

Holocaust Remembrance and Representation

Documentation from a Research Conference

*Research anthology of the Inquiry on
a Museum about the Holocaust*

Stockholm 2020



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Preface

This anthology is the documentation from the international research conference on Holocaust remembrance and representation held in Stockholm in February 12–13 2020 arranged by the Inquiry on a Museum about the Holocaust (Ku 2019:01).

It contains the keynotes and papers presented at the conference as well as summaries of the panel discussions. The conference was an important input for the inquiry in putting together its report.

The mission of the inquiry was to propose how a museum to preserve the memory of the Holocaust in Sweden should be established.

The terms of reference for the inquiry points out that stories from survivors with a connection to Sweden should be of central importance. The museum should also be able to describe the Holocaust in a broad historical context as well as Sweden's role during the Second World War. The museum should have a strong foundation in current research on the Second World War and the Holocaust, and establish international networks, both within research and with other museums focused on the Holocaust.

One important part of the task was to gather knowledge and information from scholars, museums, government authorities, civil society and other organizations currently working on issues relating to the Holocaust, in Sweden. This was done in several ways, and one way was to hold a conference.

The creation of a Museum about the Holocaust is of high priority to the Swedish government. Prime Minister Stefan Löfven said in his Statement of Government Policy of January 21st, 2019:

A new museum will be established to preserve and pass on the memory of the Holocaust. Never forget – this was the promise we made to each other. Sweden will never forget.¹

¹ Statement of Government Policy, January 21, 2019.

Prime Minister Löfven will also host the Malmö International Forum on Holocaust Remembrance and Combating Antisemitism on October 26–27, 2020 in Malmö, Sweden.

The Forum will take place 75 years after the end of the Second World War and the liberation of Auschwitz-Birkenau. This year also marks 20 years since the first Stockholm International Forum on the Holocaust was held, and the establishment of the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA).

As can be noted, Sweden has a long tradition of observing these questions. The former Prime Minister Göran Persson engaged in these issues already in 1998, when he created the Uppsala Programme for Holocaust and Genocide Studies and published the book “... tell ye your children”, written by the scholars Stéphane Bruchfeld and Paul A. Levine, and in 2003 when the government authority The Living History Forum was established.

The conference was characterized by a wish to discuss, reflect and to start the conversation on what a Holocaust Museum in Sweden could be and what it should do. Hopefully, this anthology could contribute to that discussion.

Birgitta Svensson
Inquiry chair

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Introduction

Karin Kvist Geverts (editor)

A Conference on Holocaust Remembrance and Representation

The conference was an important input for the inquiry in finishing our report, and it proved to be a valuable arena for discussions between Holocaust scholars, experts from international Holocaust museums and representatives from universities, institutions and authorities in Sweden.

The conference showed that a lot of issues remains to be resolved before the museum can open. These issues concern for example how to develop the concept of the museum, strategies for collecting materials, a permanent exhibition, as well as practical issues regarding how to be wise about costs. Many important points were made, and my hope is that this anthology can fill the gap in between the work of the inquiry and the upcoming museum, but also serve as food for thought for scholars and practitioners in the field of Holocaust studies and museums.

As can be seen in the appendix, the conference had three keynotes and five sessions which included both panel discussions and paper presentations. The different themes of the anthology are outlined below.

It should be noted that although it was a research conference, the articles are not based on new research. Parts of the texts have been presented earlier and when this is the case it is noted in the footnotes of the article.

Themes addressed in the anthology

This year, 2020, marks 75 years after the end of the Second World War and the liberation of Auschwitz-Birkenau – the end of what was later named “the Holocaust”. But what do scholars mean when they use the term, the Holocaust, and what meaning does it have in the mind of the public? How should a museum about the Holocaust deal with this term, and what should the museum be called? These issues are discussed in an article by Stéphane Bruchfeld.

During the war, Sweden was neutral, and because of this, refugees were able to flee to Sweden. In the spring of 1945, there were about 185 000 refugees in Sweden, a huge number for a small country. Most of these were non-Jewish refugees.

Neutrality also paved way for rescue operations abroad, for instance in Hungary, where Raoul Wallenberg and several others at the Swedish legation in Budapest helped Jewish refugees. At the same time, the Swedish trade with Nazi Germany, the transit of German soldiers on the railway through Sweden on its way to the battle front in Norway or the Soviet Union was problematic to say the least.

What did these different experiences of the war do to the Swedish self-image, and how can a museum about the Holocaust use knowledge of this period in order to better understand and explain it? This was discussed in the session on research on Sweden and the Holocaust and is dealt with in the articles by Ulf Zander, Karin Kvist Geverts and Oscar Österberg.

Sweden was neutral during the war, and there are no other neutral countries who have established Holocaust museums. Yet. There are Jewish museums and there are memorials, but no Holocaust museums. The closest we can find is the Living History Forum in Sweden, but the Forum is not a museum.

So why here? Why now? How can a museum be established in a country with no killing sites? How can such a museum be relevant for Swedes today? What importance does research and collections have, for a museum? These questions were addressed in a panel discussion which included Guri Hjeltnes, Yigal Cohen, David Marwell, Richelle Budd Caplan and Henry “Hank” Greenspan. The panel discussion was summarized in an abstract by Victoria Van Orden Martinez.

Stories from survivors with a connection to Sweden will be of central importance for the museum. But which survivors? Which narratives? And what should we remember? This was the topic of one session and are dealt with in the articles by Cecilie Felicia Stokholm Banke, Malin Thor Tureby and Andrej Kotljarchuk.

What makes a good museum great? Of what importance is the building? How important is the narrative, or should the museum have multiple narratives, like the Polin museum in Poland? These questions were addressed in one session and are discussed in the articles by Paul Salmons, Christina Gamstorp and Janne Laursen.

The conference was concluded with a panel discussion on how to make a Holocaust museum in Sweden, in which Guri Hjeltnes, Yigal Cohen, David Marwell, Richelle Budd Caplan, Boaz Cohen, Birgitta Svensson, Paul Salmons and Karin Kvist Geverts participated. The panel discussion was summarized in an abstract by Victoria Van Orden Martinez.

In contemporary society, Holocaust memorialization is being politicized and distorted by states, and this is a potential problem for all Holocaust museums. How to make better stories and deal with these challenges was addressed in a keynote by Andrea Petö and in an article in this anthology.

Finally, Henry “Hank” Greenspan gave a keynote via link and contributed with two articles to the anthology. He reminded us of the importance not only to listen to survivors, but also to engage, reflect, learn and discuss, and most important of all, to start a conversation. Hopefully, this anthology could be a starting point for a conversation on the new museum about the Holocaust in Sweden.

The Holocaust of the European Roma and the Nordic periphery. Terminology and preliminary state of research

Andrej Kotljarchuk

Abstract

Like other Nordic countries, Sweden has its dark chapter of ignominious history involving discrimination targeting the Roma. However, less is known about the fate of Romani people in the Nordic countries during World War II especially genocidal plans regarding Roma people in the Nazi-occupied Norway as well as the cooperation between the Nazis and the Nordic authorities regarding the so-called “solving of the Gypsy Plague”. The paper examines the results of recent research on the history of the Roma in the Nordic countries during World War II, focusing on terminology, preliminary results and dimensions for further research.

Introduction

Hundreds of thousands Roma were murdered during the war in Europe by the Nazis and local auxiliary police. The Roma from the Third Reich were first deported to the concentration camps and then murdered. Roma in the Soviet Union, Poland and the Baltic states were usually murdered on the spot. The annihilation of Roma and Jews by the Nazis and their collaborators was recognized as genocide by international law. The notion of genocide has a strictly defined legal meaning. The key notion for a legal evaluation of the genocidal nature of mass crimes is intent. The latter means that legal

theory treats differently *dolus generalis* and *dolus specialis* in cases of mass crimes against humanity. It means that a genocide did not occur when the mass murder of individual members of an ethnic group (*dolus generalis*) was not done with specific intent (*dolus specialis*) of exterminating the community as such.¹ As Michael Berenbaum pointed out, “the Nazis also singled out the Roma and Sinti, pejoratively known as Gypsies. They were the only other group that the Nazis systematically killed in gas chambers alongside the Jews”.²

Every genocide is unique. While paralleling each other in time and intent, the implementation of the extermination of Jews and Romani differs. The mass murder of Roma depended greatly on decisions of the local Nazi or collaborationist administration that could, for example, postpone “the final solution” because of the lack of resources. In 1942 a group of 880 East Prussian Sinti was deported from the East Baltic coast to Brest-Litovsk in Reichskommissariat Ukraine (today the town of Brest in Belarus) and resettled in the previous ghetto. One year after the discussion on how to deal with “the German Gypsies”, the local Nazi authorities decided “to treat them as Jews are”.³ In 1943 this group of Sinti were deported further to Auschwitz-Birkenau and gassed there. Theodor Christensen, the head of SD for Chernihiv in Ukraine, published in June 1942 the order according to which all Romani in the town and its suburbs had to go to the police office for registration. The need for registration was allegedly due to planned “further resettlement” to Serbia. Over 1 000 Roma who came to the registration offices were imprisoned and then murdered.⁴ In this and many other cases, the strategy of perpetrators was similar to the mass murder of Jews. In Kyiv 33 000 Jews sent to Babi Yar in September 1941 for “further resettlement” were massacred over two days of mass killings. However, in Lviv, another big city in Ukraine, the Roma population survived the occupation due to a better integration into the local society and, not least, the corruption within the

¹ William A. Schabas, *Genocide in International Law*, Cambridge 2000, p. 213-225.

² Michael Berenbaum, “Holocaust. From Kristallnacht to the ‘final solution’”, *Encyclopædia Britannica*, www.britannica.com/event/Holocaust, access date: February 19, 2020.

³ Martin Holler, “Deadly Odyssey: East Prussian Sinti in Bialystok, Brest-Litovsk and Auschwitz-Birkenau”, *Mass violence in Nazi-occupied Europe*, ed. by Alex J. Kay and David Stahel. Bloomington 2018, p. 105.

⁴ Andrej Kotljarchuk, “Le génocide nazi des Roms en Bélarus et en Ukraine: de l’importance des données de recensement et des recenseurs”, *Etudes Tsiganes*, 56-57 (2016), p. 205-206.

Nazi authorities. At the same time, outside town, the Romani were stopped and murdered by the Nazis *en masse*.⁵

As Piotr Wawrzeniuk, a historian at the Military Academy of Sweden, has noted, the history of the Nazi persecution of Roma should be studied with a sensitivity to the given context, while considering what explanations, interpretations, and knowledge it is possible to draw from various and very fragmented records.⁶ There is still a high degree of uncertainty about the number of the victims of the Roma genocide. Some researchers state that in total about 200 000 Roma perished at the hands of the Nazis and their collaborators in European countries. Others argue that up to 500 000 Roma were murdered by the Nazis, their collaborators and Axis-powers.⁷ In Ukraine alone, as a recent Swedish study shows, the number of Romani genocide victims varies from 20 000 to 72 000 individuals.⁸ All estimates are tentative, for it is based solely upon the few available records and often do not include nomadic Roma, who at that time usually lacked proper identification papers.

The Nazi genocide of the Roma in the countries of the Baltic Sea region is still under-studied and generally has been mentioned only in passing in genocide studies and Nordic historiography. Sweden's connections with Nazism and the Holocaust were the subject of a large-scale research project led by Professor Klas Åmark. The situation with the Roma people was not a focus of this project, however. The Nordic periphery is of special interest. Here, numerically small Romani groups generally survived the war. However, even in Sweden, which was outside the Nazi occupation zone, the government announced in 1942 a plan for resolving the "Gypsy problem" and ordered the registration and racial biological investigation of the Romani population. The official rhetoric was very aggressive, since both the Swedish state and state-affiliated experts argued in favor of fundamentally solving "the problem". How strange were such ideas to Sweden? To answer this question, we must examine the treatment of Romani people in Scandinavia during World War II in the international context.

⁵ Piotr Wawrzeniuk, "Lwów Saved Us": Roma Survival in Lemberg 1941–44, *Journal of Genocide Research*, 20:3 (2018), p. 327–350.

⁶ Wawrzeniuk, "Lwów Saved Us", p. 350.

⁷ Anton Weiss-Wendt, "Introduction", *The Nazi genocide of the Roma. Reassessment and Commemoration*, ed. by Anton Weiss-Wendt, New York-Oxford 2013, p. 1.

⁸ Kotljarchuk, "Le génocide nazi des Roms en Bélarus et en Ukraine", p. 207–209.

On terminology

The memory work and studies of the Roma genocide were very much inspired by Holocaust research and Jewish commemoration. Since the early 1970s, the Roma activists and some scholars looked for a specific term for the Nazi genocide of Roma. Already at the First World Romani Congress in 1971 in Orpington near London, the genocide was a major topic of discussion. The song *Gelem, Gelem* by the Serbian Rom Žarko Jovanović was adopted as a national anthem and this is a song about the genocide: *I once had a great family/The Black Legion murdered them.*

In 1966, Grattan Puxon, a British Traveller-Gypsy activist and Dr. Donald Kenrick, a prominent linguist, started the first-ever research project on the Nazi genocide of the Roma, supported by the Institute of Contemporary History at the Wiener Holocaust Library in London. In 1972, they published the groundbreaking book, *The Destiny of Europe's Gypsies*. Speaking about the Nazi destruction of the Roma, the authors used the legal term genocide. However, the term “the Nazi holocaust of Gypsies” was also mentioned.⁹ During the years after the 1972 publication, only a small number of academic books were published on the Nazi genocide of the Roma, particularly when compared to the research on the Jewish Holocaust. Most of the printed books are of a popular historical, rather than scholarly nature.

For the last three decades various terms for the Roma genocide have been proposed by scholars and Roma activists. Among them are the *Porajmos* (destruction), *Samudaripen* or *Mudaripen* (mass murder) and *Kali traš* (black fear). The most known term outside the Roma communities is *Porajmos*. However, this term has been rejected as inappropriate by many Roma, since in various dialects of Romani language this word connotes sexual violence, something that is a taboo for discussions in Romani traditional culture.

During the last decade many Roma activists began to argue for Holocaust as a term for the Nazi extermination of Roma. They believe that other terms work as a tool for exclusion of the Roma victims from the memory of the Holocaust. In Sweden, Roma activists protested in 2013 against the official silence regarding Roma genocide

⁹ Donald Kenrick and Grattan Puxon, *The destiny of Europe's gypsies*, London 1972, p. 18, 188.

victims during the commemoration of the Holocaust on 27 January.¹⁰ Today in Sweden, the Roma genocide victims commemorate both Holocaust Memorial Day in January and the European Roma Holocaust Memorial Day in August.¹¹ The term “Roma Holocaust” has been established recently in the academic fields of genocide and Romani studies, however mainly as an empirical, not a theoretical term.¹² In 2015, the Nazi genocide of Roma was recognized by Sweden and other countries in the EU as a Holocaust committed simultaneously with the Shoah. The European Parliament declared 2 August, the date in 1944 when the Nazis murdered the inmates of the “Gypsy camp” at Auschwitz-Birkenau, as the European Roma Holocaust Memorial Day. The European Parliament stated that for a long time, little attention was paid in European countries to the Nazi genocide of the Roma and urged:

The Member States to officially recognize this genocide and other forms of persecution of Roma such as deportation and internment that took place during World War II; Declares that a European day should be dedicated to commemorating the victims of the genocide of the Roma during World War II and that this day should be called the European Roma Holocaust Memorial Day; Instructs its President to forward this resolution to the Council, the Commission, the governments and parliaments of the Member States and the candidate countries, the Council of Europe, the OSCE and the United Nations.¹³

It is well known that many major researchers of the Jewish Holocaust rejected the claim that what had happened to the Roma during World War II could be termed Holocaust. Those scholars who pushed for inclusion of the Romani genocide within the concept of the Holocaust argued that the Holocaust was one and the same historic phenomenon when it came to the eradication of different ethnic and

¹⁰ “Romer måste ges plats bland Förintelsens offer”, *Dagens Nyheter*, August 2 2013.

¹¹ Bengt O. Björklund, “Zigenarnattens’ offer”, *E Romani Glinda*, december 2019, p. 29; Birgitta Israelsson, ”Minnesstunder i två kyrkor”, *E Romani Glinda*, december 2019, p. 34.

¹² A simple search in the Google Scholar database for the term Roma Holocaust or the Roma under Holocaust gives about 32 000 results. An advanced search for the exact term “Roma Holocaust” yields 637 results in academic publications, and 465 results for term “Romani Holocaust” in academic publications. See: <https://scholar.google.com> access date: February 19, 2020. The term “Roma Holocaust” was introduced into Swedish academic research in 1990, see: Jahn Otto Johansen, *Zigenarnas holocaust*, förord av Elie Wiesel, efterskrift av Ingvar Svanberg och Mattias Tydén, Stockholm 1990.

¹³ European Parliament resolution of 15 April 2015 on the occasion of International Roma Day (2015/2615(RSP). www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/TA-8-2015-0095_EN.html access date: February 19, 2020.

other groups whom the Nazis considered unfit to live. As David Gaunt, a professor in history at Södertörn University, pointed out “although the ‘other’ Holocaust debates were very frustrating and bitter conflicts, they did have the positive effect of increasing the general and scholarly awareness of the other genocides”.¹⁴

The Nazi genocide of European Roma and its Nordic connection

Already in the 1930s the Nazi regime started the individual identification of German Roma and established the anti-Roma racial biological classification. In the absence of previous documentation, “experts” soon stepped forward. One of these, Robert Ritter, a psychologist at the University of Tübingen, became a leading Nazi authority on Roma. By 1940, Dr. Ritter and his team at Racial Hygiene Research Center (*Rassenhygienische Forschungsstelle*) had registered and examined some 30 000 Romani living in Germany. The majority of those were subsequently murdered (or sterilized) in the Nazi genocide.¹⁵

At a 1935 Interpol conference in Copenhagen, participating states backed an initiative proposed by representatives of the SS-dominated German police force regarding the creation of an international registry of Roma. Recent research shows that the well-known Swedish criminologist, Harry Söderman, played a key role in the promoting of the pan-European registry of Roma.¹⁶ As Nazi occupation spread throughout much of Northern Europe, so did the investigation and registration of Roma come to Norway and Denmark. Following the deportation of Jews to the Nazi concentration camps, Quisling’s collaborationist government began to discuss a “resolution of the Gypsy problem”. In summer 1943 Police Minister Jonas Lie proposed to Quisling the establishment of special Gypsy camps as well as forced mass sterilization of Romani. Another proposal was to treat Roma as Jews and deport them to Auschwitz. In a letter to Lie,

¹⁴ David Gaunt, “Understanding the Clashes Between historians and Roma Activists”, *Baltic Worlds* 3, p. 43.

¹⁵ Michael Zimmermann, *Rassenutopie und Genozid: Die nationalsozialistische ‘Lösung der Zigeunerfrage’* Hamburg 1996, p. 139–162.

¹⁶ Jan Selling, “The Obscured Story of the International Criminal Police Commission, Harry Söderman, and the Forgotten Context of Antiziganism”, *Scandinavian Journal of History* 42:3, 2017, p. 329–353.

Quisling stressed: “The simplest solution is actually the one proposed by Major-General [Oliver] Møystad [head of the collaborationist security police] – to collect all Gypsies and to deport them to Poland”.¹⁷ The registration of Romani would have to be carried out and the action should be done by local police and authorities. The pro-Nazi administration of Norway wanted to know how Sweden dealt with the Roma. In June 1943, the consul general for Norway, Ragnar Söderberg (a well-known Swedish businessman and philanthrope) asked the government of Sweden to share the documentation of the “Gypsy registration” with Quisling, since the Norwegian authorities were preparing a draft law on the registration of Roma and Travellers, and they knew about the ongoing Swedish registration.¹⁸ In 1944, the Norwegian collaborators continued to discuss incarcerating the Roma in concentration camps in the far North. This plan was stopped due to the Red Army’s advance in Finnmark.

Following the Nazi occupation of Denmark in 1940, two Danish physicians at the Institute of Human Genetics (*Arvebiologiske Institutet*), Erik D. Bartels and Gudrun Brun undertook the statistical and racial biological examination of Danish Romani that resulted in a book printed in 1943.¹⁹ The Swedish National Board of Health and Welfare (*Socialstyrelsen*) collaborated with the Danish researchers and sent them the requested information about Danish Romani residing in Sweden.²⁰ Finally, in autumn of 1942, the Finnish authorities proposed to gather all the itinerant Roma in the country and send them to special “Gypsy camps”. The plan, called “A Special Arrangement for the Gypsies”, was initiated by Dr. Urho Kekkonen, an attorney and member of the Finnish parliament, and future President of Finland. By 1944, the government had established three forced labor camps for Finnish Roma.²¹

Sweden was the only state in Northern Europe that managed to remain both democratic, and neutral throughout World War II. Although it remained independent, the country was not immune to

¹⁷ Terje Emberland and Matthew Kott, *Himmlers Norge: Nordmenn i det storgermanske prosjektet*, Oslo 2012, p. 483–484.

¹⁸ Andrej Kotljarchuk, “World War II and the Registration of Roma in Sweden in Transnational Context: the Role of Collected Data, Experts and Census Takers”, *Holocaust and Genocide Studies*, 31:3, 2017, p. 463–464.

¹⁹ Erik D. Bartels and Gudrun Brun, *Gipsies in Denmark: A Socio-Biological Study*, Copenhagen 1943.

²⁰ Andrej Kotljarchuk, “World War II and the Registration of Roma in Sweden”, p. 464.

²¹ Panu Pulma, “I krigets grepp,” *De finska romernas historia från svenska tiden till 2000-talet*, Helsingfors 2015, p. 158–167.

the spread of Nazi propaganda that accompanied and facilitated the unfolding genocide against Jews and Roma in Europe. As was previously mentioned, in 1942, the Swedish government decided that the “Gypsy problem” was to be fully resolved in the country since:

The populations known as Gypsies and Travellers constitute a problem that the nation have had to fight for almost four centuries. Their lack of ability to adapt to the Swedish rule of law, as seen in their vagabondage and parasitic nature, is obvious.²²

Two national registries, one on Roma and another one on Travellers were conducted, and a massive racial biological study of Travellers was done by various academic institutions, including the State Institute for Race Biology at Uppsala University and State Institute for Psychology and Pedagogy (*Statens psykologisk-pedagogiska institut*). One of the leading experts, Professor Nils von Hofsten, proposed in 1943 to the Swedish Parliament to introduce the immediate forced mass sterilization of Swedish Travellers.²³ It is important to note that five years later the United Nations recognized the forced mass sterilization as genocide.²⁴ At that time, Professor Hofsten held several top positions within academia and public authorities. He was Vice-Chancellor of Uppsala University, a member of the Board at the Institute for Racial Biology, and the chief member of the Academic Commission at the Swedish Medical Board. Another powerful advocate of resolving the “Gypsy problem” was Dr. Allan Etzler, a historian at Stockholm University College and director of the Central Prison in Långholmen in Stockholm. Etzler used the press to promote his plan to the government. Based on the Norwegian model, he argued for forced prison education of adult Roma and Travellers and special orphanages for all Romani children. The workhouses should be established in each region of Sweden. The orphanages should collect all the children of both the ‘tattare’ and ‘zigenare’ groups in order “to sep-

²² “Tattarproblemet: Socialstyrelsen föreslår utredning,” *Tidskrift för Sveriges Landfiskaler*, 1942:1, p. 165.

²³ Nils von Hofsten, “Utlåtande i anledning av väckta motioner angående viss ändring av lagen om sterilisering. Bilaga B”. *Bihang till riksdagens protokoll vid lagtida riksdagen i Stockholm år 1943. Nionde samlingsen, första avdelningen, första lagutskottets utlåtande nr 41*, Stockholm 1943, p. 22.

²⁴ Article 2 (d) of the United Nations “Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide” defines genocide as “imposing measures intended to prevent births within the group”. <https://treaties.un.org> access date: February 19, 2020.

arate this bad element of the population and plant them in a healthy environment”.²⁵

However, in democratic Sweden, such dangerous plans met powerful opposition. Many researchers, civil servants and police chiefs were skeptical of racial biological and penal approaches. In Sweden, scholars could discuss, criticize, and influence official policy. Academic freedom was not questioned, even during wartime. In 1945 the so-called “resolution of the Gypsy problem” had become a non-issue for the government. This was not only due to the radical change in the geopolitical situation on Eastern front, but also to the nonconformist position of many academics. For example, Professor Gunnar Dahlberg, Head of the State Institute for Race Biology, sought to distance his Institute from Nazi Germany and racialist pseudo-science. In the final research report, sent by him in 1944 to the National Board of Health and Welfare, Dahlberg concluded that the Roma issue had no basis in race.²⁶

The situation for those European Roma which had tried to reach Sweden in order to escape the Nazi persecution was more problematic. Already in 1914, the Parliament had introduced a law forbidding foreign Roma to enter Sweden. This law was in force until 1954. How was this anti-Roma legislation implemented in practice? Findings in a recent Norwegian study can serve as an example. In 1934, a group of sixty-two Norwegian citizens of Roma origin, returning home from Belgium, arrived by ferry to Trelleborg in the southern part of Sweden. They had valid Norwegian passports, and yet, the Swedish authorities refused them to enter the country referring to the 1914 law, whereas the Norwegian government refused them to return to Norway. As a result, this group of Roma was turned back from Sweden. In 1944, these Roma were deported by the Nazis from Antwerp to Auschwitz and Buchenwald concentration camps. Only four persons survived.²⁷

In May 1941, a group of Norwegian youth came to Sweden seeking asylum, saying that they were the members of the Norwegian

²⁵ Andrej Kotljarchuk, “State, experts and Roma. Allan Etzler and the pseudo-scientific racism in Sweden”, *Scandinavian Journal of History*, 2019, 44:6, p. 9–10.

²⁶ Andrej Kotljarchuk, “State, experts and Roma. Allan Etzler and the pseudo-scientific racism in Sweden”, p. 11–14.

²⁷ Maria Rosvoll, Lars Lien, and Jan Alexander Brustad, ‘Å bli dem kvit’. *Utviklingen av en “sigøynepolitikk” og utryddelsen av norske rom*, Oslo 2015, p. 4–5, 86–123.

underground resistance. Almost all of them were granted asylum in Sweden. However, a sixteen-year-old, Roland Karlsen, was deported back to Norway because he was, according to the border police, of Roma origin.²⁸ In late February of 1942, a wealthy horse trader arrived in Sweden with his wife and four children. The family requested asylum since they had fled Norway due to threats of being made hostages. However, the local police chief, Åke Hiertner, found that the family was of Roma origin. After consultations with the Foreign Office of Sweden the family was deported back to the Nazi-occupied Norway. Their further fate is unknown. Their adult son had been granted emergency visa by Sweden only a few days earlier by concealing his Roma origin.²⁹

As is known, the definition of “asocial” was a major legal and propaganda tool for the Nazi persecution of Roma. Lars Hansson, a historian at Gothenburg University, has shown how this extremely problematic term was also used by the Swedish authorities in regard to the Roma people.³⁰ For example, in May 1942, Gustav Möller, the minister for Social Affairs, presented “The principles of refugee treatment in Sweden” in the Parliament. He informed the parliament that most refugees in the country are Norwegians and stressed that “nowadays no rejection by any reasons occurs for Norwegian or Jewish refugees ... with the exception of asocial elements that have been known to the Swedish border control, such as Traveller-Gypsies”.³¹

Only at the end of war did Swedish refugee policy change from active restrictions to rescue efforts. As Pär Frohnert and Mikael Byström points out, the government of Sweden had learned a great deal in the space of only few years.³² In one instance two Romani girls Hanna Dimitri and Sofia Taikon, former inmates from Auschwitz-Birkenau came to Sweden in the White Buses rescue operation organized by Folke Bernadotte. Both were granted asylum.³³ However, it is still unclear whether these two Romani women were granted

²⁸ Lars Hansson, *Vid gränsen: mottagningen av flyktingar från Norge 1940–1945*, Göteborg 2019, p. 248.

²⁹ Lars Hansson, *Vid gränsen*, p. 248–249.

³⁰ Lars Hansson, *Vid gränsen*, p. 57–67.

³¹ “Angående principerna för flyktingars behandling i Sverige”, *Riksdagens protokoll vid lagtima riksmötet år 1943. Första kammaren nr 18*, Stockholm 1943, p. 18.

³² Mikael Byström and Pär Frohnert, “Introduction II,” *Reaching a State of Hope: Refugees, Immigrants and the Swedish Welfare State, 1930–2000*, Lund, 2013, p. 69–79.

³³ Jan Selling, *Svensk antiziganism: Fördomens kontinuitet och förändringens förutsättningar*, Limhamn 2013, p. 147.

asylum despite the legal ban, or if they just hid their ethnicity. The number of Roma genocide survivors who came to Sweden was, most probably, higher and could include refugees who concealed their identity, as well as European Romani who came to Sweden after 1954. For example, in 1981, a group of Polish Roma came to Sweden as refugees after the pogrom in Oswiecim, a town in vicinity of former extermination camp of Auschwitz-Birkenau.³⁴ However, no scholars documented their experience of Nazi genocide.

In 1944 the Foreigners' Bureau of Sweden (*Utlänningsbyrå*) prepared a draft law forbidding racial hatred. The proposal included legal protections for Jews and Roma, but not for the Sami people, another stigmatized minority.³⁵ The fact that this initiative was raised suggests that some knowledge of the persecution of European Roma had reached Sweden. The Kingdom of Sweden was not occupied by the Nazis, which also meant that, after the war, the de-Nazification of academia, authorities and law enforcement agencies never took place in the country. Racial biologists and other academics who dealt with the pseudo-science continued their research careers unhindered after 1945. The academic quality of their work was undermined only during the last three decades by a new generation of researchers.

Conclusion

In his study on the memorialization of the Holocaust, Jeffrey Blutinger defines three basic approaches to the European memory of the Holocaust. The first approach, *aphasia*, means a virtual taboo on memory typical for the initial post-war period. The second stage, deflective *negationism*, means that the Holocaust is recognized, but all responsibility for it is placed exclusively on the Nazis. At the same time, the problem of local collaborationism is blurred over. Finally, the third stage is *open examination*, meaning the removal of all taboos.³⁶ The Nordic countries are, I believe, in the beginning of

³⁴ Slawomir Kapralski, "The Evolution of Anti-Gypsyism in Poland: From Ritual Scapegoat to Surrogate Victims to Racial Hate Speech?", *Polish Sociological Review* 193, 2016, p. 101–117.

³⁵ Karin Kvist Geverts, "A Study of Antisemitic Attitudes within Sweden's Wartime Utlänningsbyrå", *Bystanders to the Holocaust: A Reevaluation*, ed. David Cesarani and Paul A. Levine, London 2002, p. 209–210.

³⁶ Jeffrey Blutinger, "An Inconvenient Past: Post-Communist Holocaust Memorialization", *Shofar: An Interdisciplinary Journal of Jewish Studies*, 29: 1, 2010, p. 73–94.

third stage. In 2014, the government of Sweden published a report entitled *The Dark and Unknown History: White Paper on the Abuse and Violation of the Romani People during the 20th Century*. The Swedish state recognizes and rejects historic abuses and see the book as “an important acknowledgment for all Roma, who have been the subject of violent treatment”.³⁷ However, the White Paper project was done with minimal funding and little participation by those professional historians critical of the official inquiry body.³⁸ This situation is completely different from Norway, where the state-Roma reconciliation process is based on the substantial research results.

The discussion on Roma identity and human rights cannot be isolated from the memory of the Nazi genocide, which makes the struggle over the past a reflexive landmark that organizes the collective memory of Roma people. Bringing together Roma representatives and scholars had been possible basically through two intellectual trajectories:

One approach emerged from the growing insight among historians that memory, previously shunned, could enrich and deepen historical narrative based on archival sources [...] Another, completely different, trend grew out of the Roma side, reacting to the fact that scholars who were not Roma dominated Romani studies, with an increasing demand to participate in research on all levels. The slogan ‘Nothing about us without us’, long expressed only informally, has now been formalized by leading Roma human rights activists.³⁹

The memory of the Nazi genocide is a cornerstone for Roma cultural movement and political mobilization. For decades the Roma minority in Sweden could not participate in the nation-building process. The memory of genocide has the possibility of changing this situation, boosting the inclusion of Roma into majority society. Today’s Sweden has a unique opportunity, instead of building one of the last Jewish Holocaust museums in Europe, to establish the first museum in the world that will integrate the memory of Jewish and Roma genocides.

³⁷ *Den mörka och okända historien: Vitbok om övergrepp och kränkningar av romer under 1900-talet*, Stockholm 2014, p. 4.

³⁸ Martin Eriksson and David Sjögren, “Problematiska utgångspunkter. Om en svensk vitbok för utredande av övergrepp mot romer”, *Historisk Tidskrift* 2, 2011, p. 250–257.

³⁹ David Gaunt, “Understanding the Clashes Between historians and Roma Activists”, *Baltic Worlds* 3, p. 38.

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