

**PRECONDITIONS OF HOLOCAUST. ANTI-SEMITISM IN LITHUANIA
(19th century to mid 20th century (15 June 1940))**

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The history of Lithuanian-Jewish relations is complicated and painful, and the experience of the 1941-1944 Holocaust in Lithuania predetermines and adjusts their evaluation. The writings on the Lithuanians and the Jews in the 19th century and those sparing Lithuanian-Jewish cultural contacts often refer to the period of 1941-1944 in Lithuania, resulting in almost total annihilation of the Jewish community. According to Yehuda Bauer, the Holocaust has become “a ruling cultural symbol in Western culture” and the prism for viewing the Lithuanian-Jewish relations.

The analysis of the causes of the Holocaust in Lithuania raises the question concerning the specific character of the Holocaust development, i.e. what factors led to the extensive mass slaughter of Jews in a country which had never pursued any anti-Semitic state policies before World War II? What was the impact of anti-Semitism, which developed at the end of the 19th century and added new forms of hostility (racial segregation) in the 1930s, on the specifics of the Holocaust in Lithuania? Was the mutual estrangement during the inter-war Lithuania was a result of a long-lasting alienation between Lithuanians and Jews, or was it predetermined by the external political climate? To what extent the events of the period from 1941 to 1944 resulted from the shock the people of Lithuania at the 1940-1941 sovietisation process and from the image of a Jew-Communist popular throughout that process? Although the Republic of Lithuania ruled by President Antanas Smetona after the 1926 *coup d'état* was characterised as undemocratic and authoritarian, it was still a rule-of-law state. The citizens of Lithuania were never arrested without a legal ground, the principle of the presumption of innocence was adhered to; meanwhile, the irrational Soviet system, disregarding any legal principles, classified people into “public enemies” and “non-enemies” according to their social class features. The mass deportation of Lithuanian citizens to the depth of the Soviet Union begun on the 14-15 June 1941 came as a shock to the people of Lithuania. The Soviet occupants, their Lithuanian collaborators and, as many Lithuanians thought, “Jews-Communists” who contributed to the sovietisation of Lithuania were considered to be the culprits. For Lithuanians, Jews were more noticeable, thus their role among the 1940-1941 Soviet collaborators was particularly visible.

The Holocaust in this country was a consequence of the whole series of concurrent historical circumstances in Lithuania, i.e. 1) the images of a “Jew-Communist” and a “Jew-exploiter” particularly popular in the inter-war period (1918-1940) in Lithuania, as well as anti-Semitic incidents which in the 1930s became more frequent; they intensified the devaluation of the Jewish nation and made the people of Lithuania used to coercion with respect to Jews; 2) the Soviet occupation and the sovietisation of 1940-1941 that destroyed the then structure of the society: deportations and repressions were detrimental to the moral influence the Lithuanian political and cultural elite and the Catholic Church had on the general public; 3) speedy arrival of the German Army prevented Lithuanian Jews from withdrawing to the depth of the Soviet Union *en masse*; 4) on the first days of German attacks, the uncontrolled atmosphere of violence gave the floor to criminal elements craving revenge for the

crimes committed by Soviet repressive structures and wishing to take possession over the property of defenceless citizens of Lithuania; 5) limited availability of a forest haven in Lithuania made it harder for the Jews to hide from the nazis and local collaborators. In Western Belarus, however, numerous forests and good relations between the Belarus rural population and their Jewish neighbours enabled a bigger number of Jews to escape and join the formations of soviet partisans.¹

My study dwells on the preconditions of the Holocaust in Lithuania in the light of anti-Semitism developed from the 19th century to the first half of the 20th century. The work provides a socio-economic analysis of the Jewish-Lithuanian relations, their evolution as well as the situation of Jews in the context of relative modernisation of the 19th-century society and statehood of Lithuania in the first half of the 20th century. On the other hand, it does not aim at formulating an *ad hoc* hypothesis that the development of anti-Semitism in Lithuania was the primary cause of the Holocaust. The primary cause, however, was the anti-Jewish policy of the Nazi Germany, since the start of the Holocaust was marked by the German invasion of the Soviet Union and the Holocaust ended as soon as the Soviets pushed the Germans out of the territory of Lithuania. The unique situation of Lithuania manifests through a big percentage of annihilated Jews and a relatively small number of those who rescued them as well as by the presence of most unfavourable historical and geopolitical circumstances than anywhere else in Europe.

I.

During the 17th-18th centuries the relations between the Jews and non-Jews as well as between the Jewish community and influential Catholic Church in the Lithuanian-Polish Republic developed in the sector of economy and intertwined with growing religious intolerance. The Torah (law) forbade the Jews to borrow money on interest for their own kin. Similarly, the Catholic Church did not approve of usury either, thus, both the communities found something to share in their economic coexistence. The Jews had long enjoyed a wide economic autonomy, paid different taxes (*pro tolerantia*, compensations for manufacturing spirits, etc.) which went to the Church. There was also a rent arrangement enabling the Jews to sell spirits on the land owned by bishoprics, monasteries and nobility. Agreements concluded between the Jewish community and the Catholic Church allowed to escape economic tensions between the Christians and the Jews and consequent outbursts of anti-Semitism.

The situation changed after Lithuania's incorporation into the Russian Empire, which also affected the Catholic Church. Consequently, the Russian State started regulating the situation of both the Jews and the Catholic Church according to its legal framework. The interests of the Jews and Lithuanians split even more widely.

In 1794, upon an order of Russian Empress Catherine II, a prohibition was issued for Jews to move from their places of residence to the internal provinces of Russia. This was a way to form a Pale of Settlement. In 1804, Russia published the first systemised rules for Jews (The Statute of Jews). The tsarist system treating Jews as "persons detrimental to the society" and wishing to establish an administrative control over

¹ Y. Bauer. *The Holocaust in Historical Perspective*. Canberra: Australian National University Press, 1978. P.61.

them restricted their rights². Jews were demanded to move out of villages, they were barred from any economic activities there, they were not allowed to employ Christian farmhands. Russian tsarist policies aimed at changing the status of Jews, by resettling them from rural territories in towns (*shtetls*) and ghettos in towns, and weakening their contacts with farmers. According to a prohibition of 1841, Jews living in the Western provinces of the Russian Empire were prevented from not only buying estates, but also renting them and earning income from rent. These measures sank the Jewish community in poverty. The laws of the Polish-Lithuanian State prohibited Jews from lending money to Christians, meanwhile the Russian Empire established no restrictions on loans or bills. Therefore, a Jew-moneylender profiting from Lithuanian peasants, a Jew-innkeeper and trader were a frequent object of criticism in the 19th-century social and political writings protecting the people³.

A specific definition of the Lithuanian Jews (*Litvaks – the Yiddish language*) is given in the saying of Hassids: “*Litvak zelem – kop*”, i.e. “every Litvak has a small Christian cross in his head”. The personality of a Litvak is described by the following components: rational religiousness, devotion to science and studies of Torahs and the Talmud, high intellectual level, intellectual discipline and independence, reticence and reserved emotions, modesty and individuality. Jews were encouraged to settle in Lithuania because of the social-economic circumstances developed here after the Middle Ages and tinted with a certain degree of tolerance (at that time, Western Europe witnessed the processes of displacement (Spain 1492) and exclusion); a small and isolated country, as Lithuania was, created a positive climate for the shaping of personality with specific features of language and character⁴.

Litvaks were different from Southern Hassids who were primarily concerned about Southern-type empathy, the necessity of religious contact with the God, *devekuth*, and emphasised religious actions and the process of prayer. In Lithuania, the tradition of the Jewish enlightenment Haskalah which promoted Jewish assimilation and integration into other cultures of Western and Central-Eastern Europe was not that strong. Though in Lithuania, too, the supporters of emancipation (*maskilims*) disseminated the ideas of Haskalah by creating secular works of literature and popular works on history and geography in both Hebrew, and Yiddish, throughout the entire 19th century, a rationally pious Litvak was the prevailing type of Lithuanian Jews. Lithuanian Jews lived in a closed community which was more conservative and less affected by modern innovations than Jewish communities in other regions.

An exceptional role among Litvaks was played by the Jewish community of Vilnius (called, Jerusalem of Lithuania, Jerusalem of Yiddish due to its distinct Jewish

² O. Leontovitch. *Istoricheskoje isledovanije o pravach litovsko – ruskich evrejev*. Kyev, 1864, p. 46.

³ A. Tatare. *Ubagiešius // Pamokslai išminties ir teisybes (Sermons of wisdom and truth)*. Vilnius, 1982. P. 221. Jonas iš Svisloco. *Krominykas vendravojas (Jonas from Svisloce. Krominykas on the Razzle)*// Lithuanian didactic prose. Vilnius, 1982. P. 62 - 65. L.A. Jucevicius. *Žemaiciu žemes prisiminimai (Memories of the Samogitian Land)* // Collected writings. Vilnius, 1959. M. Valancius. *Pasakojimai Antano Trietininko (Stories by Antanas Trietininkas)*// Collected writings. Vilnius, 1972. T. 1. P. 394, 399. M. Valancius. *Žemaiciu vyskupyste (The Diocese of Samogitia)*// Collected writings. Vilnius, 1972. T.2. P. 395, 382. M. Katkus. *Balanos gadyne (The Times of Darkness)*// Collected writings. Vilnius, 1965. P. 226 - 230.

⁴ E. J. Schochet. *The Character of Lithuanian Jews – the Heritage of Vilnius Gaon* // Vilnius Gaon and roads of the Jewish culture. Material of an International Scientific Conference. Vilnius, 10-12 Sep 1997. Vilnius, 1999. P. 195.

identity). Vilnius was an orthodox (*minhagim*) centre established as a result of reforms initiated by rabbi Elijah Zalman Kremer (Vilnius Gaon) (a new way of interpreting the Talmud introduced by Gaon and a method of teaching created by Haim from Volozhin served as cornerstones for the new studies and schools of the Talmud (*jeshivot*)). Vilnius was the centre spreading the ideas of emancipation as extensively as possible and publishing literature and press in Hebrew and Yiddish, the YIVO institute and the Jewish socialist movement (Bund) were created here, moreover, in the period between 1905 and 1912, Vilnius was the centre of Zionism in Russia, as the Central Committee of Zionists was located here⁵. In no other province of the Russian Empire, Hebrew, the language of the Talmud orthodox and later Zionism, was spoken by so many people as in Vilnius. The Jews of Vilnius also demonstrated their exceptional unity and organisational skills during the election to the State Duma in 1905.

Nevertheless, the way of life and traditions fostered by Vilnius Jews were different from the Jews living in tiny towns of Lithuania. The intensity of Jewish contacts with non-Jews differed, as well. In Vilnius and in other larger cities with high percentage of Jewish population, Jews lived in closed communities, and economic contacts with gentile population were limited in scope. While in Lithuanian villages and towns, *shtetls*, the economic contacts of Jews with landowners or peasants were unavoidable. The Jewish contacts with gentile population, however, became less intensive due to Russian tsarist policies: after Jews were pushed out of villages to towns, contacts with peasants weakened. On the other hands, litvaks establishing economic contacts with landowners, in fact, were alien to landowners and to the culture of noblemen, as they were distanced from Lithuanian countrymen. The values, lifestyles and businesses of Lithuanian Jews were to a large extent different that those of Lithuanians, usually villagers, surrounding them. Lithuanian scholars (Z.Ivinskis, M.Biržiška) describing Lithuanian-Jewish relations pointed out that the two nations lived by each other for centuries as two closed communities linked by almost no mutual relations, except for the economic contacts.⁶

II.

The period between 1827 and 1855⁷ was the most difficult for the Jews living in the Russian Empire, as following an order by Nikolay I, young Jewish children were taken recruits for 25 years (the Canton system). The permission for Jews to buy out of the army valid during the rule of Catherine II was renounced. The christening of Jews in the army was a rather frequent practice⁸, as tsarist authorities undertook missionary

⁵ Encyclopaedia Judaica. Jerusalem, 1996. Vol. 11. P. 370. Jerusalem of Lithuania, Illustrated and documented. Collected and arranged by Leyzer Ran. New York, 1974. Vol. I. P. XXII.

⁶ M. Biržiška. Lietuvisu tautos kelias. I nauja gyvenima (*The Road of the Lithuanian Nation. Towards a New Life*). Los Angeles. 1952, Vol. 1, p. 64-85. Z. Ivinskis. Lietuviai ir žydai istorijos šviesoje (*Lithuanians and Jews in the Light of History*) // Naujoji Viltis. 1980. No. 13, p. 38.

⁷ “one of the darkest periods of life under the Czars” (M. Greenbaum. The Jews of Lithuania. History of a remarkable community 1316 - 1945. Jerusalem, N.Y. 1995. P. 179.)

⁸ About 70 000 Jews were taken recruits, 50 000 of them were young adolescents and about a half were christened by force (M. Stanislawski. Tsar Nikolas I and the Jews: The transformation of the Jewish society in Russia 1825-1855. Philadelphia, 1983. Chapter 1.). Other sources indicate that the number of Jewish Cantonists who served according to the 1827 Statute was ca 30 000 - 40 000, yet others mention 25 000 (Y. Eliach. There once was a world. A 900 year chronicle of the shtetl of Eishyshok . N.Y. 1998. P. 47.)

tasks and wished to integrate Jews into the Russian community. At the same time, this was a challenge to Jewish communities – *kahals* used to select recruits (Nikolaevskie sodal'ty, kantonisty) from the midst of the children of poor, unemployed, outsider Jews. This divided the community: Jews loyal to tradition protested against the coercion; meanwhile most *maskilims* favoured this kind of forced emancipation, the poor were dissatisfied that children of the rich were exempted from the service, communities used to kidnap recruits from each other, Christians were antagonised against Jews. Lithuanians did not escape the recruiting as well. However, that process did not affect a large number of Lithuanians, as most of them were peasants and belonged to the category of the “useful” population. Nevertheless, Lithuanian social writers sometimes accused Jews of escaping military service by bribing officials, who then recruited catholic Lithuanians to replace Jews.

In 1856, the Cantonic system was removed. After the bondage in Russia (1861), a small number of Jews were allowed to settle in the internal provinces of Russia. As the censorship eased, Jewish periodical press in Hebrew, Russian, Polish and Yiddish came into being. The positivism declaring that art and literature had to be associated with the real life and to heal social evils penetrated the Jewish culture, too: the secular Jewish culture enjoyed its “Golden Age”. The Positivism featured in the writings of Lithuanian authors (V.Kudirka, P.Vileišis, J.Šliupas), as well, however, the latter often linked it with the manifestations of anti-Semitism. The propagators of emancipation (*maskilims*) demonstrated their optimism about the policies by tsarist authorities almost at the time when the people of Lithuania were undergoing serious repression. The period between 1864 and 1883 was among the most difficult to Lithuanians: as a result of the 1863 rebellion, press in Latin script was banned, the Catholicism was persecuted, the policy of Russification was implemented in the system of education, and underground Lithuanian schools were persecuted. The Lithuanian people, being outsiders of history (only 2 per cent of Lithuanians lived in the city of Vilnius, no Lithuania industrial or commercial bourgeois existed), faced with a necessity to fight for their language, managed to mobilise their forces and join the family of nations fostering aspirations of statehood. The year 1883 saw the publication of the “*Aušra*” magazine which gave birth to the movement of national revival. Meanwhile emancipated Jews, *maskilims*, lost every ground for optimism after tight regulations concerning the Pale of Settlement (1882) and restrictions on Jewish engagement in certain types of professional activities (1886-1889) were introduced, and after their displacement from large cities and territories of the “Pale of Settlement” (1891-1895) was launched. This engendered waves of pogroms and mass emigration of Jewish population (which was encouraged by the Zionist movement founded later). Although the tsarist administration was an enemy of both peoples, a historical dissonance can be distinguished in the destinies of the Lithuanian and Jewish nations.

III.

Until the first half of the 19th century, all criticism against Jews in Lithuania stemmed from the juxtaposition of the religious Christian-Judaic conflict and stressed the religious underpinning of the treatment of Jews. From the 2nd till the 5th century, the hermeneutic tradition of Christianity developed two main postulates: the glorification and worship of Jesus Christ as the Messiah and the son of God, and *Adversus*

Judaeos, a theological condemnation of the Judaism and Jews. The Christianity and the Judaism started to come into conflict over the interpretation of the same holy writings and exploitation of the same tradition which was interpreted in radically different ways.

Following St. Augustine, the Jews had to be segregated from the Christians but tolerated. Christianity held the view that the history of the old Israel ended with the birth of Jesus Christ and a new page in history was opened. The law by Moses lost its force with the birth of Christ (Rom 10:1-5). As a result, the history of Israel was treated as the prophecy of the birth of Christ, the new Israel inherited the tradition of the old Israel and acquired the meaning of a universal and all-people church. Gospels by prophets aimed at salvation of the Jews and all the peoples (Acts 13, 26:28). Meanwhile, as the fathers of the Church claimed, a part of the Jews refused to recognise the Christ as a result of their own “blindness and stubbornness”. Such an approach was mixed with the accusations against the Jews for the hatred of the latter towards the teaching of the Christ and often appeared in the Polish apologetic and polemic literature of 16th-18th century and, thus, extended to the 19th century.

The nineteenth-century prayer-books and catechisms, based on the texts of the 18th and even 17th centuries, as well as writings of Lithuanian priests referred to the murder of God and torturing of Christ, though at the same time, they emphasise the principle of the Christian love to one’s neighbour. This dichotomy (disdain of Jews, on the one hand, and sympathy to them, on the other) was characteristic of not only hierarchs and clerks of the Catholic Church, but also of lower social groups. This is revealed in the short story “Silkes” (“*Herrings*”) by Lithuanian writer Vincas Kreve-Mickevicius (1882-1954). A Lithuanian farmer Marcele steals some herrings from a poor old Jew supplying goods to people. She tries to excuse herself by a popular argument: this is not a sin, since “they deceive lots of our people” and “it was them who tortured and crucified our Almighty God”. A shepherd in the same story is convinced that posthumously, even in Hell, Catholics will never stay together with Jews⁹. However, after seeing in her dream that deceiving a Jew is also a sin, and she will get to Hell for stealing the herrings of the Jew, Marcele decides to pay him already next Sunday.

After the Polish-Lithuanian State was incorporated into the Russian Empire, the state-propagated religion was the Orthodox Church, and the Catholic Church became a persecuted institution. The Catholic Church was repressed after the rebellions of 1830-1831 and 1863-1864. The representatives of the Catholic Church in Lithuania turned to defending Lithuanian nationalism and national resistance (Samogitian Bishop Motiejus Valancius (1801-1875)), and from the 19th century, they were active participants of the Lithuanian national revival movement. On the one hand, Lithuanian Catholic Church resisted the tsarist rule, on the other hand, the Church, unwilling to cause more serious persecution, tried to avoid open conflict with tsarist officials and emphasised the necessity of cultural-ethnolinguistic fight for the Catholic Lithuanian identity. The persecution perpetrated by tsarist authorities played a double role in shaping the Catholics’ approach to Jews. First, it could intensify the anti-Semitic tendencies among Catholics as Jews were blamed for indulging tsarist

⁹ V.Kreve. Bobules vargai. Silkes. Išsibare. (*Grandma’s Troubles. Herrings. Quarreled.*) Kaunas, 1933, p. 39.

officials (reporting against Lithuanians during anti-tsar rebellions, spying on them, etc.) and economic exploitation of Lithuanians. Second, persecution weakened the anti-Semitism because Lithuanian Catholics felt a discriminated minority, thus they became more sensitive towards other discriminated groups. Moreover, Jewish book vendors and smugglers were involved in the transportation of Lithuanian books from Eastern Prussia to Lithuania.

In the 19th century, the negative approach of Lithuanian Catholics towards Jews was predetermined by the anti-Judaic tradition inherited from the Middle Ages (the myths of ritual killing viable in rural communities; accusation of God killing) that had obtained a modern form.

An example of noblemen's anti-Judaism could be found in the book "*De moribus tartarorum, lituanorum et moschorum*" by Mykolas Lietuvis published in 1550. Mykolas Lietuvis wrote that the lands of the Polish Kingdom and the Grand Duchy of Lithuania (GDL) were flooded by *pelsima gens Iudaica* (an awful Judaic nation), "who take away the sources of subsistence from Christians in all market places, who do not know a behaviour other than fraud and slander; as the Holy Bible sais this is the most horrible nation of Chaldaenic origin (*ex progenie Chaldaeorum*), reprobate, sinful, unfaithful and sordid".¹⁰ In the GDL, myths of a "Jew-ritual killer of children" existed and were exploited by representatives of the bourgeois class. Alongside growing fear of Judaism, the stereotype of a "Jew-permanent enemy of Christians" formulated by the first Rector of Vilnius University Jesuit Petras Skarga strengthened. Anti-Judaic tendencies popular in the 16th-century GDL transformed the approach of the noblemen to Jews: the specific evaluation of the Jewish character was replaced with the perception of abstract evil committed by Jews against Christians (the killing of God; economic exploitation of Christians; ritual murder, etc.)

Nobleman Liudvikas Vladislavas Kondratovicius, describing the anti-social state of the former territories of the GDL in his "Iškylos iš Vilniaus po Lietuvą" ("*Travels from Vilnius around Lithuania*") (1857-1860), compared Jews to Karaites of Trakai considering the latter a nation originating from respectable Israelites, differently from "Jewish Talmudists".¹¹ Anti-Semitic noblemen referred to Jews as to an unavoidable evil ("noise, dirt, swindles")¹², nevertheless, they admitted that Jews plaid a positive role as trade mediators – supplied peasants with industrial goods that were not produced in the natural economy, brought marine products, salt, etc. Already as early as in the first half of the 19th century, the economic competition between Jews and Lithuanians gave birth to a specific type of anti-Semitism aimed at defending the people. In the second half of the 20th century, this view was employed by the figures of Lithuanian national revival movement V.Kudirka, P.Vileišis, A.Pakalniškis in the publications "*Aušra*", "*Tevynes sargas*", "*Žemaičiu ir Lietuvos apžvalga*".

Certain anti-Judaic aspects can be identified in the writings of an influential 19th-century figure Samogitian Bishop Motiejus Valancius (1801-1875). In his teaching, M.Valancius used to employ criticism of Jewish behaviour and actions in order to

¹⁰ Mykolas Lietuvis. *Apie totoriu, maskvenu ir lietuviu paprocius. (About the Customs of Tartars, Muscovites and Lithuanians)*. Vilnius, 1966. P. 52.

¹¹ Vladislavas Sirokomle. *Iškylos iš Vilniaus po Lietuvą. (Travels from Vilnius around Lithuania)* Vilnius, 1989, p. 39.

¹² *Ibidem*. P. 39.

protect Lithuanian farmers from financial skulduggery and to help Lithuanians to gain some economic weight in crafts and trade prevailed by Jews. M.Valancius did not consider Jews, shopkeepers and innkeepers, evil *per se*. He underlined their evil deeds – spying for the tsarist authorities, promotion of hard drinking, frauds, etc. Motiejus Valancius was a founder of anti-alcoholic (soberness) societies, thus he placed a Jew-innkeeper, evaluated on the basis of moral, rather than economic criteria, on the opposite pole of ethical behaviour. Ca 83 per cent of Catholics in Kaunas province belonged to the soberness brotherhoods which, like in Ireland, were associated with the wave of national movement.¹³ While Jewish innkeepers and landowners earning rather great income were in no way interested in successful activities of soberness societies.¹⁴

Motiejus Valancius proposed a programme for communication with the Jews, which urged “not to trust Jews, not to fraternise with them, to be cautious of deceits, not to tell them secrets, not to give in to the Jews tempting to drink vodka and telling not to obey priests”. According to the bishop “a Jew will treat a Catholic well as long as the latter gives profit to him.”¹⁵ The programme offered by Motiejus Valancius concerning the position Catholics should hold with respect to Jews was neither racist, nor radically anti-Semitic. For him, Christ’s teaching about love to one’s neighbour was above any means of fighting against Jews: “It is not decent for a Catholic to let a Jew into his home or to go to a Jew’s home. Our people should not care about those vagabonds all the time, but Catholics cannot help doing this because Christ taught us to love our neighbour and pray for the persecuted”.¹⁶

Catholic theologians perceiving the world dualistically, as an antithesis of the good and the evil, place Jews on the evil side of the scheme. Ideas of liberalism and socialism were not acceptable for the Lithuanian Catholic Church of the second half of the 19th century. Standard values developed in the evolution of the modern capitalism were considered to be “Jewish” phenomena. The Catholicism positioned “Masonic- Jewish heresies” against the preservation and defence of traditional Christian values. In 1884, Pope Leo VIII in his encyclical *Humanun genus* wrote that Masonism, gathered in a clandestine structure, constituted a genuine source of communist and atheistic propaganda. The Roman Catholic Church accused Masons of disseminating revolutionary, anti-Christian ideas. Consequently, the writings of Lithuanian clergy¹⁷ started speaking about connections of Jews, Masons and Socialists unified by hatred to Catholicism and national values. Jews were associated with property, power, money, and were thought to have a single goal – to gain power. The 1917 Bolshevik revolution in Russia and the numbers of Jews involved in it contributed to further development of the theory of the “international Jewish conspiracy”.

¹³ E.Aleksandravicius. Lietuviu atgimimo kultura (*The Culture of the Lithuanian Revival*). Studies by A.J.Greimas Centre, 2. Istorija, Vilnius, 1998, p. 32-33.

¹⁴ Cf. V.Merkys. Motiejus Valancius. Tarp katalikiško universlumo ir tautiško (In *Between Catholic Universality and Nationalism*). Vilnius, 1999, p. 370-371, 384-385.

¹⁵ M.Valancius.Paaugusių žmonių knygele (*A Booklet for Grown-ups*). Tilže, 1906, p. 43.

¹⁶ Ibidem. P.43.

¹⁷ Trys pašnekesiai ant Nemuno kranto (*Three interviews on the shores of the Nemunas*). Written by Adomas Jakštas [Dambaruskas]. Kaunas, 1906. Ar katalikas gali būti socialistas? (*Can a catholic be a socialist*) Written by a Lithuanian Catholic Kvietkus. Seinai, 1907. Žydai ekonomijos ir visuomenės žvilgsniu (*Jews from the economic and societal perspective*). Written by Dr A. Maliauskas. Kaunas, 1914. Masonai arba parmazonai. (*Masons or Pagans*) Written by A. Maliauskis. Kaunas, 1926.

In the 19th century, Lithuanian Catholics did not propagate racial anti-Semitism popular among Western anti-Semites as they considered it to be an anti-Christian phenomenon. Nonetheless, even in the Catholic writings, elements of the racial anti-Semitism sometimes surfaced (about worthlessness of Jews, Jewish stagnation in the course of history since they still demonstrated their exclusiveness and followed only the rules of the Talmud which was anti-Christian; they were considered a separate social group and people were urged to buy at Christian shopkeepers).

The first anti-Judaic writing in Lithuanian was “Talmudas Židu”(The Talmud of Jews) by Serafinas Kušeliauskas, printed in 1879¹⁸. The book was not original – S.Kušeliauskas wrote a pastiche of the statements of convert Jakov Brafman’s book “Kniga o kagale” (1870). The Talmud was described as a “foolishness”, a collection of witchcraft and nonsense, in which Jews slandered Christ and his supporters and tried to harm Christians on every possible occasion, as this was the teaching of the Talmud. In fact, S.Kušeliauskas criticised not only Judaism, but also Protestantism, because according to Catholics, only the Roman Catholicism was a true and correct teaching leading to the salvation of the soul.

Anti-Judaic statements in the field of theology were repeated by priest, professor of St. Petersburg Spiritual Academy J.B. Pranaitis. In 1911, he was invited by prosecutors to provide his expertise in Beilis’s case, where he made a conclusion that Jewish religious laws permitted them to use blood in religious rituals.¹⁹ His book “*Christianus in Talmude Iudaecorum, sive Ribbinicae doctrinae de christianis secreta*” was published in St. Petersburg during the years of the upsurge of anti-Semitism in Russia (1892) and was translated into German, Russian, Italian, Polish and Lithuanian.²⁰ In principal, J. Pranaitis based himself on the books by Johan Andreas Eisenmenger²¹ and August Rohling²², classics of religion-oriented anti-Semitism. *Entdecktes Judenthum* by Eisenmenger set a target “to help Jews admit their fallacy and learn about the light of the Christianity.” His study interprets Judaism as a collection of stupid prejudices and degenerated law. Eisenmenger blamed Jews for the killing of God, profanation of Christ and constant harming of Christians. Most of European anti-Judaic authors reiterated the ideas by Eisenmenger. A founded presumption might be made that Lithuanian propagators of anti-Judaism were better acquainted with German, Polish and Russian literature than with the original sources of the Talmud, though J. Pranaitis spoke Hebrew and Aramaic.

In the forward of the book, J. Pranaitis wrote that his purpose was to “make every reader understand what kind of eyes Jews, followers of the Talmud, look with at a Christian man”²³. J. Pranaitis gives many quotations from Torahs and the Talmud

¹⁸ Talmudas židu sulig priglaidimu knigeles musu žydai. (*On the Talmud of Jews*)

¹⁹ A. S. Tagier. Carskaja Rosija i delo Beilisa. Moskva, 1933. P. 17-19.

²⁰ Krikščionis žydu Talmude arba slaptinas rabinu mokslas apie krikščionybę. (*Christians in the Jewish Talmud and Secretive Teaching of Rabbis about the Christianity*). Collected by Rev. J. B. Pranaitis. Translated into Lithuanian by A. J. Seinai, 1912. The book by J. Pranaitis published in 1937 in Warsaw was illustrated with photos of Lithuanian priests who suffered Bolshevik slavery in 1918 - 1920 (Ks. J. Pranaitis. Chrzescijanin w Talmudzie tydowskim. Warszawa, 1937).

²¹ Johannes Andreas Eisenmenger. Entdecktes Judenthum. Bd. 1-2. Königsberg [Berlin], 1710.

²² August Rohling. Talmudjude. Münster, 1871.

²³ Krikščionis žydu Talmude arba slaptasis rabinu mokslas apie krikščionybę (*Christians in the Jewish Talmud and Secretive Teaching of Rabbis about the Christianity*).... P. 5.

taken without a context reflecting Jewish hostility towards Christian religion and Christ's teaching, ideas showing that Jews may not do good to a Christian (*goy*), the deceit of a *goy* is permitted, that Jews have to harm Christians and eradicate them.²⁴ J. Pranaitis places Judaism and Catholicism at two different extremes of the scale, saying that "Jews are praying, begging the God to ruin that vicious, godless kingdom of Rome, i.e. our holy Catholic Church, meanwhile the Pope tells us to pray even for worthless Jews in order to make them acknowledge Christ, our Almighty".²⁵

The book by Pranaitis was popular both in Poland, and in Lithuania in the first half of the 20th century. It was a frequent source of reference of anti-Semitic authors in inter-war Poland.²⁶ In 1933, V.M. Grigas pastiched some parts of Pranaitis's book and published them in the anti-Semitic publication "*Tautos žodis*".²⁷

The tradition of the Talmud rejected the New Testament prohibiting Jews from studying the Christian Bible "because of its attractiveness" and in order not to allow them to be distracted by the reading of the Bible from intensive studies of Torahs. There was a prohibition to non-Jews to read Torahs. The Jewish process of prayer was complicated, strange and unknown. In the appearance, Orthodox Jews differed considerably from Christians surrounding them. A belief in extraordinary Jewish secrets, books and rabbis with magic powers was formed. Leader of the Lithuanian national revival Vincas Kudirka (1858-1899), being a positivist and rejecting any medieval prejudices, also wrote about "the blight of Jews with their dirt and self-neglect polluting the air with secrets of the Talmud, with the dirty and virtuous morale distorted by the harm made to Christians".²⁸

IV.

Anti-Judaic prejudices about Jews kidnapping children and using Christian blood to "bake matzos" have always been deep-seated in rural communities. Maybe it sounds paradoxical, but medieval images of "ritual killing" strengthened at the end of the 1930s when Lithuania was undergoing the processes of economic modernisation and the growth of the level of public education. From 1935 to 1938, quite a large number of incidents about missing children and young girls which were thought to have been kidnapped by Jews were registered (1935 Telšiai, Varniai, 1936 Taurage, Krekenava, Taurages Naumestis, Kretinga, 1938 Taurage (the greatest riot on 31 March 1939), Šilale, Žiežmariai, Rokiškis, Trakai).

Most Christian writers, guided by the principles of the love to one's neighbour, assessed the accusation of Jews of ritual murders and force (elimination) against Jews as anti-Christian acts, however, the theological explanation of Christ's suffering and

²⁴ Ibidem. P. 72 - 84.

²⁵ Ibidem. P. 92

²⁶ Napisał Rabboni. Co Talmud movi o chrzescijanach? Wilno, 1910. A. Niemojewski. Dusza tydowska w zwierkiadle Talmudu. Warszawa, 1921. Tadeusz Zaderecki. Talmud w ogniu wiekow. Warszawa, 1935. St. Treciak. Talmud o gojach a kwestia zydowska w Polsce. Warszawa, 1939.

²⁷ V.M. Grigas. Krikšcionis žydu Talmude (*A Christian in the Jewish Talmud*)// *Tautos žodis*. 1933 04 -15 05 15. A separate book: V. M. Grigas. Krikšcionis žydu Talmude (*A Christian in the Jewish Talmud*). Kaunas, 1933.

²⁸ *Tevynes varpai. (The Bells of the Homeland)*. 1890. No. 10 // V. Kudirka. *Collected Writings*. Vol. 2. Vilnius, 1990. P. 457.

his killing²⁹ as well as negative approach towards the Talmud were tinted with features of medieval accusations.

The Catholic propagated anti-Semitism was caused by certain domestic economic factors: Jews having better education and experience in trade business, as well as broad contacts with Jewish communities all over Europe, were more active in economic terms. Social-economic weakness of Lithuanian Catholics gave rise to the dissatisfaction in Jewish domination in trade and crafts in the 19th century.

In the 19th century, certain stereotypes of Jewish behaviour were developed within the Polish and Lithuanian society:

- Jews seek to rule the world. This stereotype was mainly used by the elite. It has not been identified among Lithuanian rural people (in their folklore, stories).
- Jewish establishment in the economic sphere and exploitation of Christians. This stereotype was widespread in all social and religious groups.

The third stereotype concerning the dominance of Jews in culture and arts and making European culture “Jewish” (analogous to the theories by Richard Wagner)³⁰ popular among Western European anti-Semites was not developed in Lithuania owing to the weakness of Jewish emancipation and closed nationalistic nature of the Lithuanian culture.

Due to the lack of deeper knowledge about the life of the Jewish community, in the 19th century and early in the 20th century, Lithuanian rural communities had some weird horrific stories, close to myths, about Jewish extraterrestrial capacities, their links with Devil, terrifying rituals, use of Christian blood, ritual murder of children, etc.³¹ The files on religion of the Lithuanian Folklore Archive register rather many cases of medieval fear existing as late as in the 20th century, usually associated with the Jewish use of Christian blood in their rituals, the ability of Jews to harm a gentile person in various situations, to interfere with their prayer, etc.³²

Popular Lithuanian jokes about people of other religions or nationalities always featured a Jew who was usually made a fool and deceived, while Gypsies always swindled a Lithuanian (a human being).³³ Nicknames were given to Lithuanians, ethnonyms – a Jew and a Gypsy – always had a negative shade. These words were

²⁹ Senowes pripatintiej poteraį kuris pagal senuju knigu padawymr ir senu tmoniu kalbiejima surinka, surasze ir isdrukawodyna senos gadynes kunigas. (*Catechism*) Wilnius, 1909. P. 25. Platesnis katekizmas arba Šv. Rymo katalikø bažnycios mokslo išguldymas patvirtintas Žemaičiu ir Vilniaus vyskupijoms. (*Catechism*) Kaunas, 1908. P. 18.

³⁰ R. Wagner. Das Judenthum in der Musik. Leipzig, 1869.

³¹ L. Anglickiene. Žydas lietuviu pasakomojoje tautosakoje (*A Jew in the Lithuanian Narrative Folklore*)// Liaudies kultura. 1996. No. 5. P. 51 –52.

³² J. Mardosa. Lietuviu - žydu santykiai Lietuvos miesteliuose ir kaimuose (1920- 1940) (*Lithuanian-Jewish Relations in Lithuanian Towns and Villages*)// Atminties dienos (*Days of Memory*). An international conference in commemoration of the 50th anniversary of the Liquidation of Vilnius ghetto. 11-16 Oct 1993. Vilnius, 1995. P. 378.

³³ Lietuviu samojis. Liaudies anekdotai. (*Lithuanian wit. Popular jokes*). Prepared for press by J. Balys. Kaunas, 1937. P. 6.

used to characterise a swindler, a deceitful and tricky person, and a liar³⁴. The devaluation of the Jewish lifestyles and rules of ethics is a frequent phenomenon in the Lithuanian narrative folklore and 19th century didactic writings. A binary opposition between a human being (a Lithuanian/Samogitian-farmer) and a Jew was formed. Samogitian Bishop Motiejus Valancius in his booklet “Paaugusiu žmoniu knygele” attributes Jews, Gypsies, “Hungarians”, bear-performers to the negative pole of the ethical behaviour: Jews subsist on fraud, they falsify goods, engage in smuggling, usury, steal, spy for tsarist authorities, torture animals (a reference to the ritual slaughter of animals), while Gypsies are rustlers and cheats, “Hungarians” sell ineffective medicines, etc. The human being (a Lithuanian/Samogitian-farmer) represented the positive moral characteristics, while Jews often represented the dark (infernal) powers. There was a popular belief that Jew “used to attract the devil”, thus, if a Lithuanian ran into a Jew on his way, this was considered a good sign, since the devil should reincarnate into the Jew.³⁵ Beating, deception of or derision at a Jew was considered a good trick in the folklore and writings of the 19th century³⁶. The didactic booklet “Žydas ir dzukas” (*A Jew and a Dzukas*) published in 1912 tells of a Lithuanian deceiving a Jew and battering the latter with a stick. The booklet is a pastiche of a Polish version stressing the programme of “buying at own people” and the disasters brought to Lithuanians by Jews – exploitation and promotion of heavy drinking (According to this programme, the Jews are interested in making Lithuanians drink as much as possible, otherwise the “geschäft” is poor).³⁷

Often mythological stories used to interfere with the real everyday life and shape the opposition of Lithuanian Catholics (to serve for a Jew, to be a farm hand with a Jew was considered a disgrace³⁸) and their view towards Jews. In inter-war Lithuania, myths about ritual manslaughter were interwoven with criminal incidents, when in various counties children and young women used to disappear mysteriously (later, they were usually found or came back). Young people in the countryside often ridiculed at the Judaic religion, by thrusting a bird into a synagogue or otherwise interfering with the offices.³⁹

The 19th-century Lithuanian fiction contains no descriptions of naturalistic anti-Semitic scenes (about dirty, filthy, stinking, genetically inferior Jewish degenerates). Propaganda of this kind surfaced in the writings of the late 19th-early 20th century. The portrait of a Jew presented in Polish literature gave a more complete picture of the developments in the 19th-century Polish society. Polish literature revealed the influence of Haskala’s ideas on the Jewish community, the aim to integrate maskilims, the necessity to use Polish rather than the “artificial” Yiddish language. Philosemit Adam Mickevich in his “Pan Tadeusz”. (1834) depicted an ideal Jew: innkeeper Jankiel who observed Judaic traditions and was a patriot of Poland at the

³⁴ Butkus. The Lithuanian nicknames of ethnonymic origin // *Indogermanische Forschungen*. Zeitschrift fuer Indogermanistik und allgemeine Sprachwissenschaft. Hrsg. W. P. Schmid. Bd. 100, 1995. P. 224

³⁵ P. Višinskis. Antropologine Žemaičiu charakteristika (*Anthropologic Characteristics of Samogitians*) // Collected writings. Vilnius, 1964. P. 214.

³⁶ Kun. Kaz. Macius. Vainora, žydu budelis. (*Vainora, an executioner of Jews*). A short story. 1914.

³⁷ Žydas ir dzukas. (*A Jew and a Dzukas*) A merry short comedy. Adapted by Vaidevutis. Chicago, 1912. P. 15-17.

³⁸ L. Anglickiene. Ibidem. P. 52. J. Mardosa. Ibidem. P. 379. I. Koncius. Žemaičio šnekos. (*Talking by a Samogitian*) Vilnius, 1990. P. 64 - 65..

³⁹ L. Anglickiene. Ibidem, p. 50. J. Mardosa. Ibidem. P. 377- 379.

same time. Polish writers of the end of the 19th century, representatives of the positivist school (Josef Ignacij Krashevski, Elisa Orzheshkova, Boleslav Prus) wrote about Jewish community among Polish Catholics and raised the issue of the necessity of cultural and social assimilation leading to harmony between Poles and Jews. Questions like these were never raised among Lithuanian intelligentsia in the second half of the 19th century because Lithuanian-Jewish cultural contacts were minimal: the nations hardly knew anything or were not too willing to know about each other.

It has to be noted that social differences between Lithuanian Jews living in countryside and those in towns (*shtetls*) were not as great as in towns of Central and Eastern Europe, where Jews used to hold high offices in banking, journalism, medicine, universities. Jewish intelligentsia there originated from well-off commercial social classes and was prone to integration. Lithuanian Jewish communities lived in poor existence in the Pales of Settlement in towns suffering from economic depression. Few Jews in Lithuania were *haute bourgeoisie*, thus the predominant stratum was *Lümpenproletarier* subsisting on irregular income (*Luftmensch*, i.e. a person who lives on air, the term to describe economic existence of the poor, was popular among the Jews of Vilnius).

In Europe of the 19th century, the strengthening cult of nature and land broadened the gap between people engaged in agriculture and those not dealing with it. German anti-Semite Otto Glagau wrote in a newspaper of Vienna that “all Jews and persons of Jewish origin are born opponents of agriculture”.⁴⁰ The positioning of natural economy represented by a Lithuanian agriculturist, against commercial financial activities, represented by a Jews, resulted in disrespect to Jews and their treatment as worthless people. Ignas Koncius, a recorder of people’s everyday life, wrote that when referring to Jews, Samogitians never used the word “*žydą*” (Jew), they always called them by the diminutive “*žydelis*”; it was a disgrace to serve for a Jew, Jews were not people, since only those employed in agriculture were supposed to be the real people.⁴¹ In Lithuanian, the word “*žydelis*”, differently from the Polish word “*żydek*”, had no pejorative connotation. According to Mykolas Biržiška, the word “*žydelis*” used by Lithuanians reflected “a friendly, neighbourly disposition, warm feelings”⁴². The words “*žydelis*” or “*žydukas*” might gain a negative shade in a specific context of use. The word could be made negative by the intonation of the speaker. Lithuanian ethnonym “*žydą*” differs from the negative Russian “*zhid*” (in 1780, the official ethnonym “*evrej*” came into use in all documents of the Russian empire, replacing the word “*žyd – jude – judaeos*” originating from Central and Western Europe). It denotes not only the nationality, but also the believers of the Judaic religion.

According to Koncius, Samogitian communities considered that only Samogitian-speaking farmers were people. Masters-landowners, noblemen, Jewish shopkeepers and merchants (there is a Samogitian saying: “What can you expect from a Jew – he is

⁴⁰ P. J. Pulzer. *The rise of political antisemitism in Germany and Austria*. New York, 1964. P. 66.

⁴¹ I. Koncius. *Žemaicio šnekos. (Talking by a Samogitian)* Vilnius, 1996. P. 61 - 64, 76 - 77. Cf. also: J. Mardosa. *Lietuviu - žydu santykiai Lietuvos miesteliuose ir kaimuose (1920 - 1940) (Lithuanian-Jewish Relations in Lithuanian Towns and Villages)* // *Atminties dienos. (Days of Memory)*. An international conference in commemoration of the 50th anniversary of the Liquidation of Vilnius ghetto. 11-16 Oct 1993. Vilnius, 1995. P. 347- 382.

⁴² M. Biržiška. *Ibidem*. P. 38.

not a human being⁴³), as well as priests (since they are above human beings) were not considered to be people. Ethnograph Liudvikas Adomas Jucevicius (1813-1846) investigating the lifestyles of the Samogitian region, noticed that “Samogitians have very strong links with their native place”, “they show a profound hatred of the people of other lands or other faiths⁴⁴”.

Poet Czeslav Milosz gave a precise definition of the stereotypic Jew in the 19th century romantic Polish literature which was read by Lithuanians intelligentsia, too:

“The quintessence of strangeness is Jews. Their sphere covers financial operations, ranging from the largest to the smallest, and they are inseparable from dishonesty. Thus, Jews deceive, swindle, blackmail, act as secret accomplices to crimes as much as they can <...> Thus, Jews recognise no other values than material gain. Moreover, they are dirty not only morally, but also physically <...> loathing Jews is equal to loathing evil, and they lie in every corner of the society in wait for opportunities to entangle someone into their filthy (always filthy) transactions. Turning back on Marxist terminology for a moment, we would say that in the feudal system, i.e. system based of land ownership, every financial transaction has to look somewhat dirty.”⁴⁵

In Western Europe, the invitation *natura semper sibi consona* (a state of natural order) – to return to nature, to the innate natural state was popular as an opposition to urbanistic liberal (“Jewish”) culture. Lithuanian writings, too, contain some instances when a Jew-evil is identified with urbanism (probably unconsciously): in 1885, a correspondent of “*Aušra*” magazine encouraged to drive “Jewish ragamuffins” from villages to towns, at least to towns, and leave them for the grace of God there”.⁴⁶

V.

Lithuanian attitude to the Jews was familiar to the anthropologists as the singling out of “one’s own people and strangers” – people of different religion, people from a different region or a different social group, irrespective of their nationality, Jewish, German, Russian, or Polish – thus classifying the outer world. The Jews differed

⁴³ I. Koncius. Žemaičio šnekos//(*Samogitian Talking*), Vilnius, 1996, p.61. Ibidem. P. 80. In 1939, during a, anti-Semitic incident in Leipalingis market place, rumours were spread that “Jews cut a human being to pieces with a knife” (30 Jun 1939 Report of the Chief of Interrogations to the Director of State Security Department // Lithuanian State Archive (hereinafter - LSA). Doc.col. 378. The Archive of the State Security Department of the Republic of Lithuania. Inv. sch.10. File 158. P. 33).

⁴⁴ L. A. Jucevicius. Žemaičiu žemes prisiminimai (*Memories of the Samogitian Land*)// Collected writings. Vilnius, 1959. P. 444 - 445.

⁴⁵ Rodziewiczówna // Cz. Milosz. Tevynes ieškojimas. (*In Search of Homeland*) Vilnius, 1992. P. 29 - 30. Writings of the end of the 19th century -beginning of the 20th century defending the Lithuanian people contain extensive negative characteristics of a typical Jew (Musu žydai ir kaip nu anu turime gitiesi: Written by Ramojus. N.Y., 1886. A. Jakštas-Dambrauskas. Tris pašnekesi ant Nemuno kranto. (*Three interviews on the shores of the Nemunas*). Kaunas, 1906. Žydai ir dzukas. (*A Jew and a Dzukas*). A merry short comedy. Chicago, 1912. A. Maliauskis. Žydai ekonomijos ir visuomenės žvilgsniu. (*Jews from the economic and societal perspective*). Vilnius, 1914.)

⁴⁶ Auszra. 1885. Nr. 7-8. P. 234. Jews concentrated in towns might have created an impression that they were very many in Lithuania. Lithuanian Minister of the Interior Rapolas Skipitis wrote that in the first years of independence Lithuanian Jews moved to larger towns and gave such an impression (particularly in Kaunas) owing to their dominance (R. Skipitis. Nepriklausoma Lietuva statant. (*Building independent Lithuania*) Chicago, 1961. P. 286.).

from Lithuanians in all aspects of the one's own people and strangers classification: the linguistic – anthropological (racial) aspect, the religious aspect, the customs' aspect, the class – professional aspect, and etc. They dressed and looked differently. In the former lands of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania, where the Jews based their common identity on the ritual practising of Judaism, the studying of Torah – Talmud, the Yiddish language and the cultural aggression expressed through this language, and on trading, they aroused the suspicion of the non-Jews which formed a negative image of the Jews. There was especially strong religious–cultural alienation, which was noted by both the Lithuanian and Jewish authors, and included mutual estrangement, and “invisible wall” remained between both the nations until the annihilation of the Jewish community.

In Lithuania, differently from Germany, Poland and Russia, the modern ideas propagated by the Maskilims did not elicit a more active response due to the orthodoxy of the Litvaks that rejected the positivism since it demanded a secular attitude to life and led to assimilation and to “turning away from the Torah”, according to the orthodox Jews. The principle of the German Maskilims, “Jews at home, Germans in the street”, did not take root in Lithuania due to the segregation orders of the tsarist authorities forbidding the Jews to engage in agricultural activity and to live the villages and thus socially separating the nations, also the populist anti-Semitism, strong alienation of Catholicism and Judaism, and the lack of Jewish attraction to the Lithuanian culture. The ideas of the world reorganisation – improvement declared in the Russian, Polish or German literature might have attracted the Jewish youth and served as an encouragement for assimilation, while the peasant culture of Lithuania was orientated not to the wider European but to the narrower national content. The existence of the Litvaks in the shtetl was isolationist in character, the ghetto prevented the Jews' from coming into closer contact with the non-Jews. It was the language, not the religion that became for Lithuanians the chief element uniting the national community in the national rebirth period, while a common language did not connect the Jews and the Lithuanians. The Jews, though disunited religiously, politically, and by languages, Yiddish, Russian, Hebrew or Polish, were joined by a concept suggested by the Judaism that the Jews are a united national group. Lithuanians who spoke Russian or Polish would split from the nation.

At the end of 19th century, the Lithuanian nationalism based itself on a dichotomy between the following feelings: the emphasising of Lithuanian superiority over other nations (by stressing the historic role of the Great Duchy of Lithuania and the honourable past) and the inferiority complex caused by the undeveloped social structure, lack of unity among the Lithuanians, etc. Lithuanian nationalism manifested itself by the aim of “ethnic-linguistic purity”, i.e. the strengthening of the Lithuanian language and national identity. Thus, by emphasising the significance of a mono - cultural society, other national groups were culturally devaluated. Lithuanians did not aim at restricting the rights of the Jews in the Lithuanian society via legal elimination (since the tsarist authorities were imposing similar restrictions on the Catholics), but the forms of “cultural fight” against the dominance of the Jews were accentuated from the first half of 19th century already. The “cultural fight” was popular in the inter-war period Lithuania among the Catholic-orientated authors and organisations, and in the Nationalist parties and societies.⁴⁷

⁴⁷ Archbishop Vincentas Borisevicius (1887-1946), writing in 1939 on the moral elements in the works by Valancius and referring to the anti-Jewish means employed by the Nazi in Germany, noted: “Condemning the racist theory together with Archbishop Valancius, we must also warn our people

VI.

Anti-Semitism of the second half of 19th century in East Central Europe was a modern society phenomenon caused by the development of nationalism and capitalistic relations, comprising certain ideas and concepts (e.g. racial segregation) that were not characteristic of the old anti-Judaism forms⁴⁸. In 1879, a radical German politician and writer Wilhelm Marr mentioned for the first time the term “anti-Semitism” that replaced the old “Jewish phobia” term (expressing the Christian antipathy against the Jews) which no longer conformed to the pseudo-academic, nationalist and anti-Christian ideology.

The end of the 1870s is the turning point in the modern anti-Semitism history: after the bankruptcy of financial companies in Germany and Austria, a wide anti-Semitic movement emerged, and anti-Semitic parties were established aiming at stopping the emancipation of the Jews and fighting the social consequences of the emancipation, i.e. curbing the influence of the Jews on the economic, political and cultural life.

In Lithuania, a comprehensive anti-Semitic ideology was not created and the anti-Semitism here did not develop extreme forms, confining itself to the propagation of economic fight against the Jews. Analysing the roots of anti-Semitism in the end of 19th century Lithuania, it should be noted that the anti-Semitism was stimulated by the difficult economic situation of the Jewish community, as well as by the fight of Jews and non-Jews for the same means of subsistence. After the 1861 abolition of serfdom, Lithuanian peasants started moving to the cities and engaging in trade and crafts, professions earlier dominated by the Jews. 19th century Lithuanian authors defending Lithuanian peasants from various forms of exploitation and cheating drew attention to the economic struggle that caused the Jewish-Lithuanian conflicts and the anti-Semitism. The struggle was stimulated by the Jews' efforts to manage economically under the conditions created by the tsarist discriminating laws. On the other hand, the resourcefulness of the Jewish tradesmen, their skills in selling would arouse envy of the neighbouring nations, who considered the Jewish trading ability, formed in the run of many centuries, as a perfidy and the swindling of the Christians. However, the initiators of the Zionism movement in Eastern Europe had also noted that the commercial methods employed by the Jewish traders stimulated the anti-Semitism as well. Rules of the Torah-Talmud regulating the relations of the Jews with the non-Jews did not forbid the Jews to profit from the non-Jews. The Jewish traders, as any other traders, did not avoid profiting by dirty methods, while the authors of anti-Semitic books and articles would reveal not the economic but the national aspects, thus generalising the traits of Jewish character. Vincas Kudirka wrote that “one may encounter dishonest merchants among the Christians, but one will not find a single honest Jewish trader.”⁴⁹

about the Jewish deception that is still rather often now. However, declaring the war, we must only confine ourselves to the cultural means of fight”. (Borisevicius, V. The moral element in the works by and activity of Archbishop Motiejus Valancius // works of the Congress of the Academy of Sciences of Lithuanian Catholics, 1939. vol. 3 Kaunas, 1940. p. 63- 64).

⁴⁸ Yehuda Bauer. In search of a definition of anti-Semitism // Approaches to anti-Semitism. Context and curriculum. Ed. by Michael Brown. New York, Jerusalem, 1994. P. 10.

⁴⁹ Apie pardavinycijas (*On the shops*) // Kudirka, V. Works. Vilnius, 1990. vol.2. p. 766.

The Jewish traders and craftsmen⁵⁰ concentrated in the pale of settlements, the “geographical ghettos”, were forced to lower the prices and content themselves with a smaller profit, which generally was not that large earlier either, in order to survive the competition, especially after the banishment from the villages in 1908 – 1911. The operative activity period of the Jews was shorter than that of the Christians due to the Sabbath, which would cut the trade operations even more. Many of the city Jews continually suffered privations: an accident, illness, disablement, the old age of the family head or a manufacture crisis would lead a family to starvation. The Christians encountered difficulties in the cities too, but they could move to the countryside or to other Russian provinces, while the Jewish proletariat was “shut” in the “pale of settlements”. Emigration, the scale of which especially grew after the anti – Semitic pogroms, also impoverished the Jewish nation: the best and the healthiest Jews were leaving, while the poor and the weak stayed and submerged the Jews into a severe poverty in the cities and towns.

The restricted rights of the Catholic inhabitants for occupying state service and buying land aggravated the conditions of the Jewish. Unable to get employed in state service, possessing no land, and unable to move to the inner provinces (due to money shortage and conservatism – unwillingness to leave the native place), the middle class Catholics were forced to look for means of subsistence in trade and the crafts “where they had to face fierce Jews fighting for their economic existence.”⁵¹.

19th century Lithuanian authors borrowed part of the anti – Semitic ideas from the neighbouring countries where the anti - Judaism and anti – Semitism would merge with the nationalism and competition in the economic sector. During the 19th century industrial revolution in Europe, assets became capital that could circulate freely, be pawned or sold. The capitalism ignored any sentiments and rejected the old agricultural, “feudal” values. Competition became the driving force of modern society. Representatives of nationalism-awakened nations began forcing their way into the small and medium economy, pushing the Jews out of their traditional occupations. The anti – Semitism in the works of the national rebirth activists, urging the nation to push the Jews out of the crafts and trade was largely conditioned by the Jewish – non-Jewish competition for the means of subsistence, not by the low quality of the Jewish traders and craftsmen’ services or the swindling (though there were cases like that too).

A reporter of the *Auszra* daily wrote in 1885: the Jewish “ragamuffins are a burden to our farmer, they profit from his sweat. The Jews have occupied all the spheres of small economy (inns, shops) and the small towns, keeping “our land in their hands”⁵². A celebrated Lithuanian society activist and manufacturer Petras Vileišis (1851 – 1926) published in 1886 a brochure, *Our Jews and how to Defend against them*,

⁵⁰ According to the 1897 population census, 204 673 Jews lived in the Vilnius Province, and 83.6 percent of the Jewish population was concentrated in the cities. After the 1908 – 1911 banishment from the countryside, the number grew till 90 percent. 95.5 percent of the Jews who lived in the present Lithuanian territory belonged to the petty bourgeoisie, or, 63.5 percent of the petty bourgeoisie were Jews, but they were mainly concentrated in the shtetles. (se.: Aleksandravicius, E, Kulikauskas, E Under the Tsar Rule. 19th century Lithuania. Vilnius, 1996. p. 233.).

⁵¹ Ob otmene certy evrejskoj osedlosti, 1911. Dokladnaja zapiska // MAB RS BF - 26 12. p. 14.

⁵² *Auszra*. 1885. No.7-8. p. 233 - 234.

directed against the economic influence of the Jews in Lithuania. Articles inviting the Lithuanians to engage more actively in commercial activity and the crafts, thus pushing out the Jews, were published in the “Lithuanian Farmer” calendar that was popular among the Lithuanian peasants. The authors of the *Tevynes sargas* and *Žemaičiu ir Lietuvos apžvalga* dailies (Pakalniškis, K., Urbanavicius, P.) would assume a similar position⁵³. However such means of struggle should not necessarily be associated with anti-Semitism, considering that competition for the cod market was the most essential issue. The competitive struggle between the Jews and Lithuanians could have resulted in anti-Semitism only where it was related to Judophobic elements. Thus, P. Vileišis book urging the Lithuanians to get into trade and crafts and push the Jews out of these sectors was published together with the anti-Jewish text by Kušeliauskas “Talmudas Žydu” (“Jewish Talmud”).

VII.

The journalistic writings of Vincas Kudirka, the leader of the Lithuanian national rebirth, influenced to a considerable extent by the Polish Nationalist Democrats’ (Poland’s League, 1883, National League, 1893, Stronictwo narodowe Demokratyczne, 1897) “buy from your own people” (*kupuj u swoich*) ideology, feature all the signs of the modern anti – Semitism. The title of the first article by Kudirka published in *Auszra* was “Why Jews do not eat pork”, an apocryphal story known from the Middle Ages telling how Christ converted one Jew into a pig, punishing the Jews for lack of religious belief⁵⁴.

Kudirka criticised the Jews because they would engage in secret whisky trade, handle stolen goods and pay for them in whisky, and incite discord between the gentry and the peasants. In the journalistic works of Kudirka, the Jews are referred to as “spiders spinning their web” and “ticks on the body of the world⁵⁵”. On the other hand, Kudirka’s evaluation of the Jews’ socio-economic status includes a dichotomy between a “Jew-Bolshevik” and a “Jew-capitalist and exploiter”. Kudirka saw the Jew as “dirty and filthy,” but simultaneously as a “smart and dangerous exploiter”. In the words of Kudirka, the evil lies in the fact that “our Christians are more inclined to believe the jabbering of the Jews in the inn than the sermon of the priest in the Church”⁵⁶.

Kudirka’s indignation at the Jews did not confine itself to the economic anti – Semitism. Motifs of the racial anti – Semitism may also be traced in his rhetoric, as well as the image of “the Jew -- an eternal enemy of the Christians” taken from the traditional forms of the Christian anti – Judaism, and the statement on immutability of the Jews (the Jews have always been aiming at destroying the Christianity).

⁵³ Vytautas. Jews in villages // *Tevynes sargas* . 1898. No. 10 - 11.

⁵⁴ Kapsas, V. Why Jews do not eat pork // *Auszra* vol. 1-4 (25 - 28). p.160 -161. Kudirka was apparently influenced by the Polish folklore that has a similar legend (Bartoszewski, W. Polish folk culture and the Jews // Poles and Jews. Myth and reality in the historical context. An international conference. Ed. J. Micgeil, R. Scott, H. B. Segel. N. Y.: Columbia UP, P.492). Similar legends are found in the folklore of nearly all the European nations (Žr. Claudine Fabre- Vassas. La bete singuliere. Les Juifs, les Chretiens et le cochon. Paris, 1994. p. 107- 109.).

⁵⁵ *Tevynes varpai*.1891.No. 6 // Kudirka, V. Works. Vilnius, 1990. vol. 2. p. 481.

⁵⁶ *Tevynes varpai*. 1890. No.6 // Kudirka, V. Ibid. p. 481

*“The Semites and the Aryans have been fighting and hating each other for ages. The modern anti – Semitism is simply a period in the continuation of this eternal fight showing that the Aryans have felt a more intense pressure put on them by the Semitic Hydra and are trying to liberate themselves”*⁵⁷. In the journalistic works by Kudirka, the elements of anti – Judaism and the modern racial anti - Semitism merge, presenting the Jew as evil not because the devil is inciting him to the evil-doing but because the devil itself (i.e. the evil itself) has reincarnated in the Jew. Thus, following the West European anti – Semites, Kudirka believed that the Jew would always remain an immutable Jew, an exploiter, despite the converting and the assimilation. This reminds of the racial approach of modern times, which was built on biological differences of Jews implying “cultural and physical” differences. Kudirka related the activities of the Jews to the Masonic theory of conspiracy. Quoting Eduard Drumont, the author of a popular anti – Semitic book *La France juive* (1886) and *volens nolens* repeating the thoughts of Fiodor Dostoyevski, he wrote that the Jew will only integrate into the society when it will be useful for him and when the secrets of the Jewry (the Masonry) will order him to, also stating that education and science may not force the Jew to become a useful society member since “even the highest education is unable to clean off the Jew the dirt characteristic of the lowest layers of the Jewry [...] If one does not want to make himself dirty, one should not allow a Jew come near him; if one does not want to make his society dirty, one should not allow a Jew into it!”⁵⁸. The image of the Jew created by the modern anti - Semitism manifested itself in the works of Kudirka by the emphasis laid on the physical and cultural difference of the Jews that neither the assimilation nor the integration could alter.

Kudirka and other publicists based their anti – Semitism not on a true knowledge of the Jews and their culture but only on the observation of their everyday life. The poverty and the dirtiness of the Jews would strike the eye of the observer and become one of the key elements characterising the community. Many Lithuanian publicists writing on the Jews used the image of the “dirty and filthy” Jew. Valancius wrote that “the Jewish women of big cities, though dressed up, always smell bad”⁵⁹, while Kudirka said that “the Jews are one of the dirtiest creatures. Every Jew is dirty, slovenly, mangy, lice-ridden, etc. Not without necessity do Lithuanians call the Jew stench”⁶⁰. In the words of rationalist Kudirka, hygienic cleanliness is affecting the spirit of the person: “a dirty and slovenly person who is not disgusted at abdominal things will also be less disgusted at doing evil”⁶¹.

VII.

In the years of elections to the Russian State Duma (1906 – 1912), Jews and Lithuanians developed a form of political co-operation from which both sides benefited. The Jews and the Lithuanians would arrange for supporting the same candidates and form a joint Lithuanian – Jewish voters’ block against the block of the

⁵⁷ *Tevynes varpai* . 1890. No.4 // Kudirka, V. Ibid. p. 438. See.: Sužiedelis, S. “The Kaunas Ghetto: day after day”, by Tory, A. // A. Tory. *The Kaunas Ghetto: day after day*. Vilnius, 2000. p. X.

⁵⁸ Kudirka, V. Ibid. p. 457.

⁵⁹ Valancius, M. *Book of a Grown-up Person*. Tilže, 1906. p. .31.

⁶⁰ Kudirka, V. Ibid. p. 457.

⁶¹ Kudirka, V. Ibid. p. 763 -764.

Polish gentry⁶². Thus, a basis was provided for the rapprochement of the Jewish and Lithuanian political elite, whereas in Poland, the political anti – Semitism intensified and grew into a boycott of Jewish shops in Warsaw, 1912, organised by the leader of the nationalists Roman Dmowski. The rapprochement of the Jewish and Lithuanian intelligentsia during the election to the State Duma had been preconditioned by the political calculation *quid pro quo*. The coalition was formed only in Kaunas province, whereas in Vilnius town and the province as well as in Kaunas town the Jews could do away without any support of other nation/social groups and nominated their own candidates. The coalition in Kaunas province, much supported by Antanas Smetona, was realised when the coalition of the town residents and the Polish nobility failed. Meanwhile, in Kaunas town only the Jewish deputies were elected to the State Duma to represent town residents. Disappointed at such a development, influential public figure of Lithuania Jonas Basanavicius stated that the Jews of Kaunas and other Lithuanian towns remained “thoroughly strange to our people” as they used to be.⁶³ The establishment of Lithuanian consumer societies and shops in some areas of Lithuania at the start of 20th century, in the organising of which the Catholic priests actively participated, was related to the anti – Jewish statements. In a meeting of a consumer society in Veivirženai in 1909, Dean Tamulevicius spoke about the Jews’ skills in swindling and urged the Catholics to establish their own commercial enterprises⁶⁴. A news report from Laukuva in a Catholic newspaper said that the consumer society would be more successful if the people took their shares to the society and not to the Jews⁶⁵. However, the successfully operating consumer societies in other areas of Lithuania would also help the poor Jewish inhabitants⁶⁶. Consequently, the character of the Lithuanian – Jewish relations depended upon the good will and understanding of local priests and parishioners.

At the start of WWI, the Jews suffered a new wave of tsarist persecution. Approximately 200 thousand Jews were deported from the Kaunas, Kuršas and Grodno provinces to the inner provinces of Russia as an “unreliable and pro-German element”. The retreating Cossacks and Russian soldiers carried out the pogroms and plundered the Jews⁶⁷. Consequently, the Jews accepted the German occupation as a lesser evil, and the relation between Yiddish and German, together with the Jewish economic skills, allowed them to serve as mediators between Germans and Lithuanians, while the Lithuanians later accused the Jews of collaboration with the Germans, destruction of Lithuanian forests and exploitation of Lithuanians⁶⁸. Due to the experience from WWI and good relations with the German occupation government, some of the Lithuanian Jews harboured illusions about the “decent” behaviour of the Germans on the eve of WWII.

The Jews had difficulties in identifying themselves with the Lithuanian State re-established in 1918 since in the consciousness of the Lithuanian Jews the territory in which they lived, *Lite*, was larger than the ethnographical Lithuania and included the

⁶² Ycas, M. *Atsiminimai* // *(Memoirs)*. Nepriklausomybes kelias (Along the Roads of Independence). Kaunas, 1935. vol. 1. p. 27 - 28.

⁶³ Iks. *Kauno atstovu rinkimai* // *(X. Election of Kaunas Representatives)* // *Vilniaus žinios*, 1906, No. 62.

⁶⁴ Veivirženai // *Vienybe*. 1909. No. 16. p. 242.

⁶⁵ Laukuva // *Vienybe*. 1910. No 1. P. 9.

⁶⁶ Šaukotas // *Vienybe*. 1912. No. 16. p. 254.

⁶⁷ *Iz ciornoj knigi rosijskogo evrejstva* // *Evrejskaja starina*. Peterburg, 1918. No. 10.

⁶⁸ Žadeikis, P. *Didžiojo karo užrašai* // *(Notes from the Great War)*. 1917-1918-1919 p.2. Klaipėda, 1925. p. 6 - 11.

provinces of Vilnius, Kaunas, Grodno, Suwalki, and Vitebsk. The Jews of the former territory of the Russian Empire were dispersed in three states. The *Litvaks* were demographically divided between Poland, Lithuania and the Soviet Russia. In the Soviet Russia (the Soviet Union as of 1922) the Jews were being Sovietised and converted into “Soviet citizens”. In Poland, the *Litvaks* speaking Russian and Yiddish were considered not only economic rivals but also a threat to the Polish spirit in Warsaw, Lodz, and Vilnius. Only Lithuania remained in the inter-war period a more or less peaceful place where the national autonomy and independent education was granted, and the *kelihe* system existed.

The Jewish organisations in Lithuania did not aim at establishing a separate political organism. They wanted to a national – cultural self-government. Some of the Jewish groups declared total loyalty to the Lithuanian State, while others held themselves apart. It should be noted that the Jewish Socialist Union (Bund) propagated a Socialist revolution programme and was well disposed towards the Bolshevik Russia, however, it was not an outcome of political differences in the Jewish community. Similar political movements were also characteristic of the Lithuanian society.

During the independence fights, the Jews were more active than other Lithuanian national minorities in supporting the Lithuanian aspirations and served as natural allies of Lithuanians. The young Jews would help the Lithuanian guerrillas in the fights against the Poles for the Vilnius district. During the autumn 1920 invasion of General Lucjan Żeligowski to Vilnius, nearly all the students of the Hebrew school in Kaunas entered the Lithuanian Home Guard Union and the Kaunas detachment included more Jews than Lithuanians⁶⁹. The Lithuanian Jews were encouraged to support the Lithuanian independence aims by both the patriotic feelings and the strong anti – Semitic traditions in Poland, the ideology of the National Democrats and the fear of pogroms carried out by the Polish soldiers in 1919 – 1920.

Some authors have written about anti – Semitic pogroms in Panevežys and other cities in 1919, when the Lithuanian Army was dislodging the Bolshevik forces⁷⁰. However, the Lithuanian archive documents do not include any documents confirming such statements. Violence against the Jews most often manifested itself by the plundering of their property, however, the German, the Bermont’s the Polish, and the Bolshevik armies were committing the same acts on the civilians in the territory of Lithuania in 1919 – 1920. Lithuanian treatment of the Jews did not develop the forms of anti – Semitic acts and the terrorism committed on the Jewish inhabitants in the Poland-occupied Vilnius district in 1910 – 1939⁷¹.

⁶⁹ Levin, D. Fighting back. Lithuanian Jewry’s armed resistance to the Nazis, 1941- 1945. N.Y. & London, 1985. p. 8. *Trimitas*. 1923. No. 131. p. 25.

⁷⁰ Schochat, A. The beginnings of anti-Semitism in independent Lithuania // Yad Vashem studies on the European Jewish catastrophe and resistance. Jerusalem, 1958. Vol. II. P. 8-9. Schochat, A. Jews, Lithuanians and Russians 1939 -1941 // Jews and Non - Jews in Eastern Europe 1918 -1945. Edited by Vago, B and Mosse, G.L. Jerusalem, 1974. p. 301. Levin, D. Fighting back... p. 8.

⁷¹ See.:Arad, Y. Ghetto in flames. The struggle and destruction of the Jews in Vilna in the Holocaust. Jerusalem, 1980. p. 12. According to the Jewish sources, 60 Jews were killed, many were arrested, attacked and beaten, and the Jewish property was plundered, etc. during the pogroms carried out by the Polish legionaries in the Vilnius district on 22 May 1919. (Memorandum ob aprejskich sobytijach (evrejskich pogromach) 1919 g. v Vilne // MAB RS F. 255 - 549).

After the end of independence fights, Lithuanian politicians gave the Jews guarantees of a national and cultural autonomy seeking to ensure the international support of the Jews to recognition of Lithuania *de jure* and in fighting for the Vilnius district. In 1920, the first Congress of the Lithuanian Jewish communities, (*the Kahal*), was held in Kaunas. The Congress elected a National Council (*Nasjonal-rat, Va-ha-arets*) that started a democratic regulation of the Jewish community⁷². On 20 January 1920 the Lithuanian Government approved the status of the Kahal. Nearly all the Jewish parties in East Central Europe aimed at establishing national federations, while the territorial partition was of minor importance to them since the Jews saw their own security in the guarantees of individuals' rights. According to Šimon Rozenbaum, the Lithuanian Jews tried to make the young state the state of nations rather than a nation state, however, such aspirations contradicted the aspirations of the Lithuanian parties and society at large, therefore, the Jews were blamed for the destruction of general interests, in building *status in statu*. A personal autonomy would have been a desirable solution for the Jews, but the non-Jews accused them of establishing *status in statu*. In 1919 – 1920, the Poles were competing with Lithuanians since they also were considering a possibility of winning over the “plebiscite” Jews of Vilnius – Grodno in resolving the territorial conflicts, then granting them cultural autonomy and civic equality in order to paralyse the establishing of the “Kaunas Lithuania”.

Mutually beneficial relations between the Lithuanian delegation (headed by A. Voldemaras) and the Committee of the Jewish delegation (*Comite des Delegations Juives*) in support of the principle of *quid pro quo* were established in Paris Peace Conference in 1919. The Jewish Committee promised to support the position of the Lithuanian delegation in the Peace Conference in exchange for exclusive rights for the Jewish minority in Lithuania. This pragmatic co-operation of both the parties was crowned with the establishment of a Jewish national autonomy which was unique in the countries of Central and Eastern Europe. The idea of famous Jewish historian Simon Dubonov was realised in the country where the traditions of autonomous institutions up to the end of the 18th century had been deep-rooted. On 22 September 1921 Lithuanian representatives signed in Paris the League of Nations' declaration of the defence of the national minorities rights. Lithuania was the first Baltic State to sign on 12 May 1922 an expanded text of declaration of the defence of the national minorities' rights⁷³. The declaration contained two special articles on the Jewish national minority providing for the usage of mother tongue in schools and budget allocations to the education, cultural and religious issues, and the right⁷⁴ of Sabbath. However, the 2nd Seimas of Lithuania did not ratify the declaration in 1923 on the initiative of the Christian Democrat Party.

VIII.

In 1920, the anti- Semitic tendencies in Lithuania were triggered by the issue of the refugees. The treaty Lithuania signed with the Soviet Russia on 12 July 1920 provided for returning to Lithuania of deportees and refugees. The Jews forcibly

⁷² Protocol of the 1st Congress of the Lithuanian Jewish communities // LVA. doc. col. 1129. Inv. sch.. 1. file 47. p. 1-3.

⁷³ La Societe des Nations et les Minorites. Section d'information, Secretariat de la Societe des Nations. Geneve, 1923. p. 19.

⁷⁴ Declaration of the Rights of Lithuanian National Minorities // LVA. doc. col.. 3873. Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Lithuania. Inv. sch. 7. file. 642. p. 158 - 159

ejected by the tsarist authorities and those who voluntarily retreated to the inner Russia in 1915 started returning. However, the Russian and Ukrainian Jews, unwilling to live under the Bolshevik rule, were also coming to Lithuania. People were accusing Skipitis (Internal Affairs Minister) of “having filled Lithuania with Jews”⁷⁵, even more so that Lithuanians were accusing the Jews of collaboration with the German occupational authorities⁷⁶. However, in the words of Skipitis himself, “sensitiveness towards the Jews” was rather exaggerated since the number of Jews in Lithuania in 1923 was by half lower than that before WWI, population census showed. According to the Lithuanian population census of 1923 (excluding the district of Vilnius), 153 743 Jews (7.6 percent of all population), 65 599 Poles (3.2 percent), 40 460 Russians (2.4 percent), 29 231 Germans (1.4 percent excluding the Klaipeda district), 14 882 Latvians (0.7 percent) and 4 421 Belarussians (0.008 percent)⁷⁷ lived in Lithuania. The majority of Jews lived in cities (Kaunas, Panevėžys, Vilnius). Nearly all the Lithuanian Jews practised Judaism, and as few as 35 Jews were practising other religions⁷⁸. In 1923, the Jews controlled 77 percent of trade enterprises and 22 percent of industrial enterprises, while 90 percent of Lithuanians were related to the agricultural production⁷⁹.

The general situation of the Jews in inter-war Lithuania (in comparison to the situation of the Jews in other East Central Europe countries) could be characterised by the words of the Zionists’ leader Chaimas Bialikas said after a visit to Kaunas in the 1920s: “if Vilnius is known as the *Yerushalayim de Lita*, then all Lithuania should be known as *Eretz – Yisrael de Galuta* (the land of Israel in exile)⁸⁰. Leader of the Lithuanian Zionists Jokubas Vygotskis wrote that during the inter-war period “the Kaunas Lithuania” was heaven to the Jews in comparison to “the Vilnius Lithuania”⁸¹.

However, latent anti – Semitic tendencies existed in the Lithuanian society, coming to the surface in moments of crisis. Radical nationalist organisations, the Lithuanian Home Guard Union established in 1919 including, stimulated anti - Semitism in Lithuania. In the words of the Union founder Vladas Putvinskis (1873 – 1929), the Lithuanian nation is the chosen nation in the land of Lithuania, and the denationalisation is turning it into “a decaying, sick and degenerate organism”⁸². As early as in 1917, one of the founders of the Union Matas Šalcus accused the Jews of interference with the Lithuanian trade, sales of inferior goods, falsification of goods, disrespect for the Lithuanian nation, and toadying up to the tsarist authorities⁸³.

⁷⁵ Skipitis, R. *Building Independent Lithuania*. Chicago, 1961. p. 267 – 271.

⁷⁶ Priest Žadeikis wrote that in WWI the Jews helped the Germans buy up horses and got a large profit out of it, also destroyed the Lithuanian forests, buying them up for cutting (Žadeikis, P. *Notes from the Great War. 1917 -1918 -1919*. Klaipeda, 1925, vol. 2. p. 6-9).

⁷⁷ *Lietuvos gyventojai// (Lithuanian inhabitants)*. Population census of 17 September 1923 results. Kaunas, 1924. p. 54 - 55.

⁷⁸ *Ibidem*. p. XL.

⁷⁹ Mendelsohn, E. *The Jews of East Central Europe between the world wars*. Indiana university press, Bloomington, 1987. p. 306.

⁸⁰ Berdishevsky, N. *Baltic revival and Zionism // Lituanius*. 1992. Vol. 38. No.1. P. 76.

⁸¹ Mendelsohn, E. *Zionism in Poland: the formative years, 1915 –1926*. New Haven - London, 1981. P. 121.

⁸² Putvinskis, V. *Gyvenimas ir pasirinktieji raštai// (Life and selected writings)*. Kaunas, 1933. vol. 2. p. 71.

⁸³ Šalcus, M. *Dešimt metų tautiniai-kultūriniai darbo Lietuvoje// (Ten Years of National – Cultural Work in Lithuania)* (1905 - 1915). Chicago, 1917. p. 43 - 45.

The Lithuanian – Jewish relations became strained in 1922 – 1924 due to the Seimas elections fights, the reluctance of the Jewish community to speak Lithuanian, the currency reform, the abolition of the Jewish national autonomy, and some of the administrative acts.

Lithuanians were dissatisfied with the widespread usage of non-Lithuanian language in Kaunas and the non-Lithuanian shop signboards. In 19th century, the usage of Lithuanian became a proof of Lithuanian identity and a strong element uniting the nation. Leaders of the national rebirth movement emphasised the importance of preserving the Lithuanian language and created a mythical image of Lithuanian, opposing it to the Polish language and the Russification policy. In the publications of the Home Guard Union, language was referred to as a genuine and most significant feature of nationality, a priceless treasure of the country⁸⁴. After the restoration of independence, the Home Guard members, propagators of the Lithuanian ethnocentrism, considered disrespect to the Lithuanian language as disrespect to the Lithuanianism and the Lithuanian State. The usage of the Lithuanian language was an urgent problem not only at the start of the independence period. In 1930s, the Lithuanians in Kaunas would be irritated by the demonstration of “lordliness” when the Jews spoke among themselves in Russian or German. Complaints by the Lithuanians in the first years of independence about the refusal of the national minorities to speak Lithuanian and the ignoring of Lithuanian in the Kaunas City Council in 1920 – 1923, were not ungrounded. In the words of one anonymous person, the shop signboards in Yiddish would soon have made Kaunas really similar to the 2nd Jerusalem⁸⁵.

In spring 1923, the signboards of the Jewish shops in Yiddish and Russian were being painted out and the windows of the Jewish shops and houses broken out in Kaunas, Šiauliai and smaller towns. Although the leaders of Lithuanian patriotic organisations and student associations publicly disassociated themselves “from the smearing of signboards” and “breaking of the Jewish windows,” the participant of the events P. Gaucas recalls that namely students and junior officers were the initiators of those acts where “a big group of young people would split in the subgroups of five and, accompanied by an officer lieutenant in order to escape check-ups by the police, take part in the operations of smearing the signboards of shops in Kaunas.”⁸⁶ Although the leaders of the Home Guard Union would publicly dissociate themselves from the “the signboard painters and the window brokers”, the anti-Semitic tendencies among the Home Guard members were not easy to control. Leader of the HGU Klimaitis said in an interview to the *Echo* newspaper that the Union was not an anti – Semitic organisation, that it admitted Jewish members as well (accepting Jewish members, the Lithuanian Home Guard Union differed from the Polish public patriotic organisations. In 1923, the 1st Congress of the Polish *Sokol* adopted a decision not to accept Jewish members “in the name of retaining the Christian and national principles”⁸⁷), but the

⁸⁴ Noragas, Ad. Saugokime brangiausi tautos turta//(*Let us cherish the priceless treasure of the nation* // *Trimitas*. 1922. No. 32. p. 25 - 26.

⁸⁵ Šaulys Šauklys. Kada mes užprotestuosime?//(*When will we protest?*)// *Trimitas*. 1922. No. 200. p. 2.

⁸⁶ P. Gaucys. Tarp dviejų pasaulių (*Between the Two Worlds*), Vilnius, 1992. P. 73

⁸⁷ P. Matusik. Der polnische “Sokol” zur Zeit der Teilungen und in der II .Polnischen Republik // Die slawische Sokolbewegung. Beiträge zur Geschichte von Sport und Nationalismus in Osteuropa. Hg. Diethelm Blecking. Dortmund, 1991. S. 131.

number of Jewish Union members sharply decreased in 1922 – 1923⁸⁸. Leaders of the Lithuanian Nationalists' Union (Smetona, Voldemaras) who were in opposition then disapproved the spoiling of the signboards and anti-Jewish acts, considering the importance of minority support in the fight for the state borders⁸⁹.

The popular publication of the Home Guard Union of 1922-1924 *Trimitas* newspaper would publish articles accusing the Jews of collaboration with Germans in WWI and of active participation in the Bolshevik movement, of supporting the Communist groups in the elections to the 1st Lithuanian Seimas, of being opposed to the Lithuanian independence and of making demands for *status in statu*. The authors of the articles would make generalising conclusions on the unreliability of all Lithuanian Jews: “we will not make an error in saying that one out of three Jews is engaged in activity harmful to Lithuania”⁹⁰. A cycle of articles by Jokubas Blažiūnas with an ironical title “Jews, friends of ours” was published in *Trimitas* in the period when tension in the Lithuanian – Jewish relations reached climax. Articles by Blažiūnas may be considered a classical example of anti – Semitic literature. Blažiūnas described the Jews as a “degenerating nation” that “is only living among the people creating culture while not creating anything itself and even having any inclination to. A Jewish craftsman is a rarity and a good-for-nothing one as well; a Jewish farmer is even worse and even much rarer [...] The Jews have lived in Lithuania for ages but have not created anything that would remind of their existence here if the fate made them clear off. If the Jews moved out of Lithuania, only dung would be left after them in Kaunas as it is left in the cattle-shed after sending the cattle to the fallow”⁹¹.

In the words of Blažiūnas, pathologic anti-Semite, the Jews and the Lithuanians are not equal since the Jews are “a mass of degenerates” ill with “an incurable degeneration disease”. When the Lithuanians, a healthy nation, held a fight in the tsar times, the Jews toadied to the occupants and started speaking their language⁹². It is worth noting that such an undisguised anti-Semitic article was exceptional in the inter-war Lithuania. The literature of a similar kind appeared only during the occupation by the Nazi Germany. In 1924, the “Minutes by Zion Wisemen” copied from the Russian publications were published in Panevėžys, however, their dissemination in the society was not of a large scale due to a small number of copies. Moreover, the Lithuanians were used to seeing a poor Jewish community, therefore, the ideas about the “global flood of the Jew-Masons” seemed strange for the lowest classes of the society. The anti-Jewish “blood legends” or anti-Semitic statements accusing the Jews for swindle were much closer to their understanding.

The establishment of the Lithuanian currency, the Litas, in 1922 –1923 aggravated the situation even more since the traders and speculators, mostly Jews, would swindle the country-folk and pay them in old money instead of the Litas, or pay for expensive goods in cents or worthless money. Rumours were spread in little towns about the instability of the Litas, the inhabitants were being persuaded into exchanging the old Lithuanians coins they had at a very low rate. The Jewish traders were blamed for the

⁸⁸ *Trimitas*. 1923. No. 131. p. 25.

⁸⁹ Voldemaras, A. Mažumu valdžia//(*Minority rule*)// *Tautos vairas*. 1924. No. 20

⁹⁰ Pavartonis, A. Žydu pažinimo klausimu//(*On the issue of knowing the Jews*)// *Trimitas*. 1922. No. 42. p. 21.

⁹¹ Blažiūnas, J. Žydai – musu biciuliai//(*Jews, friends of ours*)// *Trimitas*. 1922. No. 48. p. 20.

⁹² Blažiūnas, J. Ibidem. No. 49. p. 21 - 22.

price increase. The country folk were the source of vitality for the Home Guard Union, therefore, the Union spoke in defence of the peasants, accusing the Jews of swindling, price increasing and the ruining of the Lithuanian currency by the spreading of bad rumours about it.

In 1922 – 1924, not only the Jews but also other national minorities, “foreign elements – exploiters”, “parasites – blood-suckers”, were accused of product falsification, state property stealing and handling, reselling of the agricultural produce cultivated by the Lithuanian farmers. Articles in the *Trimitas* stressed the “duty of every citizen not to allow that the cent he spends for any purpose would be put into the pocket of foreign element, the parasite of Lithuania and would add to his prosperity in Lithuania”⁹³. However, not all the attitudes of the Home Guard Union leaders may be considered radically anti – Semitic. Putvinskis also warned about the danger of pogrom tendencies among the Home Guard members and invited to fight not the Jews but “the negative aspects of their tactics”. He proposed to push the Jews out of trade by strengthening the Lithuanian co-operative societies and allowing the Jews to buy the land, but only those “who know how to till it and want to do it, and who love the sound farming works”. In the opinion of Putvinskis, the Jewish activists might have been interested in the growing pogrom tendencies in Lithuania, aiming at discrediting Lithuania⁹⁴.

A bulletin of the Jewish delegations (*Comite des delegations Juives*), publicised in Paris in May 1923,⁹⁵ in which the Jewish representatives accused the Lithuanian authorities for the painting out of the signboards, the pressure put on the Jews during the 1st Seimas elections, and for the appointing of Fridman, an assimilation supporter unpopular among the Jews, a minister without portfolio for Jewish Affairs, triggered a painful reaction in the Lithuanian society⁹⁶.

On 19 March 1924, the Seimas of Lithuania cancelled the position of the minister without portfolio for Jewish Affairs. On 18 June 1924, the cabinet of ministers headed by Tumenas was introduced to the Seimas. The declaration presented by the cabinet, differently from all the former cabinets, did not mention the national minorities at all, which triggered protests of the Seimas MPs representing national minorities.

On 7 July 1924, the Citizen Defence Department issued an order forbidding the spoiling of signboards in other languages than Lithuanian but also limiting the putting up of signboards and announcements in the language of local minorities to the yards and walls not visible from street or square.⁹⁷ Although the order prohibited signboard spoiling (and thus took into account the anti – Semitic incidents of 1923), it aroused the indignation of the Jewish traders, even more so that the order of 15 July 1924

⁹³ Šaulys Šauklys. Let us not take a snake to our bosom // *Trimitas*. 1924. No. 198. p. 1 - 2. “The Jews who came to Lithuania simply profited out of the great tolerance of Lithuanians” (Jewish action // *Trimitas*. 1923. No. 123).

⁹⁴ *Trimitas*. 1922. No. 45. p.23.

⁹⁵ La violation des droits des juives en Lithuanie. Bulletin du Comite des Delegations Juives aupres de la conference de la paix 25 (1923 05 25).

⁹⁶ Jewish action // *Trimitas*. 1923. No. 143. p. 1.

⁹⁷ instructions for county governors for implementing the order by the Citizen Protection Department. 7 July 1924 // LVA. doc. col. 394. Inv. sch. . 2. file. 1463. P.. 727.

provided for a 1000 Litas fine for the using of a non-Lithuanian language in accountancy and book-keeping.⁹⁸

The issue of trade on holidays gained a religious – political aspect and became a pressing problem. The Holy Father Leon XIII emphasised in his encyclical *Rerum Novarum* of 1891 the Sunday holiday, at the same time condemning the growing liberal and atheistic tendencies. The Russian Empire had liberal laws regarding the Sunday holiday: it was allowed to work on Sundays from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. in order not to disturb the church service. In the independent Lithuania, especially during the Christian Democrat rule, it was logical that Sunday would become a holiday. Lithuanians were also complaining about the noise produced by the active economic life and the market place during the Mass in the Catholic Church. On 12 May 1922 Lithuania committed itself to the League of Nations to ensure respect for the Jewish Sabbath holiday. On 3 September 1924, the Seimas of Lithuania adopted a ruling under which the shops were to be closed on Sundays as well during the Catholic holidays. The Jewish community was exasperated by the ruling since the Jewish traders would incur losses during the two rest days, and the religious Jews would have their opportunities for occupying a state service position limited.

The Jewish national autonomy seized to exist after the Christian Democratic Party dominating in the Seimas cancelled financing on 19 March 1924. Political and pragmatic rather than ideological reasons played their role. The Christian Democrats disliked the continuous opposition of the Jews to their policy. Lithuania that had lost the Vilnius district and legally regained the Klaipeda district in 1923 was no longer in need of support by the Jewish organisations. The new coalition government of Tumenas formed in June 1924 did not include representatives of national minorities' parties. Also, since 1925 approximately, the Lithuanian press would allot the anti – Semitic polemics and the “issue of Jews” less attention.

The Kahal Councils, unofficially operating since 15 September 1924, were disbanded and the Jewish communities lost the right to collect taxes, conduct birth registration, etc. themselves. The cultural autonomy, that was *de facto* in force in Lithuania till 1940, was not legalised *de jure*.

IX

On 15 June 1926, after the 3^d Seimas elections, representatives of Peasant Populists, Social Democrats and national minorities formed a coalition government and put an end to the long dominance of the Christian Democrats. The new government started carrying out liberal reforms and lifted several restrictions that impeded the evolution of parliamentary democracy. The nationalist press accused the government of benevolence towards the national minorities, the Jews including. An ultra-nationalist newspaper *Tautos valia* published by radical nationalists, students of Vytautas the Great University Grigaliunas – Glovackis and Tomkus, was attacking the new coalition for lack of patriotism and of staging a “Bolshevik uprising”. Fascist nation mobilisation slogans were coined: “only the iron will of the nation may bar the way to the impending disasters”⁹⁹. Just before the 17 December 1926 coup d’etat, *Tautos*

⁹⁸ Greenbaum, M. *The Jews of Lithuania...* p. 254.

⁹⁹ Kaunas, 5 December // *Tautos valia*. 5 December 1926. See.: Grigas. Against the Red Front // *Tautos valia*. 28 November 1926. A. B. Facing the danger // *Tautos valia*. 12 December 1926

valia wrote: rumours have spread that the Communist leaders “Kapsukas and Aleksa Angarietis” have come to Kaunas from Moscow “and have stopped at the Jewish Old Town holes and are preparing the Red hell for Lithuania”¹⁰⁰.

The stereotype of the “Jewish Communist” started shaping in Lithuania after the 1917 Bolshevik Revolution in Russia, while in the neighbouring Poland, the stereotype of “*Żydo – komuna*” was forming after the 1905 revolution in Russia. The Jews, having an inclination for the ideas of social justice and equality, took part in the revolutions in Russia, Hungary, Bavaria. In Russia, the Jews for the first time became equal citizens and could realise themselves in all spheres of life. Used to fighting for economic survival, this group was also superior in the social, academic and political sphere. Not only the anti-Semites, but the supporters of the Jews (Lord Balfour), the Zionists and the orthodox Jews were dissatisfied with the growing revolutionism among the Jews. Lithuanians who returned from Russia and had seen the horror of the revolution, stressed the role the Jewish commissars played in the revolution. The press claimed that a Jewish – Bolshevik revolution was conducted in Russia. The image of the Jewish Bolshevik grew stronger with the coming to the cultural arena of a new generation that no longer had experience of political co-operation, closer personal and cultural contacts with the Jews as the old intelligentsia did (the latter underscored that both the Jews and the Lithuanians lived under the tsarist oppression and spoke against the anti-Semitism) (Petkevicaite-Bite, Riomeris, Šalkauskis, Basanavicius, Smetona). The new generation had graduated from Lithuanian schools and was educated in a national spirit. This generation, born at the start of 20th century, belonged to the radical Lithuanian Home Guard Union, the Young Lithuania and the nationalist Iron Wolf organisations and was influenced by the worshipping of the fascist type organic state model and the ideas of a radical fight for Lithuanianism. Representatives of the new generation were greater nationalists than their parents were. Kudirka’ ideas of modern anti – Semitism took the place of the Catholic universality, represented by Motiejus Valancius since 19th century, and added to a further devaluation of the Jews in 1930s.

The approach of President Antanas Smetona towards the Jews was ambivalent. During the years of tsarist regime, election to the Russian State Duma, and the fights against the Poles he maintained the position of active pragmatic co-operation. On the other hand, being in the opposition before the coup d’etat, Antanas Smetona himself criticised the minority government for lack of patriotism, although he spoke against anti-Semitic acts such as smearing the signboards. After the coup d’etat of 1926 trying to retain authoritarian regime he had little trust in the national minorities, including the Jews, whom he identified with “active communists” and “dishonourable traders”.¹⁰¹ However, the presidential regime of Smetona did not incite anti-Semitic attacks and propaganda. The Smetona regime aimed at slightly suppressing the anti-Semitism, thus arousing the dissatisfaction of the radical political organisations (The Iron Wolf). The State Security Department made a record of the attitude of the right-wing nationalists to the policy implemented by Smetona: “*the Voldemarininkai and the activists are mostly dissatisfied with the attitude of the President of the Republic Antanas Smetona to the Jews. They call him the king of Jews [...] Engaging in such propaganda, the Voldemarininkai indicated that this government had not issued a*

¹⁰⁰ *Tautos valia*. 1926. 12. 12.

¹⁰¹ M.Greenbaum...p. 279.

single decree touching more directly the issue of the Jews or directed against them"¹⁰².

The situation of Jews, a Hebrew system of education in the period between the two world wars was the best in Central and Eastern Europe. However, there practically were no Jews in the public administration of Lithuania, and they still led the life of a closed ethnic group. The evolution of "the Jewish issue" in the Republic of Lithuania was symptomatic of the political, social and religious aspects of social development. In the 1920's the economy of Lithuania was dominated by Jewish merchants and craftsmen, therefore, the economic conflicts of farmers and merchants involved ethnic and religious aspects. Ethnic conflicts had also been aggravated as a result of fortified position of Lithuanian tradesmen and businessmen. In this context, noted here should be the exceptional approach of the government and society towards the Jews, since the government neither adopted anti-Semitic legal acts nor encouraged undisguised anti-Semitic publications and even persecuted them. However, it paid insufficient attention to some incidents as it viewed them unimportant, whereas the Jews although used to pressure in the unfriendly environment for several centuries would painfully react to them. Moreover, anti-Semitism within the Lithuanian society (particularly in the 1930s) gained strength rather than weakened.

A serious incident between Jews and Lithuanians occurred in the summer of 1929. On 1 August 1929 workers of certain Kaunas enterprises, mainly owned by Jewish manufacturers, influenced by the propaganda of the Lithuanian Communist Party (LCP), in Šanciai marked "the day of struggle against the imperialist wars".¹⁰³ According to the State Security Department, the majority of demonstrators were Jews, and a Vilijampole Jew, Communist A. Kleiner carried the red flag. They clashed with police and Lithuanian workers who opposed the Communist ideas of demonstrators. Pursuant to the administrative procedure, the Military Commandant punished 47 demonstrators to imprisonment. Then, 1-2 August 1929 saw unrest in Vilijampole. The files of the Citizens' Protection Department and the protocols of police interviews reveal, that the riflemen from Vilijampole group decided "to teach the Jewish Communists a lesson": they were checking the identity documents of passers-by on the street and assaulting the persons of Jewish nationality. The police did not step in and made no attempt to stop the perpetrators of violence. The Lithuanian Riflemen Union denied that its members took part in this act. The Prime Minister of Lithuania A. Voldemaras promised to investigate the incident, however, at the end of August was claiming that the events in Vilijampole had been provoked by the enemies of Lithuania, seeking to harm the country in view of the forthcoming session at the League of Nations. By a court decision of 1932, a policeman and another 7 persons were sentenced to imprisonment from 3 to 9 months. It is worthwhile noting that the conclusions of interrogation referred to the Citizens' Protection Department, and the protocols of police interviews contain degrading diminutives referring to Jews (and serving the purpose of distinguishing adolescents from adults), and used not only by the interviewed riflemen, but also the police interrogators: "žydukai", "žydukai-

¹⁰² SSD bulletin No. 45a of 24 February 1939 // LVA. doc. col. 378. Inv. sch., 10. file. 186. p. 173.

¹⁰³ The day was to be celebrated pursuant to the Resolution of the 6th Comintern Congress held in Brussels (Works on the LCP history. 1920 -1940. Vol. 2. Vilnius, 1978. P. 232).

komunistai” (little Jewish Communists), “several little Jews of Vilijampole, “*žydukai and žydelkutes*”(Jewish boys and girls)¹⁰⁴.

Early 1930's witnessed a more notable growth of anti-Semitism in Lithuania. The heightening of anti-Semitism in Germany and Poland played a significant role here. The state promotion of Lithuanian co-operative societies¹⁰⁵ and strengthening personal initiative reinforced Lithuanian commercial and industrial bourgeoisie¹⁰⁶, whereas the global economic crisis stripped the businessmen of their profit margin: Lithuanians and Jews were often competing for the same consumer in order to survive rather than make profit. Lithuanians envied Jews their “welfare”, however, the low cost of Jewish enterprises was due to the unpaid work of family members, and the scarcity of their needs which reduced the cost of products, and enabled [the Jew] to compete with the less economical Lithuanian businessman. The competitive capacity of the Jewish product led Lithuanians to issue the requirements to promote and support “a sound Lithuanian producer”. The global economic crisis of 1930's resulted in the rising number of the unemployed. This way, the economic conflicts consciously or unconsciously were being altered into ethnic ones.

In 1928 the Lithuanian Engineers and Architects Union submitted a Memorandum to the Cabinet of Ministers, urging it to lay down restrictions on the monopoly of aliens on the representations of Lithuanian companies and the building contractors. This memorandum did not employ the concept of citizenship (“citizen of Lithuania”), but, rather, laid emphasis on the ethnic affiliation – “Lithuanian”. The requirements to recruit “Lithuanian engineers or workers”, to execute contracts via “a Lithuanian representative of the company” unambiguously sought to promote the persons of Lithuanian nationality in the economic sector.¹⁰⁷

On 5 June 1930 the Union of Lithuanian Tradesmen, Industrialists and Craftsmen (hereinafter– LPPAS) was created. Its members could be only Lithuanians, making their living from commerce, industry or crafts.¹⁰⁸ The union called for the state-aided support and promotion of the Lithuanian producer, expecting thereby “to liberate us from the slavery imposed by the alien merchants”. In 1931 the LPPAS started printing its weekly *Verslas* (Business), which until 1940 was regularly publishing anti-Semitic articles. In 1934, a compulsory business examination, lobbied for by the LPPAS's and adopted by the Lithuanian Ministry of Education, led to displeasure of Jewish businessmen and craftsmen.

¹⁰⁴ See.: LVA. Doc.col. 394. Citizens' Protection department of the Ministry of the Interior of the Republic of Lithuania and the Police Department of the Ministry of the Interior of the Republic of Lithuania. Inv.sch.18. File.137.

¹⁰⁵ See: I. Tamošaitis. In *Twenty Years // Vairas* cultural magazine. 1938 02 15. Vol. XXIII. Issue No. 3. P. 133.

¹⁰⁶ If in 1923 there were around 14 000 Jewish shops in Lithuania and 2 160 non-Jewish shops, in 1936 this proportion altered in the following way: 12 000 : 10 200. If in the first years of independent Lithuania Jews dominated completely the export-import sector, in the 1930's Jews were in control of 20 per cent of Lithuanian export and 40 per cent of import (Lithuania // *Encyclopaedia Judaica*. Jerusalem, 1996. Vol. 11. P. 377).

¹⁰⁷ Aliens in Lithuania and their competition with Lithuanians in the field of labour // *The Economy of Lithuania*. 1928 Vol. 6. Issue No.10. P. 339 -340. Also in: *Lithuanians or Aliens // Tevu žeme*. 01. 02. 1934 Issue No.14.

¹⁰⁸ Review on the Five Year Activities of the Lithuanian Businessmen Union. // LVA. Doc.col. 605. Inv.sch.. 2. B. 6. Correspondence with the Ministry of Education and other agencies concerning the activities of the Union 1933. P. 211 - 213.

In 1939 the Editor-in-Chief of *Verslas* publication A. Briedis was claiming that the newspaper's more daring statements on the Jewish issue" boosted its popularity with the state officials.¹⁰⁹ The LPPAS spread the anti-Semitic propaganda in *Verslas* pages. By bringing forward the radical slogan "Lithuania – to Lithuanians", the LPPAS demanded to restrict the rights of Jews in the economic sector, support Lithuanian products and reduce the number of Jewish students at the Kaunas University, and urged Lithuanians not to buy in Jewish shops. Jews, in response to the reinforced anti-Semitic agitation campaign, in October of 1933 set up the Union of Jewish Soldiers Participants of the Fights for the Independence of Lithuania (chaired by J. Goldberg), which was publishing *Apžvalga* (Review) publication in Lithuanian supposed to enter into polemics with propaganda in *Verslas* and introduce to the Lithuanian audience the life of Jews in Lithuania. The congress of this union convened in Kaunas on 22-24 October 1938 was attended by 400 members.

Publishers of the explicitly anti-Semitic *Tautos žodis* (Word of the Nation)¹¹⁰ managed to release just a couple of its issues – it was closed by the wartime censorship. However, *Tevu žeme. Laikraštis visiems lietuviams* (The Parental land. A newspaper for all Lithuanians) (1933-1940), *Tautos balsas: Radikalieji tautiškos minties ir politikos laikraštis* (Nation's Voice: a newspaper of a radical national thinking and policy) (since 1932), *Akademikas* (Scholar) and other publications promoted anti-Semitic trends. The more moderate articles criticising the activities of Jews would appear in the pages of Catholic publications *XX amžius* (The 20th Century) and *Židinys* (Hearth), liberal *Naujoji Romuva*, *Musu laikraštis* (Our Newspaper), *Ukininko patarėjas* (A Farmer's Advisor), *Lietuvos Aidas* and *Musu rytojus* (Our Tomorrow). In 1933 in Kaunas ideas to establish an anti-Semitic organisation were being considered, titled the Helmet of the Nation or The Anti-Semitic Front, to fight "the Jewish monopoly"¹¹¹. According to the State Security Department information, the growth of anti-Semitism in 1936 posed a serious domestic policy problems. As the SSD conclusion maintained, Jews may join the ranks of Communist organisations in an effort to resist the spread of anti-Semitism in Lithuania.¹¹²

In 1938 the Director of the State Security Department A. Povilaitis proposed to the Minister of the Interior to close down *Apžvalga* publication, because the latter was accusing Lithuanians of anti-Semitism and undermining the efforts of Lithuanians to become dominant in commerce and crafts, as well as its publisher, the Union of Jewish Soldiers Participants of the Fights for the Independence of Lithuania, "on the grounds of instigating hostility".¹¹³ The Chief of Security A. Povilaitis was not objective in his demand to close down *Apžvalga*: he concentrated on the requirements of radical groups (disguising them under the "Lithuanian public" opinion), rather than

¹⁰⁹ Statement by A. Briedis on the Press of Lithuanian Businessmen at the Congress of Branch Representatives 1939 04 03 // LVA. Doc.col. 605. Inv. sch. 2. B. 67. Results of the congresses 1938-39. P. 33 - 38.

¹¹⁰ Its first came out in 15 04 1933, when the National Socialists came to power in Germany.

¹¹¹ *Tautos žodis*. 15. 04 1933 Issue No. 1. P. 7.

¹¹² State Security department Newsletter 1936 10 12 // LVA. Doc.col. 378. Inv.sch.. 10. File. 88a. Vol.2. L. 310. Activities of the Lithuanian Communist Party and the Need for More Stringent Measures // LVA. Doc.col. 378. Inv.sch.. 10. File. 88a. Vol.2. P. 211.

¹¹³ Letter of the SSD Director of 1938 12 to the Minister of the Interior // LVA. Doc.col. 378. INV SCH.12.FILEB. B. 653. P. 4 -5.

on the growing number of anti-Semitic leaflets in circulation, acts of vandalism committed against the Jewish property or incidents relating to the “disappearance of children”.

Whereas *Apžvalga* performed a positive role in introducing to Lithuanians the life of Jews and encouraging the Lithuanian Jews to use Lithuanian language, to stay away from communist activities in order not to give grounds for the stereotype of “Jew-the-communist” to spread.

X.

In the 1930's the anti-Semitism was spreading both among the Lumpenproletariat, the low middle class (workers, peasants), and the circles of the middle class (university students, officers, civil servants and journalists). The year 1933 saw the release of a book by a Military School graduate, law student of Vytautas Magnus University Jonas Noreika, putting forward a programme of radical nationalism, and pertaining to the economic fight against Jews and the boycott of Jewish trade.¹¹⁴ The work by the Associate Professor of Law Faculty Jonas Aleksa, released in 1933, praised the farmer, “a producer, creator of new riches”, cultivating the land, and juxtaposed it with the nomad (Jew), validating such a juxtaposition with a quotation from the Holy Script. “Nomad” Jews, being gifted with rhetoric and talented persuaders, seek to enslave other nations, and the entire world, if they are lucky. Aleksa maintained that “because of certain defects in their nature, they are bringing destructive rather than constructive action to the Western life”¹¹⁵. Relying on G. Papini's book about the Jewish prophets, J. Aleksa discovered the opposite of a prophet, calling for asceticism, neglecting [material] wealth and ownership – “an average Jew”, who could serve to illustrate the anti-Judaic stereotype: “*The Jew is craving for material wealth, which must lend him the ability to make other people serve him (which in the mindset of an old Jew is equal to slavery) and allow him to celebrate. Jews are rather vulgar. The Jew, who is a member of the crowd, tends to treat other people coldly, as if they were dust, and is willing to command them, like a master his slaves; to request that they blindly obey his despotic will*”.¹¹⁶

The Catholic Church of Lithuania rejected racism on the grounds of its deviation from the Christian ethics and doctrine. Representatives of the Catholic Church of Lithuania and Catholic as well as laymen intellectuals condemned the racial aspect of interpretation of the Judaeo-Christian relationship¹¹⁷ and were opposed to the

¹¹⁴ J. Noreika. *Hey, Lithuanian, Raise Your Head!* Kaunas, 1933.

¹¹⁵ J. Aleksa. In *Search for the Lithuanian Path of Life. On the Issue of Survival of the Lithuanian Nation*. Vol. 2. Kaunas, 1933. P. 148 -149.

¹¹⁶ *Ibidem*. P. 155.

¹¹⁷ See. J. Eretas. *Quid de nocte? (The Path and stages leading to the sprituiual crisis of the present days)* // Congress material 1936. Vol.2. Kaunas, 1937. P. 1- 44. S. Šalkauskis. *The Ideological Foundations of the Modern Crises and the Catholic Views* // Congress material 1936. Vol.2. Kaunas, 1937. P. 45-80 V. Borisevicius. *The Moral Element in the Works and Activities of Bishop Motiejus Valancius* // Congress material of the Lithuanian Catholic Academy of Sciences 1939. Vol.III. Kaunas, 1940. P. 63. S. Šalkauskis. *The Problem of Cultural Powers of the Lithuanian Nation and Catholicism* // *Ibidem*. P. 25. Bishop. M. Reinys. *Race and Mentality* // *Ibidem*. P. 101 -111. A. Jurgutis. *The Anthropological Crisis* // *Vairas*. 1938 12 01. Vol. XXV. P. 356 - 364. In 1938 a nationalistic *Tevu žeme* newspaper wrote: “racism is an even greater danger to Christianity than Bolshevism, because the philosophy of racism replaces God with Nature; racism in the shape of neo-paganism is penetrating life and ousting the Christian God and Faith” (*Tevu žeme* 1938 05 20 Issue No. 8).

persecution of Jews, such as was taking place in Germany, and believed at the same time that left-wing and Communist ideas were most popular among Jews. In 1936 the Cardinal August Hlond in Poland in his pastoral letter denounced the physical persecution of Jews, at the same time claiming, however, that Jews were involved in profiteering, that they cheat in trade, distribute pornographic literature and spread atheism among Poles, and, worst of all, support the left-wing views and Communism.¹¹⁸ The high priests of the Lithuanian Catholic Church did not speak about the deception, however, the image of “Jew, an advocate of liberal left-wing views” was employed in the 1930’s. The Lithuanian priests were concerned with preservation of traditional Christian values undergoing changes in the period of modernisation. However, there had been attempts to link the criticism of social evils (distribution of pornography, alcohol abuse, the tendencies of demoralisation among youth etc.) with the activities of Jews (Liberalism – the Freemasonry (Jews) – Socialism – Bolshevism). We come across statements about the Jewish liberalism, pioneering distorted forms and the uncontrolled in arts in the works by an art critic priest Adomas Jakštas-Dambrauskas. Asserting that the expressionism in poetry is alien to Christianity and is reminiscent of Jewish poetry in the Old Testament, he assumed that “probably that is why the Jews are such great lovers, patrons and even creators of expressionism. In addition, Jews, as the organisers of various revolutions, could be in a way attracted by the revolutionary spirit lurking in expressionism”. “One thing is clear to us, the Christians: that there is no way how we could take part in expressionism. This thing is completely foreign to us, as is foreign its spirit and voice”¹¹⁹, concluded A. Jakštas. In J.Loman’s book, the liberal reforms which followed the French Revolution (and from which “the children of Judas” benefited), were associated with the efforts of the Freemasonry (i.e. the Jewry) to annihilate the Christian values and the church of the Christ and impoverish the masses (“The Jewry leads the Freemasonry of the world”)¹²⁰. Jews were also accused of organising the Bolshevik revolution in Russia.¹²¹ The book *Communism in Lithuania* by priest S. Yla once again establishes links between Jews and the advocates and supporters of Communism.¹²² An article published in 1937 in the Catholic *Židinys* magazine claimed that “segregation of Jews” – the governmental support to Lithuanian entrepreneurs, introducing the “numerus clausus” clause in the higher schools, restriction of the number of Jews in public offices, the army and the liberal arts – would amount to positive action, compatible with the principles of Christian ethics and following the tradition of “segregation” formulated by Saint Augustine.¹²³

There were intellectuals in Lithuania who invited to rapprochement and highlighted in the pages of *Apžvalga*, that the Lithuanian-Jewish relations are good and conflict-

¹¹⁸ Y. Gutman. Polish anti-Semitism between the wars: an overview // The Jews of Poland between Two world wars. Ed. by Y. Gutman, E. Mendelsohn, J. Reinharz and C. Shmeruk. University press of New England. Hanover and London, 1989. P. 106.

¹¹⁹ Expressionism in Arts and Poetry // Problems of Art Creation. Written by A. Jakštas. Kaunas, 1931. P. 226 - 227.

¹²⁰ Kun. J. Lomanas. Quo vadis, Modern Europe? Kaunas, 1932. P. 144

¹²¹ Ibidem. P. 199.

¹²² Daulius J. Communism in Lithuania. Kaunas, 1937. P. 198.

¹²³ J.Vaišnora. On the Issue of Jews // *Židinys*. 1937. Issue No.11. P.418 - 427.

free¹²⁴, however, the anti-Semitic stereotypes and National Socialist ideas spread in the circles of Lithuanian public growing more and more radical.

Antanas Maceina, a philosopher of Catholic orientation, not only criticised the capitalist regime which "promotes cultural materialism and destroys the family and nation"¹²⁵, but also dwelled on the ideas to consolidate the ethnic awareness of Lithuanians and assimilate or "marginalise" the ethnic minorities.¹²⁶ The right-wing intellectuals took to the example of the state model of the corporate fascist Mussolini's Italy. Dr. Jonas Balys, lecturer at the Ethnology Department of Vytautas Magnus University in the pages of *Akademikas* (Scholar) brought into focus the nature of Jewish culture – culture of the Oriental people – foreign to Lithuanians, their propensity for exploitation, spread of Communist ideas and the fact that they exploit Lithuanians.¹²⁷ Even in a neutral work of literary criticism about *Vaižgantas* in 1934 by A. Merkelis the following sentence slipped in: "*since the old days our people hate Jews and turn to them [for help] only in great need. The popular fairy tales ridicule Jews. Bishop M. Valancius must have been the father of anti-Semitism in Lithuanian literature.*"¹²⁸

XI.

Although the anti-Semitic riots involved, as a rule, farmers, craftsmen and blue-collar workers, the anti-Semitic leaflets were distributed not just by craftsmen or blue-collar workers, but also schoolchildren and students. In the fall of 1939 the Lithuanian Christian Workers' Union (former Lithuanian Labour Federation till 1934) in its leaflet was calling on the workers "*to launch the fight against those Jewish parasites, who grew rich from our bloody work, and who are exploiting us and have got no shame nor conscience*". The address ends with the following words: "*Brothers Lithuanian workers! It is time we stopped toiling under the Jewish yoke. Let us drive those annoying and dangerous lodgers away from our cities and our land. Enough, their term [in our land] has expired. They are riding us – we will ride them away. Shout the slogan "Jews, get away from Lithuania!"*"¹²⁹ In December of 1939, the schoolchildren of Panevėžys, Šiauliai and Prienai gymnasiums distributed the leaflets urging to "*to throw off the Jewish yoke and salvage Lithuania from Jews*"¹³⁰.

From 1922 the students of Kaunas University were protesting against a too high number of Jews studying law and medicine, against the Jewish students occupying seats in the lecture-halls etc. On 21 November 1926 a demonstration organised by student radicals was calling for measures against the "unpatriotic" coalition

¹²⁴ "Love thy neighbour as thyself" // *Apžvalga*. 1935 07 14. Issue No. 5. The possible ways to improve the Lithuanian-Jewish relations // *Apžvalga*. 1935 06 30. Issue No. 3. Jews must not be driven away artificially from commerce // *Apžvalga*. 1935 07 14. Nr. 5.

¹²⁵ Dr. A. Maceina. The Social Justice. The Demise of capitalism and the social principles of the new regime. Kaunas, 1938.

¹²⁶ A. Maceina. The Nation and the State // *Naujoji Romuva*. 1939. Issue No. 11.

¹²⁷ J. Balys. Anthropological and Sociological Problems of the Jewry // *Akademikas*. 1934 02 01 Issue No. 2 . P. 40 - 42.

¹²⁸ A. Merkelis. Juozas Tumas Vaižgantas. Kaunas, 1934. P. 69.

¹²⁹ State Security Department Newsletter of 1939 10 26 Issue No. 251 // LVA Doc.col. 378. State Security Department, Ministry of the Interior of the Republic of Lithuania. Inv.sch. 10. File. 187. State Security Department newsletter. 1939 . P. 243 -244.

¹³⁰ Newsletter of the State Security Department of 1939 12 13 Issue No. 313 // Ibidem, P. 564 -565.

Government of M. Šleževičius. However, these protests with new strength resurfaced in 1930's, which happened not without the influence of processes unfolding in the National Socialist Germany.

The right-wing intellectuals of Lithuania, orientating themselves at the Italian model of corporatism¹³¹, did not favour the German National Socialism (A. Maceina found foreign both the atheism of the Bolshevik Russia and the “Neo-paganism” of the Nazi Germany¹³²), whose politics of a great power threatened existence of the Lithuanian state. However, certain measures pursued by the Nazi Germany (boycotting of the Jewish economy, a restriction [on Jews] to occupy public offices) and the geopolitical ideas¹³³ were perceived positively. Mirror images of the *Blutt and Boden* theory were brought into existence, listing among the characteristics of a nation – language, faith, land and customs –the criteria of blood (the race).¹³⁴ J. Balys, quoting the racist studies of German authors, wrote: “the issue of Jews is not the problem of religion or economy, but, rather, of nation and race”.¹³⁵ On 4 January 1939 a young historian Zenonas Ivinskis delivered a speech, in which he praised “the racist laws directed against the parasitic minority” in Austria and Germany.¹³⁶ Vladas Jurgutis of the Bank of Lithuania (1885-1966) in the introduction to his monograph “Money” quoted a trivial idea of Hitler, that it is not money which must serve life, but life which should serve money.¹³⁷

According to the State Security Department reports, the years 1935-1938 witnessed heightening of hysteria about “the ritual murders” and “child disappearance”. The Chairman of the Union of Jewish Soldiers Participants of the Fights for the Independence of Lithuania J. Goldberg in 1936 said:” Never, not even under Russians, has the ritual legend been spread so strongly as now”.¹³⁸ The proliferation of such accusations was preconditioned by social geography, region (their largest number circulated in Samogitia), and behaviour and attitude of local priests: some of them tolerated medieval legends.

The popular attitude to Jews, their faith and allegations of the “Christ killing” and ritual killings of Christians in the inter-war period in Lithuania was often predetermined by the education, mindset and personal attitude of priests. Some priests in their sermons encouraged to live together peacefully and rejected what back in the 13th century had been denounced by the popes Innocent IV and Gregory IX. However, there were priests who instigated the anti-Judaic frenzy. This way, amidst the anti-Semitic hysteria in Taurage county in April 1935, the Priest of Pašile church

¹³¹ B. Raila. The ideals of politics and unity of nation // *Vairas*. 1938 12 15 . Vol. XXV. P. 413, 416.

¹³² A. Maceina. The Importance of Christian Institutions for the Lithuanian Nation // *XX amžius*. 1937 10 29 .Issue No. 221. A.Maceina. Awakening of the Masses // *Židinys*. 1939. Issues No. 8-9. Vol. XXX. P. 173.

¹³³ See.: Prof. K. Aleksa. The Eugenics and the Future of Lithuania // *Vairas*. 1938 02 15. Issue No. 3. P. 151 - 158. S. Tarvydas. The Geopolitics. Kaunas, 1939.

¹³⁴ A. Liaugminas. Individual Ethnic Characteristics of Lithuanian // *Akademikas*. 1934 0 15. Issues No. 6 - 7. P. 126.

¹³⁵ J. Balys. The Anthropological and Sociological Problem of the Jewry // *Akademikas*. 1934 02 01 Issue No. 2. P. 42.

¹³⁶ Quotation from: S. Sužiedelis. “The Kaunas Ghetto: Day After Day” by Avraham Tory // A. Tory. The Kaunas Ghetto: Day After Day. Vilnius, 2000. P. XIX.

¹³⁷ V. Jurgutis. Money. Kaunas, 1938. P.9.

¹³⁸ Address by the Chairman of the Union of Jewish Soldiers J.Goldberg // *Apžvalga*. 1936 04 12. Issue No. 14.

Skinderis in his sermon asserted that “Jews were killing the Christians.”¹³⁹ In April 1938 the Dean of Svedasai A. Survila, during his Easter sermon reminded of the Beili’s case. When after the sermon the tales spread that Jews need the Christian blood, representatives of the Jewish community turned to the priest asking him to deny such rumours, to which the Dean responded that “he never said, that Jews need the blood now, he said that the Jewish nation is innocent, nevertheless is convinced that the Jewish sect is of the kind which needs blood.”¹⁴⁰

The xenophobia intensifying among Lithuanians in 1937-1939, was manifesting itself not only in the allegations against the people of other nationality of exploitation, unfair dealing in business, perpetration of dangerous radical ideologies, but, also, in labelling them as cosmopolitan and bohemian. The printed media claimed that Jewish tabloid press (*Sekmadienis* – The Sunday) promotes pornography, advocates for sexual perversion and demoralises young people. In this context, frequent references were made to a popular Lithuanian resort – Palanga, since, allegedly, there were too many Jewish holidaymakers there: “God did not keep to his promise: he promised the Palestine to the sons of Abraham, however, gave them Palanga”, joked a humorist *Kuntaplis* (Shoe) publication.¹⁴¹ A Young Nationalists’ activist V. Alantas came up with a segregation project: to set up a separate beach area for Jews, because Jews were “polluting” the seaside of Palanga.¹⁴²

According to the State Security Department Director Augustinas Povilaitis, the persons of Jewish nationality were prone to sex crimes more than other ethnic minorities in Lithuania: “It is symptomatic, that a number of this type crimes are committed by persons of Jewish nationality. Consequently, people of this nation are to a very high degree inclined to committing offences of this type. I noticed this fact in the first place also because the two-year statistics on these offences (1937-1938) is greatly unfavourable for the citizens of Jewish nationality. In the given period the citizens of Jewish nationality committed a whole series of such offences against Lithuanians, while Lithuanians have not committed a single crime against Jews.”¹⁴³ Accusations against Jews of lewdness, of corrupting the Christians and sexual perversion were penetrating from the Nazi Germany.

The extremists were calling for re-Lithuanianizing of cities and expropriation of Jewish property. Anti-Semitic leaflets were distributed, windows of Jewish shops, houses and synagogues smashed, signboards of Jewish shops smeared with Yiddish words. They were not just individual cases, the SSD newsletters of 1938-39 record such incidents on an almost daily basis. Against the background of Lithuania’s aggravating international situation, the ethnic group that was not backed by any real force, became the scapegoat.

¹³⁹ 1939 05 14 Report of Taurage County Governor to the Police Department // LVA. Doc.col 394. Inv.sch. 6.File. 45. P. 15.

¹⁴⁰ 1938 05 10 Report of Rokiškis County Governor to the Police Department // LVA. Doc.col 394. Inv.sch. 6. File. 176. P.9.

¹⁴¹ From the Promised Palanga // *Kuntaplis* 1937. 01 11 Issue No. 28. Also see.: The Blue Summers of our Seaside // *XX amžius*. 1937 08 12. Issue No.181. Opinions of Two Foreigners about Palanga // *XX amžius*. 1937 08 11. Issue No. 180.

¹⁴² V. Alantas. The Burning Issues of Seaside // *Lietuvos aidas*.1938 08. 26.

¹⁴³ A. Povilaitis. More Stringent Measures Are Needed // Reference Book on the Criminalistics. 1939. Issue. 28 .P.169.

Following the 1938 and 1939 agreements with Germany and Poland, establishment of diplomatic relations with Poland, criticism of Germans or Poles became irrelevant, thereby, Jews became the most visible and widely attacked minority. In 1939 the more serious anti-Semitic incidents took place in Kretinga, Leipalingis (the crowd was instigated by members of the Lithuanian Riflemen Union) and Taurages Naumiestis.¹⁴⁴ After the incidents, the Interior Minister Skucas described anti-Semitism as an imported phenomenon, which is wholly alien to the Lithuanian nation,¹⁴⁵ however, the spread of anti-Semitism in 1933-1939 was conditioned by both the geopolitical state of affairs and the trends in country's internal development. These incidents cannot be compared with the 19th century pogroms in Russia, or the [formal] attitude of the Polish state to Jews on the eve of World War II, however, pogrom-prone tendencies intensified notably. The tensions between Jews and Lithuanians in cities and small towns were mounting in a much more severe manner than in the late 19th century or in the period of founding of the Lithuanian state. Cultural devaluation of Jews was on the rise. An attitude of distrust towards Jews which had been common among Lithuanians before, by now has altered into insults and anti-Semitic excesses.

XII.

Jews and Lithuanians became allies for a brief period once again when Lithuanians recovered the region of Vilnius: Lithuanians and Lithuanian Jews were in high spirits: Lithuanians got back their city of Gediminas and Vytautas, while the Jews of Lithuania – the city of Gaon and the intellectual community of Vilnius Litvaks. For the first time after 1918-1920 did the both nations share the moment of joint interests, which could be taken as an opportunity to create the preconditions for easing the tensions. However, it did not happen: a long-lasting hostility and the deep-rooted stereotypical thinking was stronger than a rational attitude. The public became infuriated with the participation of a few Jewish Communists in the demonstration organised by a left-winger intellectual Justas Paleckis,¹⁴⁶ when on 11 October 1939 the NGOs in Kaunas organised a public march from the Museum of War to the President's Office on the occasion of return of Vilnius. During it, a group comprising several dozens of people, which, according to the SSD newsletter, consisted of "Jewish Communists and Communist sympathisers", organised a demonstration to express the gratitude to the USSR. In the march 4 Communists raised posters which read: "Freedom to political prisoners!" and "Long live the USSR!" The police officers requested them to lower the posters, and, when the demonstrators refused to obey, a fight broke out. People close to the scene began shouting "Beat the Jews!" Four Communists suffered a beatings and were transferred to the police. According to *Dienynas* (Diary) publication of Kaunas area SSD, at the USSR embassy, which the demonstrators reached, J. Paleckis "together with two Jewish men and one Jewish

¹⁴⁴ SSD newsletter of 1939 05 03 No.104 // LVA. Doc.col. 378. File.186. Vol.2. P. 90. SSD newsletter of 1939 08 04 // 1939 05 LVA. Doc.col. 378. File.186. Vol.2. P 115. Kretinga. 1939 06 19 SSD newsletter s No.137 // LVA. Doc.col. 378. File.186.Vol.2. P. 206 -207. SSD newsletter 1939 07 07 No. 148. // Ibidem. P. 239 -242.

¹⁴⁵ The Interior Minister Gen. Skucas Declares that Instigation and Excesses Won't Be Tolerated // *Apžvalga*. 1939 07 02. Issue No. 25. *Lietuvos žinios* 1939 06 23.

¹⁴⁶ *Apžvalga* (1939 10 22. Issue No. 36) wrote the following about this demonstration "they [young Jewish men] should realise whose grindstone they are powering and should give cause for infuriation with the loyal Jewish inhabitants", however, "Lithuanians" ,too, "should not be accusing all Jews for an escapade by a small group of young men".

girl were allowed to enter the embassy, where they stayed for 5 minutes”¹⁴⁷. The evening of the same day and the next day saw Communist demonstrations, during which the crowd smashed several shop windows on Laisves avenue. These Communist excesses, which involved young Jews, encouraged hooligan anti-Semitic acts in Kaunas.

On 13 October 1939, students of *Lithuania* corporation of Kaunas Vytautas Magnus University in their meeting discussed “the impudent escapade of Jews on the occasion of recovery of Vilnius.”¹⁴⁸ Leaflet titled “Lithuanians” and signed by the Freedom Fighters, was blaming the Jews for the exploitation of the Lithuanian nation, use of Russian language, non-patriotism in donating to the Armament Fund ridiculously small amounts and invited to the boycott of Jewish shops.¹⁴⁹ Another anti-Semitic leaflet claimed that Jews marred the high spirit of the occasion of Vilnius recovery and accused them of exploiting the Lithuanian workers: *‘No Jews [do we see] busy at the public works, cleaning of sewage, or collecting the rubbish. That is the job of a Lithuanian... They can only boast crowds of deserters.’*¹⁵⁰

The excesses of October, according to the SSD newsletter, evoked hostile attitudes towards Jews and “the Sovietization” promoted by them, however, in the eyes of the Lithuanian public, the culprit was identified not with the Lithuanian Communist Party, but with the entire Kaunas Jewish community, without distinguishing the categories of loyal and disloyal citizens within it.

On 30 October 1939, three days after Lithuanians had marched into Vilnius, the city witnessed an anti-Semitic riot. Clashes took place between Polish and Jewish youth and was the result of difficult economic standing of residents, shortage of bread and high prices. Polish youth were assaulting the persons of Jewish nationality, tales were being spread that Jews massacred a Catholic priest and organised a Communist demonstration. Jews accused the Lithuanian police, supposed to ensure the order, of being rather passive during these incidents, promoting provocative rumours and failing to prevent violence, siding with the Polish hooligans. Following the anti-Semitic incidents in Vilnius, anti-Semitism raised its ugly head among the political and military Kaunas elite. On the other hand, a witness of events Moshe Kleinbaum concluded, that Polish anti-Semitism was banned and that local press, controlled by the official censorship, allowed no anti-Semitic articles. On his report, the Lithuanian anti-Semitism in Vilnius region was exclusively economic by nature: “The economy

¹⁴⁷ SSD newsletter of 1939 10 12 Issue No. 227 // LVA . Doc.col. 378. SSD of the Interior Ministry of the Republic of Lithuania. Doc.col. 10, File. 187. P. 233 –234. Also see.: 1939 10 10 *Dienynas* Issue No 64 of Kaunas area SSD. // Ibidem. File. 545. Diary of the Kaunas area SSD 1938-40.P. 749 - 750.

¹⁴⁸ Agents reports 1939 10 14 // Doc.col. 378. Inv.sch.10. File.158. Agents reports, excerpts from newsletters 1939 -1940. P.68.

¹⁴⁹ Proclamation “Lithuanians” // Ibidem. P. 74. *Kuntaplis* humorist publication “was mocking Jews donating little to the Armament fund. Lithuanian public subscribed to a popular opinion that wealthy Jews were hardly donating one Litas each to Armament Fund (*Kuntaplis* 1938 04 17. Issue No. 16).

Proclamation “Compatriot, do not buy from Jews. Do not give away you products” // LVA. Doc.col. 378. Inv.sch.. 10. File. 158.P. 3.

¹⁵⁰ Proclamation “Hey, Lithuanian Worker” 1939 10 21 // Ibidem L. 80.

is nationalised gradually, which means that soon it will be forcibly cleansed from Jews.”¹⁵¹

The domestic situation of Lithuania, just like the international political standing of the Baltic States late 1939 – early 1940 was lacking stability. Apart from being worried about the Communist activities, Lithuanians were concerned about the growing numbers in country of Jewish people, refugees from the German-occupied Poland. Jewish refugees, who received the support from the “Joint” organisation in hard currency (US dollars) benefited the economy of Lithuania, whose export possibilities had been restricted by the war. Although *Apžvalga* sought to lay an emphasis on sympathy with the suffering refugees, the Lithuanian public, however, was concerned about the economic difficulties and fearful that the stay of refugees from Poland in Kaunas will reduce the number of apartments available for rent and increase the rent, as was the case when Hitler occupied Klaipeda region, which had been abandoned by Jews.

The end of 1930’s saw the multiplying number of anti-Semitic excesses among the academic youth. On 10 December 1938, a demonstration of Vytautas Magnus University students protesting against A. Smetona’s policy clashed with police. Students were shouting anti-Semitic and anti-governmental slogans.¹⁵² In 1939 lawyer M. Riomeris, rector of VMU, was replaced by philosopher St. Šalkauskis who made efforts to prevent political agitation and propaganda at the university and considered such manifestations the “misfortunate” of the university. Both the professors were outstanding personalities who treated national minorities in a friendly way, however, the moods within the society depended on the changing geopolitical situation and specific of activity of the communists in Kaunas rather than on the position of individual intellectuals.

At the Vilnius University, reformed on the Lithuanian model and managed by a Lithuanian administration, proposals were issued following the Polish example to identify in the lecture-halls the seats for Aryans and Jews. For instance, in Hungary *numerus clausus* was introduced in the academic circles in 1939 proceeding with the setting of 6 percent barrier for the Jewish children at a secondary school level and other restrictions. Although there were no administrative acts of this kind in Lithuania, identical proposals were becoming popular with the right-wingers students of Vytautas Magnus University. The VMU Rector S. Šalkauskis and other professors denounced such racist instigations,¹⁵³ however, their voice had not been decisive in society in the grip of anti-Semitism. On 11 December 1939 students of the Faculty of Physics and Chemistry demonstratively abandoned the lecture-hall and presented a repeated letter of protest to the VMU Rector Prof. Stasys Šalkauskis concerning the “Numerus clausus” clause, since, according to the authors of the letter of protest, the

¹⁵¹ Moshe Kleinbaum’s report on issues in the former Eastern Polish territories 12 03 1940 // Jews in Eastern Poland and the USSR, 1939 -1946. Ed. by Norman Davies and Antony Polonsky. London, 1991. P. 286 - 287.

¹⁵² Report by the Chief of Police of Kaunas county to the Kaunas County Governor 1935 12 11 // LVA. Doc.col 394. Inv.sch.6. File. 167. Reports on the [current] events 1938. P. 33 - 35.

¹⁵³ Press Release by Rect. S. Šalkauskis // *Apžvalga*. 1939 11 03. Issue No. 38. Conversation of the VM University Rector S. Šalkauskis with journalists // *Lietuvos žinios*. 1939 11 02.

Jews, prone to sympathise with Communists, are disloyal to the Republic of Lithuania.¹⁵⁴

Disloyal activities of the minority created the image that all Jews were of Communist views, while following the occupation of Eastern Polish lands, the wealthier Jews feared forthcoming nationalisation of property and repression, and only a tiny group of Communists looked forward to welcoming the Soviets. The Soviet Union could only be perceived among Jews as the country, where all nations enjoy equal rights and which is free from anti-Semitism: such geopolitical orientation of the Jewish community can be understood against the background of Hitler's unleashed aggression. The SSD newsletter after Poland's fall in the autumn of 1939 recorded the following tendencies among the Jews of Kaunas: *'The better-off Jews fear that the Soviet army may start its march to Lithuania. The left-wing Jews, on the opposite, are living with a hope that the Red Army will come here'*¹⁵⁵ Whereas in Samogitia, as the security agents maintained, the Jews were rejoicing that *'Russians will occupy Lithuania.'*¹⁵⁶ The SSD documents evidence that in June 1940 a part of Lithuanian Jews viewed the imminent Soviet occupation as the lesser evil: *'The spirits today have drooped very visibly everywhere, with the exception of Jews, and it is said by many, that if we are to encounter an occupation, the German is far more better than the Russian. Jews, on the contrary, are showing a lot of enthusiasm, are in high spirits and rejoice among themselves that they will finally see the Soviet power.'*¹⁵⁷

XIII.

The Soviet occupation of 1940 witnessed the biggest ever divergence of interests and geopolitical orientation of the Jews and Lithuanians, which had a crucial influence on the growth of anti-Semitism and formation of certain preconditions of the Holocaust. We can hardly talk about the hostile approach of the Lithuanians towards the Jews, as some Jewish authors claim¹⁵⁸, without the analysis of the 1940-1941 period. Unfavourable approach towards the Jews, which developed in the independent Lithuania, was combined with the anti-Jewish "Jew – Christ-killer" stereotype and much affected by the "Jew-Communist" image after the 1940 Sovietisation. The notes by the first sergeant, Plevokas who guarded Soviet prisoners of war and perished in 1942 on the East Front, could serve a good illustration:

"We found a Jew and brought him to *'Batia'* (Lt. Solianik), and then the latter "took care of him" by ordering him to shout: "I am a Jew who sold the Christ" and was whipped most severely. At times it is interesting, but equally cruel, since he is also a living creature, but nothing is to be done. We are fighting the Bolsheviks, particularly Jews, and have to consider that the protection battalions have already left Lithuania:

¹⁵⁴ LVA. Doc.col. 378. Inv.sch.10. B.158. Agents reports, excerpts from newsletters of 1939 - 1940 P. 95.

¹⁵⁵ SSD newsletter No. 206 of 1939 09 26 // LVA. Doc.col. 378. Inv.sch. 10.File. 187. P. 164.

¹⁵⁶ VS and KP newsletter of Šiauliai police No. 181 of 1939 09 21 // LVA. Doc.col. 378. Inv.sch.. 5. BFile 4421. VS and KP newsletter of Šiauliai police of 1938 - 1939. Vol 1. P. 123.

¹⁵⁷ VS and KP Šiauliai county newsletter No. 78 of 1940 05 30 // LVA. Doc.col. 378. Inv.sch.12. File. 296. VS and KP Šiauliai county newsletter. 1940. P. 58.

¹⁵⁸ N. Cohen. Lietuviu požiuris i žydus per Katastrofa//Lithuanian approach towards the Jews during the Catastrophe. Atminties dienos (*Days of Memory*). International conference in commemoration of the 50th anniversary of liquidation of the Vilnius Ghetto, Vilnius, 1993, p.217-222.

one headed to Minsk and the other to Estonia, to Ylma lake, with similar tasks, i.e. to collect and annihilate the Jews.¹⁵⁹”

The newspapers published in Lithuania during the German occupation mostly exploited the image of the “Jew-Bolshevik” and sometimes reprinted anti-Semitic articles of the 19th century and pre-war period (including articles by Vincas Kudirka which were published in 1890 issues of “Varpas”) about “Jewish exploiters,” saying that “the Jews have everywhere and always marched together with the enemies of our nation.”¹⁶⁰

The situation of Jews in the Soviet-occupied territories had been transformed essentially. A portion of Jews, mainly the LCP members, took the offices in the state structures. Until then they played practically no part in the administration of the state, therefore, Lithuanians got the impression that the administration was purely Jewish. The number of Jews in the higher schools went up, Jewish names became frequent in Lithuanian newspapers, their share in various artistic groups, municipalities etc. became significant. Except for the Orthodox and Zionist youth, the majority Jews, albeit displeased with the enterprise nationalisation and the economic policy of the Soviets, accepted the new regime which opened up new opportunities for them. Communists of Jewish nationality, especially from the lower classes, tradesmen and all those who experienced a significant *structural* upgrading of their social status, who earlier felt the economic pressure of the government and feared anti-Semitic assaults, responded to the change of situation positively, and at times, rather enthusiastically. The majority of Lithuanian Jews were not Communists, however, the Communism looked attractive to a part of non-Zionist Jewish youth (especially in Kaunas), who saw no future in the Republic of Lithuania of nationalistic orientation. On the other hand, the Red Army was viewed as the saviour from the eventual occupation by Germany. The Jews hoped that they will be defended against Hitler, while for Lithuanians the loss of their independence was a greatest calamity in all respects.¹⁶¹ The opposite geopolitical orientations of both nations let themselves be known as well as the indifference to each other’s interests.

The standpoint of a certain part of Jewish community in the period of Sovietisation is understandable. However, there also were insults in the address of Lithuanians, desecration of the state emblem and other insignia, exaggerated allegations to the state of Lithuania and Smetona’s regime for the policy of anti-Semitism etc. On 24 June 1940 the demonstration organised by the Lithuanian Communist Party and attended by Lithuanian workers and public servants driven forcibly to it, shouted a number of anti-Semitic comments, because the Communists of Jewish nationality who spoke

¹⁵⁹ Diary of First Sergeant Plevokas//Lithuanian Archives of Public Organisations. Doc.Col.16895, Inv. Sch.2, file 186, p.56.

¹⁶⁰ Musu tautos priešai//Enemies of our People, Naujoji Lietuva, 12 July 1941, No. 13, p.4.

¹⁶¹ Similar trends were manifested on the Eastern Polish land, which had been occupied by the Soviet Union army in the fall of 1939 :” ... the Poles feel very bitter towards the Jews for their behaviour during the Soviet occupation- their enthusiastic welcome of the Red Army, the insults which they directed towards the Polish officers and men who were under Soviet arrest, offering their services to the Soviets, informing on Poles and other acts of the sort.”(Jews in Eastern Poland and the USSR, 1939 -1946. Ed. by Norman Davies and Antony Polonsky. London, 1991. P. 14.)

poor Lithuanian, were openly declaring their agreement with the policies of the Soviets.¹⁶²

Repetition of similar instances led Lithuanians to assume that Jews betrayed Lithuania, which had extended a refuge to them, that, in fact, they were all Communists and they all welcomed the Soviet Army with flowers. Disloyalty of Jewish Communists was the basis for drawing universal conclusions pertaining to the entire community of the Lithuanian Jews.

The Soviet authorities allowed neither racial persecution nor persecution on ethnic grounds, thus, Jews [suddenly] felt equal citizens and in certain respects began feeling superior. As the witness of Kaunas events of 1940-1941 Harry Gordon maintains in his memoirs:

*“Jews suddenly felt very free. And it was not bad after all. Impolite behaviour was not permitted and this applied to Russians, Lithuanians and Jews equally. Nobody could call us humiliating names or insult, because this incurred a six months imprisonment. Jews were walking with their heads high. If a Jew encountered a Lithuanian, the latter had to step down from the pavement and give him way. Things were the other way round before Russians came”*¹⁶³

What is singled out by the Lithuanian and Jewish authors in their writings about mutual contacts during the pre-war period in Lithuania? What is the opinion of the Lithuanians and what is the opinion of the Jews based on the memories of the Soviet occupation in 1940 and the Nazi invasion of Lithuania?

Povilas Gaucys who worked in the press office of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Lithuania in 1938-1941, wrote in his memoirs that already on 15 June 1940 when in Laisves avenue in Kaunas “Russian tanks crawled and soldiers wearing Mongolian stiffened faces marched alongside, the men and women mostly of Jewish nationality stood on the pavement and threw flowers into them, some of the soldiers viewed them untrustworthy and failing to understand the behaviour of those people. It was painful and annoying to see our citizens behave in such a way. They enjoyed the end of the freedom of Lithuania, they greeted the occupants of Lithuania.”¹⁶⁴

We can also note a significant dichotomy in the approach of two nations towards both the processes which took place in Lithuania during the inter-war period and the Soviet and German occupations. In their writings about the inter-war Lithuania, the Jewish authors often emphasise the growth of anti-Semitism (which is not noted by the Lithuanians) and its manifestations such as smearing of the signboards in Yiddish and Hebrew (with the Polish inscriptions, as it should be emphasised) in Kaunas and Šiauliai in 1923. According to Lithuanians, that was a national march to make streets Lithuanian and was not worth a special consideration. Having found itself at the situation of a minority and experienced tsarist pogroms, the Jewish people would painfully react to similar acts, as Lithuanians did towards the process of Sovietisation in 1940-1941.

¹⁶² Official letter to the State Police Chief of Kaunas Area of 1940 06 25 // LVA. Doc.col 378. Inv.sch. 10. File. 158. P. 102.

¹⁶³ H. Gordon. The Holocaust in Lithuania. Kentucky, 1992. P. 16.

¹⁶⁴ P. Gaucys...p.176.

Was there any element of integration in the Jewish-Lithuanian relation during the inter-war period?

The formation of one block during the election to the first Russian Duma in 1905 is referred to as an element of this kind, however, as any political agreement, it was a typical *quid pro quo* rather than the manifestation of close co-operation. Two Jewish lawyers R. Valsonokas and J. Robinsonas protected the Lithuanian interest in Klaipeda region during the dispute with Germany, however, the work of both the lawyers was paid out of the funds of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. There were cultural contacts of intellectuals, too, but they were only individual rather than those resembling close ties of both the nations. It is still worth noting that a part of the Jews and Lithuanians shared the communist ideology and there were mixed marriages of the Jews and Lithuanians among communists, what was not the case with orthodox Jews and Zionists.

Having survived the Holocaust, Vilnius resident Grigorij Šur¹⁶⁵ stated that an important role in forming anti-Jewish moods rested on the deportations of the Lithuanians of 14-15 June 1941, but he did not attach much importance to the said, stressing that already before the outbreak of the war the Germans had shown their interest in promoting anti-Semitic moods among non-Jews and that local Lithuanian “Hitlerite organisations” played their important role when Hitler invaded the Soviet Union.”¹⁶⁶

Mutual hostility of the Lithuanians and the Jews during the inter-war period was revealed in the memoirs of S. Ginaite-Rubinsoniene:

“I graduated from the Lithuanian primary school in my childhood. I studied at the private gymnasium of Ateitininkai one year. I did not feel comfortable there as I was a stranger among the pupils of well-to-do Lithuanians <...>. Likewise the majority of the Jews in Kaunas, our family had no Lithuanian friends and had no closer relations with them. My father’s contacts with the Lithuanians were limited to business and commercial ties. My mother had no contacts with the Lithuanians at all. Our friends were only the pupils of our and other Jewish gymnasiums.”¹⁶⁷

An “invisible wall” divided the two communities and it was not demolished, thus, it was not surprising that the two communities had different interpretation of the 1940 events. S. Ginaite recognises straightforwardly that “in a way, this (soviet) occupation was not tragic for our people. We realised that we had the lesser evil out of two evils: the soviet occupation was better than the German occupation.”¹⁶⁸ The argument of a “lesser evil” is used by many authors of Jewish nationality who wrote on these issues. Rachele Margolis who lived through the Holocaust in Vilnius recognises that in 1939 they “were happy that the Russians occupied Vilnius.”¹⁶⁹ Under these dubious circumstances caused by the war when it was not clear whom to expect - the soviets or the Germans – the Jews felt safer in the Soviet Union. According to Margolis, the

¹⁶⁵ Grigorij Šur. *Evreji v Vilno. Chronika 1941-1944 g.*, St Petersburg, 2000.

¹⁶⁶ Grigorij Šur... p.31.

¹⁶⁷ Sara Ginaite-Rubinsoniene. *Atminimo knyga/(The Book of Memory)*, Vilnius, 1999, p.17.

¹⁶⁸ Sara Ginaite-Rubinsoniene...p.21.

¹⁶⁹ Pokalbis su Rachele Margolis//*Lietuvos žydai 1918-1940. Prarasto pasaulio aidas (Conversation with Rahele Margolis/Lithuanian Jews, 1918-1940. The Face of the Lost World.)* Compiled by Yves Plasseraud and Henri Minczeles. Vilnius, 2000, p. 108.

liking of the Soviet Union by some Jews had appeared even earlier as a result of poverty in Vilnius and extensive social division into the rich and poor.”¹⁷⁰ It was naïve to believe in messiah like propaganda on equal rights by the Soviet Union. The opposite orientation pursued by the majority of Lithuanians in June 1941 can also be explained by the argument of a “lesser evil”, however, it is more difficult to explain voluntary participation in the units which committed mass murder than geopolitical orientation and manifestations of spontaneous retaliation.

Deportations of Lithuanians to the distant regions of the Soviet Union started on 14-1 June 1941. Lithuanians were completely devastated and shocked, unable to comprehend why this was happening and for what sins. The Soviet occupants were to be blamed, and, as many Lithuanians believed, their collaborators Jews. Lithuanians, being squeezed into cattle carriages to be deported, were incapable of rational thinking in a state of shock. From among many Jews of Lithuania only those were singled out who enthusiastically welcomed the Red Army in Viliampole, a Jewish quarter in Kaunas. Given such conditions, the anti-Semitic leaflets distributed by the Lithuanian Activists Front (LAF) with its headquarters in Berlin, and treating Jews as perpetrators of Communist ideology and the culprits responsible for the Sovietisation in Lithuania, circulated at the ripe time.

Conclusions

1. In the first part of the 19th century all social groups living in Lithuania subscribed to the anti-Judaic (interpretation of the religious Judaeo-Christian conflict) tradition in their attitude to Jews. The 19th century written sources of the human rights defenders of Lithuanian peasants (Catholic priests and laymen) were dominated by the economic anti-Semitism. Works by activists of the national rebirth movement in the second half of the 19th century reflected the ideology of modern anti-Semitism, which, however, did not evolve till a finished version as in Poland, Germany or Russia.
2. The 19th century Lithuania evidenced certain level of coexistence in the sphere of the Lithuanian-Jewish economic relations, however, in fact, they were deeply alienated by the “own-alien” dichotomy resulting from the differences in the way of living of Jews and Lithuanians.
3. In the wake of WWI, during the Independence fights Jews, more than other ethnic minorities in Lithuania, supported the aspirations of Lithuanians to statehood, hoping for a *quid pro quo* : in exchange for the support to Lithuanians to be granted broad autonomous rights. The Lithuanian government was interested in the support of Jewish international organisations in resolving the problem of Vilnius region and the issue of *de jure* recognition of Vilnius.
4. Since the mid-1930’s Lithuania was under a strong influence of political tendencies, reaching it from its neighbours Poland and Germany, and mixed with anti-Semitism. The growth of anti-Semitism was visible among all social groups in the 1930s.

¹⁷⁰ Pokalbis su Rahele Margolis ...p. 108.

5. The global economic crisis, the state policy of promotion of Lithuanian products and the reinforced position of Lithuanian bourgeoisie gave rise to the economic anti-Semitism which urged to push Jews away from cities and boycott the producers of Jewish nationality. The stereotype of “Jew-the-exploiter” became more widespread, however, manifestations of anti-Semitic elements on racist and National Socialist grounds were scarce.
6. In the mid-1930’s the number of incidents over ritual killings went up. In some small towns of Lithuania they led to anti-Semitic hysteria. Cultural devaluation of Jews was on the rise. The attitude of distrust towards Jews among the Lithuanian public translated into insults against them and anti-Semitic excesses, however, did not reach the mount to the state of tension which existed in the neighbouring Poland.
7. The stereotype of “Jew-the-communist” which played an especially important role pertaining to the Holocaust in Lithuania, emerged after the Bolshevik revolution in Russia and was in particular strong in the mid-1930’s. This stereotype was reinforced by the left-wing activities of Jewish youth in Kaunas city, their participation in the Young Comsomol League organisation, demonstrations organised by Communists, distribution of proclamations, leaflets etc.
8. The period of Soviet occupation dismantled the existing social structure. The deportations of June 1941 had a devastating and disorganising effect on the Lithuanian nation. The upsurge of anti-Semitism that followed was largely preconditioned by the image of “Jew-the-communist”. The degree of participation of Communists of Jewish nationality in the Soviet administration and the Lithuanian Communist party and the process of Sovietisation was perceived in absolute terms and applied to the entire community of Lithuanian Jews. Situation which arose after the occupation by the German army which followed soon and during which the bulk of Jews had not managed to escape to the distant regions of the USSR, was especially conducive to the perpetration of the Holocaust in Lithuania.

Vygantas Vareikis