

Summary of Oral History: Oral history interview with Jelena Smirnova.

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Olena Smyrnova, born in 1928, a resident of the village of Brailiv, Ukraine. Before the war, a lot of Jews lived there, relations were good, and the Jews often helped villagers.

She lived near the river, which was essentially the border between the German and Romanian territories. She says the Romanians did not kill the Jews, but the Germans did. She witnessed local Jews fleeing across the river to the Romanians, to Zhmerynka, escaping death. Local villagers helped them.

She recalls a case in which the Jews who fled to Romanians were sent back to the Germans. There was a bridge across the river. She witnessed a small group of the Jews being led to that bridge in the evening, and the elders ordered to hide away because there would be a shooting. The interviewee heard the sounds of the machine gun but she does not know where the bodies of the killed were taken to.

There was a big pit in Brailov, the size of which she does not know. Many times (she does not specify) she saw columns of the Jews who were brought from everywhere, from Zhmerynka, from Vinnytsia. People were beaten so that they did not move anywhere, those who fled were shot immediately. They were led to a pit in the field.

In one of these columns, the interviewee saw her Jewish teacher, ran up to her, but she asked her to run away so that she would not be taken away. The Jews and those who saw the action cried, shouted, and were frightened. The shooting did not happen in one day. She does not remember either how long it lasted or the year, but it was a warm season. Those days, men hid in cellars because they could be taken away, others also tried to hide away, but could watch the shooting from a distance. The interviewee, along with other villagers, hid behind the house and saw the shooting. The pit was long, boards were laid above it for the Jews to stand on. Bodies fell from the boards into the pit. The Jews were previously undressed. She knows that the poor villagers took their clothes after it was over. (There were many such shootings, she cannot remember how many. She watched several of them, but heard about others from fellow villagers).

Some Jews managed to escape. They hid in villagers' houses, at Ukrainians'. In her cellar, the interviewee also hid a Jewish woman for several days (she spoke Ukrainian), then she left somewhere. The Germans searched the homes. Those who were caught were shot.

After the war was over, the Jews left.

The houses of local Jews fell into disrepair because no one looked after them. And the belongings of the Jews were loaded on cars and taken away. She does not remember who did it.

She does not know whether people of other nationalities, communists, were killed. The Roma lived before the war, but left

Volodka Kuzmin is a fellow villager, also an eyewitness to the events
Sophia Pavlina is a Jewish teacher
Hoskel, Moch, Luser are local Jews