

ZORKA, Skiba  
Former Yugoslavia Witnesses Documentation Project  
Serbian  
RG-50.586\*0016

Box 1, DVD 1

In this interview, Skiba Zorka, born in 1937, discusses her life during the German occupation, after the liberation, and during the Yugoslav Wars. She talks about how difficult life was after her parents' death. She focuses on the suffering that she and other children experienced in the concentration camp for children. She describes different ways in which they were tortured and mistreated. Zorka talks about her life in Zagreb after she was adopted. She describes what she witnessed during the Yugoslav War in Bosnia and the difficulties she experienced.

**[01:] 01:09:07 – [01:] 11:13:15**

She talks about arrival of Ustaša (Croatian Revolutionary Movement) and the German Army after the fascist Croatian state was established; describes how they robbed shops and people; comments how Serbs and Jews were fired from jobs and how there was a plan for their elimination from Croatia; talks about family life and the first abuses they suffered at the hands of the Ustaša; discusses the ethnic diversity of the population in her village; expresses her amazement at her father's sudden bravery in the face of the behavior of Croats against Serbs; remembers an incident where one Ustaša man shot at a German soldier and then blamed the Serbs; explains that afterward 27 Serbs were executed as punishment and that the villagers were forced to watch the execution; says that her father and uncle were taken to the prison for Serbs; discusses how **Omer Alagich** (Омер Алагич), the same person that took away her father and uncle, burned down their house and barn and killed her mother; talks how the Ustaša imprisoned Serbs and then took them to **Shushnyar** (Шушњар) where they were thrown into ditches; comments on Ustaša burning down all Serbian houses.

**[01:] 11:13:16 – [01:] 22:22:01**

She talks about her siblings and how they were hiding in the wheatfield on the day that their house was burned and their mother was killed; remembers in order to avoid discovery by Ustaša her sister accidentally killed their nine-month-old brother by suffocation; discusses how since that day she still has nightmares; says that their only source of food was the one cow that survived the barn fire; discusses how life became difficult; explains that they slept in Croatian and Muslim barns, hid in the woods, and ate forest fruits; talks about how they were forced to beg for money in Santski Most (Сантски Мост) to survive; remembers how on one occasion while they were sleeping in the attic of the railroad station they witnessed the Ustaša abuse prisoners while on the way to **Shushnyar**, where they threw the prisoners into ditches.

**[01:] 22:22:02 – [01:] 32:26:15**

She talks about how the Serbian prisoners were forced to dig ditches and how there were dead bodies everywhere; comments how on the next day the ditches were covered with soil; assumed that the prisoners had been killed and thrown into the ditches; remembers how wells were filled with human blood and how they drank water from the river; discusses their deportation to Zagreb by the International Red Cross; comments on her sister joining the partisan forces; speaks about the three-day journey to Zagreb without food or water; discusses their accommodation in the shelter for orphans; discusses how there were hundreds of children and how the living conditions were poor; comments how there was very little food and how only the strongest could get to the food.

**[01:] 32:26:16 – [01:] 40:46:19**

She talks about their transfer to the camp for children in Jastrebac (Јастребац); describes the camp and how children were selected by age and sent to different facilities; comments how boys were trained to become Ustaša; discusses how camp guards abused them; comments on the director of the camp **Alojz Slepinač** [Алојз Слепинац] who took a photo of her and her sisters claiming that they were Croatian children, so that they could receive donations from Catholic countries; talks about how other children her age received even worse treatment because they were small and “useless.”

Box 1, DVD 2

**[02:] 01:02:06 – [02:] 13:10:15**

She talks about the Handzar Division and its structure; discusses how her sister’s partisan division caught **Omer Alagich** and killed him; comments how prisoners from the **Zitni Magazin** prison did not resist because of the threat that their families would be killed; remembers conversations between her sister and **Stojanka Ertseg** [Стојанка Ерцег] who survived the prison about the torture and maltreatment of Serbs; speaks about the Jastrebac camp for children and how children were dying from typhus; remembers the gravedigger who was responsible for burying dead children; talks about how children who were still alive were buried in order to make more space in the camp; discusses how the gravedigger spared her life; mentions how hundreds of children were buried every day; talks how children were slaughtered and how she survived the massacre [*shows the scar from the massacre*].

**[02:] 13:10:16 – [02:] 24:34:19**

She talks how the international red cross ordered children to be moved from the basement; comments how they received better treatment; remembers how they were forced to learn by heart Catholic prayers and the songs of Ustaša; remembers one occasion when they were brought to the basement and beaten with chains; discusses how one day a Catholic priest came and

converted them to Catholicism; talks about the conversion rituals; comments on how they were treated better after the conversion; discusses how Croatian families started to adopt children from the camp; talks how one of the camp guards **Slavko Dasovich** [Славко Дасовић] adopted her;

**[02:] 24:34:20 – [02:] 40:50:08**

She talks how the partisans liberated nine-hundred boys from the camp; speaks about the bad food that caused many diseases; remembers a story that her brother told her how on one occasion a nurse killed a boy just because he mentioned her father; comments on her brother's failed escape and how he was caught and punished; mentions how sick and weak children were fed to the pigs; mentions how some Croat children were also abused; remembers all the ways in which they were abused and tortured.

Box 1, DVD 3

**[03:] 00:51:16 – [03:] 14:20:11**

She talks about the nurses and their duties; describes the facility in which they were imprisoned; witnesses how the nurse in charge determined punishments and the other nurses carried them out; speaks about how she was adopted and taken to Zagreb; talks about their living situation and treatment in Zagreb; remembers one Jewish girl with whom she was sharing an apartment and how she saved the girl from the Ustaša; mentions that **Slavko** brought her to his sister **Jelka** to take care of her; speaks how she was converted to Catholicism; talks about her enrollment in the elementary school.

**[03:] 14:20:12 – [03:] 27:19:16**

She talks how she received a new identity; remembers how she ran away from school; discusses the Communist propaganda in the school; remembers that she was sharing apartment with a student named **Ivan Szabo** who cooperated with partisans; explains how she was visited by social workers on a regular basis; mentions how after the war, the Jewish girl whom she saved from the Ustaša visited her and how her son wrote a book named after her; talks about the book and the life of the Jewish girl and her son.

**[03:] 27:19:17 – [03:] 41:40:14**

She talks how she met **Ivan Szabo** in Zagreb; comments on receiving welfare help; remembers how she made a friend for a first time in a fifth grade; talks about her return to Sanski Most and how she met her family; talks about the excitement she felt when she reunited with her family; remembers how she met her sister **Nevenka** who told her that she had killed Omer Alagich; speaks how she met the rest of her siblings.

Box 1, DVD 4

**[04:] 00:41:01 – [04:] 10:55:08**

She talks about her graduation and how she met her future husband; speaks how she moved to Mostar; remembers how **Slavko** came back from the United States to visit her; remembers how **Jelka** became sick and died, and one year later **Slavko** died too; talks about her family and how she was silent about her ordeals; comments on her participation in an annual gathering of camp survivors in Zagreb; speaks about how the nurse in charge invited her for a lunch; comments how the nurse that invited her was one of the nurses that worked in a child camp and how she intended to poison her; remembers one woman calling her to warn her not to go to the lunch; recounts how all Serbs left Mostar in 1992 when Ustaša came; speaks about her return to Mostar in 1997 and how the entire city was in ruins.

**[04:] 10:55:09 – [04:] 18:28:08**

She talks about hardships she encountered in Mostar; speaks about how she could not get any documents because she was considered dead; remembers meeting the man who had claimed her death; comments how the Ustaša intended to kill her and how they killed another person believing that it was her; comments how some people moved into her apartment; describes how one priest warned her that she was in grave danger; tells how she went to the international police station to report her case; explains that nurse **Gracioza**, from the children's camp, ordered her to be murdered; comments how her students helped her to get documents and a pension.