

**Opinion of the VDU Professor Liudas Truska on *Holocaust in Lithuania's Province in 1941*,
an essay by Dr. Arūnas Bubnys**

The author reasonably claims that the Holocaust in Lithuania's province is actually a "white spot", as so far most of the essays have dealt with murder of the Jews in the large cities of Lithuania.

On the grounds of the summer-fall 1941 investigation material of Lithuanian and to some extent German administration institutions and persons that participated in killings of Jews in the soviet period, as well as research and accounts by other authors, even essays on local lore of 1990 – 2000, Arūna Bubnys has provided a picture of Jewish existence and demise in six out of twenty-two Lithuanian districts. The research done by the author is huge and adds a lot to our knowledge about the Holocaust in Lithuania. In my opinion, the essay in question is the start of a monograph and habilitation of A.Bubnys.

One of the problems that A.Bubnys incurred was the material (resources) on the existence of the Jews during the last days of June and in July of 1941.

Another dubious aspect is how the author has carried out his research – by analysing 6 districts representing different regions of Lithuania.

The commission needs answers to the following questions:

1. How many Jews (approximately) were killed at different localities and in the province as a whole?
2. When and where did the killings take place?
3. Had there been any killings of the Jews before the coming of the German troops?
4. Had there been any instance of persecution (discrimination) of the Jews before the killings that started at the close of July? If so, what parties – Lithuanian or German – were involved in it? The role of the Lithuanian administration and armed formations.
5. The role of the German and Lithuanian institutions and armed formations in the mass killings of the Jews.

The essay of A.Bubnys does not provide answers to all of these questions. It is first of all because the material restricted to only 6 districts is not enough to do that. In my opinion, it takes material on all of the districts that was available to A.Bubnys to answer the questions of the commission. Instead of describing individual districts, I should suggest drawing a work plan based on different subjects and certain chronology, as well as refrain from illustrating the existence of the Jews before June 22, 1941 and the sharing of the killed Jews' property. All this lies beyond the topic of his essay and is the subject of another research.

The conclusions presented at the end (pages 96-97) of the essay in question are inadequate. I had great doubts about certain principal statements, like the assertion that "the initiative to persecute (not to kill – L.T.) the Jews was shown by the German occupation authorities /.../". Data on Alytus and Joniškis districts that the author is well aware of bear no reference as to the role of the German authorities, and describe the activities of the Lithuanian establishments only. Of course, the Germans might have been operating in the background. One third of the districts into which the author has directed his research were located by the German border, where the Tilžės Gestapo was active since the very beginning of the war. Here the role of the German authorities at the end of June and in July is evident.

I do not accept the schedule of stages as employed by A.Bubnys, whereby stage one lasted from the close of June until mid-July and was "dominated by political reasons of persecution". What is then the reason of the letter by Governor of the Alytus District A.Audronis to the Minister of

Internal Affairs dated July 17: “the (national – L.T.) minority issue has been resolved in a way that all of the Jews are forced to wear the sign of the David’s star /.../ Besides, we have schedule a time and place for walking and marketing” (Uprising of June 1941. Selection of documents, page 202). Does this imply persecution for political reasons? Reports by chiefs of rural district police precincts to the Chief of the Alytus District Police as of June 16 evidence that the Jewish issue is “settled” almost completely (“settled” by June 16!). Settled in a sense that the Jews are “bearing their marks”, are forced to work, there are “Jewish blocks” set up (Ibid., pages 212, 213). “The Jewish blocks” are actually ghettos established by local governments following the resolution by the Lithuanian Government to isolate Kaunas Jews in Viliampolė. Ghetto-isation of Jews is most definitely the beginning of the Holocaust, its initial stage. Therefore I do not accept the statement A.Bubnys makes in his conclusions that “the process (stage – L.T.) of resistance to mass killings /.../ in the province started approximately at the end of June and lasted until mid-August”.

A.Bubnys has established that at the eve of the mass killings the Jews would be locked in one or several buildings, typically at the town synagogue and several of the surrounding buildings, which he considers ghetto-isation. In my opinion, this is imprisonment, and ghetto-isation took place earlier in June.

I think that the Holocaust in the province should be segmented as follows:

1. The stage of persecution of the Jews (on racist basis) and preparation for their destruction – until the end of June;
2. The stage of total destruction of the Jews – from the last days of June (see Jäger’s list).

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