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**German/Lithuanian collaboration in the final solution, 1941–1944**

**Friedman, Karen Ehrlich, Ph.D.**

**University of Illinois at Chicago, 1994**

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GERMAN / LITHUANIAN COLLABORATION IN THE FINAL SOLUTION

1941 - 1944

BY

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THESIS

Submitted as partial fulfillment of the requirements

for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in History

in the Graduate College of the

University of Illinois at Chicago, 1994

Chicago, Illinois

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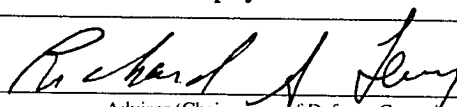
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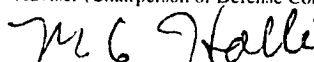
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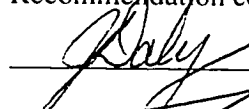
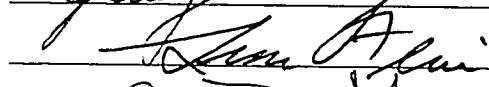
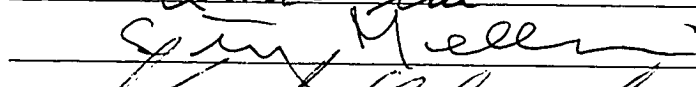
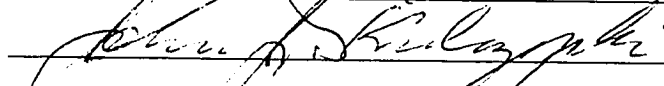

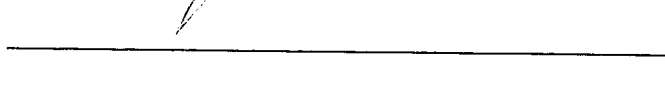
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This dissertation is dedicated to my parents, Sam and Tobie Ehrlich, whose unwaivering support gave me the strength and courage needed for its accomplishment.

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KF

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## SUMMARY

The question of Lithuanian collaboration in the Final Solution remains a highly charged and controversial issue. Without attempting to apportion blame with regard to collaboration, this study examined the significance of Lithuanian participation and investigated why and under what historical circumstances people chose to act in the ways they did. The findings suggest that the indifference which the masses of Lithuanians displayed toward Jews, the administrative assistance rendered by Lithuanian officials, and the active participation of Lithuanian auxiliaries in the actual exterminations all created a climate that allowed the Germans to achieve appalling success in ridding Lithuania of its Jews.

One problem with treating either the Soviet or Nazi period of occupation is that many of the sources on this period are remarkably tainted. They break down as either pro or anti-Soviet. But this is only part of the problem. Lithuanian accounts tend towards exculpation, Jewish sources reveal a sense of betrayal, and post-Soviets attempts are towards rehabilitation.

This study refutes the explanation of Lithuanian conduct during the Holocaust most frequently presented by contemporary Lithuanian historians: that hostility towards Jews was solely the result of the alleged Jewish connection to communism and the the Soviet occupation of Lithuania. Although the importance of the Soviet reign and its consequences can not



## SUMMARY (continued)

be denied, other factors -- economic, political, cultural, religious, opportunistic factors are equally important in explaining the behavior of Lithuanians after the Nazi conquest in 1941.

The most significant conclusion of this study is that the Lithuanians were not merely puppets of the Germans but in many many ways showed great ability to maneuver and resist German directives. National and local leaders refused to obey German orders to round up Lithuanians for military and labor recruitment and resist delivery of grain of the Germans. Had officials, churchmen, and political leaders refused help round up Jews, it is doubtful that the Germans would have succeeded in killing nine out of ten Lithuanian Jews.

## I/ INTRODUCTION

On July 31, 1941, six weeks after the invasion of the Soviet Union, Hermann Göring empowered Lt. General Reinhard Heydrich, chief of the Security Police and Security Service, to undertake "all necessary preparations with regard to organizational and financial matters for bringing about a total solution of the Jewish question in the German sphere of influence in Europe." (Nuremberg Document 9S-710).

The "final solution of the Jewish question" got under way in the Baltic states, as was graphically reported by Karl Jäger, Commander of the German Security Police in Lithuania:

The goal to clear Lithuania of Jews was rendered feasible because of a mobile unit under the command of SS Obersturmfuehrer Hamann, who adopted my goal without reservation and succeeded in ensuring the cooperation of Lithuanian partisans and civilian institutions concerned in this matter....

Lithuanian partisans carried out the executions of 2,977 Jewish men and women on July 4th and July 6th. This mobile unit contained 8-10 Germans of Einsatzkommando 3 personnel and a Lithuanian battalion commanded by Major Impulevicius consisting of 18 officers and 450 men. Between July and December 1941, 133,346 Lithuanian Jews were listed as executed under the auspices of Einsatzkmmando 3."<sup>1</sup>

Far from originating the idea of a "Jewish question," the Nazis worked within a long tradition. The conception of a Jewish problem--what to do with one's Jews--emerged in the late eighteenth century, posing a serious problem to the ethnic majorities among whom Jews lived. Usually tiny minorities in western and much of Central Europe, Jews formed more sizeable minorities the further east one went in Europe. Throughout

the nineteenth century, attempts to resolve the question of Jewish status ranged from the French revolutionary example of bestowing full rights on individual Jews to the maintenance of traditional restrictions on settlement, movement, occupation, and the holding of public office. Tsar Alexander III's malevolent solution to the Jewish question called for a third of Russia's Jews to convert, a third to emigrate and a third to die of hunger. Such callousness from a head of state was unusual before the Nazis, but not untypical of the hatred of Jews that predominated in Eastern Europe. Nonetheless, following the Bolshevik Revolution of 1917 and the end of World War One, Jews had everywhere in Europe achieved a theoretical equality with their non-Jewish countrymen.

Jewish emancipation, often forced upon the reluctant states of Eastern Europe, did not put an end to the "Jewish question." Well before the Nazis came to power in Germany, the effective rights of Jews had been seriously eroded in Hungary, Poland, and the Baltic States. Nazi Germany added to the idea of a solution of the Jewish question the word "final," bespeaking a conclusive end, and for all time. The National Socialists aimed at completely eradicating all traces of "the Jewish element." In the implementation of this goal, which resulted in the destruction of two thirds of European Jewry, they found willing collaborators in eastern Europe. This tragic phenomenon is known today as the Holocaust.

The word holocaust derives from the Greek holokauston, a burnt offering, and generically means great destruction and devastation. Although holocaust could well refer to the 35 million people, more than half of them civilians, who were killed as a direct result of Nazi racial and expansionist policies, in the context of this paper, Holocaust will be used in its now customary context: the deliberate and planned attempt to totally exterminate the Jews of Europe.

The Holocaust created an enormous shift in the geographic concentration of the Jewish population throughout Nazi-occupied Europe. Within eastern Europe, where the vast majority of Jews lived, the death tolls were highest. Still, statistics differed considerably among neighboring countries. This variance suggests a need for further explanation and analysis. For example, in 1939, Poland had the largest Jewish population with 3,350,000 Jews. At the war's conclusion in 1945, only 50,000 remained alive in Poland. (Several thousands fled east). The death totals were equally high in the Baltic states where only about ten percent out of the 245,000 Jews living in 1939 survived. Approximately 15% of Yugoslavia's 75,000 Jews survived, 20% of Czechoslovakia's 315,000, 30% of Hungary's 400,000, 40% of the Ukraine's 1,500,000, 34% of White Russia's 375,000, 50% of Romania's 800,000 Jews survived. In sharp contrast to all of the above, Bulgaria lost only 3,000 of its 50,000 Jews. 2

Among the nations of central, western, and southwestern Europe, the total number of Jews were much smaller. Although death tolls also varied greatly, proportionately fewer Jews were annihilated than in the east. For example, according to 1939 statistics, France had a relatively large Jewish population of 270,000. By 1945, the number decreased between one fourth and one third. During the same period, one half of the 2000 Jews of Norway were killed. Italy's Jewish population of 50,000 declined by one fifth. Both Greece and the Netherlands lost significantly higher numbers of Jews, around 80%, with a remainder of 12,000 and 20,000 respectively. These variances in mortality raise the crucial and natural question of whether, or to what extent, forces in addition to the German machinery of destruction, determined the number and extent of Jews killed in a particular region or country.

Timing is one key factor that to a greater or lesser degree affected the survival rate of Jews within a certain country. When the Germans attacked the Soviet Union on June 22, 1941, the Jews of Lithuania became the first victims of the Final Solution. The Einsatzgruppen (mobile killing forces) commenced operations in conjunction with the three million troops which invaded the area. Within several days, major cities such as Vilnius, Kaunas, Grodno, Minsk, and Lvov were captured by the Germans. These cities had large Jewish populations, the majority of which had little chance to escape because of the rapid German advance.

It must be emphasized that at this point in the war, no precedent for the systematic annihilation of Jews existed. By early summer 1941, Polish Jews of the Reich had been expelled and the Warsaw Ghetto sealed for over six months. In the Reich and in the occupied nations legislative measures on the treatment of Jews aimed at removing the Jews from mainstream society either by deportation or isolation and then by pauperization and starvation. In the Reich and in Poland this policy was already in high gear. In occupied nations such as Holland, Belgium, Norway, and France, Nazi decrees on the Jewish Question were generally accepted and implemented by those in power. Only in Denmark did initial attempts to subjugate Jews meet with stiff national resistance by both the ruling elite and the masses. As a result of Danish resistance the lives of 5,500 of the nation's 6,500 Jew were saved.

But this pattern of persecution was not imposed on the Jews of Soviet-held territories. There more radical methods were unleashed immediately. One of the first reports to reach the West concerning the work of the Einsatzgruppen stated:

From the day the Russo-German war broke out, the Germans undertook the physical extermination of the Jewish population on Polish territory, using for that purpose Ukrainians and Lithuanian Siauliai, (National Guard). It began first of all in eastern Galicia in the summer months of 1941. Their method everywhere was as follows: Men from fourteen to sixty were rounded up in one place -- a square or cemetery -- where they were slaughtered, machine-gunned, or killed by hand grenades. According to various estimates, the number of Jews savagely murdered in the Vilnius regions and Lithuanian Kaunas is 300,000. <sup>3</sup>

Approximately three months before the attack on the Soviet Union, or "Operation Barbarossa," on March 13, 1941, Hitler authorized Heinrich Himmler to carry out "Special Duties," in Russia. The murder of Jews was planned to coincide with the defeat of the Russians. On May 13, Hitler issued a decree of immunity for acts normally subjected to severe military discipline. This decree protected members of the armed forces and their "ancillary services" who engaged in summary executions of enemy civilians and established an unprecedented legal basis for the execution of unarmed civilians.

"Ancillary services" meant the four Einsatzgruppen, a total of 3,000 men under the ultimate authority of Reinhard Heydrich. He recruited from the various security forces including the SS, the SD, the Gestapo, Sipo, (security police Kripo, (criminal police), Stapo, (state police), Orpo, (ordinary police), and the Waffen SS. Designed to receive specific operational directives from the RSHA (Reich Security Main Office), these units accompanied the armed forces in their attack from the Baltic to the Black Sea. Attached to Army Group North, Einsatzgruppe A operated in the Baltic Countries; assigned to Army Group Central was Einsatzgruppe B covering White Russia and the region eastward to Moscow; Army Group South, accompanied by Einsatzgruppe C was responsible for the Ukraine with the exception of the southern section, which, along with the Crimea fell under the auspices of Einsatzgruppe D and the Eleventh Army.

The "Activity and Situation Reports of the Einsatzgruppen of the Sipo-SD in Russia," reveal significant data on the extermination of Jews in Lithuania and other parts of former Soviet-occupied states not only by Germans but by native populations. For example, Report No. 8 dated June 30, 1941, stated "During the last 3 days Lithuanian partisan groups have already killed several thousand Jews."<sup>4</sup> The Report of July 4, 1941, recounted 200 shootings that took place in Tilsit. It also stated that two groups of partisans had formed in Kaunas: 600 men under the leadership of Klimaitis, mainly civilian workers and 200 men under the leadership of the physician Dr. Zigonys. One week later, on July 11, Franz Stahlecker, the head of Einsatzgruppe A was able to report that "up to now a total of 7,800 Jews have been liquidated, partly through pogroms and partly through shooting by Lithuanian Kommandos." Under the segment entitled "Concerning the People" the report of Einsatzgruppe A on August 3, stated that "It was very easy to convince the Lithuanian circles of the need for self-purging actions to achieve a complete elimination of the Jews from public life. Spontaneous pogroms occurred in all the towns." Operational Situation Reports and Reports from the Occupied Eastern Territories which documented the level of aid or resistance from indigenous peoples in the Final Solution were prepared by leaders of the Einsatzgruppen from late June 1941 until late May 1943.



Partly because conditions were favorable, the Einsatzgruppen achieved appalling success in carrying out their mission. The number of Jews killed in mobile killing operations was so great that in June, 1942, Heinrich Himmler ordered the leader of Einsatzkommand 4a, Paul Blobel, to "erase the traces of Einsatzgruppen executions in the East."<sup>5</sup> Blobel was marginally successful in digging up and burning the bodies of 1,400,000 people destroyed in what was only a prelude to more sophisticated and far more extensive methods of mass murder. According to the International Military Tribunal at Nuremberg, the Einsatzgruppen and other units of the security police were responsible for murdering a total of two million people.<sup>6</sup>

By the middle of 1942, mass executions of Jews began in the General Government. In the same month that Blobel began his coverup operations in the occupied eastern territories in June of 1942, the first gas chamber selections took place at Auschwitz Death Camp. Six months had passed between the Wannsee Conference on January 20, 1942, which sanctioned the Final Solution, and the implementation of gas chambers. In the interim, Jews from from the Old Reich, Austria, and the Protektorat were deported to the mysterious "east." The first destination points were Riga, Kaunas, and Minsk in the Ostland (Baltic States and White Russia) where they were shot by Einsatzgruppen and local auxiliaries. However, between mid-1942 and late 1944, Jews from all parts of Nazi-occupied Europe

were generally transported to one of the six death camps in Poland. Gassings continued until November 25, 1944, when Himmler ordered an end to operations. At that point, Auschwitz was the only camp still in full operation. Himmler figured that the Jewish Question had been sufficiently resolved. It is estimated that 3,000,000 were murdered in the concentration and death camps.<sup>7</sup>

Concerning the fate of the Jews in the ghettos throughout occupied Europe, about 800,000 died by the time the last ghetto was liquidated in September 1944. In Spring of 1943, the Warsaw ghetto was among the first ghettos liquidated. There, some Jews violently resisted. They not only fought against Germans but also Poles, Latvians, Lithuanians, and Ukrainian auxiliaries in a battle that lasted nearly four weeks. It is estimated that out of the 56,065 (this number was 400,000 in 1941) Jewish inhabitants of Warsaw who surrendered 7,000 were immediately shot and the remainder deported to death or concentration camps.

Between June 1943 and September 1944, the large remaining ghettos including Vilnius, Kaunas, Riga, and Minsk in the Ostland were liquidated. Only a small fraction of Jews survived. Using the two ghettos in this study as examples, out of the 40,000 Jews of the Vilnius ghetto, under five thousand lived to see Vilnius liberated by the Russians on July 13, 1944. Concerning the Jews in the Kaunas ghetto, only about 2,500 survived the Nazi Occupation. A few dozen still remained

hidden in the ghetto when the Red Army entered Kaunas on August 1, 1944. The overall death toll for Jews killed in ghettos throughout Nazi-occupied territory is estimated at 800,000.

Although the destruction of Jews relied, in the first instance, upon the might of the German war machine and the Nazi capacity for annihilation, to a great measure it depended on the attitude and behavior of the civilian populations. Would the indigenous population respond passively to the murder of their Jewish compatriots? Would they thwart or assist the murderers? These were questions asked by the Nazis at the time and they are the subject of the present study, as well. This investigation will examine the broad question of non-German participation in the extermination of Jews and analyze specifically the significance of Lithuanian participation in the Final Solution to the Jewish Question. How much aid did the Germans receive in this endeavor, and of what type? Was it voluntary or forced? How and why did the initial Lithuanian-German collaboration differ from that of the other two Baltic States, Latvia, and Estonia? What part did historical antisemitic sentiment among large sectors of the Lithuanian people play after the German invasion? Why did German-Lithuanian collaboration decline after the first year of German conquest? (The Germans experienced difficulties and ultimate failure in forming a Lithuanian SS Battalion despite repeated attempts from 1942 to 1944.) What political and economic factors account for the growing anti-German sentiment among the masses? Was

there a similiar but opposite shift in the attitude towards and treatment of Jews?

The study is arranged chronologically beginning with a background and analysis of the formation of the sovereign state of Lithuania. Lithuanian-Jewish relations and interactions during the interwar period will necesarily provide the historic framework needed to understand the motives behind the behavior demonstrated by the Lithuanian majority toward the Jewish minority during the German conquest. The thesis will show that Lithuanian participation in the mass shootings of Jews following the German invasion in 1941 was not a spontaneous response but that it had a history of its own, the result of deeper-rooted sentiments that stemmed from the teachings of the church, modern nationalism, political and socio-economic conditions.

It is to be noted that the above factors predated not only the war but the first Soviet occupation of Lithuania in 1940. To emphasize these factors is simultaneously to undermine what is still the most frequently advanced defense of Lithuanian conduct during the Holocaust, that hostility toward Jews and collaboration in their extermination was the result of the alleged Jewish connection to communism and the Soviet occupation of Lithuania. The following study will call that defense into question. But it will not deny the importance of the Soviet annexation, the events and global

effects of which are crucial to an explanation of the choices people made during the war.

Careful examination of the history of the interwar era and the period of Soviet domination must provide the basis for understanding the critical importance of the actions taken from June 22, 1941--the Nazi invasion of the USSR--until the end of that year. In this space of six months the great majority of Lithuanian Jews perished. These factors are unrelated to the often heard contention that hostility to Jews was linked with communism and the First Soviet Occupation of 1940-1941.

One problem with treating either the Soviet or Nazi period of occupation is that many of the sources on this period are remarkably tainted. They break down as either pro-or anti-Soviet. But this is only part of the problem. When not emanating from participating Lithuanians, Jews, or Soviets, they are often the work of the Cold War period and scarcely to be relied on at face value. This writer has had to sift through an enormous amount of Lithuanian, German, Yiddish, and Soviet sources and secondary literature in an attempt to get at the truth about an important episode in the history of Jews, Lithuanians, Germans, and Russians, a history that is, more than most, still fraught with emotional force and subject to mythologizing, apologia, and political rhetoric. Comments contained in the footnotes will assess the reliability of particular writers.

Shortly after the commencement of the June invasion, Jews were slaughtered by Lithuanians in so-called "self cleansing operations." One month later, these spontaneous and sporadic killings were halted by the Germans and replaced by the first systematic mass murders anywhere in occupied Europe.

Nearly 90% of Lithuania's 220,000 Jews were destroyed as a result of Nazi policy on the Jewish Question. The Final Solution in practical terms involved a cumbersome process: rounding up, guarding, transporting, and ultimately shooting thousands of civilians. Could the Nazis alone have succeeded in killing so many in so short a time? On the other hand, given German methods of coercion and persuasion, what could Lithuania's leadership and populace have done to thwart the German policy of annihilation? What active assistance or aid could the indigenous population render their Jewish compatriots, had they so desired.

This study will demonstrate that although the Lithuanians enjoyed only a small space in which to maneuver under the Reich Ministry for the Occupied Eastern Territories, both the official Lithuanian leadership, (the Council General), and the masses demonstrated enormous resistance to the Nazis on a number of issues. Regarding the Final Solution, however, resistance was minimal if not totally lacking. Evidence indicates that out of those Jews who survived, only about 1,600 (or .75% of Lithuanian Jewry) were saved because they were helped by their Christian countrymen.

What was the Jewish response to the execution of the Final Solution in Lithuania? Did Jews, as the huge mortality figures suggest, go to their deaths like sheep? Given the reality of having to defend themselves against both the native population and the Germans, what, if any, forms of resistance were open to them?

Special attention will be given in this context to the execution of the Final Solution in Kaunas and Vilnius.<sup>8</sup> Together, the two cities housed the majority of Jews who survived the first round of mass murders that took place between June and December 1941. Just outside each city, the mass murder sites of Ponar (Vilnius) and Forts 7 and 9 (Kaunas) were established by the Germans and manned by Lithuanians for the purpose of shooting Jews, Soviets, and other elements of the population considered racially inferior.

The goal of this study is to establish factually and objectively what happened and to investigate the motivations of the various groups of people involved. Scholarly attempts to deal with the subject of Lithuanian collaboration in the Holocaust have been few. Media treatments and the coverage of several recent war crimes trials have been riddled with error, prejudgments, and sensationalist exploitation. There is a need to set straight the facts of this tragic chapter in human history. This is the crux of historical study and my motivation in undertaking such a grim task.

## A. Endnotes

1. "Extract From a Report by Karl Jaeger, Commander of Einsatzkommando 3, On the Extermination of Lithuanian Jews, 1941." Yad Vashem Archives, 0-18/245.
2. Excerpt from the report by the Jewish Labor Bund sent from Warsaw in May 1942 to the Polish Government in exile in London. see English translation in Lucy Davidowitz, The Holocaust Reader (New York: Behrman House, 1976).
3. Operational Situation Report USSR No. 8 National Archives Microfilm T 175. For an English translation of this Report and subsequent daily reports known as Ereignismeldungen UdSSR (Morning Reports -- USSR) beginning on June 23, 1941 and terminating with No. 195 on April 24, 1942, see The Einsatzgruppen Reports (ed.) Yitzhak Arad, Shmuel Krakowski, Shmuel Spector, (New York: Holocaust Library, 1989). From May 1, 1942 to January 29, 1943, the reports of the Chief of the Security Police and Secret Service are entitled Reports from the Occupied Eastern Territories. Considerable intelligence information on Lithuania and Latvia is revealed.
4. Affidavit by Paul Blobel, June 18, 1947, Nuremberg document, NO-3947.
5. Statistic taken from Raul Hilberg, The Destruction of the European Jews (Chicago: Quadrangle books, 1961)), p.767.
6. The Lithuanian spelling is used throughout the text to indicate the towns in Lithuania.



## II/ THE HISTORY OF LITHUANIA UP TO 1940

For the last 250 years Lithuania has been a poor, weak, powerless, and underdeveloped country whose sovereignty has been dependent on the politics of the European super powers. Its ill-fated resurrection as an independent state on February 16, 1918, until its demise at the hands of both the Nazis and Soviets on August 3, 1940, epitomizes Lithuania's powerlessness in its struggle for survival in a world filled with larger, more advanced, more powerful and most important, highly expansionistic nations. Given the loss of sovereignty and the calamity of two occupations in two consecutive years i.e., 1940, 1941, scapegoating and revenge, unpleasant characteristics of humans who have themselves suffered, make more sense in the context of Lithuania than elsewhere in Europe. This is not to suggest, however, that one can condone the brutality which a portion of Lithuanians inflicted upon Jewish citizens during the Nazi occupation. There can be no rationale for actively or passively facilitating mass murder, even if it is perceived as deserved or somehow justifiable. Rather, one must understand that part of the savagery that was unleashed on the nation's Jews was not the result of the of cold-blooded and bureaucratic policies of a Vichy France or a Nazi Germany where nothing like a real Jewish problem (in terms of proportion of Jewish residents) existed. Instead the ferocity of

anti-Jewish measures stemmed from the frustrations and rage that accompanied a strong sense of national impotence.

Lithuania's 800 year history is sprinkled with glory and greatness. Lithuania's culture by the late thirteenth and early fourteenth centuries was highly developed in terms of language and literature. Still, until the first decades of the twentieth century, Lithuania lacked any of the institutions of a modern country: no middle-class, no efficient administrative bureaucracy, no industry, comparatively little urbanization, and a native intelligentsia deeply committed to the past, prioritizing religion and traditions. Furthermore the population consisted of a highly religious, largely illiterate peasant mass. Considering pre-twentieth century Lithuanian history certain main currents help explain the attitudes and particularly the deep-rooted prejudices of many Lithuanians at the onset of World War II.

The first factor that emerges is that although the Lithuanian nation was the last European country to embrace Christianity, (1387) the power of the church remained a predominant factor in determining the politics as well as the social values of both the ruling elite and the masses. The nineteenth-century intelligentsia of Lithuania, unlike its Polish counterpart, did not stem from the vein of eighteenth-century enlightenment thought, but rather from ancient and medieval scriptures and dogma of the Roman Catholic Church. After the polonized Lithuanian nobility increasingly identified

themselves with Polish nationalism, in the second half of the nineteenth century, the clergy fostered and led the fledgling Lithuanian national movement. However, these churchmen also perpetuated the biases and prejudices of early Christianity in the modern developing nation-state. In so doing, the citizenry of the twentieth century state was defined, perhaps unofficially, but above all else, in religious terms.

Another factor has to do with Lithuania's long standing political, economic, and cultural subjugation. Located strategically on the south-eastern shores of the Baltic Sea. Lithuania has frequently been fought over and dominated by greater powers: Germany, Poland, and Russia. Also from within the geographic borders of Lithuania, almost one fifth of the population was not Lithuanian. The Jews, constituting 7.2% of the total population were the largest minority nationality followed by Germans--4.1%, Poles--3%, and Russians--2.4%.<sup>1</sup> Within the Vilnius area, Poles were in the majority along with a large number of Jews. There, Polish was the official language and Poles adamantly opposed the idea of including Vilnius in a separate Lithuanian state. However, to Lithuanian patriots, Vilnius, their historic capital, was crucial to the national cause. The goal of throwing off and keeping off foreign domination became central to the creation and survival of Lithuania as a sovereign nation.

Even a glance at the political history of Lithuania may suggest to the reader how xenophobic nationalism could have

developed as a response to years of subjugation. Xenophobia became woven into the modern nationalist movement along with a rigid notion of who belongs.

Lithuanian power was at its height during the reign of Vytautis the Great 1393-1430, then territorial Lithuania extended from the Baltic to the Black Sea. Seventeen years after the death of its most famous ruler, Lithuania entered into a Polish union. With the exception of a small strip of Lithuanian territory that remained in the hands of the East Prussians (the Memel Territory), the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth created in 1569 lasted until liquidated by Russia in 1795. Despite a flourishing of cultural achievements in both the Kingdom of Poland and the Grand Duchy of Lithuania, the Commonwealth as an institution never developed an effective centralized bureaucracy controlled by the crown. Consequently, from the seventeenth century onwards, the crown grew weaker and political, social, and economic power shifted to the nobility. This decentralization of power in turn diminished the state's military capability and ultimately resulted in the Muscovite invasion of Vilnius in 1665.

A century of devastating wars, disease, economic recession, and a growing intolerance and obscurantism especially on the part of the Catholic Church followed. Russian armies continually traversed Lithuania on their way to war fronts destroying the land and bringing plague. Lithuania's population declined radically as a result of two intense periods of fighting;

nearly half of the population was destroyed in 1648-1667, and nearly one third of the remaining population in 1698-1719.

A series of partitions eventually destroyed the Lithuanian-Polish Commonwealth and brought Lithuania under Russian control. The first partition was signed on August 5, 1772 by Russia, Prussia, and Austria. According to the terms, Russia seized the eastern possessions of Lithuania, Prussia took Pomerania and the Bishopric of Varmia: while Austria occupied Galicia. Despite urgent efforts at reform from within the Grand Duchy of Lithuania and the Kingdom of Poland, a second partition in 1793 interrupted the progress. In 1794, Lithuanians and Poles under the leadership of General Thaddeus Kosciuszko revolted in a valient effort to retain their independence. After a victorious moment, the insurrection was brutally suppressed. This time the Russians appropriated nearly all of Lithuania with the exception of territory south of the Nemunas which Prussia seized.

But for a brief period in which a provisional government was set up in April 1812 to July 1813, most of territorial Lithuania remained under Russian domination until 1918. For the next fifty years Lithuanians worked together along with Poles in an effort to regain their independence. This joint movement fomented two major revolts in both the Kingdom of Poland and the Grand Duchy of Lithuania and would have later implications on the foreign policy of the reestablished Lithuanian state.

In November of 1830 insurrection broke out in Poland, three months later Lithuanian peasants and petty noblemen also revolted. The manifestos of the insurrection varied among the counties. All demanded political freedom but only in the more radical counties such as Raseinai and Upyte did nationalism merge with liberalism. The manifesto of one county, Telsiai, is remarkable in demanding the right of peasants to own property.

Russian troops were able to maintain their hold on the cities and brutally crush Lithuanian opposition. As part of the settlement, Tsar Nicholas I invoked a sweeping policy of Russification that included shutting down universities and churches. The Russian Code replaced the Lithuanian Legal Code which had been established in 1529. Russian officials carried out repressive measures against the church and the expression of Lithuanian culture. Monasteries were labeled nests of rebellion. Restrictions were placed on the content and number of sermons priests could deliver per week and on a number of other liturgical procedures.

The repressive measures backfired as a means of subordinating the people. Instead, language and religion became the cornerstone of the national movement. By 1863, the climate was extremely volatile. Lithuanians looked to the Poles for the opportune moment. The Russian demand for military recruitment created the stimulus and the Lithuanian insurrectionists responded to the Polish initiative. Within

three days of the Polish appeal of January 29, 1863, to "Brothers, Lithuanians!" the "Lithuanian Provincial Committee, National Organization" issued its own manifesto urging fellow countrymen to revolt.

About 15,000 Lithuanians actively engaged 140,000 Russian troops. The insurrection lasted nearly eighteen months before being again brutally crushed. In addition to indiscriminate killings of wounded rebels and civilian suspects, a large number of noblemen and priests were imprisoned, exiled or killed as a result of a so-called legal due process.<sup>2</sup>

The Rebellion of 1863 marked the last time that the mass of Lithuanians worked with Poles towards the common goal of independence. The Lithuanian masses, the peasantry and yeoman, severed their Polish ties and formed their own national movement. Even the strong religious bond between the two nations underwent re-evaluation by leaders of the Lithuanian national revival. The Lithuanian clergy accused the Polish ecclesiastic organization of using their papal connections to enhance their own interest within Lithuania. Consequently the Lithuanians wanted a break within the joint clerical structure.

Ultimately when the breach between the two national movements became more pronounced after 1863, the Polonized Lithuanian nobility did not identify with the emphatically linguistically Lithuanian national movement. Since governing the state's affairs had traditionally been the domain of the aristocracy, this left the largely illiterate agrarian masses

without their traditional leaders at a time when they were beginning to reassert their self-identity. This gap created opportunities for a new set of leaders to rise up and spearhead the cause.

These new leaders and founders of the modern Lithuanian nation came almost exclusively from the peasantry. This phenomenon contrasted with the movement in Poland where the peasants were slow to realize national consciousness and the initiative came from the nobility and middle class. In Lithuania, well-to-do peasants formed the bulk of the new Lithuanian intelligentsia, which largely consisted of members of the clergy. For example, Bishop Mathias Casimir Valancius, the son of a yeoman, led the struggle against church domination by the tsarist government. In the process, he educated the masses in Catholicism, conservative values, and Lithuanian traditions and culture. In the struggle to counter the prohibition of the Lithuanian language and the ban on Lithuanian books, Valancius organized and financed an operation based in Memel, part of German-held Lithuania, or Lithuania Minor.

In 1867-68 clergymen printed a series of brochures that were smuggled across the frontier to Russian-held Lithuania, known as Lithuania Major. These widely distributed pamphlets called on Lithuanians to refuse to allow their children to be educated in Russian schools, to refuse to read books printed in Russian characters, and to hide their Lithuanian prayerbooks from Russian officials. Children of well-to-do parents began attending underground religious schools which not only



facilitated nationalism but incidently strengthened the link between the Lithuanians.

By 1870, priests such as Silvestras Gimzauskas and Martynas Sidaravicius organized an intricate system of receiving posts and distribution centers for Lithuanian prayerbooks printed on the German side and smuggled across the border. By the mid 1870's, the monopoly of religious books ended and other literary works which included folk songs, almanacs, and linguistic texts became popular on the underground circuit. Anti-Russian cartoons and polemics typically portrayed Cossacks engaged in sacrilegious acts. The struggle over language became a pivotal force in expressing the national idea. Bishop Valancius, in one of his earliest brochures published in Prussia wrote:

Presently the Muscovite had come to Lithuania, a foreign country. How can they demand that, because of them, this country's people should learn the Muscovite language. Let them first learn Lithuanian, then they will be able to talk to Lithuanians.

Children of well-to-do peasants attended underground schools which not only fostered literacy, but facilitated nationalism and further strengthened the link between German and Russianheld Lithuania.

In turn, this new educated class, the burgeoning professional and commercial elite, would become by the early 1900's the backbone of the subsequent sovereign state. Although these intellectuals were successful in raising the national consciousness of the rural masses, two factors must be noted. First, membership in political parties prior to

1919 was never more than a fraction of the total population, and second the liberal or democratic ideas expounded by those who organized the Socialist party in 1896 or the Democratic party in 1902 did not gain widespread support among the populace. Even among the politicized left, nationalism was prioritized above liberalism. To illustrate the components behind liberal thought Lithuanian style and the development of the Lithuanian Democratic Party (LPD) 1902, it is again necessary to return to the national movement in the last decades of the nineteenth century.

The liberal movement was an undercurrent of the larger national awakening. Its founders retained their commitment to raising the national consciousness but developed only a vague political program directed against the tyranny of the tsar. In 1883, under the leadership of Dr. Jonas Basanavicius, they published the first Lithuanian language newspaper, Auszra (The Dawn) in Prussia. The paper romanticized the glories of the Lithuanian past. However, the glorification of Lithuania's heathen past combined with occasional articles with socialist overtones alienated the clergy who shut the paper down three years later.

In 1889, Varpus (The Bell) replaced Auszra as the written media of the Lithuanian left. The editor, Dr. Vincas Kudirka (1858-1899) a Lithuanian nobleman, was one of the few of his class to develop his Lithuanian patriotism. This paper lacked a political program and instead focused on national and social questions. Still the much larger group of right wing Catholic

intellectuals, mostly clergy, rejected Ausra and in the same year published their own extremely militant anti-Russian newspaper, Apzvalga (Review). In 1896, a less militant Catholic newspaper, Tevynes Sargas (The Guardian of the Fatherland) replaced Apzvalga and united the Catholic intelligentsia. The Lithuanian Christian Democratic Party was organized in 1903 and the Nationalist Party a few years later.

Despite clerical opposition, Varpus continued to serve as the nucleus for the left wing political movement including the Democrats (later known as the Populists) and the Social Democrats until 1902. At that point, the Lithuanian Democratic Party was organized and its program published. The program called for full autonomy for Lithuania and for civil liberties within the new state:

By saying Lithuania -- for Lithuanians! We seek to obtain a political order within which the Lithuanians can rule themselves in their cultural growth. This can be realized only after a fully autonomous Lithuania within ethnographic borders is achieved.<sup>4</sup>

Although never enjoying mass support, the Democratic Party oriented itself toward the peasantry and found its main support there. Under the influence of the Russian Revolution of 1905, a faction broke with the Democrats and formed the Socialist Populist Party. The larger faction of the Democratic Party became known as the Peasants' Party. These two parties later united and formed the Peasants' Populist Party.

Even the Social Democrats were staunch nationalists. Independence was commonly seen as the first step to socialism. Fifty members comprised the original organization which was

formed in 1896. Their program aimed at creating a socialist order within an independent democratic republic. Thus, the primary political task was not socialism but separation from Russia. Because of this nationalist and separatist stance, the Lithuanian Social Democratic Party (LSPD) never united with the Russian Social Democratic Labor Party or any other socialist group and was refused admission to the Second International.

By the early 1900's, the small group of intellectuals still consisted mostly of priests with a sprinkling of physicians, pharmacists, engineers. Commerce was almost entirely in Jewish hands. Industry, what little existed, was concentrated in the major cities and the urban industrial proletariat was either Jewish or Polish. Industrial workers numbered 24,000 or 0.7% of the population compared with 2.6% in Poland and 1.7% in Russia. The Lithuanian proletariat was composed of about 500,000 landless workers.

When the revolution erupted in Russia in 1905, in the wake of Russian military disasters, the LSPD organized strikes throughout the cities. It also drafted an appeal calling for an end to Russian subjugation and demanding the establishment of an autonomous Lithuania based on a constitutional representative government.

In the countryside, the Populists and masses of farmers ousted Russian officials and seized local government. By late summer, farmhands staged a number of strikes on the estates which eventually turned violent. Rioting and looting became widespread.

In August, Tsar Nicholas II published his edict which instituted an advisory legislative Duma. Two months later, his October manifesto promised a constitution. Activists from the previously underground parties called for a national conference to discuss the people's demands and coordinate activities. In late October, they published an appeal in the daily Vilniaus Zinios calling for a Lithuanian congress of township and city deputies. A huge demonstration in Vilnius turned into a bloody confrontation between striking workers and Russian troops.

Two thousand deputies and a delegation of German Lithuanian observers formed the a Grand Assembly of Vilnius on December 4, 1905. Representatives included members of the Populists, the Lithuanian Democratic Party, the Christian Democratic Party, the Jewish Bund and the LSDP. The Lithuanian Social Democratic Party was the oldest organized political group and was instrumental in forcing the Assembly to take a definitive stance on the questions of liberty and self-government. The resolution accepted by the assembly called for a complete break with the old order and the establishment of a new political system. The resolution stated:

Since the needs of the inhabitants of Lithuania can be satisfied fully only under political autonomy (self government) in our country...(it is resolved) to demand autonomy for Lithuania with a diet in Vilnius, elected by universal, equal, direct and secret ballot, without discrimination as to sex, nationality, or religion.<sup>5</sup>

The Assembly further called for a complete transfer of local government to Lithuanians, and demanded that all school subjects be taught in Lithuanian. It appealed to the people to refuse to pay taxes, to shut down state liquor monopoly stores, and to refrain from reporting for induction in the Russian Armed Forces.

The Lithuanian people responded enthusiastically to the summons of the Assembly. Mass-boycotts, strikes and rallies forced the Russian Governor General to enact some initial reforms. Elementary school children were allowed to receive instruction in Lithuanian. Local Russian officials were removed from their posts.

Unfortunately the reforms were short-lived. By December 1905, following the peace with Japan, Russian troops repressed the revolutionary movement. A state of emergency was declared in Kaunas and Vilnius. Russian soldiers terrorized local Lithuanians and reinstated former administrators. Several smaller towns were shelled by artillery. Statistics in the Vilnius gubernatorial office state that the number of political prisoners rose from 187 in 1904; to 1,303, in 1905; to 2,900 in 1906. There was also a corresponding increase in the number of emigres to America, especially among the intelligentsia.<sup>6</sup> Thus, by 1906 political rights were still greatly limited and councils of self-government, or Zemstvos completely denied.

After 1905, Lithuanian political leaders generally cooperated with the Russian government and worked through

the Duma to bring about reform legislation favoring Lithuanian national interests. Lithuanian delegates held seven seats in the the first and Second Dumas and four in the third and fourth. Although delegates accomplished little to promote Lithuanian autonomy, they used their influence to peacefully obtain concessions in cultural and educational pursuits. In 1907, Antanas Smetona, prominent nationalist leader and later dictator of Lithuania during much of the period of independence, re-elected on the significance of their efforts in this arena:

Without culture, not even a strike will be of any use. Blow on the thermometer all you want, but you will not heat a cool house. The inflated mercury will show an untrue measure of warmth.

With the outbreak of World War One, Lithuanian Nationalists supported the tsarist regime. In return, they hoped to receive political concessions favoring autonomy. On August 1, 1914, a coalition of all political parties except for the Social Democrats drafted a declaration affirming the loyalty of the Lithuanians and expressing the hope that Mother Russia would unify Russian Lithuania with Prussian Lithuania and restore its sovereignty. The Russian government responded negatively on the national question and refused to make any promises regarding the future.

In early November, 1915, the Germans invaded Lithuania and set up a Supreme Eastern Command over Courland, Grodno, Suvalkai, Vilnius, Kaunas, and Bialystok. German governing

policy aimed at the immediate exploitation of Lithuanian resources to facilitate the German war effort.

In order to win over the Lithuanian nationals, the Germans began giving lip service to instituting an independent state. To demonstrate their pro-nationalist stance, the German Military Administration called for the formation of a Lithuanian Council that would begin the process of establishing self-determination. However, much to the surprise of the Germans, the Lithuanian leadership refused to become "trusted councilors." Instead, the Lithuanian liasons countered with the proposal that an elective body be formed. Thinking that they could control the elected body, the German Command permitted the election of a National Council, or Taryba.

An all-Lithuanian conference took place on September 18-22 1917, in Vilnius. Although a few of the delegates were selected by the Germans, the main body of the 214 delegates represented all areas of ethnographic Lithuania. This body elected a 20 member Lithuanian Council including Antanas Smetona of the Right, Jurgis Saulys of the Liberal bloc, Steponas Kairys of the Social Democrats, and the prominent national poet Rev. Justinas Maculeicius. Despite considerable political differences, the Conference unanimously voted for an independent state of Lithuania with a guarantee of cultural liberty to minorities. The Conference also provided for the formation of a constitutional assembly that would establish the foundations of the state and define its relations with other states.



Within weeks of the conference the Bolsheviks seized power in Russia and on November 22 began suing the Germans for peace. Smetona along Kairys and Saulys traveled to Berlin to meet with Chancellor von Hertling and General Erich Ludendorff. On December 1, 1917, they signed a preliminary protocol granting conditional German support for the restitution of the Lithuanian state. The document stated that the condition for German support must be that the Lithuanians sign a military and economic convention with Germany. On December 11, 1917 the Lithuanian Taryba agreed to the convention.

In early 1918, the Germans wanted the Lithuanian Taryba to send a delegation to the Brest-Litovsk negotiations pronouncing Lithuania's independence. The Lithuanians countered with the stipulations that Germany must first state the withdrawal date for the German army and give the date and circumstances under which the country's administration would be transferred to the Council of Lithuania. Since they received no answer, the Lithuanian delegation refused to go to Brest Litovsk. Instead, on February 16, 1918, all twenty members of the Council met in Vilnius and signed an unconditional declaration of independence. The Council renounced any ties with Russia, Germany, or any other nation. Given the chaotic closing months of the war, the Germans could do little to counter this unexpected turn of events.

Although diplomatic conflicts between the two nations continued throughout 1918 and 1919, Lithuanians remained

dependent on German troops. For example, when Lithuania was on the verge of extinction in January 1919, German mercenaries paid by the Lithuanian government defended Kaunas from Soviet occupation.

Against overwhelming odds, Smetona and the other leaders learned how to extract concessions from the dominating powers and exploit the immediate circumstances. Perhaps, the Russian case and the collaboration with the Germans during WW I prepared them for the same sort of wary collaboration with the Nazis later. This is the tactic of the powerless, welldeveloped before 1941, a kind of reflex reaction. It "worked" in 1914-1918, maybe it would work again in 1941.

The Germans, for their part, needed Lithuania as an ally against Poland and as a buffer against Soviet Russia. For both sides the relationship was not an ideal one, yet: it served as a basis for future agreement. This factor is relevant to an understanding of the German-Lithuanian collaboration one world war later. German war aims in the Baltics necessitated a friendly, if not submissive, Lithuania. Lithuania looked to Germany to ressurect its sovereignty.

It is not within the scope of this study to narrate the trials and tribulations involved in the formation and consolidation of the Lithuanian state. Nor can an attempt to survey the nation's twenty-two year history be done justice here. The developments selected for the discussion that follows serve the purpose of enhancing the reader's understanding

of the attitudes of the Lithuanian population towards the Jews, Poles, Germans, and Russians during the period of the Nazi conquest.

The goal of throwing off foreign domination remained central to this suppressed nation, as elsewhere in Eastern Europe. This "us vs. them" mentality solidified the various economic and social classes and imbued them with a common cause-- self government; and unified them against a common enemy -- foreign authority. Because establishing cultural ethnicity had been an important first step in building a national movement that sought independence as its ultimate goal, even after the creation of the sovereign state, Lithuanians remained rigidly fixed on an exclusive notion of who belongs. Consequently when minority nationals became citizens of the new state, in 1918, they were still viewed by the majority of ethnic Lithuanians as outsiders. The distinction which determined the extent of one's civil rights was not based on citizenship alone, but rather on one's ethnic origin. As Lithuania developed its own instruments of state, expanded its educational institutions, developed its economy, and gained international recognition, the exclusionary principle of membership in the community became increasingly crucial in determining the amount of privileges and rights awarded to its citizens. This attitude is one key towards understanding how the majority of Lithuanians viewed Jewish citizens on the eve of the Nazi invasion.

#### A. The History of Jews in Lithuania

Until this point, little has been said concerning the history of Lithuanian antisemitism. Perhaps the omission is in itself revealing. Yet, the fact that over 90% of Lithuanian Jews were murdered in the period between 1941 and 1944, not only by the Nazis but by Lithuanian nationals, indicate a need to dig deeper into the past for a possible rationale.

According to one German source, even as the retreating Soviet Army was still in Lithuania on the morning following the invasion, June 23, 1941, armed groups of "partisans" began attacking and killing Jewish citizens. During the first night of pogroms of June 25-26, 1941, Lithuanian partisans murdered more than 1,500 Jews in Kaunas alone. By July 2, when the Germans began implementing the Final Solution, Lithuanian partisans had already murdered 5,000 Jews. In contrast, the report stated, the Latvians killed 400 Jews that same night but "due to the fact that the population in Riga calmed down very quickly, additional pogroms would be unthinkable."<sup>8</sup>

In Lithuania, by contrast, the partisans continued to riot and murder. Eyewitness accounts presented later detail the barbarity and excessive cruelty of the perpetrators on their hapless victims.

The level of violence that exploded following the Nazi invasion can not be explained convincingly as a response to the immediate circumstances or even to the alleged Jewish

participation in the Soviet Regime of the previous year. The antisemitism that erupted in the towns and countryside throughout Lithuania makes sense only when seen as the outgrowth of a particular national movement, a popular expression of the sentiments of the people with its own history. Thus, a historical perspective that aims at pinpointing key aspects in the developmental relationship between Jews and Lithuanians is central to an understanding of Lithuanian-German collaboration in the Final Solution.

In the mid-fourteenth century, Polish and Lithuanian kings and nobles began inviting Jewish traders and money lenders to rebuild their war-torn economy. The Polish King Casimir the Great (1333-70) extended Jewish rights and privileges throughout Poland in 1344. In the fiveteenth century, the Grand Duke Witovt of Lithuania invited Crimean Jews to settle in his domain for the explicit purpose of developing commerce. Thousands more Yiddish-speaking Jews came to Lithuania and Poland to escape persecution in western and central Europe.

In Polish and Lithuanian towns, the Jewish ghetto was established not only to protect Jews from attacks but to insulate the Christian population from Jewish competitors. Within the ghetto Jews were officially permitted to practice their trades and crafts. In rural areas Jews formed the majority of the skilled workforce as carpenters, cobblers, blacksmiths tailors etc. The numbers of Jewish craftsmen increased substantially by the end of the 16th century when restriction

on Jewish commerce forced many Jewish merchants to switch to a craft.<sup>9</sup>

In the century following the Spanish expulsion of Jews in 1492, the major center for Jewish learning shifted to the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth where it remained for nearly 450 years. At the end of the fifteenth century the size of the Jewish community was slightly more than 0.5% of the population; only 6,000 in Lithuania and 18,000 in Poland. However, one indicator of the generally favorable position of the Jews was the rapid increase in Jewish population. In the next two hundred years, nearly three fourths of world Jewry came to live in this area. By the end of the sixteenth century, the Jewish population in Lithuania grew to almost 100,000 comprising nearly 7.6% of the total population. In Poland, by mid-seventeenth century there were about 500,000 Jews, nearly 5% of the nation's total population.<sup>10</sup>

Throughout Poland and Lithuania in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, the period of the Commonwealth, Jews enjoyed extensive political, economic, and social autonomy. In the second half of the sixteenth century, Jews created a self-governing body, or kahal, to serve as the administrative organ of the community. The kahal provided for its own religious and communal institutions and dispensed justice through the bet din, the traditional Jewish civil and religious court. It also supervised education and regulated economic activities. By the end of the sixteenth century, institutions on the local

level merged into a central organization known as "The Council of the Four Lands" (Vaad Arba Aratzot) which encompassed Great Poland, Little Poland, Lithuania, and the Ukraine. This body met annually and acted as a liason with the crown, particularly on matters of negotiating and collecting Jewish taxes. The Lithuanian kahal originally belonged to this Council but in 1623 seceded and formed its own "Council of the Principal Communities of the Province of Lithuania." The autonomous powers of the council far exceeded those which Jewish communities held in other states.

As indicated earlier, Polish and Lithuanian ghetto Jews developed a highly religious and cultural life. Yeshivot, or Talmudic Colleges, became centers of study for Jews from all over central and eastern Europe. Polish masters of the Haskalah, or Rabbinic law became the dominant influence in Judaism. By the middle of the seventeenth century, Vilnius, "The Jerusalem of the North," was filled with religious scholars and writers, the most famous of whom was known as the Gaon, Rabbi Eliahu.

Despite the appearance of relative security, the position of the Jews was not as stable as it might appear. When one examines the pattern of Jewish development on a local scale, a different picture emerges. With increasing decentralization of power in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, royal acts protecting and promoting the rights of Jews were not generally enforceable. Furthermore, municipal agencies and

local townspeople who resented and feared the economic competition harrassed their Jews. For example, in 1633, the three-thousand Jews of Vilnius (about one forth of the entire population) received written rights from King Wladyslaw IV to extend their economic functions i.e., maintain shops and work in crafts, produce and sell beverages, etc. The townspeople responded by attacking Jews and defacing the synagogue and the cemetery. Although a royal investigation led to compensation for Jewish losses, the animosity of the local populace continued long after the ghetto was abolished by royal decree in 1783.

In Kaunas, located in the valley between the Nieman and Vilia rivers, the situation was much the same. The first Jewish settlers migrated during the reign of Grand Duke Witovt in the fifteenth century. They were traders from Poland and the Ukraine. Local authorities expelled these Jews at irregular intervals. Over the next centuries, the pattern was the same -- Jewish settlements would attempt to establish roots but were under chronic attack by local Christians and periodically exiled. For example in 1753, the Kaunas municipality expelled Jews and confiscated their property. When Jews re-appeared in the marketplace in Kaunas in 1761, pogroms broke out. Homes were burned and the last remaining Jews were expelled to Slobodka. As a result of legal proceedings against the mayor, a judgment was issued in 1782 against the municipality who were ordered by the crown to pay damages and legal expenses



to the Jewish victims of the pogroms. However, few actually received compensation.

The decentralization of the power of the state not only left the Jews reliant on the whims of the great lords it also left them vulnerable to the wrath of the orthodox peasantry and the Cossack nationalists who saw Jews (who served the estates of the lords as money lenders, bailiffs, and tax collectors) in the same light as their Polish oppressors. In 1648, under the leadership of Hetman Chmielnicki, the Cossacks revolted and proceeded to slay at least 20% of the Jewish population of the Ukraine and Galicia. Approximately 250,000 Jews were brutally killed. Fortunately for the Jews of Lithuania, the Chmielnicki uprising did not reach that area.<sup>11</sup>

Scapegoating and intolerance continued into the second half of the seventeenth century along with the severe economic recession and declining power of the Commonwealth. Members of the Catholic Church began trumping up old charges against Jews -- such as "ritual murder."<sup>12</sup> Charges were immediately followed by parishioners fiercely attacking Jews in the vicinity.

When the Swedes invaded White Russia and Lithuania in 1654, the Poles accused Jews of plotting with the enemy and massacred them in seven hundred communities including Vilnius. Polish peasants launched another major assault on Jews in the first half of the eighteenth century. The Lithuanian peasant who was generally worse off than his Polish counterparts was not moved to violence.

Growing insecurity and impoverishment within the Jewish community promoted withdrawal and led to the spread of Jewish mysticism and belief in false messiahs. By the middle of the eighteenth century a new mystical anti-establishment movement, Chasidism, began to attract a growing number of Jews away from the Talmudic rationalism of traditional rabbinic Judaism. Even as rabbinic authorities denounced the new sect as heretical, the revival grew into a religious mass movement that is currently prominent in Jewish communities throughout the world. In a relatively short time, almost half the Jews in eastern Europe, including Poland embraced the new movement. Only in Lithuania, under the leadership of Rabbi Eliahu of Vilnius did rabbinic rationalism not give way to Chasidism. The Chasidic movement inadvertently diversified the Jewish community and (because of the distinctive outer appearance of its adherents,) strengthened the notion of Jews as internal aliens to the Christian world.

With the three partitions of the Commonwealth beginning in 1772 and ending with the dissolution of the Commonwealth in 1795, a number of political reforms (along Enlightenment lines) aimed at converting members of the Jewish community into productive and useful citizens. Although thwarted by the conservatism of the Congress of Vienna, Enlightenment ideas continued into the nineteenth century and served as the impetus for liberal change. For example, Tsar Alexander I's Statute of 1804 gave Jews the right to own and cultivate

the soil, attend universities, and practice a variety of new professions. This enabled a generation of Jews to enter into the ranks of the Russian intelligentsia. Many of these secularized Jews and their offspring would play significant roles in the development of socialism, communism, and Zionism.

In the mid-eighteenth century, Moses Mendelssohn, a German Jewish philosopher, organized a movement within the Jewish community based on the egalitarian principles of the Enlightenment. Mendelssohn and his disciples such as David Friedländer and Hartwig Wisely thought that the general spread of liberal ideas, laws, and institutions would enable Jews to emerge as equals to Christians. Jews could then make a valuable contribution to secular society and enjoy the benefits of European life. This movement called the Haskalah, aimed at breaking down not only the physical walls of the ghetto but also the economic, social, and philosophical barriers which caused Jewish life to stagnate. In parts of western and central Europe, the Haskalah was enthusiastically supported by the educated classes of Jewry. Even as Mendelssohn sought to modernize and secularize Judaism, his movement led to acculturation and assimilation.<sup>13</sup> For many enlightened Jews, the desire for social acceptance and career opportunities was so strong that they ultimately converted to Christianity. This trend towards secularism, particularly among the Jewish communities of the German states increasingly transformed

not only the Jewish community but to some degree changed the relationship between Jews and Christians.

Under the leadership of Issac Ben Levinsohn, the Haskalah spread eastward to Tsarist Russia in the first decades of the nineteenth century. The timing was ripe, given the new freedoms that the Statute of 1804 granted. However, it must be noted that the great majority of Jews in this part of the world were poor, uneducated, and unlike the elite, not generally aroused by Enlightenment tracts. Consequently, the masses remained physically and mentally isolated, a condition that did not vary over the next hundred years. As in the Christian community, only a small segment of the Jewish population embraced Haskalah. Although the gap between educated Jew and Christian may have lessened, the vast majority of both Jews and Christians remained far apart (both) inured in ancient prejudice.

In Lithuania where Judaism was characterized by rationalism rather than mysticism, Haskalah made significant inroads. This new secular "heresy" appealed to students of the Talmudic colleges who were eager to transfer their intellectual curiosity to secular pursuits. They secretly studied Polish, Russian, and German languages -- but rarely Lithuanian -- as a means of breaking down barriers. A few of these enlightened Jews followed the German example and became Christians. Most, however, retained their Jewish faith even as they entered into the broader field of general culture with particular emphasis on Russian, rather than Lithuanian culture.

As in Lithuania, those who embraced the Haskalah in Poland did not generally lean towards the culture of the Poles. Instead, in the first half of the nineteenth century the educated Jewish elite became preoccupied with German culture. After the 1830 uprising and the Russification of the entire Polish education system, the Maskilim (Enlightened Men) increasingly embraced Russian culture. Despite some Polish assimilationist tendencies on the part of a small number of highly educated Jews in the second half of the nineteenth century, particularly in Warsaw and Galicia, neither the masses nor the elite moved closer to Polish culture. This phenomenon tended to perpetuate the cultural gap between Jews and their Christian neighbors.

In Russia, Alexander I reversed his stance towards Jews. In the second decade of the nineteenth century, he rolled back previous educational, economic, and civil reforms. When Nicholas I ascended the throne in 1825, he extended the policy of Jewish repression even further. Between 1827 and 1830, he defined a Pale of Settlement (areas where Jews could live) and uprooted thousands of Jews from the District of Grodno, from along the coast of the Baltic and Black Seas, and from the area surrounding Kiev. In 1827, Nicholas successfully converted large numbers of Jews to Christianity by instituting a compulsory armed service, or Canton System, whereby Jewish males from the ages of twelve to eighteen were drafted for twenty-five years. Contrary to the provisions of religious freedom in the conscription law, strong efforts were made

to convert recruits to Russian Orthodoxy. Between 1827 and 1854, of the approximate 70,000 Jews conscripted about one half converted to Christianity.

Jewish participation in nationalist attempts to regain independence from Tsarist Russia throughout the nineteenth century present an interesting and puzzling picture. Whereas a few Jews formed their own regiments and fought on the side of the Poles and Lithuanians (as they attempted to regain independence) in the uprisings of 1794, 1830-31, 1848, and 1860-63, the vast majority remained aloof. A small number of Jews rebuffed the patriots' cause and instead chose to side with the Russian authorities. In Lithuania, relationships between the Jewish community and the Russian administration improved. In 1839 a Jew, Zvi Nėviazher, was elected to the city council. Thus, in times of nationalist uprisings Jews naturally appeared to both sides as being in league with the enemy.

Not only were the attitudes and actions of Jews on the national question ambivalent, even among those who joined the cause no consistent pattern emerges. For example, in 1794, the Jewish Legion was composed of poor and uneducated youth, mostly skilled laborers. Later, a unit known as the "Beardlings" distinguished themselves in the Revolt of 1830-31. This unit was composed of extremely religious Jews. In the Insurrections of 1860-63, Orthodox and Reformed Jewish clergy joined with the Catholic clergy and the educated secular elite

in denouncing Tsarist abuses and in urging their co-religionists to participate in the national awakening. During this time, solidarity between Poles and Jews grew stronger in face of a common enemy, the Tsarist authorities.

Despite significant differences among the various European Jewish communities and wide deviations among the Jews therein, in the minds of the Christian rural masses, a singular impression of all Jews continued to perpetuate itself through the nineteenth century. As time progressed the image took on new aspects but the fundamental qualities remained unchanged. Jews were looked upon as not simply countrymen who happened to be of another religion, they were aliens whose culture and livelihood conflicted with their own. This image was passed on orally, through folk legends and superstitious tales. However, it is also found in storybooks and Church writings. John of Sweislocz the Pedlar is an example of a popular, widely distributed storybook that stigmatized Jews. Written by a wealthy Pole named Jan Chodzko in 1821, this book was translated into Lithuanian in 1823, and republished several times until 1860. Chapter five depicts a scene from a Jewish-owned inn in which Christians are lying dead-drunk on the floor, apparently victimized by their hosts. Since the book also taught morals, the text includes a lengthy discussion on Jews as the carriers of all forms of evil who suck the blood of the people and bring about the peasant's ruin. The discussion ends with

an address designed to leave the young readers with disdain and disgust,

Oh when then, he exclaimed, will the wise prescriptions of our Gracious Monarch, requiring the deportation of the Jews to the southern provinces of the Empire, be fulfilled? Our regions rid of this plague would flourish anew; industry, which in their treacherous hands is degenerating, would if put into hands of our own townspeople and peasants draw them out of their ignorance and wretchedness...<sup>14</sup>

The elite of society, the clergy, and the nobility also held deep-rooted antisemitic religious sentiments. However, they found Jews a convenient scapegoat for the peasant's misery. Father Wawrzyniec Marczynski addressed this issue in his economic and statistical study written in 1822, entitled A Statistical Description of the Podolia Gubernia. He stated that the whole framework of Jewish life, their laws, and their religious structure aimed at one goal only...avoiding work and living off Christians by means of chicanery and corruption. According to Marczynski's analysis, Jews were particularly adroit at intoxicating good people with alcohol.<sup>15</sup>

Father Marczynski made some proposals to alleviate the Jewish menace. One measure put forth by the marshal of the nobility in the district of Podolia (Poland), Tadeusz Sarnecki, set up a carefully run civil status system designed to control the growth of the Jewish "race." For example, marriages would have to be forbidden unless the couple had five-hundred rubles or accepted deportation. Furthermore, he proposed the censorship of books to "eliminate whatever was contrary to the Governments's



intention and the general good of Christendom." The censorship was actually put into effect in 1825.

Despite efforts of a minority of Jews towards assimilation as a result of the enlightenment and the awakening of nationalism in Nineteenth century Tsarist Russia, the differences between Jews and Christians grew rather than diminished. Because of a decrease in the Jew's mortality rate and an increase in birth rate, the Jewish population continued to increase explosively despite intense governmental persecutions, the pogroms of the early 1880's, and large numbers seeking emigration. Between 1890 and 1910, one million Jews successfully fled Russia for the United States. Still, by 1897, 5.2 million Jews lived in the Russian Empire -- approximately 4% of the total population. In Kaunas, the Jewish community increased from 16,540 in 1864 to 25,448 in 1897, constituting about 36% of the general population. The same census indicated that Vilnius had about 63,996 Jews out of a total population of 148,840, or 41% of the total population.<sup>16</sup>

The great masses of Jews who remained in the Russian Empire accepted their fate stoically and did little to oppose the wave of persecutions. Through the decades, they had retained little contact with the secular world and rigidly adhered to traditional cultural and religious beliefs. However, in the last decades of the nineteenth century a small minority of Russianized Jewish intellectuals began working for change within the territorial framework of Tsarist Russia. In 1897,

the founding council of the Jewish-Democratic Party, the Bund, met in Vilnius. Most came from populist or social democratic circles. These assimilated Jews who organized the infrastructure for a Jewish mass movement were not initially concerned with forming a uniquely Jewish movement.

One of the founding fathers of the Bund, Timofei Kopelson stated that,

We were for assimilation; we did not even dream of a special Jewish mass movement...Our task was developing<sup>17</sup> cadres for the Russian revolutionary movement.

However, these leaders increasingly became drawn to specifically Jewish proletarian concerns and organized the "General League (Bund) of Jewish Workingmen in Russia and Poland." ("Lithuania" was added to the name in 1901.). In Vilnius, this organization was instrumental in bringing together several Marxist organizations (including one led by Lenin) to form the Russian Social Democratic Party. The Bund remained active in that organization until 1903 when it came under severe criticism for its nationalist position and was expelled. Along with other socialist groups, the Bund actively participated in the Revolution of 1905.

The Jewish entry into Marxism drew a tiny minority of Jews and non-Jews closer towards a commonality of purpose, but on a larger scale it provided another excuse for anti-Jewish acts by tsarist authorities and for attacks by the masses. Following the pogrom of 1903 in Kishinev, it was widely believed that Jews "had got what they deserved" for being revolutionaries

against the natural order of things. Likewise, on October 18, 1905, one day following the pronouncement of October Manifesto of Nicholas II, pogroms broke out in over three-hundred cities throughout the empire. The twelve Jewish deputies to the first Duma pushed through legislation to stop the violence and punish perpetrators but in the period of reaction, the first Duma was quickly dismissed as was the second. The third Duma was elected by a much narrower franchise and was dominated by antisemitic reactionary elements. Right up to the eve of the 1917 revolution, the tsarist government sanctioned antisemitic agitation which included ritual murder accusations.

The persecution of Jews in the last decades of Tsarist Russia also spawned another response, Zionism. This movement advocated both spiritual and physical separation between the Jew and his non-Jewish neighbor. Antisemitism according to the Zionists, was a disease endemic to Europe and immune to either education or reason. Only Jewish statehood would provide the cure. Consequently, Jews had no choice but to leave Europe to build a Jewish state. In the face of growing attacks on Jews throughout the early 1900's, Zionism's popularity continued to grow and further diversify the Jewish community.

Even as one-half million Jews were enlisted in the Russian Army, the tsarist government concluded that Jews were pro-German and not dependable. Consequently, on May 5, 1915, an edict was issued for the deportation of Jews to the Russian interior. In Kaunas, as in almost all Lithuanian cities and towns, the

edict provided an opportunity to vandalize and steal Jewish property.

In early August, the German army captured Kaunas and set up its governing apparatus. Unlike other occupied cities within Lithuania, here, the relationship between Jews and Germans was almost cordial. About nine thousand returned from the Russian interior at this time. Jews participated on the German-run government and Jewish officers of the German army worked actively with the Jewish community.

The World War worked temporary changes in the situation of Lithuanian Jews. The next great event on the world stage, the Bolshevik Revolution, had a far more permanent and destructive effect. The exact nature and extent of Jewish participation in the Russian revolutions of 1917 and the subsequent spread of communism remain much-debated issues and go beyond the specific focus of this study. But in Lithuania, as in the world at large, the real involvement of Jews in Bolshevism is not the issue. Rather, it is the perception of that role--the myth of Judeo-Bolshevism--that assumed paramount importance in the destruction of Lithuanian Jewry.

On the eve of the Revolution, contrary to popular belief, the number of Jews in the Bolshevik Party was small -- only about 4% of the total membership. After 1917, most Jews had little reason to support the Bolshevik regime because of its atheist, anti-nationalist, and anti-bourgeois stance. According

to a 1922 census of the Bolshevik Party, only 958 Jewish members joined the party before 1917 and 1,175 joined in 1917. The Mensheviks and the Bund, the latter with a membership of nearly 34,000 in 1917, had a far greater Jewish membership. However, Jews including Leo Kamenev and Zinoviev occupied many of the highest positions in the Bolshevik Central Executive Committee. To the anti-Soviet opposition and to the various nationalists within the former Tsarist Empire, however, the Soviet government was a Jewish government; indeed, this view tended to have universal acceptance.<sup>18</sup>

Antisemitism became an aggressive weapon in the hands of the counter-revolutionary nationalist White Armies as well as the Ukrainian national army commanded by Sēmen Petliura. Despite the fact that prior to liberation from Russian rule, both the Jewish and the Lithuanian Duma deputies constituted a subjugated minority and consistently worked together politically on the issue of autonomy, Jews were seen as anti-nationalist by the masses and consequently dealt with as the enemy.

Apparently the issue went well beyond politics because as White Army troops vented their frustrations by killing tens of thousands of Jewish civilians in the Ukraine, they were also killing thousands of anti-Bolshevik Jews in Siberia. Many Russian Orthodox clergymen unofficially lent support to the White struggle as a holy war against godless Jews who had usurped power in Holy Mother Russia. Dean Vostorgov sent

a message to the clergy for obligatory reading to parishioners, "bless yourselves, beat the Jews, overthrow the People's Commissars."<sup>19</sup>

Between 1918 and 1921 more than 2,000 pogroms took place in which 30,000 Jews were killed directly and another 120,000 died of related injuries or illnesses.<sup>20</sup> The Red Army was the only army that did not systematically terrorize Jews. As a result, many Jews joined, some out of deep commitment to the cause but probably many more to defend their lives or avenge the deaths of their people.

Antisemitism also took on violent overtones during the 1918-1920 Lithuanian War of Independence. Even as thousands of Lithuanian Jews were actively fighting in the newly formed Lithuanian Army, divisions of this same army staged a pogrom in Panevezys and other cities. Prominent Jews urgently appealed to the government to intervene. Following threats of heavy penalties, those officers and men responsible for the antisemitic outbursts reluctantly ceased their attacks. However, the image that Jews were pro-Bolshevik and an unreliable segment of the population remained a fixed, if at times subliminal, notion among the nationalist masses. Even the narrow stratum of Lithuanian intelligentsia who had a history of concerted political actions with Jews did not generally speak out publicly on their behalf. Their chronic silence on this issue, whether motivated by opportunism or fear, later facilitated the Final Solution of the Jewish Question in Lithuania.

During the first years of the Lithuanian Republic, the Lithuanian nationalists concentrated on sustaining and consolidating their newly won independence. On the question of Jewish status, the founders of the Lithuanian republic operated from a number of preconceptions, false hopes, and questionable motives. Some believed that granting equal rights to ethnic minorities would enhance the image of the newly organized government in the eyes of the western democracies who subscribed to the ideal of national self-determination. Others hoped that the Jews as the largest minority would gratefully serve the economic interests of the fledgling state. Also, the Lithuanian government hoped that an alliance with Jews would help create a pro-Lithuanian majority in Vilnius and facilitate world support for its return from Poland. Vastly overestimating "Jewish power" they anticipated that local Jews would mobilize Jewish world opinion in favor of the Lithuanian position.

For their part, Jewish leaders optimistically believed that they could establish a system of self-governing institutions equal in status to the Council of the Four Lands of the former Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth. However, the modern notion of national autonomy had evolved in the second half of the nineteenth century. The movement envisioned a spiritual-cultural nation in which Jews would exist within the secular communities of the diaspora. When the autonomous Lithuanian state was established, almost all the the Jewish

political organizations felt the need for a constitutional guarantee of minority autonomy. However, a manifest Jewish disunity played a destructive role at this juncture. The extreme leftists and the ultra-orthodox elements rejected autonomy. The communist groups naturally refused to join with "bourgeois" elements and the orthodox would not accept the authority of any Jewish secular body.

On August 5, 1919, the Lithuanian delegation to the Paris Peace Conference led by Augustinas Voldemaras presented to the Jewish delegates a declaration on Jewish national autonomy. The document, which had been drawn up in conjunction with representatives of the Jewish community, included proportional representation in parliament, administration and the judiciary; full rights as citizens for Jews; and autonomy in all internal matters such as religion, social services, education and cultural affairs. Two agencies of Jewish autonomy were established: the kehillot (public bodies with the right to impose taxes and issue ordinances regarding religion, education, and welfare) and a Vaad Haaretz (National Council). Guarantees for minorities were officially incorporated into the Lithuanian constitution on August 6, 1919.

The Jews of Lithuania experienced far greater autonomy than Jews in any other eastern European state between the wars. In Poland, Romania, and the Ukraine, external political conditions precluded the possibility of Jewish autonomy. In Hungary and Turkey, the Jews renounced their claim to national



autonomy because of governmental pressures. In Czechoslovakia, the diverse cultural, political, and ethnic differences among Jews made impossible any type of cohesive structure, much less autonomy. In Latvia, autonomy was extremely restricted and in Estonia where national autonomy was given the broadest range, there were too few Jews to produce significant data on this issue.

The Lithuanian Jewish leadership believed that the democratic and plural basis of the new national state would lead to a flourishing of new professional opportunities previously closed to Jews in Tsarist Russia. Their strong acceptance of the ideal of national autonomy was a rejection of assimilation as a solution to the Jewish presence in the Diaspora. Lithuanian language, culture, and traditions continued to remain outside the scope of Jewish thought.

This short period of Jewish autonomy from 1919 to 1922 was known as the "Golden Age of Lithuanian Jewry." Jews recognized and appreciated their condition of well-being and demonstrated patriotism and loyalty to the state on several levels: through financing industrial development and fostering economic growth and participation in self government. Jews were particularly active in the struggle to regain Vilnius. Over 3,000 Jews joined the Jewish Veterans of the Lithuanian War of Independence to commemorate their contribution to Lithuanian independence and to support the development of the Lithuanian state. The enthusiasm of the Jewish leadership

concerning their current status was reflected at the Second National Communal Assembly of the convention of the kehillot which met in Kaunas in February of 1922. The chairman, Dr. S. Rachmilevitch greeted the convention by expressing hopes for a reunion with the Jews of Vilnius, the upcoming improvement of the national autonomy law by the Lithuanian Constitutional Assembly, and of the responsibilities towards world Jewry which was currently "observing the great Lithuanian experiment with attention and pride." Minister for Jewish Affairs Soloveitchik proudly announced that "Lithuania is the creative source of the future forms of Jewish living."<sup>21</sup>

A flourishing Jewish press reflected the views of the various economic and social classes. In 1930, thirteen Yiddish and fourteen Hebrew periodicals were published. The Association of Jewish Participants in the Fight for Lithuanian Independence published a monthly journal in Lithuanian, which reached out to a non-Jewish audience.

From this brief sketch, one would not be able to predict the calamity that befell Jews just one generation after statehood. With the exception of Poland, the Jews of neighboring countries, far less autonomous and officially recognized, nevertheless generally fared better than the Jews of Lithuania in Nazioccupied Europe. Clearly, the constitutional arrangements and policies of the Lithuanian leadership during the early years of independence do not tell the whole story. During the subsequent years of the Republic much of the democratic

principles and legislation were rescinded. Also, since it is generally conceded that the attitudes of indigenous populations played a significant role in the outcome of the Final Solution, it is, therefore, also necessary to examine the relationships of Jews and Lithuanians below the governmental level.

According to the historian Sarah Neshamit, herself a Lithuanian Jew,

Among the founders of Lithuanian nationalism and the creators of Lithuanian culture in the middle of the nineteenth century, among the left and the clerical right, were several notorious anti-Semites, whose works were full of hatred and scorn for the Jew.<sup>22</sup>

In popular stories and plays presented in the small Lithuanian villages in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, the Jew was portrayed as one of the three traditional enemies of the peasant: the noble, satan, and the Jew (ponas, zydas, ir velias). Upon the 1941 Nazi invasion, the still-popular slogan evolved into "Jews, Russian peasants, and Polish imperialists are mushrooms on the Lithuanian people and must be destroyed as quickly as possible."<sup>23</sup>

One explanation for the rapid deterioration in relations between Lithuanian and Jews must be seen in economic terms. Previously, Jews served the Lithuanian pre-industrial economy as the middle class: as merchants and traders, artisans, entrepreneurs and skilled craftsmen. Prior to the first decades of the twentieth century Jews had little competition from Lithuanians. In this respect they were better off than middle

class Polish Jews who competed with both Poles and Germans. It was only when Lithuanians were able to educate qualified persons among the overwhelmingly peasant population, in the 1920's and 1930's, and increase their percentages in the above fields, that the rising Lithuanian middle class led by the Catholic clergy embarked on a program to radically diminish the Jewish presence in the economy. This development of an urban Lithuanian middle class occurred rapidly in the interwar era.

By 1924, the economic climate had changed substantially since the beginning of statehood. The once vitally needed commercial and professional functions that in the past had been performed by large numbers of Jews were increasingly being filled by Lithuanians. In 1919, the competition from the still-germinating Lithuanian middle class was relatively small. Almost seventy per cent of all middle class Jews were merchants and craftsmen and large numbers of the remaining percentage were doctors and lawyers. However, the Jewish presence in these fields tended to create jealousy and envy in the masses and the emerging Lithuanian elite.

Almost overnight, large numbers of educated Lithuanians flooded the white collar job market. At first they were absorbed in civil service careers. When that avenue became saturated, by 1924, the rising middle class began competing for key positions in the economy. Leading Lithuanian businessmen and artisans organized a powerful organization called the Verslininkai in

1930. The express purpose of the organization was to undermine and eventually eliminate Jews from key economic positions. By the mid and late 1930's, as sufficient numbers of Lithuanians were trained in a number of economic functions, the program became more aggressive. In January 1935, a detailed report delivered at a large Verslininki meeting stated that Jews constituted two thirds of all proprietors in commerce and 52% of those in manufacturing and handicraft.<sup>24</sup>

The main points of the Lithuanization program were summarized in the January 15, 1939 edition of Verlas, the official paper of the middle class organization. An article stated that Lithuania had too many Jewish manufacturers, merchants, and small storekeepers and that the situation could no longer be tolerated. Many of the jobs held by Jews must be transferred to Lithuanians. The editorial added that Jews should be thinking of emigration or at least transferring their efforts to manual labor.<sup>25</sup> The establishment and use of state-owned or state-supported cooperative credit and consumer cooperatives became a key tool in strangling Jewish businesses and at the same time bolstering Lithuanian ones. Jews were completely excluded from these cooperatives.

Another article in the same issue of Verlas was even more menacing and proposed the following: the expulsion of Jews who entered Lithuania after 1918, the elimination of Jews from the restaurant, hotel and the liquor industries; limitations on the number of Jewish university students and

the enforcement of Sunday as a day of rest.<sup>26</sup> Throughout 1939, articles berating Jews increasingly became the norm in this weekly journal.

At the Verslininski Conference of 1939, the Premier of Lithuania, Jonas Cernius, addressed the delegates stating that "the Lithuanian government will support the efforts of the Lithuanian Merchants' Union to eliminate the Jews from trade."<sup>27</sup> The Verlas edition of January 23, 1939 carried an advertisement offering to pay a reward to any person who could prove that the advertiser had ever purchased anything from a Jew.

Since the state was the largest investor and consumer in the country, it wielded enormous force on the economy both directly through ownership of corporations and indirectly through fiscal policy. Import and export taxes, credit and consumer cooperatives, subsidies, and exemptions were used effectively to favor ethnic -- Lithuanian owned institutions. For example, articles of state monopoly businesses such as matches and alcohol crucial to the timber industry were distributed first to Lithuanians merchants and then to Jews. In another field, the government instituted a special license for the export of flax which effectively squeezed out the formerly preponderant number of Jewish traders. On December 17, 1938, the Kovno Folksblat (Yiddish language) reported on the ongoing economic nose dive of the Jews and attempts

by the Verslininkaj to "Lithuanize" the urban centers of the country:

The evening was devoted to the favorite theme of the Verslininkaj -- how to "Lithuanize" the urban centers of the country. A certain Albert Starulis who was the speaker of the evening pointed out, first, that 75-80% of Lithuanian export and 50% of the import trade was already controlled by the Lithuanian co-operatives.

As to factories and other enterprises, the speaker noted that there were 13,800 Jewish enterprises and factories in 1923 as against 2,160 Lithuanian. By 1937 there were over 10,000 Lithuanian enterprises and the Jewish sector had fallen to 12,000. The Lithuanian sector had thus increased fivefold.<sup>28</sup>

The economic group most adversely affected by the "Lithuanization policy" were Jewish artisans. Beginning in 1936, a Lithuanian language exam and an educational and trade permit were required to work in a handicraft. Since according to the 1937 census, almost 94% of Jewish artisans had no knowledge of Lithuanian and no formal vocational training (but had learned their skills from informal apprenticeship), they were systematically displaced. In June 1939, the Lithuanian Chamber of Commerce reported that out of a total of 12,461 handicrafts for the previous year, 6,675 were Jewish workshops. Despite the statistics favoring Jewish ownership, this proportion constituted a greater than 50% decline from the 15,000 Jewish workshops in 1898.<sup>29</sup>

A few statistics illustrate how efficiently government-backed cooperatives challenged the previously Jewish controlled market in a thirteen year period. In the retail trade, from 1923 to 1936 the number of Jewish businesses

decreased 9% absolutely and 29% relatively, whereas Lithuanian ventures increased 30% absolutely and 300% relatively. In 1923 (excluding the Memel area) out of a total of 16,595 independent retail firms 15,959 belonged to Jews and 2,160 to ethnic Lithuanians. By 1936 the total number of firms rose to 23,400, not including the 394 stores belonging to 186 consumers' and farmers' cooperatives from which Jews were barred. Of the 23,400 firms, 12,000 belonged to Jews and 9,900 to ethnic Lithuanians.

The Lithuanian export trade consisted almost entirely of agricultural products. Through the centuries the Jewish trader and the non-Jewish producers were pitted on opposite sides of the economic structure. More often than not, those who engaged in physical labor felt exploited by those who they perceived, reaped their earnings without labor. Thus, historically Jews performed a necessary but resented economic role.

Through the newly emerging system of cooperatives this traditional pattern began to shift in the the 1930's. By rigidly controlling export quotas and centralizing trading companies, the government systematically began eliminating Jews from the field. By 1938, one Lithuanian cooperative Maistas almost exclusively controlled the export of meat and cattle. Two other cooperatives worked closely with Maistas. Pienocentras controlled 100% of dairy export and Lietukis had a large hand in the export of grain and flax.<sup>30</sup> Together,



these three cooperatives were, in effect, organs of the state under the auspices of the minister of finance. They had their own bank which received special state subsidies in the form of credits and other benefits. Another special bank was instituted to meet the needs of the peasantry. State-run banks extended credit on the basis of ethnicity rather than objective business considerations. For example in the field of commerce, which was largely Jewish controlled, Jews received only about 5% of the governmental allocation.

Jews countered these measures at least in part, by establishing their own cooperative credit banks. As early as October 1929, no less than seventy-five banks were operating with a capital of 30 million marks, an amount many times greater than the sum which the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee had allocated for reconstruction work in Lithuania. Despite obstacles imposed by the government in the area of credit and taxation, the majority of the Jewish cooperative banks remained fiscally sound for the duration of the Republic.<sup>31</sup>

The Lithuanian state as the single largest employer exercised great influence on the job market. Of the 31,091 employees of the state, according to an article in the Folksblat, November 11, 1936, only 1.35% were Jews. This statistic was based on a 1934 survey which included the 273 Jewish school teachers employed in Jewish schools but did not include employees of government-controlled enterprises in which there were no Jews. The civil service was the sphere of middle-class

Lithuanians who saw themselves as contenders with the long-standing Jewish middle class, they successfully blocked Jewish entry in this field. For example, the Jews of Kaunas represented about one fourth of the city's population (25,000). Out of the total eight-hundred municipal employees, only nine were Jews. A similar situation existed in all other cities and towns throughout Lithuania.

Jews of the liberal professions also suffered a significant decline during the late 1920's and 1930's. By 1939, the number of Jewish physicians and lawyers had dropped to 20 or 25%. This proportion was about half of what it had been in the late twenties and only a fraction of what it had been in 1914. As a result of statistics personally collected by Jacob Lestchinsky in 1934, he concluded that in the three major cities of Shavli, Kaunas, and Panavezys, a large majority of the physicians and attorneys were now Lithuanians. On September 10, 1933, the Folksblat reported on the status of Jewish lawyers:

The new decree concerning attorneys is one of the measures to Lithuanize the free professions. Only 88 or 41.5% of the 212 lawyers in the country are Jews. The same proportion will probably be maintained in setting up the panel of the private defense counsels. It goes without saying that a great many young people who invested so much toil to enter the bar will now be shut out. 32

Three years later the same paper reported that Jews were still fairly well represented in the liberal professions with 38% of the legal profession as Jews. The article continued

by stating that "it must be remembered that for widely known reasons no additional Jews are being admitted to the bar..."<sup>33</sup>

Although Jews enjoyed their own political infrastructure within the Republic in 1919-1921 and exerted some power on the municipal level, their ability to influence Lithuanian politics on the national level was minimal. Furthermore, no real foundation existed to support a traditionally pluralist liberalism or democratic society. The social system consisted of a peasant base and a rigidly parochial and highly-xenophobic elite. Even the Lithuanian intelligentsia had little commitment to democratic ideals or recognition of the need for pluralism in a multi-ethnic state, let alone tolerance for Jews. Thus, although the Lithuanian state was founded on the notion of religious and cultural autonomy, from 1922 onward, the power of the Jewish community was increasingly eroded. As the immediate economic and political needs changed, so did views on equality and toleration. The new constitution adopted on August 6, 1922, contained only two paragraphs regarding minority rights with no accompanying legal guarantees for the institutions of national autonomy.

By late 1923-24 the coalition government under S. Galvanauskas resigned. In December, a reactionary government came to power and accelerated the pace of antisemitic legislation. On December 21, 1923, the Lithuanian parliament deleted state provisions for employees in the Office of the Ministry of Jewish Affairs. Through gerrymandering, the number

of Jewish representatives on both the national and municipal levels were reduced substantially. In 1924, Jews lost four of the seven seats on the Seimas (parliament) that they had held in 1919. On July 15, 1924 the Government issued a decree forbidding the display of Yiddish storefronts and similar signs in streets. On September 15, the police prohibited a meeting of the Jewish National Council on the excuse that it was not registered as a private business. The Council met two days later in spite of ban. The police raided their chamber and permanently closed their offices. In 1926, Jewish members still serving on municipal councils were all removed. Jews were eliminated from all civil service jobs. The last Jewish judge was removed in 1933.

Jews could do little to counter the growing opposition either individually or collectively. For example, when the Minister of Jewish Affairs, Rosenbaum, resigned on February 2, 1924 in opposition to the budget cut, his own position was struck from the cabinet budget. When a new cabinet formed on June 18, 1924, a portfolio for Jewish Affairs no longer existed. Restrictions and prohibitions continued to undermine Jewish autonomy until the coup d'etat of Antanas Smetona and the Nationalists on December 17, 1926. This marked the official end of Jewish political and cultural autonomy and the beginning of a new intense economic program to displace Jews.

The Jewish leadership astutely assessed their condition. In 1926, the last Report of the Jewish Parliamentary Group

raised the question of how it happened that Lithuanian Jewry, which in several ways attained the maximum degree of national autonomy, could have descended so quickly to the point of second-class citizenship. The report stated:

In the early years of statehood, Lithuanian national antipathy was directed against the Russians and the Poles. But after definite boundaries had been established with the U.S.S.R. and Poland, hatred toward the Poles and the Russians was never expressed in concrete manifestations of attacks on individuals. Even during the height of anti-Russian and anti-Polish feeling in 1918-1920, only Jews were victims of pogroms, but never Poles or Russians. Finally, Lithuanian peasant youths became increasingly urbanized, thus engendering competition against the Jewish merchants and artisans. The antisemitism that came with the urbanization of the peasants emerged much later when there were no longer any government positions open to the university graduates from the villages. 34

At the onset of statehood the elite recognized Jews as a distinctly different sub-group whose patriotism and loyalty could be usefully channeled to serve the new state, in return for the recognition of their autonomous cultural needs. This may have been the case in 1919, but quite rapidly in the years that followed, the Lithuanian government became more conservative and less tolerant of minority nationals. Jews were perceived by both the Lithuanian masses and their nationalist leadership as monopolizing the best jobs and controlling the nation's wealth. Consequently, the exclusionary economic campaign of the 1920's laid the groundwork for further abuses in the 1930's.

Concurrently, another impact of the Lithuanization Program was directed at Jewish enrollment in the universities and Jews in the liberal professions. The gradual exclusion of

Jews from Lithuanian universities was accomplished by discriminating against Jewish applicants for admission. Since Lithuanian institutions were still mindful of world opinion, they could not overtly institute a quota system. More covert restrictions were needed. For example, an entrance exam was given in the Lithuanian language to all graduates of the legally accredited minority schools. A physical exam was required of all medical school applicants. The tacit goal of these measures is revealed in their resulting effects on student enrollment; in medicine the proportion of Jewish students dropped from 45% in 1927 to 29.3% in 1934. On October 1, 1934, the Folksblat stated:

The results achieved by the committee examining the physical condition of the medical school candidates, and conducting the examination in the Lithuanian language of instruction, have given the Jewish community cause to regard these measures a camouflage for a numerus clausus. In the face of these impediments only some twenty Jewish students were able to pass the examination in Lithuanian...The preparatory courses of the medical school are judenrein this year. Those who managed to pass the examination in Lithuanian were eliminated by the committee on the basis of physical health.<sup>35</sup>

By 1935, neither the Smetona government nor any private Lithuanian business would hire Jews. The increasingly large numbers of Jews who emigrated during the 1930's was one indicator that the Lithuanization program was working. The numbers in all likelihood would have been larger if the existing barriers to immigration throughout the world had not been so restrictive.<sup>36</sup> For the Jews that remained, their attempts at

defensive measures were pitted against the full weight of the state.

Efforts on the part of Jewish agencies to ameliorate the economic squeeze by encouraging Jews to farming and factory work met with little success. Because of a lack of training facilities and more important, a lack of motivation, few Jews engaged in manual labor occupations -- an enduring source of separation between the Lithuanian masses and the Jews. Hence, the former generally regarded Jews as lazy and unworthy of monetary rewards. Jews were envied and resented for what they did vocationally and disdained and despised for what they didn't do.

Ominously in the late 1930's, articles and editorials in the Lithuanian press supported Nazi race laws. Not unlike Julius Streicher's antisemitic Der Stürmer, Lithuanian journals printed polemics ranging from restricting the rights of Jews to more radical solutions to the Jewish problem. The article of January 20, 1939, published by Verlas under the title of "Let Us Not Adjourn Unless the Jewish Problem Is Solved!" cynically suggested that Lithuania take advantage of antisemitism in neighboring countries:

We shall not astonish the world very much having done the necessary operations towards the Jews as we shall not be the first to do so. It would not be wise to linger with solving the Jewish problem until the time the Jews will be done with everywhere and there will be no noise anywhere, because under the condition of silence the Jews' scream will be stronger and more important than now when it is being done everywhere.<sup>37</sup>

Despite the menacing tone of the above article, until the June invasion of Nazi troops, Lithuanian antisemitism was neither officially nor unofficially as potent a force as in Nazi Germany. It was certainly a feature of the new intense nationalism of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, but antisemitism was never legally incorporated by the Lithuanian State. In fact, the Smetona Tautiniki government which came to power through a coup d'etat in 1926, continuously disclaimed antisemitic allegations. The hardships and persecutions Lithuanian Jews endured, government officials proclaimed, were moderate compared to Jewish communities elsewhere in Central and Eastern Europe.

The concluding segment of this chapter concerning the pre-1940 period will compare the Lithuanian-Jewish experience with that of the other two Baltic countries. Since the fate of Estonian and Latvian Jews and the role indigenous populations played in the Final Solution will be contrasted at a later point in this study, it is appropriate to make a few remarks by way of introduction.

Proportionately fewer Jews resided in Estonia and Latvia than in Lithuania. The percentage of Latvian Jews to the total population was about 4.8% in 1935. In Estonia, the figure was considerably less, with Jews comprising about .4% of the total population. In all three countries, Jews played an active role, proportionate to their numbers, in the struggle for the independence of their respective country. 38



Of the three Baltic States, Estonia granted the broadest degree of autonomy to its minority nationalities. The Estonian Jews, despite their scant numbers, were granted rights equal to the larger minority groups including the Swedes, Russians and Germans. Although no Jewish representatives served on the national parliament, Jews organized their own community into a public body. All educational, cultural, and social welfare activities were administered by the community organization which was recognized by the state.

The Jewish community began to function in 1925-1926. Its autonomous jurisdiction was divided into a seven member executive elected by the council, a twenty-seven member cultural council elected by the Jewish citizens, and local committees who assisted in tax collection and maintaining schools. The sources of revenue were mandated by law and included compulsory taxation of all members of the minorities and subsidies from state agencies. A budget provision which allowed for monies to be divided between Hebrew and Yiddish instructional schools ended the long-standing feud between proponents of the two.

In Latvia, the various minorities comprised almost one fourth of the total population. Based on 1925 statistics, the Russians, including White Russians, made up the largest minority, about 12%. The Jews were the second largest minority comprising 5.2% and the Germans at 3.7%. The law of December 18, 1919 granted educational autonomy to each minority. The Jewish minority of Latvia must be divided into two distinct

groups within a single community. Those Jews in the southern region, or Latgale, had long-standing residence as that area belonged to the old Russian pale of settlement. Under Polish and Russian cultural dominance, this area had several large towns with relatively large Jewish populations. In contrast, the Jewish population of Kurland had been influenced by German culture. These Jews came from Lithuania and Germany in the last third of the eighteenth century. Before that time, Jews were forbidden to settle in Kurland. From 1919 to 1921 Latvian Jews, aided by American funds from the Joint Distribution Committee, played a substantial role in rebuilding their native country.

The agrarian reforms that followed the political independence of both Latvia and Estonia in 1919-1920 were far more extensive than had been the case in Lithuania. In Lithuania, the partial distribution of land that once belonged to Poles and Russians did not significantly affect the rural masses. The majority of Lithuanian peasantry received very little land with only a few of the wealthier farmers benefiting from the so-called reforms. Jews, also received very small amounts. In Latvia and Estonia, the agrarian reform placed almost all the confiscated land at the disposal of the state. All arable land was divided into small allotments and redistributed to landless farmers, day laborers, and artisan of both majority and minority national groups, including Jews. Whereas the lot of Lithuanian peasantry was only

marginally improved, their Latvian and Estonian neighbors emerged significantly better off. Not only did Latvian and Estonian (Jewish and otherwise) peasants receive more land, they also received government grants and subsidies.

In Latvia, which remained a democracy until 1934, as compared to Lithuania, where representative government ended in 1926, Jews were better able to defend themselves against private groups trying to eliminate Jewish competitors. Proportional representation of the Jewish minority in the parliament and other public bodies effectively blocked discriminatory measures. Also, Jews were able to form lobbies and coalitions with various political factions to maintain their vested interests. Thus, a degree of political clout made the difference.<sup>39</sup>

After the coup d'etat on May 15, 1934, the social as well as the political climate deteriorated for Latvian Jews. Parliamentary government was suspended and (as in Lithuania) a quasi-official program to undermine the Jewish role in the economy was initiated. The government came under the helm of Karl Ulmanis who carefully camouflaged antisemitic economic measures. Here too, antisemitism was not legislated into the the body politic of the state nor was racist ideology employed. Instead, Jewish enterprises were simply taken over by the state and all minority rights ceased, as did democratic elections in general.

In June 1934, the so-called Perkonkrust (an association of Baltic-German Hitlerites) attempted a putsch. Had the putsch been successful, the situation would most likely have worsened substantially for Latvian Jews. As it was, by the late 1930's, antisemitism was expressed in acts of street violence and vandalism.

In the sovereign state of Estonia, possibly because of the small size of the Jewish community, antisemitic acts were rare. Jews, though less than one half of one percent of the population, and were generally wealthier than in either Latvia or Lithuania. Over one half owned their own business and about ten percent were professionals, especially doctors and lawyers. Jews owned approximately eleven percent of the larger industrial firms.

By the late 1930's all three Baltic states faced a serious threat. To the east the Soviet presence loomed and to the west, the Germans appeared equally menacing. The Jews had ample cause to be worried about their future. They looked to the Soviets as the lesser of two evils, a viewpoint that was tantamount to treason as far as the Lithuanian majority was concerned. The Communist party had been banned for over a decade. After the coup of 1926, left wing organizations and labor unions were also banned. However the Lithuanian Communist party, having a conspicuous number of Jews and Russians, maintained an active underground existence during

the interwar years. This small body was both hated and feared by the nationalist majority.

Significant historic, economic, political, social, religious and cultural-linguistic factors were instrumental in explaining the deep-rooted sentiments of many Lithuanians towards Jews and Jews toward Lithuanians. It is also possible that the relative size of the Jewish population in each of the Baltic states affected the policies towards and treatment of the Jewish minority. These long-term factors accounted for the failure of Jews to establish and sustain their citizenship on an equal footing with majority nationals during the Republic. This second-class status provided the philosophical basis for more extreme forms of persecution.

In June of 1940, following a year of informal domination, the Soviets annexed Lithuania. Here too, a large gap exists between reality and perception regarding the Jewish role in the Soviet occupation. Since the short-term motivation behind Lithuanian collaboration in the Final Solution grew out of the events surrounding the Soviet occupation, an exploration of this brief but highly significant period necessarily follows.

## B. Endnotes

1. Centralinis Statistikos Biuras, Lietuvos Statistikos Metraštis 1929-1930 (Kaunas, Vilnius), p. 11.
2. See Bishop Paul Kubicki's exhaustive account of trials of members of the clergy, Bojownicy Kapłani za Sprawę Kościola i Ojczyzny W Latach 1861-1915 (Sandomierz, 1933-1939) as cited in Constance Jurgela, Lithuania: The Outpost of Freedom (St. Petersburg: The National Guard of Lithuania in Exile, Inc., 1976), p. 356. See also Manfred Hellmann, Grundzüge der Geschichte Litauens und des litauischen Volkes (Darmstadt, 1966). Political history in text largely based on Jurgela, Lithuania: the Outpost of Freedom and also Alfred E. Senn, The Emergence of Modern Lithuania (New York: Columbia University Press, 1959).
3. K.J. Ceginskas, Kovos Metai del Savosios Spaudos (The Years of Struggle for Our Own Press), (Chicago: Draugas, 1957), p. 93. See also Alfred Erich Senn, Basanavicius: The Patriarch of the Lithuanian National Resistance (Newtonville, 1980).
4. The program of the Lithuanian Democratic Party is reprinted in Steponas Kairys, Lithuania was Awakening (New York: Lithuanian American Information Center, 1958), p. 379.
5. An excerpt from the resolution text is quoted in Vanda Struogiene, Lietuvos Istorija, (History of Lithuania) (Chicago: Draugas, 1956), p. 862.
6. Jurgela, Outpost p. 145.
7. Quote is translated in Senn, The Emergence of Modern Lithuania p. 20.
8. Summary Report of October 15, 1941 by Bgf. Dr. Franz Stahlecker, Chief of Einsatzgruppe A, (40 copies) International Military Tribunal, L 180, (henceforth "Stahlecker Report").
9. Chimen Abramsky, Maciej Jachimczyk, The Jews of Poland (New York: Basil Blackwell, 1986), p. 4. See also Gershon Hundert, "The Implications of Jewish Economic Activities for Christian-Jewish Relations in the Polish Commonwealth," in Abramsky and Jachimczyk, The Jews pp. 55-63; B. Weinryb, Economic History of the Jewish Community in Poland from 1100 to 1800 (Philadelphia, 1973), p. 21.
10. Abramsky and Jachimczyk, The Jews p. 4.
11. Abramsky and Jachimczyk, The Jews pp. 2-5.

12. Ritual murder libel holds that Christian children were periodically slayed by Jews as a reenactment of the crucifixion of Jesus. Jews supposedly used the blood of the victims in making unleavened bread or matzots for Passover. As late as the 1930's Lithuanians attempted to revive the "Blood Libel," in face of an increasing number of clashes between Lithuanians and Jews. See R. Po-chia Hsia, The Myth of Ritual Murder: Jews and Magic in Reformation Germany (1988); Jacob Katz, From Prejudice to Destruction, Anti-Semitism 1700-1933 (Cambridge, Harvard University Press, 1980), pp. 19-20.
13. On Haskalah in Poland and Lithuania see Daniel Beauvois, "Polish-Jewish relations in the territories annexed by the Russian Empire in the first half of the nineteenth century," in Abramsky - Jachimczyk, The Jews pp. 78-90.
14. Beauvois, "Polish Jewish relations," p. 87.
15. V.W. Marcznski, Statyczne opisanie gubernii Podolskiej, 1822 pp. 87-123, as cited by Beauvois, "Polish-Jewish relations," p. 233. On Jews in the Kingdom of Poland see Yankev Shatski, Geshikhte fun yidn in varshe 3 (New York, 1953); Refael Mahler, Hahasidut ve-ha haskala (Merhavya, 1961), pp. 209-86.
16. Zvi Gitelman, The Jews of Russia and the Soviet Union 1881 to the Present (New York: Yivo Institute for Jewish Research, 1988), p. 39.
17. T. M. Kopelzon, "Evreiskoe rabochee dviszhenie kontsa 80 - kh i nachala 90-kh godov, " (The Jewish labor movement in the late 1880's and early 1890's) quoted in Henry J. Tobias, "The Bund and Lenin Until 1903," The Russian Review (October 1961), pp. 344-5.
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19. Quoted in John Shelton Curtiss, The Russian Church and the Soviet State (Boston: Little, Brown, 1953), p. 69.
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22. Sarah Neshamit, "Rescue Attempts during the Holocaust," in Proceedings of the Second Yad Vashem International Historical Conference (Jerusalem: Ahva Cooperative Press, 1977), p. 290; Azriel Shoshat, "The Beginnings of Antisemitism in Independent Lithuania," Yad Vashem Studies (Feb., 1958) pp. 7-9.

23. See P. Staras, Drasio Sirdys (Vilnius, 1958) as cited by Neshamit, Rescue Attempts p. 291.
24. American Jewish Committee, "Report on Lithuanian Jewry, 1930-1935," (New York: Yivo Institute Archives, 1945).
25. Jacob Leshchinsky, "The Economic Struggle of the Jews of Independent Lithuania," Jewish Social Studies 8 no. 4 (1946), 275. p. 273.
26. Leshchinsky, Economic Struggle p. 274.
27. American Jewish Committee, "Report." Also see Lietuvos Statiskos Mastrastis 1923-1940 (Lithuanian Statistical Yearbook).
28. Folksblat July 17, 1935 as cited in Leschinsky, "The Economic Struggle," p. 275.
29. Leschinsky, "The Economic Struggle," p. 272.
30. Visuotinis Lietuvos Zemes Ukio Surasymas Vol XII 30 (Central Bureau of Statistics, the General Census of Lithuanian Agriculture), 1930-1940.
31. M. Linder, "Jewish Handicraft in Lithuania," Yidishe ekonomik (Kaunas, 1939), pp. 1-8; For information on the cooperative bank, see Gringauz, "Jewish National Autonomy." For remarks on the economic decline of Jews see the "Report of the Jewish Parliamentary Group of the Second Seima 1923-26," (Kaunas, 1926); Leschinsky, "The Economic Struggle," pp. 275-285.
32. Leschinsky, "The Economic Struggle," p. 288.
33. Leschinsky, "The Economic Struggle," p. 288.
34. Gringauz, "The Jewish National Autonomy," p. 245-46.
35. Leschinsky, "The Economic Struggle," p. 287. Also see "La violation des droits des juifs en Lithuanie," Bulletin de comité (May 15, 1923).
36. American Jewish Committee, "Report 1930- 1935," 1930-1935." On Jewish emigration during the 1930's see "The Jews of Lithuania," American Jewish Yearbook 32 (1930) pp. 276-280 and "Yiddish emigratsie fun lite," Yidishe ekonomik 2 (1938) pp. 86-87.
37. Documents Accuse (Vilnius: Mintis, 1967), pp. 16-17 (noted hereafter as D.A.). Although the narrative is highly bias, the documents have been widely used by scholars of the period including Itzchak Arad, Director of Yad Vashem in Jerusalem.



38. For a survey of the Jews of Latvia during the interwar period see Joseph Rothchild, East Central Europe between the Two World Wars (Seattle and London, 1974), pp. 367-81. In addition to Latvia, this account includes Lithuania, Hungary, Bulgaria, Yugoslavia, Albania, Poland, Czechoslovakia, Albania, and Romania. Concerning the Jews of Estonia see Emanuel Nodel, "Life and Death of Estonian Jewry," in Baltic History (ed.) A. Ziedonis, W. Winter, and M. Valgema (Cleveland, 1973). Also see E. Amitan-Wilensky, "Estonian Jewry," in The Jews of Latvia (Tel Aviv, 1972). pp. 336-47.

39. On Jews and politics see Max Laserson, "The Jews and the Latvian parliament," in The Jews in Latvia pp. 94-185. Although in 1934 the Ulmanis government, like the autocratic government in Lithuania did not institute anti-Jewish riots, its economic policy of "nationalization" severely hurt Jews and other minority nationals. In 1940, many Latvian Jews (like Lithuanian Jews) joined the Communist Party and the Komsomol seeking new opportunities previously forbidden to Jews during the previous rule, particularly the bureaucracy. See Dov Levin, "Yehude latviya ben histeigut le-ven histalgut la-mishtar ha-sovieti," Behinot 5 (1974), pp. 73-74. For Jews and the economy during the republic see B. Sieff, "Jews in the Economic Life in Latvia," pp. 230-242, The Jews of Latvia. For a general survey also see Mendel Bobe, "Four Hundred Years of the Jews of Latvia," pp. 21-77, The Jews of Latvia.

### III/ THE 1940 SOVIET OCCUPATION AND ITS IMPACT ON THE JEWISH QUESTION

Contemporary Lithuanian-American historians emphasize the First Soviet Occupation, from June 15, 1940 until July 22, 1941, to account for and to some extent justify the vehement antisemitic sentiment displayed by segments of the Lithuanian population during the subsequent Nazi Occupation 1941-1944. Both the general passivity of the majority of Lithuanians and the active participation of a sizable minority in the destruction of ninety percent of that nation's Jewry are portrayed as the logical response to acts of persecution carried out by Jews and Soviets during Soviet Rule. Similarly, the near total lack of assistance to Jews by the population of the three Baltic States, as compared to elsewhere in Europe is also explained as the result of Jewish collaboration in Soviet measures.

A number of anti-Soviet nationalist writers have stressed that Lithuanian antisemitism was nonexistent before 1940 and that it emerged only after Jewish-Bolshevik collaboration had marred otherwise peaceful relations between Lithuanians and Jews. Even after such provocation, antisemitic behavior characterized only a small minority of Lithuanians during the Nazi Period.

The arrests, tortures during interrogations, taking part in deportations, were the reason some irresponsible Lithuanians with criminal inclinations later took part in action against Jews during the occupation by the Nazis.

In contrast, many Jewish Lithuanian survivors of the period stress the multifaceted, ubiquitous antisemitism that was discernible long before 1940. These writers contend that antisemitism could not have reached the intensity it assumed under the Nazis in just one year. One survivor clearly saw a longer continuity in Lithuanian antisemitism:

The anti-semitic element in the government brought down this institutional structure (Jewish national autonomy,) and all that remained by the time World War Two broke out was the cultural autonomy -- the religious and secular school systems under Jewish control. The climax came in 1941 when Lithuanians attacked the Jews with shocking cruelty, tortured and murdered them killing innocent infants and the unfortunate ill in indescribably horrible<sub>2</sub> ways. German murderers finished the job.

Finding the truth between these starkly contrasting views of the role of Lithuanians in the Holocaust forms the subject of this chapter. How did the one year of direct Soviet rule affect the attitude and behavior of ordinary Lithuanians toward Jews, and how was this attitude expressed in the subsequent years of Nazi domination? Did the first Soviet occupation, as post World War II Lithuanian writers suggest, sow the seeds of antisemitism or did it bring to fruition seeds planted long before? Based on the available documentation, how did the policies of the Soviets and/or Jews contribute to the popular identification of Jews with communists? Even granting that the Lithuanian masses in 1941 associated Jews with Soviets, how convincing a motive does that provide for actions against Jews during 1942, 1943, and 1944? Ought one to discount economic

and opportunistic reasons, the teachings of the Catholic Church, or the modern exclusive national consciousness that developed in the interwar period? Finally, what was the immediate effect of the sudden collapse of the Soviet regime on the Lithuanian masses and on the position of the Jews?

It is usually argued that popular perception is the only reality that counts in politics, and this study accepts as a given that most Lithuanians in 1940 perceived most Jews as communist enemies. However, the validity of this perception remains dubious, and, because it still plays a large role in post-war and present-day Lithuanian apologetics, the "reality" of the perception must be examined carefully.

Antisemites customarily deny any great distinction between Jews, preferring to see a monolithic and inimical "Jewry." But the Jews who served the Soviet regime did so from a variety of motives. Some were dedicated idealists who completely renounced any Jewish identity; they no longer thought of themselves as Jews, although most Lithuanians continued to think of them in no other way. Undoubtedly, many Jews served for opportunist reasons but the frequently made charge that they were pursuing specifically "Jewish" plans of cultural, economic, and political conquest--intrinsic to their nature--defies obvious truths. The USSR gave no such leeway to its servants.

Getting at the facts behind the popular perception of Judeo-Bolshevism in the case of Lithuania is problematical.

Soviet documents do not designate the religious or ethnic identities of administrators or agents. Non-communist Lithuanian and Jewish sources, on the other hand, rest on highly subjective testimony and, sometimes, on outright propaganda. Thus the apparently simple and vital question, "What percentage of those from Lithuania serving the Soviet regime were Jewish?" is not definitively answerable. It is clear, however, that despite later Soviet propaganda, very few native Lithuanians played significant roles in either the incorporation of Lithuania into the Soviet Union or in its governance. Instead, those responsible for policymaking from the summer of 1940 until the summer of 1941 received their instructions directly from the USSR, where most of them came from.

Post-war Lithuanian emigre writers, always stressing the absolute powerlessness of a small state perched between a greedy Germany and a despotic Russia, rest their case almost exclusively on the events of the year preceding the Nazi invasion of June 1941. Hatred of the Soviets was so intense, they argue, that it produced a compensating mass sympathy and support for the German "liberators" in the summer of 1941.<sup>3</sup> That hatred of the Soviets led to hatred of Jews as an undifferentiated group, while unjust, was not without a factual basis.

For obvious reasons, Jews remained outside the pro-German enthusiasm and sensibly regarded the Soviets as the lesser of the two evils. However, in 1940, to be even lukewarmly pro-Soviet in Lithuania was tantamount to treason. Furthermore,

during the Soviet rule, Jews began to be regarded by their Lithuanian compatriots as better-off than in the past, the true beneficiaries of the conquest. Jews, in the eyes of the public, not only favored the Soviets, but must themselves be communists. Factors such as the thousands of Jewish immigrants to Lithuania from Nazi occupied Europe in 1940 and early 1941, the disproportionate number of Jews in the Lithuanian Communist Party, the conspicuous appearance of Jews serving as Soviet administrators, and the blatant visibility of Jews in previously restricted occupations favored the formation of such an image. Whether sudden and attributable only to Soviet domination or not, the association of Jews with communism is central to understanding why Lithuanians responded so passively towards the plight of their Jewish countrymen under Nazi rule.

Thomas Remeikis explained the popular identification of Jew and communist as deriving, at least in part, from the conspicuous numbers of Jewish members in upper leadership positions of the Lithuanian Communist Party. Although he acknowledged that Jewish leaders in the Lithuanian Communist Party were not the same Jews who served as administrators of the Soviet Lithuanian Republic, this distinction was of little consequence to popular perception. He stated: "To the Lithuanian populace a communist first of all was a Jew."<sup>4</sup>

Remeikis introduced another crucial factor, Lithuanian nationalism:

The prominence of Jews in the party hindered the expansion of communist influence among the masses since as everywhere in East Europe, anti-Semitism was a living tendency. When the Soviet Union occupied Lithuania and all the Party members came out of the underground, the prominence of Jewish Communists was even more detrimental to the party, for nationalism combined by anti-semitism strengthened the reaction against the regime.<sup>5</sup>

By introducing the theme of nationalism as a factor, and by suggesting that the communist party was actually hurt by its popular association with Jews, Remeikis argues that that antisemitism in Lithuania was not simply a justifiable response to the Soviet take-over. Instead he proposed that the Soviet take-over fed, intensified, influenced already existing antisemitism.

Remeikis' interpretation is convincing, as the following two examples show. The first has to do with the pogroms that took place after the Lithuanian annexation of Vilnius in 1939, on the eve of the Soviet occupation. After being bullied into an agreement with the Soviets, the Lithuanians received their historic capital in return for allowing Russia to establish military bases and a standing army on their soil. When the Lithuanian army marched into Vilnius the Lithuanian police and a segment of the Christian population (Lithuanians and Poles) began rioting against Jews.

The argument by post World War II historians that this pogrom took place because it was generally perceived that

Jews were pro-Soviet can only be believed by the uncritical. Where it is true that most Jewish residents of Vilnius were relieved by the Soviet presence in Lithuania this was only as an alternative to German control. In fact, there had long been a tendency among Jews to prefer annexation by Lithuania rather than Russia or Poland. When Vilnius was briefly restored to Lithuania in the summer of 1920, the Jewish leadership was overjoyed. After its subsequent return to Poland, Yaakov Vygodski, Minister for Jewish Affairs in the new Lithuanian government, openly expressed the disappointment of the Jewish community. He stated that for the Jews of Vilnius, life was paradise under the Lithuanians when compared to the Poles.<sup>6</sup>

The members of the Jewish National Council who actively assisted the Lithuanian government's struggle for Vilnius made the following public statement concerning its return to Poland,

A new yoke, a hard regime of occupation is oppressing our brothers who have been cut from us, and who together with the Lithuanians and the Belorussians are now suffering under the yoke of foreign oppression. Although they are not with us, nonetheless the voice of Vilnius Jewry has been heard, the bold voice of the people who desire to be free citizens in the free Lithuanian state.

All this was generally known to the Christian population at the time. It is thus difficult to conclude that the pogrom was generated solely because Jews were thought of as pro-Soviet.

The second example has to do with the capture of Jewish refugees fleeing to Lithuania by border police. From September



1939 until June 1941 a steady flow of Jews attempted to escape western (Nazi occupied) Poland. Generally, captured Jews were beaten, robbed, and turned back whereas Christians refugees were allowed to pass freely.<sup>8</sup> One eyewitness account stated,

We were suddenly awakened at night by a clamor, and a merchant from Pinsk, by the name of Gold burst into the room. The night before he had left in a sleigh and had subsequently been discovered by mobile guards; thanks to the speed of his horses he got away, he jumped into a ditch and hid under a bush losing all his belongings. The next day I happened to meet an acquaintance who had returned to Lida in despair. After reaching the Lithuanian side of the border he was cruelly driven back by Lithuanian soldiers.

Apparently, in view of the large number of testimonies along these lines, this was common practice among Lithuanian officials. Such a sentiment can not be blamed on the Jewish-Soviet connection. Even those Jews who sought escape from eastern Poland which had been conquered by Soviet Russia were turned away.

At this point, one must return to the interplay between perception and reality and attempt to establish boundaries for each in the popular conviction that all or most Jews were communists. Towards this end, a reflection on the development of the Lithuanian Communist Party during the interwar years is one avenue that yields valuable insight. Another is an examination of the degree of Jewish integration in Lithuanian society in the late 1930's. A third component centers on the change of Jewish status after the Soviet take-over.

Two notable features regarding the development of the Lithuanian Communist Party have to do with the organization's size and the ethnic composition of its membership. After the coup of 1926 when Antanas Smetona ousted the duly elected President Grinius and had himself elected President, the Social Democratic Party and the Labor Unions were outlawed. During the next fourteen years of Smetona's regime, the latter two organizations gradually faded as a force in Lithuanian politics. The communist party continued its operations underground. In the period 1926-1930 the party had a mere 970 members out of a total population of 3,000,000. The vast majority of its members were the non-Lithuanian national minorities, Russians, Jews, and Poles. Jews were prominent not only in the party itself but in its subsidiary organizations: the Komsomols, and the Lithuanian Red Help. For example, in 1933, the Kaunas Komsomol organization was 60% Jewish in its membership.<sup>10</sup>

The Lithuanian Encyclopedia corroborates these findings and claims that by 1939 approximately 52% of the Party membership consisted of Jews. Together with Poles and Russians, Jews comprised two thirds of the Party. Among the top leadership, five of the nine known members of the Central Committee were Jewish.<sup>11</sup> The already large number of non-Lithuanians in the party further increased in 1939 when the Vilnius district (which had belonged to Poland since 1919) was restored to Lithuania.

Throughout the interwar period the communist party was considered the archenemy by the masses as well as the ruling elite. However, in 1940, it still had only fifteen hundred members. The large foreign constituency may have played a role in the party's failure to gain popular support, but more fundamental were ideological factors. None was more important than the party's atheism which deeply offended the ardently Roman Catholic masses. The party remained minuscule because the environment was hostile to it. Its policies and activities were rejected by the overwhelming majority of Lithuanians (and by Poles, Russians, and Jews, too). This situation was especially serious for the Jews, since they were identified with communism and hence the life-and-death enemies of Lithuanians. The unfairness of this view of "collective guilt" can not be overstated. The fact that the great masses of Jews rejected an atheistic and anti-Zionist communism and those few who joined the party normally severed all connection to religion and community was generally missed. Moreover, the fact that the party was as much as one-third Jewish made the party seem "Jewish" to the general populace.

In 1939, Lithuania including the Memel and Vilnius Territories, had close to 3,000,000 inhabitants. Four fifths of the population were both ethnically and religiously homogeneous: Lithuanian and Roman Catholic.<sup>12</sup> Agriculture, rather than industry prevailed. In 1938, approximately only fifteen percent of the entire population lived in cities,

only a slight increase since the census of 1923.<sup>13</sup> Occupational figures for the interwar period also show no significant shift from agriculture to manufacturing. The picture is one of stability, if not stagnation.

Among the agrarian masses, relative homogeneity was the rule. About 84% owned the farms they worked. Land-ownership by the overwhelming majority of the peasants and the slight differences among them tended to reduce the appeal of communism. Even among the richest class of farmer, only 2.4% owned over 50 hectares.<sup>14</sup>

The mainstay of Lithuanian farming were middling landowners holding 10 to 50 hectares. This group comprised about 47% of the total agricultural population and provided leadership and stability to the rural community. Politically, the middling owner backed the Christian Democratic Party which was formed in 1890 and ruled Lithuania from 1919 to 1926. The poorest class of peasantry also remained firmly entrenched in traditional and religious ties that transcended class lines.

The Lithuanian urban intellectual of the early twentieth century, stressed his emotional and social ties with the rural masses. This group including priests, physicians, pharmacists, engineers, attorneys, and bank employees were the offspring of the educated peasantry of the late nineteenth century. As discussed in the first chapter, the priests had led the masses of peasants in a spiritual and intellectual struggle that centered around Catholicism, Lithuanian language, and

culture. The younger generation were no less religious and rooted in the past than their fathers had been. This picture of a relatively classless society in which only non-Lithuanians (i.e. Jews, Poles,) remained outside the web of community was in sharp contrast to the situation in Poland. Although Polish society was also religiously cohesive its citizens were economically, intellectually, and socially more stratified.<sup>15</sup> A middle class had developed earlier in Poland because of the markedly higher level of urbanization and industrialization and were generally not connected to either the peasantry or the nobility in terms of common needs and values.

The industrial laborer, theoretically the most susceptible to communism, also did not generally embrace communism. Only three per cent of the entire Lithuanian labor force worked in industrial shops and another three per cent were self-employed skilled artisans. Many Lithuanian unskilled workers were scattered through the villages and small towns which the communists' slim resources could not reach. Before the nationalist party set up an authoritarian government in 1926, the Social Democratic Party and the various Catholic workers' organizations attracted the majority of skilled and unskilled workers.

After Smetona shut down the various trade unions, he instituted a series of labor reforms designed to protect the worker and lure him away from potential communist influence.

This progressive legislation included relief and public work programs for the unemployed, a medical insurance plan for workers, and a minimum standard for working conditions. Enticement was accompanied by coercion. The ill-treatment and many arrests of known communists by the Smetona government operated as a strong deterrent to CPL recruitment efforts. The Party remained outlawed throughout the 1930's. However, even if legalized, it probably would not have gained a much wider basis of support.

The other political parties were characterized by strict adherence to nationalism. Even the Social Democratic Party formed in 1896 was founded on a nationalist separatist program. All Lithuanian parties with the exception of the communists, barred Jews and other minority nationals from membership, but aside from this feature, each party had a cross section of social and economic groups represented. By contrast, the communist party, theoretically reliant on the working class and international in outlook, was doomed to remain powerless (in the absence of Russian/Soviet intervention) because a preindustrial Lithuania experienced little social upheaval, was relatively homogenous, and deeply traditional.

The party did not adapt to these realities. The leadership failed to modify official communist ideology to meet the prevailing conditions in its campaign to attract new members. Since the Third Comintern Congress in 1921, the Lithuanian Communist Party was bound by the directives of the Russian

Communist Party and its administrative instrument, the Comintern. Unfortunately, the policies and tactics of the Comintern, formulated in Moscow, had little to do with the reality of conditions in Lithuania. Party discipline and consciousness of their own insignificance in the world movement left CPL with little leeway. Local leaders often distorted the evaluation of conditions in Lithuania in order to conform to Comintern positions and tactics, even though these had little relevance to Lithuanian conditions.

What party rhetoric and propaganda did do, was create an ominous threat in the minds of the ruling elite, the propertied classes as well as the common citizenry. This threat only served to reenforce the authority of the state and justify repressive acts. During the last thirteen years of the independent state, 1926-1939, communists were ruthlessly persecuted. As summarized by one Lithuanian communist historian,

From the beginning to the end of the interwar period the Communist Party was perennially on the verge of a crisis. Standing alone, the Communists did not constitute any appreciable threat to a people with as highly developed a sense of National consciousness as Lithuanians.<sup>16</sup>

Even as the communists were looked upon as a threat and as an enemy by the various segments of Lithuanian society, so too, were Jews. However, the image of the Jew as dire threat was not alone the result of his identification with communism, important though that was. This new attribute of evil meshed with and reinforced older negative stereotypes: Jew as capitalist entrepreneur; Jew as exploiter, living the

good life at the expense of a poor, undeveloped country. And, of course, these antagonisms were added on to "the original sin of the Jew," the Crucifixion, a charge that remained extremely powerful among the pious Lithuanians.

An analysis of the actual roles played by the Jews in Lithuanian society during the interwar period was given in the previous chapter. Some recapitulation will be necessary, however, in order to compare Jewish status and public image before and after Soviet annexation.

The Jews of Lithuania were second-class citizens. This was officially and unofficially sanctioned. Because the Lithuanian state defined its nationhood in ethnic and cultural terms, the Jews, like other non-Lithuanian ethnic groups were categorized as outsiders and allocated a separate unequal status. For example, after 1921, Jews could not hold civil service jobs, they could not be members of economic cartels; they could not join political parties other than their own factions, and de facto quotas were placed on university entrance and the professions.

These restrictions, did not remove the animosity or its real causes. A cross section of Lithuanian society strongly resented the Jewish presence in Lithuania on any basis. To the rising Lithuanian middle and professional classes, the Jew was regarded as the incumbent adversary. This new elite viewed itself as the rightful recipients of the better positions and economic benefits that national statehood afforded and



urged legislation in this vein, hence the slogan "Lithuania for Lithuanians."

The rural population smarted under the traditional conflict between urban investor-consumer on the one hand and agricultural producer on the other. For years Jews, limited by law and tradition, played a vital but well-hated role as financier and commercial middleman in the countryside. The Lithuanian peasants were limited by their educational opportunities and by technical backwardness. Jews provided services that they could have provided themselves through cooperatives and trusts companies but these were lacking in the nineteenth century agrarian economy. Thus, the pattern in Lithuania as elsewhere in central and eastern Europe was that peasants and Jews were bound by an inescapable, usually antagonistic, partnership. This was particularly dangerous for the Jews in question because they were essentially isolated in the countryside, could look to no one for physical help against violence, and were up against a rude population who were not used to settling grievances through deliberation. The teachings of the Church, the actions of government authorities, the attitudes of the small Lithuanian middle class, and the strength of anti-Jewish tradition all reinforced the peasant in his inclinations to settle with the Jews when the opportunity arose.

Religious antisemitism was just as viable a factor as economic and political antisemitism. The medieval image of the Jew as Christ killers, well poisoners, devils and users

of Christian blood transcended the centuries. The peasants were extremely vulnerable to the teachings of the parish priest who preached that Jews were deicides and cited scripture to prove it.<sup>17</sup> There was no statute of limitation on the Crucifixion according to Christian consciousness, hence it could be relied upon at any present or future moment as a mobilizing force.

Lithuanian historians are fond of claiming that Jewish-Christian relations were essentially peaceful right up until the advent of the Nazis. But given the economic pressures and the inculcated anti-Jewish attitudes discussed above this is disingenuous. In fact, markedly "unpeaceful" episodes pepper the history of the two peoples. For example, in the early 17th century, the charge that Jews were sorcerers was leveled with such frequency that the Council of Lithuanian Jewry, or Vaad, (formed in 1623,) decreed in 1637, and again in 1647, that the expense of combating the charge and the damage resulting from it, must be shared by the collective Jewish body and not left for the community directly involved to bear alone. Still in 1681, the accusations and accompanying violence did not diminish. Apparently, the cost of defense grew so burdensome for the impoverished Jews that the Lithuanian Vaad turned to the larger "Council of Four Lands," to bear a share of the expenses.<sup>18</sup> As discussed in the first chapter infrequent but violent acts against Jews, revealed unmistakably an intense hatred, right up to 1940.

The position and legal status of Jews changed rapidly and dramatically immediately after the Soviet take-over in the summer of 1940. It was as though they had finally achieved real equality on Lithuanian soil. Jews suddenly appeared conspicuous in a number of fields that had been closed to them during the twenty-two years of the Republic. Under communist rule, the Jews were citizens possessing equal rights with all other citizens. Hence, Jews could pursue new careers in government, state cooperatives and institutions, and resume careers in professions that were previously restricted. Jews eagerly embraced these new opportunities. Whether these changes mounted to Jewish empowerment, even Jewish domination of Lithuania under the Soviets, is hotly disputed. Although this study will examine the available evidence and offer some observations, the issue is probably beyond definitive settlement.

According to one testimony by a Jewish-Lithuanian eyewitness,

Relatively few Jews got those new jobs, but to the Lithuanians it looked like an invasion. In the Communist Party Central Committee, (referring to the one imposed by Stalin, not the old CPL which had lots of Jews) there were approximately forty to fifty Lithuanians and only two Jews. Equally, there were about twenty Lithuanian commissars and about forty assistants, but only one Jew among them. All the top positions from the president down were occupied by Lithuanians. It was true that some Jews did obtain some higher positions, but their number was small. But when one thought of the fact that there was not a single Jew before in these places, every Jew looked unreasonably conspicuous.<sup>19</sup>

The Lithuanian Archives (Lietuviai Archyvas), on the other hand, states that Jews made up 70% of the highest officials

of the Ministry of Industry; Lithuanians 30%. In the lower offices, Jews made up 10% and Lithuanians 90%. Among the top NKVD (Soviet Secret Police), officials in Kaunas, 50% were Russians, 40% Jews and 10% were Lithuanians.<sup>20</sup> According to the same source, Jews held such important offices as the minister of industry, the minister of health, commissar of food production, manager of agriculture, and director of the Lithuanian Agricultural Association. Three Jews were appointed to the Supreme Tribunal and the chief of officials in the state's attorney office. Of the five directors of the state's attorney office in Lithuania four were Jews.

Based on the files of the Lithuanian American Council Dr. Juozas Prunskis, a prominent Lithuanian American nationalist scholar wrote:

The list of Jews who took part in the activities of the NKVD (Soviet Secret Police) during the Soviet Occupation is long. Several instances are cited concerning Lithuanians who were beaten by Jewish interrogators including Pranas Neimanas who was interrogated by Abramovicus in the Kaunas prison. Also, Jonas Vanagas had<sup>21</sup> a Jewish interrogator, Bloch, in the Kaunas prison.

Yet, Menacham Begin, a prominent Zionist, was also arrested and interrogated in the Lukiszki Prison by a Jew in the service of the NKVD. The testimony of another Jew, Aba Gefin is given to illustrate how Jews served the secret police:

That same night the Russians, using the addresses that I had supplied and myself accompanying them rounded<sup>22</sup> up forty men, who were taken to Alytus prison.

However, the apparent fact that Jews were also arrested and interrogated by other Jews tends to impair the case for Jewish-Soviet conspiring to act out their alleged ethnic or religious agendas. Lithuanian historians do not concede this point.

While it seems reasonable on the basis of the evidence to say that many ethnic Jews took part in the Soviet regime and in its crimes, it was not then, nor is it now, reasonable to say that they were pursuing "Jewish interests" or acting in solidarity with the Jews of Lithuania. The behavior of this tiny minority of Lithuanian Jews, so far as it was not motivated by ambition, corruption, or greed, was ideological. They proceeded against "class enemies" without ethnic distinction, often treating Jews harshly in order to show their own freedom from Jewishness. Still, Lithuanian historians have a great stake in painting Soviet oppression of Lithuania as "the work of Jews." Prunskis is adamant about the link between Jews and oppressors:

Moscow appointed a Jew, Gladkov, as Supreme Commander of the NKVD in Lithuania, which accounted for a great number of Jews in NKVD in Lithuania. The assistant to Commissar Gladkov was a Jew.

The indictment list goes on implying that Jews appointed fellow Jews on the basis of sharing a common ethnic identity, and

that Jews were congenitally suited for work in the Security Police:

A Jew, Kerbelis, was trained to use torture during investigations. Judith Komodaite (a Jew) took part in preparing a list of Christian Democrats who were to be arrested. Krastin (a Jew) helped to prepare a list of persons who should be arrested during the night of July 11/12, 1940.<sup>24</sup>

Also listed specifically were many Jews who received assignments as political instructors in the Soviet army in Lithuania.

Identifying Jewish responsibility for the policies and actions of the Soviets through the presentation of lists of names of Jewish collaborators is the main procedure Lithuanian writers use to substantiate their case. For the uncritical, Jewish-Soviet collaboration provides the short term explanation for the massive reprisals and retributions of Lithuanians in the wake of the Soviet withdrawal.

Those 230,000 Jews that remained to face Nazi rule were held accountable as a collective group, by the Lithuanian masses for the policies and actions of not only the Lithuanian Communist Party, but the Soviet Central Committee, the NKVD, and the Red Army. Remeikis concluded his chapter on 1940, by stating:

Since in the image of the public and, to a great extent, the fact the Jews were considered to be the most ruthless agents of the Soviet Regime, when Germany occupied Lithuania in 1941, the Lithuanian populace took a passive attitude toward the German Jewish policy and, in a number of cases seriously retaliated on the Jewish population for various injustices experienced during the first Soviet occupation.<sup>25</sup>

How many such cases and to what extent Lithuanians retaliated against "guilty" as opposed to innocent Jews are not questions Remeikis asks.

What were these short-lived Soviet policies that Jews were held accountable for, and how much of that perception was based on what actually happened? In broad outline, the Soviet Regime ushered in sweeping political, economic, social, and religious changes: 1) the incorporation of the Lithuanian state into the Soviet Union resulting in the loss of Lithuanian independence; 2) the confiscation and collectivization of commerce and industry creating a sharp decline in the standard of living; 3) severe limitations on the power of the church including the confiscation of church properties and the mass arrests of a number of clergymen; 4) a policy of Sovietization which resulted in the suppression of Lithuanian language and culture and culminated in the arrests, executions and deportations of targeted potential enemies (including large numbers of Jews).

In attempting to sort out the reality from the accompanying perception, one must begin with the political events leading to the take over of Lithuania by the Soviet Union. The international diplomacy and the power politics of the late 1930's are intricately linked to this event. In fact, the fate of Lithuania was sealed by an external event: the signing of the Hitler-Stalin Pact Non-Aggression Pact of August 20-21, 1939.

This pact was the culmination of several years of diplomatic maneuvers between the Soviet Union and Nazi Germany over the Baltic States as a sphere of influence. Without many options, the Lithuanian government had steadfastly remained neutral, hoping that stance would best foster the preservation of national sovereignty. Stalin expressed his desire to acquire the Baltic States in purely strategic terms, as a buffer against a possible German invasion. The Baltic States appeared as Soviet Socialist Republics on Soviet Military maps as as early as 1938.<sup>26</sup>

Hitler's design on the Baltic states were no less strategic but expressed differently. Using the popular racial and ideological Nazi vernacular of the day, Hitler viewed the Baltic Peoples as racially assimilable and thus eligible to play a role a in the New Europe.<sup>27</sup> As early as 1926 in Mein Kampf, Hitler designated the Baltic Republics as part of the general territory destined for Germany's Lebensraum -- European Russia and its border states. Among Nazi leaders, Baltic Germans, like Alfred Rosenberg, occupied prominent positions and may have directed Hitler's interest to this area. However, a more immediate involvement concerned the Memel region which had been ceded by Germany to Lithuania in 1918, at the end of the war. Still Hitler was willing to wait until the opportune moment and in 1933-34 German policy aimed at avoiding conflict with the Lithuanian Republic. In August 1933, Hitler concluded a trade agreement and approved an informal agreement with Lithuania.<sup>28</sup> However, increasing interference on the part of the Lithuanian government with the rights of Germans in



the Memel territory created a rift in relations between the two countries. At one point, in the autumn of 1933, Lithuanian officials began taking steps to counter the growing National Socialist Movement. Nazi officials were dismissed and many leading party members were arrested. These measures taken to counter the growing National Socialist movement aroused great resentment in the Memel territory as well as Berlin. The German government objected by imposing economic sanctions.<sup>29</sup>

In 1935 German-Lithuanian relations reached a low point. In his speech of May 21, Hitler explicitly excluded Lithuania from the nations with which he would be willing to sign a nonaggression pact. By the next year, however, relations between the two countries improved. Lithuania made extensive political concessions to the Memel Germans in the September 1935 election and allowed the formation of a local (Nazi dominated) Memel government. In his speech of March 7, 1936, Hitler recognized this conciliatory gesture and in turn renounced his objections to sign a non-aggression treaty with Lithuania. In the next month an economic treaty between the two nations was subsequently drawn up and reflected the warming trend.

In regard to German designs on Memel, in 1935-36, Hitler realized his goals would best be served by preserving the tenuous status quo rather than risk international sanctions by seizing Memel. The opportune moment nearly presented itself during the Polish-Lithuanian Crisis of 1938 when it appeared that Poland would militarily occupy that country. Hitler,

in turn, was prepared to grab Memel and its outskirts. However, that crisis passed without incident and the opportunity evaporated. Although Hitler repeatedly referred to the Baltic as a German Sea, his designs on Memel were postponed in favor of a greater scheme for the acquisition of Czechoslovakia. Even after the elections of December 11, 1938, in which Memel petitioned for annexation to Germany, Hitler pressed Ernst Neumann, the leader of the Memel National Socialist Party, to refrain from action. Hitler gave assurances that the matter would be settled by late March or early April.<sup>30</sup> Since he was still engaged in negotiations with Poland, Hitler hoped to tie the Memel question to a proposed Polish-German arrangement on Czechoslovakia. However, when negotiations continued into mid-March with no end in sight, Hitler marched into Prague and a few days later seized Memel from Lithuania.<sup>31</sup>

The protocol of the Führer conference of May 23, 1939, contained Hitler's pledge to "widen the Lebensraum" at the expense of Poland and to advance to the "solution to the Baltic Problems."<sup>32</sup> Still, the Baltic states were a negotiable item as far as Hitler was concerned, as was evidenced later that year when he traded them away to the Soviet Union through a supplementary protocol to the Non-Aggression Pact. Initially, the terms of the Secret Supplementary Protocol of the Non Aggression Pact stated that:

the northern boundary of Lithuania  
shall represent the boundary of the spheres of  
influence of Germany and the U.S.S.R.<sup>33</sup>

Of the three Baltic States and Finland, only Lithuania was retained by Germany: all areas to the north were delivered into Soviet hands.

Eight days later, on September 1, 1939, the Germans attacked Poland. After the successful conquest of Poland, the Secret Protocol that was originally signed on August 23, 1939, was amended in a Secret Supplementary Protocol on September 28, 1939. According to the new terms, Lithuania, with the exception of a small strip of territory, was assigned to the Soviet Union. Months later, on January 10, 1941, the Soviet Union bought that territory for 7,500,000 gold dollars. Thus, the Soviet Union had gained a free hand in the Baltics.

The Soviets immediately acted upon this virtual blank check by demanding that the Lithuanians sign a Treaty of Non-Aggression and on October 10, 1939, drew up a list of consequences, should Lithuania fail to cooperate. The pact would allow the Soviets to build air bases and maintain garrisons of soldiers on Lithuanian soil. The Lithuanian delegation was then offered the Vilnius Territory as a concession. This was no meager offer. Regaining Vilnius from the Poles had been the focal point of Lithuanian foreign policy during the entire interwar period. Still, the Lithuanian delegation vehemently opposed the proposal, hopelessly arguing that allowing Soviet military bases on Lithuanian territory would upset their policy of neutrality. The delegates also worried that the stationing of Red Army troops would incite the local

communists to agitate. Stalin responded by proposing that the Lithuanian government apply any means it wished to contain the local communists, and that if necessary, "we ourselves will master your Communists and warn them."<sup>34</sup> Both Stalin and Molotov, however, repeatedly assured the Lithuanian government that they had no intentions of interfering with the Lithuanian social or political structure.

As the negotiations proceeded, however, the Soviet government made clear that it intended to station troops in Lithuania with or without the latter's approval. It would only be a question of voluntary or forced cooperation. Hoping to retain even the facade of independence, the Lithuanian leadership acquiesced and signed the mutual assistance agreement.

The worst fears of the Lithuanians rapidly materialized. Concurrent with the public statements of the Soviets assuring the Lithuanians of their limited intentions, to establish bases, the N.K.V.D. was busy drafting a top secret document. Issued under order 001223, the document set forth precise instructions for the arrest and deportation (to the USSR) of all anti-Soviet elements from Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania.<sup>35</sup> Molotov meanwhile attempted to ease the growing tensions, deriding "the foolish talk of Sovietization of the Baltic States..."<sup>36</sup> But with the signing of the Secret Supplementary Protocol, the process of incorporation had been set in motion.

Given the Soviet plan to incorporate Lithuania, what role did the party play in influencing the course of events during the period between the signing of the Mutual Assistance Pact (October 10, 1939), and the invasion of the Red Army (June 15, 1940). No evidence exists that the leaders of the party were briefed on Soviet plans to incorporate Lithuania, and Stalin had, perhaps, been sincere in his offer to bring it to heel. However, by December 1939, a change in the party's position became apparent. It abruptly deviated from its policy of cooperation with the Social Democrats and approval of the government's negotiation with the Soviet Union.

Today there can be no talk about about a united front with the leaders of the Social Democrats -- those loyal servants of the imperialists. Also there can be no talk about a people's front with the leaders of the petty-bourgeois parties, who are for imperialist war...<sup>37</sup>

After the establishment of Red Army bases, the party immediately surfaced in an organized effort to facilitate disorder and unrest. As reported in the Secret Order of the Director of the State Security Department of the USSR:

Lately the leaders of the Lithuanian Communist Party have instructed the party activists that an earlier establishment of Soviet power in Lithuania will largely depend upon the efforts and ability of the Communist Party to stir up revolutionary activity among the workers and peasants, particularly that taking among the form of public actions, such as strikes of workers and peasants,<sup>38</sup> demonstrations with demands to establish Soviet power...

Local Lithuanian communists whose confidence was greatly enhanced by the Soviet military presence began spreading rumors

of an impending revolution and the establishment of a Soviet Republic. An extract from the Central Committee of the party to the Executive Committee of the Comintern reflected this optimism, bordering on jubilation:

The liberation march of the Red Army and the Mutual Assistance Treaty with Lithuania have caused immense revolutionary upsurge. The prestige of the party has considerably grown.<sup>39</sup>

Thus, at the same time the Soviets were pouring in troops and military equipment the local communists were fomenting political unrest. Conditions continuously deteriorated in the subsequent months. The Lithuanian minister in Moscow reported that a "black cat crossed the path of Lithuanian Soviet Relations."<sup>40</sup>

On May 25, 1940, the Soviet government charged Lithuanian authorities with the kidnapping of two Soviet soldiers in Vilnius. The Soviet Union protested the alleged willful provocations by Lithuanian authorities stationed there. On May 31, 1940, the CPL repeated the charge and proclaimed:

All this shows, that the reactionary government does not loyally execute the treaty with the USSR. It also shows, that reactionary strata, which have the decisive influence in the government, maintain secret contacts with the imperialists and already now are attempting to sabotage the mutual assistance pact with the USSR.<sup>41</sup>

Although Lithuanian officials proposed a joint investigation, the Soviets rejected the offer and delivered an ultimatum. The timing for the Soviet ultimatum of June 14, 1940 was critical; the Germans were deep into the conquest of France;

Great Britain was preoccupied with her defenses; there was little chance or inclination among the warring powers to intervene on Lithuania's behalf. The ultimatum called for the dismissal of several members of the government, allegedly responsible for the provocations against Soviet troops, the formation of a pro-Soviet government, and the free entry of an unlimited number of Soviet troops. <sup>42</sup>

The Russians required an answer within ten hours. During the interim, Molotov informed Minister Urbys, the Lithuanian Foreign Minister, that regardless of the answer Soviet troops would enter Lithuania the next day. Despite an affirmative response on June 15, 1940, Lithuania was occupied by 300,000 troops. Estonia and Latvia suffered the same fate under a similar set of circumstances one day later. All three states offered no armed resistance. Apparently unaware that their fate was already sealed, military resistance would only provoke the Soviets into more drastic measures. Lithuania's president, A. Smetona read the situation correctly, however, and on the same day as the Soviet invasion, he fled to Germany.

On June 17, 1940, the Secretariat of the Central Committee of the Lithuanian Communist Party called a conference of representatives of the communist party and the People's Anti-fascist Front to discuss the composition of a new People's Government. Acting President Merkys and others of the existing Nationalist Government did nothing to interfere with the actions

of the communists. Several ministers, for various reasons cooperated with the communists.

Interpretations of the events of June and July vary greatly. The dissolution of the Nationalist Government, the formation of a "People's Government," and the national elections resulting in the incorporation of Lithuania into the Soviet Union are seen as a triumph for the masses by contemporary communist historians.<sup>43</sup>

In contrast, contemporary Lithuanian-American historians present the view (that is generally accepted among contemporary historians) that communism was forcibly imposed on a wholly unwilling nation. The declaration of Lithuania as a Soviet Socialist Republic is depicted by anti-communist historians as an obvious step toward the illicit incorporation of Lithuania into the Soviet Union.

The single motive of the Russian rulers, whether ancient or modern, has been to grind up as many people or as much territory as possible, regardless of the amount of unjust pressure employed in the process.<sup>44</sup>

Soviet imperialism lay behind the "rape of Lithuania." According to the investigation made by the United States House of Representatives in 1954, the Soviet incorporation of Lithuania was blatantly an act of coercion. This was also the position immediately adopted in Washington; on July 15, 1940, the



Assistant Chief of the Division of European Affairs of the U.S. State Department, Loy Henderson reported:

As you are aware, on one pretext or another the Soviet Government by demands backed up with threats of force, has during the last six weeks forced the three Baltic countries of Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania to permit the entrance of Soviet troops aggregating about 500,000 men. Under Soviet pressure the governments in all three countries have been replaced by governments which are mere Soviet puppets.<sup>45</sup>

In subsequent days it became increasingly clear that the United States and other western democracies would do little more than withhold formal recognition from Soviet Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia.

Meanwhile, the Soviets were moving quickly to solidify their position on a number of levels. The Peoples' Commissariat for State Security, the Lithuanian version of the NKVD, had been taken over on June 15, and was put under the control of a (non-Jew) Antanas Snieckus. Under his orders, arrests, interrogations, and purges of high-ranking members of the police force and the civil administration were carried out immediately. Relevant articles of the USSR's penal code were imposed on Lithuanian citizens. Another purge resulted in the dismissal of chiefs of counties, chiefs of police, mayors of cities and towns and chiefs of townships. The People's Militia was instituted on June 26, with the purpose of insuring domestic peace: "The direct duty of the Militia will be to suppress all criminal activities directed against the People's Government."<sup>46</sup>

Jewish associations were also fiercely attacked as "enemies of the people." For example, the communists attempted to restrict religious worship and instruction in the synagogue as well as the church. The Regime attacked Jewish national confiscated numerous Jewish owned shops and enterprises. This important point is often slighted by antiSoviet Lithuanian historians who ignore anti-Jewish measures in their treatment of Lithuanian persecution and oppression.

The basis for the charges was ideological and economic, consistent with the charge against non-Jews of similiar economic status. On July 6. 1940, the daily newspaper, Lietuvos Aidas, stated in its editorial on the suspension of the activities of the "Fund of Palestine and the "Office of Palestine":

During the Smetona period the Jewish reactionaries were trustful collaborators of the Lithuanian plutocrats. The Jewish bourgeoisie was an ally of Smetona; its representatives made a fool of the Jewish labor masses. The Jewish capitalists<sup>47</sup> worked together with the Lithuanian capitalists.

As the July 14 elections approached, Snieckus, the Director of the State Security, ordered the arrests of two-thousand leaders and active members of all non-communist political parties including: Nationalists, Voldemarists, Populists, Christian Democrats, Young Lithuanians, Trotskyists, Social Democrats, National Guardsmen and others. The action began throughout Lithuania on the night of July 11/12 1940. <sup>48</sup>

The State Security, to tighten control further, deported to the interior of the USSR a number of influential nationalist leaders including the former prime minister, A. Merkys, along

with the minister of foreign affairs, J. Urbsys. Both were deemed "dangerous to the Lithuanian state." The elections took place on July 14, 1940. The Supreme Electoral Commission announced the results the following day with 95.1% voter turnout reported. Soviet sources acknowledged that although the elections were "just and democratic" they were not "bourgeois democratic elections."<sup>49</sup> Elections were reportedly carried out in strict conformity with the law.<sup>50</sup>

In contrast to Soviet sources which stress the constitutionality of the election, it is apparent from a host of eyewitness accounts that intimidation and police methods drove voters to the polls. While voting, citizens were warned: "It is not at all permissible to throw ballots on the ground."<sup>51</sup>

The first session of the Peoples Diet, (Seimas) met in Kaunas on July 21, 1940. Despite no mention having been made of incorporating Lithuania into the the Soviet Union by any of the candidates, this resolution was adopted in slightly over an hour after the opening of the session:

The People's Diet, expressing the unanimous will of the toiling people, proclaims that the Soviet system shall be introduced into Lithuania. Lithuania shall be proclaimed a Soviet Socialist Republic.<sup>52</sup>

Following a brief recess, the People's Diet adopted a second resolution:

Now the People, helped by the mighty Red Army have established in their country the Soviet Government. If the people have been able to establish in their country the only just order --the Soviet Order--it is all due to the Soviet Union.<sup>53</sup>

Thus, local communists felt sufficiently comfortable to openly document that external rather than internal forces were primarily responsible for the Soviet state of Lithuania. J. Paleckis, Prime Minister and Acting President of the Republic and Prof. Kreve-Mickevicius, signed the document.

Less than two weeks later, August 3, 1940, the Supreme Soviet of the USSR granted the request of the Lithuanian Diet to admit the Soviet Socialist Republic of Lithuania to the USSR "as an equal Federal Soviet Socialist Republic."<sup>54</sup>

Even as the twenty-two year old independent, sovereign state of Lithuania ceased to exist in reality, it continued to live on as an impassioned ideal. For Lithuanian nationalists, the reconstitution of independent Lithuania became at once a supreme quest and a powerful force capable of moving men to extraordinary action. This motivational force is key to understanding the attitude and behavior of Lithuanian nationalists toward the Soviets, toward the Nazis, and to a lesser extent toward the Jews during the next four years and beyond.

In retrospect, it is possible to dissect and analyze the relatively minor role of the local party by examining other components involved in the process of Lithuanian incorporation: European diplomacy, the weaknesses of the Smetona Government, the organizational skill and the effective repressive tools of the Soviet Union. No doubt the (paper tiger) rhetoric and propaganda of the party contributed to the image that

it was responsible for bringing its prophesy to fruition. This, incidentally, corresponded to the worst fears of the nationalist-minded masses. The party with its large Jewish component and foreign element had long been a pariah, an outsider, and an enemy of Catholicism and the other cultural traditions of Lithuania as a nation state. Now the heinous indictment of selling out Lithuania to the Soviets was added to further stigmatize the double-sided image of treacherous Jew and communist.

The accuracy of that indictment may be determined by reviewing the events that took place from October 1939--the signing of The Secret Supplementary Protocol, until August 1940--the formal incorporation of Lithuania. The party played no role in the diplomacy that led to the signing of the Secret Supplementary Protocol. In the establishment of Soviet bases that followed, the party played a significant role in fomenting the political unrest that provided the pretext for the Soviet Union needed to hurl more severe charges at the Lithuanian government. After the invasion of the Red Army, Soviet Deputy Commissar of Foreign Affairs, V.G. Dekanozov ordered the formation of a new "people's government." The party provided the personnel for the government but given the steady stream of orders from Moscow it was apparent that the local party had little actual authority.

Finally, the elected representatives of the People's Diet, while all Lithuanians, were scarcely independent agents.

The question of freedom of action within the Lithuanian Diet was discussed by the Deputy Prime Minister V. Krev-Mickevicius, Jurgis Glusauskas, former Commissar of Social Maintenance and Lumber Industry, along with eight members of the Lithuanian Diet. According to these participants the vote for incorporation was fixed, the ballots of the deputies were never counted, and certain non-deputies were seated during the session and voted illegally.

During the early summer of 1940, the party was at the height of its power and influence but still not the chief force behind events. After the Communist Party was legalized on June 25, 1940, its membership quadrupled. But even with 5,000 members, the party constituted only a minute segment of the total population and was almost completely subordinate to the Soviets. The plan for the incorporation of Lithuania into the Soviet Union was conceived in Moscow and executed as a result of Soviet repressive capabilities. Lithuanians were simply too weak to counter the actions of more powerful neighbors.

The figurehead function of the party became clear soon after the completion of incorporation; its purpose having been served, the party's influence rapidly diminished. On October 8, 1940, the date the party was formally accepted into the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, or CPSU (b), the All Union Central Committee ordered a screening of the party's members. The screening developed into a purge resulting

in a membership of only 2,504 members and 634 candidates for membership. Those that remained in the rump party were completely subservient to the agents sent in from Moscow, who gradually took over key posts. According to Remeikis,

The members of the Lithuanian Council of People's Commissars were either Lithuanians or Jews, but behind every one of them there was an assistant from Moscow.

Remeikis also details the specific role of Jews in Lithuania's annexation to the USSR. The small number of Jews who actively facilitated incorporation were either Lithuanian communists or Soviet communists of Jewish descent. Some of these individuals had great influence on the course of events. However, Remeikis and others consistently fail to note that the vast majority of Lithuanian Jews were not communists and were just as powerless as the rest of the population to prevent incorporation. What clouded the issue in the eyes of contemporaries was that almost all Jews understandably preferred the Soviets to Nazis, whose antisemitism was a clear and menacing danger to their safety. To the public and, to the leaders who certainly knew better, the few prominent Jewish communists became, or were allowed to become the bearers of the guilt. They allowed perceptions, not reality to motivate behavior. Here, too, traditional antisemitic stereotypes came into play. Jews, it was widely believed, and not just in Lithuania, had brought off the original Bolshevik Revolution in 1917; they were notorious wire-pullers; they harbored seething

hatreds against all non-Jews and would stop at nothing to gain their revenge.

These charges and assumptions were without foundation. Lithuanian Jewry, before the incorporation of Vilnius into Lithuania on October 10, 1939, numbered 160,000 or 7% of the total population. However, with the acquisition of Vilnius the number increased by nearly 100,000. In addition 14,000-15000 Jews fled to Soviet Lithuania from Nazi-occupied Poland in 1939-1940. This left the Jewish population at its peak: 270,000 or slightly over 10% of the total population.<sup>56</sup>

The Jewish presence in its enlarged form did not pass unnoticed by ordinary Lithuanian citizens. They associated the influx of newcomers with the recent onslaught of agents from the Soviet Union; this in turn contributed to the perception that Jews were the prime beneficiaries of Soviet domination.

The cumbersome task of examining the validity of the postwar claim by Lithuanian nationalist historians that the Jews were treated so harshly by Lithuanians because they were actually or appeared to be communists, agents of the USSR, and thus oppressors of the Lithuanian people who were justifiably, or at least understandably enraged at the loss of their country involves many strands. Almost exclusively, these historians fall into the trap of equating all Jews with a few bad apples. In doing so they shift the burden of liability on the Jews themselves and whitewash the responsibility of the Lithuanian masses and their leaders. The succeeding chapters



will explore the position of Lithuanian leaders in addition to the masses of ill-informed, abused, and powerless during the execution of the Final Solution. The remaining segments of this chapter will analyze and expose contradictions in nationalist claims tying Jews to communism; that is, the actual role of Jews in the party, the role of Jews among Soviet agents. The miniscule role of the party in the incorporation of Lithuania into the Soviet Union and the Soviet reliance on subversion rather than open force on the masses during the subsequent ten month occupation will also be examined in connection with this theme.

The actual number of Soviet Jewish agents is not statistically ascertainable, although unreliable anecdotal evidence usually claims they were numerous. Somewhat better indications of the Jewish membership in the Lithuanian Communist Party are to be had. But these too, are by no means beyond dispute. One Lithuanian source, which does not divulge the nature of its evidence states that there were approximately 2,000, with another 20,000 as pro-Soviet sympathizers.<sup>57</sup> In addition to the Jews that temporarily served on the people's government following the invasion of the Red Army, five Jews were among the deputies elected as a result of the July 14-15 elections.

The Jewish participation in the NKVD was probably the single most damaging connection between Jew and Soviet;

Anti-Semitism, also manifested itself at least in part because many of the native traitors engaged in NKVD-NKGB work were Jews: Todes, Dembo, Finkelstein, Komodos, Krastinas, Didziulis"-Grosmanas, "Adomas" -Meskup, Judinas, Rosowsky, etc.<sup>58</sup>

The Lithuanian American Council, likewise identified a large Jewish presence in the NKVD, stressing their heinous crimes, including the massacre of seventy-three Lithuanians in the Rainai forest.<sup>59</sup>

The popular notion that many Jews served the NKVD was based more on conjecture than fact. Glakov, the Senior Major for State Security was Jewish in origin, but in the absence of positive identification many others were perceived as Jewish because of appearance or surname.

The Jewish role, though greatly magnified, in the purge and rapid reorganization of the Lithuanian Army at the end of June and July, 1940 also provoked loathing among the Lithuanian masses. On June 24, 1940, the communist party began to use the slogan: "Enemies of the People get out of the administration and the army."<sup>60</sup> Within days all commanders of higher military units were dismissed. Popular reaction was so vehemently opposed to the measures that on June 30, the Minister of Defense made a radio declaration assuring the people that the "Lithuanian Army will continue to exist and in the future, if necessary, will defend the Independence of Lithuania." However, just two days later, the Law on the

Reorganization of the Army was proclaimed, calling for a transformation of the Lithuanian Army into a People's Army.<sup>61</sup>

Political instructors were introduced in the army and a propaganda section was established. Soldiers were required to take part in political activities or face harsh punishment. Many of these political instructors, according to the publication of the Lithuanian Council were Jews. Twenty names were listed specifically with the suggestion of many others.<sup>62</sup>

From June 25 to December 25, 1940. Over 150 higher officers, including 10 generals were dismissed. Many were arrested and deported to the Soviet interior as army was being reorganized, the National Guard (Sauliu Sajunga) was disarmed. On July 22, 1940, a Lithuanian-born Soviet Major-General Felix Balthusis-Zemaiis became commander-in-chief of the People's Army. On August 22, 1940, Chief Commissar S. Mamcijauskas ordered army units to organize into cells of the Communist Party and Komsomol or Communist Youth groups.

During the subsequent 12 month period (with the mounting likelihood of war,) the Soviets took additional steps to integrate the Lithuanian Corps into the Red Army. All territorial units were transferred away from the German-Lithuanian border. All upper rank Lithuanian officers were relieved of their posts.<sup>63</sup>

Nevertheless, the German invasion caught the Red Army by surprise. A great number of Lithuanian troops mutinied and joined forces with nationalist partisan units or established

ties with the Wehrmacht. About 500 officers and 5,000 enlisted men successfully escaped Soviet control: the rest were forced to retreat east along with the Soviet Army. When the German Army entered Vilnius on June 24, 1941, it found the city in the hands of partisans and remnants of the 29th Corps which had reassembled in their old units.

Regarding the extent of Jewish involvement in the reorganization of Lithuanian Army by the Soviets, evidence is scant and extremely subjective. And the same is true for the broader question of the Jewish-communist complicity during the 1940 Soviet regime. Consequently, it is doubtful that one can do more than hypothesize. The evidence supporting the popular conception that Jews were communists is largely anecdotal and therefore must be carefully weighed. In summation, it appears that a combination of factors contributed to the making of the myth. First, the fundamental element: among those communists in visible roles Jews seemed conspicuous. Second, a disproportionate number of Jews were active in the Lithuanian Communist Party. Third, after incorporation, Jews appeared suddenly in positions that had previously been limited to Lithuanian nationals. Finally, Jews were known to believe that a Soviet regime would be preferable to the Nazis--a grossly unpopular opinion with non-Jewish Lithuanians.

The events of the subsequent months following the so-called vote for incorporation by the Lithuanian Diet on July 21, right up to the Nazi invasion of June 22, 1941 tended to solidify

the image of Jew as communist oppressor. Soviet policies intensified popular hatred. One blatant example was the arrest and deportation of alleged anti-Soviet and counterrevolutionary elements during the week prior to the German invasion. The NKGB (People's Commissariat for State Security) of Lithuania rounded up thousands of Lithuanians who ultimately ended up in Soviet Asia where many perished. But Jews, too, were deported in what amounted to a concerted attempt to destroy the cultural and religious institutions of the community. Among those sent to the East were leaders, functionaries, and especially, journalists active in Zionist organizations, the socialist Bund, Jewish self-defense and veterans' associations including the Association of Jewish Participants in the Fight for Lithuanian Independence, the Jewish War Veterans and the Zionist Revisionists. <sup>64</sup>

Proportionately more Jews than Lithuanians were deported--.9% of the Lithuanian population as opposed to 1.5% of the Jewish population. However, the publication of the Lithuanian American Council reported that in the eyes of the public, Jews were held responsible for deportations. Although the publication stated that the arrests were carried out by "Jewish" security officers in charge of the deportation, A closer look revealed that the Lithuanian Chief of Police, a non Jew, initiated the arrests: and the final orders were signed by Soviet communists. The publication of the Lithuanian

American Council acknowledged, most grudgingly, that Jews were victims as well as perpetrators:

Another fact--among thousands of people who were deported to Siberia there were also a few thousand Jews. On the other hand certain Jews of Kaunas were attendants<sup>65</sup> during the mass deportations to Siberia.

Although nationalization of important branches of the economy applied equally to all citizens without regard to ethnic origins, large segments of the essentially middle-class Jewish population were especially affected. Imposition of heavy taxes on small shopkeepers, the typical occupation of the Jewish masses, led to loss of businesses and proletarianization. The larger commercial enterprises, also disproportionately owned by Jews, began being expropriated in the early Fall of 1940. Seizures included 1,587 stores, restaurants, and warehouses along with 43 hotel and 2,555 other buildings.<sup>66</sup> By June of 1941, only one tenth of the previously owned private shops remained in the hands of their owners.

Of the larger industrial enterprises nationalized: 560 or 57% belonged to Jews. Out of the 1,320 commercial firms nationalized, Jews had owned 1,095 or about 83%. In early July, the state expropriated all factories employing more than twenty persons and/or firms exceeding 150,000 litas in capital value. By March of 1941, nationalization was nearly complete with over 1,000 industries converted into state enterprises. Houses of 220 square meters and larger were

nationalized.<sup>67</sup> Subsequently these properties were distributed to the new ruling elite, the Soviet bureaucracy. The bulk of Lithuanian Jewry as well as the Lithuanian middle-class: landlords, merchants, commercial elements, suffered severe economic dislocation. Many were forced to flee the large cities seeking a livelihood in the villages. Although victims of the same fate, in the eyes of prominent Lithuanians, the Jews were held responsible for the financial consequences of Soviet policy.

The devaluation of the lita, as a result of Sovietization, adversely affected a cross-section of urban Lithuanians: the Jews and the small Lithuanian middle class were among the hardest hit. Formerly one lita was bought between 3-5 rubles. The Soviets pegged the lita at .9 ruble.<sup>68</sup> Because of this artificial devaluation of the lita, actual purchasing power diminished. People formerly of influence and the humble experienced bitter social and economic consequences.

The agricultural population suffered the fewest effects from Sovietization. Although the intention to collectivize was clear, one year was not long enough to carry out the nationalization program in the countryside -- over two-thirds of the population. Despite early statements and propaganda that farms would remain in private hands, by May of 1941 dozens of state farms were already in operation.

Even as the economic policies of the Soviets engendered hostility in the Lithuanian masses, a number of non-economic

measures of the Sovietization program elicited equally angry responses. Sovietizing Lithuania necessarily meant transforming her institutions: government, army, church, schools and social/cultural organizations. In most cases, the leadership and personnel of such institutions needed to be replaced. Gaining complete control of the military and police agencies was the first priority after seizing the reins of government. The speed with which the police and the military forces were subordinated by the communists stemmed from the obvious need to control the instruments of repression. Only by controlling the tools of coercion could the other Sovietization measures hope to succeed. According to the Select Committee on Communist Aggression: "The objective of the new chief and his force was the liquidation of all persons who had held any official posi in the political, religious, cultural or economic life of the country." <sup>69</sup> Thus, from the earliest moment, potential enemies were targeted and arrested - about 12,000 during the period of the first Soviet Occupation.<sup>70</sup>

After establishing a degree of control over the institutions of repression, the police and the armed forces, the Church was the next target of Sovietization. Over ninety per cent of Lithuania's three million inhabitants were Roman Catholics. Catholicism was a source of cohesion and a symbol of national identity for the vast majority of Lithuanians. Thus, its influence and power had to be rapidly undermined



for a successful integration of Lithuania into the Soviet Union. A number of religious leaders were included in the initial list of 2,000 "public enemies" arrested just before the "People's Diet elections."<sup>71</sup>

The newly formed communist government enacted several legislative and administrative measures to restrict and subvert the religious sector. The Concordat (of 1927) with the Vatican was voided on June 25, 1940. State salaries, pensions and all monetary supplements to religious personnel and/or agencies were halted. Bank accounts and other church property became nationalized along with privately owned assets. On July 29, 1940, Radio Vatican reported that the Soviets had implemented their usual anti-religious policies including imposing exorbitant taxes on the clergy.<sup>72</sup> Former church structures were requisitioned for military use. On August 6, Nuncios Centoz noted that the Soviets had sequestered seminaries for quartering troops.<sup>73</sup> On August 13, the Vatican noted among other things, that throughout the Baltic states anti-religious propaganda was widespread.<sup>74</sup>

Further anti-Church measures included converting religious holidays into ordinary work days. The teaching of religion both formally and informally was banned. Catholic printing shops and bookstores were confiscated and religious books removed from public libraries.

These restrictions encountered massive resistance. Because Sovietization had to appear as a grass roots movement, the

Soviets were reluctant to use open force to suppress the Lithuanian masses. More covert measures were necessary including attempting to recruit spies to report on church activities.<sup>75</sup>

Although freedom to worship or the right to perform liturgical rites and sacraments were not officially abrogated, attendance in church was taken and services screened under the supervision of Soviet officials. In 1941, as the political situation grew increasingly tense between Germany and the Soviet Union, Soviet bureaucrats instituted more direct and forceful methods of coercion including arrests and deportations to Russia. Despite the dangers, Bishop Vincent Brizgus, the Auxiliary of Kaunas, reported to the Pope on March 21, 1941, that the faith was growing and even Soviet military personnel were visiting churches and practicing religion.<sup>76</sup>

The educational system in Lithuania, after first being wrenched from the religious sphere, was earmarked for a major role in the Sovietization of Lithuania's youth. The school would be transformed into an "instrument of communist education." The party demanded that "children be trained atheistically beginning in kindergarten" and scrutinized curriculum, organization, and personnel.<sup>77</sup> Before the classes opened for the (1940) school term, the people's commissar for education instructed the teachers to tear out unsuitable pages from old textbooks because new ones could not be provided in time. Many national writers were eliminated from school readers and new Stalinist writers and poets appeared. For example,

large portions of the work of Vincas Kudirka, author of the Lithuanian national anthem, were deleted.

Sovietization met with intense opposition from among Lithuanian youth. According to a Soviet document drawn up in April 1941, no less than one half of the reported anti-Soviet publications were printed and disseminated by underground organizations of both secondary and university students. One example was The L.N.P. or Lithuanian Independence Party which organized a propaganda campaign in September 1940, distributing handwritten and mimeographed leaflets under the slogans:

"Long live independent Lithuania"  
"Down with the communist terror"<sup>78</sup>  
"Lithuania for the Lithuanians"

Twenty-six secondary students were arrested as a result of the exposure of this organization.

Students comprised a large portion of the 100,000 participants who revolted against the Soviets at the onset of the German invasion (see chapter 3). As in the cases of the army and church, Sovietization was far from a complete success before the German invasion.

The Sovietization of culture also proved a difficult assignment especially because the intellectual and artistic realm lacked the standardized components of other institutionalized structures i.e. the educational system, the army, the church hierarchy. Consequently, the campaign focused on the confiscation of pieces of art and literature

and all works that were deemed subversive by Soviet officials. Over 423,639 rare books, historic documents, and religious art monuments were removed from public museums and libraries.

Resistance was not uniform, however. For example, the famous Lithuanian poetess, Salomeja Neris was one of several prominent intellectuals and artists who embraced the Soviet Order. Her ode to Stalin glorified the man and his achievements. However, such outspoken support for the Soviets among Lithuania's intellectuals was rare. The majority of the intelligensia, despite repeated requests of the party, failed to create anything original to glorify the events of 1940.

The final facet of Soviet policy that stirred enormous antipathy among the masses occurred in what would be the Soviets last week of rule -- June 14-21, 1941. During that operation, cut short by the Nazi invasion, thousands of "anti-Soviet minded" Lithuanians and their families were loaded on freight cars and deported to Siberia and other parts of Soviet Asia. There they were interned in forced labor camps and set to work in coal mines, cutting timber and other hard labor tasks.

Plans for this operation had been drawn up almost two years before reaching fruition. Although the exact date is not stated on the document entitled Moscow Instructions on Deportation, a subsequent NKVD document refers back to the former as dated Oct. 11, 1939,<sup>80</sup> just one day after the signing of the Mutual Assistance Pact of October 10, 1939. Most

Lithuanian sources state that thirty-five thousand persons were deported during that week.

Along with the deportations for which the masses held both Soviet and Jews accountable (both Gladkov and Todes played conspicuous roles), the acts committed by the retreating Red Army on June 22-24, 1941 incited new degrees of public outrage. One Lithuanian writer described a Russian tank which drove up to the Pravieniski Concentration Camp, thirty kilometers from Kaunas, where about five-hundred Lithuanians were held prisoner for delinquency in meeting excessive grain delivery quotas, then proceeded to mow down women and children with machine guns. <sup>80</sup>

According to the same source, 52,000 Lithuanians were wounded, killed, or missing as a result of the one-year Soviet regime. Nearly 9,000 of those killed were political prisoners incarcerated at the onset of the Nazi invasion. The major prisons and work-camps were swept by NKVD and the NKGB and the majority of prisoners were executed en masse. One mass murder was described:

The most terrible death was meted out to 76 political prisoners, mostly high school students in the Rainai Forest near Telsiai. Motors were kept running noisily by the roadside while the prisoners were subjected to unspeakable sadistic tortures--by a NKVD crew of 51, including several women and two native Lithuanians. "<sup>81</sup>

Joseph Gutman, a Jew, was held responsible for orchestrating the Rainai Forest massacre.<sup>82</sup> Gutman, along with Gladkov and Todes provided "evidence" for inflating the Jewish role in

the mass murders during the final days before the Nazi takeover. The close affinity between Jew and Soviet in the eyes of the nationalist masses was reflected in the anti-Soviet publications and propaganda promulgated by the Lithuanian underground resistance. Once again, evidence that countered the myth of Jewish Bolshevism found no outlet. Such evidence was abundant. For Zionists, the orthodox, factory owners, and businessmen the Soviet reign was disastrous. Many were arrested along with Lithuanian nationals for so-called anti-Soviet practices. They, too, met cruel fates.

A summary Soviet report dated April 14, 1941 referred to "antisemitic leaflets distributed throughout the country" containing mottos such as, "Fight against Communism, Stalin, against the Red Army, against Jews, for the the reestablishment of Smetona"; "Refrain from voting for Jews"; "Down with Communism and Jews, Long Live Independent Lithuania." This document categorized the counter revolutionary leaflets into three headings:

1) Appeals to Lithuanians to unite for the struggle against Bolshevism, for the reestablishment of a mighty insurrectionist Lithuania.

2) Antisemitic tracts.

3) Appeals to refrain from voting for the nominees to the Supreme Soviet of the USSR.<sup>83</sup>

Both the real and perceived differences between Jews and Lithuanians became more pronounced in the first half of

1941 as rumors of a war between Russia and Germany began to intensify. Most Jews viewed the Soviets as a buffer to Nazism and were willing to make whatever accommodations to the Soviets, including sacrificing the Lithuanian national state, that went along with that protection. In contrast, most Lithuanians looked towards the Germans as potential liberators and were willing to make whatever accommodations to the Germans deemed necessary to get back their sovereignty. Lithuanians viewed the Soviet take-over as a national tragedy in which Jews as a collective body were active collaborators. With the onset of the Nazi invasion Lithuanian underground leaflets became more radical in their antisemitism calling on Lithuanians to settle their account with Jewish traitors when the occasion presented itself. However, considering that in the wake of the Soviet withdrawal, the partisans randomly attacked Jews and virtually ignored known Lithuanian and Polish collaborators, the issue was not (Soviet) collaboration alone.

At that highly charged juncture it appeared that the masses were unable to make the distinction between ultra-orthodox Jews, bourgeois Jews, Zionist Jews, bundists and Communist Jews. Rather all were lumped into the last category and charged with having sold out Lithuania to the Soviets. Although it is possible that the Lithuanian leaders were no less ignorant and prejudiced than the rest of the population, it is more likely that those who were able to make the distinction chose not to enlighten their countrymen. Instead, they believed

it was in their best interests to utilize the Germans as a vehicle for the restoration of the Lithuanian state which they hoped would follow the ousting of the Soviet Regime.

Thus, the subsequent cooperation which Lithuanian officials gave to the Germans in 1941 was based on a number of factors, but very little had to do with sharing a common ideology (fascism). Beyond expulsion of the Soviets, what Lithuanians and Germans had in common was antisemitism. But Lithuania's antisemitism was of the eastern European variety, not the fascist racism of the Nazis. Antisemitism in eastern Europe, while deeply ingrained in popular consciousness and religiously reinforced was primarily an argument over scarce goods--occupations, economic rewards and social status. For Nazi antisemites it was a philosophical, world-historical question, an explanation of world history past, present, and future. Without being fascist, Lithuanian antisemitism nonetheless provided the common currency between the two unequal partners. Lithuanian leaders could bargain with the lives of Jews to get what they wanted most-- independence; that they could also solve their Jewish problem was an added bonus and, as it turned out, better than nothing at all.



## B. Endnotes

1. Dr. Juozas Prunskis, Lietuviu Archives: Bolsevizmo Metai (Lithuanian Archives, The Years of Bolshevism), (New York: Lithuanian American Information Center, 1952) and his popularly distributed abridged treatise Lithuania's Jews and the Holocaust (Chicago: Lithuanian American Council, 1979), p. 15. Prunskis is one prominent Lithuanian-American historian. See also Thomas Remeikis, Communist Party of Lithuania (Urbana, Ph.D. Dissertation, 1963); Algirdas Budreckis, The Lithuanian National Revolt of 1941 (Boston: Lithuanian Encyclopedia Press, 1968); Kazys Pakstas, Lithuania and World War II (Chicago: Lithuanian Cultural Institute, 1947); K. Pelekis, Genocide, Lithuania's Threefold Tragedy (Stuttgart; Venta, 1949); B. Kaslas, The USSR - German Aggression Against Lithuania (Buffalo: William Hein and Co., 1973); Jonas Petraitis, Lithuania Under the Sickle and Hammer (Cleveland: The League for the Liberation of Lithuania, 1945); Stasys Daunys, "The Development of Resistance and the National Revolt against the Soviet Regime in Lithuania in 1940-1941," Lituanis (Chicago V. 8 no. 1-2 1962), pp. 11-15.

2. Rabbi Ephraim Oshry, Responsa from the Holocaust (New York: Judaica Press, 1973), p. 17. The reference to other Jewish/Lithuanian survivors and chroniclers of the period who treat Lithuanian antisemitism as a multi-faceted phenomenon includes: Sarah Neshamit, "Rescue in Lithuania," in Rescue Attempts During the Holocaust: Proceedings of the Second Yad Vashem International Historical Conference; Yisrael Gutman and Efraim Zuroff ed. (Jerusalem, Yad Vashem, 1977); Yitzchak Arad, Ghetto in Flames (New York: Holocaust Library, 1982); William Mishell, Kaddish for Kovno (Chicago: Chicago Review Press, 1988); Dov Levin, "The Jews in the Soviet Lithuanian Establishment, 1940-1941," Soviet Jewish Affairs 10, (May 1980); Abraham Tory, Surviving the Holocaust (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1990); Frieda Frome, Some Dare to Dream (Iowa City, University of Iowa Press, 1988).

3. Henrikas Zemeitis gives an interesting eyewitness account of the welcome given the Germans: "Day and Night the German Army marches through Kaunas. There are crowds of thousands of people on Laisves Aleja. Everyone wants to see the German soldiers who brought liberation...One middle-aged corporal steps out of the formation and asks why these people so happy and greet us pleasantly. I briefly gave him an account of the harm the Bolsheviks have caused in Lithuania and explain that they greet the Germans warmly because the latter have liberated them from this terror." See Okupantu Replese (Bad Woerishofen, 1947), p. 40. This sentiment is almost universally held by Lithuanian-American scholars and chroniclers of the period.

4. Remeikis, Communist Party p. 189
5. Remeikis, Communist Party p. 190
6. Yaakov Vygodski In Shturm (Vilnius, 1926), p. 200.
7. "Rezolutsie vegn vilne," in Der Yiddiser natisional rat in lite. Barikht vegn zayn tetikeyt 1920-1922 (Kaunas, 1922), pp. 7-8.
8. See N. Rothstein's depiction in She'arim (Tel Aviv, March 15, 1945).
9. J. Eliasberg, A World in Turmoil (Jerusalem, 1965) as cited by Azriel Schochat in "Jews, Lithuanians, and Russians 1939-1941," Jews and non-Jews in Eastern Europe ed. Bela Vago and George L. Mosse, (Jerusalem: Israel Universities Press, 1974), p. 305.
10. The Kaunas Party Organization is described in various reports in the communist press, especially Komunistas, Partijos Darboas, Balsas, Feb., 1933, p. 28.
11. See Lithuanian Encyclopedia Volume 2, (Boston: 1952-1962). See also figures stated in Prunskis, Lithuania's Jews and the Holocaust p. 9; S. Atamukas, LKP Kova Pries Fasizma, uz Tarybu Valdžia Lietuvoje 1935-1940 Metais (The Struggle of the CPL Against Fascism for the Soviet Government in Lithuania During the Years 1935-1940), (Vilnius: Mintis 1958), p. 70; Also see Dov Levin, "The Jews in the Soviet Lithuanian Establishment 1940-1941," Soviet Jewish Affairs 10, (May 1980). On the various political parties of the Jews of Lithuania see the series of articles "Miflagot u-tnuot," in Yahadut lita, 2, pp. 189-246.
12. Centralinis Statiskos Biuras, Lietuvos Statistikos Metrastis (Central Bureau of Statistics, Statistical Yearbook of Lithuania), 1937, p. 13, 1939, pp. 1-13.
13. Bureau Central de Statistique, Le Lithuanie en Chifres 1918-1928 (Kaunas: 1928), p. 2. Concerning the demography of interwar Lithuanian Jewry, the classic East European type prevailed -- the percentage of Jews in the few cities was conspicuously large (31.9% in 1923), but also numerous in the many small towns. Over one third of all Lithuanian Jews lived in these "Shetlekh" which dotted the countryside. The largest Jewish community -- about 25,000 resided in the former provincial capital, Kaunas, in 1923. See L. Hersch "Tsu der demografie fun der yidisher bafelkerung in kovner lite erev der tsveyter velt milkhome," Yivo bleter 34, (1950), pp. 274-276; See also "The Jews of Lithuania 1923," American Jewish Yearbook 32, (1930) pp. 276-80.

14. According to the figures given by Centralinis Statiskikos Biuras, Visuotinis Lieuvos Zemes Uko Surasymas 1930 vol. I, p. 48; more than three fourths of Lithuanian farms were privately owned.

15. See Ezra Mendelsohn, The Jews of East Central Europe Between the World Wars (Bloomington: Indiana Univ. Press, 1983), pp. 17-45.

16. S. Baranuskus, Nineteen Years in the Underground (Vilnius: Mintis, 1965), p. 162.

17. Mathew 27: 20-25 and John 8: 34-44 depict Jews as being Christ killers and sons of the devil whose sins are passed on from generation to generation.

18. Chimen Aramsky, Maciej Jachimczyk and Antony Polonsky The Jews in Poland (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1986), p. 5.

19. William Mishell, Kaddish for Kovno (Chicago: Chicago Review Press, 1988), p. 9.

20. Prunskis, Lithuania's Jews pp. 13-14.

21. Prunskis, Lithuania's Jews p. 15.

22. Prunskis, Lithuania's Jews p. 14.

23. Prunskis, Lithuania's Jews pp. 14-15.

24. Prunskis, Lithuania's Jews p. 14.

25. Thomas Remeikis Communist Party p. 90.

26. A photocopy of one such map was published by the Supreme Lithuanian Committee in Memorandum on the Restoration of Lithuania's Independence (Reutlingen: Lithuanian Executive Council, 1950). For a pro-Lithuanian nationalist view see "Baltic States: A Study of Their Origin and National Development; Their Seizure and Incorporation into the U.S.S.R.," Third Interim Report of the Select Committee on Communist Aggression Report No. 2684, Parts No. 1 to 16. House of Representatives, Eighty-third congress, Second Session, under the authority of House Resolution 346 and House Resolution 438. United States Government Printing Office Washington: 1954. Henceforth noted as Third Interim Report. For an opposing view see Konstantinas Navickas, The Role of the Soviet Union in Protecting Lithuania against Imperialistic Aggression in 1920-1940 (Vilnius: Mintis, 1966).

27. Alexander Dallin, "The Baltic States between Nazi Germany and Soviet Russia," in The Baltic States in Peace and War S. Vardys and V. Misiunas, (University Park: Pennsylvania State Univ. Press, 1978), p. 102. Andreas Hilgruber, "Die Endlösung und das deutsche Ostimperium als Kernstruck des rassenideologischen Programms des Nationalsozialismus," Vierteljahrshefte für Zeitgeschichte 20, (noted hereafter as VFZ), (1972) pp. 133-53. For an eyewitness and highly subjective account of the political events of 1939-1940 see Antanas Smetona, Pro memoria (Chicago: Margutis 1955), no 7-8. Also see August Rei, "The Baltic Question at the Moscow Negotiations in 1939," East and West (London, 1955), pp. 20-29. For a survey of German policy during the interwar period see Akten zur Deutschen Aussenpolitik, 1918-1945 series D, XIII, pt. 2 (Göttingen, 1970). Also see Martin Broszat, Nationalsozialistische Polenpolitik 1939-1945 (Stuttgart: Deutsche Verlags-Anstalt, 1961); Klaus Hildebrand, Deutsche Aussenpolitik 1933-1945: Kalkül oder Dogma? (Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 1971).
28. Documents on German Foreign Policy 1918-1945 Henceforth noted as (G.D.F.P.), Series C. Nos. 45, 47, 48, 354, 373, memorandum by Meyer, July 17, 1933, T- 120, 1466/3015/D 596290-91. Gerhard Weinberg, The Foreign Policy of Hitler's Germany: Diplomatic Revolution in Europe, 1933-1936 (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1970). Weinberg asserts that Lithuania was a nation whose importance for German diplomacy in the 1920's and 1930's was significantly greater than Latvia or Estonia. Two important treatments of German-Lithuanian relations at this time based on archival materials are Felix-Heinrich Gentzen, "Die Rolle der Deutschen Stiftung' bei der Vorbereitung der Annexion des Memellandes im März 1939," Jahrbuch für Geschichte der UdSSR und der Volksdemokratischen Länder 5, (1961), pp. 71-94; and Ernst-Albert Plieg, Das Memelland 1920-1939 (Würzburg: Holzner, 1962). The first is written from a Soviet (post-war) perspective and concentrates on German agitation and the second is pro-German and stresses Lithuanian measures of repression on members of the Nazi Party in Memel.
29. G.D.F.P., C. 1, Nos. 405, n. 3; 2, Nos. 143, 214, 215, 348; Stafford (U.S. charge a.i. Kaunas) despatch 6, January 9, 1934, State 760 M. 62/92. On difficulties in German-Lithuanian relations in 1934 see G.D., C. 3 No. 67, 75, 68, 80, 131, 142, 144, 193, 196, memorandum by von Bulow Dec. 22, 1934, T-120 2372/4602/ E 189935-936. For a view that depicts Nazi victimization of Lithuania see articles by Constantine Jurgela, Lithuania in a Twin Teutonic Clutch (New York: Lithuanian Information Center, 1945). For a brief summary of the National Socialist Party in Memel see Martin Broszat in Gutachten des Institute für Zeitgeschichte (Munich: Selbstverlag, 1958), pp. 395-400.

30. G.D.F.P., D. 5 No. 381, 382. The reception of Neumann by Hitler is reported in a letter of the head of the German foreign ministry department responsible for the Baltic States, Werner von Grundherr to the German minister to Lithuania, Erich Zechlin, of January 2, 1939. The exact date is not known as the meeting was kept out of the press. On the Memel issue of October-December 1938, see G.D. 5 Nos. 359-75. see also "Bestellungen aus der Pressekonferenz," January 9, 1939, Bundesarchiv, Brammer, Z. Sg. 101/12 f,10; Kirk (Moscow) tel. 35 of January 26, 1938, State 860M. 11 (Memel) 557. For a larger background see F. Krummacher and Helmut Lange Krieg und Frieden: Geschichte der deutsch--sowjetischen Beziehungen. Von Brest-Litovsk zum Unternehmen Barbarossa (Munich: Bechtle Verlag, 1970); Paul Kluge, "Nationalsozialistische Europa-Ideologie," VFZ 3, No. 3 (July 1955), 240-75.

31. G.D., D. 5 Nos. 399, 405. Hitler unsuccessfully attempted to persuade Lithuania to become an ally in a quick war against Poland offering Vilnius as an enticement. See also Walter Hubatsch (ed.) Hitler's Weisungen für die Kriegführung, 1939-1945 (Frankfurt/M: Bernard & Graefe, 1962); Gerhard L. Weinberg, "German Colonial Plans and Policies, 1938-1942," in Geschichte und Gegenwartsbewusstsein: Festschrift für Hans Rothfels (July 1970), pp. 462-91.

32. Georg von Rauch, Geschichte der Baltischen Staaten (Stuttgart, 1970). p. 172. cited in Alander Dallin, "The Baltic States between Nazi Germany and Soviet Russia," The Baltic States in Peace and War V. Stanley Vardys and Romuald Misiunas ed. Also see Hans Seraphim, Die deutsch-russian Beziehungen 1939-41 (Hamburg: Nolke, 1949), p. 94. See also Albert Tarulis, Soviet Policy Toward the Baltic States (Notre Dame: Notre Dame Univ. Press, 1959).

33. "Treaty of Nonaggression," August 23, 1939, and "Secret Supplementary Protocol," see Raymond Sontag and James Beddie, Nazi-Soviet Relations 1939-1941 (New York: Didier, 1948), p. 78 and p. 107. See also Jane Dregras, ed. Soviet Documents on Foreign Policy VIII 1933-1941 (London: Oxford University press, 1953); Vyriausbes zinios (Official Journal of Lithuania. no. 699; E. Turauskas, Communist diplomacy exposed; Lithuanian experiences in Appeasement (New York: Lithuanian Information Service, 1941), pp. 1-6.

34. Quote from the Third Interim Report p. 316. Also see "The Soviet concept of the occupation and incorporation of the Baltic States," Baltic Review (New York) no. 10, March 1957, pp. 3-18. For broader view on politics see Helmuth Weiss, "Die baltischen Staaten; von der Moskauer Verträgen bis zur Eingliederung der baltischen Staaten in die Sowjetunion," (1939-1940), Sowjetisierung Ost-Mitteleuropas (Frankfurt a. M: Ernst Birde, 1959).

35. Opinion of the Lithuanian American Council Know Your Enemy p. 25. See also the Third Interim Report p. 454. Lithuanian nationalist scholars have uniformly stated that the annexation of Lithuania to the Soviet Union was not voluntary but the result of Soviet aggression. See Joseph Pajaujis Jarvis Soviet Genocide in Lithuania (New York: Maryland Books, Inc., 1980); Jilius Smulkstys, "The Incorporation of the Baltic States by the Soviet Union," Lituanus (Chicago), 14, 1968, pp. 18-44.

36. Izvestiia November 1, 1939. English translation in Stanley Vardys in "Aggression Soviet Style 1939-40," in Lithuania under the Soviets (New York: Praeger, 1965.) p. 48. See L. Schultz "The Soviet Concept of the Occupation and Incorporation of the Baltic States," Baltic Review (New York), 10, March 1957, pp. 25-166.

37. Quoted from J. Ziugzda, ed. Lietuvos TSR Istorijos Saltiniai (The Sources of Lithuanian SSR History), (Vilnius: Lithuanian SSR Academy of Sciences, Institute of History, 1957-1961), p. 741.

38. "Secret Order of the Director of the State Security Department, Povilaitis, to the Regional Chiefs of the Security Police and the Chief of the Agency Department on Preventing the Communists from Drawing the Working People into Revolutionary Activities," December 5, 1939. English translation by Vytautas Kancevicius, (ed.) Lithuania in 1939-1940 (Vilnius: Mintis, 1976), p. 114.

39. "Extract from the Report of the Secretary of the Central Committee of the Lithuanian Communist Party, Meskupas, to the Executive Committee of the Communist International," English translation by Kancevicius Lithuania in 1939-1940 p. 115.

40. "Report of the Plenipotentiary Minister of Lithuania, Dr. Ladas Natkevicius Minister to the Lithuanian Foreign Minister," April, 1940.

41. Kommunistas (The Communist), The Journal of the Central Committee of the CPL: No. 6. (Vilnius: June 1960), p. 31.

42. The ultimatum is translated in Hearings before the Select Committee to Investigate Communist Aggression and the Forced Incorporation of the Baltic States into the USSR US. Congress. Baltic States Investigation, (Washington D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1954), pp. 537-539. Also see J. Jarvis Soviet Genocide p. 13. See Stasys Rastikis, Kovose del Lietuvos (Los Angeles, 1957).B. Endnotes

1. Dr. Juozas Prunskis, Lietuviu Archives: Bolsevizmo Metai (Lithuanian Archives, The Years of Bolshevism), (New York: Lithuanian American Information Center, 1952) and his popularly distributed abridged treatise Lithuania's Jews and the Holocaust

43. The pro-Soviet historians stress the theme that the masses were dissatisfied with the Nationalist government and voluntarily instituted the Soviet regime in Lithuania. See Lithuania in 1939-1940 (ed.), Vytautas Kancevicius, (Vilnius, Mintis, 1976). See also Kommunistas September 1958 p. 18, the articles of I. Lempertas in Istorijos Klausimai pp. 139-178. K. Tiskevicius, "The Crisis of the Fascist Government on the Eve of the Re-establishment of Soviet Government in Lithuania (1938-1940)," in a collection of Articles in Uz Socialistine Lietuva (For a Socialist Lithuania), J. Ziugzda, ed. (Vilnius: Mintis, 1960), pp. 261-295. Pertinent documents on the legalization of the incorporation of Lithuania are located in Lietuvos TSR Mokslu Akademia Lietuvos (Vilnius 1961).

44. B. Kaslas, The USSR-German Aggression p. 22.

45. "Memorandum by the Assistant Chief of the Division of European Affairs of the US State Department," Henderson, (Washington DC, July 15, 1940). See U.S. Foreign Relations 1940 V. 1, p. 389.

46. Vilniaus Balsas July 3, 1940. Underground anti-Soviet nationalist groups circulated a large number of anti-Soviet publications designed to unmask Soviet intentions. One such document dated July 8, 1940 sponsored by the "Force for Lithuania's Defense," stated, "A true Lithuanian would die rather than vote for Lithuania's traitors. Do not go to the polling places, because there you'll be forced to betray your brethren, your freedom, and your religion."

47. Lietuvos Aidas July 6, 1940.

48. Lietuviu Arhyvas V. 1, p. 13.

49. Lietuvos Zinios July 15, 1940, quoting Kostas Korskas, Director of the official Lithuanian Information Bureau.

50. "Report of the Supreme Electoral Commission," (Kaunas: July 16, 1940), Vyriausybes Zinios on July 17, 1940.

51. XX Amzius July 15, 1940.

52. Vyriausybes Zinios July 22, 1940, No. 719. (Kaunas: July 22, 1940) No. 719.

53. Lietuvos Aidas July 15, 1940.

54. Sed'maia Seslia Verkhovnovo Soveta, SSSR. 1 avgusta-7 avgusta 1940; Stenograficheskii otchet, Izdanie Verkhovnogo Soveta, SSSR 1940, p. 186.

55. Thomas Remeikis Communist Party p. 340. For a comparison see Levin, "The Jews in the Soviet Lithuanian Establishment." and "The Jews in the Election Campaigns in Lithuania," Soviet Jewish Affairs 10 no. 2, (1980) pp. 39-51.
56. Encyclopedia Judaica V. 2, p. 213, 1970. See also Dov Levin, "Participation of the Lithuanian Jews in the Second World War," Journal of Baltic Studies V. 1. (1975), pp. 300-310.
57. Budreckis, The Lithuanian Revolt p. 18.
58. Budreckis, The Lithuanian Revolt p. 18.
59. Prunskis, Lithuania's Jews p. 15. See also Levin, "The Jews in Soviet-Lithuanian Establishments," For a brief treatment of the history of Jews and Communism in Central and Eastern Europe see Jerold Muller, "Communism, Anti-Semitism and the Jews," in Commentary August, 1988.
60. "X X Amzius June 26, July 2-5, 1940: Balsas July 4, 1940.
61. Vyriausybes Zinios N. 714, 1940.
62. Prunskis, Lithuania's Jews p. 14.
63. Lietuviu Enciklopedija V. 15, p. 118-119.
64. "Instruction on the Preparation of Five-Day Accounting Summaries of Anti-Soviet and Counter-Revolutionary Elements, in conformity with order No. 0023 of the NKGB (People's Commissariat of State Security) of the Lithuanian SSR, April 25, 1941.
65. Prunskis, Lithuania's Jews p. 15.
66. Encyclopedia Judaica V. 11 p. 381-385. See also M. Inder, "Yidishe mokhe in ite," Yidishe ekomik 3 Lietuviu Enciklopedija V. 15, p. 354; Dov Levin "The Jews in the Soviet Lithuanian Establishment 1940-1941," Soviet Jewish Affairs 10, 2, (May 1980), p. 24.
67. Encyclopedia Judaica V. 11, p. 331-385. Speech of June 22, 1940, by Minister of Agriculture, S. Mickis. Translation in C. Jurgela Lithuania, the Outpost of Freedom p. 211.
68. Lietuviu Enciklopedija V. 15, p. 364.
69. Opinion of Third Interim Report p. 345.



70. F. Pelekis, in Genocide, Lithuania's Threefold Tragedy (W. Berlin: Venta Publications, 1949). Pelekis notes that between June 14-15, 1941, 35,000 persons were resettled to the interior of the USSR and another 12,000 arrested and liquidated during the 1940-41 occupation. Also see L. Sabaliunas Lithuania in Crisis 1939-1940 (Bloomington: Indiana Univ. Press, 1972), pp. 31-42.

71. Lietuviu Enciklopedoja V. 15, p. 118-119. Also see, "Documents Relating to the First Soviet Occupation of Lithuania, 1940-1941," Third Interim Report p. 464. See Vardys, Lithuania Under the Soviets p. 56.

72. Radio Vatican, B.B.C., July 29 1940, 3C ii.

73. Pierr Blet, Actes et documents du Saint Siege relatifs a la seconde guerre mondiale (Vatican City: 1967-1973), V. 3, part 1, p. 187.

74. Radio Vatican BBC, August 13, 1940, 3C, ii. On the attempted Sovietization of religion see Vittorio Vignieri, "Soviet Policy Toward Religion in Lithuania: The Case of Roman Catholicism," in Vardys, (ed) Lithuania Under the Soviets p. 215.

75. "Order To All Chairmen of the County Branches of the NKVD," October 2, 1940. English translation and original Lithuanian and Russian texts of these documents are deposited in the Archives of the Lithuanian-American Information Center, (New York).

76. P. Blet, Vol III, part 11, nos. 265, 270.

77. Kummunistas (Vilnius), No. 6. June 1960, p. 50. See Dennis Dunn, "The Catholic Church and the Soviet Government in the Baltic States 1940-41," in S. Vardys and R. Misiunas, (eds) The Baltic States in Peace and War 1917-1945; See also A. Trakiskis, The Situation of the Church and Religious Practices in Occupied Lithuania Part 1, (New York; Lithuanian Bulletin, May, 1944). Concerning the situation of the Church and religion under Soviet rule in Estonian and Latvia see The Fate of Religion and Church under Soviet Rule in Estonia 1940-1941 (New York, World Association of Estonians Inc., 1943), and Report of the Sufferings of the Christian Churches in Latvia during 1940-1943 (New York: Drauga Vests, 1944).

78. "Detailed Memorandum Regarding Counter-Revolutionary Leaflets Distributed Throughout The Territory of the Lithuanian SSR," No. 2 - 1504, April 14, 1941.

79. "Moscow Instructions on Deportations, Order No. 001223."

80. Albert Kalme, Total Terror (New York; Appleton-Century-Crofts, Inc., 1951). p. 67. J. Prunskis documents similiar acts of terror and murder by the retreating Red Army, see Fifteen Liquidated Priests in Lithuania (Chicago: Lithuanian Information Center: 1943).
81. Kalme, Total Terror p. 68.
82. Prunskis, Lithuania's Jews p. 15.
83. "Detailed Memorandum Regarding Counter-Revolutionary Leaflets." Third Interim Report pp. 472-494.

IV/ LITHUANIAN - GERMAN COLLABORATION PRIOR TO THE INVASION  
OF JUNE 22, 1941

In important respects, the arrival of the Germans in Lithuania in the summer of 1941 had been prepared well in advance, not just by the Nazis but by high-ranking Lithuanian leaders. Given the deadliness of the Final Solution in Lithuania, it is relevant at this juncture to examine the nature of the clandestine relations between Lithuanians and Germans prior to the expulsion of the Soviets.

In the months prior to the German invasion, many political refugees and repatriates from Soviet-occupied Lithuania began to take refuge in Berlin.<sup>1</sup> Among the two-hundred political refugees were former government leaders, army officers and members of the Lithuanian Security Police. Under the leadership of Kazys Skirpa, on November 17, 1940, these Lithuanians from varying political affiliations agreed upon a political action platform and unified to become the Lithuanian Activist Front or (LAF). The platform's trilogy included Lithuanian nationalism, Christianity, and social justice. Believing that only through German backing could Lithuania throw off the Soviet yoke, Skirpa began soliciting various German agencies.

Post-war Lithuanian sources stress the internal impetus and underplay or totally omit the German factor in their treatment of the creation of the LAF. Although there may

have been fascists elements in the LAF, like the Voldemarists, this position is essentially correct. Even though founded in Berlin, the LAF leadership immediately elicited an overwhelming affirmation and response from within the native country. Large numbers of Lithuanians from all classes and most parties including Christian Democrats, Social Democrats, the Tautininkai, Populists, Voldemarists, Nationalists clandestinely formed local groups under the central LAF banner. Secondary and university students joined organizations such as "Movement for a Free Lithuania" or "Lasivosios Lietuvos Sajunga." Peasants, workers, professionals, civil servants, formed groups such as the League for the Liberation of Lithuania, "Iron Wolf," the "Lithuanian Defense Guard," the Lithuanian Freedom Army," the Riflemen, scout leaders, Catholic Clubs and organizations, such as the Ateitis and Pavasaris movements and patriotic organizations as Young Lithuania.

Lithuanian nationalist scholarship treats the clandestine meetings between the LAF in Berlin with Nazi officials prior to the expulsion of the Soviets as a necessary, if unpleasant, means towards independence. Still, LAF leaders in Berlin through their contact with Nazi officials certainly had knowledge of the severe treatment Jews were going to receive at the hands of the Germans. The persecution of Jews had clearly political goals for these people while for the majority traditional Jew-hatred wedded to economic grievances and sheer frustration was probably enough motivation.

Lithuanian sources portray the grass-roots nature of the anti-Soviet uprising. The 100,000 partisans who revolted against the Soviets, so runs the invariable argument, illustrated the universal discontent with the regime:

Politically the June revolt exposed to the whole world the Soviets' lie that the Lithuanian nation joined the Soviet Union voluntarily. The revolt will always be recalled as an incontestable manifestation of the Lithuanians' desire for and<sub>2</sub> belief in, the right for independence.

In contrast, Soviet scholars deny the development of a grass-roots mass resistance movement preferring to depict the movement as limited to the small right-wing segment of the population -- a "Nazi Fifth Column." The Lithuanian National Revolt of June 22-25, 1941 according to Soviet sources, was an attempt by a minority of fascist elements, the Lithuanian Activist Front, to seize the government.

The LAF served the Nazis; its leaders hoped with the help of the Nazis to come to power in Lithuania, though they were well aware of the Nazis intentions after Lithuania's occupation. However, they had no other means of achieving their aims because the reactionary strata they might have leaned upon were scant and insignificant, whereas the Lithuanian people<sub>3</sub> gave Soviet power their wholehearted support.

Pro Soviet scholarship cannot convincingly show that the resistance groups that sprang up within Lithuania were created by and for the Germans, and their overemphasis on the German connection tends to distort the grassroots, spontaneous genesis of the anti-Soviet groups.

Lithuanian solicitation of German support for ousting the Soviets was based on the conjecture that the German/Soviet treaty would be abrogated and war between the two great powers would erupt within the foreseeable future. According to Skirpa, seeking German help "was a natural development from the news that the Moscow-Berlin Pact might suddenly explode." That event would provide the impetus for re-establishing the sovereignty of the Lithuanian state.<sup>4</sup> Given that premise, along with other contributing factors, it was not illogical to surmise that Germany would support the efforts of local Lithuanian anti-Soviet forces and become the center of an organized resistance abroad.

This appeared "a natural development" because of a couple of factors. The first concerned the large number of Baltic Germans, Lithuanian emigres, and expatriates who had gathered in Berlin to escape Soviet rule. The ranks included about 1,000 prominent political leaders, civil servants and high ranking army officers of the independence period.

The second factor had to do with Nazi racial ideology: Lithuanians could play a role in the greater German Reich. Although lower on the racial hierarchy than either Latvians or Estonians, Lithuanians were considered racially assimilable and with some restrictions could be Germanized.<sup>5</sup>

Yet, it is more likely that Nazi racial ideology played little if any part in the Lithuanian Activist Movement's attempt to gain German aid. Expediency dictated the leadership's

decision. In the fall of 1940, a German military victory appeared imminent and the fate of Lithuania if not all Europe would be in German hands. If Hitler's favor could be won, the chances for political recognition of Lithuanian statehood would be greatly enhanced or at least improved. Thus, despite the so-called friendly relations between Germany and the Soviet Union, despite official German recognition of Soviet Lithuania, Skirpa attempted to solicit German support. This reasoning, rather than innate Lithuanian fascism, best explains the LAF's course of action. Skirpa alluded to Germany's role in vaguely describing how the organization came into being.

Nevertheless, the original appeal of the still unofficial Activist Front dating from July/August 1940 made numerous concessions to Nazi terminology:

Millions of our fighting comrades, German nationalists fighting for a just new European order are stretching forth their helping hands. Thus, swift victory is assured! Let the trumpets of the struggle resound today across the entire land, let the spirit of our forefathers and our freedom fighters rise. This spirit will break the foreign yoke and will restore a free Lithuania.

The appeal was signed: "The Supreme Command of the Lithuanian Activist Front." But in early summer 1941, Skirpa revealed what was probably his actual thinking about how the organization came into being which had been several months before the actual nucleus of the LAF was formed in November of 1940. He emphasized

that the plan was his own and that it was not founded on support from Germany:

national efforts was not born on November 17th 1940, when the nucleus of LAF was formed. It was born much earlier, in July....the plan was not given to me by any outsider...Generally there was adherence to the determination not to beg anything from Hitler's Germany, but only to prepare properly for the reestablishment of Lithuania's independence and state sovereignty through a national uprising while utilizing the destruction of the Moscow-Berlin Pact.<sup>7</sup>

As early as July/August 1940, the initial appeal of the still unofficial Activist Front resounded with Nazi terminology and stressed the common purpose between Lithuanians and Germans.

Whereas Skirpa's LAF Staff in Berlin provided the over-all network for various groups within Lithuania, local groups retained a great deal of autonomy in ideology and action. The qualifications for entering the LAF remained vague enough to ensure maximum recruitment:

Any Lithuanian, without distinction regardless of his political persuasion, can become a member of the Activist Front if he is determined to fight for the deliverance of Lithuania.<sup>8</sup>

The phrase "any Lithuanian," categorically eliminated Jews and Poles. Nationalism, xenophobic patriotism, anti-Soviet sentiment, and antisemitism appear to be the only common link between diverse local groups such as the Lithuanian Freedom



Fighters Union, the Iron Wolf, the Lithuanian Freedom Army which eventually joined the LAF. The "Black Swastika" in Samogita was one of the few clearly fascist paramilitary bands that refused to join.

The strongest argument for German-Lithuanian collaboration was the opportunist motive--the mutuality of goals. If the Germans waged war on the Soviets they could use Lithuanian intelligence and troops to augment their own (chronically limited) manpower. For the Lithuanians, German military aid was an essential component in ousting the Soviets. However, obtaining German support for the restoration of a Lithuanian State appeared a wholly different matter. Despite clandestine wooing between the LAF and the Abwehr, despite connections between former officers of the Lithuanian Army and German Army Headquarters in Königsberg, the Lithuanians were unable to obtain any advance agreement on the national question.<sup>9</sup>

In the absence of a prearranged agreement, the LAF leadership in Berlin decided to proceed with its own plans for the re-establishment of the Lithuanian state. Skirpa and his staff adopted a new strategy which called for refraining from pressing the Germans until the moment of victory and then presenting them with a de facto Lithuanian government.

In the spring of 1941, LAF activity intensified. About two hundred officers of the former Lithuanian Army along with a considerable number of enlisted men had taken refuge in Germany. There, the LAF leadership envisaged forming them

into a Lithuanian Brigade under the leadership of Colonel Oskars Urbonas, former Inspector General of the Lithuanian Army. The Germans denied this request and instead attached the most Lithuanian troops to German units to act as guides and interpreters after the German's conquered former Soviet territory.

Within Lithuania, the resistance groups also intensified their activity in preparation for the invasion. The LAF leadership stressed that the only signal to start the revolt would be the actual crossing by German troops. However, cumbersome methods of communication mislead, confused, and frustrated the local LAF leadership. Worse still, even during the final hours before the German invasion, the Lithuanians were not only left without any indication of whether Germany would give its political sanction to independence but vital military issues were equally vague. At the last moment Skirpa succeeded in getting Col. Graebe of the German Armed Forces High Command to agree not to treat Lithuanian Activists as Red Army personnel in civilian clothing! Also, the Lithuanians were not officially briefed on the exact date of the invasion. Word was received from the Berlin LAF Headquarters that the date would be between June 18-26, 1941. Hence, the head of the LAF within Lithuania, Leonas Prapuolenis, was surprised when awakened by a pounding at the door. Instead of the anticipated NKVD agent, it was the alert that the German invasion had commenced!

In Berlin, Skirpa received a letter from the Chairman of the Lithuanian National Committee, Galvanauskas. The letter implored Skirpa in the absence of Former President, Antanas Smetona to assist all Lithuanians in the task of forming a government. The contents included a plea to reestablish constitutional order as quickly as possible.<sup>10</sup>

For the immediate moment, however, Skirpa was forced to remain in Berlin. The Gestapo had placed him under police surveillance where he was required to register daily at the appropriate precinct and was instructed not to leave the city. According to a Military Intelligence Memorandum of June 22, Skirpa clearly assessed the situation.

Minister Skirpa sees in this measure taken by the authorities of the German Government the purpose of isolating him from the actual events of today. He expressed the fear that this might signify the desire to isolate him from the insurrection he organized in his native land.<sup>11</sup>

The report goes on to indicate that at least one German agency was more specific in promising its support for Lithuanian independence than previously noted, and that Skirpa was not cowed by the Germans:

...if the promises about the restoration of Lithuanian independence given by the German authorities during the negotiations in Königsberg are not fulfilled by the German Government, his partisans would declare Lithuanian political independence on their own within the framework of the insurrection and declare him the head of the new state.<sup>12</sup>

On June 23, 1941, Radio Kaunas announced that a revolt had taken place in Lithuania and that the Soviets were

retreating. A provisional government was being formed by the Activists at Kaunas. Five of the provisional ministers were Populists, four were Christian Democrats, one was a Tautininkas, and three were non party independents. Three of its provisional ministers-- Skirpa, Skipitis and Rastikis were still in Berlin. The Lithuanians had taken the initiative and presented the Germans with a fait accompli. The next move was up to the Germans.

The German position on Lithuanian independence could not have been calculated with any certainty, given the paucity of data and intelligence information acquired by the LAF staff on the subject. As indicated, the LAF leadership had reason to suspect that the reaction might not be favorable, hence the number of options stated in the directives for the invasion. However, in the year prior to the invasion, the LAF leadership had been totally excluded from top secret information and high level meetings on military, political, economic, and ideological goals of the expedition. During these sessions, a number of decisions that would affect the future of Lithuania as well as all of the Nazi-occupied Russia

In the absence of hard information, the Lithuanian activists believed that the desired German response, recognizing Lithuanian independence, could somehow be elicited spontaneously, as a measure arising out of the events of the moment. Their reasoning was self-deluding resting on shaky premises. First, because the Germans would be grateful of the expected huge

military support (one-hundred thousand Lithuanians participated in the insurrection). Second, the fait accompli of proclaiming Lithuanian sovereignty, which would tie the Germans' hands. It "would be impossible to change, and if suppressed would go down in history as a very great injustice." Third, the LAF naively believed that Hitler was ideologically committed to the right of self-determination;

The declaration of members of the Government of the Reich that in the New Europe, created by the German Reich, the right of self-government in their political and national life will be assured to all nations were met by the Lithuanian nation with great interest and deep satisfaction;<sup>13</sup>

Fourth, because the Germans would be willing to placate the Lithuanians in exchange for securing future military support in the campaign against the Soviet Union.

What the Lithuanians could not know at the time and what the remainder of this chapter will address is that the Germans had no intention of recognizing Lithuanian independence. Also unknown was that institutions and plans were already completed for Germany's political subordination of the Baltics, and that very little would be changed by anything the indigenous population could have done. In fact, what collaboration and support on the part of the Lithuanian leadership and population did do was to facilitate German war aims.

In 1941, the Germans realized that they could manipulate the strong Lithuanian desire for independence into a potent source of energy. The mistaken notion that most Lithuanians

believed at least initially--that through their own actions they could solicit a favorable German response on the question of independence, was exploited by the occupation forces. Even in light of growing evidence to the contrary, a large number of Lithuanians tenaciously clung to this belief throughout the entire period of Nazi occupation.

Understandably, to the Lithuanian leadership, the position of the Germans on the Lithuanian question seemed unsettled. Germany's varied and mixed immediate response to the formation of a provisional government followed by its tactic of "refusing to acknowledge" tended to reenforce the notion that German policy was being formulated according to ad hoc principles, rather than any preexisting guidelines. Additionally the various German agencies seldom acted in concert. During the planning for the insurrection the Foreign Office and the High Command of the Armed Forces tended to be sympathetic to Skirpa and the Lithuanian cause whereas the Gestapo appeared less favorably disposed.<sup>14</sup> Likewise, the immediate response to the news of Lithuanian independence announced by the Provisional Government on June 23, 1941, varied among different German agencies and even among individuals of the same agency. For example, a Berlin policeman of the same department that restricted Skirpa's travel joined the Lithuanian honor guard in a demonstration outside the Lithuanian Legation. Others of the Berlin police force are reported to have looked upon approvingly at the hoisting of the flag representing Lithuanian

independence. A local and petty event such as this took on a distorted significance to the hopeful Lithuanian nationalists.

Just after hearing the broadcast from Radio Kaunas on the announcement of Lithuanian independence, Skirpa demanded an urgent meeting with Grundherr of the Reich Foreign Office. Skirpa recalled this meeting several year after the defeat of Germany:

My information affected him like a bomb explosion. "How could you do such things when the Reich's Armed forces are marching against the enemy?" I retorted: "What is happening in Lithuania is no surprise to the German armed forces, as I had forewarned them." Grundherr argued: But the German Foreign Office knew nothing about it! I countered: "It is not my fault if the military command failed to inform the Foreign Office." I reminded him that I had tendered him a memorandum several days ago. Grundherr stammered: "Yes, yes but..."<sup>15</sup>

Skirpa responded that the Lithuanian insurrectionists were not fighting against German forces but for their country's independence and that no one could deny Lithuania's aspiration. Grundherr calmed down and closed the meeting by stating that he would inform Skirpa shortly of his government's position on the question of recognizing Lithuanian sovereignty.<sup>16</sup>

No reply from Grundherr to Skirpa was forthcoming, however; neither was there any reponse to two memoranda drafted by Skirpa on the following day, June 24, 1940. One was addressed to Hitler by way of Foreign Minister Ribbentrop requesting that no obstacle be placed in the way of Skirpa's return to Kaunas to take over the duties of prime minister of Lithuania. The second was addressed to the Foreign Affairs State Secretary,

Weizsaecker, who was requested to permit the Lithuanian diplomatic legation to resume functioning in Berlin.

On June 25, Skirpa received a communique, but not from the Office of the German Foreign Ministry. Instead it was from the Supreme Command of the Security Office which summoned him to its headquarters. Dr Legat, Director of the Aliens' Bureau, questioned Skirpa on his role as the leader of the new provisional government. At the close of Skirpa's terse explanation, Dr Legat placed him under house arrest until further notice. From that point on Skirpa faded from prominence, as the Germans designated General Rastikis as their Lithuanian liaison.

Publicly, the Germans denied prior knowledge of the anti-Soviet uprising and the newly emerging Provisional Government. The Associated Press Dispatch from Berlin to the New York Times stated:

Lithuanians here said the Kaunas radio had proclaimed an uprising against Soviet Russia and establishment of a new government today, but German authorities professed to know nothing about an insurgent anti-Russian regime in Lithuania. Emigres here from the Russian-absorbed Baltic republic, who have listened eagerly for broadcasts from Kaunas, said the Lithuanian station went off the air suddenly at about 2 p.m. today.<sup>17</sup>

Judging by its surprise and embarrassment, the German Government had not taken the preannounced position of Skirpa and the LAF seriously. Consequently, the High Command of the Wehrmacht was not briefed on how to respond to the pronouncement of Lithuanian independence. The military



commandant of Kaunas, von Pohl, refused to acknowledge the greeting by the Provisional Government on June 25, stating that he lacked the authority to establish communications, However, General von Roques, commander of the rear army area of Army Group North and a proponent of Lithuanian independence refrained from obstructing the functions of the Lithuanian Provisional Government.

Dr. Kleist, expert on Eastern policies, was dispatched to brief the military on Nazi policy for the Baltic States. General Rastikis, was also flown to Kaunas from Berlin to try and convince the Lithuanian civil government to adhere to German policy. Both men disappointed the expectations of their sponsors. Rastikis did not carry out his mission as a "trusted liason" and did very little to promote the German cause of subordinating the Lithuanian government. Dr. Kleist, after his discussions with General von Roques adopted a position that supported autonomy. By allowing the Lithuanians a degree of self-government, the Germans could save tremendous manpower and resources, he argued. Furthermore, a large German bureaucracy might alienate the indigenous population which currently treated the German Army as liberators. Kleist's favorable report on the question of autonomy brought an angry response from Rosenberg, who remarked "that he had given away that which the German soldier has captured with his blood to his beloved Estonians, Latvians, and Lithuanians." 18

Rosenberg's office, angered by the failure of Rocques and his staff to take a stronger stance, was supported by the office of the Abwehr. On June 24, Dr. Litter, an abwehr official issued a sharply worded memorandum to the rear army headquarters in Kaunas.

The proclamation of Skirpa's government occurred without the support of German official authorities. Therefore, any support to that government is to be avoided. Military authorities must abstain from any interference with decisions which are within the exclusive competence of the political leadership.<sup>19</sup>

Although the operations of the Provisional Government were not as yet circumscribed, movement was in that direction. Just two days later, on June 26, the Wehrmacht headquarters dispatched a secret directive to the Armed Forces in Lithuania.

The new Lithuanian government is not recognized. Such acts as might be construed as official recognition of it or would signify political relations with it are to be avoided. Engagements in common with Lithuanian units are prohibited... The formation of a Lithuanian police is prohibited. The existing regular police, and the one formed by national organizations, is permitted to be used for cleanup operations. Reinforcing the regular police by auxiliary police and smaller military units is permitted. All active national organizations acting as police and Lithuanians belonging to army units should be marked by special insignia."<sup>20</sup>

This document constituted the first official denial of Lithuanian independence: it also established the pattern for German/Lithuanian collaboration i.e., the directives for the restriction and subordination of Lithuanian military units.

Henceforth, Lithuanian troops would be used to augment German forces in the accomplishment of German war aims.

After the Red Army had retreated and the "mopping up campaign began," the Germans allowed police units a degree of independence regarding strategic and covert operations against civilians. This was consistent with Lithuanian goals which according to the Directives of June 19 called upon Lithuanians "to take care of their own traitors."

By permitting military personnel to seek out and round-up for possible execution civilian population including suspected commissars and "other more active (communist) party members," an important and potentially destructive precedent was established. Both a rationale and a climate for civilian killing operations emerged. Any civilians who were collectively or individually designated as enemies could be destroyed with impunity. Lithuania's Jews were particularly vulnerable.

At this stage of the war, Lithuanian collaboration with the Third Reich rested on what appeared to be solid grounds. The two peoples shared common enemies and, as the Lithuanian leaders hoped, common goals. As long as Lithuania's leaders believed that the best path to the realization of national independence lay in continuing cooperation, Lithuanians collaborated willingly. From late 1942 onward, however, a dawning realization of the true state of affairs led to increased friction and diminished cooperation. It was gradually becoming clear--very gradually in the case of some Lithuanian

Lithuanian leaders that Lithuanian sovereignty and the Nazi concept of Lebensraum which included the Germanization of the Baltics, stood in irreconcilable conflict. But by this time, the Third Reich had implemented military, political, economic, and ideological policies with disastrously criminal consequences. The next chapter will survey these policies and plans for the peoples of the former Soviet Republics, particularly for the Jews.

## IV/ Endnotes

1. Between December 1940--April 1941, a number of so-called ethnic Germans who occupied key roles in the independent period of Lithuania were repatriated with the Reich. Along with nationalist refugees, many settled in Berlin where they became activists in the cause of Lithuanian statehood.
2. Joseph Pajaujis-Javis Soviet Genocide in Lithuania (New York: Maryland Books Inc. 1980), p. 67. Although this account is extremely anti-Soviet, most historians accept the position that most Lithuanians opposed the Soviet occupation and incorporation of their state into the Soviet Union. See a more objective account by Vardys, Lithuania under the Soviets pp. 47-58.
3. In 1960-1962, the Academy of Sciences of the Lithuanian S.S.R in the Series Documents Accuse published five books. The fourth series treats the organization known as the Lithuanian Activist Front (LAF), see text on p. 130. (Noted henceforth as DA). Quote from B. Baranauskas and K. Ruksenas who compiled and edited this work. (Vilnius: Gintaras, 1970), p. 16. Other Soviet scholars who contend that the LAF was a Nazi 5th column and express the accepted Soviet view (particularly since 1959) that the LAF served only Nazi interests. See A. Gaigalaite, Burzuaziniai Nacionalistai Hitlerine (Vokietijos Tarnyboje 1939-41) (Vilnius, Lithuanian SSR Academy of Sciences, 1960); J. Dobrovolskis, Lietuviskuju Nacionalistu, Antiliaudinis Veikimas Okupaciniame Hitlerininku Valdlzios Aparate 1941-44, series A 2(13) (Vilnius, 1962); Most of the source material on the LAF is from the manuscript section of the Academy of the Sciences main library in Vilnius which I could not consult directly.
4. From K. Skirpa's diary concerning the foundation of the Lithuanian Front and its link to the Nazi Intelligence Service. See Documents Accuse p. 65. Henceforth referred to as Skirpa's Notes See also K. Skirpa's, "Gaires i tauto suklima," I Laisve No. 27 (64), December, 1961. p. 7.
5. International Military Tribunal PS 1029, Vol 3, p.691 See Andreas Hillgruber, "Die Endlösung." See also Gerald Fleming, Hitler and the Endlösung (München, 1982).
6. "Lithuanian Activist front Appeal; All Forward Together to create a New Lithuania," July-Aug. 1940, Bronis Kaslas, The USSR-German Aggression Against Lithuania (New York: Robert Speller & Sons, 1973), p.309.
7. "K. Skirpa's Notes. DA p.65-79. See also K. Skirpa, "About the activity of the Front of Lithuanians," Lituanistikos Darbai (Chicago) v. 2 1969: 77-123.

8. Kaslas, USSR-German Aggression p. 309. On difficulties in efforts to coordinate plans between the LAF in Berlin and autonomous local Lithuanian groups see Antanas Pocius, "Kap. Pranas Guzaitis ir pogrindis," I Laisve (Chicago) no. 3 (1954); also Adolfas Damusis, "Pasiruosta ir Ivykdyta," I Laisve (Chicago), 3, (1954), pp. 4-5.

9. Stasys Rastikis, Kovose del Lietuvos; kario atsiminimai (Los Angeles: Lietuviu Dienos, 1956-1957), V. 2, p. 149; The Voldemarists in East Prussia pressured Skirpa to appoint K. Brunius, B. Pyragius and R. Puodzius. The Nazis wanted Skirpa to accept the Voldemarst leader S. Meskauskas as his deputy, Skirpa declined, as noted in Budreckis, The Lithuanian National Revolt p. 28. See also K. Skirpa, Apie Lietuviu Aktyvistu Fronto veikla (Chicago: Darbai, 1969), V. 2, pp. 77-123; Akten zur deutschen answartigen Politik 1918-1945 Series D 1937-45, B.D.XII, (Baden, Baden), 1956, p. 349.

10. K. Skirpa, "Sukilimines Vyriausybes geneze," Nepiklausoma Lietuva ("Genesis of the Insurrectionist Government," Independent Lithuania), 1951-1952. See also S. Rastikis, Kovose del Lietuvos; kario atsiminimai (Los Angeles; Lietuviu Dienos, 1956-1957) V. 2, p. 154-155.

11. "Memorandum of an Official of ABW. II Military Intelligence Dr. Pactzold." June 22, 1942, German Foreign Ministry Archives June, 1941.

12. "Memorandum," Dr. Pactzold, German Foreign Ministry Archives June, 1941.

13. "Memorandum of the former Lithuanian Minister in Berlin to the German Foreign Minister," June 19, 1941, on behalf of the Lithuanian National Committee. German Foreign Ministry Archives June, 1941.

14. Aktion zur deutschen answartigen Politik 1818-1945 Series D 1937-44 Bd. XII (Baden, Baden) 1956, No. 650.

15. Lithuanian Bulletin No. 5-7, May-July, 1948.

16. Lithuanian Bulletin No. 5-7, May-July, 1948.

17. New York Times June 23, 1941, Associated Press Dispatch from Berlin.

18. Peter Kleist, Zwischen Hitler und Stalin 1939-1945 (Bonn, Athenaum-Verlag, 1950), pp. 155-56.

19. "Memorandum by an Official of the O.K.W.," Litter, (June 24, 1941), Records of the German Armed Forces High Command (Oberkommando der Wehrmacht - OKW.) June, 1941.

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20. "O.K.W. Directive to the Armed Forces in Lithuania," (June  
26, 1941), Records of the German Armed Forces High Command,  
June, 1941.

## V/ THE GERMAN PLAN FOR LITHUANIA AND THE JEWISH QUESTION

On June 16, Joachim von Ribbentrop's office issued a request to Werner von Grundherr (Chief of the Baltic Affairs Section) to report on the probability of receiving native support for an invasion of the Baltic States. Additionally, he requested that a number of High Command military advisers prepare a study on the Eastern campaign.

After reviewing the various reports, Hitler issued the order to crush Soviet Russia in a quick campaign, "Operation Barbarosa, even before the conclusion of the war against England..."<sup>1</sup> Subsequent top secret plans for the invasion of the Soviet Union reveal that institutions of government had already been created for the Germanization of the Baltics and their eventual incorporation into the Greater German Reich two months prior to the actual invasion. On April 20, 1941, Hitler named Alfred Rosenberg as commissioner for the central control of questions connected with the East-European Region. This area encompassed the Baltic states, White Russia, and the eastern portion of Poland.

Immediately after receipt of the order from Hitler, Rosenberg, openly inimical to Lithuanian independence, began constructing his organization and conferring with the various ministries. His communications and instructions for the organizational structure of the occupied eastern territories, Ostgebieten, were later captured intact. These documents which became known as the Rosenberg Files, were drawn up before



Rosenberg was appointed Minister of the Occupied East, indeed, before there was an Occupied Eastern Territory for Germany to administer.

The first memorandum outlined seven sub-divisions for the projected territories that would be seized from the Soviets. The geographic units included: Greater Russia with Moscow as its center; White Russia; Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania; The Ukraine and the Crimea; The Don area; the area of the Caucasus, and Russian Central Asia. A treatment of the political economic and ideological ends for each territory followed. In his discussion of Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania, Rosenberg fantasized on the issue of "Germanization" of this area which apparently meant importing Germans, possibly Volga Germans. "There might also be the possibility of the settlement of Danes, Norwegians, Dutch, and after the war has been brought to a victorious end -- of Englishmen too." In regard to both Latvia and Lithuania, he indicated that, although for different reasons, large numbers of the local population would have to be deported,

The necessary removal of considerable sections of the intelligentsia, particularly Latvian ones--to the Russian nucleus area would have to be organized....We should also not have to neglect to deport considerable groups of racially inferior sections of the population from Lithuania.<sup>2</sup>

The progression of documents reflected the extent of cooperation and coordination between Rosenberg's office and others including the OKH, OKW, the Ministry of Economy, Commissioner for the Four Year Plan, the Ministry of the

Interior, the Reich Youth Leadership, the German Labor Front, the Ministry of Labor, the SS, and the SA. In the course of his instructions, Rosenberg clearly outlined his political intentions for the Eastern Provinces (Ostland) which would eventually become a German Protectorate, "after Germanizing racially possible elements and transforming the area into part of a greater German Reich."<sup>3</sup>

Even at a glance, these documents make it clear that Lithuania would not be an "equal partner in the New Europe."<sup>4</sup> Instead it would be treated as a colony for German settlement. According to Rosenberg,

it would be inappropriate to turn over political leadership to the inhabitants themselves, because Germany's ultimate political aims could not be attained if the old contracting parties--the Estonians, Latvians and Lithuanians reemerged in political control.<sup>5</sup>

#### A. Plans for the Jewish Question

Nazi plans for the ruthless exploitation of the East, including Lithuania, were part of a larger ideological construct. In Hitler's thinking, the acquisition of Lebensraum was always intimately associated with a solution of the Jewish question. His speech on the day of invasion made it clear that Hitler conceived of the war against the USSR as a war against the Jews.<sup>6</sup> As the war unfolded, Jews were targeted for annihilation.

That Hitler aimed at more than military conquest was clear from the beginning of the war against the USSR. Several special directives established the Einsatzgruppen whose task it was to cleanse the newly occupied territories of Jews, Gypsies, and other groups deemed racially undesirable. The Einsatzgruppen were created as military units of a special type.<sup>7</sup> This speciality was based on the fact that officers were recruited from the SS, the SD, the Gestapo and Sipo. Troops were drawn from applications from the above agencies and also the State Police, Criminal Police, the Regular Police Force and Waffen SS. Four battalion-sized SS Groups were set up by Reinhard Heydrich under the auspices of the Reich Security main Office and army quartermaster Eduard Wagner.

Each Einsatzgruppe contained five-hundred to eight-hundred men and was further subdivided into Einsatzkommandos or Sonderkommandos. Einsatzgruppe A, assigned to Army Group

North, operated mainly in the Baltic States; Einsatzgruppe B was attached to Army Group Center in the Smolensk area; Einsatzgruppe C, detailed to Army Group South operated in the Kiev region; Einsatzgruppe D was attached to the Eleventh Army in southern Russia. The Wehrmacht, ceded authority in the matter of the Jews to Heinrich Himmler and the SS and gave assurances that duties would be unimpeded by the armed forces.

The words "final solution," were not mentioned in this directive and indeed were rare in written military documents. Still the groundwork was prepared. Autonomy was guaranteed for the special task force, and a second necessity provided for--a secluded place where the actual mass murders could be conducted with minimum risk of mass resistance from the surrounding population:

the border at the rear of the area of operations will be closed by the OKH for any and all non-military traffic with the exception of the police organization to be deployed by the Reichsfuehrer SS on the Fuehrers orders. Billeting and feeding of these organizations will be taken care of by the OKH General Office who may for this purpose request from the Reichsfuehrer SS the assignment of liason officers...Except for the special regulations applying to the police organizations of the Reichsfuehrer SS, applications for entrance permits must be submitted to the Supreme Commander of the Army exclusively.

In successive negotiations between the Wehrmacht and the Office of the Reichsfuehrer SS, the arena of operations were enlarged to include the front line. This was done for two reasons. Under the veil of heavy fighting the extra shootings would

be concealed. Additionally, it would enable the Jews to be caught and killed with no warning and little chance of escape. Given the narrow perimeter of operations a close coordination between the army and the Einsatzgruppen was a necessity. As soon as the army seized a designated military target, the Einsatzgruppen would be poised and ready to begin operations.

The mutual duties and responsibilities were negotiated between March and May of 1941. The final agreement was signed at the end of May by Reinhard Heydrich representing the Reich Security Main Office and Wagner representing the armed forces high command. The objective of the agreement was to prevent a recurrence of earlier problems between the Army and the SS in Poland and provide maximum facilitation for the operations of the SS.

Contrary to International Law and the German Military Code both the members of the Armed Forces and Einsatzgruppen would be given a free hand in the summary shooting of civilians and were authorized to take "collective measures" against entire communities when individual suspects could not be determined. On May 13, 1941, Hitler issued what amounted to a blank check to members of the armed forces and "ancillary services" who engaged in activities against enemy civilians. The only exception concerned cases involving a breach of military discipline or security. According to Keitel, everyone appeared shocked by this flagrant breach of military code but no one

protested. Hitler finished: "I do not expect my generals to understand me, but I do expect them to obey my orders."<sup>9</sup>

As the invasion date approached, the "Bolshevik enemy," became more expansive in definition than just the Red Army. Civilian Political Commissars and Jews were also enumerated in Hitler's directive of May 12, 1941. As symbols of the Bolshevik regime they would be shot in accordance with the June 6th order known as the "Commissar Order." This order was signed by General Walter Warlimont of the High Command of the Armed Forces, "on the treatment of political commissars." Only thirty copies were provided and it was distributed only to the commanders of armies and air force territorial command; it was stipulated that "its further communication to lower command follow by word of mouth." The language of the decree reflected the subservience of military conduct to Nazi ideology using as a pretext that the enemy behaved in exactly this fashion:

In this struggle against Bolshevism we must not assume that the enemy's conduct will be based on principles of humanity or of international law. In particular, hateful, cruel and inhuman treatment of our prisoners is to be expected from political commissars of all kind as the real carriers of resistance. Accordingly, whether captured in battle or offering resistance, they are in principle to be disposed of by arms.<sup>10</sup>

Although the troops did not directly receive this order, on June 4, they were given ideological guidelines in preparation for the war in the East. An army headquarter's directive "Guidelines for the Conduct of the Troops in Russia" enlightened

German soldiers on Nazi policy and conduct. The message was that since Bolshevism was the mortal enemy of National Socialism the struggle demanded:

ruthless and energetic measures against Bolshevik agitators, guerillas, saboteurs, Jews, and the complete elimination of every active or passive resistance." <sup>11</sup>

It is interesting that the term Jew was juxtaposed in such a way so as to be on equal footing with the other categories mentioned. This juxtaposition remained pervasive in the Einsatzgruppen Reports of the second half of 1941 and 1942, that constantly refer to "the fight against vermin -- that is, mainly Jews and Communists."<sup>12</sup>

Although the complicity of the army in the extermination of the Jews has been well established by recent scholarship, the major task remained with the Einsatzgruppen. The short training program for the Einsatzgruppen began in May 1941 at recruitment facilities in Pretzsch, Duben, and Saxony, where three thousand men assembled. In addition to basic training, troops were given an intense ideological indoctrination "that Judaism in the east was the source of Bolshevism and must therefore be wiped out in accordance with the Fuehrer's aims."<sup>13</sup>

The idea of liquidating the Jewish population of the Soviet Union through mass shootings took concrete shape in early spring 1941. After a year of Soviet rule on top of pre-existing prejudices, this rationale proved appealing to

a great many Lithuanians. Vengeance against Jews became the order of the day.

As has been shown in previous chapters, the final solution, as it was played out in Lithuania, was not an accident of history, nor was it an improvisation. Native antisemitism and anticommunism combined with a systematic plan of extermination provided by the SS. Nazi goals in the East dovetailed neatly with those of short-sighted Lithuanian patriots and their acknowledged leaders. While the Lithuanian masses may have acted out of traditional Jew-hatred, economic grievances, and sheer frustration, their leaders knew that atrocious harshness would be the fate of the Jews. They not only condoned this, they expected to derive political benefits from mass murder.



## B. Endnotes

1. "Top Secret Order No. 21," signed by Hitler and initiated by Jody, Warliamont, and Keitel, Dec. 18, 1940 concerning the Invasion of Russia. (USA 31) PS 446, V. 3 p. 409. To place into historic context see Gerhard Weinberg, "German Colonial Plans and Policies, 1938-1942." Geschichte und Gegenwartsbewusstsein: Festschrift für Hans Rothfels (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1963), pp. 452-91; Helmut Krausnick "Kommissarbefehl and Gerichtsbarkeitserlass Barbarossa in neuer Sicht," VFZ 25, (1977), pp. 632-738; Woodruff D. Smith, The Ideological Origins of Nazi Imperialism (Oxford, 1986); Paul Kluge, "Nationalsozialistische Europaideologie," VFZ 3, (1957).
2. "Memorandum No. 1 regarding USSR," April 2, 1941 in Rosenberg's Russia File (USA 142) Office of the United States Chief of Counsel for the Prosecution of Axis Criminality, Nazi Conspiracy and Aggression PS 1017, Vol. 3 p. 674. See Andreas Hillgruber, "Die Endlösung," pp. 133-53. The issue of Germanizing part of the population and deporting certain elements is treated in detail by Dallin, German Rule in Russia pp. 183-86. To compare with German colonization plans of the Baltics during the First World War, see M. Urbsiene, Vokeciu Karo Meto Spauda ir Lietuva (Kaunas, 1939). See Christopher R. Browning, "The Decision Concerning the Final Solution," in (ed.) Francois Furet, Unanswered Questions (New York: Schocken Books, 1989), pp. 95-118.
3. "Instructions for a Reich Commissar in the Baltic States," PS 1029, Vol. 3, p. 690.
4. "Top Secret Operational Order ammended to Order No. 21," signed by Keitel, March 13, 1941, concerning Directives for Special Areas. See International Military Tribunal, (noted henceforth as IMT) PS 447, V. 1, p. 811.
5. "Top secret Operational Order ammended to Order No. 21," IMT V. 1, p. 811. On the subject of Germany's political and military aims on the former Soviet Union see Woodruff D. Smith, The Ideological Origin of Nazi Imperialism (Oxford, 1986), pp. 1-70; Gerhard Weinberg, Germany and the Soviet Union 1939-1941 (Leyden; Brill, 1954), p. 6 ff.
6. Since the vast majority of Jews resided in Poland and the Soviet Union an eastern war was necessary to accomplish the goal of gencide. On antisemitism in Hitler's ideology and world design see Eberhard Jäckel, Hitler's Weltanschauung (Middleton: 1972), p. 57 ff.

7. For the most comprehensive study on the Einsatzgruppen See Helmut Krausnick and Hans-Heinrich Wilhelm, Die Truppe des Weltanschauungskrieges. See also Andreas Hillgruber, Hitler's Strategie: Politik und Kriegsfuehrung 1940-1941 (Frankfurt: 1965). On antisemitism in Hitler's ideology see Eberhard Jäckel, Hitler's Weltanschauung (Middleton: 1972), p. 57.

8. "Top Secret Operational Order," IMT V. 1, p. 811. For two important studies on the role of the Wehrmacht in the extermination of Jews see Christian Streit, Keine Kameraden (Stuttgart, 1978); pp. 19 ff.; Jürgen Förster, "The Wehrmacht and the War of Extermination Against the Soviet Union," Yad Vashem Studies V. 14, (1981), pp. 7-14. See also Uwe Dietrich Adam, Judenpolitik im Dritten Reich (Düsseldorf, 1972), pp. 3 ff., and "Die ideologischdogmatische der nationalsozialistischen Politik der Ausrottung der Juden in den besetzten Gebieten der Sowjetunion und ihre Durchführung 1941-1944," German Studies Review 2, (1979), pp. 263-96.

9. Walter Gorlitz, Memoirs of Field Marshal Keitel (New York: Stein and Day, 1965), p. 136.

10. "Kommissarbefehl," (Commissar order) signed by General Walter Warliamont, for the High Command of the Armed Forces. IMT See Helmut Krausnick, "Kommissarbefehl und Gerichtsbarkeitserlass Barbarossa in neuer Sicht." VFZ 25, (1977).

11. Guidelines for the Conduct of Troops in Russia," IMT NOKW 1692. See Brozat, "Hitler und die Genesis der Endlösung Aus Anlass der Thesen von David Irving," VFZ 25, no. 4 (1977). Also see Krausnick and Wilhelm, Die Truppen.

12. Document L180, Microfilm T 175 - 233, Captured German Documents Series. See English translation of Einsatzgruppen reports for this period. See the Yitzchak Arad, Shmuel Krakowski, Shmuel Spector, Einsatzgruppen Reports (New York: Holocaust Library, 1989); To place within historical context of the reporting practices see Ronald Headland, Messages of Murder: Reports of the Einsatzgruppen of the Security Police and the Security Service 1941-1943 (Cranbury, N.J. Fairleigh Dickinson Univ. Press, 1992).

13. Heinz Hohne, The Order of the Death's Head: The Story of Hitler's SS (New York: Heinz Coward, 1970), p. 358. See also IMT PS 1976. See Klaus Hildebrand, Das Dritte Reich (Munich, 1979), pp. 45 ff.

## VI/ THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE FINAL SOLUTION

Hitler aims to destroy all the Jews of Europe.  
The Jews<sup>1</sup> of Lithuania are fated to be the first  
in line.

This manifesto was issued on January 1, 1942, by the leader of one of the earliest Jewish armed resistance groups in Lithuania. The events of the preceding six months convinced Abba Kovner and others to anticipate that the Final Solution would be uniformly applied to all Jews. He astutely perceived that the mass shootings were not (contrary to the belief initially held by many Jews) isolated acts of retribution against an allegedly pro-Soviet community but the beginning of a course that aimed at the total annihilation of a race. Indeed the first mass exterminations in July of 1941 included only Jews of the occupied eastern territories. By October, however, the Jews of Kaunas were witnessing the arrival of Jews from Germany in transport to the Fort Seven and Nine extermination centers just outside the city. Although unaware that over a million Jews had been exterminated by the end of December 1941, Kovner and the armed resistance organization of the United Partisans Organization accurately assumed the worst.

The aim of the remainder of this study is to examine the Final Solution as it unfolded in Lithuania, with particular emphasis on the two major cities of Vilnius and Kaunas.

A contrast between the two will demonstrate a variance in response to German rule and its accompanying consequences. Finally, events in Lithuania will be contrasted with those of the other two Baltic States. This study will not attempt to settle the highly vexed question of when the final solution of the Jewish question shifted from coerced emigration to systematic murder. Scholars are still debating the fine points of an extremely complex timetable. Hitler's personal knowledge and responsibility, and the degree of intentionality behind the genocide. In the case of Lithuania, these matters are not especially significant. No evidence exists that anything other than mass-murder was intended by the Nazis.

That extermination of the Jews was "the Führer's wish," was axiomatic to the various German military and civilian agencies in the occupied areas. Still, documentary evidence from the early stages of the Final Solution reveals confusion, logistical problems, and even some doubt concerning the wisdom of killing certain groups of Jews.

It is also apparent that local German functionaries had some degree of latitude in determining when and how many were killed. Two important variables in that determination included, first, the coordination and support of the German agencies in the occupied territories; and second, the commitment, compliance, and diligence of the native ruling elite and the population at large. The second variable, although difficult

to track, helps account for the wide discrepancy of death toll statistics among the various Eastern European nations.

Pertaining to Lithuanian collaboration in the Final Solution, both the eyewitness survivor testimonies of Lithuanian and Jews, and the 195 Einsatzgruppen Reports regularly submitted to the Reich Security Main Office (in Berlin) from the end of June 1941 to the end of April 1942, document the use of native forces in the killing of Jews and Communists. Also, the German State Secret Document known as the Jaeger Report of December 1, 1941 summarizes all executions carried out in the sphere of action (including Lithuanian territory) of Einsatzkommando 3 up to that date.<sup>2</sup>

When analysing these reports, it must be noted that, at least initially, the German operatives had a vested interest in demonstrating that large numbers of local inhabitants participated in the slaughter of their Jewish compatriots. According to Brig-Gen. SS Franz Stahlecker, it was important "to show the world how native people deal with their Jews,"<sup>3</sup> In his zealousness to show this, the numbers of Jews killed were probably inflated.<sup>4</sup> Photographs and films of uniformed Lithuanians killing Jews were also widely distributed as propaganda throughout Nazi-occupied Europe. Their authenticity, too, is not above suspicion.

A number of contemporary Lithuanian scholars including Dr. Juozas Prunskis claim that Germans also falsified ordinances

and other documents to give the impression that they were signed and executed by Lithuanian authorities. Prunskis states,

There are known instances when to camouflage their nefarious project, the Germans dressed their own executioners in Lithuanian uniforms and then filmed them to give the impression that the annihilation of Jews was carried on by Lithuanian units.<sup>5</sup>

On the other hand, many Lithuanian sources do not deny that some few Lithuanians participated in the killing, ascribing responsibility, however, to Jews, Soviets, and Germans:

a few renegades who, after being tortured in Soviet prisons for the most part by Communist agents of Jewish background and not being oriented as to the policies of the LAF fell easy prey to German schemes. Being brutalized by the Soviet<sup>6</sup> prisons, it was no wonder they craved revenge.

Even conceding instances of deception and alteration of records, the great weight of documentation alluded to above substantiates enthusiastic, widespread Lithuanian participation. And this is the case in both the initial and relatively spontaneous mass-killings of Jews by Lithuanian partisans as the Soviets withdrew, and later by self-defense battalions and civilian authorities who facilitated the rounding up, transportation, guarding, and murdering of Jews.

Eyewitness accounts indicate that even before the arrival of German troops in the capital, Lithuanians acted out their hostility against Jews in two demonstrable ways: first by attacking, rounding up, and arresting Jews in the municipality of Kaunas and second by attacking and killing Jews attempting to flee the Nazi onslaught.

Approximately eight-thousand of the twenty-three thousand Jews who attempted to evade the Germans by retreating into the Soviet Union were killed along the way. Most of the deaths were a result of German bombardment, but a substantial number were killed by Lithuanian partisans.<sup>7</sup> Jewish sources, including testimonies and memoirs, recorded the fate of these Jews who set off by foot and were ambushed and killed by Lithuanian partisans and peasants. The motivations apparently ranged from purely opportunistic to sincere and deep-rooted desire for revenge for the killing of Christ and retaliation for the persecutions suffered under the Soviets. However, because the retreat of the Soviet troops was so swift and the great majority of armed Soviet troops had withdrawn from Lithuanian soil by the end of the first day, frustrated partisans vented their wrath on those they could still catch--the Jews.

Ironically, many of these Jews were already traveling back to their homes after being refused entrance into the Soviet Union. Border guards admitted only card-carrying Communist Party members. Later, this policy was changed to allow fleeing Jews to enter, but then the border was blocked by the advancing German Army.

Statistics on the number of Lithuanian partisans and their Jewish victims were not officially recorded until after the first units of the German Army accompanied its mobile task force entered Kaunas on the evening of June 24, 1941. Franz Stahlecker, commander of Einsatzgruppe A, almost

immediately established contact with the Lithuanian partisan command. Although he refused to address the issue of Lithuanian independence, he offered a vague proposal. He suggested that if the Lithuanian partisans demonstrated their commitment to the anti-Bolshevik struggle by unleashing their forces on Jews it would greatly enhance Lithuania's position in the new Greater Reich. As will be noted, Stahlecker documented the response to this proposal in his summary report to his superior Heydrich.

As nearly everywhere else in Europe, the mass of the population did not participate directly in murder but remained indifferent to the plight of the Jews. This qualification notwithstanding, the contrast in behavior between Lithuanians and Poles is illuminating in this respect. As detailed above, the Nazis' attitude toward Lithuanians was far from totally hostile, finding a place for them in their hierarchy of acceptable racial groups. Toward the Poles, the Nazis felt nothing but murderous contempt, and three million Polish civilians were eventually killed.

Although no large scale action to save Jews existed in Poland, the Polish resistance, working in the most adverse of conditions, made valiant efforts. For example, the "Rada Glowna Opiekuncza" or "Council for aid to Jews" (Zegota) directed efforts toward saving children. This organization provided thousands with forged documents, hiding places, apartments and money. No parallel organization existed in



Lithuania and although the Lithuanian underground which became a powerful movement in 1943 and 1944 was anti-Soviet and anti-Nazi, it was also extremely nationalist and not interested in saving Jews. What help the Jews of Lithuania received from their countrymen was strictly the result of heroic individuals or tiny groups of them. The historical record reveals no significant organized effort at rescue.

The comprehensive data concerning the massacres in Lithuania contained in the summary report by Stahlecker to Heydrich dated October 15, may be divided into three categories; background information; initial events including the native pogroms prior to the systematic killings; the mass shootings of 120,000 Baltic Jews from early July until mid-October 1941. His analysis of the position and role of the Jew in the Baltic States during the interwar period is emphasized here because it reveals the approach used by the Germans in recruiting Lithuanians for military and labor detachments. Daily situation bulletins and monthly reports concerning the activities of Einsatzgruppe A indicated the extent of auxiliary support from indigenous peoples on killing Jews. His account, biased in its own efforts to impress superiors in Berlin, nevertheless provides the reader with a counterweight to both Jewish and Lithuanian documents. The findings support the position that

antisemitism existed prior to the Soviet rule but also emphasize the prominence of Jews during 1940-1941:

In the three Baltic States of Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania, Jewry did not make itself felt until the Bolsheviks had come to power there. But even before that, the Jewish influence on the one hand and the anti-Jewish feeling on the other hand were very strong. Until the Bolsheviks marched in, according to a census taken, Jewish influence had been restricted to the business world. The Lithuanian Jews who had already been working illegally for Bolshevism, now quickly became a dominant influence in public life. In particular, Jews of both sexes supported the activities of the NKVD. The transporting of 40,000 Lithuanians to Siberia is traceable to the preliminary work done by the Jews.

Stahlecker emphasized the disproportionate economic importance of the Jews and their increasing predominance in other spheres after the Soviets came to power. Clearly, he understood the value of these attitudes in winning support for Nazi aims.

Also contained within the report, several references were made to the "terror of the Jewish-Bolshevik rule," and a corollary that "an extensive pogrom carried out by the population might have been expected." However, the intensity and scope of these pogroms varied greatly among the three Baltic States. Likewise, the reported level of auxiliary aid that Stahlecker recruited from among the partisans fighting the Soviets varied regionally. In Lithuania, under the auspices of the LAF, these detachments facilitated the Germans's rapid advance. Although Stahlecker recognized that native groups had political goals outside the military objective of ousting the Soviets, he valued the cooperation.

Without making any political promises, Stahlecker and his subordinates skillfully exploited Lithuanian hopes, alternately harnessing and unleashing anti-Soviet, antisemitic sentiments for soliciting Lithuanian aid in killing Jews. His summary report described the utilization of existing partisans -- how much and the type of aid they rendered.

The military use of partisans was not considered for political reasons. A deployable auxiliary squad consisting of 300 men quickly formed from the reliable elements of the undisciplined partisan groups under the leadership of the journalist Klimatis. This group has been deployed during the continuing pacification not only in Kaunas itself but in numerous towns in Lithuania, and has under the constant supervision of the Einsatzkommando, performed the assigned duties especially the preparation and participation in the implementation of larger liquidation actions without any major complaints. In addition to the partisan auxiliary squad, there were also 40 former Lithuanian police officers, most of whom had been released from prisons. The Lithuanian Security and Criminal Police operates according to the orders and guidelines provided Einsatzkommando 3 and its activities are under constant surveillance. As much as possible they are used for security searches, arrests, and investigations.

Stahlecker depicted two other instances where his slim forces were stretched by auxiliary troops.

In a similar manner useful auxiliary organs were set up in Vilnius and Siaulai from the Lithuanian Self-Protective Forces who had established themselves on their own initiative under the name of the Lithuanian Security and Criminal Police. After the removal of the accused and unfit personnel and under the constant surveillance of Einsatzkommando 3, the Lithuanian Security and Criminal Police produced entirely satisfactory work as well. <sup>10</sup>

The report also indicated that those Jews who were able to escape were frequently handed over to the authorities by farmers in the area.

In concluding the segment of his report on Lithuania, Stahlecker stated that the 34,500 Jews who remained alive on October 15 were spared only because they were needed for labor.

These Jews are used primarily for work of military importance. For example up to 5,000 Jews are employed in 3 shifts on the airport near Kaunas on earth-works and work of that sort. However, the Lithuanian sector, first the prisons, then district by district, by means of selected units--mostly in proportion of 1 German per 8 Lithuanians was systematically cleansed of Jews of both sexes. Altogether 136,421 people were liquidated in a great number of single actions. It is worthy of note that many of the Jews used force against the officials and Lithuanian auxiliaries who were carrying this out, and before their execution still expressed their Bolshevik convictions by cheering Stalin and abusing Germany.<sup>11</sup>

Throughout the report Stahlecker stressed the Jewish-Bolshevik theme as a rational explanation for exterminations. However, the widespread operations against all Jews from district to district indicate that the victims' politics had very little bearing on determining whether they would be immediately shot or would remain alive as a "work Jews." The need to exploit Jewish labor impede their complete liquidation and led to the forming of ghettos, the major ones in Vilnius, Kaunas, and Schaulen.

Stahlecker's portrait of the "before and after" of the Nazi invasion in Latvia and Estonia may be compared with the

Lithuanian situation. Regarding Latvia, Stahlecker noted the similarity (to Lithuania) in regard to the lack of Jews in the political realm during the independence period and the preponderance of Jews that served the state after the Soviet takeover. He also noted the participation of Latvians as auxiliary forces in the execution squads immediately following the Nazi invasion:

After the arrival of German troops in Latvia, a self-protective force was formed which consisted of members from all walks of life, some who were totally unfit for police work. In Riga and in the other larger cities of Latvia, Sicherheitskommandos were formed initially which were later changed in an Auxiliary Police Force which consists of selected dependable and professional trained forces. In the larger cities a prefect has been placed at the head of the Auxiliary Police. Units of the Latvian Auxiliary police performed extensive executions both in the towns and in rural areas. The action of the detachments there performed smoothly. When attaching Lithuanian and Latvian detachments to the execution squads men were chosen whose relatives had been murdered or removed by the Soviets.<sup>12</sup>

Regarding Estonia, Stahlecker noted that the number of Jews living in Estonia has always been insignificant. (At the beginning of 1940, 4,500 out of a total population of 1.2 million). But Jewish influence on the economic life of the country was considerably stronger than the proportion of Jews to the whole population. As in Lithuania, Jewish power and influence appeared greatly enhanced in Estonia during 1940. At the onset of the German attack on Soviet Russia, most Jews fled Estonia, leaving only about 2000 who fell under Nazi control. During the fighting, Estonians organized a

self-defense organization but according to Stahlecker, it was "much less diligent" than in Latvia or Lithuania:

The Estonian Self-Protection Movement (Selbstschutz), formed as the Germans advanced. Although they began to arrest Jews, there were no spontaneous pogroms. Only by the Security Police and the SD were the Jews gradually<sup>13</sup> executed as they were no longer required for work.

Thus, reported Stahlecker, the levels of popular actions against Jews were greatest in Lithuania and least in Estonia. The popular fury that was unleashed in Lithuania was exploited by the Germans who goaded the Lithuanians on to continued violence. On the nights of June 25 and June 26, partisan bands brutally vented their rage on the ultra-orthodox Jews of Slobotke, a poor suburb of Kaunas.

Stahlecker recorded that on the first night of pogroms, Lithuanian partisans murdered more than 1,500 Jews and in the two consecutive nights a total of 3,800 Jews in Kaunas and 1,200 Jews in the smaller towns were eliminated.

Apparently scapegoating was limited to only the Jewish minority. One Christian eyewitness, a Lithuanian doctor, Elena Kutorgiene expressed amazement of the ferocity of the attacks on Jews:

With the exception of a few individuals, all the Lithuanians, and especially the intelligentsia who lost their positions during the Soviet regime, hate the Jews...the coarse Lithuanian mob, as opposed to the total apathy of the intelligentsia (who in all likelihood agree with them) acted with such beastly cruelty that by comparison the Russian pogroms seemed like humanitarian deeds... I can not believe my eyes and ears. I am totally shaken up by the force of blind hatred which they (the<sup>14</sup> mob) cultivate to satisfy the most base instincts.

In almost all major cities, with the exception of Vilnius, similar acts of violence erupted in the wake of the Soviet withdrawal. The Jews of Vilnius were apparently spared because of their huge number and the small number of Lithuanians living there. Popular fury needs sanction, either overt or understood. It is likely the minority of Lithuanians in Vilnius did not yet feel secure enough to act out their violence with impunity and instead reacted to the euphoria by demonstrating some initial restraint.

In Kaunas no such restraint was demonstrated, Lithuanian armed patrols under the command of police chief Jurgis Bobelis continued their mass arrests and executions of Jews. By the end of the first week of the invasion between eight and ten-thousand Jews were imprisoned in Fort VII. About one hundred were selected each day for execution. One of the lucky few to be freed was Jacob Goldberg, a lawyer and former officer in the Lithuanian army. Since at this time Bobelis' units were not yet acting under German authority, Goldberg, (a former army comrade of Bobelis) pleaded with Bobelis to stop the pogroms, arrests and shootings. Bobelis replied that the matter was not in his jurisdiction and refused to take responsibility.. The staff for partisan activities set up by the provisional government including General Stasys Pundzevicius, General Reklaitis and Col J. Vebra also remained aloof from the anti-Jewish activities of their men.

Goldberg next pleaded with Janus Villeisis, the mayor of Kaunas and long time leader of the Christian Democratic Party during the independence period. Villeisis replied that speaking out wouldn't help and that he could do little about young people who wanted to have a bit of fun, make noise and act wild.<sup>15</sup> It is possible these Lithuanian leaders remained silent not so much because they thought Jews should be punished for their former connection with communism but because the thought that scapegoating was a means of currying favor (political concessions) with the Nazi liberators. Although the Lithuanian leadership was well aware of what was happening to Jews between June and December 1941, a tunnel vision mentality prevailed: thus almost no public outcry to save Jews or even to discourage Lithuanians from participating in the actions against Jews.

Here the Roman Catholic Church could have wielded its influence--threatening to excommunicate Lithuanians who vented their anger on Jews. No such actions were taken. Instead, the highest representative of the Catholic Church in Lithuania, Archbishop Juozas Skvireckas and his deputy Bishop Vincentas Brizgys, along with other prominent church leaders, signed a congratulatory telegram to Hitler in late June. It registered no protest against the indiscriminate slaughter of Jews following the eviction of the Soviets. A Jewish delegation met with Archbishop Skvireckas and asked him to call upon the Catholics (nearly 90% of the Lithuanian population) to cease from



participating in the murder of Jews. The Archbishop's reply was that he could only weep and pray, but that the church couldn't help.<sup>16</sup>

Skvireckas' diary entry of June 30, 1941, gives insight into his position on the Jewish Question:

The thoughts of Mein Kampf, concerning the poisonous Bolshevist influence exercised by Jews on the nations of the world are worthy of note. The ideas are interesting indeed. They are true to life and present an insight into reality. Whether they belong to Hitler himself or to his associates is hard to say, but all this testifies to Hitler being not only an enemy of the Jews, but to the correctness of his thoughts as well.<sup>17</sup>

The Archbishop personally greeted the German Commissar General at the end of July.

According to the report of the (German) Chief of the Security Police and the SD on Aug 16, 1941, the Bishop of Kaunas Brizgys, actually forbade all clergymen to render any assistance to Jews what so ever. The report stated that in the future, Bishop Brizgys does not want to meet with "any Jews at all."

Although priests were requested to offer no assistance to Jewish victims, the church allowed clergy to participate in the recruitment and organization of police battalions. In this report written by Priest Tombraus of Wilkomer on July 31, 1941, he stated that he was pleased to announce the formation of a police battalion in Shaulen. He mentioned other partisan units which formed in Wilkomer and Kaunas, both in the houses of clergymen.

Brizgys's antisemitic tracts and his authorization of priests to continue sacramental rites to members of Lithuanian partisan units facilitated the Final Solution in Lithuania. Still, despite the official stance of the upper hierarchy of the church, some members of the lower clergy assisted Jews. In Kaunas, a Lithuanian priest named Mykolas Krupavicius was one of three public figures to sign a petition to stop the killings of Jews during the pogroms following the Nazi invasion.<sup>18</sup> In Vilnius, during the first waves of massacres in the autumn of 1941, nine (Polish) Benedictine nuns hid Abba Kovner and sixteen of his friends from the Hashomer Hatssair movement. An elderly priest from the small town of Alsedziai tried to block Lithuanian partisans from entering his village by baracading the road. Father Dambrauskas was able to save a group of Jews by hiding them in a cave. Brother Bronius Paukstys is posthumously remembered at Yad Vashem among the "Righteous Gentiles" for his heroic deeds. All of these individuals acted at great risk. Somewhat less heroic efforts on the part of the clergy, particularly after 1943, saved Jewish children at the price of conversion. For example, the priests of the Zemaiciu Kalvvarija monastery demanded that rescued Jews convert to Christianity.<sup>19</sup>

The above examples of rescue stand out amidst the general backdrop of "neutrality" or outright support of Lithuanian churchmen that has already been discussed. That position began to change, however with the declining fortunes of the

Wehrmacht, especially after the Battle of Stalingrad. Both clergy and laymen extended more aid to surviving Jews. In early 1943, both Jewish and Lithuanian sources stated that Bishop Brizgys delivered a sermon condemning the murders of Jews and discouraging Lithuanian participation.<sup>20</sup>

As in the case of the Church, the Lithuanian intelligentsia did little to help Jews. With few exceptions the governing elite including such respected persons as Professor Juozas Ambrazevicius, Dr. J. Pajaujgis, and Col. Jonas Slepety remained silent on the killings of Jews. Throughout the occupation, Lithuanian civil authorities made few attempts to thwart or divert execution orders. Although Jewish testimony speaks frequently of the bribing of Lithuanian officials, this sort of "help" belongs in the realm of corruption, not heroism.

The reasons for this collaboration have already been discussed: native, historical antisemitism, the attempt to curry favor with the Nazis to foster Lithuanian independence, the desire for revenge upon Judeo-Bolshevism, economic competition. Another motive, often adduced as an explanation for collaboration in other parts of occupied Europe, is fear of the consequences of resistance. This excuse remains unconvincing in the case of Lithuania. As will be shown in Chapter 8 below, both leaders and led dared to resist the Germans on several fronts. The most impressive result of such resistance was to foil German efforts to recruit a special Lithuanian unit of the SS, a policy that was successful in

Latvia and Estonia. The German documents also complain endlessly of tardy grain deliveries and sometimes of non-deliveries.

Statistics from both Lithuanian and Jewish sources reflect the grim circumstances. Out of the ten percent of Jews that survived the war, only one half of one percent were saved through the help of Christian Lithuanians. The individuals who risked their lives to save Jews came from a cross section of the population, with the notable exception of the middle-class. According to Sarah Neshamit, "there were almost no members of the middle-class such as merchants, shopkeepers and civil servants who extended aid to Jews." <sup>21</sup>

When ordinary Lithuanians, neither churchmen, government leaders, nor members of the intelligentsia strove to save Jews, they had as much to fear from their own countrymen as from German authorities. The story of the heroic carpenter, Juozas Paulavicius, is a case in point. He built a hideout for ten Jews in the yard outside his home in a Kaunas suburb. When discovered by a nationalist vigilante band, Paulavicius was brutally murdered for "treasonous behavior."

Until July 7, the Germans passively observed the chaos and killings. The Lithuanian partisans were proving themselves capable executioners and consequently the attitude among the Einsatzgruppen was to sit back for a while and let the Lithuanians do their work. <sup>22</sup> However, in the eyes of the regular army officers, the slaughter was undisciplined and chaotic enough to jeopardize an orderly occupation. Field Marshall von Leeb,

commanding officer of Army Group North ordered von Kuechler of the 13th Army to stop "the spontaneous cleansing operations" of the first days.<sup>23</sup> By June 28, the Germans had disarmed the majority of Lithuanian partisan groups and incorporated them into the auxiliary units of Einsatzkommando 3 under SS Colonel Karl Jaeger and Einsatzkommander 1b under Otto Ehrlinger. These units of Lithuanians and Germans were referred to in a number of operational situation reports that document their subsequent killing missions in the countryside of Lithuania and White Russia:

Partisans in Kaunas and vicinity were disarmed on the 28th of June by order of the German Field Command Post. An auxiliary police force of five companies was formed from the man-power of reliable partisans. Two companies of the force were put at the disposal of the E.K. One company of those is guarding the concentration camp for Jews which was meanwhile established in Kovno Fort 7, and carries out the executions, while the second company is used by the Einsatzgruppe for police tasks; the agreement of the German Field Command has been obtained. At present, the fort contains 1,500 Jews; Lithuanian Units provide the guard details.<sup>24</sup>

Another concentration camp is planned for Fort IX.

These Lithuanian auxiliary units represent one area where local forces volunteered for services that led to their direct participation in the Final Solution. Other documented uses of Lithuanian personnel in the mass killings include service in the Security Police and SD, the Forest Rangers, guards and auxiliaries (to German units.) Lithuanians also worked as ghetto and concentration camp guards within their country and elsewhere in eastern Europe.<sup>25</sup>

Considering the vast numbers of Jews--approximately 3,500,000 to 4,000,000 who resided in the former Soviet territories seized by the Nazis, the number of Germans assigned to the killing squads (proportionately 3 Germans for every 4,000 Jews) appears extremely low. The task itself was enormous involving not only the extermination of sizable portions of the population but considerable work needed in the preparation and aftermath. Prior to the shootings, thousands of men, women, and children had to be identified, isolated, and transported to the killing site. Upon arrival, they had to be guarded and stripped of possessions. After the mass-murders, the bodies had to be buried, the goods organized and dispersed to various destinations.

The framers of the Final Solution counted on the active help or at least the lack of opposition from indigenous populations at least in identifying and rounding up Jews. Local help was a crucial factor in determining how efficiently the Final Solution would be implemented in terms of German manpower expended, numbers murdered, and plunder acquired by the Reich. The Jewish death toll in Lithuania strongly suggests that the help was forthcoming.

Between 1941-1944, 20,000 served in the battalions. Their manpower averaged around 8,000 at any one time. In August of 1941 there were 20 Lithuanian Battalions with 8,388 officers and men; in March 1944 the figure stood at 8,000. These figures

may be compared with Estonian and Latvian numbers where approximately 15,000 men served in the Latvian Defense Battalion and 13,000 in the Estonian Self Defense Battalion. <sup>26</sup>

The official duty of native battalions was to protect the rear areas against Soviet partisan parachutists, POWs and other security risks. However, along with the Einsatzkommando to which they were assigned, their unofficial task became "the annihilation of Jews, Gypsies, and other social undesirables."<sup>27</sup>

Before addressing the specific role and use of these auxiliary units in conjunction with the daily shootings by Einsatzgruppe A, it is necessary to discuss the political framework in which they operated. From June to July 28, 1941, the Germans imposed military rule on most of Lithuania. Military authorities discharged the duties of occupation including judicial powers. Lithuanian town mayors and district chiefs were placed under direct German supervision. The Ostland

Military Command also took immediate steps to bring police units such as Civil Guards (Siaulai) and Forest Patrol under their direct authority. The Germans officially ignored the Lithuanian Provisional Government; relations between the two were nonexistent. However, despite this, the Provisional

Government remained loyal to the German Reich right up to the eve of its destruction on August 5, 1941:

...we declare that the Lithuanian nation is sincerely determined to cooperate positively with the Great German Reich, especially in its endeavors for the liberation of nations from destruction by Bolshevism and also in the creation of the new order in Europe.<sup>28</sup>

In its short life span, the Provisional Government was plagued with numerous problems in addition to a lack of German recognition. At the time of the pronouncement of the Lithuanian state, on June 23, 1941 the prime minister, Kazys Skirpa, the foreign minister, and the defense minister, were all held in Berlin. Thus, during the first cabinet meeting on June 24, those ministers present filled vacancies and restored the machinery of state. They created a staff for military (partisan) operations under General Stacy Pundzevicius, General Reklaitis, and Colonel J. Vebra. Colonel J. Bobelis was appointed Lithuanian Commandant for the City and District of Kaunas. His task was to centralize individual partisan and civil guard units and organize police battalions under his command. Despite the absence of relations, these organizations assisted the Nazi occupational forces in seizing Jews.

Still the biggest problem facing the Provisional Government was increasing German opposition. Despite pledges of loyalty, the Provisional Government did not appear to be winning over the Germans to the cause of Lithuanian independence. On June 25, Lt. Gen. von Pohl, German Military Commandant of Kaunas



told the representative of the Provisional Government that he lacked the authority to negotiate with Lithuanian ministers. Instead of taking steps to physically dismantle the self-government and risk alienating the native population, Pohl decided in favor of a political boycott. The directives and decisions of the Provisional Government could no longer be broadcast or published. Instead the LAF newspaper I Laisive (Toward Freedom) was forced to print German propaganda and announcements.

After the German Army had virtually completed their conquest of the Baltic States in mid-July 1941, there was even less reason to encourage hopes of Lithuanian independence. Berlin insisted that under no condition was the Army Command to grant recognition to the national government or armies of the Baltic States. About the same time, SS Major Dr. Hans Greffe, acting as a spokesman for the German occupation authorities, demanded that the Provisional Government dissolve and become a consultive body or Vertrauensrat. He assured the Lithuanian ministers that the members of the Lithuanian Provisional Government could remain at their posts and continue functioning as members of a Vertrauensrat. He stated that his country's grievance was against the Lithuanian governing body as a whole, as it was formed without German knowledge and approval. Although the Germans would permit a Vertrauensrat, they neglected to state how much authority this new body would enjoy.

On July 13, 1941, the cabinet of the Provisional Government called an emergency conference of representatives of various political and civic groups. Sixty prominent cultural and political leaders gathered including former President Kazys Grinius. After a short discussion, they rejected the German demands. They also decided that the Provisional Government should not liquidate itself voluntarily.

At this point a number of Lithuanian Voldemarists joined forces with the Germans in attempting to undermine the Provisional Government. Many of these extreme right wing antisemitic, anti-Soviet nationalists had fled to Germany at the onset of the Soviet invasion. There, they joined with the LAF but were also strongly influenced by the Gestapo. The Gestapo had recruited a few dozen Voldemarists living in East Prussia for service in Tilsit. In July, this kommando headed by an SD Lieutenant Kurmis was sent into Lithuania and "distinguished" itself by killing 5,500 Jews.<sup>29</sup> With the help of the Gestapo, the Tilsit Voldemarists organized the Lithuanian National-Socialist Party at the beginning of July.<sup>30</sup> On July 23, the Voldemarists, staged an unsuccessful putsch against the Provisional Government. However, the victory for the Provisional Government seated in Kaunas proved hollow and short-lived. Still, the Voldemarist-German conspiracy provided a convenient focal point (for post World War II Lithuanian scholars) in explaining that it was not, in general, the former leaders of the LAF or the Provisional Government

who collaborated with the Germans. Instead, it was "a part of the Activists split off from the LAF and joined the Voldemarists, who collaborated with the occupying power."<sup>31</sup>

In Vilnius, the local political situation was much brighter for Lithuanian nationalists. Von Ostman, the German military commander of the city, assented to the popularly supported Lithuanian leadership on the issue of sovereignty. Unlike Pohl, Ostman initially recognized the autonomy of the Lithuanian municipal government. Following the evacuation of the Soviets, "The Committee of Lithuanian Activists," headed by S. Zakevicius assumed control of the City and District of Vilnius. Although the "Lithuanian Committee" was supposedly subordinate to the Provisional Government, its leaders were able to make their own arrangement with the Germans.

Following the recognition of the local Lithuanian government by the German military, on June 25, Ostman and Zakevicius signed an accord that allowed for a Lithuanian-German co-administration. Article 5 stipulated that Lithuanian police patrols would have the power of enforcing decrees established by the committee. A subsequent measure recalled all former members of the police force (prior to the June 15th, 1940 Soviet takeover) to resume responsibilities. Lithuanian policemen could now carry out anti-Jewish operations including random kidnappings of Jewish males. These abductions caused

such panic within the Jewish community, that many actually wanted the Germans to seize complete power:

We waited impatiently for the moment when a German administration would be organized no matter what its character, so that Lithuanian lawlessness could be put to an end.<sup>32</sup>

Apparently, the residents of Vilnius did not have to wait long. By the second week of July the Vilnius City Committee underwent a radical transition. From a representative government it became an administrative body directly subordinate to the German military command. Lithuanian military units were either dismantled outright or made subordinate to either the German military commander or to the Einsatzkommando. From July 8, only the German authorities could issue orders.

The establishment of a clear German military authority had immediate repercussions in the prosecution of The Final Solution. The Einsatzgruppen report for this period recorded the changes:

a series of steps had been taken partly in cooperation with the military command...of Vilna, with the purpose of circumscribing the political action of the Lithuanians and so that in making decisions in the future, we shall not be hampered by faits accomplis.<sup>33</sup>

Even so, Lithuanian forces were still fundamentally necessary to the Nazis. A Department for Jewish Affairs was established in the city council, headed by P. Buragas, whose main task was to facilitate the German Final Solution to the Jewish Question either by summary executions in Ponar, or

more gradual steps toward annihilation. The Daily Situation Report of July 8th reflected the new situation:

the Lithuanian constabulary, approximately 150 men, was placed under the EK after the Lithuanian political police had been dissolved and was instructed to<sup>34</sup> take part in the liquidation of Jews.

In the process of subordinating the Lithuanians, the Nazis employed the tactic of divide and conquer. The German military Government passed a series of measures designed to bolster the activities of the numerous Polish and Belorussian nationals in Vilnius, granting them the same status as Lithuanians.<sup>35</sup>

The Germans, mindful of the dangers of Lithuanian nationalism, took special precautions in bringing Lithuanian self-defense organizations under their total control. By the end of the first week of July, Stahlecker reported,

The remaining groups were disarmed without incident. During the first day appointments for the formation of the partisan auxiliary squad, a Lithuanian Security Police and Criminal Police was created. Initially, 40 former Lithuanian soldiers and officers, most of whom had been released from prisons were deployed under the leadership of Denauskas. The Lithuanian Security and Criminal Police operates according to the orders and guidelines provided to them by E.K. 3. Its activities are under constant surveillance... In a similar manner, useful auxiliary groups were set up in Vilnius and Siauliai...The Lithuanian Security<sup>36</sup> and Criminal Police produced entirely satisfactory work.

Other restrictions included the prohibition of Lithuanian money. The Reichsmark became the only legal tender. On July 16, 1941, the military government decreed that all Lithuanian

establishments must function under its instructions. The City Committee was restricted from communicating with the Provisional Government still functioning in Kaunas. The complete curtailment of Lithuanian autonomy began in Vilnius, but spread to other parts of the country by the end of the month.

On July 25, 1941, the Germans officially imposed their own civilian administration on the peoples of the former Baltic Republics and White Russia. This creation, the "Ostland," would be administered by Reich Minister Alfred Rosenberg as an occupied territory of the Greater German Reich. However, Hitler hesitated to order the transformation from military to civilian government in the newly occupied territories.

With still no official word from Hitler, Rosenberg, by virtue of his capacity as designated Reich Minister worked out an agreement with the OKW on July 12. Through this arrangement, the lower levels of civil administration could begin operating. The German agencies--military and civilian--were not to recognize any indigenous governments or armies in the Baltic States or Byelorussia. The former Baltic Republics had thus been forced to conform to a pre-war plan which called for the organization of the Occupied Eastern Territories into Reich Commissariats.<sup>37</sup> Representatives of the local population would act in an advisory capacity and occupy the lowest level of government.

On July 17, Rosenberg officially appointed Heinrich Lohse to the position of Reich Commissar for the Generalbezirk

of the Baltic Provinces and White Russia. Adrian von Renteln, a Baltic German, was named General Commissar for Lithuania. Lithuania was subdivided into five general districts, with district commissars for each: for the City of Vilnius -- Hans Hingsst; for the district of Vilnius -- Horst Wulff; for the district of Shaulen -- Hans Gewecke; for the city of Kaunas -- Cramer; for the District of Kaunas -- Karl Lentzen.

The German civil administration had almost total jurisdiction over all questions of administration, even the Higher SS and Police Leader was directly subordinate to the Reich Commissar. The German military held the only check to the power of the Reich Commissars.

Lithuania, (like Latvia and Estonia) would be governed by a General Commissar within the framework of the Nazi hierarchy. In contrast to the expectations of the Lithuanian political leadership, the Germans did not establish Lithuania, or any of the other Baltic States, as a protectorate. Nor did the Ostland arrangement include a sharing of power with any Baltic self-governing body. According to Rosenberg,

The first task of the civil administration in the occupied Eastern territories is to represent the interests of the Reich. This highest fundamental must be considered above all measures and deliberations. In time, the occupied Eastern territories will be able to lead a certain life of their own (in the more distant future) in some not yet determined form. They remain, however, parts of the Greater German sphere and are always to the governed from the viewpoint of this main thought.<sup>38</sup>

General Commissar Dr. von Renteln and his Regional Commissars faced the difficult task of dismantling the native self-governing force since it was clear that the Provisional Government far exceeded the limit of local authority that had been authorized by Rosenberg.

Although one Lithuanian source stated that Dr. Renteln was considering entering Lithuania with an auxiliary force of 10,000 "brownshirts as a security force,"<sup>39</sup> This never materialized and non-violent measures of suppression and subversion were remarkably successful. A substitute Lithuanian body -- the Vertrauensrats had already been established. On July 28, von Renteln announced to the Lithuanian people his appointment by the Fuehrer as Generalkommissar and named his district commissars. He called on the nation to join in the reconstruction of Lithuania. Several days later, Renteln proclaimed an end to the duties of the Provisional Government. "After the introduction of the Civilian Government, your work as ministers must be considered as terminated."<sup>40</sup> On August, 5, 1941, the Lithuanian Provisional Government held its last session and quietly dispersed.

Resisting the Germans openly would probably have been futile, as the fate of the LAF reveals. Its political existence came to an end just six weeks after that of the Provisional Government. Already fragmented, with some of its leaders joining German governmental agencies, the remaining members



sent an angry memorandum directly to Hitler on September 15, 1942:

When the German Army marched into Lithuania, it found very friendly Lithuania Government organs everywhere, not Bolshevik offices. Lithuanian army units and guerillas everywhere helped the German army marching through Lithuania as much as they could. Lithuanians fought with Germany, not against it. In spite of this, the organs of the German government treat Lithuania as an occupied enemy territory.<sup>41</sup>

Soon after the news had been received, the German officials in Lithuania reacted by storming the headquarters of the LAF and arresting its leader, Prapuolenis. At that point, a number of influential LAF members went into hiding to avoid possible arrest. Many former Christian Democrats (comprising the majority of the LAF) formed an underground movement which became the Lithuanian Front. Other national liberal elements of the former LAF formed the Lithuanian Freedom Fighter Union.<sup>42</sup> Some extreme right wing nationals also formed anti-Nazi, anti-Soviet, antisemitic underground groups like the Nacionalistų Partija and the Vienybės Sąjūdis. None of these groups had any interest in aiding Jews.

During the brief period of the Provisional Government (June 23 - August 5 1941) the survival of any Jews who did not go underground had less to do with help from Lithuanians than it did with the Jews themselves. Jewish skilled laborers were needed for the German war machine. Along with the planned political subordination of Lithuania, a great deal of planning was given to its economic exploitation. In late summer 1940,

General Georg Thomas received information from Göring about a possible attack on the Soviet Union. Thereupon, Thomas began gathering data and analysing the Soviet economy. Thomas called for an organization to be responsible for "seizing raw materials and taking over all important concerns." The authority and task of this organization was acknowledged by Keitel in his operation order of March 13, 1941. Preliminary preparations were completed and on April 29, 1941, Keitel called a conference of the branches of the armed forces to introduce and explain the organizational structure of the economic sector of "Operation Barbaroso." The structure called for all economic functions to be placed under the jurisdiction of the Reich Marshal and his subordinate authorities. It is called for the establishment of the Economic Staff Oldenburg and various sub-commands and offices which would be distributed in the military rear area to "supervise the economic exploitation of the territory."<sup>43</sup>

The German economic staff would not only deal with military industrial armaments in the rear area but could also supervise the economic sphere: troop requirements, armament, and industrial transports; agriculture; the entire field of trade and industry, including raw materials and suppliers; forestry, finance and banking, enemy property, commerce and exchange of commodities and manpower allocation. Rosenberg justified

the expropriation of property and resources by arguing its historical justification.

German real estate property in the Eastern European area was confiscated without indemnification: hundreds of thousands of Germans (in the South on the Volga) were starved or deported, or as in the Baltic territories, cheated out of the fruits of their cultural work during the past 700 years<sup>44</sup>

Of course superior military might and possession of the means of repression proved the most convincing form of justification.

Regarding the treatment of Jews in the initial months of German occupation, a variety of overlapping civil, military, and police organizations continued to elicit as much help as possible from the indigenous population in the task of killing Jews. Even as the Wehrmacht and the Civil Administration were also directly responsible for carrying out all kinds of anti-Jewish measures, their overall goals differed from the Einsatzgruppen. Both had broader tasks and considerations that often conflicted with the immediate extermination of Jews. Of great concern was that, contrary to popular image, a great many Jews comprised the bulk of the skilled labor force in the Ostland and performed services vital to these agencies. This meant that the complete extermination of Jews could not be accomplished immediately without serious disruptions of economic life and its exploitation by the Germans. Thus, the demands of the Armament Office under General Thomas were partially responsible for slowing down and ultimately halting

the exterminations of the late summer and fall of 1941 and The establishment of an intermediate stage in which Jews were placed in ghettos.

In early September, the extermination squad headed by First Lieutenant Hamman, Chief of Einsatzkommandos 3 A's flying squad containing one-hundred fifty Lithuanians and ten Germans arrived in Schaulen, Lithuania. Hamman reported directly to the the SS Sergeant of a detachment of Einsatzgruppe A. In an "extraordinarily arrogant tone" Hamman complained that the Jewish situation in Schaulen was a dirty mess (ein Saustall) and that all the Jews in the city must be "liquidated." Hamman next paid the Gebietskommissar a visit and more politely repeated the purpose of his task. Gebietskommissar Gewecke responded that he needed the Jews because they were skilled laborers. Hamman declared that such matters were none of his business and that the economy did not interest him at all. Judging from a complaint by Hamman to Generalkommissar von Renteln (issued by Hamman's superior officer Jaeger) Gewecke obstructed Einsatzkommando 3 from completing its extermination work. Von Renteln requested a complete report on the incident. The written explanation submitted by Gewecke on September 10 stressed the vital economic role played by Jews:

It is impossible to carry on work without Jews. This is especially the case in the leather tanning industry. Every single artisan in this industry is Jewish... On the basis of the conversation I had with you, and in light of this report, you may be convinced that we have acted on the Jewish question in the Schaulen region with the necessary intensiveness and with National Socialist stubbornness.<sup>45</sup>

Gebietskommissar Carl of Slutz in White Russia issued a biting complaint to Kommissar General Kube concerning the conduct of Police Battalion II from Kaunas. The battalion contained four companies, two of which were made up of Lithuanian partisans. Carl's account includes the following:

...as regards the execution of the action, I must point out to my deepest regret that the latter bordered on sadism. The town itself offered a picture of horror during the action. With indescribable brutality on the part of both the German police officers and particularly the Lithuanian partisans, the Jewish people, but also among them White Russians were taken out of their dwellings and herded together...Everywhere in the town shots were to be heard and in different streets the corpses of Jews accumulated...  
Two fully armed Lithuanian policemen had to be arrested for looting and several<sup>46</sup> more had to be forcibly thrown out of shops.

He described the severe economic loss that occurred as a result of the indiscriminate shootings; the Jews were skilled laborers and specialists. As a final point, Carl addressed the hurried manner in which the shootings outside the town were carried out.

I was not present at the shooting before the town. Therefore I cannot make a statement on its brutality. But it should suffice, if I point out that persons shot have worked themselves out of their graves some time after they had been covered.<sup>47</sup>

Kube, an old and loyal Nazi, was so outraged when he received this report that he sent copies to Lohse and Rosenberg. In Kube's note to Lohse, he indicated that the burial of seriously wounded people who could crawl out of their graves

was such a repugnant business (eine so bodenlose Schweinerei) that it ought to be reported to Goring and to Hitler.<sup>48</sup>

To address the issue of suspending the liquidations of Jews, a conference was scheduled in Kaunas for early October. Generalkommissar Von Renteln; the Chief of Security Police and the SD, Jäger; Gebietskommissar Kramer; Peschel the head of the German Arbeitsamt in the Generalkommissariat for Lithuania; and P. Kubiliunas head of the General Council in Lithuania attended. They decided to urge Reichskommissar Lohse to suspend the murder of Jewish artisans residing in the ghettos of Lithuania and Latvia.<sup>49</sup>

In late October, Lohse did suspend executions of Jews in Liepaja, Latvia. He was promptly written up by Security Police and SD headquarters who complained to Rosenberg in Berlin. On October 31, 1941, Rosenberg's liaison, Dr. Leibrant, head of the political Department of the Reich Security Main Office sent a written request to Lohse asking for an explanation. Lohse received this request on November 5 and replied:

I have forbidden the wild executions of Jews in Liepaja because they were not justifiable in the manner in which they were carried out. I should like to be informed whether your inquiry of 31 October is to be regarded as a directive to liquidate all Jews in the East? Shall this take place without regard to age and sex and economic interests (of the Wehrmacht, for instance in specialists in the armaments industry? Of course the cleansing of the East of Jews is a necessary task; its solution, however, must be harmonized with the necessities of war production. So far I have not been able to find such a directive either in the regulations regarding the Jewish<sup>50</sup> question in the Brown Portfolio or in other decrees.

The response from Rosenberg's office did not reach Riga until December 18, 1991. It stated:

that by now clarification of the Jewish question has most likely been achieved by verbal discussions. Economic considerations should fundamentally remain not considered in the settlement of the problem. Moreover it is requested that questions arising be settled directly with the Senior SS and Police Leaders.<sup>51</sup>

In the one month interim between Lohse's request and Rosenberg's reply, Lohse exerted some pressure to suspend the mass shootings. In this task, he was supported by Brig. General Braemer. On December 1, Braemer issued a memorandum to the civil commissars urging them to stop the execution of irreplaceable Jewish workers. Two days later, Lohse personally distributed Braemer's circulars to his subordinates and the massacres were temporarily suspended.<sup>52</sup> Heydrich himself was pressured sufficiently to sustain the remaining Jewish communities of Vilnius and Kaunas. According to German calculations, by December 1941 that number had dwindled to 15,000 in each city.

Even as the civil administration was governed by pragmatism in regard to the extermination of Jews the various police agencies, the SS and special task forces were bound by no such constraints. The Einsatzgruppen were not even particularly concerned with whether the victims fit the legal criterion for being Jewish. Even before the German Civil Government officially defined the criterion for being Jewish on August 13, 1941, Lithuanian partisans, German Security Police and

the Kommandos 2, 3, of Einsatzgruppe A and 9 of Einsaatzgruppen B had already shot thousands of civilians that they beieved to be Jews.<sup>53</sup>

Einsatzkommando 3 which took over its duties as Security Police in Lithuania on July 2, 1941 reported that 8-10 Germans in conjunction with about 80 Lithuanian partisans shot 8,555 Jews from the following districts and cities: Marijampole, Kaunas, Girkalnis, Vandziogala, Paneyezys, Kedainiai, Reseiniai, Ariogala, Utena, Ukmerge, and Alytus. That statistic did not include the 5,000 killed in the pogroms of the first days of the invasion, nor did it include the figures supplied by Einsatzkommando 9 for Vilnius.

Einsatzkommando 9 arrived in Vilnius on July 2, 1941. The Lithuanian partisan leaders briefed kommando leader, Dr. Filbert, on the particulars of the Jewish Question there and offered further assistance. This information proved invaluable for it meant that the Lithuanian partisans enabled the Einsatzkommando to begin operations immediately. According to Einsatzgruppen report # 17,

units of Lithuanian police under the command of Einsatzkommando 9 received an order to prepare lists of Vilnius' Jews and to give priority to the intelligentsia, party activists and the wealthy.<sup>54</sup>

Report # 19 July 11, related that 205 Lithuanian Partisans were used as a sonderkommando employed to arrest, transport,



and carry out executions. Einsatzgruppen Report # 21 of July 13 specifically stated:

In Vilnius... the Lithuanian Ordnungspolizei, which was placed under the command of the Einsatzkommando after the disbandment of the Lithuanian political police, received instructions to take part in the Jewish extermination actions. Consequently, 150 Lithuanians are engaged in arresting and taking Jews to the concentration camp, where after one day they were given "special handling. (Sonderbehandlung -- i. e. execution).<sup>55</sup>

The Lithuanian unit, "Ypatingi burai" or the "The Special Ones," was the chief supplier of Jewish victims to the Germans.<sup>56</sup> The victims were seized individually or in small groups on their way to work. Occasionally, Jews were abducted right from their own homes as this eyewitness account depicts:

The Gestapo men come in cars and stops in front of Jewish houses. They take out the males and order them to bring a towel and soap. These people are ostensibly taken to work for several days, but they never return. Groups of Lithuanian and Polish youths wearing white arm bands appear in the streets and snatch the Jews, whom they lead off to the police stations or prison. Some of them break into the houses and haul out the Jewish males. People call them hapunes (abductors)... It was said that the price paid to the<sup>57</sup> abductors for a kidnapped Jew was 10 rubles.

By the second week into July, the Lithuanian partisans in Vilnius along with Einsatzkommando 9 began operations on a grander scale. New tactics, such as day raids and sealing off predesignated areas facilitated the process. Large numbers of Germans and Lithuanians surrounded residential quarters and went from house to house arresting all Jewish males.

Those arrested were then taken to the Lukiszki Prison where they remained for a few hours to several weeks. Although it was not known at the time, Lukiszki was the transit station from which Jews were taken as needed to Ponar. The firing squad at Ponar could only handle killing a limited number, approximately 500 each day.<sup>58</sup>

Three units composed of German-Lithuanian personnel were responsible for the transportation and execution of Jews at the Ponar extermination site. The first unit was responsible for transporting and guarding the victims. The second was responsible for security at Ponar and keeping the area isolated. This unit was comprised entirely of Germans. The third unit under the command of Obersturmfuhrer Schauschutz was composed of riflemen, mostly Lithuanians, who performed the actual killings.<sup>59</sup>

The Commanding Officer Filbert made sure each German fired at least once, thereby directly involving each member in the unit. Schauschutz was made chief officer at Ponar and in charge of the Lithuanian contingent that conducted the murders on the site. In groups of ten, Jews were led a few hundred yards to the embankments above the pits where they were shot. After falling to the ground, the corpses were covered with a thin layer of sand. The next batch was brought in and the cycle repeated itself.

Einsatzkomando 9 of Einsatzgruppe B operated in Vilnius until July 20, 1941. At that point, only a small rear guard

stayed until August 9, when Einsatzkommando 3 of Einsatzgruppen A took over its responsibilities in Vilnius. During the period between the German entry into Lithuania on June 24, 1941 and the departure of Einsatzkommando 9 in early August, thousands of Jewish males were shot. The German military authorities, along with Einsatzkommando 9 orchestrated the systematic murders. However, Lithuanian units in Vilnius facilitated the process, not only by their role in initiating the first killings, but by providing both organization and manpower for its realization.

Lithuanian civil officials enthusiastically endorsed and carried out the German's orders. For example, on July 3, 1941, von Ostman, the German Military Commander of Vilnius ordered Jews to wear the yellow badge. A day later, S. Zakevicius, Chairman of the Citizens Committee of the City and District of Vilnius and A. Iskauskas, Chief of Auxiliary Police of the City and District of Vilnius issued their own order to that effect as did the Lithuanian military Commander of Kaunas, Jurgis Bobelis and the Mayor of Kaunas, Kacys Palciauskas.

Throughout Lithuania, local Lithuanian officials confiscated Jewish property seizing those smaller Jewish shops and businesses that hadn't previously been nationalized by the Soviets. Much of the personal property of Jews remained in Lithuanian hands for the duration of the occupation. Only by refusing to turn over to German agencies property they had seized from

Jews, and by receiving bribes from Jews, did Lithuanian officials deviate from German orders.

At this point it is necessary to discuss the formulation of one other German sponsored administrative institution--the Judenrat or Jewish council. That this topic is included in the present chapter on German/Lithuanian collaboration in the implementation of the Final Solution suggests the view maintained here, that the Germans created the Judenrat with a singular purpose--that such a body facilitate the Final Solution. After the Nazi hierarchy realized that Jews could not all be killed at once, the concentration of Jews in a particular locale was intended as an intermediate step. A closely controlled Jewish self-administrative body would reduce the number of German personnel needed in the interim. Aside, however, from the reason behind its creation, generalizations about the function of Judenraete across Nazioccupied Eastern Europe should be avoided. Whether a particular Judenrat (each Judenrat varied considerably in terms of personnel, operation, and level of support/opposition of the particular Jewish community) served or thwarted that purpose is a controversial subject that requires individual study.

In Vilnius, during the short time between the beginning of the German occupation and the establishment of the ghetto on September 6, 1941, twenty-one thousand Jews were killed. Approximately, two months prior to the establishment of the ghetto, on July 4, the Commissioner for Jewish Affairs of

the Vilnius Citizens' Committee -- R Kalendra requested a number of community leaders to pay him a visit. He informed them that a Judenrat must be set up within 24 hours which would be directly responsible to Kalendra's office rather than the German military administration.

That evening, fifty-one Jews representing a wide spectrum of Jewish political and economic groups: Zionists, Bundists, Socialists in Vilnius chose a ten-member Judenrat. Although not optimistic, representatives believed a Judenrat would mitigate the worst blows. The Vilnius Judenrat even attempted, although unsuccessfully, to negotiate with the Lithuanian unit that was currently kidnapping Jews.

Other tasks included finding living quarters for homeless families and supplying Jews to work in establishments run by Lithuanian and German military units. Initially, the Jewish community placed confidence in the leadership of the Vilnius Judenrat, the various youth organizations and improvised groups regularly conferred with it.

When the systematic executions of Jews began in early September, the Germans dissolved the first Judenrat. Concurrently, they began assembling Jews into two ghettos. The so-called productive Jews, (approximately thirty thousand) were shoved into Ghetto No. 1 and the remaining eleven thousand including children, elderly, and those deemed unfit for work were sent to Ghetto No. 2. For each ghetto, a new Judenrat was formed but this time selected by Germans. Those chosen

the second Judenrat were not necessarily prominent in the Jewish community.

The Jewish police aided both German and Lithuanian military units in the numerous round-ups that took place between September and the end of December that wiped out 80% of the Jews of Vilnius. Although many of the remaining Jews thought that the Germans' "blood quota" had been satisfied, and that passivity and productivity were the twin tickets to survival, by the end of 1941, this line of thinking was challenged. A minority of youths formed an underground ghetto resistance movement known as the F.P.O. or Fareinikte Partisaner Organizatzie--F.P.O. (United Partisans Organization).

In Kaunas, the Germans gave the Jews one month's notice to move into a ghetto. On July 7, after the deaths of nearly 5,000 of the 35,000 Jews at the hands of Lithuanians partisans, Jaeger summoned the Chief Rabbi, Abraham Shapiro. Shapiro pleaded ill health and sent three influential members of the Jewish community in his stead; Leib Garfunkel, a former member of the Lithuanian parliament; Jacob Goldberg, a former officer in the Lithuanian Army and an old acquaintance of Police Chief Bobelis; and Dr. Ephraim Rabinowitch, a prominent physician who was educated in Germany and spoke German fluently.

Jaeger demanded that two rabbis join the delegation. Hence, Rabbi Shneer, a former chaplain in the Lithuanian Army and Rabbi Schmuckler, a spiritual leader in one of Kaunas' larger synagogues joined the reluctant delegates. General

Pohl and Jaeger conducted the initial meeting in which they explained that up to now the Germans had no reason to interfere in the internal affairs between the Lithuanians and Jews. However, it was time to restore order and stop the random killings. To accomplish this, the Jews must retreat into a ghetto for their own protection..

The Jewish delegates protested that the area designated, "Slobodka" or Villijampole was too dilapidated and too small to accommodate all of Kaunas' 30,000 Jews:

The population here lives in the most crowded and unhygienic conditions. (Perhaps three to five persons per room of about nine square meters). This suburb has no homes for the aged or for orphans, no hospitals, no water pipes, no sewage system, i.e. no water; nor has it any conditions at all to make possible the orderly living of about 25,000 new arrivals. <sup>60</sup>

Still, the Germans assured the delegation that the ghetto would afford the best protection against the Lithuanians and that the measure was not negotiable. <sup>61</sup>

Concurrent with the decree establishing a ghetto, Jaeger issued a second order calling for a Jewish administrative structure; a Judenrat led by an Oberjude and equipped with a police force to enforce laws within the ghetto and to carry out all German directives. The police units surrounding and guarding the ghetto would be Lithuanians.

In both Vilnius and Kaunas, many Lithuanian Jews responded to the idea of a ghetto with optimism remembering that in the First World War the German Armies had treated the Jews with greater civility than the Czarist Armies. This optimism,

along with an ignorance of Nazi brutality toward Jews in occupied Poland was reflected in Einsatzgruppe Report No. 20 of July 12, 1941:

The Jews are remarkably ill-informed about our attitude toward them. They do not know how Jews are treated in Germany or for that matter in Warsaw, which after all is not so far away. Otherwise, their questions as to whether we in Germany make any distinctions between Jews and other citizens would be superfluous. Even if they do not think that under German administration they will have equal right with the Russians, they believe, nevertheless, that we shall leave them in peace if they mind their own business and work diligently.<sup>62</sup>

In retrospect the naivete of the Jews appears astounding. Yet, even if the Jews of Lithuania had a greater awareness of the harsh treatment of the Polish Jews, they could not have predicted that they would be the first to be exterminated through mass shootings nor could they have known that the ghetto was but a transitional and temporary phase in the Final Solution to the Jewish Question.

On July 11, the Mayor of Kaunas announced the establishment of the ghetto and posters to that effect were distributed throughout the city. The actual resettlement took about four weeks from July 15 to August 15. The Einsatzgruppe Report



No. 19 of July 11, 1941, depicts the attitude of the Christian population at the time as friendly and helpful.

Their cooperation consists chiefly in the search for and turning over Lithuanian communists, members of the Red Army, and Jews. After the withdrawal of the Red Army the population of Kaunas killed about 2,500 Jews during a spontaneous uprising. A further rather large number of Jews were executed by Auxiliary Police Services. (partisans). From Einsatzgruppe A Headquarters in Kaunas, a total of 7,800 Jews have been liquidated up to now partly through pogroms, partly through shootings by Lithuanian kommandos. All corpses have been removed...About two hundred fifty Lithuanian partisans were left and are being sustained by us as a Sonderkommando, and are being employed for possible executions also, outside the town.

The violence continued despite Jaeger's promise that if the Jews of Kaunas agreed to move into a ghetto the Lithuanians would stop their brutal actions. Seven hundred fifty-nine Jews were shot in the interval between the announcement of the ghetto on July 11, and the final date for resettlement on August 15. Even after the ghetto was sealed, a major Aktion on August 18, 1941, resulted in 1,812 Jewish deaths. Despite broken promises, the Jewish leadership and community of Kaunas, as in Vilnius, obediently submitted to the orders of their German and Lithuanian overseers. The question of other alternatives did not arise during the first months of the German administration.

Finally the issue of how much aid the native populations in the capitals of Latvia and Estonia rendered the Germans in the prosecution of the Final Solution provide an interesting

contrast with that of the Lithuanian population. As discussed earlier, the initial picture was quite different--no pogroms of the size and magnitude of those on Lithuanian soil broke out in either country following the retreat of the Soviets. However, after the Germans completed their conquest of the two countries, the Estonian and Latvian leadership like their neighbors to the south lent their full support to the Army and the Einsatzgruppe.

Since July 3, the Latvians have a town administration and an auxiliary police force. Both organizations are headed by the former Latvian captain, Petersons... They help the E.K. as auxiliary police on duty in the 6 police districts established so far... Since the arrival of EK 2, 2,300 Jews have been liquidated by the Latvian Auxiliary Police and by our own men. The prisons will be emptied completely during the next days. Outside of Riga, an additional 1600 Jews were liquidated by the EK 2 within Latvia.<sup>64</sup>

On July 18, the RSHA Report reported on the Rossitten auxiliary police which contained 120 men and an additional 30-80 well-armed men in the provinces. Subsequent reports on July 26 and August 1, discussed the assistance of these Latvian units in "mopping up of the rear." Report # 48 noted the attachment of Estonian and Latvian units to Army Group North.

Because of the high level of cooperation between German forces and native partisan units, by the middle of December, 30,000 of Latvia's 70,000 Jews had already been exterminated. Concerning those left Stahlecker estimated that in Riga only about 2,500 Jews remained, in Dunaburg approximately 950; and Libau around 300. He points out that these Jews are

indispensable at the moment as they are specialized workers, necessary for maintaining the country's economy.<sup>65</sup>

Estonian members of nationalist partisan groups initially found their way into the various auxiliary units of the Security Police and the S.D. and assisted in the mass shootings of Jews in their own country as well as White Russia and Latvia. Together, they did their work so thoroughly that by mid-December, Stahlecker was able to report that Estonia was 100% Judenfrei.<sup>66</sup> According to German accounts only 35,000 of Lithuania's 230,000 Jews were reported alive and residing in three major ghettos--Schaulen had 4500, Kaunas had 15,000, Vilnius had 15,000.<sup>67</sup>

Regarding the perpetrators, after the conquest of Lithuania and Latvia, Einsatzkommando 2 and 3 separated from the Rear Area of Army Group North and remained in Lithuania and Latvia respectively, for essential assignments. According to Stahlecker, their task was so much the easier because each Einsatzkommando in Lithuania, Latvia, and Estonia had at its disposal native police units.

After the dismantling of the self-governing organizations, the German civil government began organizing and consolidating its civil service and police agencies. Since each level in the chain of command interacted not only with each other but with native organizations, and all impacted the execution of the Final Solution in Lithuania, it is necessary to introduce the hierarchy.

In late July, Major Franz Lechthaler assumed command of all police battalions. General Wysocki, Chief of the SS and Police in Lithuania was his superior. Wysocki, in turn, served under SS Obergruppenfuhrer H. Prutzman, entitled Higher Chief of SS and Police Commander of the Ostland. Obergruppenfuhrer Friedrich Jeckeln replaced Prutzman in November of 1941. Moving up the hierarchy, Reinhardt Heydrich, Head of the Security Police and SD was Jeckeln's superior and finally Heinrich Himmler as Reichsfuehrer SS and Chief of the German Police occupied the highest rung in the security structure receiving orders directly from Hitler.

After the Lithuanian Provisional Government dismantled itself, the Germans replaced Police Chief Bobelis with a former Captain in the Lithuanian Army, Stasys Kviecinskas. The appointments of the officer corps of the five battalions originating from Kaunas but operating throughout Lithuania were recommended to Lechthaler by leaders of the Nationalist Party. The following excerpt from a communique to Lechthaler dated August 6 and signed by Ig. Tawnys, Chief of Staff of the "Iron Wolf," the paramilitary arm of the extreme nationalist or Tautiniki Party, was a typical of the dialogue:

The Iron Wolf Headquarters of the L.N.P. (Lithuanian Nationalist Party) is sending you Captain Sopoga Pranas. We recommend him to the post of second in command of Battalion II. Captain Sopoga deserted the Lithuanian Corps (29 th Lithuanian Infantry Regiment of the Red Army) on June 18, having killed the Russian Commissar of the Battery. He speaks German fairly well and is known to be talented soldier as well as an old friend.

Lechthaler responded affirmatively the following day in a communique presented to the Lithuanian city commandant Captain Kviecinskas.

I ask you to form two battalions out of the seven companies now available. I agree that Major Simkus be in command of the 1st battalion and Major Impulevicius be in command of the 2nd battalion. I ask you to inform me about the completion of the two battalions in question. I ask you further to continue the recruiting of volunteers for the formation of the third battalion. 69

The Lithuanian Police organized along the same lines as the German model. A special Lithuanian unit, directly subordinate to the S.D., contained anywhere from forty-five to one-hundred fifty volunteers. First-Lieutenant Lukoschos commanded the unit whose duties included performing mass executions at Ponar. H. Schweinberger served as the German liason and was directly responsible for the unit's operations.

An example of how the Lithuanian agencies worked together under German orders is demonstrated in the following instructions from a top secret document sent to the Chief of the North Vilnius Police Station of the Vilnius District.

In accordance with the order of the Commissar of the Vilnius Gebiet, Herr Wulff. All Jews of the Vilnius District must be assembled to special points, ghettos, by September 22. 6 a.m. The task is to be carried out by the chiefs of the parishes and Mayor of North Vilnius, aided by the local police and soldiers of the self-defence battalion. Forty men of the self-defence battalion will be sent to your disposition at 8a.m. on September 20. The soldiers will transport and guard the Jews in the ghetto. 70

A communique to the Gebietskommissar Vilnius-Land from SS-Obersturmfuehrer Krieg demonstrated how the police and

self-defense forces of the district of Vilnius would be used in a special action:

The self-defense detachments intended for the reinforcement of the police stations in the district of Vilnius will leave Vilnius at 5:00 a.m. so that they could report for duty at 8:00 a.m. at the respective police stations of the district of Vilnius. The mayors and rural officials of the district of Vilnius are authorized by me to dispose of the police stations and the self-defense detachments remain for guard duty at the ghettos. The men of the self-defense units are to be duly accommodated and provisioned.

Because of the extensive level of communication and collaboration between local bureaucrats and enforcement agencies with those of the German occupation, the Jews were rooted out and processed rapidly. Germans introduced the Final Solution in Lithuania but the task was being carried out with significant and vital Lithuanian assistance.

## A. Endnotes

1. Abba Kovner, "Nissayon Rishon le-Haggid," Yalkut Moreshet 1973. Excerpt from manifesto dated January 1, 1942, Yiddish version in archives of Kibbutz Beit Lohamei ha-Getta'ot. On the subject of the mass executions of the Jews of Lithuania see Yitzhak Arad, "The Final Solution in Lithuania in the Light of German Documentation," Yad Vashem Studies V. 11, 1976, pp. 234-272. From the focus of a Jewish survivor see L. Rann, Ash fun Yerushalayim de-Lite (New York: Vilner Farlag, 1959). For a Lithuanian viewpoint see Leonard Valiukas, Lithuania, Land of Heroes (Hollywood, Calif: Lithuanian Days Publishers, 1974). From a Soviet standpoint see Rozauskas, Documents Accuse. On Hitler's policy of genocide, see Yehuda Bauer, "Auschwitz and the Final Solution." Lecture given at the International Conference on the Extermination of the Jews of Europe, (Stuttgart, May 3-5, 1984). Uwe Dietrich Adam, Judenpolitik im Dritten Reich (Dusseldorf, 1972); Andreas Hillgruber, "Die Endlösung." For a classic functionalist view on the Final Solution see Martin Broszat, "Hitler und die Genesis der Endlösung," p. 753. (English translation in Yad Vashem Studies 13 (Jerusalem, 1979), p. 93); Hans Mommsen concurs with Broszat that an actual order from Hitler to exterminate Jews does not exist. See Hans Mommsen "Die Realisierung des Utopischen: Die Endlösung der Judenfrage in Dritten Reich," Geschichte und Gesellschaft 9, (1983); The intentionalist argument is presented by Klaus Hildebrand, Das Dritte Reich (Munich, 1979). Also see Karl Dietrich Bracher, "Tradition und Revolution in Nationalsozialismus" in Hitler, Deutschland und die Mächte; (ed.) Manfred Funke (Dusseldorf, 1978). That Hitler gave the extermination order to the Einsatzgruppen before the invasion is concluded by Helmut Krausnick and Hans-Heinrich Wilhelm, "Die Truppe der Weltanschauungskreises" in Quellen und Darstellungen zur Zeitgeschichte V. 22, (Stuttgart, 1981). Christopher Browning, "The Decision Concerning the Final Solution," and "Fateful Months," Essays on the Emergence of the Final Solution (New York: Holmes and Meier, 1986), also takes the position that the Einsatzgruppen had prior knowledge of their mission.

2. "Summary report of Karl Jaeger (Jäger), commander of Einsatzkommando 3, December, 1941," Yad Vashem Archives, 0-18/245. Municipal orders and decrees by Lithuanian officials also substantiate collaboration. The secretary of the Kaunas Jewish Council, Abraham Tory, collected official documents by local authorities which are incorporated chronologically into the text of his diary published under the title Surviving the Holocaust, The Kovno Ghetto Diary (Cambridge: Harvard Univ. Press, 1990). A series of clearly indicting documents appear in Rozauskas, DA. The Lithuanian daily, Naujoji Lietuva which began appearing in Vilnius on June 29, 1941 published many of the local decrees against Jews, see Moreshet Archives, D. l. 362. Also L. Rann, (ed.) Yerushalayim de-Lita L. Rann, New York: Laureate Press 1974). In the National Archives of the United States, documents from the Office of Strategic Services describe the position of indigenous populations of Nazi-occupied Europe. Captured German documents including German Army Reports, Rear and High Command, Reich Ministry Reports. Reports from the Office of Resettlement also deal with the question of the collaboration of Lithuanian authorities and the general population in the implementation of the Final Solution. On the activities of the Einsatzgruppen in the former Soviet territories see the definitive monograph by Krausnick and Wilhelm, Die Truppe des Weltanschauungskrieges. On the cooperation of the Wehrmacht in the Final Solution see Christian Streit, Keine Kameraden p. 126. Apparently, the cooperation of the army far exceeded the minimum level of support agreed upon in the OKH/RSHA agreement. So much so that Brigadeführer Dr. Franz Stahlecker (Commander of Einsatzgruppe A) wrote to Himmler on October 15, 1941, IMT Document L 180 V. 2, p. 383-384. (henceforth noted as "Stahlecker Report") that his experiences with Army Group North were very good and that his relations with Generaloberst Höppner, the Commander of the Fourth Panzer Army, were "very close, yes, almost cordial." Finally, to place the sequence of mass executions in Lithuania into the larger context of the Final Solution see Raul Hilberg, The Destruction.

3. "Stahlecker Report." Heydrich issued Order No. 1 of June 29, 1941, to the Einsatzgruppen. The order stated that the local "self-cleansing" of Communist and Jewish elements was not to be impeded. "Rather, such actions are to be triggered covertly and guided in the right direction, so that later such local units cannot appeal to political guarantees given by the German authorities." Rather than fostering permanent "self defense units," local pogroms were to be instigated, see R70/32, Sowjetunion, Bundesarchiv Koblenz.



4. Budreckis states that the Stahlecker summary report greatly exaggerated the number of Jews killed in the pogroms as well as the size of the Klimatis detachment. "Actually the group numbered some fifty men who, after being tortured in Soviet prisons for the most part by Communist agents of Jewish background and not being oriented as to the policies of the LAF, fell easy prey to German schemes," The Lithuanian National Revolt p. 62. By January 1942, Stahlecker reported that only 34,500 Jews remained alive in Lithuania. His statistic does not include the few thousand Jews either in hiding or fighting in partisan units.

5. Prunskis, Lithuania's Jews p. 19.

6. Budreckis, The Lithuanian National Revolt. The "retaliation" explanation is most often presented as a rationale for Lithuanians who collaborated with the Germans in the executions of Jews. Speaking of Lithuanians who actually participated Budreckis states, "Being brutalized by the Soviet prisons, it was no wonder they craved revenge." Another example involves a German soldier/driver who witnessed the mass slaughter of the Jews of Ponar asked one of the Lithuanian members of the execution squad how he could bring himself to perpetrate such acts when the Jews had done nothing to him. The soldier replied: "After what we suffered under the rule of Russian Jewish commissars, after the Russian invasion of Lithuania, it is not so difficult." Cited in E. Klee, W. Dreßen and V. Rieß, Schöne Zeiten Judenmord aus der Sicht der Täter und Gaffer (Frankfurt, 1988), p. 48. On the revenge motive and the perceived identification with Jew to Communist see Martin Brozat, "Die nationale Widerstandsbewegung in Litauen im Zweiten Weltkrieg 1941-1944," Gutachten des Instituts für Zeitgeschichte (Stuttgart 1966), V. 2, p. 325. See also Myllyniemi, Die Neuordnung der Baltischen Länder 1941-1944 (Helsinki, 1973), p. 14 ff.

7. See examples of personal accounts given by Avraham Tory, Surviving the Holocaust, The Kovno Ghetto Diary (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1990)), pp 6-9. William Mishell, From Kaddish to Kovno (Chicago: Chicago Review Press, 1988), pp. 52-54. Also see the following studies, Sarah Neshamit Between Collaboration and Revolt (Jerusalem, 1971), p. 162 ff. and Dov Levin, "Participation of Lithuanian Jews in the Second World War," Journal of Baltic Studies V. 6, 1975, pp. 300-310.

8. "Stahlecker Report," Concerns the status of Jews in the Baltic States preceding the Nazi occupation. Stahlecker, at least, allowed for endemic antisemitism, something that contemporary Lithuanian scholars deny. Also see Krausnick and Wilhelm, Die Truppe p. 300.

9. "Stahlecker Report." See secondary literature cited above.
10. "Stahlecker Report," Various components of the Reports of Einsatzgruppe A were widely cited in the Nuremberg War Crimes Trial, Case No. 9. IMT V. 2, p. 176.
11. "Stahlecker Report."
12. "Stahlecker Report." According to RSHA IV-A-1 Operational Report USSR no. 24 of July 16, 1941, Latvian auxiliaries eagerly lent their support to Einsatzkommandos 1b and 2.
13. The Selbstschutz (indigenous auxiliary) formed itself largely from enlisted men and officers of the Estonian army. According to RSHA IV-A-1 Operational Report USSR No. 3, October 12, 1941, these local units along with Sonderkommando 1a of Einsatzgruppe A executed the small number of Jews left behind in the wake of the Soviet withdrawal. Also see Nazi Conspiracy and Aggression V. 4, p. 944. For general surveys of the Jews of Estonia see Emanuel Nodel, "Life and Death of Estonian Jewry," Baltic History (ed). A. Ziedonis, W. Winter and M. Valgema (Cleveland, 1973), pp. 227-36; E. Amitan-Wilensky, "Estonian Jewry," The Jews of Latvia pp. 336-47.
14. One Simaite "Litviner un yidn be'et der Nazi okupatsye," Lita Vol. I (New York, 1951).
15. Sol Littman, War Criminal on Trial, The Rauca Case (Toronto: Lester and Orpen Limited, 1983), p. 44.
16. Lazar S. Goldstein-Golden, From Ghetto Kovno to Dachau (New York: Goldstein, 1985), p. 66.
17. DA No. 18, p. 52.
18. Prunskis, Lithuania's Jews p. 18. Neshamit, Rescue p. 300.
19. As a condition for their rescue, the families of two Jewish doctors were forced to convert. The priests of this monastery, Vladas Polonskis and Zemaitis were arrested after the war and charged with underground anti-Soviet activities.
20. For the change in attitude of members of the Lithuanian clergy in late 1943, see Neshamit, Rescue pp. 313-320.
21. Neshamit, Rescue p. 330
22. Their "work" is a metaphor for the rounding up and killing of Jews following the Soviet retreat. See "Stahlecker Report."
23. Law Reports of Trials of War Criminals, Vol. XII, London 1948. p. 31.

24. RSHA IV A-I Operational Report USSR No. 14, July 6, 1941. According to Tory's diary entry of July 7, 1941 about 6,000 Jews had been arrested indiscriminately by the Lithuanians during the first few days of the German occupation.

25. Ilya Ehrenburg and Vasily Grossman (ed.), The Black Book (New York: Schocken Books, 1981), p. 120. A Lithuanian battalion of 335 fought with SS Major-Gen. Juergen Stroop in suppressing the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising of April 19 - May 16, 1941. For information on Lithuanian battalions which fought for the Germans who continued to participate in the murder of the Jews in White Russia and Poland (in ghettos and concentration camps) see Sarah Neshamit, "Bin Shituf Pe'ula le-Meri," Dappim leCheker ha Shoa ve-ha Mered, V. 1, pp. 152-177.

26. A. Rakunas, "Lietuvos liaudies kova pries mobilizacija i hitlerine, kariuomene ir jos suziugdymas, 1941-1945," Istorja V. 2, (Vilnius 1965), p. 41. English text in Romuald J. Misiunas and Rein Taagerpera, The Baltic States: Years of Dependence (Berkeley: Univ. of California Press, 1983), p. 55. On Latvia see Seppo Myllyniemi, Die Neuordnung der baltischen Lander, 1941-1944 (Helsinki, 1973), p. 228. On Estonia: Arnold Purre, "Eesti sõda Nõuk Liiduga," Eesti riik V. 2, pp. 25-26. English translation in Misiunas and Taagerpera, The Baltic States p. 55.

27. As described in The Einsatzgruppen Case No. 9 Nuremberg War Crimes Trials, September 1947 - April 10, 1948, p. 1.

28. "Memorandum of the Lithuanian Insurrectional Government for the Government of the German Reich," Archives of the Lithuanian Legation in Berlin, Library of the Hoover Institution on War, Revolution, and Peace. Stanford University.

29. RSHA IV A-I Operational Report USSR No. 25, July 18, 1941.

30. "Laikinojii Lietuvos Vyriausbe," I Laisve Oct. 1961, p. 8.

31. Budreckis, The Lithuanian National Revolt p. 133.

32. Mendel Balberyski, Shtarker fun ayzn (Tel Aviv: Hamenorah, 1967), p. 124.

33. RSHA IV A-I Operational Report USSR No. 17, July 9, 1941.

34. RSHA IV A-1 Operational Report USSR No. 21, July 13, 1941.

35. RSHA IV A-1 Operational Report USSR No. 17, July 9, 1941.

36. "Stahlecker Report." For the Lithuanian perspective on the events of the first days of the Nazi occupation, see Stacys Rastikis, Kovose de Lietuvos (Los Angeles, 1957), p. 301.
37. "Recommendation regarding Personnel for the Reich Commissariats in the East and for the Political Central Office in Berlin, (April 7, 1941) IMT 1019 PS, V. 3, p. 631.
38. "The Organization of the Administration of the Eastern Territories," IMT 1056 PS, V. 3, p. 706.
39. Kacys Gecys, Katalikiskoji Lietuva (Chicago: 1946), p. 418.
40. Archives of the Lithuanian Legation in Berlin pp. 1256, August-September 1941, in the Library of the Hoover Institution on War, Revolution, and Peace, Stanford University.
41. Archives of the Lithuanian Legation in Berlin RSHA IV A-I Operational Reports for that period corroborate the veracity of the statements within the text.
42. Julius Slávenas, "Nazi Ideology and Policy in the Baltic States" Lituanus V. 2, 1965, pp. 34-37. Kazys Pakstas, Lithuania and World War II (Chicago: Lithuanian Cultural Institute, 1941).
43. Top Secret Operational Order to Order No. 22 signed by Keitel March 13, 1941, concerning Directives for Special Areas. (USA 135) 447 PS V. 1, p. 811. Herman Göring had overall control of economic functions within the military. He formed the Wirtschaftsführungstab Ost (Economy Leadership Staff East) to carry out his task. General Georg Thomas, Chief of the OKWRu (Armed Forces High Command Economy-Armament Office) was part of the staff in charge of civilian war contracts in the "Ostland" and in the "Ukraine," IMT 865 PS. See secondary literature by Browning, Adam, Hilberg, and Krausnick cited above.
44. "General Instructions for all Reich Commissars in the Occupied Eastern Territories," June 28, 1941, Rosenberg File, PA 1030 V. 3, p. 695. See Klaus Hildebrand, Vom Reich zum Weltreich: Hitler, NSAP und koloniale Frage, 1919-1945 (Munich: Fink, 1969). Also see Paul Kluge, Politische form und Aussenpolitik des Nationalsozialismus, Geschichte und Gegenwartsbewusstsein: festschrift für Hans Rothfels pp. 428-436.
45. Gewecke, Gebeitskommissar of Shavli, to Lohse September 11, 1951, Occ. E. 3-22, Yad Vashem Archives, 0-18-139; 0-18-142; 0-18-144.

46. Carl, Gebeitskommissar of Sluzk, White Russia to Generalkommissar of White Russia, Kube, October 11, 1941, IMT 1104 PS.
47. Carl to Kube, October 11, 1941, IMT 1104 PS.
48. Kube to Reichkommissar Ostland, Heinrich Lohse, November 1, 1941, IMT 1104 PS.
49. Testimony by G. Hermann before the Historical Commission at Landsberg on September 2, 1946, Yad Vashem Archives, M-1-E-6, p. 3-4.
50. Lohse to Leibrant, November 15, 1941 concerning execution of Jews, IMT 3663 PS
51. Leibrant to Lohse, December 18, 1941, IMT 3666 PS
52. IMT 3664 PS
53. According to statistics for RSHA Operational Reports, by mid-August, tens of thousands of Jews had already been killed. For definition of what constituted a Jew, see enclosure in letter from Rosenberg, August 13, 1941, "Provisional Directives on Treatment of Jews in Area of Reichkommissariat Ostland," IMT 1138 PS.
54. RSHA Operational Situation Report USSR No. 17, July 7, 1941. Trial of Dr. Filbert, Commander of Einsatzkommando 9, Yad Vashem Archives, TR10-388a, p. 39.
55. RSHA Operational Situation Report USSR No. 21, July 13, 1941. See also H. Kruk, Togbuch fun vilner Geto (New York: Yivo, 1961), pp. 13-19.
56. H. Kruk, Togbuch fun vilner Geto (New York, 1961), pp. 16-17.
57. M. Dworzecki, Yerushalayim de Lita ba Meri u-va Sho'ah (Tel Aviv, Mifleget Po'alei Eretz-Yisrael, 1951), pp. 20-21. A. Sutzkewer, Getto Vilna (Tel Aviv: Shavi, 1947), pp. 12-13.
58. Diary Entry for July 5, 1941, H. Kruk, Togbuch.
59. "Testimony by A. Rindziunski," A. 381. Moreshet Archives. S. Bisrickas, Diary of Jews Murdered in Ponar, July 1941-Nov. 1943 (Vilnius: Mintis, 1977). Bistrickas was a Lithuanian railroad guard who periodically recorded his observations of the mass-shootings in Ponar.
60. Abraham Tory, Secretary to the Kovno Ghetto Judenrat, noted this condition in his diary entry of July 10, 1941. See Surviving the Holocaust p. 16.

61. Stalecker Report. See Littman, War Criminal p. 52. Mishell recalls an edict which among other things stated; "Since all Jews were communists and the Lithuanian population could not tolerate Bolsheviks among them, the Jews would be resettled in a ghetto in Slobodka. See Kadish for Kovno p. 43. The Viliampole quarter of Kaunas was one of the first ghettos established.
62. RSHA IV Operation Report # 20, July 12, 1941.
63. RSHA IV Operation Report # 19, July 11, 1941.
64. RSHA IV Operation Report # 24, July 16, 1941. See study on the destruction of the Jews of Riga, Max Kaufman, Churb'n Letland's; die Vernichtung der Juden Lettlans (Munich, 1947).
65. "Stahlecker Report." See Mendel Bobe "Riga," The Jews of Latvia (Tel Aviv, 1971).
66. "Stahlecker Report," See Emanuel Nodel "Life and Death of Estonian Jewry," Baltic History A. Ziedonis, W. Winter and M. Valgemae (Cleveland, 1973). pp 227-236.
67. "Stahlecker Report." This figure is low. It does not take into consideration Jews in the underground and those in hiding.
68. Letter of August 6, 1941 by the Lithuanian National Party regarding the appointment of Sopaga Second in Command of Battalion II, DA No. 29.
69. Letter of August 7, 1941, by Lechthaler, Mayor of Defense Police Battalion Commander to Kviecinskas. DA No. 30.
70. Letter To the Chief of the N. Vilnius Police Station of the Vilnius District. September 19, 1941. DA No. 52.
71. Letter of September 19, 1941 addressed by the Police Garrison Chief in Vilnius to the Gebietskommissar of the District of Vilnius stating that all police and self-defense forces will be detached for the special action of arresting all Jews and driving them into ghettos. DA No. 63.

VII/ THE MASS KILLINGS OF JEWS IN THE VILNIUS AND KAUNAS GHETTO  
IN THE SECOND HALF OF 1941

By mid-September 1941, the Final Solution was being carried out in all of Lithuania. Neither the victims nor their Lithuanian countrymen did much to counter German policy. August had been a relatively quiet month for the Jews of Vilnius in comparison to the daily mass killings that the Jews in Kaunas and the countryside faced. However, on August 31, an event known to Jews as "The Great Provocation" resulted in the death of thousands of Jews from the area of Vilnius and inaugurated a series of mass murders that reduced the Jewish community to 15,000 by the end of December 1941.

On September 1, Vilnius Gebietskommissar Hingst described the event:

Notice: Yesterday, Sunday afternoon, shots were directed from an ambush at German soldiers in Vilnius. Two of these cowardly bandits were identified -- they were Jews. The attackers paid with their lives for their act--they were shot on the spot. To avoid such hostile acts in the future, new and severe deterrent measures were taken. The responsibility lies with the entire Jewish community.

Thirty-seven hundred Jews from the old Jewish quarter were dragged out of their homes, arrested and taken to the Lukiski Prison between August 31 and September 2, 1941.<sup>2</sup> Lithuanian guards confiscated their money and valuables. Through bribes from intervening relatives a few Jews were released. The shooting squads of the Ypatina, commanded by a H. Schweinberger, executed the rest at Ponar.<sup>3</sup>

The offices of the Judenrat were also located in the section in which the purge was conducted. On September 2, Schweinberger and three Ypatingi ordered the twenty-two Jews present in the office to line up. Sixteen were taken to Lukiski to await execution at Ponar and six were released. The Judenrat offices were sealed shut.

Despite the circumstances, the remaining Judenrat members continued to act. They formed a committee to call on P. Buragas, the Lithuanian officer in charge of Jewish Affairs. They received permission to resume the functions of "Chevra Kadisha," the Burial Society. They also petitioned the Lithuanian Mayor, K. Dabulevicius, for clarifications on such issues as the impending ghetto and the reconstitution of the Judenrat. The mayor replied that all that had occurred in Vilnius the previous day had been ordered by the Germans and the Lithuanians bore no responsibility. He alluded to the establishment of two ghettos (discussed previously) and reestablishment of the Judenrat but would give no date.

Dabulevicius was both right and wrong. The Lithuanians had no power to make policy but were indeed responsible for its implementation. For example, the cumbersome task of removing Jews from their homes and settling them in the ghetto was assigned to the approximately two-thousand Lithuanian municipal police including the auxiliary police-guard regiment units.

Unlike Kaunas, where the fit were separated from the unfit, only geographic location determined the ghetto in which



the Jews would be placed or if they would be taken directly to Ponar for execution. The commander of the Lithuanian Police Force of Vilnius, Iskauskas reported on September 9, 1941:

The Ghetto Operation in Vilnius began at 6 a.m. on September 6, 1941. The Aktion was carried out in accordance with a prepared plan whereby the police districts of the city were divided into quarters and subquarters. Guards were posted along all roads out of the city to prevent Jews from fleeing. Simultaneous Aktionen began in all police districts from the outer perimeters, and gradually closed the ring in the direction of the city. The operation was executed by police and soldiers from guard units. The police evicted the Jews from the houses and the soldiers herded them into the places chosen for their future residence. Invalids were temporarily left in their dwellings and the City Council received notification to this effect.

The same event is described by a young Jewish participant:

We dragged along, a group of Jews with parcels. The street was full of Jews with parcels... People walked along harnessed to bundles they dragged after them on the road. People fell, packages broke open. Before me a woman was bowed under a bundle from which rice trickled endlessly like a necklace on to the roadway. I walked laden down angry. The Lithuanians egged us on, not allowing us to pause...I did not see the streets in front of me, the passersby. I only felt a terrible fatigue; I felt a storm of indignation and pain burning within me.

Lithuanians and Poles lined the streets in droves.

According to one source some taunted the Jews as they passed: "You wanted the Bolsheviks--you have the ghetto," or "you wanted Palestine--now you're off to the ghetto." There were even those who snatched parcels from the Jews. But most stood by indifferently and looked on silently. Among the spectators

German soldiers photographed the Jews and also the Lithuanians who escorted them to the ghetto.<sup>6</sup>

The process of "Umsiedlung," resettlement, that took a month in Kaunas was accomplished in one day and a night in Vilnius. By the late afternoon, the Germans observed that the number of Jews arriving at the Ghetto was much larger than expected. By late evening, a decision was made to transfer an additional number of Jews, approximately two thousand to Lukiszki. One Jewish woman described the night march to Lukiszki:

The march to Lukiszki was terrible. Thousands of Jews were rushed along like sheep and beaten with rubber truncheons in the darkness of night... Everyone was wailing, and their cries filled the dark. We were taken to prison. Hundreds of Germans and Lithuanians opened the gate for us and in doing so, beat the children fathers, and mothers. Many of them jeered at us and promised us death.

By the early morning hours of September 7, the Police Commander of Vilnius was able to report that the Ghetto Operation was completed. Several thousands went directly to Lukiszki where they awaited execution at Ponar.

The pattern of two separately enclosed ghettos established in Warsaw and later in Kaunas and Vilnius was copied at Riga. Those Jews of the first ghetto who possessed "Ausweise" or work cards viewed themselves as more secure from the round-ups. The second ghetto increasingly became a dumping ground for those without employment, in addition to children and the elderly.

Of the six-thousand Jews that were imprisoned at Lukiszki about two-hundred doctors, engineers, and other artisans were escorted to either Ghetto 1 or 2. Those Jews that remained were transferred to Ponar and executed on September 10-11.

Sima Katz, a school teacher who escaped from Ponar related:

We were loaded onto trucks, each of which has has fifty to sixty people and several Lithuanians armed with rifles. We were thus driven in the direction of Ponar. We reached a wooded spot... lay down, tired...Not far away we heard volleys of rifles fire... The Lithuanians began marshalling us into groups of ten and led them into the hillocks from which the firing was heard... suddenly it became clear to us what this was all about. The women began pleading with the Lithuanians...to no avail...when their turn came, they rose up, quiet, and despairing, without protests or pleas. Thus, family after family proceeded on their final journey. Our turn came about 5:30. I set my face for the walk, my daughters with me...we were lined up and<sup>8</sup>I felt how my elder daughter slipped out of my hand...

The report of Einsatzkommando 3 of December 1 summarized:

"On 12 September, 993 Jewish males, 1,670 Jewish women and 771 Jewish children a total of 3,334 were liquidated in Vilnius."<sup>9</sup>

Concerning the population of half-Jews, Christian spouses married to Jews, and converts, Franz Murer the Gebietskommissar of Vilnius wrote to the Senior Commander of the SS and Police:

In accordance with the directives of the Reichkommissar dated August 18, 1941 clause 1b states that the surveillance should be imposed on non-Jewish spouses who do not wish to share the fate of their Jewish partners.... As I have begun receiving reports referring to non-Jewish spouses, I would ask you to instruct the Lithuanian police to find these people and keep them under surveillance. Moreover, I ask you to send me a list of the persons identified. <sup>10</sup>

In contrast to the indifference or even cooperation that Christian Lithuanians demonstrated in regard to the detection of Jews, the masses apparently resisted the authorities in identifying Aryan partners of mixed marriages. Family ties, language ability, wider social contacts, and religious affinities made it easier for these persons to find refuge. Murer tried to obtain the information from Jewish spouses living in the ghetto regarding their partner but that also proved fruitless. Unfortunately, for those Christian spouses who chose to reside in the ghetto, their chances for survival were slim as they generally met the same fate as their Jewish mates.

In regard to the extinction of Jews from the two major ghettos of Lithuania, Jewish records as well as Lithuanian and German documents discuss Lithuanians who were directly involved in the round-ups and executions. The diary of railway guard, S. Bistrickas, recounts the author's eyewitness view of the murders at Ponar. In short, laconic sentences his 55 periodic entries spanned the period between July 11, 1941 and November 4, 1943.<sup>11</sup> He records the mass-shootings and burials of tens of thousands of Jews. His figure for the first year alone was 24,500. The entries refer to Lithuanian executioners as well as German. Bistrickas tells how 80 Lithuanians in varying states of intoxication killed 4,000 Jews. He states that the Lithuanian including many "Shaulistai," (national guards) were able to sell the clothing of the dead Jews to the local inhabitants.<sup>12</sup>

Although the Aktionen and accompanying mass shootings of the summer and fall of 1941 ended in late December, smaller round-ups including the execution of Jewish policemen in Vilnius continued until September 1942. Lithuanian participation in these round ups will be illustrated by way of a few examples.

German and Lithuanian squads led by Schweinberger began an Aktion on the morning of Yom Kippur, October 1, 1941, the high holy day when most of the Jewish synagogues were crowded with Jewish worshippers. After emptying the synagogues, the squads launched their attack on the inhabitants of the second ghetto. The operation ended that evening with over 1700 people taken to Lukiszki Prison.

According to Jewish sources the Ghetto 2 Judenrat received no advance notice of the Yom Kippur Aktion.<sup>13</sup> By contrast, the Judenrat of Ghetto #1 had been ordered by Schweinberger to hand over 1000 Jews by 7:30 by evening. Since that demand wasn't met, squads of Lithuanians and German began pulling people out of houses. On October 1, the German and Lithuanian squads captured 2,220 Jews and drove them to Lukiszki.<sup>13</sup> Only a few dozen Jews through bribes or intervention by German employers succeeded in effecting their release and were allowed to return to the ghetto.<sup>14</sup>

Three more Aktionen in the first three weeks of October resulted in the liquidation of Ghetto 2 in Vilnius. In the weeks after the last Aktion on October 21, in which 2,500 Jews were sent to Ponar, the Lithuanians demonstrated

extraordinary zeal in continuing to search for concealed persons.<sup>15</sup>

Even as Ghetto 2 was liquidated, plans were under way for the liquidation of the main ghetto beginning with inhabitants who did not have current work passes. During the night of October 23-24th the ghetto was surrounded by heavily armed detachments of German troops and Lithuanian auxiliaries. In the early morning hours, these squads went from house to house searching for Jews without passes. Most of the latter had previously gone into hiding. One young Jewish male describes the terrifying experience of being hunted:

A noise is heard...shots...I feel that the storm is approaching...We are like beasts surrounded by hunters... the Lithuanians hit harder on the walls, but gradually everything dies down of itself and we understand that they have gone away.<sup>16</sup>

In November and December the Aktionen continued until the Jewish population of Vilnius was whittled down by three-fourths. One Aktion conducted primarily by Lithuanians involved Jews from Vilnius who had escaped to Byelorussia at the onset of the massacres. Approximately 265 Jews were caught and shot in the Voronovo Township some forty-five miles south of Vilnius.<sup>17</sup>

Aside from going into hiding, Jews were able to do little in their own defense. During one of the last Aktionen on December 22, 1941, Jews assaulted the Lithuanians who had uncovered their hiding place. This act of resistance may have lifted the spirits of those left in the ghetto, but did

not stop the process of murder. That came to a temporary halt in January 1942, after which date there were no major Aktionen for more than a year.

Meanwhile, in Kaunas, throughout August, September, and October 1941, the mass-shooting continued unabated. German records give an accounting similiar to the one depicted for Vilnius concerning the use of auxiliary Lithuanian personnel. The small ghetto was liquidated in early October. According to Jaeger's summation, 315 Jewish men, 712 women and 818 children were shot on October 4. On October 28, during the Grosse Aktion, approximately 9,200 were shot at Fort IX. Only one person survived, an unidentified twelve-year-old boy who was shielded by his mother when the shooting began.

This Aktion marked the last mass-shooting of the Jews of the Kaunas Ghetto for over a year. Instead of "cleansing local elements," the execution squad of EK 3 began exterminating thousands of Jews transported from the Reich, who were "resettled in the East." One resident of the Kaunas Ghetto recorded:

The next morning when I got up I went to the kitchen window which faced the highway leading to the Ninth Fort and--God almighty there were columns of one hundred each slowly moving up the road...These were Austrian Jews taken to the East for work.

The Ninth Fort had suddenly become an execution ground for European Jewry. The local anti-Semitic collaborators in the European countries helped the Nazis round up the Jews. The Germans then transported them to Lithuania and our local collaborators, our peaceful neighbors of years past, did the final shooting...God Almighty, was there ever a Jesus Christ who walked this earth of ours? Was this what He taught them?<sup>18</sup>

To the ignorant, uneducated Roman Catholic Lithuanian rural population, the Jew was still seen as the killer of Christ. Thus, in the small towns and countryside, where the peasant was most susceptible to the biases and teachings of the parish priest (and where Jews were most isolated), local Lithuanians routinely rounded up Jewish residents. The reports from police chiefs from other towns and districts throughout Lithuania suggested the flow of directives between German administrators dispensing orders to local Lithuanian leaders (parish chiefs, mayors, district chiefs etc.) who carried out orders. From this evidence it is possible to chart the course of the Final Solution outside Lithuania's two main cities. For example, on July 28, 1941, the Chief of the Taurage Police St., Urbeliunus reported to the Ministry for Internal Affairs on July 28, 1941 "that the Jewish question has been successfully solved..."<sup>19</sup>

On August 17, the Chief of the Lekeciai Police Station reported to the district commander:

all the Jews residing in the parish of Lekeciai were arrested and handed over to the soldiers of the defence batalion in Vilkijs. There were only 9 Jews left in the parish of Lekeciai. Now the parish is completely cleared of them.<sup>20</sup>

On the same day the Chief of the Police Station in the town and district of Kedainai reported to the District Police chief that the 913 Jews of his district were all placed in the barns



of the Kedaina cultural-technical schools and that he was awaiting further orders.<sup>21</sup>

On September 16, Chief of the Sakiai District, V. Karalius, and the Police Chief, Vilcinskas reported to the Ministry for Internal Affairs that the entire district was cleared of Jews:

They have been finally dealt with by the local partisans with the help of the auxiliary police: on September 13, 1941, 890 people in Sakiai, and on September 16th, 1941, 650 people in Kudirkos, Naumiestis...The list of the Jews dealt with, if required, shall be sent to you later. Herr Gebietskommissar has been notified of the above.<sup>22</sup>

One of the duties of the police chief was to report to the District Chief acts of opposition or insubordination. In the following report, J. Kvaraciejus, the Chief of the Police Station of Varena I, reported one of the few acts that defied authority:

I wish to report to you that on September 14, Jonas Gylys, parish priest of Varena I delivered at his church a sermon directed against the government. There being a religious feast in Varena I, a large number of people were at church. The above priest called the Lithuanian functionaries butchers saying: Innocent people, (Jews) among them old folk and pregnant women, were pushed about and kicked by Lithuanians in uniform. The forest of Varena was soaking in the blood of innocent people. The blood has not dried yet, when they rushed at the property of their victims. It is obvious that in his sermon the priest Gylys meant<sup>23</sup> to stand up for the Jews shot on September 10, 1941.

Nine days later, the chief of the District, St. Maliaiskas, passed on the report to his superior with the added preface

"concerning the intolerable conduct of the parish priest Gylys of VarenaI and his attempts to intercede for the Jews." <sup>24</sup>

Often Jews in the small villages and towns skipped the process of ghettoization. Instead they were transported just outside of town and shot. Among the cities and districts (besides Kaunas and Vilnius) in which thousands of Jews were killed in mass shootings were: Marijampole 5,278, Paanevezys 8,744, Rokiskis 3,693, Raseiniai 3,600, Ukmerge 6,055 Kedainiai 2,201, Obeliai, Alytus 1,279, Svencionys 3,726, Eisiskes 3,446, Zagare 2,236. <sup>25</sup>

The Chief of the Security Police and Secret Service Report of September 19, stated that:

Actions were carried out by the sonderkommando of the EK3 in conjunction with the Lithuanian Kommando in the districts of Raseiniai, Rokiskis, Sarasai, Perzai, and Priemy. All districts are now cleansed of Jews. The executions bring the number of persons liquidated by EK3 together with Lithuanian partisans up to 46,692. The total number of executions is approximately 85,800. <sup>26</sup>

In some districts such as Alytus, the local Lithuanians took the initiative of organizing partisan bands. The leaders of that district requested the Commandant of the German Army in Alytus to permit the organization of armed partisan detachments attached to local police. The partisan units had the authority to shoot communist, Jewish, and Polish offenders on the spot and make arrests at their own discretion. They stated that this was necessary because "of the large number of Jews and communists who abound in the nearby woods and forests and keep terrorizing the population and killing even

German soldiers." They suggested that a police force of 200 strong and a partisan force of 80 strong were needed in the district.<sup>27</sup>

The document contained a supplement that stipulated rules for establishing a defense force and its composition and position. Although the rules were specifically for the partisan unit in Alytus, they were consistent with the earlier LAF Membership Directives in pledging allegiance to Germany:

1. The partisan force admits only Lithuanian volunteers who have served in the army, have not soiled their hand with Communism...
2. The duty of every partisan is to help the German troops, i.e. to do his utmost in liquidating Bolshevik soldiers, former Communist functionaries...and all those who are robbing and working against the established order.<sup>28</sup>

The Final Solution in the Lithuanian countryside was every bit as efficient and remorseless as in its two major urban centers. Resident and refugee Jews found no sanctuary in the small villages and towns, where, in addition to anti-communism and traditional Christian Jew-hatred, the desire for plunder played a substantial role in their destruction.

## A. Endnotes

1. Dworzecki, Yerushalayim de Lita p. 33. The account contains photocopy of the announcement.
2. "Jaeger Report," p. 5. Testimony of Kruk gives similiar figures whereas testimonies of Dworzecki, Yerushalayim and A. Rindziunski, Moreshet Archives A. 381 state that the number of Jews murdered at that time was much higher.
3. Kruk states that the Judenrat members shot at Ponar were S. Trotzki, J. Shabad, N. Sofer, L. Katznelson, P. Konn, A. Zalkind, B. Parness, J. Shkolnitzki, S. Petukhovski, and Katz.
4. Vilnius City and District Police Chief Iskauskas' Report to the German Security and SD Commander about the restriction of Vilnius Jews to the ghetto on September 6, 1941, DA pp. 217-218.
5. Y. Rudashevski, The Diary of the Vilna Ghetto (Tel Aviv, Lohamei Hagetta'ot and Ha'Kibbutz ha-Me'uhad, 1973), p. 32.
6. H. Kruk, Togbuch fun vilner geto. (New York: Yivo, 1961), p. 66. M. Dworzecki Yerushalayim de-Lita p. 48; M. Balberyzski, Shtarker fun ayzn (Tel Aviv: Hamenorah, 1967), p. 174.
7. B. Klibanski, "The Underground Archives of the Bialystok Ghetto," Yad Vashem Studies V. 2, 1958, p. 234.
8. R. Korczak, Lehavot ba-Efer (Tel Aviv: Sifriat Po'alim, 1946) p. 23.
9. "Jaeger Report," p. 6.
10. DA No. 59.
11. S. Bistrickas, Diary p. 4.
12. Loot and plunder reappear as a motivation for some Lithuanian collaborators in the Final Solution. One Lithuanian complains in an anonymous letter to the Reichkommissar für das Ostland that "Even where, upon German instigation, the indignant Lithuanian people ridded themselves...of the Jews, the Germans took away from these poor people even the furniture which they had taken fom the Jews." Occ. E. 3b L-94. No. 215. See documents on Jewish possessions appropriated by Lithuanians and Germans, Sutzkewer-Kaczerginski, Vilna Collection, Yad Vashem Archives, JM/1951, No. 687.
13. Kruk, Togbuch pp. 83-89.

14. B. Epstein, "Di likvidatsye fun vilner geto," Yivo Bleter V. 30, 1947. p. 21.
15. Kruk Togbuch p. 250 Balberyski, Shtarker pp. 244-246.
16. Y. Rudashevski, pp. 33-39.
17. "Jaeger Report," L. Engelshtern, In getos un velder; Fun Vilne biz di Naliboker vildenishn (Tel Aviv: Ha-Kibbutz ha-Me'uhad, 1972).
18. Mishell, Kaddish p. 125.
19. Letter No. 27 by the Chief of the Vaintas Police station of Taurage district of July 28, 1941, addressed to the Police Chief Taurage District, DA No. 81.
20. Report No. 8 of August 17, 1941 by Chief of Lekeciai Police Station to the director of the Police Department, DA No. 39.
21. Report of August 17, 1941 by Chief of Kedainai Police Station to the Chief of the Police of the District of Kedainai, DA No. 90.
22. Letter No 3 of August 1942 by Karalius, Chief of District of Sakai, and Vilcinskas, Police Chief of Sakiai, to Chiefs of police stations instructing them to detain and dispossess all Jews in compliance with the order of Reivytis, Director of the Police Department, DA No. 99.
23. Report No. 7 of September 14, 1941 by Kvaraciejus, Chief of Verena I Police Station, to the Police Chief of the District of Alytus, DA No. 95.
24. Letter No. 2579 of September 23, 1941 by Maliauskas, Chief of the District of Alytus to the Gebietskommissar of Wilna-Land, DA No. 95.
25. Jaeger Report, See also IMT bd. VII 1891-1898, bd. 2545-2546, 2589, bd. 3140.
26. USSR IV Operation Report No. 83, Sept. 19, 1941.
27. Letter from Chief of Defence of Alytus District to Wehrmacht Commandant at Alytus requesting permission to organize armed detachments, DA No. 74.
28. DA No. 74.

#### VIII/ THE JEWISH RESPONSE

During the Last major Aktion in the Vilnius ghetto on December 22, 1942, the victims set a new precedent. A group of Jews assaulted the Lithuanians as they entered their hiding place. This act of resistance greatly affected remaining ghetto dwellers.<sup>1</sup>

With few exceptions, the Jews responded compliantly in the first few months after the invasion to the prohibitions and persecutions of the Nazis and their Lithuanian collaborators. As the first European Jews to be subjected to systematic extermination their fate would have been difficult to predict. They could not have known that the Final Solution was a policy that aimed at the collective destruction of all Jews, even if it meant undermining the German war effort. That individual circumstances such as social status, education, or political beliefs generally had no bearing on one's fate was also difficult to grasp at first. However, as all Jews could not be killed at once, it became apparent that those who performed vitally needed services were temporarily spared. The least useful - - the old, the young, the sick, the unskilled - - were killed immediately. Until such knowledge became available, resistance remained an individual affair.

In the absence of the knowledge that genocide was the intended final solution, the official Jewish leadership, the Judenrat, committed itself to the most pragmatic response.

The Judenrat acted on the belief that resistance would be futile and only provoke the Germans into destroying the entire Jewish community. The general hope was that "work and productivity would sustain the ghetto." Individual and collective efforts to stay alive were directed toward obtaining employment. Even after the ghetto leaders substantiated news of the mass exterminations, they either actually thought, or deluded themselves into thinking that the killings would be limited in number and locale. The majority of the ghetto inhabitants believed this in December 1941, five months after the killings had begun. Abba Kovner explained:

As the Jews of Vilnius had no paradigm of such dreadful slaughter, and as they had heard of the existence of the Warsaw Ghetto with its half million Jews who remained there for three years, and of the Bialystok Ghetto with 40,000 Jews in it, they believed that while they would face a life studded with vicissitude, the slaughter of millions was outside the realm of possibility.<sup>2</sup>

It was only after a portion of the Jews became convinced that the Germans intended to exterminate all Jews that a minority chose resistance as a response. An early example of this occurred during the night of October 3-4, 1941. The Germans seized two-thousand people from the Vilnius ghetto and told them that they were being moved to a third ghetto. However, when the last group realized that it was being led to Lukiszki,

many lay on the ground and refused to budge. The act is described thus:

Moshe Frumkin, a lad of eighteen, cried out to the people who were being taken with him on the way to prison: Don't let them take you! Escape into the streets! Panic seized the column, women lay prone on the road, the elderly stood petrified, and the youngsters ran away. Schweinberger ordered his men to fire. Dozens of people fell dead, and the survivors were compelled to carry them. Nevertheless, many escaped including Frumkin.<sup>3</sup>

Overt refusal usually meant death. When this became clear, the majority chose more covert methods of resistance. Individuals and families demonstrated an amazing tenacity and ingenuity in staying alive despite circumstances. For example, as work passes extended protection to the relatives of the main holder of a pass, (up to four persons) fictitious families organized. Mothers became wives, sons were listed as husbands and so forth. When work passes became unavailable hide-outs were sought.

To sustain this improvised existence smuggling and black marketeering became ubiquitous in the ghetto, thus confirming the antisemites' beliefs about "the criminal nature of the Jews." In fact, in Vilnius, on December 3, 1941 an Aktion was conducted against what was called in the ghetto "di untermvelt" or underworld. Jewish policemen worked along with Lithuanian squads to rid the ghetto of 157 of these "underworld characters."<sup>4</sup>

As introduced earlier, the position of the Judenrat and the Jewish police remains a controversial issue in the history



of the Holocaust. Some argue that the erroneous contention that work and productivity would save the ghetto led to total annihilation. Whether Judenrat members were German collaborators because of misguided altruism -- that their leadership would mitigate the worst sufferings of the Jewish community -- or for personal gain depended on the individual in question as well as the time and place a particular Judenrat functioned. The question of whether the official Jewish leadership delayed or facilitated the annihilation process is also not resolved.<sup>5</sup>

By far the most powerful and controversial figure was not actually a Judenrat member but chief of the Jewish police, Jacob Gens. As a captain in the former Lithuanian army and the husband of a Lithuanian Christian, Gens was somewhat of an anomaly. Through his friendship with influential nationalists, Gens received a position as head of the Jewish hospital. There he not only showed outstanding administrative skills but was willing to hide a number of prominent Jewish leaders from the Germans.

The actions of Gens as chief of police merit closer inspection, because they reflect the extreme strains under which all ghetto leaders operated. Gens believed that if the ghetto became an indispensable resource for the German war effort, the Germans would never dismantle the institution as a whole, or so it was hoped. Like Mordecai Rumkowski of the Lodz ghetto, Gens prioritized productivity above all as essential for the collective interest of the ghetto.<sup>6</sup>

The corollary to that notion was that some Jews had to be sacrificed so that the community as a whole could survive. Again the words of Gens,

I have done everything in my power to save as many Jews as possible. But that certain Jews might live I was obliged to lead others to their death.<sup>7</sup>

In Kaunas, Dr Elhanan Elkes, a prominent physician and a Zionist accepted the position of Oberjude of the Judenrat. Like Gens who wrote, "My heart is broken. But I shall do what is necessary for the sake of the Jews in the ghetto."<sup>8</sup> Elkes too, became a reluctant leader. However, Elkes leadership and administration remains far less controversial. Both Jacob Gens, the head of the Vilnius Ghetto and Commander of the Jewish Police and Dr. Jochannan Elkes, head of the Kaunas Ghetto were men of high personal integrity and outstanding achievement. Gens might have saved himself through his Christian wife's family connections had he not felt bound to serve the Jewish community.

Both leaders displayed amazing versatility and skill in devising agencies to help cope with endless adversities. They organized health care facilities such as: sanitation units, hospitals and clinics, as well as public kitchens. They helped maintain morale with schools, theaters, and libraries. However, a Jewish police force ordered by the Germans, functioned, not only to keep order within the ghetto but to assist the Germans and Lithuanians in their round-up of Jews during

Aktionen. This assistance remains the most controversial part of the Judenrat's record.

Partly to explain their own complicity, contemporary Lithuanian scholars point to members of the Judenrat and Jewish police force as illustrations of how the Jews participated in their own destruction: "the Nazis at times even forced the members of the Jewish police to take part in the annihilation of Jews."<sup>9</sup> Prunskis cited Joseph Tenenbaum's book *Underground* as an example of self-indictment,

The actual operations were conducted by members of the Jewish police under the supervision of the German Deportation Staff... People were evicted from their homes gathered in the streets and marched off... from there in prepared boxcars, Jews were loaded for transport like cattle for the slaughter house.<sup>10</sup>

According to some Jewish Holocaust survivors, for example Dr. L. Goldstein, the preparation of lists of Jews for deportation:

was the most scandalous and most heartless act of the Judenrat. Although the Chairman and Vice Chairman of the Jewish council, Dr Elkes and Lieb Garfinkel respectively were men of high personal integrity, they bear the responsibility for this cooperation with the hangmen in the ghetto, even though they acted, of course, with the best of intentions.<sup>11</sup>

Most damaging to Goldstein was that service in the Judenrat was voluntary, one could refuse by claiming ill health, as did Rabbi Shapiro of Kaunas.

Gens was aware that controversy surrounding his policy of providing the Germans with Jewish victims and that many of his fellow Jews regarded him a traitor. Yet, he justified

his position by taking the stance that the end of preserving the ghetto justified the means -- the sacrifice of individuals.

Traditional Jewish law was not much help to Gens, and he seems to have ignored the conflicting advice he received from Vilnius' famous rabbis. One of them told him that his rationale was wrong. Seven centuries earlier, the great Jewish thinker Maimonides wrote "If the pagans ask you (Jews) to deliver up one of your numbers so that he might be killed you must remain steadfast and not deliver up a single Jewish soul."<sup>12</sup> On the other hand, the Chief Rabbi of Kaunas took an opposing view basing himself on an obscure passage in one of the commentaries that set the principle that "if an evil decree threatened disaster for for the entire community, Jewish leaders must summon the courage to save even a remnant of the people." <sup>13</sup>

Perhaps it is well to keep in mind that one of the most odious characteristics of the Third Reich was that anything short of suicidal resistance played into the hands of the Nazis. Gens worked for the Nazis and adapted their selection system to determine those worthy or unworthy to live. Although he claims to have acted out of pragmatism, those chosen were doomed nonetheless. And Gens felt forced to choose on the basis of his own version of the Nazi principle of "worthy" and "unworthy" life-forms.

Rabbi Ephraim Oshry was one of the few prominent rabbinical authorities to survive the Kaunas ghetto. He described a

slightly different facet of the question--whether it was permissible to ask another man to endanger his own life in order to save fellow-Jews. He recounted:

In those horror-filled days I was asked by our master, the great sage and Righteous man Rav Avrohom Grodzinsky--may G-d avenge his death--the Director of the Slobodka Yeshiva to go to Rabbi David Itzkovitch, the secretary of the Agudath Harabonim and ask him to approach the Lithuanian in charge of the Jew hunts, whom he knew before the war, and to persuade them to free the yeshiva students.<sup>14</sup>

The sages concluded one could not obligate Rabbi Itzkovitch to endanger himself in order to save the yeshiva students. Yet if the Rabbi volunteered, he was not to be stopped. Rabbi Itzkovitch did choose to intercede and succeeded in having the Lithuanians free some yeshiva students. Itzkovitch was later killed in a concentration camp.

Besides handing over Jewish victims to the Germans, the heaviest criticism of the Judenraete of Vilnius and Kaunas have to do with maintaining a policy of collusion in regard to suppressing the substantiated news of the massacres occurring in Ponar and Fort VII and Fort IX. For example in late September, the Vilnius Judenrat in Ghetto No. 1 learned from survivors of Ponar that it was an extermination site and not a labor camp. Fearful of a general panic, they responded by isolating the survivors and forbidding them to circulate their stories.

Throughout that first year of systematic mass shootings in which the majority of Lithuanian Jews were killed, both

Judenraete submissively accommodated the Germans. Increasingly, the work/production policy of the Judenraete involved a campaign of lies and deception concerning the fate of those deported. This, in turn, played right into the designs of the Nazi and Lithuanian officials who sought to keep Jews working until they could be eliminated smoothly.

The Germans' means of repression rendered both the Jews and the Lithuanians powerless to decide their fate with one important exception. For Jews, noncompliance with anti-Jewish measures almost always meant death. For Lithuanians, refusal may have been risky but almost never involved paying the ultimate penalty. Although eager to use native forces whenever possible, the Nazis resorted to their own forces in frequent displays of power. For example, the move to the Vilnius Ghetto and the subsequent destruction of the second ghetto was accomplished without the aid of either the Jewish Ordnungsdienst or the Judenrat. Even though the subordination of the Judenrat and the Lithuanian council was a factor in what happened and why, it is not the whole story.

Hannah Arendt raised the question of the "whole truth" regarding the cooperation by the Jewish leadership in the implementation of the Final Solution. In so doing she fanned the flames of an already fiery debate among Jewish writers. Arendt viewed the Judenrat as a key instrument in facilitating the deaths of so large a number. Although she allowed for the ignorance of the Jewish leadership in comprehending the

big picture and even the possibility of good intentions, she concludes that:

Wherever Jews lived, there were recognized Jewish leaders, and this leadership, almost without exception, cooperated in one way or another, for one reason or another with the Nazis. The whole truth was that if the Jewish people had really been unorganized and leaderless, there would have been chaos and plenty of misery but the total number of victims would hardly have been between four and a half and six million people.<sup>15</sup>

Believing that cooperation would lead to survival, most Jews chose to follow the directives of the Judenrat, and hence the Nazis. In so doing, according to Arendt, given the "totality of moral collapse the Nazis caused in respectable European society -- not only in Germany but in almost all countries," members of the Judenrat became enablers.

Leni Yahil was less critical of the Judenrat. Yahil presented their role as paradoxical. The Jewish leaders saw themselves as striving on behalf of the community, while on the contrary the Germans gave them the task of administering their anti-Jewish policy. The Judenrat approach to survival was consistent with the past. The ancient kahillot had been based on communal responsibility administered through a representative leadership. The subtle but fatal difference between the Judenrat initiated by the Nazis and earlier communal bodies was not structural or organizational. It had to do with the external manipulation and the organizing talent for a task unprecedented in history. Germans realized that the key to effective control over the Jewish masses was through

the leadership. This they did with an extremely large stick and a minute carrot. The Judenrat could not have known that any piece of one carrot was but a ruse. According to Yahil, the Jewish leadership was at no greater fault for failing to assess the intent and means of Nazi operations than was the rest of the world. Thus, she concluded that the unfortunate fate of the Judenrat epitomizes the helplessness of the Jewish people and the political disaster it suffered during the Holocaust.

For the Germans and the Lithuanian overseers, the Judenrat served other secondary purposes. For the moment, it helped shift the focus of blame onto the Jewish leadership for actively participating in the daily tortures that plagued the ghetto. It also served to divide the community, a tactic that rendered it easier to control with minimal personnel.

What is often not stressed thoroughly enough is the contention that the Judenrat enabled the Jewish community to continue the business of daily life, albeit under the most horrific circumstances. Rather than experiencing the general physical and moral collapse that the Nazis expected, the Jewish ghetto became a viable cultural and economic community. So much so that the liquidation of a ghetto often meant the loss of vitally needed goods and services. Although in the end the Judenrat followed a course that led to tragedy, the route itself provided a structure for sustaining a remarkable level of humanity.



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The activities of the Judenrat leadership in Vilnius during the second half of 1941 planted the seeds for challenging that body's authority, especially among the young. Former political activists and youth movement members of varying ideologies began to organize and coordinate their efforts in defiance of their elders as well as their oppressors. The Pioneer Youth Organization known as the He-Halutz Movement headed by Mordecai Tenenbaum-Tamaroff began by forging identity cards and work permits, both Jewish and Aryan and later created an arsenal. Abba Kovner led another youth group, Ha-Shomer ha Za'ir which included the Bundists, Betar Movement, a Zionist "umbrella organization, and a small communist group. At first, the movement aimed exclusively at mutual assistance rather than armed resistance.

Despite a few successful efforts to protect Jews from Germans and Lithuanians, the youth movement leaders made little dent in the overall number of Jews slaughtered. The leaders including Tenenbaum Tamaroff, I. Wittenberg, Yecheil Scheinbaum, Joseph Glazman and even Kovner simply lacked enough personal clout or organizational backing to create any type of mass movement. And it is dubious that even a mass movement could have altered the mortality rate significantly.

In Vilnius the Jewish resistance was at odds with the Judenrat. In the Kaunas ghetto, on the other hand, political activists from both left and right wing Jewish organizations joined forces with the Jewish Council and the Jewish Police. In turn, the official agencies supported the activities of the underground organization by notifying the groups of upcoming orders from the Germans and also by thwarting their implementation when possible. For example, during the Aktionen between August and December, the Jewish Police periodically herded stranded Jewish victims back to the ghetto rather than deporting them. This sympathetic posture was in part because some prominent members of the ghetto police and Jewish Council were also members of groups involved in underground German resistance.<sup>16</sup>

Although eyewitness accounts of the massacres outside of Kaunas and Vilnius had been reported for months, it was not until December that a minority of the Jewish community (belonging to the ghetto underground) began debating whether

the Final Solution to the Jewish Question meant total annihilation of all Jews irrespective of vocation or social status. At the heart of the debate was whether, for a variety of specific reasons, the annihilation of the Jews applied only to Lithuanian Jews or whether it would encompass the entire Jewish population of occupied Europe. Abba Kovner, one of the clearest Jewish thinkers of the moment expounded on the question:

It is still hard for me to explain why the blood of Vilnius has been spilled, and by contrast Bialystok is quiet....One thing is clear to me: Vilnius is not Vilnius alone, Ponar<sup>17</sup> is not a unique episode...It is a complete system.

The underground leaders of the two major ghettos in Lithuania had to decide whether their members should stay in the ghetto or flee into the surrounding forests to carry on the struggle there. Living outside the ghetto under a Christian guise was not generally an option. Unlike in Germany and other countries in central and western Europe where Jews had reached a degree of assimilation, the almost total segregation of the Jews of Lithuania from mainstream society made the feasibility of hiding one's Jewish identity and living among the Christian Lithuanian population unrealistic.

Neither were conditions on the part of the (non-Jewish Lithuanian masses) favorable for hiding Jews. In 1941-42, no organized anti-Nazi underground groups or even social-political cells as yet existed. As discussed, above the masses experienced no sense of solidarity or national

cohesion with the Jewish community. Since rescue on a large scale depended on the good will and support of the local population, individuals were less likely to brave the enormous difficulties involved. Accounts relate that those harboring Jews were almost as fearful of detection by their own Lithuanian neighbors by the Germans.<sup>18</sup> Moreover, since the death penalty often included the benefactor's entire family, defying the system became an enormous risk.

After the German military defeats in early 1943 and the growing possibility that Germany might lose the war, a change in the general attitude of Lithuanians towards Jews became discernible. Even some Lithuanians who had previously collaborated with the Germans began to think about future retribution. A Jewish partisan from the Kaunas Ghetto related that:

After Stalingrad in 1943, many Lithuanians changed their policy and sought an alibi. Therefore, I do not admire them. For example, Vansevicius was a well-known murderer of Jews and did intelligence work for them (the Germans). When I was caught and brought to him for interrogation, he recognized me. Nonetheless he signed my forged Lithuanian identity card and did not hand me in. He acted as if he did not know me.<sup>19</sup>

By mid-1943, native underground organizational structures were organized such as the "Committee for the Liberation of Lithuania," or VLIK (Vyriausias Lietuvos Išlaisvinimo Komitetas). Although members represented a wide spectrum of political views, the common purpose of Lithuanian underground cells,

with the exception of the communists, was the reestablishment of an independent Lithuanian State.

The communist underground had a head start over its liberal and right-wing counterparts. By late summer 1942, it began operating under the command of a Lithuanian, J. Vitas-Valunas, formerly the head of the City Council of Vilnius under the Soviets. When the Germans invaded, Vitas went underground. By February 1943, he had organized the various strands into a united group called Union for the Liberation of Lithuania, (Lietuvos Islaisvinimo Sojungo).

Several months earlier, the Jewish Communists in both the Vilnius and the Kaunas Ghetto began collaborating with other non-communist underground groups including, Ha'Shomer ha Za'ir, Betar, and Ha-No'ar ha Ziyayoni. On January 21, 1942, they formed the United Partisan Organization, (FPO). Yitzchak Witenburg, a former official of the Polish Communist Party headed the new coalition. Hoping to wield greater power, Witenburg established contact with Vitas and eventually joined forces with the Polish Communist Z.W.C. and the Union for the Liberation of Lithuania.

Ghetto couriers transmitted information and coordinated plans between the Jews in the ghetto and the communists in the city. Unfortunately for the Jews, this group tended to rely more on ghetto manpower and material assistance than the other way around. Indeed, the F.P.O. was the largest of the three groups totaling more than three-hundred members,

the ZWC and the Union for the Liberation of Lithuania each numbered less than twenty. The ghetto underground supplied the movement with a printing press, and thus all of the pamphlets and brochures distributed throughout the city originated in the Jewish ghetto.

One of the goals of the Jewish activists in the underground organization was to influence Christians to assist Jews or at least not participate in antisemitic actions. In May 1943, the organization issued a special declaration calling for the protection of surviving Jews stating:

...You must realize that the Germans want to destroy the Lithuanian people, but first they destroyed us spiritually by trying to transform all the Lithuanians into executioners. Afterwards the Germans will shoot us. They shot the Jews and will justify their actions by telling the world that the Lithuanians are decadent murderers and sadists, and therefore the Germans were totally justified in killing them...  
We have sufficient information to prove that they are going to murder more Jews. Lithuanians, do not take part, thus you will facilitate the struggle of the Lithuanian people for liberation. We warn you that all those who participate in the murder of innocent and defenceless, men, women, and children will bear the consequences as do regular bandits and murderers. <sup>20</sup>

Despite the attempt at collaboration, the Jewish group gained little from the liason with the important exception that the tie eventually led to contact with the communist partisans in the surrounding forests of Narocz and Rudniki. In Vilnius, the communist underground was interested in sabotage rather than defending the Jews in the ghetto. Indeed, the union was short-lived and ill-fated. In late June 1943, the

Gestapo discovered the City Underground Committee of the Communist Party through an infiltrator, J. Vaitkevicius. During the interrogations one member revealed that he had maintained contact with a Jewish Communist named Itshak Witenberg.<sup>21</sup> This incident had direct and serious consequences not only on the Jewish Communists of the Ghetto but on the existence of the Vilnius ghetto itself.

On July 8, Bruno Kittel of the Security Police demanded that the Judenrat turn over Wittenberg or the ghetto would be bombed immediately. Gens and the FPO quarreled and Witenberg went into hiding. The ghetto masses were in favor of Witenberg's surrender to the Nazis. In light of the Soviet military successes, the prevailing belief was that if the ghetto could hold out a little while longer then the Red Army would come to its rescue. After some deliberations, on July 16, 1943, Witenberg appointed Kovner as his successor and surrendered himself to the authorities and shortly thereafter committed suicide. Witenberg had apparently divulged no information as not a single comrade was arrested. Although unknown at the time, the remains of the Vilnius ghetto had gained a respite of only ten weeks. On September 23, 1943, Germans and Lithuanians began liquidating the approximately 20,000 surviving Jews.

In both Kaunas and Vilnius the underground's decision to avoid collective armed conflict was motivated by the general belief that although many Jews were being killed, the ghetto

as an institution would survive. A fifteen month hiatus in the mass shootings from December 1941 to March of 1943 seemingly supported that contention. Only after all hope that the ghetto would survive, on the eve of liquidation, did armed resistance become a course of action.

During the fifteen month reprieve, the Jewish resistance in the remaining ghettos, with the exception of Vilnius, sent a steady stream of members to the forests to link up with communist partisans operating there since late 1942. It was almost impossible for a Jewish unit to exist independently for any length of time, however, Yitzchad Arad, himself a partisan, treated the subject of Jewish resistance in the forests of Lithuania and recounted numerous difficulties including being shot by Lithuanian or Polish Nationalist Units operating in the same vicinity.

Jewish partisan fighters represented a cross section of the Jewish population, male and female, 18-25 years old -- who had escaped to the wooded areas immediately following the German invasion or had subsequently escaped ghettoization. Once becoming submerged in communist units, Jews lost all freedom of action. The partisan code dictated death for disobedience. For the Jew this had particular significance. It meant acquiescing to orders even if discriminatory. It also meant abandoning Jewish rescue as an end in itself.

Approximately 1,600 Lithuanian Jews were successful in linking up with various communist fighting units.



Approximately 850 joined Soviet Lithuanian Brigades, with the largest contingents belonging to the Vilnius brigade including 400 Jews, and the Kaunas Brigade which contained 200 Jews.

In late summer 1943, the first organized group of Jewish fighters reached the Narocz forest from the Vilnius ghetto. Under the command of Joseph Glazman, they had broken with the FPO. In the forest, Glazman initially formed his own Jewish partisan detachment, "Revenge," within the communist brigade. However, on the same day as the liquidation of the Vilnius Ghetto on September 23, 1943, the Soviet Lithuanian Commander, Markov, announced that the Jewish group would be disbanded and incorporated into other units. He also appropriated weapons from several of the Jewish fighters.

The other main strand of Lithuanian Jewish partisans was based in the Rudniki forests, approximately 35 miles south of Vilnius. The local inhabitants of this area were both Lithuanian and Polish. Soviet partisans began activity in the Rudniki forests in the summer of 1943 when a party of parachutists set up base in the area. They were joined by a vanguard of Soviet-Lithuanian partisans from the Narocz area in early September 1943. In mid-September Jewish fighters from the Vilnius ghetto (who, like Glazman,) had broken with the FPO reached the Narocz forest. This group, named "Yechiels' Struggle Group," consisted of seventy members. After the

liquidation of the ghetto about eighty FPO members escaped to the forest and formed another group.

Resistance fighters from the Kaunas ghetto began regrouping in the Rudniki forests from the end of November 1943, and their numbers continued growing until May 1944. The approximate two-hundred Kaunas partisans organized into three battalions. Although rescue was a major goal of the Jewish units, they also participated in combat and sabotage operations. By the beginning of 1944, the communist partisan commander decided that the Kaunas Battalions could not remain entirely Jewish and added non-Jews to their ranks. As part of the partisan communist underground, Jews often experienced virulent antisemitism including having to turn in their pistols just prior to being sent on a mission.<sup>22</sup>

Many Jews who reached the forest were not accepted into partisan units. These non-combatants attempted to survive by setting up family camps. Unfortunately, nearly all died from exposure or related causes or were murdered by Germans or local Lithuanians. In 1944, local Lithuanians massacred an entire family camp during the Nazi withdrawal.<sup>23</sup> The fate of family camps in Lithuania contrasts sharply with neighboring White Russia where the rural environment was less hostile to Jews -- almost half of those in family camps there survived.

Those who were unable to flee or were unwilling to join the underground, the remnant of the Jewish masses, chose to follow the leadership of the Judenrat as a route for survival

from 1942-1944. The ghetto attempted to make itself indispensable to the German administration through the production of goods and services. A work permit became the most precious object a Jew could possess. <sup>24</sup>

After the German defeats on the eastern front of 1942/1943, the 100,000 Baltic Jews who survived the first wave of executions became an increasingly vital source of skilled labor. So instrumental were the revenues from ghetto sources that the deportation of Jews by the Security Police resulted in a severe decrease in total monies available to a local administrator. Finances were often at the core of the quarrel between the Civil Administration and the Security Police that continued unabated until the end of the Civil Administration in the Ostland in 1944.

One illustration of how the Civil Administration thwarted the security organizations involved Himmler's instruction of January 29, 1942 to the Reich Commissariat Ostland requesting immediate action on the question of exterminating the remaining Jews of the region. The Civil Administration was able to exert pressure to skirt off the effect of that order on the Jews of Belorussia rather than the remaining "work-Jews" of Lithuania and Latvia. The latter did not undergo a second series of mass purges until early spring 1943.

## A. Endnotes

1. Kruk, Togbuch pp. 88-89..
2. A. Kovner, "Nissayon rishon le-Haggid," Yalkut Moreshet No. 16, 1973. p. 10.
3. A. Sutzkewer, Getto Vilna (Tel Aviv: Shavi, 1947). p. 50.  
R. Korczak, Lehavat ba-Efar p. 37.
4. It is not certain that the impetus behind this came from the Judenrat or the Germans. Kruk, Togbuch pp. 260-262.  
L. Rann, Ash fun Yerushalayim de Lite (New York: Vilner Farleg, 1959), pp. 140-142; M. Rolnik, Ani Hayevet le Sapper (Jerusalem: Ahiever, 1965), p. 57.
5. See debate on secondary literature on the Jewish Councils cited above. Also see Garfunkel, Kovno ha Yehudit.
6. Lodz was the largest ghetto next to Warsaw -- and the longest sustaining ghetto, liquidated at the end of August, 1944.  
See Jacob Nurnberg, "The History of the Lodz Ghetto," In the Years of the Jewish Catastrophe (New York: 1948). W. Herzkopf, "The Lodz ghetto under the Rule of Rumkowski, Der Ibergang (Munich, September 7, 1947).
7. Speaking at a literary gathering in the ghetto, Rumkowski claimed the statement on text p. 218. See Lucien Steinberg, Not as a Lamb (Hants: Saxon House, 1970), p. 230. Also see Philip Friedman, "Pseudo-Saviors in the Polish Ghettos: Mordchai Chaim Rumkowski of Lodz," Roads to Extinction p. 349; Solomon F. Bloom, "Dictator of the Lodz Ghetto," Commentary 7, (February, 1940).
8. Steinberg, Not as a Lamb p. 230.
9. Prunskis, Lithuania's Jews and the Holocaust pp. 19-20.
10. Prunskis, Lithuania's Jews p. 20.
11. Goldstein-Golden, From Ghetto Kovno p. 59.
12. L. Steinberg, Not Like a Lamb p. 231.
13. Littman, War Criminal p. 76.
14. Oshry, Responsa p. 2
15. Hannah Arendt, Eichmann in Jerusalem: A Report on the Banality of Evil (New York: Viking, 1965).

16. These members included Zvi and Moshe Levin. Deputies of the police include I. Serebnitzky and Assistant to Head of Jewish Council, Leib Garfunkel.
17. M. Tenenbaum-Tamaroff, Dappim min ha-Delelah (Tel Aviv: Ha-Kibbutz ha-Me'uhad, 1948).
18. M. Tenenbaum-Tmaroff, Dappim.
19. Testimony of Meir Zoref, Beit Lohamei Hagetta'ot files of the Association of Jewish Immigrants from Lithuania.
20. Korczak, Lehavot p. 137; S. Neshamit related that Abba Kovner wrote to her stating that the cited quotation was one he wrote during the period from spring 1942 to May 1943. "They were translated and printed in the ghetto and were distributed throughout the city by messengers of the F.P.O." from "Rescue in Lithuania," p. 73.
21. Gitlerovskaya okupatsiya v Litve; Sbornik statyey (Vilnius: Mintis, 1966), pp. 213-214. S. Palewski, "Zikhroynes," YIVO Bleter V. 30, 1947.
22. For information on the antisemitic practices of communist partisans see M. Yellin and D. Gelpert, Partizaner un Kovner Ghetto (Moscow, 1948). Also see Z. Baron and D. Levin, Toldoteha she Machteret, (Jerusalem, 1962). Yitzhak Arad, The Partisan (New York: Holocaust Library, 1971).
23. See Baron and Levin, Toldoteha Also see Yitzhak Arad, "Jewish Family Camps in the Forest, " Rescue in Lithuania pp. 333-353.
24. Often the sole criterion determining deportation. Work passes were periodically distributed (old ones invalidated) by employers. Additionally, members of the Judenrat were issued a small quota as were doctors, nurses and teachers who were employed by the ghetto. See Proclamation of the police chief in the Vilna ghetto on March 10, 1942. June 7, 1942. Vilna ghetto collection No. 17.

## IX/ LITHUANIAN RESISTANCE TO GERMAN WAR RECRUITMENT

Operation Barbarossa had called for a swift victory over the Soviet Union in one lightning campaign. When the Wehrmacht and its allies failed to make good on this timetable, and as the war stalled in the East, a chronic shortage of manpower and economic resources emerged. The effect of these needs on Jewish survival has already been discussed. But the erosion of Germany's military fortunes began also to alter relations with the Lithuanians.

From Berlin, Göring as the Head of the Four Year Plan and Economic Exploitation in the Eastern Territories and Fritz Sauckel in charge of Recruitment of Man Power in the East for Service in Germany began pressuring Lohse to make the utmost use of the indigenous population as a labor force. Lohse consequently made endless demands for Lithuanian workers. Eventually, Nazi plans called for the deportation of large numbers of Lithuanians to the Reich to serve as agricultural workers.<sup>1</sup>

The Lithuanians responded by consistently failing to meet quotas and were in turn confronted by even greater German demands. After attempts at getting Lithuanians to volunteer failed, Alfred Rosenberg, on December 19, 1941 issued a decree calling for a compulsory labor service from all male Lithuanians between eighteen and forty-five. Punishment for failure to register entailed imprisonment or a 1,000 mark fine. In 1942, entrance to universities was prohibited unless the applicant

had first served a year in the German youth labor force. For 1942-43 Germans recruited 950 Estonians, 4,576 Latvians and 1,645 Lithuanians, a number far lower than expected.<sup>2</sup> Since the Lithuanian total fell far short, in early 1944 the Germans decreed that farms of 15 ha. could be worked by one male only, freeing additional males to register for service in the Reich.

Typically, German military and civilian, Nazi party and SS agencies, frequently worked at cross-purposes. The military authorities' attempt to recruit Lithuanians seriously undercut the efforts of the economic branches. With a barrage of propaganda, the military portrayed Germany as Lithuania's salvation from Bolshevism, reminding the population of what fate awaited them should the Soviets return victorious. One such plea put it baldly. Lithuanians had to fight for or against Bolshevism, form a Lithuanian legion or reject it.<sup>3</sup>

The appeal of March 1943 read:

Lithuanians, Culture-destroying Bolshevism is consolidating its forces in order to run us down. In this, it is opposed by the unanimous will of the whole of Europe to fight. We shall not permit Bolshevism to carry off women and children to the inner regions of Asia, to close down the churches, to evict the peasants from their holdings and to enslave labor... Enlist therefore in the newly established Lithuanian Legion, where, under the command of your own officers, and along with the other European nations, you will fight for your country. Now is the time to strike out in order to give Bolshevism the decisive blow. To arms! The home country is calling. It is a case of to be or not to be. Of liberty or slavery."

Still, Lithuanians were most steadfast in evading the drafts. According to an American intelligence despatch dated May 11, 1943, the Germans summoned 1,000 men from Vilnius, 700 from Kaunas and 400 from Mariampole. However, only 50 men appeared in Vilnius, 20 in Kaunas, and 12 in Mariampole.<sup>5</sup> The report was written in Lithuania and considered by American intelligence officials to be the most precise and updated account of the situation at the time.

Most frustrating to the Germans was their attempt to organize a Lithuanian SS unit. Starting in February 1943, the high functionaries of the Civil Administration in Lithuania began their campaign, hoping to add a Lithuanian to the already existing Latvian and Estonian units. On February 24, posters appeared throughout Lithuania containing an appeal by the German Commissar H. Lohse:

Lithuanians

When the German soldiers, by order of the Fuehrer Adolf Hitler in 1941 liberated your home country from Bolshevism, they saved you from the fate of national extermination. Since then, you have contributed your share in the fight against Bolshevism by your work on the farms and in the towns, but also by your service in the security organs of the country and through active participation at the fronts. This struggle has now reached its culmination point. Bolshevism is threatening to engulf Europe. In the first place your home country is endangered... Victory will save you, your life and that of your children, your property, your culture the continue existence of your people on your native soil, your place of work and your collaboration in the European community. To arms! <sup>6</sup>To work! With Adolf Hitler to victory!



Hypocritically, Lohse used the term "your property," in his manifesto. Just one day earlier he published the so-called Reprivatization Law whereby the nationalization of private property by the Soviets in Lithuania would be rescinded, but only after the Lithuanians responded properly to other German demands.

The decision to begin the return of property that had been seized one and a half years earlier was intended to boost Lithuanian support for the intended SS Legion. Since the beginning of the German occupation the Civil Administration delayed the return by stating that such a measure could not take place until the end of the war. In the interim, great landed estates were taken over by the Land Administration Ostland. This organization distributed a number of estates to high ranking National Socialists including Dr. von Renteln and Captain Schonebeck of the German Civil Administration.<sup>7</sup> Von Renteln later qualified the reprivatization law by stating that only those Lithuanians who were actively engaged in combating Bolshevism would have their property restored.

Seeking support for military and labor recruitment, the Germans began to exert direct pressure on the Lithuanian Advisory Council, the so-called representative body, since August 1941, but with no success. First Councilor Petras Kubiliunas and all of the Councilors with the exception of the General Councillor for Social Affairs, Dr. J. Paukstys, flatly refused

to support German efforts at military recruitment. At the crux of the argument was the question of national independence.

Any initiative towards the forming of a Lithuanian military organization should be abstained from as long as the question of the restitution of Lithuanian independence remained unclarified and unsolved.<sup>8</sup>

Just hours after Lohse's appeal to the Lithuanian people, SS General Wysocki affirmed that the first volunteers into the Lithuanian Legion had already reported. This was a bluff. Contrary to his claim, not a single person had appeared at the various recruiting centers.<sup>9</sup> One month later, those who reported for service were still only .2% of those targeted.

In an attempt to gain an influential and powerful ally in their recruitment campaign, the Germans appealed to the Lithuanian Catholic Church. On February 27, 1943, the Archbishop who had welcomed the German Commissar General shortly after the introduction of the German Civil Administration at the end of July 1941 reportedly told Jaeger that he was not interested in a return visit after one and a half years later.<sup>10</sup>

The report of the S.D. and Police for April 1943 seemed well satisfied with the cooperation rendered by the church on matters of military recruitment

Bishop Brizgys spoke on the radio calling on Lithuanians to volunteer for construction battalions (baubatalionen) of the Wehrmacht. Other priests also delivered very positive speeches on this matter spoke out against Bolshevism, and called on the population to support German goals... The Catholic Church as a whole views the steps taken against the traitorous priests who spoke out against the recruiting drive as absolutely justified.<sup>11</sup>

Whether, in fact, the churchmen made these appeals is not certain. In any case, the results of their possible intervention were not particularly noticeable.

At the same time the German Civil Administration stepped up efforts to solicit the support of the General Councilors for their recruitment campaign. Kubiliunas promised that an appeal from the General Councilors would be published along with the German appeal of March 1. Kubiliunas failed to keep his promise which of course angered the Germans. But the councilors remained steadfast that as long as the question of national independence remained unanswered, there would be no support for the mass recruitment campaign. Rather, they decided to draw up a memorandum stating their opposition. The document was signed by all the councilors, again except Paukstys; it was then submitted to the Reich Commissar for the Ostland.

An opportunity for Kubiliunas to deliver the memorandum personally presented itself shortly thereafter. The German Commissar General requested that Kubiliunas travel to Riga to discuss the issue of military recruitment with the Office of the Reich Commissariat. Kubiliunas, along with General Councilors Matulionis, Rananauskas, and Narakas left for Riga at the end of February. The SS-und Polizeifuehrer in Latvia, General Jaeckel received the Lithuanian representatives. Kubiliunas began the short meeting by stating the Lithuanian position -- that military questions must be solved jointly

with political problems. SS General Jaeckel replied that he was not authorized to conduct negotiations concerning politics. Kubiliunas countered by stating that he had no authority to conduct negotiations in regard to military questions before the political problems have been solved. At this stalemate, Jaeckel affirmed his intention to act on his orders with or without the support of the Lithuanian representatives. The Lithuanian General Councilors interpreted this statement as their release from responsibility for the mobilization of Lithuanian youth. They viewed Jaeckel's orders to carry out mobilization in Lithuania as not their concern. Upon departing, Major Songinas, Wysocki's aide-de-camp told the Lithuanian representatives that whether they liked it or not, the Lithuanian Legion was going to be formed.<sup>12</sup>

On March 2, von Renteln called a conference of the Council General and other Lithuanian leaders. Prior to the opening, two functionaries of the German Civil Organization interrogated each councilor on the question of mobilization. The General Councilor for Finance, J. Matulionis, summarized the position of the General Councilors. He argued that only the government of a sovereign Lithuanian state would be in a position to effect the mobilization of the country, and that the formation of such a Government as well as the restitution of the sovereignty of Lithuania was in the interests of Germany.

Still, Renteln was able to get three of the Councilors to draft an appeal to the Lithuanian youth:

Citizens of Lithuania,  
The war is entering a phase which is decisive both for our country as well as the whole of Europe. The German Government has taken all the measures necessary for crushing Bolshevism. Our own people too, must take a more active part in this struggle.  
I appeal to you, countrymen, and request you to grasp the seriousness of the moment. Do not be led astray by any provocations and intrigues whtsoever, but do your duty fully by an all-round participation in the struggle against Bolshevism.<sup>13</sup>

On March 20, The Kauner Zeitung, the Lithuanian occupation press, published "An Appeal to the People of the General Distict" in which Lithuanians were urged to rally behind the German war effort. The article menacingly hinted at lack of cooperation on the issue:

Disturbances on the part of irresponsible Lithuanian intellectuals can in no way deter the German Wehrmacht from calling up all forces against one common enemy, Bolshevism. It is not feasible that during total war these undecided and malicious elements should go unpunished.<sup>14</sup>

Another article in the same edition described the solemn departure ceremony of the newly formed unit of Lithuanian volunteers. General Jost and Kubiliunas conducted the solemn ceremony. Despite the article's intended seriousness, it closed in a lighter vein:

Measures have been taken that departure doesn't take place without bodily sustenance. Of course the men are especially pleased by the loading of schnaps barrels and cigarettes to keep them warm during the journey.<sup>15</sup>

Out of the 150 inductees, half were criminals released for duty. The others had been randomly picked up by local police. Media appeals resulted in no increase in recruitment. In fact, large numbers of students and other designated conscripts fled the cities for the countryside. The Lithuanian Police generally supported the conscripts and assisted them in their flight. V. Gylys, the former Lithuanian Minister in Stockholm, assessed the situation for the Office of Strategic Services. His report of May 11, 1943 stated:

Considering the wild enthusiasm with which the widest sections of the Lithuanian population reacted to the dislodgment of the Bolsheviks from Lithuania by the German Wehrmacht in the middle of 1941; and considering further the fact that these very same Lithuanians in June and July 1941 had on several occasions expressed to the German Reich Government the really unanimous will of the Lithuanian people to participate actively in the fight against Bolshevism, the result of the German mobilization attempt in Lithuania is nothing less than a complete failure of the German policy in Lithuania.<sup>16</sup>

Such steadfast resistance in the face of German pressure led to a significant deterioration in German-Lithuanian relations. Lithuanians had undoubtedly been behind the effort to expel the Soviets in 1941, but the desire to fight them beyond their national borders was not strong enough to move Lithuanians to enlist in the German Armed Forces or even in non-combat subsidiary organizations. Even in late 1943-44 when a renewed Soviet threat was imminent, Lithuanians refused to respond to the German call-up. For the entire period of occupation, only 20 Lithuanian Battalions were established

with only 8,000 officers and men. Latvia, a much smaller country had nearly double that amount with 15,000 and tiny Estonia enlisted approximately 10,000 men.<sup>17</sup>

In early 1943, an American Intelligence Report received confirmation from a "reliable Polish source," on the changing nature of the tasks Lithuanians performed within the German forces:

The Lithuanian Military Police, Litauische Schutzmannschaften is organized into SS Units and is commanded by Lithuanian officers up to the rank of Colonel. The organization is used by the Germans to perform executions in Lithuania, Latvia, White Russia and Poland.<sup>18</sup>

By late fall 1942, however, Gylys supplied the American Legation in Stockholm with the following description of the Self-Defense Units:

The Self-Defense units (Selbsschutzbataillone) are the remnants of the Lithuanian Army. The situation of these units has not been clear ever since the occupation of Lithuania by the German armed forces. The youth of Lithuania in these units desired to represent the army of independent Lithuania, while the Germans sought to transform them into German police units. The Self-Defense units had their own district headquarters where the large majority of the Lithuanian officers congregated. In October 1942, SS Brigadenfuhrer Wysocki decided to incorporate these units in the gendarmerie. The grounds given for the closing of the Lithuanian staffs were that the officers meeting there might eventually form nests of anti-German activity. It was added that the Germans were aware Lithuanian officers were considering ways and means for defending Lithuania when the Germans had to leave. Such ideas were inconsistent with the idea of a New Europe, where the only army will be the German Army.<sup>19</sup>

The report continued by discussing the growing disillusionment of those Lithuanian Self-Defense Units who had been sent to

the front and the German reaction to the radical decline in the number of new recruits. Lithuanian troops fiercely objected to the required oath, "I hereby promise to be faithful to the Führer and to obey all his orders." Colonel Spokevicius, the commander of the the Self-Defense Units rejected the text and submitted a letter of protest to Wysocki. Spokevicius stated that the Lithuanian self-defense units were only interested in being able to fight for the freedom and independence of Lithuania. <sup>20</sup>

As a consequence of this protest, Colonel Spokevicius was arrested and informed that if he circulated copies among the public he would be shot. He replied that the Germans could shoot him but he would never pledge the loyalty of the Self-defense Units to Hitler as they were representatives of the Lithuanian Army. The Germans eventually gave in on the issue and authorized a watered down version which only included pledges to be diligent and obey superiors and fight against Bolshevism. <sup>21</sup> Still, many Lithuanian officers and soldiers, including General Rastikis refused to take even this oath. Rastikis was dismissed and placed under house arrest for the duration of the war.

Despite German propaganda that the allies were preparing to deliver the Baltic states back into the hands of the USSR, the campaign to establish a Lithuanian SS was still going nowhere. In mid-March Himmler met with von Renteln in Riga.



Together they returned from Kaunas ready to concede defeat and exact vengeance. On March 17, 1943, von Renteln issued an official communique stating that the recruitment campaign had been thwarted by Lithuanian intellectuals and therefore, plans for a Lithuanian Legion would be halted. He chastised the Lithuanians, by stating that (unlike Latvians and Estonians) they were "unfit to wear the uniform of the SS." Furthermore, "to protect the majority of Lithuanians from the abysmal influence of certain politicizing intellectual circles and to safeguard the successful progress of the labor service," the Reich Commissar undertook several measures including shutting down universities and restricting the return of property to those whose relatives worked for a German agency.<sup>22</sup> Before this communique had time to reach the Lithuanian public, numerous arrests took place and all of Lithuanian's institutions of higher education were closed.

In connection with the closing down of the universities, the Germans destroyed documents and equipment. The medical faculty was completely plundered. During the closing of the Lithuanian Academy of Sciences in Vilnius, the SS destroyed much of the scientific material for a dictionary of the Lithuanian language, the compilation of which had occupied scholars for over forty years. Two thousand records of ancient Lithuania were either destroyed or confiscated by the SS.

The German authorities found it convenient to blame "intellectuals" for the failure of their recruitment plans.

But this distorted the reality of the situation considerable by overemphasizing the influence of the intelligentsia, at least in these matters. Resistance to military and labor mobilization occurred on the broadest of social bases because it obviously went against the interests of ordinary individuals to be conscripted for German purposes. Even after the Germans, sticking to their interpretation of the cause of resistance, circulated rumors of upcoming plans for the physical extermination of the intelligentsia, and deported forty-six prominent Lithuanians to the Stutthof concentration camp, they got no better compliance.

In view of the increasingly tense climate, on March 17, 1943, General Councilor Kubiliunas summoned several representatives of Lithuanian public life to discuss deteriorating German relations. After first stating that further arrests and deportations were to be expected unless the Lithuanians took positive actions to bridge the gulf separating the German Civil Administration and the Lithuanian people, Kubiliunas urged those present to sign the following appeal.

Countrymen, we venture to assert to that all of you share this determination. The whole Lithuanian nation is hereby urged to be unanimous in its right appraisal of the present moment. Everyone called upon to comply with his obligations in regards to military service or war related work, must to so forthwith.

For discussing matters pertaining to the present a conference embracing the whole of Lithuania shall be convened in the near future.<sup>23</sup>

The "All Lithuanian Conference" alluded to by Kubiliunas was called by the Civil Administration. The Germans hoped that as a result of the conference, the leading representatives of Lithuanian public life would publicly encourage the Lithuanian masses to rally behind the German war effort.

Very little coverage of the conference appeared in the German controlled media. The U.S. Legation in Stockholm received a report from an unidentified private source which stated that the official session lasted only two to three hours during which time three resolutions concerning the need to form a defense battalion were imposed on the representatives. These resolutions were not voted upon but simply read to participants and then passed as having been unanimously accepted. At the end of the session ninety out of ninety-three delegates protested and drew up a memorandum which was sent directly to Hitler. The memorandum denounced the measures of the German Civil Government and reiterated the position that only an independent and sovereign Lithuania would be able to cooperate successfully in warding off Bolshevism. The conference itself ended with Lithuanian delegates withholding their support on the recruitment issue.<sup>24</sup> It is not known whether Hitler ever received the memorandum.

The outcome of the conference and the events surrounding the failed attempts to form a Lithuanian SS Legion demonstrate the difficulties the Germans experienced in imposing their will on a reluctant nation. The program for military recruitment

did not succeed despite severe threats and imposed sanctions.

According to the assessment made by the OSS:

The failure of the German attempt to put Lithuanian youths of military age in the service of the Germans is an eloquent testimony to the fact that the German policy in Lithuania, which showed very promising results in the field of German Lithuanian collaboration two years ago has led to adverse results.<sup>25</sup>

Following the conference, the Germans adopted a new tactic and immediately launched another project, the formation of Lithuanian Engineering Battalions. The battalions would remain in Lithuania and be used in construction work for the Wehrmacht. Although the German Military Commandant would have ultimate control the officers of these battalions would be Lithuanian.<sup>26</sup>

The campaign for engineering or construction battalions lasted throughout the spring and early summer 1943. Despite fear of repressive acts, the Lithuanian population generally refrained from joining. During this time, rumors were rampant that engineering battalions would be deployed to the front without any training. Despite German assurances that these battalions were to be used for construction work only, Lithuanians refused to join. The Germans responded by taking a more aggressive approach towards mobilization. After July 25, 1943, they announced that Lithuanians who refused for purely political considerations to comply with the German demand for volunteer labor service would be treated as war criminals and hostile elements.

At that point, the Germans also tried to reestablish the Lithuanian Civic Guard. The Civic Guard's job was to clear the country of Soviet parachutists, a task that ought to have appealed to the nationalist-minded Lithuanians who would be eager to organize against a Soviet attack. Lithuanians, however, refused to join this organization for a number of reasons; first there was no guarantee that the Civic Guards would not be employed outside Lithuanian borders; second, that the Civic Guard might well be called upon to act against draft resisters from within Lithuania; third, the Germans could not find a Lithuanian military leader to reorganize the Guard. Col. Kalmanis, the choice of the Germans, refused on the grounds that no basis existed for a possible revival of the former Civic Guards. According to the (former Civic Guard's) statute, their aim was "the defense and creation of an independent Lithuania."

The Germans issued a new decree on August 2, 1943, that all males born between 1919 and 1924 had to be registered in the Wermacht or in the Reich's war industries.<sup>27</sup> By late summer, the German administration distributed leaflets threatening mass deportations of the Lithuanian youth of military age who continued to resist the mobilization order. Shortly thereafter, mass deportations of approximately 1,500 Lithuanian families commenced in the district of Svencionys.<sup>28</sup> The deportations were carried out by the German SS with the assistance of Estonian and Latvian Civil Police Units which

did not always prove reliable for this work.<sup>29</sup> The German District Commissar Wulff and his deputy Wagner, present at the Svenciony deportations were well known at the time for ruthlessness.

Meanwhile, the Gestapo was spreading rumors that another 30 to 50,000 Lithuanians might be deported.<sup>30</sup> In response, the Lithuanian illegal press disseminated appeals to the Lithuanian masses and warnings to the German Civil Administration. The appeals encouraged the people to remain steadfast in their resistance but to refrain from impulsive acts. A warning was sent to the Civil Administration, that the Lithuanians were not Jews and would not dig their own graves. (The contemptuous comparison to Jews can not be missed.)

On September 16, 1943, the Bishop of Kaissiadorys, Teophil Matulionis, issued a protest to the Councilor of Justice in Kaunas. He depicted one method of recruitment, "church actions," whereby armed soldiers would snatch innocent worshippers, particularly able-bodied men and youth from the church. By late fall, these type of actions were almost weekly occurrences. Thousands of Lithuanian forced laborers were acquired by this method.<sup>31</sup>

By late 1943, First Councillor General Kubiliunas attempted to curb recruitment measures by proposing that the Council General call for a draft of 30,000 Lithuanian workers for service in Germany. In November of 1943, von Renteln declared that since the Lithuanians did not have an SS Legion at the front

they would have to provide 100,000 workers to Germany. Despite the German decree and promises on the part of the Lithuanian Council, only 8,000 were drafted. <sup>32</sup>

Germany's increasing need for manpower and war materials no doubt heavily contributed to its aggressive and menacing occupational policy in 1943-1944. At this point, the Germans had already suffered a series of military reversals in North Africa and in the East. The Allies were in Sicily and moving up the Italian peninsula.

On the eastern front, Hitler's generals urged him to create an "East Wall" making use of river barriers to hold back the Russians. Instead, Hitler took a more aggressive approach and launched a major offensive in July of 1943. Forty divisions totaling 500,000 troops advanced toward the strategic regions of Kursk, Orel, and Voronezh. After some initial successes and ten days of intense fighting the German drive exhausted itself. The Russians completely devastated 18 of Hitler's best panzer divisions and scored a stunning victory at Kursk. Then the Red Army began its huge counterattack which in the fall of 1943 and winter of 1944 recovered much of former Soviet territory. In early 1944 the Soviets were on the doorstep of the Baltic States.

At that point, the Germans once again prioritized forming a Lithuanian army division, delegating the project of recruiting 100,000 Lithuanians for labor assignments in Germany to the Councilors General. To carry out registration of available

workmen the Germans appointed Lithuanian commissions throughout Lithuania. Both the officials and the Lithuanian population balked and only a handful of persons came forward. A German memorandum concerning the release of indigenous labor for utilization by the Reich concluded an "unsatisfactory experience of recruitment."<sup>33</sup>

The following account of the difficulties was apparently typical:

When the Department of Labor and Social Affairs ordered all establishments to release that part of their non-essential office personnel, all of the establishments in Panevezys answered that no workers could be released. The commissions in Panevezys and Birzai districts categorically refused "to spy out" individuals considered suitable for deportation to Germany the reported officially that there was no free labor in their areas. Thus, the first contingent of workmen could not be sent by March 5, 1944.<sup>34</sup>

Refusal by the bureaucracy to help in compulsory labor recruitment is another example of what solidarity could accomplish in resisting the Nazis. Under the slogan "not a single workman should be taken to the Reich," the Lithuanian National Committee urged the population to boycott efforts at German recruitment.

At about the same time as the German Labor Draft Campaign in late 1943, the Germans introduced yet another plan for a Lithuanian local unit under the leadership of General Plechavicius. In late November, Kubiliunas called several prominent persons to discuss the formation of a military force to be used against the impending Bolshevik invasion. At the meeting, they decided that a military unit of one army corps



should be set up through mobilization consisting of all of the battalions already formed. They stipulated, however, that the chief of this corps must be a Lithuanian officer who had the confidence of the people.

Von Renteln took the Lithuanian proposal to Berlin. Upon his return on December 18, 1943, he declared that the formation of a Lithuanian military force (not an SS Legion), would be acceptable with a few qualifications including an official request to German authorities to organize such a division and that a German chief of division be appointed. The German proposals were discussed on January 5, 1944 at a meeting of the same groups which had participated in the November 24 meeting. After lengthy deliberations, General Plechavicius accepted the command on the condition that Lithuanian Commander be appointed to carry out mobilization in Lithuania. <sup>35</sup>

General Plechavicius took office and began making the necessary appointments, naming General Urbonas as Chief of Staff. Other staff officers were chosen from all districts and towns except in the Vilnius Territory. The registration of volunteers began on February 16, the Lithuanian Independence Day. Former Lithuanian soldiers up to 45 years of age and young men between 18 to 25 years of age were sent notices requesting them to volunteer. The number was set at 5,000, but was quickly filled and raised to 10,000. On March 5, 1944, registration activities had to be suspended as the number

of volunteers far exceeded expectations. Thirty thousand men including 400 former officers enlisted. Almost 4,000 had been soldiers during Lithuania's independent period.

The Germans were greatly surprised at Plechavicius' success, especially in light of their own failures. However, the overwhelming response arose from the immediate crisis -- the Soviets were poised to invade Lithuania. A second Soviet invasion, it was widely feared, would mean reincorporation of Lithuania into the Soviet Union. Thus, although Lithuanians had proved themselves unwilling to fight in German units, they were willing and eager to join a national unit to defend their borders. Appeals such as "It is now everyone's duty to defend the existence of his homeland!" and "Lithuanian soldiers, your fatherland is in danger! Take up your arms!" had a huge impact. Self-defense, as the Lithuanians had always insisted, was the only basis for their military collaboration.

Distrusting the aims of Lithuanians, the Germans immediately began placing restrictions that severely curtailed the power of the defense units. Officers were constantly under German watch and the distribution of rifles and other equipment was severely lacking. By May, word trickled out that the Germans sought to relieve German units by transferring Lithuanian Units to Latvia and Estonia. Almost immediately Lithuanian troops began deserting en masse. The Germans in turn ordered the disarmament of all local units and promptly arrested Plechavicius and his staff on May 15, 1944. Approximately

one hundred of his officers were arrested and twenty were randomly selected and shot for desertion. Still, the majority of the troops succeeded in demobilizing while retaining their arms. Out of a total of 13,000 troops, the Germans successfully disarmed only about 3,500.<sup>36</sup> Many soldiers fled to the forests where they joined nationalist partisan groups already in operation. Those troops that did not succeed in escaping, some 3,000, were forcibly escorted to Germany for work in German airbases.

Immediately following the disbandment of the Lithuanian local units, the Germans intensified their efforts to round up oppositional elements within the Lithuanian population i.e. "Anglophile" spies, distributors of underground publications and members of the (underground) Supreme National Committee for the Liberation of Lithuania. They also initiated another recruitment drive. Von Ranteln pressured the General Council into supporting the measure. Colonel Byrontas was named chief of the Mobilization Staff,

Massive opposition from the Supreme National Committee to military and labor recruitment contributed greatly to the failure of this campaign as it had the previous ones. From the time of its formation, the Committee urged the Lithuanian masses to refuse to accept the national leadership of the General Councillors, "the employees of the (German occupation government" which has "no right to act and pronounce important decisions in the name of the nation."<sup>37</sup> The National committee

waged an effective propaganda campaign, successfully neutralizing the decrees of the General council. It put major emphasis on opposing the military or labor mobilization of Lithuanians for the German war effort, on the usual basis of national sovereignty.<sup>38</sup>

Sovereignty and self-defense were the only two conditions under which Lithuanians should take up arms according to the Committee. Its propaganda continuously indicted the General Council for their collaboration with the Germans, charging Kubiliunas with "committing the greatest crime against the Lithuanian nation. Those responsible for executing German plans must know that they should suffer themselves or avoid their service by going into hiding rather than become the executioners of thousands and earn the condemnation of the nation."<sup>39</sup>

The heroic resistance to Nazi demands by Lithuanian leaders and the common people must naturally raise the question: why was there no such effort put forth to help Lithuania's Jews? The strong Lithuanian collaboration in the Final Solution stands out as an exception to the expressed opposition to almost every facet of the German occupational policy. Many of the same bureaucrats who refused to turn over Lithuanians for some type of service in German agencies willingly turned over Jews for execution. The reasons for collaboration in the Jews' destruction and the general indifference of the population as to their fate have already been discussed at

length. What Lithuanian resistance in other matters demonstrates, however, is that the Nazis' will could be thwarted by determined people. Fear of retribution, a lack of other options, ignorance of what was happening--all these frequently adduced excuses fall to pieces when the Lithuanian record of resistance in those matters deemed vital is considered. Furthermore, it is worth noting that with rare exceptions, Lithuanians resisted German demands without paying the ultimate penalty. It is likely that they could have also refused to murder Jews had they so willed.

Even in the strong underground resistance movement, the Supreme Committee, the stance was lethargic. In principle they were against the persecution of minorities in Lithuania and propaganda occasionally referred to the persecutions, as in the Appeal of March 1943,

The Committee does not agree with violent means against the minorities living in Lithuania, and we wish to induce every citizen of sound attitudes to join in the recovery of independence and the government of the land.<sup>40</sup>

The reader must note that the condemnation did not however merit an entire sentence devoted to the theme of persecution but instead quickly shifted back to the principal goal of regaining independence.

## B. Endnotes

1. On Nazi plans for the "inferior peoples," see Leon Poliakov, Harvest of Hate (New York, Holocaust Library, 1979), pp. 263-280.
2. Myllyniemi S. Die Neordnung der baltischen Länder 1941-1944 Helsinki, 1973, pp. 191-192. Also, in Estonia and Latvia, German efforts at military recruitment were far more successful than in Lithuania. For example, by mid-April 1943, the Latvians and Estonians had established native SS units.
3. American Legation Summary Despatch No. 1746, May 11, 1943, compiled by Hershah Johnson, Head of the American Legation in Sweden. "Attempted German Mobilization in Lithuania and its Consequences," Stockholm, Sweden. Source, Mr. V. Gylys, former Lithuanian Minister to Sweden. Office of Strategic Service Document, National Archives. At this point, the German armed-manpower problem was so severe that on January 26, 1943, Rosenberg drafted a proposal to Hitler calling for major political and economic concessions to entice native enrollment. The proposal was categorically rejected. See Rosenberg, "Enwurf einer Führervorschlag," January 26, 1943, in Bundesarchiv R6/35.
4. American Legation Summary Despatch No. 1746.
5. American Legation Despatch No. 1746. By mid-1943, Nepriklausoma Lietuva nos. 11-12, (1943) wondered whether the Nazis or the Bolsheviks were the "more inveterate murderers of innocent people."
6. American Legation Summary Despatch No. 1746. Following the Stalingrad defeat in early 1943, the Germans anticipated a Lithuanian SS legion with even more than the 150,000 provided by the Latvians. See Ostland in Zahlen (Riga, 1942), as cited by Z. Ivinskis, "Lithuania During the War," in Vardys Lithuania Under the Soviets, (1940-1965) pp. 61-85.
7. Many former owners of estates had been Lithuanians who had fled to Germany at the outset of the Soviet occupation. These so-called "Volksdeutsche" were forced to renounce property rights in Lithuania.
8. Nepriklausoma Lietuva No. 4, March 1, 1943. Statement made by Lithuanian Committee which represented all political parties (except the communists) enjoined the Lithuanian people not to comply with the mobilization obligation Legation Despatch No. 1746, May 11, 1943. The Office of Strategic Service assessed: "...no Lithuanian government has enjoyed as great an influence in Lithuania as has the Lithuanian National Committee on this occasion."

9. Nepriklausoma Lietuva No. 4, March 1, 1943.
10. Legation Summary Despatch No. 1746, May 11, 1943.
11. Befehlshaber der Sicherheitspolizei und des S.D. April, 1943.
12. American Legation Summary Despatch No. 1746, May 11, 1943. Throughout the spring and summer of 1943, The Vilnaer Zeitung and the Kaunener Zeitung carried numerous articles concerning the military and labor mobilization of Lithuanian men and women from various age categories. One example, the Kaunener Zeitung states that on May 5, 1943: "A send-off was given to the 400 members of the newly established Lithuanian Bauabteilung (Building Corps) incorporated in the Wehrmacht of Kaunas recently. The unit which is under Lieutenant Prankoni's command, will be employed immediately behind the fighting line. For numerous other examples of German attempts at military and labor recruitment and the response of native peoples see News Digest a British journal that printed reports and articles published in local newspapers throughout Nazi-occupied Europe 1941-1944, BZAAG778, New York City Library.
13. American Legation Despatch No. 1746 of May 11, 1943. The Appeal was signed by P. Kubiliunas, First General Councilor of Lithuania. For a communist view of the Kaunas conference, see the article in Arbetaren May 14, 1943. See News Digest May 17, 1943.
14. American Legation Despatch, May 5, 1943. Several local Lithuanian leaders printed articles calling on their fellow Lithuanians to support the war effort; News Digest March and May 1943.
15. American Legation Despatch, May 5, 1943.
16. American Legation Despatch No. 1746, May 11, 1943. See News Digest for April-June 1943.
17. Richard Massing, "Katseid sojavae uuestiloomsieks," Eesti riik V. 2, pp. 17-51, as cited in Romauld J. Mmisiunas and Rein Taagepera, The Baltic States: Years of Dependence (Berkeley: Univ. of Calif. Press, 1983), p. 58.
18. American Legation Despatch No. 1740, May 10, 1943, issued by the Intelligence D, Office of Chief of Navy Operations, Navy Division, U.S. Naval Attache at Stockholm, Jan. 29, 1943.
19. Memorandum drafted by the former Lithuanian Minister to Stockholm entitled "Conditions in Lithuania in October - November 1942, in "Confidential Fourth Report from the German Occupied Lithuania," Legation Despatch No. 1617, April 7, 1943.

20. Legation Despatch No. 1617.
21. Legation Despatch No. 1617.
22. Legation Despatch No. 1740, May 10, 1943, "Review of Lithuanian Radio Broadcasts during March, 1943," Legation Despatch No. 1617, May 10, 1943.
23. Ukininko Patarejas March 19, 1943 as cited in Lithuanian Legation Despatch, May 5, 1943. Also see Lithuanian pro-German newspapers corresponding to that time period in News Digest.
24. Legation Despatch No. 1740, May 10, 1943.
25. Legation Despatch No. 1740, May 10, 1943.
26. Legation Despatch No. 1740. The conclusion of this report on the response of Lithuanians to mobilization efforts, stated, "...in the light of recent events, the idea of bringing about German-Lithuanian collaboration seemed to be definitely out of the picture."
27. Legation Despatch No. 1520, April 8, 1943. For news on recruitment for the engineering battalion referred to as the "Lithuanian Bauabteilung," see News Digest April-July 1943, i.e. Kauener Zeitung May 5, 1943, which states: "A send-off was given to the 400 members of the newly established Lithuanian Bauabteilung (Building Corps) incorporated in the Wehrmacht of Kaunas recently. The unit, which is under Lieutenant Pranckoni's command will be employed immediately behind the fighting line."
28. Ateitis the Kaunas daily news, Aug 2. 1943, News Digest 1441, 8.5, C142.
29. Dagens Nyheter April 25, 1944, in News Digest May 13, 1944, p. 28. C128; Legation Despatch, No. 3244, April 27, 1944.
30. One officer and four men of the Estonian and Latvian Civil Police assisted some Lithuanians in escaping and were subsequently arrested.
31. Dagen Nyheter April, 25, 1944, in News Digest May 13, 1944. p. 28.
32. Legation Despatch No. 3120, April 4, 1944. "Protest by Lithuanian Bishop Following Raid on a Lithuanian Church by German Soldiery." Encyclopedia V. 14, Boston, 1968. p. 375.
33. Juozas Brazaitis Volkieciu okupacija (1940-1944) V. 15, (Boston, 1968), p. 376.



34. IMT 204 PS, From the City Commissioner in Kauėn who stated: "Although every effort was made, the results were still unsatisfactory. From an expected total enrollment of 5,800 men, only 47% appeared..."

35. Office of Statagic Services, Stockholm Legation Airgram A-223.

36. Legation Despatch 3244, "Formation of Lithuanian local units under General Povilas Plechavicius." April 27, 1944.

37. Legation Despatch 3558, "Events in Lithuania following the Disbandment of the Lithuanian Local Units," June 19, 1944.

38. "Appeal of the Supreme Committee of Lithuania: To the Lithuanian Nation," Nepriklausoma Lietuva V. 2, No. 4, March 1, 1943 (in Library of the Hoover Institution). English Text: Current News on the Lithuanian Situation (Washington) V. 2 no 8, p. 32 August, 1943: 10.

39. "Appeal of the Supreme Committee for the Liberation of Lithuania: Compatriots," February 18, 1944. Nepriklausoma Lietuva V. 3 no. 4.(40) 1944.

40. "Appeal of the Supreme Committee of Lithuania: To the Lithuanian Nation.," Nepriklausoma Lietuva (Independent Lithuania), V 2, No. 4, March 1, 1943.

## X CONCLUSION

One month after the reoccupation of Lithuania by the Soviet Union, the popularly supported nationalist underground organization, the National Committee, briefly summarized its perspective on Lithuanian participation in the German war efforts. In an "Appeal to the Governments of Great Britain and the United States," the Committee stated:

During the entire period of German military occupation, the Lithuanian People fought for their most sacred cause--the restoration of an Independent State of Lithuania. Our People bravely faced the excessively severe repressive measures taken against it by the Germans, and there was no backing away from any sacrifice. Our people refused to be involved in a war for Germany's interests and resisted all the German efforts to enforce an effective mobilization of Lithuanian manpower.<sup>1</sup>

The above appeal marked an important step in the process of rewriting the history of Lithuanian-German collaboration as the war was coming to an end. That Lithuanians had participated in the German war effort, for their own purposes was certainly true.<sup>2</sup> But, as has been shown, the Germans were quite skillful in exploiting Lithuanian man power for their own purposes, particularly in the Final Solution of the Jewish Question. They consistently finessed Lithuanian desires for independence while deriving great benefit from extensive collaboration. The Germans did not get all that they wanted, but they got a great deal from this relationship. The self-serving and ingenuous nature of the appeal should not, however, obscure the fact of Lithuanians' courageous

and costly resistance to Nazi labor and military mobilization efforts.

The question of Lithuanian collaboration in the Final Solution is of more than historical interest. It remains a highly charged issue. Since World War II, dozens of Lithuanians have been indicted by the Office of Special Investigation of the Justice Department for having entered the United States illegally, allegedly because they falsified the record of their activities during World War Two. Upon the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1989, the immediately succeeding nationalist government of a newly independent Lithuania moved to exonerate thousands of those convicted for war crimes by Soviet courts. A near-blanket pardon was in order, government spokesmen argued, and because the convictions rested on trumped-up Soviet evidence and the original trials had been politically motivated. The attitude which underlies this action is clear: Lithuanians, except for a few criminals, did not collaborate in the the destruction of the Jews.<sup>3</sup>

In light of this recent history and more than ever, it seems that undertakings such as the present study remain relevant. No doubt some issues will never be settled definitively, but on others, clarity can be achieved. The findings presented here question the most frequently advanced explanation of Lithuanian conduct during the Holocaust: hostility towards Jews and collaboration in their extermination was the result of the alleged Jewish connection to communism and

the Soviet occupation of Lithuania. Although the importance of the Soviet annexation and its consequences can not be denied, that explanation leaves quite a few pieces out of place.

The most obvious factor left out of place has to do with the attacks of so-called Lithuanian partisans on the most religious, anti-Soviet element of the Jewish population. During the pogroms in the wake of the Soviet evacuation, June 22-25, ultra-orthodox Jews were easily identified and brutally slaughtered. Since these Jews had suffered greatly during the 1940 Soviet occupation and in no way should have been popularly associated with the Soviet Regime, the motivation for their deaths could not have been retaliation. Certainly the Lithuanian leadership, if not the masses, knew that retaliation on Jews rather than Jewish Communists was not justifiable and that the communists considered and treated large segments of the Jewish population as enemies of the State. However, the Lithuanian leadership was silent and the partisans did not care to make the distinction between pro-Soviet and anti-Soviet Jews. The Lithuanian partisans acted out of preexisting hatred not ignorance. They simply did not care about the political affiliation of the Jews.

As has been argued, this pre-existing prejudice had little to do with the racial tenets of Nazi antisemitism. Almost no evidence indicates that Lithuanians, even the small intellectual class, cared much about the racial struggle for existence propounded by the Nazis. Instead Lithuanian

antisemitism had developed along eastern European patterns, the result of the economic competition posed by Jews, of their religious, linguistic, and sociological deviance. One can understate the sources of this antagonism, but its longstanding existence and the dynamic force of the hatred it engendered cannot be convincingly denied.

This study has gone to great lengths to show how two specific popular images of the Jew conceived of him as a dire threat. The Lithuanian peasant, limited by educational opportunities and technical backwardness viewed Jewish middlemen as exploiters. To their lights, as well as to all levels of Lithuanian society, Jews were capitalist entrepreneurs living the good life at the expense of a poor undeveloped nation. No doubt as all over eastern Europe, Jews exploited the situation as middlemen; some were honest and others were heartless crooks. The point is that Jews also were not free agents; their occupational opportunities were limited by law and tradition, and this is why they frequently found themselves in extremely objectionable, (however necessary) occupations and professions. Peasants and Jews appear locked into an inescapable, usually antagonistic partnership. This was particularly dangerous for the Jews who held no political or defensive powers commensurate with their economic basis. The teachings of the Church, the actions of government authorities, the attitudes of social superiors, and the strength

of anti-Jewish tradition all reinforced the peasant in his inclination to settle with Jews when the opportunity arose.

The weakly developed middle class, on the other hand, viewed the Jews as incumbent adversaries. During the independent period this group made their debut as professionals and consumers insisting that Lithuanians should take over Jewish occupations. Interestingly, antisemitic tendencies became more pronounced as a result of economic gains rather than crisis. When the Nazis ousted all Jews from any form of profitable employment, the great majority of middle-class Lithuanians seized the opportunity to make the situation permanent, either by helping to murder Jews or standing by as it happened before their eyes.

Since much has been said throughout this thesis concerning the identification of Jews with Soviets only a few remarks are necessary here. The Soviets lifted bans and Jews appeared in numerous occupations previously forbidden, especially the Civil Service. These and other factors combined to make Jew and communist almost synonymous in the perception of all levels of Lithuanian society. An "iron logic" was at work: since all Jews are communists, and all communists attempt to destroy everything held sacred by Lithuanians, all Jews became life and death enemies of the Lithuanians. By 1941, this new attitude of evil meshed with and reenforced older negatives stereotypes. This new attribute of evil, the link with the godless Bolsheviki, all harked back to the "original sin of the Jew," the

Crucifixion, a charge that remained extremely powerful among the pious Lithuanians.

The actual degree of Jewish empowerment under the Soviets is hotly disputed and probably beyond definitive settlement. Yet it appears reasonable to conclude that while many ethnic Jews took part in the Soviet regime and in its crimes, it was not then, nor is it now, reasonable to say that they were pursuing "Jewish interests" or acting in solidarity with the Jews of Lithuania. The behavior of this minority of Lithuanian Jews, so far as it was not motivated by ambition, corruption, or greed was ideological. They proceeded against "class enemies" without ethnic distinction, often treating Jews harshly in order to show their own freedom from Jewishness. Still, Lithuanian historians have a great stake in painting Soviet oppression of Lithuania as "the work of Jews."

Contemporary Lithuanian accounts also argue that the the liquidation of the Provisional Government in early August, and the LAF in late September 1941, marked the end of mainstream politics for much of the established Lithuanian political leadership. The majority of those who comprised the Provisional Government either went underground, or were arrested by the Nazis. A new group of leaders, former Voldemarist and pro-fascist elements, emerged to serve as collaborators. Thus, it was through a wholly unrepresentative body, the Lithuanian Council General and its agencies, that the Nazis were able to carry out the twin tragedies that resulted in the annihilation

of Lithuanian Jewry and the colonization of Lithuania. However, a review of the events suggest that the policies of the Council General, in regard to the Jewish Question, did not vary significantly from those initiated by the short-lived Provisional Government or those preceeding it from the mid-1920's. Generally, the same is true for district and municipal Lithuanian leaders right down to the lowest level of the hierarchy.

The officials of the Provisional Government from its inception on June 25, until its liquidation on August 5, 1941 demonstrated great readiness to carry out German policies by issuing and sanctioning decrees, orders, and instructions for the persecution of Jews. As one of his last official acts, Prime Minister J. Ambrazevicius, and the Minister for Internal Affairs, J. Slepety, passed a resolution depriving Jews of all civil rights. Following the resolution, the members of the government directed the chiefs of the district police to arrest all Jews and keep them imprisoned until transport to camps could be arranged. Thus, by the time the Council General began to act under Nazi pressure, the precedent for collaboration had already been put in place.

Although complicity in the massacre of Jews had clearly political goals for the Lithuanian leadership, it was not because these leaders really believed Jews were anti-patriotic: many had worked and fought alongside Jews in the nationalist struggles of the first decades of the twentieth century, and thus knew better. Their passivity and willingness to collaborate



stemmed from the miscalculated notion that currying favor with the Germans at the expense of Jewish lives would lead to the ultimate political concession -- the reestablishment of sovereignty. Moreover, they calculated that the removal of the Jews would satisfy the demands and thus win the support of both peasant and middle-class constituencies.

The most important conclusion of this study is that the Lithuanians, the apologetic literature notwithstanding, were not mere pawns of the Germans but in many aspects touching on the Final Solution, enjoyed room to maneuver and negotiate. No point illustrates this better than the issue of military recruitment. National and local Lithuanian leaders refused to obey outright or in other ways thwarted German orders to round up Lithuanians. The masses, too, resisted with few exceptions. Even as the Germans became more desperate for critically needed manpower in late 1943 and 1944 and applied greater sanctions for non-compliance, Lithuanians (in contrast to Latvians and Estonians) showed great courage in resisting the Germans.

It is likely that Lithuanians could also have refused to murder Jews had they so willed. Had that been the case, or had more aid been rendered to Jews it is doubtful that the Germans would have succeeded in killing nine out of ten Lithuanian Jews. Left almost totally to their own devices the question of how even ten percent managed to survive becomes more pertinent.

As a final postscript it must be noted that Lithuania's status as a small and powerless nation often places her at the mercy of the great powers. Its fate in 1940, 1941, and 1944 was settled by outsiders and by forces wholly beyond its control. This has been the tragedy of small nations in European history. The suspicion arises that the Jews were victims of this historical frustration. The one factor Lithuanians could do something about was this group of despised outsiders in their midst, the Jews. This might also explain the savagery of the Lithuanian auxiliaries coupled with the appalling indifference of almost the entire population.

## A. Endnotes

1. Supreme Committee for the Liberation of Lithuania, "Appeal to the Governments of Great Britain and the United States."

See E.J. Harrison, Lithuania's Fight for Freedom (New York: Lithuanian American Information Center, 1945), pp. 59-60.

2. The reader must refer to the earlier appeals by nationalist groups expressing the view that the Lithuanians fought along side of the Germans in ousting the Soviets and therefore deserved to be treated like allies.

3. Sentinel 10-31-91. The most recent government elected in Lithuania, responding to an international outcry, is in the process of reviewing 35,000 of these exonerations.

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