

02/10/2007

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Moldova Documentation Project
Romanian
RG-50.572*0039

Box 1, Tape 1

In this interview, Vasile Stoian, born February 20, 1926, and a lifelong native of Olănești and member of the Soviet Army during World War II, details the arrest and deportation of Jewish families from the area of his village over the Dniester (Nistru) River. He comments on the Romanian soldiers' treatment and attitude towards the Jews and describes the way the prisoners were escorted through villages as well as the locals' reactions to these events. He also remembers an incident related to a Jewish man's escape from Olănești with the help of one of the village men, as well as the consequent capture and murder of both of them.

[01:] 00:37:02 – [01:] 07:42:12
00:25 – 07:49

Stoian talks about his birth in the Olănești village in 1926 and remembers his recruitment into the Soviet Army during the war; remembers having remained in Olănești between 1941 and 1944 and witnessing a round-up of Jews from Olănești and nearby communities on the bank of the Dniester and their awaiting deportation; recalls witnessing the Jews gathered on the bank of the river, as he was present at the official point, which was being established in the same area, for gathering bread by the Russian Army; remembers the Jews being arrested and escorted to the Dniester only by Romanian soldiers, as the Germans had already left the village to march towards the Soviet Union; recalls having noticed at least six or seven times, on different days, convoys of Jewish families passing through the center of the village on their way to a bridge over the Dniester; describes the way the Jews were being led to the river: traveling in wooden carts or on foot, being guarded by three or four Romanian soldiers, though not restrained or chained in any way; remembers cows sometimes being tied to the carts, as they were brought by their owners; describes the escorting of approximately five or six Jewish families in one convoy, followed by three or four other families on the same day; talks about his wife witnessing groups of Jews forced to sleep in the street, next to the fences of the local houses due to their late night arrival; comments on the nationalities of the people escorted by the Romanian soldiers; explains the rumors were that it was Jews who had been arrested from nearby villages; remembers that the ones escorted would wait upwards of two days for the arrival of other groups of Jews, in order to cross the Dniester in larger numbers.

[01:] 07:42:13 – [01] 17:18:15
07:50 – 17:49

He recalls approximately one hundred Jews gathered on the bank of the Dniester and guarded by Romanian soldiers; comments on the lack of facilities offered to those forced to wait there, as

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well as on their having no tables or chairs to sit on, thus being forced to rest on the ground; describes the Romanian soldiers' behavior towards the Jews as generally non-violent; notes again that those arrested were not restrained in any way; remembers children being allowed to gather fruit from nearby orchards and bring them to their relatives; recalls the presence of elderly people, as well as very young children, aged one or two, among the ones gathered near the Dniester; describes again the groups of people escorted through Olănești, remembering three or four carts passing through in one convoy, with 20 to 30 Jews carrying personal belongings; talks about the attempts of those being escorted to communicate with the villagers, asking for bread or water, as some of them had been on the road for three or four days; recalls neighbors and other acquaintances of his offering the Jews food and water; comments on the Romanian soldiers stopping the convoys at regular intervals, in order to have food and water given to the Jews; remembers children of those gathered on the Dniester bank being allowed to go to families from the area and to buy food with money from their parents; comments on being informed by some of his relatives living nearby about youngsters buying bread, milk, and cheese from them; mentions the fact that the villagers would also offer Jewish children various products without payment and remembers himself never having accepted money from the young ones; describes the convoys crossing the bridge over the Dniester River: two or three wooden carts, as well and 30 or 40 Jews would usually go across it, twice or three times a day; recalls that after crossing the river, the Jews were lined in a row and further escorted; mentions the Jews crossing the bridge usually guarded by two soldiers; recalls that the animals brought along by the people being escorted were also taken over the river; comments on having seen as many as two cows tied to one single cart on one day, which was unusual for a family of prisoners; talks about the Moldavian dialect used by the Jews, as they had been taken from the villages near Olănești, where three to six families lived; comments on being acquainted with some of the arrested Jews, although he is unable to remember their names; says he does remember, the villages which those inhabitants had been forced to leave, as some of his relatives were living there: **Carahasani**, **Antonu [Antonești]**, and **Bilhorod-Dnistrovskiy**.

[01:] 17:18:16 – [01:] 23:01:07
17:50 – 23:46

He remembers approximately 11 Jewish families living in the village of Olănești at the beginning of World War II, all of whose members were arrested and deported over the Dniester River; comments on the fact that, despite not having seen his neighbors being taken away from their homes, he recognized them among the people gathered on the bank of the river; remembers one Jew who managed to escape arrest, as he was aided by one of the villagers; explains that the aforementioned villager hid the Jew in a haystack which he took to a field, near a pond, where he improvised a shelter; remembers that man bringing the Jew food to the shelter, in his cart, for a couple of weeks; explains that on the Jew's return to Olănești and his hiding in the villager's house, he was recognized by a local and was reported to the police; recalls the Jew and the person who had kept him hidden having been arrested, restrained, and sent to **Bilhorod-Dnistrovskiy** in a cart; emphasizes the fact that the two men never reached the destination alive, as they were executed by the soldiers near a ravine, about 20 kilometers away from Olănești; comments on the fact that he had been informed about the murder of the two people by a son of the villager who had helped the Jew escape and hide; says the family of that man learned of his murder from an acquaintance who had witnessed the shooting; remembers the name of the

person who had helped the Jew escape: **Petricenko Alexei**; comments on the consequent harassment and teasing of **Petricenko's** four sons by Romanian soldiers, who were accusing them of hiding other Jews; mentions that **Petricenko's** family always stated that they had no involvement in the man's actions and had not been aware of the person hiding in their house; comments on the question of whether any of the other Jews tried to resist their arrest, saying that although they knew in advance about what was going to happen to them, no one posed any resistance.

[01:] 23:01:08 – [01:] 29:56:21
23:47 – 30:59

He comments on the existence of Jews among his schoolmates and friends, recalling a classmate named **Oscar Schmil [Schmiel]**; mentions a German friend studying in the same class as himself and **Oscar**; talks about **Oscar's** arrest and deportation with his family, prior to the convoys from other villages reaching Olănești; remembers a conversation with **Oscar** a few days before his deportation; recalls his classmate having known about the soldiers' intention to arrest all Jewish persons before they actually came for his family, although he did not understand why; mentions that about two months after **Oscar's** arrest, his German classmate announced that he was moving to Germany with his family; remembers an event following the Jews' deportation from Olănești: on seeing a gaggle of geese in the village, a Romanian soldier was invited by a local to take as many as he wanted and eat them, as they had previously belonged to a Jewish family; mentions that although the villagers had not taken any of the animals belonging to the deported Jews, the Romanian soldier hit two geese with his helmet and took them for his mates; comments on the fact that although he does not know what precisely happened to the Jews' personal belongings, most of them were taken by Romanian soldiers; says the houses of those deported were not destroyed; remembers the Jews' houses being used by soldiers passing through the village and needing places to spend the night; comments on the question of whether Roma people were persecuted by soldiers, stating that to his knowledge, no such persons from Olănești or Bessarabia were harassed or hurt; emphasizes the fact that only the Roma people from Romania were deported to the Bug River, having heard from acquaintances about the return of some of them from the camp, on foot or by train, passing through the village of Binderi.