

RG-50.378 #031

Otevszkaya, Aleksandra [Sara] Grigoryevna

- 1.00 Born ---- 1912. One of two children. Father owned a bookstore. Family were active in the Bund organization. In 1916 their house burned down and they lost most of their possessions.
- 1.05 In 1918 with help of relatives built new house in the village of Kalinkovichy. Father died from typhus in 1919. Lived from income of large garden and mother worked as seamstress. Mother's sister died in 1923, and mother then married sister's husband. Combined family consisted of 9 children.
- 1.13 In 1926 Sara went to Poltava and began to work, even though she was only 14. She worked as a needleworker until 1930. Returned home and enrolled in a bookkeeper course. Then worked as a bookkeeper for the railroad.
- 1.16 In 1931 went to Minsk for teacher training. Later sent to town of Lipin as head of local schools. In 1932 there was a famine in Belorussia.
- 1.21 Then worked MVD on a building site.
- 1.27 Sara married in 1936 in Slutsk. Husband not Jewish. In late 30's heard about Hitler and knew about war events after 1939. Heard about German atrocities from Polishr refugees.

[Break]

- 2.00 In 1940, her third son was born. She lived in town of Osipovich. Describes announcement of war, June 22, 1941. That evening heard that Germans were advancing – at night town was bombed. People believed that Soviet army and powerful and would defeat Germans. Husband taken into army.
- 2.08 On June 26, town was bombed heavily. There was an order for evacuation, but Sara was hiding in woods with her family. On 27 June last train left town for the east.
- 2.15 Sara and children went to nearby village and took refuge with a family. But not wanting to create problems for this family, Sara moves back to her house in Osipovich. Germans occupied town.
- 2.19 Describes area of ghetto which Germans established.
- 2.24 Describes Judenrat. She convinces Judenrat not to register her.
- 2.25 All persons aged 14 and above had to work. Women with children aged three and under exempt from work requirement.

2.27 On 11 Oct. 1941 men, women, and work-aged children were taken away and shot.

[Break]

- 3.00 Describes attitude of Russian local residents to Jews. Says they varied. One acquaintance refused to greet her, another gave refuge to a Jew during Oct. 11 massacre.
- 3.03 On Oct 11, she was able to hide behind a door in her house when police came to round up Jews. An old Ukrainian woman whom she had taken in told police that all Jews in the house had already been seized, and she survived.
- 3.07 Most old woman and women with young children not shot during Oct. 11 action.
- 3.10 Sara's husband was captured near Mogilev and put in POW camp near her town of Byxovo. Prisoners given no food, not even water, but occasionally some were released if relatives came to the camp. People threw them bread and potatoes. Her husband was able to sneak out of camp wearing civilian clothes his mother had brought him.
- 3.15 Husband arrives in Osipovich, where Sara was. He was able to get a job as a bookkeeper in the city administration because he knew the head of the local administration with whom he had worked before the war. In that position, he was able to change Sara's passport, designating as Alexandra – instead of Sara – and changed her nationality from Jew to Belorussian.
- 3.20 Returns to Osipovich and with her husband decides to try to join partisan unit – at the end of February 1942.
- 3.27 Began to travel to partisan zone. Helped by people along the way, and stayed in people's houses. But heard that 'punitive units' [Karatelnie Otravady] were in the area, and they returned to Osipovich.
- 3.28 Decides to go to her relatives in Byknov. Husband would go to his relatives near Mogilev.

[Break]

- 4.01 Told along way that all Jews in Bykhov had been killed, but she continues. Arrives at night. Meets mother of husband; tries to join husband near Mogilev. Then returned to Osipovich. Husband worked in Bobruisk as bookkeeper.
- 4.15 In May 1942, partisans came to area. She hid out from time to time when Germans came near area.

- 4.18 Once taken to German Kommandatura because she was thought to be Jewish. Interrogated by Germans. Released.
- 4.20 Went to Bobruisk where husband worked as courier for partisans.
- 4.23 In answer to questions, Sara said she was told that all people left in Osipovich ghetto were shot on 5 Feb. 1942.
- 4.24 Bobruisk liberated by Soviet troops.

END OF TAPE