

PRUDNIKOVA, Regina  
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In this interview Regina Prudnikova, maiden name - Kirvelaitytė, who was born in 1925 and lived all her life in Pilviškiai town, talks about the relationship between the Jews and the Lithuanians in Pilviškiai before the war; about the blood libel stories that existed in Pilviškiai; about the looting of the Jewish property – mentions that she herself brought some items home. She discusses the restrictions that the Jews had to face when the Germans came; describes how the future executioners treated the Jews, claiming she saw how they tortured Jewish youths by making them sleep in wet beddings. She explains that at first 20-30 Jewish youths, suspected of their participation in the communist youth movement, were gathered and shot, after being held in a barn for about a month; that the rest were massacred a few days later on the land that belonged to Lozoraitis. She provides a long list of the executioners. She mentions that her neighbor's wife was Jewish, but she was spared, since she had converted into Christianity; that two Jewish sisters were continuously raped by the Germans. She claims having seen only one German, who participated in the second execution and explains that she saw him in a car that had the machine gun in it. She recalls how her teacher, who also took part in the execution gave her a coat covered in blood, and how she washed and wore it; how she bought a golden tooth from a woman, whose husband took part in the executions – she shows the tooth to the interviewer; how she bought a golden watch that she knew was taken from a Jew. She says that she saw a train in Pilviškiai railway station, which supposedly was taking Jews from Bulgaria to Paneriai. She talks about a famous Lithuanian partisan Baltūsis and his participation in the executions.

Tape 1 Box 1

**[01] 00:41:06 - [01] 09:08:09**  
00:00:51 - 00:09:39

She introduces herself as Regina Prudnikova, maiden name – Kirvelaitytė, born in 1925 in Pilviškiai. She says that before the war, Pilviškiai was mostly inhabited by Jewish families; that the Jews got along well with Lithuanians; that they would share matzos with everyone on Shabbat; that her family would buy everything from Jewish shopkeepers, who gave them presents every Christmas and Easter; that the Jewish shopkeepers let them buy on credit; that many Lithuanians served at Jewish homes; that the Jews were very compassionate people. She recalls that she served at one Jewish home, taking care of a child, but other people tried to intimidate her, saying that the Jews put people in a vat with nails in it and roll them until the blood comes out, so she got frightened and ran away; recalls that people used to say that the Jews need at least a drop of Christian blood for their religious holidays; explains that she believed what she was told, because she was young and naïve, but now she thinks it is all fiction. She recalls that she and her whole family used to go to work on a farm that belonged to Lozoraitis, on whose land the Jews were executed; claims that Lozoraitis was a drunkard and highly indebted. Goes on to tell how poor her family was. She explains that as the Russians came, the trade union leader Tomas Liogys helped her get a job at the Lipkė's restaurant – everybody called him Lipkė, although his real surname was Liurija – which was nationalized as soon as the Russians came, but one of Liurija's daughters was permitted to keep her position as a shift manager, while

the other shift manager was Magdalena Valeckienė. She concludes that life for her and her family eased with the Russian occupation, as her sisters started going to school, her family was given 10 ha of Lozoraitis' land, some of his animals, but that everything was immediately taken away and returned to Lozoraitis when the Germans came. She said that the Jews did well around Smetona's government, as well as when the Russians came; explains that only four Jewish families of Pilviškiai had been deported to Siberia: Šimbergas, Mauškė; that Mauškė later came back from Siberia and her father worked as a distributor for him; that she cannot remember the names of the others. She agrees that the Jews who were deported were lucky, as they were to ones who survived; remembers that both of her mentioned families had come back to Lithuania.

**[01] 09:08:09 - [01] 18:07:17**

00:09:39 - 00:20:04

She says that the Jewish families were deported to Siberia together with Lithuanian intellectuals; that she saw as they were put on the trains; that when the Germans came, the Lithuanians started looting Jewish shops; that the headman of Pilviškės, Vincas Ambrasas also took part in the lootings; that she herself brought back some cloth and some shoes from a Jewish store; that her brother told her to give everything back, as Petras Ilgūnas, who worked as a police clerk – she mentions that he was sentenced for his participation in the executions of Jews, but claims that he did not participate – warned that there was a complaint submitted against her; that she returned everything to the police. She explains that the Jews did not resist, as they were hiding from the Germans; says that the Lithuanians tore out doors and windows in bright daylight. She confesses that she and Antanas Masaitis brought a bottle of vodka from „Metropolis“ store [laughs]. She recalls how on the first day of German occupation, a German soldier saw Mauškė, a Jew, running down the street and asked him or some bystander who he was and got a response that the running man was a „Jude“ (Jew), shot him right away. She explains again that the town was mostly inhabited by Jews before the war and that there were only a few Lithuanian families: Mikalavičiai, Rinkevičiai, Žibrauskaitė; that the Lithuanians lived on the outskirts, mostly in houses they rented from Jewish owners. She remembers that as Neimarkas store was being looted, he was hiding on the second floor, where his apartment was. She says that at first Jewish communist youth were summoned and taken to sleep in a barn next to a mill that belonged to a German named Kromas; that the Jews were not allowed to walk on the sidewalk and were obliged to wear yellow stars; that some Lithuanians – **Laurynaitis [Laurinaitis]**, Petras Strimas, Jurgis Štūra, Ramanauskas – started beating and kicking Jewish people if they saw them walking on the sidewalk. She discusses the fate of Lithuanian communists from Pilviškiai and says that Marašauskas had already been shot when the Jewish communist youth was arrested, that Kairiūkštis was executed together with the Jews. She says that on the day of the second execution Kaminskas and Ramanauskas came over to Lozoraitis' home to look for her father and to execute him; that Kaminskas, whose profession was weighing the pigs, had been in conflict with her father; that her father managed to flee and went into hiding until Lozoraitis promised him that he will not be shot. She says that as the Jews were being executed, her father heard Lozoraitis say that after they are done with the Jews, “there is another hill dedicated to the poor”.

**[01] 18:07:17 - [01] 28:35:04**

00:20:04 - 00:29:55

She says that there were 20-30 youths kept in the barn; that they were the ones who were executed first, while the rest were executed a few days later. She names the people, or

„activists“ whom she knew in that barn: the secretary of Komsomolsk named Rižanskas and Rokė Liurija. She mentions that she had been enrolled in the communist movement herself and marched with the others on the streets of Pilviškiai, chanting songs that glorified Russia; that she was interrogated by a Lithuanian security agent in civilian clothes from Vilkaviškis, who threatened her with execution, but she managed to convince him that she had no idea what the movement she was joining was about; that she was then only prohibited from conspiring, or simply meeting with her friends Julė Kalinauskaitė and Ona **Šiupailaitė [Čiupailaitė]**. She claims that the „activists“ were kept in the barn for over a month before being executed; recalls seeing how they were made to wade into the Pilvė River and lie down in the water with their pillows and blankets in their hands, and then driven together into the barn and had to sleep in their wet beddings; she explains that she passed the barn every afternoon as she was coming home from Juozas Janulaitis, who was teaching her to sew, and would always see the Jewish youths being taken to the river; that in the morning they were made to clean the streets; that they were being beaten with rubber sticks; that Ramanauskas and Kaminskas simply ran into them on their bikes; list the people whom she saw taking the Jews to the river: Ramanauskas, Kaminskas, Laurinaitis, Strimaitis, Jurgis Štūra; explains that they were all „white striper“; that the „white striper“ movement was established right after the start of the German occupation; that they were armed with guns. She claims that the people of Pilviškiai were horrified, but there were also those, who rejoiced, as the Jews were much richer and had more land and factories, for example, **Frydmanas [Fridmanas]** owned a fur factory. She says that the Jewish youths were executed in August (1941); that they were also ordered to dig pits for the rest of the Jews – explains that her father saw them digging. She says that she witnessed the Jewish youths being taken to the execution site.

**[01] 28:35:04 - [01] 35:31:19**

00:29:55 - 00:37:09

She claims that Janulaitis participated in both of the massacres; that she saw as a police chief named Kazys Lietuvnininkas bring guns to Janulaitis – hints that Kazys Lietuvnininkas might still be alive in the US. She names the people whom she saw lined up on the day of the execution and whom she suspects of shooting at the Jewish youths; Petras Štrimas, **Buraga [Buragas]**. She says that there were fewer men who participated in the first execution than in the second, she says that she has counted 27 of those who lead the Jews to the execution site on the day of the second execution, but suspects that there were more. She claims that there were no Germans around when the Jews were being tortured; that Lithuanian policemen in uniforms were also beating the Jews; that police uniforms were not worn on the day of the executions and the policemen who participated wore civilian clothes; that only one German came on the day of the second execution in a car with a machine gun in it; that there was no machine gun in the first execution. She says that the second execution took place at the end of August, when less than a week had passed after the first execution. She recalls that Antanas Kalinauskas used to bring food to Liurija, as the latter could not buy food in any store; that the Jewish youth were not kept in the barn all day and could go home to get some food. She recalls her neighbor Barzda, whose wife was Jewish, but had converted to Christianity and was therefore spared. She explains that on the day of the second execution men, women, children and old people were all massacred together; that her sister Emilija Juškevičienė told her that she had seen blood foams on the site of the execution; that the next day after the massacre a party was held in Šimbergas' restaurant; that her family's neighbor Vainulevičius and his wife Uršulė passed them on their way to the party,

and said that they were going to the „funeral“; that they were drinking and singing until early hours. She recalls seeing the Jews taken to the execution site, the older people being taken in carts and the ones who couldn't walk were beaten with rubber sticks.

Tape 2 Box 1

**[02] 00:43:09 - [02] 09:51:14**

00:00:46 - 00:10:17

She says that, except for the communist youth, the Jews were living in their homes and only on the day of execution they were taken to the town square and lined up to march to the site of execution. She goes on to tell the story of two sisters from Antanavas, who were held in the German headquarters and raped; says that later they were taken to Lozoraitis and his father was about to drive them to a village, where they would be safe, but on the way there someone – she's not sure a German or a Lithuanian – stopped them and took the sisters to Vilkaviškis to be executed there. She claims that the executioners were given houses or apartments. She lists the people who she thinks took part in the executions: Pijušas Buraga, Petras Štrimaitis, Norkevičius, Janulaitis, Besusparis, Baltūsis, Juškai, Totoraitis, two brothers Kalasevičiai from Piliūnai village, Janulevičius, Adomaitis. When asked to explain how she knows that these people participated in the executions, she responds that she had seen them leading the Jews in the direction of the execution site. She repeats that there was only one German with them and he was sitting in the car with the machine gun in it; claims that Ramanauskas, Kaminskas, Antanas Baltūsis were also sitting in the same car; says that the car with the machine gun was following the column of Jews so that if someone tried to escape, they would be shot with the machine gun. She goes on to talk about her brother Algirdas Kirvelaitis, who had been enrolled with the „white strippers“ and was going to perform a search in Trumpikis' house to look for items looted from the Jewish stores – this happened before the executions – when a German, who just happened to be at Trumpikis' house, shot her brother's companion; explains that after this incident her brother gave away his gun immediately and did not take part in any further activities. She explains that her other brother, who was an electrician, had been working in a power plant next to the Šešupė River, when he was given a gun and told to shoot any Jew he saw passing the bridge over the river; that he didn't shoot anyone and let Krilikovskis pass. She says that both of her brothers were arrested when the Russians came and charged with collaboration with the Germans, but no file was formed against them, since they did not participate in the executions; that they spent three years in Russian prisons and then returned.

**[02] 09:51:14 - [02] 18:35:11**

00:10:17 – 00:19:23

She says that her brother Algirdas currently is helping Laurynaitis in finding witnesses to testify that Laurynaitis had no ties with the Gestapo; complains that the assistant of the persecutor Antanaitis does not want to listen to her testimonies, even though she knows a lot, since she knew Laurynaitis, Ramanauskas, Kaminskas and Lietuvninkas and would go to dances with them; she insists that she really knows they were the executioners. She goes on to talk about Vytautas Laurynaitis, who was a „white stripper“ and took part in the executions, and later left for Kaunas, from where he would come back in uniform; specifies that the uniform was green with black stripes and a skull on it; says that V. Laurynaitis would easily get permissions for his mother to travel on trains, while getting the permission was a great deed for the others, including herself. She retells what Masaitienė, the mother of her friend Antanas Masaitis, had told her

about V.Laurynaitis, who was visiting their home: when Masaitienė asked him how he can shoot the Jews, he responded that it was the same as shooting into a fence. She claims having seen V.Laurynaitis taking the Jews to the execution site both of the times. She remembers that V.Laurynaitis kicked an elderly Jewish woman, because she was walking on the sidewalk; that he was one of the men – together with Kaminskas, Ramanauskas, Petras Štrimas, Jurgis Štrūra, Jonas Barišauskas – who tortured the Jewish youths next to the barn. She claims that Janulaitis did not take part in the torture and only joined for the executions; that after the second execution Janulaitis returned with a cart full of clothes and stored them in the stables; that the next day Janulaitis gave her a beige coat smeared with blood and suggested she cleaned it herself; that her mother washed the coat for her, and Janulaitis fixed to coat for her; that when Janulaitis was arrested, she was called to Kybartai and testified; that Janulaitis pretended he didn't know her at all; that he was sentenced to jail; that after the jail he went to live in Marijampolė.

[02] 18:35:11 - [02] 28:20:12

00:19:23 - 00:29:32

She says that there was an auction of Jewish clothes organized next to the Lipkė (Liurija)'s restaurant; that people from the surrounding villages came to participate; that in other places the clothes were simply thrown out of the windows; that the clothes were thrown away by the executioners, who kept only the better quality clothes and furniture for themselves; that the Jewish homes were taken over not solely by the executioners; that her neighbor Kazlovas moved into a Jewish home, even though he did not take part in the executions; that Kazlovas' family was very poor, but after the executions his wife started wearing a fur coat. She goes on to tell a story how she saw a pile of shoes in Kazlovas' hallway and took a pair of shoes that she liked [laughs], but Kazlovas' mother-in-law noticed a pair missing, came after her and took the shoes back. When asked, where all the gold that the Jews owned disappeared, she says that everything was taken away, even their golden teeth were plied; that she also bought a tooth after the Russians came [opens her mouth and shows the golden tooth]; explains that the tooth had been recast [the camera focuses on the interviewee's mouth]; that a Ukrainian military dentist named Vera suggested she should get a golden crown and mentioned that Adomaitienė, whose husband Adomaitis participated in the execution, might have some golden teeth left; that she went over to Adomaitienė and got a golden crown with a tooth inside. She says that all the front teeth of doctor **Dirbovskis [Derbovskis, Dembovskis, Dimbovskis]** were removed, since they were cast in gold; that the teeth were plied from people who were still alive; that she has heard from witnesses that the teeth were plied after the Jews had washed themselves in the Višakis River before the execution. She recalls that after the Russians came and she was working at a store, she bought a golden watch from Kupčinskas' wife, although she suspected that it was Jewish a watch, since Kupčinskas was too poor to buy a watch; says that Kupčinskas was not sentenced, since many people defended him, as his family was very poor and had many children. She tries to remember how much she paid for the golden tooth. She says that Adomaitis was a shoemaker and was sentenced to 15 years of prison for his participation in the execution. She goes on to discuss how Kaminskas successfully went into hiding in Veiveriai (37 km from Pilviškiai) for seven years; that a Besusparskis accidentally ran into him in the Veiveriai canteen; that he was denounced and arrested immediately; tells two separate incidents in which she heard people from Veiveriai talking good things about Kaminskas, and they couldn't believe what she was saying about him being an executioner and kept going on how devout he was and how he went for the communion every single day.

**[02] 28:20:12 - [02] 35:19:19**

00:29:32 - 00:36:49

She claims that the executioners of the Jews did not become rich, that they spent everything on alcohol and parties. She says that one cannot enjoy somebody else's riches for long. The interviewer notices that the interviewee herself has somebody else's tooth in her mouth, but she responds that she paid money for it, although admitting that it was really little. She says that she was not afraid to put somebody else's tooth in her mouth, since it was recast; she speculates what tools could have been used to take the tooth out – a hammer or a hilt of a gun. She thinks that there is a lot of gold buried in Pilviškiai, since the Jews did not know they would be executed and hoped that they would return and retrieve their treasures. She mentions that Egita Liurija spent a few days at Uleckienė's home hiding inside the wall, but then they learned that somebody was going to inform on her and Egita was moved to a village, where she survived. She remembers how she was working at the Pilviškiai Railway station and saw a cattle train full of Jews and how **Levukas [Levokas]**, who lived nearby and knew German, asked them in German where they were going from, and the Jews responded in Yiddish that they were coming from Bulgaria and claimed that they didn't know where they were being taken – mentions that people talked they were going to Paneriai [Ponery] (a site of several big massacres near Vilnius). She says she saw maybe four of similar trains, but she doesn't know where the others were from; that people talked that they were from France.

Tape 3 Box 1

**[03] 00:41:03 - [03] 07:21:09**

00:00:46 - 00:07:43

She says that she only saw one train herself – the one with the Jews from Bulgaria (earlier she claimed having seen four trains); that the train consisted of 30-40 cars; that all the cars had the same shape and had people in them; that she only saw women, mostly younger – she speculates that the older women simply could not reach the windows; explains that there were two small windows on either side of the train car; that the windows had barbed wire bars on them; that there were about six people crowding at each of those little windows [shows the size of the window]; remembers that the women were asking for water, but nobody wanted to risk to be shot by the Germans; says that the train stayed for about half an hour in the Pilviškiai station; that the train was guarded by German guards, who were traveling on the same train and occupied the last train car, which was a passenger car, unlike the others.

**[03] 07:21:09 - [03] 14:42:24**

00:07:43 - 00:15:23

She goes on to talk about Baltūsis, saying that she had known him before the war; that he had been studying at a seminary; that later he went on to study at some military academy in Kaunas; that when the Germans came he reappeared in Pilviškiai; that he took part in both of the executions; that after the executions he moved into a house that belonged to the richest Jews in Pilviškiai; that he had two children; that his wife later married a Soviet collaborator from Barzdai village. She thinks that Baltūsis attended the seminary in Marijampolė; that he was expelled from the seminary for debauchery; that when the Germans came, he returned from Kaunas, married a girl who worked at the bar and lived in Baltūsis parents' home until they moved to the Jewish

house; that people talked that after the executions Baltūsis went to Poland, where he worked as the deputy of the supervisor of Svencimas (Osvencim) concentration camp; that he would return to Pilviškiai for vacation wearing a light brown uniform; that he came back in 1944, when the Russians came, and went to hide in the woods soon after.

**[03] 14:42:24 - [03] 20:44:13**

00:15:23 - 00:21:40

She recalls that about four years ago (in 1996) she read in a newspaper about the decision of the Vilkaviškis district council to put up a statue for Baltūsis in Pilviškiai town; that she, together with her sister Justina Kirvelaitytė, wrote letters to Alperovičius (the acting director of the Jewish Lithuanian community) and to the government of Lithuania; that the leader of Vilkaviškis branch of the Liberal democratic party, Greimas, made sure that the project would not be implemented. She recalls that about three years ago (1997) there was a commemoration of Baltūsis death, involving a parade and a mass held in his honor; that it was also planned to rename Pilviškiai school in his honor; that recently there was a cross put up on top of the church that had an inscription saying „In memory of the partisans of Tauras district“; mentions that she and her sister Justina Kirvelaitytė are working on an article asking for another cross – in memory of the victims of those partisans; names two people the partisans had killed.

**[03] 20:44:13 - [03] 25:05:05**

00:21:40 - 00:26:11

She claims that the priests did not talk at all about the massacres in the church; speculates that maybe it was all done with the blessing of some priests; lists the priests of Pilviškiai at that time and specifies which ones were good and which ones were bad; says that Pėstininkas was a very good priest, but let the „bandits“(partisans) keep their guns with him, therefore was arrested and sentenced. She says that the executioners attended the church on a regular basis; that the priests would give them absolution.

Translated by: Milda Morkyte

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No restrictions