

ANCA, Ovidiu
Romanian
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In this interview, retired Romanian Colonel Ovidiu Anca, who was active during WWII in Eastern Europe, describes key scenes of the 1941 Odessa massacre. He comments on the causes and aftermath of the October 22 explosion which destroyed the building that housed the General Headquarters of the Romanian Army in Odessa. The colonel also describes the consequences that followed- namely, the officially ordered execution of 22,500 Jewish persons from the city. He describes the methods of mass extermination used against the Jews from the Odessa ghetto and explains the murders as reprisals for the deaths of officials in the Headquarters building at the time of the explosion. Anca also mentions the atrocities committed by the fascist and antisemitic Iron Guard during its uprising on January 21-23, and comments on the inhumane methods of killing used, above all, against the Jewish people in Bucharest.

Box 1, Tape 1

00:00:10 – 00:04:57

Anca introduces himself as a retired colonel, also mentioning his rank in the year 1941 as Office and Staff Captain of the 18th Infantry Division in the Romanian Army; remembers the entry by the Romanian troops into the city of Odessa on October 17, 1941; states that the initial soldiers' quarters location was a Russian kolkhoz [*collective farm*] on the outskirts of Odessa; recalls the General-in-Chief's name was Ion Glogojanu; describes his dissatisfaction with the military quarters.

00:04:58 – 00:12:56

He remembers a small number of people still residing in Odessa when the Romanian Army troops arrived, mostly elderly and children; comments on the changing of the military headquarters from its original location to the former command center of the Odessa People's Commissariat for Internal Affairs, "Narodnyy Komissariat Vnutrennikh Del," (NKVD), the Soviet secret police, located on Engels Street; recalls that the reason for General Glogojanu's new choice of building was its intricate and impressive architecture, as well as its size and multiple floors; mentions the repeated attempts of Command members to warn the General regarding the danger of establishing the headquarters in an ex-NKVD building; recalls the demolition of the German headquarters in Kiev that had taken place only a week prior to the occupation of Odessa by Romanian troops; talks about the distribution of rooms in the headquarters between captains and officers, mentioning his large apartment near the General-in-Chief and the staff officer; remembers his responsibilities as head of the Mobilization-Organization department which involved competing documents, approving leaves of absence, and checking the mail of the entire Division; comments on the inefficiency of the space provided as his office due to his large staff including two typing secretaries and messengers from every

Romanian military unit; recalls settling into the headquarters building the morning of his birthday, October 21; remembers his own amazement at the grandeur of the building and apartment-style railroad wagon from which the Russians had not removed any items when they departed.

00:12:57 – 00:22:26

He states that he did not have information about a possible inspection of the headquarters which was ordered by General Nicolae Macici on October 20; recalls that a Russian woman warned the General on October 21 about the building being previously packed with explosives; remembers introducing the woman to Glogojanu so she could inform him about the terrorist activities of her son, a Soviet partisan; recalls the subsequent evacuation of the building and regrouping of staff in a nearby park called Shevchenko; adds that they waited for two and a half hours in the park before the General decided to send the staff back to the building; recalls that the General dismissed the Russian woman as mentally disturbed; remembers an event connected to the time of the explosion: his alarm clock fell on the floor and stopped at 5:45 p.m. during a conversation with a subordinate officer; describes the blast and the confusion and panic that followed, which was amplified by the dense smoke and gases; speculates that Soviet partisans may have put explosives in a room where a safe containing over twenty million in Romanian bills and approximately twenty-five million Kriegsmarken, or German marks, was located; describes how the banknotes were scattered all over the street and hanging from trees; remembers some of the survivors stealing money from the street, although this type of deed did not interest him at that time; recalls waiting, together with other survivors, for military units, in Shevchenko Park; mentions some of the deceased: members of the Division Command group, various officers, as well as other significant persons of military rank who had been invited to a conference in the headquarters building on the same day; recalls that most of the survivors had been on the lower floors of the building.

00:22:27 – 00:30:31

He recalls that Major-General Constantin Trestioreanu, second in command, became General-in-Chief and ordered the gathering of the demolition units after finding General Glogojanu's dead body among the ruins; comments on the discovery of the sole survivor during the rescue action, a Navy commander named **Bardescu**, with severe psychological trauma; remembers having been sent during the same night by General Trestioreanu to check for orders from Marshal Ion Antonescu; describes the deplorable state of Odessa's primary post office upon his arrival: immersed in darkness, vandalized and almost abandoned; talks about the coded telegram received from headquarters in Bucharest and mentions having personally witnessed its deciphering; remembers precisely the telegram's directives; reports that the instructions were to execute two hundred Jews from Odessa for each officer lost in the headquarters explosion, one hundred for each noncommissioned officer and fifty for each soldier; states that General Trestioreanu postponed retaliation because they were busy recovering the bodies still buried in the demolished building; recalls the arrival of General Nicolae Macici from Tiraspol, who was accompanied by General Nicolae Ghineraru and a staff officer in order to check General Trestioreanu's handling of the situation; recalls a discussion between General Trestioreanu and General Macici in which the latter expressed indignation that no retaliatory measures had been

taken against the Jewish citizens of Odessa until 6 a.m.; talks about General Macici's decision to relieve General Trestioreanu of his position, giving General Ghineraru full command and authority in the city; mentions having personally witnessed the enforcement of Macici's decision, as he was second in command and bound to accompany General Trestioreanu to every location.

00:30:32 – 00:36:06

He insists on the fact that General Trestioreanu had not given any orders to carry out retaliation on the night before General Macici's arrival; comments on the immediate reprisal actions following General Trestioreanu's replacement with General Ghineraru: the mass execution of Jews from the Odessa ghetto with the help of the Divisionary Artillery Battalion, unused until then; remembers having seen Jewish persons being hanged on telephone posts, as well as several groups of people being executed by shooting on street corners; mentions having witnessed these events together with his colleagues while traveling in a truck convoy back to the former headquarters location; talks about the origin of the Jews from the Odessa ghetto, revealing that most of them had been brought there from Bessarabia, while those originally from the city had evacuated with the Soviet troops' departure; points out his inability to accurately identify the location of the Odessa ghetto; mentions being seriously traumatized by the image of those executed on street corners, which due to the large number of victims, seemed even more shocking than the hanging of two to three people on telephone posts; describes the uproar and terror caused in Odessa by such retaliatory actions.

00:36:07 – 00:43:50

He mentions not having noticed any directives concerning mass executions on posts or walls when returning to the Russian kolkhoz at 9 a.m.; talks about the marking of all of the Russian's houses and yards with a red cross; mentions not having witnessed the roundup of the Jews in Odessa; states that he does not recall having seen or heard about large groups of Jews taken to the village of Dalnic, where most executions took place; comments on several extermination methods used by the Romanian army against the Odessa ghetto's population, specifically mentioning one action in which they set fire to a wooden barrack holding ten thousand Jews after having failed to murder all of those inside by shooting; also talks about the detonation of a brick building holding five hundred people; explains that the second act mentioned was committed at the same time with the burial of the officers lost in the explosion from the Romanian headquarters building; recalls all of the aforementioned crimes having been committed by Romanian troops, particularly the gendarmerie; mentions not having witnessed the arson in the wooden barrack's; mentions having noticed a large pile of jewelry on a table in General Ghineraru's office and suspected the items belonged to Jews executed during the massacre; comments again on General Trestioreanu's role in the mass execution stating that he had been reassigned as Commander in charge of prisoners of war and thus had nothing to do with the slaughter; expresses his strong view on Trestioreanu's non-involvement in the Odessa massacre, being able to account for all the General's actions due to having been his closest subordinate and having almost always accompanied him on missions.

00:43:51 – 00:50:56

He remembers a safety inspection at the Romanian headquarters right after the warning received from the Russian woman whose son had placed explosives in the building; mentions that bomb squads found no explosives inside; declares not knowing anything regarding the existence of Jewish spies in Odessa working for the Soviet Union; does not recall any rumors about the existence of a secret telephone line under the bed of a Jew in Odessa enabling Soviets in hiding in the underground bunkers to be reached; recounts that he found a Romanian soldier hidden in his office after the explosion of the headquarters; comments that he was suspected to be a spy; states that the soldier refused to account for the unusual circumstances in which he was found; recalls the eventual execution of the soldier in Shevchenko Park by General Trestioreanu's orders due to his noncompliant attitude; resumes the description of the blast, recalling the discovery of explosives in the safety deposit room; mentions the detonation not having been completely successful, thus allowing for survivors; does not recall any rumors regarding two Communist partisans having informed General Trestioreanu on October 20 about the mining of the headquarters, an event which, if true, could have prevented the loss of numerous lives.

00:50:57 – 00:55:31

He comments on the presumed number of Jewish people executed during the Odessa massacre which varies from 250,000 to as many as 400,000; mentions his inability to estimate the real number of deaths, despite Marshal Ion Antonescu's orders which clearly stated 22,500; recalls no order to destroy the coded telegram from Antonescu, stating it was deposited at that time in a registry; comments on the report presented to Antonescu after the order to retaliate was carried out, insisting on Ghineraru's involvement in this action; disputes the belief that the Governor of Transnistria, Gheorghe Alexianu, was the one who presented the retaliation report to the Marshal; states that the Romanian official had not been present in Odessa during the mass executions and thus could not have been fully aware and informed of the situation.

00:55:32 – 01:03:03

He remembers the war crimes trial where he testified in defense of General Trestioreanu; describes the reaction of those in the court room at his statement regarding the enactment of retaliatory measures; mentions that the unanimous public opinion was in favor of his immediate arrest, the people being outraged by his assertion; on having his testimony from the war crimes trial re-read to him, denies having had any conversation regarding retaliation orders with another participant in the Odessa massacre, Colonel Moldoveanu; mentions not having been arrested after the Odessa events and the abovementioned trial, having then gone on a mission to the city of Evpatoria, in Crimea.

01:03:04 – 01:08:48

He recalls having remained with Trestioreanu in Odessa one more month after the massacre in order to help the General grade the officers fighting in the war; does not have any information concerning the fate of the Jewish inhabitants of the city who did not return to Odessa until his departure in November; comments on the information regarding the vandalizing of Jew's residences, insisting on the fact that this particular action had been officially forbidden by

Date Unknown

Marshal Ion Antonescu; mentions the risk of facing Court Martial if found guilty of acts of assassination or vandalism, as specified in the collective report issued by the Marshal in August 1940; talks about the atrocities committed during the pogrom which took place in the Romanian city of Iași, on June 27, 1941, mentioning his colleagues' disapproval of the deeds committed there; recalls having heard that large numbers of Jews were forced into hermetically sealed railroad cars and taken from one railway station to another until their eventual asphyxiation occurred; talks about the period spent in the Caucasus region in the second half of the year 1942, when the Romanian Army took Jewish prisoners from the Soviet troops; mentions the majority of Jewish hostages taken from the region generally occupied important positions in the army and dealt with political training; explains the German soldiers' method of identifying the Jews among the prisoners by checking whether the men had been circumcised; recounts an event related to an Azerbaijani prisoner voluntarily pointing out the Jews imprisoned with him.

01:08:49 – 01:17:05

He recalls his military division having passed through Bessarabia before crossing the Dniester River (Nistru); comments on the Jew's households, generally occupying central areas in villages as well as in towns; recalls that fire was set to most of the Jew's houses, other residences having been vandalized before his division's arrival; mentions not having been told who committed the acts of vandalism, but remembers having personally noticed similarly damaged houses in the region of Transnistria; states that he did not encounter any Jewish ghetto or concentration camp while passing through Bessarabia and Transnistria; mentions, however, that most of the Jews had already either abandoned their homes or had them taken away before the Romanian division reached Bessarabia; questions that Romanian Army members were prejudiced toward Jews and considered them Bolsheviks; mentions in support of his argument that a Jewish lieutenant who worked as his subordinate in the Romanian Army between 1941 and 1942 was not forced to wear the Star of David; offers as another example the measures taken by the Romanian Army against the fascist anti-Semite movement of the Iron Guard in the year 1941; details his military status at the time of the Iron Guard rebellion from January that year; talks about his attending the Superior War School and his subsequent assignment to assure the safety of the Ministry Council located in Victory Square, "Piața Victoriei," in the center of Bucharest; recounts some of the atrocities committed that year by Iron Guard partisans triggering Army disapproval and measures against them; comments on the cruel acts committed against Jews in Bucharest such as hanging them by hooks in slaughterhouses; mentions having been on the front line in the East until November 22, 1943, when he returned to his wife in Bucharest.

01:17:06 – 01:19:47

He deeply decries the attitudes of those who do not regard the Odessa massacre as a real event; insists again on the origin of the Jews from the ghetto, stating they had been brought from Bessarabia after the local ones had fled the city; mentions a Jewish acquaintance from Bessarabia whom he encountered on the streets of Odessa at the time; remembers that the young woman was set free, together with other Jews from the ghetto, but does not know why.