



## I renounce the honour...

On the eve of the fourth Conference of the Lithuanian Jewish Community, member of Parliament Emanuelis Zingeris issued a public announcement in which he regretfully declared that he is renouncing his duties as honorary chairman of the Jewish Community, and that from now on he belongs to no public organization. We reprint his declaration.

## An open letter to Emanuelis Zingeris

I felt unhappy having read your public declaration (with its many grammatical mistakes) of Feb. 22, 1997, in which you renounce your name as honorary chairman of the secular (?) Lithuanian Jewish Community, and declare that you are no longer a member of any public organization (in other words - of the said community). Because of the great works which you have set out to accomplish in Parliament, and also in leading us into a modern Europe. Frankly speaking, your motives are not convincing. The name of honorary chairman is not associated with concrete public responsibilities - these lie on the shoulders of the functioning heads. Should it not be more appropriate to say straight out - that this title, in your mind, does you no honour? There are no concrete obligations outlined for any ordinary community member either. Their status isn't defined at all - members are neither accepted nor dismissed. The Statutes, which you well know and which you took part in forming, state that a community member is everyone who feels himself to be a Jew. You no longer feel yourself to be one? This significant detail, by the way, was immediately noted by "Respublika" journalists, who wittily prefaced a single sentence announcing your declaration with the heading - "Nationality".

Even the actual form of your declaration is odd (on Lithuanian Parliament letterhead). The letter is not addressed to anyone. Can it be that having travelled around the world so often, you still aren't aware that in renouncing any title, duty, membership, or contact with a body, the latter is informed of such in a personally addressed declaration, not on official letterhead. After all, it wasn't a "member of Parliament" who renounced the title of chairman, but "Emanuelis Zingeris".

It was nice to hear from you that, "The European Council has decided to organize a convention this autumn, of representatives of state executives, which will evaluate the significance to the Old Continent, of the Lithuanian Jewish cultural heritage." Though I greatly doubt that in organizing a convention (has quite a ring!), the European Council (or perhaps only a division of it?) has designated you to announce, a priori, the future results: "evaluate". Perhaps it will only attempt to evaluate, to become familiar with, to discuss? Perhaps, with new circumstances emerging, they will decide to meet once again, to hear, for example, even the opinions of Israeli or American specialists - for Judaic treasures, among other things, are valued by the entire Jewish world. Not only by the Old Con-

tinent, but also by Old Jerusalem, which is not within Europe. It's not the first year that we have been hearing about your grandiose plans "to restore a strong academic school of Judaica ... in Vilnius." The only thing we haven't heard is that there is a prepared and published program, anticipated research priorities, recruitment and preparation of academic personnel, and, of course, funds. All the more, since even now, the valuable Judaic material at the National M. Mazvydas Library is being organized by two workers with barely half a position each. What's stopping you - before the opening ceremonies for the Academy - from trying to recruit at least a few Judaica specialists now, if not from Vilnius, then from abroad, with guarantees of course, of moral, legal, and material support from Lithuanian institutions?

You state that "the leadership of the secular Lithuanian Jewish Community is not declaring its ownership regarding the Judaic heritage". Really? I heard the head of the Community state on a television program (which you participated in) that in his opinion the question is a complex one, which shouldn't be decided instantly, that it is necessary to consult with experts - with legal, historical, archive specialists. Is this not a serious suggestion?

For example, there are books from the Telsiai rabbinical seminary in this fund. What should be done with them, since the former owner-seminary still exists, only not any longer in Lithuania, but in the USA? Even its name still remains - Telsiai, not Cleveland.

The heads of the seminary came to Lithuania about four or five years ago, and they visited Telsiai, looked over the old building. Among them I met some of the people from Telsiai - students at the seminary in the old days. The spirit of this old rabbinical seminary with its honourable traditions is still alive! Even its books still exist. But they're on this side of the ocean...

Or take the more than 300 holy Torahs. According to our religion, those which for certain reasons are unusable - must be buried, like the dead. What about the rest? Religious opinion holds that they don't belong in a museum. Here again specialists should decide, especially since you're not such a great expert on the Jewish faith.

Even within Lithuania, people with authority are having different opinions. You're suggesting that all the funds be given to the Museum. Without saying how that could be done on a practical level. The books and papers were win-

### MEMBER OF THE SEIMAS OF THE REPUBLIC OF LITHUANIA

Regrettably, I have to renounce the name of honorary chairman of the secular Lithuanian Jewish Community, and henceforth I am a member of no public organization. I have been elected chairman of the Lithuanian Parliamentary Committee on Human and Civic Rights and National Minorities, and am thus bound to have concern for all national minorities. I will continue to carry out my obligations to restore a strong academic school of Judaica in Europe, in Vilnius, the former Jerusalem of the North.

It is sad that the leadership of the secular Lithuanian Jewish Community is not declaring its ownership regarding the Judaic heritage. This heritage belongs to Europe, to Lithuania within it.

The European Council has decided to organize a convention this autumn, of representatives of state executives, which will evaluate the significance to the Old Continent, of the Lithuanian Jewish cultural heritage.

Only in uniting the work of the revived Jewish community to its great past, can Lithuania's Jews become of significance in the context of a modern Europe. No other activity can suppress this cultural priority.

1997 02 22

EMANUELIS ZINGERIS

LIETUVOS RESPUBLIKOS SEIMO NARYS  
MEMBER OF THE SEIMAS OF THE REPUBLIC OF LITHUANIA

07.22.97

DEJA, TURIU ATSIKAITI PASAULIETINES LIETUVOS ZYDU BENDRUOMENES GARBES PIRMININKO VARDU IR NUO SIOL NESU JOKIOS VISUOMENINES ORGANIZACIJOS NARYS. ESU ISRINKTAS LIETUVOS SEIMO ZMOGAUS IR PILIECIO TEISIU BEI TAUTINIU MAZUMU KOMITETO PIRMININKU IR TAI IPAREIGOJA MANE ROPINTIS VISOMIS TAUTNEMIS MAZUMOMIS KARTU ITISIU SAVO ISIPAREIGIJIMUS EUROPOJE ATKURTI VILNIUJE BUVSIOJE SIAURES JERUZALEJE, PAJEGIA JUDAIKOS AKADEMINI MOKYKLA.

LIDONA, KAD PASAULIETINES LIETUVOS ZYDU BENDRUOMENES VADOVYBE NEPASINAKO DEL JUDAIKOS PALIKIMO PRIKLAUSOMYRES SIN PALIKIMAS PRIKLAUSO EUROPAI IR LIETUVAI JOJE.

EUROPOS TARYBA NUSPRENDI SI RUDENI SURENGTI EUROPOS VALSTYBIU VYKDOMOSIUS VALDZIOS ATSTOVU SUVAZIAVIMA, KURIS IVERTINS LIETUVOS ZYDU KULTUROS PALIKIMO REIKSME SENAJAM KONTINENTUI.

TIK SUJUNGI, ATSRGAVUSIOS ZYDU VISUOMENES VEIKLA SU JOS DIDINGA PRALITINE, LIETUVOS ZYDAI GAJI TAPI ZENKLUS MODERNIOS EUROPOS KONTEKSTU. JOKIA KITA VEIKLA NEGALISIO KULTUROS PRIORITETO NUSTELPTI.

1997 02 22

EMANUELIS ZINGERIS

nowed and thrown about, stacked into ricks, hidden, and masked. They now need nursing and help, like a very sick patient. And that requires depositories and reading rooms - with microclimate, lighting, and fire security systems, restoration workshops, let alone computerization. Are either of the museum buildings suitable, are they being prepared? Is there a project? What is your extemporizing worth, Mr. Zingeris? Especially if we look at how the Museum's central building, under your direction, is being renovated - not a single brick, not a single nail have gone in over the last few years...

As we know, at the present time there are antisemitic manifestations in Lithuania. Oded Ben-Hur, Israeli Ambassador to the Baltic Countries, and Ignatz Bubis, chairman of Germany's Jewish Community, have spoken about it to the Lithuanian press, L. Vildziunas, V. Toleikis, members of the Jewish community have written about it. During a symposium on Judaica which took place during the European Inter-Parliamentary Assembly in Vilnius, V. Landsbergis stated that, "What is bad for the Jews, is bad for Lithuania".

We haven't heard your censorious voice from the Parliamentary tribune - demanding that those who sabotage the good of Lithuania, who violate our country's Constitution and laws which prohibit the incitement of national dis-

cord, be restrained. In the meantime, there are doubts in the Jewish world as to the appropriateness of organizing the commemoration of the 200th anniversary of the death of the Gaon of Vilnius, in Vilnius - a city where the atmosphere lately has not been particularly luminous. It's hard to imagine how one can step into a modern Europe with antisemitic baggage. And will the European minds not be surprised to hear that the director of the Lithuanian Jewish Museum has in essence severed ties with the Jewish community? It seems that it wasn't by accident that you announced your declaration on the eve of the Lithuanian Jewish Community Conference - this gave you a formal pretext not to participate. But shouldn't you have been there as the chairman of the Lithuanian Parliamentary Committee on Human and Civic Rights and National Minorities - in order to better feel the living pulse of this national minority, and its many problems, which as you declare, you've been called upon to solve. Unfortunately, thus far we haven't felt any solutions.

Respectfully,

**Saliamon WEINTRAUB**  
member of the Lithuanian  
Jewish Community  
(opinions will be printed)

Righteous of the World

*Father Bronius Paukstys -  
born 100 years ago*

## A BEACON IN THE DARK NIGHT

Salesian Father Bronius Paukstys was born more than a hundred years ago - on Feb. 12, 1897 in the village of Kuryne, Lekeciai district, Sakiai region. Bronius was the third of 11 children (2 died when young) born to Ona and Vincas Paukstys. On Jan. 1, 1918, towards the end of the First World War, he took a four month schoolteacher course which had been started in Kaunas. After he finished, he founded a primary school in Jankai, later taught in a primary school which had been set up in his home village, and from there was transferred to the Svediskiai school in Luksiai district. While working as a teacher, Bronius Paukstys organized courses for adults, lectured at farmers' gatherings, and stirred up patriotic sentiments among people from a number of districts.

Fascinated by the ideas of St. John Bosco, the care and education of poor children, he renounced his teacher's duties in the autumn of 1925, and went off to the Salesians in Italy. He studied at various schools for a few years, and later at the theological institute in Turin. With the founding of a Salesian monastery in Lithuania, he returned to his homeland in 1937, and came to Kaunas in 1940, to carry on successful work in the Holy Trinity parish which was organized by the Salesians. When the communists arrested Father Pranas Petraitis from this parish, Father Bronius Paukstys took on the role of parish priest.

After seeing innocent people being killed during the Nazi occupation, Bronius Paukstys actively joined in the work of saving Jews. He also offered help to families or children of Russian prisoners who didn't flee Lithuania in time. Men, women, and mostly children who ran from the Kaunas ghetto found safety and temporary refuge in the Holy Trinity rectory. They were usually given Lithuanian birth certificates or passports, and sent to the priest's relatives or acquaintances on farms in Suvalkija. Bronius Paukstys was the only person in the Baltic countries who managed to save approximately 200 Jews, even though he himself had to hide from the Gestapo three times. In a letter of thanks, well known lawyer Avraham Tory wrote: "May you live another hundred years - we will never forget your name, your fatherly protection, and your love. Your being, your never ending fight for the truth, for brotherly love for everyone, irrespective of faith or nationality, was, is, and will be a difficult struggle. You were our only beacon in a long dark night, when we were in the Vilijampole ghetto, surrounded by Hitlerites. You were our only benefactor who didn't require compensation."

With the start of the second communist occupation, Bronius Paukstys lived in Kaunas and helped those who were being persecuted. In 1946, he was arrested, and on Nov. 30, after being tortured and interrogated, was sentenced to 10 years in-carceration.

During the difficult post war years, Bro-