

ZGONEA, Păun
Romania Roma Documentation Project
Romanian
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Box 1, Tape 1

In this interview, Mr. Păun Zgonea, born on August 3, 1936, talks about his deportation as a child to Transnistria with his family. He describes the journey to Transnistria, the conditions they lived in and the way they were treated. He comments on how they were taken from one village to another and discusses their everyday life.

[01:] 00:36:00 – [01:] 07:08:14

Mr. Zgonea talks about his deportation at the age of eight and his family's deportation; remembers being taken by the police and held in a warehouse for three days; from there they were taken to Turnu Măgurele in the county of Teleorman on carriages and handed over to the Gendarmerie; says that three days later they were transported to Transnistria in freight cars; comments on the duration of the journey as having been six days; remembers that from there they were taken to a village in wagons, where they spent 1-2 months and the adults were forced to harvest the crop; recalls being taken from there to another village, **Ancecraç**; mentions seeing 200-300 deported Jews upon his arrival there; remembers that the army came, consisting of approximately 300 Romanian and German gendarmes; discusses the barracks being surrounded by them and the deportees not understanding what was happening; mentions that later they noticed the Jews were gone and they heard gun shots; talks about a conversation between his father and a Romanian gendarme during which the gendarme revealed to his father that they had been sent to execute the Roma just like the Jews, but they had received an order from the Queen Consort Elena not to kill the Roma; remembers that they spent a few more days there, and then they were transported to the Bug River; comments on a few villages being partially evacuated by the Russians; discusses how the Roma lived in the empty houses.

[01:] 07:08:15 – [01:] 15:58:00

He describes the conditions they lived in: dirt, illnesses and lack of food; remembers that there was a collective farm (kolkhoz) nearby and their occasionally receiving food from there, like an ear of corn per day per person or a cup of barley flour; mentions that many people died, even a brother of his; comments on the police coming and picking up the dead from the houses, sometimes 20-30 corpses; discusses the police burying the corpses in mass graves; says that they stayed there until the spring of 1943, when they were taken to a Renault factory where his parents worked; recalls being taken to **Niceaina**, to Ion Antonescu's factory; discusses their departure from **Niceaina** in the spring of 1944 and going to Cetatea Albă, where they were caught by the Gendarmerie and taken to a settlement just behind the front; comments on the gendarmes fleeing upon hearing that the front was approaching;

talks about their leaving the carriages and the Roma on the road; recalls traveling back to Cetatea Albă from there and going to Besarabia, and occasionally being held up by the Gendarmerie; talks about a night when they went to the nearest train station and travelled to **Reni**.

[01:] 15:58:01 – [01:] 25:51:24

He comments on being stopped by German soldiers in **Reni**; talks about the way the Germans treated them; discusses the fact that sometimes they were beaten when they did not manage to keep up because of hunger and exhaustion; mentions that ten members of his family were deported but only six returned, the others died of starvation and illnesses; describes the journey from Romania to Transnistria; mentions that they were not allowed to take anything with them except a few clothes; discusses their leaving their livestock behind and realizing after their return that everything they had owned before was gone; talks about the journey; mentions that at the departure everybody received a loaf of bread which had to be enough for six days; talks about the stops on the road and not being allowed to leave the train when it stopped; discusses a sentry standing at each door; remembers not witnessing the execution of the Jews in Transnistria and only hearing gun shots; talks about his parents finding out later from a Romanian gendarme what had happened to the Jews.