THE VANISHED WORLD OF LITHUANIAN JEWS

Edited by Alvydas Nikžentaitis,
Stefan Schreiner & Darius Staliūnas

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of Lithuanian Jews

On the Boundary of Two Worlds
Identity, Freedom, and Moral Imagination in the Baltics

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Preface

Since 1990 Lithuanian political culture has demonstrated a new political willingness and ability to accommodate minorities and their languages and cultures. Lithuanian mainstream politics has had much success in embracing, or at least not alienating, the Polish, Russian, Ukrainian, and Belarusian minorities.

We could mention here some minor tensions with Lithuanian Poles in the late 1980s that reflected the dramatic history of Vilnius and its surrounding area in the twentieth century, but this is no longer the case – Poland and Lithuania recently reached an historic breakthrough in their relations to become very close allies and strategic partners.

At the same time, Lithuania has even become a sort of refuge against censorship and political persecution in neighbouring lands. As for the most fragile and vulnerable stateless cultures and minorities deeply grounded in Lithuanian history, these are more or less at home in present-day Lithuania. The existence of small groups, such as Tatars, Karaims, and Roma, does not, for example, cause conflicts.

Things are, however, far more complicated with regard to the Jewish minority. The problem for Lithuanian Jews is that quite a large sector of Lithuanian society – including not a few representatives of the intelligentsia – is still inclined to consider the Jews as collectively responsible for the mass killings and deportations of civilians, as well as for other atrocities committed during the Soviet occupation on the eve of the Second World War.

This represents the disgraceful adoption of the Nazi rhetoric that equated Communism with the Jews. In an effort to modify the charges that Lithuanians participated in the mass killings of Jews in 1941 and after, some Lithuanians have spoken of "two genocides," or – as some Jewish writers have called it – "symmetry" in the suffering of both peoples.

The notorious theory attributing the disasters that befell Lithuania to Lithuanian Jews, which has been deeply embedded up to now in Lithuanian political discourse and popular consciousness, regards with a Jewish segment of the Soviet regime as having been decisive. At the same time, this theory includes considerations of allegedly subversive and treacherous activities on the eve of the Second World War of local Jewry, with the latter perceived as lacking in loyalty, patriotism, and civic-mindedness.

Hence, a derivative theory two genocides developed, which provides an assessment of the Holocaust and of local collaboration with the Nazis in terms of the revenge for the Soviet genocide of local population. It is

little wonder, then, that the theory of two genocides, which is just another term for the theory of the collective guilt of the Jews, has been qualified by Tomas Venclova, a prominent Lithuanian poet and literary scholar who teaches literature at Yale University, as "troglodytic," thus characterising people who are inclined to practice it as moral troglodytes. Regrettably, Lithuania has failed to bring war criminals to justice and provide an unambiguous legal assessment of those Lithuanians who were active in the Holocaust.

Also problematic is the parallel existence of Lithuanian and Jewish cultures, and it has been so for centuries. Antisemitism is by no means the only attitude to the Jews that can be ascribed accurately to Lithuanians. The predominant attitude may better be described as insensitivity to, and defensiveness about, inconvenient aspects of the past. The alienation of the Jews from their host countries and their cultures is more likely to have been a tragedy for the whole of Central and Eastern Europe, and should not be seen as confined to Lithuania.

The parallel existence of Lithuanian and Jewish cultures may therefore be regarded as the outcome of the afore-mentioned alienation. These two cultures may never have achieved mutual understanding, to say nothing of achieving an interpretative framework within which to embrace or critically question one another. Prior to the Second World War, Lithuania was famous for its very large Jewish community (about 250,000 Jews lived in Lithuania; only 20,000 survived the Holocaust).

The Lithuanian capital, Vilnius – occupied by Poland from 1920 to 1939 – was known around the world as the Jerusalem of the North, and many internationally eminent Jews lived in or were from Lithuania, among them the philosophers Emmanuel Lévinas and Aron Gurwitsch, the painters Chaïm Soutine (a close friend of Amedeo Modigliani in Paris) and Arbit Blatas, the sculptor Jacques Lipchitz, the violinist Jascha Heifetz, and the art critic Bernard Berenson, one of the most sophisticated twentieth-century students of the Italian Renaissance.

Yet none of these individuals was ever considered a significant actor in Lithuanian culture – despite the fact that it was they who inscribed Lithuania's name on the intellectual and cultural map of the twentieth-century world.

Why? The answer is very simple: the Russian-speaking and Yiddish-speaking Jewish community in Lithuania was always alienated from the Lithuanian inter-war intelligentsia, which, for its part, cultivated linguistic and cultural nationalism both as a means of self-definition, and as a way of distinguishing rurally oriented Lithuanian compatriots (that is, the organic community; in Ferdinand Tönnies's terms, *Gemeinschaft*) from

"rootless," cosmopolitan urban professionals (the mechanised, fragmented, diversified society, i.e., *Gesellschaft*).

Despite the fact that many Lithuanian intellectuals – among whom Jonas Basanavičius, Vincas Krėvė-Mickevičius and Juozas Tumas-Vaižgantas should be mentioned first – and ordinary people were sympathetic to them, Jews and other aliens were excluded from the Lithuanian cultural/intellectual mainstream. The specifically Lithuanian intelligentsia decided who belonged to the nation, which they perceived as the embodiment of a historical-cultural project, rather than as empirically identifiable social reality.

Yet a tiny minority of Lithuanian intellectuals showed, in recent years, a genuine interest in the history of, and a great sensitivity toward, their Jewish fellow citizens. The establishing in the year 2000 of the House of Memory in Lithuania, which is a non-government institution inspired by the Beth Shalom Holocaust Memorial Centre in Britain and which includes some public figures, is therefore a sign of hope for the future.

The names of Lithuanian public intellectuals who raised their voices against all manifestations of antisemitism in Lithuania – the names of the film critic Linas Vildžiūnas, the journalist Rimvydas Valatka, the educator Vytautas Toleikis, the Calvinist priest Tomas Šernas, the theatre critic Irena Veisaitė, and the journalist and film script writer Pranas Morkus, among others – signify the arrival of a new epoch and also the emergence of a new moral culture in Lithuania.

It would be naïve to deny the fact that antisemitism is still persistent and strong in present-day Lithuania. Its ugly face tends to appear in the guise of the most simplistic and primitive versions of anti-Communism, not to mention the myriad ways it lurks behind the conspiracy theories of society of various shades. At the same time, it would be inaccurate, if not unfair, to insist on the failure of modern Lithuanian politics and culture to face up antisemitism and the Holocaust in Lithuania.

In the brightest pronouncements and literary works of Lithuanian émigrés, the Holocaust had become an inseparable part, not to say wound, of modern Lithuanian identity. After the Second World War, the Lithuanian émigré poet Algimantas Mackus depicted the tragic fate of a Jewish boy in a moving poem, while another Lithuanian émigré writer, Antanas Škėma, joined the theme of the Holocaust with his novel, *Izaokas*.

Together with other liberal-minded émigré writers, scholars, and artists, Mackus and Škėma belonged to *Santara-Šviesa* (Concord-Light), a liberal, secular-humanist Lithuanian cultural movement in the USA

whose members initiated wide political and intellectual debates concerning the role of Lithuanian collaborators of the Nazis in the Holocaust. They also opposed the poisonous rhetoric and astonishing insensitivity with which not a few conservative Lithuanian émigrés assessed the greatest tragedy of Lithuania.

Out of this clash of sensibilities, came the remarkable and moving words of Vytautas Kavolis, an eminent émigré sociologist in the USA and a great intellectual influence in Lithuania after 1990. Kavolis wrote that we are all responsible for what happened to Lithuanian Jews in 1941 in the sense of our sharing the mode of discourse and the form of insensitivity, which inevitably led to the demonisation, exclusion, and extermination of Lithuanian Jews.

Aleksandras Shtromas, Kavolis's life-long friend and classmate in pre-war Kaunas, a close friend of Venclova, an eminent émigré political theorist and criminologist in Great Britain and the USA, was also a major figure in the context of Lithuanian-Jewish debates. He regarded the nations as moral actors of history and violently objected the group, nation and culture stereotyping. A Holocaust survivor perfectly aware of antisemitism in his native country and beyond, Shtromas was convinced that Germanophobia, Russophobia, Polonophobia, or Lithuanophobia are no better than Judophobia.

The Rabbi Joseph Klein Lecture, "The Jewish and Gentile Experience of the Holocaust: A Personal Perspective," which Shtromas gave on 10 April 1989 at Assumption College in Worcester, Massachusetts, one of the most provocative public performances Shtromas ever gave throughout his career, made clear his standpoint that no nation has the right to indict and judge other nations as collective criminals, and that the contempt for the countries, where the Holocaust occurred, comes to multiply and strengthen mutual hatred and demonisation. The propensity to demonise other nations and cultures, according to Shtromas, is the most painful trauma inflicted by the Second World War on many nations.

The problem of the representation and misrepresentation of the Other becomes central in the most internationally acclaimed of Tomas Venclova's thoughtful and penetrating political essays, such as "Jews and Lithuanians," "Russians and Lithuanians," and "Poles and Lithuanians." In more than one way, Venclova differs from those inter-war Lithuanian intellectuals – such as the writers Vincas Krėvė-Mickevičius and Juozas Tumas-Vaižgantas, or the philosopher Stasys Šalkauskis – who were sympathetic to the Jews and who empathised with Lithuanian Jews from a genuinely Christian standpoint.

In a way, Venclova also differs from the post-war liberal-humanist element in Lithuanian émigré culture in the USA, such as the afore-mentioned poet Algimantas Mackus. For Venclova, the Holocaust and the martyrdom of Lithuanian Jewry are not only a matter of sympathetic understanding and compassion, but also the crucial question of Lithuania's present and future. Venclova conceives of the destruction of the Jewish community in Lithuania as the destruction of the civic and moral foundations of Lithuania. A sense of metaphysical guilt here clearly means a realisation that I am part of a tragic history, since I belong to the country where a catastrophe occurred; I share the language, historical memory, and culture of the country where there occurred a crime against humanity.

Venclova's humanism manifests itself not only in his great sensitivity, but also in his rejection of rational and deterministic explanations of the Holocaust. Elsewhere he reminds us that every crime, like every act of heroism, contains a kind of "transcendental remainder," which powerfully resists all rational-action or rational-choice explanations. Ultimately, such explanations are worthless. Having stressed that the Kaunas pogroms contradict the entire Lithuanian historical tradition marked by religious and political tolerance toward Jews and by peaceful coexistence of both peoples, Venclova breaks all Lithuanian political and cultural taboos by touching upon the nerve of the story.

One of such taboos in Lithuanian history and historical memory still is the role and place of the Lithuanian Activist Front (LAF) in the 1941 uprising to restore Lithuania's independence and in the spread of antisemitic propaganda in Lithuania. In 1941, the provisional government of Lithuania started playing a complicated game with the Nazis, sincerely hoping to restore Lithuania's independence.

The game, as Venclova notes, was doomed inexorably to failure. It is difficult to imagine something more dubious than choosing between Stalin and Hitler. Nobody can deny the fact that the provisional government was inspired by the LAF. And the point is that it was members of the LAF who launched antisemitic propaganda employing such pearls of the Nazi rhetoric as "the Judeo-Bolshevik conspiracy," "a plot of the Jewish bankers and communists," "the Jewish yoke and exploitation," and the like.

This is not to say that the entire 1941 Uprising should be regarded as an overture to the Holocaust. But its fallacies and grave mistakes have to be admitted. Venclova was the first to do this. In his articles, he openly challenged the romanticised and patriotic version of the Second World

War history, which tends to glamorise both the LAF and the 1941 Uprising, thus calling for a transvaluation of those values. Quoting from editorials in wartime Lithuanian papers, Venclova showed black on white that some Lithuanian politicians and intellectuals, not to mention ordinary citizens, were deeply influenced by Nazism. What happened next was quite easy to expect – conservative and ultrapatriotic circles, particularly amongst émigrés, reacted noisily, thus adding insult to injury.

Even so, it seems there is a long way from propaganda, however ferocious and sinister, to mass murder. Yet Venclova places his interpretative emphasis and moral evaluation on the empirically elusive world of human connection and inter-subjectivity, rather than political history written in a conventional academic manner. In a world of moral choices and ethical self-fulfilment, nothing is unimportant, and every single detail of human experience or attitude acquires its meaning.

Being much in tune with Shtromas's idea that many tragic events of the twentieth century have resulted from the division of people into "us" and "them," Venclova comes to stress the spiritual isolation, which manifests itself in the division of people into categories. By distancing ourselves from a group of other human beings or our fellow citizens, we create a kind of political and moral vacuum, which sooner or later will be filled with theories and practices of exclusion and hatred – one more political and ethical message of Venclova's theory of otherness, dialogue, and inter-subjectivity.

The Vanished World of Lithuanian Jews is a timely and important book, which initiates the book series, "On the Boundary of Two Worlds: Identity, Freedom, and Moral Imagination in the Baltics," with Editions Rodopi, B. V. At the same time, this book appears to be able to fill many gaps in Lithuania and beyond – the gaps of knowledge and historical memory.

It was prepared as a follow-up collection of papers presented by Israeli, American, British, German, Belarusian, and Lithuanian scholars of the Holocaust and antisemitism in the international conferences held in Nida (1997) and Telšiai (2001), Lithuania.

Having lost the Litvaks, Lithuania lost a significant part of its identity and self. It is through the moral integrity and scholarly dedication of the younger generation of Lithuanian historians, their well-documented research, and the courageous and timely social critique from some public intellectuals that Lithuania gradually comes to understand that the immensely rich and unique culture of Litvaks was, and continues to be, an inescapable part of its history, collective self, and political and moral existence.

Lithuania cannot become a modern actor of history without coming to terms with its painful history, and without realising that the way in which we discuss the Holocaust and deal with antisemitism tells everything about our ability to be a modern human being with powers of critical self-questioning, compassion, and sympathetic understanding, instead of a moron in the moral and political sense.

May this book contribute to awareness of what it means to be a human being in the twenty-first-century world.

<div align="right">
Leonidas Donskis
Executive Editor of the Book Series,
"On the Boundary of Two Worlds:
Identity, Freedom, and Moral
Imagination in the Baltics"
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Introduction

To this day today Jewish history in Lithuania in general and Jewish-Lithuanian relations in particular are a matter of controversy and debate between Jews and Lithuanians as well as among Lithuanians themselves.

The land of Lithuania, once the cradle of a variety of developments in the social, religious, and cultural history of Ashkenazi Jewry, was turned into the deathbed of hundreds of thousands of Jews not only from Lithuania itself, but also from other European countries. The remarkable Lithuanian Jewish community, which once occupied a prominent place in the Jewish world and constituted a unique part of the Jewish world community, is no more. All that remains is memory. Within a few months at the beginning of the Nazi occupation of Lithuania in 1941 Nazi executioners and their local collaborators murdered almost all Lithuanian Jews. Only very few of them had a chance to escape and survive the Holocaust.

The history of the Jews in Lithuania covers more than six hundred years. Its beginnings date back to the 14th century. From the very outset of Jewish settlement, Jewish and Lithuanian historical fates were intertwined. However, despite all research done on that past, there are still a number of chapters in that history which are still far from being sufficiently explored and elucidated, and many a question still awaits its answer. Without going into details, a few aspects of this history only may be recalled here. Over the years down to the early 20th century the Jewish community did not only play an important role in the history of Lithuania, but also saw itself as part of the Lithuanian population. The creation of the "Council of the Land of Lithuania" (*Wa'ad Medinat Lita*) in the early 17th century, i. e. the establishment of an independent system of autonomy separate from the Polish Jews, as well as the emergence of various cultural centres in the Grand Duchy of Lithuania in general and its capital in particular, indicate how far a "regional identity" of Lithuanian Jews had developed. Not without reason the latter city was named *Jerusholayim de Lite* ("Lithuanian Jerusalem") and considered to be the spiritual centre and cultural capital of those Jews who regarded themselves as Litvaks.

At the end of 18th century, Lithuania became part of Tsarist Russia. In the history of Lithuania's Jews a period began which Zvi Gitelman once called "a century of ambivalence." On the one hand, as early as from 1794, Jews faced a mixture of outspoken anti-Jewish politics and forced "modernisation" for generations, and many attempts were made to turn them into "useful citizens" of the Russian Empire. The years 1827–1855, i.e. the reign of Nicholas I., were a particularly difficult time for

Lithuania's Jews, alleviated a little bit by the short-lived reforms of Alexander II. After his assassination and the wave of pogroms which erupted immediately after it and terrified hundreds of Jewish communities in the Pale of Settlement, the imperial government again started taking more and more restrictive measures against the Jews which were only lifted when the Tsarist Empire eventually collapsed.

Nevertheless, on the other hand, these difficult decades saw at the same time the emergence and growth of a variety of socio-cultural, religious, and/or intellectual movements which gained momentum particularly among the Litvaks from, for example, new rabbinic orthodoxy, specifically Lithuanian Hasidism and Musar-movement to the Haskalah (East European Enlightenment) and, as its offspring, political Zionism and revolutionary socialism, which both drew heavily on the age-old messianic idea in Judaism, to mention but a few.

After World War One, when Lithuania had (re-)gained its independence, there were about 154 000 Jews on its territory, roughly 7,5 % of the entire population and, thus, they constituted the largest minority group in the country. The experiences of Lithuanian-Jewish co-existence in the past centuries helped the Jewish community to identify with Lithuania and take an active part in the struggle for independence and the re-establishment of Lithuanian statehood, and in turn, to become, as it were, a privileged minority at least in the first years of the Lithuanian Republic. To meet the needs of the Jewish community, during the democratic period of the first Lithuanian Republic (1918–1926) a minister of Jewish Affairs was appointed and served on the Lithuanian Cabinet until 1924. Other representatives of the Jewish minority held high-ranking positions in the Lithuanian government, such as Rozenboym and Rahmilevitch, who were deputy ministers in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Ministry of Trade and Commerce respectively.

Similarly, Jews were well established in economic and cultural life and contributed largely to it. Whereas in 1923 more than three quarters of the country's commercial and retail enterprises were owned by Jews, the situation changed dramatically in the late twenties and early thirties, when the number of Lithuanian-owned commercial enterprises grew constantly, while the number owned by Jews fell, reflecting at the same time the deterioration of Lithuanian-Jewish relations during those years.

As has already been mentioned, Jews took an active part in cultural life, too. The then Lithuanian capital Kaunas (Yidd. *Kovne*) hosted two Jewish theatres, and six Jewish daily newspapers were published there.

Jewish schools trained and educated Jewish youth and offered instruction in Hebrew and/or Yiddish. The Jewish community in Lithuania, however, was far from representing a single social group or a single class and one political orientation only. Except for the small number of wealthy Jews, most of them were rather poor, and it was they, who, incidentally, provided the majority of the members of the illegal Communist Party. Despite its place in Lithuanian society, the Jewish community led its own life. First attempts at integration date back to the end of the thirties only, when Jews started backing measures taken by Lithuanians against organisations and/or institutions of the Polish minority. In return, they earned the sympathy and support of certain Lithuanian intellectual circles.

As a result of the Hitler-Stalin Pact, Lithuania was annexed to the USSR in summer 1940, and one year later, in June 1941, occupied by the German army. The most horrible chapter in the long of Lithuania's Jews began. According to research from different perspectives, the German occupation caused the death of about 200 000 Lithuanian Jews, and compared with that figure, only a few survived the Holocaust.

More frightful, however, than the mere fact that these crimes were committed with the active participation of local Lithuanian collaborators, is the interpretation and justification offered for these horrors afterwards. Already in the early forties Lithuanian propaganda and public opinion saw in the Jews allies of the Soviets and accused them of alleged collaboration with the KGB. When, in turn, Lithuanians participated in killing Jews, they were allegedly doing nothing but taking revenge on them.

The afore-mentioned historical dates and developments indicate some of the issues discussed during two conferences which were held in the Lithuanian towns of Nida (September 1997) and Telšiai (September 2001), respectively. A selection of papers presented at these two conferences is published in this book. In addition to that, the book includes a number of studies dealing with pertinent issues like Lithuanian-Jewish relations, the attitude of "the others" towards the Jewish community, the policy of tsarist and Lithuanian governments toward non-dominant ethnic groups, and the Holocaust in the provinces of Western Belarus which once were part of the Litvaks' homeland, too.

One of the most important questions repeatedly raised during the two conferences concerned Litvak identity, i.e. the question of what elements and historical experiences shaped it, and how it changed in the course of (modern) history as a result of the relations between Jews and

Lithuanians. This question is all the more important as researchers who so far dealt with the formation of national identities among minority groups in Lithuania studied it, generally speaking, either in context with the formation of other national identities, neglecting thus "the specificity of the Jewish case," or completely isolated from them, treating thus Jewish identity as something completely different and apart.

Therefore, the authors of the chapters in this book decided to look at the afore-mentioned issues from two perspectives, from a Jewish and a Lithuanian one respectively, intending thus to reformulate the *status questionis* and begin the discussion on them anew.

The Editors

Traditions of the Commonwealth:
Lithuanian Jewry and the Exercise of Political Power in Tsarist Russia*

John D. Klier

Until the establishment of the state of Israel, the stereotype which dominated the political history of Jews in the Diaspora was that of powerlessness. Historians were accustomed to regard the Jews as an inert and passive mass, to which things were done, and from which only a feeble response might be expected. How perversely appropriate it appeared that the distinctive Jewish response to murder, rapine and forced conversion at the time of the Crusades was *kiddush ha-Shem*, the "sanctification of the Divine Name" through mass suicide.[1] Jews were "a people apart," who did not have a "politics" in the conventional sense. At best Jews might produce the occasional man of wealth or influence who was willing to use his temporary position to intercede for his co-religionists in order to avert an "evil decree." *Shtadlanut*, as this process was termed, appeared to perfectly encapsulate the lot of the Jews: it was accidental, irregular, and dependent upon the vicissitudes of fate.[2]

Reflecting this situation, it was argued, the Jews developed an ideology of passivity and political quietism in order to rationalise their powerless state. There was an interpretation of a passage in the Song of Songs that gave rise to the legend of "the three oaths." According to this *midrash*, God made the Jews swear that they would not emigrate en masse to Erets Israel, nor force the coming of the Messiah. In turn, the nations of the world swore not to oppress the Jews "too much."[3] The practical application of this worldview was contained in the talmudic dictum of *dina de-malkhuta dina* (the law of the realm is the law [for the Jews]), which placed a high premium on political loyalty and obedience to the lawful state authority.[4]

Specialists in the study of East European Jewish history are aware that such stereotypes offer only the palest image of the sophisticated political activity that characterised the Jewish communities of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth. The representatives of the community are often called *shtadlanim*, but they differed in important ways from the classic representative of this type in western Europe, the "Court Jew."[5] The essential point was that the representatives of Polish-Jewish communities were not "accidental people" who owed their position to a changing and unstable status, but *elected* members of the community. Moreover, their activities were not based on chance opportunity, but were an acknowledged part of the Commonwealth's political system.[6]

Indeed, the privileges which authorised Jewish political representation were analogous to those rights exercised by the nobility of the Commonwealth. Even when the national gatherings (the *wa'adim*) of representatives of the Jewish communities were abolished in 1764, the Jews still retained their right of communal autonomy (the *kehillah* or *kahal*), which often operated on a regional basis. The existing scholarship implies that these bodies disappeared under Russian rule. David Biale, who has done so much to correct our misconceptions regarding Jewish powerlessness, observes that "it was in the Russian Empire, starting largely in the 1890s, that the Jews achieved the most impressive level of political and economic activism."[7] The clear implication is that the political activism of the immediate past was lost under Russian rule until late in the imperial period. In the long term this is true, but in the short term, recently available archival material demonstrates the high level of Jewish political activity in the first decades of Russian rule, and its occasional reappearance at other moments of crisis. In this narrative, the Jews of the Lithuanian lands play a very important role. Indeed, political activism might be described as the legacy of Lithuanian Jewry to their new rulers.

From the moment that the first Jewish communities fell under Russian rule in 1772, they attempted to defend and extend the rights that had been given them as Russian subjects, exactly as they had done when the rulers had been Polish. The small Jewish communities of the new provinces of Polotsk and Vitebsk, under the umbrella of the *Wa'ad Kehillot Rashiyot di-Medinat Lita* (1623) in Polish times, scored a number of important legal victories, due entirely to their active lobbying of Russian officials. In 1780, for example, the Jews were specifically authorised to enrol in the prestigious Russian social estate of the *kupechestvo* (merchantry), and to enjoy the significant economic prerogatives which that status conveyed. Even more importantly, Jewish lobbying efforts ensured that Jews were included under the rubrics of the Charter for the Towns of 1785, which gave extensive powers of self-administration to municipalities in the Russian Empire.[8] On paper at least, this meant that the Jews of the Russian Empire had greater political and economic rights and freedoms than any other Jewish community in Europe.

The high status which the Jews enjoyed was emphasised when the rest of Lithuania came under Russian rule after 1795. Jews in these newly-created Russian provinces at once sought to exercise the prerogatives enjoyed by Jews in the Belarusian provinces. But many of the Lithuanian towns were governed by Magdeburg Law, which contained the provision of *de non tolerandis Judaeis* that excluded Jews from residence and trade. Lawsuits and appeals were lodged by Jewish communities against efforts

to restrict their privileges, a further demonstration of the willingness and ability of Lithuanian Jews actively to use the law of the land to defend themselves. It was partially in response to these legal contradictions and anomalies that Emperor Alexander I, on 9 November 1802, appointed a special committee to investigate the legal status of the Jews and to draw up a special code for them.[9]

Jewish lobbying did not stop there. When rumours about the new committee began to spread among the Jewish communities, the communal leaders met to allocate funds to send deputies to St Petersburg to lobby in support of their interests. In response to this agitation, the Russian state specifically permitted the Jewish communities to meet and elect deputies to go to the capital and advise the Jewish Committee. In the end, only four provincial communities could afford the expense of sending delegates, but two of them were from Lithuanian provinces, Minsk and Mogilev.[10] Historians have been less than flattering about the activities of the Jewish delegates. Iulii Gessen's summary judgement is that "the activities of the deputies had a very insignificant impact upon the Statute."[11]

In fact, on the basis of newly discovered archival evidence, I argue that the Jewish delegates displayed real political sophistication, and did succeed in over-turning a number of objectionable proposals in the Statute in draft form. In particular the delegates were able to block a proposal that would have permitted large scale interference of the state in the Jewish religious cult.[12] For religiously-conservative Lithuanian Jewry, this was a significant achievement.

The regime of Alexander I provided yet another opportunity for Lithuanian Jews to demonstrate their political skills. In the course of the Napoleonic wars, as Alexander I moved about the Empire and around Europe, he permitted a number of "Deputies of the Jewish People" (*Deputaty evreiskogo naroda*) to accompany him, and to advise him about Jewish matters. Since the government continued to take an activist approach to the "Jewish Question" (another Jewish Committee was appointed in 1809, and the question of relocating Jews from the countryside continued to exercise the government), this institutionalised "right to approach the throne" was an important prerogative. Once again, Lithuanian Jews played an important role. Both of the original two Deputies, Leizer Borukhovich Dillon (from Nesvizhe) and Zundel Zonnenberg (from Grodno) were from the Lithuanian lands.[13] Two assemblies of representatives were held to elect Deputies, in Minsk and Vilna. It is noteworthy that, in contrast to the Jewish communities of the Ukraine, such as Kiev and Odessa, the Jews of Lithuania were actively involved in the elections of 1816 and 1818, and comprised the

membership of all of the Deputies who were elected to go to St Petersburg.[14] This was a clear demonstration of the higher level of political awareness that Lithuanian Jewry carried over from the days of the Commonwealth. Indeed, the historian S. Pen noted that representatives to the electoral assembly which met in Vilnius in 1818 acted for all the world as though they were the *Wa'ad Arba' Aratsot* (Council of the Four Lands) in pre-partition Poland, sending its delegates to the capital.[15] Unlike the Jewish communities to the South, the Lithuanian communities proved willing to fund fully the expenses of the Deputies, even imposing a tax on the silver baubles which wealthy Jews attached to their *kitel*, a white ceremonial gown worn on the High Holidays.[16]

The government abolished the office of Deputy of the Jewish People in 1825. Within a year, the Jewish communities of Belarus petitioned that they be permitted to send "honoured, religious Jews" to St Petersburg for consultations.[17] This petition was denied. The reign of the autocratic Nicholas I was not the time to seek to reanimate representative communal institutions. Those Jews who persisted in these efforts, as for example the Jewish lobbyists who descended on St Petersburg to campaign against the introduction of personal military service for the Jews in 1827, were unceremoniously packed off back to the Pale. When Jews were called to the capital, it was not so much to provide information, as to advise the government on how to carry out it plans that had already been prepared for a putative reform or transformation of Jewish life. The most important of these meetings was that which met in St Petersburg in 1843 to discuss the government's plans for creation of a modern school system for Jewish youth. The two rabbis on the four-man delegation, Rabbi Yizhak ben Haim of Volozhin (and head of the famous yeshivah located there) and Menahem Mendel Schneerson, the Lubavicher rebbe, were both from the Lithuanian lands. The traditionalist communities which led the opposition to this scheme were Vilna and Minsk. What emerged was an elaborate system of state-sponsored Jewish schools, including primary and secondary schools. At the apex of the system were two rabbinic seminaries, at Vilnius and Zhitomir.[18]

The opening of the rabbinic seminary in Vilnius marked a new phase in the history of Lithuanian Jewry. Although their graduates were few in number, and scorned by traditionalists for their scanty knowledge of Torah, the seminaries were perhaps the most important engines for modernisation of the Jewish community in the Russian Empire. It is difficult to identify an acculturated Jewish intellectual in the second half of the 19th century in Russia who did not have a link to the seminaries, whether as a teacher, a student, or merely a young aspirant who had

moved to Vilnius or Zhitomir in order to prepare for the entrance examinations. Graduates of the seminaries, with the addition of a few subjects, were qualified to attend Russian universities. The seminaries thus served as the major entrée for Russian Jews into higher education. This had a trickle-down effect. So successful did the quest for secular learning become in the Jewish community, that by 1880, the Overseer of the Odessa educational district was lamenting that Jews were filling up the school benches at the expense of non-Jews.[19]

The Vilnius seminary produced many of the personnel for the "Jewish civil service" which was created in the Russia of Nicholas I: the "state" or "crown" rabbis, which every community was obliged to elect and whose duties included the keeping of vital statistics; teachers for all levels of the state Jewish school system; and the "Jewish Expert" (*uchenyi evrei*) who were appointed at the provincial level to provide information on the Jews to the Russian bureaucracy. Vilna alumni served as state rabbis for some of the major centres of the Russian Empire, including Moscow, Grodno, Kaunas, Chernigov, Brest-Litovsk, Polotsk, Elisavetgrad and Vilnius itself. L. O. Levanda – an alumnus – who served as Jewish Expert for the Governor-Generalship of the Northwest, was a major figure in the spread of the Haskalah in Russia, and in Russian-Jewish politics in general. He was one of the most popular Russian-language Jewish writers in 19th century Russia. (If this is seen as damning with faint praise, Vilnius also produced two of the outstanding representatives of modern Jewish literature, Mordecai Aaron Gintsburg [Ginzburg] and Abraham Beer Lebenzon [Lebesohn].)[20]

The seminary established its *bona fides* with the Russian state after the suppression of the Polish uprising in 1863. The Lithuanian provinces were the centre for a major russification drive, which constituted an important part of the pacification campaign of General M. N. Murav'ev.[21] Since the values of the Berlin Haskalah provided the inspiration for the rabbinical seminaries, from their opening German had been employed as the language of instruction for subjects such as the study of the Bible and Jewish history. In response to Muraviev's russification initiatives, in 1865 the Pedagogical Council of the Vilnius Seminary announced its intention to replace German with Russian, in order to "end the eternal servitude to foreign enlightenment."[22] While this toadying to the authorities might be seen as unedifying in retrospect, at the time it allowed Lithuanian Jews to amass some credit which they were able to put to good use before the end of the decade.

The climate of anti-Polish xenophobia and crude russification engendered by the Murav'ev years created an excellent atmosphere for the machinations of a Jewish convert to Russian Orthodoxy named Iakov

Brafman. A failed Christian missionary among the Jews, Brafman re-invented himself as an expert on Jewish matters and the discoverer of a Jewish plot against Christian society. Through his contacts with the Russian administration of the Vilnius Educational District, Brafman secured a copy of the communal record book, or *pinkes*, of the Minsk Jewish community in the late 18th century. Brafman edited a Russian translation of the Hebrew original, to which he affixed a tendentious commentary. This text sought to show that the Jewish religious community, a legacy from Polish times that had been abolished by the Russian government in 1844, was still in existence. This illegal, "secret talmudic republic" was the source of all the harmful conduct of the Jews. Abolition of this secret government would resolve the Jewish Question.[23]

The simplicity of Brafman's theories was very attractive for the disciples of Murav'ev, who replaced the general in Vilnius. As Brafman's influence grew, Vilna Jews undertook a campaign to block him. Once again, the political resourcefulness of Lithuanian Jewry was on display. A prominent local Jewish merchant, Iakov Barit, petitioned the Governor-General of the Northwest (Vilna, Kovno and Grodno gubernias), K. P. von Kaufman, to convene a special committee to explore Brafman's claims. At first, the stratagem appeared to have succeeded. The membership of the committee, formed in July 1866, included the state rabbi of Vilnius, Sh. Kliachko, and two "Jewish Experts," Barit and L. O. Levanda. This group proved an adequate counterweight to Brafman, who was also on the committee. The Jewish members recognised their task. Levanda noted in a letter that he was attempting "to direct Brafman towards fresh waters."[24]

The situation changed dramatically in October, 1866, when von Kaufman was replaced as Governor-General by E. T. Baranov, who was completely taken with Brafman's theories. On 24 August 1867 he issued a circular to the governors subordinate to him in which he complained about the economic and social harm that the Jews worked on the local population. He noted that "their isolation creates many abuses and hardships for the Jews themselves since it facilitates the preservation, in secret, of the kahal institution of the Jews, which has been abolished by the government."[25] Baranov's solution apparently came straight from the pen of Brafman. The Jews who lived in small towns (the *shtetlakh*) and in the countryside were to be placed under the administrative authority of the peasant *volost*, the administrative system of peasant self-government which had been created after the peasant emancipation of 1861. This would have effectively placed the Jews at the mercy of the peasantry. He asked the governors of the three provinces to comment on this project, and to submit their responses to the Jewish Committee in Vilnius.[26] This

was clearly a turn for the worst from the Jewish perspective. While awaiting the governors' reports, the Jewish members of the committee made a concerted effort to refute Brafman, by presenting extensive rebuttals of his claims. The committee as a whole nonetheless categorically rejected the arguments of the Jewish members.[27]

A victim of infighting in the capital about the best way to proceed with russification, Baranov was replaced as Governor-General in March 1868 by A. L. Potapov, seen as a moderate on the russification issue. He did retain the committee, however, while widening its brief to include the general question of the legal status of the Jews. Concerned that this local initiative would result in an "evil decree," Lithuanian Jewry sought to act at the centre. A secret – and therefore illegal – tax raised the sum of 17,000 roubles in order to send representatives to St Petersburg to undermine the work of the committee.[28] Faced with this activity, Potapov reverted to past practices that had fallen into abeyance under Nicholas I. On 13 September 1869 he invited the Jewish communities of the five Lithuanian and Belarusian provinces to elect deputies for dispatch to Vilna in order to review the work and proposals of the committee. In meetings held in the various provincial capitals, assemblies of communal representatives elected two delegates per province.

This incident displays both ordinary practice and striking innovations. As we have seen, Lithuanian Jewry were accustomed to organised activity of this sort, as a legacy of the Commonwealth. Lobbying activity and elected delegates were nothing new to them. They certainly displayed a high level of political sophistication, choosing delegates who were well-equipped to make their case. For example, the Vilnius electors chose Emmanuel Levin as one of their delegates. He was, in fact, a resident of St Petersburg, where he was a member of the circle of the banker and communal leader Baron G. Gintsburg, and secretary of the maskilic flagship organisation, the Society for the Spread of Enlightenment among the Jews of Russia.[29] Thus, co-ordination had occurred, not just on the regional level, but on the national level as well. Eli Lederhendler sees this as an especially significant moment, which marked an important stage in the evolution of the system from *shtadlanut* into modern Jewish politics. At the same time, it represented a unique episode of co-operation between the progressives, represented by the OPE, and the traditional religious leadership of Russian Jewry.[30]

Lederhendler's point concerning the unprecedented co-operation of maskilim and traditionalists is well taken; more questionable is his positioning of the Vilnius events predominantly within the context of *shtadlanut*. This is doubly unfortunate, because Lederhendler's work has played a leading role in reshaping our understanding of modern Jewish

politics. The irony is that he himself differentiates between different levels of *shtadlanut*, making a distinction between "designated spokesmen" who were, in any case, "overshadowed by the independents and notables" (i.e., those whom I call "accidental people"). He does not, in my opinion, draw the necessary conclusions. Rather, Lederhendler de-emphasises the role of the former by noting that they "came only in the wake of a government summons." This is true, but as we have seen, such a summons was virtually forced upon the government by Jewish activism. (As we have seen, this was particularly the case of the successful episodes of 1802 and 1868; there were occasions of activism, as in 1827, that did not result in a summons.) My point is that Jewish activism was not random or accidental, but directly linked to the political traditions of the Jews of the Commonwealth. These activities demonstrated real political sophistication.[31]

There is another innovation of this period that should be noted, an increased reliance on the press as a weapon in the political struggle. This phenomenon was created by two trends – the rise of a modern periodical press in Russian, and the emergence of a group of culturally-russified Jewish journalists, working in both the general and the specifically Jewish press. The activities of the Vilnius Commission were widely reported, and one member, M. L. Knorozovskii, actually made use of the press to air internal disputes which had arisen over strategy. Jews were equipping themselves to operate within the public sphere that was opening up in Russia.[32]

The crisis that befell Russian Jewry in the early 1880s – the pogroms and subsequent legislative repression – also provided a background for the political mobilisation of Lithuanian Jewry. It arose from external and internal factors. After the initial shock of the pogroms, the Russian government sought the causes for this outbreak of mass violence. A special emissary, Count P. I. Kutaisov, was dispatched on an information-gathering tour of the Pale of Settlement. The Minister of Internal Affairs, N. P. Ignat'ev, was convinced that the critical cause of the violence lay in Jewish "economic exploitation" of the peasantry. To confirm this, and to map ways to deal with "Jewish exploitation," he convoked commissions in every province of the Pale of Settlement. These "Ignat'ev commissions" were given a tendentious brief: they were to identify the main aspects of Jewish exploitation (which was presented as a given), and devise methods to deal with it. Clearly, this was a crucial moment for Russian Jews, who found themselves put on public trial. Ignat'ev's one concession was to permit the appointment of Jews to the membership of these commissions, where they were far-outnumbered by representatives

of Russia's social estates (the nobility, the clergy, the townspeople, and the peasantry).

The Jewish communities were given no formal role to play – all the delegates were chosen by the Russian administration. Nonetheless, Jews displayed the political skills they had developed under Russian rule. Whatever town or city Kutaisov visited, he was greeted by a Jewish deputation, which submitted to him a detailed report setting forth the Jews' version of events. They were virtually unanimous in attributing the pogroms to instigation, either by revolutionaries or Antisemites. The ease with which they were able to lead the people to violence against the Jews was the direct result, the reports claimed, of the Jews' restricted political status, which put them outside the protection of the law in the eyes of the unsophisticated mob. Jews, the masses believed, could be attacked with impunity. A number of these reports were printed in the press, or published as independent brochures.[33]

The position of the Jewish representatives in the individual Ignatiev commissions was not a easy one. Dr Max Mandelshtam, representative of the Kiev Commission, described its sessions as "going to Golgatha."[34] In a number of commissions, the Jewish representatives had to face articulate Antisemites, fully up to date with the latest arguments of Russian Judeophobia. A number of commissions even put obstacles in their path, such as holding closed sessions.[35] Yet Jewish activists made a concerted effort. From the offices of Baron Gintsburg in the capital they mailed literature and position papers to provincial deputies.[36] There was not a single Ignatiev Commission where the Judeophobes were given a free ride. In a number of commissions, the Jews were able to tone down the rhetoric, challenge the most extravagant accusations, and even incorporate minority reports. A number of Commissions produced reports that were not entirely hostile to the Jews; some even called for the abolition of the Pale of Settlement.[37] Finally, the Jewish press kept us a constant barrage of criticism against the activities of the Commissions, easily circumventing censorship provisions that banned discussion of the activities of the commissions in the press.[38]

The Jewish role in the Ignatiev commissions was essentially the negative task of damage control. There were also a number of positive initiatives which should also be noted.[39] Perhaps the most significant were two meetings of communal leaders which were held under the sponsorship of Baron Gintsburg in St Petersburg in September 1881 and April 1882, to discuss responses to the pogroms and to government policies. They are worth examining in closer detail, because the existing historiography is almost unanimously critical of their efforts, largely

because they were seen as critical of mass-migration as a solution to the crisis of 1881–2.[40]

It was significant that the meetings were held at all, because the Russian state was notoriously loath to permit private initiatives of any sort, particularly on a national basis. Indeed, the first gathering was not officially approved, but presented the government with a *fait accompli* when 60 delegates, from 26 cities throughout the Pale, as well as from St Petersburg and Moscow arrived in the capital.[41] Historians, basing their accounts on memoir literature, have depicted this first gathering as completely ineffectual, stunned to silence by the openly judeophobe rhetoric which accompanied the creation of the Ignatiev Commissions. The archival record is rather different, and reveals that the delegates were very energetic lobbyists. In particular, they succeeded in securing the agreement of Ignat'ev that Jews would be permitted to serve as members of the commissions (and we have seen above the significance of that boon). At least five delegates to the Petersburg assembly served as Jewish members of Ignat'ev Commissions. The Second Assembly of Jewish Communal Representatives, which gathered in the midst of the "emigration fever" which gripped Russian Jewry in early 1882, has been condemned as even less successful. When the delegates drafted a statement that was hostile to emigration, they were denounced as "traitors to the Jewish people" by young activists. This criticism obscures the fact that the transcript of the sessions reveals almost unprecedented criticism of the Russian government, something not usually associated with the traditional leadership.[42] Attitudes were taking shape which would drive middle-class Jews in numbers into the Russian Liberation Movement, which constituted the liberal opposition to Autocracy.

The crisis of 1881–2 has been much studied for the rise of the so-called "New Politics" in the world of East European Jewry. Its most distinctive features were the emergence of the new ideologies of Proto-Zionism (*hoveve Zion*) and Jewish form of revolutionary socialism.[43] In all of these movements, the Jews of Lithuania played a very prominent role. For example, the Vilnius Rabbinic Seminary was not only a pathway towards Russian culture, but towards the most modern elements of modernity. Thus, rabbinic students, like their equivalents in other institutions of secondary and higher education in Russia, encountered and interacted with contemporary theories of socialism. Past and present students of the Seminary, such as I. A. Finkelshtein and A. I. Zundelevich were pioneers of socialist propaganda in Vilnius. One of the early heroes of specifically "Jewish" socialism in Russia (i.e., propaganda directed specifically to Jews in "Jewish" languages) was the Vilnius Seminary alumnus Aaron Liberman. The majority of the membership of the first

socialist circle in Vilnius ("Chaikovskyists") were former students of the Seminary. Erich Haberer has examined the Seminary as a "school of dissent" and "centre of revolutionary propaganda," and suggested that the decision to close the Rabbinic Seminary in 1873 was given a final push by the realisation that "the seminary was in effect a potential source of socialist subversion."[44] Vilnius played a prominent role in the birth and growth of the Bund,[45] from the founding premises set forth in the "Vilnius Programme" of mid-1890s, to the founding congress of the Bund as a party in – where else? – Vilnius in 1897.[46]

Lithuania was no less prominent in the early history of Zionism. Lev Pinsker's *Auto-emancipation* was published in a Hebrew translation in 1882 in Vilnius. The region provided many recruits to the First Aliyah, or settlement in Erets Israel, and to the organisation of the Zionist movement in Eastern Europe. Just as the Vilnius Rabbinic Seminary played a major role in the history of Jewish socialism, so too did the famous Volozhin yeshivah serve as a centre for *hoveve Zion* agitation.[47]

Summary

Just as the years 1881–2 proved a crucial moment in the history of East European Jewry, with the emergence of the so-called "New Politics," they also marked a change in the status of Vilnius and Lithuanian Jewry. The decisive political role of Lithuanian Jewry, which this essay has described, was on the wane. Specifically, Lithuanian Jews were no longer alone in the political arena. On the regional level, the Jewish communities of Kiev, Odessa and Kharkov were playing a greater role than ever before, to say nothing of the distinctive role of the Jews of Warsaw in the politics of Poland. Migration within the Pale helped spread the ideas and activities which at one time had been distinctively "Lithuanian." On the national level, an articulate leadership took shape in St Petersburg which claimed to speak for all of "Russian Jewry." Although Vilnius continued to serve, not just as the "Jerusalem of Lithuania" for the religious Orthodox, but also as a "Holy Community" for both the partisans of Zionism and the socialists of the Bund, she lost the priority which she had held since the days of the Commonwealth. The pressures and opportunities of modernity were merging Lithuanian Jewry into a greater mass which could, albeit with many qualifications, be called "Russian Jewry."[48]

Notes

1. See Chazan, 1987.

2. For a recent history of modern Jewry which takes these assumptions as its starting point, see Vital, 1999.

3. Biale, 1986, 39.

4. Lederhendler, 1989, 124–17.

5. For a discussion of this phenomenon, see Stern, 1950.

6. See the chart in Davies, 1981, I, 324, which represents an effort to establish clear lines of authority and responsibility ion this system. For a description of the *wa'adim*, see Ettinger, 1993, 93–109.

7. Biale, 1986, 125.

8. For a discussion, see Klier, 1985, 67–74.

9. Unless otherwise noted, all dates are under the Julian calendar ("Old Style") then in use in the Russian Empire.

10. Gessen, 1925–27, I:140. The other two were the Ukrainian communities of Kiev and Podolia.

11. Gessen, 1906, 135.

12. See the expanded Russian version of my book cited in footnote 9: Klier, 2000, 212–16.

13. The activities of these deputies made such an impression on at least one Jewish contemporary: they figure as characters in Yisroel Aksenfeld's (Israel Axenfeld) famous Yiddish novella, *The Headband* (*Dos Shterntikhl*), published in 1861.

14. Klier, 2000, 278–82.

15. Pen, 1905, 53–4.

16. Pen, 1905, 57–8.

17. Gessen, 1909, 205.

18. For a discussion of the preliminary meetings, and the nature of the resultant school system, see Stanislawski, 1983, 49–122; Klier, 1995a, 222–44. For an important recent study of the rabbinic seminaries, see Dohrn, 2001.

19. Georgievskii, 1886, 205.

20. *Istoricheskie svedenia o vilenskom ravvinskom uchilishche*, 49; Klier, forthcoming.

21. See my article "Russification and the Polish Revolt of 1863: Bad for the Jews?", 1986, 91–106.

22. *Istoricheskiye svedeniya o vilenskom ravvinskom uchilishche*, 36–7.

23. Klier, 1995a, 263–74.

24. Landau, 1901, 61.

25. *Vilenskii vestnik*, 92:1867.

26. Ibid.

27. *Rossiiskii Gosudarstvennyi Istoricheskii Arkhiv* (St Petersburg), fond 821, opis' 9, ed. khr. 165 (1872–81), ll. 78–87o. Hereafter RGIA.

28. RGIA, f.1282, opis' 2, ed. khr. 73 (1868), ll. 1–23.

29. See my article "The Gintsburg Circle and the Politics of *Shtadlanut* in Late Imperial Russia," (1995b), 38–55.

30. Lederhendler, 1989, 144.

31. The outcome of the deliberations in Vilnius has been well-analysed, and need be mentioned only in passing. It was a considerable triumph for the Jewish delegates, who succeeded in seeing off Brafman's project, and securing a final draft which called for the full civic emancipation of Russian Jewry. The final draft was sent to St Petersburg, where it was given serious consideration. See Klier, 1995a, 175–181; Lederhendler, 1989, 142–4.

32. For literary debates surrounding the Vilnius Commission, see Klier, 1995a, 174–6.

33. See, for example, Schwabakher, 1881.

34. Mandelshtam, 1913, 44–64.

35. Krasnyi-Admoni, 1923, 519.

36. Ha-Cohen, 1927–9, I, 171.

37. *Trudy gubernskikh kommisii po evreiskomu voprosu. I: Gubernii: Vilenskaia, Kovenskaia, Grodnenskaia, Vitebskaia, Mogilevskaia, Minskaia* (St Petersburg 1884). These included the Vilnius Commission, 138. For a useful summary of these reports, see Aronson, 1975, 1–18.

38. RGIA, fond 777, opis' 3, delo 8 (1881), s. 122.

39. In this number we should include the relief operations directed by the Kiev Committee, the channelling of information and propaganda abroad, the preparation of memoranda for the government, etc.

40. To cite two examples: Dubnow, 1916–20, II, 304–8; and Vital, 362–6.

41. Lithuanian Jewry were well-represented, with delegations from Vilnius, Vitebsk, Grodno, Dünaburg (Dvinsk), Kaunas, Minsk and Pinsk. Most of these cities were also represented at the second Assembly of Jewish Communal Representatives.

42. See the transcripts of the Second Meeting of Jewish Communal Representatives in *Russkii Evrei*, 32–35.

43. See Jonathan Frankel's classic study, Prophecy and Politics: Socialism, Nationalism, and the Russian Jews, 1862–1917 (1981).

44. Haberer, 1995, 74–77.

45. I. e., the General Jewish Labour Union in Lithuanian, Poland and Russia.

46. Frankel, 1981, 171–257. See also Mendesshohn, 1970.

47. The Zionist activities of the Volozhin yeshivah students attracted the attention and intervention of the Russian secret police. See Lietuvos valstybės istorijos archyvas (Vilnius), f.378 ap.182 (1889), b.63, ll.1–52o.

48. See Lederheldler, 1995, 15–27.

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Changes in the Political Situation and the "Jewish Question" in the Lithuanian Gubernias of the Russian Empire (1855–April 1863)

Darius Staliūnas

The so-called political "thaw" in the Russian Empire which began with the accession of Alexander II in 1855 and defeat in the Crimean War (1853–56) is connected first and foremost with opportunities that arose in Russia to discuss problems in the life of the state and society openly and with the "great reforms" (the emancipation of the serfs, military and legal reforms and so forth). In the lands of the former Commonwealth of the Two Nations this period saw a new surge in the liberation movement and one more unsuccessful uprising (in 1863–64).[1]

The Crimean War, as is well known, clearly revealed to the Russian governing elite how much they lagged behind western Europe. Many reforms were begun in public life, mostly on the initiative of "enlightened bureaucrats," and at the same time the problem of "merging" (Russian: *slianie*) Jews into society at large or bringing them closer to gentile life (Russian: *sblizhenie*, "rapprochement") became more relevant to politicians. This was already being discussed by the Committee for Defining Measures for a Core Transformation of Jews in Russia [*Komitet dlia opredelenia mer korennogo preobrazovania evreev v Rossii*] that was founded in 1840. On 26 March 1856 the then chairman of this committee, Kiselev, stated that previous policy towards this ethno-confessional group had not produced results because bringing the Jews closer to gentile society was hindered by "various temporarily introduced restrictions that are contrary to general legislation and are a cause for astonishment" and therefore proposals were made for reviewing all legal acts referring to the Jews.[2] In effect all the Russian imperial civil servants agreed that the position of Jews in the Empire should be amended. Many officials were struck by Jewish "fanaticism," that is their clear religiosity and isolation, which was connected with the fact that this ethno-confessional group regarded itself as a people set apart, and by their "exploitation" of other ethno-social groups, shall we say, especially their economic "exploitation" of the peasants. Many were struck too by the Jews' moral decline. The fact that the problem was widely acknowledged did not mean that there were exactly identical conceptions of why this was so or how the problem should be remedied.

The liberal section of the bureaucracy attributed the bad conditions facing the Jews to historical circumstances such as the state of western European Jewry in the Middle Ages, the former "Polish" state's policy towards the Jews, unsuitable imperial Russian legislation and so on.

Those who held such views came to the logical conclusion that some or most Jewish economic and public activities should be abolished as should restrictions on Jewish rights of abode and then the position of this ethno-confessional group would change and bring benefits not only to Jews but also to the whole Empire. As examples from western Europe show, granting equal rights to Jews turns them into loyal and useful citizens. Meanwhile the conservative sections within Russian society linked the wrongs evident in the Jewish condition with Jews' own inbred character. Therefore abolishing discriminatory legislation would not improve the situation but merely worsen current circumstances, especially where the peasantry was concerned. In other words, the Jews should change first and only after that would it be possible to consider abolishing certain restrictions discriminating against Jews. Thus the more liberal civil servants proposed first abolishing restrictions to enable *slianie* and *sblizhenie*, while more conservative elements thought that the "merger" and "rapprochement" should happen first and only after that should discriminatory restrictions be lifted.

It is a little more difficult to say how either group imagined the result of these reforms. In other words, how they understood the widely-used contemporary terms of "merger" and "rapprochement." In official discourse of those days these terms meant as much less tangible changes in Jewish life (a reduction of religiosity and the enclosed nature of their community) as completely specific things such as learning Russian, increased study of secular subjects (that is, attendance at state schools), changes in economic activities – so that instead of being involved en masse in small trade or contraband as many Jews as possible should become involved in agriculture and other "useful" occupations. Thus "merger" and "rapprochement" did not imply complete cultural assimilation. Since, from the authorities' point of view, Jewishness was associated first and foremost with Judaism, the authorities' aim of assimilating the Jews could be illustrated by attempts to encourage or force Jews to abandon their religion. Indeed, the authorities encouraged individual Jewish *conversos* not only by not applying discriminatory laws to them but also by granting them various support.[3] However, it seems that there was no attempt to encourage the Jewish masses to convert to Russian Orthodoxy. The exception to this was the canton system whereby Jewish boys were sent to military schools and forced to convert, especially in the years 1843–1856.[4]

The Jewish Question was of relevance to the authorities too in the context of the Polish Question, as is well illustrated by events in the Kingdom of Poland. Faced with a new liberation movement in the early 1860s, the imperial authorities not only adopted repressive measures but

also attempted to find allies for their own cause. The only possible numerically significant ally group for the Russian authorities in the Polish Kingdom was the Jews, since Jews made up between ten and nineteen percent of the population in certain areas of Poland.[5] Certain Polish activists such as Ludwik Wolski, and even civil servants predicted that after a certain period Jews would form more than half the whole population of the Kingdom.[6] Therefore it is no surprise that all the most important legal restrictions on the Jews in Poland were abolished in May 1862. The most important restrictions to be lifted were those preventing Jews from buying land in villages, from living in certain towns, trade and artisan restrictions and discrimination before the courts. In this case the aims of the St Petersburg appointee Aleksander Wielopolski and the Russian authorities, that is the attempt to draw Jews away from the Polish liberation movement, coincided.

Many Jews lived within the Pale of Settlement (according to official statistics Jews comprised between 8.1 and 12.3 percent of the population in the nine western gubernias [the figures for the Vitebsk and Kiev gubernias respectively]).[7] Admittedly the peasants in this particular area were not ethnic Poles but Belarusians, Little Russians [Ukrainians], Lithuanians and Latvians. Of course, unlike that in the Kingdom of Poland the ethno-confessional make up of the Western Province (which contained the boundary of the Pale of Settlement) did not allow exactly the same policy to be implemented in these gubernias without extreme care. However, the view of the Jews held by the Russian authorities, especially those in the localities, and the recipes for "nationalities policy" they offered during the rise of the Polish liberation movement in the early 1850s have not been studied in detail thus far.

This article is devoted to analysing the attitude of the local authorities towards the Jews. It will analyse the attitudes of the authorities in the so-called "Lithuanian" gubernias (as the gubernias of Vilna, Kovno, Grodno and on occasion, Minsk, were termed in official texts of the period) towards the "Jewish Question." Therefore we will also analyse how this ethno-confessional group was regarded and what models were discussed for reforming its conditions. When we discuss these issues we must explain what circumstances forced the local authorities to take the initiative, what influenced their proposals. Of course the most important role was played by the governor general of Vilna. He usually presented the central authorities with an opinion drawn up by civil servants in the so-called "Lithuanian" gubernias and he was consulted by ministers (primarily the interior minister) when new resolutions were under consideration. The reaction of the central authorities to proposals drawn up by civil servants in the North West Province should reveal what

influence was held by the local authorities on the making of decisions affecting reform of Jewish legal rights.

As we know, on 10 December 1855 Vladimir Nazimov was appointed governor general of Vilna.[8] The metamorphoses in his ethno-political agenda in the period under consideration here have already been studied.[9] It has been remarked more than once that at first the new governor general was favourably inclined towards the local gentry (in government terms, "the Poles") and was willing to grant them certain concessions. This attitude generally suited the strategy of general imperial "nationalities policy" in the second half of the 1850s when attempts were made to grant "privileges" to elites in the Empire's peripheries so that the imperial authorities could pursue their reforms under a calm social atmosphere. However, as he came up against "Polish ingratitude," that is open demonstration of opposition to Russia and Russians (marked by patriotic demonstrations, the wearing of mourning dress and so on) and underground anti-government activities, the governor general of Vilna changed his opinion of the gentry and "turned towards" the peasantry.

Nazimov has been mentioned many times in discussions of the "Jewish Question" in the mid-nineteenth century. Most frequently he is associated with the liberal group that pressed for the abolition of discriminatory legislation.[10] On the other hand Simon Dubnov claims that Nazimov spoke out against allowing Jewish artisans to make a free choice of abode within the Empire.[11] John Klier mentions a document issued by the governor general of Vilna which comes out against complete equality of rights for Jews.[12] In other words, Nazimov's attitudes towards reform of the conditions facing Jews have not been analysed in depth so far by scholars.

The Jewish policy promoted by civil servants in the North West Province cannot be researched in isolation as in every case civil servants in Petersburg, Moscow and the so-called "Lithuanian" gubernias considered primarily how reform of Jewish conditions would affect other imperial subjects. Therefore it is very important to uncover the change in Nazimov's ethno-political agenda in the period under review.

This issue will not be examined for the whole of the age of "Great Reforms" because the situation in the so-called "Lithuanian" gubernias changed radically after yet another "Polish Uprising" broke out in 1863, the January Uprising, which led to major changes to nationalities policy in this "borderland" of the Empire. In addition on 1 May 1863 Nazimov was replaced as governor general by Mikhail Murav'ev who has gained renown (or infamy) for his harsh actions and new wave of discriminatory restrictions.

However, at the end of 1855 when Nazimov was appointed governor general of Vilna there were quite a lot of sympathy on both sides and hopes that the authorities and the gentry would work together. As we know, the very appointment of Nazimov in itself fed the hopes of the Lithuanian gentry that "nationalities policy" in these lands would change. The local social elite recalled well that in 1840–41 Nazimov had been appointed head of the Interrogation Committee in Vilnius which was supposed to uncover the secret revolutionary organisation suspected of having formed after the execution of Szymon Konarski. Despite pressure from the then-governor general, Fedor Mirkovich, Nazimov came to the conclusion that no such secret organisation existed.[13]

Indeed, during Nazimov's first years at work in Vilnius the Lithuanian gentry did receive certain concessions. Political émigrés were allowed to return from abroad and exile, the Polish language was returned to school curricula and so forth. Some of the concessions were connected directly with Nazimov's favour towards "Poles." Censorship was softened.[14] The governor himself initiated the idea of founding a Higher "Real" School in Vilnius and supported Adam Kirkor's journal.[15] From contemporary memoirs we even learn that there was talk of Nazimov's family's beginning to learn Polish.[16] At that time the governor general sent reports to Petersburg assessing the situation in the province as calm.[17]

In any case there are no doubts that after the demonstrations and prayer services for those killed in the demonstrations in the Kingdom of Poland and the so-called "Lithuanian" gubernias began (the first such services were held in St John's Church in Vilnius on 2 March 1861) Nazimov altered his view of the prospects for working together with the local gentry.[18] However, it may well be that Nazimov realised before this that the "Poles" in the North West Province would not be satisfied by the concessions the authorities were willing to make and this meant for an ever growing conflict. In the second half of the 1850s most gentry were not satisfied with a higher "real" school as the governor general had proposed and instead they wanted to found a university.[19] There is evidence that as early as 1860 Nazimov proposed several measures to increase the amount of Russian-controlled land in the province.[20] The tsar's visit to Vilnius in autumn 1860 also revealed a growing gap between the local gentry and the authorities. First of all the gentry refused to arrange a dinner in the tsar's honour (such a dinner had been arranged in 1858 when Alexander visited Vilnius for the first time) and so the tsar announced he would refuse to attend any such event in any case. Furthermore the gentry attempted to present a petition with demands that the authorities had no intention of satisfying at that time at least.[21]

Although Nazimov reassured the central authorities after demonstrations began that there would be no greater disturbance within the province without external interference, from that time until he was replaced as governor his assessments of the ethno-political situation within the province reveal that the governor general had quite a pessimistic view of the situation.[22]

The governor general was presented with the greatest problem by the gentry (or "the Poles" as he and other civil servants termed this class) and the Jews who comprised two "alien" elements in the province.[23] Alienness in this case means primarily that they were not *ab origine* inhabitants of the region. The "Poles," according to Nazimov, were seeking to teaching the people Polish in order to win them to their side with the aim of cutting the province off from Russia.[24] Although most often he identifies the whole of the gentry as "Poles," on occasion he did "find" a Russian gentry too, but these people were also lumped together with the "Polish party."[25] This gentry aim to tear off Lithuania, which "is not Poland but from olden days has been a Russian land" shows that "sincere reconciliation" between Russians and Poles in arguments over whom the western province belongs to is impossible.[26] If the gentry are listed as an enemy with which the government alone is unable to fight, new allies must be sought. Nazimov did not place great hopes in aid from local Russian society and in any case there would be only village school teachers and Orthodox clergy on whom to rely.[27]

There was still the ordinary people but, according to Nazimov, the larger numbers of Orthodox Russians in comparison with the Poles could create a misleading impression.[28] Although Nazimov notes that the "Russian element" had maintained its ethnic difference from the Poles despite attempts to polonise it, even those who had changed religion:

> Catholicism and the Union [of Brest] cut the Russian element off from the womb of the Orthodox Church and have succeeded in removing them from the Russian national family in the sense of religious beliefs and rights which Catholic propaganda imposed on them by force, but their ways and customs have not been touched and their own national character has been weakened but not smothered where the masses of Russian people are concerned.[29]

Nazimov thought that in the future the people would be able to "express their protest" themselves against the unjustified gentry pretensions.[30] However, in the governor general's opinion this social group is not a force with self-motivation in Lithuania. Nazimov compares the people with children and describes them as apathetic or slumbering in

a lethargic sleep; quite consistently the ordinary people are viewed as national non-self-determined and able to support either the government or the "Poles."[31]

Thus, seeing no serious allies in the North West Province the governor general attempted to find ways to help change the ethno-political situation there. Nazimov not only adopted repressive measures against persons involved in anti-government activity but also put forward proposals to restore social order and block the way for any "rebellion" in the future. Reducing the "Polish" influence was supposed to serve this end – disloyal Poles were to move to the Kingdom of Poland; the same end was envisaged by proposing that the Polish language was to be banned in schools in Belarus and Little Russia [Ukraine], the economic and educational level of peasants was to be raised (by setting up people's schools, publishing journals for ordinary people, allowing peasants to purchase land without estate owners' consent, not sending the army to repress peasant discontent during any (general) uprising).[32] Russian influence was to be increased by setting up a Russian university in the province after the discontent was quelled, the composition of civil service ranks was to be altered to ensure proportional representation for all national groups and the necessary Russians were to be invited from "Central Russia" until the number of local Russians was sufficient, Russian gentry were to be encouraged to colonise the area and so forth.[33]

While Nazimov was governor general of Vilna only some of this ethno-political agenda was put into effect and most proposals had to wait until Murav'ev took office. Nazimov was unable to implement many of his suggestions because certain high-ranking officials (primarily Interior Minister Petr Valuev) thought that such proposals that carried an odour of, shall we say, radical social engineering, were unacceptable and there was also the very sore problem of subordination.[34]

The "Jewish Question" was not dealt with in the ethno-political programme drawn up by Nazimov. Admittedly, if the Jews were mentioned in the documents formulating the most relevant ethno-political problems of the day, this was only in passing and this, of course, shows that they were not very significant in the political situation at that moment in time. Like many other civil servants in the so-called "Lithuanian" gubernias the governor general of Vilna regarded two groups as being important in the social-political sense, namely the gentry ("the Poles") and the peasants ("Russians" and "Lithuanians," including the "Žemaitijans"). The Jewish case was specific and so proposals for changing laws governing their life and activities were discussed separately.

As in the imperial capitals so in the so-called "Lithuanian" gubernias civil servants held various, sometimes diametrically opposed positions on this ethno-confessional group which had been classified since 1835 as "alien" – *inorodtsy*.[35] Those of a more liberal turn of mind sought the explanation for the "abnormal" position of the Jews in history and existing legislation. Thus in the opinion of the authorities in the Grodno Gubernia the special legal status enjoyed by the Jews under the "Polish kings," who had shown no interest at all in their plight, contributed to the emergence of opposition to them from local people; furthermore the Pale of Settlement now established also contributes nothing to the Jews' benefit but merely impoverishes them, forces them to engage in various illegal trades solely to feed themselves; despite such unfavourable conditions the Jews are clever and conscientious workers and so their rights should be made equal to those of burghers and merchants.[36]

An intermediary stance was taken by civil servants who proposed abolishing certain restrictions, most importantly of all, the Pale of Settlement because granting the Jews certain new concessions without abolishing the pale would mean their beginning to dominate in the area, whilst they would present no danger in the so-called "interior gubernias" because their numbers there would be small; moreover abolishing prohibitions would encourage them to take up legal business and forsake contraband.[37]

There were also officials who looked for the reasons behind particular Jewish economic activities (mainly small trade) that brought no benefit to the country in the bureaucrats' view in circumstances that had developed through history but also alleged that those particular conditions had produced consequences, namely certain a Jewish way of behaving. Persecutions and religion, according to Governor Mikhail Pokhvintsev of Vilna, led to a confirmation of Jewish solidarity that hindered them from blending in with the other people in the province. In the opinion of this official certain concessions could be granted to Jews but no way should the Pale of Settlement be abolished or their rights be made equal to those of other imperial subjects. It would be particularly dangerous to take the latter step because then "hardworking, sincere Slavs and Lithuanians would be unable to compete anywhere with the active, pushy, wary Jews who would soon occupy all the liberal professions as they had already snatched up all the commerce and industry in the places where they have their permanent abode … the equation of Jewish and Christian rights would have a negative effect on the whole state, especially on Slav nationhood [*narodnost'*]" and generally speaking such a measure could be implemented only when the ordinary people and the Jews are

sufficiently prepared in the sense of education and improved material well-being.[38]

Similar views were held by Nazimov too. In the proposals presented to the tsar when Alexander II visited Vilnius on 6 October 1860 concerning amendments to the conditions of the Jews the governor general sought the reasons for the difficult position of the Jews within that group itself.[39] The Jews, according to Nazimov, those "volunteer proletarians" were involved in the most varied illegal economic activities (fraud, counterfeiting, smuggling) and regard agriculture as unsuitable for them and during the past seven years it was they who committed most crimes in the Vilna Gubernia; most of them are led by fanatical rabbis and refuse to change anything and what is more they are inventive purveyors of vodka and have a negative effect on the morals of the common people. All those faults are visible to the naked eye.

> It is worth while looking at the towns here on a summer's working day, when the ordinary people are humming with activity and your view does not turn willing away from the festive crowd of Jews and Jewesses sitting around or wandering lazily, in their disorderly and tattered dress, around the houses or in the market places where no one sells anything. Last year during the significant rise in the number of workers on the railways (of up to 20,000 navvies but not a single Jew) a shortage was sensed of field workers and the daily wage was even doubled but despite this the Jews did not settle down to working the land.

So the governor general draws the conclusion that equal rights cannot be granted to the Jews. First of all Jews must be encouraged to change their economic activities and get educated.

The governor general had already taken certain steps himself. He took pains for rabbis to be elected from those who had trained in state rabbinical schools. In order to increase the influence of graduates from state rabbinical schools state maintenance, he thought, should be awarded to those graduates who became elected as rabbis to reduce the influence of their communities over them. However, scholars say that the work of such rabbis bore no fruit since increasing authority was enjoyed in Jewish communities by traditional leaders rather than those who had trained in state schools.[40]

Another measure put forward by Nazimov was to encourage Jews to become involved in agriculture. According to the governor general supervision of these new farmers should be entrusted to gentry leaders. This proposal seems to bear witness to Nazimov's thinking that the

"Poles" were suitable partners in the task of "re-educating" Jews at that time. Moreover he suggested allowing Jews to procure land in the Great Russian gubernias, albeit on condition that they work the land themselves. The problem of how to draw Jews into agriculture was discussed even before 1860 in both Petersburg and Vilna [Vilnius]. In the second half of the 1850s the central authorities stated that transfer of Jews to New Russia and to villages within the pale of settlement where they should be involved in agriculture would not bear results.[41] The governors in the western province assessed the developing situation in different ways. The authorities of the Grodno Gubernia suggested no longer financing this project but allowing Jews to move to established Jewish farming colonies in both the western province and New Russia.[42] The governor of Kovno [Kaunas] proposed no longer supporting Jews who wanted to farm in his gubernia but financing their removal to New Russia and only the governor of Vilna viewed the existing policy positively and suggested it be continued, albeit permitting Jews to settle only in colonies rather than individuals.[43] The opinion of the Vilna governor was supported by Nazimov too.[44] A decision was taken in Petersburg to stop granting Jews state land while permitting them to settle on land set aside in New Russia and private farms in the Pale of Settlement.[45] It seems that the governor general of Vilna took account of this resolution without abandoning his thought of encouraging Jews to take up agriculture beyond the borders of Lithuania and so proposed allowing Jews to procure land in the so-called Great Russian gubernias.

Not a few of the proposals involved education. Nazimov proposed joining so-called state first and second level Jewish schools with district and parish schools while setting aside special religious instruction for Jews and this would force Jews "to move closer to Christians, like it or not." In effect this would have meant the abolition of separate Jewish schools. In making this proposal the governor general touched on what was a very tender issue at that time. Although there were Russian officials who claimed that the popularity of schools set up for Jews in the 1840s was increasing among the Jewish community, the absolute majority considered such schools to be ineffective in creating a "rapprochement" between Jews and Gentiles.[46] Unwillingness on the part of Jews to send their children to such establishments of learning was depicted quite soberly. It was no great secret for Russian officials that the Jews were ignoring schools that had been set up specially for them because they were treated as "purely Christian;" on the other hand there was a lack of trust in religious instruction, that is, people were afraid that this could lead to "government interference in the way children are educated" and furthermore there were no teaching materials created specially for these

schools. Another important factor in this issue was that graduating from a second level school did not bring tangible benefits to Jews for they could not proceed further to continue their studies in other educational establishments and the schools did not provide sufficient training that was "needed in practical life."[47] It is not surprising that discussions arose as to what to do with these schools. The governor general of Vilna most probably knew about the ongoing discussions and put forward an idea of his own. Admittedly another opinion was dominant in the Vilna Educational District. There was thought of reforming second level Jewish schools deliberately as establishments providing commerical education.[48]

To return to Nazimov's proposals for Jewish education, it is important to stress that if such a proposal had been implemented the highest rank of schools, the rabbinical schools would have lost part of their significance since one of their basic tasks was to train teachers for the first and second level schools. Therefore what is perhaps the governor general's most original proposal and was connected with rabbinical school reform does not surprise us. He suggested devoting the funds left over after the closure of separate Jewish schools to reforming the Vilnius rabbinical school into an academy of higher educational rank and providing certain "privileges" for its graduates. Although the governor general did not outline the potential benefit from such a school, it is not difficult to guess that in this way he hoped to create a new class of Jewish elite loyal to the Empire and free from religious orientation. The Nazimov educational reform proposals outlined here show that he paid less attention than many imperial civil servants to Jewish opinion and the importance of religion to the life of this ethno-confessional group.

Pursuit of education should have been encouraged by another proposal, namely the need to establish that only those who graduated from grammar school at least could become members of merchant guilds and then grant them equal rights with the merchant class. Nazimov also proposed linking the right to be elected to town authority institutions to education as well as the property ownership requirement.

Furthermore, "rapprochement" was supposed to be encouraged by the prohibition on Jews' setting up separate workmen's guilds, but in general guilds they could be represented only by district school alumni.

Thus these proposals were intended foremost to coerce Jews into attending state schools. The "merger" of this ethno-confessional group would take place gradually and at first "privileges" would be gained only by a small group which had obtained a Russian education. The tactics selected by Nazimov to link education in state institutions with "privileges" differed in principle from many other ideas for dealing with this issue. The proposal of the governor general of Vilna had a clearly

coercive content, and as has been said, Jewish merchants would have no other means of preserving their place in that class unless they attended state school to at least grammar school level. Meanwhile a considerable number of other bureaucrats proposed offering Jewish graduates from grammar school the same rights as Christian subjects of the Empire.[49] The latter proposal could be termed encouraging rather than coercive.

Alexander II issued instructions for the ministers of interior affairs and education, S. S. Lanskoy and E. M. Kovalevskiy to be shown these proposals and that these men present their views to the Jewish Committee. The ministers had a different view of Jewish "merger" and "rapprochement" strategy from that of Nazimov:

> Linking the gradual amelioration of Jewish morals with the condition of gradual concession to them of the general rights enjoyed by other subjects according to occupation will mean condemning the Jews for ever to their present condition not only to their own misfortune but also to the detriment of the part of the Empire appointed as their real abode.

Ministers suggested permitting certain categories of Jews (those who had attended secondary and higher schools, merchants of the second and third guilds and reserve soldiers) to live outside the Pale of Settlement and did not approve Nazimov's basic proposals.[50] No pressure to elect rabbis from the ranks of state school graduates would give results, so it is only possible to influence rabbinical elections by persuasion (unless rabbis and their deputies could be granted state income); there is no point so far in abolishing separate Jewish schools not only because of the requirement to teach them religion separately but also out of fear that "if too significant a mass of Jews sent their children suddenly to the general schools, probably Christians would cease sending their children there."[51] By proposing to turn the Vilnius Rabbi School into an academy Nazimov would contradict himself because a high school of that type would certainly not contribute to "merger" or "rapprochement." Moreover it would have no students if only those Jews were admitted who had attended grammar and district schools. The proposal to link admission to the merchants' guild with an educational requirement was rejected on the grounds of a Jewish Committee resolution of 12 March 1859. The suggestion to introduce new restrictions on Jews in workmen's guild activities also failed to find approval. The idea of linking the right of election to town authority institutions with education and property requirements was rejected as being contrary to existing legislation. There was no point, the authorities held, so far to encourage and even permit

Jews to purchase or rent land in the Great Russian gubernias because experience showed that "working the land is an occupation that is completely alien to the Jewish people."

Although there was no approval in Petersburg for the Vilna governor general's proposals on reforming the condition of the Jews, this ethno-confessional group was the object of no less attention by Nazimov in later years, even though his social assessment of the group did not change. It seems that even in later days the governor general was pessimistic about the chances of "merging" Jews into Gentile society for they were typically "fanatical and superstitious:"[52]

> Because of their religious convictions and the life style and customs that are closely connected with them, the Jews differ markedly from Christians and cannot either merge with other local elements or bring them under their influence. Adapting easily to the environment and inclining towards those from whom they expect material gain the Jewish tribe forms a separate caste in all states and national [*narodnye*] interests are alien to them.[53]

Meanwhile in 1861–62 civil servants most often regarded the political inclinations of this ethno-confessional group as being neutral or even loyal to the regime and some even expected support from wealthier Jews for publishing a journal for the ordinary people.[54] However, they ought to have felt unease at the signs of gentry favour to the Jews, the anti-government mood encouraged by certain rabbis in the Kingdom of Poland not only in ethnic Polish lands but also in Lithuania, "Polish" attempts to draw them over to their side and encourage them to take part in anti-government activities, the participation of individual members of this ethno-confessional group in demonstrations of support for "Polish" aims and Jewish involvement in smuggling weapons (which was at least no novelty).[55]

Such information about Jewish moods and activities, of course, made the authorities take action. Although a report published in the Polish-language Cracow newspaper *Czas* in mid-1861 concerning Nazimov's attempt to divide Jews and Christians was exaggerated, he really was interested in Jewish opinion and did propose paying more attention to the mood and needs of this ethno-confessional group.[56]

At the end of 1861 the governor general of Vilna became worried by action from the Ministry of State Property and Finance Ministry which intended to remove illegally domiciled Jews from villages and combat contraband within the country. Nazimov suggested ceasing these removals and concentrating on cross-border contraband.[57] In the second

half of 1862 a new problem arose: there was an announcement that in 1863 the conscriptions would be renewed. Nazimov proposed that tax-paying classes, including therefore the Jews, living 100 versts from the Prussian border, be subjected to a new tax instead of the requirement for conscripts.[58] The governor general's motivation was quite clear. An abolition of the "concessions" granted to the Jews in 1856 would drive them into the arms of the "Poles" although, unlike their confreres in the Kingdom of Poland, Jews in the so-called "Lithuanian" gubernias had remained loyal during previous periods of disturbance. At the same time the government granted Jews in the Kingdom more rights. In Nazimov's view, "if there is no intention of granting the tax-paying classes in the western gubernias the same rights as the population of the neighbouring Kingdom of Poland," then at least what was promised them not so long ago should not be taken away from them, that is the pledge not to renew conscriptions.[59] This thought leads us to think that perhaps the governor general of Vilna would have favourably viewed the introduction in lands of the former Grand Duchy of Lithuania of the types of reform towards the Jews which Wielopolski had initiated in Poland. Especially since there were other civil servants in the western province, such as the overseer of the Vilna Education District, Aleksandr Shirinskiy Shikhmatov, who tried to show more favour to the Jews and grant them new "privileges" so that they would not side with the "Poles."[60] Even more obvious principles of a "divide and rule" policy were exhibited by the governor general of the south western province, Illarion Vasilchikov, who proposed allowing Jews to purchase land and thereby weaken "Polish" influence.[61] However, Petersburg only paid attention to Nazimov's opinion on halting the temporary removal of Jews from state lands and other proposals were rejected. The fight against contraband in the face of the imminent Uprising was one of the government's priorities and the decision not to make any exceptions in calling in conscripts was not explained.[62]

Thus the threat posed by the "Poles" after 1861 forced the governor general of Vilna to offer different proposals for Jewish Policy than he had previously: now not only were the "Poles" not to be regarded as allies in "re-educating" the Jews (bearing in mind that the 1860 proposal had spoken of making gentry leaders oversee Jewish farmers) but also Jews had to be protected from anti-government activity by the "Poles." Therefore the governor general suggested certain concessions and even, it seems, was inclined to support a policy similar to that enforced in the Kingdom of Poland by Wielopolski. However, the central authorities were not willing to sustain the same policy throughout the lands of the former Commonwealth of the Two Nations. Most probably Russian civil

servants were afraid lest the Jews "exploit" Russian peasants even more after discriminatory legislation was abolished in the Pale of Settlement. However, in the Kingdom of Poland the majority of peasants were Polish.

Notes

1. All dates are given according to the Old Style (Julian Calendar).

2. Nakhmanovich, 1991, 36; Klier, 1995, 1.

3. Dubnov, 1923, 140.

4. Klier, 2001, 92–112.

5. Weeks, 1998, 6.

6. Wolski – see Klier, 1995, 146; service view – see Grodno Gubernia Jewish Settlement Committee resolution of 4 March 1858, copy in Vilnius, LVIA f.378, bs, 1857, b.856 fo.5.

7. Central Statistics Committee table showing distribution of population in nine the western gubernias according to nationality: St Petersburg, Rossiiskaia Natsionalnaia Biblioteka, Russkiy Fond 18.241.1.8/1–29, no numeration of folios. Even most Russian civil servants doubted the credibility of the nationalities statistics, especially where Jews were concerned – see Report of Mogilev governor in 1862 in Vilnius, LVIA f.378.ap.121 b.1110 fo.34–35.

8. Service record of Lieutenant General Nazimov, overseer of the Moscow Education District, Vilnius LVIA f.378 bs, 1856, b.5, fo.13.

9. Beletskiy 1906, LVIII; Medišauskienė, 1998, 225–26; Fainhauz, 1999, 21, 36, 51; Kulakauskas, 2000, 86–89; Dolbilov and others.

10. Eisenbach-Fainhauz-Wein, 1863, 5; Hildermeier, 1984, 341.

11. Dubnov, 1923, 359.

12. Klier, 1995, 21.

13. Service record of Lieutenant General Nazimov, Overseer of the Moscow Education District, Vilnius LVIA f.378 bs, 1856, b.5, fo.20; P[avlov], 1885a, 565–66; Zakharova, 1999, 58–59; Fainhauz, 1999, 11; Staliūnas, 2001, 312.

14. Medišauskienė, 1998, 150.

15. Vilnius school – Staliūnas, 2000, 32; Kirkor – Stolzman, 1973, 43–44.

16. Nikotin, 1902, 511.

17. Fainhauz, 1999, 19.

18. Confidential note of chief of the fourth gendarmes corp, 18 Apr 1861 to acting chief of the gendarmes corp published in Arzhaeva, 1964, 14–15; Fainhauz, 1999, 36.

19. Staliūnas, 2000, 32–36.

20. Undated report of Vilna governor general to tsar; Alexander II's resolution to "Discuss means proposed by Mr Nazimov in the Ministers' Cabinet," 14 Feb 1862: Rossiiskiy Gosudarstvennyy Istoricheskiy Arkhiv [RGIA], f.1282, op.2, d.334 fo.10; P[avlov], 1885b, 326.

21. "Królestwo Polskie," *Czas* 1860 No. 287; Fainhauz, 1999, 20.

22. Note from governor general of Vilna to head of Third Department, 3 Apr 1861: Gosudarstvenniy Arkhiv Rossiiskoi Federatsii [GARF] f.109, 1861, d.303, part 3 fo.7, published in Arzhaeva, 1964, 333.

23. Note from governor general of Vilna to minister of interior, 14 March 1863: RGIA f.1282 op.2 d.339 fo.34.

24. Note from governor general of Vilna to minister of education, RGIA f.733 op.140 d.17 fo.49, published in Milovidov, 1913, 107; *for the aim of cutting the province off from Russia*, see RGIA f.733 op.140 d.17 fo.52.

25. Opinion of governor general of Vilna on an anonymous note which the interior minister presented to the tsar on 25 Feb 1862: RGIA f.1282 op.2 d.334 fo.121–22 and f.1276 op.1 d.11 fos105–111; *Iz del Zapadnogo komiteta: Svod predlozhenii i vyvodov*: St Petersburg, RNB, Russkiy Fond 18.241.1.8/1–29, unnumbered folioes.

26. Note from governor general of Vilna to minister of education, 26 June 1862: RGIA f.733 op.140 d.17 fo.52; governor general of Vilna's proposals (which contains a reference to a resolution of Alexander II dated 27 Aug 1862): RGIA f.1267 op.1 d.11 fo.35.

27. Opinion of governor general of Vilna on anonymous note presented to tsar by interior minister on 25 Feb 1862: RGIA f.1282 op.2 d.334 fo.124.

28. Ibid f.121.

29. Note from governor general of Vilna to interior minister, 14 March 1863, RGIA f.1282 op.2 d.339 fo.33.

30. Note from governor general of Vilna to minister of education, 26 June 1862, RGIA f.733 op.140 d.17 fo.54.

31. Opinion of governor general of Vilna on anonymous note presented to tsar by Interior Minister on 25 Feb 1862: RGIA f.1282 op.2 d.334 fo.122; note from governor general of Vilna to minister of people's education, 18 June 1862, Milovidov, 1913, 83–84; proposals of governor general of Vilna RGIA f.1267 op.1 d.11 fo.34; note from governor general of Vilna to minister of education, 1 Feb 1863: RGIA f.733 op.62 d.1483 fo.51; confidential note from governor general of Vilna to gendarmerie chief, 18 Feb 1863: Arzhaeva, 1965, 5.

32. *Disloyal Poles* – Note from governor general of Vilna to Interior Minister on 14 March 1863: RVIA f.1282 op.2 d.339 fo.41; *ban on Polish language* – proposals of governor general of Vilna – RVIA f.1267 ap.1 b.11, fo.37. Nazimov's note to the education minister (1 Feb 1863) illustrates well how the anti-Polish nature of this mood increased. In the first draft of the document it was noted that it was unsuitable to ban Polish as a school subject in certain places in Lithuania but later this thought was removed and replaced by a sentence stating that in the

eastern part of the Vilna Gubernia and in the Grodno Gubernia Catholic religious instruction should be given in the "local Belarusian language" – draft of note from governor general of Vilna to minister of education, 1 Feb 1863, LVIA f.378 bs, 1862, b.629 fo.92–93; *people's schools* to be set up – undated report of governor general of Vilna to tsar, RGIA f.1282 op.2 d.334, fo.12; *journals* – ibid. fos13–14 and note from governor general of Vilna to minister of education, 15 June 1862, LVIA f.567 ap.4 b.915 fos6–11; *not sending the army* – circular from governor general of Vilna to governors, 9 Feb 1863, Arzhaeva, 1965, 4.

33. *Russian university* – Undated report from governor general of Vilna to tsar – RGIA f.1282 op.2 d.334 fos11–12; note from governor general of Vilna to minister of education, 26 June 1862, RGIA fo.733 op.140 d.17 fo.49; *some proposals a possible exception* – governor general of Vilna's confidential note to interior minister, 31 Jan 1863, LVIA f.378 bs 1862 b.73 d.3 fos30–31; these documents seem to indicate that Nazimov did not reject outright the possibility of establishing a university with Polish as the language of instruction – Staliūnas, 2000, 73–74. *Proportion of nationalities* – note from governor general of Vilna to chief of gendarmes department, 16 Sept 1861, GARF f.109, 1861, d.303 part 1 fos236–37; note from governor general of Vilna to interior minister, 14 March 1863, RGIA f.1282 op.2 d.339 fos40–41. *Russian gentry colonists* – ibid; Opinion of governor general of Vilna on anonymous note presented to tsar by Interior Minister on 25 Feb 1862: RGIA f.1282 op.2 d.334 fos125–26.

34. Valuev criticised many of Nazimov's proposals for being completely unrealistic or unjustified and also sent an official for special affairs, Aleksei Storozhenko, to gather information, communicated with the leader of the Grodno gubernia gentry Viktor Starzenski; in other words he demonstrated his lack of confidence in the governor general of Vilna and as early as 1862 initiated plans to have him removed. Furthermore, unlike the governor general of Vilna, Valuev had to take account of the consequences of one or other decision for the whole of the Empire and not just for this region. Nazimov reacted to this by sending complaints to other high-ranking officials on the passing of resolutions without ministerial approval (for example during the declaration of martial law in August 1861 in certain districts under his control) and so on. See the "Case of misunderstandings between the interior minister and the military governor of Vilna, Nazimov" in GARF f.106, First Expedition of 1861, d.413; P[avlov], 1885a, 556; Zakharova, 1999, 112–113, 420–21; Lazutka, 1961, 238; Shtakelberg, 1962, 345–46; Staliūnas, 1998, 392–95 and elsewhere.

35. Klier, 1989, 132–33; Slocum, 1998, 182–84. Most interesting is that of the twenty five reports from governors of Vilna, Kovno, Grodno, Minsk, Mogilev and Vitebsk for 1857–68 that we have consulted (and these are not all the extant reports) only that of the governor of Minsk classified Jews as aliens while others placed only Tatars or Karaites in this category: reports from the governor of Minsk for 1861, 1863, 1864, 1866 in LVIA f.378 ap.121 b.899 fo.5; b.901 fo.10; b.550a fo.47; b.913 fo.7.

36. Copy of Grodno Jewish Settlement Committee's resolution, 4 Apr 1858: LVIA f.378 bs, 1857, b.856 fo.5–8; also b.856a fo.14–25.

37. Note from governor of Kovno to governor general of Vilna, 17 May 1858 ibid. b.856a fo.27–30.

38. Note from governor of Vilna to governor general of Vilna, 12 Sept 1859, ibid. b.856 fo.20–25; copy in b.856a fo.32–36.

39. Most humble note from governor general of Vilna to tsar, 6 Oct 1860: RGIA f.1282 op.2 d.64 fo.1–14. Rough draft of this document in LVIA f.378, bs, 1857, b.856a fo.1–10.

40. Klier, 1995, 227–28.

41. Secret note from Minister of state property to governor general of Vilna, 18 March 1858: LVIA f.378 bs, 1857, b.752 fo.33–34.

42. Copy of resolution of Grodno gubernia Jewish Settlement Committee, 6 June 1858, ibid. fo.45–46.

43. Secret note of governor of Kovno to governor general of Vilna, 17 May 1858, ibid. fo.41–43; secret note of governor of Vilna to governor general of Vilna, 30 October 1858, ibid. fo.58–61.

44. Note from governor general of Vilna to minister of state property, 4 Jan 1859, ibid. fo.67–72.

45. 22 Oct [1859], His Majesty's confirmation of proposal of the Main Committee for Jewish Settlement, published on 11 Feb 1860. On the halting of Jewish settlement on state lands in the western gubernia and concerning the lands on which Jews may be settled: *Polnoe sobranie zakonov Rossiiskoi Imperii*, sobranie II, vol. 34, second section 1859 (St Petersburg, 1861), 177.

46. Note from director of schools in the Grodno Gubernia to overseer of Vilna Education District, 15 June 1859: LVIA f.567 ap.1 b.73 fo.14.

47. Giršovičius, 1997, 273–74; note from director of schools in the Grodno Gubernia to overseer of Vilna Education District, 15 June 1859: LVIA f.567 ap.1 b.73 fo.12; extract from minute books of sessions of Rabbi Committee of the Interior Ministry, 7, 18 and 27 Dec 1861 and 2, 4, 8, 10 Jan 1862, ibid fo.203. Note from director of schools in Kovno Gubernia to overseer of Vilna Education District, 7 July 1859, ibid fo.32;

meeting of Vilna Education District overseer's council, 4 April 1861, LVIA f.567 ap.21 b.26 fos18–19.

48. Information on these discussions available from "Conclusions on Jewish Education": LVIA f.567 ap.1 b.73; minutes of meetings of Overseer's Council of Vilna Education District for 1861: LVIA f.567 ap.21 b.26.

49. Meeting of overseer's council of Vilna Education District, 4 Apr 1861: LVIA f.567 ap.21 b.26, fo.23.

50. Opinion of ministers of education and interior affairs concerning proposal for encouraging Jewish labour and education made by the governor general of Vilna, 22 Feb 1861: RGIA f.1282 op.2 d.64 fo.35–57.

51. The question of what to do with state Jewish schools was still open later. E. Putiatin who replaced Kovalevskiy as minister in Sept 1861 issued an instruction to close all second level schools in the Vilna district and only in the Grodno district was a first level school to replace them – note from minister of education to overseer of Vilna Education District, 9 Sept 1861, LVIA f.567 ap.1 b.73 fo.103. Meanwhile members of the Interior Ministry's Rabbi Committee who met in late 1861 and early 1862 drew the conclusion that for the time being it was not worth abolishing all the state Jewish schools entirely because it was still not possible to turn them all into general educational establishments – extract from minute books of sessions of Rabbi Committee of the Interior Ministry, 7, 18 and 27 Dec 1861 and 2, 4, 8, 10 Jan 1862, ibid fo.208.

52. Draft of note from governor general of Vilna to interior minister, 21 June 1861, ibid f.378 bs 1858 b.8 fo.46.

53. Note from governor general of Vilna to interior minister, 14 March 1863, RGIA f.1282 op.2 d.339 fo.34.

54. *Jewish neutrality* – note from governor general of Vilna to chief of gendarmes dept, 22 Nov 1862, Milovidov, 1913, 189; note from chief officer of Kaunas gendarmes to chief of gendarmes dept, 9 July 1861, Arzhaeva, 1964, 348. *Jewish support for peasant journal* – note from official of ministry of popular education, P. Shchebalskii, 1 May 1862, LVIA f.378 bs 1862 b.640 fo.6.

55. *Gentry support for Jews* – Eisenbach-Fainhauz-Wein, 1963, 5. *Anti-govt rabbis* – note from governor of Minsk to governor general of Vilna, 18 Oct 1861, LVIA f.378 bs 1861, b.73 d.II fo.273. *"Poles" attract Jewish support* – interior ministry review of political situation in western provinces no later than 14 July 1861; note from gendarmes staff officer of Grodno Gubernia to chief of gendarmes dept, 4 Sept 1861, Arzhaeva, 1964, 42, 455; Nadel, 1958, 50. *Individual Jews support the "Poles"* – note from Grodno staff officer to chief of gendarmes dept, 13

Dec 1862, Azhaeva, 1964, 482; Fainhauz, 1999, 32. *Weapons smuggling* – note from governor general of Riga to governor general of Vilna, 31 Oct 1862; note from Fourth Gendarmes Corps to governor general of Vilna, 24 Dec 1862, Azhaeva, 1964, 138–39, 148.

56. Wilno, 10 lipca [Vilnius 10 July], *Czas* 1861 No. 167.

57. Report of Third Department, 27 Nov 1861 on Nazimov's proposals, Eisenbach-Fainhauz-Wein, 1962, 45–49.

58. Note from governor general of Vilna to interior minister, 29 Sept 1862 and note from governor general of Vilna to chief of gendarmes 27 Nov 1862: LVIA f.378, bs, 1862, b.123 fos1–8, 9–12, published in Milovidov, 1913, 158–61, 188–89. Appeals from Christians, Jews and lower ranking officials to the governor general on this issue are in the official file "On Conscription in 1863": LVIA f.378, bs, 1862 b.679.

59. Note from governor general of Vilna to chief of the Gendarmes dept, 27 Nov 1862: LVIA f.378 bs, 1862, b.123, fo.11–12.

60. Note from overseer of Vilna Education District to minister of education, 2 Sept 1861: Kornilov, 1908, 10–11, published also in Beletskiy, 1906, 144–51; Shteinberg, 1901, 306; Nadel, 1958, 51.

61. Secret note from governor general of Kiev to interior minister, 25 Nov 1861: Eisenbach-Fainhauz-Wein, 1962, 45.

62. Report of Third Department, 27 Nov 1861 on Nazimov's proposals: ibid, 48–49; note from chief of Third Department to governor general of Vilna, 31 Dec 1862: LVIA f.378 bs, 1862, b.123, fo.14, published in Milovidov, 1913, 217.

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Politics, Society, and Antisemitism: Peculiarities of the Russian Empire and Lithuanian Lands

Theodore R. Weeks

When looking at the history of Lithuanian Jewry, we must inevitably also consider this community's relations with the other national groups inhabiting the region they (and others) rather imprecisely referred to as Lite/Lita ("Litwa," "Lietuva"). It must be emphasised that this geographical expression did not correspond to a clearly demarcated territory. Rather, it is best understood as that area lying between ethnic Polish and ethnic Russian territory (on the east-west axis), bordering Latvian and Ukrainian settlements to the north and south. Within this territory lived, besides the Jews, several other distinct nationalities, most prominent among them Lithuanians, Poles, Belarusians (by today's definition), and Russians. Among these national groups, only two enjoyed unchallenged legitimacy in the 19th century as "cultural nations" – the Russians (mainly, of course, officials and soldiers here, not natives) and Poles (primarily landowners, but also significant as townspeople, intelligentsia, and in some areas peasantry). The late 19th century witnessed the rise of national feeling and nationally-based organisations in this region, not only among Lithuanians and Jews, but also among Poles, Russians, and even (to a smaller extent) Belarusians. The fact that no one nationality could dominate here (though the Russians certainly tried to do so) also influenced the development of relations between Lithuanians and Jews.

In this paper I would like to consider the larger issue of how and why antisemitism developed in late 19th-century Europe, then examine the appearance of antisemitism in the Russian Empire – in particular the Russian and Polish cases, and finally point out certain peculiarities of the situation in "Lite" (here basically defined as the six Northwest provinces – Severo-zapadnyi krai – of Vil'na, Kovno, Grodno, Mogilev, Minsk, and Vitebsk). While much more work needs to be done on this subject, my tentative conclusion is that the Lithuanian national movement generally avoided overt antisemitic agitation because it had much more to fear from the Poles than the Jews. This is not to say, however, that relations between Lithuanians and Jews were excellent; indeed, the economic structure of the region, the large percentage of Jews among urban dwellers, and the fledgling quality of Lithuanian high culture boded ill for the future.

Before looking at more specific cases, a few words on the relationship between nationalism and antisemitism are in order. Some – in particular

nationalists (and I use the word in the American, non-pejorative, sense) – would deny any connection at all, seeing in antisemitism a perversion of true national feeling. Certainly Herder, Mazzini, and Mickiewicz, for all their exalted patriotism, were not antisemites. However, by the later half of the 19th century, as national-ethnic movements progressed from cultural-spiritual ideals to concrete political platforms and actions, isolation and rejection of the "national other" (a role which the Jews play *par excellence*) became the norm. On the most basic level, nationalists needed to define the limits of the nation, who belonged and who did not. From a liberal point of view, Jews could certainly belong to the Polish or French or German nation. Practically speaking, however, the large cultural, religious, and even linguistic gap between Jews and other ethnicities in Eastern Europe made such an inclusive definition of the nation very unlikely. Add to this the fact that Jews themselves increasingly rejected the idea of assimilation into the surrounding nation, and a complete re-thinking of relations between Jews and Gentiles is needed. Unfortunately, such a re-thinking seldom took place. Instead, age-old anti-Jewish sentiments were transformed into modern antisemitism.

I do not, however, want to argue for a kind of historical inevitability. While nationalism is certainly possible without antisemitism, the link between the two ideologies is far from accidental. In a sense, any kind of exclusivist nationalism ("Poland for the Poles," "Russia for the Russians," etc.) would seem inevitably to lead to restrictions (or worse) on Jews. But this inevitability is only apparent and depends on the nation's definition. That is, *if* (for example) a "Pole" is defined as a person who supports Polish cultural, political, and national aspirations, then there is no reason why a Jew ("Pole of the Mosaic Law," to use the contemporary phrase) should be accepted into the fold of Polishness. This conception of Jews gradually shedding their linguistic, cultural, and external differences and merging with the Polish nation was, in fact, the most prevalent solution for the "Jewish Question" before the very end of the nineteenth century. On a practical or even conceptual level, however, this solution was fraught with difficulties. Practically speaking, when Jewishness was so closely tied to the strict adherence to tradition and ritual, any Jew who dared to go against tradition by, say, dressing in "European" clothing or shaving his beard could very easily find himself treated as an apostate by his own community.[1] Conceptually, the overwhelming identification of Catholicism with the Polish and Lithuanian nation made it quite difficult for Jews, even Polish or Lithuanian-speaking, western clad, and "enlightened" in religious practices, to be accepted as entirely "one of ours."

A recent and controversial re-interpretation of modern antisemitism points to the "rise of the Jews" (in modern society) as a major factor facilitating the spread of antisemitism.[2] Whether or not one accepts Lindemann's thesis, it cannot be denied that after 1848 Jews did become more and more visible in European society. For Central and Eastern Europe, the appearance of Jews on the public stage coincided more or less with the miseries of early capitalism, the building of railways, the creation of a modern press, the development of modern professions – all fields in which Jews were well represented. It thus comes as no surprise that modern antisemitism (and the word itself, coined by Wilhelm Marr in the 1870s) appeared first in Germany and Austria.

Unlike much of Western Europe, the German lands had never entirely expelled their Jewish population. Despite their small numbers, Jews formed an important and significant segment of German and Austrian society. Their road to assimilation was quick and apparently successful – by mid-century German, not Yiddish, was the native tongue of most German Jews, most of whom excelled not just in business, the professions, and culture, but also in their fervent German patriotism. One excellent and well-known example of the successful and patriotic German Jew is Bismarck's banker, Gerson von Bleichrder.[3] Success engenders envy, economic change and disruption causes social discontent. What better outlet for social discontent than the Germany's upwardly-mobile Jewish community?

Organised political antisemitism arose in Germany in the 1870s. Several factors made this phenomenon possible and, one may say, even likely. One was political: the unification of Germany and the creation of the Reichstag, elected by universal (male) suffrage. While the powers of the imperial legislature remained significantly limited, nonetheless conservatives needed to find political strategies that would allow them to compete in these elections. One of these strategies was antisemitism. Around the same time, financial scandals and a huge stock market crash in 1873 ushered in a generation of slow economic growth – the so-called "Great Depression." Among the speculators implicated in the crash of 1873 were several high-profile Jews, included one Hirsch Strousberg, about whom Peter Pulzer has written "the only difference between his and other men's frauds was that his fraud was more impudent and involved more money."[4] To be sure, many Christians were involved in similar shady dealings, but as ever, the psychological satisfaction and political convenience of blaming the "national other" for many outweighed any sober statistical analysis.

In the late 1870s, antisemitism in various forms burst onto the public scene in Germany. On the intellectual or cultural level there were the

articles by the respected historian Heinrich von Treitschke, published in the academic journal *Preussische Jahrbücher* in 1879–1880. Treitschke criticised Jews as economically harmful, culturally pernicious, and religious dangerous.[5] Treitschke's writings and in particular his famous statement, "Die Juden sind unser Unglück," provided the antisemitic movement with a measure of intellectual respectability. At a different level of society, the Berlin court chaplain Adolf Stcker attempted to influence working-class audiences that anti-Jewish measures (especially in the economic sphere) would serve workers' interests. Stöcker's so-called "Christian Socialism" was received with scepticism by the German workers, though conservatives took up some of his arguments. Stöcker himself was elected to the Reichstag, though not from Berlin, and his party was soon eclipsed by more radical racial antisemites and, even more strongly, by the rise of German Social Democracy.[6] Despite this electoral failure, Stöcker's movement demonstrated that anti-Jewish sentiment could easily be connected with anti-capitalism, fears of economic dislocation, and resentment at those who profited from capitalist development.

A far more successful antisemitic politician was the Viennese leader, Karl Lueger. Like Stöcker, Lueger headed a so-called "Christian Social" party whose antisemitism aimed to woo lower middle-class and working-class voters. Unlike Stöcker, Lueger was considerably more opportunistic in his use of antisemitism – witness his famous phrase "Wer Jud' ist, bestimme ich" – and vastly more charismatic. Lueger succeeded in being elected mayor of Vienna, despite the explicit disapproval not only of Jewish and liberal circles, but also of the Emperor Franz Joseph himself. Only after being repeatedly re-elected was Lueger grudgingly confirmed as mayor by Franz Joseph in 1897.[7]

The following year, at the other end of the Empire from Vienna, economic strains exploded into physical violence against Jews across much of western Galicia in 1898.[8] Nor was anti-Jewish feeling in Galicia during the 1890s limited to the peasant masses. The deputy to the Galician parliament (Sejm), Teofil Merunowicz, denounced "Jewish radicals" in speeches and in print, arguing that specific measures needed to be taken to reduce Jewish power in the province.[9] Even more important than Merunowicz's pamphlet was the movement started by a Galician parish priest, A. Morawski.[10] Claiming to condemn both philosemitism and antisemitism, Morawski proposed instead "asemitism" – that is, an avoiding of contact with Jews. For all his protests that he did not hate the Jews, Morawski's theory presumed that Jews could not join the Polish nation and that their influence was inherently bad. Furthermore, Morawski's position as a priest and his "cultured" (i.e., not rabid or

vulgar) approach to the Jewish question made his ideas acceptable to many who despised such rabble-rousers as the Warsaw journalist Jan Jeleński.[11]

Thus antisemitic slogans and parties were prevalent in central-European politics of the 1890s, but one should not exaggerate their political success. As Léon Poliakov points out, the largest electoral victory of the explicitly antisemitic German Volkspartei occurred in 1893 when it received some 260,000 votes out of 7 million voters. After this point, the party went into decline; by 1912 only three seats in the Reichstag were held by the antisemitic block.[12] To be sure, electoral results reflect popular sentiments and prejudices only imperfectly.[13] Still, most contemporary commentators in the early 20th century opined that antisemitism as a political movement was on the wane in Central Europe. Not, however, to the east.

Several of the factors leading to antisemitism in Central Europe – capitalist development, industrialisation and railway construction, a modern press, a semi-democratic political system – either did not exist or were in a fledgling state in the Russian Empire of the late 19th century. The first major Russian railway (linking Moscow and St. Petersburg) opened in 1851, the capitals were linked with Warsaw (and hence with Western Europe) in 1862, but the real spurt in railway construction occurred after 1883.[14] Industrialisation in Russia gradually began under the minister of finances Reuter (1862–1878), but really took off under the ministries of Bunge (1882–6), Vyshinskii (1887–1892), and most famous of all Sergei Witte (1892–1903).[15] As Louise McReynolds has shown, the mass-circulation press in Russia also dated from these final decades of the 19th century – after all, even in 1897 barely half of the Tsar's subjects could read.[16] Finally, as is well known, Russia neither had legal parties nor any kind of national legislature until after the Revolution of 1905. For all these reasons, Russian-Jewish relations differed significantly from conditions in Central and Western Europe. Even more importantly, however, was the simple fact that, despite some exceptions and slight loosening of restrictions in the reform era (1860–1870s), Jews in the Russian Empire were never "emancipated" legally (except in the Kingdom of Poland). The fact that Russia's Jews never received equal rights took away a key rhetorical weapon of the antisemite: the claim that the Jews had been given rights "too soon" and used these rights not to help society as a whole but to their own narrow profit (such was, of course, a key argument among Polish antisemitism in the Russian Empire).[17]

With a government so overtly anti-Jewish as the Russian, antisemitic agitation might seem superfluous. Furthermore, the government did not

welcome – to put it mildly – *any* sort of social mobilisation, even groups propounding ultra-traditional and ultra-loyal ideas. While the old view of the Russian government actively fomenting pogroms has by now largely been discredited, it is also clear that Russian officialdom harbored deep suspicions of the Jews and considered them disloyal, economically harmful, and generally injurious to the Russian state and local social order.[18] At the same time, Russian officialdom held a generally low view of the *Russian* peasantry (not to mention proletariat or educated classes); severe limits on expression and organisation was the norm for all. Thus specific antisemitic parties in Russia emerged (legally, at least) only after 1905. Still, as Heinz-Dietrich Loewe argues, traditional religious anti-Jewish sentiment was nonetheless taking on forms of a more modern political antisemitism. In Loewe's memorable phrase, antisemitism in the Russian Empire served as a "reactionary utopia," aiming to preserve "feudal elements" in the Russian socio-economic and political order.[19]

Loewe's argument certainly has its merits, but it cannot be accepted without severe reservations. What does one do, for example, with the arch-conservative Russian nationalist and ultra-loyal supporter of autocracy, Mikhail N. Katkov? Admittedly, Katkov was a liberal in his youth (but so was Pobedonostsev!), but his mature views certainly merit the label "reactionary." Nonetheless, Katkov was in no way an antisemite. In an interesting twist, for Katkov the demonic Pole replaced the figure of the Jew as the source of revolutionary ideas, social ferment, and decadence.[20] In any case, the fact that politics (except for internal court and bureaucratic feuding – a rather different thing) really did not exist in Russia until after 1905 precluded the formation of political organisations espousing antisemitic ideas.

With the promise of an elected legislature – the Duma – in the October Manifesto of 1905, reactionary and antisemitic Russian groupings arose almost immediately. The most famous among these is, of course, the so-called Union of the Russian People (URP) or more popularly "the Black Hundreds." The URP specifically targeted Jews (along with Russian liberals, students, and radicals) as threats to the motherland. In many cases, URP members were implicated in anti-Jewish violence, though the government always condemned these incidents as "unrepresentative" of the party as a whole.[21] As Rogger points out, the Extreme Right (one presumes he refers to the so-called *pravye*) made up 11.5% of the conservative Third Duma (1907–1912). Among these was the notorious antisemite V. M. Purishkevich, whose name became a synonym of the most vulgar and abusive form of reaction and national chauvinism.[22]

For all their violent rhetoric and loudness, Russian antisemites – at least after Stolypin's "legislative coup" of 3 June 1907 – were something of a sideshow in Russian politics. Despite Nicholas's personal support for the Union of the Russian People, it rapidly became clear that the URP could not serve as a bulwark of order and stability for the government. Instead, Stolypin relied on an unstable and shifting "coalition" of Duma members from the Octobrist and Nationalist parties.[23] Stolypin was himself no antisemite, though to be not free of the prejudices of his background and class. Indeed, he attempted to persuade Nicholas II to lessen – if not abolish altogether – legal restrictions on Jews in the Empire, but the tsar steadfastly refused to allow any such reform.[24] Soon, however, revolutionary terror in different forms were to sweep both Stolypin and Nicholas from the political stage and, indeed, into the next world. The coming of World War One did exacerbate government mistrust and mistreatment of the Jews, but antisemitism as a popular movement remained a relatively unimportant and despised trend.[25] When the Russian Empire collapsed in February 1917 and during the ensuing months, antisemitism played little or no role in Russian politics.

The situation in Russian Poland, however, was quite different. The Kingdom of Poland, despite having lost nearly all of its autonomy after the insurrection of 1863, retained a separate legal system – including quasi-equal rights for the Jews. Remarkably, the 1862 law sweeping away previous legal restrictions (which exceeding those existing in the Pale of Settlement) was never canceled.[26] Thus at least *de jure* but also in many ways *de facto*, Jews enjoyed more rights in Warsaw or Chełm than in Białystok (just across the border of the Pale, in Grodno gubernia) or Berdichev. Here is not the place to trace the complicated development and deterioration of relations between Poles and Jews after 1863. Suffice it to say that from the early 1880s – the founding of the antisemitic weekly *Rola* in 1883 may serve as a key date – Polish society exhibited increasingly anti-Jewish and indeed antisemitic tendencies.[27] The rise of the National Democratic Party in the century's last years was both a symptom of this antisemitic sentiment and a goad to further divide Jews and Poles in the Polish lands.[28] By the turn of the century relations were seriously strained, and in the years after 1905 matters went from bad to worse. The anti-Jewish boycott proclaimed by the Poles in late 1912 was an attempt – not entirely successful, to be sure – to sever Polish-Jewish contact completely.[29] Thus in Polish society and politics, antisemitism had gained a "respectable" and powerful position already before World War I.

In the "Lithuanian" or Northwest provinces of the Russian Empire, where Jews made up very high percentages of the local population, one

might expect the development of aggressive and widespread antisemitism rather like the case in Warsaw. In fact, however, this does not seem to have been the case. Before we offer some possible reasons for this phenomenon, let us take a look at some statistics on the Jewish presence in these provinces. Nowhere in the six "Northwest" provinces did Jews constitute less than ten percent of the total population. The lowest percentage was in the mainly Belarusian Vitebsk province (11.7%), the highest in Grodno province (17.4%). As for the two provinces in which Lithuanians made up a significant percentage of the population (68.3% and 17.6%, respectively), Kovno (Kaunas) and Vilna (Vilnius), Jews made up 13.8% and 12.8% of the population, respectively. Even more striking is the Jewish population in towns and cities. In the seven largest towns in the region, the Jewish portion of the population ranged from 39.8% (Vilna) to 64.9% (Białystok), according to official figures of 1910.[30]

Conversely, Lithuanians are almost totally absent from the urban population, at least according to official statistics. All sources agree that Lithuanians were, even in 1914, a mainly peasant and rural people. But it is difficult to ascertain with any precision just how many people of Lithuanian ethnicity lived in towns and cities, given the inaccuracies of official statistics and the notorious lack of objectivity in gathering such data. For example, in 1910 an article in a Polish nationalist journal entitled "Ethnographic Relations in Lithuania" claimed that no Lithuanians at all lived in Wilno, and that taking "Litwa" as a whole (apparently, Kovno, Vilna, and Suwałki provinces), Lithuanians made up 30.9% (1.6 million) of the total population, with Poles close behind with 26.5% (nearly 1.4 million).[31] Even according to official statistics, Lithuanians made up a very small part (under ten percent) of Vilna's population, and in Kovno 17.6% of the population is listed as "other" – no doubt Lithuanians. The fact that Lithuanians did not, on the whole, inhabit towns and cities must have been one factor hindering the development of modern antisemitism among them.

As is well known, the Lithuanian national movement developed mainly after the 1863 insurrection. Miroslav Hroch calls it "a national movement of the belated type," positing that it reached "phase B" ("the period of patriotic agitation") in the 1880s with the appearance of *Aušra*, and "phase C" ("the rise of a mass national movement") only after the 1905 revolution.[32] One could, I think, quibble with these dates but few would argue that the Lithuanian population was truly nationally conscious in a political sense before 1914.[33] A recent work has argued that the experience of World War One did much to spread national consciousness among the Lithuanian population.[34] In many ways, then, Lithuanians

remained so to speak only on the verge of modernity in the early 20th century.

This is not to say, of course, that Lithuanian feelings toward their Jewish neighbours were necessarily very favourable or friendly. Jews were often seen as exploiters and allies of the Polish landlord. Jews were stereotypical middlemen, petty merchants, and innkeepers – not professions especially beloved by peasants anywhere. The Lithuanian-Catholic temperance movement of the late 1850s, for example, specifically mentioned Jewish innkeepers as a negative influence that should be avoided.[35] Lithuanian peasants regarded Jews as part of the urban scene, alien from themselves, but a natural part of the world as it existed. Unlike modern antisemites, they could not conceive of a world without Jews, even if their feelings toward individual Jews might have been rather hostile.[36]

To be sure, one may find expressions of a more modern, political and nationalistic antisemitism in Lithuanian before 1914. In an unpublished article, Saulius Sužiedėlis points out that one may find in the Lithuanian nationalist periodical *Varpas* not only anti-Jewish pieces portraying Jews as exploiters of the peasantry, but showed "an acquaintance with the ideas of French (for example, Edouard Drumont) and Austrian purveyors of racial antisemitic thought."[37] Sužiedėlis admits, however, that such opinions played a minor role in the journal's programme. A Lithuanian pamphlet of 1886 on "defending oneself from the Jews" follows a pseudo-historical anti-Jewish line and recommends that Lithuanians avoid contact with Jews, in particular in the economic sphere.[38] The pamphlet resembles rather closely similar contemporary works by Polish antisemites such as Jan Jeleński and Teodor Jeske-Choiński. It is impossible to know, however, how much resonance such pamphlets found among the population.

Certainly much more research needs to be done on the subject of Lithuanian-Jewish relations in the 19th and early 20th century before any firm conclusions can be reached even on basic issues such as the prevalence and nature of anti-Jewish feelings there. However, a few tentative conclusions may be hazarded. For one thing, it appears that antisemitism remained a minor factor among Lithuanians before 1914. While anti-Jewish sentiments are present (where were they absent?), the idea of the Jew as a key enemy of Lithuanian national interests is usually absent. Several reasons for this may be given. First, the obvious fact that the Russian government and existing Polish high culture were more immediate threats to Lithuanian culture than the Jews were. Second, the relatively low level of economic development in these provinces. Third, the weakness of the Lithuanian movement, which may have inclined its

activists to concentrate their energies internally on cultural development and externally on measures against the Russians and Poles.

As Ezra Mendelsohn points out, initially after World War I, the political-legal situation of Lithuanian Jews was quite good. Jews were promised an impressive amount of internal autonomy, and the Lithuanian government even set up a Ministry of Jewish Affairs. Unfortunately, the honeymoon between Jews and the Lithuanian state lasted only a few years; from the mid-1920s on, increasing inroads were made against Jewish autonomy. Worse still, antisemitism grew steadily, exacerbated by the economic crisis of the 1930s.[39] Perhaps this was a case of a belated nationalism "catching up" not only in consciousness and political organisation, but also in chauvinism and an aggressive view of the ethnic other?

Notes

1. This possibility of alienation from one's native society is reflected also in contemporary Yiddish literature, in particular in the works of Mendele Moykher Sforim whose literary pseudonym, Dan Miron argues, was far more than a mere literary diversion: Miron, 1973, 130–168. In his report on Jewish small towns in Tomaszów district (eastern Lublin province), I. L. Peretz noted with heavy irony that in "Tishevitz" to be a *maskil* – an "enlightened Jew," for conservatives only a step from apostasy – a man did not even have to shave: "it's enough that he trims his beard." "Impressions of a Journey through the Tomaszow Region," in: Wisse, 1990, 30.

2. Lindemann, 1997.

3. Stern, 1977.

4. Pulzer, 1988, 19. See also Lindemann, 1997, 118–122.

5. On Treitschke, see Lindemann, 1997, 131–142; Pulzer, 1988, 240–3; and Dorpalen, 1957.

6. On Stöcker, see Pulzer, 1988, 83–97.

7. On Lueger and antisemitism in fin-de-siècle Vienna, see Beller, 1989, 188–206; and the celebrated essay by Schorske, 1981, 116–180.

8. On the Galician pogroms of 1898, see Golczewski, 1981, 60–84.

9. Merunowicz, 1893. Merunowicz had earlier published pamphlets on the Jewish problem, e.g, Merunowicz, 1879.

10. Morawski, 1896.

11. For a more detailed discussion of Galician antisemitism and in particular Merunowicz than can be given here, see Żbikowski, 1993, 53–62; and 1994, 21–39.

12. Poliakov, 1985, 22–25.

13. For a short discussion of German antisemitism quite different from my own, see Greenfeld, 1992, 386–395.

14. In 1866, Russia had 3000 miles of track; in 1883 14,700; and in 1903, 36,400 – a figure which grew only modestly (to 43,900) by 1913. Figures from Westwood, 1993, 84.

15. On Russian industrialisation in a comparative framework, see Trebilcock, 1981, 205–291.

16. McReynolds, 1991.

17. On the Polish case, see Eisenbach, 1991; and Golczewski, 1981.

18. For the old view of the Russian state actively carrying out pogroms, see the works of Dubnov, e.g., 1922. More recent studies include Rogger, 1986; Aronson, 1990; and Klier, 1992.

19. Löwe, 1978. This important work is available in a somewhat expanded English translation as Löwe, 1993.

20. Katkov certainly deserves more attention than he has been given hitherto in the historiography. Meanwhile, see Nevedenskii, 1888; and Katz, 1966.

21. See, for example, the letter from Minister of Internal Affair P. N. Durnovo to S. Iu. Witte dated 20 March 1906, in which Durnovo denies any government encouragement of pogroms [Russian State Historical Archive, St. Petersburg (RGIA), f.1622, op.1, 1906, d. 312]. Durnovo was rather favourably inclined toward the URP and other rightists, as Don C. Rawson (and others) have pointed out, e.g., in Rawson, 1995, 143–4.

22. See, for example, Liubosh, 1925; and Chernovskii, 1929.

23. On the "Stolypin system," see Avrekh, 1968; and Ascher, 2001.

24. "Perepiska N. A. Romanova i P. A. Stolypina," *Krasnyi arkhiv* 5, no. 1 (1924), 102–128.

25. Distaste and loathing for antisemites comes through clearly in Andreev, L., M. Gor'kii and F. Sologub (eds.), 1916.

26. For more details, see Ochs, 1986.

27. To confound future historians, the date of *Rola*'s first issue was 24 December 1882 [old style] and 6 January 1883 [new style].

28. On this development, see Porter, 2000.

29. On Polish-Jewish relations and antisemitism in this period see (along with Golczewski), Blobaum, 2001, 275–306; Weeks, 1998, 63–81; and Weeks, 1999, 242–256.

30. For more details, see the statistics cited in Weeks, 1996, 84–90. For the record, the percentage of Jewish population in the seven largest cities here was (1910): Kovno 46.5%; Vilna 39.8%; Vitebsk 43.2%; Mogilev 55.4%; Gomel' 50.5%; Minsk 43.3%; Białystok (Belostok) 64.9%. For more statistics, in particular of the Jewish population itself, see Levin, 2000, 62–105.

31. "Stosunki etnograficzne na Litwie," *Przegląd narodowy* 3, no. 2 (February 1910), 139–152.

32. Hroch, 1985, 86–97.

33. On the Lithuanian national movement, see Ochmański, 1965; and Krapauskas, 2000. For some sympathetic contemporary accounts, see Wasilewski, 1907; Römer, 1908; and Pogodin, 1909a, 127–151; and Pogodin, 1909b, 70–87.

34. Liulevičius, 2000.

35. Medišauskienė, 1998, 259.

36. On the issue of village vs. town – and the ethnic conflicts this engendered – see Sužiedėlis, 1977, 332–358.

37. Sužiedėlis, unpublished, 3.

38. Ramojis (pseud. for P. Vileišis), 1886.

39. Mendelsohn, 1983, 213–240.

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Notes on the Origin and Development of Modern Lithuanian Antisemitism in the Second Half of the Nineteenth Century and at the Beginning of the Twentieth Century

Vladas Sirutavičius

It would be well to begin with a few more general comments that are necessary for several reasons. Firstly we should bear in mind that in general a deeper fuller-sided analysis of the development of Lithuanian-Jewish relations and, in this context, the problem of antisemitism, are still relatively new territory for Lithuanian academics. In this sense serious academic research is only just beginning in Lithuania. Secondly, if increasing attention is to be paid to inter-community relations we still lack any serious, extensive analysis of expressions of antisemitism.[1] Here I will not set about considering why this has happened, for there would be many reasons for this. Discussion of these reasons could form a separate topic of research.

It is important to stress too that those works by Lithuanian authors that are devoted to studying the development of antisemitism in Lithuania, are dominated by an oversimplified concept of antisemitism. Firstly, they exhibit a lack of a more serious and deeper methodological understanding of the problem and thus the illustrative, descriptive view tends to dominate. Usually expressions of antisemitism are cut off from social theories which explain the source and development of ethnic tensions and pressures for a traditional agrarian (class) society undergoing transformation into a modern egalitarian, national society.

Secondly, often views of Jews and social practice involving them are analysed without associating them sufficiently with their social surroundings or, in other words, without paying sufficient attention to the question of what factors, or rather what set of social, cultural, economic and political factors, had an influence on feelings of enmity and hostile behaviour where Jews were concerned. The planned research strategy which is formulated more or less as the move from "traditional xenophobia" to "modern antisemitism" is not, in our opinion, sufficiently precise to say nothing about its being sufficient; just because traditional elements (bearing in mind the religious aspect of antisemitism) are easily adaptable and conform, of course, by changing their form in the societal modernisation process.

It is also obvious that previous hatred of and enmity towards Jews did not always grow into violent collective action where they were

concerned. Thus we could assert that too little attention has been paid to this question in Lithuanian historical research and to what actions generally *conditioned the intensity of antisemitism*. Therefore often even if the answer to the question of how the so-called negative image or concept of the "conceptual Jew" or "symbolic Jew" formed in different sectors of Lithuanian culture, it simply remains unclear why there was resort to violence against Jews in one or other case.[2] It is also just as important to explain how and by what means the "image of the conceptual Jew" was maintained and generated or, in other words, what actions conditioned the constancy of this image.

A third aspect which must be noted is the over-homogenised view of antisemitism[3]. In other words we need a more refined assessment of the phenomenon which takes account of specific societal circumstances, their dynamics, the evaluations of individual social groups, behaviour, standpoints and so forth. To put things more specifically, we are talking here about Lithuanian society in the second half of the nineteenth century and the early twentieth century, where it would seem possible to discern several very general levels of antisemitism: the popular (peasant), the elite (gentry) and the official (bureaucratic). All of these groups are typified by one or other form of certain opposition to Jews but it is also obvious that the reasons for this opposition were not always completely the same. In other words, we should also bear in mind the fact that such "popular" and "elite" forms of antisemitism were not completely internally homogenous and they were influenced by economic circumstances, social differentiation, regional differences and so forth.

We would think that it would be productive and pertinent (in the analytical and methodological sense) to distinguish two concepts of antisemitism. First of all there is modern antisemitism which can be understood both as an ideology and an organised political movement which appeared in Europe from the second half to the end of the nineteenth century. Secondly, antisemitism can be understood in Robert Wistrich's phrase as a special "cultural code" or a constant, latent position against Jews, a complex of social practices which is expressed at an individual level, is notable in culture and various political practices of which the aims are to create a distance, remove or even destroy Jews as a separate cultural-ethnic community.[4]

Appreciating that it is hardly possible to present an in-depth analysis of all the afore-mentioned problems, we will restrict ourselves to discussing one particular aspect, namely which *social context* had an

influence over the formation and development of *modern Lithuanian antisemitism* in the period under review.

To be more specific, what was the content of the social context which could have had a direct influence on the formation of modern Lithuanian antisemitism and so attention should be drawn to several matters. First of all, to the relatively slow tempo of Lithuanian secularisation; secondly, to the domination of agrarian structures and the relatively late development of capitalism which did not take off in Lithuania even after the emancipation of the serfs in 1861; thirdly, to the particular nature of the Russian political regime, its form and nationalities policy. Scholars agree that all these aspects played an important role in the formation of modern political antisemitism and in one way or another conditioned its intensity.[5]

Most probably the fourth factor which cannot be ignored is the formation of modern Lithuanian nationalism as an ideology and social movement based on ethno-cultural values or, in other words, what is still called the "ethnographic principle" in the second half of the nineteenth century, and the politicisation of this nationalism which can be seen more and more clearly at the beginning of the twentieth century. The culmination of this phenomenon is held to be the Great Seimas of Vilnius organised by Lithuanian political groups at the end of 1905 at which time the basic political aims of the Lithuanian nationalist movement were formulated.[6]

If we understand antisemitism in a more political sense, that is, as an ideology and social movement, it would be possible to assert that antisemitism as such did not form in the period under discussion and did not gain a wider, more visible character. Unlike in certain western European countries such as France or in central Europe the Lithuanian national movement did not create political organisations or structures (such as antisemitic leagues, for example) which had the aim of mobilising society for the struggle against the Jews as agents of capitalism and modern society which would threaten Lithuanian identity or the aims of the national movement.

Admittedly there were certain tendencies and signs of antisemitism. For example by the early twentieth century (in the second half of 1905) an invitation was issued to establish a "Lithuanian antisemitic newspaper" and thereby counter Jewish "economic and political domination" which was already of world-wide scale.[7] The author of this call, A. Staugaitis (1876–1954), was a representative of the Christian Democratic movement and he also pointed out that the Germans and

Poles already had such publications. Moreover, in justifying the need for such a newspaper he relied on arguments put forth by the Polish clerical activist Teodor Jeske-Choiński.

We should note that the aforementioned call went unheeded. This so happened not only because persons making such proposals lacked suitable political support in the Lithuanian national movement and greater influence in drawing up the manifestos of various political parties. We would think it was no accident that at the turn of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries as the politicisation of the Lithuanian national movement increased its pace and Lithuanian political parties began to form, we do not find in their basic policy documents and statutes any attempt to politicise opposition to the Jews or use antisemitism as a means of mobilising society politically. This conclusion emerges from a comparison of policy statements from several of the more influential political parties such as the National Lithuanian Democrats, the Lithuanian Christian Democrats or the Lithuanian Democrats which formally took shape around the 1905 period. This, of course, does not mean that opposition to Jews was not typical of the mind set of the Christian democrats, but it is important to draw attention to the fact that this did not take on a more systematic policy form. Thus a question arises very naturally as to how this came to be.

It is completely understandable that documents of Lithuanian political parties which were still in the process of developing speak of the Lithuanian nation's cultural and political aims and their confirmation. However, ordinarily, or at least formally a chance was left for other national communities (including Jews in the end) to take part in social and political life. Activists of the more democratically-inclined parts of the Lithuanian national movement such as Povilas Višinskis, thought that the guarantee of equal rights for all national minorities, Jews included, and the recognition, preservation and necessary promotion of their special cultural identity should be held to be part and parcel of organising a modern Lithuania.[8]

Often it seemed to even the more radical nationalists that despite all the differences and lack of common interests between the Lithuanian community (in its more peasant sections) and the Jews (as being more town-oriented) coexistence was possible and in some cases even collaboration at a certain level. Thus Antanas Smetona declared on more than one occasion that although "no closer" cultural and economic links existed between Lithuanians and Jews, and despite the fact that Jews live a "closed" life and therefore cannot comprehend Lithuanian aims and

"only fulfil their own interests," even so both communities and their political movements were founded on the same "democratic principles."[9] Furthermore, in Smetona's view the Lithuanian national movement ought to abjure antisemitism on principle. In his words, it is not possible to "hinder the development of Jewish identity." Conceiving of Jews as a slogan and rivals who existed "alongside" Lithuanians and never wished to "identify" with them, Smetona also stressed that they, Jews, were an important factor for encouraging the "development of national individuality" among the Lithuanians themselves.[10] Therefore it was important for Lithuanians to develop themselves rather than "restrict" others.

In general it would be possible to conclude that antisemitism did not play a larger role as the Lithuanian national movement became politicised and split up into parties forming party policy programmes and aims. This happened because the Jews, given their specific nature – the closed nature of their culture and-psychology and their distinction from others – were not held to present a *direct danger* to the Lithuanians' most important cultural and political aims. *Accuratius*, we might assert that they were regarded as less of a danger than simply a danger. The developing modern Lithuanian social and political elite had a completely different conception of Lithuania's Poles and Polonicity in general. Without going into too much detail we will note that the poles and especially the political movements of Lithuania's Poles denied the possibility that Lithuanians might develop as an independent ethno-political community and refuted the political and cultural aspirations of the Lithuanian national movement. The Poles presented a direct threat to modern Lithuanicity. This situation even formed favourable conditions for collaboration between Lithuanians and Jews and the political conjuncture which developed during elections to the Russian State Duma in 1906–1907.[11]

What has been said above does not mean that antisemitism did not find an expression in one or other form or with varying intensity in the Lithuanian national movement. We could assert that at the end of the nineteenth century, especially during the last decades of the old century and the early 1900s there were attempts to systematise opposition to Jews and one of the main instruments for this was increasing stress laid on the lack of common economic interests between Jews and Gentiles and even the economic enmity of these groups. Traditional accusations against the Jews (of a moral nature) which "emerged" from the peasant milieu were complemented by new, economic accusations. In other words we should

not imagine that economic motifs in antisemitic expression (criticism of Jewish "enterprise" and self interest and so forth) were of themselves new. At the turn of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries the direction and intensity of this criticism changed. This can be seen easily by comparing the views of Jews expressed by Bishop Motiejus Valančius of Žemaitija (1801–75) and one of the founders of modern Lithuanian nationalism, the publicist and publisher Vincas Kudirka (1858–99).

In both men's philosophy and assessment of the Jews it is not difficult to detect at least a few similarities which were most likely informed by peasant experience and tradition. First of all expressions of disapproval of Jews in one form or another are typical of both men. While Valančius saw "useful" traits in the Jews as "intermediaries of wealth" with whom the peasant may deal so long as he knows how to be crafty, as well as so-called "non-useful" Jews (primarily inn-keepers), for Kudirka the "Jewish rot" was deep and even universal. No learning or education can change the Jews' "moral rot." In Kudirka's own words, "even the highest learning cannot wash away the dirt from the Jews" and Jews cannot be useful members of society.[12]

In essence Valančius attempted to systematise peasant fear of Jews and his aim was to safeguard credulous, naïve Lithuanian peasants from the Jews who were regarded as being much more crafty and sly. To that end Valančius formulated certain rules of behaviour which are expressed most fully in his 1868 book, *Paaugusių žmonių knygelė* [Little Book for Grown-up Folks]. The constant and clear feature of these rules was to protect peasants in their everyday life and everyday relations with Jews. It is important that "folks," that is, peasants, mistrust Jews, form no friendship with them and know that there are unsuitable people among their number. Peasants should not allow themselves to be duped, not tell Jews their "secrets" and in general remember that Jews do not wish Christians well, seek material advantage for themselves everywhere and are therefore nice to peasants.[13]

It is interesting to note that there are no motifs of religious criticism in Valančius's opposition to Jews (here we have in mind not his aforementioned little opus but his pastoral letters to peasants which were read out publicly in churches). His view was secularised and quite modest. In general certain elements would lead us to think that his view was close to that of the Enlightenment. This supposition seems to be confirmed by the bishop's attempt to differentiate between useful and non-useful "Jews" which has its roots in Enlightenment ideology from the end of the eighteenth century.

New forms were developed by opposition to Jews in the mindset of Kudirka and part of the secular intelligentsia in general at the turn of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries whose main aim became the promotion of the Lithuanian community's national consciousness. Jews came to be conceived increasingly as dangerous rivals holding significant social (according to Lithuanians) and economic positions in society. Kudirka's view of Jews and his philosophy were informed not so much by traditional intolerance of "aliens," which we can detect in peasant mentality and behaviour, as by the need to encourage the social activity of Lithuanian peasants (and urge them to move into the towns), peasant economic initiative (urging them to take up commerce, trade and artisanry): in other words this was informed by the need to modernise Lithuanian society.[14] In such a concept Jews, as an "economic intermediary" were regarded as a factor holding back the development and modernisation of [ethnic] Lithuanian society.

It was often asserted that Jews did not maintain the principles of fair competition, that they deceive and spoil "our folk," that is, Lithuanian peasants. By seeking benefit only for themselves, they take no heed of the needs of Lithuanian society. No Jew wants to become a "Lithuanian" because there is no advantage for him in that. Admittedly such views portray both Jews and Lithuanians and Lithuanian society in a negative light because they reveal their backwardness and lack of development which Kudirka was encouraging peasants to overcome.

Usually calls for Lithuanian peasants to take up artisanry and commercial trade, set aside their prejudice that trade is an evil "unfit for a good Catholic" were complemented by most varied criticism of the Jews. More radical calls were heard – it was important for Lithuanians themselves not to wait for any assistance but "drive out" the Jews and take their place.[15] Some times there were even expressions of support for the tsarist authorities' policy towards the Jews. Means were suggested for countering the "negative" influence and economic domination of the Jews. There were calls for peasants to set up Christian inns and shops which should be aided by the gentry and clergy, establish credit associations, be united and so on.[16] We should admit that most Lithuanian authors were not original but simply repeated what they had read in the German or Polish press. At the same time there was recognition that in trade Jews were more inventive and crafty than Lithuanians and thus Lithuanians could learn from the Jews.[17]

We would think that the appearance of the concept of "Jewish economic rivalry" could have been influenced by social and economic

changes that had taken place in Lithuanian society at the end of the nineteenth century. After the Emancipation of the Serfs (1861) and especially in the 1870s quite favourable objective conditions formed for agricultural growth. Demand for agricultural produce, primarily grain grew in Western Europe and for several years in a row there were good harvests in Lithuania. In this period we note a rise in peasants' material well-being. However, in the early 1880s the situation underwent a sea change. As is well known, an agricultural crisis hit at this time which would last until the end of the century. West European markets were flooded with cheap grain from the U.S. and as export potential fell so did the price of agricultural produce and hence farmers' income. The situation in Lithuania was further worsened by differentiated tariffs that encouraged grain export from central provinces of the Russian Empire. Some peasants, albeit in relatively small numbers, attempted to invest their capital in small trade.[18] According to data from the 1897 Census Lithuanians made up approximately twelve percent of all tradesmen in the districts. At the same time, as many Lithuanian historians have noted, this process was quite slow, affected only a very small section of the Lithuanian peasantry and did not develop a greater dynamic. But it was this change which could have led to developments in Lithuanian antisemitism in the development of a "cultural code" from the concept of the "Jewish intermediary" who was dangerous but also necessary to the "Jewish competitor" with whom battle must be joined. We consider that Lithuanian newsprints of the turn of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries reflect this process.

Admittedly we should also acknowledge at this point that competitive logic and strategy, that is, the concept of Jews as a rival group which should be overcome in order to facilitate development of ethnic Lithuanian society, did not become the grounds for the ideological formulation of antisemitism or the appearance of antisemitic movements. In our view such developments were conditioned by several factors. First of all, the relatively slow social-economic dynamic of Lithuanian society had an effect and this in the end influenced the comparatively slow collapse and transformation of agrarian structure because it was this that conditioned the existence of an ethnically-segregated labour market where traditionally Jews played the role and function of economic intermediary.

These tendencies influenced the development of both Lithuanian and Jewish communities. Historians who have analysed the development in the period under discussion of the Jewish community in the so-called

"pale of settlement" recognise that, although the tendency for "moving away from the shtetl" accelerated during this period, this process came across a whole range of obstacles hindering modernisation. These included both formal restrictions on the part of the Russian imperial authorities (such as the 1882 ukase forbidding Jews to settle outside towns or the introduction of a state monopoly on vodka in the 1880s) and also the objective shortage of capital which prevented increases in investment in and modernisation of production (such tendencies were typical of Jews in small towns)[19]. More or less similar tendencies had a negative impact on the Lithuanian community too. This held back chances for both communities to modernise themselves.

It is naïve to hope that given such a none-too-favourable economic and political conjuncture the calls of leaders of the Lithuanian national movement to change, modernise (first and foremost in the economic and social spheres) could have had a greater real effect in fact. It is no accident that many a writer describing without any sympathy about Jewish domination in commerce and artisanry and the negative effect arising thereof as forced to admit that if Jews were "driven out" they would most likely be replaced by Russians, "damned Muscovites" and that this would present an even greater threat to Lithuanian nationhood.[20] In summary we could assert that the development of both communities "came up against the wall" of the bureaucratic Russian Empire's policy which did not set itself the aim of encouraging deeper modernisation processes and attempted to bring economic development into line with the existence of semi-estate-formed bureaucratic structures. Thus only a radical transformation of such a political system (its democratisation or disintegration) could have an effect on the traditional balance that had formed in Lithuano-Jewish relations and encourage an increase in enmity.

The relatively slow tempo of modernisation could not in principle change the social and economic state of either community. The Jews managed to preserve their social niche (their role as middlemen), their dominant position in small trade and artisanry and gradually adapt to changes that were taking place. The Lithuanian community was still to "weak" and poorly structured for it to be able to aim seriously to "energise" its tired social structure or even change it. Such a state of affairs was not conducive to developing Lithuanian political antisemitism. However, on the other hand, we should accept that as a cultural code and generally speaking the "imagined Jew" in the period under discussion antisemitism took on several new and important

features, including the formation of the image of the Jew as a rival. Admittedly this did not gain independent expression but existed alongside tradition xenophobic elements which it most often served to consolidate.

Notes

1. See the conference papers on relations between the Catholic Church in Lithuania and Lithuanian Jewry published in *Lietuvos katalikų mokslo akademijos metraštis* 14 (1999).

2. Anglickienė, 1999, 48–52.

3. Scholars have noted that the term "antisemitism" was used for a long time quite "chaotically." When it first came into use in the 1870s it was restricted to "scientifically-based racial enmity towards Jews," thereby differentiating between it and traditional religious antipathy towards Jews. At the same time it is also noticeable that the term is undoubtedly connected with the Jewish "survival perception," in other words with the change in Jewish status as a "pariah" group. See Lindeman, 1999, 23.

4. Wistrich, 1990, 31; Fein, 1987, 67.

5. Birnbaum, 1992, 8–12.

6. Motieka, 1996.

7. An. St. 1905.

8. Miknys, 1995, 72–73.

9. Smetona, 1912a.

10. Smetona, 1912b.

11. Staliūnas, 1994, 45–46.

12. Kudirka, 1890.

13. Valančius, 1868.

14. Sirutavičius, 2000, 107–112.

15. Kriaučiūnas, 1893.

16. Ramojus, 1886.

17. Kabė, 1905.

18. Vėbra, 1990, 123; 128–29; according to Liudas Truska before World War One persons of Lithuanian origin comprised only four percent of all owners of industrial and commercial companies – Truska, 1975, 90.

19. Löwe, 1993, 96.

20. Kriaučiūnas, 1893.

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Some Remarks on the Jewish Condition
in Interwar East Central Europe

Ezra Mendelsohn

1. Let me begin with an apology. It is obviously an impossible task to deal adequately within the confines of a brief article with the subject of the Jews in East Central Europe in the twentieth century, even if one limits oneself, as I do here, to the interwar years. First of all, this is a region with a notoriously complex history, one that defies all attempts at generalisation. It is no simple matter even to define what is meant by "East Central Europe" in the 1920s and 1930s. Whatever it does include, it does not include the territories then included in the Soviet Union. Joseph Rothschild's excellent *East Central Europe Between the Two World Wars*, still the best work on the subject, covers Poland, Czechoslovakia, Hungary, Romania, Yugoslavia, Bulgaria, Albania and (more briefly) the three Baltic States.[1] A more recent publication by Piotr Wandycz, that features Matejko's famous painting of the battle of Grunwald on its cover, deals mostly with the Catholic peoples of the region, and in particular with the Poles, Czechs, and Hungarians.[2] Much more inclusive is the excellent atlas of the region produced by Paul Robert Magocsi, that includes Belarus, parts of Ukraine, and Greece.[3]

Beyond problems of territorial definition, what can be said to unify this highly diverse region? Neither culture nor religion, obviously, nor a sense of common history. Perhaps a degree of economic and social backwardness vis-à-vis Central and Western Europe, and perhaps too an unhappy history of autocracy (especially in the parts governed by Russia up until the First World War) and of national oppression. This, after all, was the classic region of the oppressed minority nationalities whose mostly self-appointed leaders were busy organising, during the nineteenth century, national movements aimed either at achieving a degree of national autonomy within the existing state systems or, more radically, at destroying these states and replacing them by new independent entities based on the national principle. This is what happened, more or less, as a result of the Great War.

During the interwar period the region was characterised above all by the existence of brand new political units – Poland, Czechoslovakia, Lithuania, Latvia, Estonia, and Yugoslavia – some of which did in fact base their legitimacy on the national principle but none of which were really "nation-states." The population of the new Poland, for example, was about 40 percent non-Polish. Romania, an old-new state, possessed a number of large and troublesome minorities. The Czechs and Serbs were dominant politically and perhaps culturally but not numerically.

During the interwar period these "lands between," as they have been called,[4] shared certain important aims – above all the great and on the whole successful mission of nation-building, meaning the reversal of previous trends towards acculturation and assimilation promoted by Germany, Russia and Hungary and the establishment of the nation by means of compulsory education in the mother tongue and other measures sponsored by the new states. By the late 1930s there could no longer be any doubt that there was an Estonian nation, not to mention a Polish or Czech nation. They nearly all also shared the less happy experience of moving from the political centre to the political right, influenced no doubt by events first in Italy and then in Germany. By the late 1930s most of the new states were governed by right-wing authoritarian parties although it must be emphasised that nowhere in the region did totalitarian government on the model of the Soviet Union take over. Pluralism in the cultural and even political spheres was not eliminated, but it was certainly being curtailed in most of the countries of the region. This situation was the result not only of external influences but also of the inability of the new states to solve their severe social, economic, and minority problems which they had inherited from the pre-war Empires.

So far as the Jewish communities of the region (however defined) are concerned, here too we are faced with almost infinite variety. If "East" and "West" coexisted in the lands between – think of the contrast between Prague and Mukacevo in Czechoslovakia – so too did "Ostjuden" and "Westjuden." What united the Hasidic community of, say, Eastern Galicia with the Hungarian-speaking, highly acculturated, religiously reformed (Neolog) Jewish bourgeoisie of Budapest? What, exactly, linked the Hebrew-speaking Zionist youth of Wilno (Vilnius), hoping to create a new Jewish life in Palestine, and the Polish-speaking Jewish intelligentsia of Warsaw, hoping to integrate into Polish society? The Jewish population included in its ranks the extremely rich and the exceedingly poor, the highly educated and the illiterate, believers and non-believers, big city dwellers and the residents of the *shtetl*. It spoke in diverse languages (Yiddish above all, but also Hungarian, Romanian, Russian, Polish, Czech, and German). Even within the orthodox community there were profound distinctions between, say, the Hassidic masses in Poland and the modern orthodox Jewish communities of the big cities, such as Riga or Cracow. In short, here too all generalisations are ultimately untenable. What we can say with certainty is that the vast majority of people of Jewish origin in this region regarded themselves as Jews, and were so regarded by the outside world. They were clearly conscious of being tied together in various ways; by a common faith, even if they did not believe in it, by a common national consciousness – an even more

problematic marker of identity – and, in a vague sort of way, by the shared perception of being part of a "community of fate" *(Schicksalsgemeinschaft)*. In this sense one may speak of Jewish unity that co-existed with manifestations of extreme disunity.

In the limited space available to me, I intend to raise several basic questions, the answers to which should throw some light on our subject. First of all, what were the conditions required for the well-being of the various Jewish communities? Secondly, which regions (or countries) seemed particularly promising from the Jewish point of view? Thirdly, what were the hopes and expectations of various Jewish political "camps?" Finally, to what extent were these hopes realised?

2. As for the first question, let me make a few obvious points. In pre-World-War-One Russia and Romania Jews had not yet obtained emancipation – that is, full equality under the law. Clearly, this would be their first demand of the successor states of the interwar period. The establishment of democratic regimes was also a desideratum, since such regimes were likely to implement policies of toleration and pluralism in the political, cultural, and religious spheres. Perhaps one might say that, for many Jews, the principles of toleration and pluralism were more important than the principle of democracy. After all, Orthodox Jewry was not wedded to Jeffersonian or Rousseauian ideals, but it could not hope to flourish under the sort of totalitarian regime established in Moscow. Historically speaking, Jews as individuals had done best under such democratic regimes as existed in England, France and the United States, although (as proven by the Dreyfus Affair) the existence of such regimes was no guarantee that antisemitism would not, from time to time, raise its ugly head. What was needed, in most general terms, was the strengthening of the weak tradition of liberalism in Eastern Europe, more specifically the recognition of the right of the "other" to remain loyal to his own particular religious/ethnic/national group and at the same time to be accepted as a loyal and trusted citizen of the larger political and social community.

In the realm of economics, Jews could obviously expect to benefit from any successes in the campaign against backwardness: the development of trade and industry, urbanisation, and so forth, so long as all elements within the population would be allowed to take part in this process in equal measure. Such developments, while having the potential for increasing competition between Jews and non-Jews, might also obviate the need for mass emigration, especially to North America, that played such a great role in Jewish history in Eastern Europe before the war. Let us recall that this emigration was ended by the laws passed in the

United States in the early 1920s. Finally, the Jewish communities, ravaged by the First World War and often the target of violence during the smaller conflicts that followed it, required an extended period of peace and tranquillity and the establishment of peaceful relations between the new states of the region and their temporarily weakened but potentially powerful and dangerous neighbours to the East and West.

3. Let me now proceed to the second question. The new map Eastern Europe after World War One appeared to open up some new, promising possibilities for the Jewish minority. For example, it was not unreasonable to believe that Jews might profit from the situation in those areas where previously oppressed, mostly peasant nations had suddenly, against all odds, come to power. Consider, for example, the situation in the new Baltic States, in particular in Lithuania and Latvia. These new and relatively weak nations, with little backing in the great world, might well seek an alliance, albeit an unwritten one, with their Jewish communities which, so it was thought, were both wealthy and, more important, well connected abroad, particularly in the United States. The Jewish leaders in Vilnius, for example, who supported the Lithuanian cause as against the aspirations of Russia and Poland were thinking in terms of a Jewish-Lithuanian agreement that would stand to benefit both sides.[5] Similar thoughts were entertained by some Jews in Eastern Galicia, who favoured an alliance with the Ukrainians as against the Poles.[6] Consider, too, the situation in Czechoslovakia, another new state that was much in need of international support. The Jewish presence there was, numerically speaking, not all that significant. Nonetheless, Tomas Masaryk actively courted Jewish support both at home and abroad. The Jewish community was promised not only equality but also recognition as a separate national group in return for loyalty to a state beset by severe national minority problems and surrounded by hostile neighbours who refused to recognise its legitimacy.[7]

Along with the situation in the Baltic and in Czechoslovakia, Jews certainly expected that the generally positive situation that had prevailed in Hungary in the second half of the nineteenth century, when the conservative Hungarian political establishment had valued the numerous and influential Jewish minority as politically loyal, economically useful, and culturally pro-Magyar in an environment of growing anti-Magyar feeling among the various national minorities, would continue under the new circumstances of the post-1920 settlement.[8]

In the two states with the largest Jewish populations – Romania and Poland – there was much less optimism, owing to the prevalence there of strong antisemitic traditions that wartime suffering did nothing to

dissipate. On the contrary, the experience of war most probably aggravated anti-Jewish sentiments.[9] In both countries the Jews were generally perceived not as partners in the creation of new (in the Polish case) and old-new (in the Romanian case) states, but as adversaries of this process and serious obstacles in the path towards national consolidation. The last two decades had witnessed the growth of modern antisemitism in the Polish lands, by which I mean the idea that the Polish nation could not contain within it people of the Mosaic faith.[10] The same might be said of Romania, whose relatively small but long-suffering Jewish community was now much augmented by the annexation of Transylvania, Bessarabia, and Bukovina.[11]

4. Let me now be a bit more specific and discuss the particular hopes and expectations of the various discrete Jewish political/cultural "camps." I must emphasise that there was no one single, dominant "Jewish voice" but rather a great cacophony of voices, reflecting the extreme diversity of the Jewish community.[12] Among these were, for example, the "integrationists," who hoped to gain full acceptance into the cultural life and society of the dominant national group. I have in mind, for example, those people who identified themselves as "Poles of the Jewish persuasion," most of whom wished to maintain a Jewish identity based on the adherence to some variety of modern, liberal Judaism, while at the same time taking their rightful place within the pluralistic Polish nation (the *naród*). This integrationist position was shared by most of the Jews of the Hungarian heartland, in particular of Budapest, and by many Czech Jews. It had representatives everywhere, especially in the larger, more prosperous, more "western" cities of the region.

The integrationists believed, basically, that Jewish history in the new Eastern Europe would follow the course of Jewish history in the West – in France, Germany, Great Britain, Holland, and the United States. They were convinced that there was nothing essentially distinctive about East European Jewish history, and that integration would inevitably occur when social, economic, cultural and political backwardness was overcome.

In sharp distinction, the Jewish "national camp," which was dominated but not monopolised by secularists, defined the Jewish minority in national terms. The Jews were seen as a nation more or less like other nations. Their task was to develop Jewish national consciousness and Jewish national life either in East Europe itself, on the basis of national extra-territorial autonomy, or in Palestine, regarded by the Zionists as the historic Jewish motherland. Jewish nationalism took two distinct cultural directions, one based on Yiddish (as in the case of the

main Jewish socialist organisation, the Bund, which also put forth a national programme), the other on Hebrew (as in the case of virtually all Zionists). Despite their Palestine-centrism the Zionists, along with the so-called "Diaspora nationalists," agreed on the need for national activities *in situ* in East Europe. They established such national institutions as elementary and high schools, and they took part in local politics. All these activities were related to the supreme goal of building the Jewish nation in the East European Diaspora in order to prepare it for its ultimate task – the settlement of Palestine and the establishment there of a sovereign Jewish national entity.

The third Jewish camp comprised those Jews who defined themselves as religiously orthodox, which in the East European context usually implied the maintenance of a traditional life style highly differentiated from that of the surrounding society (including that of more "modern" Jews). Shortly before the first, World War these elements, which were much stronger in Eastern Europe than in the West, established their own political and cultural organisation, called *Agudat Yisrael* (the League of Israel). The *Agudah*, as it was known, wished above all to preserve, as much as possible, the traditional religious character of East European Jewry. It did not regard as legitimate any secular definition of the Jewish people. The Jews were a "holy nation" or no nation at all, and the Zionists and other nationalists were regarded with extreme suspicion precisely because of their movements' basically secular nature. (I should point out that some orthodox Jews did in fact support Zionism – they founded their own faction within the movement, known as the *Mizrachi*.) Of all organised Jewish political forces *Agudah* was the most conservative and, in its relations with the regime, the least demanding.

Above and beyond this inevitably simplified typology of Jewish politics there were, of course, deep divisions on social issues within the Jewish community. Many Jews supported socialist movements – both specifically Jewish and non-Jewish – that aimed at transforming Eastern Europe into a just society based on class equality. The Jewish socialists, themselves divided into a bewildering number of factions, were united in their belief in the need for class solidarity between Jewish and non-Jewish workers. They also wished to rebuild Jewish society, either in Eastern Europe itself or in Palestine, on socialist principles. Most of them – the Zionist socialists, for example, and the Bund – also adopted Jewish national platforms that called for the recognition of the Jews as a secular nation. In the case of the Bund this was a position that had developed very gradually, beginning in the early years of the twentieth century in the Russian Empire and continuing into the interwar period, in particular in Poland, where the Bund supported Yiddish-language secular schools and

fought for Jewish national rights.[13]

Jewish socialist movements, and Jews on the left in general, were convinced that only socialism could solve the "Jewish question" by putting an end, once and for all, to antisemitism, regarded as a remnant of the middle ages and a tool in the hands of the ruling classes. Opposing them were Jewish organisations that regarded with fear and dread the penetration of Marxism and other radical ideologies into the Jewish community. As opposed to doctrines of class struggle they held up the banner of *klal Israel,* of trans-class Jewish unity and the essential need to maintain it in the face of the hostility of the outside world. Most of these organisations identified with some sort of liberalism. Some, like the *Agudah,* took up a distinctly conservative social position. There were also Jewish organisations that had much in common with general East European national ideologies of the right, for example, the revisionist Zionist movement led by the Russian Jewish nationalist Vladimir (Zev) Jabotinsky.[14]

5. I now come to my last question – what was the relationship between Jewish hopes and expectations and the reality of the situation in Eastern Europe in the interwar years? As is well known, the various new and old/new states of the region were unable, in the brief time available to them before war once again intervened, to overcome the economic and social tensions and problems that were the legacy of previous centuries. Economic backwardness persisted in most places, often made worse by the disasters of war and the great economic crisis of the 1930s. The all-important safety-valve of emigration no longer existed, since America and other countries had closed their gates to immigrants from Eastern Europe. In Poland, the Baltic States and Romania there was, therefore, no dramatic economic "breakthrough" that might have considerably bettered the condition of the Jewish (and all other) communities.

Politically speaking, the 1920s and 1930s demonstrated that democracy in this region was a thin reed. Totalitarianism on the Soviet model did not take root here, but neither did western-style liberalism. The one exception was Czechoslovakia, a country with a relatively well-developed economy (at least in the Czech lands) where democracy and liberalism fared better than elsewhere – until the disaster of 1938. In most of the countries the dominant ideology was that of integral nationalism, namely the principle that the state existed largely in order to advance the interests of the politically dominant nationality. Given the history of the region the popularity of this principle is easy to understand, but it obviously implied that the numerous minority nationalities and national/religious groups, the Jews for example, but also the Germans (in

Hungary), the Poles (in Lithuania), and so forth, might encounter considerable discrimination. In the most important country in the region from the Jewish point of view, Poland, there was constant tension, sometimes erupting into violence, between the Poles-by-nationality, something in the vicinity of sixty percent of the population, and the large, strategically important, and far from quiescent minorities: the Ukrainians (a majority of the population in several eastern provinces), the Jews (ten percent of the population, thirty percent of the urban population), the Belarusians, and the Germans. Such tensions were exacerbated, of course, by international instability, irredentist claims by Germany and Soviet Russia, and a general lack of willingness to accept as legitimate the territorial settlements of Versailles and Trianon.

All this surely boded ill for the Jewish community and, indeed, for most people, save for the members of the traditional social and religious elites, who that remained highly influential in the socially conservative, strongly anti-communist states of the region. True, the Jews did in fact achieve emancipation in the successor states of the Russian Empire and in Romania, but this new formal status, important as it was, did not serve as a guarantee against discrimination. The hoped-for alliances with some of the nations did bear some fruit, but (with the exception, perhaps, of the Czech case) did not endure. Indeed, in the 1930s in particular antisemitism was everywhere on the rise in the region, as it was virtually everywhere in Europe. Poland, again, is exemplary. There, in the 1930s and in particular after the death of Józef Pilsudski in 1935, the intensely nationalistic and antisemitic regime adopted the position that the Jewish question in the country could be solved only via extensive Jewish emigration. (Of course, there was no place for the Jews to go.) Anti-Jewish feelings in Poland were inspired by traditional accusations, propagated by the Church, that Judaism was inimical to Christianity. It also fed off popular aversion to Communism, the doctrine of Poland's chief enemy. Jews were identified with the enemies of the state (Germans, Russians, and Communists), accused of economic dominance (despite their general poverty), and seen as representatives of foreign, "urban" values. There was nothing particularly new about all of this, of course, but that was no comfort for the Jewish community, which on the eve of World War Two felt itself to be under siege, the object of economic boycott, institutionalised exclusion from a wide variety of positions, and sporadic violence.[15]

6. It would be a mistake, however, to see the 1920s and 1930s as years of unmitigated disaster for the Jews. On the contrary, if we •return to the programmes of the various Jewish political factions it is clear that the

story is not so simple. True, for one Jewish school of thought the interwar period was indeed tragic. The "Poles of the Mosaic persuasion," acculturated Polish Jews who hoped to be accepted fully into Polish society and to play an important role in Polish life, could take no comfort from the situation in the interwar years. Many Poles of Jewish extraction did in fact contribute greatly to Polish culture, in particular to Polish literature.[16] But the rise of extreme antisemitism struck at them no less than at the nationalists and the orthodox, perhaps even more since they were psychologically less prepared to cope with what they regarded as a basically irrational, "mediaeval" phenomenon.[17] The country, however, where the ideology of Jewish integration suffered the most severe blow was Hungary, where, unlike in the case of Poland, it was embraced by the leading Jewish organisations and by a majority of the Jewish population. In interwar Hungary, anti-Jewish forces held in check by the political establishment during the last decades of the Imperial period, burst forth in the wake of Hungary's terrible defeat and territorial losses, the ill-fated Communist revolution, and the white terror. In the 1920s and 1930s Hungary actually pioneered in the enactment of anti-Jewish measures of various kinds, which eventually put an end to the over half-a-century period of Jewish emancipation. The "Jewish-Magyar alliance," which worked well when Hungary was a co-partner in running a vast multi-national empire, collapsed. Betrayed by the Hungarian political elite, the patriotic, Magyar-speaking Jewish community that strongly identified with the Hungarian nation found itself reduced to the status of a religious minority of inferior standing.[18]

The integrationist ideology also took a beating in Romania (where it existed almost exclusively in the Regat, not in the newly annexed regions of the much-enlarged state, where most of the Jews were not interested in identifying with Romanian culture), and it, could hardly be said to exist in the Baltic States. Integrationist Jews fared best, no doubt, in the Czech lands, where some Jews continued the process begun in the last half-century of Habsburg rule of transferring their cultural and national orientation from German to Czech.[19] This position was much weaker in Slovakia and in Sub-Carpathian Rus, where the Jewish communities were either orthodox or national, or some combination of the two.

For those Jews of the "nationalist persuasion" the story was very different. It is true that, generally speaking, the states of Eastern Europe did not support the programme of Jewish extraterritorial national autonomy. Much more support was forthcoming in the Soviet Union, where, especially in the 1920s, Jewish cultural institutions of the approved variety were funded by the state. On the other hand, the existence of Jewish nationhood did receive a degree of official

recognition. Jews were allowed, and sometimes even encouraged, to maintain their own national schools with Yiddish, Hebrew, or a combination of the two as the main languages of instruction. Jewish national political parties of every variety – Zionist and anti-Zionist – flourished as never before in East European Jewish history. These parties took an active part in local politics and sent their representatives to the parliaments in Prague, Bucharest, Warsaw, Kaunas, and Riga. Jewish nationalists of every variety were free to propagate their ideas and seek support, in obvious contrast to the situation in the Soviet Union. Zionism was not only tolerated, it was often supported by regimes hoping for Jewish emigration, as in the Polish case. Cultural activities in Yiddish and Hebrew were not hindered. In short, an environment was provided which made possible the advent of a golden age of Jewish nationalism.

The appeal of Jewish nationalism in the region was obviously augmented by the successes of nationalism in general. For many Jewish nationalists Pilsudski and Masaryk were inspirational figures, men whose triumphs might be emulated by the Jewish minority. If the Lithuanians had succeeded in re-creating their long-lost statehood, why not the Jews?

Yet another factor of importance was the coming into existence of cultural vacuums in the region, brought about by the replacement of the political and cultural domination of traditionally "strong" nations by that of historically weak ones – as in Lithuania, Latvia, Estonia, Eastern Poland, Transylvania, Bessarabia, and Bukovina. In all of these lands the once dominant Russian, German or Hungarian high cultures were now replaced by languages and national cultures almost completely unknown (and not very attractive) to the local Jewish populations. The resulting vacuum was often filled by Jewish autonomous national culture as expressed in either Hebrew or Yiddish, a solution supported by all Jewish nationalists and favoured by the new regimes, who were naturally hostile to the preservation of the cultural orientations of their former masters.

This was one reason why the new state of Lithuania was an ideal venue for interwar Jewish nationalism. The small but famous Jewish community of this country was by and large ignorant of the Lithuanian language and of Lithuanian culture. Before the war the Jewish secular intelligentsia in this part of the world regarded itself as part of the Russian cultural world and spoke Russian (or, in the Klaipėda Region, German). Now, with Russian (and Polish) culture in disfavour, the Jews quite naturally fell back upon their own strong autonomous cultural traditions, and sent their children to schools whose language of instruction was either Hebrew or Yiddish. The regime favoured this development, for obvious reasons. The vast majority of Lithuanian Jews, according to the census of 1923, identified themselves as Jews by nationality, and this

situation did not change dramatically during the course of the interwar years. Zionism, as might be expected, flourished here, and it was Lithuania that provided the highest percentage of Jews who purchased the *shekel* (the "coin," representing membership in the Zionist organisation) and the highest percentage of *olim* (emigrants to Palestine).[20] The Lithuanian cities and towns – Kaunas, Panevežys, Šiauliai, and so forth – became bastions of Jewish national politics and Jewish national culture. If we add to them the Vilnius Region (part of Poland until 1939) we have, probably, the main core area of Jewish nationalism in interwar Eastern Europe.

In general, then, the Jewish nationalists could claim many achievements. We may well wonder if the State of Israel, Zionism's creation, could ever have come into being without the immigration to Palestine of several hundred thousand East European Jews, most of them coming from Poland, during the 1920s and 1930s? I doubt it. This was the time and place where, for the first time, Zionism was transformed into a considerable force. In this sense the East European environment was a highly positive one.

One could say the same thing for the large orthodox Jewish community. It too found it possible to maintain itself, if not perhaps to flourish, in the new environment. Thus *Agudat Israel* in Poland (and elsewhere) , a party that played an important role in Jewish political life, sponsored a large and successful school network, and helped make certain that a new generation of Jews would remain faithful to the teachings of the Torah.[21] True, it is probably the case that the orthodox camp was in decline during this period, partly because of the economic crisis that forced more and more Jews to abandon the spiritual ghetto and partly because the competing creeds of socialism and nationalism, with their optimistic messages, found many recruits. Nonetheless, orthodox Jewry was allowed to practice its religion and observe its customs in peace.

For the Jewish socialists, on the other hand, the situation was less happy. As we have noted, the political trend in the region was strongly to the semi-fascist right, not to the socialist or communist left. Indeed, for most of the regimes the Soviet Union was the greatest menace, both because of its irredentist demands directed against Romania, Poland, and the Baltic states, and because of its subversive ideology. Moreover, and even more to the point, there was little evidence of close cooperation between Jewish and non-Jewish workers, and the undeniable presence of antisemitism among the working classes was a considerable problem for those who believed that the triumph of socialism would solve the Jewish question.[22] On the other hand, Jewish socialist movements achieved considerable support among the Jewish population. In Poland, for

example, in the 1930s the Bund was gaining in strength, while among the Zionists the so-called "camp of Labour Palestine," which wished to make of the new Palestine a socialist society, became the most important force within the movement. I should add that almost everywhere people of Jewish origin made up a considerable percentage within the usually illegal Communist parties, a fact that was much exploited by the right. Of course we are speaking here of a tiny number of people, but some of them were to become extremely visible during the years 1939–41 and again after the war.

7. Let me now attempt to sum up these very brief remarks. Some years ago I published an article entitled "Interwar Poland: Good for the Jews or Bad for the Jews?"[23] The title implies that there is no simple, clear-cut answer to this question. On the one hand legal emancipation and the relative freedom of the 1920s, which was not completely erased in the 1930s, was extremely welcome. An environment was created in which Jewish doctrines and practices identified with the nationalist and orthodox camps could compete for the allegiance of the Jewish masses. For the Jews as a collective body, as a community, this was good news indeed.

On the other hand, there is no doubt that the new states set up in the region were "bad" for most Jews as individuals. In many of them, and in varying degrees, we witness severe antisemitism which had grave economic and psychological consequences for the Jewish population. The widespread dissemination of antisemitic propaganda of every variety – religious, economic, cultural, political – leaves little doubt that one may regard the 1930s as something of a rehearsal for the incomparably more terrible period of 1939–1945. No one, surely, could have predicted the Holocaust, but many in the 1930s spoke of a Jewish community "without a future." The Nazis were able to exploit the widespread anti-Jewish sentiments in these regions for their own purposes.

The interwar period was a time when some of the oppressed national minorities of the region finally obtained what they deserved – political independence and the opportunity to rebuild their national cultures. I am thinking of the Poles, the Lithuanians, the Latvians, the Estonians, the Czechs and Slovaks, among others. Unfortunately, but perhaps inevitably, the triumph of these "victims of history" was not shared by other "victims" – such as the Jews and other groups whose minority status was not altered as a result of the war. On the contrary, these groups continued to suffer from varying degrees of discrimination, hatred, and violence. The victory of the Poles was no victory for Poland's Ukrainian, German, Belarusian, and Jewish communities.

To point this out is to highlight the central role of victimisation as part

of national identity of the small nations of East Central Europe. It is obvious today, after the terrible tragedies of World War II and in the wake of the Communist domination of Eastern Europe that one of the greatest obstacles to understanding between Jews and the other peoples of this region has to do with their self-perception as victims. It is difficult to make room in the Jewish historical narrative, which privileges the sufferings of the Jewish people, for other sufferers, and I suspect that this may be so in the case of the Lithuanians as well. Let us hope that conferences such as the one held at Nida in 1997 will lead to a much-needed broadening of these historical narratives, which in turn should lead to the writing of more nuanced, more open, and perhaps even more accurate history.

Notes

1. Rothschild, 1974.
2. Wandycz, 1993.
3. Magocsi, 1993.
4. Palmer, 1970.
5. Mendelsohn, 1983
6. Mendelsohn, 1981, 96–101.
7. Masaryk, 1927, 222.
8. McCagg, 1922, 123–139, 187–195.
9. Mendelsohn, 1981, 37–43, 88–91; Golczewski, 1981, 121–180.
10. Porter, unpubl. I wish to thank Professor Porter for allowing me to read his brilliant study in manuscript.
11. Iancu,1978.
12. Mendelsohn, 1993, 3–36.
13. Frankel, 1981, 171–257.
14. Shavit, 1988.
15. For a general survey of the Jewish condition in interwar Poland see Gutman, 1986. See also Mendelsohn, 1994.
16. Opalski, 1986, 434–452.
17. For a useful survey see Lichten, 1986, 106–129.
18. Braham, 1981; Katzburg, 1981.
19. Kieval, 1988.
20. On Jewish national political and cultural activities in independent Lithuania in a comparative context see Mendelsohn, 1989, 190–209.
21. The most comprehensive study of this Jewish political party is Bacon, 1997.
22. See Polonsky, 1996.
23. Mendelsohn, 1993, 130–139.

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Expressions of Litvak Pro-Lithuanian Political Orientation c. 1906–c. 1921

Eglė Bendikaitė[*]

Jewish and gentile scholarship presents various images of the undoubtedly pro-Lithuanian stance taken by Litvaks towards the re-established state of Lithuania which emerged from the ruins of the Russian Empire at the end of the First World War. Stress is placed on their loyalty to that state and the part they played in its reconstruction.[1] My interest lies in the possibility of analysing the Litvak community as both a subject and an object. My task here is to present the flow of historical events not only as an integral part of the development of Lithuanian statehood but also as a part of the history of the Litvak community that had its own national interests, political aims and visions of its future existence in the Diaspora.

Litvaks (in the narrow sense of Jews living in the modern Lithuanian state) cannot be regarded as a single unit with a constant agenda that coordinated a non-swerving political line and unambiguous self-determination as the geopolitical situation in their homeland changed. Also we should realise that generalised statements and descriptions of actions are not valid in this case because of the multifaceted outlook of differentiated strata within Jewry. Any assessment requires confirmation with concrete facts and expressions of contact between Jewish and gentile society or explanation of separate exceptions. Therefore, in this text we will try to specify the relationship between some Litvaks on the political right wing (whose position in hindsight is identified with the position of the majority of Jewish society in the period) and a newly emergent factor, namely the Lithuanian national movement and the emerging Lithuanian state. We will also review particular expressions of pro-Lithuanian outlook in moments of crisis for the country, and discuss the reasons and circumstances that influenced these and which have not been interpreted adequately by Jewish and Lithuanian scholars.

1. Spiritual Litvakia

The area inhabited by the Litvaks simply was not marked on political maps. The boundaries of the territory known to world cultural history as Litvakia and sometimes simply as Yiddishland (on account of the local vernacular, Yiddish) coincided with the borders of historical Lithuania.

The "pale of settlement" territory within the North West province of the Russian Empire also almost coincided with the boundaries of Litvak-inhabited lands. However, the region which existed in the borderlands of east-central Europe covering parts of what today is Lithuania and parts of Belarus, Poland and Latvia with a population of almost one and a half million people connected by kinship, learning and ethnic (national) culture and developed consciousness, stood at a geographic crossroads.[2]

This territory began to fragment during the age of national movements until at the end of the second decade of the twentieth century in the aftermath of the First World War and the Revolutions a new world order sketched out fresh borders and divided the area into three parts. The greater part of the territory fell under Soviet and Polish flags, while only the ethnically Lithuanian northern part of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania became part of the sovereign Republic of Lithuania. The unity of the Litvak world was smashed on the surface together with the territory which had developed in the course of history. Because of the relations existing between the newly formed states, that is, because of tension between Lithuania and Poland and the complete isolation of the Soviet Union from the West, the Litvak community was suddenly cut up into three parts without any real opportunities for internal communication.[3] The Litvak community which had formed across historical ages was faced with a dilemma: how should these people develop from being Litvaks into becoming citizens of new national states.

On this dilemma S. Atamukas poses a rhetorical question:

Should Jews who do not live in their own state become involved in that state at all? Would it not be better for them to keep their distance and not interfere in complex battles between political forces and not seek to solve their [the gentiles'] affairs?[4]

2. The Beginning of Political Partnership between Jews and Lithuanians

Lithuanian historians present many various examples of collaboration between Jewish and Lithuanian political groups. The history of Lithuanian and Jewish political cooperation is usually opened by stressing the elections to the Russian Duma. In a brochure published in Chicago in 1917 by M. Šalčius called "Ten Years of National-Cultural Work in Lithuania, 1905–1915" stress is laid on the positive side of

Lithuano-Jewish relations, pointing out that "the Jews elected Lithuanian representatives against the will of Polish landowners" to all four Russian imperial Dumas.[5] Although, as Atamukas points out, the first Duma of 1906 lasted barely 73 days, the Jewish candidate L. Bramson found time to give a heated speech on the harsh fate of the Lithuanian language and demanded that rules be published for usage of that language. The Lithuanian representative A. Bulota along with progressive Russian deputies condemned persecution of the Jews.[6]

A political bloc was formed in the Kovno [Kaunas] Gubernia in 1906 which was active during Duma elections and this could not but have had an effect on the civic stance of local Jews. Groups of Jewish progressives joined in the province's political life and cooperated with democratic movements among other ethnic groups that raised ideas of forming a political federation. Contacts were made quite closely by Jewish, Lithuanian, Russian and Polish movements which propagated socialist ideas. However, the close cooperation between Jews and Lithuanians that formed in the early twentieth century can be explained with some justification by short-term political calculation arising when other political partners such as the Poles were for different reasons unfavourable to both sides. Lithuanians and Jews were interested solely in their own ethnic affairs and did not see a need to be one another's constant partners in the future to achieve their political ends and implement national ideals. Y. Plasseraud explains this scepticism by the fact that the Litvaks had still only a passive interest in local political parties and alliances, despite the role of Jewish revolutionaries in the Russian revolutions of 1905 and 1917 and a few other exceptional cases. They belonged to Jewish political groups ranging from the Bundists and Volkists to the Zionists and many other religious and social organisations.[7]

More than one leader of the Lithuanian national movement had a fresh memory of imagined Jewish positions during the Polish-Lithuanian Uprisings (1830–31, 1863–64) and their loyalty to the Russian authorities. In the Lithuanian Democratic Party's publications claims appeared alleging that Jews were not pressurised culturally and ethnically by the Russian authorities to the same extent as the Lithuanians had been. Therefore, feeling pain and without taking into account the measures taken by the tsar's government to restrict Jewish rights or the details of the widely known Beil Case and its consequences, Lithuanians accused Jews of "taking trouble to speak the Muscovites' language and spreading the Muscovite spirit here in every corner."[8] The

question arose in the Lithuanian press as to whether Jews could be relied upon in the Lithuanian national movement and an answer was mooted to the effect that "in our rebirth we cannot rely on or trust them in any way … because hitherto they have not helped anyone in such matters, and on the contrary they have always taken the side of the victors and repressors."[9]

Scholars do not link the years of the First World War with the subject of Lithuanian Jewish history as an active period in the Litvak political movement. Attention is concentrated on the battle against the authorities' propaganda which gave them the role of enemy informant and henchman. This was the Jews' most important aim, as not for the first time they became caught between the hammer and the anvil. In March–May 1915 the Russian military authorities exiled Litvaks deep into Russia; this resettlement was accompanied by plunder of their property and violence and as events on the front changed this was replaced by order imposed by the German military authorities. The German authorities' liberal attitude towards the Jewish community and the concessions they made did not last for long and had the effect of turning the Gentile population against the Jews.[10] Experience of the war years probably transformed the Litvaks' position towards Germany and Russia and also must have altered the vision of the future held by the community's leaders.

3. The Moment Comes for Decision

The account presented by Lithuanian and Jewish researchers to the effect that most Litvaks kept a distance between themselves and the Lithuanian national movement and practically took no part in events of significance for Lithuania in 1917–1918 is open to various interpretations. However, more often than not this does not offer an opportunity to analyse the Litvak community's internal politics and the aims that dictated their decisions but on the contrary it leads mainly discussion of expressions of Lithuanian nationalism.

Directions of integration, cooperation or confrontation among Lithuanian social groups were linked directly with the future prospects for Lithuanian statehood. Different social groups in Lithuania set up different political aims which were influenced not only by their own determination but also by general European geopolitical circumstances. One of the principal issues where the views of various political movements came face to face involved visions of Lithuania's status, the

formation of the future state and its territory. Of people of other nationalities Lithuanians demanded mechanical national assimilation with the Lithuanian nation or regarded them as an alien element that was harmful to Lithuania, or they sought to draw them in to the Lithuanian national movement.

In 1918–1919 the Jewish communities became actively engaged in the political life of the nascent Lithuanian Republic. The exceptional accents of their activities are reflected in the words of President Antanas Smetona:

> The Jews gave willing support to independent Lithuania and proved this support by taking part in the Lithuanian *Taryba* ["Council"], the Lithuanian Cabinet of Ministers and the Lithuanian peace delegations in Paris and Moscow.[11]

Six places were reserved for ethnic minorities on the Lithuanian Provisional Taryba, but the Lithuanians set strict conditions in return for such support. Taryba members from the minorities were to be appointed by the Taryba, the new members had to support Lithuanian independence and could not have taken part in any anti-Lithuanian activity; new members had to be able to understand the Lithuanian language.[12] In addition the Taryba later came under suspicion of being solely a creation of the German Occupation authorities. Therefore the Jews resolved that first they should call a general congress of all Jews in the Oberost in order to decide whether they should take part in the country's Taryba as established by the Lithuanians. On 29 October 1917 the German authorities were presented with a memorandum requesting permission for the Jews to hold such a congress.[13] Permission to organise such a meeting was denied and, given the constantly changing situation in the area which was difficult to gauge, the clear unwillingness of the Jewish leadership to come to a final decision was understandable. The Litvaks' political sphere of interests came up against a new phenomenon, namely Lithuanian national politics with which some form of accommodation had to be made. We think that delay in officially joining in the work of the Lithuanian Provisional Taryba was influenced by the conditions imposed by the Lithuanians and by the issue to be resolved by the Jews themselves – was supporting the Lithuanians the best way to defend Jewish interests? In 1917 no one could guarantee whether an independent Lithuanian state would in fact be declared or how long it would last if it were declared. Furthermore, there was talk of re-

establishing Lithuania within ethnic Lithuanian lands and this did not satisfy the Litvaks who were considering possibilities for a poly-ethnic state within the boundaries of historic Lithuania. So they did not sign the Declaration of Independence (16 February 1918). According to P. Klimas, "some looked to the Russians, others to the Poles and yet others were thinking again of a joint Belarusian and Lithuanian state; the Jews did not have a programme with which Lithuanians in general could agree."[14]

After the First World War as the Russian Empire collapsed and young nation states began to form on its ruins, Lithuania's Jews came out in favour of Litvak territory forming a composite part of the Lithuanian state. The Litvaks maintained the line of their own interests and imagined an independent Lithuania as a country with the broadest possible borders covering the areas inhabited by Litvaks.

From the economic point of view Lithuania had been a backward province of the Russian Empire. At the beginning of the twentieth century the Jewish intelligentsia grew up under the influence of Russian culture. In addition to Yiddish local Litvaks often spoke Russian, Polish and German but they did not assimilate into Lithuanian culture which was peasant-based, primitive and faced uncertain future. Neither religion nor place of residence could form a link for uniting the two groups, for Jews lived in towns and the shtetl while Lithuanians tended to live in villages. Jewish town mentality and subculture could not go backwards even as they remained a minority.[15] A large role in the decision of local Litvaks to support the emergent Lithuanian Republic was played by outside factors. The renascent Polish Republic was a poly-ethnic state with a mono-ethnic ideology. At first concessions were pledged to non-Poles on condition that the latter become good citizens but nationalist fever boiled over and no grounds were found for agreement.[16] Pogroms in the Russian Empire at the turn of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries trounced Jewish hopes for integration into Russian society despite Litvak representation on the Soviet Council and in the Russian Communist Party. As bolshevism took root in order to establish a "democratic socialist Russia" and justification was found for antisemitic excesses on the part of many so-called "comrades," hopes were not encouraged for civil equality of rights. Therefore it was quite simply easier to live in one state with the small Lithuanian nation especially as at that time independent Lithuania guaranteed them a quite unique cultural autonomy and political equality of rights.[17]

In London in February 1919 a World Zionist Congress was held and later there was a conference of Orthodox Jewry which passed resolutions for guaranteeing Jewish rights. An analogous resolution was passed by the Committee of Jewish Delegates at the Paris Peace Conference.[18] In order to gain the support of international Jewish organisations while Lithuania was isolated internationally and to obtain the "binding" of non-Lithuanophone eastern lands to Lithuania, the Jews were promised political, national and civil rights, participation in the work of the government and legal institutions, the chance to run their own affairs autonomously and also the formation of a Ministry of Jewish affairs in the Lithuanian Republic. A declaration to this effect was issued on 5 August 1919 and presented by A. Voldemaras and P. Klimas to the Committee of Jewish Delegates at the Paris Peace Conference.[19]

4. The Zionist Contribution to Restoring the Lithuanian State

Leaders of the Jewish community who took part in the political life of the Lithuanian state and the creation of Jewish national autonomy, including the re-organisation of cultural and economic life, were active Zionists who belonged to the right wing.

The formation of Zionism and the result of its ideas depended on the Jewish situation in the Diaspora, relations with the majority society surrounding it and tendencies towards assimilation but also on the maintenance of historical traditions. Zionism became a mass movement in the area inhabited by Litvaks. The Litvak community in the Russian Empire was influenced strongly by enlightenment ideas, although it remained traditional in comparison with west-European Jewish communities at that time and it was also most open to nationalism. Young educated Jews influenced by western culture and ideas lost their link with traditional Jewish culture but they desired to sustain their ethnic identity and in the broad spectrum of ideas propagated by Zionism they found a miraculous formula to help them adapt to the modern world without losing their Jewishness.[20] Mere formal contact with their gentile surroundings was exchanged for a chance to become an organic part of the state organism. Also the growing nationalism of society surrounding the Jews was a force for consolidating the Jewish people and compelling it to consider and consolidate its separateness. Many Litvaks did not know anything about the ideological postulates propounded by Zionism. Their support for Zionism, according to A. Dieckhoff, was in reality

based more on sentiment than political views and this had an influence on the mass nature of the new movement in the Litvak region.

After the revolution of 1905 the Russian interior ministry outlawed Zionist activity and Litvakia became the centre of the whole Russian Zionist movement and congresses and meetings were held abroad. During the Third Pan-Russian Zionist Conference of 1906 in Helsinki Litvak pressure led to the acceptance of a principle "to take action now" in order to defend Jewish civil and political rights in the Russian Empire[21]. This principle was maintained consistently by Zionists in the Lithuanian nation state in the 1920s and 1930s. Understanding the long-term nature of the aims of their programme (use of Hebrew, development of national culture, promoting emigration to Eretz Israel), Zionists took pains to educate the younger generation of Jews as loyal citizens of the Lithuanian Republic. During the First World War Zionist activities were curtailed severely. Along with other Jews many Zionists were regarded as "potential German spies" and exiled by the tsar's decree to the depths of Russia. Those remaining in German-occupied territory attempted to make contact and work together with German Zionists.

As the war drew to its end the Zionist movement began to organise itself more actively on Lithuanian territory, although now they were acting independently of the Russian movement. The General Zionist Party retained consistently its liberal leanings and united a notable influential part of Jewish intellectuals and renowned social activists.[22] The Jewish representatives who agreed to join the Provisional Lithuanian State Taryba independently, that is without representing a particular party, and who later formed part of the First Government were J. Wygodski (minister without portfolio for Jewish Affairs), S. Rosenbaum (deputy minister of foreign affairs) and N. Rachmilevich (deputy minister of trade and industry). They were all General Zionists.[23] Those who worked in the Jewish Affairs Ministry representing the Jewish ethnic minority until it was closed down in 1924 and in the Lithuanian Seimas were also mostly General Zionists. The same people were appointed to delegations that were sent abroad where decisions were made concerning Lithuanian recognition *de jure* and border issues (the Brussels Financial Conference, 1919–20, the peace negotiations with Soviet Russia in 1920) and where world public opinion was being formed on issues of polish aggression towards Lithuania.[24] The famous, authoritative new Jewish members agreed to join the Taryba and work in the first cabinets, sharing responsibility for the policies of the Lithuanian government. They were useful to the Lithuanians because they had

influence in Jewish society and could influence Jewish public opinion on issues of importance to Lithuanians.

The Zionists' decision to work together with the Lithuanians cannot be understood outside the international context. Litvaks were an integral part of the World Zionist Movement. At the end of 1917 with the help of the German Zionist Union an official memorandum was presented to the German Occupying Administration concerning the convening of a national congress to draw up conditions for Jewish national cultural autonomy. Lithuanian Jewish representatives presented several similar memoranda to leaders of the World Zionist Union in Berlin and these were supposed to negotiate with the German authorities in Oberost.[25] At the end of 1918 a General Zionist conference took place in Vilnius which united Zionist organisations operating in Lithuania into a single Lithuanian Zionist Union. Pro-Lithuanian orientation on the part of Lithuanian Jewry was sustained during this conference and thanks to the organisation's leaders S. Rosenbaum, J. Wygodski and others a decision was taken to support the re-establishment of a Lithuanian state and join the ranks of the Taryba. N. Rachmilevich, member of the Taryba and later of the Provisional Seimas declared in the hope of consolidating independent Lithuania's society that

> We always called ourselves Lithuanian Jews even when that state no longer existed … if any section of society has devoted itself body and soul to Lithuania … that group is the Jews… external differences such as language and so forth do not prevent anyone from taking active part in rebuilding the country.[26]

Viewed from the perspective of subsequent history, this situation would seem paradoxical: the Jewish community resolves to support the Lithuanian state and the political aspirations of its government at the very time, that is, the end of 1918 that the new state was still unrecognised *de iure* and its future prospects were at their most dubious. I think this can be understood as a union of clear anti-Polish forces, Jewish and Lithuanian, guided by their own interests.

5. Jewish Soldiers in the Fight for Independence

The participation of Jews in the battle for Lithuanian independence is a sign of how Litvaks viewed themselves consciously as citizens of the newly established Lithuanian state. Twenty three Jews were awarded the

highest Lithuanian medal, the Vytis Cross. Figures noted by scholars vary but even if the number of Jews taking part in the fight for Lithuanian independence is overstated, considerable data survive in archives and from newsprints of the day to confirm Jewish patriotism where Lithuania is concerned.

In a report by the chief of Lithuanian army mobilisation of 5 August 1919 it was stated that 80 percent of mobilised Jews were deployed behind the front lines, that is, most Jews did not take part in the front-line ranks.[27] This fact tells us less about the courage and resolve of Jewish volunteers than official Lithuanian civil and military mistrust of "non-ethnic-Lithuanian" citizens.

There are considerable data in contemporary newsprints, especially those published by Jews, about Jewish patriotism. The General Zionist daily in 1919–20, *Di Yidishe Shtime* published announcement after announcement, news items and articles about increasing contributions for the Lithuanian army and joining the common fight against Lithuania's enemies. The journalist Robinzon Volsonok wrote at that time:

> In these difficult, very difficult times the new Lithuania was born and bred. There was liquidation of military units and political crises grew. The emergent state had still not achieved peace and the worst a country can imagine, invasion by neighbours [here Volsonok has the Poles in mind] … now the country is in danger and everyone should join the volunteer defences organised by Lithuanians, the Riflemen's Union. Young Jews have just as much interest in ensuring a happy life and growing common weal should not bleed to death. The physical training of young Jews is no worse than that of the rest of society. Everyone has a moral duty to play their part in state life especially during her time of trouble. We should stand arm in arm with our Lithuanian friends to defend our country. How can we do this? Join the ranks defending the state, strengthen the Riflemen's Union by becoming members of it or providing assistance in one form or other.[28]

6. Vilnius and the Vilnius District Problem

Vilnius was a peripheral town of the Russian Empire in the centre of an area known as the "pale of settlement." However, events so developed that the Russian periphery became a centre for more than the Litvak

world.[29] In the second and third decades of the twentieth century not only Lithuanians but also Poles and Belarusians expressed claims to the town which had become for Litvaks a symbol of their culture, religion and historical tradition. During the Paris Peace Conference the Lithuanian delegation based their demand that Vilnius and the Vilnius district belong to Lithuania on the fact that many Litvaks lived in the area and they wanted to live in Lithuania. In this matter active advocacy was played by a special adviser to the Lithuanian foreign minister, the Provisional Seimas member Mordechai Soloveichik (Soliele) who was active in the World Jewish Committee. According to him, Lithuania needed an ally in order to effect its claims to territory that was not ethnographically Lithuanian even though it was its historic capital. Only the Jews could be of assistance in this matter.[30]

Early in 1919 the poly-ethnic Vilnius District became a focus of potential conflict. In January 1919 the Lithuanian government withdrew from Vilnius and set up residence in Kaunas and Polish military units began to dominate Vilnius. The predicament of Litvaks in the Vilnius district did not improve as the war axis changed direction from Lithuania-Poland to Poland-USSR. Litvaks who had not lived under Polish rule since the last partition of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth (1795) learned for themselves in April 1919 what J. Wygodski meant by "unhealthy Polish patriotism."[31] The Soviet invasion in 1920 did not end the anti-Jewish terror but became an incitement for further violent Polish retribution against local Jews whom they identified as pro-Bolshevik enemies. Although only a year previously the Jewish community was being attacked for its pro-Lithuanian stance.[32] Indeed Polish propaganda often equated pro-Bolshevik and pro-Lithuanian views allegedly held by Jews. In their turn when the Bolsheviks returned to Vilnius on 14 July 1920 they repeated their previous "agenda" and arrested Poles and Jews, made changes in local authority bodies, nationalised and commandeered private property. Although officially it was declared that Vilnius would be handed over to Lithuania the Bolsheviks ran the town for around six weeks. The Jewish press referred to this period as "hell let loose for a couple of months."[33]

On 27 August 1920 Lithuanian troops entered Vilnius with a Lithuanian government delegation which hastily drew up its own agenda of priority tasks for the region. It was resolved to draw "local forces" into the process of building a "new life." The forces were those which were familiar with conditions typical of the region and which could work for the benefit of the Lithuanian Republic.[34] The provisional town council

was represented by four nationalities. On the insistence of the Lithuanian authorities orders and official documents were printed in Lithuanian which only a small part (around five percent) of the population could understand but there was hope that rights to ethnic self government would be offered to Vilnius Jews too and the renewal of economic contacts with Kaunas Lithuania and thereby with Germany gave cause for optimism.[35] The Lithuanian authorities showed extraordinary favour to Vilnius Jewish organisations which under the influence of Kaunas Jewish society were supposed to provide weighty support for Lithuanian aspirations to Vilnius.

On 22 July 1920 during a meeting of the Provisional Lithuanian Committee in Vilnius Rabbi I. Rubenstein and Messrs Šeskinas and Šapiro expressed their satisfaction in the name of the Jewish community with the fact that "Lithuania had regained its independence and its historic capital." They expressed a desire to work together for Lithuania's benefit and the well being to peoples with equal rights.[36] They based their views on the fact that Kaunas Jews had become equal citizens of the independent Lithuanian state, enjoyed ethnic cultural autonomy and were working successfully with the Lithuanians. The theory of non-territorial ethnic autonomy formulated by the famous Jewish historian S. Dubnow was popular among the Jews of Eastern Europe.[37] The Litvak leaders believed that an ideal position could be achieved in the Jewish Diaspora if state legal grounds could be guaranteed for ethnic autonomy. Without going into detail of left-wing Jewish opposition to the resolutions of the Lithuanian Taryba to set up an independent Lithuanian state in January 1918, I would be so bold as to claim that the Vilnius Jewish community came out unambiguously in favour of the district's belonging to the Lithuanian state.

When, on 9 October 1920 Żeligowski led his Polish troops into Vilnius the new Polish regime propagated friendly relations with ethnic minorities, especially the Jews. Despite recent excesses the Poles attempted to win the population's support when they entered the town for this would influence the fate of the town and its hinterland. A commission was even drawn up with a couple of Jewish representatives to investigate previous anti-Jewish excesses and punish the guilty.[38]

The following day the Lithuanian Jewish Council sent out a call to Jewish communities and had it published in the most widely-read Kaunas Jewish daily newspaper, *Di Yidishe Shtime*:

Jewish Citizens,
From west and south difficult times are coming for us and our land;
they are bringing hardship and death … the imperialist Polish
leadership does not wish to make any peace with us, it wishes to
enslave us and place its heavy hand upon us. We Jews have always
stood among those fighting for Lithuania's independence. Al the time
we have taken up an active position to restore our young, awakening
country … the olden days of Lithuania-Poland are against us. We
Jews know what the attacks of Polish legionaries mean and how
much Jewish tears and blood they have poured out along that dread
road. We have still before our very eyes Jewish Vilnius and a dozen
towns bloodied only a year ago… Now is not the time for words, we
must rise with out fellow citizens the Lithuanians to the fight. Not for
the first time in our lives in the *galut* are we standing against enemy
fire for the sake of the land of our fathers as equal citizens. The
Lithuanian National Jewish Council calls upon you, Jews, to fight
with all your might for the political independence of Lithuania. The
whole civilised world should know that we will not be afraid and will
fight the attackers with all our might … Each man to his post to fulfil
his sacred duty to the state and his national independence.[39]

As Poland prepared elections to the Central Lithuania Seimas N.
Rachmilevich declared in the Lithuanian Provisional Seimas in the name
of the Jewish faction that:

Lithuania's Jewish citizens join their voice to the protest against the
steps by which the Poles wish to confer [legitimacy] on their act of
violence … we protest against the elections to the Vilnius Seimas
which are intended to tear the body of Lithuania into two parts. We
the appointed Jewish citizens of Lithuania will never agree to their
being a border between us and the town on which our ancient
tradition has conferred the name of Jerusalem of Lithuania.[40]

After the leaders of the Vilnius Jewish parties decided to boycott the
general elections to the Central Lithuania Seimas and urged the whole of
the Jewish community to do likewise, J. Wygodski, Tsemach Shabad and
Rabbi I. Rubenstein were summoned after the plebiscite to Warsaw to
explain events to the interior and foreign ministers and other high-
ranking Polish officials. The Jews explained that they regard Vilnius as
the same part of Lithuania as Kaunas. They understand Lithuania to be a

poly-ethnic state where all people enjoy the same rights not a mono-ethnic one. They hold the view that Vilnius should belong to Greater Lithuania but because the present state is too small to be independent and is closely linked with Poland historically, economically and culturally the best solution would be for Lithuania to be part of a Polish Federation. However, since there was only one question in the plebiscite to vole upon under the formula "for Lithuania or for Poland?" without any alternative, Jews had no way of expressing their opinion. It was also stressed that, despite the fact that they made up fifteen percent of the population of the Vilnius District, Jews were guaranteed only two or three candidacies. The Jews could not be satisfied with this and it did not reflect the size of their community.[41] Changes in the stance of Vilnius Jewish leaders that contradicted their previous views, could not be interpreted without taking into account the circumstances under which those views were expressed. I think that we should ask the question as to whether that was a conscious political orientation or a policy of convenience, that is, when faced with greater force (in this case Poland) there was a natural reorientation towards that force in order to defend Jewish interests. Historical experience, according to the Jewish historian S. Atamukas, had taught Jews to maintain loyalty to the state where they lived and be cautious when internal or inter-state disputes were being decided until it was completely clear which way events would turn.[42]

The position taken by the Jews of "Kaunas Lithuania" towards the Vilnius District Issue as represented by the Lithuanian Jewish faction, became clear also when the Hymans Plan was under deliberation. In the Provisional Seimas N. Rachmilevich announced in the name of the Jewish bloc that the project being offered was nothing more than a legitimisation of the Polish Warsaw-Vilnius-Kaunas-Klaipėda Plan.

> Since the Poles show no will to come to terms in either domestic or foreign policy and are hopelessly loyal to … chauvinistic nationalism at home and fanatical imperialism abroad, the Jewish community has been and will be against any organic link between Poland and Lithuania. The Jews expect nothing to come of that for the cultural development of either Lithuania or the Jewish people.[43]

On 23 September 1921 the Seimas rejected the Hymans Plan with a small majority vote of members of the People's Party ["Liaudininkai"] and the Jewish Faction. It is difficult to give an unambiguous answer as to what political arguments were hidden beneath the declarations of

loyalty to the state re-established by the Lithuanians. The Jews were virtually the only minority to have an effective influence on the country's fate without having any territorial pretensions. The leaders of the Jewish community who took part directly or otherwise in various international conferences and negotiations designed to resolve the issue of the "power vacuum" that had developed in the east undoubtedly understood the significance of the Vilnius District issue ["la Question de Vilna"] for the inter-state balance of power. However, it seems they took note of the issue and spoke out in favour of Lithuania as the optimal guarantor of stability for the country's population. I think that the young Lithuanian state best suited the interests of the Litvaks who hoped that by forming a minority in the Vilnius District the Lithuanians would not be able to pursue monopolistic policy. On the other hand, after Vilnius and its district became an integral part of independent Lithuania, the hub of the Litvak community and its homeland, albeit considerably cut down in size, would fall under the same flag.

In conclusion we may say that Litvaks had the role of a balancing force in the region where they lived as a new factor emerged, namely the modern Lithuanian nation and its aspirations to create an independent state. Lithuanian Jewry was split into political and ideological movements and did not have a single view on Lithuanian statehood (and it is doubtful whether Lithuanians themselves had one view either). Litvaks could consider a whole spectrum of prospects for Lithuania's future and the position therein of Jews as political forces changed: from autonomy within Russia to general Jewish emigration to *Eretz Israel*. Zionists were the section of Jewry which, guided by their interests, had the greatest interest in working together with Lithuanians to re-establish a Lithuanian state. Living in the Diaspora Zionists blended loyalty, patriotism and nationalism, turning their political line by the resolve to work for their people's benefit. As national states came into being, the practical implementation of the idea of national (ethnic) autonomy rose as an absolute value. Lithuania was the state where there was an attempt to bring this idea to life and, as history showed, it started with potential depending on changes in the geopolitical map and interest in the Jews as political partners and ended in failure.

During the first decades of the twentieth century several powers came and went in the area inhabited by the Litvaks, the local society experienced the hardships of occupation and enforced exile, economic and social losses, isolation and violent attack. The pro-Lithuanian political stance of the Litvaks, the declarations of their community

leaders, and the attempt to explain the circumstances which influenced them and which are related with pathos or regret in scholarship dealing with the history of Lithuanian Jewry explaining the Lithuanian Jewish contribution to the re-establishment of a state of Lithuania, lead us to draw the conclusion that until the early 1920s Lithuanian Jewry remained loyal to Lithuania, that is the idea of an imaginary *Lite* on whose territory the Litvaks had resided for centuries. The greatest influence on the Litvaks' political choice whether to support an internationally unrecognised young Lithuanian state came from external factors. Because of aggressive antisemitism and imperialist politics Litvaks could not welcome Poles or the soviets. The Litvaks who had experienced repression under the tsars and soviet Russia and violence inspired by Polish patriotism saw in the Lithuanian Republic an agent which could become a subject in the international arena that would protect them from extreme nationalism and radicalism.

Notes

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1. Atamukas, 1998; Levin, 2000; *Lietuvos žydai 1918–1940* (Vilnius: Baltos lankos, 2000); Eidintas, 2001; *Atminties dienos. Tarptautinės konferencijos Vilniaus geto sunaikinimo 50-mečiui medžiaga* (Vilnius: Baltos lankos, 1995); *Lietuvos mokslų akademijos metraštis* 15 (1999) and publications over the last decade in journals such as *Lietuvos Jeruzalė, Mokslo Lietuva* and *Veidas*.

2. Plasseraud, 2000, 13–14.

3. Plasseraud, 1995, 365–66.

4. Atamukas, 1998, 96.

5. Šalčius, 1917, 43–44.

6. Atamukas, 1998, 106–107.

7. Plasseraud, 1995, 365.

8. Bagdonas, 1896.

9. Lozoraitis, 1892.

10. Levin, 2000, 66–77.

11. Smetona, 1996, 207.

12. Balkelis, 1998.

13. Jakubčionis, 1993.

14. Klimas, 1990, 8.

15. Mendelsohn, 1992, 292–95; Berenis, 1997, 105.

16. Wandycz, 1997, 221.

17. Radensky, 1996, 84.

18. Jakubčionis, 1993.

19. Eidintas, 2001, 55.

20. Dieckhoff, 2000, 175.

21. Ibid, 172.

22. On the level of political ideas the Zionist parties were split into several camps. The General Zionists were an influential party (compared with the religious or socialist Zionists) in the world Zionist movement and included in their ranks Jews of varying age, education and social status. This party held ideals of full democracy and the rights and equality of all citizens; its main area of activity was taking care of Jewish life in the Diaspora, national cultural autonomy, improvement of economic and social standards and legal, constant emigration to Palestine.

23. Jakubčionis, 1993.

24. Jakubčionis, 1993; Levin, 2000, 80.

25. Levin, 2000, 73; Balkelis, 1998.

26. Stenogram of Seimas session, 15.09.1920: *Steigiamojo Seimo darbai. 1920 m. rugsėjo 15d. posėdžio stenogramas*.

27. Aničas, 1993.

28. Volsonok, 1920.

29. Suganas, 2000, 73.

30. Aničas, 1993.

31. Mendelsohn, 1981, 90.

32. Ibidem.

33. Cohen, 1943, 382; Mendelsohn, 1981, 90.

34. Feigelmanas, 1992, 59.

35. Cohen, 1943, 382.

36. Feigelmanas, 1992, 59.

37. Radensky, 1996, 86.

38. Cohen, 1943, 384–85.

39. "Birger Jidn!", *Di Jidishe Stime* No. 338 (10 October 1920).

40. Stenogram of Provisional Seimas session 17 Dec 1920: *Steigiamojo Seimo darbai. 1920 m. gruodžio 17 d. posėdžio stenogramas*.

41. Cohen, 1943, 385–86.

42. Atamukas, 1998, 121.

43. Feigelmanas, 1992, 60.

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Lithuanian General Aspects of Domestic Policy 1918–1940

Česlovas Laurinavičius

We might begin with a drastic claim that Lithuanian scholarship in general lacks a − factually thorough and methodologically − acceptable study of inter-war Lithuania. There are conceptually varied works on different times but none of these works taken on its own, or joined together mechanically with other studies as a whole, gives a sufficient image of the historical past. Therefore we might suspect we are dealing with a particular scholarly anomaly.

Of course every Lithuanian historian, especially one dealing with problems of modern history, has a certain empirical in-put and a certain vision of inter-war Lithuania. I think I am no exception and I will present my views here. You are free to accept or reject this view, but even if you accept it, it is clear that it will require verification.

I am inclined to take a fatalistic view of Lithuania between the two world wars as a political structure condemned to various difficulties and eventually, to collapse. This view of course is conditioned by in hindsight knowledge of what happened in 1939–40. In this case I have in mind more than the very well known stereotype that still has an influence on everyday consciousness, about the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact (although like every stereotype this has a basis in the truth). In my understanding the realities of those times are quite distant from the image of Lithuania as a virgin adorned in innocent rue ravaged by the German wolf and the Russian bear. If we agree with the precondition that German fascism was motivated by the view that man is of his essence bad and can be saved only by merciless forced selection, and that in its turn Russian communism was motivated by the claim that all human misfortunes are born of bad circumstances, which too can only be countered by merciless force, then I would dare claim that Lithuanian provided both concepts with sufficient grounds for expansion: people here too did not live without sin and furthermore they lived in unfavourable conditions.

To give a brief answer to the question as to what the general aspects of Lithuanian domestic policy were between 1918 and 1940, I can say in one word that it was "Lithuanian." In other words, nationalist and ethnocentric, like Estonian policy was Estonian, Latvian policy – Latvian, Bulgarian policy – Bulgarian, and so forth. However, it seems Lithuania's situation had a particular feature which is not easy to explain

and which, probably, caused the afore-mentioned problems that affect historical writing.[1]

The fact is that in the case of Lithuania, saying "Lithuanian" may not be exactly what we have in mind (unlike when we say "Estonian," "Latvian" or even "Polish"). In any case in 1918 the term "Lithuania" still lacked the clarity it would gain in the course of twenty years.

From a statistical point of view those who called themselves Lithuanians (*lietuviai*) lived at the beginning of the century in a homogeneous group in a territory similar to that of the diocese of Žemaitija.[2] Its borders were fixed already in the Treaty of Salinwerder, then in 1665 and afterwards we find similar boundaries in the Kovno Gubernia formed by the tsarist administration and the mystical Piłsudski Line.[3] It is unclear how the inhabitants of this area, who for centuries referred to themselves by the Žemaitijan ethnonym, came to be called "Lithuanians" or "Lithuanians" *tout court*, but one way or another in 1918 as inhabitants of "True Lithuania" they declared the creation of Lithuania with its historical capital Vilnius. This town lay in a territory in which Lithuanians did not make up even 50 percent of the local population.

But that is just a formal recourse to statistics which is neither full nor exact, although it is worthy of our attention. A deep historical view will show us that inhabitants of the territory of "True (or Ethnographic) Lithuania," not just ethnic Lithuanians but also people of other ethnic groups, often identified themselves with Lithuania, calling themselves "Litwiny," "Litvaks" or just "Lithuanian citizens." In this case we can already view the Lithuania that ethnic Lithuanians wished to recreate as a sort of modernised construct of the old Grand Duchy of Lithuania.

In addition ethnic Lithuanians had a certain political programme for bringing that construct into existence. And we should take account of this. It was according to that programme that the modern Lithuanian state grew up in the territory between Germany and Russia as a geo-political balance to Poland; this state was supposed by its existence to pacify the region permanently and also exercise the principle of self-determination embodied in modern nations. Alongside international consolidation conditions were thought up for domestic civic-national consolidation. In effect the village inhabited by the ethnic Lithuanian majority was to supply the towns (with a majority Jewish population) and establish a mutually beneficial relationship which internally and externally would foster one of the most important conditions for forming a modern Lithuanian nation: the so-called Lithuanian Poles would

become Lithuanians once again en masse, as they had been in historical times. Representatives from the Lithuanian National Progress Party who rationalised best this concept of state restoration stressed two further circumstances: first social conservatism, in effect legal protection for manors that would be a reward for Poles who gradually adopted Lithuanian culture, and secondly, a strong executive power in the Lithuanian political system and eventually a constitutional monarchy.[4]

However, at least where the domestic aspect is concerned, the two aforesaid circumstances were not available. In 1919, as Lithuano-Polish relations grew bitter, Lithuanian peasants began occupying Polish estates of their own accord. After the election campaign to the Constituent Assembly began the two large Lithuanian parties, the Christian Democrats and the Peasant People's Party, turned manor liquidation into state policy. On the other hand, those two parties who pushed the progressive National Party from power, formed a constitutional model according to which, to use M. Römeris's words, did not differ much from the Seimas commission and in that way Lithuania leaped from kaiser-led and tsarist monarchy to so-called direct democracy.[5]

The main argument for supporting the policy of liquidating the manors, and social demagogy was the use of so-called antidotes to bolshevik propaganda and the danger of soviet invasion. However, research has been done that allows us to detect something else: the sanctioning of "black partitioning" served as the main means for getting elected to the Seimas and assuring a majority there. In one way or another there was nothing to say now about civic consolidation between Lithuanians and Poles. On the contrary, a permanent stale of war existed between the two nations. What is particularly noticeable is that the Lithuanians could maintain political authority in this state of war only in areas where there was a Lithuanian peasant majority. Where the village was no longer ethnically Lithuanian, that is, in the Vilnius District, there was no means of introducing Lithuanian rule without foreign intervention.

After falling out with the Poles, the Lithuanians still had the Jews with whom there was no state of war, but civic consolidation did not develop. Instead there was a certain political alliance for a while. In return for support for the Lithuanian state, the Jews demanded national personal autonomy.

It is difficult to say what that is or could have been, but talking about Lithuanian Jewry we can mention two interests that are typical of them: that Lithuania should not become part of Poland and, the second, that in

Lithuania, whatever it might be and however long it might last, the Jews, as a sufficiently socially developed ethnic community, would have a certain legal protection and separation from the socially less-well developed ethnic Lithuanians.

In his declaration of August 5 1919 Augustinas Voldemaras, in effect, promised Lithuanian Jews their national personal autonomy and soon afterwards on 17 August ethnic Lithuanians in Kaunas could organise their first public demonstration in support of their government because Jewish flags were alongside Lithuanian flags in the columns of demonstrators.[6] On January 10 1920 the Lithuanian passed a definite law on Jewish autonomy and later the Jewish representative in the Seimas Simon Rosenbaum fought actively on behalf of Lithuanian rights to Vilnius during negotiations in Moscow with the soviets. On that occasion it was even joked in Kaunas that they managed to gain a border agreement in Moscow only after Rosenbaum had talked "face to face, as Jew to Jew" with the leader of the soviet delegation, Adolf Joffe.[7] Whatever the case may have been, the agreement with the Jews did not compensate for the breach with the Poles and in certain respects it only complicated matters further. The objective logic of the Lithuanian Jewish position shows the tendency to leave Lithuania under Russia's influence.

In autumn 1920, after Poland occupied Vilnius, Lithuania declared it was in a state of war not only domestically but also externally. It turned out that Lithuanians could not separate their national identity from the old capital of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania, Vilnius, without even realising that their project to restore a civically-consolidated Lithuanian state had collapsed. In 1925 the Christian Democrats finally destroyed Jewish personal autonomy and the demonstrative withdrawal of the Jews from the Seimas shows that the political alliance with the Jews had ended.[8]

The Seimas remained as an opportunity for representation, but as it operated in conditions of primitive democracy and constant state of war, it was more like a hermit on the Aventine hill than an effective authority institution. Especially as attacks were made all the time in the Seimas by the ethnic Lithuanian elite on pacifist European institutions and this merely served to compromise Lithuania and from 1925 there was open talk in Europe of the elimination of Lithuania as a source for war.

During the 1920s Europe made considerable efforts, sincerely or not, to bring Lithuania out of its state of war, but these efforts bore no fruit.

In spring 1926 the People's Party and Social Democratic coalition destroyed the domestic state of war and set about a series of principally

democratic reforms with the utopian view that democratic structures would function on their own like a machine, in spite of the real balance of political power in domestic and foreign arenas. In the end the left-wing coalition only laid bare the actual degree of social disintegration in Lithuania and after failing to demonstrate the necessary political will it was removed from power by force without greater complications.

Paradoxically the coup of December 17 1926 did offer certain hopes at home and abroad, because the National Party returned to power and theirs had been the model to a great extent for restoring the Lithuanian state. It seemed that that party's leaders, in particular Antanas Smetona and Augustinas Voldemaras would manage to alter basic orientations or adapt them to reality and thus lead the country out of domestic and foreign dead-ends. However, these hopes were not fulfilled. It soon became clear that the National Party had no new model and were merely desperately exploiting the old one. It was after the National Party was returned to power that anti-Polish propaganda reached its peak and the ordinary so-called Lithuanian of the new generation had a stereotype hammered into his head to the effect that he could not live without Vilnius.[9] Moreover besides impotence of the intellectual and moral elite another circumstance evolved, viz. that this new-generation Lithuanian did not want any changes at all because he could see only the threat of Polish revanche and a review of the land reform in such changes.

Of course, most of Lithuania's population did not accept their official state ideology. First of all this concerns other ethnic groups, the Poles and the Jews. In general despite constant pressure, cases of physical beating of members of other ethnic groups were not typical in Lithuania. But it seems that not only the Poles but also the privileged Jews felt some discomfort. In one way or another, reading the press of other ethnic groups in Lithuania, despite censorship and the natural caution of that press's correspondents, we can see a distance from ethnic Lithuanian problems, conceiving of them with a certain dose of irony or simply as something comic. At the same time, most probably, they understood that those ethnic Lithuanian problems would objectively lead to war and even to the destruction of the state.

Here it is worth stressing that Lithuanian problems were conditioned not only by their own unrealistic ambitions but also by natural self-defence against Poland. In Poland for a long time the dominant view of the Lithuanian state was a misunderstanding of it as a Polish provincial peasant tribe gone crazy which sooner or later would sober up and surrender to Polish sovereignty.[10] Therefore it would be difficult to say

even where the challenge lay, whether in Lithuanian nationalism to Polish civilisation or Polish imperial to Lithuanian self-determination. In addition we must bear in mind the circumstance that there were attempts in both Poland and Lithuania to seek a way out of this dead end but those attempts were blocked by the influence of the Soviet Union and Germany. Thus Lithuanian problems were not just a matter for its own population. Even so, I would not think that the international aspect of the Lithuanian problem could distract attention from each specific case of absence of good will and responsibility.

In the 1930s Lithuanian problems became a sort of routine. In many respects Lithuania was like other European states where its domestic conditions were concerned. It had an authoritarian regime watched over by an obnoxiously stern military commandant and an usually developed system for obtaining political ends. At the same time the economy flourished and living conditions improved. Admittedly, where the economy is concerned, we should bear in mind Lithuania's great dependency on Germany. This dependency took on not only a natural economic form but also a compliant political nature that had negative repercussions after the struggle over Klaipėda became bitter. According to relative data the criminal situation in Lithuania began to return to its earlier post-1918 levels in 1934–37.

What really is no cause for doubt is the flourishing of ethnic Lithuanian culture. Ethnic Lithuanians evolved from being a predominantly illiterate ethne to become an increasingly stratified society with its own home-grown intelligentsia.

However, these achievements did not change basic problems: the great discrepancy between the publicly propagated state image and reality. This discrepancy not only hindered non-ethnic Lithuanians from integrating into Lithuanian society but also made the ethnic Lithuanian nation amorphous. One great part of Lithuanians looked to the east for salvation among the Bolsheviks while others looked to the Nazis in the west.

As external pressure increased the weakness of the Lithuanian authoritarian regime became more evident and often these circumstances are cited as evidence that the 1926 coup led to the collapse of the Lithuanian state. While not denying the importance of legitimate changes of political authority, I still think that it is more important to see what political forces were laying claims to power, what their programme, credo, political will and potential authority were.

Between 1936 and 1940 as domestic political discussions and struggles took place, as I understand it, this only confirmed the fact that no political party or group in Lithuania had a programme offering greater hope or the necessary political authority.[11] For the most part that was a struggle for power for power's sake with the common view that Lithuanian problems would solve themselves or that someone else would solve them for the Lithuanians. Characterising ethnic Lithuanian political culture in brief, I would say its typical features were solipsism and infantilism.

Of course, here I refer to society at large because individual politicians were not immature and they did understand much. However they saw no solution in the societal, state sense.

There have been situations in the course of human endeavour when all civilised institutions – the authorities, the police, courts, army, the intelligentsia, and so on, find themselves in a powerless position. At such moments criminal structures come into effect. Of course there are attempts to hide this but the situation does not change in essence – those structures do their work better or worse. In one way or another that is the picture I gain of Lithuania between 1918 and 1940. That is a situation when the delicate nature and powerlessness of civilisation are laid bare for which we should all take responsibility.

Notes

1. Seton-Watson, 1945, 326.

2. Greimas, 1991, 259; Kviklys, 1989, 46.

3. Pußgers, 1924, No. 68–69; *Lietuvos istorijos atlasas*, 20; 30–32. The so-called Pilsudski Line is identified sometimes with the actual demarcation line between Poland and Lithuania in the second half of 1919 which followed the line Alytus-Stakliškės-Kaišiadorys-Čiobiškis-Širvintai.

4. Motieka, 1996.

5. Romeris, 1937, 123–73

6. Senn, 1992, 107; Lietuva 1919 N. 183.

7. Zigmas Toliušis' interviews with Petras Klimas – Vilnius University Library, Manuscripts Department F. 87–24, fos66–71; Laurinavičius, 1992.

8. Dušanskis, 1938; stenogram of Second Seimas session 173 (31 March 1925); M. Römeris, Lectures on Lithuanian constitutional law, vol. 2: manuscript in Vilnius University Library, Manuscripts Department f.75–M.R. 4, fo.6–22.

9. Lossowski, (1985), 236–44

10. Senn, (1980).

11. Rudis, *Naujosios politinės santvarkos ieškojimai 1927–1940*. Manuscript.

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The Historical Sources for Antisemitism in Lithuania and Jewish-Lithuanian Relations during the 1930s

Saulius Sužiedėlis

1. Jewish-Lithuanian Relations before the National Movement

Before the momentous changes of the nineteenth century, Lithuanian society, predominantly agrarian and "feudal," was divided into a number of more or less clearly defined communities, each with its social, religious and linguistic peculiarities: Polonised landowners, Muslim Tatars, Lithuanian peasants, petty gentry and, of course, the Jews. While it is true, in Zygmunt Bauman's expression, that the latter constituted a unique "caste," it was nonetheless one estate among many: the Jews like the other communities, had their place as social inferiors beholden to the landed aristocracy, but, as a rule, economically occupying a space above the peasantry. Social interaction between the various estates was ritualised and, for the most part, carefully regulated by traditional law and custom.[1] As in the rest of Europe, the coming of political, economic and social "modernity," to utilise Bauman's concept, altered and eventually revolutionised the relationships of Lithuania's various ethno-religious and social castes. However, this modernity, including modern forms of antisemitism, came later in Eastern Europe than in the West.

Until the late nineteenth century, Jewish interaction with ethnic Lithuanians essentially meant economic contacts with the peasantry since the latter, except for the petty gentry of Samogitia (Žemaitija), constituted by then the only significant stratum of Lithuanian speakers. As late as the middle of the last century, the relationship of the Lithuanian peasants and Jews was "pre-modern," situated within the framework of a stratified semi-feudal society entrenched within a traditional agrarian world. The symbiotic, but also conflicting, interactions between the two groups sometimes played out in a quasi-ritualistic fashion reminiscent of a bygone age, as depicted in this colourful 1857 account of a confrontation at market toll barricades in South Western Lithuania:

> … a loaded wagon is flying with great speed toward the town in the hope of avoiding the guard and the required market levy. At this very moment, a war-like command reverberates: "Halt." – in an instant, the wagon is stopped. The Lithuanian [driver], caught in a reckless deed, scratches his head, then pleads that he has nothing with which to pay, that he has barely enough money for market. He comes down from the wagon, a whip in his hand, bargaining with the unyielding guard. Sometimes, he even refuses obedience; woe then to the impudent! A

dozen Jews cluster around him, while the Lithuanian staves them off as best he can with his riding crop – [a] little Jewish fellow, kneading the peasant constantly with his knees and mussing his hair, keeps crying: "Pay! Pay!" The Lithuanian … seeks to lift his arms to beat off the unwelcome "guest," when a new rattle of arriving wagons and a dozen fists under his nose, or, on occasion, even a careful shove, applied from a careful distance, deflects his attention from his pestered head. Willy-nilly, he reaches into his breast pocket and pulls out a small bag … Confused and unable to quickly regain his composure, the peasant finally pays the few *groszy* with great difficulty. Turning away, he puts back his bag and wants to finally rid himself of the little nuisance fastened on him, but the little Jewish fellow isn't stupid – with one leap he is already several steps away from the peasant, and is hanging onto another Lithuanian, reaching for the latter's head. There's just nothing to be done; one must drive on. The peasant settles into his wagon, spurs on his horses, all the while shaking his head in dissatisfaction. However, once he arrives in the town square and glances at the white peasant overcoats … a smile returns to his face. He greets his brothers happily and forgets about his ruffled hair.[2]

Formalised economic tension, replete with ethnic stereotypes, was further reinforced by religious prejudices as well as the mutual hostility of village and town; in ethnic, social and cultural terms, the latter was an inhospitable place for the peasants. In the logic of their caste, most rural folk considered that "only the work of the land was fit for human labour." Yet the very nature of ritualised interaction within a conservative social hierarchy contained a modicum of stability and, hence, a measure of violence-mitigating security. The mutual stereotypes of the different communities were often negative, but hardly genocidal. Anti-Jewish unrest in the ethnically Lithuanian lands was neither wide-spread nor frequent.[3]

But while Jews and Lithuanians lived side-by-side for centuries, the proximity did not engender mutual understanding. The communities had limited knowledge of each other's languages and, for the most part, little interest in the Other's cultural and spiritual world. As commonly observed, in Eastern Europe Jews and Gentiles lived *beside* one another, but not *with* each other. Familiar as individuals, they were strangers culturally. Educated Jews and Lithuanians tended to assimilate into one of the region's "high" cultures: Russian proved attractive to Jews, Polish culture to Lithuanians (at least until the latter half of the nineteenth century). It should not be surprising that superficially reciprocal

stereotypes have dominated the histories, literatures and collective memories of Jews and Lithuanians, a situation which, with few exceptions, has continued to the present. The vast Jewish literature consists mainly of recounting the life and death of the numerous *Litvak* communities; as a rule, they are chronicles rather than critical histories. Even in scholarly studies, Lithuanians are often invisible or one-dimensional, appearing either as inert peasant masses, or as perpetrators of the Holocaust. On the other hand, until recently, most Lithuanian-language works, with the exception of authors such as Augustinas Janulaitis and Mykolas Biržiška, who had a genuine interest in Jewish culture, treated the Jews as a footnote, the largest of the minorities, and only in so far as the "Jewish problem" affected Lithuanians themselves.[4]

Despite their name, the majority of *Litvaks* actually inhabited what is now Belarus. The 1897 imperial census revealed about one and one-half million Jews in the lands of the former Grand Duchy, only a third of whom lived in what is now the Republic of Lithuania. The nineteenth-century conflict between the Tsars and the increasingly assertive Polish and Lithuanian national movements presented the Jews with a political dilemma: a minority supported the anti-Tsarist forces, others preferred Russian "law and order," while a great many took the view that "Russia is the father and Poland is the mother. When they fight, children must stay out of their quarrel."[5] What is missing in this bit of folk wisdom, of course, is any mention of Lithuanians.

The advent of the national movement after the anti-Tsarist insurrection of 1863, and, most important, the emergence of a secular Lithuanian-speaking intelligentsia complicated the relationship between Jews and Lithuanians. Much of the nationally-minded Catholic clergy nurtured, in various degrees, traditional anti-Judaic animosities which were now compounded by social and political concerns. Bishop Motiejus Valančius (1801–1875), an important forerunner of the Lithuanian national revival, emphasised the harmful impact on the moral and social life of the peasantry exercised by Jewish tavern-keepers and merchants. The Jews' alleged support for the Tsar made them allies of the Church's rival, the Orthodox autocracy. On the other hand, traditional Catholic anti-Judaism was mitigated by the Church's admonitions which emphasised the dignity of all human beings. Even as he advised peasants about dishonest Jewish traders, Valančius cautioned them against violence towards "God's children."[6] The beatified Jurgis Matulaitis (1871–1927), modern Lithuania's most ethical hierarch, condemned anti-Jewish pogroms as Bishop of Vilnius.[7]

At the same time, the secular Lithuanian intelligentsia encountered modern antisemitic trends, primarily from Austria, Germany and France,

reinforcing homespun negative stereotypes with the bacilli of pseudoscientific racism. The first published work by Vincas Kudirka (1858–1899), one of the founders of modern Lithuanian nationalism, was a folksy, primitive caricature of the Jewish restriction against pork.[8] In *Varpas* (The Bell), the first Lithuanian-language periodical with a political programme, Kudirka railed against "the Jews … our most terrible enemies … the most vicious wolves dressed in sheep's clothing," assailing them as a danger to the peasants' Catholic faith. Since Kudirka, like many other secular nationalists, was personally indifferent to the Catholicism of his youth, such passages were an obvious incitement of pious village folk. At least one leftist contemporary speculated that the intelligentsia of the *Varpas* movement had acquired simplistic anti-Jewish attitudes from "childhood days in the village or frequent sermons in the churches."[9] But Kudirka's antisemitic philippics, in addition to primitive appeals to the peasants' sense of exploitation, revealed an acquaintance with French and Austrian purveyors of racial antisemitism. In one striking passage Kudirka argued, in Edouard Drumont's vein, that the inborn malignant nature of the Jews was immutable and could not be ameliorated through education or assimilation.[10]

Kudirka's was not the only voice. The democratic slogans of the insurrection of 1863–1864 and the Revolution of 1905 raised hopes of Jewish emancipation as well as the liberation of Gentile peasants. Anti-Catholic and antisemitic Tsarism could be seen as an enemy of both Jews and Lithuanians; there was room for cooperation as well as hostility.[11] While Lithuanian-language periodicals urged economic competition with Jews, both the secular and clerical press discouraged anti-Jewish violence and urged a common front against Tsarist oppression. During the elections to the First Duma in 1906 Lithuanian and Jewish leaders agreed to support each other's candidates.[12] The latter sometimes remarked on the weakness of an antisemitic tradition and the paucity of pogroms in Lithuania before the Great War.[13] In sum, Lithuanian-Jewish relations of the turn of the century could be described as "complicated and contradictory, but not predominantly antagonistic."[14] Not surprisingly, the generation of Lithuanian leaders who received their political baptism of fire before 1914 also produced the most determined critics of antisemitism in later decades.

2. Ethnicity, Politics and Self-Determination in the New State

The new, vibrant and often chaotic world of post-Versailles Eastern Europe intensified regional and ethnic rivalries even as it opened new possibilities of inter-ethnic accommodation based on liberal democracy.

The advent of majority rule in independent Lithuania after 1918 rapidly transformed Lithuanian relations with the national minorities. The land reform was widely understood not only as economic democratisation, but as the historic defeat of Polish influence. The Republic's attempts to integrate Klaipėda Territory encountered the hostility of the country's Germans. In turn, the relationship of the country's Lithuanians and Jews, the largest national minority, was dramatically reshaped by the escalating competition in commerce, industry and the professions fueled by the unprecedented influx of ethnic Lithuanians into cities and towns between the wars.

The struggle for Vilnius led to violent antisemitic pogroms by Bolshevik and Polish forces in the spring of 1919.[15] During the wars of national liberation of 1918–1920 anti-Jewish outbreaks on a smaller scale also occurred in the lands controlled by the newly organised Lithuanian government. Jews had been accused of conniving with the detested German Oberost authorities whose requisitions had driven many villagers close to famine. Some of the economic, social and cultural tensions that characterised Lithuanian-Jewish relations of the interwar period were pre-shadowed by the privileged position of some Jews employed by the German occupation authorities during 1915–1918.[16] At the first Lithuanian Jewish Congress in Kaunas in January 1920, Jewish leaders raised concerns about their situation in the new state. While some of the problems reflected traditional economic frictions with the peasantry, reminiscent of the picturesque toll-gathering of the previous century, others reflected the realities accompanying the advent of majority rule. The Congress protested the excesses of Lithuanian troops in Panevėžys in May 1919 during the war with Soviet Russia, as well as the lack of Jewish participation in the bureaucracy; there were allegations that virtually all Jewish railroad workers had been dismissed.[17] Yet evidence of pogroms during the period between 1915 and the early 1920s is sketchy at best and the story of peasant-Jewish relations of those years is marred by the sparsity and subjective nature of the sources.[18]

Thus, Jewish-Lithuanian relations of the interwar period evolved within a radically transformed landscape. Gone were the layers of authority which had separated the Jews from the peasant majority: the Tsarist bureaucracy, the Polonised aristocracy and the German military administration. For all minorities, dealing directly with the Lithuanian-speaking majority without these intervening agencies was a novel experience. Would Jews consider the new Lithuania of peasant upstarts *their* state as well? Most Jews had less faith than their ethnic Lithuanian countrymen in the permanence of the new state; many preferred a version of the old multinational Grand Duchy in which the Lithuanians, Poles,

Jews and Belarusians would co-exist as autonomous Swiss-like ethnic "cantons."[19] Jewish sentiment for autonomy within a new Russia, which would include the *Litvak*-inhabited lands of Belarus, as well as suspicions and even prejudiced condescension concerning the new "peasant" Lithuanian state, were initially widespread.[20]

Yet for most Lithuanian leaders, separation from Russia and Poland was the *sine qua non* of the country's existence. And as the new Lithuanian state grew in strength and fended off its foreign enemies, Jews increasingly came to accept the Second Republic, albeit for somewhat different reasons than ethnic Lithuanians. A certain community of interests developed. Between 2,000 and 3,000 Jews fought for the Republic in the wars of independence, many as volunteers. Many Lithuanians and Jews felt victimised by Józef Piłsudski's Poland, especially Gen. Lucjan Żeligowski's seizure of Vilnius in October 1920, and were disturbed by the avowedly anti-Lithuanian and antisemitic stance of many of the latter's supporters. Acutely aware of the need to convince the international community of the viability of their state, and seeking recognition within the new Wilsonian order under construction at Versailles, Lithuania's leaders strove to present their nation as a paragon of liberal democracy.

Initially Lithuania's official policy toward the Jewish minority was based on a wide-ranging cultural autonomy, solemnly outlined in the declaration of principles issued by the Lithuanian delegation to the Paris Peace Conference on 5 August 1919 and reaffirmed for all the national minorities by the Constitution of 1922. A Minister of Jewish Affairs was part of the Lithuanian Cabinet until 1924. But Jewish autonomy, as well as an expansive attitude towards the minorities' cultural development in general, aroused opposition among Catholic, conservative and nationalist circles who considered ethnic home rule the creation of a "state within the state." The Jews and other minorities became entangled in domestic political battles: the Christian Democrats, egged on by elements in the Church, sought to settle scores with Jewish politicians whom they accused of siding with the secular centre and left parties. The Catholic Bloc's political dominance between 1922 and 1926 coincided with a progressive curtailment of Jewish self-government.[21] During the anti-leftist agitation of the mid-1920s primitive leaflets appealed to the fears of Bolshevism, subversion by disloyal national minorities and Jewish "domination."[22]

However, even after the abolition of the Jewish Ministry and the Nationalist seizure of power in 1926, Lithuania's Jews preserved a significant measure of communal autonomy.[23] The Republic continued its contributions to rabbinical salaries: in 1927 the government's per capita

subsidy to the Jewish religious community actually exceeded that assigned to the majority Catholics.[24] Initially, the proponents of a Lithuanian-dominated national state did not automatically consider Jews the most "dangerous" minority. A nationalist memorandum concerning the political crisis of 1926 emphasised the need for an "ethnic national state," but also affirmed that the Jews were the only minority which should be allowed to "participate in the government … without harm to the state's independence," since, unlike Poles and Germans, they had neither dangerous foreign sponsors nor irredentist claims.[25] While Lithuania provided a relatively safe climate for its Jews during most of the interwar period compared with, for example, Poland and Romania (not to speak of Germany), economic problems and Zionist agitation led to the emigration of nearly 14,000 Lithuanian Jews between 1928 and 1939 (about 15% of total emigration from the Republic) of whom the majority went to South Africa (35%) and Palestine (25%).[26]

3. Jews, Lithuanians and the New Economy

In 1912 only an estimated 6.5% of ethnic Lithuanians owned real estate; barely one in twenty-five proprietors of commercial and industrial enterprises was Lithuanian speaker. After 1918 the percentage of Polish, Russian and German landowners and urban bourgeoisie declined, leaving the non-agrarian economy largely in the hands of Jews who were now challenged by newly assertive Lithuanians. In 1923, 83% of the country's commercial and retail enterprises were owned by Jews, 13% by ethnic Lithuanians. During the ensuing years the ethnic face of the Lithuanian economy changed: by 1936 Lithuanians owned some 43% of the country's commercial and retail establishments. One estimate holds that between 1923 and 1936 the number of Lithuanian-owned commercial enterprises grew three-fold, while that owned by Jews fell by 9%. Furthermore, Lithuanians had come to hold three-fifths of the industrial and artisan businesses compared to a Jewish ratio of 32%, although the latter enterprises tended to be on a somewhat larger scale.

The Lithuanian cooperative movement acquired an increasing share of the agricultural markets. *Linas*, the Lithuanian flax producers' and exporters' cooperative founded in 1935, was a good example of the growth of Lithuanian-owned concerns: by 1939–1940 it accounted for 58% of exports in a branch of the economy historically dominated by Jewish middlemen. Jews charged that government policies favoured Lithuanian-owned corporations in which the state held substantial shares, such as the sugar concern, *Lietuvos cukrus*, but the growing participation of Lithuanians in the economy by no means eliminated the important role

of the Jews: in 1936, despite considerable inroads by Lithuanian shopkeepers, Jews still operated more than half of the country's small retail establishments. In 1939 Jews controlled an estimated 20% of Lithuania's export trade and 40% of the import business. Members of the Jewish community remained well-represented in the professions: in 1937 more than two-fifths of the country's doctors and lawyers were Jews. On the other hand, only a handful of Jews were employed by the central government or served as military officers.[27]

The ethnic urban landscape did not change without a fight. In 1926 the Kaunas City Council heard allegations that Jewish landlords charged lower rents for their coreligionists than the Gentile tenants and manipulated auctions to ensure sales to Jews. Lithuanian "immigrants" to Kaunas then petitioned the president to help establish "Lithuanian neighbourhoods" in the city, while their representatives in the Council urged the "National Government to undertake the solution to this problem since it is a question of ensuring the Lithuanian nation's position in Kaunas." The demand for encouraging Lithuanian property rights in Kaunas presupposed a political struggle along ethnic lines: Lithuanians complained that they expected "nothing positive from the local bodies of self-government since the dominant element in the City Council is composed of non-Lithuanians, who had, have, and will have a negative attitude on the question of strengthening the Lithuanian element."[28] On the other hand, what is also interesting about these petitions is the absence of any overtly antisemitic rhetoric.

Whether attempts to redress historic imbalances in economic opportunity, such as American "affirmative action" programmes, represent long-delayed social justice or "reverse discrimination" depends, of course, on highly subjective perceptions. In any case, the First Republic's efforts to encourage the previously disenfranchised majority's economic advancement should be viewed against the background of the minuscule ethnic Lithuanian representation in the professions, industry, commerce, and post-primary education before independence. But Lithuania's economy was not the rapidly expanding post-World War II American pie that could absorb legions of newcomers. The growing ethnic Lithuanian share of the non-agrarian economy inevitably came at the expense of others and, in Lithuania, this meant the Jews, and, proportionally to an even a greater extent, Polish landowners.

The emergence of the Lithuanian Businessmen's Association (*Lietuvių verslininkų sąjunga*) in 1932 reflected the economic competition between the Lithuanian "newcomers" and entrenched business interests. The *verslininkai*, as they were called, sought to limit "alien" economic influence and they initially concentrated much of their resentment against

the German minority, urging well-to-do Lithuanians not to hire German nannies from among foreigners, but to choose Swiss or French candidates instead.[29] In 1932, as German-Lithuanian tensions escalated, the businessmen's weekly wrote: "The Germans have long been and, perhaps, have remained the most malevolent of our nation's enemies, because they are the most clever."[30]

However, despite professed opposition to all "aliens," the Jews provided the main target. Militant *verslininkai* came to see Jewish economic clout, or, in their parlance, tyranny, as the major obstacle to the continued modernisation of Lithuanian society, which they understood as ethnic Lithuanian dominance in urban and commercial life. Publicly, the *verslininkai* denied evil intentions or envy towards non-Lithuanians, rejected violence towards Jews and asserted that the goal of 85% Lithuanian participation in the economy, its rightful proportional share, would be achieved by "natural evolution."[31] This seemingly benign posture was belied by the business weekly's vitriolic articles which painted Jews as rootless profiteers with an inbred urge towards world hegemony. The Jewish press in Kaunas, especially *Yidishe Shtime,* and the Lithuanian-language Jewish newspaper, *Apžvalga* (The Review), responded with their own scathing counterattacks, ridiculing crude antisemitic notions.[32] In addition to the constant harping on alleged Jewish economic hegemony in Lithuania, the *verslininkai* complained that Lithuania's own governing elite favoured Jews and did too little for "native" businessmen.

The excesses of the nationalist businessmen did not go unchallenged. Concerned about agrarian unrest and the Nazi threat in Klaipėda, the regime had little stomach for extremist rhetoric. In 1935–1936, the mayor of Kaunas, Antanas Merkys, as well as several government ministers, criticised the *verslininkai* and reaffirmed the regime's pledge to protect minorities. The businessmen's association was cautioned to observe the principles of "moral competition" and to avoid "low-brow chauvinism."[33] The respected former prime minister, Ernestas Galvanauskas, suggested that antisemitism among the younger Lithuanian generation resulted partly from the fact that they could not find jobs in a saturated public sector and were, thus, forced to compete in areas heretofore dominated by Jews. But he denied that there was economic anti-Lithuanian discrimination on the part of the Jews, a favourite theme of the *verslininkai*.[34] Chastened by the fact that they had been compelled to publish criticism of nationalist excesses in their own newspaper, the radical businessmen moderated their views during 1936 and, for a while, adopted a more professional stance under a new editor. But there was no long-term change of colours. Emboldened by the growing right-wing

opposition to the Smetona government during the late thirties, the atmosphere grew uglier again. In December 1938 the *verslininkai* demanded "laws which would regulate the Jewish question," specifically to establish quotas in employment and business "until such time as the majority percentage of Lithuanians is also reflected in commerce."[35]

Lithuanian-Jewish economic competition evolved within a broader context of political and social grievances. The depression of the early and mid-1930s provided the underground LCP and its front organisations with ammunition against factory owners, many of whom were Jews.[36] Anti-capitalist passions could easily translate into antisemitic attitudes, amplified by long-standing cultural irritants. In 1935, when Lithuanian workers in Vilkaviškis petitioned to be released from Sunday work, the Jewish owners threatened to fire them if they persisted in their demands. The resentful workers thus found themselves, in their words, "quietly observing [Saturdays] with the Jews." In the "Tigras" factory in Pilviškis, the non-Jews were dissatisfied because "the local owners and workers, mostly Jews, work on Sundays and even on national holidays."[37] But it was also the talk in the synagogues that "Jews are being increasingly persecuted in Lithuania. Various concessions to the farmers are impacting the Jews, who, at the same time, are burdened with [higher] taxes."[38]

4. Problems of Reorientation: Education, Culture and Language

The changing structure of the modernised higher education system in a country with limited white-collar employment opportunities presented another arena of inter-ethnic contention. Until 1930 Jews constituted a large share of students training for the professions — an estimated 35–40% of medical students and at least a third of those entering law. The government rejected nationalist demands for proportional national enrolment, the *numerus clausus*, although the introduction of compulsory Lithuanian-language entrance examinations effectively reduced Jewish enrolment at the University of Kaunas. During 1935–1936 there were, reportedly, 486 Jews out of 3,223 students in Lithuania's higher education system, about twice the proportion of Jews in the total population, but also a two-fold decline in the percentage of Jewish students since 1928–1929.[39] But Jews were still a force in higher education: the 1931 elections to the Kaunas University student assembly brought twelve representatives from the *ateitininkai*, the influential Catholic group, while the Jews elected nine students from two slates, and the Communist front group elected two persons, one of whom was Jewish.[40]

The rapid development of Lithuanian-language public discourse within the new state presented a vexing dilemma for Jews. For the first

time, Lithuanian became the country's official language; historically, however, most Jews preferred Russian culture as their "second home." The persistence of this pattern during independence irritated those Lithuanians who were sensitive to the prerogatives of their now official native language. Occasionally, this led to public disagreements and clashes. In February–March 1923 nationalist youth carried out a sudden cultural "Lithuanianisation" of the country's major cities, demonstrating their patriotism by painting over Yiddish and Polish storefront signs. Much of the older intelligentsia and political elite condemned the outbreak and called for respecting the rights of minorities,[41] but the issue festered. Even the tolerant Smetona once wondered at the Jewish propensity for using Russian; like many Lithuanians, he would have preferred that the Jews preserve Yiddish or Hebrew among themselves, but utilise Lithuanian when addressing persons outside the community.[42] In fact, some Jewish leaders showed sympathy for Lithuanian sensitivities. In 1937 Jewish organisations in Kaunas sponsored a meeting and passed a resolution condemning the "use of Russian in public places," their leaders reminding the audience that such behaviour "really does intensely irritate Lithuanians." Jews were urged to understand Lithuanian feelings about past persecution of their culture and native tongue. The meeting was well received: even the *verslininkai* commented that "we can only welcome such an attitude on the part of Jewish society."[43]

Despite tensions, there were factors encouraging Jews and Lithuanians to adopt a real, if limited, *modus vivendi*. Lithuania's conflict with Poland over Vilnius nudged the country's Jewish leadership towards a pro-Lithuanian political stance, much to the annoyance of nationalist Poles. As one Jewish leader explained, the Polish demand for, at the very least, "neutral" Jewish behaviour on the issue would be a "sell-out of our [Lithuanian] fatherland."[44] Even more important in the long term, a number of educated younger Jews gravitated toward a Lithuanian cultural orientation. The first Lithuanian-language Jewish secondary school was opened in Kaunas. Jewish scholars published articles in the Lithuanian press concerning such cultural and historical issues as "Lithuanian influences on the Jews."[45] On 20 August 1929 the Lithuanian nationalist daily *Lietuvos Aidas* remarked:

A few years ago it was difficult to find a Jew who could speak fine Lithuanian and was acquainted with Lithuanian literature, but now we can see among the Jews young philologists who easily compete with young Lithuanian linguists. This is a sign that the Lithuanian Jews will go in the same direction as the Jews of other civilised countries,

contributing their part to the cultural treasures of those nations in whose states they live.[46]

The extent to which official Lithuania and the Gentile establishment were willing to accommodate Jewish cultural and religious needs fell within parameters of not unreasonable social and legal compromises. Several examples from 1932 are illustrative. In one case, Kaunas rabbis asked the Ministry of Communications that Jews not be required to pay taxes on goods held over at railroad stations on Saturdays (and thus apply "Sunday" rules to Jewish businesses). Officials rejected the request on the grounds that "Saturday is a day of work for all state institutions."[47] On the other hand, the proposed Catholic University of Lithuania, which planned to open its doors during the early 1930s, announced its intention to treat both Saturdays and Sundays as holidays since it was expected that "Jews would form a large contingent of students," especially in the faculty of commerce.[48] When Lithuania's rabbis asked the government to delay the drafting of conscripts until after the Jewish New Year, the authorities approved the postponement.[49]

Unfortunately, the gradual reorientation of Lithuanian Jews towards the dominant Lithuanian cultural paradigm and the Republic's official tolerance collided with an exclusionary nationalism, already evident in the 1923 student attack on the country's multilingual heritage, which progressively invaded all areas of public life, even sports. Questions arose about the participation of Jews in the World Lithuanian Olympics to be held in Kaunas in early 1938.[50] Initially, Kaunas's *Yidishe Shtime* quoted reliable sources that all athletes from Lithuania, regardless of nationality and religion, could participate in the event, while only ethnic Lithuanians would be included in the diaspora teams.[51] However, soon afterward, the director of the Kaunas's Physical Education Centre told *Folksblat* that the National Olympiad was open only to ethnic Lithuanians, although the national team that would participate in the 1940 Olympics would be chosen without regard to ethnicity.[52]

Even before the late 1930s Lithuania saw its share of antisemitic agitation and violent outbreaks. A typical incident occurred in November 1931 in a small town near Kaunas, when "three hooligans began to smash Jewish windows and tried to beat a Jewish woman." Detained were: "the chief of the post office, his assistant and a representative of the Singer Co. in Kaunas." The matter was turned over to the Trakai district chief.[53] Sometimes, the authorities were not sure whether to adopt a "hard" or "soft" attitude towards the culprits. In October 1931 the state prosecutor demanded the "severest punishment" for four youths who had vandalised a Jewish cemetery in Klaipėda, arguing that the mandated three-year term

was too lenient. But the judge sentenced one of the men to six months, while the others received five. After announcing the verdict, the chief judge noted that the press had "blown up" the incident. "The court," he concluded, "regards this crime as the thoughtless work of drunken kids."[54] Localised attacks on Jews and clashes between Lithuanian and Jewish university students grew more frequent after the mid-1930s. The Telšiai military commandant punished eighteen anti-Jewish "troublemakers" in the month of October 1935.[55] Rural disturbances were occasioned by alleged "kidnappings" of Gentile children for blood rituals, all eventually proven false.

5. The Struggle over Antisemitism

Aside from the blood libel, articulated by the Nazis in its modern racially virulent form, two allegations dominate modern antisemitism: the Jews' leading role in the Bolshevik movement and their economic exploitation of non-Jews. These ideologically motivated antisemitic arguments, while more characteristic of the late 1930s, had already made their appearance in the Lithuania of the twenties. Not surprisingly, they surfaced first among the far right, especially the infamous Iron Wolf (Lith. *Geležinis Vilkas)* founded in 1927, whose members utilised the statute of the Italian fascist party as a guide for their own organisation and explicitly stated that "only [ethnic] Lithuanians can be Wolves."[56]

A programme of "humane" antisemitism was proposed:

> … the Wolves should not forget the Lithuanian struggle for liberation from Jewish economic slavery. The year 1929 should mark the beginning of a new antisemitic movement. Of course, excesses will not serve our final goal, but will only postpone its achievement. The anti-Jewish action initiated by us must flow into entirely different, cultural forms, which do not violate the principles of ethics and humanity.

The Wolves urged support for Lithuanian businesses in order to "shake off Jewish mediation and Jewish exploitation."[57]

While the Judeo-Bolshevik canard became a staple after 1940, it appeared much earlier in milder form. In 1929 the writer Povilas Jakubėnas warned that the country's Yiddish-language schools, in contrast to the conservative-religious and national-Hebrew institutions, had become breeding grounds for young Marxists, "opening the door to internationalist and nihilist" theories. The lack of religious orientation was said to turn Jewish youth into "victims of Communist propaganda."

Dr M. Sudarskis replied by defending the Yiddish schools, even while admitting that some of their graduates exhibited leftist orientations.[58] The exchange revealed interesting attitudes concerning the place of Jews in the new Lithuania: they are still acceptable, either within their familiar role as a conservative religious community, or as sympathetic "fellow nationalists." The most public example of support for Zionism was the editorial, "A Blow to the Jewish Nation," published in *Lietuvos aidas* in response to the 1929 upheavals in Palestine, describing Arabs as an "ignorant and fanatical nation" who should not begrudge the Jews a little land and expressing condolences to our "Jewish citizens" in Palestine. "One's hair stands on end," wrote the editors, when confronted with the persecution of the Jews:

Every day terrible news flows from Palestine. Fired by religious and nationalistic fanaticism, the Arabs are attacking and murdering the unfortunate Jewish colonists … The Zionist idea cannot be unattractive to any person who loves his own country. Formerly it was said that the Jews are a parasitic, purely cosmopolitan nation without any noble ideals and whose messiah is money. The Zionist movement has proven that this is not true.[59]

The "enlightened nationalism" of 1929 thrived within an unusually nurturing political context: the power struggle between Smetona and Voldemaras was in full spate and excesses in Kaunas's Jewish neighbourhood of Vilijampolė (Slabada) had resonated in the press.

On the night of 1 August 1929, during the so-called "Red Days" organised annually by leftists, a group of policemen and security officials had carried out an "action" against the Communists. The criminal police initially reported the incidents as a disturbance involving "a few Jewish fellows who had tried to organise a protest against militarism," which failed when "the police rounded them up with the help of workers, detaining 81 persons, 16 women and 65 men: 76 Jews and five Catholics."[60] But as the antisemitic character of the disorders became public, the Riflemen's Union (Lith. *Šaulių Sąjunga*) denied involvement, publishing a condemnation of antisemitism and pointing out that the Union included Jewish members.[61] Voldemaras promised an investigation.[62] Subsequent court proceedings revealed the unsavoury details. Groups of men, some in civilian dress and others in *šauliai* uniforms, armed with revolvers, rifles and clubs, had detained passers-by. As the court noted, the victims were "exclusively citizens of Jewish nationality," who were beaten with fists and humiliated through compulsory "calisthenics." The judges concluded that the "reason for the excesses were that the hooligans had for a long time been full of hatred for the Jewish nationality, since [according to them], among the Jews

there are many Communists, [and they believed] that at least 95% of Lithuania's Communists are Jews." One of the victims avoided a beating when the pogromists found an issue of the "patriotic newspaper," *Lietuvos aidas,* in the man's pocket.[63] The court classified twelve of the accused as "participants," while a policeman at the local precinct was sentenced for failing to protect the victims. A civil case for damages brought by some of the aggrieved Jews was dismissed.[64] Prosecutor Matas Krygeris demanded harsher sentences, but the court forwarded the case to the Highest Tribunal.[65] In his report to Smetona and in the order of the day, the interior minister announced the dismissal of a number of policemen and reprimanded Kaunas authorities for their irresolute response to the incident.[66]

On 20 August 1929 *Lietuvos aidas* published a denunciation of the "Slabada excesses" singling out the culprits as "yahoo patriots, super patriots and chauvinists." While the daily regretted that some Jews of the older generation "still cannot get accustomed to the idea of an independent Lithuania," it also stressed the fact that the younger generation of Jews had shown loyalty to their country: "This means that Lithuanian Jews will also have to become good patriots of their country. But this depends partly on Lithuanian patriots as well, who must return the Jews' trust with their own." In view of the fact that the summer of 1929 had also witnessed similar attacks on "Polish-speaking citizens,"[67] the paper stressed that violence against any non-Lithuanian citizen deserved the "greatest condemnation."[68] The Jewish establishment also wished to bury the incident. I. Serebravičius, a prominent Jewish leader, warned Lithuanian Jews that "foreign interests" were blowing up a local disturbance into a "pogrom" and questioned the wisdom of hiring foreign attorneys to file law-suits, as this would only aid "Lithuania's enemies."[69]

Public criticism of antisemitism grew more vociferous in reaction to the deadly 1931 pogroms in Vilnius, the outrage enhanced by the political opportunity to excoriate the "Polish occupation" of the Vilnius region. The daily *Lietuvos žinios* moralised: "A cultured person is always disgusted by the excesses of zoological nationalism and racism … Similar pogroms can never take place if the government is determined not to allow them."[70] On 15 November 1931 the Jews of Kaunas petitioned the government "to intervene and take steps to ensure the lives of our brothers in Lithuanian Vilnius, the Jerusalem of Lithuania."[71] Four days later, a large demonstration was organised by the Jewish-Lithuanian Association for Cultural Cooperation featuring prominent Lithuanian and Jewish speakers, the proceedings broadcast nationwide. Former foreign minister Juozas Purickis maintained that "until now Lithuanians had not been soiled with the blood of Jews," while Mykolas Biržiška, a literary

scholar and long-time proponent of Jewish-Lithuanian cooperation, invited people "to be vigilant that [our] beautiful toleration should never change in the future, and that our own instincts should not degenerate." The Jewish leader Rubinšteinas charged that "the Poles have brought the pogrom tradition to Vilnius." The resolution adopted at the meeting emphasised the Vilnius issue and had a distinctly anti-Polish tone.[72] On 20 November 1931 the Presidium of the Central Committee of the Lithuanian Volunteers' Union, not known for liberal attitudes, issued a statement reminding the readers of the 1919 Easter pogroms in Vilnius, and expressed sympathy for the victims: "… once again the cries of the Jews and the terrible suffering of the wounded have resonated within the walls of our [true] capital."[73]

The violence in Vilnius produced some of the most interesting public condemnations of antisemitism and racism in interwar Lithuania:

> It may seem to some that the Jewish nation has some unsympathetic characteristics (and what nation doesn't have them?). It may even be supposed that Poland's Jews have more such features than their co-nationals in other countries. But in no way and under no conditions can *pogroms* [emphasised in the original] be justified. A pogrom is an inhuman, disorderly use of brutal force against other people, citizens of the same state of a different nationality. A pogrom is essentially an immoral and indecent method of struggle, the use of which contradicts the most elemental principles of human solidarity … When one thinks about it, it seems that humanity in general, and especially our closest and greatest neighbours have turned in the direction clearly characterised by insanity and moral atrophy … Independent Lithuania cannot forget that all of the inhabitants of the occupied Vilnius district, without regard to religious, national or other differences, are her children.[74]

The editorial also regretted that the predominantly Polish students who had been involved in the Vilnius pogroms had called themselves "National Democrats and carriers of Catholic ideas."

The more liberal *Aušra* (Dawn) excoriated racism in a text that could have been written in the America of the 1960s:

> The European, an allegedly cultured person, has placed the heavy hand of slavery on people of a different colour, destroyed the patriarchal structure of the New World, turning the free nations found there into blind instruments of labour … The essence of the pogrom is the attack on unarmed peaceful people, often old people, women and

children. If you put yourself in their shoes, what are they to do? They cannot become people of another nationality … they are also human beings, they have an equal right to be protected by the state from violence and destruction …   Just as the slave trade, so the pogroms, no matter what slogans they utilise, are and remain the greatest shame of the civilised world…

After noting that racism and pogroms become possible when universal moral and religious values are undermined, the editors concluded with a warning:

To simply express condolences to the victims in banal words is not enough. We should all exert more effort to protect the young people from the threatening danger so that they, perhaps not understanding their actions, not go the way of Poland's youth who try to create their country's greatness and progress through pogroms.[75]

Such "philosemitism" can function as a means of achieving self-serving goals, in this case arousing anti-Polish sentiment and scoring points with the international community. But political benefits gained from good works do not negate their import. Pro-Jewish sentiments, just as antisemitism, subsisted within a specific political landscape. In January 1935 Smetona published a speech attacking H. Stuart Chamberlain's racist theories, arguing that it was not possible "to speak seriously about national or racial purity, when science and technology have so facilitated and speeded communications." He presented the United States as an example of a "first-rate power," which had assimilated many nations. While Smetona rejected the "other extreme" of indiscriminate nation-mixing, he stressed that there were no good or bad nations. The President emphasised the rights of minorities who were, after all, "our citizens," and begged Lithuanians not to protest persecution of their ethnic brethren abroad by attacking minorities at home.[76]

Smetona's recognition of the Nazi threat was informed by a supporter and confidant, Valentinas Gustainis, the Nationalists' leading journalist and editor of the semi-official *Lietuvos aidas*. After a careful reading of *Mein Kampf*, Gustainis not only warned of Hitler's penchant for world conquest, but also penned, in 1933, perhaps one of the first insights on the genocidal nature of Nazism, uncannily predicting the use of "chemical science, primarily the various horrible gases…" in a programme of racial extermination.[77] For his part, Ignas Šeinius, a leading writer with close ties to the Nationalist establishment, authored *Siegfried Immerselbe atsinaujina* (The Rejuvenation of Siegfried Immerselbe), a wicked satire

of Nazi antisemitism and racial pseudoscience, one of the acclaimed interwar novels.

In April 1936 police spies reported that Jews "holding rightist opinions" in the Marijampolė area were urging their community to support the government against the agrarian strikers since "Jews can never expect another President like Smetona and one must fight for him." Other Jews referred to Smetona as "our Father." In Šakiai the rabbi told local Jewish communities: "May God bless our President." Police spies reported talk among Jews that "the present government stands as an iron wall against all sorts of persecutions." In general, the Jews of Marijampolė were satisfied with the local district chief and blamed "Jewish disunity" for that fact that not a single Jew had been elected to the 1936 Seimas.[78] On the other hand, during this violent period of agrarian unrest in the southwestern region of the country, other Jews had established sympathetic contact with the rebellious peasants. The police reported that one Manaškis Kopolovičius was spreading the word that local peasants wounded in clashes with the police should "seek out Dr Freida in Šakiai, since Freida is the only one who will keep their injuries secret. Also in Pilviškiai there is a certain Jewish doctor who helps the farmers."[79]

At times Jews found they could support Lithuanian nationalist goals. As the crisis with Germany intensified in late 1935 because of the government's crackdown on the Nazis in Klaipėda, some Jews urged that, rather than expending resources improving the port, the Republic should use the money not only to buy up German land and settle it with Lithuanians, but also "to forbid the German language in schools and public institutions." The police noted "considerable interest in the economic and political situation [among the Jews]."[80] Conservative Jews shared the Smetona regime's aversion to Communism. In May 1929 the Central Committee of the Lithuanian Rabbinical Association directed a memorandum to the President opposing the Education Ministry's plan to consolidate religious (so-called "Yavne" or Javne) elementary schools with the general Jewish primary system, noting that devout parents desired that their children not grow up to be "leftists" or come under other dangerous influences.[81] In this case, the rabbis stood shoulder-to-shoulder with the State Security Department which in January 1934 urged strict vigilance against both antisemitic agitation and Communist influence among the Jews.[82]

6. Years of Crisis: From the Late 1930s to 1940

While the entire interwar period witnessed antisemitic agitation and anti-Jewish incidents, the most visible deterioration in Lithuanian-Jewish relations in the First Republic occurred during the late 1930s. One unsettling sign was a lowering of rhetorical restraints evidenced by a nationalist writer's vitriolic article advocating the segregation of beach facilities on the Baltic, citing the "dirty habits" of the Jews.[83] Despite the regime's tense relations with Berlin, German racist propaganda resonated, as it did elsewhere in Europe, among some elements in Lithuania. The last years of independence also saw the growth of street-level antisemitism, reflected in the police reports of vandalism against Jewish institutions and the appearance of anti-Jewish leaflets distributed by shadowy groups of "patriots."[84]

The increased respectability of antisemitism was grounded in older anti-Judaic prejudices but, more important, it was an outgrowth of the general fascination with fascism and radical ethnic nationalism amongst certain intellectual circles characteristic of the later 1930s. As a matter of principle, the Catholic hierarchy condemned racism and violence against minorities, while, at the same time, propagating stereotypes of secularised, Communist and commercially clever Jews as harmful to the Christian community. In 1937 one of the more intellectual clerics, Rev. Stasys Yla, published a tract expounding on the reasons for the Jews' dangerous attraction to Communism. But Yla admitted the importance of the Communist stance against ethnic discrimination as an incentive for Jews to join the Party and, as a solution, proposed a Western-style, civically progressive attitude towards minorities, including a patient policy of attracting them to Lithuanian language and culture, while maintaining a tolerant official multi-culturalism.[85] A prominent Catholic philosopher of the younger generation proceeded in a more radical direction, belittling bourgeois decadence and proposing an exclusive "organic state" in which non-Lithuanians would be "guests" rather than citizens.[86] While the most strident antisemitic voices were hushed by the censorship, some academic publications and articles in the popular press propagated an exclusive nationalism whose counterpoint was a negative image of Jews.[87] In January 1939 a prominent young historian, Zenonas Ivinskis, described to a student gathering the Führer's "decisive rule" in Germany and lauded Austria's post-*Anschluss* racial laws for "liberating the country from one parasitic minority … a positive aspect of racism."[88] In the spring of 1940 Nationalists in Šiauliai petitioned the government to "solve" the Jewish question by establishing a "reservation" for Jews.[89] During 1938–1939 the anti-Smetona opposition briefly coalesced into the

Lithuanian Activist Movement (*Lietuvių aktyvistų sąjunga)* which sought German assistance and openly proclaimed Jews and Poles as the nation's enemies. But even so, Lithuanian antisemitism paled in comparison with the more radical variants of the disease in Germany and Romania. The leader of the Klaipėda Nazis, Ernst Neumann, felt that the LAS "activists" had not yet adopted a genuine antisemitic programme: according to him, the Lithuanian radicals were "too democratic and too gentle in their behaviour regarding the Jews."[90]

European universities provided a breeding ground for antisemitic and radical nationalist excesses, stimulated by the domestic and international crises of the late 1930s. In March 1938 there were disturbances at the University of Kaunas, including attacks on Jewish students. Professors who tried to calm the malcontents were publicly ridiculed; some students even posted a copy of the Nazis' antisemitic periodical, *Der Stürmer*, as a provocation. The University Senate condemned the incitement, while the rector, Prof. Mykolas Römeris, told the press that the "hooligan-like and uncultured outbreaks against the Jewish students were for me entirely unexpected," vowing to punish the troublemakers. The Jewish *Apžvalga* worried that, while the conservative *Lietuvos aidas* had named "leftist and Jewish" provocations as a cause of the troubles, only the more liberal *Lietuvos žinios* had underscored the "racist nature" of the disturbances.[91] In November 1939 the new rector, Stasys Šalkauskis, also condemned the students' raucous behaviour: "The complex and convoluted problem of the Jews is a true test of our social and moral development." He cautioned that "the wave of antisemitism that has inundated the whole world during recent years has found a certain resonance among us as well," affecting in particular "the poorly developed part of society." The rector qualified his remarks by stating, in rather muddled prose, that he did not "consider the Jewish nation either ideal or unable to be accommodating to those among whom it must live," but he sharply criticised violence and refused to consider demands for segregating the university. Šalkauskis stressed that "aggressive antisemitism" was harmful, as shown by the experience of "a large state which has paid dearly for hatred and cruelty to Jews."[92] By 1939, the Jewish press had become increasingly concerned by proposals from some quarters that the resort town of Palanga establish a separate beach for Jews and student demands for "separate benches" for Jews at the university.[93] The latter practice, which had been introduced in Polish-ruled Vilnius, had been roundly condemned as an example of Polish bigotry during the "pro-Jewish" propaganda campaign of 1931–1932.

Ethnic animosities were exacerbated by political, social and economic tensions, such as the crisis that accompanied the Nazi seizure of Klaipėda in March 1939. On 26 April 1939 agitators appeared among Lithuanian

refugees who had fled the seaport and been housed in school buildings, urging the exiles to demonstrate "because the Jewish [exiles] have occupied most of the apartments, while the Lithuanian refugees have to live in schools." In this case no demonstration occurred because, as the police reported, "the [Lithuanian] refugees did not approve the [proposed] action."[94]

The restraint of the Klaipėda refugees was not matched by the residents of Leipalingis, which in June 1939 witnessed the largest antisemitic outbreak in the history of the First Republic. Trouble began when over 5,000 people gathered for the town's annual religious holiday which was normally accompanied by busy trading at the local markets. A group of locals had crowded into merchant Perecas Kravecas's store to get away from a rainstorm. An argument between a certain Pranas Pilvelis and the store owner escalated when, in an altercation with the store owner, the Lithuanian was injured by broken glass. Raising his bleeding hand to a crowd in the street, Pilvelis implored the people to "look at what the Jews have done to me." This quickly produced rumours that "the Jews had stabbed someone with a knife." The leader of a nearby riflemen's (Lith. *šauliai*) unit then incited the crowd, urging the people to "beat the Jews." A window-smashing rampage followed. Three riflemen and a member of the rural Catholic *Pavasaris* organisation were identified among the ringleaders the police, assisted by the more disciplined *šauliai,* prevented a lynching by firing into the air but were unable to halt the property damage. There were no serious injuries.

A thorough investigation of the incident was conducted by a ranking official of the security police who not only reported the details to the Director of State Security but also commented on the causes of the unrest, noting that "in the Leipalingis area a distinct antisemitic attitude, created by general social, ethnic and local factors, is dominant." The report identified economic competition as the main culprit: a local Lithuanian cooperative had been established and had successfully competed with Jewish retailers. Arguments arose when the new firm failed to obtain a truck to enable local Lithuanian farmers to transport the cooperative's animals. Some farmers then accused the Jews of sabotaging attempts to obtain the transport; passions rose to the point that the local coop leaders were accused of being "pro-Jewish" when they agreed to rent a "Jewish" lorry. In the meantime, the local *šauliai* had put together an antisemitic play, provoking a warning from the national Riflemen's Union office to desist. In the deteriorating climate of communal tensions, Jews were accused of roughing up Lithuanians (one case had come before the courts), encouraging beliefs that Lithuanians were being "provoked." The local rumouring had a tragicomic element. One of the final comments in

the police report revealed the troubled mood and inflammable delusions circulating among the people of Leipalingis:

> In order to illustrate the antisemitic mood in the Leipalingis area, it is characteristic that no one is condemning the excesses committed, but, on the contrary, everyone is praising the riot. It is said that severe punishments for the rioters will provoke even greater antisemitic excesses. Also, after the event, typical rumours were spread about. It was said that, in return for smashing Jewish windows in Leipalingis, Hitler had presented to Lithuania, as a gift, some kind of expensive airplane. And if a few Jews had been finished off, then he would have returned the entire Klaipėda District to Lithuania. The farmers are spreading these rumours in all seriousness.

The security police suggested that to stem harmful rumours (for example that the aforementioned Pilvelis had died), local officials should provide accurate information to the populace, utilising local veterinarians and doctors whom the people trusted. In the end, the rioters, as well as Pilvelis, the store owner Kravecas and his son were given light sentences and fines. According to the extant police files, a good number of the ringleaders and the most active rioters were petty criminals, a number of whom had already served prison terms.[95]

Interior Minister Skučas had no patience with the disturbances. "In connection with the recent outbreaks against Jewish citizens in several provincial towns inspired by irresponsible elements," he announced, it was the responsibility of not only the government but of "broad segments of the Lithuanian nation and conscientious members of the intelligentsia" to oppose such behaviour. The minister cited the influence of "foreign winds," an obvious reference to the German example, which he promised to curb. The Lithuanian disturbances, he concluded, were "reflecting" the antisemitism of other countries, and he warned the press to avoid "inciting passions." *Apžvalga* praised both the local police and national authorities for their energetic response to the disorders.[96]

While Skučas was, perhaps, the most vigorous of the official voices arrayed against antisemitism, he was by no means alone. The Jewish press gave prominence to the President's speech of 5 January 1938 in which he emphasised that in order for the Nationalist ideal to remain alive, it should include "a basis in universal human values." Smetona warned his audience that "narrow nationalism would impoverish" the Nationalist idea, pointing out that "wherever [this idea] degenerates … where the leading people are blindly in love with themselves and their own, there the national ideal cannot be pure and beautiful." The President also hopefully maintained that "in our country we do not have such antisemitism as in other states."[97] Soon after Smetona's statement the

mayor of Panevėžys and the President's brother-in-law, Tadas Chodakauskas, told a meeting of the Lithuanian Jewish Soldiers' Association that "You [Jews] will always live here as equal and free citizens, because you share joys and sorrows with us, the Lithuanians."[98] Smetona's opposition to antisemitism had a political calculation as well as a moral message: concern for Lithuania's international reputation and the perception of Jews as useful allies, especially against the Poles, played a part. On the other hand, while denunciations of antisemitism emanated from official Lithuania, not all of the regime's officials proved immune from placating the increasingly anti-Jewish popular mood. In 1938 security chief Augustinas Povilaitis failed to persuade the interior minister to close *Apžvalga* and its publisher, the Association of Jewish Solders of the Independence Wars, for divisive "incitement," that is, the paper's attacks against Lithuanian antisemites.[99]

The mutual defence pact with the USSR provoked new fissures in the country's ethnic and social fabric. On 11–12 October a mostly Jewish unruly pro-Soviet leftist demonstration erupted outside the Soviet mission in Kaunas and led to clashes with police and anti-Communist bystanders.[100] The incident intensified antisemitic political rhetoric and further identified Jews with Bolshevism in public opinion. Skučas once again exerted his moderating influence, announcing that "the excesses of certain Jewish young people cannot be allowed to harm and disturb good Lithuanian-Jewish mutual relations," reminding Lithuanians that Jewish society as a whole was not always able to control the troublemakers. *Lietuvos žinios* issued an editorial opposing racism and ethnic incitement, but the Catholic daily *XX Amžius* demanded that Jewish society "discipline its own." *Yidishe Shtime* retorted that it was time for some people to understand that Jews were not a "homogenous nation" and thus should not be held collectively responsible for the actions of the demonstrators.[101]

Even the restoration of Lithuania's ancient capital, the only unambiguously positive element in the Soviet-Lithuanian mutual assistance pact, produced serious inter-ethnic strains. On 31 October, within 72 hours of the arrival of Lithuanian troops, serious disorders broke out in Vilnius. The unfavourable exchange rate announced for the Polish *złoty*, which was to be withdrawn from circulation, sparked a rapid inflation amidst rumours that Jews were hoarding flour. Chaotic protests against the "Lithuanian occupation" among Poles and disorderly, largely Jewish, pro-Soviet gatherings ensued. Clashes with the newly arrived Lithuanian police and military, as well as violent confrontations between Poles and Jews, quickly developed an antisemitic character as pogroms also erupted in several other towns in the region. Many stores were

demolished and scores of people were wounded. The outnumbered Lithuanian forces did not always succeed in controlling the mobs, but eventually, reinforcements of mounted police, additional reserve constabulary units and Red Army soldiers managed to quell most of the unrest within a few days: sixty-six rioters, among whom the police listed forty-four Poles and twenty Jews, were arrested.[102] The initially tepid police response to the rioting convinced some Jews that the Lithuanians had inspired the pogroms, a myth propagated by the Communist underground which had encouraged the pro-Soviet manifestations. (Unfortunately, this version has been accepted by a number of authors.)[103] In any case, it made little sense for the Lithuanian authorities to antagonise the Jewish populace whom they hoped to court as a counterweight to Polish hostility.[104] Nor is there much to the idea that Soviet tanks had been called out to "protect the Jews" against fascist pogromists. The Soviet action was directed against the Polish resistance movement, in the spirit of the September 1939 secret Soviet-German protocols, which had mandated a joint Nazi-Stalinist suppression of "Polish agitation." Moscow's ambassador to Kaunas, Vladimir Pozdniakov, repeatedly criticised the Lithuanian government's policy towards the Vilnius Poles as "overly sentimental and too gentle," publicly intimating that if the Lithuanians did not show sufficient resolution in combating "acts of [Polish] diversion and aggression," the Soviets would provide the muscle.[105]

As the rioting subsided, Interior Minister Skučas published a statement blaming much of the violence on Polish-Jewish tensions, which, he declared, had been "abnormal and strained for some time" because of Polish antisemitism. In a show of even-handedness, Skučas also criticised Jewish "malcontents" for contributing to the violence, but emphatically affirmed the government's commitment to treat all national minorities fairly and to abolish the antisemitic discrimination that had been practiced by the Polish regime. The interior minister denied rumours that Lithuanians had deliberately organised pogroms and he promised protection for law-abiding Jews. Some of the ruffians who had participated in antisemitic rioting were imprisoned and one, Boris Filipow, was executed.[106] The latter punishment was "greeted with satisfaction by the Jews" some of whom now appeared willing to explain the slow response of the Lithuanian police of 31 October by the fact that the newly-arrived officers "did not sufficiently know their way around the city."[107]

The burial of constable Ignas Blažys on 14 May led to further violence. The funeral entourage eventually grew into a crowd of some 15,000 angry Lithuanians, many of whom wandered through the streets of

Vilnius, attacking Poles and Polish property. By evening the mounted police suppressed the disturbances, arresting 56 persons, the majority Lithuanian youths. In a telling comment on ethnic politics in Vilnius, the police report noted that, recalling their past mistreatment under Polish rule, "some Jews expressed satisfaction that the Poles had suffered on this day."[108]

The issue of antisemitism itself had thus emerged as a weapon in the Polish-Lithuanian struggle of 1939–1940. The press reported widely on manifestations of Polish antisemitism, which was reportedly intensified by jealousy of the widespread aid Jewish refugees were receiving from abroad. The Lithuanian authorities sought support for their Vilnius policy among Jews, but succeeded in gaining the approval of only part of the Jewish population. Here, too, long-entrenched Polish cultural influence proved a stumbling block. Lithuanians hoped that Jews would maintain the use of Yiddish in their community and then gradually adopt Lithuanian, rather than Polish, as their new second language. As one Polish underground operative reported: "[For Lithuanians], any language is better than Polish for communicating with people who do not know Lithuanian."[109] But most assimilated Jews continued with Polish, to the considerable annoyance of Lithuanian officials and commentators. Of course, Jews had reason to suspect that many Lithuanians and Poles viewed them simply as pawns in the seemingly unending struggle over Vilnius.[110]

In view of the uncertain and dangerous mood within the country, Jewish circles responded to official Lithuania's reassurances with public declarations of loyalty and reminders of the state's multi-cultural reality. In the 1940 Independence Day greeting to the nation the soldiers' association chose its words carefully: "The Association of Jewish solders, who have participated in the restoration of Lithuania's independence, greet the nation of Lithuania (Lith. *Lietuvos tauta*) and the entire Lithuanian society."[111] In May 1940 the veterans assembled in Vilnius where prominent leaders of the country's Jewish community, despite indications to the contrary, affirmed generally good Jewish-Lithuanian relations and urged avoidance of "misunderstandings." Captain Bregšteinas, the new chairman of the association, proudly reminded the audience of the thousands of Jewish soldiers who had fought in the wars of independence during 1918–1920.[112] The participants could not have foreseen the radical, indeed deadly, deterioration in Lithuanian-Jewish relations that would arise as a result of the Soviet invasion only a month away.

The immediate aftermath of the Soviet invasion of 15 June 1940 provides an ironic postscript to the final years of independence, the

contradictory period of Jewish-Lithuanian relations. Smetona, the former friend of the Jews, who had "escaped like the greatest coward," was now vilified as an antisemite. In the new "People's Lithuania," General Skučas, who had suppressed antisemitic disturbances and called society to heel, and the state security chief Povilaitis, who had chronicled the deeds of the culprits, became overnight "fascists." The instantly Sovietised *Apžvalga*, once the oracle of Jewish Lithuanian patriotism, suggested that "the provocateurs from Kaunas had contributed to the anti-Jewish excesses which had occurred when Lithuania took Vilnius." Parroting the new line, the paper trumpeted that a veritable St. Bartholomew's Night for the Jews had been prevented only by "the healthy instincts of Lithuania's masses." The Jewish Soldiers' Association asserted that the organisation's work had been hindered in various ways. Meanwhile, the new Health Minister, Leonas Kaganas, claimed discrimination against Jewish doctors in Lithuania.[113]

The reality, of course, was that the interwar conservative dictatorship had shielded Jews from the worst of popular antisemitism. The allegedly "fascist" dictator had not only protected the country against the most egregious political extremes of left and right, but had, by and large, contained antisemitic violence, allowed cultural diversity, condemned Nazi racism and rejected official discrimination. By contrast, the new "people's power," with its shrill proclamations of the brotherhood of all nations, succeeded only in raising political repression, state violence and ethnic animosity to levels that the restive subjects of Antanas Smetona could scarcely have imagined.

7. In Perspective: Jews and Lithuanians in the First Republic

The tensions inhabiting interwar Lithuania's body politic and multinational society should not be overstated. Lithuanian and Jewish memoirs of the interwar period are snapshots, ranging from idyllic accounts of ethnic harmony to bitter recriminations of national intolerance. They are interesting, but of limited use in understanding a complex and contradictory history.[114] Just about any generalisation concerning Jewish-Lithuanian relations of the time can be rested on facts observed by contemporaries.

Some general conclusions, however, can be proffered. The years of independence were not a period of systemic persecution for Lithuania's Jewish community. Important factors mitigated antisemitic tendencies, especially before the international and domestic crises of 1938–1940. During its two decades of existence, the First Republic passed not a single antisemitic statute and continued to subsidise Jewish religious and

cultural life.[115] The animosity of many Lithuanians towards Nazi Germany, stemming largely from the conflict over Klaipėda, limited the inroads of antisemitic propaganda. Jews themselves often compared their lot favourably to that of their kinsmen in other countries, most notably, Poland. Even in the later 1930s, racial antisemitism found a response among only a part of the Lithuanian public; it failed to attract the necessary critical mass to support a "solution" of the "Jewish problem."[116] Ethnic disturbances in Lithuania were relatively infrequent and localised. There is no record, as of this writing, of anyone having been killed in an antisemitic pogrom during the period (1920–1938) when the government was in effective control of the country—an obvious contrast to the hundreds of publicly celebrated racial lynchings in the United States.[117] Local authorities and police normally took action against antisemitic outbursts when they did occur.[118] University and government authorities, as well as the older generation of the intelligentsia and some elements in the Church, condemned riotous behaviour as inconsistent with what they described as civilised and Christian norms. A number of leaders, including conservative and clerical circles, criticised racial ideology.[119] Lithuania also lacked a violence-prone antisemitic mass organisation like Romania's Iron Guard. It was thus distinct from those European states which, like Germany, Hungary and Romania, either restricted Jews through legislation or tolerated violence against Jews. While manifestations of antisemitism were a serious domestic problem between the wars, independent Lithuania was not an antisemitic state. Although in early 1938 proposals regarding a new, more authoritarian constitution evoked concerns because of the document's lack of specific guarantees for minorities, this did not result in antisemitic legislation.[120]

Furthermore, the clashes over control of the economy and cultural orientation should not obscure some positive, albeit tenuous, developments in the life of Lithuania's Jewish community. Some Jews even took up traditionally "Lithuanian" political issues: in 1933 the first Jewish chapter of the Union for the Liberation of Vilnius was established in Mažeikiai. There were few Jews in government and the officer corps, particularly after the Nationalist takeover, but a number of prominent Jewish journalists and academicians left their mark on Lithuanian public life.[121] In contrast to the period when the nation was overrun by foreign armies, responsible leadership proved capable of checking the worst excesses even as the First Republic underwent rapid social and economic change. It may be true, as a recent comprehensive study of Lithuanian antisemitism concludes, that the pious strictures of government, Church and academia achieved limited success in stemming historically ingrained antisemitic attitudes among the people, especially the rural masses.[122] On

the other hand, one should not minimise the significance of independent Lithuania's legal and political structure which provided a basic guarantee for the country's minorities and, when necessary, a physical barrier of police force against base nativist instincts. Invasion and war would sweep away this structure with fatal consequences for Lithuania's Jews as well as much of the population at large. This development reflected the general course of Lithuanian history: The country's minorities, like the ethnic Lithuanians themselves, invariably suffered most during periods of foreign rule. The intricate web of Jewish-Lithuanian relations, woven over the centuries, was only one of many problems that confronted the Lithuanian state between the wars. Like so many other developments, the process of Jewish reorientation toward Lithuanian culture that had gathered some momentum after the Great War was not allowed to follow its course.

Notes

1. See Bauman, 1992, 35–37.

2. From *Gazeta Warszawska*, 206 (8 August 1857).

3. See Končius, 1996, 63. I am grateful to Prof. Vygandas Vareikis of the University of Klaipėda for pointing me to Končius's work. Cf. Sužiedėlis, 1977, 332–348; also Sužiedėlis, 1979, 93–105. Some further discussion of popular antisemitism from a cultural and literary perspective is in Kavolis, 1986.

4. Janulaitis, 1923. A good overall historical survey of Lithuania's Jews and Jewish-Lithuanian relations is Atamukas, 1998.

5. Atamukas, 1998, 60–61.

6. See Boruta, 1999, 1–23; cf. Vareikis, 1999, 81–82; see also Merkys, 1999.

7. Udrėnas, *Jahreszahl*, 105–113; See Matulaitis, 1998, Subačius, P. (ed.) 1998, 199–200.

8. *Aušra*, 6 (1885), 168–169.

9. Cited in Kairys, 1957, 238–40, as published in *Varpas*, 8 (1891).

10. From "Tėvynės Varpai," *Varpas,* 10 (1890) as quoted in Kudirka, 1990, 457.

11. See Janulaitis, 1923a, and Janulaitis, 1923b.

12. See Staliūnas, 1993, 45–66.

13. Two examples are quoted in Shohat, 1958, 38.

14. The quote and citations from the press are in Udrėnas, *Jahreszahl*.

15. An interesting account of this violent period in the history of Vilnius is in Matulaitis, 1998*,* 144ff.

16. Shohat, 1958, 9–11.

17. Lietuvos Centrinis Valstybės Archyvas [henceforth – LCVA], F. 1437, Ap.100, l. 1–2, 28–33.

18. See for example, Shohat, 1958, 11. The author actually quotes a memorandum by the Rabbi of Pilviškis describing assistance by Lithuanian peasants to the starving Jews of the area as an example of "Lithuanians' hatred [sic] towards the Jews."!

19. See the editorial statements in *Unser Tog* , 15 October and 24 October 1920 as quoted by the Press Department of Lithuania's Ministry of Jewish Affairs, in LCVA, F.1437, Ap.1, b.100, "Žydų reikalai," l. 18–19.

20. A group of Jewish and Polish socialists attacked the Lithuanian Taryba as representing "a small and very backward nation." Quoted in Shohat, 1958, 19. For more on the ambiguity and complexity of Jewish attitudes towards the new Lithuania, especially the Taryba, see Shohat, 1958, 13ff.

21. On the role of the Christian Democrats see Valkauskas, 1996, 64–71.

22. An anti-government leaflet of 5 July 1926 charging that the "new Seimas is ruled by Jews, Social Democrats, Germans … Polish spies." An earlier antisemitic leaflet was circulated by a shadowy group, "Fighters Against the Jews." LCVA, F.1556, Ap.3, b.211, l. 3, 11.

23. See Atamukas, 1998, 116ff.; Ivinskis, 1972, 24–27; cf. Shohat, 1952, 7–48 and Gringauz, 1952, 225ff and the more recent Radensky, 1995, 84–97; Valkauskas, 1995, 57–74. Also see "Lithuania," in *Encyclopedia Judaica*, Vol. 11, 375–386; cf. "Žydai," in *Lietuvių enciklopedija*, Vol. 35 (Boston, 1966), 288–295.

24. Mironas, 390.

25. LCVA, F. 1557, Ap.1, b.208, l. 1–2.

26. *Encyclopedia Judaica*, Vol. 11, 375; Eidintas, 1986, 65–66; *Lietuvos statistikos metraštis 1938*, 55; cf. the detailed breakdown of emigration statistics in Atamukas, 147.

27. The most useful figures are in Atamukas, 1998, 132–141; also see *Verslas*, 21 September 1938, which employes figures abstracted from a more detailed study by Tarulis, 1983; cf. *Encyclopedia Judaica*, Vol. 11, 375, and Ivinskis, 26.

28. LCVA, F.922, Ap.1, b.13, l. 57–59, 72–73.

29. *Verslas*, 17 March 1932.

30. *Verslas*, 31 March 1932.

31. See *Verslas*, 25 February 1932 and 22 September 1938.

32. *Verslas*, 31 March 31 and 14 April 1932.

33. *Verslas*, 19 December 1935 and 30 January 1936.

34. *Verslas*, 6 February 1936.

35. *Verslas*, 16 December 1938.

36. LCVA, F.378, Ap.3, b.1632.

37. LCVA, F.378, Ap.4, b.240, l. 1, 29.

38. Ibid., l. 33.

39. Royal Institute of International Affairs, 1938, 31.

40. 17. *Aušra*, 24 November 1931.

41. Atamukas, 1998, 131–132.

42. Smetona, 1974, 34; cf. *Verslas*, 19 May 1932. On relations between Smetona and the Jews see Truska, 1996, 296–305.

43. As reported with commentary from accounts in the Jewish press by *Verslas*, 4 November 1937.

44. Taken from *Unser Tog* as reprinted in LCVA, F.1437, Ap.1, b.100, l. 20.

45. See the polemics between J. Livšinas and P. Lemchenas serialised in *Lietuvos aidas,* 2 August, 9 August and 27 August 1929.

46. *Lietuvos aidas*, 20 August 1929.

47. *Lietuvos žinios,* 5 August 1932.

48. *Lietuvos žinios,* 26 August 1932.

49. *Lietuvos žinios*, 10 August 1932.

50. *Apžvalga*, 2 January 1938.

51. *Apžvalga,* 9 January 1938.

52. *Apžvalga,* 23 January 1938.

53. *Lietuvos žinios,* 28 November 1931.

54. "Nubaudė Klaipėdos žydų kapinių išniekintojus," *Lietuvos aidas,* 3 October 1931.

55. A good brief but quite comprehensive overview of the situation of the mid-1930s is in Atamukas, 1998, 144–146.

56. LCVA, F.563, Ap.1, b.1, l. 18–21, 44–45.

57. LCVA, F.563, Ap.1., b.1, l. 115. I am indebted for this material to my colleague Dr Gediminas Rudis of the Lithuanian Institute of History in Vilnius.

58. The debate is in *Lietuvos aidas*, 27 August 1929, and 5 September 1929.

59. *Lietuvos aidas*, "Smūgis žydų tautai," 3 September 1929.

60. LCVA, F.394, Ap.15, b.138.

61. "Ar šauliai yra antisemitai?", in *Trimitas*, 29 September 1929.

62. See *Lietuvos žinios,* 2 August 2, 5 August and 29 August, 1929.

63. *Lietuvos žinios,* October 1, 1931. I am grateful to Dr Gediminas Rudis for directing me towards the material on the Slabada events of August 1929.

64. *Lietuvos žinios,* 7 July 1932.

65. *Lietuvos žinios,* 27 July 1932.

66. LCVA, F.922, Ap.1, b.3, l. 3–8. This collection contains the detailed reports and depositions on the Slabada "excesses." An exhaustive investigation of the Slabada demonstrations and excesses is contained in the collection LCVA, F.394, Ap.15, b.138, l. 273–359.

67. Ibid., l. 3.

68. "Būkime tikri patriotai," *Lietuvos aidas*, 20 August 1929.

69. *Lietuvos aidas,* "Į Lietuvos žydų visuomenę," 9 September 1929.

70. *Lietuvos žinios*, "Dėl žydų studentų pogromo Vilniuje," 18 November 1931.

71. *Lietuvos aidas*, 16 November 1931.

72. *Lietuvos aidas,* 20 November 1931.

73. *Lietuvos aidas,* 21 November 1931.

74. *Lietuvos aidas,* 14 November 1931.

75. "Žydų pogromai," *Aušra,* 17 November 1931.

76. See Smetona's speech in *Verslas*, 10 and 17 January 1935.

77. Gustainis, 1933, 433. An interesting discussion on Smetona's reaction to Gustainis' article, which the President termed a "hair-raising" alarm, is in the journalist's memoir, *Nuo Griškabūdžio iki Paryžiaus* (1991), 126–135.

78. LCVA, F.378, Ap.3, b.4849, l. 5, 8.

79. Ibid., l. 4.

80. LCVA, F.378, Ap.4, b.240, l. 33.

81. LCVA, F.922, Ap.1, b.48:, l. 1ff.

82. LCVA, F.394, Ap.4, b.273, l. 49–50.

83. Vytautas Alantas, "Aktualieji paplūdimo klausimai," in *Lietuvos aidas*, 26 August 1938.

84. Hoover Institution, Turauskas Collection, Box 7, Lithuanian State Security Department Report No. 313, 13 December 1939.

85. See Daulius, 1937, 198–201, 232–235. Cf. other examples in Vareikis, 2001, 19–24.

86. As described and quoted by Donskis, 1997, 7.

87. An excellent brief overview of the contradictory rhetoric and ideology of the new Lithuanian antisemitism is in Vareikis, 2001, 21–23.

88. As reported by the State Security Department on 4 January 1939, in LCVA, Ap.10, b.186, I t., l. 7–8.

89. Truska, 1996, 299.

90. Quoted in Rudis, 1997, 185–215; cf. LCVA, F.378, Ap.13, b.101, l.1, Report of 28 January, 1939; also the police report of 18 January 1939 in F.378, Ap.10, b.186, It., l.59b.

91. *Apžvalga,* 6 March 1938.

92. *Apžvalga*, 3 November 1939.

93. *Apžvalga,* 10 November 1939.

94. LCVA, F.378, Ap.11, b.214, l.1, Report of 5 June 1939.

95. The extensive material on Leipalingis is in LCVA, F.378, Ap.11, b.206, see esp. Lembergas's report of 30 June 1939, l. 104ff.

96. *Apžvalga,* 2 July 1939.

97. *Apžvalga*, 16 January 1938.

98. *Apžvalga,* 23 Jaunary 1938.

99. Vareikis, 2001, 20.

100. Details are in LCVA, F.378, Ap.10, b.187, l. 232–246, State Security Department Bulletins of 12–15 October 1939.

101. *Apžvalga,* 22 October 1939.

102. A detailed account of the complex series of events is in the State Security Department account of 2 November 1939 in LCVA, F.378, Ap.10, b.187, l. 349ff. It is likely that the rumours concerning Lithuanian "instigation" of the pogroms arose from the police and army's dispersal of pro-Soviet and anti-Lithuanian demonstrators among whom were many

Jews at the same time as Polish rioters had begun attacking Jews and Jewish properties. The latter were also dispersed by the Lithuanian authorities. Cf. Łossowski, 1990, 66–69.

103. Two examples of many are, Stang, 1996, 77; and Levin, 1996, 329.

104. Liekis, 2001, 213.

105. LCVA, F.383, Ap.1, b.3, l. 105, Foreign Minister Urbšys to Lithuanian Emissary in Moscow, Ladas Natkevičius, 7 February 1940.

106. Skučas's statement in *XX Amžius*, November 6, 1939; *Lietuvos Aidas*, 30 November 1939; cf. Žepkaitė, *Vilniaus*, 93.

107. State Security Department Bulletin No. 268 (8 November 1939), LCVA, F.378, Ap.10, b.187, l. 363.

108. LCVA, State Security Department Bulletin No. 162, (17 May 1940), LCVA, F.378, Ap.10, B.225, 614.

109. Quote is in Sulik to Sosnkowski, March 17, 1940, *AK*, 177; cf. Łossowski, 1990, 215–217. An interesting account of a Lithuanian government minister's visit to a Jewish synagogue and their friendly reception is in Audėnas, 1966, 158–159.

110. LCVA, State Security Department Bulletin, No. 60, (23 February 1940), F.383, Ap.7, B.2234, 76.

111. *Apžvalga,* 15 February 1940. Note here the use of the term "nation of Lithuania" in place of the usual "Lithuanian nation."

112. *Apžvalga*, 15 May 1940.

113. *Apžvalga*, 25 June 1940.

114. At a Holocaust Conference at Millersville University in April 2000, an elderly Jewish immigrant from Lithuania strenuously objected to my remarks on Smetonas's relatively moderate stance on the Jews: "He was an antisemite. We had no use for him." By contrast, cf. Frieda Frome, *Some Dare to Dream: Frieda Frome's Escape from Lithuania* (Ames, IA: Iowa State University Press, 1988), 7: "Here Germans, Russians, Jews, and many others, in addition to the native Lithuanians, lived together in tolerance and peace."

115. In 1932 nationalist businessmen complained that the Ministry of Education spent thousands of *litai* supporting Jewish theatrical study and a choir. *Verslas*, 14 July 1932.

116. Ivinskis, 1972, 26

117. The riots that broke out in autumn of 1939 in Vilnius soon after the Lithuanian takeover are, in fact, an exception that proves the rule.

118. For a typical instance, see the account of how authorities handled an antisemitic incident that occurred in Varniai in January 1936, *Verslas*, 16 January 1936.

119. Even Soviet sources reluctantly admitted the opposition to racist doctrines among bourgeois and "reactionary" elements, as in Zaksas, 1959, 138–157, 171ff.

120. The Jewish press, nonetheless, reminded the regime of Lithuania's declaration to the League of Nations of 12 May 1922 and its obligation regarding minority rights not mentioned in the 1938 Constitution. *Apžvalga, 8* February 1938.

121. Ivinskis, 1972, 26–27.

122. See Vareikis, 2001.

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State and Minorities:
The First Lithuanian Republic and
S. M. Dubnov's Concept of Cultural Autonomy

Verena Dohrn

It was 1928, in the city of Berlin, when Simon Dubnov wrote in his diary:

"На прогулках прочитывал старую 'Маймониану' Вольфа: о Соломоне Маймоне, который полтораста лет тому назад явился в Берлин как литовский эмигрант. Ведь вот и я – литовский эмигрант уже в пятом поколении и пишу теперь историю этих пяти поколений…"

[On strolls I read Wolf's old *Maimoniana* about Solomon Maimon, who arrived in Berlin as a Lithuanian emigrant a century and a half ago. So too have I – already a fifth generation Lithuanian emigrant – and now I am writing the history of these five generations.][1]

The Jewish historian from Russia described himself as a "Lithuanian emigrant" in the tradition of Salomon Maimon in 1928 when the Lithuanian Republic had already been in existence for ten years. Although an authoritarian regime took control in 1926, the country was still home to a large Jewish community and even witnessed a flourishing of Jewish culture. It was the Lithuanian Republic that helped Dubnov escape from revolutionary Russia, granted him citizenship, and offered him a chair at Kaunas University in 1922. How can one understand Dubnov's self-identification as a "Lithuanian emigrant" or as a Lithuanian Jew "по духу" [in mind]?[2] And how should one treat a diary within a memoir for historical research? This double-filtered media of remembrance is, without a doubt, far from being a critical historic text, but nevertheless represents a source of great hermeneutic value. Today, the approach to memoirs as a historical source has been twofold and even contradictory: on the one hand, there has been a tendency to deconstruct seemingly critical scientific historiography, resulting in a new appreciation for the explicit subjective point of view. On the other hand, scholars have deconstructed the source like historiography. Recently, several critical investigations have been published that deconstruct Eastern European Jewish memoirs and historiography as an odyssey for a "usable past."[3] Nevertheless I want to insist on the value of this statement. I will treat Dubnov's confession as a testimony and will seek to locate it within a certain political context in an attempt to search for *realia* and to investigate the basic question: What did it mean? What kind relationship did Dubnov, who was born 1860 in Mstislavl (Mogilev gubernia), in Tsarist Russia, have with Lithuania? To what extent was the politician

and ideologist – inventor of the *autonomism*-conception – involved in the constitution of the Lithuanian Republic and the minority affairs of the country?

I will suggest that although Dubnov neither participated directly in founding of the first Lithuanian Republic nor even resided there, he had some influence – as a politician, as an ideologist and as a historian – on the creation of the state in three significant respects.

First, there was a long and strong Litvak tradition of Jewish politics in Eastern Europe, which was capable of modernising itself during the last decades of Tsarist reign, and Dubnov's political activities were an integral part of it. Second, for Dubnov especially the Litvak tradition and history served for a model of his modern Jewish Diaspora concept (the concept of *autonomism*). Third, given the reality for Jews in Eastern Europe, which was dramatically changing and posed a threatening situation (e.g., World War One), Dubnov pragmatically transferred his conceptual politics on an international stage and with his impartial charisma, activities, and connections influenced international politics which enforced, conceptualised, and tried to control the foundation of the "minority states" in Eastern Europe and in this framework – Lithuania.

1. The Conception of Autonomism (*Autonomie/Autonomismus*)

There is no point in debating who was the first to demand autonomy for national minorities: the Italian leftwing liberal politician and lawyer, Pasquale Stanislao Mancini (1817–1888), who maintained: "Nations, not states are the subjects of international law,"[4] the Austrian politicians Otto Bauer or Kurt Renner with his concept of *Personale Autonomie* (1899); Simon Dubnov in his *Письма о старом и новом еврействе* (1897–1907) [Letters on Old and New Jewry],[5] the Slovenian social democrat Etbin Kristan (1867–1953),[6] the Polish-Lithuanian attorney Tadeusz Wróblewski (1858–1925)[7] or someone else. The problem arose with the modern national movements and the political success of the national state in Europe in response to the disappointment about the failing of the liberal hope and promise of the enlightenment within the political frame of the old empires. Lawyers, politicians and historians alike were all aware of the question. Of course – in the Habsburg Empire public discussions and even experiments in this field began much earlier than in Russia. In the provinces of Galicia and Bukovina cultural autonomy was already guaranteed while even public discussions about that were forbidden in the Russian ruled East European countries. The revolution 1905 first forced the Tsarist empire to allow them. In any case – cultural autonomy essentially means: the guarantee of national as well as civil

rights for the minorities of a state. And the definition of national rights varies from time to time, place to place, but essentially it means – practice of one's own languages and acceptance of these languages in public life, business, politics, media; self-government of cultural, religious matters; own school systems. Dubnov stood out for his sensibility and committed empathy especially for the Eastern European Jewish minority problem, which urgently needed a lobby, and for his ability to unite – in a liberal way – the interest and commitment of a historian and a politician.

His first unsuccessful attempt to incorporate the two-fold minorities rights – civil and national – in a political programme was in the *Союз полноправия* [Committee for the Protection of Emancipation of Russian Jews] in Vilnius in 1905.[8] The second time, he was more successful when he established the programme of the *Folkspartei* (1907) in Petersburg.[9] Rereading his *Письма о старом и новом еврействе* for a new publication, Dubnov recognised similarities with Kurt Renner's political conception of *Personale Autonomie* for the Habsburg Empire. He was astonished that they shared the same idea in the same time period, but in different places.[10]

2. World War One, Jewish Politics and the Constitution of the Lithuanian Republic

Already by the beginning of World War One(14 October 1914) Dubnov anticipated an international solution of the Jewish minority problem in Eastern Europe. In his diary he predicted: "Близится новый фазис решения еврейского вопроса: международный…" [A new period for deciding the Jewish question is approaching: an international…].[11] And five months later (March 1915, in one of his *Inter arma* articles) he articulated these thoughts more precisely: that after the war, minorities rights had to be protected by international agreements in the newly-found states.[12] During war time Dubnov together with other liberal Jewish and Russian intellectuals founded a "политическое совещание" [round table] in Petersburg to launch a more effective protest to the Duma and to the government, as well as to inform the world about the cruelty inflicted on the Jews by the Tsarist army and Polish antisemites at the frontier Poland, Galicia, Riga, Courland, Kaunas.[13] Newly-established Jewish telegraph and press agencies were central in disseminating the news abroad. They were mostly organised in the neutral countries (The Hague, Copenhagen, Stockholm) by Zionists mainly from Eastern Europe who personally were involved in the tragedy like Leo Motzkin, Meir Grossman, Victor Jacobson and others.[14] The decision to present the minorities' problems before the world public and to demand minority

rights thrust modern Jewish politics on the international stage for the first time where it would be tested. It is remarkable that these demands transformed into a political concept of state founding first found expression in Lithuania, which was not yet an independent country, at the *Vilnius Conference* as early as Sept. 18–22 1917.[15] Under the rule, and with permission of the German occupants, the Lithuanian national movement met in Vilnius, claimed independence for the country with a guarantee of minority rights. Who (or what) gave the impulse for these "progressive" politics? The West European model of a national state obviously did not fit East European conditions because of its multiethnic structure:

-   the dispersion of minorities,
-   the intermingling of minorities in rural districts,
-   the mixed population and social-ethnic stratification in urban settlement,
-   the ethnic imbalance between the population of rural and urban areas.[16]

There were several attempts to compromise on the political interests of all sides at that time and that place including Russia, Germany, the Lithuanian national movement, the Poles, the Jewish and the Belarusian minority. A radical attempt to satisfy Jewish – and maybe German – interests represented the goal of founding a Federal Republic of Lithuania with "personal" autonomy for each of the autochthos people – Lithuanians, Jews and Belarusians (the Poles were not mentioned and Memel with its mainly German population was not yet a part of Lithuania).[17]

Although the Lithuanian national movement was far from comfortable with this conception, it was forced to concede these minority rights due to its weak position at the bargaining table. It was threatened by the imperial powers Russia and Germany confronted with the pretensions of Poland, and keenly aware of its lack of a lobby on the international stage. With regard to the Polish-Lithuanian antagonism the loyalty of the Jewish and Belarusian minorities was of immense importance for Lithuania. But mainly the Jewish minority itself was affected by this antagonism and torn between Poland and Lithuania. The minorities, who were also influenced by the circumstances – namely, the defeat of the occupant-protector Germany – finally (at the end of the war, in autumn 1918) accepted the conditions the Lithuanians offered to them: not to build a federal republic, but a national state; to take part in the creation of the State Council and the government of a Lithuanian Republic. From the outset and to a higher degree than the other new established East European states, the new Republic had to contend with a fundamental

problem: recognition from outside. Revolutionary Russia as well as national Poland tried to assert pretensions, the first without, the second with success – the occupation of the Vilnius District (1922). Germany (1918), and then Soviet Union (1920) were forced to recognise Lithuanian independence. Nevertheless, already before the end of the war – two years before the League of Nations was founded and the international law and minority protection system was installed – Lithuania was offering its minorities a certain degree of cultural autonomy. That this model worked for some time can be credited in part to some liberal and experienced Jewish politicians.

Back to Dubnov: he was not personally involved in this process, but the Jewish politicians who joined the Lithuanian parliament and government during the first years of independence were brought up in the same culture and political atmosphere as Dubnov and some of them learned from him. Shimon Rosenbaum (1860–1934), a contemporary and compatriot of Dubnov, a liberal Zionist from the *Cadet* tradition, with political experience from the Duma, became the deputy minister of foreign affairs in the first Lithuanian government and a member of its delegation to the Paris Peace Conference. He signed the peace treaty with the Soviet Union an behalf of the Lithuanian Republic. He was a member of the commission that drafted the Lithuanian Republic's constitution, which granted the Jews wide cultural autonomy. He was the president of the National Council of the Jews in Lithuania and in 1923 became minister of Jewish Affairs. Dubnov recalled that when Rosenbaum served as a delegate from Minsk to a *Союз полноправия* session in Vilnius 1905, he had difficulties understanding and accepting his *autonomism* programme. Ironically, Dubnov noted, "он тогда не мог еще предвидеть что ему самому через 15 лет придется строить еврейскую автономию в Литве." [At that time he could not anticipate that 15 years later he had to build Jewish autonomy in Lithuania.][18]

Together with Rosenbaum, the Litvaks Naphtali Fridman (1863– 1921), Max Soloveichik (Mordecai Solieli, 1883–1957) and Julius Brutzkus (1870–1951) joined the Lithuanian Sejm or the government. Dubnov cooperated with all three of them in Petersburg before the war and during the wartime – with Brutzkus in the *OPE* [Society for promoting enlightenment among the Jews in Russia], in *Восход*, in the *Союз полноправия;* with Fridman at the *Политическое совещание* and with Soloveichik in the *Историко-этнографическое общество* [Society for History and Ethnography].

3. National Autonomy in Lithuania, the League of Nations, and
Simon Dubnov "behind the Curtain"

In the wake of World War One, the Allies declared their intention to
create a new Europe of individual and national liberty. And when they
entered the war, they emblazoned on their banners the cause of national
minorities. The American President Woodrow Wilson echoed similar
intentions in his message on the Conditions of Peace delivered first at a
Joint Session of the Two Houses of the American Congress (Jan. 8 1918)
when he promised the right of national self-determination. For the first
time he became the most powerful promoter of national and minority
rights on the international stage, and Dubnov in Petrograd (he himself
continued to call it Petersburg) set big hopes on his politics.[19] Wilson's
"fourteen points"-programme was intended to serve as the basis for world
peace. In point 14 he demanded the formation of a "general association of
nations […] on the basis of covenants designed to create mutual
guarantees of the political independence and territorial integrity of States,
large and small equally."[20] In the American interpretation of the "fourteen
points"-programme the political importance of protecting national
minorities rights was recognised and accepted.[21] One year later, at the
Paris Peace Conference, the Victorious Allies accepted the proposals for
creating a League of Nations. To his second draft of the League of
Nation's statute ("First Paris Draft") the American president added
"Supplementary Agreements," among others an article obligating all new
states which want to be admitted to the League to refrain from
discriminating their ethnic or national minorities:

> The League of Nations shall require all new States to bind themselves
> as a condition precedent to their recognition as independent or
> autonomous States, to accord to all racial or national minorities within
> their several jurisdictions exactly the same treatment and security,
> both in law and in fact, that is accorded to the racial or national
> majority of their people.[22]

Without any comment this article was deleted later on. A general
treatment of the minorities rights proved to be politically impossible. It
became a matter of the individual treaties with the different states.[23]
Concerning the demand for establishing minority rights on the basis of
international covenants, Wilson was inspired by Jewish organisations in
USA. already before World War One, which responded to information,
demands, and complaints from European, especially Eastern European
Jewish (welfare) organisations. The Peace Conference probably would
have stopped its activities in this field without the persistence of the

delegates of the Jewish organisations.[24] Indeed, the realisation of these projects were enormously complicated by the problem of national minorities in Central and Eastern Europe. The Jewish minorities were in a peculiar position: they had no state to defend their interests. Therefore they needed another kind of lobby, international support, and network politics to promote their cause.

To compensate for the lack of a state to champion their rights, Jews depended first on the activities of the Copenhagen Office of the World Zionist Organisation, directed by Leo Motzkin and later by Victor Jacobson. Both men, liberal Zionists from Eastern European (Motzkin from Brovary near Kiev, and Jacobson from Simferopol, Crimea), felt a lot of empathy for their coreligionists in Russia, Poland, Ukraine, and the Baltics, who suffered from the ravages of war, deportations and pogroms. (Motzkin himself witnessed in his youth the Kiev pogrom 1881).[25] Jacobson was a well-educated diplomat (Dubnov called him a "типичный российский интеллигент" [typical Russian intellectual].[26] Later on, in Berlin he was connected by him with the Juedischer Verlag (where the *World History of the Jewish People* was published). It was Motzkin, however, who, became the main protagonist of the struggle for Jewish rights in the Diaspora (and especially in Eastern Europe) on the international stage and with political strategies during the war, at the Peace Conference and later on in the twenties until his death. The partnership and cooperation between Motzkin and Dubnov and the latter's commitment to international Jewish and minority politics after World War I have been underestimated. Dubnov himself witnessed it. Motzkin was in contact with him since autumn 1918 and during the twenties in Berlin. On the eve of the Peace Conference, the Copenhagen Office published the *Copenhagen Manifesto*, which outlined post-war Jewish demands with regard to Palestine and equal rights and cultural autonomy in the Diaspora. Dubnov mentioned in his diary that he wrote two articles on the same topic and for the same purpose: to influence the forthcoming Peace Conference, first for the Yiddish periodical *Fun zajt zu zajt* of the Folkspartei in Russia and the second for Motzkin and the Copenhagen Office.[27] There he demanded first of all the international acceptance of the Jews as a nation in opposition to the endeavours of the state governments (especially in Poland) and the assimilated Jews in different countries.

That was in October, 1918. In December, Lithuania (already) established the Ministry for Jewish Affairs. On 25 January 1919, the Paris Peace Conference accepted the proposals for creating a League of Nations. Two months later, on 31 March, the first meeting of the by Motzkin and others newly established Comité des Délégations Juives

took place in Paris. The American and the Eastern European Jews cooperated in working out a programme of Jewish minority rights, *Les droits nationaux des Juifs en Europe Orientale. Requeil d'études*, which was published in Paris 1919, demanding national rights based on the acceptance of cultural autonomy. Motzkin's central argument was: the Jews of Eastern Europe are to be recognised as "une communauté nationale (au sens ethnique du terme)."[28] In Summer 1919 (June 28) the first treaty between the Allies and a new state – the Republic of Poland – was signed. In the following time this functioned as a model for similar minority treaties with other nations. In 5 August 1919, the Lithuanian delegation to the Peace Conference sent a letter to the Comité des Delegations Juives with the promise of guaranteeing minority rights and cultural autonomy for the Jews of Lithuania. Eight months after being admitted (22 Sept. 1921), the Lithuanian Republic officially signed the declaration guaranteeing minority rights by the Council of the League of Nations on 12 May 1922. One may draw a thread from Dubnov's conception of *autonomism* to initiatives on behalf of the Jews for guaranteeing minority rights in the Lithuanian Republic.

The League of Nations, mainly founded and (later on directed) by the Allies and the Associated Powers for establishing the new states, regulating the relations between the states, and peace making, constituted a new kind of international political power and established a new legal system of minority protection. This became the most effective political tool for the Allies to make stipulations toward the new "minority states." The League had to observe the international guarantee of minority rights.[29] But several serious problems had not been resolved:

-   the system of minority protection was not universal. Some states were not bound to take care of it – neither the Allies, nor Russia, which claimed to have freed all nations and overcome all national problems; there was no framework of international law or human rights. These matters were the *domaine reservé* of the national state exclusively;

-   the states that were concerned refused to fulfil their obligations;

-   there was a lack of responsibility on the behalf of the victorious powers to realise the system;

-   the national movements that intended to achieve self-government interpreted this as a *jus secessionis* exclusively;

-   the politics of the League in this field was not stable: it refused to touch the sovereignty of the member states.[30]

The main problem regarding the minorities was that only states could act as partners to treaties. Only they were accepted as legal subjects and not the nations. Still unsolved remained the legal definition of a minority: a group, consisting of individuals, community, nation. This was a

problem especially for a nation without any state like the Diaspora Jews, the "minority par exellence" or the "древнейший интернационал," as Motzkin in consent with Dubnov once called it.[31] Motzkin's recommendation (1919) called for the granting of an extraordinary citizenship for the Jews all over the world and a representative position for them within the League of Nations as a united international nation.[32] But the most ambitious hope of Dubnov and Motzkin failed: the Jews were not recognised as a nation, and a minority as a whole never had the right to act and to intervene legally.

To compensate for this problem, the international state-community were bound together by a special law: the right of petition. This was a compromise, although it represented a remarkable innovation of unrealised (even to the present day) universal and humanistic expectations – a manifestation of democratic principles in search for an international consensus. The new right of petition was not to be compared with the old petition to the monarch. Nevertheless, it inevitably led to endless and unsolvable problems, when democratic politics failed in the twenties and authoritarian national politics came to power in Europe since the beginning of the thirties.[33] On 20 February 1920 the Council of the League accepted the duties entrusted to it with regard to the protection of minorities ("Trittoni Report") and on 20 October, the same year, a special institution for minority matters within the League was established – the "Committee of the Three," since 1925 called the "Minority Committee," which existed until 1938.

A clear indication that Lithuania upheld its minority rights was the official invitation extended to Dubnov by the Jewish National Council of the Republic at the end of 1921 (the invitation was transmitted by the ambassador of Lithuania in Moscow), to assume the professorship for Jewish history within the planned department of Jewish studies at Kaunas University.[34] The connections were made by Max Soloveichik, who was the Minister of Jewish Affairs until 1921. On 2 May 1922, the latter, along with Shimon Rosenbaum (then president of the Jewish National Council), Julius Brutzkus (the new minister of Jewish affairs), delegations of students, and other Jewish organisations welcomed Dubnov at the Kaunas railway station with great pomp and circumstance. A group of Jewish boy scouts accompanied them to the hotel "Metropol" singing the Hatikva. They also held a reception in his honour in the Mapu Library. In the speeches that followed, Dubnov was called "the ideologist of autonomism, settling in Lithuania and establishing there the already accepted constitution of an extensive Jewish autonomy." Dubnov replied that he, a "Lithuanian Jew in mind" would help to renew "его родина" [his native country] with pleasure.[35] But just two months later Dubnov

decided to leave Kaunas (by the way – he always called the Lithuanian capital "Kovno") for Berlin. What happened? Why did he reject the invitation which gave him the chance to settle in his "native country," now a democratic state where minority rights seemed to be protected and where the Jews – according to his demands and visions – received cultural autonomy? There are different explanations for Dubnov's decision. According to Robert Seltzer, "the Lithuanian professors rejected his appointment on the pretext that he did not have a diploma" and therefore he settled in Berlin.[36] According to his daughter, Sophia Dubnova-Erlich, the "living conditions in the Lithuanian capital seemed ill suited to realising his large-scale scholarly and literary plans" and "the attractions of a professional career in Lithuania paled."[37] Dubnov himself in his memoirs (written in Riga more then a decade later, with rare citations from the diary) cited, first and foremost, the narrow-minded political quarrels (мелкие партийные распри) on both – the Lithuanian and the Jewish sides – in Kaunas, between liberals and nationalists, between Hebraists and Yiddishists. Second, he faced a scholar's dilemma: one the one hand, he had been welcomed and honoured in the Lithuanian capital with the expectation that he would fulfil the duty of teaching in midst the community of brethren; on the other hand, he knew that he could only fulfil his "holy duty" of publishing his *opus magnum* in different languages not in Kaunas, but in Berlin. Dubnov was in Kaunas when he received letters from Berlin publishers offering to publish his ten volume *World History of the Jewish People* in four languages (Russian, German, and both Jewish languages).[38]

Indeed, there was trouble around the projected department of Jewish Studies at Kaunas University. It was the future authoritarian president and *Tautininkai* politician Augustinas Voldemaras (1883–1942), then dean of the Department of Social Sciences of Kaunas University, who informed Dubnov about the quarrels around the projected Jewish studies department, which gave him the feeling that he himself was against the "forcing its way" project.[39] But before any decision was made, Dubnov rejected the offered position. Perhaps he repressed the personal insult of not being appointed for a professorship without any discussion. I do not want to psycho-analyse his intentions, but will follow another track – that is, to analyse the political situation when Dubnov very quickly decided, not to stay in Lithuania.

4. Limits of the League of Nation. The National State and the End of Jewish National Autonomy in Lithuania

The first step that weakened the League of Nations as an international instrument for protecting minority rights against the national state was, according to the "Monroe Doctrine," the personal defeat of president Wilson and the refusal of the US Senate to join the League. The next step, which proved extremely disappointing and even threatening for the newly-established Republic of Lithuania, especially for the Lithuanian Jews was the loss of the Vilna district. As a result, the Jewish community was divided between two states, cut into two, and not recognised by the Allies because of the Polish-Lithuanian conflict. The League of Nations did nothing to intervene because the main power within the League – France – supported Poland and accordingly favoured a Lithuanian-Polish Union. It was only a few days after the definite loss of Vilnius that Dubnov arrived in Lithuania. That may explain the nervous atmosphere on both – the Lithuanian and the Jewish – sides. It is remarkable that Dubnov, despite his political sensibility, did not mention this threatening and disappointing situation. It was at the same time that Lithuania declared its intention to protect minority rights within the League's framework, and the League on its behalf took the opportunity to handle the politics in this field: managing the Polish-German Upper Silesia conflict.

Eight months later, nearly around the same time (9 and 11 of January, 1923), two violations of the new treaties–agreements based international and minority rights concerning politics took place: the occupation of the Ruhr district by French and Belgium troops and the occupation of the Memel district by the Lithuanian army. In both cases the League showed its weakness. The *Ruhrkampf* was decided without the League.[40] And, it was a traditional national state power-tool: it was the Allied Ambassadors Conference and not the League that agreed to accept Lithuanian sovereignty over Memel (Klaipėda).[41] Later on, the League succeeded in obliging Lithuania to guarantee Memel autonomy (Memel Convention 8 May 1924), but Lithuania did not observe this obligation. Another case in this period reflected the weakness of the League that concerned international minority rights and the coming to power Lithuanian national state. Lithuanian deputies of Polish origin petitioned and complained to the League and therefore were accused of state slander and high treason in Lithuania (May 1923).[42] On 20 November 1923, the first and the last session of the Jewish National Council in the Lithuanian Republic took place, where an inaugural letter of Shimon Dubnov was presented.[43]

Although he left Kaunas he did not lose his authority among the Lithuanian Jewry.

With hindsight, Dubnov proved to have been right when he decided that Kaunas would not be the right place for Jewish studies or for finishing his *World History*. Starting in 1924 the decline in the protection of minority rights and Jewish autonomy in Lithuania began. The government deleted the Jewish national budget and in response Rosenbaum, the minister for Jewish Affairs, resigned (autumn 1924). On 24 September the Jewish National Council was dispersed by police and ceased to exist. Later on, in spring 1926, the most important minority rights were liquidated (March 1926) and in December 1926, the nationalist *Tautinikai* came to power through a putsch.[44] That was the end of the first Lithuanian Republic and the beginning of the authoritarian national state. But this was not an exception, not a *solitaire* situation in Europe. After Germany had attended the League in 1926, international politics increasingly took the form of traditional bilateral national policy.[45] Even the European Congress of National Minorities, established 1925, first and foremost served national interests, the "father-states" interest in each minority, and even became the hotbed for radical (nationalistic) politics.[46] By that time Lithuanian politics, like that of other newly established "minority states," learned from the European Allied powers, how the system worked, and tried to fit into the main stream of successful national politics.

The Jewish politicians on that stage had to find a way to defend their agenda and, to complicate the matters, the interests of the countries of their domicile. They took part in the European Congress of National Minorities like Jacob Robinson in Lithuania, who (from 1922 to 1926) represented not only the Jews, but all minority groups of the state in the Lithuanian parliament, and who became (1925–1931) one of the spokesmen for the Jewish cause at international gatherings.[47] He was legal adviser to the Lithuanian Foreign Office (1931–1933), and represented Lithuania in the Memel Case before the Permanent Court of International Justice at The Hague (1931), as well as in the German-Lithuanian Conciliation Committee. Another path was taken by Leo Motzkin. He was the single member of the European Congress of National Minorities not representing a minority (or minority groups) within a national state, but the international Jewish minority, legitimated by the Comité des Délégations Juives in Paris.[48] As mentioned above, he was motivated by his Eastern European experience and obligations and inspired by Shimon Dubnov's concept of *autonomism*.[49]

In summer 1925, Motzkin became acquainted with Dubnov at a conference of the Jewish emigration organisations in Berlin, where

Motzkin's family lived. In the following time they worked together in the Berlin relief organisation for the legal defence of Shalom Schwarzbart, the assassin of the Ukrainian nationalistic leader Simon Petlyura, who was held responsible for the pogroms in the Ukraine. The circle regularly met in Dubnov's flat in Berlin from autumn 1926 to autumn 1927, when the trial began. In his memoirs Dubnov gives a convincing explanation of the initial motivation for their cooperation:

> Был какой-то скрытый пафос во всех наших беседах, сознание, что мы заступаемся за того, кто заступился за честь наших мучеников и воскресил их память перед равнодушным миром.
> [There was a hidden pathos in all our discussions, the deep knowledge that we advocate for someone, who advocated for the honour of our martyrs and made alive the remembrance for the indifferent world.][50]

In this circle arose the idea to reconstruct the Comité des Delegations Juives – to transform it into a permanent institution at the League of Nations for defending the guaranteed international agreements concerning the rights of Jewish national minorities. For that purpose Motzkin planned a conference in Geneva together with Stephen Wise, the spokesman of American Zionist Organisations, who had also served as an adviser to President Wilson. But because of a tremendous opposition from Jewish organisations all over Europe (Dubnov called them "мертвое западное еврейство" [dead Western Jewry])[51] the conference took place in Zurich, at a certain distance from the headquarter of the League (1927, 17–20 Aug.). Represented were Jews from all Eastern European countries and from the USA. by Jewish parliamentarians and deputies from the Zionist, Folkist and other parties. Together with Leo Motzkin, Nahum Sokolov, Stephen Wise and Yizhak Gruenbaum, Dubnov was elected into the presidium of new Council for Jewish Minority Rights.[52] The Council was established, but the struggle for international protection of Jewish minorities had just begun.

When Hitler came to power this international politic was confronted antisemitic national state policy, which was tolerated by the other state powers. But it failed miserably to have any influence and proved to be powerless (see "Bernheim petition, 1933"). In 1934 the Polish minister of foreign affairs renounced his country's obligations to its minorities, and there was little the international community could do but protest. Lithuania too

> belonged to the states whose actions produced complaints, but were almost entirely uncooperative in resolving them […] Lithuania,

because of its inability to get any effective League support in its dispute with Poland over Vilna, took a generally contemptuous attitude toward League activities, and made it clear that it considered the minorities protection system a sham.[53]

The Nazi regime forced the seventy-two-years-old Dubnov to emigrate once again. He decided to move to the Baltics, not to Lithuania, but to Latvia, maybe because it still was – for one more year only – a democratically-ruled country. Nevertheless he continued to adore Lithuania. There are witnesses that he did not want to stay in Riga after the putsch (1934). He had a visa for USA, but when asked by the American Consul why not he did not use the chance to leave for the States, he answered that he would use the visa to go to Vilnius. Lithuania for him was a sentimental trope, the ideal synopsis of Jewish past and future, patriarchal tradition and political vision, kahal-system and rabbinical scholarship on the one hand, cultural autonomy and Jewish sciences on the other. During a trip to Kaunas in the spring of 1940 Dubnov was interviewed by a *yiddisher shreiber*, and in this talk he "insisted on the restoration of Jewish rights in the country of domicile, and saw this in terms of a more successful League of Nations and a Jewish seat at the peace conference."[54] He understood those who emigrated to Palestine and overseas countries, but he himself decided to move to Lithuania – to either Kaunas or Vilna. But – as we know – he never had the chance to go.

Conclusions

The protection of minority rights was – and is – an indicator for the level of civil society and democratic state. For the first Lithuanian Republic as for the other "minority states" of that time it proved to be impossible to fulfil the League's obligations because of

-       the option of the national movements for the national state exclusively
-       the policy of the Victorious powers
-       the untouchable status of national state
-       the lack of international law system
-       the lack of political experience on behalf of the new established "minority states."

It was Jewish politics, mainly initiated and organised by Eastern European Jews, that represented a pioneering movement in the field of international law, vacillating between a new form of trans-national and national (Zionist) orientation. But the pivotal point was their dependence

on the national state policies of the victorious powers. Shimon Dubnov played an influential part in international Jewish politics. Despite his highly ideological options for Lithuania and the concept of *autonomism* within this framework, his experienced pragmatism was evident and has been underestimated in the historiography.

Notes

1. Dubnov, 1998, 529.

2. Dubnov, 1998, 484.

3. Zipperstein, 1999; Roskies, 1999; Cooperman, 2000.

4. Prodi, 1997, 7.

5. Dubnov, 1907. The German historian Klaus Heller forgot to mention Dubnov's conception of *autonomism* and its influence to the national autonomy theory of the Bund (Heller, 1977, 105–119).

6. Bunzl, 1975, 72–3.

7. Staliūnas, 1998, 99–107.

8. Dubnov, 1998, 262.

9. Dubnov, 1998, 284–286.

10. Dubnov, 1998, 227.

11. Dubnov, 1998, 341.

12. Dubnov, 1915, 10/1; Dubnov, 1998, 345.

13. Dubnov, 1998, 336–367.

14. Already in 1905 the protagonist of the struggle for Jewish rights in the Diaspora Leo Motzkin (1867–1933) anonymously edited the *Russische Korrespondenz*, which was published in Berlin and provided West European newspapers with informations on Russian-Jewish affair During the Beilis trial (1911–1913) Motzkin organised an information service in West Europe and Russia. At the beginning of World War One he headed the Copenhagen office of the Zionist organisation, from which he maintained contact with all branches of the movement. At the same time the Jewish Telegraph Agency (J.T.A.) was established as the Jewish Correspondence Bureau in The Hague by the journalist and publisher from Vienna Jacob Landau (1892–1952). The Russian-Jewish Zionist publisher Meir Grossman (1888–1964) went to Berlin (1913) and on the outbreak of World War One left for Copenhagen, where he – a few months after the arrival – began to publish the Yiddish daily *Kopenhagener Togblat* (later renamed *Yidishe Folkstsaytung*). After the war he worked for J. T. A. Following Motzkin the Russian-Jewish diplomat Viktor Jakobson (1869–1935) headed the Copenhagen office of the Zionist organisation during World War I.

15. Hellmann, 1966, 136.

16. Alexander, 1997, 11–18.

17. Rosenberg, 1918, 35–48.

18. Dubnov, 1998, 262.

19. Dubnov, 1998, 413–4.

20. Quoted from: Pfeil, 1976, 38.

21. Viefhaus, 1960, 67.

22. Zitiert nach Viefhaus, 1960, 109.

23. Zaffi, 1997, 199. Viefhaus, 1960, 110–119.

24. Zaffi, 1997, 199. Viefhaus, 1960, 50–1, 81–84.

25. [Anonym] *Russische Korrespondenz*. Berlin 1905.

26. Dubnov, 1998, 492.

27. Dubnov, *Kniga*, 414. Chasanowitsch & Motzkin, 1919. The part Dubnov really played in this book is uncertain, because the articles are published anonymously.

28. Viefhaus, 1960, 100.

29. Koszorus, http://www.Hungary.com/corvinus/lib/tria/tria41.htm, 4–5.

30. Ermacora, 1997, 25.

31. Dubnov, 1998, 519.

32. Motzkin, 2000, 23–4.

33. Zaffi, 1997, 202–204.

34. Dubnov, 1998, 453.

35. Dubnov, 1998, 484.

36. Seltzer, 1973, 259.

37. Dubnov-Erlich, 1991, 188.

38. Dubnov, 1998, 485–6.

39. Dubnov, 1998, 485–6.

40. Pfeil, 1976, 69.

41. Blomeier, 1998, 198–206. Pivoras, 2000, 3.

42. Zaffi, 1997, 212.

43. Shimoni, 1951, 253.

44. Atamuk, 2000, 84.

45. Pfeil, 1967, 96.

46. Bamberger-Stemmann, 2000, 389–396.

47. Bamberger-Stemmann, 2000, 404. For more on this issue, see "Robinson, Jacob" in: *Encyclopaedia Judaica*.

48. Bamberger-Stemmann, 2000, 402.

49. Dubnov, 1998, 517.

50. Dubnov, 1998, 516.

51. Dubnov, 1998, 518.

52. Dubnov, 1998, 519.

53. Vearch, 1983, 375.

54. Kayzer, 1998, 53; Grinbaum, 2000, 176–178.

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The Murder of the Jews in German-Occupied Lithuania (1941–1944)

Yitzhak Arad

This article deals with the chronology, scope, and process by which the Jews were exterminated in German-occupied Lithuania within the country's borders on the eve of the German occupation.

The Holocaust in Lithuania and its implementation was part of the Nazi-German policy toward the Jews in all of the occupied territories of the Soviet Union. It was characterised by three main elements:

1. the Jews in the occupied territories of Soviet Union were the first group of Jews in German-occupied Europe to face physical and total extermination;

2. the killing was carried out by shooting, openly and in the vicinity of the localities in which the Jews lived, and was witnessed by the local population.

3. the German propaganda stressed that Soviet Jewry were the bearers of the Bolshevik ideology and the ruling elite in Soviet Union, that the target of the war was their elimination and the destruction of the communist state. For the other nations of Soviet Union German propaganda claimed that "their enemies are not the people of Soviet Union but the Judeo-Bolshevik rulers" and the German Army brings them freedom and liberation from Stalin's and Jewish yoke.

This German policy against the Jews and its implementation was identical in all the occupied territories of Soviet Union. However, the Holocaust in Lithuania (as in Latvia and Western Ukraine) had its peculiarity and uniqueness with regard to the attitude and role of the Lithuanian people in carrying out this German policy, especially in the first half year of German occupation, when the overwhelming majority of the Lithuanian Jews were murdered. Therefore, this article focuses on the role of the local collaborators and their participation in the extermination of the Jews. It does not, however, encompass some other important aspects of the Holocaust in Lithuania, among them–the structure and operations of the German-occupation authorities, such as the *Generalkommissariat* Lithuania, the *Wehrmacht*, the SS, and the German and local police; the Jews, their life in the ghettoes, their awareness of the situation and their reactions, their struggle for survival and armed resistance; the local municipal authorities: the churches and general population-the so-called "bystanders," especially their attitude, behaviour, and relation to the Jews who were so desperately in need of their help in their struggle for survival; and the Righteous Among the Nations who risked their lives in order to save Jews. Despite the fact that they were few

in number, these outstanding individuals deserve to be remembered with admiration.

Although the subject of this article was the most sensitive of the conference, the true story of the tragic fate of the once-flourishing Jewish community in Lithuania must be told – for the sake of Jewish history, Lithuanian history, and the history of humankind in general. This period must also be a lesson for the future, showing how far criminal actions, racist theories, antisemitism, narrow-minded nationalism, and dictatorship can lead people and nations.

1. Demography and Statistics

Before undertaking any analysis or description of the extermination process of Lithuanian Jewry, it is necessary to establish how many Jews lived in Lithuania previously and how many of them were still living there at the beginning of the German occupation. This is essential in order to arrive at some estimate as to the number of Lithuanian Jews murdered at that time and how many of them survived.

As no census of the population in Lithuania was taken on the eve of World War Two, i.e., in Soviet Lithuania in 1940/41, we have to base our estimates on earlier censuses. In the pre-World War Two Lithuanian borders, there were 146–147,000 Jews.[1] In Vilnius and its surroundings, which became part of Lithuania at the end of October 1939, there were about 65–67,000 Jews.[2] About 14,000 Jewish refugees arrived in Lithuania after September 1939, from German-occupied Poland.[3] Thus, according to this estimate, in the first half of 1940, there were approximately 225–228,000 Jews.

From this number of Jews, how many remained under German occupation?

About 6,500 Jewish refugees from Poland left Lithuania for Eretz Israel, the United States, the Far East, and other places in the world before the German occupation. According to my estimates, 3,000 Jews were deported to the interior of the Soviet Union for being, as defined by the communist authorities, "anti-Soviet elements." This number was about 20 percent of all those deported in this way from Lithuania.[4] About 12–12,500 Jews tried to reach the interior of the Soviet Union during the first days of the German invasion. Some of them died as a result of attacks, bombing, and so on, while trying to escape. The total number of Lithuanian Jews who did not remain under German occupation was 21,500–22,000. *Approximately 203–207,000 Jews remained in Lithuania under German occupation and faced extermination.* These estimates are lower than those cited in other sources.[5]

2. Periodicity of the Extermination Actions

The murder of the Jews in Lithuania lasted all through the German occupation; however, there were differences in the intensity of these murder actions. In this respect, the murder of the Jews in occupied Lithuania, or, as the Germans called it, the "Final Solution," can be divided into three periods:

I. The first period: 22 June–December 1941

This period was characterised by the mass murder of Lithuanian Jews. About 80 percent of the Jews who remained under German occupation were murdered. The killing was carried out by the *Einsatzgruppen* of the German Security Police and SD, with the wide-scale participation of Lithuanian collaborator units.

II. The second period: January 1942–March 1943

This period can be called the "*relatively* quiet period." German policy during this period was aimed at maximum exploitation of the Jewish labour force, which was enclosed in the ghettoes of Vilnius, Kaunas, Šiauliai, and Švenčionys.

III. The third period: April 1943–July 1944 (until the expulsion of the German forces from Lithuania)

This period is characterised by the gradual liquidation of the existing ghettoes and of the remnants of the Jews either by murder and/or deportation to camps in Germany.

3. The Murder Actions in the First Period

The first period, from 22 June to December 1941, when about 80 percent of the remaining Jews in Lithuania were murdered, can be divided into two stages:

The first stage – from 22 June to 5 July 1941 – lasted about two weeks between the beginning of the German occupation of Lithuania until the arrival of the *Einsatzgruppen* of the German Security Police and SD in Lithuania. They were characterised by a wave of pogroms and murder initiated and carried out by Lithuanians.

The second stage was from 5 July until the end of December 1941. At the beginning of this stage, the *Einsatzgruppen* arrived in Lithuania; they took control and led the extermination actions, which included the wide-scale participation of Lithuanian police units and the full cooperation of local Lithuanian municipal authorities.

During the first stage, a wave of pogroms initiated and carried out by local people – Lithuanian anti-Soviet partisans[6] and other armed groups with, and in some places without, the encouragement of the Germans –

spread through Lithuania. It started in Kaunas and expanded to other localities. A report by Franz Stahlecker, the commander of *Einsatzgruppe A*, which operated in the Baltic countries, dated 15 October 1941, stated:

> In Lithuania this was achieved for the first time by partisan activists in Kaunas. To our surprise it was not easy at first to set any large anti-Jewish pogrom in motion there. Klimaitis, the leader of the partisan unit mentioned above … succeeded in launching pogroms on the basis of advice given to him by a small advanced detachment operating in Kaunas. In the first pogrom during the nights of 23–26 June, the Lithuanian partisans did away with more than 1,500 Jews, set fire to several synagogues … and burned down a Jewish residential quarter consisting of about 60 houses. During the following nights, approximately 2,300 Jews were rendered harmless in a similar way. In other parts of Lithuania, similar actions followed the example of Kaunas, though on a smaller scale.[7]

L. Garfunkel, who was a witness to this pogrom, wrote in his memoirs:

> Lithuanian partisans and ordinary Lithuanians who joined them, carried out a terrible massacre of Jews in Slobodka – a suburb of Kaunas – on the night of 25–26 June … the rioters in their bloody actions made no distinction between men and women, children and old. Their cruelty was limitless. They shot with bullets, they slaughtered with knives, they killed with axes … a house where some Jews found refuge was set on fire and the partisans did not permit the fireman who arrived to put out the fire. The miserable Jews were burned alive. People were drowned in the Vilia [Neris] river … others were forced to dig the graves for themselves…[8]

Stahlecker's words – "it was not easy at first to set any large anti-Jewish pogroms…" – were aimed to stress the importance of the activity of his advance unit. Even if we accept this sentence literally, the Lithuanian anti-Soviet partisans and others who carried out the pogroms and murder were not forced to do what they did. They did it willingly and enthusiastically as described by L. Garfunkel.

During those days about 1,000 Jews were murdered in Šiauliai, and massacres were carried out in Panevėžys, Plungė, Kėdainiai, and hundreds of other places in Lithuania[9]. The following description of the events in the small township of Linkuva in the Šiauliai district, where about 1,000 Jews – both locals and refugees from surrounding townships

– were present on the day that the German forces occupied it, is typical to the events in other localities in Lithuania:

> On the second day of the German invasion, when it became known that the Soviets were retreating, Jews from Linkuva started to escape. On this same day Lithuanian "activists" started their actions. Their first steps were – murder of Jews. They ambushed the escaping Jews outside the township and shot them… On 29 June the Lithuanian "activists" ordered all the Jews to report to the police. The Lithuanians were those who took over the initiative of the persecution of the Jews and they carried out the murder of the Jews in Linkuva. The commander of the police was Sintaris who in the past served in the Lithuanian border police, among his advisors were the priest Biliackas and other Lithuanians. The Jews reported to the police were closed in the stable which belonged to Yitshak Kapoliar and in some stores. There they were tortured brutally: were beaten, the beards of elderly Jews were cut of and in the hot days of the end of June – beginning of July, they did not receive any water and food. On 30 June ten youngsters aged 18–20, were taken and shot close to the Catholic cemetery… The Lithuanian "activists," the day after the murder of the youngsters, took all the adult and old Jews, brought them to the Atkučiūnai forest, close to the Mūša river, and murdered them… On 2 July four o'clock in the morning, whole families were taken from their homes, according to a prepared list, residents from the township and refugees, together 125 people. They were brought to the prison in Šiauliai. The women and children were released, 57 men remained there… A second group of Jews which were taken the same day, did not reach the prison in Šiauliai. All of them were murdered on the way by their Lithuanian guards. Among those murdered was Rabbi Dudman … On 23 July … 700 of the remaining Jews in Linkuva, were taken to the Atkučiūnai forest and shot. In these actions distinguished themselves especially the Lithuanians: three sons of the pharmacist Jasukaitis, Sintaris, Janauskas … [more names of Lithuanians who participated in the murder].[10]

Contrary to Kaunas and other localities, no large-scale murder or pogrom of Jews was carried out in Vilnius in those days. Why? Did the Lithuanian authorities who took over control in Vilnius have a different attitude toward the Jews than those in Kaunas? The answer is no. There were different reasons for their behaviour, which can be found in the German reports regarding the situation in Vilnius at that time. For example, the *Einsatzgruppen* report, dated 9 July 1941, stated:

The Lithuanian activists are trying in all possible ways to exploit the unclear situation and to give the city of Vilnius a purely Lithuanian character, by decorating the city with eye-catching Lithuanian flags. Nevertheless, the Lithuanian element constitutes a minority [in Vilnius]… The Lithuanian institutions, especially the police, made immediate attempts to halt the non-Lithuanian groupings (Belarusian and Polish) in their effort to play down the Lithuanian character of the city.[11]

Stahlecker wrote in his report: "… As far as the Lithuanian population in Vilnius is concerned, the Jewish problem is secondary to the Polish."[12]

Based on these reports, we may assume that the Lithuanian authorities who took over the rule in Vilnius, were interested in proving to the German military administration that they, and not the Poles who made up a large segment of the population of the city, (which between the two world wars was part of Poland), were in full control of the situation and there was no disorder in the streets. Mass attacks on Jews were liable to cause chaos in the city and thus imperil the Lithuanian local authorities' intentions and position.

No comprehensive research exists on these first few weeks of the German occupation and the pogroms carried out before the *Einsatzkommandos* of the German Security Police and SD reached Lithuania and put into effect their planned and controlled killing operations. (The *Einsatzkommando* was a company-size sub-unit of an *Einsatzgruppe*, numbering 100–150 servicemen; hereafter E.K.)

The exact number of Jews who were murdered in these pogroms is not known. According to estimates, some 7–8,000 Lithuanian Jews were murdered in this wave of killing.[13]

The second stage, from the beginning of July 1941 to December 1941, was the planned and organised mass murder of Lithuanian Jewry by the *Einsatzgruppen* of the German Security Police and SD, with the large scale participation of the Lithuanian police and other local volunteer units.

These mass-murder actions were carried out during the month of July, when Lithuania was under German military administration. They continued from the beginning of August, when the German civilian administration took over and the *Generalkommissariat* of Lithuania, headed by Theodor-Adrian von Renteln, as part of the *Reichskommissariat Ostland,* headed by Hinrich Lohse was created. *Reichskommissariat Ostland,* in addition to Lithuania included the *Generalkommissariats* of Estonia, Latvia and Belarus (Western Belarus and the city of Minsk).

From 23 June 1941 until 5 August, the "Provisional Lithuanian Government," headed by Juozas Ambrazevičius, existed in Kaunas. This government started to re-establish government institutions, as well as the Lithuanian army and police. The German military authorities, during the first two weeks of occupation, made no objections to these actions. Only in July, after the arrival of the *Einsatzgruppen*, did the military authorities announce that the formation of a Lithuanian army was illegitimate. Consequently, the newly created Lithuanian army units were re-organised into police battalions. However, the Provisional Lithuanian Government, during the six weeks of its existence, did have some control and influence over the Lithuanian police and the partisan groups before these groups were disbanded. Therefore they bear at least partial responsibility for the murder of the Jews carried out by these police or partisan units during this period. The Lithuanian historian Prof. Alfonsas Eidintas, in his address to the Lithuanian Seimas (parliament), on 20 September 2001, said:

> During the first weeks of war, after the first "pogroms" … even the Provisional Lithuanian Government did not condemn the acts but established a concentration camp in the Seventh Fort of Kaunas. It proclaimed Jews as aliens to the Lithuanian State… Anti-Jewish indoctrination was proclaimed over the radio and in the press by some prominent Lithuanians. People with white stripes on their hands [partisans] searched for the Jews who were hiding. There was no difference if they were Jews or the communists. Lynch courts were popular… The Lithuanian police, which had been founded for patriotic purposes, became collaborators with white stripes…[14]

Einsatzgruppen units arrived in Lithuania in the first week of July 1941. During July three *Einsatzkommandos* operated in Lithuania: *E.K. 3*, commanded by Karl Jaeger in Kaunas and centre-west Lithuania; *E.K. 9*, commanded by Alfred Filberg in the Vilnius area; *E.K. 2*, commanded by Eduard Strauch in Šiauliai and north Lithuania. A special unit of the Security Police and SD from Tilzit carried out the mass murder of Jews in Lithuania in the areas close to the border with East Prussia. The Tilzit unit carried out its murder actions, in conjunction with *Einsatzgruppe A*, in a 25-kilometer strip along the Lithuanian side of the border. At the beginning of August, *E.K. 3* took control of the Vilnius area, and, at the beginning of October, they enlarged this to the Šiauliai area as well. From that time *E.K. 3*, as the Security Police and SD authority, was in control of the entire *Generalkommissariat* Lithuania.

The Einsatzgruppen acted without any restrictions in their murder operations. The scope of the killings and the timetable for implementation

were dictated only by their physical ability. As the *Einsatzkommandos* were small units, they could carry out their wide-scale murder tasks only with the help of additional forces-either German units, such as the battalions of the German Order Police, or police units composed of local volunteers.

From the very beginning of their operations in Lithuania, they received the full help and cooperation of the local Lithuanian Order Police, the Lithuanian municipal authorities, and the Lithuanian Security Police. The latter had been organised by the Lithuanian Provisional Government but continued to exist even after the dissolution of this government, as part of the German Security Police. The Lithuanian Police Battalions assisted the *E.K.*, and, in many localities, it constituted the main force in the murder operations. Franz Stahlecker, commander of *Einsatzgruppe A*, which operated in the Baltic States, wrote in his report dated 15 October:

From the very beginning it was clear that the Jewish problem in the *Ostland* can not be solved only by pogroms... Large-scale killing operations were therefore carried out in cities and the countryside by the S.K., which were reinforced by units selected from the partisan groups in Lithuania and parties of the Latvian auxiliary police. The work of the execution units was carried out smoothly...[15]

The vast majority of the Jewish victims in Lithuania – as in other places in the occupied territories of the Soviet Union – who were murdered in July/middle of August 1941, as planned and implemented by the E.G., were young and middle-aged males. According to the estimates, at least 15,000 men and around 1,000 women were murdered in this first wave of *Einsatzgruppen* murder actions.

Jewish men were kidnapped off the streets or forced from their homes. In most cases, they were told that they were being taken for labour. They were then transported outside the town, where they were shot and buried. The executions were carried out at Paneriai near Vilnius, the Seventh and Ninth Forts in Kaunas, the Kuziai forest outside Šiauliai, the Pajuostė forest near Panevėžys, in Polygon near Švenčionėliai and in hundreds of other places throughout Lithuania.

From the middle of August 1941, however, the Jewish victims in Lithuania, as in other areas of German occupied territories of Soviet Union, included men, women, and children, young and old, without any distinction. This strengthens the assumption that the first orders given to the *Einsatzgruppen*, on the eve of the invasion of the Soviet Union, were to kill males, and only in the second half/end of July 1941, did the German authorities decide to carry out the total murder of all the Jews in the occupied territories. The killings of Jewish men could be seen and

described as executions of pro-Soviet elements and a means of eliminating those people who might oppose German occupation and became a security problem.

The change in Nazi-German policy from the murder of men to the wholesale murder of Jews, which started in all the occupied territories of the Soviet Union, took place after a meeting held at Hitler's headquarters, which was attended by the top Nazi leadership on 16 July 1941. The subject discussed at this meeting was the administration and political future of the occupied territories, as the collapse of Soviet Union was expected to happen soon. Hitler stated already on 4 July 1941, "to all intents and purposes the Russians have lost the war."[16] At this meeting Hitler stated "that Stalin's call for partisan warfare had its advantages: it gives us the opportunity to exterminate whatever stands in our way." Jews were not mentioned at this meeting, but it was clear in Hitler's and Nazi leadership minds that Jews were at the forefront of those who "stand in our [his] way."[17] The extermination of the Jews was often carried out under the guise of anti-partisan actions.

The decision regarding the total extermination of the Jews taken in the second half of July was influenced by the favourable German military situation at that time: Smolensk was captured on 16 July, which opened the way to Moscow. The crucial issue discussed at Hitler's headquarter in those days was whether to continue with the armour armies the drive and conquest of Moscow or to postpone this move and give priority to the conquest of Leningrad and encirclement of huge Soviet forces east of Kiev. But the estimate of situation was that the victory was close and the war with the Soviet Union may end soon.[18]

Hitler and Himmler considered that the wartime situation gave them the opportunity to carry out the total murder of Soviet Jewry, that in peacetime would be more complicated, because of world public opinion, mainly American, as the United States was not yet that time at war with Germany. Therefore, the total extermination of the Jews in the occupied territories of Soviet Union, had to be accomplished before the end of the war there. Hitler in his speech in the Reichstag, on 30 January 1939, said that if there will be once more a world war "the result will not be the bolshevisation of the earth, and thus the victory of Jewry, but the annihilation of the Jewish race in Europe."[19] The time was ripe to carry out this "prophesy." Goebbels wrote in his diary about his meeting with Hitler on 19 August 1941:

> We also spoke about the Jewish problem. The Fuhrer is of the conviction that his earlier prophesy in the Reichstag, that if the Jews succeeded in provoking a world war once again, it would end with the

extermination of the Jews – was coming true. In these weeks and months it has proven accurate with an almost uncanny certainty. In the East the Jews have to pay the price…[20]

Some prominent German historians, Christian Gerlach and Christoph Dieckman, in their recently published research, relate the decision of total extermination of Soviet Jews, including women and children, mainly, to the food shortages facing the German army on their Eastern front, which had to be based on local resources. Therefore by the total killing of Soviet Jews, whom they defined as "useless eaters" (*nutzlose Esser*) they will reduce the number of mouths to feed.[21] Doubtlessly, the total murder of the Jews reduced the number of people to be nourished, but this was not the decisive reason of this resolution. The decisive reason was the racist anti-Jewish Nazi theories and their relation to the Soviet Jews as bearers of communist ideology, the ruling elite of the Soviet state and mortal enemies of Nazi Germany. We may assume that the decisions regarding the mass murder of Jews and the fate of them, in the occupied territories of Soviet Union, would not be different if there would be no food shortage there. The decision of total murder of the Soviet Jews was part of the cumulative radicalisation of the Nazi "Final Solution" policy.

The order to begin the total murder of Soviet Jews was given to the *Einsatzgruppen* and other SS units verbally by Himmler, who visited the SS units subordinated to him in the occupied territories of Soviet Union in mid/second half of July 1941.

This order regarding the mass murder of Soviet Jews also sealed the fate of the Jews of Lithuania. From mid-August the indiscriminate murder of Jews – men, women, and children – began in Lithuania. There was no distinction between those able to work or not able. The first localities where this policy was implemented, according to Jaeger's report, were Rokiškis (3,200 Jews on 16 August), Raseiniai (298 Jews on 16 August), Kaunas (1,811 Jews on 18 August), Ukmergė (643 Jews on 19 August), Panevėžys (7,523 Jews on 23 August), and then spread throughout all of Lithuania.[22] In some localities, parallel to the extermination actions, ghettoes were established. In Vilnius, in the extermination actions during the closing of the Jews in the ghettoes, in the period of 2–12 September, at least 7,000 Jews were murdered.[23] The closing of the Jews in the ghettoes in Vilnius was carried out by the Lithuanian police under the command of Antanas Iškauskas, who stated in his report:

The ghetto operation in Vilnius began at 6 a.m. on 6 September 1941… Guards were posted along all roads out of the city to prevent Jews from fleeing… The operation was executed by police and

soldiers from guard units [police battalions]. The police evicted the Jews from the houses and the soldiers herded them into the places chosen for their residence…[24]

The killings in Paneriai were carried out by the Lithuanian unit under the command of German Security Police and SD in Vilnius. A sixteen-year-old Jewish girl, Pesia Shloss, was wounded but survived Paneriai. At night, when the murderers left the place, she was able to escape from the pit and return to the ghetto. She testified to what she had seen:

On 2 September, the Lithuanians entered our apartment and ordered us to accompany them … we were taken to Lukiškės [prison] … at four o'clock in the morning we were ordered to undress, they made us understand that we were being taken for work. We marched … nobody knew that the place we reached was Paneriai and what they will do to us. But then we saw and heard shootings … the whole operation was carried out by Lithuanians under the command of one German. To the place of execution we were taken in groups of ten people…[25]

In the middle of September 1941, there was some change in the German policy of indiscriminate killings of Jews. This change was limited to the cities of Vilnius, Kaunas, and Šiauliai, where the German *Gebietskommissars* were stationed and army installations were located. Those of the Jews there who were working in German enterprises – mostly young and middle-aged men and women – were now temporarily spared, along with their families. According this change in the policy, in Vilnius, Kaunas and Šiauliai were established two ghettoes, one for the working Jews and their families and the second where all the others who were doomed for extermination were concentrated. In Vilnius it was Ghetto no. 1 for the working Jews and Ghetto no. 2 for all the others, in Kaunas the "Big Ghetto" was for the working Jews and the "Small Ghetto" for the non-working, in Šiauliai the "Synagogue" served as a place where those who were doomed for annihilation were assembled. The so-called "Large Action" in the Kaunas ghetto, on 28 October 1941, characterises this new policy of the German administration. All the Jews in the Kaunas ghetto were ordered to gather at 6 o'clock in the morning at the Demokratų Square, grouped by families and according to their places of work. SS *Oberscharführer* Helmut Rauke, who was in charge of the ghetto, carried out the selection. Avraham Tori, who was among the 27,000 Jews who gathered at Demokratų Square that day, wrote in his diary:

Columns marched… Rauke who was staying on a low hill, marking with his right hand, decided the fate of the people. Old and sick, families with many children, single women and every one whose his outward appearance did not impress him as fit for work, were ordered to go to the right. There German police and Lithuanian "Partisans" beat and guarded them… In the evening the selection was accomplished, but not before Rauke verified that the quota of 10,000 [unfit for work] was reached. They were transferred to the "small ghetto" and the 17,000 people who went through the selection "peacefully" returned to their homes… The march of the column of the 10,000 Jews from the "small ghetto" to the Ninth Fort continued from the [next] morning until noon time … inside the fort the Lithuanian murderers took away from the miserable [victims] all their valuables – gold rings, earrings, bracelets, forced them to undress, pushed them into the pits and shot them.[26]

In the ghettoes of Vilnius and Šiauliai the selection of the non-working Jews was carried out differently, but the results were similar. In Šiauliai, over 1,000 non-working Jews, who were concentrated in the "Synagogue" area, were murdered, on 3 September 1941.[27] In Vilnius, Ghetto no. 2 was liquidated in the period of 15 September–21 October, 1941, and about 7,000 of the Jews concentrated there were murdered.[28]

Between 22 June and December 1941, 160–164,000 Lithuanian Jews were murdered. This total number of murdered Jews is based mainly on German reports and partly on estimates:

E.K.3. In Jaeger's report there are details concerning 111,000 Lithuanian Jews.[29] In his report, however, for some reason, there is no mention of the "Yom Kippur action" on 1 October in Vilnius, at which time about 3,000 Jews were murdered. In addition, about 800 Jews were murdered in Vilnius in December 1941, after the report was submitted. Therefore, the total number of Jews murdered by *E.K. 3* and collaborating Lithuanian police units or under their direct command was around 114,000 Lithuanian Jews. These numbers do not include the Jews murdered by units of *E.K. 3* in Daugavpils (Latvia), in the Minsk area (Belarus) nor the 5,000 German Jews murdered in October 1941 in Kaunas.

E.K. 9 murdered 5,000 Jews in Vilnius in July 1941. *E.K. 2*, with the help of the Lithuanian police, murdered about 26,000–28,000 Jews in Šiauliai and north Lithuania (Telšiai, Mažeikiai, Biržai districts).

A Security Police and SD unit from Tilsit, with the cooperation of the local police, murdered about 8–9,000 Jews in the border area (Tauragė, Šakiai, Vilkaviškis districts).

Lithuanian partisans and antisemitic elements in Lithuanian society murdered 7–8,000 Jews in the first two weeks of the German invasion, most of them in Kaunas.

At the end of this period, i.e., at the end of December 1941, some 43,000 Jews remained in the ghettoes of Lithuania: in Vilnius, about 20,000; in Kaunas, 17,500; in Šiauliai, 5,000–5,500; and in Švenčionys, 500.[30]

Which were the units and who were the people who carried out the murder of 80 percent of Lithuanian Jewry? The German *Einsatzkommandos* that planned and participated in the murder were mentioned earlier. They numbered a few hundred servicemen. *E.K. 3*, which was in charge of killing the large majority of Lithuanian Jews, was a company-size unit, with about 120 members. They were able to carry out their large-scale murder actions in quite a short period only because, as stated in the above-mentioned Stahlecker report, they had at their disposal thousands of Lithuanians who served in local Order Police stations and in the mobile police battalions (in the first weeks they were called "National Labour Service Battalions" – TDA; or, in Vilnius, the "Vilnius Construction Battalion" – VAT), or in units such as the *Ypatingieji būriai* ("special detachments"), which were under the direct command of the German Security Police and SD in Vilnius. In a study done by Arūnas Bubnys, *Lithuanian Police Battalions and the Holocaust,* the author mentions ten battalions out of the twenty-five Lithuanian police battalions that participated in murder operations of Jews, not only in Lithuania, but also in Belarus, Ukraine, and other places.[31]

In Kaunas the First Police Battalion was organised under the command of Colonel Andrius Butkūnas. It was formed by 4 July 1941, and carried out the murder of 26,000 Jews in the Fourth, Seventh and Ninth Forts in Kaunas between 4 July and 11 December 1941. (This number includes 5,000 German Jews murdered in November 1941.)

Members of this battalion participated in the murder of Jews in many other places in Lithuania, as is mentioned in the Jaeger report, with the German Security Police and SD mobile unit, under the command of *Oberschturmführer* Hamman's unit, which numbered only eight to ten Germans. The number of Jews murdered by this battalion in Lithuania, with the help of the local Lithuanian police and, in some places, with the participation of a few *Einsatzkommando* members, was close to 40,000.[32] In Vilnius, the Lithuanian Special Detachments (Ypatingieji būriai), which numbered about 150 people, with only a few Germans from the Security Police and SD, carried out the shooting of tens of thousands of Jews in Paneriai. An *Einsatzgruppen* report, dated 13 July 1941, stated:

In Vilnius … the Lithuanian *Ordnungsdienst* which was placed under the *Einsatzkommando* … was instructed to take part in the liquidation of the Jews. One hundred and fifty Lithuanian officials were assigned to this task. They arrested the Jews and put them into concentration camps, where they were subjected the same day to "Special Treatment" *(Sonderbehandlung).* This work has now begun and thus about 500 Jews, saboteurs among them, are liquidated daily.[33]

The capture of the Jews and escorting them to Paneriai was carried out by members of the Second Vilnius Police Battalion, under the command of Lieutenant-Colonel Jonas Juknevičius.[34]

In Panevėžys the tenth Lithuanian Police Battalion, under the command of Major Ernest Bliudnik, was the main force that carried out the extermination of all the Jews there in August 1941, in the forests of Žalioji and Pajuostė.[35] The Fourteenth Lithuanian Police Battalion, under the command of Lieutenant-Colonel Petras Verteilis, and a detachment of local partisans carried out the murder of the Šiauliai Jews in the Žagarė Ghetto, on 2 October 1941.[36] Similar murder actions with the participation of police battalions and the local Lithuanian Order Police took place in hundreds of other places.

Lithuania was the first country in Europe to experience the mass murder of Jews. Nowhere in Europe, except for Lithuania and Latvia, had 80 percent of the Jews already been exterminated before the end of 1941. This could be accomplished in such a short period only because of the wide-scale local collaboration and the fact that *E.K.3* which planned and organised the mass murder of the Jews, remained all that time in Lithuania. Jaeger, in his summary report, dated 1 December 1941, stated:

The goal to clear Lithuania of Jews could be achieved only thanks to the setting up of a flying squad of tried men under SS *Oberschturmführer* Hamman who adopted my goal without any reservations and managed to secure the cooperation of the Lithuanian partisans and the respective offices.[37]

What were the reasons for this enormous cooperation and collaboration? What turned people into the murderers of their neighbours with whom they had lived together for generations. A partial answer can be found in the following German reports. Stahlecker, the commander of E.G.A, wrote in his report of 15 October 1941:

The *active antisemitism* which flared up quickly after the German occupation did not falter. Lithuanians are voluntarily and untiringly at

our disposal for all measures against Jews: sometimes they even execute such measures on their own.

Traditional, popular antisemitism, in its religious, economic, and political forms, had existed previously in Lithuania, as it had in other countries. Although it may even have been less-encompassing than in neighbouring areas populated by Russians and Poles, it was still a prevailing factor in Lithuania. While, however, the existence of an entrenched, popular antisemitism was a necessary factor in subsequent antisemitic behaviour, it is not enough to understand and explain the outburst of hatred toward the Jews and the wide-scale participation in the murder actions. Thus, there were additional factors behind the behaviour of thousands of Lithuanians during the German occupation.

The existing antisemitic sentiments were no doubt strengthened during the one-year period, between June 1940 and June 1941, of Soviet rule in Lithuania. The Jews were blamed by the Lithuanians for having welcomed Soviet annexation of Lithuania in June 1940. It is a fact that the Jews welcomed the Soviet rule in Lithuania. However, this was not because of their disloyalty to Lithuania or their love of communism. The true reason was that, as the war situation developed at that time in Europe, the only alternative for Lithuania was either Soviet or German rule; it could not remain neutral and independent. The Jews simply preferred Soviet rule to German rule because they were well aware of the German persecution of Jews. Most Lithuanians, on the other hand, preferred Nazi-German rule to the Soviets. Thus, the Jews had a different attitude to the Soviet rule in Lithuania than did most Lithuanians. Moreover, they identified the Jews with the hated communist regime. As a result of their attitude to the Soviet rule, the Jews were over-represented in the middle or low ranks of government institutions at the time of Soviet rule disproportionately to their actual size within the population. This factor also strengthened anti-Jewish feelings among many Lithuanians.

Yet even these marginal numbers of Jews were gradually replaced by Lithuanians and officials who came from the Soviet Union, because of the Soviet nationality policy. What the Lithuanians did not understand was that, in fact, the Jews as individuals and as a nation suffered even more than the Lithuanians from Soviet rule. Jews were doomed by Soviet rule and communist ideology to disappear as a nation by assimilation – to become Russians, Ukrainians, Lithuanians, and so on. All their national, cultural, and religious institutions were disbanded. Jews, because of their economic and class structure, also suffered more than others from property confiscation and other actions that were a result of communist economic policy. Moreover, the estimated number of 3,000 Jews who

were deported into the Soviet Union, as "anti-Soviet elements," were 17 percent of the total number of those who were deported from Lithuania, which was much higher than their percentage among the population in Lithuania. Professor Liudas Truska, a leading historian of this period in Lithuania, has written:

> In general, research conducted by historians demonstrates that the Jews did not play any special role in the Sovietisation of Lithuania and the repressing of its people, while the losses suffered by the Jews themselves in 1940–1941 [the first period of Soviet occupation] were even bigger than those of Lithuanians.[38]

The true Jewish attitude to Soviet rule in Lithuania is most obvious in the fact that any Jew who could emigrate from Lithuania at that time did so. They numbered in the thousands.

The intensified anti-Jewish feelings among the Lithuanians were further inflamed by the antisemitic propaganda of the leadership of the anti-Soviet "Lithuanian Activist Front" (LAF), established in Germany on 17 November 1940, by representatives of most of the Lithuanian political parties. It was headed by Colonel Kazys Škirpa and was backed by a large organised underground within Lithuania. Leaflets prepared by the LAF and distributed in the thousands in Lithuania focused wide attention on the Jewish issue. In a leaflet published by LAF on 19 March 1941, was stated:

> … the hour of Lithuania's liberation is close… Local Communists and other traitors of Lithuania must be arrested… (The traitor will be pardoned only provided he proves beyond doubts that he has killed one Jew at least).[39]

In a leaflet published by the LAF on 24 March 1941, it was stated: "Instructions on Lithuania's Liberation"… When driving the Red Army away from Lithuania … it is very important to take the occasion to get rid of Jews. Therefore, the climate in the country must become intolerable for them…[40]

A leaflet released by the LAF in the spring of 1941, entitled "Let Us Free Lithuania from the Yoke of Jewry Forever," stated:

> The Russian Communism and its eternal servant the Jew represent one common enemy. Elimination of the occupation by the Russian communism and slavery imposed by Jews is our shared and most sacred task … Jews have been and are the most heinous Chekists,

informers and torturers of Lithuanians… the right of asylum granted to Jews by Vytautas the Great is cancelled altogether and completely…[41]

In a manifesto-type essay, "What Are the Activists Fighting for?", it was stated:

The Lithuanian Activist Front, by restoring the new Lithuania is determined to carry out an immediate and fundamental purging of the Lithuanian nation and its land of Jews, parasites and monsters… [this] shall be one of the most essential preconditions for starting a new life…[42]

The LAF did not call openly for the total physical extermination of the Jews in Lithuania, but it should be stressed that, in the period when these leaflets were published and distributed, even the Nazi-German leadership was not yet speaking of implementing the total extermination of Jews. Expressions in the leaflets like "when driving the Red Army away from Lithuania it is very important to take this occasion to get rid of the Jews" and others, combined with popular antisemitic feelings, were understood by a substantial part of the Lithuanian population as a call for pogroms and participation in carrying out the murder of the Jews. These expressions and the way they were understood by many Lithuanians, turned, with the German invasion, into a wave pogroms and the murder of thousands of innocent Jews.

In such an antisemitic atmosphere, which prevailed in Lithuania during the German occupation, the chances that a Jew would find refuge among the Lithuanian population, in his struggle for survival, were very limited. Nevertheless, despite the pervasive antisemitic atmosphere, it should be stressed that about 500 Lithuanians have been recognised by Yad Vashem as "Righteous among the Nations," people who risked their lives in order to save Jews.

The organised massacres and mass murder of the Lithuanian Jews in the first period, which began at the beginning of July 1941, were suspended in December 1941. By the end of 1941, only about 43,000 Jews, out of the 203–207,000 Jews who were in Lithuania at the beginning of the German occupation, were still alive. They were incarcerated in the four ghettoes: Vilnius; Kaunas; Šiauliai; and Švenčionys.

What brought about the suspension of the mass extermination actions at the end of 1941?

The suspension was the result of the controversy within the German administration as to whether to liquidate totally all the Jews in Lithuania and other places in the *Reichskommissariat Ostland,* or to spare temporarily those Jews and their families who were working in German enterprises that were serving the war-economy effort. This conflict, which waged from September to November 1941, involved all three German authorities operating in the *Reichskommissariat Ostland:* the civil administration headed by Heinrich Lohse, which was the governing authority in the *Ostland;* the army (*Wehrmacht*) commander who was in charge of exploiting the economic resources of the rear areas for military needs; and the SS authorities who were in charge of the extermination of the Jews. The dispute over the fate of the Jews in the *Ostland* reached Alfred Rosenberg, the minister of the Eastern Occupied Territories, in Berlin. In a letter dated 18 December 1941, from Rosenberg's office, regarding the fate of the working Jews, it was stated:

> Economic considerations should basically not be considered in the settlement of the problem. Moreover, it is requested that questions arising be settled directly with the Chief SS and Police Leader.[43]

The decision to leave the remaining ghettoes in the *Ostland,* including Lithuania, was accepted in November 1941, by the German authorities there before Rosenberg's reply was received. The main reason was the demand on this issue made by the *Wehrmacht*, which was responsible for supplying the German eastern war front, and as a result of the military situation at that time. It was clear that the war would not end until the winter – Moscow had not been captured, the Soviet regime had not collapsed – and the German army, which had suffered heavy losses, would now have to prepare itself for a winter war for which it was not ready. Thousands of Jews in the ghettoes of Vilnius, Kaunas, and Šiauliai worked in enterprises important to the German war economy and the economic needs and services of the local German administration. The army, supported by the civilian administration in the *Ostland,* demanded that these Jews be temporarily spared. Although the SS authorities were opposed to a halt in the annihilation of the remaining Jews they eventually gave in. Jaeger, in his report submitted on 1 December 1941, wrote:

> I can state today that the goal of the solution of the Jewish problem in Lithuania has been reached by *Einsatzkommando 3*. There are no longer any Jews in Lithuania except the working Jews and their families, which total: in Šiauliai some 4,500, in Kaunas some 15,000,

in Vilnius some 15,000. I intended to kill these working Jews and their families too, but was met with the strongest protest from the civilian administration and I received an order from the *Wehrmacht* prohibiting me from killing these Jews and their families … The working Jews and Jewesses left alive are for the time being badly needed and I presume that even after the winter is over this Jewish labour force will still be badly needed.[44]

Reichskommissariat Ostland included four *Generalkommissariats*: Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Belarus. The policy relating the Jews was implemented according the orders and directives that came from the *Reichskommissariat* civilian and SS authorities in Riga. They were identical and in force in all the four *Generalkommissariats*. What were the reasons that in the first period of German occupation (end of June – December 1941) in Lithuania about 80 percent of the Jews were murdered, in Latvia over 90 percent of them were murdered, but in *Reichskommissariat* Belarus, which included most of Western Belarus and the city of Minsk, most of the Jews, which numbered at least 300,000, still survived the first period of extermination. The reason for this was that in Lithuania and Latvia the SS authorities had immediately at their command thousands of local people who volunteered to carry out the extermination of the Jews. In Belarus they did not have that time the all needed forces to carry out the large scale murder of the Jews. Some extermination actions in the Minsk area, where over 35,000 Jews were murdered in the autumn 1941, were carried out almost completely by the Lithuanian Police Battalion no. 12, under the command of Major Antanas Impulevičius, which arrived there in the first half of October 1941.[45] The extermination of the majority of the Jews in Belarus was carried out only in the Spring–Summer 1942, when additional German Police and local police forces were available. (In Estonia remained under German occupation about 1,000 Jews and *E.K. 1* which operated there, even with limited local forces was able to murder them).

4. The Second Period: January 1942–March 1943 – the "Relatively Quiet Period"

The anti-Jewish policy of the German administration in Lithuania during this period was affected by the increasing need for manpower and the demand to provide workers for the German war industry. Thus, the German administration steadily increased the utilisation of Jewish labour and expanded the areas in which they were employed. The number of Jews working in factories and enterprises outside the ghettoes rose. The

workshops inside the ghettoes that manufactured for the German administration were expanded. In addition, Jews were sent to labour camps where they were put to work cutting peat and felling trees in the forests.

The number of workers among the ghetto inmates rose steadily, even though the population did not increase, as women and youths aged thirteen and above were enlisted and the number of Jews employed in services in the ghetto was reduced.

Working through the *Judenrat* and the Jewish ghetto police, the German authorities increased the economic exploitation of the ghetto. An additional factor taken into consideration by the German administration was that Jewish labour was much cheaper than non-Jewish workers.

The Germans fostered the belief among the Jews that their work was essential, and, as the number of Jewish workers increased, so did the Jews' confidence that the ghetto would not be liquidated. The idea in the ghettoes was work to survive; the more work, the greater the chances of survival.

However, even in this "relatively quiet period," the murder of individual Jews and of groups of ghetto inmates accused of various crimes continued. Jews were executed for purchasing food and bringing it illegally into the ghetto, for failing to wear the yellow badge, for possessing Aryan documents, or for hiding outside the ghetto. Jews considered unfit for work by the German authorities were also executed. In July 1942, eighty-four elderly people and invalids from the Vilnius ghetto were executed in Paneriai.

In March 1942, the areas of Asmiany (Ašmena), Salos, Mikališkės, and Svir (Svyriai) in Belarus, which bordered on Lithuania, became part of the *Generalkommissariat* Lithuania, Vilnius-Land *Gebietskommissariat.* About 6,000 Jews lived in some of the small ghettoes in these areas. The ghetto of Kiemeliškės, which had about 200 inhabitants, was liquidated on 22 October 1942, and the Jews there were shot in the vicinity of the township. Over 400 elderly and sick people from the Ašmena ghetto were killed on 23 October 1942.

During this "*relatively quiet period,*" the decisions and orders to carry out the "limited" killing actions were given by the German authorities, but the actual shooting of the Jews was carried out by Lithuanian police units.

5. The Third Period: April 1943–July 1944 – the Liquidation of the Remaining Jews of Lithuania by Murder and Deportation

The situation of the remaining Jews in Lithuania worsened during the spring and summer of 1943. It started with the liquidation of the last small ghettoes in east Lithuania – Švenčionys, Ašmena, Mikališkės, and Salos – and the murder of most of its inhabitants on 5 April 1943. In February 1943, the German administration in Lithuania had already decided to liquidate these four ghettoes. At that time there was an increase of Soviet partisan activity in Belarus, close to these ghettoes, and the German administration suspected that Jews from these four ghettoes would try to escape and join the partisans. To some extent this was true. There were underground groups in these ghettoes, and some groups of youngsters had escaped into the forests.

In these four ghettoes, on the eve of their liquidation, there were about 6,500–6,800 Jews. At the end of March and the first days of April 1943, about 2,500 of them were taken to labour camps around Vilnius or incarcerated in the Vilnius ghetto. The remaining Jews were told that they were being evacuated to the Vilnius and Kaunas ghettoes. Based on this information, the Jews believed that the 2,500 people who had been taken a few days before had actually been sent to labour camps and the Vilnius ghetto, and that they, too, would be transferred to the Vilnius and Kaunas ghettoes.

On 4–5 April these Jews embarked onto cargo trains, but, instead of being taken to the Vilnius and Kaunas ghettoes, they were taken to Paneriai and shot there. This murder action was carried out under the command of the German Security Police in Vilnius. However, the main guard force in Paneriai and those who shot the Jews were from the Lithuanian 1st Vilnius Police Battalion under the command of Captain Juozas Truškauskas.[46]

In a report submitted by the chief of the German Security Police and SD in Lithuania, at the end of April 1943, it was stated:

During the month covered by this report, the Belarusian areas incorporated into *Generalkommissariat* Lithuania… which are under constant partisan menace, are now completely free of Jews. As a result we now have a border zone 50 to 80 kilometres wide which is free of any Jews. The Jews who resided in the areas in question were concentrated in one place and selected for work. Those who were found to be unfit for work, some 4,000, underwent special treatment at Paneriai, on 5 April 1943.[47]

In June–July 1943, the labour-camps of Baltoji Vokė, Kena, Bezdonys, Riešė, and Naujoji Vilnia near Vilnius and Kaunas were

liquidated, and 800–900 of its Jewish inmates were murdered. In these camps there were underground groups that had made contact with the partisans, and a few dozen of their members had escaped into the forests. The liquidation of these labour camps was a German retaliatory measure. The main force involved in the killing of the Jews in these camps was soldiers from the First Vilnius Police Battalion and from the *Ypatingieji būriai* ("special detachments") located in Vilnius. During that period the German administration in east Lithuania adopted a strong-arm policy also against the non-Jewish population for disobeying the orders concerning conscription of labour and assistance to partisans operating in the area.

The fate of the ghettoes in Lithuania was eventually sealed by Himmler's order of 21 June 1943, to liquidate the ghettoes in the *Ostland* and establish concentration camps for those people who were able to work. Concentration camps enabled much stricter control over the inmates and could prevent revolts, like the Warsaw ghetto uprising, which had been put down only a month before Himmler's order. The immediate consequence of this order was the extermination of those who were unable to work; that is, the children and the elderly in the ghettoes.

There were some additional reasons behind this order. The deterioration of the German military situation in the first half of 1943, and the lifting of the siege of Leningrad was a direct threat to the *Generalkommissariat* Estonia and to the entire *Ostland*. This situation created an urgent need for manpower in Estonia to build fortifications, road construction and manufacturing oil-shale, and so Jews from the liquidated ghettoes were sent there. In August and September, according to Himmler's order, the authority for the ghettoes was transferred from the German civilian authorities and put under the exclusive control of the SS authorities. The ghettoes were then turned into concentration camps.

The ghetto in Vilnius was liquidated entirely in September 1943. From the Vilnius ghetto, with 18–19,000 inmates, over 11,000 able-bodied Jews were deported to concentration camps in Latvia and Estonia. About 3,500 children, women, and elderly people unfit for work were murdered. Some of them were killed inside Lithuania, and the rest were sent to the death camp of Sobibor in the *General-government* of Poland. About 2,200 were left in four small camps in Vilnius; over 1,000 escaped to the forests and joined the partisans or went into hiding within or outside of Vilnius.

The Šiauliai ghetto was officially turned into a concentration camp, and its area was reduced. Out of the 4–4,500 inmates, about 1,500 were sent to labour camps around Šiauliai; around 800 children and elderly were murdered on 5 November 1943. All the others, around 2,000, remained in Šiauliai.

The Kaunas ghetto was turned into a concentration camp. Out of the 16,000 Jews in the ghetto, 2,700–2,800 were deported to camps in Estonia at the end of October 1943; about 5–6,000 were sent to camps inside Lithuania; and 7–8,000 Jews remained in the camp in the area of the former ghetto. On 27 March 1944, an *Aktion* was carried out against children and elderly people in Kaunas and other camps. About 1,800, mostly children, were deported to Auschwitz or murdered in the Ninth Fort of Kaunas. About 200 children from camps in Vilnius were attached to the transport sent to Auschwitz.

The result of Himmler's order of 21 June, was the total liquidation of the ghetto in Vilnius in September 1943. Most of the inmates in the Kaunas and Šiauliai ghettoes remained in those places, although the ghettoes now became concentration camps.

As Himmler's order related equally to all the ghettoes in Lithuania, why was the fate of the Vilnius ghetto different? The answer is to be found in the reports of the chief of German Security Police and SD in Lithuania, dated 1 September 1943, which stated:

> In order to prevent panic among the Jews from reaching a climax, which might cause resistance and mass flight, it was agreed with the SS Economic Main Office [which was in charge of the concentration camps] and the police that it was necessary in the first place, to remove the Jews from Vilnius.[48]

This report related to August 1943, before the liquidation of Vilnius ghetto. In the report of 1 October 1943, which related to the events in September, when the Vilnius ghetto was liquidated, it was stated:

> Due to well-known problems in the Vilnius ghetto, it was completely evacuated. Several times it was necessary to use force to smash the serious resistance of the Jews. Our establishment sustained losses in the last action.[49]

The Vilnius ghetto, contrary to the Kaunas and Šiauliai ghettoes, was considered by the German authorities as a nest of Jewish resistance. Therefore, it was completely liquidated. The liquidation was carried out there quickly and by surprise in order to prevent resistance and mass escape.

In the last one-one and a half years of German occupation, especially after the Stalingrad defeat, the Lithuanian people become gradually disillusioned with the German occupation regime and their relations deteriorated. Their readiness of collaboration with the German authorities

diminished, but it had only a marginal effect in their relation to the remnants of the Lithuanian Jews and the readiness to help them.

Before the German retreat all the camps in Lithuania were liquidated: some of the Jewish inmates were murdered, and some were evacuated. About 2,000 of the remaining Jews in the camps in Vilnius were taken to Paneriai on 2–3 July 1944, and shot there. From Kaunas, Šiauliai, and other camps the Jews were deported to Stutthof in East Prussia and from there to camps in Germany in the first half of July 1944. In Kaunas about 1,500 Jews who went into hiding in the area of the former ghetto were killed when German soldiers, before the retreat of 12–14 July, burned down or blew up the houses in which they were hiding. Of the thousands of Lithuanian Jews who were deported to Latvia and Estonia in August–October 1943, part of them were murdered and part were evacuated through the Baltic Sea to Stutthof and other camps in Germany in August–September 1944. In the camps of Lagdi and Klooga in Estonia, on 18–19 September 1944, six days before the Soviet army liberated these camps, about 3,000 Jews – almost all of them Lithuanian Jews –were murdered by the German SS guards. Many of the Jews evacuated to Germany died or were murdered in the camps and on the death marches.

Summary

According to estimates, about 7–8,000 Lithuanian Jews of those who were evacuated from the Baltic States on the eve of the German retreat survived in Germany. About 1,700 Jews survived in Lithuania, among them about 900 as partisans in the forests and the rest in hiding or with the help of Aryan documents. Some of them were aided by local people, those "Righteous among the Nations."[50]

Out of the 203–207,000 Jews who had remained in Lithuania under German occupation, less than 5 percent survived; among them, less than 1 percent within Lithuania and in the forests of west Belarus. This number (or percentage) of surviving Jews was one of the lowest in comparison to other countries in Europe under German occupation. The explanation lies in the wide-scale collaboration with the Germans on the part of the local people and the large numbers among them who enlisted voluntarily into the police units that carried out most of the murder actions against the Lithuanian Jews and participated in the killings of Jews in Belarus, the Ukraine, and the *Generalgouvernement* of Poland.

From about 15,000 Lithuanian Jews who were deported or escaped to the Soviet Union, about 12,000 survived. Most of those who perished were soldiers in the Sixteenth Lithuanian Division in the Soviet army and fell in battle.

The glorious history of so many generations of Lithuanian Jewry, with its famous religious and secular institutions, came to its tragic end in the years 1941–1944.

Notes

1. Levin, 1996, 46–47. In 1926, there were 157,527 Jews in Lithuania. The natural growth between the two world wars was 13,833. During the same period 25,088 emigrated from Lithuania. Therefore, the number of Jews in Lithuania on the eve of World War II was 146, 272.

2. In the last population census in Poland, in 1931, the number of Jews in Vilnius was 54,600. We may assume that this number of around 55,000 Jews did not change drastically until 1939. In the small townships in the Vilnius area (Švenčionys, Švenčionėliai, Adutiškis, Ignalina), which became part of Lithuania, about 10–12,000 Jews were living there.

3. Arad, 1980, 17.

4. Stepashin et al., 1995, 247–248, doc. No. 254. According to this document, dated 17 June 1941, signed by Merkulov, the head of the NKGB of the Soviet Union, and addressed to the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, a total of 15,851 people were deported from Lithuania, including family members. As there was no national division with regard to this number, we may assume that about 20 percent were Jews.

5. Levin, 1996, 49, 82–83, cites that, before World War II, about 150,000 Jews lived in Lithuania and 240–250,000 in Soviet Lithuania. According this source 7,000 Jews were deported into the depths of the Soviet Union, and 15,000 escaped or were evacuated in the first days of the German invasion; on 101 there is a reference to 220,000 Jews who remained under German occupation.

6. With the onset of the Nazi-German invasion of the Soviet Union, on 22 June, 1941, an anti-Soviet uprising broke out in Lithuania, staged by the Lithuanian nationalist underground and units of the Lithuanian 29th Rifle Corps in the Red Army. The organisation of the underground and orders for the uprising came from the anti-Soviet "Lithuanian Activist Front" (LAF), established in Germany on 17 November 1940, by representatives of most of the Lithuanian political parties who had escaped from Lithuania. The people who took part in the uprising were called "partisans" in the German documents and in Jewish sources.

7. Nuremberg Document L–180.

8. Garfunkel, 1959, 31,329, 345.

9. Garfunkel et al., 1984, 185, 329, 345.

10. Garfunkel et al., 1984, 306–307.

11. Yad Vashem Archives 0–51/57–1, 10–12; *Einsatzgruppen* report no. 17.

12. Nuremberg Documents L–180. Summary report dated 15 October 1941.

13. Levin, 1996, 91, the number of about 10,000 Jews murdered during this period is cited.

14. Eidintas, 2001, 3.

15. Nuremberg Documents L–180.

16. Warlimont, 1962, 180. General Warlimont was the Chief of Operations Staff of the *Oberkommando der Wehrmacht-OKW*.

17. Nuremberg Documents L–221.

18. Warlimont, 1962, 180–181, wrote that in the Wehrmacht headquarter Hitler gave instructions to prepare plans to reduce the size of the army. General Warliment wrote: "There were certain additional instructions which bore witness to his [Hitlerls] complete confidence in the outcome of the Russian campaign."

19. Baynes, 1942, 740–741.

20. Dieckmann, 2000, 265.

21. Gerlach, 2000, 227. Gerlach wrote: "Economic interests and crises were far more important influences on the tempo of liquidation of the Jews… Antisemitism and anti-Bolshevism were necessary preconditions for these murders … but economic pressure led to the massive killing campaigns, to the horrible dynamics of mass murder." Dieckman, 2000, 262, wrote, "… it is clear that provision problems in Lithuania and in the region of Army Group North in general constituted an important, and possibly a decisive, factor in the decision to kill, in stead of feeding 'useless' Jewish women and children."

22. Yad Vashem Archives 0–18/245, 2–3.

23. Yad Vashem Archives 0–18/245, 5–6. According to Jewish sources, the number of murdered Jews in those days was around 10,000.

24. Rožauskas, 1970, 217–218.

25. Kruk, 1961, 53.

26. Tory, 1988, 66–75.

27. Yerushalmi, 1958, 38.

28. Arad, 1980, 133–142.

29. Arad, 1980, 133–142.

30. These numbers are higher than those given in Jaeger's report, which are: Šiauliai – 4,500; Kaunas – 15,000; Vilnius – 15,000. Švenčionys was not mentioned in Jaeger's report.

31. Bubnys, 2001, 31.

32. Bubnys, 2001, 13.

33. Arad/Krakowski & Spector, 1989, 22; Operational Situation Report USSR, no.21. The "one hundred and fifty Lithuanian officials" mentioned in this report were the "*Ypatingieji būriai*" unit.

34. Bubnys, 2001, 22.

35. Bubnys, 2001, 28.

36. Bubnys, 2001, 29–30.

37. Yad Vashem Archives 0–18/245.

38. Truska, 2001, 18, mentioned the number of 3,000 Jews deported by the Soviets.

39. Rožauskas, 1970, 123: Truska, 2001, 27, claims that the sentence in brackets was not inserted by the LAF centre in Berlin but added by an individual multiplying the LAF leaflets in Lithuania.

40. Truska, 2001, 23.

41. Truska, 2001, 24.

42. Truska, 2001, 24–25.

43. Nuremberg Document PS–3666.

44. Yad Vashem Archives 0–18/245.

45. Bubnys, 2001, 15–16.

46. Bubnys, 2001, 22–23.

47. Rožauskas, 1970, 271–272.

48. Arad, 1980, 439.

49. Arad, 1980, 440.

50. These numbers are based on the following estimates: There were about 1,000–1,100 Jewish partisans (600–650 from the Vilnius ghetto, 250–300 from the Kaunas ghetto, 35–40 from the Švenčionys ghetto, and over 100 from other localities). About 150–200 of them perished in the forests.

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The Holocaust in Lithuania:
An Outline of the Major Stages and their Results

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The aim of this paper is to reconstruct the process via which Lithuanian Jewry was destroyed. We will attempt to establish the most important stages in the mass-murder process, outline their characteristics and assess their results. We must concede that this topic is a relatively recent arrival in scholarship in post-1990 Lithuania and Lithuanian research still lags behind the work done in Israel by Dov Levin, Yitzak Arad and Dina Porad and in Germany by J. Matthaeus, K. Stang and C. Dieckmann. In recent years Lithuanian historians, such as L. Truska, V. Brandišauskas, S. Sužiedelis, A. Eidintas and others, have achieved much in studying of the genocide of Jews in Lithuania. The aforementioned Lithuanian historians try conscientiously and objectively to research the weightiest issues that give rise most often to argument. We have in mind collaboration by Lithuanian institutions with the Nazis in carrying out the genocide of Lithuanian Jewry and the problem of national moral responsibility. Nevertheless, insufficient attention has been devoted so far to certain important aspects of the Holocaust, such as periodisation, specificity and the statistical features of the Holocaust in Lithuania. Since we have no studies for comparison from neighbouring countries, it is difficult to establish what was particular about the Holocaust in Lithuania.

It is widely known that after the Nazi Party came to power in Germany antisemitism became state policy. Later this was transferred to areas of Europe occupied by the Third Reich. We should stress that the persecution and destruction of Jews was initiated by Nazi Germany, but in certain occupied countries, including Lithuania, the Nazis managed to involve part of the local population and local collaborating institutions in this criminal action. Nazi propaganda succeeded in exploiting anti-communist and antisemitic moods that had developed during a year of Soviet occupation and convince some Lithuanians that Bolshevism meant Jewish power and that the Jews were primarily responsible for the misfortunes endured during Soviet annexation and occupation.

The Jewish Genocide (Holocaust) in Lithuania could be subdivided conditionally into the following periods:

1. End-June 1941–November 1941 and this period may be subdivided further into two periods:

a. End-June 1941–mid-July 1941.

   b. End-July–November 1941.

   2. December 1941–March 1943.

   3. April 1943–mid-July 1944.

We will now survey the processes that took place in each period and attempt to distinguish their most important features and offer summaries of their results.

The worst and most tragic period for Lithuanian Jewry was the second half of 1941. By December 1941 80 percent of Jews resident in Lithuania at that time were murdered. The initiative for persecuting and killing the Jews lay in the hands of the occupying forces. Preparing for war against the Soviet Union, the leadership of the Third Reich planned from the outset that the war in the east would differ markedly from the war in western Europe. In March 1941 Hitler already stressed that the war with Russia would be a fight to the death between two irreconcilable ideologies (Nazism and Bolshevism), a war of *Weltanschauung*. All real and potential enemies of Nazism were to be destroyed mercilessly. As we know, the Jews were regarded by the Nazis as the Third Reich's most important enemy. Hitler was convinced that the *Wehrmacht* would not be strong enough to carry out the tasks of ideological war. This was to be done first and foremost by *Wehrmacht* groups operating behind the front lines (*Einsatzgruppen*) controlled directly by the Reich's supreme security agency, the *Reichssicherheitshauptamt*. Preparing for the attack on the Soviet Union the Nazis formed four operational groups, A,B,C and D. Group leaders were appointed directly by Himmler and Heydrich. Each section of the army (North, Centre and South) was allocated an operational group. The Northern Army which was to occupy the Baltic States and move against Leningrad was allocated Group A which comprised operational division (*Einsatzkommandos*) 2 and 3 and *Sonderkommando* 1a and 1b.[1] Operational Group A was headed by SS Brigadeführer Walter Stahlecker. *Einsatzkommando* 3 which operated in Lithuania was headed by SS *Standartenführer* Karl Jaeger. Operational Group A had around 990 men.[2]

On June 25 1941 Group leader Stahlecker arrived in Kaunas with the first *Wehrmacht* contingents and on July 2 1941 *Einsatzkommando* 3 led by Jaeger took over security police functions in Lithuania. Jaeger's staff set up its HQ in Kaunas and on 9 September 1941 the Vilnius district came under its control as did the Šiauliai District on 2 October.[3]

The slaughter of Lithuanian Jewry began during the first days of the Soviet-Nazi war. Even before the ghettoes were set up in August 1941 thousands of Jews were killed in Lithuania. The earliest organised mass

murders were committed in areas of Lithuania that bordered on Germany and in Kaunas. On the first day of the war Stahlecker arrived in Tilsit and instructed the Tilsit security police leader, H. J. Boehme, to begin the murder of Jews and communists within a 25 km band of territory in Lithuania. The Tilsit operative group comprising Gestapo, SD agents and Klaipėda's German police force soon began "cleansing" actions in the Lithuanian frontier zones. The Tilsit Gestapo group arranged the first murders in Gargždai on 24 June when 201 people were shot.[4] By 11 July 1941 the Tilsit Group had murdered 1,542 people in various sites in Lithuania and during summer 1941 their murder victims totalled 5,502.[5] The absolute majority of victims were Jewish.

On June 25 Stahlecker arrived in Kaunas and set about organising actions to destroy Jews and communists. Later (on 15 October 1941) Stahlecker wrote a detailed report on his activities to Himmler. One of Stahlecker's main concerns was involving local people in the killings of Jews and hiding Nazi guilt. In the afore-mentioned report Stahlecker wrote:

> After occupying the town there were efforts during the first hours to provoke anti-Jewish pogroms although it was difficult to arouse local antisemitic forces. The security police was ready on the basis of instructions to solve the Jewish question will all possible means as quickly as possible, but it was handy that at first at least they acted behind the scenes.[6]

After Algirdas Klimaitis's gang formed and armed itself Stahlecker managed to carry out mass pogroms in Kaunas. It should be stressed that A. Klimaitis's gang of around 300 men was not subject to either the Lithuanian Activists' Front [LAF] which had organised the armed anti-Soviet uprising or the Provisional Lithuanian Government. As Stahlecker wrote,

> A. Klimaitis managed so to organise and begin the pogrom that neither the instructions we had given nor our initiative came to the fore. During the first night of the pogrom in the night of June 25–26 Lithuanian partisans liquidated more than 1,500 Jews, burned or otherwise destroyed several synagogues and set the Jewish quarter, where there were around 60 houses, on fire. On the following nights 2,300 Jews were neutralised in the same way. According to Kaunas's example other Lithuanian towns had similar actions albeit on a

smaller scale and these affected communists who were still in those places too.[7]

The figures for the number of Jews killed and buildings burned during those pogroms (3,800 and 60 respectively) give grounds for doubt. Witnesses of those events often only recall the killings in the Lietūkis garage on 27 June 1941, when more than a dozen or several dozen Jews were killed; but Kaunas people do not remember there having been great fires at that time. Gestapo-initiated pogroms continued in Kaunas until 29 June 1941. After that regular slaughters of Jews began in the Kaunas forts. Certain renowned Israeli historians such as Yitzak Arad and Dov Levin stress the active role of Lithuanian anti-Soviet partisans and rebels in encounters with Jews during the first two weeks of the war and the Nazi occupation. It is alleged that in the period between 22 June 1941 and 5 July Lithuanians perpetrated anti-Jewish acts and controlled the situation in Lithuania. For example Dov Levin calculates there were around forty places where during these days where Lithuanian groups carried out pogroms[8]. Israeli historians rely mostly on the evidence of Jews who survived the Holocaust. I think that these allegations and calculations should be checked. As we know, during the first week of the war the *Wehrmacht* occupied Lithuania and the country was brought under German military rule (until the end of July 1941). During the first week of the war the German security police and SD operational and special groups began operating in Lithuania. They took the initiative in carrying out murders of Jews and communists (the Tilsit Gestapo group and Stahlecker's group in Kaunas). Thus, the Provisional Lithuanian Government that formed at the beginning of the war, the civil administration, police and partisan groups were not sole masters of the country but had to carry out the orders of the German military administration and operational groups. On the basis of my work in Lithuanian archives, I cannot confirm the allegation that at the beginning of the war in dozens of places in Lithuania Lithuanian partisan groups would have carried out pogroms and murdered Jews. Even in such a large town as Vilnius there were no mass pogroms during the first week of the war. In addition we should pay attention to the situation that developed during the first days of the war. In many places in Lithuania anti-Soviet Lithuanian partisans were shooting retreating Red Army soldiers, Soviet officials and activists. There were many Jews among those retreating and some of them could and did fall victim to such encounters. Retreating Red Army and NKVD units also carried out

dreadful acts of terror against Lithuanian rebels, political prisoners and even civilians (such as at Pravieniškės, Rainiai, Červenė and so forth). The red terror led to acts of revenge during which innocent people may also have died.

However, beginning with July 1941, when the whole of Lithuania was occupied by the Nazis and an occupation regime was set up there, persecution of the Jews took on a different form. There was a move from separate pogroms to the mass murder of Jews. This was done first of all in Kaunas. On 2 July 1941 *Einsatzkommando* 3A officially took over security functions in Lithuania. The Lithuanian partisans groups that had formed in Kaunas were disarmed on 28 June. That same day (28 June) work began on organising a National Labour Defence Battalion [TDA] led by Colonel Andrius Butkūnas. Together with the German Gestapo agents the TDA battalion began carrying out systematic mass killings of Jews in the Kaunas forts and the provinces. The first site chosen for mass murders was the Kaunas Seventh Fort. On the order of *Einsatzgruppe* 3A Commander Jaeger, 463 Jews were shot here on 4 July 1941 and on 6 July 2,514 Jews were slaughtered.[9]

According to the evidence of former TDA battalion members tried by the Soviet Union, we can conclude that the murders in Kaunas Seventh Fort were carried out by units 1 and 3 of the TDA battalion. Unit 3 took part more frequently in later murders of Jews and this was led by Lieutenants B. Norkus, J. Barzda and A. Dagys. When particularly large mass murders were committed almost all members of the battalion took part, except for soldiers on other duties. In August 1941 Kaunas Jews were murdered in Kaunas Fourth Fort and from October 1941 in the Ninth Fort. Here executions were carried out until the very end of the Nazi occupation. The largest mass murder of Kaunas Jews took place on 29 October 1941. The evening before the murders the Gestapo selected Jews from the Kaunas ghetto. Around 10,000 people were selected for death. They selected families with many children, physically weak persons, old people and the sick for murder. Members of the TDA, later called the First Police battalion, also took part in the selection of ghetto prisoners. On 29 October the condemned Jews were driven out of the ghetto to the Ninth Fort where they were shot in huge previously-dug pits. According to Jaeger's report 9,200 Jews were killed in the fort on 29 October of whom 2,007 were men, 2,920 were women and 4,273 were children. Jaeger referred to these murders cynically as "the cleansing of the ghetto from unnecessary Jews."[10] Summing up the Kaunas murders we can say that from 4 July to 11 December 1941 the TDA battalion,

especially its third unit, together with the Gestapo, murdered around 26,000 Lithuanian and foreign Jews (from Germany, Austria, Czechoslovakia).

The greater part of Jewish murders committed in Lithuania in 1941, except for those in the Vilnius and Šiauliai districts were connected with *SS Obersturmführer* Joachim Hamann's "flying unit" (*Rollkommando Hamann*). In his (in)famous report of 1 December 1941 Jaeger alleged that

> the aim of killing the Lithuanian Jews was able to be achieved solely because a flying unit was formed from the battalions and led by *Obersturmführer* Hamann, who understood my aims completely and was able to effect collaboration with Lithuanian partisans and the relevant civilian establishment.[11]

Hamann's mobile unit was not full-time and did not have a permanent station. Usually it was formed for a specific action from several German Gestapo agents and several dozen Lithuanian TDA battalion soldiers. Hamann himself often did not attend the killings in the provinces and restricted himself to issuing orders for the TDA officers (Dagys, Barzda, Norkus and others). The flying unit joined murders in the provinces when all the preparation work had been done: the condemned Jews had been gathered in one place, local policemen and so-called partisans (with white armbands) combined to guard the victims, a secluded killing site had been selected (mostly in forests or distant fields) and pits had been dug.

To sum up the murders committed by the First Police Battalion (TDA) in the provinces, we can say that in Lithuania (the Kaunas, Alytus and other districts) unit 3 of this battalion murdered around 12,000 Jews in at least fifteen sites (not counting Kaunas). Hamann's flying unit was a very efficient tool for carrying out Nazi Holocaust policy. According to figures of murdered Jews (at least 39,000), only the German security police battalion and special SD unit in Vilnius, and the Second Lithuanian Police battalion (later called the Twelfth) organised and led by major Antanas Impulevičius in Kaunas could match Hamann's unit. However, Impulevičius's group murdered Jews in Belarus rather than Lithuania. In general it should be stressed that the role played in the Holocaust by Lithuanian police battalions was particularly significant. Although almost every type of Lithuanian police force (public police, security police, auxiliary police, partisan [white

armband] groups) took part in the persecution and murder of Jews, their role in the Holocaust was not so important as that of the police battalions (or "self-defence" units). On the basis of my research I can say that ten Lithuanian police battalions out of twenty five took part in the Holocaust in various ways (direct shooting, guarding the shooting sites during the murders, transporting victims to the killing sites, ghetto and concentration camp security). According to my calculations these Lithuanian police battalions together with the Gestapo and local policemen shot around 78,000 Jews in Lithuania, Belarus and the Ukraine.

The ghetto-building process proceeded in parallel with the arrest and shooting of Jews. The Kaunas military commandant, the Lithuanian Jurgis Bobelis, and the mayor, Kazimieras Palčiauskas, issued the order for setting up the Kaunas ghetto on 10 July 1941. All Kaunas Jews were compelled to move to the ghetto in the Vilijampolė suburb by 15 August 1941. Those who did not comply were threatened with arrest[12]. Even before the ghetto was set up around 10,000 Kaunas Jews were killed in June–July 1941.[13] The ghetto was enclosed in a barbed-wire fence on 15 August. The ghetto was guarded by German and Lithuanian police. The ghetto commandant was Kaunas Town District Commissar Hans Cramer's adjutant, Fritz Jordan. Around 30,000 Jews were locked into the Kaunas ghetto and its internal administration was headed by a council of elders whose chairman was the doctor, Elchanan Elkes. In August 1941 a Jewish ghetto police form was set up headed by Mikhail Kopelman. Later there were 220–230 ghetto policemen.[14] Ghetto Jews were to be killed gradually but first they had to be used to the utmost for German war requirements.

The Vilnius ghetto was begun by Town Commissar Hans Hingst in the first days of August 1941. Practical issues were delegated to Hingst's adjutant and assistant for Jewish Issues, Franz Murer. The latter, together with Mayor Dabulevičius selected a site for the ghetto in the old town. On 6 September 1941 Vilnius Jews were transferred by the police to the ghetto. Before the ghetto was established German security police and special SD units killed between 10,000 and 20,000 Vilnius Jews in Paneriai. Around 30,000 people were located in Ghetto 1, and around 9,000–11,000 were imprisoned in Ghetto 2. But even after the Jews had been forced into the ghettoes the killings continued until the very end of 1941. After several operations carried out in October 1941 Ghetto 2 was liquidated. All the inmates were murdered in Paneriai. Until the beginning of the Nazi-Soviet war around 57,000 Jews had lived in

Vilnius and by the end of 1941 around 33,000–34,000 had been murdered.[15] More than 20,000 Vilnius ghetto Jews were left to live for the time being and do war work required by the Germans. Jewish ghettoes were set up in other large and small Lithuanian towns but most of these were liquidated in summer and autumn 1941. After 1941 only the Vilnius, Kaunas, Šiauliai and Švenčionys ghettoes remained. According to the Israeli historian Y. Arad's calculations of the number of Jews murdered in Lithuania between June and December 1941, some 164,000–167,000 people, or approximately 80 percent of Lithuanian Jewry, were killed in those six or so months. At the end of this period there were only around 43,000 Jews in Lithuania: around 20,000 in the Vilnius ghetto, 17,500 in the Kaunas ghetto, 5,500 in the Šiauliai ghetto and 500 in Švenčionys.[16]

1. The Destruction of Lithuanian Jewry in Provincial Areas in 1941

How were Jews persecuted and killed in the Lithuanian provinces? Two periods may be distinguished here:

A. End-June 1941–mid-July 1941

This period was dominated by politically-motivated persecution. Jews were most often arrested, imprisoned and shot as former communists, members of the communist youth organisation, Soviet officials and supporters. Non-Jews were also terrorised for these reasons (Lithuanians, Russians, Poles and so on). In this period it was mostly male Jews who were persecuted. Women and children were murdered less frequently. The persecution and murder of Jews was organised by the German authorities (military commanders, officers in the security police and SD, and a little later, district commissars). However, the Lithuanian administration took part in this process from the very beginning of the Nazi occupation (district leaders, town mayors), as did the Lithuanian police and so-called partisan groups (with white armbands).

B. The second stage (end-July 1941–November 1941)

This was the period of racialist genocide. In this period Jews were not persecuted for political reasons but simply because they were Jews. At this time almost all Lithuanian provincial Jewry was slaughtered. Murders took place intensively from August to mid-September 1941. Temporary ghettoes and isolation camps were set up before the mass murders got under way. This was a period of preparation for mass

murder. The ghettoisation process began in the provinces around the end of July and lasted until mid-August. A particularly important moment was the third secret memorandum of Police Director Vytautas Reivytis (16 August 1941), "On the detention and concentration of Jews in special locations." Carrying out the instructions and orders of Lithuanian administration officials and the Nazis, *all* provincial Jews were rounded up into ghettoes and isolation camps. In many places all surviving Jews, women, children, the aged, were shot before the final liquidation of the ghettoes and camps. Normally the murders were committed in woods or fields a few kilometres away from the ghettoes and camps. The most important groups in the slaughter of provincial Jews were: Hamann's flying unit (formed basically by unit 3 of the TDA battalion), local self-defence units (in Jonava, Kupiškis, Zarasai etc), local partisan groups (white armbands) and police officers. Mass shootings were often led by German Gestapo officers but there were many small towns where people were murdered without direct German involvement. The latest mass provincial murders of Jews took place in Lazdijai (3 November 1941) and Vilkaviškis (15 November 1941). By November 1941 virtually all provincial Jews had been shot. Only a small number escaped or were saved by local people (hardly more than 3–5 percent).

2. Specific Features of the Holocaust in Lithuania

There were certain features that were specific to the Jewish Genocide in Lithuania. Previously in other Nazi-occupied countries, especially in western Europe, persecution of the Jews took place gradually in several stages. In Lithuania the killings began in the first days of the occupation. We can say that Lithuania was the first country where the Nazis set about carrying out their extermination policy from the start. In occupied areas of central and western Europe Jewish civil rights were restricted at first and later Jews were moved into ghettoes and only after that did physical destruction begin. Each stage last between one and two years. Complete extermination was the last stage in a long process. No clear boundaries between these stages were seen in Lithuania. Practically juridical discrimination, ghettoisation and physical destruction took place at the same time. West European Jews were usually not murdered in their homeland but in concentration camps in Germany and German-occupied Poland. Most Lithuanian Jews were murdered not far from where they were born. Jews from Austria, Germany, Czechoslovakia and France were transported to their deaths in Lithuania.[17]

Why did the mass murders begin so soon in Lithuania? We might offer the following hypothesis in response: The Holocaust was connected with the plans of the Third Reich's leadership to colonise and germanise the Baltic countries. According to Nazi racialist policy all Jews, as the greatest enemies of the Aryan race, were to be eliminated totally. Because Lithuania had a common border with Germany and Lithuania was supposed to become ground for German colonisation after the war, Lithuanian Jewry had to be shot immediately, that is, as Nazis understood it, this strategically important territory had to be cleansed of undesirable elements and prepared for colonisation. In addition Nazi Germany, seeking to ensure its border security sought to destroy most quickly those Jews who, in their eyes, were the most important source of disturbances behind the front and dissatisfaction with the occupying authorities. This also encouraged the Nazis to kill Lithuanian Jews as quickly as possible.

Another specific factor in the Holocaust in Lithuania is that the Nazis managed to draw a relatively high number of Lithuanian institutions and local people into carrying out the killings. This fact can be explained by the fact that unlike western and central European countries Lithuania experienced the Soviet occupation before the Nazi occupation. Pain inflicted during the Soviet occupation made a large part of the Lithuanian population enemies of Bolshevism and supporters of Germany. The Nazi-Soviet war was associated with the removal of the Soviet occupation and the hopes for restoring the Lithuanian state. Antisemitic propaganda from the Nazis and the anti-Soviet Lithuanian underground further popularised the anti-Jewish mood and stereotypes (Jew-Bolshevik). Therefore in Lithuania Hitler's policies, including that towards the Jews, received greater support than in western Europe. Once again in their history Jews became an easy object for revenge and attack, a kind of scapegoat for the misfortunes endured by the ethnic Lithuanian nation. These factors increased the scale of the Jewish catastrophe and helped the Nazis carry out their Genocide policy in Lithuania. The number of Lithuanian Jewry's dead (around 95 percent) was the largest in the whole of Nazi-occupied Europe. Although the Final Solution was organised and initiated by the Nazis it would not have been carried out so quickly and on such a scale without the action support of part of the Lithuanian administration and the local population. Since the main German military and police forcers were sent to the front and the area closest to the front line the Germans lacked force to control gigantic territories and carry out their occupation policy consistently**.** We can give

the following figures as an example. At the beginning of 1944 only around 660 German officials worked in the German civilian administration (the general commissariat and the district commissariats) while in the Lithuanian administration (at all levels, management, district administration, the police) there were around 20,000 ethnic Lithuanian officials. Thus the Germans comprised only 3.3 percent of the occupation administration staff.[18] The successful implementation of Nazi policy (including their Jewish policy) was inconceivable without the support of the ethnic Lithuanian administration. The nationalistic Lithuanian administration was interested in the liquidation of the Jews as a perceived enemy and potential rivals of ethnic Lithuanians and thus not only did not oppose Nazi Holocaust policy but in effect adopted it as their own.

3. The Second Period: December 1941–March 1943

This period could be called a relatively stable or calm period. At that time there were no mass murders of Jews. Nazi efforts were concentrated in making maximum use of the Jews as a workforce in the interests of the German war economy. Almost all men and women of working age had various jobs in the ghetto workshops, different factories, firms and special Jewish labour camps. In the report of the German security police and SD chief in Lithuania in February 1943 it was said that daily around 9,600 Kaunas ghetto Jews worked in 140 work sites. 1,400 men and women worked in ghetto workshops. Most Jewish labourers carried out work required by the army and met military orders. Every week around fifty people died in the Kaunas ghetto as a result of hard labour, food shortages and poor medical care.[19]

The September 1943 German security police and SD chief's report said that after the SS took over the Kaunas ghetto the number of work teams was reduced from 93 to 44. There were provisions for setting up eight concentration camps: for 2,500 Jews in the Aleksotas barracks, for 1,200 in Ežerėliai, 1,200 in Šančiai, 600 in the army car park in Petrašiūnai, 500 in Palemonas, 500 in the Kaunas rubber factory, 400 in Marijampolė, 400 in Kaišiadorys and 2,000 in the Kaunas ghetto.[20]

Ghetto leaders were of the opinion that while the ghettoes were economically useful for the Nazis, they would not be liquidated. Therefore the ghetto administration tried to employ as many workers as possible and increase their workload. For example, in summer 1943

around 14,000 Vilnius ghetto Jews (two thirds of the ghetto population) were working in various firms and Jewish labour camps.[21]

In April 1943 the German security police and SD chief in Lithuania informed the *Reichssicherheitshauptamt* that at that time 44,584 Jews were left in the Lithuanian general district 23,950 in the Vilnius ghetto, 15,875 in the Kaunas ghetto and 4,759 in the Šiauliai ghetto. Around 30,000 Jews were doing jobs needed by the German army.[22]

4. The Third Period: April 1943–July 1944: Liquidation of the Ghettoes

The calm period came to an end in spring 1943. In February 1943 the Nazi administration decided to begin liquidating the ghettoes. This was done first in the districts of Svyriai and Ašmena which had been joined to the Lithuanian General District. At this time the Soviet partisan movement became stronger in the eastern part of the Vilnius District. Some of the Jews who managed to escape from the ghettoes joined Soviet partisan groups. This led the Nazi administration to begin liquidating ghettoes and labour camps in the Vilnius district. First in March 1943 the Švenčionys, Mikališkės, Ašmena and Salos ghettoes were liquidated. Around 3,000 people were moved from these ghettoes to the Vilnius ghetto and others were told that they would be transferred to Kaunas. On 5 April 1943 trains with Jews from the small towns of eastern Lithuania halted in Paneriai. Here the Jews were taken out and shot in the Paneriai woods. "Men" from the First Lithuanian Police Battalion took part in the killings. Around 5,000 Jews were murdered in all. Only a few managed to escape and return to the Vilnius ghetto.[23]

At the beginning of July 1943 the Jewish labour camps in Kena and Bezdonys that were part of the Vilnius ghetto were liquidated. Around 500–600 Jewish workers from these camps were shot by Gestapo and Lithuanian policemen. Around 600–700 Jews from the Baltoji Vokė and Riešė labour camps were transferred to the Vilnius ghetto or managed to escape.[24]

On 21 June Himmler issued an order to liquidate all ghettoes on Ostland territory. Jews who were fit for work were to be transferred to SS-controlled concentration camps. The Kaunas and Šiauliai ghettoes were turned into concentration camps and the Vilnius ghetto was destroyed.[25]

The Vilnius ghetto was liquidated on 23–24 September 1943. The inmates were divided into two groups. The men and women (around

11,000 in number) who were fit for work were transported to concentration camps in Estonia (Kloga, Vaivara) and Latvia (Kaiserwald), while the elderly, women and children were taken away to be murdered in Auschwitz. After the Vilnius ghetto had been liquidated, around 1,200 Jews were left in Vilnius to work in the "Kailis" factory and a similar number were employed in the army motor vehicle repair shops in Subačius St.[26] According to data from the German security police and SD there were 24,108 Jews in ghettoes in the Vilnius district before the Vilnius ghetto was liquidated; 14,000 Jews were transported to Estonia for work, 2,382 Jews were left in Vilnius and there were a further 1,720 Jews in the villages.[27] Of more than 50,000 Jews hardly 2,000–3,000 survived to the end of the Nazi occupation. Approximately two-thirds of these survivors were escapees from the ghetto and most of them joined Soviet partisan groups.[28]

Killings were resumed in Kaunas on 26 March 1944. That day there was a particularly vicious round-up of children led by W. Fuchs and B. Kittel. SS men and Ukrainian policemen entered the ghetto, visited houses, took children away from their mothers and threw them into buses. Mothers who resisted were beaten with rifle-butts and attacked by dogs. In two days around 1,700 children and old people were rounded up. 130 ghetto policemen were arrested. The next day (27 March 1944) those arrested (including 34 Jewish policemen) were shot in the Ninth Fort.[29]

As the front drew closer to Kaunas the Nazis decided to liquidate the concentration camps completely. The liquidation of the Kaunas ghetto began on 8 July 1944 when around 1,200 were transported by barge; on 12 July the Gestapo began burning ghetto buildings. Anyone who ran out of a burning building was shot. Almost all the houses and workshops were burned down. Hundreds of people perished in the flames or from Gestapo bullets. In all around 6,000–7,000 people were taken out of the Kaunas ghetto; around 1,000 were killed during the liquidation of the ghetto and approximately 300–400 Jews escaped.[30]

Men from the Kaunas ghetto were transported to the Dachau concentration camp and the women were sent to Stutthof. The Kaunas Jews sent to Dachau built an underground aircraft factory and did other work. Several prisoners died every day from exhaustion. Death rates were particularly high in October and November 1944.[31] In Dachau the former chairman of the Kaunas ghetto council of elders E. Elkes perished. When the war was ending Dachau was liberated by the

Americans. Around 1,000 Lithuanian Jews lived to see Dachau liberated. Around 100 returned to Lithuania and the rest remained in the west.

The women and children of the Kaunas ghetto were taken to Stutthof. On 19 July 1944 1,208 women and children were placed in this camp.[32] On 26 July 1,893 Jews from the Kaunas and Šiauliai ghettoes (801 women, 546 girls and 546 boys) were moved from Stutthof to Auschwitz.[33] Very few survived to be liberated. There are data showing that only around 2,400 people, 8 percent of the population, from Kaunas ghetto lived to see the end of the war.[34]

Until October 1943 the Šiauliai ghetto was under the control of Šiauliai District Commissar Hans Gewecke and from 1 October 1943 the SS took control of the ghetto.[35] The ghetto became a concentration camp headed by SS *Hauptscharführer* Hermann Schleef. Since the murders of spring and autumn 1941 the ghetto had a relatively calm existence. There had been a selection of children and people unfit for work on 5 November 1943. This was led by SS *Sturmhauptführer* Foerster. That day SS and Vlasov men came from Kaunas to shoot or transport to the German camps (probably Auschwitz) 570 children and 260 elderly Jews. Jewish Council members B. Kartun and A. Kac volunteered to accompany the detainees.[36]

On 15 July 1944 the liquidation of the Šiauliai ghetto began. Around 2,000 Šiauliai Jews were transported in four stages to Stutthof and from thence the men were taken to Dachau and the women and children to Auschwitz. Šiauliai survivors in Dachau were liberated by the Americans on 2 May 1945. Only 350–500 Šiauliai Jews lived to the end of the war.[37]

It is very difficult to answer the question of how many Lithuanian Jews were killed in all during the years of Nazi occupation. Historians differed markedly on this issue. Numbers of Holocaust victims in Lithuania vary from 165,000 to 254,000. It is most probably impossible to give an exact figure. Neither full statistical records nor lists of the names of the dead survive in the archives. The present author bases himself on the following calculations: according to data from the statistics department, on 1 January 1941 there were 208,000 Jews (6.86 percent of the total population) in Lithuania.[38] At the beginning of the war around 8,500 Jews went to Russia. During the Nazi occupation 1,500–2,000 escaped from the Vilnius and Kaunas ghettoes and 2,000–3,000 lived in concentration camps to the end of the war. Thus around 195,000–196,000 Lithuanian Jews were murdered. This figure is neither final nor indisputable, but the present author considers it to be close to

reality. The Holocaust of Lithuanian Jewry is the worst tragedy of Lithuania's history. Never in Lithuanian history have so many people been killed in so short a time. Lithuanian society is insufficiently aware of the scale and severity of this tragedy and does not grasp its significance or empathise with its victims. However, over recent years more and more books and articles have been printed in Lithuania on this theme. This is not just an academic history problem but a moral problem for all Lithuanians. It is very important that we grasp the fact that the Holocaust was not just a Jewish tragedy but the total destruction of our fellow-citizens and thus it was a Lithuanian tragedy. Such an understanding does not come immediately or without effort. It requires certain effort on the part of historians, teachers, politicians and the mass media. Knowledge and understanding of the Holocaust are necessary to overcome nationalist and anti-democratic ideologies, expand society, foster tolerance and understand "other" cultures.

Notes

1. Krausnick, 1985, 124–25.

2. Hilberg, 1990, 303.

3. Krausnick, 1985, 151–52.

4. Krausnick, 1985, 142; Potsdam, *Bundesarchivabteilungen* [BAP], Report from USSR No. 14: 82.

5. Krausnick, 1985, 142; *Masinės žudynės,* part 2, 26.

6. *Masinės žudynės,* part 2, 19.

7. *Masinės žudynės,* part 2, 19.

8. See Y. Arad's paper in this volume.

9. *Masinės žudynės*, part 1, 131.

10. *Masinės žudynės*, part 1, 135.

11. *Masinės žudynės*, part 1, 138.

12. Vilnius, LCVA f. R–1444 ap.1, b.8, 140: Order of Kaunas Commandant No. 15, 10 July 1941.

13. *Enzyklopedie des Holocaust* vol. 2, 804 ("Kowno").

14. History of the Kaunas ghetto Jewish Police (in Russian): Vilnius, LYA f. K–1, unattributed document file, b.345, fos11–13.

15. *Enzyklopedie des Holocaust* vol. 3, 1601 ("Wilna").

16. See Y. Arad's chapter in this volume.

17. Porat, 1993, 22–23.

18. Paper delivered by C. Dieckmann, "Überlegungen zur deutsch-litauischen Kooperation 1941–1944," in the the Hüttenfeld conference *Das Jahr 1941: Die Fragen an die litauische Geschichte*, 29–30 Sept 2001.

19. *Masinės žudynės*, part 1, 243.

20. Vilnius, LCVA f. R–1399 ap.1, b.62, fos60–61: report from German Security Police and SD chief in Lithuania to the Supreme Reich Security Department [RSHA] in Berlin, Sept 1943.

21. *Enzyklopedie des Holocaust*, vol. 3, 1601 ("Wilna").

22. Vilnius, LCVA f. R–1399 ap.1, b.26, fos55–56: report from German Security Police and SD chief in Lithuania to the Supreme Reich Security Department [RSHA] in Berlin, April 1943.

23. *Masinės žudynės*, part 1, 172; interrogation report of J. Oželis-Kozlovskis, 16 Dec 1944, Vilnius LYA f. K–1, ap.58, b.27968/3, fos12–48.

24. Report of interview of A. Rindziunskis, 21 Dec 1945 from former Latvian SSR KGB Archive No. N–18313, t.3 ap.164; I. Guzenberg, "Vilniaus geto darbo stovyklos ir 1942 m. gyventojų surašymas," in: *Vilniaus getas: kalinių sąrašai*, vol. 2, 14–15.

25. Arad, 1990, 88.

26. *Masinės žudynės* part 1, 247–48; Arad paper in this volume.

27. Report of German Security Police and Vilnius SD department, 11 November 1943: Vilnius, LCVA F. R–1399 ap.1, b.33, fo.4.

28. *Enzyklopedie des Holocaust*, vol. 3, 1603 ("Wilna").

29. Confirmation of Nazi murder of Jews in Kaunas from Lithuanian SSR KGB dated 8 Aug 1944: Vilnius, LYA f.K–1 ap.10, b.16, fo.94.

30. Vilnius, LYA f. K–1 ap.10, b.102, fo.217.

31. *Masinės žudynės*, part 1, 247–48.

32. Archiwum Muzeum Stutthof, I–II B–10, 169–189: Prisoner list, 20 July 1944.

33. Archiwum Muzeum Stutthof, I–II C–3, 43–67.

34. *Enzyklopedie des Holocaust*, vol. 2, 806 ("Kowno").

35. Interrogation report of G. Parizer, 17 April 1945: Vilnius, LYA f. K–1, ap.46, b.1228, fos1–2.

36. *Masinės žudynės*, part 1, 342; notes on Schleef's activities, Vilnius, LYA f.K–1, ap.46, b.1228, fos1–2.

37. *Lietuvos rytas* 26 July 1994; report of interrogation of E. Gens, 21 Jan 1948: Vilnius, LYA f. K–1, ap.58, b.42809/3 fo.12–13.

38. Lithuanian Statistics department data of 1 Jan 1941 on ethnic composition of Lithuanian population: LCVA f. R–743, ap.5, b.46 fo.172.

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Holocaust and Musar for the Telšiai Yeshivah: Avraham Yitshak and Eliyahu Meir Bloch*

Gershon Greenberg

1. Avraham Yitshak Bloch

When Yosef Layb Bloch, the Head of the Ets Hayim yeshivah of Telšiai (or *Telzer Yeshivah*) died in 1930, his eldest son Zalman (b. 1887) transferred his natural right as successor to be *Rosh Yeshivah* (yeshivah director) to his younger brother Avraham Yitshak (b. 1890). The yeshivah (a religious academy for males thirteen years old and older) began in 1875 under the leadership of Zalman Abel, Meir Atlas and Tsevi Ya'akov Oppenheim in an effort to synthesise traditional rabbinic texts with *Musar* (moralistic) literature. It was led by Eliezer Gordon ("Eliezer Telzer") 1881–1910, and then his son-in-law Yosef Layb Bloch. Avraham Yitshak, along with the other yeshivah directors Eliyahu Meir Bloch and Azriel Rabinowitch, built the yeshivah's tradition of excellent Talmudic scholarship. Shimon Shkop and Hayim ("Hayim Telzer") Rabinowitch were on the faculty. Study and prayer went from 8:00 AM – 10:00 PM daily except for Sabbath, for five consecutive one and a half year programmes.[1] Before succeeding his father, Avraham Yitshak led in establishing a preparatory school (*Mekhinah*), directed by brothers-in-law Hayim Mordekhai Katz and Avner Akliansky, along with Pinhas Halpan with secular studies required by the government, a seminar for advanced rabbinic study (*Kollel Harabanim*), directed by Katz; male and female branches of the Yavneh teachers institute (*Beit Midrash Lamorim*) headed by Avraham Mordekhai Vesler and Shmuel Hayim Dunash; and *Beit Midrash Lamorot* and a branch of the Yavneh Hebrew High School for Girls (*Gymnasiyon Ha'ivri Lebanot*).[2]

By November 1939 the yeshivah was endangered by war and financial collapse. Avraham Yitshak Bloch wrote to the president of the yeshivah's international organisation (*Histadrut Talmidei Yeshivat Ets Hayim Betelz*), Avraham David Burak in Brooklyn, that an attempt was being made to send some of his leadership to America to raise funds to help cover costs for destitute refugee students from great yeshivas of Poland who were streaming in through Vilnius. Despite the distress, he assured, the yeshivah was full, the learning intense, and all were committed to ascending in holiness (*Vehakal mesorim le'aliyah ulehitalut bakodesh*). Bloch prayed that God would have mercy and restore what had been destroyed.[3] In June 1940 he cabled *Der Morgen Zshurnal* in New York that the "Yeshivah and religion have not been affected by the change in

government which has now taken place in Lithuania through Russia's military penetration." The editor added that the yeshivah was asking for immediate help to support the dormitory and the kitchen, which now served five hundred students.[4] On 3 July 1940 the Soviets annexed Lithuania and on 30 July ordered the evacuation of the yeshivah building.[5] Its contents were moved to the *Mekhinah*, the Torah scrolls being left for last, and on 4 July the building began its transformation into a Lithuanian *Volkschule*. Learning continued in the *Mekhinah* and in different *Batei Midrash* (learning houses) in Telšiai. In early August 1940 Avraham Yitshak Bloch cabled *Der Morgen Zshurnal* that "the yeshivas continue with their fruitful work, anticipating as always that their American Jewish brethren will not let them disappear."[6] In September, the yeshivah published its last issue of *Peri Ets Hayim: Kovets Letorah Veda'at* in Kėdainiai.[7]

2. *Bitahon* and *Mesirat Nefesh*, 1939–1940[8]

In his lecture entitled "The Loftiness of the Days of Judgment" of September 1939, Avraham Yitshak Bloch stated that *Halakhah* in its larger sense would be the best way to cope with the growing difficulties, for as a self-enclosed entity it was outside the upsetting reach of contemporary events. Specifically, if one drew strength from God's presence (I Chronicles 16:11), kept God ever in mind (Proverbs 5:19) and permeated life with Torah, then *Musar* (moralistic conduct) and *Da'at* (wisdom) could resist their impact. As a model, Bloch pointed to Mordekhai's response to Haman's decree of destruction. Since it was the sixteenth day of *Nisan*, when a flour offering (*Omer*) was brought during the days of the Temple, Mordekhai engaged his students in the relevant laws (Leviticus 2:2; bMegillah 16a), and this gave them power to endure.

The *Musar* and *Da'at* reflections by Avraham Yitshak Bloch centred on carrying out *Mitsvot* (Scriptural commandments) before death – a paradigm for the *Mitsvot* amidst the current threat, which he designated as an *Et pekudah*, a moment of visitation in the sense of crisis. Bloch brought forward the view of Yonah Gerondi (1200–1263) that when a *Mitsvah* was performed preceding one's death it evidenced a total life of Torah-observance, and when a *Mitsvah* was trespassed it evidenced a total life of Torah-trespass. The relation to a single *Mitsvah* at the boundary between life and death retroactively defined and epitomised all of one's life (*Sha'ar Sheni* 16[a]. In *Sha'arei Teshuvah*). Bloch recalled his father Yosef Layb Bloch's saying that after a person died all his deeds were gathered up in eternity. There, in eternity, they had equal stature, no matter their original position in time and space or respective importance.

Genesis 24:1 ("Abraham was old and well stricken with age") meant that as he was about to die all Abraham's deeds were collected for evaluation thereafter, *vis a vis* redemption. The Sages averred that "When a person goes to the grave, all deeds are detailed before him" (bTa'anit 11[a]). As one approached death, the single act mediated between a lifetime of *Mitsvot* as differentiated by time and space and *Mitsvot* in eternity which became equalised.[9]

In a subsequent undated lecture of this period, "Wait on the Lord" (*Kavei el Hashem*) (Psalms 27:14), Bloch focused on *Bitahon*. The unfolding catastrophe came about in relationship to Israel (Yevamot 63[a]), and so the response had to come from Israel. It had to be one of *Bitahon* – which Bloch understood primarily in terms of *Havot Hatevavot* by the eleventh century Jewish philosopher Bahyah Ibn Pakudah. For Bahyah – according to the elaboration offered by R. J. Zwi Werblowsky – *Bitahon* consisted of absolute trust in divine providence and omnipotence, under any circumstances; faith that whatever happened, God meant it for the best. It was ever-conscious, rather than dormant and crystallising into consciousness in moments of crisis – objective or existential. In essence, *Bitahon* was the practice of the presence of God. It displaced reliance on human effort and merit with attribution of worldly success to divine grace. It involved abandoning oneself totally to God, meditating upon Him and being lovingly prepared to die for the sanctification of His name. When one trusted in God this way, for Bahyah, the divine love which sustained the world would in fact surround one on every side.[10]

Bitahon, Bloch began, was the ultimate form of response to the ascents and descents of life (See *Mi yesh lo umi yityaser ... mi yeshaket umi yetaref. Tefilat Yamim Noraim*). It had present and future dimensions. The Men of the Great Synagogue prayed "In the Land of Israel God assures and insures the pious" (*Be'erets Yisrael misha'en umivateah latsadikim*.). Because God directed all action, one may have *Bitahon* that positive results would emerge (an assurance of the present) and that God, who was completely good (Psalms 5:5), would prevent evil from intruding upon those who adhered (*shedivek* – related to *Devekut*) to him (an insurance for the future).[11] Bloch referred to Bahyah's statement that whatever effort man made (and every human effort should be made) only God determined what would actually be achieved (*Sha'ar Habitahon*. Chapter 4. In *Hovot Halevavot*) and to Rambam's premise that God protected those who trusted in Him from all evil (Psalms 91:2. Rambam, *Moreh Nevukhim*, vol. III, Chapter 51.

Bitahon had existential (subjective) and ontological (objective) dimensions. Ideally, it involved continual *Devekut* (adherence) to God, uninterrupted consciousness that there was none besides God;

consciousness of God's presence, which connected one to eternity.[12] In an earlier lecture "Prayer" (*Tefilah*) Bloch spoke of keeping God in mind at all times. When this happened, particularly through prayer, God's *Shekhinah* (divine presence) entered in and with it the rule of providence. Conversely, if one severed thought from God for but a moment, the door to divine inspiration would close for that moment.[13] This consciousness, he said in "Wait on the Lord," assured that God's protection would become an objective reality ("I will fear no evil for Thou art with me." Psalms 23:4). Bloch implied the existence of a meeting point between God and man prior to experience, a point which unfolded below and above. The process began with man: "The awakening from above depended upon the awakening from below" (*keyadua*, *hitorerut dele'ila teluyah behitorerut delitata*). With the belief that God was present in His goodness, all would in fact turn out to be good. In turn, God would strengthen the existential *Bitahon*, indirectly furthering the objectively good life (Psalms 27:14).[14] Bloch called upon those of his yeshivah community to fill their minds and hearts with *Bitahon*, suspend doubts about the future, expect God's effecting a positive outcome, and leave no room for despair or collapse. This indeed, was God's intention. According to the sixteenth century Kabbalist Hayim Vital:

> It arose in God's will [to create the world in order] to enhance His creatures, such that they would recognise His greatness and be worthy of becoming a chariot to the above, adhering to him (Hayim Vital, *Sha'ar Hakelalim* 5[a]. In *Ets Hayim*).

In God's world, according to Mosheh Hayim Luzzatto (Ramhal), man ascended and adhered to God by keeping the *Mitsvot* (*Perek Alef*. In *Mesillat Yesharim*). Upon achieving the *Devekut* of *Bitahon*, God would protect a person from evil and affliction would end (Psalms 11:1).[15]

Bloch spoke of the objectively-good reality evoked from God by man in terms of *Hesed* (merciful love) and *Rahamim* (compassion). For Bahyah, faith in God's infinite *Hesed*, consciousness of the divine presence and the goodness it brought, opened up the channel to divine *Hesed*. *Hesed* was implicit to creation, having been created by divine will. It was ready for man, and awaiting his initiative (*Sha'ar Habitahon. Chapter 2*. In *Hovot Halevavot*). God's *Rahamim*, also infinite (Lamentations 3:22), affirmed His *Hesed* (*Hatov ki lo kalu rahamekhah vehamerahem kilo tamu hasadekhah me'olam kivinu lakh*. In *Modim anahnu lakh*). The act of "Waiting upon the Lord" (Psalms 27:14) set the process in motion.[16] Bloch pointed out that *Bitahon* in itself had such

value for the eighteenth century Gaon of Vilna that he averred that a thief who had it would succeed; that God's *Hesed* could even be invoked contrary to His will if *Bitahon* was present. The converse was also true, Bloch added. When *Bitahon* was absent and one only lamented one's plight, one in effect distanced God and generated objective suffering. He cited the rabbinic sages:

> R. Nathan used to follow Rabbi Hamnuna. Once he sighed and the others said to him: This man wants to bring suffering upon himself, since it is written: "For the thing which I did fear is come upon me, and that which I was afraid of hath overtaken me" [Job 3:25]. (bBerakhot 60[a]).[17]

Having explained that the subjective assertion of God's goodnes blended with objectively real goodness, moving it from being implicit to creation to being explicit in history, Bloch suddenly was struck by doubt. He took into account that God's providence was total: "No man [so much as] bruises his finger here on earth unless it was so decreed against him in heaven" (bHullin 7[b]). He believed that the world was moving towards revealing God's oneness, blending divine presence with itself. He shared Ramhal's view that when God hid His face, it preluded the renewal of His effective goodness (*Shehistir panov lehadesh bo davar hanhagat tov vera hazot*), and that descents were followed by mending (*Tikkun*), that the confrontation between good and evil would resolve itself with perfection of goodness (*Siman 48*. In *Da'at Tevunot*). But he could not look aside from the cruel realities of the *Et pekudah*: "The earth is given over unto the hand of the wicked" (Job 9:24) and "fury poured out" (Ezekiel 20:33), and from the harsh judgment (*Din*). He also sought to ease the tension between the terror and his inbred *Bitahon* by affirming that the earthly destroyer (under God) distinguished one individual from another. As Ramhal pointed out while God's providence over other species was collective, for human beings it was both collective and individual (*Behashgahah*. In *Ma'amar Ha'ikarim*, pp. 20–21).[18] For example, when it came to the slaying in Egypt, God distinguished first-born Egyptians from others (Rashi to Numbers 15:41) and had the children of Israel remain at home through the night (Exodus 12:22) lest they be caught outside where human-generated fury made no distinctions (Shabbetai Bass, *ad* Exodus 12:22. In *Siftei Hahamim* p. 7[a]). Bloch also suggested that the pious could be caught up in the troubles because when there was a plague (part of the *Et pekudah*) the angel of death had authority and the innocent became vulnerable – although prayer could help (Psalms 141:2).[19]

Still the tension between *Bitahon* and *Et pekudah* persisted. Bloch, however, did not surrender *Bitahon*. Instead he raised it to a new dimension. The current *Et pekudah*, he concluded, belonged to the onset of the messiah (*Ikvetah dimeshiha*. See Sota 49[b]). The rabbinic sages stated that "When you see the powers fighting each other, look for the feet of the king messiah" (Midrash Bereshit Rabbah 42:8), and this was such a time. Insofar as the messiah was about to come, providing a spark of light in the darkness of exile, the people of Israel might believe that the time had come to act by their own power. To the contrary, only closeness to God and *Bitahon* could bring protection and rescue; the child who held its father's hand in the dark forest and let it go when light came, he allegorised, ran back to him when a wolf suddenly appeared. In the era of *Ikvetah dimeshiha*, human autonomy had to be surrendered. The depth of darkness, the cruelty, the doubt, all disrupted the blending of existential commitment to goodness and objective *Hesed*, and to overcome the disruption, selfhood had to be sacrificed (*Mesirut nefesh*).

In normal times, Bloch explained, *Bitahon* functioned in terms of what the human being defined as good, e.g., reward for *Mitsvot*. In the apocalyptic era of *Ikvetah dimeshihah* it involved *Mesirut nefesh*. For Yonah Gerondi (1200–1263), he continued, this meant accepting everything in love. It meant throwing oneself upon God with the hope that God would protect one and provide a good life as He defined it (Yonah Gerondi, *ad* Proverbs 3:26. In *Peirush* Al *Mishlei*). Bloch described this as an act of worship (*Avodah*) on the part of unblemished individuals (*Temimut*. See Psalms 38:18).[20] *Bitahon* now meant absolute reliance (*Semihut*) upon God's goodness: "Cast thy burden upon the Lord and He shall sustain thee" (Psalms 55:23). Faith also changed. Instead of producing *Bitahon* as in normal times, faith (united with *Bitahon*) moved from its human source into the realm of the divine. God enabled, affirmed and further instilled *Bitahon* and faith together. Further, uplifted faith coalesced with goodness; absolute faith joined absolute goodness. This was the goodness which was internal to God and which He shared with the world at creation (Hayim Vital, *Sha'ar Hakelalim* 5[a]. In *Ets Hayim*). Such faith-*Bitahon* in God's goodness (*sheboteah betovo*) could only take place with the sacrifice of the autonomous self – an act, a feeling (not an abstract, intellectual concept) of *Mesirut nefesh*.

Bitahon presumed immersion in Torah. In this *Ikvetah dimeshihah* era close to redemption, when sufferings were great ("Let the messiah come, but let me not see him." bSanhedrin 98[b]), rescue came from good deeds according to Torah (so Rabbi Elazar told his students when they asked how to be saved from the *Hevlei mashiah*. bSanhedrin 98[b]). The immersion had to be complete, such that God's voice of Torah permeated

all one's actions: "Wait on the Lord" (Psalms 55:23). *Bitahon* also implied passivity, the recognition that "vain is the help of man" (Psalms 60:11).[21] When the prophet Hosea called the people to penitent return (*Teshuvah*) he asked them to recognise that "Asshur shall not save us; we will not ride upon horses: neither will we say anymore to the work of our hands, Ye are gods: for in The the fatherless findeth mercy" (Hosea 14:3). Ordered by God to earn a living (Genesis 3:19), once having endeavored to do so – and within the bounds of Torah (Ramhal, *Perek Alef*. In *Mesillat Yesharim*) – one had to surrender to God and His goodness. Bloch cited Rashi to Exodus 16:32 ("Fill an omer of it to be kept for your generations"): When Jeremiah reproved the people of Israel for not being engaged in Torah and they responded that they had to earn a living, Jeremiah brought out a container of *manna* and told them that their forefathers earned a living from it – namely from the goodness of God which nourished the world.[22]

Bloch extended the theme of *Bitahon-Mesirut nefesh* in the face of crisis in his lecture "All his saints are in Thy Hands" (*kal Kedoshav Beyadekhah*) following the Russian occupation of the yeshivah building. His point of departure was Deuteronomy 33:3: "Yea He loved the people; all His saints are in Thy hand: and they sat down at Thy feet; every one shall receive of Thy words." There were moments in history when God confronted evil by destruction – as He did with the exodus from Egypt. God's destructiveness also applied when Israel sinned. It was liable to reach a point where the enemy was joyful (bMegillah 10[b] with Rashi and Maharsha commentary) and even became endeared to Him (*Yalkut Shimoni ad Deuteronomy* 33:3). At such moments the destroyer was in charge:

> Should somebody whisper to you, "But it is not written, 'Contend not with evil doers, neither be thou envious against them that work unrighteousness' " [Psalms 37:1], then you may tell him, Only he whose conscience smites him says so… R. Isaac said: If you see a wicked man upon whom the hour is smiling, do not attack him. For it is said "His ways prosper at all times" [Psalms 10:5]. (bBerakhot 7[b])

At these moments God extended authority to the enemy, permitting (*erloybn*) them to act at will.

How could the God of *Hesed* allow this? To the believer, unlike heretics who saw evil as evidence of the absence of divine reality ("One who slanders makes his sin reach into heaven." bArakhin 15[b]), all God's creation, even His destructiveness, was good. As such, Bloch did not

question the apparent contradiction between destruction and *Hesed*. Moreover, the greatness of divine goodness implied evil of equal magnitude – Bloch's implication being that one defined the other. Beyond this, the destruction belonged to a higher plan: "All His saints are in Thy hand" (Deuteronomy 33:3), and the evil would ultimately yield to goodness. Bloch had said in "Wait upon the Lord" that God's absence was for the sake of goodness (Ramhal). Now he stated that even when evil eclipsed all the light and no hope remained, the pious person remained certain that providence, which was good, prevailed.

This commitment to God in defiance of reality, a leap to God who was prior to the human perception of conflict between destruction and goodness, required reduction and surrender of self; the autonomous self could not transcend the chaos (*Hatsadikim yakhniyu veyashpilu et atsmam*). Bloch thought of scholars who went from place to place to learn Torah and did not move from God even when their feet pained them (*Yalkut Shimoni ad* Deuteronomy 33:3). They annulled themselves, cast themselves completely under God's leadership (*bitul atsmo, lehashlikh et atsmo legamrei tahat hanhagat Hashem yitbarakh.* The opposition between good and evil was liable to be sharp: As God's goodness and His Torah were great, so must be His punishment ("As the Lord rejoiced over you to do you good, and to multiply you; so the Land will rejoice over you to destroy you…" [Deuteronomy 28:63] or "The Lord came from Sinai and rose up from Seir unto them … and [the beaten scholars] sat down at Thy feet…" [Deuteronomy 33:2–3]). But it would yield to the defeat of the enemy (*Yalkut Shimoni ad* Deuteronomy 33:29) and to an outcome of goodness. In the certainty of God's presence (*Bitahon*) the pious Jew sacrificed himself (*Mesirut nefesh*), surrendering to God. Indeed, the act of self-surrender blended with the goodness of God's universe. Fear, on the other hand, the inability to be certain of divine presence and to surrender, removed God's protection (Isaiah 61:12–13). Bloch continued:

> We do not know the ways of God. What we are to do is to lower ourselves (*lehitkonen*) "at Thy feet" [Deuteronomy 33:3]. That is, hold fast to our path and be among those whose souls are rescued through (*al yedei*) the misery and distress. Even within them (*tokho*). That is, in terms of (*im*) the assaults, by accepting the yoke of suffering. No matter what happens, we are to guard against collapse. We must [concentrate solely] on coming closer to God [i.e., becoming increasingly conscious of His presence and goodness, intensifying *Bitahon* – which in turn will bring us even closer]; on serving Him

with greater care and clarity in our actions; with greater *Mesirut nefesh*.

Bloch stressed the point: "Essentially, we are being asked to join those 'At Thy feet' (Deuteronomy 33:3), not look around us and think about what will happen to us."

In *Kavei el Hashem* Bloch could not hold onto the traditional concept of *Bitahon*. The crisis was too great, and explanations did not bring him peace. Before the great darkness which interrupted the blend between subjective commitment to divine goodness and God's objective *Hesed*, he moved to surrender the self; the way to transcend the dark and chaotic barrier was through *Mesirut nefesh*. By lowering the self, it became possible to reach God and His goodness. By rooting faith within God, it became possible to share in God's good creation. In this subsequent lecture Bloch was overwhelmed by the evil and destruction. But he knew that God was behind it – and that God's goodness for man must ultimately be above it. His normal comprehension could not, however, bear the destroyer's power – even if God-given. He overcame the confusion engendered by commitment to God and His destructiveness by surrendering his human understanding. As with the first lecture, the radical evil of the world moved Bloch closer to God by distancing human presence from God.

The *Bitahon* of *Mesirut nefesh* assumed forms of intensified commitment to Torah, atonement for sin, and appealing to divine *Rahamim* (Psalms 78:38; "It is permissable to fall down upon the face and to ask for *Rahamim* after evening prayer even in public." *Siman* 237:7. In *Tur Orah Hayim.*). Bloch also spoke of *Teshuvah*. Even as the destroyer's fury was poised for release, *Teshuvah* could stop it (Psalms 78:38). If *Mitsvot* were performed with proper focus and intention (*Kavanah*), if one reflected on one's deeds with a sense of atonement, the suffering would be diminished – whether empirically or in terms of coalescence with the objective reality of goodness remained undelineated by Bloch.[23]

Bloch had explicated on the need for *Teshuvah* in the sinful environment he observed on 28 October 1938. In a statement closely resembling that of Elhanan Wasserman of Baranowitch on 9 April 1937, he wrote that current hatred and persecution of Jews in Germany was unprecedented in Jewish history. While there was war against Israel since the nation began (See bShabbat 89[b]), the current attacks against the respective Jewish minorities were central to the politics of great nations. Austria, Italy and Germany declared war against the "scattered sheep" of Israel (Jeremiah 50:17) – while Israel had no military power. As

unprecedented, the attacks transcended human understanding and led to trans-human sources. Bloch observed the coincidence between assimilationist Jewish communities (where Jews sought to eliminate the "Jewish image") and nationalistic outbursts against "enemy" Jews who had to be totally annihilated (*Hisul gamur*), and concluded that the coincidence was a matter of divine, measure-for-measure punishment. The punishment was set in place by the nineteenth century, but was, for some reason, not activated until later. The delay did not neutralise the cause: "Because sentence against an evil work is not executed speedily, therefore the heart of the sons of men is fully set in them to do evil" (Ecclesiastes 8:11). Bloch identified Nazi theory as an explicit response to the Jews' attempt to sever connections with the religion of Israel, reduce Judaism to ethnic origin (*Geza umotsa*), and remove the barrier between Israel and other citizens. With all its barbarism and inhumanity, Nazi theory was measure (assimilation)-for-measure (assault). If Israel sought to be as the nations, God would let out His fury on Israel ("As I live, saith the Lord God, surely with a mighty hand, and with a stretched out arm, and with outpoured wrath, will I rule over you." Ezekiel 20:33). Divine punishment, however, contained *Hesed* (graceful love), and now when no refuge remained for Israel God was calling out: "Return unto Me, and I will return unto you" (*Lamentations* 5:21), opening the path for *Teshuvah*. If Jews accepted divine providence over the tragedy and were impelled to *Teshuvah*, the suffering would cease. Indeed, there would be redemption. Precisely when troubles were overwhelming and there was seemingly no possibility for salvation (bSanhedrin 97[b]), redemption came speedily.[24]

But by 1940 Bloch was convinced that such attempts to explain the crisis, even from revealed sources, must recede. In the era of *Ikvetah dimeshihah*, autonomy had to be given up. In order to share in the stream of goodness flowing within empirical reality, the Jew needed higher faith, *Bitahon*, and to perform *Mesirt nefesh*. In his October 1938 statement Bloch had brought forward a common theme of measure (punishment) for measure (assimilation), offering his metahistorical interpretation of the crisis. In September 1939 he spoke of the crucial importance of *Mitsvot* when crisis loomed. In his lecture some months later he moved from explicating and blending the subjective (human) and objective (divine) dynamics of goodness and surrendered human measurement in the unfolding of goodness in God's world. The basis and definition of goodness resided with God. Bloch carried the motif of *Mesirt nefesh* into his lecture following the takeover of the yeshivah building. Instead of elucidating the potential confluence between existential conviction of God's good presence and objective expression of God's goodness he let

the division between man and God (and the tension between destruction and *Hesed*) stand, transcended his autonomous framework and entered into the (surely good) presence of the divine.

3. Labour Camp and Death: Summer 1941[25]

When the yeshivah students left Telšiai for traditional home visits during Passover 1941, the Soviets declared it illegal for non-Telšiai residents to rent rooms making it impossible for most students to return. Telšiai students who were residents studied under Avraham Yitshak Bloch, while the others (in Ylakiai, Siluva, Tryskiai and Papilys) received instruction from *Menahel Ruhani* Zalman Bloch and *Rosh Yeshivah* Yisrael Ordman.

When the Russians evacuated Telšiai and the Germans entered (23–25 June) Avraham Yitshak Bloch decided not to leave with his family for Russia but to emulate his father who had remained with his students when the yeshivah closed down during World War I. According to his daughter Hayah he may have shared the sentiment that it was better to be forced to surrender the body to Germans than the soul to Russians. Pleas by his wife Rasya to Telšiai Bishop Justinas Staugaitis and by Yisrael Ordman's wife Hasyah Bloch (Zalman Bloch's daughter) to local police were in vain. On Friday, 27 June, Sabbath preparations at their home on Navarana Street were interrupted and the family was taken, along with some 2,500 other Jews, *via* the Lukniker Way, to Lake Mastis – from where they would be taken to Rainiai labour camp (six kilometers from Telšiai) to join the 200 other Telšiai Jews taken there on 26 June.[26] Beaten and mocked by Lithuanians as they moved, at a certain point (the home of yeshivah secretary Efrayim Halpan or of a certain Shalom Talpiot) they were stopped and accused of shooting at German soldiers. Avraham Yitshak Bloch led a collective oath of denial in response. On the way and at the lake, according to his daughters, Bloch led the community in the recitation of Psalms. At the lake Bloch was told that all would be drowned or murdered, and he pleaded successfully for the women and children to be sent home. He declined the option he was offered to leave.

Bloch was interned with others in the horse stables at Rainiai, forced to work and tortured.[27] In the "devil's dance" male inmates had to move about on their knees with hands in the air or run in circles, fall down and get up on command. Women and children, who came back from Telšiai on 28 June, watched.[28] Bloch was on the inmates' representative committee – along with Zalman Bloch, the engineer Ginsburg and 24 year old Iska Bloch, a Telšiai yeshivah graduate and "Betar" Revisionist who wrote for *Der Moment*. He continued Torah study with Azriel

Rabinowitch. On 12 July he observed the Sabbath and he kept the 17 Tammuz (13 July) fast day in commemoration of the breaching of Jerusalem's walls by Nebuchadnezzar and Titus (Hayah Bloch). He declined an opportunity to move to the less harsh Dusetos labour camp, lest he abandon his community.[29]

The mass murders at Rainiai began on 15 July, following a devil's dance where men were beaten with planks. They went back to the stables with heads split, teeth knocked out and eyes swollen. Then they were removed in groups of twenty-five into the forest, forced to dig pits, undress to their underwear, and shot. In his 23 January 1945 testimony in Telšiai against Lithuanian guard Kazys Sulcas, Adam Desyatnik of Telšiai described how Sulcas beat those who couldn't run, get up and down quickly enough during the devil's dance; and how the Germans gave Sulcas gold and silver valuables taken from the prisoners. He reported that a heavy rain called the killing to a halt. The Jews were led back to the stables for some hours before being taken back and killed – Desyatnik was allowed to stay behind because of his youth.[30] According to Hannah Peltz's testimony of 1946, Avraham Yitshak Bloch was taken to his death on 16 July – along with Azriel Rabinowitch, Zalman Bloch and a certain Pinhas Elfand of the yeshivah.[31] At the pits, their beards were ripped off with pieces of flesh. Peltz said there was a storm that day. The undressed men were ordered to dress again and return to the stables. She continued:

> They no longer looked human; their faces were gray and half-wild. The pious Jews thought heaven had intervened [by having it rain]. They sat like pieces of clay, stones, frozen statues. The rain, thunder and lightning continued for another three hours. They moaned and tore out their hair. The guards stood outside, preventing them from running. They were exhausted and their bones were broken. The sky cleared. The killers took the Jews back to the pits and shot them. Some escaped and reported what happened.

In subsequent years, Ya'akov Rabinowitz received reports that the victims were forced to lie down in the pits, face upwards and be shot; they were covered by another layer of victims.[32] Other Jews were forced to cover the pits with sand, with some in them still alive.[33]

Further details about the days of murder when Bloch was killed come from the killers' testimonies. In January 1944 and January 1945 the farm worker Kazys Sulcas (born 1903 in Seda) stated:

I and other members of the Defence of National Labour Battalion (TDA) came to Rainiai. I was told to guard the arrested Jews. I remained in my post for about twelve hours and then replaced by somebody else. I was told to guard stolen Jewish property. I stayed in this post for two days and nights. / … All the arrested Jews from Rainiai concentration camp were shot in July 1941. They were escorted to the killing site in groups of 20–30 people. I personally took part in escorting two groups. I killed three Jews from the second group. /… The arrested Jews dug pits of 6–8 meters length, 2 meters width and 2.5 meters depth. How many pits they dug, I don't know. I saw 3. The killing took place in a small area about ten meters from the pit. The Jews were brought in groups, forced to undress to their underclothes, and lie face down on the ground. Then they were shot from five meters away. When the new group came, they had to throw the dead bodies into the pit and lie down on top of them in the same small place. When the pit was full it was covered by sand. / … Before the killings the Jews had to line up in rows in Rainiai camp and the Germans took their [gold and silver] valuables away. The Germans cut the beards of the Jews and did so in brutal ways. After that they ordered Jews to run in circles and lie down. They beat those who were too weak to run fast enough. It lasted for two hours. After that the Jews were shot.

In January 1944 the policeman Kazys Idzelevicius (born 1920 in Telšiai) stated:

On 26 June 1941 I joined Telšiai police [partisan squad]. My duty was to guard the arrested Jews, and I served in this capacity till September 1941. /… During my service from June 1941 to January 1942 I guarded arrested Jews who were imprisoned in the Rainiai estates, about 3,000. The [Lithuanian] "partisans" [who armed themselves early in the war, pursued the retreating Red Army and supported the occupying Germans] squad consisted of 50–60 people… German soldiers were present. The shootings were carried out during nighttime and into the daytime when needed… Working in the Rainiai camp, besides supplying food [for the camp guards], I took part in robbing the Jews. I took their rings and watches. The "partisans" took suits and other clothing from persons doomed to death. / … About 1,000 men were killed there in [two days] July 1941 – I don't remember the exact day. I took part in the killings. [About 2,000] women and children were transferred [by myself and others] to Geruliai [10 kilometers outside Telšiai] and shot there [except for 500 young

Jewish women brought to Telšiai for labour]… / … The killing of men in Rainiai was carried out in this way: One day at 5 p.m. on July (I don't remember the day) eight Germans arrived on a truck in the Jewish camp. They gathered all the Jewish men in the yard, lined them up, four in each line. The Germans ordered them to run in circles and lie down every time they whistled. Those who did not run fast enough or did not lie down in a proper way were beaten with switches. This violation continued for one hour. After that the German had the Jews bring all their valuables into one place. / … In the evening of the same day several dozen men were singled out, given shovels and escorted to prepare the pits for the Jews. We partisans, together with the Germans, organised a drinking party. Early in the morning a watchman reported that the pits were ready. We lined up in a line, checked our guns and marched to the killing site. About 30 Jews doomed to be killed were there. [There was a special platform built at the edge of the pit.] We ordered them to undress and lie down in one row. The Jews lay down, we approached them and started shooting. When we finished with this group another one, of 30–40 Jews, was brought over and ordered to undress. They were told to put the bodies of Jews just killed into the pit and to lie down on top of them. The killings proceeded. We shot the Jews, who arrived successively in groups of 30–40 people. It continued all day and night. All in all we killed about 1,000 Jewish men. / … In total, during the both times [i.e., in Rainiai and Geruliai], I killed approximately 50 people, Jewish citizens… During my service in the partisan squad from 26 June 1941 to October 1941 I worked in the Jewish camps of Rainiai and Geruliai. The partisans, I, the soldiers of the TDA and the Germans killed 3,000 Jewish residents, men, women and children altogether. / … During the killings I was drunk. [Before the murders we were always offered alcohol.] That is why I was brave enough to commit that bloody crime. When the intoxication left me, usually after the murder of ten-twelve groups consisting of thirty-forty people each, I felt like I wanted to vomit. I had to leave the lines of the killers. / … I received nothing from the Germans as a reward for the killings – other than what I stole from the Germans: Eight golden rings and two metal watches. I cannot give you a clear answer why I took part in the killings of the Jewish people. The Germans gave me an order and I shot them… There were some Germans among the perpetrators, all from the S.S. and lower ranking officers. A few were present through the killings. Others would try to shoot once and leave the site… One S.S. officer brutally beat fourteen Jewish men, who [we were told] were Communists … then led them to other Germans who shot them.

In August 1948 the chimney sweeper Kazys Zavalys (born 1901 in Libavy, Latvia) stated:

> I joined the partisans on the second day of the German occupation …
> My duty was to guard the arrested people who were held in the
> basement of the partisans' headquarters. At the beginning of July
> 1941 I was one of those guarding the arrested Jews. They were
> gathered in the Telšiai market square. I was also in the Rainiai camp,
> where Soviet citizens of the Jewish nation were kept. While I was
> there, the partisans killed about 80 from the Jewish nation… I did not
> shoot anyone. But I did bring six-eight people to the pits… I received
> twenty-five *Reichmark* for the entire period of service to the Germans.
> At the end of June or beginning of July 1941 I escorted two groups of
> Jews, six to seven people each from the barracks in Rainiai camp [to
> the killing site]. Later I was a guard at the killing site for about two
> days. My job was to stop those to be shot from fleeing… All the
> people imprisoned in the Rainiai camp had to be killed, because they
> were Jewish… I carried a German gun.[34]

After the two-three day massacre the women went to the pits, where they found brain matter, bodies, clothing and pictures. Lime had been poured over the earth (Rahel Fulda and Hannah Peltz-Saks). Women and children were taken to Geruliai.[35]

Nothing in writing by Bloch remains from Rainiai. But there are testimonies about his words and actions, hagiographic in character, which point to his mindset. On the way to the lake and at it, after he somehow learned of the magnitude of the danger, he declared that *Teshuvah*, *Tefillah* (prayer) and *Tsedakah* (charity) had to be carried out, for they were the only way to remove the evil decree (Hayah and Miriam Bloch). His commitment to *Teshuvah* was expressed in his 28 October 1938 statement and in *Kol Kedoshav Beyadekhah*. In an earlier lecture he cited Rambam's point that it was a positive commandment to cry out to God when trouble came (*Perek* 1, Halakhah 1. In *Hilkhot Ta'aniyot*) and stated that the only hope for rescue was prayer; had the Jews not already been praying the troubles would be worse than they were. Even the smallest amount of prayer (e.g., *Ana Hashem hoshiyah na*) would elicit God's *Rahamim*.[36]

Bloch expressed the *Bitahon* identified with Psalms 91. He recited the text as bombs fell on 22 June and when the Germans came on 25 June and as Sabbath fell at Lake Mastis. On 13 July he told his family that reciting Psalms 91 ten times with *Kavanah* would elicit God's (good) will

(Hayah and Miriam Bloch, and Elitsur-Rituv). In his *Tefillah* lecture he had identified Psalms 91 as a psalm of affliction to be recited amidst special troubles. It spoke of man's dwelling in God's secret place, under His shadow (Psalms 91:1). It expressed *Bitahon* that God would protect the worshiper with His *Hesed* ("He is my refuge." Psalms 91:2), that His *Hesed* would increase at moments of affliction ("I will answer him and be with him in trouble." Psalms 91:15) and rescue the worshiper from evil ("Surely He will deliver me from the snare…. Because he hath set his love upon Me, therefore will I deliver him." Psalms 91:3, 4, 7, 8, 9, 14). Even the greatest *Tsadik* who already lived with *Bitahon* and was under God's protection, Bloch added, must pray to God in moments of trouble to elicit *Hesed*.[37] In *Kavei el Hashem* he cited Rambam's reference to Psalms 91 in his discussion of *Bitahon* (Rambam, *Moreh Nevukhim*. Chapter 51).

The witnesses speak of Bloch's ongoing commitment to Torah study, as described in *Kavei el Hashem* – during the 25 June German incursion; in the night before he was taken from Telšiai (in Torah discussions with a daughter), and during Rainiai internment with *Hiddushim* (interpretations of Scripture and rabbinic texts). In anticipation of the end, Bloch enunciated the need for *Mitsvot*. When a weapons search took place at the lake, he declared that the only way to survive was by observing the *Mitsvot* of Sabbath, *Kashrut* and *Taharat Mishpahah* (family purity). Presumably, given the near impossibility of performing them, Bloch's intention was to bring them to consciousness and in this sense realise them (Miriam Bloch).

There were expressions of *Bitahon* as *Mesirut nefesh* – from self-surrender and throwing oneself upon God and His terms of goodness to actual martyrdom. After a 14 July devil's dance Bloch returned to the stable, held his hands high and declared "Sovereign of the world, You are righteous and Your deeds are righteous" (Shoshanah). When he was beaten on the head with a hammer at the pits "to knock out his God" (*az er muz zayn Got im aroysshlogn fun Kop*) he declared "God is for everyone" (Rabinowitch). When the yeshivah building was taken over, in his *Kol Kedoshav Beyadekhah* address, Bloch's form of *Bitahon* joined with *Mesirut nefesh* as self-surrender – but he resisted the reality of acts of martyrdom:

> The fear that everyone has because of everything happening around us is ungrounded. Surely we need to be ready for *Mesirut nefesh* [as physical martyrdom]. But we must also recognise that the situation is not all that bad [that we need to anticipate death]. The exaggeration of fear over the situation is also badly advised. We should look more

deeply with our eyes and discern that even in the midst of evil itself, God will set a path for us.

In time this changed. After a devil's dance Bloch asked a daughter to recite the *Hilkhot Kiddush Hashem* (presumably from bSanhedrin 74[a]; bAvodah Zarah 27[b] and Rambam, *Hilkhot Yesodei Hatorah* 5 *Halakhah* 1 and *Halakhah* 4). According to the *Hilkhot*, *Mitsvot* may be violated to avoid death except in cases of worship of other gods, forbidden sexual relations and murder (Leviticus 18:5). To choose to be killed and resist the three violations, and do so in the presence of ten Jews, constituted an act of *Kiddush Hashem* in the tradition of Rabbi Akiva and the spirit of Psalms 50:5 ("Gather unto Me My pious ones, those who have made a covenant with Me by slaughter").[38] The essence of *Mesirut nefesh al Kiddush Hashem* (submission of the soul and self-sacrifice as sanctification of God's name), piety and commitment to God, permeated the last moments of his life. When he, Zalman Bloch and Yisrael Urdman walked to their deaths they did so as the act of worship (*Avodah*) in the form of *Mesirut nefesh al Kiddush Hashem*. Bloch's self-surrender to God at and in death is also indicated by reports of his reciting the confession of sin before death (*Viddui*), acknowledging that if God determined death it should be accepted with love (see *Siman* 338:1. In *Shulhan Arukh Yore Deah*), on the Lukniker Way; and of his asking for water to purify himself for the *Viddui* when he was taken to the pits. At the pit, escapee Shmuel Landau reported to Luba Bloch, he cried out the *Shema* and his pure soul left him with the declaration of God's oneness (*Ehad*). (See bBerakhot 61[b]) (Hayah Bloch).[39]

4. *Bitahon* and *Torah* for Eliyahu Meir Bloch[40]

A. Telšiai

Amidst the clouds gathering in Europe in 1936, Eliyahu Meir spoke of *Bitahon* in face of the troubles. He assured that God's providence prevailed over His people and that the people would be led by God to fulfill their role as a light to the nations. The very rebuke by God which the troubles manifested would lead to intensified love for Israel: "The Lord taketh my part with them that help me: Therefore shall I see my desire upon them that hate me" (Psalms 118:7). He observed that a person of balanced mind rooted the intellect in healthy intuition, the source for which was the wisdom of the soul. In turn, that wisdom was rooted in the divine soul and the entire soul of creation (*Nishmato ha'elokit ubenishmat haberiyah kula*), in the collective will of creation and creature to exist and

flower (*Poteah et yadekhah umasbia-lekhal hai ratson*. Psalms 145:15). Faith in the ultimate *Tikkun* of the world and *Bitahon* that the future would be good were ultimately derived from roots in the divine soul and soul of creation. This faith and *Bitahon* enabled one "to see that death would not advance, and to yearn for life even amidst conditions of suffering and troubles – and even when it seemed that the moment to despair over the good had arrived."[41]

In an April 1939 article in the Agudat Yisrael newspaper *Dos Yidishe Lebn*, Eliyahu Meir Bloch brought forward his older brother's October 1938 measure-for-measure interpretation of metahistory. As the earthly representative of heavenly ideas, Israel inevitably suffered because of the opposition to earthly power and physical brutality they involved. In modern times, a despair over the world's accepting the heavenly ideas set in, and some Jews assimilated in an attempt to grab whatever crumbs the nations of the world might leave for them. The reaction was an explosion of terror. It belonged to a higher drama, a cosmic battle between light (the good, moral and humane) and the dark (evil); assimilation fell into the latter camp. Through it all, God's *Shekhinah* remained with Israel (*Shekhinta begaluta*. bArakhin 29[a]), assuring the ultimate restoration of heavenly ideas in the world. From within, Israel would retreat from assimilation; ideas of Torah, purified by fire, would be realised. From without, after Jewish blood would be poured, the people of Israel humiliated and their sanctuaries profaned, the heavenly role of Israel with its dimensions of truth and justice would be discerned. Indeed, the longed-for redemption of Israel would arrive.[42]

In mid-August 1940, after the Russians occupied the yeshivah building, Bloch delivered a lecture on suffering's dimension of love. The soul which was complete praised God's *Hesed* as well as His *Din* (punitive judgment), knowing that out of His *Hesed* God enacted *Din* to enhance the soul ("God punished to teach him the law." Psalms 94:12). It was a sign of light ("Like the sun when it goeth forth in his night." Judges 5:31) for a person to rejoice in the chastisements (bGittin 36b), having recognised the divine love they expressed. Even when troubles could not be attributed to trespasses of Torah, such a soul was sure that they came from God's love and were intended to perfect a person ("For whom the Lord loveth He correcteth." Proverbs 3:12) (bBerakhot 5a). Specifically, God sometimes inflicted pain to provide opportunity to praise Him despite the suffering and to affirm His comprehensive power in the world He created (Psalms 150:1–2). The declaration of God's power, irrespective of discernible sins, filled the parts of the soul empty of God-recognition. When he was in New York fifteen months later, Bloch spoke of responding to sufferings which could not be explained in terms of sin,

not with shock but with Torah and prayer. They brought the entire soul into line with God's will: "When Israel fulfills the will of the omnipotent, the left hand becomes the right" (Rashi *ad* Exodus 15:6).[43]

In the *Kavei el Hashem* statement of the same period, Avraham Yitshak Bloch described the potential coalescence of existential recognition of God's good omnipresence and the objective reality thereof for the devoted Jew. Eliyahu Meir Bloch probed the existential dynamic, speaking of filling the soul with recognition of that omnipresence – which, he implied, would evoke the objective unfolding of the goodness of God for such a soul. On 14 January 1945, after Bloch heard of the murder of his family, he applied Kabbalistic terms. Ordinarily, God's *Hesed* provided the soul with a narrow path, bounded by materiality, to His light. Suffering expanded the path by shattering the material bounds – which, using the terminology of the sixteenth century Kabbalist Yitshak Luria, were shattered pieces of materiality attached to light (*Kelippot*). The suffering could ultimately assume a messianic dimension, as the *Hevlei mashiah* (messianic suffering) which preluded the coming of redemption. God's power (*Gevurah*) served His *Hesed*, destroying the materialistic bounds to the completion of the soul and its coalescence with God's light and omnipresent goodness: "Thy right hand, O Lord, hath dashed in pieces the enemy" (Exodus 15:6) (Rashi and *Yalkut Shimoni ad* Exodus 15:6).[44]

Avraham Yitshak Bloch was interested in the blending of existential and objective dimensions to goodness. When the blending was obstructed by the darkness of the age, or when the tension between destructive evil and *a priori* commitment to God's *Hesed* became too great, he reduced the role of man and human terms and spoke of a leap of faith. Ultimately, this meant martyrdom as *Mesirut nefesh*. Eliyahu Meir Bloch spoke of God's *Din* as an opportunity to enhance the soul through its absolute commitment to God's *Hesed*, and of *Din* as a shattering of material boundaries of the soul on its path to God's light. For both, the suffering belonged to a higher relationship with God. While Avraham Yitshak Bloch focused on the soul's surrender to God, Eliyahu Meir focused on the completion of the soul as it came to God. And while the former focused on the responsibilities of the soul in terms of higher faith and *Mesirut nefesh,* the latter focused on God's enabling the soul to come to Him by shattering materiality through the sufferings wrought by His *Din*.

B. America

In early fall 1940 Eliyahu Meir Bloch, along with Hayim Mordekhai Katz, left Telšiai and journeyed through Vilnius, Moscow, Vladivostok and Japan for America to gather funds for the yeshivah. They arrived in November 1940. By October 1941, in the face of the deteriorating condition in Lithuania, they established a yeshivah in the Cleveland area.[45] The act fulfilled Bloch's 31 July 1940 prayer. Holding the Torah from the occupied yeshivah building, he declared: "Twice You decreed that we take the Torah scroll from the holy ark and bring it forth from the house of God – during the great Telšiai fire [of 1907] and during World War I. May it be Thy will that I merit seeing the rebuilding of the Telšiai yeshivah."[46] But the loss of the yeshivah in Telšiai was not mitigated. In summer 1945 he said that it was indescribable: "What thing shall I like to thee, O daughter of Zion? What shall I equal to thee, that I may comfort thee virgin daughter of Zion? (Lamentations 2:13). The yeshivah was the expression of *Shleimut* (completion) and *Temimut* (wholeness). *Shleimut* because all the yeshivah's aspects of thought and action were in harmony (Midrash Bereishit Rabbah 79:5), and *Temimut* because it was unblemished, perfect (Midrash Bereishit Rabbah 58:1), whole hearted in relationship to God (Rashi to Deuteronomy 18:13). All this was lost: "The paradigm of *Shlemut* and *Temimut* has been destroyed. The daughter of my nation has been broken, and this breaking has broken us – as the sea itself is broken. Who can heal us?"[47]

In early 1941 he spoke of asserting Torah in the face of suffering, bringing his August 1940 statement about filling the soul with recognition of God forward. God's providence remained with Torah sanctuaries in the present, as it did with the initial exile ("Whenever the people of Israel were exiled, the *Shekhinah* was exiled with them" Midrash Eykhah Rabbah 1:20). Israel was called upon to respond by actively learning and implementing Torah, explicating the divine presence. Even when God's voice was silent (I Kings 19:12) and displaced by voices of lament, the people of Israel still had to raise Torah out of the realm of blood and fire. Having spoken earlier of shattering the material world and expanding light; and of suffering as an opportunity to blend the individual soul with divine omnipresence, now he spoke of dwelling on Torah and not on the material affliction. Bloch urged Jews to draw from the vitality of Torah and burst forth from the suffering in terms of Torah and thereby coalesce with God's good presence. Israel was the army of God ("Some trust in chariots, and some in horses. But we will remember the name of the Lord our God." Psalms 20:7), and Torah was its weapon. He looked upon American Jewry for refuge from the trouble and for support in following Torah ("They are brought down and fallen: but we are risen, and stand

upright." Psalms 20:9), but warned against the dangers of assimilation in the land of the yeshivah's refuge.[48] Indeed, he added in October 1944, the Jews of America must assume the historical role of dominant centre for diaspora Judaism.[49]

Bloch carried the theme of Torah assertion in the face of suffering, of Torah's divine source and of Torah as affirmation of divine presence into his 22 August 1941 address to the Agudat Yisrael convention in Baltimore. The great yeshivah institutions of Poland and Lithuania were falling to the enemy. How, he asked, could the very bastions secured by God be destroyed? His answer was that considered essentially, they were not being destroyed. The Torah was God's co-creator and therefore indestructible. Esau could destroy the body, but not the spirit (Torah) of Jacob (Midrash Eykhah Rabbah: Proem 2:1). Mordekhai successfully responded to Haman's decree of destruction with his timely study of flour offerings. While a philosopher like Socrates approached death indifferently and others met it zealously, in the course of Israel's history the body burned to death but the soul ascended to the highest beautiful note (*romans-Akod*). For the *Shema* was recited. That is, the soul loved God with *Kavanah* even as the soul was taken by God (bBerakhot 61b). It surrendered itself with love and the Jew died with the angel's spiritual kiss of death. This *Mesirut nefesh* affirmed the reality of Torah, and of Torah learning as identified with divine thought. Rather than reacting to the enemy physically, which amounted to being co-opted by it, the Jew asserted Torah. The endurance of Torah (and its implicit affirmation of divine presence) continued into the present. The grounding of Torah was being expressed primarily by great yeshivah personalities and the students (as distinct from the physical structures themselves), as it always was. As long as they continued to sound the voice of Torah, Esau's hands would not rule.[50] When (in May 1944) Bloch heard that his family had been killed, he continued writing *Hiddushei Torah*. It was impossible for him to relate as before to his surroundings, he explained, and his very being was upset. The only source of strength and calm was Torah: It was "the sacred duty of the lamenting survivor to take Torah in hand. The labour of Torah must be the first response to the terrible calamity."[51]

In 1943 and 1944 Bloch spoke of the enduring, underlying presence of God in the world and its history, providing grounding for the soul to affirm God and blend with His goodness. After affliction came relief. Thus, Jacob's son was called Benyamin and not child of the affliction of the mother Rachel (Genesis 35:18) and Akiva died with the *Shema* on his lips (bShabbat 130a) when Rome decreed his execution. Now too descent would be followed by light.[52] When a new yeshivah building was inaugurated in May 1944 Bloch recalled how his father had revived the

yeshivah in Telšiai after World War I and he observed that Israel's calendar (i.e., history) was lunar, following the moon's ongoing ascent and descent. Thus the messiah was born after the Temple was destroyed (yBerakhot 2); the death of Akiva gave rise to a new generation of students. Bloch was convinced that Israel's eternality (I Samuel 15:29) would prevail, and that the present *Hurban* would yield to light.[53]

In April 1943 he observed that when God created the world He seeded the earth and provided for rain, but that man first had to pray in order for the rain to come. God's glory was present, but man had to overcome the distance between potential and actual. He initiated the process by performing *Teshuvah* – specifically for the last one hundred and fifty years of sinful assimilation. The subjective act of *Teshuvah* would align the Jew with the objective reality of divine presence. Suffering would end and even bring redemption: "I said unto thee when thou wept: In thy blood, live" (Ezekiel 16:6–8). *Teshuvah* and prayer could displace the thick clouds with healing rain.[54] In April 1944 Bloch returned to the idea of God's *Shekhinah* being with Israel in exile (bArakhin 29[a]); God remained present, calling to the soul of the Jew (Song of Songs 5:2). When Jews assimilated, the *Shekhinah* moved into the distance. That is, God punished Israel, leaving the Jews to drown in their blood, pained and humiliated – "Is this not an exact description of our situation today?" There were those who unlocked the handles (Song of Songs 5:5) of the door to God with acts of *Mesirat nefesh al Kiddush Hashem*, but Israel as a whole lay wounded, with neither present nor future. Yet:

> Even in the valley of death one can sing of the sickness of divine love [Song of Songs 2:5]. [One can declare] "I will sing of *Hesed* and *Mishpat*: Unto Thee, O Lord, will I sing" [Psalms 101:1]. Whether God is with us with *Hesed* or *Mishpat*, the Song of Songs endures. The call of God persists through all events of life. It does not forget the mission of Israel. Indeed it becomes ever stronger, ever more demanding. Has the time not come, for the Jewish nation to hearken well [to the call] and to respond with proper *Teshuvah*?[55]

In America Eliyahu Meir Bloch understood the completion of the soul through suffering (*Din*) in terms of Torah. The human soul was rooted in the divine soul, which permeated creation through the Torah. The Torah could shatter the suffering, perfect the soul and bring it to God. The yeshivah's personalities and students were its bearers. There were those who performed *Mesirt nefesh al kiddush Hashem* and blended with God through the *Shema*. Now it remained for the survivors to come to God

through the Torah. The process would bring Jewish history out of its descent and into ascent. That is, individually and collectively the Torah would blend Israel with God. God awaited Israel, His goodness anticipated man's access. By man's affirming God's *Hesed* (which included *Din*) and through acts of *Teshuvah* manifest in the life of Torah, this meeting would take place.

Concluding Statement

The words of Avraham Yitshak Bloch in 1939 and 1940 revealed his religious path to martyrdom. His life was of *Bitahon*, and ultimately this *Bitahon* meant a total surrender to God and His goodness, independent of and transcending the darkness of the era. His final act of *Mesirat nefesh* affirmed and completed the *Bitahon* of the era of *Ikveta dimeshiha*. His younger brother carried his effort further – not in the face of death but before the threshold of new life. Having reconciled himself to the place of suffering in the process of completing the soul and reaching God in Telšiai, once in America he applied it to the future. In America, rooted in Torah, Israel could shatter the darkness and burst forth towards God's goodness which awaited it. Avraham Yitshak Bloch's *Bitahon* was overshadowed by a cloud of dark confusion. But he did not despair of *Bitahon* – as indicated for example by his plea for God's mercy (*Rahamim*). Instead he prepared himself for martyrdom. As it turned out, his preparation anticipated the reality to come. Eliyahu Meir Bloch viewed the dark confusion as God's *Din* which provided an opportunity to enhance the soul. The very incomprehensibility of the suffering allowed the path of light to God to expand – if commitment to God endured. As it turned out, and he faced not murder at Rainiai but possibility in America, his preparation also anticipated the reality to come. Committed to *Bitahon*, the brothers together led their people into death, and into life in history, blending existential commitment to the goodness of God and the creation which shared it with the metaphysical reality of *Hesed* – through *Mesirut nefesh* for one, and through Torah for the other. As if speaking with one another across time and space, the brothers together led a way of *Musar* through the Holocaust.

Notes

* The essay is dedicated to the memory of Pearl Silver of Cincinnati, who supported her husband Rabbi Eliezer Silver's work in rescuing and rebuilding the Telšiai Yeshivah and enabled the donation of their library to the yeshivah; and in whose name a scholarship at the yeshivah in Cleveland was established by the family of her late sister Lillian Berkson Greenberg of Brooklyn. Research was conducted as a fellow at the International Institute for Holocaust Research at Yad Vashem, 2001. The participants in the Telšiai conference in which this paper was originally presented, especially John Klier, provided valuable insights into the historical context.

1. Abel was the author of *Beit Shlomoh: Hoshen Mishpat*, Atlas became the rabbi of Šiauliai, and Oppenheim the rabbi of Kelme. The *Musar* literature included works by Bahyah Ibn Pakudah, Yonah Gerondi, Ya'akov ben Sheshet Gerondi, Mosheh Hayim Luzzato (*Ramhal*) and Hayim of Volozhin. On *Musar* and its relationship to the Holocaust see Greenberg, 1977, 101–138. See also Isser Zalman Meltser, 1944/45, i; 1940/41, i; and 1946/47, i (I thank Hayim Basok for this reference).

2. On the history of the Telšiai Yeshivah see Carlebach, 1931/32, 293–394; Goren, 1984, 288–290; Rabiner, 1964/65; Shoshanah, 1975, 263–293; Gifter, 1956, 169–188; Shtampfer, 1995, 252–292; Katz, D., 1945/46, 17–109; Katz, H. M., 1945, 4–8; Katz, H.M., 1951, i–ii; Sorotskin 1963/64, i–ii; Harkavi, 1965; Bloch, E. M., 1951, 623; Katz, D., 1959, 226–241. See Editor, *Beit Ya'akov*, 1961 as cited by Shoshanah; Burak and Shehr, 1940, 3.

3. Bloch, A. Y., 1954, 276.

4. Editor, 1940a, 2.

5. Sužiedėlis, 1998, 128–146; and 1999, 177–208.

6. Editor, 1940b, 3.

7. The September 1940 issue of *Peri Ets Hayim*, the last published in Europe, included Halakhic studies by Yehudah Layb Bloch and Hayim Ozer Grodzinsky (both posthumously); Elhanan Bunim Wasserman (*Rosh Yeshivah* and *Menahel Ruhani* (spiritual director) of Ohel Torah Yeshivah in Baranowitch); Azriel Rabinowitch; Shraga Gavron (*Av Beit Din*, Kėdainiai); Yitshak Yaffe (*Av Beit Din*, Upynas); Zalman Sharal; Abba Shor (*Av Beit Din*, Vainiai); and Telšiai Yeshivah students Nissan Graz and Ya'akov Druck. Lara Lempertiene of the Hebraica division at the Vilnius National Library provided this issue.

8. On Avraham Yitshak Bloch see Bloch, H. (daughter of Eliyahu Meir Bloch), 1958, 235–236; Bloch, A. Y., 1975, 233–238; Ausband, 1993/94, i–vi; Burak, 1945, 8–11; and Shtayn and Ausband, 2000/01, i.

See also Bloch, A. Y., 1951, 281–300; and 2000/01c; and 1993/94. Rebbetsin Avraham David Goldberg and Hayah Bloch-Ausband provided a copy of *Shiurei Da'at*, vol. 1.

9. Bloch, A. Y., 2000/01b, 173–177. Hayim of Volozhin, 1997; *Sha'ar* 1, *Perek* 7 as cited by Bloch. The editor cited Mosheh Hayim Luzzatto, Editor, 1964/65, 353; and Ha'Gra, *Peirush Lemishlei ad* Proverbs 6:33 and 19:2. These and other references from the *Musar* literature for Bloch's lectures, unless stated otherwise, are drawn from the notes provided by the editor Yitshak Finkel.

10. Bloch, A. Y., *Kavei El Hashem* (1939/40), forthcoming b. Werblowsky's analysis is based largely on Bahyah Ibn Pakuda, *Sha'ar Habitahon*. In *Hovot Hatevavot*. He notes that *bateah* and *kavei* were used synonymously in the Psalms: Werblowsky, 1964, 95–139.

11. On *Devekut* see for example Maharal of Prague: "The person of faith … leaves the material world and adheres to the higher world. Because faith means to hand oneself over to God and have trust (*boteah*) in Him, and not turn aside at any time from His blessed name. Because faith means to adhere to God totally (*shedibek bo yitbarakh legamrei*)." Maharal of Prague, 1982, 488–502 (Werblowsky).

12. Hayim of Volozhin praised those for whom God filled the universe and whose thoughts adhered completely to God. For them, God removed all other powers from the universe. Hayim of Volozhin, 1997, *Sha'ar* 3, *Perek* 12, 200–202.

13. For Yonah Gerondi: "Insofar as all activities depend upon God (*Proverbs* 3:6) and all success upon God's *Hesed*, man must be mindful of God in all his actions. Should one not be mindful, and directed towards God, worship is diminished." (Yonah Gerondi, 1910, 15). See also Hayim of Volozhin, 1997, *Sha'ar* 2, *Perek* 15. Bloch, A. Y., 2000/01a, 158–172.

14. According to *Siman* 581:4. In *Tur Orah Hayim,* when the year ended and the future remained in doubt, one still had to dress and eat well out of certainty (*betuhin*) that God would bring righteousness. (Finkel).

The theme of ontological goodness *vis a vis Mesirut nefesh* may be compared to the response to the catastrophe by Eliyahu Dessler of the Kelme School of *Musar*. For Dessler the objectively real universe was imbued with God and morality, and the people of Israel belonged to this realm as long as they were engaged in *Teshuvah*. Once they abandoned *Teshuvah* and turned to the nations, objective being was lost and a void (of the Holocaust) opened up. When *Teshuvah* became collective, the void would be filled, suffering would become a purification and the subjective world (of history and of evil) would blend into objective reality (morality and God). At that point Israel could recite *Hatov vehametiv* (that God is good and bestows goodness, see Pesahim 50[a]) instead of

Dayan Ha'emet (that God punished Israel for their sins to purify her ephemeral life for the sake of eternal life). See Schweid, 1995, 171–195.

In the day of judgment, Bloch said earlier, one must plead to God to blend His judgment with mercy. Such *Devekut* affirmed God as the absolute leader and assured a positive outcome. Bloch, A.Y., 2000/01d, 178–214. For Yonah Gerondi (*Peirush Al Mishlei ad* Proverbs 3:26), trust in God brought about the strength to displace fear with hope. Gerondi, 1910, 24.

15. For Bahyah, ben Asher (fourteenth century), *Bitahon* in God involved divine assurance (*sheyivtah*) that man would indeed fulfill His commandments. Bahyah ben Asher, 1996, 58–66. *Pipano* recommended recitation of Psalms 91, which awakened the soul to seek protection by God, to trust in God and to rely on His *Hesed*. This awakening assured the person that he would be protected from all injury. David ben Rav. Avraham Pipano, 1997, 240–241. See also Gerondi, 1997, 3–11; and Luzzatto, 1985/86, 246.

16. For Yonah Gerondi, *Bitahon* assured God's *Rahamim* and *Hesed*. Psalms 130:7 ("Let Israel hope in the Lord: for with the Lord there is mercy, and with Him is plenteous redemption"), and rescue rose in proportion to trespasses ("And He shall redeem Israel from all his iniquities." Psalms 130:8). Gerondi, 1910, 24.

17. According to Bahyah ben Asher, "God will rescue you from your enemies also by natural means. Therefore do not be frightened of them. You needn't fear the nations; rather from God who dwells in your midst." Bahyah ben Asher, 1968, III, 293 (Finkel).

18. Ramhal averred that when it came to reward and punishment, harmony prevailed between what happened to the individual and what happened in terms of collective *Tikkun* of the created world. Luzzatto, M.H., 1973, 194–195.

19. The theme that once released, the evil forces did not distinguish between good and bad, was also enunciated at the time by Shlomoh Zalman Ehrenreich, citing *Metsudat David ad* Isaiah 10:5. Ehrenreich, 1976, 283–285.

20. See also: "We should not analyze how many holy ones among the *Rishonim* suffered terribly; why they were not saved through *Bitahon*. It should be understood that they had a different quality. They accepted their sufferings in love, in the manner of Rabbi Akiva who said: 'All my days I have been troubled by this verse 'With all thy soul,' which I interpret 'even if He takes thy soul.' I said, when shall I have the opportunity of fulfilling this? Now that I have the opportunity, shall I not fulfill it? (bBerakhot 61b). They enacted the attribute of *Mesirat nefesh*,

sacrificing themselves to God so that He would do good by them."
Shelomoh ben Hayim Haikel, Elyashov, 1994, 113–115.

21. Bloch cited Bahyah Ibn Pakuda's anecdote about a *Parush*
(abstemious Jew) who went to another community in search of income.
After he asked a gentile worshiping the stars to whom his worship was
directed, the gentile asked him and the *Parush* responded that he
worshiped the creator of the world who provided for the needs of all. The
gentile then asked: If you believe this why did you have to leave your
own land and come here? He returned home and became an absolute
Parush (Bahyah Ibn Pakuda, 1989/90, 283–383). The historian of *Musar*
Dov Katz relates that a poor workman once asked Rabbi Yisrael Lipkin of
Salant (1810–1883) to save him and his family from despair and Rabbi
Yisrael promised that in due course God would give him enormous riches
if he trusted totally in God. The workman did so – and he stopped
working, whereupon his misery increased. When he returned, Rabbi
Yisrael offered five thousand rubles for the riches God would give him.
The workman accepted, and Rabbi Yisrael reproved him: "If you
sincerely believed that God will give you a fortune, you would not throw
it away for five thousand rubles!" Katz, D., 1945/46, 320–21.

22. Bloch, A. Y., *Kavei El Hashem* (1939/40), forthcoming b. Yitshak
Finkel provided pre-published pages of this volume.

23. Bloch, A. Y., *Kal Kedoshav Beyadekhah* (Finkel dates it as after
the Russian occupation of the yeshivah building), forthcoming a.

24. Bloch, A. Y., 2000, 25–30, translated by Finkel. Wasserman,
1937, 7. Wasserman, a graduate of the Telšiai Yeshivah, was the son-in-
law of Meir Atlas. His son Naftali, a member of the yeshivah's *Kollel*,
was married to Miriam Rabinowitch of Telšiai. She gave birth to daughter
named Mikhal, named after her mother-in-law, in the Telšiai ghetto in fall
1941 and died some days later from giving birth, and he was killed in
Kovno, 30 October 1941. Schwartz, 1984, 369–378. On assimilation and
disaster see Emden, 1747, 75–79; Soloveichik, 1973, 37; Berlin, 1894,
115–138; and Meir Simhah Hakohen of Dvinsk, 1945, 771–773. A survey
of the literature may be found in Vainfeld, 2001, 47–58.

25. The account of Bloch's imprisonment and murder is drawn from
testimonies by Hannah Peltz-Saks (1946, Vilnius and Lodz), edited by
Layb Kalakhowsky. Yad Vashem Archives (AYV) 0–71; Bloch-
Ausband, 1984, 326–329. Bloch-Klayner, 1984, 400–408; (both based in
part on the eyewitness testimony of Mosheh Yaffeh [?]);Rabinowitch,
1984, 448–460. (Based on eyewitness accounts); Rahel Fulda and Hannah
Peltz-Saks, AYV 0.3/8515 – 0330/393. Elitsur-Rituv, 1984, 346–349 and
Elitur-Rituv, 1985/86, 235–238; and Shoshanah, 1975, 263–293.

On the destruction of the Jewish community of Telšiai see also Girsh-Bod, 1984, 330–337. Holer-Verias, 1984, 338–345; Bat Ami, 1984, 355–361; Zinger-Tayts, 1984, 363–366; Shavel, 1984, 393–399; Kagan Hurvits, 1994, 491–493; Shohat-Schif, 1984, 408–419; Levin, D. (ed.), 1996, 305–313; and testimonies of Minah Karshtat-Yudelevitch, AYV 140/1573; Tsevi Brik, AYV 03/6139; Hayim Layb-Aryeh Shavel, AYV 03/6528.

26. Justinas Staugaitis (1866–1943), a graduate of Seinai Theological Seminary, was consecrated as Bishop of Telšiai in 1926. Editor, 1972, 299. On Rainiai see Kibelka, R., 1999, 91–97.

27. Peltz reported that some Lithuanian guards wore German S.S. uniforms. The Jews recognised them and spoke with them in Lithuanian. She identified: Commander Benediktas Platakis (Telšiai); Guards Juozas Platakis (born 1903 in Telšiai); Kazys Idzelevicius, Juozas Idzelevicius (both of Telšiai); and Jonas Cepauskas (born 1912 in Telšiai district). In his 23 January 1945 testimony Desyatnik identified [?] Sutkus, Kazys Idzelevicius, Juozas Petkus, Antanas Andrijauskas, Juozas Andrijauskas, and Kazys Sulcas; and on 16 April 1948 he described how Jonas Cepauskas tortured inmates. The perpetrator Kazys Sulcas identified Benediktas Platakis, Juozas Milasius and Kazys Idzelevicius as participants in the Rainiai killings. In his 22 January 1944 testimony Kazys Idzelevicius identified Juozas Gecius (Varniai, 30 years old); and Pranas Kazdailis (Varniai area, 29–30 years old), Zigmas Sidlauskas (23 years old), Juozas Petkus (32 years old, Telšiai), Stepas Vilimavicius (40 years old), Sutkus, Edvardas [?] Ceniauskas, Jonas Burskys (28 years old), [?] Gurcenas (28 years old), Juozas Andrijauskas, Antanas Andrijauskas, Kazys Sulcas, Jonas Cepauskas, [?] Vaiciulis, [?] Juknevicius (Telšiai), [?] Mickus (Telšiai), Adomas Palauskas (27 years old), Stasys Petrauskas (27 years old), Anicetus Skuridas (30 years old), Antanas Rupeika (28 years old), [?], Baskandis, [?] Storpersis. At the end of his Soviet trial, Kazys Idzelevicius stated: "Pity that the Jewish children remained alive." Rahel Fulda (who was at his 22 January 1944 field trial) and Hanna Peltz-Saks testimony.

28. The women recited *Kiddush*, washed their hands and blessed the Sabbath when they returned to Telšiai on Friday night (Miriam Klayner-Bloch). They recited a prayer as they were led to Rainiai the next day.

"Look from heaven, and see the condition of the holy city of Telšiai. Look at how we are mocked and cursed by nations which are out to destroy, kill, abandon, hit and disgrace us. Look at how they rejoice in our distress, how they treat us cruelly. Is this what happens to the holy nation? The nation You chose from among all the nations, to exalt the light of Torah and to carry Your holy name in its mouth forever? To the

nations which the king of kings dearly desired? … From whence will our help come (Psalms 121:1)?" (Elitsur-Rituv, 1986, 346–349)

29. The testimonies recall that Telšiai Yeshivah student Dov Ber Nahamkin (killed 26 July, 25 years old) refused to work on the Sabbath; Tsevi Hirsh Levin (killed that summer, 19 years old) destroyed his watch rather than surrender it, Avraham Bloch's son Eliezer (killed August 1941) buried the yeshiva's money which had been held by Zalman Bloch and Avner Akliansky; the devil's dance killed yeshivah staffer Eliyahu Hayim Halpan (68 years old), and that Zalman Bloch (killed that summer) carried yeshivah staffer Avraham Mosheh Kaplan (Eliyahu Meir Bloch's father-in-law, 79 years old) through the dance.

30. The testimonies by Desyatnik, by perpetrators Kazys Sulcas, Kazys Idzelevicius, and Kazys Zavalys were made available from the KGB files and translated from the Russian and Lithuanian by Rūta Puišytė of the Vilna Gaon Jewish Museum in Vilnius. Desyatnik testimony, ["Citizen of the USSR. Not a (Communist) party member. Gymnasium graduate. Single. From the labour class." (Date? Telšiai?)]. Criminal case no. 9387/3. vol. 1, 62, 63. Authenticated by KGB official Major Chvanov; and 23 July 1945 (Telšiai). Criminal case no. 3398/3. vol. 1, 64–66. Avraham Yitshak.

31. Bloch's wife Rasya was killed 2 January 1942, son Eliezer 15 July 1942, son Yosef Yehudah Layb on 15 July 1942, and daughters Hasyah and Peninah on 2 January 1942. His daughters Hayah (later Ausband), Miriam (later Klayner) and Rahel (later Sorotskin) survived. Hayah Bloch-Ausband heads the Yavneh High School for women in Cleveland.

32. The murder of Iska Bloch in particular was recalled in 1947. Rahel Wechsler (as recorded by R. Kaplan on 11 July 1947) described how Iska Bloch (mistakenly called Yitshak) declared to the Lithuanian killers, "You will spray the trees with our blood, and your blood will wash the river" before they chopped him apart and his blood sprayed the trees. R. Kaplan [Rahel Wechsler], "Di letste Verter fun [Avraham] Yitshak [Ayzik] Bloch." Testimony (11 July 1947, Munich) AYV 19–1–1/2482 or M–1/E–2411/2482. Peltz quoted him as saying "You will spray the flowers with our blood. In revenge, your blood will wash the ground" before he was cut into pieces.

33. Hayah Bloch recalls that on 15 (presumably 16) July, yeshivah students Shmuel Landau and Shraga Rituv escaped back to the stables. Luba Bloch urged them to run. Landau said he was unable, having just buried his teachers, but Rituv did – and was killed near Luoke. Miriam Klayner-Bloch recalls that Avraham Krenitch of the *Kollel* and the yeshiva's Yoselovsky brothers of Klaipėda (Meir and Bentsiyon)

disguised themselves and escaped – but the brothers were caught and killed in Geruliai.

34. Kazys Sulcas, 9 January 1944 and 16 January 1945 (Field trials?). Criminal case no. 3398/3. Vol. 1, 51–59. Kazys Idzelevecius. 22 January 1944 (Field trial). Criminal case no. 3398/3. Vol. 1, 15–19. Kazys Zavalys. 30 August 1948 (Telšiai). Criminal case no. 12400/3. Vol. 1, 19–21, 27–33; Criminal case no. 12409/3.

35. Kazys Idzelevicius testified that: "The killing of women and children took place in Geruliai in August 1941. A pit of 150 meters in length, 3 meters in depth and 3 meters wide, was dug. We herded the women and children there and started shooting them. We shot them in groups of 30–40 people throughout the day. We killed ultimately about 2,000 people. During the killings some women could not stand the horror and collapsed into the pit alive…. There were women with small children or babies in their arms. All the Jewish women and children were shot in one day. The killing started at six o'clock in the morning and ended between eleven and twelve o'clock in the afternoon…. All Jewish belongings were brought for storage in Telšiai."

According to Shoshanah, some yeshivah students were taken to Geruliai. Miriam Bloch writes that Zalman Bloch's son Mosheh was killed there while wearing his *Tefillin*. Sixteen members of the yeshivah escaped into Russia, eight of whom died from hunger. Hayim Shtayn, Ayzik Ausband, Meir Seligman and Natan Tsevi Baron made it to America. Shoshanah, 1975, 263–293.

Some of those killed (June–September 1941) have been identified: Akliansky, Avner; Baye, Shimon Yehudah (25 years old); Berman, Yehudah (28); Blakhman, Mosheh (61); Blekhmer, Gershon (30); Bloch, Avraham Yitshak; Bloch, Zalman; Brunznik, Mosheh Yosef (19); Cohen, Yitshak (29); Cohen, Ze'ev (38); Davidov, Eliezer Mordekhai (41); Dunash, Shmuel Hayim (b. 1889); Druk, Ya'akov (29); Elyashev, Shmuel (19); Epel, Mordekhai (19); Epelman, Reuven Mosheh (17); Fin, Eliezer (49); Fin, Mosheh Shimon (20); Gershtavitch, Aryeh Layb (53) (*Kollel*); Gershtavitch, Ezra (21); Gershtavitch, Ovadiah (18); Gershtavitch, Yonah (27); Goldman, Yosef Pessah (33); Gradnik, Yosef Layb (26); Halpan, Efrayim (b. 1902); Halpan, Eliyahu Hayim (68); Halpan, Pinhas (b. 1898); Hess, Yosef (14); Kamenetsky, Yitshak Shlomoh (24); Kaplan, Tsevi (45); Kaplan, Avraham Mosheh; Kaplan, Meir Eliyahu (20); Katsenelnboygn, Menahem Mendel (21); Katsenelnboygn, Shalom Tuvyah (43); Kimhi, David (38); Krakh, Aryeh (42); Krenitch, Avraham (50); Krakh, Aryeh (42); Landau, Shmuel David (20); Levin, David Zalman (28); Levin, Mordekhai (55); Levin, Tsevi Hirsch (19); Levinsohn, Shmuel (43); Luria, Mosheh Betsalel (26); Merkin, Meir (15);

Merkin, Reuven (16); Merkin, Tsevi Hirsch; Nahamkin, Dovber (25); Noyk, Yosef (18); Mayzel, David (50); Paklibak, Eliezer (22); Pazeretz, Ya'akov (17); Pet, Mosheh Aharon (38); Polyevnik, Aryeh Layb (48); Polyevnik, Mosheh (46); Porplaner, Yitshak (16); Ritov, Shraga (?); Segal, Raphael (18); Segal, Pinhas (18); Sherl, Mendel (63); Shlamovitch, Hayim (25); Shtaynbakh, Meir (30); Rabinowitch, Azriel; Reznik, Zundel (35); Talman, Yehiel (35); Taytz, Yitshak (40); Tsal, Tanhum (22); Ordman, Shlomoh (18); Ordman, Yisrael; Vaserman, Aryeh Layb (26); Verbilav, Aharon Yosef (29); Verbilav, Pinhas (22); Vesler, Avraham Mordekhai; Yaffe, Dovber (26); Yankelevitch, Elia (23); Yaffe, Shmuel Reuven (23); Yoselovsky, Bentsiyon (in Geruliai); Yoselovsky, Meir (18); Yoselovsky, Shmuel (51); Ziv, David (55); Ziv, Fayvel. Sorotskin, 1963/64, 1–20.

A letter written on the stationery of Avner Aklianski of the *Mekhinah* and dated 30 December 1941 was sent by Leah Tayts to her brother I. Poplak in Cape Town, South Africa, and provided this description. Held by the Vilna Gaon Jewish Museum in Vilnius, translated from the Yiddish by the Museum staff and provided by Rūta Puišytė:

"I and my two babies are the only people still alive of all our family. Today, the 30th of December 1941, my children and I are to be killed. They have murdered all Lithuanian Jews here and nobody can stay alive. I managed to escape several times – a Lithuanian Jucius P. from the village of Stulpenai [?] helped me. So, if the world survives, please give him some of my things. Because that Lithuanian tried to hide me, but he did not succeed. When you are to say *Kaddish* for us I do not know either. My husband [Yitshak?] was shot on the fifteenth day of Tammuz [10 July 1941]. / From my heart I wish you all the best. It is from the depths of despair that your doomed sister and her two babies are writing to you. My regards to all my dear people abroad. Make sure that our innocent blood is avenged."

36. Bloch, A. Y. 2000/01a, 158–172.

37. Bloch, A. Y. 2000/01a, 158–172.

38. On the *Halakhah* of martyrdom during the Holocaust see Rabinovits, 1996, 193–216.

39. See also Katz, H.M., 1993/94, i–ii.

40. On Eliyahu Meir Bloch see Editor, 1955, 13–45; Silver, 1955, 121; Gifter, 1955, 16–17; Editor, 1964, 26; Mozes, 1975. See also Bloch, E.M., 1947, 1; 1949, 2,5; 1971/72a, 134–138; 1975, 243–245; and 1983a, 349–353.

41. Bloch, E. M., 1936, 2 and 3.

42. Bloch, E. M., 1939, 3.

43. Bloch, E. M., 1971/72b, 121–127 and 1941b, i–ii.

44. Bloch, E. M., 1971/72b, 122n. Bloch may have drawn from Mosheh Cordovero's *Tomer Devorah*. See Bland, 1975, 103–129. For an interpretation from within the Telšiai Yeshivah tradition see Cordovero M., 1999.

45. Hayim Mordekhai Katz and Eliyahu Meir Bloch arrived at Pennsylvania Station in New York from Chicago: "Two famous rabbis, children of the great Gaon R. Yosef Layb [Bloch] and the grandchildren of Hagaon R. Eliezer Telzer [Gordon] have arrived from the Telšiai Yeshivah where they were *Roshei yeshivah*. They are beloved by hundreds and thousands of students, many of whom were now in America. After great difficulties and sacrifice they made it through Moscow and Siberia to Japan, where they discovered that their temporary visas were invalid. Thanks to the help of Rabbi Dr. Dov Revel, Mr. Shmuel Layb Zar, and Rabbi Holtsmann, they were rescued from being sent back and received permission to come to America. / Among those who welcomed the important guests were delegations from the Agudat Harabanim, the Histadrut of Telšiai Students of the Telšiai Yeshivah, Ladies Auxiliary of Yeshivah Yitshak Elhanan, and the Telšiai Yeshivah Banquet Committee."

Editor, 1940c, 1–2. The right wing Lithuanian dictator Antanas Smetona (1926–1940) came to Cleveland in 1943; it is not known if Bloch and Smetona had any contact.

Eliyahu Meir Bloch's wife Rivka (daughter of Mosheh Kaplan) was killed 30 August 1941; his son Eliezer 30 August 1941; his daughter Ruhamah Brayna 30 August 1941; Hani at the end of summer 1944; and Miriam at an unknown date. See Hayah Bloch, 1958, 235–236. The wife of his brother Zalman, Luba, and their children Eliezer, Mosheh, Yosef and Peninah were killed 1941–42; Hasyah Bloch-Ordman perished as well. Katz (Eliyahu Meir Bloch's brother-in-law) studied at the Telšiai Yeshivah, the Yeshivat Keneset Beit Yitshak in Slobodka and in Volozhin. His wife and ten children remained in Telšiai. A daughter was killed at the end of winter 1944/45 in a German concentration camp. See Katz, H. M.,1975, 246–250 and 1967, 24–25; Katz, Y. Z., 1988/89, 5–20. Sherer, 1964, 3–4.

46. Sorotskin, 1963/64, i–ii. Barukh (who married Rahel Bloch) and Eliezer Sorotskin were the sons of Zalman Sorotskin of Lutzk and grandsons of Eliezer Gordon (Rabinowitch, 1984), 448–460.

47. Bloch, E. M., 1945, 3–4.

48. Bloch, E. M., 1941a, 12–13.

49. Bloch, E. M., 1944a, 26. I was unable to access Eliyahu Meir Bloch and Natan Tsevi Baron, *Sefer Peninei Da'at: Al Hatorah: Iyunim*

Yesodiyim Parashiyot Hatorah (Wycliff, Ohio: 1944) in time for publication.

50. Bloch, E. M., 1942, 11 and 1–2.

51. Bloch, E. M. [On hearing of the death of his family]. In *Hiddushei Torah* as cited in Gifter, 1955, 16–17.

52. Bloch, E. M., 1943a, 3.

53. Bloch, E. M., 1983b, 268–271.

54. Bloch, E. M., 1943b, 11–13.

55. Bloch, E. M., 1944b.

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The Holocaust in the Western Regions of Belarus

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The final purpose of the Nazi genocide policy towards the Jewish population was the latter's total annihilation. The realisation of the purpose was carried in two main directions:

1. The destruction of the people by indirect methods by creating such provisional life support system that would sustain Jews on a level of minimum biological survival and would lead to the gradual but inevitable reduction of the Jewish population;

2. Physical destruction of the Jewish population.

As a rule, foreign and local research on the history of the Holocaust in Belarus has dealt with the problems of the physical destruction of the Jewish population and Jews' participation in the partisan movement. The source base for such works comprises by the recollections and various narrative sources, as well materials from Western archives. The study of the main directions of the occupation authorities' social and economic policy regarding the Jewish population is possible only with the help of a new complex of sources, earlier unavailable to researchers. These include official documentation from government and self-government bodies (*Judenrats*, municipal administrations, municipal and district commissariats), which is stored in the Belarusian archives. The complex analysis of the above-mentioned sources, unlike the available works on the Holocaust history in Belarus, allows to study deeper those manifestations of the occupation regime, which go beyond the borders of the Nazi punitive policy towards Jews.

One of the main directions of the German occupation authorities' social and economic policy towards the Jewish population in the western regions of Belarus was the exploitation of labour resources via organisation of forced labour and the maximum use of qualified Jewish workers in the production sphere.

The German authorities regarded the Jewish population of the occupied territories as the most important functional element in the organised economic structures, which satisfied the needs of the *Wehrmacht* and local civil administrations. All Jewish population was divided in the following categories by the occupation authorities:

1. <u>Able-bodied population:</u>
- Artisans keeping their own workshops;
- Workers and office personnel of city factories and establishments;
- Other able Jewish population: men aged 14–60, women aged 16–50.

2.   <u>Unfit population:</u>
- Children;
- Elderly people;
- Invalids and the sick.

Traditionally in the western regions of Belarus there was a situation of considerable dominance by Jews among the artisans and some other categories of qualified workers and specialists. According to the data for 31 January 1938, in Polessye province, which included Brest, Drogichin, Kamen-Kashirsky, Kobrin, Kossovo, Luninets, Pinsk, Pruzhany and Stolin districts, there were 10,264 Jews, who accounted for 76% of all qualified artisans.[1] A similar ratio of Jewish and non-Jewish artisans was retained during the occupation period. Taking the city of Brest as an example, one can reconstruct the professional structure of the Jewish population. According to data for November–December 1941, 21% of the city Jews were artisans, 13.7% were workers (qualified and unqualified), 4.7% were employed in the sphere of public services, 4.7% were doctors, teachers, etc.; 0.7% were employed in agriculture. More than a half of the Jewish population – 54.8% – did not have any special or professional training.

Most of the qualified specialists were Jewish men. Among the Jewish male population artisans made up 37.3%; workers – 26.5%; 9.4% were employed in the public services (bakers, barbers, etc); 7.1% were office workers; 2.3 % worked in the agriculture, and only 17% of Jewish men did not have any speciality. 69% of Jewish women did not have a profession, which reflected the traditional way of life in Jewish families, where women were chiefly responsible for housekeeping. About 15% of women were employed in the artisan production, and the absolute majority of these were involved in clothes making. Above 8% of Jewish women had various working professions, about 3% worked in the service sphere; 3,7 % were office workers; 0.1% worked in the agriculture.[2] It is quite characteristic that even among those Jewish women who had a speciality, the percentage of those working steadily was very low. Thus, by the data for autumn 1941, of all Pinsk Jewish women with a speciality only 33% were employed, and on the whole only 8.3% of 8,500 women had a steady job.[3]

According to the information for 25 January, 1942, the total number of the able Jewish population in Pinsk was 9,056 people (50.2%), the working people supported 8,961 dependants (49.8%). The able-bodied population was employed in the following way: 1,982 people (11% of Jews) worked in industry and at the city establishments, 291 people (1.6%) kept their own workshops, other 6,783 people (37.6%) were summoned to work from time to time by the *Judenrat*. Children – boys

below 14 and girls below 16 – made up 34.4% of the population (6,209 people); the elderly – men above 60 and women above 50 made up 14.2% of the Jewish population (2,562 people). Besides, there were 190 people invalid or chronically sick in Pinsk (1% of the total population). After the first extermination actions Jewish men made 33.8% of the Jewish population, at that 47% of them were children and adolescents below 14, thus making the ratio of men in certain categories much lower. For instance, among the elderly people men made up 18.5% (the disproportion between male and female population in this category can also be explained by the difference in the age qualification). Among the Jews, who were used for forced labour, men 11.7% were. The majority of the able Jewish men were employed in the industrial production and at the city establishments (as qualified workers) – they were 1,613 (26% of the Jewish men, or 81.3% of all people in this category). Most Jewish women were enlisted for the forced labour – 5,985 people, or 50.2% of all Jewish women, which also made up 88.2% of the people in this category.[4] Such situation was caused by the peculiarities of the social and professional structure of the Jewish population in the western regions of Belarus.

According to data for 14 May, 1942, 1,087 Pinsk Jews were artisans and practised some kind of trade (693 men and 394 women), while there were only 41 artisans of "Aryan" origin.[5] So, Pinsk Jews made up 96.4% of all city artisans. Similar situation was in other West-Belarusian cities and localities. The occupation authorities registered artisans by professional groups. Thus, according to data for September 1941, there were 2,772 artisans of more that 40 professions registered in Grodno, of them 16.2% were tailors, 12.3% were metal workers, 10% were shoe-makers, 9.5% were carpenters.[6] In Brest for 3 October 1942, there were 2,200 Jewish artisans.[7]

The occupation authorities' policy was aimed at the maximum use of qualified labour. With the establishment of the occupation regime the private sector in the economy was revived, local authorities let small businesses exist. In August–September 1941 the licensing of Jewish workshops took place, which allowed the partial reconstruction of the social and professional infrastructure of the cities along the Polish model. However, from spring 1942 many Jewish workshops were closed: their owners refused to renew the license and moved to work at the city establishments.[8] According to data for September 1942, 158 Pinsk artisans returned their provisional certificates. A part of them lost their the patent, as their shops remained in the Aryan part of the city, others, who had their shops in the ghetto, were forced to shut them down due to the lack of raw materials, orders, electricity, etc. Only 27 artisans continued

to work in the ghetto, most of them shoe-makers or tailors, 29 people practised their trade in their free from the forced labour time.[9]

The larger part of the qualified labour resources was used by the occupation authorities in the municipal artisan workshops and in companies. Such situation was typical for the ghetto period. The scale, forms and conditions of the qualified labour use depended on the economic potential of the city and the peculiarities of the Nazi policy in various occupation zones.

On the territory of the General District "Volyn-Podolia" (*Reichskommissariat* "Ukraine") the main organisational form for qualified labour was municipal and trade workshops. Closing of the private workshops and trade led to the increase in the number of the workers at middle-sized and large enterprises. This was caused by the occupation authorities' changing policy in the economic sphere. Small private shops could not satisfy the Wehrmacht's growing needs, that is why only the minimal number of the artisans were left to serve the local population, while additional workers with professional training were used to fulfil the orders of the military and civil authorities. By the information for June 1942, there were 15 Jewish workshops in Brest, which united 131 former workshop owners, as well as at least 5 municipal shops, which employed 145 Jewish artisans.[10] The turnover of 15 Jewish shops for June 1942 was 96,108 roubles.[11] By October 1942 the artisans union was created at the Brest *Judenrat*, which united 31 shops with the total 2,280 people employed (tailors and dress-makers, seamstresses, furriers, hatters, knitters, hosiery production, watch repairers, carpenters, shoe-makers, etc.). On the whole, 50 % of the workshops' orders came from the military authorities (above 45,000 units monthly), and about 3 thousand units were produced monthly for the citizens.[12]

By the information for 1 July 1942, there were 255 artisans employed in Ghetto 1 in Grodno, and 711 artisans worked outside the ghetto.[13] By late 1942 there were 19 Jewish enterprises of the artisan type in the city, which mainly worked on the military orders (15 of them employed 1,601 people). The head of the Jewish enterprises was Harwardt. The largest enterprise united felt boots production shops – by 31 December 1942, they employed 380 people (from 1 Oct. 1942 to 31 Dec. 1942 the shops produced 10,000 pairs of felt boots). The turnover of all Jewish enterprises for the fourth quarter of 1942 was 267,058 Reich Marks, and the total tax was 5,341 Reich Marks.[14]

The category of the permanently employed also included, apart from specialist artisans, the workers, used in the industrial production and at various organisations and factories in the cities. Many Jews continued to

work in industry: of 1,774 people, employed at Pinsk factories, 818 were Jewish (814 men and 4 women).[15]

According to the order of Brest-Litovsk Commissar, Burat, dated 21 Nov. 1941, all workers and office workers of the district were registered at their working places, and dismissal was allowed only with the consent of the Labour Department chief or his deputy. Leaving one's work place was considered sabotage and punished with an unlimited fine, or imprisonment, or transporting to the labour camp.[16] Similar rules applied to the Jews in Grodno district. From 4 May 1942, the directives of Grodno Labour Exchange came into force, according to which the working day for the Jewish workers was 10 hours, and the repeated belatedness for work as strictly punished.[17]

The forms and type of work that could be done by Jews were strictly regulated. When Jews were enlisted for work in the state enterprises, private companies or for forced labour, it was forbidden to use them for office work and in trade.[18] However in practice these restrictions were often violated. As an example of the authorities' reaction to such cases we can draw the order of the civil administrative bodies in Grodno district, dated 6 Oct. 1942, which stated: "Unfortunately, enterprises producing foodstuffs still employ Jews either out of thoughtlessness, or out of the conviction that as a specialist a Jew can not be replaced by an Aryan…" As a consequence of this, a strict ban was imposed on the use of Jews at food producing enterprises, private farmsteads, canteens and restaurants. The term was set to substitute Jews by Aryans – it was to be done by 1 January 1943.[19] The exception was made only for the Jewish medical specialists, a small number of whom were allowed to stay at the Aryan medical establishments.

The wages of Jewish workers in steady jobs (e.g. in private businesses, enterprises, organisations and establishments) were regulated by numerous directives of the *Reichskomissariat* and the local authorities. According to the "Ukraine" *Reichskomissar's* order, dated 3 Jan. 1941, all establishments, factories, building companies, offices, etc. had to pay the District *Reichskommissariat's* Cashier Office or to the account of the District Reichskommisars 20% of the Jews' salaries.[20] So, one fifth of the money earned by Jews formed a special Jewish tax. According to the workers' tariff scale, women received 80% of men's salary, the salary of a Jewish working woman was lowered accordingly.[21] Apart from the special 20% tax, Jewish workers were imposed all general taxes (income tax, health service tax, etc.).

In the Białystok district the system of the Jewish taxation, defined by the regulation of the East Prussia president, dated 18 Sept. 1941,[22] was much tougher. In fact Jewish workers received 38% of the money earned

(50% of all deductions were a special Jewish tax, 12% was deducted from Jews' money, as well as from other workers' to pay income tax and social tax). Women received 75% of men's salaries.[23] The tariff scale of the Jews' salaries in Białystok district depended on the worker's qualifications and age.[24]

Considering all taxes, Jews' real earnings made a very insignificant sum. Thus, 190 Jewish workers, employed at the construction works at the Grodno municipal administration, earned 6,936 Reich marks for the period 16–31 July, 1942, yet with the deductions of all taxes the general amount to be paid was 3,341 Reich marks, which made it 17,5 R.m. per person on the average[25]. In this way the Nazi programme was put into practice, and its gist was summarised by *Ostland Reichskomissar* Lose as early as in August 1941: "The Jews' salaries must not correspond to their output, but only maintain the worker and his dependants on the level of sustenance…"[26]

In the sphere of the labour legislation working Jews were deprived of the privileges enjoyed by the blue – and white – collar workers of other nationalities: a bonus was given to the salary for the command of the German language, for the over-fulfilment of the norm, 25% of the salary additionally for conscientious work and other types of financial incentives, as well as the right for vacation.[27]

According to Hitler's directive about the government on the new eastern territories, dated 17 July 1941, all the population of the occupied territories was considered liable for labour.[28] However, it was the Jewish population of the occupied territories that, due to the specific policy of the occupation authorities, became that potential contingent which was drawn for forced labour in the first place. At first the decision about the terms of organising forced labour, wages and age qualifications of the enlisted population was made, as a rule, by the military authorities. Thus, not later 5 August 1941, the Pinsk commandant issued the order about enlisting Jews aged 16–55 for forced labour. The *Judenrat* was responsible for organising working brigades to be provided at the disposal of the municipal administration, German offices and military detachments. The latter had to forward the requests for Jewish labour to the *Ortskommandantur* or the city council with the indication of the number of the needed workers, their profession, number of unqualified working hands, place and duration of work. The Jewish council had the right of inner taxation to form the salary fund for the Jewish workers and to finance the Jewish self-government service. The order forbade picking Jews up for work in the streets without having a summons for labour.[29] In this way the authorities tried to stop voluntary round-ups, practised by the military detachments to enlist Jews for work. The order regulated the

process of organising forced labour. Since in the first weeks of the occupation the enlisting of forced labour was parallel to the first punitive actions, conducted by the *Einsatzgruppe*, and mass shooting of Jewish men, Jewish communities tried to shun the orders summoning Jews to work. In this situation the military authorities resorted to the threats of punishment on the one hand, and introduced remuneration for work on the other. The order of this kind was issued on 16 August 1941, by the military commandant of Brest, von Unru.[30] From time to time all able-bodied Jews had to come for work upon being summoned by the *Judenrat*. The character of work was determined by the requests for labour, received by the *Judenrat* via the *Ortskommandantur* and city council. The clients were German military detachments, various municipal establishments and organisations, and private persons. The client could hire one or several workers on the pay per hour basis (the number of the workers could amount to 30–40 people).[31]

Permanent jobs and work in one's own shops did not free Jews from the forced labour.[32] According to Brest Burgomaster Bronikovsky's order, dated 17 September 1941, full-time workers in the city establishments had to report once a week for public and communal works for the city benefit. Jews were not paid for that day at their working places.[33]

The analysis of the archive sources in Pinsk, Brest and Grodno – such documents as the correspondence of the municipal administrations with Judenrats, Labour Exchanges and economic organisations regarding the questions of enlisting Jewish labour – allows us to distinguish the following types of forced labour, where Jewish hands were used:

1.   Repair and construction work (stove works, carpentry, joinery, etc., work at the military and civil establishments). In Brest Jewish brigades were used to work in the fortress.

2.   Street and building cleaning, improvement works at German cemeteries, sewage-disposal works.

3.   Unqualified labour at factories (e.g. in Pinsk at the brick factory, in concrete production, at the aerodrome, in bakeries and in forestry).

4.   Loading and unloading of barges and freight cars, transporting of the building and other materials.

5.   Agricultural works at farmsteads.[34]

Jews made a considerable labour reserve for the occupation authorities. In May 1942 in Pinsk ghetto there were 3,228 able-bodied men and 7,642 women fit to be used for forced labour. Adolescents' labour was also used (1,574 boys and 4,364 girls above 14).[35]

With the course of time the number of Jews, enlisted for forced labour, increased, which can be explained by the growing demand of the

occupation authorities in cheap labour. Thus, in Brest in January 1941 4,956 Jews were employed permanently and temporarily, in February they were 5,490, in March – 5,843 people, in April – 6,722, in May – 7,248 people. In June 1942 the number of working Jews reached the record mark – 7,994 people, including 1,571 men-specialists and 1,384 men and 5,039 women employed mainly for forced labour.[36]

Jews were given the most labour-consuming and lowest-paid jobs. Adolescents received 60% of the adult worker's salary. The earned money was deducted all taxes. The payments were often delayed, the earned money was given in the reduced amount, or not paid at all.[37]

By organising forced labour the occupation authorities found another way to get revenues from the Jewish population: firstly, Jews represented practically an unpaid labour force; secondly, the developed system of fines gave additional money to the city budget. The available archive materials throw light on how widely the fine system was applied. By the incomplete data, only on 4–5 March 1942, 152 Pinsk Jews received a fine notice, the total sum amounting to 7,530 roubles.[38]

As "the final solution of the Jewish question" drew closer, the economic situation on the occupied territories aggravated. Local industrial production and the economic infrastructure in towns and localities in Western Belarus were based on the predominant use of the Jewish labour. The extermination of the Jewish population could lead to an immediate economic collapse, to the paralysis of the economic mechanism, created by the occupants on the seized territories. Thus, in August 1942 the "evacuation" of 350 Brest Jewish artisans brought about the temporary disruption in the work of several important military enterprises in the city.[39]

The occupation authorities did not have a single view of the consequences of the Jews' extermination. Thus, the chief of the security police in Brest garrison in his urgent report of 15 Sept. 1942 pointed that "the solution of the Jewish question will cause much damage due to the shortage of the labour force." As an example he drew the situation in Kovel, where after the ghetto liquidation the economic life was paralyzed, and there was felt bad shortage of specialists and labour force, especially in the agriculture.[40] In Grodno district the civil authorities expressed an opposite viewpoint concerning the consequences of the "Jewish" actions. The report dated 10 December 1942, "On the economic consequences of the Jewish campaign," stated, that despite some difficulties, there would not be a considerable change after the "evacuation" – the enterprises would continue their work, and even increase the production output.[41] In order to overcome the possible economic consequences of the liquidation

of the able Jewry, a special complex programme was worked out, which included the following points:

1. Training of qualified specialists of the local non-Jewish origin for industrial needs and artisan's production. A network of vocational schools was established. Thus, according to the data for September 1942, there were 8 vocational schools opened in Pinsk, which trained shoe-makers, upper-makers, tailors, dress-makers, cutters, metal workers, turners, smiths, carpenters, etc.[42] In Grodno District in 1942 training courses to for tailors and cutters were ready to start; also the camps of the German Labour Front to train qualified builders, electricians, adjusters, workers for the iron foundry. It was supposed to start the training courses at large factories in Grodno – the foot wear factory, furniture factory, tobacco factory, also at some artisan's shops. The demand for the specialists in Grodno was 1,500 people, and the total labour deficit, by the authorities' reckoning, was 3–4 thousand people.

2. A more rational use of the available labour reserve:

§ Enlisting the able population from the rural areas. It was planned to forcefully move the peasants having insufficient arable land (less than 4 hectares), as well as the residents of small farmsteads and villages in the partisan zones, to the industrial areas.[43]

§ Use of the labour previously meant to be transported to the Reich.[44]

§ Enlisting the refugees for work (in 1943–1944).

Nonetheless the actual economic consequences of the destruction of the Jewish population in Western Belarus were graver than the occupation authorities could predict. The industrial and artisan production was struck a severe blow. Among those who suffered most were small enterprises in towns and localities. Thus the tanneries in Skidel and Grodno were shut down, as was the soap factory in Domachevo, Brest District and so on.[45] The hopes of the authorities on the training of the local qualified specialists, or the use of *Ostarbeiter*, refugee or peasant labour. The changing situation on the Eastern front, the active partisan movement, the evacuation of the industrial enterprises which have begun and export of raw materials hindered the stabilisation of the economic situation in the occupied Belarusian territories. The liquidation of the Jewish population led to an irrevocable change in the social, economic and demographic structure of the region, the consequences of which greatly influenced the economic development of the region in post-war times.

An analysis of available material allows us to draw several conclusions:

1. The specific use of Jewish labour in the western regions of Belarus largely depended on the economic potential of the region, created before

the occupation, and the actions of the local occupation authorities and *Judenrats*. It also determined the possible ways of using Jewish labour, as well as the life-term of the Jewish population on the occupied territories.

2. The peculiar feature of using Jewish labour was the authorities' determination to use it to the maximum, which correlated with the Jewish people's desire to survive by working hard and participating in the work that was offered. Singular cases of sabotage or refusal to work do not distort the general picture. So, the relations between the occupation authorities and the Jewish population were based on the principle of expediency.

3. The use of Jewish labour was a part of the Reich's global programme of mastering labour resources in the eastern territories, and until 1943 it was the most important aspect of the authorities' policy, securing the functioning of the cities and factories, fulfilling *Wehrmacht* military orders.

4. One of the ways of using the Jews was enlisting them for forced labour, including agricultural work, which gave the opportunity to attract unqualified workers, and also women and children.

5. The occupation authorities' economic inclination to use predominantly Jewish labour allowed them, on the one hand, to organise the work of the city economy, industrial enterprises and create production infrastructure to serve the *Wehrmacht's* needs in 1941–1943, but on the other hand, this caused economic destabilisation and acute shortage of working hands after the destruction of the Jewish population.

On the eve of the war Jews formed a considerable part of the population in western regions of Belarus. Traditionally Jews had lived in industrial and trade centres. With the establishment of the German fascist regime the ratio of the Jewish and non-Jewish population in the cities and towns changed in favour of Jews, which was caused both by the migration processes (spontaneous migration of the Jewish families and even communities to large cities in search of a safer place), and by the purposeful concentration of the Jewish population by the German authorities in order to facilitate the control, organisation of forced labour and finally the destruction of the Jewish population.

From the first days of the occupation the German leadership raised the question of separating Jews from other nationalities by means of forceful isolation in specially created areas for living – ghettoes. A. Rosenberg's memorandum "Directions to solve the Jewish Question" pointed that the first and foremost aim of the German authorities regarding this question must be strict separation of Jews from other population. Rosenberg demanded to deprive Jews of all rights and place them in the ghettoes.[46]

An analysis of the living conditions and the legal status of Jews in the western regions of Belarus allow us distinguish two main stages in the process of ghettoisation (isolation of the Jewish population):

1. Organisation of the open ghettoes – racial and legal isolation of the Jewish population by introducing the whole complex of the discriminatory measures (separating Jews from other people, breaking the links with the outside world).

2. Organisation of the closed ghettoes – physical isolation of the Jewish population, complete break of the connections with the outer world.

Racial and legal isolation of the Jewish population started from the first occupation days. The complex of the discriminatory measures worked in three main directions: restricting free movement, social life and economic functioning.

The limitation of the free movement included the following measures:

1. Ban on moving from place to place without special authorisation.

2. Restricted movement within populated areas.

According to the Army Group "Centre" Rear Services commandant, General Schenkendorf's order, the military authorities had to inhibit spontaneous movement of Jews. Schenkendorf demanded that Jews be prohibited to leave their communities and that Jewish refugees be obliged to return to their former places of abode; and also Jews had to be restricted to the areas of Jewish residential quarters. This order was duplicated by another, the 812 Minsk District Field Commandant's Office order, dated 20 July, 1941, about the organisation of Jewish councils and living quarters (ghettoes).[47] Jewish and other refugees, who happened to find themselves in the war action zone, were temporarily prohibited to return to the former place of living, if it was situated in an area of 10-kilometers area from the eastern border line of the Army Group "Centre" Rear.[48]

Attaching Jews to their places of abode became the first step on the way to deal with "the Jewish question."

In the first weeks of the occupation the process of exiling Jews from rural areas to district and regional centres started. The concentration of the Jewish population in large cities was effected for the sake of facilitating the control over Jews. Such removals were on a rather large scale. Thus, in autumn 1941 at least 250 Jews were removed to Pinsk from the agricultural colony in Ivaniki, 59 Jews came from Gorodische, 7 Jews – from Porechie. On the whole in the period June–October 1941 at least 776 Jews returned or were removed to Pinsk (of them 15.8% were men, 44.3% were women, and 39.8% – children and adolescents below 14).[49] 113 Jews from the village of Slovatichi and 52 Jews from Rossozh

were exiled to Brest.[50] The first exterminations and relocations of Jews had a powerful impact on the number of Jewish communities on the occupied territories. Certain communities ceased existing or shrunk considerably (e.g. in Zabludovo the Jewish community decreased by 70%). On the other hand, the number of Jews in other places grew (e.g. in Krynki the population increased by 20%, in Sukhovlya – by 100%).[51]

A peculiar situation developed in Pruzhany. In October 1941 a decision was made about the organisation of a Jewish town ("*Judenschtadt*") there; in the period from autumn 1941 to spring 1942 about 4,500 Jews from Białystok were transported there, and also 2,000 Jews from the towns and localities in the western regions of Belarus: Belovezha, Gainovka, Narevka, Stolbtzy, Novy Dvor.[52]The characteristic feature of the first stage of the ghettoisation was the forceful removal of the Jewish population from certain parts of the city or locality to the place especially allotted to Jews.

The complex of the measures, meant to restrict the Jewish population within the populated area, included the ban on appearing in certain parts of the city; the ban on walking in unorganised groups and the curfew.

The restriction of free movement for Jews was also evident in the ban on using pavements, public transport and automobiles.[53]

The first stage of the ghettoisation (open ghetto) is characterised by the strict division of the city or other area, densely populated by Jews, into two parts: Jewish and non-Jewish. Jews were forbidden to appear in public places[54]. Everywhere it was announced about the ban for Jews to visit nearby villages.[55]

In summer-autumn 1941 the Army Group "Centre" Rear Services commandant, General Schenkendorf issued the order prohibiting Jews to trade (buy or sell) with the non-Jewish people. The ban did not pertain to those Jews who obtained German authorisation to work in a trade or artisan enterprise.[56]

Special orders were issued to regulate the sale of food to Jews. If at first the Jews of Glubokoe village were allowed to make purchases at the local market daily during two hours appointed by the authorities, then later there followed a categorical order, forbidding Jews to visit the market and especially to buy butter, meat, eggs, milk and berries.[57] Similarly, the Jews of Pinsk were allowed at first to make purchases at the local market twice a week, later – only once a week, and from November 1942 the commissar of Pinsk district ordered that Jews should be forbidden to buy food at the local groceries, markets or from peasants. Besides, it was forbidden to exchange clothes for food.[58] On 14 October 1941, the Grodno district commissar, Dr von Pletz issued a similar orde.[59]

Jews were restricted in the right of property, they were forbidden to trade, pawn or exchange their possessions.[60]

Stressing the special policy towards Jews, the Nazis used visual means of separating this national group from others, thus resorting to the psychological factor of humiliation. All the Jewish population, including children above 10, was obliged to wear special signs testifying to their national origin. On the territory of the Western Belarus several variants of such signs were in use. The most typical signs during the first weeks of the occupation were white arm bands with a yellow (in Pinsk), blue (in Grodno), or white-red (in Brest) six-cornered star. Later these were substituted by round yellow patches (in Pinsk, Brest, Braslav) or six-cornered stars (the places of Nova Mysh and Diatlovo in Baranovichi district, Grodno) 10 cm. in diameter, sewed to the left or right side of the chest, in the middle of the back (as a variant – on the shoulder: in Miory village).[61] There were cases when the sewed-on stars had to bear additional signs: letter "J" (in Druya[62]) or personal number (in Novogrudok[63]). In some places blue-yellow stars were used (in Vishnevo).[64] The compulsory wearing of patches was an effective way to ensure that Jews followed all the rules regulating their behaviour in the streets. Jewish houses also had to be marked; the facades had to bear six-cornered stars (in Lenino), or the inscription "Jude" (in Braslav), or large yellow tables (in Volkovysk).[65] The streets leading to the Jewish quarters were also marked with special signs (in Brest).[66]

Various methods were used by the Nazis to make the isolation of Jews complete. In some places special orders were issued, forbidding office clerks from having any contact with Jews, including hand-shaking or conversation; in fact any communication between Jews and other people was banned (greetings, chatting, etc.).[67] Grodno District Commissar Dr von Pletz declared at the meeting with *volost*[67a] commissars and burgomasters on 23 October 1941, that people communicating with or supporting Jews would be equated with the latter and treated accordingly.[68] The organisation of the *Judenrats* can also be regarded as a part of the isolationist policy.

The occupation authorities continued population selection and took under control the sphere of marriage and family. Marriages between Jews and non-Jews were forbidden. Some time later, in early 1942 the orders were issued forbidding marriages between non-Jews and half-Jews. Information was gathered about marriages between Jews and non-Jews that already existed.[69] Non-Jewish spouses of Jews or half-Jews were forbidden to maintain matrimonial relations under the threat of being given the same status as Jews.[70] There is information about the cases of sterilisation of Jews, who continued to live in the wedlock with non-Jews

(in Baranovichi).[71] While registering marriages, local people had to fill in special papers of pre-marital investigation which tried to find out whether there were Jews among them or their relatives three times removed.[72] Belarusians, Poles, Russians and Ukrainians working at the establishments organised by the occupants were obliged to submit such documents and make a signed statement about not having Jewish ancestors.[73] The Nazis' orders prohibited practising Jewish religious rituals, sacrificial animal slaughter[74] synagogues were closed and Jewish books were burnt (Pinsk, Brest, Druya, Krivichi, and other).[75]

The second stage in the process of isolating the Jewish population was the organisation of closed ghettoes. The characteristic features of the closed ghetto are the following:

1. Fixing the ghetto borderline and encircling it with fences.

2. Concentration of the entire local Jewish population on the ghetto territory.

3. Organisation of the outer guard and inner Jewish patrol in the ghetto.

4. Prohibition to leave ghetto territory and introduction of the strict pass system.

5. Prohibition of mail and telephone services.

Jewish ghettoes were to be organised, if possible, at a distance from main roads, inside cities and towns – distant from central streets (there were directives that the living conditions for Jews were to be worse than for non-Jews).[76] Yet in a number of cases ghettoes were situated in the centre of the city (firstly, for the purpose of preventing escapes from the ghetto, which could have been easier done had it been situated on the outskirts of the place; and secondly, for the purpose of facilitating the removal procedure, as most Jews traditionally lived in the centre of the cities and towns). Alongside the ghetto border there was a 10 metre "estrangement" line: it was categorically forbidden to construct buildings, store construction materials and plant trees or bushes there.[77] On ghetto territory electric wires were removed (exceptions were made only for hospitals, bakeries and industrial enterprises.[78] Around ghettoes large fences were built (for instance, the ghetto in Baranovichi was enclosed with a barbed wire fence 2,5 metres high), watch towers were erected (in Grodno).[79] In some cases there were natural boundaries in the ghetto (in Braslav the ghetto was adjacent to the lake on one side and to the Zamkova mountain on the other).[80]

Often the organisation of the ghetto, building of the fence and suchlike works were laid on Jews themselves (in Białystok, Pruzhany, Dolginovo and other).[81] The term for the removal to the ghettoes was different: from several days (in Pinsk, Brest) or 24 hours (in Grodno) to

several hours or even half an hour (in Glubokoe).[82] The heads of the Political Departments, created in regional and district commissariats, were in charge of the ghettoes. On the eve of the extermination actions ghettoes were passed in charge of the Security Police.[83] Inner administration in the ghettoes was done by the *Judenrats*. Jewish police (*Ordnungdienst* – O.D.) were created in the ghettoes to maintain order on its territory, they were armed with rubber clubs and sticks. The Jewish police were not numerous. In Pinsk they were 13 people, in Brest – at least 16 people, in Slonim – 30 people, in Baranovichi – 22 people.[84]

The outer guard of the ghetto borders was the SS and police's area of competence.[85] Thus, the outer guard of the Baranovichi ghetto was done by a unit of the guarding police, made up of the local volunteers.[86]

In late 1941 there were 13 closed ghettoes set up on the territory of Grodno District: in Skidel, Lunno, Kamenka, Ostrino, Martsikantsy, Ozera, Porechie, Golynka, Sopotzkino, two ghettoes existed in Grodno and Druskininkai.[87]

The whole complex of the discriminatory measures, existing in the first stage of ghettoisation, was fully retained in the closed ghettoes. Moreover, these measures were reinforced and amplified. New restrictive and forbidding orders first of all pertained to the freedom of movement.[88] Jews were allowed to leave the ghetto only in the working brigades, or carrying an individual pass, issued by the occupation authorities. In small localities Jews were allowed to go away from the ghetto for the distance of no more than 1 km. (i.e. to stay in the confines of the locality), provided they had a pass.[89]

The process of setting up closed ghettoes completed the concentration of the Jewish population. All Jews, who remained until then in the rural areas, were removed urgently to the nearby towns, where closed ghettoes were created, and the "purge" of the countryside was carried out. In February 1942, 20 Jews from the village of Lososno II were exiled to Grodno, and so were 32 Jews from Lapy in July 1942.[90] On the eve of the ghettoisation in Pinsk (April 1942) the Jewish population of the city grew by 697 people, who arrived from the nearby villages.[91] In spring 1942 the concentration of Jews started in the Novogrudok ghetto, where 5,500 people were removed from the nearby villages and localities (Lubcha, Vselub, Karelitsy, etc.).[92] The ghetto in Glubokoe held Jews from 42 localities, villages and towns.[93]

High density of the population due to the shortage of the dwelling space was the typical feature of all ghettoes. Thus, in the Pinsk ghetto more than 18,000 people lived in 446 houses, the total floor space of which was 35,126 sq.m.,[94] so the proportion was 1.8 m² of the general

floor space per prisoner. In Malorita more than 2,000 people inhabited 50 houses.[95] Similar situation was in other ghettoes.[96]

The transformation of the closed ghetto into the Jews' place of life and work was, according to the occupation authorities, the prerequisite for the active use of the Jewish labour in the military economy. The barrack life of Jews together with the situation of the production on the ghetto territory gave certain economic benefits:

1. There was no need to transport Jews to work;
2. Control over the workers was facilitated;
3. The working day increased by at least two hours.[97]

In some places two closed ghettoes were created. The organisation of two ghettoes was a part of the policy of separating Jews into able-bodied and unfit. In the western regions of Belarus two ghettoes existed in Slonim, Grodno, Brest, Bereza-Kartuska, Glubokoe, Drohichin, Kobrin, Novogrudok, Antopol, Vileika.[98] As a rule, in one ghetto ("the working one") artisans, qualified specialists and other able population resided, the elderly, the sick and children were concentrated in the other.

One special type of the ghetto was the transit camp – a place where Jews were temporarily kept before being transported to the death camps. On the territory of Western Belarus were set up 5 transit camp: in Białystok, Kolbasino (Lososno), Bogush, Volkovysk, Sambrov (near Belostock).[99]

A typical occurrence in the process of the "final solution of the Jewish question" was the organisation of so-called "remnant" ghettoes, which can be viewed as a kind of labour camps. The specific feature of this type of ghetto was keeping only Jewish artisans (sometimes with their families) there. Thus, in Pinsk after the liquidation of the ghetto 150 artisans remained, in Novogrudok – about 500 specialists, in Baranovichi – about 100 people were left behind.[100]

An analysis of the regime and the conditions of people's imprisonment in closed ghettoes, and Jewish transit and labour camps allows us to regard them as concentration camps, the defining features of which are the enforced concentration and keeping of large numbers of people in the enclosed and guarded space; creation of such living and working conditions that lead to the extinction of prisoners; total denial of people's civil rights and subsequently their complete destruction.

On the whole, the genocide policy adopted by the occupation authorities towards the Jewish people brought about an irrevocable change in the social and demographic structure of the population. The social and demographic consequences of the Nazi genocide of the Jewish population were revealed in the destruction of Jewish communities, which

used to live compactly in Belarusian cities and villages. The proportion of Jews, who formed about 10% of the population in pre-war times, shrunk considerably, and hardly reached 1% after the war. Thus, according to the population census in 1959, there were 3,745 Jews in the Grodno region (0.35% of the population), of them 3,513 lived in towns (1.4% of the urban population).[101] So, about 99% of the Jewish population of the western regions of Belarus was destroyed in the Holocaust, and there took place the irrevocable change in the ethnic composition of the Belarusian cities and villages.

Notes

1. Brest, Gosudarstvennyi Arkhiv Brestskoi Oblasti [GABO], fond 2, vopis 1, spr. 3017, 4.

2. Ibidem, fond 201, vopis 1, spr. 21, 41–62, 132–157, 160–286, 288–320, 440–445, 467.

3. Ibidem, fond 2135, vopis 1, spr. 25–27.

4. Ibidem, fond 2135, vopis 1, spr. 199, 1.

5. Ibidem, fond 2135, vopis 2, spr. 199, 8.

6. Grodno, Gosudarstvennyi Arkhiv Grodnenskoi Oblasti [GAGO], fond 15, vopis 1, spr. 16, 1–13; spr. 12, 1–14.

7. GABO, fond 201, vopis 1, spr. 2442, 28.

8. Ibidem, fond 201, vopis 1, spr. 1564, 85, 86.

9. Ibidem, fond 2135, vopis 2, spr. 1448, 7–19; spr. 135, 15.

10. Ibidem, fond 201, vopis 1, spr. 6183, 22; spr. 1564, 21–23, 85, 86; spr. 2377, 23; spr. 6563, 2–8.

11. Ibidem, fond 2377, 23.

12. Ibidem, fond 2442, 28.

13. GAGO, fond 2, vopis 1, spr. 17, 32.

14. Ibidem, fond 1, vopis 1, spr. 365.

15. GABO, fond 2135, vopis 1, spr. 199, 8.

16. Ibidem, fond 201, vopis 1, spr. 11, 64.

17. GAGO, fond 1, vopis 1, spr. 346, 99.

18. Arad, 1992, 47–48.

19. GAGO, fond 1, vopis 1, spr. 277, 32; Minsk, Natsional'nyi Arkhiv Respubliki Belarus' [NARB], fond 4683, vopis 1, spr. 974, 230, 231.

20. GABO, fond 201, vopis 1, spr. 11, 83.

21. Ibidem, 65.

22. GAGO, fond 1, vopis 1, spr. 346, 3.

23. Ibidem, spr. 15, 16.

24. Ibidem, spr. 346, 14.

25. Ibidem, fond 2, vopis 1, spr. 70, 47.

26. Arad, 1992, 47–48.

27. GABO, fond 201, vopis 1, spr. 11, 65; fond 2120, vopis 1, spr. 7, 4; Pin'ska Gazeta. – 1942. – October 2.

28. Kosik, 1993, 523.

29. GABO, fond 2135, vopis 2, spr. 124, 51.

30. Ibidem, fond 201, vopis 1, spr. 4416, 13.

31. Ibidem, fond 2135, vopis 1, spr. 941, 1–24; spr. 431, 134.

32. Ibidem, vopis 2, spr. 1456, 14.

33. Ibidem, fond 201, vopis 1, spr. 15, 20.

34. Ibidem, fond 2135, vopis 1, spr. 943, 1–44; spr. 431; fond 201, vopis 1, spr. 1539, 54, 55; spr. 458, 97; GAGO, fond 15, vopis 1, spr. 16, 11, 12; NARB, fond 4683, vopis 3, spr. 1043, 88.

35. GABO, fond 2135, vopis 1, spr. 199, 8.

36. Ibidem, fond 192, vopis 1, spr. 20, 1,2.

37. Ibidem, fond 2135, vopis 2, spr. 128, 3; spr. 941, 23–26

38. Ibidem spr. 131, 132, 133.

39. NARB, fond 4683, vopis 1, spr. 971, 54, 55.

40. Ibidem, spr. 1043, 130.

41. GAGO, fond 1, vopis 1, spr. 324, 20, 21.

42. Pins'ka Gazeta. – 1942. – August 13.

43. GAGO, fond 1, vopis 1, spr. 324, 20, 21.

44. NARB, fond 4683, vopis 1, spr. 1043, 130.

45. GAGO, fond 1, vopis 1, spr. 324, 20, 21.

46. Chernoglazova, 1997, 49.

47. NARB, fond 370, vopis 1, spr. 409, 71; fond 409, vopis 1, spr. 1, 67.

48. Ibidem, fond 409, vopis 1, spr. 1, 57 rev.

49. GABO, fond 2135, vopis 1, spr. 16, 17.

50. Ibidem, fond 201, vopis 1, spr. 397, 35, 36, 39.

51. Datner, 1966, 11,20.

52. Ibidem, 10; Chernaya kniga, 1991,. 185; Pamiatz, 1997a, 207.

53. Destruction, 1992, 46, 47.

54. Ibidem, 47.

55. Datner, 1966, 14.

56. NARB, fond 409, vopis 1, spr. 1, 23.

57. Chernaya kniga, Ch. 1, 1991, 169, 170.

58. GABO, fond 2120, vopis 1, spr. 428, 9.

59. GAGO, fond 1, vopis 1, spr. 167, 216, 221, 224; spr. 80, 44, 51.

60. GABO, fond 2135, vopis 2, spr. 124, 52.

61. Arad, 1992, 47; Minsk, Gosudarstvennyi Arkhiv Minskoi Oblasti [GAMO], fond 626, vopis 1, spr. 1, 2; NARB, fond 750, vopis 1, spr. 114, 56, 58; fond 409, vopis 1, spr. 1, 73; Pamiatz, 1997b, 138; Klovskii, 1994, 26.

62. Pamiatz, 1998, 389.

63. Kagan *et al.*, 1998, 56.

64. Pamiatz, 1996, 167.

65. GABO, fond 2745, vopis 1, spr. 5, 4; Pamiatz, 1998, 382; Datner, 1966, 14.

66. GABO, fond 201, vopis 1, spr. 4979, 34 rev.

67. Ibidem, spr. 19, 21; NARB, fond 409, vopis 1, spr. 1, 73.

67[a]. Volost is a smaller than district administrative territorial unit.

68. GAGO, fond 1, vopis 1, spr. 15, 11.

69. Ibidem, spr. 134 b, 2; GABO, fond 2848, vopis 1, spr. 55, 17–23.

70. GABO, fond 2135, vopis 2, spr. 136, 41

71. Ibidem, fond 682, vopis 1, spr. 1, 17.

72. Ibidem fond 2135, vopis 2, spr. 98, 6.

73. NARB, fond 3500, vopis 2, spr. 1391, 11; Gosudarstvennyi arkhiv Vitebskoi oblasti [GAVO], fond 2842, vopis 1, spr. 46, 40.

74. GABO, fond 2120, vopis 1, spr. 8, 38; GAGO, fond 15, vopis 1, spr. 15, 34; Arad, 1992, 47.

75. GABO, fond 2135, vopis 2, spr. 91, 8; spr. 789, 6; spr. 790, 11, 14; fond 514, vopis 1, spr. 110, 24, 25; Pamiatz, 1998, 390; Chernaya kniga, Ch. 1, 1991,176.

76. NARB, fond 409, vopis 1, spr. 1, 11.

77. GABO, fond 2135, vopis 2, spr. 797, 22.

78. Ibidem, vopis 1, spr. 1003, 26.

79. Rus, 1998, 76; Klovskii, 1994, 31.

80. Pamiatz, 1998, 383.

81. Datner, 1966, 16,17; Chernaya kniga, Ch. 1, 1991, 166.

82. Klovskii, 1994, 31, 32; Chernaya kniga, Ch. 1, 1991, 231.

83. Rus, 1998, 76.

84. Boneh, 1977, 109; Alpert, 1989, 51; Trunk, 1972, 520, 521; GABO, fond 201, vopis 1, spr. 327, 167, 276.

85. Chernoglazova, 1997, 52; Adamushko *et al.*, 1998, 98.

86. Rus, 1998, 76.

87. GAGO, fond 1, vopis 1, spr. 335, 23.

88. GABO, fond 684, vopis 1, spr. 4, 6.

89. GAVO, fond 2841, vopis 1, spr. 1, 37.

90. GAGO, fond 1, vopis 1, spr. 54, 7, 30.

91. Rozenblat *et al.*, 1997, 301.

92. Kagan *et al.*, 1998, 51.

93. Chernaya kniga, Ch. 1, 1991, 172.

94. GABO, fond 2120, vopis 1, spr. 787, 127.

95. Pamiatz, 1997a, 205.

96. GAGO, fond 1, vopis 1, spr. 213, 56.

97. NARB, fond 370, vopis 1, spr. 486, 20.

98. Trunk, 1972, 376, 405; NARB, fond 4683, vopis 3, spr. 949, 195.

99. Datner, 1996, 24–26; Grodno, 1995, 90, 91; Chernaya kniga, 1991, 158, 159; Klovskii, 1994, 53–60.

100. Boneh, 1977, 125–129; Kagan *et al.* 54; Rus, 1998, 70.

101. Jews, 1963, Table 6,7.

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GAGO *Grodno, Gosudarstvennyi Arkhiv Grodnenskoi Oblasti* [State Archives of Grodno Region].

GAMO *Minsk, Gosudarstvennyi Arkhiv Minskoi Oblasti* [State Archives of Minsk Region].

GAVO *Gosudarstvennyi arkhiv Vitebskoi oblasti* [State Archives of Vitebsk Region].

NARB *Minsk, Natsional'nyi Arkhiv Respubliki Belarus'* [National Archives of the Republic of Belarus].

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Lithuanian Participation in the Mass Murder of Jews in Belarus and Ukraine, 1941–44

Martin C. Dean*

The most clearly documented example of Lithuanian participation in the mass murder of Jews outside of Lithuania consists of the actions conducted by the 12th Lithuanian *Schutzmannschaft* Battalion in the Minsk-Baranoviche area in October 1941.[1] This unit was sent to Minsk from Kaunas at the beginning of October. Here it operated under the control of German Reserve Police Battalion 11, itself subordinated to the Military Commandant for *Weißruthenien*, von Bechtolsheim, commander of the 707th Infantry Division.[2]

Detailed legal investigations into the 12th Battalion have been carried out by a number of countries including the United States, Canada, Australia and Scotland as well as the former Soviet authorities. Although the specific degree of participation by individuals has been difficult to prove on the basis of live witness evidence, there can be no doubt that elements of the Battalion carried out a series of mass executions in Minsk and the nearby towns of Koidanov, Rudensk, Slutsk, Kletsk, Nesvizh and other places in the autumn of 1941.[3]

The evidence in support of this conclusion comes from a number of different sources. The Nazi District Commissar in Slutsk, Carl, wrote a vehement report protesting about the brutal manner in which the Jews of Slutsk were massacred, stressing particularly the active role of the Lithuanians:

During the operation the town itself presented a terrifying picture. With indescribable brutality, both German police officers, and especially Lithuanian partisans, herded the Jews, and also Belarusians, out of their homes. Shots could be heard all over the town and in some streets the bodies of executed Jews were piled high.[4]

This document was presented as evidence at the Nuremburg trial. More recently captured German documentation from the Minsk archives have provided further details of specific actions involving active Lithuanian participation. For instance on 10 October 1941 the German Commandant in *Weißruthenien*, von Bechtolsheim, reported that:

In an operation by the Secret Field Police, Police Battalion 11 and two Lithuanian Police Companies under the command of the Military Intelligence Minsk field office, on 8.10.41 in the Uzlany-Rudensk area one political instructor, 9 partisans, 1 Red Army soldier (presumably an officer) and 630 other suspicious elements without identity papers, Communists and Jews were shot.[5]

In an order dated 16 October 1941, just prior to the actions in Slutsk, Nesvizh and Kletsk, it was noted that in the area of 727th Regiment, the Lithuanian companies were to be used primarily for the destruction of the Jews in the villages.[6]

Detailed evidence has been collected with regard to the action in Nesvizh. On 29 October 1941 an order was issued by the military commandant's office (*Ortskommandantur*) for the entire Jewish population to gather in the square to have their papers checked.[7] The next day the Jews turned up dressed in their best clothes and uncertain what to expect. A selection was conducted of the skilled workers on the basis of a list. During the selection process some trucks suddenly appeared on the road which led to Slutsk. Uniformed men surrounded the entire market-place.[8] According to one survivor the men were Lithuanians, clearly identifiable from the language which they spoke.[9]

The skilled workers, approximately 560 people,[10] were then escorted to the school, where they were held captive under the guard of the local Belarusian police. The remainder of approximately four thousand Jews, were taken to be executed at two separate sites. The old and infirm were transported to the execution site in lorries. Before being executed the victims had their valuables taken from them and were also made to undress. Accounts by German soldiers of 8th Company, 727th Regiment, who were based in Nesvizh, describe the active participation of one Lithuanian company in the shooting.[11]

A further document located in the German military archives in Freiburg reports on 10 November the recent shooting of 5,900 Jews in the Slutsk-Kletsk area.[12] Lord Milligan, the judge in the Scottish Television libel case in 1992, was of the opinion that:

> making fullest allowance for the fact that documentation now available is far from complete, I find that contemporary documentary evidence strongly suggests that … in Byelorussia in late 1941 … all platoons in the Lithuanian Battalion, were heavily involved in participating in executions of Jews and other innocent civilians during that period.[13]

These findings are corroborated by numerous statements collected as evidence in the legal investigations of the Germans, Soviets, Americans and others. Extracts from the testimony of one former policeman given freely to western investigators reveals clearly the nature of the unit's operations:

> I first became aware of the shooting of civilians and saw that happening when we were taken to a place and surrounded it. I don't remember the place but it was a small town. It used to be mostly small towns because

the Jews lived in towns. I can remember several of the towns later on but the first one I cannot remember. The places I remember are Slutsk, Koidanov, Baranoviche … Bobruisk. There are many people who testified about them. Those are all places I went to…

He also describes the rounding up of the Jews from their homes with the assistance of the local Belarusian police. Whole families were taken out of the houses and the Jews did not resist. They could be identified as Jews by the six-pointed yellow stars sewn onto their clothing:

It was always the same even in Slutsk with a lot of people and soldiers. We would have a large group surrounded and we would separate a smaller group which we would then take to the pit and make them lie down in the pit and then we shot them… The soldiers would be about 1– 2 metres apart on one side only. The officer would stand at the end of the pit. We used to just bring the people to the pit and the soldiers who were standing there would tell them to lie down. We spoke enough Russian then to be understood in the situation.[14]

In order to raise their spirits on such occasions alcohol was made available. The same witness notes: "only when we went on liquidation expeditions was vodka included in our rations; when on guard duty we were not given vodka."[15]

The participation of elements of the Battalion in such actions has been corroborated by another Battalion member living in the West:

One time I saw Jews being shot; I did not go on any other occasion. It was not far from Minsk – maybe only about two kilometres – in a field, with no forests around, where pits had been dug. My job was to undress the Jews. They were all driven naked to the pit. The soldiers from my company drove them to the pit… It was Lithuanians who were carrying out the shooting; Germans had formed a cordon around the area. The Jews had been driven on foot from the city. There were Belarusian police there too who had driven the Jews to the pits together with some of our soldiers.[16]

The members of the Battalion had been recruited voluntarily to join the National Labour Battalion in Kaunas from the end of June 1941. A public appeal was made for volunteers to come forward.[17] Prominent among those joining were former members of the Lithuanian Army and members of the Lithuanian Partisans who had risen up against the Soviets and carried out pogroms against the Communists and Jews as the Germans advanced. Anti-

Communism and Lithuanian nationalism were the prime motives for enlistment. Many agreed to serve the Germans in order to fight against the Communists, who had conducted a wave of deportations from Lithuania just prior to the German invasion. Others were attracted by the prospect of a regular salary, especially if they were without work. One man claims he joined the police in order to get official papers after escaping from arrest.[18] Another says he volunteered in order to be released from being held as a prisoner of war.[19]

Most members would maintain that they did not intend joining an execution squad on enlistment. Nevertheless events in Kaunas soon gave them a taste of their future duties. During the summer of 1941 members of the Battalion were involved in the mass killing of Jews at the old Forts around the town.[20] According to Battalion orders, at this time it was possible for members to resign from the Battalion without great difficulty.[21] One officer is said to have committed suicide in Kaunas as he did not want to shoot Jews.[22] Over the following winter a number of men deserted, while others resigned on completion of the six months they had initially agreed to serve.[23]

The 12th Battalion was not the only Lithuanian unit reported to have participated in executions of Jews outside Lithuania. In November and December 1941 Lithuanian police auxiliaries were reported to have taken part together with the Germans and Belarusians in large scale actions in the Belarusian towns of Slonim and Novogrodek.[24] According to a German document dated 1 July 1942, there were nine Lithuanian *Schutzmannschaft* Battalions deployed outside Lithuania at that time. Of these 3 were deployed on rear area security in Belarus (the 3rd, 12th & 15th), three acted as guards on the construction project *Durchgangsstraße* IV (DG IV) in Ukraine, two were in the military rear areas closer to the front and one was deployed securing the harvest at Korosten in Ukraine. The total strength of these nine Battalions operating outside Lithuania amounted to almost 4,500 men.[25]

From the sources I have examined it is not clear to what extent each of these *Schutzmannschaft* Battalions were also implicated in mass executions. Interviews conducted with former members of the 15th Battalion have not revealed a similar direct participation in mass murder. Some members claim they were conscripted as opposed to the 12th Battalion which was made up of volunteers. Statements by former members of the 15th Battalion indicate that they were employed to escort Soviet Prisoners of War from Lida back to Lithuania in autumn 1941 and were then used to guard the railway station in Baranoviche. In 1942 it appears that they were transfered to guarding prisoners working at a peat works not far from Minsk. Eventually the 15th Battalion was amalgamated with the 12th Battalion in Minsk in 1943 and sent back to Germany to serve as part of the Luftwaffe ground forces.[26]

However, according to German documents, in the autumn of 1942 both the 3rd and the 15th Lithuanian *Schutzmannschaft* Battalions were involved in a large-scale German operation in Belarus code-named "Swamp-fever." Amongst the activities carried out during this operation was the shooting of any remaining Jews found in the villages or hiding in the forests. The specific role of the two Lithuanian Battalions is not clear in the available documentation, but as Raul Hilberg has pointed out, during the course of operation "Swamp-fever" from 21 August to 21 September 1942 8,350 Jews were reported as having been executed.[27]

During the second wave of killings in Belarus in the summer of 1942 there are frequent references to the participation of Lithuanian police units. These Lithuanians were either members of the Battalions listed above, which were frequently split up into Company and Platoon sized units to act as garrison guards for the Germans; or they may have consisted of smaller groups of Lithuanian guards, translators and drivers attached directly to the German Security Police posts in Belarus, transferred together with other forces from *Einsatzgruppe A*.

For example when on 9 June 1942 a Security Police command from Baranoviche was ambushed by partisans on its way back from a Jewish action in the town of Naliboki, among the losses were ten Germans and eleven Lithuanians directly attached to the Security Police.[28] A few weeks later in Nova Mysh a further action was carried out by members of the SD under Lt. Amelung from Baranoviche, who, according to a former Belarusian policemen, brought with them an execution squad of Lithuanians. About 600 people were executed.[29] This time the Germans surrounded the execution site with machine guns nests to prevent any intervention by the partisans.[30]

At the end of June 1942 a second large-scale action was conducted in the town of Slonim. Due to the recent losses in Baranoviche, a squad from the Waffen SS together with Security Police from Minsk travelled to Slonim to take part.[31] They were assisted by local policemen, members of the Wehrmacht, Lithuanians and men from the District Commissar's office.[32] Here it appears that the German forces deliberately set fire to the houses in order to drive out those still in hiding. One Jewish survivor hid in a store-room next to the house in which the rest of his family was hiding. He saw a group of Germans and Lithuanians approaching:

> The Germans were giving orders and shouting with their weapons pointed "Juden raus" but nobody came out. Then an order was given to throw phosphorous grenades into the house and it caught on fire. We saw all of this through the gaps of the wooden planks of our hiding place. Since there was no room for the whole family to hide under the

kitchen, some of my family members hid in the attic. I saw that my cousin … jumped down and he was shot by a Lithuanian whilst he was still in the air. The *Gebietskommissar*, Erren, clapped his hands and shouted "Bravo Litauer." At some stage when the house was on fire my grandmother came out of the house wearing all of her clothes and some fur coats, she was on fire. Some of the Germans shouted "here comes the burning witch." Erren took out his pistol and shot her three times until she fell to the ground. A Lithuanian asked Erren for permission to set the wood store on fire but Erren did not allow it and said in German "leave it alone, there is no one there." They continued from house to house.[33]

A second action was conducted in Nesvizh on 21 July 1942. Under the organisation of the Security police in Baranoviche, a combined force of Germans and Lithuanian auxiliaries arrived from Baranoviche on trucks the day before the action. In addition the local Belarusian policemen from all the police stations in the district were mobilised and brought to Nesvizh.[34] In the evening all the policemen were assembled and it was explained to them that the Jews from the ghetto were to be shot the following day. Instructions were given for a cordon to be thrown around the ghetto to prevent any Jews from escaping. Clear orders were issued that any Jews attempting to escape should be shot.[35]

The following day some of the Jews set fire to the ghetto and resisted with available weapons in order to assist others in escaping. However, many of the Jews were still escorted out of the ghetto by the police and were taken for execution. According to one local policemen the Jews were loaded onto trucks and taken to a pit outside of town. Here they were shot by Lithuanians and Germans, together with some local policemen who assisted in loading up and shooting the Jews.[36]

Some fragments of evidence have been examined in relation to the activities of the Lithuanian Battalions assigned to the DG IV, which was a large road construction programme in Ukraine. In many places Jewish labour was used to carry out construction work on the project and the Lithuanians were employed as guards acting under Order Police control.[37] According to a Court Martial verdict in relation to a member of the Organisation Todt, which organised work on the construction sites, it is noted that from repeated cases it was known that "Jews who were unable to work were shot by the Lithuanian guards on orders from the police."[38] These Lithuanian guards will have been from the 7th Lithuanian *Schutzmannschaft* Battalion based in the Vinnitsa area at that time.[39]

Other evidence from the Vinnitsa area in the summer of 1942 indicates that elements of the 7th Battalion were on occasions also involved in rounding up the Jews as the smaller ghettoes of the region were liquidated.

For instance in the small town of Gnivan near Vinnitsa, about 100 Jews were killed in early summer 1942, including women and children. The Jews were driven out of their houses at dawn and collected together by German and Lithuanian guards from the nearby PoW camp at the stone quarry together with men from the Gendarmerie and the local Ukrainian Schutzmannschaft post. The Jews were then marched into the woods in a large column under close escort. They were shot by members of the SD from Vinnitsa in a pit at a construction site just inside the forest. I have visited this site myself in the company of the only Jewish survivor still living in the town.[40]

After the war a number of Lithuanians were tried in the former Soviet Union for their participation in mass executions of Jews and for their traitorous service with the Germans. For instance 14 former members of the 12th Battalion were sentenced to 25 years imprisonment in 1948. The commander of the Battalion, Impulevicius, was tried in absentia by the Soviet authorities in 1962. At the same time eight further Battalion members were also tried and convicted. Widespread coverage was given to the trial for propaganda purposes; but this served to bring considerable evidence about the Battalion into the public domain.[41] Even in 1979 another former member was identified as living under an assumed name in the Soviet Union. He was sentenced to death and executed.

It is interesting to note how some of the perpetrators were located by the Soviet authorities. A Jewish survivor from Novogrodek, Jack Kagan, recently told me the following story, which although hard to verify, does provide a good indication of the unfortunate reputation of the Lithuanian police units in Belarus. Jack was trying to find the location of the grave site, where his family was killed. Eventually he found the site with the assistance of the local Mayor who told him the following story:

A number of years ago, on a rainy morning on his way to work, he [the Mayor] saw skeletons on the road. It transpired that on the previous night some Lithuanians had come and robbed the mass grave. They were looking for and found golden teeth. They were tracked down and arrested. From what he told me, he thought that they had participated in the killing. Otherwise they would not have known the place.[42]

Outside the Soviet Union, the Office of Special Investigations in America has successfully conducted a number of denaturalisation cases against former members of the 12th Lithuanian *Schutzmannschaft* Battalion. The American legislation only requires for it to be proven that a U.S. citizen concealed relevant information on entering the country and when applying for U.S. citizenship. Nevertheless in most cases the onus has been on the OSI to prove that individuals were members of a killing unit at the relevant period of time.

In this respect the detailed orders of the 12th Battalion, including lists of

Battalion members, preserved in the Vilnius archives have proved vital evidence in conjunction with the other German documentation referred to above. In one recent case the subject was partly undone by the details he provided in an application to the German authorities for a war-service invalidity pension, as he admitted being wounded in the spring of 1942 whilst returning from operations in Minsk.[43]

It is interesting to discover exactly how so many former Battalion members found their way to the West by the end of the war. As mentioned above, many former Lithuanian *Schutzmänner* from the 12th and 15th Battalions were subsequently transferred to an anti-aircraft unit of the Luftwaffe in Germany during 1944. They were then sent to serve on the southern front in Italy. Here many were captured by the Allies or deserted during 1944. The personnel records held at WAST in Berlin for units of the Luftwaffe and Allied prisoners of war provide the key to this story.[44] These records demonstrate the link between names from the *Schutzmannschaft* units and the records of the Free Polish Army in the West. Through the Polish Army, many of these Lithuanians subsequently made their way to western countries, including Great Britain and America after the war.

In summary – about 5.000 Lithuanians served outside their home country on rear area guard duty during the period 1941–43. At this time Hitler was most reluctant to grant them an equal status as allied military units fighting against the Soviets directly at the front. Instead, as part of Himmler's extensive Police apparatus in the East, some of them were called upon to take part in executions of Jews under the direction of the Security Police, the Order Police and the *Wehrmacht*.

The most detailed evidence of such actions concerns the 12th *Schutzmannschaft* Battalion which was involved in a series of executions in the autumn of 1941. The details regarding this unit are well known, as they have been the subject of a number of separate War Crimes investigations. Nevertheless, live eye-witness evidence is hard to obtain, mainly due to the mobile nature of the killing operations. As the victims did not know the perpetrators, evidence can only be gained from the unit members themselves, most of whom are now dead or unwilling to testify.

Additional evidence also points to the widespread participation of some other Lithuanian police units in murder operations, especially during the second wave of Jewish executions in Belarus and Ukraine in 1942. A few Lithuanians even served directly with the Security Police in Belarus probably having been detached there from *Einsatzkommando 3* in Lithuania. Having proved themselves quite effective in the pogroms against the Jews and Communists encouraged by *Einsatzgruppe A* on entering Lithuania, it was understandable that the German police should employ Lithuanian units for similar tasks elsewhere.

Lithuanian police units were not alone as collaborators with the Germans in the Holocaust in the East. Many local policemen in Belarus assisted the Germans in these crimes, as did Ukrainian and Latvian police auxiliaries both in Belarus and their home territories. Nevertheless the few Lithuanians sent to Belarus earned their countrymen an unfortunate reputation through their willing and brutal participation in atrocities. The example of Germany itself has demonstrated that a start can only be made in exorcising these demons if the truth is confronted openly, however unpleasant that task may be.

Notes

[*] The opinions expressed in this article are entirely my own and not those of the Metropolitan Police War Crimes Unit, London.

1. It should be noted that the unit did not receive its designation as the 12th Lithuanian *Schutzmannschaft* Battalion until 1942 that is after the main period of Jewish shootings in autumn 1941. For convenience I will refer to the unit in this article as the 12th Battalion.

2. On the 12th Battalion and other German police auxiliary units see also Breitmann, 1990, 23–39.

3. Regarding the killings just outside Minsk, see New Scotland Yard (NSY) D4 M.M. 30.9.88 & L.M. 1.10.88. On Slutsk see M.M. 30.9.88, J.A. 3.10.88, L.M. 1.10.88 & S.G. 29.9.88; for Koidanov see J.A. 3.10.88; on Kletsk see L.M. 1.10.88 & on Rudensk see E.G. 29.9.88 & L.S. undated. For further details regarding all the listed places and others see the Impulevičius trial papers in the former KGB archives in Vilnius.

4. National Archives Washington (NAW) RG 238 1104–PS, Report of District Commissar Carl in Slutsk 30.10.41.

5. National Archives Minsk (NAM) 378–1–698, 4 Kommandant Weißruthenien 10.10.41.

6. NAM 378–1–698, 11–12 Kommandant Weißruthenien 16.10.41.

7. NSY D9133.

8. NSY D9136.

9. NSY D9135.

10. Cholawski, 1980, gives the figure of 585. Another source puts it at 562: Lachowicki, 1948.

11. Ibid.; NSY D9136; D9135; Die Zentrale Stelle Ludwigsburg (ZSL) II 202 AR 116/67, 146–53, 444–9 & 549–55.

12. Bundesarchiv-Miltärarchiv Freiburg (BA–MA) RH 26–707/2, 1–3 Kommandant Weißruthenien 10.11.41.

13. Opinion of Lord Milligan in Scottish Television libel case 17.7.1992, 165.

14. NSY D2100.

15. NSY D4, J.A. 3.10.88.

16. NSY D2138.

17. Lithuania National Archives (LNA) 1444–1–8, Kaunas 28.6.41.

18. NSY D1897.

19. NSY D1896.

20. Breitmann, 1990, 24–5; NSY, D4.

21. See LNA 1444–1–3 Orders No. 21 & 22.

22. NSY D4, J.K. 30.9.88.

23. NSY D4, J.A. 3.10.88; L.M. 1.10.42; E.G. 29.9.88.

24. On Novogrodek see ZSL 202 AR–Z 94e/59, Bd. V, 914–23; for Slonim see for example ZSL II 202 AR 116/67, Bd. II, 257–9.

25. Bundesarchiv Berlin (BA) R 19/266, 5–11 Strengths and locations of *Schutzmannschaft* units 1.7.1942. Seven further Lithuanian *Schutzmannschaft* Battalions were raised by April 1944 with the strength of 5,600 men, see BA R 6/356.

26. NSY D2757.

27. Nuremberg Document PS–1113 HSSPF Ostland Jeckeln report 6.11.42. Quoted by Hilberg, 1985, 383 FN 67.

28. *Unsere Ehre heißt Treue*, 241; BA R 58/697. 168–78 Report from the ocupied Eastern Territories No.9, 26.6.42.

29. NSY, D6104.

30. Institute for National Remembrance Warsaw (INRW) SWSz 69–78.

31. *Unsere Ehre heißt Treue*, 242 Gruppe Arlt report, Minsk 3.8.42.

32. See also StA. Hamburg, Trial papers of Gerhard Erren.

33. NSY, D7809.

34. NSY D2479, A.A.G. 17.10.79. On the concentration of all Nesvizh district police see also D2469, A.I.T. 16.10.79 and Lachowicki, 1948. On the participation of Lithuanians, probably auxiliaries of the Security Police, see for example D9132, D9129 & Minsk KGB Archive File 1592, Criminal Case 2006.

35. NSY D2479 A.A.G. 17.10.79. On the orders to shoot escapees see also D2471 A.K.A. 16.10.79 & D2469 A.I.T 18.10.79. Original documents in ZSL 202 AR 133/81, 4–52.

36. Minsk KGB Archive File 1592, Criminal Case 2006.

37. ZSL 213 AR–Z 99/59 (case against Giesecke) Proskurow/DG IV, vol. III, 475 includes a reference to Lithuanian guards for roadworks on DG IV at Krasnopolka in 1943.

38. Military Historical Archive Prague, Varia SS, B–142 Court martial verdict of F.K. 183 against Meisslein 17.3.43.

39. BA R 19/266, 5–11 Strengths and locations of *Schutzmannschaft* units 1.7.1942.

40. On the events in Gnivan, ZSL II 204a AR–Z 136/67, Bd. I, 260–67 & 275–85; see also evidence of the Australian Special Investigations Unit (SIU) taken in the case of Nikolay Beresovsky; and Vysotsky, 1987, 162–3.

41. *Do you know this man?* 1963.

42. Kagan, 1997, 288.

43. U.S. District Court Northern District of Indiana case against K.C., filed on 18.6.97.

44. I am indebted for this section to Dr. Peter Longerich who conducted work at WAST on behalf of the Scottish War Crimes Inquiry. Sources from

public archives include documents from the State Archives in Vilnius and the Sikorski Institute in London.

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Coming to Terms with a Difficult Past

Joachim Tauber

This brief study will be limited to two aspects of our topic: firstly, the significance of the Holocaust in Lithuania for National-Socialist extermination policy as a whole; and secondly, the way people in the Federal Republic of Germany came to terms with the Holocaust.

The mass-murder of Lithuanian Jewry is remarkable for its speed, brutality and thoroughness. In December 1941, apart from the few tens of thousands of Ghetto inmates there were no more Jews alive in Lithuania. The fate of Lithuanian Jewry was sealed even before the death factories in Occupied Poland set to work. From a chronological point of view the Holocaust in Lithuania marks one of the central turning points in the Slaughter of European Jews.

Inevitably various sets of questions arise from this subject, answers to which should be sought in the context of new areas of research. In recent years German historians have moved on from concentrating on decisions made in the centre of the Reich and on the course of events in Berlin, and have turned their attention to the carrying out of mass murder in the occupied provinces. Regional studies have modified the theory that this process was initiated and controlled solely by the Nazi leadership, and shown that the mass murders on the spot reveal many differences and had various initiators, whose relation to the "final solution" have not been appreciated adequately hitherto.

At the heart of the matter lies the question of the radicalising impulses from above and below which paved the way to the death factories built on Polish soil. Studies of local differences today illustrate well how "a multitude of factors behind the implementation of genocide" should to be cited, even taking into account the deciding role of the Nazi leadership.[1]

When referring to the special place of Lithuanians in the Holocaust, that we mentioned above, the murder of Lithuanian Jews takes on a special significance in the context of local case studies. Recent work has been done by Christoph Dieckmann and Saulius Sužiedėlis.[2] Early investigations, especially those by Christoph Dieckmann, for instance, attribute the decision to murder the Jews in 1941 to a large degree to the German civilian administration and the military leadership, pointing further to the provisions crisis facing Army Division North in the Autumn of that year. "The murder of the Jews could be rationalised by supposed material necessity. A higher quantity of means of sustenance

for the remaining population and primarily for benefit of the fighting German soldiers."[3] Also conditions in Lithuania where, as we all know, the most brutal measures were taken against the Jews at least, should not be forgotten. Here we are concerned less with those Lithuanians who undertook the shooting with their own hands as assistants to the Germans than with the local Lithuanian Authorities which were responsible for seizures of, legal discrimination against, the robbing of and also the transportation of victims to the death sites selected by local people. The reaction of a large part of Lithuanian society seems very similarity to that of the German public: lack of interest, passivity, complicity and silence are types of behaviour typical of Germans and Lithuanians alike.

Comparative historical analysis should concentrate on the peculiarities and specifics of each situation. Then we could grasp for each institution or individual, German or Lithuanian, more clearly where a particular share of responsibility lies. A broader step can then be taken to examine reactions to the final solution in Lithuania on the other extermination centres, thereby providing a contribution to the debates on the question, which has caused more controversy in recent years, of the final decision to slaughter all Jews found in areas under German control.

These questions will certainly gain a new impulse through the results of the work of the International Commission for the Evaluation of the Crimes of the Nazi and Soviet Occupation Regimes in Lithuania. Of course I would not like to speak on behalf of the Commission as a whole, but only give my own very personal thoughts as a German member of this Commission. I get a strange feeling when my colleagues speak about how the Germans provide a model for coming to terms with a dreadful past. I am struck especially by the way the Germans and their reaction to the murder of European Jewry after 1945 have become idealised.

Therefore, was the so-called "overcoming the past" as exemplary as it might seem in hindsight? While the German Democratic Republic underwent state-controlled anti-Fascism to come to terms with the past, the approach of West German society and historical scholarship towards the Holocaust appears in a different light if we examine it chronologically and historiographically.[4] After the founding of the Federal Republic of Germany more or less fifty years ago the Germans rejected their Nazi history. The crimes that were committed in the name of Germans between 1939 and 1945 were and would be attributed solely to Hitler, his close band of henchmen and predominantly the SS.[5] This was a simple way for Germans to exculpate themselves and to make a

small minority responsible for the gruesome killings. A veil of oblivion was draped over the Third Reich and people avoided direct contact with the past. There was what in 1983 one historian called an "eloquent silence."[6] Moreover during the time of the Cold war and the anti-Communist stance of the Federal Republic the crimes in eastern Europe were completely wiped from the collective memory.

The relatively problem-free continuation of their careers which many Nazis achieved after 1945 leaves a darker mark on the Federal Republic's success story.[7] While the political émigrés were confronted with a silent, partly open non-acceptance after their return, the reintegration of former Nazis was problem free. "Denazification" turned into a farce and "fellow traveller factory,"[8] as one historian has called the "courts" which were supposed to judge the past of individual Nazis, produced merely honourable citizens rather than any National Socialists.[9]

From the end of the 1950s the fragility and impossibility of such a refusal became marked. There is special doubt in connection with the trial of the Ulm Special Group, when the appalling individual cases involving the massacre of Jews on June 24 1941 in Gargždai and other Lithuanian-German border areas became public knowledge. Now a central judicial register point for Nazi crimes would be set up in Ludwigsburg and German public prosecutors searched out the murderers. The 1960s were marked by the large trials over the extermination camps in Poland. The Auschwitz Trial alone lasted three years in Frankfurt-am-Main. The discoveries of public prosecutors, the expertise of historians and above all the testimony of the few surviving victims exceeded all that could be imagined. As students in the Federal Republic followed in the footsteps of their American and French fellow protesters and took to the streets in 1968, these protests were also part of a Generation-conflict and took on a quite specific "German" component.[10] The knowledge that the older generation was also the perpetrator generation shook the young Germans up especially. To this day the question is still being asked: "What did you do in the War, Daddy?"

The events of 1968 signified a culmination point of something which began in the middle of the 1960s, still clearly noticeable change in the Federal Republic to a different society: "the German virtues in the name of which the country kindled two world wars have really experienced a change of values from 1968. The Utopia of federal citizens is no longer their job but the leisure park."[11] The crimes of the Third Reich slowly

but surely became part of young West Germans' collective consciousness in the 1970s. In the 1950s historians concentrated predominantly on Hitler's seizure of power and the fall of the Weimar Republic, many works appeared on the German resistance to form a positive symbol of identification for Germans after the War, while only few Germans had found their way into real opposition and the approach to the attempted assassination of July 20 remained ever conflicting.[12] The expert evidence given by historians during the Nazi trials of the 1960s were the first to open up a scholarly depiction of the history of the SS and the extermination camps.

After that in the 1970s came academic debates primarily on the suitability of the idea of Fascism and the role of the dictator and turned by the early 1980s increasingly to concentrate on the last taboo, namely the war with the Soviet Union. Works on the gruesome fate of Red Army prisoners of war, the mass murders by the special groups and the planning of German occupying authorities showed unambiguously that this war was conceived in advance as a war of racial conquest, enslavement and extermination. There was now an end to the myth of the *Wehrmacht* as a purely military organisation: many *Wehrmacht* soldiers took part in the crimes, the highest ranking German generals not only approved the actions but even ordered the soldiers to carry out the most brutal measures.[13]

What was found in research on the eastern Front gained an echo in work on every day history. It became ever clearer that the overwhelming part of Germans, if not positively inclined towards the National Socialist regime were at the very least not opposed to it. Regional studies have revealed a partly alarming picture of Fascism on the ground. Opportunism and indifference characterised the behaviour of most Germans towards the fate of Soviet prisoners of war, east European forced labourers and German Jews. In this climate the "final solution" grew up and the Regime found "quite normal people" to turn into mass murders.[14]

At the same time new theories have been worked out in Holocaust studies. In an exemplary fashion German demographers and economic scholars in the 1930s developed a picture of eastern Europe which took as its point of departure the theory that the region could be developed economically only if it had a population of ten million fewer people. In academic texts these "experts" complained of "over-population in the East" and thus, in the words of a provocative book title which has not gone without controversy among scholars, they became "theoretical

precursors of extermination."[15] Also the settlement of a German minority from Eastern Europe had a direct effect on the radicalisation of German policy towards the "final solution."[16] From the end of the 1990s German historians found themselves face to face on their own doorstep, as it were, with the affinity of well-known Federal Republic historians of the 1950s and 1960s with pre-1945 National Socialism.[17] At present people are concentrating on research primarily into regional studies of the Holocaust. It is becoming clearer and clear that the extermination of the Jews locally was a result of the concerted action of the SS, *Wehrmacht*, German civilian authorities and their local helpmates even when the regions were completely different. It will be clearer and clear too that the "final solution" cannot be studies in isolation but must be understood as an inseparable and un-dissoluble part of the German occupation regime which moreover would be influenced by the mass of those involved in the war.

This short review shows how difficult and complex coming to terms with the Holocaust was in the Federal Republic. First for the younger generation the murder of European Jewry by their own (German) people belongs to part of the self understanding of German society. The Shoah forms an inseparable and un-dissoluble part of German collective memory. At the beginning of the 1990s when Jewish cultural institutions were defaced and attacked people throughout Germany came out onto the streets to protest against the radical right and on behalf of their Jewish fellow citizens. When in 2002 a politician made resort to antisemitic stereotypes a public discussion flared up in which the rejection of this form of "overcoming the past" came clearly to prominence.[18] An opinion poll from June 2002 speaks clearly: 86 per cent of those asked to respond to the statement "I am ashamed that Germans have committed so many crimes against the Jew" said "Yes." Only one percent said it was unpleasant having a Jewish neighbour and when asked "How many Germans have antisemitic views?", 83 percent thought that only "a small number" and that "almost no" Germans are antisemites.[19] For more than half a century a civil, democratic society has existed in West Germany the great majority of whose members openly reject antisemitic currents. My conclusion – including the Lithuanian case, is short: a society which denies the truth and forces it out harms itself the most and mortgages its future to difficulty.

What does all this mean for Lithuania? If German society was only ready to face the Holocaust at the end of the 1960s, how should we interpret the wide public reserve in the young Lithuanian democratic

state towards the subject after the twelve years since 1990? In the Soviet Union discussion of the Holocaust could not be considered because of ideological grounds. The Federal Republic of Germany as it was in 1957 cannot be put forward as a model for Lithuania except perhaps in a negative sense.

Thus this comparison also has its limitations with one factor, which is known to us all, remaining to be made completely clear: were it not for the German occupying force and German initiative, supervision and orders, Lithuanians would never have taken part in the mass murder. This is a very different point of departure which separates and must indeed separate the Germans' coming to terms with their past from the Lithuanian case. The difficulty faced by Lithuanians in coming to terms with their own past has much to do with the fact that between 1940 and 1990/91 Lithuanians were themselves the victims of inhuman and brutal policies. This absolutely understandable and obviously clear fact means that it is difficult for the realisation that a victim can also be a (co-)perpetrator to gain ground in Lithuanian society and the general public.

Furthermore, as has already been said, in the end it matters less that the Lithuanians were direct culprits or German helpers than the fact that Holocaust survivors were treated so terribly with enmity or indifference. The Lithuanian population was certainly able to as little as the Poles[20] to put an end to murders in the camps but we should remember the statement of Ulrich Herbert that "this was not so much an active ideologically motivated fanatical affair, a collective will to kill, the attitude that stamped a broad section of German society, as indifference, lack of interest and an astounding deficit of norms based on morality…"[21]

At the Ninth Fort in Kaunas, one of the most terrible killing sites in Lithuania, there is a memorial bearing the following inscription: "In grief and shame – and horror over the silence of those who knew about it – Munich, the capital of Bavaria, remembers the 1.000 Jewish men and women who were deported from Munich on November 21 1941 to Kaunas and brutally murdered in this place five days later."[22] My short account would add: the legacy of those days of June 1941 and the following months and years is and remains a constant reminder and challenge for society and historical scholarship in the Federal Republic of Germany and the Republic of Lithuania.

Notes

1. Herbert, 1998, 63.

2. Dieckmann, 1998, 292ff.; Dieckmann, 2001, 75ff.; Sužiedėlis, 1998, 128ff and Sužiedėlis, 1999, 177ff.

3. Dieckmann, 1998, 324.

4. Groehler, 1992, 110ff.

5. Frei, 1996.

6. Herman Lübbe quoted in Zimmerman, 1992, 130.

7. The most famous examples are Theodor Oberländer who became a federal minister despite his Nazi past and Hans Globke who published a legal commentary on the antisemitic Nuremburg Laws, and was secretary of state under Adenauer in the Federal Chancery. On these persons see Schutt, 1995; Wachs, 2000. For background material see Burkert, 1992 and Schwab-Trapp, 1996.

8. Stöver, 2002, 62ff.

9. Niethammer, 1982.

10. Stöver, 2002, 62ff.

11. "Die deutschen Tugenden, in deren Namen das Land zwei Weltkriege entfachte, sind tatsächlich in dem von '68 ausgehenden Wertewandel untergegangen. Das Utopia des Bundesbürgers ist nicht mehr der Arbeitsdienst, sondern der Freizeitpark": Michael Sontheimer, quoted in: Stöver, 2002, 95.

12. Rauff, 2002, 11.

13. For a review of the development and present status of research on this topic see Ueberschär, 2000.

14. Browning, 1993.

15. Schneider, 1991 and Aly and Heim, 1994.

16. Aly, 1998.

17. Schulze and Oexle, 2000.

18. "Das Spiel mit dem Feuer. Wieviel Vergangenheit vertragt die Gegenwart," in: *Der Spiegel* June 3 2002.

19. "Abschied vom Klischee," in: *Der Spiegel* June 10 2002.

20. Pohl, 1998, 121: "Eines ist freilich zu betonen: Eine Möglichkeit, die Massenmorde zu stoppen, besaß die polnische Bevölkerung nicht."

21. Herbert, 1998, 65. "… nicht so sehr ein aktives, ideologisch motiviertes, fanatisches Verhalten, ein kollektiver Mordwille die Haltung der deutschen Gesellschaft in ihrer Breite prägte[n], sondern Gleichgültigkeit, Desinteresse und ein eklatantes Defizit an moralisch fundierten Normen…"

22. "In Trauer und Scham – und entsetzt über das Schweigen der Mitwissenden – gedenkt die Landeshauptstadt München der 1000

jüdischen Männer und Frauen, die am 20. November 1941 von München nach Kowno deportiert und fünf Tage später an diesem Ort brutal ermordet wurden."

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Summaries

John D. Klier:

Traditions of the Commonwealth: Lithuanian Jewry and the Exercise of Political Power in Tsarist Russia

Just as the years 1881–2 proved a crucial moment in the history of East European Jewry with the emergence of the so-called "New Politics," they also marked a change in the status of Vilna and Lithuanian Jewry. The decisive political role of Lithuanian Jewry, which this essay has described, was on the wane. Specifically, Lithuanian Jews were no longer alone in the political arena. On the regional level, the Jewish communities of Kiev, Odessa and Kharkov were playing a greater role than ever before, to say nothing of the distinctive role of the Jews of Warsaw in the politics of Poland. Migration within the Pale helped spread the ideas and activities which at one time had been distinctively "Lithuanian." On the national level, an articulate leadership took shape in St Petersburg which claimed to speak for all of "Russian Jewry." Although Vilna continued to serve not just as the "Jerusalem of Lithuania" for the religious Orthodox, but also as a "Holy Community" for both the partisans of Zionism and the socialists of the Bund, it lost the priority which she had held since the days of the Commonwealth. The pressures and opportunities of modernity were merging Lithuanian Jewry into a greater mass which could, albeit with many qualifications, be called "Russian Jewry."

Darius Staliūnas:

Changes in the Political Situation and the "Jewish Question" in the Lithuanian Gubernias (1855–March 1863)

This article analyses the ways in which the "Polish Question" changed the attitudes of Governor General Vladimir Nazimov (1855–63) of Vilnius towards the Jews. Until 1860–61, that is while he still regarded the local social elite (the Poles) as his allies and sought compromise with them, Nazimov regarded the Jews as a parasite group and associated improvements in the lot of this ethno-confessional group with the expansion of Russian education. The "merger" of this ethno-confessional group was supposed to take place gradually and at first "privileges" could

be expected only by a small group which had undergone Russian education. The Vilnius governor general's proposals were of a clearly coercive nature. For example Jewish merchants wishing to remain members of that class had to graduate from Russian schools.

The danger posed by the "Poles" after 1861 forced the governor general to make other types of political proposals for the Jews than had been made previously. Now not only were Poles no longer regarded as allies in the cause of "retraining" Jews (gentry masters were supposed to oversee Jewish farmers, according to a 1860 proposal) but also there was a need to try to protect Jews from the Poles' anti-government activities. Therefore the governor general offered certain concessions and even, it seems, was inclined to support the same policy as had been implemented in the Kingdom of Poland on the initiative of Aleksander Wielopolski.

However, the central authorities were not inclined to maintain this kind of policy throughout the territory of the former Commonwealth of the Two Nations. Most probably Russian bureaucrats feared lest Jews "exploit" Russian peasants even more if discriminatory laws were to be repealed within the Pale of Settlement, whereas most peasants in the Kingdom of Poland were Polish.

Theodore R. Weeks:

Politics, Society, and Antisemitism:
Peculiarities of the Russian Empire and Lithuanian Lands

In the Russian Empire, Jews and Lithuanians lived in close proximity. Unlike in the neighbouring Polish provinces, however, a well-developed antisemitic movement never developed among Lithuanians before World War I. This article attempts to explain this phenomenon in the context of European antisemitism and the political structures of the late Russian Empire. I conclude that while relations between Lithuanians and Jews were not uniformly positive and one can find antisemitic voices among Lithuanian nationalists before 1914, antisemitic tendencies remained limited, in large part because the Polish and Russian threats to Lithuanian cultural-national interests were far more obvious than any potential Jewish threat.

Vladas Sirutavičius:

Notes on the Origin and Development of Modern Lithuanian Antisemitism in the Second Half of the Nineteenth Century and at the Beginning of the Twentieth Century

This article analyses the specific character of the formation of modern Lithuanian antisemitism in the late nineteenth- and early twentieth century. It is asserted that antisemitism did not play a greater role in the process of the Lithuanian national movement's politicisation, which developed particular momentum in the period under review. Unlike its counterparts in Central-European countries the Lithuanian national movement did not set up political structures whose aim was to mobilise society for the struggle against the Jews as agents of capitalism and modern society that threatened Lithuanian identity or the aims of the national movement. The article concludes that this was the case because Jews were not regarded as presenting a direct danger to Lithuanian cultural and political aims which were imbued with significance in the early twentieth century by the search for political autonomy. They were not regarded as dangerous because of their specific place in Lithuanian society and their culturo-psychological closed nature. It is noted that the emerging modern Lithuanian political and social elite regarded Poles and polonicity in a completely different way. Of course, this does not mean that antisemitism did not appear in one form or another in the ideology of the Lithuanian national movement. In the late nineteenth − and early twentieth century there were attempts to systematise opposition to the Jews by placing increasing stress on divergence between Lithuanian and Jewish economic interests. In Lithuanian political and social thought Jews came to be depicted more and more as economic rivals whom it was necessary to overcome in order to achieve the development and modernisation of Lithuanian society. The article suggests that the appearance of the "Jew-economic rival" concept may have been influenced by social and economic changes in Lithuanian society at the turn of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, *accuratius* by the process of disintegration within agricultural structures which formed conditions for Lithuanian peasants to take up artisan trades and commerce. At the same time it is stressed that society's social-economic dynamic was relatively slow and thus influenced only a very small section of the Lithuanian peasantry. The Jews succeeded in maintaining their socio-economic niche and their dominant place in commerce and artisan trades while the Lithuanian community remained too "weak" and slightly

structured to be able to change its society's social structure that has remained the same for a long period of history.

Ezra Mendelsohn:

Some Remarks on the Jewish Condition
in Interwar East Central Europe

The interwar period was a time when some of the oppressed national minorities of the region finally obtained what they deserved – political independence and the opportunity to rebuild their national cultures. I am thinking of the Poles, the Lithuanians, the Latvians, the Estonians, the Czechs and Slovaks, among others. Unfortunately, but perhaps inevitably, the triumph of these "victims of history" was not shared by other "victims" – such as the Jews and other groups whose minority status was not altered as a result of the war. On the contrary, these groups continued to suffer from varying degrees of discrimination, hatred, and violence. The victory of the Poles was no victory for Poland's Ukrainian, German, Belarusian, and Jewish communities.

To point this out is to highlight the central role of victimisation as part of national identity of the small nations of East Central Europe. It is obvious today, after the terrible tragedies of World War II and in the wake of the Communist domination of Eastern Europe that one of the greatest obstacles to understanding between Jews and the other peoples of this region has to do with their self-perception as victims. It is difficult to make room in the Jewish historical narrative, which privileges the sufferings of the Jewish people, for other sufferers, and I suspect that this may be so in the case of the Lithuanians as well.

Eglė Bendikaitė:

Expressions of Litvak Pro-Lithuanian Political Orientation
c. 1906–c. 1921

This article attempts to analyse the political orientation of the Litvaks in their homeland during a period of crisis in the first two decades of the twentieth century. It treats the Litvaks as an autonomous ethnic community with its own national/ethnic interests, political aims and

vision for the future. The political self-determination of the Litvaks and the settling of relations with newly emerged political agents, the new national states, were influenced by outside factors and circumstances. The Jews were the only minority to have a determining influence on the country's fate without having any territorial pretensions of their own. Their experience during the First World War and the country's new geopolitical situation transformed Litvak attitudes to nationalist Poland and Soviet Russia and turned them into supporters of the re-established state of Lithuania. Living in one state together with the small Lithuanian nation protected in theory at least the local Jews' position, guaranteed them cultural autonomy and equal political rights and thus was safer for the Litvaks and suited the interests they sought to defend. To solve the issue of the rise of a "power vacuum" in the east the Litvaks saw in the Lithuanian Republic an optimal guarantor of stability for the local community that would defend them from extreme nationalism and radicalism.

Česlovas Laurinavičius:

Lithuanian General Aspects of Domestic Policy 1918–40

This study claims that Lithuania's dramatic history between 1918 and 1940 was conditioned by the gap between the Lithuanian state projected in great power politics as a balancing element between Germany, Russia and Poland, and the actual ethno-demographic situation in the territory which the projected Lithuanian state was supposed to occupy. This project, which we can only deal with as a hypothesis, was based on the theory of a balance of power and Lithuanian statehood's historical tradition that was supposed to help consolidate local inhabitants for political coexistence under the new conditions. Meanwhile the peoples living on the projected Lithuanian territory, the Lithuanians, Poles, Jews and Belarusians, had their own national agendas which did not coincide with the projection offered for a new Lithuanian state. In the real Lithuanian state which was formed in the aftermath of the First World War and occupied only part of the projected territory, the dominant position was taken by the Lithuanians who made a certain alliance with the Jews against the Poles. However, this was a marriage of convenience which threatened to become a conflict because it was not affected by any stronger consolidating external or internal factors. When World War Two began the nationality conflict in Lithuania became a tragedy.

Saulius Sužiedėlis:

The Historical Sources for Antisemitism in Lithuania
and Jewish-Lithuanian Relations during the 1930s

The years of independence were not a period of systemic persecution for Lithuania's Jewish community. Important factors mitigated antisemitic tendencies, especially before the international and domestic crises of 1938–1940. During its two decades of existence, the First Republic passed not a single antisemitic statute and continued to subsidise Jewish religious and cultural life. The animosity of many Lithuanians towards Nazi Germany, stemming largely from the conflict over Klaipėda, limited the inroads of antisemitic propaganda. Jews themselves often compared their lot favourably to that of their kinsmen in other countries, most notably, Poland. Even in the later 1930s, racial antisemitism found a response among only a part of the Lithuanian public. Ethnic disturbances in Lithuania were relatively infrequent and localised. There is no record, as of this writing, of anyone having been killed in an antisemitic pogrom during the period (1920–1938) when the government was in effective control of the country.

Furthermore, the clashes over control of the economy and cultural orientation should not obscure some positive, albeit tenuous, developments in the life of Lithuania's Jewish community. One should not minimise the significance of independent Lithuania's legal and political structure which provided a basic guarantee for the country's minorities and, when necessary, a physical barrier of police force against base nativist instincts. Invasion and war would sweep away this structure with fatal consequences for Lithuania's Jews as well as much of the population at large.

Verena Dohrn:

State and Minorities – The First Lithuanian Republic
and S. M. Dubnov's Concept of Cultural Autonomy

The Jewish historian from Russia Simon Dubnov describing himself as a "Lithuanian emigrant" did not participate directly in founding of the first Lithuanian Republic, but he had some influence – as a politician, as an ideologist and as a historian – on the creation of the state in three significant respects.

Firstly, there was a long and strong Litvak tradition of Jewish politics in Eastern Europe, which was capable of modernising itself during the last decades of Tsarist reign, and Dubnov's political activities were an integral part of it. Secondly, for Dubnov especially the Litvak tradition and history served for a model of his modern Jewish Diaspora concept (the concept of *autonomism*). Thirdly, given the reality for Jews in Eastern Europe, which was dramatically changing and posed a threatening situation (e.g. World War One), Dubnov pragmatically transferred his conceptual politics on an international stage and with his impartial charisma, activities, and connections influenced international politics which enforced, conceptualised, and tried to control the foundation of the "minority states" in Eastern Europe and in this framework – Lithuania.

Yitzhak Arad:

The Murder of the Jews in German-Occupied Lithuania (1941–1944)

According to estimates, about 7–8,000 Lithuanian Jews of those who were evacuated from the Baltic States on the eve of the German retreat survived in Germany. About 1,700 Jews survived in Lithuania, among them about 900 as partisans in the forests and the rest in hiding or with the help of Aryan documents. Some of them were aided by local people, those "Righteous among the Nations."

Out of the 203–207,000 Jews who had remained in Lithuania under German occupation, less than 5 percent survived; among them, less than 1 percent within Lithuania and in the forests of west Belarus. This number (or percentage) of surviving Jews was one of the lowest in comparison to other countries in Europe under German occupation. The explanation lies in the wide-scale collaboration with the Germans on the part of the local people and the large numbers among them who enlisted voluntarily into the police units that carried out most of the murder actions against the Lithuanian Jews and participated in the killings of Jews in Belorussla, the Ukraine, and the *Generalgouvernement* of Poland.

From about 15,000 Lithuanian Jews who were deported or escaped to the Soviet Union, about 12,000 survived. Most of those who perished were soldiers in the Lithuanian 16 Division in the Soviet army and fell in battle.

The glorious history of so many generations of Lithuanian Jewry, with its famous religious and secular institutions, came to its tragic end in the years 1941–1944.

Arūnas Bubnys:

The Holocaust in Lithuania: An Outline of Major Stages and Results

This article attempts to distinguish the most important stages of the Holocaust in Lithuania, elucidate the characteristics of each stage and illustrate the consequences of the genocide against the Jews. The author divides the genocide process into three periods: from the end of June to November 1941 (with two sub-periods of late June to mid-July and late July to November 1941); December 1941 to March 1943 and April 1943 to mid-July 1944.

The most intensive murder of Jews took place during the first period. Until the end of July 1941 political motives were dominant. Jews were arrested, imprisoned and shot as former Communists, members of the Comsomol, as Soviet officials and supporters. Other Lithuanian citizens were treated in a similar way for the same reason, be they Poles, Lithuanians or Russians. Jewish men were the largest persecuted group. Women and children were not murdered systematically and en masse as yet. The period of racial genocide began at the end of July 1941. Jews were murdered not for political reasons but for racial ones, that is because they were Jewish. Jews were murdered most intensively in the large towns and provinces of Lithuania from mid-August to November. During this period around 80 (eighty) percent of Lithuanian Jewry was murdered. Because representatives of the Wehrmacht and German civilian authorities intervened only Jews who were able to work and their families were left alive. They were to carry out work of importance for the German war effort. At the end of 1941 there were 45,000 Jews left in Lithuania out of the 200,000 who lived in the country before the beginning of the Nazi-Soviet War. They were locked up in the ghettos of Vilnius, Kaunas, Šiauliai and Švenčionys. The initiative for the persecution of the Jews came from the German civilian government (the military commanders, security police, SD agents and special groups and later the commissars of the civil authorities). German occupying institutions also headed the process of persecuting and murdering Jews. Even so the Lithuanian administration subject to the Nazis was also drawn broadly into the process (district administrators, town mayors and

especially the public and security police, police battalions and auxiliary police groups [the so-called "partisans"]). The role of the Lithuanian administration was of particular importance in the Holocaust, especially in the murder of provincial Jews. During the second period of the Holocaust (Dec 1941–April 1942) Nazi attention was turned to using the Jews for the war effort. During this stable or calm period there were no mass murders. Almost all fit men of working age (approximately 30,000 in all) worked in factories, various firms and the ghetto workshops. The calm period came to an end in spring 1943. As underground opposition grew in strength and Jews escaped from the ghettos and labour camps, during the spring and summer of 1943 the largest ghetto in Lithuania, the Vilnius Ghetto was liquidated. Its inmates were transported to Estonian and Latvian concentration camps. The ghettos in Kaunas and Šiauliai were turned into concentration camps and their regimes were made much harsher. As the eastern front approached Lithuania in summer 1944 the Kaunas and Šiauliai ghettoes were liquidated and their inmates transported to Germany (Stutthof, Dachau, Auschwitz and so on). Just a few thousand Lithuanian Jews lived to see the end of the war. Around 200,000 Jews died in Nazi-occupied Lithuania and in Nazi camps beyond Lithuania's borders (in all around (95 [ninety five] percent of Lithuanian Jewry). Never in Lithuania's history has so large a proportion of its population been murdered in so short a time.

Gershon Greenberg:

Holocaust and Musar for the Telšiai Yeshivah:
Avraham Yitshak and Eliyahu Meir Bloch

The words of Avraham Yitshak Bloch in 1939 and 1940 revealed his religious path to martyrdom. His life was of *Bitahon*, and ultimately this *Bitahon* meant a total surrender to God and His goodness, independent of and transcending the darkness of the era. His final act of *Mesirat nefesh* affirmed and completed the *Bitahon* of the era of *Ikveta dimeshiha*. His younger brother carried his effort further – not in the face of death but before the threshold of new life. Having reconciled himself to the place of suffering in the process of completing the soul and reaching God in Telšiai, once in America he applied it to the future. In America, rooted in Torah, Israel could shatter the darkness and burst forth towards God's goodness which awaited it. Avraham Yitshak Bloch's *Bitahon* was overshadowed by a cloud of dark confusion. But he did not despair of

Bitahon – for example, resorting to pleading for God's mercy (*Rahamim*). Instead he prepared himself for martyrdom. As it turned out, his preparation anticipated the reality to come. Eliyahu Meir Bloch viewed the dark confusion as God's *Din* which provided an opportunity to enhance the soul. The very incomprehensibility of the suffering allowed the path of light to God to expand – if commitment to God endured. As it turned out, and he faced not murder at Rainiai but possibility in America, his preparation also anticipated the reality to come. Committed to *Bitahon*, the brothers together led their people into death, and into life in history, blending existential commitment to the goodness of God and the creation which shared it with the metaphysical reality of *Hesed* – through *Mesirat nefesh* for one, and through Torah for the other. As if speaking with one another across time and space, the brothers together led the way of *Musar* through the Holocaust.

Yevgeni Rozenblat:

The Holocaust in the Western Regions of Belarus

The article investigates one of the urgent problems of Belarus history dated back to the Second World War. The author carried out a complex analysis of main trends of Nazi policy in relation to the Jewish population in the Western regions of Belarus: ghettoisation, robberies, intensive exploitation. The author also showed stages, methods, and forms of political and legal discrimination of Jews. The article analyses *Judenrat* activities, the work of organisations of food supply, social and medical care for the Jewish population before and after the creation of ghettos. In addition to that, it documents the discriminating character of the main objectives of the German occupation authorities, their social and economic policy towards the Jewish population in the western regions of Belarus, the exploitation of Jewish manpower, and the organisation of forced labour using qualified Jews in the production sphere in the years 1941–43. Furthermore, based on archive materials, published sources, and a number of publications of Belarusian and other researchers, the author specifies the number of victims of the Holocaust in the western regions of Belarus.

Martin C. Dean:

Lithuanian Participation in the Mass Murder of Jews in Belarus and Ukraine, 1941–1944

In summary – about 5,000 Lithuanians served outside their home country on rear area guard duty during the period 1941–43. At this time Hitler was most reluctant to grant them an equal status as allied military units fighting against the Soviets directly at the front. Instead, as part of Himmler's extensive Police apparatus in the East, some of them were called upon to take part in executions of Jews under the direction of the Security Police, the Order Police and the Wehrmacht.

The most detailed evidence of such actions concerns the 12th Schutzmannschaft Battalion which was involved in a series of executions in the autumn of 1941. The details regarding this unit are well known, as they have been the subject of a number of separate War Crimes investigations. Nevertheless, live eye-witness evidence is hard to obtain, mainly due to the mobile nature of the killing operations. As the victims did not know the perpetrators, evidence can only be gained from the unit members themselves, most of whom are now dead or unwilling to testify.

Additional evidence also points to the widespread participation of some other Lithuanian police units in murder operations, especially during the second wave of Jewish executions in Belarus and Ukraine in 1942. A few Lithuanians even served directly with the Security Police in Belarus probably having been detached there from Einsatzkommando 3 in Lithuania. Having proved themselves quite effective in the pogroms against the Jews and Communists encouraged by Einsatzgruppe A on entering Lithuania, it was understandable that the German police should employ Lithuanian units for similar tasks elsewhere.

Lithuanian police units were not alone as collaborators with the Germans in the Holocaust in the East. Many local policemen in Belarus assisted the Germans in these crimes, as did Ukrainian and Latvian police auxiliaries both in Belarus and their home territories. Nevertheless the few Lithuanians sent to Belarus earned their countrymen an unfortunate reputation through their willing and brutal participation in atrocities. The example of Germany itself has demonstrated that a start can only be made in exorcising these demons if the truth is confronted openly, however unpleasant that task may be.

Joachim Tauber:

Coming to Terms with a Difficult Past

The article first focuses on the role of the holocaust in Lithuania within the process of the annihilation of Europe's Jewry. It contends that comparing the holocaust in Lithuania with other regions in Eastern and Western Europe is an appropriate means to get a clearer picture of the peculiarities of the destruction process in Lithuania.

How the Federal Republic of Germany tried to cope with a murderous past, is the second question to be answered. Only beginning in the late 1960's German society and historians really tried to open their minds to an unsettling past. Since then the Holocaust has become one of the most important themes of public discussion and academic research.

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