Jahrbuch für Antisemitismusforschung 21

Herausgegeben von Stefanie Schüler-Springorum
für das Zentrum für Antisemitismusforschung
der Technischen Universität Berlin

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Memories of Blood: Some Aspects of Lithuanian Responses to the Holocaust

Introduction

To study the Lithuanian responses to the genocide of the Jews, understood here as the reactions, views and perceptions of ethnic Lithuanians, is to enter a labyrinth of conflicting emotions and attitudes.[1] Whether one considers the immediate reaction to the slaughter, people's reflections on its aftermath or the development of postwar memory, the spectrum of responses is wide and diverse although some perceptions are clearly more common. Research on what can be considered a nationwide response, or a collective memory of the Holocaust, is inherently different from the kinds of documentary evidence generally employed in describing the genocide itself. The study of attitudes rather than actions is a different, subtler kind of research. Sources that purport to inform us about what was going on in the minds of the population at large have their limitations. There were no professionally conducted opinion polls in 1941. Official accounts of the security services, the reports produced by agents on the ground, may constitute an important evidentiary tool in gauging the "mood of the times", but much of its value depends on the professionalism and/or bias of those spying on the people. The press, even if censored, gives us some insights, albeit often indirectly.

1 This study is based on the paper "Memories of Blood: Examining Lithuanian Responses to the Holocaust" delivered on 7 February 2011 during the Colloquium "No Simple Stories: Jewish-Lithuanian Relations between Coexistence and Violence", held at University College London's Institute of Jewish Studies. A more detailed outline of postwar and recent Lithuanian academic and political reactions to the Holocaust is outside the scope of this article and is soon to be published by the author, along with Šarūnas Liekis, as "Conflicting Memories: The Reception of the Holocaust in Lithuania", in: Joanna Michnic/John-Paul Himka (eds.), Bringing to Light the Past: The Reception of the Holocaust in Postcommunist Europe by University of Nebraska Press.

Foreign occupations tend to smother the political and moral voices of civil society. Only the collaborators can speak openly. Diaries, memoirs and related anecdotal evidence, while highly subjective, can be mined to reflect social attitudes, although these sources are by nature "snapshots" shaped by the prejudices and initial impressions of the authors. Ghetto inmates and especially the hunted survivors could not have helped but feel that most of the world was against them. Those who pitied the victims may have assigned their own feelings to fellow bystanders, while those who helped may have believed that they were but a lonely select few. On the other hand, rescuers who passed on their charges might conclude that the network of righteous was larger than in reality.

Interethnic Hatreds on the Eve of the Catastrophe

The immediate and contemporary Lithuanian responses to the mass murder of the Jews were undoubtedly conditioned by the wrenching experience of the previous twelve months of Soviet rule, the visceral shock of the carnage itself as well as the ideological contamination of part of the populace by the occupiers' racist narratives.

The Holocaust in Lithuania happened under distinctive conditions, most of which were common to all territories occupied by the Soviet Union between September 1939 and June 1941. The circumstances of the Baltics, Eastern Poland and Moldova differed radically from the prevalent conditions in other regions of Nazi-occupied Europe. The Soviet-installed regimes inflicted unprecedented stresses and strains on the affected societies. As a result, political, social and ethnic tensions had intensified considerably on the eve of the German invasion. The rise of antisemitism at virtually every level of society has been well documented, buttressed by numerous official reports, diplomatic sources, contemporary accounts and memoirs. It is true that antisemitic discourse and policies found a positive response among some people in Nazi-occupied Western Europe, including Vichy France. But nothing in the West approximated the situation in the Soviet-occupied territories, where the sudden appearance of Jews in positions of power produced a dangerous cauldron of ethnic hatreds that contributed to a number of onerous consequences.

The presence of Jews within the structures of Stalinist power as well as the rapid Sovietisation of the country reinforced the shibboleths of Judeo-Bolshevism. The mythology of Jewish communism fed on distorted and bigoted responses to a real crisis. The mutual distrust between communities was amplified by conflicting geopolitical orientations: Jews and Lithuanians could hardly view Nazi Germany and Stalinist Russia in the same way. Lithuanian (and some Jewish) contemporary accounts frequently portray the Soviet system as barbaric and "Asiatic".[2] The attitude of much of the ethnic Lithuanian population, as well as the rhetoric of the anti-Soviet opposition, especially the Lithuanian Activist Front (LAF), stressed the theme of Jewish treason. The resulting intensification of antisemitic attitudes occurred despite the fact that the Soviets expropriated Jewish businesses and suppressed the community's cultural organizations.[3] The deadly concoction of exaggerations and half-truths was especially dangerous considering the volatile atmosphere conducive to fantasies of revenge: the expectation that war was imminent and that the newly installed Stalinist system would thus be short-lived.

Soviet authorities were not unaware of the dangers. The contempt for Soviet power and hopes for its demise are well-reflected in a January 1941 report of the NKVD on the political attitudes of the 29th Lithuanian Riflemen's Corps of the Red Army, a unit whose men represented a cross-section of society. The Stalinist police documented the extensive anti-Sovietism of the unit and the expectation of German liberation, concluding that the 29th Corps was utterly unreliable and that officers would desert in the event of war.[4] The notion that treasonous Jews would suffer their just desserts following a German invasion is reported in a number of

2 For example, see the passage about the "alienating impression" of the "Mongolian" Soviet soldiers as "Huns storming Europe" whose singing sounded like the "howling of wolves", as recalled by Bernhard Press, The Murder of the Jews of Latvia 1941–1945, Evanston/IL 2000, p. 32.

3 The intensification of antisemitic attitudes is recounted in reports of the communist police apparatus, first in the People's Government's State Security Department's accounts and later in NKVD documents. The archival references can be found in Saulius Sužiedėlis, Foreign Saviors, Native Disciples: Collaboration in Lithuania, 1940–1945, in: David Gaunt/Paul A. Levine/Laura Palosuo (eds.), Collaboration and Resistance during the Holocaust: Belarus, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Frankfurt a. M. 2004, pp. 327.

4 Докладные записки НКВД ЛССР о полит-моральном состянии 29-го Территориального корпуса, Lietuvos Ypatingasis Archyvas, f. 1771, ap. 2, b. 531.

sources. By all accounts, the deportations of 14–17 June 1941 created an atmosphere of shock and rage: "The mood in the country was as before an explosion", remarked Holocaust survivor William W. Mishell.[5] It is difficult to escape the conclusion that, given a collapse of Soviet power, communal violence was almost a certainty. Genocide, on the other hand, was anything but inevitable: It required an ideological, political and administrative structure rather than a simple breakdown of authority.

War and Holocaust

In particular, the first two weeks after the German attack on the Soviet Union on 22 June 1941 have evoked a distinct cleavage in the memories of Jews and Lithuanians. In Jewish memory, the invading Nazis, the terror of antisemitic pogroms, the menacing hostility of many Lithuanians dominate the accounts. Lithuanians tend to recall the anti-Soviet revolt as well as the atrocities carried out by communist forces during the retreat. Both narratives are grounded in the reality of events, during which thousands of unarmed civilians perished.

In the border areas (Jurbarkas, Kretinga, Gargždai, Palanga), between 25 June and 3 July 1941, special German units and local auxiliaries killed more than 700 Jews, almost all men. Furthermore, an estimated 4,000 to 6,000 Jews were murdered before 4 July, mostly in massacres in Kaunas and Vilnius. At the same time, German forces shot probably fewer than 200 non-Jewish, mainly Lithuanian, civilians. Between 1,000 and 1,500 Lithuanians were massacred by the Red Army, NKVD and Stalinist activists during their retreat eastward. Conversely, anywhere from 2,000 to 5,000 non-Jews accused of collaboration with the Soviets also died at the hands of vengeful anti-communists. In addition to military casualties, these admittedly rough estimates exclude locals who died in the fighting (several hundred Lithuanian anti-Soviet rebels, as well as dozens of armed communist activists, including

5 William W. Mishell, Kaddish for Kovno: Life and Death in a Lithuanian Ghetto 1941–1945, Chicago 1988, p. 9. Cf. the observation by Grigorijus Šuras, Užrašai: Vilniaus geto kronika 1941–1944 (Notes: Chronicle of the Vilnius Ghetto 1941–1944), trans. by Nijolė Kvaraciejūtė and Algimantas Antanvičius, Vilnius 1997, p. 23.

some Jews). Clashes with communists and Red Army stragglers in hiding, as well as isolated arrests and killings of Jews, are reported throughout July.[6] The mass murder of nearly 3,000 Jews, mainly men, at Fort VII in Kaunas on 4 and 6 July opened a new, essentially post-pogrom phase in the destruction. Pogroms and shootings carried out under the chaotic conditions of war and insurgency were now replaced by organized mass executions under the control of a clearly identifiable chain of military and/or police command.

The term "pogrom" is understood here as an interethnic riot directed against Jews by the local population or "neighbours", as in Jedwabne, rather than the kinds of mass killings undertaken at Fort VII. This distinction complicates any reasonably accurate determination of the number of victims of pogroms but it is nonetheless clear that most Lithuanian Jews did not die at the hands of marauding neighbours. More than 90% of Lithuania's Jews were still alive in mid-August of 1941, long after pogroms, in the usual sense of the word, had abated or ceased altogether.

The Nazi-inspired and Stalinist atrocities of the first days of the war overlapped in time and space. Two of the most sensational crimes of the first days, the massacre carried out by the Soviet military at the Pravieniškės detention centre (26 June) and the infamous murders of Jewish men at the Lietūkis garage (27 June), occurred in the same metropolitan area. In both cases motifs of revenge and retribution dominated the narratives.[7] The causal link between Soviet atrocities and anti-communist "revenge" in the memories of many non-Jewish Lithuanians provided a legitimizing rationale for anti-Jewish violence. Furthermore, the Judeo-Bolshevik nexus was reflected at the highest levels of society. "Jews and Bolshevism are one and the

6 Christoph Dieckmann, Lithuania in Summer 1941 – The German Invasion and the Kaunas Pogrom, in: Elazar Barkan/Elizabeth A. Cole/Kai Struve (eds.), Shared History – Divided Memory. Jews and Others in Soviet-Occupied Poland, 1939–1941, Leipzig 2007, p. 361. Cf. Christoph Dieckmann/Saulius Sužiedėlis, Lietuvos žydų persekiojimas ir masinės žudynės 1941 m. vasarą ir rudenį. The Persecution and Mass Murder of Lithuanian Jews during Summer and Fall of 1941, Vilnius 2006. For example, compare reports in Lietuvos centrinis valstybės archyvas (LCVA), f. R-660, ap. 2, b. 131, Alytaus šaulių rinktinė, [The Unit of the Alytus Riflemen] also f. R-1436, ap. 1, b. 29, Alytaus apskrities viršininkas [Chief of the Alytus District].

7 In Ukraine and Lithuania, Jews were ordered to "atone" by burying the corpses of people killed by the Soviets.

same", trumpeted the first issue of the rebel newspaper Į laisvę ("Towards Freedom"), which appeared on 24 June. The paper evoked the image of Jews fleeing east together with the hated Russian enemy, further reinforcing the Jewish connection to the former occupiers.[8]

The antisemitic statements and statutes issued by the rebels' Provisional Government (PG), which functioned in a formal sense from 24 June to 5 August, have been documented and studied at length. The ideological program of the Lithuanian Activist Front, the major political force behind the PG, envisioned a future in alliance with Nazi Germany. The governing philosophy bore resemblance to that of Germany's Axis allies, such as Slovakia and Hungary. At best, the LAF and the PG intended to severely restrict the rights of Jewish citizens in direct violation of the constitutions passed by the interwar republic. At worst, the more extreme elements urged wholesale expulsion. Clearly, an era of persecution lay ahead for the Jews, but there is no evidence that the Lithuanian leadership, such as it existed in the chaotic summer of 1941, planned outright genocide.[9]

While angry anti-Jewish and anti-Soviet rhetoric dominated the airwaves and press, the civil and clerical authorities nervously observed the murderous chaos in the streets. According to the minutes of its second meeting on 25 June, the PG cabinet decided to "strengthen the activities of the partisans" in order to fight the remnants of the "Bolshevik, communist and Jewish gangs" but also to "exclude as rapidly as possible the undesirable element that has opportunistically adhered" to the units.[10] In its first published statement of 24 June directed at the rebels, the PG noted that the men were firing their weapons "needlessly and too often". The new government also noted that some rebels were seeking to "settle accounts with persons whom they find objectionable". The government rebuked those taking the law into their hands and proclaimed: "All the scum who have transgressed against the Lithuanian nation will receive their punishment in the courts."[11]

At the PG cabinet meeting of 27 June Minister Vytautas Žemkalnis-Landsbergis reported on the "extremely cruel torture of the Kaunas Jews at the Lietūkis garage".

8 Į laisvę, 24. 6. 1941, p. 1.

9 Sužiedėlis, Foreign Saviors, pp. 346.

10 Arvydas Anušauskas, comp. Lietuvos Laikinoji vyriausybė: posėdžių protokolai [The Lithuanian Provisional Government: Protocols of Meetings], Vilnius 2001, p. 11.

11 Į laisvę, Šaulių ir partizanų žiniai [Notice to the Riflemen and Partisans], 24. 6. 1941, p. 1.

The cabinet's decision is noteworthy in its choice of language: "Regardless of all the measures that must be taken against the Jews on account of their communist activity and sabotage against the German army, partisans and individuals should avoid public Jewish executions [emphasis added]. It has been learned that these actions have been undertaken by people who have nothing in common either with the Activist [LAF] Staff, or the Partisans' Staff, or the Provisional Lithuanian Government."[12]

There is no doubt that the authorities were concerned by the chaos and disorder of the first days. On the other hand, the concern was mitigated by factors that negated much of its moral weight. Unease at the violence against Jews was at times expressed within the context of Judeo-Bolshevik mythology. The aging metropolitan of the country, Archbishop Juozas Skvireckas, remained sequestered in his residence outside Kaunas, fearing that "some wild-eyed Jew could fire a shot in ambush". Skvireckas took at face value reports of "a real battle of the Jews against the Germans and Lithuanians". The Jews, he wrote, were "constantly attacking, firing from their houses, trying to kill as many as possible". He commented favourably on "Mein Kampf" in his diary: The Fuehrer's ideas were not only "truly interesting" but also "provide witness to the fact that Hitler is not only an enemy of the Jews, but is a very correctly thinking person".[13] The same Skvireckas, on learning of the Lietūkis killings from the military doctor Colonel Balys Matulionis and the priest Simonas Morkūnas, sent his emissary Msgr. Kazimieras Šaulys to intercede with the Commandant of Kaunas to halt anti-Jewish violence, but the intervention had no discernible effect.[14] On 11 July, the day after the announcement on the ghettoization of the Jews of Kaunas, a Jewish delegation visited Skvireckas' assistant, Bishop Vincentas Brizgys. Skvireckas' diary notes that "the Jews attempted to seek intercession and even visited Bishop Brizgys, who explained to them that the Jews

12 Lietuvos laikinoji, Protokolas no. 5 [Protocol no. 5], 27. 6. 1941, pp. 17.

13 See entries for 26 June to 1 July, in Valentinas Brandišauskas, comp. 1941 m. birželio sukilimas: dokumetų rinkinys [The June 1941 Uprising: A Collection of Documents], Vilnius 2000, p. 268–275.

14 1941 m. sukilimas, diary entry for 28 June 1941, 272, and 1 July 1941, 274. Rev. Morkūnas' own account is in Dalia Kuodytė/Rimantas Stankevičius (comp.), Išgelbėję pasaulį... žydų gelbėjimas Lietuvoje [Saving the World: The Rescue of Jews in Lithuania], Vilnius 2001, p. 109–112.

probably are aware of the Catholic clergy's attitude about the Jews, but if the priests tried to publicly speak out in favour of the Jews they could be lynched themselves. It's obvious that not all Jews are guilty, but the guilty ones have brought the hatred of Lithuanian society on all the Jews. The Jews should understand that at this moment there is no benefit for them in forcing their way into the Lithuanians' midst; that it would be better for them to quietly remain alongside the Lithuanians; that it will be more tranquil for them, say, in Panevėžys or Šiauliai, where there have been no excesses against them, than in Kaunas, where at least 8,000 Jews have arrived from all different regions."[15]

At their meeting of 6–7 August 1941 the bishops decided that, "since Jews, Russians and the followers of Bolshevism have been eliminated from public life", it was time "to demand that the establishment of private Catholic schools be allowed". The bishops also considered the "problem of Jewish Catholics" and consented to "write an appropriate letter to the government, interceding on behalf of Jews baptized before 22 June 1941, so that they would not be driven into the ghetto". The Lithuanian bishops' conference next met on 7–8 October 1941. One of the points on the agenda referred to the Jews: "H. E. Bishop Brizgys reported on today's conversation on the Jewish question with the First General Counsellor, General Kubiliūnas, from which it became apparent that the Germans had reserved for themselves the exclusive right to resolve the Jewish question."[16]

The formalism of the ecclesiastical response can be seen in the message from the Archbishop's office in which the deacons of the Kaunas Archdiocese were reminded not to baptize adults without the episcopate's permission. The purpose of this warning was made clear: "Furthermore, on this occasion it is necessary to remind you of the instructions of the civilian authorities forbidding inhabitants, thus also the clergy, from associating with Jews." Two weeks later Monsignor Šaulys reasserted this position, adding: "For reasons known to all, persons of Jewish nationality are subject to the rules of prisoners of war. Civilians are prohibited to associate with them in any way. The clergy of the diocese are warned that this prohibition be strictly observed."[17] On the other hand, it is clear that the warnings were routinely

15 Diary entry for 11 July 1941 in 1941 m. birželio sukilimas, p. 284.

16 Both documents in LCVA, f. 1671, ap. 5, b. 63.

17 LCVA, f. 1671, ap. 5, b. 134. Kazimieras Šaulys to the deaconate, 20. 3. 1942 and 8. 4. 1942.

ignored as even Bishop Brizgys maintained contacts with prominent persons of the Kaunas ghetto.[18]

However, even in the early days there were examples of unambiguous warnings against violence, as indicated by the 10 July 1941 pastoral letter of Bishop Justinas Staugaitis to the faithful of Telšiai Diocese: "When the Red Army overran our country and introduced the Bolshevik order, we did not need to look for activists in Russia: Bolshevism, unfortunately, was carried out by Lithuanians themselves. [...] Let us not also forget that every human being, whether one of our own or an outsider, whether friend or foe, is the same child of God, that is, our brother. If he is suffering, it is our duty to help him as much as we can. [...] [The criminals should be prosecuted] by organs of public authority. [...] God save you from revenge and licentious violence."[19]

There have been claims that the bishops had forwarded a memorandum protesting the slaughter of the Jews, but this remains unconfirmed.[20] Yet as the massacres in the province intensified, at least some members of the elite became concerned about the effects of the genocide on the reputation of the Lithuanian people. On 19 September Archbishop Skvireckas recorded his recollections of a meeting with the former head of the Provisional Government who had come to see the metropolitan on an urgent matter: "I was unable to guess what these important matters were, but Bishop Karosas immediately noted that Dr. A[mbrazevičius] wanted to talk about the Jews. And as it turned out, the former prime minister of the Provisional Independent Government had come to propose some sort of action on the problem of the murders of the Jews. Well, as it is becoming increasingly obvious, the Germans want to place the entire blame on the killing of the Jews on Lithuanians themselves, the Lithuanian partisans. The partisans are so enraged and set against the Jews that they strive to participate in the shooting of the Jews. [...] The Germans are filming the shootings and in these films the Lithuanian partisans with yellow embroidery are prominent. Dr. A. has seen one such execution himself in which Lithuanians

18 See Avraham Tory, Surviving the Holocaust: The Kovno Ghetto Diary, Cambridge/MA 1990, p. 312–317, pp. 484.

19 LCVA, f. 1671, ap. 5, b. 63.

20 Vincentas Brizgys in his Katalikų bažnyčia Lietuvoje 1941–1944 m. [The Catholic Church in Lithuania], Chicago 1977, p. 323. Cf. Regina Laukaitytė, Lietuvos bažnyčios vokiečių okupacijos metais [The Lithuanian Church during the Years of the German Occupation], Vilnius 2010, pp. 103.

indeed participated, maybe having received some beer mixed with whiskey. The shootings are done without any court proceedings and it is not clear under whose orders. With the end of the war and with, perhaps, an English victory, the Lithuanians could receive a very large accounting for these massacres, since there will not be any evidence that they did not do this and are not the ones at fault. Thus [Dr. A. proposed] to proclaim a protest against these killings which would be signed by the most famous people in Lithuania, such as the former President of Lithuania and myself as the Archbishop of Kaunas. [...] On the question of whether there will be evidence that Lithuanians did not approve of the massacres, I said that the priests on more than one occasion have already spoken out against them and have fallen into disfavour with the Germans; that I had already spoken out against the massacres which are contrary to Christian morality through representatives of the Red Cross and made efforts that this attitude of mine would be known to the partisans' staff; that I had written a very serious letter concerning Jewish Catholics and persons of mixed Jewish marriages; that the bishops will find a way to inform world opinion, in their own way, as to what they think of the killings and who are the true culprits. I added that even among the partisans there are people openly resisting those who force them to be murderers. I mentioned to him that hardly anyone will believe what the Germans are proclaiming for purposes of propaganda, since they lie too insolently and I pointed out that [my] conversation with Reichskommissar [Hinrich] Lohse which was published in the newspaper was all an invention from A to Z."[21]

Skvireckas evaded any formal statement suggested by Ambrazevičius and observed that while it was proper for political leaders like Grinius to make such protests, a religious leader must stay clear of political matters and avoid actions that "needlessly bring German hatred against the entire Curia". But as historian Valentinas Brandišauskas has noted, Skvireckas "did not avoid other statements on public issues" especially if they concerned the struggle against the evils of communism.[22]

21 I am indebted to Dr. Arūnas Streikus for providing me with this excerpt of Skvireckas' notes found in the Archive of the Kaunas Curia [Kauno Arkivyskupijos kurijos archyvas], b. 175, l. 181. A more detailed and critical analysis of Skvireckas' attitude towards the Jews is in Valentinas Brandišauskas, Holokaustas Lietuvoje: istoriografinė situacija ir pagrindinės problemos [The Holocaust in Lithuania: The Situation in Historiography and the Major Problems], in: Vacys Milius et al. (eds.), Lietuvos Katalikų mokslo akdemija. Metraštis [The Lithuanian Catholic Academy of Sciences. Annual] XIV (1999), p. 140–150.

22 Brandišauskas, Holokaustas, pp. 143.

Intense discussions took place within the Curia and among the clergy on the disposition of Jewish property during the year following the genocide of the summer and fall of 1941. The available evidence indicates that many priests dealt with the question of restitution in a formal, canonical sense, a rationalization that has been described as destructive of the Church's moral authority.[23] In January 1943, in a message from Kaunas, Lithuania's bishops, greeting the faithful, noted with sorrow the issue of looting: "[W]ith ever-greater impudence the property that had been rightfully acquired by persons of non-Lithuanian nationality is being stolen. This shows terrible contempt for Christian morality. [...] Aroused to indignity by this spectacle, we cannot but help to raise our voices in warning against such behaviour, which denigrates and insults our nation. We must be just to all and remember the rule: Do not do to others what you do not wish to be done to you."[24]

In general, the hierarchy's position can be described as one of active public support for the "war on Bolshevism" and a rational defence of the institutional interests of the Church.[25] This canonical response, reminiscent of the caution of Pius XII, contrasts sharply with the actions of many individual clergy, including bishops (especially Vincentas Borisevičius of Telšiai), as well as more than 100 priests and nuns who assisted Jews and some who spoke out against the killings.[26] Some, like Brizgys, who at least knew and approved of rescue efforts while maintaining contacts with Jewish leaders from the ghetto, were clearly pro-German (and favourably disposed toward the Western Allies) in their political orientation.[27] But such contradictory behaviour is counterintuitive only if one views World War II from a simplified Western perspective.[28]

23 Ibid., p. 147–151.

24 LCVA, f. 1671, ap. 5, b. 65, Bishops' letter, January 1943. It is not certain that the property in question refers to the Jews. More likely, it concerns the behavior of Lithuanians regarding Polish farmers who were being deported from their farms as part of the German colonization drive.

25 However, the assertion in Raul Hilberg, The Destruction of the European Jews, New York 1961, p. 201, that Brizgys ordered all of Lithuania's clergy not to assist the Jews in July 1941 seems problematic. Brizgys had no such canonical authority and has vigorously denied the charge. Aside from a single sentence in a German report, there is no other reference to what certainly would have been an extraordinary announcement. Furthermore, a number of accounts, both Jewish and Lithuanian, confirm that the bishop knew and approved of the clergy's rescue of Jews.

26 See Arūnas Streikus, Bažnyčios institucija nacių okupacijos laikotarpiu Lietuvoje [The Institution of the Church during the Nazi Occupation in Lithuania], http://www.komisija.lt/lt/body.php?&m=1193654523.

While many bystanders were clearly aghast at the killings, others were put off for other, more selfish reasons. One interesting response was that of the leaders of the more extreme Lithuanian political wing, particularly the Lithuanian Nationalist Party (LNP). The most radical fringe of this group had become thoroughly Nazified in their worldview, advocating a "Third Lithuania" based on National Socialist principles in which the Jews were to be "stricken from life".[29] The important diary of Zenonas Blynas contains sharp expressions of disgust at the killings, but his sympathy was not with the defenceless Jews. The dominant emotion reflected a sense of shame mixed with self-pity and resentment that the Germans were utilizing Lithuanians as executioners. Blynas reported on what he heard in preparation for the action in Rokiškis, one of the largest operations of the genocide: "They say tomorrow 9,000 Jews will have to be shot in Rokiškis. They will dig a three-meter ditch, bring in 100 Jews, put them in the ditch, threaten that whoever gets up will be shot, then a few persons with submachine guns fire a crossing pattern at the backs, pour on a layer of 20–30 cm sand. [...] Then they lay down another line [of people] [...] Once they had brought in 600 Jews, demanded that they be led out of town. After a few kilometres they were ordered to put down their sacks and take off their outerwear. The Jews understood their fate; there were tragic scenes. This even affected the people who carried out the action. Supposedly there are 2,000 people (old people, women, children) who are left for the 'second group' – for humanitarian reasons, so that there would be no need to bother with the children. [...] But now they are taking care of the healthier ones, the young men."[30]

27 See Avraham Tory, Surviving the Holocaust, Cambridge/MA 1990, p. 312–317.

28 The example of Metropolitan Andrey Sheptytski of Lviv is relevant here. See Timothy Snyder, He Welcomed the Nazis and Saved Jews, http://www.nybooks.com/blogs/nyrblog/2009/dec/21/he-welcomed-the-nazis-and-saved-jews/.

29 As quoted in Zenonas Blynas, Karo metų dienoraštis 1941–1944 m. [Diary of the War Years 1941–1944], ed. by Gediminas Rudis, Vilnius 2007, pp. 123.

30 Blynas, Entry for 14. 8. 1941, p. 128. Reference here is probably to two massacres: the smaller action of July and the giant massacre of 15–16 August, which involved more than 3,000 victims.

Blynas' matter-of-fact tone outlining the technical aspects of the planned shootings changed sharply after the large action of 15–16 August. He recorded his rage at the manner of the murders: "Yesterday [Klemensas] Brunius spoke of the massacre in Rokiškis, which was carried out in the open. [...] The [victims'] brains and blood were spattered, the men, the shooters, were covered in blood. The women yelled and screamed. People from the area had gathered to watch. At first they laughed, smiled in a happy manner, but then they became horrified, the Aryan women began screaming. A massacre. Disgraceful. The local chief is a Judas. I had said before, that if the Germans are doing this by our hands, then everything must be done calmly, not in public, without scandal. But that traitor did everything to the contrary. I'll remember him... that villain."[31]

Blynas also recorded a conversation about the reaction of people in the provinces: "Today a man came from Joniškis relating that the villagers are finding it difficult to get used to the massacre of the Jews. In the villages, where the Jewish terror was not as rampant as in the towns, the killings are creating a depressing and heavy atmosphere. People say it would be better to take the Jews for work and shoot the communists. It's unfortunate that there is too much shooting and it is done by Lithuanians, especially if it is true that the Germans are filming the actions."[32]

In late August, after a "thorough conversation on the massacre of the Jews", Blynas noted that "in today's issue of Į laisvę there is an interesting stanza in [poet Bernardas] Brazdžionis' poem, 'I Call upon the Nation'", adding that the cited selection "is probably about Jewry": "I call in the name of your land of sorrows/In the voice of castle hills, meadows and forests/Do not take revenge, so that the stain of hot blood/Not fall as a curse on your children's children."[33]

Resentment against the utilization of the Lithuanian police battalions as "butchers" in the executions of Jews and POWs evoked shame among the nationalists

31 Ibid., Entry for 24. 8. 1941, p. 147, cf. Entry for 6 November 1941 on the killings carried out by the 12th Lithuanian Schutzmannschaften battalion in Minsk, Borisov and Slutsk, p. 234. Blynas was also enraged by the killings of members of Sokol, the Czech resistance, brought to Lithuania, hurling "eternal damnation" on the officers who participated as noted in the entry of 12. 1. 1942, p. 282.

32 Ibid., Entry for 13. 8. 1941, p. 128.

33 Ibid., Entry for 30. 8. 1941, p. 157.

without sympathy for the victims: If the Germans want to kill the Jews, they should do it themselves.[34]

For some, even a smidgeon of shame was too much. A travelogue dated 15 July 1941 by a student, one V. Jurgutis, entitled "The Whirlwind of War in Samogitia", reported that locals in Samogitia were still complaining that Jews were threatening them and had allegedly burned towns and villages. And yet, in the new order, Jurgutis noted that local farmers had discovered to their satisfaction that the Jews were "unnecessary" because the markets were doing well without the traditional input of Jewish commerce. In a jocular yet cynical tone the young man wrote: "Truly here in Samogitia even the Jewish seed is gone: All the men have been 'put in their place', as they say in Samogitian, for their various misdeeds. Only the women and children are left: They are corralled in temporary camps and are guarded by TDA officials and perform all kinds of work."[35] Practical concerns on the effects of the genocide are also reflected in Blynas' report on "the opinion of a farmer from Vilkija". The villager opined that "East Prussia is less thickly settled than Lithuania. After the massacre of the Jews – about 10 % of the population – Lithuania will be less inhabited. Germans will be sent to the Jewish homes and the state farms. The Germans will dominate and thus will Germanize Lithuania." Blynas noted that "he [the farmer] himself shot four Jews the other day. [According to him] there will be no more Jews in Vilkija."[36]

How prevalent were the attitudes ranging from condemnation of the killings and sympathy for the victims to indifference, to actual acceptance and approval of the genocide? Generalizations are risky: The public space of the Nazi occupation, including the period of the Provisional Government, allowed for only anti-Jewish narratives. Except for some of the clergy speaking from the pulpit, public denunciations of the massacre were nigh impossible. Killers acted more or less in the open, rescuers were forced to work in the shadows. In any case, on the principle that the

34 Noted in a number of sources.

35 Lietuvos Mokslų akademijos Vruvblevskių biblioteka rankraščių skyrius [LMA VBRS] [The Manuscript Section of the Lithuanian Academy of Sciences, the Wróblewski Archiv], Karo viesulas žemaičiuose [The Whirlwind of War in Samogitia], F. 22-1754, l. 14-17. Tautinė darbo apsauga, or the Defense of National Work, was an official designation for some units of anti-Soviet partisans and the early police battalions.

36 Blynas, Entry for 16. 8. 1941, p. 132.

"word becomes flesh", the persistent antisemitic vitriol in the official press created an atmosphere conducive to dehumanizing the victims and thus assisting in their destruction.[37]

Overt antisemitism in the underground press of the German occupation became less strident, but the animus against the Jews remained. There were occasional expressions of shame and regret, but most of the anti-Nazi propaganda was directed at German restrictions on Lithuanian cultural life, forced labour to the Reich and popular resistance against the mobilization to the SS. The tone of the organ of the former LAF, Į laisvę, now transformed into an anti-Nazi underground messenger, is particularly striking. The German policies against Lithuanians were described as even more barbaric than the crimes of the Bolsheviks. The seldom-mentioned periodic shootings of Jews, on the other hand, are usually reported in a factually neutral manner. In one insulting passage, Lithuanian bravado against the Germans was compared to the behaviour of the victims of genocide: "We are not Jews and will not dig our own graves."[38]

The Longer View: Institutional Change and the Persistence of Myth

Until the late 1980s three views of Lithuania's Holocaust dominated and are, to some extent, still relevant. Allowing for some simplification, they can be divided into the Western, Soviet and Lithuanian perspectives. Western accounts of Lithuania's wartime history focused on the fate of the Jews, which tended to emphasize native collaboration in the Final Solution.[39] As such it has evoked resistance in

37 Linas Venclauskas, Žydų stereotipas laikraštyje 'Į Laisvę' [Jewish Stereotypes in the Newspaper 'Toward Freedom'], unpubl. seminar paper, Vytautas Magnus University; idem, Žydų stereotipas Lietuvos ir Prancūzijos spaudoje (1940–1942 metais): panašumai ir skirtumai [Jewish Stereotypes in the French and Lithuanian Press 1940–1942], unpubl. B. A. thesis, Vytautas Magnus University; cf. the published version in Linas Venclauskas, Stereotipų mįslės (Antisemitizmas Lietuvos ir Prancūzijos spaudoje 1940–1942 metais) [The Riddles of Stereotypes: Antisemitism in the Lithuanian and French Press 1940–1942], in: Darbai ir dienos 34 (2003), p. 321–348.

38 Linas Venclauskas, Žydų stereotipas laikraštyje, p. 21.

39 For example, Hilberg's seminal work, The Destruction of the European Jews, and other scholarly accounts which followed. Among more popular surveys, Lucy Dawidowicz's general indictment in The War against the Jews 1933–1945, New York 1975, p. 541, is not untypical: "[T]he Baltic and Ukrainian populations [my emphasis] collaborated voluntarily with the Germans in murdering the Jews."

40 Bronius Kviklys (comp.), Mūsų Lietuva [Our Lithuania], T. 2, Boston 1965, p. 376. It has now been determined that a Soviet tank unit was responsible. Other accounts list over 200 killed.

the current popular imagination, which tends to be defensive when the matter of Lithuanian participation in the Holocaust is broached. The Soviet version of the Holocaust suffered both from its avoidance, with few exceptions, of the Jewish specificity of the Holocaust and its political agenda, the main purpose of which was to discredit the anti-communist Lithuanian diaspora in the West. While the Soviet historiography of the period is held in low esteem by most Lithuanian scholars today, it would be wrong to conclude that its influence was short lived. The knee-jerk reaction of many Lithuanians to any Soviet historical narrative meant that much of the story of the genocide of the Jews as it was presented until the mid-1980s, even when based on fact, aroused suspicion rather than acknowledgement. Furthermore, the Soviet version of the Second World War, including the German occupation, was in direct contradiction to that of dissident circles as well as the anti-communist exile community in the West. This latter discourse grew out of the experience of the postwar Lithuanian diaspora, which rested on intense anti-Sovietism, the denial of the auxiliary role played by ethnic Lithuanians in the Holocaust and, at times, antisemitic stereotypes. As anti-Soviet attitudes hardened during the drive for independence, the historical narrative of the exiles, as flawed as it was concerning the Holocaust, gained a measure of credibility in newly independent Lithuania.

The utter incompatibility and mutual blindness of the Soviet and diaspora Lithuanian collective memories can be illustrated by an example from the 1960s: An encyclopaedia of Lithuanian geography published in Boston contained an entry on Pravieniškės that detailed the massacre of some 400 prisoners and guards at one of Lithuania's better-known prison camps, carried out by a Soviet military unit on 26 June 1941. "The massacre at Pravieniškės greatly agitated all of Lithuania", the entry concluded. "However, there was no international intervention, the criminals were neither identified nor punished."[40] One would never know from this account that more than 200 Jews were shot here on 4 September 1941 and that

Pravieniškės served as a labour camp and killing site under the Nazis. A Soviet encyclopaedia simply states that "the Hitlerites and local bourgeois nationalists established a concentration camp in Pravieniškės in 1941" and then goes on to enumerate the fascist crimes.[41] There is no mention here of the massacre carried out by the Red Army.

However, there is no question that since Lithuania's independence from the Soviet Union important transformations have taken place in terms of the country's attitude towards its recent past, leading to a re-evaluation of the Holocaust in a number of venues. On an official level, one can identify several significant developments. During his 1995 visit to Israel, President Algirdas Brazauskas, in a speech to the Knesset, publicly asked forgiveness for the actions of "those Lithuanians who mercilessly murdered, shot, deported and robbed Jews".[42] In April 2000 Lithuania's Catholic bishops' conference issued a public apology for those "children of the Church who lacked charity towards the persecuted Jews" and acknowledged "past manifestations of antisemitism which burdened the memory of the Church".[43] The International Commission for the Evaluation of the Crimes of the Nazi and Soviet Occupation Regimes in Lithuania was established by presidential decree on 7 September 1998. Its subcommission on Nazi atrocities has engaged in research on the Holocaust and developed numerous educational outreach programs.

A number of international conferences were convened in the 1990s.[44] The largest Holocaust conference on the Baltics was held in September 2002 in Vilnius. Titled, "The Holocaust in Lithuania in the Focus of Modern History, Education and Justice", it brought participants from Israel, the United States, Germany, Russia, Ukraine and Poland, including the dean of Holocaust historians, Yehuda Bauer. On 23 April 1999 a public discussion on the Holocaust, which included politicians, historians, archival researchers and jurists, took place in the Seimas, Lithuania's parliament.[45] Serious Lithuanian-language scholarship on Jewish history and the Holocaust ceased to be a novelty, largely thanks to a number of younger scholars entering the field, some with an acquired knowledge of Yiddish and Hebrew.[46] New works appeared in a number of fields, including the history of antisemitism,[47] Jewish-Lithuanian relations between the wars, the role of Lithuanian police battalions in the destruction of the Jews, the fate of Lithuanian ghettos and other aspects of the Holocaust.[48] Currently, the variety of academic studies, commemorative publica-

41 Mažoji lietuviškoji tarybinė enciklopedija [The Short Lithuanian Soviet Encyclopaedia], T. 2, Vilnius 1968, p. 905.

42 As quoted in Adolfas Eidintas, Žydai, lietuviai ir holokaustas [Jews, Lithuanians and the Holocaust], Vilnius 2002, p. 402.

43 Published in Josifas Levinsonas (red.), Šoa (Holokaustas) Lietuvoje: skaitiniai [The Shoa in Lithuania: Readings], Vilnius 2001, pp. 231.

44 See, for example, the proceeding of a 1993 conference in Vilnius in Emanuelis Zingeris, sud. Atminties dienos: The Days of Memory, Vilnius 1995.

45 Lietuvių-žydų santykiai. Istoriniai, teisiniai ir politiniai aspektai. Stenograma, Vilnius 1999. A record of this session held on April 23, 1999 is available also on http://www.genocid.lt/GRTD/Konferencijos/lietuvi.htm [accessed June 30, 2008]

46 For a somewhat dated overview of Lithuanian historiography on the Holocaust before 2003 see Liudas Truska, Litauische Historiographie über den Holocaust in Litauen, in: Vincas Bartusevičius/Joachim Tauber/Wolfram Wette (eds.), Holocaust in Litauen: Krieg, Judenmorde und Kollaboration im Jahre 1941, Köln/Weimar/Wien 2003, p. 262–276.

47 The Lithuania History Institute has considerably expanded the research on the nineteenth and early twentieth century context of Jewish social life and Jewish-Lithuanian relations: Darius Staliūnas/Vladas Sirutavičius (eds.), Žydu klausimas Lietuvoje (XIX a. vidurys) [The Jewish Question in Lithuania during the Middle of the Nineteenth Century], Vilnius 2004; cf. the collection edited by the same authors, Kai ksenofobija virsta prievarta: lietuvių ir žydų santykių dinamika XIX a.–XX a. pirmojoje pusėje [When Xenophobia Become Violence: The Dynamics of Lithuanian-Jewish Relations from the Nineteenth to the First Half of the Twentieth Century], Vilnius 2005 and their Žydai Lietuvos ekonominėje-socialinėje struktūroje: tarp tarpininko ir konkurento [Jews in Lithuania's Socio-Economic Structure: from Intermediary to Competitor], Vilnius 2006. See also Jonas Boruta, Katalikų bažnyčia ir lietuvių-žydų santykiai XIX–XX a. [The Catholic Church and Lithuanian-Jewish Relations in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries], in: Lietuvių Katalikų Mokslo Akademija. Metraštis, XIV, red. Vacys Milius Vilnius 1999, p. 1–23; Vygantas Vareikis, Tarp Valančiaus ir Kudirkos: žydų ir lietuvių santykiai katalikiškosios kultūros kontekste [Between Valančius and Kudirka: Jewish-Lithuanian Relations in the Context of Catholic Culture], in: ibid., pp. 81; see also Vygandas Vareikis/Liudas Truska, Holokausto prielaidos: Antisemitizmas Lietuvoje XIX a. antroji pusė – 1941 birželis. The Preconditions for the Holocaust: Anti-Semitism in Lithuania (Second Half of the 19th Century–June 1941), Vilnius 2004. The new research highlighted the importance of Catholic anti-Judaism in promoting harmful stereotypes and the import of modern economic and racial antisemitism based on French, Austrian and German influences, which affected some of the founders of modern Lithuanian political nationalism, most notably Vincas Kudirka (1858–1899). Yet the emerging picture is one of nuance: There were periods of anti-Tsarist cooperation between Jews and Lithuanians during the early 1900s and some Jews played a part in founding the First Republic.

48 Genovaitė Gustaitė, Vyskupas Jurgis Matulaitis ir žydai Vilniaus vyskupijoje 1918–1925 [Bishop Jurgis Matulaitis and the Jews in the Vilnius Diocese 1918–1925], in: Lietuvių Katalikų

tions, memoirs and document collections dealing with Jewish history and the Holocaust has become quite extensive. In effect, the discourse concerning the Holocaust within government, the mainstream media and in the universities has increasingly taken on the attitudes and vocabulary of the Western narrative: that is, the recognition of the genocide of the Jews as an exceptional event.

But there are a number of caveats that do not allow for an excessively optimistic outlook. It has often been proposed that the proper recognition and understanding of the Holocaust is essential to internalize "modern European values" and "serves as a barometer of the progress of civil society".[49] If so, then one must consider some of the problems facing a reconstruction of memory about the Holocaust.

Study of the interwar and wartime periods has been liberated from the closed archives and censorship of the Soviet period. Yet some research also has contributed to controversy and can prove unintentionally troublesome. One example is the

Mokslo Akademija. Metraštis, XIV (1999), p. 105–113; Saulius Sužiedėlis, The Historical Sources of Anti-Semitism, p. 119–154; Raimundas Valkauskas, Žydų tautinės autonomijos klausimas Lietuvoje, in: Lietuvos istorijos studijos [Lithuanian Historical Studies] 3 (1996), p. 64–71; also the essay by Šarūnas Liekis, Žydai: kaimynai ar svetimieji Etninių mažumų problematika Lietuvos istorijos moksle [The Jews: Neighbors or Strangers?], in: Genocidas ir rezistencija [Genocide and Resistance] 12 (2002) 2, p. 114–120. Cf. Eglė Bendikaitė, Dvi ideologijos, vienas judėjimas: sionistinis socializmas nepriklausomoje Lietuvoje, in: Darbai ir dienos. Lietuvostautinės mažumos: lenkai, rusai, žydai [Works and Days. Lithuania's National Minorities: Poles, Russians, Jews] 34 (2003), p. 255–271. A recent general study of the autonomy issue is the analysis of Šarūnas Liekis, A State within a State? Jewish Autonomy in Lithuania 1918–1923, Vilnius 2003. The two decades of independent Lithuania presented a rich and contentious history: the beginnings of Lithuanian linguistic assimilation by some segments of Jewish society; a surge of antisemitic attitudes, especially during the later 1930s, amplified by the alarming geopolitical situation; a relatively tolerant attitude towards Jews on the part of the Smetona dictatorship (1926–1940); the polarization of society on the eve of the Soviet invasion. The First Republic passed not a single antisemitic statute during its two decades of existence and provided subsidies for Jewish education, religious and cultural life. There is no official record of deaths in anti-Jewish pogroms during the interwar years. Despite the persistence of widespread antisemitic attitudes, the fact that the Nationalist (tautininkai) regime protected the country from the political extremes of left and right, largely (if not entirely) contained ethnic violence, allowed cultural diversity and criticized Nazi racism, may be discomforting for holders of the stereotype of a fascist interwar state.

49 As cited from the Program of the National Convention of the American Association for the Advancement of Slavic Studies (AAASS) in Philadelphia, 20–23 November 2008, Session 6, "The Memory of the Holocaust in Post-Communist Europe: Similarities and Differences".

first Soviet occupation, 1940–1941. Academic study of this crucial period is essential to confront the contentious issue of Jewish participation in the Sovietization of Lithuania. On the other hand, a careless selection of facts could lead to distortions of the so-called "theory of two genocides": that is, that Lithuanian participation in the Holocaust was a regrettable but understandable response to "Jewish persecution of Lithuanians".[50] Rage at Soviet atrocities was certainly one incentive for pro-German collaboration and contributed to the "Judeo-Bolshevik" nexus. The collaboration of some Jews with Soviet power was not the cause of the Holocaust, but many perpetrators adopted it as their singular rationalization for participating in the genocide.[51] The issue has continued to reappear in the media.[52]

Apologists for the Nazi collaborators published a number of tracts in the 1990s. There were the all-too-frequent refrains about a "handful of riffraff" who shot Jews; there was even the claim that the police battalions assisted Jews. The fantasy that the Holocaust in Lithuania was carried out by Germans dressed up in Lithuanian uniforms gained some currency among the gullible. An introduction to the memoirs of a veteran of the Fifth Lithuanian Schutzmannschaft battalion reveals a novel attempt to settle the problem of guilt. We can call it the logic of "no-fault" collaboration: "It is no secret that in our [Lithuanian] society [...] the pernicious notion still dominates,

50 The idea is articulated in the article by Jonas Mikelinskas, Teisė likti nesuprastam [The Right to Be Misunderstood], in: Metai (1996) 8/9, p. 126–163. A more documented study of the "two genocides" without the antisemitic baggage is Albinas Gražiūnas, Lietuva dviejų okupacijų replėse 1940–1944 [Lithuania Caught Between Two Occupations 1940–1944], Vilnius 1996.

51 For more, see Sužiedėlis, Foreign Saviors, pp. 329. The issue of conflicting collective memories and the "Judaeo-Bolshevik" stereotypes are effectively addressed by Joachim Tauber, 14 Tage im Juni: Zur kollektiven Erinnerung von Litauern und Juden, in: Bartusevičius/Tauber/Wette (eds.), Holocaust in Litauen, p. 40–50; Alfonsas Eidintas, Das Stereotyp des 'jüdischen Kommunisten' in Litauen 1940–1941, in: ibid., p. 13–25. On another front, historian Dov Levin's notion that "Soviet rule in Lithuania did defer the Holocaust there for twelve months and seven days" is a rhetorical flourish that would make sense only if the Germans had intended to occupy Lithuania in the fall of 1939, or if the Lithuanians had initiated the Holocaust on 14 June 1940. See his Fighting Back: Lithuanian Jewry's Armed Resistance to the Nazis, 1941–1945, New York 1985, p. 21, 23.

52 For some example of Lithuanian attitudes in this regard during the early 1990s, especially in the provincial press see Dov Levin, Lithuanian Attitudes towards the Jewish Minority in the Aftermath of the Holocaust: the Lithuanian Press, 1991–1992, in: Holocaust and Genocide Studies 7 (1993) 2, p. 247–262.

that to fight in the Red Army against the Nazis was a normal phenomenon, whereas to fight on the German side against the Bolshevik regime, which fought on a single front with the USA, Britain and France, was intolerable. But no one wants to think more deeply and come to the following conclusion: During the war, the Lithuanian state did not exist and thus the Lithuanian people were not under any obligation to the anti-Hitler coalition. For the Lithuanian nation, the Russian Bolsheviks and the German Nazis were equally enemies and occupiers. So today we should tolerate equally our soldiers who battled on the Eastern and Western fronts, because they fought with the enemies of our nation."[53] Not surprisingly, the memoir that followed this introduction makes no mention of the battalion's activities during the late summer and early fall of 1941.

The desire to exculpate everyone has penetrated some allegedly historical studies. A recent history of the Lithuanian police offers us the following narrowly self-contradictory explanation of the role of the Lithuanian Security Police in the destruction of the Jews: "The accusations that the Lithuanian security police took an active part in the destruction of the Jews are mainly the tendentious insinuations of Soviet 'historians' seeking to conceal the Soviets' own genocide of nations. With respect to the inhabitants of Jewish nationality, the Lithuanian security police carried out the following functions: They gathered and transported the Jews to the territory of the ghetto, sought out those who escaped from the ghetto and secured Jewish real estate that had been forcibly seized. In addition, the struggle of the LSP with the Soviet and Polish underground was not contrary to the interests of the Lithuanian nation. Thus one should not create an unrealistic image of the Lithuanian security police."[54]

A recent comprehensive study of the German occupation in Lithuania, which actually contained a detailed account of the massacre of the Jews, was prefaced by its Lithuanian-American sponsors with a word of thanks to the author for "his diligent work in analyzing the extermination and exploitation of the Lithuanian nation, and the colonization of Lithuania's land carried out by the German occupiers".[55]

53 Jonas Laucė, Penktasis savisaugos batalionas [The Fifth Self-Defense Battalion], Vilnius 1998, p. 5.

54 Petras Stankeras, Lietuvių policija 1941–1944 metais [The Lithuanian Police 1941–1944], Vilnius 1998, pp. 71.

55 Arūnas Bubnys, Vokiečių okupuota Lietuva (1941–1944) [Lithuania Under German Occupation 1941–1944], Vilnius 1998, p. 5.

There is no mention of the single greatest atrocity of the Nazi occupation in the preface, although the text itself contains, for its time, a fairly extensive review of the Holocaust. One Lithuanian-American writer proclaimed the fantasy that the Provisional Government of June–August 1941 "prosecuted all those who, taking advantage of wartime circumstances, persecuted Jews".[56]

While there are certainly some hard-core antisemites and Third Reich sympathizers among these scholars, the inability to properly evaluate the history of the German occupation by part of academia and society at large is also due to historic circumstances. Just as the first year of Soviet rule and the concomitant rise of the Judeo-Bolshevik stereotype conditioned many people to accept harsh antisemitic measures and some to even engage in murder, so it must be understood that most Lithuanians remember the 1940s quite differently from the "good war" narrative popular in the West. The chronological limits of victimhood differ. Many more ethnic Lithuanians were killed in the war's Stalinist aftermath (1945–1953) than during the European and global war that began in 1939. In a few, albeit untypical, locales, total violent deaths after May 1945 exceeded those of the Second World War.[57] The Grand Alliance narrative, with its emphasis on the positive role of the Soviet Union, does not resonate widely. If one does not consider the Jews and Soviet POWs, and many ethnic Lithuanians probably do not, then the selectively imagined demographic reality of destruction is that Soviet rule was more deadly than that of the Nazis. This perception is ingrained in the term pokaris (literally, "the after-war") as a description not of peace but of unremitting violence. The reality of experience, aside from other factors mentioned above, is an obstacle to an appreciation of the Holocaust within its proper context as the most uniquely destructive event in the history of modern Lithuania and as the central event of the Nazi occupation of 1941–1944.

It is beyond the scope of this contribution to consider the recent and current social issues that have affected the formation of memories. Anti-Jewish prejudices are still valuable political currency, as shown during the impeachment crisis of Rolandas Paksas in 2003–2004 as well as in the scandalous publications of Vitas Tom-

56 Draugas [The Friend], 9. 12. 1994.

57 While this is not true of East Europe as a whole, there are regions in the Balkans and west Ukraine where a statistical analysis of what are sometimes referred to as "hidden wars" might reveal the same.

kus, editor and publisher of the second most widely read daily, Respublika, which have denounced the so-called Jewish world domination. Since 11 March 2008, the emergence of public demonstrations by "youth of patriotic attitudes" have become an annual spectacle, featuring hundreds of skinheads and assorted racists.

While these kinds of phenomena are hardly confined to Lithuania, there are specific problems that spring directly from the paradoxes and conundrums unique to the country's history. For example, in June 2007, following media accounts of killings carried out by Soviet partisans during the war, the Lithuanian procurator's office began to investigate alleged killings by Soviet Jewish partisans in eastern Lithuania and Belarus. Dr. Yitzhak Arad, the former director of Yad Vashem and a member of the Lithuanian historical commission, who had fought as a teenage partisan in the ranks, was dragged into the investigation, which centred on the massacre of peasants in the village of Kaniūkai in January 1944. The affair derailed the work of the historical commission's Nazi group, seriously eroded Lithuania's reputation abroad and revealed the danger of allowing political manipulation of the most painful wounds of Lithuania's past. The investigation was discontinued in September 2008 but this did little to heal divided and acrimonious wartime memories. While it may be too much to hope for a shared historical narrative, it is certainly not an impossible task to ask all ethnic groups to appreciate the unique suffering of the "Other". Considering the realities of the war in Lithuania and the appalling fate of the country's Jews, which has no parallel even when compared to the very real postwar torment of ethnic Lithuanians, it is the responsibility of the latter to make greater efforts to appropriately internalize the memory of the Holocaust.

ANTISEMITISMUS