

KURLAVIČIENĖ, Domicelė  
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In this interview, Domicelė Kirilova (Kurlavičienė), born in 1916 in the town of Butrimonys (Alytus region), discusses the fate of the Jews of her town. She recalls the police chief Kasperskis who – when the Germans arrived in Butrimonys – summoned the people of surrounding villages to dig trenches for the Jews. The interviewee explains that in the beginning the Jews of Butrimonys were transferred to Alytus to be shot, and those, who remained, were locked up in a school building, from where they were taken to be massacred nearby, in Butrimonys. She claims to have seen them being led to the site of massacre. The interviewee recalls a Jewish doctor named **Gabajus** who supposedly had an agreement with the police chief that he and his family would be spared and explains that the doctor survived, while his wife was killed on the way to a work camp in Kazlų Rūda. She also recalls a Jewish man named **Finkas**, who knew German very well and managed to escape to the US.

Box 1, Tape 1

**[00:] 00:30:24 – [00:] 04:07:13**  
**00:40 – 04:24**

She introduces herself as Domicelė Kirilova (Kurlavičienė); explains why she has two last names – a Lithuanian one (Kurlavičienė) and a Russian one (Kirilova); says that she was born in 1916 in Butrimonys and has spent her whole life there; claims that the whole town, except for a few houses, used to belong to the Jews; says that she herself knew Yiddish pretty well and that she had served at a Jewish home as a child.

**[00:] 04:07:14 – [00:] 10:08:15**  
**04:25 – 10:41**

She explains that when the war started, the Germans arrived in her town to kill the Jews; says that the (police) chief of the town knew their plans and that the headman sent out invitations to people from surrounding villages to come to the town and bring shovels and food supplies with them; recalls that she was passing by the town center with her girlfriends when she heard the police chief asking the crowd if they knew why they had been summoned; reports that when they replied that they did not, he explained that they had been summoned to dig the trenches for the Jews and warned them that if they refused to dig, trenches would be dug for them; explains that only the last remaining Jews were buried in Butrimonys while the rest had been taken to Alytus; says that people had been ordered to take the Jews to Alytus in their carts; recalls watching the Jews being led with their hands tied behind their backs; explains that they were led by strangers, not locals, whom people called “smogikai“ (“hitmen“); adds that they were the ones who were

shooting; claims to have heard the shots; says she thinks that they were Lithuanians [*a phone rings, a discussion behind the camera ensues.*]

**[00:] 10:08:16 – [00:] 13:55:00**  
**10:42 – 14:36**

She says that some people ran over to watch the Jews being massacred and that they told her that once a salvo was shot, the executioners would ask if anyone was still alive and some of the victims would raise their hands, just to be shot right away; explains that she did not go to watch; says that she was so distressed that her hair turned grey after the massacre. She says that people were saying that after the Jews were dealt with the others would follow, especially since their town was considered to be Polish, but somehow they survived; when asked about the shouting that she heard, she explains that she could only hear shrieks; says that when the Jews were led to be massacred, the elderly and women with children were taken on carts; elaborates that in the beginning the stronger Jewish men were locked up in the school building; says that some people tried to bring food to them but sometimes were caught and beaten up; states that from the school building the Jews were led directly to the massacre site.

**[00:] 13:55:01 – [00:] 18:54:19**  
**14:37 – 19:49**

She recalls that the last Jewish survivors were a doctor named **Gabajus**, (“gabajus” or “gabai” can mean the “headman” of a Jewish community), with his blind brother and an old mother, and another man named **Finkas**, a widower; says that **Gabajus** was from Alytus and his wife was a dentist; adds that **Gabajus** and **Kasperskis** (the police chief of Butrimonys) had been neighbors and got along well, therefore he managed to make a deal with **Kasperkis** and had him promise that they will be spared; recalls that **Gabajus** had two children; says that the **Finkas** children had been taken in by a family living in Vilnius, while **Finkas** and **Gabajus** with the latter’s family went into hiding in a village situated five kilometers from Rūdiškės town; explains that she had a good relationship with the **Gabajus** family and that they contacted her as she was living in a village nearby; says she had fled Butrimonys since the Germans had deported her two sisters to Germany and she feared to be deported as well; reports that she helped out the **Gabajus** family and **Finkas** by bringing them food; explains that they were staying with a farmer and would go to sleep in his bathhouse at night; recalls that **Gabajus**’ wife had a nervous breakdown.

**[00:] 18:54:20 – [00:] 24:05:19**  
**19:50 – 25:13**

She says that when the Vilnius ghetto was established, **Gabajus** was appointed its guard, while his wife and **Finkas** were sent to a work camp in Kazlų Rūda; when asked to conclude whether the **Gabajus** family and **Finkas** survived, she starts explaining that Finkas knew German very well and managed to escape to the U.S.; when asked to describe what happened to the Jewish property in Butrimonys, she explains that people from the surrounding villages took over the Jewish houses; returns to **Gabajus**’ story and says that before he left his blind brother and elderly mother in Butrimonys, he had prepared two cups of poison and told them to drink the

poison if somebody came to take them to be executed; says they did this and only their bodies were taken away to be buried; adds that **Gabajus'** wife was killed on the way to Kazlų Rūda because she started feeling ill while travelling; when asked if she visited the site of the massacre after it happened, she says that she did, but all she could see was leveled soil.

**[00:] 24:05:20 – [00:] 30:10:25**  
**25:14 – 31:33**

She recalls that after the war **Gabajus** returned to Butrimonys to sell his house; says that he had moved to live in Vilnius; when asked what the priest said at the church after the massacre, she responds that he said nothing; specifies again that the person who summoned the people to dig the trenches was the police chief **Kasperskis**; explains that the Jewish clothes could be taken by anyone who wanted them and that there was no store set up to sell them; says that after the last Jews – who were taken directly from their homes – were killed on the premises of the Jewish cemetery, a walking cane was left stuck into their grave; says that she saw the cane herself; explains that the last ones to be killed were a Jewish girl, who was being “used” by the policemen, and some elderly people.

**[00:] 30:11:00 – [00:] 32:47:06**  
**31:34 – 34:17**

She says that at first, when the Jews were being taken to Alytus, they were told that they were being taken to work; says that later it became clear that they were executed in Alytus; concludes by saying that the rest were locked up in the school building and massacred in Butrimonys.