

Lithuanians haunted by Holocaust

New cases are being brought against those who allegedly carried out the slaughter.

By Fen Montaigne
INQUIRER STAFF WRITER

SEIRIJAI, Lithuania — Fifty-one years after the Jews of this farming region were exterminated on two warm September days, residents here are haunted by the memories of their neighbors being led to their deaths.

People here still talk about the young boy who was one of 953 Jews massacred in the village on Sept. 11, 1941. Domiciele Daugirdiene, whose husband drove a cart of elderly Jews to the forest and witnessed the killings, described the boy.

"He was Jewish, but he had been raised by a Lithuanian woman," recalled Daugirdiene, 71. "And as he was about to be shot he crossed himself and pleaded, 'Don't shoot! I am a Catholic! I can say prayers! I can go to church! Don't shoot me!' And Maskaliunas (the mayor) went up to him and shot him and he fell into the pit."

Twelve miles away, in the village of Leipalingis, Ona Rudzinskiene cannot shake two images. One was the sight of men, stripped of all valuables, including belts, having to hold up their pants as they were beaten and prodded by

Lithuanian guards. And then there was the scene the next day at the pit where 155 Jews were shot. There, near a field of rye, she found dozens of notes and addresses tossed away by the victims moments before their deaths. To this day she regrets that, out of fear, she did not pick them up.

What happened in this small patch of southern Lithuania occurred throughout the Baltic states, Ukraine, Russia and Belarus in the early stages of the German invasion of the Soviet Union. Now, with the opening of state and KGB archives following the demise of the U.S.S.R., new details of the Jewish genocide are coming out, and new cases are being brought against people who allegedly carried out the slaughter.

The U.S. Justice Department last month filed a denaturalization complaint against Jonas Stelmokas, saying the Lithuanian immigrant — now a retired architect living in Lansdowne — "advocated, assisted, participated or acquiesced in the murder and other persecution of Jews and other unarmed civilians in Lithuania." The complaint does not cite specific in-

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Stase Kubertaviciene, 60, attends a mass grave at Simnas near the Holocaust monument. Her family hid two Jewish brothers from the Nazis.

July 27, 1992, Stelmokas, Fen Montaigne

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