

SICORA, Pavel Isaivici  
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Romanian  
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In this interview, Mr. Pavel Isaivici Sicora, born in 1926 and a lifelong resident of Răuțel in Moldova, describes what he witnessed of the persecution of the local Jewish population during the war. He recounts the concentration of many Jews in a makeshift camp surrounded by barbed wire where they lived in barracks and huts that they built themselves. He reports on their living conditions, including infestation, disease, and rampant hunger, as well as the Jewish inmates' effort to get food from the villagers. He describes one mass grave with ten to twenty bodies in it but says that he did not witness or personally hear any executions taking place.

Box 1, Tape 1

**[01:] 00:29:06 – [01:] 10:29:08**  
**00:00 – 10:35**

Mr. Isaivici introduces himself; states that he was born in Răuțel (a village in the county of Fălești, in the present-day Republic of Moldova) in 1926; recalls that the Russians came in 1944 and took people to the “voincomat” (or “voenkomat,” an archaic word used to describe the military commissariat); states that they were then taken to the village of Obreja where they stayed for a month after which they were taken towards the Prut River; explains that they were thought to have been spies; elaborates that since he was still “green” (meaning young), he was not taken; goes on to say that they were brought back to the “voincomat;” adds that they took people from the ages of 26 to 50 by force; states that they took him also, even though he was only 15, because he looked older than his age; mentions 300 people being taken to a nearby larger village, called Bălți, and then towards the Nistru river on foot; elaborates that from Bălți there were in addition to the 300 already mentioned also people from other towns or villages such as Răuțel, Pârghița, Mărăndeni, and Papauca adding up to around 20,000–30,000 people; when asked what happened in that area at the beginning of the war, states that the Germans brought Jews to the nearby forest and kept them in an enclosure with barbed wire two meters high where they stayed from May until probably November; states that they were there for six months; *[this contradicts an earlier statement that they were there for two years]*; goes on to say that they were then taken to Bălți, or so he heard older people say; adds that from there he has no idea where they were taken; when asked, mentions he saw the convoys bringing Jews to the forest only twice; estimates that in the first one there were around 300–500 people still in good health and guarded by about ten Romanians with automatic guns; adds that the order came from Hitler *[unclear how he can state this for sure]*; when asked by interviewer if they were carrying anything with them, states that they were not allowed to carry anything but the clothes they were wearing at the time of their capture; reports that he he saw a second convoy about two or three weeks after the first; explains that they were brought from Cernăuți on the road that goes to Pârlița and Cotileu (both in Fălești county); states that in this convoy there were about 500–600

Jews walking on foot and guarded by 10–20 soldiers; mentions the village of Mărăndeni and recalls that it had about 20 Jewish families who he described as good people with whom the Romanian peasants in the village lived on very good terms.

**[01:] 10:29:09 – [01:] 19:12:17**  
**10:36 – 19:55**

Returning to the Jews in the forest, he says they were kept in the barbed wire enclosure without any food for two or three weeks; *[this seems doubtful since he says only a few died each week but if people were kept there, including children, without any food whatsoever for three weeks more would have died]*; adds that more Jews were brought to the improvised camp in the forest; estimates that at some point there were more than 50,000 Jews there; states after being asked that he never saw it personally and that his estimates are based not on having directly witnessed it but on the number of Jews he saw or heard were coming in the convoys; states that because his parents' corn fields were close to the edge of the forest, he saw how, at some point, the Jews from the enclosure were eating tree bark to keep from starving to death; mentions that he was moved by this and told his father to help them and give them some bean stew; reports that his father replied that he didn't want the soldiers on patrol to arrest him, too, so he refused to give them food; recalls that the Jews were given water in barrels *[he doesn't mention who exactly was bringing it to them]* from the creek and that the water was not necessarily good drinking water they drank it out of necessity; recalls that they were given bran for soup and bread but it was not enough so people would beg for food constantly; states that small children died of starvation; reports that he talked with the people giving the Jews in the camp food and they told him that some 20–30 died daily in the camp because of malnutrition, starvation and diseases; elaborates on the people who were bringing the food stating that every day, some people from the village were supposed to bring five carts with food to the camp and when it was his father's turn, he went with him to see from as close as he could get what was going on there; recalls that the guards guarding the camp didn't allow them to get too close; mentions that they were throwing bread and other food over the fence; estimates again there must have been at least 20,000 people there; says that he is pretty convinced of the accuracy of his estimate because his family hosted a "furier" (secretary from the mayor's office whose name was **Petru**), and that he used to ask him about the people in the camp; says that he asked the man how long the people would stay there and the man answered that they will stay "as long as Hitler wants"; when asked by the interviewer how the people in the camps looked, he mentions they were very thin and full of lice, unwashed and wearing the same clothes day in and day out; describes around ten or twenty dead bodies being carried to a burial site, which was a big hole in the ground; tells that they were not buried but rather thrown directly into the common hole which was then covered up by bulldozer; mentions that there were about 100 huts made with tree branches by the Jews in the camp.

**[01:] 19:12:18 – [01:] 33:26:05**  
**19:56 – 34:30**

Mr. Sicora states that there were barracks for the Jews to stay and sleep in and that there were about three of them measuring 30–50 m; adds that not all could fit in there so that's why they made the huts; recalls that the people in the camp sometimes shouted from the fence, asking the villagers to give them food but the villagers were unable to comply since there were sentinels on

the hill guarding the camp with machine guns; speculates that this is why the people from the village were afraid to get near the camp; referring again to the Jews being taken from the camp, he says that he did not see them leaving but he heard from the people in the village that they were taken to Bălți and he does not know where they were taken afterwards; mentions, in response to question by interviewer, that he never heard gunshots or saw people being shot; says that he heard people shouting from the camp; tells a story that he heard from the elders of the village about a Jewish doctor who attempted to get out of the camp by asking chief of the guards to let him go; states that the chief of the guards replied that he doesn't want Hitler to shoot them both so he didn't let the doctor go; when asked if he ever went in the camp, he replies that he did not, but one of his brothers did and came out with thousands of lice on his body; adds that two years afterwards, it was still closed because it was dirty and people could catch a number of diseases just by being there; says, in response to question about Jews in the camp being forced to work, that he saw them being taken out of the barracks and huts to work the fields; elaborates that these were mostly young men and women; estimates that this lasted for two weeks; states that they [*unclear who*] were not allowed during that time to eat, to drink or walk alone through the village.