the "traitorous [auxiliary] policemen" (predateli Rodiny politseiskie) had shot communists, Jews and "Gypsies" "in huge numbers" and "without any reason".¹⁷⁸

The simultaneous action against Jews and "Gypsies" in the Briansk region is also confirmed from German sources. A mass shooting of 300 "Jews and Gypsies" took place in Klinty in the spring of 1942, which is said to have 'displeased' watching soldiers.¹⁷⁹ In addition to this, *Sonderkommando 7a* reported the murder of 45 Gypsies in March 1942, while a rearguard of the same *Kommando* murdered 30 "Gypsies" in the same area in the second week of April.¹⁸⁰ Further examples from the other regions of the Klinty area can be found in the records of the Extraordinary State Commission. A collective murder can be assumed if the numbers of victims of Jews and Roma are entered in an individual column and not separated: The entire Jewish and Gypsy population", "342 people in number", was exterminated in Unecha.¹⁸¹ Both groups were also eliminated in the Briansk region, where the German murderers thought up a special killing method: "A large number of witnesses stated that the Germans hunted down Jews, Gypsies and communists, chained them to rods at a distance of 0.5 to 2 metres from each other and drove them over minefields, where the condemned people were killed when the mines exploded."¹⁸²

The fact that *Einsatzgruppe B* regarded the extermination of Roma and Jews – as well as communists – in and around Briansk as a single objective is further demonstrated by the selection of collective places of execution and mass graves: "In the suburb (poselok) of Briansk II, 14 pits full of corpses were discovered on the testing ground (Probnoe pole)

¹⁷⁵ Either this number is too high, or victims from other regions were brought to Churovichi for shooting.

¹⁷⁶ Protokol doprosa – Lagutina Marfa Fedorovna, 11.7.1944. Ibid, ll.170-171; 171.

¹⁷⁷ See SVEDENIIA o zlodeianiiakh nemetsko-fashistskikh zakhvatchikov i ikh soobshchnikov v period okkupatsii po Churovichskomu raionu. GARF, f.7021 (ChGK), op.19 (Brianskaia oblast'), d.5, l.154.

¹⁷⁸ AKT raionnoi komissii, g. Klimov, 12.7.1944. Ibid, l.168.

¹⁷⁹ See Zimmermann: Rassenutopie und Genozid, p.262.

¹⁸⁰ See Ibid, p.260.

¹⁸¹ AKT Brianskoi oblastnoi komissii, 22.10.1945. In GARF, f.7021 (ChGK), op.19 (Brianskaia oblast'), d.1, ll.1-25; 8.

¹⁸² Ibid, l.3.

opposite the hospital grounds (gorodka) on the right-hand side of the road leading from Briansk to Karatsev at a distance of 200-250 metres from the avenue. There were a total of 7,500 dead bodies of people who had been murdered (umershchvelnnykh), old people, women and children, mainly Jewish, but also from the Gypsy population."¹⁸³

A more precise differentiation and the names of the victims could not be determined by the experts of the Extraordinary State Commission in Briansk II: "It proved to be impossible to discover the family names of the victims of this abominable punishment (gnusnoi raspravy) of the Jewish and Gypsy population, because the majority of them had been evacuated here from other regions."¹⁸⁴ This was because Briansk was a major traffic intersection which had attracted countless refugees from Belarus and the Ukraine before it was occupied.¹⁸⁵ While most of the local Jews and Roma probably escaped in time, no documents or pre-war statistics were available for the refugees. And the fact that there is no testimony of Jewish or Roma survivors in the records of the Briansk commission clearly shows that there was complete extermination in this area, which made identification of the victims almost impossible.¹⁸⁶

The mobile killing units, and also the military security agencies, continued to search for Jews and Roma after the major extermination wave of the spring of 1942. However, no more collective shootings took place. *Sonderkommando 7a* reported the 'arrest' of 30 "Gypsies" in the second half of August 1942; *Sonderkommando 7b* claimed 48.¹⁸⁷ It is unclear whether the latter included the 30 Roma from Orel murdered in August 1942. Orel was located in the immediate vicinity of the operational areas of the *Wehrmacht* – as was Kursk¹⁸⁸ further to the south – and was 'processed' by *Sonderkommando 7b*.¹⁸⁹ This is the *Sonderkommando* which constructed a "Gestapo camp" on the site of a so-called "children's village" (detgorodok) in the village of Nekrasovskoe near Orel, in which between 200 and 250 politically suspect civilians and potential partisan helpers were held prisoner.¹⁹⁰ In the summer of 1942, the statements vary between the end of July and the end of August, 30 people, "including

¹⁸³ AKT, gor. Briansk, 16.11.1943. GARF, f.7021 (ChGK), op.19 (Brianskaia oblast'), d.2, ll.197-202; 198ob. However, this does not necessarily mean that Jews and Roma were murdered together, since, according to investigations of the ChGK, the pits were filled "over the entire period of the occupation". Ibid.

¹⁸⁴ Ibid, l.198.

¹⁸⁵ See Al'tman: Zhertvy nenavisti, p.264.

¹⁸⁶ The numbers of victims were therefore summarized in general terms. According to Soviet information, a total of 17,011 "people from the Russian, Jewish and Gypsy population" were murdered in the city and region of Briansk alone. cf. GARF, f.7021 (ChGK), op.19 (Brianskaia oblast'), d.1, l.27.

¹⁸⁷ See Zimmermann: Rassenutopie und Genozid, p.260.

¹⁸⁸ No results for the murder of Soviet Roma in the Kursk region were obtained in my initial random sampling.

¹⁸⁹ See Krausnick: Hitlers Einsatzgruppen, p.161.

¹⁹⁰ The "members of Sonderkommando 7b" Winkler (Vinkler) and Stricke (Shtrikke) are named as camp commanders. The mortality rate in the camp was high as a result of heavy forced labour, insanitary conditions and malnutrition. Individual prisoners also taken from the camp at irregular intervals and shot. See the Commission report and the witness accounts in GARF, f.7021 (ChGK), op.37 (Orlovskaia oblast'), d.6, ll.1, 3-4, 12-15.

Gypsies", and "two carts with personal articles and children" were taken to the camp. Some of them wore worker's and peasant's clothes which were "noticeably torn".¹⁹¹ The witness Petr Oblepov recalled: "All of them were taken to the camp area. All of them were forced into a building, you could hear screams, the whimpering of the children, the weeping of the women, the bellows of the Germans and the sound of whips (pletok). When evening had fallen, patrols were deployed between 6 and 7 o'clock. They sent us to our homes and forbade us to leave them, and anyone who came out would be shot. Several shots were heard, 5 or 6, not more. Some time passed, about an hour, and then the patrols were stood down. I went past the camp the following day and saw vehicles with materials, pillows, etc. Down and feathers were lying everywhere in the yard. There were also articles of clothing, pillows, eiderdowns, shirts, shoes and the like in the first hut."¹⁹² Apart from the Roma, four civilian prisoners who had dug out the pits were also shot.¹⁹³ The forensic examination of the bodies in August 1943 revealed that there were 13 women and 12 children among the total of 34 victims. Traces of earth were found in the mouths and throats of the children's corpses, which suggests that they were buried alive. To judge by remnants of clothing and documents, "one row" of men and women consisted of "Gypsies".¹⁹⁴ In addition to this, the doctors considered that the diet of the victims had been "adequate" because of a "conspicuous layer of fat".¹⁹⁵ The Roma victims were apparently sedentary workers, possibly even skilled workers (because they had not suffered from hunger), who had been 'found guilty of being Gypsies' shortly beforehand and were subjected to immediate 'special treatment' after a brutal quick interrogation. In comparison to the other political prisoners, the mere ethnicity of the Roma was motive enough for murder.

The number of similar cases which occurred in the autumn of 1942 is uncertain. The statement originating from an activity report of *Einsatzgruppe B* that a total of 301 'Gypsies' were "specially treated" in the first two weeks of September 1942¹⁹⁶ is not echoed in the Soviet records – at least according to my research so far. The last mass shooting of Roma on record in the administrative area of *Heeresgruppe Mitte* took place in the spring of 1943, again in the Briansk region, namely in the Krasnogorskii area. According to Soviet

¹⁹¹ cf. PROTOKOL pokazaniia gr-na KUZINA Il'i Vladimirovicha, 15.8.1943 (Kopiia). GARF, f.7021 (ChGK), op.37 (Orlovskaiia oblast'), d.6, l.8.

¹⁹² POKAZANIIA OBLEPOVA Petra Mironovicha. Ibid, l.10.

¹⁹³ Ibid, l.1.

¹⁹⁴ AKT sudebno-meditsinskoi ekspertizy, 15.8.1943. GARF, f.7021 (ChGK), op.37 (Orlovskaiia oblast'), d.6, ll.12-15; 13-13ob. "Two passports in the name of Kulikova Vera Alekseevna, date of birth 1923, Gypsy, worker, resident in Ordzhonikidzeograd [near Briansk] and Zolotareva Mariia Artemovna, date of birth 1880, also a Gypsy from Ordzhonikidzeograd" were found between the corpses. Ibid.

¹⁹⁵ Ibid, ll.13ob.-14ob.

¹⁹⁶ Lewy: "Rückkehr unerwünscht", p.206.

information, "several (neskol'ko) Gypsy families from the village of Selets" had first been "arrested" by local auxiliary policemen.¹⁹⁷ The "civilians of Gypsy nationality" were then shot in an anti-tank ditch in the vicinity of Krasnaia Gora. According to the Commission report, Nikolai Odeovenko, who is referred to in the Soviet records as the "head (nachal'nik) of the 2nd Gestapo division", and Ivan Sergeenko, the "chief of police", were personally responsible for the murders.¹⁹⁸

The examples from the Velikie Luki, Smolensk, Briansk and Orel regions illustrate the great importance of the operations area of *Heeresgruppe Mitte* for the appraisal of the systematic approach of the National Socialist genocide of the Soviet Roma. There is no doubt that the motive for the persecution here was the National Socialist racial ideology, which expressed itself both in the generalized equation of "Gypsies" and partisans as well as in the manner in which "Gypsies" were selected from the Russian population, particularly in the Smolensk region. No difference was made between sedentary and non-sedentary Roma in any of the regions examined.¹⁹⁹ On the contrary, it was precisely the "national Gypsy kolkhozes" of the pre-war period which were systematically exterminated.

In the Briansk region, the Roma were put on an equal footing with the Jews from the spring of 1942 and murdered together with the Jewish victims in many cases. The fact that the complete extermination of the Soviet Russian Roma population in the examined regions 'only' started in the spring of 1942 changes nothing about the systematic approach and totality of the persecution. Even if the records of the Extraordinary State Commission do not permit any statements to be made about the absolute numbers of exterminated Roma, it can nevertheless be clearly stated that the centres of population in the west of Soviet Russia were a hub of the National Socialist genocide of the (Soviet) Roma in quantitative and qualitative terms.

Another centre of population of Soviet Roma was East Ukraine, which was under the control of *Heeresgruppe Süd* [Army Group South] during the German occupation in the Second World War.

¹⁹⁷ AKT o zverstvakh nemetsko-fashistskikh zakhvatchikov i ikh soobshchnikov v Krasnogorskom raione, Brianskoi oblasti (undatiert). GARF, f.7021 (ChGK), op.19 (Brianskaia oblast'), d.2, ll.167-169; 168.

¹⁹⁸ GARF, f.7021 (ChGK), op.19 (Brianskaia oblast'), d.1, l.35.

¹⁹⁹ This fact will probably not be revised after intensive evaluation of the Commission's records from Kursk and Belgorod, however, the results must be regarded as provisional.

3. Army Group South

Two *Einsatzgruppen* – C and D – were active at the same time in *Heeresgruppe Süd*. It is therefore appropriate to divide up the investigation.

3.1 The murders in the area of operations of *Einsatzgruppe C*

The activities of *Einsatzgruppe C* in the occupied Soviet Union are primarily concentrated on the Ukraine, whose eastern part also remained under military administration.²⁰⁰ The regions of Chernigov, Sumy, Kharkov and Stalino (today Donetsk) were concerned.²⁰¹ The Donetsk region is used by the historian Il'ia Al'tman as an example to illustrate the differences between the persecution of Jews and Roma. In this respect, he refers to a letter of the "Organisation of Ukrainian Nationalists" (OUN) of October 1942, in which "Gypsies" are listed among the nationalities of the pitmen, while the Jews had already been completely exterminated at this point.²⁰² However, the records of the Extraordinary State Commission give the impression that the Roma pitmen must have been an exception,²⁰³ i.e. the parallels in the extermination of the Jews and the Roma observed in the Briansk region (see above) can also be detected in the Stalino region. On 7th January 1942, a summons was issued to the Jewish population of Artemovsk, a town to the north of Stalino, to collect for "resettlement". Two days later, more than 3000 people were shot and sealed in "Shaft 46" of an alabaster factory. A large number of victims are said to have been still alive when the brickwork was set.²⁰⁴ When the shaft was opened after liberation of the region, the Extraordinary State Commission discovered that there were also "Gypsies" among the bodies: "The majority of the bodies had white armbands on their left-hand coat sleeve with a Star of David sewn or painted on. Several bodies had bright and colourful clothing, such as is normally worn by Gypsies."²⁰⁵ These were all residents of the "Gypsy quarter" of Artemovsk, which consisted

²⁰⁰ On *Einsatzgruppe C* see Krausnick: Hitlers Einsatzgruppen, p. 162-169.

²⁰¹ I concentrated on the regions of Chernigov and Stalino in my research on the Ukraine.

²⁰² See Al'tman, p.38. Al'tman refers to the extreme anti-Semitic propaganda which the Germans spread in the Soviet territories as a second difference. Roma were not a subject of this. However, Al'tman's assertion that the persecution of the Roma was not based on a racial ideological motivation is unjustified. See *ibid*, pp.38-39.

²⁰³ Also in the case of pitmen, the external conditions of the policy of occupation (forced labour, economic interests, etc.) would have to be examined first of all, in order to determine the possible reason for the exception.

²⁰⁴ See the detailed descriptions in Vigdergauz, David L. (sost.): *Artemovskii Babii Iar*. Artemovsk 2000; Tatrinov, S.I.; Semik, Ju. A.; Fediaev, S.V.: *Evrei Bakhmuta-Artemovska. Ocherki istorii XVIII-XX stoletii*. Artemovsk 2001, pp.66-71.

²⁰⁵ Akt o zlodeianiiakh nemetsko-fashistskikh zakhvatchikov v g. Artemovske i g. Chasov-Iare s 31 oktiabria 1941 g. po 5 sentiabria 1943 g. Gosudarstvennyi arkhiv Donetskoï oblasti (GADO), f.R-1838, op.1, d.2, ll.21-23a. In Ukrainian, the archive is called: Derzhavnyi arkhiv Donets'koi oblasti. Both terms are usual.

of the Konnaia ulitsa and its parallel street.²⁰⁶ A small number of the Roma victims could be identified during the investigation of the case.²⁰⁷ Following the mass murder of the urban residents, the rural areas in the Artemovsk rayon were also combed for Roma, which is indicated by the victims lists of the individual village soviets.²⁰⁸ After the investigations had been completed, the Extraordinary State Commission consequently summed up that "The entire Gypsy population of Artemovsk had been shot, from the babies to the old people".²⁰⁹ The example of Artemovsk underlines that the *practical* implementation of the intent to exterminate did not always require a specific summons or particular propaganda. In my opinion, recourse to a fictitious "resettlement" might be connected with the fact that the Jewish community in Artemovsk was relatively large. On the other hand, the "Gypsies" could also be registered and arrested with less effort on account of the more manageable number.

Where the Roma population was large enough, it is very likely that the persecutors also used this method, as the example of Chernigov tellingly demonstrates: on the 10th June 1942, the "Head of the security police of the city of Chernigov" issued an "order in respect of the place of residence of the Gypsies" in two languages (Russian and Ukrainian). This informed "the Gypsies" that they would be "assigned specific locations for settlement and as a place of residence", which they henceforth "may not leave without the permission of the authorities". (§1) As preparation for their "resettlement" (pereselenie), they would have to report to the nearest police station for registration without delay. (§2) "Severe penalties" were announced for anyone who ignored the summons. (§3)²¹⁰ The records of the Extraordinary State Commission only provide very general information on the subsequent mass murder: "The Gypsy population was registered in the spring of 1942, and all the Gypsies were shot after registration."²¹¹ In this connection, it should be noted that the ChGK got the date wrong, since the actual summons for resettlement was not issued until June of the same year. According to

²⁰⁶ Interview with Larissa Litovchenko, Artemovsk, December 2006. Ms Litovchenko is not an eyewitness to the events, but reported the narratives of her (deceased) mother in the interview.

²⁰⁷ A total of 15 people, most of them with the family names Jurchenko and Kor'iak. See GADO, f.R-1838, op.1, d.64, ll.167-168.

²⁰⁸ GARF, f.7021 (ChGK), op.72 (Stalinskaia oblast'), d.30, l.204; GADO, f.R-1838, op.1, d.64, l.172.

²⁰⁹ GARF, f.7021 (ChGK), op.72 (Stalinskaia oblast'), d.3, l.11.

²¹⁰ Nachal'nik Politsii Bezpeki v m. Chernigovi/Nachal'nik Politsii Bezopastnosti v g. Chernigove: Rozporiadzhennia vidnosno mistsia tsigan/Rasporiazhenie odnositel'no mestozhitel'stva tsygan. Chernigiv, 10 chervnia 1942 g./Chernigov, 10 iiunia 1942 g. Gosudarstvennyi Arkhiv Chernigovskoi Oblasti (GACHO), f.R-3001, op.1, d.22, l.28. The example of the poster of Chernigov shows the enormous importance at regional level of the "captured documents" stored in the regional archives of the former Soviet Union.

²¹¹ DOKLAD o sovershennykh nemetsko-fashistskimi zakhvatchikami zlodeianiakh po Chernigovskoi oblasti U.S.S.R. g. Chernigov, 1944 god. GARF, f.7021 (ChGK), op.78 (Chernigovskaia oblast'), d.204, l.8.

the statements of the Russian eyewitness, Gerard Kuznetsov²¹², the actual arrest and shooting took place in August 1942. He gives a very impressive and detailed description of the tragedy of the Chernigov Roma in his autobiographic memories of the occupation period: "One day my colleague, the old Gypsy²¹³, did not come to work. Somebody said that his whole family had been arrested by the [auxiliary] police (politsai). It turned out that the entire Gypsy population had been arrested in Chernigov and the whole region (oblast') in a single day. A huge train (oboz) of Gypsies with tents over the carts arrived in the town from some rural area, [...]. The policemen bragged that they had put the minds of the prisoners at rest by telling them they were about to go on a journey to Serbia.

When the train reached the prison gates, the Gypsies started to make a noise. Screams, wailing (vizg) and weeping could be heard. They had realised what kind of Serbia they were to be sent to, but escape was impossible, because the train was surrounded by Germans with submachine guns and Alsatian dogs on leashes. First of all, the Gypsies were forced into the prison yard and distributed to the cells from there.

Needless to say, the police stole the possessions of the people who had been condemned to death.

This was a Sunday, and no shootings were carried out on Sundays. So many Gypsies were crammed in the prison in the following two days that it was buzzing (gudelo) like a roused beehive in the truest sense of the word when I went past this building on Proletarskaia ulitsa on my way to the bazaar. Sometimes wailing (vopli) came from the windows with broken glass. It was terrible (zhutko) to hear.

The Gypsies were shot at the same place at the edge of the Podusovskii forest (opushka Podusovskogo lesa) where previous executions of prison inmates had been carried out. While we were busy unloading and transporting timber for the furniture factory, we were once again witnesses to unfortunate people, whose only fault was to be victims of the racial policy of the Reich, being taken along this path, the route of death, for slaughter (na uboi). [...] Apart from the Gypsies who were taken from the prison in trucks for shooting – and that was most of them – two groups (partii) of Gypsies were taken to the place of execution in the Podusovka forest on foot, escorted by Germans with Alsatian dogs. There were more than one hundred people in each group, mainly women with children as well as old men and women. Their march of grief (skorbnyi put') led from the prison on Proletarian Street and then along

²¹² Gerard Kuznetsov was 16 years old in 1942 and worked in a furniture factory, where he had been conscripted for work by the "employment service" (birzha truda) of Chernigov.

²¹³ This was an old blacksmith by the name of Petr, who owned a forge in Leskovitse, a village near Chernigov, before the war. Kuznetsov describes him as a "very handsome and proud Gypsy". Interview with Gerard Kuznetsov, Chernigov, December 2006.

Tolstoi Street up to the oil depot. After passing the cotton factory, the unfortunate people reached the edge of the forest, where the executioners waited for them beside deep pits which had been excavated beforehand. They were murdered there."²¹⁴

The exact number of murdered Roma can also not be calculated in the Chernigov case. According to Kuznetsov, it was "a very large number", since the shootings took three complete days. According to the statements of a former prison guard, all the cells were so full of "Gypsies", that nobody could sit or stand.²¹⁵ If this description is extrapolated, a total of at least 2000 murdered Roma is arrived at.

What is striking about the extermination operation against the Chernigov Roma is that it took place a great deal later, namely nine months after the conclusion of the biggest mass executions of the local Jewish population. A forensic expert commission headed by the Kiev military surgeon Professor Ishchenko summed up the crimes of the German occupying forces in its final report as a phased sequence of carefully directed extermination operations: "In November 1941, there was a so-called three-day campaign for shooting the Jewish population of the city [Chernigov]. In January 1942, the mentally ill were shot, in the spring [summer; MH] of 1942, the Gypsies, and in the following months of 1942, Soviet activists. The prisoners of war and civilians (mirnye grazhdane) who had been interned in camps were shot in February and March 1943."²¹⁶

Irrespective of the time lag, it is clear that the persecution of the Roma in the Chernigov region escalated into a systematic and intended genocide by the summer of 1942 at the latest, which cost the lives of thousands of Roma. The goal of the occupying forces was to make Chernigov "Gypsy-free", after it had already been made "Jew-free".

The goal-directed systematic approach of the persecution in the Chernigov region is also documented by the fact that the search for Roma in the rural regions was continued after the major action of June 1942. However, the persecutors were dependent on the support of local collaborators, because the majority of the assimilated Roma population had Ukrainian family names and worked in ethnically mixed kolkhozes. Thus 12 members of the Gorbenko family "of Gypsy nationality" were arrested in the kolkhoz of "Shevchenko" on 30th October 1942 by order of the mayor of the town of Baturin and the head of the "local Feldgendarmarie" and

²¹⁴ Kuznetsov, Gerard: *Rasterzannyi Chernigov, ili Iunost', opalennaia voinoi*. Chernigov 2005, pp.138-139.

²¹⁵ Interview with Gerard Kuznetsov. Chernigov, December 2006.

²¹⁶ GARF, f.7021, op.78, d.31, ll.63-64. AKT No12. *Sudebno-meditsinskoi ekspertiznoi Komissii [o zlodeianiiakh nemetsko-fashistskikh zakhvatchikov i ikh soobshchnikov nad sovetскими grazhdanami goroda Chernigova Chernigovskoi oblasti.]* September 1944. According to witness accounts, however, the murders at the central psychiatric clinic of Chernigov had already begun in October 1941. cf. GARF, f.7021, op.78, d.31, l.29.

"deported to an unknown location". The same fate befell the "Gypsy non-collectivized farmer" (tsygan-edinolichnik) Kuz'menko.²¹⁷ 7 Roma from the village (selo) of Zhuravka were shot by a "retaliation unit" in the town of Priluki on 25th September 1942. The order for this is said to have come from the "head of the regional gendarmerie" Iselmann (Izel'man).²¹⁸ In addition to 14 Ukrainians, three "Gypsies" by the name of Bychok were "taken away" (vyvezeny) from the village (selo) of Rabukhi on the 24th October 1942.²¹⁹ In these cases, it is not clear whether the Servi Roma²²⁰ had been recognized as such or whether they were involved in a 'reprisal action' by chance. On the other hand, it would also be conceivable that the other villagers were murdered under the pretext of partisan support, because they had not reported "Gypsies" in their village. The Soviet records provide no information about this. Four "Gypsies" with the family name of Panchenko, including two children, can be found in the lists of the more than 50 kolkhoz members murdered in Tikhonovskii village soviet. The murders took place in December 1942.²²¹ However, the search for Roma continued unabated in 1943. 13 people were "brutally shot" in the prison of Chernigov because they were members of the "Gypsy nation" (tsyganskaia natsiia). Although the prison was often 'cleansed' of Ukrainian and Russian prisoners, the members of the commission differentiate between the motives for the murders.²²² In addition to this, a Rom by the name of Gorbunov was shot in the same year.²²³

In comparison to all the cases examined so far, the shooting of the 2000 Roma from the city and region of Chernigov in August 1942 represents the biggest related mass murder of Soviet Roma. Did the extreme dimension and the thereby associated coordination of the extermination arise from a special initiative of the military administration as in the case of *Heeresgruppe Nord*? A glance across the borders of *Rückwärtiges Heeresgebiet Süd* [Rear

²¹⁷ GARF, f.7021, op.78 (Chernigovskaia oblast'), d.1, ll.2-3ob.; 4-5ob.: AKT m. Baturin Baturinskogo raiona Chernigovskoi oblasti. 6.6.1944; GACHO, f.R-3013, op.1, d.2, ll.3-4ob., 18-19, 20-21ob. The date of arrest for three members of the family is the 30th May 1942, whereby this appears to be a clerical error.

²¹⁸ AKT-Spisok, selo Zhuravka, Varvinskii raion, Chernigovskaia oblast'. 20.11.1943. GARF, f.7021 (ChGK), op.78 (Chernigovskaia oblast'), d.5, l.23. A Jewish woman and four Ukrainian "communists" had already been shot at the same location in May 1942. Ibid.

²¹⁹ AKT, s. Rabukhi, Dmitrovskogo raiona, Chernigovskoi oblasti, 13.7.1944. GARF, f.7021 (ChGK), op.78 (Chernigovskaia oblast'), d.8, l.62.

²²⁰ In terms of numbers, the Servi are the main ethnic group of the Ukrainian Roma, and are characterized by a high degree of the assimilation. Most of the Servi Roma were identified in their passes as ethnic "Ukrainians".

²²¹ AKT, Tikhonovskii sel'sovet, Koriukovskii raion, Chernigovskaia oblast', 29.7.1944. GARF, f.7021 (ChGK), op.78 (Chernigovskaia oblast'), d.14, ll.19-19ob.

²²² AKT-Spisok, s. Kovchin, Kovchinskogo s/soveta, Kulikovskogo raiona, Chernigovskoi obl. 28.5.1944. GARF, f.7021 (ChGK), op.78 (Chernigovskaia oblast'), d.15, l.33. Some of the Roma victims had names which were already on the victims lists of the August shootings, such as Sulimovskii and Kazimirenko. Apparently they had first of all escaped the executioners in August 1942.

²²³ Ibid, l.33ob.

Army Area South] raises doubts, because a further mass shooting of Roma which reached a comparable degree to the one in Chernigov took place in the *Reichskommissariat Ukraine* [Imperial Commissariat Ukraine], which was under civil administration. "There was a particularly large number of shootings at the beginning of the occupation, when thousands of Jewish and Gypsy families were taken from the city and shot, and later (zatem), when the Germans began to 'unburden' (razgruzhat') their prisons before the occupiers were driven out of Kirovograd. [...] As the investigation showed, according to information which was far from complete, around six thousand souls (dush) from the Jewish population and more than thousand souls from the Gypsies were shot and tortured to death (zamucheno) in the city of Kirovograd alone."²²⁴ It cannot be inferred from the sources²²⁵ whether the mass extermination of Jews and Roma took place before the *Reichskommissariat Ukraine* was set up. And it also does not play a key role in the general assessment of the treatment of Roma under the civil administration, because the persecution in the Kirovograd region was subsequently continued, as in the case of Chernigov. 27 Roma were shot in the village (selo) of Ianych in Chigirinskii rayon in the summer of 1943.²²⁶ The Rom Ivan Romanenko, escaped the persecutors and was witness to the dramatic events, during which his complete family was murdered: "... SS troops (voiska "SS") drove into the village in the morning. They began to round up the Gypsy inhabitants of the village of Ianych, who had lived here and worked together in the kolkhoz with the Ukrainians since the day of the revolution. When I heard about it, I hid in the field, in the maize. After some time, the Germans herded [vygnali - sic!] a group of around 30 people into the field. They stopped (ostavalis') 150-200 metres [away] from me. The Germans forced the condemned people to excavate a pit. When the pit was ready, the Germans made everyone stand at the edge of the pit, so that their legs were in the pit. Shots were fired, the people fell into the pit, and the children, who were in the arms (na rukakh) of their mothers, fell into the pit together with the adults.

I saw with my own eyes how the Germans shot my wife and my son. I saw how they shot my brother together with his wife and five small children. After the shooting, the Germans dumped (zasypav) earth on the bodies and left. Then I went to the pit. I saw how people

²²⁴ SPRAVKA O ZVERSTVAKH NEMETSKIKH OKKUPANTOV V g. KIROVOGRADE. 1.3.1946. Derazhavnii Arkhiv Kirovograds'koi oblasti (DAKO), f.R-6656, op.2, spr.1, ll.1-7; 5.

²²⁵ Unfortunately, the date and exact sequence of the extermination of the Roma could not be determined from the records given to me at the state regional archive in Kirovograd. Some of the material is still kept there under lock and key for some obscure reason.

²²⁶ Actually the year 1942 would be more likely to judge from the overall context. A typing error cannot be excluded, because the other National Socialist crimes concerned reprisal actions in the spring of 1943.

covered with earth were moving. They had obviously been buried alive or wounded. I could not help, because it was forbidden to approach the pit under pain of execution."²²⁷

3.2 The murders in the area of operations of *Einsatzgruppe D*

3.2.1 Crimea

The historical research into the Crimea has provided the most extensive information about the National Socialist persecution of Soviet Roma available so far. There is agreement that the murder of the Roma on the peninsula had a systematic and largely total character.²²⁸ The main basis for this assessment are recorded incident reports of *Einsatzgruppe D* and the statements of Otto Ohlendorf²²⁹ and other accused at the Nuremberg Einsatzgruppen Trial (Case IX) of 1947/48.

Unlike in the regions examined so far, the *systematic* extermination of the Roma in the Crimea began at the end of 1941 and proceeded virtually in parallel to the extermination of the Jews and Krimchaks.²³⁰ Amongst other things, the practical implementation of the persecution was made possible by the fact that three *Teilkommandos* [part detachments], namely 10b, 11a and 11b, were operative in the relatively restricted territory of the peninsula at the same time. It emerges from an incident report of *Einsatzgruppe D* that "824 Gypsies" had been shot between 16th November and 15th December 1941 alone.²³¹ The majority of the Roma murdered in the stated period were probably victims of a major mass shooting in Simferopol.²³² The main city of the Crimea had its own "Gypsy quarter", whose residents were registered from November 1941. On 9th December 1941²³³, groups of Roma were taken from the city in trucks and shot in anti-tank ditches, after they had been robbed of their

²²⁷ AKT PO CHIGIRINSKOMU RAIONU. Ibid, ll.62-63; 62ob.-63.

²²⁸ See Zimmermann: Rassenutopie und Genozid; Wippermann: Nur eine Fußnote?; idem: "Auserwählte Opfer?"; Lewy: "Rückkehr unerwünscht"; Bauer: Die dunkle Seite der Geschichte; Krausnick: Hitlers Einsatzgruppen, amongst others.

²²⁹ Ohlendorf had already appeared at the Nuremberg Trials against the major war criminals (1945/46), not as an accused on that occasion, but as a witness, and spoke at length about his activities in the Crimea. However, the persecution of the Roma in the Crimea was not focused on in this trial.

²³⁰ Krimchaks were descendants of Seraphic Jews, who had adopted the Muslim faith in the Crimea. After some hesitation, they were included in the extermination measures, since they were said to be Jews in the "racial sense". On the other hand, the Karaites were excluded from the persecution, because they were a Turkic tribe, which only professed the Jewish faith. The "racial affiliation" was therefore the key factor for the extermination. See Angrick: Besatzungspolitik und Massenmord, p.330.

²³¹ Bundesarchiv (Federal Archive Berlin – BAB), R 58/219, Bl.378. *Ereignismeldung* (Incident report EM) 150 dated 2nd January 1942. The statistics also mention the murder of 17,645 Jews, 2,504 Krimchaks and 212 communists and partisans in the same period. Ibid.

²³² The "Gypsy action" at Simferopol was described at length in Michael Zimmermann: Rassenutopie und Genozid, pp.264-265.

²³³ Neither the statements of the accused German perpetrators nor the incident reports of *Einsatzgruppe D* provide an exact date. The date of 9th December 1941 comes from Soviet sources. Tiaglyi: Chingene, p.162.

valuables and outerwear beforehand. Some of the victims who had only been wounded by the firing squads of *Teilkommandos* 10a and 11b were apparently buried alive.²³⁴

In the view of the people responsible for *Einsatzgruppe D*, "no complaints whatsoever" could be made about the procedure of the extermination operation.²³⁵ 'Smooth' carrying-out was guaranteed, not least by the active support of the *Wehrmacht*, which took over the entire logistics and made guards available.

In the Nuremberg Einsatzgruppen Trial, Otto Ohlendorf, who was responsible for the murder of more than 90,000 people as former commander of *Einsatzgruppe D*, attempted to justify the mass murder of Soviet Jews and Roma with military "security considerations" and a corresponding Order of Hitler which had been issued a few days before the attack on the Soviet Union. According to this, it was the task of the Einsatzgruppen "to keep the rear of the Wehrmacht free by killing the Jews, Gypsies, communist functionaries, active communists and any persons who could jeopardize security".²³⁶ Jews and "Gypsies" were not treated differently, since both had always acted as "spies" "in every war" and should therefore be regarded collectively as dangerous "elements". Ohlendorf considered the inclusion of children in the extermination as a 'pre-requisite' for bringing about "permanent security" of the conquered territories and for preventing them from seeking revenge for their murdered parents.²³⁷

Ohlendorf's claim that a general extermination order had been issued for Jews and "Gypsies" from the outset is regarded as having been clearly refuted by the research in the meantime.²³⁸ On the contrary, the command status offered the Einsatzgruppen commanders a relatively wide scope to act on their own responsibility in the first weeks of the Russian campaign,

²³⁴ There were no doctors who could have established death. And the wounded were apparently not killed with a "coup de grâce". See Zimmermann: *Rassenutopie und Genozid*, pp.264-265.

²³⁵ Statement of Ohlendorf's adjutant, Heinz Hermann Schubert, who was assigned with the inspection of the operation of the "Gypsy action" in December 1941, at the Nuremberg Einsatzgruppen Trial. See Zimmermann: *Rassenutopie und Genozid*, pp.264-265. Schubert's testimony is published in detail in *Trials of War Criminals before the Nuremberg Military Tribunals under Control Council Law No 10, Volume IV* ('The Einsatzgruppen Case'), Washington D.C. (no year) [in the following "TWC"], pp.581-584. In part also in Leszczyński, Kazimierz (publisher): *Fall 9. Das Urteil im SS-Einsatzgruppenprozeß, gefällt am 10. April 1948 in Nürnberg vom Militärgerichtshof II der Vereinigten Staaten von Amerika.* [Case 9. The judgement of 10th April 1948 of Military Tribunal II of the United States of America in Nuremberg in the SS Einsatzgruppen Case.] Berlin 1963, p.229.

²³⁶ Quoted in Krausnick: *Hitlers Einsatzgruppen*, p.158; TWC, p.244.

²³⁷ STA Nürnberg, ND, Case IX, No. A 6-8, Bl.669-673; Zimmermann: *Rassenutopie und Genozid*, p.261; TWC, pp.286-287.

²³⁸ See *inter alia* Ogorreck, Ralf; Rieß, Volker: *Fall 9: Der Einsatzgruppenprozeß (gegen Otto Ohlendorf und andere)*. In: Ueberschär, Gerd R. (publisher): *Der Nationalsozialismus vor Gericht. Die alliierten Prozesse gegen Kriegsverbrecher und Soldaten 1943-1952*. Frankfurt on Main 1999, pp.164-175;167-168; Angrick: *Besatzungspolitik und Massenmord*, pp.74-113.

something which they took advantage of, in order to extend the eradication programme successively within the limits of their security police measures. In this regard, the orders lagged behind the murderous dynamics of the events, and the practice of the extermination, which was in progress in any case, was only sanctioned by degrees. The commanders of the *Einsatzgruppen*, including Otto Ohlendorf, therefore made a proactive contribution to the cumulative radicalization of the National Socialist policy of extermination in the occupied Eastern Territories, which very soon ended in the indiscriminate murder of the Soviet Jews and later also the Roma.

Einsatzgruppe D of all *Einsatzgruppen* even played a pioneering role in the persecution of the Soviet Roma, because Ohlendorf's *Teilkommandos* were the first to move over to concerted extermination of the Roma population as a whole. Two mass shootings from the Nikolaev region [also Nikolajew in German] date from as early as September and October 1941. Significantly, the victims in the first (recorded) case were sedentary Roma: 100 to 150 "Gypsies", including women and children, who lived in a woodhouse settlement were ordered to board trucks which were to take them for execution. When the Roma refused, they were shot in front of their homes.²³⁹ Another group of "Gypsies" was shot in the Nogai Steppe, east of Nikolaev, in approximately the same period. The reason is said to be that they had a Russian machine gun on their horse cart.²⁴⁰ In all probability, the early order to kill all the Roma came from Ohlendorf himself. In his defence at the Nuremberg *Einsatzgruppen* Trial, however, he resorted to a perfidious dual strategy to justify his actions on the one hand and to conceal his personal responsibility on the other: while Ohlendorf sought to strengthen the sweeping accusation of espionage through his alleged 'expert knowledge' of "Gypsies", he deliberately played down the actual extent of the "Gypsy actions" carried out under his command.

The "image of the Gypsy" which Ohlendorf created for his defence was based on traditional anti-Gypsy stereotypes. His attempt to support the accusation of espionage with 'historical parallels' with the Thirty Years' War as described by "Ricarda Huch and Schiller" is frankly absurd. Not until the presiding judge, Musmanno, insisted on actual examples of partisan

²³⁹ See 22 Js 201/61 of the Public Prosecutor's Office Munich I, vol. 5, statement of Georg Mandt of the 4.12.1962, Bl.1100. Cited from Angrick, p.252. In this case, the precise date of the events is not entirely clear. According to Andrej Angrick, the "Gypsy shooting" took place before the major shooting of Jews in the "gorge" near Nikolaev (14th September 1941), which would put it in the first half of September 1941. However, Angrick says at a later point that *Einsatzgruppe D* had not begun to shoot "Gypsies" in Nikolaev "until" October 1941. See *ibid*, p.343.

²⁴⁰ See the excerpt from the statement of Heinrich Wiegmann in the file 'Crime scene index' of all *Einsatzgruppe D* trials in Munich. After Angrick: *Besatzungspolitik und Massenmord*, p.252.

support and espionage during the German-Soviet war under discussion did Ohlendorf add that he had known of "various cases" of this kind from the Jaila Mountains at that time.²⁴¹ The inaccessible Jaila Mountains in the south of the Crimea did indeed provide the partisans with an ideal retreat and was a permanent trouble spot which the German Security Police never had under control even with local support, since most of the military units which would have been necessary for a targeted action on a large scale were tied up in the enduring siege of Sevastopol.²⁴² Consequently, the development of the partisan movement in the Jaila Mountains always had a central place in the incident reports of *Einsatzgruppe* D from November 1941 to the middle of 1942. If there had been a serious occurrence of alleged "Gypsy spies" or other 'incidents' connected with "Gypsies", this would certainly have been highlighted or at least noted in the reports of the *Einsatzgruppe*. It is significant that this was not the case at any point, however.²⁴³

Because of the insistent questioning of the prosecution during his examination, Ohlendorf obviously sensed that his arguments were not convincing, for which reason he was prompted to ruminate generally on the 'Gypsy character'. In comparison to other ethnic and cultural communities, "the Gypsies" as a "non-sedentary people" were "inherently prepared" "to change location" and conduct espionage.²⁴⁴ Resorting to such racist constructs about "Gypsies" is typical of the legitimating strategies of many National Socialist perpetrators. However, the example of the Crimea particularly shows how greatly Ohlendorf's stereotyped caricature differed from the reality on the ground. The vast majority of Crimean Roma had lived as sedentary artisans and traders in towns and villages since Tsarist times; apart from Simferopol, the towns of Evpatoriia, Bakhchisarai and Kerch also had their own Roma

²⁴¹ See TWC, p.287.

²⁴² The fortress of Sevastopol was heroically defended by Soviet units and did not fall until the beginning of July 1942. See Angrick: *Besatzungspolitik und Massenmord*, pp.529-530. On the military aspect of the siege of Sevastopol, see Wegner, Bernd: *Der Krieg gegen die Sowjetunion*. In: *Das Deutsche Reich und der Zweite Weltkrieg*, Band 6 (without year), pp.759-1102; 845-849. Until the first half of 1942, the work of the *Teilkommandos* in the Jaila Mountains was therefore mostly restricted to intelligence operations and intimidation of the village population at the foothills of the mountains who were suspected of helping the partisans with food and offering them shelter. See the incident reports of *Einsatzgruppe* D up to and including April 1942.

²⁴³ See. *inter alia* incident reports 139 (28th November 1941) and 143 (8th December 1941), which were made in the immediate period before the major "Gypsy action" in Simferopol. BAB, R 58/219, Bl. 213-216 and 256-259. There is also no mention of "Gypsies" at any point in the detailed reports of "Partisanenbewegung im Raume Feodosia – Stari-Krim" ["Partisan movement in the Feodosia – Stari-Krim region"] (EM 152, 7th February 1942) and "Die Partisanenbewegung im Raume der West-Krim. Entwicklung, Aufbau und Auftrag der Partisanenbewegung" ["The partisan movement in the West Crimea. Development, organisation and task of the partisan movement"]. BAB, R 58/220, Bl. 35-46; BAB R 58/221, Bl. 8-22.

²⁴⁴ STA Nürnberg, ND, Case IX, no. IX, no. A 6-8, Bl.669-673; TWC, p.287; Zimmermann: *Rassenutopie und Genozid*, p.261.

quarter.²⁴⁵ Moreover, the Roma in the Crimea had assimilated the Tatar culture over the centuries. They had not only adopted the language, religion, clothing and customs of their surroundings, but also frequently called themselves "Tatars" in their passes.²⁴⁶ Ohlendorf himself stated that local Tatars had to be employed for registration of the "Gypsies", in order to prevent "ill feeling" through potential cases of mistaken identity. In this respect, however, it escaped his notice that there were also family links and ethnically mixed marriages between Tatars and Roma, something which was guaranteed to reduce the willingness to hand them over.²⁴⁷

The fact that Ohlendorf adhered to his construct of "restlessly itinerant Gypsies" in his review of the events in spite of all this is not necessarily attributable to pure tactics before the court. Ohlendorf's "Gypsy imagination" was based on the National Socialist racial ideology, which stigmatised "the Gypsy" as a born "social misfit" with an unbridled "roving spirit". The reality encountered in the Crimea obviously had no effect on this preconceived notion. The same could be said of his views about the alleged "Jewish world enemy", which he also adhered to in Nuremberg²⁴⁸, something which again illustrates how profoundly the former commander of *Einsatzgruppe D* had internalized the National Socialist ideology. Moreover, he shared this ideology with the entire leadership of the SS and the *Sicherheitsdienst* and with a large part of the *Wehrmacht* command.

In contrast to the military administration and the SS, the civil administration of the General Commissariat of "Taurien" had a far less ideologically prejudiced attitude towards the local conditions. In the "Interim Information on the Crimea" of the 15th December 1941, "the Gypsies", who were mainly waggoners, second-hand dealers, smiths, jewellers and musicians,

²⁴⁵ On the history of the Roma in the Crimea, see inter alia Aradzhioni, M.A.: Krymskie tsygane. In: idem; Gertsen, A.G. (red.-sost.): Khrestomatiia po etnicheskoi istorii i traditsionnoi kul'ture starozhil'cheskogo naseleniia Kryma. Ch.1. Musul'mane: krymskie tatory, krymskie tsygane. Simferopol 2004, pp.21-28.

²⁴⁶ The fact that the "long sedentary Gypsies" in the Crimea "conceal [their] origin" and that the majority speaks Tatar had also been a thorn in the side of the Soviet authorities. See NKZ RSFSR v NKZ Krym – Sektoru organizatsii territ. i pereseleniia. 17 maia 1932. GARF, f.1235 (VTsIK), opis' 123, delo 27, ll.159-159ob.

²⁴⁷ Mixed marriages between Tatars and Roma have been recorded since the 18th century. However, the degree of assimilation varied considerably in the individual ethnic groups of the Roma. See Toropov, V.G.: Istorii i fol'klor krymskikh tsygan. Moscow 2004, pp.9-10; Marushiakova, Elena; Popov, Veselin: Segmentation vs. Consolidation: The example of four Gypsy groups in CIS. In: Romani Studies, volume 14 (series 5), number 2, December 2004, pp.145-192; 148-152. The Muslim faith and the cultural closeness of most of the Crimean Roma to the Tatars were completely ignored by Andrej Angrick. This leads him to make substantial misjudgements about the attitude of the Tatars towards Roma: "On the one hand, they [the Tatars] acted vehemently against Jews and Gypsies, but they defended their fellow believers to the last, even if they seemed to be suspicious or dangerous in the eyes of the Germans." Angrick: Besatzungspolitik und Massenmord, p.473.

²⁴⁸ Anti-Semitic "arguments" pervade all areas of Ohlendorf's statements in the Einsatzgruppen Trial. See TWC, pp.223-312.

were described as obvious urban residents (75%) in censuses.²⁴⁹ The civil administration actually refuted the caricature of the "Gypsy social misfit" with its statistics, but it had no influence on the practical occupation policy in the Crimea.

Ohlendorf's second defence strategy during the Einsatzgruppen Trial consisted in playing down the real extent of the campaigns of murder against Roma in his former area of responsibility. The (in my opinion) conscious lie of the accused that he did not know of any other "shooting of Gypsies" except for the "action" in Simferopol served this purpose.²⁵⁰ Not only do the already mentioned examples from the Nikolaev region refute Ohlendorf's account but also the further events in the Crimea which followed the mass extermination of Simferopol. In Alushta, where a *Teilkommando* of *Sonderkommando* 11b under the command of Hans Stamm was stationed, a camp for "Jews and Gypsies" was set up immediately after the occupation of the town, which was subsequently 'disbanded' by murdering all the inmates. Alushta was regarded as "Jew-free" from the 2nd January 1942.²⁵¹ While the murders of the Roma in Nikolaev and Alushta were not juridically known until the 1960s, the direct overall responsibility of Ohlendorf is probably most clearly reflected in the other "incident reports from the USSR", by means of which the *Einsatzgruppen* informed the *Reichssicherheitshauptamt* [Reich Security Main Office] about the progress of its security police activities in the occupied territories. Apart from the already mentioned "824 Gypsies" who had been killed between 16th November and 15th December 1941, the following shootings are summarized in the incident reports from the spring of 1942: 421 "Gypsies, anti-social elements and saboteurs" were shot between 16th and 28th February 1942; 810 "anti-

²⁴⁹ See Tiaglyi: Chingene, p.159; Kunz: Die Krim unter deutscher Herrschaft, p.192. ["1921" instead of 1941 was erroneously stated in Kunz.] It is astonishing how resistant even the latest historiographical contributions appear to be towards the content of this kind of statistics. In his short and inherently extremely inconsistent excursus about "Gypsies", Norbert Kunz mentions the "gross contempt for their way of life" and "their social living conditions" as a motive for the persecution of the Sinti and Roma in the "Third Reich" in general and in the Crimea in particular, although he himself cites various statistics and information which contradict his thesis of the "sociocide" – which was apparently substantially borrowed from Guenter Lewy. See *ibid.*, pp.191-194.

²⁵⁰ Compare TWC, p.287.

²⁵¹ See incident report 150 of the 2nd January 1942. BAB, R 58/219, page 378. It is not mentioned in the stated incident report that Alushta was also "Gypsy-free" at the same time, but this emerges from subsequent statements of the former members of the *Teilkommando*. See 22 Js 205/61 of the StAnw Munich I, vol. 6, statement of Willi Hasbach of the 13.10. 1962, Bl. 1368f.; *ibid.*, vol. 12, statement of Hans Stamm of the 10.5.1966, Bl. 2455-2458; and *ibid.*, vol.14, statement of Johann Welsch of the 8.11.1966, Bl. 2818. After Angrick: *Besatzungspolitik und Massenmord*, p.346. Angrick adds: "Stamm stated – not very credibly – that he had successfully refused to murder Jews and Gypsies and had even let the allegedly captured partisan leader Mokrousow go. On the other hand, the other members of the *Teilkommando* admitted they at least knew about the murder of the prisoners." *Ibid.*

social elements, Gypsies, insane and saboteurs" in the first two weeks of March and 261 "anti-social elements, incl. Gypsies" in the second half of March.²⁵²

Even if the category "Gypsies", which had still been shown separately with "Jews" in the initial reports, is subsumed in a category with alleged "anti-social elements", "saboteurs" and even "insane" from February 1942, the continuity of the systematic persecution is already noticeable on account of the regular references.²⁵³

On 8th April 1942, the incident report of *Einsatzgruppe D* finally summed up that "Jews, Krimchaks and Gypsies" were "no longer in existence except for a few small groups which occasionally turn up in the north of the Crimea". Individuals who "had been able to conceal themselves by means of forged identification documents, etc." would "nevertheless be detected sooner or later" and dealt with accordingly.²⁵⁴ In other words: Ohlendorf was not only aware of the continuous extermination of the Crimean Roma, but assumed that he had "solved" the "Gypsy question" in the peninsula with his *Kommandos*.

The records of the Extraordinary State Commission confirm the systematic character of the Roma persecution in the Crimea. The investigation results of the commission supplement the German records and provide exhaustive details about the course of events of the extermination measures in some cases. In addition to the mass shooting of Simferopol, two more major actions against "Gypsies", also in the period of the turn of the year 1941/42, are attested to in the Soviet sources. In Kerch, the extermination apparently reached an intensity which was almost comparable to that in Simferopol, because to judge from the ChGK reports, the murder action was directed against the entire Roma population of the town. On 29th December 1941, "all the Gypsy families" of Kerch were arrested and taken to the local prison. They were taken from the town in twelve trucks the next day and shot in an anti-tank ditch with machine guns. Romanian soldiers had provided the guard detail for the entire action, while members of the *Wehrmacht* cordoned off the site of the shooting.²⁵⁵

²⁵² See incident report (EM) 178 of the 9th March 1942. BAB, R 58/221, Bl. 64; EM 184 of the 23rd March 1942. BAB, R 58/221, Bl. 130; EM 190 of the 8th April 1942. BAB, R 58/221, Bl. 268.

²⁵³ "Gypsy" and "Jew" were individual self-explanatory extermination categories in the reports of *Einsatzgruppe D* up to and including January 1942. See incident reports 145, 153 and 157. R 58/219, 220. The fact that the "racial affiliation" of "the Gypsies" is no longer stated as the sole reason for murder from February 1942 – at least in the official account – may have unconsciously had something to do with the protests of the Tatar population described below, who were vehemently opposed to the murder of fellow believers. An additional 'rational argument' for justification of the murders was provided as it were through the attribution of alleged "antisociality" or other 'harmfulness'. On the other hand, similar categorizations can also be found in the incident reports of the other *Einsatzgruppen A, B and C*.

²⁵⁴ EM 190 of 8th April 1942. BAB, R 58/221, Bl. 267.

²⁵⁵ See GARF, f.7021, op.9 (Krymskaia ASSR), d.38, ll.212-213. The course of events of the action was attested to by a surviving Rom who had worked as a blacksmith in the village of Kamysh-Burun before the occupation.

Detailed information is also available about the persecution of the Roma in Evpatoriia (also referred to as "Eupatoria" or "Jewpatoria" in German documents). The "Gypsy action" took place at the beginning of 1942 at a time when the Germans were implementing massive "retaliation" for an unsuccessful Soviet attempt to retake the seaport.²⁵⁶ In May 1944, the Extraordinary State Commission interviewed the construction worker, Jakub Kurtuliarov, "of Gypsy nationality" about the course of events of the extermination operation. Kurtuliarov said that he had personally witnessed how the Jews of Evpatoriia who had complied with the summons for registration and "resettlement" were shot just outside the town, because he did not live far from the location of the shooting. The same procedure had been repeated with the Krimchaks of the town a short time later.²⁵⁷ In a third step, the persecutors also focused their attention on the Roma of the town: "At the beginning of 1942, I don't know the exact month any more, the German powers told all the Gypsies that they had to appear for registration to receive bread rations. However, the Gypsies realized that the purpose of this lure (zamankoi) was to seize the Gypsies, in order to exterminate them. So none of them went for registration, [instead] they began to hide. As a result, the Germans organized raids and rounded up the Gypsies. More than one thousand people were arrested in Evpatoriia, including myself, whereby our Gypsy quarter (nasha tsyganskaia slobodka) had been sealed off by army units. They were all packed onto trucks in a tangle, whereby the small children were simply thrown into the vehicles. After that they were taken to Krasnaia gorka and shot in anti-tank ditches with machine guns and submachine guns. I was in the second rank of those who were to be shot. The man in front of me was shot dead, while I was hit in the shoulder. The falling bodies covered me, so that I [lay] wounded amongst them. And after the guns had become silent and the discussions ended, I crawled out from under the bodies and hid in a neighbouring village."²⁵⁸

The example of Evpatoriia illustrates that there was no possibility of deception when the summoned target groups were aware of the fate of the previously murdered Jews and Krimchaks. Varying the registration reasons ("bread rations" instead of "resettlement") could also change nothing about this. The *Einsatzgruppen* and *Ortskommandanturen* were forced to resort to more elaborate means to make Evpatoriia "Gypsy-free". However, the relative

²⁵⁶ Soviet soldiers landed in the port of Evpatoriia by speedboat on 5th January and were soon supported by several hundred partisans. The Soviet attack was repulsed after a two-day battle. The German security forces subsequently made mass arrests in the town, which were followed by hundreds of executions. See Angrick: *Besatzungspolitik und Massenmord*, pp.488-493.

²⁵⁷ Protokol doprosa svidetelei. Kurtuliarov, Jakub, tsygan po natsional'nosti. 22.5.1944. GARF, f.7021, op.9 (Krymskaia ASSR), d.57, ll.34-34ob.; 34.

²⁵⁸ GARF, f.7021, op.9, d.57, ll.34-34ob.

density of the security police forces and the active support of the *Wehrmacht*²⁵⁹ made also this mass murder possible.

In addition to the major actions in Simferopol, Kerch and Evpatoriia, there were two more "Gypsy actions" on a smaller scale in the same period: the persecutors also proceeded systematically in Feodosii, although there was no significant Roma settlement there. In December 1941, 10 inhabitants of the town were registered as "Gypsies" and subsequently taken for physical extermination.²⁶⁰ The Fursenkos, a Roma family of seven, were shot in the rayon of Biiuk-Onlarskii on 15th January 1942. The sole reason for their murder was their "national affiliation to the Gypsies (za natsional'nuu prinadlezhnost' kak tsygane)".²⁶¹

After the first extermination wave, the mass shootings had to be temporarily halted on account of the adverse weather conditions. The *Teilkommandos* of *Einsatzgruppe* D used this enforced break to recruit local support; in particular, Tatar volunteers were intensively – and successfully – wooed.²⁶² As in the case of the persecution of the Jews, a second extermination wave against Roma was also started in the spring of 1942. Since the towns had already been intensively "combed", the extermination operations increasingly shifted to the rural regions. A large part of the Roma population in the rayon of Dzhankoi, numbering about 200-300 people, was eliminated in March 1942. One and a half months previously, the Jews of the town and the surrounding villages had already been shot. In case of the Roma, however, a gas van was used, which suggests that the murders of the Roma of Dzhankoi were carried out by *Teilkommando* SK 11b.²⁶³ According to eyewitness accounts, the suffocated victims were dumped in prepared pits together with their clothing and covered with earth by Soviet

²⁵⁹ A detailed description of the role of the *Wehrmacht* in the Crimea from the late summer of 1941 to the end of 1942 can be found in Oldenburg, Manfred: *Ideologie und militärisches Kalkül. Die Besatzungspolitik der Wehrmacht in der Sowjetunion 1942*. Cologne, 2004, pp.57-224.

²⁶⁰ Gosudarstvennyi Arkhiv Avtonomnoi Respubliki Krym (GAARK), f.R-1458, op.1, d.4, l.122. After Tiaglyi: *Chingene*, pp.161-162.

²⁶¹ GARF, f.7021, op.9 (Krymskaia ASSR), d.34, l.96.

²⁶² On the recruitment of the Tatars from January 1942, see Angrick: *Besatzungspolitik und Massenmord*, pp.465-468; Oldenburg: *Ideologie und militärisches Kalkül*, pp.121-123. The success of the recruitment of Tartars is explained to a certain extent by the decidedly anti-Bolshevist and anti-Semitic attitude of the Crimean Tatar population. The decisive factor for the anti-Bolshevism was the experience with the Soviet ruling power in the pre-war years which, in addition to the general sanctions and the struggle against the Muslim spiritual leaders, had taken vehement action against the Tatar national movement. In addition to the ideological caricature of 'Judaeo-Bolshevism', the anti-Semitism also resulted from the forced transfer of land for the establishment of Jewish villages in the 1920s and 1930s and (later abandoned) Soviet plans to found a Jewish republic in the Crimea. See on this topic Fisher, Alain: *The Crimean Tatars*. Stanford 1978, pp.109-149. In addition to this, many Tatars regarded the establishment of Tatar committees and the set-up of the self-defence units as the first step towards political self-administration or even territorial autonomy, which were at no point under discussion for the Germans, however.

²⁶³ *Einsatzgruppe* D had one gas van at its disposal in the Crimea between February and March 1942. "The command staff handed over two gas vans to the local *Teilkommando* of Sk 11b in the spring 1942 for extermination of the Krimchaks of Karasubasar." See Angrick: *Besatzungspolitik und Massenmord*, pp.505-507.

prisoners of war.²⁶⁴ In the same month, the persecutors also directed their attention to the region of Staryi Krym [in German also Stary Krim and Stari-Krim]. It was the mayor of the capital of the rayon who drew up a list of 20 "Gypsies" and gave it to the German "gendarmerie". The latter made the arrests and took the Roma to Feodosii for shooting.²⁶⁵ Two families "of Gypsy nationality" – a family of seven in Dzhuma-Eli and another family in the village of Karagoz, which was part of the kolkhoz "2nd five-year plan (2-ia piatiletka)", – had previously been murdered in the neighbouring rayon.²⁶⁶

Several individual shootings had been carried out in Kolaiskii rayon in the meantime²⁶⁷; when the figures of the Extraordinary State Commission are added up, a total of 80 victims is arrived at in this rayon alone.

Both the German incident reports and the Soviet Commission reports give the impression that the National Socialist persecution of the Roma in the Crimea had resulted in complete extermination. However, it emerges from Soviet sources of the post-war period that more than one thousand Roma survived the German occupation of the Crimea. As was not shown until many years later, these had been inadvertently included in the Soviet deportations of so-called "treacherous peoples", which initially concerned the entire Crimean Tatar population in May 1944.²⁶⁸ In all, 1109 "Gypsies" had been deported as alleged "Tatars" and accommodated in "special settlements" of the Stalinist camp system.²⁶⁹ This probably concerned all of the Roma

²⁶⁴ See GARF, f.7021, op.9 (Krymskaia ASSR), d.193, ll.17ob, 19ob. The figures vary in this record. In the final report of the Extraordinary State Commission, there is talk of approximately 200 gassed "Gypsies" who had been discovered during excavations. See *ibid*, l.12. However, further mass graves cannot be excluded.

²⁶⁵ This concerns statements of the mayor K.K. Artsishevskii to investigators of the Soviet Secret Service. See *Arkhiv USBU v ARK, arkhivno-sledstvennoe delo No 10135, ll.134, 205ob*. Cited from Tiaglyi: Chingene, p.162. The statements of the mayor give the impression that the "gendarmerie" carried out the shooting. However, it is more likely that the Roma in Feodosii were "correctly" handed over to the Security Police for "further processing". Otherwise the transport from Staryi Krym to Feodosii would not have made very much sense.

²⁶⁶ See GAARK, f.R-1289, op.1, d.6, ll.88, 142; Tiaglyi: Chingene, p.167.

²⁶⁷ A total of 32 "Gypsies" were murdered in the village of Terepli-Abash, in Arlin-Barin – 6, in Nem-Barin – 8, in Shirin – 2, in Michailovka – 2, in the kolkhoz "Bolshevik" – 25, in the village of Avlach – 2 and in the kolkhoz "8th March (8 marta)" – 3. See GAARK, f.R-1289, op.1, d.12, ll.36-44ob; Tiaglyi: Chingene, p.167.

²⁶⁸ After the Crimea was retaken by the Red Army, the Bolsheviks first of all hunted down individual collaborators and "anti-Soviet elements". The decision to charge the Crimean Tatars collectively with treason and to deport all of them from the Crimea was made in the first half of May 1944 and was implemented in the same month. See *Dokladnaia zapiska narkoma vnutrennykh del SSSR L.P. Berii I.V. Stalinu o vyselenii tatarskogo naseleniia Kryma. 10 maia 1944g. GARF, f.9401, op.2, d.65, ll.41-43*. Published completely in: Vert; Mironenko: *Massovye repressii v SSSR*, pp.495-496. *Postanovlenie GKO No 5859ss "O krymskikh tatarakh"*. 11 maia 1944g. Published in Bugai, N.F. (sost): *Deportatsiia narodov Kryma*. Moscow 2002, pp.70-73. A total of around 190,000 Tatars were deported. Even families of Tatar Red Army soldiers who were still fighting at the front were not spared.

All the Bulgarians (12,075 people), Greeks (14,300) and Armenians (9,919) were also deported from the Crimea the following month for 'furthering the enemy's cause'. cf. Bugai: *Deportatsiia*, p.91.

²⁶⁹ *Nachal'nik 2 Otdeleniia OSP MVD SSSR kapitan V.P. Trofimov: Spravka o kolichestve lits drugikh natsional'nostei, nakhodiashchikhsia na spetsposelenii, vyselennykh s nemtsami, s vyselentsami Kavkaza*,

left in the Crimea, because it was noted that there were "no Gypsies" remaining in the peninsula in a statistical overview of the NKVD of February 1945.²⁷⁰ This suggests that approximately 30% of the Crimean Roma could have survived the German occupation.²⁷¹

How was this possible? Had the command of *Einsatzgruppe D* been mistaken when it reported the extermination of all "Jews, Krimchaks and Gypsies" to the Reich Security Main Office?

The difficulties the German occupying forces had in identifying "Gypsies" have already been indicated. As a result, at least some of the Roma could have remained undetected and therefore survived the occupation. In the opinion of Mikhail Tiaglyi, however, this is not enough to explain the relatively large number of surviving Roma. The Ukrainian historian referred to previously inaccessible secret service material and Tatar remembrance literature in an academic analysis published in 2006.²⁷² In the process, he was able to demonstrate that the solidarity of the Crimean Tatar population – both the Muslim committee and the Tatar self-administrations as well as individuals – with "their Gypsies", i.e. the Muslim part of the Roma population, was far greater than had previously been known.²⁷³ There had already been attempts to stave off the fate of the persecuted in the first major extermination operation in Simferopol in December 1941. With the help of a Tatar spiritual leader and the ostentatious presentation of Muslim symbols of belief, the Roma summoned for "resettlement" attempted to convince the German occupying forces that their persecution was based on a

Kryma, no ne vkhodiashchikh v sostav semei etikh kontingentov. 31 dekabria 1949. In: GARF, f.9479, op.1, d.436, l.26, Published in: Bugai: Deportatsiia, p.114.

²⁷⁰ 9.2.1945. Sovershenno sekretno. OPERUPOLNOMOCHENNYI 1 OTD 5 OTDELA GUBB NKVD SSSR, Leitenant gosbezopasnosti SAVINOV: Spravka po tsyganskim kochevym taboram za 1944 god. GARF, f.9478 (Glavnoe upravlenie po bor'be s banditizmom MVD SSSR), op.1, d.459 (1945), l.18. The statistics actually concerned the number of "itinerant Gypsies". However, it was stated in a annotation, that generally speaking there were "no Gypsies" in the Crimea.

²⁷¹ One problem consists in the fact that there is no unambiguous data about the number of Roma in the Crimea. The number varied considerably in Soviet censuses, inter alia because a large number of Roma had Tatar passports and also registered as such. The extent of the variations is impressively demonstrated by the example of Simferopol. In 1923, there were 2,000 "Gypsies" registered there, but precisely 3 (!) in the census of 1926. And in 1928, it was said that 4,000 Roma lived in the "Gypsy quarter" of Simferopol alone. See NKZ RSFSR v NKZ Krym – Sektoru organizatsii territ. i pereseleniia. 17 maia 1932. GARF, f.1235 (VTsIK), opis' 123, delo 27, ll.159-159ob. In 1931, Barannikov, the Soviet Indologist and leading Soviet "Gypsy expert", assumed that there were 8,000 Roma in the Crimea. See Barannikov, A.P.: Tsygany SSSR. Kratkii istoriko-etnograficheskii ocherk. Moscow 1931, p.37. According to the census of 1939, however, 2064 "Gypsies" lived in the Crimea, including 998 in towns and 1,066 in the countryside. On the other hand, 1,700 Roma are said to have lived in Simferopol alone at the beginning of the occupation in November 1941 (see the remarks on Simferopol below). Considering the latest surveys, it can be assumed that approximately 3,500 to 4,000 Roma were living in the Crimea at the start of the war. But this is only an estimate.

²⁷² Tiaglyi: Chingene.

²⁷³ Another indication of the unconditional support which the Roma in the Crimea enjoyed is the fact that not a single denunciation of "Gypsies" can be found in the regional archives of the Crimea [in total contrast to the massive numbers of examples of denunciations of Jews]. See Tiaglyi: Chingene, p.172.

misunderstanding. The eyewitness Lashkevich recorded the events in his journal, which was published after the war: "The Gypsies arrived en masse at the Talmud Torah building [i.e. synagogue; MH] on carts (podvody). For some reason, they raised a green flag, the symbol of Mohammedanism (magometanstva) and placed a Mullah at the head of their procession. The Gypsies tried to convince the Germans that they were not Gypsies, some passed themselves off as Tatars, others as Turkmen. But their protests were not heeded and they were all put in the large building."²⁷⁴

The last mentioned attempt to pass off the Muslim Roma as Tatars or Turkmen, in order to rescue them from persecution, was also made in an article in the periodical of the Muslim committee "Azat Krym" (Liberated Crimea), published in Simferopol.²⁷⁵ An article about a Roma group who referred to themselves as "Turkmen" was published in the issue of 27th March 1942. The author explained that the "language, rituals and behaviour" of this ethnic group differed considerably from other "Gypsies", since they were "related to Iranian tribes". Tiaglyi surmises that the real purpose of the article could have been to draw the attention of the remaining Muslim Crimean population to the danger, in which the Roma found themselves.²⁷⁶

Finally, the Tatar side also directly addressed the German occupying forces. According to Adil'sha ogly, it was one of the first official acts of the Crimean Tatar Muslim committee, which was founded around the turn of the year 1941/42, to request the future protection of the Muslim Roma in several petitions to the German commanders.²⁷⁷ No more shootings of Roma are said to have occurred in Simferopol for this reason. Where petitions did not help, the rescue attempts sometimes culminated in open protest at the extermination measures and in the threat to stop the collaboration with the occupiers, if necessary. According to oral sources, the Roma population of Bakhchisarai, who had already been rounded up for transportation, survived through the courageous action of the Greek Muslim mayor, Fenerov. The Germans finally had to abandon their plans thanks to his vigorous intervention.²⁷⁸ It is indeed striking that there is no information about a Roma shooting in Bakhchisarai, neither from the German side nor in the investigation records of the Extraordinary State Commission.

²⁷⁴ Iz dnevnikh Kh.G. Lashkevicha. – In: Peredaite detiam nashim o nashei sud'be. Simferopol': BEC "Khesed Shimon", 2002, p.63. Cited in full in Tiaglyi: Chingene, p.162.

²⁷⁵ The Tatar Committee had been allowed to issue the periodical "Azat Krym" as a central publication after Ohlendorf had consulted the representative of the foreign office at Army High Command 11, the envoy von Hentig. See Angrick: Besatzungspolitik und Massenmord, p.474.

²⁷⁶ See Tiaglyi: Chingene, pp.164-165.

²⁷⁷ Adil'sha ogly P.: Kuda podevalis' krymskie tsygane. In: Kr''ym, No48 (1994), p.2. The petitions are not documented, but are a constituent part of the Tatar remembrance literature. See on that topic Tiaglyi, pp.163-164.

²⁷⁸ Reshid, Memish: Zabytoe plemia. In: Golos Kryma, 4th September 1998, p.5. After Tiaglyi, p.165.

However, the most effective means of rescuing the Roma continued to be the 'Tatar cloak'. In the countryside, the village elders, who had been charged with the registration of the villagers by the military and security police agencies, had the power to give up "their" Roma or to cover them by simply registering them as Tatars.²⁷⁹ Many village elders, although not all by a long way, used their prerogative of interpretation to perform a solidarity-based rescue act. After the war, some stated in their defence that they had not known about the murderous intention of the registration; others confessed under interrogation that they had enriched themselves with the possessions of the deported victims without any misgivings.²⁸⁰ The differing attitudes of the village elders resulted in e.g. many Roma families being left alone during the large-scale extermination measures carried out in the rayon of Dzhankoi in March 1942, while all the Roma inhabitants in the neighbouring villages were murdered in the gas van.

Some Roma were forced to provide a "quid pro quo" for their protection, which often led to the grotesque situation that they were recruited by the "Tatar volunteer units" or even had to join the SD voluntarily, in order to maintain their cover. As in the case of other collaborators, these Roma were arrested as "traitors to the fatherland" after the liberation of the Crimea and interrogated by the political section of the NKVD.²⁸¹ It was only discovered during the interrogation that some of the arrested "Tatars" were actually Roma.

Several "Gypsies" served in the Tatar Guard Company of the SD in the Simferopol division, including a Rom by the name of Riza G., who had worked as a guitarist before the war. Others joined the military services of the occupiers and wore German uniforms, such as Kurtmambet S., who served in the 152nd Tatar volunteer battalion in 1943. The artist Il'ia A. was even promoted to divisional commander of the 147th Tatar volunteer battalion, which was stationed in the rayon of Evpatoriia.

Should the Roma "in German service" be considered as traitors to their own people? It would be presumptuous to make a moral judgement on this subject. A Rom by the name of S., who was officially enlisted as a Tatar volunteer, talked during his interrogation about the inhuman

²⁷⁹ Otherwise the elders were dutiful informers for the German authorities. In March 1942, *Einsatzgruppe D* noted with satisfaction that the "system whereby the Starost leaders, etc. regularly report any influx of outsiders to the *Kommandos* and *Teilkommandos*", had "proved to be a great success". BAB, R 58/221, EM 184, 23rd March 1942, Bl. 126-131; 128.

²⁸⁰ cf. on the following Tiaglyi: Chingene, pp.167-174.

²⁸¹ The Stalinist cleansing of "anti-Soviet elements" from the Crimea was carried out before the decision for mass deportation of the entire Crimean Tatar population. From April 1944, 'suspect' Tatars were arrested and taken to filtration camps, where they were interrogated about their activities during the German occupation. See Prikaz NKVD/NKGB SSSR No 00419/00137 "O meropriiatiakh po ochistke territorii Krymskoi ASSR ot antisovetskikh elementov". 13 apreliia 1944g. Sovershenno sekretno. Published in: Vert; Mironenko: Massovyie repressii v SSSR, pp.494-495.

pressure which was on him and his family: "In reality, I am a Gypsy by nationality, and the Germans shot the Gypsies. Ennan, the head of the Muslim committee, knew that we were Gypsies and threatened to give us up to the Germans. I had not intended to join the Tatar volunteer battalion, but the situation at that time was that our entire family could be shot. We talked [about this] in the family and decided that I should go to the Muslim committee and voluntarily enlist in the German army."²⁸² The need for personal betrayal for simple survival makes clear the entire tragedy of those Roma who had to enter the service of their mortal enemies, in order to maintain their Crimean Tatar "cover".

However, the actual effect of the Tatar protests against the murder of Muslim Roma should not be overestimated, as Mikhail Tiaglyi does. It is by all means likely that petitions were actually made to the German commanders, but it is extremely doubtful that they were the decisive factor for the (alleged) discontinuance of the persecution in the towns.²⁸³ The collective memory generally tends to create myths, as can be plausibly demonstrated by the example of Bakhchisarai. As already mentioned, according to oral sources, the entire Roma population of Bakhchisarai survived as a result of the courageous action of the mayor Fenerov. And indeed there is no information concerning a "Gypsy shooting" in this town, neither on the German nor Soviet side. The precise manner in which this rescue is said to have come into being is less convincing, however: after the Roma of the town had already been collected for "resettlement", Fenerov went "to the weeping crowd" and asked a German officer to pick out three male Roma "at his discretion (usmatrenie)", which he did. Fenerov led them to the headquarters and told them to let their trousers down in front of the Germans. And Muslims stood before the astonished Germans. Fenerov said that he could not be the head of a town, in which Muslims were shot. The repression was [then] stopped."²⁸⁴ Here the actual survival of the Roma population of Bakhchisarai is stylized into a legend about an alleged heroic rescue act. In this respect, the possibility that the deliberate or unintentional exaggeration of their rescuer role has an apologetic purpose must at least be considered. The stigma of the "treason against the motherland" weighed heavily on the Tatar population in the

²⁸² Arkhiv USBU v ARK, arkhivno-sledstvennoe delo No 20423, t.5, l.101. After Tiaglyi: Chingene, p.173.

²⁸³ This not only applies to the Roma. The Tatars tended to offer unconditional help to all their fellow believers; the Muslim Committee tried to make every effort for its Muslim brothers to the very last, even if the Germans regarded them as suspicious or dangerous. However, the practical options were extremely limited, because the Security Police generally took no notice of such initiatives. Tatars, e.g. those who worked for the Soviets as agents, were regularly picked up and shot irrespective of their origin or religion. See Angrick: Besatzungspolitik und Massenmord, p.473.

²⁸⁴ Reshid: Zabytoe plemia, p.5; Tiaglyi: Chingene, p.165. It should be noted at this point that the method usually used by the Nazis in the rest of Europe to identify Jews in cases of doubt was to check whether a male individual was circumcised. Once areas inhabited by Muslims were reached, this was no longer readily possible.

Soviet Union, and still encumbers them in the post-Soviet societies of the succession states to some extent. In addition to this is the fact that the Tatar leadership actively participated in the genocide of the Jews. In this respect, the (over)emphasis and stylization of their own role as "Gypsy rescuers" could serve as a kind of memory-psychological counterweight for the upward revaluation of the negative image. On the other hand, the fact remains that a series of surviving written sources of German origin contradicts the contents of the remembered image. With respect to the source material, however, this can be exclusively verified by the example of Simferopol. An integral part of the memory of the "Crimean Tatar intelligentsia" is that the persecution of the Roma there was stopped after the major mass shooting of December 1941 as a result of the Tatar protests (in the form of petitions to the German commander).²⁸⁵ However, it is surprising that the brave actions of the Muslim committee were at no point reflected in the incident reports of *Einsatzgruppe D*. In incident report no. 157 of 19th January 1942, i.e. at a time when the Tatar protests are already said to have resulted in the suspension of the anti-Gypsy measures in towns, it was reported under the heading "General situation and mood" that "The resettlement of the Jews, Krimchaks and Gypsies, which is regarded almost without exception as a final removal, is generally welcomed."²⁸⁶

However, the fact that extermination measures against Roma had by no means come to a standstill after the major mass shooting of December 1941 is more serious than the discrepancy between the German morale reports and the Tatar memory. At the beginning of January, the command of *Einsatzgruppe D* actually assumed that "In addition to Jews, the Krimchak and Gypsy question is also settled" in Simferopol.²⁸⁷ As soon as they came across further Roma during security police work, they were "treated" in the same way as Jews and communists. On 11th January 1942, *Einsatzgruppe D* was ordered by the 11th army to carry out an "action for the detection of unreliable elements" in Simferopol. After large-scale raids and countless house searches, 1100 men and 150 women were arrested and taken to *Dulag* [transit camp] 241, where the actual check by the SD began. While most of the civilian internees were used for forced labour, "Jews, communists and Gypsies" were selected and

²⁸⁵ Adil'sha ogly: Kuda podevalis' krymskie tsygane, p.2; Tiaglyi, p.163.

²⁸⁶ BAB, R 58/220, EM 157, 19th January 1942, Bl. 207-214; 209-210. This was justified because the fear of measures against the entire population was disappearing: "Apart from this, the mood of the population was affected by the resettlement of Jews, Gypsies and Krimchaks which was carried out in the operational area of the Crimea during the reporting period. The absurd fear that the Germans would wipe out the entire population had completely disappeared several weeks after the occupation of the Crimea. It was heightened again at the beginning of December when preparations for the resettlement of the 12-13000 Jews, Krimchaks and Gypsies were started. [...] Calm did not return until several days after the resettlements." cf. *ibid*, pp.209-210.

²⁸⁷ BAB, R 58/220, EM 153, 9th January 1942, Bl. 64-66. In this respect, it was also said that the "liberation from these elements" was "generally welcomed by population". *Ibid*.

murdered on the spot after a brief interrogation.²⁸⁸ And the military law enforcement and security forces did not only restrict their investigations to Jews in hiding by any means. In the spring of 1942, Secret Field Police Group 647 reported the hand-over of 51 "Gypsies" to the SD in Simferopol in addition to some individual executions.²⁸⁹

The indicated examples make clear that Roma had no prospect of survival once they were in the custody of the Germans and could be identified as "Gypsies".²⁹⁰ It can therefore be assumed that only the Roma who successfully managed to pass themselves off as Crimean Tatars finally remained in the city of Simferopol. Admittedly, the actual position of the documentary records does not permit any firm conclusions to be drawn about the number of individual executions in Simferopol in 1942/43. However, the fact that the number of Roma in the city continually decreased and was approaching zero in January 1943, in spite of the alleged cessation of the persecution, indicates that the extermination policy continued in the meantime. According to information of the office for statistics of the municipal administration of Simferopol, there were 1700 "Gypsies" in the city on 1st November 1941 at the beginning of the occupation. "According to rough estimates", there were said to be 1100 in January 1942, one month after the major mass shooting. One year later in January 1943, only eight "Gypsies" were registered in Simferopol.²⁹¹ To state that this decrease was purely and simply the result of "Gypsies" going into hiding and fleeing, as Tiaglyi does²⁹², is clearly unsatisfactory. Another indication for the progressive process of destruction of the "Gypsy quarter" of Simferopol was the renaming of "Gypsy Lane" (Tsyganskii pereulok) as Katsinskii-Katsa Lane in August 1942.²⁹³ With the renaming, some kind of symbolic line was drawn under the history of the Roma quarter of the city.

So what role did the Tatar collaborators play in the rescue of the remaining Roma of Simferopol? What realistic options did they have to protect Roma? The Tatars in towns and cities like Simferopol were given *inter alia* the role of police informers, who could use their local knowledge to track down 'enemies' in hiding. *Einsatzgruppe D* was very satisfied with

²⁸⁸ See BA-MA, Film WF-03/14321, O.K. I/853, B. Tgb.Nr. 1259/42, an Kommandant rückw. Armeegebiet 553 vom 31.1.1942, Betr.: Tätigkeitsbericht für die Zeit vom 16.1.-31.1.1942; Angrick: Besatzungspolitik und Massenmord, pp.496-497.

²⁸⁹ Nbg. Doc. NOKW-853; NOKW-854, NOKW-852 und NOKW-845, Geheime Feldpolizei Gruppe 647, Feldpostnummer 31244, Tätigkeitsberichte für die Monate März bis Juni 1942. cf. Angrick: Besatzungspolitik und Massenmord, p.504.

²⁹⁰ The above mentioned example of Alushta can be cited as further evidence for this statement.

²⁹¹ See GAARK, f.R-1302, op.1, d.9, l.6. After Tiaglyi: Chingene, p. 163. The question arises here as to whether the responsible people of *Einsatzgruppe D* were in close contact with the civic authorities and therefore had relevant statistical material at their disposal. The incident reports suggest otherwise.

²⁹² See Tiaglyi: Chingene, p.163.

²⁹³ Ibid.

the development of the collaboration: "Security Police and SD work was extended during the reporting period with the objective of the complete elimination of unreliable elements. Network of informers in Simferopol, particularly the Tatars. Individual results already available."²⁹⁴ In particular, the task of tracking down "unreliable elements", which also included "Gypsies" of course, conferred on the police informers and the Tatar associations allowed them to hold their protective hand over Muslim Roma – i.e. not so much through public action but by quietly preventing exposure.²⁹⁵ Simferopol was regarded as "Gypsy-free" in the second half of 1942 at the latest, and the Tatar police informers made great efforts to further this impression. The above mentioned individual tragedies of the Roma who had to enlist in the service of the *Wehrmacht* or the SD, in order to maintain their cover, are the clearest evidence for this. The paradoxical situation that a fraction of the Roma of the Crimea served the persecutors, while the others faced extermination, was only possible as long as the Roma concerned were able to conceal their ethnic identity. According to the statements of people subsequently interrogated by the NKVD, the people in question would not have survived exposure. Tatar protests would certainly not have helped in this case. However, it also emerges from the Soviet interrogation records that the German authorities did not suspect that they had engaged some Roma and provided them with weapons and uniforms. Their true identity was known only to the Tatar units, but this information did not leave the group owing to their solidarity with their fellow believers. This cover also had to be maintained in 1943, which suggests that the Germans were still willing to kill every "Gypsy" they could catch.

The fact that Security Police and SD thoroughly made great efforts to search specifically for individual "Gypsies" is demonstrated by the ChGK investigations in the Kolaiskii rayon, where several individual shootings, ranging from two people, are recorded in the spring of 1942.²⁹⁶ And 'successes' in tracking down Roma in hiding were also recorded on the German side. For instance, the following was unequivocally stated about "Jews, Krimchaks and Gypsies" in April 1942: "Even if they have been able to conceal themselves as individuals by means of forged identification documents, etc., they will be detected sooner or later, as the experience of the last few weeks has shown."²⁹⁷

²⁹⁴ EM 157 of 19th January 1942. BAB, R 58/220, Bl. 213.

²⁹⁵ In this respect, their options were similar to those of the elders in the villages when they drew up the lists of inhabitants. However, the activities of police informers in towns entailed a higher risk.

²⁹⁶ See the summary above of the investigation results of the Extraordinary State Commission in the Crimea.

²⁹⁷ Incident report 190 of 8th April 1942. BAB, R 58/221, Bl. 267.

The search for "hostile civilians" also included the systematic tracking down of Jews *and* "Gypsies" in the rayon of Fraidorf²⁹⁸ [Freidorf in German documents] to the north-east of Evpatoriia, as Manfred Oldenburg demonstrated with the example of the *Feldgendarmerie* of OK I/742, which was stationed there. There was a separate heading "Identification of Jews and Gypsies" in the activity reports of the *Ortskommandantur* from April to June 1942, in which negative reports were also noted. For example, it was stated on 10th May 1942 that "No Jews or Gypsies were found by the patrols."²⁹⁹ The collective recording of "Jews and gypsies" permits the substantiated assumption that both groups were also accorded equal status in the "processing", i.e. murder. However, the degree of uncertainty of the Field Gendarmes [military police] with regard to identification of the Roma population assimilated in the Tatar culture is shown in the activity report of 10th July 1942: "Identification of Jews and Gypsies: When determining nationality, 40 people were identified as Gypsies by the head of the rayon in various villages and rayons. However, they claimed that they were not Gypsies."³⁰⁰ Cases of mistaken identity in the Crimea would have caused friction with Tatar inhabitants, which could have undermined the loyalty of the allied self-defence units. The indicated examples show once more just how important it was for the remaining Roma to maintain their cover as Crimean Tatars, in order to survive in the peninsula, also after withdrawal of the mobile *Einsatzkommandos*.

It remains to be noted that the situation in the Crimea occupies a special position in the history of the National Socialist persecution of Soviet Roma in various respects. On the one hand, the systematic extermination of the Roma population began far earlier here than in other German-occupied areas of the Soviet Union and proceeded practically in parallel to the murder of Jews and Krimchaks. On the other hand, the preponderantly Muslim Roma of the peninsula were assimilated in the Tatar culture to a high degree and could not be clearly identified by the German occupiers. In some cases, there were also family relationships between the two Muslim ethnic groups as a result of intermarriage. Under the cloak of Tatar identity, a part of the persecuted Roma succeeded in surviving the occupation. In this respect, they profited

²⁹⁸ Before the war, Fraidorf was a so-called national Jewish rayon, which had been established in 1931 as part of the Bolshevik nationalities policy. Larindorf followed as the second Jewish rayon in the peninsula in 1935. See Kuchenbecker, Antje: *Zionismus ohne Zion. Birobidžan: Idee und Geschichte eines jüdischen Staates in Sowjet-Fernost*. Berlin 2000, pp.94-95. Soviet plans to create a territorially contiguous Jewish autonomous region in the Crimea, had been abandoned for good in 1934 in favour of Birobidzhan in the Far East of the USSR. See *ibid*, pp.112-125; Kostyrchenko: *Tainaia politika Stalina*, pp.90-99.

²⁹⁹ cf. BA-MA RH 23/100: *Feldgendarmerie der OK I/742 (Freidorf)*, TB 26.4.-10.5. 1942. After Oldenburg, pp.203-204.

³⁰⁰ cf. BA-MA RH 23/101: *Feldgendarmerie der OK I/742 (Freidorf)*, TB 26.6.-10.7.1942 (10.7.1942). *Ibid*. It is not recorded what happened to the arrested people.

from the solidarity of the Tatar population, who made various attempts to keep their fellow believers from extermination. The most effective means here consisted in maintaining the 'ethnic disguise' during registration, in which the Tatars collaborating with the German occupiers had the prerogative of interpretation in most cases.

In spite of all this, approximately 70% of the Roma population in the Crimea fell victim to the National Socialist genocide. The cultural proximity of the surviving Roma to the Tatars, which rescued them under the Nazi regime, was their undoing after the end of the occupation, when they were caught up in the Soviet deportations of "treacherous peoples".

3.2.2 North Caucasus

The activities of *Einsatzgruppe* D are also of particular relevance for evaluation of the National Socialist persecution of the Roma, because its *Kommandos* accompanied the advance of the *Wehrmacht* in the North Caucasus, the so-called "Operation Blue". Next to nothing is known about the fate of the Roma living there during the occupation. The route to the Caucasus led over Rostov-on-Don, an area with a relatively high number of Roma. So far only one example of a massacre of Roma can be found in the literature, namely the shooting of all the inhabitants – "three truck-loads" – of the national Gypsy kolkhoz "Ordzhonikidze" near Poliakova. "Teilkommando Trimborn" of *Sonderkommando* 10a was responsible for the extermination operation. In this case, the victims were also deceived by an ostensible "resettlement", for which they were to take 20 kilograms of "personal baggage".³⁰¹ Furthermore, it is known that an unknown number of Roma were murdered in the gorge of Petrushino, a German place of execution in the rayon of Taganrog, in addition to "communists" and Jews.³⁰² The records of the Rostov Extraordinary State Commission still await evaluation, but a second incident at least can be established. The "German executioners" murdered 38 "Gypsies" – 29 males, 3 women, 5 adolescents and a six-month-old baby – in the kolkhoz "Victory of socialism (Pobeda sotsializma) on 3rd January 1943. The "German monsters" shot their victims "without regard to their age and gender", in spite of the "massive lament (massovoe rydanie³⁰³) of the Gypsies".³⁰⁴

The advance into the North Caucasus is also of particular relevance for determination of the equal standing of the persecution of Jews and Gypsies, because the occupation did not begin

³⁰¹ See Angrick: *Besatzungspolitik und Massenmord*, p.518.

³⁰² Ginzburg, Lev: *Bezdna. Povestvovanie, osnovannoe na dokumentakh*. Moscow 1966, p.20.

³⁰³ "Rydanie" would be literally translated as "crying" or "wailing".

³⁰⁴ AKT No 83 (Kopiia), 27.3.1943. GARF, f.7021 (ChGK), op.40 (Rostovskaia oblast'), d.4, l.36

here until 1942, i.e. at a time when the extermination of the Soviet Roma had a clear systematic character and had reached its peak. On the other hand, the persecutors did not have much time, since the occupation only lasted a few months. The German occupation of the Krasnodar region, where *Sonderkommando* 10a was active, lasted half a year. What makes the Krasnodar case special is the fact that the first trial of war criminals took place here as early as 1943. The method of killing using gas vans played a central role in this respect. However, the second war crimes trial of 1963 was undoubtedly even more important for the assessment of the National Socialist crimes in the North Caucasus. The genocide of the Soviet Roma was apparently also brought up in this, as the reflections of Lev Ginzburg, who was an observer at the trial, attest to.³⁰⁵ The operations reports of *Einsatzgruppe* D from 1942, in which "specially treated Gypsies" are reported, were also used as evidence.³⁰⁶ The "Gestapo archive" secured during the attack on Krasnodar, which the fleeing occupying forces had to leave behind, was fundamental for the trial. And its contents might provide information about the precise course of the "persecution of Gypsies" in Krasnodar. This will be shown by future research.³⁰⁷

The persecution of the Roma is not expressly considered in the records of the Extraordinary State Commission of Krasnodar.³⁰⁸ However, a general summary of the events is provided in a subsequent letter from the Krasnodar district secretary to the head of the Propaganda and Agitation Department of the Central Committee of August 1949, which mentions the "number of Gypsies and their way of life in the Krasnodar region". According to inexact data, "around 3000 Gypsies lived in the Krasnodar Region (Krasnodarskii Krai) until the Great Patriotic War. There were 18-20 smaller Gypsy kolkhozes in the region (krai). [...] Many Gypsies who were not members of the kolkhozes worked in craftsman's artels [cooperative associations]. Only 500-600 led a nomadic lifestyle.

³⁰⁵ Ginzburg wrote this about the German occupying forces in southern Russia: "Sonderkommandos entered the towns behind the German front units and conducted several lightning (molnienosnykh) actions – registration and shooting of all Jews, Gypsies and family members of Soviet and party activists. Then the daily 'killing duty' began: detection and liquidation of communists, members of the Komsomol [Young Communist League], secret revolutionaries (podpol'shchikov) and partisans, extermination of the old and sick as well as general 'minimisation of the population numbers'". Ginzburg: *Bezdna*, p.16.

³⁰⁶ See Ginzburg: *Bezdna*, pp.90-91. The respective operations reports are published in Angrick: *Besatzungspolitik*, p.519.

³⁰⁷ Unfortunately I was denied general access to the court records. In Moscow, I was referred to the "responsible" State Regional Archive of Krasnodar. However, the court records – and probably also the "Gestapo archive", nobody could or wanted to tell me anything about its whereabouts – are inconveniently stored there in the Secret Service Archive of the FSB. I was also unable to gain access locally.

³⁰⁸ At least this applies to all the records which were made accessible to me in the State Archives of the Krasnodar Region (krai). See Krasnodarskii kraevoi Gosudarstvennyi arkhiv (KKGA), f.R-897 (ChGK), op.1, dd.1-12, 25-29, 31-31a.

The majority of the Gypsies were evacuated to the remote regions of the country. The Gypsies remaining in the region were brutally killed by the German occupiers."³⁰⁹ Whereas the extermination in the rural regions – with the clearly identifiable "Gypsy kolkhozes" – was carried out successfully, the situation in the city of Krasnodar was different.

The Rom, Nikolai Lutsenko, who took part in the liberation of Krasnodar in February 1943 as an assistant company commander, told at a meeting of the Moscow theatre ensemble "Romen" with the author Lev Ginzburg in 1967 about an exceptional find which had been made in a "Gestapo building" taken by storm: "There was a list of 58 Gypsy families in the Gestapo and all of them were condemned to death, as it is [was] usual."³¹⁰ The Germans had fled in panic, however, which is why "the Gypsies who were to be killed were still alive".³¹¹ The list of 58 "Gypsy families" is not mentioned in the brochure published about the trial of 1943. And as the court records are kept in the secret service archive of the city of Krasnodar and still classified as "top secret", it was not possible for me to view them. However, Lutsenko's statement is confirmed by an interview which I conducted with the Romni, Zoia Andreichenko (born 1931), at the end of November 2006. Andreichenko spent her childhood in Krasnodar, where she also experienced the six-month German occupation. At the beginning of February 1943, i.e. a few days before the city was retaken by the Red Army, the "warden of the quarter" (kvartal'naia) had called on the Roma family to warn them. The "Gestapo" had come to her and asked about which houses "Gypsies" were living in. They then told her to draw up a list of the addresses. Since the warden remembered what had happened to the Jews, she advised the Roma to hide as quickly as possible.

Andreichenko's uncle then took the family to a Russian woman, where everyone was able to hide in the cellar. A neighbour later on reported that "the Gestapo" had come to the apartment of the "Gypsies" two days in a row. The second time, "the men" riddled the complete apartment with bullets (perestreliali) and destroyed it. The family of Zoia Andreichenko lived out the last days of the occupation in their hiding place.³¹²

³⁰⁹ DOKLADNAIA ZAPISKA SEKRETARIA KRAIKOMA VKP(b) S.E. SANINA ZAMESTITELIU ZAVEDEUIUSHCHEGO OTDELOM PROPAGANDY I AGITATSII CK VKP(b) K.F. KALASHNIKOVU O NALICHII TSYGAN I OBRAZE IKH ZHIZNI V KRASNODARSKOM KRAE. Avgust 1949g. Tsentr Dokumentatsii Noveishei istorii Krasnodarskogo kraia (TsDNIKK), f.1774-A, op.3, d.1654, ll.68-69. Published in: Upravlenie po delam Arkhivov Krasnodarskogo kraia; Tsentr Dokumentatsii Noveishei istorii Krasnodarskogo kraia; Gosudarstvennyi Arkhiv Krasnodarskogo Kraia: Krasnodarskomu kraiu – 65 let. Stranitsy istorii v dokumentakh fonda Kubani. Istoriko-dokumental'nyi al'bom. Krasnodar 2002, pp.90-91.

³¹⁰ STENOGRAMMA besedy pisatel'ia L.V. Ginzburga s truppoi teatra "Romen" i vystupleniia artistov. 11th May 1967. Rossiiskii Gosudarstvennyi Arkhiv literatury i iskusstva (RGALI), f.2928 (Romen), op.1, d.74, l.25.

³¹¹ Ibid, l.24. However, the prison in the city was set on fire, whereby all the political prisoners were killed. This crime was one of the areas of focus in the first trial of Krasnodar (1943). See Ginzburg: *Bezdna*, p.12.

³¹² Interview with Zoia Andreichenko, née Simonova, Rostov-on-Don, November 2006.

Some time after the liberation, the family was summoned "to the NKVD in Gogol Street". There, a commissar asked how it was possible that the family was still alive, since he had a "list of the Gypsies who had been shot", which included the Simonovs (the maiden name of Zoia Andreichenko). As proof, he read out the names and addresses of the attendees from the Gestapo list.³¹³

The phases of the National Socialist persecution of the Roma in the city of Krasnodar can be reconstructed from the testimonies made independently of each other. Fortunately, the Security Police did not manage to exterminate all the "Gypsies" during the relatively short period of occupation of half a year. Drawing up the "Gypsy list" obviously required much time. After registration of the Krasnodar "Gypsies" had been completed, the murderers started to implement their extermination plans, but were surprised by the attack of the Red Army. The fact that the police started this operation in spite of the precarious military situation clearly shows the great importance they attached to the extermination of the Roma. The fate of Zoia Andreichenko and her family apparently hinged on a few days. The number of families which the SD and *Sonderkommando* 10a caught is unknown.

The advance towards the Caspian Sea also led *Heeresgruppe Süd* to the rayon of Mineral'nye Vody, which was part of the region of Voroshilovsk (called Stavropol after the war). In addition to the Smolensk region, the North Caucasus was one of the territories in occupied Soviet Russia which had a relatively large Roma population. And the Bolshevik "settlement policy" enjoyed particular success here. The first national "Gypsy village soviet" in the USSR, consisting of several smaller "Gypsy kolkhozes", was founded in Mineral'nye Vody in the 1930s. The village soviet was headed by the Roma author, Bezliudskii.³¹⁴ The Roma in Mineral'nye Vody are not mentioned in the records of the Extraordinary State Commission. My attempts to fill this gap through local interviews with contemporary witnesses were unsuccessful.³¹⁵ However, the Rom, Vladimir Ivashchenko, told me that he had a letter from Bezliudskii in his private archive which attested to the complete extermination of the village soviet by the German occupying forces.³¹⁶

³¹³ Ibid.

³¹⁴ See SOVESHCHANIE o trudoustroistve kochuiushchikh i kul'turno-khoziaistvennom obsluzhivanii vsekh trudiashchikhsia tsygan v SSSR. 4.1.1936. GARF, f. 3316 (TsIK SSSR), op.28, d.793, ll.77-118.

³¹⁵ In addition to extremely adverse external conditions, this was because the Roma population in the present-day rayon mainly comes from neighbouring Chechenia, which they left in the 1990s. Contact with "indigenous Roma" could not be arranged in the short time.

³¹⁶ Interview with Vladimir Ivanovich Ivashchenko, Rostov-on-Don, November 2006. Unfortunately, the interview took place a few hours before the expiry of my Russian visa, so that it was not possible to view the letter.

I have (so far) been able to find only one reference to Roma in the other records of the Extraordinary State Commission for the Stavropol region. However, this is a key document of extraordinary significance: on 1st September 1942, a few days after the occupation of the rayon of Arkhangel'skoe, the inhabitants of the village of Niny were summoned to a meeting at which the 'new order' was explained to them and various orders were issued. "The necessity of the extermination of persons of Jewish and Gypsy origin" was openly addressed at the meeting, as the witnesses S. Babkin and V. Kurilov testified.³¹⁷ A further registration (pereregistratsiia) of the entire population, "primarily the communists, members of the Komsomol [Young Communist League], Jews and Gypsies", was also to be carried out.³¹⁸ Five "Gypsies" who had come to Niny "to complain to the German commanding officer about the requisition (otbor) of their horses" were arrested during the meeting and shot on the same day. The 61 Jews of the village, who were war refugees, were murdered one day later.³¹⁹ The Roma were, hence, put on a par with the Jews (and communists) from the outset in the rayon of Arkhangel'skoe. Even if only fragments of the (written) record and assessment of the extermination of the Roma in the North Caucasus are available, it can nevertheless be assumed that this procedure was also implemented in the other rayons of the regions of Stavropol and Voroshilovsk.

In the last analysis, it is therefore beyond question that the genocide of the Soviet Roma was also systematic and intentional in the operational area of *Heeresgruppe Süd*. In this respect, the pretence of "resettlement", a method which was frequently used in the extermination of Jews and also regularly used in the murder of Roma, was a typical strategy of the *Einsatzgruppen C* and *D*.

³¹⁷ AKT, s. Arkhangel'skoe togo-zhe [Arkhangel'skii raion] r-na Stavropol'skogo kraia. 20.7.1943. GARF, f.7021 (ChGK), op.17 (Stavropol'skii krai), d.9, ll.51-51ob; 51ob.

³¹⁸ AKT, s. Niny Arkhangel'skogo r-na Stavropol'skogo kraia. 18.7.1943. GARF, f.7021 (ChGK), op.17 (Stavropol'skii krai), d.9, ll.155-155ob.; 155.

³¹⁹ Ibid. A woman and a twelve-year-old girl were among the five murdered "Gypsies". They could therefore have been a family. The number was corrected to six "Gypsies" in the final report. See GARF, f.7021 (ChGK), op.17 (Stavropol'skii krai), d.9, l.155.

4. Conclusion

This treatise illustrates the enormous possibilities which the consultation of historical sources of Soviet provenance can offer for the reconstruction of the National Socialist persecution of Soviet Roma. Taking the militarily administered territories as an example, about which only scant information was previously available, the *systematic* character of the National Socialist extermination policy against Soviet Roma has been successfully demonstrated. And even if only a part of the extensive records of the Extraordinary State Commission and other relevant agencies could be researched and analyzed in the initial step, the results obtained are enough to revise fundamentally the previously predominant research pattern, at least for this area of the German-occupied Soviet Union. Future steps will show the extent to which this is also possible for the territories under civil administration.

In some instances, the investigation results of the Extraordinary State Commission expose the ideological construct character of the National Socialist caricature of the "itinerant Gypsy spy", which was advanced for external legitimation of the extermination policy against Soviet Roma, particularly in the military sphere. The frequently cited mass shooting near Novorzhev at the end of May 1942 receives a completely new interpretation as a result of the Soviet perspective: the extermination operation by military units of the 281st Security Division in the rear operations area of *Heeresgruppe Nord* is not solely directed at a "captured group" of "itinerant Gypsies", but at *all* of the Roma of two neighbouring rayons, whereby some of the victims had been deceived by ostensible "resettlement to southern Russia". The number of – sometimes barbarically mutilated – bodies discovered in the Soviet exhumation of the mass graves consequently exceeded the number in the German execution report by a factor of almost three. Further mass murders of Roma in the rear army area North in the spring and summer of 1942 attest to the fact that the barbaric shooting of Novorzhev was by no means an individual arbitrary act.

The spring of 1942 also marked the transition to *systematic* genocide of the Soviet Roma in the other military areas. The only exception to this rule can be found in the Crimea, where the murder campaign of the *Teilkommandos* of *Einsatzgruppe D* was "total" in character at the end of 1941 and took place practically simultaneously with the extermination of Jews. The persecutors first of all focused their attention on larger towns with their own Roma quarters, whose residents were summoned for registration for ostensible "resettlement" or separate "bread rations". The towns of Simferopol, Kerch and Evpatoriia were regarded as "Gypsy-

free" by January 1942; the rural areas of the peninsula were 'scoured' for Jews, Krimchaks and "Gypsies" in the following months. Nevertheless, some of the Muslim Roma, who had been assimilated in the Tatar culture, survived the German occupation, which was primarily due to ~~to~~ the pronounced solidarity of the Crimean Tatar population. The Muslim committee and the Tatar self-defence units made every effort to protect their Muslim fellow believers, ranging from open protest to their German allies to tacit concealment "of their" Roma as Tatars. In this respect, the Crimea has an absolutely exceptional position in the Soviet context.

It is striking that eyewitnesses repeatedly mention the summons to the Roma population for registration for ostensible "resettlement" – a method which is mainly known from the persecution of Soviet Jews. The (so far) only found original poster of this kind is preserved as a surviving historical source in the state regional archive of the Ukrainian city of Chernigov, located north-east of Kiev. On 10th June 1942, the commanding officer of the security police of the city announced in a bilingual (Russian and Ukrainian) order "concerning the place of residence of Gypsies" that all "Gypsies" would be resettled. In this connection, all those concerned had to register at the nearest police station "immediately". The poster stated that failure to comply with the order would be "severely punished". ["DokAufrufCernigov"]

In August 1942, all the Roma from the city and the surrounding area who the Security Police could find were finally arrested with the support of local auxiliaries, concentrated and murdered in a three-day operation. To judge by the descriptions of eyewitnesses, there were more than 2000 victims in Chernigov.

The perpetrators did not exclude sedentary Roma from extermination in any of the described cases. This shows that the degree of sedentariness and sociable adaptation in the militarily administered territories played no role whatsoever in the decision to exterminate "Gypsies". This observation is confirmed by examining the Smolensk region, where there were several "national Gypsy kolkhozes" before the German occupation, in which Roma pursued agriculture. The actual motivation for extermination clearly emerges in the case of the ethnically mixed village of Aleksandrovka, which was part of the "national Gypsy kolkhoz" with the name of "Stalin's Constitution" founded in 1937. An SS unit – probably a *Teilkommando* of *Einsatzgruppe* B – entered Aleksandrovka on 24th April 1942 and selected the "Gypsies" of the village from the other, Russian, inhabitants. A list which had been drawn up by the bookkeeper of the village the day before was used in the process. In the arising panic, some Roma begged for mercy, while others maintained that they were Russians. The

Germans thereupon subjected them to a kind of 'racial examination'. According to the statements of surviving eyewitnesses, the colour of the hair and skin was the decisive criterion for identification and selection. Some of the Roma of Aleksandrovka were judged to be "Russians" during this "racial inspection" and allowed to go home. The remaining "Gypsies" were shot on the same day and buried in two mass graves.

The exhumation of the mass graves revealed that 176 individuals had been shot on 24th April 1942. Kolkhoz workers, educators and three teachers were among the adult victims. The social position therefore played no role whatsoever in the shooting in Aleksandrovka. And the Germans also did not search for any partisan contacts, which could have legitimized the extermination operation as an ostensible "security measure". The Roma were murdered as Roma. The racial ideological motivation of the perpetrators is clearly demonstrated by the double selection by means of a list of names and selection on the basis of external physical features.

The extermination of Jews and "Gypsies" was occasionally even carried out collectively in the Briansk region, which is located south-west of Smolensk and was also part of the sphere of influence of *Heeresgruppe Mitte*. *Sonderkommando 7a* carried out several mass shootings in the rayon of Klinty from February to April 1942, in which Jews and Roma were shot together and buried in a common mass grave. The same also applied to the rayon of Briansk, where eyewitnesses recalled *inter alia* how "Jews, Gypsies and communists" were chained together and driven over a minefield, where they were killed by explosions.

The fact that the intensity of the Roma persecution developed into total eradication almost simultaneously in the various military area indicates that there must have been at least an arrangement concerning the elimination of the Roma between the German occupiers, including the Army High Commands and the military and Security Police/SD. However, the acid test for this development is to be found in the North Caucasus, because operation "Blue" started in the summer of 1942, i.e. at a time when the systematic murder of the "Gypsies" was already in full swing in the territories which had been under occupation for a lengthy period. Thus the extermination of the Roma would have to have started together with the German advance and therefore in parallel to the liquidation of the Jewish population. Unfortunately, the written sources on the North Caucasian Roma under German occupation are extremely sparse, however, they have a high informative value and can also be supplemented by plausible oral testimonials. After the war, the party secretary of Krasnodar reported that the

rural Roma population, including the eighteen smaller "Gypsy kolkhozes" of the pre-war period, was completely exterminated during the occupation. On the other hand, there were several eyewitnesses in the city of Krasnodar who stated that the persecutors drew up a list of "Gypsies" to be arrested. Fortunately, the city was liberated in time, so that some of the Krasnodar Roma managed to survive the half year under German occupation.

The occupying forces also proceeded systematically against Roma in the Voroshilovsk region (today Stavropol') to the east of Krasnodar. A few days after the Germans had taken the rayon of Arkhangel'skoe, the inhabitants of the village of Niny were openly informed of the "necessity" for the extermination of communists and "persons of Jewish and Gypsy origin" at a meeting on 1st September 1941. The announcement was directly implemented over the following two days.

It is astonishing that no information about the Roma in Mineral'nye Vody can be found in the official information of the ChGK because the first (and only) "national Gypsy village soviet" of the USSR, which was headed by the idealistic author, Bezliudskii, was founded there in the 1930s. After the war, he described the destruction of the "Gypsy kolkhozes" of Mineral'nye Vody during the German occupation, which lasted just a few weeks, in a private letter. The examples make clear that the North Caucasus must be included in the territories, in which the extermination of the Soviet Roma was methodical.

A great deal research work still has to be done before a systematic comparative study of the National Socialist persecution of the Jews and Roma (as well as other victim groups) in the Soviet Union can be started. However, several firm conclusions would appear to be possible at the present time. Thus it can already be determined on the basis of this empirical analysis that the distinction between sedentary and "itinerant" Roma assumed in some monographs only existed on paper and had no influence on the practical "Gypsy policy" locally. Their "way of life" did not play a role for the persecutors; instead the Roma collectively came under the sights of the *Einsatzgruppen* and military units as an ethnic group – the frequency of the extermination measures identified by the ChGK leaves no doubt about this. As a result, Roma in the military areas *Nord*, *Mitte* and *Süd* were *de facto* "treated" like Jews from the spring of 1942 onwards. From this period, the indiscriminate extermination of Soviet "Gypsies" in all the military areas examined did indeed have a systematic and intentional character, as the historian, Wolfgang Wippermann, had already supposed in his article of 1992. The Crimea, where the systematic genocide began as early as 1941 and proceeded almost in parallel to the murder of the Jews and Krimchaks in the peninsula from the outset, is the only exception to

this rule. The exceptional situation there is also demonstrated by the fact that the Muslim Roma enjoyed the support of the Tatar population, who were outraged by the murder of their fellow believers. Some of the Muslim Crimean Roma managed to survive the entire period of occupation under the cloak of a Tatar identity and with the solidary support of the remaining population.

After the Jews, the Roma were the only ethnic population group in the occupied Soviet Union whose systematic extermination began in the first year of the German-Soviet war, i.e, in a period, in which the German occupiers still proceeded from a successful campaign. A basic motive in case of the Roma was also the racial ideological *weltanschauung* of the National Socialists, as is made clear by the example of Aleksandrovka near Smolensk. It becomes apparent from both the documents of the perpetrators and from the witness accounts that the mobile SS units and the *Wehrmacht* units in the military areas considered the persecution of Jews and "Gypsies" to be a related task from the spring of 1942 at the latest. The mass shootings of Briansk and Klinty, in which the "actions" against Jews and "Gypsies" were combined and the victims buried in a common mass grave, are the most symbolic expression of the equal treatment of the two groups. When confronted with more or less big Roma communities, the German persecutors used the same methods which had proved to be "successful" in the extermination of Jews, such as separate registration, isolation and deception by means of ostensible "resettlement".

Perspective: Commemoration and remembrance after 1945

The records of the Extraordinary State Commission clearly prove that the Kremlin was informed in detail about the development and extent of the National Socialist extermination of Jews and Roma. The Commissars were obviously aware of the specific character of these two genocides, although their entire context was never officially announced.³²⁰ As a consequence, they also played practically no role in the official remembrance politics. Remembrance of the victims of the genocide remained an internal matter for the Roma in the Soviet Union. In this respect, the experiences of Soviet Roma between 1941 and 1945 were very different as a result of the enormous geographical extent of the USSR. Since only parts of the Soviet Union were occupied by the *Wehrmacht* in the Second World War, the majority of the Soviet Roma escaped the National Socialist "persecution of Gypsies". The direct personal perception of the war was therefore not exclusively connected with sorrow and pain, but was also associated with a feeling of pride and triumph. Soviet Roma made their contribution to the defeat of the German invaders, no matter whether they were soldiers, partisans or workers. Thousands of Roma fought in the Red Army, dozens of whom were highly decorated.³²¹ In addition to simple soldiers, they included pilots, engineers and tank drivers, who had received their training in the 1930s.³²² There is also a soldier "of Gypsy nationality" on the official list of "Heroes of the Soviet Union", the highest Soviet decoration.³²³

The Russian Rom, Aleksandr Baurov, had a typical and, at the same time, unusual military career.³²⁴ Baurov was born in Leningrad in 1906 and came from a prominent family of artists, who performed in the famous Moscow and Petersburg "Gypsy choruses". He joined his parents' chorus as a guitarist in 1917, but it lost its audience during the October revolution. Baurov therefore chose another path. After studying electrical engineering, he obtained a job as a laboratory assistant at the Military Academy for Intelligence. He was appointed as

³²⁰ The political and ideological motives for this decision have already been considered in the introduction – compare the comments about the particular features which have to be taken into account in the evaluation of the records of the Extraordinary State Commission.

³²¹ See Rossiiskii Gosudarstvennyi Arkhiv Sotsial'no-Politicheskoi Istorii (RGASPI), f.17, op.125 (Agitprop TsK VKP(b)), d.127, ll.145; 220-220ob.

³²² See Materialy o podvigakh tsygan vo vremia Velikoi otechestvennoi voiny. RGALI, f.2928 (Romen), op.3, d.37, ll.1-10. Also Kalinin: Zagadka pribaltiiskikh tsygan, pp.65-68, 100-102; Demeter; Bessonov; Kutenkov: Istorii tsygan, pp.225-228.

³²³ See Chekharin, E.M. and others (ed.): Vserossiiskaia Kniga pamiati, 1941-1945. Obzornyi tom. Moscow 1995, pp.518-519. Druts and Gessler assume that the actual number must have been higher, since many Roma were registered as Russian, Ukrainian or Byelorussian in their papers. They cite the example of the Russian marine and Hero of the Soviet Union, Timofei Prokof'ev, who was actually a Rom. See Druts; Gessler: Tsygane, pp.328-329.

³²⁴ My thanks go to the Russian Roma expert Nikolai Bessonov from Bykovo near Moscow, who drew my attention to Aleksandr Baurov and gave me access to the estate of the deceased war hero.

commanding officer of the intelligence service in the 44th Soviet tank battalion in the "Great Patriotic War" and took part in the defence of Leningrad. After being wounded, he was transferred to the 189th infantry division, before he was promoted to become commander of the "intelligence section of the 1st airship division". Baurov personally went up in balloons to spot enemy artillery positions. After being wounded a second time, Baurov received several decorations, including the orders of the "Red Star", "Red Banner" and the "Order of Alexander Nevsky". Back at the front, he took part in the liberation of Poland and in the break-through at the Oder river, for which he was decorated with the Polish war-bravery cross. After the German capitulation, he was the member of a commission which scientifically examined the German rocket technology. After his return, he worked in a rocket development centre in the Astrakhan region. Baurov died in February 1972. The portrait of the veteran and some of his unique photographs of the front are on display in the "Museum of the Defence of Leningrad".

The contribution of Soviet Roma to national defence was not restricted to armed service, however. The Moscow "State Gypsy Theatre 'Romen'" also played its part in supporting the Soviet troops. Except for those conscripted, the ensemble remained intact during the war, and the players toured the entire Soviet Union with their families giving guest performances. More than 600 theatre performances and concerts were given for soldiers, workers and in hospitals in 52 towns and cities from July 1941 to January 1944.³²⁵ In the spring of 1942, two "Romen Brigades" headed to Rostov-on-Don on the southern front, where their performances were very enthusiastically received. In a letter to the theatre, the Rostov rifle regiment wrote that the performers had demonstrated "their devotion to our motherland in their songs and dances" and made their contribution to the approaching "complete annihilation of German fascism in 1942".³²⁶ The theatre proudly stated that the performances in Rostov had also "continued during heavy artillery fire and air raids".³²⁷ The entire ensemble received the

³²⁵ See the letter of the deputy theatre director Kiselevskii to the editorial office of the almanac "Teatr i Dramaturgiia" of January 1944. RGALI, f.2928, op.1, d.484, ll.24-26. See also the collected thank-you letters from army units, military hospitals and hospitals. RGALI, f.2928, op.1, dd.477 (1941), 480 (1942), 481 (1943) and 483 (1944). Otzyvy i blagodarnost' uchrezhdenii i organizatsii o voenno-shefskoi rabote teatra "Romen".

³²⁶ RGALI, f.2928, op.1, d.480, l.49. Otzyv. Komandir polka maior Zaets i Voenskom polka S. politruk Litvinov, deistvuiushchaia armiia. 16.5.1942. In another letter, the unit added: "Until we meet again after VICTORY over the Hitlerite monsters – Dear Comrade GYPSIES!" cf. *ibid.*, l.55. IUZHNYI FRONT, deistvuiushchaia Armiiia. Maior Borsh i St. Politruk Timoshevskii i Intendant 3-go ranga Khachaturov – Moskovskomu Tsyganskomu teatru "Romen". 17.5.1942.

³²⁷ RGALI, f.2928, op.1, d.484, ll.1-2. OTCHET o voenno-shefskoi rabote Moskovskogo Gosudarstvennogo Tsyganskogo teatra "Romen". 1944.

"Medal for the Defence of the Caucasus" for their performances at the southern front.³²⁸ Apart from entertaining the troops, benefit concerts were also held in the hinterland, with the proceeds going to the defence fund. The "Military Sponsorship Committee" of the theatre transferred a total of more than 510,000 roubles, which, amongst other things, paid for the construction of the bomber "Romenovec".³²⁹ A telegram from Stalin dated 15th April 1943 is preserved in the collection of the ensemble, in which the supreme commander expressed his thanks for their efforts: "[...] Please convey my fraternal greetings and the gratitude of the Red Army to the staff of the Moscow State Gypsy Theatre ROMĚN, who raised 75,000 roubles for the construction of a bomber [...]. I. Stalin."³³⁰

At the first production meeting of the theatre in March 1945, it was stated with satisfaction that the "Romen" had finally "won its right to life after a hard struggle" through its engagement in entertaining the troops.³³¹ "During its guest performances [during the war], the theatre sensed the entire responsibility which it has towards the motherland and the audience. [...] The theatre has done a fantastic job."³³²

The activities of the "Romen" during the Second World War do indeed have high symbolic merit. In the last analysis, the beauty of the Roma culture – represented in the music and dance of the artistic ensemble – also made a contribution to putting an end to the racistly motivated extermination policy of the National Socialists.

With respect to the remembrance of the genocide, Aleksandrovka near Smolensk developed into the central place of memorial of Soviet Roma. In August 1982, after many years of endeavour and with the active support of the Moscow "Romen" ensemble,³³³ the survivors of the massacre succeeded in constructing a memorial to their murdered friends and relatives at the location of the mass graves of 1942. And even if the inscription on the memorial does not mention the ethnicity of the honoured dead – there is a general reference to 176 executed

³²⁸ RGALI, f.2928, op.1, d.484, ll.15-15ob. SPISOK Rabotnikov Moskovskogo Gosudarstvennogo Tsyganskogo teatra "ROMEN", predstavliaemykh k nagrazhdeniiu medal'iu "ZA OBORONU KAVKAZA". See also RGALI, f.2928, op.1, d.74, l.17.

³²⁹ See RGALI, f.2928, op.1, d.484, l.2; Slichenko, Nikolai A.: *Rodilsia ia v tabore*. Moscow 1980, p.36.

³³⁰ RGALI, f.2928, op.1, d.481, ll.4-5. Telegramma tov. Stalina – teatru ROMEN i Mestkomu Vladivostoka. 15.4.1943.

³³¹ Speech of Comrade Iugov. cf. STENOGRAMMA proizvodstvennogo soveshchaniia kolektiva Gosudarstvennogo Tsyganskogo teatra "ROMEN". 2.3.1945. RGALI, f.2928, op.1, d.485, l.13.

³³² Speech of Comrade Bizev. Ibid, l.19.

³³³ The theatre management had already supported several applications for the approval of an appropriate memorial in the middle of the 1960s and opened a donations account, which the proceeds from special benefit performances were paid into. See RGALI, f.2928, op.3, d.37, ll.11-13; *ibid*, f.2928, op.3, d.39, l.4. Some of the members of the "Romen" had also lost friends and relatives in the genocide, such as the actor Sergei Leonov, who lost seven family members in the mass shooting in Aleksandrovka. See Kenrick; Puxon: *Sinti und Roma*, p.104.

"peaceful residents of Aleksandrovka" on the memorial stone – this is nonetheless the very first Soviet memorial to Roma murdered during the war.

The special symbolic function of Aleksandrovka is also demonstrated by the fact that the "Romen" theatre brought that same massacre to the stage in 1985 with the play "Birds need sky (Ptitsam nuzhno nebo)", thereby making it known to a wider audience. Apart from some dramatic license, the portrayal of the events of April 1942 followed the recollections of the contemporary witnesses down to the last detail in a quasi-documentary introductory part, before the plot changed to a fictional retribution fantasy in a folkloristic-mythopoetic narrative style in the second part.³³⁴

After the break-up of the Soviet Union, there was greater scope for the artistic processing of the subject in Russia. The feature film "Sinful Apostles of Love (Greshnye apostoly liubvi"; Russia 1995) was independently produced by the Muscovite Lovaro, Dufunia Vishnevskii. In this, a "baro shero" (family patriarch) tries in vain to get his family through the occupation unharmed without departing from his principle of non-violence. The particular tragedy of his efforts is that he costs most of the persecuted their only chance of survival. The pioneering achievement of such a project is certainly worthy of note, but the substance and educational intention of the film are adversely affected by gross historical inaccuracies and distortions as regards content.³³⁵

"Sinful Apostle of Love" was the only example of artistic engagement with the genocide of the Roma in post-Soviet Russia.³³⁶ To a certain degree, the reason for the lack of other forms of articulation on the subject can be found in the considerable social upheaval which modern Russia has gone through. Officially recognised Roma organisations, such as the "Moscow Gypsy Association 'Romano kkher' (The Roma House)³³⁷ and the "Federal National Cultural Autonomy of the Russian Gypsies (FNKA)"³³⁸, which had originally devoted themselves to the preservation of the culture and language of the Roma, were forced to shift the main focus

³³⁴ For details of the play "Birds need sky" see Holler, Martin: Die nationalsozialistische Vernichtung der Roma in der sowjetischen und russischen Erinnerungskultur. In: Fischer von Weikersthal, Felicitas; Garstka, Christoph; Heftrich, Urs; Löwe, Heinz-Dietrich (publisher): Der nationalsozialistische Genozid an den Roma Osteuropas. Geschichte und künstlerische Verarbeitung. Cologne 2008, pp.245-294; 278-281.

³³⁵ See *ibid*, p.281-284.

³³⁶ Only the poem "I mertvim i zhivim i nenarodzhenim' romam – zhertvam fashizmu prisiv' iachuiu" by Mikhail Kozymyrenko exists in Ukrainian. A brief portrait of the Roma poet and musician from Chernigov, whose entire family (37 people) was murdered in 1942 – only he and his mother survived by fleeing –, can be found in Swiss Fund for Needy Victims of the Holocaust/Shoa (publisher): Stories and Faces of Victims of the Holocaust. Final report of the Fund Executive, 2nd part. Bern 2002, pp.116-120.

³³⁷ "Moskovskoe tsyganskoe kul'turno-prosvetitel'noe obshchestvo, Romano kkher'" (founded in 1989). On the establishment and the goals of the organisation see Demeter, G.S.: Moskovskomu tsyganskomu kul'turno-prosvetitel'nomu obshchestvu "Romano kkher" 15 let. Moscow 2004.

³³⁸ "Federal'naia natsional'no-kul'turnaia avtonomiia rossiiskikh tsygan (FNKA)" (founded in 1999). See the information brochure of the association "Te aven bakhtale, romale!".

of its work to social questions and the struggle for human rights on account of the social developments.³³⁹ This also influenced the remembrance of the genocide. According to the vice-president of the FNKA, Vladimir Kutenkov, it is currently almost impossible to start a well organized campaign for the remembrance of the murdered Roma, but they have been able to reach pragmatic goals, such as social provision for war veterans and the granting of compensation payments to survivors of the National Socialist persecution through the foundation "Remembrance, Responsibility and Future".³⁴⁰ Initiatives for the construction of memorials and the official recognition of the genocide of the Roma have failed in the meantime. After a motion tabled by Vladimir Zhirinovskii of the "Liberal Democratic Party of Russia (LDPR)" in July 2004, the Russian State Duma did at least debate a possible joint declaration "about the genocide of the Gypsy people during the Second World War", which could have resulted in additional compensation claims against Germany. However, the subsequent vote failed because 86.9% of the representatives did not vote or were not even present. On the whole, it must therefore be noted that there is still no official remembrance of the National Socialist genocide of the Roma in Russia.³⁴¹

Fortunately, this (no longer) applies to all the countries of the former Soviet Union. Although the Ukrainian Roma have also suffered greatly as the result of economic change and various forms of social discrimination³⁴², there is a demonstrable interest on the part of the government in preserving the remembrance of the National Socialist genocide of the Roma in the public consciousness in the meantime. However, this is a recent development which was not easy to foresee in the 1990s. For instance, the plan of the Ukrainian Roma organisation "Romanipe" to erect a memorial to the murdered Roma in Babi Iar failed in 1997. The memorial by the sculptor Anatolii Ignashchenko is entitled "Doroga smerti (The Road of Death)" and shows a horse-drawn cart of black granite and steel with its wheels sunk into the mud. Mourning garlands symbolize the human and cultural loss, whose historical background

³³⁹ On the difficult situation of the Roma in Russia see Moskovskaia Khel'sinskaia Gruppy: Natsionalizm, ksenofobii i netepimost' v sovremennoi Rossii. Moscow 2002; Evropeiskii tsentr po pravam tsygan (ERRC): V poiskakh schastlivykh tsygan. Presledovanie otverzhenykh men'shinstv v Rossii. Budapest 2005; Holler: Erinnerungskultur, pp.285-291.

³⁴⁰ Conversations with Nadezhda Demeter and Vladimir Kutenkov. Moscow, July 2004 and October 2005.

³⁴¹ See 9 iulja 2004 goda. Dnevnoe zasedanie Gosudarstvennoi Dumy RF. Punkt 27, o proekte postanovleniia Gosudarstvennoi Dumy "O zaiavlenii Gosudarstvennoi Dumy Federal'nogo Sobraniia Rossiiskoi Federatsii ,O genotside tsyganskogo naroda v gody Vtoroi mirovoi voiny'". Can be found at http://www.akdi.ru/gd/PLEN_Z/2004/07/s09-07_d.htm.

³⁴² Existing state ordinances for the protection and promotion of minorities in general and Roma in particular are normally little more than window-dressing in view of the living conditions of Roma as well as countless examples of arbitrary measures on the part of the authorities and social hostility. See the chapter "Problems of discrimination and inequality in the Ukraine (Problemy diskriminatsii ta nerivnosti v Ukraini)" in Ukrain's'ka Gel'sins'ka Spilka z Prav Liudini: Prava liudini v Ukraini – 2004. Dopovid' pravozakhisnikh organizacii. Kharkiv 2005, pp.177-197; 183-186.

is explained by an inscription. Apart from the wheel tracks, footprints of people, horses and dogs which peter out directly behind the bogged down vehicle can be seen. After a long discussion, the memorial was finally set up in a hilly countryside near Kamenets-Podol'sk.³⁴³

In subsequent years, however, the interest of the state in the remembrance work of local Roma organisations and private memorial initiatives has increased. The state support for the Roma reached its interim high point in 2005 with the decision of the Verkhovna Rada, i.e. the Ukrainian Parliament, to declare the 2nd August as an official national "Day of remembrance of the Holocaust of the Roma (Den' Pamjati Golokostu Romiv)". The date recalls the "liquidation" of the "Gypsy camp of Auschwitz-Birkenau" when the last 2,900 inmates were gassed on 2nd August 1944.

The example of the Ukraine shows that economic and social crises and upheavals do not have to be an obstacle to the preservation of the memory of the victims of National Socialism, if historical insight and political will embrace each other. With the introduction of a memorial day, the Ukraine not only occupies a special place among the successor republics of the former Soviet Union but can also lay claim to a pioneering role at the pan-European level.

³⁴³ The members of "Romanipe" donated the equivalent of 5,000 dollars for the project. See newsletter (svidotstvo) no. 309 of the association of 1997. Private archive of Martin Holler. See also Semivolos, Pavlina: V garazhe rzhaveet shedevr. In: <http://www.zerkalo-nedeli.com/nn/show/325/29164>. Photos of the memorial can be found at <http://www.cygane.pp.ru/foto-03.html>.

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³⁴⁴ The records from GAARK are cited after Tiaglyi.

³⁴⁵ The records from the secret service archive are cited after Tiaglyi.

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Interview with Zoia Andreichenko, née Simonova, Rostov-on-Don, November 2006.

Conversations with Nadezhda Demeter and Vladimir Kutenkov. Moscow, July 2004 and October 2005.

Conversation with the president of the umbrella association of Ukrainian Roma organisations "Kongres Romen Ukraini", Petr Grigorichenko, in Kiev in December 2006.

Interview with Vladimir Ivanovich Ivashchenko, Rostov-on-Don, November 2006.

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