

ZALOGAITE, Elena
Lithuania Documentation Project
Lithuanian
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Tape 1 of 1

In this interview, Elena Zalogaitė, a resident of Obeliai, discusses Jewish life in the city before the war and how it changed after the Nazi take-over in 1941 when Jews were forced to move out of their homes into the ghetto in Antanašės, and were later shot. She describes hearing the shootings nearby and mentions an interruption in the shootings when Jewish partisans attacked those who were shooting the Jews. She explains the system by which the Jews were divided up to be shot either in Antanašės or Rokiškis according to gender, and describes witnessing a wagonload of Jewish women children and elderly pass through the town on their way to be shot. She also remembers exploring the empty ghetto with other children on the day of the shootings. She provides information about the Nazi collaborators and their families. She discusses in detail what became of Jewish belongings and how their empty houses were re-distributed amongst the city-dwellers. She also describes witnessing German perpetrators tear apart a synagoge that used to stand in her yard. She discusses rumors about burried video-recordings of the shootings, how the mass-graves were hidden and then later uncovered, and the fate of the man who owned this land.

[01]:44:20:10 – [01]:53:33:01

She introduces herself as a local of Obeliai born in 1928; talks about her family background; talks about the large Jewish population in Obeliai before the war; discusses what streets the Jews lived on, what kind of shops they had, and how most of the houses had belonged to Jews; mentions that the Jews were concentrated in the center of the cities and towns and did not live in villages; talks about how she interacted and went to school with Russians and with Jews; talks about her family's relations with Jews, mentioning the name of her mother's friend, Slepaitė; talks about what happened when the Germans came; mentions partisans (she calls Nazi collaborators „partisans“ and also „Jew-shooters“ (*tr. Žydšaudžiai*)); recalls a conversation her mother had with their Jewish neighbors in which they complained of being forced to leave their house and the fate that awaited them—that they would be forced to dig canals and then be shot into them; discusses the means of transportation Jews used to move out to Antanašės, a manor where the ghetto was established; [*knocking on door, interview resumes*]; tries to remember the year when the Jews were forced out of the city; argues with the interviewer about the date of the German invasion; admits to not really knowing exact dates but guesses that if the Germans came in 1941, then they shot the Jews in 1942, but then thinks they may have shot the Jews in the same year as the invasion.

[01]:53:33:02 – [01]:58:00:00

She describes seeing the Jews leave their homes, how her family stood on the street to bid farewell to the Jews as they moved out to Antanašės, and that their homes remained empty in the city; mentions the ghetto hospital where a partisan she knew hid and was infected with typhus;

discusses how, for several days, partisans forced Jews to move out of their homes to the ghetto; describes the civilian clothes of the partisans; debates whether they carried weapons; remembers an episode in which a small group of „Jew-shooters“ drove through the town drunk raising their weapons and shouting; talks about how these partisans guarded the ghetto once the Jews were brought there; tries to remember whether they shot the Jews the same year or the following year, cannot remember for how long the Jews were in the ghetto; explains how she, as a child went over to the ghetto after the shootings took place; remembers the announcement that nobody could walk outside that day—that if they were caught outside, they would be shot; talks about how she, along with a group of other children, snuck out to see what was going on in the ghetto; describes seeing a large pile of clothes in the middle of a courtyard that had been taken from the shot Jews; explains how the families of the „Jew-shooters“ would later divide the clothes amongst themselves; remembers an episode in which two people, partisan Valiūkas and Ališauskienė, argued over a pillow until Valiūkas shot into the air out of anger; describes the filth and chaos of the interiors of the buildings in the ghetto.

[01]:58:00:01 – [02]:07:00:14

She discusses hearing the shootings, focusing on the fact that the shooting ceased after only one short round; provides an explanation for the pause in the shooting claiming that a group of Jewish partisans attacked the „Jew-shooters“; explains that she knows about this row because she saw a wounded „Jew-shooter“ on a wagon be driven through the city; explains that when the shooting resumed, they could no longer hear it; mentions seeing cartridge cases by the graves after the war; explains the system of separating Jews for shooting-- that men were shot in **Rokiškis [Rokiškės]** and that women, children and the elderly in Antanašes near Obeliai; describes seeing wagons of women children and the elderly from **Rokiškis** be driven through the town of Obeliai to be shot nearby; remembers an episode in which an old man fell out of the wagon, was beaten and flung back onto the wagon; mentions seeing a Jewish woman drink rain-water from the drainage gutter; speculates that these Jews driven from **Rokiškis** to Antanašė were perhaps shot only the following day; mentions seeing local Jewish men be driven to **Rokiškis** to be shot; describes how the wagons were guarded along the sides; reiterates that the wagons of Jewish women, children and the elderly from Rokiškės were driven through Obeliai to be shot near Antanašės; talks about visiting the mass-grave site after the war when the graves were uncovered as evidence of genocide; mentions seeing the large cartridge-cases scattered around the area; discusses what kind of weapons were used to kill the Jews; talks about six women who had to dig up the graves to provide the investigators with a corpse, and then cover the trenches; mentions the name Daužvadienė; mentions the names of Nazi collaborators **Daužvardė**, Valiūkas and Alešauskas; recalls how one partisan bragged in great detail about killing a Jew; talks about Valiūkas, that he was a farmer from Lukštu village; recounts an episode in which Valiūkas, having found a Jewish mother and daughter living with a Lithuanian, forces a neighbor to drive them on his wagon to a place near the ghetto where he tortured and shot them; mentions hearing about this episode from Garnelytė; comments on the wide-spread reputation of Valiūkas for his cruelty.

[02]:07:00:15 – [02]:14:52:08

She remembers an episode in which a partisan broke into the house where a Jewish mother had lived with two daughters before they were shot; explains how the partisan searched the house and found a Lithuanian flag, focusing on the fact that the partisan himself was surprised that this family of Jews had been patriots; recalls that the partisan took the flag, along with many clothes and drove away; mentions that this partisan was from Stasiūnai; discusses how one knew who was a „Jew-shooter“; specifies that **Sastrauskas** was the driver of the wagon who brought the mother and daughter to be shot by Valiūkas; talks about how it was common knowledge that the **Belanoškos** were „Jew-shooters“, and how one Sunday they came to church wearing new and fancy clothes that had belonged to Jews; talks about another shooter’s wife who came to church with certain shoes that had been taken from a Jewish woman; mentions the name Daužvardienė; *[the interviewer coughs until interview resumes]*; talks about the Daužvardas family-- how they were poor and then suddenly began to wear fancy clothing after the shooting of the Jews; gives an interpretation about two types of partisans—those who did not participate in shootings, and those who did, and that it was the latter who received the Jew’s belongings; discusses the occupation and redistribution of empty Jewish homes after the shooting; explains how her family received an apartment in a formerly Jewish house of **Slepas** in 1944; talks about what the house looked like when they moved in and how Slepaitė, the daughter of Slepas who had survived, came back to search for valuables which had already been taken by another neighbor, Mikhailovas; mentions that Slepaitė then sold the house to the state; justifies Mikhailov’s appropriation of the belongings; talks about a buffet table that had remained in the apartment that her family moved into and how they got rid of it, believing it was bad luck to keep it; talks about the cobbler neighbor Mikhailovas and his appropriation of Jewish belongings; discusses the fate of Slepaitė, how she did not request her belongings back from Mikhailovas, married a Jew and moved to Vilnius.

[02]:14:52:09 - [02]:19:32:06

She explains that in her own courtyard at the time of the war there stood a synagogue; remembers watching German soldiers break into the synagogue and tear it apart; explains how she witnessed this from inside the synagogue; explains that when the Germans were retreating, they set many things on fire and wonders whether or not they also set the synagogue on fire as they were driven out by the Soviets; explains how workers who were remodelling her house, among them a man named Dryskius, told her that while digging they found a holy slab, which they then sold; describes the small group of perpetrators who tore up the synagogue, identifies them as Germans according to their language and uniform, focuses on their behavior; explains that she does not know what happened at the synagogue and town toward the end of the war because her family moved to the village **Barkiškiene** after hearing rumors that the Germans were going to burn the city; *[silence until interview resumes]* talks about how she does not remember much else; talks about recognizing the „Jew-shooters“ as a child, but not remembering their last names; *[silence until interview resumes]*; mentions political prisoners who had been tried and given ten years in Siberia, wondering whether they had anything to do with Jews; mentions the last name Šauliai.

[02]:19:32:07 - [02]:28:51:04

She remembers witnessing an episode in which two passing, drunk „Jew-shooters“ were carrying a pair of children’s shoes which they gave to a little girl standing outside of Daužvardienė’s

house; remembers her mother's comments on the incident; explains that she did not know who the „Jew-shooters“ were; *[silence until the interview cuts and resumes]*; talks about the widespread rumor the Germans had filmed Lithuanians carrying out the shootings, and that the Germans then buried the film in the corner of one of the trenches in order to implicate Lithuanians in the genocide and not the Germans; explains how during the German occupation, orders were given to level out the mound of the grave-site and to sow the land so as to hide the spot completely; explains that the Germans forced the owner of the land to give it for the mass-graves; discusses the fate of the man who owned the land in which the mass-graves were located and which he was ordered to try to hide by growing crop on it—he was later tried (in Soviet courts) and sentenced to ten years in Siberia; returns to the episode of partisans driving through the town; remembers seeing a small car full of drunk partisan men drive down Vytautas street on the day of the shooting; explains that before the shooting she saw a wagon-load of Russian prisoners with shovels being driven to the site in order to dig the trenches; wonders whether the Russian prisoners witnessed the shootings since they had to bury the bodies; explains that her neighbors identified them as prisoners and discusses a rumor that the prisoners received clothing from the shooting place; *[silence until interview ends]*

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Total time: 35 min, 36 sec.