

01/16/2005

URBELIENĖ, Adelė
Lithuania Documentation Project
Lithuanian
RG-50.473*0119

Box 1, Tape 1

In this interview, Adelė Urbelienė, born in 1929, a resident of Veluona (a town in Jurbarkas district, western Lithuania) discusses the persecution and murder of Jews in Veluona. She recalls several aspects of prewar life in Veluona, including relations with Jews and Jewish shopkeepers. She describes seeing Jewish males rounded up and taken away with shovels in their hands and then hearing gunshots at the massacre site. Urbelienė discusses the aid and rescue of a Jewish girl who survived the Holocaust. In this interview, Urbelienė briefly discusses the collaboration and perpetration of crimes by Lithuanian Nationalists who collaborated with the Germans, “baltaraiščiai,” “white strippers,” and the looting of Jewish property.

[01:] 00:30:15 – [01:] 05:33:21
00:27 – 05:43

She introduces herself as Adelė Urbelienė, born in 1929 in Veluona (a town in Jurbarkas district, western Lithuania); estimates that there were 60 Jewish families living in Veluona before the war; mentions several names: **Motkė, Leiba, Dabskis**; says that many Jews made a living in trade, namely running bakeries, butcher shops, or as seamstresses, shoe repairers, or doctors; explains that Mrs. **Leibienė**, who owned a bakery and butcher shop, would deliver goods to their home; recalls that Jews would sell goods on credit; adds that she was acquainted with but was not close friends with many Jews in Veluona; says that there was a Jewish primary school in town.

[01:] 05:34:22 – [01:] 10:00:25
05:44 – 10:20

When the interviewer asks about the situation after the start of World War II, she explains that Jews in Veluona were isolated, controlled, and that they were forced to wear yellow Stars of David; says she noticed fewer Jews walking around and that Jewish trade was stopped; says that there was no Jewish ghetto in Veluona but that Jewish men were separated from the women and children, who were left at home; explains how she witnessed “white strippers” taking Jewish men down the street; further specifies that the Jews were taken from their homes, and that they were told to bring shovels because they were going to work; says that the Jews were forced to dig their own grave and that the men were murdered in a pine forest about one kilometer away from her home; speculates that there were about 10-12 Jewish men in the group being taken by the “white strippers”; states that she thinks the Jews probably knew that they would be killed; explains that the men standing guard were called “white strippers” because they wore a white armband; recalls that she saw about four “white strippers” taking the Jews to the massacre site; explains that she

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was standing about 30 meters away from the road as the Jews were being taken; affirms that the “white stripers” were armed.

[01:] 10:01:00 – [01:] 14:35:12
10:21 – 15:06

She specifies that she witnessed a small group of victims being taken to the massacre site; says that only the strongest Jewish men were rounded up; states that Jewish women and children were taken to and held in the synagogue for about three or four days; says that they were then massacred in the Jaučikai pine forest; states that she did not witness the Jewish women and children being rounded up; adds that she did not go to the synagogue where Jews were being held; explains that there were two synagogues in Veluona: one on a hill and one at the foot of the hill; describes how one night, at the start of the war, several Jews carried religious books out of the synagogue and buried them in the Jewish cemetery; explains that several years after the war, a group of Jewish survivors came to Veluona and dug up the books; describes how her mother would bring food to the Jews covertly because the “white stripers” stood guard near Jews homes and would not let people pass; she admits that she did not witness the “white stripers” standing guard, but that she heard about this from her mother. She recalls that the Jews were rounded up into the synagogue on the hill, which was, after the war, and is currently the House of Culture; that the other synagogue burned down.

[01:] 14:35:13 – [01:] 22:17:09
15:07 – 23:07

She states that she heard gunshots coming from the massacre site and that the murders did not take a long time; when the interviewer asks her about the reaction of the local residents to the murders, she maintains that people felt pity for the victims and were deeply affected by the massacre; describes the local “white stripers,” saying that at first they were all local residents of Veluona; mentions two men: **Jacinskas [Jesinskas]** who was the son of a manor lord, and **Antanas Štašaitis [Stašaitis, Stažaitis]**; says that the majority of residents disapproved of and condemned the actions of the “white stripers”; discusses, for a while, the relationship between Jews and Lithuanian residents in Veluona saying that she does not know if any Jews survived the Holocaust in Veluona; remembers then how one Jewish girl was rescued and survived in Veluona; recounts the story of rescue: **Jonas Sadauskas**, a teacher, brought a nine or ten-year-old Jewish girl from Klaipėda to Veluona; states that the girl was taken in and raised by his sister **Bronė Sadauskaitė** and the girl was called **Zuzana**; recalls she was taken to church; explains that although **Zuzana** did look Jewish and spoke a specific Samogitian dialect, people did not know she was Jewish; admits that she was told about it because they were close friends; explains that **Zuzana** survived the Holocaust, got married, and states that they met again several years later; mentions that **Zuzana** was baptized, but that she does not know if the priest was aware of the situation. *[Note: the real name of the rescued Jewish girl is Rachilė Jaminaitė-Grigienė].*

[01:] 22:17:10 – [01:] 26:37:16
23:08 – 27:38

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She comments on the “white stripers,” saying that after a short while, they were uncomfortable in Veluona, therefore, they changed places with the “white stripers” in the neighboring town of Serėdžius; states that after the massacres, the “white stripers” returned to their own towns; when interviewer asks about the fate of the “white stripers” after the war, she explains how one murderer named **Bronius**, *[she does not remember his surname]*, became known for his work in the Soviet Union; recalls that after his photograph was publicized, someone informed on him and he was put in prison; adds that he later returned to Veluona and died; also mentions the murderer **Jacinskas [Jesinskas]**, the son of a manor lord, who fled to the United States with his family; explains that looted Jewish property was brought to the synagogue in Veluona and tossed out of the windows; says that she does not know whether the goods were sold or simply given to the people; remembers seeing a man walking with a coat that belonged to a Jewish man; says that she does not remember the man’s name, nor does she know how came to have the coat; states that she does not know specifically what happened with the homes of the Jews, but supposes that some people from the villages moved into them or they were requisitioned by the government and then sold.

[01:] 26:37:17 – [01:] 35:02:06
27:39 – 36:25

The interviewer asks if there were any Lithuanian shops in Veluona before the war and Urbelienė says that her mother opened a shop in 1920; says that her mother interacted with the Jews and that they would travel together to pick up goods; recalls that there were many Jewish shops in Veluona and that the Jewish shopkeepers would transport goods to the villages and would also purchase goods from the villagers; says that Jews bought apples from the large apple tree at her family home; explains that her mother opened her shop, at which she sold small goods, in the home where she now resides; *[the interviewee is distracted by something behind the scenes; laughs]*; explains that her mother’s shop was bankrupted because of the competition from Jewish stores that were located closer to the center of town and the market; recalls how Jewish girls would sell ice cream at the market; *[pause; new scene]* admits that she cannot provide testimony about the persecution of Jews in Veluona before the massacre because she did not witness it and that the information she has is hearsay; struggles to define if and how her personal life changed after the massacre of Jews in Veluona; says that essentially her life did not change though she did miss some of the goods sold by Jews; adds that she was told that during Soviet occupation, collective farms tore down the gravestones in the Jewish cemetery, which was near her home, and used the stones as foundations for construction.

Translator’s note: In this interview, Adelė Urbelienė discusses the rescue of a Jewish girl from Klaipėda by Jonas Sadauskas, though the information provided is limited. Preliminary research indicates that this girl is Rachilė Jaminaitė. The following is a short synopsis: Rachilė Jaminaitė was born in 1911 in Plungė. At the start of WWII, her father was murdered. When she was taken to a massacre site with a group of Jews, Jaminaitė managed to escape and hid in the forest for several days. She was found by her former teacher Jonas Sadauskas, who made every effort to rescue her and keep her safe. The pastor of Vėžaičiai, Jonas Stasiulis, issued her the identification documents of Zuzana Skudaitė, a recently deceased girl. As Zuzana she was taken to Veluona, where she lived with the family of Juozas Sadauskas for several years. Rachilė Jaminaitė became a nurse and in 1953 married Stasys Grigaitis. More information is available on

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the website of the Vilna Gaon Jewish State Museum (in Lithuanian):
<http://www.jmuseum.lt/index.aspx?Element=ViewArticle&TopicID=448>