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‘Gypsies’ in the Police Eye

Identification, Census and Deportation of Sinti and Roma from
Annexed Alsace, 1940 to 1944

Abstract: In annexed Alsace, the destruction and dislocation of Sinti and Roma families, labelled as ‘gypsies’, were part of the broader genocidal dynamic triggered by the German authorities during the winter of 1942/1943. Using Strasbourg criminal police records, Arolsen Archives materials and the documentation of the Rassenhygienische Forschungsstelle (Racial Hygiene Research Center, RHF) in Berlin, the main aim of this contribution is to shed light on how escalating persecution and genocidal policies targeting Sinti and Roma were implemented in a western borderland space. Racial registrations and uses of the ‘gypsy’ category are analysed to document police methods and identification practices in a former French territory. By underlining the circulation and exchange of collected data on ‘gypsy’ individuals between central institutions and regional police stations, this article intends to show that the Strasbourg deportation of March 1943 was the result of specific racial identifications operations aiming to eliminate German Sinti and Roma families living in annexed Alsace.

Introduction

On March 22, 1943, 61 individuals reached Auschwitz-Birkenau. From pages 353 to 356 of the women’s registration book of the ‘*Zigeunerlager*’ (‘gypsy camp’), 35 newly arrived individuals were recorded.¹ On that same day, the men’s register reported 26 new entries.² Among the 61, 33 were under the age of 15. Within this group, seven different family names were mentioned: Rosenbach, Franz, Wesel, Blum, Gerste, Braun, and Freiwald (see fig. 1). These names reappear on fourteen death certificates issued by the registry office of the Auschwitz camp administration.³ These documents indicate that all of them were domiciliated in Alsatian

1 Pages 353 to 356 of the women’s *Hauptbücher des ‘Zigeunerlagers’* of Auschwitz-Birkenau, 22.03.1943, 1.1.2.1/531497–531498/ITS Digital Archive, Archives Nationales.

2 Pages 146 and 147 of the men’s *Hauptbücher des ‘Zigeunerlagers’* of Auschwitz-Birkenau, 22.03.1943, 1.1.2.1/530981–530982/ITS Digital Archive, Archives Nationales.

3 For one example, see death certificate for Robert Blum, 29.10.1943, Auschwitz-Birkenau, 1.1.2.1/568532/ITS Digital Archive, Archives Nationales.

cities before their deportation: eight lived in Strasbourg, four in Cronenbourg and two in Colmar. Moreover, prisoner registration cards of four other members of this deportation convoy, created later when they were transferred to Buchenwald, mentioned that they had been arrested as ‘work-shy gypsies’ (*Arbeits-scheue Zigeuner*) by the Strasbourg criminal police (Kriminalpolizei, Kripo) in March 1943.⁴ Although these documents are linked to specific individuals – either dead or transferred –, such spatial and administrative indications hint at the geographic provenance of the entire group. They constitute a first lead to explore local applications of deportation policies targeting ‘gypsies’ implemented in Western Germany’s territorial margins.

By the end of 1940 and following the defeat of France, the former Bas-Rhin and Haut-Rhin departments were annexed to the German territory and Strasbourg progressively became the new administrative and political centre of the Gau Oberrhein, which united Baden and annexed Alsace. This borderland territory of the Rhine area was perceived as a fundamental space in the Nazi policy, which intended to reshape racial European frontiers. Alsace was meant to become a Western march built for the defence of Germanness.⁵ Thus, the Alsatian lands were subjected to Germanization policies that affected individuals considered as ‘gypsies’ within this territory.⁶ People labelled as ‘gypsies’ were mainly musicians, basket-makers, fairground artists and trailer dwellers linked to the travelling worlds of this transfrontier area between France, Germany, and Switzerland: Sinti, Manouches, Roma and Yenish experienced familial dislocations and endured persecution policies throughout the war.

The main aim of this article is to shed light on how racial and genocidal policies targeting Roma and Sinti were implemented in annexed Alsace where different legal conceptions of categories framing and criminalising itinerant professions had overlapped since the second part of the nineteenth century, inherited both from German and French police practices. The term ‘gypsy’ used in this paper refers to the term *‘Zigeuner’* used by the German authorities during the Second World War to label people that were stigmatized as racially inferior aliens meant to disappear from the German area. It was as ‘gypsies’ that many families were persecuted, and it is as such that they appear in the sources used for this study. The choice not to capitalize this term intends to emphasize that this

⁴ For one example, see prisoner registration card for Hugo Wesel, Buchenwald, 1.1.5.3/7407285/ITS Digital Archive, Archives Nationales.

⁵ Isabel Heinemann: *Rasse, Siedlung, deutsches Blut. Das Rasse- und Siedlungshauptamt der SS und die rassenpolitische Neuordnung Europas*, Göttingen: Wallstein, 2003, 305–356.

⁶ Lothar Kettenacker: *Nationalsozialistische Volkstumspolitik im Elsass*, Stuttgart: Deutsche Verlags-Anstalt, 1973, 249–267.

3	Rosenbach	1890	10.10.1890	Frankfurt	
4	Rosenbach	Otto	20.10.1890	Nordholl.	
5	Rosenbach	Wol	23.10.1890	Nordholl.	
6	Rosenbach	Wol	11.3.1890	Karlsruhe	
7	Rosenbach	Wol	11.10.1890	Frankfurt	
8	Rosenbach	Wol	21.10.1890	Frankfurt	
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Fig. 1: Page 146 of the men's *Hauptbücher des Zigeunerlagers* of Auschwitz-Birkenau, March 22, 1943, Archive of the State Museum Auschwitz-Birkenau in Oświęcim.

exonym is first and foremost the result of a social categorization elaborated by state laws and shaped by administrative, bureaucratic and police practices starting as early as the nineteenth century which does not refer to any stable collective identity claimed by the individuals concerned.⁷

7 On the racialisation of the 'gypsy' category since the nineteenth century, see Leo Lucassen: "Harmful Tramps'. Police Professionalization and Gypsies in Germany, 1700–1945", in *Crime, History & Societies*, 1, 1997, 29–50; Ulrich F. Opfermann: "Preußen – Kaiserreich – Weimar, Umbrüche und Kontinuitäten", in *Zigeunerverfolgung im Rheinland und in Westfalen 1933–1945. Geschichte, Aufarbeitung und Erinnerung*, Paderborn: Ferdinand Schöningh, 2012, 37–52; Juliane Tatarinov: *Kriminalisierung des ambulanten Gewerbes: Zigeuner- und Wandergewerbepolitik im späten Kaiserreich und in der Weimarer Republik*, Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 2015.

In the historiography of the persecution of Roma and Sinti, Alsace has rarely been the focus of scholarly attention. Although Marie-Christine Hubert's pioneering thesis addresses the Alsatian case, French academic publications mainly analyse the internment policy for 'nomads' in the occupied and non-occupied zones, relegating this borderland area as a shadow zone.⁸ Michael Zimmermann's groundbreaking study of the Roma and Sinti genocide in Europe raises the Alsatian question and provides us with its major repressive framework but without mentioning any deportation to Auschwitz-Birkenau from this annexed territory.⁹ Using a microhistorical perspective, recent studies have emphasized the need to consider annexed or German-ruled borderland areas as autonomous case studies going beyond traditional national borders to reveal the local dynamics of persecution practices.¹⁰ Similarly, the biographical study of Heiko Haumann on the trajectory of Zilli Reichmann, arrested in 1942 in Alsace as a 'gypsy', deported to Lety and later to Auschwitz, reveals the integration of this annexed territory within the Nazi camp system.¹¹ Thus, the methodological approach in this paper is to study the margins to understand the core of repressive policies towards Sinti and Roma in Europe. It was indeed within border areas that the question of identification became more acute: who, in the eyes of the German authorities, had to be categorized as 'gypsy' in annexed Alsace? What criteria did the Germans use to identify the 61 individuals labelled as 'workshy gypsies' and to deport them to Auschwitz-Birkenau in March 1943? How did the police services concretely implement the policies to repress them?

8 Marie-Christine Hubert: *Les Tsiganes en France 1939–1946. Assignation à résidence, internement, déportation*, Paris: Paris 10 University, 1997, 87–90.

9 Michael Zimmermann: *Rassenutopie und Genozid: Die nationalsozialistische "Lösung der Zigeunerfrage"*, Hamburg: Christians, 1996, 214–218. He wrote that "transports from Alsace, as well as from Lorraine and Luxembourg, have not been documented so far" (*ibid.*, 309). Both translations by the author.

10 Claire Zalc and Nicolas Mariot's study on the persecution of the Jewish families living in Lens, a northern French city located in the *zone interdite* (forbidden zone), shows the specificities of the anti-Jewish measures and persecution practices in this territory ruled by German authorities which united Belgium and two northern French departments (Nord and Pas-de-Calais). See Nicolas Mariot and Claire Zalc: *Face à la persécution: 991 Juifs dans la guerre*, Paris: Odile Jacob, 2010. The work of Monique Heddebaut on 'gypsy' families deported by a convoy from Malines to Auschwitz-Birkenau in January 1944 underlines the dynamics of deportation policies targeting Sinti and Roma set up in the same military zone. See Monique Heddebaut: *Des Tsiganes vers Auschwitz: le convoi Z du 15 janvier 1944*, Paris: Tirésias-Michel Reynaud, 2018. For a study on the German police in annexed Moselle, see Cédric Neveu: *La Gestapo en Moselle: une police au coeur de la répression nazie*, Metz: Serpenoise, 2012.

11 Heiko Haumann: *Die Akte Zilli Reichmann: Zur Geschichte der Sinti im 20. Jahrhundert*, Frankfurt am Main: S. Fischer, 2016.

The dynamics between central decisions and regional applications regarding the escalating Sinti and Roma persecution policies will be analysed through the Alsatian lens. By delving into the archive records of the Strasbourg Kripo from 1940 to 1944 and racial investigations led by the Rassenhygienische und bevölkerungsbiologische Forschungsstelle (Racial Hygiene and Population Biology Research Center, RHF) in specific Rhine cities between 1937 and 1942, I intend to show that police identification practices and deportation policies towards so-called gypsies followed specific criteria depending on the temporality of the war and did not affect all itinerant families living in Alsace with the same intensity. While one might have thought that the German police had a clear vision of whom to arrest, given the racial policies they had put in place against Sinti and Roma in Germany prior to 1940, it appears that the identification of 'gypsies' living in Alsace was a more complex process involving several authorities.

The repressive frameworks will first be introduced to contextualize the regional situation at the very beginning of the annexation and to document the use of the 'gypsy' category in the implementation of expulsion policies to unoccupied France. This part will be based on correspondences and monthly reports of the German police deployed in Alsace that are held in the French departmental archives in Strasbourg and Colmar but also in the National Archives in Washington. Then, the temporality of the repression towards the 'gypsy presence' shall be studied by referring to the arrest cards and mugshots made by the Strasbourg Kripo in 1942. Finally, following the deportation order of 'gypsies' to Auschwitz issued by Heinrich Himmler on December 16, 1942, the spatial and chronological applications of this decision will be analysed by taking as a case study the constitution of the Strasbourg convoy of March 1943 and by referring to Arolsen Archives documents. The aim is to understand which families were targeted by such policies by comparing the deportees' names of this convoy with the RHF documentation kept in the German Federal Archives in Berlin.

Expulsion Practices and the Use of the 'Gypsy' Category by the Germans in Conquered Alsace, 1940 to 1941

Shortly after German troops entered Strasbourg on June 19, 1940, the Reich Security Main Office (*Reichssicherheitshauptamt*, RSHA) set up the *Einsatzgruppe* III (mobile police intervention group) to secure Alsace before its annexation to the *Reich*. Under the authority of a Commander of the Security Police (*Befehlshaber*

der Sicherheitspolizei und des SD, BdS), the *Einsatzgruppe* III was divided into two territorial units operating in the Bas-Rhin and Haut-Rhin: the *Einsatzkommando* III/1 with its headquarters in Strasbourg and the *Einsatzkommando* III/2 with its offices in Mulhouse. These police forces, composed of Gestapo and Kripo agents, supervised the actions of the territorial gendarmeries and were responsible for the implementation of expulsion policies against populations deemed undesirable in Alsace.

During the first weeks of the military occupation of Alsace, expulsion practices targeted Sinti and Roma among other groups perceived by the Germans as ‘undesirable elements’. On July 1, 1940, BdS Gustav-Adolf Scheel ordered his police officers to draw up lists of “professional criminals and asocial individuals present in Alsace for their future evacuation”.¹² Two weeks later, he specified the modalities of application and quoted the profile of the individuals that were to be identified and expelled: “professional criminals, beggars, vagrants, asocial pimps and gypsies”.¹³ At this time, the use of the ‘gypsy’ category by the German police deployed in Alsace was incorporated into common criminal behaviour patterns and did not support any autonomous specific policy, targeting so-called gypsy families as such.

During the next month, the identification of so-called gypsies started to be associated with itinerant economic activities perceived as a threat to regional security and stability. On 14 August 1940, Alexander Landgraf, criminal commissioner and head of the Strasbourg police, informed his agents of the details regarding the forthcoming operation aiming to “cleanse Alsace of asocial, criminal and gypsy elements”: men identified as “gypsies” or “having the gypsy type” were to be taken, along with their wives and children, to the *Sicherungslager* (security camp) of Schirmeck-Vorbruck.¹⁴ In August 1940, 41 ‘asocial elements’ living in Obernai, a municipality located in the southwest of the Strasbourg area, were transferred to this camp. This group consisted of four families with the sur-

¹² BdS-Elsaß to the Einsatzkommando III/1 and 2, 01.07.1940, 9379992, T-175/513, National Archives and Records Administration, Washington (henceforth NARA). Translation by the author. The order is also quoted in Zimmermann, *Rassenutopie und Genozid*, 214. Translation by the author.

¹³ BdS-Elsaß to the Einsatzkommando III/1 and 2, 20.07.1940, 9380004, T-175/513, NARA. Translation by the author.

¹⁴ Einsatzkommando III/1 leader to the Strasbourg criminal police, 14.08.1940, 938005, T-175/513, NARA, Washington. Translation by the author. For a study on the Schirmeck-Vorbruck camp, see Jean-Laurent Vonau: *Le “Sicherungslager Vorbruck-Schirmeck” un camp oublié en Alsace*, Strasbourg: Éditions du Signe, 2017.

name Gargowitsch.¹⁵ According to the French census, these families were registered as residents in this city in 1936.¹⁶ In the police report, all of them were presented as basket-makers (*Korbmacher*), an itinerant profession based on mobility – itinerant trade, sale on markets – that constituted a reason for ‘asociality’ and a pretext for further expulsion. Although the word ‘*Zigeuner*’ does not appear on this document, the Gargowitsch were treated as ‘gypsies’ and taken to the Schirmeck security camp. This specific case illustrates the overlapping use of police categories that targeted the ‘gypsy’ presence in annexed Alsace.

To set up the expulsion lists, the officers of the Einsatzgruppe III relied on former French police archives. In August 1940, Landgraf justified his delay in drawing up the expulsion lists by referring to “the ramified classification of French police files”.¹⁷ It can be assumed that they targeted so-called gypsy families by using the ‘nomad’ records issued by the French prefectures.¹⁸ In the absence of French police records, the German authorities resorted to field investigations: on July 11, 1940, the Landkommissar (civil territorial leader) of Altkirch, a city in the south of Mulhouse, required the municipal authorities under his jurisdiction to identify “asocial individuals [...] and above all the gypsies” because “the criminal records had been removed since the outbreak of the war”.¹⁹ In response, the mayor of Durmenach provided a ‘gypsy list’ (*Zigeunerliste*) composed of 36 individuals.²⁰ But the existence of such lists specifically targeting Sinti and Roma remains very rare during this period and seems to have resulted from local initiatives. Thus, many identification lists used the ‘gypsy’ category among others to quell the presence of people who could not belong to the ‘*Volksgemeinschaft*’ as conceived by the Nazi ideology. In the summer of 1940, the German security offices were mainly devoted to expelling any individual related to social or economic marginality schemes.

15 List of the ‘asocial elements’ living in Obernai, 16.08.1940, 1.1.40.1/4397075/ITS Digital Archives, Archives Nationales.

16 Obernai population census, 1936, 364D 4, Archives départementales du Bas-Rhin, Strasbourg (henceforth ADBR).

17 Strasbourg criminal commissioner to the BdS-Elsaß, 18.08.1940, 9379996, T-175/513, NARA. Translation by the author.

18 In 1912, the ‘nomad’ category was created by the French authorities to collectively target, register and monitor families with an itinerant activity and a mobile lifestyle. This legislation was applied in Alsace and Moselle after the First World War. On the 1912 law, see Emmanuel Filhol: *Le contrôle des Tsiganes en France (1912–1969)*, Paris: Karthala, 2013, 59–106.

19 Altkirch Landkommissar to the Mulhouse criminal police, 11.07.1940, 1AL3 213, Archives départementales du Haut-Rhin, Colmar (henceforth ADHR). Translation by the author.

20 Durmenach mayor to the Altkirch Landkommissar, 18.07.1940, 1AL3 213, ADHR.

On the Durmenach list were the names of Joseph Lafertin, his wife Marie, and their four children. Joseph Lafertin was born in 1892 in Aspach-le-Haut, near Thann, in southern Alsace. In May 1921, he was registered as a *musicien ambulant* (itinerant musician) and categorized as a ‘nomad’ by the Haut-Rhin prefecture.²¹ He was then forced to carry a specific anthropometric identity booklet and have it stamped in every locality he travelled to. Labelled as ‘Zigeuner’ by the German local authorities during the summer 1940, Joseph and his family were expelled to the unoccupied French zone. On June 20, 1941, considered by the French authorities as ‘nomads’ coming from Alsace, the Lafertin family, with nearly 330 other Alsatian itinerants, were conducted to Rivesaltes, an internment camp located in the Pyrénées-Orientales and administered by the Vichy regime.²² The trajectory of the Lafertins illustrates the interweaving of repressive measures against Alsatian itinerants by French and German authorities from the very beginning of the war.²³

In the following months, through their research in former French police archives and field investigations, the German security forces began to gather information on the presence of ‘gypsies’ in Alsace and started to establish reports on the racial condition of the travelling families living in the region. On September 27, 1940, the Altkirch gendarmerie sent a note to the Mulhouse Kripo on a basket-maker family living in Henflingen and stated that they must not be considered as “racial gypsies” because the head of the family had “a good reputation”²⁴. This statement underlines the scope of action that local police forces had to racially qualify individuals who carried out an itinerant activity according to behaviour and lifestyle criteria.

Incrementally, the German policy targeting ‘gypsy’ families became more and more precise as police authorities gathered knowledge on the Alsatian po-

21 Individual anthropometric notice, Antoine Lafertin, 26.05.1921, 1AL2 1148, ADHR. Between 1920 and 1921, following the end of the First World War, the three prefectures of Moselle, Bas-Rhin and Haut-Rhin implemented the French 1912 law on the regulation of itinerant professions. The sixteenth mobile brigade dedicated to these identification procedures labelled 1,161 individuals as ‘nomads’ and matriculated 109 trailers in all three departments. See Report of the sixteenth mobile brigade to the ministry of Interior, 28.12.1921, 157AL 131, ADHR.

22 Pages 342 to 377 of the entry register of the Rivesaltes camp, 20.06.1941, 1260W 78, Archives départementales des Pyrénées-Orientales.

23 For further information on the internment of expelled itinerant families from Alsace in southern France, see Emmanuel Filhol and Marie-Christine Hubert: *Les Tsiganes en France. Un sort à part, 1939–1946*, Paris: Perrin, 2009; Alexandre Doulut: *Les Tsiganes au camp de Rivesaltes (1941–1942)*, Paris: Lienart, 2014.

24 Altkirch gendarmerie to the Mulhouse criminal police, 27.09.1940, 1AL3 213, ADHR. Translation by the author.

pulation. On November 18, 1940, arguing a criminality rise in Alsace, the Einsatzgruppe III organized a new wave of expulsions targeting "undesirable elements"²⁵ living in the Strasbourg area. On November 21, the Strasbourg Landkommissar mobilized its territorial gendarmerie networks and ordered to report the presence of "asocials, work-shy people, gypsies or gypsy-like people, vagrants, homosexuals and beggars".²⁶ In response, several gendarmerie services such as Mommenheim, Brumath or Wolfisheim sent back their lists using distinct categories to class the names. Relying on these lists, the police spotted and expelled 664 individuals from the Strasbourg area to the unoccupied France in December 1940.²⁷ When the Strasbourg police sent the final results of these expulsion operations to the Einsatzgruppe III services in January 1941, it attached three separate lists relating to "homosexuals", "asocials" and "gypsies".²⁸ Although these lists remain undiscovered to this day, the fact that, for the first time, police regional authorities set up a distinct list dedicated to expelled 'gypsy' individuals shows how progressively the use of the 'gypsy' category became more specific in the eyes of the German police.

These forced and massive evacuations targeting Sinti and Roma among other categories of 'undesirable elements' continued with various intensity until January 1941. This policy shift coincided with an administrative change. Indeed, the police services and attributions were reorganized to correspond to the bureaucratic architecture of the German apparatus police: criminal police stations were settled in Alsace as permanent offices and took over the security missions originally applied by the Einsatzgruppe III. The first *Meldeblatt* (police internal report) of the Strasbourg Kripo was issued on February 24, 1941.²⁹ After the coordinated expulsion operations, Kripo agents took over the repression towards 'gypsy' individuals and carried out preventive arrests and targeted expulsions.

25 BdS-Elsass to the Strasbourg, Erstein, Haguenau, Sélestat, Saverne and Wissembourg Landkommissar, 18.11.1940, 9380011, T-175/513, NARA. Translation by the author.

26 Strasbourg Landkommissar to the Wolfisheim gendarmerie, 21.11.1940, 400D 77/27, ADBR. Translation by the author.

27 Strasbourg Kriminalkommissar to the BdS-Elsaß, 14.12.1940, 9380016, T-175/513, NARA.

28 Strasbourg Kriminalkommissar to the BdS-Elsaß, 09.01.1941, 9380022, T-175/513, NARA. Translation by the author.

29 *Meldeblatt* of the Strasbourg criminal police, 1, 24.02.1941, 400D 77/11, ADBR.

The Strasbourg Criminal Police and the Census of the ‘Gypsy’ Presence in Annexed Alsace, 1941 to 1943

As Alsace was incorporated into the *Reich* in the months following its annexation, German authorities progressively applied their criminal legislation and police laws. Scholars have underlined the involvement of the Kripo services in the implementation of racial policies in Germany against individuals perceived as ‘gypsies’.³⁰ In Alsace, the 8th office of the Strasbourg criminal police was charged with the “preventive fight against crime” and had to repress the “gypsy presence”.³¹ Therefore, Kripo agents adopted former police practices used in Germany to precisely target travelling families and to identify ‘gypsies’ using racial standards.

On July 9, 1941, the December 1937 decree on crime prevention was issued in Alsace.³² Two days later, the Strasbourg police internal report relayed the methods to be adopted to settle this policy: ‘gypsies’ and ‘mixed-race gypsies’ (*Zigeunermischlinge*) were to be registered by the Kripo services before the end of the month.³³ Thus, from the summer of 1941 onwards, in police discourses and practices, ‘gypsies’ were no longer mingled with ‘asocials’ and ‘homosexuals’ as repressive categories but were now subjected to a separate, targeted, and specific persecution. Although the result lists of this first racial census in the summer of 1941 remain unknown, the arrest cards of the Strasbourg Kripo, kept in the Bas-Rhin departmental archives centre, reveal the intensity and the temporalities

30 For the involvement of the German criminal police in racial policy implementation, see Patrick Wagner: *Volksgemeinschaft ohne Verbrecher: Konzeptionen und Praxis der Kriminalpolizei in der Zeit der Weimarer Republik und des Nationalsozialismus*, Hamburg: Christians, 1996. For the specific persecution towards ‘gypsies’, see idem.: “Kriminalprävention qua Massenmord. Die gesellschaftsbiologische Konzeption der NS-Kriminalpolizei und ihre Bedeutung für die Zigeunerverfolgung”, in Michael Zimmermann (ed.): *Zwischen Erziehung und Vernichtung. Zigeunerforschung und Zigeunerpolitik im Europa des 20. Jahrhunderts*, Stuttgart: Franz Steiner, 2007, 379–392; Marc von Lüpke-Schwarz: “Zigeunerfrei!” *Die Duisburger Kriminalpolizei und die Verfolgung der Sinti und Roma 1939–1944*, Saarbrücken: Dr. Müller, 2008; Johannes Kaiser: *Verfolgung von Sinti und Roma in Karlsruhe im Nationalsozialismus. Die städtische und kriminalpolizeiliche Praxis*, Karlsruhe: Info, 2020.

31 “Organisationsplan der Kriminalpolizei Strassburg”, 05.07.1941, R70-Elsass 19, Federal Archives, Berlin-Lichterfelde (henceforth: BArch). Translation by the author.

32 Guenter Lewy: *The Nazi persecution of the Gypsies*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000, 81.

33 *Meldeblatt* of the Strasbourg criminal police, 11, 11.07.1941, 400D 77/11, ADBR.

of the 'gypsy' policy on an urban scale and document police identification practices in annexed Alsace.

Composed of nearly 5300 individual cards, the Strasbourg Kripo arrest file unveils the repressive devices against criminality and provides information on the civil status (surname, first name, date, place of birth) and the circumstances of the arrest (year, place and motive) of individuals arrested between 1940 and 1944 in Alsace, mainly around the Strasbourg area.³⁴ The arrest motive constitutes a methodological key to enlighten the modalities of repression: it makes it possible to identify who, in the eyes of the Kripo, was perceived as a 'gypsy'. By collecting the cards which contain the term '*Zigeuner*' or '*Ausweisung*' (expulsion) as an arrest motive, the corpus of people arrested following these two categories comprises 232 individuals. Among them, 165 were arrested in the Strasbourg district in 1942.

Studying these 165 arrest forms outlines the evolution of the categories used by Kripo agents to treat the 'gypsy' presence during this specific year: 90 were categorized as 'gypsies' and 75 were expelled. Although only the year of the arrest is documented, each card contains two anthropometric mugshots (face and profile) with a unique identification number. This number refers to the chronological order of the mugshots taken by the Strasbourg Kripo photographic unit. By focusing on this data, it is then possible to discern a more precise temporality of the persecution policies towards 'gypsies'. For instance, Maria Reinhardt, born in 1912 in Bildstock (Sarre), was arrested in Strasbourg in 1942 as '*Zigeunerin*'. The number 66/42 appears on her mugshot which means that she was the 66th person to be photographed in 1942.³⁵

The Kripo mugshots of 1942 help to understand the temporality of the repression and the shift in the methods employed. By comparing an arrest card with the entry register of the Strasbourg prison, the moment of arrest can be determined. As an example, Rosa Siegler, born in 1905 in Strasbourg, was identified as '*Zigeunerin*' by the Kripo services in 1942 with the number 748/42.³⁶ She was incarcerated in the Strasbourg prison on August 8, 1942.³⁷ Thus, it can be assumed that other mugshots with a relatively close number were also taken in early August 1942. But connecting an identification number with a precise date remains uneasy since arrested individuals labelled as 'gypsies' were not necessarily incarcerated in the Strasbourg prison. Nonetheless, the chronological evolution of the arrest motives used by the Kripo can be approximated with this

³⁴ Arrest cards of the Strasbourg criminal police, 1940–1944, 757D 68–107, ADBR.

³⁵ Arrest card Maria Reinhardt, 1942, 757D 76, ADBR.

³⁶ Arrest card Rosa Siegler, 1942, 757D 77, ADBR.

³⁷ Custody register of the Strasbourg prison, 08.08.1942, 1184W 62, ADBR.

method and hints at a crucial policy shift regarding the police treatment of the Sinti and Roma population in annexed Alsace.

Table 1: Distribution of Arrest Motives Used by the Strasbourg criminal police in 1942 According to the Mugshot Number

Category Mugshot Number	' <i>Ausweisung</i> ' (expulsion)	' <i>Zigeuner</i> ' ('gypsy')	Total
0–747 (before 8 August 1942)	75	9	84
748–1272 (after 8 August 1942)	0	81	81

Before the 748th mugshot of Rosa Siegler taken on August 8, 1942, the Strasbourg Kripo unit had used the category expulsion 75 times whereas the 'gypsy' category was only used 9 times. Indeed, during the first part of 1942, expulsion practices remained the main means used by the German authorities to eliminate Alsace from its 'asocial and criminal elements'. The itinerary of the Geiger family exemplifies the first phase of 1942. Louis Geiger, a basket-maker born in 1881 in Alsace, was identified as a 'nomad' in 1928 by the French Haut-Rhin prefecture in Colmar.³⁸ In 1942, he was arrested in Strasbourg by the Kripo and photographed with the 429/42 mugshot number.³⁹ With his wife Caroline Secula and his two sons, he was later expelled to unoccupied France and reached Lyon on June 19, 1942 with a convoy of 132 individuals, composed mainly of Alsatian families who exercised an itinerant activity.⁴⁰ On June 20, 1942, in a report sent to the RSHA, the Strasbourg police stated that "125 gypsies"⁴¹ were evacuated to France during the previous week, and it is quite probable that this report referred to this specific expulsion convoy.

From the summer of 1942, the use of the 'gypsy' category by Kripo agents became exclusive. The German authorities in annexed Alsace decided to stop the expulsions and started to spot and immobilize Sinti and Roma families while awaiting a future decision. This shift corresponds to an order of the Stras-

³⁸ Individual anthropometric notice for Louis Geiger, 18.08.1928, 3AL2 118, ADHR.

³⁹ Arrest card Ludwig Geiger, 1942, 757D 87, ADBR.

⁴⁰ List of the 132 individuals expelled from Alsace, 19.06.1942, 3W 71, Archives départementales de la Moselle, Metz.

⁴¹ Strasbourg criminal police to the RSHA, 20.06.1941, 2963003, T-175/413, NARA. Translation by the author.

bourg Kripo issued on June 28, 1942 requiring a complete census of 'gypsies', 'mixed-race gypsies' and 'gypsy-like persons' to "definitively solve the gypsy question in Alsace".⁴² The local police stations received concrete instructions: they were asked to register all 'gypsy' persons over the age of six and to duly notify the nationality of the recorded individuals who were forbidden to leave their place of residence until further notice. To carry out this registration procedure, Kripo agents had to use the RKP 172 form, a specific document created in 1939 to implement the repressive measures established by Heinrich Himmler's decree for 'fighting the gypsy plague' (*Bekämpfung der Zigeunerplage*) issued on December 8, 1938, in Germany. These nominative reports contained individual data such as civil status, family ties and nationality. However, the information collected on this form was adapted to the presumed 'gypsy' lifestyle: the 'gypsy nickname' (*Zigeunername*) is noted as well as the type of housing and the regional travel areas of the censused person. No such reports have been identified yet for Alsace but the required use of this specific form by Kripo agents enlightens the transfer of the same German police methods regarding the 'gypsy' policy in an annexed territory. It can be presumed that this racial registration in Alsace was the expression of a broader and coordinated census operation of the Sinti and Roma present in the recently conquered territories as a similar event occurred in Prague in July 1942 when German criminal police forces decided to achieve a racial registration specifically dedicated to identifying 'gypsy' people living in this urban area using the same identification methods.⁴³

After the December 16, 1942, order of Heinrich Himmler – known as the 'Auschwitz Decree' – and following the January 15, 1943, meeting regarding the execution of the collective deportation of Sinti and Roma from the Reich,⁴⁴ the RSHA issued a report to all Kripo departments (except Vienna) on January 29, 1943, to specify the conditions of the identification of individuals concerned by this measure.⁴⁵ In this document, Alsace was specifically mentioned as a ter-

⁴² Strasbourg criminal police to the Mulhouse criminal police, 28.06.1942, 3AL3 24077, ADHR. Translation by the author.

⁴³ Aletta Beck and Michal Schuster: "Die Verfolgung von Roma und Sinti im Protektorat Böhmen und Mähren". Available at: <https://www.holocaust.cz/de/geschichte/rom/die-verfolgung-der-roma-nach-der-errichtung-des-protektorats-boehmen-und-maehren/>. Last accessed: 09.05.2021.

⁴⁴ On this meeting, see Karola Fings: "A 'Wannsee Conference' on the Extermination of the Gypsies? New Research Findings Regarding 15 January 1943 and the Auschwitz Decree", in *Dapim. Studies on the Holocaust*, 27, 2013, 174–194.

⁴⁵ Report of the RSHA on the "Einweisung von Zigeunermischlingen, Rom-Zigeunern und balkanischen Zigeunern in ein Konzentrationslager", 29.01.1943, 1.2.7.26/82342449 – 82342453/ITS Digital Archive, Archives Nationales.

ritory where the deportation order should be implemented. To apply this central decision, the Strasbourg Kripo made several targeted arrests of Sinti and Roma families and deported 61 individuals, labelled as ‘gypsies’, to the ‘Zigeunerlager’ of Auschwitz-Birkenau on March 22, 1943. However, not all the people recorded by the police ‘gypsy census’ of the summer 1942 were deported from annexed Alsace as the mention ‘Zigeunererfassung’ (‘gypsy census’) appears 105 times on the Kripo arrest cards. The central hypothesis – as will be explained in the following section – is that the deportation only affected censused ‘gypsies’ with at least one relative who had been previously racially registered and identified as a ‘mixed-race gypsy’ in Germany during the pre-war years.

Racial Identifications and the Deportation of ‘Gypsies’ from Annexed Alsace, 1943 to 1944

Rosenbach, Franz, Wesel, Blum, Gerste, Braun and Freiwald: as mentioned above, these are the seven family names of the 61 deportees arrested by the Strasbourg Kripo and sent to Auschwitz in March 1943. Genealogical and patronymic investigations made by Kripo officers played a key role in the racial identification and selection of ‘gypsies’ to be deported from annexed Alsace. These police inquiries relied on the racial surveys conducted by a central institution created in 1936 and dedicated to the registration of Sinti and Roma living in Germany: the RHF.⁴⁶

On 5 February 1941, Robert Ritter, head of the RHF, published an article whose title translates to “The inventory of gypsies and mixed-race gypsies in Germany”.⁴⁷ There he unveiled his project for the identification and subsequent registration of Sinti and Roma living in Germany. The idea of collecting data regarding the racial characteristics of an entire group is connected to a broader dynamic of total census and classification of the German population promoted

⁴⁶ On the RHF see Zimmermann, *Rassenutopie und Genozid*, 125–146; Martin Luchterhandt: *Der Weg nach Birkenau. Entstehung und Verlauf der nationalsozialistischen Verfolgung der “Zigeuner”*, Lübeck: Schmidt-Römhild, 2000, 123–137; Eve Rosenhaft: “Wissenschaft als Herrschaftsakt. Die Forschungspraxis der Ritter’schen Forschungsstelle und das Wissen über Zigeuner”, in Zimmermann (ed.): *Zwischen Erziehung und Vernichtung*, 329–353; Karola Fings and Frank Sparing: *Rassismus – Lager – Völkermord: Die nationalsozialistische Zigeunerverfolgung in Köln*, Cologne: Emons, 2005, 109–194.

⁴⁷ Robert Ritter: “Die Bestandsaufnahme der Zigeuner und Zigeunermischlinge in Deutschland”, in *Der Öffentliche Gesundheitsdienst*, 21, 477–489, 611/3/10, Wiener Library, London. Translation by the author.

by the Nazi authorities.⁴⁸ In his article, Ritter argued for the necessity of labelling 'gypsy' people to implement racial policies and presented his methodology to distinguish 'pure gypsies' from 'mixed-race gypsies'. According to him, the census of the entire 'gypsy' population could be completed in a year since, so far, 10,000 racial individual reports had been sent by the RHF to the Reichskriminalpolizeiamt (Headquarters of the Criminal Police, RKPA), the main office responsible for the 'fight against the gypsy plague' ('*Bekämpfung des Zigeunerunwesens*'). The results of racial surveys conducted by members of the RHF in previous years were used as reference records by the criminal police stations. Ritter's statements underline the key role of the RHF in the identification and racial determination process of the targeted 'gypsies' and the decisive involvement of this research center in the Sinti and Roma genocide.⁴⁹ For instance, in 1937 and 1938, RHF agents conducted several racial censuses and investigations in multiple Rhine cities such as Karlsruhe, Mannheim, Freiburg or Herbolzheim. Using genealogy and anthropometry, RHF racial anthropologists and Kripo police officers worked together to identify, register, and categorize more than 1,000 Sinti living in the Rhine area using a complex racial classification with numerous variations between a 'pure gypsy', a 'mixed-raced gypsy' and a 'non-gypsy'.⁵⁰

The racial inquiries realized by the RHF for Alsace were most likely based on the results of the Strasbourg police 'gypsy census' which recorded 105 individuals between the summer of 1942 and spring 1943. To achieve this racial census, Kripo agents completed the RKP 172 questionnaires and sent the documentation to RHF services in Berlin for further racial investigations. As the RHF collected and gathered anthropometrical and genealogical data on the 'gypsy' families living in Alsace, members of this institution carried out inquiries within their centralized records and archives. The case of the Gerste family exemplifies the circulation of collected data between central institutions and local police stations regarding 'gypsy' individuals. At the beginning of 1943, six members of the Gerste family were arrested in the Strasbourg area and labelled as 'gypsies' by

48 Götz Aly and Karl Heinz Roth: *Die restlose Erfassung. Volkszählen, Identifizieren, Aussondern im Nationalsozialismus*, Frankfurt am Main: S. Fischer, 2000.

49 On Robert Ritter, see Joachim S. Hohmann: *Robert Ritter und die Erben der Kriminalbiologie. "Zigeunerforschung" im Nationalsozialismus und in Westdeutschland im Zeichen des Rassismus*, Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 1991, 133–216; Tobias Schmidt-Degenhard: *Vermessen und Vernichten. Der NS-"Zigeunerforscher" Robert Ritter*, Stuttgart: Franz Steiner, 2012.

50 "Hilfskarteien: Sinti aus Süddeutschland, Rheinland, Mitteldeutschland", 1937–1940, R165 6, BArch.

the Strasbourg Kripo (see fig. 2).⁵¹ According to their birthplaces, the Gerste family was originally from Thuringia. The presence of three of them in Mainz was documented in February 1938 as their names were mentioned on a blood exam list compiled by Gerhart Stein, one of the main racial investigators of the RHF.⁵² Consequently, RHF researchers built up the genealogical tree of the Gerste family in 1942 and proved that they should be considered as ‘mixed-race gypsies’.⁵³ Therefore, according to the instructions sent by the RSHA on January 29, 1943, the Gerste family was concerned by the deportation order as they could be identified as German ‘mixed-race gypsies’. Arrested by the Strasbourg Kripo, the Gerste family was deported to Auschwitz on March 22, 1943, where none of them survived.

Similarly, previous racial registrations conducted by the RHF led to the identification of the Wesels who were also considered as ‘mixed-race gypsies’ by the genealogical investigations of the RHF.⁵⁴ According to the death certificate issued by the Auschwitz registry office, Alfred Wesel (born 1904 in Eydtkuhnen) and Maria Winter (born 1902 in Leipzig) had their fifth child in November 1941 in a Moselle town named Château-Salins, which proves that this family was present in the annexed area during the war.⁵⁵ A few months earlier, on February 13, 1941, Rudolf Wesel, Alfred’s father, was summoned to the Berlin Kripo station to be questioned about his family ties.⁵⁶ Presented as a ‘mixed-race gypsy’, Rudolf Wesel was forced to give all the information he knew about his relatives (names, surnames, nicknames, places and dates of birth) and to specify the relationships between them. He recognized that the Wesel patronym was an alias and that his parents were in fact named Höhdel. Upon identifying his six children, he stated that he did not know where his son Alfred lived. The police report of Rudolf Wesel’s interrogation highlights what Michael Zimmerman defined as a “scientific-police complex”⁵⁷ by underlining the close connections between the Kripo’s genealogical inquiries and racial research aimed at identifying ‘gypsy’ families conducted by the RHF across Germany. Therefore, the arrest and identification of the Wesels in Alsace demonstrate the ability of the Kripo services to

51 For one example, see: Arrest card Adolf Gerste, 1943, 757D 87, ADBR.

52 Nominative list of the blood exams conducted in Mainz by Gerhart Stein, February 1938, R165 38, BArch.

53 Genealogical materials Gerste, 1942, R165 145, BArch.

54 Genealogical materials Wesel, 1942, R165 148, BArch.

55 Death certificate for Otto Wesel, 1.1.2.1/514697/ITS Digital Archive, Archives Nationales.

56 Police interrogation report of Rudolf Wesel, 13.02.1941, in File of the Berlin criminal police on the Wesel family, 1.2.2.1/12102896/ITS Digital Archive, Archives Nationales.

57 Zimmermann, *Rassenutopie und Genozid*, 147–155, here 147. Translation by the author.

17. Sprache:	Name: <u>Gerste</u>
18. Mundart:	Vorname: <u>Adolf</u>
19. Mäßige Merkmale:	Eltern:
linke Hand:	Spitzname: <u>Zigeunerverfassung</u>
rechte Hand:	Verf.-Gruppe: <u>Zigeunerverfassung</u>
Geßel: <u>Senkrechte Narbe auf der Oberlippe</u>	anfeindendes: <u>angegeb. Alter:</u> <u>Sehr</u>
Stals:	geb.: <u>15.10.1872</u>
Gonßige Eigenheiten:	Geburtsort: <u>Wulfelade</u>
20. „Eigenständige Namensunterchrift“:	Arbeits und Stand: <u>Neustadt a. Rubenberg</u>
	Staatsangehörigkeit:
	Glaubensbekenntnis: <u>(auch bekannt)</u>
	Wohnort:
	Wohnenommen in <u>Strasbourg</u> am <u>1943</u>
	Part.-Mitgl.: <u>Nein</u>

Bei Entnahme dieser Karte aus dem Akten II, ist ein mit Währungszeichen, Datum und Unterschrift versehener Zettel einzulegen.

DNV A 3 (148-152 mm)
Vertrieb 1943: 15.

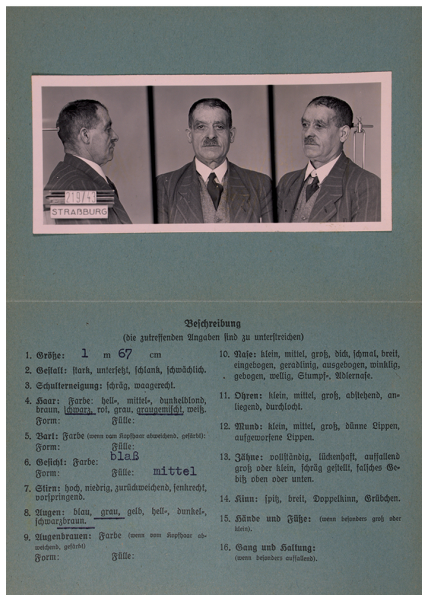


Fig. 2: Arrest card of Adolf Gerste, 1943, 757D 87, Archives départementales du Bas-Rhin, Strasbourg.

weave a network of data exchanges concerning 'gypsy' families all across Germany, including recently annexed territories.

In annexed Alsace, the deportation of March 1943 concerned exclusively 61 individuals who had already been spotted by the Kripo offices and the RHF in previous years. It was because these families were formerly registered in German police records and racial archives as 'mixed-race gypsies' that the Strasbourg Kripo deported them to Auschwitz-Birkenau in 1943. On the contrary, some fam-

ilies who were identified during the ‘gypsy census’ of 1942 were not deported because the German authorities did not have records on them and were not able to issue genealogical findings linked to the racial ‘gypsy’ classification. According to their birthplaces during the interwar period, the non-deported individuals censused had mainly pre-war French anchorages whereas the 61 deportees essentially came from Germany. Therefore, in March 1943, the principal target of the Strasbourg Kripo – when it came to carry out the roundups and organize the deportation – was firstly directed towards individuals previously identified as ‘mixed-race gypsies’ and of German origin.

Of the seven members of the Wesel family deported to Auschwitz on March 22, 1943, only one survived the concentration camp system. In 1955, Hugo Wesel, born in 1925 in Dresden, filled out inquiry forms to the International Tracing Service (ITS) for his relatives and stated that he and his family had been arrested in Strasbourg on March 11, 1943.⁵⁸ This postwar information on the temporality of the urban arrestations given by a survivor is a fundamental clue to document precisely the chronology of the deportation policy in Alsace as the regional archives do not unveil any chronological information on the Strasbourg Kripo arrest practices at this very moment. In the same perspective, the Buchenwald prisoner registration form of Georg Rosenbach identifies March 14, 1943, as his arrest date in Colmar.⁵⁹ Moreover, the inquiry form regarding the fate of Conrad Franz sent by the Munich state compensation office to the ITS in 1956 stated that he was arrested in 1943 in Strasbourg during a ‘*Zigeuneraktion*’ (police action against ‘gypsies’).⁶⁰ Although these are fragmentary or postwar materials, they roughly shape the chronological framework of the roundups and suggest that the Kripo agents may have executed the targeted arrests in less than a week.

The spatiality of these urban persecutions can be traced with the death certificates issued by the Auschwitz registry office. Although there are a few variations, four deceased deportees indicate “Kronenburg, Oberhausbergerstrasse Nr. 74”⁶¹ as their last residence. This location is confirmed by the Buchenwald prisoner registration card of Toni Franz which mentions “Strassburg-Kronenburg

58 Tracing inquiry from Hugo Wesel, 26.04.1955, in T/D file Alfred Wesel, 6.3.3.2/99448520/ITS Digital Archive, Archives Nationales.

59 Prisoner registration form of Georg Rosenbach, Buchenwald, 1.1.5.3/6946697/ITS Digital Archive, Archives Nationales.

60 Tracing inquiry for Conrad Franz, 22.05.1956, in T/D file Conrad Franz, 6.3.3.2/101646933/ITS Digital Archive, Archives Nationales.

61 For an example, see death certificate for Amanda Franz, Auschwitz-Birkenau, 1.1.2.1/578185/ITS Digital Archive, Archives Nationales.

Hausbergerstr. 74"⁶² (see fig. 3). Furthermore, this address is noted for individuals tied to different families, meaning that they were present together at the same place before being deported from Strasbourg.

KL: keiner - Buchenwald **Signaturen:** [Signature]

Häftlings-Personal-Karte

Fam.-Name: Franz **Überstellt** am: 19.4.44 an KL: Ravensbrück **Personen-Beschreibung:**

Vorname: Toni **geb. Blum** am: 23.4.95 in: Trebnitz **Größe:** 178 **cm**

Stand: Kinder: **Gestalt:** edel

Wohnort: Grossbürg-Kronenburg **am: 13.9.44 an KL: Buchenwald** **Gesicht:** oval

Strasse: Hausbergerstr. 74 **am: 14.10.44 an KL: Buchenwald** **Augen:** braun

Religion: Staatsang.: 9.2. **am: 14.10.44 an KL: Buchenwald** **Nase:** gerad

Wohnort d. Angehörigen: in K.L. Auschwitz **am: 14.10.44 an KL: Buchenwald** **Mund:** norm.

Eingewiesen am: 23.2.43 **am: 14.10.44 an KL: Buchenwald** **Ohren:** "

durch: Kripo Strasbourg **am: 14.10.44 an KL: Buchenwald** **Zähne:** vollst.

in KL: Auschwitz **am: 14.10.44 an KL: Buchenwald** **Haare:** braun

Grund: absichtlich 2.ig in **am: 14.10.44 an KL: Buchenwald** **Sprache:** deutsch

Verstraft: mit Verfügung v.: **Entlassung:** am: durch KL:

Strafen im Lager: **Bemerkung:**

Grund: **Art:** **Bemerkung:**

1.1.5.4/7562572/ITS FOTO No. 10330

16/54

Fig. 3: Prisoner Registration Card of Toni Franz, Buchenwald, 1.1.5.4/7562572/ITS Digital Archive, Archives Nationales, Paris.

Comparing these geographical data with the resident registration file of the Strasbourg municipality allows us to map more precisely the presence of the deported families inside the urban area. These resident registration cards attest that out of all 61 deportees, 39 of them were housed in Cronenbourg and 11 in Strasbourg.⁶³ They were registered at these two specific locations between November 17, 1942, and March 5, 1943. And on March 19, 1943, each card indicates the same phrase: "has been deported to a labor camp for an unknown period with his family"⁶⁴.

The Cronenbourg place is in the northwestern suburbs of Strasbourg, beyond the central railway station. According to the city's 1939 street directory,

⁶² Prisoner registration card of Toni Franz, Buchenwald, 1.1.5.4/7562572/ITS Digital Archive, Archives Nationales.

⁶³ Resident registration file of the Strasbourg municipality, 1940–1944, 624MW 1–67, Archives de Strasbourg.

⁶⁴ For an example, see resident registration form for Leopold Franz, 1943, 624MW 16, Archives de Strasbourg. Translation by the author.

this address refers to a former military hospital built in 1891 and composed of five barracks and one administrative building.⁶⁵ In 1929, the Strasbourg municipality acquired this site, surrounded by its original wall, to convert it into social housing.⁶⁶ It can be assumed that in 1943, the Strasbourg Kripo authorities used this facility, which could be easily secured and guarded, to gather 'gypsy' families arrested in the area. The assumption that Cronenbourg's former military hospital was a place of assignment can be sustained by the information given by a Gerste relative after the war. When submitting inquiries to the ITS for the deported Gerste family in 1958, August Gerste indicated that they resided near Saarlouis, in Saarland, before being arrested in 1943.⁶⁷ The arrest of the Blum family is a further argument for thinking that the Cronenbourg address may not have been the real residence of the deported 'gypsy' families. Their mugshots provide time and spatial indications as they were taken outdoor.⁶⁸ Moreover, the Kripo photographer added a blackboard behind the individual with the exact date and place. The women of the Blum family were photographed on October 22, 1942, in Haguenau, a town located in northern Alsace. Furthermore, one of the deportees gave birth to a child in the city's hospital in February 1942.⁶⁹ The birth certificate issued by the Haguenau municipality indicates that the mother was domiciled in Ittlingen, in Baden, whereas her death certificate in Auschwitz points out the Cronenbourg address.⁷⁰ The gathering of spatial data with Arolsen materials and local sources regarding the deportees from the Strasbourg area in March 1943 confirms that the targeted families lived in different places in Alsace and Sarre. Their arrests were probably due to their economic mobility at a time when the Strasbourg Kripo was keeping a watchful eye on the 'gypsy question'. As such, the arrested families may have been 'preventively' gathered at Cronenbourg for further racial examinations in late 1942 and early 1943 before being selected and deported.

⁶⁵ Street directory of Strasbourg, 1939, 1BA 1939, Archives de Strasbourg.

⁶⁶ Former Cronenbourg military hospital: housing development project, 1929–1930, 843W 616, Archives de Strasbourg.

⁶⁷ Tracing inquiry from August Gerste, 28.08.1958, in T/D file Alwine Gerste, 6.3.3.2/104406185/ITS Digital Archive, Archives Nationales. On the death certificate issued by the Sonderstandesamt (special registry office) in Arolsen in 1971, the place of residence of Alwine Gerste is Saarlouis.

⁶⁸ For an example, see Arrest card of Pauline Blum, 20.10.1942, 757D 69, ADBR.

⁶⁹ Birth certificate for Waltraud Freiwald, 19.02.1942, Mairie de la ville de Haguenau.

⁷⁰ Death certificate for Emma Freiwald, 16.11.1943, Auschwitz-Birkenau, 1.1.2.1/578308/ITS Digital Archive, Archives Nationales.

Conclusion

The Strasbourg criminal police's racial identifications played a key role in the deportation of Sinti and Roma from Alsace as police services progressively collected knowledge on the 'travelling worlds' of this borderland area. Using census methods and referring to the records of the *Rassenhygienische Forschungsstelle* in Berlin, Kripo services first led the repression towards the identified and selected German 'gypsy' individuals who had been previously registered. The Strasbourg deportation of March 1943 was embedded in the broader context of the Sinti and Roma genocide as coordinated deportation convoys were organized in Western Germany. For instance, on March 10, 1943, the Karlsruhe criminal police planned the deportation of a convoy from Herbolzheim scheduled for March 24, 1943.⁷¹ Similarly, on March 15, 1943, a convoy left the Stuttgart railway station for Auschwitz-Birkenau.⁷² The destruction and dislocation of these families were part of the genocidal dynamic triggered by the German authorities in spring 1943. With the involvement of Kripo officers, this policy was at the same time applied in annexed Alsace.

The 61 deportees from Strasbourg arrived at Auschwitz-Birkenau on March 22, 1943, where the death of 33 of them was documented between April 4, 1943, and May 21, 1944, within the registry book of the 'gypsy camp'. The fate of 14 individuals remains unknown whereas 14 others were later transferred to Buchenwald or Ravensbrück. The examination of ITS inquiries shows that at least nine of them survived through the war. While there are no administrative records, correspondences or police orders related to the deportation of this group in the French departmental archives, documents from the Arolsen Archives shed light on the spatial and chronological trajectories of this specific group. The study of the implementation of the genocidal policies in annexed Alsace underlines the methods used by the German repressive forces to project onto this borderland space their own conception of 'gypsies', product of their racial imaginary and former police methods. Registration of presumed 'gypsies', gathering of individual and familial data, transmission of records from Stras-

71 The Documentation and Cultural Centre of German Sinti and Roma: "'Rassendiagnose: Zigeuner'. Der Völkermord an den Sinti und Roma und der lange Kampf um Anerkennung". Available at: <https://www.sintiundroma.org/de/set/022211a/?id=2591&z=13>. Last accessed: 08.05.2021.

72 Magdalena Guttenberger and Manuel Werner: *"Die Kinder von Auschwitz singen so laut!" Das erschütterte Leben der Sinti Martha Guttenberger aus Ummenwinkel*, Norderstedt: Books on Demand, 2020, 204.

bourg to Berlin, inquiries into genealogical materials, and selections for deportation: these police and bureaucratic operations show how brutally the German racial ideology found its own spatial expression in a recently annexed Western European borderland territory.