In this interview, Annette Leiris talks about her assignments as a social worker in different camps, like, e.g., Beaune, Drancy, Pithiviers and Voves. She focuses on the organization of the camps, her daily routine there and the background and the fate of the inmates. In addition, she describes life in France under German occupation and comments on the incidents with the roundup of Vel’d’Hiv.

[01:] 00:16:00 – [01:] 06:17:00

She gives her background information; discusses her teaching French in England for one year and her obtaining a national diploma in social studies at a school in Montparnasse; talks about her first assignment in Evry in a workers’ home; describes her being in charge of child and maternity protection there; focuses on the fate of the children after the start of the war; comments on the start of her career by being called by her friend Ellen Campinchi and being invited to attend a social service school; explains her relationship to Ellen and César Campinchi; discusses her entering the navy in order to work in a home or shelter for sailors; talks about establishing this special home in Cherbourg; comments on the specific regulations for the sailors to follow in Cherbourg; talks about her responsibilities as a social worker, the sport facilities, food supply and the entertainment program there; discusses the different nationalities of the residents of the home.

[01:] 06:18:00 – [01:] 14:02:00

She comments on the German invasion of France; her departure from Cherbourg and wondering where to go; discusses her moving to northern France and hiding in the castle of the prince de Portalais [Portalèze] with her sister and other people; describes being protected by the prince; mentions the prince’s daughter Ms. Hauteville; focuses on the organization of life in the castle under German occupation; remembers an incident in which a man with a revolver went to the castle; remembers another incident in which her sister received flowers from a German officer; discusses their return to Paris; comments on her joining the Red Cross for the emergency team in Compiègne; explains the different zones of occupation of France; comments on the foundation of a home for French repatriated prisoners of war and refugees by the German association, “NS Volkshilfe,” (NSV); discusses the equipment, the organization and the staff of the NSV.
She describes her work with the NSV; talks about her assignment in Compiègne; mentions the assistance of Mr. Thurn and Taxis; comments on the difficulty of food supply; focuses on the type of prisoners in Compiègne; discusses having two assistants help her with her daily duties as social worker; mentions her return to Paris and seeing the roundup of foreign Jews there; comments on Jews being sent to ghettos; discusses volunteering for internment camps in both Beaune and Pithiviers; describes an oral agreement to become a social worker for the Red Cross there; comments on the situation in Beaune and Pithiviers and the Jewish inmates not eating unkosher food; mentions the Polish origin of the exclusively male inmates; discusses the assistants learning the instructions to prepare kosher food; focuses on the hospitalization of inmates because of their refusal to eat; describes her personal contact with the local police and her talking to them on behalf of the Jews and the kosher food; focuses on the organization of religious festivities in the camps.

Box 1, Tape 2

She discusses visiting a rabbi in Paris in the rue de la Victoire and his help to her to prepare for Yom Kippur; comments on switching from Beaune to the camp in Drancy 1941; discusses the conditions in Beaune la Rolande, the barracks, toilet facilities and the food supply; describes living in the hospital of Beaune la Rolande; comments her commute between Beaune and Drancy; describes the social center in Beaune she worked at, her office in a barrack, their technical and medical equipment, and her two assistants acting as interpreters for the Polish language; comments on other organizations and institutions represented in the camps; discusses the medical staff, the medical treatment, the permissions for hospital visits, the daily routine of the inmates and the facilities in Pithiviers; focuses on Drancy and the establishment of her office there, mentions her assistants Pierre Mars, Crémieux and François Lioncamp [Lyonecant, Lyoncamp] in Drancy; mentions Pierre Lioncamp and her friendship with his family; discusses her being fired by the French police for “doing too much” for the inmates; comments on the duration of her assignment in Drancy; discusses deportations and executions there; remembers an incident in which people “disappeared”; mentions the name Schneeberg.

She comments on the layout of the buildings in Drancy; describes the housing facilities, the assistance she had and other organizations and institutions represented there; discusses visits in Drancy and communication between women from outside the camp and male inmates; describes the location of her office and supervision of the camp; comments on her contact with French administrators and the French police; remembers a conversation with a French policeman; discusses her life after Drancy and being sent to a
camp for communists in Voves; comments on the inmates’ background, deportations and the living conditions there; discusses the roundup in Vel’d’Hiv and the preparation of the camps in Beaune for the people sent from Vel’d’Hiv; comments again on the camp for communists, the location of her office, her assistants, the visitors, the entertainment facilities and the professional background of the prisoners there; mentions her secretary Adolf [first name]; discusses the escape of some prisoners and being accused of being an accomplice to that escape.

Box 1, Tape 3

[03:] 00:05:00 – [03:] 08:14:00

She remembers an incident in Drancy in which there was a dead body in her office; comments again on the roundup of Vel’d’Hiv and her assignment with the Red Cross there; discusses the lack of organization and information and being sent back to Beaune and Pithiviers to prepare the camps for people who were supposed to be sent there; comments on the disappearance of former male inmates, the insufficient food and water supply and the lack of toilet facilities; discusses the deportation of women while their children were left behind; mentions Ms. Auvalle [Ovale, Ovalle]; comments on the deportation of children from Pithiviers and witnessing this personally; remembers discussing this deportation with colleagues from the Red Cross; discusses the duration of her assignment in Beaune and Pithiviers; describes the camp changing into a camp for political prisoners.

[03:] 08:15:00 – [03:] 24:11:09

She discusses the participation of local women of Beaune searching the Jewish women for jewelry; comments on the “Final Solution”; remembers an incident with two children, Rosette and Jacques; talks about memories of some children and their life circumstances in the camp; discusses the duration of her stay in this camp; talks about her assignment in Fresnes with people of the resistance and collaborators; discusses her memories of occupied Paris; comments on Jewish life in Paris, the liberation and anti-German attitude; focuses on the liberation of Drancy, the departure of the Gestapo and the Swedish Council telling the Red Cross to help with the liberation of Drancy; mentions Alois Brunner and “replacing” him and taking over his sleeping quarters.

Box 1, Tape 4

[05:] 00:09:00 – [05:] 12:32:00

She comments on the organization of the liberation, the food ration cards and issuing temporary papers to the inmates; discusses the Red Cross teams returning to Paris on
trucks; comments on the fate of the Drancy archives; comments on the organization of transports from Drancy; discusses the police staying in the camps and her eating Brunner’s food; focuses on the liberation of Paris while she stayed at the Hotel Lutetia; comments on deportees located at the hotel; discusses the situation at the hotel, the vaccinations and the medical treatment of deportees there; remembers recognizing one man named Epstein [Eppstein, Ebbstein] from Beaune; discusses the prison de la Roquette, its organizational chart and the life and daily routine of the inmates.

[05:] 12:33:00 – [05:] 24:34:06

She remembers being told a story by a male deportee about people eating parts of other people; comments again on the deportation of children; discusses learning about the gas chambers after the war; focuses on the return of inmates and prisoners from the camps to their home towns; mentions the Jewish woman Getting [Götting] and her son looking for her at the hotel and never seeing her again; comments on her further career as a social worker; mentions a man named Hammer; discusses her assignment in the prison of Haguenau; focuses on the prison becoming French and being reorganized; describes her work in the prison; comments on her later work in Bercy; discusses her marriage and her being a social worker in Fresnes until her retirement.

Box 1, Tape 5

[06:] 00:10:00 – [06:] 06:52:00 [end of recording]

She comments on her contact and friendship with Jewish families after the war; discusses her commitment to Amnesty International after retirement; provides a personal resume of her life experience; comments on her never going to Germany nor to any of the camps again; discusses Jewish persecution in general.