



ZBORNİK RADOVA

ESKALACIJA U HOLOKAUST

Od streljačkih vodova do gasnog kamiona koncentracionog logora na Sajmištu:
Dve odlučujuće faze Holokausta u Srbiji

SELECTED WORKS

ESCALATING INTO HOLOCAUST

From execution squads to the gas van of the concentration camp at Sajmište:
Two defining phases of the Holocaust in Serbia



KRAGUJEVAC 19.10.2016

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STOCKHOLM 07.12.2016

ZBORNİK RADOVA

**ODABRANI RADOVI, PREZENTACIJE I PREDAVANJA PREDSTAVLJENI TOKOM JAVNIH MANIFESTACIJA
U OKVIRU PROJEKTA "ESKALACIJA U HOLOKAUST"**

SELECTED WORKS

**PAPERS, PRESENTATIONS AND LECTURES PRESENTED DURING THE PUBLIC EVENTS
IN THE FRAMES OF THE PROJECT "ESCALATING INTO HOLOCAUST"**

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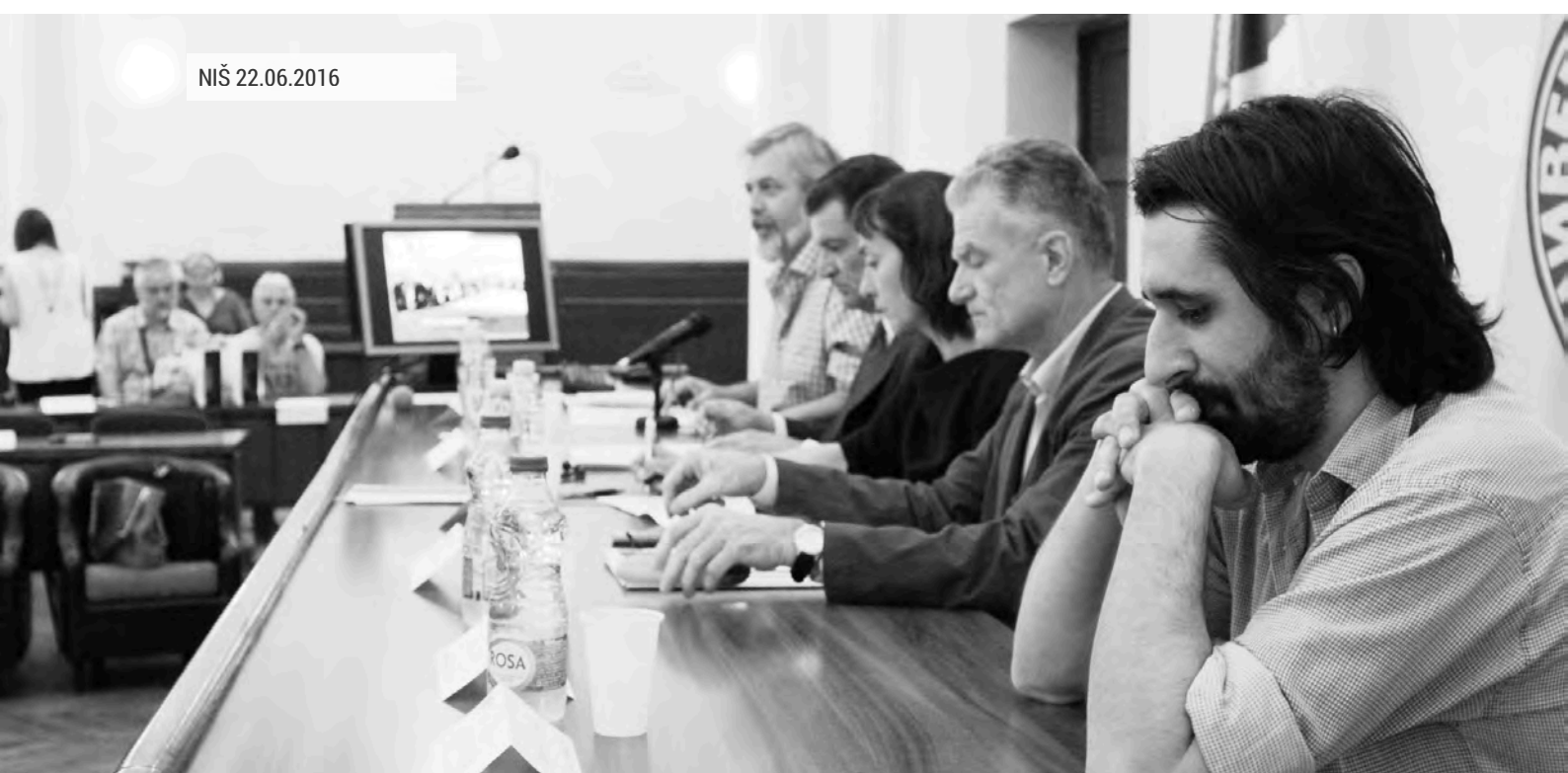
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Remembrance Of The Roma Genocide (1941–1944) In Contemporary Ukraine ¹

Mikhail Tyaglyy, Ukrainian Center for Holocaust Studies

Summary:

Among the hundreds of thousands of Roma who fell victim to the Nazi persecution and extermination politics prior and during the Second World War, more than 20,000 Roma perished in Ukraine. The article seeks to explore how the contemporary Roma community in Ukraine, as well as Ukrainian society more broadly, remember the fate of the Roma who perished during the German and Romanian occupation of Ukraine.

Keywords:

Roma genocide, Politics of memory, Memorials, Holocaust, Memory culture, Ukraine, Babi Yar, Nazi occupation

Among the hundreds of thousands of Roma who fell victim to the Nazi persecution and extermination politics prior and during the Second World War, more than 20,000 Roma perished in what today is the independent state of Ukraine. Although this subject is still extremely understudied, the preliminary historical research available shows that in many regions of the German-occupied Soviet Union, particularly Ukraine, the Roma communities were murdered unmercifully by Wehrmacht, Sipo-SD, gendarmerie, and other units, often with the assistance of the local administrative and police forces. This annihilation of the Roma took place in big cities as well as remote villages, with the peak of the extermination policies in spring-autumn of 1942. The article presented seeks to explore how the contemporary Roma community in Ukraine, as well as Ukrainian society more broadly, remember the fate of the Roma who perished during the German and Romanian occupation of Ukraine.

There are a number of questions related to the strategies of remembrance, or lack thereof, at various levels of society. Firstly, are there any consistent politics of memory regarding the Roma Genocide (for short I will use RG) run by the Ukrainian government? How does the state support,

¹ The article is written in the frames of the project “The Genocide of the Roma during the occupation of Ukraine (1941–1944): Research, Teaching, and Commemoration” which is being run by the Ukrainian Center for Holocaust Studies with the support by the German “Erinnerung, Verantwortung und Zukunft” Foundation (EVZ). This publication is updated version of the article appeared in Anna Mirga-Kruszelnicka, Esteban Acuna C. and Piotr Trojański (eds.), *Education for Remembrance of the Roma Genocide. Scholarship, Commemoration and the Role of Youth* (Cracow: Libron, 2015), 97–119.

if at all, RG research and commemoration? Is there any historical information present on the subject in school curricula and textbooks? Secondly, how were/are civic society and non-governmental organizations involved into this process? Thirdly, how do the Ukrainian Roma themselves remember what happened to them during the Second World War? Is the memory about wartime suffering being preserved and transferred to the younger Roma generation? Finally, if taken altogether, are all these efforts sufficient for the RG to be adequately remembered? To answer these questions, one has to start by considering the overall situation in the culture of memory and the national memorial politics dominating contemporary Ukraine. Particularly, does the memory of the RG have room within contemporary visions of the past that exists in the Ukrainian society?

According to the ideology and politics of memory that existed in the Soviet Union, the Second World War (or rather, the part that took place from 1941–1945 and was called The Great Patriotic War) was considered to be among the greatest moments in the history of the USSR. As many scholars have noted, the victory by the USSR functioned almost as a cult, and was seen as the best tool to legitimize the Stalinist regime and Communist party power generally.² This ideology promoted the view that all Soviet people, disregarding their ethnic background, heroically defended their socialist Motherland together. The Soviet regime condemned the few exceptions as “bourgeois nationalists” or “betrayers of the Motherland.” As a result, there was no room in official Soviet memory for the research and remembrance of some particular groups exterminated on the basis of racial ideology. This applied more generally for any explicit research and commemoration of ethnic victim groups of either the National-Socialist or Soviet regimes. Thus, the Holocaust was downplayed, the special fate of the Roma (as well as the Jewish) victims was neglected, and those victims were instead enumerated as among the Soviet martyrs of the struggle against fascism. The authorities officially considered the Nazi genocide victims to be part of the broader Nazi plan to eliminate the entire population of the USSR. They forbid any attempts by Roma individuals, as well as informal Roma communities, to commemorate their relatives by erecting monuments; no memorials specifying the ethnic background of the victims existed.

Even after gaining independence in 1991, Ukraine was never a monolithic society: pro-European (mostly in the Western part of the country) and pro-Russian (mostly in the Eastern areas) sentiments competed with each other. Following these lines of division, perceptions of the past differed as well. When the Communist rule failed and the process of constructing a national narrative started, most politicians and historians adopted a moderate nationalistic rhetoric and tended to present the Ukrainian past as a pattern of suffering inflicted by external powers (Russian Empire, Soviet Union, Communism, etc.).³ The majority of historians easily abandoned their Marxist-Leninist concept of the historical process, adopting instead one that emphasized nation-building and state-building as the most important tasks and the core of the historical processes.

² For further reading regarding the role of the “Great Patriotic War” in postwar Soviet ideology and place of the Holocaust in it, see, for example, Amir Weiner, *Making Sense of War: The Second World War and the Fate of the Bolshevik Revolution* (Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2001), 416.

³ For detailed analysis, see Andrii Portnov, “Velyka Vitchyzniana viina v politykah pamiaty Bilorusi, Moldovy ta Ukrainy: kilka porivnialnyh sposterezhen,” *Ukraina Moderna*, vol. 15, no. 4 (2009), 206–218.

Within these frames, most historians believed the ethnic Ukrainian nation to be the heart of that process and the only subject deserving mention in the emerging grand-narrative.⁴ Another main feature differentiating memory politics in Ukraine was its “regionalization”. While being unable to formulate a united national vision of the past that would satisfy all regions of Ukraine, the authorities allowed the local models of the past to prevail in their regions. If it was impossible to avoid clashes between contradictory visions at the national scale, these questions were simply being concealed or silenced by the central government.⁵ In addition, Ukrainian perceptions of the Second World War underwent some “humanization” (compared to Russian and Belorussian examples), which shifted the focus of educators and memory agents from “the mass heroism of the Soviet people” to the life and suffering of average people under occupation.⁶ This shift also assisted the integration of traumatic memories of particular ethnic minorities into a general narrative of the Second World War.

However, in the situation of competition and, sometimes, opposition to alternative memories, there is little room for memories of traumas like those the Roma suffered under the Nazis. Both memories – the post-Soviet one and the nationalistic one – tend to marginalize it. For those who support the post-Soviet vision of the past, the Roma do not constitute a separate group targeted by the Nazis for total extermination; they are regarded and commemorated only as an active part of all-Soviet resistance to the “German-fascist invaders,” or as “peaceful Soviet citizens killed by the occupiers.” For those adhering to the nationalistic visions, the RG does not constitute a particular subject to be commemorated, since the core of the Ukrainian liberation movement implied a pursuit for ethnic homogenization of the historical space, both physical and symbolical.

One more obstacle from preventing RG from being taught and commemorated was that the consensus in the scholarly literature was absent about the essence of Nazi politics towards the Roma. In other words, scholars had failed to fully study this aspect of the Second World War. The key monographs by Western scholars (like Michael Zimmermann’s book *Rassenutopie und Genozid*) have never been translated into local languages. Research by local scholars was absent as well. The Roma were never singled out as a subject for historical explorations of their fate in Soviet and post-Soviet monographs. In this situation, an opinion among the scholars and wider audience was prevailing for a long time (and still prevails) that the Roma, when killed on a mass scale by the Nazi Germans, suffered because they were considered by the perpetrators to be “asocial elements”, an opinion that implied transferring guilt on the victims. Post-Soviet, particularly Ukrainian, historiography and popular literature still needs to reach out to readers in

⁴ For an analysis of conceptual and historiography developments in Ukrainian academic scholarship after the collapse of the USSR see, for example, Mark von Hagen, “Does Ukraine Have a History?”, *Slavic Review*, vol. 54, no. 3 (Autumn, 1995), 658–673. For a more recent analysis of Ukrainian historiography and historical politics, see Georgii Kasianov, “Sovremennoe sostoianie ukrainskoi istoriografii: metodologicheskoe i institutsionalnye aspekty,” *Ab Imperio*, vol. 2 (2003), 491–519; idem, “Istoricheskaia politika v Ukraine: 2000-e gody,” *Russkii vopros*, no. 2 (2012) (accessed 14 October 2015 from: <http://www.russkiivopros.com/index.php?pag=one&id=457&kat=6&csl=58>).

⁵ Portnov, “Velyka Vitchyzniana viina,” 215.

⁶ Andrii Portnov, “Istorii dlja domashnego upotrebleniia,” *Ab Imperio*, vol. 3 (2012), 309–338.

order to show them the racial nature of the Nazi persecution of the Roma.⁷ In 2000, following the Stockholm International Forum, the Ministry of Education of Ukraine recommended that universities provide courses on Holocaust history.⁸ In 2006, Holocaust history (as well as the term itself) was introduced into school curricula, though very briefly, and into the list of questions for examination in secondary state schools.⁹ However, most writers evaluate these innovations as formalistic and insufficient, covering only a very small part of the school audience.¹⁰

Paradoxically enough, in 2004 the Ukrainian parliament (*Verkhovna Rada*) created the legal ground for RG commemoration in Ukraine. On initiative of two parliament members from the Communist party, the Parliament passed a separate law introducing annually 2 August as the day for commemorating the RG in Ukraine.¹¹ The very title of this law, as well as how it was introduced, shows that it was adopted without careful expert preparation and with no intent by the authorities to keep an eye on its implementation. The memorial day proposed by this act was called “The International day of the Roma holocaust” (sic!). The historical preamble of the act states that “During the Second World War, Hitlerite fascists, together with their accomplices, fulfilling the racial politics of ethnocide, deported about 500,000 Roma from the occupied countries and burned them in the concentration camps.”¹² Despite some factual and terminological mistakes in the text, this act obligated the Cabinet of Ministers, along with regional authorities, “to elaborate actions directed to researching the scale, number of victims, and sites of the Hitlerite ethnocide of the Roma during the Second World War, as well as to commemorate the deported and murdered representatives of this ethnic minority.” However, closer examination of how that law was implemented shows that almost no systematic activities recommended and prescribed by the act were carried through in the following years. Despite the fact that this memorial day exists in the official state commemorative calendar, and would therefore require an annual address from state

⁷ It is only recently that the situation has begun to change. See, for example, contemporary works that stress the racial nature of the Nazi persecution of the Roma in the occupied Soviet territories: Martin Holler, *Der nationalsozialistische Völkermord an den Roma in der besetzten Sowjetunion, 1941–1944* (Heidelberg: Dokumentations- und Kulturzentrum Deutscher Sinti und Roma, 2009); Alexander Kruglov, “Genotsid tsigan v Ukraini v 1941–1944 gg. Statistiko-regionalnyi aspekt,” *Holokost i suchastnist. Studii v Ukraini i sviti*, vol. 2, no. 6 (2009), 83–113; Mikhail Tyaglyy, “Nazi occupation policies and the mass murder of the Roma in Ukraine,” in Anton Weiss-Wendt, ed., *The Nazi Genocide of the Gypsies: Reevaluation and Commemoration* (New York: Berghahn Books, 2013), 120–152. However, only a few of these publications are available to a wider audience in Ukraine.

⁸ Anatolii Podolskyi, “Aktualnist ta stan vikladannja istorii Holokostu v suchasnii Ukraini,” *Uroki Holokostu*, vol. 14, no. 2 (2008), 2–4.

⁹ Anatolii Podolskyi, “Ukraïnske suspilstvo i pamiat’ pro Holokost: sproba analizu deiakih aspektiv,” *Holokost i suchastnist. Studii v Ukraïni i sviti*, vol. 1, no. 5 (2009), 47–59.

¹⁰ For instance, the experienced Kievan schoolteacher and methodologist Iurii Komarov estimated in his brief survey that Ukrainian teaching plans and textbooks dealing with the Holocaust remain behind those of Europe and do not reflect the European experience. Furthermore, he pointed out that the Ukrainian Ministry of Education does not realize the universal messages and teaching potential of the Holocaust, which he blames on the fact that some Ukrainian historians still prefer to cultivate the ethnocentric paradigm of history based on the history of ethnic Ukrainians. See Iurii Komarov, “Formalni mozhlivosti: mistse temy Holokostu v navchalnykh kursakh MON Ukraini,” *Uroki Holokostu*, vol. 2, no. 14 (2008), 4–6.

¹¹ See <http://zakon4.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/2085-iv> (accessed: 14/10/2015).

¹² Ibid.

officials, it was only on 2 August 2009 that the president of Ukraine (at that time – Victor Yushchenko) delivered public address to the Roma community. No media, excluding *Forum of Nations* (a small monthly newspaper published by the NGO “Congress of National Minorities of Ukraine”) reported this event.¹³ In 2011, the Ukrainian Institute for National Remembrance included this day in the “Calendar of outstanding and memorial dates for 2011,” but this institute organized no event on that day. Since then this date has been absent in the Institute’s calendar.¹⁴ The practice shows that, in most cases, the activities prescribed by this law to the regional authorities to foster research and education were mostly left on paper.¹⁵ The local authorities prefer only to join memorial building, commemorative ceremonies, and public events which are typically initiated and organized by NGOs, and do that only if the latter hold responsibility for the organization of events of this kind.¹⁶ In 2013, the Strategy and Action Plan on the protection and integration into Ukrainian society of the Roma minority for the period up to 2020 was adopted and signed by the president of Ukraine (at that time Victor Yanukovich), but nothing was included into this document regarding teaching and commemorating the RG.¹⁷ The same is true when considering the field of education. Is RG being taught at schools? To what extent is the information about RG present in teaching curricula and history textbooks? Over the last twenty-five years, textbook writing in Ukraine has experienced some development, and the state of affairs one can see in this field now is ambiguous.

Several years ago Oleksandr Voitenko, a Ukrainian expert in the field of formal and informal education, observed in his article specifically devoted to the RG teaching that in Ukrainian textbooks and teaching manuals multiculturalism and the multi-ethnic character of the country are hardly represented. ... And the Roma, judging from the analysis of educational textbooks in history textbooks for junior and senior schools, have never been present in Ukrainian history. So, how are the Roma represented in school teaching materials? The only mention of the Roma in the context of Nazi racial policies is found in textbooks on World History and History of Ukraine for the 10th grade. But from these textbooks we do not see why Jews were persecuted? Why the Roma? Why

¹³ Address by the President of Ukraine on the occasion of the International Day of the Roma Holocaust, <http://www.forumn.kiev.ua/2009-08-87/87-04.html> (accessed 14 October 2015). Later, in 2013, only one more public address was issued on that memorial day, signed by the first deputy of the head of the Ministry of Culture in Ukraine, see <http://mincult.kmu.gov.ua/mincult/uk/publish/article/336250;jsessionid=4C686292653E8BCC86DD2300BBCB10A2.app6:2> (accessed 14 October 2015).

¹⁴ See <http://memory.gov.ua/page/istorichnii-kalendar> (accessed 14 October 2015).

¹⁵ Systematic web-monitoring made by the author shows that local administrations included plans in their annual agendas or issued “methodical recommendations” for the administrative bodies and educational institutions subordinated to them in only four regions (out of twenty-five) in Ukraine – Lviv, Mykolaiv, Odessa and Zakarpattia oblasts – about how to mark the “International Day of the Roma Holocaust.”

¹⁶ In his recent article exploring contemporary commemoration of the RG in Ukraine, Swedish scholar Andrej Kotljarchuk provides about twenty examples of sites in various parts of Ukraine where the monuments to the murdered Roma were erected recently. See Andrej Kotljarchuk, “Natsistskii genotsyd tsygan na territorii okkupirovannoi Ukrainy: rol sovetського proshlogo v sovremennoi politike pamiati,” *Holokost i suchasnist’*. *Studii v Ukraini i sviti*, vol. 1, no. 12 (2014), 24–50. However, a closer examination of these cases shows that almost all of them were possible due to the initiatives of the NGO sector (primarily Roma organizations, but also other groups), while the role of the state was limited usually to granting permission for the public activists to build a monument and taking part in the dedication ceremonies.

¹⁷ See <http://zakon4.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/201/2013> (accessed 14 October 2015).

were they “chosen” as victims? And where from do they appear in Ukraine, if they have not been mentioned in earlier schooling? Roma history, their culture, and contributions to the culture of Europe and Ukraine, the history of their national movement, integration issues, etc., must be included in history classes in the schools. Information on the Roma genocide in the Second World War must be embraced by the school curricula. It must not be “separated” from the context of Roma history in Europe and Ukraine.¹⁸

Has the situation changed since 2009? No standardized textbook exists for Ukrainian students of every grade, but instead there is a range of textbooks annually recommended by the Ministry of Education to be used in classrooms, and individual school administrations can choose the ones they consider to be most appropriate. History is being taught in Ukrainian schools within two courses: “World History” (for which five textbooks were available last year) and “History of Ukraine” (for which five textbooks were also available last year). The period of 1939–1945 is covered in the beginning of the last (the 11th) grade of each course. All textbooks published in 2010–2013 for “World History” course (in which the Second World War is presented in the context of global and European perspective) contain the term “Holocaust” and its definition within the lesson about the Nazi occupation regime in Europe or the Nazi “New Order”. But each textbook offers a different definition for this concept. In most textbooks, one can see the statement that “the Holocaust means the extermination of the Jewish people during the Second World War.” However, this definition is always accompanied with the information about the Nazi “New Order”, which presents it as a consistent policy pursued by the Nazis to eliminate “inferior people” like Jews, the Roma (or Gypsies), and the Slavic population on the basis of racial ideology. In this context, one can see that the term “Roma” is present in all the textbooks, although in most cases Nazi racial policy is misinterpreted by the authors as something that had genocidal intentions, also in regard to the Slavic people, and the fate of the Roma is mentioned in them quite briefly. One textbook, however, stands out,¹⁹ since it presents quite a nuanced and explicit explanation of the “genocide committed in regard to the Gypsy people (Sinti and Roma),” although it also states inaccurately that the Roma were persecuted by the Nazis as thieves, “fortune-tellers, and kidnappers,” thus neglecting the racial grounds for the Nazi persecution of the Roma.²⁰

As for the textbooks on the history of Ukraine (where the Second World War is given a Ukrainian context and focused geographically on the territory of contemporary Ukraine), they give similar picture. Out of five textbooks under consideration, four contain the term “Holocaust”, which is formulated as the destruction of the Jews by the Nazi regime (while the remaining one mentions information about the mass murder of Jewish people without using the term). However, only three out of the five contain a brief hint that the Roma were also the subject of the Nazi extermination policies. One can conclude that the tragic fate of the Roma is still externalized in the Ukrainian

¹⁸ Oleksandr Voitenko, “Genotsid romiv u navchalnykh kursakh MON Ukrainy ta neformalni praktyky uvichnennia tragedii v osvitianskomu protsesi,” *Holokost i suchasnist’*. *Studii v Ukraïni i sviti*, vol. 2, no. 6 (2009), 141–147.

¹⁹ Ihor Shchupak, *Vsemirnaia istoriia. Noveishii period (1939–2011). Uchebnoe posobie dlia 11 klassa obshcheobrazovatelnykh uchebnykh zavedenii* (Zaporizhzhia: Premier, 2011), 272.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 33.

teaching narratives: it is rather regarded as a part of the general history which happened elsewhere but was not really a part of the Ukrainian historical past. One more conclusion out of the analysis of textbooks is that in most cases, even when dealing with the RG, the authors mention it very briefly, in passing, and do not actually emphasize the racial nature of the Nazi policies towards the Roma.

When trying to interpret the reasons why the RG-related (as well as the Holocaust-related narrative) is present in the textbooks in different degrees, it might be helpful to have a look at the personal professional background of the authors. It reveals that the more each author was involved in the activities initiated by NGOs working in the field of informal education, the more detailed narrative about this subject can be found in his/her textbooks. Several NGOs today are focused on the promotion of Holocaust education among governmental education structures and schoolteachers. The central ones are the Ukrainian Center for Holocaust Studies in Kiev²¹ and “Tkuma” Institute for Holocaust Studies in Dnepropetrovsk;²² both include RG history in their agenda and run educational workshops for schoolteachers and school administrators. Ihor Shchupak, the Director of the “Tkuma” Institute for Holocaust Studies, compiled the above-mentioned textbook, which contains an entire passage on the RG. The textbook *Together on the Same Land: A Multicultural History of Ukraine*, published by the NGO “Nova Doba” Association of Teachers of History and Civics in Lviv, covers the RG (and Roma history more generally) and provides information about the various ethnic groups of Ukraine.²³ Therefore, it would not be going too far to say that NGOs introduce memory of the RG into the official curricula and textbooks and classrooms. The governmental bodies remain clumsy and inert in accepting this approach, though they do not prevent it from being integrated into the curricula. Having appeared originally on the margins of the state educational system, education about the RG is still there, with some occasional attention of a symbolical nature provided by the governmental structures.

However, some important developments can be observed: (1) the more effective activities of NGO sector; (2) the “humanized” image of the Second World War; (3) the prevailing regional memories over the national ones; and (4) also some European integrationist rhetoric and practices used to a different extent, but by all Ukrainian presidential administrations. While the Holocaust has been in the focus of educators for already more than twenty years, the RG became a focus only recently.

Comparing this situation with that of Russia and Belorussia, one can see that the general history and memory politics there makes it more difficult for the RG to be included into the national

²¹ See <http://www.holocaust.kiev.ua> (accessed 14 October 2015).

²² See <http://tkuma.dp.ua/> (accessed 14 October 2015).

²³ See *Razom na odnii zemli. Istoriiia Ukrainy bahatokulturna. Posibnyk dlia uchniv* (Lviv: ZUKTs, 2012), particularly the chapters *Roma History* and *Jewish and Roma Genocide*. See <http://www.novadoba.org.ua/ukr/together-on-the-sameland-book> (accessed 14 October 2015).

memory canon.²⁴ This can be indirectly confirmed by the total absence of publications attempting to reflect on RG education, or at least methodological suggestions and recommendations for the teachers on that subject. As for Ukraine, polycentrism and pluralism in the process of shaping the national historical narrative made it possible for such efforts to appear (though primarily as NGO initiatives). In this process, as mentioned above, initiatives by the Roma communities and other non-Roma groups and the civil society actors are intertwined.

The NGO activities dealing with RG remembrance in Ukraine can be divided into three broad categories, although in most cases these initiatives are the result of mixed interrelations and cooperation and not such clearly defined groups.

The first category includes research and educational initiatives of local actors supported financially by international or foreign foundations. In this case, the initiatives belong to the local NGOs, which are successful to secure funding of their projects. In 2008, the Ukrainian Center for Holocaust Studies (UCHS) organized the first scholarly conference in Ukraine focused specifically on the RG thanks to the support of the Friedrich Ebert Stiftung. A year later, the German Embassy in Ukraine funded the publication of the conference proceedings.²⁵ The UCHS in Kiev is currently running a four-year project combining research and educational activities, which was initially supported by the “Mutual Understanding and Tolerance” Foundation and then by the EVZ Foundation.²⁶ Due to this support the UCHS was able to publish a map with 113 killing sites of the Roma in the German-occupied area of Ukraine identified on the basis of available archival documentation. This map (which continues to be updated, since the project is still in progress) could become a base for the nation-wide registry of the Romani victims.

The second category consists of initiatives carried out by local branches of international institutions, which include RG-related education. In this case, international institutions in Ukraine find local partners from the civic sector to fulfill a particular project. For example, the Ukrainian

²⁴ As for Belorussia, see Andrej Kotljarchuk, “World War II Memory Politics: Jewish, Polish and Roma Minorities of Belarus,” *The Journal of Belarusian Studies*, vol. 1 (2013), 7–37. As for the Russian Federation, no critical examination of this subject, even by international scholars, has been published at the time of this writing.

²⁵ See http://holocaust.kiev.ua/news/chasopis_2010.html (accessed 14 October 2015).

²⁶ See www.romagenocide.com.ua (accessed 14 October 2015). In the autumn of 2013, the UCHS launched a three-year research and education project, *The Genocide of Roma (Gypsies) during the occupation of Ukraine (1941–1944): Research, Teaching and Commemoration*. The aims of the project include promoting research into documentary sources and introducing them into scholarly use, recording oral history accounts pertaining to the fate of the Roma living in the Ukrainian territories occupied during the Second World War, and facilitating research by local historians on these subjects. Educational goals consist of increasing the cooperation of researchers and teachers from educational institutions, encouraging the involvement of students in research activities, recording memories of the witnesses of the genocide against the Roma, identifying Roma mass murder sites during the Second World War and their present-day condition, developing methodological materials for teaching purposes, and assisting students in preparing research papers for the annual *The History and Lessons of Holocaust* contest run by the UCHS. The UCHS launched a new website to promote the interaction of all those willing to work on this subject, as well as to create an online resource that will assist in making reference materials and the recent literature on the subject more readily available. This page offers visitors updates on the latest developments within the project, a bibliography and full-text publications of Ukrainian and foreign researchers of Roma history and the genocide of the Roma, guidance papers regarding research activities (such as oral history methodologies and student paper guidelines), and a forum to enable the exchange of opinions about the state of the art and future developments for the project.



III. 2. Memorial sign in Babyn Yar (Kyiv) saying "On this site a memorial will be erected to the victims of the Roma Holocaust". Photo by Mikhail Tyaglyy, 2009

branch of the International Renaissance Foundation in Kiev has a Roma program initiative,²⁷ which mostly focuses on Roma-related social and legal issues but also embraces humanities and, particularly, conferences and teaching courses on Romani Studies, including the RG.²⁸ This foundation established a one-year program on Romani Studies at the National University “Kiev-Mohyla Academy” in 2012–2013,²⁹ and more recently an agreement was signed to establish the Romani Studies Program at Uzhgorod National University and Chernihiv State University.³⁰ At the same time, this organization paid the travel costs for several Ukrainian students of Roma and non-Roma origin to attend the annual ceremony of commemoration on 2 August in Cracow-Auschwitz, and now is discussing the possibility of adapting into Ukrainian the recently published Council of Europe’s textbook *Right to Remember*.

The final category includes initiatives developed by the Roma community and its various individual and collective parts, which realized independently or in cooperation with state bodies and/or the non-governmental sector. Without a doubt, present-day Roma ethno-cultural organizations and their leaders are the main memory agents interested in commemorating the RG, sharing this traumatic experience with the broader society and introducing this knowledge into the Ukrainian historical narrative, both on academic and public levels. Compared to the situation of the post-war or late Soviet period, their memory is no longer “muted.” As Polish scholar Sławomir Kapralski demonstrated in regard to the Roma community in Europe, particularly in Poland,³¹ the Ukrainian Roma today are becoming increasingly involved in public commemoration ceremonies and the “invented tradition” process, as far as the resources allow them to do so.

This is especially true for a younger Roma generation, which is on the way to integrating into the wider society. It is impossible yet to evaluate and give a representative picture of which level the RG is in the historical background of the Roma community, since the research on this subject has never been completed. However, some indirect tools to measure this awareness can be used, such as an analysis of essays written by young Romani students applying annually to the Roma Education Fund for the fellowships. One of the chapters in the application form, which they need to complete, is the so-called “Essay on Roma Issues”, which expects them to deliver their vision, limited to five hundred words, on what it means to be Roma in individual and social dimensions.³² The instructions for this section ask, among other questions, the following: What does it mean to be a young Roma? Or, do you see a need to strengthen this identity – and if so – how? As one can

²⁷ See <http://www.irf.ua/en/programs/roma/> (accessed 14 October 2015).

²⁸ For the conference proceedings, see http://issuu.com/irf_ua/docs/roma-2014-1/1?e=2879057/7849618 (accessed 14 October 2015).

²⁹ See <http://pritsak-center.com/en/about-roman-studies> (accessed 14 October 2015).

³⁰ See <http://www.uzhnu.edu.ua/uk/news/v-uzhnu-zapratsyuyut-romski-studiji.htm> (accessed 14 October 2015).

³¹ See, for example, Sławomir Kapralski, “The Holocaust in the Memory of the Roma: From Trauma to Imagined Community?”, in L. Stillman and G. Johanson (eds.), *Constructing and Sharing Memory: Community Informatics, Identity and Empowerment* (Newcastle: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2007), 114–123.

³² I am grateful to the Roma Education Fund, particularly to Stela Garaz, for giving me permission to use this data from the application process.



III. 3. Memorial sign in Babyn Yar (Kyiv) vandalized.
Photo by Mikhail Tyaglyy, 2011



III. 5. The Roma Caravan Memorial returned to Kyiv and inaugurated in 23 September 2016.
Photo by Mikhail Tyaglyy, 2016



see, this guidance, though indirectly, leaves some space for a respondent to expound one's personal feeling of identity in the terms he/she prefers. Some young Roma applicants used what we can call "historical discourse" (particularly the notion of the RG and its implications) when explaining what it means for them to be a Roma.

Year	Total number of essays considered	Number of essays where the Holocaust (genocide, Nazi victims, Nazi racial ideology, victims of the Second World War) discourse is present	% to total
2012	93	3	3,2
2013	131	10	7,6
2014	133	10	7,5
2015	181	13	7,1
2016	145	14	9,7

This demonstrates that, for reasons yet to be researched, the percentage of Roma students aware of this tragic aspect of their identity doubled in 2013 compared to the previous year. This discourse was present in approximately 7% of applications since 2013, and increased to almost 10% in 2016. In my opinion, the fact that they used the notion of the RG in their self-representation can be interpreted not only as awareness of this past, but also their readiness to use this knowledge actively in their personal and social life, particularly when facing present-day instances of discrimination or intolerance. However, this also demonstrates that the overwhelming majority of young Roma people (90%) are reluctant or unable, when speculating on the present-day situation of the Roma community, to perceive themselves as being part of historical process and to see the connection between potential discrimination nowadays and the persecution that occurred in the past, in order to learn lessons from it. In other words, for the overwhelming majority of young Roma, the meaningful past is still not considered as a possible resource for shaping the future by most of the students.

As mentioned above, over the last two decades Roma communities and individuals were the main memory agents interested in commemorating the RG in Ukraine, particularly active in erecting monuments and memorial signs on mass graves where the Roma perished. Perhaps the long story of erecting a memorial to the murdered Roma in Babyn Yar (Kiev) is the most symbolic example of Roma initiatives that had to interact with state authorities and public actors. Babyn Yar in Kiev is a place known for its tragic history, a site where German forces murdered primarily Jews, but also Roma, Soviet POWs, Ukrainian nationalists, Orthodox priests, Soviet resistance

members, mentally disabled persons, as well as all those believed by the occupiers to be “suspicious” and “undesirable” elements, in great numbers in the years 1941–1943.³³

As early as in 1995, the Roma organization “Romanipe” in Kiev, in cooperation with the well-known architect and sculptor Anatoly Ignashchenko, projected a monument to the Roma killed in Babyn Yar in 1941. The monument, made of iron, was created in the form of the Roma nomad tent. In 2000, after the pedestal was completed and the monument was about to be installed, the city administration suddenly prohibited this action, arguing that the new monument “does not fit the area of the secured landscape.”³⁴ Despite attempts by the architect to overcome the prohibition, the monument was erected in another location, Kamianets-Podilskyi, a remote, suburban part of the city above a ravine that is difficult to visit (see ill. 1). Thus, the position of Kiev city bureaucracy prevented the erection of the monument despite the support of the Roma community and public opinion for this project. In 2006, the National Reserve “Babyn Yar” was created by a decision of former President Yushchenko, but in fact this organization existed on paper only.³⁵ For several years there was no monument to the Roma in Babyn Yar, until 2009, when the Roma community again collected funds and erected a small memorial plaque with an inscription promising that “On this site a memorial will be erected to the victims of the Roma Holocaust.” (see ill. 2)

In June 2011, unknown persons destroyed this small monument in Babyn Yar, and police investigation brought no results. For some time the site remained without any memorial plaques (see ill. 3), but the Roma community eventually put one more small monument with another inscription, which this time did not contain any promise of building a future memorial. The new monument merely states “In memory of the Roma shot in Babyn Yar.” (see ill. 4)

This story remains completely incomprehensible for an outside observer without some extra attention paid to the context, but it becomes quite clear when the role and activities of both governmental and non-governmental organizations involved are considered. The area of Babyn Yar, or rather what remained of this huge area after the attempts by the Soviet authorities to erase and reshape this part of Kiev in 1950–1960s, became – during the independence period – a tasty morsel for numerous commercial companies and the nouveau riches who had their lobbyists in the city administration responsible for maintaining city territory. For more than two decades, city authorities were making decisions in a completely non-transparent manner, ignoring civic initiatives directed to creation of the united site of memory in Babyn Yar, which would shape the common space of memory for various victim groups murdered there. In 2003, the Civic Committee for Commemoration of Babyn Yar Victims was established, and it elaborated a project to implement the model of the memorial site. This memorial site would represent the fate of every group of victims and create a symbol of the national past, uniting victims of different backgrounds

³³ For the most detailed research on Babyn Yar, see T. Evstafieva, V. Nakhmanovych (eds.), *Babi Yar: chelovek, vlast, istoriia. Dokumenty i materialy. Kniga 1: Istoricheskaia topographiia. Khronologiia sobytii* (Kiev: Vneshtorgizdat, 2004). The book is available for download at <http://www.kby.kiev.ua/book1/> (accessed 14 October 2015).

³⁴ See <http://www.forumn.kiev.ua/2009-08-87/87-04.html> (accessed 14 October 2015).

³⁵ See <http://babyn-yar.gov.ua/> (accessed 14 October 2015).

around one commemorative space.³⁶ But initiatives like that were ignored. Instead, at least three initiatives by various private Jewish organizations (controlled or supported by the Ukrainian businessmen of Jewish origin) were discussed, and were nearly accepted to build a museum in Babyn Yar devoted exclusively to Jewish victims.³⁷ It would not be going too far to assume that Ukrainian civil servants responsible for the state of affairs of this memorial area were obtaining some unofficial and indirect means to meet the above-mentioned initiatives in quite a friendly and positive way; another explanation can be their absolute ignorance of the history of Babyn Yar and its present-day symbolical meaning. It is not surprising that to those who associate themselves today with the other victim groups (Ukrainian nationalists, Orthodox church, etc.), the initiatives listed above seemed to be totally inappropriate, as they did not include memory of “their” groups in a common memorial narrative. This situation resulted in the so-called “memory wars” in Ukrainian society. Particularly, the most recent conflict happened in 2011, when the Ukrainian parliament approved a decree “On the 70th anniversary of Babyn Yar.”³⁸ This document contained a list of measures to be implemented in order to hasten activities of the National Reserve “Babyn Yar” (created in 2006) and to commemorate the victims of the massacres. This time the reason for discord was that the Committee for preparing and organizing the events devoted to the 70th anniversary of the massacres in Babyn Yar was formed exclusively of the representatives of Jewish organizations. Both Ukrainian and Roma ethno-cultural organizations addressed the Ukrainian prime minister (at that time Mykola Azarov), criticizing this decision and demanding to have their representatives included in the Committee.³⁹ No public reaction followed these criticisms, and the effect of these addresses remained unknown. For a long time, the Babyn Yar territory remained a kind of cake, sliced into several chunks, and every victim group (or, rather their descendants associating themselves with any victim group) enjoys its own chunk, i.e., visits a particular part of Babyn Yar territory on their own commemorative dates with no regard to the other victim groups. One memorial site that could unite and consolidate present-day Ukrainian society by means of the common tragic fate thus failed to be created.

More recently, on the 75th anniversary of the massacres in Babyn Yar, the Ukrainian government introduced a number of events and invested efforts and funds towards the creation of a common

³⁶ See <http://www.kby.kiev.ua/> (accessed 14 October 2015).

³⁷ The most prominent scandal occurred in 2002–2004 that included an initiative by the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee (and supported by part of the local Jewish leaders) to construct Jewish Community Center in Babyn Yar. This inappropriate idea was confirmed by the authorities with no public discussion on this issue, and was canceled only after polemics spread beyond the Jewish community and involved the wider Ukrainian intelligentsia. See <http://babiyar-diskus.narod.ru/Index.html> (accessed 14 October 2015).

³⁸ See <http://zakon4.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/3560-vi> (accessed 14 October 2015).

³⁹ For the statement by the Organization of Ukrainian Nationalists, see <http://www.istpravda.com.ua/columns/2011/09/26/56627/> (accessed 14 October 2015). For the statement by the Roma organizations, see <http://www.unian.ua/society/517746-romi-vimagayut-vid-azarova-vshanuvati-vbitih-u-babinomu-yaru.html> (accessed 14 October 2015). Remarkably, the appeal by the Ukrainian circles refers only indirectly to the composition of the Committee, saying that “some particular civic organizations are undertaking one more attempt to cross out historical truth and national fairness, above all in regard to the death of the thousands of Ukrainian patriots, who had struggled for Ukrainian independence during the war.” The letter by the Roma organizations was much less politically correct: “[The fact that the Roma are not represented in the Committee] gives us a ground to consider the Plan of Events proposed by the Committee as a business plan for money-laundering of the budget funds through the Jewish institutions.”

memorial space. Particularly, markers with historic information were established in the area, a building for the museum was finally given to the National Reserve, and, with the support of the Ministry of Culture, the “Roma Caravan” monument was brought back to Kiev by the Roma community members and inaugurated in Babyn Yar on 23 September 2016 (see ill. 5). On 4 October, NGOs and governmental institutions in Kiev organized a scholarly conference on the “Genocide of the Roma of Ukraine during the Second World War: Research, Education and Commemoration.”⁴⁰

In conclusion, the RG is remembered and commemorated in a specific and ambiguous way in present-day Ukraine. The memory is being preserved and transferred to younger generations, but insufficiently. In the context of inconsistent and ambiguous politics of memory, and in the situation of constant struggle between “post-Soviet” and “nationalistic” discourses of history, the dynamics of spreading RG-related memory is generally positive, but this is mainly due to the efforts of non-formal education and commemoration activities developed by NGOs, covering only small sectors of society. Besides, as the scholar Tetiana Portnova noted, the wider Ukrainian society is not ready to discuss sensitive and painful questions related to involvement in the Holocaust.⁴¹ The same can be said for the position on the RG. Education on the RG in the former Soviet Union (FSU) space still remains in its early stages and relies on the actions of a few memory agents, such as Roma community activists and NGO educators. Compared to the situation in the FSU states, Ukrainian FG education has been more successful despite the problems discussed above. This is because of the more active role the NGO and civic sector play in shaping pluralistic visions of history, and the law the Ukrainian parliament passed in 2004 to create a legal framework where civic initiatives, particularly commemorative ones, can be implemented.

⁴⁰ See <http://romagenocide.com.ua/data/files/anonsy/konf0410pressa.pdf> (accessed 10 October 2016).

⁴¹ Tetiana Portnova, “Holokost v ukrainskikh obrazovatelnykh praktikakh,” online publication, see <http://urokiistorii.ru/learning/edu/51948> (accessed 9 December 2015).

Lista učesnika

List Of Participants

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Želeli bi ovim putem da se zahvalimo svim institucijama
koje su podržale projekat, i/ili čiji su predstavnici učestvovali u aktivnostima projekta:

(po abecednom redu)

Institutions

We would like to express our gratitude to all institutions
that participated, supported and contributed to the project activities:

(in alphabetic order)

Anne Frank House, Amsterdam	NLD
Center for Holocaust Research and Education CHRE, Belgrade	SRB
Center for Professional Orientation in Kragujevac	SRB
City Council of Belgrade	SRB
City Council of Kragujevac, Dept. for Culture	SRB
Committee for Cultural Affairs of the Novi Sad City Council	SRB
Department of Cultural Studies, University of Rijeka	HRV
Department of History, Faculty of Philosophy, University of Belgrade	SRB
Documenta - Centre for Dealing with the Past, Zagreb	HRV
Documentation Center of Austrian Resistance, Vienna	AUT
Dutch Resistance Museum, Amsterdam	NLD
Dutch Theatre Museum – Hollandsche Schouwburg, Amsterdam	NLD
Editionsprojekt "Judenverfolgung 1933–1945"	DEU
Educational and Memorial-Site House of the Wannsee-Conference, Berlin	DEU
Embassy of Croatia in Serbia	HRV
Embassy of Germany in Serbia	DEU
Embassy of Israel in Serbia	ISR

Embassy of Montenegro in Serbia	MNE
European Institute for Jewish Studies in Sweden – Paideia	SWE
Faculty of Dramatic Arts, Belgrade	SRB
Faculty of Philosophy Novi Sad	SRB
Faculty of Social Sciences, University of Vienna	AUT
Federation of Jewish Communities of Serbia	SRB
Haver Serbia	SRB
Historical Archive of the City of Novi Sad	SRB
Historical Archives of Belgrade	SRB
Historical Archives of Niš	SRB
Holocaust Fund and Holocaust Memorial Center in Macedonia	MKD
Institut für Zeitgeschichte München - Berlin	DEU
Institute for Contemporary History, Belgrade	SRB
Institute for Recent History of Serbia, Belgrade	SRB
International Tracing Service (ITS)	DEU
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Jewish Community Novi Sad	SRB
Jewish Community Zemun	SRB
Jewish Historical Museum in Amsterdam	NLD
Jewish Historical Museum in Belgrade	SRB
Living History Forum, Stockholm	SWE
Memorial Museum 21st October in Kragujevac	SRB
Memorial Park October in Kragujevac	SRB
Military Archives of Serbia, Belgrade	SRB
Ministry of Culture and Information of the Republic of Serbia	SRB
Ministry of Justice of the Republic of Serbia	SRB
Museum of Genocide Victims, Belgrade	SRB
National Committee 4 and 5 May, Amsterdam	NLD
National Holocaust Museum, Amsterdam	NLD
National Museum of Kragujevac	SRB
National Museum of Kraljevo	SRB

National Museum of Niš	SRB
NIOD Institute of War, Holocaust and genocide Studies, Amsterdam	NLD
Planning Committee for the Memorial Canter at Sajmište	SRB
Secretariat for Culture of the City of Belgrade	SRB
Secretariat for Culture, Public Information and Relations with Religious Communities APV	SRB
Sensus Study Association in Stockholm	SWE
Serbian Academy of Sciences and Arts	SRB
Serbian Association in Sweden	SWE
Society for Preservation of the Memory of Holocaust, Kragujevac	SRB
Stanley Burton Centre for Holocaust and Genocide Studies	GBR
Terraforming network Stockholm-Amsterdam-Novi Sad	NLD
Tourist Organization of the city of Niš	SRB
Ukrainian Center for Holocaust Studies (UCHS), Kiev	UKR
Université Libre de Bruxelles	BEL
University of Niš	SRB
University of Rijeka	HRV
VU University Amsterdam	NLD
Women's Space NGO, Niš	SRB
Yad Vashem School for Holocaust Studies	ISR

Učesnici

Želeli bi ovim putem da se zahvalimo svim stručnjacima i uvažanim gostima koji su direktno učestvovali u aktivitetima projekta:

(po abecednom redu)

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The Project team