

ASSOCIATION OF THE ROMANIAN JEWS

VICTIMS OF THE HOLOCAUST

HOLOCAUST:

SURVIVORS RESPOND

Translated from Romanian by Petre Maria (second year student at the College of Foreign Languages and Literatures at the University)

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A.E.R.V.H

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Iancu Tucarmen - Survivor of " the death train"

Question from the audience:

What do you remember from the journey in “the train of death” departing Iasi in June 1940?

[...] We were shoved in cattle-cars, about 100-150 persons per car. I was put on a car with another 137 persons.

The floor of my car, like that of many others, was covered by a layer of dung, sprinkled over with quicklime.

Noticing that the small shutters of the car window were open, a railroad worker dressed up in uniform, with the customary red cap, procured himself a ladder and boarded up those little windows, reducing the amount of air entering the car.

Once the train started moving, the dung and quicklime began to radiate progressively more heat. All of us prisoners started taking off our clothes, some to the point of getting entirely naked. It was then that we realized something tragic was going to happen. The train was continuing its journey, interrupted by many maneuvers and lengthy stops. It was the middle of summer, and the heat inside the train car had become unbearable. Deprived of air and water, the first victim succumbed within half an hour. The situation had become downright hellish.

The burning thirst made some of us drink their own urine. Others went mad and started trashing around, throwing themselves over their neighbors in desperation and searching every inch of the train car for a drop of water. Eventually, it was impossible to tell who was dead and who was still alive.

At 14:00 hours, after 9 hours of torture which felt like an eternity, the train finally stopped at Podu Iloaiei. The doors of the cars were opened. From my car only 8 survivors disembarked, the rest of 129 had died from dehydration and suffocation.