

FRUNZE, Vasile
Moldova Documentation Project
Romanian
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Box 1, Tape 1

In this interview, Vasile Frunze, born in 1931 and a native of Pârlița, remembers the roundup of the Jews from his village and their being escorted to the Răuțel concentration camp, their inhumane treatment, as well as events concerning some of the prisoners' execution. He also comments on the other villagers' efforts to help the Jews by sending and bringing them food in the forest.

[01:] 00:30:20 – [01:] 03:23:12

Frunze talks about his birth in the village of Pârlița in 1931 and recalls the beginning of World War II; remembers the region where he was born being bombarded in 1941 by both the German and Russian armies; mentions soldiers on both sides having spent time in Pârlița and especially in his house; places emphasis on the locals' prohibition from walking freely through the village during the soldiers' stay there, specifying that they risked being beaten if found wandering on the streets.

[01:] 03:23:13 – [01:] 08:11:12

He recalls many Jews living in the Pârlița village before the German Army's arrival, although he cannot remember their exact number; mentions some of the Jews' occupations in the community as having to do with trading or selling goods; explains witnessing the Jews' roundup and deportation to a nearby forest named Răuțel, and hearing orders executed by the German Army; describes the gradual and daily gathering of Jews by the German soldiers, as well as their placement under arrest in other villagers' houses, usually until nighttime, when they were escorted into the forest; mentions following the Jews and German soldiers into the woods many times; remembers between 20 and 30 Jews being escorted each time into the forest, some of them belonging to other villages; comments on the presence of children and the elderly among those escorted to Răuțel, having witnessed their shrieks and cries of help at the beatings and mistreatment by the German soldiers, who forced everybody to walk barefoot through the forest; states that the Jews were gathered by the army regardless of their having any personal items with them; talks about the Jews who escaped the roundups but returned to the village only to be shot or caught by the soldiers and taken away to an unknown location; mentions witnessing the execution of Jews by German soldiers and describes an incident regarding the shooting of a fleeing group of people at Răuțel; comments on the soldiers' delivery of orders to the Jews in German, not being sure whether the group understood what was being shouted at them.

[01:] 08:11:13 – [01:] 13:48:02

He describes the internment camp in the Răuțel forest, as seen personally by him: a few shelters dug into the ground, not large enough to offer refuge to all the people brought there; remembers the Jews being unable to find a place in the dugouts and having to sleep outside; mentions that the children who had followed the German soldiers into the forest were not allowed to enter the perimeter where the Jews had been gathered, as the **sentries** chased them away; notes the distance between the village of Pârlița and the Răuțel forest as three kilometers; comments again on the internment camp; remembers no fence surrounding the area and German soldiers being the only ones guarding the Jews; recalls the soldiers being positioned strategically at approximately 50 to 100 meters from one another, covering an area of 500 meters; explains that the Jews from the concentration camp were not being fed properly, so children from Pârlița would usually sneak pieces of bread to them past the soldiers; comments on the Jews' attempts to communicate with him and the other children, crying and telling the youngsters that they did not know what would happen to them [*silence until interview resumes*]; places emphasis on the deaths of many Jews from Răuțel due to starvation; does not remember ever seeing German soldiers feed the prisoners, but recalls an old man bringing them drinking water in his cart; comments on the identity of the elderly person, who was unknown to him, and was probably forced by the German soldiers to bring water to the Jews; talks about the soldiers' savage mistreatment of the Jews, which included forcing them to walk barefoot through the forest and not allowing them to communicate with other people; mentions there were no Romanians among the soldiers who gathered the Jews.

[01:] 13:48:03 – [01:] 18:29:21

He comments again on the Jews he saw in the forest camp, explaining that the ones who died were immediately buried; mentions seeing graves at the place of the concentration camp, as well as inscriptions with names of those buried there; comments on personally seeing three corpses: two men and one woman, being carried away on blankets and pieces of cloth by other Jews; remembers the other locals being forbidden to help bury the Jews; mentions having inspected the concentration camp at Răuțel after the Jews' evacuation and further deportation; remembers the Jews' confinement in the forest camp of two to three months, although he cannot clearly recall the season(s); remembers, however, the initial mild weather, followed by a very cold period that brought about the death of many Jews from the camp; mentions three to four hundred Jews from Pârlița and other nearby villages such as Bălți imprisoned at Răuțel; discusses the evacuation of the camp and the Jews walking one after another, surrounded by German soldiers; mentions numerous disabled people among the Jews, as well as persons unable to walk due to the prickles and thistles in the forest; remembers the ones who fell along the way being pulled up in wooden carts and further carried by people from Pârlița, forced to fulfill this task by the German soldiers.

[01:] 18:29:22 – [01:] 24:49:07

He recalls the shooting of several Jews who wanted to flee the camp; comments on seeing a woman being shot in the camp, as well as on having heard numerous gunshots coming from the forest and from the area where the Jews were being confined; explains that he was approximately 20 meters away from the above-mentioned woman who was shot by the German soldiers for wanting to leave the camp; describes the woman: aged 40 to 50 years old, slowly walking away from the soldiers, who were shouting at her to return; comments on her being shot by a soldier and then carried away by two Jews; mentions again that the ones sneaking food to the Jews were mainly children from the

village, as they could sneak past the soldiers more easily; comments again on the appearance of the camp, which he saw personally after its evacuation: heaps of grass had been used for beds, in order to diminish the harshness of the ground and human feces could be found everywhere; laments that the prisoners were forced to sleep in that same area.

[01:] 24:49:08 – [01:] 30:01:19

He comments on the reactions of the villagers, outraged by the inhumane manner in which the local Jews had been rounded up like cattle and taken away from Pârlița; remembers the peaceful relationships between the Jews and the other locals; explains that the Jews used to offer bread, wood, and other construction materials in exchange for sunflower and wheat from the other villagers; discusses the partition of the Jews' lands and personal items between their acquaintances and close ones from the village, some of whom became extremely wealthy; mentions the Jews' apparent desire for their wealth and goods to be left to their friends in Pârlița; does not recall ever seeing anyone take items from the deceased persons' houses.