

## **TO YIVO: SEPTEMBER. 16, 2011 LEYZER RAN FAMILY PROTEST**

This letter is written in memory of Leyzer Ran (1912-1995) -- the renown historian of Jewish Vilna, who worked for many years at YIVO to preserve an accurate history of Jewish life in Europe, and, in particular, "The Jerusalem of Lithuania" -- by his wife, Basheva Ran, daughter, Dr Faye Ran, and granddaughter Davina Ran who wish to raise our voices in protest and indignation regarding YIVO's current, and we believe inappropriate, invitation of Lithuania's Foreign Minister, Audronius Ažubalis, who has supported Jewish conspiracy theories, as an honored guest at the September 22<sup>nd</sup> event held to commemorate the anniversary of the liquidation of the Vilna Ghetto, as well as YIVO's Director's faulty or incomplete representations of issues\* and attacks on those courageous members of the Jewish community struggling to bring to light the resurgence of unrepentant anti-Semitism, witch hunts, and the pernicious obfuscation of history as in the vile Double Holocaust legislation and promotion of the idea which equates Soviet Rule (whose corruption, inhumanity and crimes we do not deny) with the Holocaust which we know and grieve as the programmatic and devastating genocide of the Jewish people. These are Separate and Not Equal!

Having been to Vilna in recent years, I have seen first-hand its swastika graffiti, and the same anti-Semitic cartoon placed in Lithuanian newspapers in 2004, 2009, and 2011 insinuating that Jews and Homosexuals control the world\*\*; I have seen Jewish students with *kipas* spat upon and roughly jostled in the streets; and I have spoken to members of the Jewish community who have been harassed and persecuted for voicing opposition to the Government's schizophrenic behavior towards the Jewish community and its glittering "Shoah Business" tactics seeking tourist dollars and foreign support.

While our family sincerely appreciates all the fraught-with-difficulty educational and diplomatic efforts being made by YIVO and Jewish communities within Lithuania and abroad to preserve and portray Jewish history, redress intolerance, and promote informed and cordial relationships, blurring or refusing to face the problematic Lithuanian Government's treatment of Jews past and present is unacceptable. Not only should the invitation to Andronicus Ažubalis be rescinded in the same manner that Yad Vashem has rescinded its invitation to the Lithuanian culture minister and ambassador to its forthcoming 2011 event on the Lithuanian Holocaust, but YIVO would do better to engage less in personality politics and more openly protest the various

forms in which anti-Semitism and the distortion of Jewish History, and the Holocaust (diminution to denial) continues unabated.

In that spirit, we also ask that YIVO continue to pursue the return of its looted archives and ask for the swift return of these materials to the one legitimate YIVO, in New York City, which we believe to be their rightful owner and most judicious, suitable guardian. YIVO should not have to forfeit its rights, nor undermine its institutional mission in order to gain political recognition and cooperation.

We hope our protest will be understood in the context of our profound commitment to the preservation of Jewish history and to the protection of righteous individuals and Jewish communities around the world. We continue to count ourselves among YIVO's lifelong friends and supporters.

*Basheva Ran*  
*Faye Ran*  
*Davina Ran*

\*For example, Mr. Brent states: Fact: It is illegal to display the swastika in Lithuania today. Yes - However: please review evidence below in which a Lithuanian court has ruled that the swastika is a historic symbol of the sun, not a sign of Nazi terror allowing for its continued resurgence and public display.

**Main > News > Jewish World Swastika: Symbol of the Sun, Not Nazi Terror? A Lithuanian court has ruled that the swastika is a historic symbol of the sun, not a sign of Nazi terror. By Hana Levi Julian First Published: 5/23/2010, 4:16 PM / Last Update: 5/23/2010, 7:34 PM**

“The Nazi swastika is apparently not considered illegal in the Lithuanian city of Klaipeda, despite former assumptions that the symbol was not to be displayed nationwide, a common legislative ruling in Eastern Europe.

A local court has ruled the sign is a centuries-old symbol that depicts the sun. The judge in the case, which lasted three months, justified his ruling by adding that the symbol is found on numerous historic artifacts. The case involved four men who brandished swastikas at the city's national Independence Day parade.

“It is not a Nazi attribute, but a valuable symbol of the Baltic culture, an ancient sign of our ancestors, which had been stolen from them and treacherously used by other peoples,” said one of the witnesses for the defense quoted by *RT*, Russian television's English news channel.

According to the *IA Regnum* news agency, swastikas have been displayed at least twice before in Lithuania, both times without legal consequence – once on May Day, and the second time in front of the presidential palace in Vilna (Vilnius), the nation's capital.

Two years ago, on Lithuanian Independence Day, neo-Nazis marched down Vilna's central boulevard waving specially modified Lithuanian swastikas, and chanting “Juden raus!” (Jews out!). This year, the slogan was “Lithuania for Lithuanians!”

Not one politician raised an eyebrow until a week later, when Norwegian Ambassador Steinar Gil pointed out that the Lithuanian parliament had protested a parade for homosexual rights, but had not objected to neo-Nazis. Lithuanian Prime Minister Adrius Kubilius replied five days later, according to *Tablet Magazine*, saying, “There are skinheads and neo-Nazis in every country, and they sometimes take a walk or chant something.”

Efraim Zuroff, Israel director of the Simon Wiesenthal Center and its chief Nazi hunter, noted that “Lithuanian judges are again showing bias in favor of Holocaust perpetrators rather than victims,” and called on the Lithuanian courts to “overturn this outrageous and contemptible decision as quickly as possible.”

### **Local Efforts to Whitewash the Past**

Lithuania has also been working to wipe out its Nazi Holocaust past.

According to the report published earlier this month in *The Tablet*, the Museum of Genocide Victims on Vilna's central boulevard “glosses over events at a place called Ponar in Yiddish” – 100,000 innocents were murdered mostly by local Lithuanian militiamen there. Seventy percent of the victims were Jews.

The report notes that Lithuania's Holocaust museum is “devoted entirely to Soviet crimes” and a concerted effort is being exerted to equate Soviet-sponsored warfare against the Nazis, and subsequent Soviet-sponsored warfare against others, with the Nazi genocide, in the theory known as “double genocide”. With that, Lithuanian authorities are slowly dimming the use of the words “Nazi Holocaust” in historic literature...

### **Also : “Lithuanian court: Swastikas a ‘historic legacy’ JTA –The Global News Service of The Jewish People -May 21, 2010**

(JTA) -- A Lithuanian court has ruled that a swastika is part of the country's historic legacy and not a Nazi symbol.

The May 19 ruling capped a three-month case involving four men who displayed swastikas at Klaipeda's national independence parade.

“It is not a Nazi attribute, but a valuable symbol of the Baltic culture, an ancient sign of our ancestors, which had been stolen from them and treacherously used by other peoples,” one of the defense witnesses said, according to RT, Russia's English news channel.

Efraim Zuroff, the Simon Wiesenthal Center's chief Nazi hunter and Israel director, called the decision “outrageous” and likely to lead to a tremendous increase in the use of Nazi symbols by Lithuania’s ultranationalists.

“Allowing the use of swastikas sends a clear message to those local residents harshly victimized by the Nazis that they are no longer welcome in their country of birth,” he said. Lithuanian judges are “again” showing bias in favor of Holocaust perpetrators rather than victims.

“We urge the Lithuanian courts to overturn this outrageous and contemptible decision as quickly as possible,” Zuroff said.

Swastikas previously have been displayed in Lithuania on May Day, and once in front of the presidential palace in the Lithuanian capital Vilnius, according to news reports. Neither instance prompted police or legal action.

**Also: Swastika raised in Baltic country – tribute to history or Nazi revival?**

**Published: 07 June, 2010, 06:47** Rt autonomous Nonprofit Organization “TV-Novosti”, 2005–2011.

**Lithuanian court defines swastika as “historical legacy,” not Nazi symbol**

**A court in the Lithuanian city of Klaipeda has ruled in favor of four men who displayed swastikas at the national independence parade, stating the image is part of the country’s historical legacy and not a Nazi symbol.**

**The swastika is considered a Nazi symbol and banned in most of Europe. But a Lithuanian court recently ruled that it's not exclusively a Nazi emblem after students displayed the symbol at an independence parade.**

**The decision shocked many in the country, as they say it may now be used by neo-Nazis.**

*“I wanted people to think outside the box,” said Milvydas Juskauskas, one of the parade organizers. “That’s why I decided to look for a symbol which would urge them to do so. And I chose the ancient swastika – a symbol of light, fire and universe – as a perfect match. The swastika – once a sacred symbol – is now being misinterpreted and humiliated.”*

**It is, of course, etched forever in history as the sign of Nazi horror. But the march’s organizer said the symbol of Nazism was around long before Hitler.**

**A balcony with swastikas belongs to a 19th century building in the heart of Vilnius, the capital of Lithuania. Historians say that the swastika, as a symbol, is very popular in this part of the world. And it had been popular long before Adolf Hitler was born.**

**A professor in Vilnius says the swastika was an ancient symbol of fire and sun in places including China and Europe – even appearing on the first Soviet banknotes.**

*“I’ve come across swastikas a lot during decades of archeological research,”* maintained Alekseus Lukhtanas, professor of archeology. *“They can be found as decorations for ancient wallets, on clay pots and hats. And they are thousands of years old.”* But he’s opposed to the marchers’ revival of the symbol – notorious as the emblem of the Nazis. He questions their motivation in choosing a motif bonded in the public mind to a creed of extermination and hatred, rather than ancient history.

*“One thing is an ancient symbol of fire and prosperity,”* Lukhtanas said. *“The other is when someone tries to use it for whatever their motivation is. I don’t believe they did it for archeological purposes. It was a very bad promotion. If they did, why wouldn’t they promote any other archeological findings on banners?”*

And at first, Lithuanian authorities thought the same way. The students were originally arrested and put on trial for the illegal display of fascist symbols. But in a court decision that surprised and shocked many – they were acquitted. The judge saw no malicious intent in their actions – believing their story that they were promoting a historical symbol. Further, a political activist says it’s an extremely sinister and dangerous development for his country.

*“We see in Lithuania the process of rehabilitation of Nazi collaborators,”* noted Algirdas Paletskis, the Frontas movement leader, *“We see that people who fought against the Red army – Lithuanians fighting on Hitler’s side – are being rehabilitated. So this court decision legalizes the proliferation of swastika. At least in Lithuania swastikas can now be drawn by any artist and they will be in a position to say that it’s legal by the court.”*

In Lithuania, the display of both Nazi and Soviet symbols is outlawed. But many are wondering if the court’s verdict may open the way for neo-Nazis to use history as a cover-up for fascist demonstrations.

### **Representative Selection of Public Displays of the Swastika - Photos from Defending History.com From 2008-2011** (more complete information regarding each photo is available on that site)

11 March 2008 -Gedimino Boulevard, Vilnius. This is the ‘Lithuanian swastika’ with the added lines meant to evoke the ‘Columns of Gediminas’



16 February 2010-*Klaipeda*. Independence Day demonstration using posters featuring prewar 'classic' swastikas.



11 March 2010-near Cathedral Square, central Vilnius. One of the various 'swastika fill-in' fascist symbols.



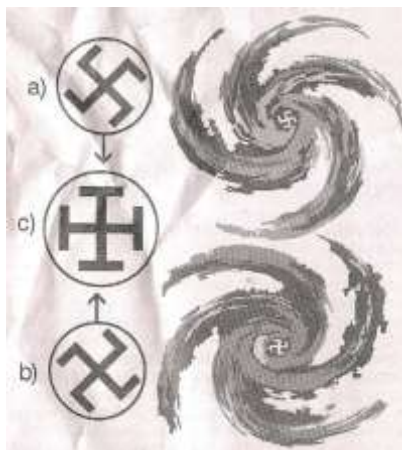
26 March 2010- at the Norwegian Embassy, Vilnius, protesting the Norwegian ambassador's stand for human rights.



8 May 2010 - at the Hotel Reval Lietuva, Vilnius.



On this occasion, the neo-Nazis handed out copies of a newspaper containing the following diagram to assure the faithful that the symbol on the flags does indeed count as a proper swastika.



19 May 2010- Klaipeda, posters that had led to arrests and the court's decision permitting public displays of swastikas.



A court in Klaipeda approved the public display of swastikas on the grounds that they are 'Lithuania's historical heritage rather than symbols of Nazi Germany'.

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27 May 2010 -on the major internet portal [Balsas.lt](http://Balsas.lt) with this image.



10 September 2010-The 'Gay Pride Swastika' that appeared on the website of the Lithuanian Social Democratic Party.



October 2010 - Classic and avant garde Swastika buttons purchased at a posh shop off Gedimino Boulevard in Vilnius:





11 March 2011 - The 'Lithuanian swastika' makes a massive appearance at the neo-Nazi parade on the capital's main boulevard, with a permit from city authorities, and with participation of a member of parliament and a 'chief specialist' at the Genocide Research Center.



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APRIL 22, 2011, In apparent homage to the April 20th birthday of Adolf Hitler, neo-Nazis hoisted Nazi flags high over the heart of Vilnius atop the former Labor Palace building on Tauro Hill.



Around the same time, a sign was affixed to the gate of Kaunas's one functioning old synagogue, the Choral Synagogue. It read: *'HITLER WAS RIGHT—JUDEN RAUS'*.



**\*\* See also the Cartoon of A Jew and Homosexual Holding Up (Controlling) the World -- Back in print 27 June 2011**

The infamous cartoon of a Jew and Homosexual holding up the world was featured in *Respublika* and other mass circulation newspapers in Lithuania in 2004, and again from 2009. It came back to the newspaper today.

## Dienos Citatos



*“Kad vietiniai šeiminkai (“čiabuviai”) Naujosios Pasaulio Tvarkos šeiminkams nereikalingi, jau seniai visiems aišku”,-*

o kam dar neaišku, žurnalistas Vitas TOMKUS siūlo prisiminti 10-ies metų senumo paveiksluką, kuris sukėlė triukšmą visame pasaulyje.

...And now, the cartoon is back. It appeared today in miniature on the back page of *Respublika* in the 'Quotes of the Day' column. The quote is from the long and vicious article of the editor, Vitas Tomkus.

Translation of the text accompanying the image in today's *Respublika*:

Daily Quotes—"That the local rulers ('the locals') are not needed by rulers of the New World Order has been clear to everyone for a long time" — and for whomever it is not yet clear, journalist Vitas TOMKUS suggests remembering this picture of 10 years ago which created a stir throughout the world.

**21 March 2009**



After human rights advocate and journalist Andrius Navickas lodged a protest against the publication of the antisemitic and homophobic cartoon, a caricature of *his* face and body was inserted into the 'Jews and Gays control the world' cartoon and published on the front page of *Vakaro žinios*. It appeared along with the article 'What is the Gay Manifesto?'

### **Lithuania Must Stand Up Against Anti-Semitism**

By Abraham H. Foxman

National Director of the Anti-Defamation League

This article originally appeared in *New Jersey Jewish Standard* on March 13, 2009

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**Lithuania holds a special significance for me. It was where I survived the Holocaust. In the capital of Vilna, now Vilnius, my parents left me with my Polish Catholic nanny, who baptized me and raised me as her son, saving me from certain death at the hands of the Nazis. And the Nazis weren't the only concern.**

**From 1941 to 1944, Lithuanian militias participated with the Nazis in killing around 95 percent of the country's Jewish population, the largest percentage in any country**

during the Holocaust. Today, Lithuania is again distinguishing itself from the rest of Europe in a less murderous but still terrible way — through its tolerance for anti-Semitism.

In no other European country has the front page of a national newspaper featured a cartoon with a hook-nosed Jew and a homosexual holding a globe between them with the caption, "Who Controls the World?" None of Lithuania's leaders condemned it.

European newspapers do not print such blatant anti-Semitism as an op-ed, entitled "The Rabbis are Wreaking Havoc in Lithuania," whose first sentence reads "I don't like Jews and nothing can be done about that."

Unfortunately, these examples are not isolated cases of anti-Semitism in Lithuanian media. Some of the most hateful articles over the past year have been written by former and present members of Lithuania's parliament, newspaper editors, and other opinion elites.

In no other country have World War II Jewish partisans — like the heroes of the movie *Defiance* — been named as "persons of interest" by state prosecutors. In May 2008, Lithuanian prosecutors announced that they were seeking two elderly Holocaust survivors, Fania Brantsovsky and Rachel Margolis. Brantsovsky, a former partisan, is a librarian at the Vilnius Yiddish Institute in Lithuania. Margolis, a historian of the partisans who discovered and published a long-lost diary by a witness of the murder of the Jews of Vilnius, lives in Israel, but each summer would give tours of the Vilna Ghetto. No longer. Today she fears interrogation and possible arrest if she were to visit her native Lithuania.

In no other country where it is illegal to incite ethnic hatred have the police escorted a neo-Nazi parade through the capital, as the marchers chanted the Nazi slogan "Juden raus!" ("Jews out!") and sang "You take that little stick and kill that little Jew." Lithuanian police did so last March. It took an entire week and complaints by Jewish organizations before Lithuanian President Adamkus criticized the march and the police inaction.

Only in Lithuania is the local Mardi Gras festival celebrated by dressing in costume "as Jews," as the Lithuanians say, often with horns or long noses. This year a major television channel showed two revelers dressed as chasidic Jews, who sang about the global economic crisis to the tune of Hava Nagila.

Lithuania and Poland are also the only countries in Europe to prevent Jews from claiming Holocaust-era confiscated private property. Lithuanian law, unlike the laws of any other member state of the European Union, requires citizenship prior to December 2001 as a condition for restitution. Since Lithuanian law prohibited dual citizenship until July 2008, survivors or their descendants living outside of Lithuania — virtually all the claimants — were denied restitution.

The first step for Lithuania in addressing these problems is to recognize them. When the capital's Jewish community center was spray-painted with swastikas and anti-Semitic slogans, President Adamkus did condemn the attack, saying that it should be

considered "a destructive and sordid act against Lithuania as a whole, not only Lithuania's Jewish community." But it took a blatant and high-profile anti-Semitic incident and the world watching to produce such a statement, an exception to what should be the rule.

If the Lithuanian government wants to shed its dubious distinction, it knows the steps it must take. Condemn anti-Semitism. Prosecute those who incite violence against or intimidate the Lithuanian Jewish community. Clear the names of the Jewish partisans. Provide reasonable legal processes for property restitution.

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*Abraham H. Foxman is National Director of the Anti-Defamation League and author of "The Deadliest Lies: The Israel Lobby and the Myth of Jewish Control."*