Issue No.7 of "Lithuania, " Crime & Punishment

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English / Forward / Forward

Issue No.7 of "Lithuania, " Crime & Punishment has enjoyed world wide circulation and has contributed greatly to increasing public awareness to the culture of abuse and mental cruelty unleashed by Lithuanians from all walks of life on their Jewish neighbours before they brutally murdered them. This online issue gives accounts of just some of the atrocities perpetrated by Lithuanians during WW2.

given by survivors and victims who We have accumulated thousands more eyewitness accounts before they died. Tens of detailed studies covering a wide managed to tell their stories to friends also been published. An in-depth account of the genocide of Lithuanian range of events have can be found, among others, in Volume Four of "Yahadut Lita" - the Anthology of Jewry in "Pinkas Lithuanian Jewry – published by The Association of Lithuanian Jews in Israel and .University in Jerusalem Hakehilot – Lithuania, edited by Professor Dov Levin of the Hebrew

Some of the material published here already appeared in previous issues of the journal and it should come as no surprise to anyone that we find it necessary to repeat and recall those horrific events. For centuries Lithuanian Jewry made an outstanding contribution to the spiritual and cultural life of mainstream Lithuanian society.

It became famous for its practice of charity and compassion towards all those in need, irrespective of race, religion, or creed. Indeed the words of Rabbi Akiva "and you shall love your neighbor as you do yourself" formed a cornerstone of its philosophy of selfless contribution to those less fortunate. Jewish lawyers, doctors, and members of other professions very often provided their services free of charge to those in need of help. And when they finally met their horrifying fate, they were murdered not by Nazi guards in concentration camps but by their own neighbors who turned on them at the first opportunity.

Therefore we consider it our sacred duty to continue to remind the world of the appalling atrocities that the Lithuanians inflicted on our wonderful community. And we shall carry on doing so until Lithuania faces up to its bloody history and prosecutes the thousands of murderers, many of whom have been allowed to live out their lives in Lithuania safe in the knowledge that no proceedings will ever be brought against them.

For many years now, we have been reiterating our claims at every possible opportunity and we will continue to bring our message to the international community of civilized nations as long as Jews live on the face of this earth. We find it unacceptable that a country, whose citizens stooped to the lowest form of bestial behavior by massacring entire communities in their thousands should be allowed to take its place among the community of civilized nations without first

answering for its crimes. And anyone familiar with the history of the period in question will know that it does indeed have a lot to answer for.

Are we expected just to turn our backs and go about our lives as if nothing happened? Six decades ago, the outside world did just that as the law abiding, patriotic and community conscious Jews of Lithuania were being cut down in their thousands by fascist thugs while ordinary people from every walk of life stood and applauded the killers.

With 2005 now upon us, the international community has once again ignored the dark truth of history by admitting Lithuania to the EU, NATO, and other key international organizations. So the publication of this article comes at an opportune moment. It will, we hope, remind the world of those historical facts that nobody wants to hear. Back then our loved ones were abandoned to their fate, as they suffered lonely and horrible deaths and were then thrown into unmarked graves in the hope that they would be forgotten forever. We, the survivors of that hell, will do whatever it takes to make sure that never happens again.

We will continue in future, to publish this and all our other pamphlets and related literature with the aim of perpetuating the memory of our loved ones who lost their lives in the appalling horror. We will also, from time to time, reproduce further articles from our print literature on this page. Our vigilance will serve as a constant reminder to the international community of the unspeakable persecution we suffered at the hands of the Lithuanians during that period of terror.

Some of those who survived the horrors are still with us today. There first hand testimony has been invaluable in educating the next generation about their own heritage and the tragic events that brought the golden age of Lithuanian Jewry to an end. It is thanks to such cooperation that this collective act of unspeakable brutality will never be forgotten.

tortured their Jewish neighbors before But it is not only the barbarity with which Lithuanians which we can never forgive or forget. We will never murdering them or burying them alive systematic refusal to prosecute even key criminals such as arch murderer forgive them for their responsible for the Impulevicius, commander of the infamous First Battalion, which alone was them for failing to indict civil deaths of around 100,000 Jews. We will also never forgive Police in the Provisional Government was one of servants such as Revytis, who as Minister of issued directives to regional commanders as to the arrest and those “Desk Murderers” who Jews from their homes and recruited and organized the death squads that expulsion of the Lithuanians for massacred Jews in their thousands. Neither will we ever be able to forgive the restitution of Jewish property and assets to their absolute refusal over six decades to agree to the .of greed that has merely added insult to injury their lawful owners, a cynical act

Commission” set up by Lithuanian President In the previous issue I referred to the “International downsizing the magnitude of the crimes committed by his Adamkus for the sole purpose of War Two. I also noted once again the tactics that the Lithuanians have compatriots during World public pressure, such as traditionally resorted to when evading issues of that arise as a result of or international. I quoted, as examples, the ,the setting up of commissions, either local, bilateral to investigate the horrific progrom at Lietukis garage (see commission of inquiry established Israeli-Lithuanian commission on the rehabilitations granted by Lithuania to below) and the joint

establishment six thousands of murderers of Jews. This trend appears set to continue with the .little or no value years ago of the "International Commission." All three have

the first commission of inquiry into ,As mentioned previously, the first commission of inquiry years on its investigation and after having summoned the Lietukis pogrom spent two and a half selective memories, it failed to deliver any tangible findings, which is witnessess with highly what the Lithuanians intended from the outset. The bilateral Israeli-Lithuanian exactly details regarding the commission fared little better. The Lithuanians promised to provide us with They never did. After approximately .approximate five thousand murderers that were repatriated a mockery of us and the work we were assigned two years, during which the Lithuanians made ceased to exist. A similar fate is likely to befall the to do, the commission effectively Commission" set up in 1998 by President Valdas Adamkus. Adamkus has no "International commission in uncovering the historical truth and it is therefore highly unlikely that the interest .will do anything other than procrastinate endlessly

Indeed, the need to provide a robust response to the international community's indifference to the suffering of the Jews was identified as far back as 1947 by survivors attending the first conference of Lithuanian Jews in Munich, Germany. With the horrors of the Holocaust still fresh in their minds, they adopted the following resolution, which I now quote, word for word:

"Lithuanians from all backgrounds and walks of life (intelligentsia, civil servants, farmers tradesmen, laborers and others) aided and abetted the Nazi murderers in the destruction of Jewry, especially that of Jewish communities in provinces throughout the country. A substantial number of these criminals have managed to reach the American, British, and French controlled sectors of Germany and Austria. They are posing as "displaced persons" and as such, have qualified for UNRA protection and support.

– by the Lithuanian nation distribute information relating to the mass murder of Jews

management to produce and both before This conference hereby authorizes the new association" .governments and public bodies across the globe and during Nazi occupation – to

"We, the sole survivors of the former Jewish community of Lithuania, witnessed the brutality displayed by Lithuanians towards their Jewish neighbors. Each and every one of us can testify to incidents of brutal murder committed by Lithuanians against innocent and defenseless Jewish communities during Nazi rule.

single-handedly wiped out every single It is with extreme sorrow that we note that Lithuanians" the country. They also actively participated in the provincial and rural Jewish community in communities in major cities, as well as the pogroms in Kovna – including destruction of Jewish Seventh Fort horrendous massacre in the Slabodka district – and the barbaric genocide at the the the lives of more than nine outside Kovna during the first weeks of occupation, which claimed

participated in the destruction of Jews in ghettos thousand Jews. We also know that Lithuanians .at Maidanek, Warsaw, and other locations ,and camps outside Lithuania

“The Association of Lithuanian Jews in exile in Germany, considers it its moral duty, as Jews and survivors, to bring these facts to the attention of both Jews and non-Jews throughout the world.”

This testimony represents the sole truth regarding the events that took place in Lithuania during the Holocaust. And as survivors, we will remain loyal to the mission statement set down by our predecessors back in 1947 and make our voices heard whenever and wherever possible regardless of the charade now taking place in Vilnius. The best way we can ensure these events never happen again is to never forget their full horror.

This issue will reveal the truth about what happened to the Jews of Lithuania during the holocaust. It features more historical accounts of events that took place during the Holocaust in Lithuania. We also report on the Lithuanian authorities’ continuing intransigence regarding the two key issues of concern to us: the prosecution of known murderers – around 23,000 in all, according to our estimates, and the restitution of Jewish property and assets stolen by the Lithuanians following the genocide carried out during the period 1941-1944.

I have divided this issue into two parts: the first describes in detail some of the bloody atrocities carried out by Lithuanian death squads during the Holocaust. The second focuses on the Lithuanians’ persistent unwillingness throughout the 15 years since gaining independence, to address the issue of war crimes committed by Lithuanian citizens during the three years of Nazi rule.

Adv. Joseph A. Melamed, Editor

The first mass “actions" against the Jewish population in Kaunas

On Monday June 23 , 1941, when there were practically no Soviet troops left, but prior to the entry of German troops, the city was at the mercy of armed anti Soviet partisan units that were springing up.

On the same day, the Lithuanian national leadership made a public announcement, stating that the country’s independence had been restored and that a national government had been formed with Colonel Skirpa, former Lithuanian minister to Germany at its head. It should be noted, however, that when the Germans took over, they failed to recognize the declaration and the self styled government that made it. They also prevented several Lithuanian ‘cabinet members’ resident in Berlin, from returning home. The German government was unwilling, from the outset, to recognize any Lithuanian state institutions, preferring instead to establish a local military command and judiciary directly answerable to Berlin.

To ingratiate themselves with the occupying power, local pro-Nazi elements embarked on the assassination of Jews, in the hope of convincing their masters that the Lithuanians could be counted on as reliable allies.

Led by their ‘supreme command,’ gangs of armed ruffians patrolled the town, attacking Jews at random, killing some on the spot and arresting others. Those arrested were taken to the headquarters of the recently formed Lithuanian security police and other holding centers. The point of assembly for the Jews in the old city was the square next to the town hall. Most of the prisoners were later transferred from several locations to the 7th fort (one of the military stockades situated outside the city) – the scene of the first mass-murder of Kaunas Jewry.

The event that accompanied attacks by blood thirsty Lithuanian thugs against the helpless Jewish population was horrendous. The anguished screams of frightened women and children, chased out of their homes could be heard everywhere. Groups of Jews arrested in the suburb of Slabodka, were demonstratively paraded through Leisves Allee, the main street of Kaunas. Many of them were wearing their prayer shawls and phylacteries and loudly recited psalms as they walked. Their captors walked alongside, shooting and beating people at random.

Close to Slabodka bridge on Jenever street, the Lithuanian hoodlums singled out around 25 Jews and forced them to dance, do physical exercises and chant Jewish prayers and Russian songs. Bystanders were invited to gloat at the predicament of the tortured Jews. When they had finally grown tired of their bloody form of amusement, the thugs ordered the Jews to kneel down, following which they then shot them in the back. Among the victims was the journalist Shmuel Matz, also known as “Shmulik,” one of the editors of the magazine “Folksblatt.”

While Jews were being murdered, many homes were looted and valuables stolen. This would be a fitting juncture to note the indifference of the Lithuanian people who watched these events as they occurred, yet voiced no protests or condemnation of the revolting atrocities committed by

their fellow Lithuanians. The silence of their Christian neighbors soon convinced the distressed Jews of the hopelessness of their situation under the Germans and their local Nazi accomplices.

On the evening of June 24, as the first German units arrived in Kaunas, anti Jewish rioting intensified. Terrified by events and unable to escape, most Jews remained confined in their homes, helplessly awaiting the course of events. Local janitors played a singularly despicable role during those grim days, as the systematic killings continued. Many of them, blinded by greed, betrayed Jews to the 'partisans' and then looted personal effect from the victims' homes once they had been arrested. Only a few protected their Jewish tenants, by informing the marauding gangs that there were no Jews living in the building., or that they had already been caught. Initially, Jewish residents could still be seen on the streets of Kaunas but these soon became almost 'judenrein.' As early as June 25, one could see terrified Jews running through the streets like hunted animals. By this point, every Jew was aware that he risked his life by showing himself in public. People only did so if they needed to contact relatives or friends living elsewhere and not feel so lonesome and miserable. ammunition and consequently many of the ransacked homes were littered with the dismembered body parts of their former owners.

One such case was that of the garage near Vytautas Prospekt. Here too, the killers tortured their victims until they lost consciousness. They were then doused with buckets of cold water and subjected to more torture until they finally lost the will to live.

horrendous pogrom in Slabodka on the The mass murders reached their first peak during the killers, among them many uniformed students and night of Wednesday June 25, 1941. Brutal knives, broke into Jewish homes under darkness and went on an 'partisans' armed with guns and stabbing and beheading. The bloody spree went on throughout the night. Some ,orgy of shooting the killers used hollow point of

Zionist leader Mordechai Jatkonsky who lived on Jurburker street. His head was found in one corner of the room while his headless torso lay in the other. The corpse of his dentist wife lay elsewhere with both breasts cut off.

The dismembered body of Rabbi Ossowsky was found at his home, bent over a blood stained Talmud volume he had been studying, the night the killers surprised him. Rumors were rife that in some shop windows in Slabodka, heads of decapitated Jews were being exhibited.

On Kriksciukaicio street, opposite the post office, a Jewish owned home was set on fire, consuming the corpses of several Jewish families. These are but some of the events that took place during the widespread Slabodka pogrom, which claimed the lives of almost a thousand Jews in horrific circumstances. On Friday June 27, 1941, their corpses were heaped on garbage wagons and some were buried at the old Jewish cemetery while the rest were dumped in mass graves on the river banks outside Slabodka.

Later the same day, around sixty Jews were grabbed off Vytautas Prospekt and Gedimin St and herded into the compound of Lietukis garage where they were tortured to death. Eye witnesses watching the proceedings from neighboring buildings recalled later that dozens of Jews were clubbed to death with vehicle parts and blunt instruments. Some had hose pipes shoved down

their mouths and the water turned on full pressure until their intestines burst. A shapeless mass of human offal lay strewn over the yard, after the horrific spectacle finally ended.

Unfortunately, the Slabodka pogrom and bloody excesses at the garages were but the prelude to further atrocities both in Kaunas and the provinces.

All sectors of Lithuanian society actively participated in the cold blooded killing of Jews. Farmers, workers, officials, and representatives of the intelligentsia all indulged themselves in an orgy of sadism against helpless Jews. Such was the desperate the plight of Lithuanian Jewry at the outset of German occupation.

This slaughter became known worldwide not only because of its savagery but primarily, the fact that it was commited in broad daylight in the presence of hundreds of local residents, including women and children who applauded after each murder was committed. The writer has brought eyewitness accounts of German soldiers and Lithuanians who were present at the Lietukis Garage and saw the bestial behaviour of the Lithuanians.

The slaughter at Lietukis garage Adv. Joseph A. Melamed

The grotesque savagery so virulently demonstrated by the Lithuanians at this dreadful event, represented a watershed in the campaign of persecution against the Jews not merely because of the bestial hatred the Lithuanians so shamelessly displayed in the course such an act of 'valor' against defenseless people.

What made this act of barbarity so gruesome, was the fact it was committed in broad daylight with hundreds of local residents, including women and children, gathered around to observe the spectacle of Jews being either battered to death with crowbars or tire irons or choked to death by having a hose pipe shoved down their throats and water pumped into their gullets until their entrails burst.

The rounds of applause that came from the assembled crowd with each successive band of thugs (Juozas Luksa) that had just murdered 68 innocent people, took out his harmonica and together with the assembled crowd sang the Lithuanian national anthem. The prisoners incarcerated in the Kovna ghetto were to compose a parody on that anthem later on during the dark years of imprisonment, a parody that reflected the depth of their hatred and contempt for their Lithuanian enemies.

The significance of the Lietukis pogrom, in terms of the depth of hatred evidenced towards Jews is, however, as relevant today as it was at the time. The manner in which the present day Lithuanian government chose to handle the Lietukis issue once it had been firmly placed on the international agenda was as shocking as the events themselves.

In the face of mouting pressure for some form of judicial review of the events at the Lietukis garage, the Lithuanian government, at the suggestion of the then (1996) speaker of the Seimas (Lithuanian parliament), Vytautas Landsbergis, directed the office of the district attorney in Kovna to set up a commission to investigate the massacre. Such a commission was subsequently established by that authority but its composition merely added insult to injury. No indpendent observer or Jewish survivor was invited to participate in the commission's inquiry. The only people who were asked to take part in the proceedings were prisoners of the 'political prisoners association' (most of who themselves were murderers of Jews); Lithuanian historians who specialize in the falsifying of historical facts; representatives from Kovna City Council (also renowned for its vitriolic tirades against Jews which continue to this very day); and Lithuanian police officials.

Such a gathering of eminent 'unbiased' investigators could only come to one conclusion after two and a half years of 'inquiries' and taking evidence from people who 'saw nothing and heard

nothing.' Namely, that the evidence submitted was inconclusive and there was no case to answer. They did not approach those people who actually saw the atrocities being committed, such as the German soldiers who took photographs clearly showing the murders being carried out in broad daylight and which were introduced as evidence at the Nuremburg trials in 1946. Nor did they take the trouble to summon other witnesses such as those Lithuanian bystanders who gathered to watch the appalling spectacle and probably applauded the killers while they were going about their gruesome business.

As I mentioned in the pilot issue of our international newsletter "Lithuania, Land of Blood" the commission set up to investigate the Lietukis pogrom spent two years examining witnesses who heard nothing and saw nothing. It not unsurprisingly arrived at the conclusion that the evidence it heard was inconclusive and therefore there was no case to answer. I decided to tackle this issue head on and gathered a number of eyewitness accounts of Jews, Lithuanians, Germans, and others that were there on that fateful day. The testimonies that follow have already appeared in a number of publications so I find it extremely difficult to believe the members of the commission were unaware of their existence when they produced their report.

Testimony of Laimonas Noreika – award-winning actor (Published in "Metai" May, 2000)

"I can't remember whether we left work early that day (my elder brother Albertas and I) or whether we went home at our usual time. Opposite the Kovna cemetery at the corner of Greenwald St and Vytautas Boulevard there was a small garage, which serviced light vehicles. A large crowd had gathered alongside the perimeter fence of the garage yard. So we also went over to see what was happening. I keep asking myself whether I just imagined it all but I know I did not. Those horrific events have been burned onto my memory and will remain there until my dying day. In the middle of the yard, in broad daylight and in full view of the assembled crowd, a group of well dressed, spruce intelligent looking people held iron bars which they used to viciously beat another group of similarly well dressed, spruce, intelligent people. It was obvious the yard also served as a horse stable as animal droppings were littered everywhere. The assailants yelled the word "norma" (move it) repeatedly as they relentlessly battered the Jews until they fell to the ground and began gathering feces. They kept hitting them until finally they lay inert. Then, using a hosepipe for washing cars, they doused them with water until they came round following which the abuse would start all over again. And so it went on and on until the hapless victims lay dead. Bodies began to pile up everywhere. I stood next to the fence and watched it all until finally, my brother Albertas pulled me away…"

Testimony of Vytautas Petkevicius, author and member of the Lithuanian Seimas (published in "Uzrase Sud" Vilnius, June 2001

"What I saw that day in the Lietukis garage yard will be ingrained in my memory for as long as I live. Can you imagine what it must have been like for a child to witness people being brutally murdered in broad daylight? It was a gruesome spectacle. I was twelve at the time and had just got off the ferry that had brought my schoolmate Ricardas Pakulis and me from the district where we lived on the banks of the Nemunas River (I lived in the Freda neighborhood). We reached Vytautas Prospektas at eleven o'clock sharp and headed for the Lieutakis office building where

company employees were queuing to receive two free loaves of bread each (the father of one of my friends worked as a truck driver for Lieutakis).

father so went downstairs to the garage. The parking spaces in the 'We couldn't find Ricardas" empty as the Russians took all the trucks with them when they fled Kovna. The yard were house adjacent Defense Ministry offices were also empty and were eventually used to Ricardas' father there Lithuanian members of the "White Armband" patrols. We could not find was about. As we stood there a number either but we hung around to see what all the commotion street at random and drag them into the center of the of Lithuanians began to grab Jews of the .yard

"At around one in the afternoon after several dozen Jews had been assembled in the yard, the Lithuanians set upon them with clubs and iron bars. They battered them until they were senseless and then, as the victims lay prostrate on the ground they set upon them with hosepipes (usually used to wash cars) which they forced up their rectums and then turned the water on and left it on until the victims' bowels burst under the pressure. I stood at the side of the yard and watched it all together with my friend Ricardas. I will never forget what I saw for as long as I live.

"Just then the headmaster of school passed by. Upon noticing us standing there he approached and slapping us sharply on our faces he shouted: "what do you think you're doing here? Clear off at once!!" We didn't see anybody in uniform, neither among the murderers nor victims. I recognized one of the killers, he was a neighbor of ours named Zigmas Juodis. There were a few other familiar faces there as well but I cannot remember their names.

"After a while, a member of the White Armband patrol showed up and announced that the "members of the Klimaitis group (who carried out the pogrom at Slabodka on June 25) should now leave the area as they are needed for another job elsewhere." A number of Lithuanians then left the scene while the rest carried on with their "work." They were all under the command of the L.A.F. ("Lithuanian Activist Front") Chief of Staff Alexandras Bendinskas (who later became a member of the Seimas following the declaration of independence)."

Testimony of Leonas Survila (from a deposition taken by the State Attorney's Office, January 1961)

"Around a week after war broke out I observed bourgeois nationalists killing people of Jewish extraction at the Lieutakis garage. That day, I left the Neris Iron Foundry at around ten o' clock and headed for home. As I passed by the cemetery on Vytautas Prospektas an armed member of the Lithuanian Nazi militias stopped me and ordered me to go inside the cemetery and start digging pits. He stopped several other passers by too. Inside the cemetery a group of civilians, among them several Jews had already started digging.

A large crowd had gathered outside the perimeter fence to watch was happening inside the yard. It was too crowded for me to be able to make my way to the front so I headed for Misko Street further down the avenue and entered the yard of the former Polish school which was directly adjacent to the garage yard. I climbed up the border fence and watched the events in the yard below. I saw five or six men wielding iron bars and lengths of heavy rubber piping with

which they beat Jewish men who had been stopped in the streets and forced into the yard in groups of two or three.

"The tarmac was soon littered with mangled corpses and pools of blood. The attackers tore out their victims' hair, battered their skulls with iron bars, and doused them with water from hosepipes usually used to clean vehicles. The victims were tortured and abused until they finally died. Standing among the crowd was a group of German officers and soldiers. They did not join in the carnage and just watched the gruesome spectacle from a distance. I didn't know any of those Lithuanians who murdered the Jews but I do remember one of them playing an accordion…"

Testimony given by Petras Cepas

I was walking down Vytautas Prospektas when I came across a large crowd ,1941 ,On June 27**"** see Lithuanian that had gathered outside the Lieutakis Garage yard. As I approached, I could hosepipes with which they men with arm bands on their jacket sleeves wielding shovels and men, who lay prostrate on the ground. mercilessly battered a group of Jews, old and young the murderers immediately shoved hosepipes into their ,When the victims began to yell in agony water on. I saw the men with the white armband order two men to mouths and turned the they had done so, they led one of the men to the center of the yard where the undress. When passed out. They other victims lay. Then they beat the other man with a rifle butt until he beat him with a length of iron dragged him into the yard where another Lithuanian repeatedly it made me sick to watch. One of the murderers, piping. It was an absolutely horrifying sight and out: "keep quiet or you'll be next." By the time the orgy of on seeing my discomfort called pools of blood. Shortly after, ended, the yard was full of dismembered bodies and killing finally alongside the yard and the murderers loaded them with the bodies of their two trucks pulled up "….victims

Testimony given by Stasys Lekciaskas

"I couldn't eat or sleep for days afterwards. One of the people being beaten to death in the garage yard was an acquaintance of mine. I do not recall his name but he was a musician and I used to see him at dance halls and other places of entertainment. He was a cheerful, affable person and was always ready to help people if he could. What I saw drove me to distraction and I felt like a bone had stuck in my throat. But there was nothing I could do to save him as the animals had already dismembered his body.

As soon as they murdered all those in the yard, the murderers began looking for more victims to kill. Within no time at all, their associates had rounded up another group of Jews and marched them up Vytautas Prospektas to the yard entrance. Several killers jumped over the gate, selected several Jews and led them into the center of the yard. And then the bloody killing spree started all over again.

"Cheered on by the enthusiastic crowd of spectators, the murderers took their cruelty to new heights of sadism. At the start of the pogrom, victims were beaten unconscious, doused with

water to revive them and then beaten again and again. Now the murderers shoved hosepipes down their victims' throats and turned on the water and left it on until the victims writhed on the ground with agony as their stomachs became ever more swollen and distended. Some of the victims were stripped of their clothes and their personal effects by the murderers before they battered them to death with iron bars. After it was over, the yard was hosed down with water until all the puddles of blood had been flushed into the drains….."(Source: "Kauno Tiesa" September 4, 1960).

Eyewitness accounts from Germany

After the war German police interrogated a number of Germans who were at the Lieutakis garage yard on the day of the pogrom. Their testimonies were breathtakingly accurate, especially that of photographer Wilhelm Gunsilius whose photos encapsulated the full horror of the events in all their savagery. Following is an

excerpt from his statement to investigators at the Central Criminal Division of Baden Wirtemberg State police:

Testimony given by Wilhelm Gunsilius concerning the killings of Jews at the Lietukis garage in Kaunas.

(source: Ludwigsburg City archives No. 207, AP-3 14/58 (126:33).

"I am a photographer by profession and served in the air force with the aerial reconnaissance division. On June 22, 1941, our unit was in the city of Gumblien. I was under the command of General Busch, commander in chief of the 16th army. The task assigned to the troops was to seize control of both sections of the Ebenrod-Kaunas highway, thereby cutting off Daugavpils from the main city. On Tuesday June 24, 1941, I joined an advance detail heading for Kaunas. We arrived before lunch time on Wednesday June 25. I was ordered to find suitable billets for our unit. I managed to locate suitable properties without difficulty as I had aerial photos of the city. There was no fighting in the city. Later that day, not from the building I had a selected as our billet, I saw a large number of people standing in the yard of a petrol station. On the left side of the yard stood a group of between 40 to 50 men aged 30-50. A group of civilians had forced them into the yard. As can been seen in the photos I took, the civilians wore white armbands and carried rifles.

"A young man, apparently Lithuanian, stood in shirt sleeves and wielded an iron bar in one hand. Every few minutes he dragged another man out of the group and killed him with one or two blows to the back of the neck. Within an hour, he had murdered the entire group. After the war, I discovered in my archives a number of photos I took of the corpses and am prepared to lend them, as documentary material, provided they are returned me afterwards. After he had finally murdered them all, he picked up an accordion and standing on top of the corpses he played a tune, which I later learned was the Lithuanian national anthem.

"The conduct of the civilians, including women and children was unbelievable. After every blow of the iron bar they applauded and when the murderer began to sing the Lithuanian national anthem, they all joined in to the accompaniment of the accordion. In the front row stood women with their children in their arms, avidly following the entire proceedings.

"While I was in Kaunas, I observed from my apartment how Lithuanians wearing while armbands stopped groups of Jews of different ages and sex and led them away. Seeing this, I ran to photograph them."

Excerpt from testimony given by Colonel L. Von Bischoffshausen:

"I arrived in Kovna on the afternoon of June 27 1941. Whilst patrolling the city I came across a crowd of people that had gathered alongside a gas station to watch was happening in the adjacent yard. There were women in the crowd and many of them clambered onto chairs and crates so that they and their children could get a better view of the "spectacle" taking place in the yard below. At first I thought this must be a victory celebration or some type of sporting event because of the cheering, clapping and laughter that kept breaking out. However, when I asked what was happening I was told the "death dealer of Kovna" is at work and he would make sure that all "traitors and collaborators" received a fitting punishment for their "treachery." When I drew closer I witnessed a display of brutality that was unparalleled by anything I saw in combat during two world wars.

"Standing on the tarmac in the yard was a fair haired young man of around 25. He leaned on a long iron bar as thick as human arm and around his feet lay between fifteen to twenty people who were either dying or already dead. A few feet away from him stood another group of individuals who were guarded by armed men. Every few minutes he signaled with his hand and another person quietly stepped forward and had his skull shattered with one blow from the huge iron bar the killer held in his hand. Each blow he struck drew another round of clapping and cheering from the enthralled crowd.

"Later on at staff headquarters, I discovered that my superiors knew about the killings of Jews. They were appalled but at the same time they made it clear that such acts constituted spontaneous retribution against Jewish traitors and collaborators for their mistreatment of Lithuanians during Soviet rule. Such horrific acts were therefore an internal matter which the Lithuanians had to resolve on their own, without outside interference.

On the evening of June 27, I was invited to dinner at staff headquarters. During the meal, a staff officer approached General Bush, the local Wehrmacht commanding officer, and informed him of the rioting and killing that had broken out in parts of the city. The general replied that these were internal disputes and the Wehrmacht had no authority to intervene until such time as new orders were issued, which he hoped would be soon. All through the night I heard the sounds of machine gun and canon fire in the city. The next day, armed men could be seen on the streets escorting groups of around forty to fifty men, women and children, all of whom had just been driven out of their homes. On seeing me, a woman rushed over and falling to her knees, she begged me to rescue her. Within seconds the guards pounce on her and dragged her back into the group she had left. They told me the people were being taken to jail but in fact they were all

taken outside town and executed. I remember the anger and resentment my report aroused amongst the officers and servicemen in my unit. They too considered such events an internal Lithuanian affair. I also subsequently learned that our military high command expressly prohibited army personnel from intervening in any way in such incidents as these were matters that came under the jurisdiction of the appropriate security services."

Another person summoned to give evidence was Karl Roeder (b. 1910). This is what he told Baden Wirtemburg police investigators:

"I served in the 562nd bakery platoon which was attached to the German 16th army. Whilst patrolling Kovna I came across a crowd that had gathered in one of the city squares. I parked the car and climbed onto the roof of the vehicle to watch was happening. I saw a number of Lithuanians wielding implements which they used to savagely beat people until they collapsed lifeless on the ground. I didn't know why these people were being so brutally murdered in broad daylight. When I asked the sergeant from the medical corps who was standing near me what it was all about, he explained that the dead were Jews whom the Lithuanians had abducted off the streets and led into the square to be killed. I knew nothing about the persecution of Jews back then.

"Upon approaching the scene I saw that fifteen people were severely wounded; the rest of those lying on the ground were already dead. I was an amateur photographer and took two shots of this bizarre "event" from my vantage point on top of the roof of my car. Before I could take any more, an officer appeared and said I was not allowed to photograph such events. He took the camera off me but luckily I managed to discreetly remove the film from it as I was handing it to him. The pictures I took clearly show five Lithuanians with implements in their hands beating Jews who were lying on the ground. Also visible are several members of the White Armband Volunteer Patrol. They dragged victim after victim into the yard where the other Lithuanians set upon them and viciously beat them to death.

"I left the scene after around ten minutes. A group of Wehrmacht soldiers passing through came over to the fence eager to see what was going on. They did not, however, take part in the murders themselves. None of us could believe our eyes. I didn't see any SS or SD men there. I can identify the exact spot where I parked from the pictures taken by Gunsilius. The puddles in between the corpses strewn on the ground are blood; the rest of the yard was flooded with water.

"My testimony is supported by that of Sergeant Fritz Lesche who currently resides at 32, Herder St, Dusseldorf. This was a brutal massacre carried out by inhumane thugs of the lowest order. It was a singularly horrendous crime because nobody, no matter how heinous the offence he may have committed, deserves to be treated that way. The Jews prayed before they were killed and even the fatally wounded murmured final [unclear]

Statement given by Field Marshal Wilhelm Riter Von Lev – Commander in Chief of "Nord Unit"

"I told General Von Roques (member of German Eastern Front High Command) that while I empathized with his sense of anger, my hands were nevertheless tied. As is known, he had

expressed his dissatisfaction with the mass murders of Jews that members of the Lithuanian secret service carried out on the streets of Kovna. We had no influence over such matters and all we could do was observe from a distance…"

In his evidence to the War Crimes Tribunal in Western Germany on October 20, 1947, Von Roques stated that SS General Stahlecker informed him that the Lithuanians initiated and carried out the first wave of mass killings in Kovna (including the massacre at Lieutakis Garage).

Film director and Holocaust researcher Saulius Berzinis commented: "Jews were massacred in broad daylight with small children hoisted on to their parents' shoulders so they could get a better view. Can you imagine such a gruesome horror happening in Berlin?"

These eyewitness accounts are just a small part of the multitude of testimonies that have been published to date. Many more unpublished accounts lie in archives in Germany, Russia, and Lithuania itself. The "eminent" members of the commission set up to investigate the Lieutakis pogrom could have gained access to such documentation without difficulty. And many of the witnesses who gave this evidence are still alive and could easily have been summoned to testify to the commission as to what they heard and saw. The commission chose instead to turn a blind eye to such evidence and by doing so, it proved beyond doubt that its very existence and remit were nothing but a shabby public relations exercise designed to cover up the facts.

Covering up the truth – how the Lithuanians got away with murder

Father Alexandras Pakalniskis, a priest and writer who escaped to the United States in 1944, shortly before the Soviets recaptured Lithuania, recalled one particular attempt at deception perpetrated by the Public Information Bureau in 1942. On the initiative of bureau chief and journalist Juozas Sankus, an exhibition depicting what he called "red terrorism" was held at the military museum on Duonolaicio Street in Kovna. The exhibition featured photographs of mutilated bodies of Lithuanians who, apparently, had been tortured by Soviet N.K.V.D intelligence personnel and their "Jewish accomplices." The bodies were so badly mutilated as to be beyond identification and so the names of the victims were added to each photograph. A display panel with the words "Lieutakis Garage" could clearly be seen in the background on several pictures.

One of the Lieutakis managers visited the exhibition and was shocked to discover the photographs of his garage yard on display. He informed the Public Information Bureau that the bodies photographed were, in fact, those of Jews. The exhibition immediately closed and reopened with the same selection of photographs from which the words "Lieutakis Garage" had now been discreetly removed. (Source: "Voices from the Past" (Praeities Atgarsiai, Chicago, 1988).

(Note: this was just one of the ruses employed by the Lithuanians to suppress the truth)

Ponar is a greenbelt area near the Lithuanian capital Vilna(Vilnius).It was selected by the Lithuanians(and approved by the Nazis) to become the largest Lithuanaian killing site of the Jewish people. The "Ypatingas Burys"(The " special squad")a Lithuanian group of about 150 men , "worked" there for 3 years killing about 100,000 people- men women and children- being helped(when masses wre executed) by the Lithuanian police battalions of Vilna and a few Germans from the Einsatzgruppe. Some of the brutal murders and trade in victims` clothing and valuables by murderers with the local population, were recorded on daily basis by a Polish Christian journalist who lived near the killing site. The journalist, Kazimeracz Sakowitz, secretly kept a record of what he saw. He witnessed the atrocities and wrote down his testimony on scraps of paper, old calenders etc, all of which he stuffed into bottles and buried them until he was caught and murdered like all the rest.

Ponar – an atrocity so monstrous it defied belief

Joseph A. Melamed

We are all familiar with the Lithuanians' continuous efforts to disassociate themselves from the approximate 220 mass graves that hold the bodies of the hundreds of thousands of Jews murdered by Lithuanian battalions and partisans during the course of the war. So effective was this killing machine that the Germans transported Jews from countries in Western and Central Europe to Lithuania where they met the same horrendous fate as their local counterparts. The genocide that took place at Ponar, however, is one event for which the Lithuanians cannot deny direct responsibility as they have done in many other instances. Indeed it stands apart from the other atrocities by sheer virtue of the numbers of victims that were killed there. Over a period of three years a Lithuanian death squad known as the "Ypatingas Burys" numbering around 200 men, operating under directives from the Germans, murdered approximately 100,000 Jewish men, women and children, the largest number of victims to be murdered at a single killing site throughout Lithuania.

Located ten Kilometers south of Vilna, Ponar is a greenbelt area that originally served as a tourism and holiday resort prior to the outbreak of the war. Following their occupation of Lithuania in June 1940, the Soviets built a fuel depot in the wooded area near the rail track to store large quantities of aircraft fuel and amongst other things, excavated a number of large craters designed to house fuel tanks for safe storage. Once the Soviets had gone, the Lithuanians decided that these would be an ideal site for the act of genocide they wished to instigate against the Jews. Mass murders of Jews began with the German invasion even before the arrival of the SS' infamous Einsatzgruppen. Upon their arrival, the latter designated Ponar as a suitable site for the implementation of the "Final Solution" in Lithuania.

As mentioned above, the notorious Lithuanian death squad known as the "Ypatingas Burys" carried out most of the atrocities at Ponar. Having gained a reputation for their sadism, they were ideally suited to the gruesome task, which they set about performing with alacrity. At first they employed somewhat crude methods to carry out the mass murders but once SS Obersturmfuhrer

Shaushitz assumed command, he introduced new techniques designed to kill more people as efficiently as possible.

took part in the mass murders Very few of the German Einszatzgruppen troops actually Lithuanians eager to kill Jews whenever the themselves since there was never any shortage of Germans attended to all the administrative tasks entailed in opportunity presented itself. The killings and provided and operated the transport infrastructure that brought organizing the average were groups of Jews to be killed at the site on a daily basis. Around 200 people on groups on covered trucks and murdered every day. The victims were usually ferried to the site in numbered no more than several hundred at a time, occasionally by train. Although they usually murdered sometimes ran into several thousand, depending on the the groups of victims to be .jointly by the Germans and their local Lithuanian henchmen schedule planned

The first that the outside world knew of the horrifying atrocity at Ponar was when several Jews who managed to escape from the death pit after pretending to be dead by lying still among the masses of corpses covered in slaked lime, made their way back to the nearby ghetto at Vilna and told their stories. But a more extensive account of events at Ponar was produced after the liberation of Vilna by the Soviets with the discovery of a “diary” written by a Polish journalist named Kazimierz Sakowicz who lived near the killing site. Himself an Anti-Semite, Sakowitz befriended several of the killers and kept a record of what he saw (although the reason for this remains unclear). He witnessed the atrocities first hand and wrote down his testimony daily on scraps of paper, notebooks and old calendars all of which he stuffed into lemonade bottles and buried in the earth until he was finally murdered along with everybody else. Sakowitz began his records on July 11, 1941 and kept a continuous account of the atrocities for 835 days or approximately two and half years until November 1943, eight months to the end of the mass murders at Ponar.

In one of his accounts Sakowicz recalls the five different methods employed by the Lithuanians when murdering the Jews. These were as follows:

A. The Jews were taken to another part of the site and ordered to lie on the ground face down. The Lithuanians then led them, a group at a time, to the edge of the killing pit where they beat and abused them. After they had finished they laid a wooden plank across the pit and ordered the victims to undress and walk across the plank. As each victim made his way across the plank the Lithuanians opened fire on him from behind causing him to fall into the pit.

B. The planks were subsequently discarded and instead the victims were forced to step down directly into the pit where they were then shot.

C. Same as above but instead of firing on the victims, the Lithuanian tossed a number of hand grenades into the pit.

D. When using the second method, the Lithuanians forced the victims to step down into the pit fully clothed. As soon as they had undressed, they opened fire on them with machine guns.

All the while, the other Jews sat in groups on the side of the road, unaware that they were next in line to be killed.

E. At a later stage, once the murderers were more experienced the Lithuanians forced the victims to strip while they were still on the vehicles that brought them to the site. Thus, they were already naked when they were forced into the pit and then shot.

Following are excerpts from Sakowicz' diary (free translation from Polish):

"As of July 14, 1941, the Lithuanians strip the Jews of their clothing and offer it for sale at nearby markets. Trade in clothing is booming. Wagons full to the brim with sacks of clothing taken from the victims arrive at the commercial center near Grodzinska where they are offered for sale…..

"The Lithuanian murderers roam the streets carrying satchels laden with watches and other valuables that they try to sell. They are especially keen to trade their wares for alcohol….

" The shooting resumed on August 23, 1941. They murdered between two hundred and fifty to three hundred people daily for a period of seventeen days. ……

"For the Germans, three hundred dead Jews are three hundred enemies of civilization whilst for the Lithuanians, three hundred dead Jews means three pairs of shoes and other items of clothing…….

"August 11. A private car arrived at one of the pits and two Lithuanian women and one Lithuanian man got out. All three were elegantly dressed and in buoyant spirits. They wanted to enjoy themselves and had come to watch the murders. When the shooting was finally over they got back in the car and drove off. They did not look upset to me……

"On Tuesday, the second of September it was both windy and raining. On the road to the site I could see a long column of people that stretched almost two kilometers back to the church. The guards forced everyone to run all the way to the site, a journey that took around 15 minutes. Jankowski claimed there were around 4,000 people in all. Others said there were more than that. Most of the people in the column were women with babies. When they reached the path that led to the wooded area, they realized what awaited them and began shouting, "help." A group of 80 Lithuanian murderers opened fire on them while another 100 stood watch to prevent anyone escaping. They were all drunk. Jankowski said that to make sure they had the guts to kill them, the murderers abused their victims first. They beat the men and women and then shot the men separately. They forced the women to strip down to their underwear. The victims believed they were being moved to a ghetto and had therefore brought all their personal property with them. Once they were dead, the fur coats and valuables began to pile up. The Lithuanians made each group stand on top of the row of corpses of the people that had been shot before them. People were literally trampling on the dead. Many of those who lay in the pit with gunshot wounds were

still alive. One woman managed to escape to Dolna with only an injury to her hand. She saw her children being murdered in one pit and her husband in another…..

"The day after the mass murder, the Lithuanians organized a large sale of women's clothing. The next day, they found an infant playing in the sand next to one of the pits so they threw him in the pit and shot him. Krikowa said that during the mass killing the Lithuanians, on seeing a mother breast feeding her baby wrenched him from her arms and murdered him on the spot. On September 3, a Jewish woman who was attempting to escape to Vilna knocked on the door of the Jankowski home. A Lithuanian passing by saw her enter the house and barged in after her. Collaring her on the balcony, he asked if she was a Jew and when she said she was, he beat her and dragged her into the bushes outside where he murdered her……..

"Saturday, October 25 was a nightmare. At around eight thirty in the morning I noticed a long procession of Jews lining the road near the church. When I came nearer, I could see they were all women. Some of them were elderly and others were young with children on their arms or in pushchairs. Some of them had dozed off. It was a fine sunny morning that day. Later, we suddenly heard the sound of gunshots coming from the direction of the nearby forest. They were shooting the women and children that had been brought by truck from Lukiskis Prison. Apparently there were many injured. Some of them tried to escape and the shooting went on throughout the night……

"One young Jewish woman, around nineteen or twenty years old and wearing a gray overcoat with fur collar, carried a three year old boy. She threw herself on the ground in front of a junior officer and pleading for her life, she began kissing his mud-soiled boots. The officer responded by kicking her in the jaw causing her skin to burst and her blood to mingle with the mud. A second soldier standing nearby joined in and beat her with his rifle as she lay on the side of the entrance to the killing site.

"Then he grabbed hold of the boy and tossed him over the fence like a strip of timber. The soldier then aimed his rifle through the fence at the boy and was about to shoot him. On seeing this, the mother clambered to her feet and raced towards the nearby entrance in a desperate attempt to reach her son on the other side of the fence and shield him from the soldier's bullets. The shooting went on until five in the afternoon. Another Jewish woman, on hearing the sound of the shots coming from the nearby forest broke out of the line and tried to run but the Lithuanians caught her and beat her to death on the spot……

"November 19. They brought 200 women and children. It was bitterly cold. The soldiers had run out of bullets so instead, they took the children from their mothers and murdered them with their rifle buts. Even when they had ammunition they didn't always use it. On some occasions they just threw children alive into the pit…….

"November 21. Another group of women and children plus a few men was brought to the site. The shooting went on incessantly. At the end of the day, an armed Lithuanian came out of the site with a cart full of women's clothing and footwear, which he began selling to bystanders. The last coat was sold together with a pair of winter shoes for 120 rubles. When one of the peasants asked if there were any clothes left for his wife he replied, "hang on, I'll pick out a Jewess who's

the same size as her." The couple panicked and ran off. The Lithuanian was annoyed when he came back and found the peasant had not waited for him after he had gone to the trouble to find a Jewish woman who was the same size as his wife. So after he killed the woman he kept the coat for himself……

"The first Saturday in December was All Saints Day. But that didn't stop the Lithuanians, themselves devout Catholics, from murdering four truckloads of Jews. On this occasion, they all wore uniforms for a change…..

"July 30, 1942. At nine in the morning, the Lithuanians brought to the site a group of 150 elderly Jews from the ghetto. They were too weak to work and were herded into the site from the entrance on the main road. Many of them were buried alive writhing in agony from their severe agencies…….

"Monday April, 1943. They ordered the remaining group standing on the edge of the pit to undress. The sound of crying and wailing chilled the air. People fell to their feet and begged for mercy, but the soldiers just kicked them and shot them on the spot. The others were beaten and ordered to undress. When they had done so, the Lithuanians shoved them into the pit below and opened fire with their rifles and machine guns. One man who had already taken his clothes off was ordered to haul an unconscious woman into the pit. When he had done so he was shot in the head and fell backwards into the pit. His brains were spattered everywhere. The Lithuanians kept on shooting until the rest of the group was dead. When they finished some of the soldiers went over to the train parked nearby to bring another group of victims.

"The massacre went on and on. The Lithuanians gathered all the victims' clothes in one big heap. Suddenly one of the soldiers pulled out a small child who had been hiding in the heap. He threw him in the pit and on rifling through the mountain of clothes again, he found several more children. They too were thrown in the pit and another soldier who was standing at the edge shot them all.

"Later, another group of men and women were brought to the pit and murdered. The Lithuanians then ordered four Jewish men to gather the clothes into a heap. As they were moving the clothes they discovered a baby underneath. One of the Lithuanians ordered one of the men to throw the baby back into the pit but instead he grabbed the baby and ran off into the nearby woods. Several Lithuanians gave chase and opened fire but the Jew got away.

"As this was going on, yet another group was being herded into the pit where they met the same fate as the others. One woman spat in the face of one of the German officers and a Lithuanian soldier standing nearby beat her with his rifle butt. Another man tried to resist but to no avail. They shot him and he fell dead in the pit.

"The killing began at six in the morning and went on, group by group until eleven at night. 49 carriage loads of Jews, approximately 2,500 in all, were brought to the site that day. Only 50 managed to escape."

The writer of this article miraculously survived the Holocaust in Lithuania and for years has been writing on the atrocities committed by the Lithuanians. In this article he describes how the" killing machinery" in Lithuania functioned. The Lithuanians did not have to learn their "trade from the Nazis. Rather, the Nazis, famous for their extreme sadism, could have learned a lesson from these killers.The Lithuanians performed the murders like professional mass-killers, a task which included the " preparation" of the victims before the executions which the murderers saw as necessary to weaken the victims physically and mentally to remove any will to resist.

The Lithuanian Death Machinery

A. Levin, New York

The first victims were usually selected from among Jewish intellectuals. These would usually include rabbis, scholars, teachers, lawyers, medical doctors, pharmacists, artists, musicians and others. The Lithuanians chose rich people first for execution so that they could loot their property and valuables after they were dead.

Then the deportations took place. In larger cities, ghettos or concentration camps were established while in the smaller towns, victims were incarcerated in the main synagogue or similar public building. All these places served as temporary sites where victims were subjected to “preparation” prior to their murder (see below).

The timing of executions varied from place to place. It depended on the readiness of victims and murderers alike. In some places the authorities tried to arrange the murders on a Jewish holiday while in other places they organized killings on Christian holidays or days marking nationalist or fascist events.

“Preparation” was needed to weaken victims mentally and physically and deprive them of any will to resist. This took various forms although torture was the main method used. The Lithuanians excelled at this. It is difficult to understand how people could behave in such a cruel, inhuman, monstrous and bestial way towards other persons, including their former “best friends.”

Eyewitness accounts have revealed that the brutality of the Lithuanians shocked even the Germans. Many SS officers wrote to their superiors to complain about the behavior of local Lithuanian killers. Scholars and rabbis were subjected to more humiliation and abuse than anyone else (see the article “The murder of Lithuanian rabbis). Doctors were similarly abused. Out of the 400 Jewish physicians in Lithuania at the time of the German invasion, more than half were murdered by their Lithuanian neighbors as well as local “activists” during the bloody period of June – December 1941. The doctors provided medical care for the thousands of their sick compatriots right up to their last hours. The “mercy” shown towards some doctors who were temporarily spared to enable them to continue serving the Lithuanian population was short lived. They too, were cruelly murdered together with their families. Despite the longstanding care and

attention given to their former neighbors, many of whom were treated free of charge and even received free medication - as in the case of doctors Troib and Zacks of Rietavas - doctors were usually tortured hideously before they were killed. Troib and Zacks, for example, were forced to perform a "demons' dance" in the city square. Another physician, Colonel Dr. Dambovski of Pilviskiai, was beaten to death with rifle butts.

The preferred methods physical tortured used by Lithuanian on their Jewish prisoners before murdering them were: beatings (with sticks, rifle butts, rubber truncheons, belts, whips, pipes and iron crowbars) designed to break various bones and joints, especially the hands; piercing of body parts (the tongue in particular) with needles; burning with red hot iron pokers; and electrical shocks. Young girls from the ages 10-15 were often raped with their parents forced to stand and watch. Other methods of torture used were making prisoners stand for hours without food or water during the summer months; standing barefoot in the water during the rain and cold of the Lithuanian winter; placing victims in barrels filled with freezing water; tying prisoners to posts and leaving them in the summer sun to die of dehydration and burning people to death. In some cases, prisoners had water hoses shoved down their throats and the water turned on full pressure until their stomachs burst. No less horrendous for prisoners was the mental torture, humiliation and debasement.

usually in fields outside villages and cities)) Victims were usually transferred to the killing sites Sometimes , prior to the start of a death march, the victims had to run .on foot in large columns row of policemen, activists and partisans who beat them with clubs, whips and past a trucks and horsewhips. Small children, disabled and sick persons were usually thrown into and infants were thrown brought to the execution site. Some cases are known where children pavement rather than in the back of the from windows of buildings and landed on the adjacent mother who witnessed her child falling from a window to waiting truck. In one case, a Jewish mad and throwing herself on the pavement, she began to lick her the pavement below, went Her misery was finally ended by a bullet from the rifle from an amused .child's blood .Lithuanian policeman

Upon arrival at the murder site, police and local activists collected money and valuables from their victims. In many cases wedding rings were cut off together with the fingers they were on and gold teeth were wrenched out together with the whole denture. Women always had to strip naked; men and children were occasionally spared this humiliation. The Lithuanian sadists seized any opportunity possible. The rape of women was, in many instances, considered "payment" for collaborating in acts mass murder.

Pits were dug at execution sites in preparation for the victims to be murdered there. The pits were usually dug either by Soviet prisoners or the victims themselves. Around five pits were generally dug at time, each between 30 to 60 meters long, 3 meters wide and 2 meters deep. Often existing trenches originally dug by the Red army were used; these, of course, were bigger. The actual shootings in major cities and towns were usually carried out by Lithuanian battalions; or by the Mechanized Commando Unit of Haman with the assistance of local police and activists; or by the Lithuanian unit of the Ypatingas Burys with the assistance of the Vilnius battalions. Murders in provincial towns and villages were usually carried out by local police and activists.

The procedure usually started with victims ordered to step down into the pit and kneel or lie either on the earth or on top of the bodies killed earlier. In some cases, victims had to jump into the pit with later groups required to jump on the dead and wounded of previous groups. Once they were in the pits, the victims were mowed down by a hail of gun fire from carbine rifles and machine pistols, which did not require the killers to actually step into the pits to carry out the shooting. However, as the number of prisoners brought for execution steadily grew, the method was revised and instead of stepping into the pit, victims were instead ordered to stand on the edge while their killers opened fire on them with machine guns. Those victims who were still alive after falling into the pits were finished off with pistol shots from officers standing nearby. Many were still buried alive and the sounds of groaning and crying could often be heard from under the earth for days after the killing took place.

The Lithuanians' bestiality could also be seen in their behavior towards children and babies. These were seldom shot and instead the killers tore off their heads or dashed their bodies against walls, boulders, trees or telephone poles, following they threw them in execution pits. Some babies were impaled on bayonets while others served as entertainment for killers who throw them in the air and shoot them instead of practicing with clay pigeons. Many babies were buried alive.

Lithuanian murderers were paid for their work with the money, valuables and clothes of their victims. They were also given generous rations of alcohol, before, during the course of and following a killing spree. After the executions, the murderers usually celebrated their great "victory" (usually after having killed babies) and met local hostelries or inns to celebrate. In many cases local churches held a special mass attended by the murderers to commemorate the occasion.

The first Jewish victims to be abused or murdered were the intelligentsia and in particular the Rabbis.The Rabbis were singled out by the Lithuanians for particularly savage treatment. In this article Mr. Zak recounts only a small part of the suffering the Rabbis had endure until they were finally murdered by their Lithuanian torturers.

The murder of Lithuanian Rabbis

By Joseph Zack (Zera Kodesh)

Were the Vilna Gaon (of blessed memory) alive during the Holocaust of Lithuanian Jewry, the Lithuanians would have no doubt tortured and murdered him as they did the rest of the rabbinical community of Lithuania…

Lithuania was renowned for its eminent rabbinical scholars. Their numbers were disproportionately large, compared to those in Lithuania's larger neighbors, Russia and Poland. Lithuanian rabbis were amongst the most famous of all Jewish scholars, the most notable of whom was Rabbi Eliyahu, the 18th century Gaon of Vilna. He was perceived as an authentic representative of Lithuanian Jewry, encapsulating all the characteristics and qualities commonly associated with Lithuanian Jewry.

This eminent scholar – who lived by the strict guidelines of traditional Jewish law (Halacha) – produced a long dynasty of erudite pupils whose influence continues influence Jewish thinking to this very day. The century following the deaths of the Vilna Gaon and Rabbi Chaim of Volozin, saw the establishment in Lithuania of tens of Yeshivot among them the renowned centers for Torah study at Volozin, Mir, Vilna, Radin, Lida, Slabodka, Telz and Panevezys. The thousands of students that attended these institutions went on to promote religious observance and teach Torah at communities across Europe.

The passion for Torah burned within Lithuanian rabbis, who viewed such activity as the cornerstone of Jewish identity. This meant that the increasingly popular Hassidic movement that had spread across neighboring countries could be not reconciled with the typical rationale of Lithuanian Jewry. They considered the Hassidic movement somewhat enigmatic in nature, with some rabbis even expressing strong opposition to the locally based 'Mussar' movement of Rabbi Yisrael Salanter, which aspired to add a moral dimension to Torah study by studying works that focused on Jewish ethics and philosophy. Scholars such as Rabbi Leib Shapira of Kovna discouraged students from such study, fearing that it would divert their attention from the more important task of studying Torah itself.

Most Lithuanian rabbis balanced religious observance in its most ardent form with a rational approach to key religious issues. Many researchers feel that Lithuanian Jewry was far more prolific than its counterparts in other countries by sheer virtue of the widespread popularity of Torah study. In towns and cities throughout Lithuania, the Torah represented a heritage common to all Jews, irrespective of their individual backgrounds.

Although they viewed Torah study as the primary purpose in life, the Rabbis were not indifferent to the spirit of the times, especially in all matters relating to the revival of, and support for a Jewish presence in Eretz Israel. Disregarding the vocal opposition of a small

minority, the overwhelming majority of Lithuanian rabbis played a pivotal role in the founding of the Zionist movement and added moral weight to the legitimacy of the fledgling movement by joining its leadership. Rabbis and yeshiva students had been moving to Eretz Israel ever since the great wave of immigration by disciples of the Vilna Gaon at the close of the 18th century, and played a key role in the spiritual life of the Jewish settlement.

Thanks to the efforts of Lithuanian rabbis and other educational and spiritual leaders, Lithuanian Jewish spiritual life thrived. Their intellectual leadership was a constant source of inspiration to Jewish communities throughout Lithuania and served to preserve the flame of Jewish tradition and religious observance during the era of Soviet occupation. Under the guise of 'cosmopolitan emancipation' the communists, aided and abetted by several local Jewish sympathizers, mounted a relentless assault against Jewish heritage, culture, and Zionism. These efforts failed. Only the physical annihilation by Lithuanian pro Nazi militia could deal a mortal blow to this magnificent community and its spiritual leadership.

scholars murdered by the Lithuanians were individuals who were Among the dozens of rabbinic achieved descendants of the Vilna Gaon. Other rabbis living in Lithuania at that time reputedly therefore be safely renown for their extensive Torah knowledge in their own right. It can similar fate had he lived during this assumed that the Vilna Gaon himself would have suffered a .period dark

The Rabbis were usually the first victims of Lithuanian savagery. During the first ten days of the German invasion local Lithuanian groups and individuals murdered tens of thousands of Jews without the assistance of the infamous Einsatzgruppen who had not yet arrived from the West. The first people to be butchered were local Jewish leaders, including rabbis who were singled out for particularly savage abuse by

Lithuanians. It would be difficult to find the appropriate words to describe the extent of the suffering endured by the rabbis before they returned their souls to their almighty. Despite claims made after the war, these crimes were not committed by a select band of thugs but by people from all walks of life and professions who were eager to demonstrate their loyalty to the newly installed Nazi regime. Following are just some of the incidents of torture and abuse inflicted on rabbis by local teachers, doctors, engineers, lawyers, farmers, soldiers, police and others.

Alytus

"Ivaskauskas, a former major at the Lithuanian general staff headquarters, arrived on the scene and decided to take the initiative on his own. He asked that a Jewish rabbi be found so that he could kill him with his own bare hands. The rabbi they found was crippled and could barely walk. After dragging him around and savagely beating him, they threw him face up into a pit so that Ivaskauskas could shoot him. He drew and his pistol and shot him between the eyes three times."

Anyksciai

“The rest of the participants amused themselves (prior to the murders) by subjecting prisoners to grueling exercise regimes and then beating them savagely. One of those subjected to this was the local rabbi Kalman Kadishevitz, also known as the ‘righteous man of Lotova.’ Wrapped in his prayer shawl (Talit) and phylacteries (Tefilin), he was taken with the first group for execution at dawn and conducted himself with purity and piety right until his final moments.”

Birzai

“The abuse of the Jews began on the very first day. The local rabbi, Yehudah Lev Bornstein was murdered for ‘daring’ to approach the authorities on behalf of the community. A young man, Mottel Bader, who tried to defend the rabbi was also shot. The local ritual slaughterer (shochet), was singled out for a particularly cruel death. The Lithuanians tied his beard to the tail of a galloping horse. The animal dragged the man through the streets until he finally died.”

Butrimonys

“They assembled all the Jews in the study center (Beit Midrash) and ordered them to tear up all the Torah scrolls and religious books and burn them in the furnace at the local blacksmith’s workshop. Rabbi Avraham Moseh Vitkind, an ardent Zionist and eminent scholar, was forced to smash the windows of the synagogue. On the night of August 21, local Lithuanians arrested 100 men and 15 women, including the local rabbi. They stripped him of his clothes, tore out his beard and placed a hat on his head back to front. All the prisoners were tied up in pairs with steel wire and marched to Alytus where they were murdered.”

Girkalnis

“The Lithuanian thugs started off with the synagogue. They removed the Torah scrolls unfurled them through the streets of the town and then danced and trampled on them. They dragged the town Rabbi, Leb Chaim Itzhak Ossovksy into the street and wrenched out his beard together with the skin on his face. When they finally got bored, they left him bloody and beaten on the sidewalk. Rabbi Ossovsky was finally murdered a week later together with the rest of the Jewish community after being held in captivity without food or water.”

Josvainiai

“The rampage by local Lithuanians started prior to the arrival of German troops. Once the Germans entered the town, attacks by Lithuanians became increased in frequency and savagery. They were continually devising new ways to abuse the Jews. One day, the grabbed the local shochet and his wife and led them into a room full of people. They then cut off his beard and sideburns and forced him to strip down to his underwear. They made him dance the ‘Kazachok’ while all the audience applauded, and kicked and beat him. His wife, in an act of desperation, fell fists flailing on the murderers and few minutes later several gunshots ended the lives of these two poor creatures. The murderers wanted yet more entertainment and turned next on the local rabbi Avraham Dov Tarna. He too was dragged into the same room, stripped and then beaten mercilessly. They did not murder Rabbi Tarna that day but instead waited a month and then killed him together with the rest of the community in August.”

Kaisiadorys

“The Lithuanians invented all sorts of games and shows to amuse themselves. One day, they dragged the local rabbi David Aaron Yafe through the streets of the town until he finally died. Local Lithuanians looked on with glee.”

Kelm

“On July 29, the Lithuanians gathered all the Jews and marched them to the Grosbask estate where they were murdered and buried in pits. Some people were thrown alive into the pits under the pretext that a bullet was too precious to be wasted on a Jew. The last group to be murdered included principals and students from nearby yeshivas, among them Rabbis Daniel Movshovitz, Gershon Maydanik, Shlomo Pianko and Kalman Benishevitz. Rabbi Benishevitz was the last person to be shot and prior to this he was forced to kneel at the edge of the pit and watch his entire community being wiped out.”

Lazdijai

“One day, they dragged the town rabbi, Yaakov Aryeh Hacohen Gerstein out of his home and began beating him with a horsewhip in the street. His family were also beaten as a punishment for watching what was happening to their father. Afterwards the rabbi was placed on a truck and driven away. Fearful for their rabbi’s safety, representatives from the Jewish community contacted the local priest for help but he merely prevaricated. It later transpired that they had taken the rabbi outside town and made him carry sacks of cement all day long. In the evening, they made him return home on foot. On November 3, 1941, Rabbi Gerstein was taken together

with his family and the rest of the community to a site outside town and there, naked as the day they were born, they were savagely murdered."

Luoke

"The rabbi of the town, Shlomo Efraim Kravitzki was taken to the forest where the Lithuanians savagely tortured him, cut off half his beard and made him endlessly carry water pitchers back and forth. After a few days, the Lithuanians locked him in a barn without food or water. Several days later, after being repeatedly tortured and subjected to various 'exercises' by his captors, he was led to a pit and shot together with the rest of his community. Some people were buried alive."

Marijampole

"After many days of abuse which included the local rabbi Avraham Zeev Heller being forced to clean city streets, the Lithuanians rounded up all the Jews in the Hella market square. They took Rabbi Heller, cantor Lanski and other distinguished communal figures and tethered them to horses which dragged them through the street until they were streaming with blood. Many Jews, on seeing this, realized the end was near and accepted their fate with calm and dignity. The local shochet, Chayim Velvel Connoyser led the assembled crowd in prayers for divine mercy and another communal leader Rabbi Hiller ended the proceedings by reciting the verse: "hear oh Israel, the lord is our God, the lord is one.

"The march to the pits began the next morning. After having been continuously tortured, the Jews had no resistance left and were no longer aware of what was happening to them. Many people were not shot and instead were simply buried alive. Children had their heads shattered with clubs and shovels. Many local students and gymnasia pupils volunteered eagerly to take part in the savagery."

Papile

"On the very first day of occupation, the Lithuanians rounded up all the Jews in the market square and robbed them of all their money and valuables. A favorite Lithuanian pastime was tearing the hair out of old people's beards. The local rabbi, Avraham Hacohen Levine was singled out for particularly barbaric torture. The Lithuanians cut off his beard and forced the rest of the community to dance around him in a circle while he was being abused. Rabbi Levine bored his suffering with dignity, uttering silent prayers all the while. The Jews were then transferred to a camp near the town hall. The camp commandant ordered a local farmer to provide a pig and then had it killed and cooked. He ordered Rabbi Levine and other Jewish leaders to join him for dinner one evening and when they refused he had them thrown into a

damp cellar and forced them to eat bowls of pork soup. After several days of torture, in which large numbers of Jews died, those who were still alive were taken to pits in the fields outside town and shot."

Pumpenai

"Several days after the start of the German invasion, the Lithuanians got together and began deporting local Jews to forced labor camps. They continually abused them , robbing them of anything they could lay their hands on. The Jews were imprisoned in several homes, one of which was that of the local rabbi, Meir Itzhak Chayat. They were held without food and in conditions of squalor and were subjected to continual abuse by Lithuanians. Eventually Rabbi Chayat was tortured to death in his own home. Accusing him of swallowing gold coins, a band of thugs threw him on the floor and beat and kicked him until his entrails burst. His wife, Gittel, the daughter of Rabbi Chayim Halevy Katz and her three children were forced to stand and watch. Afterwards, the entire Jewish community was marched to the Pajost forest where they were savagely murdered."

Radviliskis

"Local Lithuanians began abusing the Jews as soon as the Germans entered the town. One of their favorite pastimes was grabbing orthodox Jews off the streets and forcing them to gather excrement from the streets with their skullcaps which they then had to wear on their heads. Aside from the usual abuse, the Lithuanians also arranged 'public exhibitions.' One day, they led a large group of Jews to "Liberty Avenue" and began training the group to perform various exercises. These satanic practices would often include forcing the group to pour buckets of water over one another, riding one another and other forms of hideous amusement. They took the local rabbi, Itzhak Begun and cut off his beard and placed it in his front coat pocket as a decorative handkerchief while a crowd of Lithuanians stood around enjoying the spectacle. A week later Rabbi Begun was murdered together with the first 300 victims from the community."

Ramygala

"The Lithuanians singled out the local rabbi, Zissel Steinfeld for special attention. They tied him to a wagon and then dragged him through the cobblestone streets until he finally died."

Rietavas

for a single moment. One blow of a whistle would have them all The Jews were not left alone“ the double. The murderers singled out the local rabbi, Shmuel Ponidler, for on their feet on of the building special treatment. They cut off part of his beard, marched him to the back yard and the book he had been and there they forced him to burn his prayer shawl, phylacteries forced him to drag it through the studying. They then tethered him to a garbage wagon and Later, the .failed him, he was murdered on the spot streets of town. When his strength finally ”.local shochet, Abba Rabinovitch was also murdered

Seduva

“The carnage continued and the number of casualties kept on rising. One day they grabbed the local rabbi, Mordechai Rabinovitch and took him to the local Jewish cemetery. The criminal selected for the task shot Rabbi Rabinovitch but deliberately avoided killing him, leaving him to writhe in agony throughout the night. The murderer finally returned the following morning and shot him dead.”

Sirvintos

“As soon as the Germans entered the town, the Lithuanians went on the rampage and began abusing the Jews. First they took all the Torah scrolls out of the synagogue and study hall and unfurled them in the streets for all passers by to trample on at leisure. Then they locked the local Rabbi, Avraham Leib Grossbard and his son, Zundel Krook inside the study center and set it ablaze. Both father and son were burned to death.”

Taurage

“During the first days of the invasion, armed Lithuanians set upon the local rabbi, Levy Shpitz and demanded he hand over the list of Jewish communists that were hiding in the town. When Rabbi Shpitz insisted he knew nothing about any Jewish communists, they ordered him to start running and then shot him in the back. Fatally wounded, he staggered home but the Lithuanians followed him and dragging him back out into the street, they cut off his beard and tortured him to death.”

Telsiai

“Bloody Friday, as it became known, took place five days after the start of the German invasion. The Jews of the town were ordered to assemble in the city square.

five and then ordered to march to the lake outside town with the They were arranged in rows of Avraham Itzhak Bloch, senior teachers at the local yeshiva and other dignitaries ,local rabbi others wept leading the way. The rest of the community followed, some reciting psalms while formation and pushing the bitterly. Lithuanian guards accompanied them, keeping the lines in prods and rifle butts. They were led down to disabled and frail forward with blows from cattle the lake and locked in huts

where under appalling conditions, they were subjected to continuous torture and abuse.

“Finally on the morning of July 15, 1941, Lithuanian guards burst into the cabin in which Rabbi Bloch and other leaders were being held, shouting “all you rabbis and Jew parasites outside on the double.” The prisoners knew what lay in store for them but death was a welcome panacea from the torture and torment of the last few days. They all came out in orderly formation and were led two by two to nearby pits. They were ordered to strip and stand on planks that had been laid across each of the pits. Lithuanian guards then shot them dead. Rabbi Bloch was subjected to several hours more torture before he was finally murdered.”

Tytuvenai

“Local Lithuanian groups sprung into action as soon as the German invasion began. They seized every book they could find, including the entire library of the local rabbi, Avraham Ezriel Medlin, and burned them. Rabbi Medlin himself, was tortured to death but witnesses relate that before he died he cursed his killers and said that God

would avenge the blood of the Jews. He promised them that they would never succeed in annihilating the entire Jewish community and those who survived would find a way to avenge those who died.

“The rabbi’s wife managed to escape together with her three children to the ghetto at Shavli. The children surprised local residents with their talents. Her eldest son, aged eight, already knew most of the Talmud and could also solve complex mathematical problems. But they were eventually caught by a local death squad and murdered in the ‘children’s action,’ later that year.”

Ukmerge

“As soon as the Germans arrived, local Lithuanians arrested Rabbi Zusmanovitch and after savagely torturing him, they took him and other diginitaries to a suburb called Pivonia where they all locked in a brick oven and burned alive.”

Utena

“The abuse of the Jews reached its peak on the third day of the German invasion. As evening fell, the Lithuanians went on the rampage in the local synagogue and threw all the Torah scrolls and religious books out into the street. The rabbi of the town, Zvi Yaakov Bleinman was marched into the city square and forced to dance and sing while holding a Torah scroll. Afterwards they set fire to all the books and as the flames were burning, they cut off Rabbi Bleinman’s beard and shot and severely wounded him. He was murdered shortly after together with the rest of the Jewish community of Utena.”

Uzpaliai

“The death of the young rabbi, Leib Kameraz, son of the elderly rabbi, Aharon Naftali Kameraz, was particularly horrifying. The murderer Caponis raped his daughter in front of him and then threw Rabbi Kameraz in jail where he was held without food or

water for several days. Caponis and his thugs then took him into the nearby forest and ordered him to dig his own grave. Rabbi Kameraz leapt on Caponis and tried to strangle him but was shot from behind by one of the others. Caponis was critically ill in hospital for several days afterwards. Rabbi Kameraz’s father, Rabbi Aharon Naftali, who was completely paralyzed, was thrown on to the back of a wagon and then murdered together with the rest of the community.”

Zagare

“The morning after the Germans entered town, local Lithuanians ordered the communal rabbi, Israel Reif and several other Jews to march to the market square in the town center. There, under guard by armed Lithuanians, they were given tools and marched to the Graf Grishkin estate where they were put to work cleaning out cowsheds and stables. As evening fell, the group were ordered to return to the town square where a ‘show’ was organized for the enthusiastic audience that had gathered. Each Jewish man was forced to place his tools on the ground and then kneel down in front of them. The Lithuanian guards then walked up and down the rows of prostrate Jews and anyone whose tools were not placed in a straight line was given a severe beating. Afterwards, they took Rabbi Reif who was tall and paired him with someone who was short. They tethered the two men to a wagon and made them drag it around the town center to the cheers and applause of Lithuanian bystanders.

“The murderers had a particularly sadistic custom which they practiced each morning. Each group of Jews selected for forced labor was required to pass in front of Rabbi Reif and spit in his face before going out to work. Many Jews could not bring themselves to degrade the rabbi in such a manner and paid for their bravery with their lives. So Rabbi Reif commanded his community to spit in his face if ordered to do so, before being sent to work.”

Out of all the gruesome atrocities committed by Lithuanians during the mass murders of the Jewish population, the most inhuman was, no doubt, their treatment of Jewish babies and toddlers. These murders can only show the depths of of evil to which the Lithuanian murderers descended. The author of this article selects just some of the many cases recorded.

Infanticide – the cruel murder of babies and children

Joseph Zak (Zera Kodesh)

"*Because the young children and the sucklings swoon in the broad places of the city. They say to their mothers, where is corn and wine? When they swoon as the wounded in the broad places of the city, when their soul is poured into their mothers' bosom." (Lamentations Chapter 2, verses 12-13)*

There is, it seems, no limit to the depths of evil and savagery which mankind is capable of descending to, rendering him void of any semblance of humanity. When overcome by bestial instincts he is capable of behavior horrendous enough to shock any living soul. The Lithuanians displayed such behavior during the Holocaust while abusing their victims – namely their Jewish neighbors – abuse committed on a scale never witnessed before in the history of mankind. Their 'treatment' of babies and children was particularly gruesome.

The testimonies given by survivors, Lithuanian neighbors and the criminals themselves are singularly horrifying. How could these animals abuse infants with such vehement hatred and cruelty?

Volume 4 of the anthology of Lithuanian Jewry , which provides details on the Holocaust that took place in Lithuanian towns and cities, also includes accounts of infanticide that took place at certain locations. These shocking accounts make difficult reading, but it is our duty to continue to publish them so that these atrocities – committed by Lithuanians who were usually neighbors of the victims they murdered – will never be forgotten. The testimony that follows below represents just some of the many atrocities that occurred and we aim to obtain information about as many such incidents as possible, if not all of them, so that they may be accurately recorded for the education of future generations.

Alsedzaiai

"Stasys Abrutus displayed exceptional cruelty. One of the women begged him to shoot her first so that she would not have to witness her baby daughter's death. Abrutus slashed the infant's throat in front of the mother and then murdered her."

Alytus

“The murderer Petras Saulevicius admitted, “I was an active participant in the annihilation of Jews and I felt it necessary to act decisively. I abused women, old people and children. I would toss the children around like strips of timber and paid no heed to them or their whining mothers.”

Aukstadvaris

“The Lithuanians began murdering; they shot and threw wounded victims into the pits. Babies’ heads were shattered with blows from hammers.”

Betygala

“From her hideout, she could follow the gruesome scenes of murder that were taking place. She saw how Lithuanian murderers wrenched a nine month old baby from his mother’s arms and tore him in two.”

Butrimonys

“The children were simply shoved into the pit and shot. Most of them were buried alive.”

Gargzdai

“Having murdered all the Jewish men, the Lithuanians forced Jewish women and children to dance on the graves of their loved ones. But it didn’t end there. Later, the women and children were led by armed Lithuanian guards to a site west of town on the other side of the Minga River and locked in a number of derelict barns. Many children didn’t reach the final destination and were murdered en route, their skulls shattered with stones and clubs.

“The Lithuanian carried out the murders with the utmost barbarity. They beat the women and children with shovels and iron bars, terrorizing their victims like bloodthirsty animals hunting prey.”

I watched as the men and women put down their suitcases and personal effects and began “ removing their outer clothing. As they began separating the women from the

Jonava

children, terrible wailing broke out. Women refused to be separated from their children so the Lithuanian murderers dragged them away by their hands and legs. Many children ran back to their parents and were mowed down by a hail of gunfire. They pushed people forward to the edge of one of the trenches and then opened fire on them with machine guns. The children were shoved into the other trench and many of them were buried alive.”

Jubarkas

“Children were beaten, thrown to the ground and trampled to death. The murderers would fire their guns in the air, brutally shouting, “Throw the children in the pits.”

Kedainiai

“The murderers’ cruelty got worse with every minute that passed. Rachel Shisianski stood at the edge of the pit and begged them to shoot her first and then her children. In response, they grabbed hold of her children and shot them in front of her and then killed her afterwards. The Lithuanians would throw babies and try to impale them on their bayonets as they came down.”

Kraziai

“The Lithuanian murderer Bronius Kaminskas grabbed Leyzarin, a six week old baby, and dashed his head against a tree as well as tearing him in two.

Marijampole

“They didn’t bother shooting children at all, but merely smashed in their skulls with clubs and shovels.”

Mazeikiai

“After the women, came the turn of the children. At this point the Lithuanians came up with a simpler idea. They threw them all into one long trench. Then they positioned themselves around the edge of the trench and opened fire on the children below. Their screams pierced the skies above. Once they had finished shooting, the Lithuanians filled in the trenches with earth and slaked lime, burying the children underneath, the dead, wounded and living all together.”

Panevezys

“They would wrench the young children out of their mothers’ arms and throw them in the pits. The Lithuanian murderers’ favorite sport was throwing babies and attempting to shoot them mid air. They usually missed and many of the infants would be still alive after they fell into the ditch below. Grabbing the children by the hair, the murderers shattered their skulls with a bullet from their revolvers. Soviet prisoners of war were usually employed to fill in the ditches once the murders were over. On one occasion they noticed that a child in one of the trenches was still alive. They lifted him out and tried to hide him in the nearby bushes but the Lithuanian guards saw them and reprimanded and beat them severely. Claiming it was “better to kill him so that no one can take vengeance on us,” the local police official Dembrauskas put his gun against the child’s head and shot him.”

Psavalys

“Lithuanian murderers went on the rampage. They tore the infants to shreds and dashed their heads against nearby trees.”

Radviliskis – Nemunelis

“Children up to age six were killed with blows from rifle butts or by having their heads crushed with stones. Children aged six and upwards were shot.”

Sirvintos

“Small children were thrown in the air and used by the Lithuanians as target practice.”

Taurage

“The Lithuanian murderers didn’t even bother shooting babies and kids. They simply grabbed them by the legs and tore them in two or dashed their skulls against nearby trees or boulders. Then they would throw them in the pits.”

Uzpaliai

“Mirel Meitz gave birth to a baby a few days before war broke out. The hooligans tore the infant to shreds in front of the mother and threw the mutilated corpse into the yard.”

Lithuania was famous , even before WW2, as a stronghold of basketball. In 1938/9 they won the European championsip. Having welcomed the invasion of Lithuania by the Nazis, the Lithuanians played host to their German mentors . Just one week into the invasion a Lithuanian team consisting of Lithuania`s best players played a German basketball team drawn from local German forces. The Lithuanians obviously won.The Lithuanian organizers had an idea as to how they would reward the victorious athletes: they gave them the opportunity to kill Jews... This was easy, since many thousands other Lithuanians did the same at that time. The "Heroes" were brought to the Seventh Fort where thousands of Jews were being imprisoned prior to being murdered. There, the Lithuanian team demonstrated their ability, not only to play basketball but also to kill defensless people.

The Basketball Game & Murderous Prize (from an eyewitness account).

On July 6, 1941, just over a week after the launcch of the German invasion of Lithuania, a basketball match took place in the city of Kaunas. A local Lithuanian team – composed chiefly of Lithuania's national team that had earlier won the European nations championship – faced a side drawn from the invading German forces. The local side, of course, won. The Lithuanian organizers of the game came up with a novel idea for rewarding the victorious athletes. The prize they received for beating the Germans was the opportunity to murder Jews.

The day after the game, the team was taken to the Seventh Fort where the Lithuanians had incarcerated around seven thousand local Jews who had been abducted from their homes and off the city streets. They subjected their Jewish prisoners to the most horrendous abuse, murdering hundreds of them daily until there were none left alive, save for thirty survivors, most of whom were veterans of Lithuania's war of independence. As a reward for their efforts, each member of the victorious basketball team was allowed to shoot dead ten Jews. It should be noted that the abduction of the Jews, their imprisonment at the fort, torture and subsequent murder was ordered by Colonel Jurgis Bobelis, the military governor of Kaunas.

After the war, the small number of survivors of this atrocity began to testify to the horrors they experienced as prisoners at the Seventh Fort. One such witness was Itzhak Nementchik, who provided a graphic account of the ten days of torture at the fort, which culminated in the mass murder by the Lithuanians of the Jews held there. Nementchik himself was released at the last moment along with the small group of "fortunate" veterans. His testimony appeared in the survivors association periodical "Fun Letzn Churban" (Accounts from the Final Destruction), which was published in Munich in 1948.

Most members of the Lithuanian basketball team that murdered Jews fled Lithuania together with the Germans as the Red army advanced. Once in Germany, they eventually found their way to one of the refugee camps in the American occupied zone where they stayed until moving on to the United States and other Western countries. They participated in several more basketball games before leaving Germany.

members of this infamous team, the Norkus brothers were recently As is known, two of the bring the United States and proceedings have been initiated to bring them to try to discovered in them to trial

PART TWO

In this short article, Prof. Golan, a senior professor at Haifa University and a member of the Administration of the Association of the Lithuanian Jews in Israel, expresses his feeling regarding the contemptible and inhumane treatment of the Lithuanian authorities toward Jews in general and particularly to Holocaust survivors.In spite of the Lithuanian participation in the murder of Lithuanian Jews, after they got independence, the government and the nation did not atone for their actions and did not try to compensate or at least make life easier for their victims. They enacted prejudicial laws in order to hurt those who were left alive. Professor Golan turns to the conscience of the world and asks them not to hug this country to their bosom until they have paid their debt to the Holocaust survivors.

A**n Outrage!**

Professor David Golan

The proverb "Time is a healer of wounds," certainly makes sense and is certainly true in some respects. This is not the case, however, where we are concerned.

More than sixty years have passed since the dark days of the horrendous slaughter of Lithuanian Jews by their longstanding neighbors – the Lithuanians. Ninety four out of every hundred Lithuanian Jews – men, women and children, young and old – were brutally murdered by their own neighbors on Lithuanian soil, with their naked bodies (they were all forced to strip before being killed) dumped in hundreds of pits and fields throughout the country. Within less than three months of continuous intensive mass murder, only 20% of the Jewish community remained, most of whom were exploited as slave labor before they were finally murdered.

The attainment of Lithuanian independence in 1991 aroused hope among us for a measure of justice on the part of the newly established state authorities. All of those who murdered, raped, tortured and robbed were of Lithuanian stock. They also looted the property and assets, both communal and private, of their victims after they murdered them.

Men and institutions in search of the murderers identified many thousands of killers and appealed to the Lithuanian authorities to prosecute them. No such action was ever taken. In fact, the authorities have gone to great lengths to falsify the evidence. To facilitate this whitewash and exonerate their own compatriots, they have reinvented "historical circumstances" to suit their own convenience. Moreover, one of the first laws enacted by the independent Lithuanian parliament in 1991 was the "Rehabilitation Law," which granted an official pardon to 55,000 individuals originally tried and convicted by Soviet courts. Thousands of these individuals participated in the mass murder of Jews.

service to the Western world, rather than The Lithuanian authorities tenaciously prefer to pay lip required them to bring criminal charges against their own face the truth, which would have restore unequivocally citizenship to Holocaust survivors. They also errant compatriots and Citizenship Law," which restricted" enacted the

eligibility for Lithuanian citizenship to individuals of ethnic Lithuanian origin (i.e. non Jews). This represented an attempt to legally disenfranchise the remnants of Lithuanian Jewry who would be unable to lay title of any of the property looted during the Holocaust, due to the passing

into law of the “Restitution of Property” Law, which limited the right to reclaim property to Lithuanian citizens only!

With Lithuania now a fully fledged member of NATO and other European community institutions, this would be an appropriate moment for men of conscience to condemn such corrupt policies and call the Lithuanians to order.

In an article written in 1997 the late Prof. Tzvi Kolitz attacks a senior professor at New York's Yeshiva University and calls Lithuania, "an ostracized land" because of its many crimes against humanity. Prof. Kolitz calls to the nations of the world not to associate with Lithuania and not to accept the country into international organizations because of the despicable deeds predicated by the people of this nation with overwhelming enthusiasm in particular the Lithuanian intelligentsia.

No to Lithuania!!! Professor Tzvi Kulitz

It is because of the high regard in which I hold Lithuanian Jewry that I find myself absolutely rejecting its Christian counterparts.

Alytus (a post my late father held prior to the war) has been in my thoughts constantly

one must remain so because it is the Lithuania is pariah state and it must remain as such. It Jewish community was even worse than that of Christian state whose horrific treatment of the even turned on the Jewish doctors who treated them selflessly. the Nazis. Lithuanian Christians And .behavior is without parallel in the entire history of Nazi organized genocide Such sadistic about it. The local the manner in which they murdered the last rabbi of ever since I first read sick old rabbi" (his own words) " Lithuanian militia commander instructed his men to find the ".shoot him between the eyes" and bring him that he could have the chance to

Why do I recall these events? I do so because the Lithuania of today seeks admission to NATO. Such membership will provide it with the platform from which to influence public opinion both in the international community and the United States, home to a substantial Lithuanian expatriate community. This must be prevented at all cost!

enthusiasm for killing Jews as that No nation under Nazi occupation demonstrated as much local Jews were also massacred in their thousands shown by Lithuania. Even in Ukraine, where intelligentsia generally did not join in the mass murders. By contrast, the by their neighbors, the Doctors, .educated classes in Lithuania were among the ringleaders of the mass genocide other professions murdered students, priests, journalists, army officers and individuals from Soviet Union in June 1941. Entire Jews with alacrity even before the Nazis invaded the volunteers. Indeed, Lithuanians were unique in the communities were destroyed by local militia set about the task of looking for Jews to kill wherever they could enthusiasm with which they ?What caused this seething hatred .find them

Some historians feel the murderers were driven by a desire for revenge against the Jews for their purported collusion with the Soviet regime. The role played by Jewish commissars was certainly one of the causes but could not, by any means be considered the primary factor behind the Lithuanians' bloodthirsty desire for retribution. Despite their role in the Soviet administration, Jews fared little better than their Lithuanian counterparts during that period, with seven per cent of the Jewish population deported to Siberia compared to only three per cent of the Lithuanian population.

The real reason for the hatred runs much deeper. The late author and philosopher Abraham Kariv, whose publications included an abridged version of the writings of the Maharal of Prague, attributed the levels of cruelty and bestial excesses of Lithuanians to the divinity and saintliness of their Jewish victims. Such sanctity merely infuriated them further, driving them to commit acts of unspeakable barbarity.

Eight centuries ago, the Rambam had similar thoughts on the relationship between sanctity and devastation, as expressed in a letter to his son while visiting Eretz Israel. “He who is more saintly than his friend,” he claimed, “will surely feel the sword hovering over him.”

Should the members of NATO seriously consider admitting Lithuania to their ranks, Lithuanian Jewry must do all in its power to prevent it. This is one instance where protests and demonstrations may help. To allow Lithuania to join that select league of nations which never played any role in the spilling of Jewish blood, would be to turn a blind eye to the crimes committed against us. **It is our sacred duty never to forget!!!**

Dr. Efraim Zuroff, the writer, explains why thousands of Jews, especially Holocaust survivors, boycotted the Congress in Vilnius. The Lithuanians did not do anything to fulfill their duty as a free country. They did not bring to court or punish even one murderer of Jews during the Second World War.The Lithuanians did not fulfill the agreement in which they promised to supply information to the Israeli Lithuanian Committee, which was created in order to check the immunity given to the murderers of Jews. It's no wonder that Holocaust survivors do not believe the Lithuanians.

Can Lithuania face its Holocaust past? Reflections of a concerned Litvak.

Excerpts from lecture given by Dr. Efraim Zuroff, Director of the Wiesenthal Center, Jerusalem, at the conference on "Litvaks in the World," August 28, 2001.

Leib Zar of Lingmiany and Beila Gifter Zar of Shaduva, may I say As the grandson of Shmuel me pleased I am to be able to participate in this conference of Litvaks, which for how especially not here with us, but is a family gathering. I am only sorry that more of my fellow Litvaks are one the topic I would like to speak on is to perfectly honest, I am not surprised. This is because .today especially those from Israel, decided not to join us here ,of the reasons that some Litvaks

That topic is Lithuania's Holocaust past, an issue that hovers like an ominous black cloud over the Jewish past in this country and continues to dominate Lithuanian-Jewish relations. Twenty minutes are obviously not enough to adequately describe the role played by Lithuanians in the Holocaust, but perhaps I can leave you with several images, which illustrate the depth of the problem.

security focused in recent years on the Sagumas (Lithuanian wartime With so much attention Gimzauskas, Gecevius and others, ,of Lileikis cases the police battalions due to the police), and cruelty of the Lithuanian population during the initial there is a tendency to overlook terrible Nazi invasion. In at least forty communities, Jews were physically days and weeks of the attacks their Lithuanian neighbors before the Nazis arrived, and in many places such attacked by Caponis raped the were accompanied by indescribable brutality. In Uzpaliai, the murderer then imprisoned Rabbi daughter of the local rabbi Leib Kamerantz in front of him and finally executing him. In Birziai, the Kamerantz for several days without food or water before murdered by local townspeople who tied his beard to a local shochet (ritual slaughterer) was animal galloping through the streets until the man was dead. In Papile, horse's tail and sent the murdered local rabbi, Abraham Hacohen Levin was forced to eat pork soup before he was the .("rabbis (see article "Murder of Lithuanian

In major cities, the situation was, of course, no different. Who can forget the horrifying testimony of the German photographer who witnessed the brutal murder of tens of Jews in the Lietukis garage on June 27, 1941? (See article on Lietukis).

And on that patriotic note, who can ignore the words of Major Anatanas Impulevicius who reminded the men of the 12th Lithuanian Auxiliary Battalion prior to setting out for their mass murder mission in Belarus that they should fulfill their mission "with resolute will, honesty and honor. Always and everywhere show yourselves worthy of the noble name of a Lithuanian soldier because you are the representatives of the entire Lithuanian nation."

The results of this patriotism and its impact on Lithuanian Jews and Jews elsewhere speak for themselves:

1. More than 96% of the 200,000 Jews who lived under Nazi occupation in Lithuania were murdered during the Holocaust, many by Lithuanians.

2. Lithuanian police battalions murdered thousands more Jews outside Lithuania, primarily in Belarus but also Poland and the Ukraine.

3. Thousands of Jews from countries in Central and Western Europe were transported to Lithuania and also murdered by Lithuanians.

And who better to describe the Lithuanian role in the aforementioned murders than Ona Simaite, the courageous Lithuanian righteous gentile who clearly demonstrated the fact that people did have a choice at that time and that some Lithuanians helped their neighbors. These are her recollections recorded after the war:

"With the onset of World War 2, relations between Jews and Lithuanians took a turn for the worse that was far in excess of anything we'd ever dreamed of. Speaking as a Lithuanian, it distresses me deeply to have to say that many of my countrymen were incapable of demonstrating any compassion towards their Jewish neighbors as the latter were being systematically tortured and persecuted by the Nazis. And I feel great sadness when I think that there were those who even actively assisted the Nazis in their quest to destroy the Jews.

Special Lithuanian Platoon) traveled the length and breadth of) "The "Ypatingas Burys" others are killing tens of thousands of Jews. Individuals such as Bobelis, Piragius, and Lithuania their crimes against the Jews criminals whose names will live in infamy for all time, not just for Lithuanian nation. Not only did these carry out but also the disgrace they brought on the Jews but also in many instances they displayed a ghoulish Hitler's orders to kill all the before murdering them. I saw acts of victims torturing and terrorizing their enthusiasm for Lithuanian policemen supervised the transfer of the sadism and savagery with my own eyes as they were leading Jews to execution Lithuanian police were Jews to the ghetto. Even as demonstrating any common decency by sparing the traumatized victims news of the incapable of "horrific fate that awaited them

With this in mind, what did Jews expect from the newly independent Lithuania? After all we had boycotted Spain justifiably for far less for close to 500 years!

To start with, the least that we could expect was an unequivocal explicit admission of guilt and a sincere apology, a serious attempt to prosecute murderers and a determination to teach the truth

about what happened in Lithuania during the Holocaust. Today, from the perspective of more than a decade, we can say that very little has actually been done. We can start with the official declaration of the Seimas regarding Holocaust crimes, which despite being issued on behalf of the "Lithuanian people" expressed regret that "Lithuanian citizens" participated in the murders, a vague turn of phrase that could even include Jews.

Instead of immediately seeking to bring to justice those responsible for the murders, the Lithuanian authorities introduced a wide-scale rehabilitation program under which tens of thousands of Lithuanians previously convicted by Soviet courts were granted pardons and awarded generous compensation. Even though the law excluded those who had "participated in acts of genocide," the Wiesenthal Center discovered that at least dozens, if not hundreds and perhaps thousands of Lithuanian Nazi murderers had been granted rehabilitation.

Even worse, the theory of two genocides – the Holocaust and a purported equivalent or parallel genocide of Lithuanians – became common parlance not just among fringe elements in Lithuanian society. Two false unholy symmetries were created and repeatedly reiterated by Lithuanian officials- the relatively few crimes of Jewish communists against Lithuanians were presented as the rationale for the participation of Lithuanians in the murder of Jews during the Holocaust. Added to this was the blatantly untrue claim that the number of Lithuanian righteous gentiles exceeded that of Lithuanian murderers. Another myth often circulated asserted that those Lithuanians, who actually murdered Jews, were usually social misfits, when in truth they came from all walks of life in Lithuanian society and included many members of the Lithuanian intelligentsia.

Today, if we sum up what the Lithuanian government has achieved on these issues we can point to the following:

- 2 indictments against Lithuanian murderers – Sagumas commanders Alexandras Lileikis and Kazys Gimzauskas – which were filed only after it was clear that they were medically unfit to stand trial. Both arrived in Lithuania long before they were indicted. Neither sat one day in jail.

- 1 extradition request to Great Britain, submitted following a call by the Wiesenthal Center in February 2000 to initiate an investigation of 12th battalion officer Antanas Gecevicius, who was discovered living in Edinburgh.

- 47 rehabilitations cancelled in the wake of the establishment of a joint Lithuanian-Israeli commission of inquiry of which I am a member. I should point out, however, that the research mechanism created by the commission was unilaterally disbanded by the Lithuanian government which ceased providing information to Israel commission members. It is also important to add that the Lithuanian government did not even publicize the cancellation of the rehabilitations, let alone demand the return of property and money by those individuals whose rehabilitations were revoked.

In this regard I want to use this platform to call upon the Lithuanian government to renew the activities of the joint Israeli-Lithuanian commission on rehabilitations, and give priority to the prosecution of Lithuanian Nazi murderers. Just yesterday, I submitted the names of 97 Lithuanian suspects – members of police battalions and local police units – to the director of the division for special investigations at the office of the Prosecutor General. I can only hope therefore, that during the next few years some of the perpetrators of the Lithuanian Jewish Holocaust will finally be held to account in Lithuanian courts for their crimes.

In conclusion, I think it would be particularly appropriate that the next Litvak congress is held in Israel, which is home to one of the largest Litvak communities and certainly the most active Litvak expatriate organization, the Association of Lithuanian Jews, headed by Adv. Joseph Melamed. It is high time that we Litvaks gave a meaningful practical dimension to our yearly declaration, "Leshanah Haba'a BeYerushalayim," next year in Jerusalem.

(some passages are missing in this article and are being added)

Professor Levin of the Hebrew University claims that the execution of the Georgian Jew Dekanidze in Vilnius was just the murder of another Jew and that being Jewish was the crime for which he was executed. He ponders if Dekanidze was the last Jewish victim in Lithuania.

The last Jewish victim? Professor Dov Levin

Following is a summarized version of the tragic affair which many are unaware of. It began in the middle of October 1993, while several colleagues and I were attending a conference in Vilnius which focused on key facts and issues concerning relations between Jews and Lithuanians during the Holocaust. One day, during a heated debate, we suddenly heard a gunshot from the streets outside our conference hall. Within a short time, we learned that the victim of the shooting that had taken place nearby was Vitas Lingis, editor of the local popular tabloid "Respublika."

The subsequent arrest of Boris Dekanidze, son of the Georgian born local businessman Georgi Dekanidze shocked Vilnius Jewry. Respublika had no doubts as to the identity of the guilty parties even before Dekanidze and his co-defendant were charged. In a deliberate attempt to prejudice the outcome of the case before it started, the paper ran an article entitled "Revealed: the man who murdered Lingis for thirty silver coins." It was followed by a reproduction of the Leonardo da Vinci portrait, "The last Supper" but superimposed over the faces of the twelve messengers were the

The press made sure the affair remained firmly in the public spotlight by frequently publishing anti Semitic caricatures in which Jews had hooked noses and wore star of David pendants. The trial, which was conducted at lightning speed and with unprecedented determination produced no clear cut evidence linking Dekanidze to the shooting of Lingis. Despite this, Dekanidze alone was found guilty of murder and sentenced to death by firing squad.

Lithuania has always purported, since the Holocaust, to model itself after Western style democracies. But since the right of appeal to a higher judiciary does not exist there and consequently any sentence handed down by the courts is final, the only way to save Dekanidze from a firing squad was by appealing directly to the then state president Algirdas Brazauskas.

photos of twelve leading local Jewish figures including Dekanidze, who was depicted in the role of Judas Escariot.

The Dekanidze family appointed Tel Aviv-based lawyer Ze'ev Gordon to handle the appeal. In an interview with Pazit Rabina of the former Israeli daily "Davar," which appeared on July 28, 1995, Gordon spoke of his experiences in Vilnius after agreeing to act for Dekanidze. He was deeply disturbed by the manner in which the trial was being conducted and the surrounding media frenzy, which, he felt, "had severe anti Semitic" undertones. One such example was an

article published the day before sentencing, which alleged that the Dekanidze family "bribed the judges so as to ensure they would find Boris innocent." Well informed sources in Vilnius felt the article would "create intense pressure on the judges to return a verdict that would dispel all such allegations."

Sources close to the presidential administration attributed Brauzaskas' decision to the urgent need to placate hard line nationalist and anti Semitic elements in Lithuania,

n official request for clemency on humanitarian grounds was subsequently submitted to President Brazauskas following his visit to the Knesset in Israel on March 5, 1995, during which he apologized for the crimes committed by Lithuanians against their Jewish neighbors during the Holocaust. Despite this, it transpired that on returning to Lithuania after visiting Israel, Brazauskas decided to reject the appeal, although the Lithuanian government never acknowledged that such a request for clemency had been received.

who launched a withering attack on him for making statements of contrition while in Israel, which, they felt, were an affront to Lithuanian national honor. Yet although the appeal for clemency had been turned down, the authorities still did not set a date for Dekanidze's execution.

In the meantime, further developments in the case came when it was learned that a man named Igor Tiomkin, who was described at the trial as a full accomplice in the planning and murder of Lingis, was being held in custody in Germany. Moreover, information forwarded to Adv. Gordon and the likelihood that Tiomkin would be extradited to Lithuania, gave rise to the possibility that Dekanidze would be granted a retrial. On the basis of this, an official application for a stay of execution was filed with the Lithuanian authorities.

But on July 16, 1995, the popular Lithuanian daily "Lietvos Rytas," in a laconic exclusive, informed the public, including the Dekanidze family that Boris had been executed four days earlier on the twelfth of the month. Put differently, this contemptible act had been carried out in secret without informing the family, community and general public.

It was hardly surprising that Adv. Gordon, on learning that his client had been executed, declared: "the government of Lithuania conducted itself like thieves in the night. Sovereign and democratic states do not behave in this manner. They did not summon a rabbi, nor allow the condemned man's father to give his only son one final embrace. To carry out such an execution, under cover of darkness, indicates the state had something to hide."

This incident will no doubt serve as both a chilling and threatening reminder to those of us, who in the summer and autumn of 1941, witnessed the execution of tens of thousands of Jews in the same Vilnius by death squads in official uniform wearing Lithuanian national insignia on their hats. These individuals also used a variety of trumped up charges to justify their vile actions.

Whether the killers were members of the "Ypatingas Burys" or other militias, there can be no avoiding the comparison, albeit momentarily, between what happened to our predecessors during World War Two and what we saw with our own eyes, fifty years on, just as a general amnesty

was being granted to thousands of murderers of Jews – among them arch criminals such as Lileikis and his associates.

It should also be remembered that the sentence passed on Boris Dekanidze was the only execution ever carried out in Lithuania since the declaration of independence in 1991! Furthermore, the bill to abolish capital punishment was introduced in the Lithuanian parliament just as the trial of Dekanidze was taking place. The passing of the bill into law was conveniently delayed until the condemned man had been

In this article, Dr. Gill, a specialist on the relationship between Lithuanian Jewry and gentile Lithuanians, points out the hypocrisy of the Lithuanians towards the Jews. They clasp them to their bosom when they need to use them and then hate them overwhelmingly when their services are no longer needed. This happened in 1918-1920 when the Lithuanian country was created and repeated itself in 1989-1990 when they got their independence again.

The "new" Lithuania by Dr. H.Gill.

During the years 1918-1920, when seeking to liberate themselves from Soviet rule and establish the independent Lithuanian state, the Lithuanians turned to the Jewish community and promised "the earth" in return for the Jews' support for their cause. Such an occurrence was to repeat itself six decades later as the Lithuanians sought once again to disentangle themselves from Soviet domination. The Jewish community did not ask for autonomy as it had done on the previous occasion since there were very few Jews left in Lithuania following the wholesale destruction of Lithuanian Jewry by Lithuanian militias and partisan groups during World War Two. But once again, as in 1920, the politicians and activists of the day went out of their way to secure Jewish support for the cause of independence. And once again, as in 1920, when the then Lithuanian government abandoned its promise of autonomy for the Jews once independence had been secured, the pro-independence movement of the 1990s subsequently turned its back on the Jewish community, allowing traditional anti Jewish sentiments to rise to the surface once again.

pro-independence activists in Lithuania ,In 1989, two years before the end of the Gorbachev era for independence. The "movement" needed Jewish formed the Sajudis movement to campaign impression" among Russian dissidents (some of who were also Jews). support to make a "good be this and prove its democratic credentials to western states whose backing would To achieve together with a group of 55 ,essential in securing independence from the Soviets, Sajudis leaders

Lithuanian intellectuals, published a joint "Declaration of Contrition," in which they expressed their sorrow over the tragic fate that befell Lithuanian Jewry during World War Two and reiterated their commitment "never to accept claims made by anti Semites that the Jews caused harm to Lithuania."

This approach was subsequently adopted by the new regime on assuming power after the departure of the Soviets. The newly formed Lithuanian parliament, the Seimas, passed a resolution stating, among other things, that the "legislature's economic and political decisions would be framed so as to respect the rights and dignity of all minorities." A statement issued by Seimas members on the destruction of Lithuanian Jewry during World War Two expressed "profound sorrow over the collaboration of Lithuanian citizens with the Nazi regime," and insisted that "the Lithuanian republic would not tolerate anti Semitism in any form."

But this spirit of rapprochement did not last long. With western recognition of independence secured and the institutions of government in place, the new regime did not take long to distance itself from the reassurances made earlier to Jews. Statements echoing the old style anti Jewish rhetoric soon became commonplace again. A new public announcement by seven of the intellectuals (who were signatories to the previous announcement issued jointly Sajudis)

wondered, among other things, why "people are reluctant to mention the 'fact' (which was, of course, a total fabrication), that in addition to the hundreds and perhaps thousands of Lithuanians, Russians and Poles, there were also Jews who participated in the genocide against the Lithuanian people."

The anti Semitic press has flourished in Lithuania. During the first ten years of independence, more than one thousand virulently anti Semitic articles appeared in the Lithuanian press. Several years ago, a neo-Nazi political party was formed. Gravestones in Jewish cemeteries and monuments at mass killing sites have been vandalized. Anti Semitic graffiti can frequently be seen on walls on streets in cities and towns throughout the country.

against murderers of Jews. These Successive governments promised to bring criminal charges their crimes and enjoy hero status in Lithuanian individuals have never been held to account for total around 23,000 and are thought to have murdered nearly society. They are believed to Lithuania, Poland and the Soviet Union during World War Two. The Lithuanians 450,000 in changes for the repeatedly failed to deliver on such promises and we have yet to see any real criminals have even been better. Not only have no prosecutions been brought but known war other allowances. The record of the Seimas rehabilitated and now receive generous pensions and resolution passed several years ago that bore little resemblance to the has also been abysmal. In a endorsed the conciliatory tone of the early 1990s, it declared that the Lithuanian people Front in which it "expressed declaration originally issued by the far right Lithuanian Activist ".the Bolsheviks gratitude to Hitler for liberating Lithuania from

Anti Semitic incidents have continued to increase in number despite there being only a few Jews left in Lithuania today (there around 1,000 families, many of whom have been diluted by intermarriage). One event worthy of note, was the publication in 2000 of a series of fifty anti Semitic articles by the "quality" newspaper "Lietvos Aidas." The tone of these articles shocked the small Jewish community of Lithuania.

recently to the European Union and NATO. Lithuania was one of those countries to be admitted approval of membership of these organizations, made sure State authorities, in the run up to the ferocity of the anti Semitic rhetoric of leading media organizations. They also to tone down the country was launched a number of initiatives aimed at convincing the outside world that the occasions, all this was soon indeed turning a new page in its history. But as on previous the aforementioned institutions had been abandoned once the goal of securing membership to traditional anti Semitic vitriol resurfaced again, as was achieved. It was not long before the Semitic publication by "Respublika," the second largest daily, of a series of anti evident by the produced by the Nazi diatribes, whose tone bore a stark resemblance to the hideous diatribes .Two organ "Der Stuermer" before the outbreak of World War

Following are a selection of quotes from a series of anti Semitic articles entitled "Who runs the world?" written by Vytas Tomkus, editor in chief at Respublika and which appeared on February 20 through February 23 2004:

“They (the Jews and the gays) waste people’s savings, spend millions of euros and make banks bankrupt.”

“They lie, they privatize, they dictate all our thoughts. They send leaders of our states all over, like errand boys. They do not respect our laws. They want harmony and stability. Is it really worth our while to tolerate them?”

“We should be especially careful with Americans, because America is ruled by Jews and Jews are very cunning. We Lithuanians have much to learn from them, for example tolerance towards one another.”

“However, Rolandas Paksas faces impeachment not because of this, but because Kikalishvili communicated in Miami with Josif Kobzon, also know as “The father” of the Russian mafia. Besides, he is a Jew, which means he is a representative of the most powerful and influential nation in the world.”

“People, be alert! Do not let yourselves be provoked! Let us think together how it happens that the policy of genocide is being mixed not only with business but also with the international mafia.”

“My dear readers, who would have imagined that Mafiosi from international criminal organizations would start covering their murderous deeds by the memory of the victims of the Holocaust? It is difficult to imagine an act of sacrilege more awesome than this – the tragedy of the genocide serves criminals of Jewish origin.”

“Even America has finally realized that the Mafia is not a form of nationalist movement, but instead has become an international organization with close contacts with terrorists. Jewish nationality and the memory of genocide victims have provided a good cover for impunity.”

The above are but a small sample that reflects the atmosphere in the Lithuania of today. This is how this country looks and this is how its citizens think. They were breastfed anti Semitism at birth. Such is the Lithuania of 2005 which was recently welcomed into the European Union and other international organizations.

The writer asserts that the Fascist Movement created in Berlin (the LAF) which participated in the murder of Lithuanian Jews are the same people behind the creation of the Lithuanian citizenship law created to prevent Jewish survivors of the Holocaust regaining their citizenship rights and property stolen by the Lithuanians.

Lithuanian Citizenship & Restitution of property Adv. Joseph A. Melamed

The Lietuviu Aktivistu Frontas, or Lithuanian Activist Front (L.A.F.) was founded in Berlin on November 17, 1940 at the instigation of the Gestapo and other security services of the third Reich. Formed as an umbrella political grouping incorporating all Lithuanian political factions, except the communists and socialists, the LAF assisted their German mentors in plotting the genocide of Lithuanian Jewry and communists.

The organization's ideological manifesto was drawn up by its ideologue Bronys Raila.

It referred among others, to the violation by the Judeo- Communists regime of the "eternal cornerstone of Lithuanian national aspirations" and praised the virtues of National Socialism and the German Reich drive to form a new Europe (in the spirit of Hitler's speech regarding a "New World order"). The manifesto also envisaged a newly independent Lithuania that would expunge the "Jewish parasite" that "sucked the marrow out of the bones of the hard working Lithuanian nation and castigated the Jews that "took control of Lithuania's towns and cities and contributed nothing to the culture and development of the homeland, preferring instead to line their pockets with the earnings of hard working Lithuanians."

This organization subsequently formed armed underground cells in Lithuania. With the invasion by Germany in June 1941, these went on to form the partisan and "White Armband" militias that murdered hundreds of thousands of Jews in Lithuania and other countries.

Prior to the invasion the L.A.F. orchestrated a well-planned propaganda campaign. Leaflets were issued to activists in Lithuania instructing them, among other things, to inform the Jews that their fate was sealed and that they should leave Lithuania forthwith. Another leaflet instructed activists to "to seize their property at the opportune moment so that nothing remains unaccounted for." The day before the invasion saw the release of another flier in which the L.A.F. declared, "on behalf of the entire Lithuanian nation that the traditional right of refuge granted the Jews by

Vytautas the Great is hereby terminally and conclusively revoked. All Jews are hereby warned to leave Lithuanian soil without further delay."

It is clear that the Lithuanian legislators had these ideas in mind when they enacted the "Nationality Law" after regaining independence. Under its terms, Lithuanian "racists" were granted full citizenship.

was, on the other hand, subject to The right of Jewish Lithuanian expatriates to citizenship the law was amended) one of which was the numerous qualifying requirements (even after

would not qualify for citizenship if they left Lithuania to determination that such individuals homeland." There are very few Lithuanian Jews left since the Lithuanians" reside in their right to murdered most of them. And most of those who survived are willing to waive their have made all claims to Lithuanian citizenship. The problem is that the Lithuanian authorities plaintiffs conditional on eligibility for Lithuanian restitution of the property they stole from the legislation, a person can only reclaim his property if he holds citizenship. Under the new .citizenship Lithuanian

There surely could be no more fitting an example of the biblical adage "hast thou murdered and also inherited" than L.A.F. 's legacy of racism and xenophobia.

The Jerusalem Post newspaper editor describes the anti-Semitic approach of the Lithuanians even after they murdered the majority of Lithuanian Jews. He related to their response to Chairman of the Israeli Knesset Reuven Rivlin when he told the Lithuanians in blunt terms about their past. The Lithuanians hypocritically claimed they were "insulted" by these facts. The editor of the "Lithuania, Crime and Punishment" Bulletin, H. Melamed, supported this article.

Lithuanian War Crimes – Knesset Speaker Rivlin addresses Seimas in Vilnius

Jerusalem Post Editorial, September 25, 2003

Knesset Speaker Reuven Rivlin yesterday concluded his state visit to Lithuania, notorious for its World War Two collaboration with the Nazis.

Though pressured and criticized, the outspoken Rivlin pulled no punches. He demanded his hosts face their anti-Semitic past and own up to their responsibility for brutish mass murder. "Admitting guilt is an essential step in any bid to tighten relations," he told the Lithuanian parliament.

His words of admonition were frequently met with bristling intolerance. The small local Jewish community, fearing a backlash, begged that he give no offence. Lithuanian officialdom, concerned about the country's image, also asked Rivlin to tone down whatever remonstrations he planned to include in his address to parliament, where some representatives preferred to walk out rather than hear unpleasant truths.

To his credit, Rivlin did not cave in. The Holocaust in Lithuania was unique even within the context of the Holocaust as a whole.

Lithuanian mobs did not wait for the Germans to implement an "orderly" final solution. Two days after Germany's invasion of the USSR, they began butchering their Jewish neighbors. Lithuania holds another distinction; its Jewish population suffered proportionally the heaviest losses of any Jewish community anywhere in wartime Europe. Ninety four per cent of Lithuania's Jews were wiped out. In that, the Lithuanians outdid such bloody minded collaborationist neighbors such as the Latvians and Ukrainians.

Then too, most Lithuanian Jews were slaughtered by Lithuanians, not Germans. The Lithuanians organized special volunteer units to exterminate Jews and were the first to conduct mass executions of women and children. Up to that point, most German atrocities were perpetrated against Jewish men. The Lithuanians specialized in shooting tots in their mother's arms. So efficient was the Lithuanian 12th battalion in murdering local Jews that the Germans transferred it to Belarus to continue its handiwork there.

The traditional Lithuanian narrative is to blame the bitter fate of Lithuanian Jewry on its alleged pro-Soviet sentiments. The USSR annexed Lithuania in 1940 and ruled it for less than a year

prior to the Nazi conquest. That short period suffices to furnish a sort of moral equivalence – the Jews aided the Soviets and the Lithuanians got back at them by aiding the Germans.

Though Jews never massacred tens of thousands of Lithuanians, there are few Lithuanians today who dispute and reject this equation. With eyewitnesses dwindling, Rivlin thought it paramount that the record is set straight and that younger Lithuanians be aware of their nation's sins.

Before that, he stressed, "relations cannot be normal. Cooperation between parliaments and governments is meaningless if there is no reconciliation between peoples. The Jewish people, the survivors among them first and foremost, refuse contact with Lithuania until there is a meaningful assumption of responsibility."

But Lithuania's record is not encouraging. It has been remarkably reluctant about compensation for confiscated Jewish property, and it has been even more loath to bring war criminals to justice. Many of them in fact are brazenly feted as heroes of the anti-communist struggle.

That is why Rivlin rightly refused to attend a ceremony in which the Lithuanian president was to honor several dozen of his compatriots credited with rescuing Jews.

Righteous gentiles were exceedingly rare in Lithuania and Rivlin discovered that only a minority of those who were to be decorated for their humanitarianism were known to, and recognized by Yad Vashem. He feared the others may not only be counterfeit altruists but could even include murderers. This assumption, sadly, is not far fetched in Lithuania.

Israel must be very careful indeed in how it furthers relations with such collaborationist Eastern European states. All of them, like Lithuania, crave ties with Israel on the stereotyped assumption that Jews can work financial and economic magic, or, at a minimum, win them American favors.

These states need legitimacy from the Jewish state to cleanse their record and earn the respectability they need to integrate into modern Europe. Their overtures to Israel are self-serving. It is not that Israel, hardly pampered by international popularity, could not use new friends, but like Rivlin, we feel that Israel cannot overlook bestiality for ephemeral advantage.

No measure of profit can justify deals with Holocaust deniers, be they individuals or nations reluctant to admit their collective guilt. Lithuania has made some hesitant first steps but still has a long way to go. That was Rivlin's message and it was the right one.