

SAFRONOVA, Stefanija
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Stefanija Safronova, born on July 19, 1923, to a Polish father and a Lithuanian mother, is a longtime resident of Lazdijai (Alytus region, southern Lithuania). In this interview, she describes the persecution of Jews, the ghettos, and the massacre of Jews in Lazdijai. She provides names of several perpetrators and collaborators. Ms. Safranova reveals that both she and her father, Steponas Melnikas, were arrested for aiding Jews by providing food. Her father was later arrested and executed by the Gestapo.

File 1 of 2

[01:] 00:31:03 – [01:] 41:45:12
00:20 – 43:18

01:] 00:31:03 – [01:] 02:23:22
00:20 – 02:17

Q: First, I wanted to ask you to introduce yourself. What is your name and surname?

A: Stefanija Safronova.

Q: And when were you born?

A: 1923 July 19th.

Q: And where?

A: In Lazdijai. This is my birthplace.

Q: And you have lived in Lazdijai the entire time?

A: Yes. Except for the time when I was teaching in the village. But I would be here on Saturdays and Sundays.

Q: Tell me, were there many Jews in Lazdijai before the war?

A: Yes. About a third of the residents. There were 3,800 residents in Lazdijai—residents of Lazdijai, so a third of them were Jewish, before the war.

Q: Did you know them?

A: Yes. I was born on Senamiesčio Street, where I currently live, and my first neighbors were Jews. I have also been in their synagogue. In the house of prayer. *[pause; new frame]*

Q: Did you see what happened with those Jews when the war began?

A: Yes, I saw.

Q: Tell us what you yourself saw.

A: On the first day, I was deeply affected by one incident. At the time, I was walking down Seinų Street, which is now also called Seinų Street, to visit my dear friend, who I was friends with. Was she still alive after the front, right? Because the front began here from six o'clock in the morning until twelve o'clock there was bombing, shooting, and the city was burning.

[01:] 02:23:23 – [01:] 04:03:00

02:18 – 04:01

A: So after lunch I went to visit my friend. From Vytauto Street, to that Seinų Street. And what did I see: opposite house number 13—I think I see it now—a man was walking with his children, Jewish nationality. With a basket on his back. And a “baltaraištis” (white striper) was driving him. There were “baltaraiščiai” (white stripers) here already on the first day of the war. And they are standing there. They had a white band on their sleeves – they were these “Hilfspolizei.” And he pushed him around, and would not let him inside his house. That house is still standing now. So then he asked if he could at least go to the woodshed, to take his young children. So that person kicked him. But I don't know his surname, he was not an acquaintance of mine, that person. So this scene shook me first. Well, and I also saw them walking with baskets, those whose homes had burned down—I saw those Jews. Some were running—at the end of Vytauto Street there is this stream that we call Dumblaitis (little muddy thing). So some of them ran to those shores, hiding. Well, and others ran in the direction of the synagogue, because it had not yet been bombed. Well, and the sight was frightening. And the next day, on June 23, the so-called intelligentsia-activists gathered and they formed this—of Lazdijai—this authority committee.

[01:] 04:03:01 – [01:] 06:01:04

04:02 – 06:04

A: This authority—there were several people who I knew very well who joined this authority committee. One of them was Pranas Baubonis, my classmate, born in 192—maybe three, maybe four. He is now deceased. And that protocol, of the organ of authority was written by my esteemed literature teacher, Rapolas Stankūnas. This document has been copied and is available in a book of documents. And in the document, during the meeting, it is written, that is, that “Happy Birthday” was sung to Hitler, the liberator, and gratitude was expressed. So we were very afraid. And then everything happened on that same street, those institutions were there, this is why I know so much.

Q: Tell me, when did you see this document?

A: No, I only know—I saw that they were meeting—

Q: That meeting?—

A: Those gentlemen, they went. But I did not know why they were going. And then they were in power. So then I saw them, those people – Rapolas Stankūnas, my former teacher. So I knew him very well. He died recently. He taught later. He did not sit anywhere (was not imprisoned/ did not serve time). So there, this was the first scene. Then, the next day—so on that day, the 23rd, they gathered, and then immediately affirmed the resolution—I even remember the contents, but I read this later in a book—

Q: Later—

A: I later read that the Jews who were most dangerous to society—the Jews who were more dangerous to society were to be closed off into a ghetto. Well, and what. From that day forth, they rounded them up into two barracks, former Soviet army barracks.

[01:] 06:01:05 – [01:] 08:05:00

06:05 – 08:13

Q: One minute. And that document, tell me, it—how do you know that this document that you saw was created specifically by those people?

A: I saw their activities.

Q: Yes, but are there any signatures there with—on that that document, or something?

A: There are signatures at the end of the document. But I only actually saw a copy of that document.

Q: Yes, I understand—

A: Yes—where it is printed in the book. Mas—

Q: But you know that this is the document—

A: Yes—

Q: Which actually—

A: Because they were my acquaintances. Because I was born here and I knew them. For example, the next day, they already sent a message to Kaunas, to the “Gebietskommissar” or whoever they sent it to, [*saying*] that they wanted to collaborate. And the names of those who were going to collaborate were listed. I knew all of these people: the Jonuškas [*men*] from Palazdijai village, Juozas Karosas, a former policeman in Lazdijai. They are already deceased; this was a long time ago. So I saw what they did. They walked around armed, others had guns. They became Activists (probably members of the Lithuanian Activist front, “Lietuvių aktyvistų frontas” (LAF)) and they walked around here and maintained order. And those Jews—and the Jews were, from the first days, they were driven out of the barracks that are near my homestead, next to our school, the present-day Gymnasium. So they were taken to clear the rubble, because the next day and the day after, the city was still burning for a few more days. The entire city center was burned down; only a few homes remained. So these old people, about 70, about 80 years old, hungry, they collected those stones, cleared the bricks. It was really difficult to watch. They immediately affixed those yellow stars on them. All of this happened near my parents’ home. And they would come to us, asking for food.

[01:] 08:05:01 – [01:] 10:09:06

08:14 – 10:22

A: And then they would arrest [*people*] for this. I was arrested three times. The first time, when this Ms. Braudaitė, **Chaškė**—this was her first name—my classmate. She was an orphan, from a very poor family. I felt very sorry for her. And she came to our house—my mother was not there. So I cut a slice of bread, poured a bottle of milk, and pulled a few beets. And she went back, from my parents’ home, back to that ghetto. She returned and the policemen—and the policemen—there were no Germans here, there were no German guards here. This was all of the “baltaraiščiai” (white stripers), all of the Activists did everything, former policemen, a few of the earlier policemen—from the

time of Smetona (Antanas Smetona, first president of Lithuania, served from 1919-1920 and 1926-1940)—so some tilled the land, and others joined. Well, because no one forced them to go. And that Aleksas Karaliūnas, my classmate, he became the head of the Security forces (“Saugumas”). He walked around with a pistol, I saw. Well, and when they arrested me the first time—

Q: One minute, finish about the girl, when she returned to the ghetto.

A: Oh, I am very sorry. That girl, when she returned, so a guard apprehended her: “Where were you?” he asked. She told him where she had been, she said, “Stefutė (diminutive form of the interviewee’s first name – Stefanija) Melnickaitė (the interviewee’s maiden name) gave me this food.” And then they came to arrest me. And they held me for only one day. They took me to the police, and when they were taking me from one room to another, then I saw another horrible sight. There was a man sitting there, half-naked, without undergarments, on a chair. And the others were beating him with whips. He was a Lithuanian, that person, I think. He was blonde. Then they released me. Then the policeman **Dzemionas** walked through the yards; he was from **Kapšiūmiestis**. That **Dzemionas** read this note that whoever aided the Jews would be treated like a Jew.

[01:] 10:09:07 – [01:] 12:02:13

10:23 – 12:20

A: And this—and we stood in the yard listening as he read this note. And these two [*female*] neighbors, these old ladies, sisters – Agotėlė and Rožytė (diminutive forms of the names Agota and Rožė) Kūbertavičiūtė—they are already dead, of course. And one of them says, “Mister, we don’t aid the Jews. But here, Mr. Melnickas”—she said this about my father—“he aids them.” And the Jews would come to us because my father was a carpenter, and he worked often here in the shops, he knew how to make furniture. We interacted with everyone. How can you not give [*to them*]? So this is what people were like, you see. Well, and then they held the Jews like that until August, so until, almost until the end [*of the month*]. And then they moved them to Katkiškė. And Katkiškė is like a suburb of Lazdijai, beyond—they shot them there. And you know what else I found out. I read in the magazine *Gairės* that the father or Mr. Landsbergis led the organization of the ghetto. And it is written—Lazdijai is mentioned also. So this was very interesting to me. I don’t have that magazine. Well, and I did not go to that ghetto. And next to the ghetto, on a hill, there was a well. So they went to bathe there, got water with rust. How did they make—I can’t even imagine this. And how could more than one thousand people fit in two barracks, I don’t even understand this.

Q: You are now talking about the first ghetto or about the second one?

A: Yes, yes. About the first one that was next to us—

Q: Next to you—

A: Yes, yes. I remember this. I remember how they took them to work.

[01:] 12:02:14 – [01:] 14:03:14

12:21 – 14:26

A: They were not allowed to walk on the sidewalk. They could only walk in that section of the road where the horses rode. They pushed them. In the filth—they went by. They pushed these old people, so that they would collect those stones, all of that rubble. There were some food cards provided for them, a very small ration. But they would go ask, would exchange some clothes. They asked for bread, for some sort of potato. It was very hard for them. There were pregnant women, there were small children. And they did not have any soap. So my parents gave them everything. My father was also arrested three times. And then they even shot him. A witness to history was not necessary. I have a document issued by the Gestapo, an original. We know all of this. We saw it all with our own eyes. Well, and then I really remember this one incident, I must tell you about it. I was walking home from the shop and I saw—but this was already, you know, maybe September, or perhaps the beginning of October. Yes, like this now, it was the fall. And I am walking, and I see a cart drive in near the hospital, one horse. The driver is sitting there, and there is a group of workers standing on the stairs of the hospital. Because I finished nursing courses in [19]39, when I was a student in the Gymnasium, so I knew all of the personnel. And I knew that hospital. And I was very interested in what was happening that the group was standing there and crying. With robes, with those scarves—of the nurses, this wonderful nurse Adolfiną Laužikaitė. The museum was looking for her because they did not know her surname—I am preparing to write to them. Her name is Adolfiną. She was a very wonderful midwife.

[01:] 14:03:15 – [01:] 16:02:21

14:27 – 16:31

A: And she is holding a small child, and I see how she hands it to the daughter of my Jewish neighbor Šimančikas, a cobbler. And the women are crying because they knew where they are going to take her. They placed her in the cart, with the child in her arms, and they drove her to Seinų street, that is, to the ghetto. And there she was shot together with her child a few days later. It was a horrific scene.

Q: Tell me, when were they transferred from one ghetto to the other?

A: It was about the same time that it is now, around the end of August, I think at the end. I cannot tell you the exact date.

Q: How long were people in the second ghetto?

A: Well, they were there from the end of August, through all of September, all of October, and they shot them at the beginning of November. It is written everywhere that this happened on the third of November. For some reason it seems to me that it was the second. *[clears throat]* Maybe they were afraid of killing them on All Souls Day, that there would be many people and they would see that horrible execution. So the pits were dug ahead of time, those ditches, about two weeks in advance. So those Jews were crying, wailing. And they always asked my father, when they were still in this ghetto, whether they were shooting *[Jews]* in other cities, were there still any Jews. So my father traded a bit so that he would have a ruble for bread, as they say. So he would drive out—he would bring back paint, nails, he was a carpenter—to Kaunas. So he says, “I saw they are still there.” So they thought that all of this would be postponed, maybe they will not shoot anymore. Well, and they shot them.

[01:] 16:02:22 – [01:] 18:01:15

16:32 – 18:33

A: They came—and again I was a witness to all of this. This is probably my fate, that I happen to be in these horrible vortexes of history. And I went to visit my friend again, in November—if this was the third day *[of November]*, after All Souls Day—and I went to see that friend of mine—there was her mother, two sisters. My friend is alive. She lives in Vilnius on Mildos street – Birutė Živatkauskienė-Miglinaitė – she is a very wonderful woman. They aided the Jews very much, their mother, and they. And we conversed. It snowed a bit in the evening, but the ground was not frozen, so that everything was clearly visible. And the mother went out into the yard, returned, and was crying loudly. We said, “What is going on?” She says, “Dearest girls, they are shooting the Jews. And they are going to shoot **Calkė**,” she said. And that **Calkė**—I don’t know his surname—they made sausages, so he would sell them that beef, that **Calkė** this young man, “Oi, and they are going to shoot **Calkė** too.” And we all cried loudly, went out into the yard, and from that yard we saw—because in that place where the Lazdijai park now is—to this belonged to this Mazialiauskas—that Mazialiauskas was also later arrested—the garden of Mazialiauskas. There were not many trees, and the leaves had fallen. And we were able to see Katkiškė very well. And we saw as groups—it was clear that it was people dressed in dark clothes—they were being taken from the barracks to the other side, as we watched, to the hill where they now lie.

[01:] 18:01:16 – [01:] 20:05:01

18:34 – 20:43

A: And the shooting began. Rattling. This was frightening. We cried intensely. *[she becomes emotional; short pause]* Their wailing, *[cries]* how they cried as they took them from the ghetto, they local people who lived nearby hear it.

Q: And did you yourself hear their wailing?

A: No, no. I could not, because it was a little too far. But those shots and the procession. But my father told me much of it – Steponas Melnicaks, my father. He was taken to cover those pits. They chose those people who interacted with the Jews. Mostly those people. Those who during the Soviet period, were some sort of worker, who worked in the militia, those kind. Well, and—and Poles, Russians, but they also took Lithuanians. All kinds. And they had to cover the pits that had been dug beforehand. When they rounded them up into the police yard on Vytatuto street, those men they gathered, then they said that: “You will have to cover the pits.” So, some of them began complaining. One said, “My”—my father said that they fell on the palms of their hands. So this one says, “My hand hurts.” Another one says, “My child is sick. Let me go.” So then they started shooting up into the sky—our policemen. There were no Germans at all here in Lazdijai. The authority was comprised of those Lithuanians, those nationalists. And when those cars arrived in Katkiškė—there were maybe about three buses—because I saw when they drove those killers there, to the restaurant. This was on Seinų street.

[01:] 20:05:02 – [01:] 22:10:04

20:44 – 22:53

A: Well, and they drove them there, there were, they say, about two or three German officers. But I did not see them myself, but my father told me that the officers were Lithuanians, and the soldiers, I saw them. Then—

Q: Your father saw the cars arrive—

A: Those cars—

Q: Near the pits—

A: Yes, yes, yes.

Q: Your father saw how they were shot?

A: Yes. He told me about this one incident, how they—well, they take groups of people. Before this, they order them to take off their clothes, and they take them barefoot, took

them. Barefoot, in their underclothes. So there were those who were about the same age that I am now, these older parents. So the children would take the father by the hand, or the mother, one would pull by one arm, the other by the other [arm], and running, and they ran just so that they would jump into the ditch, that pit faster. They throw down their clothes. Some people took those clothes home, I actually know this myself, and their surnames, and I know where they were stored, because I saw it. And after they jumped into those pits, then the soldiers came, and shot them. And then—so when they finished shooting one group, the soldiers move, they call over those men with shovels in groups to cover them. Those men come and, that is, cover it with earth. People were still moving. They were still half alive. Well, because a person does not die instantly. And when they threw some earth on the one row, and then they were to move back, the earth moved, and a boy crawled out. My father said that he could have been about ten, twelve years old. He knelt down, clasped his hands together in a prayer like this, and Pacikonis approached, the “Wachtmeister” Pacikonis—I knew him, from Kauno street—but he is now deceased—the police “Wachtmeister,” he came up and finished off that child. That was all.

[01:] 22:10:05 – [01:] 24:00:10

22:54 – 24:48

A: And after that they would bring another group. And we were standing in the yard—my friend’s yard—and we were crying, because we were very horrified. And they rounded them up in parts, in groups. They drove, drove, drove. Then, you know, the execution ended in the afternoon. So I wanted to go home, but I was very afraid of going alone, so I was accompanied by my friend Birutė Mignaitė, who lives in Vilnius, on Mildos street, and her cousin Mikas **Tuminauskas [Tūminauskas]**, he is buried in Lazdijai. And one from one side, and the other on the other side, and we walked linked down that Seinų street. And when we approached that place where the old home of the Jewish man Titevskis now stands, and now there is a shop called “Agnė” in there, so there was this restaurant there, a milk product shop, in our corner, and a movie theatre in the home of that Jewish man. He survived, that Jewish man and his family. His wife was a teacher, I knew her. And two children. They were deported in [19]41, on June 14 to Siberia, and they stayed alive there. And the others died. So there, we stopped at that place, with my friend and her cousin, because we were—well, we could have walked on father—but we were very curious about this. There were three buses standing behind us, and soldiers stepped out of those buses, they walked inside—it seems that they were drunk—some sort of—they were somehow energized as they walked in. And some even walked in with rings on their hands. And they all went to eat at that restaurant. After shooting the people. This is how horrible it was.

[01:] 24:00:11 – [01:] 26:16:08

24:49 – 27:10

Q: And were they those who were shooting, these soldiers?

A: Yes. They arrived in those buses—

Q: And how do you know—did you know at the time that they were [*coming*] from the massacre?

A: We heard the shooting, so they [*came*] from there. They came from that same direction, where the necropolis now was. Because we saw everything. We watched with that Birutė and her mother.

Q: What language were those soldiers speaking?

A: Lithuanian. They were dressed in Lithuanian uniforms, really. I can swear to this. Only—

Q: Did they have weapons?

A: Well, I can't tell you this. They probably had them in the cars. I cannot tell you this, I don't know. Well, and we—when they all walked away—so then we turned and went toward my street. My friends accompanied me. And when I arrived, I found that my father had returned. He was so incredibly upset. And he told us about this—he was very—for about two weeks he was unable to speak well. And then they arrested many of those who buried [*the victims*]. Many of them sat in cells. Three were executed. My father was shot together with Česlovas **Zagreckas**, 23 years old. My father was 49 years old. I was 19 years old when my father was executed.

Q: Did the Gestapo present you with that Gestapo document?

A: They gave it to my mother and I have it in a drawer.

Q: And what is written there?

A: The following is written: “**Vertod Verultait**” (GERMAN) – that he was selected by the SS/SD polizei—I don't now remember the contents in German very well. But I can tell you in Lithuanian—

Q: Say it in Lithuanian.

A: Yes, because I understand this. It says that, this means, that Steponas Melnickas, son of Juozas, born then and then, in Poland, from **Krosno**, was sentenced to death. My father was from Poland, that is. And it says that he was sentenced to death by German—that SS/SD polizei commissariat of some sort, or whatever they were called. And it states that the sentence was carried out in 1942, on the ninth—October ninth. Only it does not indicate where.

[01:] 26:16:09 – [01:] 28:01:22

27:11 – 29:00

A: But he was held in the Marijampolė prison and was executed there. And then they shot him, they also shot those other two men – Kalinovas, the Russian, and **Žagžeckas**, the Pole, and my father. The Gestapo read them the sentence the night before. There was a chapel in the prison yard. They led them there with large dogs, and the prisoners knew already, because they would shoot people there often, that if they came with dogs, then that was it. They were going to shoot someone. Well, and they read the sentence—You—I can't even imagine how strong my father was, because he did not shout, nor did he curse in the cell. He prayed. You know, Poles are very pious.

Q: And how exactly do you know about this scene, this episode, that with dogs?—

A: I will tell you soon. I will tell you soon. Others returned from the cell alive, people who were apprehended. And I have their testimonies; those testimonies are verified with a notary seal. I keep them, I have them in my drawer. Moziliauskas, Stasys Markevičius, Pikutis. They were in that cell—they—I will say this—they were standing in the cell and the small windows were very high, and they wanted to see if they were really going to shoot them. Right, in the morning, after breakfast, my father prayed as he always did and the guards walked in and said, “Get dressed in your own clothes.” And the three of them got dressed in their own clothes. And they said, “Now you will go out.”

[01:] 28:01:23 – [01:] 30:05:05

29:01 – 31:08

A: The others—this is what those who were imprisoned told me, that is. And as he walked through the doors, this is what he said: “Goodbye, men. Please give my final farewell to my dear wife and children.” [*cries*] And this is what they told me. [*speaking through tears*] And when they walked through those doors, **Žagžeckas**, the young man, took off his hat, turned back to this prisoner named **Lovjovas** and said: “Take this; as a remembrance.” And the wife of **Sovlovjovas** reminded me of this recently. Well, and they took them down the hallway. So those men, they stood on each other's shoulders, or something like that—because the windows were up very high. And this—and they look and saw how they were shot. They saw, those prisoners. And then they buried them.

Then, two years later, in August of 1945—I was pregnant then, I was already married—and I was not allowed to go to Marijampolė. But they invited my mother. And so my mother and husband went to Marijampolė. There was this national commission established, and they excavated those graves. So my mother recognized two women who were imprisoned with me. I was imprisoned for the third time after the massacre of the Jews, like my father was imprisoned for the third time on March 23, [19]42, in the morning. It was the Monday before Easter. They conducted a search in our house, searching for a weapon or something. They did not read us a protocol. We don't know what was written there.

[01:] 30:05:06 – [01:] 32:03:11

31:09 – 33:11

A: And they just told my father to, “Get dressed, and you will go with us to the police. You will sign the protocol there.” The search was led by Mr. Simonavičius, who was from Marijampolė, I did not know him before. And the protocol was written by someone I knew well, from our street, Mr. Kadziauskas, a former teacher, he became a Security agent, they were Security agents here. And **Beinorius**, he was from Lazdijai, I don't know where he was born, but he lived on our street, he had married a girl from Lazdijai. Then he fled—in [19]44 he was a Security agent—he fled to America. He died there. And his wife went insane. And that Simonavičius, of course, fled in [19]44. After they had done all of this in Lazdijai. Well, and I also remember the witnesses. Stasys Markevičius, he testified to me—this, I have his testimony confirmed by a notary that he was asked to testify. So there, I remember this very well. When they took my father to sign his signature—so I was very religious then, at that time. I believed strongly in people, and I believed strongly in God. I ran to the church to pray. And I cried a lot kneeling in front of the altar of Mary. I asked for God's help. And when I walked out, through the doors, I stood on the stairs and I saw, some woman, wrapped in a scarf, was walking toward the church, in the churchyard. I did not recognize my mother in all of that grief. My mother, Then I saw her, “Mother, father has probably returned home.”

[01:] 32:03:12 – [01:] 34:05:11

33:12 – 35:17

A: And she says, “No, I came to tell you that they came to arrest you. I don't even know why.” And I really took her hands into my hands; her hands were so cold. I felt so sorry for her. I could have run away through the churchyard, somewhere. But if she were then arrested, then what would happen to my other younger brothers and sisters. Well, and I said, “Mama, what should I do?” She says, “I don't know.” And I did not know. And then two men, Security officers presented themselves. They arrested me and took me to jail. First, the interrogation, then to the cell. There were 11 women being held in the cell. But maybe you this is not interesting to you?

Q: Interesting, interesting.

A: This is the truth. There were 11 women imprisoned. I was the youngest one, 18 years old. **Voronecka**, a doctor, a very wonderful woman, was imprisoned with me. She is already deceased. I was also imprisoned with two wives of Soviet officers. I knew them. I knew one of them beforehand – **Dusé Firtikova**. And Malkova. They shot both of them. In Marijampolė. And when they were exhumed, my mother recognized them from their clothes. Malkova had long, beautiful hair. She had just arrived here before the war, and she did not yet have any children. And **Dūsė Firtikova's** husband was hiding somewhere here, he was arrested in Marijampolė, in prison—they shot him as he was running in the prison yard. Then they also shot that **Dusė**. And my mother recognized her, because she made her a dress. My mother was a seamstress. They daughter **Fainačka**, three years old, was orphaned. Well and there were other women in prison. Some were from the villages; I did not know them. Well, and maybe their surnames are not important here. There were 11 of us in prison, and two were killed, from our group.

[01:] 34:05:12 – [01:] 36:05:05

35:18 – 37:23

Q: And how did they interrogate you? What did they want? Who interrogated you?

A: Ah, so. Those same [*men*] interrogate me – this Aleksas Karaliūnas, who now lives in America. Antanas Soroka, from Miškiniai, my former classmate. So these young people all got into the power, to the Security force.

Q: So your classmate interrogated you?

A: Yes. Yes. The first time that Soroka—so he had this rubber—I don't know what it is called—this thing that militia men have. So he held it up to my nose like this, always up to my nose. This was very painful for me. We had attended Gymnasium together, we were friends. So he interrogated me because I had given that Braudaitė something to eat, that bread. Well, and the next time also because I gave food. Well, and this time—that Karaliūnas was some sort of—and that one who interrogated me, and now I forget his surname. There was this Simonavičius. There was Karalius—no, Karalius was the police chief, and these men were Security forces. Ai, there were all sorts of Security agents there. There was this one from Leipalingis—perhaps I will remember his surname [*pause; thinking*] It seems to be Telešius. Or Lilešius. It was Telešius. And then that Aleksas Karaliūnas became a commander. In the beginning, it was that Simonavičius. And then that one, he moved away somewhere, so that Karaliūnas took over. Then he

also moved somewhere, so then, later—then the war ended. So they lived here – in Lazdijai.

Q: So what did they want from you?—

A: Ah, why did they interrogate me. They constantly asked me questions relating to my father's arrest. "Did any people visit your home? Did they come from somewhere," they asked. "Did you interact with, were your parents acquainted with local Poles, with some sort of manor lords." My father was a carpenter, my mother a seamstress, so we knew very many people.

[01:] 36:05:06 – [01:] 38:00:10

37:24 – 39:23

A: They asked if we aided Jews. They asked these kinds of questions. I just maybe don't remember any more, you know. So many years have gone by. Well, and—

Q: Did they use physical force against you?

A: Against me, no. But against my father, so horrible—I am afraid even to discuss it. They interrogated my father—I was sitting in one cell, and my father was sitting in the men's cell. So they beat him severely—my mother told me about this—when I was imprisoned, so then they conducted a search a second time—everything I tell you is the truth. They arrested my two brothers, young children, 12, 13 years old and locked them in custody—there was this wooden house in the prison yard—it used to belong to **Brazdžiauskas**, the former district leader—he was a wonderful person, he was not even arrested by the Soviet government. He was an official during the period of Smetona (Antanas Smetona, first president of Lithuania, served from 1919-1920 and 1926-1940). So this was his house, but he was not here, he was from Kaunas, from a very large family, he had 18 brothers and sisters. And he died at about 102 or 103 years of age. He is written about in one articles, but you are not interested in this. So this means that in his former house, my two brothers were held all night long, kneeling on their knees, with their tongues sticking out, arms raised up, so that they would either admit or reveal where our father kept his weapons. Well, you know from history that during those time, in [19]42 or thereabout, there were all sorts of movements. There were the partisans and the Home Army "Armija Krajova" (AK) was somewhere. There were these—

Q: Good, who—who arrested your brothers and when?

A: Well, those same Security forces, when I was sitting in prison—so my mother told me about this as soon as I was released during Easter.

[01:] 38:00:11 – [01:] 40:06:21

39:24 – 41:34

A: And when my mother arrived, she brought food, so Kazlauskas, the policeman, who was a prison guard then, he pushed her around, and that is—she said, “Give my daughter and husband this food.” “Wait.” My mother says, “I can’t because my five-year-old daughter is sick.” My little sister. “You be quiet,” said that Kazlauskas—I think his name was Bronius—a policeman. “I am in charge here, I do as I please.” Not one German—this Kazlauskas from the village – a Lithuanian. He said, “I can take those prisoners of yours and beat them, kick them. I will do what I want. And no one can say anything to me.” Oh and I did not yet tell you about how they interrogated those women—those Russians, who were sitting in a cell with me—so they came back to the cell after an interrogation, and we became very scared—a torn blouse. I remember this very well. I am a visual type, so I am very—it seems that I see it now. She was wearing these high boots, and with these brown “**golf**” pants, velvet. Maybe she was a Tartar or something, or a Russian, black eyes, dark hair, a very beautiful woman. Her blouse was torn and her chest was so scratched it was bleeding. So if they tore women, so then I really believe that this also happened to my father. And this really did happen. That is, they came—after they interrogated my father, this one girl ran over—well she was about 16 years old or something—Izabelė—or Izabelė Uzdil—wait, Uzdilaitė, when she married her husband, she became Mrs. **Grigaravičienė**. So that Uzdilaitė was a maid. And she worked for the police chief Karalius, with his child. So they paid her salary as a maid. And she cleaned.

[01:] 40:06:22 – [01:] 41:45:12

41:35 – 43:18

A: In the evening, after the interrogation, after they beat my father severely, drove nails under his fingernails, beat the soles of his feet severely—and he was beaten so severely that he was covered in blood, so it seems that they also hit him in the head. He fainted, and then they pulled him out of the cell and he was lying in the corridor—now that house is—that house is still there, but no one lives there. The Security forces were there at the time—that building is near the Gymnasium. And he [her father] was lying there, bloody, unconscious, with nothing, and then the interrogators ordered the girl to fetch some water. She brought a bucket and poured it onto my father and he revived. So then they took him under the arms and dragged him to the cell. I only saw my father once when he was imprisoned. When they released me—are you listening? *[directed at the interviewer]*

Q: Yes.

A: When they released me and as I was walking down the street, then I saw how my father was led out into the yard to walk around for a little while—with a warm, black jacket, but

I only saw him from behind. This is the last time I saw him in my life. And they tortured my brothers so that they would say something, you know how children are. So my youngest brother said something. He said, "Maybe he has a weapon on the top floor." So they came to conduct another search. They did not find anything. There was nothing.

File 2 of 2

[02:] 00:31:05 – [02:] 02:10:23

00:30 – 02:14

Q: We can continue the conversation. You wanted to talk about something else.

A: Well, I can tell you about one more incident, but I did not see it myself—just a person who came to chop firewood for my mother—he lived at the other end of our street, a resident - **Krapilius [Krapylius]**, a worker. One time, before the massacre of the Jews, he went to that stream where the our park now is, to gather some wicker, to make brooms. And he told us [*coughs*] how this one woman, a Jewish woman—I knew her, a very beautiful woman—but I don't remember her surname now. And she somehow escaped from the ghetto in Katkiškė, she had several dresses, was wearing them. It seems she wanted to exchange those clothes for food. And she was being pursued by a policeman, from that ghetto. And she—here where our park now is, in that place—she was shot. She was struck in the back, at her waist, maybe a bit lower, where the blood tends to collect inside, as they say, the blood does not pour out. And she fell. And one of the people who reside on our street, my neighbor, Pranas Stravinkskas, he is deceased, of course, was walking by. And on the door to his home the following sign was written: "**nur fur Deutschen**" (GERMAN: Only for Germans), which meant that he only gave rooms to Germans. And he was always in contact with all of those guards.

[02:] 02:10:24 – [02:] 04:13:16

02:15 – 04:22

A: And it was evident that he also looted those goods. And at that moment he happened to be there, near the river—maybe he was going to the ghetto, or who knows what he was doing. But that **Krapilis** said, "Oh, God," he said, "so up the hill, and then down the hill. So then up the hill, then back down." [*this portion about the hill is unclear*] This person, can you imagine this. He undressed that women so that he could take her clothes.

Q: But she was already wounded?

A: She was already killed. There—

Q: Killed—

A: When someone is shot there, then the blood very quickly collects in the guts. So I don't know—she died there, I don't know how it was, where she was buried there. And now, what do I want—I wanted to tell you something—aha, that same—

Q: One minute, I didn't understand. Did the man undress her, the one on whose door there was a sign stating “**nur fur Deutschen.**”

A: Yes, yes. That one. That Pranas Stravinskas. So this is what that **Krapilius** told me. For my mother and me. We were at home when he told us about this. We all remembered those events, during the war years, so he told us. Well, and the other thing I remember, when I returned home after the shooting, and I walked out to the yard, out of my parents' yard, behind the school there, where I lived, I saw that well, that hill where the Jews would go get water and bathe, that is. And I saw that I person was walking, up that hill—there is a part there now, the school's. And I stood around there, I was interested. This person was carrying a large bundle, maybe bedding, maybe some sort of pillows on his shoulder, a bundle. And he walked through our parents' field, ducked under the bridge, where our little stream is, the Dumblaitis, and he walked along the shore to Staidarai.

[02:] 04:13:17 – [02:] 06:06:12

04:23 – 06:19

A: I knew him. He was Maniuška, but I don't know his *[first]* name. He is also dead already. So I thought – his mother, a Lithuanian, a national, a peasant, how could she not make her children some bedding. So then he had to take those lice-ridden, blood-covered things from Katkiškė. This is what I thought, this is horrible. Well, and they took the other clothes down Dariaus Girėno street—here, it is not far from me here—they lived this Aglinskas, so he took the clothes, he had this cellar there or something. And there was also—the one who conducted the search in our home—Kadziauskas, with another neighbor of his, or maybe his relative, or a neighbor, so they took it—on Dzūkų Street—and they stored those clothes there. And then maybe they divided them up, I don't know what they did with those clothes that belonged to the murdered people.

Q: So they took those clothes from Katkiškė?

A: Yes, yes.

Q: From that second ghetto?

A: Yes, yes. From there, from there. Really—

Q: S this means that when the Jews went from one ghetto to the other, there was nothing left behind in the first ghetto, no things, no Jews, nothing—

A: There was probably nothing. No, there really no Jews left. So probably nothing. I did not go inside there to take a look. Only those buildings were left standing there, and then someone demolished them, I don't even know. Now—

Q: And were there any Jewish belongings left? Or?

A: Well, so, how, so the ones who were able to take the things, the ones who participated here, they took them. They took them, divided them up, those clothes. Yes.

[02:] 06:06:13 – [02:] 08:06:14

06:20 – 08:24

Q: Who guarded the ghetto? What did the guards look like? I have in mind the first ghetto, the one that was near you.

A: Well, you know, I knew some of them. Some of them I—policemen. There were no German soldiers here.

Q: Perhaps you remember their surnames?

A: I remember. I bought shoes from one of them. Women's shoes. Suede. Size number 35. So they probably did not fit anyone. I don't know if someone gave them to him, or if he took them.

Q: This was after the shooting?

A: No, they were still alive. He sold them through someone. He said, "Maksimavičius has a good pair of shoes to sell." I bought them from—through some person, but I don't remember his name now.

Q: So what were their surnames, what surnames do you remember?

A: Well, for example, I remember Maksimavičius. I remember **Čižikas**, I remember **Vilipolskis**. I knew them from sight. They were not my age, but I—I was still a student at the Gymnasium then, before the war. But I also knew them. I know them. Maybe some other one, perhaps.

Q: Did you see how they were guarding the ghetto?

A: Yes, they were walking around there near us—near the barracks—this was visible. Well, and we walked along that street—you go to the shops, return from the shop. We had to tie up the cow, well, because my father's field is near there—the cow—we saw. I saw when people would go bathe by that well.

Q: Tell me please—

A: Ah, and what else—I will tell you so that I don't forget. They prayed a lot. Because the rabbis were with them. So the rabbi's daughter survived, and last year, on April 23, I went to Adamkus's, to the Presidential palace, when there was an award ceremony for the people who rescued **Riva**, the rabbi's daughter. I know her very well. We finished nursing courses together. She lives in Israel. I have her address, but I don't remember it. And the telephone number.

[02:] 08:06:15 – [02:] 10:22:03

08:25 – 10:45

Q: Let us go back. You said that they were praying a lot.

A: Yes.

Q: You heard this?

A: Yes. They prayed very loudly here on Vytauto street, where I was living. Well, you know, it was warm, summer time, you go out into the yard. How they prayed, how they moaned, how they pleaded with God. They had prayer books, the afterwards, when they killed them there in Katkiškė, and the buildings remained, and some of their things. So these young people, children would run to take a look. It was interesting for them when they found something.

Q: And did you go to Katkiškė? After that?

A: There—I didn't go afterwards. I was there before. There were Soviet soldier—military barracks there. So my friend and I—I would walk around with my friend—we went over there and saw that there were books rolling around on the floor – *Gorkio motina* (Gorkis's mother) – I remember. **Majakovskis's** books, you see. Letters written by those Russian, by those little soldiers—maybe some letters they received from home. So we saw these. We were young, and everything, so everything worried us.

Q: Tell me, was there any indication in the Gestapo document why *[her father was executed]*?

A: That's it. This is not there. That's it, this is not there. And I have two addresses. I write to the German consuls. The consuls of Germany. And I have several of their responses, with the general prosecutor. The general prosecutor also—there are even three signatures—he confirmed that the document I have is really authentic. And the German consul also confirmed this, and gave me two addresses. I have not gotten around to it. But in the coming days I am prepared to send out the letters. One of my former students teaches the German language and she will write for me to the two cities where the archives are, because my children went to the State Archive, Special Cases—a former student of mine, Bubnys, was in charge there—so they went to the Archive, my daughter and son and looked through the 1942 cases.

[02:] 08:06:15 – [02:] 10:22:03

08:25 – 10:45

A: So they found only four cases, from that year, in that Archive. And they could not locate these cases, of those Lazdijai residents. And I am very interested how they formulated this.

Q: I also wanted to ask you, so, you saw when those soldiers, that group of people returned—

A: Yes—

Q: Going to the restaurant.

A: Yes.

Q: They were soldiers and military officers?

A: Yes, I saw—maybe they were military officers, I don't remember this well now. There were some sort of officers, without a doubt. They were not on their own, well, someone led them. But we were standing there, frightened—

Q: They were all only Lithuanians?

A: They all spoke Lithuanians, the ones who walked past us. My friend and I were standing on the sidewalk.

Q: With Lithuanian uniforms, yes?

A: Yes.

Q: And the rings, you said, the rings. What was on the ring, what was that—

A: Nothing, just rings. Well, what do I know, if they were married, or maybe they had taken them from the Jews. Basically, like this. It seems that the officers walked by like this, where you are now. We stood there for a long time. While they all went into that restaurant. Then we went home.

Q: And what did people say? Where could they have come from?

A: *[sighs]* All of those leaders, for example, Karalius, he was the police chief. Karaliūnas was the chief of the security forces. The others. They had maids, and those maids would recount everything. For example, one maid even came to my mother and said, “Aunt, tell your husband to hide, because they are also going to arrest him.”

Q: And you heard this—

A: People would know—

Q: How she said this?

A: This—my mother told me about this. My mother. So I trust my mother.

Q: And what did those maids talk about? Where did they come from—those murderers?

[02:] 12:08:08 – [02:] 14:18:05

12:36 – 14:30

A: They said from Alytus. This Stefa **Karankevičiūtė**, I don't know her married name. She married a Ukrainian, and moved to Ukraine, and I don't know her address. So she was a servant. And with Kar—or at Karaliūnas's. There was a party, and they were all drinking and eating, and they said, “We dealt with these Jews, so now we will take care of the Poles.” And she came and said, “Aunt, let him—my uncle”—well my mother was a local here—my relatives here are Lithuanians. But my father is from Poland. They wed during the other war, in 1917. My mother was 17; my father, 23. So there. Yes. *[new frame; sounds; camera operator conversation]*

Q: I wanted to ask you if right at the start, right at the start of the war, when all of that began, were there any posters, advertisements, incitements against the Jews in Lazdijai somewhere on the walls or fences? Some sort of propaganda?

A: I would have to think about it. Almost the entire city was bombarded, almost all of the homes of the Jews were here, generally only a few of them remained. There could not have been anything there. That is, the entire authority was on the street where I lived. Behind the church, on that street. The security forces and the police were always there, and the prison was there also.

[02:] 14:18:06 – [02:] 16:10:13

14:31 – 16:37

A: Well, you know, I don't know this, if this happened. Until that time, that is, from that—that kind of, well some sort of hatred or some kind of expressions. Ai, I told you that they pushed them around. I saw this myself, how they pushed them around. Ah, and I can tell you about another episode, if that is possible. For me it was—well, maybe it just stays with me more—maybe this is more—because we were acquainted with the Jews, and they were craftsmen, and laborers, and watchmakers, and owners of jewelry shops, some also had money. So they would come—each day someone would come to us, through the grasses, through those fields. Some would bring money to give, because we found out that there was a shop in the home of Titevksis, and there, for a few rubles, or if someone had an ostmark, those who got them, that is, you could buy some butter, even up to three kilograms. So who of my family would go? Me—I was a student at the Gymnasium. Well, not my mother, nor my father; they had their own work. So every day I, well, I walked to that shop, because there were a lot of products at the Lazdijai creamery shop before the front, before the war. And they had to be sold. And they would sell things without any sort of cards. You were able to buy even up to three kilograms of butter. Well, in the beginning—when the Jews found out—those who would come to us. So, some would even bring money so that I would go there and buy it. So I would always make trips, walk there. Well, at first, there were not too many people, not everyone knew that this shop was open. And then, after a few days, many people would gather. And we would stand in line, on the sidewalk. And that woman, I will tell you her name and surname – Stasė Kubilienė – her husband was a policeman, but he was a good person, he worked the land, he did not join those activists.

[02:] 16:10:14 – [02:] 18:02:10

16:38 – 18:34

A: And that Stasė was the seller at the milk products shop before the war. She was a former “Šaulė,” she was very organized and very arrogant. And she arrived late. So when she opened the door, so then we all—we buzzed into that shop. And it just so happened that I

ended up near the scale. Well, it just happened. Some were in front of me, other were behind me. She began yelling, “Why are you acting like cows.” So horrible, pushing each other. None of us were pushing. We were standing, standing, and we froze and nothing—that is, “Why are you acting like some sort of cows? And now that curse Polish woman is standing here.” At me. In front of all of the women, I was very uncomfortable. “And this cursed Polish woman is standing here. You won’t be standing here for long. They will soon hang a yellow star on you, just like they did the Jews. Only the letter ‘p’ will be written there.” This meant that it would be affixed to my chest also. I was so worried, I thought to myself, what should I do. Should I buy or not buy? I bought that butter, brought it home, and then I told my parents that I was afraid of going back there anymore. So for the Jews—they brought—the **Breidburdas** family could come visit us. They son was the first killed in Marijampolė, as soon as the front began. He had gone to this seminar, maybe Communist Youth or something like that. That **Gecalas – Gecas Breidburdas** – was my classmate. And this man Vitas **Liegus** was with him. He is Lithuanian, so they let him go. This is what he said, “They let me go and told me that I will ensure my freedom with foreign blood.”

[02:] 18:02:11 – [02:] 20:03:07

18:35 – 20:40

A: “And where was—where is **Gecalas**? But where is that **Gecas**.” And he says, “They shot **Gecas**.” Immediately, in Marijampolė. They shot many people there during the first days of the war. And that one came back. So I remember this moment, when I would go buy food for them, because we had only one cow, there were five of us children. Could we have fed those hundreds, as they say? We did what we could. And I am telling you, my father was arrested twice solely because of the Jews. And when they arrested him the third time, they had already been killed. And when they transported the so-called Polish people in 1942—maybe you don’t know the history? They took the Poles from Lithuanian to Lithuania. [*glances around*] Should I tell you about it?

Q: No. You witnessed this?

A: Yes. [*emphatically*] I experienced it myself. Yes.

Q: From where to where were they taking them?

A: In 1942, my father was still in the Marijampolė prison. And after this, he overcame, he sent us a letter. And my mother read it: “Dear wife, I dreamt that you were travelling somewhere.” This is what he wrote to us in a letter. He did not dream it, but he head in the Marijampolė prison that—and now like this, in 1942, when the German army was approaching Stalingrad, Belarus was occupied, a part of Russian, everything here in the

Baltics, everything was occupied. [*coughs*] Those Germans who had lived in Lithuania before the war began returning here – to Lazdijai. I knew them. I studied with a few of them. According to a treaty—there was this treaty signed between the Soviet Union and Germany, in 1940, in December, January, February, and March, these four month, Lithuanians came from Poland who wanted to be in Lithuania—and Russians who were living there, right here, well, on this side of Poland, on our side.

[02:] 22:03:08 – [02:] 22:04:12

20:41 – 22:46

A: And I, as a former nurse, well, I was a student at the Gymnasium, a graduate, I was mobilized with that **Riva**, the one I spoke of to you, the rabbi's daughter. [*thinking*] I forgot her surname. Well, this is not important. This means. And we were mobilized as nurses to that so-called evacuation point. And we saw how those Lithuanians were travelling with their horses, carts, a heifer, a cow tied up to the cart, with their clothes, a table or something else, and they were housed on the farms of Germans. In Lazdijai, in Vilkija, in Šakiai, they were tossed all over Lithuania.

Q: On German farms, Germans who had left?

A: Yes, on the former farms of the Germans, those who had left for the “Vaterland.” And they lived here. They used everything that they found here. Well, and the land there, or the animals, when they lived here. When I told you how in 1942 already, this was in the summer, in August, I remember the day very well, it was the 17th. This happened at night. Why do I know this? Because I always find myself in these kinds of historical circumstances. I had gone to the district administration to ask for permission for my mother to visit my father. I had already once been given this sort of permit. But you could only go alone, so my mother went, she took my sister, five years old, and saw him. So my sister then told me that the prisoners brought my father in like this on their hands [*shows hands*] because he was beaten so severely that he could not walk to meet my mother. And I thought I would be able to visit with him. And in that moment, one of my neighbors, this Dominykas **Zmirskas**, he is, of course, deceased; he was already an old man.

[02:] 22:04:13 – [02:] 24:03:06

22:47 – 24:49

A: And he met with someone, next to me; we were sitting, waiting in line. That one asks him, “What's going on in Lazdijai?” And that Dominykas says, “Nothing, **hoite nacht Polen varen.**” (GERMAN) He said this in German, which means that the Poles will be taken away tonight. This is what he explained to that person. I went home quickly, and because my father was Polish—my mother is sitting there, at the sewing machine, it is almost dark, and she is sewing underclothes, out of new fabric—a seamstress. “Mama,

why are you sewing?” “For you, if they kill you like they did the Jews, then you will all have new shirts.” This is what my mother said. I said, “Mother, stop it, we don’t have any horses, we don’t have a lot of land.” Why did this happen, that is, when the Germans return to their farms, then where do you put your brothers, the Lithuanians? So then you have to throw out the Polish people, and settle those Lithuanians who came from Seinai, from Suvalkija, from somewhere. You probably understand me. Yes. Well, and that same night, the dogs began barking furiously. We were scared, we were afraid that someone would come to our house. It was getting dark, the wind was rustling the leaves. For some reason it was a cold day, August 17. Suddenly someone knocked on the door. I go to open it, ask who it is. “It is I, Stravinskienė” who was of *[wife of the man who had a sign that read:]* “**nur fur Deutsche.**” “It is me, open the door.” Well, “Why don’t you have your light on?” “Yes,” we said. “We are sitting here, we don’t know what is going to happen.” So there, “They can take you away as they are doing to the others. And you have a large heifer, capable of birthing calves, so you give me that heifer now.”

[02:] 24:03:07 – [02:] 26:06:15

24:50 – 26:58

A: “I will take her—I will lead her through your garden here, so when you, if you are still alive, and your children need bread”—she said this to my mother, and I heard this, we were all right there—“So I will at least give your children some bread.” And my mother said, “I will not give anyone anything. We have a cow, a heifer, some pigs, let them fight over it,” she said, “Let them eat everything. If they want to devour us, then let them devour all of this.” This is what my mother said. And I was silent. And she left. “You, Mrs. Melnickienė, don’t be angry with me,” she said. “I came to tell you from my soul as a neighbor.” And a Russian prisoner worked for them. Someone worked for them—how can I say this—a runaway Belarussian girl, sixteen years old, with her aging father. Only for the stomach, as people say. They worked for them only for sustenance. And for some time, the wife of a Soviet military officer also worked for them. And he always walked around with his hands clasped like this. So there. So she left. And again, someone knocks on the door. I open it again and I ask, “Who is it?” “It is me, with your neighbor Mrs. Paukštienė.” I said, “Well, please.” And my mother said, “Open the door, open the door for the woman.” And we heard that the dogs were already barking in the neighborhood, crying. The Albavičius family is crying, our neighbors, they are being taken away. That Albavičius was ostensibly a Polish man, an old man, he walked poorly. And his wife was an old woman; she did not even speak Polish. She was a Lithuanian. She hailed from our region. She was his second wife. So they cried so much, their dog barked, and they stuffed them into a carriage and took them that night to Šeštokai, to the station. So then all of that woman’s teeth fell out. Probably from the stress, or something. Well, after some time. Well, she survived. Someone had said that Albavičius died on the way, but

we would have heard about it. But they took them a roundabout way, not using the city center streets, as if they were embarrassed.

[02:] 26:06:16 – [02:] 28:05:20

26:59 – 29:02

Q: So who transported them?

A: Well, the same ones. That same security force was in charge of everything. This was in 1942. Understand this. The same ones – Karaliūnas, Karalius, Telešius, all of the others, **Vilipolskas**, Mancevičius, and so forth.

Q: And where did they want to take the Poles?

A: So, I will tell you soon. So, we did not know where they would put all of them. I will tell you one other real fact. I even have written down the explanation of a woman who then received a pension for this. **Gaziauskienė**, and the other one—Gaz—the other woman was Planutienė. So her surname was that of her husband, it seems, a Lithuanian, Planutis. And she was **Gaziauskaitė**, so maybe she was Polish. [the names seem to be confused] When they came to take them away, on August 17, so those woman began crying. They said, “Sirs,”—the police and soldiers were Lithuanians. Then, in 1942. They said, “Sirs, where are you?” “Get ready, you will have to leave soon.” And they had cows, and cows and pigs – farmers. They said, “Sir, so where—why are you taking us?” “We are cleaning Lithuanian of its trash.” I am preparing to write an article. *[sound drops out; new frame]* *[pause; the position of the camera changes; camera shows Mrs. Safronova at a distance]*

Q: Now, you said that at the start a neighbor came to your house to take your cow. Then another neighbor came.

A: The neighbor came to comfort us, to calm us, to see if we were worried. And they did not take us away because we had very little land, we did not have any horses, so who could farm here. But they took the others.

Q: And who came in their stead?

A: Some people whose surnames I don't know. Well, they were former Lithuanians from somewhere, some place like Šakiūnai, something, or from Jurbarkas, or somewhere else. Those who had come after the Polish people. So they were settled here.

[02:] 28:05:21 – [02:] 30:03:17

29:03 – 31:05

A: And they were here until the Germans were driven out.

Q: And where did they take the Polish people?

A: Where did they take them? I will tell you soon. They took them to the Šeštokai train station. And then they transported them by train to the lake peat bogs, some of them. I have written down some material about those who were in the peat bogs until the Germans were driven out, that time. There were very large barracks there. Many people were brought there from various regions. And they took them to the lake peat bogs over there near Kaunas somewhere. So the village children would go look when they were being taken there, everything. From the train, then they would drive them in trucks. So there, they say, they said that Poles were brought here, and look these are people. They probably thought that Poles were not people. This is what the children said. So some of them even went to school. And everyone was ordered to do work – some dug the bogs, some—this one woman, whose daughter is a scientist, a naturalist, she lives in Vilnius now—so when they took her the girl was about two months old. So she would dry the diapers on her stomach and on her husband's stomach. Well, as they took them by train to the station. Some would, some people would take food to give them, the Lithuanians, those who also gave to the Jews, they took and carried. And they would somehow hand things over in the ghetto. There were some very good people. Well and the guard was a German woman, with a pistol even, and with a baton, she would watch over and force people. So that woman would have to clean 120 square meters of floor each day, the one who was feeding her daughter. And then her milk dried up.

[02:] 30:03:18 – [02:] 30:50:10

31:06 – 31:54

A: They would be given some kind of broth of some sort and they would boil something. Well, and a few people ran away to their relatives. This was a very difficult issue because Lithuanians and Poles were Catholics. And what is nationality? A Lithuanian man marries a Polish woman, a Polish man marries a Lithuanian woman. For example, my grandmother's mother's family is Lithuanian, but my father is from Poland. Well and what is the difference here. But here, this became complicated, and little by little some began running away, some fled Šeštokai, some fled Ežerėliai, some left their homes. Like this—there was this confusion.

Translated by: Ada Valaitis

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There are no restrictions on this interview.