

Speaker : Ingrida Vilkiene

"Education about the Holocaust: using different historical sources "

The Holocaust in Lithuania in the 20th century (1941-1944) was an unprecedented event in the history of Lithuania when in 1941 about 2/3 of Lithuanian Jews were massacred in a few months. (According to Prof. Saulius Sužiedelis, 130,000 - 140,000 people were killed between June and December out of a Jewish community of about 220,000 people living in Lithuania before the Second World War). A small number of surviving Jews were imprisoned in the ghettos of Vilnius, Kaunas, and Šiauliai (until 1943-1944).

The Holocaust in Lithuania was a large-scale murder of local Jews in those areas where Lithuanian Jews lived before World War II. The Holocaust in Lithuania, as in many parts of Eastern Europe, was executed, according to historians, by bullets (by shooting). Before the Second World War, Lithuanian Jews were the largest national minority in Lithuania. During the Holocaust, the Nazis and their local collaborators exterminated about 94% of Lithuanian Jews. According to historians and researchers, about 10,000 Jews survived who either went into hiding or were rescued by good people or managed to escape to the interior of the Soviet Union at the time when the Nazis were occupying Lithuania, and survived until the end of the war, or survived in concentration camps, such as those at Stutthof, Dachau, and others.

In analyzing the subject of the Holocaust, we are always dealing with people: the victims, the perpetrators, the rescuers, or simply the bystanders - people who knew that Jews were being killed but thought it was none of their business, that it did not relate to them. All these groups had different people, and you cannot draw general conclusions because each person is an individual and the experiences and motivation to behave in one way or another during the Holocaust were

related to a person's concept of values, traditions, literacy, emotional intelligence, the way of thinking, etc.

The Holocaust took place throughout Lithuania. Before the Second World War, Jews lived in larger or smaller towns in Lithuania, sometimes even in villages, so the extermination of local Jews was concentrated in the places where Jews resided. There are more than 200 such places in Lithuania (researchers believe the number to be higher by several tens). The killing of Jews in Lithuanian settlements was carried out in a similar manner (people were shot at pits in the woods, in the fields, sometimes right next to a town or a township), and although there are many similarities in the analysis of the destruction of Jews in the settlements, there are also some differences: in some places, only Nazis were involved, in some places, only the local population - the white arm-banders - were responsible for the killings, there were places with various attempts to rescue the local Jews, in some places, there were no cases known to rescue local Jews and so forth.

This lecture will give an overview of the Holocaust timeline in Lithuania. It will be followed by an example of one Lithuanian town, famous for its multi-ethnic society and tolerance, where the Holocaust was brutal, as in other parts of Lithuania, and the entire Jewish community of the town was annihilated in a few days. The lecture will also present the stories of two people related to the Holocaust but from different perspectives.

Teachers will be provided with sources, and after discussing them, they will be asked to create examples of how to present the Holocaust in Lithuania to their pupils based on the suggested sources.