

Persecution of Roma-Sinti in Croatia, 1941–1945

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The terrible fate of Roma in wartime Croatia and partitioned Yugoslavia has not received much scholarly attention, either in former Yugoslavia or elsewhere.¹ In Yugoslav historiography, the fate of Roma was often mentioned but not systematically researched. There are basically two reasons for this fact. First, despite the fact that the Roma of the Independent State of Croatia probably suffered proportionately higher losses than either the Serb or Jewish populations,² the Ustaša regime saw the Serb and Jewish “questions” as being of greater importance. Scholars have geared their researches accordingly. The Ustaša movement (1929–45) was essentially an anti-Serb movement. Anti-Serbdom had always been central to Ustaša ideology; in the words of one prominent Ustaša, it was “the quintessence of the Ustaša doctrine, its *raison d’être*.”³ Antisemitism began to acquire greater importance in the movement only in the late 1930s, but Roma were never mentioned in prewar Ustaša tracts. Second, there is little in the way of extant documentation pertaining to the Roma in wartime Croatia, either because it was destroyed or never kept by the perpetrators in the first place. The documentation that we do have is incomplete, and almost all of the survivor literature that mentions the fate of Roma has been written by non-Roma.

Western scholars have hardly addressed the topic at all, which reflects the general neglect of the Roma within the Western scholarly community. As the University of Texas scholar Zoltan Barany recently observed, scholars have for the most part considered Roma studies a peripheral subject, and in researching the fate of Roma during the Second World War, historians “face the absence of reliable demographic data and the deficient accounting of the Nazi administrators who documented the extermination of the Gypsies far less meticulously than that of the Jews.”⁴

Determining the number of Roma victims in Croatia is no simple task, in large part because even the number of Roma in pre-war Croatia (and Yugoslavia) is still debated. In Yugoslav historiography, it is argued that there were anywhere from 26,000 to 40,000 Roma in the territory of the Independent State of Croatia in 1941, most of whom were subsequently murdered in the Jasenovac camp system.⁵ According to the Yugoslav census of March 1931, the last prewar Yugoslav census, which used religion

as its main criterion for recording the population, there were approximately 70,000 persons who registered themselves under the category “other and unknown” religion or “without confession.” It is likely that most Roma were recorded in this category. However, since there were Roma who were nominally Serbian Orthodox, Muslim, and Roman Catholic, it is possible that some registered under those categories in 1931. Of the 70,000 persons in this category, approximately 31,000 lived in those territories that subsequently formed part of the Independent State of Croatia (Croatia, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Srijem): 11,272 in Bosnia-Herzegovina (i.e., Drina and Vrbas provinces) and 20,528 in Croatia (i.e., Sava and Primorje provinces).⁶

Legislation: The Race Laws

Within a month of its creation in April 1941, the Croatian state issued a series of race laws. This legislation consisted of three decrees: i) the “Legal Decree on Racial Belonging”; ii) the “Legal Decree on Citizenship”; and iii) the “Legal Decree on the Defense of Aryan Blood and the Honor of the Croat Nation.” The influence of the Third Reich was all too evident; the decrees were essentially copies of the Nuremberg Laws. These laws segregated both Jews and Roma by defining them as “non-Aryans.” They were forbidden henceforth from marrying persons defined as “Aryans,” employing Aryan women and from participating in Aryan affairs, whether political, cultural, social, or economic. As one Ustaša writer observed, the intent of the race legislation was “clear”: “The aim of our national state, which is Aryan, is and must be to rid ourselves of non-Aryan elements.”⁷ Although the Jewish population was the primary and intended victim of this legislation, the Roma were affected just as severely as Croatian Jewry.

Two months after issuing the race legislation, on July 3, 1941, the Croatian Ministry of Internal Affairs ordered that all Roma in Zagreb, regardless of sex or age, register with the police on July 22–23. This order was published in the press, and placards were posted around the city. Those who did not register were cautioned that they would be “harshly punished.”⁸ The registration of Roma coincided with a registration of the city’s Jewish population between July 22–26, 1941.⁹ At the same time, the Ministry ordered all local civilian (county, district, and city prefects) and police officials to compile a census of Roma in their localities by the end of July 1941. They were to record each Roma family (with the sex, age, date of birth, and name of each member), and whether they owned property and had a profession or trade. The

Ministry asked local officials to pay close attention to whether these Roma were nomadic or sedentary, and added, “Those Roma who wandered [*doskitali*] onto the territory of the Independent State of Croatia since the outbreak of the world war should now be driven across state borders.”¹⁰ We do not know how many Roma were driven out of Croatia in 1941, but it is possible that some were deported to German-occupied Serbia.¹¹ If the race laws were the first step of the Ustaša authorities in segregating the Roma population, as was the case with the Jewish population, then the registration and census indicate, certainly in retrospect, a planned effort on the part of the Croatian government to lay the groundwork for much harsher measures.

Indeed, in the summer of 1941 the Croatian government began entertaining various proposals on the “Roma question.” For example, already in June 1941 the Croatian Institute for Colonization proposed to the Ministry of Internal Affairs the deportation of Roma. The reasons cited for deportation reveal some of the typical stereotypes affecting Roma, not only in Croatia but elsewhere. The Institute for Colonization believed that the Roma were a source of infectious diseases, and as such posed a danger to the general population. Moreover, it was alleged that “nomadic” Roma had inflicted economic losses on the peasant population by stealing on a regular basis from the peasantry. The Institute proposed that the Roma be immobilized and then resettled, although it did not propose a location for their resettlement.¹² The Ministry of Internal Affairs received similar suggestions from other quarters. For example, the city administration of Križevci proposed that its Roma population (roughly 450 persons) be removed from the town and its environs. It, too, argued that the Roma had inflicted economic losses on the local rural population, and were perpetrators of various crimes. The city administration proposed that they either be resettled to an undisclosed area or be utilized as forced labor.¹³

Arrests and Deportations

The central authorities did not react immediately to these proposals. Large-scale arrests and deportations of Roma in Croatia began only in May 1942.¹⁴ By that point the central Ustaša authorities clearly had reached a decision to arrest all Roma, regardless of sex or age, to deport some and to intern others, in Croatian camps. Yugoslav historiography has not adequately addressed the reason(s) for this lag between the race laws and census of mid-1941 and the arrests of May 1942. Here are three possible reasons: first, although the Croatian authorities wished to settle the so-called Roma

question in Croatia, in 1941 they were very much preoccupied with the Serb and Jewish questions, which were perceived as of greater import.¹⁵ The state's nascent bureaucracy and police apparatus were directed at these two so-called "national enemies." Second, the Croatian authorities had to contend with Bosnian Muslim religious leaders' opposition to the application of anti-Roma measures against Muslim Roma. This opposition, which I will discuss in greater detail, may well have delayed, although it did not prevent, the implementation of an over-all anti-Roma policy. Third, in the spring of 1942 the Croatian government began deporting all Jews, some to Croatian camps, some to Auschwitz. Arrests and deportations of Jews to Croatian camps had begun in 1941, but they became widespread in 1942. When these all-encompassing Jewish deportations began, the Croatian government may have concluded that the deportations should be widened to include the Roma, who were, after all, the only other group in Croatia defined as "non-Aryan." This last point is speculative, since little documentary evidence exists to support it, but the timing of the deportations suggests a link between the implementation of anti-Jewish and anti-Roma measures.

On May 16, 1942, the Ustaša secret police (UNS, or *Ustaška nadzorna služba*) and Ministry of Internal Affairs ordered district civilian and police officials to begin arresting all Roma and deporting them to the Jasenovac camp system. Croatian military and gendarme units were instructed to assist in these operations, where assistance was needed by local officials.¹⁶ For the most part, however, the regular police (and usually the criminal police) conducted the operations. Arrests and deportations followed immediately, but we have only a few extant documents relating to the deportations. On May 28, 1942, the Zagreb criminal police deported sixty-nine Roma to Jasenovac.¹⁷ In the first week of June 1942, the police of Zemun (Srijem region) deported approximately 400 Roma to Jasenovac.¹⁸ The prefect of Županja district in eastern Croatia reported on June 5, 1942, that approximately 2,000 Roma had been detained in his district (of an estimated population of 2,600) and that all had been deported to the Jasenovac camp system in eighty-three railroad cars. An inventory was compiled of their goods, some of which had been auctioned to the local population.¹⁹ These arrests were often conducted at night or early in the morning, and with great haste. In some cases, the Roma were told they were simply being resettled, and would be given land in other parts of the country.²⁰

These sweeping anti-Roma arrests were even mentioned in the Ustaša press. For example, on June 14, 1942, the government's flagship Zagreb daily, *Hrvatski narod* (The Croat Nation), carried a short article reporting that the government was in the process of "solving the Roma question." According to this article, the government was studying the Roma "problem" and was determined to find a solution. In the meantime, it had to adopt measures against the Roma. Roma "vagrants" were being "collected" and sent to "separate camps" where they would be put to work and supposedly perform socially redeeming labor.²¹ District officials in the provinces were also rounding up "beggars" who would be put to work on public works projects.²² What is interesting about these articles is that the Croatian press was almost completely silent about the Roma, which was not their approach to reporting on the Jews. These two short articles, the only two that I have found in the Croatian press from 1942, are unusual only in that they broke the public silence typical of Croatian government circles to the Roma question.

Bosnia: Muslim Roma

The Ustaša authorities did encounter difficulties, however, in implementing these measures. In Bosnia-Herzegovina some Roma, predominantly Muslim Roma (or so-called "White Roma"),²³ were spared. This was because of the early and repeated intervention of Bosnian Muslim religious leaders.²⁴ Not long after the race laws had been issued and a census of Roma was ordered, a delegation of Bosnian Muslim Roma appealed, on July 17, 1941, to the *Ulema*, that is, the Islamic religious body in Sarajevo, to intervene on their behalf against the application of the race laws to them. In short, the Bosnian Moslem religious leadership took up their cause and established a committee to defend Muslim Roma. For the most part, their interventions were successful. On August 30, 1941, the Ministry of Internal Affairs informed the Reis ul-ulema, the head of the Muslim religious community in Sarajevo, that no measures would be adopted against Muslim Roma, who were to be treated as Muslim "Aryans," that is, as Muslim "Croats."²⁵ Although it was evidently not their original intention to do so, Ustaša leaders deliberately decided to exempt Muslim Roma from persecution. This was done purely on political grounds, in deference to the Bosnian Muslims, whom the regime courted from the outset.

This is not meant to suggest that all Muslim Roma were spared. Some were still affected by the Ustaša government's anti-Roma policy. When the Ministry of Internal

Affairs ordered the arrest of all Roma in May 1942, some zealous local officials applied this order to Muslim Roma. For example, on May 26, 1942, Muslim religious leaders from the town of Zenica (Bosnia) protested the local Ustaša party officials' deportation of local Roma to the Croatian camps. On the basis of this protest, the Reis ul-ulema again called on the central authorities to release all Muslim Roma who had recently been arrested. Just days later, the Ministry of Internal Affairs agreed to release them from Jasenovac.

On the other hand, some local Croatian officials in Bosnia asked the central authorities to clarify the term "Roma" (*Cigani*) before they initiated arrests. For example, on May 29, 1942, the prefect of Konjic district (Herzegovina) reported to his superiors that in Herzegovina many Muslims referred to themselves as Roma. In the interwar period, they consistently voted "together with the remaining Muslim Croats [*sic*] for Croat interests and [the Croat] cause. They have permanent addresses and many have their own homes, land, and other immovable property."²⁶ They also had professions and worked. Were they supposed to be arrested and deported? Just days later the central authorities replied that their earlier orders pertaining to the arrest and "evacuation" of Roma were to be implemented only against "nomadic" Roma, those without a permanent address, property, or occupation. There likely were many such queries from Bosnia, because in the spring of 1942 the Ministry of Internal Affairs subsequently issued local officials a clarifying circular regarding these Muslim Roma. It ordered "the so-called White Roma Muslims are to be left alone, because they are to be considered Aryans."²⁷

It is because of these repeated interventions in 1941–42 that the Bosnian Muslim Roma survived; the communities of Sarajevo, Dobož, Brčko, Srebrenica, and some smaller localities escaped the horrible fate of most of the country's Roma. They were spared as Muslims and because of their high degree of assimilation; they had Muslim names, dressed like Muslims, had homes and professions.²⁸ How many Roma were saved because of Muslim protests is difficult to say because we do not know how many Muslim Roma there were in Bosnia. The intervention of the Muslim leadership was the only serious intervention made on their behalf.²⁹

Roma in the Jasenovac Camp System

The vast majority of Roma were not that fortunate. Virtually all captured Roma were sent, beginning in the late spring of 1942, to the Jasenovac camp system.³⁰ Once there,

almost all of them were herded into Camp III-C, where a separate section was formed for them. By late 1942 most had been killed. One survivor, the communist Mladen Iveković, later wrote, “I watched rivers of Roma, their wives and children, flow daily into Jasenovac. They came to be slaughtered. Wagon-loads [of Roma] were killed daily.”³¹ Another camp survivor, Milko Riffer, arrived in Jasenovac’s Camp III-C in October 1942. Other inmates told him that there had been anywhere from 10,000 to 20,000 Roma in the camp in the late summer of 1942. By October 1942 virtually all Roma had been murdered. The section of the camp that had earlier been designated for the Roma was now being used as a sanatorium.³² Other survivors support Riffer’s account. Egon Berger and Đorđe Miliša also claim that the Roma who began arriving in large numbers in the summer of 1942 were all placed in and near Camp III-C and murdered within months.³³ Based on survivor testimonies and memoirs—we have no camp documents pertaining to the Roma—between June and October 1942 virtually all Roma in the Jasenovac camp system had been murdered.

Conclusion: Roma Losses

As I have mentioned earlier, it is difficult to determine the exact number of Roma who were murdered at the hands of the Ustaša authorities. The first postwar Yugoslav census, conducted in 1948, determined that there were 405 Roma in Croatia and 422 in Bosnia-Herzegovina. These numbers alone indicate how high Roma losses were in Croatia: from a 1941 population of probably 26,000–28,000, only 827 were recorded in 1948.³⁴

And yet, there is no consensus among scholars in former Yugoslavia or in the West on the exact number of Roma victims in Croatia. For example, Milan Bulajić claims that 40,000 Roma were killed in Croatia, which seems like a statistical improbability given that most scholars believe there were no more than 27,000–28,000 Roma in wartime Croatia.³⁵ Antun Miletić, who has authored a detailed, three-volume study of the Jasenovac camp system, believes that approximately 25,000 Roma were killed.³⁶ The Croatian Jewish historian Ivo Goldstein, in a recently published history of Croatia, believes there were only 15,000 Roma in wartime Croatia, all of whom were killed.³⁷ Both the Israeli scholar Menachem Shelah and American scholar Dennis Reinhartz believe that 26,000 Roma, out of a prewar population of 27,000–28,000, were killed in Croatia.³⁸ Although most scholars have settled on a figure of 25,000–27,000, there is still wide disagreement on the numbers. This is because we do not

know how many Roma there were before the war. Second, perpetrator documents are few and far between. Like the Nazi administrators in Germany and occupied Europe, Ustaša officials either did not maintain detailed records of Roma, or destroyed them. Third, it seems likely, based on the 1948 census figures, that many Roma fled to occupied Serbia during the war or were deported there by the Croatian authorities in 1941. According to the 1948 census, the number of Roma in Serbia was far greater than in 1931, which suggests that some Roma may have fled or were deported there from Croatia.³⁹ We must also keep in mind that some Roma managed to flee to the Italian-occupied zone of Croatia, as did many Jews and Serbs, where they were given shelter and, in some cases, even removed to Italy.⁴⁰ Fourth, although Roma were recognized as a national minority after the war, many Muslim Roma in Bosnia, who were spared during the war only because they were Muslim, may have chosen to register themselves after the war as “Yugoslav Muslims” rather than as Roma, which would have further reduced postwar Roma numbers. As both Tatomir Vukanović and David Crowe have observed, after 1945 there were probably thousands of “closet” Roma who simply felt uncomfortable identifying themselves as Roma in the immediate postwar era.⁴¹

In the final analysis, however, we should not dwell too long on numbers alone. Despite disagreements on this issue, there is absolutely no doubt that Croatian Roma suffered an indescribably horrible fate, and that almost the entire community that fell into Ustaša hands was killed. Roma losses in Croatia may have accounted for five to ten percent of Roma losses in Europe, depending on one’s calculation of total Roma losses.⁴² Although from the outset the Ustaša authorities devoted much greater attention both to the Serb and Jewish populations, and regarded the Roma as a lower priority, when they moved against the Roma in 1942 they did so rapidly, thoroughly, and with fatal consequences. Between May and October 1942, in a period of just six months, virtually the entire Roma community was annihilated, regardless of age or sex. What adds to this immense and horrible tragedy is that we have so few resources, so few records, to investigate this genocide.

Notes

1. The persecution of Roma in wartime Croatia is treated by Jozo Tomasevich, *War and Revolution in Yugoslavia, 1941–1945: Occupation and Collaboration* (Stanford, 2001), pp. 380–415, 608–10; Milan Bulajić, *Ustaški zločini genocida i sudjenje Andriji Artukoviću 1986. godine* (Belgrade, 1988), vol. 2, pp. 82–174; Mirko Peršen, *Ustaški logori*, 2nd ed. (Zagreb, 1990); and, S. D. Milošević, *Izbeglice i preseljenici na teritoriji okupirane Jugoslavije, 1941–1945* (Belgrade, 1982), pp. 239–42. For a survey of Yugoslav Roma, see Tatomir Vukanović, *Romi (Cigani) u Jugoslaviji* (Vranje, 1983). There are only a few Western studies that address the topic. See Menachem Shelah, “Genocide in Satellite Croatia during the Second World War,” in *A Mosaic of Victims: Non-Jews Persecuted and Murdered by the Nazis*, Michael Berenbaum, ed. (New York, 1990), pp. 74–9, which mentions the Roma in passing; Dennis Reinhartz, “Damnation of the Outsider: The Gypsies of Croatia and Serbia in the Balkan Holocaust, 1941–1945,” in *The Gypsies of Eastern Europe*, David Crowe and John Kolsti, eds. (Armonk, NY, 1991), pp. 81–92; Donald Kenrick and Gratton Puxon, *The Destiny of Europe’s Gypsies* (London, 1972), pp. 108–17; David M. Crowe, *A History of the Gypsies of Eastern Europe and Russia* (New York, 1994), pp. 195–233; and Rajko Djurić, et al., *Ohne Heim - Ohne Grab: Die Geschichte der Roma und Sinti* (Berlin, 1996), pp. 277–84.

2. Western scholars of Yugoslavia now believe that the old, communist-era official Yugoslav estimates of wartime casualties in Yugoslavia (1.7 million dead) are too high, and that approximately 1 million died in all of Yugoslavia. The approximate breakdown of losses by nationality is as follows: Serbs (between 487,000 and 530,000), Croats (192,000–207,000), Bosnian Muslims (86,000–103,000), Jews (60,000), Montenegrins (50,000), and Slovenes (32,000–42,000). It is now estimated that roughly 350,000 Serbs (or 18 percent of the Serb population in 1941) and 27,000–30,000 Jews (or 75 percent of the Jewish population in 1941) were killed in wartime Croatia. Determining Roma losses is much more difficult. Most scholars believe that 25,000–27,000 Roma were killed, out of a 1941 population of roughly 28,000. If true, this would mean that, in proportionate terms, Roma losses (approximately 90 percent) were higher than either Serb or Jewish losses in wartime Croatia. For a summary of the figures, see John R. Lampe, *Yugoslavia as History: Twice There Was a Country* (Cambridge, 1996), p. 380 n. 10; and Tomasevich, *War and Revolution in Yugoslavia*, pp. 718–50. These figures are based on the work of Bogoljub Kočević, *Žrtve Drugog svetskog rata u Jugoslaviji* (London, 1985); and Vladimir Žerjavić, *Gubici stanovništva Jugoslavije u Drugom svjetskom ratu* (Zagreb, 1989).

3. Eugen “Dido” Kvaternik, *Sjećanja i zapažanja: Prilozi za hrvatsku povijest*, comp. by Jere Jareb (Zagreb, 1995), p. 285.

4. Zoltan Barany, “The Poverty of Gypsy Studies,” *NewsNet: The Newsletter of the AAASS* 40 (May 2000), no. 3, pp. 2–3.

5. Bulajić, *Ustaški zločini genocida i sudjenje Andriji Artukovi u 1986. godine*, p. 83.

6. Peršen, *Ustaški logori*, p. 157; Milošević, *Izbeglice i preseljenici*, p. 239. Milošević believes that the 70,000 persons in the “other and unknown” category of the 1931 census were all Roma, which seems unlikely since other groups were probably recorded under that category. According to Peršen, the autonomous prewar Croatian government (1939–41) claimed in its 1940 official almanac that there were 14,879 Roma in Croatia (or 0.37 percent of the population). The fascist Croatian state established in 1941 was larger than the prewar autonomous Croatian province in Yugoslavia (1939–41). One must therefore add up to 11,000 Roma from Bosnia, which would result in a figure of approximately 26,000 Roma in the Independent State of Croatia in 1941. The Western scholars Paul R. Magocsi and David Crowe also provide a figure of 70,000 Roma in 1931. Crowe estimates that in 1941 there were 28,500 Roma in Croatia. See P. R. Magocsi, *Historical Atlas of East Central Europe* (Seattle, 1993), p. 141; and David Crowe, *A History of the Gypsies of Eastern Europe and Russia*, p. 216.

7. “Zaštita arijske krvi i časti hrvatskog naroda,” *Hrvatski narod*, October 26, 1941, p. 2.

8. “Cigani sa područja grada Zagreba moraju se prijaviti,” *Hrvatski narod*, July 19, 1941, p. 7.

9 “Poziv židovima,” *Hrvatski narod*, July 19, 1941, p. 24.

10. Cited in Bulajić, *Ustaški zločini genocida*, p. 84.

11. On June 4, 1941, a Croato-German deportation agreement was signed in Zagreb. According to the terms of this agreement, the Croatian government was to accept over 100,000 Slovenes from German-occupied Slovenia in exchange for being allowed to deport the same number of Serbs to German-occupied Serbia. These deportations began in early July 1941 and soon degenerated into chaos, as zealous local Croatian officials exceeded centrally imposed quotas and guidelines; the terms of the Croato-German agreement were largely disregarded in the process. By late August 1941 the German military authorities of occupied Serbia, faced with a huge influx of deported Serbs from Croatia (in addition to over 30,000 from Hungarian-occupied Bačka (Bácska, in Hungarian), and a smaller number from Bulgarian-occupied Macedonia), had temporarily halted the deportations. A month later they permanently put an end to the deportations. On September 22, 1941, the German ambassador to Croatia, Siegfried Kasche, informed Berlin that a Croato-German conference was held that day

concerning resettlement policy. Although it was impossible to determine precisely how many Serbs had been deported to Serbia, there was “mutual agreement” that, according to counts in Serbia, over 100,000 had been deported. On September 26, 1941, SS-Obergruppenführer Reinhard Heydrich wrote to Foreign Minister Joachim von Ribbentrop that the Croatian government had “so far deported 118,110 persons in legal and illegal transports to Serbia.” *Documents on German Foreign Policy*, Vol. XIII (Washington, DC, 1964), Docs. 350, 360, pp. 552–55, 570–71. It is quite possible that some local officials, especially in eastern Croatia (Slavonia, Srijem regions), deported Roma as well, since many of them in the region were of the Serbian Orthodox faith. After all, the Ministry of Internal Affairs’ July 4, 1941, census order to local officials did permit them to deport Roma who had “wandered” into Croatia since the outbreak of the world war. Given the over-all behavior of local Croatian officials vis-à-vis the Serbs, it is likely that many Roma were swept up in the deportations and simply herded across the border.

12. Milošević, *Izbeglice i preseljenici*, p. 240; Peršen, *Ustaški logori*, pp. 55–56.

13. Milošević, *Izbeglice i preseljenici*, p. 240.

14. Bulajić, *Ustaški zločini genocida*, p. 100; Peršen, *Ustaški logori*, p. 157.

15. In the prewar period, Ustaša periodicals and propaganda emphasized anti-Serb themes and, to a much lesser extent, antisemitic themes. The Roma were never mentioned. Furthermore, all anti-Serb and anti-Jewish decrees and measures were published in the Croatian press in 1941, and anti-Serb and anti-Jewish articles justifying these harsh policies are legion. However, after examining the Ustaša newspaper *Hrvatski narod* (The Croat Nation), the fascist regime’s flagship daily paper in Zagreb, I have been unable to locate a single article from 1941 devoted solely to the so-called “Roma Question” in Croatia. Furthermore, local Croatian civilian, gendarme, and military officials, in their weekly situation reports to Zagreb, regularly reported, under “General Political Conditions,” on the behavior of the local “Croat” (i.e., Catholics and Bosnian Muslim populations), Serb, and Jewish populations. It is virtually impossible to find references in these reports to Roma, either in 1941 or later. There was a sharp contrast in both the press and official documentation: on the one hand, an explicitly anti-Serb and anti-Jewish tone, and on the other, almost universal silence on Roma. Among other things, this would indicate that the Croatian authorities regarded the Serb and Jewish “questions” as much more serious. Finally, although the Ustaša authorities formed a central office for Jewish affairs (the “Jewish Section”), no such office was formed to coordinate and implement policy toward the Roma.

16. The documents are reproduced in Miletić, *Koncentracioni logor Jasenovac*, pp. 289–91. Based on the extant documentation, it is impossible to infer any German involvement in the Croatian government’s May 1942 decision to arrest and deport

Roma. In the case of Bulgaria and Hungary, David Crowe has argued that Germany applied various degrees of pressure in 1941–42. In both countries, racial and compulsory work decrees were issued, but these decrees were not necessarily followed by deportations or killings. In the Bulgarian case, the German government evidently decided by mid-1942 not to press Sofia on deportations. In Romania, as Radu Ioanid has recently shown Nazi Germany paid great attention to the government's handling of the Roma "problem." Crowe, *A History of the Gypsies of Eastern Europe and Russia*, pp. 89–91; and Radu Ioanid, *The Holocaust in Romania: The Destruction of Jews and Gypsies Under the Antonescu Regime, 1940–1944* (Chicago, 2000), pp. 225–37.

17. Miletić, *Koncentracioni logor Jasenovac*, pp. 291–94.

18. *Ibid.*, pp. 294–96.

19. *Ibid.*, p. 299.

20. For example, Josip Joka Nikolić, from the village of Predavec (Čazma district), recalled that he and the other Roma were told they were being resettled either to Bosnia or to central Croatia, where they would be given land. See Bulajić, *Ustaški zločini genocida*, p. 91.

21. "Hrvatska rješava pitanje Cigana," *Hrvatski narod*, June 14, 1942, p. 4.

22. "Čišćenje Zagreba od prosjaka," *Hrvatski narod*, June 18, 1942, p. 6.

23. There had been three categories of Roma in Bosnia-Herzegovina. The oldest group, known as "White Roma," was most assimilated. It was gradually losing its Romany language and customs. These Roma were Muslim, whereas their counterparts in Serbia were Orthodox Christian. On the other hand, the "Black Roma" were more nomadic. They were popularly referred to as čergaši (from the Turkish word çergi or "tent"). Although Muslim, they were much less assimilated than the so-called White Roma. The third group was known as the Karavlası ("Black Vlachs"), who tended to regard themselves as Vlachs or even Romanians, although they were often regarded by others as Roma. See Noel Malcolm, *Bosnia: A Short History* (London, 1994), pp. 116–18.

24. Bulajić, *Ustaški zločini genocida*, p. 149.

25. *Ibid.*, p. 150. The Ustaše, like most Croat nationalists since the late nineteenth century, regarded the Bosnian Muslims as Muslim "Croats." This was based on their belief that the Bosnian Muslims had, in the medieval period, belonged to the Catholic community (which thus supposedly made them Croat) and then the Bogumil religious sect. With the arrival of the Ottoman Turks, these Bogumil converts, so the argument went, to Islam, but conversion did not alter their Croat nationality and character. A

summary of the Ustaša attitude towards the Bosnian Muslims can be found in Malcom, *Bosnia*, pp. 174–92; and in Francine Friedman, *The Bosnian Muslim: Denial of a Nation* (Boulder, 1996), pp. 117–32. A more detailed treatment is provided by Fikreta Jelić-Butić, “Bosna i Hercegovina u koncepciji stvaranja NDH,” and Mile Konjević, “O nekim pitanjima politike ustaša prema bosanskohercegovačkih Muslimana 1941. godine,” in *1941. u istoriji naroda Bosne i Hercegovine, Zdravka Antonić*, ed. (Sarajevo, 1973), pp. 43–9, 263–74.

26. Cited in Miletić, *Koncentracioni logor Jasenovac*, p. 290 n. 3.

27. Cited in Miletić, *Koncentracioni logor Jasenovac*, p. 290 n. 3.

28. Bulajić, *Ustaški zločini genocida*, pp. 150–52.

29. The Roma encountered a good deal of hostility or indifference from the population. However, we do have a few recorded instances of the population assisting arrested Roma. For example, when the eighty Roma of Pisarovina district of Croatia were arrested in May 1942, a group of forty Croat peasants protested their arrest to the local prefect, Dragutin Stare. They asked that the Roma be released because they had not done anything wrong. Stare informed the Ministry of Internal Affairs of the protest, but the Ministry never replied and the Roma were duly deported. The peasants of Kutjevo village (Požega district) protested the arrest of forty-four local Roma, as did the villagers of Vrpolje (Brod district). In both cases, the peasants submitted written petitions to the authorities asking for the release of the Roma, who were law-abiding citizens and innocent of any wrongdoing. Only in the case of Vrpolje was the petition successful. Ten Roma families, all of whom were Catholic and permanently settled in the village, were saved. Bulajić, *Ustaški zločini genocida*, pp. 85, 94; Milošević, *Izbeglice i preseljenici*, p. 241; and Slavica Hrečkovski, *Slavonski Brod u NOB i socijalističkoj revoluciji, 1941–1945* (Slavonski Brod, 1982), pp. 46–48.

30. The only work on Roma in Jasenovac is Dragoljub Acković, *Stradanja Roma u Jasenovcu* (Belgrade, 1995).

31. Cited in Jefto Šašić, “Predgovor,” in Miletić, *Koncentracioni logor Jasenovac*, p. 8. Iveković believed that approximately 30,000 Roma had been killed in the camp.

32. Milko Riffer, *Grad mrtvih: Jasenovac 1943* (Zagreb, 1946), pp. 38, 154–55.

33. Egon Berger, *44 mjeseca u Jasenovcu* (Zagreb, 1966), pp. 67–69; and Đorđe Miliša, *U mučilištu-paklu Jasenovac* (Zagreb, 1945), pp. 59–61, 139–42. Camp III of Jasenovac had been formed in November 1941. By the summer of 1942 it had become the largest camp of the Jasenovac system, with three sections (III-A, III-B, III-C). Camp III-C, where most of the Roma were detained, was formed in July 1942. Witness

and survivor testimonies often provide high figures for the number of Roma killed at Jasenovac. For example, Berger believed that 45,000 Roma perished in the camp, while Miliša estimated 40,000 Roma victims.

34. Peršen, *Ustaški logori*, p. 159.

35. Bulajić, *Ustaški zločini genocida*, p. 173. Unfortunately, Bulajić does not seriously question or scrutinize the numbers he uses in his study. He bases his estimates entirely on survivor accounts (Đorđe Miliša, Egon Berger, et al.), which tend to exaggerate the number of Roma killed in Jasenovac. Mladen Colić, although not discussing in any detail the Croatian government's policy towards the Roma, also believes that there were 40,000 Roma victims in Croatia. See Mladen Colić, *Takozvana NDH* (Zagreb, 1973), p. 394. The figure of 40,000 is also cited in Djurić, et al., *Ohne Heim*, pp. 280–82. During the 1999 war crimes trial of Dinko Šakić, who served for eight months in 1944 as commander of the Jasenovac camp system, the President of the Roma Party in Zagreb, Kasum Cana, claimed in an interview that over 20,000 Roma had been killed at Jasenovac, but that the figure may have been as high as 40,000. See “Rom za bježanje,” *Feral Tribune*, 9 August 1999.

36. Miletić, *Koncentracioni logor Jasenovac*, p. 37.

37. Ivo Goldstein, *Croatia: A History* (London, 1999), p. 137.

38. Shelah, “Genocide in Satellite Croatia,” p. 78; Reinhartz, “Damnation of the Outsider,” p. 84.

39. According to the March 1948 census, there were approximately 52,000 Roma in the Socialist Republic of Serbia (i.e., Serbia proper, with Vojvodina and Kosovo provinces). According to the 1931 census, there were approximately 29,000 persons in Serbia (Belgrade prefecture, Dunav and Morava provinces, i.e., Vojvodina and Serbia proper) in the “other and unknown” category. According to David Crowe, in 1939 there may have been 39,000–40,000 Roma in Serbia proper and 60,000 in wider Serbia (with Vojvodina and Kosovo). Viewed in relation to the 1931 census, these estimates may be too high. See Peršen, *Ustaški logori*, p. 159; and Crowe, *A History of the Gypsies of Eastern Europe and Russia*, p. 220.

40. On Italian assistance to Croatian Roma, see Crowe, *A History of the Gypsies of Eastern Europe and Russia*, p. 219; Angus Fraser, *The Gypsies* (Oxford, 1992), p. 271; Kenrick and Puxon, *The Destiny of Europe's Gypsies*, p. 109; and Giovanna Boursier, “Gypsies in Italy during the Fascist Dictatorship and the Second World War,” in *In the Shadow of the Swastika: vol. 2: The Gypsies during the Second World War*, D. Kenrick, ed. (Hatfield, 1999), pp. 25–8.

41. Crowe, *A History of the Gypsies of Eastern Europe and Russia*, p. 223; Vukanović, *Romi (Cigani) u Jugoslaviji*, pp. 129–32. According to the March 1948 census, there were 72,000 Roma in Yugoslavia, and according to the 1953 census, there were almost 85,000. Vukanović believes that there were actually 150,000 Roma in 1953, but that most still refused to identify themselves as Roma.

42. This assumes that Roma losses in Europe numbered around 250,000, a figure provided by a number of authors. For example, see Kenrick and Puxon, *The Destiny of Europe's Gypsies*, pp. 183–84; and Magocsi, *Historical Atlas of East Central Europe*, p. 164. Henry R. Huttenbach believes that between 250,000 to 500,000 Roma were killed during the Second World War. See H. R. Huttenbach, “The Romani Pořajmos: The Nazi Genocide of Gypsies in Germany and Eastern Europe,” in *The Gypsies of Eastern Europe*, pp. 44–45.