Lithuania and the Holocaust: A Dark History

Rather than being reviled by Lithuanians as "a traitor" for exposing her grandfather's role in murdering Jews ("My Grandfather's Crimes Against Humanity," op-ed, Aug. 26), Silvia Foti merits praise for revealing the truth.

I am an American Jew of Lithuanian ancestry. Ms. Foti's grandfather's involvement in killing Jews is only the tip of the iceberg of Lithuanian complicity in carrying out the Holocaust. Collaborators from Lithuania were among Hitler's most loyal henchmen in annihilating Jews.

An estimated 96% of Lithuania's Jewish population—212,000 out of 220,000—were murdered, a higher proportion than in any other nation. Notably, many of them were killed by their Lithuanian neighbors rather than by German invaders. While Lithuanian accomplices lacked the authority to administer the mechanics of the Nazi mass-murder machine, they served as the domestic engine of extermination. In the assembly line of death, these local accomplices incited violence against Jews, captured the victims, marched the martyrs to jail, took the prisoners to the execution sites, dug the pits in which the hunted were entombed and fired many of the bullets that killed them.

Commander Franz Stahlecker, the head of Nazi *Einsatgruppe A*, wrote in an Aug. 3, 1941, report to his German superiors of how "easy [it was] to convince the Lithuanian circles of the need for self-purging actions to achieve a complete elimination of the Jews from public life. Spontaneous pogroms occurred in all towns."

Despite the mass murder of more than 200,000 Jews, not a single Lithuanian has, to my knowledge, served a proportionate sentence in a Lithuanian jail for the Holocaust-related killing of a Jew since Lithuania gained independence from the Soviet Union in 1990.

LOU GERBER
Falls Church, Va.