

# An English Poetic Translation

*Hamish MacDonald*

<sup>1</sup> Żagań, 25th July 1952

The song Tears of Blood, or what we suffered  
under the Germans in Volhynia in '43 and '44.

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▼ Ah, my good people

<sup>5</sup> believe me on my love of God

I don't want to recall such bad times  
because my heart becomes sick and soon wants to cry.  
But what to do? It is necessary to sing,  
to evil people who want war.

<sup>10</sup> Let them know well:

God forbid anyone has to live  
in war. In times of great trouble stained with a bloody  
tear. What a poor soul went through.

A Jewish child, and with her Roma children

<sup>15</sup> a Romni! Ah song, song you are sad!

As the earth without the sun would be poor

It is bad in the world when there is war.

God grant that there will never be a war.

People are shaking, flesh trembles

<sup>20</sup> on the bones and the soul cries blood-stained  
tears. No one knows where one's family is

Let them see only reason from my song;  
so that their soul will soften and not want war.

Let them learn how it was, because they are

<sup>25</sup> the ones who said 'do not give anything to the Roma'  
and did not believe how under the Germans the Roma perished.

What beautiful houses these good people  
aspired to have! And now what is left?

Only forgotten ruins. Dear God, make sure that no one

<sup>30</sup> forgets all these misfortunes, though how wonderful it would be  
to live in the world, if only to listen to great songs.

**Why and what do I sing about?**

▼War, war! Let it never be part of our life.

My dear and good-hearted people!

Listen to my true song,

<sup>35</sup> on what the Rom, the Roma children and Romni suffered.

Terrible fire! The soul drenched in blood and tears.

It is for you I sing the song, this woeful song.

In the forests without water,

without fire, in great hunger.

<sup>40</sup> Where are the children to sleep?

There is no tent. Fires can't be burned at night

because the smoke betrays us

to the Germans; how are we to live with the children

in freezing, bitter winter? ▼All are barefoot,

<sup>45</sup> everything left behind us in the town of Włodzimierz.

**The woes of the war.**

**UNDER THE GERMAN RULE.**

**A German Rom told us to flee.**

When the Germans wanted to murder us,

first they ordered us to hard labour.

This German came to the Roma at night saying:

'I must tell you something bad:

<sup>50</sup> on this night they mean to kill you.

Keep it quiet but know this:

I am from the Kalo Rom, a true black Rom,

purest of blood. May you have

the best of luck in the dark

<sup>55</sup> forest.' Having spoken these words

he kissed us all.

▼I am walking swiftly into the forest. We have ventured far

into the broad world, to where a hundred

of the Roma family gathered.

<sup>60</sup> Before dawn we moved deeper

into the great forest. We threw away everything,

we were without cart or horse. The Germans came on horseback,

and we only with our hiking staffs, so how to escape?

One child carried on the shoulders,

<sup>65</sup> the other in the arms. This is how the Roma were walking.

What to do now? The Germans are near,

they can catch us. ▼Then,

from all around us partisans are running and shooting.

In the clearing

**Leaving the city  
of Włodzimierz.**

**IN THE FORESTS.**

**Chapaev partisans save us.**

<sup>70</sup> they see the children and the Romnis  
as a big battle begins.

Where could the Germans hide?

The Chapaev partisans fear nothing;

then begin talking to the Roma: 'What is happening here?'

<sup>75</sup> We say: 'The Germans wanted  
to kill us, so we had

to hide in the forest.' 'Ah, poor

you, how many are you?' 'One hundred.'

▼Dear God, how are we to live, what is there to eat,

<sup>80</sup> what to drink, where to get money from?

But no need to seek anything, the forest will give  
up its bounty. Whatever is to be found in the forest  
Roma take; whatever is to be found in the villages  
we will steal – you or us, all of us,

<sup>85</sup> together. ▼Two poor Jews are in our company,  
all their family killed.

▼With all of that sadness the Roma began singing.

It was a beautiful song, birds carried it far  
into the forest, one retelling it to the other.

<sup>90</sup>▼This was a wonderful night,  
the Roma fell asleep together  
with all the stars.

▼Birds and the little ones

woke them up. The stream murmurs before dawn

<sup>95</sup> to sing a beautiful song.

Fishes delight the Roma children to make them laugh  
as they quietly chatter by the stream,

forgetting all their hardships. They don't know  
what, Dear God, awaits them.

<sup>100</sup> ▼Only our Blessed Mother and the Almighty knows.

Oh, song,

my sad song, no one knows, oh God,

what will happen.

A dozen of my family will be killed by the Germans.

▼The Germans are chasing us

<sup>105</sup> but they fear to go deeper in the forest.

They do not allow us to go out, where we want.

**How to survive here?**

**Victims, Jews.**

**Our song relieves grief.**

**Our night in the forest.**

**Great morning. Let's  
live and wait.**

**Let's not forget our  
dead ones.**

**The forest hides us  
from the Germans.**

They are surrounding the forest to fight  
 with the partisans. The Romnis are weeping, asking  
 God for His mercy. At night all go out to steal but sometimes  
<sup>110</sup> bring nothing back.

For two, three days there is nothing to eat.  
 Because of that we go to sleep hungry, eyes  
 do not close. Everyone is watching the stars.  
 Oh God, life can be good but the Germans do not let us  
<sup>115</sup> live. They are shooting, and fires  
 like my songs go flying far away.

▼ Ah you, my tiny star, before day breaks  
 you are so big and real over this world,  
 blind the Germans' eyes,  
<sup>120</sup> take them along twisting roads, show  
 them a wrong turning, deceive them.

Let Jewish and Roma children live  
 let the German leader perish.

▼ Raise yourself around us, dear forest,  
<sup>125</sup> sing to them a song where our people walk,  
 in front and at the back let your song sound out, laugh.  
 Forest, forest, thick with trees!  
 Mighty forest, covered with leaves!

▼ A big battle rages, Germans together with Ukrainians,  
<sup>130</sup> all are killing and wounding us and Jews,  
 they do not listen to anyone anymore,  
 only to their own voices. Everywhere around  
 they have killed Catholics.

Poor Poles, with their tongues cut out,  
<sup>135</sup> their eyes gouged. ▼ Soon,  
 all over the world people will be poor.  
 You, rich people, it is you who  
 will then be poor, weeping tears of blood.

▼ So what do you think, my good company,  
<sup>140</sup> where can hundreds of people survive?  
 It was bad and it was good when it was  
 warm outside. Some sunshine, some tears,  
 wild blueberries to be gathered, we drank brews  
 made from herbs, ate forest mushrooms, yes, and

**Papusza prays to the little star.**

**Papusza prays to the forest.**

Germans and Ukrainians murder  
 Roma, Jews, Poles.

The rich fast turn poor (≈ Luke 6:25).

**How to live in the forest?**

<sup>145</sup> a few fishes too. Romnis cooked  
 dead horses that had rotted for two  
 or three weeks on the ground, but how miraculous that meat tasted.

Roma children roasted potatoes on a fire, those tasted  
 sweet as marzipans. Once a

<sup>150</sup> week poor Roma brought a dozen or two  
 of them. ▼ So far so good

but when freezing winter comes  
 what are Romnis to do with a small child?  
 Where will they get a coat from?

<sup>155</sup> All the clothes are already in tatters,  
 the flesh is naked, we want to die.

**It will be even worse soon.**

No one has heard or knows about it, only the sky  
 and the river hear them cry.

▼ What evil eye has led us  
<sup>160</sup> into such misfortune? Whose lips  
 have cursed us? God, don't listen to  
 them, hear us.

**Who has cursed us?**

▼ This night got colder and old Romnis  
 began to sing a Roma fairy tale:  
<sup>165</sup> 'A golden winter will come,  
 snowflakes will fall on the ground, on your arms,  
 like tiny stars. Black eyes will  
 freeze over, little souls will  
 die, not a single one of the old will survive  
<sup>170</sup> to compose honest songs.'

**The song of a cold night.**

▼ The children began to cry: 'We want  
 to eat, we have no strength left to keep  
 on walking'. The Germans surrounded the forest.  
 Here many of us perished from starvation.

The children cry, the snowfall  
 makes them happier.

<sup>175</sup> In the morning it began snowing  
 and despite hunger and misfortune little souls brightened up:  
 one is laughing, the other  
 is crying, another plays in the snow.

Papusza tells a fairy tale in the open  
<sup>180</sup> air, one is laughing another is crying. ▼ God  
 gave snow. Here the feared and evil German  
 is returning, pressing on.

The Germans are coming,  
 we must run away.

The Chapaev partisans are walking faster with us walking  
 after them. ▼There will be food to eat. I won't be  
<sup>185</sup> a Roma daughter if I don't go  
 through the campfire to bring back a pot of meat.  
 I am bringing bread and Hungarian  
 smoked meats. ▼Today the Chapaev  
 commando were saying that they would cross  
<sup>190</sup> the railroad. Yes, that's true,  
 so that night we didn't sleep.  
 It snowed heavily, closing the road: with only the  
 Milky Way to be seen in the sky.  
 The partisans go with a song under their breath.  
<sup>195</sup> ▼I alone began to sing aloud. I don't  
 know what became of me.  
 I would have gone then to kill a German,  
 or to let them stab me.  
 Truly I became fearless.  
<sup>200</sup> ▼All Roma and the soldiers are asking: 'Why so  
 loud? Sing, but do not wake  
 the Germans and Hungarians up. This is no laughing  
 matter. Let's see what the battle  
 will bring. Let everyone now obey.'  
<sup>205</sup> The sky is so beautiful.  
 I began to sing a song quietly to myself  
 and I spoke to the Roma:  
 ▼'Look at the sky, how  
 it flashes, trembles, not  
<sup>210</sup> calm, unlike my soul. When  
 we arrive, we will gift all we have  
 to the church, a candle, as big as my own  
 height.' ▼After I finished,  
 a big fire fell upon us. All tumbled down,  
<sup>215</sup> tied up children's mouths.  
 All became as if dead from fear.  
 ▼But I don't care if I live  
 or die, I have no children,  
 no one to live for.  
<sup>220</sup> I started to scream then began running forward. ▼My  
 husband saw me, grabbing me by the hand.

Papusza will get a lot of food soon.

**A railroad crossing is planned.**

Papusza is under trance.

All ask Papusza not to sing loud.

Papusza's vow of a church candle.

**Shooting.**

Papusza is under trance again,  
 why she was fearless.

Her conversation with her husband.

'What are you doing? Do you want to die?'

'Don't worry, husband, God gave each of us their own fate. There is nothing to eat.

<sup>225</sup> I am a Rom's daughter, black night

is a sister of mine.' 'Crazy,

what has happened to you?' 'I want

to feed the hungry children.

I can't bear to look at

<sup>230</sup> this misfortune. What is happening to me

today? This! I want to die

there, where I shouldn't, you Roma lad!

▼Singing, on I went. A big battle raged.

Fires rained down. Little by little,

<sup>235</sup> the Germans are giving up, don't harm our fighters

allowing them to cross

the railroad. I plunder the battlefield for meats,

grab smoked hams and sweet

liquors, a full blanket packed with

<sup>240</sup> white loaves and all I could find. A lot of killed

Hungarians lie around.

I am walking and fear nothing, break

a piece of bread and am eating it. I forget about the misfortune

and am running as fast as I can. ▼Our people

<sup>245</sup> can't be seen, they have gone on.

Our soldiers have let them through

and now are looking at me: 'Who are you?'

'Were my Roma here? Haven't

you recognized me?' ▼Fortunately,

<sup>250</sup> a soldier was around who knew me: 'This

Romni is ours, she always

sings a Roma song. Why have you

stayed behind? Faster,

go now, faster. God forbid, if there are

<sup>255</sup> Germans nearby.' ▼On horseback, together with

the soldiers I ride and

we took all that food. It's already a bright day.

Our people are all asleep.

A beautiful place. The Germans will not come here.

Papusza gets a lot of food.

Her short separation from the Roma.

[Unexpressed risk of being mistaken for a spy.]

A soldier confirms her identity.

Papusza finds her family again.

<sup>260</sup> We may stay for several days.  
 It began snowing heavily. ▼ We've set a big table.  
 ▼ They say we almost died from hunger.  
 In such a war, it is said,  
 everyone saves only himself,  
<sup>265</sup> the birth mother even leaves her child.  
 ▼ My husband is in a terrible rage  
 that I cooked meat for you,  
 brought bread, I spoke these words  
 and because of joy, I began  
<sup>270</sup> to sing a song with joy, ▼ all with  
 eyes wide open, as if they weren't able to see  
 me. ▼ The soldiers had a hearty meal and thanked me,  
 they ate up till satiated. 'Well done, you are brave',  
 they said. ▼ I didn't want  
<sup>275</sup> their praise, I only wanted to save  
 the children dying from hunger.  
 ▼ This night is cold, a girl is already  
 dying, during the past four days  
 the Romnis have buried four children.  
<sup>280</sup> In deep snow, Roma boy,  
 you perished. Four children we laid in a single  
 grave in one day. Dear God,  
 see our misfortune. Have a look,  
 dear sun, at how without you, a Roma  
<sup>285</sup> boy is dying of cold  
 in the big forest. ▼ A bird hears  
 a mother and father weep. The river  
 and forest hears and together compose a great song to carry  
 it far into the world. A Rom replies,  
<sup>290</sup> 'why is the forest singing'?  
 Because a Romni is crying. ▼ Often  
 the Roma crossed the railways together with the soldiers,  
 often bullets whizzed past a Rom's  
 head, like birds, often  
<sup>295</sup> tears of blood flowed. Often  
 a child was starving to death,  
 like a little sparrow in winter. Sun, gentle sun,  
 hiding behind the trees, the shadow

A banquet for everybody.  
 Roma thank Papusza.

Papusza says unacceptable things.

Roma are silent in shock.

Soldiers thank Papusza.

A good, but single meal for children.

[The soldiers secretly left the Roma]  
**Hunger and cold. Children are  
 dying.**

**Parents' laments.**

**Endless suffering.**

of the trees deepens the cold, but a fire cannot  
<sup>300</sup> be made. ▼Dear God  
 forgot about us.

God looks after us.

All the same, dear God, for one year  
 a Rom has been hiding in the forests.  
 Mother of God remembers us,  
<sup>305</sup> ▼though a Romni does not go to villages.

**The forest somehow feeds us.**

Once a week she is sure to find something  
 in the forest, if not a cow,  
 a killed horse, a little salt and  
 some spilled rye. This is how the Roma  
<sup>310</sup> lived. The Rom is chewing wax  
 instead of gum, seems  
 to be eating and fills his belly, he drinks  
 forest tea and eats a hedgehog –  
 the little forest piglet.

<sup>315</sup> ▼Somehow he survives, and though  
 he sleeps rough doesn't  
 get TB. After all, the wind carries fragrances from all good  
 flowers to drive sickness away.

The forest gives us strength and  
 health.

Forest, forest!

<sup>320</sup> This disease

hangs in the air but here

Roma can avoid it.

After all resinous pine forests

heal and add strength.

<sup>325</sup> ▼All the world neglected us,  
 so the forest

People have left us. Our neighbours.

covered us. A little star

sits with us until daybreak

and an owl. The old woman tells a Roma tale of the owl

<sup>330</sup> as bird of the dead. Some listen to the voice of

the owl, some throw twigs

after it for they strongly believe

it. The owl, little

birds, wolves, all their voices

<sup>335</sup> are loud but they never touch us.  
 There were many creatures all around us as if they were  
 our dogs. ▼My dear and good  
 people! How would you like to see  
 our life in a film?

<sup>340</sup> Truthfully I would like  
 to describe all these things.  
 After one year passes,  
 there would be a beautiful Book.  
 I know that my golden little  
<sup>345</sup> Brother is writing it, I  
 don't lie, otherwise let my  
 soul perish. All is true, true  
 what the poorest Rom and  
 the richest Jew in the world  
<sup>350</sup> suffered under German rule.

▼The sun rose, all the forest brightened, the Rom has  
 barely come to life and the times – may God be praised –  
 changed. ▼A gadjo showed up;  
 'What is going on? Did  
<sup>355</sup> the Germans move on'? Some forests  
 have already become free of Germans. Men and  
 women, villagers are looking at us fearfully  
 as our tears fall like rain.

▼Romnis are crying  
<sup>360</sup> of happiness when they see the villagers,  
 hear these townsfolk. Romnis  
 are fetching food, songs fly  
 up into the sky. Roma children  
 rejoice, dance and do not fear  
<sup>365</sup> the forest. Legs are red, browned, dirty.  
 No shirts. Bellies are naked.

▼The villagers come and invite us to their houses.  
 But our joy did not turn out to be  
 big because these people were  
<sup>370</sup> Ukrainians. ▼They burnt churches,  
 tore down Catholic crosses.  
 Cattle are lowing like the sound of people mourning.  
 Poles have been killed to the last one  
 and now their property is being taken. ▼Then

Our past deserves a movie and a  
 book (about Roma and Jews).

UNDER THE BULBAITES RULE.  
**Dawn. It's getting warmer.**

A gadjo comes.

The joy is great ...

Enmity towards Catholics.

What did they do before?

What did they ask us about?

<sup>375</sup> the gadjos turn to us: 'Who are  
 you?' 'We are Roma.' 'Ukrainians  
 or Poles?' 'We are Roma,  
 the Germans wanted to kill us  
 ▼we have come to you to play.'  
<sup>380</sup>After all, the Roma took good care of all their  
 instruments as preciously as their eyes,  
 because playing music saved us  
 from certain death. They played  
 a soldier song and now, ▼out of nowhere,  
<sup>385</sup> a peasant woman has fetched a pot of lard.  
 Roma played the song 'Your Dark  
 Eyes' – the peasants brought boots.  
 All were playing so beautifully  
 that the peasants brought everything we needed.  
<sup>390</sup> In the end they have clothed us all,  
 ▼only I didn't take anything.  
 The clothes I got I distributed among the Romnis  
 because I had taken all my own dresses.  
 I left some good boots behind,  
<sup>395</sup> I wore some bad ones, these ones  
 that I had were worn away, I had torn them walking  
 in the forests. I promised  
 myself that even if I had to die  
 I would not take a killed person's shirt,  
<sup>400</sup> I would prefer to have walked naked.  
 Blood admonishes me  
 that the innocent perished here  
 and lie buried in the ground. After all, I  
 am such a one who can see when something is evil.  
<sup>405</sup> Let my soul die before I would touch it.

We play our music.

Gadjos pay us.

Papusza and things of the  
murdered.

▼We see a gadjo come  
 and ten more follow him  
 with staffs on their shoulders.  
 Bulbaitees killed them. ▼What have you,  
<sup>410</sup> dear God, done, why have you led us  
 to here, what are we now to do?  
 To where should we go? To which  
 soldiers? The Chapaev partisans left us,  
 but they will likely return soon to

How people died.

Papusza's prayer.

<sup>415</sup> us. What will God give: bad  
or good? Where will I go to live  
through winter, when not one big head will perish?

▼The Roma agreed on one thing and asked  
for housing. They gave us the houses  
<sup>420</sup> of the Poles, poor souls,  
who were killed recently. ▼I'd prefer  
to remain in the forests. Better wolves  
eat me now than we sit  
in these houses. In the frenzied  
<sup>425</sup> nights of killing, people here  
were drowned in the wells.

▼Chickens run wild in the forests,  
cats walk, cry. Gadjos  
kill cows. It is unbearable to watch  
<sup>430</sup> what is happening. ▼The Roma fear  
to stay in the houses  
lest the dead return, lest the living  
begin killing us.

▼Accommodated in houses the Roma were looking for work. Modest comfort, fear of change.  
<sup>435</sup> A big cold winter came, a black Romni was wandering  
around the village. Fear was great,  
some gadjos came, Ukrainians:

▼'Are you "white" Poles?' But  
the Roma are clever, not such simpletons,  
<sup>440</sup> like the Pole gadjos. The Ukrainian gadjo  
didn't understand the conversation in Romani: 'How  
do you cross yourselves?' 'To the Orthodox right.'  
'What are your names?' 'Vasyl, Ivan,  
Nastia, Paraska, Olena,  
<sup>445</sup> Petro.' 'Where are your papers?' 'The Germans  
took them.' Roma are hiding  
in the forests, where gadjos can't find them.  
'If you were those Polish Lords ...'  
They would have immediately killed us.

<sup>450</sup> ▼Once in Lytomorye's house, but where I can't  
remember,  
all day the sky was perfect.

Houses of the dead.

It would be better in the forest.

Ownerless animals.

Roma are afraid of the dead, and  
even more of the living.

Modest comfort, fear of change.

What did the other gadjos ask?

**The night visit of a young Jewess.**

The moon shone directly into the window,  
 so I couldn't sleep. Someone at  
 the window was peering fearfully inside.  
<sup>455</sup> I asked: 'Who is that?'  
 'Open the door, my dear black  
 Gypsy woman.' I see a beautiful  
 Jewish girl come in. She is trembling, shaking,  
 asks for something to eat. Dear God  
<sup>460</sup> knows I don't lie,  
 I swear by any good luck  
 left to me in this world. Poor you,  
 my dear Jewess. I gave her  
 bread, salt, what I had,  
<sup>465</sup> a shirt. A beautiful lass,  
 like a berry, she began crying: 'Ah,  
 dear God! How good you are.  
 Two Jewish children are dying of starvation.'  
 'My Roma are good.'  
<sup>470</sup> And we two forgot that the soldiers  
 were camped nearby,  
 and this night they didn't come to us.  
 'My dear Gypsy, let me kiss  
 you for your good soul. You are afraid  
<sup>475</sup> and I fear. Each week I will  
 come once at night. Don't you know  
 where the Chapaev commando  
 may be?' 'We were traveling with them.  
 But they went on when  
<sup>480</sup> we fell asleep and I haven't seen them again.'  
 She kissed me and I her.  
 ▼From all over the gadjo is running.

Another dwelling.

'All you Roma, gather,  
 now you will move to other houses.'  
<sup>485</sup> At night all Roma are awakened.  
 Already one house is burning, another  
 is being destroyed. They  
 chase us into a single house,  
 sixty six people in all.

490 ▼

In February 1944

**Everyone got sick, no one died.**

In February the gadjos gave  
 a single house for all of us, three rooms and  
 one kitchen. We all got sick  
 with consumption: a Romni, and then  
<sup>495</sup> I, and from me all caught this disease.  
 No one died, but all  
 stayed six weeks in bed. Boiled raspberry twigs  
 gave some strength and  
 with this brew we began to heal.

<sup>500</sup> And today, in order to remember, we tell to all how this is done.

▼ God sent us a warm March.

**What did the Poles ask?**

Only patches of snow remained. Other gadjos walk  
 to the windows: 'Roma, how do you  
 cross yourselves?' ▼ The Roma eventually forget those adopted names.

**Roma forget troubles, but ...**

<sup>505</sup> Now call one another by our baptised names:

Janek, Bronia, Krzysia, Zosia ...

Only mine they did not recognise as a Roma name.

This nickname was lucky.

▼ Gadjos were holding big meetings

**the gadjos want to kill them.**

<sup>510</sup> on killing Roma.

They ordered us to dig graves, they wanted  
 to kill us, how much we cried!

But the gadjos didn't even look: sick men  
 and women fell into the ground a day later.

<sup>515</sup> Over there they kill all at night.

Some kneel, pray to God,  
 weep tears of blood. It would have been  
 better to stay in the forests than to be with these  
 gadjos who devour our flesh!

<sup>520</sup> We are men, let's take up axes in hand  
 before they kill us and later the children.

▼ A black night fell,

**Two Romnis are looking for  
Russians.**

I and a Romni

(let her soul rejoice at my God's  
<sup>525</sup> because she has already died)

sprang out and went away. Like a  
 big and black night, our soul  
 blackened with fear. ▼ She and I

**Why did they decide to go?**

are childless. 'Anyway they will kill  
 530 me and you, but you have a brother.' We are walking fast  
 along the road towards where  
 the Chapaev commando is encamped.  
 After all, by tomorrow no one of the Roma will have survived.  
 'Neither you nor I have children, let us two  
 535 go, so that the other Roma wouldn't know.'  
 So, we went. ▼Oh, this dark night,  
 my song, song. Where to find  
 our big good luck? ▼You, our Holy  
 Mother! Heavenly Father, sweet is your soul,  
 540 save our heads, so that not all of us perish.  
 Lend us your hand.

▼All little birds pray to God for  
 our children, so that angry snakes and gadjos  
 would not kill us. ▼Ah, what a sad fate is ours.  
 545 My unlucky luck. ▼'Listen my  
 Romni-friend, let's go back! We should not face death just two alone  
 without being among our Roma, it's better to perish  
 together, it is better among many of us.'  
 'Ah, you my dear path, show us  
 550 where a good Russian is, so he could lend  
 us his hand.' ▼Someone is  
 riding. A little bird is singing a song.  
 We hear the forest speak,

in  
 555 Russian!

It replies. Vania, the name resounds. ▼We,  
 as if dead, stopped in our tracks. What to do,  
 we didn't know. By God, we lay down  
 and started a fire with a match.  
 560 They surrounded the forest.  
 We began to sing a Russian song  
 and to talk in Russian:  
 '*Olia, kuda ty? Chapaev! Idite  
 siuda!*' ▼Kolpakov and the Russians: '*Ruki  
 565 vverkh!*' Well, we tell them, we don't know if  
 our people are alive this night.  
 We rode with the partisans,

**They are singing.**

**They pray to God.**

**Birds pray with them.**

**Another song.  
 Doubts.**

**They pray to the dear path.**

**UNDER THE PARTISANS.  
 The forest hears a Russian name.**

**Frightened, they sing in Russian.**

and saw that our people were in great  
 misfortune. They all had been already standing,  
<sup>570</sup> next to them the Russians  
 and there was no militia to be seen.

*Czy widzisz dokola,  
 jak w marszu swym krocza  
 z piosenką wesolą ...*

<sup>575</sup> ▼ And in this way  
 they marched in a single column.  
 I swear on the lives of my children: this  
 night we all were walking together.  
 We buried Romni Moliunia.

<sup>580</sup> ▼ The Russians captured Bulbaites who will be  
 transported  
 beyond the frontier. These women are crying,  
 berate the Roma: 'Why did the devil  
 bring them here! Because of them  
 my son is lost. Oh, these black devils!...'

<sup>585</sup> ▼ Little girls carried staffs,  
 and were busy creating an independent  
 Ukraine, this caused a lot of  
 nights when many people perished.

▼ The Germans are decent dogs, too! Beautiful  
<sup>590</sup> Roma girls perished in the concentration camp  
 from forced labour. We remember them like  
 stars, so to this day good songs are composed about  
 them during hard works. ▼ This night Chapaev  
 commando and the Roma took horses,  
<sup>595</sup> pigs, down duvets, linens, leather shoes,  
 all that they could find in a villager's house.

▼ From the town only a single Rom has not come back,  
 alongside the Romni who together with me had led the Russian  
 soldiers to our Roma. She perished in the town  
<sup>600</sup> because of a Bulbaite.

When the Chapaev commando surrounded the Roma  
 a Bulbaite commander shot, but a Chapaev  
 soldier killed him; anyway, the Romni  
 perished on the spot. ▼ All those misfortunes she survived

**March with the Russians.**

**Local men in captivity, women  
 curse the Roma.**

What were the locals doing?

What were the Germans doing?

Partisans get rich at night.

How Moliunia died.

Lamentation of Moliunia.

<sup>605</sup> and left her only brother and two  
 sisters. Neither mother nor father do they have. Who  
 is going to cry after you, poor you? Black  
 soil will cover you, my black  
 sister. ▼The soldiers ask 'How come  
<sup>610</sup> that you lived here and they  
 didn't kill you? That they didn't learn that  
 you are Lords, Polish Roma? Poor you!  
 They ask about everything.  
 The Romnis are remembering  
<sup>615</sup> and crying: 'Why did you leave us  
 when we slept and for almost 2 months  
 forgot about us?' Now a man appears  
 in front of the women: 'We will  
 not leave you again!'

The partisans ask the Romnis.

<sup>620</sup> ▼The rich cart is strong,  
 the Roma got rich  
 and Chapaev soldiers took all the Roma along.  
 The peasants are crying,  
 the partisans keep telling them: 'Return  
<sup>625</sup> all that, which you took from the Poles. Let  
 these poor Roma ride good  
 horses. And you who cry! ▼What have you  
 done? So many villages you burnt down,  
 so many people you chopped to death  
<sup>630</sup> with axes. Evil are your souls!  
 ▼Having spoken these words he ordered  
 to leave. The Roma are riding away, laughing,  
 drinking like lords. Children  
 rejoice. The horses are neighing, sensing  
<sup>635</sup> the long journey. The strong German is gone!  
 The horses clip-clopping along the road.  
 The Germans are in trouble. The Roma  
 laugh, ride the horses.  
 The Germans retreat. The partisans  
<sup>640</sup> capture them. Romnis thank  
 God,  
 sing songs, imagine good times coming,  
 play music for all the Russian soldiers

The Roma are getting richer too.

What were the locals doing?

The road is great and the joy is  
 great, as the Germans are in great  
 trouble.

and forget about the trouble. ▼Already we are parting to go    Parting. New victims.  
<sup>645</sup> our ways. A big battle took  
place in the forest, when the soldiers readied to part company  
with the Roma, together with their children and women.  
Before we arrived at the place where the Chapaev commando  
camped this night,  
<sup>650</sup> the Bulbaitees had killed five of our  
soldiers. These ones who go together  
with us know nothing of this. ▼We have arrived.                    The funeral of the partisans.  
They are burying the fallen, laugh and sing,  
hold back tears. ▼That night    Hard way from the partisans.  
<sup>655</sup> we rode far away together.  
Into the big mud that trembles.  
The horses sank. Planks thrust under  
wheels didn't help. Over there two horses  
drowned. Narrowly we saved ourselves  
<sup>660</sup> from certain death in the quagmire. Barely, with great effort  
we got out. All dirty.  
In the middle of the large swamp we all  
crowded onto the single left  
cart. ▼Before daybreak    Why are we coming back?  
<sup>665</sup> the Germans were nearby. We went back, returning onto  
the other roads, where the Germans had left  
their carts laden with fragrant hams and various  
injections and medicines. ▼The soldiers                                Another parting.  
ask: 'Do you have horses, carts?  
<sup>670</sup> No? Then go! Pick up some food  
and don't forget about us. After all, with us  
soldiers you will never perish.  
Godspeed to you'. ▼They    Soldier secrets.  
tell the truth straight in the face. What  
<sup>675</sup> they don't want to reveal they discuss with each  
other, they laugh and look at us: shortly they will leave  
the forest for good. ▼'Well, come on,                                        Sleepless march.  
go.' We ride by cart all night and day.  
We have a lot to eat, whatever your soul may desire  
<sup>680</sup> but whoever walks alongside almost falls down because all want  
to sleep. We see that they lead us  
onto the overgrown roads. It is daylight but the edge of the forest

is in the shade. ▼ It got warmer, the sun  
 rose high, the whole sky  
<sup>685</sup> clear, all visible, my dear, most beautiful world.  
 You can see the beautiful big world from afar:  
 houses and people. Great joy  
 in Roma souls. Empty  
 houses. A lot of chickens. No  
<sup>690</sup> people, all killed. The doors all remain intact  
 in the houses. What happened here?  
 ▼ We see soldiers behind us,  
 our Kolpakov leader has arrived,  
 and more soldiers follow him: 'Sing  
<sup>695</sup> a Roma song, or better a Russian one:  
 "The tramp curses fate  
 and rushes with a bag on  
 his shoulders.'" Then he declares: 'It's time to go,  
 Gypsies! And don't move away even a little.  
<sup>700</sup> The other soldiers await us.'  
 ▼ We see the crossroad. And  
 the Roma are standing, and the soldiers shake  
 hands and they say: 'Stay, our  
*Romale*, healthy and happy. And we  
<sup>705</sup> go back. The other  
 ones expect us.  
 Lords' soldiers wait for you,  
 your Poles.'  
 Having spoken these words  
<sup>710</sup> they gathered and left. ▼ All the Roma  
 in a single voice thanked them with the song  
 'Dark Eyes.' The soldiers cried, like drops of blood  
 their tears fell, like rain, on  
 the road crossing.  
 ▼<sup>715</sup> It wasn't any secret what  
 the Chapaev and Kolpakov's soldiers told us  
 about our Polish partisans who camped  
 nearby, ▼ but we are a bit afraid  
 and don't know where to go. We would like  
<sup>720</sup> to return. Here is a soldier  
 dressed up like a German, on

Again the houses of the dead.

Russians are asking for songs;  
 other soldiers are waiting for us.

Polish soldiers are waiting for us.

A farewell song. The final  
 parting at the crossroads.

Soldier secrets.

UNDER THE POLES.

Left at the crossroads. Fears and  
 hesitation. Unknown soldiers  
 surround us.

horseback, and keeps looking around.

And he immediately guesses that black  
Roma are on the crossroad.

<sup>725</sup> He shoots in the air. Many, many soldiers  
approached, surrounded our carts

▼ and ask: 'Who has led you here?'

'The Chapaev soldiers told us

to come here.' 'Show your papers, are you Germans

<sup>730</sup> or Roma?' 'Roma, Roma!, with women

and children. It is the second year we

have lived in these forests, like wolves, not

people. When we left our homes,

we put our papers in pots then buried them in the ground

<sup>735</sup> so that they wouldn't rot.

We took out the papers and showed to our

soldiers. 'Right. You are not cheating.' ▼ They

showed us the road behind them. They

gave us Ukrainians' houses.

<sup>740</sup> 'All the Ukrainians are killed, what you see is now

yours: hens, pigs, a horse for each,

alongside a cart.' ▼ For two weeks they will live

with us here and then they will go

to the regular army soldiers, who came from

<sup>745</sup> Russia. A Rom asks: 'Has the German

already gone away?' 'One day he retreats,

but another day he comes back again.'

▼ Planes hit the cities and

villages hard. The forests are on fire. More people are

<sup>750</sup> taken away for forced labour, they do not see

daylight. But let our

souls hope that this year has gone

and will never return. The Roma

played for them, they sang, kept staring up

<sup>755</sup> but still, they did not scare us

a lot, they only boasted.

That was going on for two weeks, the Roma forgot

about misfortune, stole hams, laughed.

Roms, Romnis and girls sang

The interrogation about our  
ethnicity (Poles) and papers.

March after the Polish partisans.  
The houses of killed Ukrainians.

The Polish partisans join the  
regular army soon.

The Germans are still strong.

The battles intensify. Our victory  
is coming.

<sup>760</sup> Chapaev partisan songs in Russian:

▼'Oh, near the field, near the field,  
two poplars, where at night a cloud  
hangs, there lies buried deep  
a fallen Komsomol member, a beautiful

<sup>765</sup> partisan. She used to lead him,

where at night the grass is  
rolling. She gave him a sabre,  
a sabre. She led a black  
horse. There lies buried deep

<sup>770</sup> a fallen Komsomol member, a beautiful partisan.

He fell shot in a big

Soviet battle for the land,  
for motherland, for my beautiful  
beloved ... She led a black

<sup>775</sup> horse ... gave me a sabre ... She,

the beauty was a hero herself ...  
there where at night the grass is  
rolling ... two poplars, a black

horse she led ... for love, for

<sup>780</sup> the Soviet land, she also

perished, because she loved a hero,  
a Komsomol member, and didn't fear death.

Neither did he. And I lie I in the dark  
ground ... the horse, two poplars ...

<sup>785</sup> to love I sing this song, for

all the world to hear ... Fly, dear song,

fly to my mother, tell her

and the man's mother

that he lies killed with his sweetheart

<sup>790</sup> where the two poplars are

and the black horse

was killed, where the two poplars;

with his beloved, where at night

the grass is rolling, lies buried

<sup>795</sup> deep a fallen Komsomol member, a beautiful partisan.

She gave him a sabre,

led a black horse to him ... She,

a beauty, perished in this battle

for motherland, for the Soviet land,

<sup>800</sup> the two poplars are singing

the song.'

▼ The Chapaev commando's song,

The Roma and the Chapaev soldiers

sang this song.

▼<sup>805</sup> This song we sang all together,

the Chapaev soldiers and all the Roma.

We shook hands with one another at the

crossroad. All went ahead, to where

their eyes led them. ▼We went to

<sup>810</sup> the Polish soldiers. We stayed with them for two

weeks. ▼All was as if in a big

city. Whatever your soul wished for, all beautiful things.

Girls dressed in white, as if some important doctor.

Here they produced all kinds of stuffs, carts

<sup>815</sup> and all. The road was closed

by the white-and-red barrier.

The barrier is down.

They let us in

and closed it again, then

<sup>820</sup> stand guard, as if in a town.

The soldiers are standing at the entrance, dressed in German uniforms,

but with the eagle of Poland pinned to their hats.

▼We stayed with them for two weeks

in a single camp, ate whatever the soul desired.

<sup>825</sup> It was a beautiful day, dear sun warming the world

beautifully. We wanted to depart

this day. But what are we to do now? ▼It snowed

heavily, like falling leaves. Snow

stopped us in our tracks. This snow was

<sup>830</sup> deeper than the cart wheels. With our own feet

we had to create ruts and helped the horses by

pushing the carts. ▼The Poles

said: 'Go to Kopyczew,

a small town. They have a self-defence commando

<sup>835</sup> and different people

take houses there and live,

as the owners. Otherwise, you

should not live here with

Parting with the Russian partisans.

A fortnight stay with the Poles.

Polish army order.

We're going to depart.

Our exhausting trip started.

Reasons to leave for Kopyczew.

children. The Germans may break through.'

<sup>840</sup> The commander said that it was better not to stay in quiet towns, located in the forests, they needed to be avoided because in three days a big battle was expected. The Roma might perish there.

Well, we listened. ▼We stayed three days

We have to leave for Kopyczew.

<sup>845</sup> more. Ah, dear Great Lord, how much white snow fell! All the sky

was overcast and got even darker, the road became blocked but what could we do?

We had to go, the soldiers

<sup>850</sup> commanded us to move. And the Roma, though they didn't really want to they had to go

by cart across big snow to Kopyczew, to receive a house

before regular Soviet and Polish

<sup>855</sup> soldiers would finally come. ▼Ah, you,

The strong snowfall, our departure.

dear God, great you are in the sky,

let us live.

So many misfortunes, so many sorrows we have lived through and we are unable to leave misfortune behind.

<sup>860</sup> Will we ever leave it behind and be able to live quietly?

Like winter sparrows, like caught fishes

that shake and jump in the boat before

lying still stricken with fear. ▼How many misfortunes

**Lamentation.**

and starvations, how many sorrows and roads, how many sharp

<sup>865</sup> stones and thorns cut our

feet? How many bullets whizzed by

our ears? How many bogs, rainy nights, how many

tears of blood did we shed? Many!

In the forests, tree branches

<sup>870</sup> almost gouged out our eyes, when a little star

blinked at us from behind that

branch, through the leaves. ▼The Roma girl

Overnight stay was hard.

still did not sleep for fear

when the moon father

<sup>875</sup> appeared in the north. The poor, poor

Rom, how many forests did he go through,

not once did he sleep

sitting in the mud. By him two or three

tiny children. ▼The Rom asked God:

<sup>880</sup> 'Why don't the poor die, only  
have to wander between the forests  
in great fear. You can't sleep  
either, it would be better to die  
than to live in war.'

<sup>885</sup> Well, we forget about everything.

▼The partisans told us to go to  
Kopyczew. So, we go.  
Through thick snow we all push the cart,  
tread a rut in the snow

<sup>890</sup> with our feet. ▼Suddenly, we hear the German  
'air-frame' plane fly, which almost got caught  
on a tree top. We as one dropped  
on the snow already  
wet because spring was coming. Some  
<sup>895</sup> walked barefoot.

Poor Roma children froze to death.

My husband cried out:

'Turn down your faces  
so that he understands we are Roma!'

<sup>900</sup> All faces are hidden in the big wet snow.

Shading my eyes with a hand (I'm not kidding, otherwise let me die)

I look up: what is that airplane doing?

And he comes low and peers  
through binoculars. He laughed,

<sup>905</sup> saw a little girl lying barefoot  
next to her mother. Maybe something deceived him  
and he turned back. ▼We jumped up,

and whoever is happy holding for a while at  
the place. We almost froze

<sup>910</sup> to death, but didn't die, though wanted to.

Thanks be to God, dear sun you made  
a good road for us and already a little  
town is visible. 'Thanks be to you  
dear God!' Quickly a child warmed up ...

▼<sup>915</sup> Having uttered these words, about a  
dozen planes flew in, throwing bombs on the town.  
Snow with mud gets flung at us.

Prayer for the comforting death.

Our exhausting trip to  
Kopyczew.

A reconnaissance plane hunts us.

People almost froze.

The battles intensify.  
New victims.

The trouble is big,  
 a peasant man and a Roma girl were crushed.  
<sup>920</sup> The trouble is great and there was trouble in the forests  
 but these German devils did not fly there.  
 Houses are burning, shots go out.  
 You could hear Stalin's organs and nebelwerfers, as  
 a Chapaev soldier told us. What could only be  
<sup>925</sup> seen: one fire after another was coming closer to us.  
 ▼They would kill, chase away the German. The German – The Germans never win.  
 let God kill him – wanted to conquer  
 all the world, well, now good people and  
 my God were defeating him.  
<sup>930</sup> ▼'Well, what to do now? Should we return, What are our plans then? Papsza's  
 or press on? Ah, God, fatalistic mood.  
 the first is yours, and mine the last. Let it  
 be as it wills! Let them  
 kill me at once, why  
<sup>935</sup> to live in such misfortune?  
 ▼Where the girl had died, they dropped Our exhausting trip to  
 another bomb, but didn't kill anyone. Kopyczew.  
 So that is how we travelled that day, we all nearly  
 died, the Roma children were sick.  
 ▼<sup>940</sup> The Germans had already stopped bombing. The weather improved, the road  
 The sun got wet.  
 happened to be warming us well, as it cannot bear  
 to watch our misfortune, and sent all the rays  
 to us, and immediately after one day  
 the mud appeared. ▼We arrived at the little town: Who were then in Kopyczew.  
<sup>945</sup> gadjos, Czechs, Jews, Roma, people of  
 different kinds, staff in hand,  
 and the partisans in the forests. ▼In this manner, The battles intensified near  
 a battle against the Germans commenced. Kopyczew.  
 The houses stood like a gate before  
<sup>950</sup> the airfield: each day reconnaissance planes fly  
 and each day they bomb Kopyczew.  
 I won't write more how it was. Our horse  
 got killed, mud covered  
 us all, not once but many times, well no one  
<sup>955</sup> got killed. That is how  
 dear God ordained. ▼Jews and Roma, The dead soldiers.

in the town hall we sat together,  
 and each night  
 we carried the dead,  
<sup>960</sup> the soldiers carried the dead near us.  
 Each night two or four beautiful men,  
 I remember as clearly as today, the  
 long nights, when many mothers shed  
 tears of blood, these poor soldiers,  
<sup>965</sup> who saw us. ▼Others died too,  
 children. For five days they lay unburied,  
 opposite our hall's door, because  
 the town was full of gadjos  
 evacuated from all over; making it impossible  
<sup>970</sup> to rent a house or shed.

After all, one lies atop the other: the dead  
 soldiers – may their souls be  
 happy. We were not afraid of anything – we prayed  
 to God for their souls.

<sup>975</sup> ▼And so we lived there until we saw  
 regular soldiers arrive. We played  
 concerts for them. Some of the wounded died.  
 And the Jews went with the regular soldiers.  
 They kissed us goodbye. There were beautiful as  
<sup>980</sup> small berries: Four Jews and five Jewesses.

\*\*\*

▼Thank God, we all survived. All the Roma were  
 scattered. We were all found by one another. We give  
 big candles to my God. And until  
 today, you all remember everything what  
<sup>985</sup> Roms, Romnis, Roma children went through, while many  
 perished. ▼And here and there some remained alive,  
 those Roma who survived. Nobody else, only  
 real Polska Roma. Kalderashi and Lovari –  
 those who stayed in Lwów,  
<sup>990</sup> lived as gentlemen, because they secured false papers  
 for themselves. ▼Yet, dear Brother,  
 be clever, I need to tell  
 the truth: even today *Volksdeutsche*

Not buried dead. Overcrowding.

The regular soldiers arrived.  
 The Jews went with them.

THE WAR ENDED.  
 Papsusza's vow of a church  
 candle fulfilled.

We, the true Polish Roma, went  
 through the hardest experience.

*Volksdeutsche* and other "devils"  
 are still dangerous.

*schießen*. Various devils – let their  
<sup>995</sup> souls perish – don't let  
 people live. Please, dear  
 Brother, don't tell anyone.  
 Why should we, dear Brother, die because  
 of them? ▼ And we are not  
<sup>1000</sup> rich, but we are real Roma,  
 though we are poor.

We are modestly poor Roma.

▼ So, dear Brother,  
 we survived, what else  
 more – my dear God! We could make  
<sup>1005</sup> a book, a very large one, which could be written  
 during one little year to tell  
 everything, everything, everything. There is no mind and head  
 to take in everything that the Roma lived through  
 during two whole years. ▼ We thank  
<sup>1010</sup> my God and Holy Mother of Częstochowa  
 and kind people for  
 everything that we survived. God forbid  
 that anyone should see such  
 a time again, so that good people  
<sup>1015</sup> and my God may take care of the world.

Papusza could write a bigger  
 book about the war.

Papusza thanks God  
 for saving their lives.

▼ A Roma song: Ah, people, today  
 I would like you to soften  
 all the world's souls,  
 who love to live in a good  
<sup>1020</sup> way in the world, not to forget  
 about war, but rather that war should not exist at all.  
 Today I would like  
 to sing beautifully as if in a theatre, ▼ so that all the Roma  
 would run to me, as to the forest where there is a fire,  
<sup>1025</sup> big and full of sun rays. Ah,  
 people, how inspired I am, right  
 now I would like to sing a song and  
 let all the Roma come together for that song  
 of mine and understand my words. Let us all be  
<sup>1030</sup> alive together, at least rich in the  
 great but fading Roma glory.

THE ROMANI SONG.  
 Disposition.

**Let's live together  
 for our happy future.**

My song! My song! Get to old  
 people's souls, because the young will become  
 happier faster. As good people  
<sup>1035</sup> together, all the Roma, our old  
 and most beautiful young children,  
 let them live happy and  
 arrive at such a time, when  
 there will be no war that curses  
<sup>1040</sup> human life to misfortune. ▼ Give to us,  
 dear God, good weather, so that  
 my ragged tent dries up.

Recollection: our poor life  
 in the past (song).

\*\*\*

A fine rain fell, soaking  
 small children, it carried my song  
<sup>1045</sup> in a mist to all the rich  
 Roma who have new  
 tents. ▼ They don't understand what makes one  
 rich. Is one rich when one has  
 a lot of gold, or when one is clever and with bread  
<sup>1050</sup> in one's hand? Roma can't see  
 the difference. ▼ I'd love to compose  
 a rich song to embrace all people's souls  
 as the forest embraced us, and that said today  
 we should remember what we lived through ... until death.  
<sup>1055</sup> My song like a bird in the forest sat down on a tree branch,  
 the sun beautifully drove out the darkness,  
 and ordered the stars to set,  
 and near the moon there is one star. The most  
 beautiful place of all is there where  
<sup>1060</sup> a naked child sits near the fire, a Roma tent  
 stands in the forest beautiful, like a little star  
 whose bright light shines into  
 the big dark night, like a golden  
 star. ▼ Young girls are standing, beautiful  
<sup>1065</sup> like berries. Black eyes burn like  
 gold. They and the lads are as happy  
 as fish in the water. They have freedom  
 in the world, they walk more than anyone else, faster

**Who are the rich Roma?**  
 (≈ Proverbs 19:1)

Recollection: our happy forest  
 life in the past.

The universe gives freedom  
 and power to Roma.

than anyone, like water runs, nothing will hold  
<sup>1070</sup> it back. ▼As the forest sings, so the Rom  
 dances: light as a feather, heavy as  
 a stone. So in love  
 he burns, just as fire burns beautifully. ▼Roma life is  
 easy, like in the forest a bird is happy  
<sup>1075</sup> when it spends the night with the Roma.  
 One bird crosses the road to another who is the Rom. One sings  
 a song to another the Rom hears. One sees the other.  
 How do a bird and the black Rom  
 live in the forest? ▼It is good  
<sup>1080</sup> for the rich Roma to live in this world,  
 but we in modest (small) poverty  
 sit in our houses, where we sing beautiful  
 songs, read and tell stories from a beautiful  
 book, so let the good people  
<sup>1085</sup> in this new world  
 publish this book. Pampusza

Wajs

**The way the Rom dances.**

Roma life is as happy,  
 as the forest bird life.

**Our Roma possess the new  
 sedentary culture.**