

# **Vilkovishk (Vilkaviskis)**

**Written by Joseph Rosin**

**English edited by Sarah and Mordechai Kopfstein**

Vilkovishk is located in the South-Western part of Lithuania on the shores of the Seimena River, a tributary of the river Sesupe, about 18 km from the border with Prussia (now Russia) and 3.5 km from the St.Petersburg-Berlin railway line. It was one of the oldest towns in Lithuania, when in 1660 King Jan Kazimir granted it city rights (Magdeburg rights).

Until 1795 Vilkovishk was part of the Polish-Lithuanian Kingdom, when the third division of Poland by the three superpowers of those times - Russia, Prussia and Austria - caused Lithuania to become partly Russian and partly Prussian. The part of the state which lay on the left side of the Neman river (Nemunas), including Vilkovishk, was handed over to Prussia who ruled there during the years 1795-1807.

Under Prussian rule the residents were encouraged to build stone or brick houses, instead of wooden ones, for which they were granted a third of the expenses. In those years the importance of Vilkovishk increased, it being a commercial point on the road from Kovno to Koenigsberg.

After Napoleon defeated Prussia and according to the Tiltz agreement of July 1807, Polish territories occupied by Prussia were transferred to what became known as the "The Great Dukedom of Warsaw", which was established at that time. The king of Sachsonia, Friedrich-August, was appointed duke, and the Napoleonic code now became the constitution of the dukedom, according to which everybody was equal before the law, except for the Jews who were not granted any civil rights.

During the years 1807-1813, Vilkovishk belonged to the "Great Dukedom of Warsaw" and was part of the Bialystok district. The

Napoleonic Codex was then introduced in this region, remaining in effect even during the Lithuanian period.

In the summer of 1812, Napoleon, with a huge army of about 250,000 soldiers, stayed there for 4 days, causing great damage to the residents of the town and its surroundings. Napoleon told a delegation of Vilkovishk Jews, who had approached him requesting that the army stationed there remove their horses from the synagogues - it being before "Tisha beAv" (ninth of Av) and the Jews wanted to mourn the destruction of the Temple in Jerusalem, - that he had been in Palestine with his army in 1898-99, and that if he managed to conquer that land he would re-establish the Jewish Kingdom.

After the defeat of the French army in Russia many retreating soldiers were frozen to death and drowned in the lakes around Vilkovishk, and 80 French soldiers and 3 generals were buried in the vicinity of Vilkovishk. In 1815, after the defeat of Napoleon, all of Lithuania was annexed to Russia, as a result of which Vilkovishk was included in the Augustowa Region (Gubernia), and in 1866 it became a part of the Suwalk Gubernia as a district center.

The Russians built large barracks near the town as well as several factories, one factory for producing spirits and a few large factories for extracting oil etc. They also built big storehouses where locally produced goods were stored together with imported ones, for distribution to neighboring towns.

Vilkovishk in these years was the center for processing pig bristles, and in 1900 about 1,000 workers were employed in this industry.

During the years 1882, 1886 and 1895 the town suffered from extensive fires.

In 1915, during World War I, Vilkovishk was captured by the German army who ruled there till 1918, when the independent Lithuanian state was established. During the period of independent

Lithuania (1918-1940) Vilkovishk was a district center as it had been before and appropriate institutions, such as district offices and the regional court, were located there. There were also 3 hospitals (2 of them private), 4 pharmacies, 2 high schools, 3 elementary schools, one trade school, several libraries, 2 printing presses, 8 doctors, 8 dentists and 2 cinemas.

In the twenties the railway line Kazlu--Ruda--Marijampole--Kalvarija--Alytus was constructed, resulting in the transfer of the regional commercial center to Marijampole.

During Soviet rule (1940-1941) Vilkovishk continued to serve as a district center.

The invasion of Lithuania by the German army in June 1941 caused the destruction of most (about 90%) of the houses in Vilkovishk. During the first months of the German occupation (June-September 1941), they together with their local helpers murdered 3056 people, most of them Jewish. Vilkovishk was liberated from the Nazis by the Red Army on the ninth of August 1944.

## **Jewish Settlement till After World War I.**

According to tradition, Jews began to settle in Vilkovishk already in the fourteenth century, but in the old Jewish cemetery tombstones were found dating only from 1575. At the beginning of the sixteenth century Queen Bona (wife of King Zigmunt August the second) donated timber to the citizens of Vilkovishk for building prayer houses. Jews too were among the beneficiaries and built their synagogue in 1545, which existed till World War II, having been renovated several times over the years. It contained a grandiose oak "Aron Kodesh" (Holy Ark), three stories high (11 meters), decorated with artistically engraved wooden ornaments, which housed several scrolls brought by those expelled from Spain

as well as the usual Sifrey Torah allowed to build a cemetery for themselves.

## **The Old Synagogue**

At the beginning of eighteenth century deceased Jews from Koenigsberg (Prussia) were brought to Vilkovishk for burial, because they were not allowed to build a cemetery for themselves.

## **Synagogue of Vilkavishkis**

**By Balys Buracas**

**(BB-sin5 BB1927)**

## **Synagogue of Vilkavishkis, other side**

**By Balys Buracas**

**(BB-sin6 BB1924)**

Above two photographs are from the archival collection of 36,000 photographs Balys Buracas. This image appears here thanks to the generous cooperation of his nephew, [Professor Antanas Buracas](#) [Click here for additional photos](#)

of Balys Buracas.

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[anbura@lrs.lt](mailto:anbura@lrs.lt) "**



**An old tombstone at the Vilkovishk cemetery**

In the middle of the eighteenth century a cholera epidemic hit the town of Vizhan (Wizajny - now Poland) about 35 km south of Vilkovishk. Jewish refugees from there who were not allowed to enter Vilkovishk, settled in a forest nearby and the community of Vilkovishk supplied them with food. Many of them died and were buried near the forest. Descendants of these Jews later settled in

Vilkovishk and lived there till the Holocaust.

A community committee consisting of the Rabbis and the respected personalities of the community administered public life. This committee managed all the religious, educational and welfare institutions. State rule in general did not intervene in interior issues of the Jews, thus the Rabbis were authorized to register births and deaths, to collect taxes for community needs and also to act as judges in conflicts among community members. The notebook (Pinkas) of the community from the years 1692-1833 is located in the Central Archives of the History of the Jewish People in Jerusalem.



increased to 5,788 people, but included only 3,480 Jews (60%).

During the years 1869/70 Jewish immigration to America started. In a list of immigrants from Vilkovishk the following names appear: L.Aronberg, H.Volkovitz, A.Varshavsky, M.London, S.Levi, M.B.Lichtenstein, S.Neuman, T.Memlonusky, S.Karigarsky.

In the eighties and nineties of the nineteenth century Jews from Russia would arrive in Vilkovishk in order to cross the border to Germany without a passport, and from there to sail to America. This was attempted for mostly financial or political reasons, but sometimes the smugglers were caught by the Russian Border Guard, whereupon the Vilkovishk community was obliged to free these Jews from jail. In 1898 a warning was published in the Hebrew newspaper "Hatsefira" (printed in Warsaw) against attempting to cross the border without a passport, signed on behalf of the community of Vilkovishk by: Rabbi Zvi Mah-Yafith, Rabiner (official Rabbi) Eliyahu Shereshevsky; Trustees: Sender Turberg, Efraim-Mendel Pustapedsky; Gabaim (honorary officers): Yechezkel Yafe and Yehosua Lipman Yofe.

Over the years the Jews concentrated on trade in grains, timber and agricultural products designated for export to Germany. There were Jews in Vilkovishk who owned considerable fields (according to the Napoleon Codex Jews could acquire land in this region), also growing vegetables and fruits. The fire of 1882 harmed 180 Jewish families, and in 1886 300 Jewish houses burnt down. The fire of 1905 destroyed many Jewish houses, resulting in help being supplied by the Jewish French "Alliance" association and Barons Rothschild and Hirsch.

There were many Jewish shopkeepers, various artisans and car and carriage owners who transported goods and passengers to the railway station and to neighboring towns. In particular the industry of processing pig bristles for the production of brushes was developed in Vilkovishk. There were four big factories of this kind — belonging to Sobolevitz, Rozin, Vilkovisky and Vindsberg -



who employed more than 400 Jewish workers in addition to several smaller workshops. These workers were the first ones who organized and arranged strikes in order to improve their working conditions.

In 1896 a strike took place in Vindsberg's factory, organized by members of the "Bund" party from Vilna (Avraham Alexandrovitz and Ortshik), the workers demanding to reduce daily working hours to 10, and they achieved their goal. At that time the "Union of the Brush Workers" was established, and in 1898 a proclamation "To the Jewish Brush Workers in Lithuania and Poland" concerning the struggle for workers rights was issued by this union. The "Bund" also organized illegal demonstrations causing collisions with the police and some of the demonstrators were detained (the tailor Voloch, Shmuel Joffe, Eliyahu Slitovsky, Yisrael Kenigsberg). In 1911 about 1000 bristles workers, mostly Jewish, struck in order to achieve an eight-hour working day and a supplement of 75 Kopeiki (100 Kopeiki=1 Ruble) per week, thus becoming the first workers in Lithuania to benefit from an eight-hour day. The "Bund" organization fought not only for workers rights, but also propagated knowledge and Yiddish culture among the working classes.

There were many prayer houses in town: the old synagogue, the "Beth Midrash", four "Klois'es": the German, the French - where Napoleon's soldiers had lodged - the "Chevrah Kadisha" and the R' Ya'akov Yeshayahu, and one "Shtibl". The brush workers had their own prayer house which was called "Chevrath Sh"Ch (Hebrew

initials of Pig Hair) This society (Chevrah) was established in 1875, initiated by the "Magid" from Kelem (Kelme) who taught those workers "Chayei Adam" and "Mishnah" (see the front page of the "Pinkas" of this society, below).

1002  
1931  
1931

ולקח  
פנקס

69439

בחדרה חתם אדם אמנות  
מכאן ישר (שנה - חנוכה)  
1875 רח"ל (המחבר)

במה עובדיה כן ביה"ט זך בה  
קראתה אגוד, ואלהי חסד קולן  
פאר נ"י מתי לבק"ו עומט כמילא  
אלהכבוד ב"ו באב-כ"ט  
במטה נקרה - ה' ק"ב בה אהבו הקב"ל  
במטה " - ה' אלה סבאוסקי, אלה  
אזת יתבה אן א"י אן אבקי אן רמ"ב כאל  
אלק רמ"ב  
הקב"ל

כ"ו אלה סבאוסקי אן בא אונקל  
(אונקל כ"ו אלה סבאוסקי אן בה סבאוסקי  
3.3. אן קולמ"ו)

1002  
1931  
1931

A "Chevrah Kadisha" was also active, whose "Pinkas" (Notebook) existed from 1811 and "Chevrath Mishnah" whose "Pinkas" already existed in 1761.



## **The "Beth Midrash"**

Education of Jewish children was mainly in the hands of "Melamdim" (religious teachers), and at the end of the nineteenth century the "Melamed" Moshe Sudarsky, very beloved by his pupils and honored by the entire public, became famous in Vilkovishk. Many pupils of the "Chadarim" and "Talmud Torah" continued their studies in the "Yeshivoth" in town or in neighboring towns.

In 1867 there was a Russian-Jewish school, with one of its teachers being Nachum-Tuvia London, who immigrated to America in 1895, published articles in the Hebrew press there and also participated in the writing of the English Jewish Encyclopedia. In 1879 there was a school directed by Rabiner E.Shereshevsky, and in 1903 he established a school with three classes, in which religious and general subjects were taught.

Part of the youth were fluent in the Hebrew language and showed great interest in the origins of the new Hebrew literature. An association called the "Distributors of Knowledge" (among the Jews) in Russia sent Hebrew books and periodicals which were received with excitement, and letters of thanks were sent to the distributors.

In those years the "Sopher" (Scribe) Moshe was famous in Vilkovishk and its surroundings, as a writer of Scriptures and as an artist who created more than 500 artistic "Mizrach" signs indicating the east, the direction towards Jerusalem, which were fixed on the eastern walls of many Jewish homes, and many "L'Shanah Tovah" signs. The climax of his work was a "Sidur" (prayer book) written by hand and ornamented, which he prepared for the "Home for the Aged" in town.

Among the Rabbis who served in Vilkovishk during this period were: Eliezer Landa (1791-1886); Ya'akov David Vilevsky (1845-1914); Zvi Hirsh Mah-Yafith (1840-1919).

Among the "Dayanim" (Religious Judges) were Ya'akov Rabinovitz; Ya'akov Shpaier; Yehudah Yitshak Segal; Elchanan Haparush; Dov-Ber Kamaika; Chananyah Cohen.

Many welfare institutions were active in Vilkovishk: "Gemiluth Chasadim" (ran a "Pinkas" from 1800); "Maskil el Dal" (their "Pinkas" dates from 1880) giving loans to the needy without interest and small payments for returning the money; "Mathan BeSeter" which helped people whose economic situation had deteriorated and who were embarrassed to ask for help; "Maoth Chitim" provided the needy with necessities for "Pesach". In 1910 all four institutions were united into one big institution "Tsedaka Gedolah". "Hachnasath Kalah" helped poor brides; "Linath haTsedek" supplied poor passers-by with food and accommodation; "Bikur Cholim" helped needy patients and sent them doctors and medicines. There were also Jewish public baths and several "Mikve". In 1912 the community built a magnificent "Home for the Aged" with a lovely garden.

Zionist activity had started in the eighties of the nineteenth century, and expressed itself in publicity and fund raising for the settlement of Eretz-Yisrael. Yitshak Eliezer Izersky, a pharmacist, immigrated to Eretz-Yisrael in the seventies of the eighteenth century and opened a shop of medicines in Yaffo. Vilkovishk Jews who immigrated to Eretz-Yisrael at that time were Rabbi Zevulun

Charlap (died in Jerusalem in 1898) and Adinah Cahansky (arrived in 1902), who opened a restaurant in Rishon leZion which became a meeting place for writers and workers' leaders. She published articles in the periodical "Hapoel HaTzair" and was a member of the local council.

In the old cemetery of Jerusalem there are three tombstones of Vilkovishk Jews: Zeev-Wolf son of David (died in 1878); Yitshak son of Moshe HaCohen (died in 1888); Zvi son of Aharon HaCohen (died in 1899).

The "Zion" society in town, headed by pharmacist Fainberg, had 400 members in 1899. At the regional conference of Zionist Societies, which took place in 1899 in Vilna, Rabbi Zvi Mah-Yafith participated as delegate from Vilkovishk. On "Chol HaMoed Succoth" 1903 the "Center of the Zionist Societies of Suvalk Gubernia" gathered in Vilkovishk and there drafted regulations for the societies' activities, which were adopted. In 1901-1902 about 200 "Shekalim" (membership card of the Zionist organization) were sold in town. At that time 500 shares of the so-called "Colonial Bank" (The Jewish Colonial Trust Ltd., established by Dr. Herzl at the second Zionist Congress in 1899, the predecessor of the Anglo-Palestine Bank), each of one pound, were sold in Vilkovishk. In the summer of 1913, before the 11<sup>th</sup> Zionist Congress, a conference of Zionist Societies, gathered in Suvalk with the participation of a delegate from Vilkovishk.

During these years the "Tseirei Zion" and "Poalei Zion-Smol" parties acted in town and were a counter weight to the ant-Zionist "Bund".

During WW1 Vilkovishk passed several times from one administration to another, the Jews suffering from abuse and maltreatment by Russian soldiers, and many left. During the German occupation (1915-1918) the Jews, like every one else, suffered from the various restrictive edicts of occupation rule and Jewish community life was paralyzed. The Jewish Bendet Rabinovitz was the mayor of Vilkovishk during these years.



**A view of Vilkovishk with the Old Synagogue in the background**

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*Last updated by JA on November 19, 2006*

# During the Period of Independent Lithuania

(1918- 1940)

## Society and Economy

When the German occupation ended after the war and the Lithuanian state was established, Vilkovishk 's Jews started to return home. The economic situation of the returning residents was very bad and they needed help. A Jewish relief committee was established in Vilna which provided financial help to needy communities in Lithuania (see attached document written still in German - Wladislawow is the old name of Kudirkos Naumiestis).

Das jüdische  
**ZENTRAL-UNTERSTÜTZUNGSKOMITEE**  
für das Gebiet Ob-Ost  
Wilna, Benediktinerstr. 4.

10931  
Wilna, den 15 Januar 1919

34

An  
das Kreis-Unterstützungskomitee  
in Wilkowitzki

Wir übersenden Ihnen durch Ihren Bevollmächtigten Herrn  
Brucker den Betrag von  
Mk. 8325,- in Worten achttausenddreihundertfünfundzwanzig  
zur Verteilung wie folgt:  
Mk. 4600 für <sup>den Kreis</sup> Wilkowitzki von der V. Verteilung  
500,- für die Rabbiner des Kreises Wilkowitzki  
1000,- für den Kreis Wilkowitzki von der VI. Vert.  
1725,- für den Kreis Wladislawow von der V. Vertl.  
500,- für den Kreis Wladislawow von der VI. Vertl.  
Mk. 8325,-

Wir bitten bei der ersten Möglichkeit um den Empfang des Geldes  
zu bestätigen und zeichnen

hochachtungsvoll

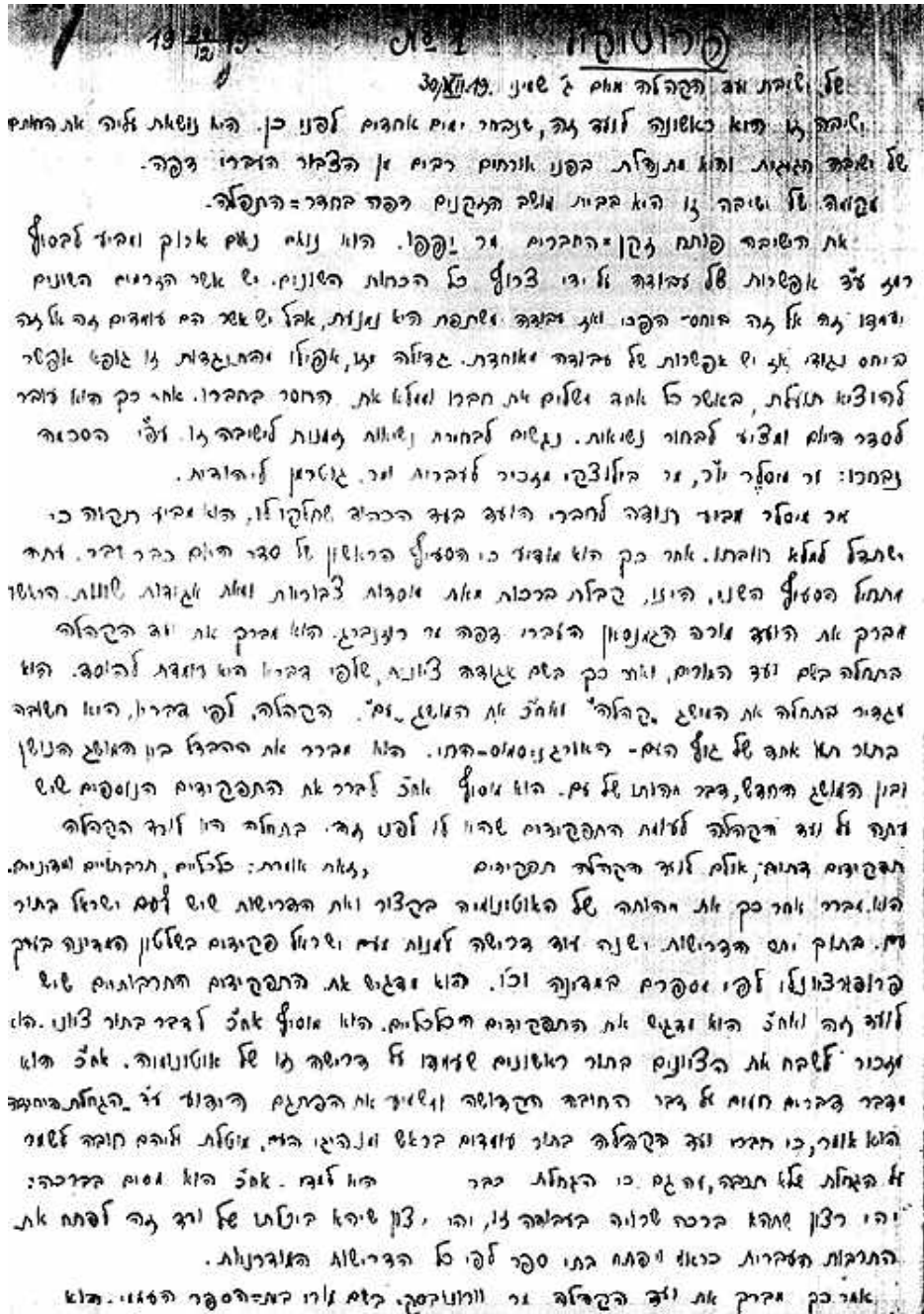
Das jüdische  
Zentral-Unterstützungskomitee  
für das Gebiet Ob-Ost  
Wilna, Benediktinerstr. 4.

J. A.  
Sekretär

The autonomy law issued by the government regarding minorities in Lithuania, including Jews, gave substantial encouragement to social and economic life. Elections for the community committee took place in 1919 and the two workers parties, "Poalei Zion" and the "Bund" won an absolute majority. The first meeting of the

committee took place on December 30, 1919, with Misler being elected chairman, and because the protocols were written both in Hebrew and in Yiddish, Bilotsky was elected as the Hebrew secretary and Guterman as the Yiddish secretary

(see below for the document written in Hebrew).



The first page of the first meeting of the Community Committee

In these years the signs on Jewish shop were written in Lithuanian and Hebrew or Yiddish, but after a short time they were smeared



over at night with tar.

The committee was active until the end of 1925 when the autonomy was annulled by the nationalist government who took over the rule in the state. During the years of its existence the committee collected taxes as required by law and was in charge of all aspects of community life.

At the elections for the municipal council, which took place in 1921, 11 Jews out of 21 council members were elected, in the 1924 elections there were 12 Jews in a council of 24 members, and a Jew officiated as Chairman of the District Council. In 1931, 8 out of 12 council members elected were Jews: Avraham Liudvinovsky, Bendet Rabinovitz, Shlomo Reizen, Ya'akov Rozenholtz, Reuven Haskel, Yosef Kabaker, Avraham Makovsky and Mordechai Zimansky. But in the 1934 election only 6 Jews were elected, out of 12 council members. Meir Varshavsky, the Deputy Mayor and treasurer of the municipality for many years, was also a Jew. In 1936 there were 7 Jews among the 19 employees of the municipality. Among 110 government officials there was 1 Jew.

According to the first survey arranged in Lithuania in 1923, there were 7,263 people in Vilkovishk, including 3,206 Jews (44 %).

When conditions stabilized the Jews started to rehabilitate their businesses and to establish new enterprises, but the town did not return to the status it had before WW1. The brush industry, which had maintained hundreds of families, became more and more restricted, until by 1935 this branch only employed about 50 workers, who also suffered from labor conflicts with their employers. The reason for this crisis was the shortage of raw materials in Lithuania and the prohibition of export by the USSR, who was the main supplier of bristles.

Another reason for the deterioration of Vilkovishk 's economy was the construction of the railway line Kazlu Ruda-Marijampole-Kalvarija- Alytus, which transferred economic activity from Vilkovishk to Marijampole. The annulment of the autonomy and the seizure of rule by the Nationalist party in 1926 also caused a deterioration of conditions for Jews in Vilkovishk. The new rule encouraged the establishment of Lithuanian consumer cooperatives in order to compete with the Jewish merchants and also imposed heavy taxes on them. The total closure of the border with Poland cut off trade with this country and land reform which was carried

out by the government took away part of Jewish owned land, adding to the worsening of economic conditions of Vilkovishk 's Jews.

Despite this the Jews established new enterprises, such as for the extraction of oil, for soap, cigarettes, a flour mill, a printing press etc., and with all the difficulties the number of Jews in Vilkovishk did not decrease. Only a part of the youth immigrated to Eretz Yisrael or moved to other towns in Lithuania.

According to the 1931 government survey of shops in the state, Vilkovishk had 154 shops, including 130 owned by Jews (84%). The partition according to the type of business is given in the table below:

<b>Type of the business</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>Owned by Jews</b>
Groceries	14	13
Grains and Flax	11	10
Butcher's shops and Cattle Trade	17	12
Restaurants and Taverns	19	10
Food Products	9	9
Beverages	6	6
Textile Products and Furs	22	21
Leather and Shoes	9	9
Tobacco and Cigarettes	1	1
Haberdashery and Home Utensils	11	11
Medicine and Cosmetics	4	2
Watches, Jewels and Optics	3	3
Bicycles and Sewing	2	1

Machines		
Tools and Steel Products	6	6
Building Materials and Furniture	2	2
Heating Materials	8	8
Overland Transportation	3	2
Stationary and Books	2	1
Miscellaneous	5	3

According to the same survey Vilkovishk had 50 light industry factories, 42 of them owned by Jews (86%), as can be seen in the following table:

<b>Type of the Factory</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>Jewish owned</b>
Metal Workshops, Power Plants	3	2
Headstones, Bricks	1	0
Chemical Industry: Spirits, Soaps	4	4
Textile: Wool, Flax, Knitting	2	2
Tar Industry	1	0
Paper Industry: Printing Presses	2	2
Beverage. Cigarettes	13	10
Dresses, Footwear	5	5
Leather Industry: Production, Cobbling	2	2
Barber Shops and others	17	15

Fragments of the governmental Survey of Shops in Vilkaviskis District in 1931

**Cloth**

VILKAVISKIO APSKR.

*Blagoslovenskienė S.*, Kybartai, Žydu g. 6.  
*Berenšteinaitė Chana*, Pilviškiai, Turgavietė 2.  
*Blochus Ch.*, Kybartai, Sinagogos 7.  
*Černyševskienė Chana*, Vilkaviskis.  
*Eisikis Ch.*, Vilkaviskis, Gedimino g. 11.  
*Elsonas Mavoša*, Pilviškiai, Turgaus g. 9.  
*Evizonas Mironas*, Virbalis, Vilniaus g. 46.  
*Fambergienė Rochā*, Vilkaviskis, Turgavietė 14.  
*Fainbergas Ch.*, Vilkaviskis, Gedimino g. 2.  
*Freinbergas Norikomas*, Virbalis, Turgavietė 12.  
*Finkelšteinsienė Ch.*, Pilviškiai, Turgavietė 16.  
*Frūmanienė Gitel*, Vilkaviskis, Turgavietė.  
*Frūmanas Vulfas*, Pilviškiai, Turgavietė 12.  
*Garbas Giršas*, Virbalis, Vilniaus g. 83.  
*Geršteinis B.*, Pilviškiai, Turgavietė 22.  
*Gitelvičius Jekas*, Virbalis, Vilniaus g. 49.  
*Gochenbergas Samueelis*, Virbalis, Vilniaus g. 63.  
*Goldšteiniene Dvora*, Virbalis, Vilniaus g. 44.  
*Guntorius J.*, Bartinkai.  
*Gurvičienė N.*, Vilkaviskis, Vytauto g. 17.  
*Chazons Ovešjus*, Vilkaviskis, Turgavietė 16.  
*Ironienė D.*, Vilkaviskis, Turgavietė 1.  
*Jablons Pšechis*, Pilviškiai, Turgavietė 3.  
*Jasvenienė Chaja ir Jasvenas*, Kybartai, Senapilės 55.  
*Kaplani B. ir G.*, Vilkaviskis, Vytauto g. 7.  
*Kaplaniene Judd*, Turgavietė 6.  
*Laksienė Jochoeda*, Vilkaviskis, Turgavietė 20.  
*Lupranskienė Riva*, Vilkaviskis, Kestučio g. 5.  
*Lavitus E.*, Kybartai, Vištyčio g. 6.  
*Lebertavičius Jonas*, Gražiškiai.  
*Lipieus Abramus*, Vilkaviskis, Turgavietė 17.  
*Mikliauskis Josefis*, Vištytis, Bažnyčios g. 13.  
*Mejerovičius Ošeris*, Vilkaviskis, Kestučio 11.  
*Mileva S.*, Kybartai, Senapilės 59.  
*Olkenickis S.*, Virbalis, Vilniaus g. 41.  
*Orlinskis J. D.*, Virbalis, Turgavietė 12a.  
*Petrulis V. ir Galpotas*, Vilkaviskis, Gedimino g. 8.  
*Ryckis A. ir Mulnavičius S.*, Virbalis, Turgavietė 16.  
*Rubinozienė Dora*, Vilkaviskis, Turgavietė 8.  
*Seinanskis*, Kybartai, Senapilės g. 83.  
*Sluckis Aronas*, Vilkaviskis, Turgavietė 7.  
*Svaraus Jekas*, Pilviškiai, Turgavietė 8.  
*Trikašai Peša ir Aronas*, Vilkaviskis, Turgavietė 16.  
*Vladislavovskienė C.*, Pilviškiai, Jurkų g.  
*Volovickis Simsonas*, Vilkaviskis, Kudirkos g. 2.  
*Zedachienė Rochilė*, Vilkaviskis, Vytauto g. 13.  
*Želka Juozas*, Gražiškiai.

**Grocery**

VILKAVISKIO APSKR.

*Arongauzas Mordcheis*, Vilkaviskis, Sinagogos k. 6.  
*Balberickis Abramus*, Vilkaviskis, Vytauto g. 25.  
*Bergneris V.*, Kybartai, Senapilės g. 99.  
*Fainbergas Jakobas*, Vilkaviskis, Vytauto g. 27.  
*Geležianus Juozas*, Virbalis, Geležinkelio stotis.  
*Ginsburgas J. ir Scaras*, Kybartai, Sinagogos k. 6.  
*Heimanas Tobijas*, Kybartai, Senapilės gt.  
*Heimanytė Ešana*, Virbalis, Vilniaus g. 19.  
*Jurkšaitis M.*, Kybartai, Naujakurių g. 54.  
*Lakauskis Sanderis*, Virbalis, Vištyčio g. 19.  
*Levinsonas Giršas*, Vilkaviskis, Kestučio g. 18.  
*Levinsonas I.*, Vilkaviskis, V. Kudirkos g. 18.  
*Losmanas ir Grosbardas*, Vilkaviskis, Kestučio g. 20.  
*Norkelūnas Viteas*, Kybartai, Algimanto g.  
*Okrovskis Judelis*, Virbalis, Gedimino g. 31.  
*Solskiai Br. ir B-ūs*, Pilviškiai, Turgavietė 3.  
*Samesas Isakas*, Virbalis, Vilniaus g. 11.  
*Vinkelšteinas Šiomos*, Vilkaviskis, Vilniaus g. 23.  
*Volbergas Berelis*, Vilkaviskis, Vytauto g. 20.

**Candies and Chocolate**

VILKAVISKIO APSKR.

*Demantas Abramus-Leizeris*, Vilkaviskis, Vytauto g. 16.  
*Kiliene Sara*, Virbalis, Gedimino g. 1.  
*Perstunskis M.*, Vilkaviskis, Vytauto g. 46.  
*Siforovičius Isaakas*, Vilkaviskis, Gedimino g. 16.  
*Teitelbaumas*, Vilkaviskis, Žaliumynų g. 3.

**Soap Factories**

VILKAVISKIO APSKR.

"Inkaras", *Zelbergas, A ir Zilberis P.*, Vilkaviskis, Kestučio g. 9.  
*Zilberis P.*, Vilkaviskis, Stoties g. 11.

By 1937 Vilkovishk counted among its working population 87 Jewish artisans, as follows: 16 tailors, 11 bakers, 10 butchers, 10 barbers, 7 shoemakers, 4 hatters, 3 watchmakers, 2 seamstresses, 2 painters, 2 tinsmiths, 2 leatherworkers, 2 stitchers, 1 rope maker, 1 carpenter, 1 photographer, 1 oven builder, 1 glazier, 1 electrician and 10 others. Most of them were organized in "The Association of Jewish Artisans" which had a club and a loan fund.

In addition to the merchants, industrialists and artisans there were 35 families engaged in agriculture. There were also 7 buses, 3 of them owned by Jews, and out of the 4 taxis 1 belonged to a Jew (in 1935).

As from 1926 the manager of the power station owned by the municipality was the Jew Meir Varshavsky, who was praised for his work, as well as a Jewish mechanic who worked in the station. At the end of 1935 both were dismissed, the employers using the excuse of "restrictions". The district engineer was also Jewish.

An important factor in the economic life of the town was the "Volksbank" established with the help of the "Joint" in 1928, when it had 718 members. By 1935 it had only 368 members: 79 shop owners, 56 artisans, 48 merchants, 37 workers, 32 free profession owners, 31 agrarians, 21 cart owners, 12 industrialists, 8 clerks and 44

miscellaneous members. The capital of the bank was then 55,000 Litas (1\$=6 Litas). Loans to the amount of 300,000 Litas were given and the total sum of deposits came to 170,000 Litas. Wholesalers used the services of the private bank of Yosef Sperling.

In 1939 there were 190 phone owners in town, 64 of them belonging to Jews and Jewish institutions.

### **Education and Culture.**

Instead of the traditional educational system of "Chadarim" and "Talmud Torah" a modern Hebrew educational chain was established. It included a kindergarten, an elementary school of the "Tarbut" network, a religious school of the "Yavneh" organisation and a high school.

The high school was established in 1919 at the initiative of a founders committee whose members were intelligent Jewish merchants, advocates of the Hebrew language who cared for the education of their children. They were Ya'akov Chmilevsky, A.Zeiberg, A.Volberg, Ya'akov Solomin, Peretz Silver, Yosef Sperling, Shimshon Volovitzky, Neta Teitelbaum and Neta Matz.

In August 1919 hundreds of children started their studies in this high school, where all subjects were taught in Hebrew with Sephardi pronunciation. The first director was Dr. M.Cohen and after him came Dr.Tsemach Feldstein, Dr.Yehoshua Fridman, Dr.Moshe Yardeni, Shlomo Trachtenberg, the last director being Shraga Halperin.

Among the teachers were M.J.Mendelson-Mishkutz, Dr.A.Rozenberg, B.Meshorer, Dr.Yehudah Holtzman-Haetzyoni, J.Strelitzky, D.Zilberstein, A.M.Tshertok and others.



**The teachers of the Hebrew High School**

**Sitting from right: B.Meshorer; Dr.Cohen; Dr.Tsemah Feldstein; Dr.Y.Haetsyoni; Lithuanian teacher.**

**Standing from right:Y.Zilberstein; -----; M.Y.Mendelson; -----; Shimon Zak; Hayim Vilkovishky.**



**The invitation for the celebration of the tenth anniversary of the High School and the laying of the cornerstone for the new building of the High School and the Vocational School, June**



**20, 1929**

## **The tenth anniversary of the Hebrew High School**

**Sitting from right: A.Volovitzky (delegate of the pupils); Dr. Cohen (Teacher of Science); Rabbi Grin; Dr.Sakenis (Education Minister); Head of the department of high schools in the ministry; Dr. Yardeni ( headmaster); Y.M.Mendelson (lecturing).**

The first graduation class completed its studies in 1921 and the Lithuanian government representative at the matriculation examinations was Dr.Yosef Berger (Harari), the director of the Education Department of the Jewish ministry. This was the only occasion during the Jewish autonomy in Lithuania when the government authorized a Jew to participate in the matriculation examinations and to sign matriculation certificates on its behalf.



*Picture supplied by Shmeriyahu Pustopedsky*

### **A class of the high school 1926 or 1927**

**First line sitting from left: Nechama Openheim, Ya'akov Cohen, Rachel Michnotzly, Sheine Stalovsky, David Feinberg, Frida Melamdovitz**

**Second line sitting from left: Aryeh Balberishky, Shmeriyahu (Zunia) Pustopedsky, Nechama Rabinovitz, Teacher Mishkutz, Sarah Neishtot, Goldshmit, Imanuel Albom.**

**Third line standing from left: Shifrah Sider, Mordechai Shershenevsky,**

**Hayim Srolevitz, Yehudith Shperling, Alter Hayat, Frida Hayat, Reuven Levin,**

**Hanah Tchernotzky, Meir Tabatchnik.**



*Picture supplied by Aryeh Kahana*

### **High School Class with the gymnastics teacher Starkovsky - 1931**

The school was financed by tuition fees paid by the pupils, but due to the deterioration in the economic situation of Vilkovishk Jews many of them had difficulty in paying the high fees. For several years the Lithuanian government supported the school, and in 1929 the cornerstone for a new building of the High and the Vocational schools was laid (see the invitation for the celebration below). The building was erected thanks to donations of a Vilkovishk Jew who had immigrated to London named Krovelsky of the "Joint" organization, and of the Sobolevitz Brothers from Vilkovishk. The new building housed both the High and Vocational schools, where subjects of metal and electricity were taught. The vocational school was connected to the "ORT" network and teaching languages were Yiddish and Hebrew.

In the middle of the thirties, after the Nazis seized power in Germany, a group of Jewish youths from Germany arrived at the school to learn a vocation prior to their "Aliyah" to Eretz Yisrael

The director and teacher of this school was for several years (1929- 1933) Aryeh Volovitzky, born in 1908 in Vilkovishk. He immigrated to Eretz-Yisrael, where he changed his name to Ankorion. He was a lawyer (Dr. Jur.) and worked in the public sector, later being elected to the "Kneseth" on behalf of the Israeli Labor party.

Many of the graduates of the high school continued their studies in



the Lithuanian University in Kovno and also abroad. Some of them immigrated to Eretz Yisrael where they became doctors, lawyers, teachers, merchants, Kibbutz members etc., all loyal to Jewish culture and to the spirit of Lithuanian Jewry.

In 1935 there were 120 pupils in the high school, its conditions worsening from year to year, but none the less it existed until Soviet rule in Lithuania in 1940.

In Vilkovishk two Hebrew books were printed: "Speak Hebrew - about the question of Speaking Hebrew", by M.Yardeni 1932, and "The History of the new Hebrew Literature, Vol. 1, the 'Haskalah' literature in Central Germany (1784-1829)" by Ch.N.Shapira, 1940, a lecturer of Judaica in the Lithuanian university, who was murdered by the Nazis in the Kovno Ghetto).

In the years 1918-1919, at the initiative of the "Bund" and "Poalei Zion-Smol" who dominated the community committee, many cultural institutions were established. They organized the "Kultur Lige" (League for Culture), a popular university, a Yiddish school, a consumer cooperative, the trade union of the brush workers, which became the center of all brush workers in Lithuania and also a sick fund. All these institutions existed till 1926, when they were closed together with the liquidation of autonomy, when the nationalist party began to rule in Lithuania.

In 1925 a branch of the association "Libhober fun Visen" (Supporters of Knowledge) was founded in Vilkovishk, which established a library with 1,500 books in Yiddish. Next to it was a reading room where lectures on different themes took place. There was also the Zionist-Socialist "Sirkin Society", which maintained a large library in Hebrew and Yiddish.

The Jewish theater from Kovno often presented its plays and so did the "Hebrew Studio", which existed only for a few years.

In March 1939 "The Artisans Association" arranged a big party in the big hall of the cinema, where the play "Two Kuni Lemel" was performed with great success.

There was also "The Society of Jewish ex-soldiers who fought for the independence of Lithuania" with its 25 members.

## **Zionist and Other Activities.**

During the autonomy the workers parties "Bund" and "Poalei Zion" dominated the Jewish public. At the head of the "Poalei Zion" party stood Efraim Bruker and his wife Rashel, the accountant Album and Yisrael Nitzevitz.

A delegate from VILKOVISHK participated in the regional conference of "Poalei-Zion" which took place in Suvalk in 1919.

The "Bund" was forced to stop its activities in 1921, where some of its members merged with the underground Communist party and others with the "Poalei Zion-Smol (Left)", which too was forced to disband after the nationalist party took over in Lithuania.

From the entire Yiddishists group in Vilkovishk there remained only the "Volkists" (populists), who stood for the use of the Yiddish language and opposed Zionism. Their organ of opinion was the daily newspaper "Volksblat" published in Kovno.

In those years the Zionist Vilkovishk with all its nuances became the dominating movement among VILKOVISHK Jews. All Zionist parties were active there: Z"S (Zionist-Socialist), Z"Z (Tseirei Zion) from the labor movement; the General Zionists; Mizrachi; Revisionists; WIZO (Women International Zionist Organization). The Zionist youth organizations who were active were: HeChalutz, HaShomer HaTsair, Betar.



*Picture supplied by Aryeh Kahana*

**Meeting of the "General Zionist HeChalutz" in Vilkovishk  
May 19, 1934**

**On the left side is the front of the Jewish "Home for the Aged"**



**Group "Pil" of "HaShomer HaTsair" 1925**

One can judge the state of mind among Vilkovishk Jews according to the results of the elections for the first Lithuanian Seimas (Parliament) which took place in October 1922: Zionists received 609 votes, Achduth (religious) 290 votes, and Democrats 92 votes. In the table below we can see how Vilkovishk Zionists voted for the different parties at six Zionist Congresses:

Congress Nr.	Year	Total Shkalim	Total Voters	Labor Party		Revisionists	Gen. Zionists A B		Grosmanists	Mizrachi
				Z"S	Z"Z					
14	1925	120	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--
15	1927	264	170	44	27	16	75	--	--	8
16	1929	664	268	102	17	83	61	--	--	5
17	1931	351	268	138	16	60	46	--	--	8
18	1933	---	724	498		151	60	--	5	10
19	1935	1,001	896	596		--	56	109	97	38

**The Z"S party, or as it was called later "The Eretz Yisrael Workers Movement" was very active in Vilkovishk in the thirties. The cultural/artistic parties this movement arranged would always attract large audiences. For example, in December 1934 in the hall of the Hebrew High School, a big party in honor of the "Histadrut" (Federation of Labor in**

Eretz-Yisrael) was arranged. The speakers on the history and the function of the "Histadrut" were: M.Varshavsky, M.Yarovsky, M.Karnovsky and Al.Varshavsky. Those who participated in the artistic part of the party were David Neishtot, Avraham Olvitzky and Y.Faktorovsky, and the organizer of the party was Avraham Vinderovitz. Among the excellent activists in Zionist and public work was Mrs. S.Litovitz, who immigrated to Eretz-Yisrael in the middle thirties.

In those years two "Kibbutzei Hachshara" (Training Kibbutzim) on behalf of "HeChalutz" and the General Zionists acted in Vilkovishk. Many of these "Chalutzim" made "Aliyah" and were among the founders of the Kibbutzim Beth-Zera, Givath-Brener, Dafna, Yagur, Tel-Yosef etc.



*Picture supplied by Aryeh Kahana*

**A group of "Chalutzim" from Germany with their local escorts at the Vilkovishk railway station before their departure to Eretz-Yisrael 1934**

Sport activities were carried out at "Maccabi" with its 168 members, "Bar-Kochva", "HaPoel", "Betar", and the Yiddishists "Y.A.K", which included football, gymnastics, bicycle riding, swimming and table tennis.

### **Religion and Welfare.**

The old synagogue and the other prayer houses which existed before the war, continued to fulfill their mission after most of Vilkovishk Jews returned home. All the societies for learning Judaism were active again as was the "Chevrah-Kadisha".

During all this period the Rabbi of the community was Eliyahu-

Aharon Grin (1875-1941), who was murdered in the Holocaust.

After the disbanding of the community committee in the middle twenties, the welfare activities were transferred to the "Ezrah" society, which together with the "Adath Yisrael" society had about 120 members who donated about 500 Litas per year. These societies helped the poor, arranged fund raisings (as for "Maoth Chitim" for Pesach) and also initiated special welfare activities.

The pride of the community was its "Home for the Aged" which also had a nursing department. Its budget was covered by donations and by a regular allowance from the municipality (2,000 Lit. per year).

The "OZE" organization dealt mainly with Jewish school children, and its clinic was open twice a week. The municipality supported it with 2,400 Lit. per year (1932).

The welfare institution "Maskil El Dal" who gave interest free loans to the needy, renewed its activity in 1918 at the initiative of J.M.Levinovitz, its director for many years.

The Community also cared for the Jewish soldiers who served in the infantry regiment stationed in Vilkovishk for Kosher food, especially during the Jewish holidays

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*Last updated by JA on December 15, 1999*

# **During World War II and Afterwards**

World War II started with the German invasion of Poland on the first of September 1939 and its consequences for Lithuanian Jews in general and Vilkovishk's Jews in particular were felt several months later.

In agreement with the Ribbentrop-Molotov treaty on the division of occupied Poland, the Russians occupied the Suvalk region, but after delineation of exact borders between Russia and Germany the Suvalk region fell into German hands. The retreating Russians allowed anyone who wanted to join them to move into their occupied territory, and indeed many young people left the area together with the Russians. The Germans drove the remaining Jews out of their homes in Suvalk and its vicinity, robbed them of their possessions, then directed them to the Lithuanian border, where they were left in dire poverty. The Lithuanians did not allow them to enter Lithuania and the Germans did not allow them to return. Thus they stayed in this swampy area in cold and rain for several weeks, until Jewish youths from the border villages smuggled them into Lithuania by various routes, with much risk to themselves. Altogether about 2,400 refugees passed through the border or infiltrated on their own, and were then dispersed in the Vilkovishk and Mariampol districts. Vilkovishk alone accommodated 300 refugees, among them tens of "Chalutzim", who received a warm welcome and loyal assistance for which Lithuanian Jews were famous. It should be mentioned that Vilkovishk Jews provided help to the refugees in spite of the fact that their own situation was continuously deteriorating.

In June 1940 Lithuania was annexed to the Soviet Union and became a Soviet Republic. Following new rules, the majority of the factories and shops belonging to the Jews of Vilkovishk were nationalized and commissars appointed to manage them. All the Zionist parties and youth organizations were disbanded, several of the activists being detained and Hebrew educational institutions were closed. Supply of goods decreased and, as a result, prices

soared. The middle class, mostly Jewish, bore most of the brunt and the standard of living dropped gradually. Five families and two bachelors were exiled to Siberia, the heads of these families being sentenced to 5-18 years of forced labour in the terrible Reshoti camps there. They were:

Uliamperl Yitzhak, with wife and son, blamed for being the owner of a nationalized factory, and who died in Reshoti;

Pustopedsky Shmeryahu (Zunia) with wife Liuba, blamed because he was a member of the Betar organization, survived Reshoti;

Zimansky Avraham (single), the same accusation, survived;

Starkovsky Ya'akov (single), the same accusation, died in Siberia;

Uliamperl Munia (with wife and two children), also blamed for being a Betar member, died in Reshoti;

Kovarsky Berl (with wife), accused of being a shop owner, died in Reshoti;

Goldberg Moshe (with wife and son), blamed for possessing a farm, died in exile.

At dawn on June 22, 1941, Vilkovishk was bombed by the German Air Force, the center of the town was ruined, and most of the Jewish houses including the old synagogue went up in flames. This was the beginning of the German invasion of the USSR. Most of the Jews who had fled from the bombed town returned and crowded together into the remaining undamaged houses. The German army entered Vilkovishk on the first day of the invasion, but the Lithuanian nationalists did not wait for orders from the Germans and started plotting against the Jews immediately. They robbed Jewish houses, guided Germans into Jewish houses and told them to take anything they wanted. Two days later, on June

24, 1941, all Jewish men were ordered to gather in the market place, from which they were sent in groups to various types of work, such as cleaning the streets of ruins, collecting dead Russian soldiers and burying them, and other duties for units of the German army. Some groups were sent to nationalized agricultural farms.

Because Vilkovishk was situated within 25 km of the German border, the decision on the fate of the Jews was handed over to the Gestapo in Tilzit, where an order was issued to clean the area of Jews and communists. Jews were ordered to wear a yellow patch on their garments and were forbidden to walk on sidewalks. Every day communists were hunted down, and this was used as a pretext to detain Jews, who had no contact with communist activities.

One night at the beginning of July, on orders from the Tilzit Gestapo, all Jewish men, except for the ill, were taken from their homes and led by Lithuanian policemen to the building of the Priests Seminar outside the town. There the policemen stood in two lines on both sides of the stairs, and the Jews had to walk between them where they were badly beaten with sticks and iron bars. Three men who tried to resist were killed immediately, one of them being Yosef Tchihak. They were buried in the yard of the Seminar.

After a week or so the men from the Seminar, which included the sick who had been left in town previously, were transferred to a barracks outside the town which was encircled with barbed wire and was proclaimed a Ghetto. A committee of four men was appointed - "The Committee of the Jews".

On July 27, 1941 the Ghetto was surrounded in force by Lithuanian guards. In order not to arouse panic and to prevent attempts to escape, the guards soothed the Jews, telling them that nothing bad would happen to them. The commander of the guard gathered 250 Jewish men, equipped them with spades, took them to the training yard of the barracks and ordered them to dig ditches. The explanation was that there was an urgent need to store oil tanks in the ground. The duplicity of this commander was so



shocking that he summoned one of the Jewish men, who had once dealt with oil issues, and asked him if the ditches would be suitable for that purpose. All the men returned home that evening.

The next day, July 28, 1941 (fourth of Av 5701) 800 men, including 65 non-Jewish Communists were taken to this yard, where they were ordered to remove their clothes, after which they were shot and buried in the previously prepared ditches. Back in town people could not believe that the men had been killed, as rumours were spread that the men had been transferred to another working place. Those women who still lived in town and came to visit their husbands bringing food parcels, approached the German commander asking about the fate of the men. He soothed their fears and received money and valuables from them, promising to clarify the whereabouts of their menfolk.

On the first of August all the women and children who still lived in town were forced to move to the barracks. Everyone was allowed to take belongings of up to 25 kg and 250 Rubel. The women immediately discovered the mass graves, despite the fact that the yard had been leveled and there were no signs left. The Lithuanian guard forbade the women to approach the site. There were two ditches in the yard, one 20 meters long and 5 m wide and the other 14 m long and 3 m wide, and near them another empty ditch.

On September 24, 1941 (third of Tishrei 5702 - Tsom Gedaliah) the women and children were murdered too. Many escaped but were caught later. Only two young sisters, from the Faktorovsky family survived and were hidden by a Lithuanian woman (named Juziene) in a small village 9 km from Vilkovishk. This woman saved the sisters for humane motives only, and did not receive any reward for her deed.

According to official Soviet data, 3,056 people were murdered in Vilkovishk by the Germans and their local helpers during June-September 1941.

After the war, the few Vilkovishk survivors found the site of the

mass graves deserted, with cows grazing on them, and grave robbers having ransacked the graves looking for gold teeth. After many requests the local Soviet authorities finally agreed to erect a fence around the graves. At the beginning of the nineties a monument was erected on this site, with the following inscription in Yiddish and Lithuanian:

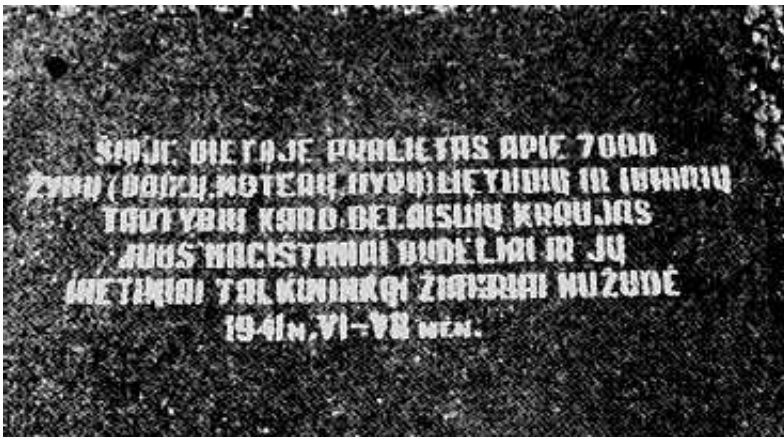
**"Here the blood of about 7000 Jews (men, women and children), Lithuanians and war prisoners of various nationalities, was spilt, savagely murdered by the Nazi murderers and their local helpers in the sixth and seventh months of 1941".**



**The Monument on the mass graves**



**The inscription in Yiddish**



### The inscription in Lithuanian

In 1986, former Vilkovishk Jews in Israel erected a memorial monument for the community of Vilkovishk in the Holon cemetery. (See below)



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## **Appendix I.**

A partial List of Personalities born in Vilkovishk.

**Zevulun Harlap** (1840-1898) - immigrated as a young man to  
Eretz Yisrael, later a "Dayan" in Jerusalem;

**Moshe Leibovitz-Maimon** (1860-?), a well known painter,  
graduated from the Art Academy of St.Petersburg in 1883, his  
famous two paintings are "The Anusim" (The Marranos) and "The  
Hashmonaim";

**Miriam Mergel-Mozeson** (Verzhbelovsky)(1841-1920) - writer  
and translator from English into Hebrew;

**Gorge Margalith** (1853-1924) - researcher of the Bible, orientalist  
in England;

**Brothers Eliyahu** (1863-1932) and **Levi** (1866-1938) **sons of  
Shmuel Levin-Epstein** - Zionist activists, publishers and printers

in Eretz Yisrael;

**Leon Kameika** (1864-1957), son of the Rabbi of VILKOVISHK Dov-Ber Kameika, journalist and publisher of many Yiddish newspaper in the USA, from 1904 one of the publishers of "Morgen Journal";

**Yehudah Kenigsberg** (1853-?) - in the USA from 1893, published many articles in the Yiddish and Hebrew press;

**Dr. Eliyahu Sintovsky** (1880-1943) - in the USA from 1914, journalist and writer, published articles in the "Bund" press in Vilna and New-York;

**Dr. Shmuel Levin** (1883-1941) - Headmaster of the Yiddish high school in Kovno and one of the central personalities of the psychological-pedagogic division of YIVO, published articles on this subject in the Yiddish newspaper "Folksblat" of Kovno, murdered in Kovno Ghetto;

**Dr. Shmuel Melamed** (1885-1938), from 1914 in USA, journalist and writer, published books on philosophical themes in German, English, Hebrew and Yiddish;

**Adv. Michael Gerber** - was the president of the Zionist Organization of Canada;

**Menachem Krakovsky** (1869-1930) - Rabbi, journalist and author of rabbinical literature;

**Yosef Bloch** (1871-1936) - socialist leader in Germany;

**Ana Rosental** (1872-1941) - of the leaders of "Bund";

**Dr. Nachman Rachmilevitz** (1876-1941) - active in "Agudath Yisrael" party, Deputy Minister for commerce and finance in the first Lithuanian government, active in the autonomy institutions, member of the Seimas and later consul of Lithuania in Tel-Aviv;

**Dr. Ari Ankorion** (Volovitzky) (1908-1986), teacher, journalist, lawyer, member of the 5th, 6th, 7th and 8th "Knesseth" on behalf

of the Israeli Labor party.

**Mordechai (Max) Pustopedsky** (1899-1941) a well known figure in Vilkovishk, published a poem in Yiddish "Erev Pesach in Vilkovishk" which made a great impression in town;

**Dr. M.Dembovsky**, murdered in VILKOVISHK in 1941, was a doctor in the cavalry of Budioni at the time of the Russian revolution, published his memoirs in Yiddish "Mit di Kozaken iber Bukovine un Galitzie" (With the Cossacks through Bukovina and Galitzia), Vilkovishk 1923;

**Hayim Varshavsky** (1907-1944), member of the center of the Zionist-Socialist party, murdered in Dachau;

**A.M.Filipovsky** publisher and editor of the periodicals "Di Velt" (The World), Vilkovishk 1934, "Di Yiddishe Velt" (The Jewish World), Vilkovishk 1935.

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