

Grant Arthur Gochin
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United States of America

Mayor Remigijus Šimašius
Municipality of the City of Vilnius

REQUEST

Regarding the removal of a memorial plaque

Dear Mayor,

A group of 17 Lithuanian historians and intellectuals approached you on October 19, 2015, asking for you to take action for the removal a memorial plaque dedicated to Jonas Noreika which is placed on the outside wall of the library of the Lithuanian Academy of Sciences in Vilnius (Žygimantų street no. 1/8). That request was based on documents testifying that Jonas Noreika significantly contributed to the Holocaust in Lithuania. This request was not fulfilled. The Center for the Study of the Genocide and Resistance of Residents of Lithuania provided you and others, and published history reports which were speeches in defense of, and vindicating Noreika.

I want to inform you that I initiated a document search in the Lithuanian archives. In this research we looked for documents connected with the actions of Jonas Noreika during World War II. The historians discovered that the Center, in its reports and publications describing Noreika's participation in the events of the Holocaust in the districts of Telšiai, Plungė and Šiauliai, suppressed a plethora of documented facts showing Jonas Noreika commanded the independently-organized group the Telšiai LAF, issued orders in the name of the Republic of Lithuania and the LAF to members of that organization who were in command of the most important law enforcement institutions in Žemaitija, issued verdicts in courts martial, and carried them out in the name of the Republic of Lithuania, and considered pleas for clemency from those condemned to death.

The historians researched the events and circumstances of the June Uprising in 1941 and subsequent events and determined the Telšiai LAF did not follow Nazi orders, operated on its own initiative without the Nazis' knowledge, acquired their own weapons and issued permits to carry weapons to members of the "Nacionalzocialist" Party. This organization was the supreme government in Žemaitija in the summer of 1941.

The historians determined the extermination of the Jews carried out in the second half of 1941 in Žemaitija was incited by the newspaper " Žemaičių žemė" published by the LAF and in proclamations issued by the LAF, and that city celebrations were held in conjunction with the massacres where speeches were given glorifying the labor of the Lithuanian people, Nazi Germany and Adolf Hitler. These events took place with the knowledge, under the command and with the active participation of Telšiai LAF commander Jonas Noreika.

It's worth noting SS standartenführer Karl Jäger was the head of the German Security Police and SD for all of Lithuania (July 2, 1941-July 31, 1943) and was the commander of the 3/A Einsatzkommando, a mobile execution squad. Jäger recorded in detail the mass murder of 137,346 people (mainly Jews) between July 1 and November 25, 1941, in a report dated December 1, 1941. The document contains exact dates, numbers of victims murdered and categories of victims (Jews, Communists, criminals, etc.). It contains in total over 100 mass murder operations at 71 different locations.

The mass murders of Lithuanian Jews in Plungė and Telšiai by Einsatzkommando 3 (the Hamann squadron) are not mentioned in the report by commander Jäger, nor in court testimony by members of the Tilsit Einsatzkommando on the mass murder of Jews near the Lithuanian border. From the report by Einsatzgruppe A commander Stahlecker, one is given to understand that formally at least Einsatzkommando 2, the murderers of the Jews of Latvia, was responsible for mass murder operations in Plungė, Telšiai, Mažeikiai, Biržai and Šiauliai, but there was only one unit in Šiauliai, over 100 kilometers away from Plungė.

Actually only 8 Germans participated in the mass murder of the Jews of Telšiai, or one detachment. This coincides with Stahlecker's report of October 15, 1941, which shows Einsatzkommando 2 alone (about 30 soldiers), responsible for the entire Šiauliai military district, was able to murder 42,000 Jews, while Jäger's Einsatzkommando 3 (150 soldiers) murdered just 32,000 in the Kaunas military district. From Jäger's report one understands that his unit, under the command of the psychopath Hamann, worked in earnest five days per week. What can it mean, that the mass murders in the districts under Noreika's LAF took place without the knowledge of the Nazis, or that the Nazis simply failed to include an accounting of the mass murder operations in two districts?

This research revealed circumstances which lend strong foundation for claiming widespread propaganda against Jews was carried out in the Telšiai district in 1941, that the destruction of Jews was justified and incited in public statements by the LAF leadership and in its press organs, agitating for the Lithuanian people to unite and cleanse themselves of the undesirable element. Hence the Telšiai LAF and commander Jonas Noreika were directly responsible for the murder and theft of property from at least 1,800 Jews of Plungė (July 12-13, 1941) and 800 of Telšiai (July 20-21, 1941).

There is better documentation on the period during which Jonas Noreika headed the Šiauliai district administration. Correspondence permits and identification cards and records of orders confirm Jonas Noreika actively contributed to the establishment of the ghetto in Žagarė and had the power to really decide the life and death of Jews. The documents confirm Noreika actively participated in the establishment of slave labor camps and in the administration and collection of fees for using slave labor. The documents also confirm Noreika was actively involved in deciding on seizures and allocation of Jewish property in the Šiauliai district. Monies from properties sold were deposited in the account of the Šiauliai district administration. These statements are clearly demonstrated in the attached chronology of events based on documents found in the archives, the diary of Lithuanian Nationalist Party secretary Zenonas Blynas and other sources.

The archival documents provided (Lithuanian Central State Archive FR 1099 a-1-b2) show Noreika as head of the district was in charge of exploiting Jews as forced labor, set up security to keep them from escaping, provided weapons and permits to guards and organized the exit and return to the ghetto of Jewish labor brigades. There is a documented case regarding the extension of the railroad demonstrating Jonas Noreika received private orders for Jewish slave labor.

The ghettos were under the jurisdiction of the SS but governed by the Lithuanian administration, while the SS governed concentration camps. There was a Jewish Affairs liaison assigned to the Šiauliai municipality and the municipality received fees from clients, farmers and enterprises for Jewish labor.

There's a letter of November 5, 1941, by Noreika to the Šiauliai municipality which concerns the non-payment of money for Jewish workers Jonas Noreika sent for forced labor on the railroad, with Noreika instructing the municipality to contact the Railroad Board which ordered the slaves (Lithuanian Central State Archive-fR-1099-a1-b2- 1504).

There survives a certificate dated August 24, 1942, signed by the head of the Šiauliai district and the district's accountant confirming payment of 53,350.03 Rubles between September 20, 1941, and November 1, 1941, from the head of the Šiauliai district to soldiers at the Šiauliai district headquarters of the Lithuanian self-defense battalions (LCSA-fR-1099-a2-b2-1133). For comparison, there are also surviving documents showing district head Noreika's salary at that time was officially 1,000 Rubles while police officers received from 250 to 330 Rubles.

These documents prove the Šiauliai district administration (Jonas Noreika) paid salaries during the period the mass murder operations against the Jews were being carried out in the Šiauliai district (at the Žagarė ghetto on October 2, 1941). The historians say the 14th battalion which operated in the Šiauliai military district was composed of units of soldiers from the Telšiai LAF. Jonas Noreika was the commander of the Telšiai LAF. The Lithuanian military as such did not exist then.

Jonas Noreika's granddaughter Silvia Foti has confirmed the authenticity of the facts and the historical research. Attached is a document in which she indicates the suppression of the role played by Jonas Noreika as the commander of the Lithuanian Activist Front and as Holocaust perpetrator is one of the biggest conspiracies in Lithuania in the last century.

The actions of the Center for the Study of the Genocide and Resistance of Residents of Lithuania are not merely an inappropriate interpretation of history, this is the conscious disinformation of the public, intentionally hiding facts and documents in the archives testifying to Jonas Noreika's crimes against humanity.

From 2015 to 2018, the director of the Center has actively denied Noreika's criminal activity. In their publications the Center has claimed it has "comprehensively analyzed J. Noreika's actions" and "there is no information that J. Noreika was connected with the organization or implementation of the mass murder of Jews." In 2016 the magazine published by the Center also carried a 26-page article by historian Alfredas Rukšėnas portraying Noreika as a rescuer of Jews

who knew nothing and who had no genocidal intentions. Rukšėnas limits himself to Noreika's actions concerning property seizures and creates a neologism to describe these actions: "economic genocide." In the light of the documents from this historical research, I think the "economic genocide" Noreika committed has to be understood as the isolation of the Jews of Žemaitija, their exploitation and their extermination in striving to receive financial profit.

The tale told in Rukšėnas's article of Noreika's resistance activity and his attitude towards Jews is equivalent to the tale Stalin deported Lithuanians to Siberia because they would have gainful employment there, since there was no work in Lithuania after the war.

It's worth noting that neither the Genocide Center nor any other institution have published any information describing specific examples of resistance by Jonas Noreika or his leadership of armed forces beneficial to Lithuania. From the official history we know that LAF units did not engage in battle with the military of the USSR. The Red Army withdrew from Lithuania without a fight.

The historical research partially fills the gaps in the history suppressed by the Center. Jonas Noreika commanded armed forces who weren't involved in the liberation of Žemaitija but rather the destruction of the Žemaitijan Jews. Noreika sucked countless people into his criminal initiative to exterminate all Lithuanian Jews. His resistance activity is actually the destruction of Jews, the theft of their property and the exploitation of prisoners for forced labor.

For a long time now the director of the Genocide Center has deceived you and other people in government. In truth Teresė Burauskaitė has denied the Holocaust; she has promulgated information and propaganda denying the historical reality of the destruction of the Jews carried out in World War II by the Nazis and their collaborators (UN Resolution on Holocaust Denial, October 30, 2013, Toronto).

Jonas Noreika as the commander of the organized group the Telšiai LAF bears responsibility under article 99 of the criminal code for the organization, incitement and contribution to the genocide of the Jewish people in June and July of 1941 in the Telšiai district, and also responsibility under article 103 of the criminal code for ordering and organizing the large-scale seizure of property of Jews without justification for military necessity. As the head of the Šiauliai military district, he bears responsibility under article 99 of the criminal code for the organization, incitement and contribution to the genocide of the Jewish people from August of 1941 to February of 1943, and also bears responsibility under article 103 for the organization and establishment of forced labor camps and the exploitation of POWs and people of Jewish ethnicity. There is no statute of limitations on these crimes.

The memorial plaque to Jonas Noreika aka General Vėtra, honors a person who engaged in war crimes and is a living reminder of an individual who publicly condemned Jews starting in 1933. This is a terrible example to set for Lithuanian soldiers and civilians. This was a person incarnating the ideas of hatred and anti-Semitism. The raising of this plaque to Jonas Noreika was the initiative of his comrades and followers. Its presence in the center of the city serves to testify to the fact anti-Semitic ideas are alive and well in Vilnius.

Following the discovery of significant documents witnessing to possible war crimes by Noreika and his command of the criminal group the Telšiai LAF, I believe there is a firm basis for revisiting and reconsidering the appeal made to you in 2015. We ask you to take the actions within the powers of the mayor of Vilnius and to initiate the take-down of memorial plaque to Jonas Noreika which is set up on the outside wall of the library of the Lithuanian Academy of Sciences in Vilnius (Žygimantų street no. 1/8).

Sincerely,

Grant Arthur Gochin
June 19, 2018
Vilnius

ATTACHED:

1. Query on actions by Jonas Noreika with appendices;
2. Time-line of Noreika, LAF and LNP from 1941 to 1942;
3. Replies from City of Vilnius (2015-2016)
4. Center's finding on J. Noreika;
5. Center's reply regarding Lithuanian National-Socialist Party;
6. Copy of agreement on legal representation.