

ROMANESCU, Constantin
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Box 1, Tape 1

In this interview, the psychiatrist Constantin Romanescu, born on May 18, 1926, the son of two officials, discusses the events that took place in 1940 in the city Dorohoi. He talks about the 1940 pogrom, being an eyewitness himself, and describes the deportation of the Jews from Dorohoi.

[01:] 00:36:07 – [01:] 09:04:18

Mr. Romanescu talks about the events that took place in Bessarabia (Basarabia) in 1940 when he was 14 years old; he mentions that his parents were officials and only his mother was originally from Bessarabia, his father was from Botoșani; emphasizes the fact that in their city there was no animosity between Romanians and Jews, mainly due to the education provided by 2–3 teachers who taught students to be tolerant; comments on a scene he witnessed that year, on a Sunday, two days after the occupation of Cernăuți (Chernivtsi, in present-day Ukraine); mentions that he does not remember the exact date of the incident, a fact he considers very interesting as a psychiatrist; remembers that on that day he was heading to a park called Brazi near by the Christian cemetery together with some friends, when he saw a frightening scene: he recalls seeing a very good high school student called **Bercovici** and an unknown girl; mentions that both of them had been savagely beaten, the boy was full of blood and his clothes were torn; the girl, 20-something, had been beaten beyond recognition, she even had a torn ear; he says he believes that not only soldiers beat people, but others as well, however, he did not see precisely who.

[01:] 09:04:19 – [01:] 18:37:21

He recalls that after seeing this scene he ran approximately 20 meters and from that distance he saw a piece of **Bercovici's** skull flying; mentions that the girl was shot as well by soldiers; remembers running to the closest house and then running home; mentions that after he arrived at home, a drunk Romanian captain went to his father and wanted to hit him because he thought he was Jewish according to his appearance; remembers that his father was taken to the commander of the troops coming from Cernăuți and that a quick council was held, although he was not an eyewitness of the scene; mentions that the commander in question was the future Prime Minister Sănătescu (Constantin Sănătescu, Prime Minister of Romania between August 23 and December 2, 1944); focuses on the chaos that was taking place at that time all over the city; describes how soldiers started entering houses and shooting people; he believes that 41 people were killed in the 10-minute slaughter; however, he is not sure about the exact number; mentions that he himself was an eyewitness of the shootings in the streets; emphasizes the fact that the

soldiers were shooting people according to their physical appearance and mainly entered the houses of wealthy people.

[01:] 18:37:22 – [01:] 25:58:10

He focuses on the storm that followed the mass killings; mentions that the rain reduced the number of shootings; recalls that due to an order given by military commanders, more or less disciplined patrols were sent out to calm down the situation and stop the traffic; comments on the fact that the house of George Enescu (Romanian composer born in Dorohoi county, today: Botoșani county) was entered as well, although Enescu was out of town; mentions that the soldiers suspected that there were two Jewish cooks in the house, however, they did not destroy the house as they did others; emphasizes again that Dorohoi was a very calm city with peaceful people and that the relationship between Romanians and Jews was good.

[01:] 25:58:11 – [01:] 34:49:08

He focuses on the fact that it is said that the yellow badge with the Star of David was never worn in Dorohoi; remembers distinctly that for a while it was indeed worn; talks about the period after the pogrom, after the dead were buried; mentions that Jewish students were expelled from high school and a separate school was created for them; he recalls that certain teachers encouraged a respectful relationship between Romanians and Jews; emphasizes that a teacher called **Ttefan** sent two students with cameras to the railway station in order to document the deportation of Jews, a gesture then viewed by many students as heroic; focuses on the day of the pogrom; mentions that there were robberies and crimes committed by civilians and that there was a harsh, well-organized reaction from the side of the military; emphasizes that there were no German soldiers among them, nor any legionnaires.

[01:] 34:49:09 – [01:] 43:44:16

He remembers that after the pogrom he did not leave the house on that day, the family remained in the attic and they followed the events with binoculars; he mentions that the Jews remained in their houses, while the bodies were still on the streets; he explains that at the beginning of the war Dorohoi was occupied by German soldiers and a high school was transformed into a military hospital; recalls that the officials were transported to Piatra Neamț for about two weeks; remembers hearing that on the day before the beginning of the war Jews were being thrown out of the windows of trains; mentions rumors circulating regarding the atrocities committed by the Germans; explains that the information mainly came from Polish refugees in Dorohoi; focuses on the declaration of war at Piatra Neamț; mentions an incident regarding his father: when all officials were ordered to kneel during the reading of a proclamation, his father refused and should have been sentenced, but miraculously escaped sentencing in the end; he recalls spending approximately three weeks in Piatra Neamț after which they returned to Dorohoi.

[01:] 43:43:17 – [01:] 54:01:23

He discusses their journey home; describes an incident that happened when the train stopped between Dorohoi and Roman; explains that everybody got off the train and

saw two large pits with horrible smell coming out of them; comments on the pits and says that Jewish corpses had probably been buried there; mentions that at that time the war had started 3 or 4 days ago and the evacuations in Transnistria had started as well; remembers that after the beginning of the war they were taken to Hațeg, their place of refuge during the war; mentions that on their way to Hațeg the train stopped at Veresti for two days; describes an incident which happened in this period: in the railway station Jewish people were shot, according to him, about 50 in total; recalls that it was believed that he was a Jew as well and they wanted to shoot him; mentions that he survived due to a colleague of his who protected him.

[01:] 54:01:24 – [02:] 02:43:09

He emphasizes that the chief of the railway station in Veresti, named **Țăranu**, intervened courageously to stop the atrocities happening at the station; talks about their return from Transylvania; mentions that his father helped a lot of Jews; describes the deportation of the Jews from Dorohoi, he himself being an eyewitness; mentions that the students would take bread, hats, and other goods to the Jews who were going to be deported; admits that these events were not as horrifying as the pogrom; mentions that the deported Jews did not know where they were going to be taken; explains that after the return of the deported Jews there were no criminal acts committed by Jews, as many people had feared there would be.

[02:] 02:43:10 – [02:] 10:19:00

He describes a day in 1952, when he returned to Dorohoi after the birth of this son, two Jews held an impromptu service for his son in an improvised synagogue, out of respect for his father; admits that after he had publicly offered to testify regarding the events that happened during the war, he received a lot of threats, curses and anonymous messages; mentions that the reaction of his acquaintances was, however, positive; talks about the irrationality of antisemitism.

[02:] 10:19:01 – [02:] 18:33:02

He mentions that he knows that the number of victims of the pogrom was 41 from his father, who was the attorney of the city, from an ex-girlfriend of his and from other people; admits that soldiers and other people told him that Jews were thrown out of train windows.