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Compensation and Trustworthiness

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For several years I have spoken and continue to speak about how Lithuania should emerge from a project for implementing historical justice with its head held high, rather than with its head hung in shame. That means that the entire project must be accomplished transparently. I said and say that the articles of incorporation of the Lithuanian Jewish Heritage Fund registered by leaders of the association called Lithuanian Jewish Community and American Jews violate Lithuanian laws. For these statements of mine I was called an enemy of Jews by the provincial and self-important leaders of the Lithuanian Jewish Community.

So what made the Lithuanian Jewish Community leaders bristle so much at criticism? Are they afraid to appear unreliable? I already said that the reliability of the recipient is the basis for the carrying out of the project. The recipient must be transparent. And I'm speaking here not just about how heads of the Lithuanian Jewish Community over the last ten years during annual conferences of this association failed to present members' financial reports on sums of millions received from the World Fund for Jewish Charity and spent.

We now need to speak also about how the dangerous political decisions by the association called Lithuanian Jewish Community are causing lack of confidence. Here again we learned that the association called Lithuanian Jewish Community has become a beachhead for anti-Lithuanian propaganda by Russia.

The association called Lithuanian Jewish Community — its headquarters — became the conference venue where the financial support of the Russian embassy and other Russian organizations inimical to Lithuania founded “movements” with A. Paleckis at the helm. The conference dedicated to this

event took place at the Lithuanian Jewish Community's headquarters. There was another meeting here as well, to introduce a book called *The Power of the Truth of History* [Russian title follows here] which criticizes Lithuanian textbooks for allegedly distorting history and presenting false information about and demonizing Russia.

That this activity directed against Lithuania is being financed by Russia was confirmed by the chairman of the parliament's National Security and Defense Committee, Arvydas Anušauskas.

What are the Lithuanian Jewish Community leaders trying to achieve? To confirm the false, amoral antisemitic stereotype that Jews allegedly betrayed Lithuania and are prepared to betray Lithuania again? Do the leaders of the association Lithuanian Jewish Community not understand that organizations working against Lithuania are using the association called Lithuanian Jewish Community as useful idiots?

This dangerous collaboration by the leaders of the association called Lithuanian Jewish Community with forces inimical to Lithuania is nothing other than the compromising of all Jews of Lithuania. Is that perhaps another of Russia's goals?

Finally, the Lithuanian Jewish Community leaders know perfectly well that throughout the entire Russian Empire, during the entire history of the Soviets, hundreds of thousands of Jews were sent to the gulags to be robbed and die. Entire Jewish communities and Yiddish culture were destroyed. They know that thousands of Jews were forced to Russify their surnames. Going with the Devil to pick apples together is surely not a path leading to serious historical discussion on judging the crimes of Nazis and Communists.

I want to remind readers that the association Lithuanian Jewish Community in no way represents the opinion of all Lithuanians of Jewish origin. Even the Lithuanian Jewish Community's deputy director Faina Kukliansky was angered by these actions by Lithuanian Jewish Community leaders. She stressed that she personally knew nothing about the conference organized and held at Lithuanian Jewish Community headquarters and that her name had simply been used. According to the deputy director of the Lithuanian Jewish Community, she is distancing herself from this conference that took place at the Lithuanian Jewish Community building.

So who will guarantee that compensation monies going to the Lithuanian Jewish Heritage Fund dedicated to money laundering [or: embezzlement] won't be used against Lithuania? After all, one of the main articles in this fund's articles of incorporation forbids even the questioning decisions by fund directors as well as supervision of the financial activity of the fund. Even today the association Lithuanian Jewish Community is demanding illegally [or: illicitly] through the courts the return to the association of buildings already legally [rightfully] belonging to legitimate Jewish religious communities. The courts of Lithuania have rejected the demands of the association Lithuanian Jewish Community as unfounded, speculative [or "profit-seeking"] .

The question comes up: why did the Government through its representatives turn down participation in the founding of an alternative fund based on criteria of justice, legitimacy, transparency and accountability?

That is the way it is done in France, Austria, Hungary and the Czech Republic. Such participation would guarantee transparency in the use of money. Especially when serious disagreements are taking place between different Lithuanian Jewish organizations. One shouldn't forget that we are talking about the taxpayers' money. The aforementioned states apply these requirements to their recipients. So why is our government silent?

The public interest, including the interest of Lithuanian citizens of Jewish origin, demands total transparency in solving compensation issues. It has to be talked about. Even if you are called enemy, antisemite or lackey of neo-Nazis.

But it's not just I alone who seeks transparency. Let's look at the Israeli context. Two years ago Israeli TV2 reporters Orly Vilnai-Federburg and Guy Meroz did a program called "The Morality of Compensation: The Battle Continues."

The presenters of the program accused one of the most powerful US Jewish organizations, the Claims Conference (an organization responsible for the return of or collecting of compensation for assets lost by Holocaust victims) whose former and current staff over 16 years stole \$43 million (about 103 million litas) allocated for supporting people who survived the Holocaust.

The Israeli reporters accused the Claims Conference of using millions of dollars for things other than what they were intended for. The program aired on Holocaust Remembrance Day (<http://www.ruthfilms.com/paying-for-justice.html>).

It was not for no reason at all the those who survived the Holocaust in Israel and elsewhere took to the streets in protest against the extraordinarily small support for the aging and ill. In Israel about 80,000 people live below the poverty line. But since 1955 when the Claims Conference was established, Germany has paid out to it more than \$60 billion. This money was intended for support to 278,000 victims of the Holocaust who survived.

Claims Conference leaders claimed the reporters damaged the solid and responsible image of the organization through these broadcasts and that this would make it much more difficult for them to get compensation for Jewish property.

At the same time CC leaders swore that the income and expenditures of their organization are supervised and that audits are done. The only problem is, the CC itself “controlled” those finances. The aforementioned Israeli reporters, as in my case, were also accused of antisemitism, fanning hatred of Jews and disloyalty to their compatriots. But the reporters were right.

The project for compensating Jewish religious property must be linked with trustworthiness, with confidence in the recipient. The Lithuanian government and parliament should feel responsible for total transparency in the implementation of Compensation for Jewish Religious Property. The thought “let anyone get it” or let “them” divide it up as the Lithuanian state decides this sensitive project is not honorable.

For the process to conclude honorably, all that is needed is to formulate criteria for ... the recipient, including in this process only Litvaks who are citizens of the Lithuanian state, Lithuanian Jewish religious communities who have the rights of succession [who are the legitimate successors to pre-war organizations] and Lithuanian Jewish organizations. This is the only way corruption will be avoided in the implementation of this important project.