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Selective Memories: Finnish State Policy toward Roma in the 1930s and 1940s in Its European Context and Post-War Perception

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Abstract
In this article, we argue that the discriminatory acts and laws that the Finnish government issued in the 1930s and 1940s to regulate vagrancy and impose labor obligations on the population were intended first and foremost to put pressure on the Finnish Roma, an ethnic minority consisting of an estimated number of 4,000 persons at that time.[2] Although the *irtolaislaki* (Finnish Act on the Regulation of Vagrancy)[3] of 1936 did not mention the Roma explicitly, its content and intention is comparable to a series of similar acts directed against them in Europe before and after World War II. These similarities show that Finland's vagrancy legislation cannot be fully understood without a European perspective because Roma policies tend to have a supranational character. Up to now, the historiography on Finland's Roma policies has rarely gone beyond its Finnish and Scandinavian interpretive scope (Gasche 2016, 17–19). Yet, even during WWII, the development in Finland was comparable to some other countries allied with Nazi Germany, as we will show. At the same time, however, the *postwar* development in Finland seems to be unique in international comparison. Unlike the Finnish Roma, the Roma in Germany and other (West) European countries began a Roma rights movement and started to demand protection within the majority society along with political equality. This activism was primarily based on a consciousness of the centuries-old discrimination against "Gypsies" practiced

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2 One has to be careful with this estimation. There is no existing statistical information about the exact number of Roma who have lived in Finland (Pulma 2016, 208).

3 All translations of Finnish, German, and Russian quotations, names, and titles are made by the article's authors.

by the majority, which culminated in the Nazi genocide of Europe's Roma (Matras 1998; Rose 1987; Wippermann 2015, 138–50). The Finnish Roma, however, identified themselves with a positive narrative about Roma soldiers fighting in the Finnish Army for their home country (Ruohotie 2007, 12). This strategy was successful, we argue, since it perfectly fits into the official Finnish narrative about a brave and fair "war of continuation" that Finland fought against the Soviet Union independently and separately from Nazi Germany—a point of view questioned in recent years in light of the information on Finnish Waffen-SS and Wehrmacht volunteers involved in Nazi atrocities against Soviet civilians, including the Roma.

The International Dimension of Anti-"Gypsy" Measures

The "Finnish Act on the Regulation of Vagrancy" from 1936, which became effective at the beginning of 1937, received international attention at the annual meeting of the International Criminal Police Commission in Vienna in January 1939. The organization was founded in Vienna in 1923 with the aim of developing the international cooperation of criminal police (Deflem 2002, 23). Finland became a member in 1928. According to the Dutch historian Leo Lucassen, between 1931 and 1934, at the initiative of Austria, efforts to combat the "Zigeunerunwesen" (Gypsy nuisance) were also incorporated into the organization's mission (Lucassen 1996, 186–87; see also Selling 2017, 329–30). At least since the eleventh meeting of the International Criminal Police Commission in Copenhagen in June 1935, the international delegates were also aware of the harsh measures the German authorities planned to approve against the "Gypsies." In his presentation, the German delegate Karl Siegfried Bader suggested that certain "intransigent Gypsies" should be sterilized. At the end of his speech, Bader stated that the "Gypsies," as a "foreign element," would never fully belong to the Nazi Volksgemeinschaft (German people's community in the sense of a "racial" unity of Germans) (Bader 1935). In the Nordic Countries as well, Roma groups were confronted with discrimination and rigid national policies against their way of life. Not surprisingly, the most sensitive issues within the social engineering program of the Nordic welfare states, such as child custody and recommendations for sterilization, were associated with Roma people until the 1970s (Pulma 2016, 210–15; Pulma 2006, 164–65; Mattila 2005, 402–50; Selling 2014, 147–49).

In the spring of 1936, the Internationale Zentralstelle zur Bekämpfung des Zigeunerunwesens (International Central Office for the Control of the Gypsy Plague) was established with the aim to set up a transnational "Gypsy" database within the International Criminal Police Commission. Member states were asked to collect photographs, fingerprints, crime records, civil status information, and genealogies of "Gypsies" in their respective countries (Fraser 2000, 258; Lucassen 1996, 186–87), even though there was no clear and inclusive definition of the people who could be identified and registered as "Gypsies."

Although Martti Koskimies, the chief of the Finnish police, presented the "Finnish Act on the Regulation of Vagrancy," he did not do so within an explicit discussion on this sub-theme. Koskimies introduced the act to his international colleagues in response to an investigation by the commission to discern whether member countries had inaugurated legal acts against persons who had yet to commit any crime but whose appearance and activities posed a potential threat for public safety. Koskimies explained to his colleagues that Finland, like many other countries, had identified the criminal element as mostly consisting of itinerant individuals either with no fixed address or as individuals who had permanent residences but showed an unwillingness to work. To allow for stricter control, explained Koskimies, the Finnish government enacted the new "Finnish Act on the Regulation of Vagrancy" (Schultz 1939, 10).

In Finland, the Finnish Roma were the only easily identifiable itinerant group of significance. As a result of the new law, the *Mustalaislähetys* (Gypsy Mission)—established in 1906 and the oldest civil service organization for the Roma in Finland—stated that the daily life of the Roma had become increasingly more difficult (Viita 1967, 122). However, the "Finnish Act on the Regulation of Vagrancy" did not mention the Roma at all. But this was not a genuine Finnish pattern (Bernecker 2007, 281–82; Peschanski 2007, 268–70), and can even be discerned during the time after WWII. The "Bayrische Landfahrerordnung" (Bavarian vagrant act) from the 1950s, for instance, showed the same semantic policy. The Bavarian vagrant regulation from 1955 re-enacted discriminatory legislation against "Gypsies," building on an earlier law from 1926. The Bavarian authorities now avoided the term "Gypsies" but did not make any "substantial change to the [previous] law or its spirit," states the Israeli historian Gilad Margalit (2002, 72). Traditionally speaking, there has also been an association between vagrancy and criminality in the opinion of the authorities and the public (see, for instance, Bogdal 2013, 337–46; Bernecker 2007, 282; Peschanski 2007: 269–70). The same goes for the perception that the itinerant way of life is connected with work-shyness. The above-mentioned Bavarian law of 1926 for controlling "Gypsies," vagrants, and "Arbeitsscheue" (work-shy people) imposed the obligation of permanent work on every "Gypsy" between the age of sixteen and sixty-five. Also, local authorities or heads of municipalities were authorized to imprison "Gypsies" in workhouses, "without any prior legal procedure," as Margalit underlined. It was believed that the workhouses would educate the "Gypsies" through hard work and mend their assumed weaknesses, such as "idleness, lack of self-discipline, and lack of perseverance" (Margalit 2002, 32). Similar actions were suggested by the "Finnish Act on the Regulation of Vagrancy" from 1937. Local authorities were obliged to round up all itinerant persons. Those picked up for the first time were supposed to be provided with instructions and support for living a well-ordered life. If all the guidance given failed to achieve the desired result, however, the authorities had to bring the itinerant persons

under the supervision of the state and control their way of life for up to one year. If such supervision still proved ineffective, the authorities could commit these individuals to live in a workhouse for less than a year or to spend up to three years in prison.[4]

Radical Change in the Majority's Attitude toward the Minority during the War

The outbreak of the Second World War also marked the beginning of harsher times for the Finnish Roma. After the Finnish-Russian Winter War of 1939–40, between 1,500 and 2,000 Finnish Roma were among the 450,000 Karelian Finns who were resettled from Karelia to Finland. This traumatic experience (Teräs 2014, 48–52) was accompanied by the loss of former social networks connecting them with the majority population; these relationships had been crucial for the livelihoods of the Roma. After the summer of 1941, when the Finnish army re-conquered Finnish territory in Karelia, only Finnish Karelian Roma families were not allowed to return to their homes. At the same time, it turned out to be extremely difficult for the authorities to provide this group of evacuated people with housing. Even those Karelian Finnish Roma men who found work after their evacuation often had to sleep with their families under the open sky. Other temporary lodging solutions were sauna buildings and farmers' barns. Furthermore, unlike other resettled Karelian Finns, the Karelian Roma were not given any compensation for their losses. This was often the result of the fact that they lacked the necessary documentation of their properties. Also, the Roma rarely owned real estate. The housing situation for the evacuated Karelian Roma remained critical even after the end of the war. Earning a living posed yet another challenge. The most significant source of income for the Roma was horse trading. The horses of the Karelian Roma, however, were either left on the other side of the border, sold to raise money for food, or confiscated by the Finnish Army. The Karelian Roma groups who resorted to traveling around the country and begging for their survival, however, found this strategy less than expedient during the harsh wartime conditions. Some Roma, in order to survive, turned to committing minor crimes, such as selling illegal alcohol (Pulma 2016, 208–9; 2011, 165, 172).

During the summer and autumn of 1942, not only various Finnish authorities but also ordinary Finnish civilians repeatedly demanded that the authorities clamp down on traveling Roma groups and "put them to work." The Suomen Nimismiesyhdistys (Finnish association of regional police chiefs) in particular argued for more stringent measures against the Roma. The association's position on the so-called "mustalaiskysymys" (Gypsy question), which reflects the authorities' and majority population's biased and pejorative perception of the Roma, was made public in the Finnish Police Journal by board member Harry Blomberg. In his article

4 The German documentation of Koskimies's speech here uses the word "Zwangsarbeiterhaus" (forced labor house) (Schultz 1939, 10–11).

"Mustalaisista" (About the Gypsies), he reminded the readers of the association's responsibility for overseeing the maintenance of public order and the prevention of crime, as well as to offer suggestions to higher authorities in order to tighten measures against certain occurrences (Blomberg 1942, 647). In this framework, Blomberg continued, the association had also paid attention to the Finnish Roma, a group that he identified as "generally criminal by nature." Besides accusing the Roma of "begging, deception, and stealing," he also condemned them for illegally practicing professions and moving from one place to another without authorization. Blomberg explained that at this time the Finnish association of regional police chiefs had been pondering the "Gypsy question" because "most Finnish men [were] defending the fatherland, and both men and women, even children, [were] doing hard and useful work" (Blomberg 1942, 652). According to Blomberg, the majority of Finns viewed the Roma with resentment; they regarded the Roma's itinerant way of life with incomprehension and had no compassion or understanding of any of the underlying reasons for the supposed crime rate among this group. For this reason, the association sent a letter to the Finnish Ministry of the Interior, calling for a tougher course of action against the Roma. At the end of his remarks, Blomberg profoundly regretted that Finnish constitutional law did not consider racial issues and that the Finnish Roma were, according to constitutional law, Finnish citizens, thus rendering it impossible for the association to suggest radical law decrees to solve the "Gypsy question." The final sentence of the article is clearly motivated by racism: Blomberg and the association maintained that it would be destructive in the long run if the Roma, a distinctly "inferior population", mixed with "our" Finnish nation (Blomberg 1942, 652).

Juho Lähti shared a similar impression of the Finnish Roma in his article "Mustalaiset" (The Gypsies) in August 1942. It was published in the journal *Huoltaja* (Legal guardian), which was the general voice of municipal and voluntary care service. Lähti claimed that "everybody" knew how "the Gypsies" went about their lives. He identified "begging, stealing, and cheating" as natural inclinations of the Roma and called them a "nuisance" for the country (Lähti 1942, 339). According to Lähti, there had occasionally been suggestions that a "keskitysleiri" (concentration camp) would be the best place for the Finnish Roma to live and the best way "to end" their generally assumed "itinerant way of life." However, because of the war, and the lack of people in the workforce, he recommended for "this time" a "temporary" solution: He suggested the full exploitation of legal options in order to put the Finnish Roma to work and to relieve the nation of this "nuisance" (Lähti 1942, 340). In the same summer, Johan Berg, the regional police chief from the district of Pietarsaari, shared the views expressed by the common people to the Vaasan lääninhallitus (County administrative board of Vaasa). Berg's letter reported that the people in his district were particularly disturbed by the wandering of the Roma, and that they had concluded that the Roma

should be put to work, alternatively into working camps, as many Roma were considered sufficiently fit for working life (Ihari 2014, 20–21).

Among those who participated in the discussion about how to solve the "Gypsy question" was Urho Kekkonen, who served as the director of the Karelian Siirtoväen Huollon Keskus (Evacuees' welfare center) at that time and who later became the longest-serving president of Finland (1956–82). Kekkonen published his contribution under the pseudonym Pekka Peitsi in the Finnish popular journal *Suomen Kuvalehti* (The Finnish illustrated magazine). Kekkonen firmly assured his readers that his comments were not motivated by "mustalaisviha" (hatred for the Finnish Roma). According to Kekkonen, the Roma constituted "a miserable element" of the Finnish nation. Yet he had astutely noted that majority population's annoyance about Roma groups' itinerant way of life represented a dangerous development for the unity of the Finnish nation. Kekkonen disagreed with the view that putting the Roma to work could solve the shortage of workers during the war. Nonetheless, he did propose the installation of labor camps, but only as a preliminary measure to make the Finnish Roma settle permanently and abandon their pattern of roaming from one village to the other (Peitsi, alias Urho Kekkonen, 1942).

From October 1939, the Finnish government issued an act on the obligation to work. This law, "työvelvollisuuslaki" (Finnish act on the obligation to work), became even more stringent in May 1942. From this time on, every Finnish citizen between the ages of fifteen and sixty-five had to accept the work that was offered by the Finnish authorities (Lähteenmäki 2002, 163–64). In the following months, several labor camps were set up in Finland. Three groups, however, were considered unfit for work from the government's perspective: alcoholics, prostitutes, and "Gypsies." In the autumn of 1943, however, the Finnish government passed a law that allowed putting these three groups into "erikoisleirit" (special labor camps). The Finnish authorities wanted this legal act to close loopholes between the acts on the obligation to work and on the control of vagrancy (Pulma 2011, 168–69). In the government's bill to the Diet, the naming of an ethnic group as a legal objective was motivated with the reference that the Roma, because of their physical condition, their way of life, and their behavior, could not associate with ordinary workers. The law, explicitly mentioning the Roma as one of the target groups, came into force December 1, 1943 (Pulma 2011, 169). Finland was not the only German ally to tighten measures against Roma around that time. In 1941, the Slovakian Tiso regime, for instance, began establishing stricter policies against both nomadic and sedentary Roma groups in the country. In June 1943, two decrees by the Slovakian Interior Ministry led to a major restriction of Roma mobility and the placement of Roma groups from all over the country in internment camps (Vodička 2008, 56–60).

However, even if a number of Roma had to work in enclosed camps during WWII, the objective to make all Roma in Finland systematically,

comprehensively, and permanently join the workforce failed (Pulma 2012, 159–60). The account of the labor camp in Lappajärvi, which was opened as a site only for Roma and a sort of test camp in February 1943, showed just how difficult it was to carry out such a goal. The camp was supposed to consist of thirty-nine Roma men between fourteen and sixty-five years of age from all over the country. Eventually, the Finnish police managed to bring in twenty-four Roma men, seven of whom escaped that same spring (Ihari 2012, 24). Additionally, the results of the work were unsatisfactory, and the camp was closed with only twelve Roma men left at the end of June 1943. Additionally, the Roma custom of living together in a larger family collective distracted from the daily routine at the Lappajärvi camp. Roma families had followed their male family members to Lappajärvi and were camping outside the fence. Authorities had to drive the Roma families away. An account about the Lappajärvi camp was made public in *Suomen Poliisilehti* (Finnish police journal) (Ahtee 1943). After the new legislation came into force in December 1943, the Finnish authorities sought to set up a special labor camp for Roma in Kihniö. This project also failed because of the authorities' inability to fill the necessary quota of fifteen Roma men for such a camp (Ihari 2012, 96). This was also related to the fact that Finnish police forces and other authorities were understaffed at that time and, therefore, simply unable to enforce the new legislation in a more comprehensive way (Ihari 2012, 26–27).

Positive Memory of the War: Military Service Redeemed the Roma's Place in Finnish Society

At the same time, according to the Finnish historian Panu Pulma, at least 300 Finnish Roma men were enrolled in the Finnish army during WWII. There are no exact figures, however, because the Finnish Army did not record any information on the ethnic origins of its soldiers. The Finnish Roma did not only serve as horsemen in the rearguard, but they were also engaged in active combat at the front lines. In total, approximately sixty Finnish Roma men fell during the Finnish Winter War, the Continuation War, and the Lapland War (Pulma 2012, 162). This involvement of Roma men in the Finnish military service is highly cherished in the collective memory of the Finnish Roma community. Moreover, even today, many decades after the war, the Finnish Roma men's customary dress looks like a soldiers' uniform with dark, straight, loose trousers and black footwear. This dress code still serves as a reminder of the Roma men's involvement in the Finnish army during the war (Stenroos 2012, 428). The narrative of Roma participation in the war is even communicated in Roma literature for children, for instance, in the book *Minne matka, yökettu?* (Where are you headed, night fox?). The illustrated book tells the story of a Finnish Roma family who travel by ferry with two small children to Sweden. There, they, with other relatives, visit their great-uncle in the hospital. In this context, the narrative of a family member's military service in the

Finnish army and his death in a military hospital during the Second World War is woven into the story (Blomérus et al. 2009, 27).

Undoubtedly, participation in the Finnish military service has provided the ethnic minority with a heightened sense of equality and security within the majority society (Roman 2012, 59). Until the present day, according to a common legend among the Finnish Roma, the deportation of Finnish Roma to Nazi Germany had been planned, but Marshal Carl Gustaf Emil Mannerheim saved them from being transported to the Nazi German concentration camps (Oksanen 2010, A15). The legend is, presumably, based on Mannerheim's refusal to hand over the Finnish Jews to Nazi Germany at the possible request of Heinrich Himmler in 1942 (Torvinen 1989, 140–43). It is even possible to find similarities in the oral history of the war of both Finnish minorities; they did not only wear the same military uniform, but also certainly shared the same fear of deportation to Nazi Germany. In a television documentary called *Suomen romanien tuntematon sota* (The unknown war of the Finnish Roma) from 2004, Väinö Lindberg, a member of the Finnish Roma community, mentioned rumors among the Finnish Roma that a boat was on its way to Finland to collect them.[5] A similar tale circulated within the Finnish Jewish community: Rumors that "two boats [were] waiting in Helsinki to carry [the Jews] away" became known to the wider public in a documentary film about the Finnish Jewish wartime experience seven years earlier, in 1997.[6]

It has been very important for both the Finnish Roma community and the Finnish authorities to communicate the idea of brotherhood-in-arms to the mainstream society. In 2003, in honor of the Finnish Roma who lost their lives during the Second World War, a monument was erected in the Hietaniemi cemetery in Helsinki, not far away from the tomb of Marshal Mannerheim. Made by the Finnish sculptor Heikki Häiväoja, the monument, with its broken wheel and wagon axis, was meant to show the Finnish Roma people's love for their country and the Roma culture. The erection of the monument had the official support of the leadership of the Helsinki Parish Congregation.

Electronic teaching material provided by the Finnish Ministry of the Interior in co-operation with the Valtakunnallinen Romaniasian neuvottelukunta (National advisory board on Roma affairs), online available until 2020, emphasized that the Finnish Roma participated in defending Finland as every other Finnish citizen did during WWII. What was puzzling here, however, was the claim in this online material that over 1,000 Finnish Roma men served at the front lines. This inflated figure can only be understood against the background of the minority's profound

5 https://yle.fi/aihe/artikkeli/2010/04/16/suomen-romanien-tuntematon-sota.

6 The documentary movie *David: Tarinoita kunniasta ja häpeästä* (David: Stories of honor and shame) was directed by Taru Mäkelä. The documentary highlights the controversial and unique situation of the Finnish Jews who fought at the front line alongside Wehrmacht soldiers during the Continuation War, from 1941 to 1944.

desire to receive acknowledgment and respect for their war efforts from the majority society. According to researcher Camilla Nordberg's observations, Finnish Roma activists emphasize a strong Finnish identity to distinguish themselves from more recent Roma arrivals from the Balkans. The Finnish Roma underline their shared language, religion, and history with the Finnish nation, particularly highlighting the Roma soldiers killed in action during WWII (Nordberg 2007, 68).

Sustaining this positive war narrative—both on the part of the minority and of the representatives of the majority—has required experiences of injustice to be silenced for many decades. Nonetheless, this compelling narrative that has served to foster a sense of national belonging for the Finnish Roma has been modified by younger Roma who have a more nuanced view of history and who emphasize that military service did not improve the social position of this minority after the war and that discrimination continued for war veterans, too (H. Hedman 2014, 9). Others have also spoken up about Roma victimization during the Holocaust, for instance, on public occasions, in the community's journal *Romano Boodos* (Roma news), and in artistic works (https://www.kulttuuriespoo.fi/fi/node/5937; S. Hedman 2015, 3; Kylmälä 2013, 3). In 2012, the Finnish Roma activist Janette Grönfors commented on the Roma genocide during the Second World War in the aforementioned newsletter: "We [the Finnish Roma] also have a common history with the rest of Europe's Roma, even though Finland's Roma were reportedly not sent to the European concentration camps" (Grönfors 2012, 13). The Finnish Roma artist Veijo Baltzar has produced an exhibition that tells the story of the Slovakian Roma girl Miranda who, along with other family members, was sent to a concentration camp during the Second World War. Through the exhibition project "MIRANDA—Mustalaisten holokausti. Kuka pelkää valkolaista?" (MIRANDA—The Roma Holocaust: Who is Afraid of the White Man?), Baltzar sought to present "recent European history from a Roma perspective," the "dynamic culture of the Roma," and their "current conditions."[7] The exhibition was also shown during 2013–14 at the National Museum of Finland in Helsinki.[8] This identification with the Holocaust represents much more than an attempt to be recognized as a victim group in history. It has to be understood as a minority's strategy for gaining security within the majority society and an international political agenda aimed at ensuring that "future generations" also "understand the causes of the Holocaust and reflect upon its consequences."[9] Nonetheless and until now, the historical narratives told by the Finnish Roma of different generations appear to complement rather than to contest each other. However, ongoing research on Finnish men's

7 https://www.kulttuuriespoo.fi/fi/node/5937.

8 https://ec.europa.eu/programmes/europe-for-citizens/projects/efc-project-details-page/?nodeRef=workspace://SpacesStore/8041632a-3c48-4562-bb7d-1998316afb77.

9 Declaration of the Stockholm International Forum on the Holocaust from January 2000, https://www.holocaustremembrance.com/about-us/stockholm-declaration.

participation in atrocities on the territories of the former USSR during WWII might pose a challenge for the Finnish Roma community's positive narrative on their war engagement.

Research Outlook: Were Finns Involved in Mass Killings of Roma During WWII?

In the discourse regarding the potential involvement of Finns in Nazi atrocities against Soviet civilians during Operation Barbarossa, scholars have thus far focused on the role of the Finnish Volunteer Battalion of the 5th SS Panzer Division *Wiking*, which was not only an elite military force, but also an active tool of the Nazis' war of extermination against the Soviet Union, especially regarding the Jewish population, communists, and other "undesired elements" (Boll 2002; Stein 1967). Postwar Finnish historiography, however, has ignored this aspect and focused almost exclusively on military and diplomatic aspects of the Finnish Waffen-SS history. Moreover, its conscious disregard has led to the assumption that Finnish soldiers did not participate in any war crimes, but fought a fair war to secure their country from bolshevism. This assumption perfectly fits into the thesis of a "separate war," according to which Finland fought its "war of continuation" against the Soviet Union independently and separately from Hitler's Germany (Holmila 2013, 218–19, 226–30). This interpretation was corroborated by memoirs of Finnish Waffen-SS veterans and postwar interrogation protocols of the Valpo (Finnish state police). Some of the veterans admitted that they had witnessed war crimes and atrocities by the Wiking-division and other units, but asserted that none of the Finnish volunteers had taken part in them (Lappi-Seppälä 1945; Parvilahti 1958). In recent years, however, the recurring pattern of veterans' self-representation as mere witnesses or bystanders has been questioned (Holmila 2013). In January 2018, Efraim Zuroff, the director of the Simon Wiesenthal Center's Jerusalem office, asked the President of Finland, Sauli Niinistö, to start an enquiry into the role played by Finnish volunteers in the Wiking-division's mass killings of Jews between 1941 and 1943. In February 2019, the Finnish National Archives of Finland published an investigation entitled The Finnish SS-volunteers and Atrocities against Jews, Civilians and Prisoners of War in Ukraine and the Caucasus Region 1941–1943 (Westerlund 2019).[10] According to this archival report, Finnish SS men were most likely involved in the atrocities of their division. So far, there is no concrete documental evidence that Wiking-units on their way from Galicia to Northern Caucasus also murdered Soviet Roma, but this should not be generally ruled out.

Another area where Finnish-speaking volunteers served in German uniforms on a larger scale was the northwest of Russia, occupied by Heeresgruppe Nord (Army Group North) in late summer 1941. In Ingria, where there was a Finnish-speaking minority of 76,342 people, the German occupiers preferred Estonians and Ingrian Finns as village elders,

10 For an in-depth review of Westerlund's book, see Lubotina (2020).

since they did not trust the local Russian majority for "racial" and political reasons (Nevalainen 1991, 268; Musaev 2004, 295). Furthermore, the German military administration recruited local Estonians and Finns as auxiliary forces for the Wehrmacht and the Security Police, including guards of POW camps. Approximately 1,000 Ingrian Finnish volunteers served in the 18th Army (Kilian 2012, 172–83, 442; Mallmann et al. 2014, 268). In February 1942, the so-called Finnische Sicherungsgruppe 187 (Finnish Security Group 187) was established in order to guard objects of the infrastructure and to take part in the combat against partisans. In the fall of 1942, the group transformed into Ost-Bataillon 664 (Eastern Battalion 664) with similar tasks and a contingent of approximately 800 Ingrian Finnish soldiers. At the end of 1943, the battalion was relocated via Tallinn to Hanko, where it was integrated into the regular Finnish Army under the name Erillinen pataljoona B (Special Battalion B), and later on Erillinen pataljoona 6 (Special Battalion 6). It consisted of 25 officers, 54 sergeants, and 601 soldiers. In June and July 1944, the battalion fought in Karelia against the Red Army, before it was removed to the rear area (Mutanen 1999, 45, 65–67, 97, 100, 110–14, 126).

To answer the question to what extent the Ingrian Finnish volunteers took part in Nazi atrocities, it is necessary to have a closer look at the character of the extremely harsh German occupation policy. "Securing" the area and "combating partisans" implied the murder of mere suspects and the systematic annihilation of the Jewish and Roma population. These crimes were not only perpetrated by the Security Police of the SS, but also by Wehrmacht unions. According to the current state of research, the Germans killed at least 1,300 to 1,500 Roma in the operational area of the Army Group North (Holler 2013, 159). In some cases, the genocidal executions of Jews or Roma took place in public and were additionally legitimized by alleged "partisan support," "stealing," or "refusal to work," in order to intimidate and discipline the witnessing population. According to Soviet investigations, in Krasnogvardeisk (today Gatchina), Jews and "Gypsies" were even hanged together in the center of the town (ChGK Gatchina 1944). Aleksanteri Jakman, a former member of the Finnish Security Group 187 in Ingria, who had moved from Karelia to Finland in 1994, described such a public execution that he had "accidentally" witnessed in a village near Luga: A whole "Gypsy family," including children and elderly people, was hanged in line by the Germans. Officially, they had been accused of stealing from houses while the villagers were bringing in the harvest from the fields (Mutanen 1999, 89). Jakman gives no exact date and describes himself as a mere bystander, a strategy reminiscent of the exculpatory pattern of argumentation by the Finnish Waffen-SS members mentioned above. It is possible, nevertheless, that the execution had already taken place in the fall of 1941, before the recruitment of Ingrian volunteers.

According to a report of the Soviet Chrezvychainaia gosudarstvennaia komissiia (Extraordinary State Commission or ChGK) from the Gdov

district, there is at least one example of a presumably concrete involvement of (Ingrian) Finnish soldiers in a Nazi mass shooting of Roma in the area of Army Group North. At the end of February 1942, a "retaliation unit" consisting of "Germans, Finns, and Estonians" searched the village Filippovshchina and recognized twenty-six Roma who were deportees from Luga in 1941 and quartered with Russian peasants as work forces. The next day, these Roma, among them ten children under the age of twelve, were driven out of their houses and shot on a bridge at the entrance to the village. The entire village community had to assemble nearby and watch the mass execution, which was carried out in an especially sadistic manner, since the perpetrators forced the victims to dance on the bridge prior to their death. The soldiers officially declared that "the Gypsies" had been "in contact with partisans," although they did not interrogate the victims at all. Instead, the Russian villagers were completely shocked by the brutal murder of "defenseless Gypsies and their children" (ChGK Gdov 1945).

The Soviet Extraordinary State Commission was not able to find out the exact units involved. It is possible that members of the Finnish Security Group 187 took part in the operation, but since Estonian soldiers were also present, it seems more likely that it was an Estonian unit under German command with some Ingrian Finns in their ranks. Further research might bring to light more examples of war crimes and atrocities committed by the German occupiers with the immediate help of Ingrian Finnish volunteers. A promising source type would be the NKVD files concerning trials against "traitors of the fatherland," among them filtered Ingrian Finnish repatriates from Finland, but the Russian FSB archives of St. Petersburg, Novgorod, and Pskov are still inaccessible to foreign scholars.

Conclusion

One might argue that the Ingrian example with its Soviet Russian context is a separate case and cannot be added to or compared with the role of the war engagement of Finnish Roma men, other Finns, or Finnish Waffen-SS volunteers from Finland itself. At the same time, however, it must be recognized that the Ingrian matter became an immediate part of Finland's history when the Ingrian Finns were transferred from the occupied territories to Finland in 1943 and 1944. From that time on, the ranks of the Finnish army had included soldiers of Soviet Finnish origin, who might have taken part in the Nazi mass murder of Roma, Jews, and other Soviet civilians. At the same time, this incorporation of the Ingrian Finns made them brothers-in-arms with the Finnish Roma.

For decades after WWII, not only was the memory of the Finnish discriminatory legislation against the Roma before and during the war silenced by both the Finnish majority and the Roma minority, but also uncomfortable indications about the potential involvement of Finnish Waffen-SS and Wehrmacht volunteers in Nazi atrocities against the

civil population—including possible actions against the Roma—in the German-occupied parts of the Soviet Union were ignored. The mutuality between the minority and the majority society, in many cases represented through state authorities, manifests most visibly in the erection of the monument for the fallen Roma soldiers during WWII at Hietaniemi cemetery in Helsinki. However, this tribute also serves to emphasize the assumed unique character of Finnish warfare during WWII, with Finland having fought a separate war, and to detach it from the Nazis' war of extermination in the Soviet Union.

In contrast to such a traditional Finnish perspective on history, those members of the Finnish Roma community who are speaking up about the victimization of Roma in the course of the Holocaust are providing these dark events with a European historical context. Such a wider supranational contextualization is also necessary for the evaluation of Finland's acts and laws on the regulation of vagrancy and labor obligation in the 1930s and 1940s, which predominately affected the Roma and were obviously directed against parts of this particular minority.

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