

LUČINSKIENĖ, Monika  
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In this interview, Monika Lučinskienė, born on June 4, 1927, a resident of Plungė (in northwestern Lithuania), discusses the persecution and murder of Jews in Plungė. She describes the roundup of Jews into the synagogue, confirms the murder of Jewish males, and states that Lithuanians were forced by Germans to dig graves and bury Jewish women and children. She discusses the role of local Lithuanian “baltaraiščiai ” (“white strippers”) in the betrayal and rounding up of Jews, as well as the baptism of Jewish victims at the massacre site by a local priest, the looting of Jewish property and her own recollections of having to clean up brain matter and body parts with other Lithuanian children at the massacre site. Lučinskienė also recounts the story surrounding her family’s participation in the rescue and hiding of two Jewish girls.

Box 1, Tape 1

**[01:] 00:31:10 – [01:] 06:13:18**  
**00:00 – 06:32**

She introduces herself as Monika Lučinskienė, maiden name Mačiulskytė, born on June 4, 1927 in Alksnėnai village, Plungė district (northwestern Lithuania); explains that her father was a farmer, that a Jewish family lived nearby; recalls that the daughter’s name was **Peškė**, the son’s name was **Berkis**; adds that she was acquainted with other Jews who lived in Plungė and that she attended school in Alksnėnai and was good friends with **Peškė**; says that **Peškė** fled to the Soviet Union in 1940, and that she saw **Berkė** dressed in military uniform during the war and he told her that his parents had been murdered [*interviewee cries*]; describes the start of the Second World War saying that she saw how the road was filled with Jews trying to escape the various surrounding areas, and that Jews would ask for food and water, and that many fleeing Jews settled in Plungė; explains that on June 23 (1941), Germans arrived in Plungė, and with the aid of the local Lithuanian “white strippers”, rounded up all of the Jews into the synagogue; mentions that Jews were rounded up and held in two different locations, but can only confirm the synagogue.

**[01:] 06:13:19 – [01:] 10:45:04**  
**06:33 – 11:15**

She explains that there were two synagogues in Plungė: one large brick synagogue, where the Jews were rounded up and held, and a smaller, wooden synagogue; estimates that the Jews were detained for one week; states that the synagogue was not fenced and that it was guarded by Germans with machine guns; recalls that the “white strippers” helped the Germans by denouncing and identifying Jews in the area; discusses the number of Jewish residents in Plungė; repeats that

the Jews were rounded up in two locations; says that Jewish babies and children were buried in the Jewish cemetery, on top of which the Plungė middle school was later constructed; explains that the Jews were held in such constricted conditions that several small children and babies suffocated and died in the synagogue; adds that the corpses of the children were handed through the door of the synagogue to the soldiers who then gave them to Lithuanians to bury in the Jewish cemetery; reveals that one of her acquaintances, a girl named **Agota Kantautaitė [Kuntautaitė]**, who worked as a servant for a Jewish man named **Gamza**, described to her how she buried several children in the Jewish cemetery; specifies that **Agota Kantautaitė [Kuntautaitė]** said that she buried four young children wrapped in cloth.

**[01:] 10:45:05 – [01:] 15:09:00**  
**11:16 – 15:50**

She explains that a special unit of German soldiers arrived in Plungė and that they were dressed in brown uniforms with a skull on the sleeve; describes how on Saturday evening while she was herding cows, she heard several rounds of gunfire; says that she was told that Jewish males were massacred that night; explains how the next day, Sunday, her father, sister, and she went to church in the morning and that, after mass, there were Germans with cars sitting at the entrance of the church; reports that the Germans would not let people leave the church and that they sat all of the people in the cars and drove them down the road; continues describing how the cars stopped and the Germans separated the men and women from the children; states that the children were told to go home; recalls with great emotion how they feared that their father would be killed; reports that she saw two very large piles of corpses [*cries*]; specifies that she did not see the corpses of the male victims because they had been killed inside the pits the night before and that the victims she saw in the huge piles were women and children; says that a priest named **Lignugaris [Lygnugaris]** baptized 370 Jews and then they were all massacred; mentions that the mass graves are still visible.

**[01:] 15:09:01 – [01:] 20:18:15**  
**15:51 – 21:13**

She recalls her father's description about how on Sunday after mass, he and several others were forced to dig graves to bury the victims – women and children – and then cover the graves; says that her father said that they buried the victims nicely, in an organized manner, and that he saw how several mothers had died with their children in their arms; says that her father described everything when he returned home; adds that he took off his clothes and burned them; explains that a Lithuanian [*unclear if the person was male or female; the interviewee uses both masculine and feminine word endings and pronouns*] was forced to pour bleach onto the mass graves; describes how on the Tuesday after the massacre, she and several other children were forced to gather up into buckets the brains and other body parts that had scattered during the massacre because the victims were killed with exploding bullets; states that they cleaned the area for about three hours and then buried the buckets of body parts in a pit that was dug at the massacre site; when asked how she knew that the victims were shot with exploding bullets, she says that her father described the state of the victims' corpses.

**[01:] 20:18:16 – [01:] 25:01:04**

**21:14 – 26:07**

She explains that the Jews were killed early in the morning on Sunday; recalls that the massacre began at six o'clock and continued throughout the morning; adds that she heard gunshots at her home; says that gunshots and the screams of victims were audible in the church and that during mass Father **Pūkys** told the congregation to pray for the Jews who were being murdered at that moment; explains that later Father **Pūkys** was apprehended by the Gestapo for holding mass and encouraging people to pray; recounts that Father **Lignugaris [Lygnugaris]** baptized Jews on the day of the massacre at the murder site and that the Jewish women chose baptismal names and he baptized them with those names; maintains that she was told this information by their neighbor **Pranciškus Jonišas [Jonušas]**, a Lithuanian who rounded up the Jews; says that **Jonišas [Jonušas]** described all of the events surrounding the murders and that when he was asked why he joined the "white strippers", he said that it was because he was given schnapps; says that all of the collaborators were drunk; explains that the Germans would give alcohol to the Lithuanians and that the Germans would sit at the massacre site and give commands to shoot; returns to the discussion about the day of the massacre explaining how the Lithuanians, herself included, were gathered up at the church and driven to the massacre site; says that the Germans let the children go, along with a few of the mothers who were concerned for their children's safety; says that she saw five German soldiers, and that the "white strippers" drove the Lithuanians while the Germans guarded the bodies of the Jews who had already been killed.

**[01:] 25:01:05 – [01:] 30:02:16  
26:08 – 31:21**

She explains that later on the day of the massacre, several Jews that had escaped were found and killed; describes one incident in which a Jewish man fled and was hiding in the forest where he was found by a child; says that the man began running, was chased by Germans, got stuck in a pond and was then killed by Germans; adds that the Germans told Lithuanians to pull the man's body out of the pond; explains that the translator was a "white striper" who spoke German; says that the translator's name was **Juozas** but does not remember his surname, only that he was from Plungė; when the interviewer asks her to provide more detailed information about the day of the massacre, says that the Lithuanians were rounded up at the church and transported to the massacre site in three large military vehicles; states that Germans drove the vehicles and that the translator told the people that they would be shot by the Germans if they attempted escape; explains that on Saturday Jewish men were forced to dig a grave and were then murdered; states that all of this information was provided by **Pranciškus Jonišas [Jonušas]**; interviewer asks her to name other "white strippers"; mentions **Edvardas Kardinskis**; says that most of the "white strippers" were from the town and that she did not know them.

**[01:] 30:02:17 – [01:] 34:31:18  
31:22 – 36:01**

The interviewer asks about the murderers: she says that they looted Jewish clothes, bedspreads, tablecloths; reveals that **Pranciškus Jonišas [Jonušas]** went to live on the farmstead of a murdered Jewish family; confirms that Father **Lignugaris [Lygnugaris]**, the school chaplain, was forced to baptize Jews by the Germans at the massacre site; states that people gathered to watch the baptism and pray for the Jews; explains that when the Lithuanian children were told to

leave the massacre site, they stopped on the road and watched to see what would happen next; says that she saw how her father and the others were led away and then they ran home; says that after an hour they heard gunshots and were afraid that their father had been killed; recounts how on Sunday morning, after the Saturday massacre of Jewish males, **Jonišas [Jonušas]** came by their home and asked for one hundred grams of alcohol; states that he also participated in the massacre of Jewish women and children on Sunday.

[01:] 34:31:19 – [01:] 38:01:20  
36:02 – 39:40

The interviewer asks about the fate of the murderers: she says that the “The People’s Commissariat for Internal Affairs,” “*Народный Комиссариат Внутренних Дел*,” (NKVD) executed **Jonišas [Jonušas]**; states that the NKVD pursued **Kardinskis**, who was hiding under the dog house at his home, but his wife betrayed his location and he was apprehended [*pause*]; briefly describes the current memorial at the massacre site; says that she sometimes goes to the location to walk around and pray for the victims of the Holocaust; discusses prewar relations with Jews and her friendship with several Jews before the war; when asked by the interviewer about Jewish property after the massacre, she states that she did not see anything but heard that people looted Jewish property and that belongings of Jews were sold in the market after the massacre.

[01:] 38:01:21 – [01:] 41:41:18  
39:41 – 43:29

The interviewer asks her about any instances of Jews being rescued in Plungė; describes how her family hid and supported two Jewish girls for a period of two months: one from France, the other from Poland; says that they fled to Lithuania in hopes of finding a safe haven; explains that after two months, in the fall, both the Jewish girls and her family began to worry about their safety; says that that were not only afraid of the Germans and the “white stripers”, but they were also afraid that their neighbors would denounce them; explains how her mother dressed the girls and how her mother’s brother accompanied them to the Polish border; adds that the girls said that they would try to travel to France and would notify the family of their safe arrival; explains that the girls were met in Poland by a Jewish man who live in a manor; mentions that a photograph was taken of the girls with her whole family and that she still has it; states that her family was deported to Siberia in 1948, that she kept the photograph safe and took it with her to Siberia. She says that the rescued Jewish girls’ names were **Chana** and **Meyer**.

[01:] 41:41:19 – [01:] 48:45:17  
43:30 – 50:51

She explains how the two aforementioned Jewish girls arrived at their home to ask for food; says that the family took them in and kept them safe for a few months; says that she was 14 years old at the time and that she does not know how old the Jewish girls were but estimates that they were 24-25 years old; mentions that she will show the abovementioned family photograph taken with the girls; repeats that one of the Jewish girls was from France, the other from Poland; the interviewer asks how they communicated; she says that the girls spoke a little Lithuanian;

explains that the Jewish girls were given a room, or they slept on the hay in the barn, and that no one would come to visit the family; recounts one incident when a few German soldiers came into their home; explains that the Jewish girls hid and that she was very nervous and afraid; explains that there were three sisters and one brother in her family; continues to describe how they rescued the two girls, how they lived in one room together, and how they were told not to walk around or make their presence known; describes the Germans conducting a search of her family's home [*unclear if this actually happened*]; repeats that her uncle accompanied the girls to the Polish border.

**[01:] 48:45:18 – [01:] 54:16:15**  
**50:52 – 56:36**

The interviewer presents a few additional questions that the interviewee answers: states that the victims at the massacre site were undressed; maintains that 370 Jews were murdered on Sunday, and that these victims had been baptized by Father **Lignugaris [Lygnugaris]**; states that the Lithuanians were apprehended at the church and forced to bury the victims; explains that she read about this information in the magazine "Lurdas" (Catholic magazine published by the Order of Friars Minor Capuchin); says that she took this magazine along with her when she was exiled to Siberia and that the magazine "Lurdas" was published before, during, and after the Second World War; the interviewer asks her about any other details she would like to share; she discusses relations with the Jews before the war, and expresses her profound sorrow about the fate of the Jews; says that she was deeply affected by the events; adds that the Germans who murdered the Jews were dressed in brown shirts and that it was the Lithuanians who denounced and betrayed Jews; states that there were instances in which Lithuanians rescued and supported Jews [*the interview tape is suddenly cut off in mid sentence*].

*[Translator's Note: In this interview, Monika Lučinskienė refers to the baptism of 370 Jews by a Father Lygnugaris on the day of the massacre. Because of the style of narration, the information provided is limited and unclear, though preliminary research shows that a Father Lygnugaris did indeed baptize Jews in Plungė. I have included an article titled "The Catholic Church in Lithuania 1941-1944: Attitudes toward the Genocide and Baptism of Jews", written by Regina Laukaityte of the Institute of Lithuanian History and published in the journal Lituanistica in 2007. There is an English language summary at the end of the article. In it, Father Lygnugaris is only briefly mentioned though it may provide resources for further investigation and research. In another source, I found that Father Lygnugaris was tried in 1951 for anti-Soviet speech and for his "participation" in the massacre of Jews and was sentenced to deportation to Siberia for 10 years. Lučinskienė also says that she read an article about the baptisms and massacre of Jews in a Catholic magazine entitled "Lurdas" (Our Lady). It may be interesting to attempt to locate this publication, though the interviewee does not provide the date of the article. The following website provides a list (in Lithuanian) of Catholic clergy and nuns persecuted by Soviet authorities; this list would have to be confirmed by the Special Archives in Lithuania. <http://gevask.dtiltas.lt/RegiLauk/html/priedas3.htm>].*