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DAUJOTAS, Vladas
Lithuania Documentation Project
Lithuanian
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In this interview, Vladas Daujotas, born in 1921 and lived in Kaunas at the beginning of the war in 1941, talks about his witnessing people being beaten up the infamous massacre at the Lietūkis garage. The interviewee claims that he did not watch the pogrom for more than two minutes and cannot remember the details very well. He states his opinion *[not consistent with the historical record]* that hostility toward Jews burgeoned during the first Soviet occupation of Lithuania when the Jews collaborated with the Soviet administration and held highest positions in it. He says that a part of his family's apartment was handed over to someone else by the Jewish officials but nevertheless that his parents had Jewish friends and that his mother tried to put in a good word for their Jewish friends with the Lithuanian partisans but was turned down.

Tape 1, Box 1

[01:] 00:42:02 – [01:] 04:21:12
00:00 – 04:31

He introduces himself as Vladas Daujotas, born in 1921 in Seda (Mažeikiai region) to Marijonas and Eugenija Daujotai; says that his father was a forest ranger and that his parents returned from the Soviet Union in the first year of Lithuanian independence (probably around 1919-1920); explains that they lived in Darbėnai (Kretinga district), where he went to elementary school; states that later they moved to Kretinga where he attended a Franciscan *gymnasium* (equivalent to U.S. college preparatory school).

[01:] 04:21:13 – [01:] 08:37:00
04:32 – 08:57

When asked to share his memories from the eve of the war, he discusses the mass deportations of Lithuanians *[by the Soviets]* that took place about a week before the beginning of the war *[June 1941]*, and about the persecution of Lithuanian intellectuals under the Soviets *[June 1940–June 1941]* as well as the massacre of Lithuanian intellectuals in Rainiai *[actually the murder of 70-80 Lithuanian political prisoners by the NKVD and the retreating Red Army]*; mentions that at the beginning of the war he lived in Kaunas with his family; claims that among the indicators of imminent war was the return of his classmates, who had fled from Lithuania to Germany when the Russians came *[in 1940]*; recalls that one of them stayed with his family; says that they talked about the imminent war *[meaning the German invasion of Lithuania]*; states that even the Russians themselves talked about it; mentions that his family listened to radio programs from London about the trip of *[Rudolf]* Hess to England; points out that Kaunas was not rescued by the Germans, and when the Germans arrived, Kaunas was already free of Russians; says that as soon as the Germans arrived the persecution of Jews began: they were ordered to wear yellow

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stars, forbidden to walk on the sidewalks; clarifies that the persecutions started several days after the Germans came; states that posters were put up on the walls in Kaunas listing the rules that regulated life of the Jewish people.

[01:] 08:37:01 – [01:] 13:14:20
08:58 – 13:47

He mentions that he witnessed an event at the Lietūkis garage which took place about a week after the Germans arrived in Kaunas; states that he had been out in the city that day and was walking home on **Vytauto** Avenue when he noticed a crowd of people and German officers and soldiers among them; notes that this incident happened in the afternoon; states that as he approached, he saw a “horrible sight” in which people were being beaten up, revived by having water poured on to them and then beaten up again; claims that as soon as he understood what was going on he turned around and walked away; says that the ones who were carrying out the beatings had white faces and shaved heads; adds that he assumes they had just left the prison since only prisoners had shaved heads at that time [*these beating were carried out by pro-German Lithuanian nationalists*]; claims that he doesn’t know how many executioners there were but it didn’t look like there were very many; says that he stayed there for only a minute or two; explains that he did not understand at the time that it was Jewish people who were being beaten up, and only later learned it from the Soviet media; when asked if there were already dead people when he came, he says that there were some people lying on the ground, but he could not see if they were dead as the crowd was standing behind a fence several tens of meters away from the site; explains that the execution took place in a parking lot next to the garage.

[01:] 13:14:21 – [01:] 16:48:19
13:48 – 17:29

When asked how the water was poured on to people, he responds that the torturers were using water hoses that were kept in the garage to wash the cars; insists that he cannot remember many details because he only watched the incident for a very short time; when asked if there were people waiting for their turn to be beaten up, he responds that he saw some people lined up against the wall; says that they were not guarded but that they could not have run away, as they were fenced in and could not have gone far in the middle of the city; adds that Lithuanian civilians watched as well as German soldiers; when asked about the reaction of the crowd, he answers that the crowd was silent; repeats once again that he came to the garage in the afternoon and that he watched for no longer than a minute or two.

[01:] 16:48:20 – [01:] 20:50:22
17:30 – 21:42

The interviewer hands some photographs from the Lietūkis garage for the interviewee to review and comment on; talking about the first one, the interviewee notices that the crowd is standing really close to the site of the incident and that there is no fence between them, which was there when he came over; when asked what was used for beating, he replies that the torturers used sticks, as can be seen from the photograph; claims that he cannot recall if he understood that the victims were Jewish; confirms that hostility towards the Jewish people had existed by then;

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explains that the hostility was born after the Russians came and the Jews welcomed them “with open arms,” took up highest positions in the administration and demonstrated “with arrogance” that the power was in their hands; when asked if he had witnessed this arrogance himself, he says that since his family’s apartment was large, the Jewish communists took some rooms from them and gave them to somebody else; claims that before the Russians came the Lithuanians and the Jews got along well, but the hostility burgeoned during the year of the first Soviet occupation.

[01:] 20:50:23 – [01:] 25:42:11
21:43 – 26:45

He discusses once again the start of the war and the restrictions on the Jews that were introduced such as the order for the Jews to move to the ghetto; mentions that his parents had Jewish friends and that some of them had fled Klaipėda and its surroundings when it was occupied by Hitler [*meaning German forces*]; adds that one was a lumber merchant and another was a dentist; recalls that when the Germans came, his mother and her sister went over to the headquarters of the Lithuanian partisans and pleaded with them not to punish their Jewish friends, explaining that they were loyal and good people; states that they were warned that they would suffer themselves if they didn’t leave immediately; adds that they were devastated that they could not help in any way; claims that the event at the garage was the only occurrence of hostility against the Jews that he had witnessed; states that he later saw many people secretly handing food to the Jews when they were still allowed to walk unguarded; remarks that later, when they lived in the ghetto, the Jews walked in columns lead by the Germans.

[01:] 25:42:12 – [01:] 31:20:20
26:46 – 32:38

The interviewer asks him to comment on another photograph, and he says that the scene reminds him of the one he witnessed; notices that once again there is no fence between the torturers and the crowd; begins doubting his memory about the existence of a fence; reviews the rest of the photographs and notices that in all of them the distance from the site of the execution and the crowd is very small and there is no fence; acknowledges that this contradicts the image in his memory; when prompted by the interviewer, he draws a map and explains where he stood when he witnessed the event.

[01:] 31:20:21 – [01:] 34:30:08
32:39 – 35:56

When asked who the victims were – what he thought then and what he thinks now – he replies that he then thought they were Jewish [*several times earlier he said that he did not know that they were Jewish*], but that he cannot remember why he thought that; speculates that maybe he asked someone from the crowd or saw the victims wearing yellow stars; adds that perhaps the victims were Jews who worked at the prison as interrogators or guards; claims that even today he doesn’t know who these people were; says that he could not tell that they were Jewish from their complexion since the crowd was standing quite far from the site; states that the people had been beaten up so badly that one could not recognize them.