

Kristina Vagt

The Deportation of Sinti and Roma from Hamburg and Northern Germany to the Belzec Forced Labour Camp in the ‘*Generalgouvernement*’ of 1940

Abstract: On May 16, 1940, criminal police offices in three different regions of the Reich arrested up to 2,500 Sinti and Roma and, over the days that followed, deported them to the ‘*Generalgouvernement*’. Up to 1,000 people in northern Germany – Hamburg, Schleswig-Holstein, Bremerhaven, and the Weser-Ems region – were affected. They were deported to the Belzec forced labor camp, then to another camp after a few weeks, and then left to fend for themselves. For most of them, a story of persecution ensued through various ghettos and concentration camps. Many of those concerned were murdered. This deportation of Sinti and Roma persecuted on racial grounds is still relatively unknown. This article provides an account of the discrimination and registration of the Sinti and Roma by the Criminal Police and the Rassenhygienische Forschungsstelle illustrated using the example of northern Germany. It highlights new approaches to the research. Accessing personal documents such as compensation records and the inventories of the Arolsen Archives has made it possible to research individual persecution destinies. It is a process that was implemented for the *denk.mal Hannoverischer Bahnhof* documentation centre project in Hamburg. A memorial site was inaugurated there in 2017, listing the names of the Jews and the Sinti and Roma deported from Hamburg and northern Germany between 1940 and 1945.

Introduction

In a landmark compensation case brought in January 1956, the Federal Court of Justice (Bundesgerichtshof, BGH) ruled that “the resettlement of gypsies from the border zone and neighbouring areas to the ‘*Generalgouvernement*’ (‘General Government of Poland’) carried out in April 1940 does not constitute a Nazi act of violence on racial grounds pursuant to § 1 of the *Bundesentschädigungsgesetz* (Federal Compensation Act)”.¹

¹ Judgements of 07.01.1956, reprinted in Bundesgerichtshof and Zentralrat Deutscher Sinti und Roma (eds.): *Doppeltes Unrecht – eine späte Entschuldigung. Gemeinsames Symposium des Bun-*

The measure carried out in May 1940, euphemistically referred to as a ‘resettlement’ by the Nazis (a term re-employed in the 1956 ruling), was the first such family deportation of Sinti and Roma, and it affected a total of some 2,500 women, men, adolescents, and children. Included in the number were as many as 1,000 affected persons from northern Germany, approximately 930 from western Germany, and approximately 490 from south-western Germany. They were arrested without prior notification, not as early as April 1940 as cited in the quotation, but on 16 May 1940, and then taken to three central assembly centres in Hamburg, Cologne and Hohenasperg (north of Stuttgart). From there they were subsequently deported to three different destinations in ‘*Generalgouvernement*’ between May 20 and 22.

A striking aspect of the grounds given for the 1956 ruling issued by West Germany’s supreme court – apart from the fact that it is riddled with antiziganist stereotypes – is that it denied the Sinti and Roma any recognition as a victim group and judged the persecution and deportation to be legitimate in that it was a strategy aimed at ‘crime prevention’. Indeed, “experience has shown” that the persons concerned “had exhibited a tendency to criminality, particularly theft and fraud; they frequently lacked the moral urges of respect for the property of others since, like primitive beings, they had inherent within them an uninhibited instinct for occupation”.² The judgement meant that a female plaintiff and a male plaintiff were denied compensation payments for their deportation from the Rhineland in May 1940.

The judgement was revised in 1963, but it was not until 2015 – i.e. 59 years after the 1956 landmark ruling of the BGH – that BGH President Bettina Limperg issued an official apology to the Central Council of German Sinti and Roma, finding strong words at a symposium jointly organized by the BGH and the Central Council in 2016: “It is a ruling to be ashamed of, and an indefensible dispensation of justice”.³

desgerichtshofs und des Zentralrats Deutscher Sinti und Roma zu den Urteilen vom 7. Januar 1956, Karlsruhe, 2016, 46–67, here 46. Translation by the author.

² Ibid., 62. Translation by the author.

³ Detlev Fischer: “Die Urteile des Bundesgerichtshofs vom 7. Januar 1956 – Entscheidung, Vorgeschichte und Entwicklung”, in Bundesgerichtshof und Zentralrat Deutscher Sinti und Roma (eds.): *Doppeltes Unrecht – eine späte Entschuldigung. Gemeinsames Symposium des Bundesgerichtshofs und des Zentralrats Deutscher Sinti und Roma zu den Urteilen vom 7. Januar 1956*, Karlsruhe 2016, 25–40. Translation by the author. Cf. the condensed assessment of the discriminatory practices against the Sinti and Roma group and the insufficient compensation payments, in Karola Fings: *Sinti und Roma. Geschichte einer Minderheit*, Frankfurt am Main: C.H. Beck, 2016, 96–98.

The deportation and the ensuing period of persecution during which many deportees were sent to ghettos as well as concentration and extermination camps where they were later murdered, the treatment of this persecuted group by society after 1945 and the restitution and compensation practice all had far-reaching consequences for the survivors and their families as well as the victims' relatives. Using the example of the May 1940 deportation from northern Germany, this contribution aims to outline the research as it currently stands and present the results from the project *denk.mal Hannoverscher Bahnhof documentation centre* in Hamburg.⁴ After a brief overview of the existing research and the desiderata, I will look at the process of name reconstruction, describe the campaign of arrests in Hamburg and northern Germany, and the deportees' enforced stay at the Belzec⁵ labor camp. I will then focus on the survival strategies adopted by the deportees following their release and their subsequent fate during the Nazi era before finally addressing the public remembrance of the May 1940 deportation.⁶

Existing Research and Desiderata

The historian Michael Zimmermann had previously looked at the May 1940 deportation for his groundbreaking study entitled *Rassenutopie und Genozid* (Racial Utopia and Genocide), based on a wide variety of source material.⁷ Karola Fings and Frank Sparing have comprehensively presented the process of exclusion and, among others, the deportation from Cologne and the Rhineland.⁸ Ulrich Prehn has taken a closer look at, in particular, the co-operation between the Hamburg criminal police, the welfare authorities, and other offices and au-

4 The documentation centre will be part of the Foundation of Hamburg Memorials and Learning Centres Commemorating the Victims of Nazi Crimes.

5 The German spelling of the forced labor camp is being used rather than the Polish spelling of the town of Belzec in order to highlight the fact that we are dealing here with a German camp.

6 Translation of this article by Stephen Grynwasser, Vienna.

7 Michael Zimmermann: "Rassenutopie und Genozid. Die nationalsozialistische 'Lösung der Zigeunerfrage'", in *Hamburger Beiträge zur Sozial- und Zeitgeschichte*, 33, 1996. See also the account of the May 1940 deportation in Karola Fings: Die Bedeutung der "Mai-Deportation" für den Verfolgungsprozess und ihre Deutung nach 1945. Lecture given at the seminar "Die Verfolgung der Sinti und Roma im öffentlichen Gedächtnis" in Mannheim on 22.05.2010 (unpublished manuscript), 13–17. I am grateful to her for her kind permission to use the manuscript.

8 Karola Fings and Frank Sparing: "Rassismus, Lager, Völkermord. Die nationalsozialistische Zigeunerverfolgung in Köln", in *Schriften des Dokumentationszentrums Köln*, 13, 2006.

thorities in Hamburg.⁹ With regard to northern Germany, previous research into the May deportation focused mainly on Hamburg as the departure point.

For the May 1940 deportation from northern Germany as a whole, especially from Schleswig-Holstein, Bremerhaven, and the Weser-Ems region, on the other hand, numerous research questions remain open, even though greater attention has been paid in recent years to the group of persecuted victims in these regions. Various individuals and initiatives have conducted research on site into those affected by persecution and deportation, and the mechanisms of persecution. In some cases, this was done also in contact with relatives and in consultation with Sinti and Roma associations.¹⁰

With regard to the institutions involved in the organization, numerous research desiderata remain relating not just to the region of northern Germany, but also to the persecution of the Sinti and Roma as a whole. At the level of the Reich, this is true of the Reichszentrale zur Bekämpfung des Zigeunerunwesens (Reich Central Office for Combating the Gypsy Nuisance) at the Reichskriminalpolizeiamt (RKPA, Reich Criminal Police Office) as well as the Rassenhygienische Forschungsstelle in Berlin. At the local level, it concerns the Dienststellen für Zigeunerfragen (Departments for Gypsy Issues) at the Kriminalpolizeistellen (Criminal Police Investigation Departments) and Kriminalpolizeileitstellen (Criminal Police Headquarters) as well as various local offices and authorities. Another set of questions concerns the subsequent fates of the deportees as of autumn 1940; indeed, after the transfer from the Belzec forced labor camp and after an enforced stay of several weeks at the Krychow prison, the deportees were left to

⁹ Cf. Ulrich Prehn: "... dass Hamburg mit als erste Stadt an den Abtransport herangeht." Die nationalsozialistische Verfolgung der Sinti und Roma in Hamburg", in *Die Verfolgung der Sinti und Roma im Nationalsozialismus – Beiträge zur Geschichte der nationalsozialistischen Verfolgung in Norddeutschland*, 14, 2012, 35–54. My warmest thanks to Ulrich Prehn for reading this contribution and for his advice. See also Roger Repplinger: "Hat sich besondere Kenntnisse in der Bearbeitung des Zigeunerunwesens erworben." Der Kriminalinspekteur Krause im Nationalsozialismus und in der Bundesrepublik", in *Zeitschrift für Geschichtswissenschaft*, 12, 2017, 1049–1070.

¹⁰ For example, the initiatives and private individuals in Neumünster, Lübeck, and Hans Hesse in Bremerhaven and Oldenburg sought to get in touch with survivors and descendants of the deported. Investigative research into individual deportees is currently under way in Lübeck and is to be incorporated into a publication. Email from Elisabeth Esser to the author, 09.06.2021, cf. also the brochure by Manfred Bannow-Lindtke: *Bruder Sinti, Schwester Roma. Ein Jahrhundert zwischen Diskriminierung und Verfolgung. Zur Geschichte der Sinti und Roma im 20. Jahrhundert in Lübeck*, Lübeck: Interkulturelle Begegnungsstätte Lübeck, 2000.

their own devices.¹¹ What happened to the deportees? Where did they stay? How many died, and how many survived?

Reconstructing the Names

Any systematic study of the persecution destinies of those affected by the deportation is predicated on knowing their names. A large number of those deported in May 1940 from northern Germany to the Belzec forced labor camp via Hamburg were successfully researched for the memorial site *denk.mal Hannoverscher Bahnhof* and within the context of the preparations for its eponymous documentation centre. The memorial established in 2017 at the site of the former Hamburg railway station known as the *Hannoverscher Bahnhof* commemorates more than 8,000 Jews, Sinti and Roma who were deported to ghettos, concentration camps and extermination camps in Central and Eastern Europe. The plaques at the memorial also list all those who lived beyond the Hamburg greater metropolitan area and were deported via Hamburg.¹²

However, it has proved impossible to find all the names of those deported to Belzec as there is no known overall transport list. But a list of names with Hamburg residents has been preserved, apparently reconstructed by the RKPA after the original list had been destroyed as a result of the effects of war.¹³ The archives of the Amt für Wiedergutmachung (Office for Restitution and Compensation) of the Committee of Former Political Prisoners were also consulted as a complementary source.¹⁴ In addition, first-person documents and interviews

¹¹ No systematic research has yet been carried out in the Polish archives.

¹² Oliver von Wrochem: "Gedenkort und Dokumentationszentrum denk.mal Hannoverscher Bahnhof in Hamburg: Entstehungsgeschichte und Vermittlungskonzept", in Alexander Kraus, Aleksandar Nedelkovski and Anita Placenti-Grau (eds.): *Ein Erinnerungs- und Lernort entsteht. Die Gedenkstätte KZ-Außenlager Laagberg in Wolfsburg*. Frankfurt am Main/New York: Campus, 2018, 195–213.

The memorial plaques also mention the names of the Jews deported from Hamburg and those of the more than 300 Sinti and Roma who had been deported to camp section BIIe at the Auschwitz-Birkenau extermination camp in March 1943. The names of some 30 people – mostly children – who were deported to the same destination in April 1944 are also listed.

¹³ Gypsies previously resident in Hamburg and resettled to the 'Generalgouvernement' on 20.05.1940, 331–1 II Police Authorities II 456, Staatsarchiv Hamburg (StAHH). The deportation lists are said to have been destroyed in summer 1943. Cf. e.g. Kriminalamt an das Amtsgericht in Hamburg-Altona, Betr. Maria Winter, alias Emma Rosenbach, 16.02.1957, 331–1, 1782, StAHH.

¹⁴ The original files are in the archive of the Union of Persecutees of the Nazi Regime/Federation of Antifascists Land Association of Hamburg and were digitized by the Neuengamme Concentration Camp Memorial.



Fig. 1: *denk.mal Hannoverscher Bahnhof* memorial site with *Fuge* (gap, fugue) and plaques. Photograph: Kati Jurischka.

with survivors were included for the purposes of matching up and identifying the names of Hamburg residents.¹⁵

Of those deported from Schleswig-Holstein, 207 names complete with biographical details are known from a list compiled after 1945, based on ‘racial reports’ of the Rassenhygienische Forschungsstelle.¹⁶ After the memorial was completed, it also proved possible to research the names of the Sinti and Roma living in Flensburg, Bremerhaven, and the Weser-Ems region who had been deported via Hamburg in May 1940.¹⁷ The names of the approximately 41 deportees from Flensburg were reconstructed using street registers from the Flensburg municipal archives in which the deportees had been identified using the handwrit-

15 In the project *Transgenerational Transmission of History. Building Blocks for the Future of the Recollection of National Socialism in the Migration Society* of the Neuengamme Concentration Camp Memorial, Karin Heddinga conducted interviews with descendants, also on the subject of the persecution of the Sinti and Roma.

16 Expert opinions of the Race Hygiene Research Centre of the Reich Health Office in Berlin-Dahlem (transcript, undated), 331–1_II_928, StAHH. The list also includes those who had remained at their place of residence as well as individuals who had been deported to the Auschwitz extermination camp via Hamburg on March 11, 1943.

17 These names are to be added to the plaques at the *denk.mal Hannoverscher Bahnhof* memorial site at a later date.

ten note “Deported on 16.5.40”¹⁸. A total of 257 persons are known to have been deported from Schleswig-Holstein.¹⁹ For the partial transports from Bremerhaven and the Weser-Ems region, the historian Hans Hesse has so far managed to research 138 names on behalf of the Neuengamme Concentration Camp Memorial, mainly by analysing compensation records in the Oldenburg and Bremen state archives.²⁰ On the strength of this research, Hesse presented a memorial book in 2021 with the names of the women, men and children deported from Bremerhaven and the Weser-Ems region.

These new findings show that the number previously assumed by the research, i.e. 910 persons, was too low and that up to 1,000 people in total were affected.²¹

Campaign of Arrests in Hamburg and Northern Germany

The May 1940 deportation was preceded by a gradual process of definition of the term ‘Zigeuner’ (‘gypsy’) over many years, of recording people who were then

18 My thanks to the Flensburg municipal archives for identifying and providing the street registers in January 2018: I D 156 Streets, Vol. 194 (Valentinerallee), Flensburg Municipal Archives. In addition, two more families comprising a total of nine persons from the Flensburg and Schleswig area are known from various sources. Cf. Stephan Linck: *Der Ordnung verpflichtet. Deutsche Polizei 1933–1949. Der Fall Flensburg*, Paderborn: Ferdinand Schöningh, 2000, 94–96; Umzugs-Abmeldebestätigung der Stadt Schleswig, 02.12.1941, Archiwum Akt Nowych Waszawa AAN, 433.

19 For Schleswig-Holstein, the assumption has so far revolved around 200 persons, cf. Zimmermann, *Rassenutopie*, 73.

20 Hans Hesse: “... Wir sehen uns in Bremerhaven wieder ...” *Die Deportation der Sinti und Roma am 16./20. Mai 1940 aus Nordwestdeutschland, Gedenkbuch zur nationalsozialistischen Verfolgung der Sinti und Roma aus Nordwestdeutschland, Teil 1*, 27, Bremerhaven Municipal Archives: Bremerhaven, 2021.

21 Zimmermann indicates 200 persons for Schleswig-Holstein, cf. Zimmermann, *Rassenutopie*, 173. In doing so, he also refers to the “Übersicht über die in Deutschland lebenden Zigeuner und Zigeunermischlinge”, reprinted in Hermann Arnold: *Die NS-Zigeunerverfolgung. Ihre Ausdeutung und Ausbeutung. Fakten – Mythos – Agitation – Kommerz*, Aschaffenburg, undated, 32. The original is to be found in Zsg 142/22–1, BA. I am indebted to Karola Fings for the reference to the printed source. A total of 257 people from Schleswig-Holstein were researched as part of the *denk.mal Hannoverscher Bahnhof* project. It cannot be ruled out that other individuals or families were deported. The urgent instruction is reprinted in Linde Apel (ed.): *In den Tod geschickt. Die Deportationen von Juden, Roma und Sinti aus Hamburg 1940 bis 1945*, Berlin: Metropol, 2009, 74.

persecuted as such, of disciplining them through compulsory labor, of ousting them from the urban environment, and of criminalizing this particular group of people as a whole.²² The process itself did not simply begin the moment the Nazis came to power; indeed, it had gradually been gathering pace and given a legal underpinning from 1933 onwards. In June 1938, some 100 male Sinti and Roma were arrested in Hamburg among other cities as part of a Reich-wide campaign entitled '*Arbeitsscheu Reich*' ('Reich work-shy'). Plans for a camp in the Hamburg metropolitan area were drawn up as of the summer of 1939. By this point, forced labor camps had already been established in other cities.²³ But in autumn 1939, the Hamburg plans were shelved when, during an internal meeting, the police commissioner Walter Bierkamp gave notice of the contents of an urgent instruction dated October 17, 1939.²⁴ Indeed, it set out an arrest decree with which the Reich Main Security Office ordered the registration of all 'gypsies' and 'gypsies of mixed blood' on fixed days from October 25 to 27, 1939 and also their 'final removal' at a time as yet undefined.²⁵ The local police authorities and gendarmeries were to instruct Sinti and Roma not to leave their place of residence. They collected their personal data and compiled the database for subsequent deportations. The database itself was further expanded in co-operation with the Rassenhygienische Forschungsstelle established at the Reich Health Office in Berlin in 1936, to which we will return later.

It was in this situation that the Hamburg Gauleiter, Karl Kaufmann, took the initiative for the deportation of all Hamburg Sinti and Roma. His plans were to have 1,000 Sinti and Roma deported 'to Poland' from the Hamburg metropolitan

22 Extensive research on the measures adopted to exclude and persecute the Sinti and Roma group in Hamburg was carried out in the inventories of the Hamburg State Archives as part of the exhibition 'In den Tod geschickt. Die Deportationen von Juden, Roma und Sinti aus Hamburg 1940 bis 1945'. See the exhibition catalogue: Apel, *In den Tod geschickt*.

23 A camp in Cologne-Bickendorf, completed in 1935, became a template for other cities, see Karola Fings and Frank Sparing: "Rassismus, Lager, Völkermord. Die nationalsozialistische Zigeunerverfolgung in Köln", in *Schriften des Dokumentationszentrums Köln*, 13, 2006, 68–80. In northern Germany, too, Sinti and Roma were required to move, sometimes forcibly, as for example in Flensburg in 1935, cf. Sebastian Lotto-Kusche: "... daß für sie die gewöhnlichen Rechtsbegriffe nicht gelten". Das NS-Zwangslager für 'Zigeuner' in Flensburg und dessen Wahrnehmung in der Stadtbevölkerung", in *Demokratische Geschichte. Jahrbuch für Schleswig-Holstein*, 28, 2017, 225–238.

24 Minutes of the meeting on 20.10.1939 with the Reich Governor, 351–10 I, AF 83.73, StAHH, quoted in Prehn, *Abtransport*, 51, footnote 43.

25 Urgent instruction issued by the Reich Main Security Office, Berlin, to the State Criminal Police – Criminal Police Headquarters and Departments, 17.10.1939, 153–154, 331–1 II, 455, StAHH.

area.²⁶ To this end, Bierkamp contacted Bruno Streckenbach, the former head of the Hamburg Gestapo who was, at that point, the commander of the Sicherheits-polizei (Security Police) and SD in Krakow, to explore ways of expelling said Sinti and Roma from Hamburg.²⁷

Initiatives in favor of, and negotiations on, the expulsion and deportation of Sinti and Roma are also known from other cities. In January 1940 for instance, Richard Zaucke, an employee of the Reichszentrale zur Bekämpfung des Zigeunerunwesens (Reich Central Office for Combating the Gypsy Nuisance), was in Graz for the planned deportation of Sinti and Roma from the Burgenland to the ‘*Generalgouvernement*’, scheduled for February 1940.²⁸ Zaucke was meant to be on site in Hamburg in May 1940 on behalf of the Reich Criminal Police Office for the deportation of the Sinti and Roma from Hamburg and northern Germany.²⁹

However, the plans to deport Sinti and Roma as well as Jews from the Reich territory to the ‘*Generalgouvernement*’ initially failed due to the resistance of ‘*Generalgouverneur*’ Hans Frank, who was keen to prevent the newly created administration of the ‘*Generalgouvernement*’ now under his administration from becoming ‘overstretched’.³⁰ By early 1940, there were differing interests within the various Nazi institutions with regard to the Sinti and Roma. The Wehrmacht wanted to expel the Sinti and Roma from the regions near the border, fearing that this particular group might engage in espionage. The espionage attributed to the Sinti and Roma was a trope that went back a long way in history.³¹ By con-

26 Minutes of the meeting between police commissioner (senior government advisor Bierkamp, superintendent Lyss, police inspector Schmidt) and the social services administration (senior senate councillor Bornemann) on 12.12.1939, 351–10 I, AF 83.74, StAHH.

27 Meeting between police commissioner and social services administration, 12.12.1939, 351–10 I, AF 83.74, StAHH, cf. Prehn, Abtransport, here 42–43.

28 Gerhard Baumgartner: “Projektentwurf: Dezentrale nationalsozialistische ‘Zigeunerlager’ 1939–1945 auf dem Gebiet des heutigen Österreich”, 6–7. Available at: https://www.doew.at/cms/download/8v3s6/gb_projektentwurf.pdf. Last accessed: 24.07.2022.

29 Zaucke was presumably transferred from the RKPA to Vienna in 1941. That year, he was the criminal director of the Vienna Criminal Police Headquarters and, in that capacity, involved with the ‘Lackenbach Gypsy Camp’. He was there on site when, on November 4, 1941, the first transport convoy of Sinti and Roma to the Litzmannstadt (Łódź) ghetto was dispatched, cf. Florian Freund, Bertrand Perz and Karl Stuhlpfarrer: “Das Ghetto in Łódź”, 63–64, 66. Available at: https://zeitgeschichte.univie.ac.at/fileadmin/user_upload/i_zeitgeschichte/Publikationen/Endbericht-Lodz_ro.pdf. Last accessed: 24.07.2022.

30 Zimmermann, Rassenutopie, 176.

31 See the sub-chapter “Die Wehrmacht und das Klischee vom spionierenden Zigeuner” in Zimmermann, Rassenutopie, 193–199; also, Karola Fings: “Die Bedeutung der ‘Mai-Deportation’ für den Verfolgungsprozess und ihre Deutung nach 1945”. Lecture given at the seminar “Die Verfol-

trast, by January 1940, the head of the Rassenhygienische Forschungsstelle, Robert Ritter, was urging forced sterilization. This measure was also favoured by Reich Medical Leader Leonardo Conti as a Nazi policy instrument towards the Sinti and Roma aimed at excluding them from the '*Volksgemeinschaft*', or national community.³²

In view of the Reich-wide plans for deportation, Ritter pushed ahead with the registration and examination of 2,000 Sinti and Roma from early 1940 onwards. The results were to be included in a 'gypsy clan archive'. From March to early May 1940, task forces called on the homes of Sinti and Roma residents in western and northern Germany to sound out their personal data and family kinships and take anthropological measurements.³³ To this end, staff members determined the hair and eye colour, measured body parts, recorded the data on special index cards, took fingerprints, and photographed each individual. For those examined in this way, these procedures were a humiliation and an indignity. Records show that one such task force was in Hamburg over the period April 25 to May 4, 1940. Shortly thereafter – on May 6 and 7, 1940 – Robert Ritter, Karl Moravek and at least one assistant – presumably Eva Justin – interviewed at least 21 residents of a Sinti and Roma wagon yard in Neumünster.³⁴

Heinrich Himmler's Rapid letter dated April 27, 1940 referencing the previous such instruction dated October 17, 1939 finally gave orders for the deportation of 2,500 individuals across the Reich. The relevant 'Guidelines for the Resettlement of Gypsies' contained criteria for the selection of those to be deported and the implementation method.³⁵ The administration of the '*Generalgouvernement*'

gung der Sinti und Roma im öffentlichen Gedächtnis" in Mannheim on 22.05.2010 (unpublished manuscript).

32 Zimmermann, *Rassenutopie*, 159, 171; Fings and Sparing, *Rassismus*, 196–198.

33 Fings and Sparing, *Rassismus*, 201; cf. on the research practice also Barbara Danckwort: "Wissenschaft oder Pseudowissenschaft? Die 'Rassenhygienische Forschungsstelle' am Reichsgesundheitsamt", in Judith Hahn, Silvija Kavčič and Christoph Kopke: *Medizin im Nationalsozialismus und das System der Konzentrationslager*, Frankfurt am Main: Mabuse, 2005, 140–164.

34 Lists of Sinti and Roma registered by the *Rassenhygienische Forschungsstelle* in Hamburg and Neumünster, R 165–45, BArch. In Hamburg the registration dates were April 25, 26, 27, 29, 30 and May 1, 2, 3; in Neumünster: 06. and 07.05.1940. Some of the daily lists bear the stamp "Collection of H. Arnold" Surviving index cards of medical examinations in Hamburg and Neumünster bear the abbreviation "Dr. Mo" for Dr Karl Moravek, R 165–211, BArch. Photographs of the interventions at the wagon yard in Neumünster have also survived: Film Archives of the Federal Archives, R 165, 72 IV (old signature), BArch. On the photographs Robert Ritter and presumably Eva Justin are seen.

35 Urgent instruction issued by the RFSSuChdDtPol in RMdI, Berlin, to the Criminal Police Headquarters and Departments in Hamburg, Bremen, Hanover, Düsseldorf, Cologne, Frankfurt

was not included in the planning and was to be notified only shortly before the actual deportation.³⁶

At 4 am on May 16, 1940, criminal police officers assisted by ordinary policemen began arresting women, men, adolescents and children in their homes across northern Germany and took them to the local police stations and, from there, to Fruit Warehouse C in the Free Port of Hamburg. In her testimony before the Hamburg Committee of Former Political Prisoners in 1946 Therese Rosenberg gave an insight into what it was like to experience the ordeal of this utterly surprising and violent raid:

The police officers burst into the flat brandishing pistols and demanded that we immediately accompany them to the *Stadthaus*. My husband explained that if anyone had to go to the station, it was him, and that his wife and children should stay at home. My husband was then threatened with truncheons. So I now had to get myself and the children ready and we were then put into a car and driven to the *Stadthaus*. There we were interrogated and then taken to Fruit Warehouse C. Even though we had a doctor's report stating that one of the children was seriously ill with double pneumonia and that three were bedridden with measles and were not fit to be transported, Krause declared that the children had to come along.³⁷

Those to be deported were selected by officers of the criminal police headquarters and the criminal police stations. Many families with children were affected, but also individuals. Also among the deportees were some 25 women without husbands, with a total of around 100 children of different ages. Some of the husbands had already been arrested as part of the '*Arbeitsscheu Reich*' campaign in 1938 and had not returned from concentration camp detention.³⁸ A number of individual persons joined the transport voluntarily, such as a married couple

am Main and Stuttgart on 27.04.1940, 331–1 II, 455, re: resettlement of gypsies, folio 165–168, StAHH.

36 Zimmermann, *Rassenutopie*, 176–177.

37 Statement given by Therese Rosenberg, 06.07.1946, folio 7, StAnw LG – Strafsachen, 19075/64, 213–11, StAHH. Translation by the author. This statement and others incriminated *Kriminalobersekretär* Kurt Krause, former head of the *Zigeunerdienststelle* (Department for Gypsy Affairs) at *Kommissariat* BK 2 of Criminal Investigation Division I A of the Hamburg Criminal Investigation Department, who at the time was still in the police service.

38 Author's own count and from random sampling. Example of Bertha Bamberger, whose husband Julius Bamberger died in 1940. Also Dunga Otto, whose husband Stefan Otto had been arrested during the '*Arbeitsscheu Reich*' campaign and died at Mauthausen concentration camp on 12.05.1940. See *Freies Radio Neumünster*: "Zeitreise: Wir erinnern heute an Elisabeth Otto genannt 'Lilli'". Available at: <https://freiesradio-nms.de/2020/zeitreise-wir-erinnern-heute-an-elisabeth-otto-genannt-lilli/>. Last accessed: 24.07.2022.

from Flensburg who, because of their old age, could have stayed but chose to accompany their adult children and their families.³⁹

As an employee of the Reichskriminalpolizeiamt in Berlin, the aforementioned Richard Zaucke was seconded to the Hamburg Fruit Warehouse; at the Reichszentrale zur Bekämpfung des Zigeunerwesens he was responsible for the deportation of 'anti-social elements', prostitutes, Roma and Sinti to concentration camps.⁴⁰ It is unknown whether an employee of the Rassenhygienische Forschungsstelle was on site as planned.⁴¹

At the Hamburg Fruit Warehouse, all those detained there were registered in a 'master list' complete with serial number. Identification papers such as ID cards, work books and military passes were confiscated "to prevent escape attempts wherever possible".⁴² Instead, certificates were issued for all persons aged 14 and over, specifying their first name, surname and name at birth, date and place of birth, the classification 'Zigeunermischling' or 'Zigeuner', a fingerprint of the right index finger, and a serial number assigned to each person. They also bore the signature "Dr Zaucke"⁴³ and an RKPA rubber stamp. Affixed to the back of the certificate was the person's photograph, stamped by the Hamburg Criminal Investigation Department. Thereafter, the holders were required to carry the certificates with them wherever they went so they could identify themselves at all times.

Those detained at the Fruit Warehouse were promised houses, land and cattle in Poland.⁴⁴ This information, designed to assuage, was also provided in Cologne to those interned there on the trade fair premises.⁴⁵ By the same token,

39 Transcript of the interview with Helene K. née Weiss, No. 47/2, 2, Sinti and Roma in Lower Saxony collection of interviews, Lower Saxony Memorials Foundation.

40 Patrick Wagner: "Volksgemeinschaft ohne Verbrecher. Konzeptionen und Praxis der Kriminalpolizei in der Zeit der Weimarer Republik und des Nationalsozialismus", in *Hamburger Beiträge zur Sozial- und Zeitgeschichte*, 34, 1996, 340. In Cologne, Josef Ochs of the RKPA was in charge of the overall supervision, cf. Fings and Sparing, *Rassismus*, 202, 211.

41 In Cologne, a total of 120 people, including criminal police officers and ordinary policemen, soldiers, SS men, and other auxiliary staff such as nurses were deployed for the arrest and medical examination, Fings and Sparing, *Rassismus*, 203.

42 Urgent instruction issued by the RFSSuChdDtPol in RMdI, Berlin, to the Criminal Police Headquarters and Departments in Hamburg, Bremen, Hanover, Düsseldorf, Cologne, Frankfurt am Main and Stuttgart on 27.04.1940, re: resettlement of gypsies, folio 167, 331–1 II, 455, StAHH. Translation by the author.

43 Archiwum Państwowe w Lublinie, Generalgouvernement, Lublin District, 203.

44 Prehn, *Abtransport*, 45.

45 Fings and Sparing, *Rassismus*, 206.



Fig. 2: Certificate for Sophie Berta Rose, née Laubinger, State Archive Bremen, 4,54-E-7295.

they were forbidden from returning and threatened “to be taken into preventive police custody if they were to return without permission”.⁴⁶

The mass arrest of some 550 people in Hamburg and their transport in buses through the Hamburg metropolitan area did not go unnoticed by the population. Luise Solnitz, a resident of Hamburg whose husband was persecuted as a Jew, recorded the following in her diary on May 16, 1940: “At the Handlungshilfenverein⁴⁷ large omnibuses drove past us, – at last some excursionists. With the police

⁴⁶ State Criminal Police to the District Administrator of Verden District, Re: Resettlement of Gypsies, 13.11.1940, 3/18d, Verden District Archives. Translation by the author.

⁴⁷ The reference is actually to the *Handlungsgehilfenverein* (association of sales assistants).

at the front and then the gypsies, and last of all their belongings. Evidently, they are being put in some camp somewhere.”⁴⁸ On May 20, 1940, she also mentioned the Sinti and Roma in connection with the air raids on Hamburg:

With every description I get, I am more and more convinced that Hamburg has been taken by surprise, or has allowed itself to be taken by surprise, that since the tremendous battle in the West, the defences have been weaker, that the flak and searchlights have lessened. [...] People blame talkative gypsies; some have observed their deportation.⁴⁹

This statement could be an indication that, as with the population of Cologne, the Sinti and Roma were blamed for the air raids. In Cologne, they had allegedly used bed sheets to signal the location of a chemical factory to the British planes.⁵⁰ This invoked once again the ‘cliché of the spying gypsy’, which the Wehrmacht had invoked already during the first half of 1940 to promote the deportation of the Sinti and Roma from the western territories.⁵¹

Belzec Forced Labor Camp in the ‘*Generalgouvernement*’ of 1940

The commander of the Ordnungspolizei in Krakow had informed the internal administration of Lublin District of the transport’s imminent arrival, but only two days before it was scheduled to depart Hamburg. A telegram stated: “1,000 gypsies to arrive between 22nd and 24th. Destination station Belzec Tomaszow District”⁵². They were to be housed at the newly established forced labor camp at Belzec in the border area with Soviet-occupied western Galicia. A few days later, the first Jews arrived from nearby.

Once the train had arrived from Hamburg, the men among the deportees were forced to dig an antitank ditch on the orders of the SS border guards’ construction command. According to survivors, 70 to 80 deportees died of weakness over the first few weeks, including many children.⁵³

⁴⁸ Diary of Luise Solmitz (transcripts), entry dated 16.05.1940, 551, Archive of the Research Centre for Contemporary History in Hamburg (FZH). Translation by the author.

⁴⁹ Ibid., entry dated 20.05.1940, 553. Translation by the author.

⁵⁰ Fings and Sparing, *Rassismus*, 227.

⁵¹ Zimmermann, *Rassenutopie*, 171–172.

⁵² Handling of gypsies 1939–1940, police teletype, Lublin Regiment, 18.05.1940, 203, Archiwum Państwowe w Lublinie. Translation by the author.

⁵³ According to the survivor Luise Schalle in her statement of 1946, cf. Prehn, *Abtransport*, 44.

SS men – including *Volksdeutsche* (ethnic Germans) – guarded the camp and inflicted all manner of violence on the prisoners. The SS locked the deportees inside a large shed, along with Polish Roma and Jews who presumably arrived a little later from Lublin and Piaski. Due to the catastrophic living conditions, the upper echelons of the administration hierarchy decided in mid-July 1940 to transfer the German Sinti and Roma to the former Polish prison at Krychow, north-east of Lublin. In the justification for the decision, particular mention was made of the fact that, among those who had arrived from the Reich, were “war veterans and also party comrades”, some of whom were even married to “German women”.⁵⁴ The Polish Roma, for their part, had to remain at the Belzec forced labor camp, which was dissolved in October 1940. It was near this site that the SS established the Belzec extermination camp in late 1941, in which initially Jews from eastern Poland, but then also Roma, were murdered.⁵⁵

In Krychow, the deportees were assigned to moor drainage and canalisation work. Most of them were released in autumn 1940. It is still unclear whether this was done solely on the instructions of the SS or whether it was a joint decision with the civil administration.⁵⁶ From this point on, the deportees from Hamburg went their separate ways and developed different strategies in order to survive.

Survival Strategies and Murder

In his study *Rassenutopie und Genozid* (Racial utopia and genocide), Michael Zimmermann had described patterns of survival strategies and the persecution destinies of the deportees from northern Germany in May 1940.⁵⁷ For decades, however, systematic access to personal sources that could have provided information about these persecution stories was blocked. These dossiers have become more easily accessible in recent years. They include files from the inventories of the Amt für Wiedergutmachung (Office for Restitution and Compensation),

⁵⁴ Niederschrift der Dienstversammlung der Kreis- und Stadthauptleute des Distrikts Lublin, 18.07.1940, ZS, AR 540/83, 95–96, cited in Zimmermann, *Rassenutopie*, 180 (translation by the author); Agnieszka Caban and Ewa Koper: *Die Geschichte der Rom*inja und Sint*izze in den Arbeits- und Vernichtungslagern in Belzec*, Belzec: Ministry of Administration and Digitalization in Poland, 2020.

⁵⁵ Robert Kuwałek: *Das Vernichtungslager Belzec*, Berlin: Metropol, 2014, 59–78.

⁵⁶ Zimmermann, *Rassenutopie*, 180–181.

⁵⁷ Zimmermann has analyzed extensive files on the fate of the Hamburg and northern German deportees from the Lublin and Warsaw municipal archives, which my colleague Sarah Grandke also examined on site for the purposes of our project: Archiwum Akt Nowych Waszawa, AAN, 433.

which are now kept by the Hamburg State Archives and are largely accessible in an online database.⁵⁸ The inventories of the Arolsen Archives are also relevant to the question of which stops came after the first two camps and which individuals became caught up in the concentration camp system.⁵⁹ As part of the *denk.mal Hannoverscher Bahnhof* project, the more than 900 names known to date have been compared with the inventories held by the Arolsen Archives to verify the personal data and obtain quantitative and qualitative data on the subsequent stops after the forced detention at the Belzec forced labor camp. The aim was to provide a systematic overview of how many of the 1,000 or so people became caught up in the camp system and lost their lives, and how many survived. By evaluating the individual case files in the inventories held by the Arolsen Archives – a process which is, however, still ongoing – as well as the compensation files, it has been possible to obtain a more precise idea of the persecution destinies after the first two stops, namely the Belzec forced labor camp and the Krychow labor camp.

In principle, those deported from the Reich were supposed to find accommodation with farmers in the immediate vicinity following their detention in the autumn of 1940 and then try and make a living for themselves. The individuals in question tried to hold their own under the most difficult circumstances and to ensure their survival as well as that of their families. While there are no known instructions for the systematic persecution and murder of the Sinti and Roma deported from Germany to Poland in 1940⁶⁰, many people did get caught up in the concentration camp system and a large number of them were murdered.

Some of the deportees attempted to obtain official recognition as Reich Germans within the ‘*Generalgouvernement*’ in order to be able to apply for clothing or food ration cards. Time and again, the men sought to emphasize their status as world war servicemen. Rudolf and Robert Weiss from Hamburg for instance, who worked at a sawmill in Starachowice, applied for food ration cards from the Main Food and Agriculture Department of the government of the ‘*Generalgouvernement*’ in Krakow on December 13, 1942. The men stated their occupation as skilled workers, referred to themselves as ‘Reich Germans’ and produced their ID papers. They further substantiated their status by mentioning their serv-

58 State Archives Hamburg: “Online Recherche”. Available at: <https://recherche.staatsarchiv.hamburg.de>. Last accessed: 02.02.2022.

59 Remote access has made it possible to conduct research into all the names of the deportees known to date. This resulted in 640 hits in the database, many of which comprised reference cards.

60 Zimmermann, *Rassenutopie*, 183.

ice record as soldiers in the First World War. However, the arguments they put forward fell on deaf ears with the authorities and, eventually, the Schutzpolizei withdrew their ration cards and their identity papers.⁶¹

Others tried to return to their place of residence within the Reich. Several such cases from Hamburg, Schleswig-Holstein, Bremerhaven and the Weser-Ems region are known.⁶² Mention should be made, by way of example, of Katharina Rose, who prior to her deportation had lived with her partner and three children in a village near Flensburg. In autumn 1940 her partner, who as a non-Sinto had not been deported, applied to the local authorities for her return. When this was not granted, he sent her the tickets, whereupon she managed to return to her partner with two daughters while her son was deemed as missing in Poland. Back in the Reich, however, she was arrested once again after just a few weeks. Richard Zaucke of the Reich Criminal Police Office was again responsible, as he had ordered her 'preventive police detention' in a letter dated January 24, 1941.⁶³ Katharina Rose was arrested in 1941 and sent to Ravensbrück concentration camp, where she lost her life in June 1944.⁶⁴

Other individuals and families who returned to the Reich territory were arrested already in the border region. The aforementioned Therese Rosenberg and her family were caught on the other side of the border and sent to prison. From there her husband was dispatched to Sachsenhausen concentration camp, where he died in 1942. Therese Rosenberg was sent to Ravensbrück concentration camp. Her children were later sent to camp section BIIe at the Auschwitz-Birkenau death camp⁶⁵, the so-called gypsy camp, which had been set up separately for the Sinti and Roma in spring 1943.⁶⁶ Rigo Rosenberg's prisoner index card from Buchenwald concentration camp indicates that he was commit-

61 Application submitted by Rudolf and Robert Weiss, Starachowice, for the issue of German food ration cards, 08.04.1943, AAN 433, Archiwum Akt Nowych Waszawa.

62 Cf. also on Fridolin and Auguste Laubinger with their children and a brother of Auguste Laubinger: Hesse, Bremerhaven, 110–113.

63 Investigation proceedings 2 a Js 175/49 by the Flensburg public prosecutor's office, RKPA letter, 24.01.1941, 354/784, Landesarchiv Schleswig-Holstein (LASH).

64 Linck, Ordnung, 94–96; Björn Marnau and Stephan Linck: "Im Januar 1944 in Kielce/Polen verstorben". Die Flensburger 'Zigeuner' in den Jahren 1922 bis 1945", in *Ausgebürgert. Ausgegrenzt. Ausgesondert. Opfer politischer und rassistischer Verfolgung in Flensburg 1933–1945*, Flensburg: Stadt Flensburg, 1998, 190–222.

65 Office for Restitution and Compensation, file on Rigo Rosenberg, 351–11_46472, StAHH.

66 TD file on Marie Rosenberg, 6.3.3.2/86845652/ITS Digital Archive, Arolsen Archives. The youngest daughter was born in Grünberg in Silesia in February 1941.

ted to Auschwitz concentration camp by the Breslau Kriminalpolizei, presumably on 5 May 1942.⁶⁷ Seven children were murdered in Auschwitz.

As the family of Richard Weiss from Hamburg shows, many families were literally torn apart. The family had initially remained longer in Krychow than other families as Cilentia Weiss was giving birth at the time of their release. They moved to Chelm, 40 km away, where Richard Weiss found employment as a forestry worker. He was subsequently arrested during a raid by the SD and taken back to Krychow; his family was sent to the Siedlce Ghetto. Richard Weiss fled from Krychow and, according to his own statement, hid with partisans. In the end, he managed to return to his family in Siedlce. His wife was later murdered at Treblinka extermination camp. When the Siedlce ghetto was established, Weiss went to Radomek with his three surviving children. During an SD raid, Ernst and Erich Weiss were arrested. Richard Weiss was forcibly recruited into the SS special unit Dirlewanger.⁶⁸ He fled from there, searched for his two surviving sons and returned with them to Hamburg in June 1944.⁶⁹

In summer 1944, a number of those who had been deported from Hamburg to the '*Generalgouvernement*' returned to the Hanseatic City. On September 11, 1944, for example, the Department IV Economics and Food of the Inner City Office in Hamburg reported 16 such 'returning emigrants' from Lublin. They had come to the Department's notice when they applied for food ration cards.⁷⁰ In the letter it is assumed that they represent an 'undesirable influx (gypsies)'. The returning male Sinti and Roma were assigned to work as part of Organization Todt; the women were put to work in the waste materials industry.⁷¹

By contrast, other individuals or families remained in Poland and, in some cases, returned only years later to the Federal Republic of Germany or the German Democratic Republic.⁷² Others still remained in Poland altogether, such

⁶⁷ Rigo Rosenberg's prisoner index card from Buchenwald concentration camp, 1.1.5.3/6949008/ITS Digital Archive, Arolsen Archives.

⁶⁸ The Dirlewanger *Sondereinheit* (special unit), named after Oskar Dirlewanger, was a notorious unit into which Sinti and Roma were drafted, especially towards the end of the war. It was deployed in the fight against the Soviet army, see Zimmermann, *Rassenutopie*, 296 and 347.

⁶⁹ Office for Restitution and Compensation, file on Richard Weiss, 351-11_55870, StAHH.

⁷⁰ Notification regarding the influx of returning emigrants, 11.09.1944, 377-10_I_A_b_IV_7_n, StAHH.

⁷¹ Re: influx of gypsies from Lublin who at the time were resettled in the East at the instigation of the Reich Criminal Police Office Berlin, 01.09.1944, folio 1, 377-10_I_A_b_IV_7_n, StAHH. Translation by the author.

⁷² This is true, for example, of Katharina Rose's son, who was eight years old at the time of the deportation. Through the tracing service of the German Red Cross, contact was made in the 1960s with a sister in the Federal Republic of Germany and another in the German Democratic

as Adolf Brühl, who was deported from Lübeck as a child together with his mother and siblings.⁷³

The preliminary analysis of compensation files and inventories in the Arolsen Archives suggests that more people survived the Belzec forced labor camp, the subsequent enforced stay at Krychow and other stays than had previously been assumed. Earlier estimates that 80 per cent of those deported from Hamburg to Belzec did not survive seem to have been overestimated.⁷⁴

Remembrance Culture

Commemorative reminders in the public space that reference the lives and persecution of the Sinti and Roma and their deportation in May 1940 are still few and far between. This is particularly true of Hamburg and the region of northern Germany as a whole. In Hamburg, for example, very few memorial plaques mark the sites of persecution. The first plaque in Hamburg's urban environment to refer to the May 1940 deportation is located at the site of the former Nöldekestrasse police station in the Harburg borough. It was inaugurated in 1986 by the Rom und Cinti Union Hamburg and commemorates those deported from Hamburg-Harburg. A second plaque was created in 2001 as part of the programme of *Sites of Persecution and Resistance 1933–1945* of the Hamburg Department for the Protection of Historical Monuments. It marks the location of the Fruit Warehouse as an assembly centre for those deported in May 1940 and also refers to the two further deportations of Sinti and Roma in 1943 and 1944 to the Auschwitz-Birkenau extermination camp.⁷⁵ The aforementioned main memorial *denk.mal Hannoverscher Bahnhof* to the memory of the two per-

Republic. He moved to the GDR in the mid-1960s, cf. interview with Beate K., 05.12.2017, M2019–0015, Archive of the Neuengamme Concentration Camp Memorial.

73 Cf. the account given by the grandson of Karl Brühl, Andrzej Luczak, in Agnieszka Caban and Ewa Koper, *Geschichte der Rom*nja und Sint*izze*, 63–64.

74 Michael Zimmermann, *Rassenutopie*, 183–184, footnote 150; Zimmermann relies on an estimate by the Committee of Former Political Prisoners.

75 The plaque is the initiative of Viviane Wünsche, a schoolgirl who, as part of a history competition, had previously studied the story of the survivor Gottfried Weiss's persecution, cf. Viviane Wünsche: "'Als die Musik verstummte ... und das Leben zerbrach'. Das Schicksal der Harburger Sinti-Familie Karl Weiss im Dritten Reich, dargestellt nach Gesprächen mit Gottfried Weiß (2001)", in Viviane Wünsche, Uwe Lohalm and Michael Zimmermann: *Die nationalsozialistische Verfolgung Hamburger Roma und Sinti. Vier Beiträge*, Hamburg: Landeszentrale für politische Bildung, 2002, 81–102.

secuted groups who were deported, i.e. Jews and Sinti and Roma, has only existed since 2017.

Several plaques situated beyond the Hamburg city limits commemorate the May deportation: Bremerhaven since 1994⁷⁶, Kiel since 1997⁷⁷, Flensburg since 2008⁷⁸ and Neumünster since 2021.⁷⁹ In Belzec, too, a commemorative plaque to the memory of the murdered Sinti and Roma at the former forced labor camp was inaugurated in 2012, thanks in particular to the initiative of local protagonists. Employees of the museum and memorial in Belzec, which primarily but not exclusively feels that it has the responsibility for the site of the former extermination camp in Belzec, are also involved locally in commemorating and remembering the Sinti and Roma deported to the forced labor camp in 1940.⁸⁰

Outlook

As we have shown, much of the history of the deportation from Hamburg to Belzec in May 1940 has been researched. But there are still research desiderata. In particular, the subsequent fate of these deportees has thus far only been re-

76 Dokumentations- und Kulturzentrum Deutscher Sinti und Roma: “Gedenktafel für die deportierten und ermordeten Bremerhavener Sinti und Roma”. Available at: <https://verortungen.de/gedenkorte/bremerhaven-karlsburg/>. Last accessed: 24.07.2022.

77 Heiko Weis: “Gedenkstein für die deportierten und ermordeten Sinti und Roma”. Available at: <https://sh-kunst.de/gedenkstein-fuer-die-deportierten-und-ermordeten-sinti-und-roma/>. Last accessed: 24.07.2022.

78 Dokumentations- und Kulturzentrum deutscher Sinti und Roma: “Gedenktafel für die aus Flensburg deportierte Sinti-Familie Weiß”. Available at: <https://verortungen.de/gedenkorte/flensburg-norderstrasse-sinti/>. Last accessed: 24.07.2022.

79 The relevant initiative came from Ingo Schumann, to whom I am also indebted for many references to the fates and destinies of Sinti and Roma deported from Neumünster. See also the features on Elisabeth Otto, Maria Busch, née Weiß, and Wilhelm Thormann: Freies Radio Neumünster: “Zeitreise: Wir erinnern heute an Elisabeth Otto genannt ‘Lilli’”. Available at: <https://freiesradio-nms.de/2020/zeitreise-wir-erinnern-heute-an-elisabeth-otto-genannt-lilli/>. Last accessed: 24.07.2022; *ibid.*: “Zeitreise: Wir erinnern heute an Maria Busch, geborene Weiß”. Available at: <https://freiesradio-nms.de/2020/zeitreise-wir-erinnern-heute-an-maria-busch-geborene-weiss/>. Last accessed: 24.07.2022; *ibid.*: “Zeitreise. Wir erinnern heute an Wilhelm Thormann genannt ‘Sperling’ aus Neumünster”. Available at: <https://freiesradio-nms.de/2020/zeitreise-wir-erinnern-heute-an-wilhelm-thormann-genannt-sperling-aus-neumuenster>. Last accessed: 24.07.2022.

80 The brochure in four languages also describes the construction and official inauguration of the memorial, see Caban/Koper, Belzec, 80–88.

searched for some of those affected, and there is a lack of reliable information on how many of the deportees were later murdered. It would also be expedient to focus more on the experiences of the deported Sinti and Roma and their retrospective interpretations of the events that occurred in the ‘*Generalgouvernement*’. This would entail consulting and analysing first-person documents, existing interviews and published recollections.⁸¹ A systematic assessment of compensation files might be helpful in this regard as often they contain early written reports on the persecution destinies. This would also allow an analysis of how the 1956 BGH ruling was reflected in the practice of the reparations offices.⁸²

It would also be promising to examine the May deportation from a comparative perspective: the deportations from the three different regions of origin in northern Germany, in western Germany and in south-western Germany to the three different regions within the ‘*Generalgouvernement*’. For example, what sort of leeway did the local criminal police offices have in selecting those to be deported, and how did individual persecutees initially manage to escape deportation? Under what conditions did they continue to live in their places of residence, and what forms of persecution did they experience in the years that followed? As mentioned earlier, while many new insights into the deportees’ regions of origin have been gained in recent years, they need to be studied further, particularly with regard to the way in which the deportations were organized by the institutions and officials involved. More research into the deportees’ persecution destinies within the ‘*Generalgouvernement*’, to be conducted among Polish regional archives, would be apposite.

Finally, contextualising the May deportation with the first deportations of Jews from Vienna, Moravian Ostrava, and Katowice to Nisko in autumn 1939 and from Szczecin in February 1940 could provide new insights into the start of the deportations, their planning and implementation, and the subsequent persecution destinies of the deported victims in the ‘*Generalgouvernement*’ and be-

81 Several interviews are to be found in the collections of the Workshop of Memory at the Research Institute for Contemporary History in Hamburg and the Lower Saxony Memorials Foundation in Celle. In recent years, descendants of those deported have published the stories of their families’ persecution as well as the ways in which the families have addressed these issues: Tornado Rosenberg: *Vom Glück im Leben. Die Geschichte von Lani Rosenberg und Mama Blume*, Berlin: epubli, 2019; Ricardo-Lenzi Laubinger: *Und eisig weht der kalte Wind. Das Schicksal einer deutschen Sinti-Familie*, Berlin: KLAK, 2019.

82 The historian Sebastian Lotto-Kusche is currently investigating this issue using the example of applications for compensation for Sinti and Roma deported from Flensburg: See: Sebastian Lotte-Kusche: Zur Deportation der Sinti und Roma am 16. Mai 1940 aus Flensburg. Opferschicksale, Kämpfe der Überlebenden um Entschädigung und Strafverfolgung, in: *Grenzfriedenshefte*, 69, 2022, 3–38, 24.07.2022.

yond. Last but not least, the May 1940 deportation should also be viewed in conjunction with the deportations of Sinti and Roma in the wake of the Auschwitz Decree in December 1942.

One remit pertaining to commemoration policy might be to anchor the event more strongly among the general public through commemorative reminders in public spaces or through reporting, for example on the occasion of memorial days.