

GRĂDINARI, Maria
Moldova Documentation Project
Romanian
RG-50.572*0172

In this interview Maria Grădinari, born in 1923 in the village of Codreanca, describes how a group of about 30-40 Jews were shot on the outskirts of her village. Her neighbors were also among that group. She talks about how a group of Jews were gathered and held for several days in a house in the center of the village. She remembers how she followed the column of Jews outside the village where she witnessed their shooting. She also explains that several locals helped the soldiers during the shooting and how some villagers stayed behind and took clothes from the dead. Some corpses were left unburied and were eaten by dogs. The Jews' belongings were also taken by some of the villagers.

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[01:] 00:00:00 – [01:] 23:26:22
00:00 – 23:08

[01:] 00:30:14 – [01:] 03:31:20
00:13 – 03:14

Q: Please tell me your name and surname.

A: My name with my husband or...from before?

Q: Now, what your name is.

A: Grădinari...

Q: Grădinari...

A: Grădinari Maria and **Panona**, from the village of Codreanca.

Q: Wait, let's stop. Five seconds.

Interview is interrupted.

Q: Please tell me your name and surname.

A: Say it again?

Q: Please, tell us again.

A: __.

Q: Now. Your current one. What is your name and surname?

A: Gradinari Maria and **Panona**.

Q: Which year were you born?

A: In [19]23.

Q: And where were you born?

A: Excuse me?

Q: Where were you born?

A: In Codreanca. Still Strășeni county.

Q: A few weeks ago we were guests in your house and you told us what you had seen, what had happened with the Jews. Now we have come again and would like you to remember...

A: You were here?

Q: ...and tell us again.

A: You were? *[Unclear what she is referring to.]*

Q: Yes.

A: __. *[She seems to mumble something in Russian.]*

Q: Tell us please, were there Jews living in your village before the war?

A: There were many. In stores __. Right in my neighborhood. We were right next door to one [called] Leiba __. He had a Jewish wife; she was called Lyolea. They had a son Niuma, one Izea, one [daughter] Basea and one Neta. These were the kids. Six kids.

Q: And do you also remember other Jews, what were their names? Or do you remember only these ones?

A: I know them, but I have forgotten. There was one with a small store, this one—what the hell was his name? That one lived right in that small house. Dudel. Dudel, but I swear I can't remember his name. *[She cannot remember his family name.]* And there was...one Itzic. There were, there were many, but I wasn't old enough to be able to remember them. On the other side [of the village] there were also Jews there.

Q: And did you see what happened to the Jews from your village when the war started in [19]41?

A: See what?

Q: What happened to the Jews?

A: They were shot. They were shot. They took them and they gathered them and took them outside the village...

Q: But when they gathered them, did you see how they were gathered?

A: Of course! They took them from the house and onto the street with the rest of them, everybody. And then there were here, who—some good-for-nothing men—who were walking in the water. They were put to shoot. And there, at the outskirts of our village of Codreanca—have you been to Codreanca?—have you been?—

[01:] 03:31:20 – [01:] 06:27:10

03:15 – 06:10

Q: I didn't understand what you said about those men who were walking in the water. What did you mean? Who were they?

A: They were some of ours, Moldovans. But they were some useless ones who were only looking for trouble. But anything else I...

Q: And you are saying that those were the ones shooting?

A: Of course! They shot those poor people.

Q: So, tell us in order how it happened. How did they round them up? Where did you first see them being rounded up?

A: They started first in my neighborhood.

Q: So you saw them in your neighborhood.

A: Of course. Because there was a—those—at Leiba's—in that house there were more of them.

Q: Who was rounding them up?

A: Excuse me?

Q: Who was rounding them up?

A: Soldiers, German ones and some of those useless men who __ and they shot them.

Q: These villagers were also rounding them up. The German soldiers and the villagers together?

A: Yes.

Q: How many soldiers and how many villagers did you see rounding up the Jews in your neighborhood?

A: The ones that were rounding up the Jews, they were useless men who were doing nothing. Not working just doing nothing. Some good-for-nothing men. They were gathering them in groups with—where those soldiers were. And then, they were going through houses and taking them outside.

Q: So the soldiers were not entering the houses. These ones were going in...

A: Of course they were going in! Why wouldn't they?

Q: All of them were going in?

A: Of course they were going in.

Q: The soldiers as well as the villagers.

A: Yes.

Q: And when they were taking them from the house, were they taking them with luggage or empty-handed?

A: Do what?

Q: From the house, were the Jews taken with luggage or empty-handed?

A: Hell no, they were not taking anything—but did he need any luggage? If he was taken from the house with a gun pointed at his back, did he need to take any luggage?

Q: And how many people did you see rounded up in your neighborhood?

A: Well, I don't know how many. There were many. There was one, Aftenie. He had his nose bitten off. He was from here, __ from the village. He was gathering them.

Q: Aha. So you are saying that one of these men was called Aftenie? One of these villagers? Aftenie was his name?

A: Right, Aftenie. He didn't have a nose.

Q: What was his family name?

A: Huzunu.

Q: What?

A: Huzunu.

Q: Huzunu. Do you know what the names of the others were?

A: Maybe I knew them, but now I don't remember anything.

[01:] 06:27:11 – [01:] 09:26:13

06:11 – 09:09

Q: How many Jews did they gather there in the street? How many Jews did they gather?

A: 30-40, however many there were in those houses. They took them outside and took them to the outskirts of the village. And there, finished. They shot them there.

Q: Did you see this only here in the neighborhood or did you see this somewhere else too?

A: Well, but kids go everywhere like kids do. Me, I too went around; I didn't stay put. I went everywhere.

Q: And did you see anything elsewhere?

A: Yes.

Q: What did you see elsewhere?

A: On the other side, where they took them towards the forest. And the kids...

Q: [Did you see] this on the other side?

A: What?

Q: In which neighborhood? Where is this?

A: The neighborhood on the other side of the village. I live here where the hospital is, where the church is, this is where I lived. But there, that is right near the forest.

Q: Who was rounding them up? Who were they rounded up by?

A: These ones. You think there were only one or two? They were looking for trouble. And they were taking things that were in those houses. These bad ones—not the other people—the bad ones.

Q: And from that neighborhood, how many Jews were rounded up?

A: How many were from here? There were eight. And there, where Dodea had his store, there were four: the mother, the father, a girl Hilea and a boy Haim. And another one, a Jewish woman, right there in the valley, with her son and husband. I have forgotten what her name was. I don't know—**davai**—
(Davai is a Russian term meaning "go on" or "continue".)

Q: But I want to ask you—both of these groups, this one and the one from your neighborhood, were they gathered on the same day or on different days?

A: Different days.

Q: Different days. So you didn't see them on the same day.

A: Excuse me?

Q: You didn't see them on the same day.

A: In our village there were many Jews. They couldn't gather them all and kill them.

Q: When you saw this incident from the neighborhood and then you saw the incident from the other side of the village, these were on different days?

A: Yes. Here, there was one Leiba, one Lyolea... and on the other side it was...

Q: But first, you saw them in your own neighborhood or there?

A: In my neighborhood.

Q: First you saw them here. And then after how much time—after how long did you see them on the other side of the village?

A: I don't remember how long. A few days. It was prolonged. Some ran away.

[01:] 09:26:14 – [01:] 11:22:18

09:10 – 11:05

Q: Did you see anybody run away?

A: Huh?

Q: Did you see anybody run away?

A: From my neighborhood nobody ran away.

Q: Nobody ran away.

A: They didn't run. They were all at the house in the hallway, and they were sitting on chairs. And he had a long backyard and a long shed. And my house was on this side. That was my mother's and father's house. And they had a restaurant and I was working—and Aftenie had his money stolen. There, I was selling to these drunks who were buying drinks. But...

Q: But I want to ask you, when you saw them gathered in your neighborhood, did you see where they were taken after they were rounded up?

A: They took them on foot to the outskirts of the village.

Q: Did you follow them from behind or not? Did you or didn't you go after them?

A: I went there. Of course.

Q: You followed them?

A: But only me, you mean?

Q: What did you see when you went after them?

A: That there were also small kids, poor suckling babes. They were knocked down. You could only see a hand or a foot moving.

Q: Please tell me in order.

A: Excuse me?

Q: So, I want to understand better how everything happened. So, they were taken in a column. You followed them from behind?

A: From behind. You mean only me?

Q: How far did you follow them from behind?

A: I went almost to the place where they shot them. But not right there, because I couldn't go farther because it wasn't allowed.

Q: And how close did you go to the place where they were shot?

A: I was like from here to the gate, at the street, just like that.

Q: About eight to ten meters away?

A: Excuse me?

Q: You were about eight to ten meters away?

A: Yes, yes. Just like from here to the road.

Q: And did you see how they were shot?

A: Of course.

Q: And what did they do to them when the column arrived? What did they do?

A: They made—there were pits there, and there was water, and there were pits. And that's where they threw them. But some were left [unburied] and the dogs ate them.

[01:] 11:22:19 – [01:] 14:16:12

11:06 – 13:59

Q: When the column arrived, how did they shoot them? All of them at once or in groups? What did they do? Tell us how it happened.

A: How? So, as they were sitting in groups like that, they put bullets, and prrrrrr [*she imitates the sound of a machine gun*], and all of them fell in all directions. Women, and children, and men, and old ones, and young ones, and all kinds.

Q: And... but who was shooting at them?

A: Huh?

Q: Who was shooting at them?

A: Our villagers were shooting and also the army was shooting. The ones from my village were those, those good-for-nothing ones who were everywhere like devils. And they—with the other ones, the army—

Q: But where were they standing, the soldiers and the ones from the village? Where were they standing? And where were the Jews standing?

A: The Jews were all in one place. These other ones were a separate group.

Q: The ones that were shooting.

A: And that's it. All of them at once. They were putting bullets, those round ones in those rifles, and they [the soldiers and the villagers] were shooting and they were falling [the

Jews]. One this way, one that way [*she indicates left and right*], all directions. This is the truth, it is not a lie.

Q: Was there only one pit or were there several pits?

A: What?

Q: Prepared for...

A: Eh, did they need several pits?

Q: There was one pit.

A: One pit and they killed them there.

Q: But how big was that pit?

A: Huh?

Q: How big was that pit?

A: Just like how it is here at our well. That one is a well. [*Indicates towards her right side.*]

Q: About what size? About two and a half meters by two and a half meters? About what is its size?

A: One on top of the other. You think they wanted to put them in coffins? They died there.

Q: Were they shooting them with their clothes on or off?

A: They didn't undress them. Just as they were, like that.

Q: Did you stay until they finished shooting them all?

A: Huh?

Q: Did you stay until the end, until they finished shooting them?

A: But of course. I had to see what happened at the end...

Q: And did you see how they threw them in the pit?

A: They were falling easily__ there.

Q: Then they covered them? They covered them with dirt?

A: They covered them with dirt and...

Q: Last time you told us that some of the locals were taking clothes from the dead.

A: Well, when the army left, they left the dead behind. They [the villagers] did whatever they wanted with them [the dead]. Whether they dressed them or undressed them...

Q: It means that...

A: The soldiers didn't stay until the end to see what those did to them.

[01:] 14:16:13 – [01:] 17:08:12

14:00 – 16:51

Q: It means that the soldiers left earlier.

A: They left.

Q: And only the ones from the village stayed?

A: Our villagers, yes.

Q: And did you see how they were undressing them?

A: Of course. They were taking clothes, and ___...

Q: And how long did you stay there? For how long were you there?

A: How long? Well, the whole thing. While they shot them, undressed them, threw them in the...

Q: And how long did this take?

A: Huh?

Q: How long did this take?

A: How long—the time? Well, how—they were taken in the morning. In the morning, they were gathered there. Then they put them in a group and with the guns from behind—and they were going in front—kids were taken by their hands, and some were carried—and they surrounded the group and they kept telling them something. And after that they started shooting them.

Q: But what were they saying? What did you say? That they were telling them something before shooting them, or what?

A: Do what?

Q: Did the soldiers say something to the Jews before shooting them?

A: Put what?

Q: I don't know, you said that they said something. Did they say something?

A: Well...

Q: You said that "they kept telling them something". What did you mean?

A: Well, I have forgotten.

Q: You have forgotten. In this group, the one you said they were shooting at, were the ones from your neighborhood there?

A: Of course. The gimpy one Leiba was there and Lyolea. And Dusea. And that one, Jenea, Izea. [*She is counting them on her fingers.*] Look, I know them like I know my fingers.

Q: And they were all there.

A: Yes.

Q: And you saw how they were shot.

A: With their faces—they faced the valley, __, there was a big, large house here. Behind that, a shed. That shed had a wall next to our garden. And then they took all of them and...

Q: But, from where you were, could you hear their voices? Could you hear what they were saying?

A: Do what?

Q: You said that you were as far from the pit as we are from here to the gate. Could you hear what those Jews were saying, there at the pit? Could you hear...

A: But they were talking Jewish, they in our language.

Q: But did you hear sounds? Could you hear something else?

A: Of course you could hear. Couldn't someone hear us if there was somebody right there? The same thing there. But they killed the poor people.

[01:] 17:08:13 – [01:] 20:20:20

16:52 – 20:03

Q: Was there only this one incident when you saw how they shot them, or did you see other incidents too?

A: It wasn't only here. It happened on the other side too, because our village is big. And in the neighborhoods—they were in groups. They took them from there. They took them and killed them.

Q: But did you see other incidents too?

A: I didn't go there; I only was interested in the ones from my neighborhood.

Q: You saw only these ones.

A: Yes.

Q: Did you see incidents where people died or were arrested during the war?

A: I didn't see.

Q: You never saw.

A: No, no.

Q: But you told us last time that the Jews were held a day or two, locked up somewhere in your village.

A: They were held sometimes longer, sometimes shorter, as much as...

Q: How did you know about this, that they held them locked up in your village?

A: Well if they were put in sheds and —wherever—in houses, and were kept locked up, how would I not know?

Q: But did you ever see them held somewhere?

A: There, where we were. Where that one had a shed, a big one—at Leiba's. There was a Jewish woman in the valley, and there were also Dudel and Basea and that one—what the hell was her name—a daughter Hilea and a son Haim. And her—I don't know what her name was. Right in the center where the store is, where the hospital is in Codreanca, in that area, where there is a square house. And there was one __ and that's where that Jew was. He lived there.

Q: But you said that you saw them locked in a shed. Where was this shed?

A: I think in our—here in our neighborhood.

Q: Leiba's shed?

A: Yes, Leiba's.

Q: And they were held locked up? Were they not taken at the same time, or how?

A: Not all at once. They held them there awhile—__ had a daughter in Chisinau, two sons—and held them there. Then they took them out. Poor people were taken out crying and moaning and__. They were shooting, there was this good-for-nothing one from here, who wouldn't see the soul in a man.

Q: But for how long were they held there?

A: A few days, not long.

Q: A few days.

A: Not long. They didn't hold them for long.

Q: What happened to all of the belongings of the Jews from your village? What happened?

A: Do what?

Q: With their belongings.

A: Belongings? Their belongings were taken by those men who were going around like devils. They were the ones who went into homes, taking clothes, taking everything they found. Those good-for-nothing ones. Honorable people were thinking that there was a human's soul there. They thought about that and didn't do those kinds of things.

[01:] 20:20:21 – [01:] 22:24:06

20:04 – 22:06

Q: Did you ever see them taking things from the house?

A: Many times. They told them to come out; they didn't know what's inside. Like here—these terrible ones—whith wounded hand. Right there at the gate—they poored a big bucket of water on him, on his head. *[Unclear what she is talking about.]*

Q: I want to ask you, were there any Jews left alive in your village after the war? Did they live...

A: None were left in the village. None were left. As if they—if they were taken one after another—were taken as a group—like if there were several of us here in the house, they could take us all—shot to the ground.

Q: Besides the Jews, were there other people killed as well?

A: They did, but some of these who were against.

Q: Which ones?

A: Who were against the Russian.

Q: But this was after the war.

A: Excuse me?

Q: This was after the war.

A: I don't understand.

Q: I am saying that what you told us about happened after the war. But we are interested whether they killed other people or only the Jews during the war.

A: They killed, but do I remember what they do? What they did?

Q: But do you know, did anything happen to the gypsies during the years of the war?

A: With what?

Q: With the gypsies.

A: No, they didn't do anything to the gypsies.

Q: Did they do anything to the communists?

A: They were shooting at the communists.

Q: Do you know about incidents that happened with communists?

A: Huh?

Q: Do you know about any incidents?

A: Back then I knew, but it is many years since then. I can't remember all those things.

Q: We will stop here. Thank you very much.

[01:] 22:24:07 – [01:] 23:26:22

22:07 – 23:08

The interview is interrupted.

Q: We have a few more questions to ask you.

A: **Davai.**

Q: I understand that what happened—everything you told us about these incidents—they happened in Codreanca.

A: Yes.

Q: Yes.

A: That is the truth, it is not a lie. I am glad I am not part of that.

Q: Besides Aftenie Huzunu, the one who participated there...

A: Who?

Q: You said that Aftenie Huzunu was the name of the man who rounded up the Jews?

A: Uh-huh.

Q: Do you remember the names of other villagers?

A: Only those bad ones I know.

Q: And what were their names? The bad ones.

A: That one I told you who he was. But the other ones I don't remember.

Q: You don't remember anybody else.

A: It's been so many years. If you were here with questions earlier, I would have remembered, but now...

Q: I understand. Thank you.

[01:] 23:26:22

23:08

Conclusion of interview