EDUCATION FOR REMEMBRANCE OF THE ROMA GENOCIDE

Scholarship, Commemoration and the Role of Youth

EDITED BY
Anna Mirga-Kruszelnicka, Esteban Acuña C. and Piotr Trojański
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Among hundreds of thousands of Roma who fell victims of the Nazi and their allies persecution and extermination politics prior and during the Second World War, more than 20,000 Roma perished in what today is the independent state of Ukraine. Although this subject is still extremely understudied, the preliminary historical research available shows that in many regions of the Soviet Union, particularly occupied Ukraine, the Roma communities were murdered unmercifully by Wehrmacht, Sipo-SD, gendarmerie and other units, often with the assistance of the local administrative and police forces, in big cities as well as remote villages, with the peak of the extermination policies in spring-autumn of 1942\(^2\).

The article presented seeks to explore how the fate of the Roma who perished during the German and Romanian occupation of

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1 The article is written in the frames of the project «The Genocide of the Roma during the occupation of Ukraine (1941–1944): Research, Teaching, and Commemoration» which is being run by the Ukrainian Center for Holocaust Studies with the support by the German “Erinnerung, Verantwortung und Zukunft” Foundation (EVZ).

Ukraine is being remembered by the contemporary Roma community in Ukraine as well as by the wider Ukrainian society. According to this aim, we will observe several layers of this subject. First, is there any consistent politics of memory in regard to the Roma Genocide (for short I will use RG) run by the Ukrainian government? How does the state support, if at all, RG research and commemoration? Is there any historical information present on the subject in school curricula and textbooks? Second, how were/are civic society and non-governmental organizations involved into this process? Third, how do the Ukrainian Roma themselves remember what happened to them during World War II? Is the memory about wartime suffering being preserved and transferred to the younger Roma generation? Finally, if taken altogether, are all these efforts sufficient for the RG to be remembered?

To answer these questions, one has to start from consideration of more general situation in the culture of memory and the national memorial politics dominating in contemporary Ukraine. Particularly, does the memory of the RG have a room within contemporary visions of the past that exists in the Ukrainian society?

According to the ideology and politics of memory that existed in the Soviet Union, the Second World War (rather, the part of it, which took place in 1941–1945 and was called The Great Patriotic War) was considered to be among the greatest moments in the history of the USSR. As many scholars have noted, the victory by the USSR functioned almost as a cult, and was seen as the best tool to legitimize the Stalinist regime and Communist party power generally. This ideology promoted the view that all Soviet people, disregarding their ethnic background, heroically defended together their socialist Motherland. The few exceptions

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were condemned as “bourgeois nationalists” or “betrayers of the Motherland”. As a result, there was no room in official Soviet memory for the research and remembrance of some particular groups exterminated on the basis of racial ideology. This applied more generally for any explicit research and commemoration of ethnic victim groups of either the National-Socialist or Soviet regimes. Thus, the Holocaust was downplayed, the special fate of the Roma (as well as the Jewish) victims was neglected, and those victims were instead enumerated as among the Soviet martyrs of the struggle against fascism. The Nazi genocide victims were officially considered by authorities to be part of the broader Nazi plan to eliminate the entire population of the USSR. Any attempts by the Roma individuals as well as informal Roma communities to commemorate their relatives by erecting monuments were forbidden; no memorials specifying the ethnic background of the victims existed.

Even after gaining independence in 1991, Ukraine was never a monolithic society: pro-European (mostly in the Western part of the country) and pro-Russian (mostly in the Eastern areas) sentiments competed with each other. Following these lines of division, perceptions of the past differed as well. When the Communist rule failed and the process of constructing a national narrative started, most politicians and historians adopted a moderate nationalistic rhetoric and tended to present the Ukrainian past as a pattern of suffering inflicted by external powers (Russian Empire, Soviet Union, Communism, etc.)\footnote{For detailed analysis, see Andrii Portnov, “Velyka Vitchyzniana viina v politykah pamiati Bilorusi, Moldovy ta Ukrainy: kilka porivnialnyh sposterezhen,” \textit{Ukraina Moderna}, vol. 15 (4) (2009), pp. 206–218.}. The majority of historians easily abandoned their Marxist-Leninist concept of the historical process, adopting instead one that emphasized nation-building and state-building as the most important tasks and the core of the historical processes. Within these frames, most historians believed the ethnic Ukrainian nation to be the heart of that pro-
cess and the only subject deserving mention in the emerging grand-narrative\(^5\). Another main feature differentiating memory politics in Ukraine was its “regionalization”. While being unable to formulate a united national vision of the past that would satisfy all regions of Ukraine, the authorities allowed the local models of the past to prevail in their regions. If it was impossible to avoid clashes between contradictory visions at the national scale, these questions were simply being concealed or silenced by the central government\(^6\). In addition, Ukrainian perceptions of WWII underwent some “humanization” (comparing to Russian and Belorussian examples), which shifted the focus of educators and memory agents from “mass heroism of the Soviet people” to the life and suffering of average people under occupation\(^7\). This shift also assisted the integration of traumatic memories of particular ethnic minorities into a general narrative of WWII.

However, in the situation of competition and, sometimes, opposition to alternative memories, there is little room for memories of traumas like those the Roma suffered from the Nazis. Both memories – the post-Soviet one and the nationalistic one – tend to marginalize it. For those confessed to the post-Soviet vision of the past, they do not constitute a separate group targeted by the Nazis to total extermination; they are regarded and commemorated only as an active part of all-Soviet resistance to the


“German-fascist invaders”, or as “peaceful Soviet citizens killed by the occupiers”. For those adhering to the nationalistic visions, the RG do not constitute a particular subject to be commemorated, since the core of Ukrainian liberation movement implied pursuit for ethnic homogenization of the historical space, both physical and symbolical.

One more obstacle from preventing RG from being taught and commemorated was that the consensus in the scholarly literature was absent about the essence of the Nazi politics towards the Roma. To say more, this subject was totally understudied by the scholars. The key monographs by Western scholars (like Michael Zimmermann’s book *Rassenutopie und Genozid*) have never been translated into local language. Research by local scholars was absent as well. The Roma were never singled out as a subject for historical explorations of their fate in Soviet and post-Soviet monographs. In this situation, an opinion among the scholars and wider audience was prevailing for a long time (and still prevails) that the Roma, when killed on mass scale by the Nazi Germans, suffered because they were considered by the perpetrators to be “asocial elements”, an opinion that implied transferring guilt on the victims. Post-Soviet, particularly Ukrainian, historiography and popular literature still needs to path its way to readers in order to show them the racial nature of the Nazi persecution of the Roma.

In 2000, following the Stockholm International Forum, the Ministry of Education of Ukraine recommended that universities

8 It is only recently that the situation has begun to change. See, for example, contemporary works that stress the racial nature of the Nazi persecution of the Roma in the occupied Soviet territories: Martin Holler, *Der nationalsozialistische Völkermord an den Roma in der besetzten Sowjetunion, 1941–1944* (Heidelberg, 2009); Alexander Kruglov, “Genotsid tsigan v Ukraine v 1941–1944 gg. Statistiko-regionalnyi aspect,” *Holokost i suchastnist. Studii v Ukraini i sviti*, vol. 2 (6) (2009), pp. 83–113; Mikhail Tyaglyy, “Nazi occupation policies and the mass murder of the Roma in Ukraine,” in Anton Weiss-Wendt, ed., *The Nazi Genocide of the Gypsies: Reevaluation and Commemoration* (New York: Berghahn Books, 2013), pp. 120–152. However, few of this research is available to wider audience in Ukraine.
provide courses on Holocaust history. In 2006, the Holocaust history (as well as the term itself) was introduced into school curricula, though very briefly, and into the list of questions for examination in secondary state schools. However, most writers evaluate these innovations as formalistic and insufficient, covering only a very small part of the school audience. Paradoxically enough, in 2004 the Ukrainian parliament (Verkhovna Rada) created the legal ground for RG commemoration in Ukraine: on initiative of two parliament members from Communist party, the Parliament passed a separate law introducing annually the 2nd of August as the day for commemoration of the RG in Ukraine. The very title of this law as well as how it was introduced shows that it was adopted without careful expert preparation and with no intent by the authorities to keep an eye on its implementation. The day proposed in this act was called “The International day of the Roma holocaust” (sic!). The historical preamble of the act states that “During World War II Hitlerite fascists together with their accomplices, fulfilling the racial politics of ethnocide, took out from the occupied countries and burned in the concentration camps about 500,000 Roma...”. Despite some factual and terminological mistakes in the text, this act prescribed to the Cabinet

11 For instance, experienced Kievan schoolteacher and methodologist Iurii Komarov estimated in his brief survey, that in regard to Holocaust education the Ukrainian teaching plans and textbooks remain behind those of Europe and do not use European experience; the Ukrainian Ministry of Education do not realize common to all mankind nature and teaching potential of Holocaust; some responsibility for that is of Ukrainian historians who still prefer to cultivate the ethnocentric paradigm of history based on the history of ethnic Ukrainians. See Iurii Komarov, “Formalni mozhливості: mіstse temy Holokostu v navchalnyh kursah MON Ukraini,” Uroki Holokostu, issue 2 (14) (2008), pp. 4–6.
of Ministers together with the regional authorities “to elaborate actions directed to research the scale, number of victims and sites of the Hitlerite ethnocide of the Roma during World War II, as well as to commemorate the deported and murdered representatives of this ethnic minority”. However, closer examination of how that law was implemented shows that almost no systematic activities recommended and prescribed by the act were carried through in the following years. Despite the fact that this Day in official state commemoration calendar means annual address from the higher officials of the state, it was only in 2009 that the president of Ukraine (at that time – Victor Yushchenko) delivered public address to the Roma community on August 2nd, 2009, and no media (excluding “Forum of Nations”, a small monthly newspaper published by the NGO called “Congress of National Minorities of Ukraine) disseminated it13. In 2011, the Ukrainian Institute for National Remembrance included this day into the “Calendar of outstanding and memorial dates for 2011”, but no event was run by the Institute on that day. In the following years, which include 2015, this date has been absent in the Institute’s calendar14. The practice shows that, in most cases, the activities prescribed by this law to the regional authorities to foster research and education were mostly left on paper.15 The local authorities prefer only to

13 Address by the President of Ukraine on the occasion of the International Day of the Roma Holocaust (Retrieved October, 14, 2015 from: http://www.forumn.kiev.ua/2009-08-87/87-04.html). Later, in 2013, only one more public address was issued that day signed by the 1st deputy of the head of the Ministry of Culture in Ukraine, see http://mincult.kmu.gov.ua/mincult/uk/publish/article/336250;jsessionid=4C686292653E8BCC86DD2300BBCB10A2.app6:2 (access: 14/10/2015).
14 See http://memory.gov.ua/page/istorichnii-kalendar (access: 14/10/2015).
15 Systematic web-monitoring made by the author shows that only in four regions (out of 25) in Ukraine – Lviv, Mykolaiv, Odessa and Zakarpattia oblasts – local administrations elaborated a plan of events to have these included into their annual activities agenda or issued “methodical recommendations” for the administrative bodies and educational institutions subordinated to them about how to mark the “International Day of the Roma Holocaust”.
multiculturalism and multi-ethnic character of the country are hardly represented. ... And the Roma, judging from the analysis of educational textbooks in history for junior and senior schools, have never been present in Ukrainian history. So, how are the Roma represented in school teaching materials? The only mention of the Roma in the context of Nazi racial

16 In his recent article exploring contemporary commemoration of the RG in Ukraine, Swedish scholar Andrej Kotljarchuk provides about 20 examples of sites in various parts of Ukraine where the monuments to the murdered Roma were erected recently. See Andrej Kotliarchuk, “Natsistskii genotsyd tsygan na territorii okkupirovannoi Ukrainy: rol sovetskogo proshlogo v sovremennoi politike pamiati,” Holokost i suchasnist’ Studii v Ukraini i sviti, vol. 1 (12) (2014), pp. 24–50. However, closer examination of these cases shows that almost all of them were possible due to the initiatives of NGO sector of the society – first of all, the Roma organizations, but also other groups, while the role of the state bodies was limited usually to granting permissions for the public activists to build a monument, and taking part in the dedication ceremonies.

policies is found in textbooks on World History and History of Ukraine for the 10th school grade. But from these textbooks we do not see why Jews? Why the Roma? Why was it them to be «chosen» as victims? And where from do they appear in Ukraine, if they haven't been mentioned in earlier schooling? Roma history, their culture and contribution to the culture of Europe and Ukraine, history of their national movement, integration issues, etc. must be included in the school courses of history. Information on Roma genocide in WWII must be embraced by the school curricula. It must not be «separated» from the context of Roma history in Europe and Ukraine."

Has the situation changed since 2009? No one, standardized textbook exists for Ukrainian students of every grade; instead, there is a range of textbooks recommended by the Ministry of Education annually to be used in classrooms, and school administration can choose the one it considers to be more appropriate from this range. History is being taught in Ukrainian schools within two courses: “World History” (for which 5 textbooks were available last year) and “History of Ukraine” (for which also 5 textbooks were available last year). The period of 1939–1945 is covered in the beginning of the last (the 11th) grade of each course. Let us consider how textbooks published in 2010–2013 cover this period.

As for “World History” course (in which WWII is presented in the context of global and European perspective), all of these contain the term “Holocaust” and its definition within the lesson about the Nazi occupation regime in Europe or the Nazi “New Order”. But this term is explained differently. In most textbooks, one can see the statement that “the Holocaust means extermination of the Jewish people during World War II”. However, this definition is always accompanied with the information about the Nazi “New Order”, which presents it as a consistent policy pursued by the Nazis to eliminate “inferior people” like Jews, the Roma (or Gypsies), Slavic population on the basis of racial ideology. In

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this context, one can see that the term “Roma” is present in all the textbooks, though in most cases Nazi racial policy is misinterpreted by the authors as something which had exterminationist intentions, also in regard to the Slavic people, and Roma fate is mentioned in them quite briefly. One textbook, however, is outstanding of this range\(^{19}\), and presents quite nuanced and explicit explanation of the “genocide committed in regard to the Gypsy people (Sinti and Roma)” (though the passage that the textbook contains states inaccurately that the Roma were persecuted by the Nazis as thieves, “fortune-tellers and kidnappers”, thus neglecting the racial grounds for the Nazi persecution of the Roma)\(^{20}\).

As for the textbooks on the history of Ukraine (where WWII is given in Ukrainian context and focused geographically on the territory of contemporary Ukraine), they give similar picture. Out of 5 textbooks under consideration, 4 contain the term “Holocaust”, which is formulated as destruction of the Jews by the Nazi regime (while the remaining one mentions information about the mass murder of Jewish people without using the term), but only 3 out of 5 also contain a brief hint that the Roma were also the subject of the Nazi extermination politics. One can come to a conclusion that the tragic fate of the Roma is still externalized at the Ukrainian teaching narratives: it is rather regarded as a part of the general history which had happened elsewhere but not really as part of Ukrainian historical past. One more conclusion out of the analysis of textbooks is that in most cases, even when dealing with the RG, the authors mention it very briefly, in passing, and do not actually emphasize the racial nature of the Nazi politics towards the Roma.

When trying to interpret the reasons why the RG-related (as well as the Holocaust related narrative) is present in the textbooks in different proportions, it might be helpful to have a look on the

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\(^{20}\) Ibidem, p. 33.
personal professional background of the authors. It reveals that the more the text author was involved in the activities initiated by NGOs working in the field of informal education, the more detailed narrative about this subject can be found in his/her textbooks. Several NGOs today are focused on the promotion of Holocaust education among governmental education structures and schoolteachers. The central ones are Ukrainian Center for Holocaust Studies in Kiev\textsuperscript{21} and “Tkuma” Institute for Holocaust Studies in Dnepropetrovsk\textsuperscript{22}; both include RG history into their agenda and educational workshops for schoolteachers and school administrators that they actively run. The above-mentioned textbook, which contains a separate passage on the RG, was compiled by Ihor Shchupak, director of the “Tkuma” Institute for Holocaust Studies. One more example of the RG (as well as general Roma history) covered comes from another part of the country, but still NGO: a textbook called “Together on the same land. Multicultural history of Ukraine” was published by “Nova Doba” Association of Teachers of History and Civics in Lviv about various ethnic groups of Ukraine.\textsuperscript{23}

To conclude textbook exploration, one must add that sometimes textbook writing can be a very bright example of how the stereotypes regarding the Roma are kept and transferred to the younger generation. For instance, manual “Basics of Health” for pupils of the 4\textsuperscript{th} grade (10 years old) describes to a kid what to do when no adults are at home and someone rings to the door, and this situation of danger is personified with an image which can be identified easily with a Romani woman\textsuperscript{24}. The textbook was published in 2004, but today is still in use in schools.

\begin{footnotesize}
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\item[21] See http://www.holocaust.kiev.ua (access: 14/10/2015).
\item[22] See http://tkuma.dp.ua/ (access: 14/10/2015).
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Therefore, it would not be going too far to say that in the field of education it is NGOs who introduce memory of the RG into the official curricula and textbooks and classrooms. The governmental bodies remain clumsy and inert in accepting this approach, though they do not prevent it from being integrated into curricula. Having appeared originally on the margins of the state educational system, the RG teaching still remains there with some occasional attention of a symbolical nature provided by the governmental structures. However, some important developments can be observed: (1) the more effective activities of NGO sector, (2) “humanized” image of WWII, (3) the prevailing regional memories over the national ones, and (4) also some European integrationist rhetoric and practices used to a different extent, but by all Ukrainian presidential administrations. While the Holocaust has happened to be in their focus for already more than 20 years, the RG became a focus of educators’ attention only recently.

Comparing this situation with that of Russia and Belorussia, other Slavic post-Soviet states, one can see that general history and memory politics there makes it more difficult for the RG to be included into national memory canon; this can indirectly be confirmed by the total absence of the publications attempting to reflect the RG teaching or at least suggesting methods and recommendations for the teachers on that subject. As for Ukraine, polycentrism and pluralism in the process of shaping national historical narrative made it possible for such efforts to appear (though, again, as NGO initiatives). In this process, as it has been mentioned above, initiatives by the Roma communities and other non-Roma groups and the civil society actors are intertwining. Now it is time to consider them with greater care (some of them have been mentioned above) to find out what is their contribution to the RG remembrance in Ukraine and what

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As for Belorussia, see Andrej Kotljarchuk, “World War II Memory Politics: Jewish, Polish and Roma Minorities of Belarus”, *The Journal of Belarusian Studies*, vol. 1 (2013), pp. 7–37. As for Russian Federation, no critical examination of this subject, even made by a foreign observer, ever existed.
is the outcome of their activities. The NGO activities generally are going on in three directions (for the purpose of convenience I would divide these into three groups, but, one has to keep in mind that this division is rather conditional, because in most cases these initiatives are the result of mixed interrelations and cooperation):

(1) Research and educational initiatives of the local actors supported financially by the international or foreign foundations. In this case, initiatives belong to the local NGOs, which are successful to secure funding of their projects. In 2008, a first scholarly conference in Ukraine focused especially on the RG was run by the Ukrainian Center for Holocaust Studies (UCHS) due to support of the Friedrich Ebert Stiftung; a year later, the conference proceedings were published separately thanks to support of the German Embassy in Ukraine26. One more example is the 4-year project currently being run by the UCHS in Kyiv, combining research and educational activities and supported initially by the “Mutual Understanding and Tolerance” Foundation and then by the EVZ Foundation;27

27 See www.romagenocide.com.ua (access: 14/10/2015). In the autumn of 2013, the UCHS launched a new three-year research and education project, The Genocide of Roma (Gypsies) during the occupation of Ukraine (1941–1944): Research, Teaching and Commemoration. The research aim of the project lies in promoting the search of documentary sources and introducing them into scholarly use; recording oral historic accounts pertaining to the fate of the Roma living in the Ukrainian territories occupied during World War II; facilitating research by local historians in this direction. The educational goal presupposes the cooperation of researchers with teachers from educational institutions; involvement of students in search activities; recording memories of the witnesses of the genocide against the Roma; identifying Roma mass murder sites during World War II and their present-day condition; development of methodological materials for the teaching of this topic; and the writing of research works by students to be presented at the annual The History and Lessons of Holocaust contest run by the UCHS. The UCHS launched new website to promote the interaction of all those willing to join the subject, as well as to create an online resource that will help find and utilize in work reference materials or recent literature on the subject. This page offers visitors
due to their support the UCHS was able, particularly, to publish a map with 113 killing sites of the Roma in German-occupied area of Ukraine identified on the basis of archival documentation available. This map (which continues to be updated, since the project is still in progress) could become a base for the nation-wide registry of the Romani victims.

(2) Initiatives carried out by local branches of international institutions, which include RG-related education. In this case, international institutions in Ukraine find local partners from the civic sector to fulfill a particular project. For example, Ukrainian branch of the International Renaissance Foundation in Kyiv has, among others, a Roma program initiative28, which is mostly focused on the Roma-related social and legal issues but also embraces humanities and, particularly, conferences and teaching courses on Romani Studies, including the RG29; as for teaching courses, one-year program on Romani Studies has been established at the National University “Kyiv-Mohyla Academy” in 2012–201330; currently an agreement has been signed to establish the Romani Studies Program at Uzhgorod National University.31 At the same time, this organization sponsored travelling of several Ukrainian students of Roma and non-Roma origin to the annual ceremony of commemoration on August 2 in Krakow-Auschwitz, and now is discussing the possibility of adapting into Ukrainian the recently published Council of Europe’s textbook Right to Remember.

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*29* As for conference proceedings, see http://issuu.com/irf_ua/docs/roma-2014-1/1?e=2879057/7849618 (access: 14/10/2015).


(3) *Initiatives developed by the Roma community and its various individual and collective parts, being realized on their own or in cooperation with state bodies and/or non-governmental sector.* With no doubt, present-day Roma ethno-cultural organizations and their leaders can be seen as main memory agents interested in commemorating the RG, sharing this traumatic experience with the wider society and introducing this knowledge into the Ukrainian historical narrative, both on academic and public levels. Comparing to the situation of post-war time or late Soviet period, their memory cannot be called “muted” anymore, and, similarly to what Polish scholar Sławomir Kapralski demonstrated in regard to the Roma community in Europe, particularly in Poland, the Ukrainian Roma today are getting more and more involved into public commemoration ceremonies and “inventing tradition” process, as far as the resources allow them to do so.

Especially, this is true for a younger Roma generation, which is on its way of integration to the wider society. It is impossible yet to evaluate and give a representative picture of at which level the RG is in the historical background of the Roma community, since the research on this subject has never been done. However, some indirect tools to measure this awareness can be used, particularly, on the basis of essays written by the young Romani students applying annually to the Roma Education Fund for the fellowships. One of the chapters in application form, which they need to fill in, is the so-called “Essay on Roma Issues”, which expects from them to deliver their vision, limited to 500 words, on what it means to be Roma in individual and social dimensions. Instruction to this section, asks, among other questions, the following: *What*
is your opinion on Roma identity? Do you consider it important for young Roma? Or, do you see a need to strengthen it – and if so – how? As one can see, this guidance, though indirectly, leaves some space for a respondent to expound one’s personal feeling of identity in the terms he/she prefers. Some young Roma applicants indeed used what we can call “historical discourse” (particularly the notion of the RG and its implications) when explaining what it means for them to be a Roma.

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This demonstrates that, for the reasons yet to be researched, since the year of 2013 the proportion of Roma students aware of this tragic element of their past multiplied twice comparing to the previous year and, since that time remains stable, constituting about 7% of the total amount of the young people who applied for the support. In my opinion, the fact that they used the notion of the RG in their self-representation can be interpreted not only as just awareness of this past, but also their readiness to use this knowledge actively in their personal and social life strategies, particularly when facing present-day instances of discrimination or intolerance. On the other hand, this also demonstrates that the overwhelming majority of young Roma people (about 93%) are reluctant or unable, when speculating on the present-day situation of the Roma community, to perceive themselves as being part of historical process and to see the connection between potential discrimination nowadays (which the application form asked about too) and the persecution that occurred in the past, in order to learn lessons from it. In other words, the meaningful
past is still not considered as a possible resource for shaping the future by the most of the students.

As it has been mentioned above, over the last two decades Roma communities and individuals were main memory agents interested in commemorating RG in Ukraine, particularly erecting monuments of memorial signs on the mass graves where the Roma perished. Perhaps the long story of erecting a memorial to the Roma perished in Babyn Iar (Kyiv) is most symbolical when considering how the Roma initiatives interact with the governmental bodies and public actors. Babyn Iar in Kyiv is the place known for its tragic history, a site where mostly Jews, but also the Roma, Soviet POWs, Ukrainian nationalists, underground members, mentally disabled persons, as well as all those believed by the occupants to be “suspicious” and “undesirable” elements, were murdered in big numbers over 1941–1943.

As early as in 1995, the Roma organization “Romanipe” in Kyiv in cooperation with a well-known architect and sculptor Anatoly Ignashchenko projected a monument to the Roma killed in Babyn Iar in 1941. The monument, made of iron, was created in the form of the Roma nomad tent. Then, the base for the monument was ready, and the monument was about to be put on the pedestal. In 2000 this was suddenly prohibited by the city administration, which argued that the new monument “does not fit the area of secured landscape.” After attempts by the architect to overcome that prohibition, finally the monument was taken to another location, Kamianets-Podilskyi, and put there in the suburbs of the town above a ravine, remote area which can hardly be visited (see photo 1). Thus, the position of Kyiv city bureaucracy prevented putting that monument there despite the support of the Roma.

community and public opinion given to this project. In 2006, a National Reserve “Babyn Iar” was created by decision of president Yushchenko, but in fact this organization existed on paper only\textsuperscript{36}. For some years, there was no monument to the Roma in Babyn Iar until 2009, when Roma community again collected funds and erected a small memorial sign with inscription on it promising that “On this site a memorial will be erected to the victims of the Roma Holocaust” (see photo 2).

\textsuperscript{36} See http://babyn-yar.gov.ua/ (access: 14/10/2015).
In June 2011, this small monument was destroyed in Babyn Iar by unknown people. Investigation brought no results. For some period, the site remained without any stone with inscription (*see photo 3*), and soon the Roma community put one more small monument with another inscription, which – this time – did not contain on the stone any promise of the future memorial to be erected. The new one says only: “In memory of the Roma shot in Babyn Iar” (*see photo 4*).

This story remains completely incomprehensible for an outside observer without some extra attention paid to the context – but it becomes quite clear when the role and activities of both governmental and non-governmental organizations involved are considered. The area of Babyn Iar, or rather what remained of this huge area after the attempts by the Soviet authorities to erase and reshape this part of Kyiv in 1950–1960s, became - during the
Photo 3. Memorial sign in Babyn Iar (Kyiv) vandalized. Photo by Mikhail Tyaglyy, 2011.

independence period – a tasty morsel for numerous commercial companies and nouveau riches who had their lobby in the city administration responsible for maintaining city territory. For more than two decades, city authorities were making decisions in a completely opaque manner, ignoring civic initiatives directed to creation of the united site of memory in Babyn Iar which would shape common space of memory for various victim groups murdered there. In 2003, Civic Committee for Commemoration of Babyn Iar Victims was established and elaborated a project to implement the model of the memorial site, which would represent every victim group’s fate and, therefore, create a symbol of national past, uniting victims of different background around one commemorative space37. But initiatives like that were ignored. Instead, at least three initiatives by various private Jewish organizations (controlled or supported by the Ukrainian businessmen of Jewish origin) were discussed, and were nearly accepted to build a museum in Babyn Iar devoted exclusively to the Jewish victims38. It would not be going too far to assume that Ukrainian civil servants responsible for the state of affairs of this memorial area were obtaining some unofficial and indirect means to meet the above-mentioned initiatives in quite friendly and positive way; other explanation can be their absolute ignorance of the history of Babyn Iar and its present-day symbolical meaning. It is not surprising that to those who associate themselves today with the other victim groups (Ukrainian nationalists, Orthodox

37 See http://www.kby.kiev.ua/ (access: 14/10/2015).
38 The most prominent scandal occurred in 2002–2004, an initiative by the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee, supported by the part of the local Jewish leaders, to construct Jewish Community Center in Babyn Iar; this inappropriate idea was confirmed by the authorities with no public discussion on this issue and was canceled only after polemics had come out of the borders of the Jewish circles and involved wider Ukrainian intelligentsia, see http://babiyar-diskus.narod.ru/Index.html (access: 14/10/2015). Needless to say that in this and other initiatives all the local actors of Jewish origin pursued their own PR goals when introducing projects like that and allocating funds for them.
church, etc.), the initiatives listed above seemed to be totally inappropriate, as they did not include memory of “their” groups in a common memorial narrative. This situation leads to what can be called “memory wars” in the Ukrainian society. Particularly, the most recent conflict happened in 2011, when the Ukrainian parliament approved a decree “On 70th anniversary of Babyn Iar”39. This document contained a list of measures to be implemented in order to hasten activities of the National Reserve “Babyn Iar” (created in 2006) and to commemorate victims of massacres. This time the reason for discord was that the Committee on preparation and running of the events devoted to the 70th anniversary of massacres in Babyn Iar was formed exclusively of the representatives of Jewish organizations. Both Ukrainian and Roma ethno-cultural organizations addressed Ukrainian prime-minister (at that time Mykola Azarov), criticizing this decision and demanding to have their representatives included into the Committee.40 No public reaction followed to these criticisms, and the effect of these addresses remained unknown. Up to the present day, the Babyn Iar territory remains a cake, sliced into several chunks, and every victim group (or, rather their descendants associating themselves with any victim group) enjoys its own chunk, i.e. visits particular

40 For the address of the Organization of Ukrainian Nationalists, see http://www.istpravda.com.ua/columns/2011/09/26/56627/ (access: 14/10/2015). For the address of the Roma organizations, see http://www.unian.ua/society/517746-romi-vimagayut-vid-azarova-vshanuvati-vbitih-u-babinomu-yraru.html (access:14/10/2015). Remarkably, the appeal by the Ukrainian circles refers only indirectly to the composition of the Committee, saying that “Some particular civic organizations are undertaking one more attempt to cross out historical truth and national fairness, above all in regard to the death of the thousands of Ukrainian patriots, who during the war struggled for Ukrainian independence”. The letter by the Roma organizations was much less politically correct: “[The fact that the Roma are not represented in the Committee] gives us a ground to consider the Plan of Events proposed by the Committee as a business plan for money-laundering of the budget funds through the Jewish institutions”.

part of Babyn Iar territory on their own commemorative dates with no regard to the other victim groups. One memorial site which would unite and consolidate present-day Ukrainian society by means of the common tragic fate has not been created yet.

Summing up, one can come to a conclusion that the RG is being remembered and commemorated in present-day Ukraine in a specific and ambiguous way. The memory is being preserved and transformed to the younger generations, but very insufficiently. In the context of inconsistent and ambiguous politics of memory, and in the situation of constant struggle between “post-Soviet” and “nationalistic” discourses of history, the dynamics of spreading RG-related memory is positive, but this is mainly the merit of non-formal education and commemoration activities developed by NGOs and it covers small sector of the society. Besides, as one scholar noted, the wider Ukrainian society is not ready to discuss sensitive and painful questions related to involvement into the Holocaust. The same can be referred to the RG.

Teaching about the RG in the FSU space remains to be still in the beginning stage and is being initiated merely by few memory agents such as the Roma community activists and NGO educators. Comparing the situation in Ukraine to that in the rest of the FSU states, one can see that elsewhere RG teaching has reached more success due to several reasons; one is general and consists in a more active role the NGOs and civic sector play in the society, shaping pluralistic vision of history; the more particular one was that the 2004 Law by Ukrainian parliament created a framework where civic initiatives, particularly commemorative ones, if not supported, at least can be carried out with no prevention from the side of the authorities.

41 Tetiana Portnova, “Holokost v ukrainskih obrazovatelnyh praktikah,” online publication, see http://urokiistorii.ru/learning/edu/51948 (published 9/12/2013).