

Our dear Friends,

It is our great honor and pleasure to extend to you our most sincere congratulations on Rosh-ha-Shana.

We wish safety and peace for Israel.

We wish all your dreams to come true.

Right now the terrible news from NY came in. Our deep condolences, dear friends.

We are with you.

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The museum is marking the 60th anniversary of the Catastrophe of Lithuanian Jews by opening a new TOLERANCE CENTER on Naugarduko 10. It is located in a former Jewish theatre. The center inaugurates a unique exhibition of the world famous artist Samuel Bak who as a child was prisoner in the Vilna Ghetto. This summer he visited our museum as well as the famous composer and former little prodigy of the Vilna ghetto, Alik Volkovski, who created the now world famous song "Shtiler, shtiler..." ("Quiet, quiet,...") His father wrote in Polish the first part of the lyrics and poet Shmerke Kazcerginski translated it into Yiddish and wrote the rest of the lyrics. Alik lives in Israel and was long year director of the Music Academy in Jerusalem and is today Prof. Alexander Tamir. So a year passed. It was full of events, painstaking work, achievements and failures. The museum participated in international forums and conferences, in the government's programme on Holocaust education and the first Litvak congress, which took place from 24th to 30th of August in Vilnius.

The museum opened new exhibitions and published new books, took part in educational projects and welcomed thousands of visitors who got - as we hope - the message of Jewish continuity.

All we do, dear friends is for our people and our history.

It is you who make this possible.

Thank you very much.

In the name of the museum's staff and its director Mr. Zingeris,

Rachel Kostanian

All texts by museum's staff members.

Layout: Sepp R. Brudermann

CONTENT:

The new Tolerance Center	page 2
New exhibitions	page 3
New books	page 3
Exhibition "The Jews of Lithuania Throughout the Centuries"	page 4+5
Film	page 5
Educational projects	page 6
Educational Documentaries	page 7
Friends and quotes	page 8

NEWS

THE TOLERANCE CENTER

On the 23rd of September 2001 the Jewish Museum is marking the 60th anniversary of the Catastrophe of Lithuanian Jews by opening the TOLERANCE CENTER on Naugarduko 10. As part of the inauguration a unique exhibition of the world famous artist Samuel Bak who as a child was prisoner in the Vilna Ghetto and now lives in the United States will be opened.

The building of Naugarduko 10, which is now completely renovated, housed a Jewish soup kitchen already in 1887 till approximately the end of WW 1. In 1910, after its reconstruction it was called "The Philharmonic", where theatre performances, concerts and lectures took place. It housed the Jewish sport organisation Maccabi as well as the first Jewish theatre in Lithuania and other theatre groups, like "maidim" - a Jewish puppet theatre. With this opening new life will fill its halls.

WITNESSES OF PEACEFUL TIMES

A part of a documentary collections (over 200 files), miraculously survived the Shoa. During the first years after WWII this collection belonged to the Vilnius Jewish Museum, after the latter's liquidation it was part of the Lithuanian State Archives and in 1998 it was transferred back to the Vilna Gaon Jewish State Museum. About 1000 pieces from this collection are photographs, which were found on the territories of the Vilnius and Kaunas ghettos when their owners already perished or suffered horrors in the concentration camps.

Ghetto photographs... We may imagine them, left in the ghetto rooms as the last witnesses to the peaceful life fragments of their owners. Or, maybe, the owners of those photographs brought them to the ghetto together with their essential

property. It is hard to believe that these photographs weren't swallowed by the merciless fire, which swept the Kaunas

ghettos during liquidation.

The main part of the photographs collection consists of portraits - individuals and groups. The variety of the places they were taken is broad. These photographs were received or were ready to be sent off to relatives or friends in various Lithuanian towns. And also there are photographs, which reached Lithuania from the other continents and different foreign countries - Latvia, South Africa, the USA, Latin America. Many of them were sent from Palestine. From the whole of the photographs collection we can select those that reflect Lithuanian Jewish public and daily life. The authors of the photographs are often the photographers and owners of well-known photo shops throughout Lithuania. That is why the quality of the photographs is so high.

We believe in the necessity of creating an exhibition of these photographs. Maybe there still are people who may recognize faces from the photographs... Who knows.

Those who want to contribute to this project are welcome.

Roza Bieliauskienė

EXHIBITIONS & BOOKS

Jascha Heifetz and Vilnius

This exhibition was opened on the 1st of February 2001. It is a unique exhibition, which introduces the little known period of the great musician who was born - according to Vilnius rabbinate book - in Vilnius on 20th of January 1901. Jasha was visiting music school from 1905 to 1909. In the exhibition we find student's concerts programs from 1908 to 1909 as well as a programme of the graduating concert of the eight best students of the music school, in which Jasha Heifetz took part. The exhibition includes a number of letters from his teacher J. Malkin and from the director of the St. Petersburg conservatoire, the world famous composer A. Glazunov.

The museum is still working on the exhibitions "The Fate of the Jews of Vilna Area in WW2" and "The Jews of Butrimonys". We have a unique collection of prewar, war and afterwar photographs. The museum is also preparing an exhibition called "The Jews of Lithuania Throughout the Centuries" which will be opened in the Lithuanian parliament on January 25th 2002. It is an educational program for schoolchildren, done by the Institute of History, our museum and supported by Anne Frank House. There was also inaugurated an exhibition of wood carvings created by former Kovno Ghetto prisoner Elijah Kholm opened in August 2001. The master dedicated it to the Shoa in Lithuania. We reconstruct some permanent exhibitions which will be located in the new Tolerance Center on Naugarduko 10. This center's team includes Mark Zingeris, Ona Biveiniene, Gajane Leonenko and Jurate Razumiene. The spiritual head of the center, as that of the museum is Emmanuel Zingeris, former MP, headign now the Historical Commission investigating the crimes of the Nazi period, as well as those of the Soviet regime.

BOOKS

The museum published its periodical almanac "The Jewish Museum", dedicated to the 60th anniversary of the Shoah in Lithuania. It consists mostly of material prepared by museum's co-workers. It includes more material as well, among which is the article of Prof. Dov Levin about Jewish soldiers in Lithuanian army (1918 - 1920). We are looking for a possibility to translate the almanac into English.

The museum is also presenting its new book, written by Joseph Levinson: "Holocaust in Lithuania", as well as a new book about the saviors of Jews in Lithuania compiled by our department of the rescuers of Jews.

In a couple of months we hope to publish the long awaited Siauliai Ghetto list compiled by Irina Gusenberg and Eugenija Sedova. Also we hope to publish a brochure on Spiritual Resistance in the Vilna Ghetto.

EXHIBITIONS

"Jews OF LITHUANIA throughout the centuries"

The travelling exhibition "Anne Frank - a History for Today" has completed its tour through public venues in Lithuania. More than 15,000 visitors came to see it at eleven presentations in eight Lithuanian towns: around 70% of the visitors were students. We are sure to have transmitted to them the right message. The principal organisers of the project, the Anne Frank House and the Vilna Gaon Jewish State Museum decided early on to collect feedback from students and teachers. The most important findings were that most Lithuanian pupils entered the exhibition with no knowledge at all about Jewish history or the Holocaust. Some of them have never heard of that term before. They therefore learned a lot about the story of Anne Frank. The active commitment of the exhibition guides, who were trained by members of our staff, was crucial in this process: they engaged the visitors in debates about the themes of the exhibition.

The biggest disadvantage of the Anne Frank exhibition was that it did not deal with the history of the Holocaust in Lithuania. Many students left the exhibition venue with a feeling that the terrible Things they had just heard about happened far away: in Germany and in Holland. We have to deepen and expand this work because too many did not make any connection with Lithuanian history or with contemporary issues.

For the guides it was very difficult to introduce this subject in discussions with students: not only a lot of courage was necessary to confront this topic, but there are also hardly any resources available in the Lithuanian language.

As a result teenagers posed questions like "Why do we hear so much about anti-Semitism in the media?" "What about the history of Jewish Culture in Vilnius that you hear about now and then?" "What is Yiddish?"

"Jews in Lithuania throughout the Centuries"

For the above mentioned reasons in September 2001 the Anne Frank House and the Vilna Gaon Jewish State Museum decided to create an additional exhibition which will provide information about Jewish life and culture, about Jewish/Lithuanian co-existence over the centuries, about the Holocaust in Lithuania and about the role of the Jewish Community and anti-Semitism nowadays. Because the exhibition will also have an online version, educators in Lithuania (and outside of Lithuania) will be able to download the exhibition or view it on-line. www.baltic-teachers.nl (in progress)

Eventually an editorial group was established in which representatives of six NGO's are co-operating. The Vilna Gaon Jewish State Museum, the History Institute of Lithuania, the Centre for Civic Initiatives, the Textbook Research and Information Centre for Baltic Countries, the Austrian Verein Gedenkdienst and the Anne Frank House (Amsterdam).

After the texts had been finished deep-going photo-research could be done. The group decided not to limit itself by focusing on Lithuanian archives only, but sent one member of the editing-group, Ruta Puisyte of the Vilna Gaon Jewish State Museum to the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum in Washington for photo-research.

The first opening of the exhibition is scheduled for the 25th of January 2002 (around International Holocaust Day) in the Lithuanian parliament.

A catalogue will contain all exhibition-texts and photos and will additionally give place for more scientific and more detailed articles, written by the exhibition-authors.

Norbert Hinterleitner and Sepp Brudermann

ALIVE - MEMORIES AND ITS BEARERS (WORKING TITLE)

45 minutes, colour, master in dv-pal-format
lithuanian language, english subtitles

Since January 2001 we, Sepp R. Brudermann and Niko Mayr, both Gedenkdienst-volunteers in the Vilna Gaon Jewish State Museum and the Anne Frank House in Amsterdam, are working on "Alive - Memories and its Bearers (working title)", an interview-film. It will be shown at the exhibition "The Jews of Lithuania Throughout the Centuries". 12 interviews by museum's worker Ruta Puisyte with survivors of the Holocaust in Lithuania have been filmed. They all survived in different ways. Some survived in hiding places, others fought with the partisans in the woods, others went the whole way from the ghetto to Stutthof or Auschwitz. For us it is important to stress the variety of ways of surviving, as well as to show how people managed to go on living after the catastrophe. Each survivor has their own story of how they dealt with what they went through, both in the past and the present. This film differs from "classical" oral history films, because the team does not see the people as "living history books", does not show them sitting in an armchair in front of a white wall, but take more time to visit them at home or at their workplace in order to draw a more specific picture of these people as living beings amongst us.

The film medium contributes to telling the history of the Lithuanian Jewry in a more direct and accessible way. Therefore the interviews are made in Lithuanian language, so that it is accessible for a Lithuanian audience. We hope that it will also be used and shown to both young people and adults after the end of the exhibition, on television, in schools and in other exhibitions.

EDUCATIONAL PROJECTS

YOUTH PROGRAMS

Like every year our museum invites a lot of students and teachers from all over Lithuania to come to the museum and learn more about the Holocaust. Still this part of Lithuanian history is hardly dealt with at schools so the museum sees an important part of its work in educating young people about and rising their interest in this topic.

TEACHER TRAININGS

Several teacher trainings were organised in Lithuania in cooperation with the Anne Frank House. In these 3 days lasting trainings teachers from all over Lithuania are taught about topics like Holocaust or Antisemitism and how to teach about and deal with these topics in their lessons. Several Lithuanian experts on Antisemitism and the Holocaust, like museum's worker Ruta Puisyte held lectures as well as survivors were invited to tell about their experiences during the Holocaust in Lithuania.

THEATRE WORKSHOPS

After the success of the play "Dreams of Anne Frank" last year some more drama workshops with the same young people were organised by our museum in cooperation with Anne Frank House and the Vilnius Sholom Aleichem Jewish school and the Lithuanian school Nr.9. They rehearsed a short performance dealing with topics like prejudices, intolerance, violence and bullying which was performed in various schools all over Lithuania. After these performances the young people became peer educators and facilitated other students and teachers in the process of how drama can be used to explore these topics.

YIDDISH COURSES

From 1st to 29th of August "The Fourth Annual Vilnius Program in Yiddish" took place. Visitors from all over the world came to Vilnius to improve their Yiddish skills and to attend various activities like excursions, guided tours, workshops, film performances, concerts and other cultural events. The scientific part of the programme consisted of lectures regarding various topics, concerning Jewish life in Lithuania, for example "Between Hassidim and Haskalla".

The programme was organised by The Vilnius Yiddish Institute, The Jewish Community of Lithuania and Mendy Cahan from Israel. The Vilna Gaon Jewish State Museum was involved as well by giving guided tours: For example the tour through Yiddish Vilne or the tour through the Vilna Ghetto and an excursion to Ponar were guided by staff members of the museum.

DOCUMENTARIES FOR LITHUANIAN SCHOOLS

UNCLE CHATSKEL

Film Producers: Rod Freedman, Emile Sherman
Director Rod Freedman, Australia

Lemchen Chatskel is a great Lithuanian linguist and lexicographer who appears in a film as a living witness to the events of the last century: from the Russian Revolution until the creation of independent Lithuania in 1990. The film also deals with the history of Lithuanian Jews during the Holocaust. Ch. Lemchen was imprisoned in the Kaunas Ghetto where he lost both of his sons.

Our museum participated in the film creation and works on an educational resource consisting of the video and a small booklet for teachers will be distributed among 300 secondary schools throughout Lithuania. Sponsors are Mr. Rod Freedman and the Australian Embassy to the Baltic States in Sweden.

OPENING UP - SHIFTING PERSPECTIVES WITH DRAMA

Film Producers: Vilna Gaon Jewish State Museum, Anne Frank House
Directors: Sepp R. Brudermann, Niko Mayr

This film shows the process of the theatre workshops which took place in 2001 (page 6). You can see how Henri Seebohm (UK) brought together Jewish and non Jewish young people from Lithuania, how communication and drama skills were developed in order to explore themes like prejudice, racism and bullying in their lives. Out of this process the group created a short performance which was performed in various schools throughout Lithuania, where the young performers then facilitated other young people in the process. The film includes interviews with Henri Seebohm as well as all the young people, speaking about the work, the process and how this project affected or changed their lives.

In combination with a manual, explaining exercises and why and how to use drama in education this film will be distributed among 300 secondary schools throughout Lithuania.

REMEMBRANCE CONFERENCE AMSTERDAM

The Conference on Remembrance was held in Amsterdam from 3rd to 5th of May 2001. Many people from all over the world, politicians, historians and artists, gathered to discuss about how the memory of the Holocaust can be kept alive today. Museum's worker Ruta Puišitė joined the conference and participated in discussions and workshops dealing with education and film- and photomaterial as historical sources.

FRIENDS AND VISITORS

We were very sad, when we have heard that Sidney Hamburger died on the seventh of June 2001, aged 86.
Hamburger was one of the closest friends of our museum and one of our most generous supporters.
We all will miss him.

VISITORS

Every year visitors from all over the world come to visit our museum. Among them are survivors of the Holocaust or descendants who are in search of their roots as well as tourists and well known personalities of political, scientific and cultural backgrounds. Some of them write their impressions into our guestbook...

The heroic work that you have begun is of great importance for Jewish historical research. I look forward to supporting you in your efforts.

Carl J. Rheins, Executive Director, YIVO, New York, USA, October 2000

I have never before been moved so much by the silent power of your museum, where hand-made love and dedication bear a testimony far greater than all the other Holocaust Museums in the large cities of the West.

Marc Radomsky, April 2001

I came here to relive part of my childhood history and also the history of my mother who attended Vilnius University in the early part of the twentieth century. I was not prepared for the pain of walking through the Vilna Ghetto. The past came back with great pain of my own experience of being in Navaredok Ghetto as a child many years ago.

Paula Burger, USA, August 2001

We would like to thank heartly all the people who extended to us generous donations via

contributions in money or books. You enable us to continue our work:

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THANK YOU VERY MUCH !!!!