

A 'Little' Tragedy on the Margins of 'Big Histories': The Romani Genocide in Volhynia, 1941–1944

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'Volhynia is the land of executions and punishments, the land of bloodied forests and swamps, the land of the war of all against all' (Обвіняєм 1944: 434). These words open a leaflet entitled '[We] Blame,' which representatives of the Organization of Ukrainian Nationalists of Andriy Melnyk's faction (OUN-M) disseminated in 1944 among the civilians of Volhynia. The Melnikovites (OUN-M members) in this letter blamed only the members of the OUN-Bandera faction (Banderites) for the failure of what they called the Ukrainian national revolution in Volhynia. In addition, they also blamed them for a provocative policy that generated ruthless retaliation by the German occupiers, the senseless and murderous cruelty towards the civilian Polish population, but first of all, for partisan violence towards those Ukrainians who did not support policies of the OUN-B and its armed wing, the UPA (*Українська повстанська армія*, Ukrainian Insurgent Army). By and large, however, the metaphor at the beginning of the aforementioned leaflet reflected the situation in the region much more broadly than just in relation to these groups of Volhynia's people. Some sections of the population were not specifically mentioned in this document at all. First, such unmentioned groups were not of much interest to the authors of this leaflet, and second, by the fourth year of the German occupation members of these groups in Volhynia had been almost exterminated in their entirety. This was the situation of Volhynia's Jews and Roma.

During the recent decades Volhynia is one of those regions that have attracted historians' attention for its complex and multiethnic past. One of the most complicated is the period of World War II and the fates of various groups and peoples who interacted under the harshest imaginable conditions under German occupation. To name but a few, the tragic fate and almost total extermination of the region's Jews during World War II is the focus of a book by Shmuel Spector, *The Holocaust of the Volhynian Jews* (1990), as well as numerous pieces by other German, American, Polish and Ukrainian historians, who examine the Holocaust, the Polish-Jewish and Ukrainian-Jewish relations of that time, and the German occupation policies towards the Ukrainian population. The history of Czechs, ethnic Germans, Jews and other ethnic groups in Volhynia is researched as well. Scholarly discussions focus on the Polish-Ukrainian relations, which in 1943 tragically culminated in the murderous events known as

the 'Volhynia tragedy,' though some historians prefer the term 'Volhynia massacre'. Needless to say, these topics are not limited to the activities of purely academic researchers, but regularly become a subject of heated public discussions, including political misuse of the difficult past. Yet, the fate of Volhynian Roma, one of the smallest groups in the region, seems to have remained overshadowed by grand and national master narratives that are steeped in large-scale events. This situation is all the more bitter in view of the fact that despite its small number and low social visibility, this group experienced almost total annihilation during the Nazi occupation of the region.

The historical region of Volhynia used to belong to various states. In the 20th century alone, Volhynia was part of the Russian Empire until 1915. Then the region found itself under the Central Powers' occupation. After World War I, armies of the Ukrainian People's Republic, Poland and Soviet Russia struggled for these lands. Between 1921 and 1939, most of the historical region became a Volhynian Voivodeship in interwar Poland. Subsequently, at the beginning of World War II, under the terms of the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact, the Soviet Union annexed the region.

The ethnic composition of the population of the Volhynian Voivodeship (administrative region) can be indirectly calculated from the materials of the 1931 Polish census. This census did not record ethnicity, but rather the native language and religious affiliation of respondents. Volhynian scholar Yuri Kramar provides the following figures. In 1931, the Ukrainian population amounted to about 1,418,000 persons (68% of the voivodeship's population), while the Polish population to 346,640 (16%). More than 90% of the Ukrainians lived in the rural *gminas* (administrative communes) and worked in agriculture. The vast majority of the region's Poles also lived in rural areas (277,000, or 80.5%). Unlike Volhynian Ukrainians, the region's Poles constituted the governing and intellectual elite. The Jewish community of Volhynia numbered 205,519 persons, which amounted to about 10% of the voivodeship's population. The Jews were busy mostly in trade and small crafts (about 80%). German 'colonists' (or rather descendants of such mainly Protestant colonists from the turn of 19th century) constituted the fourth group (46,883 Germans, approximately 2.2% of the total population). There were more than 300 German 'colonies,' that is, ethnic villages. The 1931 census recorded an increase in a similar type of 'colonists,' namely Czechs (Bohemians), who numbered 30,977, or 1.3% of the Volhynian population. They mostly earned a living in agriculture. The census also recorded 23,387 ethnic (Orthodox) Russians in western Volhynia. From the confessional perspective, Orthodox Christians constituted 69.8% of Volhynia's inhabitants. Most of them were Ukrainians (1,379,841; 80%), while Russians

(22,771) and some Czechs (21,584) accounted for the rest. Roman Catholics (15.7%) amounted to Volhynia's second largest confessional group, which encompassed mostly Poles. About 7,000 Czechs also belonged to this denomination. Jews (10%) constituted the third largest denomination (Крамар 2015: 28–38).

Since the 1931 census recorded the population according to native languages and religions rather than ethnicity, the question of the number of Roma in the region remains unclear. It is unlikely that their numbers exceeded a few thousand individuals. Probably some of them were registered as Roman Catholics or Orthodox. It is sure that apart from the Polska Roma (Rom. 'Polish Roma') group, some Kalderash and Vlachs (see below) lived in Volhynia, too. Some scarce evidence also points to Ukrainian-speaking Roma. Probably most of the Volhynian Roma led a seminomadic way of life as itinerary tradesmen. Some also settled in the towns, earning a living through unskilled labor, small-scale trade or entertainment. Yet, others lived in the villages, where they either engaged in blacksmithing and horse-breeding or in agricultural work.

At the same time, interwar Poland, including Volhynia, was the area in which attempts were taken to establish modern-style Roma political institutions; if not an international Roma association, then at least a Romani national representation that the Polish authorities would recognize. The extended Kwiek clan of the Roma subgroup of the Kalderash proclaimed themselves kings of Poland's all Roma. They also sought to dominate the Roma communities in Romania and Czechoslovakia. The clan's influence covered Volhynia. In 1936 a convention of Poland's Roma communities was planned in the Volhynian town of Równe (today, Rivne in Ukraine) to create a statewide Roma organization (Gontarek 2020: 336–345; Klímová-Alexander 2005: 177–185; Kapralski 2018: 215–240). The leaders of the Roma community planned to approach the Polish authorities in order to obtain a tract of land in the Polesia Voivodeship (north of Volhynia) for the Roma to settle down as farmers. The convention never took place. A year later, Janusz Kwiek was crowned King of the Polish Roma. He faced strong competition from relatives trying to delegitimize his power among Poland's Roma. Particularly, Basil Kwiek, who represented mostly eastern Roma communities, declared in Volhynia's administrative capital of Łuck (Lutsk, today in Ukraine) that Janusz Kwiek did not even have the right to bear the surname Kwiek. Basil also announced a verification action aimed at separating the real Kwieks from those who assumed this name illegally. The outcomes of this story were quite ambiguous. On the one hand, for the first time in history, thousands of ordinary Romani community members (almost all of them males) became involved in political activities. On the other hand,

as Alicja Gontarek argues, all these activities had a destabilizing effect on the Romani community in Poland, contributing to its even greater atomization (Gontarek 2020: 342).

For many ethnic groups of Volhynia, the wartime and postwar Sovietization meant a radical breakdown and transformation of the established way of life. The Sovietization entailed the prohibition of political parties, the liquidation of private commerce, the expropriation of private property, the nationalization of the financial and commercial sector, and the destruction of the existing religious and communal institutions. Deportations of entire ethnic groups (or segments thereof) to the eastern territories of the USSR were implemented. The victims stemmed from all Volhynia's ethnic groups, as long as their social and property status did not conform to the Soviet norms. According to preliminary estimates, from September 1939 to June 1941 in the Soviet-occupied regions of Poland more than 109,400 Polish citizens were arrested (Hryciuk 2007).

It is reasonable to assume that some of the well-to-do Roma also underwent expropriation and, possibly, deportation into the Soviet hinterland. So far, there has been no available statistics on the Roma deported from Volhynia, although the online database 'Реабілітовані історією' (Rehabilitated by History) provides data on the Roma repressed in Soviet Ukraine in the 1930s.¹ The Soviet security apparatus obviously did not bypass this small minority. In the spring of 1941, the NKVD learned from a Romani agent that the 'thieving groups of Roma robbers (including Janusz Kwiek, crowned in Warsaw in 1937 as King of the Roma)' were present in the recently annexed western regions of the USSR. Another Rom from the Kwiek family was recruited by the NKVD and sent on a mission. He fetched a group of Roma (with the aforesaid Janusz Kwiek) to his home in one of the villages in what is now the Ukrainian region of Ivano-Frankivsk (earlier Stanislav, and Stanisławów in Polish). As a result, the NKVD arrested Janusz Kwiek and six of his companions (of whom only one had a different last name). During the search, the officers confiscated a silver chain with a cross weighing four kilograms, identified by them as 'a distinctive sign of the chief judge of the Roma.' An investigation was opened in connection to the arrested individuals with the purpose of establishing if they engaged in espionage, sabotage and other criminal activities' (Спецсообщение о задержании цыганского короля Януша Квека и его соучастников 1941: 118–121). This episode demonstrates how the Soviet authorities were trying to establish

1 *Реабілітовані історією* (Rehabilitated by History) is a state-sponsored program to prepare and publish a series of books on Ukraine's regions that contain information about the people who were subjected to political repressions between 1918 and the late 1989. Cf. <http://www.reabit.org.ua/>.

strict control over Roma, like over any other ethnic group, in order to be able to manipulate the political situation and views within various strata of the population.

Soon after the beginning of Operation Barbarossa on 22 June 1941, German troops occupied Volhynia. For a better understanding of the fate that soon befell the region's Roma, it is necessary to dwell in detail on the killing infrastructure created by the occupiers, that is, to describe the main power structures, their areas of authority and the ways in which they communicated decisions. For the initial two months, Volhynia was under the Wehrmacht's control, but beginning in September 1941 a *Generalbezirk* (General District) of Volhynia-Podolia was formed. It corresponded in the north to the present-day regions of Khmelnytskyi, Rivne and Volyn, alongside part of the regions of Ternopil and Vinnytsia. This German administrative unit also included Pinsk and Brest districts of present-day Belarus. Heinrich Schöne, in his capacity of Generalkommissar administered the district. It was part of *Reichskommissariat Ukraine* (hereafter RKU), which, together with the *Reichskommissariat Ostland* (today's Belarus and Baltic republics of Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania) was subordinated to the German Ministry for the Occupied Eastern Territories in Berlin (hereafter RMfdbO) under Minister Alfred Rosenberg's leadership. Each *Generalbezirk* was in turn composed of *Kreisgebieten* (or simply *Gebieten*), of which there were about 25 in each district. In addition to the German civil administration, the occupation authorities established local government bodies, corresponding to Soviet *raions*, alongside municipal and village administrations. Local people, often Ukrainians, were appointed as such low-level administration units' heads. The lowest level of government was composed of village administrations, typically headed by elders. Crucially, these elders were responsible for security in their villages, execution of orders of the civilian administration, registration of inhabitants, or fulfilling the Germans' economic and agricultural demands.

In addition to the civilian administration, the territorial police authorities were established. Ultimately, the police force was placed under SS *Reichsführer* Heinrich Himmler's control. Hans-Adolf Prützmann was appointed Higher SS and Police Leader (*Höherer SS und Polizeiführer*, HSSPF) of the *Reichskommissariat Ukraine* in December 1941. In the Volhynia-Podolia General District, SS-*Brigadeführer* Gerret Korsemann became SS and Police Leader of Volhynia (*SS- und Polizeiführer Wolhynien*, SSPF) in September 1941. Korsemann also served as Chief for the district commanders (KdS) of the Security Police (*Sicherheitspolizei und des Sicherheitsdienstes*, Sipo-SD) and as Chief for the district commanders (KdO) of the Order Police (*Ordnungspolizei*, Orpo). The police investigated political cases and acts of sabotage, carried

out arrests, searches, identified members of the resistance, participated in the extermination of the Jews, and imprisoned local people in concentration camps.

In the rural areas there were gendarmerie departments within the Sipo-SD or Orpo. Local people staffed auxiliary police units subordinated to these departments. As a result, all the Ukrainian policemen amounted to about 1 % of the region's total population; each German policeman was assisted by up to five-ten Ukrainian ones (Олійник; Завальнюк 2012: 59). Mass desertions of the Volhynian Ukrainian policemen into the forests to join the Ukrainian Insurgent Army (UPA) occurred in the spring of 1943. In turn, the occupiers formed Polish police units as a replacement, which fuelled the ethnic division and strife across Volhynia.

The occupation authorities implemented a policy of looting and terror in the region. In the second half of 1941 the Jews suffered massive and brutal losses at the Germans' hands, described in historiography as the first wave of the Holocaust. Overall, in the Ukrainian lands that were transferred to the RKU around 300,000 Jews were killed during that period. Still, the cases of massacres of Roma during this time are unknown.² In early 1942, approximately a similar number of Jews were still alive in the RKU, the overwhelming majority of whom resided in General District Volhynia-Podolia (Pohl 2008: 43). The initial months of 1942 were a time of relative calm in the murderous actions of the German occupation authorities (with a few exceptions). From May 1942 onwards, however, a second wave of bloody violence swept across Volhynia, involving the liquidation of the remaining Jewish ghettos and the total extermination of the Jewish population. It was within this period that Roma were destined to become the second target of the Germans' genocidal activities. Let us examine the reasons behind the events.

German Decision-Making Process regarding Volhynia's Roma

The known attempts to 'justify' extermination for 'solving' the 'Gypsy question' were voiced by the German civilian administration already in the

2 This makes the situation in Volhynia different from what happened to Roma in the neighboring regions, where the *Einsatzgruppen* in cooperation with the police carried out acts of violence against Roma immediately after occupying these territories. For example, already in late summer and early autumn 1941, several mass killings of nomadic Roma took place in the Belarusian-Lithuanian border region and continued in Belarus later on (Cf. Bartash 2020: 32–33; Бессонов 2020: 118, 120, 123). The reasons of relative safety, as experienced by Roma in Volhynia, at that time needs to be explored.

fall of 1941. Yet, they took place not in *Reichskommissariat Ukraine*, but in the neighboring *Reichskommissariat Ostland*. In December 1941 the Reich Commissioner for Ostland (*Reichskommissariat Ostland*, or RKO) Hinrich Lohse directed Himmler's attention to the 'problem' created by itinerant Roma as a group supposedly unfit for labor and responsible for spreading diseases. On 4 December 1941, Lohse issued a decree that presented the Roma as a 'dual threat.' Arguing that Roma caused harm to the Germans also by sharing sensitive information with the enemy, Lohse concluded that 'they need to be treated in the same manner as the Jews' (Lewy 2000: 123–124). However, it took half a year longer to develop a uniform German policy towards the Roma in the East (or the territories gained from the Soviets after 1941). In June 1942 Otto Bräutigam, an official at the RMfdbO, inquired about the status of the Roma in *Reichskommissariat Ostland*: 'In particular, I request your opinion on whether the Gypsies are to be treated like the Jews. Also of interest is information on how the Gypsies there [in the Baltic states] live, whether the Gypsies are sedentary or itinerant, whether and which occupations they hold and whether the number of *Zigeunermischlinge* ['racially mixed Roma'] is substantial.' According to Guenter Lewy, the RKU received the same inquiry (Lewy 2000: 125).

However, an archival search shows that the authorities of *Reichskommissariat Ukraine* – and primarily the General District of Volhynia-Podolia – were also concerned with the 'Gypsy question' earlier than it had been dealt with in Berlin. Let us examine two important documents. Their importance, in my opinion, is so essential that they require citing in full. Both documents were found in the state archives of the present-day Ukrainian provinces of Volyn and Rivne, that is, those regions that in 1941–1944 constituted a significant part of the General District of Volhynia-Podolia.

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Copy!

Reichskommissariat Ukraine, Rowno [Rivne], May 8, 1942

II a

To the General Commissioners [in] Brest-Litowsk, Zhitomir, Kiev, Nikolaew and Dnepropetrowsk

Re: Treatment of Jews [sic]

Gypsies generally should be treated like Jews. The order to place them in the ghetto will follow.

Acting

Signature: Dargel

Registrar President

The copy is correct: [indecipherable] (Dargel 1942).

* * * * *

This document was found in the collection of the *Gebietskommissariat* of Lutsk, one of the *Kreisgebieten* in the General District of Volhynia-Podolia. This fact, as well as the ink stamp on the document, indicates that this initial order from the RKU was indeed rather a circular that had already passed down through at least two higher levels of administration, namely, from the *Reichskommissariat* down to the General District of Volhynia-Podolia, and from the latter down to the *Gebietskommissariat* of Lutsk. A document of exactly the same content was recently discovered in the archival collection of the *Gebietskommissariat* of Rowno (Rivne). Therefore, one can assume that the same order was received by the general commissars in Kiew (Kyiv), Nikolaew (Mykolaiv), Dniepropetrowsk (Dnipro) and Zhitomir (Zhytomyr) and passed down to their respective *Gebietskommissariats*. The document was signed by Paul Dargel, who, from 1 November 1941, headed Main Department II (Administration) of the RKU. In 1942 Dargel was nominated to the post of the permanent deputy to *Reichskommissar* of Ukraine Erich Koch.

Based on this document, several conclusions can be drawn. First, the civilian authorities of the RKU did not make any distinction between sedentary and nomadic Roma, unlike their colleagues from *Reichskommissariat Ostland*. In *Ostland*, in December 1941 only 'Gypsies who roam across the country' (that is, nomadic Roma) were equated in status with Jews.

Secondly, it is obvious that May 1942 constituted the temporal borderline, when Roma were singled out from among the rest of the RKU population. We do not know of any earlier document that would prescribe any special treatment for Roma. The same document creates a legal framework, which had to be followed by the local authorities. Thirdly, this order unequivocally equated the status of Roma with that of Jews across the RKU. As a result, Roma, like Jews, were to be incarcerated in ghettos. Most likely, this did not mean separate places of isolation for Roma only, but rather placing them in the already established Jewish ghettos. It is revealing that, while the document discusses the measures related to Roma, its subject, obviously by mistake, states that it concerns Jews. Regardless of the bureaucratic error (either committed by an official or a typist), it shows that in the minds of the civilian authorities the policy regarding both groups – Jews and Roma – was the same or very similar.

The anti-Jewish policy of the Nazis in the RKU, and particularly in Volhynia, was already examined in detail by many researchers. As scholarship shows, with few exceptions, RKU *Gebietskommissars* began establishing ghettos between December 1941 and April 1942. Ghettoization in the RKU in March and April 1942 affected primarily Volhynian Jews (Pohl 2008: 46). This may explain why the second sentence in this circular sent out from the RKU's capital in Rowno (Rivne) to the general districts mentioned the soon-to-be-scheduled

sending of Roma to the ghettos. Precisely the same measures were carried out by the civilian administration in regard to the Jewish population at the time.

In late spring 1942, the situation of Jews in the RKU was gradually becoming even more tragic. Around 20 May, a new wave of mass murder was launched in the General Districts of Volhynia-Podolia and Zhytomyr, and by late summer, it swelled into the total destruction of almost every single Jew in the RKU (Pohl 2008: 48). In the summer and autumn of 1942, most of the region's Jews had been already killed; the few remaining able-bodied Jews were left for labor exploitation.

What was happening to Volhynia's Roma at this time? Were they really placed in ghettos? There is no documentation on this issue in the known archival material from the RKU. However, we have at least one group of sources showing that events were going in a more merciful manner for Roma in Volhynia-Podolia with its administrative center in Brest-Litovsk. On 22 April 1942, the administration of the *Kreisgebiet* of Kostopol (today Kostopil' in Ukraine) reported to the *Generalkommissar* of the Volhynia-Podolia that during the past days 92 Roma had been arrested and placed in the labor camp in Ludwipol (today, Sosnove near Berezne in Ukraine). Kostopol *Gebietskommissar* Löhnert reported that the 'Gypsies' are a 'heavy burden' for the camp, since they were 'heavily infested with lice' and there were old people and children among them. He asked *Generalkommissar* for instructions on how to proceed with these Roma (Відомчий вісник: 56). On 9 May 1942, the *Regierungsrat* (Administrative Council) of the Volhynia-Podolia district replied to Kostopol that general instructions on the treatment of Roma would soon be given (Відомчий вісник: 61). Probably, after receiving the RKU order of 8 May 1942, *Generalkommissar* of Volhynia-Podolia, Heinrich Schöne, signed the following reply on 15 May 1942: 'All itinerant Gypsies in the general district should be detained and fixed (*festzusetzen*) [that is, concentrated in one place]'. If necessary, they should be sent to useful work, while their carts and horses and the like taken away (*sicherzustellen*) (Протоколи засидань: 66). This document did not contain information about its addressee, thus, it is unclear whether it was forwarded only to the Kostopol commissar or to all *Gebietskommissars* in Volhynia-Podolia. However, the measures were prescribed only for nomadic Roma and did not imply their murder.

On 21 May 1942 – probably in order to familiarize all the subordinate authorities with this resolution – another order signed by Schöne and titled 'Wandering traders and Gypsies' was sent out from the General Commissariat of Volhynia-Podolia to all the *Gebietskommissariats* and the municipal commissariat of Brest-Litovsk. The document read, '[...] All vagrant traders should

be arrested immediately because they are spreading rumors. All nomadic Gypsies should be immediately fixed. Horses and carts are to be confiscated and transferred for rational use' (Відомчий вісник: 72). These orders indicate that at least in one of the RKU's six general districts (relevant documents for the remaining five ones are still unknown), the district authorities implemented the central RKU decree by narrowing the concept of 'Gypsies' to those who could be defined as leading a 'wandering' lifestyle. Sedentary Roma were yet not to be affected.

However, a month and a half later, a new initiative was launched regarding Roma. We have at our disposal a series of documents from the lowest – *raion* – level of the RKU administration in the town of Vysotsk in the Stolin kreisgebiet. This cache of correspondence consists of ten documents. The earliest is the order of the chairman of the Vysotsk raion, dated 10 July 1942 and addressed to the rural administrations subordinated to Vysotsk. They were required to provide, in accordance with the order received a few days earlier from the *Gebietskommisariat*, information about the presence of Roma in the villages. The other documents are the village elders' replies, all informing that there were no Roma in the territory under their jurisdiction. Here is the inquiry:

* * * * *

Raion administration in Vysotsk

Department: org.[anizational]

10.VII.1942

No. 9/42

To the heads of village administrations

In accordance with the order of *Herr Gebietskommissar* dated 7 July 1942 I order to send immediately, by a special courier, the lists of the Gypsies who are on your territory – both passers-by and permanent residents. Provide these lists in the following form:

1. Surname and name.
2. Patronymic.
3. Year of birth.
4. Place of birth.
5. Since when [s/he] has been living in the village.
6. Occupation (profession).
7. How much land he has.
8. When he arrived to the village.
9. Where he came from.
10. Pure-bred Gypsy or mixed one.

If there are no Gypsies in or around the village, you should also inform the district administration that there are no Gypsies.

Deadline is 15 July 1942.

District Chairman (Справки сельских голов о наличии цыган в селах: 3).

* * * * *

What does this document say about? First, the fact that the Roma began to be of particular interest to the occupation authorities (similar in this respect to the Jews, for whom a ‘special treatment’ was envisaged as well). It should be noted that the registration of Roma in this case was not part of a general registration in relation to the region’s entire population. In the rural areas in the RKU, all residents, as a rule, were registered by the elders of rural communities at the beginning of the occupation in accordance with the ‘Office instructions for elders and town mayors regarding the registration of the population and the issuance of identity cards.’ According to this instruction, all residents of a village had to be registered on a single list, except for ‘Jews,’ partisans, captured Red Army soldiers, criminal elements and members of the Communist party. All of these groups were to be registered on a ‘special list.’ During this first registration wave, Roma were not singled out as a separate category. Therefore, in July 1942, a separate registration list had to be launched exclusively for them.

Secondly, it can be assumed that this document is a result of the implementation of the RKU order signed by Paul Dargel on 8 May 1942, and of the order issued by the Volhynia-Podolia district on 21 May, as discussed above. The document in question confirms that the request from the RMfdBO in June 1942 to *Reichskommissariat Ostland* was indeed sent to the RKU, as well. Indirectly, this is evidenced by the similarity of the questions in the letter from Otto Bräutigam with the inquiry sent to the Vysotsk district administration. Both letter and order request not only statistics on the number of Roma, but also information about their way of life (either ‘nomadic’ or ‘sedentary’), about professional occupations and, most importantly, whether they were ‘pure-bred or mixed Gypsies.’ This last point most clearly indicates that the registration in Vysotsk was not the initiative of the local administration, but was an inquiry from Berlin. It clearly follows the tenets of official *Rassenkunde* (‘science of race’), in accordance with which the policy against Roma was then pursued in the Third Reich. It is likely that somewhat different policies were developed for ‘pure-bred’ and ‘mixed’ Roma in Ukraine, like elsewhere in wartime Germany. Also noteworthy is the inclusion of the patronymic in the list of required information. This may be evidence of an attempt to trace the personal genealogy of registered people. However, another explanation is more likely, namely, the patronymic was required for the identification of persons in the bureaucratic tradition of the Russian Empire and, subsequently, in the USSR.

Thirdly, the letter from the Vysotsk district administration mentions the order of the *Gebietskommissar* of *Kreisgebiet* Stolin. Documents that would tell us about the implementation of such requests by other *raion* administrations in *Kreisgebiet* Stolin, or in other *Kreisgebiets* of the General District

of Volhynia-Podolia have not been found yet. However, it is unlikely that the German administrative campaign to collect information about Roma was initiated only in a single *Kreisgebiet*. Most probably, it was a large-scale action to collect data on all the Roma living in the General District of Volhynia-Podolia, if not all over the RKU. If so, this data would play an important role in the shaping of the RMfdBO's policy on the 'Gypsy question.'

Summing up, in the spring and summer of 1942, the Roma were singled out by the German civilian authorities as a group, for which the authorities developed a specific policy. The sedentary Roma were to be registered. With regard to the nomadic Roma, the intention was to settle them in some place and use for forced labor, often entailing detention in a camp.

The Situation on the Ground

Nevertheless, the situation on the ground was much more complex than it seems from the correspondence and administrative decisions on the 'Gypsy question' as communicated by the German civilian authorities to different levels of the territorial administration. Besides establishing the occupation rules and embarking on a variety of initiatives, the RKU officials were mainly responsible for the economic exploitation and the management of everyday aspects. Meanwhile it was the SS-police formations (Sipo-SD and Orpo), who carried out mass murders for the sake of 'solving' the 'Gypsy question'. The Sipo-SD and Orpo were formally subordinated to the respective RMfdBO structures. However, Reichsführer SS Heinrich Himmler was the ultimate commander for these forces. This section compares the civilian administration's instructions and the actual outcomes of the German policy. A careful analysis of German agencies' reports, the postwar Soviet documentation of Nazi crimes, survivor testimonies and eyewitness accounts enables such a comparison.

In reality, beginning in April 1942, both nomadic and sedentary Roma in the RKU, including the General District of Volhynia-Podolia, became the target of systematic extermination. The earliest case of a mass murder of Roma in Volhynia can be dated back to April 1942, though it was recorded later. This is an emotional, horrifying description of how the German gendarmerie and local police executed Roma near the town of Lokachi (Łokacze in Polish). This account was written by Jewish author Michael Diment, who later survived the liquidation of the ghetto in the same town.

On April 16, the Judenrat [Jewish ghetto administration, MT] was asked to supply 30 strong men with shovels on the following day. This immediately panicked everyone. Why suddenly with shovels? Every conversation was concerned with the following day and the coming events, trying to determine where they would be sent. At 5:00 AM the Wachmeister [correct: *Wachtmeister*, here: local German gendarmerie commander, MT], in Gestapo uniform, followed by 10 militiamen [local auxiliary police, MT], took the 30 men. All headed in the direction of Koslov [today, Kozliv]. We were scared; our eyes followed them. They went to a hill near a brick factory. There they stopped. Near the factory, waiting since the previous day, were wagons filled with Gypsies. The peasants had told us all about this in the 'park.' A short while later we heard the sound of shooting and terrible screaming. We were confused. What was happening there? The screams abated, but the shooting did not stop. Moshe Schwartz came into the ghetto. Frightened, he said, 'I came for an additional 10 men who are needed to help bury the slain Gypsies.' At noon the entire detail returned, dirty, tearful and very bitter.

The strong men who returned from the carnage told about the 114 Gypsies the Germans rounded up in the villages and brought to the mountainside, promising to provide them with all their needs: food, land and shelter. They were told that they were [being] settl[ed] down so that they would no longer need to go begging for food in the villages. The militia described how the Gypsies danced with happiness: singing and playing their violins all through the night, along with their children who were dressed in new clothes.

In the morning when the militia came, all the Gypsies were asleep. They were quickly awakened and asked to line up near the mountain, presumably to be counted. When all of them were standing, the Ukrainian militia's commanding officer ostensibly went to turn the command over to the Wachmeister, but when he walked far enough away, the shooting by the Wachmeister and other hidden militia started. The Gypsies could not escape; they were against the wall. Small children trying to get away, hid under their mothers' dresses and this was how they were killed. Babies were shot by the killers, going from crib to crib. Immediately after the slaughter, the militia ransacked the bodies for valuables. We dug large holes, collected the bodies and threw them into a mass grave. Some were still alive.

The horrifying events and the terrible ordeal of the Gypsies stirred the ghetto into a frenzy of terror (Diment 1992: 76–78).

This event finds its corroboration in the recent testimony of a local Ukrainian dweller who was a 9-year boy at that time (YIU testimony 1480). However, he says that the killing of Roma took place after the Jewish ghetto was destroyed, which actually took place in September 1942. Maybe this is the reason why he does not remember who was used by the perpetrators to bury the bodies. Diment's testimony looks more credible.

This detailed fragment can serve as a description of one of the typical ways of killing of nomadic Roma.

- (1) The murder was organized by German occupiers from the SS-police structures;

- (2) direct killing could be carried out either by the Germans themselves, or by the Germans with the assistance of the local police, or only by the local police;
- (3) captured Roma, as a rule, were not placed in isolated locations for a long time, but were shot immediately or after a short period of time;
- (4) if the victims were buried at all, the perpetrators used for this task the forced labor of the local population or even Jews from the nearest Jewish ghetto.

In addition, Diment's account provides us with a unique view of this event through the eyes of a representative of another victim group. Hence, the Jewish author displays empathy to the Roma victims and evokes emotional details that typically lack in witness accounts provided by non-Roma. In some cases, and quite importantly for that matter, massacres of Roma are known only because they were recorded in sources of Jewish origin.

The following excerpts on Roma massacres provide a detailed picture of how Roma were exterminated in Volhynia in the subsequent months. On 2 June 1942, German gendarmes executed 64 Roma in the village of Shylovoda (Отчет BDO³ 1942: 29). On 17 August 1942, a German Security Police unit in Rowno (Rivne) reported that 76 Roma had been subjected to 'special treatment' in Kamin-Kashyrskyi (Kamień Koszyrski in Polish) and Kovel (Kowel in Polish) (Круглов 2009: 98). Prior to the mass execution, Jewish and Romani prisoners were incarcerated in the same concentration camp. The murder of an unknown number of Roma took place near the same site where part of Kovel's Jewry had already been exterminated. The location was a sand quarry near the village of Bakhiv (Bachów in Polish), as confirmed by two local Ukrainian eyewitnesses (YIU testimonies 525, 532).

The ChGK (Soviet Extraordinary State Commission for the Investigation of the Atrocities of the German Fascist Invaders and their Accomplices) further documented the mass murder of some 200 Roma in Sarny (50 kilometers east of Kovel) on 26 August 1942 (Акт ЧГК Сарны 1944: 24, 69). On the same day, ten kilometers northwest of Sarny, a group of 15 Roma 'who had lived in the forest' were executed in the village of Voronky (Woronki in Polish) in the District of Volodymyrets (Włodzimierzec in Polish) (Акт ЧГК Воронки 1945: 4).

In 1942, 85 Roma were put to death in the town of Ratne (Ratno in Polish), 40 kilometers north of Kovel (Акт ЧГК Ковельский район 1944: 89). The

3 BDO (Bund Deutscher Osten, Confederation of the German East) was a Nazi organization founded in 1933. Meant to mobilize ethnic Germans across the "German East," i. e. the regions that had German settlers.

150 Romani men, women, and children who had been arrested in Kovel were executed after three days spent in a local concentration camp (Акт ЧГК Ковель 1944: 32). In Volodymyrets District of Rivne Province, not far from the village of Stepanhorod (Stepangród in Polish), 40 kilometers northwest of Sarny, the Germans hunted down and executed 15 Roma who had been hiding in the forest (Акт ЧГК Владимирец 1945: 8). One more mass killing of Roma was documented by the ChGK in the town of Berestechko (Beresteczko in Polish), 30 kilometers south of Lutsk. It was reported that 60 to 195 Roma were ‘rounded up from the neighboring villages’ and killed in November 1942 (Начальнику Волинского ОГА УМВД 1946: 1–2).

The paucity and brevity of archival sources is to some extent compensated by information drawn from the memoirs of Polish Roma who survived the persecution,⁴ alongside non-Roma’s eyewitness accounts. Edward Dębicki’s memoir presents a detailed description of the massacre of about 40 Roma families in the spring of 1942, several kilometers away from Berestechko. Three Roma survived the destruction of their caravan (that is, a family group). One of them testified:

Early in the morning the Germans came and took away several young men. They drove them out behind the village and ordered them to dig a deep hole in the field, about 30 meters long and two meters wide [...]. At twelve o’clock the villagers saw a large group of Gypsies led by the Germans. They were walking quietly, but it was obvious that they were very frightened. When they [the Germans] led them [the Roma] to this pit, all hell broke loose. They ran as fast as they could, but soon rifle bullets were catching up [with] them. The women got down on their knees, kissed the feet of their tormentors, and begged for their lives. When that didn’t work, they stood over the pit, clutching their small children to their chests, and fell into the grave with them. When the massacre was over, the Germans ordered the men to quickly fill in the pit. Some of the wounded were still alive, but the Germans paid no attention to this and ordered the peasants to fill in the ground. When they left, the earth on the grave was still moving for about 15 minutes (Dębicki 2004: 61–62).

One survivor, who managed to escape, also left a testimony about the destruction of a family caravan near Horokhiv (Horochów in Polish), 15 kilometers northwest of Berestechko. This is one of rare survivor accounts that mentions sexual violence against Romani women.

The cars had not yet had time to stop, and the Nazis were already jumping down and shouting ‘*Hände hoch!*’ We started to run away. Those who managed to run

4 For a more detailed survey of the testimonies by Polish Roma who survived persecutions in Volhynia, cf. Semczyszyn (2020: 311–313).

quickly into the woods escaped, the rest were caught. The elderly women, men, and children were put in two cars, and only girls and beautiful young women were taken to a separate car. The two cars went in the other direction, and the one with the women in it went into town. As we found out later, they killed everyone outside the village, near the woods, they took the girls for their amusement, and later they were killed too. Only five families left (Dębicki 2004: 77).

After August 1942, several Romani families ('two carts') were killed near the village of Kysylyn (Kisielin in Polish), 30 kilometers west of Lutsk. Polish eyewitnesses say they were 'settled Roma' who worked for the local (Soviet) collective farm (Dębski 2006: 398). Evidence by two local Ukrainian peasants confirms this murder but the victims were characterized as 'itinerant Roma' (YIU testimonies 448, 450). Approximately at the same time, nearly 10 Roma were killed by the Germans in the village of Ostrozhets (Ostrożec in Polish), Mlyniv (Młynów in Polish) raion, five kilometers south of Lutsk (Литвинчук 2011). Nearly 50 Roma were slaughtered in the spring of 1943 near the village of Zabolottia (Zabłocie in Polish) in Ratne district (Показания Свиржевского 1944: 34). According to witness accounts, almost 60 Roma were shot in 1943 in the village of Vyderta (Wyderta in Polish), Kamin-Kashyrskiy raion, 40 kilometers north of Kovel (Бессонов 2006: 9).

As can be seen from the evidence, the period of May–December 1942 and then the entire year 1943 became a deadly time for the Volhynian Roma. What were the reasons for this? In my opinion, a combination of circumstances played a fatal role, which resulted in the almost complete extermination of the region's Roma community.

First of all, the fact that the Roma, as shown above, became the subject of particular interest on the part of the German civil occupation administration both in the General District of Volhynia-Podolia and across the entire RUK. It was crucial that the very decision-making top level of this administrative system, namely, the RMfDBO took interest, too. The singling out of Roma from among the local population, their registration, data collection on them, and the draft decision to isolate Roma from society at large constituted the initial steps of the coming genocide.

However, the situation could have developed in different directions, as the official correspondence in the General District of Volhynia-Podolia shows in May 1942. While not intending to brutally eliminate members of this group, the district's civilian administration was rather inclined to use Roma as forced labor. Why then did the German occupation prove fatal for Roma?

To answer this question, it is not enough to consider only the situation of Roma; a broader socio-political context must be taken into consideration. The extermination of the Roma can be explained through tracing decisional

interactions between certain segments of the RKU civilian administration and the SS-police apparatus, including the latter's initiatives. The broader context is the 'Final solution' for the Jews, as decided at the Wannsee Conference in Berlin in January 1942. As the Holocaust studies show, in Berlin the top officials at the RMfdBO were more inclined to eliminate even skilled Jewish workers needed for work as quickly as possible rather than to leave them for forced labor, even if for a short time.

According to German historian Dieter Pohl, despite the desire of civilian officials to 'solve the Jewish question,' it became clear after the Wannsee Conference that Himmler and Heydrich (Chief of the RSHA, Main Imperial Security Office) were claiming decision-making primacy in the occupied zone under civilian administration. In addition to the general circumstances, in *Reichskommissariat Ukraine* the radicalization of Germany's 'Jewish policy' received its own local impetus. Despite some disagreements, RKU Commissioner Erich Koch and RKU HSSPF (*Höherer SS- und Polizeiführer* 'SS and Police Leader') Hans-Adolf Prützmann closely cooperated on the 'final solution.' Koch officially turned his administrative authority for dealing with the 'Jewish question' to Prützmann. In turn, the latter delegated this responsibility to the KdS officers under his command (Pohl 2008: 47).

As a result, the Jews of Volhynia were captured in the second wave of deadly violence. Only between May and late December in 1942, about 160 thousand Jews were killed across the region. In light of the German or Soviet documentation, it was this period that brought death to the small Roma population in Volhynia, both nomadic and sedentary.

Why were the Roma singled out for 'special treatment'? As already mentioned, we still do not have direct answers to this question in the thus far located documentation of the German SS and police authorities. However, one can assume that such documents did not exist at all because they were not necessary. A combination of factors led to the coalescence of the German administrative opinion that it was necessary to exterminate all Roma. These factors included:

- (1) the separation of the group from the general population, and the prescription of special measures against Roma;
- (2) the generalized anti-Roma stereotypes and prejudices, which all the members of the occupation apparatus shared to varying degrees;
- (3) the growing acceptance for the extermination of 'racially inferior' persons and peoples;
- (4) the broad powers accorded to the SS-police;
- (5) the close cooperation between the civil administration and the SS police for getting rid of the 'undesirable' populations (notwithstanding some individual exceptions).

Activities of Einsatzgruppe D (Special Task Force D) under the command of Otto Ohlendorf amply illustrate the situation. Daniel Goldhagen gained access to documents with Ohlendorf's personal thoughts recorded on the 'Gypsy issue' (Goldhagen 1982: 93–94). Ohlendorf was guided by his idea of 'criminal and racially inferior Gypsies.' In the absence of a civil administration, he enjoyed unusually broad prerogatives in security matters. Already in the fall of 1941, Ohlendorf embarked on the policy of the total extermination of both Roma and Jews in southern Ukraine and Crimea (Tyaglyy 2009: 30–33; Holler 2012: 267–288). From spring 1942, this mindset and respective practice of dual extermination became routine for SS and mobile killing units. Heads of other SS-police bodies in the RKU also followed suit.

The fact that by July 1942 the civilian administration and the SS-police began to consider the Roma as a group earmarked for 'special treatment,' that is, extermination, is confirmed by the RKU decrees. On 1 May 1942, an order signed by the RKU *Reichskommissar* determined the sick pay for Ukrainian workers in the case of illness (Розпорядження про охорону хворих 1942). On 18 July, an addendum was issued, clarifying to whom this regulation did *not* apply. Along with foreign workers, POWs and Jews, 'Gypsies' were also mentioned to have been excluded from this provision (Перше виконавче розпорядження до розпорядження про охорону хворих 1942).

The Involvement of Non-Roma Population in the German Actions against Roma

One more important aspect, namely the attitude of the locals to the persecution of Roma, needs to be explored. It is indisputable that whatever measures were planned and carried out by the German occupation authorities against Roma, they were never implemented in a social vacuum, that is, with the participation of the 'perpetrators' and the 'victims' only. Roma groups lived in the neighborhood of non-Roma or were even closely integrated with them. In ethnic terms such local populations in Volhynia, included, among others, Ukrainians, Poles, Russians, Czechs, or local ethnic Germans. Due to the lack of resources and staff, the occupiers had to coopt local populations in the administration and in the implementation of German policies. The position and attitudes of the local population could significantly impact the Roma concerned. This was true of locals at the level of interpersonal relations, and especially those who worked as auxiliaries in the local administration.

From among the independent collective social actors attested in Volhynia during the occupation, two played an important role in the Romani genocide.

One was the Organization of Ukrainian Nationalists (OUN), later renamed as the Ukrainian Insurgent Army (UPA), and the other were the Soviet partisans.

Ukrainian Insurgents and their Attitude toward Roma

The Organization of Ukrainian Nationalists (OUN) was formed in 1929 with the aim of winning an independent Ukrainian nation-state. In 1940, the OUN split into two factions. Moderates supported Andriy Melnyk, while radicals stood for Stepan Bandera. The organization's two wings were distinguished as OUN-M and OUN-B, respectively. After the start of the German invasion of the Soviet Union on 22 June 1941, the OUN-B declared an independent Ukrainian nation-state on 30 June 1941 in Lemberg (Lviv). In reply, the Nazi authorities suppressed all the OUN leadership. In October 1942, in Volhynia the OUN-B established a Ukrainian Insurgent Army (UPA).

In the Ukrainian nationalism the 'Gypsy question' did not figure prominently, until it was considered in light of the ideas about social order. In other words, the ethnic dimension of this issue itself did not attract much attention among the Ukrainian national underground. This was especially so in relation to settled Roma, who were well integrated in society. But some of the members of the movement saw nomadic Roma as those who did not meet the threshold of being 'useful members' of society. Such Roma were branded as potentially 'criminal,' and thus to be surveilled by the state apparatus. An example of this approach can be seen in the draft document titled 'The proposals of the OUN-M on the structure and competences of the ministries of the future Ukrainian state,' which was completed not later than 22 June 1941.

The authors proposed that the Ministry of Interior should be in charge of 'homeless Gypsies and people without documented occupations.' This responsibility was paired with a 'solution' in the form of 'houses of forced labor and colonies for juvenile offenders' (Кульчицький 2006: 233). In legal terms nomadic Roma were equated with criminals. As a result, diverse nomadic groups, who were engaged in legal activities and did not commit criminal acts, faced the risk of falling into the collective category of 'criminal Gypsies.'

A similar approach to this issue was demonstrated by the 'General Instruction of the OUN-B Security Service,' which was released in 1941. To successfully conduct raids, police officers were recommended to carefully study the area where a raid was to take place and, in particular, 'to know [...] the places where alcohol is illegally sold, the houses where Gypsies or other vagrants stay overnight, including the houses of politically suspicious persons' (ОУН в 1941 році: 593).

During the German-Soviet war, and especially since 1943, Volhynia became an arena of multilateral confrontations among different military forces, public and political groups, paramilitaries and partisans, permanent and temporary

groupings of militants, each of which pursued its own political and immediate goals. The main groups included the German occupiers, Soviet partisans, OUN and UPA military forces, alongside the Polish Home Army (AK, *Armia Krajowa*). The OUN and UPA forces aspired to resist both German and Soviet occupations. Simultaneously, they sought to ethnically homogenize these territories, which they saw as forming integral parts of a future independent Ukraine. Volhynia was to be included in this nation-state. That is why the OUN and UPA launched a campaign of ethnic cleansing that targeted Volhynia's Poles in spring 1943.⁵

In the OUN propaganda, the region's Jews and Poles were presented as 'aliens' whose presence could derail the Ukrainian national project. The 'Gypsy question' did not feature in this propaganda as prominently as the 'Jewish question.' However, in publications addressed to UPA soldiers and civilian members, at times, the Roma were portrayed as one of those groups, who were inimical to the national project. Such groups were to be eliminated. An OUN leaflet addressed to the Red Army urged Soviet soldiers not to fight for 'Jews, Gypsies and other scum' (Відозва до українців червоноармійців 1942).

In August 1943, in an appeal to the Ukrainians of Kholm (Chełm in Polish, Kholm in Ukrainian) and Podlasie, the UPA General Command stated that 'for destroying the Ukrainian people, Moscow, the eternal enemy of Ukraine, sent troops composed of Gypsies, Muscovites, Jews, and other thugs, that is, so-called "red partisans"' (Сергійчук 1996: 366). In early 1944 Victor Yuriiv's⁶ 'Materials on Political Training' contained an appeal to the Ukrainians of Polissya (Polesia). The UPA General Command depicted the historical and present-day dangers to the construction of an independent Ukrainian nation-state from the perspective of ethnic nationalism. Among others, this appeal said, 'entire hordes move to Ukraine: Jews, Tatars, Gypsies and all other rags. They promise pears on a willow, that "everything will be fine, we will give you everything, but you only have to surrender and live under our rule"' (Юрїїв 2011: 183).

To what extent did this negative attitude towards the Roma expressed in military orders, propaganda and other documents determine ethnic Ukrainians'

5 As a result of UPA's systematic acts of violence against the Polish population in Volhynia, according to various sources, from 30,000 to more than 60,000 Poles were killed, while up to 15,000 Ukrainians fell victims to Polish retaliatory actions (McBride 2016: 631–641).

6 Viktor Yuriyiv is a pseudonym of Osyyp Dyakiv, who was a member of the OUN leadership. He served as deputy head of the General Secretariat of the Ukrainian Supreme Liberation Council, and in the rank of lieutenant colonel as a political educator for the Ukrainian Insurgent Army (UPA).

day-to-day relations with them? For a more thorough explanation, an important ethnographic detail must be recalled. As mentioned above, the Roma of Volhynia were not a homogenous group. While ‘Ukrainian Roma’ (see above) resided in towns and villages, spoke Ukrainian, practiced Orthodoxy, and were mainly engaged in blacksmithing and farming; Polska Roma led a semi-nomadic lifestyle, were Catholic and spoke Romani and Polish. Therefore, Volhynia’s Ukrainians often saw the latter as foreigners. So did the UPA partisans who initiated the ethnic cleansing of Poles in 1943. Most probably, these partisans extended their policies originally aimed at ethnic Poles also toward Polska Roma. Papusza’s poetry, as well as the memoirs of Tadeusz Wajs and Edward Dębicki mention the acts of UPA violence against their kin, including threats, physical abuse and murder. To survive, Polska Roma often had to pretend to be ‘Ukrainian Roma’ and switch to speaking the Ukrainian language and displaying Orthodox Christian symbols and gestures.

Polish poet and folklorist Jerzy Ficowski concluded that Ukrainian national forces ‘murdered Polish Roma, but did not harm Ukrainian Roma’ (Ficowski 1965: 98). According to the Romani testimonies collected by Ficowski, the persecution of Roma at the hands of UPA peaked in 1943. It coincided with UPA’s actions against the German and Soviet forces and the ongoing ethnic cleansing of the local Polish population. Soon after the war, the above-mentioned Tadeusz Wajs narrated to Ficowski the progress of his large traveling group across Vohlynia during 1943. For the sake of improved safety, the original group split into smaller subgroups that could respond to danger more nimbly. They all passed through the same localities, namely, Shumsk (Ternopil region), Kremenets and Teremne (Rivne region), Lanovychi (Lviv region), Ostrog and village Maikiv (Rivne region), village Bukhariv (Rivne region), Baranivka (Zhytomyr region) and village Khodaky (Ternopil region) (Jastrzębska 2013: 149–152).

In Wajs’s testimony, Ukrainian villagers often helped Roma. But some other Ukrainians, whom he also identifies as *Banderowcy* (Banderites), are portrayed as those who murdered Roma and others. Papusza’s *Tears of Blood* offers another vivid picture of Roma’s desperate survival and attempts at hiding from the Germans and Ukrainians. ‘Germans and Ukrainians come to us together, they bring death to us and the Jews,’ wrote Papusza. She did not delve into the details about the perpetrators’ ethnic origins or organizational affiliations. A similar picture is painted in Edward Dębicki’s postwar memoir titled *Bird of the Dead*. He relates two separate events when Polish Roma passed themselves off as Ukrainian Roma to the Banderites (Dębicki 2007: 98–99). However, the practice of persecuting Polish Roma was not universal, as Joszkiewicz-Krzyżżanowski’s short story ‘Dando’ shows. The author

recalled in it a Ukrainian raid on the Roma near the village of Kysylın (Kisielin in Polish), 30 kilometers west of Lutsk:

The raid by the Bandera people begins [...]. The Ukrainians are starting to chase us out of this forest. And the Poles – old people and children, all those who didn't manage to escape to Vladimir [actually Volodymyr, Włodzimierz Wołyński in Polish]. They separated the Roma from them by three steps. They had axes, pitchforks, hoes, rifles [...] One of their old men [...] said, 'Oh, the Gypsies are here! Why are you Gypsies crying?' And we exclaimed, 'Why not to cry, when death is before our eyes!' [...] They step aside, elderly Ukrainians, discussing: Why should we kill these Gypsies? They don't play politics [...]. 'What kind of Gypsies are you? What nationality? Polish or Ukrainian?' My brother [...] says, Gypsy nationality. And we are all Poles, Roman Catholics. And he said: 'We won't beat you.' And they let us go, what a miracle ... And look – they cut off the heads of those Poles with blunt sabers (Joszkiewicz-Krzyżanowski in Semczyszyn 2020: 316).

When using the Romani testimonies published by Jerzy Ficowski, one should approach them critically. They tell us little about the historical events mentioned, and rather shed more light on the postwar context in which Ficowski operated when he wanted to make the fate of the Roma publicly known. Polish researcher Emilia Kledzik compared the fragments, published in Ficowski's various works over the decades. They illustrate the way in which he edited the testimonies with an eye to 'customizing' the Roma characters for Polish readers. In particular, Ficowski took care to improve the image of the Polish population at large, emphasizing their help for Roma. On the other hand, he tended to present Ukrainian national insurgents in an unfavorable light: 'Bearing in mind that being a Rom during the Volhynia massacre did not necessarily mean a death sentence, as in the case of Poles, Ficowski used the words of his Roma informants to justify their decision to adopt Ukrainian surnames and passing themselves off as Ukrainians. The poet also removed fragments that showed any kindness, which UPA soldiers sometimes extended to Roma (Kledzik 2020: 195).

Information on anti-Roma actions of UPA is scant, but can be also found in non-Roma sources. Testifying in court about their anti-Polish and anti-Jewish actions, a former UPA soldier mentioned that in autumn 1943, a group of UPA partisans led by Antin Shkytak attacked a hamlet inhabited by a Romani family. It was located near the villages of Ploske and Halivka (Gałówka in Polish) in the Staryi Sambir (Stary Sambor in Polish) area. 'The OUN members chopped to pieces all the Gypsies they managed to capture,' testified this soldier (Statement by Shpytal 1964: 13). Because the term 'hamlet' is mentioned, the victims were either Roma who had been settled for long, or who had recently received a plot of land there. Thus, this testimony provides us

with rare evidence on the UPA violence against sedentary Roma who were not specifically targeted by the ideology of the Ukrainian national movement. The textual part is, however, scarce and does not reveal the attackers' motivations. Possibly the hamlet's dwellers died caught by accident in a confrontation between UPA units and Soviet partisans.

By 1943 many Roma had found refuge from the German persecution in Soviet partisan units. UPA's internal documentation shows their awareness of Roma's presence among the Soviet partisans. For example, Volodymyr Makar wrote an essay 'North-Western Ukrainian Lands: The Ukrainian People's Armed Self-Defense of the Ukrainian People,' which gathers the OUN Security Service's (SB) political reports and the UPA information and intelligence service's reports on the situation in wartime Volhynia and Polesia. A document dating to late May or early June 1943, states that

already in 1942 the Bolshevik partisans completely conquered Polesia and the northern forest strip of Volhynia. [...] Their ranks are constantly replenished with red paratroopers: Muscovites, Belarusians, as well as with fugitives Poles, Jews and Gypsies, and by the time of the UPA retreat also with Ukrainians from burned villages and forcibly mobilized peasants (Штендера 1984: 16).

Further mentions of Roma in the enemy's ranks can be found in numerous reports submitted by various UPA units, OUN SB units, and OUN branches' political departments. For example, in August 1943, a socio-political officer commented on the situation in the Bolota (Błota in Polish) area (40 kilometers west of Pinsk, today in Belarus). He stated that 'the national composition of the Red partisans is very different. There are Katsaps [derogatory term for Russians, MT], Gypsies, Poles, Belarusians, Uzbeks, there are also Ukrainians mostly from the eastern regions, and former communist activists' (Звіт суспільно-політичного референта округи про ситуацію в терені "Болото": 256). A report dated 15 October 1943 on the activities of the SB noted that 'in the Red partisan units all those found shelter, who are politically persecuted by the Germans or Ukrainians, namely Poles, Jews, Cossacks, Gypsies etc.' (Звіт про роботу референтури за період від 15 вересня до 15 жовтня 1943 р.: 309). In December 1943, the OUN chronicle in the Stolin region (20 kilometers east of Pinsk) reported that 'in the village of Berezichi [that is, Berezychi, Berezicz in Polish] Gypsies, Jews and all sorts of other good-for-nothings gathered, where they organized and went to plunder the villages' (Хроніка про діяльність оунівських боївок на Столінщині: 456).

On the basis of these and other reports, it can be assumed that in general Ukrainian insurgents' negative view of the Roma as an undesirable element was further complicated by the presence of the latter in the ranks of the

former's enemies. Mentions of Roma in Soviet partisan units are attested by Roma's recollections and former partisans' diaries and memoirs.⁷ Papusza in her poem *Tears of Blood* also repeatedly refers to Soviet partisans as the only means of salvation for Roma and Jews. This choice forced on them by the circumstances pushed Roma into a tragic vicious circle of violence. Roma could not seek protection from the Germans in UPA, because the latter sought to build an ethno-linguistically homogenous nation-state. So, the only option available to Roma was to join the Soviet partisans. Yet, because Roma did join Soviet partisan units, the Ukrainian national underground associated them with the enemies of the Ukrainian nation.

It is difficult to learn about the killings of Roma from OUN and UPA sources. An exception is the following example. Ukrainian insurgent Ivan Lyko mentions in his memoirs that in 1946 the UPA district leader with the nom de guerre *Chornota* (Ukr. 'Blackness') persuaded him to kill a whole Romani family of six persons in a village of Halytsia (Galiția in Romanian, 60 kilometers west of Chernivtsi), because allegedly one of the family members was an 'informer' associated with the Soviet resistance. Lyko refused, and the next day he learned that the whole family had been killed on Chornota's order (Лико 2002: 214–215).

One more episode illustrates the logic of action followed by OUN SB members, when killing Roma. Former commandant of subdistrict 67 (in Volhynia) Kulchynskyi, nom de guerre *Yavir* (Ukr. 'Sycamore'), testified to the Soviet authorities in 1944 that in August 1943 a group of 'Gypsies' had appeared in his area, that is, in village of Novomalyn (Nowomalın in Polish) near Ostroh (30 kilometers south of Rivne). He provided them with a house, a plot of land and seeds for agriculture. But in October 1943 a group of OUN soldiers arrived from the district center and killed those Roma. Yavir inquired the district commandant about this event and received a reply that the 'Gypsies' had been killed as they were 'unreliable elements' (Показання Леоніда Кульчинського 1944: 22).

However, diametrically different cases are also known. On 24 October 1943, the political officer of the UPA Lutsk district 'Khortytsia' reported that several ethnic groups lived in the area, including about 50 'Gypsies'. The report presented the local Romani residents in a positive light: 'a Gypsy will never become a [Soviet] Komissar, [since] they only want to live through the war' (Звіт політичного референта району: 188). One female Romani survivor,

7 The most complete overview of the participation of Roma in Soviet partisan units is presented in Bessonov's work (Бессонов 2010: 268–310).

who was in hiding in wartime Volhynia's forests, recalled, 'Banderovtsy did not touch us, and we did not touch them' (Стоянович Ганна 2017).

Most probably the killing of the local sedentary Roma was not the aim of the Ukrainian national underground. What also mattered was the brutalization of the general situation in Volhynia, leading many to use violence even in situations where it was not necessary. Brutal retaliation actions by the Germans, UPA attacks on the Polish civilians, reciprocal actions by the Polish armed formations, the atmosphere of total distrust also increased violence against the local Roma.

A significant part of the fighters who joined the UPA in the spring of 1943 were deserters from the Ukrainian auxiliary police. In 1941–1942, they had already taken part in the 'final solution of the Jewish question' in Volhynia. They had learned how to kill in a mechanized, industrialized fashion. Subsequently, in 1943, such soldiers applied this 'know-how' to the extermination of the local Poles and others, whom they saw as a threat to the Ukrainian nation. As Timothy Snyder put it, 'from 1941 collaboration in the Final Solution changed the collaborators, transformed Ukrainian boys in Volhynia into the kind of men they could never have become otherwise' (Snyder 2003: 159–160).⁸

Some evidence suggests that the decision to wipe out entire ethnic groups in a region, including the Roma, might be taken at a higher command level that covered the operational activities of several units in various territories. For instance, according to the testimony of Ivan Iavorskyi, OUN SB commander in the Mlynov district, Rivne region, received orders to liquidate all 'foreigners,' meaning, Russians, Poles, Czechs, Jews, Gypsies, together with those Ukrainians who opposed the OUN-B and UPA. The last group was to be liquidated, including their families (Motyka 2006: 471).

However, the interrogation of Iavorskyi is problematic. First, it is well known how the NKVD obtained testimonies with the use of systematic violence and psychological pressure. Much of what Iavorskyi actually never intended to say was extracted with brutal and unlawful methods of interrogation. The goal was not to obtain a truthful picture of an event, but words that would 'confirm' what the Soviet authorities wanted and needed. Second, even if his testimony about the Roma is accepted as truthful, it is not confirmed by the testimonies of other UPA functionaries captured by the Soviets. Third, what Iavorskyi said

8 However, recent micro-level Holocaust studies propose not to absolutize this fact. Apart from those who had already used violence in auxiliary police formations, perpetrators of ethnic cleansing in Volhynia also stemmed from among peasants, especially those who were forced to join the UPA (McBride 2016: 652).

does not correspond to the reality on the ground. No massacres of Roma in the area under his command are known.

The anti-Roma prejudices espoused among the Ukrainian popular culture significantly impacted the situation. Any stereotypes that exist within one ethnic group in relation to another do not fundamentally affect mutual relations during stable and peaceful coexistence. However, under extreme conditions, people may start acting upon previously latent prejudices, leading to escalation and open violence.

Ukrainian folklore and literature feature a considerable number of prejudiced stories about Roma (Рачковський 2005: 397–401; Шума 2016: 128–135). First and foremost, quite a few proverbs and sayings are devoted to the Romani lifestyle, their presumed traits and family relationships. Apart from positive traits (such as freedom-loving, resourcefulness, skilled in blacksmithing), much attention is paid to negative ones, such as cunning, deceitfulness, laziness, or godlessness. According to researcher Eva Milczarczyk, in traditional society, the Roma ‘sparked fascination, interest, and, at the same time, alarm, fear, and the desire to dissociate from them’ (Мільчарчик 2005: 384).

To what extent did the Ukrainian partisans inherit and spread such stereotypes about the Roma? Most UPA soldiers belonged to the traditional society because they stemmed from rural localities and obtained only primary education. Therefore, they tended to espouse their social environment’s stereotypes quite uncritically. In a similar manner they portrayed Roma in their postwar memories. Ivan Lyko, a former UPA soldier, left a colorful and informative testimony:

To continue our celebrations we got to the Kuliashne village [nowadays Kulaszne in northeastern Poland, 10 kilometers south of Sanok], where we sat down to the hospitable table of one respectful good host with his family and few neighbors. It happened that [...] a nice black haired girl was sitting next to me. The idea came to my mind to make a closer acquaintance of her and, during the conversation, we agreed that I would accompany her to her home.

[...] I was shocked by the scene in which I was caught when finding myself in her house. The door was opened by the mother of the girl, a typical Gypsy woman. And her brother, who was at that time in the room, confirmed to me with his personal look that I got to the Gypsy family.

Prejudices towards Gypsy race which I got in my childhood, when you time after time hear from adults that Gypsies were workers of evil, who fed themselves by meat of dead animals, which they exhumed, sometimes in half-decomposed condition, stroke my mind immediately. I tried not to show my impressions outwardly despite I knew perfectly that I do not belong to the people who could mask their feelings. I knew that the mother and the brother of the pretty Gypsy girl could read all that came to my mind from my face. The brother of the girl made an excuse and left the room, and the mother offered to us a snack sausage, ham and kulich [Easter bread, MT] and one quarter liter of bathtub gin.

I drank the glass with no hesitations, but when I began to eat the ham it seemed to me that the ham was 'growing in my mouth.' [I] got up from the table, trying to find some idea how to 'get out of the situation.' [...] Luckily for me, I saw Buryi approaching the Gypsy house on the hill, and when he entered the house and communicated that the militants were leaving the village, it was as if a heavy stone had fallen from my shoulders. Thanking the hostess for the hospitality, I said a goodbye and kissed the young Gypsy girl, to whom I promised that I would try to visit her and stay with her longer next time (*Лико* 2002: 178).

This passage particularly well demonstrates that the author's biased views of the Roma were shared by the society to which he belonged. Mykola Terefenko, another former OUN member, dedicated a separate fragment to Roma in his memoirs. He also described how he and his comrades visited the house of a Roma family and were invited to dinner. He recalled his feelings during the meal:

We approached the first house at the back of a village. The house looks poverty-stricken [...]. There was a light in the house. We opened the door and saw that the Gypsy family lived in that house. The old woman cooked something at the fire kitchen while the old Gypsy man was sitting on the bench. [...]

The old Gypsy woman just came up to us and said, 'Sit, please sit with us. Do not shrink away from Gypsies. We are poor people, but we are kind people [...].'

They took spoons and started to eat once potatoes, once broth. Meat laid separately. All of them started to eat together. I did as they too, my lot taught me everything, only my companion did not take a spoon and eat anything. The old Gypsy woman looked at him and said, 'Eat, Sir. I know why you do not eat, because all the time people say about us that we eat carrion, but that is not true. Look how good this meat is. We bought it from our neighbor [...].' But my companion did not eat. He said to her that he was not hungry. I kept eating, though I was thinking that possibly that cow croaked. Damn it all! If they do not die, why would I?

The Gypsy woman gave me a big portion of meat after the broth and potatoes. I ate that all. When they finished their dinner, they stood up and we did the same. I thanked her and complimented for her cooking, but she was dissatisfied because of my companion who did not eat.

Then the old woman came up to the cupboard and took out the whole loaf of bread from it, gave that bread to me and said, 'It is for the road.' Both of us said a good-bye and left. Although I was afraid that a 'revolution' would start in my stomach, nothing happened. That evening made me laugh a bit. I thought about the Gypsies, who are such poor people, but so human and hospitable (*Терефенко* 2002: 508–509).

Like the previous story, this one also took place beyond the boundaries of today's Ukraine, that is, in Slovakia in summer 1947. However, the author's feelings could be similar if this meeting happened in Volhynia in 1943, since he describes his general perception of 'Gypsies.' Of course, it is wrong to draw

a direct line between UPA soldiers' and other Ukrainians' anti-Roma prejudices and the cases of persecution and murder of Roma. These fragments do not show any hostile attitude on the part of UPA soldiers toward those Roma whose homes they visited (beyond common stereotypes). Yet, in these cases UPA soldiers visited sedentary Roma, who were an integral part of the rural society at that time. In the soldiers' eyes, nomadic Roma were different, and they could behave towards them differently, when coming across traveling caravans in forests.

The aforementioned qualifications and facts lead to the conclusion that different groups of Roma faced different fates in wartime Volhynia. Only those Roma whom Ukrainian insurgents associated with the Polish population or Soviet guerillas were singled out for persecution and extermination.

Soviet Partisans, and their Attitude toward Roma

From late 1942, the Soviet partisan movement in the region rapidly intensified and increased several times over. 32 partisan detachments and 71 underground groups operated in Volhynia. The Soviet partisan movement leaders' attitude toward the Roma who fled the German extermination was ambiguous. Notwithstanding the Soviet ideology's internationalist and inclusivist character, Soviet partisans had other immediate practical considerations, namely the suitability of potential recruits for military service, or whether they possessed useful professional skills. Soviet partisans, too, were not free of antigypsyism, and this often influenced their decisions on Roma recruits and their fate.

Roma's numerous attempts to find refuge in forests are attested in the recollections of Soviet underground members and partisans. Roma who were interviewed within the framework of recent oral history projects frequently mention that they sought Soviet partisans' help or even joined their units. Most partisan commanders realized that the Germans persecuted the Roma, alongside the Jews. For example, some Roma who came to the woods told Ivan Kolos, a Soviet partisan commander in Belarus, that the Nazis 'were shooting Gypsies and Jews without exception' (Колос 1979: 46). Recounting the situation in Volhynia in 1943, Oleksii Fedorov, commander of the Chernihiv-Volhynia Soviet partisan formation recalls that entire civilian settlements emerged in the woods: 'There were unique hamlets fashioned out of dugouts: Ukrainian, Polish, Jewish and Gypsy' (Федоров 1955: 231). In 1942, Anton Brynsky, commander of a Soviet operational reconnaissance and sabotage center, was aware of the execution of nearly 150 Roma in Lielčytsy (Lelczyce in Polish), a small town in southern Belarus, 30 kilometers west of Mazyr (Бринский 1966: 367).

The decision on whether to allow Roma to join a Soviet partisan detachment depended on its commander's attitude towards Roma and other factors. For example, Mykola Sheremet, a member of the Chernihiv-Volhynia partisan unit in 1943, left the following lines in his diary regarding the events of 22 March 1943.

Suddenly a group of Gypsy women came to us. I saw them a long ago. A[leksei] F[edorovich]⁹ received them near his tent. They looked ragged, in long dirty skirts, only their eyes were burning like embers, and strands of black hair were sticking out from under the handkerchiefs. The Germans and the police persecute and kill them along with the Jews. [...] Stealthily, they roam in the Belarusian forests, looking for help and assistance from the partisans.

The eldest of the women says:

- We are not nomadic Gypsies but settled. Under Soviet rule, we worked in a match factory in Khoyniki.¹⁰ My husband and brothers were in the Red Army, and when the Germans came, they destroyed our families, and threw young children alive in a well. [...]
- Where are your men? – we ask.
- Everyone in the army or in the guerrillas [that is, partisans]. We have two old men guarding our Gypsy camp. They have two grenades – that's all our weapons ...
- And how do you live? – we continue the conversation. – By telling fortune, perhaps?
- No, our dears. Gypsies used to foretell because they wanted to eat. And now neither fortunetelling nor singing. Hard times have come. Take us with you, with the children, – they beg.
- We will give you some horses and a cart, we will help, – A[leksei] F[edorovich] makes a decision. – But, you can't go with us (Шеремет 2015: 176).

However, most authors describe the Roma whom they encountered in a detached manner, often with a hint of hostility and superiority that soldiers tend to display toward defenseless people who were unfit for combat. If soldiers harbored any sympathy and empathy for Roma, these feelings were veiled by the partisans' pragmatic attitude. In their view, Roma were useless, and worse, a drain on scarce resources. In these episodes, Roma are usually portrayed as mostly elderly people, women, and children. Roma men were either in the Red Army or had become the first victims of the Nazi persecution. Some authors conclude that on partisans' part there was a desire to get rid of this 'civilian ballast.' As a result, they drove such Roma out of the areas where

9 In 1943, Alexei Fedorovich Fedorov commanded the Chernihiv-Volhynian formation of Soviet partisans.

10 Chojniki near Homiel in Belarus.

partisan detachments were stationed. Partisan commanders viewed such measures as necessary in the time of war.

A fragment from the memoirs of Yakiv Shkriabach, the commander of a partisan detachment that marched through 13 oblasts of Ukraine and Belarus, is especially revealing in terms of vocabulary and images used. It seems to bring together all the clichés and templates that are found in other texts.

Heading out on reconnaissance in the direction of the hamlet of Obruchatnitsa,¹¹ a group of our cavalymen unexpectedly came upon some bedraggled women and children in a forest clearing. Taking fright, they dashed into the thick of the forest. We spurred the horses, and after a minute we caught up with them. They were Gypsies. We saw tents and a few wagons – everything that accompanied this tribe in its nomadic life. Three Gypsy men, 15 Gypsy women, and a bunch of dirty, shaggy-haired kids formed the entire camp. There was one horse for five wagons.

– What are you doing here in the forest? We asked. A nimble, young Gypsy inspected us carefully.

– We are partisans, Gypsy partisans! He replied gravely.

– What are you killing the fascists with? They showed us a rusty rifle with a bolt without an injector, ten cartridges, and a grenade without a capsule.

The story that the Gypsies recounted was a sad one. When a German division had come through here, clearing the woods of partisans en route to Yurevychi,¹² the Nazis attacked the Gypsies. First, they killed the men. Only a few people managed to escape deep into the woods. During this period the inhabitants of the camp ate the horses. Right now they are eating mushrooms and berries.

A dense crowd of Gypsy men and women surrounded us.

‘Give me a rifle! I will tell you your fortune, I’ll tell the truth!’

‘Give me at least a bad horse! You will have luck and great happiness...’

‘Commander, where is your hand? I’ll tell you the whole truth. Just give us a needle and thread...’

‘Take this girl of ours. A beautiful Gypsy girl? She’s 17 already. She will come in handy... Give us a horse for the girl!’

Finally convinced that we were partisans, the Gypsies became bolder and offered us anything in exchange for a ‘horse’ and a ‘rifle.’

They were stationed some four or five kilometers from us. After observing where we had gone, the next day the Gypsies came to the camp. ‘We want to tell your fortune.’ Once again, they asked for a needle, thread, horse, and rifle. We ended up having to give them two lame horses and two German rifles with cartridges. At the same time, we warned them not to come to [our] camp anymore.

11 Obruchatnica, single household farm (*khutor*) in today’s Belarus, near the hamlet of Chobnoje, 15 kilometers northeast of the village of Juravičy, and 20 kilometers east of Mazyr.

12 Juravičy, cf. the previous footnote.

But the next day they reappeared. Only when the partisans threatened them with weapons did the Gypsies finally leave us in peace (Шкрябач 1966: 134).

The lexical set of the text reveals its tonality and creates a prejudiced (colonial-like) way for readers to perceive the ‘Gypsies’ who do not deserve protection and help. Given the internationalist ideology of the Soviet partisan movement, one would expect that this partisan force should have been hospitable to civilian Roma, women, children and the elderly, who all were threatened with death. However, the sources, with rare exceptions, show a different picture. Not everyone had a chance to remain under the protection of a partisan detachment, the exception was made only for those who could be useful to the partisans.

Nikolai Bessonov’s aforementioned work contains dozens of biographies of Roma men and women, members of partisan units or who occasionally performed some tasks for the partisans. However, the close analysis shows that extremely rarely did partisans accept family groups of Roma. Partisans mostly accepted young and middle-aged people who were capable of fighting and fending for themselves. Yet, for personal reasons or to fit the dominating narrative in Russia, Bessonov chose in his writings the mode of enthusiastic patriotic discourse.

Local Occupation Administrations, and their Attitude toward Roma

The statistical and economic departments of municipalities and district administrations were also involved in the registration of Roma and, after the massacres, in the registration and utilization of Roma’s property.

However, sometimes heads of local administrations initiated anti-Roma actions on their own. For example, on 17 November 1942, Head of the Korets district ordered the local police in the town of Korets (Korzec in Polish, 30 kilometers east of Rivne) to run an action in Bohdanivka (Bogdanówka in Polish), the aim being ‘the eviction of two Gypsy families.’ Their property was to be handed over to the elders of the village. The Roma’s dwellings were to be adapted for displaced persons (Розпорядження Корецького районного начальника Галинського: 221). By ‘eviction’ District Head Yuri Halynskiy clearly meant something else but did not want to express that openly. The local police also realized that the Roma would be handed over to the Germans for extermination.

The episode described above is a rare case in the study of the Romani genocide, since the preserved documents allow for the reconstruction of the victims’ further fate. The Soviet authorities recorded the testimony of a female resident of Korets who lived near the Jewish cemetery. She described seeing

in winter 1942 how the Germans killed several Roma in the cemetery, namely, two men, three women and two children aged 10–11 (Показания Федоры Мамчуровской: 17). They were these two Roma families from Bohdanivka, because no other murder of Roma was documented in the town. It is obvious that the Korets police brought the victims to the district center. Subsequently, they were handed over to the local Sipo-SD branch, whose officers executed the captured Roma.

In another Volhynian district, Rozhyshche (Rożyszczce in Polish, 10 kilometers north of Lutsk), on 9 June 1942, the district's head ordered the heads of the district's villages to adopt a number of measures against Roma, including the following prohibition: 'it is forbidden for Gypsies to wander around the villages. If they appear, inform the district's Security Service immediately' (Голова Рожищенського району старостам: 76). Village officials were required to report caravans to the gendarmerie, which meant death for the spotted Roma.

The ordeal suffered is known from survivors' personal accounts. At times, neighbors and even individuals directly involved in the local administration provided timely assistance to their Romani fellow-villagers to escape prescribed reprisals. Among those Roma whose recollections were recorded in the course of various oral history projects, there are also testimonies of Roma from Volhynia. For instance, in the village of Chudvy (Czudwy in Polish), Kostopil district, 25 kilometers north of Rivne, according to a Roma woman, the Germans 'wanted to kill us. And the one from the village council, who was called headman, did not allow that. The head of the village began to ask [the Germans]: "Do not touch [Gypsies], do not kill [them], because we will not have a blacksmith"' (Козелец ЛЮБОВЬ 2017).

Another female interlocutor said that her family lived near the village of Soshychne (Soszychno in Polish), District Kamen-Kashirsky (Kamień Koszyrski in Polish), 30 kilometers north of Kovel. They survived thanks to a local Ukrainian policeman, who knew her father as a good blacksmith. This policeman escorted their family to a safe place, allowing them to escape sure death at the hands of Germans (Стоянович Ганна 2017).

One more female survivor provides a similar story about her father, mother and children (including herself). The local village elder and villagers saved the family from the Germans, because her father was known and respected as a good blacksmith in the village of Nuino (Nujno in Polish, 30 kilometers north of Kovel) (Стоянович Прасковья 2017). These examples show that non-Roma villagers, and in some cases village heads, protected those Roma who had lived in their localities for a long time. Especially, if such Roma were well integrated with the local population, meaning they spoke the same language, practiced

the same religion, were respected, and had a profession that was essential for other villagers, typically blacksmithing. Obviously, nomadic Roma could not count on such grassroots support.

As mentioned above, in the raion of Vysotsk (Wysock in Polish, 50 kilometers north of Sarny) an order was sent to the raion's village heads to register Roma residing in their localities. Nine village heads and the head of the Vysotsk raion replied that no Roma lived in the localities. However, one can assume that it was not a veracious overview of the situation, but a ploy to protect the local Roma.

Local Auxiliary Police, and Their Attitude toward Roma

Recently more research is done on the role of local security formations in the Nazi 'final solution' of the Jews. But the formations' involvement in the Romani genocide remains understudied. Usually, the local police provided support for the rounding up of Roma and escorting them to the place of execution. On the other hand, the actual killings were carried out by German units. However, in several cases there are reasons to believe that the local police detained, conveyed and executed Roma out of their own initiative, without German participation. Such cases occurred beginning in mid-1942. The argument is that the murder was typically initiated by local administrators or the police. Orders were issued to this end, and the documents always contained the following formulation, 'in accordance with the *Gebietskommissar's* order'. Often those arrested for killing Roma and interrogated by the Soviet authorities claimed that they had acted in compliance with the German orders. However, such a formulation or corroborating evidence are not always available.

One Saturday evening in 1942, in the bitter cold, a Jewish girl Zhenya Chernyavska, who lived in the town of Rohizne (Rohoźne, Rohóźne or Rogoźno in Polish), Demydiv district, 30 kilometers south of Lutsk, returned home and saw 'perhaps 20 carts with Gypsies being escorted by the police to Berestechko.' She later learned that these Roma had been shot there (Memoirs of Zhenya Chernyavskaya: 13). About a year after the start of the invasion, the Germans began killing Roma with the help of local police, as narrated by Tetiana Markovska (Tatiana Markowska in Polish), who lived in a caravan near Sarny in the late summer of 1942. Her parents and relatives were killed, she managed to escape (Гогун, Церович 2009: 77–78).

In late August 1942, a group of officers of the Ratne district police encircled a group of 10–12 Roma on the way from the town of Ratne to the village of Zabolottia. The Roma were escorted to Ratne and then to the outskirts of the town, where the police killed them (Висновок по архівно-кримінальній справі 1997: 327). In June 1943, another group of local policemen in the village

of Zabolottia arrested four Roma males. They took the Roma two kilometers away from the village to the forest, where the latter were shot and buried (Обвинительное заключение 1949: 138). In summer 1942, officers from the Ratne district police detained 35–40 Roma in a forest near the village of Siltse (Sielce Górnickie or Sielce Korteliskie in Polish), 40 kilometers southwest of Lutsk. They took the Roma to Ratne and executed them by shooting near the local cemetery (Обвинительное заключение 1959: 174–175).

This evidence is sufficient to conclude that the local police were actively involved in the identification, arrests and mass shootings of Roma. The question arises why local district or city mayors and police chiefs considered it necessary to get rid of the Roma. It is difficult to answer, due to lack of sources that would shed light on their personal motivations. To some extent, a range of factors described by Alexander Prusin in his study of the motivations of anti-Jewish actions of the Ukrainian auxiliary police is of assistance. These included, among others, anti-Semitism, loyalty to the new government, careerism, the desire for domination and self-assertion at the expense of vulnerable people, or enrichment. For some, sadism was a motivation, too (Прусин 2007: 50–59). If anti-Semitism in this list is replaced with anti-Gypsyism, the other factors also played a role in rounding up and killing Roma in Volhynia. By mid-1942, the German goal to exterminate all the Roma had become apparent. So, like in the case of the extermination of Jews, local collaborators also came to view rounding up and murdering of Roma as a routine ‘administrative’ task.

Roma Losses: Physical and Symbolical

One of the specific features of the study of the Romani genocide is the paucity of sources. At times, archival documents or memoirs portray a mass killing of Roma. But often they miss crucial details, for instance, the circumstances and the number of victims. In other cases, available written evidence operates with such vague terms as ‘caravan,’ ‘group,’ or ‘two wagons.’ The ChGK, which was to record human losses in the occupied Soviet territories, operated under time and capacity constraints. Its work had to follow specific ideological tenets, which had negatively impacted the recording of the victims’ ethnicity. As a rule, the ChGK did not produce detailed accounts of Roma massacres. The Shoah Visual History Foundation recorded tens of interviews with Roma across Ukraine, but the Volhynia was not covered. The only substantial array of surviving memories are available in the archive of Jerzy Ficowski, as mostly left by Polska Roma. They shed some light on the events in Volhynia.

The sources available today allow to estimate that over 20 mass killings of Roma in Volhynia took place. Around 1,500–2,000 Roma were murdered. The commemoration of Romani victims continues to be sadly insufficient. Of the more than 20 places of mass death in the region where Roma perished, only one is appropriately commemorated. The Roma community themselves erected a symbolic memorial sign in the form of a cross in the village of Vyderta.

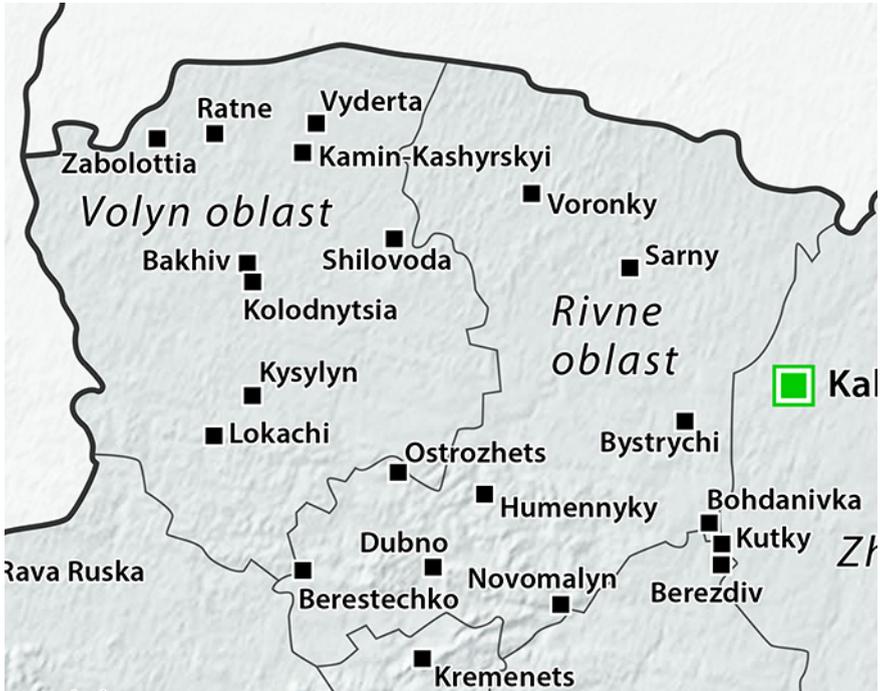


Fig. 10.1 Map of the mass killing sites of Roma in Volhynia by Mykhailo Tyaglyy.

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