Jews and non-Jews in Lithuania: Coexistence, Cooperation, Violence

International Conference

in association with
Institute of Polish Jewish Studies, Oxford,
Institute of Jewish Studies, University College London,
in cooperation with the Embassy of the Republic of Lithuania

Monday 17 December 2012, 3pm
Embassy of the Republic of Lithuania, Lithuania House,
2 Bessborough Gardens, London SW1V 2JE

Tuesday 18 December 2012, 9.30am-6.30pm
University College London, JZ Young Lecture Theatre,
Anatomy Building, UCL, Gower Street, London WC1E 6BT

Reservations essential. Registration fee £12, concessions £6, plus booking fee. Refreshments and a kosher buffet lunch are included in the price. Registration only on-line: http://lithuaniaconference.eventbrite.co.uk/
For all enquiries: Sara Benisaac, Institute of Jewish Studies, UCL, email: ijs@ucl.ac.uk. www.ucl.ac.uk/ijs

Wednesday 19 December 2012, Concert 7pm
Sandy’s Row Synagogue, 4a Sandy’s Row, London E1 7HW

The history of Lithuanian-Jewish communities has been marked not only by a continuity of religious tradition, but also by cultural dynamism. This conference offers insights into Lithuanian-Jewish culture, seeks to throw light on the complex history of Lithuanian-Jewish relations, including their cruel and traumatic disintegration during World War Two, and attempts to assess the contemporary situation in a European context.

The conference marks the launch of
POLIN VOLUME 25
Polin. Studies in Polish Jewry:
Jews in the former Grand Duchy of Lithuania since 1772

The conference will be preceded by an afternoon event and evening reception at the Embassy of the Republic of Lithuania on Monday 17th December, followed by lectures from distinguished speakers all day Tuesday 18th, at UCL. There will be a concert on the evening of Wednesday 19th, at Sandy's Row Synagogue.

Please note that the programme may be subject to change.
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Programme of Events

Monday 17 December 2012, 3pm

Embassy of the Republic of Lithuania, Lithuania House, 2 Bessborough Gardens, London SW1V 2JE

This event is free of charge.
Please note this event is organised by the Embassy of the Republic of Lithuania who require a separate RSVP for security reasons. If you plan to go please send name, address and contact details to: amb.uk@urm.lt, or tel: 020 7592 2841.
Admission is strictly by pre-registration only.

No Simple Stories II: Jewish-Lithuanian relations in historical perspective

3.00pm Registration

3.30pm Welcome by HE Ms. Asta Skaisgirytė, Liauškienė, Ambassador of the Republic of Lithuania

3.35pm Book Launch: Dr Darius Staliunas – “Pragmatic Alliances” published by the Lithuanian Institute of History. The book is dedicated to the political cooperation between Jews and Lithuanians at the beginning of the 20th century in establishing the Republic of Lithuania

Followed by discussion chaired by Mr Leonidas Donskis, MEP

Presentation of “The Northern Jerusalem” Initiative by Ms Anna Avidan, CEO

4.50pm Tea/Coffee Break

5.10pm Dr François Guesnet - Re-assessing Lithuanian-Jewish relations in the 19th and 20th centuries: presentation of the proceedings of the workshop “No Simple Stories”, February 2011

Comments by Dr Lionel Kopelowitz, President, Board of Deputies of British Jews 1985-1991, Professor Evan Zimroth, Queens College, The City University of New York

Presentation by the Centre of Litvaks Culture and Arts in Vilnius (Vilna Gaon Jewish State Museum)

6.30pm Reception and Opening of Exhibition of Jewish folk theatre posters from Vilnius
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Tuesday 18 December 2012, 9.30am-6.30pm

University College London, JZ Young Lecture Theatre, Anatomy Building, UCL, Gower Street, London WC1E 6BT
(just south of the main UCL entrance)

9.30am Refreshments in the Gavin de Beer room, Anatomy Building

10.00am Welcome
   Chair: Mr Ben Helfgott, Chairman of the Institute for Polish-Jewish Studies,
   HE Ms Asta Skaisgiryte-Liauškiene, Ambassador of the Republic of Lithuania
   Opening Remarks: Sir Sigmund Sternberg, President of the Institute for
   Polish-Jewish Studies

10.30am Morning Session
   What is a Litvak?
   Chair: Professor Michael Berkowitz (UCL)
   - Dr Benjamin Brown (Hebrew University, Jerusalem):
     ‘From “Habit” to “Heart”: Spirituality and De-routinization in the Musar Movement’.
   - Professor Antony Polonsky (Brandeis University):
     ‘The Origins of the Litvak Identity’.
   - Dr Irena Veisaite (Open Society Fund Lithuania, Vilnius):
     ‘Lithuanian Jewish Life after War and Communism: Personal Reflections’.

12.30pm Kosher Buffet Lunch in the Gavin de Beer room

2.00pm Afternoon Session 1
   Aspects of Lithuanian-Jewish Interaction in the Late
   Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries
   Chair: Professor Antony Polonsky
   - Dr Darius Staliunas (Institute of History, Vilnius):
     ‘Antisemitism in Lithuanian Political Culture in the Late Nineteenth and Early
     Twentieth Centuries’.
   - Dr Vladas Sirutavičius (Institute of History, Vilnius),
     ‘A close, but very suspicious and dangerous neighbour’: Outbreaks of Antisemitism
     in Inter-War Lithuania’.
   - Professor Saulius Sužiedėlis (Professor Emeritus of History, Millersville
     University of Pennsylvania):
     ‘The Holocaust in Lithuania: The Main Historiographical Problems’.

4.00pm Refreshments in the Gavin de Beer room

4.30pm Afternoon Session II Round Table:
   Contemporary Lithuanian-Jewish Relations in the
   European Context
   - Mr Roger Cohen (New York Times).
   - Dr Leonidas Donskis (Member of the European Parliament).
   - Professor Šarūnas Lieks (Vytautas Magnus University, Kaunas).
   - Professor Andrzej Żbikowski (Jewish Historical Institute, Warsaw).

6.00pm Conclusion - Film Jewish Life in Vilna
   1939, Poland, 10 minutes. Produced by Yitzhak Goskin.
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Wednesday 19 December 2012, 7pm
Concert DUO VERSUS

Sandy’s Row Synagogue, 4a Sandy’s Row, London E1 7HW

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Email: amb.uk@urm.lt, tel: 0207 7592 2841.

DUO VERSUS is the pairing of two like-minded musicians (Abe McWilliams, violin; Martynas Levickis, accordion) who passionately explore the diverse repertoire possibilities of the union between the violin and the accordion. As well as arranging and performing transcriptions of sonatas for violin and piano, Duo Versus also delves into other genres and styles from tango, improvisation and folk music to commissioning contemporary works by living composers. Having performed in venues in both UK and Lithuania, notably with performances in the Christopher Summer Festival in Vilnius, Lithuania, August 2012, the duo has been praised for their captivating and creative playing, as well as their unique appearance on stage and innovative use of stage designs and costumes to create an effect which is different to most traditional ensembles.
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Notes on Speakers

**Professor Michael Berkowitz (UCL)**
Michael Berkowitz, a native of Rochester, New York, received his BA from Hobart College (Geneva, New York) and his MA and PhD from the University of Wisconsin (Madison). Before coming to UCL he taught at the University of Chicago, Ohio State University, and the University of Judaism. His scholarship has dealt broadly with modern Jewish identity formation and political self-representations; relationships between art, politics, and culture; sport (especially boxing) and spectacle; the politics of religion in Mandate Palestine; perceptions of criminality and social deviance from early modern times to the present; Jews and German culture; ties between charity and nationalism; and modes of understanding and mis-understanding the Holocaust.

**Dr Benjamin Brown (Hebrew University, Jerusalem)**
Benjamin Brown is a lecturer in the Department of Jewish Thought, at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem where he teaches courses on Jewish thought as well as on modern philosophy and logic. He specializes in Orthodox Judaism in its various aspects, and has published many articles on this subject. His book, The Hazon Ish: Halakhist, Believer and Leader of the Haredi Revolution (2011) analyzes the works of Rabbi Abraham Yeshayahu Karelitz (1878-1953), one of the most prominent leaders of "Litvish" Judaism in Israel. In the past he was classical music and research book critic for the newspaper 'Jerusalem', worked as a lawyer in the field of civil law, taught in the Bar Ilan and Tel Aviv Universities, and took his post-doctoral studies at Harvard.

**Mr Roger Cohen (New York Times)**

**Dr Leonidas Donskis (Member of the European Parliament)**

**Dr François Guesnet (University College London)**
François Guesnet is Sidney and Elizabeth Corob Reader in Modern Jewish History in the Department of Hebrew and Jewish Studies at University College London. He specializes in the early modern and nineteenth century history of Polish Jews. His publications include Polnische Juden im 19. Jahrhundert: Lebensbedingungen, Rechtsnormen und Organisation im Wandel (Cologne, Vienna: Boehlau 1998) and numerous contributions and articles. Most recently, he edited an anthology of non-fictional Polish writings about the Jews of Poland, Der Fremde als Nachbar. Polnische Positionen zur jüdischen Präsenz in Polen. Texte seit 1800 (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp 2009), and a collection of German language texts by a nineteenth century Polish-Jewish merchant, Louis Meyer: Hinterlassene deutsche Schriften eines polnischen Juden (Hildesheim: Olms Verlag, 2010).

**Mr Ben Helfgott (Chairman of the Institute for Polish-Jewish Studies)**
Ben Helfgott is a Holocaust survivor and former champion weightlifter. He is one of two Jewish athletes, as far as is known, to have competed in the Olympics after surviving the Holocaust. Born in Pabianice, Lodz, Poland, he was 10 years old when the Nazis invaded the country in 1939. Initially sent to Buchenwald, he survived the Holocaust and came to England after the war with 700 other youngsters after being liberated from Theresienstadt. He and one of his sisters were the only members of his family to survive. In England he set up a Jewish youth club and continued his sporting activities. He was the captain of the British weightlifting teams at the Olympics in 1956 (Melbourne) and 1960 (Rome).

**Professor Šarūnas Liekis (Vytavutas Magnus University, Kaunas)**
Šarūnas Liekis is Dean and Professor of the Faculty of Political Science and Diplomacy at Vytautas Magnus University, Kaunas. He studied and did postgraduate research at Vilnius University, Brandeis University (1993–98, Ph.D.), the Hebrew University of Jerusalem and the University of Oxford. He publishes extensively on Jewish history, minority issues, and the international and political history of Lithuania and Poland. His latest book is 1939: The Year that Changed Everything in Lithuania’s History (2010).
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Notes on Speakers

Professor Antony Polonsky (Brandeis University)

Dr Vladas Sirutavičius (Institute of History, Vilnius)
Vladas Sirutavičius is senior scientific researcher in the Lithuanian Institute of History and associate professor in the Institute of International Relations and Political Science (Vilnius University). He specializes in the modern history of Lithuania, Lithuanian-Jewish and Lithuanian-Polish relations. His publications include Lietuvos istorija. Sąjudis: nuo persitvarkymo iki Kovo 11 d (History of Lithuania. Sąjudis from perestrojka to independence. In Lithuania.) (With Č. Laurinavičius.) (2008). He has published several articles on Lithuanian Anti-semitism during the interwar period. Most recently he (with D. Stalinius) edited collection of articles about Lithuanian-Jewish relations: A Pragmatic Alliance, Jewish–Lithuanian Political Cooperation at the Beginning of the 20th century (2011).

Dr Darius Stalinius (Institute of History, Vilnius)
Darius Stalinius has been deputy director of the Lithuanian Institute of History-Vilnius since 2000. He is the author of Making Russians. Meaning and Practice of Russification in Lithuania and Belarus after 1863 (2007). His research interests include issues of Russian nationality policy in the so-called Northwestern Region (Lithuania and Belorussia), ethnic conflicts, Jewish-Lithuanian co-operation in late Imperial Russia as well as problems of historiography and places of memory in Lithuania. He is currently working on a book Not deadly pogroms in tsarist Lithuania.

Sir Sigmund Sternberg (President of the Institute for Polish-Jewish Studies)
Sigmund Sternberg is a British philanthropist, interfaith campaigner and businessman. He was born in Budapest, Hungary and emigrated to Britain in 1939. He was naturalised as a British citizen in 1947. His work in promoting dialogue between different faiths has included organising the first papal visit to a synagogue in 1986 and negotiating the Vatican’s recognition of the State of Israel. He established the Sternberg Foundation in 1968 and was one of the co-founders of the Three Faiths Forum. He is currently Life President of the Movement for Reform Judaism. In 1976, he was knighted by Queen Elizabeth II, and in 1985 he was made a Papal Knight Commander of the Order of St. Gregory the Great (KCSG) by Pope John Paul II.

Professor Saulius Sužiedelis (Millersville University of Pennsylvania)
Saulius Sužiedelis, born in Gotha in 1945, Ph. D., 1977 University of Kansas in Russian and East European History, is currently Professor Emeritus of History at Millersville University of Pennsylvania. Has published on the Holocaust and society’s responses in Lithuania and is a member of that country’s International Commission for the Evaluation of the Crimes of the Nazi and Soviet Occupation Regimes. Amongst his more recent publications are The persecution and mass murder of Lithuanian Jews during summer and fall of 1941: sources and analyses (with Christoph Dieckmann) (2006) and Historical Dictionary of Lithuania (2011).

Dr Irena Veisaite (Open Society Fund Lithuania, Vilnius)
Irena Veisaite was born in Kaunas in Lithuania in 1928. She is one of the few Lithuanian Jews who survived the Holocaust in Lithuania, hidden by friends in Vilnius. In 1953, having graduated from the Moscow Lomonosov State University, she came back to Vilnius, determined to work in Lithuania. She became a lecturer at the Pedagogical University in Vilnius, where she taught the history of Western European and German literature. She later taught at other universities, and became involved in theatre and many other activities, although the University remained her main employer. In 1990 she was invited by the philanthropist George Soros to create the Open Society Fund in Lithuania. Today she is still working with George Soros and his Open Society Fund, and now acts as Ombudsman for his worldwide organization.

Professor Andrzej Zbikowski (Jewish Historical Institute, Warsaw)
Andrzej Zbikowski, an East European Studies Professor at the University of Warsaw, has been a researcher at the Jewish Historical Institute in Warsaw since 1985. From 2007 to 2008, he was also the education and publication deputy Director at the Institute. He was Professor at the Pultusk Academy of Humanities and a leading expert in the Public Education Office of the Institute of National Remembrance (IPN). He is a member of the Center for Holocaust Studies in Poland. He has written numerous publications about the contemporary history of Polish Jews.