ACTIVIST MEMORY AND HUMAN RIGHTS: THE COMMEMORATION OF THE ROMA GENOCIDE IN LITHUANIA

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SUMMARY. This paper will focus on the intersection between the emerging memory of the Roma genocide and the human rights agenda in Lithuania. Transnational Roma genocide memory culture can be described as an activist memory. Various memory entrepreneurs fostering Roma genocide memory, especially NGOs, link remembrance to human rights (specifically, the human rights abuses experienced by the Roma communities) and the need to fight antigypsyism. Despite the rapid increase in Romani memorial practices in Europe during the last two decades and the development of activist memory regimes, similar phenomena in Lithuania so far has attracted very little scholarly attention. The paper sets out to address this gap in the literature on activist memory of the Roma genocide in Lithuania.

Lithuania's Roma community was severely affected by the Holocaust. Memorial practices focusing on the Roma genocide intensified around 2015, when, following a march by Roma activists and Holocaust survivors in Auschwitz-Birkenau, the European Parliament passed a resolution recognizing a memorial day commemorating the Roma genocide during World War II. In 2019, the Lithuanian government added the commemoration of the Roma genocide to its calendar of commemorative days. This paper will trace the development of the activist memory of the Roma genocide in Lithuania, and it will focus on the following questions: 1) What is activist memory, and what is its relationship to Holocaust memory? 2) Which actors started the creation of activist Roma genocide memory in Lithuania? Which strategies did they use? Were these strategies effective? 3) What is the relationship between the practices of the memorialization of the Roma genocide and human rights, specifically, the fight against strong societal prejudice against Roma in Lithuania?

It is argued that the emerging Roma memory regime in Lithuania has found a way to coexist with the local narrative about the Jewish Holocaust. The insertion of the stories about Roma suffering into the Holocaust narrative has helped to hybridize this narrative, turning it into a story about multiple traumas. The hybridization of the Jewish Holocaust narrative was significantly affected by international actors who promoted the inclusion of the narrative about the experiences of the Roma into the Jewish Holocaust narrative. Cooperation involving the Roma and Jewish communities in the coalition to promote human rights facilitated the emergence of his hybrid Holocaust memory.

KEYWORDS: Roma genocide, Holocaust, commemoration, historical memory, human rights.

INTRODUCTION

During the past several decades, scholars and practitioners have observed a relatively new global phenomenon—the rise of what Lea David has called "moral remembrance" (David 2020: 1). International organizations, states, societies and even non-state actors have been interested in finding the right way to face the past when dealing with various legacies of human rights abuses, such as genocide. It has been assumed that there is a right way to "face the past," and the memorialization of past abuses is intrinsically linked to human rights (including minority rights). Multiple international norms focusing on the best ways to confront the past and memorialize it have been developed by international and local actors. These norms have included confronting the past, forming group discussions about the past (especially in multiethnic societies), conducting trials of perpetrators, and issuing apologies and paying restitution to former victims. Some analysts, such as Elazar Barkan, describe these phenomena as a "new global trend of restitution for historical injustices" (Barkan 2000: x) changing identities and self-understanding of both individuals and groups worldwide and signaling "a potentially new international morality" (Barkan 2000: ix). The rise of this "new international morality" has been rooted in activist memory, conceptualized as a dynamic, living entity, embedded in society. Holocaust memory has been conceptualized as a type of "active" memory—not simply a narrative about the past, but also strongly linked to "present day concerns" as well as individual and collective identities (Levin 2016).

But can "proper memorialization" truly help to promote human rights, including minority rights? In other words, is there empirical evidence suggesting that "moral remembrance" helps to increase the well-being of individuals and groups, especially the ones that were subject to oppression in the past and may still be discriminated against in the present? Not everyone is an enthusiastic supporter of the thesis about the relationship between "proper" memorialization and human rights. In *The Past Can't Heal Us: The Dangers of Mandating Memory in the Name of Human Rights* Lea David forcefully argues that there is no such thing as "proper" memorialization, no one appropriate way to "come to terms with the past," and attempts to mandate moral responsibility for past crimes and "appropriate" memory can be "ineffective at best and counterproductive at worst" (David 2020: 2). In her own words: "The human rights memorialization agenda is constructed and adopted as a result of experiences based on historically grounded events that, once transformed into policy-oriented memorialization efforts, translate into an oppressive force" (David 2020: 2). The feelings of ethnic belonging are strengthened, and ethnic animosities become even worse.

On the other hand, the influential book *Yellow Star, Red Star* by Jelena Subotić (2019) suggests that there is such a thing as proper memorialization. Subotić is very critical of post-Communist states, including Lithuania, that, trying to deal with ontological insecurities related to their "re-entry" into Europe, started pursuing a strategy of "memory reconciliation" by arguing that there were two totalitarianisms (Stalinism and Nazism) and two genocides (the Holocaust and "Soviet genocide"). During the process, the "new European" narrative tended to focus on their "own" suffering (associated with the Gulag in the case of Lithuania) and erase uncomfortable memories, such as collaboration with the Nazis during World War II. According to Subotić, the main memory actors in post-Communist states, including Lithuania, "carried out remarkable and diverse projects of Holocaust memory appropriation and inversion" (Subotić 2019: 11), and this inappropriate memorialization is related to the rise of nationalism, even the revival of fascism, in post-Communist states.

This paper argues that tracing the development of activist memory related to the commemoration of the Roma genocide is an excellent way to test the hypothesis about "proper" memorialization and its relation to human rights. In 2015, the European parliament passed a resolution to commemorate the Roma genocide, recognizing the genocide of the Roma as a historical fact and establishing a "European day" (August 2) to commemorate this trauma. Importantly, this resolution linked the commemoration of the Roma genocide to human rights, creating an invitation to confront antigypsyism everywhere, labeling it as a type of racism (European Parliament 2015). This resolution was the culmination of decades of work by Roma activists promoting the "proper" memorialization of the Roma genocide by creating a transnational activist memory. There is evidence suggesting that this transnational memory has started to affect local memorialization efforts—several states, including Lithuania, added the commemoration of the Roma genocide to its calendar of commemorative days. These memorialization efforts were followed by activities led by non-governmental actors, such as Roma organizations, to fight antigypsyism and promote human rights.

To unpack this relationship between "proper" memorialization and attempts to promote human rights, this paper proceeds in several steps. First, it traces the creation of transnational activist memory related to the commemoration of the Roma genocide and attempts to identify the ways in which various actors, including international organizations, have tried to link memorialization efforts to the promotion of human rights. Second, it examines how this transnational memory became localized in Lithuania, paying attention to grassroots practices as well as the influence of national and international actors. Although recently the Roma genocide and its commemoration has attracted some scholarly attention, Lithuania's

case has been by and large ignored in the English language literature. One of the goals of the Lithuanian case study is to investigate whether the attempts to pursue "proper" memorialization have affected the rights of Roma in Lithuania—or at least the public awareness about prevalent antigypsyism. The paper will conclude by relating the findings of these empirical investigations to the debate about "proper" memorialization and human rights by attempting to outline the impact of the commemoration associated with the Roma genocide in Lithuania.

THE DEVELOPMENT OF *PROPER* MEMORIALIZATION: THE CREATION OF TRANSNATIONAL ROMA MEMORY

There is scholarly agreement that the Roma were one of the groups most affected by genocidal policies during World War II. Although it is unclear how many Roma were murdered in Europe, the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum claims that at least 25 per cent of European Roma were murdered during the Holocaust by the Nazis and their allies (United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, no date). Others estimate from 96,000 to 500,000, with the actual number probably more than 200,000 (Weiss-Wendt 2013: 1). Even before the Holocaust, the Roma in Europe experienced discrimination and persecution that intensified when the Nazis came to power in 1933. The Roma were believed to have "alien blood"; they were an "undesirable" group that was subject to "race laws," accusing them of criminality and linking this "trait" to genes. During the Holocaust, the Roma were imprisoned in concentration camps without charges, subject to forced labor and mass murder. Despite the experience of huge human rights abuses during the Holocaust, the Roma have remained one of the most vulnerable and discriminated groups after World War II in Europe and beyond.

Despite this systematic persecution, for many years after the end of World War II, the Roma genocide was not widely commemorated—despite the fact that the Holocaust has become a dominant European and, according to some accounts, even global memory (Levy and Sznaider 2002). Some scholars have even questioned whether the Roma were the victims of a genocide during World War II, arguing that the deportations they experienced did not constitute a systematic premeditated killing (Lewy 2000). Currently there is a consensus among scholars that "genocide" is the appropriate term to describe the traumatic experiences of the Roma during World War II. In the words of Anton Weiss-Wendt, "without departing from the actual wording of the UN Genocide Convention, the contemporary legal practice in establishing criminal intent suggests a common design that rendered the comprehensive destruction of the Roma communities unequivocally

genocidal" (Weiss-Wendt 2013: 1). Political activists have used the Romani term *O Baro Porrajmos* (The Great Devouring) or *Porrajmos* to refer to the Roma genocide. In addition, the terms *Mudaripen* or *Samudaripen*, referring to killing or murder, have been used as well (Weiss-Wendt 2013: 24).

Romani intellectuals and activists in Europe are usually associated with the change in the global (primarily European) memoryscape and the increasing openness to commemorations of the Roma genocide. These actors led public commemorations such as ceremonies by German Sinti commemorating deportations to concentration camps and annual commemorations marking the liberation of the camps at Birkenau (Kapralski 2013: 248). These practices were internationalized as early as the 1980s, with the involvement of actors such as the Third World Romani Congress and the Central Council of German Sinti and Roma. Germany's increasing openness to acknowledging its guilt during the Holocaust during that time contributed to the proliferation of memorial activities focusing on the Roma genocide. Gradually, European Holocaust memory started to incorporate the Roma genocide as well. In 2012, the Berlin memorial for the Sinti and Roma of Europe was opened. During the opening ceremony, Germany's Minister of Culture described the memory of the Roma genocide as "a pillar of German remembrance" (Commission on Security and Cooperation in Europe 2021), which suggests that by then the Roma genocide memory was well-established as a type "moral remembrance" in Germany, and it was spreading fast beyond Germany's borders as well.

Some Roma activists felt that it was essential to integrate the discourse about the Roma genocide into the discourse about the Holocaust, but others felt that it was essential to find their own voice (Kapralski 2013: 235). Ian Hancock, a prominent Romani studies scholar and activist, who has been a passionate proponent of the use of the term *O Baro Porrajmos* to refer to the Roma genocide, argued the following: "To name something is to own it, and for too long Roma have been otherized as a corollary to the Jewish Holocaust. The word has given an identity and a name to the most tragic event in Romani history, and moves it from the collective into the particular" (Hancock 2015: 586). Thus, instead of trying to inscribe their story about the Porrajmos within the Jewish Holocaust narrative, some Roma groups have started to create their own museums and new memorial practices as well as historiographies. Examples include the towns of Tarnów in Poland and Brno in the Czech Republic (van Baar 2011: 272).

The increased interest in the commemoration of the Roma genocide coincided with the attention to the plight of Roma in Europe, which can also be traced back to the 1980s. During several decades, the Council of Europe and the European Union (EU) developed various programs to help the Roma. These programs initially focused on educational outcomes. Beginning in 1993, the EU started focusing

on the protection of minorities (including the Roma) as a condition for aspiring countries from Eastern and Central Europe to enter the EU. In 2011, the Commission of the European Union adopted the EU Framework for National Roma Integration Strategies. This legally non-binding document encouraged European governments to assign financial funding for Roma inclusion, and it became an important instrument for EU member states to start improving the socio-economic integration of Roma (European Commission 2011).

Shortly after, the EU started linking the memorialization of the Roma genocide to Roma rights and socio-economic integration. In 2016, worried about the social inclusion of Roma, the EU Council started pushing for the recognition of the Roma genocide (Jutelytė 2018: 22). During the same year, the European Commission highlighted the importance of the EU Memorial Day of the Roma genocide and linked it to the importance of fighting against anti-Roma prejudice (Mirga-Kruszelnicka 2017: 8). Various projects focusing on activist memory related to the Roma genocide were sponsored by the EU, and the link between "moral remembrance" and Roma rights became a European norm.

Unfortunately, these initiatives did not bring the desired results—at least not yet. Roma discrimination has continued, especially in Eastern Central Europe. However, the EU has continued to maintain the link between "moral remembrance" and Roma rights. The EU Roma Framework was updated in 2020 and named "EU Roma Strategic Framework for Equality, Inclusion and Participation for 2020-2030." The link between "moral remembrance" and Roma rights was clearly articulated in this new version: "As a prerequisite for the fight against antigypsyism, the minimum standards set on the criminalization of the hate speech, and the denial, condoning or trivialization of the Holocaust need to be fully and correctly transposed into the legislation of Member states" (European Commission 2020). The Roma genocide was also explicitly linked to the Jewish Holocaust (which was not necessarily the case in the past, when it was questioned whether the experiences of Roma during World War II could be described as a genocide), thus making it part of transnational memory and related international norms.

The European "moral remembrance" norm linking the memory of the Roma genocide to Roma rights (focusing on the fight against antigypsyism) was strengthened by many other international organizations, such as the Council of Europe and the European Commission against Racism and Intolerance. In its overview of international organizations focusing on the intersection between the Roma genocide and human rights, the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA), a major actor pushing for "moral remembrance," identified five major intergovernmental organizations, such as the Council of Europe and the EU Agency for Fundamental Rights, nine international civil society organizations, including Amnesty

International, and five museums that have been committed to the commemoration of the Roma genocide and the related fight for human rights (IHRA, no date).

A closer look at the activities of these international actors (specifically, the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, or OSCE) suggests that these organizations try to influence government policies and societal attitudes to actively promote "moral remembrance," hoping that changes in commemoration will help human rights. For example, the OSCE provides resources for governments to help to improve teaching about the Roma genocide and its commemoration. The representatives from this organization even actively participate in international commemorations of the Roma genocide, linking "the lessons of the past" to anti-gypsyism (OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights 2020). The OSCE action plan even includes a specific recommendation to "include Roma history and culture in educational texts, with particular consideration given to the experience of Roma and Sinti people during the Holocaust" (Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe Permanent Council 2003). Other proponents of "moral remembrance," such as the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA), even suggest specific types of remembrance of the Roma genocide. Instead of focusing on victimhood during the Roma genocide (trying to avoid stereotyping), IHRA argues that the resilience and resistance of the Roma during the Holocaust should be emphasized (IHRA, no date).

It appears that the European governments have supported the development of this international norm by acknowledging the Roma genocide. This includes post-Communist states, such as Poland, Serbia and Lithuania, which, as argued by Subotić (2019), have experienced multiple ontological insecurities and have struggled with Holocaust memory, failing to fully acknowledge the level of local participation in the Holocaust and by equating communism with fascism. These states have incorporated the Roma genocide as an official commemorative day in their national calendars. Interestingly, Poland, which has been experiencing a decline in democratic standards recently, was the first state to officially establish a national commemoration day of the Roma genocide in 2011. This happened even before the famous resolution issued by the European Parliament which commemorated thousands of Roma and Sinti in Auschwitz-Birkenau who lost their lives on August 2, 1944, even though they resisted fiercely. This can be explained by the successful activities of the Oświęcim Association of Roma in Poland which has pushed for the commemoration of the Roma genocide since 1991 (Mirga-Kruszelnicka and Mirga-Wójtowicz, no date). It appears that the commemoration of the Roma genocide, perhaps because Roma continue to be treated as a marginal group, has not threatened the national "fighting and suffering" narratives that tend to focus on suffering related to Communist crimes. Furthermore, it remains unclear

what the effects of the official commemoration of the Roma genocide memory are and whether they have any impact on minority rights. To gain insight into these questions, the following section focuses on local manifestations of transnational Roma genocide memory in Lithuania, which added the commemoration of the Roma genocide to the calendar of commemorative days in 2019.

LOCAL MANIFESTATIONS OF THE TRANSNATIONAL ROMA GENOCIDE MEMORY: THE CASE OF LITHUANIA

According to Aurėja Jutelytė, one of the most prominent researchers in Lithuania focusing on the memory of the Roma genocide, this memory became publicly visible in Lithuania in 2012, when the commemorative events focusing on the Roma genocide in Paneriai, a major Holocaust memorial, was covered in the Lithuanian mass media (Jutelytė 2020: 8). Scholarly interest in the Roma genocide in Lithuania can be traced to the late 1990s and early 2000s, when Lithuania was eager to join the transatlantic community and the EU, and respect for minority rights were among the requirements for the entry into these organizations.

Scholarly research about the Roma genocide in Lithuania has been impeded by the lack of written sources, such as reports, orders and memoirs. According to Arūnas Bubnys, a leading World War II historian in Lithuania, there may have been approximately 1,500 Roma in Lithuania (including Vilnius and Vilnius region) during World War II (Bubnys 2020: 25). Although it is difficult to determine the exact number of Lithuanian Roma who were killed during World War II, it appears that approximately 500 Roma were killed (International Commission for the Evaluation of the Nazi and Soviet Occupation Regimes in Lithuania 2002). This means that every third Roma perished during the Holocaust. According to the estimates by Bubnys, "several hundred" Roma were killed in Lithuania during the Holocaust (Bubnys 2020:42). Most of them were kept and killed in Pravieniškės detention camp. It appears that at least three mass killing operations could have been held in Pravieniškės, including a mass killing in 1943, when women, children and elderly were murdered (Bubnys 2020: 33). Towards the end of the Nazi occupation, the detained Roma were transported to France and Germany for forced labor or to concentration camps. According to the historian Vytautas Toleikis, who interviewed 28 survivors of the Roma genocide in 1998-99, it is possible that some Lithuanian Roma may even have been deported to Auschwitz; however, this location is not mentioned in the songs of Lithuania's Roma, and the archive with the names of the prisoners was destroyed by the Nazis (Toleikis 2016: 4).

Grim details about the suffering of Lithuania's Roma during the Holocaust emerge from the surviving oral testimonies kept in the US Holocaust Memorial museum as well as from testimonies recorded by Aušra Simoniukštytė, Vida Beinortienė and Daiva Tumasonytė (Beinortienė and Tumasonytė 2016) and Vytautas Toleikis (Toleikis 2016). Beinortienė recorded many traumatic stories, including those of Roma women who told her that the Nazis asked them to disown their own children. If the Roma women agreed, they would be allowed to live, and their children would be shot (Platūkytė 2019). The suffering of women and children emerges from the testimony given by Ona Arlauskienė (born in 1926): "In Pravieniškės they took all children, all old people, the disabled and shot them. They destroyed such a family! [the family of her brother] . . . When they brought children—well, what, there was a horrible scream. Crying, screaming—this is all. You could not say anything. They shot and killed them. Just be silent, because you could face the same fate. All you could do is lower your head and hide. Let Perkūnas kill them!" Arlauskienė's testimony has also documented other crimes conducted against the Roma during the Holocaust, including taking away their property (e.g., horses) and various other abuses ("the start was when we saw that they [the Germans] hate the Roma, and this is it"… [The abuses against the Roma were] "catching, shooting, moving, and this is it") (Oral History Interview with Ona Arlauskienė 1998).

Similar themes—detentions, taking away horses and mass killings emerge from the testimony given by Aleksas Aleksandravičius (born in 1919). According to his testimony, the first year of occupation was relatively quiet, marked "only" by the taking away of horses and carts. The trouble started during the second year of occupation, when they "tried to catch us, catch us" and take them [the Roma] to the Ninth Forth, a place of mass killings, and Pravieniškės. This story is consistent with the historical narrative. According to Bubnys, active persecution of Roma in Lithuania started in 1942 (the second year of occupation), when the occupying German officials decided that it was necessary to treat the Lithuanian Roma the same as the Jews were treated because the Roma were "a dangerous element"—spreading disease and moving from one place to the next (Bubnys 2020: 25). Consistently with other testimonies, Pravieniškės emerges in Aleksandravičius' testimony as a place where many of Lithuania's Roma families were kept and killed. He recalled the cruel killing of his family members when he heard the shooting in the forest: "We heard the shooting, but we did not realize that they were shooting our family members." When his mother-in-law started lamenting her children, she was publicly shot as well (Oral History Interview with Aleksas Aleksandravičius 1998).

In the words of Toleikis, who states that all of the respondents whom he interviewed mentioned Pravieniškės, this labor camp could be regarded as "a potential

symbol of the Holocaust against the Lithuanian Roma people" (Toleikis 2016: 9). Bubnys has also argued that probably the largest number of Lithuania's Roma "were imprisoned and killed in Pravieniškės forced labor camp" (Bubnys 2020:30). Apparently, Pravieniškės was suggested as the place for a memorial by the Lithuanian Genocide Research and Resistance Center, but the Roma community did not want this site of memory to be linked to "criminality" (there is currently a prison located in Pravieniškės), as it may have reinforced the stereotype of Roma as criminals (Jutelytė 2016). Instead, the Roma community chose Paneriai, a place commonly associated with the Jewish Holocaust, for annual commemoration ceremonies. Based on the testimonies of the members of the exhumation brigade who escaped Paneriai through a tunnel, there were Roma who were killed in Paneriai (Latvytė 2020: 53). It is estimated that up to 100 Roma could have been murdered there (Latvytė 2020: 53).

The dilemmas associated with the choice of a commemoration site for the Roma genocide highlights the links between the past and the present. According to Svetlana Novopolskaja, Director of the Romų Visuomenės Centras (Roma Community Center), a nongovernmental organization, the Lithuanian Roma community faced the question about the appropriate place for commemoration when it started to commemorate the Roma genocide around 2003. "We were looking for places to memorialize [this traumatic event]. Eventually, we decided on Paneriai. We thought that there were definitely Roma who were murdered there" (Novopolskaja 2020a). Apparently, the image of Paneriai as a place of killing can be detected in Lithuanian Roma tradition as well (Vitkus 2020: 78). However, it took a long time for Paneriai to be recognized as a place of memory associated with the Roma genocide. In the eyes of Zigmas Vitkus, a Lithuanian historian and specialist on memorialization, the reasons for why the Roma genocide was not commemorated for such a long time are the following: First, the Roma are a marginalized minority, and they did not have enough political power to influence government institutions; second, these institutions treated the commemorative needs of the Roma minority as less important and did not react to the needs and expectations of this community (Vitkus 2020: 76–77).

As narrated by Svetlana Novopolskaja, cooperation with international organizations was essential for the start of the commemoration of the Roma genocide in Lithuania. The International Organization for Migration was active in Lithuania in 2001, and this organization was able to provide the Lithuanian Roma community with preliminary lists of people who survived the Holocaust. This helped Svetlana's organization to identify these people and collect their testimonies (Novopolskaja 2020a). In addition, Novopolskaja recalled cooperation with several other organizations—the Department of National Minorities under the

Government of Lithuania, the Genocide and Resistance Research Center of Lithuania, and the Human Rights coalition. Novopolskaja argued that cooperation with these actors, especially the international organizations, has influenced the ways in which the Lithuanian Roma started to commemorate the genocide: "Without the intervention by international organizations, we would still probably visit that place [Paneriai]; however, we would probably not have the same commemorative day [August 2]" (Novopolskaja 2020a).

Roma rights activists have been engaged in commemorative activities on August 2 since around 2009 (Novopolskaja 2020a). The ceremony usually includes putting flowers at the Paneriai memorial, with the participation of various groups, including representatives from the Department of National Minorities of the Republic of Lithuania, which Novopolskaja has described as "a major ally" in her work to pursue moral remembrance and support the rights of Lithuania's Roma minority (Novopolskaja 2020a). Commemorative activities at the Paneriai memorial usually involve speeches by government officials and the placing of wreaths at the monument, which includes an inscription in Lithuanian and Russian "for the victims of fascist terror" dating back to the Soviet period (Roma are not specifically mentioned). In the past, these commemorative activities included representatives from the US embassy and even members from marginal right-leaning groups (the *tautininkai*) who argued that they shared a belief in the importance of ethnic belonging with the Roma community (Tumavičiūtė 2012). It is possible that the attention that right-wing forces paid to the Roma genocide was related to their interest in minimizing and relativizing the Jewish Holocaust, which was increasingly becoming a prominent memory in Lithuania after its accession to the EU.

Despite the fact that the Lithuanian government has added the commemoration of the Roma genocide to its calendar of commemorative days in 2019, the annual commemorative ceremonies in Paneriai did not attract many people. In the eyes of Novopolskaja, the Lithuanian mass media has continued to by and large ignore the commemorative ceremonies in Paneriai (Novopolskaja 2020a), and this perhaps explains why attendance has been poor. No prominent politicians participate in these ceremonies. Unfortunately, the ceremonies have not attracted the Roma youth who constitute the majority of Lithuania's Roma community. They have been attracted by more personalized, engaging events with personal appeal, such as putting wreaths with candles into the Neris river and letting them float downstream to commemorate the Holocaust (Novopolskaja 2020a).

But the development of transnational memory about the Roma genocide and emerging international norms supporting "moral remembrance" has affected memorialization in Lithuania. In 2015, after the European Parliament's resolution to commemorate the Roma genocide, the Lithuanian Genocide Research and Resistance

Center, a major memory institution in Lithuania, became engaged in commemorative activities. There was a commemorative public event in 2015, including the opening of an exhibition in one of the halls of the Museum of the Occupations and Struggles for Freedom (previously known as the "Genocide" museum). Drawing on surviving archival records and family photographs, this exhibition presented a story about the life of Roma in Lithuania before World War II and their traumas during the Holocaust, including the suffering experienced in Pravieniškės. In a sense, the presentation of the Roma genocide in this museum is even more emotional and personalized (with the presentation of pictures of individuals) than the presentation of the Jewish Holocaust in the same museum, which is mostly using the language of facts and historical information.[1] This suggests that the memorialization of the Roma genocide did not threaten the hegemonic memory account of Lithuania's suffering and fighting (which focuses mostly on Communist crimes and the anti-Soviet partisan resistance) that is presented in this museum.

Lithuania's Roma community has cooperated in commemorative activities with the Lithuanian Genocide Research and Resistance Center. In 2018, the community created, in the words of Novopolskaja, "their own" event—the musical play *Samudaripen. Mergaitė iš vagono* [Samudaripen. A Girl from a Railcar] which included Roma performers and which was shown in three major towns in Lithuania (Vilnius, Šiauliai and Panevėžys). The play was accompanied by an exhibition created by the Lithuanian Genocide Research and Resistance Center for educational purposes. The play featured a Roma family that was being transported to a concentration camp in a railcar. On the next track, a Jewish family was being transported. During stops, a young Roma girl engaged in conversations with a Jewish boy. At some point, the Jewish boy is gone, and the Roma girl does not have anyone to talk to. In the end, the Roma family is gone as well, and only ashes remain. The play has highlighted the similarities between the traumas associated with the Jewish Holocaust and the Roma Holocaust. Similar ideas—that these traumas share similarities and that there should be no competition of memories—have been articulated by speakers from non-governmental institutions during the commemorative ceremonies on August 2 as well.

According to Faina Kukliansky, the leader of Lithuania's Jewish Community (the Litvaks), prior to 2015 the two memories did not peacefully coexist, and there was even competition between them. There were some who questioned whether the Roma did indeed experience a genocide, and whether their experiences should be described using the term "Holocaust". According to Kukliansky, these were

[1] I am grateful to Liljana Radonić for this insight. She made this observation during the Q&A session of the panel "The Roma in Central Europe," Association for the Study of Nationalities (ASN) annual conference, May 5, 2021.

"childish arguments" (Kukliansky 2020a). She argues that it is essential for the two communities to cooperate, and these two communities do share a common history: "We were already hurt one time in the past. [There was an attempt to] kill all Jews, all Roma in Lithuania" (Kukliansky 2020b).

This recent cooperation between the Lithuanian Jewish community and Lithuania's Roma community was promoted by an international actor, the Erinnerung Verantwortung Zukunf (EVZ) Foundation, which sponsored several projects related to Roma Holocaust memory in Lithuania. One of the projects dates back to 2016, when, together with the other non-governmental organizations in Lithuania, including the Lithuanian Center for Human Rights (LCHR), the EVZ (together with other organizations) sponsored a project to install Stolpersteine ("stepping stones") to commemorate the victims of the Holocaust. This act of remembrance included placing small commemorative plaques on a cobblestone street in Panevėžys, where Roma lived before they were taken to camps during World War II. An explicit link between remembrance and human rights was made, as Birutė Sabatauskaitė, who then served as the Director of the LCHR, argued that this act of remembrance should help to better integrate Roma into Lithuanian society and see their history as part of Lithuania's history (15 minutes 2016).

Another project sponsored by the EVZ that promoted cooperation between Lithuania's Jewish and Roma communities encouraged these non-governmental organizations to develop suggestions on how to fight antigypsyism and antisemitism in Lithuania. This project was carried out in 2017 and 2018, and it included meetings, workshops and focus groups in which the two communities learned about each other's history and memory. Achieving official acknowledgment of the Roma genocide by the Lithuanian state was one of the major recommendations put forward by NGOs working on this project, and this goal was achieved in 2019. Teaching about the Roma genocide and increasing scholarly attention to the issues related to the Roma genocide in Lithuania were among the recommendations as well (Lietuvos žydų (litvakų) bendruomenė 2018). The project (especially the focus groups) highlighted the differences in fighting antigypsyism and antisemitism. It became clear that socioeconomic discrimination was especially acute in the case of Lithuania's Roma community, while socioeconomic issues were not a priority for Lithuania's Jews.

The cooperation between the two communities (encouraged by the projects funded by the EVZ) continued in 2019 and 2020. In 2019, the Lithuanian Ministry of Culture recruited Rūta Sinkevičienė, a journalist who has dealt with topics related to Lithuania's Roma community in the past, to create the first documentary film "Juodasis paukštis. Romų genocido atmintis" (The Black Bird: Memory of the Roma Genocide"). This documentary included comparisons between the experiences of

Lithuania's Jewish and Roma communities (e.g., both communities were described as "new others" in Lithuania; both were depicted as having experienced traumas associated with the Holocaust), but it also made it clear that the Roma genocide was still a "forgotten" genocide and "an open wound" for Lithuania's Roma.

In November 2020, the Lithuanian Jewish Community hosted an online discussion of this film during which the connections between the two communities as well as the connections between "moral remembrance" and human rights were highlighted. During this discussion, Faina Kukliansky argued that both communities would like to eliminate "the myths that creep after us" and work towards the promotion of tolerance for "others" and the elimination of institutional discrimination (Kukliansky 2020b). Svetlana Novopolskaja argued that it was important for her that "more Roma understood their own history," and that it was crucially important for the Roma genocide to achieve a more prominent status in Lithuanian society. There was still no official mandate to teach the Roma genocide in Lithuania's schools (Novopolskaja 2020b). A young Roma woman featured in the documentary explained why it is so crucial to focus on increasing the status of the Roma genocide memory: "hopefully, people will start looking at us differently."

It appears that during this event and related events both communities made a clear connection between "moral remembrance" and human rights (specifically, they articulated the importance of memory when fighting antigypsyism and antisemitism). Memory projects sponsored by the EVZ can be described as very impactful for both communities: They learned about each other, and they were able to articulate the main challenges facing them. According to Dovilė Rūkaitė, who serves as the Project Manager for the Lithuanian Jewish community, the members of the communities acknowledged that prior to the projects they knew little about each other, and these memory projects were eye opening for them. Furthermore, these projects helped to expand the concept of the Holocaust to include the Roma experiences (Rūkaitė 2020). However, it remains to be seen if moral remembrance projects associated with the Roma genocide memory have had an impact on broader society and, by extension, if they have the power to influence human rights (specifically, help to improve the status of the Roma minority in Lithuania).

MORAL REMEMBRANCE AND HUMAN RIGHTS: DOES MEMORY MAKE A DIFFERENCE?

According to data collected by the Lithuanian Ethnic Studies Institute (since 2005), the Roma have consistently been identified as the least liked group in Lithuania. This trend can be traced since Lithuania regained its independence (Lietuvos žydų

[litvakų] bendruomenė 2018: 62). Close to 60% of respondents have consistently expressed the opinion that they would not like to live in the same neighborhood as Roma. The most recent data from the last three years associated with the emergence of "moral remembrance" (2019, 2020 and 2021) do not show a deviation from this trend. In 2019, 62.8% of respondents said that they would not want to live in the same neighborhood as Roma. This number was 58% in 2020 and 61% in 2021. In 2021, 53.8% of respondents said that their opinion about Roma had worsened (worsened a lot or worsened, not improved) (LSTC etninių tyrimų institutas 2021). Other groups that experience similar public feelings are people with mental illnesses and people who have been released from prison (LSTC etninių tyrimų institutas 2019, 2020 and 2021).

The results of sociological surveys suggesting that Roma are likely to experience severe discrimination are supported by the analysis of sectors such as mass media, education and housing market. The mass media is likely to link the ethnicity of Roma to criminality—despite an ethical norm prohibiting journalists from engaging in such behavior (Lietuvos žydų [litvakų] bendruomenė 2018: 71). Furthermore, until its elimination in 2020, Vilniaus taboras (one of the largest Roma neighborhoods) was constantly linked to criminality and filth in mass media reports. These themes were prominent when there were reports about the elimination of taboras by the local government (Tubys 2020).

To address the structural discrimination experienced by Roma, the Lithuanian government developed several national integration programs. The first program was developed in 2000 (for 2000-04), and it was linked to Lithuania's desire to join the European Union. One of the stated goals in the program was to introduce Lithuanian society to Roma culture and history and promote tolerance (Lietuvos Respublikos vyriausybė 2000). Moral remembrance (the commemoration of the Roma genocide) was not part of the program. The subsequent programs of integration (2008-2010, 2012-14 and 2015-20) also mentioned the importance of tolerance toward Roma in Lithuanian society. "Moral remembrance" becomes part of these government programs in 2012-14, although the mandate to include learning about Roma culture and history was in the 2008-2010 program. The 2012-14 program mentions the Roma genocide, recommending that the Ministry of Culture collect information about the Roma genocide and publish a brochure (Lietuvos kultūros ministro įsakymas 2012). The commemoration of the Roma genocide is specifically addressed in the 2015-2020 program, suggesting the influence of international norms regarding the Roma genocide (the program was adopted shortly before the resolution by the European parliament to commemorate the Roma genocide). When discussing the goals of "encouraging intercultural dialogue" and "increasing the openness of Roma culture and societal tolerance,"

this document argues that the Lithuanian parliament should make August 2 a national commemorative day to remember the Roma genocide. The program also recommends that Roma history and material about the Roma genocide be taught in Lithuanian schools (Lietuvos Respublikos Kultūros Ministras 2015).

The 2015-2020 program was prepared taking the recommendations from the European Commission into account and established four priority areas for improving Roma rights: education, employment, health and housing. However, as pointed out by the Romų Visuomenės Centras, the program failed to address the underlying causes for antigypsyism and did not pay adequate attention to the increasing hatred toward Roma found on the Internet and discrimination in all priority areas (PI Roma Community Centre 2019: 7). The most recent program prepared by the Vilnius local government (2020-23) tries to develop an integrated approach to pursue "the integration of Roma" by including programs for youth education, women's development, and, perhaps most importantly, the elimination of stereotypes. Although moral remembrance is not part of this local initiative, there is awareness that to combat antigypsyism, a major societal change is required. In the words of Vaiva Poškaitė-Tomaševič, the leader of the Baltic Region's Roma Association: "The integration of Roma is most complicated. … We have a long way to go, and one of the most important challenges is that not only the Roma themselves have to change, but the whole society has to change, getting rid of stereotypes that prevent accepting Roma as an integral part of Lithuanian society" (Vilniaus miesto savivaldybė 2020). It appears that, at least on the national level, the moral remembrance of the Roma genocide has already become part of the ways to address the challenges associated with integration.

CONCLUSIONS

This paper set out to explore the complicated relationship between the moral remembrance of the Roma genocide and human rights, which is usually associated with the reduction of antigypsyism in European societies, with a focus on Lithuania. It has become increasingly clear that a set of international norms to commemorate the Roma genocide has developed during the past several decades. International actors, such as the EU, OSCE and Roma activist groups have participated in the creation of a transnational Roma genocide memory that includes August 2 as the commemorative day for the Roma genocide. One important feature of this emerging memory regime is that it embraces activist memory—that is, moral remembrance, assuming that the proper commemoration of the crimes

committed in the past against vulnerable groups such as the Roma helps to promote human rights in the present.

The evidence presented in this paper demonstrates that there is an emerging moral remembrance regime in Lithuania that commemorates the Roma genocide. It is supported by the national government, which announced August 2 as a national commemorative day in 2019, and sponsored the creation of a documentary commemorating the Roma genocide. The Department for National Minorities, the Genocide Research and Resistance Center and the Ministry of Culture were active participants in this emerging moral remembrance regime, and the tenets of this regime were embedded in the recent Roma national integration program (2015–2020). Moral remembrance is also supported by non-governmental organizations, such as the Romų Visuomenės Centras and the Lithuanian Jewish community, which have cooperated in the creation of an open, multidirectional Holocaust memory that includes not only the Jewish Holocaust, but also the Roma genocide. This cooperation, with the clearly expressed goal of moral remembrance, was promoted by international actors, such as the EVZ.

However, despite the acceptance of international norms dealing with the moral remembrance of the Roma genocide, societal prejudice toward Roma remains high—at least as reflected in public opinion surveys. A major cultural change is needed to alter such attitudes, and it can take decades. In the case of Lithuania, it is likely that norms associated with moral remembrance will become part of this slow change.

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Dovilė Budrytė

AKTYVI ATMINTIS IR ŽMOGAUS TEISĖS: ROMŲ GENOCIDO ĮAMŽINIMAS LIETUVOJE

SANTRAUKA. Šis straipsnis analizuoja, kaip besiformuojanti romų genocido atmintis yra susijusi su žmogaus teisių skatinimu Lietuvoje. Tarptautinė romų genocido atminties kultūra gali būti vadinama aktyvia atmintimi. Įvairūs atminties veikėjai, ypač nevyriausybinės organizacijos, besirūpinančios romų genocido atmintimi, sieja atminimą su žmogaus teisėmis (tiksliau sakant, su žmogaus teisių pažeidimais, kuriuos patiria romų bendruomenės) ir būtinybe kovoti prieš romafobiją. Nepaisant spartaus romų atminties veiklų augimo Europoje per pastaruosius du dešimtmečius ir aktyvios atminties režimų vystymosi, panašūs reiškiniai, vykstantys Lietuvoje, susilaukė labai nedaug akademinės visuomenės dėmesio. Šiuo darbu siekiama šią spragą literatūroje apie romų genocido atmintį Lietuvoje bent kiek pataisyti.

Lietuvos romų bendruomenė buvo stipriai paveikta Holokausto. Atminimo procesai, susiję su romų genocidu, sustiprėjo apie 2015 metus, kai po romų aktyvistų ir žmonių, išgyvenusių Holokaustą, žygio į Aušvicą, Europos Parlamentas paskelbė rezoliuciją, skirtą romų genocidui per Antrąjį pasaulinį karą atminti. 2019 metais Lietuvos Vyriausybė įtraukė romų genocido minėjimą į atmintinų dienų sąrašą. Šiame darbe nagrinėjami tokie klausimai: 1) Kas yra aktyvi atmintis ir koks jos santykis su Holokausto atmintimi? 2) Kurie veikėjai pradėjo kurti romų genocido atmintį Lietuvoje? Kokias strategijas jie naudojo? Ar šios strategijos buvo efektyvios? 3) Koks romų genocido atminties praktikų ir žmogaus teisių santykis (tiksliau pasakius, kaip atmintis veikia kovą su itin neigiamomis visuomenės nuostatomis romų atžvilgiu Lietuvoje)?

Argumentuojama, kad besiformuojantis romų atminties režimas Lietuvoje rado būdą susigyventi su vietiniu naratyvu apie žydų Holokaustą. Į Holokausto naratyvą įtraukti pasakojimai apie romų kentėjimą padėjo hibridizuoti šį naratyvą, paverčiant jį pasakojimu apie daugelį trauminių patirčių. Naratyvo apie žydų Holokaustą hibridizacijai stiprų poveikį darė tarptautiniai veikėjai, kurie skatino įtraukti romų patirtis į naratyvą apie žydų Holokaustą. Romų ir žydų bendruomenių bendradarbiavimas žmogaus teisių gynimo koalicijoje įgalino šios hibridinės Holokausto atminties susiformavimą.

RAKTAŽODŽIAI: romų genocidas, Holokaustas, minėjimai, istorinė atmintis, žmogaus teisės.