



September 2000

Vilna Gaon Jewish State Museum of Lithuania

# Newsletter 4

Dear Friends,  
dear Colleagues,

We are happy to congratulate you with Rosh ha Shana and wish everyone health, wealth, success in all you do.

And above all - Peace for Israel.

This year has been full of painstaking work. Here is an overview of the museum's activities in the past year.

## The Stockholm International Holocaust Forum



Members of the Museum at the conference

From January 26th to 28th the Museum participated in the outstanding International Holocaust Forum in Stockholm, Sweden, represented by its Director Em. Zingeris, MP, and Vice Director Rachel Kostanian. This intergovernmental conference on education, remembrance and research was the first time that Heads of States, researchers, survivors and NGOs from 45 countries from all over the world gathered to discuss the lessons to be learned from the history of the Holocaust. The purpose of the conference was to pass on testimony of the Holocaust and to give support to education and research. On this big event the Museum presented its exhibition of unique Vilna Ghetto posters in the Stockholm Historical Museum, which afterwards was travelling in Sweden for 2 months.

## Days of Memory

In March our museum participated in the film "Days of Memory" presentation in Amsterdam. The film is based on an international conference the museum organised in 1993 together with the French Committee. It was produced by Saulius Berzinis and Philo Bregstein. The museum took part in the film creation. Then the film was presented in Paris.

## The Anne Frank Project

A year now passed since the start of the project " Anne Frank - A History for Today". The centerpiece of this big project which is organized by the museum in cooperation with the Anne Frank House in Amsterdam, toured through Lithuania until the end of August. After being shown in Vilnius in 3 different locations, it visited the towns of Panevėžys, Utena, Kedainiai, Klaipėda, Šiauliai, Mažeikiai and Kaunas. In each town there was an opening event, in which representatives of the local Jewish community, local politicians and representatives of the museum took part. Totally approximately 20 000 visitors came to see the exhibitions in those towns. In addition to the exhibition 2 guide trainings took place in Vilnius.



### Dreams of Anne Frank



One big part of the project were drama workshops which were organized in September 1999 and February 2000. The focus of the workshops was to bring together young people from different backgrounds and to rehearse the play "Dreams of Anne Frank" by Bernard Kops. So 12 teenagers, both from the school No.9 and the Shalom Aleichem Jewish School, were cast. After one month of intensive rehearsals, the play was performed at the Vilnius Puppet Theater, the former Ghetto theater, for an audience of 350 people. This was quite symbolic. This September the 3rd part of the Drama project is taking place with the aim of presenting a theatre-in-education workshop to schools in some of the towns the exhibition has visited.



"Anne", "Peter" and "Margot" (f.l.t.r.)

Another part of the project is the teacher training in October 2000. Teachers are invited to Kedainiai, where information events and discussions on the topics of the exhibition, holocaust, human rights and tolerance will take place.

The program was implemented by Johannes Thaler, Wolf Freinbichler and Florian Foerster from Austria and Ruta Puišytė.

## Educational Projects

### Youth Programms

To reveal the truth about Jewish history and the Holocaust to Lithuanian society and to educate the young generation are important goals of the Museum. Therefore an educational project has been launched. It aims to teach schoolchildren about a part of Lithuanian history, which is hardly dealt with in Lithuanian schools. The project further wants to help children to understand history and to realize its influence on their own life. Schoolchildren and their teachers are invited to the museum where the museum's guides try to rise their interest in these topics.



Children visiting our Museum

In addition the Museum is actively participating in events as Lithuanian Youth Conference, where schoolchildren present their papers on the local history. In that way the Museum rises interest in Jewish history, conveys its message to teachers and pupils and establishes new contacts.



Soldiers from Lithuanian Military Academy with Museum's worker R. Puišyte

### Soldiers

Furthermore the Museum invited soldiers and officers from the Lithuanian Military Academy to its exhibitions. For now we can say that groups of soldiers regularly visit the holocaust exhibition. During the previous year we had 4 groups with a total number of 100 soldiers who visited us.

### Yiddish Program

ווילנער פראָגראַם אין ייִדיש

This summer the 3rd Vilnius Programm in Yiddish - offering courses on Yiddish language and workshops and lectures of Jewish life and culture took place. Museum workers participated in the program as lecturers and guest speakers.

## Exhibitions

### Jews in Fight Against Nazism



In May the Museum opened the long awaited exhibition "Jews in Fight Against Nazism". Greatest acknowledgement to the Claims Conference, which enabled the realisation of the exhibition, which aims to disclose a new page in the historiography of Lithuanian Jewish history. Until now Jews were seen as victims (or communists who deserved their fate) and almost nobody spoke of their resistance, their fight against Nazism. The exhibition informs about the armed and spiritual resistance in the ghettos, the armed fight of Lithuanian Jews as partisans and on the front of

WW II. Furthermore the sculpture "Menorah" created by sculptor Tamara Janova is being shown.

The author was J.Levinson, designer H.Kostanian.

### Masha Rolnikaite

On 26th of September our Museum is going to open an exhibition dedicated to well known writer Masha Rolnikaite. She was born in Klaipeda, went to school in Vilnius and had a devoted family. When the war started she was 14 years old. She survived the Ghetto and its liquidation, where she was torn off her mother and little brother for ever. She also survived the concentration camps Strasenhof and Stutthof. During all those hard times she used to write a diary untill the end of the war, which today is an important testimony of that time. The exhibition is prepared by museum's historian N. Latvytė and designer G. Kostanian. It consists of various texts from Masha Rolnikaite's books, many photos, documents and personal belongings. Marsha Rolnikaite herself will open the exhibition.



## Druskininkai



Our Museum has a small branch in Druskininkai, a township on the river Nemunas, where the great sculptor Jaques Lipchitz was born. In May we exhibited there, besides all previous exhibitions, paintings of the children of the Sholom-Aleichem Jewish school in Vilna. As the town is a resort, very many people come there for summer, among them many Israelis. So we keep up a small light of Yiddishkeit in this place too. The exhibition was organized by Roza Beliauskienė, Jūratė Razumienė, Gajane Leonenko and Aleksandra Jacovskyte. In June 2000 an exhibition presenting photos of works of the famous Lithuanian Jewish sculptor Jacques Lipchitz was opened in this museum's department. A second exhibition displays photographs depicting Vilnius' former Ghetto immediately after it was liberated from the Nazis.

## Traveling Exhibitions

Last year the exhibition of unique Vilna Ghetto Posters travelled through the United States. In January 2000 it was presented at the Stockholm International Holocaust Conference in Sweden and it is planned for Strassbourg later this year.

Two travelling exhibitions of the museum were touring through Lithuania during the last year. One about Righteous people of Lithuania was exhibited in Plungė, Palanga, Telšiai and Klaipėda. The other exhibition about Synagogues of Lithuania was shown in the towns of Plungė, Palanga and Telšiai. All of them arose great interest among the natives.



## Conferences, Scientific papers, Reports

Museum's staff workers participated in several international conferences where they presented the results of their scientific researches. R.Beliauskienė in an annual conference organized by the Jewish Art Center at the Hebrew University presented her paper "The Book of Esther and her personage in the image of a folks master". At the same conference M. Rupeikiene presented her paper "The influence of the old testament on architecture of Lithuanian synagogues and churches". N.Latvyte and R. Puisyte participated in conferences in Minsk and St.Petersburg. R.Kostanian participated with a paper on cultural activities in the Vilna Ghetto in a conference on Holocaust Remembrance organized in October 1999 in Yad Vashem. On the Oxford conference " Remembering for the Future 2000" in July 2000 she presented her paper "Jewish continuity or spiritual resistance in the Vilna Ghetto". She wrote an article dedicated to the 10th anniversary of the Museum published in the "Museum Bulletin" of Lithuania and also in the newspaper "Jerusalem of Lithuania".

In December 1999 the museum opened the two exhibitions "Ið musø istorijs" - "From our history" marking its 10th anniversary. Since 1989 the museum is carrying out extensive research , organising conferences, publishing books and trying to educate Lithuanian society on Jewish History and the Holocaust. The aim of the exhibition is to show how we gathered our artifacts during the 10 years of existence.

In the exhibit paintings of Jewish artists, religious attributes and items of Jewish everyday life are on display. Another exhibit shows photographs of important moments of Jewish museum's and its workers' life as well as panels presenting the results of research and educational activities of the Jewish Museum during the previous 10 years. The exhibition was prepared by R. Beliauskienė, J.Rasumienė and G. Leonenko.

## Museum's Anniversary

## Homepage

These days, we are working on the creation of our new www homepage. The address will be :

[http://www.muziejai.mch.mii.lt/Vilnius/zydu\\_muziejus.en.htm](http://www.muziejai.mch.mii.lt/Vilnius/zydu_muziejus.en.htm)

On this page you will find various information about the museum, its collection and its activities. The page will be updated regularly, so that you will always find current informations about new publications and events. Our email address remains [jmuseum@puni.osf.lt](mailto:jmuseum@puni.osf.lt) .

## New books published by the museum

### Hands Bringing Life and Bread

Volume 2.

The second Volume of the planned in total seven books is dedicated to those people of Lithuania who preserved true humanism and risked their own lives saving Jews. The book includes documented stories and photographs of rescuers and their families collected by the museum special department of the Rescuers' staff: O. Biveinienė, D. Epsteinaite, V. Sakaitė and D. Bassus.



### Almanach "The Jewish Museum"

Volume 2.

It contains the results of the museum staff's work in research of Lithuanian Jewish history: articles, essays, archive documents and memoirs. It will be published at the end of the year.

Editor and compiler: Dalia Epšteinaite

### Īiauliai Ghetto: List of Prisoners

(publishing date: approximately December 2000)

This is the first publication of the lists of the Īiauliai Ghetto inmates. This book is compiled by Irina Guzenberg in cooperation with Eugenija Sedova. The delay of publishing was because the text required more exact scientific information.

## Visitors' Book's Quotations

At the end of this year's newsletter we would like to share some of the latest quotations in our visitor's book with you, our dear friends.

"I have been to a number of holocaust museums - each different in character and mood. The one in Washington may be the most impressive and comprehensive, Yad Vashem the first and possibly the most stirring, the one in Nottingham the most unusual given its provenance, but I have never been as moved as I was when we visited your museum in Vilnius. I have been trying to think why. Perhaps it was the actual building when strikes one as being a modest museum in somebody's home, and then the fact that it only covers the fate of the Jews in Lithuania alone that gives it the strength. [...] It is clearly and graphically organized and your explanations and ability to show the spectator exactly what was going on awakened the emotions in a number of the group visiting that day." [Yvonne Gill, 27th of June 2000, by email]

THE WORK YOU HAVE DONE IS OF GREAT IMPORTANCE  
IT HAS MORE IMPORTANCE TO ME THAN WASHINGTON DC  
THE PERSONAL IMPACT CAN NOT BE EXPLAINED...  
PLEASE DON'T STOP...

JOE WINSTON  
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FERDINAND FL  
32035

"I frequently hear that the museum is becoming a magnet for Jewish pilgrimage from all over the world - for both non-Litvaks as well as Litvaks."

[Ian Paterson, 22th of August 2000, by email]

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