

Translation of:

delfi.lt at: <http://www.delfi.lt/archive/article.php?id=23132325>

NOTE: Controversial sentences are highlighted in RED in this translation for rapid reference (final page, not emphasized in the original).

JEWISH PROPERTY AND A “BURNED-DOWN LAND”

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I want to immediately ask all antisemites and shouters to choose another article – this one is not for you. The Lithuanian government has finally decided to solve the issue of compensation for the communal property of the Jews. It is a big step forward, because the [Social Democratic] government of Gediminas Kirkilas / Algirdas Brazauskas was messing about for almost ten years, always making promises and telling lies.

It told lies not just to some abstract Jews, but to various organizations, diplomats and politicians, thereby spreading the message that those in the

Lithuanian Government are liars. They told lies because they did not understand why they should provide compensation and were afraid to take on a sense of political responsibility. Alas, earlier governments did not understand that such compensation for property lost was not a financial issue, but one of justice for damages. However difficult it might be, with this step we acknowledge the Jewish catastrophe in Lithuania, the contribution of the Lithuanian nation to it and we are trying to compensate for the lost property.

This step is necessary not for the Jews, but for Lithuania, because we ourselves have to accept history and bravely look the past into the eye. On the other hand, the provision of financial recreate anew Lithuanian-Jewish relations on condition that the money will be used for this purpose and spent in Lithuania. This money can finance educational programs, the development of relations between Lithuania and Israel, and youth and business cooperation. Compensation is therefore not a financial but rather a political and moral issue.

Nobody has explained to A. Baker that it was not appropriate to overstep bounds, and that letters of US Congressmen did not impress us very much, because it is easy in Lithuania to gather some signatures of members of the Seimas under a letter saying that the USA is an empire of evil that is ruled by homosexuals. However it seems that lately people who present themselves as Jews have forgotten why such Restitution is being implemented and they decided that money is the most important thing, and that they would get this money at any cost. For example, Andrew Baker, the lobbyist from the USA, well-known in Lithuania, said two weeks ago that 113 million litas was too little money for the lost property; supposedly, it should amount to 300 million litas – because this was the value last year of the buildings on the list. Such talk was strengthened by typical phrases that Lithuania is the last country in Europe to solve this issue, and the letter from the US Congressmen. This is obvious propaganda – Lithuania is really not the last country in Europe, which has yet to solve this issue of property.

One can understand this lobbyist – he has a goal to bleed as much money as possible and he does not care about the consequences. Even five years ago we were threatened that Lithuania would not be accepted into NATO if it behaved badly toward the Jews. Nobody has explained to A. Baker that he should not step over the line with his own actions, and that letters from US Congressmen do not impress us very much, because it is easy in Lithuania to gather some signatures of the members of the Seimas under the letter, saying that the USA is an empire of evil, which is ruled by homosexuals.

However, the position of the Jews surprises one. At first they made a pause and after considering it for a couple of weeks, they started repeating the words of A. Baker. Watching the news on television one finds out that in Lithuania pensions and salaries of employees are being reduced, the state tries to save itself from

financial collapse, and in the meantime the Jews are demanding not 130 million litas, but 300 million litas. They demand a direct compensation for the property, without explaining where and how they will use the money and forgetting that this is not an agreement about a deed of property conveyance or sale, but compensation. And in the case of compensation people agree on the principle. The state once compensated for deposits by paying one litas for one Soviet rouble.

However, if we calculated the level of inflation and interest rates, the state would have to pay about 100 litas for one rouble.... Or another example – my grandparents received compensation worth 2000 roubles for twelve years of cutting down trees in Siberia. And would you agree to work for this amount for so many years?

That is why I would like to ask the Lithuanian Jews, whether they plan, just like Mr Baker, to kick the asses of Lithuanian politicians and leave with big bags of money across the Atlantic Ocean, or do they nevertheless think that Lithuania is their homeland and plan to live here?

The first option is rather attractive. There are about 3000 Jews in Lithuania, and one must keep in mind that only some 1000 are really Lithuanian Jews (heirs and successors to the former Jewish communities), rather than aliens from the East. An elementary calculus says that every one of them could get about 130,000 Litass.

If, however, the answer is the second option, and the Lithuanian Jews really understand this issue of compensation as a moral one, and intend to use the money for public purposes and to support Holocaust survivors in Lithuania, then it should be seen to, that the history of compensation for the real estate would not leave a burned down land after it, where individual bodies of friends of the Jews would lie about.

It is also necessary not to forget that the law will be passed in the Seimas and it is naive to maintain the illusion that uncles from America together with the Ambassador will manage to “salvage” the law. Therefore, the law and its goals have to be noble and explained to people. Until now a mistake has been made. Only the money is discussed and the lobbyists from the USA are allowed to rage. The sum of 113 million Litass is big and the Lithuanian Jewish Community must give assurances that the money will be used decently in Lithuania and that it would allow for establishing new relations between the Lithuanians and the Jews, and would not destroy what is left.