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Summary

Vasile Ionita is 93 years old Roma survivor of persecution in Romania between the years of 1941 and 1944. [The interviewee does not indicate his date of birth. He was probably born circa 1902.]

Vasile Ionita in his testimony indicates that at the outset of the German occupation of Romania he was evacuated to Transnistria. There were two categories of Roma, most of them were a nomadic people, though some were settled, owned land, served in the Romanian army, and were recognized as citizens. However, the new laws of 1941 discriminated against them. They began to be deported from villages in Romania to Transnistria regardless of their status.

Vasile Ionita belonged to the nomadic Roma. During the spring of 1942, between March and April, around the holiday of Passover, the Roma from northern Moldova were deported to villages on the Bug river, in Transnistria, that was under the administration of a Romanian General who followed the directives of Romanian Government from Bucharest. Their living condition were extremely difficult, not having food nor clothing. They lived in camps supervised by the Romanian gendarmes among the Russian/Ukrainian population of the region. The Roma, men, women and children, as young as ten years old if not even younger, worked in the fields helping with harvest, at cutting woods in forests, at building roads. Those who were able to work received a ration of 200 grams of corn, grains, per day. Vasile and his family fared a little better due to his craft skills. In the winter they had to dig frozen potatoes for their food. When they rarely found some grain, would take it to a mill to turn it in flour. Most of the time they were hungry. Occasionally, when a horse would die, they would eat its meat. They lived mostly in huts dug in the ground, few were able to have a roof over their head.

Those who did not have work, were old, ill, and considered undesirable were shot and buried by the survivors. Vasile in his testimony mentioned the shooting of a young Jewish woman, he calls her "jidanca" (which is derogatory) whom they also had to bury. Few were able to evade this situation.

The Roma deportation started in 1942 which exposed them also to being under occupation of the German soldiers who treated them very badly, sometime shooting them, that being in addition of being under the supervision of the Romanian gendarmes, that lasted for about two years at which time around the beginning of 1944 those who survived were able to return to Romania by train via Galati (a port city on the Black sea).