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THE HOLOCAUST AND THE DESTRUCTION OF ROMANI IN THE WORLD WAR II: ORAL HISTORY INTERPRETATIONS ON THE DEPORTATIONS OF ROMANI AND JEWS TO TRANSNISTRIA GOVERNORATE¹

Transnistria is an artificial region, defined as the area between the rivers of Dniester and the Southern Bug and the Black Sea in the South. It was demarcated during the Second World War in accordance with a German-Romanian treaty signed in 1941. The terms of the treaty granted control of Transnistria to Nazi allied Romania. The region was used by Romanian occupation authorities as a place for concentration and extermination of Jews and Romani from Ukrainian, Moldavian and Romanian territories. During the occupation, thousands of Jews and Romani from Bessarabia and Bukovina were deported to Transnistria.

On June 29, 1941 I. Antonescu signed a decree-law about the establishment of Bessarabia and Bukovina as two separate provinces within Romania [...] August 19 Decree #1 Antonescu created a province of Transnistria and approved the 'Instruction concerning the Governance of Transnistria Province'²

Decree of I. Antonescu

about the establishment of the Romanian administration on the temporarily occupied Soviet territory between the Bug and the Dniester rivers August 19, 1941

We, General Ion Antonescu, the Supreme Commander in Chief of the Army, decree:

Article 1. The territory occupied between the Dniester and the Bug, excluding the Odessa region,³ bordering the Mogilev-Zhmerynka line [...] becomes a part of Romanian administration⁴

Article 2. We appoint Mr. Professor Gheorghe Alexianu as our representative in Transnistria, with handling all the power⁵

Article 7. We appoint the residence of authority of Transnistria in Tiraspol city.⁶

Many hundreds of Romani and Jews were found in graves in Transnistria. Nonetheless, particularly on this territory under Romanian control, the most numbers of people could survive. In my article I will appeal to narrations by Jews and Romani, to consider their memory about those tragic events. There are a number of articles, monographs as well as published documents concerning the history of the Holocaust and the annihilation of Jews during the Second World War under Romanian authority. Among the main volumes comprising documents regarding the policy of Romania during wartime and the Romanian treatment of Jews and Romani, namely, extermination in and deportation to Transnistria, one should mention the documents edited by J. Ancel,⁷ V. Achim,⁸ Y. Arad,⁹ etc., and the collection of documents on "Roma in Transnistria (1941-1944)",¹⁰ published in Odessa in 2011. There are also a large number of documents published in the Soviet Republics.¹¹

Conducting a fieldwork on this topic is difficult and rare. In spite of wide-ranging projects in oral history developed in the last 20 years, which had as a goal to record personal experiences during the Third Reich period and the Second World War, none of such projects focus on Roma as a separate category of victims. However, some projects conducted about the Jewish memory also dealt with the Roma memory of the war period. One of such projects is the "Surviving in Shoah" (Visual History Foundation). The foundation was created by director S. Spielberg in 1994 to record testimonies of Jewish people who survived the Holocaust and also of other victims of the Nazi regime. Through 1994–1999, 48,361 interviews with Jews and 408 interviews with Roma and Sinti were recorded. 135 of such interviews were recorded on the territory of Ukraine. Out of these interviews, 69 were in Russian language, 42 in Ukrainian, 20 in Romanes, and 4 in other languages. Some of these interviews touched upon concentration camps in Transnistria - Domanovka, the ghetto in Golta, and survivals in Odessa and Vinnytsia regions, in former Transnistria.¹²

Other researchers than those involved in the foregoing project tried to conduct interviews with independent efforts. Among such scholars I can mention the Romanian Petre Matei, the Moldavian Ion Duminica, the Ukrainian Mikhail Tyaglyy. Here I should underline that conducting interviews with survivors is now a very difficult task. Many of war survivors died in the recent years, the rest are disabled or have hard illnesses and therefore, can hardly be sources for information. Still, some who can tell their life stories, were 4-5 years old in 1941, and thus they remember only very limited war experiences.

To work on memory is a complicated endeavor because the memory itself is not perfect. With the years passed, people forget many details, some of the recollections are replaced with more emotional details and frequently what they heard from others seems to them as their own remembrance. According to psychological studies, active memory starts from the age of 7-10, that is to say that the narrative of events until this age is fragmented and inconsistent. When it comes to the age group of 50-80 the challenge with the information is that we cannot notice in the narratives the chronological depth. Also we need to consider the fact that the informant transmits information not only of his/her own memory but of details which he/she heard from his/her parents and grandparents. Therefore, the chronological depth is increased. On the other hand, in such a case we have to deal with collective memory which intersperses with individual memory and sometimes it is difficult to discern between individual and collective memory especially in the case of Roma.

We can define individual memory as personal memory, where personal recollections fit into the frame of the narrator's personality and personal life. Even in recollections which a person shares with others, the narrator takes only the viewpoint where such recollections relate to him/her and define her/his difference from others. On the other hand, the individual memory does not function without such tools as words and ideas borrowed from a person's social surrounding. But this does not change the individual memory, which is anyway based on personal perception of what a person saw or felt in a certain moment of life and personal/individual memory is not mixed with the memory of others. ¹³

For this paper I will use my collection of interviews, which were conducted with Jews and Romani who survived in the former Transnistria territories, as well as interviews from a documentary about deportation of Romani to Transnistria. In addition to interviews, as my main sources, I will also use unpublished archival materials, published documents, monographs and articles for argumentation or comparison of historical material with interviewees' narrations of their wartime memories. I will try to show in which way Jews and Romani comprehend the fact of their deportations to Transnistria, how they answer the question why it all happened. And then, I will attempt to interpret their way of thinking. Considering that in 1941, when extermination and deportation started, the most of my respondents were 5, 6, and 7 years old, I will analyze their narratives as a collective memory, rather than an individual or a mixed individual-collective one. Undoubtedly, people can remember

some crucial events for their life experience at that age. However, to give estimations on the social context or comprehend the overall events is impossible at such ages. Along with these interviews, I will use interviews with younger generations (in general, with those who were born during the War, in 1941-43) as examples of collective memory. These will add to interviews conducted with people (considered as representatives of the expression of individual memory) who in 1941 were 7-15 years old.

Certainly, in order to examine the personal judgment on the issue, we need to address two questions: Why some people were deported and why others were not deported?

I have to indicate, firstly, that such way of thinking is characteristic for Romani, rather than for Jews. As a rule of thumb, Romani do not know why they were deported. (I consider it "as a rule of thumb" because I cannot make a decisive argument about all Romani people; my observation is limited to those Romani whom I interviewed about deportations.) The first simple explanation to this would be that they do not have formal education and even if they do have education they do not read about the Second World War, in general, and the deportations to Transnistria, in particular. This is reason why the question "why" appears, in a literal sense, in the narrations of the Romani.

In the Jewish narrations, such question does not come up literally. As a rule of thumb, Jews are well educated, and all of them are knowledgeable on anti-Semitism and the politics of Hitler and Antonescu during the Second World War. This is why Jews have other way of comprehending the events, and therefore, instead of asking the straightforward question "why?" they ask a philosophical question: "how?". More precisely, they ask "How (why) is it possible?", "How could it happen?". At this point, when I remark their philosophical approach to the problem, I think we have to consider some specific aspects. Firstly, the stereotypical perception of Germans. After the examination of the narrations, I can summarize this stereotypical perception as follows: "How such an educated, clever and great nation as the Germans could produce such primitive, savage, and inhuman behavior?" Pre-Second World War individual communications and experiences also caused Jewish disbelief in Nazi-German cruelty. The second aspect of the Jewish reflection on "How is it possible?" has to do with an appeal to God. To put it in other words, Jews tend to reflect through the question: "How could God let such horrible things happen?".

The first aspect, the stereotypes towards Germans, appears in every second narration. For example, Anatolii Shpits, who was born in Odessa

in 1938, remembers from his mother's words that his grandfather's brother said:

I know Germans, they are decent people,.. we don't need to be afraid of them." 14

Or, Sergei Sushon, who was born also in Odessa in 1928, says:

My grandma was in Germany, in Berlin, before the War and she didn't believe that Germans could do something like this [...] I was an educated kid and I understood that Germany was more progressed, in terms of their development, than the Soviet Union.¹⁵

Before the Second World War, or, more precisely, during the First World War, the Jewish population in Ukraine, for example, also met Germans. Moreover, many Jews who served in the Tzar's army were captured by Germans. Jews had first hand observation of the German treatment and attitude to them; and on the eve, and even in the beginning of the Second World War, the older generation of Jews told to the young about their earlier experience with Germans. Such experience can be noticed in the interview with Semion Dodik. He was born in 1926, in the village of Kalius, on the Bessarabian border, on the Dniester River (Khmelnytskyi Region). Dodik remembers what his father was telling about Germans:

My father was in German captivity during the First World War. Then, they treated Jews better than the Russians did and we were not afraid of Germans.¹⁶

The second aspect, the issue of God, could be observed only in the memories of religious Jews. For instance, Moshe Frimer was born to a pious family, in 1929 in the town of Khotyn. His father was religious man, he went to the synagogue, and celebrated all Jewish holidays. Moshe Frimer tells that:

When the War begun, many people started to evacuate. My father was a religious man. He said that we don't have any motive to be afraid of; it is impossible that Germans would kill Jews for no reason.¹⁷

Moshe than elaborates that his father meant two things by his words. First: we don't have to be afraid because our God will not allow something horrible to happen, and that God's will, in anyway, protects us if something would happen near us. Second: the Germans will not kill Jews without a reason, because they are religious people and Christian religion forbids killing.

Without going into details, I will confine myself mentioning that numerous articles and books were authored on this topic by philosophers, theologians, writers and public activists. Such works provide multifaceted religious explanations and interpretations of what has happened. The reason why I will not examine and discuss such religious explanations and interpretations in this article is because Jewish understanding of the question "why" is not relevant to my approach. That is firstly because the question "why" is connected with the comprehension of Nazi politics in a general sense, rather than the deportation issue as a separate phenomenon. Secondly, the question "why" refers to another level of thinking which touches upon not psychological or everyday life reflections but, as I mentioned earlier, to a philosophical, religious and moral comprehension.

Antonescu spoke, in 8 July 1941, at a cabinet session of the Romanian government, about the forced deportation of Jews from Bessarabia and Bukovina:

At the risk of being misunderstood by those who hold traditional views and who possibly are among us, I argue for the forced migration of entire Jewish elements of Bessarabia and Bukovina. They must be thrown out of our country's borders. Also I argue for the forced migration of the Ukrainian elements which are not in this process at the moment.

I do not care whether we are going into history as barbarians. The Roman Empire made a series of barbaric acts against their contemporaries, but still it was the most magnificent political system.

There was no more favorable moment in our history. If necessary, shoot them with machineguns! 19

However, not all Jews and Romani were deported from Bukovina and Bessarabia to Transnistria. Some Jews were annihilated in the ghettos. Some of them were even killed before the ghettos were established.

The order to exterminate part of the Jews of Bessarabia and Bukovina and deport the rest was given by Ion Antonescu of his own agreement, under no German pressure. For carrying out this task he chose the gendarmerie

and the army, particularly the pretorate, the military body in charge with the temporary administration of a territory. losif lacobici, the chief of the General Staff, ordered the commander of the General Staff's Second Section, Lt. Col. Alexandru Ionescu, to implement a plan "for the removal of the Judaic element from Bessarabian territory (...) by organizing teams to act in advance of the Romanian troops". The implementation began on July 9. [...] The first killings took place at Siret (southern Bukovina), five kilometers from the new border with the Soviets. The Jews of the town were deported on foot to Dornesti, twelve kilometers away. Dozens of Jews who were not able to walk - the elderly and some crippled - remained behind with a few women to care them. These Jews were driven to a valley not far from town, where the women were raped by several soldiers of the 7th Division. The elderly were brought to the Division headquarters and accused of "espionage and attacking the Romanian army". That same day, all of them were shot at the bridge over the Prut, in the presence of the inhabitants of Siret, who had been brought to the execution site.²⁰

In Moldavia, as well as in Bukovina, Germans and Romanians were exterminating Jewish population together, in the same settlements, before the 31 of August 1941, when the agreement about the establishment of Transnistria and the demarcation of the area of influence was signed in Tighina (Bendery) [...] One of the first mass executions was organized by AK-10a and the Romanian gendarmes in the middle of July 1941 in Bălţi (about 450 people were murdered) and in Dubăssari.²¹

Approximately at the same time in Edinet, the mass killing of Jews was conducted by the Romanian troops. 613 people were shot dead. In the same document, written on the 30 of July 1944, one can also find information about the organization of the camp in Edinet, where captive Jews died from starvation every day.²² Mikhail Roif's (born in 1929 in Edinet) recollections prove the foregoing information:

The war began. A few days later they rounded up about 470 people or so: doctors, teachers, rich Jews. It took a few days to gather them all. They were taken to the Jewish cemetery. There they were forced to dig a pit. If anyone talked to anyone else, they were killed immediately. Then the rest were also shot. It was horrible in Edinet. A Jew had no right to do anything: draw water from the well, or buy a loaf of bread. The humiliation was terrible. ²³

The same information is verified in the words of Tsilia Koifman (née Furman, born in 1928, in Briceni).

In Briceni, the robbery has been started already. People looted empty Jewish houses. The Jews were shot near Edinet. ²⁴

In another recollection, Moshe Frimer from Khotyn (born in 1929) also tells that the killing of Jews started before the deportations:

In the first days of the occupation, the Germans came in with the Romanians... Germans and Romanians took Jews out of their houses to kill them [...] On the first day, they killed 100-160 people.²⁵

In late July and early August,²⁶ on the heels of the Wehrmacht, German extermination units were advancing rapidly in Ukraine, rounding up and gunning down tens of thousands of Ukrainian Jews. Under these circumstances, lacking coordination with the German army and based only on the talks between Hitler and Antonescu in Munich on June 12, the Romanian army began to deport tens of thousands of Jews who had been arrested in boroughs and on the roads to the other side of the Dniester, in that area that would soon become Transnistria. This action commenced the moment the troops reached the Dniester. Toward the end of July, the Romanian army concentrated about 25,000 Jews near the village of Coslav, on the Dniester. Some had been marched from Northern Bukovina and others were caught in northern Bessarabia, particularly in and around Briceni.²⁷

As regards the Romani, as I mentioned earlier, not all Romani were deported. It is noticeable in the interviewees' memories that some Romani stayed during the War in their localities. They noticed the fact that a war has started only when they could not nomadize freely anymore. ²⁸ Concerning the Romani, as Viorel Achim notes, "the most important component of Antonescu's policy was their deportation to Transnistria in the summer and early autumn of 1942. Approximately 25,000 Gypsies were taken to Transnistria, including all nomadic Gypsies and part of the sedentary Gypsies."29 According to Radu Ioanid, "Gypsy invalids of the First World War were deported". 30 The "legal" basis for the deportations of Romani, as Ioanid emphasizes, "was a May 1942 measure, Order No. 70S/1042 of the President of the Council of Ministers. This was supplemented a few days later by another measure, Order No. 33911, attributed to C.Z. Vasiliu of the Ministry of the Interior and distributed to the police prefectures: the police were to conduct a census of both nomadic and sedentary Gypsies an then deport the former and certain categories pertaining to the latter

group. [...] Questioned after the War, Marshal Ion Antonescu confessed that the original decision to deport the Gypsies had been his ... 'After much investigation we concluded that these were armed Gypsies, many with military weapons, organizing these attacks. All the Gypsies were moved out. Since Mr. Alexianu needed manpower in Transnistria, I said 'Let's move them to Transnistria'..."³¹

There is a large debate among scholars concerning the Nazi German policies towards Jews, as well as the Nazi German and the Romanian policies during Antonescu's regime towards the Romani.

The major discussion about the Jews includes different approaches on the "final solution of the Jewish question", and the further Nazi policies connected with the "final solution". Scholars are divided into two groups: intentionalists and funcionalists. Intentionalists defend that Hitler and the supreme command of Nazi Germany had an intention to exterminate all Jews from the very beginning, and A. Hitler plays the main role in it. Intentionalists try to prove their point by referring to Hitler's decrees and orders which, sent to local administrations, were put into practice by these administrations. On the other hand, functionalists argue that the politics of Nazi Germany was not succeeding and consistent. Many decisions were not made according to a plan, but rather spontaneously. Several practices were contemplated and decided on the spot by local administrations in a fashion to respond to the circumstances in which they found themselves. In this latter case, the role of Hitler was not primary and, therefore, not central to the extermination of Jews.³²

For the purposes of this article I can elaborate on this discussion in relation to Romanian policies during I. Antonescu's regime in Transnistria concerning the Romani. As it will be shown later in this article, recollections reflect, with regard to Romani, that Romanian local administrations made decisions on the spot. The main debate about the annihilation of Romani developed around a conceptual question: whether the extermination of Romani was implemented on the basis of racial ideology and with a concrete intention and a structured plan, with using all technical and administrative sources for this purpose, or the anti-Romani policies did not have a racial-ideological basis and did not have a structured plan, implying that the purpose was not total annihilation of the Romani. The latter view considers that Romani were persecuted as "a socially dangerous" element. Thus, the Nazi policies concerning the Jews were clear: Jews should have been exterminated in anyway. When it comes to Romani, the case was different and one can observe this in the narrations to follow.

For example, the story of Paraskovia (Ana) Flora, a settled Roma, whose family lived in a village near the border between contemporary Moldova and Ukraine, says:

Nobody deported our gypsies, we were few in numbers and we worked, we didn't live as tramps. Maybe this was the reason.³⁵

She further recalls:

When the Germans came, they wanted to take us and my father. But to where they would take us? But our chief [it means more than a *predsedate* [³⁶] said: "I will not give you my Gypsies, because they are working, he works, he doesn't loaf about, he works and feeds his own family."³⁷

And nobody took them away. In this narration I would like to point out that the *predsedatel* [the head] saved this Romani family from deportation through standing by their side. With this example I could argue that cases of saving Romani from deportation took place on these territories. In addition, I can also conclude, out of this narration, that the Romani understood their place in society and the social values in a larger community where they found themselves in. Therefore, they realized that people should work and people should have a place of permanent residence, etc. By adopting such notions, they could justify their preference to be settled and reject a nomadic style of living. In this way most of the Romani continued to live in Soviet Union until 1956.³⁸

Zhuzhuna Duduchava, a younger and educated Roma woman from the Romani branch of Crymy,³⁹ corroborates in her narration Flora's theory about deportation, *i.e.*, that working Romani were left in the localities:

My grandma told ... Germans lived in our house. Our Gypsies are absolutely different Gypsies and their treatment with us was absolutely different than with other Gypsies. This is an urban group of Gypsies, such Gypsies are [located] only in Odessa and Mykolaiv⁴⁰. During the Soviet times, men got up early in the morning and went to work. Women were housewives in general ... That is why the attitude to them was absolutely different.⁴¹

Upon my question about the deportation Zakharii Chebotar said:

Nobody drove us anywhere. Romanians took Gypsies and sent [them] to Bug. [They have taken] not our [Gypsies], but other [Gypsies].⁴²

With this narration and interesting fact emerges: that even though he was a nomadic Romani he was not deported.

I nomadized in Bulgaria, Moldova with a [Gypsy] camp. Before the War [the Gypsy camp comprised] 20-40 families (about 100 people or more). 43

Further, Chebotar narrated that he stayed in Izmail before the War. In Izmail, people from his camp found jobs and in the due course of the War they remained in Izmail.⁴⁴

Why he was not deported? I can only provide two reasons. The first is that he and his family were not deported possibly because during the War they stayed in Izmail and did not nomadize. The second one, more convincing, has to do rather with the fact that many aspects of life depended on local administration, be it German or Romanian. In some cases only local administration decided if these people will continue to live or will be exterminated. And in this latter assumption I agree with Wendy Lower who defended this theory in her book Nazi-Empire building and the Holocaust in Ukraine. On the example of German administration, in the Zhytomyr General Commissariat, she shows how the behavior of local administration corresponds to local conditions.⁴⁵ In this case, the functionalists' theory seems convincing both in the case of Jews and that of Romani, at least in the territory of Transnistria. In defense of this theory, concerning the deportation of Romani, as well as Jews, in Transnistria, I can adduce proofs from interviews. In interviews with Romani which I collected in Izmail region, people talk about the War time as if it was a period of an absolutely normal life.

The same Chebotar Zakharii, from Izmail, mentioned already, tells:

That Romanians came everything was all right [...] [There happened] nothing to be remembered during the War, everything was as usual, we danced, sang; they [Romanians] only took away horses [...] When everybody was gone and the Soviet Union was coming in, it became worse than during the War, because it was forbidden to nomadize, they forced us to work.⁴⁶

Vladimir Vakulenko was born in Odessa in 1935. In early July of the year 1941, he arrived to a village in Mykolaiv Region.

Romanians arrived when we were in our village in Mykolaiv Region. Everything was as usual, we joked with them, our girls made friends with them. They were Bessarabians in general, that is why everything was all right.⁴⁷

Piotr Damaskin was born in Izmail in 1938. He was in Izmail during the War:

The local Romanians which were here, they were ok, but Romanians from the front, they beat people, [they] tortured [people] for nothing.⁴⁸

In both cases, the interviewees emphasized that the local administration's attitude, in different localities in Transnistria, manifested in diverse ways.

In many cases, the attitude of the Romanians in localities depended on the characters of the individuals. This argument could be noticed in the narrations of Jews. For instance, Zhanna Khvoshchan was born in 1934 in Mykolaiv and survived in the village of Pody (Ochakiv area, Mykolaiv Region). Her narration points to a rather humane treatment from some Romanians, in contrast to the treatment applied by the people from the front.

Everyone had Romanians living in their homes. Two Romanians stayed in our house. They used to sing Romanian songs and play accordion. They were good people, [they were] about 40 years old, and they had children, too. When they got treats from back home, they used to share them with us. We were happy that they turned out to be good people. They fed us occasionally. Sometimes they'd both bring in pots with food, one would give us his bean stew, and they'd eat the other portion together, because they had children our age back home. And when those Romanians left, new ones came to the village, and those were real bandits, [they were] raping and taking everything. 49

In this article I will not discuss the diverse nature of German and Romanian treatment of Romani and Jews. I have confined myself to give an example which corroborates with the theory about the attitude of local administrations and thereby, I have attempted to find an explanation for why in one locality Romani were deported and cruelly tortured, and in other localities they could live as usually and continue to work like in peacetime.

Such a treatment from the Romanian administration was not only directed towards Romani, but also to Jews. I will take the well-known ghetto in Zhmerynka as an example. In this ghetto, people survived for three years under the Romanian occupation. Some even deliberately escaped there from Nazis. This was the case with Riva Molochkovetskaia. Her mother, with Riva and her younger sisters, ran to Zhmerynka from the German Nazi occupied Vinnytsia and survived there. In her recollections Riva mentioned that:

There [in Zhmerynka] were also Romanian Jews who escaped from Germans.⁵⁰

Her memories about the local Romanian administration, regarding the possibility of survival, are also confirmed by two other interviews about the Zhmerynka ghetto.⁵¹ Of course, we should not forget that the Zhmerynka case was unique, but anyway this example helps us to understand all the diversities in the relationship between Romani, Jews and the local Romanian or German administration in Transnistria.

Now I am returning to the memories of Chebotar Zakharii from Izmail. Upon my question about the deportation he said:

Nobody drove us anywhere. Romanians took Gypsies and sent [them] to Bug. [They have taken] not our [Gypsies] but other [Gypsies]."

And further he adds with indifference:

But, where is Bug? I don't know.⁵²

As an interesting phenomenon the Romani usually talk only referring to the limits of their family or camp. However, they do not even talk about others, *i.e.*, other Romani branches, as if they did not exist. This phenomenon could be explained with the nature of their collective ethnic identity, which is yet formed until today. They are thinking of the social space in a tribal sense because they lived as nomads. This is most likely

why other Romani beyond their space do not appear in their radar when they relate the Second World War memories.

Clues towards another theory about why the Romani were deported is provided by Iona Matrache. She was born in 1936 in Manici village, Nisporeni district. She said:

We were working in the villages where we usually arrived. People worked as blacksmiths, shoemakers, and other jobs that people were skilled at. [...] We were deported because we were rich.⁵³

Lina Pleshko from Soroca makes a similar emphasis. She was born in 1942 and, no doubt, she could not relate the deportation out of personal memories. However, her mother and mother-in-law told her about the times of deportation. With that she underlines two aspects of why they were deported:

They gathered rich Gypsies, the Căldărari⁵⁴ especially. They were many and Germans started to gather and to punish them.⁵⁵

Thus, if we will look at the research conducted so far regarding the attitude of the Transnistrian administration and particularly about Ion Antonescu's attitude to Jewish and Romani property, we can see that all property was expropriated in favor of the state. Yitzhak Arad paid attention in his research to the question of Jewish property. With regard to Jewish possessions, referring to the Nuremberg Document PS-212, Arad provides a memorandum from the Reich Ministry for the Occupied Eastern Territories, entitled "Instructions for Dealing with the Jewish Problem". In this memorandum we notice the Nazi attitude to and demand on the Jewish properties:

It is necessary to seize and confiscate all Jewish possessions, except for what is essential for their existence. As rapidly as possible and to the extent that the economic situation permits, Jews must be dispossessed of their property and belongings by means of orders and additional measures by the senior officials of the Reich Commissariats. This is necessary in order to put an immediate halt to the transfer of property [into the hands of others]. ⁵⁶

In stenogramma of I. Antonescu's speeches about the government policy in the temporarily occupied Soviet territories (Extract from a

stenogramma of the session of the Council of Ministers of Romania together with Governors of occupied Soviet territories, November 13, 1941) we can notice a similar attitude to the property:

...Transnistria must be managed with its own means, it should be organized in a fashion to exist with its own sources, because in Romanian State do not have necessary reserves to provide [Transnistria] with agricultural, industrial or commercial sources.

Secondly, this district must provide us with foodstuff and satisfy needs of troops which are situated there.

Thirdly, Transnistria must cover our military expenses in the widest sense.⁵⁷

As noticed in the Final Report of the International Commission on the Holocaust in Romania, "the deportation of Jews from villages in many regions of Romania is of particular importance, as the isolation of Jews from the rural population always figured high in the anti-Semitic narrative... In addition, the deportation aimed to seize Jewish property". 58

With reference to archival sources, Viorel Achim describes in his monograph the same situation:

...Gypsies were taken from their homes without being allowed to take with them the personal and household belongings necessary for life in the places to which they were being deported. They did not have sufficient time to liquidate their assets. There were a considerable number of cases in which heads of sections of gendarmes and police took advantage of the opportunity to buy various objects from the Gypsies at derisory prices. The houses and other goods of the evacuated Gypsies were taken over by the National Centre for Romanianisation.⁵⁹

Obviously, Germans or Romanians did not disdain of Jewish and Romani property and we can observe this in the narrations. In principle, the question of property and its analysis demand a separate economic and historical research.

A simplest attempt to comprehend the deportation on just emotional level emerges in the recollection of the nomadic illiterate Roma Zinaida (her Roma name is Kursanka) Prodan. She was born in Dubăsari, in 1935, and deported to Transnistria from Tiraspol region:

He [German] didn't like Jews and Gypsies, simply he didn't like these nations, but for what [reason]? I don't know.⁶⁰

A similar trial to understand the Nazi behavior surfaces in another interview with a semi-nomadic, semi-settled Ukrainian Roma (this is how she called herself). Tamara Tsinia (born in 1930) from Odessa region:

Germans didn't like Gypsies, kept them in the camp. They hated Jews and Gypsies.⁶¹

Absolutely the same words are repeated by Zakharii Chebotar (born in 1936):

Germans hated Gypsies. Jews and Gypsies.⁶²

While telling their stories, Romani always associate and juxtapose themselves with Jews. They underline their common fates. In opposition the Jews who mention Romani in their narrations are very rare. They speak about Romani most often upon a particular question on Romani. Here I can bring forward two reasons as to why Romani and Jewish attitudes in narrations differ: Undoubtedly, Jews know about the deportations of Romani. When they are asked about the deportations of the Romani, they display their knowledge on this issue. But this knowledge is very fragmentary and limited to the information that Romani were also deported and annihilated. Jews really do not have much knowledge of the Romani fate in the War, this is particularly the case if they were not together in the camps or during deportations. But in my view there is another reason for their silence. With their silence on the fate of Romani, lews underline the distinctive feature of the Holocaust. This has to do with personifying and appropriating individual recollections of their extermination and this topic in general. Romani, on the other hand, understand that different people had different fates and ways of survival during the War. They do not resent a more happy fate in comparison to their own. Moreover, they recognize the Jewish experience vis-à-vis their own.

A Roma from Soroca, Lina Pleshko (born in 1942), understands the reasons of deportation in a different way and she also mentions Jews in her recollection:

The Germans, and more Romanians than Germans, considered that Gypsies and Jews were the most skilful... Germans thought "why should Gypsies and Jews be the cleverest?". And they tortured Jews and they also tortured

Gypsies, not us [meaning Gypsies], but those who were not local ones. They gathered them in villages. 63

Analyzing this narrative we can see at least four points of interest. Lina was thinking about the characters of Jews and Romani and about their personal features.

It is understandable why Romani are thinking about themselves: they underline that they belong to one people even if they have different branches. Why are they thinking about Jews? From my point of view, there are two reasons. Firstly, Romani lived side-by-side with Jews in many localities (villages and towns) in Ukraine, Moldova and Romania. And Romani observed the behavior of their Jewish fellow townsmen. Secondly, Romani and Jews were stricken by the same curse of deportation and annihilation. Sometimes they lived together in concentration/labor camps.

Telling her own perception of what happened, Lina underlined that Jews and Romani were tortured because of their skills. This boils down to the fact that she is convinced that Germans and Romanians were, sharing Lina's perception of the case, considering themselves as not so clever. This being the case, the motivation of their actions is understandable: if people are better and cleverer it would be better to dispose of such people. This point might be absolutely understandable from a psychological point of view: if person A, who is stronger, sees person B cleverer than himself, because person A has power over person B, then person A will try to avoid person B or to compensate his own lack of abilities, which in turn provokes feelings of envy or fear. In the case of Lina's story this theory is quite possible. As a proof to this, Lina cites an example from her father:

...Romanians came and took immediately my father [to fight] ... My father was very clever. He was not educated, but very clever, very skilful. 64

She also compares Jews and Romani and put them on an equal footing in spite of the fact that Jews were educated, while the majority of Romani were not. However, she equates the intellectual abilities of Jews with the Romani's sharpness and resourcefulness.

Lina also mentioned that "...they [Germans and Romanians] tortured Jews and they also tortured Gypsies, not us, but those who were not local ones". It means that the attitude to the locals, at least in Soroca, was different. Possibly those who tortured unknown Jews and Romani were afraid of responsibility for their own actions. Because if a person

is unknown to someone, it is much easier to do cruel acts against that person, in comparison to what one could do to a person which he/she personally knows. The same circumstances were very important when local people (Moldavians, Ukrainians, Romanians, Russians, and others) decided to help and to save Romani and especially Jews.⁶⁵

Last important issue, which I will consider in relation to Jewish and Romani understanding of why they were deported, is about the perception of Romanians by the Jews and the Romani. In all recollections which I analyzed above, people at times refer to Romanians, sometimes to Germans, sometimes both to Germans and Romanians. Why do we have such variations in appellations of the "other"? Is it possible that local people do not know really who ruled at that time? Here I would like to propose my theory to the question. The territory, which later was called "Transnistria", was occupied by the Nazis, and afterwards they handed this territory to the Romanian administration that was ruled by Ion Antonescu. In the narratives we can see different attitudes towards Romanians and Germans. I will provide some examples of Romani narrations about Romanians. In many cases, they consider Romanians and their actions as obedient to Germans. Therefore, sometimes people just say "Germans" and later, from their further narration, one can understand that they really meant both Germans and Romanians or sometimes even only Romanians. Such ambiguity is rather inherent in Romani, while it is very rare with Jews. I will not repeat narrations with such an indefinite meaning of "Romanian", but I would like to underline that some of the interviewees can explain his/her own perception of Germans and Romanians in the occupied Transnistria territories. In this matter I would like to propose the following excerpts for consideration. For instance, Tamara Tsinia tells how Germans came to her village, Ivanovka, and upon my question "Germans or Romanians?", she says:

When Germans went, Romanians came. Romanians were under German power.⁶⁶

It means that she understands who is who and even remember the chronology: in the beginning were Germans, and then – Romanians. Then the question arises: why Romani, mostly uneducated, remember very well about who and in which order they arrived? From my point of views it is connected to the actions of Romanians and Germans, with their treatment of Romani and Jews. Lina Pleshko provides data towards the argument:

Germans and Romanians had the same blood. [...] Romanians tormented us. What did Germans do? [They did] the same as the Romanians.⁶⁷

Her words are confirmed by Serafina Preida (born in 1943) from the same town of Soroca:

Romanians were like Germans, they did the same.⁶⁸

The same appraisal is observed in the recollections of some of Jews. For example, Semion Dodik, a Jew who, to survive, escaped from the territory occupied by the Germans to the territories under Romanian control, provided such a view on this issue:

Me and my friend decided to go to the Romanians, we knew they wouldn't kill us [...] The local population was afraid of the Romanians as much as of the Germans, but the Romanians were closer to us.⁶⁹

Romani and Jews knew very well that Romanians established their own regime in this region. We can observe this in Vladimir Vakulenko's the narration. Born in Odessa, in 1935, he speaks about his personal attitude to the Romanians:

Romanians arrived and promised Transnistria, I mean Zadnestrovie, and Odessa became the capital of Transnistria [...] Romanians entered [the city] without any shot. When they arrived, for almost two days Odessa was free [of soldiers]. When the Romanians arrived [there] was silence, [it was] quiet and calm. Arrived, arrived, I said "O, mamalyzhniki [those who eats mămăligă – A.A.] arrived".⁷⁰

While Romani confused, sometimes the Germans with the Romanians, Jews always knew exactly that there were Romanians, but they considered them as one entity with the Germans. Tsilia Koifman (born in 1928) from the town of Briceni tells:

We lived on the central street and all the people came out and said: "Romanians, Romanians!" But my sister said that Romanians are with the Germans.⁷¹

We can observe the same in the recollections of Moshe Frimer:

"In the first days of occupation, the Germans came in with the Romanians."⁷²

I suppose that such a perception of Romanians was also connected with the Soviet propaganda after the War, which used only two terms to define the occupants of the Soviet territories. There were Nazi Germans or German occupants. This definition also extended on other nations who were Hitler's satellites. Thus, in archives we can find reports about atrocities and destruction in occupied territories. Very rarely one can see reports which mention only the Romanian authority. For example, the

Chronological References about the temporary occupation by German-fascist invaders of settlements in Bar district and their liberation by the Red Army:

Reference June 13, 1949 №64

Handed out from Slobodo-Mateikivska council and accounting that the village Slobodo-Mateikivska, in Bar district, was occupied by the German troops, on July18, 1941, and liberated by the troops of the Red Army on March 23, 1944.

During the occupation, five people were taken by force to Germany, one person was shot dead, two houses destroyed. During the occupation by the Romanian authority, Jewish people were driven out from Bessarabia, and 13 of them were murdered."⁷³

In this report we can see that the compilers clearly distinguish between Germans and Romanians. In other reports such distinction is absent. In almost all reports their authors use the term "German-Romanian occupants". As an example I will give two reports from Transnistria territory.

Chronological references about the temporary occupation of settlements in Tulchyn district:

Reference April 13, 1946 №0270

To Tulchyn district executive committee

April 5, 1946, Kalyninska village council of Tulchyn district sending this report, via this paper, about the activities of the German-Romanian occupants, which occupied the village of Kalynino on July 24, 1941, at 4 o'clock in the morning. There started outrages with the civilian population, including 19 men. There were no killings in that part [of the village – A.A.],

there was robbery in 23 farms. 23 heads of horned cattle, 37 pigs, chickens, eggs and much of the house property, which is countless [were stolen].⁷⁴

Chronological references about the temporary occupation by German-fascist invaders of settlements in Sharhorod district and their by the Red Army:

Descriptive reference

Murafa village council, Sharhorod district, Vinnytsia Region: Murafa village, Sharhorod district, was captured by German occupiers at 12 o'clock on July 22, 1941. Murafa village was liberated by units of the Red Army at 5 o'clock on March 19, 1944 [...].

13 persons were deported to the concentration camp. Five persons [out of 13] perished [as a result of] atrocities of the German-Romanian occupants. [As a result of] beating and atrocities two persons died.⁷⁵

So, in my opinion Jews and Romani in most of the cases did not distinguish Germans to Romanians not because they really did not see a difference between them or did not know about the existence of two regimes, but because of the post-war Soviet propaganda. And not only Soviets talked only about Germans as the main evil. People use to apply the same terminology which was applied by the authority and the mass media.

Conclusions

In this paper I examined the way in which Jews and Romani are thinking about why they were deported. Based on oral history and other historical sources we can see that the interpretation of certain issues is sometimes very different, in spite of similar examples in the memories of Jews and Romani.

After the examination of Romani and Jewish memory about their deportation to Transnistria during I. Antonescu's regime, we can see four major patterns of how Romani and Jews consider their deportation in different ways:

 explanation on the emotional level, which I can characterize with the words: "they didn't like us, they hate us, but we don't know why";

- the conviction that the hate from the German and Romanian sides comes through the extrapolation of good features of character, skills and abilities on oppressed people (in this case Romani and Jews were tortured by Germans and Romanians because they were cleverer and more skilful). But I find this conception only in the interpretation of Romani;
- the explanation on moral and everyday life level, which I can describe with the words of Romani: "we worked, we didn't live as tramps". It means that they gained their means of subsistence without help from outside;
- the explanation through economic situation, in the case of deportation of Romani and Jews as a means of confiscation of their property.

I also tried to show, based on examples of memories, that in reality the policy of the Romanian administration was not so definite and depended on local administration and personalities.

Another interesting aspect is the identification of Romanians as Germans in individual and collective memory. Of course, for the historical interpretation, oral history in general, and memory studies in particular, can serve only as additional source, which validate or unvalidate archival data. Nevertheless, memory studies are the main source for understanding the psychological process and the everyday life thinking. By examining individual memory, we can also discover many small details of the historical events and understand the influence of certain factors on people's life. When we compare individual and collective memory we can further see how personal perception spread on collective consciousness and became its part. Thus, through examples I observed how the identification, on personal level, of Romanians as Germans entered into the mass consciousness of Romani and Jews who survived during the Second World War in Transnistria. At the same time, by working in memory studies I could scrutinize the frame of deportation topic of research and a number of different issues such as: organization and ways of deportation; conditions of life during deportation and suffering, their psychological influence on the recollections and external impact on the survivor's memory.

NOTES

- Transliteration and spelling of the names in Ukrainian follow the 'National 2010' system; the transliteration and spelling of the names in Russian are done according to the 'Passport (2013), ICAO' system. Romanian names are spelled in the original language.
- ² "Romy u Transnistrii (1941-1944)". *Arkhivni dokumenty*. Vypusk 1 (Roma in Transnistria, 1941-1944. Archival documents, Issue 1), Odessa: Fenix, 2011.
- 3 At that time the battles were in Odessa.
- "Transnistria" also included the Odessa Region (within the borders of 1941), the Southern part of Vinnytsia Region, and the Western part of Mykolaiv Region. All this territory was divided in 13 large and 65 small districts.
- Gheorghe Alexianu was professor of law and, during the king's dictatorship (1938-1940), a Royal Resident.
- In October 1942, Odessa city became the residence of the civil authority of the governorate "Transnistria": Odessa v Velikoi Otechestvennoi voine Sovetskogo Soiuza. Sbornik documentov i materialov. V 3-kh tomakh (Odessa in the Great Patriotic War of the Soviet Union. Collection of Documents and Materials), Vol. I–III, Odessa: Odesskoie oblastnoie izdatelstvo.), 1947-1951. Vol. II, 1949, p. 5.
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- Interview with Anatolii Shpits (born in 1938), Chişinău, 18.06.2013 in A.Abakunova archive.
- ¹⁵ Interview with Sergei Sushon (born in 1928), Hadera, 07.08.2010) in A.Abakunova archive.
- Interview with Semion Dodik (born in 1926), Tel-Aviv, 08.08.2010 in A.Abakunova archive.
- ¹⁷ Interview with Moshe Frimer (born in 1929), Chernivtsi, 23.07.2010 in A.Abakunova archive.
- For instance, see theologists David Weiss Halivni and Peter Ochs; *Breaking the Tablets: Jewish Theology after the Shoah*. Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2007; Eliezer Berkovits, *Faith After the Holocaust*, New York: Ktav, 1973; Ignaz Maybaum, *The Face of God After Auschwitz*, Amsterdam: Polak & Van Gennep, 1965; philosopher and writer Elie Wiesel, *La Nuit*, Paris Les Éditions de Minuit, 1958/2007. Quite a number of such works bring up questions like: "how to live after what happened, after surviving in such inhuman conditions?" or "how is possible to live after Auschwitz?" Owing to a question "How God could let to happen it" philosophers and theologists address the concept of "theodicy", i.e., justifying God. But this is another huge topic in religion studies.
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- ²⁰ Final Report / International Commission on the Holocaust in Romania, Iași: Polirom, 2004, p.128-129.
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- ²⁶ 1941. A.A.
- ²⁷ Final Report / International Commission on the Holocaust in Romania, Iași: Polirom, 2004, p.134-135.
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- ³⁶ A head of village.
- 37 Ibid.
- In 1956, Nikita Khrushchev, General Secretary of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union during the period of 1953-1964, issued the Decree "About the integration for work of the gypsies who were tramps". After the Decree about 90% of Romani in USSR became settled.
- Crymy or Krymy, Kyrymitika Roma, Tatarica Roma, Crimea Tsyhany ethnic group of Romani nation in Ukraine. Traditionally they dwell in Crimea and in the Southern Oblasts of Ukraine. This group formed in time the Crimean Khanate. Krymy migrated from the Balkans to Crimea and settled among Crimean Tatars. Their language and culture carry strong influence of Crimean Tatars and Russians. In1944 Crimean Roma, as well as Crimean Tatars were deported to Central Asia. Most of Crymy were registered as Tatars in the Soviet passports. The majority of Crymy Roma are Sunni Muslims. Their traditional occupation is retail trade, musical performances, traditional crafts, blacksmithery, goldsmithery, fortune-telling, and begging.
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- ⁴² Interview with Zakharii Chebotar (born in 1936), Izmail, 04.06.2013 in A. Abakunova archive.
- ⁴³ *Ibid.*
- 44 *Ibid.*
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- ⁴⁷ Interview with Vladimir Vakulenko (born in 1935), Izmail, 04.06.2013 in A. Abakunova archive.
- ⁴⁸ Interview with Piotr Damaskin (born in 1938), Izmail, 04.06.2013 in A. Abakunova archive.

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- Interview with Riva Molochkovetskaia (born in 1928), Vinnytsia, 24.06.2010 and 22.10.2010 in A. Abakunova archive.
- ⁵¹ Interview with Milia Balk (born in 1924), Zhmerynka, 02.08.2012; Berta Bondarevskaia (born in 1938), Zhmerinka, from 02.08.2012 in A. Abakunova archive.
- ⁵² Interview with Zakharii Chebotar (born in 1936), Izmail, 04.06.2013 in A. Abakunova archive.
- Interview with Iona Matrache (born in 1936) in Documentary "The persecution from Bessarabia", director Sergiu Pene, 2011.
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