

# אַ קלייט פון בייגל

## the bagel shop



Before you is the latest issue of the Bagel Shop Newsletter for 2023. It's new, but looks back over the preceding year, the events and moments in the daily life of the Lithuanian Jewish Community in 2022. The year was emotional like never before and we spoke much on the topic of historical memory.

The Fifth World Litvak Congress was held in Vilnius in May, attended by Jews of Lithuanian ancestry from across the Atlantic and throughout Europe who discussed the lessons from the past and the current realities. The art program directed by Gintaras Varnas which did honor to the history and legacy of the Litvaks was especially moving, and the religious received a real treat in the form of a concert by Joseph Malovany from the United States at the Choral Synagogue in Vilnius.

In this issue you will find five articles from different countries around the world dealing not just with tragic fate of the Jews, but also the Roma and other communities who suffered in the Holocaust. This history must not be forgotten, nor may it be revised.

The small Lithuanian Jewish Community is slowly recovering from the COVID pandemic and our elder generation is becoming smaller and smaller. This year we'd like to invite our young people to carry on the Litvak traditions, to be active members and imaginatively create a Jewish cultural ferment in our spaces. We are looking forward to you in celebrating Vilnius 700th birthday and in representing Litvaks at events coming soon this season!



**Faina Kukliansky**, chairwoman  
Lithuanian Jewish Community

## Highlights from an Interview with Saulius Sužiedėlis

**Saulius Sužiedėlis**, professor emeritus of history at Millersville University in Pennsylvania, was one of the first professional Lithuanian historians to write and lecture publicly about the Holocaust in Lithuania. The following are some highlights from an interview conducted with him by Charles Perrin on October 13, 2022.

**Sužiedėlis:** ...The historian Peter Hayes has written that the knowledge of the specialists about the Holocaust is outpacing what the public believes it knows about the Holocaust... He wrote that in his book *Why?: Explaining the Holocaust* [2017], which is, I think, a good insight into what's been happening. And right now, I would think that ethnic Lithuanian scholars in Lithuania, particularly those younger than myself, are probably doing the most interesting and in-depth work, not only [about] the Holocaust, but about, let's say inter-war Jewish society, and so on—people who now can read Yiddish and Hebrew, some of them, at least a dozen that I know of. But that work is not yet widely available among people outside the country, except for scholars like yourself, Joachim Tauber, Christoph Dieckmann and several other Western scholars and others who can read the documents in the indigenous languages, and are familiar with the secondary literature, much of which is quite good,

although some of it is not. But there's a great deal of academic literature [that's] quite eye opening, and I think that's the future really of... Holocaust Studies in Lithuania.... And right now, I think most of what is written that, I think, is truly valuable and new is being done in Lithuania.

**Perrin:** What is still missing from the remembrance of the Holocaust [in Lithuania]?

**Sužiedėlis:** I think what needs to be done is for the Lithuanian public as much as possible... to understand that Jewish history is part of Lithuanian history and to be more inclusive in that sense; and, secondly, that, after all, the Holocaust was the greatest single demographic disaster in Lithuanian history, and to stop using the word tragedy to describe it, but rather think of it in terms of a crime in which

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# Highlights from an Interview with Saulius Sužiedėlis

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there are perpetrators and victims, and to accept that... This does not mean that Lithuanians... have to give up the Lithuanian narrative of their own suffering, especially victimization at the hands of the Soviets. I mean this one thing [the Holocaust] can go along with the other, these are not mutually exclusive.... And finally, an honest look and acceptance of the role that Lithuanian people played during the German occupation: the perpetrators, and also, of course, acknowledging rescuers... Lithuania... has a very high percentage of rescuers proportionate to the population at large... If you look at the Yad Vashem list, it's a fairly impressive group. So, I mean not all of these narratives have to be doom and gloom, but they have to be addressed honestly, and I think if those three things are put together... both in academe and in the public, I think it would go a long way towards solving some of these cultural war issues.

**Perrin:** In the 1980s you worked for the Office of Special Investigations of the U.S. Department of Justice. [This office was responsible for investigating U.S. citizens or residents who allegedly collaborated with the Nazis.] During the time that you worked there how were you treated by the Lithuanian-American community?

**Sužiedėlis:** My uncle actually collected about fifty pages worth of articles and controversial stuff directed at me, personally, during this time. So, there was in the diaspora press, and generally among Lithuanian-Americans, an extremely negative reaction to my work at the United States Department of Justice. There were a number of activists who said that the Office of Special Investigations, OSI for short, was cooperating with the KGB using documents that could not be relied upon, and this was simply a Soviet disinformation campaign.... But I stand behind the kind of work I did at the OSI... And I can tell you that although Soviet propaganda did, in fact, utilize allegations of Nazi collaboration, and that the actual documents presented to the Department of Justice were selected from archives under Soviet control, it is clear that – with the opportunity of going back into the archives after independence – almost all of them are genuine – again, selected, but authentic – in particular documents relating to the activities of the so-called self-defense battalions, the police battalions known as the *savisaugos batalionai*'... A number of these units were active in persecution, and some participated in direct killings of Jews. Those documents were, in fact, not forged, as some people claimed, they were quite authentic. ■



1 There were a number of activists who said that the Office of Special Investigations, OSI for short, was cooperating with the KGB using documents that could not be relied upon, and this was simply a Soviet disinformation campaign.... But I stand behind the kind of work I did at the OSI... And I can tell you that although Soviet propaganda did, in fact, utilize allegations of Nazi collaboration, and that the actual documents presented to the Department of Justice were selected from archives under Soviet control, it is clear that—with the opportunity of going back into the archives after independence—almost all of them are genuine—again, selected, but authentic—in particular documents relating to the activities of the so-called self-defense battalions, the police battalions known as the *savisaugos batalionai*...

## Postmemory of the Holocaust in Lithuania

Prof. **Violeta Davoliūtė**

As the events of the Second World War recede into history, scholars distinguish generations of Holocaust memory. The first generation is the memory of those who lived through the events, including Holocaust survivors, perpetrators and the broad and varied category of bystanders. The second generation are the children, and the third generation are grandchildren of the first, and so on. The writings of the second and third generation have come to be characterized as works of *postmemory*, a term coined by Marianne Hirsch. Building upon the objects, stories, photographs, behaviours and affects (emotion) *inherited* from their parents and grandparents, *postmemory* is seen as a genre of *autobiographical writing* distinct from the historical or fictional narratives that lack this familial connection to the event.

In Germany, for example, scholars have discerned two major waves of postmemory: the *Väterliteratur* of the late 1970s and 1980s in West Germany, and the current trend of multi-generational family narratives that began in the late 1990s.<sup>12</sup> *Väterliteratur* reflects the debate between the second and first generation of Germans concerning the appropriate ethical stance relative to World War II and the Holocaust. Second-generation authors sought to challenge the tendency of their Väter, or fathers, to forget the

difficult or shameful sides of their history. Written in the first person, they express a confrontational attitude, seeking to compel a reluctant public to reckon with a forgotten past.

By way of contrast, the texts of the third generation, published in the 1990s and later, are less opinionated. Often referred to as *Familienromane* or family novels, they express an intention to understand the more distant experiences of their grandparents, and to reconcile the trajectory of their own lives with their family history. Although each work is unique, in general terms the authors of second-generation Holocaust memory or *Väterliteratur* have sought to reach a definitive conclusion regarding the question of their parents' complicity in Nazism, whereas the authors of *Generationenromane* have allowed for greater nuance in categories such as victim and perpetrator.

The Lithuanian memory of the Holocaust has also evolved in a generational pattern. However, owing to the Soviet-era censorship and a taboo on discussing the role of Lithuanians in the Holocaust, which held sway both within Soviet Lithuania and among the émigré communities during the Cold War, the second generation of postmemory was mostly silent. Public discussions and academic study of

the Holocaust did not emerge until the 1990s, after the restoration of national independence, and it would take another decade before the third generation of Lithuanian writers, in Lithuania and among the émigré community in North America, began to produce notable works of Holocaust postmemory.

In 2015 the Lithuanian American Rita Gabis published a personal exploration of the role that her grandfather may have played in the mass killing of Jews in *A Guest at the Shooter's Banquet*. In 2016, Rūta Vanagaite's published *Mūsų šaliai* (Our People), the most prominent polemical work addressing the implication of Lithuanians in the events of the Holocaust. First published in 2016 in Lithuanian and then in English translation in 2021, this book catalyzed an earthquake of public debate, domestically and internationally, over the role that Lithuanians, i.e., "our people," played in the Jewish genocide. In 2017, the Lithuanian Canadian Julija Šukys published *Siberian Exile: Blood, War, and a Granddaughter's Reckoning*, which explores the role of her grandfather in the Holocaust as the head of the local police in a small town in Lithuania. In 2018 Sylvia Foti published an article "My father wasn't a Nazi-fighting war hero – he was a brutal collaborator" that grew into a book published in 2021.

While each of these authors are the grandchildren of Lithuanians who participated in the Holocaust, the works of Vanagaite and Foti are close to the second generation of German writers in terms of attitude, while Gabis and Šukys resemble more the third generation. The work of all four authors can be categorized as postmemory, where the narrators seek to position their life trajectory in relation to their family and national history.

Like the authors of *Väterliteratur*, the common intention of Vanagaite and Foti is to catalyze a public confrontation with a suppressed memory. While each refers to her own family history, the main subject of their narrative is the collective Lithuanian subject implicated in the Holocaust. Gabis and Šukys also confront the silence of their parents and grandparents, but their encounter with the traumatic past is much more individual and personal, their narratives more introspective than declamatory in their mode of address.

In each case, the subjectivity of the individual protagonist shapes her engagement of the family past, as each seeks to negotiate between personal family relationships and public discourses of collective memory about the meaning of the Holocaust for Lithuania. ■



# Several Observations on Holocaust Photography and Historical Memory

by Šarūnė Sederevičiūtė, PhD, Vilna Gaon Jewish History Museum



Musical performance in the Kaunas ghetto, ca. August, 1942, to March, 1944.  
Center: vocalist Liuba Kupritz, accompanied by piano and trumpet.  
United States Holocaust Memorial Museum photograph



Two young men at the woodworking workshop in the Kaunas ghetto, ca. 1942–1944.  
Left: Daniel Bursztyn, son of the Yiddish writer Michal Bursztyn.  
United States Holocaust Memorial Museum photograph

Photography and historical memory are like sisters in terms of the history of the 20th century. Retellings of history to the broader society today are usually conveyed via visual media, which you can verify by visiting any museum. Most Westerners are able to recreate in their memory in an instant several fundamental photographs which have become a sort of personification of history itself: the small boy raising his hand during the Warsaw Uprising, the Vietnamese girl screaming in terror as she runs naked from a napalm attack. These images have become part of the collective historical consciousness. But do several symbolic photographs really bring us closer to the historical reality? Although the Holocaust, besides everything else, was the most-photographer event in modern history up to that time, can a photograph help us to understand this phenomenon which goes far beyond the borders of the image?

Along with many other Holocaust researchers, I harbor deep doubts concerning the educational value of photographs which portray mass murders or other

atrocities against Jews. Some might think, well, after all, these are authentic historical documents, undisputable facts which everyone should see, so that similar events are never repeated. Nonetheless, research shows that the more we are exposed to images of violence and brutality, the weaker our moral response becomes, thus the probability of these sorts of events being repeated increases. In the first generations to follow on the crimes and atrocities committed by the Nazis, photographs served as vitally important witnesses, but in the present time when we are inundated with images of violence, do black and white photos of piles of corpses surprise anyone?

I’d like to point out another important factor. The photographers were mainly the Nazis themselves and photography was part of the act of dehumanization. So by viewing these pictures we are in a way continuing that debasement. In other words, are we paying the respect due to that naked woman being led to the pit in the photograph? She didn’t have the choice of whether to be photographed or

not at that point, and she has no choice now to go unnoticed by curious onlookers at the most vulnerable moment in her life. I myself have watched museum visitors convulsively laughing and cases of students smiling at one another knowingly in front of these sorts of photographs. There I can say confidently that the removal of some violent photographs from public space could actually serve to commemorate the Holocaust better than letting them become blood-curdling objects of banal curiosity. All the more so since we actually have alternatives. Tzvi Hirsh Kadushin who secretly photographed the Kaunas ghetto has left us a real treasure trove of images. That we are able to view this period through Jewish eyes is unique even in terms of the world, there are only a few such examples in existence. Thanks to Kadushin we can see the Kaunas ghetto from the inside, to attend the secret school and the workshops, to wait in line for food and medicine, to encounter secret merchants and members of the underground on the street, to observe the deportations, the dai-

ly trudge of the work brigades and the illicit planting of potatoes. In this manner we get to know the Jews imprisoned in the ghetto as living people rather than as depersonalized victims sentenced to death. This acts as a counter-weight to the Nazi view of the Jew as a monster, a view which has been passed on to the world. Although photography appears like a break in the wall allowing us a view of the past, photographs alone can’t explain the Holocaust to us. But these frozen moments do also cause us to pause, and kindle a desire to learn more about these specific people, and provide an opportunity for posing questions to history. These questions have to reach sufficient criticality in order to break through the superficial boundary of illustration. Whom does the photographer represent? Why did he take this specific picture? What exactly do we see in this photograph, and what does our true or supposed understanding impose upon it? Who put the title to this photograph?

I invite readers to remember these questions the next time they look at historical images. ■



Photographer Tzvi Hirsh Kadushin poses with a Jewish police officer in the Kaunas ghetto, 1942. United States Holocaust Memorial Museum photograph



Jewish children talking in the Kaunas ghetto. Ca. 1941–1943.  
United States Holocaust Memorial Museum photograph



# Anthropologist: Roma Still Invisible in National History and Public Discourse

The first Lithuanian Roma oral history archive opened last year in which Lithuanian Roma tell their stories from different times in their own language. How does the Roma community remember the Holocaust, the Soviet era and changes at the Kirtimai settlement just outside Vilnius? Why is it important to incorporate the memory of the genocide of the Roma in Lithuanian history and public discourse? We spoke with the anthropologist Agnėška Avin, one of the people behind the new oral history archive.

## Where did the idea come from to create a Roma history archive in the Lithuanian dialect of Romany?

The idea for the archive came two years ago during the celebration of the World Day of the Romani Language on November 5. Professor Jolanta Zabarskaitė described the problem during a discussion of the Romany language and its future in Lithuania: there were no efforts at the national level to explore and conserve the Romany language in

its Lithuanian dialect, nor was there impetus to get Lithuanian researchers involved. Until then the Romany language in Lithuania was a subject for investigators from abroad.

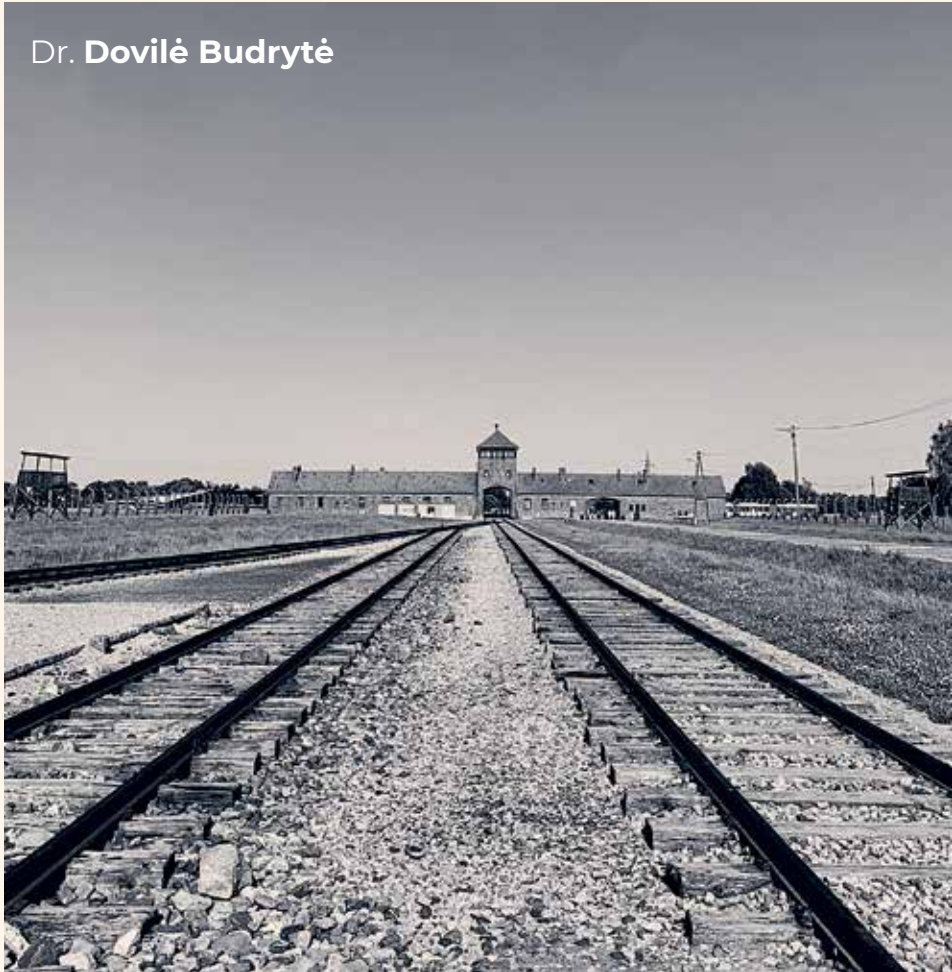
Our archive is not the first attempt to collect information about the history of the Roma in Lithuania. Teacher and writer Vytautas Toleikis and anthropologist Aušra Simoniūškytė recorded memories in Lithuanian, but that was twenty years ago. The current archive which was supported by the Lithuanian Department of



Anthropologist Agnėška Avin

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# Activist Memory and Human Rights: The Commemoration of the Roma Genocide in Lithuania<sup>1</sup>



Dr. Dovilė Budrytė

During the past several decades, there has been a new development in memory studies and memory practices. Many international organizations, states, societies and even non-state actors became interested in finding the right way to face the past when dealing with egregious crimes of the past. They started to assume that the memorialization of past abuses is intrinsically linked to the creation of a democratic culture conducive to human rights. The rise of this “new international morality” has

been rooted in activist memory, conceptualized as a dynamic, living entity, embedded in society. Holocaust memory has been conceptualized as a type of “active” memory—not simply a historical narrative about the past, but also strongly linked to present concerns, such as discrimination and human rights.

But can “active” memory truly help to promote a culture conducive to human rights? In other words, is there evidence suggesting that such memory helps to in-

crease the well-being of individuals and groups, especially the ones that were subject to oppression in the past and may still be discriminated against in the present? The development of activist memory related to the commemoration of the Roma genocide in Lithuania is an excellent way to gain insight into this question.

In 2015, the European parliament passed a resolution to commemorate the Roma genocide, recognizing the genocide of the Roma as a historical fact and establishing a “European day” (August 2) to commemorate this trauma. Importantly, this resolution linked the commemoration of the Roma genocide to human rights, creating an invitation to confront antigypsyism everywhere, labeling it as a type of racism. This resolution was the culmination of decades of work by Roma activists in various countries promoting the memorialization of the Roma genocide by creating a transnational activist memory.

This transnational memory has started to affect local memorialization efforts. In 2019, Lithuania added the commemoration of the Roma genocide to its calendar of commemorative days. These memorialization efforts were followed by activities led by non-governmental actors, including local Roma organizations and the Lithuanian Jewish community, to fight antigypsyism and antisemitism and promote human rights. The attempts to commemorate the Roma genocide—during which, according to some estimates, every third Roma was killed in Lithuania—go back to the beginning of the twenty-first century. However, these commemorations (which started taking place in Paneriai) became publicly visible only around 2012.

Although these commemorations have not attracted large numbers of people and have been by and large ignored by important politicians and the Lithuanian mass media, they have resulted in cooperation between the Roma and Jewish communi-

ties. This cooperation included a project to develop suggestions on how to fight antigypsyism and antisemitism in Lithuania as well as a public discussion of the documentary film *Juodasis paukštis. Romų genocido atmintis* (The Black Bird: Memory of the Roma Genocide). This documentary includes comparisons between the experiences of Lithuania’s Jewish and Roma communities (e.g., both communities were described as “new others” in Lithuania; both were depicted as having experienced traumas associated with the Holocaust). It also made it clear that the Roma genocide was still a “forgotten” genocide and “an open wound” for Lithuania’s Roma. This cooperation between the two communities who both have experienced the Holocaust suggests that Holocaust memory can be dialogical, hybrid and multidirectional; it can open communication between different traumatic experiences.

At the same time, despite these very promising developments in the commemoration of the Roma genocide, the results of sociological surveys and an analysis of sectors such as mass media, education and the housing market continue to suggest that Roma are likely to experience severe discrimination. Despite the acceptance of international norms dealing with the moral remembrance of the Roma genocide, societal prejudice toward Roma remains high—at least as reflected in public opinion surveys. A major cultural change is needed to alter such attitudes, and it can take decades. Non-governmental organizations and community initiatives are major players in bringing about this major cultural change.

<sup>1</sup> For a more developed discussion of activist memory and human rights, please see my essay in *Darbai and Dienos* (2022): <https://doi.org/10.7220/2335-8769.77.7>



# Challenges of the Holocaust to Commemorative Culture and the Legal System

On February 9, 2022, the Bagel Shop Café at the Lithuanian Jewish Community in Vilnius hosted the fourth discussion in the #ŽydiškiPašnekesiai [Jewish Conversations] discussion club called „Challenges of the Holocaust to Commemorative Culture and the Legal System.“

“Without solving these challenges, the battle against anti-Semitism, Romophobia and homophobia all become Mission: Impossible in the context of the state’s historical memory policies. We already hear voices in the West denying the uniqueness of the Holocaust. This symbol of humanity’s moral bankruptcy is compared with other genocides. That’s why it is so important to discuss this important topic of historical commemorative culture without taboos, without fear of possible criticism, critically and independently,” Arkadijus Vinokuras, the founder of the discussion club and the moderator of this discussion, said.

A number of distinguished guests agreed to talk about and explain this urgent and important topic, even if it remains controversial in Lithuania:

**Violeta Davoliūtė**, cultural historian, Holocaust memory researcher and professor at the Philosophy and History of Ideas Cathedral at International Relations and Political Science Institute of Vilnius University; **Mindaugas Jackevičius**, editor-in-chief at Lithuanian state radio and television; Professor **Dainius Žalimas**, faculty head at the Law Faculty of Vytautas Magnus University, former chief justice of the Constitutional Court of the Republic of Lithuania; and **Ana Rozanova**, communications and membership specialist at the ERGO Network uniting Roma NGOs around the world.

Here are a few of the insights they shared:

**Dainius Žalimas**: “The law is dry and formal. We know the definition of genocide, its essential characteristic is the aspiration to exterminate an entire category of people or to significantly reduce their population. Legally speaking, these are the same acts: the genocide in Rwanda and in Lithuania against the partisans. But the Holocaust has a special name because it is different. ... Every crime is unique in its own way and commemorative culture and historical research play an important role. Even so, the uniqueness of the Holocaust can only be taught through commemorative culture, through the corresponding research. ... This was the result of intentionally executed policy, it wasn’t spontaneous, it was truly the attempt to exterminate an entire group of people. It was an industry for murdering people.”

**Violeta Davoliūtė**: “The attorney Rafael Lemkin who was born in Grodno [in Belarus] came up with the term ‘genocide’ and he was himself a war refugee who fled Poland and finally ended up in the United States, and who participated in the Nuremberg trials. ... Comparing different things is innate to human ways of learning. The comparison of genocides is a normal thing in academia. Yehuda Bauer said he didn’t agree with those who claimed genocides couldn’t be compared. It is important to compare things, it’s important to compare systems and structures and social and political contexts. Because if we don’t com-

pare something with something else, we won’t know how to prevent it.”

**Mindaugas Jackevičius**: “Last year we marked the 80th anniversary of the onset of the Holocaust in Lithuania. Lithuanian state radio and television wrote a lot [about it] because we realized the state was late [to address the topic]. And many people also understood the topic was a difficult one. Every time you write about the Holocaust in Lithuania, it’s as if you become a traitor to Lithuania. When should we talk about it, if not now? Soon there will be no eye-witnesses to the Holocaust left. This is the last chance to talk about it, and I’m afraid that it will fall into oblivion.”

**Ana Rozanova**: “The Roma are usually forgotten in the Holocaust story. This is something we see in both the political and educational context. Students usually don’t know the Roma were also exterminated during the Holocaust. Yes, things are changing, we see progress in the academic sphere, and I hope the historical judgment of the Holocaust and commemorative culture will include the Roma perspective as well. ... Legal mechanisms aren’t always successful from the Roma point of view, the Roma live under constant discrimination. ... Recalling that phrase ‘Never again!’ Roma don’t feel sure about that.”

**Arkadijus Vinokuras**: “Do we understand the difference between genocide and war crimes?”

**Dainius Žalimas**: “Crimes of completely different scopes and motivations as well as contexts can be assigned to the category of genocide. Speaking about Lithuania, however, there hasn’t been a consistent attitude differentiating genocide from other crimes. Genocide as well as crimes against humanity and war crimes can include the very same acts, but the distinguishing feature of genocide is the specific desire to exterminate a specific group, or to exterminate a significant portion of that group. This intention has to be demonstrated, otherwise it is not genocide.

“Meanwhile, war crimes are the violation of rules of military action, for example, attacking civilian sites.

“To insure these types of crimes don’t recur, we need to study them and to study their motivations. These are cultural rea-

sons and so on, but we also have to recognize honestly the historical truths. You cannot prove these crimes using formal legal criteria alone.”

**Violeta Davoliūtė**: “The Holocaust was a genocide of vast dimensions which led among other things to trials based on international law which hadn’t existed up to that time and led to structures and legal mechanisms. The Holocaust has been researched rather thoroughly. Genocide research and commemorating is different in every specific case. In any case, we will not avoid the Holocaust, neither research nor understanding. The experience, examination and commemorative culture of the Holocaust is always used as bases for research. In speaking of the genocide of a given group, it’s extremely important what the goal of that speech or discussion is. Very often this is targeted at political popularity, lobbyism and the consolidation of one’s own ethnic community. Researchers and academics talk about and compare genocides in order to better understand the facts, circumstances and conditions surrounding them, whereas those who seek to exploit the trauma of genocides and complicated histories to further their own egotistical goals usually only care about the genocides, suffering and experiences of their own ethnic community. This often becomes a tool for political consolidation and very often this takes the form of efforts to trivialize, rewrite or deny, and we can clearly identify these processes.

“According to Yehuda Bauer, what we can’t compare and measure is the suffering of people, and it doesn’t matter if the people in questions were murdered in the gas chambers in Auschwitz or shot to death in Kėdainiai. It’s a myth that the Holocaust was only conducted on an industrial scale. In many places people were beaten to death with sticks and children were thrown alive into pits. Homicide was carried out using the most primitive methods. Communal genocide is when one ethnic community engages in the extermination of another. It’s immoral to compare suffering. Yehuda Bauer says those who carry out genocide usually use all means, tools and technical measures available to them for the extermination. Bureaucracy, railroads, gas chambers, but if these aren’t available, then machetes. Tools are collected for this purpose. Comparison of suffering isn’t ethical. We can only compare processes and motivations.”

**Ana Rozanova**: “Romani society is very young. The average age in Lithuania is 27. In terms of generations, this is probably the fourth, fifth or even sixth generation. On the topic of historical trauma, it’s there, we can’t deny it, but if we’re talking about commemoration and examination, there is a lot less of that. When we talk about the Holocaust of the Roma of Lithuania, we hear less analysis and fewer facts. The narrative continues to be that it was a weather disaster and a dark time which is hard to grasp and examine, to remember or analyze in some way, but it is a dark spot of fear which persists in the majority of families. In Lithuania every third Roma directly experienced the Holocaust. This influences the relationship between the Lithuanian majority and the Roma. This has had a deep effect in terms of distrust and discrimination.

“Lithuania Roma victims of the Holocaust haven’t received payments or compensation from Germany. These processes haven’t taken place. Agreed was made with foundations of other countries, for example, Switzerland. The Roma Social Center conducted a poll and talked with survivors, so the Roma Social Center has the information and very few people received compensation.”

**Violeta Davoliūtė**: “It’s very important to connect current phenomena and expressions with the processes of the past in order to understand expressions of radicalization. Each individual case of genocide in every case has its own specific features. The Holocaust of both the Roma and the Jews still isn’t understood. There are fine researchers, but education is a different matter. Education is a huge problem in Lithuania, and elsewhere as well, but it is really a problem in Lithuania. People aren’t able to make the connection between the process and their own national history and the history of their locality. Regarding genocide, we see signs at demonstrations such as “Lithuanian universities are conduction student genocide.” This demonstrates an absolute lack of understanding of what genocide means. Or it represents efforts to aggressively belittle and trivialize the concept of genocide.

“Furthermore, anti-Semitism is institutionalized in Lithuania. We can find examples of latent anti-Semitism in educational materials.” ■





# Overview of Events of 2022

January 9. Evening to commemorate professor Irena Veisaitė held at the Lithuanian National Philharmonic in Vilnius. “I don’t know another person who ever taught as Irena Veisaitė did. She didn’t just teach in words, but with her whole self, passing on to others the spirit of dialogue, openness and tolerance. I think this ability of hers came from her family, Jewish intellectuals with European values who lived in Lithuania in the period between the two world wars, and from the enlightened Lithuanians who rescued Irena from the Holocaust, especially her ‘second mother,’ Righteous Gentile Stefani-ja Ladigienė. This ability of hers also came to the forefront because Irena had to overcome within herself the difficult experiences of the war and the post-war period, the loss of most of her family and relatives and her own confrontations of violence with a thousand faces. These types of experience can imprison the mind in a prison of trauma. Even so, Irena succeeded in finding the way out of this prison, an inner hole in the ice leading to creative freedom, free thought and a sense of confidence in the goodness of people and the world. This was the direction she travelled, leading from humiliation and degradation to the resurrection of love,” literary expert and translator Mindaugas Kvietkauskas wrote in a press release issued by the National Philharmonic.

In January the Lithuanian parliament, the Seimas, agreed amendments to the Lithuanian Law on Citizenship to clarify gaps in the legislation since 2017 and allowing for greater ties between the Lithuanian Litvak and the world Litvak community. “The Lithuanian state often underlines its connection with noteworthy Litvaks and their descendants, taking pride in their achievements and inviting them to visit Lithuania. Despite that, it has to be said that for many years these same people had to wear ‘iron slippers’ in order to restore their Lithuanian citizenship. I consistently called on all Lithuanian institutions to solve this problem, and today I take pride that we can see the fruits of this joint effort,” attorney and chairwoman of the Lithuanian Jewish Community Faina Kukliansky said.

On February 2 friend of the Lithuanian Jewish Community Rimantas Stankevičius presented the largest-to-date collection of texts by Righteous Gentile Ona Šimaitė including an audio recording of her made by the Lithuanian priest Jonas Petrošius in Paris in 1966, and with an expanded and rather complete biography.



On January 27 the Lithuanian Jewish Community, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Lithuania and the Sholem Aleichem ORT Gymnasium in Vilnius invited foreign ambassadors resident in Lithuania and representatives of

Lithuanian institutions to a commemorative tour of the Vilnius ghetto territories in the capital’s Old Town. The walking tour marked January 27 as the International Day of Commemoration in Memory of the Victims of the Holocaust declared

by the United Nations. Representatives from the LJC called for remembering the horrors of the Holocaust and for passing on the lessons of this tragedy to future generations.



The Lithuanian Jewish Community celebrated Purim by sharing the holiday of community spirit, faith and hope with the families of war refugees from Ukraine seeking safe haven in Lithuania. And of course the LJC also shared traditional Litvak hamentashen pastry as well.

On March 8 the Lithuanian parliament hosted a presentation of the photo contest “Jews in Žemaitija.” The photography competition was one of the events in the Shalom, Akmenė! project partially funded by the Goodwill Foundation dedicated to preserving the Jewish cultural heritage and traditions in the Akmenė region of Lithuania. The photographs included period portraits and snapshots of Jewish life and Holocaust commemorations.

American Jewish Committee general director David Harris and a delegation from the AJC’s Central Europe Bureau marked Yom haShoah in Lithuania. During the official visit the delegation and Lithuanian Jewish Community chairwoman Faina Kukliansky met with the Lithuanian president, prime minister, speaker of parliament and foreign minister. Delegates also attended events to mark Yom haShoah.



Meeting with the Speaker of the Seimas of the Republic of Lithuania and the delegation of the American Jewish Committee



The Fifth World Litvak Congress was held in Vilnius in May. The LJC took pride in the rich program for the event and was pleased to see so many guests and friends who made the Congress such a success yet again.

May 23 was the opening ceremony at the Lithuanian parliament, with a bar/bat mitzvah ceremony at the Lithuanian Jewish Community and a concert by American cantor Josphe Malovany at the Choral Synagogue in Vilnius. May 24 included the “Date with Vilne” walking tour of Jewish Vilne. That same day the Jewish discussion club #Žydiški-Pašnekesai considered the problem “Jewish Theater and Dramaturgy: Why Are There No Jewish Comedies at Lithuania’s Theaters Today?” and the Israeli street food kiosk Cvi in the Park was opened. On May 25 there were tours of Panevėžys and Kaunas, as well as an exhibit of paintings by Israeli painter Alexander Ganolin. May 25 saw a commemoration of Holocaust victims at Ponar outside Vilnius, a visit to the grave of the Vilna Gaon, and a concert and buffet to close the Congress.



Opening of the 5th World Litvak Congress – Conference in the Seimas of the Republic of Lithuania



Closing concert of the 5th World Litvak Congress in the Lithuanian State Youth Theatre



Concert of cantor Joseph Malovany (USA) and pianist Doron Burstein at the Vilnius Choral TAHARAT HA-KODESH Synagogue

On May 24, as the Fifth World Litvak Congress was underway, the Lithuanian Jewish Community opened the Saul Kagan Welfare Center, the new name of the Social Center. The event was attended by many Social Center clients and employees, with applause going to LJC executive director Michail Segal and the first director of the Social Center, Shmuel Levin. Chairwoman Faina Kukliansky unveiled the memorial plaque commemorating Saul Kagan. In attendance as well were Arie Bucheister from the Joint, Saul Kagan’s daughter Julia Kagan Baumann and Israeli ambassador to Lithuania Yossef Avni-Levy. The Jewish song and dance ensemble Fayerlakh also performed.



Unveiling of the memorial plaque dedicated to the memory of Saul Kagan

- From June 20 to 23 Lithuanian Jewish Community chairwoman Faina Kukliansky along with specialists, diplomats and academics from 35 countries around the world met in Stockholm for a plenary session of the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance with the Swedish branch presiding and assessing work done in 2022 to combat anti-Semitism, Romophobia and other forms of racism.
- The end of June marked the 81st anniversary of the start of the Holocaust in Lithuania. More than 90% of Jews in Lithuania were murdered during the Holocaust, the highest percentile of Jews exterminated in any country in Europe.
- LJC chairwoman Kukliansky addressed the Human Rights Council of the United Nations during their universal periodic review process at the invitation of the World Jewish Congress. In her brief address she spoke about Lithuania’s level of adherence to international human rights standards as it related specifically to the life of the Jewish community in Lithuania.



In June the Lithuanian Jewish Community, tenth-graders from the Sholem Aleichem ORT Gymnasium and students from the Roma Social Center embarked on an emotionally difficult journey to Poland. This was part of a program funded by Germany's EVZ Foundation called "Young Leaders of the Roma and Jewish Communities for the Preservation of Historical Memory and Justice." The main goal of the visit to Poland was to learn more about history, the true facts in the painful history of the Roma and Jewish communities, by visiting the Auschwitz concentration camp complex. Young people from both communities had a painful experience at the concentration camp, which brought them closer together.

Some students spoke about their experience: "Auschwitz is a place full of histo-

ry, a place one must visit, like the Wailing Wall in Jerusalem. How can I describe what we experienced? Pain, for which there are no adequate words. Something that stuck in my mind was the words written by George Santayana on the wall of a barracks in Auschwitz: 'Those who forget the past are doomed to repeat it.' Members of the Vilnius Roma community went through this experience together with us. We learned that our peoples experienced and survived this shared pain. When you go to Poland, don't forget to visit the Auschwitz museum because we must not forget this history. Thank you for this unforgettable trip."-Students in grades 10A and 11, Sholem Aleichem ORT Gymnasium.



Athletes from the Lithuanian Makabi Athletics Club took part from July 12 to 26 in the 21st annual World Maccabiah Games in Israel. More than 10,000 athletes from more than 60 countries competed. The Lithuanian team included 17 athletes competing in 8 sports. This was the ninth time the Lithuanian Makabi team competed at the World Maccabiah. This time they won 6 medals, making this perhaps the most successful performance in the history of the Lithuanian Makabi organization since it was restored following Lithuanian independence. Gerda Šišanovaitė took home gold and Ignas Šišanovas silver in one-on-one table tennis, Michailas Trusovas

earned silver in the free-style 50 meter swimming competition. Thirteen-year-old Daniel Šer was punching above his weight and won silver in the 16-18 age group in chess competition. Alanas Plavinas won a bronze medal in singles badminton and Markas Šamesas and Danielius Tarachovkis won bronze in doubles badminton. A further 7 medals were won by international teams including Makabi members: 3 silvers in fencing, swimming and table tennis and 4 bronzes in badminton and table tennis. The Lithuanian Makabi team made the Lithuanian Jewish Community very proud. Congratulations to them.



In August we bade farewell to Israeli ambassador to Lithuania Yossi Avni-Levy. He was presented a medal commemorating the Year of the Birth of the Vilna Gaon and the Year of Jewish History declared by the Lithuanian parliament. We also welcomed the new Israeli ambassador, Hadas Wittenberg Silverstein.



Six new "memory stones" were placed on at Nos. 37 and 46 on Gedimino prospect in Vilnius on August 25. The stones commemorate the Rabinovitch-Bruk family whose members were murdered at Ponar. Currently there are 64 such memory stones installed in 13 cities and towns in Lithuania, in Vilnius, Kaunas, Šiauliai, Panevėžys, Alytus, Ukmergė, Plungė, Jurbarkas, Švėkšna, Darbėnai, Kuliai, Krakės and Vilkaviškis.



August 29 was the 125th anniversary of the First Zionist Congress held in Basel, Switzerland, in 1897. This congress convoked by Theodor Herzl laid the foundation for the modern State of Israel which has changed the history of the Jewish people and the world.



In September Katharina von Schnurbein, the European Commission's coordinator for implementing strategies to combat anti-Semitism and foster Jewish life in Europe, visited Lithuania. She spent much of trip focused on the Lithuanian Jewish Community. In meetings with high-level Lithuanian officials von Schnurbein discussed the prospects for implementing EU strategies for combating anti-Semitism and fostering Jewish life and for commemorating the Holocaust in Lithuania.



On December 6 Misha Jakobas received the title of honorable citizen of Telšiai (Telz) for his efforts to promote Jewish and Žemaitijan culture. The Lithuanian Jewish Community congratulates him.

On December 19 the Choral Synagogue held a Hanukkah light lighting ceremony in the evening. Lithuanian speaker of parliament Viktorija Čmilytė-Nielsen lit the symbolic first candle. LJC chairwoman Kukliansky remarked: "As we light the Hanukkah candles every year, the Jewish community sends out a message of light and friendship to all of the Lith-

uanian ethnic communities and to the Jewish communities around the world. We want to remind people that we can only overcome the greatest challenges by being and working together, by communicating and trying to understand one another, to light the light of knowledge, understanding and tolerance. We can all be part of the light."



A world premiere took place in Kaunas, celebrating its status as capital of European culture for 2022, on November 5, the symphony "Nešantys šviesą" ["Those Who Carry Light"] dedicated to Japanese diplomat Chiune Sugihara, Japans consul in Kaunas during the early part of the Nazi invasion of Lithuania. His contemporaries tended to describe him as a simple and unassuming man, but he never lacked for courage when the time came to resist the Nazi killing machine. Risking his own career and life he saved more than 6,000 Jews fleeing Nazi-occupied Europe by issuing them Japanese transit visas, although he lacked permission to do so initially, and was then ordered to stop. An exhibit showcasing Righteous Gentiles was presented by the Lithuanian Jewish Community and the Yad Vashem Holocaust Authority before the premiere.

In November the Lithuanian Government hosted an awards ceremony for those who rescued Jews from the Holo-

caust. Attending, speaking and presenting awards were prime minister Ingrida Šimonytė, Lithuanian independence leader professor Vytautas Landsbergis, Israeli ambassador to Lithuania Hadas Wittenberg Silverstein, Dani Dayan who is the Jerusalem director of Yad Vashem's World Holocaust Center, Lithuanian Jewish Community chairwoman Faina Kukliansky and Rabbi Andrew Baker, the director of the international affairs department at the American Jewish Committee. Recipients included Kazimieras and Marcijona Ruzgiai's living relatives. The married couple saved a Jewish woman and her young daughter in Žemaitija in 1944. Also recognized were Aksentiy and Matryona Burlakov and their daughter Zinaida who saved a Jewish girl whom her parents had entrusted to them in 1942. Jonas and Ona Žvinklevičiai were recognized for saving an entire Jewish family in 1943, as were Juozas and Marijona Bagurskai. Currently around 900 people in Lithuania have been recognized as Righteous Among the Nations or Righteous Gentiles by the Yad Vashem Authority in Jerusalem.

December 20 the Lithuanian parliament, the Seimas, approved 37 million euros worth of compensation for Jewish personal property seized by the Nazis and Soviets. As with current disbursements, the new monies will be allocated by the Goodwill Foundation for payment to property owners and their heirs. Applications should be made before the end of 2023 with payments paid out from 2024 to 2030. The new version of the law allows for symbolic compensation to be paid for property illegally or illicitly seized during the period of occupations by totalitarian regimes and which belonged to people of Jewish ethnicity living in Lithuania before or during World

War II. The law calls for compensation to be made when these former owners had no legal remedy for restoring their ownership rights to tangible property and real estate, including ownerless real estate whose ownership was assumed by the state in cases where there were no owners or heirs left, because of the Holocaust. The new legislation also calls for allowing the Goodwill Foundation to allocate from 5 to 10 million euros for satisfying requests by individuals for compensation for real estate. This monetary sum would be paid to an individual without regard to the value of the real estate which had belonged to the victim.

HAPPY BIRTHDAY  
TO OUR MEMBERS  
WHO CELEBRATED  
MILESTONE  
YEARS  
IN 2022

*Dita Šperling,*  
who celebrated her 100th

*Fania Brantsovskaya,*  
who also celebrated  
her 100th birthday

*Eta Gurvičiūtė*  
on her 102nd birthday





# Anthropologist: Roma Still Invisible in National History and Public Discourse

4 p. ▶

Ethnic Minorities is different because it is in Romany.

**How was the archive collection collected? Did that involve ethnographic field work?**

In collecting the material for the archive, we strove to preserve the language, to make digital copies and to provide the kind of space needed for informants to feel at ease telling their stories in their native language. The material collected in Romany was translated to Lithuanian and is currently being translated to English as well.

We did go on an ethnographic expedition throughout Lithuania and met with different members of the community. We focused on the older generation because of their purity of language and the stories they were able to relate. We wanted to record memories of the Holocaust, World War II, the nomadic way of life, customs and traditions, in other words, to collect an entire ethnographic archive.

Young Roma accompanied us on these expeditions and recorded the conversations, talked with the informants and heard the story of their people during World War II from living eye-witnesses. This was an intensive and significant learning process, of learning their own history.

Joining the archive team were Kirill Kozhanov, a well-known expert on the Baltic dialects of Romany, and Gopalas Michailovskis, one of the leaders of the Lithuanian Roma community who is studying at the Central European University. Different researchers wrote about



the Romany language and the Roma social and cultural context in Lithuania.

This kind of archive is very topical and time-sensitive, for example, Adelė from Kybartai, who died a half year ago. The archive conserves her story of the hardships she experienced in Nazi Germany where she was sent as slave labor. She also spoke about her father who rescued Roma. After our conversation we found registration pages which showed Adelė's brother and his wife returned to Lithuania from a brick factory in the German state of Saxony.

**What were the most interesting cultural and social matters which came up as you were preparing the archive?**

The largest section of the archive is dedicated to Holocaust memory. People who were born after the war shared their family memories of how their parents hid, how children were murdered, how Roma caravans were stopped and the people shot in the forest. There were also profiles in heroism: the Roma weren't just the victims of the Nazis, they tried to help others. For instance, a Roma family in Marijampolė rescued a Jewish girl. The mass extermination of the Jews in Lithuania began before that of the Roma. New stories never told before publicly have come to light.

There is also the repeating theme of relations with the Lithuanian partisans and attacks on caravans and women. It's important to start the conversation and to view Lithuanian history from different vantage points, including critical moments. I hope that, over time, space will be made for this as well.

**What does the community have to say about newer history, for example, the Soviet experience?**

Life in Soviet times is emphasized in the stories. The period is idealized and remembered as a time when there was less discrimination and the cultural and material situation of the community was better, compared with the period of Lithuanian independence and the discrimination and marginalization currently being experienced.





There are recollections about how the Kirtimai settlement in Vilnius changed in the 1990s. Now this settlement is associated with narcotics trafficking and crime, but trafficking only appeared after Lithuanian independence. This greatly demoralized people and led to many painful experiences. For this reason there is a great nostalgia for the past when the community was safe. As time passed the sense of shared purpose, trust and communication were lost. The archive shows a different side of the Kirtimai settlement through personal stories and experiences.

**The Roma community in Lithuania is small and experiences great social disenfranchisement. How can we educate the public on Roma history, including the community itself in that teaching process?**

The Roma community doesn't command such great social and cultural resources. It's difficult to raise public consciousness about Roma history and the Holocaust. Financial resources are necessary for accomplishing that. If only NGOs working the field of human rights or state institutions undertake to raise consciousness, we grow distant from the main principle of the Roma movement, which is, "nothing about the Roma without the Roma."

Activists working in the field of the Roma Holocaust have a different approach. The Roma community commemorates Samudaripen, Roma genocide day, paying respect to the victims from the community, passing on and preserving their memory, thus becoming the tellers of their own story rather than passive subjects.

State institutions are implementing a common European Union policy. In 2015 the European Parliament declared August 2 Roma Holocaust Memorial Day. Recognition of the genocide the Roma were subjected to at the EU level has led many countries to do the same at the national level. In 2019 the Lithuanian parliament, the Seimas, thanks to the efforts of the Roma community and activists who support them, added Samudaripen to the official list of commemorative dates in Lithuania.

Human rights NGOs view the commemoration of the Roma Holocaust from two different perspectives. One, this is the marking of the worst hate crime, genocide, and a reminder of what the consequences are when we don't push back morally and legally against hate. Two, the Roma community experiences such great social inequality, turning the commemoration into a call to the public to reduce discrimination.

**Why is Roma history and commemoration of the Roma genocide important to the state?**

Recognition goes hand-in-glove with recognition of Lithuania's Roma as fellow Lithuanian citizens. Long-standing neglect and ignorance of the Roma community reflects the social marginalization and exoticization of Lithuania's Roma, of seeing the Roma as other, as foreigners. The Roma are still absent or almost absent from national history and in public discourse. If we want the Roma genocide to be recognized and lodged in our memory, we first have to recognize the Roma as equal members of society. ■

## Young Jewish, Roma Leaders Visit POLIN Museum



Participants in the project to promote mutual understanding among young future leaders from Lithuania's Roma and Jewish ethnic communities sponsored by the Goodwill Foundation and Germany's EVZ Foundation visited the award-winning POLIN Jewish history museum in Warsaw. Besides viewing the interactive exhibits teaching about 1,000 years of Jewish history in Poland, the young people and educators engaged in a discussion there among themselves and with educators from the museum. People often say there are two Warsaws, pre- and post-war, not surprising since the entire city was leveled in warfare and especially during the Warsaw Uprising, and painstakingly reconstructed in the post-war period. The female guide for the Lithuanian delegation was a rare original resident of the Polish capital and able to speak something like seven languages.

"This museum is a huge story and we have the moral duty to tell it," she said. The bright modern museum located in the Warsaw ghetto stands in sharp contrast to the dark granite monument commemorating the heroes of the Uprising. The guide told the group around 80% of world Jewry called Poland home for centuries. The Lithuanian delegation led by the guide viewed multimedia installations, texts, music, paintings, photographs and recreated scenes from Jewish daily life.

The main exhibit begins with the legend of how the first Jews came to Poland in the Middle Ages. Trekking through the thick forest these first Jews heard a voice from heaven, instructing them: "Po lin". This means "rest here" in Hebrew. This is how Poland acquired its name. Poland became a safe haven for Jews exiled

from France, the Rheinland and Spain. In 1765 there were about 750,000 Jews living in the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth. By 1939 the Jewish population had reached 3.3 million, or about 10 percent of Poland's total population. Only from 200,000 to 300,000 Jews survived the Holocaust. Most left the country, with the last wave of emigration following the anti-Semitic campaign orchestrated by the Communists in 1968. ■





## information

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Ela Gurina	home-care service	8 686 24 043 hesed@sc.lzb.lt

### OTHER LJC CONTACTS

Name of LJC club	Coordinator	Telephone, e-mail
Union of Former Ghetto and Concentration Camp Inmates	Rozeta Ramonienė	8 5 212 7074
Fayerlakh Jewish song and dance ensemble	Larisa Vyšniauskienė	8 687 79 309 larisa.vysniauskiene@gmail.com

### Useful information

**Shmuel Yatom**, chairman,  
Vilnius Jewish Religious Community,  
e-mail sinagoga1903@gmail.com

Schedule for prayer services at the Choral Synagogue (Pylimo g. 39) in Vilnius:

- work days from 8:30 A.M. to 9:30 A.M.
- Saturday from 10:00 A.M. to 12:30 P.M.
- Sunday from 9:00 A.M. to 10:00 A.M.

Synagogue telephone number:  
8 5 261 2523

### Support Us

Use the QR code below if you'd like to make a direct donation to support the work of the Lithuanian Jewish Community. Our bank information: Lithuanian Jewish Community  
Bank: SEB Bankas  
Account no.: LT097044060000907953



Schedule for visiting Jewish cemetery in Vilnius (Sudervės road no. 28)

- work days and Sunday from 9:00 A.M. to 7:00 P.M.
- closed Saturday

Cemetery caretaker's telephone number: 8 5 250 5468

## BAGEL SHOP CAFÉ

Jewish snacks and treats in the Litvak culinary tradition



Open Monday to Friday  
from 10:00 A.M. to 7:00 P.M.

from 10:00 A.M. to 4:00 P.M.  
on Saturdays and Sundays

mobile telephone: + 370 683 86894  
e-mail: kavine@lzb.lt

Pylimo street no. 4 | Vilnius

### Litvak Culinary Heritage

#### Teiglakh recipe

To make 30 teiglakh pastries  
you'll need:

- 1 kg flour
- 0.05 l oil
- 0.05 l vodka
- 1 kg sugar
- 3 cups water
- 9 eggs
- 200 g honey
- 0.05 g ginger
- 150 g orange peel zest for decoration, or sugar, ginger or poppy seeds

Preparation time: about 3 hours

Mix a syrup from the honey, 900 g sugar, vodka and water, boil and place the teiglakh in it.

Mix the dough, make teiglakh knots, simmer for from 2 to 3 hours in the honey syrup. Leave the lid of the pot slightly ajar and wait for an half hour to insure there isn't any burning happening. Take the brown inflated teiglakh and roll them in poppy seed or finely-grated orange peel, then sprinkle with dried ginger.



Lietuvos Respublikos  
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ir darbo ministerija

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