

Foreword by Petra Rosenberg

The deportations of Sinti and Roma to Nazi concentration camps and their systematic murder were ended more than 75 years ago. Numerous details of these crimes as well as innumerable references to the biographies of those persecuted and murdered have been preserved in the holdings of the Arolsen Archives. These include, for instance, deportation guidelines and transport lists as well as documents from former concentration camps. Next to testimonies of the life-threatening Nazi bureaucracy, one can find letters, which former prisoners of the Dachau concentration camp wrote to their families, as well as documents on the Lackenbach camp, where over 2,000 Sinti and Roma were interned and from where they were deported to be exterminated. Additionally, postwar documents produced by the International Tracing Service (ITS) have been preserved in Bad Arolsen. These so-called correspondence files document, among other things, the search for missing people. They include letters by survivors asking for a written confirmation of their persecution, such as the one my father Otto Rosenberg wrote in 1954 requesting a certificate of his incarceration in Auschwitz and other concentration camps to substantiate his claim in compensation proceedings. Many of these documents offer an insight into the persecution and genocide of Sinti and Roma. These testimonies are shocking and, at the same time, a manifestation of prejudices passed down over centuries. And a look at the postwar documents makes it clear that bias against Sinti and Roma has survived their liberation – among both, people and authorities. This is shown, for example, by discriminatory comments on numerous official documents. Their struggle for a

public recognition of their persecution finds its expression in the documents as well. Thus, survivors' statements concerning their path of persecution were often called into question, and the German citizenship they had been deprived of in the Nazi era was restored to many on their personal insistence only.

The systematic stigmatization and disadvantaging of Sinti and Roma continued even decades after the Nazi era had ended. It was only as a result of the civil rights movement initiated by German Sinti and Roma in the Federal Republic in the late 1970s that, in 1982, the Nazi genocide of Sinti and Roma was officially recognized by Chancellor Helmut Schmidt. Nevertheless, members of our minority are massively discriminated against even today. And this happens not only in Germany, but also in many other European countries. What aggravates the still prevailing prejudices is the widely spread lack of knowledge of the genocide of European Sinti and Roma.

For a long time, historical re-appraisal of this genocide had hardly been a topic in historical scholarship and the number of pertinent publications remained limited. I thus appreciate even more that this conference volume includes contributions on the genocide of Sinti and Roma. In addition, I hope that this book will inspire further research projects addressing the numerous pertinent desiderata.

Petra Rosenberg
Chair, Association German Sinti and Roma Berlin-Brandenburg

