



VILNA GAON JEWISH STATE MUSEUM OF LITHUANIA

# NEWSLETTER 11

September 14<sup>th</sup>, 2007

Dear Friends of the Jewish Museum in Vilnius/Vilne,

## ***5768 Shana Tova! Mazl Tov !***

We have the honor and pleasure to continue our annual report on the occasion of Rosh haShana.

Every friend, whether in Israel or Lithuania, the US or Great Britain, Australia or Tasmania, Germany or Austria, in any and all corners of the world, blessings be upon you.

We continue our work on collecting Jewish artifacts, the remains of our great past, and to research and publish them. We finished four books this year! We have established several exhibitions, and continue to teach our visitors. We thank **Rachel Margolis**, formerly a member of our staff who has returned for the past 13 years to help us, for her dedication to teach everyone entering our doors, Jew and non-Jew alike. We thank our eleventh volunteer from Austria, **Michael Kieber**, for his diligent and dedicated work, and wish him a meaningful and happy future. In fact, he did most of this newsletter.

We thank you, our dear friends, for your support for our efforts to tell the complicated history of Jews in Lithuania on our walls and on paper. Our particular thanks go to our friends of many years **V. Winston, Sonia P. Beker, Yehuda Levy-Aldema, Amy and Oscar Schachter, Phillip Shapiro, Bernard Rubin, Keith Kaye, Gene Le Pere, Leona Rosenberg, Jonathan Beare, the Blumenthal family, the Margol family** and the **Feldman family**.

Members of the well-known **Dr. Tsemekh Shabad, Menachem Begin, Miriam Bernstein** and **Margolis families** visited the museum among many other dear visitors.

We had a number of survivors of the Vilnius ghetto and their families arrive. **Irina Guzenberg** of the museum's History Department conducted an interview with **Chaim (Alexander) Shouster** who as a young boy worked in the Vilna ghetto porters' brigade. He clarified some outstanding questions regarding the history and sequence of events during that terrible time. We also had another visitor from the Vilna ghetto with whom Rachel Kostanian conducted an interview, **Mr. Jonah Benson**. Looking at the model of the *maline* (hiding place), he said: "I was hidden just in such a maline on Šiaulių street right here, number 6/10." Irina Guzenberg also interviewed **Sulamith Gordon** from the Kaunas ghetto.

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Our visitor **Roman Abraham Mornel** was born in 1942 at the home of a Polish woman, the family's neighbor. He was born in a closet while a German officer paced around the room outside. Neither the woman nor the child made the slightest sound. For more details, see **Holocaust Exhibition** below.

We also thank our dear professors and friends **Sir Martin Gilbert, Myra Sklarew, Solon Beinfeld, Dovid Katz, Esther Gilbert, Merryl Kravitz, Benjamin Hershav, Dina Porat** and others.

Our greatest appreciation goes for the work done by the Righteous Department headed by **Danutė Selcinskaja**: two films have been completed in Lithuanian and English and a third was begun in July, with all scenes shot in Lithuania and Belarus.

The museum also received a fair share of international media attention this year. During Japanese emperor Hirohito's visit this spring to Scandinavia and the Baltic States, Japan's largest television station **NHK** arranged an interview next to a statue erected in honor of famous rescuer of Lithuanian Jews **Chiune Sugihara**. Among

others, we'd like to mention the **New York Times'** comments on the Vilna Gaon Jewish State Museum's Holocaust Exhibition in their travel section on April 29: "Relying extensively on witness testimony and original documents, the museum offers a timeline of the Jewish community's ascent and destruction in Vilnius. Larger Holocaust museums may present comparable exhibits, but to gaze upon them here, after walking those very same streets, is especially affecting."

The museum also worked in close partnership with the **Yiddish Institute** of Vilnius University this year, conducting numerous tours of the former ghetto and four museum sections, including Ponar. (More about the Yiddish courses later in this issue.)

Markas Zingeris (Director), Rachel Kostanian (Associate Director)



## The Holocaust Exhibition (The Green House)

This year the Green House began operating Sundays from 10 to 4 as well as all weekdays from 9 to 5. As usual, the summer months at the Vilna Gaon Museum were especially busy. Dr. Rachel Margolis of Israel helped with research and guided tours in Yiddish, German and French. This year the Yiddish Institute of Vilnius University made much use of the museum, especially the Holocaust Exhibition at the Green House. Rachel Margolis, associate director Rachel Kostanian and Michael Kieber, our volunteer from Austria, provided many tours of the exhibition and Rachel Kostanian, **Fania Broncovska** and Rachel Margolis also conducted walking tours of former Jewish sites and the Nazi ghetto, and took students to Ponar, the mass killing site south of Vilnius. Volunteer **Christian Kielch** of Nurnberg worked extensively on re-writing our outdated guide-book for visitors and museum specialist **Katarzyna Krynica** of the Nicolas Copernicus University in Torun, Poland, helped on this and a number of other projects as part of the European Union's Leonardo da Vinci ARCHEO-TOR program for post-graduate students in cultural heritage fields. Besides working on the film Children of the Sky, the new guide book, updating the Vilnius and Kaunas ghetto chronicles and translating exhibit texts to English as well as a host of other tasks, Green House personal met a number of Vilna ghetto survivors this year.

One survivor's tale especially affected staff:

"The Jewish resistance to the Nazi occupiers and their helpers in Vilne [Vilnius] made on me a very big impression. This museum is closer to me than the Yad Vashem [Holocaust Museum] in Israel in spite of the fact that I am a citizen of Israel. I'm one of the few children born in Vilne during the fascist occupation who survived. My name is Roman Abraham Mornel, born on the 22nd of March, 1942, in a *maline* on Sibiuro street in Užupis. My mother, Gita Mornel, being pregnant, was driven to the Vilne ghetto. My father, Abraham Mornel, was shot in Ponar [Panerai] before I was born. My mother managed to run away from the ghetto before my birth. A noble Polish family, one of whose members was named Stefania, sheltered my mother in their place. It was in this family that I was born. My mother was hidden in a ditch which was dug under a cupboard and at night she was let into the room. This lasted about two and a half years until Vilne was liberated from the Nazis. I lived in the family of these wonderful people, was given Aryan papers and named Roman Grabowski. I was their 'son.' I knew the fighters in the partisan units acting in Vilnius area, like Shmuel Kaplinski, his wife Chiena Kaplinski and others. I knew them from childhood because my mother was their friend even before the occupation. That's why everything that is shown and told in the Vilnius Holocaust Museum is very dear to me and known from my mother's stories. I would like very much that my children and grandchildren be able to see and understand and not forget what was going on in this city during the war and occupation." (**Roman Mornel**, September 3, 2007)

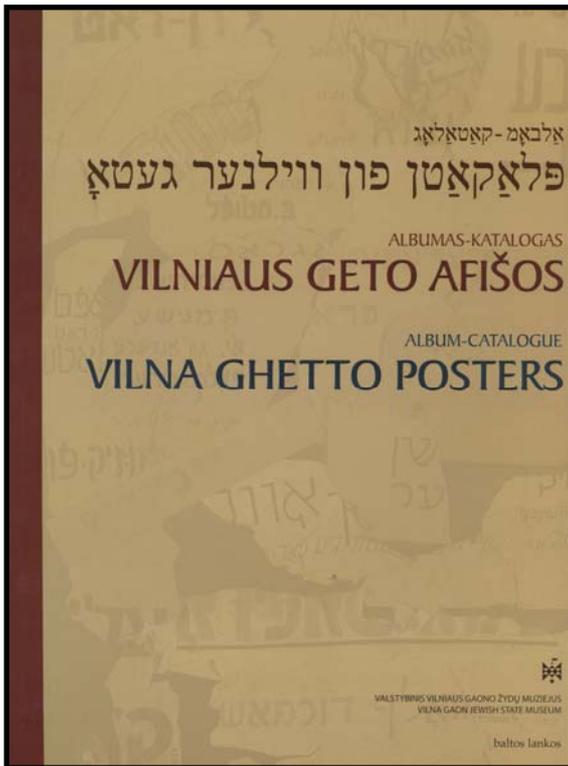
Rachel Margolis added: "His mother **Gita**, with whom we studied in the same school, told me she was going to deliver the baby in a closet where she hid because of the visit of a German officer. She trembled in awe and suffered terrible labor pains." When interviewed by **Irina Guzenberg** of the History Department, he recalled more facts, and took museum staff to the site of his birth.



## New Books

Published in 2006 and 2007

### How the book *Vilna Ghetto Posters* was created



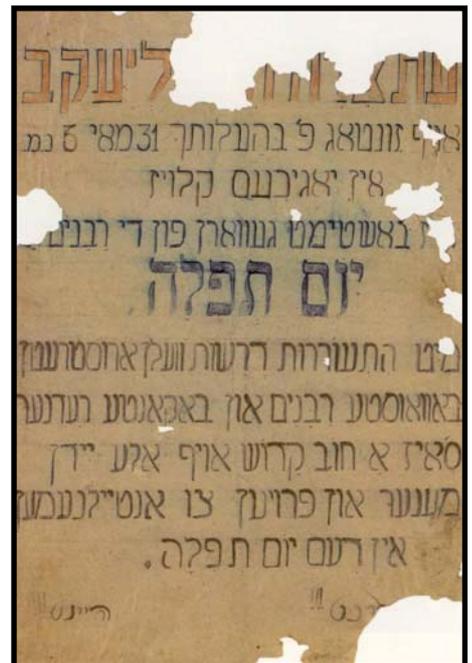
The new book “Vilna Ghetto Posters” prepared by Vilna Gaon Jewish State Museum has received many comments, thanks and expressions of admiration and among the questions people have asked most often is “How was this book created?” In order to answer this, we have to tell a little bit about the history of the events that went into making this book.

In 1991 museum staff member Rachel Margolis was working in the Central State Archives, only recently opened after the Soviet prohibition on access to all Jewish documents, and came across a large collection of Vilna ghetto posters. In June of 1992, our museum received 16 posters from the State Museum of Lithuania (the former Revolutionary Museum). With all that material available, the idea occurred to establish an exhibition. This idea was enthusiastically supported by then-visiting professor Solon Beinfeld and by museum staff as well, but couldn't be implemented because of lack of financing.

In June of 1996, the Jewish Club of Culture, headed by professor and well-known theatrical critic Dr. Markas Petuchauskas, voiced the idea of organizing the event “Days of the Vilna Ghetto Theater,” and in 1997 the

exhibition was included in the program “Theatrical Days” in Vilnius. **Professor Petuchauskas** as well as the museum's own **Eugenia Biber** wrote the introductions. Museum staff members including **Irina Guzenberg**, **Aleksandra Jacovskaja**, **Rachel Kostanian**, **Gajane Leonenko**, **Jūratė Razumienė**, **Judith Rozina**, **Svetlana Šatalova** and the late volunteer **Necha Šnaider** contributed a great deal in the selection of 47 posters from the archives, photographed and translated them to Lithuanian and English and designed the exhibition. The exhibition had many visitors, caused a sensation and received global media attention.

This compelled us to continue our work after the exhibition was over in order to make these unique documents accessible to the world. So was the idea of the book born, while at the same time the need to conserve, restore and preserve the posters was evident. In particular, 3 of the 16 posters in our museum archives needed urgent attention. This was performed in 1997 by restorers at the Martynas Mažvydas National Library, at the personal expense of our late staff member **Eugenijus Potalujuš**. Deputy director Rachel Kostanian commenced the difficult task of securing financing and attracting sponsors. During 2000-2001, all the posters slated for restoration were restored. Over the same





period, we also had 252 photographs of the posters, including 27 fragments, as well as facsimiles for mobile exhibitions, done by esteemed photographer **Antanas Lukšėnas**.

The conception for the book was drafted by Eugenia Biber, Rachel Kostanian and **Judith Rozina**. It was decided that Eugenia Biber, a former prisoner of the Vilna ghetto, should describe for the readers the events in the ghetto in the context of the human suffering, the isolation from the surrounding world, the denial of all rights, the general inhuman living conditions, the hunger and exhaustion, and how ghetto inmates witnessed the death of their own children and

family members under the daily threat of the loss of their own lives, but nevertheless found within themselves the spiritual courage and the will to resist evil.

Their efforts are expressed and remembered in the surviving posters. Space dictated the need to select only the most interesting and informative posters, reflecting general activities in the ghetto – social, economic, medical, educational, literary, theatrical, religious, music and sports. This reduced the number of posters to 83. They had to be translated to Lithuanian, which Judith Rozina did. In the course of the work, the need arose to find dates which were either not indicated or illegible on the posters themselves and to recover lost sections of text. This required getting to know

the entire contents of every poster. The existence of variant posters eased this task. Comments and notes also had to be provided for readers to comprehend fully the contents of the posters.

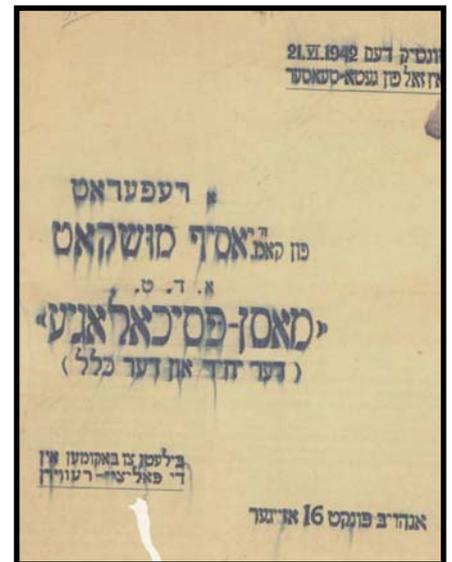
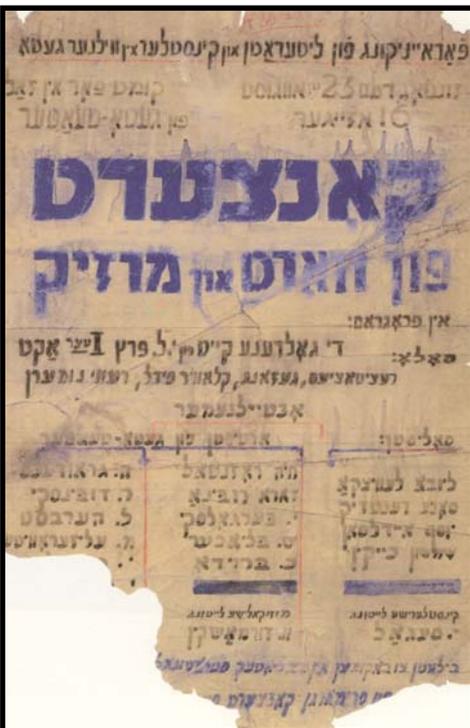
Indispensable help came from **Motl Gurvich** (Israel), a former prisoner of the Vilna ghetto. We had known of only one man who designed the posters, **Š. Kurycki**, thanks to his signature on 8 of them. Later we learned that Motl Gurvich was also a designer of posters in our possession. He described

how the posters were usually made, most of them being the work of several designers.

The translated posters were described by restorer **Danguolė Šlaustienė** and Judith Rozina. (**Eugenijus Potalujus**, together with Judith Rozina, provided descriptions for some of the posters before he passed away in 1998.) The descriptions included the condition of the posters and their “biographies” – various stamps, inscriptions, notes, place of storage, archival abbreviations and inventory numbers. If the poster was restored, the name of the restorer and date were indicated.

It was also important to describe the reaction by ghetto prisoners to events described in the posters. This is demonstrated in material collected by Eugenia Biber and Rachel Kostanian.

“People from the posters” is an important chapter in this book. It reveals the fates of the people mentioned on the posters, those who took part in organized ghetto events. The author of this section, Eugenia Biber, accomplished a major task in collecting material on the fate of the people and by examining photographs of them received from authentic sources and personal correspondence with the “People of the Posters” and/or their relatives.





The catalogue – a summarized version of all Vilna ghetto posters stored in the Central State Archives and in the Vilna Gaon Jewish State Museum – was compiled by Eugenia Biber. It contains photographs of all the posters, their main contents and variations.

In describing the story of how this album catalogue was created, we must mention the vital work done by the main editor of the book, **Ilona Murauskaitė**, now a member of the museum staff. Her dedication, knowledge and experience helped make this work complete.

On behalf of all who took part in the creation of this book, I would like to thank once more the major sponsors and all the people who helped us in our work (a list is provided at the beginning of the album catalogue). Without their help, the book would never have appeared.

Judith Rozina, member of the museum staff  
Translated by Rachel Kostanian

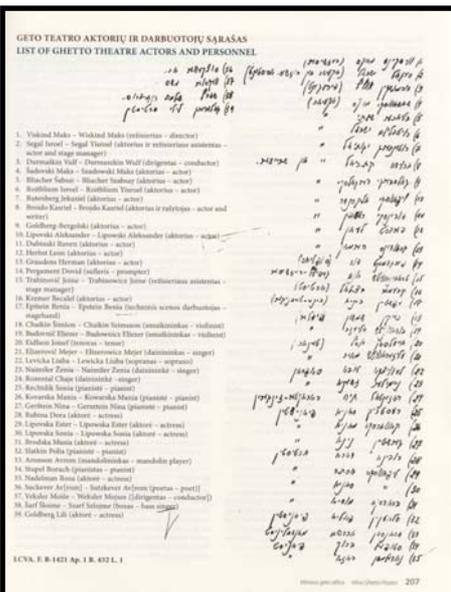
**Readers Comments:**

*"This most recent publication of The State Vilna Gaon Jewish Museum is a masterpiece of memory and memorial. Eighty-three ghetto posters are reproduced to the highest quality, in colour, with Lithuanian and English-language translations. The documentation of each poster introduces the historical context. The biographical notes of the people mentioned in the posters bring the reader close to the vibrant life and tragic destruction of Vilna Jewry. Every student of the lost world of Vilna Jewry will be enlightened and inspired by this remarkable publication."*

–Sir Martin Gilbert, C. B. E., D.Litt.

*"The book arrived yesterday and I spent hours looking at every page and reading about all the actors, musicians and doctors. The photographs included are wonderful. The book is a marvel! I wonder where you got all the information about each person highlighted. You had most of their birth places and birth dates, most of their activities and death dates and places. How all this information was collected is a wonder."*

–Gene Le Pere



*"The publication of the Album-Catalogue 'Vilna Ghetto Posters' by the Vilna Gaon Jewish State Museum is a major achievement. These posters are a unique record of astounding creativity despite all the horrors and deprivations experienced by its inmates... This splendid volume does full justice to these precious remnants. The posters are beautifully reproduced, and the announcements in them are carefully translated from the original Yiddish and Hebrew into Lithuanian and English. The explanatory notes are exceptionally clear and complete, providing us with rare insight into the strength of the human spirit in a terrible time."*

–Solon Beinfeld, Ph. D  
Professor of History, Emeritus  
Washington University, St. Louis

*"... a great achievement."*

–Dovid Katz  
Professor of Yiddish, Oxford, Vilnius Universities



"Thank you so much for your kindness in sending us this wonderful book. We will treasure it always and pass it onto our children and grandchildren. The world must never be allowed to forget. Thank you all at the Museum for your dedication and hard work."

–Simon Blumenthal

"The book of posters arrived today. My feelings cannot be described. I am overwhelmed. It is beautiful and important historically. It is moving (mind altering). It has more impact than any description I have seen of the Vilna Ghetto. Having put these posters together is truly a mitzvah. I am sure I cannot imagine the amount of work it has taken. But the emotional energy that was expended must be beyond measurement."

–Stella Esrig

"What a truly magnificent book you have made, and what an unbelievable gift you have given me! To say thank you is so insufficient! The tremendous work and love you put into this project is so moving. I viewed the pages, read your words and I cried! And Ms. Biber's words were so powerful and tender! And then, to see that you put my name beside the truly honorable ones, your own names, I don't feel I belong there! I am not so important! But to know that I share the pages of this magnificent book with all of you is an honor I never anticipated!"

–Sonia Durmashkin-Beker

"Thank you so much for the wonderful book of Vilna Ghetto Posters. Congratulations on an excellent quality publication. It really is beautifully done and I can imagine the amount of meticulous work that went into it. It is an important record for those of us who don't know about the history."

–Rodney Freedman,  
Producer and director, Change Focus Media



"I would like to express our thanks and admiration to you for the book you authored on Lithuanian Jewry... The books is impressively researched and beautifully presented. This history is an important one and needs to be preserved accurately and accessible to all. You will be pleased to know that your book now occupies an important place in our synagogue library. Thank you!"

–Rabbi David and Aviva Freilich, lecturer, University of Western Australia Law School

"I used your beautiful book on the Ghetto Posters for information for the course [The Holocaust and its Relevance Today, upcoming]. I even found an Esther Goldberg in the Choir! (Goldberg is my maiden name!)"

–Esther Gilbert,  
Hillsdale College, Hillsdale, Michigan, USA

"At the same time [in 1942-1943], people with nooses around their necks [as Julijus Fuček wrote] played theater, organized concerts, sung songs, held lectures and people with nooses around their necks went to see and listen to them. But the world was largely unaware of them...."

"The Jewish State Museum has published a unique comprehensive album-catalogue called 'The Posters of the Vilna Ghetto' in English and Lithuanian, with a forward in Yiddish."

–Aaron Garon, Israel,  
writing in US-based Yiddish newspaper *Forverts*, June 1, 2007.



## Other New Books

### The Shoah (Holocaust) in Lithuania

Joseph Levinson, compiler and author of the introduction, survived the Holocaust in the Lithuanian division of the Soviet Army. The book gives a broad overview of the Holocaust in Lithuania, Jewish resistance, examples of contemporary Lithuanian discourse on the modern interpretation of Lithuania's role in the genocide, excerpts from modern Lithuanian scholars studying the history of the Holocaust in Lithuania, interviews with public figures.

“Various types of material are presented here—documents, articles, memoirs, studies of events, testimonies, etc. Their sources and circle of authors are diverse and wide. These are people who lived through the Shoah, who were fated to survive and publish their memoirs in the press and in books, including *Yahadut Lita* [The Jews of Lithuania]. These are people from Lithuanian cities and towns, witnesses of those events, who also published their memoirs. These are historians who have researched those events. These are criminals who participated in one way or another in the massacres and gave testimonies to law enforcement agencies. There are authentic documents that have survived from those times.”

—Joseph Levinson

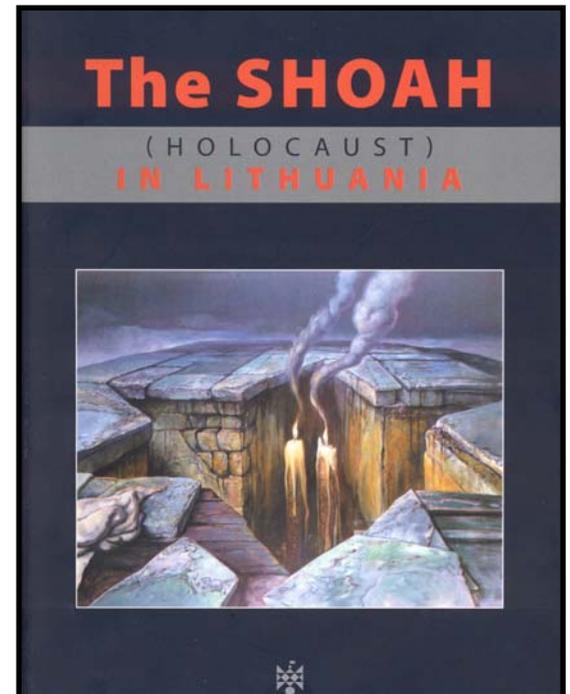
“The book provides ample documents from the Vilna Gaon Jewish State Museum: a map of sites of massacres of Jews is provided on pages 30 and 31, a list of 57 Lithuanians serving in Haman's *Rollkommando* death squad is published on page 155 and a list of children saved from the Kaunas ghetto and their rescuers is provided on pages 311-314. There are warm responses to Lithuanians who saved Jews. At the beginning of 2003 there were 513 Lithuanian citizens recognized as Righteous Gentiles; this number has grown every year since.

“It should be noted that the compilers managed to avoid partiality: all the major directions and concepts of Holocaust Studies are reflected in the book.

“The material is organized according to historical events and problem assessments.

“The cover portrays Aloyzas Smilingis's sculpture from the Vidzgiriai memorial and the work ‘Sabbath Eve’ by Samuel Bek, the artist who survived the Vilna ghetto as a child. This book contributes historical material on the Holocaust in Lithuania for the wider world of Holocaust studies and historiography. This is an important achievement of this book. On the other hand, this book is also a martyrology of Litvaks and a witness in the English language of resistance to the Nazis and Nazi collaborators.

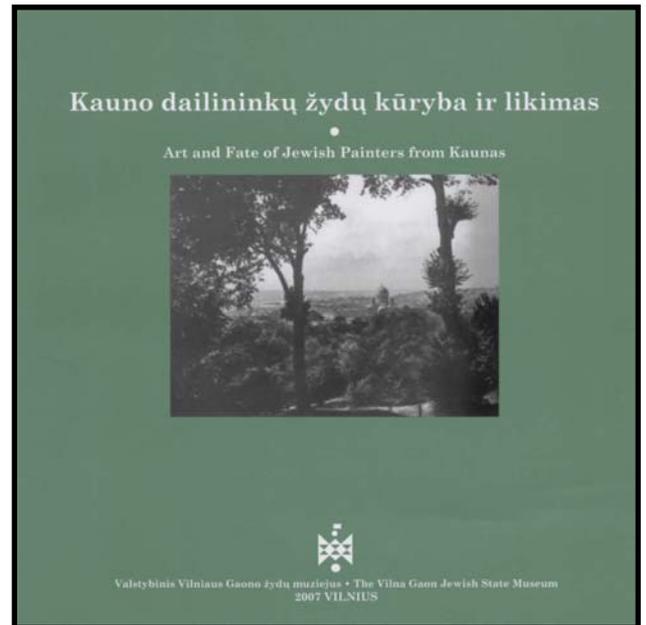
“The author has written a comprehensive introduction and closing word and provided a chronology and geography of massacres of Jews.” —Vytautas Berenis, *Kultūros barai* #5, 2007





## Art and Fate of Jewish Painters from Kaunas

We also published a book on the work and fate of Kaunas ghetto artists. It describes the dynamic artistic environment in pre-war Kaunas – which at the time served as the provisional Lithuanian capital – and shows how this multilingual and multinational cultural milieu influenced the world-view of many Jewish painters, a rich culture that was destroyed by the Nazis and collaborators. It includes comprehensive text describing the lives, schools of art and exhibitions in which these artists participated. They shared the fate of almost the entire Jewish population – they perished in the same places they had lived and created. The book is richly illustrated, based on material never published before. The book was compiled by Irina Nikitina and edited by Dalija Epšaintė and Ilona Murauskaite.



*Miesto vaizdas / View of the Town, 1941*  
Ofortas / Etching, 17,9×14,3 cm  
Parašas, data / Signature, date  
VŽM 3377 nuo/since 1995

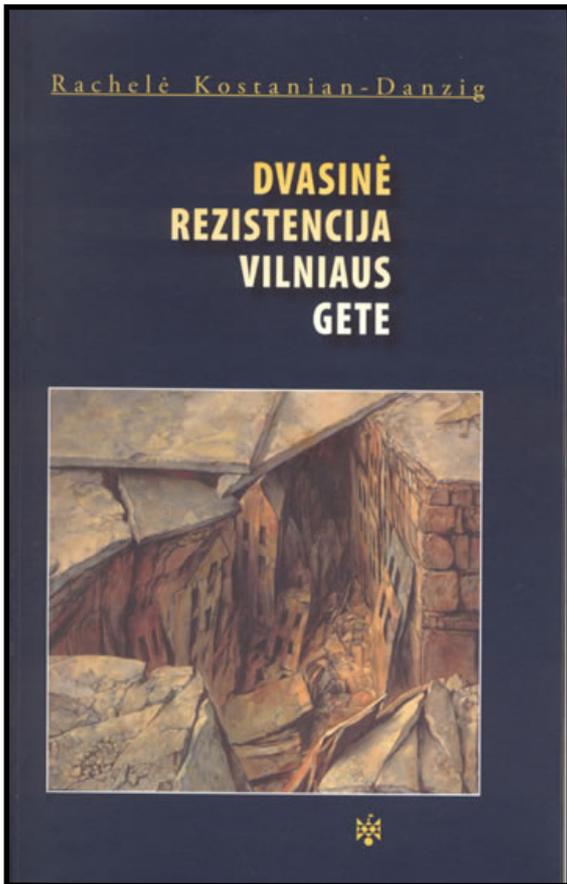


*Vyro portretas / Portrait of a Man, 1937*  
Lino rašymas / Linocut, 30,5×24,0 cm  
Parašas, data / Signature, date  
VŽM 3376 nuo / since 1995

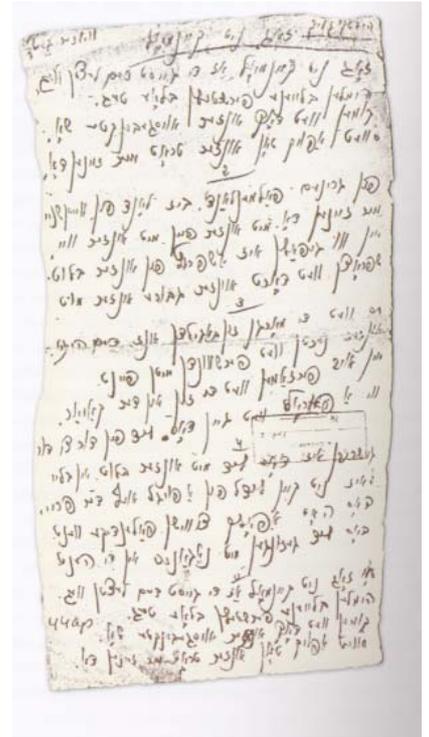
Plates from the book *The Art and Fate of Jewish Painters from Kaunas*



## Spiritual Resistance in the Vilna Ghetto (Lithuanian translation)



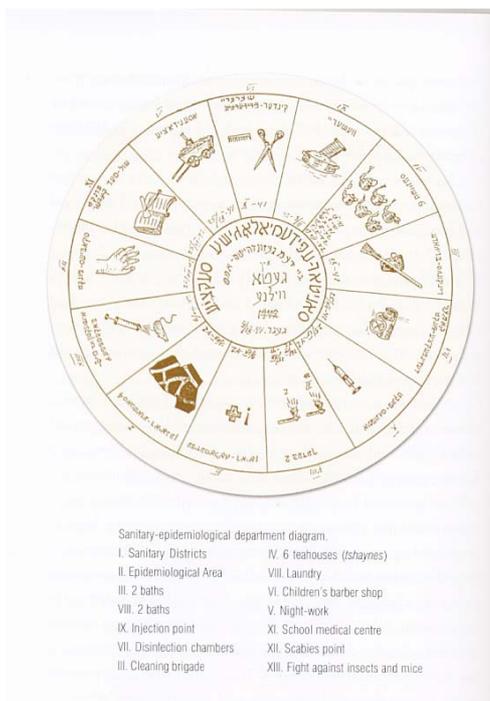
The book is a translation from English and describes the great phenomenon of spiritual resistance in the Vilna ghetto, 1941-1943. It was here that the intellectual leadership of the ghetto, in spite of the horrendous situation, in the short period of relative calm led an enormous battle not only for physical survival at any cost, but also for people's dignity: fighting dehumanization. They established a meaningful way of life for the ghetto inmates, social and medical care for children and adults, schools and nurseries, orphanages and day-care centers, music and performances, lectures and commemorations. They thought of posterity and saved the remains of the unique Jewish heritage of the once Yerusholayim de Lita for future generations.



**Hirsh Glik's poem which became the hymn of the Vilna FPO**

*"In that tradition of Jewish hope and martyrdom, the cultural heroes of the Vilna Ghetto never abandoned the hope that the surviving letters and words of YIVO's documents would also soar and live to see the light of day."*

Allan Nadler  
Research Director  
YIVO Institute for Jewish Research  
New York City



**Diagram of the Vilna ghetto sanitary-epidemiological department describing different subunits**



## History Department activities

The museum's History Department (led by **Dalija Epsteinaitė**) this year, as they do every year, carried out diverse research activities. The main task accomplished this year was the publication of two books, the photo-album/catalogue "Vilnius Ghetto Posters" and the catalogue "The Art and Fate of the Jewish Painters of Kaunas." French writer **Odile Suganas**'s book "Atminties mozaika" ("Mosaic of Memory," translated from the French "Mosaïque ou Reconstitution d'une mémoire" to Lithuanian) has also been presented to the publisher. The Paris-based author has reconstructed the history of her family scattered across the world. The photo-album "Portraits of **Vabolnik**" ("Vabalninko portretai" in Lithuanian; the book is to be published in Lithuanian and English), compiled by Dalia Epštainiatė who also wrote an historical introduction to the book, is also ready for publication. The latter book makes use of glass photographic negative plates taken by the famous Lithuanian photographer **Juozas Daubaras** to reconstruct the history of and genocide in this Jewish town in northwest Lithuania. The negatives were one of the museum's first purchases and were the basis for the very first museum exhibition, "They Lived in Vabalninkas."

Department staff also participated in academic conferences. The conference "Jewish Cultural Heritage: History and the Present" on December 13, 2006, saw especially active presentation by department staff: Ilona Murauskaitė delivered a paper based on the prose of **Chaim Grade**, **Milda Jakulytė-Vasil** on the history of Trakai, Lithuania, and PhD **Aistė Niunkaitė-Račiūnienė** on symbols in Lithuanian Jewish art. On March 21, 2007, **Solomonas Teitelbaumas** held a show of his paintings at the old town hall in Vilnius. On May 30, 2007, he defended his dissertation on Litvak artists (including **Chaim Soutine**, **Pinchus Krémègne**, **Mikhaël Kikoïne** and others), and also worked on making an inventory of the **Josif Šapira** ex-libris collection. On May 3, 2007, Milda Jakulytė-Vasil went to the 10th annual conference of the Association of Lithuanian Museums and delivered a report about the history of the Jews of **Vekshna** (Viekšniai) based on material held in the Vilna Gaon Jewish State Museum collections. PhD **Vilma Gradinskaitė** and Milda Jakulytė-Vasil also participated in several seminars and programs in Belarus, Israel and Poland during the summer and gave lectures on and learned about Jewish history and art and Holocaust education.

Department staff also collected material for exhibitions. An exhibit called "One from Many" on the fate of the Jews of the town of **Butrimonys** should open before the end of 2007. Materials are also being collected for exhibits about **Lazar Kagan**, **Chaim Meir Fainstein**, "Warm Houses" (about Lithuanian Jewish children in children's homes during WWII) and the **Junge-Vilna** group of young artists, for which a catalogue is also being prepared.

Judith Rozina is continuing her work on Jewish education in inter-war Lithuania and is finding pupils from former Jewish educational institutions. Questionnaire information collected is being computerized and the photographs collected can be used for exhibitions. Interviews with former students are being recorded as well. This material will be used for both an exhibition and a catalogue. Judith Rozina is also continuing work on a chronicle of cultural life in post-war Lithuania.



## Righteous Among the Nations



Liūda Rasteikienė, Simon Alperavich, Chen Ivry

On September 15, 2006, ceremonies took place at the Lithuanian Presidential Palace to award those who saved Jews and others from the Nazi genocide during World War II in Lithuania. Based as usual on the proposal by the Vilna Gaon Jewish State Museum, **Lithuanian President Valdas Adamkus** awarded the **Order of the Cross of Rescuer of the Dying** to 59 people, of whom 18 were still alive.

On January 31, 2007, four **Righteous Gentiles** were honored at the Lithuanian Jewish Community building at Pylimo 4 in Vilnius. Head of the Lithuanian Jewish Community **Simon Alperovich** and **Israeli ambassador Chen Ivry** presented awards to **Juozas Katinskas**, **Kotryna**

**Katinskaitė** and **Pranas and Antanina Mažyliai**. Granddaughter **Elena Barilienė** received the award on behalf of the Katinskas family and **Liūda Rasteikienė** received the award on behalf of her parents, Antanina and Pranas. Long-time chairman of the Republican Union of Victims of the Ghetto and Concentration Camps **Tobijus Jafetas** spoke and told the story of how the entire Katinskas family worked together to save him when he was a child. Liūda Rasteikienė spoke about saving **Isak Judelevich** and his presence in the Mažylis family during the first days of the war, when Jews were being kidnapped right off the streets in Kaunas. She told about how Jewish children were saved at her father Pranas Mažylis's clinic in Kaunas and about the fate of **Liliana Levintoff** and her parents. Guests also enjoyed a showing of paintings by **Dovyd Leibzon** who was saved from the Kaunas ghetto as a child.



Tobijus Jafetas

On March 6 and 7, 2007, ceremonies to honor Righteous Gentiles took place in Telšiai and Kaunas, Lithuania. The events were organized by the Embassy of Israel, the Lithuanian Jewish Community, the Vilna Gaon Jewish State Museum, the Telšiai Drama Theater, Telšiai municipality, Kaunas municipality and the Kaunas Jewish Community.

In Telšiai, 29 Righteous Gentiles were awarded. Survivor **Jehoshua Shokhat** was in attendance and gave an address. Israeli ambassador Chen Ivry presented the awards, but only three Righteous Gentiles have survived and were able to accept the awards: **Jadvyga Laucevičiūtė Baužienė**, **Stefanija Budzinskaitė** and **Benigna Budzinskaitė**. Family members of other Righteous Gentiles accepted the awards on behalf of those who have perished. A small play was presented after the awards ceremony at the Telšiai Drama Theater.



Elena Barilienė, Simon Alperavich, Chen Ivry

On March 7 ceremonies took place at the Kaunas city hall building. The ambassador of Israel presented awards to 17 Righteous Gentiles. All except Bronė Milienė were awarded post-mortem. **Bronė Milienė** saved **Maya Vysotskaya** who had planned to attend the ceremony but unexpectedly passed away just days before, on March 4. Maya Vysotskaya survived the **Children's Action in the Kaunas ghetto** on March 27, 1944 (3 Nissan 5704). Milienė also received the award of Righteous Gentile on

behalf of her mother, **Sofija Aleknavičienė**, who, besides harboring Bronė, saved Maya Vysotskaya's mother **Sheina Berelovich** who, at the last moment as she was being driven along with other ghetto inmates to the railroad station, managed to flee from the column.



## The Tolerance Center

Located in a former Jewish theater, our Tolerance Center, or TC, is the venue for many events associated with Jewish life and history. It is visited by children and adults and provides guided tours and host conferences among other things. A showing of **Helene Czapski-Holzman's** paintings opened on April 17 at the museum's Tolerance Center. Helene Czapski-Holzman, wife of Jewish artist **Max Holzman**, survived the Holocaust and managed to save others. She documented her experiences in Kaunas after the war, although her manuscript was only just published in 2000 in Germany, "Dies Kind soll leben. Die Aufzeichnungen der Helene Holzman 1941-1944." The book has been translated into a number of languages since then, and was published in Lithuanian in 2003,

On August 22 and 23, 2006, the Tolerance Center hosted events commemorating the **Lithuanian Jewish Genocide Remembrance Day** and an international conference on the Holocaust. These were organized by the Vilna Gaon Jewish State Museum, the Lithuanian Jewish Community, the Commission for Investigating Crimes of the Soviet and Nazi Occupational Regimes, the Žvėrynas Gymnasium and state institutions.

The seminar "Presenting Jewish Culture to Students" took place on December 1, 2006.

The documentary film "Studies in Hope" premiered at the Tolerance Center on April 31, 2007. The film told the story of the life of Helena Chapski-Holzman, a rescuer of Jews. The film was made by the Vilna Gaon Jewish State Museum and the Trans-Atlantic Integration Support Group.

**Lara Lempertienė** also delivered lectures on Jewish religious articles, art and holidays.

### Exhibitions at the Tolerance Center

"**Jewish Life in Ottoman Turkish Society**" from December 19, 2006, to January 19, 2007, organized by the Turkish Embassy in Vilnius and the Tolerance Center of the Vilna Gaon Jewish State Museum.

"**People and Statues in Photographs**" from February 12 to April 16, 2007, by **A. Jacovskytė** and **K. Jaroševaitė**.

"**Studies in Hope**," an exhibition of paintings by artist Helene Czapski-Holzman, from April 17 to May 17, 2007.

"**The World of Litvak Artists: The Chvoles Dynasty**," photographs by **Ida Chvoles** (France) and paintings by **Rivka Chvoles-Lichtenfeld** (Israel), from June 6 to August 31, 2007.

The **Chvoles** (Khvoles) family has deep **Litvak roots**. **Rafael Khvoles** was born in 1918 in Vilna. He studied in the private studios of **M. Kuliesa** and **A. Sturman** and began to exhibit his work in 1933, the same year Hitler became Chancellor of Germany. After World War II when he left Vilnius, he lived in Warsaw and Paris. He is known for his depictions of the Jewish Quarter in Old Vilna. He is also known for painting moving portraits of Vilna Ghetto survivors. Many of his paintings are found in Lithuania. "**Yard in Vilnius Old Town**" is on display at the Vilna Gaon Jewish Museum. The artist lived in Paris. Rafael's sister **Rivka Chvoles**, born in Vilna in 1928, studied at the Decoration and Composition Department of the Vilnius Polytechnic. She was part of the Lithuanian chess team and **was known to the world of chess as Maria Lichtenfeld**. She took place in different chess competitions, in the USSR and later in Israel, where she won the **gold medal** and other prizes. In Israel, she became interested in art, completed art school and began to draw. In 1980, Rivka showed her works in Paris together with those of Marc Chagall, Mane-Katz and other famous artists at the exhibition Yiddish Culture. She exhibited all over the world. Today, Rivka lives in Ashdod, Israel, where she teaches chess and art in Ashdod, Holon and Bat Yam. Another artist in the Chvoles family is **Rafael's granddaughter Ida**. Ida was born in Paris in 1973 and studied at the Faculty of History at Jussieu. In 1982, she began to use photography to capture faces and forgotten corners of Paris. Over her travels she had the opportunity to bring home moods, intonations and views which impart a visual and emotional distinctiveness to places both near and far.



## Yiddish Course



From July 29th to August 24th, 2007, the **10th Summer Program in Yiddish** of the **Yiddish Institute at Vilnius University** hosted 70 participants from all over the world and of different ages who wanted

to either improve their Yiddish language skills, or start from scratch. Since its inception, it has met with considerable success, being unique in part because of its venue – Vilnius, a key European center of Ashkenazi Jewish creativity for hundreds of years.



Since its beginnings, the Yiddish Summer Program has worked closely with the Vilna Gaon Jewish State Museum, and this year was no exception. Museum director **Markas Zingeris** delivered a lecture to students, associate director **Rachel Kostanian**, **Dr. Rachel Margolis** and **Fania**



**Brancovska** led **guided tours** through the Green House, Jewish Vilne, the mass execution site of Ponar (Paneriai) and the **Vilna ghetto** in **Yiddish** and **English**. Although the tours of the Holocaust Exhibition were optional this year, visitors kept coming back in the days following to get a better look at the gruesome history of the Holocaust in Lithuania.



There were excursions to the Ninth Fort in Kaunas and Ponar near Vilnius, the two most notorious sites for the mass-murder of Jews in Lithuania, but program participants also found time to do some site-seeing. Concerts by **Marija Krupoves-Berg** and others were held at the Tolerance Center and at the Lithuanian Jewish Community building at Pylimo 4 in Vilnius, and the students staged a concert at the Yiddish Institute at Vilnius University with some help by the great Yiddish singers **Galpern** and **Chorny**, who conducted music workshops and performed concerts as well. Information about the Yiddish Summer Program is available from the Yiddish Institute, [www.judaicvilnius.com](http://www.judaicvilnius.com)

Yiddish course students had **mixed reactions** visiting sites of the mass murder of hundreds of thousands of Jews such as the **Ninth Fort** and taking in the sights of the old town of **Kaunas**, Lithuania



# Tasks and Accomplishments

## Articles published

Dalija Eipšteinaitė, *Veržimasis į tiesą* // Lietuvos Jeruzalė Nr. 5-6 ["The Urge toward the Truth"]

Dalija Eipšteinaitė, *Kelias į atsakymą* // Lietuvos krantai, 2006 Nr. 3, 63-64 p. ["The Road to an Answer"]

## Publications

Irina Nikitina, *Work and Fate of Jewish Painters of Kaunas/Kauno žydų dailininkų kūryba ir likimas*. Vilnius, printed by Žara, 2007, 40 p. Lithuanian and English.

Joseph Levinsonas, *The Shoah (Holocaust) in Lithuania*. Vilnius, printed by Vaga, 2006, 527 p. Translation from Lithuanian to English.

Rachel Kostanian, *Dvasinė rezistencija Vilniaus gete*. Translation from English. Vilnius, printed by Vaga, 2006, 143 p. [Spiritual Resistance in the Vilnius Ghetto] Translated from English to Lithuanian by Zinaida Mažeikaitė.

Museum special publication *Newsletter*, November 15, 2006, dedicated to the 10th anniversary of service by volunteers from Austria

*Vilna Ghetto Posters/Vilniaus geto afišos*. Vilnius, printed by Baltos Lankos, 2007, 372 p. Lithuanian and English.

*Žydų tema Lietuvos spaudoje 1992-1993 (Bibliografijos rodyklė)*. [The Theme of Jews in the Lithuanian Press, 1992-1993 (Bibliographical index).] Compiled by Irina Guzenberg and Liudmila Šaraškina, printed by Standartų spautuvė, 2006, 255 p. Lithuanian, Russian and English.

## Reports

Dalija Eipšteinaitė spoke on national Lithuanian Radio program *Santara* about the work of Austrian volunteers at the museum and the theme "Shabad is more than just the prototype of Dr. Aiskauda" on the program *Rusų gatvė* [Russian Street]

Irina Guzenberg delivered the lecture "Jewish Buildings in Vilnius" at the Lithuanian Jewish Community.

Rachel Kostanian delivered 3 reports in South Africa on the history and culture of Lithuanian Jews, the Holocaust and the work of the museum.

Rachel Kostanian delivered a lecture and guided tour of Jewish Vilnius to politicians and administrators from Germany.

## Conferences

Aistė Niunkaitė-Račiūnienė delivered a report called "Symbolic reflections in art by Lithuanian Jews: Sources and Origins" at the first annual meeting of the conference "Jewish Cultural Heritage: History and Present" organized jointly by the museum and the Center for the Study of the Culture of the Jews of Lithuania under the Lithuanian Institute of Culture, Philosophy and Art. Ilona Murauskaitė delivered the report „The World-view of Lithuanian Jews in the prose of Chaïm Grade (Based on Analysis of the novellas "Neila" and "The White Scarf")" there as well. Milda Jakulytė-Vasil delivered the report "The Life of the Jewish Community of Trakai: A Case Study" and Roza Bieliauskienė delivered the report "The Jewish Museum as Repository and Celebrator of Ethnic Material Culture" at the same conference. Vilma Gradinskaitė delivered the report "New Artistic Expressions of the First Half of the Twentieth Century: Synthesis of Ethnic and Modern Jewish Art."



Milda Jakulytė-Vasil delivered the report "A Shtetl and its Inhabitants: The History of the Jews of Viekišniai (Vekshna) in the Collections of The Vilna Gaon Jewish State Museum" at the 10th annual conference of the Association of Lithuanian Museums called "Urban Heritage in Museum Collections." Vilma Gradinskaitė and Roza Bieliauskienė delivered the report "The Lost Jerusalem of Lithuania: the Raphael Chvoles Collection at the Vilna Jewish Museum" there as well.

Vilma Gradinskaitė delivered the report "'There's no such thing as Jewish Art': Preconditions for the Formation of a Negative Attitude" at the conference "Twentieth Century Metamorphoses of the Philosophy of Art and Aesthetics" organized by the Lithuanian Institute of Culture, Philosophy and Art. She delivered the report "Political Aspects in the Art of Eastern European Jewish Artists" at the 14th annual international Judaica conference organized by the Sefer Center. She delivered the report "The Interaction of Eastern and Western Cultures in the Art of Jews of Lita: Images of the Shtetl" at the 5th annual conference "East-West: Interaction of Civilizations" organized jointly by the Lithuanian Institute of Culture, Philosophy and Art's Comparative Cultural Studies Department and The Orientalism Center at Vilnius University. She also delivered the report "Expressionism of Parisian Jews: the Vilnius School of Drawing-École de Paris" at the academic conference "The Avant-garde and Culture: Art, Design and Environment"

### Seminars

Aistė Niunkaitė-Račiūnienė attended a seminar organized by **Sefer** Center in Zhitomir, Ukraine June 28-July 5, 2007.

Aistė Niunkaitė-Račiūnienė, Mirijam Abilovičienė and Mira Traubienė participated in the training seminar "Managing Museum Collections" organized by the Learning Center for Lithuanian Cultural Workers on February 19 and 20, 2007.

Aistė Niunkaitė-Račiūnienė and Milda Jakulytė-Vasil attended a seminar in Belarus organized by Sefer Center July 31-August 7, 2007.

Milda Jakulytė-Vasil attended the seminar "Teaching the Shoah and Anti-Semitism" organized by **Yad Vashem**, July 1-19, 2007.

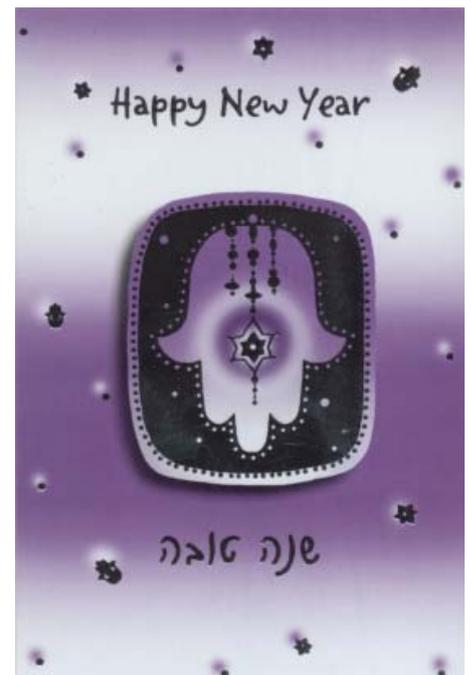
Vilma Gradinskaitė attended a Sefer Center seminar in Poland August 15-22, 2007.

### Films

"**Studies in Hope**," the story of the life of **Helena Chapski-Holzman**, a rescuer of Jews, made by the Vilna Gaon Jewish State Museum and the **Trans-Atlantic Integration Support Group**

"**Children from the Sky**," Vilna Gaon Jewish State Museum [Rachel Kostanian], studio Ju

The **Kuklianski** project, footage about survivors from **Veisiejai**, Lithuania by family members based in Israel, support from Trans-Atlantic Integration Support group, still seeking financial sponsorship for completion.



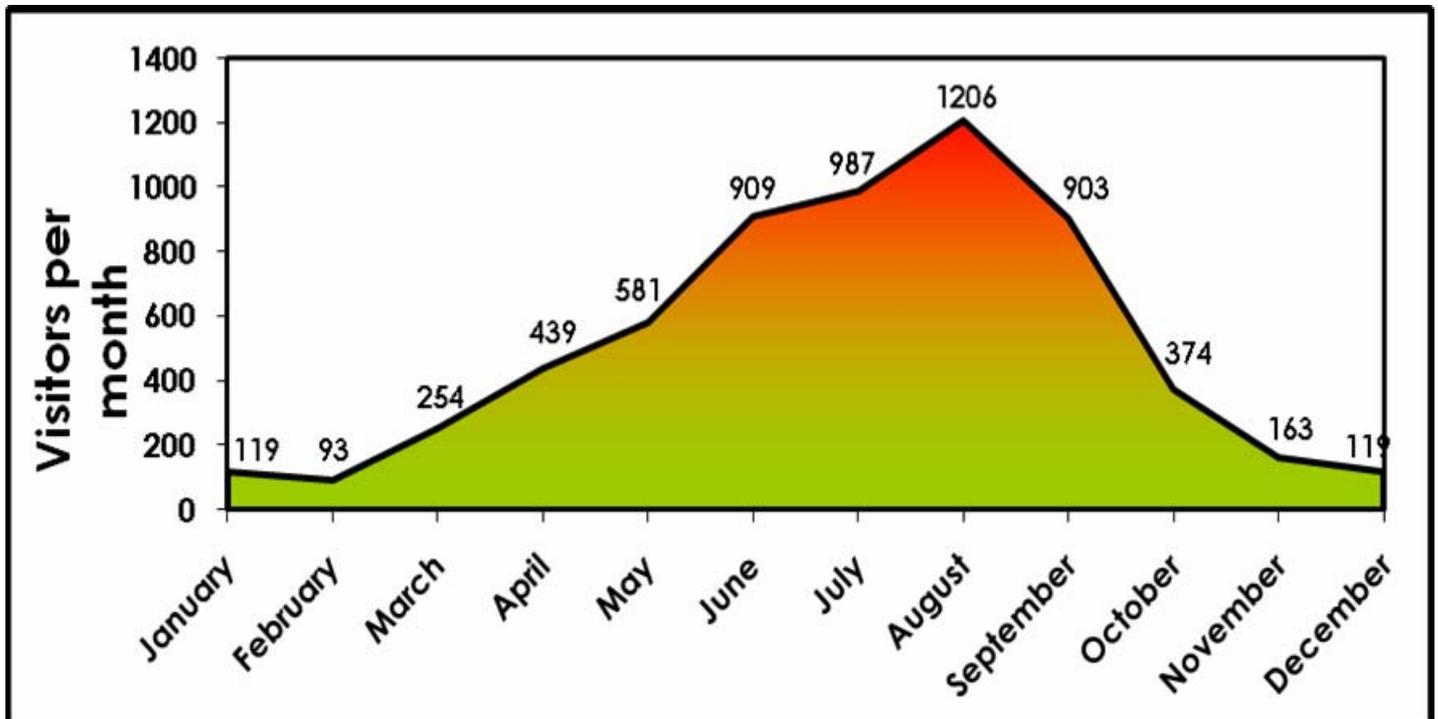
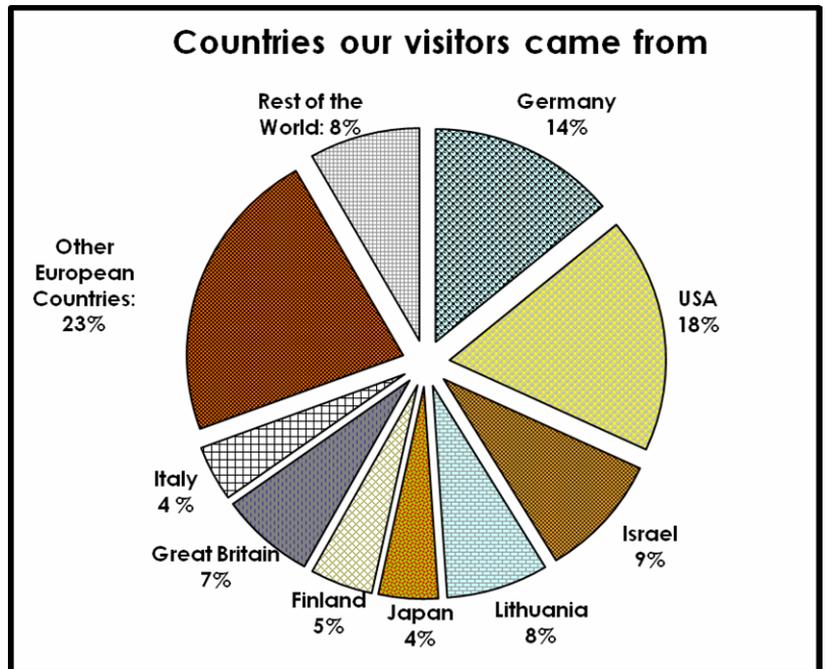


## Statistics

In this year's newsletter we present statistics on our visitors again. These are based on entries made by our staff at the Holocaust exhibition and at the branch of the museum at Pylimo 4.

Between September of 2006 and August of 2007, more than 7,052 people from more than 45 different countries visited the main branches of the museum in Vilnius, a significant increase over last year. The Green House, or Holocaust Exhibition, welcomed 4,447 people according to the log book. The branch at Pylimo 4 saw 1,595 visitors according to statistics kept there. The small museum at the mass killing site of Ponar (Paneriai) south of Vilnius reported 4,834 visitors over the course of the year. We couldn't

include figures from Ponar, Pylimo 4 or the Tolerance Center in our chart of countries of origin for visitors, so this chart only documents visitors to the Holocaust Exhibition at Pamėnkalnio 12 in Vilnius. The Visitors per Month graph below is based on initial figures from Pylimo 4 and the Holocaust Exhibition.



Looking at the distribution of visitors by home country, we found that **56% come from just five countries**: the United States, Germany, the United Kingdom, Israel and Lithuania. Nevertheless, there was a large **increase** of visitors **from Japan and Finland** mainly, but **also** from **Italy** and other countries.



## VISITORS & FRIENDS

### Comments by our visitors

Every year hundreds of visitors from all over the world come to visit our museum. Among them are **survivors of the Holocaust** as well as **Litvaks**, tourists, students and well-known personalities with political, scientific and cultural backgrounds. Here we include a few entries from our guest book from 2006-2007:

I have to say that I have been to many Holocaust museums in the world and I have learnt Holocaust history in Israel. However, I have never seen a more impressive, important and moving museum than the Jewish Museum in Vilna. Thank you. Keep up your arraying work.

*Steve Zarobnick, Jerusalem, Israel, August 15, 2007*

"An extremely moving and insightful exhibition ... Thank you for saving the stories of the survivors!"

*Anna Khmehitski, Cambridge UK, July 16, 2007*

"This is an excellent exhibition to ignite ones outrage at what can and has happened. The truth is unbelievable. I was asked if I thought it was appropriate to show the photos of the naked women in this exhibition...it is...their shame and humiliation should never happened again, therefore there is a need to actually show it. Think about the animals who actually took the photos – Nemach Shemam."

*Geoff Levy, Sydney, Australia, June 13, 2007*

"The tragedy of genocide – as well as the courage of honourable resistance to evil – is still with us. Let us remember the past and change the present so all – Jew and Gentile, Christian and Moslem, black and white and all shades between – can share a better future."

*Gweneth Minaker, Colin Highnett, Woodstock, Canada, May 29, 2007*

"Please contribute to show all of the pictures and documents. Although they are difficult to see, it is incredibly important to portray what actually happened. Thank you for the incredible experience."

*Josh, Sandra, Susie, Joe, Rose Lee, San Francisco, USA*



**Roman and Lea Mornel outside the now-burned-down home where he was born in a closet**

"A noble Polish family, whose name I'm not sure of, sheltered my mother in their place. It was in this family that I was born. My mother was hidden in a ditch which was cut under a cupboard and at night she was let into the room. This lasted about two and a half years until Vilnius was liberated from the Nazis. I lived in the family of these wonderful people, had been given Aryan papers and I was named Boguslaw Zagrebski. I was their 'son.' I knew the fighters in the partisan units acting in Vilnius area, Like Shmuel Kaplinski, his wife Chiena Kaplinski and others. I knew them from childhood because my mother was their friend still before the occupation. That's why everything what is shown and told in the Holocaust Museum is very close to me and known from my mother's stories. I would like very much that my children and grandchildren would be able to see and understand and not forget what was going on in this city during the war and occupation." *Roman Mornel, Israel, September 3, 2007*

"Very powerful exhibits. The first room has been translated into English quite well but much remains to be done to translate exhibits in the other rooms. The

last room needs no translation and no words. Very powerful! If you can print copies of "Do Not Forget" [a poem near the entrance in four languages] for visitors to take with them, perhaps printed on the back of a ticket stub, that would serve its purpose and ours as Jews, very well." *Anonymous, August 24, 2007*



Comments by our visitors, continued:

“Very well composed exhibition that highlights the horrible part of history. Some of this information are not available outside of Lithuania, and it is great to witness fist-hand very well preserved artefacts of this morbid time.”

*Svajūnas, August 13, 2007*

“We are New Yorkers. We have travelled extensively. The emotional response we gave to your exhibit was more than pain tempered with pride—proud to be children of people who escaped; proud to be chosen by history to survive and succeed.” *Joan Haber and Jes Mitchell, sisters née Fox, August 15, 2007*

## First museum director and founder, MP Emanuel Zingeris



**Emanuel Zingeris with Josifas Šapiro, at a ceremony commemorating Jewish volunteers who fought for Lithuanian independence (1918-1920). Josifas Šapiro is second from left, wearing authentic uniform. Emanuel Zingeris is in center**

He dreamed of continuity: how to take the mostly ruined remains of Jewish heritage from the post-war Jewish Museum of the poets (and partisans) **Avrom Sutskever** and **Shmerl Kaczerginski**, he dreamt about Kafka and Shakespeare in Yiddish here, about all the **Litvak Judaica** to be accumulated in the Vilnius Jewish Museum. He has a heart full of love for Jewish culture and history.

We sincerely congratulate him on his **50<sup>th</sup> birthday** and wish him the greatest success in life.



**Emanuel Zingeris with museum staff**

– The staff of the Vilna Gaon Jewish State Museum





## Friends & Supporters

We'd like to thank all our dear friends who have supported us so generously. Thanks to you we are able to continue our work.

In 2006-2007 (5767) the museum received many warm letters and gifts from supporters around the world. The following people and organizations donated books, compact discs, DVDs, magazines, academic journals, photographs and other materials, but the list is only a partial one so apologies to anyone left out, your support is much appreciated even if your name didn't make it onto this list.

Virgilijus Kubilius, IL; Julian Rafes, USA; Dorothy Leivers, UK; Yad Vashem, IL; Renaissance Publishing Ltd., UK; Michael K. Freed, UK; "Wahnsee-Konferenz", DE; Gerald Raichman, AU; Dorothea Rozenberg, USA; Dr. Joshual Lavy, RSA; Ineke Calis, NL; Library of Congress, USA; Hannelore Skrobliès, DE; Aldona Genvilienė, LT; Jewish Community Center, RU; Holocaust Museum, Capetown, RSA; Dos Jidisze Wort, PL; Zydowski intytut historyczny, PL; Valentine Mitchell, UK; Helaine Sboag, USA; Levit, AU; Vidmantas Markevičius, LT; Holocaust Center, RU; Dr. Eleonora Bergman, PL; Oxford University Press, USA; P. Musel, IL; Jewish Museum, USA; Holocaust Education Center, JP; Friary Press, UK; Violeta Stankevič, LT; University of Haifa, IL; US Holocaust Memorial Museum; Houston Holocaust Museum, USA; Landsmen Press, USA; Renee Gordon, CA; Boris Maftsir, IL; Gedenkstaetten Rundbrief, DE; Jewish Museum of Greece, GR; Elvyra Užkurėlytė-Baltinienė, LT; Society for the Research of the History of the Zionist Youth Movement in Hungary, HU; Leavey Library, USA; Jewish Museum of Australia, Victoria; Panevėžys Jewish Community, Panevėžys; Colin Datnow Chairman, RSA; Schweizer Radio DRS 1, CH; Michael Kieber, Röthis, AT; Vladimir B. Pliss, RU; European Monitoring Centre on Racism and Xenophobia, AT; Jidisches Museum Wien, AT; Jewish Holocaust Centre, AU; Facing History and Ourselves Headquarters, USA; Allgemeiner Journal, USA; Organizaçao feminina WIZO, BR; Professor Howard Erdman, USA; Jack (Idel) Kagan, UK; Simonas Dovidavičius, LT; J. Voshaa, DE; Laura Esther Wolfson, USA; Katarzyna Krynica, PL; professor B. Hershaw, Yale University, USA; Dan Bahet, IL; Yad Vashem, IL; YIVO, USA; Irena Rosenberg and many others.

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