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In this interview, Ona Arlauskienė, born (presumably) in 1926 in Simnas, discusses the lives of local Roma, including herself, during World War II. She talks about her imprisonment at both Ninth Fort in Kaunas and Pravieniškės, as well as how she escaped. Further, she recalls cases of abuse and the killing of Jews.

Box 1, Tape 1

[01:] 00:41:00 – [01:] 05:50:22
00:00 – 05:55

Arlauskienė introduces herself, noting her birth in Simnas; says she does not know her actual birth year but at the time of the interview (1998) she is 72 years old; specifies that at the beginning of the war she was an adult, was married, and had a child; says that before the war the local Roma lived well, owned horses, and freely wandered; remembers that when the Germans came the Roma left their tents in the forest and fled that night into fields but were caught by the Germans; says the Germans hated Roma; remembers the Germans beating her father after he helped starving Jews in the ghetto; remembers the Germans catching, killing, or taking them away; says their horses and tents were found in the forest, and the horses were unharnessed and taken from them; says the Germans took the Roma to the Ninth Fort by car; mentions that the Germans tortured them; recalls being separated at the Ninth Fort and was no longer with Roma from her tribe.

[01:] 05:50:23 – [01:] 09:36:07
05:56 – 09:52

Arlauskienė recalls her life at the Ninth Fort; says they were given soup comprised of dirty vegetables and sand; remembers never having time to eat because the supervisor would not wait for the prisoners to finish eating; laments that she could not properly wash her baby; says that since she did not drink tea, she would collect grass to lay on the floor and wash him with the tea; says the baby was eventually taken; says a prisoner-of-war explained that he witnessed her baby being murdered together with other prisoners-of-war near the Ninth Fort; says she does not know if her baby was shot or buried alive; specifies that not all prisoners-of-war were shot because a few people were left alive to dig graves of others; says the Germans lied her; says they told her that the baby was taken to a children's shelter; says her family was driven away by the Germans and were separated and that only she returned; says she does not know if a lot of Roma were murdered at the Ninth Fort but knows plenty of children, old, disabled, in addition to healthy people, were murdered in Pravieniškės.

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[01:] 09:36:08 – [01:] 14:29:19
09:53 – 14:57

Arlauskienė describes the barracks at the Ninth Fort: water ran over the walls, beds were made of wooden boards, multiple people slept in one bed while others were left to sleep on the floor; remembers that in the women's barrack there were six Roma and one Lithuanian; notes that men were in another barrack; says the prisoners did not wear special clothing but instead wore what they brought with them; says they were not readily given water for washing themselves and that when someone would ask for water, the female supervisor would only bring a half-liter; remembers that all women in her barrack were brought to Kaunas, but were separated upon arrival and did not live together from then on; mentions she does not know why no one was taken to Germany; remembers a 90-year-old woman was brought with her to Pravieniškės and was shot there; says the woman was told she was being taken to peel potatoes, but that she understood they were going to kill her, so she cried and prayed to let her go because she loved her child very much and wanted to see him; tells that that old woman was shot because she was not healthy; mentions that this old woman was not her relative, but a stranger from Kaunas.

[01:] 14:29:20 – [01:] 19:45:25
14:58 – 20:27

Arlauskienė discusses her life at Pravieniškės; says the camp was fenced, they worked in a potato field; mentions she would put potatoes into her pockets, make a camp fire, bake the potatoes and eat them; thinks they were the Germans' potatoes, but is not sure; says that in the field they were guarded by a German who wore a German uniform but spoke Lithuanian; remembers his name was **Bareiša [Baraiša]** and that he guarded them only when they were at the potato field; says when walking to and from the field they were guarded by other soldiers; says that **Bareiša** did not beat prisoners, because there was no reason, but they worked "like horses" and he never gave them time to rest; remembers in camp there were Lithuanians and Roma but no Jews; says that she does not know why Lithuanians were imprisoned; remembers the area she stayed in was full but cannot estimate how many people there were; says each prisoner had a bed with a mattress and blanket but no sheets; says that in Pravieniškės she without her family; mentions that all families were separated; notes that of her family only she survived imprisonment.

[01:] 19:46:00 – [01:] 26:57:16
20:28 – 27:56

Arlauskienė explains that her parents were killed by Germans, but does not know how they were killed; remembers they were separated on the first day and she never saw them again; says her two brothers and three sisters were taken away to Germany and she never saw them again, either; comments that she knows they went to Germany because the Roma who were with them told her; remembers that four of her brother's children were killed in Pravieniškės, but did not see this happen; says that all arrested Roma were brought to Pravieniškės and eventually shot; claims she does not know if there were Lithuanians among the people who tortured them, because all of the captors wore the same green uniform; says it was only when they spoke was it possible to determinate if they were German or Lithuanian *[based off their language]*; says she did not see how some of the Roma were killed, only the old woman *[mentioned earlier]*; says Roma who

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were not arrested in Pravieniškės were killed; says at the Ninth Fort she was initially joined by one of her sisters but was separated from her when they were taken to Kaunas; remembers that the only person who joined her in Pravieniškės from the Ninth Fort was the old woman who was shot down about a week after their arrival; claims that time only the old woman was shot and no other Roma were included; comments that maybe other Roma were killed before or after that; says she has learned that many Roma were tortured and killed in Pravieniškės, but notes that she was ever a witness to it; notes that she only heard crying and shouting when children were separated and shot; remembers that five children were taken from her sister and shot down in Pravieniškės, and other sister's child was taken away to Germany.

[01:] 26:57:17 – [01:] 34:11:25
27:57 – 35:29

She tells how she was treated in Pravieniškės; notes they received only soup for a meal from the captors but that the prisoners also ate stolen potatoes; says that during her internment they went only to the potato fields and nowhere else; says she was not beaten during work, and that she worked very hard; notes that she witnessed other women being beaten, but she does not know why; says that women were counted before and after going to work by a Russian woman; says this Russian was also a prisoner; remembers that she was nice to everyone, not just the Roma, and that it was the Russian who explained that the old woman was shot down and that she had left her (Ona) some things; notes that she did not take those things; claims that the Roma were beaten by the Germans and that everyone was afraid of the Germans; remembers that in Alytus, before her imprisonment in the Ninth Fort, she had to stay in a long queue to get some bread and that Lithuanian men threw Roma men and women out of the queue; notes that is why the Roma often had nothing to eat; says that nobody argued with Lithuanians, everyone stayed silent.
[silence]

[01:] 34:12:00– [01:] 35:01:12
35:30 – 36:31

She remembers how Jews were treated in Vilnkija; tells that adults were shot down in a pine forest and child were buried alive; says that she was not near the grave during the shooting, but on the third day after the execution they went with other Roma to take a look at the grave; says they saw moving ground and on top of the earth there was blood.

Box 1, Tape 2

[02:] 00:20:23– [02:] 07:56:25
00:00 – 08:15

She tells once more how the Roma were staying in Vilnkija in the forest and heard how Jews were shot; remembers that they went to the place of execution place on the third day after the shooting; notes that she saw the ground moving in a few places; says there was only one large grave, and that it was already made flat, but not trodden; claims that she has not seen any

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personal items of those murdered near the grave, but thinks that some could have been left there; notes there were not a lot of Roma at the Ninth Fort; notes she knew of the six Roma women who lived with her; says that maybe there were more, but she did not see them; remembers that at the Ninth Fort there were Lithuanian men and prisoners-of-war, but she cannot tell how many prisoners-of-war there were because they were kept separate from the other prisoners; comments that there were no Jews imprisoned at the Ninth Fort; claims she was held captive at the Ninth Fort for six weeks and was then taken to Kaunas; says that she was glad about it; remembers those who were taken away did not return, and that she risked escaping and survived.

[02:] 07:57:00 – [02:] 11:37:07

08:16 – 12:04

She describes her life in Pravieniškės; says that in addition to their house there was a house of men and another house of women; mentions that it was almost impossible to escape from Pravieniškės; says that she escaped when she was working in the potatoes field near the forest; remembers that she put potatoes under the bush and ran through the forest, and that she did not care about being shot; says she ran through the forest to Nemunas and a ferryman brought her to the other side of the river in his boat; says that she then went again by foot; says that she worked for locals, completing any work that was asked of her: harvested rye, hay, potatoes; remembers also working in the winter; says she was able to survive because she was healthy and able to help people *[silence]*.

[02:] 11:37:08 – [02:] 21:20:25

12:05 – 22:13

She returns to the story about her life in Pravieniškės; remembers having to work until the evening, received a meal of tea in the morning and soup in the evening, and that if they were lucky and their supervisor slept, they stole potatoes during work; claims never having seen a doctor in the camp, but that no one in her cell was ever ill; says the soldiers did not harass the young women, they only “commanded”, but she does not remember which language (German or Lithuanian) they used; says that after work they did nothing except maybe burn a fire near their house, baked potatoes which they had hidden in their pockets, sat near the fire and went to sleep; says that sometimes prisoners would try to sing but that the Germans shouted it was not allowed; notes she had neither money nor jewelry, because she did not have anything with her on the day when she was arrested; remembers that their supervisor (Russian woman) explained that some Roma wore jewelry but the Germans took everything away; remembers an incident, when a young Roma was arrested: she had jewelry and Germans wanted to take it, but she fought against them and was killed; says that at the Ninth Fort, Roma had no gold, but she does not know if it was taken or they did not have it when they were arrested; remembers that at the Ninth Fort there were no children, just her baby who was killed when he was only three weeks old.

[02:] 21:21:00 – [02:] 24:10:17

22:14 – 25:10

She returns once more to the incident at Alytus, when her father threw some bread to Jews in the ghetto because they cried and asked for food; says that he was beaten very badly; says she did

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not see it because she was at home but that he relayed the story to her when he came home; claims that she did not see Jews being abused because she was hiding from the Germans and did not want to be arrested; mentions that when she was at the Ninth Fort, the Roma were not killed there, rather all of them were brought to prison, and that only her baby was taken away.