

## **JEWES ARE NOT JUST CLEVER PEOPLE**

*by Algirdas Berkevičius*

The first issue about which the public was informed after our March 11 Independence Day, when the president of the Republic of Lithuania returned from abroad, was the issue of the fate of the Jewish cemetery in Šnipiškės, Vilnius. Heated arguments are going on even on the international level. They say even that the image of Lithuania could be harmed, due to an inappropriate solution of the problem. And what is the situation like in reality? What is the essence? Let's consider the matter.

Let's say that in Vilnius or in other Lithuanian town our businessmen choose a perspective location for the development of their business. However, there is an old Jewish cemetery located in that place. Having consulted with each other, they decide to address the local Jewish community, a rabbi, or board of rabbis, asking the Jews to sell this cemetery to them for a good price. What do you think the Jews would answer in such a case? Yes, you think right. No Jewish community and no rabbi would agree even to discuss such a question. Moreover, they would get very insulted, because for a Jew, as well as for many other honest people, the place with their ancestors' graves and their ancestors' bones is sacred. Therefore, having in mind the aforementioned circumstances, a conclusion can be drawn that even no such talk about selling the Jewish cemetery is possible.

It was already announced in our press that the former cemetery in Šnipiškės had been sold to the Russian Tsar's local authority in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Do you think that in those days Jews valued their ancestors' place of eternal rest differently? I do not doubt that in those days Jews had exactly the same attitude towards this question as today. In those days Jews wouldn't have sold the cemetery for any price either. Therefore, we can arrive at a conclusion that in those days they sold not the Jewish cemetery with all the

graves, but a place that was intended for the cemetery and where not a single Jew had been buried yet.

Because discussions are going on, archeological earthworks are going to be (or are already) carried out in order to find out the truth. While digging the earth, I am certain, they will unearth human remains that were once buried in that place. We can only guess about the amount of human remains to be found. Whatever will happen, do not get surprised at the findings. And here is why. About twenty years ago the “Professorial Study Hall” at Vilnius University was damaged in a fire. During reconstruction works, under the attic floor amid the beams, a woman’s skeleton was discovered.

While redecorating the old town of Vilnius, in a two-storied building on Literatu Street, remains of six people laid to rest together were discovered under the floor on the first floor. During the digging on Gedimino Avenue, human remains were also found in a pit under the pavement. As far as I can remember, A. Brazauskas admired the well-preserved, healthy teeth of the buried person.

I do not want to claim that there are human remains in all the houses of Vilnius. However, in Šnipiškės, in the disputed location, human remains can be found. Once it was a rather remote place; therefore, a possibility cannot be rejected that people could have been buried there. That is why we should not make hasty conclusions, if burials, maybe German or French, will be unearthed. Such facts should be announced only after detailed investigations of the findings, taking into consideration the burial traditions of those days.

Some readers might ask such a question: “If the problem is so little, why is there so much noise? Why do they make noise even in foreign countries?” I would answer this question in such a manner. Jews are good businessmen. They manage to make money out of nothing. The aforementioned supposed cemetery and the noise made at the international level is also a kind of business. There are people, who gain bigger or smaller profit from such noise. The cemetery in Šnipiškės is a good example of exactly such business.

After World War II, in Israel, there were special services formed to persecute Nazis and they were functioning in a few countries. After these Nazis died out, agents of those services were left without work. Observing what is going on, I get an impression

that these agents got new tasks, that is to search for previous Jewish property. This goal is pursued with determination and with any means to the end.

Let me give an example. During the war, quite a lot of diverse buildings were destroyed in the old town of Vilnius. Many of them were rebuilt again, many remains were removed and squares were erected in their place. Strange as it may seem, even the houses that were rebuilt from foundations are claimed. One of these buildings is at the address Žydu Street 4.

This building was rebuilt from the foundations and people settled there in 1969. It is evaluated at 12 million litas. As it happens, it is also one of the “Jewish properties.” It is only one house, but there are more similar claims.

When a person is attacked by a robber or a criminal, the criminal is prosecuted and not his victim. In the aforementioned case of the restitution of property, the victim — Lithuania — is prosecuted, but not Germany, or Russia (the assignee of rights and obligations of the Soviet Union).

For some reason nobody remembers that cities were destroyed and people were murdered in Lithuania by the invaders. Therefore, damages should be claimed and compensations required only from the same countries, but not from Lithuania. However, political businessmen think otherwise. Today already neither Germany, nor Russia can be assaulted, but Lithuania can be, because its name will be harmed if it resists.