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8. Workers who, as defined by the German Compensation Act, were forced to live and work in concentration or similar camps or who were loaned or sold as slaves.

✠ 7 ✠

## INTERVIEWS WITH POLISH ROMA

A Report of My Experiences

*Artur Podgorski*

Everything in it which may seem implausible is true  
according to the Gypsy way  
—Jerzy Ficowski

### Introductory Remarks

The project I carried out in Poland aimed to find five former slave and forced labourers among Polish Roma with whom I could carry out life-history interviews in the context of the documentation project. This task was far from easy, as I was soon to find out. From identifying appropriate interview partners, through making first contact and setting up an appointment for an interview, to actually conducting the interview, the project proved to be a real challenge characterised by the experience of significant cultural differences and by my own efforts to find common ground with my interview partners. This was a process that more than once confronted me with my limitations, and I was often not really satisfied with its results.

In view of these problems, and also of the very limited material that I was able to produce in the end – three audio and two video interviews conducted at Andrychowo, Szczecinek and Legnica – my report is nothing more than an initial exploration reflecting my own perspective, which

often expresses itself as frustration and irritation. The question of how far my observations might be typical or even representative for the Roma population in Poland beyond these five individual informants must remain unanswered for the time being. That said, when reading relevant studies by the Polish gypsologist Jerzy Ficowski, who was the first in Poland to do research on the history and destruction of the Polish gypsies,<sup>1</sup> I found many parallels with regard to non-gypsies perceiving gypsies, which suggest that it might be possible to generalise my experience.

In each case, however, the very awareness of difference and strangeness provoked by this encounter – in respect of the individual's relationship to the group, of behaviour towards strangers, of dealing with the past, of language and social codes – made it possible to see forms of experience that had remained largely beyond the purview of historians.

### The Choice of Interview Partners

I had hoped that the *Polnisch-Deutsche Aussöhnung* (Polish-German Reconciliation) foundation would be able to help me make contact with possible interview partners. However, this proved impossible for reasons of data protection. The foundation is provided with the addresses of all Poles who have applied for compensation from the funds of the German foundation 'Erinnerung, Verantwortung und Zukunft', but handing these addresses over to me would have involved lengthy formalities that would probably have been an obstacle to making direct contact with former victims and to their willingness to be interviewed. Instead, I directly approached Roma associations<sup>2</sup> that in many cases had supported Roma in their applications for compensation and had 'represented' them in the course of the application process, so that they also possessed addresses of potential interview partners. Unfortunately, a closer look made clear that only a few of the Polish Roma who were imprisoned in ghettos and/or camps or had experienced the Second World War at all are still alive today. An advertisement I circulated via the various information services on the persecution and history of Roma produced no response. After several weeks of searching I was able to find only eight people throughout Poland – six women and two men – who were worthy of consideration for an interview.

The difficulty of finding interview partners considerably delayed the start of the project. In my opinion, one important reason for these difficulties was the indifference that representatives of Polish Roma associations showed towards my request – and thus towards the entire documentation project. But among potential interviewees, too, I encountered a general distaste for being interviewed – without pay, after all: a fundamental lack

of trust in me as a non-Roma; negative experiences with the application procedure and the compensation; but also negative experiences with earlier interviews, which the interviewees sometimes remembered as a kind of interrogation and in the context of which they and their documents had not been treated with due care (e.g. borrowed photographs were not returned). I also had the impression that it would be difficult to make the potential interviewees understand just what the logic of the interviews was, and the importance of recalling past injustices as exactly as possible, with details of place and time, perpetrators and victims.

Thus, I faced a double barrier: on the one hand mistrust on the part of the largest and most influential Roma associations, and on the other hand the resistance of potential interviewees. Typical of the behaviour of association representatives was refusal to permit me to make any contact with one of the suggested people by myself. During the preliminary interviews, when I asked about year of birth, period of detention in a ghetto/camp, the conditions of imprisonment and the place where forced labour had been carried out, a representative of the organisation was always present. In the event, the substantive interviews were conducted in the interviewees' homes. Apart from issues of good practice, the fact that I was not prepared to use the premises of the Roma associations played a role in this decision, since that would certainly have meant that one of the associations' representatives would have been present throughout.

One almost inevitable question, whose answer the associations considered a *sine qua non* for any contact with their 'protégés', was the question of the amount of payment.<sup>3</sup> In fact, the prospect of payment proved to be an important tool to persuade people to take part in an interview – even if the interviewees did not know until the end of the conversation how much they would receive or whether they would be paid at all. As a matter of fact, in most cases I paid a fee of €50 on production of a receipt, and in the end I think this was quite appropriate as a kind of symbolic gesture of compensation. We have to consider that in most cases an interview such as this involves an effort of many kinds for the interview partners: from the use of professional equipment such as Beta-cameras, through having to answer sometimes very detailed questions about their own biography and the history of the family, to the possible use of the interview for expositions or publications.

Despite the limited number of interviews, I wanted to take the widest possible variety of people and problems into consideration. Starting with written reports by former inmates of ghettos, labour camps and concentration camps, but also by former forced labourers in agriculture, I wanted the interviews to depict the various forms of persecution and in this context to explain the specific nature of forced labour done by gypsies and its influence on both their individual lives and the community

during the time of occupation and after the war. Another aspect was age. Since as far as possible those being interviewed were supposed to have experienced the events they were describing themselves, I tried to find interview partners who had been at least fourteen at the beginning of the war. Here I was successful in only three out of five cases. Two interview partners – Maria S. and Jan C. – were born in or around 1939, while the other three were adolescents during the time of occupation.<sup>4</sup>

The following information about potential interview partners, which I was able to glean in the course of my research, prompted me to select them for an interview. Of Apolonia K. I knew that she was forced to dig irrigation ditches and that she wanted to talk about her experiences during the war. Maria S. attracted my attention quite by accident with her concise and interesting way of telling her story as well as her frank views on Polish gypsies, particularly after 1945. Born in 1939, she was theoretically too young for the project, but given her eloquence and favourable logistic circumstances I nevertheless decided to make a video interview with her. Alfreda M. was suggested to me by the Association of Polish Roma at Szczecinek as an inmate of the former Jewish ghetto of Lublin. From her I hoped to learn something about the conditions of imprisonment, forms of labour and persecution of gypsies in the Lublin ghetto, for she was the only gypsy woman who was said to have been in the Lublin ghetto. I also placed great hopes in a conversation with Stefania O. because it was in speaking to her that I heard for the first time about gypsies interned and carrying out forced labour in the concentration camp of Krakow-Plaszów. A report by Stefania O. would have been the first one on this topic. Although she was born in 1932 and was thus quite young during the war, there was the prospect of a rare and precious story, so I decided on an audio recording. The last partner with whom I made an audio interview was Jan C., who had been taken prisoner in a wood along with other Roma with whom he was travelling and had spent several months in the Warsaw ghetto. I was eager to see whether his report on the Warsaw ghetto would be different from Alfreda M.'s report on the ghetto in Lublin in respect of the conditions of internment, punishment and behaviour of imprisoned Roma, and of whether interned Jews and gypsies had been treated differently and been subject to different kinds of labour.

### The Interviews

In all the interviews, what stands out most is the interviewees' frequent use of plural forms ('we', 'the family'). Their focus is on the history of the family, behind which their own personal histories take second place. At the same time it was often difficult to identify a clear time frame or

to see exactly what was meant when they referred to particular events. The process of remembering was marked by ambivalence. On the one hand, the interviewees seemed to struggle against memories arising from the past and actually tried to avoid talking about their experiences. If they nevertheless confronted their memories, there was a very strong emotional element to their narratives; that is, they were clearly in pain, sometimes shedding tears when they spoke about such events as shootings and other acts of murder.

Often I could not identify a chronology in their reports. Again and again the narrative trailed off into accounts of minor events that came to the interviewees' minds apparently at random. Then they often lost the thread and their reports came to a halt. On the one hand this narrative practice is probably an expression of a particular relation to time or of a way of thinking that takes limited account of causal relationships; on the other hand it may also reflect limited language skills or articulacy, which could be partly explained by the speaker's very low level of education.<sup>5</sup> Sometimes the three interview partners with the lowest level of education answered only in half sentences, sometimes with a barely disguised dislike of my questions, and in this context I was not always sure how far they had understood the questions. The fact that a single interview partner could remember a single situation in various, sometimes contradictory ways makes the interpretation of their statements difficult. For example, Alfreda M. characterised a certain event first as a deportation, then as a flight, and finally as but another stage of the family's normal travelling history. In her narrative it was also often unclear whether somebody belonged to the family or whether they were a distant relation, or even just an occasional travelling companion.

In the end, I found it difficult not to lose my bearings amid the life stories of my interview partners, and I never achieved the insight into what structured their interpretations that would have allowed me to formulate questions that would have elicited further information. In practice, my questions often came to nothing. Sometimes I really had the impression that my interview partners, who maybe were simply not willing to tell me about certain things, were consciously deceiving me. For example, my questions about toys or the 'black sheep' of the family only provoked loud, even mocking laughter and comments that seemed calculated to expose my naiveté and ignorance. Clearly, I did not always succeed in communicating the meaning of such questions and getting serious answers. More often the interviewees only answered my questions in a formal sense while actually using their 'answer' to change the subject. Whether this was because they had not understood the questions or whether it was a conscious conversational strategy must remain an open question in most cases.

Three of my interview partners even reacted with a certain degree of resistance to my questions. On the one hand, they communicated a clear interest in putting an end to the interview as soon as possible; on the other hand they displayed an inability to formulate an independent narrative, so that I had to pose further questions. This contradiction sometimes generated a tense atmosphere. Although in the case of Apolonia K. the period of free narration lasted for forty minutes, she then fell silent for several minutes, and my efforts to renew the dialogue were not successful, so that I had to put an end to the interview. Stefania O. had told me even before her interview started that she did not feel well and that the interview was therefore very inconvenient for her. During the interview, too, she repeatedly reminded me that she was indisposed. Particularly during my detailed questioning about the Krakow-Plaszów camp she became increasingly impatient and urged me to put an end to the interview.

Alfreda M., too, wanted to get the interview over with quickly. After about half an hour she declared that now she had told her entire life story and there was nothing more to say. In response to my follow-up questions she repeated this observation several times. To many questions she did not react at all, instead returning time and again to memories of tragic events – in particular a shooting – that she had already told and retold, and which thus became recurring motifs. At the same time she made it difficult for me to bring the conversation back to a point where my questions could be answered. It seemed to me that she was pursuing a strategy of telling me the dates and facts of her biography as rapidly and concisely as possible so as to then be able to declare the interview over. The atmosphere of this interview was also problematic. Alfreda M. avoided any eye contact and kept staring in front of her.

All five interviews were similar in respect of the narrative topoi and the fragmentary narrative style. Journeys, for example, obviously played a major role, but without the place (in most cases simply 'woods') or time being defined in detail. Similarly, only a fragmentary account of any persecution experience can be reconstructed from these narratives. The interviewees recounted a number of incidents of forced labour or of fleeing from Germans or Ukrainians, but the concrete conditions in which these took place remain vague. Tragic moments of family life are given particular emphasis, but the context of the narratives is obscure. The details necessary for understanding are often missing. Meanwhile, the relaxed approach to chronology also impeded comprehension. Thus shooting incidents are related in varying degrees of detail, and in some cases quite extensive stories about the postwar period are introduced into the account without any clear rationale or their being expressly marked by the narrator.

One reason for this imprecise way of narrating or the fragmentary quality of reported memories might be that the reports are based to some extent on other people's memories. From Jan C.'s report it does not become clear whether the family escaped from the Warsaw ghetto or from Gesibork. He remarks that persecution spread but gives no details. As he himself says, the bulk of his information comes from third parties. Maria S.'s memories, too, may be supposed to be mostly based on what she was told by her mother or her sister, as far as the period of the Second World War is concerned. At least, it is surprising how detailed her childhood memories are, given that she was only three or four years old.

Furthermore, it is noticeable that single events are often juxtaposed without any connection. There is clearly little interest in making connections, drawing parallels and looking for explanations of one's own fate. Accordingly, it is difficult to assess Apolonia K.'s narrative because she barely refers at all to the historical context in general and the situation of gypsies during the Second World War in particular.

In the case of Alfreda M. the free narrative part of the interview lasted for about half an hour. Her answers to my further questions remained largely incomprehensible to me. My interest in her stay in the Lublin ghetto was to no avail, as she dealt with this time in a few words, without giving even the approximate duration of her period of internment and forced labour, so that her story can hardly be chronologically and topically organised.

Unfortunately, I did not gain the differentiated insights on the camp of Plaszów that I had hoped for from Stefania O. All that can be said after the interview is that the image she presents is definitely different from what is told by Jewish prisoners or is generally known from the relevant literature.

Remarkable is the wilful attitude that Jan C. and Alfreda M. display towards (forced) labour and particularly camp discipline. If they found the work boring and their stay at the camp too difficult, they fled to the woods together with their families, regardless of the danger. They treat paid work and forced labour equally, as a laborious imposition on their daily lives, something that a gypsy should rather avoid.

Two out of the five interviewees (Stefania O. and Alfreda M.) report quite briefly, using really meaningless formulations, so that it is not possible to make even the most basic connections and both the chronology of events and the interviewees' biographies remain largely unclear. When some key terms are not entirely unambiguous even after repeated questioning (for example, sometimes 'brother' refers to a relative, sometimes to any other gypsy; the terms 'deportation' and 'flight' appear as synonyms) the result is bound to be faulty information.

The interviewees do not situate their own history in the context of the persecution of Polish Roma during the Second World War. There



are no names of places or families; there are no dates, such as the year of deportation or imprisonment. My direct questions about these points remained unanswered, so that it was hardly possible to discuss certain topics in greater detail. The sometimes very restricted vocabulary of the interviewees and their sometimes limited readiness to speak about their experiences at greater length further impeded a longer interview that might have dealt with the topic in any kind of depth.

Nevertheless, although – or maybe precisely because – several of my expectations of the interviews were frustrated, the interviewees in their own way quite impressively communicated very intense experiences of persecution. All the interviewees remember situations very well when their lives were threatened, whether by Germans or by 'Russians' (usually meaning Ukrainians). They emphasise the tragic meaning of this experience, for while they themselves survived, often all other members of their families were killed.

Jan C. tells very movingly how his whole family (his mother and two brothers) was captured in a roundup and interned in the Warsaw ghetto, and also about the preparations for shooting them all. Fixed most firmly in his memory is that 'as a child you were always only seeing corpses, most of all Jews ... their faces ... their eyes still open'. Alfreda M.'s narrative, too, is dominated by the shooting of her family.

In a positive sense, too, parents – especially mothers – are very important in all accounts. Typical is Stefania O., who tells of travelling with her mother and the latter's efforts to keep her children fed and to protect them from danger. Even more painful is the loss of parents or of the mother. With almost all interviewees, their great longing for their lost relatives is palpable.

On the other hand, in some answers it becomes obvious that the interviewees do not really like to talk about certain things with regard to their late relatives, particularly their own parents.<sup>6</sup> For example, the topic of their parents' education or vocational training and that of their own children seems to be awkward for them, whereas they speak of their material possessions with undisguised pride. Their own childhood receives little mention in most cases, not least because the situation in those days did not allow much space to experience childhood. Alfreda M. marks the end of her childhood strikingly, with the shooting of her parents. Jan C. remembers his childhood as living in the gypsy camp and not having a fixed abode.

In the accounts of my interviewees the topic of forced labour plays a distinctly minor role, which resulted in some confusion on both sides. As a matter of fact, none of them classify their own experiences under German occupation as forced labour. Equally, they do not consider themselves forced labourers. They fundamentally consider work – even paid

work – a kind of repression and a threat to their freedom that even in the ghetto or the camp was always to be avoided.

Apparently no Roma worked in the usual sectors of the German war economy – uniform workshops and arms workshops. In the card file of the Deutsch-Polnische Versöhnung foundation there is not a single hint of a gypsy doing forced labour in the armaments industry. Rather, they were given mostly uncomplicated tasks, as the interviewees also report for themselves and other family members. Apolonia K dug irrigation ditches, Maria S.'s brother dug trenches or anti-tank ditches, Alfreda M. cleaned windows.

None of the interviewees speaks of forced labour as a kind of exploitation or a means of annihilating the gypsy population. They did not consider themselves citizens of an occupied state. In their memories and reports this topic occupies little space, and they have little knowledge of this problem.

None of the interviewees and no members of their families were deported to Germany for work. Nor does (forced) labour appear to have played a role at their places of internment, for example in a labour camp. In the account of Stefania O., for instance, who states that she was in the labour camp of Plaszów, forced labour does not take place. None of the five people was able to give a detailed description of the work they had to do or was able to say what it was good for. Rather, they were astonished by my detailed questions about the exact conditions, nature, duration and place of their work.

Some mention that they worked on the orders of a village mayor, whereas others voluntarily reported to the 'employment office' – apparently because, like Alfreda M., they believed working for Germans would protect them from deportation and would mean 'postponing death'. However, in these accounts it is not at all clear that this work was forced labour because details such as the date of internment of the interviewees themselves or their parents and the duration of forced labour are missing. In some cases – such as that of Maria S. – there are indications that it might have been a relatively voluntary form of occupation.

Their statements on 'perpetrators' cover a broad spectrum. The interviewees' opinions range from hatred towards Germans and Russians to surprisingly positive judgments of Germans in general and gratitude for small acts of help from their side, as for example in the case of Alfreda M. On the other hand, her particularly harsh judgment of Ukrainian soldiers is based on rumour. Stefania O. accuses neither Germans nor Russians but emphasises the particular brutality of Ukrainians. Jan C.'s memories express rage and anger towards Germans, but this has declined over the years and today is practically nonexistent. Apolonia K. repeatedly emphasises troubles she experienced both from the German and the Russian

side. She is particularly angry at the Germans and gives emphasis to her anger with appropriate expletives. On the whole and particularly in the light of their experiences, the memories of the five interviewees are surprisingly free of accusations against particular national groups. Instead, suffering and death dominate their accounts, and these have no names.

For most of them, returning to their homes after the war meant looking for relatives and again taking up their travelling way of life. In only one case (Maria S.) had the family laid the foundations of a sedentary existence; all other interviewees returned to their old seasonal journeying and to their same occupations after the war, if they had been interrupted at all. Jan C. regularly went to the GDR with his extended family to engage in trade. Stefania O. stayed twice in Berlin (GDR) as well as in Dortmund and Holzminden (FRG) to, as she puts it, be granted 'political asylum'. She is not able to say when and for how long. After 1945 Apolonia K.'s relatives were deported to Siberia; she herself was 'abducted' by her future husband, as was the custom. Only two of the interviewees – the youngest ones – attended school after the war; the others remained illiterate. All interviewees remember the repressions of the 1950s and 1960s in the People's Republic of Poland, when gypsies were forced to abandon their itinerant way of life and to send their children to state schools.

### Collective and Individual Patterns of Remembrance and Coming to Terms with the Past

Polish gypsies did not confront their own history until the early 1990s. In most cases the survivors tried to suppress their wartime experiences. At the same time they wanted to commemorate the victims and preserve the places where their relatives had been executed. Since then, magazines published by Roma associations have also published scholarly texts on the history of Roma during the war, texts that concur in their details and serve to transport a shared narrative. Remarkably, up to now no text has dealt with the topic of forced labour.<sup>7</sup> Rather, Polish Roma are offered narratives of the history of their persecution that borrow inappropriately from the history of German and Slovak Roma.

The five interviews presented here suggest that in Poland there exist two 'histories' of the persecution and murder of Polish Roma: official history, as it is shaped and circulated by influential Roma associations, and individual or family-based 'people's history', which is told among relatives and close friends and is continuously enriched with new elements – not without influence from the associations – drawn from written sources and the family or clan's oral traditions, sometimes taking on the quality of a legend.<sup>8</sup> As already indicated, until the early 1990s knowledge of

the persecution of Polish Roma during the Second World War was based mostly on oral tradition and to very limited extent on research and publications by Jerzy Ficowski. Up to now, there has been no published edition of sources and no history of the persecution of Polish Roma that is anywhere near complete, so that a fixed canon of knowledge, such as is possessed by other peoples or minorities, hardly exists yet.

In the immediate postwar period the main commission investigating Nazi crimes in Poland, which was established in Warsaw, identified 180 places in the country where gypsies had been shot. By ceremoniously celebrating the anniversary of the liquidation of the camp for gypsy families in Auschwitz on 22 August 1944, and since 1993 with an annual pilgrimage ('Caravan of Memory') that starts at one mass murder site, Szczurowa (near Tarnow), and visits various other sites, the Polish Roma themselves present only part of their history (of suffering) to the public.<sup>9</sup>

### On Compensation

The Deutsch-Polnische Versöhnung foundation has funded compensation for 2,029 Roma on the grounds of racial persecution.<sup>10</sup> But not a single Rom or Romni has made an application based on forced or slave labour. Each of the five people I interviewed had received compensation for having been racially persecuted. For three of them, who were illiterate, the family or the Roma association had carried out the application formalities. Maria S. was the only one of the interviewees who had been able to apply for compensation herself. She was able to name the foundation that had made the grant of compensation and the grounds on which she had been compensated (racial persecution). The remaining four interview partners had only a rough idea of why they had received compensation and where the foundation was located.

They spent the money on daily needs, such as household appliances, renovating their flats or paying unpaid rent, or they distributed it among their children. All of them emphasised strongly that their compensation payments had not been high enough. I was not able to ascertain in the course of the interviews whether this referred to the amount of individual payments or whether it was a comment on a fundamental problem of any kind of financial compensation.

### Concluding Remarks

Finally, I would like to emphasise two aspects again. One, and this was very surprising for me, concerns the interviewees' readiness to forgive

their former tormentors, despite extreme experiences of suffering. Maria S. and Jan S., who travelled with their extended families as children, were forced to witness shootings on several occasions; Jan S. and Alfreda M. were imprisoned in camps or ghettos. How can their readiness to forgive in spite of all this be explained?

My impression is that subsequent experiences, particularly with members of those national groups to which their persecutors had belonged, have quite considerably changed their judgment of earlier experiences. And in my opinion another reason seems to be the distinct religiosity of my interview partners. As practising Catholics, they really feel obliged to forgive the perpetrators. But the compensation scheme may be another significant point: it meant real financial help for the interviewees, and perhaps because of this Germans, as the originators of the scheme, appear in a different, somewhat more positive light.

The second aspect concerns quite fundamentally the substance of the interviews or my doubts in this regard. One obvious problem in this context is of course the age of the interviewees – that is, their relative youth at the time of the events. The two youngest ones, Jan C. and Maria S., both born in 1939, emphasised several times that their knowledge was based on stories told by adults among the family, but also on reports by other Roma, non-family members, reports they had heard after the war. Jan C. may also have got his knowledge from newspapers and magazines.

More fundamental than the uncertain origin of the information is its contradictory nature. Often, when I returned in the course of an interview to statements made earlier, I found that now the events were told in a different way. Sometimes I could not resist the impression that my interview partners were giving just any place and date and that they dealt with names and events promiscuously – a considerable problem for the reconstruction of their biographies and the histories of their persecution.

In this context, one experience made me particularly thoughtful: some time after my interview with Alfreda M. I read in the press that on 17 October 2006, the president of the Republic of Poland had awarded this very Alfreda M. the Commander's Cross with the Star of the Order of Polonia Restituta. According to the press report, she received this award for particular merit in the context of saving people during the Second World War because she had rescued some dozens of children, Roma and Jews, from death.

After the interview with Alfreda M. in May 2006 I had had the impression that I had learned at least the basics of her biography, but this information was completely new for me. Despite my sense that I had gained her trust and that we had had an open conversation, Alfreda M. had not mentioned any conspiratorial activity or this act of heroism that was now being acknowledged. The fact that she did not relate this impor-

tant detail of her biography makes me question how much I got to know at all about her life. In the end, this feeling of insecurity also extends to my other interview partners. Thus, even more than at the end of any other project, one must probably say that the result is more questions than answers.

## NOTES

1. Jerzy Ficowski, *Demony cudzego strachu* [Demons of Foreign Fear] (Warsaw 1986), 89: 'Thus, the reports I recorded in 1949 are the only evidence on Gypsies from these years, a memory of those who succeeded in saving their lives. Basically, it is a number of memories I was told by different Gypsies.' The epigraph of this essay also comes from Ficowski's book (p. 9). The persecution of Polish Roma remains a relatively underresearched aspect of the history of Nazi genocide; see also Piotr Kaszyca, 'Die Morde an Sinti und Roma im Generalgouvernement 1939–1945' [The Murder of Sinti and Roma in the General Government 1939–1945], in Wadaw Długoborski (ed.), *Sinti und Roma im KL Auschwitz-Birkenau 1943–44* (Auschwitz 1998); Michael Zimmermann, *Rassenutopie und Genozid: Die nationalsozialistische 'Lösung der Zigeunerfrage'* (Hamburg 1996), 277–283.
2. In this essay I use the term (Polish) gypsies for Roma in Poland, but for the Roma associations I use their respective official names.
3. In this context, the Roma association at Legnica was the only exception.
4. Jan C., born on 22 March 1939 or 1944; Aplonia K., born in 1921 or 1924; Alfreda M., born in 1926 (?), who received her first ID card in 1966; Stefania O., born around 1932; and Maria S., who was the only one to give a certain date of birth, 15 May 1939.
5. On the collective forms of identity construction and the culture-specific tendency to treat the historical past as irrelevant to identity, and their consequences for narrative practice among the Roma, see above all Paloma Gay y Blasco, 'We don't know our descent': How the Gitanos of Jarana Manage the Past', *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute* (N.S.) 7 (2001): 631–647; also Michael Stewart, *The Time of the Gypsies* (Boulder 1997), 58–60, which also analyses the attitude towards 'work' as it developed among (Hungarian) Roma under socialism up to the early 1990s. Observations on the problem of interviewing surviving Sinti (German 'gypsies') are offered by Michael Zimmermann, 'Jetzt' und 'damals' als imaginäre Einheit. Erfahrungen in einem lebensgeschichtlichen Projekt über die nationalsozialistische Verfolgung von Sinti und Roma', *BIOS* 4(2) (1991): 225–242.
6. See Gay y Blasco, 'We don't know our descent', 633: 'Similarly, a whole complex of practices, which include name avoidance and the destruction of the deceased's belongings, ensure that no individuals become part of the communal memory despite the fact that they are emotionally and elaborately memorialised by their close relatives.'
7. On this see *Rom p-o Drom: Cygan na drodze* [The Roma on the Road], a bi-monthly magazine published in Białystok since 1990 and edited by S. Stankiewicz.



The first Roma magazine in Poland, it is issued by the International Association of Roma both in the Polish language and gypsy dialects. *Dialog-Pheniben*, a quarterly cultural magazine published in Oświęcim (Auschwitz) since 1995, edited by M.G. Gierlich, is issued by the Association of Roma in Poland in the Polish language.

8. Ficowski, *Demony cudzego strachu*, 24.
9. Sławomir Kaprański, 'Ritual of Memory in Constructing the Modern Identity of Eastern European Romanies', in Nicholas Saul and Susan Tebbutt (eds), *The Role of the Romanies* (Liverpool 2005), 208–225; Adam Bartosz, 'The Gypsy Caravan of Memory', [http://www.muzeum.tarnow.pl/wydawnictwa/czytelnia/artykuly/tabor\\_eng.pdf](http://www.muzeum.tarnow.pl/wydawnictwa/czytelnia/artykuly/tabor_eng.pdf).
10. N.a., 'Zapomniany Holokaust' [The Forgotten Holocaust], *Dialog-Pheniben* 8 (August 2004): 8.