

PURICE, Mihail
Moldova Documentation Project
Romanian
RG-50.572*0012

Tape 1

[01:] 00:00:01 – [01:] 00:09:00

- Q: Please tell me your name.
A: I did not understand.
Q: Your name, what is your name?
A: My name is Mihail but they call me Mircea.
Q: And your family name?
A: Purice.
Q: What year where you born?
A: Well, you already asked me, in '26 I told you.
Q: I need to record on the videotape. Please tell me the place where you were born, the name of the village.
A: Gura Cavnice, here, Floresti County.
Q: And tell me in 1941, when the war started, were you here in the village?
A: Yes.
Q: Do you remember what happened back then with the Jews?
A: Suddenly.
Q: Can you tell us?
A: Suddenly.
Q: Please.
A: Russian troops retreated. There, over the hill where there is the highway now [*shows direction*] (the highway was not built during the war), there were Russian trenches. Romanians and Germans were here on this side [*shows direction to his left*] and they were fighting over the hill. The house you are in here is not the same house that was here before. I made this house myself; there was an old house before that was destroyed. We were left on the roads. For nine days the front was at our home then the Russian troops retreated. Romanians and Germans came in and life started as it was before 1940. What do you want to know now?
Q: Do you recall anything that happened to the Jews?
A: Yes, I remember well. They were taken over here [*shows direction in front*] from where I do not know, they were walking through here. There were some with spades and shovels, much younger, much stronger, they were walking and making a hole upfront and those who could not walk anymore and fell down were shot and pushed into the holes. How they shot them I do not know. They did not permit us to look and see, we were still too young, 14 years old. They pushed them there and were putting, how do you say, branches and some dirt over the holes. After that they left and we also followed them because we were curious.

- You can tell where the people fell into the hole because the dirt was lifting there from people breathing. It was very sad.
- Q: Do you remember what type of soldiers they were, if they were Romanians or Germans?
- A: They were both.
- Q: They were speaking also Romanian?
- A: Yes, yes, yes.
- Q: And you only heard the shooting or you actually saw how they were shot?
- A: I did not see. How they were shot I did not see. What I recall, I'm telling you...
- Q: Did you see dead bodies, dead people?
- A: Yes, certainly. Some were not entirely dead. Some were shot and were still breathing then taken from there and pushed into the graves.
- Q: And who dug up the graves?
- A: Jews, Jews from the column.
- Q: And also they were covering the others?
- A: Still. They were standing beside the others and a German and a Romanian told them to.....oh oh.
- Q: Do you remember about what happened, whether the people tried to escape or about those who ran?
- A: Yes, a Jewish woman. Me and my grandpa had a vineyard here. We had almost two hectares of vineyards. I was a kid, around 14 or 15 years old, and we went after that to the vineyard where we had a hut. Do you know what a hut is? It is not a house, it is made with reed roof [*quiet*—a sign to be quiet was made]. The Jewish lady was pregnant and she remained. How she remained I do not know. My grandpa took her from there and put her in that hut and she gave birth there.
- Q: She remained behind?
- A: Yes, when the column went.
- Q: She remained behind the convoy?
- A: Yes, the column went and she remained by herself. My grandpa took her to the hut; my grandpa chased us away so we wouldn't look. She gave birth there, and she took the baby. My grandpa saved her. He did not permit us to look. Why? Because if someone found out that my grandpa had saved a Jewish woman he would have gone to Court Martial, which is how it was called back then.
- Q: And do you know what happened with her after that?
- A: I do not know. I never saw her.
- Q: Only once you saw a convoy passing?
- A: How many convoys passed—many have passed. I can tell that today one passed, then maybe a week and then another one and so on, they were passing like this.
- Q: And every time did you see how people were murdered?
- A: No. How? They were walking and fell down. They could not walk anymore. If there was food, they did not receive it, and they were chased away. Some were left behind and shot. They were not allowed to be put in the cart and carried. They shot them and buried them.
- Q: And you saw trenches many times?
- A: No, maybe twice I saw this, but the convoys—there were many convoys. I do not remember, maybe 4–5 convoys like this, but big convoys; they were many people.

- Q: They were also from the village?
- A: No. How should I tell you. Here there were two Jews; one Jewish woman lived right here [*shows direction, in front of him*]. Leah was her name. She used to take me riding during the evening, God help her, because now she is dead; she took me riding because we were kids and another Jew beyond the post office. When she went I do not know. I don't remember them. She went way ahead. Then, this, the Jewish woman had two boys **Hil** and **Iancu**. **Hil** was with me on the battlefield and he came back with only one arm; but **Iancu**, I do not know what happened with them. They were old, maybe they are already dead, maybe they passed away. I do not know.
- Q: And where were you in the battlefield?
- A: Me?
- [*The location of the interview changes*]
- Q: Tell us, is this the place that you described earlier?
- A: Yes, here it is, the road goes through here and into the valley. The trees are the same. Near the edge of the trees is where they shot them.
- Q: And where were the graves?
- A: Here, on the edge of the trees, on the edge of the road, and in this direction.
- Q: Is it a road that now does not exist anymore?
- A: Yes, there was a country road, in Russian it is called... [*Interviewee gives the name of the road in Russian*].
- Q: And at what distance were you from these places? How close could you approach?
- A: To them? Close, we were with them. If they would have shot us, they would have thrown us away.
- Q: And did you try to talk with them? Did you try to bring them water or food?
- A: Yes, there were some soldiers who let us bring—"Go and bring!" There were some who did not let us.
- Q: How many times did you give them water or food?
- A: I do not remember. I think 2–3 times, or something.
- Q: And did you bring it from far away?
- A: From the fountain; there is a fountain.
[*shows direction*] There were those holes, not only here, you understand, there still are; so many are no longer, they crumbled, the houses collapsed. What are you looking at? Cheers!