SUMMARY. The article is based on the analysis of the reports of State Security Department (SSD) concerning antisemitism in Lithuania in 1939–1940. This section of Lithuanian and world history is known as a turbulent time, so was this period anyhow different in respect with the dissemination of anti-Semitic ideas and actions in Lithuania? Anti-Semitism emerged in Lithuania (as well as in other countries) as one of the results of modernization but the question arises whether the geopolitical tensions in the world had any impact on the relationship between Jews and Lithuanians, not to mention the country’s internal situation, worsened by the increasing social and economic problems, the loss of Klaipėda Region, the attempts to incorporate Vilnius Region into Lithuania, etc. The analysis, which is based on SSD reports, is structured in three parts that analyse the following topics: Lithuanian authorities’ position toward Jewish minority, major anti-Semitic attacks in 1939–1940, and day-to-day anti-Semitic incidents. It was clear that authorities by all means tried to avoid and suppress any anti-Semitic actions, and if attacks on Jews occurred, the perpetrators were punished. During this period, there were no major anti-Semitic attacks, which leads to the assumptions that Antisemitism was not intensifying over the last years of independent Lithuania, and that daily anti-Semitic actions did not reduce the average of Lithuanian – Jewish conflicts, in comparison with other periods. The source of the conflicts remained the same: distribution of anti-Semitic pamphlets and posters, destruction of Jewish property breaking windows, and occasional physical attacks.

KEYWORDS: State Security Department, Authorities, Lithuanians, Jews, Antisemitism.

INTRODUCTION

Since the appearance of mankind a dichotomy between “us” and “others” have always existed. In different époques this dichotomy manifested in different shapes and guises. Until modern times the differences between “us” and “others” were quite clear – religion, race, etc. Modernity offered another understanding of human being, first of all underlining human equality despite all differences – religious, racial, linguistic, etc. But even though based on new concepts of tolerance, each modern society still faced tensions, discrimination and hatred, caused
by two particular features – the otherness and complexity of other societies. Lithuanian society with its national revival that started in the second half of 19th century was not an exception. Although after declaration of Lithuanian independence on February 16, 1918, all citizens of Lithuania became formally equal. However, religious, linguistic and ethnic differences did not disappear. Moreover, they were instrumentalized by some powers in order to deepen this trench of differences. Although most societies faced the manifestation of otherness between different ethnic groups, which even grew to threats and attacks against each other, the most striking phenomenon that acted as a source of hatred between different ethnic groups in European countries, as well as in a number of other countries throughout the world, was Antisemitism. Antisemitism was present in Lithuanian society as well, although in different periods it had different manifestations and intensity. In this article I will discuss antisemitism in Lithuania, focusing on rather short but very tense and important period of Lithuania’s Republic history, the year 1939–1940. Research of Antisemitism is rather complex, because a lot of actors took place in acts against Jews, to start with individuals, their attitudes and values, and to end with entire associations, organizations, movements, parties, etc. It is necessary to evaluate a general atmosphere of the society, the impact of information, propaganda, as well as the situation in neighbouring (and not only neighbouring) countries, etc. Bearing in mind the complexity of the phenomenon of anti-Semitism, the article will be based on reports of Lithuanian State Security Department (further the SSD, Lithuanian: Valstybės saugumo departamentas – VSD). The main goal of the SSD was to guarantee top security at the state level, therefore, since there were reports about anti-Semitic activities, antisemitism was perceived as one of the main threats of state’s and society’s stability and security. 1939–1940 was the time of great changes as well – Lithuania lost Klaipėda to Nazis and regained Vilnius from the USSR. However, finally, in the summer of 1940, Lithuania was gradually occupied by Soviets and lost its independence, which stopped the natural development of the state and society.

AUTHORITIES AND ANTISEMITISM

Antisemitism was present in Lithuanian society, but it was rather trivial as no political party or organization set up its main goal as only anti-Semitic activities. On the other hand, anti-Semitic activities or rhetoric were primarily attributed to some organizations. The Union of the Lithuanian Entrepreneurs, Industrialists and Businessmen (Lietuvių prekybininkų, pramonininkų ir amatų sąjunga) would be a good example. Encouraging Lithuanian trades and business, the Union’s
newspaper *Trade* (*Verslas*) quite often reproached Jews and even the government of Lithuania for insufficient support of Lithuanians in trade and business. Jews were creating the competition in the market and authorities were unable to issue laws protecting Lithuanians and discrimination of minorities, therefore, issues related to Jews were referred to by the newspaper as the sore points of Lithuanian society. In the report of January 26, 1939, it said that discontent of the Jewish population in Lithuania was growing up, and movements against Jews were becoming more active. The main indicator for this, according to the report, was the increase in the newspaper’s circulation – in the middle of 1938 it was 2,000 and a year later it was already 8,000. In addition, the SSD agent reflects:

> Businessmen have become as loyal to the Government as never before. They are expecting that the Government, silently using its powers, will eliminate Jews from their positions in economy.¹

Actually, during the authoritarian rule of President Antanas Smetona (1926–1940) he and his changing governments from time to time were accused of being too lenient towards national minorities in general, or extremely pro-Jewish. There were some common rumours saying that Jews had bribed Smetona by offering him gold, or that they had bought a palace for the President in Palestine. The reproaches became more active during the period analysed in the present article. Opposition to Smetona’s rule was growing up in this period, and the old ideological opponents were supplemented by new emerging powers, such as, for example, attempts to publish anti-Semitic newspaper, or organize a wide fascist movement. The major theatre of these activities was Klaipėda (occupied by Nazis in March 1939). The SSD agents reported that there had been some intentions to renew an anti-Semitic newspaper issued in Klaipėda. These ideas were spread by Vladas Martynas Vabuolas, former member of Ateitininkiai club “Vytautas”, and Antanas Išganaitis, who was member of Ateitininkiai and board member of “Kęstutis” corporation. It was not the only attempt to revive anti-Semitic press, besides some anti-Semitic newspapers had already been issued in Lithuania, though all of them were closed by Smetona’s authorities.² In this renewed newspaper with old title *The Voice of the Nation* (*Tautos Balsas*) the publishers expressed another important statement: They would not write anything against the Government, but instead they would present a number of requirements concerning Jewish minority. They did not have any funds to release the newspaper but they were sure that people would willingly

¹ Reports of State Security Department: LCSA, 1939-01-26, (Lithuanian Central State Archive, Lithuanian: Lietuvos centrinis valstybės archyvas – LCVA), f. 378, in. 10, file 186 (1r), 85–86.

donate to its publishing. This report clearly shows that part of the Lithuanian society saw some links between Jewish Community and the Government.

Another power, called Voldemarininkai (after first Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs Augustinas Voldemaras, former comrade of A. Smetona), openly criticized Smetona’s regime, directly referring to the connection between Smetona and Jews as harmful for Lithuania. The initiators of the movement issued a newspaper called *United March (Bendras Žygis)*, where they spread their ideas. The SSD, the police, the censorship and other authorities tried to confiscate the issues of the newspaper, however, some of them still circulated or were even hanged in some public places so that as many people as possible could read them. In Klaipėda, the common place, where these newspapers were displayed was Milašius’ shop – this place is frequently mentioned as the spot where the *United March* was displayed as well. One of the reports raises a question:

> Who is against us? Jews, Poles, Communists or Nationalists (the name of the party in power – Lietuvių Tautininkų Sąjunga – the Union of Lithuanians Nationalists – L. V.). Who is with us? The main Lithuanian political streams, volunteers-founders (savanoriai – kūrėjai, military volunteers in Lithuania’s fights for freedom – L. V.), farmers, Lithuanian workers and Lithuanians in exile. Nationalists must know that 90% of Lithuanian population are against them.

Of course, the number is exaggerated. On the other hand, it can be clearly seen that anti-Semitic moods were present in the movement – not by accident it appeared on the list of “enemies”, where Jews were indicated in the first place.

Another report shows the complexity of the problem. Some SSD agents could share anti-Semitic views as well, or at least were ultrapatriotic, trying to show that Lithuania first of all is the country that belonged to Lithuanians, while other nationalities were only guests in the state (such view was quite popular in Lithuanian society in late 1930). The report says that Voldemarininkai and Activists (Aktyvistai – pro Nazi orientated movement – L. V.) were not satisfied with President Smetona’s attitude towards Jews. Smetona was not called anyhow else but “King of the Jews.” That is why during holidays Jews put Smetona’s, as their protector’s, portrait on the windows. It was said that his government did not issue a single law against Jews. The report repeated already common statements that Jews and authorities were portrayed as having too close connections, since Jews were protected by the President and the Government. But another comment, which is provided further below, is even more interesting. Usually, such kind of reports ended

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3 Reports of State Security Department 1939-01-17, LCSA, f. 378, in. 10, file 186 (1t), 53.
5 Reports of State Security Department 1939-03-04, LCSA, f. 378, in. 10, file 186 (1t) 2 d., 173.
with a concrete decision regarding offenders, such as a fine, imprisonment, or at least a short notice. In this case, however, the agent considers:

Isn’t it worthy to deflect such statements? There are enough laws restricting Jewish actions in various spheres. Most probably there is only lack of information and propaganda. If we present these decisions, Voldemarininkai will not be able raise any accusations to the Government.⁶

The agent is not giving any concrete examples of such decisions. The historians agree that there were no official anti-Semitic politics or practices in Lithuania until its occupation in the summer 1940. A paradoxical situation could be mentioned here: Being nationalistic par excellence, Smetona and his authorities mostly were neither xenophobic nor anti-Semitic. They tried to keep society as calm as possible, and any internal conflicts, based on ethnic or religious background, were seen as threat to the state. In other words, stability of society was seen as a greater value than the protection of the dominant group – Lithuanians. Thus, some signs of priorities given to Lithuanians could be seen as well. Liudas Truska refers to this situation as Civic discrimination.⁷ Indeed, there were no Jews among those who held the most important positions of governance (for example, Prime Minister or ministers, generals in the army, etc.), with the exception of some cases, for instance, mayors of the cities were of Jewish nationality. Although Jews were elected to these positions, generally speaking, there was a sort of invisible line drawn between them and Lithuanians. It is possible that the SSD agent meant precisely this situation, still only one thing is clear – there were no laws discriminating Jewish or any other minorities in the Republic of Lithuania until its annexation.

On the contrary, authorities put a lot of efforts in order to stop any kind of provocations or conflicts on the religious or ethnic background. The anatomy of the conflicts or pogroms shows that their main component were authorities – only they had the power to decide whether the conflict would be stopped, in what ways would the culprits be identified and punished. In this respect, Lithuanian authorities, starting from the top – President, Ministers, etc. – were proactive: every potential larger conflict was stopped, while smaller ones were investigated, or at least registered (such as, for example, broken glasses of the windows of Jewish property).

In 1937, when more anti-Semitic activities took place, Minister of Interior Julius Čaplikas noticed that authorities had enough power to maintain stability in the society, that the actions against one or another national group would not

⁶ Ibid., 174.
be tolerated and that there were enough vacancies in prisons and labour camps. When in the summer of 1939 anti-Semitic actions took place in Naumiestis and Leipalingis, Minister of Internal Affairs Kazys Skučas replied to Jewish newspaper *Jidie Štine* that authorities were taking extra measures throughout the country in order to suppress such incidents, and all culprits would be severely punished. Censorship was also operating actively — quite a few numbers of the newspaper *Verslas* were censored. For example, the SSD report of March 6, 1939 said that Lithuanian businessmen were not satisfied with the situation. It added that two issues of *Verslas* had already been published after going through a lot of censorship — anti-Semitic articles were not approved for publishing. Moreover, even radical members of the same ruling party called *Tautininkai*, when issuing their own journal *Vairas (The Wheel)*, faced censorship directed at anti-Semitic articles in the journal.

### MAJOR ANTI-SEMITIC CASES

Despite the government’s expeditious response to anti-Semitic activities, some major events took place. More people than usual participated in these events, which were discussed for a longer period of time than, for example, the cases of vandalism, when the windows of Jewish property were smashed, or the appearance of anti-Semitic posters or slogans on the walls of the buildings after the night. Here I will present two cases — the pogrom in Leipalingis on June 18, 1939, and the incident in café *Monika*, in Kaunas on February 14, 1939.

Leipalingis event bears a typical scenario of the pogrom. On June 18, a Catholic feast took place in Leipalingis, and a lot of people gathered there for the celebration. Around 3 p.m. it started raining and people rushed to seek shelter. Some of them went into the shop owned by Kravec Perec (Kravecas Perecas). The owner encouraged the crowd to buy something or leave, or shelter in a room nearby. One of the visitors, Pranas Pilvelis, replied that in any shop people were free to buy something or not to buy anything. Perec insisted that Pilvelis buy something, to what he replied that he had enough time for that. Then Perec and his son tried to push Pilvelis out. During the jostle, Pilvelis cut his hand while he was breaking the glass of the door. Then he stepped outside and showed his bloody hand to the crowd shouting “Jews have done that”. The crowd immediately accepted that Jews had attacked Pilvelis with a knife and made such injuries. Žekas, who was a farmer and the chief

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of the Riflemen’s squad (Šaulių būrys) of Jovaišiai village, said a short proclamation ending with the words “Let’s strike Jews”. The crowd reacted immediately, some tried to get into Perec’s house, but it was protected by the Lithuanian police, otherwise, according to the SSD report, Perec family would have been lynched by the mob. The windows of all the Jewish houses (except two located nearby the police station) were broken as the crowd did not obey to the commands of the police (7 policemen and a few members of the Riflemen’s Union) and was raging for one and a half hour.11

Based on Leipalingis case, several insights could be made. The causes of the pogrom were on the one hand spontaneous, while on the other hand, they were nurtured by stereotypical assumptions: Jews try to harm Christians, so revenge for the damage is justified. As was said earlier, authorities in all cases tried to stop the ongoing conflicts. However, some new symptoms of reaction of the society could be seen as well, although this was not the first case where the police had to intervene. Leipalingis event was one of the first when the crowd did not obey demands of the police. Usually, seeing a policeman or hearing a policeman’s command was enough to stop fighting at once. In Leipalingis case, however, the mob did not react to the commands of the police, so the police had to fire into the air in order to control the situation (there were 31 shots from guns and 10 from pistols12). Moreover, the crowd were threatening the police by stating that if someone were arrested, the policemen would be beaten up. As if to justify the threats, the crowd were throwing stones at the policemen until one officer was hurt.

As a result of this pogrom, the guilty ones were put on trial and punished whether by financial fines of up to 1,000 litas, or imprisonment for one month or less. In this perspective, the end of such anti-Semitic actions was the same – trial and punishments, which in many cases were positively perceived by Jewish community.13 But here it is important to stress one more thing – the tensions in Lithuania’s society were increasing because of economic, social and political reasons. Uncertainty was growing up and a search for quick responses or scapegoats to blame started. A slightly growing anti-Semitism was one of the results. If some years ago it was enough for the police to appear in a conflict zone to stop the conflict immediately, now some more measures had to be taken to demonstrate power, like firing into

13 Writing about the events in Leipalingis Židis Štme mentioned that Jews did not have any reproaches to local police or authorities. For more information about this see: Truska L. A. Smetonos valdžios politika žydų atžvilgiu (1927–1940). In Istorija, LIX–LX, 2004, 72.
the air. The assumption that president Smetona’s and his authorities’ power was doubtful is such cases, may also have encouraged conflicts: The provocateurs were not frightened enough seeing the symbols of power, like uniforms, etc., therefore it was necessary to demonstrate the armed force power (like firing the guns) in order to remind to the raging crowd that police is in charge of security, order and safety.

Café Monika case is based on rumors and their effect. On 14 February, 1939 it was reported that a fight between Jews and Lithuanians was taking place in café Monika. The noise-makers Lithuanians were kicked out from the café by its owner, because they were carping Jews. But the rumours spread that Jews had attacked Lithuanians. Moreover, a few days later someone saw that at the same café, a Lithuanian student was attacked by knife and a Lithuanian soldier in uniform was beaten up in the café; that the café was a place, where Jews had opened black market are speculating with gold, US dollars etc. Finally, on 20 February captain Lapinskas died in hospital. His funeral was quite pompous and rumours once more spread that captain was killed by Jews. Actually, captain Lapinskas suffered from alcoholism and it was the real cause of his death – he had fainted while dinning, was brought to the hospital unconscious and died next day. The accident had nothing in common with café Monika, but it the flow of rumours it was additional “testimony” how harmful and dangerous Jews were. The atmosphere was charged for a whole month (last report is dated March 23) and SSD agents repeatedly reminded that some explanations should be given to the society, otherwise a serious rebound would follow the events, because anti-Semitic statements were shared not only by café Monika visitors, but also by students, soldiers and even University professors. All together they stated that if the Government did not take any actions against Jews, they themselves would “establish order and would show Jews where they really belonged”. Although there were no further physical conflicts – everything calmed down, this case could be seen as a major event in 1939–1940, based on stereotypes and rumours.

OTHER ANTI-SEMITIC INCIDENTS

The year 1939–1940 was a turbulent period in Europe’s history. Nazi and Soviet aggressions, the outbreak of WW II, the economic and social tensions and other

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14 Reports of State Security Department 1939-04-03, LCSA, f. 378, in. 10, file 186 (t1) 2 d, 202–203.
15 Ibid.
16 Ibid., 193–194.
17 Ibid.
circumstances effected Lithuanian society as well. Naturally, in uncertain situations quick responses and someone to blame are usually searched. Minor or major conflicts between Jews and Lithuanians, as was said, occurred during the entire period from 1918 to 1940. The period in question was even more intense, and more anti-Semitic actions could be traced back, but the growth of their number was not very significant. All conflicts were based on the same, already familiar scenarios – reproaching Jews for being unrespectable to Lithuania’s demands, cheating, trading on the black market, etc. Usually, fights between Jews and Lithuanians occurred when the latter were drunk and brave enough to express their hatred towards Jews by breaking the windows of their property.

The anti-Semitic activity in 1939–1940, when the window glasses of Jewish property were smashed, was the major incident of such kind. Definitely, these actions had negative psychological effects on property owners and Jewish community in general, but not every such action arose from anti-Semitic incentives, or was pre-organized in some way. Report from Tauragė (1939 January 24) says that the window glasses of three synagogues were broken at night: on Stoties street 8 glasses were broken, on Kudirkos Street – 7, while on Bažnyčios Street – 1 window was smashed. Presumably, it was an organized action in order to threaten local Jewish community, but the same report says that a pupil of a Lithuanian elementary school broke two window glasses of the Jewish school and that it was some kind of a mischievous act or simply search for fun.18 Another report from Kaunas says that unknown persons broke window glasses of Synagogues, elementary schools and some private property houses. It also said that one person came to the police and reported that he had broken 7 glasses of elementary Jewish school located at 6 Uosto Kranto Street, because he had got tired from Jews. General summation of these several reports carried out by a SSD agent says that in general, society was very unsatisfied with the situation when Jews were leaving Klaipėda and all of them were coming to Kaunas.19 The most harmful action of breaking windows took place in Pasvalys, at night before November 4, 1939, when 33 glasses of Jewish private houses, including synagogue (14 glasses) and 2 glasses of a house owned by a Lithuanian, were broken. As the report indicates, some of them were bedroom windows, but nobody was injured during that incident.20

Another popular activity of Jewish haters was expressing anti-Semitic statements in public or writing pungent captions on posters, which were usually found

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18 Reports of State Security Department 1939-06-30, LCSA, f. 378, in. 10, file 186 (1t), 71.
19 Ibid., 75. Some more reports about such actions: LCSA, f. 378, in. 10, file 158, 30 – reports from Leipalingis (June 28) and Prienai (June 25).
after the night or distributed anonymously. For example, in Skuodas gymnasium hand written posters were distributed encouraging to get rid of the Jews who were too firmly established in the cities; some posters were found in the marketplace too.\textsuperscript{21} A number of reports on anti-Semitic content of publicly exposed posters came from Zapyškis, where posters stating \textit{Jews our disaster} were displayed in three different places. A SSD agent reported that he had found three such posters and detached them, adding that two days before such posters had been noticed by local Jews and were also detached.\textsuperscript{22} On December 10, anti-Semitic posters were exposed in Prienai, the content of which also encouraged to fight against Jews and their dominance.\textsuperscript{23}

An interesting and very complex situation occurred in summer of 1940, when Lithuania was under the process of occupation. Although the heads of the departments were changed, their activities were still exercised keeping to the old schemes. Soviets, being anti-Semitic at the very beginning, did not expose these attitudes, so anti-Semitic incidents were registered by the SSD of already Soviet Lithuania, widely recording the Lithuanian society’s attitudes that Jews were on the Soviet’s side and were strongly supporting the occupational regime.\textsuperscript{24} On the other hand, before Soviet occupation the attitude that Jews are first to spread Communist ideas was expressed in SSD files quite often.

One of the first reports on anti-Semitic proclamations dated July 8, 1940 and sent from Alytus, is called “Dear Lithuanians, (addressing male and female readers) take a stop and think where you are going.” The document was signed by the Lithuania’s Anti-Jewish Committee. Actually, there is nothing new in the content of the proclamation. Readers are encouraged to stay away from the Jews, because they abused Lithuanians during Smetona’s regime; cheated Lithuanians in forming business deals; exploited Lithuanians by gaining money while doing nothing, etc. However, a few important ideas are expressed in the documents. First of all, the author or authors encourage readers to separate from Jews during this new regime – if Jews want, they should create their own Communist movement; Communism in Lithuania should be Lithuanian – without Jews. Another important statement

\begin{footnotes}
\item[21] Reports of State Security Department 1939-03-18, LCSA, f. 378, In. 10, file 186 (1t) 2 d., 262.
\item[22] Reports of State Security Department 1939-09-23, LCSA, f. 378, In. 10, file 158, 64.
\item[23] \textit{Ibid.}, 94vs.
\end{footnotes}
says that we are not encouraging to fight against Jews or to beat them, we just have to keep away from them and have no contacts.25

Some reports deal with the events concerning elections to the Liaudies Sei- mas (People’s Parliament) when some Lithuanians encouraged others not to vote for Jewish candidates, and some anti-Semitic slogans were written on bulletins.26 Another group of reports deal with physical attacks on Jews. Although such events were quite rare, they still took place, and were most shocking for the Jewish society. If there was any information on attacks on Jews, Lithuanian authorities tried to prevent such activities. The report of 14 February, 1939, form Varniai says that local Germans and Voldemarininkai tried to organize pogrom against the Jews, because on this day in Varniai there was a big fair and market. However, due to bad weather and squishy roads very few people came. Otherwise, the scenario of Leipzigings might have repeated. On the other hand, report says that the local police was informed that the pogrom was planned on that day in Varniai, so they were prepared to suppress the conflict.27 The Government’s position against anti-Semitic accidents prove another two reports from Kelmė. One of the reports says that several drunk roughnecks attacked 7 Jews of different age on the street. The Jews were hit in the faces by hands and fists, one Jewish worker was injured by a hard item and imbrued. It seems that it was an organized attack on Jews. Police had identified 7 bruisers and referred them to the Raseiniai district governor for punishment. Two of them were fined 1,000 litas or a month of imprisonment, others were fined 500 litas or 20 days of imprisonment.28 The report of March 4 informs that two Lithuanians attacked Simonas Jakubovitts (a 19-year old student from Palestine, studying in Kelmė Rabbi seminary) and injured him in his head. The two attackers were identified and punished 1,000 litas fine or a month of imprisonment.29 One more accident took place in Panevėžys, where around midnight two drunk Lithuanians started to harass the bypassing Jews. Later, a few Jews were attacked, during the conflict one Jew took his pistol and fired into the air 3 times. Then the police intervened and separated the feuding sides. This report does not provide any information about the punishment of the violators, just indication that it was a hand fight, without using any items, no one was injured, and that local Jewish community perceived this event as pogrom.30

25 Council of Ministers of Soviet Lithuania, LCSA, f. R754, in. 3, file 311, pages do not have numbers.
26 Ibid., report of June 20, 1940.
27 Reports of State Security Department 1939-02-15, LCSA, f. 378, in. 5, file 4421 II t., 484.
29 Ibid.
30 Reports of State Security Department 1939-07-03, LCSA, f. 378, in. 10, file 158, 51.
First Soviet occupation changed the situation radically – it destroyed the natural
development of Lithuanian society’s norms and values, while Lithuanian – Jewish
relationship during this period would be an object of another research. Here I’ll
limit myself to only a few remarks. According to Police and SSD reports, more
offensive and threatening remarks were addressed to the Jewish population, one of
them openly declared that it was time to finish up with Jews, that is, to kill them,
that Hitler was doing the right things, that he would come and cut off the heads
of all Jews, etc.³¹ These and other reports lead to an assumption that during the
summer of 1940 (in the beginning of first Soviet occupation) anti-Semitic events
intensified, at least oral threats and abuses. Although most of the reports end with
a statement “Under investigation”, SSD reports from independent Lithuania usu-
ally specify punishments for those who committed anti-Semitic activities. In other
words, until first Soviet occupation, all Lithuanian – Jewish conflicts tended to be
solved as quickly as possible; during Soviet occupation they were recorded, but
there is no information on the precise results due to this blur statement “Under
investigation.” More research should be carried out on this issue, but a conclusion
can already be made that this transitional period – while Soviet occupation was
trying to establish itself – Jews were threatened and accused of disloyalty on one
hand, while on the other claiming that they collaborated mostly with Soviets. For
example, one of the reports says that a Lithuanian came to his Jewish neighbour,
presented himself as a political prisoner and asked for money. When the Jewish
person refused to give him money, the Lithuanian addressed him saying: “You,
Jewish snout, (Žydovska morda) now you have the power, but when our time
comes we will repay you.”³² Such an uncertain situation might have encouraged
additional conflicts, trying to internalize new order and rules, and, at the same time
trying to get rid of, as they were perceived, unnecessary members of the society, first
of all Jews. Therefore, it seems that first Soviet occupation served as a good oppor-
tunity for persons sharing anti-Semitic views to express their attitude more openly.

CONCLUSIONS

Tensions between different ethnic, religious and social groups have always been
observed in modern societies, and Lithuania is not an exception in this regard. The
main question is how these problems have been dealt in this country. Lithuania

³¹ Resumes of Political events and Information of Kaunas Police watcher, LCSA, f. 754, in.3, file 310, 9, 10,
12, 18.
could not be considered a country having firm and organized anti-Semitic positions: despite the fact that antisemitism was present in the society, it was influenced by religious stereotypes, social conflicts, propaganda, etc., and never had any elements of organized structure, such as movements in the society, political parties, etc. On the other hand, radical nationalists used anti-Jewish rhetoric and sentiments in order to gain some popularity in the society.

The main guarantors of the society’s stability were Authorities, to start with local ones to the high-ranked officials: President, Prime Minister, Minister, etc. It is clear that the officials holding such posts did not express any open anti-Semitic views. On the contrary, during the year 1939–1940, President and Government were criticized of being extremely pro-Jewish and unable to take necessary decisions in order to support the development of Lithuanian affairs. All anti-Semitic incidents were recorded and researched, which shows that the suppression of anti-Semitic activities were seen as one of the priorities. The reports and other documents provide evidence that the State Security Department was also involved in the process of anti-Semitic activity survey.

The years 1939–1940, the last years of independent Lithuania, could not be referred to as a period of a growing anti-Semitism in the state. Anti-Semitic activities intensified a bit, but there was no radical change in Lithuanian-Jewish relationship. The growth of anti-Semitic actions was influenced by some socio-political problems in Lithuania, as well as in the rest of the world: the outbreak of WW II, the loss of Klaipėda, attempts to reintegrate Vilnius into Lithuania, etc. The nature of anti-Semitic conflicts did not change either: Jews were seen as cheaters, organizers of black market and Communist supporters. The expressions of conflicts remained the same as well. The most popular one included breaking of window glasses of Jewish property, distribution of anti-Semitic posters or leaflets, sometimes publication of anti-Semitic articles, although in this respect censorship remained vigilant. There were also physical attacks on Jews, but the SSD documents do not allow to record the growth of such crimes in 1939–1940. Physical attacks on Jews were the rarest anti-Semitic actions, which also were thoroughly investigated by authorities, and perpetrators were punished.

First Soviet occupation brought a lot of uncertainty and instability. The summer of 1940 could be identified as a period of more intensive anti-Semitic activities, at least this could be said by the records of the SSD and police. New reality and order for some people might have signified an opportunity to externalize and establish their own values, based on the understanding that Soviet Lithuania should have been even more Lithuanian than independent Republic of Lithuania and that there was a possibility to have Lithuanian Communist party, etc. Others might have
thought that Soviet occupation was a temporary condition and it had to serve for the establishment of real Lithuania, based on homogeneity. But it is important to stress here that such opinions and positions were shared by isolated individuals or some organized, but relatively small groups, and had nothing in common with the attitudes and values that prevailed in the Republic of Lithuania, which in the summer 1940 was destroyed and occupied by Soviets.

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ARTICLES