

VILNIUS, JULY 2008

AN OPEN LETTER TO

HIS EXCELLENCY VALDAS ADAMKUS,
PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF LITHUANIA

CESLOVAS JURSENAS,
SPEAKER OF THE SEIMAS OF THE REPUBLIC OF LITHUANIA

GEDIMINAS KIRKILAS,
PRIME MINISTER OF THE REPUBLIC OF LITHUANIA

ALGIMANTAS VALANTINAS,
PROSECUTOR GENERAL OF THE REPUBLIC OF LITHUANIA

The prosecutors of Lithuania do not cease to persecute anti-Nazi Jewish partisans. The Prosecution Service's claims that "hundreds of witnesses are being questioned" are belied by the fact that only Jewish names are being heard in the media: Yitzhak Arad, Fania Brantsovsky, Rachel Margolis, and others.

This enables us to conclude that efforts are being made in order to shape Lithuanian public opinion by portraying Jews as primarily responsible for the crimes of the Soviet totalitarian regime. The negative image of anti-Nazi Jewish partisans is being consciously constructed in the mass media. For example, an officer from the Prosecution Service said in public that a search for Fania Brantsovsky was allegedly announced, although this former ghetto prisoner and anti-Nazi partisan has lived in Vilnius for more than 80 years and has a permanent job.

We feel that it is our duty to remind the public that the anti-Nazi Jewish partisans were prisoners of the ghettos that had been established by the Nazis and their Lithuanian collaborators, and survived only because they fought an armed fight against Hitlerism. By fighting against Nazism they saved Lithuania's honor in World War II, and contributed to the Allied forces' victory against Nazi Germany. During the Nazi occupation, the Nazis and their local collaborators killed more than 220,000 Jews; they destroyed the Lithuanian Jewish community almost completely. It needs to be repeated that during eighteen years of independence, not a single Nazi collaborator was punished. What is more, the prosecutors show signs of trying to revise Holocaust history by reversing the historical emphasis.

We strongly deny the direct and indirect accusations against Jews for the crimes committed by the Soviet regime. We ask that it be kept in mind that "world Zionism" together with "American imperialism" were the greatest enemies of the Soviet empire. State antisemitism was included in the official policy of the Communist Party. Jewish citizens of Lithuania suffered a higher proportional loss than their Lithuanian neighbors during the Soviet deportations of 1941. After the war all the members of the Jewish Anti-Fascist Committee were shot and mass campaigns were launched by

the Soviet regime, against “doctor-killers” (the “Doctors’ Plot” — concerning medical personnel of Jewish nationality) or against “rootless cosmopolitans” (= Jewish artists). After Stalin’s death Hebrew teachers or people who wanted to emigrate to Israel were persecuted. The term “prisoner of Zion” entered into the world’s vocabulary.

It needs to be stated that the Prosecution Service feels the pressure of certain politicians. For example, Fania Brantsovsky was summoned to the investigator after an appeal by a member of the Seimas, R. Kupčinskas of the Homeland Union fraction. The fact that the the “International Commission for the Evaluation of the Crimes of the Nazi and Soviet Occupation Regimes in Lithuania,” established by the President (chaired by E. Zingeris), did not publicly defend its own member Yitzhak Arad, or the other Jewish anti-Nazi partisans, is also surprising.

It is a pity but such facts do not honor our state. This is evident from numerous publications in the foreign press and by letters that our community receives. The Lithuanian Jewish Community has been planning to organize the Third World Litvak Congress for the “Vilnius – European Capital of Culture 2009” program and to invite Nobel Prize laureates with roots here in Lithuania to the congress. Now we receive unequivocal messages from our partners that no participation is possible in any events organized in Lithuania while the persecution of former ghetto prisoners and anti-Nazi partisans proceeds apace. This forces us to think whether it is at all feasible to organize the Third World Litvak Congress in Vilnius.

We demand a halt to the persecution of Jewish anti-Nazi partisans who fought for the Allied victory in World War II. We hope that the Prosecution Service’s activities will be guided not by letters from certain members of Seimas, but by the decisions of the International Nuremberg Tribunal and the International Holocaust Conference in Stockholm.

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