

2012 UNVEILING OF THE PLAQUE

Rose Zwi

It is late afternoon and the sun has started its downward trajectory over the shops and dwellings on the western side of the town square. For centuries it had been the market place of Zagare; on 2 October 1941, it became the site of the massacre of the town's Jews.

The weather is unpredictable: midsummer showers alternate with shafts of sunlight breaking through threatening clouds. Will heavy rain will hold off until the plaque has been unveiled?



The Culture house in Zagare (photo: Rod Freedman)

Forty minutes before the scheduled unveiling workmen are still fitting the metal plinth onto its foundation of concrete tiles at the southern end of the town square, opposite the Culture House. The rest of the square is apparently being dug up by archaeologists who have recently identified several layers of settlement down to the 13th century.

It is not possible, in the short time we'll be in Zagare, to discover anything more about these archaeological activities.

Unbidden images rise of the massacre of 1941. It began here and ended in the woods surrounding Naryshkin Park, where the dead and injured were buried in prepared pits. The grave, it is said, heaved for days.

These images must now be put aside. We are here to mourn our dead and seek reconciliation with a new generation of Zagareans whose acceptance of the truth of the massacre is symbolised by the unveiling of the plaque that reads:

For hundreds of years Zagare (in Yiddish Zhager) had been home to a vibrant Jewish community. Zhager's Market Place had many Jewish shops and was a centre of commerce for the merchants from here and a range of other towns. Many of their shops surrounded this square. Zhager was also famous for its many Hebrew scholars, the "Learned of Zhager". German military occupiers and their Lithuanian collaborators brought the region's Jewish men, women and children to this square on 2 October 1941. Shooting and killing of the whole Jewish community of Zhager began here and continued in the forests nearby. About 3,000 Jewish citizens were killed.



The plaque in Lithuanian, Yiddish and English (photo: Defending History.com)

The descendants, as we are known, have gathered in the town over the last two days. There are eight of us: Joy Hall from Cumbria who had created Lithuania Link, a charitable organisation whose objective was to introduce self-help projects in the depressed Zagarė community; her friend June, a member of Lithuania Link, who is investigating her possible Jewish descent; Joy's cousin, Sara Manobla from Israel, a journalist on the Jerusalem Post and a radio broadcaster, whose grandfather David Towb left Zagarė in 1890; Cliff Marks, a town planner from Seattle, compiler of the Zagarė Shtetl website; Rod Freedman who made an excellent film about his uncle Chatzel Lemchen, a well-known philologist and Holocaust survivor; Roger Cohen, a columnist for the New York

Times whose forebears come from Zagare; Raymond, Hazel and Gill Woolfson from Glasgow, and myself.



Rose and Valdas



People in Zagare town square

We look anxiously towards Valdas Balcunius, who is directing the workers at the site of the unveiling. It was he who organised the making of the plaque - three metal plates, inscribed in Lithuanian, Yiddish and English, attached to a metal plinth, now in the process of being fixed into the concrete tiles. During the ceremony the wording will be read aloud by Rod Freedman in English; Valdas in Lithuanian, and Dovid Katz, in Yiddish. Dovid is a Yiddish scholar from America, now living in Lithuania. On his website, [Defending History](#), Dovid passionately counters the onslaught by government and right wing organisations in their attempts to revise the political history in Lithuania and the other Baltic states.

While Valdas was growing up in Zagare, he was aware that a great catastrophe had happened in the town in 1941. A conspiracy of silence and denial on the part of most Lithuanians, however, obscured the extent

of the tragedy. After reading Last Walk in Naryshkin Park in 1998, Valdas, then a young man of twenty-two, wrote to me:

“...Last summer when our town was celebrating its 800th anniversary, I met Joy Hall, her relatives and friends. An opportunity then arose to visit the U.K. to study. Whilst staying at Joy and Maynard’s in Cumbria, I read your book Last Walk in Naryshkin Park which has moved and appalled me more than I can say. I did not know what happened in 1941 in Zagare, but I want to say to you how full of pain and sorrow I am on behalf of my community. I do share it and am continually aware of the tragedy. There ARE people who remember and care about what happened – and these memories and truths are a part of my own and future generations...”

While visiting Joy Hall in Cumbria, he spent time at a dairy farm where he studied feed- milling technologies which have helped him develop Golden Grass, a horse feed business in Lithuania. Now, at the age of 35, he is married and has a young daughter. A successful entrepreneur, he has never forgotten his dedication to reconciliation.

About five months ago, I received an email from Valdas: *“... Maybe you remember us exchanging letters some twenty years ago regarding your book “Last Walk In Naryshkin Park”. I still have your letter...”*

He explains that Joy, Cliff and he have been working on a project to place a memorial plaque on the town square, and invites me to unveil the plaque on 13 July 2012.

After many misgivings, I accept the invitation. My two short visits to Zagare in 1992 and 1993 to research the fate of my father's family in 1941, had been traumatic, and I dread repeating it. Sara and Joy reinforce Valdas' invitation, emphasising that as large a Jewish presence as possible is important. So here I am, watching Valdas supervise the last stages of setting up the plaque.

On arrival in Lithuania, I spent a week in Vilnius with my cousin Freda before I met up with Sara Manobla and her friend Julius Bieliauskas who will drive us to the unveiling. To my regret Freda can't accompany us: her husband is very ill. In 1992 she and her family had taken me on the four-hour journey to Zagare. In 1993, my mission incomplete, her brother Misha drove me, Freda, and two of my children to the place my parents had called "Der Heim".

On both occasions we were met by hostile residents who thought we'd come to reclaim property. At the Municipal offices we enquired whether there were any Jews living in Zagare. "Only one," said the receptionist, "and there he is," she pointed out of the window to a man crossing the square, "Aizakas Mendelsonas."

When we caught up with him we spoke to him in Yiddish. He smiled broadly and invited us to his home. From him I learned that my father's brother Leib, Freda's father, had been with him in the 16th Lithuanian Brigade during WWII, fighting the invading German forces. Leib had been killed in the battle for Kursk in 1943. Isaac survived and returned to live in Zagare demanding that his family's home (his parents had been massacred) be returned to him. He lived there until his death in 2010.

After an absence of nearly 20 years, I am again walking through the streets of Vilnius with Freda. And once again I am painfully aware of a vacuum, an eerie emptiness at the heart of the city. It is particularly strong when we go into what have been described as the "Jewless Jewish" institutions.

On the ground floor of the Jewish Cultural and Information Centre, the large exhibition space is hung with paintings by a Jewish painter, Rafaelio Chwoles, who once lived in Vilnius, but spent most of his life in Paris. Recently, we're told, there have been other exhibitions, including one of Catholic churches in Vilnius painted on glass. One floor up there is a small area dedicated to rescued Lithuanian Jewish children who tell their stories of survival. Only one of the staff is Jewish. On this particular morning there are no other visitors to the Centre.

On one of the boulevards of Vilnius stands the government-supported Museum of Genocide Victims, known as the Genocide Museum. But it is not the Jewish genocide they are concerned with. It deals only with Soviet crimes against Lithuanians, equating the Soviet oppression of the Lithuanian people with the Nazi-inspired genocide of the Jews, thus obfuscating the true significance of the Holocaust.

The Double Genocide, they call it, and it has inspired a plethora of articles in the press, statements by politicians and “learned” theses in academe. The objective of this misnamed “Genocide” Museum seems to be to shift guilt and blame for the Holocaust, to rewrite history.

In another part of Vilnius, is the government-funded Genocide and Resistance Research Centre of Lithuania which barely mentions the genocide of the Jews in Lithuania.



Zilvinas and Rose, Freda and Sara at the Vilnius Jewish Public Library

There are non-Jews, however, who are sincere in their quixotic attempt to fill the emptiness created by the destruction of the vibrant Jewish

community that existed in Lithuania before 1941. The Vilnius Jewish Public Library, for example, is the brainchild of an eccentric gentile who lives in America. It isn't exclusively Jewish, nor is it a public library in the sense that its books are still in the process of being catalogued. At the moment it has more bookshelves than books, most of which are about Jews or by Jews, and are written in English. Zilvinas Beliauskas, a psychologist and academic who oversees the library part time, is trying to develop it into a meaningful community institution.



Sara, Rose and Roza in Vilnius

These are only a few of the paradoxes which exist in so-called Jewish institutions, or those which profess to be museums researching the Lithuanian genocide.

Local Vilnius Jews who survived the Holocaust, feel isolated. Rachel Konstanian, a cultured woman, an intellectual and a writer, has dedicated

her life and talents to the Green House, the real Holocaust Museum. It is not adequately funded and struggles to exist. Because she is an outspoken opponent of the government's promotion of the Double Genocide interpretation of history, she feels threatened by the political power it yields.

Another Jewish intellectual, Roza Bieliauskiene, the mother of Julius who drove us to Zagare, worked in the Museum for many years. In addition to being a Yiddish scholar, she is also a genealogist and a guide. For the last few years, however, she has taught Yiddish literature and Jewish history at an excellent school in her neighbourhood. And herein lies a paradox of another kind: her pupils are mostly gentile.

“Jewish food”, on the other hand, is to be found in abundance in restaurants throughout the city: latkes, borsht, blintzes, herring of all kinds, and many of the other dishes we thought of as Jewish food.

In Vilnius I renew my longstanding friendship with Sara Manobla. Julius and Sara pick me up early on Thursday morning and we set off on our four-hour journey to Zagare. The flat landscape is in full flower, with white, red and blue blooms among the long green grass. Our first stop, Joniskis, is a town about 30 kilometers from Zagare. Here we meet up with Cliff Marks, a retired town planner from Seattle. He is helping the Joniskis Council renovate two shuls, the red brick, and the plastered white one, both of which had been in a state of decay.



The red shul of Jonishkis



The white shul of Jonishkis

Over the years I've had intermittent contact with Cliff, but we'd never met. We greet one another with warmth and mixed emotions. Under different historical circumstances, all the descendants might have grown up in Zhager or known one another's families. Although the shuls are beautiful structures, of heritage interest, they are unlikely to be used as synagogues again: The Jewish community of Joniskis, like those in other areas of Lithuania, ceased to exist after 1941.

We arrive in Zagare to more emotional scenes as we meet Valdas. He takes us to his mother's recently renovated home which Sara Manobla and I will share with Joy and her friend June. The refrigerator and kitchen cupboards are laden with food. There's a joyous reunion between the cousins Joy and Sara; one lives in Cumbria, the other in Jerusalem.



At Valdas's house, Zagare

Mrs. Balcunius, Valdas' mother, brings us a large bowl of dumplings that look familiar but I cannot put a name to them. With my first bite, my childhood name for the dish leaps to mind: salted noses.

Saltanosses! A doughy dumpling, filled with cream cheese and cooked in cream. Or, in our diet-conscious times, boiled in water, with a jug of cream on the side. The taste of the saltanosses evokes a memory of my grandmother's cooking. Who had learned what from whom?

The rest of the descendants come trickling in and we become instant landsleit. They are distributed over various make-shift B&Bs in this town of no hotels, where, they say, they are provided with only one of the B's: they will eat breakfast with us at Valdas' house.

Later that afternoon, there is an air of excitement when we all gather for a barbeque at the home of Sarah Mitrike, a young English woman married to Saulius, a Zagarean friend of Valdas. She had been working as one of Joy's volunteers in Zagare when they met. Sara is breastfeeding her baby, while Saulius plies the guests with food and drink.

Food flows freely from the barbeque on the large open plot in front of the house, to the half-completed dining room and kitchen which Sara and Saulius are renovating. (Again, that recurring, obtrusive thought: which Jewish family live here – seventy years ago?) There is grilled wild boar, ham, venison, sausage, salads, different kinds of Zagan cheese and bread and much to drink. We introduce ourselves to the other guests, mostly young people who had been involved in the community work of Lithuanian Link. They offer to show us around Zagare any time we wish.

And at last I meet Aldona, the young teacher to whom Sara Manobla had given a copy of LWINP in 1998. She had used it as a translation text for a group of students. “They found it too literary,” Aldona says, “especially the Yiddish songs and poems which none of us were able to translate. But the main reason we stopped using it,” she tells me, “was that some Zagare residents strongly objected to the “bad light” in which you had portrayed the Lithuanians who had participated in, or even instigated, the killing of the Jews in 1941. When feelings ran high, I was advised by friends to stop the translation.”

Next morning we rise early, still in the grip of the magical, almost mystical excitement that drew us all together the previous day. Most of the descendants drop in for breakfast, after which some of us will visit the mass grave in Naryshkin Park.

Sara Manobla has been telling us about her research on the Levinkas family of Zagare. Yad VaShem was in the final stage of giving them posthumous recognition as “Righteous Among the Nations”, for having saved Jews during the Nazi occupation. What is now required is the testimony of a witness or a person who had been saved by them. After a long search, Sara has found one of the survivors, an elderly woman called Ruta, who lives just ten minutes away from Sara’s home in Jerusalem. She is delighted and surprised when Valdas tells her the Levinkas are his next door neighbours. Zofia Levinkas, he says, used to be his nursery school teacher. He goes to their house to ask if we can come over to speak to them.

Sara, Valdas, Rod and I are warmly received by Zofia and Leonas. Refreshments are offered, and Leonas brings out books and documents relating to Zagare’s past. Leonas, now over 80, tells us, through Valdas, that when he was a young boy he had lived in this very house with his parents. His mother was German, his father Lithuanian. A German officer would occasionally come to their house to listen to forbidden broadcasts on their radio.

Leonas remembers sitting on the floor, leaning against the partition which divided the room. The officer had no idea Batya Trusfus and her granddaughter Ruta (whom Sara has recently tracked down in Jerusalem) were trembling with fear behind the partition, just a few meters away from him. They were hidden by the Levinkas family for over a year.

Zofia’s family too had been involved in giving refuge to Jews.

Leonas shows us the certificate Zofia's family had been sent by Yad Vashem honouring them as "Righteous of the Nations".

Leonas' father was a Tolstoyan and like other members of that movement, was an ethical man with strong beliefs in freedom and justice. Many Tolstoyans had been active in saving Jews and some had been deported or killed for such acts.



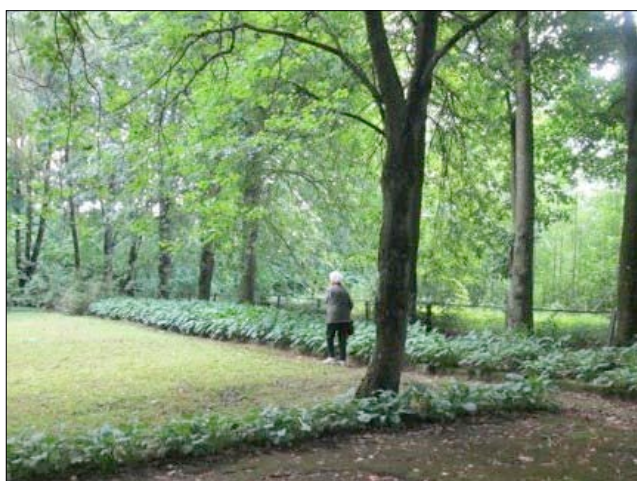
At the Levinskas house

Leonas brings out another book which he and his father put together some years ago, giving a pictorial account of Zagare. Among the photographs are serious looking men, all with Tolstoyan beards. There is also a photograph of the Market Place on a busy day reproduced from Last Walk In Naryshkin Park (published in 1997). The title is idiosyncratically translated as "A Turn in Naryshkin Park". Both writer, R.Zwi and the photographer, J. Trubik, are acknowledged.

I am overwhelmed by the warmth and openness with which we are received by the Levinskas, by their parents' heroic action of saving Jews

under such dangerous circumstances, by the story of the Tolstoyan society of which I had not been aware, and finally, by finding the photograph of the market place in their book. I now feel truly connected with the Levinskas and their forebears, and much of the fear and anger I've harboured over the years begins to melt away.

Our visit to the mass grave in Naryshkin Park after we leave the Levinskas is, as on previous occasions, a wrenching experience, alleviated only by my renewing faith in humanity. At first we gather at the aging obelisk, refreshed by a new black marble plaque that spells out the original message: "In this place on 2 October 1941 ...", then we wander off on our own. The V-shaped grave is covered with flowering hosta. I've seen these decorative leaves and flowers in many other places, but nowhere else do they have the same significance for me: guardians of the grave.



Mass grave, Naryshkin Park, Zagare

After a while we meet up again at the obelisk. Rod is standing next to a young oak which towers over his head. "When I was filming Uncle Chatzel fifteen years ago, I dug up an oak seedling in the forest and

planted it in the clearing with Isaac and Altona's help," he tells us. "I call it The Lemchen Tree, in memory of our family." He unobtrusively takes a leaf from a twig and puts it in his pocket.

We slough off our sombre mood and have lunch in a pub across the town square where workers are still labouring to install the plaque. Valdas is overseeing the final touches and waves to us. Borsht, blinis and latkes are on the menu in addition to the usual lamb, chicken and pork dishes. Then it is time to go back to our lodgings to change our muddy shoes.

The weather remains unpredictable, short, sharp showers, followed by brilliant sunshine as the dignitaries and guests arrive and the plaza fills up. Seats are set out in a semi-circle around the speakers "platform". About 100 people are present. Next to the veiled plaque are two microphones, one for speakers, another for Valdas, who will translate. Sara Manobla performs brilliantly as MC, introducing speakers, most of whom she has never met before, in her warm, cultured voice, while Valdas translates between paragraphs.

The head of the Regional Council welcomes the visitors, followed by a series of speakers ranging from a representative of the Israel Embassy, Vidmantas, the son of the late Isaac Mendelson, and Eduard Tiesnesis, son of one of the Jewish residents saved by gentiles. Joy, Sara and Cliff speak on behalf of the Jewish descendants. Because much of what I had planned to say has already been said so well by others, I cut my speech drastically. I am in a highly emotional state and want it all to be over.

The only thing I remember of my unveiling speech are the last two paragraphs:

“ As I stand before this plaque, I am overwhelmed by the thought that my parents and I might have lain in the mass grave together with my father’s family, had they not left Zagare in the 1920s. I never knew my father’s family, but I mourn them to this day.

“Remember us, their unquiet spirits seem to call from the grave. As though one could ever forget. They do not ask for vengeance, only remembrance. They will always be remembered. And, in the language we would have had in common, I say: MIR ZEINEN DOH! We are here.”

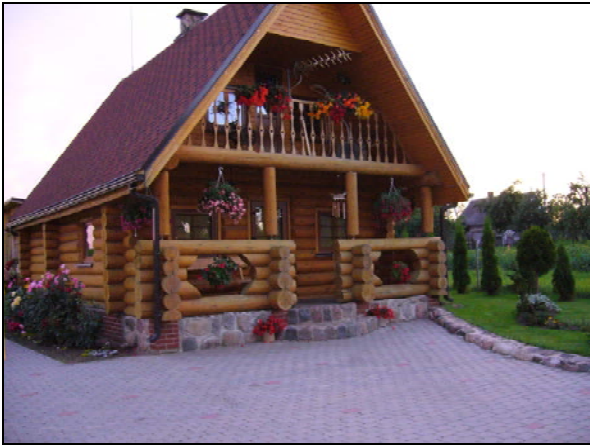
I unveil the plaque, with difficulty: Valdas has tied the cover down to prevent it blowing off. As I walk away, the rain pelts down, but clears immediately, leaving glittering tears on the metal plaque. At that moment, bells toll from an unseen church. People have now gathered around the plaque and Dovid Katz intones the Mourner’s Kaddish, in the very place where our forebears had been corralled for the massacre. I, an agnostic, am moved and mystified by these fortuitous happenings. Valdas, Rod, Sara, Joy and some others, confirm it has been a powerful moment.



Zilvinas, Rod and Dovid

Some of us take shelter from the sporadic rain in the Culture House where a concert of Jewish music and singing is taking place, to great applause from the general public.

We then gather in the now deserted town square and are driven to a chalet outside town where a Kabbalat Shabbat ceremony has been organised for the descendants, friends and supporters from Zagare, Siauliai and Vilnius. Cliff hosts the evening. Sara has brought with her from Vilnius kosher wine, khallot and candles. Gill Woolfson, Sara and I recite the blessings over the Sabbath candles, wine and khallot. Valdas has organised a gargantuan buffet of various kinds of pork, sausage, crab sticks, and sweetmeats. But no one, as Rod comments, could remember the blessing for the 'kosher' pork.



Kabbalat Shabat, Zagare

Rod, Roger and Sara, who had not spoken at the ceremony, say how connected they now feel to Zagere. When we emerge from the Kabbalat Shabbat, the rain is over, and a brilliant sunset lights up the fields.

It is close to midnight before we all get to bed. I fall asleep immediately but am shocked out of sleep by the sound of shooting. I lie very still, listening. Again. This time the shots sound a little closer and come in rapid succession. I sit up. Sara is fast asleep in her bed and there's no sound from Joy's room. Did I dream it? As I drop off to sleep again, the sound of shooting comes nearer and nearer... They're going from house to house, dragging people out... Nonsense, I say out loud, hoping Sara will wake up. It's not people they're shooting; they're discharging their guns into the weeping plaque in the Town Square. I pull the blanket over my head as the shooting continues, breathing with difficulty. Then I sit up, fully awake. I walk to the door, putting my ear against it. Nothing.

It's been an emotional day, and suppressed fears have been evoked. It's a nightmare, like the ones I suffered in childhood. I fall asleep until dawn.

At breakfast I am very quiet. Plans for the day are discussed. Perhaps we'll watch the soccer match between Maccabi and the combined Baltic team. I casually ask if anyone had heard noises during the night. None, everyone responds. Valdas' car stops outside the house. He's bringing bad news... And my night fears rise again. I ask him the same question and he smiles, apologetically.

"I'm so sorry", he says. "I should've warned you. There was a fireworks display at midnight. The end of the Festival. I can imagine what you thought."

I wonder, silently, what other fears my nightmares will reveal to me.

Everyone comes to breakfast in a relaxed mood. We go to the grounds of the Cherry Festival, wandering around from stall to stall, some with cherry products of one kind or another, others displaying Lithuanian folk art, a blacksmith showing off his expertise, yet another stall selling kitchenware decorated with the ubiquitous cherry. Children take turns on a very tame pony, hanging onto his mane as he trots around with them. Everything looks so normal, a country fair in any place in the world.

We walk over to the football field and sit on a fallen log, waiting for the game to begin. Alas, the game is delayed by the late arrival of the team, so

we move on. We hear later that Maccabi has been thoroughly beaten. Then someone suggests we visit the House of Pots and Pans.

Rod's family, the Lemchens, had had a cloth dyeing workshop before WWI. The present owner, an eccentric sculptor called Edmundus Vaiciulis, has a run-down garage operating on the premises, and gives Rod permission to walk through it. Edmundus' wooden and metal sculptures are distributed throughout the garden where roses and other summer flowers are in full bloom amongst the 'junk'.



House of the pots and pans

His house has a steep, shingled roof and stands not far from the old market place of Zagare. What distinguishes it from the remaining old houses in the street, is its decoration from rooftop to ground level with pots, pans, pails, basins, lanterns and other metal articles.

Edmundus comes out of the house, greets us briefly with a shy smile, then disappears into the depths of his treasure trove. His daughter, an attractive girl in her teens, joins us. Valdas asks about this unusual collection of hardware.

She says that some time ago, the actual year is lost in translation, her father bought up a vast quantity of scrap metal, no doubt destined for smelting. He nailed, hung, suspended and stuck these vessels on the inside and outside walls and on the roof. Those with handles were strung up between trees on strong wire.

She leads us to a courtyard filled with rusting shelves on which stand brass pestles and mortars, like the one my grandmother brought with her when she emigrated from Lithuania. It now stands in my kitchen. There are also dozens of brass candle sticks, identical to the pair my grandmother used when she blessed the Sabbath candles.

I begin to feel agitated. Hanging between the poles of a run-down pergola, is a string of samovars similar to the silver one my grandmother had received as a wedding gift. After some years in South Africa, she sold her

samovar, replacing it with a cheap electric kettle. Much more practical, she said somewhat sadly. Takes no time to boil the water.

The sculptor's young daughter picks up that we aren't the general run of tourists. I've got some treasure to show you, she says, and runs into the house. She emerges with a large copper or brass bowl encrusted with verdigris and takes off the lid. Inside are several heavy coins or medals, on one of which the date 1793 is discernable.

I remember my grandmother telling me that on the night World War I broke out, the Jewish population were told they were to be exiled deep into Russia next day. She had taken the few precious things the family owned, put them into a copper pot, dug a hole in the garden, and buried it. She said the night had been filled with the sound of digging and scraping throughout the shtetl.

I don't remember whether the copper pot was still there when her family returned to Zagare after the war.

My feeling that we are standing in the midst of a museum of domestic Jewish life in Zagare/Zhager, is confirmed.

I've got more, says the young curator of this strange museum. This time she brings out part of a torah, stripped of its velvet and silver covering. She bends to unroll it on the ground when Sara leaps forward, takes it from her, and opens it on the rusted table where a damaged Singer sewing

machine stands. She then begins to read from the half-destroyed Torah the story of the Jews' escape from Egypt.



Torah and instruments

By this time the rest of the descendants have joined us and we are all looking with awe, through tears, at this latest treasure. It is agreed that a Jewish Museum must be alerted to this discovery. Valdas asks where her father found the Torah.

“Two young boys brought it to my father,” she says. “He paid them a small sum and asked where they got it from. Their father, they said, was renovating his house when he found it built into a wall.”

It is futile to speculate why or when it was hidden in the wall, but here it is before us and we will try to persuade a different kind of museum to buy it back from the obsessed collector who has unknowingly created a Museum of everyday Jewish life in Zhager, the sort of museum we had looked for in vain in Vilnius.

Sara takes me by the arm and leads me to a corner of the veranda where several musical instruments are pushed together under a thick cover of

spider webs: a euphonium, a battered trumpet, a saxophone, part of a drum, a flute and other wind instruments.

Your uncle Leib, she begins. By now I am openly crying. My father's younger brother had been part of a small band of musicians. He had played a wind instrument, either a trumpet or a saxophone, I can't make out which from the faded photograph I used in my book.

Sara picks up a saxophone. This could even be his, she says.

We will never know which instrument, if any, was his. These battered remains had probably belonged either to Leib or to other musicians who had given pleasure to listeners in their day.

When Leib stood up to play solo, one of my interlocutors told me when I interviewed him for Last Walk in Naryshkin Park, everyone stopped dancing, romancing or whatever they were doing at that moment. They stood around in silence, listening to the golden notes that flowed from his instrument.



Some of the descendants

We thank our enthusiastic curator and return to Valdas' house. We are all quiet, wrapped in our own thoughts. Most of us may never meet again; few will return to Zagare/Zhager. It has been a cathartic experience and a bond has been forged that will last for the rest of our lives. Of equal significance is the tie between the descendants and our Lithuanian friends who made us welcome in the Heim of our forebears.