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Illustration: Kerin Sunvissan



“While the people of Europe work for the victory, Gypsies take little notice”, claims this comment to the photograph supposed to show Roma as disorderly and antisocial, *Lemberger Zeitung*, June 4 1943.

“THE GYPSY QUESTION” AND ITS ANSWERS

by Piotr Wawrzeniuk

ANTI-ROMA PROPAGANDA IN THE PRESS OF THE DISTRICT OF GALICIA 1941–1944

abstract

This study offers the first analysis of anti-Roma propaganda in the District of Galicia (Distrikt Galizien, the DG), a part of the General Government (Das Generalgouvernement, the GG), by studying the dailies and several periodicals published in the District. It constitutes the first step in studying anti-Roma propaganda in the GG. While the wartime anti-Roma propaganda employed the pre-war images of Roma, those were manipulated, distorted and radicalized in accordance to the needs of the Nazi regime in the DG. The radicalization in the press paralleled introduction of regulations with anti-Roma edge and scaling up of Roma persecution in the GG. By 1943, the propaganda pieces alluded to solving “the Gypsy question” in the way that “the Jewish question” had been solved.

KEYWORDS Genocide studies, propaganda studies, Second World War, the General Government.

In May and July 1943, two small groups of Roma in Lviv (Polish: Lwów), capital of the District of Galicia, were arrested and put to trial.¹ Those events were employed by the local press to produce negative images of Roma people with Lviv suburbs as settings.

Propaganda is about management of collective attitudes.² It can be defined as a way of influencing people into doing something they would not do if provided with all the relevant information.³ It appears more credible to the receivers if it builds on already existing perceptions, and operates within a social context.⁴ For instance, Nazi anti-Semitic propaganda in the GG press frequently exploited pre-war anti-Semitic templates, such as those of Jews as dangerous socioeconomic competitors and parasites.⁵ The anti-Semitic campaigns of the Nazi apparatus were paralleled in a number of underground leaflets and newspapers published by Polish center and right-wing parties.

This made the consequences of this propaganda particularly wide-ranging, according to Lucjan Dobroszycki.⁶ In the context of a totalitarian state, propaganda can also be viewed as a “strategically planned attempt to construct, spread and implement a certain collective identity, combined with the use of various forms of pressure or even violence”. In the context of the Nazi rule that built on race phantasms, the body was “indistinguishable from social status”,⁷ resulting in what one might call “ethnocracy”.⁸ Thus, the cognitive features of propaganda were supported by an omnipresent underlying threat of oppression and violence.

Propaganda is usually rooted in, and part of, a social and historical narrative. Its effect depends on propagandist’s ability to connect “past historical and cultural events with present emotional and cognitive reasonings”.⁹ For instance, Nazi sponsored racial science built on a pre-existing tradition going back to the 19th century; so did the anti-Roma propaganda in the Balkans.¹⁰

These findings suggest adopting a longer timeline than the war itself when it comes to the production and reproduction of anti-Roma stereotypes in the territory studied. Therefore, the analytic part of this study starts with a short enquiry into the perceptions of Roma as expressed by several interwar dailies (Polish, Jewish, and Ukrainian) in Lviv. It is followed by an analysis of war-time anti-Roma propaganda, and preceded by the presentation of the historical background and my analysis tools.

The General Government

The General Government (GG) comprised of parts of pre-war Poland not already incorporated into the Reich. It was a temporary creation, a quasi-statelet-in-waiting for the permanent solutions to be applied after the Nazi final victory. According to Hans Frank, the chief Nazi administrator in the GG, his mission was to “mercilessly loot this conquered war territory” and “turn its economic, social, cultural and political edifices into a pile of ruins.”¹¹ The region’s main function was to provide resources – foods, raw materials and manpower – to the Nazi war effort. The District of Galicia (DG) was added after Operation Barbarossa laid parts of Poland conquered by the Soviet Union in 1939 under Nazi occupation. It joined the districts of Cracow (capital of the GG), Warsaw, Lublin and Radom that had been established in 1939. Starting with a group of German Jews deported in 1939, and German Sinti deported from westernmost Germany before the invasion of the Low Countries and France in 1940, the GG became a veritable dumping ground for categories of unwanted population. The local Nazi administration fiercely opposed those measures, as its understanding was that the GG itself was to be cleansed of unwanted elements.¹² The GG was to be emptied of its pre-war population, with the exception of elements considered as “racially worthy”, being of “Nordic” origins. There were two general aims of the Nazi oppression: terrorizing the population in order to facilitate the management

of the territory, and the gradual decrease in numbers of the non-German population.¹³

Creation of propaganda outlets

The beginning of the Nazi occupation saw closures of pre-war press outlets; the regime saw no point in providing services not directly needed for the exploitation of the population. However, the lack of any information about the world and domestic developments proved potentially destabilizing. The need to influence the population by information management, to prevent rumors, and to stem potential unrest was realized. According to Hans Frank, the GG administration “could not just shoot 16,000,000 Poles in the back of their heads” in order to solve “the Polish question.” As long as Poles existed, his argument went, they should be made to work for Germany. Accordingly, the leadership of the GG was to somehow manage and direct the population. Propaganda disseminated by the press was one way of shaping popular attitudes. The late autumn of 1939 and the spring of 1940 saw the establishment of several propaganda outlets in the GG. As they were considered quite successful from the viewpoint of managing the population, the creation of the propaganda press in the DG immediately followed the creation of the district, its incorporation into the GG, and the introduction of the civil administration in the summer of 1941.¹⁴

The press, like all other propaganda outlets in the GG, was managed by the Department of Public Enlightenment and Propaganda in 1940, and from 1941 the Department of Propaganda at the GG’s central government in Cracow, with branches in all the five districts down to county level. In relation to the non-German population (a legal category encompassing mainly Poles and Ukrainians), its task was to explain the reasons for the war’s outbreak and to illuminate its progress, to mediate the ordinances and regulations of the GG, and to explain the historical bonds that justified Nazi German rule.¹⁵ From 1940 onwards, persistent propaganda was disseminated using leaflets, wall newspapers, and newspapers, the latter in print runs of hundreds of thousands. Cinemas and theatres soon joined the above outlets as propaganda tools.¹⁶

This propaganda’s first goal was the consolidation of power. Its receivers were shown Nazi Germany’s adversaries (mainly the Polish and the Soviet states) in a negative light, while a positive image of the emitter was given.¹⁷ At the height of Nazi rule, it was close to the goal of convincing the population that Nazi rule was forever, and the subjects of the Reich were to adapt.

The press also made it possible to simultaneously conceal and explain the ruthless exploitation of the GG’s resources.¹⁸ Another desired result was the realization that the Nazi regime would shape every aspect of life in the GG, including interethnic relations, in accordance to its will. Propaganda also aimed at establishing particular moral modes. In this

“THE CAMPAIGN’S GOAL WAS TO ENSURE THAT MOST PEOPLE WOULD REMAIN PASSIVE BYSTANDERS, AND PERHAPS EVEN FACILITATE THE GENOCIDE OF JEWS.”



Laut Prozeßakten land in diesem Zigeunerdorf bei Kaschau noch 1929 Menschenfresserei statt

"According to court files, cannibalism took place in this Gypsy village close to Kosice in 1929", the comment reads. An example of propaganda device called "card stacking" (manipulation of information by distortion and/or omission); actually, the press reported that claims of cannibalism turned out to be ungrounded. Lemberger Zeitung, June 4 1943.

context one can mention the anti-Semitic propaganda that prepared the way for Operation Reinhardt (the extermination of the GG's Jews). The campaign's goal was to ensure that most people would remain passive bystanders, and perhaps even facilitate the genocide of Jews. Propaganda also promoted racial, national, class, and all other aspects of superiority of various groups (Germans above everybody else, Poles above Jews etc.).¹⁹

Anti-Semitic propaganda

No research on anti-Roma propaganda in the GG's press has been undertaken. However, as the working hypothesis is that Roma were also to be exterminated, it is reasonable to study anti-Semitic propaganda and to look for potential similarities between the two types. Jews were frequently accused of being "parasites", constituting a "plague", and transmitting diseases, particularly typhoid fever. When the situation with food supplies deteriorated, "Jewish usurers" and "parasites" were accused of having caused it. Labelled "parasites" (*Schmarotzer*) in 1940, Jews were forced to perform physical labor in public. Everyone was to see how radically the Nazi regime was transforming the GG. The exhibition "Jews, lice, typhoid fever" opened in Warsaw in early 1941, its goal being to link Jews to accumulating and transmitting diseases. The campaign extended to the end of 1942, and was a preamble to moving the Jewish population to ghettos. The extermination of Polish Jewry was accompanied by essays, comments and accounts of anti-Jewish measures elsewhere in Nazi-occupied Europe. Those writings were supposed to stem fears among the majority population that the developments the readership was witnessing were sequential; that the Poles' (or Ukrainians') turn would come once the GG disposed of its Jews.²⁰

The newspapers studied

The propaganda outlets analyzed in this study constituted the main local and regional newspapers in Lviv and the DG

in 1941–1944 – *Lvivski Visti* (The Lviv News, in Ukrainian), *Gazeta Lwowska* (The Lwów Gazette, in Polish) and *Lemberger Zeitung* (The Lemberg Newspaper, in German). Those dailies, published mainly for the population of the district capital, were complemented by outlets published for the provincial Ukrainians of the district, such as weekly *Ridna Zemlia*, and periodicals such as *Stanislavske Slovo*, *Holos Pidkarpattia*, and *Holos Pokuttia*, among several others. Identical or very similar articles were published simultaneously in those papers, distributing the word from the center of the district to the countryside. *Gazeta Lwowska*, *Lvivski Visti* and *Ridna Zemlia* were under the Department of Propaganda control (*Abteilung Propaganda*) of the DG Government. *Lvivski Visti* and *Ridna Zemlia* (along with most Ukrainian periodicals in the DG) shared an editor in chief in the person of Ostap Bodnaryovych, who made a name as the editor of various Ukrainian periodicals in the interwar period.²¹ Around 70,000 copies of *Gazeta Lwowska* were printed daily, making it the second largest newspaper in Polish in the GG. *Lvivski Visti* had an average of 45,000 copies printed daily in 1943.²² *Lemberger Zeitung* was a renamed incarnation of the main German outlet in the GG, *Krakauer Zeitung*. The former's content was somewhat adapted to the needs of the DG, referring to the activities of the local Nazi administration.²³ Material from Telepress, the GG news agency, was distributed to Polish and Ukrainian outlets. While it constituted between 50 and 60 percent of the material, the editorial staff was left with the task of filling the remaining space using a pattern mandatory for all newspapers.²⁴ The German Press Service in the General Government (*Deutscher Pressedienst Generalgouvernement*) produced materials for newspapers and journals in German.²⁵

The material presented above is compared with accounts on Roma in the main Polish daily published in the GG, *Nowy Kurier Warszawski* (200,000 copies). This Warsaw daily offers valuable perspectives on Roma in 1940–1941, as central Poland was con-



"Das Generalgouvernement", the General Government. Since the map encompasses Distrikt Galizien (in the south-east), it is from August 1941 or later, Biblioteka Narodowa ZZK 18 760.

quered in September 1939, while what became the DG passed from Soviet to Nazi occupation in the summer of 1941.

Persecution of Roma in the General Government

Unlike in Weimar or Nazi Germany, there was no state definition or registration of Roma in interwar Poland. This posed a challenge to the rulers of the GG as they had to create their own categories and routines rather than building on institutional and judicial continuity.

The life of a Sinti or Roma was most threatened in the Reich and its incorporated territories, where up to 90 percent perished. Among German Sinti and Roma deported to the GG in 1940, around 50 percent survived. The policy shifted into sending German, Austrian and Czech Sinti and Roma to concentration camps rather than syphoning them off to the districts of the GG reluctant to receive them. Between March 1943 and August 1944, 22,600 Roma were sent to so-called *Zigeunerlager* ("Gypsy Camp") at Auschwitz-Birkenau, among them 1,273 Polish Roma. Of those Roma, 19,300 perished, 5,600 by the use of poisonous gas.²⁶

Most Polish Roma who perished in the GG were shot and/or executed in the open. They were shot by Wehrmacht, SS, police or gendarmerie, while Polish and Ukrainian police units seem to have played a minor role. Michael Zimmermann assumes that there were instructions concerning the persecution of Roma in the GG, as "the number of killings, their geographical

distribution, their timeline and the engagement of various German detachments" point to that. The killings of Roma peaked in 1942 (43 incidents) and 1943 (82 incidents), with 9 killings in 1939–1941 and 15 in 1944–1945. The peak in 1942–1943 occurs at the same time as several groups of Roma were placed in ghettos. Many were executed along with Jews when the ghettos were liquidated. All in all, the number of Polish Roma murdered or who perished as a result of harsh treatment and deplorable living conditions amounts to between 8,000 and about 13,000–14,000 individuals from a pre-war population of 28,000 or 18,000–20,000. There are no exact numbers of either the pre-war population or the total number of victims, and there is basically no way of reconstructing their numbers building on pre- and post-war censuses, as in the case of Kotljarchuk's estimates of numbers of Roma in Belarus and Ukraine on the threshold of the Second World War, and the number of victims of Roma persecution there.²⁷

In the DG, the local authorities along with police and gendarmerie shaped the policy towards Roma. A rough estimate claims a few hundred Roma were murdered in the district.²⁸ My own research shows that several hundred Roma survived in Lviv (German: Lemberg), the capital of the DG. Many of them were driven to the DG and Lemberg by persecution elsewhere in the GG. They inhabited marginal municipal areas, such as Zniesienie, that had constituted areas of Roma settlements since mid-19th century.²⁹

Secondary material: Roma in the newspapers

Newspaper content was organized according to its importance to the management of the occupied territories. For instance, the Cracow daily *Goniec Krakowski*, studied by Lars Jockheck, brought news about the military situation on the first and second pages, while regional and local news and developments were found on page 3. On the following page, there were ads. The weekend issue was usually somewhat longer, and contained more thematic columns and essays. Jockheck identifies between 26 and 43 percent of the content as "propagandistic".³⁰ The structure of *Gazeta Lwowska* and *Lvivski Visti* was similar to *Goniec Krakowski*. Ads filled page 4, war news was on page 1, sometimes spilling over to the second page, the rest of which was filled with accounts of regional and local developments, essays, and religious news that also occupied the third page.³¹ The articles on Roma appeared on pages 3 and 5 (the latter in the extended weekend issue); those were the pages with local and regional material along with essays. Ukrainian weeklies for the countryside numbered eight pages. Pieces on Roma were printed on pages 6 (local and regional developments) and 8 (news in brief, and medical advice) in *Stanislavske Slovo*. The DG regional weekly *Ridna Zemlia* published articles on Roma on page 7, reserved for miscellanea from around the world.³² In those periodicals, six pages out of eight were usually reserved for matters concerning agriculture (methods, mandatory food contingents, the need to work and contribute to the war effort) and the war effort (parts of pages 1, 2 or 3).³³

Lemberger Zeitung's articles on Roma were placed on page 3,

after the war developments on page 1 and various shorter news and notes on the second page. Page 3 was reserved for longer and supposedly analytic pieces on important issues. The political part of the newspaper ended with page 4. On further pages, regional and local news along with accounts of the doings of the German administration in the GG and the NSDAP, sport, and photos, followed.

Judging by the place assigned to them in the newspapers, the conclusion can be drawn that the Roma articles were not viewed as the most important information. However, in *Lemberger Zeitung* the pieces on Roma appeared on a page dedicated to inquiring into important issues concerning the war effort and connected topics.³⁴ This placed them in the focus of the readership. In *Gazeta Lwowska*, all pieces on Roma appeared on pages dedicated to local developments and history. This was likely to illuminate “the Gypsy problem” as a direct concern and a challenge to the readership.

The research questions and analytical tools

The approach of the study is diachronic, offering an analysis of the development of certain themes from the interwar years to the final days of the Nazi occupation.

The analysis starts by identifying the main themes found in articles on Roma before the war. Then, it goes on to analyze notes and articles about Roma in the district in 1941–1944. The questions aim at analyzing the propaganda as such, in relation to (dis)continuities with the pre-war period, the descriptions of Roma in the press, and the measures needed to come to grips with the group. What main themes in writings on Roma precede war-time Nazi propaganda? How, if at all, are they employed and modified by the propaganda outlets? What new themes appear during the war, if any? What measures, if any, should be taken? What was the intended outcome? The final question deals with the time of publication of the anti-Roma pieces. Are there attempts at radicalizing anti-Roma sentiments through the press that were synchronic with anti-Roma legislation, measures, and violence? Connecting the persecution of Roma with anti-Roma propaganda will illuminate whether the propaganda and persecution, words and deeds, went hand in hand. The period that appears will be compared with the pattern of the persecution of Jews in the GG and the DG, paving the way to understanding whether the mass killing of Roma proceeded in parallel with the mass killing of Jews.

Studying propaganda

The analysis takes as its starting point the claim that “communications in abnormal and extreme situations are characterized by generalizations combined with the use of stereotypes, labelling and value-weighted, emotionally charged attributes”.³⁵ In the analysis, the most common patterns, themes, and arguments used in the

texts are identified, and completed by showing the main tools employed by the writers-propagandists, along with the course of action inherent in the articles.

In the 1930s, the Institute of Propaganda Research (the IPR) identified a number of common propaganda devices. In this study, they are employed in order to identify the main types of the anti-Roma propaganda. The IPR analyzed propaganda in the USA, but also in other countries including Nazi Germany. Thus, the terminology applied by the IPR builds on sentiments and mentalities prevalent at the time, while also offering simplicity. Textual analysis constitutes the second step of the analysis. While the IPR propaganda devices point to the main tools employed by the propagandists, textual analysis operates on the intermediate level and explores how the problems supposedly posed by Roma were presented, and what implicit and explicit solutions could be applied. The combination of these two approaches constitutes the first attempt at formulating an analysis framework that also would be applicable in research on anti-Roma propaganda elsewhere in Nazi-occupied Europe.

There are four propaganda tricks that are of particular interest for this study. In the language of the IPR, we face phenomena such as *name calling*, *glittering generalities*, *card stacking* and *band wagon*. The first, *name calling*, refers to the condition when the propagandist wants to incite hate or fear by providing the objects of negative propaganda with unattractive labels and stigmatizing names. The audience is expected to react to the negative label, not to evidence. *Glittering generalities* means the propagandist associates himself with value-ripe “virtue words”. The emotional impression thus accomplished is supposed to trigger unthinking judgement and acceptance of the propagandist’s propositions without evaluation. The third propaganda device important for this study is *band wagon*: suggesting that the audience should accept an idea because an unspecified everybody supposedly subscribes to it. The underlying presumption is that it is more comfortable to be a member of a crowd rather than being deviant. *Card stacking* means manipulation of information by overemphasizing and underemphasizing phenomena, by distortions, omissions, and deception in general. The audience is expected to accept half-truths and sweeping generalizations, and forget inconvenient information.³⁶

In the textual analysis, I will be looking for intertextuality and assumptions. The former refers to a text’s dependence on other texts, and is often employed to accentuate difference. The latter reduces the difference by assuming common ground.³⁷ In particular, value assumptions will be of interest, as they point to what is good or desirable. At the same time, phenomena viewed as bad and undesirable will appear indirectly.³⁸ Identifying modality and statements with obligational modalities will be important. Modality refers to probabilities and obligations with reference to what is

“THERE ARE NO EXACT NUMBERS OF EITHER THE PRE-WAR POPULATION OR THE TOTAL NUMBER OF VICTIMS, AND THERE IS BASICALLY NO WAY OF RECONSTRUCTING THEIR NUMBERS.”

being said. It signals “factuality, degrees of certainty or doubt, vagueness, possibility, necessity, and even permission and obligation.” Statements containing obligational modalities are linked to evaluations of varying intensity, and suggest steps and action to be taken, while also pointing to the desirable outcome.³⁹ In the analysis, action-oriented statements will identify potential answers to “the Gypsy question”.

Although it is possible to pin down the design of the anti-Roma propaganda and its chronology with reference to anti-Roma measures in the GG, one issue remains out of reach of the researcher. It is impossible to determine whether, and to what extent, the propaganda made an actual impact on the readership. Anna Czocher has found that autobiographers looking back at their wartime lives describe the press as the easiest available source of information. They claim that most people were able to read between the lines, and follow the military developments, to read the official ordinances and various advertisements without being affected. Still, it turns out there were times when propaganda affected the readers’ perception of the world.⁴⁰ After his convincing 330-page study of propaganda in the GG, Lars Jockheck finds that “empirical data is lacking for satisfactory answers” as to the actual impact of the propaganda. In general, it succeeded much better among the Germans working in the GG, at worst contributing to their radicalization and to brutalization of policies towards the non-German population. As to the Poles, the polarity between brutal Nazi policy on the one hand, and the claims in the newspapers on the other, made popular acceptance of the propaganda improbable. Still, one of the outlets of the Polish resistance movement likened the Nazi press propaganda to poison. Although not instantly harmful if taken daily in minuscule doses, it would eventually degrade and influence recipient’s mind, it was argued. While being cautious not to make sweeping claims, Jockheck points at pre-war anti-Semitism and anti-Communism as factors that made the task of Nazi propagandists easier when matters connected to Jews or the Soviet Union were on the agenda.⁴¹

The “Gypsy” in popular imagination and in newspapers

When describing the common denominator of the diverse historical forms of the collective imaginary of the “Gypsy”, Sevasti Trubeta identifies strangeness, as expressed by the “deviant” way of life and inability to conform socially, but also “diachronic stereotypes of primitivism, presenting Gypsies as ‘parasites’ and ‘noble savages’ and additionally as ‘born wanderers’”.⁴² Adam Bartosz identifies three main contemporary stereotypical representations of Roma in the Polish press in the 2000s – “demonic”, “criminal”, and “operetta”. The first refers to supposed supernatural powers of Roma. The second “views the Roma community as an organized unit of professional criminals”. The “operetta” Roma, in turn, are depicted as romantic wanderers living for music and the love of nature.⁴³ Thus, there have been

“IT IS IMPOSSIBLE TO DETERMINE WHETHER, AND TO WHAT EXTENT, THE PROPAGANDA MADE AN ACTUAL IMPACT ON THE READERSHIP.”

common and persistent features when it comes to the collective imagination on Roma. As a group and individuals they had been viewed as deviant, culturally distinct, and potentially dangerous.

Roma in the interwar press

If Bartosz’s down-to-earth typology of writings on Roma in newspapers is applied to the interwar press, the “criminal” and “operetta” themes turn out to have been dominant. In three politically diverse Lviv dailies such as *Dziennik Polski* (“The Polish Daily”) Polish newspaper close to the ruling circles), *Chwila* (“The Moment”, Zionist newspaper published in Polish), and the National-Democratic Ukrainian *Dilo* (“The Deed”, in Ukrainian), the criminal narrative predominates. Over the years, the average reader would get the impression that most Roma engaged in, or at least were in the physical proximity of, criminal activities. Roma were usually mentioned once a crime had been suspected or committed, and likely after a police intervention. Most often, the papers referred to local and regional developments. *Dilo* frequently focused on Roma who reportedly hassled Ukrainian farmers, either by stealing crops and poultry, or by extracting money from gullible land laborers.⁴⁴ As to the “operetta” theme, there was a multitude of notes advertising “fiery” Roma music on offer in the local restaurant and cinemas, along with information on radio shows playing such music in Poland and the neighboring countries. References to a “bohemian” way of life or “Bohemians” as persons with free and unconventional social habits (*cygański* and *cyganeria* respectively) were also common.⁴⁵ No information on Roma culture outside the criminal and operetta themes was available, but the readership learnt there were different groups of Roma, with varying degrees of friendship and animosity between them. Still, Roma were the only group whose nationality was mentioned explicitly.

Two of the texts on Roma go beyond the predictable accounts of Roma misconduct. In *Dziennik Polski*, the anonymous author of “Tribe of eternal nomads” characterizes Roma men as “particularly renowned for horse stealing and trade in stolen goods.” In turn, Roma women were known to be vagrants and beggars. The group was largely illiterate, superstitious, cowardly, and lacked morals, as “the definition of evil did not exist among Gypsies.” This let them carry out their criminal doings without scruples. Roma [likely Sinti, too, as the daily makes no difference between the groups] from former German lands incorporated into Poland after the First World War constituted the highest standing group among Roma in Poland, the author maintained. The second group were the Roma from the former Austrian part of Poland, who were mainly sedentary. The third group encompassed Roma with Polish surnames and speaking Polish dialects, stemming from the former Russian part of Poland. One learns that there also were “Russo-Romanian” and Hungarian Roma in Poland.⁴⁶ After the short-lived Republic of Carpatho-Ukraine (part of Czechoslovakia prior to the German annexation in March 1939) was occupied by Hungarian

troops in 1939, *Dilo* delivered a bitter account of the welcome arranged for the Hungarian Commissar by the local administration. Since Hungary lacked popular support for the annexation, “all Jews and Gypsies were put in front of the former residence of the Ukrainian government” and instructed to cheer for the Commissar. This was done until the throats of “the Jew-Gypsies” were hoarse, *Dilo* reported.⁴⁷ Generally, the tone on Roma matters was hardly one of approval in the Zionist *Chwila*. Still, the editors did not engage in outright contempt as in the two examples above. Instead, *Dziennik Polski* took the lead, when also characterizing Roma camping on Lviv’s outskirts as “a plague”, a term recurring during the war. This was directly after information on a spike in local numbers of cases of breaking and entering.⁴⁸ In *Dilo*, one finds a litany of grievances, but no outright verbal attacks. However, it offers the only joint reference to Jews and Roma as willing tools of the enemies of Ukrainians. The Hungarian administration would use those supposedly alien (disloyal) groups, as it allegedly lacked the popular support of the “real” population. The case also constitutes the only example of combining the two groups in one negative mass, as in the war-time propaganda outlets.

The samples from the interwar period in the section above suggest at least two stereotypic themes on Roma. The first one was the one of Roma as potential criminals, villains and thieves. The second one depicted Roma as happy-go-lucky libertine characters defined by music and exotic customs. The section below shows that the former theme occurs frequently in the war-time propaganda outlets.

Anti-Roma propaganda in the war-time press

The main narrative encountered in the propaganda is that of irredeemable Roma. It can be divided into two sub-themes. The first is that of Roma as “born wanderers” (to use Trubeta’s terminology) and aliens. The fact that Roma had been itinerant up to a point of time, and most still were, was the favorite field of propagandists. From nomadism and/or the inability to adapt to sedentary life, most troubles emanated: idleness, lack of morals, and transmitting diseases. The way lay open to linking all the members of the group to negative, stigmatizing symbols, and allowed for sweeping generalizations and demonization. The Roma way of life invited criminality, the second sub-theme in the propaganda. The romanticized notions of Roma continued to flourish. They were, however, dismissed sharply as the war approached its end.

Roma as “born wanderers, aliens, idlers, parasites, and vectors”

In longer accounts, vignettes about the Indian or simply alien origins of Roma were usual. The *Lemberger Zeitung* found that Slovakia first saw Roma 500 years ago.⁴⁹ In a later account in the same daily, one learns that Roma had come to the Balkans after being expelled from India in the mid-14th century.⁵⁰ *Lvivski Visti* presented Roma as part of the “pre-Aryan” population that has plagued the Balkans since the high Middle Ages.⁵¹ However, the

Indian thread still prevailed, as claims of both *Gazeta Lwowska* and *Ridna Zemlia* show. The former found that Roma had probably been low caste in India, and that they had “swarthy mulatto faces”, while the latter informed readers that they were “organically alien” to Europe.⁵² In other words, the articles stressed the exotic and foreign origins of Roma. As several of the examples below show, the accounts of grave maladjustments to the core society continued by listing supposed Roma deviance, unaccountability, and work-shyness, while illuminating the dangers of criminality and contagion to the “host” societies. Those accounts frequently identified nomadism as the main reason.

The first mention of Roma in the Nazi occupation press in Lviv aimed at showing the readership that Roma were put under firmer control than during the Soviet occupation. Among the news on local developments, one finds that Roma have “again appeared on the streets, market squares, and in tramways of Lviv”. Their “screams and clamor” filled the streets, as they “obtrusively clung to passers-by in order to tell them their fortune”. Still, Roma were far fewer than “during the Bolshevik times”, when “whole camps” of them lived on Lviv’s streets and squares.⁵³ Thus, the reader learns that Roma brought trouble while constituting an alien body of visitors, and being a nuisance to the town’s *permanent* inhabitants. Therefore, the reference to their supposedly lower numbers is supposed to bring about a sense of relief and improvement. The last-mentioned was one among many supposed improvements, be it the tidying up of the town (after the Nazi offensive) or barring Jews from public parks.

In May 1942, the readership learned there were 55,000 Roma in Hungary “who do not want to work, but roam from place to place”. The Hungarian government had decided to separate them from the rest of the population and put them in labor camps to prevent crime and the likelihood of Roma transmitting diseases.⁵⁴ The piece gives the reader no references as to the facts, but talks about the development as a natural outcome of what is generally known: that many itinerant Roma were criminals and potential carriers of diseases. Supposedly, they performed no labor whatsoever. Thus, putting them in labor camps might appear beneficial to society; the dangerous elements would be contained, while society could celebrate the prospect of the integration of a deviant group. From an article on Roma in Slovakia, one learns that Roma would not only learn to work, but also to read and write, in specially dedicated labor camps. Contained along with their families, Roma “would not ramble”.⁵⁵ The *Lemberger Zeitung* praised the Slovak government for succeeding “in solving the Gypsy problem” where the drastic old measures of the *ancien régime* (mutilation), the ambitious program of Habsburg empress Maria Theresa and her son emperor Joseph, and the soft and misguided measures of “the Czech-Jewish” state had failed – in making the Gypsies sedentary, and teaching them to work. The important factor, the author maintains, was that the Slovak government did not accept “the false democratic idea about the equality and brotherhood of all peoples,” as one could not equate “parasites” with “hardworking people”. In Slovakia, Roma were placed in the labor camps and required to work. Roma settlements would also be removed from the main

streets, in order not to upset picnickers and resort visitors. This was a campaign to raise “the social, hygienic and ethical level” of Roma and making them sedentary. Their formerly infection-ridden colonies were on the way out, the population being adapted to “work, order and cleanliness.” It was encouraging to see Roma in clean working uniforms in the spotless camps, the author concluded.⁵⁶ Here, one can follow a “classic” repertoire on Roma as unchangeable, incorrigible over time. Itinerant Roma are identified as parasites with low social, hygienic and ethical standards. Roma settlements are described as “colonies” infested by diseases, marking their foreign and unestablished character, and a potential danger of contamination for surrounding areas. Distinctions between itinerant and sedentary Roma are blurred; they do not matter. Contrasts are at play, when claims of “work, order and cleanliness” in the camps follow those of the need to elevate the (social, hygienic and ethical) level of Roma and making them sedentary. In the process, one would contain the drifters, and their infections, and keep the streets pleasant for everybody else. In September 1942, *Stanislavske Slovo* informs readers that “Yugoslavia begins a campaign of struggle against Gypsies-wanderers”, who are not only thieves, but also “carriers of infectious diseases, particularly typhoid fever”.⁵⁷ The name of (by the time) a defunct state shows that propagandists would not go into the technical niceties and realities of the Nazi occupation and the Ustaša regime, but rather mention a place that the readership could put on a map. Nazi propaganda programmatically accused Jews of spreading diseases, particularly typhoid fever.⁵⁸ However, it is unlikely that the readers knew what measures were being undertaken: mass murder of segments of the Roma population in the so-called Independent State of Croatia (*Nezavisna Država Hrvatska*, the NDH).

The Balkans remained an important reference point. In *Lvivski Visti*, a short article entitled “The Balkan Nomads” (*Balkanski Nomady*) turns out to be a summary of a text in the Croatian weekly *Novyi Lad*. “The nomads” already constituted a problem in the 10th century in Byzantium once they had formed into a group of “various asocial types and the homeless”, and from the “pre-Aryan” population, consisting of “Mongols, Avars, Gypsies, of various racial and national roots”. The Ottoman Empire used them to hasten the fall of Serbia. Even today, one can most often see those “nomads” in Serbia, and in Bosnia and Herzegovina. The author, one Dr. Uzorinats, claims that “lack of land and lack of satisfaction with intense agriculture” made “the robber and antisocial elements – actually the most negative among the negative” join the Ottomans in their war effort against Central Europe. The former usually advanced before the main army, pillaging and robbing, turning the land into a desert. Although many among them later joined Croatian detachments, “others still remained perpetual robbers, who easily took to arms rather than to a plow”. Actually, the author maintained, “the same element” had prevailed in “the bands” of the former centuries, as in 1914, in former Yugoslavia, and in “the bands” [meaning partisans] of today. The problem thus turned from a historical into a contemporary one. Nowadays, decisive steps were being taken in Croatia “to clear the space of the Balkan nomads, who do not have anything

in common with the Croatian nation and have throughout the centuries merely proved to be a devastating factor”. The victory over the nomads would be made “easier and more likely”, the more peoples gathered themselves in the question of race, Uzorinats concluded.⁵⁹ This account went hand-in-hand with the view prevalent among race theoreticians in the NDH and the ruling Ustaša regime.⁶⁰ The Roma were depicted as alien and dangerous for at least a millennium. As both the Byzantine Empire and the medieval Serbian kingdom fell under Ottoman pressure, one may presume that “the nomads” even hastened the downfall of them both. If sedentary, the former “nomads” hardly proved to be good farmers, but regressed to violence. Before the indirect mention of the mass murder (“decisive steps”) carried out by the Ustaša regime, one finds another reference to the incorrigibility of “the bands”, as they were an alleged part of anti-Croatian and anti-Axis partisan movements. The latter statement also belittled the resistance made by the partisans to a mere expression of banditry by the supposed “nomads”.

The *Lemberger Zeitung* article “Die Zigeunerfrage im europäischen Südosten” (The Gypsy question in South-Eastern Europe) published in June 1943 drew parallels between “solving” the Jewish and “the Gypsy question”. The readers were informed that Roma had been undermining the societies “they have haunted”, and constituted “a plague”. It was not a coincidence, the author continues, that the peoples of the Balkans required a solution to “the Gypsy question” at the same time as the Jewish question was being solved on “the basis of race”. After all, Roma were “an equally important issue for a healthier population policy in South-Eastern Europe [as Jews]”. They once poured into Europe, and had “haunted” Germany, “seldom ready to work, but always inclined to earn a living by theft, robbery and deceit”. Only after the Nazi accession to power, the author finds, were convincing measures taken against them. Roma were declared an inferior race. Since they were idlers, they were expelled from the body of National-Socialist German people, “and officially treated accordingly”. Today, as the peoples of the South-Eastern Europe were striving towards the victory, it was an obligation, “to enforce the settlement and solution of the Gypsy problem with all means, just as with the Jewish question, so the creative European people would be liberated from those parasites”. According to the author, no further proof was needed that Roma were a “parasitic people” (*Schmarotzervolk*). Unlike Jews, Roma engaged in deceit and criminal activities only to scrape a living, and did not strive after prosperity and riches. However, they refused “any scheduled work”, unlike “the native cultural peoples”. By doing so while the peoples were working hard for the new order and the victory, Roma “as a race and as humans” put themselves outside “the European community”. No nation could allow itself the luxury of nurturing such subversive elements at the time when strengthened discipline was needed, the author summarized.⁶¹ Thus, one learns that Roma constituted a natural disaster of sorts and a contagion, as they “poured” into the continent, “haunting” its societies, constituting a “plague”, and being “parasites”. As they were rootless, one could not expect loyal and productive behavior from them, but

merely “theft, robbery and deceit”. In addition, Roma had deliberately put themselves outside the community of peoples in order to carry on with their life. While the Nazi Socialist measures against Roma in the Reich were positive steps, they did not suffice in the era of the life and death struggle against Bolshevism. With wording recalling medical science, the indirect suggestion is made that the infected part of the body be removed, and not merely by means of legal discrimination. “The national body” should be cleansed, given the decay Roma brought into the society. Recurring references to Jews make the necessary measures clear. Roma must disappear physically.

In *Ridna Zemlia* from summer 1944, one finds the most outspoken advocacy of solving the problems supposedly caused by Roma published in a non-German newspaper. The article echoed the tone of the *Lemberger Zeitung* from June 1943 in calling for solving “the Gypsy question” in the same way as “the Jewish question”. One learns that Roma “gushed into Europe” from Asia Minor. They were “organically alien”, and had not accustomed themselves to settled life. In the Reich, the problem has been solved by registration and control, while “Hungary has not been as lucky”. The number of Roma in Hungary was estimated at 280,000–300,000. Wherever Roma go, “they leave tuberculosis, typhoid fever and venereal diseases in the places of their recent stays”. They were also in conflict with local populations. “The New Europe” that was appearing on the ruins of “all that was antiquated, dangerous, and harmful to its peoples”, has set itself the task of solving “this problem of social-ethical order”, on which the welfare of European nations largely depended.⁶²

In the articles in the section above, one finds depictions of Roma as aliens, invaders, element of nature flooding the European civilization. Their alleged anti-social behavior depended largely on their being foreign and itinerant. There was a general assumption that all Roma were in fact nomads. If sedentary, they still made bad citizens, neighbors, workers and farmers. Being outside society (out of choice) made bandits and parasites out of Roma. They also transmitted infectious diseases when travelling. As the section below shows, all those factors made Roma criminal in the eyes of the propagandists.

Roma portrayed as criminals

The criminal narrative always overlapped with the plethora of Roma deficiencies sketched out in the previous section. The alleged criminality of Roma was rooted in their anti-social character that had defied progress over centuries.

While dismissing the validity of popular supernatural beliefs surrounding Roma over time, *Gazeta Lwowska* at the same time identified the group as “the tribe of thieves” repeatedly driven away from Lviv and its vicinities. The view of Roma cited above was behind the group’s historical “persecution”. The latter also depended on mystic beliefs, the supposed practice of child abduction, and many other misconceptions. The overall impression is that Roma had been rightly persecuted for being “dirty, dishonest,

crude”, features they, according to the author, have retained up to today. However, persecution due to “belief in Gypsy witchcraft and superstition, fear of strangers, has wrongly persisted among most of us”, one learns. As the piece referred to Roma history in Lviv since the 1480s, one gets the impression that Roma were also incorrigible over time.⁶³ While allegedly dismissing a number of stereotypes, the article amplified others and depicted them as defects constant over time. When presenting anti-Roma measures in Hungary, *Ridna Zemlia* wrote that separating Roma from the rest of the population and putting them in labor camps was “due to the high number of criminals among Gypsies”, among several other reasons.⁶⁴ In 1944, in a piece entitled “The biggest free-loaders”, *Ridna Zemlia* claimed that Hungarian statistics mirrored “the criminal behavior” of Roma, who also regularly came into conflict with the law.⁶⁵ In a similar way, *Stanislavske Slovo* claimed that putting Slovakian Roma in labor camps would prevent them from “deceiving people”.⁶⁶ From *Gazeta Lwowska*, one learns that while Tartar cries were heard in the locality in ancient times (a detachment of Tartars was defeated there in 1695), nowadays “howling and squalling of Gypsy youth which is numerous here, very numerous”, was heard. Somehow, the author maintains, Zniesienie has become “the permanent quarter of many Gypsy families”. Their adaptation to the local milieu “evokes scenes uncommon in the rest of the town”. The Roma women (“busy coquettish Gypsies”) did not walk quickly in pairs as in Lviv’s center. Instead, they constituted “a static if not characteristic feature” of the local scenery when standing in groups and talking. Roma wedding parties went on for three days, with an abundance of food and alcohol brought in by Roma women. The passers-by enjoyed the music streaming out of the windows. Turn away from the main Nowozniesieńska Street, the author instructed, and walk to Kardynał Trąba (Cardinal Trąba) Street. There, “impoverished and dirty” girls sit on the ground and play – “light-haired indigenous ones and black-haired Gypsies”; “they grow together, they play together, they know how to communicate with each other”. The author concludes that “righteous and brave” people, citizens of Lviv, inhabited Zniesienie with its orderly flower and vegetable gardens.⁶⁷ One reads that Roma are loud in a way similar to Tartars (the symbol of pillage and destruction in Polish historical imagination) in the past. What article does not explain is that Roma living on one of the streets described in the article were under suspicion of cattle theft, illegal slaughtering and breach of rules concerning the wartime economy, one of them actually serving a prison sentence at the very time the article was printed. There were several Roma living in Zniesienie.⁶⁸ In semi-urban settings such as Zniesienie,

those cases must have been a talking matter. Somehow, the news reached *Gazeta Lwowska*. One should also note the wording of the title that refers to the street bearing the name of a medieval cardinal, but uses adjective *kardynalne* (synonymous to “fundamental” or “serious”, as in “cardinal error”) rather than *kardynalskie* (referring to high Roman Catholic Church offi-

“RECURRING REFERENCES TO JEWS MAKE THE NECESSARY MEASURES CLEAR. ROMA MUST DISAPPEAR PHYSICALLY.”

cial). This equivoque was likely more than a proof of author's wit, and referred to the situation that had allegedly occurred in Zniesienie – a virtual Roma colony. The reference to wedding parties with plentiful food and drink going on for days were intended to upset readers who were likely to be worn out by malnutrition due to high food prices; general public health was declining.⁶⁹ It likely alluded to goods supposedly brought to the parties as obtained in illicit ways. The daily rather correctly described the ways the Roma women moved in the city center – in pairs, or in slightly bigger groups, as cases from the local courts from 1943 show.⁷⁰ The passage about the citizens of Lviv and orderly gardens of inhabitants of Zniesienie probably referred to the need to solve the mingling of peoples that could prove disastrous for the non-Roma population, in terms of mutually exclusive polarities of order (the non-Roma population) and disorder (Roma). The latter were bringing noise, dishonesty, and potential insecurity to the otherwise calm and orderly suburb.⁷¹ In “Particularities of old Lwów. The Gypsy Settlement”, the readers of *Gazeta Lwowska* found that Roma “make a living by chance, from the work of others, they steal and deceive out of principle and dilettantism”. They also regularly trick people when trading horses or simply steal them. Good blacksmiths as they were, Roma attempted to settle in the (then unpopulated) area on the outskirts of Lviv. Founding several smithies, they still engaged in stealing – “their natural trade” – with far greater enthusiasm. This endangered the security of other inhabitants. The suburb was unsafe; there also was a deep wheel-driven well – “the well of suicides” – where dead bodies were regularly found. It disappeared at approximately the same time as the smithy. Roma either assimilated into the population or wandered on “to continue their vagrant life”.⁷² Here, one again finds that Roma were incorrigible over time, and unable to adapt to the social mores of the majority population. Attempts at a settled and ordered life merely created an unsafe area, as the ways of Roma remained unchanged. The story about “the well of suicides” hinted that Roma engaged in darker matters than theft and deceit. While the articles in *Gazeta Lwowska* stand out as full of double meanings, and as somewhat more sophisticated when it comes to the message, the point was still that Roma could not be trusted. Under the neighborly façade, the criminal dwelled. By putting Roma in the local setting of Lviv and the vicinity, the articles in *Gazeta Lwowska* also brought “the Gypsy problem” into the direct environment of the readership, and provided it with a face, a location, and even an address.

A savage not noble: The limits of the “operetta” Roma

Somewhat surprisingly, anti-Roma propaganda in the press was paralleled by many references to the – real or imagined – aspects of Romani culture that had found their way into the musical canon. Throughout the period studied, one finds ads for concerts at cafés and restaurants attracting potential visitors with “Gypsy music” or “romances”.⁷³ *The Gypsy Baron*, an operetta by Johann Strauss the younger, was produced in 1941, just before

Carmen.⁷⁴ One finds sentimental flashbacks to past productions of *The Gypsy Baron* in Lviv in an article in *Gazeta Lwowska* that actually condemns Roma.⁷⁵ Mykhailo Tiahlyi has noted same phenomenon in the press of *Reichskommissariat* Ukraine. According to him, those musical pieces supported “romanticized popular cultural images” of Roma. They had at best a loose relationship to actual Roma culture(s). Tiahlyi believes that the idealized Roma image of popular culture obscured the real Roma in the collective imaginary of the population, thus excluding them from the public space, which in turn facilitated the mass killings.⁷⁶

A poster advertising *Gypsy Love* by Franz Lehár, an operetta staged at the Lviv Opera House, shows that the authorities did not see any contradictions between staging pieces inspired by Roma music and culture (though inaccurate), and intensifying persecution of Roma in the summer of 1942.⁷⁷ However, in 1943 a different image of the “operetta *Gypsy*” already began to appear. *Lvivski Visti* informed readers that the various “expressions” that ill-informed westerners have called “Balkan” or have counted as part of “Balkan romanticism”, have nothing in common with the population of South-Eastern Europe. Actually, it was claimed, these features constituted “roots of evil” that went back to the “nomads”.⁷⁸ *Ridna Zemlia* echoed these claims a year later, claiming that “if all Gypsy romanticism is put aside ..., the Gypsy problem reveals a picture of deep social degeneration”. The common view of Roma culture as containing romantic elements was in fact a result of “sentimental films and operettas”, and “a consequence of Jewish profiteering”. The result of this process was “glorification of the Gypsy ideal”.⁷⁹ In those two articles, one finds a departure from the dichotomy of Roma as a potential criminal and an alien on the one hand, and as a “noble savage”/“operetta Gypsy” (stereotypical but with positive elements) on the other. It turns out that predilection for even most selective and stereotyped parts of Roma culture was mistaken, as those were a smoke screen for social and moral deviance. In the latter article, one also learns that the pre-war popularity of Roma/Roma influenced music was due to Jewish interests in show business. Here, two negative narratives interact. The profiteering Jews employ the deviant and morally corrupt Roma culture in order to facilitate the decay of society and to make a profit. The “operetta Gypsy” was no more.

A Short Comparison:

Nowy Kurier Warszawski and Roma

Nowy Kurier Warszawski (The New Warsaw Courier, the NKW) featured several notes and shorter articles on Roma. In general, they followed those in the Lviv press in relation to time and themes. However, since the publication started in late 1939, an initial period when Roma matters were treated in a way similar to the interwar years can be observed. Short notices in 1940 and 1941 were comparatively positive in tone – when describing the arrival of Roma in Warsaw after the winter of

“IN THE SUMMER OF 1942 THE READERSHIP WAS INFORMED THAT ROMA WERE CONTAINED IN THE GHETTO ‘ALONG WITH THE JEWS.’”

1939–1940 as a recurring (but not unwelcome) phenomenon, and the group as productive, or questioning an account pointing at a Roma woman as a hypnotizer-thief.⁸⁰

The negative accounts and references in the NKW spiked in 1942, the year when the persecution of Roma started in the GG. Local developments and anti-Roma policies elsewhere were used interchangeably. As to the latter, one finds information about measures undertaken in Slovakia (“labor camps”, referring to same developments as *Lemberger Zeitung*), or in Bulgaria (a ban on Jews and Roma marrying “Aryans”).⁸¹ From a Romanian case, the readership learned that nomadic Roma had been sent east (the deportations of Roma to Transnistria). Roma constituted “an interesting ethnographic and social problem”, and had always been “unwanted guests” in the countries where they lived, as they refused “to adjust to the societal order”. They sabotaged Habsburg Emperor Joseph II’s well-meant attempt to make Roma become farmers. The author posed a rhetorical question concerning whether the Romanian attempt to make Roma sedentary and productive would succeed, the underlying expectation being that it would not.⁸²

As to local (Warsaw) developments, in the summer of 1942 the readership was informed that Roma were contained in the ghetto “along with the Jews”. The measure was described as necessary, as the author claimed that Roma women would often steal when telling fortunes, or simply swindle people into handing over “jewelry, clothes, [and] sometimes their whole savings.”⁸³ In a way similar to the press in the DG, one finds notices informing about cultural events containing supposedly Roma features, including a circus introducing Roma wrestlers in 1940, and a “Gypsy camp” (reportedly 15 persons), the latter in late 1943, after at least eighteen months of Roma persecution.⁸⁴ In general the NKW follows the same pattern as the DG press in relation to Roma, with radicalization occurring in 1942.

Concluding discussion

Designing the propaganda: “problems”, obligations, and measures

In the sections above, the reasons for Roma constituting a “problem” appear to be clear. However, with the notable exception of articles where Roma and Jews were mentioned simultaneously as alleged problems for society, the measures to be taken and obligations in this context appear less obvious. In the newspaper accounts, one finds numerous intertextual references. Developments in Hungary, Romania, Yugoslavia, Croatia, Slovakia, and the Reich are frequently mentioned. One also finds more unspecified entities such as “the Balkans” or “South-Eastern Europe”. It is likely those locations appeared in the texts to illustrate that Roma were dysfunctional, anti-social, and potentially dangerous everywhere one looked, and thus constituted a global problem calling for decisive measures. Those references could be important as indirectly explaining what was happening to Roma in the GG and the DG in 1942–1944 and why. At the same time, a community of European nations with shared problems and values was assumed, including the authors and the readers, that was supposedly plagued by Roma activities. A question



Operas featuring several “operetta Gypsy” themes on display at the Lemberg Opera House in May–June 1942, Biblioteka Narodowa DZS XIX A 6. At the same time, the persecution of Roma was accelerating.

underlying the complex of “problems” and “questions” was whether enough was being done locally, and whether so many measures were needed or planned elsewhere. This brings us to the matter of solutions – what should be done, and was the desirable outcome?

A number of evaluative statements with implicit and explicit obligational modalities appeared in the articles. “Screaming and clamor” mentioned by *Lvivski Visti* in December 1941 along with the supposed obtrusiveness of Roma, although hardly a threat, constituted a case of disorder calling for action. Even more so did the existence of work-shy, parasitic people who also were a potential health hazard. There was language inspired by medicine, with Roma infecting the “people’s body”. Logically, this “body” should be treated. Besides those factors, there were outright references to what form developments should take. “No nation” could nurture parasites; the peoples of the Balkans “required” a solution, it was “an obligation” to settle the problem “using all means” (my own italics), and the people “would be liberated” from parasites. The most outspoken texts also referred to Jews, clearly marking the course of events to come, as their treatment could have hardly escaped the readership. The measures as they crystalize in the texts from 1943 and 1944 are

genocidal, their objective being annihilation of Roma. Read the texts closely, and any other approach might appear as illogical, given the need to carry on with the war effort while also preserving stability.

The propaganda devices

The propaganda device that underlies all the anti-Roma articles is *card stacking*, meaning manipulation of information by blending facts and half-facts along with sweeping generalizations and unevicenced statements. The interwar press accounts on Roma were important in the process. The propagandists relied on the prevalence of negative attitudes towards Roma that could be amplified and gain new dynamics. The theme of criminal Roma, for instance, appeared in many pre-war notes and articles. However, those texts often referred to concrete events in space and time. The notes and articles contained the names of those involved, and recounted a real course of events. Roma were described as a group, *and* as individuals with their own needs, agendas, motifs and sympathies – even if in a stereotypical and overly negative way. Still, they were rarely depicted as a homogenous menacing mass. The war-time press referred to general and amorphous developments, often out of sight of the reader. This allowed for manipulation of information while using threads that had circulated in the public sphere during the pre-war period – such as supposed cannibalism or typhoid fever being spread by Roma.⁸⁵

Name calling was another important device used by the propagandists. Several negatively charged names were attributed to the whole group: aliens, idlers, criminals, and transmitters of diseases. The expectation was that the audience would embrace this terminology rather than look for evidence (that was anyway dissolved and lost in the first propaganda device discussed above). There was an expectation of communality when it came to anti-Roma sentiments. Large groups of people throughout occupied and Nazi-allied Europe were depicted as threatened, and as sharing anti-Roma attitudes – clearly an attempt to create insiders versus outsiders sentiments. This so-called *bandwagon* feature of propaganda, suggesting a majority subscribes to views proposed by the propagandist, was sometimes supported by another propaganda device – *glittering generalities*. Positively sounding but empty phrases and words such as “the European community”, “creative European people”, “the New Europe” or “victory”, aimed to make the audience embrace the ideas and measures presented in the texts without paying attention to the content or its implications.

Propaganda and genocide

The writings on Roma in 1941–1944 follow the path of radicalization of anti-Roma policies. While the first note on Roma in Lviv in *Lvivski Visti* in December 1941 is negative, but makes no references to anti-Roma measures, the tone definitely changes in 1942. In January, one learns about the treatment of Roma in Slovakia from *Lemberger Zeitung*. In February, *Gazeta Lwowska* opens its anti-Roma series that ran until November 1943. The radicalization begins at the same time as an ordinance with an anti-Roma

edge was published (January 1942) and entered into force (April 1942).⁸⁶ From the spring, a number of articles followed the above three, reaching a crescendo in *Ridna Zemlia* in June 1944 (Roma should be treated as Jews), just one month before Soviet troops entered Lviv. The persecution intensified; killings of Roma in the open in the GG in 1942–1943 accounted for 84 percent of all such executions carried out there in 1939–1945. The year 1942 also marks the beginning of groups of Roma being put into ghettos.⁸⁷ The anti-Roma propaganda and persecution paralleled *Operation Reinhardt*, aimed at annihilating the Jews of the GG. It was set in motion in March 1942, and preceded by years of propaganda. Its sheer scale and intensity have long overshadowed the mass murder of Roma in the GG.

Apart from proximity in time to anti-Roma regulations and persecution, the propaganda material on Roma is abundant with thematic similarities to the anti-Semitic propaganda in the GG. It will suffice to look at terms such as “parasites”, “plague” or the accusation of transmitting typhoid fever and other diseases. There are obvious parallels to the writing on the supposedly work-shy and parasitic Roma being put to work in labor camps, and Roma transmitting contagious diseases. Rather than orchestrating food crises and profiteering from them as Jews supposedly did, Roma were accused of not contributing to the war effort. When Jews were being mass-executed in ghettos or sent to concentration or death camps, they were frequently referred to as a “plague”, a term one finds in *Lemberger Zeitung* in relation to Roma. Accusations of spreading diseases was grave and linked Roma to Jews in the way that must have been obvious to the readership. Just like the anti-Semitic propaganda, the anti-Roma pieces analyzed above were abundant with information about Roma persecution elsewhere, outside the GG. Apart from the likely ambition to show that Roma constituted a general problem as mentioned above, another probable goal was to reassure the readership that the violent measures they were witnessing would not apply sequentially, and eventually also afflict the majority population. The findings of this study are likely to be repeated in future studies of anti-Roma propaganda in the GG, as distribution of (dis)information was centralized. ❌

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