

# **"Like Jews?" The Nazi Persecution and Extermination of Soviet Roma Under the German Military Administration: A New Interpretation, Based on Soviet Sources**

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The situation in the German occupied territories of the Soviet Union during the Second World War plays a key role in discussion of the comparability or incomparability of the Nazi genocide of Roma ("Gypsies") with the Holocaust. At the same time, this same region, particularly the militarily administered parts, remains the most understudied area with regard to the Nazi persecution of Roma. This analysis of German and Soviet documents offers new insight into this topic and forces us to reconsider the relationship between the persecutions of the "Gypsies" and the Jews.

The German occupied Soviet territories during the Second World War are of great importance for the evaluation of the genocidal character of the Nazi persecution of Roma.<sup>1</sup> The Soviet example is therefore frequently cited in the course of historiographical and often polemical discussion about the comparability or incomparability of the Nazi extermination of "Gypsies" with the Jewish Holocaust. Despite its importance, to date research into the fate of Soviet Roma under Nazi occupation is very inadequate.<sup>2</sup> Although the archives of post-Soviet states opened their doors to research almost twenty years ago, historians have

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1 I use the ethnic and cultural expression "Roma" (Rom – masculine singular; Romni – feminine singular) with respect to the Roma people. The term "Gypsy" was the name given to Roma by non-Roma and I use quotation marks to mark its status as construct. Furthermore, I refrain from using fashionable political expressions like "*porraimos*" or "Gypsy Holocaust," which are inaccurate and confusing. *Porraimos* (from *porrovav* - to devour) has, at least in some Romani dialects, a sexual connotation, while "Gypsy Holocaust" employs the word "holocaust" polemically, in order to underline parallels between the Nazi persecution of Jews and of "Gypsies." See Nikolai Bessonov, "Ob ispol'zovanii terminov 'Poraimos' and 'Kholokost' v znachenii 'genotsid tsygan,'" in *Golokost i Suchasnist* 2.1 (2007), pp. 71-82.

2 So far, we have only estimates of the actual extent of the crimes committed in the German occupied Soviet Union. The most widely accepted approximation of Roma

only recently begun to study Soviet sources on the fate of "Gypsies" between 1941 and 1944. As I will show, this new empirical data facilitates a fundamental reinterpretation of the historiographical consensus established by Michael Zimmermann in the 1990s.<sup>3</sup>

It was Wolfgang Wippermann who, following the pioneering work of Donald Kenrick and Grattan Puxon, first proposed the idea that the Nazis intended the systematic annihilation of the Soviet Roma.<sup>4</sup> He presumed that the mobile killing units of the SS killed every "Gypsy" they could reach. However, he concluded that what distinguished the "Gypsy" genocide from the Holocaust was that the *Einsatzgruppen* (Task Forces) had encountered difficulties in identifying the "Gypsies", who successfully hid their ethnic identity.<sup>5</sup>

Michael Zimmermann also recognized the genocidal intentions of the Nazis towards the Soviet "Gypsies", who they viewed as racially inferior. Zimmermann, however, argued that the genocidal activity was not so systematic, since the *Einsatzgruppen* differentiated between itinerant and sedentary "Gypsies." The former were viewed by the Nazis as "vagabonds," "anti-socials" and potential "partisan spies". He suggested that although sedentary and socially assimilated Roma, who did not fit the traditional "Gypsy" stereotype of perpetually traveling nomads, also fell victim to mass shootings, the perpetrators did not actively search for them. In contrast, the killing of all Jews was an absolute priority for the Nazis. One of Zimmermann's main arguments was that the *Einsatzgruppen* did not think of employing measures such as special registration, isolation or calls for a fake resettlement against "Gypsies", as they did against the

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victims is 30,000, which Donald Kenrick and Grattan Puxon derived from pre- and postwar censuses in the USSR. See Donald Kenrick and Grattan Puxon, *Sinti und Roma: die Vernichtung eines Volkes im NS-Staat* (Göttingen: Gesellschaft für Bedrohte Völker, 1981), p. 105. The English version appeared in 1972

- 3 With regard to the empirical basis, the present article offers a concise version of my monograph on the topic. See Martin Holler, *Der nationalsozialistische Völkermord an den Roma in der besetzten Sowjetunion (1941-1944): Gutachten für das Dokumentations- und Kulturzentrum Deutscher Sinti und Roma* (Heidelberg: Dokumentations- und Kulturzentrum Deutscher Sinti und Roma, 2009).
- 4 Wolfgang Wippermann, "Nur eine Fußnote? Die Verfolgung der sowjetischen Roma: Historiographie, Motive, Verlauf," in *Gegen das Vergessen: Der Vernichtungskrieg gegen die Sowjetunion 1941-1945*, eds. Klaus Meyer and Wolfgang Wippermann, (Frankfurt am Main: Haag und Herchen, 1992), pp. 75-90.
- 5 Wolfgang Wippermann, "Auserwählte Opfer?" *Shoah und Porrajmos im Vergleich: Eine Kontroverse* (Berlin: Frank & Timme, 2005), p. 121.

Jews. He claimed that this was also due to the fact that Soviet Roma lived in small and dispersed groups rather than in compact settlements, so that concentrated and planned mass operations were neither necessary nor possible.<sup>6</sup> As I will show in the examples of “Gypsies” living in *kolkhozes* (collective farms), or in communities in villages and towns, this assumption is mistaken.

Yehuda Bauer’s simplification of Zimmermann’s thesis is also problematic. In pointing out the differences between genocide and the Shoah, Bauer also views Nazi actions in the Soviet Union as the “real touchstone” for the evaluation of Nazi policy towards Roma. While Zimmermann cautiously leaves open the question of the degree to which sedentary Soviet “Gypsies” actually became objects of genocidal persecution, Bauer generalizes the alleged differentiation between sedentary and itinerant “Gypsies”, and asserts that “relatively few” Roma were murdered by the A, B and C Task Forces, with *Einsatzgruppe D* as an exception.<sup>7</sup>

The main weakness of these theses is that they are based exclusively on materials from German archives, including military orders, Security Police and army reports, and post-war trials. In relation to Soviet Roma, such sources offer only a fragmentary and contradictory insight into actual events. Nevertheless, this research did trigger the beginnings of an important historiographical debate concerning the fate of the Roma as a special victim group in the German occupied territories. Consequently, they are no longer “just a footnote,” as Wolfgang Wippermann lamented in 1992.<sup>8</sup> In recent years, most Western scholars have integrated the “Gypsy” narrative, to some degree, into their general analysis of the German occupational policy.<sup>9</sup> The most promising new research

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6 Michael Zimmermann, *Rassenutopie und Genozid: Die nationalsozialistische “Lösung der Zigeunerfrage”* (Hamburg: Christians, 1996), p. 263; Zimmermann, “The Soviet Union and the Baltic States 1941-44: the Massacre of the Gypsies,” in *In the Shadow of the Swastika: The Gypsies During the Second World War*, ed. Donald Kenrick (Hatfield, Hertfordshire: University of Hertfordshire Press, 1999), pp. 131-48.

7 See Yehuda Bauer, *Die dunkle Seite der Geschichte: Die Shoah in historischer Sicht – Interpretationen und Re-Interpretationen* (Frankfurt am Main: Jüdischer Verlag im Suhrkamp Verlag, 2001), pp. 90-93; Bauer, “Zigeuner,” in *Enzyklopädie des Holocaust: Die Verfolgung und Ermordung der europäischen Juden, Band III (Q-Z)*, pp. 1630-34; 1634 (Berlin: Argon, 1993). Similar arguments can be found in Guenter Lewy, “Rückkehr nicht erwünscht:” *Die Verfolgung der Zigeuner im Dritten Reich* (Munich and Berlin: Propyläen, 2001), p. 217.

8 Wippermann named his 1992 essay “*Nur eine Fußnote?*” (“Just a footnote?”).

9 On Belarus, see Christian Gerlach, *Kalkulierte Morde, Die deutsche Wirtschafts- und Vernichtungspolitik in Weißrussland 1941 bis 1944* (Hamburg: Hamburger Edition, 1999), pp. 1063-67; on Galicia, see Dieter Pohl, *Nationalsozialistische*

is by scholars who integrate German and Soviet materials. Fortunately, in recent years, historians from post-Soviet States have also begun to examine this issue.<sup>10</sup> Although a comprehensive study of the Nazi genocide of Soviet Roma is still lacking, a number of articles relating to this particular geographical location have facilitated a broader view and enhanced our understanding of this important subject.<sup>11</sup>

The most useful sources in deciphering Nazi policy and their persecution of the Soviet Roma are files from the former Soviet Union, which until now have, for the most part, been ignored by Western scholars. Post-Soviet archives offer a variety of materials, including files from the local occupational administration; partisan reports

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*Judenverfolgung in Ostgalizien 1941-1944: Organisation und Durchführung eines staatlichen Massenverbrechens* (Munich: Oldenbourg, 1997), pp. 114-15; 397-98; on Estonia, see Anton Weiss-Wendt, "Extermination of the Gypsies in Estonia during World War II: Popular Images and Official Policies," in *Holocaust and Genocide Studies*, 17.1 (Spring 2003), pp. 31-61; Ruth Bettina Birn, *Die Sicherheitspolizei in Estland 1941-1944: Eine Studie zur Kollaboration im Osten* (Paderborn: Ferdinand Schöningh, 2006), pp. 185-89. Andrej Angrick and Norbert Kunz have also collected information on Roma in the Crimea: see Andrej Angrick, *Besatzungspolitik und Massenmord: Die Einsatzgruppe D in der südlichen Sowjetunion 1941-1943* (Hamburg: Hamburger Edition, 2003), pp. 342-43 and Norbert Kunz, *Die Krim unter deutscher Herrschaft 1941-1944: Germanisierungstypie und Besatzungsrealität* (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 2005), pp. 191-94.

- 10 Soviet historiography on the topic was limited to mentions of single mass shootings, without contextualization. In the 1960s, the Russian writer and journalist Lev Ginzburg collected extensive materials for a general monograph about the Nazi genocide of Roma, but for unknown reasons he never published it. On Ginzburg, see *Rossiiskii Gosudarstvennyi Arkhiv Literatury i Iskusstva (RGALI)*, f.2928, op.1, d.74, ll.1-31.
- 11 Mikhail Tiaglyi, "Chingene – Zhertvy kholokosta? Natsistskaia politika v Krymu v otnoshenii tsygan i evreev, 1941-1944," in *Odessa i evreiskaia tsivilizatsiia, sbornik materialov IV mezhdunarodnoi nauchnoi konferentsii: Katastrofa, soprotivlenie, pobeda* (31 October–2 November, 2005, Odessa); *Evreiskii obshchinyi tsentr "Migdal"* (Odessa: Studiia "Negotsiant," 2006), pp. 140-75; Nikolai Bessonov, "Tsygane SSSR v okkupatsii: Strategii vyzhivaniia," in *Golokost i Suchasnist 2.6* (2009), pp. 17-52. On the Ukraine, see Aleksandr Kruglov, "Genotsid tsygan v Ukraine v 1941-1944 gg.: statistiko-regional'nyi aspekt," in *Golokost i Suchasnist 2.6* (2009), pp. 83-113; some details can be found also in Il'ia Al'tman, *Zhertvy nenavisti: Kholokost v SSSR 1941-1945 gg.* (Moscow: Fond "Kovcheg," 2002). The Russian independent author and expert on Roma, Nikolai Bessonov, is currently working on a monograph, to be titled *Tragediia Tsygan* (The Tragedy of the Gypsies).

to Moscow; political reports; investigations by the Red Army;<sup>12</sup> the voluminous files of the Extraordinary State Commission for the investigation of German-fascist crimes;<sup>13</sup> public and secret Soviet tribunals against war criminals and “traitors,” i.e. collaborators; and, last but not least, eye-witnesses’ and survivors’ testimonies.

The files of the Extraordinary State Commission for the Investigation of German-Fascist Crimes (ChGK) are of cardinal importance. From November 1942 on, the commission started its work in the first territories liberated by the Red Army. Their investigation included interrogation of eye-witnesses, the compiling of statistical records and the exhumation of mass graves. Some of their findings were used in the Nuremberg trials and were also published in the press. One should be aware, however, that the work of the ChGK was largely politically motivated.<sup>14</sup> By convincing his western Allies that the Soviet Union had to bear the greatest losses in the fight against Hitler, Stalin succeeded in securing his post-war geographical and material demands. For this reason, the ChGK files tend to round up or exaggerate the numbers.

Another typically Soviet problem is the omission, due to ideological principle, of any reference to distinct ethnic groups. The fact that both Jews and “Gypsies” were exterminated was not denied, but the unique character of these genocides remained concealed, or was at least minimized. In the case of the Jews, the Soviet refusal to commemorate their specific tragedy went hand in hand with a Stalinist policy of state

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12 To be found in the Central Archive of the Ministry of Defense of the Russian Federation (*Tsentral’nyi Arkhiv Ministerstva Oborony Rossiiskoi Federatsii*). See also F.D. Sverdlov (sost.), *Dokumenty obviniaiat: Kholokost: svidetel’stva Krasnoi Armii* (Moscow: Nauchno-prosvetitel’nyi tsentr “Kholokost,” 1996).

13 *Chrezvychainaia Gosudarstvennaia Komissiiia po ustanovleniiu i rassledovaniiu zlodeianii nemetsko-fashistskikh zakhvatchikov i ikh soobshchnikov i prichinennogo imi ushcherba grazhdanam, kollektivnym khoziaistvam (kolkhozam), obshchestvennym organizatsiiam, gosudarstvennym predpriiatiiam i uchrezhdeniiam SSSR (ChGK)*. Henceforth I will use the shorter title “Extraordinary State Commission” or “ChGK.”

14 Political misuse of the Commission occurred most obviously in the infamous case of Katyn near Smolensk, where the Soviet government tried to blame the occupying German forces for the shooting of several thousands of Polish army officers, an act which was in fact committed by the NKVD in 1940. See, among others, Natalia Lebedeva, *Katyn: prestuplenie protiv chelovechestva* (Moscow: Gruppya Progress-Kul’tura, 1994). One should emphasize, however, that Katyn was an extreme case, an exception rather than the rule, and so it should not be used to disqualify the investigations of the Extraordinary State Commission as a whole.

sponsored antisemitism.<sup>15</sup> A further peculiarity of the ChGK files is that the quality and nature of its investigation differed between regions and at different times. The earlier the investigation, the more specific the information relating to the ethnic identity of the victims. In later reports to higher governmental levels, the Jews and "Gypsies" were referred to as "Soviet civilians."

Furthermore, there are some technical matters concerning the Commission's material. In many cases witnesses' testimonies are imprecise or even contradictory. It is often impossible to determine the exact date of certain mass shootings. This is particularly true of the extermination of Jews and Roma. The mass murder of these groups began in the first year of the German-Soviet war and was overshadowed by countless German atrocities committed against villagers in the course of "anti-partisan campaigns," and by the scorched earth policy of the Wehrmacht's withdrawal in 1943 and 1944.

The civilians interviewed could seldom give exact information about the perpetrators, and it is often unclear whether a massacre was committed by SS forces, military units or others. The interviewees often describe the perpetrators as "retaliation units," "Fascist monsters," or simply "the Germans." Their accounts also blur the identity of the victims. In some villages, the murdered Roma were described stereotypically as nomads (*kochevniki*), even if they were registered as formerly sedentary refugees or evacuees from other parts of the country. Furthermore, Roma villages, or even urban quarters with a sedentary Roma population were colloquially called "*tabor*," a Russian word meaning a temporary camp of itinerant Roma. It is important to be aware of these problems when using and interpreting these sources. Nevertheless, the files of the Extraordinary State Commission remain one of the most important sources available on the Nazi persecution of Soviet Roma.

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15 See for example Gennadii V. Kostyrchenko, *Tainaia politika Stalina: Vlast' i antisemitizm* (Moscow: "Mezhdunarodnye otnosheniia," 2001). The Roma were much too marginal a group in Soviet society to draw any special attention from the Bolsheviks. The complete absence of a political lobby is one of the reasons why Roma victims never became part of the official Russian collective memory of the Second World War: see Martin Holler, "Die nationalsozialistische Vernichtung der Roma in der sowjetischen und russischen Erinnerungskultur," in *Der nationalsozialistische Genozid an den Roma Osteuropas: Geschichte und künstlerische Verarbeitung*, eds. Felicitas Fischer von Weikersthal and Christoph Garstka and Urs Heftrich and Heinz-Dietrich Löwe (Cologne: Böhlau, 2008), pp. 245-94.

My article focuses on those Soviet territories that were under German military administration, and about which little is known.<sup>16</sup> They include all of those territories in occupied Soviet Russia (including the Crimea), the *oblasti* (territories) Chernigov, Sumy, Kharkov and Stalino in East Ukraine and parts of East Belarus (the *oblasti* Mogilev and Vitebsk).

I examined the question of Nazi policy and treatment of Soviet Roma, first by analyzing German reports relating to the mass shootings of “Gypsies” and comparing them with Soviet investigations of the same events. Second, I focused my investigation on particular geographical locations in which the Roma settlement was dense, in order to gain a greater insight into the treatment of sedentary and socially assimilated Roma, which is the focus of the historiographical debate regarding the nature of the Roma genocide.

### Army Group North

As early as July 17, 1941 Lithuania, Latvia, Estonia and parts of Belarus were officially annexed to the *Reichskommissariat Ostland*, with a civil administration under the control of the newly established *Reichsministerium für die besetzten Ostgebiete* (Reich Ministry of the Occupied Eastern Territories). The North-West Russian front, consisting of parts of the territories of Leningrad, Novgorod, Pskov and northern Velikie Luki, remained under military administration up until the end of the German occupation.<sup>17</sup>

The Roma population in the area between the Peipus and Ilmen lakes was relatively small,<sup>18</sup> but Army Group North’s area of operations was a militarily administered territory, where we find written orders for the treatment of local “Gypsies.” The order of the general in command of Army Group North’s rear area, dated November 21,

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16 Since research on the Nazi extermination of Soviet Jews is much more extensive than that dealing with the genocide of Roma, my empirical analysis concentrates almost exclusively on the latter, in order to achieve a solid basis for comparison with the Shoah.

17 See Andreas Zellhuber, “*Unsere Verwaltung treibt einer Katastrophe zu...*”: *Das Reichsministerium für die besetzten Ostgebiete und die deutsche Besatzungsherrschaft in der Sowjetunion 1941-1945* (Munich: Ernst Vögel, 2006), pp. 130-36. In December 1941, Estonia was also integrated into the *Reichskommissariat*, although it still remained part of the military administration.

18 Leningrad, which did not fall under German occupation, was the centre of Roma life in this area. For the same reason, many Roma starved to death during the German blockade.

1941, differentiated between "itinerant Gypsies," who were to be "handed over to the next *Einsatzkommando* of the SD" (to be shot), and "sedentary Gypsies, who had already lived in their place of residence for two years" and were "neither politically nor criminally suspicious," who should be left where they were.<sup>19</sup> The Security Police and military units were given great latitude in assessing the "political reliability" of the groups. Further, the idea of "itinerants" in wartime could be broadly applied. This vague definition was still in official use up until the end of the German occupation.<sup>20</sup>

German files do not provide a clear or comprehensive picture regarding the practical implementation of official "Gypsy" orders, as only four reports on the shootings of Roma survived. In January 1942, *Einsatzgruppe A* reported the arrest and execution of 93 persons, among them "a bunch of Gypsies, who had made trouble (*Unwesen*) in the surroundings of Siverskaia."<sup>21</sup> A further shooting of 71 "Gypsies" was also reported from the area around Leningrad.<sup>22</sup> On February 1, 1942, "38 Jews and a Gypsy" were murdered in Loknia.<sup>23</sup> Finally, the biggest mass shooting of Roma – 128 persons according to German files – was perpetrated in the summer of 1942 by a military unit in Novorzhev.<sup>24</sup> This report will be analyzed below.

In 1941, no mass shootings of Roma were registered in this area.<sup>25</sup> However, the ChGK files do not include a complete assessment of how Roma were treated at this

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19 The complete text of the order is no longer extant, but later orders and reports often paraphrase or refer to it. Compare for example STA Nürnberg, ND, NOKW 2072, 281. Sich.Div., Abt., Ia/Ic/VII - 297/42. 23.6.42; STA Nürnberg, ND, NOKW 2022, 281. Sdv., Abt.VII/Ia, Tgb. Nr. 457/43 geh., 24 March, 1943, an Feld.-Kdtr. 822.

20 STA Nürnberg, ND, NOKW 2072, 281. Sich.Div., Abt., Ia/Ic/VII - 297/42. 23.6.42; *ibid.*, NOKW 2022, 281. Sdv., Abt.VII/Ia, Tgb. Nr. 457/43 geh., 24.3.43, an Feld.-Kdtr. 822.

21 See Hans-Heinrich Wilhelm, *Die Einsatzgruppe A der Sicherheitspolizei und des SD 1941/42*, (Munich: PhD diss., n.d. [1974-75]), p. 242.

22 Zimmermann, *Rassenutopie und Genozid*, p. 260.

23 Wilhelm, *Die Einsatzgruppe A*, 239. According to Soviet investigations, 37 Jews were killed. A twelve-year-old-boy managed to escape during the shooting. From the young boy's testimony, the ChGK could reconstruct the course of the mass shooting in detail. See *Protokol doprosa Filanovskogo Soliu Grigorevicha*, 12 February, 1942. GARF, f.7021 (ChGK), op.20 (*Velikolutskaia oblast*), d.13, ll.14-15ob.

24 In German documents also named Noworschew or Noworschew.

25 In November 1941, two "Gypsies" from the village of Botanok (Dno region) were shot together with a Russian, but this isolated incident probably occurred in the course of a German Security Police campaign against communists, "Soviet intelligence" and Jews, which took place in October and November 1941. See Wilhelm, *Die Einsatzgruppe A*,



time and it is very possible that they were subjected to increased Security Police control and used for forced labor, as was the case in Estonia.<sup>26</sup> At least one example supports this assumption. In 1941, several Roma families, 26 persons altogether, were deported from Luga to the village of Filippovshchina of the Shcherpetskii *sel'skii soviet* (village soviet)<sup>27</sup> in the Gdov region, where they were quartered with Russian farmers and forced to do agricultural work, so that it seems that their deportation was also economically motivated. However, at the end of February 1942, a “retaliation unit” consisting of Germans, Finns and Estonians came to Filippovshchina. On a freezing morning, with temperatures around minus 30 degrees Celsius, all Roma, most of them lightly dressed, were driven out of their houses and made to stand on a bridge at the entrance to the village. For the “repulsive entertainment” of the murderers, to quote the Commission’s report, the “Gypsy” families were forced to dance in front of the assembled village community, before they were shot with three machine guns. After the shooting, the Russian farmers were forced to bury the dead bodies in mass graves. A ten-year-old Roma boy, who suffered only a hand injury, tried in vain to escape with the help of some villagers. According to eye-witnesses, he was buried alive.<sup>28</sup>

With regard to the motivation of the perpetrators, there are two important points worthy of mention. First, the mass shooting in front of the whole village community was deliberate. A German soldier officially declared it to be an action against partisan activity. Yet, according to the ChGK protocols no one amongst the shocked eye-witnesses believed the accusation hurled against the “completely innocent and defenseless Gypsies,” who had not even been interrogated by the Germans.<sup>29</sup> Second, the sadistic manner in which the execution took place illustrates the way the Nazis viewed their victims – which is deeply connected to the stereotypical image of the “Gypsy”. The perpetrators exploited music and dance, integral to Roma culture, to humiliate the victims. Surrounded by loaded machine guns, the

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pp. 242-44. The Soviets also noted the extraordinary intensity of German persecution at this time. Compare *AKT o zlodeianiiakh nemetsko-fashistskikh zakhvatchikov i ikh soobshchnikov v Oredezhskom raione Leningradskoi oblasti*. GARF, f.7021 (ChGK), op.30 (*Leningradskaiia oblast*), d.245, ll.3-9; 3-4.

26 See Weiss-Wendt, *Extermination of the Gypsies in Estonia*, pp. 40-44.

27 The village soviet was an administrative council consisting of representatives of collective farms, chaired by an elected leader of the council.

28 *AKT o zlodeianiiakh nemetsko-fashistskikh zakhvatchikov i ikh soobshchnikov po Gdovskomu raionu, za period ego okkupatsii*. GARF, f.7021 (ChGK), op.39 (*Pskovskaia oblast*), d.457, ll.1-17ob.; 6-6ob.

29 *Ibid.*, ll.6ob.-7.

Roma of Filippovshchina were forced to perform their last dance on a stage formed by the bridge.

The murder of the Roma of Filippovshchina was the beginning of a whole series of massacres in Army Group North's area of operations, starting in the spring of 1942.<sup>30</sup> According to the (presumably incomplete) data of the Extraordinary State Commission, altogether between 700 and 900 Roma were killed in this area during the German occupation. Geographically, the mass murders were spread all over the territory and were committed by different perpetrator groups.

Up until the end of March 1942, those shootings of Roma which were registered were committed exclusively by mobile killing units.<sup>31</sup> In April 1942, however, anti-Roma measures reached a new level of planning and coordination. In the Leningrad region, the entire Roma communities of Oredezh (72 persons) and Utogorsh (120 persons), were deported in freight trains, one after another, to the "SD residence" in the former farmyard of Vasil'kovichi, where they were murdered.<sup>32</sup> It is remarkable that the complete registration and arrest of the Roma was only possible with the help of the Russian informer Anna Ershova.<sup>33</sup> Ershova is mentioned in the ChGK list of "traitors" and war criminals together with the Chief of Police in Oredezh, Bauer.<sup>34</sup>

At the end of May 1942, 128 Roma were shot at Novorzhev near Pskov by members of the *Geheime Feldpolizei Gruppe 714* (Secret Field Police Group 714), a

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30 AKT No 21. *Slantsevskoi raionnoi komissii*. 29.11.1944. GARF, f.7021 (ChGK), op.30 (*Leningradskaia oblast*), d.250, ll.4-5.

31 In two villages of the Pskov region, Roma were shot together with Jews. *Doklad ob itogakh ushcherba i rassledovanii zlodeianii, chinimyx nemetsko-fashistskimi zakhvatchikami v Pskovskoi oblasti*. GARF, f.7021 (ChGK), op.39 (*Pskovskaia oblast*), d.455, l.20.

32 *AKT o zlodeianiakh nemetsko-fashistskikh zakhvatchikov i ikh soobshchnikov v Oredezhskom raione Leningradskoi oblasti*. GARF, f.7021 (ChGK), op.30 (*Leningradskaia oblast*), d.245, ll.3-9; 3-6. Nine of the total of 72 victims were identified by the surviving Romni Anastasiia Grokhovskaia; later on, the Extraordinary State Commission added a further 15 names. See *Ibid.*, ll.10-10ob. and 18.

33 *Zaiavlenie v raionnuiu gosudarstvennuiu komissiiu [...] ot grazhdanki Grokhovskoi Anastasii Kuzminichny*. GARF, f.7021 (ChGK), op.30 (*Leningradskaia oblast*), d.245, ll.19-20; 19ob; *Protokol doprosa – Grokhovskaia Anastasiia Kuz'minichna*, 12.10.1944. *Ibid.*, ll.21-22ob.

34 Bauer and Ershova are explicitly listed as war criminals responsible for the murder of Roma. See GARF, f.7021 (ChGK), op.30 (*Leningradskaia oblast*), d.1611, ll.40-41.

massacre which is often cited in the literature.<sup>35</sup> In this case, it is possible to compare the German reports with those of the ChGK. Due to the fact that the mass shooting of the “Gypsies” was carried out by a military unit in contravention of existing military orders, an administrative inquiry by higher command authorities followed. In a letter to the Commander of Army Group North, the 281<sup>st</sup> Security Division justified the execution of the “captured group” by a “general suspicion of partisan and spy activity,” which is “always a given” where “itinerant (*herumziehenden*) Gypsies” are concerned. Furthermore, the officer claimed that during interrogation the “Gypsies” left a “very unfavorable and mendacious impression”.<sup>36</sup> In 1944, the Extraordinary State Commission investigated the Novorzhev case, but came to a different conclusion. According to eye-witnesses, at the end of May 1942, “all Gypsies” of the rayon were summoned for resettlement in South Russia.<sup>37</sup> Those who obeyed the order were arrested and held for several days in the town’s prison. Finally, they were loaded on trucks, driven to a former *kolkhoz* and shot in pits. More than 330 murdered Roma, most of them women, children and old people, were found in the mass graves. According to the final forensic report, a large number of the dead bodies bore signs of having been brutally tortured: women’s hair had been torn out of their heads, skulls and bones had been broken, hands, feet, and heads had been torn off bodies; the children had been poisoned and some buried alive.<sup>38</sup>

The ChGK concluded that “The applied methods of torture, violence and murder had a systematic methodological character with the aim of a complete extermination of a whole nationality (*narodnost’*) – the Gypsies.”<sup>39</sup> The commission understood that the accusations made against the victims were merely attempts to justify their premeditated murder.

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35 See, among others, Helmut Krausnick, *Hitler’s Einsatzgruppen: Die Truppe des Weltanschauungskrieges 1938-1942* (Frankfurt am Main: Fischer-Taschenbücher, 1985), pp. 243-44; Zimmermann, *Rassenutopie und Genozid*, pp. 265-66; Lewy, “Rückkehr unerwünscht,” pp. 204-5.

36 STA Nürnberg, ND, NOKW 2072, 281. Sich.Div., Abt., Ia/Ic/VII - 297/42. 23.6.42.

37 S. Kopylov, “*Nemetskie izvergi*,” *Put’ kolkhoznika, Novorzhev*, 1 (March 17, 1945), p. 2; P. I. Petrov, “*Nemtsy – ubiitsy zhenshchin i detei*,” *Put’ kolchoznika, Novorzhev*, 31 (July 23, 1944). My quotation cites Val’demar Kalinin, *Zagadka baltiiskikh tsygan: Ocherki istorii, kul’tury i sotsial’nogo razvitiia baltiiskikh tsygan* (Minsk: Logvinov, 2005), pp. 63-4.

38 *Zakliuchenie*, 5 June, 1944. GARF, f.7021 (ChGK), op.39 (*Pskovskaia oblast’*), d.319, ll.15-16 and 24-25.

39 GARF, f.7021 (ChGK), op.39 (*Pskovskaia oblast’*), d.319, 1.8.

The Commission reported on other events in the area controlled by the 281<sup>st</sup> Security Division.<sup>40</sup> In May 1942, almost at the same time as in the neighboring region of Novorzhev, the *Ortskommandantur* of Pushkinskie Gory arrested approximately 300 persons, among them all 70 Roma inhabitants, 23 of whom were children. A few days later, most of them were driven out of the town and shot in pits. This instance of mass murder was not a special "Gypsy action," as it was directed mainly against communists and alleged "partisan supporters" among the civilian population. However, while adult Russian "suspects" were arrested individually and to a large degree arbitrarily, among the Roma of the town whole families were arrested and murdered.<sup>41</sup> The special treatment of the Roma population was obvious to everyone, but it was best expressed in a statement made by the Russian Orthodox priest Iosif Dmitriev, who initiated an investigation of the crime by writing a letter to the ChGK. He noted that in addition to other murders, the Germans had committed "racial shootings (*rassovyie rassstrely*) of Gypsies and their children from the age of six and babies."<sup>42</sup>

In the Novgorod territory, too, the official orders of the military administration did not reflect the actual, murderous anti-Roma Nazi policy. In an order given by the local agricultural administration of Soletsk to the elder (*starosta*) of the rural Klevitskaia district (*volost*), the following command was given: "We inform you that, should itinerant Gypsies be found in your district, you are obliged to confiscate their horses and to give them to those villagers (*grazhdan selenii*) in need of horses. The Gypsies should be handed over to the nearest command in order that they be put to work."<sup>43</sup> The fate of those arrested is clear given the context, as systematic mass murders of Roma – with no differentiation between the sedentary and the itinerant – are documented in the Novgorod area. Thus Boris Kovalev's thesis, in which he claims that the reason for the shooting of "nomadic Gypsies" must have been their "unwillingness and inability" to carry out "any given work," is a crass

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40 See *AKT po Porkhovskomu raionu*, 30 April, 1945. GARF, f.7021 (ChGK), op.39 (*Pskovskaia oblast*), d.328, ll.40, 79.

41 AKT No 71, pos. Pushkinskie Gory, 25.3.1945. GARF, f.7021 (ChGK), op.39 (*Pskovskaia oblast*), d.336, ll.1aob., 5ob., 8ob., 11ob.

42 20.4.1945. [Zaiavlenie] V ChGK *sviashchennika* Dmitrieva Iosifa Dmitrievicha. Ibid., ll.6-6ob. By using the phrase "racial shootings," Dmitriev expresses the racist motivation of the perpetrators and the intended total extermination of the Roma.

43 *Soletskoe Raionnoe Sel'khozupravlenie – Volostnomu starshchine Klevitskoi volosti. g. Sol'tsy*, 21 July, 1942 g. No 722. *Gosudarstvennyi istoricheskii arkhiv Novgorodskoi oblasti (GIANO)*, f.R-2113s (*sekretno - rassekrecheno*), op.1, d.6, l.13.

misrepresentation.<sup>44</sup> In actual fact, military units had earlier “cleansed” the Novgorod region of Roma. In May 1942, thirty “nomadic Gypsies” and a sedentary Roma family named Masal’skii<sup>45</sup> were arrested and held in a prisoner-of-war camp located on the former *sovkhos Zaveriazhskie Pokosy* of the Borkovskii village soviet. They were all shot shortly afterwards.<sup>46</sup>

The extermination reached its peak in May and June of 1942. It is likely that most of the Roma in Army Group North’s area of operations had already been annihilated in the first half of 1942. Nevertheless, several other massacres took place at irregular intervals until the summer of 1943. In most cases the shootings were carried out by military units, in contravention of official orders.<sup>47</sup> The last anti-Roma – as well as anti-Jewish – *Aktion* was held in the town of Ostrov in the Leningrad region. Soviet files describe the events succinctly: “In the summer of 1943, inhabitants of the town of Ostrov, altogether about 200 persons of Jewish and Gypsy nationality, among them old men, women and children, were arrested and robbed of their property. The people themselves were driven out of the region to the town of Pskov and shot.”<sup>48</sup> The “Gypsies” – according to witnesses, more than a hundred people – were arrested one night after the arrest of the Jews. After their removal from Ostrov, the property of the Jewish and Roma victims was sold in the town.<sup>49</sup> Apparently, the Jews and Roma of Ostrov were employed as forced laborers for almost two years before the German occupying forces murdered them.<sup>50</sup>

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44 Boris N. Kovalev, *Natsistskaia okkupatsiia i kollaboratsionizm v Rossii 1941-1944* (Moscow: AST-Tranzitkniga, 2004), p. 250.

45 Interestingly, most witnesses called the Masal’skii family “itinerants,” although they were well known sedentary villagers. Semen Masal’skii, the head of the family, worked as a railroad conductor on the Staraiia Russa – Leningrad line (*ibid.*, p. 108).

46 GARF, f.7021 (ChGK), op.34 (*Novgorodskaiia oblast’*), d.368, ll.3, 81, 110-111ob, 120.

47 GARF, f.7021 (ChGK), op.39 (*Pskovskaia oblast’*), d.325, l.3-5ob; *ibid.*, d.339, ll.6, 48-48ob., 363; GARF, f.7021 (ChGK), op.20 (*Velikolutskaia oblast’*), d.13, ll. 2ob.-3, 9ob., 14-15ob.

48 AKT, gorod Ostrov, 28 August, 1944. GARF, f.7021 (ChGK), op.30 (*Leningradskaiia oblast’*), d.1736, ll.2-4; 3.

49 See GARF, f.7021 (ChGK), op.30 (*Leningradskaiia oblast’*), d.1736, ll.2-4, 141-42, 149-50, 179-80.

50 It is possible, however, that some of the deported Roma were brought to the camp of Salaspils; thirty Roma of Ostrov survived and returned to their hometown after the war. I am grateful to Aleksandr Kruglov, Ukraine, who pointed my attention to this circumstance, which is not reported in the Soviet files.

The chronology of events reveals a systematic genocide of "Gypsies" in the area controlled and administered by Army Group North. The killing was carried out in several stages and by different groups. Mass killings of Roma began in February and March 1942, and were at first conducted by mobile killing units of *Einsatzgruppe A*.<sup>51</sup> In April 1942 local Security Police and SD units provided reinforcements for the persecution, as in Oredezh. During the same month, locally stationed military units, *Ortskommandanturen* (Secret Field Police), played an active part in the persecution of Roma, and during this time the killing reached its peak.<sup>52</sup> In principle, by shooting the "Gypsies" themselves the *Ortskommandanturen* infringed their orders, but the absence of any serious consequences exposes the tacit agreement of the commander of Army Group North. The same can be said about the official differentiation between sedentary and itinerant "Gypsies," which was completely disregarded.

All German perpetrator groups in Army Group North's area of operations justified their measures by using anti-Roma rhetoric accusing them of engaging in partisan activities. The local population, as well as the Extraordinary State Commission, understood that these accusations were the Nazis' attempt to disguise their true intention – the total obliteration of the Roma people. According to the Commission of the Novgorod territory, the Masal'skii family was shot "because they were Gypsies by nationality."<sup>53</sup> Similar statements were made by the Commissions of Leningrad, Pskov and Loknia.<sup>54</sup>

Furthermore, after weeks of intensive examination of Nazi crimes in the Pskov territory, the Commission claimed that in terms of totality and intention, the extermination of "Gypsies" was comparable with the murder of Soviet Jews:

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51 The special "Gypsy operation", for which, according to the testimony of a witness at an Estonian war crimes trial, a *Sonderkommando* from Tallinn was sent to the Pskov area, probably also took place at this time. See Pavel Kurovskii's testimony at the *Mere-Gerrets-Viik* trial in Tallinn, 1960-61, mentioned in Weiss-Wendt, "Extermination of the Gypsies in Estonia," p. 54.

52 This may have been related to the desire of the military administration during the occupation to reinstate their influence over the Security Police and reclaim responsibility for "enemy elimination" behind military lines. See Wilhelm, *Die Einsatzgruppe A*, pp. 267-68.

53 4.2.1945. AKT 30. 28 members of the *Borkovskii sel'sovet Novgorodskogo raiona Leningradskoi oblasti*. GARF, f.7021 (ChGK), op.34 (*Novgorodskaiia oblast'*), d.368, l.105ob.

54 GARF, f.7021 (ChGK), op.30 (*Leningradskaiia oblast'*), d.1611, l.8; GARF, f.7021 (ChGK), op.39 (*Pskovskaiia oblast'*), d.319, l.8; GARF, f.7021 (ChGK), op.20 (*Velikolutskaia oblast'*), d.13, ll.2-2ob.

The German monsters spared nobody. They murdered men and women, the healthy and the ill, children and old people. In carrying out their inhuman Nazi experiment, which was based on a bestial morality, these monsters in human disguise committed the complete extermination of Soviet civilians – Gypsies and Jews – living on the Pskov territory. The only reason for their shooting was in this case their national origin... The collected materials of the Commission show that, next to the Jews, the Gypsies suffered total extermination in all regions of the Pskov territory.<sup>55</sup>

The regional commission in Loknia also pointed out the exceptional status of Jewish and “Gypsy” victims. The Germans had committed “extraordinary atrocities against Jews,” it was stated, with “the intent of physical extermination of the Jewish population.” The report continues: “The German-Fascist intruders raged no less cruelly against the Gypsies. Suspecting them all of having contact with the partisans, they carried out their physical extermination on a massive scale.”<sup>56</sup>

### Army Group Centre

*Heeresgruppe Mitte* (Army Group Centre) controlled the following parts of the occupied Soviet Union: East Belarus (the Vitebsk, Mogilev, Bobruisk and Gomel territories) as well as the Russian territories of Smolensk, Velikie Luki (the central and southern parts), Briansk, Orel, Kursk, and Belgorod.<sup>57</sup> The invading Wehrmacht troops were followed by *Einsatzgruppe B*, which numbered 650 men and was divided into two *Einsatzkommandos* (8 and 9), two *Sonderkommandos* (7a and 7b) as well as a so called “*Vorauskommando Moskau*” (“Advance Commando Moscow”), which was dismantled after the German defeat near Moscow.<sup>58</sup> According to reports of *Einsatzgruppe B*, by the end of March 1943 the mobile killing units had liquidated 142,359 people.<sup>59</sup> Among

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55 *Doklad ob itogakh ucheta ushcherba, prichinnogo nemetsko-fashistskimi zakhvatchikami i ikh soobshchnikami gor. Pskovu i Pskovskoi oblasti*. GARF, f.7021 (ChGK), op.39 (*Pskovskaia oblast'*), d.455, ll.19-21.

56 15.12.1944. AKT, *gorod Loknia*. GARF, f.7021 (ChGK), op.20 (*Velikolutskaia oblast'*), d.13, l.2ob.

57 During the German advance on Moscow in the autumn of 1941, parts of the Kalinin (present-day Tver) and Kaluga territories also belonged to the occupied zone, but due to the partial withdrawal of the Wehrmacht, this situation lasted only several weeks.

58 See Krausnick, “Hitler’s *Einsatzgruppen*,” pp. 156-62.

59 See Christian Gerlach, “*Die Einsatzgruppe B*,” in *Die Einsatzgruppen in der besetzten Sowjetunion 1941/42: Die Tätigkeits- und Lageberichte des Chefs der Sicherheitspolizei und des SD*, ed. Peter Klein (Berlin: Hentrich, 1997) pp. 52-70.

the victims were a significant number of Roma. The earliest reports regarding mass executions of "Gypsies" came from East Belarus. In September 1941, *Einsatzkommando* 9 killed 23 Roma who had been handed over to the mobile unit by *Feldkommandantur* (Field Command) 181, near Lepel.<sup>60</sup> Between October 1941 and March 1942, the area of Mogilev turned into the main killing site for Roma where *Einsatzgruppe* 8 undertook several "Gypsy actions."<sup>61</sup>

The Smolensk territory plays a key role in the general evaluation of the systematic character of the Nazi persecution of "Gypsies" in the occupied parts of Soviet Russia. Smolensk was one of a few Soviet regions with a relatively compact, sedentary Roma population. The local Bolsheviks celebrated this fact as if it was a product of the Soviet nationalities policy, although most of the members of the newly founded "national Gypsy *kolkhozes*" had been farmers long before the October revolution.<sup>62</sup> Furthermore, some "national *kolkhozes*" were ethnically mixed, as an increasing number of Russian families joined them during the 1930s.<sup>63</sup>

Before the German occupation, the ethnically mixed village of Aleksandrovka<sup>64</sup> belonged to a "National Gypsy *kolkhoz*" called "Stalin's Constitution" ("*Stalinskaia konstitutsiia*"), which was founded in 1937. According to the Commission's report, in the early evening of April 23, 1942, two German officers came to the village and ordered the book-keeper to draw up a list of the villagers, divided into family groups and nationalities.<sup>65</sup> Around five o'clock in the morning an armed SS unit<sup>66</sup> burst into the villagers' houses and drove them by force to a nearby lake. A short time later, several Roma families from the neighboring village of Devkino were led to the same place. Immediately on their arrival a German officer, "who knew the Russian language well," read the list of names loudly, separating the "Gypsies" from the others. After the selection

60 See Wippermann, "Nur eine Fußnote?" p. 86; Gerlach, *Kalkulierte Morde*, pp. 1062-63.

61 See Gerlach, *Kalkulierte Morde*, pp. 1062-63.

62 GARF, f.3316 (TsIK SSSR), op.28, d.794, ll.144-144ob.; GARF, f.1235 (VTsIK), op.123, d.28, ll.70-70ob. On Soviet nationalities policy in general see Terry Martin, *The Affirmative Action Empire: Nations and Nationalism in the Soviet Union, 1923-1939* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 2001).

63 Tat'iana F. Kiseleva, *Tsygany Evropeiskoi chasti Soiuza SSR i ikh perekhod ot kochevaniia k oseedlosti (Kandidatskaia dissertatsiia)* (Moscow: MGU, 1952), p. 168.

64 The official name, very seldom used, is Aleksandrovskoe.

65 See the testimony protocol of the book-keeper Fekla Riabkova, October 11, 1943, in GARF, f.7021 (ChGK), op.44 (*Smolenskaia oblast'*), d.1091, ll.37ob.-38.

66 In the commission reports the perpetrators are called a "retaliation unit" (*karatel'nyi otriad*), consisting of SS forces. *Ibid.*, ll.1-3. The witnesses also call them "Gestapo," "German soldiers" or simply "Germans".



the Russian villagers were sent home, whereas the remaining Roma were placed under heavy guard. The strongest men were chosen to dig two pits with shovels. Around 2.00 p.m., the Germans “drove” the women, children and old men “like cattle” to the pits, “beating them with sticks and whips,” whereby “many were beaten unconscious.” In the rising panic and disorder some people managed to escape.<sup>67</sup> Others begged for mercy, claiming to be Russians. Consequently, the Germans “undressed them” and carried out a kind of “racial examination.” According to witnesses’ statements, skin and hair color played a decisive role in determining who was a “Gypsy.”<sup>68</sup> Later on, the male “Gypsies” went through the same procedure, as Andrei Semchenkov recalled: “The officers began to examine the Gypsies. They lifted their clothes and looked at the naked bodies of the women and men... The officers inspected my body, touched my breasts and hands, seized me by the nose and ears, and in the end let me go home.”<sup>69</sup> One woman was even allowed to return to her house under escort to get her Russian passport.<sup>70</sup> The other “Gypsies” had to undress in a barn and hand over their valuables. The eyewitness Lidiia Krylova described the terrible details of the subsequent shooting to the commission: “Each family was led separately to the pit, and if someone did not move to it, they lugged him. The shooting was carried out by a soldier with a pistol. First the ten to twelve year old children were shot in front of their mothers’ eyes, then the babies were torn out of the mothers’ arms and thrown alive into the pit. Only after all this was the mother shot. Some of the mothers could not stand the torture and jumped in alive after their babies... But not only children were thrown alive into the pit. With my own eyes I saw how they threw the old woman Leonovich, who could not move and was put into a blanket by her daughters and carried with their hands.”<sup>71</sup> After the

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67 GARF, f.7021 (ChGK), op.44 (*Smolenskaia oblast’*), d.1091, l.9ob. Testimony protocol of Mariia Lazareva [Romni], October 10, 1943.

68 Proskov’ia Timchenkova described her unexpected rescue: “The German officer dragged my dress apart and examined my breasts and hands, he took off my head-scarf and looked at my hair, and after that he acknowledged me as Russian-like and took me to the side.” Timchenkova’s parents and one of her brothers were also freed but the rest of her family was shot. See the testimony protocol of Proskov’ia Timchenkova [Romni], October 10, 1943, in GARF, f.7021 (ChGK), op.44 (*Smolenskaia oblast’*), d.1091, l.25.

69 Ibid., ll.28-28ob. Testimony protocol of Andrei Semchenkov [Russian, mother Romni], October 11, 1943.

70 See the testimony protocol of Lidiia Krylova [Romni], October 10, 1943, in GARF, f.7021 (ChGK), op.44 (*Smolenskaia oblast’*), d.1091, l.13.

71 Ibid., ll.13ob.-14. Krylova herself was also led to the pit, but at the very last moment she was acknowledged to be “Russian” and sent home.

shooting, the male "Gypsies" had to fill the mass grave with earth, before they were shot in the second pit. Returning to the town of Smolensk the Germans took with them the valuables and some clothes of the murdered victims.<sup>72</sup>

The Commission's forensic exhumation of the bodies revealed that on April 24, 1942, 176 people were shot. 143 of these – 62 women, 29 men, 52 children – were identified, whereas 33 people could not be identified.<sup>73</sup> Amongst the adult victims there were *kolkhoz* workers, educators and three teachers. The degree of social adaptation and nature of their settlement, however, played no role whatsoever in the selection for the mass shooting in Aleksandrovka. Neither did the Germans investigate any partisan activity. The Roma were killed as Roma. The two step selection, the list of names and the "physical examination", suggests unequivocally that the perpetrators were motivated by ideological racism.

Further mass murders were perpetrated by the Security Police in other Roma settlements in the Smolensk territory. In Krasnyi Bor, a suburb of Smolensk, four "Gypsies" were shot in March 1942 as alleged "partisan supporters."<sup>74</sup> In the same month, *Einsatzgruppe B* reported the killing of 45 "Gypsies" in the Smolensk area.<sup>75</sup> These *Aktionen* seem to have coincided with the activities of the Security Police who had started to "cleanse" the rural regions of "Gypsies" on a large scale. According to Soviet investigations, the actions were directed against "the whole Gypsy population of the *kolkhozes*."<sup>76</sup> The "Gypsy" *kolkhoz* "*Svoboda*" ("Freedom") in the village soviet of Kardymovo was completely destroyed by the "German-fascist occupiers." All 90 inhabitants were brought to a place outside the *kolkhoz* and shot in groups.<sup>77</sup> It is reported that in another *kolkhoz* a *dushegubka* (gas-lorry) was used to exterminate the Roma.<sup>78</sup> According to an eye-witness, a *tabor* ("Gypsy camp") of more than a hundred people was surrounded by "the Germans" and completely annihilated.<sup>79</sup> In the town

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72 Ibid., II.1-2.

73 GARF, f.7021 (ChGK), op.44 (*Smolenskaia oblast'*), d.1091, II.4-4ob., 42-4. Among the victims were two Roma from Korenevshchina and five from another village, who happened to be in Aleksandrovka that day.

74 GARF, f.7021 (ChGK), op. 44 (*Smolenskaia oblast'*), d.1091, I.19.

75 Lewy, "*Rückkehr unerwünscht*", p. 207.

76 GARF, f.7021 (ChGK), op.44 (*Smolenskaia oblast'*), d.41, II.16-20; 18.

77 GASO, f.1630, op.1, d.369 II.82-87; 84. *Akt chlenov ChK. Kardymovskii raion. 10.2.1944 (Kopiia)*.

78 Anna Anfimova, "Genotsid tsygan v Smolenskoi oblasti v gody natsistskoi okkupatsii," in *Tum-balalaika: antifashistskaia gazeta vol'nykh ezhei*, pp. 15-16 (April-August 2000): pp. 10-12; 11.

79 I. Tsynman, *Bab'i Iary Smolenshchiny* (Smolensk: Rus', 2001), p. 133.

of Dorogobuzh and the surrounding area “not a single Jewish or Gypsy family” survived.<sup>80</sup> Another mass shooting is reported to have taken place in Rodnia.<sup>81</sup> The last murders took place in the course of the German withdrawal at the beginning of September 1943, when a “Gypsy” family of seven was shot in the village of Rai near Smolensk.<sup>82</sup>

Persecution of Roma in the Smolensk territory was, thus, systematic, and the intention was the complete obliteration of this ethnic group. The Chairman of the local Extraordinary State Commission of Smolensk, D. Popov, came to the same conclusion in his final report to Moscow: “Special racial atrocities (*rasovye izuverstva*) were committed against the Jewish and Gypsy population. Everywhere, Jews and Gypsies were all exterminated.”<sup>83</sup>

The Jewish and Roma populations were also totally destroyed in Novosokol’niki (Velikie Luki territory), which was situated north of Army Group Centre’s area of operations: “According to statistical data of the local administration (*raionnoi upravly*) of Novosokol’niki, on September 1, 1941, 74 Jews and 53 Gypsies lived in the rural area and all of them were shot by the Germans.”<sup>84</sup> The date of the local administration’s report is of particular importance. It seems that the special registration of Jews and “Gypsies” – suggesting preparation for their complete extermination – took place in the first days of the occupation.<sup>85</sup>

The Novosokol’niki territory example indicates a close relationship between the persecution of Jews and Roma under Army Group Centre’s administration. A closer look at the Briansk territory, situated south of Smolensk, confirms this impression.

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80 G. Fedorov, “Krovavaia tragediia v Dorogobuzhe,” in *Rabochij Put*,” 193 (19.9.1943), filed in GARF, f.7021 (ChGK), op.44 (*Smolenskaia oblast’*), d.1082, l.27ob.

81 Kenrick writes of around 1,000 murdered Gypsies in Rodnia. See Donald Kenrick and Grattan Puxon, *Gypsies Under the Swastika* (Hatfield, Hertfordshire: University of Hertfordshire Press, 1995), p. 95. The number itself must be an overestimation, however, since there is no record of a massacre of such a large scale in the ChGK files.

82 GARF, f.7021 (ChGK), op. 44 (*Smolenskaia oblast’*), d.1091, ll. 19, 39ob.

83 *Dokladnaia zapiska ob itogakh ucheta ushcherba i zlodeianii nemetsko-fashistskikh zakhvatchikov v Smolenskoii oblasti. Predsedatel’ Smolenskoii oblastnoi komissii D. Popov – Chrezvychainoi Gosudarstvennoi Komissii SSSR* GARF, f.7021 (ChGK), op.44 (*Smolenskaia oblast’*), d.1091, l.19; printed in “*Vse sud’by v edinuiu slity*,” 136; also to be found in GASO, f.1630, op.2, d.29, ll.182-213.

84 *AKT goroda Novosokol’niki*, 21.11.1944. GARF, f.7021 (ChGK), op.20 (*Velikolutskaia oblast’*), d.16, ll.1-1ob.; 1ob.

85 Velikie Luki was occupied by the Wehrmacht on August 19, 1941. See Al’tman, *Zhertvy nenavisti*, p. 250.

Combined persecutions were observed regularly in the Klinty rayon, in the southwest of the Briansk territory, where the *Sonderkommandos* 7b and 7a were active. As in most of the occupied Soviet territories, the physical extermination of the Jewish population was conducted in several stages: in the first weeks of the German assault Jews were registered, concentrated and forced to identify themselves with armbands and the Star of David, while mainly Jewish Soviet prisoners-of-war and adult men fit for military service were executed. In November and December 1941, in a first wave of killings perpetrated by mobile killing units, most of the Jewish community, including women and children, were liquidated. After *Sonderkommando* 7b moved towards Orel and was replaced by *Sonderkommando* 7a, a second wave of murders were carried out between February and April 1942, after which there were almost no surviving Soviet Jews.<sup>86</sup> The mass murder of the Roma began concurrently with the second wave of the annihilation of the remaining Jews. Beginning in spring 1942, *Sonderkommando* 7a started to include "Gypsies" in the mass shootings of Jews in the Klinty area, as well as in the neighboring regions of Klimov and Churovichi. The course of the systematic genocide was replicated in the town Klimov (or Klimovo).<sup>87</sup> Marfa Lagutina recalls witnessing the events: "The Jews of the village (*selo*) Churovichi and the Gypsies of the village Novyi-Roisk, who were shot on the same day, were brought to the place of the shooting. About 400 people were shot in total.<sup>88</sup> In the evening, the police forced people from the town of Klimov to bury the dead bodies... Today, all of them lie in the same pit."<sup>89</sup> In the Churovichi region alone, 42 Roma (12 men, 13 women, and 17 children) as well as 35 Jews (11 men, 12 women, and 12 children) were murdered.<sup>90</sup> In their final report, the regional Soviet investigators declared that "Hitlerists" and "traitorous local police units" killed communists, Jews and "Gypsies" "on a massive scale" and "without any reason."<sup>91</sup>

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86 On the movement of the *Sonderkommandos* in the Klinty and Briansk areas see Krausnick, *Hitler's Einsatzgruppen*, pp. 158-61. On the stages of extermination of Soviet Jews see Al'tman, *Zherty nenavisti*, pp. 261-64.

87 See *Protokol doprosa* – Dolgov Andrei Semenovich, 11 July, 1944. GARF, f.7021 (ChGK), op.19 (*Brianskaia oblast'*), d.5, ll.169-169ob.

88 Either the given number is too high, or further victims from other regions were also brought to Churovichi to be shot.

89 *Protokol doprosa* – Lagutina Marfa Fedorovna, 11 July, 1944. Ibid., ll.170-171; 171.

90 See *Svedeniia o zlodeiianiakh nemetsko-fashistskikh zakhvatchikov i tikh soobshchnikov v period okkupatsii po Churovichskomu raionu*. GARF, f.7021 (ChGK), op.19 (*Brianskaia oblast'*), d.5, l.154.

91 AKT raionnoi komissii, g. Klimov, 12 July, 1944. Ibid., l.168.

German reports from this period confirm the combined measures used against Jews and “Gypsies” in the Briansk territory. In the spring of 1942, 300 “Jews and Gypsies” were shot in a mass action, eliciting “expressions of disapproval” from Wehrmacht soldiers who witnessed the event.<sup>92</sup> In addition, *Sonderkommando 7a* reported the liquidation of “45 Gypsies” in March, 1942, while a subdivision of the same mobile unit carried out a further mass shooting of 30 “Gypsies” in the second week of April, 1942.<sup>93</sup>

Concerning the remaining parts of the Briansk territory, one has to return to the files of the Extraordinary State Commission. In Unecha, for example, “the entire Jewish and Gypsy population,” “342 people in total,” was eliminated.<sup>94</sup> In the Briansk region too, both groups were persecuted. According to the ChGK, the perpetrators used an extraordinarily cruel method of murder: “A lot of witnesses stated that the Germans chained Jews, Gypsies, and Communists, 0.5 to 2 meters apart, to (metallic) bars and made them walk over mine fields, where the condemned exploded on the mines.”<sup>95</sup>

It seems likely that from 1942 on, *Einsatzgruppe B* viewed the annihilation of “Gypsies” and Jews, as well as the liquidation of communists, as a common goal. At the very least, the killing units regularly used the same places for extermination and burial in mass graves. Near the suburb of Briansk II, 14 mass graves were found and exhumed by the Soviet Commission: “Altogether, 7,000 dead bodies of murdered old men, women and children [were found], mainly belonging to the Jewish, but also to the Gypsy population.”<sup>96</sup>

Complete identification of the victims was problematic. “It turned out that it was impossible to determine the family names of the victims of this atrocious massacre of the Jewish and Gypsy populations, because the majority of them had been evacuated to here from other territories.”<sup>97</sup> It’s striking that not a single Jewish or Roma survivor

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92 See Zimmermann, *Rassenutopie und Genozid*, p. 262.

93 See *Ibid.*, p. 260.

94 AKT *Brianskoi oblastnoi komissii*, 22.10.1945; in GARF, f.7021 (ChGK), op.19 (*Brianskaia oblast*), d.1, ll.1-25; 8.

95 *Ibid.*, l.3.

96 AKT, *gor. Briansk*, 16.11.1943. GARF, f.7021 (ChGK), op.19 (*Brianskaia oblast*), d.2, ll.197-202; 198ob. However, this does not necessarily mean that Jews and Roma were murdered together here, since the ChGK investigations confirmed that the pits “were filled [gradually] during the whole period of occupation” (*ibid.*).

97 *Ibid.*, l.198. Briansk was a major railroad junction for Western Soviet Russia and therefore played an important role for evacuees and refugees from Ukraine and Belarus, before it came under occupation itself. See Al’tman, *Zherty nenavisti*, p. 264.

could be found to help identify the unregistered victims – which suggests the total destruction of both groups.<sup>98</sup>

After the great wave of murders in spring 1942, the German occupying forces continued to search for Jewish and “Gypsy” survivors, although no mass shootings were witnessed. *Sonderkommando 7a* is reported to have arrested 30 “Gypsies” in the second half of August 1942, while *Sonderkommando 7b* “caught” 48.<sup>99</sup> Shortly after, in the first half of September 1942, *Einsatzgruppe B* reported to Berlin the “special treatment” of 301 “Gypsies”.<sup>100</sup> The last registered mass shootings of Roma under Army Group Centre’s control dates to spring 1943 and took place in the Krasnogorskii region of the Briansk territory.<sup>101</sup>

The developments in Briansk and Smolensk are of crucial importance in evaluating the Nazi genocide of (Soviet) Roma in the military zones. In these territories, it is clear that what motivated the annihilation of the Roma population was the racist ideology of the perpetrators. In none of the regions were sedentary Roma spared. On the contrary, the “national Gypsy *kolkhozes*” of the pre-war period were systematically and totally eradicated.

From the spring of 1942 the “Gypsies” of the Briansk territory were not only treated like Jews, but in some cases even killed and buried together with them. The fact that the complete annihilation of the Soviet Roma population started as late as spring 1942 does not detract from the motivation behind and the intended totality of this genocide. Although the files of the Extraordinary State Commission do not permit an estimation of the total number of Roma victims, it is nevertheless possible to claim that during World War II the Western parts of Soviet Russia were a centre for Nazi extermination of “Gypsies”.

### Army Group South

*Einsatzgruppen C* and *D* operated in the territory controlled by Army Group South. The activities of each unit will be discussed separately.

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98 The final statistics of a total of about 17,011 murdered “people of the Russian, Jewish and Gypsy population” are similarly generalized. See GARF, f.7021 (ChGK), op.19 (*Brianskaia oblast*), d.1, l.27.

99 See Zimmermann, *Rassenutopie und Genozid*, p. 260. The German statistics concur with Soviet investigations into the shooting of “30 Gypsies” in Nekrasovskoe near Orlov, in August 1942. See GARF, f.7021 (ChGK), op.37 (*Orlovskaiia oblast*), d.6, ll.1-15.

100 Lewy, “*Rückkehr unerwünscht*,” p. 206.

101 GARF, f.7021 (ChGK), op.19 (*Brianskaia oblast*), d.1, l.35; *ibid.*, d.2, ll.167-169.

### Extermination under Einsatzgruppe C

The activity of *Einsatzgruppe C* was concentrated mainly in the Ukraine. The eastern territories of the Ukraine were under German military rule.<sup>102</sup> In his research, Il'ia Al'tman examines the area of Stalino (present-day Donetsk), in order to emphasize the differences between the persecution of Jews and Roma. In a report by the Organization of Ukrainian Nationalists (OUN) from October 1942, "Gypsies" were still listed as a nationality group in a statistical overview of the number of coal miners, whereas the Jewish population had already been completely annihilated.<sup>103</sup> Yet investigations by the Extraordinary State Commission give the impression that the Roma miners might be a unique case, as there are certain parallels between the murders carried out in the Briansk territory and the massacres in the territory of Stalino. In January 1942, more than 3,000 Jews of Artemovsk, who had obeyed a call for "resettlement," were shot by the Germans and buried in industrial mine No 46 of the local alabaster factory. Many of the victims were still alive when the mine was sealed.<sup>104</sup> When, after the liberation of the town, the Extraordinary State Commission examined these tragic events, corpses of murdered Roma were also found in the mine: "Most of the corpses wore on the left sleeves of their coats white armbands or a painted Star of David. Some of them wore colorful and flamboyant clothing, typical of Gypsies."<sup>105</sup> The murdered Roma found along with the Jewish victims came from a section of the town around Konnaia Street which was the small "Gypsy" quarter of Artemovsk.<sup>106</sup> Only 15 of the Roma victims, most of them with the family names Jurchenko and Kor'iak, could be

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102 On *Einsatzgruppe C* see Krausnick, *Hitler's Einsatzgruppen*, pp. 162-69. In the course of my research I have concentrated so far on the Chernigov and Stalino Territories.

103 See Al'tman, *Zhertvy nenavisti*, p. 38. Al'tman sees a second remarkable difference in Nazi propaganda in the occupied territories, such that aggressive antisemitism played a key role, while "Gypsies" were almost never mentioned. This observation is correct. His conclusion, however, that the extermination of "Gypsies" did not have a racist, ideological background, is a misinterpretation. See *ibid.*, pp. 38-39.

104 See the detailed description in David L. Vigdergauz (*sost.*), *Artemovskii Babii Iar* (Artemovsk: Nauchno-prosvetitel'skii centr "TKUMA", 2000); S.I. Tatrinov and Ju. A. Semik and S.V. Fediaev, *Evrei Bakhmuta-Artemovska: Ocherki istorii XVIII-XX stoletii* (Artemovsk: Muzei evreiskoi kul'tury, 2001), pp. 66-71.

105 *Akt o zlodeianiiakh nemetsko-fashistskikh zakhvatchikov v g. Artemovske i g. Chasov-Iare s 31 oktiabria 1941g. po 5 sentiabria, 1943g. Gosudarstvennyi arkhiv Donetskoi oblasti* (GADO), f.R-1838, op.1, d.2, 1.21-23a. In Ukrainian the archive is titled *Derzhavnii arkhiv Donets'koi oblasti*. Both terms are common.

106 Interview with Larissa Litovchenko, Artemovsk, December 2006. Ms Litovchenko is not an eye-witness herself, but recounted the recollections of her (deceased) mother.

identified by the ChGK; the rest remained anonymous.<sup>107</sup> After the mass murder in the town, the persecution was expanded to include the rural areas around Artemovsk.<sup>108</sup> In its final report, the Extraordinary State Commission concluded that – after the Jews – “the whole Gypsy community” of Artemovsk was shot, “including newborn babies and old people.”<sup>109</sup>

It is striking, however, that “Gypsies” were not called for “resettlement” in Artemovsk and that they are not mentioned in German documents. One possible explanation is that due to the very small size of the Roma community, the registration and arrest of its members required no extraordinary measures. Where the Roma population was larger, the persecutors did actually try to deceive the victims, promising them “resettlement,” as in the case of Chernigov. On June 10, 1942, the Commander of the Security Police distributed a bilingual (Russian and Ukrainian) order “concerning the place of residence of Gypsies,” in which all “Gypsies” were informed of their “resettlement” in new “places of residence.” The “Gypsies” were obliged to register “immediately” at the nearest police station. Anyone who did not comply would be “severely punished.”<sup>110</sup> According to the testimony of Gerard Kuznetsov, the actual arrests of the Roma took place in August 1942.<sup>111</sup> In his impressive autobiographical account of the occupation period, he describes the tragedy of the Chernigov Roma in detail:

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107 See GADO, f.R-1838, op.1, d.64, ll.167-168.

108 GARF, f.7021 (ChGK), op.72 (*Stalinskaia oblast'*), d.30, l.204; GADO, f.R-1838, op.1, d.64, l.172.

109 GARF, f.7021 (ChGK), op.72 (*Stalinskaia oblast'*), d.3, l.11.

110 *Nachal'nik Politsii Bezpeki v m. Chernigovi/Nachal'nik Politsii Bezopastnosti v g. Chernigov: Rozporiadzhennia vidnosno mistsia meshkannia tsigan/Rasporiazhenie otноситel'no mestozhitel'stva tsygan. Chernigov, 10 chervnia 1942 g./Chernigov, 10 iiunია 1942 g. Gosudarstvennyi Arkhiv Chernigovskoi Oblasti (GACHO), f.R-3001, op.1, d.22, l.28.* The example of the poster in Chernigov underlines the importance of Soviet “triumph files” of German origin, which are stored in regional archives in the former Soviet Union. The files of the Extraordinary State Commission give only general information about subsequent events: “In spring 1942, the Gypsy population was registered, and after the registration, the Gypsies were shot.” The date of these events is incorrect, as the call for registration came only in June. See *Doklad o sovershennykh nemetsko-fashistskimi zakhvatchikami zlodeianiiach po Chernigovskoi oblasti U.S.S.R. g. Chernigov, 1944 god.* GARF, f.7021 (ChGK), op.78 (*Chernigovskaia oblast'*), d.204, l.8.

111 In 1942 Gerard Kuznetsov was 16 years old and forced to work in a furniture factory in Chernigov.



One day, my colleague, the old Gypsy,<sup>112</sup> did not appear at work. Somebody said that the [auxiliary] police had arrested him and his family. It turned out that in the course of one day the whole Gypsy population of Chernigov and of the whole territory (*oblast'*) had been arrested... It was the policemen's boast that they had managed to calm the arrestees by telling them about a forthcoming journey to Serbia. When the train of people reached the gates of the prison, the Gypsies began to make noise. One could hear them scream, moan and cry. They had understood to what kind of Serbia they will be sent, but it was impossible to escape, because they were surrounded by Germans with machine guns and shepherd dogs on the leash.<sup>113</sup>

The Roma were taken in trucks to the Pudovskii forest near the town, where they were shot. The exact number of victims cannot be determined. Kuznetsov speaks of "very many," as he witnessed trucks driving back and forth for three whole days. According to an eyewitness, who served as a prison guard at that time, all the prison cells were so full of "Gypsies" that they could not sit down.<sup>114</sup> After the mass shootings of August 1942, the Security Police continued to search for "Gypsies" around Chernigov, with isolated shootings taking place during the following months.<sup>115</sup>

The mass executions at Chernigov were the largest "Gypsies" massacre I have been able to identify thus far. This systematic mass murder was perpetrated nine months after the Jews of Chernigov had been annihilated.<sup>116</sup> Arguably, the German perpetrators engaged in the total murder of the "Gypsies" as the second step in their genocidal program, which began with the "solution of the Jewish question."

One might ask whether these extreme measures were a reaction to special security problems encountered by the military administration near the front. That was not the case, as a look at the borders of the operational zones of Army Group South reveals. In Kirovograd, which stood under the civil administration of the "*Reichskommissariat*

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112 The Roma colleague was an old blacksmith named Petr, who before the war was the owner of a smithy in Leskovitse. Kuznetsov describes him as a "handsome and proud Gypsy." Interview with Gerard Kuznetsov, Chernigov, December 2006.

113 Gerard Kuznetsov, *Rasterzannyi Chernigov ili Iunost', opalennaia voinoi*, Chernigov 2005, pp. 138-39.

114 Interview with Gerard Kuznetsov, Chernigov, December 2006.

115 See GARF, f.7021 (ChGK), op.78 (*Chernigovskaia oblast'*), dd.1, 5, 8, 14, 15; GChO, f.R-3013, op.1, d.2.

116 The largest part of the Jewish community had already been annihilated in November 1941. See GARF, f.7021 (ChGK), op.78 (*Chernigovskaia oblast'*), d.31, ll.63-64.

Ukraine", a massacre of almost comparable extent was carried out. The course of the extermination process – concentration in prisons, transport by truck to the place of shooting outside the town – was similar to the massacre in Chernigov. The Extraordinary State Commission concluded that "in the town of Kirovograd alone, about six thousand souls of the Jewish population and more than a thousand souls of the Gypsies were shot and tormented to death."<sup>117</sup> As with the examples mentioned above, later on the persecution continued in the rural areas of the Kirovograd territory.<sup>118</sup>

### The murders under Einsatzgruppe D

Most historians agree that the persecution and extermination of "Gypsies" in the Crimea was systematic and total.<sup>119</sup> Research and documentation relating to Nazi control over this Soviet region are the most extensive, due to the evidence collected at the Nuremberg *Einsatzgruppen* Trial in 1947-1948, and the remaining archival sources of *Einsatzgruppe D*. In these trials, Otto Ohlendorf, the former leader of *Einsatzgruppe D*, justified his responsibility for the murder of more than 90,000 people, most of them Jewish civilians, by "security concerns" together with his obligation to follow orders.<sup>120</sup> In his words, "Gypsies" had to be treated "like Jews" because, "as itinerant people", they had a traditional "inner willingness" to engage in espionage.<sup>121</sup> At the same time, Ohlendorf tried to play down the real extent of the extermination, asserting that the mass shooting of "Gypsies" in Simferopol was the only case of which he was aware.<sup>122</sup>

Ohlendorf's statements were false since, contradictory to his claims at Nuremberg, orders to eradicate the whole of the Jewish and "Gypsy" populations had definitely not

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117 *Spravka o zverstvakh nemetskikh okkupantov v g. Kirovograde*. 1 March, 1946. *Derzhavnii Arkhiv Kirovograds'koi oblasti* (DAKO), f.R-6656, op.2, spr.1, ll.1-7; 5.

118 *Akt po Chiriginskomu raionu*. Ibid., ll.62-63; 62ob.-63.

119 See, among others, Zimmermann, *Rassenutopie und Genozid*; Wippermann, "Nur eine Fußnote?" and "Auserwählte Opfer?"; Lewy, "Rückkehr unerwünscht"; Bauer, *Die dunkle Seite der Geschichte* and Krausnick, *Hitler's Einsatzgruppen*.

120 See "Trials of War Criminals [TWC] before the Nuremberg Military Tribunals under Control Council Law no. 10, Volume IV ('The *Einsatzgruppen* Case')", Washington D.C. (O. J.), p. 244. The image of the "Gypsy" evoked by Ohlendorf for the benefit of the court, was a peculiar mixture of traditional anti-"Gypsy" clichés and absurd "historical parallels" with the Thirty Years' War, "as described by Ricarda Huch and Schiller." See *ibid.*, p. 287.

121 STA Nürnberg, ND, Fall IX, Nr. IX, Nr. A 6-8, Bl.669-673; TWC, 287; Zimmermann, *Rassenutopie und Genozid*, p. 261.

122 TWC, p. 287.

yet been given in June 1941.<sup>123</sup> In fact, *Einsatzgruppe D* spearheaded the systematic genocide of Roma. As early as the autumn of 1941, between 100 and 150 Roma were killed in front of their wooden barracks in the Nikolaev rayon.<sup>124</sup> Characteristically, from the very beginning no differentiation was made between sedentary and non-sedentary Roma. When *Einsatzgruppe D* reached the Crimea, where the majority of the Roma had lived for centuries in towns and had almost completely assimilated among their Tatar neighbors, the German perpetrators found the task of identifying the “Gypsies” very difficult.<sup>125</sup> In the town of Simferopol, which had a special “Gypsy quarter,” the murder of the Roma began during the first days of the occupation and continued almost in tandem with the murder of the Jews, with more than 800 Roma being killed.<sup>126</sup> At the same time, *Sonderkommando 11b* established in Alushta a camp

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123 See, among others, Ralf Ogorreck and Volker Rieß, “Fall 9: Der Einsatzgruppenprozeß (gegen Otto Ohlendorf und andere),” in *Der Nationalsozialismus vor Gericht: Die alliierten Prozesse gegen Kriegsverbrecher und Soldaten 1943-1952*, ed., Gerd R. Ueberschär (Frankfurt am Main: Fischer-Taschenbücher, 1999), pp. 164-75; 167-68; Angrick, *Besatzungspolitik und Massenmord*, pp. 74-113.

124 See 22 Js 201/61 *StAnw München I*, Bd. 5, *Aussage* Georg Mandt, 4 December, 1962, Bl.1100, quoted in Angrick, *Besatzungspolitik und Massenmord*, p. 252. A further group of “Gypsies” was shot in the Nogai steppe near Nikolaev. The alleged reason for the murder was that they had carried a Russian machine gun in one of their vehicles. See the excerpt from the statement of Heinrich Wiegmann, in the “*Tatortverzeichnis*” file of the *Einsatzgruppe D* proceedings in Munich, *ibid.*

125 It is no surprise, therefore, that “itinerant Gypsy spies” never appeared in the innumerable *Einsatzgruppe D* reports on the partisan movement, as Ohlendorf tried to make the judges in Nuremberg believe. See BAB, R 58/217-221. In December 1941 even the German civil administration was aware of the fact that seventy-five per cent of the Crimean “Gypsies” were town dwellers, working as traders, blacksmiths, jewellers and musicians, yet this fact obviously did not influence the decision of the Security Police and the military commanders. It is very disappointing that even recent historiographical contributions tend to adopt the old theses, despite the much broader research now available, which ought to result in a reinterpretation. A case in point is Norbert Kunz, who sees the motive for the persecution of “Gypsies” in the Third Reich in general, and in the Crimea in particular, as a “simple contempt for their way of life” and “their social circumstances,” respectively, although he himself presents several statistics and items of information which completely contradict his – obviously borrowed from Guenter Lewy – thesis of an alleged “sociocide.” See Kunz, *Die Krim*, pp. 191-94.

126 For a detailed description of the massacre see Zimmermann, *Rassenutopie und Genozid*, pp. 264-65.

for Jews and "Gypsies", and a few weeks later all the prisoners were murdered.<sup>127</sup> In the spring of 1942, "Gypsies" were regularly listed as victims in the shooting reports of *Einsatzgruppe D*.<sup>128</sup> *Ereignismeldung* (incident report) no. 190 from April 8, 1942, finally concluded that "Jews, Krimchaks and Gypsies no longer exist in the Crimea – with a few exceptions in the North."<sup>129</sup>

The files of the Extraordinary State Commission provide us with a significant amount of additional information confirming the systematic nature of the murder of Roma in the Crimea. In addition to Simferopol, similar mass shootings took place in two other Crimean towns. At the end of December 1941, "all Gypsy families" in Kerch were arrested and imprisoned. The next day they were driven in twelve trucks to a place outside the town, where they were shot in pits.<sup>130</sup> Detailed information documents the obliteration of the Roma in Evpatoriia, which followed shortly after the murder of the Jews and Krimchaks of the town.<sup>131</sup> The Rom Jakub Kurtuliarov, who survived the massacre with a bullet in his shoulder, described the course of events for the ChGK:

At the beginning of 1942, I cannot recall the exact month, the German authorities called all Gypsies to register for special bread rations. The Gypsies understood, however, that this was a lure to round up the Gypsies for extermination. Therefore, nobody appeared for registration, [but] they began to hide themselves. After that, the Germans organized raids and hunted for Gypsies. More than a thousand people were

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127 In *Ereignismeldung* 150 (January 2, 1942), it is mentioned that Alushta was now "free of Jews" (*judenfrei*) (see BAB, R 58/219, Bl.378). The fact that Alushta was "free of Gypsies" too was not mentioned in the report, but it was stated by former members of *Sonderkommando* 11b during the Munich trial and 22 Js 205/61 *StAnw München I, Bd.6, Aussage Willi Hasbach*, 13 October, 1962, Bl.1368f.; *Ibid.*, Bd.12, *Aussage Hans Stamm*, 10 May, 1966, Bl.2455-2458; *Ibid.*, Bd.14, *Aussage Johann Welsch*, 8 November, 1966, Bl.2818 and Angrick, *Besatzungspolitik und Massenmord*, p. 346.

128 See *Ereignismeldung* (EM) p. 178, 9 March, 1942. BAB, R 58/221, Bl.64; EM 184, 23 March, 1942. BAB, R 58/221, Bl.130; EM 190, 8 April, 1942. BAB, R 58/221, Bl.268.

129 EM 190, 8. April 1942. BAB, R 58/221, Bl.267.

130 See GARF, f.7021 (ChGK), op.9 (*Krymskaia* ASSR), d.38, ll.212-213. The course of the action was confirmed by a surviving Roma, who worked before the occupation as a blacksmith in the village of Kamysh-Burun.

131 See Angrick, *Besatzungspolitik und Massenmord*, p. 347.

arrested in Evpatoriia, among them myself, as far as our Gypsy quarter (*nasha tsyganskaia slobodka*) was sealed off by army units... After that, they were brought to Krasnaia *gorka* and shot in anti-tank pits with machine guns and submachine guns.<sup>132</sup>

Apart from the mass shootings in Simferopol, Kerch and Evpatoriia, ten inhabitants of Feodosii and a family of seven in Biiuk-Onlarskii were murdered in the same period “for belonging to the Gypsy nationality.”<sup>133</sup>

After a “winter break” during which *Einsatzgruppe D* recruited Tatar volunteers, the extermination continued in the spring of 1942, in the rural areas of the peninsula. In March 1942, a large part of the Roma population of the Dzhankei rayon, a total of about 200 to 300 people, were suffocated in “gas-lorries” – six weeks after the Jews of the region had been shot.<sup>134</sup> In the same month, Roma in Staryi Krym and its surroundings were also murdered.<sup>135</sup> Finally, several separate shootings, with a total of 80 victims, were carried out in the Kolaiskii rayon.<sup>136</sup>

Both German sources and Soviet investigations give the impression that the Nazi persecution of Crimean Roma resulted in their complete annihilation. Soviet post-war sources reveal, however, that at least 1,109 “Gypsies” survived the German occupation. A number of Roma were included in Soviet deportations of the entire Crimean Tatar population in May 1944, and subsequently lived among the “special settlers” of the Gulag system.<sup>137</sup> It seems likely that all remaining “Gypsies” of the peninsula were victims of Soviet deportation, since a statistical overview, written for the NKVD

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132 *Protokol doprosa svidetelei. Kurtuliarov, Iakub, tsygan po natsional'nosti*. 22.5.1944. GARF, f.7021 (ChGK), op.9 (*Krymskaia ASSR*), d.57, ll.34-34ob.

133 On Feodosiia see *Gosudarstvennyi Arkhiv Avtonomnoi Respubliki Krym (GAARK)*, f.R-1458, op.1, d.4, l.122; Tiaglyi, *Chingene*, pp. 161-62. On Biiuk-Onlarskii see GARF, f.7021 (ChGK), op.9 (*Krymskaia ASSR*), d.34, l.96.

134 See GARF, f.7021 (ChGK), op.9 (*Krymskaia ASSR*), d.193, ll.12, 17ob, 19ob.

135 See GAARK, f.R-1289, op.1, d.6, ll.88, 142; Tiaglyi, *Chingene*, p. 167.

136 In the village of Terepli-Abash, 32 “Gypsies” were killed in total; 6 in Arlin-Barin; 8 in Nem-Barin; 2 in Shirin; 2 in Mikhailovka; 25 in the *kolkhoz* “Bol’shevik”; 2 in the village of Avlach and 3 in the *kolkhoz* “8th of March” (8 *marta*). See GAARK, f.R-1289, op.1, d.12, ll.36-44ob; Tiaglyi, *Chingene*, p. 167.

137 *Nachal'nik 2 Otdeleniia OSP MVD SSSR kapitan V.P. Trofimov, Spravka o kolichestve lits drugikh natsional'nostei, nakhodiashchikhsia na spetsposelenii, vyseleennykh s nemtsami, s vyseleentsami Kavkaza, Kryma, no ne vkhodiashchikh v sostav semei etikh kontingentov*. 31 dekabria 1949, in GARF, f.9479 (4-yj *specotdel MVD Sel.*), op.1,

in February 1945, claimed that "no Gypsies" live in the Crimea.<sup>138</sup> Thus we can conclude that approximately thirty percent of the Crimean Roma survived the German occupation.<sup>139</sup> Was the commander of *Einsatzgruppe D* misinformed when he reported to the *Reichssicherheitshauptamt* that the annihilation of Crimean "Jews, Krimchaks and Gypsies" was complete? Perhaps the survival rate indicates the difficulties that the German occupiers encountered in identifying the Roma. In this context, the attitude of the local Tatar population towards the Crimean "Gypsies" played a key role, as the Ukrainian historian Mikhail Tiaglyi has shown. On the basis of recent Tatar accounts and evidence from the post-war interrogations of "traitors" contained in the archives of the Ukrainian Secret Service, Tiaglyi suggests that the Tartar population demonstrated extraordinary solidarity with the persecuted, Moslem Roma. The Moslem Committee and other Tatar organizations tried to defend their brothers in faith in newspaper articles, petitions to the German authorities, open protests, and other measures.<sup>140</sup> As early as December 1941, the clergy of Simferopol made a (futile) attempt to rescue those "Gypsies," who had been ordered to assemble for "resettlement." As the eye-witness Lashkevich noted in his diary:

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d.436, l.26. Printed in *Deportatsiia narodov Kryma*, ed. N.F. Bugai (Moscow: INSAN, 2002), p. 114.

138 9 February, 1945. *Sovershenno sekretno. Operupolnomochennyi I otd. 5 otdela GUBB NKVD SSSR, Leitanant gosbezopasnosti Savinov, Spravka po tsyganskim kochevym taboram za 1944 god*, GARF, f.9478 (*Glavnoe upravlenie po bor'be s banditizmom MVD SSSR*), op.1, d.459 (1945), l.18. The actual purpose of the statistics was to find out the number of "itinerant Gypsies," but the Crimean report went on to say that there were "no Gypsies at all" on the peninsula.

139 Unfortunately, the number of Roma in the Crimea can only be estimated. In Soviet censuses the total number fluctuated sharply, since many Roma had Tatar passports. According to the 1939 census about 2,064 "Gypsies" lived in the Crimea, 998 in towns and 1,066 in the countryside. Yet, at the beginning of the occupation in November 1941, around 1,700 Roma were registered in Simferopol alone. In view of these numbers, a total estimate of 3,500 to 4,000 for the Crimean Roma population seems realistic.

140 Tiaglyi, *Chingene*, pp. 163-65. A further indication of the unlimited Tartar solidarity with Roma in the Crimea is the fact that no denunciations against them can be found in the archives, whereas Jews were denounced on a massive scale (see *ibid.*, p. 172).

For some reason, they [the Gypsies] put up a green flag, the symbol of the Moslem faith (*magometanstva*), and the procession was led by a *mullah*. The Gypsies tried to convince the Germans that they were not Gypsies, some of them called themselves Tatars, others Turks. But their protests were not recognized.<sup>141</sup>

According to memoirs written by Crimean Tatars, their protests became increasingly successful from the beginning of 1942, resulting in the cessation of the persecution of “Gypsies” in urban areas.<sup>142</sup> However, the actual effectiveness of such protests against the extermination of Roma should not be overestimated, because *Einsatzgruppe D* did not usually consider Tatar interests while carrying out Security Police activities.<sup>143</sup> Even in Simferopol, with its major Moslem Committee, the murders continued. On January 11, 1942, about 1,250 people were arrested as “unreliable elements” and brought to *Dulag 241*. In the camp, “Jews, Communists, and Gypsies” were selected for execution, while the other civilians were sent to do forced labor.<sup>144</sup> Military units also engaged in the persecution of “Gypsies.” In the spring of 1942, Secret Field Police unit 647 handed over 51 “Gypsies” to the SD in Simferopol.<sup>145</sup>

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141 See “*Iz dnevnika Kh.G. Lashkevicha*”, in *Peredaite detiam nashim o nashei sud'be*, Mikhail Tiaglyi (Simferopol: BETs “Khesed Shimon”, 2002), p. 63. For detailed quotations see Tiaglyi, *Chingene*, p. 162.

142 P. Adil'shaogly, “*Kuda podevalis' krymskie tsygane*,” *Kr'ym*, p. 48 (1994): p. 2; Tiaglyi, *Chingene*, p. 163.

143 Tatars, convicted as Soviet agents, for example, were liquidated with no consideration for their ethnic origins or religious beliefs, although the Moslem Committee did everything it could to save them. See Angrick, *Besatzungspolitik und Massenmord*, p. 473. Against this backdrop, the description of the rescue in Bakhchisarai seems unrealistic. According to Memish Reshid, the “Gypsies” were already collected for transport when the Moslem mayor Fenerov convinced the Germans that the deportees were Moslems. Fenerov warned the Germans that he “could not be the head of a town in which Moslems are shot. After that, the repressions ended.” See Memish Reshid, “*Zabytoe plenja*,” *Golos Kryma*, September 4, 1998, p. 5; Tiaglyi, *Chingene*, p. 165. Hence the fact that the Roma community of Bakhchisarai actually survived the occupation (at least, neither German nor Soviet files speak of a mass shooting, here), became an exaggerated heroic rescue legend in the collective memory.

144 See BA-MA, Film WF-03/14321, O.K. I/853, B. Tgb.Nr. 1259/42, *an Kommandant rückw. Armeegebiet 553*, 31 January, 1942, Betr. *Tätigkeitsbericht für die Zeit*, 16 January, 1942; Angrick, *Besatzungspolitik und Massenmord*, pp. 496-97.

145 Nbg. Dok. NOKW-853; NOKW-854, NOKW-852 und NOKW-845, *Gruppe Geheime*

The best way to rescue the Gypsies was through local initiatives of the towns' administrations and local auxiliary police forces, which had the power to conceal the identities of the targeted "Gypsies" by registering them as Tatars. In the rural areas, village elders played a similar role.<sup>146</sup> In most cases, the religious conviction of Moslem Roma was enough to evoke Tatar solidarity. Nevertheless, there were cases where village elders and local organizations demanded different types of compensation. In some cases the protected "Gypsies" were obliged to join units of Tatar volunteers, or even to serve in the German SD. NKVD interrogations of Crimean "traitors" confirm that the Germans were unaware of the actual ethnic identity of these "Gypsy collaborators," and that the loss of their Tatar camouflage would have resulted in their certain death.<sup>147</sup>

Essentially, what set the Roma experience in the Crimea apart from their experience in all other territories under military administration, was a deep sense of solidarity between the Moslem Tartars and the persecuted Roma. Nevertheless, this outstanding and unique demonstration of support by the local population could not prevent the annihilation of approximately seventy percent of all Roma on the peninsula.

The activity of *Einsatzgruppe D* is also of special importance because it followed the advance of the Wehrmacht into the Northern Caucasus. The operation started only in 1942, during a period when the extermination of Roma in other areas had already reached a systematic level comparable to the annihilation of Jews. However, until now available information about the fate of the Roma in this area has been scarce. The first territory that was occupied was Rostov-on-Don, which had a relatively large Roma population. *Einsatzgruppe D* proceeded to persecute sedentary Roma systematically.

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*Feldpolizei 647, Feldpostnummer 31244, Tätigkeitsberichte für die Monate März, 2 June, 1942. See Angrick, Besatzungspolitik und Massenmord, p. 504.*

146 The situation in rural parts of the Crimea after the mobile killing units of *Einsatzgruppe D* had left the peninsula in early summer 1942 is rather contradictory. On the one hand, the military administration obviously knew about the existence of remaining "Gypsies", as 405 were listed in statistics of Crimean nationalities in July 1942. See *Kdt. rückw. A.Geb. 553 an A.O.K. 11, O.Qu./Qu.2 – betr. Zahlenmäßige Gliederung der Volkstumsgruppen auf der Krim*, 15 July, 1942. BA-MA, RH 23/94, Bl.217. In subsequent statistics, the number of "Gypsies" had diminished to 345 (see Kunz, *Die Krim*, 194). On the other hand, in the Fraidorf rayon near Evpatoria the *Feldgendarmerie* of OK I/742 continued to search intensively for hidden Roma. There was a special category in the reports of this unit: "Discovery (*Feststellung*) of Jews and Gypsies." See BA-MA, RH 23/100: *Feldgendarmerie der OK I/742 (Freidorf)*, TB 26.4.-10.5. 1942.

147 See the examples in Tiaglyi, *Chingene*, p. 173.



One example is the “National Gypsy *kolkhoz* Ordzhonikidze” near Poliakova, where all inhabitants – “three trucks full” – were exterminated. *Teilkommando Trimborn*, a subdivision of *Sonderkommando* 10a, was responsible for the *Aktion*. As in the past, the perpetrators deceived their victims and “allowed” them to take twenty kilos of “hand luggage” for their “resettlement.”<sup>148</sup> In other massacres, “Communists,” Jews and an unknown number of Roma were shot in the ravine of Petrushino – the main killing site in the Taganrog rayon.<sup>149</sup> The files of the Extraordinary State Commission of the Rostov territory have not been analyzed completely, but it is clear that more mass shootings occurred. On January 3, 1943, in another *kolkhoz* in the same area, the “German hangmen” murdered 38 “Gypsies”: 29 men, 3 women, 5 teenagers and a six-month-old baby. The Commission stated that “the German monsters” shot their victims “with no consideration of age and sex,” in spite of the “massive wailing of the Gypsies.”<sup>150</sup>

*Sonderkommando* 10a was also responsible for immense atrocities committed in Krasnodar, a territory with an even denser Roma population than Rostov. Two Soviet tribunals, in 1943 and in 1963, dealt with German crimes against humanity in Krasnodar.<sup>151</sup> According to the reflections of the journalist Lev Ginzburg, the murder of Roma was discussed or at least mentioned in the second trial of 1963. Commenting on the German occupation of Southern Russia, Ginzburg wrote: “The *Sonderkommandos* followed the front units into the towns and made several lightning (*molnienosnykh*) attacks – the registration and shooting of all Jews, Gypsies, and family members of Soviet and Party activists.”<sup>152</sup>

Unfortunately, the Krasnodar Commission did not consider the “Gypsy question,” at least not in the material I have examined.<sup>153</sup> The only document to be found is a letter from August 1949, in which the Secretary of Krasnodar Province reported to the Chief of the Department of Propaganda and Agitation of the Central Committee on “the number and way of life of Gypsies in the Krasnodar territory”:

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148 See Angrick, *Besatzungspolitik und Massenmord*, p. 518.

149 Lev Ginzburg, *Bezdna: Povestvovanie, osnovannoe na dokumentakh* (Moscow, 1966), p. 20.

150 AKT No 83 (Kopiiia), 27.3.1943. GARF, f.7021 (ChGK), op.40 (*Rostovskaia oblast*), d.4, l.36.

151 In the trial of 1943, the first trial of German war crimes in the world, the fate of the Roma population was not discussed. The judges concentrated on general atrocities against Soviet civilians, with the use of “gas lorries” as their most horrifying symbol.

152 Ginzburg, *Bezdna*, p. 16.

153 See *Krasnodarskii kraevoi Gosudarstvennyi arkhiv* (KKGA), f.R-897 (ChGK), op.1, dd.1-12, 25-29, 31-31a.

Before the Great Patriotic War – according to very inexact data – more than 3,000 Gypsies lived in the Krasnodar territory (*krai*). There had been 18-20 small Gypsy *kolkhozes*... A lot of Gypsies, who were not members of *kolkhozes*, worked in craftsmen cooperatives. Only 500 to 600 led an itinerant lifestyle. During the war, most of the Gypsies were evacuated to the furthest regions of the country. Those Gypsies who remained, were bestially exterminated by the German occupying [forces].<sup>154</sup>

The perpetrators seemed to have had no problems identifying “Gypsies” in rural areas with their national *kolkhozes* and villages. In the town of Krasnodar, however, the situation was different. In a meeting between the actors of the Moscow State Gypsy theatre “Romen” and the Soviet writer Lev Ginzburg in 1967, the Rom Nikolai Lutsenko, who had taken part in the liberation of Krasnodar by the Red Army, recalled the special discovery that was made in the former Security Police building of the town: “At the Gestapo, there was a list of 58 Gypsy families sentenced to death, as usual.”<sup>155</sup> The Germans had left the town in a panic, however, so that “the Gypsies, who should have been killed, remained alive.”<sup>156</sup> The publications from and about the Soviet trials make no reference to the existence of such a “Gypsy list.”<sup>157</sup> But Lutsenko’s statement was confirmed during an interview I conducted with the survivor Zoia Andreichenko in November 2006. Andreichenko survived the occupation together with her family with the help of a Russian woman, who hid them in her cellar.<sup>158</sup> A short time after the liberation, Andreichenko’s family was called to “the NKVD in Gogol Street,” where a

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154 *Dokladnaia zapiska sekretaria Kraikoma VKP(b) S.E. Sanina Zamestiteliu zaveduiushchego Otdelom propagandy i agitatsii TsK VKP (b) K.F. Kalashnikovu o nalichii tsygan i obraze ikh zhizni v Krasnodarskom krae*. August, 1949. *Tsentr Dokumentatsii Noveishei istorii Krasnodarskogo kraia* (TsDNIKK), f.1774-A, op.3, d.1654, ll.68-69. Printed in *Upravlenie po delam Arkhivov Krasnodarskogo kraia and Tsentr Dokumentatsii Noveishei istorii Krasnodarskogo kraia and Gosudarstvennyi Arkhiv Krasnodarskogo Kraia, Krasnodarskomu kraiu – 65 let: Stranitsy istorii v dokumentakh fonda Kubani: Istoriko-dokumental’nyi al’bom*, (Krasnodar: Gosudarstvennyi Arkhiv Krasnodarskogo Kraia, 2002), pp. 90-91.

155 *Stenogramma besedy pisatelii L.V. Ginzburga s truppoi teatra ‘Romen’ i vystupleniia artistov*, 11 May, 1967. *Rossiiskii Gosudarstvennyi Arkhiv literatury i iskusstva* (RGALI), f.2928 (*Romen*), op.1, d.74, l.25.

156 *Ibid.*, l.24.

157 Records of the trials are kept in the archive of the secret service FSB. During my stay in Krasnodar, I was not allowed to use these materials.

158 Interview with Zoia Andreichenko, née Simonova, Rostov-on-Don, November 2006.

Commissar told them that they were on a “Gestapo list of liquidated Gypsies.” In order to prove this to them, he read out their names and addresses from the list.<sup>159</sup>

The registration of “Gypsy” families suggests that the Nazis began preparations for the extermination of the Roma in the city of Krasnodar, but due to the relatively short period of occupation they did not have enough time to identify them all. The number of Roma who were actually found and murdered by the Security Police remains unknown.

The German advance into the Northern Caucasus also led to the territory of Voroshilovsk (today Stavropol’), which was, after Smolensk, the second centre of the “Gypsy *kolkhoz* movement” in Soviet Russia. In the 1930s, the first and only “Gypsy” village soviet “Trud Romen,” consisting of several national Roma *kolkhozes* and led by the Roma intellectual Bezludskii, was founded in the region of Mineral’nye Vody.<sup>160</sup> Unfortunately, the files of the Extraordinary State Commission ignore the Roma *kolkhozes* in this region, and my attempts to find more information by searching for survivors or other eyewitnesses have not met with success.<sup>161</sup> Yet, in the private archive of the Rom Vladimir Ivashchenko there is a personal letter from Bezludskii, in which the former head of the village soviet testifies to the complete destruction of the “Gypsy *kolkhozes*” by the German occupiers.<sup>162</sup>

Other ChGK files include only one mention of Roma in the Voroshilovsk territory, but the document in question is without doubt a key document for understanding Nazi policy in the Northern Caucasus. On September 1, 1942, a few days after the capture of the Arkhangel’skoe rayon, the inhabitants of the village of Niny had to gather for a meeting, in which the “new order” was explained and instructions were given. Witnesses of the meeting remembered that the German commanders declared “openly the necessity to exterminate persons of Jewish and Gypsy origin.”<sup>163</sup> For this purpose

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159 Ibid. The family name was Simonov, as was Zoia Andreichenko’s maiden name.

160 See *Soveshchanie o trudoustroistve kochuiushchikh i kul’turno-khoziaistvennom obsluzhivanii vsekh trudiashchikhsia tsygan v SSSR*. 4 January, 1936. GARF, f.3316 (TsIK SSSR), op.28, d.793, ll.77-118.

161 The majority of Roma living in the region today are former refugees from Chechnya. During my relatively short stay in Mineral’nye Vody, I tried in vain to arrange contact with old-established Roma.

162 Interview with Vladimir Ivanovich Ivashchenko, Rostov-on-Don, November 2006. We do not know how many Roma lived in Mineral’nye Vody in 1942. In Soviet pre-war *kolkhoz* statistics, the numbers fluctuated. While in 1932 a total of 93 families were registered, in 1936 only 46 families remained. See GARF, f.1235 (VTsIK), op.123, d.27, l.106; GARF, f.3316 (TsIK SSSR), op.28, d.793, ll.210-210ob.

163 *AKT, s. Arkhangel’skoe togo-zhe [Arkhangel’skii raion] r-na Stavropol’skogo kraia*. 20 July, 1943. GARF, f.7021 (ChGK), op.17 (*Stavropol’skii krai*), d.9, ll.51-51ob; 51ob.

they announced a re-registration of the whole population, "first of all Communists, Comsomol members, Jews and Gypsies."<sup>164</sup> On the same day, five "Gypsies" who had come to Niny in order to complain to the German commander about the confiscation of their horses, were arrested and shot shortly afterwards. The next day 61 Jews of the village were shot.<sup>165</sup>

Hence, from the very beginning of the occupation of the Arkhangel'skoe rayon, the German authorities treated Roma, Jews and Communists similarly. Although no other documents about "Gypsies" seem to be available, it may be assumed that the same policy was carried out in other rayons of the Voroshilovsk territory.

### **Conclusion: Soviet Jews and "Gypsies": A comparable fate?**

From the spring of 1942 onwards, a systematic genocide against the local Roma population was in operation in all military areas of the German occupied parts of the Soviet Union, with the total annihilation of the Roma as its obvious goal. As Wolfgang Wippermann correctly presumed already in 1992, the Roma life style or their social status was irrelevant to the perpetrators. However, the corroboration of his thesis has only been made possible with the inclusion of Soviet sources. Roma were murdered because they were born Roma. The clearest proof of this was the complete destruction of the "national Gypsy *kolkhozes*" in the occupied Smolensk territory, where the survival of the inhabitants depended on Nazi racial categories. In ethnically mixed villages, people identified as "Gypsy" were selected from among the villagers and murdered.

The importance of the present study lies in its analysis and use of sources hitherto untapped. Previous research on the question of the comparability or incomparability of the Nazi persecution of Soviet Jews and Roma, is methodologically flawed: it is based almost exclusively on German sources and thus reflects only one side of the story – that of the perpetrators. Throughout the German reports, the image of "Gypsies" is consistent, based on the stereotypical view that they were "itinerant spies" and "partisan informers," an image invoked to justify the German policy of genocide. In contrast to the Baltic States, where the German authorities justified the imprisonment and murder of Roma by traditional and widespread anti-"Gypsy" stereotypes, such as

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164 *AKT, s. Niny Arkhangel'skogo r-na Stavropol'skogo kraia*. 18.7.1943. GARF, f.7021 (ChGK), op.17 (*Stavropol'skii krai*), d.9, ll.155-155ob.; 155.

165 *Ibid.* Among the five murdered "Gypsies" were a woman and a twelve-year-old girl, so the group may have been a family. In the Commission's final report the number of Roma victims was corrected to six. See GARF, f.7021 (ChGK), op.17 (*Stavropol'skii krai*), d.9, l.155.

“social harmfulness” and “refusal to work,”<sup>166</sup> the perpetrators in the military areas – Security Police as well as Wehrmacht – predominantly referred to the “Gypsies” as a security threat. It is no surprise, then, that the local non-Roma population in these areas did not believe this official explanation, as in most cases no investigation was conducted and the victims included women and children.

Further research is needed before a comprehensive study comparing the fate of Roma and Jews (and other victim groups) under Nazi occupation may be carried out. Nevertheless, some preliminary conclusions may be drawn, based on the research that has been done thus far. First, it is important to stress that several basic differences are evident. The mass murder of the Jews began immediately with the Nazi invasion of the Soviet Union in June 1941, with mainly Jewish Soviet prisoners-of-war and adult men fit for military service being executed during the first weeks. In autumn 1941, the murder of Jews became genocidal in that the Security Police destroyed most of the Jewish communities under German control, including women and children. A second wave of systematic mass killing was carried out between February and April 1942, after which only a small percentage of the Jewish inhabitants of the occupied zones remained alive.

In most parts of the military zones, systematic and large scale extermination of “Gypsies” began in the spring of 1942, i.e. at a time when the majority of local Jewry had already been annihilated. One could argue that the timing of the murder of the different groups reflects Nazi ideology with its ideological hierarchy of enemies, in which the Jew was viewed as the primary foe. Jews were regarded as a “world enemy” and an “anti-race” to the “Aryan” people. One of Hitler’s main goals for “Operation Barbarossa” was the destruction of what he believed was Jewish Bolshevism (*Judäobolschewismus*). The Nazi view of “Gypsies” was different from their view of the Jews. This might also explain why, in contrast to ubiquitous antisemitism, the German propaganda machine in the occupied Soviet territories did not make reference to anti-“Gypsyism”, as Il’ia Al’tman and Mikhail Tiaglyi have correctly pointed out.

It is also possible that the late beginnings of the persecution of the Roma are due to practical reasons – the Germans had to wait for the recruitment of auxiliary local police forces, because the occupying forces themselves had serious problems identifying “Gypsies,” especially those whose appearance did not match the stereotype. Even in the pre-war years, some Soviet Roma had had to conceal their identity in order to escape persecution and repression. Many were registered as “Russians,” “Ukrainians,” or “Belorussians,” a fact that indicates their rate of assimilation.

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166 See Weiss-Wendt, *Extermination of the Gypsies in Estonia*, pp. 31-61.

Assimilation was greatest in the Crimea, where the majority of Roma had lived for centuries in the towns and shared language, culture and religion with the Moslem Tatars. Consequently, the Crimean Tatars became incensed at the persecution of their brothers in faith, and the Moslem Committee tried everything to save "their" Roma from annihilation. As a result of this extraordinary solidarity, part of the Moslem Roma population of the peninsula was able to survive the German occupation under the guise of a Tatar identity.

Generally speaking, solidarity with persecuted Roma seems to have been much more widespread than with the Jews. The best evidence for this is that in the files of the local archives of the former Soviet Union there are almost no denunciations of "Gypsies" – as opposed to the numerous denunciations of Jews. Informants such as Anna Ershova in Utogorsh, who helped the German Security Police to find and arrest hidden Roma, were an exception. One of the reasons for this difference might be, once again, that the Roma did not play any political role in Soviet life and hence were not associated with ideological anti-Bolshevism. Furthermore, in contrast to antisemitism, anti-"Gypsyism" had less of a tradition in Russia compared to Western Europe. Roma art, especially in the Tsarist Empire, was understood to be an integral part of Russian culture, and the political attitude towards "Gypsies" was relatively benign.

A peculiarity of the German persecution of Soviet Roma was the contradiction between the official, written orders of the military commanders and their actual implementation in the field. The example of Army Group North's area of operations demonstrates that orders concerning the distinction between sedentary and itinerant "Gypsies" existed only on paper, and had no influence on the radical practice of murder. The extent of Nazi mass shootings of Soviet "Gypsies" from 1942 onwards is indicative of the fact that in all German occupied military areas the entire Roma population was *de facto* treated like the Jews, even if according to the orders "only" a part of it – the (supposed) itinerants – were to be targeted for extermination. It is therefore likely that there was some kind of verbal order, or at least an agreement between the Security Police and the Wehrmacht, to kill all "Gypsies."

Finally, there were also similarities in the way the two victim groups were treated under Nazi occupation. From 1942 onward, the extermination of Soviet "Gypsies" in military areas was deliberate and systematic. In the Crimea, the systematic genocide of "Gypsies" began as early as 1941 and ran almost parallel to the destruction of the Jews and Krimchaks on the peninsula. After the Jews, the Roma were the only group living in the occupied Soviet Union whose systematic extermination started as early as the first year of the German-Soviet war. In both cases the racist ideology of the National socialist *weltanschauung* served as a basic motive for the persecution (although Nazi antisemitism included different elements as well and was on a different scale), and it

was intended that both “races” should vanish. Furthermore, Soviet investigations give the impression that from 1942 onward, mobile SS units as well as German military units understood that the murder of the Soviet Jews and of “Gypsies” were connected. The murder of the Roma took place in parallel with the complete annihilation of the last remaining Jews in the military area. The mass shootings in Briansk and Klinty, where several *Aktionen* targeted both Jews and “Gypsies” at the same time and the victims were buried in the same mass graves, symbolize their shared fate in these territories.

There are other cases in which joint or parallel massacres took place in locations where relatively large Roma communities existed. The perpetrators employed the same methods which had proved so successful in the mass murder of the Jewish population. In some cases, the Nazis’ attempts to deceive the Roma failed once the latter learned what had actually become of the “resettled” Jews. Refusing to follow resettlement orders usually could not save their lives, however. The close cooperation of the Wehrmacht with the Security Police made escape for Roma almost impossible.

The population of the occupied Soviet territories, who witnessed these hideous events, understood the connection between the genocide of Jews and of Roma. In the Ukraine, this understanding was expressed in a widespread adage: “*Evreiam kaput, tsyganam tozhe – a vam, ukraintsam, pozzhe!*” (The Jews are done for, the Gypsies as well – and you, Ukrainians, [will be done for] later on!). This premonition reflects an awareness that the Nazi systematic genocidal policy would eventually be extended to the Slavic population and other ethnic groups in the Soviet Union. In considering the brutality of the occupation regime and plans like “*Generalplan Ost*,” such an assessment was not an exaggeration. The difference was, however, that both Jews and “Gypsies” would have been annihilated long before “*Generalplan Ost*” was implemented.

In the eyes of the Extraordinary State Commission, the comparability between the annihilation of Soviet Jews and Roma was confirmed beyond doubt. In the Central State Archive of the Russian Federation, a catalogue of the ChGK is partly preserved in which “The murder of citizens of Gypsy nationality” as well as “The murder of citizens of Jewish nationality” are individual categories.<sup>167</sup> It follows that the Soviets

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167 All in all, there are twelve categories in the catalogue system, half of which concern diverse victim groups: “1. Extermination of the Civil Population; 2. Extermination of Children; 3. Extermination of War Prisoners; 4. Extermination of Citizens of Jewish Nationality; 5. Extermination of Citizens of Gypsy Nationality; 6. Extermination of the Insane.” Unfortunately, the remaining index cards of the catalogue offer only a fragmentary overview which is inadequate for research.

were well informed about the special status of the Holocaust, as well as the genocide of Roma, but as part of the Kremlin's Stalinist post-war policy, this knowledge was kept secret for ideological reasons, and thus did not become part of the collective memory. The consequences of this policy can be felt up to the present day, in that the Nazi genocide of Soviet Roma still remains more or less unrecognized by the Russian public, including the majority of Russian historians of the Second World War.