

HOLOCAUST MEMORIAL MONUMENTS

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Holocaust Memorial Monuments in Vilnius, Lithuania



*Entrance Monument to the victims of Paneriai in the Paneriai Memorial.
Architect Jaunutis Makariūnas, 1985.*

Expedition Report 2022

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All material gathered during the expedition is available in the Holocaust Memorial Monuments database (<https://cja.huji.ac.il/hmm/browser.php?mode=main>) and in the Bezalel Narkiss Index of Jewish Art (<https://cja.huji.ac.il/browser.php>).

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The major body of information about memorial monuments in this report and in the database Holocaust Memorial Monuments is provided by a wonderful guidebook by **Irina Guzenberg**, *Vilnius: Traces of the Jewish Jerusalem of Lithuania. Memorable Sites of Jewish History and Culture. A Guidebook* (Vilnius: Pavilniai, 2021). All other sources of information are listed in the corresponding entries in the Holocaust Memorial Monuments database, mentioned in footnotes.

Introduction

An expedition of the Center for Jewish Art went to Vilnius in November 2022 to document Holocaust memorial monuments in the city. The trip was a part of the pilot project on Holocaust Memorial Monuments (<https://cja.huji.ac.il/hmm/browser.php?mode=main>), with the goal of refining the survey instruments, re-search questions, and criteria to be used in the monument database.

Vilnius (Vilna in Hebrew, Vilne in Yiddish, Wilno in Polish, Vilna in Russian) was one of the most prominent centers of Jewish life in eastern Europe. The capital of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania, it was part of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth until its annexation by the Russian empire in 1795. At the end of the First World War Vilnius was proclaimed the capital of the independent Republic of Lithuania, but during the interwar period the city was under the rule of the Second Polish Republic. Occupied by the Soviet Union in 1939, it was transferred to Lithuania, which, in its turn, was annexed by the USSR in 1940. In 1941-1944, Vilnius was under Nazi occupation and after the war served as the capital of the Soviet Socialist Republic of Lithuania in the USSR. After the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991, Vilnius became the capital of the revived and independent Lithuania.

According to the last pre-war Polish population census of 1931, there were 55,006 Jews in the city, comprising 29% of its population. The majority of Vilnius Jews were murdered during the Nazi occupation.

This expedition in November 2022 documented 50 Holocaust memorial monuments of various types in Vilnius. This number is comparable with the number of Holocaust monuments in Greece, and more than the number in Croatia – two countries whose Holocaust monuments we have already documented.¹

The complexity and richness of the Holocaust memorial cityscape in Vilnius is caused by three major factors. The first factor is time and documentation. While the most Jewish communities in Lithuania were annihilated by the end of 1941, Jews would live and be murdered in Vilnius until 1944. The history of the Holocaust in Vilnius includes: The mass murder of Vilnius Jews in Paneriai (Ponary); the establishment of two ghettos on 6 September 1941, one of which was annihilated on 29 October 1941, while the other existed until 23 September 1943; the rich cultural and political life of the ghetto; efforts to protect Jewish cultural valuables from the Nazis; an attempted uprising by the United Partisan Organization (FPO) in 1943; and the creation – after the annihilation of the ghetto – of two forced labor camps, “Kailis” and HPK (Heereskraftfahrpark Ost 562), the inmates of which

¹ On Holocaust memorials in Greece see a 2022 report by Samuel D. Gruber; on Holocaust memorials in Croatia see a 2021 report by Vladimir Levin, <https://cja.huji.ac.il/hmm/browser.php?mode=reports>.

were murdered in July 1944. Some Vilnius ghetto prisoners survived the Holocaust in labor camps in Estonia or in partisan units, among them prominent figures such as Avrom Sutzkever and Abba Kovner. Others were rescued by non-Jews. These events were well documented; many survivors left testimonies; and several diaries from the Holocaust period are preserved.

The second factor is the resurrection of the Jewish community after the liberation of Vilnius by the Red Army in July 1944. By 1959, there were 16,354 Jews in Vilnius. The survivors launched commemoration initiatives, which were cut short by the Soviet Lithuanian authorities. When the USSR collapsed in 1991 and the independent Republic of Lithuania was reestablished, some former prisoners of the ghetto still lived in Vilnius and abroad, granting the Jewish community the vivid historical memory and inspiration to start a large-scale work of public commemoration of the Holocaust.

The third factor was the attitude of the reestablished Republic of Lithuania, which wished to project an image which be distinct from that of the Soviet regime. While the Soviet authorities did not acknowledge that the Nazis murdered the Jews as Jews and included all civilian victims under the label “innocent Soviet citizens,” the new Lithuanian state supported distinct Jewish commemorative activities and initiated its own projects. This not only caused the number of Holocaust-related memorials to grow, but also brought the Holocaust memorials away from the actual murder sites (Paneriai) and the internal Jewish spaces (the synagogue and Jewish cemetery), to the public space of Vilnius.

The history of the erection of Holocaust monuments in Vilnius could be divided into three phases – the Soviet period, the period of Perestroika (the late Soviet period), and the period of Lithuanian independence.

The Soviet period (1944-1985)



1. Original monument in Paneriai. Artist Mikhail Klein, 1948.
Photo courtesy of the Vilna Gaon Jewish State Museum.

Survivors from the Vilnius Ghetto began collecting documents about the Holocaust and founded the Jewish Museum in July 1944. The main exhibition of the museum, devoted to the annihilation of Lithuanian Jews, was opened in early 1946.² Therefore, it is not surprising that the first monument at a mass killing site was erected in Paneriai by the Jewish community in 1948 (Fig. 1).³ It was a high granite pier designed by Jewish artist Mikhail Klein. The monument had a Yiddish inscription, followed by a verse from the Hebrew Bible, a call for revenge in Hebrew, and a short inscription in Russian.⁴ Although the museum and the monument were created by two different groups of Jews, their fate was similar and reflected the antisemitic atmosphere in the last years of Stalin's life.

² David Fishman, "Evreiskii muzei v Vilniuse, 1944-1949 gg." in *Sovetskaia iudaika: istoria, problematika, personalii*, edited by Mark Kupovetskii (Jerusalem-Moscow: Gesharim - Mosty Kul'tury, 2017), 243, 247.

³ <https://cja.huji.ac.il/hmm/browser.php?mode=set&id=47108>.

⁴ On this monument and its comparison with other early memorials in the USSR see Arkadi Zeltser, *Unwelcome Memory: Holocaust Monuments in the Soviet Union*, trans. A.S. Brown (Jerusalem: Yad Vashem, 2018), 114, 124, 139, 179, 209-210, 234, 273, 306.

The museum was closed in 1949 and the monument was demolished by the authorities by 1952. Therefore, the oldest preserved Holocaust memorial in Vilnius is the plaque in the Taharat Ha-Kodesh Synagogue (Fig. 2). While the monument in Paneriai was intended to commemorate Vilnius Jews killed at that site, the plaque served another purpose: It includes the major dates of murders in Vilnius and Kaunas and a list of 121 Jewish communities with the dates of their annihilation. The purpose of the plaque was practical – to allow synagogue worshippers to say the Kaddish prayer on the *yortsayt* (commemorative date) of their families. One of the dedications on the plaque mentions Haim Tzvi Shifrin, the Chief Rabbi of Vilnius after WWII, and it states that he died in 1953 (though he actually died in 1952). This dates the plaque to 1953, or the mid-1950s.⁵



2. Holocaust memorial plaque in the Taharat Hakodesh Choral Synagogue, after 1953.

Another Holocaust memorial of the Soviet era is a symbolic grave of Holocaust victims from the town of Anykščiai in the Jewish cemetery of Vilnius; its headstone was erected in 1969 by Holocaust survivors from Anykščiai.⁶ Since it was situated among regular graves in the Jewish cemetery, and it is likely nobody asked official permission for the memorial's construction, it was possible to inscribe the monument in Hebrew, using the religious formulas like "murdered for the sanctification of the God's name" and not to conform to the official Soviet narrative. According to the official approach in the Soviet Union, Jews suffered under the Nazi occupation like all other Soviet civilians. Therefore, the commemoration of Jewish victims as Jews was often not welcomed and neutral forms speaking about the murder of peaceful Soviet citizens were preferred.

5 <https://cja.huji.ac.il/hmm/browser.php?mode=set&id=45476>.

6 <https://cja.huji.ac.il/hmm/browser.php?mode=set&id=45571>.



3. Soviet Obelisk in the Paneriai Memorial, 1964 (?).

It is in this spirit that the murder site in Paneriai was memorialized in the 1960s. In the early 1960s, an impressive obelisk was erected on the remains of the demolished monument built by Jewish survivors in 1948 (Fig. 3),⁷ and a memorial park with seven granite memorials was rearranged in 1985 (Fig. 4).⁸ The inscriptions on the monuments did not include any mention of Jews, nor did the museum exhibition or the official narrative offered during the guided tours.



4. Entrance to the Paneriai Memorial. Architect Jaunutis Makariūnas, 1985.

The Perestroika period (1985-1991)

A new phase in Holocaust commemoration began in the time of Perestroika, when the regime of the Soviet Union was dramatically transforming. Not only could local Jews begin memorializing Holocaust events without ideological supervision by the Soviet state, but for the first time, foreign actors were allowed to participate directly in the memorialization. A prominent role in the erection of monuments was played by Yeshayahu Epstein, a native of Vilnius living in Israel. Holocaust memorials established during the Perestroika were placed in specifically Jewish spaces – the killing sites and in the Jewish cemetery, as was customary in many communities around the world.

⁷ <https://cja.huji.ac.il/hmm/browser.php?mode=set&id=46051>.

⁸ <https://cja.huji.ac.il/hmm/browser.php?mode=set&id=46045>.



5. Monument to the victims of the Vilnius Ghetto in the Third (Šeškinė) Jewish Cemetery. Sculptor David Zundelovich, 1989.



6. Monument to the children of the Vilnius Ghetto in the Third (Šeškinė) Jewish Cemetery, 1991.

The first new memorial was a monument to the victims of the ghetto located in the Jewish cemetery (Fig. 5).⁹ It was initiated and funded by Yeshayahu Epstein in 1989 and placed near the graves of people who died in the ghetto. At the same time, the opportunity was taken to mark those graves with concrete slabs.¹⁰ A monument to the children of the ghetto was built in the cemetery in 1991, also by Epstein, at the assumed burial place of the children arrested on 27 May 1944 (Fig. 6).¹¹ Both monuments featured Hebrew inscriptions accompanied by very short Lithuanian dedications.

In June of 1991, a large monument explicitly commemorating 70,000 murdered Jews, also initiated by Epstein, was unveiled in Paneriai (Fig. 7).¹² Hebrew and Yiddish commemorative inscriptions appeared on the front of the monument, above a seven-branched menorah, while Lithuanian, English and Russian translations were written on its back, above a second menorah. All inscriptions included mention of local collaborators of the Nazis.

Around the same time, the monument at the entrance to the Paneriai memorial was reconstructed. Between Lithuanian and Russian inscriptions about the murder of 100,000 Soviet people, a stele with Yiddish, Hebrew, Lithuanian and Russian texts mentioning 70,000 murdered Jews was added (see photo on the title page).¹³ Both monuments – the monument initiated by Epstein and the new stele at the entrance – were designed by the architect of the 1985 memorial park, Jaunutis Makariūnas.

9 <https://cja.huji.ac.il/hmm/browser.php?mode=set&id=45574>.

10 <https://cja.huji.ac.il/hmm/browser.php?mode=set&id=45575>.

11 <https://cja.huji.ac.il/hmm/browser.php?mode=set&id=45579>.

12 <https://cja.huji.ac.il/hmm/browser.php?mode=set&id=46046>.

13 <https://cja.huji.ac.il/hmm/browser.php?mode=set&id=46044>.



7. Monument to the Killed Jews in the Paneriai Memorial.
Architect Jaunutis Makariūnas, 1991.

The explicit mention of Jews as the main victims of Paneriai was accompanied by a kind of particularization of commemoration. Already in 1990, a monument to the killed Poles was established there.¹⁴ It was followed by memorials to other victims: the Lithuanians in 1992,¹⁵ the Red Army POWs in 1995,¹⁶ the Lithuanian activist Enzis Jagomasts in 1996,¹⁷ the soldiers of the Lithuanian Territorial Defense Force in 2004,¹⁸ and finally, Roma people in 2015.¹⁹ In this way, the Paneriai Memorial became a place where each group of victims is commemorated separately.

To summarize, Holocaust commemoration in Vilnius during the Perestroika period saw the reintroduction of memorials mentioning Jewish victims specifically to Paneriai and the establishment of new monuments in the Jewish cemetery.

14 <https://cja.huji.ac.il/browser.php?mode=set&id=46049>.
 15 <https://cja.huji.ac.il/browser.php?mode=set&id=46052>.
 16 <https://cja.huji.ac.il/browser.php?mode=set&id=46054>.
 17 <https://cja.huji.ac.il/browser.php?mode=set&id=46050>.
 18 <https://cja.huji.ac.il/browser.php?mode=set&id=46053>.
 19 <https://cja.huji.ac.il/hmm/browser.php?mode=set&id=46057>.

The Lithuanian independence period (from 1992)

A new era of Holocaust commemoration began after the collapse of the Soviet Union and the reestablishment of Lithuanian independence. It combined the continuation of commemoration in the Jewish space of the cemetery with the extensive creation of Holocaust memorials in the public spaces of Vilnius.



8. Memorial plaque at the Judenrat building, 1992.



9. Memorial plaque at the entrance to the Small Ghetto, 1993.

On the initiative of the historian of the Vilnius Jews, Genrikh Agranovsky, four memorial plaques commemorating the Vilnius ghetto were installed, all with inscriptions in Lithuanian and Yiddish.²⁰ Two of them, at the Judenrat building (Fig. 8)²¹ and at 3 Lydos Street,²² were unveiled on January 29, 1992. Two others, marking the gates to the Large and the Small Ghettos (Fig. 9), were inaugurated on September 23, 1993 – the 50th anniversary of the annihilation of the Large Ghetto in 1943 (since 1994, this has been the date of Holocaust Memorial Day in Lithuania).²³ On the same day, a monument in memory of the martyrs and fighters of the ghetto was unveiled at Mėsinių Street (by architect Živilė Mačionienė) (Fig. 10)²⁴ and a monument marking the site of the Old Jewish cemetery was inaugurated (architect Jaunutis Makariūnas) (Fig. 11).²⁵ All plaques and monuments were financed by the Vilnius municipality.

20 Irina Guzenberg, *Vilnius: Pamiatnye mesta evreiskoi istorii i kul'tury* (Vilnius: Pavilniai, 2013), 51.

21 <https://cja.huji.ac.il/hmm/browser.php?mode=set&id=45472>.

22 <https://cja.huji.ac.il/hmm/browser.php?mode=set&id=45477>.

23 <https://cja.huji.ac.il/hmm/browser.php?mode=set&id=33504>;
<https://cja.huji.ac.il/hmm/browser.php?mode=set&id=33504>.

24 <https://cja.huji.ac.il/hmm/browser.php?mode=set&id=33451>.

25 <https://cja.huji.ac.il/hmm/browser.php?mode=set&id=45490>.



10. Monument in memory of martyrs and fighters of the Vilnius ghetto.
Architect Živilė Mačionienė, 1993.



11. Monument at the Site of the Old Jewish Cemetery.
Architect Jaunutis Makariūnas, 1993.

In July 1993, a memorial was unveiled in the Cheap Houses, which served as the HPK forced labor camp in 1943-1944 (Fig. 12). It consists of two monuments: The first one, initiated by Yeshayahu Epstein, marks an assumed grave where about 200 Jews hiding in the HPK were shot and buried on 4 July 1944, a day after the rest of the inmates were taken to Paneriai. The monument is shaped as a traditional tombstone and only bears a Hebrew inscription (Fig. 13).²⁶ Another monument in memory of the HPK inmates shot in Paneriai is situated in front of the grave. Financed by Yakov Prenner, a former Vilnius Ghetto prisoner, whose relatives were murdered in the HPK camp, it was designed by the Vilnius Jewish architect Lev Kaplan (Fig. 14).²⁷ At the same time, a modest plaque presenting the story of the site in Yiddish, Hebrew, English, and Lithuanian was installed on a building near the symbolic tombstone.²⁸

26 <https://cja.huji.ac.il/hmm/browser.php?mode=set&id=45485>.

27 <https://cja.huji.ac.il/hmm/browser.php?mode=set&id=45484>.

28 <https://cja.huji.ac.il/hmm/browser.php?mode=set&id=46025>.



12. Memorial complex at the Cheap Houses, 1993.



13. Symbolic tombstone at the Cheap Houses, 1993.



*14. Memorial at the Cheap Houses.
Architect Lev Kaplan, 1993.*

The monument commemorating the Japanese consul Chiune Sugihara belongs to the same period (Fig. 15). Made by Japanese sculptor Goikhy Sioko Kitagawa in collaboration with a Lithuanian colleague Vldas Vildžiūnas, on the initiative of the Director of the State Jewish Museum and prominent public figure Emanuelis Zingeris, the monument was unveiled near the Holocaust Division of the Museum in 1992.²⁹

The monuments of 1992 and 1993 demonstrate the cooperation between city authorities and Lithuanian architects on the one hand and the Jewish community, the State Jewish Museum, and private Jewish donors on the other, who combined efforts to introduce the memory of the Holocaust into the urban fabric of Vilnius.



15. Chiune Sugihara Monument. Sculptors Goikhy Sioko Kitagawa, Vldas Vildžiūnas, 1992.

At the same time, the creation of monuments in the distinctively Jewish space of the cemetery continued as well. A monument to the teachers of the ghetto was initiated by the Jewish Museum.³⁰ On the initiative of the former member of the Jewish Labor Bund and the United Partisan Organization (FPO) fighter, Samuil Kaplinsky and his wife, FPO activist, Hiena Borovska (Kaplinsky), a group of four red granite cenotaphs were erected. Three of them commemorate the activists of the United Partisan Organization of the ghetto killed in 1943–1944, but the fourth is dedicated to Hirsh Lekert, a Bund hero executed in 1902.

29 <https://cja.huji.ac.il/hmm/browser.php?mode=set&id=29234>.

30 <https://cja.huji.ac.il/hmm/browser.php?mode=set&id=45578>.

The cenotaphs, one of Sonya Madeysker (Fig. 16) and Yitzhak Wittenberg,³¹ the other of Abram Khvoynik, Yankel Kaplan and Asye Big,³² bear depictions of shaking hands – a symbol of the FPO – and epitaphs in Yiddish and Lithuanian. The cenotaph of Yosef Glazman, a leader of the right-wing Jewish organization Beitar, was funded by former members of Beitar organization, has Hebrew and Yiddish epitaphs and traditional Jewish symbols (Fig. 17).³³ The construction of cenotaphs went hand in hand with the erection of headstones on the graves of victims of the 1905 Russian Revolution (mostly Bundists) and leaders of the Bund, whose bodies were reinterred from the closed cemetery in Užupis to the present cemetery in 1963. This work was also undertaken by Samuil Kaplinsky.³⁴



16. Cenotaph of Sonya Madeysker and Yitzhak Wittenberg in the Third (Šeškinė) Jewish Cemetery, 1993.



17. Cenotaph of Yosef Glazman in the Third (Šeškinė) Jewish Cemetery, 1993.

All in all, eleven Holocaust monuments were erected in 1992–1993, but it was not the end of commemoration activities in Vilnius. In 1997, a modest stele commissioned by the Boom-Rankema Family from the Netherlands to commemorate the last “selection” of the inmates of the ghetto (on 23-24 July 1943) was unveiled near the Missioners’ Monastery at Subaciaus St., where the selection took place.

31 <https://cja.huji.ac.il/hmm/browser.php?mode=set&id=45585>.

32 <https://cja.huji.ac.il/hmm/browser.php?mode=set&id=45584>.

33 <https://cja.huji.ac.il/hmm/browser.php?mode=set&id=45580>.

34 Irina Guzenberg, *Vilnius: Traces of the Jewish Jerusalem of Lithuania. Memorable Sites of Jewish History and Culture. A Guidebook* (Vilnius: Pavilniai, 2021), 702, 707.

In 1999, the stele was moved to the area where people who died in the ghetto were buried in the Jewish cemetery.³⁵ In the same year, the Sugihara Monument near the Holocaust Division of the Jewish Museum was supplemented by a monument to the Dutch consul Jan Zwartendijk, who issued visas for Jews to the Dutch Indies. Those visas enabled Sugihara to provide Japanese transit visas to the fleeing Jews. The monument named “The Corner” was designed by Lithuanian sculptor Antanas Šnaras (Fig. 18).³⁶



18. “The Corner” Monument to Jan Zwartendijk. Sculptor Antanas Šnaras, 1999.

Commemorative activities intensified in 2000, when five new memorials were erected. In Paneriai, Rachel Margolis, a former inmate of the Vilna Ghetto, member of the FPO, and long-standing employee of the Vilna Gaon State Jewish Museum, initiated and funded two additional monuments. The first one commemorates the inmates of the Kailis and HKP camps and Jewish doctors shot on 5 July 1944 (Fig. 19). Margolis’ father and brother were among them.³⁷ The second monument singles out the memory of the medical doctor Hilaris Feigus – the only person who was identified during the exhumation of killing pits in 1944 and was buried separately.³⁸

35 <https://cja.huji.ac.il/hmm/browser.php?mode=set&id=45577>.

36 <https://cja.huji.ac.il/hmm/browser.php?mode=set&id=45498>.

37 <https://cja.huji.ac.il/hmm/browser.php?mode=set&id=46059>.

38 <https://cja.huji.ac.il/hmm/browser.php?mode=set&id=46058>.

In the city itself, a memorial plaque was unveiled at the place where members of FPO fought against the Nazis on 1 September 1943. The initiative came from the Jewish community, while the funding was provided by the German embassy.³⁹ A statue “Flame of Hope” by Mexican Jewish artist Leonardo Nierman was established in the courtyard of the Judenrat building with the assistance of several donors from the USA.⁴⁰



19. Monument to the inmates of the Kailis and HKP camps and Jewish doctors in the Paneriai Memorial, 2000.

The first commemorative plaque for Lithuanians who rescued Jews during the Holocaust was also unveiled in 2000 (Fig. 20). It was affixed to the wall of the former Benedictine convent at Šv. Ignoto Street, where Juozapas Stakauskas, Marija Mikulska, and Vladas Žemaitis hid twelve Jews from September 1943 to July 1944. The plaque, commissioned by Rimantas Stankevičius, was made by the sculptors Vytautas Zaranka and Jonas Naruševičius. It features the relief portraits of the three persons and bears the words “Righteous Among the Nations” in Lithuanian and Hebrew.⁴¹



20. Memorial plaque to Juozapas Stakauskas, Marija Mikulska, and Vladas Žemaitis. Sculptors Vytautas Zaranka, Jonas Naruševičius, 2000.

39 <https://cja.huji.ac.il/hmm/browser.php?mode=set&id=45499>.

40 <https://cja.huji.ac.il/hmm/browser.php?mode=set&id=45488>.

41 <https://cja.huji.ac.il/hmm/browser.php?mode=set&id=33495>.

In the next decade, the only local Jewish initiative commemorating the Vilnius ghetto was the memorial plaque on the building where the ghetto theater functioned in 1942-1943 (2002, Vytautas Zaranka).⁴² On the other hand, the Righteous Among the Nations got more attention. An additional monument to Chiune Sugihara was erected in 2001 by Waseda University, where Sugihara studied, in a public park on the shore of the Neris River (sculptor Yusuke Sakuraba) (Fig. 21).⁴³ In 2011, the Austrian embassy funded a cenotaph for a Wehrmacht soldier from Austria Anton Schmid, who rescued Jews from the ghetto and was sentenced for death (sculptors Jonas Gencevičius and Tauris Budzis).⁴⁴

The Genocide and Resistance Research Center of Lithuania – the state institution dedicated to the study of genocide, crimes against humanity, and war crimes in Lithuania – commissioned in 2004 a memorial plaque for the Lithuanian Righteous Among the Nations, Ona Šimaitė, placed at the Vilnius University where she worked as a librarian. The plaque, which bears a Lithuanian inscription, was unveiled on the building where the Yiddish Institute had been situated.⁴⁵ In 2011, the same Research Center erected a monument at the site where remains of the 60 victims (both Jews and Poles) killed by the Nazis in July of 1941 were discovered in 2007. Catholic clergy participated in the reburial, but the monument bears only Lithuanian and Yiddish inscriptions (Fig. 22).⁴⁶



21. Chiune Sugihara Monument in Sakura Park.
Sculptor Yusuke Sakuraba, 2001.



22. Memorial to the First Victims of the Nazi Occupation at Titnago St.
Sculptor Jonas Jagėla, 2011.

42 <https://cja.huji.ac.il/hmm/browser.php?mode=set&id=45471>.

43 <https://cja.huji.ac.il/hmm/browser.php?mode=set&id=45497>.

44 <https://cja.huji.ac.il/hmm/browser.php?mode=set&id=45561>.

45 <https://cja.huji.ac.il/hmm/browser.php?mode=set&id=45563>.

46 <https://cja.huji.ac.il/hmm/browser.php?mode=set&id=45500>.

In 2004, the United States Commission for the Preservation of America's Heritage Abroad, in cooperation with the municipality, unveiled a memorial at the site of the Užupis Jewish cemetery destroyed by the Soviet Lithuanian city authorities in 1963-1965. The memorial, designed by Jaunutis Makariūnas, utilizes remnants of tombstones used in different building projects in the city that were brought back in the 1990s and reconstructs the entrance gate to the cemetery. The destruction of the cemetery apparently had no connection to the Holocaust, but the texts in English, Lithuanian and Hebrew explicitly mention 200,000 Jews “who lived within what are now the boundaries of Lithuania” and were killed by “German military forces and local collaborators” (Figs. 23-24).⁴⁷ Thus, this memorial echoes the 1993 memorial at the site of the Old Jewish cemetery by the same author, which, having no direct connection to the Holocaust, was unveiled on the 50th anniversary of the annihilation of the ghetto (see above).



23-24. Memorial at the site of the Second (Užupis) Jewish cemetery.
Architect Jaunutis Makariūnas, 2004.

47 <https://cja.huji.ac.il/hmm/browser.php?mode=set&id=45479>.



25. *Temporary Monument to Righteous Among the Nations.*
Sculptor Jonas Jagėla, 2018.
Photo by Milda Jakulytė-Vasyl.



26. *Commemorative plaque to Stefanija Ladigienė, 2021.*

In recent years, six new Holocaust memorials were erected in Vilnius. In 2015, the staff of the Jewish Museum together with Roma children established a Circle of Stones in the form of a cartwheel in Paneriai, in memory of about one hundred Roma people killed there.⁴⁸ A monument “The Remaining Stairs” in memory of ghetto children was placed in the compound of the Jewish school in 2016 (sculptor Mindaugas Šnipas).⁴⁹ In 2018, on the initiative of the chairwoman of the Jewish Community of Lithuania, Faina Kukliansky, a temporary monument was unveiled at the site where a grander monument to the Lithuanian Righteous Among the Nations is to be erected in the future. The temporary monument takes the form of a black marble stele bearing the Star of David and the Lithuanian coat of arms, and includes texts in Lithuania, English, and Yiddish (Fig. 25).⁵⁰ This sign was followed by two commemorative Lithuanian plaques placed by the Vilnius municipality on the houses where the Righteous Ona Šimaitė and Stefanija Ladigienė lived (Fig. 26).⁵¹ In 2019, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Lithuania funded a memorial at the place where in 1933-1944 stood the building of the YIVO (the Jewish Scientific Institute).⁵² Although the inscriptions in Lithuanian, English and Yiddish do not mention the Holocaust, this building was the scene where the so-called “paper brigade” of ghetto inmates prepared materials from the rich YIVO archives and library for the Nazi Museum of the Extinct Race in Frankfurt on Main, at the same time attempting to hide the most valuable objects from their reach.⁵³

48 <https://cja.huji.ac.il/hmm/browser.php?mode=set&id=46057>.

49 <https://cja.huji.ac.il/hmm/browser.php?mode=set&id=45824>.

50 <https://cja.huji.ac.il/hmm/browser.php?mode=set&id=45828>.

51 <https://cja.huji.ac.il/hmm/browser.php?mode=set&id=45826>;

<https://cja.huji.ac.il/hmm/browser.php?mode=set&id=45825>.

52 <https://cja.huji.ac.il/hmm/browser.php?mode=set&id=33493>.

53 On the “paper brigade,” see David E. Fishman, *The Book Smugglers: Partisans, Poets, and the Race to Save Jewish Treasures from the Nazis* (Lebanon, NH: ForeEdge, 2017).

Conclusions

Several conclusions can be drawn from the documentation and analysis of fifty Holocaust memorial monuments in Vilnius.

The erection of monuments on mass graves of Jews by survivors in the late 1940s was quite common in the Soviet Union, as demonstrated by Arkadi Zeltser. The destruction of the monument erected by Jews in Paneriai in 1948, however, was quite unusual. It was not the only case of demolition of a Holocaust monument in the USSR, but such cases were not common.⁵⁴ It is very tempting to connect the pulling down of the Paneriai monument by 1952 with the destruction of the Old Jewish cemetery in 1948-1955, the demolition of the Great City Synagogue in 1955-1957 and the destruction of the Užupis cemetery in 1963-1965. However, additional research is needed to understand whether all these demolitions could be seen as a series of measures aiming at blotting out the very memory of Jewish presence in the urban fabric of Vilnius, or each one of them was a separate event with its own reasons and causes.

The theme of the Holocaust entered the city space of Vilnius between 1989 and 1993, at the time when the Soviet past was being actively rejected and the foundations of a new future for an independent Lithuania had to be laid. Started by private people in traditional sites such as the killing site and the Jewish cemetery, Holocaust memorials spread through the former Jewish quarter in the very center of Vilnius. This development was part of the reshaping of the memorial cityscape by adding Lithuanian national narrative to the existing Soviet one.

The process of Holocaust memorialization continued in the late 1990s and 2000s, and included additional monuments in the killing sites, memorial plaques in the ghetto territory, and a monument at the site of the Užupis cemetery. Commemorations of the Righteous Among the Nations became an important theme in this period. New monuments were commissioned by a wide range of actors, from private people and the local Jewish Community, to Lithuanian governmental agencies and foreign organizations. At the same period, at least thirteen memorials commemorating Jewish figures and places not connected to the Holocaust appeared in Vilnius as well. Thus, Holocaust commemoration was only part of a larger process of reintroduction of Jews and Jewish topics into the memorial cityscape of Vilnius. In recent years this process continues, with the major focus on the Lithuanian Righteous Among the Nations.

Imagery on Holocaust memorial monuments in Vilnius is not especially rich. In some cases, it is totally absent, while in the others it is restricted to the traditional Stars of David and menorahs. Depictions of the plans of both ghettos sin-

54 On Holocaust monument in the USSR see Zeltser, *Unwelcome Memory*.

gle out two memorial plaques dedicated to the ghettos. The monuments to Chiune Sugihara (2001) and to Juozapas Stakauskas, Marija Mikulska, and Vladas Žemaitis, bear their relief portraits. The monuments at the sites of both cemeteries are shaped to resemble the destroyed structures, the tomb of the Vilna Gaon and the gates to the Užupis cemetery, respectively. Some other monuments have unusual forms: the 1992 monument to Sugihara, the 1999 monument to Zwartendijk, the “Flame of Hope” and the “Remaining Stairs” monuments.

Not less important is the language politics of Holocaust memorials. The memorials established by Jews in the Soviet era (the original Paneriai monument of 1948, the 1953 plaque in the synagogue, and the 1969 tombstone of Anykščiai victims in the cemetery) did not include Lithuanian inscriptions, but all other monuments make use of Lithuanian, the language of the state, both Lithuanian SSR and independent Lithuania.⁵⁵ The Soviet monuments in Paneriai combine Lithuanian with Russian, the language of the USSR. After 1989, Russian was used only on two monuments in Paneriai, in line with the older Soviet inscriptions, notwithstanding the fact that Russian is the language of everyday life of many Vilnius Jews.

All memorials commissioned by the Lithuanian Jewish Community or its members after 1989 contain inscriptions in Lithuanian and Yiddish. The use of Yiddish by the community seems to be an intentional emphasis of the local Jewish identity as opposed to Israel-dominated discourse that would have used Hebrew. In contrast, the monuments commissioned by Israelis contain Hebrew inscriptions, sometimes accompanied by Yiddish ones. Some of them include only an extremely short dedication in Lithuanian, like “Victims of the ghetto” or “Ghetto children,” placed beside a long Hebrew text. It seems that Israelis involved in commemoration in the years of Perestroika did not appreciate the local importance of the state language and addressed a mostly Jewish audience. The involvement of other international actors is marked by the use of English, and occasionally Hebrew. The monuments to Chiune Sugihara (2001) and Anton Schmid contain inscriptions in the languages of the commemorated people, Japanese and German respectively, and the memorials to the Lithuanian Righteous Among the Nation have only Lithuanian inscriptions.

One of the monuments described above is a simple stele erected in 2018, which announces that “A monument to Righteous Among the Nations, who rescued Jews in Nazi-occupied Lithuania, will be built at this site.”⁵⁶ This inscription clearly indicates that more Holocaust-related memorials in Vilnius will appear in the future.

55 The symbolic tombstone at the Cheap Houses has no Lithuanian inscription, but it is accompanied by an explanatory plaque in Lithuanian.

56 <https://cja.huji.ac.il/hmm/browser.php?mode=set&id=45828>.