

SINKEVIČIENĖ, Zofija
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In this interview, Zofija Sinkevičienė, a Roma Holocaust survivor born in 1925 in Panevežys, describes her experiences during the Holocaust and World War II. In 1943, the Roma community in Panevežys was rounded up, held in a ghetto, and taken to a forced labor camp in Pravieniškės. (a village in between the cities of Kaunas and Vilnius). Zofija Sinkevičienė describes conditions at the labor camp in Pravieniškės, testifies to the massacre of most of the Roma interned there, and explains the circumstances whereby she and several others were spared and transported to forced labor camps in France and Germany. In this interview, Zofija Sinkevičienė talks at length about work conditions in the various labor camps and describes the liberation of Buchenwald. She also briefly mentions the persecution of Jews in Panevežys and also in Krakės.

File 1 of 5

[00:] 00:42:00 – [00:] 05:00:02

00:36 – 05:05

She introduces herself as Mrs. Sinkevičienė; mentions that her brother Aleksas Beresnevičius died in France. *[tape is cut; interview starts anew]* She explains that in 1943, Mr. Surkevičius came to their family home, which was at Number 26 Tilvyčių street and rounded up her family and other Gypsies and transported them to the ghetto. She describes the arrival of the priests in the ghetto and how they baptized, heard confession, and married the Gypsies. She then describes the transport from the ghetto to Pravieniškės (a town in the Kaišiadorys region, near Vilnius and Kaunas). She confirms that both Lithuanians and Germans acted as guards, that they were beaten with rubber batons (“bananas”), that their jewelry and shoes were confiscated, and that they were made to wear clogs.

[00:] 05:01:02 – [00:] 10:22:24

05:06 – 10:41

She briefly mentions the beatings inflicted by Lithuanian collaborators; she identifies a Lithuanian man who beat and murdered victims, who was said to have escaped to America. She describes being taken to work in groups of four; says that people were beaten if they were unable to keep up. She describes an incident when a Lithuanian military officer, or a “Šaulys” (*Lietuvos Šaulių Sąjunga* (LŠS) – Lithuanian Riflemen’s Union; a paramilitary civilian national defense league) was shot by the Germans; says that she does not know the reason for his internment in the labor camp, that after he was killed, the Gypsies were forced to their knees and told that the

same fate awaited them. She describes the work performed at the labor camp in Pravieniškės, the difficult task of carrying logs. She talks about an incident when she was approached by a German soldier who then put a gun to her head; says that he wanted to drag her in to the forest; it is implied that she was in danger of being raped; she explains that a Lithuanian soldier from Panevėžys, with whom she attended school, came up at that moment and asked that she be spared.

[00:] 10:23:04 – [00:] 15:16:12

10:42 – 15:47

Zofija Sinkevičienė recalls her conversation with the Lithuanian soldier, wherein they established how they knew one another; says that he offered to help her escape, that she was afraid and refused to run away, that the Lithuanian soldier gave her his shoes, that he revealed that the Gypsies were going to be massacred that week. She reveals that the Lithuanian soldier instructed her, on the day of the massacre, when he surname was called, to walk up and give the Hitler salute. She interjects with the assertion that she considers this Lithuanian soldier innocent because he was just following orders in the Army. She continues her description of his instructions and stands up to demonstrate the Hitler salute [*microphone is dislodged and adjusted*]; she describes how she was spared at the massacre site because she gave the salute, that the Germans told her that she would be taken to Germany, that she told the other victims to also raise their hands. [*interviewee continues standing*] She emotionally describes how she pulled her two younger brothers, Aleksas and **Reivonas**, to her, how those who raised their arms in the Hitler salute were spared and the others were killed.

[00:] 15:17:22 – [00:] 19:24:05

15:48 – 20:05

[*Interviewee is still standing.*] She reveals that she had once escaped, just before the Gypsies were rounded up, that Mr. Surkevičius found her and beat and tortured her for running away. She explains that she tried to elude him by giving another surname; mentions that her parents were not officially married, that her mother died when she was young. The interviewer asks the interviewee to take a seat. [*Interviewee sits down.*] She returns to the description of the day of the massacre in Pravieniškės; admits that she did not personally witness the massacre; repeats that she encouraged all of the victims to raise their hands in the Hitler salute. The interviewer asks Zofija Sinkevičienė to discuss her sense of the situation; she posits that the Germans enjoyed seeing the Hitler salute and spared her and the others for this reason [*interviewee stands to demonstrate the Hitler salute and then sits down again*] She reiterates that those people who raised their arms were spared and taken away, that those who did not, were killed; mentions that most of the older people were massacred; says that the Gypsies did not fathom that they would be killed. There is an effort to determine the timeline for her stay in Pravieniškės.

[00:] 19:25:05 – [00:] 24:02:17

20:06 – 24:55

She confirms that many of her family members were rounded up and taken to the labor camp in Pravieniškės, that their captors – cannot confirm if they were Lithuanians or Germans – demanded that they hand over their jewelry, that they were beaten with rubber batons. She explains that she traveled to Pravieniškės after the war, that she didn't recognize it because so much had changed. She describes how her aunt was pregnant in the labor camp (the location of this labor camp is unclear) and was sent back to work immediately after giving birth. She explains that French citizens would throw bread into the train cars as they were being transported. Zofija Sinkevičienė reveals that her little brother was shot in France, describes the circumstances: her brother was hungry and as he tried to escape through the wire fence, he was shot in the stomach; says that she received a letter from the men's labor camp informing her of this death; explains that her other brother died upon his return to Lithuania after the war.

[00:] 24:03:17 – [00:] 30:21:02

24:56 – 31:30

Zofija Sinkevičienė describes the work and living conditions at the labor camp in France; says that they lived in a house near the sea, that the French people would surreptitiously give them food to eat. She discusses the death of her brother, that he was not immediately killed by the gunshot, that she was informed of his condition by letter and was not allowed to visit him in the hospital before his death, that she was kicked and abused by Germans when she asked to see her injured brother. She describes being hit in the head by a German with a rock thrown from a slingshot. *[shows the scar on her forehead]* She alleges that the people interned at Buchenwald were set to be killed, but then the Americans arrived, and liberated the camp; describes the battles and eventual liberation; says that she saw African-Americans for the first time in her life, that the Americans gave them food to eat, that some people died from eating too much food too quickly.

[00:] 30:22:02 – [00:] 34:07:06

32:30 – 35:25

She explains that, after liberation, she and several others attempted to flee Buchenwald, but were held there by the Americans; says that packages with food and supplies began arriving from Lithuania, that the Americans provided sufficient food. She reveals that after liberation, she reported the chief German officer at Buchenwald, revealing the severity of his violence, that the chief German officer was then tied to a tree and beaten; she describes the beating; says that the German officer's wife was left alone; repeats the descriptions of beating and torture suffered at the hand of the Germans at Buchenwald. She posits that they were taken to Germany from France because the Germans did not want the Americans to find them. She briefly provides commentary on Hitler and his intentions. The interviewer asks again about her journey from Pravieniškės to France; she admits that there is no documentation available that shows she had

been interned in Pravieniškės or France, that people had searched through the archive and could not find anything.

[00:] 34:08:06 – [00:] 35:59:04

35:26 – 37:22

She describes the living situation at the labor camp in France; says that the French would give them food. She goes on to describe the daily food rations in the Pravieniškės forced labor camp, including a description of the bread and soup served; asserts that they were treated in this manner because they were eventually going to be killed. The interviewer asks whether she witnessed the massacre of the victims interned at Pravieniškės; she says that she ran away during the shooting. *[camera operator interruption]* Interviewer informs the interviewee of the break. *[tape is cut mid-sentence]*

File 2 of 5

[conversation behind the scenes while the slate is being shown]

[02:] 00:41:03 – [02:] 05:05:01

00:35 – 05:10

The interviewer attempts to secure details and a time for the interviewee's transport from Lithuania to Germany, stopping in France. Zofija Sinkevičienė explains that they were given an injection in their backs in France. The interviewer asks if any of her family or acquaintances were also taken to the labor camp in France; her explanation is unclear. She says that among the other Lithuanian prisoners, she only knew her two brothers, that one brother was killed in France. She discusses the work they performed in the labor camp in France; reveals that two elderly Roma women were also transported to France. She returns to her description of the work; says that she once was kicked very hard by a German because she had taken a break.

[02:] 05:06:0 – [02:] 11:03:01

05:11 – 11:23

She continues her description of her encounter with the German soldier who kicked her; says that she hit him in the head with a stick, that a female Polish brigadier came to her rescue, that she was taken to and tossed into a flooded cellar, that she was in the cellar for a few hours before being released. She describes the beatings sustained by the prisoners at Buchenwald; mentions that a German soldier was tortured and killed after the liberation of Buchenwald. The interviewer poses a few questions: she responds that she knew of an extermination camp near Buchenwald, that people were not killed at the labor camp in France; she discusses food and work in France: says that they were given bread with butter to eat, and a soup made of grasses in the evening, that

they were largely unable to rest, except when the French overseers allowed it. She expresses the horror of the situation. She explains that they recovered when Buchenwald was liberated, that they received packages from Lithuanian that were shared among four people, that the various nationalities in the camp usually did not commingle.

[02:] 11:04:01 – [02:] 15:13:08

11:24 – 15:44

She confirms that there were two elderly Roma women who were a part of the group that was taken to France and Germany from Pravieniškės, that they all survived the Holocaust. She explains that the detainees wore their own clothes throughout their time in France, that she was told numbers would be affixed to their clothes to identify them, but this did not occur for some reason. The interviewer asks about the timeline of the transport and again about the clothing: she admits that she does not remember the exact month when they left Pravieniškės, believes it was March or April; says that they were not given prisoner's clothes, that they wore their own clothes throughout, that they were not given identification numbers to sew onto their clothing. The interviewer asks Zofija Sinkevičienė to show a photograph; *[The interviewee shows a photograph of herself to the camera.]* she explains that the photograph was taken after the liberation of Buchenwald. The interviewer comments on her pretty dress; she explains that the blouse she is wearing in the photo was given to her by French people who gave clothing to the prisoners.

[02:] 15:14:08 – [02:] 20:07:10

15:45 – 20:50

She confirms that the French gave clothes to the prisoners, that she took this particular blouse with her to Germany, where she did not wear it, but instead wore her other plain clothes; she explains that, after liberation, the Americans encouraged the prisoners to take new clothes and fabric, that she did not take anything. She recalls that upon returning to Lithuania, she was disheartened to see Germans walking freely in the streets, that she was given an apartment, clothing, and six months of food by the Soviet government. The interviewer asks her if life and work were more difficult in France or in Germany; she says that although things were easier in France, she regrets that her brother was killed there; she reiterates that the French would give food to the prisoners. The interviewer wants to focus on her time in Germany; she reveals that she once escaped the labor cap in Germany, that she ran away from work into town, was given a loaf of bread and some money by a shopkeeper, returned to the labor camp, and shared the bread with her friends.

[02:] 20:08:10 – [02:] 24:02:00

20:51 – 24:56

She explains that she was able to run away despite the fact that the Germans counted the workers every few hours, that she was given a small loaf of bread and a coupon by the shopkeeper, that

she was wearing her own clothes when she escaped. The conversation returns to the discussion of clothing and identification numbers; maintains that no numbers were affixed to their clothing, that they were accompanied by a German convey when they went to work each day. The interviewer asks is she had any documents in her possession in France or Germany; the interviewee misunderstands, thinking he is asking her to show a document; she rises from the chair [*microphone is dislodged; a man enters the frame to adjust the interviewee's microphone*] She states that she did not have any documents with her, that she was issued a document in Buchenwald, that she presented this document upon her return to Panevežys in Lithuania. The interviewer again asks about the work in France and Germany; she describes how they were forced to perform manual labor: building roads, clearing rubble; says that a convoy of German soldiers accompanied them to work.

[02:] 24:03:00 – [02:] 30:19:01

24:56 – 31:28

She describes the labor camp in Germany: distinctly remember the iron doors; says that after the war, only the doors remained, that it was enclosed by a barbed wire fence, there was one two-storey building used to house the female prisoners, that the men's labor camp was further away. She says that initially they were forced to sleep on the floor, that later, bunk beds were constructed; describes the bunks; says that they were given blankets, that they were able to bathe and wash clothes, that four people had to share one piece of soap. [*hammering/knocking noise; interview is cut*] The tape starts rolling mid-conversation. Zofija Sinkevičienė describes the killing of a Lithuanian military officer, or "Šaulys" (*Lietuvos Šaulių Sąjunga* (LŠS) – Lithuanian Riflemen's Union; a paramilitary civilian national defense league) at the internment camp in Pravieniškės, that he was shot in the head and his skull was torn open; admits that she does not know why this officer was interned in Pravieniškės. She describes the living conditions in Pravieniškės: says that they slept on bunks, that they were allowed to bring their own bedding from home.

[02:] 30:20:01 – [02:] 34:10:13

31:29 – 35:29

She explains that they were not allowed to take much with them to Pravieniškės, that the Germans required a clean environment. She mentions that a few people were killed individually in Pravieniškės, that she was not killed; she repeats her description of the incident when a German soldier wanted to drag her away to the forest and a Lithuanian soldier came to her rescue; admits that she does not know the name of the Lithuanian soldier, that they attended the same school, but that he was a few years older, that she did not see him after the war. She recounts how he told her he would help her escape, how he gave her his galoshes, how he taught her the Hitler salute to signal before the massacre. She tells the story of a gypsy who escape Pravieniškės, was apprehended and sentenced to die; says that he asked the Germans if he could sing one final song, that he sang so beautifully that the Germans let him go.

[02:] 34:11:13 – [02:] 36:24:02

35:30 – 37:49

She briefly discusses descriptions of the massacre site after the war; she acknowledges that she did not see the massacre, that she ran away from the site, that she was shot in the leg as she ran. She says that she returned to Pravieniškės after the war, that local residents provided details about the massacre. She confirms that all of the Gypsies were taken to the massacre site, that the ones who raised their arms in the Hitler salute were spared, that the other were killed. She again repeats how the Lithuanian soldier warned her about the planned mass killing, how he taught her to give the Hitler salute, how he was wary of demonstrating the salute for fear of someone seeing him, how she told her aunt about the impending massacre.

File 3 of 5

[03:] 00:41:08 – [03:] 06:00:12

00:43 – 06:16

She admits that she does not know that name of the Lithuanian soldier who rescued her. She recalls the time when the Lithuanian soldier gave her his galoshes; says that she had been wearing wooden clogs which she then lost in the snow, that the clogs were uncomfortable and difficult to walk in. She briefly describes her escape from Pravieniškės, saying that one day, when they were taken to work in the woods, she asked to use the restroom, moved away from the group, and then did not return. She describes her journey on foot from Pravieniškės to Panevežys, that she walked for several days, that she would find shelter with people who gave her food and clothes, that she would not stay long with people so as not to cause any problems for them with her presence, that she would try to stay with older people who were more likely and willing to take her in. She talks at length about an elderly Lithuanian woman who harbored her for a week; says that the woman bandaged up her injured leg, nursed her wound, that she slept near the stove, that she was hidden from the woman's two sons.

[03:] 06:00:13 – [03:] 12:09:20

06:17 – 12:40

She explains that that both of the woman's sons were active in the underground, but for opposing forces, that one named Antanas fought for the Russians, and that the other named Juozas fought for the Germans. She explains that one of the brothers was accepting of their opposing positions, and that the other one threatened to kill his brother. She recalls how she slept near the oven in this homestead, how she remained hidden, how the elderly woman fed her and took care of her, how she became nervous and fearful of the sons and left the woman's homestead. The interviewer asks how she managed to find her way to Panevežys; she says that she knew the way, that people helped her, though she did not reveal the details of her situation, that she arrived in

Panevežys and went to her home on Tilvyčių street, that she searched for her aunt, but she was not there, that her aunt had fled and was in hiding, that the home was unlocked and empty. She says that she walked around the city for three days and then returned to the home on Tilvyčių street, where she was apprehended. She reveals that she was taken to the local **Arbeitsamt** and beaten and interrogated, that she tried to conceal her identity by giving her father's surname, that she was tortured by several men, that they burned her chest with matches, that they wanted her to report on the people who harbored her during her escape. She affirms that she did not reveal the identities of anyone who helped her, that she was eventually taken to the ghetto and then transported back to Pravieniškės. She briefly mentions that the Jews had already been massacred.

[03:] 12:09:21 – [03:] 18:07:10

12:41 – 18:53

She explains that the Gypsies were not persecuted by the Germans while the Jews were being massacred; provides her own brief analysis of the murder of the Jews, and Germans nationalism. She maintains that the Gypsies in Panevežys were unaware that they would be persecuted and killed, that Gypsies from Alytus were also massacred, that she does not know if Gypsies from Panevežys were killed in Panevežys. She is asked by the interviewer to discuss and describe the persecution and massacre of the Jews in Panevežys: she says that she witnessed the requisition of Jewish property, that she witnessed the transport of Jews to Žalioji, that there were many cries heard in Panevežys, that local residents looted Jewish property. She recalls a conversation she and her aunt had with a Lithuanian man named Juozas who participated in the massacre of Jews; says that they asked him why he killed Jews, that he responded saying that they were given alcohol to drink and they did as they were told. She confirms that the killers were drunk. She discusses the looting of Jewish property by local residents when the Jews were rounded up in the ghetto.

[03:] 18:07:11 – [03:] 24:11:11

18:54 – 25:11

She confirms that the homes of Jews were broken into and looted, that men, women, and also children looted Jewish property, that children were sent by their parents to take things from Jewish homes, that the locals knew that the Jews would not be returning. She discusses the wealth of Jews in Panevežys, mentions Jewish shops and recalls the home of a Jewish man who owned a linen factory; says that he fled to America or Israel. The interviewer asks if she remembers the day of the massacre, when the Jews were taken to the Žalioji to be killed. She explains that she only witnessed the march of Jews out of the ghetto, that people were crying because they knew they were going to be killed. She mentions that there is a monument at the massacre site, that the victims were crying as they were being led to be killed. She admits that she does not know specifically how many men drove the victims, nor does she know if they were Lithuanian or German soldiers, but says that they were dressed in German military uniforms. She confirms that the Gypsies were not persecuted immediately after the massacre of the Jews. She

describes how Germans and Lithuanians arrived at their home one night and rounded them up and took them to the ghetto, that they were allowed to slaughter a piglet and take it with them to Pravieniškės.

[03:] 24:11:11 – [03:] 30:31:01

25:12 – 31:49

She describes how they slaughtered the piglet under the watchful eye of the guards, that they were told they would be given food in Pravieniškės. She discusses the presence of the Catholic priests in the ghetto, the baptisms and marriages they performed. She recalls an incident when she asked a priest why they were being taken away, that the priest responded by saying that this was happening because they had not prayed enough. She says that the priests did not tell them that they were going to be taken to Pravieniškės, that the Gypsies assumed that they were being taken to Pravieniškės as a work force; she recalls that the Gypsies did not imagine that they would be massacred; she admits that she does not know the exact number of priests who came to see the Gypsies; repeats that the priests baptized children, heard Confession, and performed marriages. She laments the fact that the Gypsies did not realize their fate; reveals that she had already been baptized at a young age, that her family was religious, that her godparents were Lithuanian. She again recalls the presence of the priest before the transport to Pravieniškės, and compares it to the sacrament of Last Rites (Sacrament of Last Rites/ Anointing of the Sick/ Extreme Unction).

[03:] 30:31:02 – [03:] 36:23:23

31:50 – 37:57

Zofija Sinkevičienė discusses the reasons for the murder of the Jews; asserts that Hitler and the Germans wanted to kill everyone, that the Lithuanians were spared only temporarily to aid the Germans in their murderous acts. She explains that she was held in the ghetto for about a week before being taken back to Pravieniškės, that the guards were Germans and Lithuanians, that they were all dressed in German military uniforms. She briefly describes life in the ghetto before being taken to Pravieniškės; talks about the lack of food, about the piglet her family was allowed to slaughter and bring along to Pravieniškės; says that her family shared food with the other prisoners. She describes an incident in Pravieniškės when her younger brother ate two loaves of bread because he was so hungry; says that she hit and scolded him. The interviewer asks when the Gypsies in Panevežys were rounded up; she asserts that the Gypsies were taken to Pravieniškės in 1943. There is a brief discussion about the time line; Zofija Sinkevičienė maintains that the Gypsies were not persecuted by the Germans for a few years after the massacre of the Jews.

File 4 of 5

[04:] 00:21:01 – [04:] 00:41:05

00:14 – 00:35

[A brief conversation, in English, takes place while the slate is displayed; tape is cut]

[04:] 00:41:06 – [04:] 06:02:04

00:36 – 06:08

[sound of door creaking; camera moves out of close focus on interviewee; brief camera operator comment] Zofija Sinkevičienė discusses her time spent in Krakès with her female cousin; says that her cousin pointed out a Jewish doctor, showed her where he lived; describes the Jewish doctor. She explains how the victims were led by escorts with guns; describes the guns; confirms that both Lithuanians and Germans guarded the victims. She confirms that the Jews were rounded up before the massacre, that she does not know where they were held. She describes how Lithuanians in uniform would take the Jews throughout the town. She returns to talk about the doctor; says that she felt pity for him, that he had a wife and children; discusses the rounding up of Jews; says that they were dressed in nice clothes, that there were no numbers affixed to their clothing. She describes the Jewish doctor; indicates his height by referring to a man present in the room; reveals that she saw men beating an elderly woman with the butt of a gun *[gestures to demonstrate beating with the butt of a gun]*, that she watched as the Jewish doctor and children were being led away from their homes; confirms that the Jewish victims did not take any belongings.

[04:] 06:02:05 – [04:] 12:24:00

06:09 – 12:47

Zofija Sinkevičienė provides details about the clothes of the Jewish doctor; says that he was wearing brown pants and a white shirt, that he was nervous and walked with his head lowered, that he was alone – his wife and children were gone, that she witnessed how he was rounded up from his home. She admits that she does not know the year when these events occurred, that she remembers that the victims were wearing short-sleeved shirts, and the day was warm, so it must have been summer. The interviewer attempts to clarify the timeline of Zofija's visit in Krakès, emphasizing that each details is important. She confirms that the victims were beaten, that she did not see any children being beaten, that she was told that children were thrown into the pits alive. The interviewer directs the conversation back to a topic that was discussed off screen: Zofija Sinkevičienė recalls that her grandmother had predicted that the Gypsies would meet a fate similar to the Jews, that he aunt did not believe that the Gypsies would be massacred.

[04:] 12:24:01 – [04:] 18:17:04

12:48 – 18:54

She recalls that there was some level of confusion about the fact that priests were brought to the ghetto to baptize and marry the Gypsies, that her grandmother fell ill while in the ghetto, that her grandmother had a premonition about the fate of the Gypsies. She briefly repeats the details of the incident when the Lithuanian soldier instructed her on how to survive the selection before the massacre. She says that the people who lived in the surrounding areas witnessed how the killers threw children into the pit alive, that she herself did not witness the killings, that the pits were dug ahead of time. She briefly describes the period before the massacre and the selection; says that she raised her arm in the Hitler salute when her name was called, that she was taken out of line and told that she would be taken to Germany by the senior commander of the labor camp. She goes on to describe how she pulled her younger brother to her during the selection [*demonstrates pulling her brothers by their hair*]; says that she told the victims in Russian, Lithuanian, and Romanian to raise their hands in the Hitler salute as she had done.

[04:] 18:17:05 – [04:] 24:14:01
18:55 – 25:07

She explains that those who had raised their hands in the Hitler salute and were spared from execution, were taken to another section of the forced labor camp before they were transported, that the victims were killed that night, that she learned of this when she visited Pravieniškės in 1945. She describes the journey out of Pravieniškės; provides details about the conditions in the train car; says that they were not given any water to drink; briefly explains the fate of several of her family members. She reveals that during the journey they were not give any food until they reached Berlin; describes the soup they were given to eat. The interviewer asks how it was that she knew they had reached Berlin, she responds the men in the train car realized this fact and passed on the information.

[04:] 24:14:02 – [04:] 30:03:12
25:07 – 31:11

She confirms that new people were loaded onto the trains throughout the journey, that they were Russians and Lithuanians, that men and women were kept in separate train cars. She describes the death of a young Russian girl during the journey in the train, saying that she went insane, fell ill, and died. She describes the type and ration of bread they were given, the dire conditions in the train car, the logistics of how waste was eliminated while in the train car. The interviewer attempts the clarify the precise location and timeline of the journey from the labor camp in Pravieniškės through France and Germany; Zofija Sinkevičienė is unable to provide exact details about time and location.

[04:] 30:03:13 – [04:] 36:20:15
31:12 – 37:49

Zofija Sinkevičienė describes the living conditions in the house near the sea in France; says that she saw dolphins, that the doors to the house were very large, that only prisoners lived in this

house. In response to a question, she confirms that they were infrequently given bread to eat during the journey. *[Interviewee is distracted by someone off camera.]* She confirms that the forced labor camp in France was run by Germans, that there was no bathing or disinfection process upon arrival in Germany; she suddenly remembers that they were taken to Grodno (Hrodna, Гродна – city in Belarus), where they were allowed to bathe. She confirms that they were not allowed to bathe while at the forced labor camps, that they would wash themselves in any body of water they came across, that the water was turned off in the house in France, that the French overseers would allow the prisoners to bathe. She then says that the water in the house in France would occasionally be turned on so that the prisoners could wash their clothing.

File 5 of 5

[05:] 00:00:00 – [05:] 00:40:21

00:00 – 00:42

[camera operator conversation]

[05:] 00:40:22 – [05:] 06:19:09

00:43 – 06:35

Interview begins *[Camera operator asks the people in the background to be quiet.]* The interviewer attempts to determine the timeline for the journey from Pravieniškės through France and Germany; Zofija Sinkevičienė admits that she has a hard time remembering details about this time period. She briefly recalls the incident when she was selected to be taken to work in Germany. She mentions that there were Polish people present in the forced labor camps, that they were no prisoners. She describes an incident when she and another girl were cleaning an office and noticed a transport file on a table; she says that she purposely spilled ink on the file and was beaten by a German officer for this transgression. She describes feelings of confusion, helplessness, and fear during this time period. The interviewer broaches the subject of sexual harassment and misconduct; she reveals that she was often approached, but never violated; she recalls the incident when a Lithuanian soldier saved her from being dragged into the forest and presumably raped. She says that the Germans cut off her hair. *[The interviewer hands Zofija a photo album. She shows a photograph of herself; camera then focuses on the photo album in her lap as she flips through it; she holds up another photo of herself to show to the camera]*

[05:] 06:19:10 – [05:] 12:12:09

06:36 – 12:45

She asserts that the final labor camp where she was held before liberation was Buchenwald, that she does not remember how long she was there, that she cannot describe the camp facilities

because she was not able to walk around. She briefly describes the liberation of Buchenwald by the Americans; says that they were transported through Poland. She asserts that she did not see any Jews in Buchenwald, that they had already been killed. She briefly provides a few details about life in Buchenwald; says the people did not commit crimes, that the prisoners were beaten. She says that there was a German officer who was predominantly responsible for the beating sustained by the prisoners, that his wife was present at the camp and would watch the beatings, that the wife did not say anything to deter her husband. She describes the beatings sustained at length, emphasizing the violence and the senselessness.

[05:] 12:12:10 – [05:] 18:18:22

12:46 – 19:05

She says that she lived in the women's labor camp, that there was a men's camp further away, that the women and men did not interact, that only after liberation did men and women meet up. The interviewer asks where or not many people died during the period of imprisonment; she does not answer this specific question, but says that people died after liberation from eating too much too quickly; says that many of the female prisoner were starved and weary. The interviewee asks about how Mr. Surkevičius found her in Buchenwald; she explains that Mr. Surkevičius was fleeing, on his way to the United States, that he told her not to go back to Lithuania because all of the Gypsies had been killed; she expresses her shock about the fact that Mr. Surkevičius told her where he was fleeing, especially given the fact that he had committed so many crimes in Lithuania; confirms that Mr. Surkevičius is now deceased. She reveals that she fell ill with pneumonia while in Buchenwald; describes the process of treatment of illnesses with human urine. She mentions that the prisoners were given injections in their backs upon arrival at the forced labor camp.

[05:] 18:18:23 – [05:] 24:20:04

19:06 – 25:21

She talks for a while about the injections and their side-effects; mentions that there were prisoners who performed housekeeping duties in the camp. The interviewer brings up a woman Zofija had probably mentioned in a pre-interview: she talks about **Jadzė**, a female brigadier in Buchenwald who defended her and treated her well; says that **Jadzė** did not beat people. She briefly discusses interactions between prisoners, especially between the men; says that upon return to Lithuanian, the Gypsies had a meeting and discussed the malicious behavior of other Gypsies while in the labor camp. In response to a question, she says that there was no trading of goods or food in the forced labor camp. She recalls the bombing of a city; describes how the prisoners were forced to carry wounded and dead civilians out of a bunker after the bombing; talks about one German man in particular, whose legs had been blown off and who called out for his wife and children.

[05:] 24:20:05 – [05:] 29:57:09

25:22 – 31:14

Zofija Sinkevičienė says that she did not participate in pulling corpses and injured civilians out of the bunker, that she was frightened by the sight of blood, that the corpses were in disarray and covered in blood; describes the bombing [*While gesturing, the interviewee dislodges her microphone.*] Interviewer attempts to determine the location of the bombing; after some discussion, Zofija Sinkevičienė confirms that the bombing occurred outside of Buchenwald, that they were forced to pull the injured victims out of the bunker as soon as possible. When asked whether or not there were any opportunities to escape through this ordeal, at first she answers in the negative, saying there was nowhere to go, but then goes on to explain that there were opportunities to flee, but that no one escaped the forced labor camps. The interviewer thanks Zofija Sinkevičienė for the testimony.

Prepared by: Ada Valaitis

Date: 11/24/2010

There are no restrictions on this interview.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION:

-There is an interview in the Lithuania Documentation Project with a male Lithuanian Roma survivor, who was also interned in the labor camp in Pravieniškės, Lithuania.

See: RG-50.473*0047 Aleksas Aleksandravičius

CLOP available, included.

-A brief description of the forced labor camp in Pravieniškės, Lithuania is available in:

Encyclopedia of Camps and Ghettos 1933-1945. Volume 1.

See included.

-Three (3) ITS documents that show, based on preliminary research, that documentation of Zofija Sinkevičienė is not available at Buchenwald. Further research would have to be done to determine the location of the several forced labor camps described by Sinkevičienė in the interview.

See included

-A CLOP of Interview RG-50,473*0030 is available.

See included.