

Malicious Neglect and Lethal Violence: Romanian Persecution of Deported Roma in Transnistria

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Abstract: This article explores Romanian policy towards approximately 25,000 Romanian Roma deported from May through October 1942 into the region of southwestern Ukraine known as Transnistria. Occupied and administered by the Romanians during 1941–1944, Transnistria served as a dumping ground for ethnic and political undesirables of the military dictatorship of Ion Antonescu, primarily Jews and Roma. The region witnessed numerous atrocities against Jews, including mass murder, and living conditions for the Roma through the end of the occupation were atrocious. While the deportation of Roma has recently been the subject of illuminating scholarly research, this cannot be said of their treatment by the Romanian authorities after they arrived in Transnistria. Based on published and archival materials, this article shows that Romanian administrators and gendarmerie considered Roma the lowest of their priorities and provided almost zero resources for their employment and welfare. Although the deportation of Roma was not necessarily intended as a means of extermination, the overall effect of the policies adopted toward the deportees at the highest national and provincial levels was genocidal. Nevertheless, not all Romanian administrators were willing to see Roma perish under their watch, and some made unsuccessful attempts to improve their condition.

Keywords: Genocide, World War II, Romania, Roma

Introduction

This article explores Romanian policy towards Roma deported into the region known as Transnistria in June–October 1942.¹ This region of 40,000 square kilometres and 2.3 million inhabitants lay between the Dniester River to the west

1 I am aware that the term policy falls short of conveying the extent of Romanian brutalities towards this population group. I use it reluctantly and only because no other term has so far emerged to replace it.

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and the Buh River to the east and north.² Hitler allotted this territory to Romanian military dictator Ion Antonescu as compensation for that country's contribution to the Axis powers' war efforts.³ Although originally not intended as such, already by late September 1941 Transnistria had become the dumping ground for Romania's ethnic undesirables, first and foremost Jews. According to the most recent and authoritative calculations, in 1941–1942 Romanians deported to Transnistria between 154,449 and 170,737 Jews, mainly from the eastern provinces of Bessarabia and Bukovina, but also from the rest of the country. Romanians meant to deport this mass of humanity 'further to the east' after the end of hostilities, but in the meantime interned them in the makeshift ghettos and concentration camps along the Buh River. Due to the lack of food, fuel, and elementary medical assistance, and because many of the deported were exhausted and robbed of their possessions, these communities were devastated by typhus and other diseases; many thousands were also murdered by local policemen and ethnic German militia (there were numerous ethnic German settlements in the region), so that by the end of occupation in March 1944 no more than 30,000 to 50,000 Romanian Jews survived. At the time of Transnistria's occupation, Romanian forces found between 150,000 and 200,000 local Jews there (of about 331,000 Soviet Jews who lived there before the war). These Jews suffered a fate similar to that of their Romanian brethren: only about 20,000 local Jews were still alive after Transnistria's liberation by the Red Army.⁴

The Romanian government also deported 24,719 Romanian citizens of Romani ethnic origin into Transnistria. Like Jews, deported Roma also suffered cruelly at the hands of the Romanian authorities

2 Transliteration of toponyms and hydronyms presents difficulty, as they differ in the various languages used in the sources. In this article, I apply the following rule: when speaking in my voice, I transliterate names of locations in today's Ukraine from Ukrainian and, when speaking of locations in the area of the eastern Republic of Moldova that in 1941–1944 belonged to Transnistria, I use Romanian transliteration as Romanian is the official language of that country. When citing sources, I indicate the names as they appear in them, sometimes adding their original Ukrainian transliteration in parentheses. As some administrative entities, such as *județe*, were created by the occupiers and existed solely under their domination, I indicate them in Romanian transliteration. For that reason, for example, the city's name is transliterated as Ochiakiv, but the *județ* to which it gave its name as Oceačov *județ*.

3 For more on Romanian rule over this territory, see Vladimir Solonari, *A Satellite Empire: Romanian Rule in Southwestern Ukraine, 1941–1944* (Cornell University Press, 2019).

4 The International Commission on the Holocaust in Romania (hereinafter, ICHR), *Final Report* (POLIROM, 2005), pp. 177–179.

in Transnistria. It is believed that about half of them survived the ordeal.⁵ In contrast to the attention paid to policy towards Jews, Romanian policy towards Roma came to scholarly attention considerably later. In his influential 1998 monograph, the Romanian historian Viorel Achim argued that the decision to deport Roma belonging to two categories — itinerant and those with a criminal record — was taken by the Romanian dictator Ion Antonescu single-handedly. Achim suggested that this decision stemmed from Antonescu's concern with the preservation of social order and the prevention of crime and that racial ideology played no part in it. Thus, any comparison of Romanian policy with the Nazi genocide of the Romani people is misguided, as the latter was predicated by the extreme racism of National Socialism.⁶ Ironically, this view reproduces the legal theory popular in West Germany in the first post-war decade, according to which Nazi persecution of the Roma did not amount to genocide as it was pursued inconsistently and followed the logic of policing of 'asocial' elements — even if applied with undue harshness — rather than of racial hatred.⁷ Not all scholars agreed with Achim's contention. In particular, Benjamin Thorne and myself emphasized that the racialized view of Roma as Romania's Other was a significant factor that drove the Antonescu's regime policy towards Roma.⁸ I underscored that although 'only' two categories of Roma were deported, the government planned to remove the entire Romani population. When the government 'suspended' all (that is, both of Jews and Roma) deportations on 13 October 1942, it did so due to policy considerations, namely the newly-found desire to restore relations with the Western powers given the fading prospects of German victory in the war. Humanitarian or any other concerns played no role in the deci-

5 The International Commission on the Holocaust in Romania offered the number of 11,000 Roma deaths as their conclusion, without, however, explaining how they arrived at this number. ICHR, p. 241.

6 Viorel Achim, *The Roma in Romanian History*, trans. by Richard Davies (Central European University Press, 1998), pp. 168–70, 179, 182–83. This position was reflected in the Final Report of the International Commission on the Holocaust in Romania, whose chapter on Roma was authored by Achim. See ICHR, p. 227.

7 See Ari Joskowitz, *Rain of Ash: Roma, Jews, and the Holocaust* (Princeton University Press, 2023), pp. 137–140.

8 See Vladimir Solonari, *Purifying the Nation: Population Exchange and Ethnic Cleansing in World War II Romania* (Johns Hopkins University Press, 2010), pp. 264–290; Vladimir Solonari, 'Ethnic Cleansing or Crime Prevention? Deportation of Romanian Gypsies', in *The Nazi Holocaust of the Gypsies*, ed. By Anton Weiss-Wendt (Berghahn, 2013), pp. 96–119; M. Benjamin Thorne, 'Assimilation, Invisibility, and the Eugenic Turn in the "Gypsy question" in Romanian Society, 1938–1942', *Romani Studies* 21.2 (2011), pp. 177–205, doi: 10.3828/rs.2011.8.

sion.⁹ In a recently published monograph, Florinela Giurgea sides with Achim's interpretation,¹⁰ while elsewhere Valentin Negoï has insisted that 'the policy against Roma during Antonescu's time was based on ethnic and in no way social considerations'.¹¹ Petre Matei, whose research focuses on the role of police and gendarmerie in the persecution of Roma, came to the conclusion that it was the police's concern for the maintenance of order and crime prevention that determined the policy of their deportation under the Antonescu regime.¹²

Concerning Romanian policy towards the deported Roma in Transnistria, a disagreement among scholars is also noticeable. Viorel Achim asserted that the suffering and high mortality rate experienced by Roma resulted primarily from the lack of care on the part of Romanian administrative bodies, the lack of resources in the war-torn province, and bureaucratic inefficiencies rather than from an intention to annihilate the deported Roma.¹³ In his 2015 book on the forced labour of Jews and Roma and in Transnistria, Achim implied that had the administration reacted earlier to the arrival of the deportees and invested more heavily upon providing them with lucrative employment, their situation would have been considerably better; he did not ask the question of why the administration was so slow to take these measures.¹⁴ Florinela Giurgea recently offered a detailed discussion of the character of the Antonescu regime's policy towards Roma, and in particular of whether it could be judged genocidal. Admitting that there is some 'circumstantial evidence' (*dovezi colaterale*) in support of the affirmative, she nevertheless concluded that 'it is impossible to prove that Antonescu intended to exterminate them' or that 'there existed a concerted plan or a methodical program of their extermination'.¹⁵

9 Solonari, 'Ethnic Cleansing or Crime Prevention?' p. 113.

10 See Florinela Giurgea, *Deportarea romilor sub regimul Antonescu* (Cetatea de scaun, 2022), esp. pp. 126–132.

11 Valentin Negoï, *Deportarea romilor din Muntenia în Transnistria în perioada celui de-al doilea război Mondial* (Cetatea de scaun, 2023), esp. p. 290, my translation. Unless otherwise indicated, all translations are my own.

12 See Petre Matei, 'The Romanian Police and Its Role in the Roma Deportations', in *Holocaust. Studii și cercetări* 10.11 (2018), pp. 11–52 and 'Deportările romilor din Pitești în Transnistria (1942)', in *Holocaust. Studii și cercetări* 9.10 (2017), pp. 30–55.

13 See Achim, *The Roma in Romanian History*, esp. pp. 178–180. This view found expression in the Final Report of the International Commission on the Holocaust in Romania. See ICHR, pp. 231–235.

14 See Viorel Achim, *Munca forțată în Transnistria: 'organizarea muncii' a evreilor și romilor, decembrie 1942 – martie 1944* (Editura Cetatea de Scaun, 2015), esp. pp. 97–99.

15 See also Giurgea, esp. pp. 274–275.

Other scholars took an opposite view. Perhaps the most explicit was Jean Ancel, who in a 2006 essay stated that 'Roma, alongside the Jews, were deported into Transnistria to perish'. Although there were some differences between the Romanian policies towards them and the ways the victims reacted to their persecution, 'both ethnic groups were equally affected by the Holocaust'.¹⁶ Radu Ioanid fully adhered to this view when, in 2009, he asserted that 'the scope of Roma's deportation was their physical destruction'.¹⁷ Andrea Varga was just a little more circumspect when, in 2001, she affirmed that 'regardless of how well the evacuation plan was thought-out, its implementation ... creates an impression... that this was an operation of extermination'. The extraordinarily high mortality rate of deported Roma cannot be explained solely by the 'negligence and insubordination of the lower-level officials', Varga continued, as the central government and Transnistria's governor's office were fully aware of their disastrous conditions and refused to take action to support them.¹⁸ In his unpublished dissertation, Thorne argued that 'the regime was perfectly content to allow the Roma population to die off exponentially'.¹⁹ Shannon Woodcock and Michelle Kelso, while focusing on the Romani victims' resistance to the Antonescu regime's policy and their strategies of survival in Transnistria, use the terms 'genocide' and 'the Holocaust' as applicable to Romani experience.²⁰

The absence of scholarly consensus underscores the need to revisit this subject. In this article, I explore the aims and methods of Romanian policy towards the deported Roma, its evolution over time, and the factors that affected it, the role of various authorities in this policy's elaboration and implementation, as well as its effects on the Rom-

16 Jean Ancel, 'Prefață. Tragedia romilor și tragedia evreilor din România: asemănări și deosebiri', in *Lacrimi române = Romane asva*, ed. by Luminița Mihai Cioabă (Ro Media, 2006), p. 33.

17 Radu Ioanid, Michelle Kelso, and Luminița Mihai Cioabă, *Tragedia romilor deportați în Transnistria, 1942-1945: mărturii și documente* (Polirom, 2009), p. 52.

18 *Minorități etniculturale. Mărturii documentare: Țigani din România (1919-1944)*, ed. by Lucian Nastaș and Andrea Varga (Centrul de resurse pentru diversitate etnoculturală, 2001), pp. 638-639.

19 M. Benjamin Thorne, 'The Anxiety of Proximity: The "Gypsy Question" in Romanian Society, 1934-1944 and Beyond' (unpublished PhD thesis, Indiana University, 2012), pp. 264, 266.

20 See Shannon Woodcock, 'Romanian Romani Resistance to Genocide in the Matrix of the Tsigani Other', *Anthropology of East Europe Review* 25.2 (2007), pp. 28-43; Shannon Woodcock, 'The Holocaust and Romani Romanians: Deportation and Resistance', in *Genocide Perspectives IV: Essays on Holocaust and Genocide*, ed. by Colin Tatz (UTSePress, 2012), pp. 353-380; Michelle Kelso, 'Romani Girls and Responsibility During the Holocaust', in *Women and Genocide: Survivors, Victims, Perpetrators*, ed. by Elissa Bemporad and Joyce W. Warren (Indiana University Press, 2018), pp. 137-158.

ani community. I highlight the differences in viewpoints, agendas, and motivations of various Romanian officials in charge of the 'Roma problem' and suggest an interpretation that, although mainly in synch with the genocidal reading of Romanian policy, foregrounds the lack of uniform will in its implementation. I argue that the vexed 'inconsistency' of Romanian policy stemmed from the institutional structure of the Antonescu regime which, unlike that of German National Socialism, had no agency fully committed to genocidal slaughter. Although national and provincial authorities likely intended the extermination of the deported Roma, they were reluctant to clearly communicate that policy to the local Transnistrian administrators and gendarmes who, lacking an unambiguous order, largely refrained from committing lethal violence against their charges.

The most important Romanian documents pertaining to the policy towards deported Roma in Transnistria were published by Viorel Achim in 2004 in his two-volume collection on the deportation of this ethnic group.²¹ Although since then archival documents have appeared as addenda to monographs or collections of survivor testimonies, they either reprint materials from this collection or do not add significant new information to them.²² During my years-long research in several countries, I came across other Romanian documents.²³ They come from military and gendarmerie reports as well as depositions of eyewitnesses and survivors during the post-war investigations of war crimes. I also used Russian-language sources, likely for the first time, on the subject, including data collected by the State Extraordinary Commission to investigate war crimes and partisan activity reports.²⁴ These docu-

21 *Documente privind deportarea țiganilor în Transnistria*, ed. by Viorel Achim, 2 vols (Editura Enciclopedică, 2004).

22 See Achim, *Munca forțată în Transnistria*, pp. 101–138; Ioanid, Kelso, and Cioabă, pp. 265–280.

23 I worked in the archives of the US Holocaust Memorial Museum in Washington, DC; Yad Vashem: The World Holocaust Remembrance Center in Jerusalem, Israel; as well as state archives of Romania, Moldova, and Ukraine.

24 The full name of the Soviet Extraordinary State Commission (hereinafter referred to ChGK) was 'Extraordinary State Commission for the Establishment and Investigation of the Atrocities of the German Fascist Invaders and Their Accomplices and the Damage They Caused to Citizens, Collective Farms, Public Organizations, State Enterprises and Institutions of the USSR'. Both the US Holocaust Memorial Museum (hereinafter USHMM) and Yad Vashem (hereafter YV) house microfilm and microfiche copies of collections of the original archival documents from Romania, Moldova, Ukraine, and Russia used for this research. In the following pages, when a source was accessed at either USHMM or YV, I indicate both the original archive and the respective microfilm or microfiche according to the rules of the housing institutions. The following abbreviations are used to identify original archives and

ments provide evidence about killings of Roma that is unavailable in other sources, as well as information on the relations between the local population and this group of deportees. Victims' perspectives and important factual details are provided in the survivors' testimonies, collected in the last three decades by Romanian researchers.²⁵ Due to the long timespan from the traumatic events experienced by the victims and the moment they shared their memories, I relied on the information they provided only when it was supported by other sources.

The 'Placement' of Deported Roma in Transnistria

The deportation of the Roma was prepared, on Ion Antonescu's orders, by the Romanian gendarmerie in May 1942. Gendarmerie (*jandarmerie*) in Romania were a militarized rural police force; the police's (*poliție*) responsibility was limited to urban centres. Both gendarmerie and police were centralized and subordinated to the Minister of the Interior, or rather, his deputy *General de divizie* Constantin (Picky) Vasiliu. Two categories of Roma were deported: 1) nomadic and 2) those with criminal records or who, 'having no means of existence or a precise occupation... constituted a danger to public order'.²⁶ Ion Antonescu conceived this 'operation' as 'the first step [...] within the general framework of measures of the removal of parasitic and disorderly elements'.²⁷ Itinerant Roma, whose numbers were assessed by the General Inspectorate of Gendarmerie (GIJ) at 11,441, were deported from 1 June to 15 August 1942.²⁸ Gendarmes convoyed them to their final destinations in Trans-

archival collections: DANIC – Directory of Romanian National Historical Archive, Bucharest; F. – collection (fond), both in Romanian and in Russian and Ukrainian; IGJ – General Inspectorate of Gendarmerie (collection); ASRI – Archival of the Romanian Intelligence Service; ANRM – National Archive of the Republic of Moldova, Chişinău, Moldova; TsDA HOU – Central State Archive of the Civil Organizations of Ukraine, Kyiv, Ukraine; GDA SBU – Sectoral (State Archive of the Ukrainian Intelligence Service, Kyiv, Ukraine; DA00 – State Archive of Odessa Oblast, Ukraine, Odessa, Ukraine; GARF – State Archive of the Russian Federation. Op. (*opis* Russian and Ukrainian) as well as *Inventar* (Romanian), stand for inventory; *Dosar* (Romanian), *Delo* (Russian), *Spr.* (*Sprava*, Ukrainian) stand for file; f. (*filă*, Romanian), l. (*list*, Russian) and ark. (*arkush*, Ukrainian) stand for p. in the file.

25 *Minorități etnoculturale*, pp. 593–626 and Ioanid, Kelso, and Cioabă, pp. 55–264.

26 See General Vasiliu's order to the General Inspectorate of Gendarmerie, 17 May 1942, in Achim, *Documente*, vol. 1, pp. 5–6.

27 See Antonescu's order to the General Inspectorate of Gendarmerie in *ibid.*, 1, 22–23.

28 This data comes from the Gendarmerie Inspectorate of Transnistria's information summary on the situation in the province, 1 November 1942, in DANIC F. IGJ dosar 200/1942 f. 250 USHMM RG-25.010 reel 22.

nistria while the Roma rode their horse-drawn caravans. Once there, on the order of Governor Alexianu, their horses and carts were confiscated and they were forced to settle permanently in pre-selected localities in the easternmost Transnistrian *judete* of Balta, Golta, Bere-zovca, and Oceacov. Governor Alexianu justified this measure by the Roma's supposed 'rebellious mood' and their tendency to 'pointlessly wander around'.²⁹ According to the survivors' recollections, in addition to the horses and carts that were their main possessions, lei and valuables such as gold pieces were also confiscated by the Romanians. While the deportees should have received the German-issued quasi-currency called *Reichskreditkassenscheine* or RKKS, which served as a legal tender in occupied Soviet territories, including Transnistria, in exchange, survivors did not recall receiving any compensation.³⁰

From 12–20 September, 13,176 Roma labelled as 'non-itinerant, dangerous, not subject to mobilization' were deported in railway cargo car trains, also to the eastern *judete*.³¹ They were allowed to take only the bare minimum of their possessions, not more than one bag per person.³² Upon entry into Transnistria, they were robbed of their possessions under the legal fiction of exchanging them into RKSS, precisely in the way the groups of itinerant Roma were.³³ If Roma managed to hide some lei at that time, they were confiscated at points of their arrival where they were subjected to corporal searches.³⁴ That left the deported without any material resources to rely on.

29 See Gendarmerie Inspectorate of Transnistria's information bulletin, 15 July–15 August 1942, in DANIC F. IGJ dosar 166/1942 ff. 171–172 USHMM RG-25.010M reel 21. The bulletin contains the summary of the order and the report of its implementation; the order itself has not surfaced so far.

30 See interviews of Mirica Dinu taken by Michelle Kelso, 2001 in Ioanid, Kelso, and Cioabă, p. 91; of Toma Tănase by Luminița Mihai Cioabăin, *ibid.*, pp. 144–145. The initiative of 'exchanging' lei for RKKS came from the IV Romanian Army deployed at the time in Transnistria. See report signed by that army chief of staff, *General de brigadă* M. Stănescu, from 23 July 1942, to the Romanian General Staff in Achim, *Documente*, vol. 1, p. 71.

31 See Gendarmerie Inspectorate of Transnistria's information summary on the situation in the province, November 1, 1942, in DANIC F. IGJ dosar 200/1942 f. 250 USHMM RG-25.010 reel 22.

32 On the limits of allowed luggage, see the order of Colonel Constantin Tobescu, Chief of Gendarmerie Service in the Ministry of Internal Affairs and Vasiliu's deputy, 31 August 1942, in Achim, *Documente*, vol. 1, pp. 126–127. On the transportation in trains, see Vasiliu's order of 1 September 1942, in *ibid.*, pp. 143–145.

33 See Tobescu's order to IJT of 1 September 1942, in *ibid.*, 146–147, and Colonel Mihai Iliescu, IJT chief on the arrival of trains with Roma and exchange of Romanian lei found in their possession in *ibid.*, pp. 212–213.

34 See the report of Crivoi Ozero *raion* Pretor Elizeu Rozorea to the prefect of Golta *judet*, 'On the confiscation of Romanian currency from Roma kept in Treidube camp', 23 October

The Roma endured a forced march on foot under the supervision of gendarmes for between 150 and 200 kilometres from the crossing on the Dniester to their final destinations on the Buh River. The convoys were not allowed to enter villages and had to bivouac under the open sky and sometimes under heavy rains; gendarmes who convoyed them sometimes did not allow them to so much as drink water from the communal wells, probably for fear of contamination.³⁵ Those who were unable to move were left behind to die.³⁶ Small wonder then that by the time the Roma arrived to their destinations, most of them 'had absolutely no means of existence'.³⁷

Upon completion of the two waves of deportation of the first and the second categories of Roma, the chief of the Department of Gendarmerie in the Ministry of Internal Affairs, *General de divizie* Constantin (Picky) Vasiliu ordered, on 21 September, the preparation of a further deportation, this time of *all* Roma with a criminal record. However, on 4 October, Ion Antonescu suspended further deportations until the following spring. When on 13 October 1942, Ion Antonescu's deputy (and distant relative) Mihai Antonescu announced the 'suspension' of deportations of Jews into Transnistria at the Council of Ministers' meeting, this policy shift eventually led to the termination of mass deportations of both Jews and Roma. Still, small groups of Roma, such as those who 'dodged' the first two deportations, continued to be deported in late 1942 and 1943, so that eventually the number of Roma deportees reached, in all probability, 25,000.³⁸

Unlike Jews, Roma were not supposed to be deported 'further to the east' any time soon but instead settled in Transnistria. However, how exactly that 'settlement' was to be accomplished remained unclarified for a long time. From the point of view of Antonescu, what mattered was cleansing Romania of a population seen as parasitic, crimi-

1942, in *ibid.*, pp. 305–307. Although no similar reports from other localities have surfaced, that was likely routine everywhere, as subsequent evidence of the misery among deported Roma strongly suggests.

35 See interview of Ștefan Moise by Radu Ioanid, 1991 in Ioanid, Kelso, and Cioabă, p. 60. Cf. Mirica Dinu, who recollected that his groups were allowed to enter villages in search of food and water there, *ibid.*, pp. 90–91.

36 See interview of Ștefan Moise by Radu Ioanid, 1991, in *ibid.*, p. 80.

37 This assessment comes from the note sent by the chief of staff of the 3rd Security (Pază) Division, Colonel Zotter Toma, to the head of *Golta județ* on 25 October 1942. Published in Achim, *Documente*, vol. 1, p. 295. Colonel Toma added that due to their desperate condition, the Roma 'committed a series of robberies and murders that are extremely damaging to the prestige of the authorities and the army'.

38 See Solonari, *Purifying the Nation*, pp. 265–290.

nally inclined, and bearing various contagious diseases due to their low hygienic and cultural level. This left the Transnistrian administration in charge of determining the policy towards deported Roma, a task for which it was neither prepared nor disposed.

The Romanian administration of Transnistria was known as *Guvernământ* (governorate), with its capital initially in Tiraspol, then in Odessa. The *Guvernământ* was headed by the Governor, Professor Gheorghe Alexianu, answerable directly and exclusively to Ion Antonescu himself. The Romanians preserved the Soviet-era territorial units known as *raions* but grouped them in thirteen larger *județe*, sometimes translated as counties. The lowest territorial unit was a *comune*, which could be a city, town, or a group of villages (more rarely, one large village). *Județe* were headed by prefects appointed and subordinated to the governor; they were usually military majors in reserve. *Raions* were headed by pretors appointed by and subordinated to prefects, all of them low-ranking civil servants from Romania. Each *județ* was supervised by a gendarmerie legion, divided into sectors, usually coinciding with *raions* and posts, supervising one or more *comune*. At the *județe* level, gendarmes were subordinated both to prefects and to the gendarmerie inspector of the Transnistria inspectorate, which in June 1943 was divided into two inspectorates, one headquartered in the city of Balta, and another in Odessa.³⁹

Initially, both the deportation and settlement were the responsibility of the gendarmerie, which had only limited and belated support from provincial and *județe*-level administrations. As early as 25 August, the commander of Golta Gendarmerie Legion, Captain Romulus Ambruș, reported to the Golta Prefecture that by that date 8,303 itinerant Roma had been brought into Dumanevka *raion*, 'according to a verbal order'. They 'live under open sky, in tents'. Their employment was not organized, guards were insufficient, no measures to manage their life during the approaching winter were taken or even ordered, no epidemiological protection provided for.⁴⁰ A week later, while instructing the Transnistrian Gendarmerie Inspector on actions to be taken following the arrival of trains with deported Roma of the second category, Vasiliu's deputy Colonel Constantin Tobescu emphasized that the 'placement' of the Roma had to be taken 'in understanding with the *Guvernământ* of Transnistria'.⁴¹ Still, the governor was not interested. Only on 29 Sep-

39 On Transnistrian administration, see Solonari, *A Satellite Empire*, pp. 55–94.

40 Published in Achim, *Documente*, vol. 1, p. 116.

41 *Ibid.*, pp. 125–126.

tember, almost a month later, did he issue instructions to the prefects of the eastern *județe* to 'select, for the purposes of placement of Roma, villages closer to the Buh [River], which will be completely emptied of [their] population and [in their stead] Roma will be placed. In this way, you will create colonies in which Roma will be forced to till the land and [thus] stopped from wandering'.⁴² The governor thus offloaded the responsibility for the Roma's placement, housing, and provisioning on his underlings.

Alexianu thus treaded – whether he was aware of it or not – along the road taken before him by state reformers, some more authoritarian than others, who attempted to 'solve the Roma problem' by forcefully settling down and transforming them into 'useful ploughmen', invariably with scant success.⁴³ Even so, one is struck by the thinness of Alexianu's instructions, which contained no hint as to where exactly the original population from the villages selected for Roma resettlement was to be 'evacuated' and 'placed,' nor from where additional guards could be recruited and funds for their compensation secured, nor how these impoverished deportees were supposed to be fed and protected from the cold during the coming winter. And, last but not least, no measures were foreseen to combat the inevitable outbreak of typhus. Having ignored for about five months (June–October 1942) the tasks that the deportation of Roma into Transnistria saddled him with, Alexianu eventually came up with the scheme for which neither *județe* administrations nor gendarmerie legions had any resources, and then refused to take any steps to help them cope with this impossible task. Such conduct was sending a clear message to the gendarmes that the Roma's well-being and survival were the lowest on their list of priorities.

Responding to the governor's order, gendarmes selected villages in their *județe*, 'evacuating' (in fact, forcefully transferring) their residents to other settlements, after which they 'placed' deported Roma there.

42 See copy sent to Balta *județ* prefecture in DA00 F. 2358 Op. 1 ed. Hr. 43 1942 f. 10 USHMM RG-31.004M reel 15. Although no copies sent to other prefectures have so far surfaced, there is little doubt that these instructions were sent to them, too, as they acted in their spirit. Tobescu was Chief of the Gendarmerie Service within the General Gendarmerie Inspectorate; despite its name, the General Inspectorate oversaw both the gendarmerie and police.

43 On the best-known history of Holy Roman Emperor Joseph II's policy of Roma forced sedentarization and their mixed results, see David M. Crowe, 'From Persecution to Pragmatism: The Habsburg Roma in the Eighteenth Century', in *Austrian History Yearbook*, 37 (January 2006), pp. 99–120, doi:[10.1017/S0067237800016799](https://doi.org/10.1017/S0067237800016799).

In the Balta *judet*, the villages of Grosulovo, Slivenka, and Grushynivka were designated for this purpose.⁴⁴ In Golta, Prefect Modest Isopescu selected thirteen unnamed villages where he 'placed' the Roma.⁴⁵ In Oceacov *judet*, gendarmes placed Roma in the villages of Kovalivka, Bolshaia Karanika, and the former Red Army barracks at Alexandrudar and Beicușul-Mare.⁴⁶ In Berezovca *judet*, gendarmes initially selected for Roma 'placement' the sole village of Varushino. In December 1942, Kovalivka, together with a nearby village of Androtivka, were transferred to Berezovca *judet* from Golta *judet*, and Roma that had been 'placed' there came under Berezovca authorities, too.⁴⁷ However, shortly afterwards numerous problems engendered by such arrangements prompted the two prefects to suggest revision. Golta Prefect Isopescu reported to the governor that the expulsion (he used the euphemism 'evacuation') of residents from their homes provoked their 'grave dissatisfaction', which was particularly embarrassing to the authorities, as among those evicted were persons whom the Soviets had repressed, the group whom the Romanians privileged as their potentially most loyal supporters. Gendarmes were also unable to effectively guard thousands of Roma who, lacking food and other necessities, resorted to thievery on a scale that alarmed not only the local population but even the Romanian troops deployed in the area.⁴⁸ Isopescu asked the governor to allow the placement of Roma in groups of twenty to fifty families per village, 'in the houses left empty from the Jews and refugees [who fled to the east, with the Red Army]'. The benefit of such an arrangement would be, continued the prefect, that locals themselves would 'guard [Roma and prevent them] from thieving and plundering', so that eventually, 'having no other source of existence',

44 See gendarmes' report to Bersad *pretura*, Balta *judet*, 19 October 1942, in DA00 F. 2358 Op. 1 ed. Hr. 43 1942 f. 10 USHMM RG-31.004M.

45 See Isopescu's message to the governor, October (no date indicated) 1942, published in Achim, *Documente*, vol. 1, pp. 254–255.

46 See activities report of a *Siguranța*'s agent, 5 December 1942, unsigned, published in *ibid.*, vol. 2, p. 27.

47 See report of Gendarmerie Colonel Sandu Z. Moldoveanu, chairman of the Commission of Investigation into 'errors' committed on the deportation of Roma (in fact, deportation of families of Roma serving in the ranks of the Romanian army at the front), 21 December 1942 in Achim, *Documente*, vol. 2, pp. 59–64.

48 See Isopescu's report, October 1942 (no exact date indicated in *ibid.*, vol. 1, pp. 254–255 and message sent by Colonel Zotter Toma, chief of the 3rd Security (*Pază*) Division staff, to Prefect Isopescu, 20 October 1942, *ibid.*, vol. 2, p. 295. In all likelihood, the latter preceded the former.

Roma would become 'obedient and start working'.⁴⁹ Isopescu thus took his lead from the governor, for as Alexianu offloaded the task of guarding the deported Roma onto *județe* administrations and gendarmerie legions, without allotting them any additional resources, so the prefect was now suggesting entrusting the locals with that same commission. Evidently, Isopescu's plan was at least as unrealistic as that of his boss, since locals had neither the wherewithal nor the skills to guard the deportees (whose language they, in their great majority, did not speak) or lucratively employ them. Alexianu was only too happy to oblige, and soon Golta gendarmes were busy resettling Roma deportees accordingly.⁵⁰

This shift in policy was initially not extended over other *județe* until, in late November, Prefect Colonel Vasile Gorsky of Oceacov *județ* requested permission to carry out what may be called the deconcentration of Roma from the four places initially designated for their placement. The reason he adduced was that Roma, having no wood or other fuel, tore away from the structures in which they lived all the wooden parts, including roof beams, windows, and doors, and burned them to warm themselves. As a result, those buildings became unlivable and could collapse at any minute. Gorsky proposed to resettle half of the local peasants in the selected villages from their houses into the houses of their neighbours, and place Roma in the thus emptied dwellings. This proposal was also approved by the governor and gendarmerie inspector Colonel Emil Broșteanu, following which the locals were expelled from their homes, crammed into those of their neighbours, and the Roma were relocated accordingly. By that time, the Roma had been so weakened by cold and malnutrition that many died en route.⁵¹ In the Berezovca and Balta *județe* , Roma remained 'fixed' in the same villages that had been selected for them in October 1942.

49 See Achim, *Documente*, vol. 1, p. 255.

50 See Isopescu's order to Golta *raionpreturas*, 26 October 1942. Isopescu mentioned the governor's agreement to his proposal to that effect, published in *Ibid.*, p. 314, and his message to the 3rd Security Division concerning the same, late October 1942, in *ibid.*, p. 296.

51 See instructions of Colonel Vasile Gorsky, Oceacov *județ* prefect to Oceacov *raion* prefect, 28 November 1942, in *ibid.*, vol. 2, p. 7-9, and an unsigned *Siguranța* agent's report on, among other developments, 'the Roma question' in Oceacov *județ*, in *ibid.*, vol. 2, pp. 24-29. *Siguranța* was an intelligence-gathering service within the gendarmerie that ran a network of informers from among the local population.

Failed Attempts to Improve the Roma's Conditions

During the summer and fall of 1943, some Romanian mid-level officials attempted to improve the Roma's conditions and prepare them for the following winter, whether due to humanitarian concerns or because they were unwilling to bear responsibility for their eventual demise. Their reasonings cannot be established from the available sources. Their initiatives, however, received only half-hearted support from the provincial-level authorities and encountered indifference or hostility from other colleagues. On 7 June 1943, the pretor of Crivoi Ozero *raion* requested permission to send a part of 'his' Roma to the northern, forested *județe* to chop twenty hectares of forest in order to build 500 huts for 5000 Roma who were supposed to be kept in this *raion* during the upcoming months.⁵² Supported by Prefect Isopescu, this request was approved, with almost a month delay, by the governor.⁵³ After another delay of several months, in the late fall of 1943, close to 2000 Roma from Golta arrived at Balta *județ* for logging, but soon familiar problems reappeared: instead of storing logs for the assigned purposes, the Roma used wood to produce wooden utensils that they then sold to local buyers. They also stole tools, chopped young trees (thus damaging the forest), and assaulted the locals who ventured into the woods.⁵⁴ As a result, the Balta Forestry Division requested, on 18 December 1943, that the governor urgently order the removal of all Roma sent for logging. It is unlikely that the governor heeded this request, as on 29 December Prefect Isopescu ordered the pretor of Crivoi Ozero *raion* to force the Roma sent to Balta *județ* for logging to work, as if by this time it had not yet become clear that the gendarmes were in no position to fulfil this task.⁵⁵ Given that on 1 November 1943, the Golta *județ* Directorate of Labor complained to the prefect that no timber for the construction of Roma shelters (downgraded by that time from huts to dugouts) had arrived, it appeared that the whole initiative had come to naught. Thus, in Golta *județ* the Roma entered their second Transnistrian winter in no better conditions than in the preceding year.⁵⁶ In the nearby Berezovca *județ*, where some forest existed, some logging might have been done in order

52 Published in *ibid.*, vol. 2, pp. 210–211.

53 See *ibid.*, vol. 2, pp. 211–213 and pp. 232–233, respectively.

54 See report of the chief forester, Sliusarevo forestry district to Balta prefect, 17 December 1943, *raion* pretor 2 in Achim, *Documente*, vol. 2, pp. 405–407.

55 Both documents were published in *ibid.*, pp. 407–409 and p. 418, respectively.

56 See *ibid.*, pp. 365–366.

to help the Roma build their dugouts in October 1943.⁵⁷ The governor's office even issued for that purpose a limited amount of timber, some of it from Romania, to Golta and Berezovca *județe* in the same months.⁵⁸ There is no evidence to determine whether this material was used for the assigned purpose and with what result. Nor was the situation in the forested Balta *județ* any better, as on 18 January 1944, Berșad *raion* pre-tor reported to the prefect that even though they did log timber for that purpose, Roma stole this material and then fled, 'so that up until now no shelters had been built'.⁵⁹ As to the steppe Oceacov *județ*, no evidence exists that any construction of housing for Roma took place there.⁶⁰

The project to clothe and shoe deported Roma ended up as a no less spectacular failure. This project was initiated by Mayor Stan Ion, aka Natale, of a Roma community at the state farm Suha Balca in Berezovca *județ* on 16 September 1943. In a petition to the governor, Natale asserted that 499 Roma, who from May 1943 were employed and toiled honestly at various agricultural works, were 'well taken care of'. Yet all the clothes in which they arrived in Transnistria had worn off and become rags. Natale asked that a way be found to 'clothe them a little', given the coming winter. Both the farm's administrator, Teodor Apolozan, and Prefect Leonida Popp supported this request. On 29 September, the head of the Directorate of Labor of the *Guvernământ* (this department managed the workshop of Jewish craftsmen) cabled to the prefect that Governor Alexianu approved the sale of eighty male costumes made of sackcloth for 180 RKKS each and seventy-three female costumes for 150 RKKS each, plus a packaging cost of 50 RKKS per unit. The same offer was made to Berezovca and Oceacov *județe*.⁶¹ The next day, the head of the Directorate of Labor informed the Golta prefect that 500 pairs of boots were apportioned to 'the most meritorious Roma labourers' in his *județ* and promised

57 See *ibid.*, pp. 329–330. Berezovca Forestry Division informed Berezovca prefect that the relevant authority in Odessa issued permission to log 200 CBM for this purpose and requested sixty workers, 1 October 1943.

58 See official correspondence to that effect in *ibid.*, pp. 334–335 and p. 341.

59 See *ibid.*, pp. 425–426.

60 As early as 14 April 1943, the prefect ad interim of Oceacov *județ* requested permission to send 'his' Roma to the forested areas where they could be employed in logging, as they were no good at agricultural work. However, on 1 June of the same year, the Forestry Directorate of the *Guvernământ* turned this proposal down, and it seemingly remained inconsequential. See *ibid.*, pp. 171–172 and pp. 206–207, respectively.

61 Natale's request and Apolozan's accompanying letter in support of it were published in Achim, *Documente*, vol. 2, 314–316. Prefect Leonida Popp's letter of support dated 25 September 1943, see in DA00 F. 2361 Op. 1 spr. 591 ark. 50 USHMM RG-31.004M reel 19. Letter of the head of the Directorate of Labor, see in Achim, *Documente*, vol. 2, p. 328.

to produce more in due time.⁶² As no price for boots was indicated, one could assume that they would be distributed for free, but on 16 October 1943 the head of the Directorate of Domestic Commerce hurried to dispel such illusions: boots, whose number in the meantime had risen to 555 pairs with wooden soles, and Roma had to pay 50 RKKS for each pair; furthermore, the authorities allotted 1100 pairs of pig leather sandals that Roma could buy at the price of 20 RKKS per pair.⁶³

The amount of clothes and shoes allotted was thus totally insufficient, and the prices of the items were too high for impoverished Roma. On 29 October, when the weather was already cold, the Labor Bureau (*serviciul muncii*) of Berezovca *județ* reported to the Directorate of Labor in Odessa that they had received only 300 pairs of boots and 120 pairs of sandals for 2,620 Roma. Most Roma remained 'completely naked, not having even a shirt on their backs' and would surely freeze to death during the coming winter.⁶⁴ On 1 November, the head of Berezovca *județ* Labor Bureau Corneliu Ciureanu reported to the prefect that Roma could not procure the costumes or shoes allotted to them because 'those who are naked are such because they are penniless'. Ciureanu suggested that this situation be reported to the *Guvernământ* so that it 'would decide what to do with the Roma'.⁶⁵ As a concession, the head of the *Guvernământ* Directorate of Labor Constantin Sdrobici allowed the distribution of clothing to Roma on the condition that its costs would be reimbursed 'in small monthly instalments', but this did not change much as Roma could not make any payments at all.⁶⁶

It was only on 11 December 1943 that the Golta prefect resolved to be blunt and cabled to the governor that 'the Roma could not pay. They worked in the summer just for food'. He asked Alexianu to distribute allotted clothing and shoes to the Roma and register their costs on the prefecture balance.⁶⁷ Two days afterwards, the request was granted.⁶⁸ This was, however, an exception, as in other *județe* the administration continued to insist that Roma had to reimburse them for all the costs.⁶⁹

62 See Achim, *Documente*, vol. 2, p. 329.

63 Ibid., pp. 332-333.

64 Ibid., pp. 358-359.

65 Ibid., pp. 365-366.

66 Sdrobici's missive to Golta Prefect, in *ibid.*, p. 385.

67 Ibid., p. 398.

68 See the cable from the governor to Berezovca Prefect, *ibid.*, p. 400, 13 December.

69 On 20 January 1944, the Berezovca prefect invited the Roma kept at State Farm Suha Balca to receive their meagre clothing only if they paid the officially established price. *Ibid.*, p. 428, 20 January 1944.

On 3 January 1944, Alexianu ruled that a very limited number of costumes would be distributed to the Roma on condition that their costs would be reimbursed from their wages during coming agricultural work.⁷⁰ That was the last mention of costumes and shoes in the bureaucratic correspondence saga.

Failure to Lucratively Employ Roma

The failure to provide deported Roma with shelters to house them and clothing to wear during the second winter was compounded by the inability to lucratively employ them during the agricultural season. As the 19 December 1943 summary report on the state of deported Roma prepared by the staff of the General Inspectorate of the Gendarmerie acknowledged, neither workshops for their employment had been set up nor had the necessary tools been procured that would allow them to earn their living. Children of twelve or below and persons of sixty and above were not provided with any food, and even those few Roma who were employed were either not paid or paid so little that they could not support even themselves, let alone their dependents. 'Due to this situation', the report went on, 'to which one should add the proximity to the front, the Roma try to run away, using any gimmick and means of transportation they can resort to'.⁷¹ Individual reports from local authorities add flavour to this dry account. In the second week of December 1943, the Berezovca *județ* prefect reported to Governor Alexianu that of the 2,198 Roma that had been settled in Mostovoi *raion*, only 428 were 'capable of work', of which only 110 were 'utilized'. As to the Roma in Landau *raion*, all of them '[stealthily] embarked military trains [heading to the west] and currently there are no Roma in that *raion*'.⁷²

Although the authorities were aware that they could neither provide for nor lucratively employ the Roma, they continued to return run-away Roma to their places of internment, investing considerable resources in that brutal and fruitless exercise up to the very end of the occupation. Vasiliu, whose Roma-phobia was particularly acute, stubbornly insisted on re-deporting clandestine returnees. As late as 3 Jan-

70 See dispatches from the Directorate of Labor to prefectures of Balta and Berezovca counties, 8 January 1943, in *ibid.*, pp. 421-422.

71 See Achim, *Documente*, vol. 2, pp. 408-410.

72 *Ibid.*, pp. 396-397.

uary 1944, the Argeş *judeţ* Gendarmerie Legion (in Muntenia, Old Kingdom) reported that they had 'evacuated' 114 Roma into Transnistria.⁷³

On 29 January 1944, Ion Antonescu replaced Governor Alexianu as the head of the Transnistrian administration with *General de divizie* Gheorghe Potopeanu. Simultaneously, the civilian administration or *Guvernământ* was liquidated and instead the Military Administration of the Territory Between the Dniester and Bug Rivers created.⁷⁴ By that time, it had become clear that the Red Army would be in Transnistria very soon and Potopeanu's role was to prepare the evacuation and remove the traces of Romanian illegalities in the region. On 10 February 1944, Potopeanu issued an order ostensibly designed 'to improve the conditions of the Roma and thus to prevent their running away'.⁷⁵ The order provided for their placement in small groups in the villages where they would be employed; it was the same old scenario that had already failed numerous times. As Potopeanu neglected to indicate where additional resources for this task would come from, one is left with the impression that the order was meant to provide cover for Potopeanu as the one not responsible for the Roma's tragedy rather than achieve any improvement for them. It was only on 15 March that Mihai Antonescu cabled to Potopeanu to evacuate 'Romanian citizens regardless of their origin and to see to it that somehow certain acts and ... [ellipse in the original] vis-à-vis Poles and Jews would not be imputed to us'. The vice chairman of the council of ministers probably meant that the Germans to whose control Transnistria was to be transferred could commit atrocities against the remaining Jews and Poles. He added in parentheses that photos were to be taken and lists drawn up and signed by local citizens that those persons from these two groups who could not be shipped to Romania were alive at the time the Romanians were leaving the area.⁷⁶ Significantly, Mihai Antonescu failed to mention Roma, likely because he considered them the most expendable group. The next day, 16 March, Potopeanu ordered the general evacuation and transfer of the province into German hands.⁷⁷

73 See Legion commander Colonel Valentin Niculescu to IGJ in *ibid.*, p. 420.

74 Ion Antonescu's order on Potopeanu's appointment, see in ASRI dosar 40010 vol. 25 f. 440 USHMM RG-25.004M reel 30.

75 Potopeanu's order of 10 February is published in Achim, *Documente* vol. 2, p. 439.

76 ANRM F. 706 Inventar 1 dosar 1129 ff. 15–16.

77 See his order and instructions in ASRI dosar 10013 vol. 6 ff. 438–439, USHMM RG-25.004 reel 30.

This lack of concern towards the plight of deported Roma on the part of the national government was observable throughout the whole period of their deportation. For more than a year, Romanian leaders failed to so much as explain to the provincial administrators the aims of Roma concentration in Transnistria, beyond the task of their 'placement' in the three *județe* and the prevention of their return to Romania. They did not even spell out whether Roma were supposed to remain in Transnistria 'forever' or for a limited time only, as were the Jews, of whom it was said that they would be deported further east. As late as November 1942, Ion Antonescu still clung to his vision of an annexed Transnistria, purified of all ethnic 'foreigners' and repopulated with ethnic Romanians from east of the Buh River, which implied that Roma were to leave the province soon.⁷⁸ By July 1943, when the Germans lost the battle of Kursk and the Soviets started the westward march that would eventually bring them to Bucharest and Berlin, Romanian policy-makers had finally realized that their chances of retaining Transnistria were nil.⁷⁹ This, together, with the gradual reorientation toward an agreement with Western powers, led to the relaxation of the policy toward deported Jews. As early as 8 July, Ion Antonescu allowed the return of certain categories of Jews deported from Romania, and on 12 November 1943 he ordered the repatriation of Jews from Bessarabia and Bukovina to start (this order had only a limited effect).⁸⁰ Nothing like this, however, was ordered with regard to Roma. On the contrary, on 13 July 1943, Governor Alexianu instructed prefects of three *județe* to announce to all Roma under their charge that 'their petitions for permission to return to Romania had been denied and that from now on they would have to work hard assisting the *Guvernământ* administration... [in order to] create for themselves a new and definitive life in Transnistria'.⁸¹ It seems that during the previous year the governor had hoped that the Roma's presence in Transnistria would be temporary and that he would soon be relieved of that 'nuisance' [*pacoste*], as Roma were often referred to in bureaucratic correspondence.

The decision to settle the Roma 'definitively' came too late for it to be applied with any consistency: the news from the front made a mockery of any long-term planning in the province. As anxious officials only half-heartedly took measures to prepare the Roma for winter hardships,

78 See Solonari, *Purifying the Nation*, pp. 328–329.

79 See *ibid.*, pp. 318–322.

80 *Ibid.*, p. 221.

81 Achim, *Documente*, vol. 2, pp. 244–246.

the Roma's efforts to slip back into Romania as the only sure way to avoid death during the cold months became more determined. Against this background, the relentless efforts of the gendarmerie to apprehend and bring them back into their 'colonies' were as absurd as they were cruel.

Regardless of whether the Roma were 'fixed' to the villages emptied of their residents or scattered all over the *judete* living side-by-side with the locals, as in Golta and later in Oceacov, there were no jobs at which they could be employed during the coming winter, as due to seasonal character of Transnistrian agriculture farmers mostly idled through the cold months. It was thus a senseless cruelty on the part of Isopescu to order that Roma be given just one half of the food ration allowed to other residents 'until they earn their right to eat' and thus 'become useful, unlike today, when they are a scourge'.⁸² Even in places where administrators showed a more humane attitude than in Golta, the Roma 'capable of work' were allotted just 400 gr of bread while old persons and children were given a meagre 200 gr per day plus 'some potatoes and very rarely salted fish in extremely low quantities', so that by early December most Roma 'lost so much weight that they were real skeletons. Ten to fifteen of them were dying... each day'.⁸³ It is impossible to determine how much of that suffering was caused by 'objective' factors, such as lack of food in a war-torn area subjected to heavy requisitions in the interests of the occupiers (as former Prefect Gorsky would claim after the war), and how much by the Romanians' malicious intent to make Roma die or teach them whatever lesson they wanted them taught.⁸⁴ That the latter might have played an essential role in determining the demise of numerous Roma follows from a December 1942 report by a Captain Florian Ioan, commander of Oceacov Gendarmerie Legion to the General Inspectorate of Gendarmerie, in which he assured his superiors that 'the harvest in Oceacov *judet* was good and the Roma could be kept in [decent] conditions'.⁸⁵ Similar situations occurred in other *judete*, as in Berezovca, where the same norms of food for Roma were ostensibly prescribed but 'in reality... no food had been distributed to them for four to eight days in a row'.⁸⁶ It thus appears that at least

82 Isopescu's order to Golta *raion* prefecturas, 26 October 1942. In Achim, *Documente*, vol. 1, p. 314.

83 *Siguranța* agents report from Oceacov, 5 December 1942 in Achim, *Documente*, vol. 2, p. 28.

84 See Gorsky's 1945 pre-trial deposition in *ibid.*, p. 499.

85 *Ibid.*, pp. 31–32.

86 See the report of a commission of investigation into alleged 'abuses' committed by gendarmes during the deportation of Roma, 19 December 1942, published in *ibid.*, p. 63. This

in some areas of Roma 'placement', the authorities could indeed allot more resources to Roma but failed to do so.

Malnutrition, overcrowding, and lack of fuel made the spread of typhus among the Roma deportees inevitable. The first cases were reported in Golta as early as 21 November 1942, after which reports on Roma routinely mentioned the spread of typhus among them through the end of the occupation.⁸⁷ Survivors' testimonies contain blood-curdling descriptions of the devastation wrought by the typhus epidemic, including mass graves, stray dogs devouring dead bodies, and people so weak that they were unable to drag cadavers to the hole dug in the ground.⁸⁸ Sporadic efforts to delouse the Roma were hampered by the administration's lack of interest and insufficient supply of gas (used as a disinfectant) and fuel for makeshift delousing chambers. Available fragmentary data paints a horrifying picture of relentlessly rising mortality. By 25 November 1942, 309 Roma deaths were registered in Oceacov *județ*, not counting 'cadavers of Roma scattered along the road from Ochiakiv to Alexandrudar [who] died of famine and cold'.⁸⁹ By 19 December, of 3881 Roma detained at Bolshaia Karanika, 150 had died.⁹⁰ According to former Oceacov Prefect Gorsky's 1945 pre-trial deposition, during the 1941–1942 winter, 'up to 4,000 Roma died in the *județ*', plus an unknown

was one of three commissions tasked with the mission of verifying claims contained in numerous petitions submitted by deported Roma, and sometimes supported by Romanian officials in Transnistria, that among those deported were members of families of soldiers of Roma origin who fought at the front in Romanian army ranks, whom Antonescu exempted from deportation. Although the commission's reports essentially confirmed those claims, Vasiliu managed to prevent their repatriation, using various pretexts. See Solonari, *Purifying the Nation*, pp. 284–288.

87 Often, the authorities were concerned not so much with the plight of the Roma as with the typhus danger they posed for the Romanian population, especially by Roma clandestinely streaming back into the country. See note of Vasiliu's secretariat to himself on forty-eight such cases, of which the Ministry of Health and Social Protection informed the government, 20 January 1943 in Achim, *Documente*, vol. 2, pp. 90–91; report of Sibiu Gendarmerie Legion to IGJ, February 8, 1943, on such cases in their *județ*, in *ibid.*, pp. 111–112, and 17 February 1943 report of Vasiliu to Minister of Internal Affairs Jack Popescu, *ibid.*, pp. 121–122.

88 See interview with Mirica Dinu, interview of Anuța Brânza by Michelle Kelso and Alexandru Alexe, 1999; interview of Toma Tănase, in Ioanid, Kelso, and Cioabă. pp. 96–98; 138–140; 146–47 and 154–155 respectively.

89 *Siguranța* agents report from Oceacov, 5 December 1942, published in Achim, *Documente*, vol. 2, p. 28. That authorities routinely undercounted Roma mortality follows from comparison of this data with the one provided by a commission of investigation into alleged 'abuses' committed by gendarmes during the deportation of Roma on 19 December 1942, according to which out of 3,881 in Oceacov *județ*, 150 had died. See *ibid.*, p. 57.

90 See report of a commission of investigation into alleged 'abuses' committed by gendarmes during the deportation of Roma, 19 December 1942 in *ibid.*, p. 57.

number of those who died ‘without traces of identification’ while trying to escape into Romania.⁹¹

Relations with Locals

Famished and freezing, Roma resorting to looting, ‘devastating’, as Romanians put it, not only their own houses, but nearby villages as well. Roma, testified Gorsky in 1945, ‘first collected dried grass in the camps, even at long distances from the villages [to which they were assigned]. Then they started to chop fruit trees in their vicinity, fences and store houses where they existed, and even barracks...’.⁹² By 21 December 1942, in Berezovca *judet*, the Roma had

stolen all corn from about twenty to twenty-five ha, seven cows, five pigs, multiple chicken and other foods, and this only in the villages in which they lived, [and] many more goods from neighbouring villages, but still approximately 200 of them died, and every day five to ten continue to die and if this situation... would persist through the spring, not even five hundred would remain capable of work [out of approximately 5000], the majority having become more dead than alive [*fuguri cadavrice*].⁹³

With the beginning of the agricultural season, demand for labour in the countryside increased, but only rarely did Roma employment bring satisfactory results. On 23 June 1943, the pretor of Landau *raion* reported to the prefect of Berezovca *judet* that ‘many Roma craftsmen ... are of higher quality than locals’ and that many Roma agricultural workers, in particular gardeners, were also good at what they did; and in late September 1943, the pretor of Crivoi Ozero [Krivoie Ozero] *raion*, Golta *judet*, assessed that the Roma’s work was ‘yielding satisfactory results’.⁹⁴

91 Ibid., pp. 499–500.

92 Ibid.

93 This is according to the findings of the Third Commission to investigate the situation of the non-itinerant Roma evacuated in Transnistria. Achim, *Documente*, vol. 2, p. 59. Ion Antonescu ordered the creation of three commissions to investigate the supposed ‘abuses’ committed by the gendarmerie, who had deported to Transnistria Roma families whose male heads were serving in the Romanian military at the front. The commissions confirmed that such cases were indeed numerous, but the authorities did not allow the Roma families to return to Romania. Instead, they released the male heads from military service and sent them to Transnistria to join their families. See Solonari, *Purifying the Nation*, pp. 284–288.

94 Achim, *Documente*, vol. 2, pp. 219–221 and pp. 322–323, respectively.

Much more frequent were bitter and malevolent complaints: Roma were not used to agricultural work, many of them preferred their traditional way of living and earning their meagre income by wandering, panhandling, and fortune-telling. They also resorted to thievery. Typical was the following note of the pretor of Varvarovca *raion*, in Ocea-cov *judet*, from mid-April 1943:

[T]here is no way we could put the Roma to work. Whatever we do, they stubbornly refuse to come out for work. On the other hand, they keep stealing. Daily, we receive complaints from the surrounding villages of Roma stealing animals, which they then bring to their communities for slaughter. [Gendarmes refuse to take measures, and the Roma] believe that they can continue in this way and that there is no need to work. ... This raion consumes tens of carloads of cereals to feed them, and this is when the war requires so many sacrifices from everybody, but we cannot even hope of ever recovering those losses.

[The Roma believe that they] would go back home on 15 April, [and] almost all of them have their luggage ready. To curb this state of affairs, I beg you to approve that from now on we would distribute food to only those Roma who work, while those caught stealing or wandering from village to village would be shot, so that in this way we could hinder the spread of epidemics, especially typhus and cholera, which hit in the first place the army, disorganizing the front's rear.⁹⁵

There is no evidence that the permission to shoot recalcitrant and vagabond Roma was issued by Prefect Gorsky. However, the fact that in his 1945 pre-trial deposition he called the author of the above text 'a man of great soul and initiative' suggests that he was in agreement with him.⁹⁶

Relations between locals and Roma were often tense, with the former seeing the latter as their enemies and, paradoxically, as in the service of the occupiers. This is, for example, how, in 1944, a group of putative Soviet partisans portrayed Roma deported to Vradievskii *raion* two years prior:

At this time, the Romanian invaders started to settle numerous Romanian Roma in Vradievskii *raion*, whom they spread through the villages

95 Achim, *Documente*, vol. 2, pp. 322–323.

96 See *ibid.*, p. 499.

installing several of them in each kolkhoznik hut. Romanian authorities obliged kolkhozes to provide food and fuel to these parasites [*tuneiadt-sev*]. These Roma used to steal and drink, they literally terrorized the population and Romanians encouraged them in these actions.⁹⁷

Romanian sources contain evidence of fights between villagers and Roma. On 17 March 1943, the chief of the gendarmerie post in the village of Kovalivka in Brazuca *județ*, reported to the Legion commander that 'the native population hates [Roma], they beat them whenever they meet them, [and] in general they leave Roma to die of hunger'.⁹⁸ Nevertheless, some Roma survivors recalled gestures of empathy and help offered by the villagers.⁹⁹

Lethal Violence against Deported Roma

Romanian officials in Transnistria held varying opinions on the nature of the 'Roma nuisance'. Some believed, as did the pretor of Liubașevca *raion* in Golta *județ*, that Roma had been 'considerably less dangerous than Yids in what concerns the undermining of the state' and thus they deserved more care from the authorities, if nothing more than to keep them from 'committing a series of crimes or acts of sabotage, to which they would otherwise resort purely from the instinct of life preservation' (the pretor pleaded for more clothing and better food).¹⁰⁰ Others displayed no empathy, gleefully anticipating the Roma's demise during the second winter in Transnistria. As Colonel Iliescu, head of the

97 See TsDA HOU F. 1 Op. 22 spr. 473, ark. 34. Such activity reports were collected by party organizations after liberation for the purposes of their subsequent verification, as the party distrusted Soviet citizens who lived under occupation, suspecting them of disloyalty to the Soviet regime and treating such reports with suspicion.

98 Achim, *Documente*, vol. 2, pp. 147–148.

99 See interview of Anuța Brânzan, p. 118 and Constantin Miulescu by Michelle Kelso, 2005; Silvia Stănescu by Cosmina Gușu, Michelle Kelso and Marioara Trancă, 2007 in Ioanid et al., *Tragedia romilor deportați în Transnistria*, p. 118; 178, 216 respectively.

100 See the pretor's missive to Golta prefect, 22 October 1943, in Achim, *Documente*, vol. 2, pp. 352–355 (citation is on 354). Although the pretor's name is illegible in the original, there is no reason to suspect that he was not Gheorghe Bobei, who served in this capacity from 19 March 1942 (see Bobei's deposition in ASRI dosar 40011 vol. 7 f. 320 USHMM RG-25.004M reel 20), whose name appears on other documents. Bobei's attitude to Roma was humane and paternalistic, constituting an exception among Romanian officials. See, for example, his appeal to Roma placed in Arcepitovca village 'to build their farms, thus creating for themselves a better, stronger and definitive life in Transnistria... a purely Roma village' (Achim, *Documente*, vol. 2, pp. 278–279).

Odessa Gendarmerie Inspectorate, opined in an information bulletin for October 1943, the Roma would die 'due to cold and malnutrition, as they did in the previous winter, so that by the spring the Roma problem would disappear, together with their disappearance'.¹⁰¹ Sometimes officials revealed their wish to see Roma die soon, as when they explained their refusals to provide food to starving Roma by their being 'useless to society and earning their living solely by begging, thieving, and fortune telling'.¹⁰² According to survivor Vasile Nemeş, the Subprefect of Golta *judet*, Aristide Pădure, used to utter the following opinion: 'Beasts deserve fodder and care; Jews (Yids) and Roma have to drop dead anyway; their labour has no value, so that one does not need to worry neither about food, nor care, nor even straw [for them]'.¹⁰³

From gleefully anticipating the Roma's vanishing to making them vanish was but a step. Archives contain numerous references to requests for authorization to punish Roma by death, and, more rarely, their approval. For example, on 13 April 1943, the pretor of Varvarovca *raion* reported to the Oceacov *judet* prefect that Roma refused to work and instead resorted to thievery and robbery, provoking locals' ire. The pretor requested permission to distribute food solely to those who worked and 'to shoot to death Roma who would be caught thieving or roaming around, because otherwise we would not be able to curtail the spread of epidemics, especially typhus and cholera, which strike first and foremost the Nation's army, contributing to the disorganization of the front'.¹⁰⁴ It is not known whether this request was approved, but according to the chief of Covaleovca (Kovalivka) gendarmerie post *Plutonier* Paul Jilă, by 18 May 1943, 'numerous Roma' were shot to death by gendarmes of the nearby Trihati post. Roma were coming to that village in search of menial jobs, but both gendarmes and residents saw them as vagabonds and thieves.¹⁰⁵ Significantly, Jilă's was a very rare case of a gendarme officer empathizing with the Roma (in this report, he requested that some protection be extended to Roma but was curtly put down by the pretor of Landau *raion*), and this suggests that shoot-

101 See DANIC F. IGJ dosar 84/1943 ff. 175–176 USHMM RG-25.010M reel 27.

102 Pretor of Landau *raion* Nicolae Albu to the chief of gendarmerie post Covaleovca, 24 May 1943, in Achim, *Documente*, vol. 2, 202–203.

103 ASRI dosar 40011 vol. 20 f. 170. Nemeş worked as a clerk in the Golta prefect's office, a rare privilege accorded to lucky Jews with special skills.

104 Achim, *Documente*, vol. 2, pp. 170–171.

105 Achim, *Documente*, vol. 2, pp. 196–198.

ings of Roma might have been more frequent than the records indicate, as many instances likely went unreported.

A couple of months later, on 4 July 1943, *Guvernământ* Director of Labor Sdrobici, in a summary on the conditions of Jews and Roma composed for Alexianu, despaired of the high frequency of theft by Roma of construction materials intended for their hovels and suggested to 'exemplarily punish' the wrongdoers, including by 'execution of several relapse offenders'.¹⁰⁶ Alexianu's reaction to this suggestion is not known, but on 25 August 1943 he authorized, on the request of Golta *județ* Prefect Isopescu, the hanging of Roma 'caught red-handed while thieving'.¹⁰⁷ It bears emphasizing that such punishments were illegal under Romanian law and Alexianu's own regulations concerning the administration of justice in Transnistria, according to which death sentences could be imposed only by military tribunals (*Curtea Marțială*) in Odessa and Tiraspol. Proper procedure was not meant to be followed where the Roma were concerned.

Both Romanian contemporary sources and Romanian and Soviet post-war investigative files contain numerous mentions of the murder of the Roma people by the German *Selbstschutz* militia. The *Selbstschutz* was a militia created from male inhabitants of ethnic German settlements in Transnistria. They had been invited to settle in the newly annexed territories by the tsarist government in the early nineteenth century; Transnistria was the area of this group's highest concentration in all of the occupied Soviet Union, with about 130,000 people in all. Within Transnistria, the greatest concentration of ethnic German villages was in Berezovca *județ*. It was here, in the town of Landau, that the Heinrich Himmler-appointed leadership of the SS-*Sonderkommando-R* (SkR) established their headquarters in the fall of 1941.¹⁰⁸ Initially, the SkR's mission was defined as separating local ethnic Germans from their non-German neighbours, their reeducation in National-Socialist ideology, and the raising of their material and cultural level. SkR organized the *Selbstschutz* with the aim of protecting their property and autonomy from the encroachment of the Romanian authorities. Starting from late December 1941 through September 1942, *Selbstschutz* became heavily involved in the massacre of deported Jews, first in the

106 *Ibid.*, pp. 233–239, citation on p. 236.

107 *Ibid.*, pp. 298–299. Isopescu's request of 17 August, see in *ibid.*, pp. 291–292.

108 On the activities of SkR and the role played by *Selbstschutz* in the murder of Jews in Transnistria, see Eric C. Steinhart, *The Holocaust and the Germanization of Ukraine* (Cambridge University Press, 2015).

Golta *judet*, at the Bogdanovca camp, then in Berezovka *judet*, where they massacred practically all the Jews deported there from Odessa, as well as deportees from other regions of Romania and Transnistria, possibly more than 30,000 in all.¹⁰⁹

As early as 19 December 1942, a governmental commission investigating the situation of evacuated non-itinerant Roma among whom there were families of Romanian soldiers serving at the front, cited the murder of thirty-five Roma in the German village of Steinberg; those were Roma who had been placed in the nearby village of Bolshaia Karanica (Kir'iakivka), Oceacov *judet*.¹¹⁰ In his information report for the same month, Oceacov Legion Commander Major Ioan Florian also mentioned the murder of Roma in the same village (this time identified as Kiriacofca) by the German militia in October 1941. It seems that the only reason Florian condescended to report that a massacre had taken place was that it scared Kir'iakivka Ukrainians, who thenceforth inundated him with their complaints about German threats.¹¹¹ This massacre was registered by the Soviet ChGK, who assessed that in Steinberg seventy 'Jews and Roma' were murdered.¹¹² As SS *Hauptsturmführer* Martin Assmann from SS-*Sonderkommando-R* explained to Soviet interrogators in 1944, Sk commander SS *Standarterführer* Hört Hoffmeyer summarized Sk policy towards deported Roma thusly: 'All Roma who wander through German villages and fields had to be shot to death'.¹¹³ Although likely coerced by the Soviets, Assmann's confession is supported by considerable evidence of the killings of Roma found in the vicinity of ethnic German villages, particularly in Berezovca *judet*. According to Gendarmerie Lieutenant in reserve Dumitru Candrea, who in 1942 was chief of Mostovoi Gendarmerie Sector in Berezovca *judet*, starting from January 1942, local Germans systematically killed deported Jews, and 'when in the summer of 1942 the Roma arrived, it appears that Germans killed many Roma, too'.¹¹⁴ Ac-

109 For statistics of murders of Jews in Berezovca *judet*, see ICHR, *Final Report*, pp. 164–165.

110 Achim, *Documente*, vol. 2, p. 57. The name of the German village is misspelled here as Steinberg.

111 See a copy of that report in ASRI dosar 21535 vol 5 ff. 159–160 USHMM RG-25.004M reel 124.

112 See GARF F. R-7021 Op. 68 delo 178 II. 188–189 YV JM 19 716. Summary (*akt*) on Kir'iakovskii sel'sovet.

113 See transcript of Assmann's deposition in Russian translation in GDA SBU spr. 20 tom 1 arh. nomer 13153 ark. 203–217, citation on ark. 210 YV JM-19.765.

114 ASRI dosar 39181 vol. 2 ff. 161–169 USHMM RG-25.004M reel 26. Candrea was sentenced to forced labour for life for transferring Jews to the Germans, knowing that they would be murdered, as well as for robbing other deported Jews of their possessions. See July 1945 sentence in ASRI dosar 39181 vol. 2 ff. 25, 32.

cording to Mihail Hausner, a Romanian Jew deported in September 1942 to Mostovoi, the Germans murdered numerous Roma in the village of Trei Dubi (also Tridubi, Triduby), where they were sent 'for work'.¹¹⁵ According to the April 1945 deposition of Gendarmerie Lieutenant-Colonel Vasile Gorsky, who was the prefect of Oceacov *judet* in 1942 through April 1943, 'several Roma were shot to death in German villages and then [their corpses] burnt (for example, Schönfeld)'.¹¹⁶ Gorsky did not seem to have reported this event contemporaneously. According to the Soviet ChGk findings, in the first half of 1943 one Roma family was shot in the German village of Liechtenfeld in Berezovca *judet*.¹¹⁷ In the village of Mikhailovo of the same *judet*, on 3 November 1943, sixteen locals, twenty Roma, and one Jew 'were taken and shot to death', likely by the Germans.¹¹⁸

During the investigation of crimes perpetrated by *Selbstschutz* of the village of Landau in 1953, Soviet investigators established, on the basis of numerous testimonies of survivors, that in May or June 1943, these militiamen shot to death close to one hundred Roma in the nearby village of Annivka, whose dead bodies they then threw into a well.¹¹⁹ In the mid-1960s, while investigating crimes of *Selbstschutz* from the hamlet of Neue Amerika, the Soviets discovered that in the summer of 1942, they shot groups of five or seven Roma who wandered into their settlement and whom they caught stealing clothes hung out to dry on a line.¹²⁰ Romani survivors also often identified 'the Germans' as those who murdered an individual or groups of Roma.¹²¹ It is clear that all these shootings could have taken place only with the connivance of the gendarmerie according to the same pattern of cooperation that had by that time been established in the 'liquidation' of deported Jews. At least in one case (in the village of Annivka), eyewitnesses mentioned that through the arrival of German militiamen, the Roma were guarded by Romanian gendarmes.¹²²

115 See his 1945 deposition in ASRI dosar 39181 vol. 3 f. 78v USHMM RG-25.004M reel 26 and transcript of his November 1948 interrogation in ASRI 38891 vol. 1 ff. 305-305v. USHMM RG-25.004M reel 27.

116 Achim, *Documente*, vol. 2, 498.

117 See summary (*akt*) on Lichtenfel'dskii sel'sovet in GARF F. R-7021 Op. 69 delo 79 l. 33 YV JM-19.969.

118 Summary on the village of Mikhailovo, GARF F. R-7021 Op. 69 delo 80 l. 85 YV JM 19.969.

119 See GDA SBU spr. 4412, esp. ark. 37-38, 70, 153, 234v, 235 USHMM RG-31.018M reel 22.

120 See GDA SBU spr. 20 tom 34 arh. nomer 131563, ark. 177, 178, 228v-229; spr. 20 tom 20 arh. nomer 131563, ark. 61, 69v-70 YV JM-19.763.

121 See interviews of Silvia Stănescu and Anghel Nedelea by Ana-Maria Popa and Michelle Kelso, 2006, in Ioanid, Kelso, and Cioabă, pp. 178 and 217 respectively.

122 See GDA SBU spr. 4412, ark. 235 USHMM RG-31.018M reel 22. Eyewitness Viktor Cherba. On the connivance of Romanian gendarmes in the murder of deported Jews by *Selbstschutz*

These fragmentary and rather sporadic references to the killings of Roma do not allow quantitative assessment, except to state that the number of victims was clearly in the hundreds.¹²³ In a sense, Roma were 'lucky', as by the time they were brought to Transnistria, in September 1942, Romanian policy had moderated, and mass murder was no longer practiced. The de-escalation, however, did not touch the ethnic German communities or, better to say, their SS leaders, who were still determined to keep the territory under their control free of Jews and Roma, and thus systematically killed all Roma who were brought – or wandered – into contact with them. The fact that most of the registered killings of Roma happened in Berezovca *judef*, in which *Selbstschutz* sporadically killed Jews well into 1943, confirms that the German ethnic militia's policy was basically the same with respect to both Jews and Roma. It also suggests that gendarmes were as complicit in the murder of Roma as they were in the murder of Jews. The local population's intensely hostile attitude towards deported Roma may explain why Soviet ChGK failed to register some of the Roma massacres known from other sources (for example, in the village of Annivka): the locals either did not want to remember them or did not consider them worth mentioning.

Conclusion

The nature of Romanian policy towards Roma in 1942–1944 is elusive because Ion Antonescu never bothered to define and communicate it to his underlings clearly, and because decision-makers at various levels had different agendas which they pursued with unequal commitment. Ion Antonescu, not known for consistency of thought and action, was driven by the impulse to rid the country of a group of ethnic undesirables, all of whom he intended to deport by categories, starting with the most dangerous and ending up with virtually all Roma. The dictator failed to square this desideratum with his other priority, namely, the expulsion of all non-Romanians from Transnistria and its repopulation with ethnic Romanians. To Governor Alexianu, the arrival of

men, see Jean Ancel, *Transnistria, 1941–1942: The Romanian Mass Murder Campaigns*, vol. 1 (Yad Vashem, 2003), pp. 292–338.

¹²³ Some Jewish survivors offered much higher numbers in their post-war depositions. For example, Mihail Hausner assessed that in 1948, the Germans shot to death 11,500 Roma at Tridubi (ASRI, dosar 38891 vol. 1 ff. 305–305v USHMM RG-25.004M reel 27). This seems to be an exaggeration, as such a huge massacre would have been reported in other accounts, which it was not.

thousands of deportees into Transnistria only added to the numerous problems he faced with inadequate economic, administrative, and police resources. Having grown used to enabling mass murder and death by starvation, cold, and disease of tens of thousands of Jews in the previous year of his administration, he expected the 'Roma problem' to be solved in the same manner, without his direct involvement. Hence his procrastinations with issuing instructions as to the organization the deportees' housing, employment, and provisioning, his refusal to allot the minimum of resources to help their plight, and his enthusiastic support for the lethal reprisals against them. The head of the Romanian gendarmerie, General Vasiliu, and his immediate underlings, were determined to prevent the return of the deportees into Romania proper, in the teeth of the governor's opposition. Taken together, these policies caused disaster.

Still, not all lower-level commanders and administrators were completely indifferent to the Roma's terrible plight, either due to their moral qualms or because they were loath to bear responsibility for their demise. These officials' warnings of unfolding disaster, requests for help, and proposals for measures to improve the deportees' situation invariably encountered their higher-ups' indifference and came to naught. Stripped of their meagre resources, such as horse carts, tools necessary for practicing their crafts, and valuables that were confiscated upon their entry into Transnistria, and prohibited from continuing their traditional way of life, Roma were left to die. Thus, although deportation was not necessarily intended as a means of the Roma's physical destruction, the overall import of the stances adopted by the national and provincial governments towards them was genocidal.

The lack of uniform will to murder the deportees and sporadic, although largely ineffectual, attempts to alleviate their suffering entertained by various mid-level officials, highlight the basic fact that Romanian administrators and gendarmerie were not fully committed to the genocidal project. With the regime lacking an agency empowered to violate the law and charged with the murder of civilians on a massive scale, as was the SS in Nazi Germany, the extermination of deported Roma by attrition would take longer than the regime had at its disposal. The survival of a part of the deportees was ultimately due to the Red Army's advance and the Romanian troops' precipitous withdrawal from Transnistria, not to any noticeable change in the policy towards them at the highest levels of government.

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