

THE HISTORICAL SOURCES FOR ANTISEMITISM IN LITHUANIA AND JEWISH-LITHUANIAN RELATIONS DURING THE 1930s

Saulius Sužiedėlis
Millersville University of Pennsylvania

Jewish-Lithuanian Relations before the National Movement

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

Until the late nineteenth century, Jewish interaction with ethnic Lithuanians essentially meant economic contacts with the peasantry since the latter, except for the petty gentry of Samogitia, constituted by then the only significant stratum of Lithuanian speakers. As late as the middle of the last century, the relationship of the Lithuanian peasants and Jews was “pre-modern,” situated within the framework of a stratified semi-feudal society entrenched within a traditional agrarian world. The

symbiotic, but also conflicting, interactions between the two groups sometimes played out in a quasi-ritualistic fashion reminiscent of a bygone age, as depicted in this colorful 1857 account of a confrontation at market toll barricades in southwestern Lithuania:

... a loaded wagon is flying with great speed toward the town in the hope of avoiding the guard and the required market levy. At this very moment, a war-like command reverberates: 'Halt!.' — in an instant, the wagon is stopped. The Lithuanian [driver], caught in a reckless deed, scratches his head, then pleads that he has nothing with which to pay, that he has barely enough money for market. He comes down from the wagon, a whip in his hand, bargaining with the unyielding guard. Sometimes, he even refuses obedience; woe then to the impudent! A dozen Jews cluster around him, while the Lithuanian staves them off as best he can with his riding crop — [a] little Jewish fellow, kneading the peasant constantly with his knees and mussing his hair, keeps crying: 'Pay! Pay!' The Lithuanian... seeks to lift his arms to beat off the unwelcome 'guest,' when a new rattle of arriving wagons and a dozen fists under his nose, or, on occasion, even a careful shove, applied from a careful distance, deflects his attention from his pestered head. Willy-nilly, he reaches into his breast pocket and pulls out a small bag ... Confused and unable to quickly regain his composure, the peasant finally pays the few *groszy* with great difficulty. Turning away, he puts back his bag and wants to finally rid himself of the little nuisance fastened on him, but the little Jewish fellow isn't stupid --with one leap he is already several steps away from the peasant, and is hanging onto another Lithuanian, reaching for the latter's head. There's just nothing to be done; one must drive on. The peasant settles into his wagon, spurs on his horses, all the while shaking his head in dissatisfaction. However, once he arrives in the town square and glances at the white peasant overcoats... a smile returns to his face. He greets his brothers happily and forgets about his ruffled hair.²

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

But while Jews and Lithuanians lived side-by-side for centuries, the proximity did not engender mutual understanding. The communities had limited knowledge of each other's languages and, for the most part, little interest in the Other's cultural and spiritual world. As commonly observed, in Eastern Europe Jews and Gentiles lived *beside* one another, but not *with* each other. Familiar as individuals, they were strangers culturally. Educated Jews and Lithuanians tended to assimilate into one of the region's "high" cultures: Russian proved attractive to Jews, Polish culture to Lithuanians (at least until the latter half of the nineteenth century). It should not be surprising that superficially reciprocal stereotypes have dominated the histories, literatures and collective memories of Jews and Lithuanians, a situation which, with few exceptions, has continued to the present. The vast Jewish literature consists mainly of recounting the life and death of the numerous *litvak* communities; as a rule, they are chronicles rather than critical histories. Even in scholarly studies, Lithuanians are often invisible or one-dimensional, appearing either as inert peasant masses, or as perpetrators of the Holocaust. On the other hand, until recently, most Lithuanian-language works, with the exception of authors such as Augustinas Janulaitis and Mykolas Biržiška, who had a genuine interest in Jewish culture, treated the Jews as a footnote, the largest of the minorities, and only in so far as the "Jewish problem" affected Lithuanians themselves.⁴

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

must stay out of their quarrel.”⁵ What is missing in this bit of folk wisdom, of course, is any mention of Lithuanians.

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

At the same time, the secular Lithuanian intelligentsia encountered modern anti-Semitic trends, primarily from Austria, Germany and France, reinforcing homespun negative stereotypes with the bacilli of pseudoscientific racism. The first published work by Vincas Kudirka (1858-1899), one of the founders of modern Lithuanian nationalism, was a folksy, primitive caricature of the Jewish restriction against pork.⁸ In *Varpas* (The Bell), the first Lithuanian-language periodical with a political program, Kudirka railed against “the Jews...our most terrible enemies...the most vicious wolves dressed in sheep’s wool,” assailing them as a danger to the peasants’ Catholic faith. Since Kudirka, like many other secular nationalists, was personally indifferent to the Catholicism of his youth, such passages were an obvious incitement

of pious village folk. At least one leftist contemporary speculated that the intelligentsia of the *Varpas* movement had acquired simplistic anti-Jewish attitudes from “childhood days in the village or frequent sermons in the churches.”⁹ But Kudirka’s anti-Semitic philippics, in addition to primitive appeals to the peasants’ sense of exploitation, revealed an acquaintance with French and Austrian purveyors of racial anti-Semitism. In one striking passage Kudirka argued, in Edouard Drumont’s vein, that the inborn malignant nature of the Jews was immutable and could not be ameliorated through education or assimilation.¹⁰

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

Ethnicity, Politics and Self-Determination in the New State

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

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

The struggle for Vilnius led to violent anti-Semitic pogroms by Bolshevik and Polish forces in the spring of 1919.¹⁵ During the wars of national liberation of 1918-1920 anti-Jewish outbreaks on a smaller scale also occurred in the lands controlled by the newly organized Lithuanian government. Jews had been accused of conniving with the detested German Ober Ost authorities whose requisitions had driven many villagers close to famine. Some of the economic, social and cultural tensions that characterized Lithuanian-Jewish relations of the interwar period were pre-shadowed by the privileged position of some Jews employed by the German occupation authorities during 1915-1918.¹⁶ At the first Lithuanian Jewish Congress in Kaunas in January 1920, Jewish leaders raised concerns about their situation in the new state. While some of the problems reflected traditional economic frictions with the peasantry, reminiscent of the picturesque toll-gathering of the previous century, others reflected the realities accompanying the advent of majority rule. The Congress protested the excesses of Lithuanian troops in Panevėžys in May 1919 during the war with Soviet Russia, as well as the lack of Jewish participation in the bureaucracy; there were allegations that virtually all Jewish railroad workers had been dismissed.¹⁷ Yet evidence of pogroms during the period between 1915 and

the early 1920s is sketchy at best and the story of peasant-Jewish relations of those years is marred by the sparsity and subjective nature of the sources.¹⁸

Thus, Jewish-Lithuanian relations of the interwar period evolved within a radically transformed landscape. Gone were the layers of authority which had separated the Jews from the peasant majority: the Tsarist bureaucracy, the Polonized aristocracy and the German military administration. For all minorities, dealing directly with the Lithuanian-speaking majority without these intervening agencies was a novel experience. Would Jews consider the new Lithuania of peasant upstarts *their* state as well? Most Jews had less faith than their ethnic Lithuanian countrymen in the permanence of the new state; many preferred a version of the old multinational Grand Duchy in which the Lithuanians, Poles, Jews and Belarusians would co-exist as autonomous Swiss-like ethnic “cantons.”¹⁹ Jewish sentiment for autonomy within a new Russia, which would include the *litvak*-inhabited lands of Belarus, as well as suspicions and even prejudiced condescension concerning the new “peasant” Lithuanian state, were initially widespread.²⁰

Yet for most Lithuanian leaders, separation from Russia and Poland was the *sine qua non* of the country’s existence. And as the new Lithuanian state grew in strength and fended off its foreign enemies, Jews increasingly came to accept the Second Republic, albeit for somewhat different reasons than ethnic Lithuanians. A certain community of interests developed. Between 2,000 and 3,000 Jews fought for the Republic in the wars of independence, many as volunteers. Many Lithuanians and Jews felt victimized by Józef Piłsudski’s Poland, especially Gen. Lucjan Żeligowski’s seizure of Vilnius in October 1920, and were disturbed by the avowedly anti-Lithuanian and anti-Semitic stance of many of the latter’s supporters. Acutely aware of the need to convince the international community of the viability of their state, and

seeking recognition within the new Wilsonian order under construction at Versailles, Lithuania's leaders strove to present their nation as a paragon of liberal democracy.

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

However, even after the abolition of the Jewish Ministry and the Nationalist seizure of power in 1926, Lithuania's Jews preserved a significant measure of communal autonomy.²³ The Republic continued its contributions to rabbinical salaries: in 1927 the government's per capita subsidy to the Jewish religious community actually exceeded that assigned to the majority Catholics.²⁴ Initially, the proponents of a Lithuanian-dominated national state did not automatically consider Jews the most "dangerous" minority. A nationalist memorandum concerning the political crisis of 1926 emphasized the need for an "ethnic national state," but also affirmed that the Jews were the only minority which should be allowed to "participate in the

government...without harm to the state's independence," since, unlike Poles and Germans, they had neither dangerous foreign sponsors nor irredentist claims.²⁵ While Lithuania provided a relatively safe climate for its Jews during most of the interwar period compared with, for example, Poland and Romania (not to speak of Germany), economic problems and Zionist agitation led to the emigration of nearly 14,000 Lithuanian Jews between 1928 and 1939 (about 15% of total emigration from the Republic) of whom the majority went to South Africa (35%) and Palestine (25%).²⁶

Jews, Lithuanians and the New Economy

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

The Lithuanian cooperative movement acquired an increasing share of the agricultural markets. Linas, the Lithuanian flax producers' and exporters' cooperative founded in 1935, was a good example of the growth of Lithuanian-owned concerns: by 1939-1940 it accounted for

58% of exports in a branch of the economy historically dominated by Jewish middlemen. Jews charged that government policies favored Lithuanian-owned corporations in which the state held substantial shares, such as the sugar concern, Lietuvos Cukrus, but the growing participation of Lithuanians in the economy by no means eliminated the important role of the Jews: in 1936, despite considerable inroads by Lithuanian shopkeepers, Jews still operated more than half of the country's small retail establishments. In 1939 Jews controlled an estimated 20% of Lithuania's export trade and 40% of the import business. Members of the Jewish community remained well-represented in the professions: in 1937 more than two-fifths of the country's doctors and lawyers were Jews. On the other hand, only a handful of Jews were employed by the central government or served as military officers.²⁷

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

Whether attempts to redress historic imbalances in economic opportunity, such as American "affirmative action" programs, represent long-delayed social justice or "reverse discrimination"

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

The emergence of the Lithuanian Businessmen's Association (*Lietuvių Verslininkų Sąjunga*) in 1932 reflected the economic competition between the Lithuanian "newcomers" and entrenched business interests. The *verslininkai*, as they were called, sought to limit "alien" economic influence and they initially concentrated much of their resentment against the German minority, urging well-to-do Lithuanians not to hire German nannies from among foreigners, but to choose Swiss or French candidates instead.²⁹ In 1932, as German-Lithuanian tensions escalated, the businessmen's weekly wrote: "The Germans have long been and, perhaps, have remained the most malevolent of our nation's enemies, because they are the most clever."³⁰

However, despite professed opposition to all "aliens," the Jews provided the main target. Militant *verslininkai* came to see Jewish economic clout, or, in their parlance, tyranny, as the major obstacle to the continued modernization of Lithuanian society, which they understood as ethnic Lithuanian dominance in urban and commercial life. Publicly, the *verslininkai* denied evil intentions or envy towards non-Lithuanians, rejected violence towards Jews and asserted that the goal of 85% Lithuanian participation in the economy, its rightful proportional share, would be achieved by "natural evolution."³¹ This seemingly benign posture was belied by the business weekly's vitriolic articles which painted Jews as rootless profiteers with an inbred urge

towards world hegemony. The Jewish press in Kaunas, especially *Yidishe Shtime*, and the Lithuanian-language Jewish newspaper, *Apžvalga* (The Review), responded with their own scathing counterattacks, ridiculing crude anti-Semitic notions.³² In addition to the constant harping on alleged Jewish economic hegemony in Lithuania, the *verslininkai* complained that Lithuania's own governing elite favored Jews and did too little for "native" businessmen.

The excesses of the nationalist businessmen did not go unchallenged. Concerned about agrarian unrest and the Nazi threat in Klaipėda, the regime had little stomach for extremist rhetoric. In 1935-1936, the mayor of Kaunas, Antanas Merkys, as well as several government ministers, criticized the *verslininkai* and reaffirmed the regime's pledge to protect minorities. The businessmen's association was cautioned to observe the principles of "moral competition" and to avoid "low-brow chauvinism."³³ The respected former prime minister, Ernestas Galvanauskas, suggested that anti-Semitism among the younger Lithuanian generation resulted partly from the fact that they could not find jobs in a saturated public sector and were, thus, forced to compete in areas heretofore dominated by Jews. But he denied that there was economic anti-Lithuanian discrimination on the part of the Jews, a favorite theme of the *verslininkai*.³⁴ Chastened by the fact that they had been compelled to publish criticism of nationalist excesses in their own newspaper, the radical businessmen moderated their views during 1936 and, for a while, adopted a more professional stance under a new editor. But there was no long-term change of colors. Emboldened by the growing right-wing opposition to the Smetona government during the late thirties, the atmosphere grew uglier again. In December 1938 the *verslininkai* demanded "laws which would regulate the Jewish question," specifically to establish quotas in employment and business "until such time as the majority percentage of Lithuanians is also reflected in commerce."³⁵

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

Problems of Reorientation: Education, Culture and Language

The changing structure of the modernized higher education system in a country with limited white-collar employment opportunities presented another arena of inter-ethnic contention. Until 1930 Jews constituted a large share of students training for the professions — an estimated 35-40% of medical students and at least a third of those entering law. The government rejected nationalist demands for proportional national enrollment, the *numerus clausus*, although the introduction of compulsory Lithuanian-language entrance examinations effectively reduced Jewish enrollment at the University of Kaunas. During 1935-1936 there were, reportedly, 486 Jews out of 3,223 students in Lithuania’s higher education system, about twice the proportion of Jews in the total population, but also a two-fold decline in the percentage of Jewish students since 1928-1929.³⁹ But Jews were still a force in higher education: the 1931 elections to the

Kaunas University student assembly brought twelve representatives from the *ateitininkai*, the influential Catholic group, while the Jews elected nine students from two slates, and the Communist front group elected two persons, one of whom was Jewish.⁴⁰

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

Despite tensions, there were factors encouraging Jews and Lithuanians to adopt a real, if limited, *modus vivendi*. Lithuania's conflict with Poland over Vilnius nudged the country's

Jewish leadership towards a pro-Lithuanian political stance, much to the annoyance of nationalist Poles. As one Jewish leader explained, the Polish demand for, at the very least, “neutral” Jewish behavior on the issue would be a “sellout of our [Lithuanian] fatherland.”⁴⁴ Even more important in the long term, a number of educated younger Jews gravitated toward a Lithuanian cultural orientation. The first Lithuanian-language Jewish secondary school was opened in Kaunas. Jewish scholars published articles in the Lithuanian press concerning such cultural and historical issues as “Lithuanian influences on the Jews.”⁴⁵ On 20 August 1929 the Lithuanian nationalist daily *Lietuvos Aidas* remarked:

A few years ago it was difficult to find a Jew who could speak fine Lithuanian and was acquainted with Lithuanian literature, but now we can see among the Jews young philologists who easily compete with young Lithuanian linguists. This is a sign that the Lithuanian Jews will go in the same direction as the Jews of other civilized countries, contributing their part to the cultural treasures of those nations in whose states they live.⁴⁶

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

Unfortunately, the gradual reorientation of Lithuanian Jews towards the dominant Lithuanian cultural paradigm and the Republic's official tolerance collided with an exclusionary nationalism, already evident in the 1923 student attack on the country's multilingual heritage, which progressively invaded all areas of public life, even sports. Questions arose about the participation of Jews in the World Lithuanian Olympics to be held in Kaunas in early 1938.⁵⁰ Initially, Kaunas's *Yiddishe Shtime* quoted reliable sources that all athletes from Lithuania, regardless of nationality and religion, could participate in the event, while only ethnic Lithuanians would be included in the diaspora teams.⁵¹ However, soon afterward, the director of the Kaunas's Physical Education Center told *Folksblat* that the National Olympiad was open only to ethnic Lithuanians, although the national team that would participate in the 1940 Olympics would be chosen without regard to ethnicity.⁵²

Even before the late 1930s Lithuania saw its share of anti-Semitic agitation and violent outbreaks. A typical incident occurred in November 1931 in a small town near Kaunas, when “three hooligans began to smash Jewish windows and tried to beat a Jewish woman.” Detained were: “the chief of the post office, his assistant and a representative of the Singer Co. in Kaunas.” The matter was turned over to the Trakai district chief.⁵³ Sometimes, the authorities were not sure whether to adopt a “hard” or “soft” attitude towards the culprits. In October 1931 the state prosecutor demanded the “severest punishment” for four youths who had vandalized a Jewish cemetery in Klaipėda, arguing that the mandated three-year term was too lenient. But the judge sentenced one of the men to six months, while the others received five. After announcing the verdict, the chief judge noted that the press had “blown up” the incident. “The court,” he concluded, “looks at this crime as the thoughtless work of drunken kids.”⁵⁴

Localized attacks on Jews and clashes between Lithuanian and Jewish university students grew more frequent after the mid-1930s. The Telšiai military commandant punished eighteen

anti-Jewish “troublemakers” in the month of October 1935.⁵⁵ Rural disturbances were occasioned by alleged “kidnapings” of Gentile children for blood rituals, all eventually proven false.

The Struggle Over Anti-Semitism

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

A program of “humane” anti-Semitism was proposed:

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

The Wolves urged support for Lithuanian businesses in order to “shake off Jewish mediation and Jewish exploitation.”⁵⁷

While the Judeo-Bolshevik canard became a staple after 1940, it appeared much earlier in milder form. In 1929 the writer Povilas Jakubėnas warned that the country’s Yiddish-language schools, in contrast to the conservative-religious and national-Hebrew institutions, had become breeding grounds for young Marxists, “opening the door to internationalist and nihilist” theories.

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

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

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

On the night of 1 August 1929, during the so-called “Red Days” organized annually by leftists, a group of policemen and security officials had carried out an “action” against the Communists. The criminal police initially reported the incidents as a disturbance involving “a few Jewish fellows who had tried to organize a protest against militarism,” which failed when “the police rounded them up with the help of workers, detaining 81 persons, 16 women and 65 men: 76 Jews and five Catholics.”⁶⁰ But as the anti-Semitic character of the disorders became

public, the Riflemen's Union (Lith. *Šaulių Sąjunga*) denied involvement, publishing a condemnation of anti-Semitism and pointing out that the Union included Jewish members.⁶¹ Voldemaras promised an investigation.⁶² Subsequent court proceedings revealed the unsavory details. Groups of men, some in civilian dress and others in *šauliai* uniforms, armed with revolvers, rifles and clubs, had detained passers-by. As the court noted, the victims were “exclusively citizens of Jewish nationality,” who were beaten with fists and humiliated through compulsory “calisthenics.” The judges concluded that the “reason for the excesses were that the hooligans had for a long time been full of hatred for the Jewish nationality, since [according to them], among the Jews there are many Communists, [and they believed] that at least 95% of Lithuania's Communists are Jews.” One of the victims avoided a beating when the pogromists found an issue of the “patriotic newspaper,” *Lietuvos aidas*, in the man's pocket.⁶³ The court classified twelve of the accused as “participants,” while a policeman at the local precinct was sentenced for failing to protect the victims. A civil case for damages brought by some of the aggrieved Jews was dismissed.⁶⁴ Prosecutor Matas Krygeris demanded harsher sentences, but the court forwarded the case to the Highest Tribunal.⁶⁵ In his report to Smetona and in the order of the day, the interior minister announced the dismissal of a number of policemen and reprimanded Kaunas authorities for their irresolute response to the incident.⁶⁶

On 20 August 1929 *Lietuvos aidas* published a denunciation of the “Slabada excesses” singling out the culprits as “yahoo patriots, super patriots and chauvinists.” While the daily regretted that some Jews of the older generation “still cannot get accustomed to the idea of an independent Lithuania,” it also stressed the fact that the younger generation of Jews had shown loyalty to their country: “This means that Lithuanian Jews will also have to become good patriots of their country. But this depends partly on Lithuanian patriots as well, who must return the Jews' trust with their own.” In view of the fact that the summer of 1929 had also witnessed

similar attacks on “Polish-speaking citizens,”⁶⁷ the paper stressed that violence against any non-Lithuanian citizen deserved the “greatest condemnation.”⁶⁸ The Jewish establishment also wished to bury the incident. I. Serebravičius, a prominent Jewish leader, warned Lithuanian Jews that “foreign interests” were blowing up a local disturbance into a “pogrom” and questioned the wisdom of hiring foreign attorneys to file law-suits, as this would only aid “Lithuania's enemies.”⁶⁹

Public criticism of anti-Semitism grew more vociferous in reaction to the deadly 1931 pogroms in Vilnius, the outrage enhanced by the political opportunity to excoriate the “Polish occupation” of the Vilnius region. The daily *Lietuvos žinios* moralized: “A cultured person is always disgusted by the excesses of zoological nationalism and racism... Similar pogroms can never take place if the government is determined not to allow them.”⁷⁰ On 15 November 1931 the Jews of Kaunas petitioned the government “to intervene and take steps to ensure the lives of our brothers in Lithuanian Vilnius, the Jerusalem of Lithuania.”⁷¹ Four days later, a large demonstration was organized by the Jewish-Lithuanian Association for Cultural Cooperation featuring prominent Lithuanian and Jewish speakers, the proceedings broadcast nationwide. Former foreign minister Juozas Purickis maintained that “until now Lithuanians had not been soiled with the blood of Jews,” while Mykolas Biržiška, a literary scholar and long-time proponent of Jewish-Lithuanian cooperation, invited people “to be vigilant that [our] beautiful toleration should never change in the future, and that our own instincts should not degenerate.” The Jewish leader Rubinšteinas charged that “the Poles have brought the pogrom tradition to Vilnius.” The resolution adopted at the meeting emphasized the Vilnius issue and had a distinctly anti-Polish tone.⁷² On 20 November 1931 the Presidium of the Central Committee of the Lithuanian Volunteers’ Union, not known for liberal attitudes, issued a statement reminding the readers of the 1919 Easter pogroms in Vilnius, and expressed sympathy for the victims:

“...once again the cries of the Jews and the terrible suffering of the wounded have resonated within the walls of our [true] capital.”⁷³

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

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

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

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

The European, an allegedly cultured person, has placed the heavy hand of slavery on people of a different color, destroyed the patriarchal structure of the New World, turning the free nations found there into blind instruments of labor... The essence of the pogrom is the attack on unarmed peaceful people, often old people, women and children. If you put yourself in their shoes, what are they to do? They cannot become people of another nationality... they are also human beings, they have an equal right to be protected by the state from violence and destruction... Just as the slave trade, so the pogroms, no matter what slogans they utilize, are and remain the greatest shame of the civilized world...

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

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

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

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

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

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

this case, the rabbis stood shoulder-to-shoulder with the State Security Department which in January 1934 urged strict vigilance against both anti-Semitic agitation and Communist influence among the Jews.⁸²

Years of Crisis: From the Late 1930s to 1940

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

The increased respectability of anti-Semitism was grounded in older anti-Judaic prejudices but, more important, it was an outgrowth of the general fascination with fascism and radical ethnic nationalism amongst certain intellectual circles characteristic of the later 1930s. As a matter of principle, the Catholic hierarchy condemned racism and violence against minorities, while, at the same time, propagating stereotypes of secularized, Communist and commercially clever Jews as harmful to the Christian community. In 1937 one of the more intellectual clerics, Rev. Stasys Yla, published a tract expounding on the reasons for the Jews' dangerous attraction to Communism. But Yla admitted the importance of the Communist stance against ethnic discrimination as an incentive for Jews to join the Party and, as a solution, proposed a Western-style, civically progressive attitude towards minorities, including a patient policy of

attracting them to Lithuanian language and culture, while maintaining a tolerant official multi-culturalism.⁸⁵ A prominent Catholic philosopher of the younger generation proceeded in a more radical direction, belittling bourgeois decadence and proposing an exclusive “organic state” in which non-Lithuanians would be “guests” rather than citizens.⁸⁶ While the most strident anti-Semitic voices were hushed by the censorship, some academic publications and articles in the popular press propagated an exclusive nationalism whose counterpoint was a negative image of Jews.⁸⁷ In January 1939 a prominent young historian, Zenonas Ivinskis, described to a student gathering the Führer’s “decisive rule” in Germany and lauded Austria’s post-*Anschluss* racial laws for “liberating the country from one parasitic minority...a positive aspect of racism.”⁸⁸ In the spring of 1940 Nationalists in Šiauliai petitioned the government to “solve” the Jewish question by establishing a “reservation” for Jews.⁸⁹ During 1938-1939 the anti-Smetona opposition briefly coalesced into the Lithuanian Activist Movement (*Lietuvių aktyvistų sąjunga*) which sought German assistance and openly proclaimed Jews and Poles as the nation’s enemies. But even so, Lithuanian anti-Semitism paled in comparison with the more radical variants of the disease in Germany and Romania. The leader of the Klaipėda Nazis, Ernst Neumann, felt that the LAS “activists” had not yet adopted a genuine anti-Semitic program: according to him, the Lithuanian radicals were “too democratic and too gentle in their behavior regarding the Jews.”⁹⁰

European universities provided a breeding ground for anti-Semitic and radical nationalist excesses, stimulated by the domestic and international crises of the late 1930s. In March 1938 there were disturbances at the University of Kaunas, including attacks on Jewish students. Professors who tried to calm the malcontents were publicly ridiculed; some students even posted a copy of the Nazis’ anti-Semitic periodical, *Der Stürmer*, as a provocation. The University Senate condemned the incitement, while the rector, prof. Mykolas Römeris, told the press that the “hooligan-like and uncultured outbreaks against the Jewish students were for me entirely

unexpected,” vowing to punish the troublemakers. The Jewish *Apžvalga* worried that, while the conservative *Lietuvos aidas* had named “leftist and Jewish” provocations as a cause of the troubles, only the more liberal *Lietuvos žinios* had underscored the “racist nature” of the disturbances.⁹¹ In November 1939 the new rector, Stasys Šalkauskis, also condemned the students’ raucous behavior: “The complex and convoluted problem of the Jews is a true test of our social and moral development.” He cautioned that “the wave of anti-Semitism that has inundated the whole world during recent years has found a certain resonance among us as well,” affecting in particular “the poorly developed part of society.” The rector qualified his remarks by stating, in rather muddled prose, that he did not “consider the Jewish nation either ideal nor unable to be accommodating to those among whom it must live,” but he sharply criticized violence and refused to consider demands for segregating the university. Šalkauskis stressed that “aggressive anti-Semitism” was harmful, as shown by the experience of “a large state which has paid dearly for hatred and cruelty to Jews.”⁹² By 1939, the Jewish press had become increasingly concerned by proposals from some quarters that the resort town of Palanga establish a separate beach for Jews and student demands for “separate benches” for Jews at the university.⁹³ The latter practice, which had been introduced in Polish-ruled Vilnius, had been roundly condemned as an example of Polish bigotry during the “pro-Jewish” propaganda campaign of 1931-1932.

Ethnic animosities were exacerbated by political, social and economic tensions, such as the crisis that accompanied the Nazi seizure of Klaipėda in March 1939. On 26 April 1939 agitators appeared among Lithuanian refugees who had fled the seaport and been housed in school buildings, urging the exiles to demonstrate “because the Jewish [exiles] have occupied most of the apartments, while the Lithuanian refugees have to live in schools.” In this case no demonstration occurred because, as the police reported, “the [Lithuanian] refugees did not approve the [proposed] action.”⁹⁴

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

A thorough investigation of the incident was conducted by a ranking official of the security police who not only reported the details to the Director of State Security but also commented on the causes of the unrest, noting that "in the Leipalingis area a distinct anti-Semitic attitude, created by general social, ethnic and local factors, is dominant." The report identified economic competition as the main culprit: a local Lithuanian cooperative had been established and had successfully competed with Jewish retailers. Arguments arose when the new firm failed to obtain a truck to enable local Lithuanian farmers to transport the cooperative's animals. Some farmers then accused the Jews of sabotaging attempts to obtain the transport; passions rose to the point that the local coop leaders were accused of being "pro-Jewish" when they agreed to rent a "Jewish" lorry. In the meantime, the local *šauliai* had put together an anti-Semitic play,

provoking a warning from the national Riflemen's Union office to desist. In the deteriorating climate of communal tensions, Jews were accused of roughing up Lithuanians (one case had come before the courts), encouraging beliefs that Lithuanians were being "provoked." The local rumoring had a tragicomic element. One of the final comments in the police report revealed the troubled mood and inflammable delusions circulating among the people of Leipalingis:

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

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

Interior Minister Skučas had no patience with the disturbances. "In connection with the recent outbreaks against Jewish citizens in several provincial towns inspired by irresponsible elements," he announced, it was the responsibility of not only the government but of "broad segments of the Lithuanian nation and conscientious members of the intelligentsia" to oppose such behavior. The minister cited the influence of "foreign winds," an obvious reference to the German example, which he promised to curb. The Lithuanian disturbances, he concluded, were "reflecting" the anti-Semitism of other countries, and he warned the press to avoid "inciting

passions.” *Apžvalga* praised both the local police and national authorities for their energetic response to the disorders.⁹⁶

While Skučas was, perhaps, the most vigorous of the official voices arrayed against anti-Semitism, he was by no means alone. The Jewish press gave prominence to the President’s speech of 5 January 1938 in which he emphasized that in order for the Nationalist ideal to remain alive, it should include “a basis in universal human values.” Smetona warned his audience that “narrow nationalism would impoverish” the Nationalist idea, pointing out that “wherever [this idea] degenerates...where the leading people are blindly in love with themselves and their own, there the national ideal cannot be pure and beautiful.” The President also hopefully maintained that “in our country we do not have such anti-Semitism as in other states.”⁹⁷ Soon after Smetona’s statement the mayor of Panevėžys and the President’s brother-in-law, Tadas Chodakauskas, told a meeting of the Lithuanian Jewish Soldiers’ Association that “You [Jews] will always live here as equal and free citizens, because you share joys and sorrows with us, the Lithuanians.”⁹⁸ Smetona’s opposition to anti-Semitism had a political calculation as well as a moral message: concern for Lithuania’s international reputation and the perception of Jews as useful allies, especially against the Poles, played a part. On the other hand, while denunciations of anti-Semitism emanated from official Lithuania, not all of the regime’s officials proved immune from placating the increasingly anti-Jewish popular mood. In 1938 security chief Augustinas Povilaitis failed to persuade the interior minister to close *Apžvalga* and its publisher, the Association of Jewish Soldiers of the Independence Wars, for divisive “incitement,” that is, the paper’s attacks against Lithuanian anti-Semites.⁹⁹

The mutual defense pact with the USSR provoked new fissures in the country’s ethnic and social fabric. On 11-12 October a mostly Jewish unruly pro-Soviet leftist demonstration erupted outside the Soviet mission in Kaunas and led to clashes with police and anti-Communist

bystanders.¹⁰⁰ The incident intensified anti-Semitic political rhetoric and further identified Jews with Bolshevism in public opinion. Skučas once again exerted his moderating influence, announcing that “the excesses of certain Jewish young people cannot be allowed to harm and disturb good Lithuanian-Jewish mutual relations,” reminding Lithuanians that Jewish society as a whole was not always able to control the troublemakers. *Lietuvos žinios* issued an editorial opposing racism and ethnic incitement, but the Catholic daily *XX Amžius* demanded that Jewish society “discipline its own.” *Yidische Shtime* retorted that it was time for some people to understand that Jews were not a “homogenous nation” and thus should not be held collectively responsible for the actions of the demonstrators.¹⁰¹

Even the restoration of Lithuania’s ancient capital, the only unambiguously positive element in the Soviet-Lithuanian mutual assistance pact, produced serious inter-ethnic strains. On 31 October, within 72 hours of the arrival of Lithuanian troops, serious disorders broke out in Vilnius. The unfavorable exchange rate announced for the Polish *zloty*, which was to be withdrawn from circulation, sparked a rapid inflation amidst rumors that Jews were hoarding flour. Chaotic protests against the “Lithuanian occupation” among Poles and disorderly, largely Jewish, pro-Soviet gatherings ensued. Clashes with the newly arrived Lithuanian police and military, as well as violent confrontations between Poles and Jews, quickly developed an anti-Semitic character as pogroms also erupted in several other towns in the region. Many stores were demolished and scores of people were wounded. The outnumbered Lithuanian forces did not always succeed in controlling the mobs, but eventually, reinforcements of mounted police, additional reserve constabulary units and Red Army soldiers managed to quell most of the unrest within a few days: sixty-six rioters, among whom the police listed forty-four Poles and twenty Jews, were arrested.¹⁰² The initially tepid police response to the rioting convinced some Jews that the Lithuanians had inspired the pogroms, a myth propagated by the Communist underground

which had encouraged the pro-Soviet manifestations. (Unfortunately, this version has been accepted by a number of authors.)¹⁰³ In any case, it made little sense for the Lithuanian authorities to antagonize the Jewish populace whom they hoped to court as a counterweight to Polish hostility.¹⁰⁴ Nor is there much to the idea that Soviet tanks had been called out to “protect the Jews” against fascist pogromists. The Soviet action was directed against the Polish resistance movement, in the spirit of the September 1939 secret Soviet-German protocols, which had mandated a joint Nazi-Stalinist suppression of “Polish agitation.” Moscow’s ambassador to Kaunas, Vladimir Pozdniakov, repeatedly criticized the Lithuanian government’s policy towards the Vilnius Poles as “overly sentimental and too gentle,” publicly intimating that if the Lithuanians did not show sufficient resolution in combating “acts of [Polish] diversion and aggression,” the Soviets would provide the muscle.¹⁰⁵

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

The burial of constable Ignas Blažys on 14 May led to further violence. The funeral entourage eventually grew into a crowd of some 15,000 angry Lithuanians, many of whom wandered through the streets of Vilnius, attacking Poles and Polish property. By evening the mounted police suppressed the disturbances, arresting 56 persons, the majority Lithuanian youths. In a telling comment on ethnic politics in Vilnius, the police report noted that, recalling their past mistreatment under Polish rule, “some Jews expressed satisfaction that the Poles had suffered on this day.”¹⁰⁸

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

In view of the uncertain and dangerous mood within the country, Jewish circles responded to official Lithuania’s reassurances with public declarations of loyalty and reminders of the state’s multi-cultural reality. In the 1940 Independence Day greeting to the nation the soldiers’ association chose its words carefully: “The Association of Jewish soldiers, who have participated

in the restoration of Lithuania's independence, greet the nation of Lithuania (Lith. *Lietuvos tauta*) and the entire Lithuanian society."¹¹¹ In May 1940 the veterans assembled in Vilnius where prominent leaders of the country's Jewish community, despite indications to the contrary, affirmed generally good Jewish-Lithuanian relations and urged avoidance of "misunderstandings." Captain Bregšteinis, the new chairman of the association, proudly reminded the audience of the thousands of Jewish soldiers who had fought in the wars of independence during 1918-1920.¹¹² The participants could not have foreseen the radical, indeed deadly, deterioration in Lithuanian-Jewish relations that would arise as a result of the Soviet invasion only a month away.

The immediate aftermath of the Soviet invasion of 15 June 1940 provides an ironic postscript to the final years of independence, the contradictory period of Jewish-Lithuanian relations. Smetona, the former friend of the Jews, who had "escaped like the greatest coward," was now vilified as an anti-Semite. In the new "People's Lithuania," General Skučas, who had suppressed anti-Semitic disturbances and called society to heel, and the state security chief Povilaitis, who had chronicled the deeds of the culprits, became overnight "fascists." The instantly Sovietized *Apžvalga*, once the oracle of Jewish Lithuanian patriotism, suggested that "the provocateurs from Kaunas had contributed to the anti-Jewish excesses which had occurred when Lithuania took Vilnius." Parroting the new line, the paper trumpeted that a veritable St. Bartholomew's Night for the Jews had been prevented only by "the healthy instincts of Lithuania's masses." The Jewish Soldiers' Association asserted that the organization's work had been hindered in various ways. Meanwhile, the new Health Minister, Leonas Kaganas, claimed discrimination against Jewish doctors in Lithuania.¹¹³

The reality, of course, was that the interwar conservative dictatorship had shielded Jews from the worst of popular anti-Semitism. The allegedly "fascist" dictator had not only protected

the country against the most egregious political extremes of left and right, but had, by and large, contained anti-Semitic violence, allowed cultural diversity, condemned Nazi racism and rejected official discrimination. By contrast, the new “people’s power,” with its shrill proclamations of the brotherhood of all nations, succeeded only in raising political repression, state violence and ethnic animosity to levels that the restive subjects of Antanas Smetona could scarcely have imagined.

In Perspective: Jews and Lithuanians in the First Republic

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

Some general conclusions, however, can be proffered. The years of independence were not a period of systemic persecution for Lithuania’s Jewish community. Important factors mitigated anti-Semitic tendencies, especially before the international and domestic crises of 1938-1940. During its two decades of existence, the First Republic passed not a single anti-Semitic statute and continued to subsidize Jewish religious and cultural life.¹¹⁵ The animosity of many Lithuanians towards Nazi Germany, stemming largely from the conflict over Klaipėda, limited the inroads of anti-Semitic propaganda. Jews themselves often compared their lot favorably to that of their kinsmen in other countries, most notably, Poland. Even in the later 1930s, racial anti-Semitism found a response among only a part of the Lithuanian public; it failed to attract the necessary critical mass to support a “solution” of the “Jewish problem.”¹¹⁶

Ethnic disturbances in Lithuania were relatively infrequent and localized. There is no record, as of this writing, of anyone having been killed in an anti-Semitic pogrom during the period (1920-1938) when the government was in effective control of the country—an obvious contrast to the hundreds of publicly celebrated racial lynchings in the United States.¹¹⁷ Local authorities and police normally took action against anti-Semitic outbursts when they did occur.¹¹⁸ University and government authorities, as well as the older generation of the intelligentsia and some elements in the Church, condemned riotous behavior as inconsistent with what they described as civilized and Christian norms. A number of leaders, including conservative and clerical circles, criticized racial ideology.¹¹⁹ Lithuania also lacked a violence-prone anti-Semitic mass organization like Romania's Iron Guard. It was thus distinct from those European states which, like Germany, Hungary and Romania, either restricted Jews through legislation or tolerated violence against Jews. While manifestations of anti-Semitism were a serious domestic problem between the wars, independent Lithuania was not an anti-Semitic state. Although in early 1938 proposals regarding a new, more authoritarian constitution evoked concerns because of the document's lack of specific guarantees for minorities, this did not result in anti-Semitic legislation.¹²⁰

Furthermore, the clashes over control of the economy and cultural orientation should not obscure some positive, albeit tenuous, developments in the life of Lithuania's Jewish community. Some Jews even took up traditionally "Lithuanian" political issues: in 1933 the first Jewish chapter of the Union for the Liberation of Vilnius was established in Mažeikiai. There were few Jews in government and the officer corps, particularly after the Nationalist takeover, but a number of prominent Jewish journalists and academicians left their mark on Lithuanian public life.¹²¹ In contrast to the period when the nation was overrun by foreign armies, responsible leadership proved capable of checking the worst excesses even as the First Republic underwent rapid social

and economic change. It may be true, as a recent comprehensive study of Lithuanian anti-Semitism concludes, that the pious strictures of government, Church and academia achieved limited success in stemming historically ingrained anti-Semitic attitudes among the people, especially the rural masses.¹²² On the other hand, one should not minimize the significance of independent Lithuania's legal and political structure which provided a basic guarantee for the country's minorities and, when necessary, a physical barrier of police force against base nativist instincts. Invasion and war would sweep away this structure with fatal consequences for Lithuania's Jews as well as much of the population at large. This development reflected the general course of Lithuanian history: The country's minorities, like the ethnic Lithuanians themselves, invariably suffered most during periods of foreign rule. The intricate web of Jewish-Lithuanian relations, woven over the centuries, was only one of many problems that confronted the Lithuanian state between the wars. Like so many other developments, the process of Jewish reorientation toward Lithuanian culture that had gathered some momentum after the Great War was not allowed to follow its course.

Endnotes

1. See Zygmunt Bauman, *Modernity and the Holocaust* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1992), 35-37.

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

3. See Ignas Končius, *Žemaičio šnekos* (Vilnius: Vaga, 1996), 63. I am grateful to Prof. Vygandas Vareikis of the University of Klaipėda for pointing me to Končius's work. Cf. Saulius Sužiedėlis, *The Lithuanian Peasantry of Trans-Niemen Lithuania, 1807-1864: A Study of Social, Economic and Cultural Change* (Unpubl. Diss. University of Kansas, 1977), 332-348; also my "Užnemunų miestų ir miestelių socialėkonominių problemos XIX amžiaus pirmojoje pusėje (iki 1864 m. reformos)," in *Lituanistikos instituto 1977 metų suvažiavimo darbai* (Chicago: Lituanistikos institutas, 1979), 93-105. Some further discussion of popular anti-Semitism from a cultural and literary perspective is in Vytautas Kavolis, *Sąmoningumo trajektorijos: lietuvių kultūros modernizavimo aspektai* (Chicago: Am & M publications, 1986).

4. Augustinas Janulaitis, *Žydai Lietuvoje: bruožai iš Lietuvos visuomenės istorijos XIV-XIX amž* (Kaunas: Author, 1923). A good overall historical survey of Lithuania's Jews and

Jewish-Lithuanian relations is Solomonas Atamukas, *Lietuvos žydų kelias nuo XIV amžiaus iki XX a. pabaigos* (Vilnius: alma littera, 1998).

5. Atamukas, 60-61.

6. See Jonas Boruta, “Katalikų bažnyčia ir lietuvių-žydų santykiai XIX-XX a.,” in Vacys Milius, ed., *Lietuvių Katalikų Mokslo Akademija. Metraštis*, Vol. XIV (Vilnius: Katalikų akademija, 1999), 1-23; cf. Vyantas Vareikis, “Tarp Valančiaus ir Kudirkos: žydų ir lietuvių santykiai katalikiškosios kultūros kontekste,” in *Ibid.*, 81-82; see also Vytautas Merkys, *Motiejus Valančius. Tarp katalikiškojo universalizmo ir tautiškumo* (Vilnius, 1999).

7. Genovaitis Gustaitis, “Vyskupas Jurgis Matulaitis ir žydai Vilniaus vyskupijoje 1918-1925,” in *Lietuvių Katalikų Mokslo Akademija. Metraštis*, XIV, 105-113 ; See Jurgis Matulaitis, *Užrašai* . Ed. Paulius Subačius. Intro. Vaclovas Aliulis [Institutum Historicum Marianorum, Fontes Historiae Marianorum] (Vilnius: Aidai, 1998), 199-200.

8. *Auszra*, 6 (1885), 168-169.

9.

Cited in Steponas. Kairys, *Lietuva budo* (New York: Amerikos lietuvių socialdemokratų sąjungos literatūros fondas, 1957), 238-40, as published in *Varpas*, 8 (1891).

10. From “Tėvynės Varpai” in *Varpas*, 10 (1890) as quoted in Vincas Kudirka, *Raštai*, Vol. II (Vilnius, 1990), 457.

11. See historian Augustinas Janulaitis's, *Žydai Lietuvoje: bruožai iš Lietuvos visuomeninės istorijos XIV-XIX amž.* (Kaunas: Autorius, 1923) and his *1863-1864 m. sukilimas Lietuvoje* (Kaunas: Krašto apsaugos ministerijos leidinys, 1923).

12. See Darius Staliūnas, “Rinkimai ♥ Rusijos Dėmą Lietuvoje,” in *Lietuvos Istorijos Metraštis 1992* (Vilnius: Mokslo ir enciklopedijų leidykla, 1993), 45-66.

13. Two examples are quoted in Azriel Shohat, “The Beginnings of Anti-Semitism in Independent Lithuania,” in *Yad Vashem Studies*, II (1958), 38.

14. The quote and citations from the press are in Nerijus Udrėnas, “Lithuanian-Jewish Electoral Cooperation,” unpubl. manuscript in the author’s possession.

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

16. Shohat, 9-11.

17. LCVA, F. 1437, Ap. 100, l. 1-2, 28-33.

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

19. See the editorial statements in *Unser Tag*, 15 October and 24 October 1920 as quoted by the Press Department of Lithuania's Ministry of Jewish Affairs, in Lietuvos Valstybės Archyvas [henceforth -- LCVA], F. 1437, Ap. 1, b.100, "Žydų reikalai," l. 18-19.

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

21. On the role of the Christian Democrats see Raimundas Valkauskas, "Žydų tautinės autonomijos klausimas Lietuvoje," in *Lietuvos istorijos studijos* (1996, No.3), 64-71.

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

23. See Atamukas, 116 ff.; Zenonas Ivinskis, "Lietuva ir žydai istorijos šviesoje," *Aidai*, No. 1 (1972), 24-27; cf. Shohat, "The Beginnings of Anti-Semitism," 7-48 and Samuel Gringauz, "Jewish National Autonomy in Lithuania," in *Jewish Social Studies*, Vol. 14 (1952), 225 ff and the more recent Paul Radensky, "Žydų reikalų ministerija ir žydų tautinė atonomija Lietuvoje 1919-1923 metais," in *Lietuvos Istorijos Metraštis* (1995), 84-97; Valkauskas, "Žydų tautinės autonomijos klausimas," 57-74. Also see "Lithuania," in *Encyclopedia Judaica*, Vol. 11, 375-386; cf. "Žydai," in *Lietuvių enciklopedija*, Vol. 35 (Boston, 1966), 288-295.

24. Vladas Mironas, "Tikybos Nepriklausomoje Lietuvoje," in *Pirmasis Nepriklausomas Lietuvos dešimtmetis*, 390.

25. LCVA, F. 1557, ap. 1, b. 208, l. 1-2.

26. *Encyclopedia Judaica*, Vol. 11, 375; Alfonsas Eidintas, "The Emigration Policy of the Tautininkai Regime in Lithuania, 1926-1940," *JBS*, 16:1 (Spring, 1986), 65-66; *Lietuvos statistikos metraštis 1938*, 55; cf. the detailed breakdown of emigration statistics in Atamukas, 147.

27. The most useful figures are in Atamukas, 132-141; also see *Veršlas*, 21 September 1938, which employs figures abstracted from a more detailed study by Albertas Tarulis, "Die Juden im Wirtschaftsleben Litauens," first published in the March 1938 issue of *Osteuropa*; cf. *Encyclopedia Judaica*, Vol. 11, 375 and Ivinskis, 26.

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

29. *Veršlas*, 17 March 1932.

30. *Veršlas*, 31 March 1932.

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

32.

Veršlas, 31 March 31 and 14 April 1932.

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

-
34. *Veršlas*, 6 February 1936.
 35. *Veršlas*, 16 December 1938.
 36. LCVA, F. 378, ap. 3, b. 1632.
 37. LCVA, F. 378, Ap. 4, b. 240, l. 1, 29.
 38. *Ibid.*, l. 33.
 39. Royal Institute of International Affairs, *The Baltic States* (London: Oxford University Press, 1938), 31.
 - 40.17. *Aušra*, 24 November 1931.
 41. *Atamukas*, 131-132.
 42. Antanas Smetona, *Pasakyta parašyta 1935-1940*, II (Boston: Lithuanian Encyclopedia Press, 1974), 34; cf. *Veršlas*, 19 May 1932. On relations between Smetona and the Jews see Liudas Truska, *Antanas Smetona ir jo laikai* (Vilnius: Valstybinis leidybos centras, 1996), 296-305.
 43. As reported with commentary from accounts in the Jewish press by *Veršlas*, 4 November 1937.
 44. Taken from *Unser Tag* as reprinted in LCVA, F. 1437, Ap. 1, b. 100, l. 20.
 45. See the polemics between J. Livšinas and P. Lemchenas serialized in *Lietuvos aidas*, 2 August, 9 August and 27 August 1929.
 46. *Lietuvos aidas*, 20 August 1929.
 47. *Lietuvos žinios*, 5 August 1932.
 48. *Lietuvos žinios*, 26 August 1932.
 49. *Lietuvos žinios*, 10 August 1932.
 50. *Apžvalga*, 2 January 1938.
 51. *Apžvalga*, 9 January 1938.
 52. *Apžvalga*, 23 January 1938.
 53. *Lietuvos žinios*, 28 November 1931.
 54. “Nubaudė Klaipėdos žydų kapinių išniekintojus,” *Lietuvos aidas*, 3 October 1931.
 55. A good brief but comprehensive overview of the situation of the mid-1930s is in *Atamukas*, 144-146.
 56. LCVA, F. 563, Ap. 1, b. 1, l. 18-21, 44-45.

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

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

59. *Lietuvos aidas*, “Smėgis žydė tautai,” 3 September 1929.

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

61.

“Ar šauliai yra antisemitai?,” in *Trimitas*, 29 September 1929.

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

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

64. *Lietuvos žinios*, 7 July 1932.

65. *Lietuvos žinios*, 27 July 1932.

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

67.

Ibid., l. 3.

68. “Bėkime tikri patriotai,” *Lietuvos aidas*, 20 August 1929.

69. *Lietuvos aidas*, “♦ Lietuvos žydė visuomenė,” 9 September 1929.

70. *Lietuvos žinios*, “Dėl žydė studentė pogromo Vilniuje,” 18 November 1931.

71. *Lietuvos aidas*, 16 November 1931.

72. *Lietuvos aidas*, 20 November 1931.

73. *Lietuvos aidas*, 21 November 1931.

74. *Lietuvos aidas*, 14 November 1931.

75. *Aušra*, “Žydė pogromai,” 17 November 1931.

76.

See Smetona’s speech in *Veršlas*, 10 and 17 January 1935.

77. Valentinas Gustainis, “Hitlerio užsienio politika,” *Vairas*, No. 4 (1933), 433. An interesting discussion on Smetona’s reaction to Gustainis’ article, which the President termed a “hair-raising” alarm, is in the journalist’s memoir, *Nuo Griškabėdžio iki Paryžiaus* (Kaunas: Spindulys, 1991), 126-135.

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

79. Ibid., l. 4.

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

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

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

83. Vytautas Alantas, “Aktualieji paplėdimu klausimai,” in *Lietuvos aidas*, 26 August 1938.

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

85. See Juozas Daulius [Stasys Yla], *Komunizmas Lietuvoje* (Kaunas: Šviesa, 1937), 198-201, 232-235. Cf. other examples in Vygantas Vareikis, “Holokausto prielaidos. Antisemitizmas Lietovje XIX a. - XX a. pirma pusė (iki 1940 06 15),” 19-24. Report to the International Commission for the Evaluation of the Crimes of the Nazi and Soviet Occupation Regimes in Lithuania, 2001. Published in English on the Commission’s web site: <www.komisija.lt>

86. As described and quoted by Leonidas Donskis, “Antanas Maceina,” in *Akiračiai*, 4 (April, 1997), 7.

87. An excellent brief overview of the contradictory rhetoric and ideology of the new Lithuanian anti-Semitism is in Vareikis, “Holokausto prielaidos,” 21-23.

88.

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

89. Truska, *Antanas Smetona*, 299.

90. Quoted in Gediminas Rudis, “Jungtinis antisemitizmo opozicijos sąjūdis,” in *Lietuvos istorijos metraštis 1996* (Vilnius: Lietuvos istorijos institutas, 1997), 185-215; cf. LCVA, F. 378, Ap. 13, b. 101, l. 1, Report of 28 January, 1939; also the police report of 18 January, 1939 in F. 378, Ap. 10, b. 186, l. 159b.

91. *Apžvalga*, 6 March 1938.

92. *Apžvalga*, 3 November 1939.

93. *Apžvalga*, 10 November 1939.

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

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

96. *Apžvalga*, 2 July 1939.

97. *Apžvalga*, 16 January 1938.

98. *Apžvalga*, 23 January 1938.

99. Vygantas Vareikis, “Holokausto prielaidos,” 20.

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

101.

Apžvalga, 22 October 1939.

102. A detailed account of the complex series of events is in the State Security Department account of 2 November 1939 in LCVA, F. 378, Ap. 10, b. 187, l. 349 ff. It is likely that the rumors concerning Lithuanian “instigation” of the pogroms arose from the police and army’s dispersal of pro-Soviet and anti-Lithuanian demonstrators among whom were many Jews at the same time as Polish rioters had begun attacking Jews and Jewish properties. The latter were also dispersed by the Lithuanian authorities. Cf. Piotr Łossowski, *Litwa a sprawy polskie 1939-1940* (Warsaw: PWN), 1982, 65-66; Regina Žepkaitė, *Vilniaus istorijos atkarpa 1939-1940* (Vilnius: Mokslas, 1990), 66-69.

103. Two examples of many are, Knut Stang, *Kollaboration und Massenmord: Die litauische Hilfspolizei, das Rollkommando Hamann und die Ermordung der litauischen Juden* (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 1996), 77; and Dov Levin, “Lithuania,” in David Wyman, ed., *The World Reacts to the Holocaust* (Johns Hopkins: Baltimore, 1996), 329.

104. Šarūnas Liekis, “The Transfer of Vilna District into Lithuania, 1939,” in *Polin. Studies in Polish Jewry: Vol. 14: Focusing on Jews in the Polish Borderlands* (Oxford: Littman Library of Jewish Civilization, 2001), 213.

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

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

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

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

109. Quote is in Sulik to Sosnkowski, March 17, 1940, *AK*, 177; cf. Łossowski, *Litwa*, 215-217. An interesting account of a Lithuanian government minister’s visit to a Jewish synagogue and their friendly reception is in Juozas Audėnas, *Paskutinis posėdis: atsiminimai* (New York, Ramovė, 1966), 158-159.

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

111.

Apžvalga, 15 February 1940. Note here the use of the term “nation of Lithuania” in place of the usual “Lithuanian nation.”

112. *Apžvalga*, 15 May 1940.

113. *Apžvalga*, 25 June 1940.

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

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

116. Ivinskis, 26

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

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

119. Even Soviet sources reluctantly admitted the opposition to racist doctrines among bourgeois and "reactionary" elements, as in Irmija Zaksas, *Rasizmas ir eugenika buržuazinėje Lietuvoje* (Vilnius: VPMLL, 1959), pp. 138-157, 171 ff.

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

121. Ivinskis, 26-27.

122. See Vygandas Vareikis, "Holokausto prielaidos."