



CELEBRATION

The sounds of the first bombings in Kaunas woke me up at 4:00 a.m. For some reason, at first I thought that it was manoeuvres by the Red Army. But then I wondered, for lately the British radio had been announcing that the German Army was converging on the USSR border.

I switched on the radio and started to listen to broadcasts of military speeches and marches from Germany. Though Moscow was silent, I was suddenly struck by the thought that war had begun.

Normally students from the Shalom Aleichem Gymnasium would meet in Laisvės Blvd., so that's where I went. It was a beautiful June day, and we were young and full of optimism. All year long Soviet propaganda had been aimed at convincing us that the Red Army was invincible - that it was armed with the most advanced tanks and planes in the world, that it was headed by the best war experts, that its soldiers were the bravest, and that they would smash the fascist army and defeat the enemy on their own territory without spilling a great deal of blood.

We believed it. After all, we saw the continuous flow of tanks, artillery guns, and thousands of soldiers advancing towards the western frontiers...

The Jews of Lithuania ended up in a state of total uncertainty, unable to understand what was going on, what to do, how to act. Only the functionaries and high officials of the Communist Party were aware of military developments, and they fled by transport out of the country.

Prepared and armed by the Hitlerites in advance, Lithuanian fascists started to riot even before Hitler's armies arrived: Jews were ruthlessly tor-

tured and killed everywhere, their property plundered. A quickly formed Lithuanian government did not put a stop to the thousands of brutal degenerates who drowned Lithuanian soil in Jewish blood.

A great many Jews attempted to flee to the East on horseback or by foot. They were shot down by German planes, and attacked, killed, and robbed by the local fascists. Many

sense of the word, with the bodies of our dead friends.

After the bloody struggle the division was sent to the rear for reinforcement; later it continued fighting, and reached the Baltic seacoast in 1944 to take part in liberating Lithuania from the Nazis. Jewish soldiers fought bravely in its ranks, and a great many of them met a hero's death. Those of us who survived have not forgotten our

their lives in order? If fascism had not been destroyed, perhaps present-day Germans would be much worse off? And maybe all of Europe would be different? But the Soviet Union fell apart without being able to create a proper life for its citizens: perhaps it fell apart precisely because it could not manage to do so?

Ten years ago, Lithuania reclaimed its independence. I am not an expert,

Recently I read in one of the newspapers that the 55th anniversary of Victory Day is the last to be commemorated by those who took part in the war. This is a fact, though it is hardly tactful as far as the elderly are concerned. Sometimes it is more seemly to keep silent than to proclaim that which is in fact understood by everyone.

The war veterans, who saved Europe from the brutal Nazi regime, and who have retained the history of battles and victories in their memory, note with sadness that the young generation neither knows nor wants to know at what cost Victory was won 55 years ago. It does not know how those who survived the war wept with joy when they found out that this, the most bloody and horrible war in the history of the world, had ended in Victory...

A certain wise person has said: those who do not remember their past risk repeating it. I would not wish that the present young generation experience that which befell my generation. I sincerely trust that they won't.

On the occasion of the 55th anniversary of Victory against Nazi Germany, I would like to remember everyone who gave their lives in the name of this great Victory, as well as those of our armed friends who have departed during these 55 wound and illness bearing years. I would like to congratulate my friends in battle, all those who fought against Nazism, and to wish them good fortune - to wish that, to the frustration of their enemies and the joy of all good people, they greet not only the 55th, but all up-coming Victory jubilees in good health.

Meyer NOMBERG,
War veteran

55 YEARS AFTER THE VICTORY

died on the roads during the first days of the war. Only an insignificant portion of Lithuania's Jews managed to break through to the East by train.

The Lithuanian infantry division, mobilizing Lithuanian citizens who had ended up in Russia and the other Soviet republics, was established in the beginning of 1942. The division was formed and trained in the district of Gorky. By the start of military action, it was comprised of 30-40% Jews.

In Feb. 1943, the division was thrown into battle against the firmly entrenched German army at Orel. And thrown in fact it was: the horse drawn artillery were late for the start of the operation for they got stuck on a snow-bound road, the airforce did not back up the infantry, and we suffered heavy losses. German machine guns, artillery, and aircraft attacked in full force. The battle field near the village of Alekseyevka was strewn, in the real

friends who died in the struggle against the brown plague, and keep their memory sacred forever.

Among those Jewish soldiers of the 16th Lithuanian Division who were decorated, there were four - V.Vilenski, G.Ušpolis, K.Shure, and B.Tzindel (post-humously) - who received the highest award, the title Hero of the Soviet Union.

Victory was achieved at a high cost: the names of more than 1,800 Lithuanian Jewish soldiers killed have been disclosed.

Looking back now, 55 years after the Victory, one sees that Germany, then vanquished and reduced to ruins, has managed not only to rebuild what was demolished, but also to become one of the most powerful countries in the world. A sense of well-being has been created for the population there. And sometimes I wonder: perhaps it is thanks to us that they put

and I have no scholarly explanation for why the industrial and agricultural sector was demolished, why the State does not pay farmers for their produce, or teachers their salaries, why they do not allocate funding for higher education, and why they deprive those who are the most easily victimized - pensioners - of any exemptions. It is difficult for me to understand why more than 11% of able-bodied people cannot utilize their abilities and their knowledge, and why engineers with the highest qualifications have to sell women's clothing at the market in Gariūnai.

There is a lot that I cannot explain, but I also cannot help seeing that the long-awaited freedom is being abused, that only a few can take advantage of it, and that the rest are victims of a basic law - i.e., the same customs of an uncivilized capitalism that we have read about in books.

death of Stalin saved them.

S.Alperavičius noted the great importance of this exhibition, for it is another step towards immortalizing the memory of all those Lithuanian Jews who fought bravely against Nazism, those who were killed at the front and in partisan groups during the war, those who died later of wounds and ill health, and those who are still with us today.

This exhibition

Kostanian, who played the greatest role in its preparation. The exhibition became a reality also thanks to the considerable support of the Claims Conference.

In the words of the director of the Vilna Gaon Jewish State Museum Emanuelis Zingeris, "I know of the struggles of the 16th Lithuanian Division not only from books, but also from my father, Moise (Mykolas) Zingeris; he often spoke about the times when fate led him to join the ranks of those who fought against fascism. I have always remembered that, and I will pass that memory on to my children... When there is talk of occupation by the Soviet army, it has nothing to do with the Jews."

It is E.Zingeris' belief that all talk of a negative role by the 16th

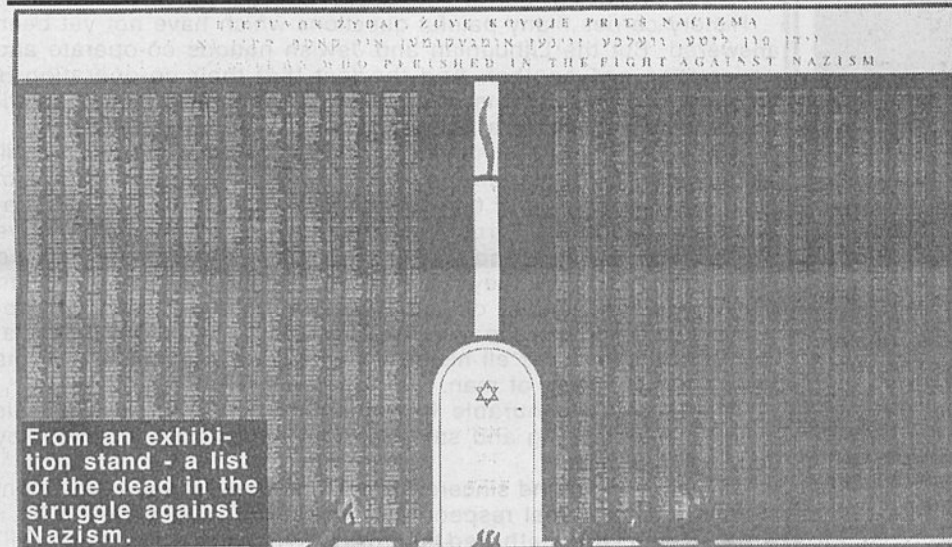
nally talk about it, we see that we must work faster in order to achieve what, in this respect, has already been accomplished in countries like Germany.

J.Levinson gave a comprehensive account of the idea behind the exhibition, and explained how it sheds light on the history of armed resistance on the part of Lithuania's Jews. In his opinion, this exhibition is important because little or nothing is known about this tragic period in the history of the Jews; there is a lot of literature on this topic in English, Hebrew, and Yiddish, but very few books thus far in Lithuanian.

J.Levinson spoke about the Ghetto's resistance against the spiritual annihilation of the Jewish nation, about the organizing of an underground and partisan movement, and about the armed struggle against the German fascists and their local collaborators.

He ended his presentation with the following words from Mark Dvorzhetski's book entitled Jerusalem of Lithuania - Struggling and Dying: "Remember the Catastrophe of the Israeli nation, remember her struggle and her death... Let it be in the name of those who are

AN EXHIBITION OF PAIN AND GLORY



From an exhibition stand - a list of the dead in the struggle against Nazism.

The opening of an exhibition entitled "Lithuania's Jews in the Struggle Against Nazism", curated by the Vilna Gaon Jewish State Museum, happened to take place during the days when the entire world was commemorating the 55th anniversary of the great Victory against Nazism. The opening was attended by Lithuanian state and public officials, representatives of the diplomatic corps, heads of the Lithuanian Jewish Community and of the Museum, community members, and representatives of Vilnius society.

Chairman of the Lithuanian Jewish Community Simonas Alperavičius, director of the Vilna Gaon Jewish State Museum Emanuelis Zingeris, and member of the LJC executive Joseph Levinson spoke during the opening ceremonies.

S.Alperavičius said that three organizations - the Jewish Museum, the Council of Jewish WWII Veterans, and the LJC - were responsible for creating this exhibition. He emphasized the principal significance of the exhibition: the fact that some people in Lithuania would not care for it because it is about people who fought against the Nazi occupant while serving in the Red Army. In his opinion, Lithuania's Jews never occupied anyone; they fought against Nazism, humanity's greatest enemy, while defending their right to live. In their entire long history, the Jews had never experienced such a brutal trial. Six million of them died; among them nearly the whole pre-war Lithuanian Jewish community of more than 220,000 people...

S.Alperavičius recalled that the

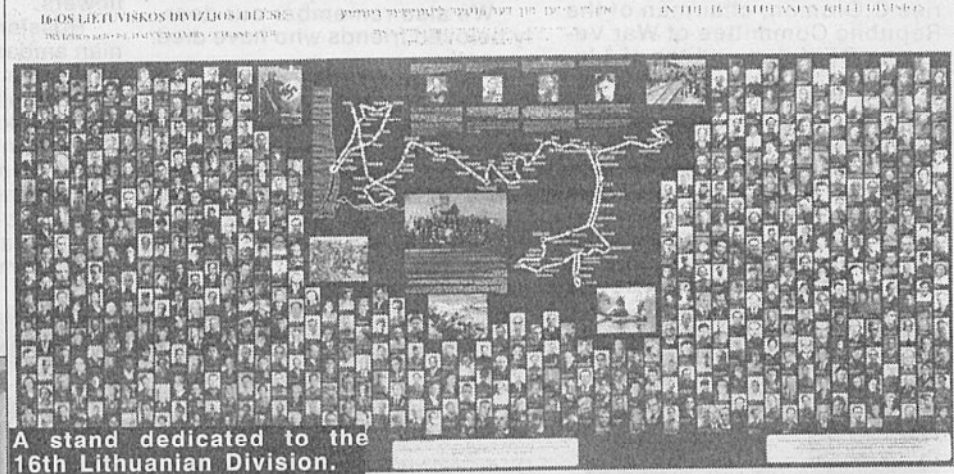
Nazis were not the Jews' only enemy. The danger of annihilation continued even after Nazism was vanquished. This time it was Stalin's regime which threatened the life of the Jews. Scarcely had the Second World War ended, when the spiritual genocide of the Jews began: all Jewish cultural institutions were closed down, and in 1952 plans were completed for the deportation of all Soviet Jews to the far north and Siberia. It is now a documented fact that only the

clearly negates a tenacious myth of Soviet propaganda - that the Jews "fought in Tashkent or Alma Alta", and not at the front.

S.Alperavičius thanked all the organizers of this exhibition, in particular Joseph Levinson, Eliah Levit, Israelis Lempertas, as well as Rachel and Genrich



The opening of the exhibition.



A stand dedicated to the 16th Lithuanian Division.

Lithuanian Division is an attempt to discredit the sole hope of Lithuania's Jews to survive during the Second World War, the possibility to defend themselves and their nation. "Did the Jews have any other means than to fight in the ranks of the 16th Lithuanian Division or with the partisans?" - was his rhetorical question.

E.Zingeris noted that the Western countries of Germany, France, etc. managed to inculcate their younger generation with an "anti-Nazi vaccination": now, 50 years later, when Lithuania can fi-

no longer with us. Let the memory be the salt of your blood and an inseparable part of your bone and fiber. Clench your teeth and remember! Remember when you eat! Remember when you drink! And when you hear the singing - remember! And when the sun shines - remember! And when night falls - remember! When sowing your fields, build a mountain of stones in memory of your brothers and your sisters who will never see their Homeland."

"J of L" info.