

- Well, good evening everyone, and welcome. And I particularly want to welcome Dr. Efraim Zuroff, who is of course in Jerusalem. And our thoughts are with everyone over there. Now, he has an extraordinary job. He's the chief Nazi hunter of the Simon Wiesenthal Centre. Some of you will remember that he was interviewed by Phil Rubenstein. He runs the Israel office and he has been responsible for many prosecutions. He's written four books that have been translated into 15 languages. And of course, last time, he wrote specifically his book about Lithuania. Now today, he's going to talk about collaboration in Lithuania, but he's going to bring it up to date. He's actually going to give us an in-depth about what's going on there. And many of the things that he's going to talk about are very common to what is happening in Eastern Europe. So, Efraim, thank you. And I'm so glad that, despite everything you are in Jerusalem. That's the Israeli spirit, isn't it? And I'd like to thank you so much for joining us tonight. So, thank you.

- Okay, thank you, Trudy. And thank you for the opportunity to speak to the wonderful audience of Lockdown U about a subject, which in my mind is quite important. It was actually, I think, very surprising, but we're seeing that it poses a very serious threat to the historical narrative of the Shoah. I'm talking about something that we refer to as Holocaust distortion, which is not the same as Holocaust denial. In other words, denial... Those people who say either that the Shoah didn't happen at all, or that the figures are grossly exaggerated, were talking about a phenomenon, which is very prevalent throughout all of post-communist Eastern Europe. And in which they don't deny that the Shoah took place in their backyard in a certain sense. But what they're trying to do is change the narrative, change the narrative of what happened, try and deflect blame from their own Nazi war collaborators, trying to focus attention on their suffering under the communists, and to try and claim that communism is also genocide. And of course, it lasted far longer than the Nazi occupation.

And also to give them a licence to create national heroes. And their heroes are the people who fought against the Soviets after World War II. But unfortunately, among them were people who murdered Jews during the Shoah, and very actively collaborated with the Nazis, which in theory, should disqualify them from being national heroes. And they are also trying to convince Europe, initially Europe, but ultimately the world, that there should be a joint Memorial day for all the victims of totalitarian regimes, in other words, communism and Nazism. And of course, that would make International Holocaust Remembrance Day, which was mandated in 2005 by the United Nations, has proven quite successful. It would make it totally superfluous.

So that is the issue. And one of the key countries, one of the countries that I sometimes said is the locomotive that is pulling this train throughout the region is Lithuania. And in order to understand why this is happening and how this is happening, we have to deal with the issue of collaboration with the Nazis. In every country occupied by Nazi Germany or allied with Nazi Germany. The Nazis tried to enlist local helpers. And there were three reasons for that. One ideological reason and two practical reasons. The ideological reason was that the Nazis wanted to show that the local populations fully support that the measures that they are going to take,

they're about to take against what they call the enemies of the riot, primarily Jews of course, but not only Jews, homosexuals, gypsies, Jehovah's witnesses, handicapped, mentally ill, chronically ill. And the practical reasons were following.

First of all, the Nazis controlled an area, which was almost the entire European land mass, with the exception of Great Britain and the Soviet Union. In other words, with the exceptions of the neutrals, the six neutrals, which were Turkey, Switzerland, Sweden, Ireland, Spain, and Portugal. The Nazis controlled the entire continent from the beaches of Normandy, all the way to the gates of Moscow, and Leningrad in the east, from Narvik and Trondheim in Northern Norway, all the way to the Greek islands. And obviously they were suffering from a shortage of manpower. So, any local person who could be enlisted to help them freeze a German or Austrian to go where they're needed more urgently, and of course, helps the Nazis control this entire area.

But the other point was simply a point regarding, but a very important point regarding logistics. They're about to unleash an unprecedented mass murder operation. They come to a country at Lithuania. They don't know the language, they don't know the topography, they don't know the geography. They're trying to kill almost a quarter of a million Jews in 220 communities spread out all over Lithuania. And they're doing it by shooting. At least initially, this was the plan.

And that's how the final solution was initially implemented. It wasn't implemented by gas chambers, that came later. And actually that was instituted by Hitler, because he felt that the shootings that were carried out by the Einsatzgruppen, and the special mobile killing units, and the Nazi collaborators were having a very difficult influence or a painful influence on the people who were carrying out the shooting. And they were looking for a way in which to carry out the murders in a more sort of impersonal way. So, in other words, they're coming to Lithuania, they have to carry... In other words, they're about to launch this mission. And they need help. They need help, they need help in arranging it, and carrying it out.

The Einsatzgruppen and special mobile killing units murdered about a million and a half, primarily Jews in '41, '42, and early '43. But they were stretched from all the way from Tallinn, Estonia in the north to Odesa, Ukraine in the south of Black Sea. That's the front of 1,500 kilometres. And they numbered, initially Hillberg thought it was 3,000 people, apparently it's a little bit more than that, because there was a certain rotation system. So let's say 4,000 to 5,000 people. How could 4,000 to 5,000 people who had to murder every single victim individually murder so many people in such a short time? And the answer is they had plenty of help. And Lithuania is a classic example of that help.

Now when the Soviets liberated Lithuania and the other countries of Eastern Europe, these countries did not make a transition from a Nazi occupation to Western liberal democracy. They simply switched from a Nazi occupation to a Soviet occupation. And that meant that, in essence, they were under the influence of the Soviets. And it was the Soviets who decided what would be written in the history books, what monuments would be made, what captions would be under

monuments, and how the story of the war would be told. So, for example, believe it or not, the Soviets never used the word until the '80s, the late '70s, early '80s, the word "Holocaust" was never used even once.

The Soviets never acknowledged the unique faith of the Jews during the Holocaust, nor did they want to identify those guilty of helping the Germans. So, let me give you an example. I think many of you know the example, which is the story of Babi Yar. Babi Yar is a ravine then on the outskirts of Kyiv. And on September 29th, 30th, 1941, 33,771 primarily Jews were murdered by the Nazis by Einsatzgruppen C and the Ukrainian security police. Now, for many years, there was absolutely no attempt to commemorate this murder. There was no monument, certainly no museum, and then some "genius" in the Kyiv municipality came up with an idea, with a proposal to build a football stadium on Babi Yar. But thank God there were people like the Russian non-Jewish poet, Vladimir Danchenko, who published his famous poem, "Babi Yar," which was really a cry on behalf of the victims. And then a little monument was put on the site. They abandoned the idea of the football stadium, and the caption on the monument was, "To the victims of fascism."

Now, that's a very interesting caption. What does it do? It hides the identity of the victims and it hides the identity of the perpetrators. Now, why was this the case? And by the way, if you had gone to Rumbula outside Riga, where 25,000 to 30,000 Jews were murdered on November 30th and December 8th, 1941, or to Ponary or Paneriai, outside Vilna, where 70,000 Jews were murdered, or to Malitruštiniz outside Minsk with tens of thousands of Jews, maybe as many as 100,000 were murdered. Every single monument had the same inscription, "To the victims of fascism."

So, first of all, the Soviets did not want to acknowledge, as I told you, the fate of the Jews, the fact that they were singled out for mass murder, for annihilation, for genocide, the final solution, lest it's strengthened Jewish identity in the Soviet Union. I'm sure many of you know that Soviets severely repressed Jewish life, did not permit Jewish schools, did not permit communal life. They only usually had one synagogue in each large city. They campaigned against going to the synagogue. They campaigned against circumcision, they campaigned against all the rituals, the Jewish rituals and the like. And they didn't want to do anything that would strengthen the Jews. As far as they were concerned, they wanted the Jews to assimilate and become Soviet people.

Now, as far as the issue of the collaborators, so that was also difficult for the communists, because what was it that ostensibly tied all the different nationalities of the Soviet Union together? In other words, what ties together a Latvian, an Estonian, Kazak and Uzbek, Yakuti, God knows what, a Moldovan? In theory, they're brothers in communism. For one second, if they're brothers in communism, how could Ukrainian communists murder Jewish communists? That did not fit the motto. So, in other words, there was a tremendous lack of knowledge. The story was distorted. The facts were not acknowledged. So, these countries of the former Soviet Union and Eastern Europe only had a chance to learn the truth, teach the truth, write the truth when the Soviet Union crumbled in Romania in 1989, the Baltics in 1990, and later the rest in

1991, and they made the transition to democracy.

But the problem was that the story of what had happened in these countries was very difficult. Only in Eastern Europe did collaboration with the Nazis include participation in systematic mass murder. In other words, as I said, the Nazis were able to enlist local helpers wherever they went. In France, Belgium, Holland, Norway, Greece, Italy, et cetera, Lithuania, Latvia, Estonia, Poland, Romania, Hungary, Yugoslavia, everywhere. But the difference was between the essence or the content, you could say, of the collaboration in Eastern Europe with the rest was that, as I said, only in Eastern Europe did that collaboration include systematic mass murder.

So, in other words, in France it was not Vichy. The Vichy police were not required or asked to murder French Jews. They implemented the initial stages of the final solution, defining who is a Jew, passing discriminatory legislation to prevent Jews from earning a livelihood, to prevent Jews of having a normal life, of having freedoms, et cetera. And then they arrested the Jews, and put them on trains to be sent somewhere else to be murdered by someone else.

The same in Holland, the NSB, the Rexists in Belgium, you name it. So in other words, for most of Western Europe, Northern Europe, and Southern Europe, collaboration with the Nazis ended either at the train station or at the port. In other words, from Norway, Jews were sent by boat. From the Greek islands, they were sent by boat. But the primary mode of transportation, of course, were the trains.

Now, there was some countries in Central Europe that had a mixed model. In other words, they did commit murders. But the overwhelming majority of the Jews that they discriminated against and they persecuted, were sent to death camps. So, Hungary is a classic example. In Hungary, you had the murder of 16,000 Hungarians. Jews living in Hungary who did not have Hungarian citizenship were expelled to communists Podilskyi in August, 1941. And the Hungarians participated in their murder together with the Ukrainians and the Einsatzgruppen.

In January of '42, more than 3,300 Jews, Serbs, Roma, were murdered in and around the city of Novi Sad by the Hungarian gendarmerie and Hungarian military. Later on in Budapest, when Ferenc Szalasi of the Arrow Cross, the Hungarian fascists, was installed as Prime Minister, and the only Jews left were the Jews of Budapest, there was an open season on Jews. And thousands of Jews were shot, and their bodies were thrown into the Danube. But if you're talking about the scale of the persecution, the largest scale atrocity or aspect of persecution was not mass murder, it was the deportation to Auschwitz to be murdered of 437,000 Hungarian Jews.

The same in Romania. In Romania, the Romanians helped the Einsatzgruppen D murder Jews in Ukraine, Southern Ukraine, and Odesa. But the bulk of the Jews who were persecuted and punished... Not punished, were mistreated, were those in the occupied territories of Bessarabia and Bukovina, and those sent to Transnistria who weren't immediately murdered, but many died of the conditions. In any event, once these countries became, made the transition to democracy,

it became clear to them that the issue of the Holocaust would be a very important issue for their foreign policy objectives. And that's because their biggest fear was that the Russians will come back. In other words, that they'll reconquer the Baltics, that they'll reconquer Ukraine or Belarus, or even perhaps Poland, Romania, Yugoslavia, Hungary, et cetera.

So, what can protect them? In other words, how do they ensure that they'll be able to maintain their independence? A little country like Lithuania, which had three and a half million people when it became independent, obviously it can't defend itself against the Russian Army, nor can Latvia, nor can Estonia. And I think in any military encounter, the Russian Army would probably be able to defeat any of these countries. So, who can protect them? And the answer obviously is NATO and the European Union. So, in other words, from the very beginning, their main objective was to gain membership to enter NATO and the European Union. And they were firmly convinced that in order to do so, it would be very important to create good relations with Israel and with the Jewish communities outside Israel, primarily, for example, the United States, American Jewry, British Jewry, French Jewry, et cetera.

But they can't just say, "Let's be friends, guys," because obviously one of the things that's hanging over this relationship is the memory of the Shoah. So there were six actual practical issues that these countries had to deal with as related to the Holocaust. One was the acknowledgement of guilt and an apology for their collaboration. Two was commemoration to commemorate the victims. Three was prosecution of unpunished Nazis. And many of these local collaborators had run away to the West. Thousands of them fled to the United States, Canada, Great Britain, Australia, and New Zealand. Four was documentation, because they had to rewrite the history books. The history books were all from the Soviet period, were all sheer Soviet propaganda, the kind that I described to you. Five was education. They had to throw out its history textbooks, because that too was propaganda and they had to rewrite them. And six, of course, was restitution.

But all of those issues are a product of the narrative. What's the narrative of the Holocaust that took place in these countries? So, I want to begin the second part of this discussion by reading to you a small excerpt from a speech that was delivered in the Lithuanian parliament this past January 27th. January 27th, as you all know, is International Holocaust Remembrance Day. And the Lithuanian parliament, the Seimas, observed that day, and they had an event in the Parliament. And the person who was invited to be the keynote speaker was a member of the Seimas, who was the chairman of a parliamentary committee on national struggles and historical memory. His name was Valdas Rakutis. He was a member of the Conservative Party and he was a student of history. And he began by talking about the evolution of the idea of the final solution and how important it was to try and understand how this happened, obviously, in order to prevent a recurrence of such a terrible tragedy. And he obviously referred initially to the Germans, to the Nazis. And then he started talking about the helpers.

Okay, so I'm quoting, "Who are the people who took on these terrible ideas?" In other words, the ideas of genocide and to eliminate, and the final solution. "Are they the leaders of the Lithuanian

nation, such as Kazys Skirpa or General Vetra." And here I have to explain to you that Kazys Skirpa was the leader, basically one of the most important political leaders of Lithuania when the Russians occupied Lithuania in 1939, because there was... In 1940, excuse me. There was a year of Soviet occupation of the Baltics, and the Ukrainian Belarus, and East Poland before the Nazi invasion of June 22nd, 1941. So when the Soviets invaded, the leaders of almost all the Lithuanian political parties ran away from Lithuania, went to Berlin, set up shaft under the aegis of the Third Reich, proclaimed their allegiance to the Nazis and the Third Reich, Adolf Hitler and the Third Reich.

And they sent messages of incitement against the Jews into Lithuania saying, "The day of reckoning will be coming. The Jews have exploited us, they betrayed us, they deported us to Siberia." In other words, there were mass deportations the last week before the Nazi invasion, in which thousands of Lithuanians, including Jews, by the way, including about 7,500 Jews were deported to Siberia. And Skirpa was the person. In other words, he was a notorious anti-Semite.

General Vetra was the code name of one of the leading fighters against the Soviets after World War II. But during World War II, was the liaison with the Nazis in Northwest Lithuania. His name is Jonas Noreika. And if you've heard that name, it's because his granddaughter, Sylvia Foti, recently published a book about his life. And it's a project, which she began assuming that he was a great hero, only to find out that he was a Nazi collaborator who was responsible for the death of many thousands of Jews. And so, his nickname, his code name was General Vetra.

So, in other words, are we talking about Kazys Skirpa or General Vetra? Despite the great uproar of recent years, there's no way to prove they organised the Holocaust. And when he talks about the uproar, for example, the book written by Noreika's granddaughter, no, it's quite different people, often uneducated, who tend to feel important when they get a rifle in their hands, sometimes severely affected by the Soviet repression of '41. In other words, those are the deportations of the Soviets, and the measures taken by the Soviets against Lithuanians, sometimes blindly following the orders.

Okay, so let's get to know them. Let's understand why they did it. After all, there was no shortage of Holocaust perpetrators among the Jews themselves, especially, in the ghetto self-government structures. We need to name these people out loud and try not to have people like them happen again. But also to answer the question of, what were the views of the Jews themselves? What ideas led some Jews to cooperate with the Soviet authorities and occupy important positions in the repressive Soviet structures? So, in other words, do you want to know why the Holocaust took place? Well, obviously the Jews are to blame. They're the ones who cooperated with the Nazis. And he's talking about the Judenrat, the Jewish councils in the ghettos, and the Jewish administration in the ghettos. But of course, this is an obviously outrageous comparison. How can you compare someone who's about to become a victim of Nazi Germany, and to be murdered with Lithuanians who were no way persecuted by the Nazis, and as a matter of fact, led a relatively normal life.

So these two paragraphs that I read to you basically give you the narrative that the Lithuanians have promoted ever since independence. So, what are their goals? Goal number one is to hide or minimise the role played by the locals. Two, to try and claim that those few locals who did collaborate are not mainstream Lithuanian society. These are social miscasts. These are people who are illiterate, primitive, if you give them a gun, they feel important. And he talks about people who are uneducated, everything to give you the impression that these people are really the outcasts of society. And listen, every country has its outcasts. So, this is what happened in Lithuania, nothing unusual.

But what the truth is here is that all strata of Lithuanian society played active roles in the mass murders, thousands. Over 20,000 Lithuanians were actively involved in the process of mass murder. And something that most people don't know is that there were 600 to 900 Germans in Lithuania during the Nazi occupation. That's it. And they had to carry out a very labour intensive mass murder operation. Because as I explained to you, every single victim had to be shot individually. So, what happened in Lithuania was that Lithuania had been independent from 1918 to 1940 when the Soviet occupation began, the Soviets dismissed all the workers of the local Lithuanian administration. But when the Germans came, the political leadership told those people to return to their posts to serve the Germans. And they are the ones who played such an important role in organising the mass murders.

They took place in... There are 220 mass Holocaust graves in Lithuania. Out of the 220,000 Jews who lived under the Nazi occupation, 212,000 were murdered. But it didn't stop there. More than 5,000 Jews from Germany, Austria, and the Protectorate, that's part of Czechoslovakia, were deported to Lithuania to be murdered by Lithuanians. And the Lithuanians also had sent a police unit to Belarus, where in '41 and '42, primarily they murdered over 20,000 Byelorussian Jews. So, this is Lithuania, a country of something like two and a half million people during World War II, who are responsible for the murder of almost a quarter of a million Jews with less than 1,000 Germans in Lithuania pulling the strings.

So, obviously this is not a pleasant thing, and this is one of the reasons why they're trying to hide it. And this is also, for example, the reason why they miserably failed to prosecute Lithuanian and Nazi collaborators who had run away from Lithuania. Many of them were denaturalized and deported from the United States, for example, and came back to Lithuania, and could be put on trial. But the Lithuanians did everything under the sun to make sure that they wouldn't sit one day in jail.

You had a man like Aleksandras Lileikis who was the commander of the Saugumas, the Lithuanian security police in Vilna district. He had 100 men under his command. They were the ones who guarded the Vilna ghetto. They prevented any Lithuanians. And there was some Lithuanians to their credit, who tried to help the Jews in Vilna. They were the ones who prevented Jews from escaping from the ghetto. They were the ones who took the Jews from the Vilna ghetto, and brought them to Ponary to be murdered by a special Lithuanian unit called the Ypatingasis burys. Lileikis came back to Lithuania. He was healthy. He was certainly healthy

enough to stand trial. Lithuanians did everything possible to postpone until he was no longer healthy.

And then they passed three laws into Seimas in the parliament saying that a genocide suspect can be investigated, even if he's not medically fit. A genocide suspect can be indicted even if he's not medically fit. And you can have a video hookup from a hospital bed for the trial. None of these people were even obligated to show up at their own trials. When Lileikis decided to come one day to the trial, one session, and I was there. Instead of reading him the indictment and the charges against him, they asked him, if he had anything to say. What did he say? "I did it all for my country. I did it because I was a patriot." Then he had a heart attack.

In any event, not one of the three people that they put on trial sat one day in jail. Now in Lithuania, they talk non-stop about the Holocaust. There are ceremonies, there are collar incentives. But what they don't tell you is the real truth about what had actually happened. So, first of all, they don't tell you the scope of Lithuanian collaboration. They don't tell you that the perpetrators came from all strata Lithuanian society, from the political leadership, from the religious leadership, the cultural leadership, from the administration down to the killing squads. And there were some degenerates of course. They don't want you... In other words, they don't see it as a goal to bring the Lithuanians who were involved in these murders to trial. They sent a unit, a police unit to Belarus, as I explained to you. October 6th, 1941, they set out for Minsk to cleanse the area of the enemies of the Reich. So many of these people ran away to Anglo-Saxon countries. They ran away to America, they ran away to Canada, they ran away to England, and they ran away to Australia, they ran away to New Zealand.

One of the most important cases in the UK, and the case that actually I think helped convince the government that Nazi war criminals must be prosecuted was the case of one Antanas Gecas, or Antanas Gecevicius, his full name, who became Anthony Gecas when he landed in Scotland, worked in the mines as an engineer, actually was in contact with MI5 and served as a spy for the British authorities, and was not prosecuted. The Lithuanians finally asked for his extradition, but he died before he could be extradited.

And the irony of the story is that he was buried under a false name, because his family was afraid that there would be protests, demonstrations at his funeral. But think about it for a minute. All the Jews that he helped murder, thousands and thousands of those Jews who were murdered in Belarus, they all lie in mass graves without names, without monuments, without anything. And he too, in the end, at least had to be buried not under his own name.

Now as far as the history books or the textbooks is a better example, the truth is not told. And the Lithuanian authorities are doing everything possible also to emphasise their own suffering. So, on June 3rd, 2008, a declaration was formulated and signed by 33 mostly Eastern European intellectuals and politicians, which Lithuanians played a very important role in producing and in promoting. And this is what's called the Prague Declaration. And it basically calls for parity or equality in dealing with Soviet crimes, or the Communist crimes, the same as

with Nazi crimes.

So, first of all, they're calling for total rewriting of all the history textbooks in the spirit of equality. They're promoting the canard of equivalency between Communist and Nazi crimes. And if you want to understand what the difference is, it's very simple. Communist crimes are not genocide. The Communists never tried to completely wipe out a single people, even though the Ukrainians claim that the Holodomor, the mass hunger that was engineered by Stalin was not necessarily directed at the Ukrainians. And there were Byelorussians who suffered it, and there were Jews who suffered. Besides the majority were Ukrainians. But it wasn't directed at the people, it was directed at a type of the kulaks, in other words, small landowners. In other words, the rationale was economic. It had nothing to do with ethnicity, or the religion, or anything of the sort.

And certainly there was no industrialised mass murder as there was under the Nazis. So in other words, communism was a tragedy. It's not right that the Soviet Union or the successor state, Russia, did not accept responsibility for those crimes and compensate the victims, and prosecute the perpetrators. But that doesn't mean that this is genocide. But why are they stressing that it is genocide? Very simple, because if communist crimes were genocide, which they weren't, as I explained, that means that Jews committed genocide, because there were Jews who worked for the NKVD, today the KGB, or later on the KGB. And if Jews committed genocide, then how can the state of Israel, Jewish organisations, Jews in general, complain about the fact that Lithuanians committed genocide? So this is very important.

And they, for example, also want there to be built a museum of memory and conscience that will tell the history of the 20th century in the spirit of equality between communism and Nazism. And they write in the beginning of the declaration that Europe will never be truly united unless this is done. And another one of the steps that they're calling for, besides the museum that they want to build, they want support for the local museums. So, what museum are they talking about? For example, the Genocide Museum in Vilna, which didn't deal with the real genocide, which was the Holocaust, but focused 99% on communist crimes in Lithuania, and especially those committed by Jews. So, it reached a point in which it was so ridiculous that they finally were forced to change the name of the museum. It's no longer the Genocide Museum.

Or take the Museum of the Occupation in Latvia, again, the museum focuses on suffering of the Latvian people and says practically nothing, virtually nothing, very little about the very active participation of Latvians in the murders. And in Latvia, what they try and do is basically blame everything on the Arjas commander, which is one unit of mass murderers that murdered 30,000 Jews in Latvia. And later was sent to murder Jews in Belarus, the same as same as the Lithuanian unit. And they have, I think, when they were in temporary headquarters and the museum was something like 40 panels, they had one panel on Latvian perpetrators and a panel and a half on the Latvian Righteous Among the Nations, who are quite few, in fact.

And in these countries, it's an interesting phenomenon, what you see is an attempt to inflate the number of righteous, even if those righteous don't fit the criteria established by Yad Vashem.

And they try and deflate the number of perpetrators. So, in Lithuania, I have to talk to you also about the Genocide and Resistance Research Centre, which is the supposed equivalent of Yad Vashem. But it also has an added element that they're also responsible or they play a role in the issue of prosecution. In other words, any question that has to deal with Lithuanian history and the two occupations, in other words, the Nazi occupation and the Russian occupation, the communist occupation, they refer to the Genocide and Resistance Research Centre.

So, in Israel, the local Association of Lithuanian Jews, which was headed for many years by the late Joseph Melamed, a blessed memory, a very devoted chairman who worked very hard to fight against these lies. So he had a publication called "Crime and Punishment." And in one of the articles, they mentioned the fact that there were at least 23,000 Lithuanian perpetrators, and they gave extensive lists of the perpetrators in many different listed locations. And the Lithuanian government got very nervous, and they tried, first of all, to make the association take it off its website.

But then they asked the Genocide and Resistance Centre to produce a list of those Lithuanians who indeed were involved in the murders. So, it took them some three years, and they came up with a list of 2,055, and wrote in other words, alongside with this number, with this list they wrote. But you all realise that these people were under German officers, and they had no choice, et cetera, et cetera. So, even these 2,055 are not really culpable. So, I have news for you, which is very bad news for the Lithuanian government. And that is that the testimonies of the people, some of the people who served in these killing squads made it very clear that if people did not want to participate in the shootings, they could be sent to do something else. In other words, the task was made clear to them, and there were people who refused to participate.

And by the way, the same is true in Nazi Germany, there is not a single case of any Nazi, any German or Austrian Nazi being executed for refusing to kill Jews. And historians look long and hard to see if such a thing had ever happened. And their conclusion after many years of research was, you did have a choice. And the same was true as far as the collaborators are concerned, which of course makes the issue of participation in these crimes much more terrible, because people had a choice. They didn't have to shoot innocent men, women, and children.

So, I just want to briefly address the question that you're asking yourselves, which of course is, "Well, how can we combat these lies?" So, some of you might know that I wrote a book together with a Lithuanian author named Ruta Vamagaite. Ruta was a very popular author. She wrote books about pop-psychology, basically advice to women. And about six years ago or seven years ago, she discovered that her relatives were involved in killing Jews in the Shoah. And she was very upset about it. She wanted to atone for their crimes. And she started a project called Being a Jew, because she realised that the non-Jewish children in Lithuania junior high and high school have absolutely no knowledge of Judaism, of Jews. They hardly ever meet a Jew. And she arranged for a programme to teach them about Judaism, Jewish history, Jewish traditions. She took them to the synagogue to hear lectures from members of the community.

And ultimately they made a wonderful ceremony in front of the Vilna City Hall on Yom HaShoah, on Holocaust Memorial Day. And then they were taken Ponary the mass murder site of the Jews of Lithuania. In any event, she got a grant from the European Union to do this. But as part of the grant, she had to have a conference on Holocaust education. She didn't know who to invite. She spoke to the people in Lithuania who were in charge of Holocaust education, which is very minimal and not very accurate. And they said that you can invite whoever you want, except for two people. One is myself, and the other one is Dovid Katz, a professor of Yiddish who lived in Lithuania for many years. And at a certain point, and he was very close to the survivors whom he interviewed, to learn the authentic Litvish, Lithuanian Yiddish.

And when the Lithuanian government at a certain point wanted to prosecute Jewish partisans who joined the Soviet partisans, and in that manner saved their lives, and accused them on trumped up charges of war crimes against innocent Lithuanians, who in reality were Nazi collaborators. So, Dovid became involved in politics, and he has a wonderful website called defendinghistory.com.

But in any event, Ruta invited me. I couldn't go, but I met her when I came to protest against a neo-Nazi march in Vilna. And we discussed what we could do. And what we ended up doing was, we went to 40 places of mass murder, where Lithuania's murdered Jews, and we chose the places based on our biographies. In other words, she grew up in Lithuania. My maternal grandparents both were born in Lithuania and grew up in Lithuania. And we went from place to place to see if we could find the mass graves. We interviewed eyewitnesses. And invariably, the question was asked, who committed the murders? And I mean, all the witnesses were non-Jews, there are people living in those places today, and they all said the Lithuanians were the ones who carried out the murders. We went to local museums.

So, one quick story about a museum in a town called Ponevezh that might be familiar to many of you. Ponevezh is the name of a very, very prominent yeshiva that was founded in Lithuania. And in Ponevezh before the Shoah, there were close to 7,000 Jews, 99% of whom were murdered. In any event, we went into the local museum, and I asked the guy in charge of the media relations, I asked him, "Is there anything here about the Jewish community?" He said, "No." So I asked him, "Are you aware of the fact that millions of people all over the world know the name of your town?" He looked at me like I came from Mars. He said, "Why, what are you talking about?" So, I explained to him what a yeshiva is. How Rabbi Kahaneman, one of the founders of the Ponevezh Yeshiva, escaped from Lithuania in 1940, went to Israel, reestablished his yeshiva in Bnei Brak, and until recently, now they have very serious internal fights there in the yeshiva, so it's not as important as it used to be. But for years, for decades, it was one of the most important ultra-orthodox yeshivot.

And I went through that museum, and I came out so frustrated, and so upset that it reminded me of a famous story in the book of Kings. The king, Ahab, had a neighbour named Naboth who had a beautiful vineyard. And Ahab wanted to take over the vineyard, and he wanted to buy it

from Naboth. And Naboth refused to give it to him, to sell it to him, and Ahab murdered him. And not long after that, the prophet Elijah encountered Ahab, and he said to Ahab, "You murdered and you inherited." So, I said to Ruta, I said, "You murdered? Not you, not Ruta of course." I'm saying, In other words, "You murdered, you inherited, you stole the Jews property and valuables, and then you erased them. They don't exist anymore, they never existed."

One last story about the book was, every elderly person that we encountered, we spoke to and we interviewed. And one of those people was an elderly lady who I saw coming out of a grocery store. And I said to Ruta, "Listen, she looks the right age. Why don't you ask her if she remembers anything from World War II?" Okay, sure enough, she had been a young girl, eight years old, in 1941 when the murders started, and she was friendly with a Jew. They were friendly. Her family was friendly with the Jewish family. And each family had two girls, one of about, I don't know, 13 or 14, and one her age, about eight, seven or eight. And when the decrees against the Jews began, she told us that there was a very intense discussion in her family about whether or not they could save her friend.

So, I said to her, through Ruta of course, I don't speak Lithuanian, I said to her, "Well, you must have been scared of the Nazis." She said, "No, we could have hidden her from the Nazis forever. We were afraid of our neighbours." And she began crying. And I'm telling you, it was so touching. In other words, it was like I had the feeling it was the first time that she had ever been able to tell her story to someone who sympathised with her, with her pain, for not being able to save her friend. And in a certain sense, it's emblematic, symbolic of what happened to the Jews of Lithuania. They were primarily murdered by their neighbours. Whoever wanted to help them was reluctant to do so, because of their neighbours, because of Lithuanians. And it's really heartbreaking.

It taped our conversations as we went from place to place. And in other words, I'm a descendant of the victims. My great uncle was murdered, and then his wife and two boys were murdered in Lithuania. And I'm named for him. Ruta, of course, her grandfather and her uncle were, her uncle was the police chief of Ponevezh. Her grandfather prepared lists of communist activists, in other words, Jews who were executed. And the book created an enormous scandal in Lithuania. It was published by the most important publisher. And the only reason they published it was, because they wanted to keep Ruta writing for them. But they made a condition, which was that she couldn't tell anyone what she's writing about until the book comes out, which was very good, because as a result, the government was unprepared for what happened.

So, they printed 2,000 copies. It sold out in less than 48 hours. Ultimately it sold 20,000 copies, read by a 100,000 people, the most popular book in the public libraries in Lithuania for three years. But a year and a half later, they took revenge on Ruta, because she questioned whether a hero of the anti-Soviet resistance after World War II should be honoured by Lithuania, because she had read his file in the KGB archives. And he had done some really questionable things. So, they asked her, "Do you think it's a good idea?" She was interviewed, "Do you think it's a good idea?" And she said, "It's not necessarily such a great idea, you should reassess."

The next day the publisher announced that they're severing relations with her, took all her books, even though only one had to do with the Holocaust, 27,000 books she had just launched the day before her autobiography, took 'em out of the bookstores, and initially said they're going to turn them into toilet paper. But she went to court, she got the books back, but there's nothing, she can't sell them. And no one in Lithuania wants to publish her book. So, she put out a second book now on, "How did the Shoah happen?" With a German historian who's the biggest expert on the Shoah, Christoph Dieckmann. And she had to self-publish it.

But now you have a whole strata of people in Lithuania who have read the book. So, the elder elderly people don't believe it, but the young people who grew up in Lithuania as a member of their European Union look at it quite differently. And they're beginning to understand that they've been fed a bunch of lies. So this is the issue, and now we're actively doing whatever we can to promote the truth. Sylvia Foti's book about her grandfather, Jonas Noreika, is also a very important book, and that's going to come out in Lithuania very soon, and is available in English. So, we're fighting very hard and we're determined to win this fight.

So, if there are any questions now, I'll be happy to take them.

Q&A and Comments

- [Trudy] There are a couple of notes in the Q&A, if you want to have a look through them. I'm happy for you to have a look through them.

- Okay, I'll look through them. So, just one thing. First of all, the name of our book is "Our People Discovering Lithuania's Hidden Holocaust." Sylvia Foti's book is "My Grandfather, the Nazi War Criminal." And they're both available on Amazon and on book sites. And we'd appreciate it if you took a look and you read it.

Okay, next. Well, Russia, next Lithuania. The head of national security in Lithuania claimed that our book was a threat to national security, because after the book came out, Putin would annex Lithuania. But it didn't happen. And I don't think it's about to happen. There are thousands of NATO troops in Lithuania today, as well as in Latvia and Estonia to prevent it from happening.

Nazi war criminals in Spain, definitely, definitely true. No question, there was such people. But not necessarily generals by the way. Otto Skorzeny was there. Ante Pavelic, the Croatian head of state was there. Leon Degrelle, head of the Belgian collaborationists. The Spanish government did nothing. Franco had protected these people, but when Gonzalez took over, later Aznar, nothing was done. And it's absolute outrage.

So, obviously Holocaust distortion is also a terrible problem in Hungary. Maybe in the future lecture, I'll address that, or someone else will address that. It's true in Romania, in every single country in post-Congress Europe. Not to mention Poland, of course, which has terrible problems, but is in a different category, because the Nazis considered the Pole

"untamenschen," in other words, subhuman. And they did not integrate the Pole into the mechanism of mass murder in Poland. So the murders committed by Poles, and about 200,000 Jews were either murdered by Poles or handed over to the SS to to be murdered by Poles. That was more personal initiative than part of the framework of the mass of the final solution.

Croatia, another country with a terrible problem of Holocaust distortion. There's enormous nostalgia for the Ustasha. The most popular singer in Croatia is Marko Perkovic, who's nicknamed Thompson, who sings about Stara Gradiska, which was the women's camp of Jasenovac. There are all sorts of attempts to claim that Jasenovac was not a camp in which 100,000 Serbs, Jews, Roma, and anti-fascist Croatians were murdered, but rather a labour camp. And it was the communist who turned Jasenovac into a death camp. Total lie, all sorts of falsehoods.

Cardinal Stepinac, of course, will not be named a Righteous Among the Nations, because he was the priest of the Ustasha. He gave communion and confession at Pavlovic to one of the biggest mass murders in human history, and in World War II was the head of the independent state of Croatia, which murdered the hundreds of thousands of Serbs, helped murder 20,000 Croatian Jews, and sent another 10,000 to Auschwitz, murdered thousands of Roma and anti-fascist Croatians.

As far as the number of Jews killed in Lithuania, 90% were killed locally within half an hour of their homes, 234 mass graves in Lithuania, in every single one of the 220 Jewish communities, locals did participate in the measures taken against the Jews.

As far as the immigration of Nazis to South Africa, there was none, because South Africa was hermetically closed to immigration, all immigration. The countries that admitted large numbers of immigrants were the United States, Canada, UK, Australia, and New Zealand. And among those people were thousands of Nazi war criminals. New Zealand, there might have been less than that. But many, many hundreds, at least many hundreds in the United States, at least 10,000. Having said that, they also admitted large numbers of survivors. So, in South Africa, there are hardly any Holocaust survivors. And there were no cases that we discovered of Nazis in South Africa itself.

As far as the speech in Lithuania Parliament this year, it got an enormous amount of attention, because the American, German, and Israeli ambassadors responded very, very strongly against it, and harshly criticised it. And normally they don't like to interfere in Lithuanian internal affairs. Certainly not the Germans, by the way, who's afraid that they'll be accused of trying to shirk their responsibility. But this was so outrageous that it might be a real milestone in the fight against Holocaust distortion. Okay, prosecutions in Serbia, we helped prosecute a lot of people who murdered Serbs, but those prosecutions took place in Hungary and in Croatia.

Q: "Did I read the recent book, 'Our People'?"

A: I wrote it. I wrote it together with Ruta.

So, as far as the attitude of the Lithuanian Roman Catholic Church, the leadership, they for the most part refused to help Jews. Whatever help might have been given in some cases to Jews who ostensibly converted or tried to convert. In the Lithuanian version of our book, Ruta interviewed the most popular Catholic priest in Lithuania today, Ricardas Doveika. And he gave a very good interview. He talked about the importance of preserving the historical narrative, as well as the most popular evangelical priest, Thomas Chalmers, who also gave an excellent interview.

Q: "Have I read the book by Rabbi Oshry?"

A: I know the book very well, but it's not exactly a historical source. I mean, to some extent it is, but it's somewhat problematic, because everything was written after the war.

Q: Okay, "How many of these murderers are still alive?"

A: Very few. Very few, if any. But Lithuanians are not willing to do anything. In many countries, we face a problem of lack of political will to prosecute. And the best way to explain it is, compare a serial killer to a 90 year old Nazi. What are the chances of a 90 year old Nazi murdering anybody? Well, practically none. But if someone's a serial killer, the working assumption is that they'll continue to murder until they're finally arrested and punished.

Okay. Many of these things in the chat group were comments, of course, not questions.

- Yes, I'm struggling to scroll through to you. In fact, my mouse seems to be frozen. So, I'm sure you won't be able to get through these. I'm sure.

- Yes, I would not be allowed to speak at the Lithuanian embassy in London, that's for sure. As a matter of fact, they followed us everywhere we went, especially, that Ruta went to give talks about the book. There were representatives of the Lithuanian embassy who started talking about, "Well, there are different versions of history," and all sorts of other lies.

Okay, Hakarat, he's a Lithuanian from Svetzian, even though Svetzian was Poland before World War II, a partisan as a young boy, he survived as a partisan, and he came to Israel, and he fought in 1948, became chief education officer of the IDF. Later, the chairman of the Yad Vashem, at the same time, he did his BA, his MA, and his doctorate. He wrote very important books on the history of the Shoah, especially on Operation Reinhardt, but not only on that. And he just passed away this week in the Lithuanian. And in 2006, the Lithuanian government tried to put him on trial for war crimes against innocent Lithuanians. And they of course were unable to do so, because they couldn't find any evidence. But they never apologised to him. And the Lithuanian ambassador in Tel Aviv wrote that his legacy will be with us forever. I mean, it's such hypocrisy, you can't believe it. I tweeted that in my Twitter account.

By the way, if anyone is interested in following me on Twitter, the hashtag is @EZUROFF. So, please follow me, if you can, if you're interested in what we're doing. This is about our activities

fighting Holocaust distortion, assisting in the prosecution of Nazi war criminals, which is still going on. There are two new cases that'll start very soon in Germany, one from a guy from Sachsenhausen, and one from the secretary of the commandant of Stutthof. And hopefully there'll be more. Of course, it's a mad race against time, as you can imagine.

- [Trudy] I think we are running out of time this evening. I don't know, if you want to just take one or two more, and then we'll just finish up?

- I'm looking, yeah.

- Okay.

- Okay, there's a question regarding what happened in Galicia. So, in Galicia, he's asking if it's the same. So, some Jews were murdered by the locals, but many, many, many of the Jews in Galicia were sent to death camps, to Belz, and other camps. And in Lithuania, it was only 10% of the Jews were deported to camps at the very end of the Shoah, at the end of the war, when the ghettos of Vilna, Kovno, and Chavo were evacuated, General Storm, Jonas Noreika, played a major role in Northwestern Lithuania. He was the liaison with the Nazis. He gave the order to move the Jews into the ghettos, and the genocide centre said that was to save the Jews. And he's actually a righteous Gentile. So, you understand in what kind of universe we live.

So, if someone wants to know here about the destruction of Lithuanian Jewry, of course, I'll recommend my own book in English, "Our People." And Ruta's second book, "How Did it Happen?" was coming out in the fall together with Christoph Dieckmann. Okay, the name of the historian is Dieckmann, D-I-E-C-K-M-A-N-N. He wrote a major work on German occupation policy in Lithuania, devoted 16 years to writing the book. And he's the world's leading expert in the Shoah in Lithuania.

Okay, Ruta, I don't think she needs physical protection anymore, but she obviously is subject to much criticism.

Grant Gochin should be mentioned definitely. Grant Gochin has tried to sue the Lithuanian government to cancel the awards and honours given to Jonas Noreika. His family lived in Northwestern Lithuania. Many of his relatives were murdered in Northwest Lithuania, he says over 100 people from his family. And he's been extremely active, and has made a great effort. The latest effort is that he's submitting a suit to the European Court of Human Rights in Strausberg. to force the Lithuanians to cancel all the honours granted to Noreika. And he deserves a lot of credit, Grant. Today you have about between 3,500 and 4,000 Jews who live in Lithuania, if you're wondering.

Did I travel to Rotishgus? Yes. Not during the book. We didn't write about Rotishgus in the book, but yes. Listen, in terms of the question about Holocaust distortion, the problem is very rampant.

It's very prevalent throughout Eastern Europe. Poland, Latvia, and Ukraine are definitely major, major offenders. Ukraine at a certain point was even worse than Lithuania. And certainly glorification of heroes like Stepan Bandera and Roman Shukhevych whose men murdered Jews in Lviv, and Ternopil, and other places. But once Zelensky was elected president, I think that there's been less of it. But it's still an enormous problem in Ukraine, no question.

One of the problems that we have is, I am embarrassed to tell you as an Israeli by choice, that Israel has played very little role in trying to combat this phenomenon, because they want to enlist the support of the Eastern European countries in the European Union and in the international bodies. And unfortunately, when Netanyahu went to Lithuania, instead of trying to open up a dialogue and reach some sort of cooperation like they did in Poland, although what we agreed to is absurd in Poland, I have to say, he praised the Lithuanians for how they commemorate the Holocaust. That's approximately like praising the Ku Klux Klan for improving race relations in the United States. So, I think that's it. Are we done?

- [Trudy] Yes. So, thank you so much for giving us some extra time today.

- [Efrain] My pleasure.

- [Trudy] And thank you to everybody who joined us today. And I will see everybody again soon. Thank you so much.

- You're welcome.

- [Trudy] Bye-bye.

- Bye.