



PAVEE POINT
TRAVELLER AND ROMA CENTRE

Roma Holocaust Memorial 2017

Testimony – Danafe Spirache

Danafe lives in Romania and was interviewed by Gabi Muntean over the phone. Danafe's son, Ecunom and his family live in Blanchardstown, Ireland. We thank Danafe for sharing his story and his family for their support in highlighting the experiences of Roma in the Holocaust.

We left home and were working from Easter to Christmas for a landlord. Then one day Antonescu's people came and wanted to have a meeting with us. They asked why do we work for this man for just food when they could offer us much more. They promised us things such as houses, land and livestock. People from our community warned us not to take this offer. However with the belief of a better future we took it. When the day came to leave, we were taken and put on a train.

Once on the train we were given little food and as we neared the Russian boarder, the Romanian authorities took away all our belongings including our horses, carts... everything. At that moment we felt helpless. We were now in the hands of the authorities with nothing to our name. After crossing the Russian boarder we were instructed to get off and essentially left in the middle of nowhere in an abandoned town. From here we felt what hell on earth was like. I saw images that will forever haunt me. We resorted to begging and a lot of violence was directed towards us, both from the Russian authorities and the villagers. Many times our women and girls fell prey to rape by the Russian soldiers.

This ordeal continued for two years until we returned to Romania. The most heartbreaking memory however was of my three year old brother. When it was time to cross the border into Romania, we had to cross a dangerous river. My brother by this stage was weak and looked like a skeleton. I don't know what my mother felt, either she lost hope or was too weak but she took the decision to leave my brother behind. I could hear him shouting "mommy mommy" as we left but we could not look back. This was so shocking that we never spoke of him again. (The survivor was silent after this part of the interview.)

I always tried despite how hard it is for me, to educate my children and grandchildren on the horrors of the past. I teach my children that they must never forget they are Roma and they must never trust in authorities, as the view on the Roma people is still the same. I am close to death now and I feel sorry for the things Roma people had to go through. The sad truth however, is that nothing has changed.

