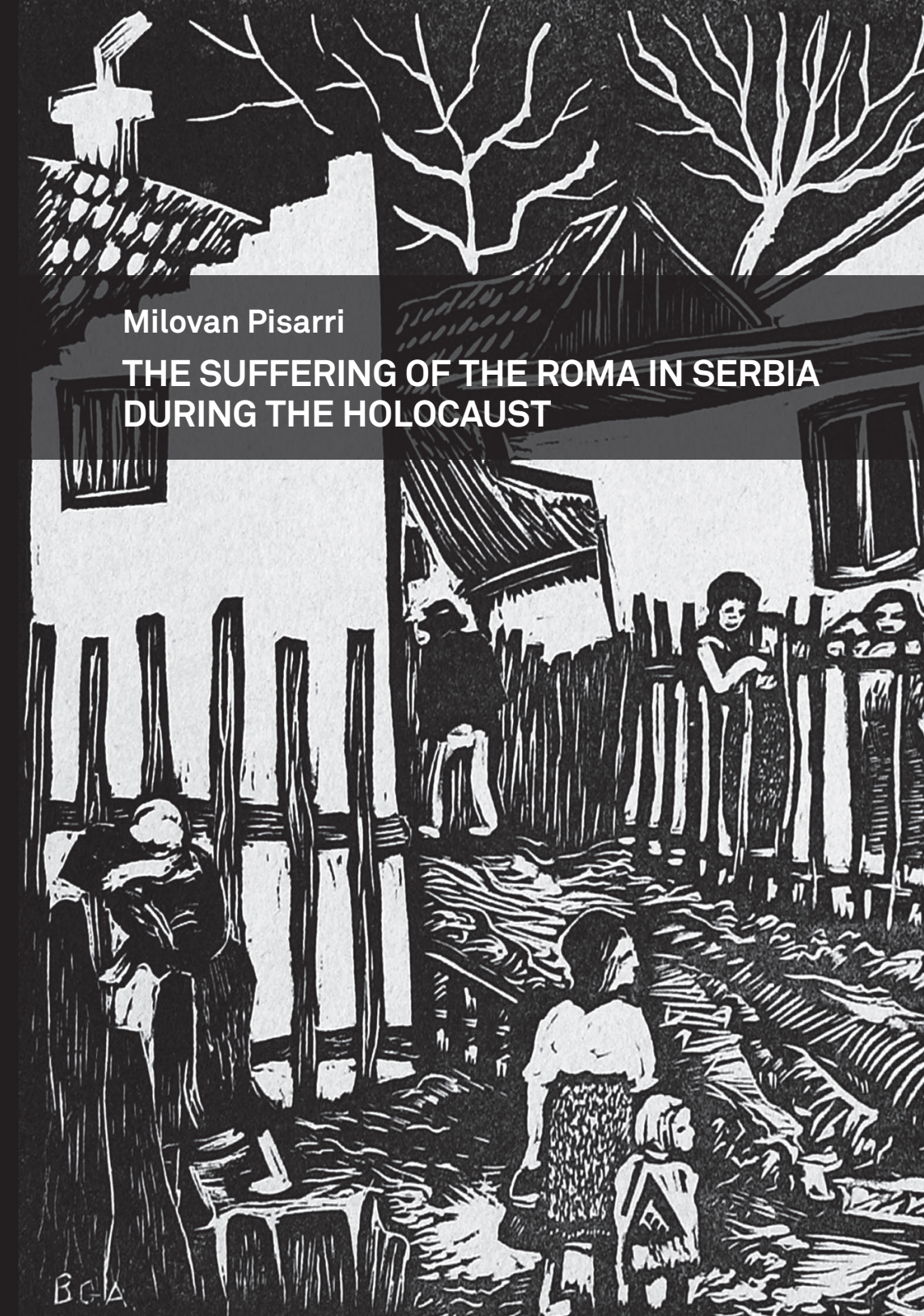

Milovan Pisarri

THE SUFFERING OF THE ROMA IN SERBIA DURING THE HOLOCAUST

Milovan Pisarri

The Suffering of the Roma in Serbia during the Holocaust

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The quotation on the book cover is taken from the testimony of Leposava Ilić from Jatagan mala published in: Dragoljub Acković, *Romi u Beogradu*, Belgrade, 2009, pp. 250–251.

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Milovan Pisarri

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Belgrade, 2014

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I. INTRODUCTION

In one of the first substantial studies devoted to genocide against the Roma,[1] journalist and writer Christian Bernadac presents testimonies of two female concentration camp survivors, because, as he says,

> Collecting certain stories and papers on deportation, I reached the conclusion that the Roma were avoided by all representatives of deported peoples, of which there were around thirty-two or thirty-five. As an illustration, it is sufficient to refer to some of the rare sentences mentioning the Roma in the survivors' testimonies. "Gypsy women, dirty thieves, utter cowards, crybabies full of vermin...", "A herd of bohemians, disgustingly dirty, obtuse, thieves...", "One tall Gypsy, thief and liar: just like others of his race, all he needed was one cue by an SS member to become a killer...".[2]

The author, in the paragraphs that follow, admits to having felt very disappointed when he noticed that even writers, university professors and priests from different countries share the same thoughts, quoting several of their statements from the post-war period. Also, it was frightening to discover that the massacre of Roma was being ignored. "How is it possible to forget all those victims, to delete them from memory?", he asks himself and others.[3]

The answer is, of course, not simple, but nonetheless, it should be acknowledged that, from that moment onwards, especially in recent

1 Christian Bernadac, *L'holocauste oublié: les massacre des tsiganes*, Éditions France-Empire, Pasir, 1979. In the present text, the translation into Serbo-Croatian has been used: *Zaboravljeni holokaust. Pokolj Cigana*, (translated from French by Selma Oruč), Globus, Zagreb, 1981

2 *Ibid*, p. 18

3 *Ibid*, p. 19

years, numerous efforts have been made so as to wrest, at last, the genocide against the Roma in World War II from the abyss of mass amnesia. Essential papers pertaining to this matter which represent the first significant publication on the suffering of the Roma, appeared in Great Britain as long ago as 1972, entitled *The destiny of Europe's Gypsies*,[4] as well as the book *Rassenutopie und Genozid. Die nationalsozialistische „Lösung der Zigeunerfrage"*[5], considered by one of the most influential experts on the subject of Roma in World War II, Gilad Margalit, to be the most significant work on genocide against the Roma.[6]

The text that lies before the reader should be interpreted in the spirit of a "battle against forgetting".

Writing about unfamiliar topics, opening up new research studies and asking new questions in historiography is always a difficult task. The historian who does not have literature at his/her disposal is compelled to pore over material kept in archives, without any specific indication as to where to direct one's attention, where to seek written documents on the topic s/he is addressing or even whether or not such documents actually exist. It's a delicate task, especially when it comes to such a large and problematic issue as genocide against the Roma in World War II.

Accessing archival resources without prior knowledge brings a risk that the endeavor might be too great, and results too small; especially bearing in mind that the rare mentions of suffering of the Roma in existing scientific papers always underscore the lack of sources for suitable treatment of the topic.

Nevertheless, hope for success and the moral obligation to invest the greatest extent of commitment in the work must ultimately lead to

4 Donald Kenrick and Grattan Puxon, *The destiny of Europe's Gypsies*, Heinemann, London, 1972

5 Michael Zimmermann, *Rassenutopie und Genozid. Die nationalsozialistische „Lösung der Zigeunerfrage"*, Christians, Hamburg, 1996

6 Gilad Margalit, *The uniquess of the Nazi persecution of the Gypsies*, in *Romani studies*, vol 10. no. 2/2000, p. 186. For an overview of the most important works on genocide against the Roma, see the bibliography at the end of the text.

certain answers to the myriad of questions the historian asks him/herself before and during research. It is never possible to find an answer for each question, but this is precisely where the complexity of historical science lies; truth will never be found in documents alone, a topic will never be exhausted, it will never be possible to isolate one segment of history and bind it within the limits of dogmatic statements. Topics are opened up, nurtured and developed, generating a life of their own and rousing interest among others, not only those within the scientific field, but also within the fields of morality, politics and general understanding.

Holocaust, *Roma holocaust*, *Porajmos?;* unlike other mass exterminations in the 20th century, what happened to the Roma in Europe during World War II has still not been defined distinctively with one specific term. This fact is sufficient to illustrate the very vague picture that we have to today regarding the mass, systematic killing of the Roma.

In order to single out the unique National Socialist terror against Jews from the general legal category of genocide, during the nineteen fifties, the word Holocaust became more frequent. It was created by Elie Wiesel, a Jewish survivor. Shortly, however, the same term started being coined by various scientists so as to define the extermination of other groups by the Nazis. The expression Holocaust, thus, expanded to include mass killing of "the racially inferior" (Roma), political and ideological opponents (primarily communists), religious enemies (Jehovah's Witnesses) and the undesirable (the disabled, homosexuals). In the Serbian language, this term is written in lower case letters, while capitalization began recently so as to single out the Holocaust against Jews from holocaust against other groups. Due to existing risk from banalization of terror against Jews, in western countries (but not in the Anglo-Saxon world) the term Shoah is now being used more and more frequently.

It was in mid nineteen-nineties that the extermination of the Roma was named for the first time. The Roma linguist and activist Ian Hancock introduced the word Porajmos (destruction) so as to signify the

National Socialist policy of extermination of the Roma and the Sinti in World War II. From then on, the term gained presence, not only in scientific, but also in political language, even though it cannot yet be considered fully accepted. Some people, for instance the anthropologist Michael Stewart, decisively oppose the term because of the meaning it has among the Roma in Eastern Europe.[7] In Serbia, the term Porajmos is not used at all, just mentioned occasionally.

The fact that extermination of the Roma and the Sinti can be defined as genocide in the legal sense, but also as holocaust and ultimately as Porajmos, has led, in the symbolic sense, to a situation whereby on the European and Global level there is still no unique manner of usage for these terms. This becomes evident not only in scientific papers, but in the language of State and international institutions: for instance, in September 2012, European MPs proposed that an International Day of Remembrance of the Victims of Holocaust against the Roma be established, while at the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA, former ITF) the expression "genocide against the Roma" is in use.

In Serbia, authors of Roma origin, who belong to the small number of those devoting their attention to genocide against the Roma, unequivocally utilize the term holocaust.[8]

7 Cf.: Michael Stewart, *Remembering without commemoration: The mnemonics and politics of holocaust memories among European Roma*, in *The Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute*, vol. 10, no. 3/2004, pp. 561-582. In certain dialects of the Romani language, especially those spoken in the Balkan peninsula, the word Porajmos has the same root as many other words, which is why it is brought into relation with several possible meanings, among which are "to open", "to scream", "to deceive", "to open one's eyes", "to set up a tent" etc. One of the meanings which makes the word Porajmos unsuitable and even offensive for definition of genocide against the Roma and the Sinti is "rape". Therefore, other words have been suggested, among which the most frequently used is "Samudaripen" i.e. "mass killing" or "all killed". The term was first coined by the linguist Marcel Courthiade.

8 The best known authors, thanks to whom the issue of genocide against the Roma has received at least some attention in the public, are Dragoljub Acković and Rajko Đurić. Their works have been used in the present text.

Nevertheless, the lack of suitable definition impacts on marking the remembrance of genocide. In the year 2009, the Roma National Congress and International Romani Union proposed the introduction of a 'Day of Remembrance of the Holocaust against the Roma/ Porajmos', selecting the 2nd of August as the date, in remembrance of the day when the last 2,897 prisoners at the concentration camp for the Roma in Auschwitz were executed. As already mentioned, in September 2012 at the European Parliament, MPs proposed that an 'International Day of Remembrance of the Victims of Holocaust against the Roma' be established. Although the European Parliament has not yet released an official statement, that date is already being commemorated in some countries. In addition to the central commemoration in Auschwitz, this date is being marked, for example, in neighboring Croatia where, in Uštica next to Jasenovac, the first commemoration took place on the 2nd of August 2012, in the presence of representatives of Roma communities from the country and the region, as well as Croatian state officials. Elsewhere, however, a different date has been chosen. In Serbia, for instance, the Day of Remembrance of the Roma killed in World War II is marked on the 16th of December, in memory of that date in 1942, when Himmler ordered the systematic deportation of Roma to concentration camps and their extermination. In 2010, a commemoration was held at Arapova dolina near Leskovac, followed in 2011 by one at Bežanijska Kosa near Belgrade, and in 2012 and 2013 near the memorial complex in the village of Jabuka, close to Pančevo. Those commemorations had, unfortunately, more of a private rather than public character, usually attended by representatives of the government, Roma communities and local community, as well as descendants of the victims. Additionally, upon the initiative of local Roma associations, the 11th of December each year, at the monument devoted to victims from Leskovac and the vicinity (located at Arapova Dolina), a commemoration is held in memory of the firing squad shooting that the occupational forces, strengthened by the quislings, executed on the 11th of December 1941, when 310 civilians were shot, of which 293 were Roma.

The case is similar with memorialization as part of monument culture. Namely, it is rare to find monuments dedicated to the Roma in Europe. It was only on the 24th of October 2012, in Berlin, that the first monument to Roma victims[9] was unveiled near the Reichstag, where a monument to Jews (unveiled 2005) and homosexual victims of Nazism (2008) already located. This fact should not be regarded with any great surprise since greater interest in the issue of genocide against the Roma only really began at the beginning of the 1990's, even though some people had attempted to address the issue about ten years beforehand. Specifically, after the protest of Roma activists in 1980 in Dachau, who protested because genocide against the Roma was being negated and the Roma in Germany continuously being discriminated against (through further use of dossiers drawn up by Nazis during their rule) in 1982, Germany admitted genocide against the Roma.

In Belgrade, the Serbian city with the most Roma victims, the sole visible trace of genocide is a plaque set up by the Association of Jewish Municipalities in Serbia in 2006 at the location of former concentration camp Topovske šupe, with the inscription:

> From August to December of 1941, this place was a Nazi concentration camp for Jews and Roma people from Belgrade and the Banat region. All were declared hostages, and each day hundreds were transported elsewhere to be shot.

Nonetheless, the memory of the Roma victims of genocide is still alive. Namely, many streets in the vicinity of former concentration camp Topovske Šupe to this day carry the same names they had in 1941, while the appearance of Marinkova Bara, as well as other parts of the city from which the Roma were led to their deaths, probably doesn't differ much from what it used to be like seventy years ago. These city districts continue to be poor, inhabited by many Roma. It

9 On diverse polemics around the monument, cf.: Michael Zimmermann, *The Berlin Memorial for the Murdered Sinti and Roma: Problems and Points for Discussion*, in *Romani Studies*, vol. 17, no. 1/2007, pp. 1-30.

is possible that descendants of victims or even survivors are among today's residents.

Genocide against the Roma is a historical phenomenon which encompasses the period from 1934 to 1945, i.e. the period from introduction of first anti-Roma measures in Nazi Germany up until the end of World War II.

As in the case of anti-Semitism, there already existed a long tradition of anti-Gypsyism in Europe. Since the Middle Ages, in different European countries, the Roma and the Sinti have been subjected to segregation, persecution, even massacres; in the 19th century, race theories were created which view the Roma as a lower race and represented the groundwork for a theory whereby the Roma were considered criminals by nature. However, just like in the case of Jews, their systematic mass destruction occurred later on, during National Socialism. In interpreting the circumstances that enabled this, it is worth referring to Zygmunt Bauman's book *Modernity and the Holocaust*.[10] From the mid-thirties of 20th century, based on existing laws from Weimar Germany, which, among other things, envisaged constant police control over Roma and Sinti, the National Socialists began the selection of Roma and Sinti to be sent to concentration camps in Dachau, Dieselstrasse, Sachsenhausen, Marzahn and Vennhausen.

Unlike in the case of the Holocaust, the Nazis had a clear picture of the fate of Roma and Sinti as early as 1938. This year is considered to mark the commencement of "the final solution to the Gypsy issue" in Germany. As foreigners, and "by nature" dangerous criminals (thus a menace to Aryan pureness of the German race) the Roma began being subjected to mass imprisonment and transportation to various concentration camps. In addition, they started being subjected to sterilization. The year 1940 saw the start of mass deportation of German Roma and Sinti to occupied Poland, where Germans established a so-

10 Zygmunt Bauman, *Modernity and the Holocaust*, Cornell University Press, New York, 1989

called General Protectorate. That same year, the poisonous gas Zyklon B was tested on a group of 250 Roma children, later to be used in gas chambers. With the German invasion of the USSR, Einsatzgruppen, that is - special squads comprising mostly SS members, were ordered to exterminate communists, Jews and "dangerous elements"; a phrase 'specific' enough for the commencement of the killings of the Roma. That is when mass firing squad shootings started operating in entire Eastern Europe, but many Roma, such as, for instance, around 5.000 who had been imprisoned at the Łódź ghetto, were murdered in mobile gas chambers (dushegubkas). Starting from 1942, the Roma were imprisoned at almost all of the most notorious death camps, often having various experiments performed on them, such as those Mengele carried out in Auschwitz.

As it can be assumed, the fates of Roma and that of the Jews were often shared. Consequently, the study of mass extermination of Roma is in many cases an accompanying issue of the Holocaust, in the sense that the suffering of the Roma is mentioned as part of research and papers devoted to the Jews. Partial explanation lies in the fact that, according to National Socialist plans, both groups had to be wiped off the face of the earth, so they had the same fate, not only in the legislative system, but also on the issue of ghettoization, mass executions and killings in death camps. If we take Serbia as an example: it was mandatory for the Roma to wear yellow badges (with the letters "Gypsy" on them), to go into forced labour, and to abstain from public life. Later, male Roma were interned at Topovske Šupe in Belgrade, at Crveni Krst in Niš and elsewhere, where they were killed in mass retaliations during Autumn of 1941. Ultimately, Roma women and children were interned at Sajmište, although most were released after a certain period.

The fact that the issue of persecution of the Roma is almost always linked to persecution of Jews, prevents it from being treated as an autonomous subject of scientific research, and consequently as a historical phenomenon that should be contemplated independently of other events.

The necessity for such a standpoint was underscored almost fifteen years ago by Gilad Margalit. Although the Jewish narrative is frequently the same as the case of Roma, it should nonetheless be pointed out that there are salient differences between them. Specifically, both have their particular characteristics on the basis of which they can be defined as "distinct".[11] The presumption that "race", which was commonly given as the reason for extermination of the Jews and of Roma, is sufficient in their interpretation, does not allow, in the case of Roma, for numerous other aspects to be taken into consideration that differentiate them from the compact and consistent process of decision making that was made in relation to the total elimination of Jews. Nazi policy towards the Roma was often confusing, at some moments even "romantic". The main difference is that Jews were considered responsible for an attempt to take control of the world, mobilizing, at the same time, communism and western plutocracy. The war against the Soviet Union was thought to be, among other things, a war against Jews. In the Holocaust itself, anti-Semitic ideology was a more important component than biological racism, i.e. than the threat of Jews defiling the German race.[12]

This step is necessary towards the aim of affirming distinctiveness of the phenomenon of Roma suffering, through analysis of the Roma before the war and especially afterwards, up until today. In brief, even though in the methodological sense it is useful to study genocide against the Roma together with the Holocaust, it must not, as a phenomenon, remain in its "shadow". It is clear that this step is of a purely scientific nature and must not cross that boundary; genocide against the Roma must therefore not be viewed separately, with the aim of a value comparison with the Holocaust, i.e. in order to determine whose suffering was greater and more horrible, since in such a manner a dangerous political relativizing would be made of both one and the other phenomenon.

11 Gilad Margalit, *ibid*., p. 188

12 *Ibid*, p. 193

Concerning genocide against the Roma in Serbia, there are only fragmentary traces which most frequently appear and are repeated in scientific works devoted to other, kindred topics, such as and above all the Holocaust. Although this issue has been addressed by historiography in Serbia rather seldom and superficially,[13] and despite the fact that certain authors attempted to include suffering of the Jews in the category of significant topics worthy of permanent attention, it can be noticed that since the very outset of their prominence in the public sphere, the Roma have been relegated to a place which has, to a certain extent, always been secondary in relation to the suffering of the Jews. Accordingly, in the publication *Crimes of Fascist Occupiers and their Collaborators against Jews in Yugoslavia*, published by the Association of Jewish Municipalities in Yugoslavia as long ago as 1952,[14] we come across mention of the Roma in connection with mass executions at the village Jabuka (Autumn 1941), with concentration camps at Topovske šupe and at Sajmište in Belgrade, since in all those cases the fate of Roma population was very similar to the fate of Jews.

Other papers in historiography which dealt, in the subsequent years and especially in the past decade, with the issue of the Holocaust do not differ much from the above mentioned standpoint. Exactly forty-four years ago, the monograph *Terror and Crimes of Nazi Germany in Serbia 1941–1944*,[15] was published in which the second chapter is directly devoted to suffering of Jews and Roma (entitled "Persecution and annihilation of Jews and Gypsies"). Unfortunately, genocide against the Roma has remained a phenomenon mentioned only alongside other topics, and has not become the subject of deeper

13 On historiography and the Holocaust in Yugoslavia and Serbia, cf.: Jovan Ćulibrk, *Istoriografija Holokausta u Jugoslaviji*, Institut za teološka istraživanja, Belgrade, 2011

14 Zdenko Levental (ed.), *Zločini fašističkih okupatora i njihovih saradnika protiv Jevreja u Jugoslaviji*, Savez jevrejskih opština Jugoslavije, Belgrade, 1952

15 Venceslav Glišić, *Teror i zločini nacističke Nemačke u Srbiji 1941–1944*, Institut za istoriju radničkog pokreta Srbije, Belgrade, 1970

analysis in its own right. The same fleeting traces of genocide against the Roma can be found in one of the first publications on suffering of Yugoslav Jews that was published as late as 1980, entitled *Jews of Yugoslavia 1941–1945. Victims of Genocide and Participants of the National Liberation War.*[16] Although the focus of attention is the suffering of Jews in all parts of Yugoslavia, there are occasional mentions of the Roma suffering. The situation did not change much during the nineteen-nineties nor since the year 2000, because despite the fact that works dealing with the Holocaust have expanded and deepened their research (opening up new significant issues) genocide against the Roma has been regarded as just an occasional new piece in the overall mosaic. In the book "German Concentration Camp at Belgrade Fairgrounds 1941–1944",[17] published in 1992 (which to this day represents a seminal work in the study of the Holocaust in Serbia) for the first time the issue of Roma suffering and its scope is raised clearly, as well as implications as to how significant, but also neglected, the issue actually is. Unfortunately, despite this example, the overall trend whereby it is again considered an accompanying issue to the suffering of the Jews has continued in this publication, thus failing to rouse interest in further research studies.

It was not until the year 2006 that an article by a younger generation historian drastically shifted perceptions towards this issue: sixty-five years after the commencement of genocide against the Roma in Serbia, *The Roma in the Jewish Concentration Camp Zemun 1941–1942*[18] is the title of the paper by Danijela Jovanović, whose greatest merit is that the paper directly addresses genocide against the Roma, without

16 Jaša Romano, *Jevreji Jugoslavije 1941–1945. Žrtve genocida i učesnici Narodnooslobodilačkog rata*, Jevrejski istorijski muzej, Belgrade, 1980

17 Milan Koljanin, *Nemački logor na beogradskom sajmištu 1941–1944*, Institut za savremenu istoriju, Belgrade, 1992

18 Danijela Jovanović, *Romi u Jevrejskom logoru Zemun 1941–1942*, Balkanski književni glasnik, 5/2006 (www.balkanliteraryherald.com/broj5/danijelajovanovic5.htm, last accessed: 9 April 2014

mediation of the Holocaust or other topics that are already present in historiography. The significance of this paper does not lie necessarily in the utilization of new materials from archives or elsewhere, but in the shift of perspective that had previously been used to approach such familiar materials: laws on race, concentration camps, executions that encompassed not only Jews but also the Roma in occupied Serbia, especially in Belgrade, were now being read from the standpoint of Roma victims. For the first time the frightening fact surfaced that there is an enormous group of people in Serbia who had been the victims of racial persecution, yet who have been forgotten by all, not only institutions, but also by historians, sociologists, anthropologists and other members of the scientific and cultural elites.

The sole exception to this trend are authors of Roma descent, who have grappled with the issue of genocide in publications of wider scope. In particular, Dragoljub Acković should be singled out with the books *Ašunen Romalen! Listen up people!* and *The Roma in Belgrade*, as well as Rajko Đurić, with his book *History of the Holocaust of Roma*, published in collaboration with the historian Antun Miletić.[19]

The present text that lies before the reader should also be considered in continuity with the article by Danijela Jovanović, whose plea we accept and support in its entirety:

> This paper certainly provides just a partial answer to the many questions that exist in relation to this topic. I hope that in the entire Balkan peninsula a bit of effort will be invested in answering these questions as well as that the work will not be taken on solely by Roma associations.[20]

19 Dragoljub Acković, *Ašunen Romalen! Slušajte ljudi!*, Rominterpress, Belgrade, 1996; and *Romi u Beogradu. Istorija, kultura i tradicija Roma u Beogradu od naseljavanja do kraja XX veka*, Rominterpress, Belgrade, 2009. Rajko Đurić and Antun Miletić, *Istorija Holokausta Roma*, Politika AD, Belgrade, 2008

20 Danijela Jovanović, *ibid*., last accessed: 9 April 2014

Structure of the paper, historical sources

Taking as a starting point the fact that this is the first research from an archival institutions which aims to study of a topic that has been almost disregarded up until now, the present paper is divided into certain sections which can be read independently.

In the first section, the wider European context is considered, above all on the ideological plane. This is where National Socialist policy towards the Roma is presented, its implementation in the Third Reich and occupied territories, as well as similar policies in collaborating countries (Italy, Croatia, Romania). In writing the first chapter, both foreign and local literature has been used, since in the recent years this topic has gained attention and sources have become available (at least partly) in Serbia.

The second section addresses the situation in Serbia. Although it would be significant, the decision was not to take into account the position of Roma in pre-war Serbia, taking instead, as the starting point, the disintegration of the Kingdom of Yugoslavia and establishing of occupation and quisling apparatuses after the 6th of April 1941; the policy of those apparatuses towards the Roma and anti-Roma measures and, ultimately, the carrying out of genocide. In this section also, most use was made of literature of general interest and partly archival materials.

The third section is devoted to genocide against the Roma in Belgrade, and could be said to represent the core of the entire paper. Based on research in archival institutions in Belgrade, it was possible to reconstruct, with a substantial degree of certainty, the phases of Roma suffering and, for the most part, to let the victims "speak for themselves". Relations between German and quisling authorities, the issue of victims and perpetrators, restitution, are also at least partly presented. The materials used originate from three main archives. The fourth archive, the Archive of Serbia, even though it surely contains significant material pertaining to genocide against the Roma in Serbia, was

not possible to take into account because of the lack of time. We hope that those materials will be the subject of further research which will complete, alter, expand or critique the present paper.

The Archive of Yugoslavia, at the archival fund of the State Commission for Determining the Crimes of Occupiers and their Collaborators (fund no. 110), is where the most valuable material is to be found. It contains numerous statements, around eight hundred, collected by local branches of the commission in 1945 from Roma women survivors whose husbands, sons, fathers, brothers and friends had been killed in the genocide. Many of these women were also victims of persecution, since almost all had been interned at the concentration camp at Sajmište, but survived due to the possibility of release.[21]

The work of occupation and quisling bodies, primarily of the City of Belgrade Municipality and the City of Belgrade Administration, has been examined via materials kept at the City of Belgrade Archives and at the Military Archives.

One of the significant results of this research work is the fact that after more than seventy years since these events – throughout which time the sentence "there are no materials on genocide against the Roma" has been frequently repeated by historians – it is now possible to draw up a list of victims from Belgrade, which will, at least in the most modest and most simple manner, honour all the victims; wresting them from obscurity and placing them, at last, side by side with other victims.

Accurate lists of killed and surviving Roma, if the issue were to be pursued further, could be compared to other lists. Knowing, for instance, that based on the statements in the State Commission for Determining the Crimes of Occupiers and their Collaborators collected after the war, many Roma had held jobs as coach-drivers, it is possible to compare their names with the names of the Horse-Drawn Cab and Ox-Drawn Cart Drivers Association of Belgrade members, kept at

21 The chapter on genocide in Belgrade will provide more details on this.

the fund of the same name in the City of Belgrade Archive. In such a manner, which, of course, demands careful and thorough work, additional important details can be found in the complex endeavor of reconstructing their lives, or better still, their social and economic position in Belgrade at the time. In the present paper, the comparison of those data had not been planned, simply due to lack of time. Therefore we leave such a possibility to subsequent works, in the same spirit with which we compiled this first, more encompassing text on genocide against the Roma in Belgrade and Serbia i.e. in the hope that it will pave the way for various questions and that others will accept them as suggestions, stimuli or moral obligations to continue studying this topic. This means that part of the work devoted to Belgrade should be considered a case study, whose applied methodology can serve for other case studies, which would, for example, address genocide against the Roma in other Serbian towns, by approaching the issue in a proper manner, i.e. by local history taking on the responsibility for research, study and public presentation of the genocide.

In the fourth and final section, and for the very reason previously mentioned, already known cases are presented, without greater pretensions and with the aid of existing literature, in which Roma were victims of genocide in other towns of Serbia. This section should be considered a kind of appendix, intended to show the scope of genocide in the country through certain examples, on the one hand, while on the other as possible groundwork for exploration on the local level. It is understood that cases taken into account should by no means be considered the only ones that are known about.

As in every scientific publication, what follows then is the conclusion.

In this paper, no use at all (or rare use) has been made of testimonies by Roma survivors or eyewitnesses collected thanks to some initiatives since the mid-eighties. Consequently, special significance lies in the methodological approach of oral history, based on which a certain part of testimonies by Roma who have survived genocide has been collected in previous years. USHMM was among the first who began

collecting interviews with Roma survivors in various parts of Europe, including Serbia.[22]

In Belgrade, during the mid-eighties, Milan Koljanin and Milena Radojčić had conversations with three male Roma survivors. Their testimonies can be found in the Historical Archive of the City of Belgrade and, to this day, represent the richest source of information on genocide against the Roma in Belgrade.

Another example of oral history is the work of Paul Polansky, who published, in 2007, three volumes of testimonies by Yugoslav Roma survivors. The entire first volume is devoted to the Roma from Niš and contains over twenty interviews. The remaining two volumes deal with other parts of Yugoslavia. The suffering of the Roma in Niš and Leskovac has been portrayed in short documentary films, "This Life, it's a Gift I got" and "11 December 1941. Mass Execution".

The immense potential that exists in the abovementioned and similar initiatives with the aim of reviving the issue of genocide against the Roma in Serbia, lies in the fact that, although they cannot be considered reliable sources, (at least not at this moment in a strictly historiographical sense) they certainly are living proof of what has been kept aside up until now, what has constantly been forgotten or ignored. In that sense, the explosive force they possess should become part of the everyday and permanent honoring of the suffering of the Roma in this region, wherever possible: on the internet, in the future memorial at Sajmište, in other publications, in school textbooks, in the media and in culture.

22 The interviews can be found at www.ushmm.org.

II. GENOCIDE AGAINST THE ROMA IN EUROPE

At the moment when the first measures against the Roma and the Sinti in Nazi Germany were made public, anti-Gypsyism, just like anti-Semitism, had already existed for a long time, not only in the Third Reich, but also in many other European countries. In various works on genocide against the Roma (following the narrative of the Holocaust), the authors' starting point is often an engrained anti-Gypsyism, used to explain the motivation to the last, most atrocious act carried out by Nazis.

Christian Bernadac, for example, speaks concisely but clearly about crimes perpetrated against the Roma in various parts of Europe during the previous nine centuries, claiming that it was this very "primary intoxication" that paved the way for genocide against the Roma in World War II. Being French, he primarily speaks about examples from France – the king's proclamation against "Bohemians" from the year 1682, for instance,[1] but also from other countries: mass deportation to Louisiana in America (France 1802), taking away children from the Roma (Germany 1830), enforced exile by force of arms (Great Britain 1912), the ban on Roma language and clothing (several regions in France, Spain, Portugal), prohibition of marriages among the Roma, prohibition of nomadism, automatic enslavement (Romania), annulling marriages between Roma and non-Roma (Hungary), confiscating property, ban on ownership of horses and carriages, banning the performing of certain jobs, buying houses (Portugal), mandatory showing

1 Christian Bernadac, *Zaboravljeni holokaust. Pokolj Cigana*, Globus, Zagreb, 1981, p. 24

of anthropological identity card (France), plan for branding (Hungary) or sterilization (Norway 1930), and, of course, The Law against the "Gypsy Menace" in Germany from December 1939.[2] According to the same author, gas chambers were the sole innovation.

That anti-Gypsyism had played a certain part, this is beyond doubt. However, it certainly wasn't sufficient to start up the entire machinery of death, which, in the subjugated Europe, devoured the lives of hundreds of thousands of Roma.

In 1899, the functionary Alfred Dillman established "The Service for Information on Gypsies"[3] in Munich as part of the police service. Six years later, he published *The Book about Gypsies* (Zigeuner-Buch), in which 3,500 Roma from the Munich county were registered. Twenty-one years later, after destruction and annihilation wrought by World War I, Bavarian authorities introduced special measures in the battle against "Gypsies, drifters and freeloaders", which spread, three years later, to the entire Weimar Republic territory. They envisaged specific restrictions in movement, introduction of specific documents, assigned time that could be spent in each location, as well as police control over them; offences were to be punished by two years of forced labour.[4]

With Hitler's accession to power, the Nazis took up existing laws on the Roma. In 1936, within the Ministry of Health in Berlin, "The Institute for Research on Racial Hygiene and Biology of the Population" was founded, which became the major Nazi body for studying the Roma. At the moment of founding, its chief, the psychiatrist Robert Ritter, received from the Service of Munich 19,000 already drawn up dossiers. What followed were genealogical examinations and the Roma census, which encompassed 20,000 persons in February 1941, and 30,000 people in the Spring of 1942 – almost the entire Roma

2 *Ibid*, p. 30

3 *Ibid*, pp. 35–36;

4 Michael Burleigh and Wolfgang Wippermann, *The Racial State. Germany 1933-1945*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 2003 (ninth printing), pp. 114-115

population of Germany at that time.[5] Ritter's thesis was that the Roma and the Sinti had come from India, but that their original Aryan background had been lost, since during the centuries they had mixed with the inhabitants of those territories where they settled. From a pure race they had thus become an inferior one. This category, according to Ritter, contained over 90 percent of the Roma in Germany. Pertaining to the asocial and criminal behaviours attributed to the Roma up until then, Ritter offered as an explanation the impact of racial characteristics: simply, their genes were responsible for it. As a way to combat that "problem", Ritter proposed confinement and sterilization of the most dangerous elements.[6]

The key year for the Roma was in 1936, when the Research Institute for Racial Hygiene was established. From that moment onwards, the position of the Roma was regulated on the national level: they were ordered to take up permanent residence in one place, while places were often designated that were kept under special control; something which had happened previous year but only at a local level. They were also sent to forced labour, while being denied social welfare. That same year anti-Roma measures gained a clearer racist tone, where from the Roma were considered a foreign element in the German national body.

In July 1936, during the lead-up to the Olympic Games, the hunt for the Roma began in Berlin. Around 600 of them were evicted from their homes and banished to the outskirts, then rounded up at the concentration camp Marzahn.[7] At the same time, about 500 Roma from Bavaria were sent to Dachau for re-education and "possible sterilization".

In July 1937, the "Central Office for Fighting the Gypsy Menace" was founded.

5 Christian Bernadac, *ibid*., p. 36

6 Michael Burleigh and Wolfgang Wippermann, *ibid*., pp. 119-120

7 Luca Bravi, *Lo sterminio degli zingari*, in Alessandra Chiappano and Fabio Minazzi (eds.), *Il paradigma nazista dell'annientamento. La Shoah e gli altri stermini*, Giuntina, Firenze, 2006, p. 113

A year later, the Gauleiter of Styria, Tobias Portschy, who considered the issue of Roma more urgent than that of the Jews, stated that "all Gypsies (should be sent) to concentration camps for forced labour, since they are a danger to German racial purity, and because a developed state such as the Third Reich can have solely those who are working and producing as its inhabitants".[8] His book *The Gypsy Issue* (Die Zigeunerfrage) was a kind of foundation for racial persecution of the Roma, which made it to the agenda of National Socialist political rulers in 1938.

From the research by Dr. Ritter and his assistant Eva Justin, conducted at the concentration camp at Marzahn (and other places designated for the Roma), Himmler drew his most significant conclusions, resulting in him issuing the key decree[9] on the racist interpretation of future policy towards the Roma. In such a manner, on the 8th of December 1938, he issued a circular notice in connection with the battle against the "Gypsy Menace". The Mischlinge, i.e. "impure" Roma, of which, according to Ritter's notions, represented over 90 percent of the entire Roma population in Germany, were the focus of attention. The orders were to carry out a registration of all Roma, while Germans were forbidden to marry them. In addition, a special law on the Roma was proposed which would regulate their position within German living space. For the first time, the expression "final solution to the Gypsy issue" [10] appeared.

The Roma were then officially allocated to certain categories: "Z" (Zigeuner), that is – pure blooded Roma, "ZM+" for those who had over 50 percent of Roma blood, "ZM" for those who had half of Roma blood, "ZM-" for those who had less than 50 percent of Roma blood and, finally, "NZ" or non-Roma.

8 Christian Bernadac, *ibid*., p. 35; Michael Zimmermann, *The National Socialist „Solution of the Gypsy Question*", in Ulrich Herbert, *National Socialist Extermination Policies. Contemporary German Perspectives and Controversies*, Berghahn Books, 2000, p. 196

9 Luca Bravi, *ibid*., pp. 113-115

10 Michael Burleigh and Wolfgang Wippermann, *ibid*., pp. 120-121

These divisions, in the chaos of commands and conceptions in force among Nazi leaders on the issue of Roma, was not always respected. At the moment of mass deportation to Auschwitz, in 1943, the difference between "pure" and mixed Roma was not taken into account.[11]

Himmler's orders represented a key historical moment since they meant a definitive shift from a policy towards the Roma based on a socio-geographical view of them as a foreign body in German community, to the racist-biological notion that Roma are an inferior race.[12] At the conference on racial policy organized by the RSHA chief Heydrich on the 21st of September 1939, it was decided that all Roma from Germany, just like Jews, were to be relocated to Poland. In that same period, Roma women began being subjected to sterilization for the purposes of preventing their further reproduction.

It is noteworthy at this stage to point out that since the 19th century, i.e. since the creation of modern race theories, none of the race theorists ascribed to the Roma the wish to dominate Germany or the Christian world, unlike the Jews, and no-one seemed overly interested in creating a race theory on the Roma.[13] Similarly, unlike anti-Semitic propaganda, anti-Gypsyism wasn't overly present in discussions among Nazi leaders. The Nazi attitude towards the Roma was not always of purely racial type, since they were primarily regarded as a "social problem" for the German national community, only being considered a racial issue[14] later, since the year 1938. That same year, around 2,300 Roma and Sinti from Germany and Austria were arrested and interned at various concentration camps as "asocial", but with the official explanation that this action represented a preventive battle against crime. Nonetheless, due to protest by Governor-General of Poland, Hans Frank, the operation was suspended.

11 Luca Bravi, *ibid*., p. 115
12 Michael Zimmermann, *The National Socialist*..., p. 194
13 *Ibid*, p. 189
14 *Ibid*, pp. 193–194

Attack on the Soviet Union and genocide against the Roma

According to Nazi principles from the end of the thirties, the behavior of social groups had their roots in biological and genetic factors. The Roma were divided into two categories: so-called "Mischlinge", i.e. persons of mixed blood, who had strayed from their original biological nature, and pure blooded Roma, who hadn't mixed with other peoples and who kept their pureness by remaining as nomads. In occupied territories, however, the inverse policy was applied, so that most suffering befell nomadic Roma, while there were less victims among the permanent residents.[15] This phenomenon was the result of the picture created about nomads just before and during the German attack on the Soviet Union; since at the time they had been represented as dangerous for German security, as enemy agents. The very reasons that led to the radicalization of understanding and the adopted solution to "the Gypsy issue" were the war against the Soviet Union and the extermination of Jews.

Although there was no specific command which envisaged the extermination of Roma on the territory of the Soviet Union, the Einsatzgruppen probably interpreted Hitler's directives on killing all political commissaries of the Soviet army and all potential dangerous elements as sufficient for killing of "asocial" Roma as well. Einsatzgruppen A, B, C weren't systematically targeted at the Roma, but nevertheless it resulted in around 3,500 of them being killed in Baltic countries. Einsatzgruppe D also killed between 2,000 and 2,400 Roma on the territory under its jurisdiction.[16]. In the report by that Einsatzgruppe dated the 8th of April 1942, they proudly claimed that up until that moment in the Crimea 92,000 Jews, Crimeans and Roma were killed and that in the entire peninsula there is not one Roma left.[17]

15 Michael Zimmermann, *The Wehrmacht and the National Socialist persecution of the Gypsies*, in Romani studies, vol. 11, no. 2/2001, pp. 111–112

16 Michael Zimmermann, *The National Socialist*..., p. 201

17 Guenter Lewy, *The Nazi persecution of the Gypsies*, Oxford University Press, New York, 2000, p. 121

In the Soviet Union, the nomadic Roma were regarded as dangerous primarily because of their movement across war territories, where they were able to convey important information and act as "spies". The Roma nomads which Einsatzgruppen came across were therefore treated as enemies and killed:[18] even though unlike Jews and communists, at least in that moment, they didn't belong to the category of Germany's arch-enemies. The difference between nomads and those able to prove permanent residence was based on the very idea that nomads could be a threat due to espionage. A similar concept and differentiation of those categories of Roma was also applied in the occupied Serbia.

It was this stereotypical attitude concerning Roma "spies" that was the reason for the first mass deportation in May 1940 from north-western parts of the Reich in the lead-up to the attack against France.[19] In a way, France was ahead of the Third Reich in solving the "Gypsy issue", at least temporarily. Two months before Marshal Petain signed the capitulation on the 17th of June 1940, the prefects received instructions whereby a rounding up and imprisonment of the Roma[20] was to follow. In numerous concentration camps 3,000 French Roma were interned.[21]

It was not until July 1942 that the Ministry for the Occupied Eastern Territories deliberated on the order that all Roma, regardless of whether they were nomads or permanent residents, must be made equal with Jews. However, for reasons unknown to this day, after a year the decision was partly changed and instead of extermination of the Roma, it was proposed that they instead be interned. It was not until the 15th of November 1943 that the final text of the order was issued, in which a differentiation between the Roma remained, but according to which they were to be treated the same way, regardless of

18 *Ibid*, p. 118

19 Michael Zimmermann, *The Wehrmacht...*, pp. 115-116

20 Christian Bernadac, *ibid*., pp. 40-41. On pages 44-47, the author published the decree dated 6 April 1940 which forbids the movement of nomads during war operations and prescribes forced lodging for them under police supervision.

21 Denis Peschanski, *The Gypsies in the Upheaval*, in *Roma and Sinti. Under-Studied Victims of Nazism. Symposium Proceedings*, USHMM, Washington D.C., 2002, pp. 55-56

whether they are traveling Roma or "Mischlinge", and they were to be made equal with Jews.[22]

Despite this, because of the chaotic and incoherent Nazi policy towards the Roma, many had already become victims of "the final solution". In January 1942, the first Roma were gassed at the concentration camp at Chelmno. The victims were Austrian Roma, who had earlier been deported to the Łódź ghetto. In nearby Latvia, an important role was played by the special quisling squad under the command of Viktors Arājs, which was killing Roma and Jews.[23] As early as the 4th of December 1941, the Reichskommissar for Baltic countries issued the command whereby the Roma were made equal with Jews, since they represent a twofold threat: as carriers of dangerous diseases, especially typhoid, and as disobedient elements which don't listen to German orders and refuse to take up useful jobs. Also, they became the subject of serious suspicion that they were working as agents against Germany.[24]

In that same period in Serbia, male Roma, together with male Jews, were the victims of mass executions applied by German occupation forces as retaliation for partisan combat, whereas women and children, at least from Belgrade, were interned at the concentration camp in Sajmište.

In his journal, Himmler wrote on the 20 of April 1942 that the extermination of Roma should be discontinued everywhere. The question arises as to why he did this and what was the significance of this command, considering that the killing continued all the way up until the end of the war. According to some historians, Himmler's order was connected to the release of 292 Roma from Sajmište, while others consider these two things unrelated, since release of the Roma from Sajmište had started earlier, while killing those from concentration camps began as early as March of that same year.[25]

22 Guenter Lewy, *ibid*., p. 127
23 *Ibid*., p. 123
24 *Ibid*., pp. 123–124
25 Gilad Margalit, *ibid*., p. 207

In September 1942, Goebbels decided that "the asocial life of Jews and Gypsies should simply be destroyed". Up to that moment, it seems that the idea about total annihilation of Roma had not appeared. On December the 16th 1942, Himmler issued orders that all Roma be deported to Auschwitz. It was a definite turnaround in the policy of persecution against the Roma and commencement of mass deportations, with the aim of their total annihilation.

In Auschwitz, the Roma and the Sinti were interned in a separate section of the camp, in the so-called "Gypsy camp" (Zigeunerlager) or "Family camp" (Familienlager), separated from other prisoners. It was exactly where Doctor Mengele's laboratories were located, and he performed most of his experiments on imprisoned Roma. Deported Roma were mostly from Germany, Austria, Bohemia, Moravia, Holland, Belgium and northern France, totaling around 23,000. Somewhat over 3,000 survived.[26] In addition to Auschwitz, the Roma suffered in many other death camps, such as Majdanek, Bergen-Belsen, Treblinka, Sobibor and Ravensbrück.

In collaborating countries: Italy, Romania, Independent State of Croatia

It was not just in Germany, that the Roma were victims of special laws; segregation and even genocide took place in all other fascist countries. In this paper, it is important to take into consideration the context of the policy towards the Roma in fascist Italy, i.e. in the country where fascism was born, as well as in neighboring countries to the west and east of Serbia, since that was where genocide reached destructive dimensions.

In continuity with the policy of liberal Italy, in February 1926, fascism introduced the first serious measures against the Roma, who were considered from then on to be foreign citizens and, due to their life-style, a peril to the security and hygiene of the country. In an order sent to all counties, the Ministry of Internal Affairs prescribed that at border crossings all Roma caravans should be prevented from entry,

26 Guenter Lewy, *ibid*., pp. 26–27

regardless of whether their passengers own passports and regular documents or not. Furthermore, it was prescribed that all Roma caravans that are already present in Italy should be dispatched to border crossings as soon as possible. Italian embassies were ultimately ordered to stop issuing visas for these "undesirable foreigners".[27]

Eleven years later, Chief of Police Arturo Bocchini ordered that all Roma with Italian citizenship be rounded up in designated places and be kept under control. The reasons indicated, at first glance, seem motivated by the similar social stereotypes about the Roma which were present almost throughout Europe: in particular, that the most severe crimes perpetrated in north-eastern border regions, in nature and manner of being committed, could be attributed to the Roma.[28]

During this period, the influence of the growing racist view of the Roma in National Socialist Germany was also felt in Italian fascism. Although race laws adopted in 1938 related solely to Jews, in fascist newspapers displaying views closer to biological racism, the "Gypsy race" was also reflected on: nomadism and criminality were considered racial characteristics of Roma and Sinti.[29] Despite the fact that their Aryan origin had been recognized, their inferior psychological and moral characteristics were considered dangerous to the purity of the Italian race.[30] In the magazine *La difesa della Razza* (Protection of the Race), known for its "scientific" approach to analysis and glorification of the Aryan, but also the Italian race, the issue of Roma was presented as a problem of poisoning true European blood.[31]

27 The document is published online at www.porrajmos.it, last accessed: 21 March 2014

28 Paola Trevisan, *The internment of Italian Sinti in the province of Modena during fascism: From ethnographic to archival research*, in Romani studies, vol. 23, no. 2/2013, p. 143

29 Renato Semizzi, *Gli Zingari*, in Rassegna di clinica, terapia e scienze affini, XXXVIII, no. 1/1939, pp. 66–67.

30 *Ibid*., pp. 72-73.

31 Guido Landra, *Il problema dei meticci in Europa*, in La difesa della Razza, no. 2/1940, pp. 11–15

In the lead-up to Italy entering the war, on the 11th of September 1940, Bocchini ordered the internment of resident Roma and Sinti, because of "their innate tendency towards crime, due to inability to oversee them otherwise, as well as due to the possibility that there are elements among them who will organize antinational activities".[32] Places of forced containment and concentration camps for Roma and Sinti were organized throughout Italy, most of all in Sardinia.[33]

Scant publications on the relation of Italian fascism towards the Roma do not provide information about the fate of those Roma who were on the territory controlled by the Italian Social Republic; a puppet state proclaimed after the capitulation of Italy in 1943, in the north of Apennine peninsula. Considering the fact that, in this puppet state many regulations were in force similar to those in the Third Reich and that the fate of many Jew residents was sealed in death camps across occupied Europe, it is not difficult to assume that many Roma also suffered there.

On the territory of Croatia, Bosnia-Herzegovina and Srem, in April 1941, the Independent State of Croatia (NDH) was proclaimed under the leadership of Ante Pavelić and the Ustachi movement, whose ideology propagated the idea about ethnically pure Croatia and saw, in National Socialism and in the Third Reich, the model to be adhered to in action. Consequently, the "Aryan" Croatian people were to take on a new role in the Balkans, as well as throughout Europe. Fanatic Catholicism was also an integral part of Ustachi ideology, which resulted in participation of part of the local Catholic priesthood in carrying out racial policies and propagating Ustachi principles.[34] Since the very beginning, it was clear, as openly said by Ustachi adherents, that a

32 The document is published online at www.porrajmos.it, last accessed: 21st of March 2014

33 Mirella Karpati, *La politica fascista verso gli Zingari in Italia*, in Lacio Drom. Rivista bimestrale di studi zingari, no. 2–3/1984, pp. 41–47. The author published several testimonies of the Roma who had been in those concentration camps.

34 For more on this, cf.: Marco Aurelio Rivelli, *Le génocide occulté: État indépendant de Croatie, 1941–1945*, L'Age d'Homme, Losanna, 1998; Viktor Novak, *Magnum Crimen. Pola vijeka klerikalizma u Hrvatskoj*, Nakladni zavod Hrvatske, Zagreb,

confrontation would be necessary with other national elements, who made up almost half of the population of the NDH itself. The biggest problem, in the eyes of Ustachi, were Serbs, of which there were almost two million, around 40,000 Jews, as well as between 26,000 and 40,000 Roma, as opposed to three and a half million Croats, 150,000 Volksdeutsche and 800,000 Muslims, who were counted as Croatian peoples by the Ustachi.

Since the very proclamation of NDH, basic anti-Semitic and anti-Roma laws were introduced into the new legislative system that had been in force in the Third Reich. Adapting them to the local situation, the Ustachi also expanded them to a third racial category which was, in a way, meant to be eradicated from the "pure Croatian living space", meaning – the Serbs. On the 30th of April 1941, the "Legal Decree on Racial Origins" and "Legal Decree on the Protection of Aryan Blood and the Honour of the Croatian People" were adopted, regulating the social status of Jews, Roma, and subsequently Serbs.

In the Law on racial origins, whereby the Croatian people were defined as Aryan, it was stipulated that "for the purposes of this legal decree, a person shall be deemed a Gypsy if he is the descendant of two or more ancestors twice removed from Gypsies according to race",[35] and the Law on protection of blood banned entry into marriage, i.e. "mixing" between Aryans and non-Aryans.[36]

During the month of May, a series of other decrees were issued against Serbs, Jews and Roma, which led to their complete separation from the Croatian national body. Unlike Germany, in that same period, the first mass murders of Serbs started, as well as the founding of a network of concentration camps, where alongside Serbs, certain categories of Jews were also interned. It was during that period that the first death camp was founded near the town of Gospić, at the lo-

1948; Stella Alexander, *The tryple myth: a life of archibishop Alojzije Stepinac*, East European Monographs, Boulder 1987

35 *Narodne novine*, no. 4, 17 April 1941

36 *Ibid.*

cality Jadovno, which, within four months, together with other linked subcamps in Gospić and Pag island, took the lives of around 40,000 people; the vast majority being Serbs.[37] In August 1941, due to the re-occupation of the region where the camp was located by the Italian army, the genocidal policy against Serbs and Jews was continued by the Ustachi at Jasenovac. In that village, just a few hours away from the capital of Zagreb, a new death camp was built in which, during its existence, until the end of the war, over 130,000 people met their death.[38]

Extermination of Roma population, just like in the case of Serbs and Jews, was carried out by Ustachi completely autonomously and independently of German genocidal endeavors in other parts of Europe. On the 19th of May 1942, Ustachi authorities issued the command to all territorial units to "round up all Gypsies on the territory of all districts and turn them over to district areas which will treat the Gypsies according to the issued order". Regular army, i.e. "Home Guards", helped in that task, which ultimate goal was sending all Roma to Jasenovac camp.[39] At the end of that same month, according to the command by the Ministry of Internal Affairs, (and as suggested by certain representatives of Muslims), the Roma of Islamic faith were exempted from that order, and were to be considered "Aryans" from that mo-

37 On the camp Jadovno, cf.: Đuro Zatezalo, *Jadovno – sistem ustaških logora*, Muzej Žrtava Genocida, Belgrade, 2007

38 The concentration camp Jasenovac has been the subject of severe disputes not only in Croatian but also in Serbian historiography for two decades. On Jasenovac, cf.: Antun Miletić, *Koncentracioni logor Jasenovac 1941-1945. Dokumenta*, vol. I and II (1986), vol. III (1987), vol. IV (2007), Narodna knjiga-Gambit, Beograd-Jagodina; Egon Berger, *44 mjeseca u Jasenovcu*, Grafički zavod Hrvatske, Zagreb, 1966; Jaša Almuli, *Jevreji i Srbi u Jasenovcu*, Službeni glasnik, Belgrade, 2009; Nataša Mataušić, *Jasenovac 1941-1945. Logor smrti i radni logor*, Jasenovac-Zagreb, 2003 and by the same author *Jasenovac, fotomonografija* (Jasenovac, photo monograph), Spomen područje Jasenovac, Jasenovac-Zagreb, 2008; Dragan Cvetković, *Stradanje civila Nezavisne države Hrvatske u logoru Jasenovac*, in Tokovi istorije, no. 4-2007, pp. 153–168

39 Narcisa Lengel-Krizman, *Prilog proučavanju terora u takozvanoj NDH: sudbina Roma 1941-1945. godine*, in Časopis za suvremenu povijest, no. 1/1986, pp. 32-33

ment onwards[40]. Namely, as early as during the year 1941, Muslim religious leaders organized a special committee for defense of Muslim Roma: despite that, not all were saved.[41]

All other Roma were transported mainly by trains to concentration camps in larger or smaller groups. Since the daily transported crowds were too numerous for the camp to accept all, Ustachi grouped them in the nearby village of Uštice, which was named the "Gypsy concentration camp". Nonetheless, soon it became clear that not even this would suffice, so new arrivals were taken directly to Gradina to be killed where the largest execution field connected to Jasenovac camp was located.[42] At one moment, the procedure of liquidating the Roma resembled the selection typical for German death camps, since the arrivals were divided into two groups: the first, consisting of women, children, the elderly and infirm, was immediately sent into death, while men capable of work were detained for a certain time in a separate part of the camp, in the direst conditions, and used for certain tasks. In July, however, even the men were all killed, so that no Roma at all remained in Jasenovac, apart from some individual exceptions.[43] During that short period, from April until July 1942, between 22,000 and 28,000 Roma were systematically killed.[44] For the vast majority, over 22,000 of them, there identity has been determined.[45]

To the east of Serbia, terrifying genocide against the Roma was also unfolding. Just like in the case of NDH, Romania was an inde-

40 *Ibid*., p. 34

41 Marko Biondich, The Persecution of Roma-Sinti in Croatia 1941-45, in *Roma and Sinti. Under-Studied Victims of Nazism. Symposium Proceedings*, USHMM, Washington D.C., 2002, pp. 37-38

42 Narcisa Lengel-Krizman, *Prilog proučavanju*..., pp. 37-38

43 *Ibid*., pp. 38-39

44 Narcisa Lengel Krizman, *Genocid nad Romima*, Spomen-područje Jasenovac, Jasenovac-Zagreb, 2003, p. 41

45 Rajko Đurić and Antun Miletić, *ibid*., p. 131. The authors published a list of Roma victims at the end of the book.

pendent country so the persecution of the Roma was the result of an internal decision.

In September 1940, after Romania was forced to yield a large part of its territory to the Soviet Union, Hungary and Bulgaria, King Carol appointed general Antonescu his Prime Minister.

Shortly, Antonescu established a regime with clear fascist traits and signed an alliance with Germany. The regime immediately showed its anti-Semitic face. Between 1941 and 1942, numerous laws and regulations against Jews were adopted; already near the end of June 1941, Romanian authorities carried out a massacre at the town of Iaşi, where, within two days, over 13,000 Jews were murdered because of alleged subversion and support of the Soviet Union. That same year, while Romanian troops were making their way towards the Caucasus, in a joint campaign with Germany, Italy and other fascist forces against the Soviet Union, Antonescu ordered the deportation of Jews from Bessarabia and Bukovina to the recently occupied Transnistria. Many of them were killed just before deportation, while numerous others died in camps formed specifically for them. Up until the year 1942, ostensibly because of retaliation for the attack on Romanian troops, over 100,000 Jews were killed in various other attrocities; in the city of Odessa alone, near the end of October 1941, over 25,000 Jews were killed.

It is calculated that in these bloodsheds, as well as at concentration camps in Transnistra, around 270,000 Jews met their death.[46]

The Romanian fascist regime, however, also carried out a special policy towards the Roma. In his speeches, as early as 1941, General Antonescu proposed severe measures against the Roma who lived in larger Romanian cities. His idea was that they should be relocated and rounded up in certain places of residence and kept under control,

46 Raul Hilberg, *La distruzione degli ebrei d'Europa*, Einaudi, Torino, 1999, p. 813. On the Holocaust in Romania, cf.: Radu Ioanid, *The Holocaust in Romania: the destruction of Jews and Gypsies under the Antonescu regime, 1940-1944,* USHMM, Washington D.C., 2000

so that, on the one hand, cities would be "cleaned" from them, while on the other, they could be used as a work-force.[47] In Autumn of that same year, the idea appeared among Romanian authorities that Roma should be deported to Transnistria. For reasons unknown, it was not until several months later that Antonescu paid attention to this. In the year 1942, on the 17th of May, he ordered the registration of all Roma, primarily nomads and those who had had problems with the police or who lacked sustenance. The figures show that, in 1942, the territories under Romanian control were populated by roughly 210,000 Roma, not counting nomads. The exact number could not, however, be determined, since many had lived together with Romanians, in the same villages, with the same customs and had started families together.[48]

Motivated by reasons of "public safety", but in actuality due to racial persecution, between 25,000 and 26,000 Roma were deported from different regions of Romania to Transnistria.[49] That region was selected allegedly because it needed an agricultural "work-force", as well as due to the fact that Marshal Antonescu knew that Romania didn't have ambitions for its permanent annexation, i.e. that Romanian forces would abandon it after the war.[50]

The Roma were deported by trains, while each person was given a basic quantity of bread for the five-day journey. When it comes to personal belongings, they were allowed to bring only the bare necessities. Their property was confiscated.

47 M. Benjamin Thorne, *Assimilation, invisibility, and the eugenic turn in the „Gypsy question" in Romanian society*, 1938-1942, in Romani studies, vol. 21, no. 2/2011, pp. 194-196

48 Michelle Kelso, *Gypsy Deportations from Romania to Transnistria 1942-44*, in Karola Fings and Donald Kenrick (eds.), *The Gypsies During the Second World War: In the shadow of the swastika*, vol. II, University of Hertfordshire Press, Hartfield, 1999, p. 98

49 Viorel Achim, *Romanian Memory of the Persecution of Roma*, in *Roma and Sinti. Under-Studied Victims of Nazism. Symposium Proceedings*, USHMM, Washington D.C., 2002, p. 59

50 Michelle Kelso, *ibid*., p. 100

The first transport of groups already began in June 1942. They contained all the registered Roma nomads, of which there were about 11,400. The second transported groups arrived to Transnistria in September 1942 and contained "the most dangerous" Roma, around 13,000 of the permanent residents. Other groups were targeted for transportation in the Spring of 1943, but wartime circumstances prevented this; consequently just several hundreds of Roma were taken away.[51]

After deportations, protests of many people followed, among which were representatives of political parties, as well as inhabitants of villages whose Roma had been designated for deportation. Nevertheless, the protests pertained solely to deportation of Roma permanent residents, whereas nobody stood up for the nomads.[52] Among the Roma themselves, there was also a protest: in September 1942, Gheorghe Niculescu, president of the General Union of Romanian Roma, sent a plea to President Antonescu for the measures of arrest and deportation to Transnistria to bypass the permanent residents who are propertied and employed, so that the measures be applied solely in the case of nomads.[53]

In the midst of inhumane living conditions, poverty and approaching winter, many Roma had already died by the end of 1942 from hunger and disease. During 1943, many attempted to return to their homes by any means, while the unsustainable situation for the local population, as well as the presumption that Germany will lose the war, led the Romanian authorities to allow certain categories of Roma to legally leave Transnistria.[54]

The survivors returned home in the Summer of 1944, several weeks before dictator Antonescu was overthrown. According to avail-

51 M. Benjamin Thorne, *ibid*., p. 201; Michelle Kelso, *ibid*., p. 110

52 Viorel Achim, *ibid*., pp. 59–60

53 *Ibid*., pp. 60-61

54 Michelle Kelso, *ibid*., pp. 126–128

able data collected by the authorities after the war, of the total number of those deported, around 6,000 survived.[55]

Estimates concerning the numbers of Roma killed in World War II fall in the range between 219,600 to over 900,000.[56] Analyzing the data which were published, often solely on the basis of estimates, by historians Kenrick and Puxon, the greatest percentage of fatalities was in the Independent State of Croatia, where, out of a total of 28,500 Roma who had lived there in 1939, 28,000 were killed. In Romania, 36,000 out of 300,000 were killed; in Germany 15,000 out of 20,000; in Italy 1,000 out of 25,000; in France 15,000 out of 40,000 etc.; in total 219,700 were killed throughout Europe. According to the same estimates, in Serbia 12,000 Roma were killed out of a total of 60,000 who lived in the country in 1939.[57] Christian Bernadac evaluated the total number of Roma killed in Serbia to be 16,000.[58] It is not clear, however, whether that number relates to entire Serbia, parts of which were under Ustachi and Hungarian control during World War II, or just to Nedić's Serbia. According to other estimates, 150,000 Roma had lived in Serbia, whereas between 1,000 and 10–20,000 were killed.[59]

55 *Ibid*., p. 130

56 Ibid. The lowest figure was provided by Kenrick and Puxon, *ibid*., pp. 183–184, whereas the highest by Zimmermann, ibid., pp. 248-292

57 Christian Bernadac, ibid., p. 409

58 Ibid, p. 411

59 Ibid. The author quotes estimates given by Zimmermann, ibid., p. 258, and Kenrick and Puxon, ibid., p. 119

III. GENOCIDE AGAINST THE ROMA IN SERBIA

The April War and instatement of authority

By bombing main cities of the then Kingdom of Yugoslavia and especially its capital, Belgrade, Germans and their allies commenced war operations on the 6th of April, which, in the span of several days, led to the occupation and division of the entire Yugoslav space. Italian troops took possession of the east coast of the Adriatic, part of Slovenia and Montenegro, whereas west Macedonia and large part of Kosovo was annexed by Albania. On the territory of Croatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina and today's north-western Serbia (Srem), a fascist entity was created under the name Independent State of Croatia. At the same time, Hungarians annexed part of Croatian territory and a sizeable portion of Vojvodina, i.e. Bačka, whereas Bulgarians occupied central and eastern Macedonia, as well as south-eastern Serbia. Central Serbia, with Belgrade as its centre, i.e. from the rivers Sava and Dunav in the north to Kosovska Mitrovica and Niš in the south, was occupied by Germans with the intention of establishing direct control of the region, whereas Banat was taken over by the German national minority or Volksdeutsche.[1] At the time, that territory, i.e. the territory under direct control of German and Volksdeutsche authorities, was populated by 3,773,000 people, of which 3,367,000 were Serbs, 23,000 Croats, 51,000 other Slavic nationalities, 102,000 Hungarians,

1 On the division of Kingdom of Yugoslavia, cf.: Ferdo Čulinović, *Okupatorska podjela Jugoslavije*, Vojnoizdavački zavod, Belgrade, 1970

146,000 Germans, 66,000 Romanians and 18,000 other.[2] Although it is not possible to determine how many Roma lived in Serbia at the time, it can be estimated that there were roughly 60,000,[3] taking into account the fact that in the entire Yugoslavia before the war there were about 300,000 Roma.[4]

Immediately after the capitulation of the Kingdom of Yugoslavia army, an occupational system was established in Serbia. At the head of that apparatus was the Military Commander in Serbia, (*Militärverwaltungskommandant*, later *Bevollmächtigter Kommandierender General in Serbien*): during 1941, that function was held in succession by Generals Hermann Förster, Ludwig von Schröder, Heinrich Danckelmann and Paul Bader.[5] Two headquarters were subordinate to the Military Commander: the Command Headquarters, responsible for tasks of a solely military nature, and Administrative Headquarters, which represented the most significant structure of the entire occupational apparatus. The Administrative Headquarters Chief, SS-Brigadenfuhrer Harald Turner, was in charge of local commands as well, i.e. of Feldkommandantur, Kreiskommandantur, Ortskommandantur and ultimately Platzkommandatur[6].

In cooperation with the Military Commander, but directly accountable to the Reich Security Main Office in Berlin (RSHA), a special Operative Group of Security Police and Security Service or Einsatzgruppe (*Einsatzgruppe der Sicherheitspolizei und des Sicherheitsdiensts für Serbien*, or *EG Sipo und SD*) was active in Serbia, with SS- Standartenführer Wilhelm Fuchs as its head. Within Einsatzgruppe there was Depart-

2 AVII, NdA, 3-1/13-1.

3 Christian Bernadac, *ibid*., p. 409

4 Dragoljub Acković, *Ašunen Romalen!...*, p. 17

5 On the occupational system, cf.: Valter Manošek, *Holokaust u Srbiji. Vojna okupaciona politika i uništavanje Jevreja 1941–1942*, Službeni list SRJ, Belgrade, 2007; Jovan Marjanović, *The German occupation system in Serbia 1941*, Belgrade, 1963; Cristopher Browning, *The Final Solution in Serbia. The Semlin Judenlager. A case study*, in Yad Vashem Studies, XV, 1983, Jerusalem, pp. 55–90

6 Ferdo Čulinović, ibid., pp. 398–402; Cristopher Browning, ibid., pp. 55–56

ment IV – Gestapo, and within it Bureau IV B4 for Jews (and later for the Roma), whose leader was SS-Untersturmführer Fritz Stracke.[7]

The German occupational structure continued to be divided somewhat clumsily into various other apparatuses. The Economic Affairs Department was headed by the Plenipotentiary General for Economy, Franz Neuhausen, whereas the advisory function was performed by the Plenipotentiary of the Third Reich Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Felix Benzler.[8]

According to Harald Turner, (who, it can be concluded, played a very important role in Serbia during the entire year of 1941) the instatement of German authority wasn't sufficient for governing the occupied territory efficiently. In his opinion, Serbian authorities were also necessary, so as to seem, in front of the people, much more acceptable than German authorities; on the other hand, his prior experience in organizing military administrations in western occupied territories, i.e. Belgium, Luxembourg and Holland,[9] showed that, for purely technical reasons – familiarity with the language, culture, customs etc. – it is much more useful to act in cooperation with local authorities than set up direct control over the entire territory, also meaning – the people.

Turner's understanding of the relation between occupational authority and quisling government was based on the concept that governing an occupied country without its own bodies of authority was not possible. It was therefore necessary to form a kind of self-rule structure overseen and advised but also instructed by the occupier.[10] Furthermore, as stated by Harald Turner himself, the first and most important problem after occupation was the lack of "regular state government". Since the king and government had gone abroad, whereas

7 Milan Koljanin, ibid., pp. 22

8 Ibid, p. 24 and p. 32

9 AVII, Military Courts, case Harald Turner and others, 3/III, book 1, Military Administration in Serbia, p. 1

10 AVII, Military Courts, case Harald Turner and others, 3/III, book 1, Military Administration in Serbia, str. 6.

the king was the only one who could appoint ministers and government, "the king's place had to be taken by occupational authority to name ministers and consequently the government".[11]

While the local municipality authorities reorganized themselves and continued with their regular work, Turner decided, as early as the beginning of May, to make up a so-called "commissary government", which would act as a real government in many ways. According to his words, he worked in this manner primarily so that local authorities in the country would "receive their instructions from their own ministries, whose officers were mostly right there".[12]

The appointed head of the commissary government was Milan Aćimović, who was one of the people German authorities trusted, together with City of Belgrade Governor, Dragi Jovanović.

Specifically, Aćimović had already been known in German circles thanks to, on the one hand, his work in the Kingdom of Yugoslavia in the years leading up to the war, and, on the other hand, the fact that in those years he had established close cooperation between Yugoslav and German police. His pro-German, pro-fascist and anticommunist standpoint had also been known. At the time while he was the head of the City of Belgrade Administration, when in 1936 and 1937, repression against communists reached its peak, and every public protest was stifled by way of violence.[13]

As members of the Commissary Government, Aćimović selected people he already knew from political life during the Kingdom of Yugoslavia, especially those ideologically close to himself. Government members were, for instance, former adherents of Milan Stojadinović's

11 AVII, Military Courts, case Harald Turner and others, 3/III, book 1, problems and their solutions, p. 1

12 AVII, Military Courts, case Harald Turner and others, 3/III, book 1, Military Administration in Serbia, str. 7. On restoring the old administrative apparatus, cf.: Milan Borković, *Kontrarevolucija u Srbiji: Kvislinška uprava u 1941–1944*, book 1, Sloboda, Belgrade, 1979, pp. 38–45

13 Branislav Božović, *Uprava i Upravnici grada Beograda: (1839–1944)*, Prosveta, Belgrade, 2010, pp. 101–103; and 203

Yugoslav radical community called Zbor, but also some representatives of the democratic party.[14]

On the 16th of May 1941, Aćimović and other Commissary Government members presented, via a newspaper, the reason for forming the Government and its tasks:

> By the Decision of the Military Commander in Serbia, civilian administration has been established in our country and we have been entrusted with being in charge of certain areas of state administration, with the aim of preserving peace and order as well as for the sake of the quickest possible revival of economy in the country.
>
> Domestic laws remain in force, which our administrative and judicial authorities will abide by, if German military authorities, in the interest of their military security, are not compelled to order that they be temporarily suspended.
>
> We have embarked upon this difficult task with the aim of helping our people and easing their position in this fateful time.
>
> We believe that the entire nation will approve of our decision, since it was in favour of sincere and loyal cooperation with its big neighbour, the German people, with whom it has enjoyed friendship and always kept close economic and cultural ties. The fact that our people have been brought into this position in relation to the German Reich was not the wish of the German Reich, which had always stressed amicable intentions towards our fatherland, nor is it our people's fault, but rather it is the fault of several of their leaders, who drew the people into war without actual need and against their interests.
>
> Resolute that we will devote all our efforts to rebuilding the country, we are aware of the responsibilities and difficulties that lie ahead of us, but we believe that, with the cordial help of all layers of society, those difficulties will be overcome. It is necessary to discard all politicizing and to be aware that a new time is coming when all strengths must be mustered and many sacrifices sustained, so that the country can rise from the rubble in which it has found itself.
>
> The Military Commander has promised us that he will assist us in our future effort willingly and cordially. We are thankful for this promise, as well as for his statement that nothing will be required from us which

14 AJ, 110-102-763, Decision on Determining the Crimes of Occupiers and their Collaborators, Harald Turner, p. 3; Milan Borković, ibid., p. 34

> would oppose our national honour and dignity, that cooperation in the government is being entrusted to us as people of the nation, that our service should be to the country and the people, while being sincere and loyal to the German government. We have given our word that we will act on our own behalf as well as on the behalf of our people. We are thankful for the proper deportment of the German army towards our people, fully convinced that the entire nation feels the same way.
>
> We are therefore addressing the Serbs, to assist us in carrying out the difficult task that lies ahead of us. By helping us, our people will help themselves. We invite our people to go back to their regular work and unconditionally keep the peace and order. We have been presented with an opportunity to steer our country towards new life ourselves, without coercive measures. Let us use that opportunity and accept the proffered hand, with that high national awareness which has graced our people throughout their history.[15]

In relation to occupational authorities, Aćimović's understanding of Commissary Government had a different and more explicit connotation. Expressing his satisfaction due to the new situation, he clearly expressed hope that his government will be the nucleus of a new Serbian state, which would be an integral and loyal part of the new National Socialist world order.

Already in June, the Commissary Government tried to act as the real government of an independent state, demanding, for example, from occupational authorities, the expansion of Serbian borders at the expense of the just proclaimed NDH, as well as Kosovo and Macedonia. Shortly, Turner himself let the commissaries know that they had not been appointed heads of government to deal with such political issues, but rather to act in accord with the needs and orders of the German authorities. In that sense, alongside the organization of accepting Serbian refugees from NDH, reorganization of administrative apparatus, revival of the economy and other key tasks, one of the first fields in which the occupational and quisling authorities showed perfect synergy in action was the adoption of anti-Jewish and anti-Roma measures.[16]

15 *Zbornik NOR*, vol. I, book 2, doc. 89

16 More on the Commissary Government of Milan Aćimović: Milan Borković, ibid.

Anti-Jewish and anti-Roma legislature

Side by side with the strengthening of the occupational apparatus, which above all meant the creation of administrative-police and military apparatuses, German authorities introduced into Serbia a part of the legislative system that had already been in force in other occupied regions. This action was primarily necessary so that the population, which had lost its state and political head within several days, could calmly be placed under the auspices of new masters and continue their lives without further substantial change. The second aspect of this new legislature was the passing of all those ordinances and regulations applied by German military and police authorities, thus expressing loyalty to National Socialism. During the first days of occupation, one of the German authorities' concerns was to clearly let it be known to Belgrade citizens, as well as to the inhabitants of entire Serbia, that local Jews were now deprived of the rank of human being as well as that special laws will apply to them. Similarly, from the very beginning it was clear that they would be the victims of economic plundering, physical exploitation, abuse and maltreatment. Germans waited just a few days from entry into Belgrade before issuing the first regulation that pertained to Jews only: on the 16th of April, all Jews were ordered to sign up at a designated place by no later than the 19th of April, for the purposes of registration, with a death penalty envisaged for those who failed to do so. Reactions were probably different, but the vast majority of Jewish population nevertheless reported to the Serbian police, which was in charge of the registration. It was then that the Holocaust began for them: they received yellow badges with the word "Jude" on them and were assigned to forced labour, whilst their property became the subject of the occupier's economic interests.

During the months of April and May, legal regulations were adopted concerning Jews, which, according to the model of the Nuremberg laws, completely separated Jews from other citizens, practically ghettoizing them in their own city, although freedom of movement through-

out the city itself, at least in that period, was not entirely denied them. They were forbidden to use public transport and visit public places, they were not allowed to go to the open market before ten in the morning, they had to queue at every fountain and wait for everyone else to finish drinking before they could drink, electrical appliances were taken from them and their shops were placed under commissary rule; which primarily meant expropriation. Finally, they were compelled to set up their own healthcare institutions, since neither as doctors nor patients were they allowed to set foot in the public hospitals. Germans controlled the Jewish community, on the one hand, through the Serbian police which was in charge of applying the new legal regulations, as well as punishing disobedient elements, while on the other hand, through Jewish community representatives, i.e. through a special body consisting of top-ranking representatives of the Jewish community, which, just like any other Judenrat in Eastern Europe, executed German commands and took care of the entire Jewish community.

Once everything had been defined, the new legislative system that had been introduced by the occupiers in Serbia fixated on another category of people, which was incompatible with the new order, according to Nazi ideology, that is – the Roma. On the 20th of May 1941, the Military Commander in Serbia issued the Regulation on the Press in Serbia. Among other things, it says the following:

> §2 A permit for performing the editorial profession may be issued solely if the person is:
>
> 1. Not a Jew or a Gypsy or if he is not married to a Jewish or Gypsy woman;
> 2. If he is older than 21;
> 3. If he is not limited in his professional capacity;
> 4. If he has been professionally educated and;
> 5. If his personality is such that it provides assurance whereby he can fulfil the duties of an editor[17].

17 *Nove naredbe i Uredbe*, "Novo vreme", 24 May 1941, p. 6

Two days later, i.e. on the 22nd of May, the Military Commander issued three regulations concerning work in the field of arts and publishing: Regulation on theatre management, Regulation on the operation of cinemas and film rentals, and Regulation on cabarets and variétés. The content of these regulation are similar, especially when it comes to the Jews and Roma, who are mentioned in certain items, so that any type of work in these activities and enterprises is forbidden to them. In the first Regulation, that pertains to theatres, opera and ballet, the following is stipulated:

> §2. [...] Jews and Gypsies, as well as persons married to Jews and Gypsies, cannot obtain a permit for managing an enterprise from §1.
>
> §3. Applications for a permit must be submitted in the German language in three copies to the Military Commander in Serbia. The applications are to contain the following data:
> [...]
>
> 2. The applicant's written statement that neither he nor his lawful wife is a Jew or Gypsy;
> [...]
>
> 8. The applicant's written statement that neither his deputies nor their wives are Jews or Gypsies.
>
> §5[...] Jews and Gypsies, as well as persons married to Jews or Gypsies, shall not work or be employed at enterprises in accordance with §1[18].

These were the first regulations in which specific reference was made to "Gypsies" as it was made to Jews. However, just several days later, specifically on the 30th of May, the Military Commander issued "The Regulation concerning Jews and Gypsies", which definitively regulated their status within Serbia. The regulation consists of 22 articles and it is important to quote it in its entirety so as to understand the position of Roma and Jews at that moment in history. The first 17 articles relate expressly to Jews:

18 *Nove naredbe i Uredbe*, "Novo vreme", 25 May 1941, p. 6

On the grounds of authorization issued by the Military Force Commander-in-chief, I hereby order the following:

I Jews

§1. For the purposes of already issued regulations and those that will be issued by the Supreme Military Commander for Serbia, a Jew is deemed to be any person who descends from at least three Jewish ancestors (implying parents of father and mother). The ancestors shall be deemed Jews if by race they are full-blooded Jews or belong or belonged to the Judaic faith. Jews shall also be deemed to be those Jews who are half-breeds between one or two Jewish ancestors (implying parents of father and mother) who belonged, after the 5th of April 1941, to the community of Judaic faith or joined it. In addition, Jewish half-breeds shall also be deemed Jews, who are married to a Jewish woman or who enter into marriage with a Jewish woman.

§2. Jews must report within two weeks after the issuing of the present regulation to Serbian police authorities in charge of reporting, to whose precinct their place of residence or temporary dwelling belongs, so as to be entered into the lists of Jews. Reporting by the household head is sufficient for the entire family.

§3. It is the Jews' duty to wear insignia. They must wear a yellow band on the left arm with the word "Jevrejin" ("Jew").

§4. Jews cannot be public servants. Their removal from institutions must be carried out by Serbian authorities immediately.

§5. Jews shall not be allowed to hold the practice of lawyer, doctor, dentist, veterinary and pharmacist.

Jewish lawyers who had had their own practice are not to appear before the court or authorities as representatives. Jewish doctors and dentists will have their practice taken away, unless it deals with treatment of Jews only. At the office entrance, a notice must be put up stating Jewish origin and ban on treatment of Aryans. The operation of Jewish veterinaries and pharmacies is prohibited.

§6. For the purposes of repairing war-induced damage, Jews of both genders aged 14 to 60 shall be sent to forced labour. The number of Jewish participants in this type of work shall be decided by County command headquarters in charge or those departments appointed by the Supreme Military Commander for Serbia.

§7. Jews are banished from theatres, cinemas, all entertainment venues, public baths, sports events and public fairs. Visiting inns is also forbidden to Jews, unless certain facilities have received permission from the Supreme Military Commander for Serbia, allowing access to Jews. These facilities must be designated by a particular mark.

§8. Jews are not allowed to own educational or entertainment institutions or to be employees thereof.

§9. Jews who had escaped from occupied Serbian territory are forbidden to return. No Jew is allowed to leave his place of permanent or temporary residence without approval by the County command headquarters in charge. Every Jew must remain in his own apartment from 8 p.m. until 6 a.m.

§10. All radio sets and material owned permanently or temporarily by Jews must immediately be reported to the County command headquarters via the municipality in charge of their permanent or temporary place of residence.

§11. Jews and their spouses must, within 10 days from issuing of the present regulation report to the County command headquarters, via the municipality in charge of their permanent or temporary place of residence, their property and its accurate location. It is forbidden to utilize property without charge or with a reimbursement. Arrangements agreed on a legal basis that are contrary to this regulation are to be annulled. The sole exemption from this ban are expenses for procuring the basic life supplies.

§12. Jewish economic enterprises or those enterprises which continued to be Jewish after the 5th of April 1941 must be reported to the County command headquarters in charge by the 15th of June 1941. The County command headquarters which shall be deemed in charge are those in which county the persons reside while legal entities have their legal seats. This also holds true for Jewish economic enterprises with their legal seat outside the occupied territory, applying to that part of the enterprise's operation which is carried out on occupied territory. The registration must contain: a) names, legal seat of enterprise owner or lessee, specifying the circumstances on the basis of which the enterprise is Jewish or continued to be Jewish up to the 5th of April 1941; b) in the case of enterprises that are no longer Jewish, the circumstances why these premises are no longer valid: c) type of enterprise according to the type of goods sold, made or managed, specifying the major

item; d) branch offices, workshops and auxiliary shops; e) turnover according to latest taxation; f) value of owned warehoused goods, existing quantities of raw materials, real estate and money.

§13. For the purposes of the present regulation, an economic enterprise shall be deemed to be every enterprise that participates in production of goods, processing of goods, alteration of goods, and management, regardless of the legal form of the enterprise and regardless of entry into the registry. This also includes banks, insurance companies, notary's offices, exchange offices and real estate enterprises. An enterprise is Jewish if its owners or lessees are: a) Jews, or b) societies whose one member is a Jew, or c) limited liability societies whose one third of members are Jews or over one third of the shares are in the hands of Jewish members, or whose one manager is a Jew, or more than one third of the supervisory board members are Jews, or d) shareholder societies whose board of directors chairman or one of the deputies is a Jew, or over one third of the board of directors members are Jews. The Plenipotentiary General for Economy in Serbia can proclaim an enterprise Jewish if it is under primarily Jewish influence.

§14. All Jewish economic enterprises as well as all legal entities that are not economic enterprises and that have over one third of Jews among members or in the management, must report, by the 15th of July 1941, to the County command headquarters in charge: their own or entrusted stocks, shares, secret participation in economic enterprises, as well as real estate owned and rights to property. The County command headquarters which shall be deemed in charge of accepting applications are those in which county the enterprise has its legal seat or in which the real estate is located that is subject to this regulation.

§15. Legal operations from the time after the 5th of April 1941, based on the usage of property of persons mentioned in §11 and §14, can be annulled by the Plenipotentiary General for Economy in Serbia.

§16. For Jewish economic enterprises, a commissary-director may be appointed and provisions of the Regulation on managing operations (Regulations sheet no. 2, page 19) are applied to him. Until the commissary-director is appointed, the director must manage operations tidily.

§17. The County command headquarters can order that governors of cities and municipalities with many Jews appoint one Jew to whom the execution of measures would be transferred.

The following three articles relate to the Roma:

> II Gypsies
>
> §18. Gypsies are made equal to Jews. Suitable provisions of the present Regulation apply to them.
>
> §19. A Gypsy is considered to be that person who descends from at least three Gypsy ancestors. Gypsy half-breeds are made equal to Gypsies, having descended from one or two Gypsy ancestors as well as those married to a Gypsy woman or who enter into marriage with a Gypsy woman.
>
> §20. Gypsies shall be marked by wearing armbands which must also be yellow and bear the word "Ciganin" ("Gypsy"). Based on applications, Gypsies are to be registered into Gypsy lists.

Ultimately, the remaining articles pertain to duties of Serbian authorities and punitive measures:

> III Duties of Serbian authorities
>
> §21. Serbian authorities are responsible for carrying out orders stipulated in this Regulation.
>
> IV Punitive measures
>
> §22. Whoever objects to the orders stipulated in this Regulation shall be punished by prison and monetary fine, or either of the two punishments. In severe cases, he shall be punished by hard labour or death.
>
> Belgrade, 30th of May 1941
> Military Commander in Serbia[19]

German authorities issued these orders and from then on Serbian authorities executed them. Amongst their subsequent duties Serbian authorities were required to keep Jews and Roma legally distant from other Serbian citizens: it was a role they accepted and executed seriously, thus becoming an integral and necessary part of the racial persecution of the Jewish and Roma populations.

19 *Naredba koja se odnosi na Jevreje i Cigane (Regulation that concerns Jews and Gypsies)*, "Novo vreme", 2 June 1941, p. 2

In the subsequent period, alongside the expulsion of all remaining Jewish employees and from now on Roma too, from state apparatuses, the final registration of entire Jewish and Roma population was conducted. In Belgrade, up until the 13th of July, 9,435 Jews and 3,050 "Gypsies" registered themselves.[20] In other cities, registration was also carried out thoroughly: according to the census by municipality authorities. The results of this census showed for instance, 38 Jews and 652 "Gypsies" living in Obrenovac,[21] around 1,500 Roma and 80 Jews marked and living in Leskovac in June 1941,[22] in Užice 56 "Gypsies" and 9 Jews were recorded;[23] in Ćuprija there lived about 200 domestic, but also around 300 Russian Roma (60 families), the vast majority of whom moved to Belgrade during the last days (just 5 families remained in Ćuprija).[24] In Aleksinac, 238 Roma were registered, in Mladenovac 120, in Jasenica county 788, of which 190 were in Smederevska Palanka, and 1,943 in Požarevac.[25]

During the same period, specifically up to the 14th of June, Jews and Roma submitted applications about their property. In the capital city, the municipality legal department entered all the data in a separate "List of Jews and spouses of Jews who submitted applications about their property to the municipality of Belgrade, in accordance with the regulation issued by the Military Commander in Serbia dated the 30th of May 1941". The fact that Roma are not mentioned in that title, although there are about 150 on the list (from a total of 3,474 names,

20 Milan Koljanin, ibid., p. 23

21 *U Obrenovcu ima 38 Jevreja i 652 Ciganina (In Obrenovac there are 38 Jews and 652 Gypsies)*, "Novo vreme", 20 June 1941, p. 4

22 *Priraštaj stanovništva u Leskovcu (Population accretion in Leskovac)*, "Novo vreme", 28th of June 1941, p. 4

23 *Užice, grad sa 14.364 stanovnika.... i samo 9 Jevreja (Užice, a city with 14,364 inhabitants....and just 9 Jews)* , "Novo vreme", 18th July 1941, p. 4

24 *Ćuprijski Cigani već dobijaju trake (Gypsies of Ćuprija are already getting armbands)*, "Novo vreme", 21 June 1941, p. 4

25 Olivera Milosavljević, *Potisnuta istina. Kolaboracija u Srbiji 1941–1944 (The repressed truth. Collaboration in Serbia 1941–1944)*, The Helsinki Committee for Human Rights, Belgrade, 2006, pp. 146–147, 151

along with about twenty who were added subsequently),[26] speaks, once again, about one of the main differences between the persecution of Jews and Roma. It partly explains the great attention paid in the regulation dated the 30th of May primarily to Jews: economic plundering of real estate as well as movable property belonging to the Jewish community, who were allegedly to be regarded as an ordinary citizen group in the class sense, i.e. that they should not be given special attention in the economic life of the then Serbia, was a very important point in the process of exterminating Jews, whereas in the case of Roma, who had mostly been the poorest layer of urban population, it was known, to put it bluntly, that there wouldn't be any economic profit.

In the month of June, additional measures were adopted against the Roma and Jews, but this time by the Serbian authorities, who had become adapted to the new situation. An example is the provision dated the 19th of June, by way of which the Musicians' Union for Serbia, registered as a section of "Jugoras", the only allowed syndicate, informs musicians who are Jews and Gypsies that their music-related operation is in opposition to the existing rules, thus they won't be allowed to work and that it's pointless to address the union on this issue.[27] In the subsequent period, other anti-Jewish and anti-Roma regulations were issued, but those were mostly addenda to the regulation dated the 30th of May.[28]

Suddenly, on the 11th of July, the Administrative Headquarters Chief Turner issued a regulation redefining the position of Roma. Specifically, in the communique forwarded near the end of that same month by

26 Particular attention has been paid to the significance of that list by Jovanka Veselinović, *Spisak Jevreja i supružnika Jevreja koji su prema naredbi Vojnog zapovednika u Srbiji od 30. maja 1941. godine podneli opštini grada Beograda prijave o imovini*, in Zbornik. Studije, arhivska i memoarska građa o istoriji Jevreja u Beogradu, no. 6/1992, pp. 372-406. In that study, the author also published the integral list.

27 *Iz Jugorasa – Muzičari Jevreji i Cigani*, "Novo vreme", 19 June 1941, p. 3

28 For example, *Uredba o štampanju knjiga i spisa*, 23 July 1941, or addenda.... *Osnovna uredba o Univerzitetu*, 21 October 1941, cf.: Olivera Milosavljević, ibid., pp. 155 and 188

the Serbian Ministry of Internal Affairs to city of Belgrade municipality, as well as probably to other municipalities in Serbia, among other things, it says:

> [...] "The Military Commander in Serbia, by his Act no. 2051-2142/41 dated the 11th of July this year, has communicated the following:
>
> "For the purposes of removing certain ambiguities which have arisen in the implementation of my Regulation on Jews and Gypsies dated the 30 of May 1941, Regulations sheet, p. 84, I hereby order the following:
>
> Serbian citizens of Gypsy descent, who have honest jobs, lead proper lives and whose ancestors had been permanent residents at least since the year 1850 – which needs to be proven – shall not, for the time being, be treated in accordance with §§ 18 to 20 of the abovementioned Regulation. Evidence concerning residence is to be submitted to the municipality mayor in charge, who will confirm it".[29]

Although there is a theoretical possibility that Serbian authorities had affected that decision,[30] since the measures stipulated by the Regulation dated the 30th of May encompassed a large part of the population, (especially in some Serbian towns, despite still not having sufficient gendarmerie and policemen) it is more probable that German authorities themselves assessed it was better not to waste too much energy on the Roma at that moment. According to Turner, the measures stipulated in the Regulation dated the 30th of May should "for the time being" not be applied to those who can prove their permanent residence; from which it could be inferred that the solution to the Roma issue was simply delayed, i.e. divided into two phases.

According to Georg Kiessel, who was Harald Turner's right hand at the time,

> (…) Einsatzgruppe had the task, received from Berlin, of arresting Gypsies on the territory of Serbia. However, the Administrative Headquarters explained to Dr. Fuchs that Berlin's intentions for the

29 The document has been published in Dragoljub Acković, *Romi u Beogradu*..., p. 244

30 Venceslav Glišić, ibid., p. 82

> solution of the Gypsy issue were to arrest travelling Gypsies, not those with permanent residence, who could be considered an integral part of the population to a certain extent. Fuchs respected this and the arrest of Gypsies was not effected.[31]

Shortly, the Subsection for Freemasons, Jews and Gypsies, within the Department for Foreigners of the Ministry of Internal Affairs, sent a communique to all county administrations explaining which Roma the Regulation dated the 30th of May should apply (according to the Military Commander's decision dated the 11th of July.[32])

While anti-Jewish propaganda was increasing on the one hand, there were also a growing number of anti-Roma articles in quisling newspapers in which the criminal traits of Roma were unambiguously portrayed, in accordance with official Nazi ideology: on June the 15th, "Novo Vreme" published a story about a "Gypsy" gang which robbed two houses in the village of Umka within two days.[33] About ten days later, a story was published about a Roma woman and her daughter who tricked a village woman near Kuršumlija and stole everything from her house.[34]

During the summer of 1941, just like in the case of the Jews, the quisling newspapers were also publishing short news items on measures introduced regarding the Roma in other quisling states. For instance, while in Belgrade and other Serbian towns a Roma census was being conducted for the purposes of compiling lists of "Gypsies" and handing out yellow armbands, "Novo Vreme" was reporting that a census of Gypsy children was in progress in Slovakia.[35]

31 AVII, Military Courts, case Harald Turner and others, 3/III, book 1, Georg Kiessel, minutes concerning the hearing, 18th of October 1946, p. 3; minutes concerning the hearing, 25th of October 1941, p. 3

32 AVII, NdA, 26-1-3/1.

33 *Nova kradja na Umci*, "Novo vreme" , 15 June 1941, p. 5.

34 *Ciganka "Vračara" pokrala lakovernu seljanku*, "Novo vreme" , 26th of June 1941, p. 5

35 *Popis ciganske dece u Slovačkoj*, "Novo vreme" , 20th of June 1941, p. 6

The communist uprising

With the attack on the Soviet Union, which Germany and its allies commenced on 22nd June 1941, the situation suddenly changed in Serbia. In agreement with Milan Aćimović, occupational authorities first decided to carry out a series of preventive arrests of all prominent communists and Spanish fighters in the country. Even though initially they were intended to be detained in the existing prison at Ada Ciganlija, on the outskirts of the capital, it was quickly decided that they should be kept in a separate camp.[36] The decision was made by German authorities, while construction of the concentration camp was entrusted to the City of Belgrade Governor, Dragi Jovanović. The fact that the task was conceded to local authorities indicates the trust that they enjoyed in the eyes of occupational authorities: Jovanović, Aćimović and all other top-ranking representatives of the quisling authorities were prominent anticommunists and had developed, throughout previous years, special skills for breaking up and pursuing communist groups, which had long been forbidden. Namely, since the mid-thirties, i.e. from the start of the economic and political approximation of the Kingdom of Yugoslavia to forces of the future Axis, their work, as well as the work of the entire state apparatus in preventing the spread of communism, included the utilization of special prisons and even concentration camps for communists. For example, camps in Višegrad, in Bileća and in Kotor were well known, as well as prisons in Sremska Mitrovica and Belgrade. Due to this experience and continuity in the bureaucratic and police apparatus, Jovanović was capable of organizing a new camp within just several days. Thus, on the 9th of July, the arrested communists and Spanish fighters were taken to the concentration camp at Banjica.

After German authorities' decision about establishing concentration camps, the City of Belgrade Governor Dragi Jovanović, who had been entrusted with the organization of these camps, chose as the lo-

36 Milan Borković, ibid., p. 57

cation the barracks of the former 18th Infantry Regiment in Belgrade. Captives were brought from Belgrade, as well as from throughout Serbia, primarily because of their belonging to the communist party or as its supporters, and shortly partisans too, as well as many civilians were interned there. The Banjica concentration camp had a twofold administration: German authorities kept two thirds of the camp under their direct control, while the remaining third was managed by the City of Belgrade Administration, through Svetozar Vujković. The ultimate control over the camp was carried out by the Gestapo.[37]

At the same time, the Communist Party of Yugoslavia (KPJ) was given the 'green light' from Moscow to organize armed resistance against fascist occupiers and their collaborators. The Molotov–Von Ribbentrop Pact, (which meant the international ban on any communist party linked to the Soviet Union commencing any act against German forces) automatically ceased to be in force. At that moment, the Soviet Union needed all available forces in the country and abroad, so as to confront their mighty enemy.

In Serbia, the call to battle was accepted by all members of the Communist Party and its organizations; primarily those consisting of youth. At the moment when the Communist Party Central Committee issued a decree to all peoples of Yugoslavia to rise up "all as one and go into battle against the occupier and his local servants",[38] armed action, sabotage and other actions had already started. It was the beginning of a battle which the KPJ conducted continuously until the end of the war and which led to the liberation of the country and the creation of socialist Yugoslavia.

37 More about Banjica concentration camp: Sima Begović, Logor Banjica 1941-1944, Institut za savremenu istoriju, Belgrade, 1989; Evica Micković and Milena Radojčić (eds.), *Logor Banjica: Logoraši, knjige zatočenika Koncentracionog logora Beograd-Banjica 1941–1944*, Istorijski arhiv grada Beograda, Belgrade, 2009; Branislav Božović, *Specijalna policija u Beogradu*, Srpska školska knjiga, Belgrade, 2003

38 Concerning those moments, cf.: *Oslobodilački rat naroda Jugoslavije*, book 1, Vojnoistorijski institut, Belgrade, 1963, pp. 41–45

Reactions by occupational forces in an attempt to quell the uprising, developed in two directions. On the one hand, military units reinforced by quisling gendarmerie and police charged into pursuit and frontal combat with the insurgents, while on the other hand, punitive measures were applied with the aim of intimidating the population, intended by the occupiers as deterrents for all who planned to join the insurgents or to assist them in any way. The objective of these measures was also to influence the mostly passive population, which was meant to remain loyal to the new authorities and, in fear of retaliation, to help break up the anti-fascist uprising.

The first executions by shooting were carried out in Belgrade as early as the start of July, when 13 communists and Jews were shot in retaliation for an attempted attack on the Military Commander in Serbia. In Obrenovac, on the 4th of July, 10 communists were shot because of sabotage, while two days later, in Belgrade, 16 communists and Jews were executed.[39] Executions were conducted during the following days as well, while on the 28th of July the first mass execution was carried out, in which, out of 122 hostages shot, 100 were Jews.[40] It was similar in other towns and parts of Serbia: on the 10th of August, in Užice, 81 persons were shot; on the 15th of August the village Skela near Obrenovac was burnt down, while 50 hostages were shot who had been brought from the Banjica camp; on the 18th of August, 38 people were executed near Požega; in Prnjavor, in western Serbia, on the 20th and 21st of August, over 140 peasants were killed.[41]

39 *Streljanje deset komunista*, "Novo Vreme", 15 July 1941, p. 3; *Streljanje 16 komunista i Jevreja u Beogradu*, "Novo Vreme" , 17 July 1941, p. 3

40 *Stroge mere protiv Jevreja i komunista u Beogradu*, "Novo Vreme" , 29 July 1941, p. 3

41 Milan Borković, ibid., p. 78

Chetniks

During those months, alongside the communists, there was another group of people who had the ambition to stand up to the Germans and who will be remembered as "Chetniks". In May1941, colonel Draža Mihailović rounded up a part of the Yugoslav Royal Army officers who, having refused capitulation, wanted to continue their fight against the occupier. Consequently, they represented military field force continuity with the Kingdom of Yugoslavia army,[42] whose political existence was represented by the government and royal family in exile in London. The liberation of the fatherland and reestablishing the rule of Karađorđević family, on the grounds of political, economic and social order which had existed up until the collapse in April 1941, were initially the main goals of that movement.

Draža Mihailović was also joined by representatives of pre-war parties, who gave a political dimension to the Chetnik movement; among them being Dragiša Vasić, Stevan Moljević, Mladen Zujović and others, who formed the Central National Committee, which played the most important role in the movement. Despite the Committee, the Chetnik movement survived, mostly due to the convictions of its leader Draža Mihailović who believed that political work shouldn't be allowed to overpower military organization, without having a true and clear political programme: in actuality, it the organization relied on the programme of Serbian Cultural Club, which had been active up until the beginning of the war.[43] In that spirit, Stevan Moljević had already created the "Greater Serbia" project near the end of June 1941. Taking as its starting point the need for all regions of the Kingdom of Yugoslavia to unite into a whole, Moljević also expressed the need for Greater Serbia to become homogeneously pure, primarily by relocating the non-Serbian element (especially Croats) outside the bor-

42 Branko Petranović, *Srbija u Drugom svetskom ratu 1939–1945*, Vojnoizdavački i Novinski centar, Belgrade, 1992, p. 363

43 Ibid, p. 379

ders of that new unit, but also by cleansing it of ethnic minorities and non-national elements (i.e. communists). Accordingly, the Kingdom of Yugoslavia was to be reorganized so that Serbia and Serbs would have central, but also absolute power at last, whereas other units (Croatia, Slovenia, etc.) would be subordinate. Thus Serbia would gain a central place in the entire Balkans.[44] Revenge against Croats and Muslims, because of crimes already perpetrated against Serbs in Bosnia-Herzegovina and Croatia, was also an important factor of that project.

The lack of a clear ideological determination against fascism and Nazism, on the one hand, as well as a continuation of the implementation of nationalization policy, (which the ruling Serbian circles had begun violently during the wars in 1912 and 1913) brought the Yugoslav Army in the fatherland to the place somewhere in between anti-occupier attitudes and opportunistic collaboration with the occupiers and quislings. With the aim of realizing their plans, it was possible, in many cases, to adapt to their new situation without any great problems. Between Chetnik and quisling forces, there was a shared standpoint that communists are the greatest enemy: if, for the quislings, they represented an evil that should be destroyed (since they were the greatest enemy against the National Socialist order) for Chetniks they were a serious and tangible threat to reestablishing a centralized monarchy within Serbia with Serbs at its head. Wartime circumstances permitted that, for the sake of that shared interest, weapons be pointed at the communists, on several occasions, up until the end of the war. It was in the name of anti-communism, following negotiations with the Germans in November 1941, that a special kind of cooperation started between the government of Milan Nedić and the Yugoslav Army of the Fatherland, which Mihailović allowed by way of legalization of a certain number of his squads, through receiving weapons, financial aid, food or joint action in regions endangered by partisans.[45]

44 Ibid, p. 381
45 Ibid, p. 391

Legalized Chetniks became a problem for the military efficiency of Draža Mihailović's army, but at the same time, by way of the ease with which they became accustomed to the new duty, they showed that among many officers, sub-officers and soldiers of Yugoslav Army of the Fatherland there was no awareness about the battle against the occupier, nor were there ideological obstacles against cooperation with Germans. Thus the Yugoslav Army of the Fatherland effectively became part of the quisling apparatus, which was, in fact, part of the new National Socialist order.

The idea about creating the homogeneous Greater Serbia and collaboration with quisling and occupational formations created ideal possibilities for Draža Mihailović's forces to commence with the implementation of their plan for cleansing territories from ethnic minorities. In addition to mass crimes they perpetrated in Bosnia-Herzegovina and Montenegro as early as September 1941, they carried out, in February 1943, a massacre of the Muslim population in eastern Bosnia, while in Sandžak they killed over 8,000 innocent people, mostly women and children.[46]

Battle and situation in the summer of 1941; formation of "The Government of National Salvation"

During July and August 1941, the uprising against the Germans spread to various parts of occupied Serbia. It covered Mačva, Posavina and part of Šumadija, where the Communist Party and Chetniks already started liberating villages, towns and large regions, striking considerable blows to occupational and quisling forces.[47] In other parts of Serbia also, battles were fought and acts of sabotage organized, especially

46 For more on Chetniks of Draža Mihailović and their crimes against civilians, cf.: Jožo Tomašević, *Četnici u Drugom svetskom ratu*, Liber, Zagreb, 1979; Ivan Matović (ed.), *Zločini četničkog pokreta u Srbiji 1941-1945*, Zbornik radova sa okruglog stola održanog 25. septembra 2012, SUBNOR Srbije, Belgrade, 2012; Fikreta Jelić-Butić, *Četnici u Hrvatskoj 1941-1945*, Globus, Zagreb, 1986

47 *Oslobodilački rat...*, pp. 52–55

with the objective of disabling railway traffic and communications. In Belgrade, during July and August 1941, communist activists, mostly belonging to the younger generation, carried out about fifty actions against German and quisling forces, attacking enemy soldiers and officers, as well as "national traitors"; burning their vehicles, destroying warehouses with fuel and ammunition, cutting down telegraph and telephone poles etc.[48]

The Commissary Government did not prove stable and strong enough to destroy the forces of the People's Liberation Movement, nor to win the sympathy of the citizens. This led the German occupational authorities to find an alternative which would somewhat change the situation to their advantage. After negotiating with Berlin and gauging the political situation on site, they reached the decision that a Serbian government should be formed with a greater extent of autonomy than had been the case with the Commissary Government. Administrative Headquarters Chief Turner, who was once again the brains of the operation, wanted the German administration to be visible to the citizens' eyes as little as possible, meanwhile the Serbian government would be supported in its work. "If orders were necessary from the occupier's side, then those same orders were discussed with ministries before being issued, and issued solely when the situation was avoided whereby other tasks would be severely threatened, the same held true for the ministries' intentions to issue orders",[49] testified Turner after the war. At the same time, during mid-August in Belgrade, there was a meeting of politicians, representatives of various pre-war parties, chambers, associations, universities and other organizations, where Milan Aćimović formally resigned and explained the situation. It was proposed that the Prime Minister of the new government i.e. "the Government of National Salvation" be army general Milan Nedić.[50]

48 Ibid, pp. 62–63

49 AVII, Military Courts, case Harald Turner and others, 3/III, book 1, Military Administration in Serbia, p. 8

50 Milan Borković, ibid., pp. 96–97

The new Serbian government was formed on the 29th of August 1941. Political legitimacy requested as early as May by Milan Aćimović was also requested by Milan Nedić, who invited representatives of prewar political parties to participate in its work.[51]

Each ministry in the Serbian government was assigned a German clerk, who reported to the Military Commander's Administrative Headquarters about the work of that ministry. This relationship existed on the local level as well. Between the Administrative Headquarters, Feldkommandantur, Ortskommandantur, the Gestapo and Feldgendarmerie, on the one side, and administrative and self-rule bodies of Serbian government administration on the other, there were special bodies that functioned as a connection: they controlled the operation of Serbian institutions, provided support and assistance, issued orders each time it was necessary, "so that there was full cooperation", as Milan Nedić himself said after the war.[52]

Nedić's perception of the role of Serbia is clear from one simple sentence of his: "the Serbian people have a calling to be the guardian and gendarme in the Balkans for the centre of Europe, i.e. for the Reich and its European plans."[53] In his first address to the Military Commander, he clearly underscored the continuity with the Commissary Government and the need for establishing an "autonomous" Serbia within the new National Socialist order:

51 AJ, 110-102-763, Decision on Determining the Crimes of Occupiers and their Collaborators, Harald Turner, p. 3. For biographies of ministers in the government of Milan Nedić, cf.: *Biografije novih ministara*, "Novo vreme", 30 August 1941, pp. 3–4

52 AVII, Military Courts, case Harald Turner and others, 3/III, book 1, Excerpts from minutes concerning the hearing of Milan Nedić, p. 4

53 *Nemačka obaveštajna služba (German Secret Service)*, volume VIII, Državni sekretarijat za unutrašnje poslove FNRJ, Uprava državne bezbednosti (State secretariat for internal affairs of FPRY, State Security Administration), Belgrade 1956; doc. no. 145, Nedić's perceptions of the role of Serbia (note by Hans Rexeisen, SS captain, after a conversation with Nedić 17th of June 1943).

> Accepting the authorization that You have entrusted me, I would like, foremost, to thank You on the behalf of the Serbian people and my own behalf, for making it possible for the Serbian people to get their own government, which will *autonomously* conduct its operations and attend to their fate. I also thank You on the accurate observation expressed here that Serbian people neither have nor want to have anything in common with communist troublemakers, who — incited by foreign propaganda — are killing and plundering their own Serbian people solely with the aim of wreaking havoc in the country and imperiling the lives of innocent citizens and the most pressing interests of the people. Introducing to You, on this occasion, my associates, I kindly ask of You, Mr Military Commander, to trust my own and my associates' firm will to crush anarchy in the country, providing instead complete peace, order and security. As part of the new opportunities You are providing us, to *autonomously* conduct operations of the Serbian people, we will endeavor to build the future of the Serbian people in loyal and amicable cooperation with the German Reich, as well as with its representatives in Serbia, believing that the German people will properly comprehend and assess the inevitable needs of the Serbian people. We hope that, in the shortest possible period, by implementing the necessary reforms and organizing Serbian armed forces, by our own means we will guarantee peace and order in the country, thus enabling the withdrawal of German troops so they can devote their energies to their own tasks. The Serbian people won't forget that the German soldier, even though the victor, has not taken revenge on anyone after war operations ended, and has behaved properly towards the Serbian people. With the return of peace and order, my government will commit to further building the country in the economic and social aspects, so that the country could recover, as soon as possible, from the severe losses that it has sustained. I myself, as well as my colleagues, are aware of the responsibility we are taking on by accepting to govern the country, but we will invest all our efforts solely and exclusively towards the national interest, in loyal cooperation with You, Mr Military Commander.[54]

The government of Milan Nedić, which lasted, with certain reconstructions, until the liberation of Serbia in October 1944, developed its own kind of National Socialist ideology. Consequently, the Minis-

54 Quoted from Milan Borković, ibid., p. 108

ters Council Chairmanship of Milan Nedić contained a State Propaganda Department where renowned pre-war Germanophiles worked. Propaganda was also being spread via the Serbian Journalists Association and around forty quisling papers of diverse content, such as *Novo Vreme (New Era)*, *Obnova (Reconstruction)*, *Naša borba (Our Battle)* and *Srpski narod (Serbian People)*, but also by way of the Serbian Literary Cooperative, which appointed as its head the well-known ideologist of Serbian fascism Svetislav Stefanović, who primarily supported the favouring of German books.[55] Radio Belgrade was directly in the hands of Germans, who made decisions about the programming, while there were also various propaganda departments at headquarters and legal seats of German occupational forces. Propaganda above all dealt with communist "villains", or with Jews and freemasons and their joint endeavours, against which Germany was "fighting bravely". At the same time, there was propagation of National Socialism ideas and the place which Serbia and the Serbian people ought to have in the new order, through the "cult of national awareness" and "cult of labor".[56] Even Milan Nedić proclaimed National Socialism to be "the ideal social organization" and he modeled the internal structure of Serbia after Nazi Germany.[57]

In addition to the government of Milan Nedić, there was also an independently active group of the most ardent adherents of National Socialism in Serbia, Dimitrije Ljotić's "Zbor" (Rally), the basic tenets of which were battle against freemasons, Jews, communists and western capitalism. Their ideology was close to National Socialism, according to which, Serbia was to become an independent state attached to Germany, with the king as its head.[58] Armed squads of volunteers

55 Branko Petranović, ibid., p. 424

56 Ibid., p. 428

57 Olivera Milosavljević, ibid., p. 18. It is worth mentioning that this book represents the most valuable contribution to the understanding of Nedić's regime and his ideology.

58 Branko Petranović, ibid., p. 416

"Zbor" were formed in September and October 1941 under the name "Srpska dobrovoljačka komanda" (Serbian Volunteer Command), later to become "Srpski dobrovoljački korpus" (SDK) (Serbian Volunteer Corps). Their ranks were open solely to ideologically aware persons, while each unit had teachers or "educators" who taught the volunteers in the spirit of Zbor principles.[59] Germans trusted the "party army" the most, especially in the fight against communism.

In the ideology of Serbian adherents of Nazism, from Milan Aćimović to Milan Nedić and Dimitrije Ljotić, the attitude towards the Roma was never defined so clearly as the attitude towards Jews. The question arises as to whether it was the result of generally accepted standpoint that had already prevailed in pre-war Serbia or perhaps the Roma were indeed considered citizens of Serbia, albeit "second rate". All in all, they didn't represent the major concern of Serbian rulers, at least not until the autumn of 1941.

German reinforcements

Despite reorganization of the authorities, in the first half of September it was clear that three German divisions and quisling forces weren't sufficient to quell the uprising. The situation was disquieting for the occupational apparatus, since actual danger existed that, at the moment when the attack against SSSR was in full swing, it might lose control over parts of the Balkan peninsula, and thus over communications with the Aegean sea. Therefore, in addition to deployment of other military units, on the 16th of September, Hitler personally appointed General Franz Böhme to be the head of all military troops on the territories of South-Eastern Europe in which uprising had broken out, so that it could be quelled. Böhme was subordinated solely to the commander for the South-East, Generalfeldmarschall List, while his Supreme Command was compelled to be stationed in Serbia.[60] That same day, Supreme

59 Ibid., pp. 415-416

60 *Zbornik NOR (People's Liberation War Anthology)*, volume I, book 1, doc. 158

Command of the Armed Forces (OKW) Chief Wilhelm Keitel signed a command whereby 100 communists were to be shot for each German soldier killed and 50 for each one wounded. The command pertained to all occupied territories in which, according to German estimates, there was activity by the mass movement directed by Moscow.[61]

German authorities allowed Nedić to increase the number of members of the Gendarmerie to up to 5,000 people, so that at the moment of Hitler's decision to appointing Böhme the head of all forces in combat against the People's Liberation Movement, quisling formations could count on roughly 11,000 people, including Ljotićevci and the Chetniks of Kosta Pećanac.[62]

Despite the fact that, even then, the major goal of occupational forces was the pacification of the country and destruction of the People's Liberation Movement, the clumsy apparatus in Belgrade continued to regularly perform its functions, among which was the issue of Jews, and now also the issue of the Roma.

Male Jews from Banat and some of those from Belgrade were already interned in the concentration camp at Topovske šupe[63] and the fate of their families was already being discussed, not only in Belgrade but also in Berlin. Plenipotentiary of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Felix Benzler, requested from Ribbentrop, in mid-August, that Jews from Serbia be deported to the general governorship in Poland,[64] but his impact and role in Belgrade weren't sufficient for the National Socialist authorities in Berlin to initiate that "evacuation". The position of Administrative Headquarters Chief Harald Turner was different. He portrayed the situation clearly in a memorandum sent on the 21st of September to general Böhme, who had just arrived in Serbia, and

61 *Zbornik NOR*, volume I, book 1, doc. 159

62 *Oslobodilački rat...*, p. 65. The Chetniks of Kosta Pećanac were active mostly in southern Serbia and were in the service of German occupier.

63 Cf. chapter about Belgrade.

64 *Zbornik NOR*, volume XII, book 1, doc. 299

proposed certain measures for future steps of the occupational authorities. Starting from his firm standpoint that local the quisling government represents a very useful, even necessary apparatus in ruling Serbia, he first proposed that General Nedić withdraw, at least temporarily, since it was clear that a large number of civilians would be killed in mass retaliations, and that by doing so, Nedić would maintain his credibility in front of the people. Existing ministries, as well as the entire structure of clerks, would in that case be directly subordinate to the Military Commander, whereas the squads of Kosta Pećanac in south-eastern Serbia and Ljotić's volunteers in the space between Belgrade and Gradište, would continue to be active as separate police/military units. With the aim of quelling the uprising, Turner proposed strict measures against the civilian population in those territories that had been most engulfed by the uprising. First and foremost, it was necessary to carry out "a complete evacuation in the space west of Šabac, in the arc between the Sava and the Drina", thus punishing all the inhabitants who were providing assistance to the insurgents. In Turner's opinion, the consequences would be twofold: on the one hand, the action would be an intimidating example for other regions of Serbia, while on the other hand, it would prevent the insurgents from using the produce from that most bountiful area of the country. Belgrade was considered another space where exemplary measures were to be carried out. "Cleaning" the capital, whence "undoubtedly the means are easily passed on to the insurgents", meant the confinement and liquidation of intelligentsia active in certain organizations, which Turner himself mentioned in the memorandum, as well as elements which were proven to be assisting the communists. In addition, it was suggested that all officers and sub-officers be arrested, except those placed at the disposal of Nedić's government, and ultimately: "There should also be severe forms of arrests of all Jews, which are already in progress, as well as simultaneous arrests of Gypsies".[65]

65 *Zbornik NOR*, volume I, book 1, doc. 167

That same day, probably partly accepting Turner's suggestions, Böhme ordered the evacuation of inhabitants from the space in between the rivers Sava and Drina, west of Šabac. For the male population aged between 15 and 60, it was envisaged that they be sent to camps to the north of the river Sava, whereas the female population was to be banished towards the south, while the villages were burnt.[66]

Meanwhile, during the counseling held in Dulene on the 16th of September 1941, the headquarters of NOP (PLM) squads of Serbia reached a decision on the creation of a large liberated territory in western parts of the country, from the mountain Cer in the north, to Sandžak in the south, and from the river Drina in the west to Šumadija in the east.[67] The partisan units' endeavor, at that moment supported by Chetniks, led to the creation of the so-called "Republic of Užice", i.e. the first liberated territory in the entire subjugated Europe. Shortly, however, the occupational forces organized a large offensive for the purposes of reestablishing authority. The pressure exerted by German and quisling forces from the north, from Mačva, and from the east, from the direction of Kraljevo, Kragujevac and Požega, soon led to the surrounding of the republic of Užice. Meanwhile, the Chetnik forces of Draža Mihailović turned their weapons against partisans and commenced serious negotiations with quislings and with Germans. The final break up between partisans and Chetniks occurred because Draža Mihailović rejected the partisans' proposal about the continuation of the joint fight against the occupier, under rigorous rules, on the 27th of October 1941. This moment also marked the beginning of an unceasing conflict between anti-fascists gathered around KPJ (CPY) and Draža Mihailović's nationalists, who, in a desperate attempt to win in the fight for power and creation of Greater Serbia as part of a monarchist Yugoslavia, started intensively cooperating with occupiers and quislings, not only on the territo-

66 Ibid., doc. 168. More on those events in the chapter on genocide against the Roma in other towns of Serbia.

67 Dojčilo Mitrović, *Zapadna Srbija 1941*, Nolit, Belgrade, 1975, p. 145

ry of NDH (ISC), especially in regions under direct control of Italian forces. After unsuccessful attempts to attack and break up the partisan strongholds at Užice and Ivanjica, Chetniks succeeded in capturing 325 partisans from various NOP squads and as a token of loyalty (resulting from agreements just made with the occupier), they turned them over to German forces, who shortly executed them. The battle for Užice started on the 25th of November and lasted until the 30th of November. With the entry of strong enemy forces into the city, partisan units were pushed towards the south, to Sandžak, and shortly towards Bosnia.[68] From that moment on, the KPJ led the People's Liberation Battle mostly on the territory west of the river Drina, whereas in Serbia smaller squads were active, and the situation relatively calm up until the summer of 1944.

The collaborationism entered into by the Chetniks at that time and which characterized their demeanor throughout the war, justified by the need to put an end to ferocious intimidation that Germans applied in Serbia against the civilian population, enabled the occupational and quisling authorities to implement their programmes in relative peace.

Jews and Roma: distinct categories for execution

With the arrival of General Böhme in Belgrade and defining the ratio of 100 hostages in return for one killed and 50 for a wounded German soldier (later for Volksdeutsche as well), the military authorities found themselves in a new situation. As had been the case up until then, they had the task of directly clashing with the insurgents, assisted by other forces – police and security services, above all, quislings – but at the time they were also responsible for mass intimidations which were carried out against civilians as retaliation for the People's Liberation Battle. Up until then, duties related to executing hostages were the responsibility of SD (Sicherheitsdienst) and the order police.[69]

68 On the course of the battle to seize Užice, cf.: *Oslobodilački rat*…, pp. 117-121

69 Valter Manošek, ibid., p. 86

The new role that Wehrmacht had in the Balkans, i.e. in Serbia, wasn't something foreign or new in the German army; a fact which can explain the efficiency with which the officers and soldiers committed themselves to their assignments. Mass executions of war captives, civilians, Jews and Roma had already been performed large-scale in eastern Europe and especially in the Soviet Union, where close cooperation existed between the regular army and Einsatzgruppe, not only in relation to providing logistics but also in participating in mass executions themselves as a sign of retaliation for partisan attacks.[70] The opportunity to implement the new policy arose for occupational authorities in Serbia during the start of October.

Near the town of Topola, on the 2nd of October, partisan forces carried out an attack on a German column and killed 21 soldiers. Two days later, general Böhme ordered, at the initiative by his subordinate officers, Captain Faulmüller and Colonel Pemsel, the execution of 2,100 Serbian prisoners from concentration camps in Šabac and in Belgrade, primarily Jews and communists.[71] Although at first glance the command didn't pertain to the Roma, several days later, specifically on the 9th of October, in the report by Security Police Chief and SD from Berlin, it was registered that "with the objective of retaliation for 21 German soldiers who were killed near Topola several days ago, 2,100 Jews and Gypsies (will be) executed (...) 805 Jews and Gypsies

70 E.g. cf.: Omer Bartov, *German Soldiers and the Holocaust: Historiography, Research and Implications*, in *History and Memory* no. 9 (1/2)1997; Jürgen Förster, *The Wehrmacht and the War of Extermination Against the Soviet Union*, in Michael Marrus, *The Nazi Holocaust: Historical Articles on the Destruction of European Jews*. (tome 3, vol. 2, *The "Final Solution": The Implementation of Mass Murder*), Meckler Press, Westpoint, 1989; Jürgen Förster, *Complicity or Entanglement? The Wehrmacht, the War and the Holocaust*, in Michael Berenbaum and Abraham Peck, *The Holocaust and History The Known, the Unknown, the Disputed and the Reexamined*, Indian University Press, Bloomington, 1998; Geoffrey P. Megargee, *War of Annihilation: Combat and Genocide on the Eastern Front, 1941*, Roman and Littelfield, Lanhman, 2007

71 Christopher Browning, *Fateful Months. Essays on the Emergence of the Final Solution* (revised edition), Holmes & Meier, New York-London, 1991, pp. 47–48; *Zbornik NOR*, volume I, book. 1, doc. 189

will be taken from the camp at Šabac, while the rest from the Jewish temporary detention camp in Belgrade".[72]

That change, which marks the beginning of extermination of the Roma (extermination of Jews was already in progress), occurred because of the intervention by Military Administration Chief Turner, who altered Böhme's command about executing primarily Jews and communists into "Along with Jews, instead of communists, the Roma should be shot".[73] It was a personal success of the Military Administration Chief, who had shown, on several occasions, as for instance in the memorandum dated the 21st of September, the wish to solve the issues of Jews and the Roma as soon as possible. That same day, the first executions were carried out in the vicinity of the village of Deliblato in Banat; then on 11th of October in Jajinci and on the 14th of October in Rakovica, near Belgrade, and then on the 11th and 12th of October in Zasavica, in the vicinity of Šabac.[74] Roma nationality victims were mostly from Šabac. It is not clear as to whether the Roma from Belgrade had been shot or not, they probably had not, since German authorities had at their disposal numerous Jewish hostages.

After the partisan attack near Valjevo on the 16th of October, in which 10 German soldiers were killed and 24 wounded, Turner forestalled Böhme and suggested the execution of 2,200 Serbs, of which 600 were to be shot by the 64th Police Reserve Battalion, which was directly subordinated to Turner at the time, whereas the remaining 1,600 hostages were to be shot by the sentinel regiment of Belgrade.[75]

Ten days later, a day before Wehrmacht units started executing hostages, Turner sent a communique to all Feldkommandanturs and Kreiskommandanturs, explaining the manner in which hostages nec-

72 Ibid, doc. 200

73 Valter Manošek, ibid., p. 98, footnote no. 185.

74 Rena Rädle and Milovan Pisarri (eds.), *Mesta stradanja i antifašističke borbe u Beogradu 1941-1944. Priručnik za čitanje grada*, Milan Radanović, Belgrade, 2012, pp. 209-229

75 Valter Manošek, ibid., p. 103

essary for executions were to be arrested. In that order, among other things, the position of male Roma was definitively determined:

> The starting point should be the general postulate that Jews and Gypsies are, overall, an unreliable element, thus representing a threat to public order and security. Jewish intellect is what started this war; it must be destroyed. Gypsies can't be useful members of the national community, taking into account their spiritual and physical build. It has been determined that the Jewish element has participated considerably in leading gangs, while Gypsies themselves are responsible for remarkable atrocities and for secret service duty. Thus, all Jewish and Gypsy men must essentially be placed at the disposal of the troops as hostages. Be that as it may, there is an intention whereby women and children of Jews and Gypsies would be collected at a detention camp so that this element of disturbance be evicted and thus removed from Serbian space. Necessary preparations ought to be undertaken accordingly.[76]

Of course, Turner's command could not be adopted without Böhme's approval. But, whereas for the representative of military occupational apparatus and SS member, Turner, it was a political issue, for the commander-in-chief of military forces engaged against partisans, it was all about reaching the quotas for executions.[77]

During the subsequent days, large-scale arrests of male Roma population were conducted in Belgrade, who were detained for a short time at the Topovske šupe camp before together with Jews, being executed at the village Jabuka,[78] while similar actions were suggested for Serbia proper as well. Once again, the proposal originated from Turner. On the 3rd of November, citing Böhme's order about taking hostages from communist ranks, Jews, as well as nationalists, he again ordered all Feldkommandanturs to arrest "as hostages all Jews and Gypsies". His intentions were already geared towards solving the issue of women and children: "Further, a substantial number of Jewish and

76 *Zbornik NOR*, volume I, book 1, doc. 234; origninal in German in AVII, NA, 27II-1-36/1 and 36/2

77 *Nemačka obaveštajna služba*, volume IV, p. 157

78 Cf. chapter on Belgrade.

Gypsy women and children should be sent, from their place of residence, and the preparation completed for their relocation to a detention camp in the vicinity of Belgrade".[79]

In the days that followed, Jews and Roma from Serbia proper were arrested as hostages in a greater numbers. However, Nazis weren't so rigorous towards the Roma as they were towards Jews, because they didn't have anything to plunder (since the Roma were primarily poor) as well as because of their greater mobility and "lack of discipline", and who, unlike Jews, didn't respond to summonses for reporting".[80]

In some cases, local authorities had to protest in front of Turner himself since Serbian cantons weren't capable of supporting the arrested Roma and Jews, as was the case with the Brza Palanka canton[81].

Executions certainly continued over the subsequent period, and the Roma were victims just like Jews. According to data collected at the end of the war by the State Commission for Determining the Crimes of Occupiers and their Collaborators, around 1,000 Roma were shot in Belgrade,[82] around 300 in Leskovac, 150 in Šabac, 70 in Kruševac, 250 in Kragujevac,[83] etc.

After a month, genocidal measures also encompassed women, at least in Belgrade. They were imprisoned at the Sajmište camp, together with Jewish women and children, although they were mostly released after three months. Nonetheless, a certain number of them died at the camp itself from starvation, disease and winter cold, while it is also logical to suppose that others died after returning home from the consequence of concentration camp life.[84]

79 *Zbornik NOR*, volume I, book 1, doc. 226; in German, AVII, NA, 27II-1-40/1 (NOKW 801).

80 Sima Begović, ibid., p. 32

81 Venceslav Glišić, ibid., p. 88

82 Cf. chapter on Belgrade.

83 AJ, 110-613-541. Cf. chapter on genocide against the Roma in other towns of Serbia.

84 Cf. chapter on Belgrade.

By allowing still alive women, children and men to be erased from lists of "Gypsies", on the grounds of an order issued by the Military Commander on the 11th of July 1941, effective for all who were already in the concentration camp, German authorities obviously opted for a different solution to the "Gypsy issue" in Serbia. Like Kiessel testified after the war: an order came from Berlin that just nomads be arrested, "not those with permanent residence, who could be considered an integral part of the population to a certain extent",[85] Occupational authorities also automatically erased the very existence of Roma in Serbia by erasing them from lists of "Gypsies", at least in the bureaucratic sense. From the moment of erasure, these Roma were considered Serbs and, at least theoretically, again enjoyed all the rights they had had prior to the introduction of anti-Roma measures. Therefore, on the 29th of August 1942, Turner proudly informed the newly appointed Commander of the South-East, General Loehr, that "the Jewish issue, as well as the Gypsy issue, had been completely liquidated. Serbia is the only country in which the Jewish issue and the Gypsy issue have been solved".[86] Jews were exterminated, men and women alike, whereas the Roma, after the mass executions of autumn 1941 and their internment at Sajmište and other concentration camps, and subsequent release, were definitely turned into Serbs – although it should never be forgotten that a considerable number of them died at the camp itself or immediately after leaving it.

Despite this, the bureaucratic apparatus continued publishing, just like in many other occupied territories, provisions against Jews and Roma. The quisling Ministry of Education ordered, on the 5th of September, that schools must stop enrolling children of Jewish and "Gypsy" background if they belong to the territory of the Military Commander in Serbia (including Banat), until a new directive is issued about

85 Cf. footnote 23.

86 Quoted from: Valter Manošek, ibid., p. 197

their schooling[87]; while the mass execution of Jews was already in progress, and the execution of Roma had just been ordered, on the 21st of October 1941, quisling authorities issued the Main directive about the University, within which article 27 stipulated that "Jews and Gypsies cannot attend University (colleges)".[88] After mass executions of men and just several days after internment of women at Sajmište camp, in the Directive about the introduction of national service, which Nedić's government adopted on the 16th of December, article 3 reads that "the following people are exempt from national service duty: (…) Jews, Gypsies and those persons who do not enjoy honourable civil rights";[89] and ultimately, when the mass killing by poisonous gas at the so-called "dushegubka" was in progress of women and children interned at Sajmište, in the Rules of procedure of the Serbian work community dated the 3rd of April 1942, article 20 stipulated that: "Jews and Gypsies cannot be members of the Serbian work community."[90]

Similar commands were issued even after "the final solution to Jewish and Gypsy issue": in the Directive on Organization of Film Screenings, issued on the 23rd of February 1943, article 3 stipulates, among other items, that "Jews and Gypsies as well as persons married to Jews or Gypsies cannot be granted a permit for running a cinema", and that "Jews and Gypsies as well as persons married to Jews or Gypsies cannot be employed by cinemas".[91] The Directive on national work service for rebuilding Serbia, adopted as late as the 16th of May 1944, art. 7 reads that "Jews and Gypsies do not have the right to service at the National work service for rebuilding Serbia".[92]

87 AJ, 110-908-554, Nadleštvo Podbana za Banat, Prosvetno odeljenje Direktorima gimnazija i učiteljske škole, Upraviteljima građanskih škola i školskim Nadzornicima, IV no. 2728, 5th of September 1941

88 Olivera Milosavljević, ibid., p. 188

89 Ibid., p. 194

90 Ibid., p. 224

91 Ibid., p. 267

92 Ibid., p. 392

The perpetrators

Even though, regarding the activities of the occupational authority and quisling apparatus, the issue of Roma was solved as early as 1942, it is probable that the attitude towards them did not change. They continued to be considered "Gypsies", as had been the case before the war and during the first two years of war, that is – second rate citizens, so that the word "Gypsies" itself went on appearing in quisling apparatus documents. However, wartime circumstances led to a different situation, which proved to be fateful for many Roma in Serbia because of the role which Draža Mihailović's Chetniks had until the end of the war.

As had already been clear in autumn of 1941, their major enemy of the Chetniks was not the occupier but rather partisans led by the KPJ. Therefore Chetniks commenced and accelerated the battle for power, increasingly attacking partisans and being more frequently in the position of collaborator of the ocuppiers and quislings. In Serbia itself, their targets were all partisans, their families and adherents, including, of course, those under suspicion of supporting the communists.

In certain cases, the Roma belonged to that category and they were assigned a horrible fate: nonetheless, legitimate doubt remains that they were being killed just for being Roma, or whether as partisan concealers and helpers. Ćuprija municipality mayor, an adherent of Ljotić, displaced the remaining Roma to neighbouring villages during 1942. A group of Russian Roma, who had not sought refuge in Belgrade the previous year, were in the village Vlaška at the time. That is where they were surrounded by a group of Chetniks, during the night between the 8th and 9th of September 1942, and chased to the Morava riverbank: their clothes were removed and all were slaughtered – 28 of them including women and children – and thrown into the river.[93]

The other known case occurred in central Serbia. In the village Kopljare, near Aranđelovac, during the night between the 25th and 26th

93 Dimitrije Đulić and Miodrag Milačić, *Na Moravi Ćuprija*, opštinski odbor SUBNOR, Ćuprija, 1977. pp. 366, 403 and 438

of December 1943, Chetnik units subordinate to commander Nikola Kalabić, slaughtered 24 persons, of which 20 were Roma, since they had allegedly been communist concealers. In his report to Draža Mihailović, Kalabić wrote: "In Kopljare, 24 active communists were captured while sleeping and slaughtered, of them 20 were Gypsies, who admitted they were so-called 'jarugaši' ('ravine dwellers'), minding their household chores by day, staging action by night. I slaughtered them all."[94] The event was also marked by Nedić's gendarmerie, which provided additional information on the killed Roma: "In the night of 25/26 of the current month, in the village of Kopljare, in Orašac canton, DM's Chetniks slaughtered Gavrilović Milutin, the municipality registrar, Milanović Radojica and Savković Tihomir, farmers, as well as 15 male Gypsies and 4 female Gypsies, burning down all Gypsy houses in the village, and in addition the houses of two farmers whose family members are in partisan ranks. The act has been carried out because those killed had cooperated with partisans."[95]

The Chetniks were, on the one hand, desperately attempting to establish some kind of control over certain territories in Serbia and other parts of Yugoslavia, while on the other hand, they ventured several times into the process of realizing the political programme of creating an ethnically pure Greater Serbia. Consequently, the Chetnik forces carried out various crimes against the Roma of Islamic faith, who, together with other Muslims, were to be exterminated or removed in some manner from the future Serbian national territory. In this second case, the crimes were the most extensive and affected the greatest number of inhabitants in south-western Serbia, i.e. in Sandžak. There are serious indications that in these massacres where over 8,000 women and children were killed, many Roma were also victims.[96]

94 *Zbornik NOR*, volume XIV, book 3

95 *Zbornik NOR*, volume I, book 21

96 Rajko Đurić and Antun Miletić, ibid., pp. 409-410. The authors published a list of 92 Roma children killed in Priboj srez in the year 1943, exactly the time of Chetnik slaughters in that region.

The Roma who were victims of the terror perpetrated by forces under Draža Mihailović's command, even if they cannot be considered victims of the National Socialist extermination plan, were still the victims of genocide carried out by Chetniks against Muslims and which also encompassed areas of Montenegro and Bosnia-Herzegovina in addition to south-western Serbia. How many Roma were killed there by Chetniks? And whether or not there had been a plan of exterminating Roma, i.e. what was supposed to be their position in the future Greater Serbia? remain open questions, which other research studies need to explore.

In the trials conducted after the war in front of Military Courts of Yugoslav Authorities against war criminals, the issue of genocide against the Roma seems to have never been taken into consideration.

In the court ruling against Turner, Kiessel and others, although their responsibility for killing Jews is frequently mentioned, the killing of Roma is never brought up. This also happens when the regulation dated the 30th of May 1941 is mentioned,[97] even though it pertained to Jews and Roma alike. Forgettance of genocide against the Roma is even more obvious in the ruling against Wilhelm Fuchs and others, in which the following is written, among other things:

> [they are guilty]
>
> [...]
>
> 10. Because they directed all measures undertaken against Jews, ordered the gathering of all Jews from the Serbian territory in the concentration camp at Autokomanda, carried out the destruction of male Jews, organized on the 8th of December 1941 a Jewish camp at Sajmište for women and children and, from February until May 1941, directed the destruction of Jewish women and children (...).[98]

Further, in the explication:

97 Đorđe Lopičić, *Nemački ratni zločini 1941-1945. Presude Jugoslovenskih vojnih sudova*, Muzej žrtava genocida, Belgrade 2009, pp. 51-54, 66

98 Ibid., p. 102

> The concentration camp at Sajmište was founded by Dr. Fuchs in the summer of 1941. It was founded for the purpose of rounding up Jews. Therefore it represented a kind of Jewish ghetto. Solely Jews were sent to that camp up until spring 1942.[99]

It is astounding that the Roma, who had passed through the same concentration camps and had been killed in the same execution fields, together with Jews, were literally erased from the accusation and from the explication, although Yugoslav authorities were well aware that a distinct policy of extermination had been carried out against this group.

Where the Roma do appear, they remain just a momentary note. Thus, for instance, in the ruling against Fuchs and others, it says that in the second half of 1941, following Gestapo orders, Jews and "Gypsies" from Belgrade were brought en mass by trucks near the village Jabuka, in the vicinity of Pančevo, as well as to Deliblatski Pesak, where they were executed by the Schutzpolizei;[100] furthermore, in the verdict against Karl von Bothmer, Feldkommandant of Niš, there is mention of his responsibility for submitting lists of "suspicious persons", Jews and "Gypsies", according to which the Gestapo conducted arrests and internments at the camp Crveni krst.[101] Those who had planned and executed the genocide against the Roma were freed from responsibility, it could be said, at the very beginning.

99 Ibid., p. 127
100 Ibid., p. 114
101 Ibid., p. 55

IV. GENOCIDE AGAINST THE ROMA IN BELGRADE

Instatement of German and quisling authorities

During the first days after the bombing, Belgrade was a city in ruins, not in a physical, but also in a political sense. Many buildings, especially in the city centre, were razed by the force of German bombs, while around 2,500 citizens lost their lives. It was not the first time that such scenes were witnessed in Belgrade, since Austro-Hungarian and German grenade attacks from 1914 and 1915 were still fresh in memory. However, in those April days of 1941, disaster struck so suddenly and so destructively that it was hard for anyone to grasp what was going on. Alongside ruined buildings and dead citizens, the political authority, or at least what remained of it at the time in the capital of Kingdom of Yugoslavia, was also definitely demolished.

According to the census conducted by occupational and quisling authorities on the 18th of May 1941, at that moment Belgrade had 253,729 inhabitants. The census excluded Zemun, neighboring villages, prisoners, the German army and patients in hospitals. Since the state of emergency measures were still in force, the opinion was that it would ultimately turn out that Belgrade had roughly 300,000 inhabitants.[1]

How many Roma lived in the capital of Serbia is difficult to determine, but it is known that they mainly lived in parts of the city called Jatagan mala, Marinkova bara, Pašino brdo, Čubura, Zvezdara and

1 *Beograd ima sada 253.729 stanovnika, prema najnovijem popisu Beogradske opštine*, "Novo vreme", 25th of May 1941, p. 5.

amongst others. In addition to those with permanent residence in Belgrade for several decades or longer, many were newcomers from various Serbian towns. They made their way towards the capital primarily in the aftermath of World War I, because of the utter poverty that the war and occupation had left behind. Therefore the Roma were moving to Belgrade, just like many other Serbian citizens, in the hope that they would find better living conditions in the capital. However, the large number of newcomers and impossibility of the city absorbing all of them resulted in the natural development of big settlements, where people lived in the most impoverished conditions. Consequently, the Roma didn't differ from many other Belgrade inhabitants fighting daily for survival.[2] The Roma "original settlers", who had lived there before World War I, started the process of self-organization through the operation of associations, cooperatives and even their own assembly. In the mid-thirties, the Roma newspaper "Romano Lil"[3] started being published, whereas in the year 1939, just before the war, "Belgrade Roma Club" was founded.

The Roma who lived in Belgrade were left, at that time, without a country, just like other citizens, while the only ones capable of reacting were members of the police and bureaucratic apparatus. Actually, they didn't react, but rather carried on, applying the usual diligence that characterizes those apparatuses worldwide, with their work even during the state of emergency – during and after the bombing. Although without a political body, the city's bureaucracy used the Roma strengths, as they both counted their dead and continued fulfilling their assignments related to the organization and management of the city's administrative and political life.

The occupier's arrival just partly changed the situation in that aspect, because, viewed from the standpoint of bureaucracy, during those first days, it was all about the change of who was issuing orders

2 On the Roma in Belgrade cf.: Dragoljub Acković, *Romi u Beogradu*....

3 Ibid., pp. 197-216.

and holding executive authority, while the essence of moral and professional duty of each officer, clerk, policeman, firefighter and others remained the same.

It meant that the structure of the apparatus remained almost unchanged even after the occupier's entry, with the only changes in numbers of personnel stemming from a certain number of employees being put in prison after the April battle, and Belgrade municipality firing others near the end of May and start of June, due to reduced finances.[4]

At the moment of the Nazi-fascist attack on Yugoslavia, Belgrade was run by two basic administrative bodies, the city municipality and the City of Belgrade Administration (UGB). While the municipality dealt with the everyday tasks necessary for the normal functioning of social and economic life in the capital of the Kingdom of Yugoslavia, the Administration represented a unique system in the entire country, the objective of which was to assure state and public security. Its members were forbidden any political affiliation,[5] which was meant to underscore its purely state-oriented character. The Administration was subordinate solely to the Ministry of Internal Affairs, while its jurisdiction encompassed not only the City of Belgrade Municipality, but also all neighbouring municipalities, including Zemun and Pančevo. Since 1929, i.e. from the moment dictatorship was introduced and clear approximation to a state regime typical for authoritarian and nationalistic countries began, its jurisdiction when it comes to "certain jobs" expanded to the entire country. Even though during the thirties it had been the subject of several reorganizations, the City of Belgrade Administration strengthened its police function: specifically, in its service, in addition to general, penal, technical and traffic police,

4 AVII, NdA, 20a-2-2/1 and 2/3. On the 26th of June 1941 the number of employees of all types (registrars, clerks, workers etc.) at the municipality amounted to 7,000 people.

5 Branislav Božović, *Uprava i* upravnici..., p. 90.

there was also a gendarmerie regiment and a squadron of mounted gendarmerie.[6]

A major turnabout in the existence and role of City of Belgrade Administration occurred in 1936, when the well-known Germanophile and anticommunist Milan Aćimović was appointed its head, the same man to whom German authorities later entrusted power in Serbia at the commencement of occupation. On the one hand, Aćimović politicized the Administration, establishing an open liaison with the government of Milan Stojadinović, which increasingly strove to grow closer to National Socialist Germany and fascist Italy, while, on the other hand, he established close ties and official cooperation with the German police, aided by his loyal associates,[7] primarily Dragi Jovanović; the future City of Belgrade Governor under German occupation.

It was the leading men of those institutions, especially Dragomir Dragi Jovanović and Milan Aćimović, who were among the most significant elements the German authorities could rely on unconditionally. As early as the 21st of April, less than ten days from their entry into Belgrade, Dragi Jovanović was appointed Extraordinary Commissary of the City of Belgrade by SS Major Hans Helm, (an appointment which was officially confirmed the next day by colonel Ernst Moritz von Kaisenberg, city commander) and on the 9th of May, from the newly elected Commissary Government of Milan Aćimović, he received the function City of Belgrade Governor.[8] Simultaneously, he received the function Belgrade Municipality Governor, which he held, with the exception of one short period, until the end of the war.

During that short interval, many clerks who had escaped from the German bombing (or had been far from their place of residence due to

6 Ibid., pp. 96-97.

7 Ibid., pp. 102 and 202–203. At the end of December 1938, Milan Aćimović became Minister of Internal Affairs at Milan Stojadinović's government. He remained in that function somewhat over a month, i.e. until that same government resigned.

8 Ibid., p. 338.

some other reason) mostly returned to service. For those who had been captured by Germans, Jovanović and Aćimović requested, and were often granted, special permits from occupational authorities to be liberated and to return to service, since they were needed at the Administration or municipality. In the hearing before Yugoslav authorities in 1945, when asked "How did you carry out the organization of City of Belgrade Administration and Belgrade Municipality?" and "(...) Have you thus kept the clerks who had worked in those institutions before the war?", Jovanović himself responded that he completely kept the old organization of City of Belgrade Administration, according to existing directives, just changing the name of the General Police Department to the Special Police Department, while on the city of Belgrade territory, and instead of the gendarmerie regiment he introduced the Serbian State Guard of CBA. At the municipality he kept the old organizational statute and old clerical apparatus.[9] When it comes to the administrative division of the city, as early as the 18th of May, a detailed description was issued of the structure of police commissariats and quarters,[10] in which the only crucial difference from the prewar order was the obligation to cooperate closely with local German authorities. Continuity between prewar and war administrative and police apparatus is often apparent: "The personnel at the quarters mostly stayed the same as before the war, since almost all people returned to their duties", it was claimed in the quisling newspaper "Novo Vreme" in mid-May 1941.[11] It was not only departments and personnel that stayed unchanged, but also relations, duties and functions of the Administration and municipality, as well as their place in the hierarchy,

9 IAB, b. 595-11 „Dragi Jovanović", Documents and hearing of Dragi Jovanović, pp. 5-6.

10 *Uspostavljanje i organizovanje područja Uprave grada Beograda*, "Novo vreme" the 18th of May 1941, p. 5. It is noteworthy that the city of Pančevo was singled out from CBA jurisdiction immediately following occupation, whereas the same happened with Zemun several months later.

11 *Kvartovi Uprave grada Beograda uvedeni su odmah praktično u život*, „Novo vreme", 19th of May 1941, p. 4.

according to which the Administration was subordinate to the Ministry of Internal Affairs, while the municipality was subordinate to other administrative bodies of that same Ministry. Naturally, everything was strictly controlled by the German occupational authorities, which conducted strict oversight of all quisling institutions and frequently directed their operation, all the time leaving them with substantial autonomy, under the condition that their work be performed in accordance with the needs of National Socialist Germany.

Similarly, all municipality departments, especially those most necessary after the bombing, were quickly in a completely functioning state again. A good example that illustrates the great capacity for regeneration of the bureaucratic and police apparatus, (although its old political "head" had been severed, for the purposes of establishing a new system in accordance with, the National Socialist military, police and political apparatus just arrived in Belgrade) is the efficient reconstruction of the fire brigade. Specifically, on the 14th of April, the acting City of Belgrade Municipality Governor ordered that the city's firefighting department be reactivated. The following day, the newly appointed director set to cleaning the "Firefight Command" building, i.e. the headquarters of Belgrade firefighters, as well as gathering firefighters and volunteers and acquiring of new vehicles. Within several days, the building was functioning, all vehicles were at their disposal, and there were about fifty firemen and fifteen volunteers in service.[12]

In the first period of the City of Belgrade Administration's existence, roughly up until the formation of the "National Salvation" government, near the end of August 1941, Dragi Jovanović had at his disposal a considerable number of people: CBA guards could count on 52 officers and 1,550 sentinels (gendarmes, as they continued to be called by the people), whereas civilian police had 180 clerks and 300 agents. Within the police force, a distinctive place was held by

12 IAB, OGB, b. 216, Izveštaj o nađenom stanju u zgradi Požarne komande u Beogradu (Report on the situation found at the Belgrade Firefight Command building), on the day of the 15th of April 1941 until the 24th of April 1941

the Special Police, in which 28-30 clerks were engaged and half of the total number of agents: 150.[13] Its main task was to battle against communists, in which the majority of agents already had substantial experience, since they had been performing that same assignment in the previous years, in the Kingdom of Yugoslavia. The "Serbian Gestapo", as the Special Police could be described, consisted of several departments, of which the most significant one was IV anticommunist department, where 14-18 clerks and 90 agents were engaged.[14] Although Special Police duties were performed within the Serbian regime, the Gestapo decided that, starting from the 1st of June 1941, it would additionally finance its work, sending it 16,000 dinars every month for the purposes of "repression of Jewish-communist action". The money was collected from mandatory "contributions" that the Gestapo imposed on the Jewish community at the time.[15]

Needs imposed by the National Socialist head via its peripheral bodies, including the military-occupational system in Serbia, required that within the quisling regime, police authorities be in charge of overseeing Jews and later Roma; therefore, already in April, as part of Special Police, a distinct "work group" for Jews was formed, which in May grew into Sector VII of the Special Police, also known as the police for Jews or commissariat for Jews, becoming, on the 7th of June that same year - Sector VII of Special Police for Jews and Gypsies.[16] Its task was to oversee the Jewish and Roma population, so as to respect the new order, which had placed those two categories of citizens outside the law and prescribed separate rules for them. Furthermore, Sector VII had to carry out the registration of Jews and Roma, as well as their property. It performed these assignments in close cooperation

13 IAB, b. 595-11 „Dragi Jovanović", Dokumenti i saslušanje Dragog Jovanovića, p. 8 and p. 10.

14 IAB, b. 595-11 „Dragi Jovanović", Dokumenti i saslušanje Dragog Jovanovića, p. 15.

15 Branislav Božović, *Stradanje Jevreja u okupiranom Beogradu 1941-1944*, Muzej žrtava genocida, Belgrade, 2012, p. 236.

16 Branislav Božović, *Upravnici*…, p. 121.

with the Jewish department of Belgrade Gestapo, as well as with the II special sector of the State Protection Department operating as part of the Ministry of Internal Affairs of the Government of Serbia.[17]

Above all the local institutions was German authority. Belgrade held the seats of the most important bodies of occupational and quisling apparatus in Serbia, starting from the Military Commander and president of quisling administration Milan Aćimović and later Serbian Government Prime Minister Milan Nedić.

The highest city body was Feldkommandatur 599. Its first commander was von Kaisenberg, while on the 9th of February 1942 he was succeeded by Major Adalbert Lontschar. Adhering to the same structure of main occupational administration, the Feldkommandantur was divided into Command headquarters and Administrative headquarters, while it also had its own military courts, military police and prison.[18] As early as the beginning of May, the Feldkommandantur was renamed City of Belgrade Command (Stadtkommandantur Belgrad), but it also kept its old name, as well as control over Kreiskommandanturs 834 and 838.[19]

With the aim of thorough surveillance of the city, Belgrade city territory was divided into seven sentinel sections, each with two infantry troops at their disposal. The first six sections each covered two quarters, i.e. administrative units of Belgrade, while the seventh encompassed the outskirts.[20]

In the occupational system, a special place was enjoyed by those belonging to the German national minority. Although in Belgrade itself, in April 1941, there lived slightly over 5,000 domestic Germans, their number soon rose to 25,000, of which the majority had moved from

17 Rena Rädle and Milovan Pisarri (eds.), *ibid*., pp. 86-88.

18 Muharem Kreso, *Njemačka okupaciona uprava u Beogradu 1941*-1944, Belgrade, Istorijski arhiv Beograda, 1979, pp. 84-85.

19 *Ibid*., p. 86.

20 *Ibid*., pp. 87–88.

Banat. It wasn't accidental: alongside the fact that they were needed by the occupational authorities, as thoroughly knowledgeable about the Serbian language and situation in the country, they served in various police formations, managed Jewish shops[21] and performed other important duties. The influx of Volksdeutsche from Banat, but also from Srem and Bačka, was favoured for another reason. In the Third Reich plans, Belgrade was supposed to become a German fortress and German garrison in the future German Danubian state,[22] from where territories up to the Danube delta would be ruled.

Anti-Roma legislative in Belgrade

After "cleansing" the Belgrade municipality from undesirable Jews, which was carried out already at the beginning of May, (when all sectors reported to the City of Belgrade Administration whether or not they have Jews among employees),[23] the same procedure was followed for the "cleansing" of Roma employees. Their categorization first appeared on the 21st of May, when there appeared, in a form sent by the Ministry of Internal Affairs of Commissary Government to City of Belgrade Municipality, for the purposes of keeping records on all employees, the question: "Racial belonging: among ancestors of 1st and 2nd degree i.e. was one of his parents or grandparents (maternal and paternal) Jewish, or Gypsy and who was it?"[24] The inquiry was prob-

21 *Ibid*., pp. 29–32.

22 *Ibid*., pp. 101–102.

23 Cf. E.g.: IAB, OGB, b. 211, unnumbered, City Governorship, Governing department, procurement request for blue identity cards at the Ortskommandantur, for clerks at the corporals who live outside the district, 10th of May 1941; City Governorship, General department, T. V. No. 882, 7/V/1941, to the Director of Governing department, procurement request for identity cards; List of clerks and staff of the court department of Belgrade municipality for whom transit passes are requested, unnumbered and undated; etc.

24 IAB, OGB, b. 211, City of Belgrade Administration, administrative department I no. 390, 23 May 1941 (Ministry of Internal Affairs regulation no. 39, 21st of May 1941)

ably also sent to other Serbian municipalities, since regulations concerning Jews and Roma were in force nationally.

In the days following the issuing of the first anti-Roma regulations, dated the 22nd of May, and especially after the regulation dated the 30th of May 1941, "which concerns Jews and Gypsies",[25] quisling authorities above all had to determine whether in various departments of the municipality and City of Belgrade administration there are Roma employees or not, so as to take suitable measures, that is – fire them. Similarly as one month earlier, when he ordered that Jews employed at public services be identified, on the 10th of June, Dragi Jovanović ordered that all municipality departments check if they have "Gypsy" employees[26] and report it within twenty-four hours to the authorities in charge at the City of Belgrade Administration.

Already that same day, certain sectors checked the racial background of their employees and immediately sent a response to those in charge. "I hereby report that this department does not have any employee of Gypsy origin", wrote the Administrative department chief, while the Governing department chief wrote that "in the Governing department's archive there is no clerk of Jewish or Gypsy origin".[27] In the same or similar manner, all other departments and sectors acted in accordance with Dragi Jovanović's order and so determined that the entire bureaucratic structure of the City of Belgrade municipality is "clean" from non-Aryan clerks.[28]

Results of the mandatory registration of Roma showed that out of the 3,044 Roma registered up until the 26th of June, 2,080 were over

25 Cf. chapter on genocide against the Roma in Serbia.

26 IAB, OGB, b. 211, no. 4546, Belgrade City Governorship, Governing department, 10th of June 1941.

27 IAB, OGB, b. 212, br. 344362, Belgrade City Governorship, Administrative department, to the Governing department, 10th of June 1941; no. 4546, Belgrade City Governorship, Governing department, 10th of June 1941.

28 IAB, OGB, b. 212, 45-46/41, Legal department to the Governing department, 11th of June 1941; no. 4546/41, Personnel department to the Governing department, 10th of June 1941; etc.

the age of 14, while 964 were younger. In total, there were 1,081 men, of which 326 were farmers and labourers, 261 musicians, 71 craftsmen, 407 had miscellaneous jobs and 16 were unemployed.[29]

After the regulation dated the 30th of May, the Roma were left without personal identity cards, just like Jews. The bureaucratic apparatus constantly paid attention to this, as can be seen from all the documents that pertain to citizens' personal data. On the 3rd of June, the City of Belgrade Administration ordered that all Belgrade citizens of both genders of "Aryan origin" over the age of 16 must possess an identification card.[30] It had already been well known that Jews had been excluded from the "Aryan origin", but exclusion of the Roma, based on a regulation issued several days before, was probably yet to be accepted, at least in administrative language. Nevertheless, almost two months later, the situation was much clearer. In the regulations on issuing personal identity cards dated the 27th of July, in addition to all provisions about the content of personal cards, as well as their appearance, it was underscored that "Jews and Gypsies must not be issued identity cards".[31]

Unlike Jews, who practically all lived in the city centre and who were used for forced labour and exploited economically during that period – at least the men, the Roma were in a different situation where their social belonging was once again crucial, in the negative sense, to their position. While the regulations on issuing identity cards were being drawn up, the city of Belgrade municipality, probably in agreement with German authorities, practically divided the city territory into two parts, not allowing those who lived in the outskirts to move freely in the city centre anymore without additional documents. The provision pertained not only to distant districts, but also to those

29 Document published in Dragoljub Acković, *Romi u Beogradu*..., p. 253.

30 IAB, OGB, b. 2, no. 406, City of Belgrade Administration, Administrative department, 3rd of June 1941.

31 IAB, OGB, b. 2, Regulations on issuing identity cards.

where many Roma lived, such as, for instance Čubura or Pašino brdo.[32] Criteria for issuing those documents were probably rather strict, while the objective of the measure undertaken, it can be assumed, was an attempt to place the inhabitants under firm control for security reasons in those initial chaotic phases of occupation. Many Serbs were surely affected by these measures, while for those who had jobs in the city itself but didn't succeed in procuring those additional documents, it must have been a great setback in an economic sense. What is perhaps the most significant to note however, is that those Roma who had all their rights taken away and who were compelled to live marked by a yellow armband, were practically ghettoized in their districts, since they couldn't even obtain plain identity cards, let alone the mentioned additional documents. Simply put, the musicians, coach-drivers and common labourers were compelled to stay in their homes and get by to the best of their ability in order to survive.

The situation that ensued after the 30th of May regulation, following a series of administrative measures and new assignments for the police force in charge of overseeing Jews, (as well as Roma from then on), led to protests within the Roma community itself. Although the community wasn't structured and didn't have its representative institutions, that is – even though it couldn't qualify as a separate autonomous community, certain groups of Roma nonetheless stood out in the attempt to somehow be exempted from anti-Roma measures.

The local authorities registered that

> After the census was conducted, a substantial number of Romanian Gypsies asked to be deleted from the registry on the basis of permits they had received from the Romanian Consulate here, claiming that they are of Romanian nationality and, as such, should be deleted. This issue was solved by requesting proof from the applicants concerning nationality and origin to be issued by the municipality in charge.[33]

32 IAB, OGB, b. 211, no. 5631, List of citizens of city of Belgrade municipalities from the outskirts, who were issued permits and passes for free movement, 2nd of June 1941.

33 Document published in Dragoljub Acković, *Romi u Beogradu*..., p. 253.

On the other hand, a letter sent already on the 5th of June to Dragi Jovanović by a group of twenty-six Roma "original settlers" is indicative:

> To Sir City of Belgrade Governor
>
> On the third of the current month, a regulation concerning Jews and Gypsies was published in the paper "Novo Vreme". According to the regulation, Gypsies are made equal with Jews in almost everything. This equation of us Gypsies with Jews is obviously unfounded, especially when it comes to us, Belgrade Gypsies, and generally city Gypsies in Serbia. Families of those Gypsies in Serbian cities have been living there in many cases over a hundred years, so that we have almost always been considered not newcomers but original settlers. Nearly 90% of our families residing in cities have been of Serbian Eastern Orthodox faith since the earliest times and we, as citizens, have almost always had the same rights and the same obligations as other citizens, while our national feeling, among Gypsy natives, has been exclusively Serbian. It's blatant that we, the Gypsies, have always been the most loyal citizens of our country. We have done army service, paid taxes and discharged all our other obligations towards the state as all other Serbs. By way of honest and quiet work, the majority of us, city Gypsies, have made ourselves modest households and settled down to family life. A large number of us Gypsies are trained in various crafts, especially in Serbia proper, while the greatest number of us are exclusively musicians. As craftsmen, we have been earning daily bread for our families honourably and honestly.
>
> All the above also holds true because in the racial-biological aspect, not one country – except Croatia nowadays – has singled out Gypsies from Aryans, therefore, Sir Governor, on the behalf of Serbian Gypsies – especially Serbian Gypsies who are Belgrade natives, we hereby most kindly request the following:
>
> 1) that the regulation dated this 3rd of June, which equates us with Jews, be changed;
>
> 2) that Gypsies musicians be allowed to work at common taverns, so as to be able to earn their daily bread for their families in an honest way, using their craft, with the proviso that we will strictly respect regulations that ban work on the radio, in theatres, variétés, bars and cinemas.
>
> Finally we would like to point out: that in Belgrade there are a lot of Gypsies newcomers, who are beggars, thieves and the like. Those Gypsies don't have any connection with us natives, either in the religious or

national or any other aspect, so we would like to request that they be banished from Belgrade so that we, proper citizens, wouldn't be blamed because of them.

Up until now, authorities have appointed from our ranks the chieftain of Belgrade Gypsies. This has been of general usefulness so we request from Sir Governor to appoint one chieftain now, so that he would provide the authorities with all explanations and assist them in governing Gypsies in Belgrade. We will take the liberty to propose for that purpose our most renowned man, Mr. Zdravko Milosavljević, musician, residing at the address Banjalučka 4.

Hoping that Sir Governor will take our request into consideration, we remain, respectfully Yours,

June the 5th 1941
In Belgrade

(signatures of 26 people)[34]

It is difficult to comprehend the circumstances in which such a letter was written, as it is difficult to interpret whether the text was written out of fear or if the undersigned had perhaps foreseen what would befall them; or maybe it was the need of a group, among the most emancipated Roma, to show their loyalty towards the new authorities and be accepted as such; or maybe it was just an attempt to protect their selfish interest. The class difference stressed in the letter, according to which the newcomers are second-rate in comparison with the original settlers, probably had a crucial meaning in later application of genocidal measures: subsequently, killing poor, "uncivilized" and "improper citizens" didn't rouse any empathy among native Roma, or among other Belgrade citizens.

Whether or not that letter had any impact on quisling authorities is hard to determine, as it is hard to determine if quisling authorities attempted to gain something to that effect from German occupational

34 Document published in Dragoljub Acković, *Romi u Beogradu*..., pp. 252-254. The letter has its version in German: IAB, OGB, b. 590 „An Herrn Polizeipräsident der Stadt Belgrad".

authorities. The fact that the decision on the fate of Roma was nonetheless made by Administrative Headquarters Chief Turner on the 11th of July,[35] i.e. that it arrived from Berlin[36] – according to which the Roma nomads were to be separated from natives and become the sole victims of anti-Roma measures – indicates that the letter probably didn't affect the stance of occupational authorities, who were the only ones capable of making a relevant decision.

It was after the the 11th of July regulation that many Roma had the opportunity of being deleted from lists of "Gypsies". In other words, it meant that they were automatically able to regain all citizens' rights they had enjoyed up to the 30th of May and to stop wearing the yellow armband. Thanks to these measures they could once more move freely about town, visiting public places, ride on trams and, most significantly, return to their jobs. In this manner, many of those musicians who earned by playing, for instance, at taverns and other public venues and who succeeded in proving their permanent residence in Belgrade, could return to those places and continue a more or less normal life (it should never be forgotten that in his regulation, Turner stressed that "for the time being" the measures should not apply to permanently residing "Gypsies"); furthermore, coach-drivers and cart-drivers were again able to make a living by transporting people and goods. The few Roma employed in city structures also demanded to return to work, which was approved for some. In certain cases, they wrote an application directly to the Ministry of Internal Affairs:

> By the City of Belgrade Governorship Decision VII No. 24974/41, dated the 5th of June 1941, I was fired as a "Gypsy" from the D.T.C. Service where I had been employed as a driver since 1928 up until the day of this regulation. The Decision about my dismissal followed on the

35 Cf. chapter on genocide in Serbia.

36 AVII, Military Courts, case Harald Turner and others, 3/III, b. 1, Georg Kiessel, minutes concerning the hearing, 18 October 1946, p. 3; and minutes concerning the hearing, 25 October 1941, p. 3.

> grounds of regulation by the Military Commander in Serbia on the declaration of Jews and Gypsies.
>
> By way of order by Military Commander in Serbia D.N. no. 2051.2142/41 dated the 11th of July 1941, I was deleted from the list of Gypsies to which the abovementioned Military Commander's regulation applies, which proof by the City of Belgrade Administration I also have in writing. On the grounds of the above, since I have a notice of dismissal, I kindly request to return to my job where I spent 13 years as an honest worker, driver at the Tram and Lighting Authority.[37]

Over the following two months, up to several days before genocidal measures took the lives of many Roma and Jews, the City of Belgrade Administration initiated a new wave of checks on personnel and employees in municipality services. In a separate regulation dated the 22nd of September, Dragi Jovanović again ordered that a check be carried out so as to determine if any employees are of Jewish or "Gypsy" origin, but, unlike at the start of June, the deadline was probably much longer this time. Thus, for instance, while the Department for cemeteries informed the authorities, already on the 23rd of September, that "during the past two years, not one Jew has been hired", the Governing department sent a response of similar content rather late, on the 27th of October. At about the same period, other departments followed suit, paying attention not only to Jews, but to Roma as well: "Further to the request of that Department and regulation by Mr. Presiding II No. 16252 dated the 22nd of September 1941", wrote the Legal department chief on the 24th of October, "the Department is being informed that in the service of the present Sector there is no Jewish or Gypsy clerk, with request for further authority".[38] Other depart-

37 IAB, OGB, b. 2, unnumbered, Božidar Stojanović's plea to the Ministry of Internal Affairs, the 18th of September 1941

38 IAB, OGB, b. 214, no. 704, Belgrade City Governorship, Department for cemeteries to the Governing department, 23rd of September 1941; no. 19889, Belgrade City Governorship, Governing department to the Personnel department, 27th of October 1941; no. 16252, Belgrade City Governorship, Legal department to Governing department, 23th of October 1941.

ments responded similarly, among which were the Cultural department, Museum department and Library department.[39]

At the same time, in other administration segments, racial belonging i.e. "Aryan" belonging, represented one of the most salient attributes that all other employees were compelled to prove. An example of the application of anti-Roma and anti-Jewish regulations is the appointment of "Municipality Newspaper" director in October 1941. At the time, City of Belgrade Administration sent a communique to the Serbian Journalists Association about the decision on reestablishing the municipality gazette, as well as about the appointment of future editor-in-chief. One of the prerequisites for successfully holding such a job, in addition to, of course, substantial experience and professional education, was proof that the candidate wasn't a Jew or "Gypsy". As a kind of necessary addendum to the submitted résumé, the selected candidate had to write, in his own hand, the following statement:

> Pursuant to Art. 2 item 1 of the Directive concerning the press in Serbia, I hereby state that neither I myself, nor my wife, are Jews or Gypsies nor have any of our ancestors been Jews or Gypsies. I make this statement accepting full legal responsibility.[40]

"Racial" belonging, or rather – non-belonging to the Jewish or Roma people became, just like in the Third Reich and other occupied or quisling countries, one of the most important pieces of information in the personal description of each citizen. Another example is an ordinary communique between two departments of the city municipality, in this case the Firefighter and Governing department, which relates to validation of the identity card of a Firefighter Command clerk. In concise sentences, bureaucratically written, the Firefighter depart-

39 IAB, OGB, b. 214, no. 19870, Belgrade City Governorship, Cultural department to Governing department, 23rd of October 1941; no. 198, Belgrade City Governorship, Museum department to Governing department, 24th of October 1941; no. 666, Belgrade City Governorship, Library department, 24th of October 1941.

40 IAB, OGB, b. 214, unnumbered, Serbian Journalists Association Chairman.

ment chief, requesting validation, guarantees that "the above person is of neither Jewish nor Gypsy origin".[41]

In the period when the racial belonging of city of Belgrade municipality clerks was being checked, the situation in the city regarding Jews was already being steered towards their extermination, while soon the same was to hold true for the Roma.

First arrests of the Roma

The situation in Belgrade stayed rather calm up to the start of July, when an uprising broke out across the country under the leadership of the Communist Party of Yugoslavia. Much like in other towns and villages all over the country, in Belgrade too, the representatives of German and quisling authorities became the target of communists, where traffic and communication connections, garages and other places were subjected to sabotage daily. As a response, as early as the start of July, the occupiers introduced measures for intimidating the citizens; primarily executions of communists and Jews.[42]

The concentration camp at Banjica, founded in the beginning of July, for the purposes of internment of communists and Spanish fighters, quickly became a place where smaller or larger groups of prisoners were brought daily from Gestapo and Special Police prisons, as well as directly after raids and arrests. A certain number of Roma from Belgrade and the vicinity started arriving at that camp.

The first documented cases of Roma interned at the Banjica camp relates to groups of Roma from two villages near Belgrade, Meljak and Sremčica, mid-September 1941.

41 IAB, OGB, b. 213, no. 987, Belgrade City Governorship, Firefight command department to Governing department, 4th of September 1941.

42 Cf.: Radomir Bogdanović, Đorđe O. Piljević (eds.), *Beograd u ratu i revoluciji 1941-1945*, I-II, Istorijski arhiv grada Beograda, Belgrade, 1984; Rena Rädle and Milovan Pisarri (eds.), ibid.

During that period, despite the attempts of Administrative Headquarters Chief Turner to get the "Gypsy" issue solved as soon as possible, together with the Jewish issue, the Roma were still not an integral part of bureaucratic arithmetic by which the occupational authorities were sending Jews to their deaths (as well as captured partisans and their supporters) as a sign of retaliation for killed and wounded German soldiers. The question thus arises as to why the two mentioned Roma groups were arrested and taken to the Banjica camp and then executed within several days. The scenario tends to overlap with what started happening a month and a half later in the streets of Belgrade's outskirts, however, a deeper analysis yields a different explanation.

Specifically, on the 12th of September, in the village of Meljak, partisans carried out an attack against the Valjevo gendarmerie squadron. During the clash, as thoroughly reported by its commander, one communist was killed, while many were wounded, whereas one gendarme from the squadron was missing, and another wounded; according to the same commander, "roughly 40 bandits participated in the battle, assisted by villagers (Gypsies) of Meljak".[43] The next day, following orders by the City of Belgrade Administration, fifteen male Roma from the same village were interned at the Banjica camp.[44] All were executed three days later, probably as part of larger retaliation because of a partisan attack against German soldiers at the Topčider train station, in the capital's outskirts, when a total of 91 captives from Banjica were shot.[45]

The Roma from Meljak were therefore arrested by the quisling authorities and taken to Banjica just like many other civilians charged with helping the partisans or suspected to be their adherents. As such they were executed at the orders of German authorities, but as part of a larger group of Banjica internees: they were not subjected to the ra-

43 *Zbornik NOR*, volume I, book 21, doc. 3.

44 Evica Micković and Milena Radojčić (eds.), ibid., pp. 76-77 (prisoners from no. 219 to no. 233).

45 Venceslav Glišić (ed.), *Beograd u ratu i revoluciji*, book 1, Istorijski arhiv Beograda, Belgrade, 1984, p. 243.

cial policy of extermination, nor did they represent a separate group from other victims. They were killed primarily as communist concealers, as confirmed by Nedić's government itself in the document on measures to be undertaken against renegades "who refuse to turn themselves in", in which it is also written that "when capturing renegades such as e.g. gypsies from Meljak (they should be) immediately photographed and published in the press so that the world can see who these are who are pretending to be national heroes. The same thing should be done when catching runaway convicts, Jews and renegades of other nationalities".[46]

What is also noteworthy regarding that event and which provides important elements for interpreting that period is that the group from Meljak was taken to the Banjica camp, which functioned, among other things, as a container for hostages of "political" orientation, not to the Topovske šupe camp, which represented a container for hostages of a "racial" background and where solely Jews were detained at that time. In a way, that situation mirrored the order concerning the execution of hostages, which overlooked primarily communists and Jews as categories of persons to be the subject of retaliation. Contact between those two concentration camps occurred only in extraordinary circumstances: when for some reason it was necessary to transfer a certain number of hostages from Topovske šupe to Banjica – but never vice versa – or when smaller groups of arrested "runaway" Jews were brought to Belgrade from Serbia proper, and were then interned at Banjica. In the first case it is illustrative that a group of about 200 Jews had been transferred, on the 14th of September 1941, to Banjica because of overcrowding at Topovske šupe camp and remained there until the 17th of that same month. The ill were then allowed to be transferred to the Jewish hospital at Dorćol, while the majority of them, 186 people, were shot near Zemun, at Bežanijska kosa.[47]

46 *Zbornik NOR*, volume I, book 21, doc. 4.

47 JIM, k.24-2a-1/2; Evica Micković, Milena Radojčić (eds.), ibid., pp. 77-88 (prisoners from no. 234 to number 420); Milan Koljanin, ibid., pp. 34-35.

The second case pertains to the group of 47 Jewish refugees from Skoplje, whom Bulgarian authorities turned over to the Gestapo at the end of November 1941 and who were shot at the beginning of December after several days spent at Banjica.[48] In both cases, Jews were retained for a rather short period, since they were allocated, usually within several days, to hostage groups for execution, whereas the women were transferred to Sajmište at the beginning of December; in both cases, that transfer was the result of decisions by German authorities. Nevertheless, during the existence of concentration camp Topovske šupe and later Jewish camp at Sajmište, Jews and Roma were interned at Banjica camp individually or in small groups: but in that case as well, it should never be forgotten that the concentration camp itself had a police and political function in the occupational and quisling apparatus. Banjica camp served, among other things, as a place where runaway Jews or Roma were detained for a certain time, probably as much as was needed for an investigation to discover the possible network of concealers or "communists", before execution or transferal to Sajmište.

As in the case of the group of Jews, in the autumn of 1941, group or individual arrests of Roma were registered. It is difficult, at least for the time being, to determine the reason why they were interned at Banjica, but in any case it is important to underscore that they were entered into detainee books as "Gypsies", and that some of them were released after several days. It is possible that they had been brought in, as was the case with the Roma from Meljak, as partisan concealers, and then released after investigation in which it was proven that they had not aided partisans in any way; alternatively they had already been brought in as Roma, but were then released since they were able to prove permanent residence, and so be deleted from lists of "Gyp-

48 Evica Micković, Milena Radojčić (eds.), ibid., pp. 163-166 (prisoners from no. 1557 to no. 1603). Sima Begović, ibid., p. 29. More on that: Milovan Pisarri, *La Shoah in Serbia e Macedonia*, in Laura Brazzo-Michele Sarfatti, *Gli ebrei in Albania sotto il fascismo: una storia da ricostruire*, Giuntina, Firenze, 2010, pp. 169-198.

sies". Ultimately, it should be kept in mind that the month of October was the period in which Turner's proposals on expelling Roma from Serbian territory, i.e. primarily the decision on executing male Roma as hostages, received more realization under Böhme. However, if we take into consideration that possibility, which would, in other words, mean the start of raids and arrests of male Roma on the city of Belgrade territory in order to be shot, certain fundamental questions remain unclarified – why were they interned at the police-political camp at Banjica, not the "racial" reservoir of hostages at Topovske šupe, where a large number of Belgrade Roma were soon collected? Why did internment pertain solely to smaller groups or individuals and why was it started in certain villages outside of Belgrade? Finally, why was there no mention in German documents of the separate hostage category of "Gypsies", which became considerably more visible as late as October in the orders of German authorities?

If we remain on that hypothetical level, the internment of Roma as well as their fate can only be noted. For example, on the 11th of October, the City of Belgrade Administration arrested 19 people from Sremčica, in the vicinity of Belgrade. Of them, the first four men were marked as "Gypsies", while others weren't, although their last names, professions, places of birth and residence, as well as possible family ties with the four Roma, indicate the possibility that they too were Roma who simply reported to the authorities as Serbs.[49] Despite that difference, their fate was the same: they were shot in a large group on the 17th of October, when German authorities ordered the execution

49 Evica Micković, Milena Radojčić (eds.), ibid., pp. 115-116 (prisoners from no. 829 to number 843). Pp. 118-119 (prisoners from no. 877 to number 900) contain another 23 names of Sremčica inhabitants who were arrested on the 16th of October. Among them were two women released on 24th of that same month; out of the rest, 11 were released in the upcoming days, while the remaining ten men were shot on the 17th of October probably together with their neighbors arrested on the 11th of October. Not one of them was listed as "a Gypsy", but in that case it is difficult to determine whether there were among them those Roma who had signed up as Serbs earlier.

of 200 hostages (100 Jews and 100 communists) because two soldiers had been killed the previous day.[50]

Mass arrests in Sremčica continued over the following days: on the 16th of October, the City of Belgrade Administration brought 22 men and two women to Banjica. Ten men were shot the next day, together with others arrested on the 11th of October, while others were released, mostly on the 24th of October.[51] Another group of 12 men from Sremčica were arrested on the 18th of October, but this time by the German army; all were released after slightly over a month, specifically on the 26th of November, thanks to the intervention of City of Belgrade Administration.[52] Although in the two groups there was no-one listed as "a Gypsy", it is entirely possible that many of them were indeed Roma who had not reported as such to Serbian authorities. Why were they brought in and why were some shot while the majority were released, it is hard to determine, but it is nonetheless important to notice certain details. The fact that the second group was brought in by CBA indicates a possibility that they had also been arrested for retaliation, due to an event of local character, as had been the case a month earlier in Meljak. The third group from Sremčica was nevertheless brought in by the German army, i.e. upon direct orders of German, not Serbian authorities, which implies a possibility that those Roma, if they were indeed Roma, were arrested during implementation of genocidal measures (in which many Roma from Belgrade and vicinity were killed during the following days). Their release also leads to several interpretations: according to one, they were released because they introduced themselves as Romanians, since they were speaking the Romanian language.[53]

50 *Zbornik NOR*, volume I, book 2, doc. 142.

51 Evica Micković, Milena Radojčić (eds.), ibid., pp. 118-119 (prisoners from no. 877 to no. 900).

52 Ibid., pp. 119–120 (prisoners from no. 901 to no. 913).

53 Dragoljub Acković, *Romi u Beogradu*..., p. 245. On the same page, the author mentions that the Roma who passed themselves off as Romanians were spared reprisals.

In addition to the Roma known by name, who were brought to Banjica in that period as well as later, it should be noted that there was another group of people recorded as "Gypsies" who were brought in on the 31st of October by the German army. The fact that it consisted of male Roma from several places – 8 from Boleč, from the outskirts of Belgrade, 6 from Senaja, from the vicinity of Mladenovac, also near Belgrade, and 1 from Belgrade itself (Marinkova bara)[54] – and that, except in two cases, all were shot on the 3rd of November, indicates that they too were the victims of genocidal measures systematically implemented in Belgrade and vicinity, during those days, by German and Serbian forces. The fact that they were brought to Banjica, not to Topovske šupe, in a way confirms the function that the camp had during the Holocaust against Jews and during genocide against the Roma: in those "extraordinary" circumstances, when a substantial number of people were being arrested, while the detainment capacities at Topovske šupe were rather limited, smaller groups were interned at Banjica and shot within several days.

In addition to these cases, it is possible that a certain number of Roma passed through Banjica even though they were not entered into data files, which are anyhow incomplete. Friedrich Willi, the German sub-officer in charge of certain assignments related to Banjica camp, stated that "(...) Besides him, Sergeant Edgar Enge and Ensign Wilhelm Boden also carried out the executions, mostly of Jews and gypsies".[55]

54 Evica Micković, Milena Radojčić (eds.), ibid., pp. 125 and 129 (prisoners from no. 994 to no. 1008).

55 AVII, Military Courts, case Wilhelm Fuchs and others, 3/III, b. 1, the hearing of Willi Friedrich, p. 5.

Collecting the Roma from Belgrade and vicinity: genocide against the Roma

The date that marks a dramatic turnabout in the lives of all civilians in Serbia, especially Jews and Roma, is the 16th of September 1941. On that day, when Keitel issued the order about mass retaliations on all occupied territories, Hitler personally appointed General Böhme to be the head of all military forces in Serbia. The decision for his supreme command to be placed in Belgrade wasn't the outcome of coincidence but of a clear awareness that the battle against insurgents must be fought in the heart of the then most dangerous uprising wave in the Balkans, that is – in Serbia.[56]

Jews, already victims of mass executions, were joined by the Roma. Because 21 German soldiers had been killed near Topola on the 2nd of October, the decision was made by Administrative Headquarters Chief Turner and general Böhme to shoot 2,100 "Jew and Gypsy" hostages; 805 from the concentration camp in Šabac, while the rest from the transit camp in Belgrade,[57] i.e. from Topovske šupe; a decision which marked the commencement of mass extermination of male Roma. Although it is clear that a certain number of Roma from Šabac were killed in those executions, it is not clear whether or not Belgrade Roma were also shot: on the one hand, in some testimonies, it is claimed that there had been arrests in Belgrade on the 10th of October and that the victims were executed at Jabuka on 13th of that month,[58] on the other hand, available German documents don't mention any other victims except Jews.[59]

During those days, political and racial prison camps of hostages were being emptied at great speed. For everyday mass executions, the numbers of male Jews quickly became exhausted, and at the end of

56 Cf. chapter on genocide against the Roma in Serbia.

57 *Zbornik NOR*, volume I, book I, doc. 200, pp. 171-172.

58 Cf. e.g.: AJ, 110-273-9,10 and 11; 21, 22, 23, 24; IAB, „Sajmište" files.

59 Cf. e.g.: *Zbornik NOR*, volume 1, book 1, doc. 212, pp. 200-203.

the month just a small number remained alive. For that very reason, German authorities ordered that those belonging to other "racial" categories be arrested. Male Roma from Belgrade were then subjected to mass arrests in the following period and shot in order to meet Böhme's quotas, as well as to carry out the first phase of the final solution against them, the same way that, the first phase of the final solution was carried out against Jews. Arrests of the Roma in Belgrade were planned solely when the Topovske šupe camp had almost emptied, for the second time (the first time had been after the execution of the majority of Banat Jews, while the second after the execution of Belgrade Jews).[60] Therefore, shortly after Turner's order to arrest all of the remaining male Jews and all male Roma in Serbia, as hostages intended for execution,[61] German and quisling authorities in Belgrade "set into action". The operation was most likely run by Fritz Stracke, chief of sector IV B4 for Jews (and "Gypsies").[62]

Arrests in Belgrade began on the 28th of October, on the territory of the IX quarter. The well-known area of Jatagan mala was then the target of joint efforts between German and quisling forces. Soldiers and policemen of occupational authorities had a kind of logistic assignment in that action. Early morning, at 4 a.m., while the majority of citizens were still asleep in their homes, not even suspecting what would happen, they blocked the streets and districts in which the Roma lived. Simultaneously, Serbian Special Police agents and local station gendarmes knew which houses they would barge into and where they would find all the persons intended for arrest. They had accurate data, based on existing "gypsy" lists made as early as the previous June, although they probably didn't adhere to them, so that they arrested all the Roma they found. Whether or not they knew what the objective of that big endeavour was can only be presumed, but no response can lessen the extent of their responsibility. They indeed knew,

60 AJ, 110-908-219.

61 Cf. chapter on genocide against the Roma in Serbia.

62 AJ, 110-908-219.

with a rather great deal of certainty, that they would take these people to the nearby concentration camp at Autokomanda, and they knew that those arrested would most likely be sent somewhere else, as had been the regular procedure with Jews. There was still hearsay that Jews were being sent to Germany for labour, but there was more frequent proof they had been taken by trucks to execution at Jabučki rit.

Not many people participated in the action, perhaps just several dozen. Greater forces weren't even necessary; since there had obviously been no fear of any revolt or mass fleeing. The ease with which the authorities always subdued the Roma, even before the war, as well as the image of Roma in society and before the authorities themselves – squalid, uneducated, politically ignorant – didn't indicate possibilities for any reaction by the victims. Substantial forces weren't necessary due to the fact that there was no need for great organization: the destination of the captives, the concentration camp, was just several hundred meters away, a couple of kilometers at the most, from the location where the action was carried out.

Outside occupational and quisling circles, as well as outside of police and gendarmerie forces engaged in the action, it was difficult to foresee that what was happening to Jews would soon happen to the Roma as well; despite the fact that they had been marked and placed under strict legal regulations, there were no concrete indications of such mass arrests.

When barging into houses, the agents and gendarmes weren't cruel, except in rare cases. They entered houses and quickly woke up the household members, asking that males exit and come with them. So as to prevent panic, they often used false promises or explanations: one of the more frequent ones was that males are being rounded up for the purposes of felling trees at Ada or some other location and that it wouldn't last long.[63] The lie was obviously chosen so as to seem the most convincing and most efficient, being that, at the time, city of Bel-

63 AJ, 110-273-31, 43, 147, 434, 470 etc.

grade municipality was organizing the cutting down of forests in various locations at the outskirts due to great demand by the population, refugees and the municipality apparatus itself.[64] In some other cases, policemen said that it's just an identification check and that they would be taken to the local gendarmerie station to be checked, after which they would be let go.[65]

The raid was carried out quickly, efficiently and without complications. Gendarmes and German soldiers didn't come across resistance, either by the Roma or others present, in the vast majority, Serbs. The Roma exited their houses calmly, while gendarmes grouped them and led them into already prepared trucks. Some victims knew the gendarmes who arrested them, while their countenance burnt into the memory of their wives, daughters, mothers:

> (...) The arrest was carried out by a civilian I know was the scribe at IX quarter, I don't know his name, but he is of middle height, stocky, swarthy, with trimmed moustache, around 33 years old. Of the guards, one had the rank of sergeant, while the other was a private. I don't know their names but I remember they were both tall, stocky and fair-skinned. Regarding age, the sergeant could be about 45, while the other one around 25. (...)[66]

Those intended to be collected were given the opportunity to bring the barest necessities with them, some food, money, clothes and other items that would be useful while "cutting down the forest". Trucks made their way towards the seat of the IX quarter, where they made about an hour's stop, then continued towards Topovske šupe. During that break, the Roma were probably registered in separate lists, which the quarter administration later sent to their seniors, or at least sent the information on the number of captives, so that the German and quisling administration would know how many people had been re-

64 IAB, UGB, b. 214, no. 19743, Poglavarstvo grada Beograda građanstvu Beograda (City of Belgrade governorship to the citizens of Belgrade), 25 October 1941

65 AJ, 110-273-145, statement of Cveta Marinković; and 149, statement of Zagorka Nikolić.

66 AJ, 110-273-130, statement of Živka Stanojević Mandić.

moved, i.e. sent to the concentration camp with the final destination – execution field – and how to proceed further.

Side by side with the raid at Jatagan mala, the German army and Serbian gendarmerie did the same at Čukarica, the city district in south-western Belgrade. According to the same pattern, the Roma were first taken to the seat of the local XIV quarter and immediately afterwards to Topovske šupe.[67] That same day, a raid was also conducted in Žarkovo.[68]

The following day, on the 29th of October, new raids led to mass arrests in the IV quarter, specifically in Cvijićeva Street,[69] as well as on the territory of the VIII quarter, at Čubura.[70] Gendarmes from those two quarters didn't have a big job like their colleagues the previous day at Jatagan mala, since in those areas the Roma marked for arrest lived in just several streets. Unlike Cvijićeva Street and Čubura, many more police forces were needed for the raid carried out the same day at Marinkova bara, where the inhabitants were primarily Roma (as in the parts of Pašino brdo that belonged to XI quarter).

The action started early morning, like the previous day at Jatagan mala, at Čukarica and Žarkovo. Around four o'clock, the German army surrounded the entire area, after which the gendarmes and policemen went from house to house and took away the men, saying that they are going to a hearing at the local gendarmerie station after which they would shortly return home, or would be taken to Ada for felling trees.[71] Although they found the majority asleep, some had already known they would be taken away, probably because news about the raids carried out the previous day in neighbouring areas had spread over Marinkova bara too:

67 AJ, 110-273-472; and 739, statement of Draginja Bošnjaković.

68 IAB, „Sajmište" files, statements of Miodrag Petrović and Milutin Petrović.

69 AJ, 110-273-419, statement of Mara Marinković.

70 AJ, 110-273-534, statement of Nada Savić; and 535, statement of Anton Tepeh.

71 AJ, 110-273-124, statement of Mileva Stojanović; and 141, statement of Ljubica Martinović.

> (...) They ordered that my husband get dressed and go with them. My husband got dressed, he had his new black suit on, new shoes, new winter coat and in addition he brought two pairs of underwear and a kilim to use as a blanket, which he had prepared in advance because we knew that the police were rounding up Gypsies. (...)[72]

In those chaotic moments, some tried to hide under the bed or at a neighbour's, but they too were found or snitched on and taken away by force.[73] The fact that snitches turned in the victims contributed to the thoroughness and efficiency of rounding up of male Roma from the XI quarter. It seems that certain members of the local gendarmerie were the most zealous in this task, as even before the arrest they had abused the Roma in different ways and kept close ties with Germans and Special Police agents. One of them, Đorđe Uzunović:

> (...) In the lead-up to taking of male Gypsies to the concentration camp, all night he paced the whole street and stood near Gypsy houses, certainly with the intention of guarding them and watching lest someone should escape, because he knew they would be taken away. Then, in the morning, around 4 o'clock, together with his wife and daughter-in-law Adela, he entered all Gypsy houses with the German police and denounced them. What is more, it seems that he was the person who gave to the Germans an accurate list of Gypsy houses, since Germans didn't enter other, Serbian houses.[74]

The Roma from Marinkova bara were taken by trucks to the gendarmerie station, located in the primary school "Branislav Nušić", while the captives from Pašino brdo were transferred to the seat of the XI quarter at Ibarska Street.[75] In both cases, they were detained a short time before being sent to Topovske šupe.

In the report by the Military Commander in Serbia to the Commandant of the South-East, written at 1:15 p.m. on that same 29th of

72 AJ, 110-273-132, statement of Draga Lekić; cf. AJ, 110-273-143, statement of Natalija Savić; and 141, statement of Ljubica Martinović.

73 AJ, 110-273-167, statement of Mileva Đurić; and 75, statement of Mara Jovanović.

74 AJ, 110-273-833.

75 AJ, 110-273-141, statement of Ljubica Martinović.

October, it was concisely written: "Belgrade: 250 Gypsies arrested (Belgrad: 250 Zigeuner verhaftet)".[76]

As a result of these raids, women and children were left without their husbands, fathers and sons:

> On the 29th of October 1941, during the surrounding of Marinkova bara by Germans, two agents and two S.D.S. gendarmes barged into our apartment at 9, Zajcova Street and demanded that all the men who were in the apartment at the moment get ready. My husband, Velimir Stanković, C.B.M. employee, 53 years old, married, 1 child, born in Ub, brother-in-law, Živorad Radosavljević, musician, 20 years old, born in Meljak, married, the father of 1 child, brothers: Aleksandar Matić, worker, 30 y.o., married, with three children and Žika Matić, worker at C.B.M., 20 y.o., married, with two children, both born in Ub, all of Eastern Orthodox faith, Serbian nationality. From the apartment they were taken to the camp at Autokomanda, where they were detained for two days and then taken to an unknown destination. I haven't received any news from them to this day.[77]

On the third and last day of taking away the Roma, the German and quisling authorities focused on the remaining parts of the city, primarily the outskirts, as well as on nearby villages. They continued the action above all at Pašino brdo, from where those who lived in the part that belonged to the XI quarter were taken the previous day, blocking the other section, which belonged to the VII quarter, as well as in Bulbulder.[78]

It is unclear whether or not anyone succeeded in escaping in the meantime, if anyone was preparing to flee, if they hid or whether they simply waited for their fate. They were certainly able to presume that their turn would also come, since their neighbours from adjoining quarters and streets had already been taken away and transferred to

76 AVII, NA, NAV-N-T-312, 452/8037695; and *Zbornik NOR*, volume I, book I, doc. 238.

77 AJ, 110-273-113, statement of Milena Stanković.

78 AJ, 110-273-914, statement of Slavka Stojanović; 807, statement of Zagorka Todorović; etc.

the camp at Autokomanda. What is certain is that in this case as well, the local gendarmerie played the crucial role, carrying out thorough searches and arrests. Testimonies of women from Pašino brdo, outline the role of the gendarmerie played in these events even more clearly. Already at Jatagan mala and at Marinkova bara, the presence of scribes from local quarters was noticed during the arrests, but at Pašino brdo, for days before the raid, the commander of the gendarmerie station carefully catalogued all "Gypsy" houses, as many female witnesses attested: "In the lead-up to the arrests, the commander of Pašino brdo station, Dragi Isaković, made a list of Gypsy houses"[79]; "I would like to point out that on the eve of that day, Dragi Isaković, commander of Pašino brdo station, made a list of all the houses in that area"[80]; "(...) but I will mention that, just before the arrests, Dragi Isaković, commander of Pašino brdo station, made a list of all Gypsy houses."[81].

Similarly to the role that the snitch Uzunović had at Marinkova bara, the raid site was obviously prepared according to clear directives by the City of Belgrade Administration superiors. The detailed procedure described in the case of Pašino brdo, as well as the identical manner in which the Roma were taken away, indicates that two days before the arrests, the same preparations had been carried out, as well as that Uzunović wasn't just a snitch, but rather had clear instructions on what he should do and that he had accepted the job proudly, performing it diligently. Was he the only one or were there more such cases, it is not known, but the efficiency which the gendarmerie, bureaucracy and, of course, the German army showed, once again indicates that cases of refusing duty or "turning" one's head away so as to save someone, were rare. The vast majority of gendarmes, municipality clerks and policemen were doing their jobs, even when they had the opportunity, at least theoretically, not to do them, thus saving at

79 AJ, 110-273-759, statement of Stanica Perić.

80 AJ, 110-273-771, statement of Katarina Radosavljević.

81 AJ, 110-273-793, statement of Ljubica Sremčević.

least someone who is their fellow citizen: the case of one of the rare attempts to escape is illustrative; a man from Bulbulder succeeded in reaching Čukarica on the day of the raid, but was then captured by the local gendarmes and turned in to the Germans.[82]

The last day of arrests of the Roma in Belgrade included surrounding villages which were under the jurisdiction of the City of Belgrade Administration. Gendarmes of the V quarter carried out a raid at Višnjica, assisted by Ljotić's volunteers[83] and most likely with the support of the local municipality governor. There were no Germans, as the municipality governor himself testified after the war.[84]

During the same period, arrests were conducted at Banjica,[85] at Dorćol[86] and at Mirijevo.[87] In the upcoming days, the gendarmerie and police drew their job to a close, carrying out individual arrests around town, probably with the objective of arresting runaway Roma or those that could be "added" to the already immense numbers of those taken away. Such cases were registered on the 31st of October at a tavern in Bulevar Oslobođenja, while on the 3rd of November at Sveti Klimentije Street, south of Pašino brdo.[88] That same day, several Roma were captured at Boleč and Senaja and taken to Banjica.[89]

According to stories that went round town, in the autumn of 1941, about 12,000 Roma and Jews were arrested.[90]

82 AJ, 110-273-570 and 571.

83 AJ, 110-273-967 and 970, statements of Jovanka Paunović, Marija Radomirović, Draga Radimirović.

84 AJ, 110-273-976, statement of Aleksandar Dimitijrević.

85 AJ, 110-273-817, statement of Leposava Jovanović; and others.

86 AJ, 110-273-858, statement of Ružica Stojković Zlatković; and 860, statement of Olga Petrović.

87 AJ, 110-273-942, statement of Nikolija Marić and Mileva Mihajlović; 944, statement of Mira Kostić; and others.

88 AJ, 110-273-537, 625 and 626.

89 Cf. footnote no. 54.

90 AJ, 110-273-826, statement of Živomir Đorđević.

At the concentration camp Topovske šupe

In mid-August 1941, in agreement with the German occupational authorities in Belgrade, the Volksdeutsche made a decision to "cleanse" Banat from Jews. Although some of them had already been shot in individual executions, often together with Serbs, there was no mass extermination or deportation to the Reich; rather it had been planned that the entire Jewish population, around 3,000 people, be transferred to Belgrade. Jews from Pančevo, Petrovgrad (Zrenjanin), Vršac and other towns were arrested and interned at temporary camps and after several days, the majority of them were transported by barges to Serbia's capital. In Belgrade they were received by Jewish Chairmanship representatives, whose assistance was all they could count on; except those who had relatives in Belgrade. German authorities had not designated a particular place where the newcomers would be lodged, rather they ordered that the captives be received at privately owned Jewish houses or as assigned by the Jewish Chairmanship. Difficulties, primarily of an economic nature, regarding the circumstances in which the Chairmanship operated, as well as ghettoization to which the Jews, even though still free, had been subjected, did not provide many possibilities for accommodation. Banat Jews were therefore lodged at the Jewish hospital, at the synagogue and in the "Oneg Shabbat" building.

Such numbers of compelled arrivals drastically impacted on the already delicate position of Belgrade Jews, rousing fear among occupational authorities that it could lead to unrest, strengthening of the anti-fascist movement or simply the outbreak of disease because of the conditions in which these people were forced to live. Consequently, men were separated from women and interned at the newly formed "Jewish transit camp" in Topovske šupe buildings, which were an integral part of the big barracks "Kraljević Andrija", at the location known as Autokomanda,[91] in the part of the city bordering Jatagan mala and

91 The only study that exists on Topovske šupe is the short article: Nenad Žarković, *Prolazni logor Topovske šupe*, in Nasleđe, no. 10/2009, pp. 103-112.

Marinkova bara. In some manner, probably by way of barbed wire, the buildings were separated from the rest, in which Serbian refugees from the Independent State of Croatia were lodged, among others; but, because of the camp's location in the urban context, the Jewish captives and their suffering were visible daily not only to onlookers, but also to passers-by. The newly formed camp for Jews, which was also one of the first concentration camps for Jews in Europe, was located in a densely populated part of the city: Marinkova bara and Jatagan mala were located at its southern and south-eastern side, while in the north, where the camp entrance was, there was an important traffic artery of Belgrade, primarily the tram route. That way, from the moment the camp was founded, the Roma looked at those buildings every morning, every afternoon, every evening, without a hint that for many of them – for all men – it would be their last residence before death. At the same time, other Belgrade citizens commuted to the city centre and back for work, shopping or simply entertainment. Pupils regularly went to nearby schools, football fans cheered for their favourite team every Sunday at the BSK stadium, just five hundred metres away from Topovske šupe, while patrons filled taverns and restaurants.

Jews were taken from the concentration camp to forced labour, which had been mandatory for them since April. They cleared away ruins, unloaded goods at the docks, repaired the sewage pipes and waterworks, often serving German and quisling masters. Topovske šupe looked like a prison, a place of forced lodging, maybe even a labour camp, but it was still not clear that its existence was in the function of destruction of Jewish male population. In addition to the internment of Banat Jews, the first group of Belgrade Jews was brought to the camp, made up of those incapable of labour.[92] Even though Jews had already been the victims of executions, from the moment when retaliation was introduced in the ratio 100:1 and 50:1 respectively, and Jews included in one of the first categories of hostages for execution (the

92 AJ, 110-593-161, statement of Alfred Kazes.

second category being communists) – all of them actually became dead captives, whose fate had already been sealed and who were just waiting for the moment when Germans, under the pretense that they have to pay for partisan battles, would take them from the camp and lead them down the road of no return. When the camp was emptied enough, the Germans would bring an even bigger group of Jews. Up until the 20th of September, the remaining Banat Jews were brought in, who had still been at Banat camps,[93] while the last mass arrest of Belgrade Jews was carried out on the 18th of October.[94]

On average there were up to 1,500 captives at the camp, whereas at the moment of the aforementioned last arrest of Belgrade Jews, it contained over 3,000 people. Living conditions were very harsh; the Jewish Chairmanship was compelled to supply the camp with food, while every attempt to flee was punished by death:

> (...) For some time I was working outside the camp in the daytime, while at night I returned to the camp to sleep. In the beginning of October there were roughly 1,000 to 1,500 people at the camp. That number was increasing constantly up until the 19th of October when all the men from Belgrade were rounded up and when I ran away, there were at least 3,000 to 4,000 people at the camp. We lived at the barracks and in three to four stables. The rooms were so overcrowded that you could hardly lie down at night. People were lying down in hallways and paths left for passing through. Germans didn't give us any bed linens. All we got from them was straw and it was insufficient.[95]

Women and children were allowed, at least initially, to come to the concentration camp entrance and give their dear ones food, until one day they were told that their husband, son, father or relative had been sent to Germany for labour.[96] Of course it was a lie, just like the story

93 Zdenko Löwenthal (ed.), *The crimes of the fascist occupants and their collaborators against Jews in Yugoslavia*, reprint of the first edition, Jasenovac research Institute, Belgrade-New York, 2005, p. 15.

94 Ibid., p. 15.

95 JIM, k. 24, 2a-1/2, statement of Alt Kalman.

96 Ibid.

intended for internees themselves had been a lie, that they are going to a labour site outside of town, while they were being loaded into empty trucks and given work tools, and then driven towards the execution fields. The sole ones who knew what was going on, in addition to camp administration, BdS, Military Commander, Administrative Headquarters Chief Turner and some German senior officers and representatives, were the quisling authorities. The police for Jews and Gypsies, keeping files on Jews designated for forced labour and organizing labour in the quarters, had to know which labour force it had at its disposal daily. It also had to know how many Jews there were that it needed to control. Therefore, after each taking away of Jews from Topovske šupe, the police received a report on the number of those taken away, with lists of names and surnames. At the back of each file, they then wrote the sign LS, "Logor streljan" ("Camp executed"), so they would know the person is no longer at their disposal, labour-wise and in the economic sense.[97] Bureaucratically, they had to keep track of the available work force.

All Roma who had been arrested in raids at the end of October were transported by trucks to Topovske šupe after short stops at the seats of quarters or gendarmerie stations. They didn't travel much, to be exact, it could be said that they didn't travel at all, they just stayed in the area where they had lived, but now in a completely new world that they had only seen from the outside until recently. Cramped in the camp, they took the places of those Jews who had been executed the previous days, while they were subjected to perfidious treatment:

> When a certain number of Jews from the concentration camp were liquidated during the first days of November, they started bringing in, by trucks, larger groups of Gypsies from Belgrade and Serbia proper, allocating them to the places of liquidated Jews. Gypsies were grouped in a horse stable and one room on the upper floor and there were about 1,000 of them. I remember there were Gypsies from Požarevac, Vranje,

97 AJ, 110-593-160, statement of Salomon Altarac; and 154, statement of Moša Simonović.

> Niš etc.[98] (...) However, the German camp guards often barged into the stables and rooms at night, taking wristwatches, fountain pens, money and other items. They did so mostly while inebriated, while firing guns. It was a very frequent occurrence that the German camp guards got drunk at the sentry box, held orgies and then, drunk and shooting their guns, assailed certain Jews. There were also occasional fights (beatings) of Jews, but they beat Gypsies much more.[99]

Beatings were probably frequent, in that short time span while the Roma were at the camp.[100] Food was probably not given to them or maybe the Jewish Chairmanship increased the number of meals served in those days, so as to provide at least something for them too. Many had brought something with them from home, while many musicians had also brought their instruments. What is certain is that their wives immediately saw to it that they brought something to eat, as the Jewish women were doing:

> (...) As soon as the blockade of our street ended, I went to the XI quarter but they told me there that they don't know anything. The next day, when I was passing by, Dušan Depalo, shoe repairman, saw me and told me my husband is in the concentration camp at Topovske šupe. I came home immediately, prepared food and went there so as to give him the food. However, since the mass of people who came to visit was greater than the number of internees, Germans and gendarmes didn't let us approach, so crowding ensued and Germans shot in the air while gendarmes beat the mass of people with poles and their gun butts.[101]

The Roma stayed in the concentration camp just several days, in some cases just one, while three days were more frequent. Then, in the morning, larger groups of them would be led down Franša D'Eperea Street to the "Mostar" crossroads, and then in an unknown direction.[102] Unlike the treatment of Jews, when each night in the lead-up

98 AJ, 110-593-162, statement of Alfred Kazes.

99 Ibid.

100 AJ, 110-273-538, statement of Milija Nikolić. The witness had seen, in passing, Germans beat two male Roma at the camp.

101 AJ, 110-273-520, statement of Jelica Vasić.

102 AJ, 110-273-55, statement of Darinka Milosavljević.

to being taken away, the camp would be visited by Stracke or some other German police representative who would issue orders on how many people were to be singled out the following day for transport, the Roma were being separated into groups immediately:

> As soon as Gypsies arrived, they immediately started transporting them together with Jews by trucks to the ferry near Pančevo bridge. When taking away Gypsies, no lists were made, nor were they assigned individually by name to prepare for the trip, rather they were grouped together by 50 up to 200.[103]

Their destination was most frequently Jabuka, which had already been known as an execution field.

The last moments of their time spent at the camp were remembered, after many years, by a witness who left a remarkable image:

> After about ten days, around a thousand Gypsies were brought in, who were gradually being taken away from the camp over the following days. A lot of them came in with musical instruments; a day after arrival, they organized an orchestra in the barracks courtyard, played their farewell concert – among others, the overture of the opera "The Barber of Seville" by Rossini. After the concert, Germans broke their instruments and burned them in a big bonfire, while trucks drove away a large group in an unknown direction.[104]

Within those several days, individual cases of release from camp were registered. Thus, for instance, it seems that Sava Sremčević from Belgrade, with 11 members of his family, were released from Topovske šupe, thanks to the fact that he succeeded in proving that they are Romanian, since the regulations which were in force for "Gypsies"[105] didn't pertain to them.

103 AJ, 110-593-162, statement of Alfred Kazes.

104 Pavle Minh, *Četiri godine pod senkom smrti*, in Aleksandar Gaon (ed.), *Mi smo preživeli... Jevreji o Holokaustu*, vol. 3, p. 265.

105 Dragoljub Acković, *Romi u Beogradu*..., p. 245. Still, in other cases, "Romanians" were killed together with others: cf. AJ, 110-273-137, statement of Tonka Gašparević.

Executions

At the sixth kilometer on the road from Pančevo to the village Jabuka is one of the locations that the Germans chose in the autumn of 1941 for mass executions of Jews and Roma, probably Serbs as well. The frequency of executions, and in addition other technical reasons, for example, repair of the bridge over the Danube near Belgrade or sabotage and diversions by partisan fighters, were frequent problems which the German administration had to overcome so as to perform its task in the best, bureaucratic manner: killing a certain number of people, burying corpses, calculating the number of soldiers or policemen needed for each action, the number of trucks that needed to be utilized, fuel, ammunition and all the other things. At the time, executions were conducted at several locations in the vicinity of Belgrade: at Jajinci, Deliblatska peščara, Bežanija (Trostruki surduk), Rakovica, Kumodraž and, ultimately in the village of Jabuka.[106] The report that a German lieutenant wrote about executions of Jews (and maybe Roma too) on the 9th and 13th of October, provides detailed insight into how the actual executions unfolded:

> (...) After detailed reconnaissance of the place and performed preparations, the first execution was carried out on the 9th of October 1941. The detainees were brought from Belgrade camps, carrying the barest necessities, at 5:30 a.m. By handing out shovels and other tools, the impression of a community action was created. Each truck had just 3 guards so that the number of guards wouldn't let on the true intention.
>
> The transport was completed without any difficulties. The mood of detainees was good during the ride and preparation. They were glad to be leaving the camp, where the conditions apparently didn't suit their wishes.
>
> We set the detainees to work at 8 km from the place of execution and then brought them in as needed. The place was secure enough for preparation and execution. The execution was carried out by way of powder at a distance of 12 m. For each detainee, five gunmen were assigned. In addition, the doctor had at his disposal two gunmen, for cases in which he deemed it necessary, who would shoot the victims in the head, thereby causing sure death. Objects of value and remaining

106 Cf.: Rena Rädle and Milovan Pisarri (eds.), ibid., pp. 208-229.

items were seized under supervision and later turned in to N.S.V., i.e. Security Police.

On the day of the 9th of October 1941, 180 people were executed.

The execution was completed at 6:30 p.m. There were no distinct events. Units returned home satisfied.

The second execution could not be conducted before the 11th of October 1941 due to repairs on the Danube ferry. Because of those works, the following execution had to be carried out in the vicinity of Belgrade. For that purpose, it was necessary to find a new place and double the caution. The following execution was carried out on the 11th of October 1941 near the shooting range. It went according to plan. 296 people were executed. During both executions, no detainee escaped and the troops didn't record any particular events or incidents. For increasing security, another platoon was used from major Pongruber's unit, under the command of Lieutenant Hau. In total, on the 9th and 11th of October 1941, those units shot 449 people.

Unfortunately, those units were compelled, due to official reasons, to end further executions and transfer the assignment to Major Pongruber's unit.

Signed by Liepe
Lieutenant and unit commander[107]

A report also exists by another German lieutenant in charge of operations, concerning the place where Belgrade Roma were executed at the end of October and beginning of November 1941. i.e. concerning Jabuka. Thanks to that document it is possible to reconstruct the last moments in the lives of Belgrade Roma who were first arrested and interned at Topovske šupe, afterwards loaded into trucks and taken down Franša D'Eperea street towards the "Mostar" crossroads and further on in an unknown direction:

In accord with the agreement with the SS in charge, I led the singled out Jews i.e. Gypsies from the detainee camp Belgrade. Trucks of Polish kommandatur 599, which I had at my disposal, proved to be unsuitable for two reasons:

1. They were driven by civilians. Thus secrecy is not guaranteed.

107 *Zbornik NOR*, volume I, book 1, doc. 212.

2. All were without a cover or awning so the citizens were able to see whom we have in the vehicles and where we are driving. In front of the camp, wives of Jews gathered, bemoaning and screaming when we were leaving.

The place where the execution was conducted is very appropriate. It lies to the north of Pančevo and immediately alongside the Pančevo-Jabuka road, at a slope which is so high that a person can only climb it with great effort. Opposite this slope is swampland with the river behind it. When the water level was high (29th of October), the water almost reached the slope. Escape of captives can thus be prevented with few people. Similarly, it is favourable that the soil is sandy, which facilitates digging of holes, thus shortening the working hours. While arriving, about 1.5-2 km before the designated place, captives got off the trucks, walked to the place of execution, while the trucks with civilian drivers returned immediately, so as to have little opportunity for suspicion. Then I closed off the road to all vehicles for the purpose of security and maintaining secrecy. The execution spot is secure with three light machineguns and 12 gunmen.

1. Against the detainees' escape attempts

2. For self-protection against possible forays by Serbian gangs.

Digging of holes takes up the greatest part of time while the shooting itself proceeds very quickly (100 people – 40 minutes).

Pieces of luggage and valuables have previously been collected and brought by my truck so as to be turned in to NSV.

Execution of Jews is simpler than that of Gypsies. One must admit that Jews went into death very composedly – they stood very calmly while Gypsies moaned, yelled and constantly fidgeted even when already at the place of shooting. Some jumped into the hole even before the salvo and tried to feign death.

Initially my soldiers didn't show that the execution unsettled them. The second day, it could already be observed that the occasional gunman doesn't have the stomach to carry out the execution for a longer period. My personal impression is that during the shooting itself, there are no psychological inhibitions. Nonetheless, they occur in the evening while contemplating in peace.

Valter,
Lieutenant[108]

108 *Zbornik NOR*, volume I, book 1, doc. 245.

In his bureaucratic style, Lieutenant Valter succeeded in recording with disdain the desire to live that the Roma were expressing, desperately trying to save themselves. None of them, however, like none of the Jews, succeeded in that feat. Their lives ended, while their wives and children, not knowing what had happened to them, had to go on fighting so as to survive. While the Belgrade Roma were executed at Jabuka, the Pančevo Roma were forced to bury their corpses:

> About harvesting corn in 1941, one day, I don't remember the date, they called us to the city police with the order that we go and dig graves. That day, they took us 36 Gypsies to the Jabuka road and threatened that we must not tell anything to anyone or else we'd be shot. They ordered that we dig a hole around 15-20 steps long and 3-4 steps wide and about 1 meter deep. Around 10 o'clock, the German army brought in three trucks with about 100-120 people, among whom were Serbs, Gypsies and Jews, while the victims were brought in from the direction of Belgrade. (...). The victims were marshaled in groups of roughly 20 facing the grave, and after the better ones had had their suits and footwear removed, then one of the German soldiers placed some kind of circle on each one's back where the soldiers were later shooting. When they shot all the victims they had brought, they ordered that we place them side by side in two or three rows, after which we buried them. Of the perpetrators of this crime who were present, I recognized one single face, (...). This policeman killed, with his own hands, one of the victims who addressed him with the plea not to shoot him because they know each other and he has five or six children (...). The execution of remaining victims was carried out by the German army. Every day we dug just one hole as big as they ordered, keeping in mind the number of victims they were to shoot. In one hole there was water because of the proximity of the Tamiš, so the perpetrators poured lime on the arranged victims, after which we buried them. If someone had dug holes before my first arrival, that I don't know. I was there roughly 6-7 times with interruptions and I reckon during that time about 1500-1600 victims were killed (...). I know that the perpetrators of the crime later brought the things – suits and shoes removed from the victims, to the municipality and handed them out to domestic Germans (...).[109]

109 AJ, 110-691-106, statement of Jovan Šajin.

Internment of women and children

No one can imagine how the women and children felt without husbands and fathers. One whole community, it could be said, was left without men in just several days. It was the second time something like that happened in Belgrade: about ten days before that, the last remaining Jewish families were left without their men.

Roma women from Marinkova bara, Jatagan mala, Pašino brdo, as well as from surrounding villages "cleansed" from Roma men, who were already living in extremely harsh circumstances, also lost the possibility to meet, in the economic sense, their barest existential necessities. In their often very poor houses, just before the winter, they were compelled to struggle with feelings stemming from the loss of their dear ones, to care about children, find the means to survive, find how to obtain food, firewood for heating, and deal with the fear that they too might be taken away one day, together with their children.

It is not known whether or not they tried to go somewhere else and if they helped each other out; it is not known if they received any assistance from "Aryan" neighbours; it is not known if they were already dying of hunger and winter cold; but that November must have been one of the hardest periods in their lives.

While Roma and Jewish women were struggling to survive in such horribly difficult conditions and raise their children, whose future in the best case scenario meant growing up without male figures, amidst hostile surroundings, German occupational authorities had intensive negotiations with Berlin on the issue of "the final solution to Jewish and Gypsy issue" in Serbia. Women and children were also to be removed; all that was needed was the appropriate manner.

As early as the 11th of October, the chief of Jewish department at the German Ministry of Internal Affairs, Fritz Rademacher, arrived in Belgrade, accompanied by two Gestapo representatives. During talks with occupational authorities, as suggested by him, the decision was made to gather women and children, not only Jewish, but Roma as

well, in one ghetto in Belgrade and to engage 500 Jewish men for the purposes of maintaining order, organizing a supply and healthcare system, while all others were to be executed (it should be kept in mind that executions were already underway). The ghetto would represent just a temporary solution, before sending them to the concentration camp, which was to be built on an island near Sremska Mitrovica, or further, to some other camp in the east.[110]

Near the end of October, however, it turned out that the chosen location near Sremska Mitrovica didn't suit the need for constructing a concentration camp, which was, among other things, according to the German occupier, supposed to receive, in addition to the remaining Jews and Roma (i.e. Jewish and Roma women), another 50,000 Serbian hostages. Therefore, on the 28th of October, while arrests of the Roma in Belgrade were in full swing, general Böhme ordered that the construction of that camp be suspended, and using the existing buildings of Belgrade Fair (Sajmište) for that purpose instead.[111]

In the period from the 8th to the 12th of December, in accordance with German orders, Jewish women and children reported to the Police for Jews. Early morning, they would start off from their homes in groups to the nearby Džordža Vašingtona Street, where Serbian policemen waited for them. It was the last "walk" in Belgrade for all of them. At the police station they were registered, then transferred by German trucks to the concentration camp at Sajmište. What few personal belongings they could carry with them they were also transported to the camp, but by other trucks. Everything unfolded calmly, well organized, in the heart of the city, in front of the eyes of all citizens who could watch the procession of women and children with yel-

110 Milan Koljanin, ibid., pp. 36-37. More about the Sajmište camp: Kristofer Brauning, *Konačno rešenje u Srbiji: Judenlager na Sajmištu, studija slučaja*, in Zbornik Jevrejskog istorijskog Muzeja, no. 6/1992, pp. 407-428; Jovan Bajford, *Staro Sajmište. Mesto sećanja, zaborava i sporenja*, Beogradski centar za ljudska prava, Belgrade, 2001.

111 Milan Koljanin, ibid., pp. 46-47.

low armbands, without men, as they passed through Belgrade, first on foot, then in trucks. A heartrending testimony concerning those last moments remained recorded in the words of Hilda Dajč, a young volunteer nurse from the Jewish hospital:

> Nada, my dear,
>
> Tomorrow morning I leave for the camp. Nobody's forcing me to go and I'm not waiting to be summoned. I'm volunteering to join the first group that leaves from 23 George Washington Street tomorrow at 9 a.m. My family are against my decision, but I think that you at least will understand me; there are so many people in need of help that my conscience dictates to me that I should ignore any sentimental reasons connected with my home and family for not going and put myself wholly at the service of others. The [Jewish] hospital will remain in the town, and the director has promised that he will take me in again when the hospital moves to the camp. I am calm and composed and convinced that everything is going to turn out all right, perhaps even better than my optimistic expectations. I shall think of you often; you know - or perhaps you don't - what you have meant to me - and will always mean to me. You are my most beautiful memory from that most pleasant period of my life - from the [Literary] Society.
>
> Nada, my dear, I love you very, very much.
>
> Hilda
> December the 7th 1941[112]

Side by side with the internment of Jewish women and children, at the other end of town, in those parts the outskirts and surrounding villages where, near the end of October, a raid had been carried out against Roma men, another series of numerous arrests of women and children was in progress. The manner and dynamics of arrests were rather different, but their reasons and the destination of the detainees were the same as in the case of Jews from the city centre. On the 10th and 11th of

112 JIM, k.24-2-1/1. Letters of Hilda Dajč (a total of 4) have been published in different languages. The original ones in Serbian and translation into English can be downloaded freely from the website: www.open.ac.uk, last accessed: 24th of March 2014.

December, Roma women and children were taken to Sajmište, after their men had been killed in mass executions a month earlier.

The scenario was practically the same as in the case of the arrests of the men. Serbian gendarmes and policemen went from door to door and led all women and children outside and into trucks, taking them to gendarmerie stations or seats of quarters and, after less than an hour, transferred them to Sajmište. German forces didn't participate directly, but were mainly overseeing the activity so that everything would unfold in the greatest order:

> (...) We were taken from our apartment at 58a Jaše Ignjatovića Street – I, my brother, Ljubomir Matić, 16 years old, and my sisters: Katica, 7 y.o., Olivera, 4 y.o., all born in Belgrade, of Eastern Orthodox faith, Serbian nationality, and our mother Mileva Stojanović, housewife, 58 years old. We were taken away by three agents and two gendarmes, of which one was called Bora, subsergeant, commander of Marinkova bara station, while the other was called Nikola Gvozdešević. I don't know the names of agents and I don't recall their faces. From the apartment, they took us to the school Branislav Nušić where we stayed one hour, then they drove us by trucks to the camp at Sajmište (...).[113]

When they arrived in front of the newly founded camp, the Roma descended from trucks and passed through camp gates in large groups. Those days, there was probably much crowding since the buildings of the former fair had to receive roughly 5,300 people of all ages at once, with a lot of children among them. Jews and Roma weren't mixed, rather a separate section of the camp complex was allocated to the Roma. While Jews were interned at the first and third pavilion, the biggest building in the entire complex, the Roma were crammed into pavilion number 2.[114] According to estimates of the camp commander, there were about 600 of them.[115]

113 AJ, 110-273-119, statement of Nadežda Matić.

114 Milan Koljanin, ibid., pp. 77 and 99.

115 Kristofer Brauning, *Konačno rešenje u Srbiji*..., p. 410.

The camp was governed by Einsatzgruppe from Belgrade, while guard was kept by the 64th Police Reserves Battalion. The supply of camp with food, medications, heating materials and other necessities was entrusted to the city of Belgrade municipality. Internal control, i.e. internal order, was the duty of the Jewish Chairmanship, which continued to perform its functions among internees themselves. Outside the camp, the Jewish hospital was still operating, where the patients and staff were under strict surveillance of German and quisling forces. There were no free Jews left anymore, except rare individuals who had been spared for some reason or those who were hiding. The same couldn't be said of the Roma, since a considerable number of them, i.e. all those who were no longer "Gypsies" in the eyes of Germans and quislings, since they had succeeded in proving permanent residence in Belgrade, continued to enjoy full freedom. On the other hand, from Marinkova bara, Jatagan mala, Čubura, Pašino brdo and all other city parts and surrounding villages, the poorest segment of the population had completely been removed.

In addition to three big pavilions where women and children were interned, the camp consisted of several other buildings that made it practically independent and completely separate from the city.[116] The conditions were inhuman for all, especially for the Roma. Among many Roma women, difficult moments remained etched in their memory:

> (...) At the camp they beat me and made me work, they made me drink water with sand. Beneath our beds ran water, so we were freezing with cold. For food we received just one meal per day.[117]
>
> (...) Life at the camp was hard, I was abused by someone named Kraus, who was overseeing Gypsies. I was all swollen from the beating. They gave us some injections from which numerous women died.[118]
>
> (...) In addition to what we were subjected to at the camp, my daughter and I were physically abused by Kraus, warden, as follows: on

116 Cf.: Milan Koljanin, ibid., pp. 76-98.

117 AJ, 110-273-179, statement of Jelena Simić.

118 AJ, 110-273-181, statement of Grozdana Milosavljević.

> one occasion he hit me in the face with his fist and knocked out my 2 teeth while I was waiting for a portion of bread but he suspected that I had already received it. He beat my daughter on two occasions with a whip because she couldn't leave the children when she was supposed to bring out, with the others, the dead from the camp.[119]

More details about life at the camp are provided in another letter by Hilda Dajč:

> (...) Here it's so - I don't know how to describe it - it's quite simply a huge cowshed for 5,000 people or more, without walls, without barriers - everyone sharing the same quarters. I described the details of this magic castle to Mirjana and I really don't feel like repeating them. We get either breakfast or supper accompanied by the most abusive of words - on top of that, one's appetite passes and one's no longer hungry. Over the past five days we've had cabbage four times. Otherwise, everything's wonderful. Especially as far as our neighbours are concerned - the Gypsy camp. Today I went there to shave and grease the heads of fifteen people with lice. However, although after this my arms were burning up to the elbows from the cresol, my work is in vain, because as soon as I finish the second group, the first have got lice again. (...)[120]

Hunger was the foremost source of suffering. The kitchen was located far from the pavilion where the Roma were interned, so that food was brought and handed out to them once a day.[121] The city of Belgrade municipality participated consciously in starving and indirect killing of internees, regarding them as persons whose needs are to be met only at the end or maybe never. It was a kind of recognition or acceptance of the special place in the categorization of humankind that was attributed to the Roma by National Socialism in their new order: the behaviour of the bureaucratic structure of the Belgrade municipality, specifically the Supply Directorate (DIRIS), didn't differ at all from

119 AJ, 110-273-192, statement of Natalija Obradović.

120 The third letter of Hilda Dajč. www.open.ac.uk/socialsciences/semlin/sr/pismo-3.php, last accessed: 27th of March 2014.

121 Danijela Jovanović, ibid., (www.balkanliteraryherald.com/broj5/danijelajovanovic5.htm, last accessed: 9th of April 2014).

the activities of other Nazi or pro-Nazi bureaucracies. Another problem probably lay in the potential profit that some clerks and suppliers saw in the large undertaking, which soon resulted in stealing, resale or appropriation of products intended for the camp. The problem, of course, pertained to the relations with German authorities, primarily with the camp administration, which often had to intervene so that the camp would get the agreed quantity of groceries, medications and other necessities.[122] A shortage of those items could mean increased mortality, maybe even riots, i.e. problems in "solving the Jewish and Gypsy issue" in Belgrade and in Serbia, which was supposed to proceed uninterruptedly.

Hunger and winter quickly began reaping death not only among the Roma, but also among Jews. Most often the victims were children and the elderly; the weakest among the detainees. Mothers watched helplessly as their newborns died in their arms. In the worst cases, the children were just several months old or had even been born at the camp itself: Cveta Ibišević, born at the camp and died after one month;[123] Ljubomir Mirković, 9 months old;[124] Đura Stanojević, a 4-year-old child; Petka Ibrahimović, 13 years old;[125] then, Milena Draganović, 60 years old; Stana Todorović, 55 years old.[126] Those were just some of the names of the Roma who died in Sajmište.

Unlike Jewish women, for whom, except in the mentioned cases, no possibility to be saved existed, the Roma women and their children

122 Concerning the relations between city of Belgrade municipality and the camp there is very important correspondence from February and March 1942: AVII, NdA, b. 36-1 doc. 21-58.

123 IAB, OGB, b. 216, Department for the cemetery to the Governing department, report on the funeral of those who died and were killed on the 11th of April 1942.

124 AJ, 110-273-72, statement of Natalija Mirković.

125 IAB, Sajmište files.

126 IAB, OGB, b. 216, Department for the cemetery to the Governing department, report on the funeral of those who died and were killed on the 31st of December 1941; and report on the funeral of those who died and were killed on the 9th of January 1941.

could at least repeatedly attempt to escape the clutches of their executioners. Although for men there was practically no time to quote the earlier order issued by Administrative Headquarters Chief Turner, whereby all those capable of proving their permanent residence in Belgrade were envisaged to be deleted from lists of "Gypsies", in the case of women and children from Sajmište, the experience they had with their husbands, sons, fathers and neighbours, as well as more time at their disposal, played a key role in saving many lives. Specifically, just several days after arrests, the first groups of Roma women were released from the camp, since they had succeeded in procuring the necessary permit, thereby proving permanent residence in the Serbian capital.[127] Most frequently, relatives were the ones who addressed the municipality governor or local quarter chief, with birth certificates of interned women and children, which was to prove the validity of submitted documents. The application was forwarded to the Special Police, that is – the Police for Jews and Gypsies, from where it was sent to the German authorities in charge, i.e. Einsatzgruppe, which controlled the camp. The last step was the signing of the permit by the Sajmište camp commander, based on which the people for whom "amnesty" was pleaded were deleted from lists of "Gypsies" and released.[128]

Based on that, it is perfectly visible how much power in the case of Roma women and children lay in local, quisling authorities: municipality governors were *de facto* able to decide on the life or death of Roma, because it was solely on their positive opinion, i.e. their confirmation of residence that someone's release from camp depended. The frightening face of that situation, which had constantly appeared even before, but never with such clarity, is the fact that Roma women and children were sent to camp with the necessary help of the lowest level of police and bureaucratic apparatus. These low level police and

127 AJ, 110-273-92, statement of Natalija Stojanović; and 96, statement of Milka Simić.

128 Original permits for release from camp have been kept, or their copies: AJ, 110-273-105, 110, 153 etc.

bureaucratic apparatuses consisted of people who knew well those they were sending to camp and with whom they had probably lived in community a long time. This same apparatus could save them, return them home, albeit without men, could help them obtain the suitable residence permits in some way, even counterfeit them.

It is probable that, during those moments, a considerable number of people, members of that apparatus, took advantage of others' desperation. There is suspicion that residence permits were being issued in return for certain sums of money, just like City of Belgrade Municipality officials profited in the procurement of goods for concentration camps or like Italian mission clerks were selling fake identification cards to Jews who wanted to escape from Belgrade and were able to do so.[129] Still, however that may appear today, it enabled those Roma who could pay to save their dearest ones from camp. Women and children in villages around Belgrade often had a strange fate, because the local municipality governor first led the arrests, like in Resnik, but then confirmed that they were indeed residents of Belgrade, thus ensuring their release.[130] In other cases, nevertheless, it did not happen. "The village didn't guarantee" is a phrase that will remain in the memory of the survivors.[131]

At the concentration camp itself, a Jewish woman, remembered solely by her name – Matilda – played a significant role in saving the Roma. Matilda was appointed manager of the pavilion where the Roma were interned and urged the Roma to spread the word among those who had already been deleted from lists of "Gypsies" to write pleas for the release of all others from the camp.[132]

129 Milovan Pisarri, *La Shoah in Serbia e Macedonia*..., pp. 192-193.

130 AJ, 110-273-960, statement of Jelena Đorđević.

131 Reminiscences of Dekić Milorad and Dekić Pavle from Mirijevo, published in Dragoljub Acković, *Romi u Beogradu*.... Original reminiscences are kept at the City of Belgrade Historical Archives. They were collected from Milan Koljanin and Milena Radojčić on the 9th of May 1986.

132 Ibid., pp. 251-253 and 282.

Liberation was carried out in groups, during January and February. The greatest number of camp internees spent three months in captivity. From the start of March, it was not possible to exit the camp,[133] probably so as not to disturb the planned killing of all male and female internees which followed after the decision to finally "solve the Jewish issue in Serbia". For that purpose, a so-called dushegubka was sent from Berlin, that is – a special truck with poisonous gas, which was already being used in Chełmno and elsewhere, serving as a moveable gas chamber. Its notorious work commenced at the Jewish hospital on the 19th of March, and then went on to Sajmište. Daily, except on Sundays, drivers, accompanied by the camp commander, took away groups of one hundred people, suffocated them on the way, during the drive, and then unloaded them at Jajinci, where they were buried in mass graves. So as everything could run smoothly, before setting off, the convicts were being convinced that they would be transported further, to Poland. The last group was driven out on the 15th of May, after which date the Sajmište camp served as a camp for imprisoned partisans and civilians until the end of the war.[134]

Since mid-March until mid-May, the Roma were also killed who could not succeed in securing their own release. It is not known if they too were suffocated or killed at the camp itself, nor is it known how many there were. Whereas on the one hand, on the 5th of May 1942, the Jewish Chairmanship informed the City of Belgrade Governorship that, from December until April, 56 Gypsies of both genders died at the camp,[135] the report by the State Commission for Determining the Crimes of Occupiers and their Collaborators their number rose to 400.[136]

133 Ibid., pp. 271 and 280.
134 Milan Koljanin, ibid., pp. 120-124.
135 AVII, NdA, 36-1-54.
136 AJ, 110-613-541.

It can reliably be said only that in the second half of April there were Roma still alive, since at the time, the quisling police went in search of two Roma who had succeeded in escaping from the camp:

> Matić Ruža, a Gypsy woman escaped from the camp in Zemun. Description: 22 years old, nothing else has been sent regarding the appearance. She is to be found and handed in to the Special Police department of the City of Belgrade Administration citing no. 935/42.
>
> Jovanović Dušan, Gypsy man escaped from the camp in Zemun. Description: 14 years old, nothing else has been sent regarding the appearance. He is to be found and handed in to the Special Police department of the City of Belgrade Administration citing no. 935/42.[137]

Data collection, victims, perpetrators

After three years under fascist authority, Yugoslav National Liberation Army units, supported by the Red Army, liberated Belgrade on the 20th of October 1944. Street clashes, in which a substantial number of soldiers from both sides were killed, but also civilians, went on for eight days and the result was the retreat of German and quisling forces towards the north-west. Several further months were needed before German capitulation, before the entire Yugoslavia was liberated. During those months in the liberated Serbia and Belgrade, the Communist Party instated authority and formed a network of state and local structures according to the model of the Soviet Union. A State Commission for Determining the Crimes of Occupiers and their Collaborators was already functioning as a separate temporary body. Its major task was to thoroughly investigate all crimes perpetrated on the territory of Yugoslavia, identifying not only victims but also perpetrators, as well as the circumstances in which the crimes had been committed. The State Commission was divided into country commissions Slovenia, Serbia, Croatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro, Macedonia, as well as area commissions for Vojvodina, Kosovo and

137 *Policijski glasnik*, no. 853, 25th of April 1942

Sandžak. Each country commission further divided into county, canton (district), city, municipality and local (sector) commission, which covered every populated part of Yugoslavia. Separate survey commissions existed also, which usually investigated crimes perpetrated at camps, such as, for instance, at Sajmište. The operation of the commission lasted somewhat under five years.[138]

In Belgrade, which was simultaneously the seat of State Commission, Country Commission of Serbia and county commission, also active were canton, municipality and local committees. Thanks to their thorough work, many personal testimonies about crimes against all civilians have been collected, alongside numerous original German and quisling documents. As can be seen from the correspondence between commission bodies, as well as on the basis of the pure scope of collected testimonies, the issue of Roma was treated separately. In one communique dated the 8th of March 1945, for example, during the period when the commission under the VII sector (Jatagan mala) was collecting data on persons killed on the territory for which they were in charge, the city commission returned to the representatives of the same sector the case of a victim, with the following explanation:

> The case is being returned for further work, with the note that in the Commission's decision nothing was said about the damage that resulted from this crime, although the injured party mentioned in her charges the damage she had sustained, besides, the injured party did not provide a statement about whether or not her husband was a Gypsy. The latter was necessary so that all cases of Gypsy victims could be grouped together and separated from other victims.[139]

Sector commissions operated according to plan in all quarters whence the Roma were taken and murdered. In that manner, in February and March 1945, all data from Jatagan mala was collected, where-

138 Mladenko Colić, *Rad i rezultati komisija za utvrđivanje zločina okupatora i njihovih pomagača u Jugoslaviji 1941-1945. godine*, in *Istinom protiv revizije NOB u Jugoslaviji 1941-1945*, Društvo za istinu o NOB, Belgrade, 2009, pp. 215-217.

139 AJ, 110-273-4.

as in June and July, the XI sector commission proceeded to collect data from Marinkova bara. On special forms, commission members recorded all the necessary personal data of witnesses, as well as statements pertaining to killed or interned family members or acquaintances, or testimonies of personal experience in the Sajmište camp. In addition to name and surname, place and date of birth or age, place of residence, employment, property status of the witness (which was most often described as "weak", "poor" or "meager"), the forms contain those same data about the victims. Frequently, but not always, the amount of damages was recorded that the commission envisaged for the witness or it was mentioned that, in the witness' own words "regarding the damages claim, I leave to the Commission to determine it freely".[140] Although for everyone the mentioned nationality is Serbian, on each form it was written that these are "Gypsies".

Two months after the operation of the Commission for Determining the Crimes of Occupiers and their Collaborators, the newly instated national authorities proceeded with thoroughly collecting submissions regarding war damages. Each sector, which later became a municipality, sent a fieldwork committee whose task was to collect data from each citizen concerning damage of property, as well as casualties. All data was collected in special forms, in which besides the name, surname and other personal data of the claimant, the date and circumstances in which the victim died, was killed or went missing, were also written.

The most significant thing about this process is that, based on the family and their economic situation, the Commission proposed the amount of damages, which was later confirmed by a special decision of the Canton Commission for War Damages.

Many submissions, specifically, most submissions from Marinkova bara, relate to the Roma. The same women who testified in June

140 Cf. e.g.: AJ, 110-273-65, statement of Danica Mančić; and 88, statement of Marija Milanović.

and July about their husbands, sons and fathers being taken away and missing, received in September and October, certificates that a certain sum in dinars had been granted them by way of an official decision, for the endured loss of a male family member (or a female and even a child, if the victims had been killed, for example, at Sajmište). In addition, a certain sum was allocated to them for the upkeep of their remaining family members. These figures differ greatly.

Similarly to what had happened with statements collected by the Commission for Determining Crimes, which were allocated to the separate category of "Gypsies" and who were thus, the same as Jews, granted a special status of victim within German and quisling policy during World War II, in the case of submissions about war damages, local sectors left the freedom to claimants to state their nationality. In some places the claimants are reported as Serbs-Gypsies, while elsewhere just as Serbs. It is possible that many didn't want to apply as Roma, i.e. in the fear because of everything they had undergone in the previous years overpowered the trust they could have in the new authorities, about which, like many others, they knew almost nothing. Just in rare cases the victims were listed as "Gypsies",[141] whereas most often the victim's nationality was "Serbian", while the reason of death or disappearance given was "sent away as a Gypsy".[142]

The collected data provides more details which should be the subject of deeper analyses and research. In those applications, for instance, it's not rare to find data about children who had died from hunger or winter cold during 1942.[143] Their names and surnames, as well as addresses and particulars about other family members indicate that, in many cases, these were Roma children. Thus, the question is raised if perhaps these were children who died because of what they had been subjected to at Sajmište or because there was no one to

141 IAB, INOO, VI Reon, k. 26/5 R „V"/1345

142 IAB, INOO, VI Reon, k. 26/5 R „V"/1347, 1348 etc.

143 IAB, INOO, VI Reon, k. 26/5 R „V"/1355, 1356, 1357 etc.

take care of them after release; as their fathers had been killed, while mothers were physically and psychologically exhausted from experiences at the camp. It was probable that the surviving women couldn't find any jobs, so that they too, like their children, died from hunger and cold: the fact that they had been released from camp, didn't automatically mean that they saved their lives.

Thorough work of the bodies of Commission for Determining the Crimes of Occupiers and their Collaborators, as well as the people's committees, represents the most valuable material for studying the issue of genocide against the Roma in Belgrade. The fact that it was approached so thoroughly in the capital indicates a possibility that data about Roma victims in other Serbian cities has been collected in the same manner. This could be proven solely by additional research. The paradox of those documents lies in the fact that there is frequent mention of the lack of material in historiography which would enable the study of genocide against the Roma in Serbia, despite the fact that, at least in the case of Belgrade, there is plenty of data on Roma suffering, which is probably lacking when it comes to other victims, for example Jews. The explanation is simple: unlike Jews, who were almost all killed, the committees in the case of Roma had at their disposal numerous witnesses, that is – the victims' relatives. Wives, mothers and daughters were thus given a key role in saving victims of Roma nationality from being forgotten. Unfortunately, it was because of historical circumstances that over seventy years were to pass before this data could be the focus of a research study.

According to data from the City Board of Trustees of the Commission for Determining the Crimes of Occupiers and their Collaborators, about 1,000 Roma were shot or killed in some other manner in Belgrade.[144] Many victims were newcomers from Bukovik, Garaš and other places in Šumadija, who had moved to the capital like many oth-

144 AJ, 110-55-901. In the communique sent to the Country Commission of Serbia, it is stated that about 9,000 Jews were killed.

er citizens of the Kingdom of Yugoslavia after World War I or later. Regularly registered inhabitants, they lived in the poorest conditions. Their children, who were in many cases killed with them, had been born in Belgrade.

The question of so-called "drifters" remains open, i.e. Roma who lived a nomadic life and who, unlike other Roma, didn't even have the possibility of proving their residence and being saved that way. Almost nothing is known about them and their fate, so that, at least for the time being, things can only be assumed on the basis of rare documented traces. For example, in June 1941, when Ćuprija municipality authorities carried out a census of the Roma, about 200 local and around 300 Russian Roma (60 families) lived there, who had, however, in the vast majority (except 5 families), moved to Belgrade several days earlier.[145] It is possible that those Russian Roma, who had moved from Ćuprija to Belgrade just before the introduction of anti-Roma and anti-Semitic measures stipulated in the regulation dated the 30th of May 1941, were those very drifters who later lost their lives in the mass executions and at Sajmište. Similarly, it is possible that among the so-called drifters, there were Roma who sought refuge in Belgrade during the autumn of 1941, so as to avoid persecution in their native town, not suspecting that they would soon be arrested and shot.[146]

In statements collected by the Commission for Determining the Crimes of Occupiers and their Collaborators, there is valuable data about the perpetrators. Although at the end of each statement, the witness indicates the responsibility of those issuing orders, such as, for instance Dragi Jovanović, Milan Aćimović, Milan Nedić, Heinrich Dankelmann and others, the names of executioners provide many more elements for interpreting genocide against the Roma in Belgrade. The difference between those two categories is clear: while in the case of those issuing orders the pressure of committee members

145 *Ćuprijski Cigani već dobijaju trake*, "Novo vreme" , 21st of June 1941, p. 4.
146 AJ, 110-273-901 and 902.

was felt, as it seems that they "suggested" the names of perpetrators, since they are repeated in the same formulation in almost all statements. In the case of executioners, personal recollections of witnesses emerged, who had in many cases been familiar with their assassins. Connections existed between them just like between any citizen of a town and representatives of local police or administrative apparatuses: they all lived or worked in the same part of town, often near each other; they probably often met in the streets, at the market or a tavern. At Marinkova bara, Jatagan mala, Pašino brdo and all other locations where the Roma were arrested and taken away, the victims and criminals met on a daily basis and knew each other, at least being nodding acquaintances. Consequently, due to those connections, we found out that in the arrests of men at Marinkova bara near the end of October 1941, the following people participated: Subsergeant Bora Janković, commander of local gendarmerie station, Gendarme Nikola Gvozdešević,[147] agents Dulić and "Selja",[148] the scribe of the XI quarter Popović,[149] Dragi Isaković, (who led the arrests at Pašino brdo, and was the commander of local gendarmerie station),[150] Sergeant Vesović (who was one of the participants in the raid at Dorćol)[151] and Sergeants Mandić and Jovanović, (both in service at V quarter) who were among the gendarmes who arrested the Roma in Mirijevo.[152]

The aforementioned people, as well as many others, were directly responsible for participating in the mass arrests of the Roma for the purpose of their extermination. They were part of the machinery which ordered, organized and carried out genocide. What their fate

147 AJ, 110-273-119, statement of Nadežda Matić; 173, statement of Javorka Živković and others

148 AJ, 110-273-132, statement of Draga Lekić.

149 AJ, 110-273-185, statement of Zorka Jovanović.

150 AJ, 110-273-759, statement of Stanica Perić; and 771, statement of Katarina Radosavljević.

151 AJ, 110-273-860, statement of Olga Petrović.

152 AJ, 110-273-742.

was after the war, if they were pronounced responsible for the crimes perpetrated, will probably be shown only by deeper research. Still, it can be assumed with a rather substantial dose of certainty that, because of their participation in arrests and the internment of neighbours, acquaintances or just fellow citizens, they haven't paid a high price, or any price for that matter. From some statements or reports it can be seen that they just transferred from one, quisling apparatus, to another, new, revolutionary one. Among those responsible for the raid at Resnik, at the moment of writing the report on arrests of Roma from that village, which dates from the 14th of November 1945 – more than one year after liberation – the then municipality governor Tanasije Tasa Živojinović was killed (but it is not known how, by whom and why), while peasants Borivoje Matić and Milan Lazarević, as well as treasurer Žarko Stojanović, were free, in their houses.[153] Similarly, one gendarme who had participated in arrests at Čubura was seen by one female witness after the war in the service of the newly formed traffic police:

> (...) One of the criminals who were collecting our people I now see in the traffic force and within 7 days I'll try to find out his name and where he works. He attacked us Gypsies for not wearing the armbands that the occupier had imposed.[154]

In addition to those belonging to police and administrative apparatuses, the issue of snitches and others who helped or participated in the crime in any way, confirms the need for further research. In one letter from the Gypsy Cultural-Educational Association from Voždovac, (an organization that included Roma from Marinkova bara and probably represented an attempt to take certain steps, in addition to emancipation and improvement of Roma's living conditions, towards punishing the perpetrators who had participated in genocide against the Roma), sent to the State Commission for Determining the Crimes

153 AJ, 110-273-954.

154 AJ, 110-273-558, statement of Anka Jovanović.

of Occupiers and their Collaborators, it is clearly visible how important this issue is:

> Recently, I, the undersigned, have been visited by many members of the association from Marinkova bara demanding that I report the following people to the authorities in charge:
>
> 1) Đorđe Uzunović, Jaše Ignjatovića 76, Marinkova bara (VI sector)
>
> 2) ... Uzunović, Jaše Ignjatovića 76, his wife, name unknown
>
> 3) Adela Uzunović, Jaše Ignjatovića 76, his daughter-in-law.
>
> 1) People in the whole neighbourhood, Gypsies as well as Serbs, are talking about Đorđe Uzunović, that many Germans and Gestapo members visited him openly, that he was on excellent terms with the German commander and German authorities, that one German was even his guest of honour at Christmas, as well as that he is certainly of German descent too, because he speaks perfect German.
>
> What is most important for the association, he is claimed to have ruined almost all Gypsies from Marinkova bara, that he constantly threatened them, beat them, and finally, that he snitched on them so they would be taken to the camp, i.e. execution fields.
>
> Thus, for example, one elderly woman, Jovanka Beškić, residing at Jaše Ignjatovića 67, complains that this Uzunović person first urged a policeman to check the identification papers of her son Stojan and beat him up, then he went to find a German patrol, but when he didn't find them, he brought two gendarmes, who took her sons, Stojan and Borisav, to the gendarmerie station and beat them senseless, even across the palms of their hands and soles of their feet. Later he ordered them to dig a toilet hole free of charge and told them to be thankful that he hadn't brought them the German patrol. Besides, he always boasted of having been appointed Marinkova bara commander and that he would judge the Gypsies. Those two, as well as all Gypsies from that neighborhood, he constantly threatened that he would send them all off as "communists" to the concentration camp and that he would be the end of them, he persistently used foul language against them, calling them communists and assaulting them personally or by way of our police or the German one. In the lead-up to taking Gypsy men to the camp, all night he paced the entire street and stood near Gypsy houses, certainly with the intention to watch over them lest someone should escape, since he knew there would be removals. In the morning, around 4 o'clock,

together with his wife and daughter-in-law Adela, he entered all Gypsy houses with the German police and denounced them. What is more, it seems that he was the person who gave to the Germans an accurate list of Gypsy houses, since Germans didn't enter other, Serbian houses. In addition to all those threats, cursing and snitching, he even took some things from a Gypsy woman called Persa, while she was in the camp and sold some of them, while others are still at his place. Even so, Persa never returned from camp, nor did her children, and it is not known what happened to them.

2) His wife also snitched on Gypsies, called them communists, cursed them and threatened them. Besides, she personally attacked and slapped a Gypsy woman.

3) Daughter-in-law Adela, whose husband the Germans had taken to Germany, and who had also behaved towards Gypsies like her father Đorđe, snitched to German authorities not only on Gypsies but on many Serbs as well. What is more, from a Gypsy woman called Nata Petrović, she took a large sum of money, promising she would hide her and keep her from being taken to camp, but in actuality she herself reported her to the police, who came and took her and her 4 children to camp, whence they never returned. Besides, the whole Marinkova bara knows, and would openly say so, that she was of very immoral behavior, that she had the most intimate liaisons with Germans and that the whole neighbourhood was afraid of her and watchful. Now it seems she has run away somewhere and vanished from the area, certainly out of fear she might be accused.

Regarding all those claims, as well as many other things, the witnesses listed below will testify as association members, and if needed, we will submit other names, even from among Serbs.

We request from the addressee hereof to call the named persons to account as soon as possible and after determining if guilty, to see to it with authorities in charge that they be apprehended and sentenced to the punishment they deserve, taking into account the fact that for their snitching on Gypsies from door to door, they are to be blamed for the death of numerous breadwinners and even entire families. This is all the more necessary, since the association has already been informed that all Gypsies taken away from Belgrade were executed and killed in Germany; which is why many families, women and children, are left without their breadwinner and defender.

Witnesses for the above are:

1) Jovanka Belkić, Jaše Ignjatovića 67, whose two sons were beaten and then taken away
2) Žika Dobrosavljević, Peke Pavlovića 76,
3) Natalija Todorović, Jaše Ignjatovića 82,
4) Živko Milovanović, Peke Pavlovića 57,
5) Darinka Stanković, Jaše Ignjatovića 67,
6) Desanka Kostić, Jaše Ignjatovića 65,
7) Mitra Todorović, Jaše Ignjatovića 67,
8) Radovan Aćimović, Jaše Ignjatovića 84,
9) Mileva Stojanović, Jaše Ignjatovića 60a,
10) Nata Firizević, Jaše Ignjatovića 60a,
11) Zorka Radosavljević, Jaše Ignjatovića 72,
12) Leposava Paunović, Jaše Ignjatovića 67.

DEATH TO FASCISM – FREEDOM TO THE PEOPLE!

Association chairman,
(Illegible)
(law school graduate)[155]

Several months later, the same association sent another letter, this time to the court authorities (Public Prosecutor for Serbia), clearly demanding that Dragi Jovanović, who was then already in prison of the security police (OZNA), be questioned about the issue of mass killing of the Roma. In the letter, the following was stated:

> The association has found out that Dragi Jovanović is now in Belgrade, being a well-known war criminal, who ought to be brought before the court.
>
> Being that Jovanović is one of the biggest culprits for the horrible fate of our fellow citizens – Gypsies, and being that the association has not been able to find out, to this day, what happened to them, as not even the State Commission for Determining the Crimes of Occupiers and their Collaborators has any data about it, we kindly ask the Public Prosecutor to receive this act as a kind of accusation by all Gypsies in Serbia, especially Gypsies from Belgrade, who suffered the most. In addition, we ask the investigating authorities to question the above named criminal on the following: what happened to the Gypsies, where were they sent and are they still alive or were they all shot? We are

155 AJ, 110-273-833.

> convinced that he knows all that as one of the occupier's main associates and helpers, who persecuted us Gypsies the most.
>
> At the same time, we ask Comrade Public Prosecutor to inform us, if possible, in every way, about the results of the investigation on this issue, i.e. if the Gypsies who were taken away are still living and where they were sent by the occupier. This is because many mothers, wives and sisters who are wearing weeds are uncertain to this day about the fate of their dear ones.[156]

Unfortunately, nothing was done. As in the case of German war criminals who were tried in front of Yugoslav military courts, neither Dragi Jovanović, nor other domestic fascists were charged with the responsibility for genocide against the Roma. It is solely in the indictment against other members of Nedić's regime, Tanasije Dinić, Velibor Jonić and Đura Dokić, that their role was mentioned in carrying out the extermination of Jews and "Gypsies", but it was left at that.[157] Accordingly, the report is indicative which the Belgrade Board of Trustees of Serbian Country Commission for Determining the Crimes of Occupiers and their Collaborators sent on the 27th of November 1945 to the Country Commission:

> Because of a shortage of concrete data about the manner of crimes committed in Belgrade, in certain cases also because of unilateral proceedings, a collective determining of all crimes committed against Gypsies is being undertaken. As these crimes were committed rather long ago, mostly in 1941, so impressions have faded, while on the other hand, citizens don't see a need for determining these crimes and criminals or a reason to press charges because the criminals are unfamiliar by name, absent or for the most part liquidated. Therefore this commission has succeeded in collecting relatively few data.[158]

156 IAB, box „Jovanović Dragi", 595-611, no. 10, Gypsy Cultural-Educational Association to the Public Prosecutor for Serbia, the 16th of February 1946

157 Miodrag Zečević (ed.), *Dokumenti sa suđenja Draži Mihailoviću*, SUBNOR Jugoslavije, Belgrade, 2001, p.163.

158 Report no. 7562 sent by the Belgrade Board of Trustees of Serbian Country Commission for Determining the Crimes of Occupiers and their Collaborators on the 27th of November 1945 to the Country Commission of Serbia, the 27th of November 1945, published in Miodrag Zečević (ed.), ibid., p. 1732.

The collected data, as well as reports and determinations outlining the damages for each victim have disappeared from the discourse on war crimes. As in other European countries, the Roma were forgotten.

V. GENOCIDE AGAINST THE ROMA IN OTHER SERBIAN CITIES: CONCISE OVERVIEW

Measures against the Roma population were introduced and applied in all the cities of occupied Serbia. Just like in Belgrade, the Roma were victims of mass executions during the autumn of 1941 in many other cities although relatively little data exists in the literature about it. Fragmentary traces indicate the fact that new, more thorough research must be undertaken, so as to obtain a more complete picture about genocide against the Roma in Serbia. In this short chapter, which can be considered an appendix, solely "the best known" cases are considered. The objective is to show, without excessive ambition, that suffering of the Roma is an issue that encompasses the whole of Serbia, although it attained its greatest scope in Belgrade.

Šabac

Occupational forces entered Šabac on the 13th of April 1941. After the final breakdown of the Yugoslav Army and division of the territory of Yugoslavia, Šabac county became an area bordering with the newly created Independent State of Croatia.

Since the commencement of the armed battle against the occupier and quislings, strong national resistance and action of partisan units developed in that region. Already in August, the Mačva squad was formed and the first big armed action carried out, that is – an attack against the village Bogatić, which was exceptionally successful.[1]

1 On that, cf.: Dragoslav Parmakovic: *Mačvanski (Podrinski) narodnooslobodilački partizanski odred, 1941-1944*, Fond narodnooslobodilačke borbe Podrinja, Šabac, 1973.

After that attack and quick strengthening of partisan forces, the occupational forces in Šabac county received re-enforcements. The first armed conflict between partisan and German units happened on the 14th of August near the village of Duvanište, after which the battle spread to other territories of the county. In the second half of September, it became clear to occupational authorities that the reaction to resistance in Šabac county had to be more adequate.

In was during that period that general Böhme was appointed plenipotentiary commanding general in Serbia, and among his first acts, he ordered the cleansing of that territory from enemy elements.[2] In that order it stated, among other things, that "unscrupulous measures must be an intimidating example, which will shortly be heard about all over Serbia."[3]

The cleansing of Mačva encountered the insurgents' resistance. In the order issued by German Military Commander for Serbia, it is stated that on the 23rd of September, arms were fired against German patrol, which suffered losses. Further it is mentioned that immediately the next day "342 division is to collect, by foray, all men in Šabac between the ages of 14 and 70 and transfer them to the concentration camp, which the division will erect west of the river Sava." In addition, it was mentioned that members of the population participating in battles should be executed on the spot.[4]

The action of carrying out arrests lasted three days. In the daily report of the headquarters of 342nd infantry division, dated the 25th of September 1941, there is mention of the fact that 3,500-4,000 men from Šabac were arrested during the action of cleansing.[5] In the daily report for the following day, it is stated that 4,410 people were arrested[6].

2 Cf. chapter on genocide in Serbia
3 *Zbornik NOR*, volume I, book 1, doc. 168.
4 Ibid., doc. 170.
5 Ibid, doc. 175.
6 Ibid, doc. 176.

This number of arrestees was confirmed in the report of German Military Commander in Serbia dated the 27th of September 1941.[7]

For all arrestees, on the grounds of regulation issued on the 25th of September by the German Military Commander in Serbia, a separate camp was to be formed west of the river Sava, at the locality of Jarak, 20 kilometers north of Šabac.[8] The next day, transport of roughly 5,000 people began, including Jews from the Šabac camp on the Sava, i.e. Jewish men from Šabac who were part of "Kladovo transport".[9]

During the relocation of convicts, German soldiers on horses and bicycles imposed an impossible pace on the exhausted convicts. First they were interned in the village of Klenak, where they were left without food and water for two days, after which they continued making their way towards Jarak. A certain number didn't survive the relocation. When they arrived at Jarak, it was assessed that the position was not the most favourable for a camp, so that those same convicts were sent back, toward Šabac. The return was equally hard and a certain number of convicts didn't survive the trip.

After the partisan attack against German soldiers near Topola on the 2nd of October, Böhme ordered the execution of 2,100 hostages, of which 805 "Jews and Gypsies" were to be taken from the camp in Šabac.[10]

The execution of Jews and Roma was carried out on the 12 and 13th of October in the village Zasavica.

7 Ibid, doc. 178.

8 Ibid, doc. 174.

9 "Kladovo transport" is the name that relates to the group of about 1,200 Jewish refugees from Austria and other Middle-European countries, who were temporarily in Šabac at the moment war with Yugoslavia erupted, hoping they would succeed in making their way to Palestine. All but several exceptions were killed in Serbia. On "Kladovo transport" cf.: Milica Mihajlović (ed.), *Kladovo transport. Zbornik radova sa okruglog stola*, Jevrejski istorijski muzej, Belgrade, 2006.

10 Cf. chapter on genocide in Serbia.

According to a witness from the group of villagers assigned by German authorities the task of digging a grave and burying the executed Jews and Roma:

> On the first day, i.e. the 12th of October 1941, Germans shot a certain number of Gypsies, whereas the following day, the 13th of October, they shot, as far as I can assess, about 7-800 Jews. The execution procedure was as follows: in front of the grave, Germans had driven 50 small stakes into the ground, so that for each stake they set up one victim. The stake was placed at a distance of no more than 1 metre from the grave and each victim fell onto the turf, not the grave. Each victim was shot from immediate proximity by two Germans, at the command issued by an officer. After firing a volley, the soldiers retreat, while German officers approach and kill with handguns every victim that shows signs of life. We follow closely and throw the killed people into the grave with utmost speed. (...)[11]

The word about mass executions already spread two days later all over Šabac. It was found out that the Wehrmacht had shot all male Jews from the camp, as well as around 200 Roma. About a month later, according to witnesses, 600 Jews were executed and 100-120 Roma.[12]

After the war, the Country Commission of Serbia for Determining the Crimes of Occupiers and their Collaborators formed a special committee in charge of exhumations in the village Zasavica. Stevan Jovičić, a clerk from Šabac, who participated in that work, testified that, during the disinterment, the committee found the remains of 868 killed persons, of which around seventy had been Roma from Šabac. Nationality was determined on the basis of identity cards found among some, while others were recognized by their families.[13]

11 AJ, 110-908-1025. According to the testimony of another witness, on the second day, Germans shot more Roma than Jews: AJ, 110-593-133. Regardless of the difference between these two testimonies, it is striking that in both cases the witnesses remember that a certain number of Roma were shot during the course of one day.

12 Milan Koljanin, *Poslednje putovanje Kladovskog transporta*, in Andrej Mitrović and Milica Mihajlović (eds.), *Kladovo Transport. Zbornik radova sa okruglog stola*, Jevrejski istorijski muzej, Belgrade, 2002, p. 80 (footnote no. 33).

13 AJ, 110-908-1032.

During the operation of "cleansing" the Mačva region (the confluence of the Drina and Sava rivers), which lasted somewhat over a month, evidence was discovered of executions of over 3,600 people, not only captured partisans, but also civilians, and in total about 22,000 people passed through the concentration camp in Šabac.[14]

By the outset of November 1941, just a small number of free Roma remained in Šabac; there were no more Jews left at liberty. Nevertheless, on the 7th of November, the order was issued that all free Jews and Roma were to report themselves. Soon there were no more free Roma in Šabac either, except those who had succeeded in being erased from lists of "Gypsies".[15]

Kragujevac

While the action of cleansing Mačva and mass crimes against civilians were still in progress, the military heads demanded that a similar operation, with the same brutality, be conducted in central and western Serbia, where partisan forces and Chetniks held important towns and wider territory, known as Republic of Užice. During the first days of October, general Hoffmann, commander of the 717th Division, whose task was to carry out the action of "cleansing" primarily around Gornji Milanovac and Rekovac, envisaged certain measures against the population, in the spirit of what was going on during those days in north-western Serbia: threats, fires, arrests of hostages and the entire male population, except children and the elderly.[16] Draconian measures, whereby all Serbian people were to be considered insurgents' accomplices, and which, after additional orders issued by general Böhme, envisaged primarily the arrests of communists, Jews and Roma as hostages, were the main regulations which German officers applied during actions against insurgents and which led to mass crimes in different cities of Serbia.

14 Venceslav Glišić, *Teror i zločini*..., p. 55.

15 Stanoje Filipović, *Logori u Šapcu*, Dnevnik, Novi Sad, 1967, p. 77.

16 Venceslav Glišić, *Teror i zločini*..., p. 53.

The city of Kraljevo, in central Serbia, was in German hands then, and it contained the majority of troops which had retreated from the Užice region. Awaiting a partisan attack and fearing that the insurgents would be joined by the working class of Kraljevo (employed at local airplane and locomotive factories as well as on railways) the German authorities ordered their arrest.

Several days later, specifically in the night between the 14th and 15th of October, partisan forces carried out an attack against Kraljevo, but were warded off, with casualties of 14 dead and 10 wounded. The following day, German authorities ordered and carried out arrests of all men they could find between the ages of 14 and 60 years old. In the following three days, all the arrested 1,736 men and 19 women were shot by German army. During the following days, all male refugees kept at the Kraljevo train station were also executed.[17]

After the partisan attack on the units of the 3rd Battalion of the 749th regiment in the vicinity of Gornji Milanovac, during which the German forces suffered 10 fatalities, with 26 injured, the regiment commander, following Böhme's instructions, ordered retaliation against the civilian population. In the villages around Kragujevac, on the 19th of October, 422 men were executed, while during the following days, German forces, together with quisling formations, carried out mass arrests in Kragujevac itself. Among the arrestees there were entire year groups of local secondary school children, such as the first and second grade of the Teaching School and fifth grade of the Gymnasium. All detainees were collected at the local detention camp buildings, where all male Jews from Kragujevac, around 80 of them, had been kept since the 18th of October. They were all shot on the 21st of October, at three localities in the vicinity of the city, the majority at a place known as Šumarice. That day, a total of 2,300 civilians were executed.[18]

17 Ibid., p. 64.

18 Ibid.

Several days before the execution, Ljotić's 5th volunteer squad arrived at Kragujevac, under the command of Marisav Petrović. Their task was primarily to recruit new volunteers from the city. In addition to helping Germans, during the day of the 20th of October, the squad carried out arrests independently, while its members plundered Jewish shops and apartments together with Germans.[19]

It was one group of the 5th volunteer squad, under the leadership of Momčilo Zdravković, called "Izrila", that had the assignment to collect the Roma.[20] Among the arrestees were four immobile elderly men, who were thrown into trucks "just like sacks of things".[21] The next day, on the date of the execution, Ljotić's squads (Ljotićevci) tried to single out, from the big group of arrested Kragujevac citizens, those whom they considered capable of becoming the new "volunteers". Instead, they gave Germans other hostages, mostly Roma, in an even greater number than was necessary.[22] According to some estimates, roughly 200 Roma were executed.[23]

Niš

As the second largest city in Serbia, Niš was the most important city in the southern part of occupied Serbia. Just before the war, it was home to 40,000 people, among which there were 950 Roma on the territory of the city itself and another 350 in its rural area.[24] With the arrival of the occupier, it became the seat of Feldkommandantur 809, led by

19 AJ, 110-908-683.

20 Branislav Božović, *Poruke streljanog grada*, Spomen park-Kultura, Kragujevac, 1966, pp. 123-124.

21 AJ, 110-102-777, Decision on determining the crimes of occupiers and their collaborators, Harald Turner, p. 17.

22 Branislav Božović, *Poruke streljanog...*, pp. 130-131.

23 Valter Manošek, ibid., p. 165.

24 Đokica Jovanović, *…Čuo je da su Cigani streljani na Bubnju…Kultura zaborava ili Romi u Nišu u vreme II svetskog rata*, in Sulejman Bosto, Tihomir Cipek and Olivera Milosavljević (eds.), *Kultura sjećanja: 1941. Povijesni lomovi i svladavanje prošlosti*, Disput, Zagreb, 2008, p. 84.

Karl Freiherr von Bothmer. Through the Feldkommandantur, the Military Commander's Administrative Headquarters exerted control over all quisling and collaborator forces in south-eastern Serbia: Nedić's gendarmerie, Kosta Pećanac's Chetniks, Ljotić's volunteer squads, and from 1942, the Bulgarian occupational corps. The Kreiskommandantur in Zaječar and in Leskovac, and until December 1941, also the Kreiskommandantur in Kruševac and Kosovska Mitrovica, were subordinate to Feldkommandantur 809.[25]

Just like in other cities of Serbia, the existing local administrative apparatus continued to operate in the occupier's service. They reported on the one side to the German authorities, and on the other to the quisling Ministry of Internal Affairs [26].

The battle against insurgents and the regulation issued by the military authorities in September 1941 led to the formation of the concentration camp Crveni krst, under the administration of the Gestapo from Niš. Around 30,000 people passed through the camp, of which about 750 were Jews: men were shot, while women and children were taken to the Sajmište camp.[27] Camp detainees who were designated for killing were taken to the execution field at Bubanj.

Shortly after the regulation dated the 30 of May 1941, various departments of the Niš municipality fired fifteen Roma clerks.[28] The Roma in Niš were mostly of Islamic faith. Consequently, it was the representatives of the Albanian national group who primarily interceded on behalf of the Roma, taking advantage of the Roma's fear of arrest in order to recruit them for Albanian quisling formations; on the other hand, some priests baptized groups of Muslim Roma and gave them Serbian names and surnames, thus saving them from persecution.[29]

25 Miroslav Milovanović, *Nemački logor na Crvenom krstu u Nišu i streljanja na Bubnju*, ISI-opštinski odbor SUBNOR Niš-Narodna knjiga, Belgrade, 1983, pp. 17-18.

26 Ibid., p. 29.

27 Ibid, p. 92.

28 Đokica Jovanović, ibid., p. 85.

29 Ibid., p. 89.

Several days before the big raid in Belgrade, on the 20th of October 1941, quisling forces blocked all five Roma neighbourhoods, i.e. "mahalas" – Stočni trg, Beograd-mahala, Stambol kapija, Čair and Rabadži-mahala – and arrested all men over the age of 16 they could find. The Roma serf whose task was to walk in front of soldiers, yelled in Serbian "People, wake up and come out", but at the same time in Romani "Run away, wherever you can". A total of about 370 Roma were arrested.[30] All were taken to the camp at Crveni krst.

The group of Roma who succeeded in avoiding arrest on the 20th of October, established a connection with the head of Albanian quislings in Kosovo, Džafer Deva, who interceded on behalf of the Roma before the Gestapo in Niš and saw to it that they are released from the camp. They were released in groups, primarily those who worked at factories, but a group of 90 people was, nonetheless, transferred to the penal bureau and shot at Bubanj on the 23rd of February 1942.[31] A report was also drawn up on that event by the county committee of CPY for Niš:

> (...)
>
> 2) Two days ago, mass executions were carried out here. 850 people were shot. Over 600 were led out of the penal bureau, then almost all male Jews, some Gypsies and one part of the remaining people from the camp. It was the occupier's retaliation for actions undertaken in the vicinity and revenge because of the convicts' escape from the camp and the murder of several German soldiers. There is great fear in the city and many are running away just to save their bare lives. (...)[32]

In the upcoming period, 170 Roma were also brought to the camp from surrounding towns, that is – from Prokuplje, Aleksinac, Svrljig, Bela Palanka and other places, and executed.[33]

30 Ibid., p. 87.

31 Ibid., pp. 87-88.

32 *Zbornik NOR*, volume I, book 3, doc. 30.

33 Miroslav Milovanović, ibid., pp. 194-195.

According to the calculation by Đokica Jovanović, 298 Roma were shot in Niš, some at the Crveni krst camp, others at the Bubanj execution field.[34] Although, on the one hand, it is claimed that the number isn't final, on the other it is not mentioned if those were victims of racial persecution and genocide, or, as in the case of Roma interned in the Belgrade camp at Banjica, those people were killed as partisans or their adherents, regardless of their background. Furthermore, for many Roma who were deported to the Bor mine or to Germany for forced labour, it is not clear whether they were victims of racial persecution or deported as "Serbs", just like many of their fellow citizens of Serbian nationality.

Leskovac and other towns

In April 1941, a Kreiskommandantur was established in Leskovac, subordinate to Feldkommandantur 809, while from that summer, a branch of BdS was also active. As elsewhere, even though they had absolute military and civilian authority, German forces relied on quislings, primarily on the local branch of the Special Police, on the gendarmerie, the Ljotićevci and administrative apparatus members.[35] In the Leskovac region, Kosta Pećanac's volunteers were also active.

From 1941 onwards, the Bulgarian army was also present in the region, which had initially been engaged for the purposes of railroad protection, while later, together with all other occupational and quisling formations, it was utilized in the battle against partisans.[36] All those formations were responsible for many crimes committed against the civilian population during occupation.

From the attack on the Soviet Union until the end of 1941, occupying forces activity mainly developed through individual or group

34 Đokica Jovanović, ibid., p. 89.

35 Hranislav Rakić, *Teror i zločini okupatora i domaćih izdajnika u Leskovačkom i Vranjskom kraju 1941-1944*, Narodni Muzej Leskovac i međuopštinski odbor SUBNOR-a Južnomoravskog regiona, Leskovac, 1986, p. 42.

36 Ibid., p. 46.

arrests of communists and their adherents. However, on the 3rd of December of that same year, a big offensive was organized against partisan forces on the liberated territory of Pusta Reka and Jablanica. During the battle, several German soldiers and quislings were killed. Retaliation was quick.

Two days after the offensive, German authorities ordered the arrest of hostages in Leskovac itself. Nedić's gendarmerie blocked the Roma districts of Podvorci and Sat-Mala. Similarly to what had happened two months earlier in Belgrade, they went from house to house and collected all men over the age of 16, telling them they must unload goods at the railway station. All arrestees were taken to the nearby school and detained there. However, since they succeeded in arresting only 120 Roma, they decided to let several of them go, so as to show that all the rest would also soon be released. Since the situation was calmed at least temporarily, on the 9th of December, gendarmes blocked Roma districts again, this time including Vinarce and Pečenjevac. Together with Germans, they captured men and pushed them into trucks by force. The following day, all were shot at a place called Gavrina dolina, on Hisar mountain near Leskovac. In total, 293 Roma were killed, together with 11 Serbs and 6 Jews.[37]

According to traces that exist in the literature or in archival materials, a month after the occupier's entry into Bor, a group of "Gypsies" and one Jew were arrested and transferred to Zaječar.[38] In the indictment against Ernst Ludwig Langemann Schulze, the German army major, who was the head of Kreiskommandantur in Zaječar from the 20th of April 1941 until the 5th of August 1943, it says, among other things, that:

> over 1,000 Gypsies from the county territory were arrested and tortured in camps, upon orders of the accused, a considerable number of them died and were shot, while the rest were released at last.[39]

37 Ibid., pp. 51-53. The author also includes a list of names of those executed.

38 AJ, 110-908-387.

39 AVII, Military Courts, case Harald Turner and others, 3/III, book 1, Communiques, Criminal proceedings against Schulze Langemann Ernst Ludwig, p. 2.

Additionally, Fritz Müller, German army major and former Kreiskommandant in Zaječar, when asked by Yugoslav authorities after the war, "Was the order for arrests of Gypsies issued via the Feldkommandantur or not?", he responded: "I remember that the order for arrests of Gypsies came near the end of 1941, and then it was transferred by the Feldkommandantur to the Kreiskommandantur. I don't recall the details now".[40]

In Kruševac, a town in central Serbia, the Roma were also victims of mass executions. In a report by the county committee of CPY for Kruševac county, dated October 1941, it says as follows:

> (...) The most important action was an armed uprising and five-day siege of the town. Mobilization of peasants was carried out by Major Keserović as a chetnik, but it wasn't known if it was for a battle against partisans or Germans. Before the attack, in a short period he imparted that he was leading them into battle and attack against the town, at the same time asking for the cooperation of our squad (...). Germans responded by way of reprisals. They killed roughly 130 people in the town, on the streets and in houses alike, additionally executing about 56 Gypsies and some citizens. (...)[41]

40 AVII, Military Courts, case Wilhelm Fuchs and others, 3/III, book 1, the hearing of Fritz Müller, p. 3.

41 *Zbornik NOR*, volume I, book I, doc. 39.

VI. CONCLUSION

If one were to chronologically define the period in which genocide against the Roma in Serbia was carried out, one could say, with certain reservations, that its beginning lies in the introduction of the first anti-Roma measures in May 1941, while its completion is marked by dissolution of the Jewish camp at Sajmište in May 1942. Specifically, during that period, the Roma were victims of racial and social discrimination, mass executions and suffering at the camp.

By way of the regulation dated the 30th of May 1941, Roma were equated with Jews. From that moment, they no longer had any civil rights, while a separate legislation was in force for them, whereby they were compelled to wear yellow armbands and report their property; at the same time being banned from public places and prevented from doing their jobs.

In Belgrade, mass executions ensued after partisan attacks in October of that same year. As a result of the attack near Topola at the beginning of the month, following which General Böhme ordered the execution of 2,200 hostages (800 from the camp in Šabac), or the case of the attack near Valjevo in the middle of that same month, followed by the execution of another 2,200 hostages – there was a drastic decrease in the total number of available hostages from the "racial" reservoir, i.e. from the Toposvke šupe camp. There were simply not enough Jews anymore, and the enormous need for hostages couldn't be met by the "political" reservoir, i.e. – the Banjica camp. It was therefore necessary to find a substantial number of people immediately who could be sent into death, without it bothering anyone in Belgrade too much, (just as the extermination of Jewish men hadn't

seem to bother them). The mass of victims was already prepared, at its disposal; their arrest didn't even require greater forces, since they lived next to the camp. Because they were needy, poor and marginalized, their removal would certainly not represent a problem for fellow citizens and would perhaps even ease the position of City of Belgrade Administration as well as that of municipalities, which grappled with many social and health problems. In the second half of October, Turner's proposals concerning the arrests of Roma received a suitable response from Böhme.

A similar situation whereby male Roma were used for "filling up" quotas for execution existed in other Serbian towns as well.

Accordingly, it is interesting to note that after mass executions in Kraljevo and Kragujevac, which mostly affected Serbian citizens, president Milan Nedić interceded before the German authorities, asking that the retaliation policy be ended. In principle, Böhme agreed, especially due to the consequences that the executions had had on the local inhabitants.[1] Nevertheless, in the following days, the remaining male Jews from Belgrade and Banat were shot, except one group the German authorities utilized for labour at Sajmište. The Roma in entire Serbia became new victims of retaliations. Nobody protested.

At the moment General Böhme was released from duty, on the 5th of December 1941, his successor General Bader was left with a simple calculation about executions carried out until then, as well as the number of additional hostages who must be shot. Although data wasn't completely accurate, it was calculated that, up to that date, 11,164 hostages had been shot, while 20,174 more people were to be killed so as to meet the quota.[2]

Of the total number of victims, roughly 5,000 were Jews, while about 2,500 were Roma.[3]

1 Christopher Browning, *Fateful months...*, p. 54.

2 Ibid., p. 55.

3 Milan Koljanin, *Nemački logor...*, pp. 39-40.

Due to the new situation in the country and retreat of the majority of partisan forces to Bosnia, General Bader reduced the number of hostages designated for execution, but the Roma, just like Jews, remained in the category of those hostages who were to be shot first, even though, to put it simply, there were no more left. Under the revised calculations for each German who was killed, 50 people were to be executed, while 25 for each one wounded. Victims were still to be taken from the ranks of communists, Roma, Jews, criminals etc.[4]

Killing of the Roma went on rather painlessly for the remainder of the population. The position of the Roma, although they had been victims of segregation, especially after the regulation dated the 30th May 1941, probably didn't change much in the eyes of other citizens, since even before the war they had been the victims of social and economic segregation. Unfortunately, their position didn't change subsequently.

In the process of making the decision about executing male Roma, two main currents converged. On the one hand, after Keitel's order to execute 100 hostages for one killed German and 50 for a wounded one, the German army had the constant need for new victims. Just like a factory which needed to realize production necessary for further operation, the Wehrmacht demanded more and more raw materials so as to continue producing death of the innocent and fulfil its revengeful policy. The fact that as early as summer of 1941 executions of Jews were carried out and didn't have any adverse effects either on quisling authorities or the people, implied that primarily Jewish men could be taken as hostages. Nevertheless, their relatively small number required that already near the end of October new victims had be sought elsewhere; at the same time avoiding further taking of Serbian nationality hostages, so as not to overly disturb the citizens. The solution was to turn to the Roma, who were also "compatible victims" according to Nazi principles and for whom no one would defend. Exe-

4 Christopher Browning, *Fateful months*..., p. 55.

cution of Jews and Roma provided a guarantee that retaliations would be conducted in the most secure and peaceful manner.

Of the impact felt of the overall local German authorities, Harald Turner, played perhaps the most significant role.

National Socialist Party member since 1930 and SS member since 1932, with experience stemming from occupied territories of Poland and France, Turner was appointed, in accord with Hitler's wishes, as chief of Administrative Headquarters of the Military Commander in Serbia during April 1941. His policy was founded, on the one hand, on building a Serbian quisling apparatus, while on the other, on destruction of all unreliable elements.[5] In that spirit one should view the speed with which measures against Jews and especially Roma were introduced in Serbia. Adopting the regulation dated the 30th May 1941 represents Turner's wish to treat Roma, as soon as possible, like they were treated in the Third Reich, i.e. the same way as Jews. It should be kept in mind that in Nazi Germany itself, at least at the time, no distinct plan existed for extermination of the Roma, rather it depended on local circumstances. Therefore the persecution of Roma was different to that of the Jews and didn't happen simultaneously or consistently throughout Europe.[6]

Turner's decision isn't completely clear, being that the Roma in Serbia resided outside of the borders of German living space, or "Lebensraum", and accordingly having a different place in the plans of Nazi ideology. Still, his regulation, which pertained to all Roma in Serbia, indicates his adoption of a racial interpretation of "the Gypsy issue" which was gaining momentum during those years in the circle around Himmler.

It was only after the attack against Soviet Union and the establishing of a clear difference between Roma nomads, i.e. čergari, as they were called in Serbia, and original settlers, that Turner was compelled

5 Christopher Browning, *The Path to Genocide. Essays on Launching the Final Solution*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1992, pp. 128-129.

6 Michael Zimmermann, *The Wehrmacht ...,* p. 112.

to revise his policy. Racial theory, that was still in force in Germany, according to which nomads were the sole Aryans who had kept their purity without mixing with other peoples, receded in front of the notion that they represented a political threat, especially in occupied eastern territories, because with their mobility and potential to be informants, they could severely undermine the security of German troops. For the same reasons, by way of regulation dated the 11th of July, only nomads were pronounced dangerous, not permanently residing Roma, as in other occupied countries of Eastern Europe, so that only they were on the receiving end of all the adopted anti-Roma measures, at least "for the time being". The statement by Turner's right-hand man Kiessel, according to whom the decision had been made in Berlin, indicates the intervention of the central authority for the purposes of regulating the situation in Belgrade and Serbia.

However, Turner used every opportunity so as to continue carrying out his original policy. In addition to his wish for the Jewish issue "to be solved" as soon as possible, he demonstrated through his three speeches to the German Plenipotentiary of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Belgrade, and by an announcement by Felix Benzler, in August and September 1941, that Serbian Jews be deported to Romania, Poland or Russia.[7] The Roma issue came into focus again with the arrival of general Böhme in Belgrade. Adapting his standpoint to the needs of the German army in Serbia, which was engaged the most in fighting against communists, and using suitable phraseology, near the end of October, Turner proposed to Böhme the extermination of male Jews and Roma. Both one and the other he considered to be "an unreliable element", while for the Roma he especially underscored that "they can't be useful members of a community of peoples, taking into account their spiritual and physical constitution", but that they are also "responsible for particular atrocities and carrying out secret service".[8]

7 Christopher Browning, *The Path*..., pp. 128-129.

8 *Zbornik NOR*, volume I. book 1, doc. 234; orginal in German in AVII, NA, 27II-1-36/1 and 36/2.

After mass executions in autumn of 1941, the Wehrmacht no longer had direct contact with Jews and Roma in Serbia. In Berlin, the idea of "the final solution" to these issues started being more clearly defined, that is – to their technical realization, which was solved on the 20th of January at the Wannsee conference. On the basis of communication between local occupational authorities in Belgrade and representatives from Berlin, the decision was reached about the final liquidation of Jewish and Roma women and children from Serbia. The first phase was supposed to take place in the camp in Belgrade itself, up until further decisions were made. From that moment, the Einsatzgruppe became the sole master of the lives of about 7,500 Jewish women and about 800 Roma women and their children.

As early as the outset of December 1941, the entire "non-Aryan" population was removed from Belgrade, not only by execution, but also by being grouped and interned at the camp, which was to represent solely a temporary phase en route to their extermination. Racial aims were attained solely thanks to efficient cooperation between all Nazi actors in Belgrade, of German, Austrian, Volksdeutsche and Serbian provenance.

The position of the Roma at the Sajmište camp was very difficult. Still, the possibility to obtain suitable permits concerning permanent residence provided an opportunity for salvation. The majority of them who were released, were successful due to this fact. Those who remained, who had not been able to procure that permit, as well as drifters and Jews, were killed in the spring of 1942.

"The Gypsy issue" was finally solved. The Roma were partly killed, while the majority of them were administratively "turned into" Serbs.

The mechanism by which "the Gypsy issue" was being realized indicates the specific role that quisling authorities in Serbia played in genocide against the Roma.

Since the very establishing of Serbian local, city and national administrations, at the start of the Second World War the issue of the Jews and the Roma were seriously understood and were devoted effi-

cient attention, typical of administrative and police apparatuses. German orders were assiduously carried out and respected strictly: by the end of June 1941, i.e. two and a half months after the start of occupation, Jews and Roma were fired from government service and registered, while yellow armbands were also assigned to them, so as to make them visibly different from the remaining population.

At the moment of mass arrests in Belgrade, the domestic gendarmerie was entrusted the task of arresting, in cooperation with German army and police, all male Roma: within three days, it carried out an extensive raid in various parts of the capital and surrounding villages, proving once more to Germans their loyalty and efficiency. What is more, the gendarmerie conducted the transfer of arrestees to Topovske šupe camp and slightly over a month later, they repeated their atrocities by arresting women and children, then transferring them to the Sajmište camp. The participation of domestic forces in arrests of the Roma in other Serbian cities, especially in Kragujevac and Leskovac, confirms the responsibility that quislings had in the mass killing of Roma: especially when taking into account that in all those cases the fate of arrestees was to be execution. Domestic authorities knew well how the Occupiers would treat their victims, for they knew how Jews from Banat and Belgrade had been treated.

Nevertheless, the quislings' responsibility does not relate only to their thorough work on arresting and handing over the Roma, in which they could have had an interest of their own, but which was in any case the consequence of occupational authorities' orders.

Several months before the raids in Belgrade and other Serbian towns, at the moment when Turner issued the regulation whereby travelers were to be separated from permanent Roma residents, a step was taken by which the local, lowest authorities were entrusted with a very serious responsibility: municipality governors had to confirm whether each Roma applicant was a permanent resident or not. This meant that municipality governors had immense power of making the

decisions as to who would be on the receiving end of anti-Roma measures and who would be spared; from October to December of 1941, it also meant the power to decide whom to send to camp and probably into death, while from December onwards, whom to release from Sajmište. In what manner they determined whether someone was a permanent resident or not, it is difficult to ascertain, but, keeping in mind all the obstacles and actual impossibility of accessing this data, it can nevertheless be claimed that personal interest often played an important role in the process.

The intervention by the Romanian Consulate is noteworthy, which made it possible for "Romanian" Roma in Belgrade, probably elsewhere too, to be saved by issuing them Romanian documents. What the reasons were: why Romanian authorities intervened to save the Roma and how many people were saved that way are questions that will hopefully be clarified by way of other research studies.

Transferring responsibility to local authorities definitely indicates that the Roma in Serbia, unlike Jews, weren't the subject of upmost concern of the German central authorities. The situation partly changed in 1943, when, due to the new direction of Himmler's policy towards the Roma in Europe and their mass extermination at death camps, German newspapers estimated the number of Roma in Serbia at 115,000, and again "the Gypsy issue" in Serbia became an item that needed to be solved as soon as possible.[9] Turner's words from July 1941, when he underscored that anti-Roma measures were not to apply to permanently residing Roma "for the time being", seemed thus like a threat at that moment. Still, it can be assumed that the difficult situation of Germany on all battlefields, as well as enormous difficulties the Germans had in Yugoslavia and Serbia, in the midst of a thwarted battle against the People's Liberation Movement, represented a severe obstacle to the implementation of mass measures of total annihilation of the Roma people in Serbia.

9 Michael Zimmermann, *The Wehrmacht...*, p. 126.

The People's Liberation Movement, which grew into a large political and military structure by the end of war, gave rise to the authorities of the new socialist Yugoslavia. Among them were the Commission for Determining the Crimes of Occupiers and their Collaborators, with all its branches, and national precincts, i.e. future city municipalities. Thanks to their thorough work, which was probably unique in entire postwar Europe, (even though it had probably not been their intention), data was collected, at least in Belgrade, about the suffering of the Roma, while damages for survivors were also determined. Based on that material, without which the present paper would not have been possible, further research should be embarked upon, not only for the sake of memorialization, but also for determining and claiming compensation rights for the victims.

VII. ARCHIVAL MATERIALS AND BIBLIOGRAPHY

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A few days after the first raid the policemen returned to the houses of the Roma in Jatagan mala. Partly by force, and partly by promising that they would bring us children and women to our brothers and husbands that had allegedly been taken to Ada Ciganlija to 'cut wood', they collected the remainder of us and brought us to the camp at Sajmište that had previously only seen Jewish captives.