

VPU Professor, Liudas Truska. The review of the paper “Persecution of Lithuanian Jews and Mass Massacres in Summer and Autumn 1941: sources and analysis” by Dr. Christoph Dieckmann and Prof. Saulius Sužiedėlis

I have appreciated the paper very much: very wide selection of sources (not only Lithuanian but also German archives, memoirs in Yiddish) and literature; all statements are well based. It is clear, that this is the newest word of history science in the research of the holocaust in Lithuania.

I find one feature of the research attractive: while reading the paper, I have not encountered an attempt to justify “fellows” (Germans) and impose more responsibility to Lithuanians although one of the researchers is German. However, this cannot be said about Lithuanian authors, who are still inclined to reduce the responsibility of their nation, the Temporary Government or even the Lithuanian Activist Front (LAF) in their papers.

I support the statement that violence against Jews started at the same time as the revolt, before Germans came (arrests of Jews, their plundering, sneering, even occasional killings); and on 25 June, when a squad of German security police came to Kaunas, the violence increased. However, “statements about huge pogroms that had been taking place before German forces showed up should be carefully considered” (p.36).

One of the motifs of first pogroms in Kaunas revealed by the authors of the paper is worth noting: that Lithuanians (as well as Latvians) would be fighting not for their country, which was unacceptable to Nazis, but would use their energy for activities that were not dangerous to Nazis and even useful to them – a fight against the “eternal enemy” – the Jews (p. 43). Lithuanian historians have not noticed this motif before.

It is claimed in p. 36 that in March 1941 “Lithuanian Jews were declared outlaws; it was allowed to persecute them”. The commission did not accept my interpretation of the point of the LAF programme on the cancellation of the “hospitality right” for Jews in Lithuania, which I expressed during my presentation on the intensification of anti-Semitism in 1940–1941 a few years ago. As if “the cancellation of the hospitality right” meant expelling of Jews from Lithuania, but not declaring them outlaws.

In fact, I agree with the evaluation of the role of the Temporary Government in the massacres of Jews, presented in p. 48-49. However, it is hardly possible to agree with the statement in p. 114 saying that the Temporary Government “refused to help [Nazis] to organise the massacres”. Has the Temporary Government not joined the ghettoisation of Jews? And is the imprisonment in ghettos not part of the Holocaust?

Table 4 about the massacres of Jews executed by EK3 in Latvia and Belarus is provided in p. 108. However, the table is not related to the context; conclusions are not drawn: why was the scale of massacres of Jews considerably lower in Belarus? Why did mass massacres of Jews, i.e. Holocaust, start half a year later in Belarus than in Lithuania and Latvia?

The text in p. 40–42 reiterates earlier presented statements.

The paper lacks conclusions, and that hampers the evaluation of the paper itself.

I do not understand why the researchers decided not to calculate the number of massacred Jews in all Lithuania and were limited only to the territory controlled by EK3? As we know, it did not cover the Northwestern part of Lithuania. The Commission must estimate the number of Jews massacred in all Lithuania in summer-autumn 1941. Having no direct data about the number of Jews massacred outside the territory controlled by EK3, we need to search for indirect sources. I think that one of them is the data of the Lithuanian Statistics Board about the number of Jews in all towns of Lithuania on 1 July 1940 (LCVA, R-743, Ap. 5, B. 47, L. 79).

By the way, some village ghettos are mentioned in the paper. Is that a bad translation to Lithuanian? On the eve of the Second World War, all Lithuanian Jews lived in towns and small towns. There were no Jews in villages.

The translation into Lithuanian is bad, even very bad. Therefore, sometimes it is difficult to get the point.

I shall finish with what I have started: in general the paper makes good or even very good impression.

23-11-2004

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