SAMONII, Pavel
Moldova Documentation Project
Russian
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Box 1, Tape 1

In this interview, Pavel Samonii, a resident of Kamenka village, talks about the mass killings of Jews at the hands of the Romanian Nazi gendarmerie in 1941–1942. He describes locations of those events, their timing; remembers miscellaneous details of mass drowning: the number of executions, age groupings of victims, and procedures of arrest. He also talks about cases of public humiliation that Jews were forced to endure, for example, forcing them to dance around the campfire.

[00:] 01:01:15 – [00:] 11:35:23

He introduces himself; remembers the beginning of World War II in the USSR in 1941; describes the kolkhoz (collective farm) in Kamenka before and during the war; discusses the Jewish population of Kamenka before the war; starts talking about the hole in the ice at the Dnieper River (present-day Ukraine) where Nazis drowned the Jews; remembers personally witnessing the killings; recalls an incident where a woman with a suckling baby was drowned; comments on Romanian gendarme posts; mentions roundabout ways which the victims were escorted to the ice hole; talks about the possibility of recognizing the victims from the distance of his observation point.

[00:] 11:35:24 – [00:] 20:52:08

He mentions that he saw several groups of people, but one group at a time; estimates the size of the ice hole as 3x4 meters; recalls the average number of the victims in one group as 15–20 and the number of executioners as 7–10, remembers refugees from other locations who were also killed at the Dnieper by drowning; points out that the location of his relative's houses that stood on Dnieper shore was a good observation point; talks about Romanian night patrols on the streets of Kamenka; describes the procedure of the drowning; explains that most of the victims were adults; comments on the location of gendarme stations.

[00:] 20:52:09 – [00:] 30:59:10

He talks about the victims' unwillingness to die and their resistance to the executioners while being drowned; mentions how it was impossible to rescue the victims because of the fear of being shot by gendarmes, though he cannot remember any specific case firearms were used during the drownings; recalls that during the night he often heard gun shots in the streets of Kamenka; remembers that these mass killings had occurred between 1941 and 1942; points out

how Jews were detained at the market place; talks about how gendarmes recognized and caught Jews; points out that they also held them in the school building.

[00:] 30:59:11 – [00:] 39:19:03

He points out that the number of people imprisoned at the school is unknown; explains that gendarmes forced Jews to dance around the campfire; assumes the number of Jewish people forced to dance was approximately 15–20; explains that his happened in March 1942; discusses his return back to Kamenka in 1950 and notes that that many of the Jews who had lived in Kamenka prior to the war were no longer there.

[00:] 39:19:04 – [00:] 48:51:02

He talks about the 2 or 3 groups of victims he saw being drowned; mentions that non-Jews were not executed and humiliated by Nazis; speaks about the mayor of Kamenka during the fascist regime in Romania; explains that Romanians searched for Jews in their homes and then arrested them; points out that usually two Romanians conducted the search; mentions that Jews were brought to and held at the school building; tries to remember the people he knew who were arrested and taken from their home.

[00:] 48:51:03 – [00:] 57:55:10

He discusses his relative **Timofey Mikhaylovich**, whose horse was taken away by gendarmes; estimates that it took approximately 20–30 minutes to drown a group of 15–20 people; recalls Jews he recognized from Kamenka who survived the war; estimates that the events he has discussed took place in the years 1941 and 1942; mentions that he did not know any gendarme personally; recalls the drowning victims screaming in Russian and other languages unfamiliar to him; assumes that they were at points speaking Yiddish.