

POLOVINKIN, Ivan
Latvia Documentation Project
Russian
RG-50.568*0038

Box 1, Tape 1

In this interview, Ivan Polovinkin, born in 1934 and a citizen of Daugavpils, where a ghetto and a Jewish camp were installed, recalls his childhood during the war. He describes Jewish prisoners and Nazi guards who led them to be executed. He focuses on differences in attitudes towards the Jews between Germans and local soldiers. He describes how his family helped Jews who escaped from the camp and relates what happened when Soviet soldiers entered the town.

[01:] 00:57:00 – [01:] 09:04:25

Polovinkin introduces himself mentioning that he was born in 1934 in the town of Daugavpils, where he lived during the war; recalls the first days of war and the first news about persecutions of Jews; remembers seeing Jews in groups of 50–100 people, whole families, leaving their coats and sacks, and being convoyed into the woods; says that later shots could be heard [*upon recalling all these painful memories he remains calm, self-disciplined, restrained*]; indicates he did not witness the executions, nor the burial places; says the Jews were ordered to leave their things, which were sold or handed out afterwards to the locals; notes he despises them [*the locals who took the belongings(?)*]; says all the orders were given by the German Nazis, Vlasov's soldiers and "aizsargi;" says they were easily distinguishable by their uniforms, and that the Ukrainian soldiers were the most ruthless.

[01:] 09:05:00 – [01:] 12:49:25

He says that half of the Jews in town were either shot or deported and that gun shots were heard many times during the day; notes that one group execution lasted about half an hour; tells of Ivan **Stridzhevsky** witnessing an execution and seeing Jews digging a ditch where they were later buried by the next group; says **Stridzhevsky** related this to his father who allowed him to listen to the reports of the eyewitness; says both **Stridzhevsky** and his father had good relationships with the Jews in town before and during the war; says **Stridzhevsky** warned the Jews against the looming danger, but at the same time the Nazis put him in charge of the town, and he was to keep order; notes that after the war, when the Soviets came, **Stridzhevsky** was not able to prove his innocence and committed suicide.

[01:] 12:50:00 – [01:] 15:39:25

He recalls that many Jews managed to escape from the camp, which was located near his home; remembers throwing food and tobacco over the barbed wire fence and that in return, the confined Jews threw handmade wooden toys over to him; remembers witnessing how numerous bodies of starved Jews were carried out of the camp each night; remembers that by

late 1942 some Germans had come to the camp to buy prisoners' toys; notes that those deals helped the Jews get some food from the guards.

[01:] 15:40:00 – [01:] 18:29:25

He says there were many escapes from the camp; recalls that there were clothes for escapees in his house; says his family was once caught helping escapees and a German soldier pulled out his gun; remembers the German soldier saying that a Ukrainian soldier would have killed him and his family, but that the sight of five small kids prevented him from shooting the family; says that only one escapee came to see him after the war ended; notes that he told only his wife who the guest was; relates that some Germans were quite ordinary people and some spent New Year festivities in his house; notes that his father locked the children in one room; remembers a time when the children were bold enough to touch the weapons of the guests and were reprimanded by their father [*laughs*]; notes that when the SS soldiers came into town, the atmosphere worsened dramatically.

[01:] 18:30:00 – [01:] 24:29:25

Polovinkin says he was unable to find a single Jew he knew in town after the war; says after the war, he first visited the location the executions had taken place; remembers seeing skulls and body parts just below the ground's surface; notes there is now a forest in that place; recalls that locals, including his sister, would buy and exchange belongings of the Jews; remembers Jews walking about 1.5 kilometers from where they had left their belongings to the woods where they were shot; says no one remembers a single Jew trying to escape then, and that they were holding prayer books and babies in their hands; notes that his mother crossed herself as she saw them being convoyed.

[01:] 24:30:00 – [01:] 26:05:25

He remembers **Stridzhevsky** saying he watched the execution, as everybody was allowed to; says that the Germans allowed the Ukrainians to shoot more in order to release the hatred the Ukrainians had towards the Jews; says there were two very difficult periods for him: when many Jews were executed and when the Soviets came after the war to arrest Nazi collaborators [*gestures as if to show noise, disorder, chaos*].