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CONGRESSMAN BRAD SHERMAN

SERVING THE SAN FERNANDO VALLEY

September 25, 2019

Hon. Saulius Skvernelis
Prime Minister of the Republic of Lithuania
In Care of: Hon. Rolandas Kriščiūnas
Ambassador the Republic of Lithuania
Embassy of Lithuania
2622 16th St., N.W.
Washington, DC 20009

Re: Nazi-Era Lithuanian Leader Juozas Ambrazevičius-Brazaitis

Your Excellency,

As a Member of Congress, I am deeply committed to maintaining strong ties between the United States and Lithuania.

As a result of recent statements issued by the Genocide and Resistance Research Centre of Lithuania, an agency of your government, I am writing to ask you to either provide specific and credible references to the exoneration and rehabilitation of Juozas Ambrazevičius-Brazaitis, former Minister of Education and acting Prime Minister under the Provisional Government of Lithuania in 1941, or to publicly retract the Centre's claims for the misstatement of facts and misuse of U.S. Congressional documents in your government's efforts to address the history of the Holocaust in Lithuania.

On three separate occasions dating back to February 26, 2018, the Genocide and Resistance Research Centre of Lithuania (LGGRTC) asserted that the United States Congress and the United States Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS) "completely exonerated" Juozas Ambrazevičius-Brazaitis for culpability in the murder of Jews in Lithuania.¹

The United States Department of Justice conducted an investigation into the allegation that from June 23, 1941 to July 12, 1941, during the life of the interim Provisional Government of Lithuania, Mr. Brazaitis, as Minister of Education and acting Prime Minister, "was responsible

¹ Letter Reference 55R-21, 14R-82; DELFI, "LGGRTC: The Genocide Research Center Will Not Stand Vulgar Pressure In Response to Mr. Vinokurui," March 8, 2019. Letter Reference 14R-53, dated February 26, 2018.

for the issuance and enforcement of repressive edicts against the Jewish minority.”² The letter sent from Commissioner Leonard Chapman, Jr. to Chairman Joshua Eilberg of the Subcommittee on Immigration, Citizenship, and International Law in December 1974 states that in an attempt to elicit testimony from Mr. Brazaitis as to the activities of the Provisional Lithuanian Government, Mr. Brazaitis was unable to testify as he had sustained his fourth heart attack and was hospitalized. Mr. Brazaitis died on October 24, 1974. The letter then states that in the opinion of the review committee, “further investigation in these matters appeared unwarranted.”³ As a result, the Immigration and Naturalization Service determined to remove Mr. Brazaitis’ name from the active list of Alleged Nazi War Criminals residing in the United States. The U.S. Department of Justice and U.S. Congressional Committees do not usually continue investigations after a subject has died; thus, they would have concluded the investigation without findings—exactly as the letter indicates.

Notably, the review of Mr. Brazaitis by the U.S. Department of Justice was cursory and was conducted only as a result of pressure by Congresswoman Elizabeth Holtzman of New York, a member of the Subcommittee on Immigration, Citizenship, and International Law of which Mr. Eilberg was Chairman, to investigate and deport Nazis who had been offered protection by the U.S. government.⁴ In 1974, the Immigration and Naturalization Service was “ill-equipped” and made “half-attempts” to deport known Nazis, until a formal office was established for this purpose in the U.S. Department of Justice in 1979.⁵ In 1974, Congresswoman Holtzman herself accused the INS of conducting a “half-hearted, dilatory investigation” of more than 60 alleged Nazi war criminals and charged specifically that the investigation was headed by “three part-time bureaucrats without the background or authority to direct an investigation of this nature,” who failed to contact the German or Israeli governments for pertinent data, the National Archives in Washington, or Soviet Jews now in Israel who may have had pertinent information.⁶ Similar to a number of other known Nazi perpetrators who emigrated to the United States following World War II, Mr. Brazaitis gained entry to the United States as a result of his “operational value” for the Central Intelligence Agency.⁷

Since the United States Department of Justice conducted its investigations into Mr. Brazaitis’ responsibility for “repressive edicts against the Jewish minority,” key documents regarding the activities of the Provisional Lithuanian Government have been made public. In 2001, the Genocide and Resistance Research Centre of Lithuania historian Rytas Narvydas discovered and published the authentic minutes and decrees of the Provisional Government. In 1974, problematically, these documents were held by the Soviets. The volume included the “Regulations on the Situation of the Jews” with Brazaitis’ signature, which asserts that the Jews had exploited the Lithuanian nation economically for hundreds of years, had demoralized it, and

² U.S. Department of Justice, Immigration and Naturalization Service, Letter to Chairman Eilberg from Commissioner Chapman, Jr., December 1974.

³ *Ibid.*

⁴ Mr. Brazaitis was a “covert contact” of the Central Intelligence Agency.

⁵ Eric Lichtblau, *The Nazis Next Door*, Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2014.

⁶ Joseph Polakoff, “INS Accused of Conducting Dilatory Probe of More than 60 War Criminals,” *Jewish Telegraphic Agency Daily News Bulletin*, May 21, 1974, http://pdfs.jta.org/1974/1974-05-21_098.pdf?_ga=2.142121586.1937063510.1569271901-1798217195.1563368735.

⁷ April 19, 1955, “Re-entry Permit for Juozas Brazaitis,” https://www.cia.gov/library/readingroom/docs/BRAZAITIS%2C%20JUOZAS_0072.pdf.

in recent years, under the mantle of Bolshevism, had most widely developed their battle against Lithuania's independence and the Lithuanian nation. The Genocide and Resistance Research Centre also included the minutes from a meeting on July 5, 1941, in which Brazaitis and the Provisional Government approved requested funding for 824 members of the TDA Battalion and the concentration camp at Kaunas VII fort. From June 28 to July 6, the TDA Battalion murdered approximately 5,000 Jewish men, and held many Jewish women and children without food or water at Kaunas VII fort.

As the Immigration and Naturalization Service only considered the actions of the Provisional Government from June 23, 1941 to July 12, 1941, the approval of funding for the TDA Battalion and the conclusion of the "Regulations on the Situation of the Jews" were not considered as such actions fell outside of the designated time frame.

Finally, in 2005, the International Commission for the Evaluation of the Crimes of the Nazi and Soviet Occupation Regimes in Lithuania concluded their review of "the Persecution and Mass Murder of Lithuanian Jews during Summer and Fall of 1941."⁸ The Commission determined that the Provisional Government approved segregating the Jews of Lithuania and expropriating their property, and did not publicly disassociate itself from the murder of Lithuania's Jewish citizens. To this point, the Commission recognized the TDA Battalion as a "Responsible Agency" as a result of their participation in the killings of Jews. The Provisional Government funded the TDA. The Commission also concluded that the Provisional Government's approval of the "Regulations on the Situation of the Jews" was the most comprehensive expression of the Government's official anti-Semitism. Thus, there is no question as to Mr. Brazaitis' involvement in cementing Lithuania's anti-Semitic history and the considerable violence that took place before the arrival of the Germans.

I hope you will take concrete steps to demonstrate your government's commitment to accurate historical portrayal and recognize the darkest realities of the Holocaust.

Sincerely,



BRAD SHERMAN
Member of Congress

CC: Office of the Special Envoy to Monitor and Combat Anti-Semitism
Special Envoy for Holocaust Issues

⁸ International Commission for the Evaluation of the Crimes of the Nazi and Soviet Occupation Regimes in Lithuania, "The Persecution and Mass Murder of Lithuanian Jews during Summer and Fall of 1941: Sources and Analysis," CONCLUSIONS, April 20, 2005.