

## Koniuchy in the "New" and "Old" Polish and Jewish Memory

### **JEWISH PARTISANS IN LITHUANIA**

For many years, Soviet propaganda had been building a certain image by exploiting the role of the Soviet partisans during the World War II era for its own advancement. For several decades the often film and literature image was one of a guerilla soldier without particular features, insensitive to the suffering of others, but determined and self-confident with respect to the rightness of the cause being fought for. It was a stereotyped picture of a person who usually had a “typical Soviet” background, from a typical family and typical town. Most of the Soviet era research supported this effigy, and was itself the product of a political machine, which had to serve the ruling ideology and its supporting historical concepts.

Scholars from the West, on the other hand, were not able to build a substantially different picture, because the archives in the Soviet Union and its satellite countries were closed to foreign (and most native) scholars. There was, moreover, an overestimation of the Second Front in the anti-Nazi resistance, and denial even of a glimmer of popular support for the Soviet regime during the Cold War era.

After the demise of the Soviet Union, researchers turned their attention to the nationalist guerilla movements that fought very often not only against Germans and Soviets but among themselves as well. Materials and documents in the archives became much easier to access. The wave of interest, including archival studies previously impossible, led to increased interest in the role of the Jewish partisans in overall Soviet popular war effort.

However, despite available archival materials, the important topic of Jewish partisans did not result in studies based on primary sources.

The continuing interest in the West in the issue was preserved due to the oral histories and memoirs of Holocaust survivors, many of whom, especially in Lithuania, fought in Soviet partisan groups. However, the overemphasis on oral history and memoirs has resulted in the fragmentation of efforts to reconstruct the history of the numerous Jewish partisan groups and of the movement as a whole. There was another parallel tendency. Israel attempts to build the country’s military legacy on the Jewish military exploits in the past added to the emergence of the Jewish resistance as a proper subject in school curriculum.

Due to all these circumstances, the Jewish partisans’ topic in Lithuania, where they contributed a solid fighting force in the Soviet partisan groups, is still based on secondary sources and extensive memorabilia, presenting objectified and romanticized, and overly ideological picture of the events.

My research aims as much at describing and reconstructing of the lives of simple heroic human beings, as it is with the analysis of historical structures and supporting research by previously disregarded archival sources to reconstruct history of the Jewish partisans in Lithuania. A need can also be identified to re-evaluate some of the traditional arguments

brought forward from different historiographies which appear to be discarded as part of the iconoclastic zeal to exorcise the past. The exorcism became an important part of national historiographies in Israel, Lithuania and Poland, trying to refute the arguments brought forward by the Soviet historiography. Additionally, it should be recognized that the powerful weight of evidence which underpins serious scholarship may itself serve to raise a number of “open questions” which this research will not be able to answer.

## METHODOLOGY

Although it is a challenging undertaking, one of the main analytical planks of this study is to approach the topic by applying the concept of an “institutional entity” to the Jewish partisan movement in Lithuania forged by the Soviet commanders, discipline, party control and power, as opposed to the image of the atomized, highly ideologically motivated assembly of the individuals presented by the Soviet and Israeli researchers.

The quote from Roderick Floud would add to the point, “while it has long been clear to social scientists, that, in most circumstances, it is illegitimate to make inferences about individual motivations or behavior from mass data, this does not preclude historians from contrasting behavior of large numbers or people considered as a whole”.<sup>1</sup>

Many studies implicitly demonstrated that people at war engage in controversial, and not only, actions because of the “strategies for survival”, force of circumstance, with response to manpower limitations, and only very small impact has on them their political convictions, view of the world. The political attitudes of the men in arms appeared of much less importance than provision of paternal protection and the gratification of certain daily needs. The partisan groups could, as any other military unit, provide safety against individuating military threats.<sup>2</sup>

## HISTORIOGRAPHY

Though the very subject of Jewish resistance has received large attention in eighties and nineties, the subject of Jewish partisans in the Lithuania has not attained significant attention from the scholars publishing in English.<sup>3</sup>

Books of the ex-partisans: Ytzhak Arad, *The Partisan: From the Valley of Death to Mt. Zion*, Isaac Kowalski, *A Secret Press in Nazi Europe. The Story of a Jewish United Partisan Organization* Partisan and his book (edit.) published in 1991 *Anthology on Armed Jewish Resistance, 1939-1945*; Lester Eckman and Chaim Lazar, *The Jewish Resistance. The History of the Jewish Partisans in Lithuania and White Russia during the*

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<sup>1</sup> R.Floud, “Quantitative History and People’s History: Two Methods in Conflict”, *Social Science History*, 8, 1984

<sup>2</sup> Theo S.Shulte, *The German Army and Nazi Policies in Occupied Russia*, Oxford, 1989, p.34; W.Victor Madej, “Effectiveness and Cohesion of German Ground Forces in World War II”, *Journal of Political and Military Sociology*, vol.6, 1978, pp.233-48.

<sup>3</sup> United States Holocaust Museum, The Miles Lerman Center for The Studio of Jewish Resistance, *Jewish Resistance. A Working Bibliography*, Washington D.C.1999, p.34.

*Nazi occupation 1940-1945*; Lazar, *Destruction and Resistance*, and parts of Dov Levin's book describing Jewish partisans, are based exclusively on memoirs and predominantly secondary sources.<sup>4</sup> Numerous literary expressions and songs have been collected, and documentaries based on the stories were produced.

All this literature stressed the "Jewishness" of the fighters and the Zionist world view of the movement as a whole. In part, it could be explained by the fact that oral histories of the ex-partisans from different regions with diverse population attitudes towards Nazis and Soviets, even different occupation politics, tended to blur the context and general picture of the events in very diverse environments of Belarus or Lithuania, and was not country or geographically specific. This type of research makes far reaching generalizations based on a data and facts from a location specific events, for example, from Belarus.<sup>5</sup> Moreover, the context of the events is not of great interest to the authors, as well as connection of their stories to the real situation on the ground. Naturally, these books have plenty of factual mistakes and inaccuracies. Even Nechama Tec in her brilliant study, "*Jewish Resistance Facts, Omissions, and Distortions*," did not avoid far reaching generalizations on the topic of Jewish partisans under the influence of her fine study of Bielski partisans. However, she was careful to stress that there are more questions than answers concerning Jewish armed resistance and, especially, participation of the Jews in non-Jewish underground.<sup>6</sup>

This historiography written in English brought attention to many interesting circumstances, provided many insights into what was really happening, and depicted events with valuable details and description of event, all of it makes it indispensable for any researcher in the future. However, the books are based exclusively on one-sided sources or personal memoirs, and all have flaws that are attached to human nature and his memory, not to speak about self-indulging authors' glorification of own military deeds.

The historiography on the Soviet side situation was in many ways similar. Though the topic of the partisan resistance to the Nazi occupation was often discussed in public, and found its expression in arts and literature, the historiography is not prolific and the subject is not well researched even under auspices of Marxist-Leninist ideology. The research on partisans for several decades was the monopoly of the selected Party historians.

The long standing sole privilege to research the Soviet Lithuanian partisan topic in Lithuania was in the hands of Povilas Staras who wrote numerous publications,

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<sup>4</sup> Y. Arad, *The Partisan: From the Valley of Death to Mt. Zion*, New York, 1979; I. Kowalski, *A Secret Press in Nazi Europe. The Story of a Jewish United Partisan Organization*, New York, 1969; I. Kowalski, *Anthology on Armed Jewish Resistance, 1939-1945*, Vol. 4, New York, 1991; L. Eckmann and Ch. Lazar, *The Jewish Resistance: The History of the Jewish Partisans in Lithuania and White Russia during the Nazi Occupation, 1940-1945*, New York, 1977; Ch. Lazar, *Destruction and Resistance*, New York, 1985; D. Levin, *Fighting Back: Lithuanian Jewry Armed Resistance to the Nazis*, New York, 1985. Valuable information is provided by the authors of memoirs, describing pre-partisan period in the ghettos: A. Sutzkever, *Fun Vilner Geto*, Moscow, 1946; A. Tory *Surviving the Holocaust: The Kovno Ghetto Diary*, Cambridge, 1990; H. Kruk and M. Bernshtain, *Togbukh fun Vilner Geto*, New York, 1992.

<sup>5</sup> As an example could serve documents and articles collection by Jack Nusan Porter where far reaching conclusions are made on all Jewish partisan groups on the Belorussian material: Ed. J.N. Porter, *Jewish Partisans: A Documentary of Jewish Resistance in the Soviet Union During World War*, Jerusalem, 1982

<sup>6</sup> N. Tec, *Jewish Resistance Facts, Omissions, and Distortions*, 2001 Washington D.C. USHMM, p.36.

beginning in 1956 with a book *Lietuviu tautos kova uz Tevynes laisve Didziajame Tevynes kare* (*The Fight of the Lithuanian Nation for the Freedom in the Great Patriotic War*).<sup>7</sup> He addresses the start of the partisan movement and its development, coordination of the actions with the Soviet partisans in Belarus and Soviet Army.

After ten years, he published the next, much larger, volume *Partizaninis Judejimas Lietuvoje Didziojo Tevynes karo metai s* (*Partisan Movement in Lithuania during the Second World War*).<sup>8</sup> Among other things, Staras start to discuss the events of 1941-1942 that obstructed formation of the partisan movement in Lithuania. The author also examined military actions of the partisans, and what is very significant, not only had introduced partisan stories but provided references to it. For the first time in history he started to address the issue of partisan numbers and their national composition. His book also uses memoirs and excerpts from the Soviet press.

In 1982 an important documentary publication, collective monograph, "*Lietuvos Liaudis Didziajame Tevynes Kare*" (*Lithuanian People in the Great Patriotic War*) was published, describing events of 1941-1945.<sup>9</sup> Extensive documents and other sources from the Communist Party Archive, the Lithuanian Central State Archive, the Latvia's Central Historical Archive, and the USSR Central Archive of the Ministry of Defense were included. However, the collection has several substantial flaws: the documents are published not in full length and contain omissions of the facts that could be interpreted in several ways. Naturally, the dark side of the partisan life and reports (robberies, arbitrary killings, drunkenness) were omitted, leaving for the readers only attacks against Germans and collaborators.

Additionally, several books of memoir anthologies were published during the Soviet period.<sup>10</sup> All these products of ideological motivation, driven by ideological fervor and hatred of a dreaded enemy, describe what their authors did between 1941-1945, and attempt to describe Soviet partisan activities. All of these memoirs are highly charged with Soviet ideology and as a rule were written 13 to 37 years after the events. Information is poorly delivered, and as in all memoirs which are written after such long time are not trustworthy and entirely accurate. Basically, the memoirs are about everything and nothing at the same time. The events that were heard from others to take place, and even fantasies were entangled into narrations.

With the regaining of the Lithuania's independence, in the period after 1991, nothing substantial was written on the topic. The scholar's effort was invested into the research and preserving materials about previously neglected Lithuanian nationalist guerilla movement of 1944-1953, pro-Nazi rebellion of 1941 and similar topics legitimizing present Lithuanian statehood. The Soviet Lithuanian Partisans were excluded from the priorities.

Similarly in Poland, the attention to the AK excluded any serious research into AL or Soviet partisans groups. They became presented as the adversaries for the Polish National cause.

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<sup>7</sup> P.Staras, *Lietuviu Tautos Kova uz Tevynes Laisve Didziajame Tevynes Kare*, Vilnius, 1956, p.112.

<sup>8</sup> P.Staras, *Partizaninis Judejimas Lietuvoje Didziojo Tevynes Karo Metu*, Vilnius, 1966, p.198.

<sup>9</sup> *Lietuvos Liaudis Didziajame Tevynes Kare. Dokumentu ir Medziagos Rinkinys.*, Vilnius, 1982, p.432

<sup>10</sup> P.Staras, *Drasios Sirdys*, Vilnius 1958, p.112.M.Sumauskas. *Gyvenimo prasme*. Vilnius, 1975, p.152.; T.Monciunskas, *Rudininku Girios Partizanai*, Vilnius, 1959; P.Kutka, *Girioj Aidi Suviai*, Vilnius, 1958, p.139.V. Apyvala, *Sakalai broleliai*, Vilnius, 1961, p.171; B.Urbanavicius, *Liaudies kersytojai*, Vilnius, 1981, p.145.

My study will be based on the archival records of the Headquarters of the Lithuanian Partisan Movement (HLPM), located in the Lithuanian State Archive of the Public Institutions (LSAPI). The files of the partisan groups and units, contain information about the formation of the unit, initial composition, some biographical data on the personnel, weapons, overview of the military operations, court martial of the partisans, decisions, decrees and messages from Moscow etc. Some files on the research topic are in the Lithuanian Special Archives (LSA) (Former KGB archives), mostly related to immediate for the post-liberation events in 1944, or following afterwards the ex-partisans and NKVD cooperation, especially joint activities against the Polish Home Army (AK).

The Lithuanian Central State Archive has materials related to German and Lithuanian Police activities, SD and SS actions in anti-partisan warfare.

USHMM holdings of Russian special archives, Belorussian Oblasti Archives, Latvian State Historical Archives, Polish State Archive and USHMM oral history holdings, serve as an enormous resource for understanding the context and drawing upon available resources for this modest contribution to understand Jewish resistance in the Soviet Lithuanian partisan groups in Lithuania.

Utilizing all these materials and synthesizing the most comprehensive Western and Eastern sources on the struggle, will be an essential step forward in reconstructing Jewish partisan movement and its true nature. Finally, but alas almost too late, I seek out those few remaining veterans of the partisan movement to record their recollections.

## **FORMATIVE YEARS OF THE PARTISAN MOVEMENT**

This chapter is an overview of the relationship between Jewish, Soviet, and Polish partisans, and Lithuanian local administration and police, in the Southern Lithuania. Ethnically diverse partisan movements emerged, fighting for diverse aims in the war. In comparison to other Nazi-occupied territories, Lithuanian Jews, while facing the Holocaust, also found themselves in the midst of the struggle between three opposing forces-Poles, the Lithuanian local administration, and Soviet partisans. The conflict endangered the survival of the Jews, who joined the Soviet partisan movement, in the conflict for the dominance over the region.

The Vilna area before World War II, including its East-Southern part with *Rudniki* forests, later home of the numerous partisan groups, was part of the Polish Eastern Borderlands-*Kresy Wshodnie*. It was ethnically mixed area where Poles, Lithuanians and some Belorussians comprised a majority in rural areas. Polish and Jewish minorities lived in urban areas and dominated local economies, while ethnic Poles ran the administration, police and school system. The rural areas saw permanent conflict over the Lithuanian language and schooling with Polish authorities. Heavy handed Polish policies, as well as the Lithuanian-Polish territorial dispute from 1918 to 1938, provoked resentment and resistance, and fueled Lithuanian-Polish conflict on both sides of the border for two decades.

The beginning of the Second World War in 1939 brought the Vilna area under Lithuanian jurisdiction. Vilnius was joined to independent Lithuania in October 1939. On 10 October, Minister of Foreign Affairs Juozas Urbšys signed an agreement granting Lithuania Vilna and surrounding formerly Polish territories (2750 square miles and 457,500 people) in exchange for 20 000 Soviet soldiers in Lithuania.<sup>11</sup> Lithuania extensively moved to the newly acquired territory officials, policemen, and recruited local Lithuanians to serve in local administration, schools, and police. It seriously exacerbated social competition between the Poles and Lithuanians in the newly acquired area. The Soviet occupation in 1940 of Lithuania only partly reversed this trend, additionally opening a channel for upward mobility of the pro-Soviet Jews, Belorussians and Russians in the South-Eastern Lithuania. The tendency to recruit pro-Soviet Jews, Russians and Belorussians into important and visible administrative positions, among other policies of nationalization of private enterprises, bringing under communist control of public and private life etc., seriously compromised the position of Soviet power in all Lithuania (including Vilna area). Very soon, the Soviet regime, apart from having social character, in wider public perceptions started to be viewed as well in ethnic terms, as being Jewish and Russian. Resentment, confusion, and distrust to “all others” permeated the world-view of Jews, Lithuanians and Poles when arrests and deportations mounted in the country in 1940-1941.

After the outbreak of the Soviet-German war in June 1941 the German army quickly swept through the country, and not without help from the Lithuanian pro-German rebellion, in three days took over the country. From the very first days of the occupation, the Nazis implemented policies for the Jewish extermination. The first half of Nazi occupation year was the most tragic for the Lithuanian Jewry. According to the Nazi reports of 31 January 1942 136, 421 or  $\frac{3}{4}$  of the Lithuanian Jews were killed in the country. Later extermination actions continued. At the end of April 1943 in the Lithuanian General District there were left 44 584 Jews in Ghetto of Vilnius, Kaunas and Siauliai. Around 30 000 of them were used for labor benefiting the Wehrmacht, Police and local economies. However, on 21 June 1943 came Himmler’s order to liquidate the Ghetto and move their inhabitants to concentration camps. At the beginning what choices were before those wanting to fight for their life? Hiding among the population? Compliance with Nazi orders? Joining the resistance fighters in the forests! ? Then, what fighters?

For numerous ideological and practical considerations, by far the largest number of Lithuanian Jewish ghetto survivors joined the Soviet underground.

From the beginning of the German-Soviet war, and after losing Lithuania to the Germans in June 1941, the Soviet government and its military made attempts to revive its military and security institution activities in Lithuania.

According to some preliminary information, in 1941-1942, from 576 to 1432 people could be counted as underground activists<sup>12</sup>. Only part of them were armed and the majority did not participate in any military activities. These groups were comprised of

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<sup>11</sup> L.Sabaliunas, *Lithuania in Crisis*, Bloomington, 1972, 151-153.

<sup>12</sup> P.Staras, *Partizaninis Judejimas Lietuvoje Didžiojo Tėvynės karo metais*, Vilnius, 1966, pp.54 and 71.

Red Army stragglers, few of the former Communist of Party of Comsomol officials, and Soviet NKVD and Soviet army intelligence groups. All of them, could be accounted as partisans with great difficulty. These groups suffered heavy casualties and often deserted.

Soviet forces already in July 1941 started to train and send NKVD intelligence groups (from training schools in environs Gomel and Mozyr in Belarus, and Kalinin in Russian Federation) into Lithuania. Then in July there was sent the first group of A.Godliauskas to Lithuania without a specific task. Later three additional military intelligence groups, arrived to Lithuania in August, 1941, made of the former NKVD officials.<sup>13</sup> But they returned after had encountered police resistance. Total of 80 fighters in 6 groups reached Lithuania on foot in July and August, 1941 from Kalinin.<sup>14</sup> According to the archival documents, all of these groups came having only personal arms (pistols), inadequate trained and without specific tasks.<sup>15</sup> They were made exclusively of Lithuanians who previously served in NKVD or NKVD prison system.<sup>16</sup> Not having political backing and isolated in the country, those groups either surrendered or switched sides, some participants were killed or betrayed to the police or SD. Some went into hiding not to resurface in the anti-Nazi fight in the future.<sup>17</sup> In 1941 there were only uncoordinated anti-Nazi activities in the country which did not raise larger concern for the occupying authorities. The Partisan movement failed to develop. In many cases, armed pro-Soviet activists, single Red Army stragglers or their armed groups, were eliminated from the self-made armed groups from local population, who often did not inform German authorities about their engagements.<sup>18</sup>

A highly ineffective policy of sending Soviet intelligence groups made of ex-NKVD operatives with limited military tasks continued in Lithuania in 1942. But gradually, from April 1942, after Soviets started to gain the upper hand in the fight with Germans the situation started to change. On May 30 the Central Staff of the Partisan Movement, headed by Belorussian First Secretary P.K.Ponomarenko, was formed. The task of the Central Staff and its subordinate staffs attached to Red Army fronts and republican central committees, was to centralize, coordinate and direct the partisan activities. Ponomarenko envisaged mass partisan movement, very different from the Stalin's view of partisans' limited in scope activities, and directed against military targets.<sup>19</sup> On 5 September 1942 Stalin signed People's Commissariat of Defense Order No.189, "On the Tasks of the Partisan Movement", which marked a significant moment in the direction and objectives of the partisan movement "so that the partisan struggle embraces the broadest masses of the Soviet people in the occupied territories."<sup>20</sup> This meant that it was policy now to expand the scope of the partisan movement and to admit all people into the

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<sup>13</sup> J.Vildziunas, *Kova be atvangos*, Vilnius, 1979, pp.263, 266, 267.

<sup>14</sup> P.Staras, *Partizaninis Judejimas Lietuvoje Didžiojo Tėvynės karo metais*, Vilnius, 1966, pp.48.

<sup>15</sup> Report on "Patvarieji"//LSAPO F.53, In.1, File 1, pp.1.

<sup>16</sup> Report on "Patvarieji"//LSAPO F.53, In.1, File 1, pp1-2.

<sup>17</sup>The same

<sup>18</sup> Separate Lithuanian military infrastructure of local commandants was set up during Lithuanian rebellion, following German invasion, and functioned till August 1941. Later the institution was abolished after the conflicts by the Nazis.

<sup>19</sup> K.Slepyan "The Soviet Partisan Movement and the Holocaust" *Holocaust and Genocide Studies*, Vol.14 Nr.1, Spring 2000 p.10.

<sup>20</sup> The same p.11.

partisan units, regardless of their background, social profile, nationality, training or skills, and to gain wider political legitimacy for the Soviet cause in the territories occupied by the Nazis.

In addition, The Lithuanian Communist party Central Committee had to start reconsidering its new role as a unifier and organizer of peoples resistance to the Nazis, which was overtaken before by the Soviet Military Intelligence in Lithuania. Already on May 12, 1942 the decision was taken to select 200 people from the 16<sup>th</sup> Lithuanian Riflemen Division, and start training them for partisan warfare in Balachna, Gorkyi Oblast.<sup>21</sup> Having made this decision, the Lithuanian Communist Party established their own Headquarters of the Lithuanian Partisan Movement to be incorporated at the Central Staff of the Partisan Movement.<sup>22</sup> The founding of the Headquarters was formalized by the order of the USSR State Defense Committee and was signed by J.Stalin on the 26<sup>th</sup> of November, 1942.<sup>23</sup>

The changes in the Soviet grand design to conduct partisan warfare based on the mass movement, were immediately noticed by the German police authorities. The German military authorities on 12 July, 1942 sent an order to all Lithuanian police stations and garrisons to intensify anti-partisan vigilance, and provided information, derived from its anti-partisan struggle experience in Russia, Belarus and Ukraine, about the tactics of the partisan groups.<sup>24</sup> But in practical terms, the Nazi authorities and Lithuanian police in the country did not immediately notice those changes and felt comfortable in suppressing poorly organized groups of the escaped Soviet POWs as well as activities of the weak communist underground. Information coming from the captured Soviet agents did not reveal any specific changes of earlier tactics to send people exclusively for the military intelligence activities. It is interesting to note that the German authorities received information on the partisan training school at Balachna, which would train future Lithuanian partisan leaders, only in late Fall of 1943.<sup>25</sup>

The Police reports on the partisan activities are abundant with small occurrences for the year 1942 which seem not to be of a political nature. Good example comes from the Panevezys district, when in 1942 armed groups (“Stalin friends” as they were call in the police reports) stole 1400 RM, clothing, food was taken from some people, local residents reported to the police that over a dozen times they had been asked to eat or for the way by the partisans, four times the railway was bombed and several local people in German administration or “ex-partisans” in pro-German rebellion of 1941 were executed.<sup>26</sup> Several incidents, involving escaped Soviet prisoners of war, were reported in Marijampole.<sup>27</sup> Similar occurrences were reported all over the territory of Lithuania, excluding only its Western part, bordering Eastern Prussia. At that time partisan

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<sup>21</sup> LCP Central Committee Bureau Minutes Nr.9 of 2<sup>nd</sup> July, 1942//LSAPI F.1771, In.5, File 62.pp.10-22.

<sup>22</sup> The plan to start partisan movement and its further activities was presented by First Secretary of Lithuanian Communist Party A.Snieckus to Ponomarenka on 02 July, 1942.

<sup>23</sup> The Decree of J.Stalin Nr.GOKO-2540a//LSAPI F.1, In.1, File 426, P.1.

<sup>24</sup> Pagrindinis vokieciu vadovybes isakas del kovos su partizanais 1942 07 02 //LSAPO F.5, In 1, File 1, p.1.

<sup>25</sup> Auszugsweise Abschrift.Quelle: Abw.Kdo 103 vom 23.11.1943, National Archives Microfilm Publication, T-78, roll 563, frame 211.

<sup>26</sup> Chronology of the Occurencies //LSAPI F.3777, In.58, File 266, p.3

<sup>27</sup> Circular of the Marijampole Commander 28 May, 1942//LCSA F.R715. In.1, File 2, p.218.

movement by police is described exclusively as a Russian phenomenon, and alleged that partisan subversive activities concentrate around the places where few ethnic Russians lived:

“Local Russians even if not the communists provide with information and support them with food. There is alive for a long time around an idea of the local people, to get away Russians from Lithuania. Then the danger of Communism would be lesser.”<sup>28</sup>

The changes in the attitudes on the Soviet side soon were transformed into different tactics and intensity of the partisan movement in occupied Lithuania. The partisan movement in Lithuania in response to the successful attack of the Red Army had to become “all people fight against the fascist plunders.”<sup>29</sup> The first move into all Peoples War in Lithuania was made when 19 partisan groups were sent to Lithuania in 1942 from training in Balahna, near Gorkyi in Russian Federation. Nine of them were sent by plane and had been parachuted. Other 10 (in 3 units) had to cross through the front line on foot.<sup>30</sup> Yet the groups moving on foot had reported about arrival to Lithuania only in 1943. The first of them, the so called Pranevicius partisan unit (made of five groups) arrived for Belarus (the group even did not attempt to cross into Lithuania) in April, 1942. All other groups arrived only in May, 1943. Some of them were ambushed by the police and two groups were completely annihilated while on the marsh. Other groups lost several people too.<sup>31</sup>

Additionally, for the coordination of the partisan movement, a group of the Lithuanian Communist Party Central Committee was sent to the Belorussian forests. The group had to explore the political situation in the country, to learn about activities of the German authorities, to form fighters reserve from the local population, and to generate Lithuanian partisan movement in close cooperation with the Belorussian partisans.<sup>32</sup> The Belorussian factor was considered extremely important as in the forests of Lithuania there were only 377 partisans in hiding on the 1<sup>st</sup> of July, 1943, without adequate arms for guerrilla warfare and not in possession of ready bases and infrastructure in order to expand partisan movement.<sup>33</sup> These groups were made exclusively of the escaped POWs or the Lithuanian members of NKVD (Soviet secret police) and Communist party activists.<sup>34</sup>

Understanding the deficiencies of the partisan movement to be able to represent “the people”, the Lithuanian Communist Party Central Committee operational group of Motiejus Sumauskas (the head) Genrikas Zimanas (deputy head) and four members: D.Rocius, S.Syrius, J.Narkeviciute and V.Majevski departed to the forests of Begomli in Belorussia in April 1943. They had to be followed later by the special group of 49 fighters trained at Balachna. All together later moved to 3 intermediary bases in the East-

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<sup>28</sup> Chronology of the Occurencies //LSAVO F.3777, In.58, File 266, p.3.

<sup>29</sup> Partizanu kovos stiprinimas rysium su Raudonosios Armijos puolimu//LSAPO F.1 In.1, File 426, p.2

<sup>30</sup> Report/LSAVO F.1771, In. 16, File 95.

<sup>31</sup> *Lietuvos Liaudis Didziajame Tevynes Kare. Dokumentu ir Medziagos Rinkinys.*, Vilnius, 1982,p.401;p.408.

<sup>32</sup> A.Snieckus Decree Nr.16 1943 02 09//LSAPO F. 1, In. 1, File 427,pp.21-23.

<sup>33</sup> Notes of the D.Shupikov, Deputy Head of the Headquarters of the Lithuanian Partisan Movement // LSA F.1, In.1, File 172, p.1.These groups included 84 people under direct command of the Headquarters of the Lithuanian Partisan Movement who reached Lithuanian territory in Spring 1943.

<sup>34</sup> List of the “Vilkas”group//LSA F.1,In.1, File 172, p.8.

Southern Lithuania, established by five Pranevicius groups (the groups were staying in Belarus in Roson forests).<sup>35</sup> The operation started from a big failure. The operational Lithuanian Communist Party CK group lost two its members killed and two wounded (including Zimanas) on landing. Only Sumauskas and Rocius were in capacity to move on their own. Moreover, other eight people from the special group were killed while landing. The surviving part of the Lithuanian Communist Party operational group and special group, joined together with the five groups of P.Pranevicius and moved to the first temporary camp in Losin village in Belarus that was close to Fiodor Markov unit base. These partisans formed “Zalgiris” brigade which was made of “Vilnius”, “K.Kalinauskas” and “Zalgiris” units. One of the first “local” partisans who joined “Vilnius” unit yet in Belarus was Yitzhak Arad . He, as several others Jews, were survivors in the Soviet Belorussian partisan movement and were transferred to the Lithuanian partisan groups.<sup>36</sup> Then, in the Soviet Partisan movement documents he was called Itzik Rudnickis, *nom guerre* “Kukickas”.<sup>37</sup> The brigade “Zalgiris” on the 14 of May together with the Belorussian partisan unit had marched to Kazenai forests in Belarus on the border with Lithuania.<sup>38</sup> All partisans reached base only in July, 1943. Only then work for multiplying partisan groups started. It was implemented by the direct participation of the party operational group, which for still unclear reasons, split in two. The most probable reason for the competition was personal dislike. Later, to avoid complications in the chane of command, the Lithuanian Communist Party decided to set up its Southern Commiittee under Zimanas and Nothern District under Sumauskas.<sup>39</sup> G Zimanas, now as an independent commander, together with his Communist underground committee made of Marijonas Miceika, *nom guerre* “Gabrys “, Vincas Sakalauskas *nom guerre* “Rimonis”, moved to Rudniki forests together with the “Margiris” group, which was made of the agents trained for the partisan warfare<sup>40</sup>, and then to Trakai district.<sup>41</sup> Zimanas Albertas Barauskas *nom guerre* “Greitas” (the head of “Margiris”) became Zimanas’ head of intelligence. Sumauskas for the time stayed in Kazenai forests and later took care of the Northern part of Lithuania, while the third surviving member of the party group, D.Rocius, was killed in action during a German punitive operation “Fritz” in Glebokie area on July-August, 1943, where Germans killed 327 in fighting and captured 227 partisans.<sup>42</sup>

For Zimanas Southern Party Committee the most difficult task was to start a new movement, based on the local population, but under the leadership of the “old guards” from the pre-war Lithuanian Communist party and “students of Balachna.” In his letter of 24<sup>th</sup> of October, 1943 Zimanas stated that the local population’s attitudes towards partisans was problematic for the movement:

<sup>35</sup> A.Snieckus Decree Nr.16 1943 02 09//LSAPI F. 1, In. 1, File 427,pp.21-23.

<sup>36</sup> Y.Arada, *The Partisan. From the Valley of Death to Mount Zion*, New York, 1979, pp.120-121.

<sup>37</sup> The list of “Vilnius “fighters//LSA F.1, In.1, File 172, p.9.

<sup>38</sup> M.Sumauskas radio message Nr.141 of 1943 05 14//LSAPI F.1, In. 1, File 406, P.143

<sup>39</sup> *Lietuvos Liaudis Didziajame Tevynes Kare. Dokumentu ir Medziagos Rinkinys.*, Vilnius, 1982, pp.240-241

<sup>40</sup> This group was made exclusively of the Lithuanians.

<sup>41</sup> Jurgis(Zimanas) radio message Nr. 474 of 1943 09 08//LSAPI F.1, In.1, File 407, P.290.

<sup>42</sup> *Lietuvos Liaudis Didziajame Tevynes Kare. Dokumentu ir Medziagos Rinkinys.*, Vilnius, 1982, p.405; J.Turonek, *Bialorus pod Okupacja Niemiecka*, Warszawa, 1993,

“They are afraid of us because had never met real partisans, only the bandits. The self-defense units fighting (against us) have growing success, people in larger number take up arms. The partisans are often betrayed, and even ambushed by the locals.”<sup>43</sup>

The political situation in Lithuania also appeared to be dangerous for the new partisan movement:

“If in Belarussia some are not for the Germans, then they are for the Soviet rule. Here, in the meantime, we have the third option-nationalists, and Vilnius even the fourth option of Sikorski followers (AK-Polish Home Army). It extremely complicates local situation.”<sup>44</sup>

Zimanas first took the initiative to change the situation and to form a partisan movement based on the local people. Before his arrival in Lithuania, the leading role in the partisan movement was played by the predominantly escaped prisoners of war groups, alien to the larger portions of the local population. The situation seriously compromised the partisan movement's prospects. The discipline in these groups was low, they were hostile to local population, alienating not only Lithuanians, but even the escaped from the Ghettos Jews. Because of their grim experience with Germans and Lithuanian collaboration against them, Soviet POW's view everybody around as a potential enemy. The prejudices against the Jews played an important role as well. The majority of the Russian POWs were not exposed to the Jews or Jewish culture before, and viewed them as nothing more than traders and merchants, incapable of doing strenuous physical work.<sup>45</sup> Thus, not having feasible options for resistance in Lithuania, few escapees from the Lithuanian Ghettos immediately moved to Belarussia. The report from the partisans group of “Skardzius” A.Raguotis, *nom guerre* “Dalgis”, and S.Kopytov *nom guerre* “Kolcov”, on organization of partisan movement in Rokiskis, serves as an interesting illustration.

The backbone for the newly established partisan “Zemaite” unit was the Djakov group, made of the 60 escaped prisoners of war. The “organizers” wrote with astonishment that this large partisan unit through its existence since 1942 did not make a single military operation, that there was grave breach of conspiracy, everyday drunkenness and excessive robberies of the local population.<sup>46</sup> Similar discipline problems were with the only “partisan” group of Rudniki that was stationed there before Zimanas' arrival, from the Spring 1943. It was the Soviet military intelligence *group Nr.14* of the main Intelligence Office of the General Staff of the Red Army operating in Rudniki forests. However, in contrast to Djakov's group, it was highly efficient military. After the war, in 1946, Zimanas made a bold statement and characterized the group in the following way:

“Special group (aut. note Nr.14) took part in many joint partisan operations, its leadership consulted with and listened to underground party organizations. It is true, that on the part of ordinary members, sometimes pillage and use of force against the local population

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<sup>43</sup> G.Zimanas(Jurgis) letter to A.S Snieckus of 1943 10 24//LSAPI F.1, In.1 File 37, p.37.

<sup>44</sup> G.Zimanas(Jurgis) letter to A.Snieckus of 1943 05 11//LSAPI F.1, In.1, File 33, p.70.

<sup>45</sup> K.D.Slepyan, *The People Avengers: Soviet partisans, Stalinist Society and the Politics of Resistance*, Ph.D. dissertation, The University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, 1994, p.267.

<sup>46</sup> Report of the commander of the “Zemaite” unit//LSAPI F.1, In.1, File 31, pp.18-19.

took place. However, the leadership, after interference of party organizations, as a rule, took needed steps... But after arrival of major “Groznyi”(aut. note Evgraf, Pavlenko) situation suddenly changed to the worst. Major “Groznyi” did not listen to the party organizations, and did not stay in touch with them. He completely stopped military activities under the pretense of reorganization. The discipline surprisingly went down, about which we judged from increasing number of instances of robberies and violence against the population. I have met “Groznyi” several time and he never been sober....The fighters from his group told that permanent drunkenness, brawling, fraternizing with the shadow characters, reigned over their camp.”<sup>47</sup>

Despite personal antipathy to the commander “Groznyi”, the statement reflected tensions between Communist party and military objectives and policies in the area. No doubt that “Groznyi” did not start reorganization on his own and just was getting ready for the events when the German-Soviet front line started to approach in Spring, 1944. However the group was entirely of the trained soldiers and this was the largest underground group made of over 250 people. All sides preserved independence. Attempt to unite Zimanas partisans and *group Nr.14* would have obstructed efforts to build an indigenous, at least in appearance, partisan movement in the country. They would have swallowed Zimanas’ partisans if decided to merge. Later, the group Nr.14 was instrumental in helping to bring many escaped Jewish partisans to the newly formed partisan groups. The group marched against Germans to the area of Taurage in July 1944, as a sabotage unit in German uniforms, leaving its wounded and sick in Rudniki. Finally, it was destroyed and dispersed by the units of the German XXXX Panzer corps in August, 1944.

Reflecting on the state of the units of the Soviet Intelligence and those made of Soviet POWs, cautioning against the attempts to appoint Russian military leadership in the partisan units, came from the first Lithuanian Party Communist Secretary Antanas Snieckus, who in early spring of 1944 wrote in a letter to Zimanas:

“You have to promote Lithuanians into leading positions. However, only after efficient background check. As for the Russians, especially former prisoners of war, it’s difficult for them to inspire local population to fight. I think that you already can form ethnically mixed units, putting forward as a rule, Lithuanians.”<sup>48</sup>

The flow of the “trained partisans” from the Soviet Union was continuing constantly through 1943 and helped to form the backbone of partisan units in Lithuania. Thus,

#### **April-June, 1943- 90 people arrived**

August,	24
September	36
November	35 <sup>49</sup>

However, both underground party committees in the South and the North according to this put emphasis on the formation of the indigenous partisan forces. The beginning of a

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<sup>47</sup> H.Zimanas statement to the Lithuanian Communist Party Secretary A.N. Isachenko of 1946 06 29//LSA F.14, In.1 File 1, p.8.

<sup>48</sup> A.Snieckus letter to G.Zimanas Nr.82 of 1943 08 28//LSAPI F.1771, In.1, File 119, p.19.

<sup>49</sup> *Lietuvos Liaudis Didziajame Tevynes Kare. Dokumentu ir Medziagos Rinkinys.*, Vilnius, 1982, p.187, p.197, 213, p.418, p.159.

“new” partisan movement was seen primarily through the formation of the “new” local party organizations. Originally, active underground communist organizations existed along ethnic lines in Vilnius, starting with in October 24, 1942. This way, the “Union of the Active Fight” was established with 9 members. Soon this organization was transformed into “Polish Patriotic Union”(Zwiazek Patriotow Polskich).<sup>50</sup> In February 1943 they established contact with the Lithuanian communist organization of Juozas Vitas, the so called “Union for the Liberation of Lithuania”. Later they all established contacts with the Jewish communist organization in Vilnius Ghetto led by Itzik Wittenberg, and making part of the Jewish *Fareynikte Partizaner Orgnizatsye* (United Partisan Organization) The communists activists from all these organizations founded Regional Party Committee, under leadership of J.Vitas. Soon all the leadership was betrayed, arrested, and executed by the Nazis. The majority of the ordinary members survived repression, and were actively employed by the communist movement organized from the Rudniki forests. The new party organization soon had been set up in Rudniki forest on the 10 August, 1943 and lead by Miceika *nom guerre* “Gabrys.” It was his activities and contacts that had helped to increase the number of partisan groups in Eastern Lithuania and contributed to the saving of refugees from Jewish Ghettos with following incorporation into Soviet Lithuanian partisan units.

## **THE JEWS IN THE SOVIET LITHUANIAN PARTISAN MOVEMENT**

The involvement of the Jews into the partisan groups was initiated from above in the Soviet Lithuanian Partisan movement. Only few Jews were fighting in the partisan or underground groups till the Summer of 1943. Luckily, for those ready for resistance in the Ghettos, the wipe out of the Ghettos in Summer 1943, correlated with the attempts to expand partisan movement in the country. The largest number of the Ghetto inmates, were brought to the partisans with the help of Vilnius and Kaunas Communist party organizations. The backbone of the partisan groups to be expanded with the new coming people under Headquarters of the Lithuanian Partisan Movement, as a rule, was composed of the Lithuanians and Russians, with extensive military training or experience in partisan warfare. To form new units, for example the “Margiris” unit, which among other fighting tasks, was performing disciplinary control function of all partisan units in the Rudniki forests, passed a group of 8 people to form “Perkunas”unit, “Margiris”gave 13 people to form “Death to the Occupants” group; to form “Adomas Mickevicius” a group of 25 people.<sup>51</sup> Ninety people saw service in “Margiris” in 1943-1944. The people from the “Margiris” unit and other special groups that arrived later performed recruiting and people trafficking into the units. According to the picturesque report from the “Death to the Occupants” unite, the latter was founded on the 3<sup>rd</sup> of November, 1943, as a Russian group of partisans that underwent training in “partisan training center in Russia” and aimed to attract prisoners of war and to encourage desertion from the Vlasov military units made of Russians in German service. However, their recruiting effort succeeded and they soon got more fighters than expected:

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<sup>50</sup> Interrogation Minutes of Juzefa Przewalska of 1944 09 25//LSAPI F.1, In.1, File 137, pp.36-37

<sup>51</sup> Commander Albertas Barauskas report of the 1944 09 30//LSA F.12, In.1, File 1, p.2.

“We had brought many comrades from the Jewish ghetto in Kaunas, they made a large part of our partisan unit. But these people were very diverse in their military value, there were some who saw service in military before and people who don't have a slightest idea about warfare. You don't have to think that those people came independently to our unit, the majority arrived in organized fashion.”<sup>52</sup>

One anonymous Jewish fighter of the unit, who came out of Kaunas Ghetto, turned at that time into concentration camp, had witnessed:

“I received a chance to get in contact with Kaunas communist party organization, which gave me clothing, had been hiding me for 10 days, gave me a pistol and on the 6<sup>th</sup> of January, put me on the leadership of 26 people to bring them to the partisan unit “Death to the Occupants.”<sup>53</sup>

During its existence the unit had 5 Lithuanians, 93 Russians, 79 Jews, and 47 men of other nationality<sup>54</sup> All units were founded in a similar fashion. This way, Kaunas Ghetto Jewish Fighting organization, yet not having contacts with the Kaunas party organization tried to send as many as possible prospective fighters to the Partisan groups starting with the Summer 1943. On the 6<sup>th</sup> of October, 1943, after the arrival of the liaison officer from the Lithuanian Communist Party CK operational group, Gese Glezeryte, *nom guerre* “Albina”, the Communist Party organization was formalized and permanent contact with the city Party Organization and Zimanas Southern Party Bureau was maintained.<sup>55</sup> After establishing contacts with the City Communist Party Committee, they had attempted to establish a partisan base in the forests of Augustow. But this attempt had failed because of poor supply with arms and long distance to the destination. Eighty people left to Augustaw as a result. 43 were killed on the way and 11 were arrested by the Gestapo.<sup>56</sup> Only in the Autumn, 1943, the mass evacuation of the Ghetto underground fighters had started. The majority of them were taken away in lorries by Lithuanian Soviet partisans dressed in German police uniforms and with forged documents. The Ghetto authorities were asked as a rule to provide 20-30 people “for the night shift”. The transportation continued till the 15 April, 1944, after the Gestapo had discovered the Soviet Lithuanian partisans conspiracy, and the transport had been ambushed by the Germans.<sup>57</sup>

The units which had the largest proportion of the Jews from Kaunas and Vilnius Ghettos, were “Free Lithuania” (54 out of 94), “Death to the Fascism”(39 out of 69), “Struggle”( 58 out of 77), “To Victory”(106 out of 119), “The Revenger” (105 out of 107), group “Vladas Baronas” (11 out of 18) and were located primarily in Vilnius district.<sup>58</sup> Samuel Kaplinsky from “To Victory” was the only who stayed as a commander, who was previously the commander of informal refugees group from the Ghetto and after transformation of the unit into Soviet Lithuanian Partisan. He stayed as a commander until the 20 May, 1944, when had to resign and Abram Shabrinskii, a

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<sup>52</sup> The Lithuanian Partisan Unit “Death to the Occupants”//LSA F.1, In.1, File 47, p.6.

<sup>53</sup> The same//LSA F.1, In.1, File 47, p.12.

<sup>54</sup> The Report of the Unit “Death to The Occupants”//LSAPI F.24, In.1, File 1, p.69.

<sup>55</sup> The same.

<sup>56</sup> Kaunas Ghetto Underground Partisan Fighting Organization(Appendix)//LSA F.15409, In.1, File 1, pp.9-10.

<sup>57</sup> Kaunas Ghetto Underground Partisan Fighting Organization(Appendix)//LSA F.15409, In.1, File 1, p.10.

<sup>58</sup> The Lists of the Partisan Groups belonging to the HLPM//LSAPI F.1, In.1 File 488, P.20.

former POW had been appointed.<sup>59</sup> In all other cases Lithuanian or Russians took over the command of the Jewish partisan groups, leaving for the escaped Jews only menial positions in the units. Nevertheless, from the point of military service and purpose, these appointments in the guerilla warfare were justifiable. Even Chaim Lazar, who was critical of the non-Jewish partisan leadership of the ruthlessness and contempt for human life, in his memoirs had agreed that at the beginning:

“the experience of the Jewish fighters was not very reassuring. Many had been in the forests for only one month and they already had to set out on dangerous course. Obviously, if these people encountered Germans, they would be all killed.”<sup>60</sup>

Only few of the refugees had any military training or even saw military service in pre-war years. The ‘Struggle’ unit of Vilnius district could serve as an example, which on its list had 58 Jews and 19 non-Jews (Russians, one Pole, one Lithuanian, and one Ukrainian). Only one, Kamleizer (first name was not provided), saw military service before the war and served as NCO in the Polish army. Out of other 19 fighters (Russians, Ukrainians, Poles and Lithuanians) five had been in military service before, and all had commanding positions in the unit.<sup>61</sup> Another unit ‘‘To Victory’’ (commander A. Shabrinskii), based in Vilnius district, had 119 fighters on the list, and only 13 were non-Jews (the Russians, a Kyrgyz, a Turkmen, an Uzbek, a Pole, a Lithuanian, an Estonian, a Dutch). The Jewish fighters had among their ranks 11 people who saw military service in the pre-war Polish or Lithuanian army. Five of the six commanders were Jewish. Non-Jews had only one person who served in army.<sup>62</sup>

The demographic and social profile of the Jewish fighters is also worthy of analysis. Traditionally, before the World War II, the conscription age for males was 21-35 (US, Lithuania). Germany and the Soviet Union conscripted and induced into service during the World War II, people of 18-45 year age), with slight variations depending on the country, and on the status of volunteering. What was the demographic outlook of the Jews in the Soviet Lithuanian partisan groups? The Jewish fighters of the conscription age, born 1898-1925, in the unit ‘‘Struggle’’ made 46 or 79 % people, 2 or 4 people were younger born in 1927 and 1929). However, there was no one older than 45 years old (age still available for conscription in the USSR). Additionally, there were 10 or 17 % women in the unit, who performed, as in all armies during the World War, auxiliary roles with only in exclusive cases seeing real combat. Their age also fell into conscription brackets in the Soviet Union. The majority of the Jewish fighters fell into ‘‘old-fashioned’’ conscription age group of 21-35 years old or 39.6%; younger primarily of 18-21 age, with earlier mentioned two exceptions, numbered 16 or 27.6%, men of 35-45 years old were 10 people or 16.9 %; there was the same number and percentage of women of the predominantly younger age group, up to 35 years age. The non-Jewish

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<sup>59</sup> History of the Unit ‘‘To Victory’’//LSA F. 11 In.1 File 1, p.13.

<sup>60</sup> L.Eckmann and Ch. Lazar, *The Jewish Resistance: The History of the Jewish Partisans in Lithuania and White Russia during the Nazi Occupation, 1940-1945*, New York, 1977, p.151.

<sup>61</sup> The List of the ‘‘Struggle’’ Partisans’’//LSA F.10, In. 1, F.1 (envelope)p.33-35

<sup>62</sup> The List of the ‘‘To Victory’’Partisans //LSA F.11, In.1, File 1, envelopes 1 and 3. The unit was engaged in actions in supporting itself. It lost only 3 people in action, and 3 wounded in action (among the latter Ch.Lazar).

fighters in this unit were of conscription age with the commander of the unit, Ivan Vasilenko, being the oldest of 37 in 1943.<sup>63</sup> The educational profile of this unit is worthy of attention. The only person with university and military education was the commander of the unit. Out of three others in line of unit's command, two had secondary education, one with 7th grade education. The educational level of Jewish fighters in the unit "Struggle" was predominantly below the 10th grade.

Illiterates	2nd	3rd	4th	5th	6th	7th	8th	9th	10th	Secondary	University	Total
4	1	2	4	9	4	15	4	2	3	9	1	58

64

The only Jewish partisan with university education was an accountant, Jacob Iashunskii, born in 1905. Moreover, there were only two Communist party members in the group, a Lithuanian and a Jew, with only 8 Jewish Communist Youth Members and 4 non-Jewish Communist Youth members. Even commander of the unit was not a Communist party member.<sup>65</sup>

The similar personnel situation was in the Soviet Lithuanian Jewish unit under command of A. Shabrinskii "To Victory." There were only 2 Jewish fighters older than 45 years old in the unit. Younger than 18 years old were 4 Jewish partisans of the total number of 106 Jewish fighters. Predominant majority of the Jewish fighters constituted people born in 1920-1925. Secondary education, not to speak about higher studies, was more an exception than the rule. The majority of the fighters were blue-collar workers, while the membership in the Communist Party or Communist Youth Organizations did not exceed or go only slightly above of 10% of the total number.<sup>66</sup> The Jewish membership in other Soviet Lithuanian Partisan units, with higher Lithuanian and Russian participation, did confirm to this pattern, with nearly absolute exclusion of marginal age groups and higher proportion of membership in the Communist organizations.

The age and social profile of the Jewish partisans confirms the theoretical supposition that the Jews were drawn into the Soviet Lithuanian Partisan units as a part of Soviet partisan recruitment effort, only indirectly aiming at saving people from the horror of Holocaust. The main purpose was to draw upon the conscription age human resources of the Ghettos. Additionally, the crucial element allowing to go to the Soviet Lithuanian Partisan units there were links to the Communist party underground and informal Jewish youth networks directed against educated white collar Ghetto establishments in Vilnius and Kaunas.

In all the lists of the units belonging to the Headquarters of the Lithuanian Partisan Movement (including non-combatants who lived in the partisan camps), there were 3910 people who, to one or another extent, saw some action or had supported partisan movement during the war from 1941 to 1944. The distribution according to the nationality is also worth of mentioning. At the peak of its expansion, the Soviet Lithuanian

<sup>63</sup> The list of the "Struggle" partisans//LSA F.10, In. 1, File 1, (envelope) pp.33a-36.

<sup>64</sup> The same.

<sup>65</sup> The same.

<sup>66</sup> The list of the partisans of the unit "To Victory"//LSA F.11, In.1, File 1, (envelope 1, 2 and 3).

Partisan movement according to the data from the Headquarters movement fielded 1633 partisans in the forests.<sup>67</sup>

Out of a total, of 3 910 Soviet partisans in Lithuania, the Lithuanians made 1388 fighters, the Russians-1 477 fighters, the Jews-676 fighters and all other ethnic groups had 367 people in the Soviet Lithuanian Partisan units. There were 1020 escaped Soviet POWs among them. These numbers are reliable, though make illusion or pretense that partisans made a large fighting group.<sup>68</sup> Especially, because the partisan lists included male teenagers and women, who might have participated in fighting, but because of the “macho culture”, which dominated guerilla movements in the past, excluding from fighting a larger part of civilians, in these units, their active participation seemed to be unlikely. The lists also included partisan informants and all kind of their supporters. 425 partisans were in the Communist Party, 55 candidates to the CPSU, 472 Communist Youth members.<sup>69</sup>

The movement suffered substantial casualties as a result of military encounters. According to the list of the partisans, killed in action with the “German-Fascist occupants,” the units subordinated to the Lithuanian Headquarters of the Partisan Movement, had suffered casualties of 404 killed in action (Russians-177, Lithuanians-119, Jews-75, Poles-8, Belorussians-4, unidentified fighters-21) and 9 people taken prisoners in 1943-1944. Additionally, 12 partisans were executed for treason, 4 deserted.<sup>70</sup> These numbers are inaccurate. First, they don't include people from the military intelligence groups for the period of 1941-1944. Even according to highly reduced official casualties of the Soviet military Intelligence *group Nr.14*, it had reported loss of 20 people (16 Russians, 2 Belorussians, 1 Pole and 1 Jew).<sup>71</sup> The real losses of the *group Nr.14* could have reached 120 people.<sup>72</sup> The statistics also omit casualties of the various partisan groups and single people from and in Lithuania under the Belorussian partisan leadership. The casualties of the Jews don't report about people killed on the way from the Ghettos to the partisan bases, killed before being integrated under command of HLPM. Also it does not include the fighters killed while living in the family camps. The number also does not reflect on the victims of the “Special Affairs Division” in the partisan units, who, according to Lazar, had executed former 6 former Ghetto policemen on the suspicion of espionage for Gestapo.<sup>73</sup> The victims of brawling and death from diseases is often not reflected in the statistics.

The Lithuanians in the partisan movement were distributed unevenly in the territory of Lithuania, despite an apparently large proportion of 35.4% (29.5% according to the data of 22 December 1944) in the movement. The larger percentage of Lithuanians was in the

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<sup>67</sup> K.D.Slepyan, *The People Avengers: Soviet partisans, Stalinist Society and the Politics of Resistance*, Ph.D. dissertation, The University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, 1994, p.203.

<sup>68</sup> The data about the number of the partisans. Compiled on 1945 11 04.//LSAPI F.1, In. 1, File 136, P.6.

<sup>69</sup> The same.

<sup>70</sup> The list of the partisans killed in action by the German occupational authorities, and the lists of the traitors of the Headquarters of the Lithuanian Partisan Movement 1943-1945//LSA F.1, In.1 F.185, pp.1-63.

<sup>71</sup> The list of the killed partisans from *group Nr.14*//LSA F.14, In.1, File 15, (envelope) p.8.

<sup>72</sup> The group was home for 250 fighters. The main list has 152 names. 20 of them were casualties. Still 120 are missing. The operation of August, 1944 in Taurage, and the groups, encirclement by regular panzer troops, implies high casualties.

<sup>73</sup> Ch.Lazar, *Destruction and Resistance*, New York, 1985, p.144 and 159.

West of the country. The Russians and Jews were over-represented in comparison to the main population in the localities around Rudniki forests in the East-South of the country, where a majority of the Jewish partisans were concentrated.<sup>74</sup> There were 127 or 9% Lithuanian, 448 or 32% Russians, 577 or 41% Jewish, and 231 or 18% fighters of other nationalities in partisan groups of the HPML in 1943-1944. The Jewish partisans made a single largest nationality in the partisan units in the East-South of Lithuania. The Vilnius brigade under the command of Miceika *nom guerre* “Gabrys”, according to the 22 December, 1944 lists, had the following nationalities composition in its units:

Name	Lithuanians	Russians	Jews	Others	Total
Margiris	21	-	-	-	21
Adomas Mickevicius	18	23	14	40	95
To Victory	1	5	106	7	119
Struggle	2	15	58	3	78
Perkunas	2	68	26	25	107
Revenger	1	1	105	-	107
Death to the Fascism	3	15	41	1	60
Total/Percentage	47/8%	132/22%	340/58%	76/12%	587/100%

Additionally, there were three groups of Kaunas brigade in Rudniki forests, with fighters nationality was the following:

Name	Lithuanians	Russians	Jews	Others	Total
Death to the Occupants	5	93	79	47	224
Forwards	28	50	36	3	117
Vladas Baronas	-	6	11	1	18
Total/Percentage	33/10%	149/41%	126/35%	51/14%/10	359/100%

<sup>74</sup> The data about the number of the partisans. Compiled on 1945 11 04.//LSAPO F.1, In. 1, File 136, P.6.

The ethnicity of the partisans was the following in district of Trakai, in the Trakai Brigade,:

Name	Lithuanians	Russians	Jews	Others	Total
“For the Fatherland”	33	85	20	18	156
“Liberator”	5	51	15	70	141
“Free Lithuania”	1	31	56	8	96
“Victory”	4	54	21	8	85
Total/Percentage	43/10%	167/ 39%	111/26%	104/25%	425/100%

<sup>75</sup>

The data from the East-South of Lithuania explicitly demonstrates that the majority of the locals, the Lithuanians and Poles, did not go along with the Soviet partisans. While a substantial majority of the Lithuanians in the partisans were with the background in NKVD or Communist Party apparatus, the number of the Poles in the Partisan groups was absolutely insignificant. As a rule, at most several people were Polish in the larger groups of more than 100. However, expansion of the Lithuanian Soviet partisan movement at the expense of the Jews from the Ghettos made the head of the Headquarters of the Lithuanian Partisan Movement (HLPM) Snieckus to boast about the recruiting success in the Fall, 1943:

The number of the of the partisan groups and units increased from 21 to 43. The number of people enlarged from 230 to 1225. The local population added 825 people, 99 former POWs, 71 sent from the reserve of the HLPM.<sup>76</sup>

## COMPETITORS

Difficulties in building anti-Nazi resistance, were in part caused by the Nazis occupational regime which was relatively more lenient in Lithuania than, for example, in Belarus. For the majority of the non-Jews, the prospects of the Soviet rule, which was advocated by the Soviet partisans, in the future, seemed even more repulsive than German military presence on their soil with all their administrative excesses. The Jews, in contrast to others, did not have a choice as to go with the Soviets and their “internationalist ideology”, as only real alternative over the German genocidal policies. Majority of the politically active Lithuanians and Poles supported restoration of the pre-war independent Lithuanian and Polish states. Nevertheless, both Lithuanians and Poles had conflicting claims over the territory, the historical heritage of the Vilnius area, which only in 1939, after Germans first and later Soviets defeated and occupied Poland in the

<sup>75</sup> The main list of “Liberator” unit//LSAPO F.49. In.1, File 1, Envelope Nr.1 pp.1-8.; The main list of the “For the Fatherland Unit”//LSAPO F. 49, In.1, File 1, Envelope Nr.1 pp.1-7; The main list of the “Adomas Mickevicius”//LSAPO F. 8, In.1, File 1, Envelope 4, pp.1-10.

<sup>76</sup> *Lietuvos Liaudis Didziajame Tevynes Kare. Dokumentu ir Medziagos Rinkinys.*, Vilnius, 1982, p.229.

beginning of the Second World War, was included into Lithuania. The Lithuanians considered Vilnius area to be integral part of the country. The vision of the majority of the Poles was diametrically opposed. They thought of the Vilnius area as belonging to the Second Polish Republic from the year 1923, after the war with Lithuania over the territory. The Second World War inspired nationalist sentiments and wide spread preferential treatment of the co-nationals. As a result it caused great damage to the cohabitation of the different groups in the country.

The Military Government co-existed with the Civil administration in Lithuania from the Summer, 1941. The German repressions and hostage taking in retaliation of the Soviet resistance actions, started only in 1942, and only after attacks of the Soviet partisans from Belarus. Overall, the population cooperated against Soviet partisans raiding from Belarus with then German authorities. The police reports have plenty messages provided by the local population and even active armed participation in the operations against partisans.

For the local Poles and Lithuanians, the partisans starting to raid territories in *Generalkommissariat Litauen* were a true disaster. The raids of the Belorussian partisans into the border areas started from the middle of 1942, and immediately triggered large-scale repressions against local population.<sup>77</sup> Jews, Belorussians, Poles and Russians were targeted by executions. The increasing activities of the partisans from Belarus in 1942-43, apart from demonstrating an insensitive stance towards the fate of the local population and ruthlessness, did damage to the strained local economies of towns and village people at war. Largely in response to these actions, the Polish Home Army (AK) attained large popularity among the local Polish population starting with 1942. The Lithuanian self-defense units supported by the Lithuanian police sprung out in the Lithuanian villages in the East-South of Lithuania. The number of incidents especially increased in cold winter of 1943 and 1944. Apart from the robberies partisans seeking to procure food, clothing and sometimes even small pieces of furniture. The plunder of the population was practised by all sides, not to exclude police or German punitive expeditions. Soon in 1943, the Belorussian partisans were joined by the Soviet Lithuanian partisans who all lived as guerillas at the expense of country dwellers, sparing from contributions only their direct supporters. The contributions deepened inter-ethnic tensions in the country. The Polish partisans from AK robbed Lithuanians and Russians, but did not touch Poles as a rule. The Germans and Lithuanian administration and police avenged these acts by harsh treatment of all around, except Lithuanians. It became a war of nationalities where everybody else was trying to survive at the expense of “others” perceived as aliens. The Jews in hiding in family camps or partisan groups in Belarus, fell victims of this war as often as everybody else.

The police reports contain plentiful of reflections of this kind of “nationalities war” in the South-Eastern part of the country:

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<sup>77</sup> The watershed came in May 19, 1942 after Belorussian partisans ambushed, killed and mutilated bodies of the four German officers, when they traveled on the way from Svencionys to Lentupis. Around 500 people were executed in reprisals for this attack.//Intelligence Report about the Repressions for Beck, killed in May 1942//LSAPI F.1, In.1, File 69, p.5.

“On the 7 th January , 1944 the Villages of Karklyne, Torosiskes ir Songailiskes near Eishyshok were attacked and robbed by the 30 bandits group, made mostly of Jews. While traveling with the booty, the group met Lithuanian self-defense group and came under fire. Two Jews, one Jewess, and their six horses were killed. One police helper was heavy wounded, another one slightly”<sup>78</sup>

“On the 16 th January, 1944 the group of Russian bandits was looting in Graiuziskes, they took from the farmers (Poles and Lithuanians) four wagons, food, clothing etc.”<sup>79</sup>

“On the night from the 17 th to 18 th, January 1944 Polish bandits attacked Rudamina, disarmed and robbed all police officials and localLithuanians. They had been staying there for 3 hours. They took from policemen 2 machine guns and 20 rifles”<sup>80</sup>

“ There are 500 Polish bandits in small bands in the environs of Paberze, Giedraiciai, Nemencine, Pabrade an N.Vilnia. They plunder local farmers (of all nationalities, except Poles), in diverse ways terrorize Lithuanians, publicly announcing themselves to be Polish partisans who fight against Bolsheviks and Lithuanians.”<sup>81</sup>

In return, the Lithuanian police, naturally, did not report in the information summaries about their own abuse of power and actions that caused widespread resentment of the local Poles, Jews and all others. The policemen and local administration was falling victim to these encounters as well. The newspaper “*Lietuvos laisves trimitas*” reported in October 1943, that”bandits”(Soviet and Polish) already had killed 280 Lithuanian officials of the self-government.<sup>82</sup>

The way partisans procured goods in the indiscriminate fashion, though with the ideological bias and wording, could be well illustrated by the unpublished story of procurement by Albertas Barauskas *nom guerre* “Greitas”, the head of Zimanas intelligence:

“The first days of stay in the district did not pass unnoticed. When we had arrived all our clothing and shoes were worn out. We had to find the out of situation. We had to “bomb” for clothing and shoes “white partisans”(auth.AK), who had booty (property) from the Jews and the Soviet people. Sure, this way we got dressed up . But this made serious impact on our work as after such events, we always were followed and pursued...”<sup>83</sup>

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<sup>78</sup> Police reports for the 5 th-11<sup>th</sup> of January, 1944//LSA F.3377, In.58, File 266, P.30.

<sup>79</sup> Police reports for the 17th-25<sup>th</sup> of January, 1944//LSA F.3377, In.58 F.266, P.38

<sup>80</sup> The same.

<sup>81</sup> Weekly digest on the bandit activities in Lithuania for the 8-14<sup>th</sup> March, 1944//LSA F.3377, In.58, File 266, P.59.

<sup>82</sup> Banditizmas Lietuvoje//Lietuvos Laisves Trimitas, October, 1943.

<sup>83</sup> A.Barauskas report on “Margiris” partisan group, which was active in 1943-1944 in the District of Vilnius//LSA F.1, In.1, File 501, p.136.

The Lithuanian Soviet Partisans competed with the German and Lithuanian officialdom over power and resources of the local population, but at least did not need to share with them the living quarters in the forests. The main competitor for the booty in the forests and the living quarters was the Polish Home Army (AK). Its growth and expansion in building military forces, and most important timing, corresponded in time with the growth of the Soviet partisan movement in Lithuania. It eventually had to bring to the conflict over the zones of influence in the country undersupplied with resources. The AK military structure in the Eastern parts of the former Second Polish Republic was based on the regional division of the country to “*Wojewodstwa*” The AK districts roughly corresponded to “*Wojewodstwa*”. The units around Vilnius were part of the AK Wilno (Wilno). The territory of the AK Nowogrodek was also overlaying on the Lithuanian territory. The whole former *Nowogrodek Wojewodstwo* was administratively included in *Reichskommissariat Ostland* as part of *Generalkommissariat Weissruthien*, areas around Eisiskes, with large forests were included into *Generalkommissariat Litauen*. The AK Nowogrodek maintained these areas are under their jurisdiction, despite the fact that the real borders set by German administration, and before by the Soviet Union, of Lithuanian SSR and Belorussian SSR, were drawn differently. All the units of the AK Wilno and AK Nowogrodek were under command of the Territorial Operational Headquarters, under the supreme commander Col. Alexander Krzyzhanowski, *nom guerre* “Wilk”. The AK ideological strength was drawn not only from grievances of the population over the German occupation. A very important component in their nationalist political views was based on anti-Sovietism ideologies and directed against all “others”, not Poles. Nevertheless, the rhetoric of AK is rather contradictory There was constant expression of paternalistic care over all “minorities” in that region (Jews, Lithuanians, Belorussians, Germans). The order Nr.5 of A.Krzyzhanowski said: “The local people, despite difference in nationality or faith have to be treated equally and just. Any excessive use of force towards civilians can not take place. Their life and possessions have to be guarded by the Polish Army.”<sup>84</sup> However, in a large number of documents, there are echoes of concern about the “minorities” stance towards AK and Polish statehood. Documents have abundant remarks about tense situation between Poles and Lithuanians, Poles and Belorussians, and Poles and Jews. The AK perceived local scenery as a “war of nationalities.” All non-Poles were stamped with certain ideological characteristics. The Lithuanians were nationalists, *haters of Poles*, all Germans were *fascists*, not differentiating between different political and ideological trends inside of any ethnic group. The Jews were not an exception in this pattern. In the AK propaganda and instruction materials, the Jews were made equal to the Soviets and *vice vers*. In other words, to be Jewish meant to be *Communist, Bolshevik, Russian*, and most often “*Soviet bandit*.”<sup>85</sup> The Jews were presented as ardent supporters of the Soviet cause and potential backers of the Soviet partisan groups.<sup>86</sup> The image of the Jew was as of the member of the Soviet partisan group, who lived at the expense of the local Polish population. These images had pedigree in the radical deterioration of Polish-Jewish relations in the Eastern Polish territories as a result of Soviet occupation of Eastern Polish borderlands in 1939.

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<sup>84</sup> Rozkaz Nr.5//LCSA F.601, In. 1 File 4, p.4.

<sup>85</sup> The AK Wilno report on the nationality situation 1944//LCSA F.601, In.1, File 46, p.9.

<sup>86</sup> Reports on the current situation March, 1944. Soviet partisans and local bands//LCSA F.601, In.1, File 50.

The interests of Polish and Jewish mainstream political groupings and politically active population went into opposite and confronting directions. In 1939, chauvinistic and nationalizing practices in interwar years, especially heavy and evident in *Eastern Kresy*, turned against just recently dominant Poles. The price was loyalty of Ukrainians and Jews, Belorussians and Lithuanians, in time of crisis of Polish statehood. All stereotypes had certain foundation. The raids on the Polish villagers for food and clothing from the Jewish family camps and Jewish self organized partisan groups, in the areas of Lida and Nowogrodek, were a prominent feature of everyday life. The large influx of the Jews in the Soviet Lithuanian partisan groups, further added to the strengthening of the stereotypes and ideological stigmatization of the Jews as the Soviets. The Soviet underground in return popularly called and considered Polish underground “*hitlerites*” and “*Polish fascists*”.<sup>87</sup> The everyday conflicts were caused by the competing claims of the AK and the Soviet partisans over the control and contributions collection from Polish and other villages around Vilnius. The Lithuanian Soviet partisans did not make distinctions in what localities to supply their units, when they wanted to supply their units and by all means to harm local economies and as a consequence to reduce German provisions for the army and local administration.<sup>88</sup> Both groupings had different visions for the country’s future. The Lithuanian Soviet partisans saw the Lithuania’s future as a Soviet Socialist Republic in the SSSR, while the AK fought for the Eastern Lithuania, and possibly all Lithuania, as a part of Poland. Differently from the Soviet partisans who were engaging occupational forces or those civilians who were not complying with their orders or demands constantly, AK was sparing their forces for the end of the war, when decisive battles had to be fought, and was mostly concerned about the defense of the territory. Competition over resources, in the years 1943-44, brought bloody small scale conflicts and confrontation between AK and the Lithuanian Soviet partisans. Zimanas had mentioned in his letter of 25<sup>th</sup> of November, 1943 that the “the white Poles are showing up and raid around”<sup>89</sup> His colleague Sumauskas” Kazimieras” was more categorical about the Polish partisans: “They beat us, we have to beat them in return”.<sup>90</sup> Despite the fact that Zimanas was less indicative of the conflict and having very often distorted and incomplete information about the AK true intentions predicted that after getting stronger, the AK would start seriously threatening the Lithuanian Soviet Partisan Movement.<sup>91</sup> The conventional wisdom of the parties in conflict was that the Soviet partisans controlled the Rudniki and Inkleriskes forests. The territory to the East and South of Rudniki forest was controlled by Polish partisans. As a consequence when Soviet partisan units were willing to reach Vilnius–Molodechno or Vilnius-Lida railway, they had to cross Salcia valley controlled by the AK.<sup>92</sup> War diaries of many Soviet partisan groups are abundant with the accounts of the skirmishes between the Soviet partisans and the AK. The reports of the partisan groups in Rudniki forests

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<sup>87</sup> Nationalities and Eastern Information Nr.29. Delegation of a Government for a Country[Poland]Department of Information and Press, Eastern Sector, 1941-1945//USHMM RG-15, 045 M, Reel Nr.3, p. 65

<sup>88</sup> M.Wardzynska, *Sytuacja ludności Polskiej w generalnym komisariacie Litwy, czerwiec 1941-lipiec 1944*. Warszawa, 1993, pp.204-205.

<sup>89</sup> G.Zimanas letter to A.Snieckus of 1943 11 25//LSAPI F.1, In.1, File 55, p.16.

<sup>90</sup> “Kazimieras” letter to A.Snieckus//LSAPI F.1, In.1, File 55, p.27.

<sup>91</sup> G.Zimanas letter to A.Snieckus of 1943 08 18//LSAPO F.1, in.1, File 32, p.53.

<sup>92</sup> R.Korab-Zebryk, *Operacja Wilenska AK*, Warszawa, 1988, p.95

overflow with messages about the small bloody encounters with AK groups. Some of these messages illustrate the true nature of the conflict. Thus, on the 25<sup>th</sup> of May, the partisans from the unit “To Victory”(commander Abram Shabrinskii), under the command of their military intelligence officer went to obtain food as the unit was near the brink of the starvation. When they reached the village designated to “supply them with food”, they found out that the village already had been plundered by the “white Poles”, while the Soviet partisans in their Soviet bureaucratic language speaking “conducted operation and provided us with deplorable results.” Afterwards, the estate where they expected the next night “to improve results of their previous operation” was guarded by the large forces of the “white Poles” and they had to leave the area without achieving their aims.<sup>93</sup> Another time, the same unit planned to attack the German barracks that German garrison left in Turgeliai and to set fire on the barracks. However, the operation had to be called off as the “white Poles” had occupied all surrounding villages and prevented the partisans from accessing the locality. As a rule, the conflicts were starting when Soviet partisans were entering territories inhabited by the Poles. This helped AK to make a strong argument in defense of the Poles and finding themselves a role in the guerilla war. However, the command of the AK had more moderate stance on the relations with the Soviet Lithuanian partisans. Yet in the order for the operation “Burza”(Storm), the Polish partisans were warned against conflict with the Soviet partisans. If the conflicts took place and the attempts to reach cessation of hostilities were unsuccessful, then, the AK units might have to be relocated to other bases. The AK before the Soviet Army had to appear as controlling situation in the country, however, fighting against the Soviet partisans was allowed only in self-defense.<sup>94</sup> One matter was formal order, another everyday practice in the “forest brotherhood”. The war diaries of the partisan units demonstrate especially high tensions. Attacks on the Lithuanian Soviet partisan small groups by AK and vice-versus was an everyday occurrence. It is interesting to mention that out of the 722 people who crossed the front line into Lithuanian territory or were parachuted there in 1942-1944, under the auspices of the Headquarters of the Partisan Movement in Lithuania, 141 were registered dead by the beginning of May, 1944. The majority were killed by the German army and Lithuanian police, died in accidents, some were casualties of the local people, and only seven of them were killed by AK.<sup>95</sup> However, every partisan unit in the East-South Lithuania had suffered larger or smaller casualties from AK.<sup>96</sup> The single largest casualty of AK, was extermination of Eduardas Taujenas group of 12 from the K.Kalinauskas unit near Dubingiai on the 1<sup>st</sup> of March, 1944 after partisans were ambushed by the AK fighters.

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<sup>93</sup> Report on activities and war diary of the unit” To Victory”//LSA F.11, In.1, File 1, p.4

<sup>94</sup> R.Korab-Zebryk, *Operacja Wilenska AK*, Warszawa, 1988, p.74.

<sup>95</sup> The List of Fighters Killed in Action//LSA F.1, In.1, File 172, pp.118-127.

<sup>96</sup> Regular partisan groups had 225 killed in action (KIA) according to the lists of 1945 in LSA F. 1, In.1, File 185, pp.1-63. These lists are incomplete and don't reflect on arbitrary executions inside of the units, lack of documentation on personnel, especially for the year 1943. The real casualties of those in the partisan groups could have been as 2 times higher. The personal files of the partisans started to be compiled only in 1945 when the CK of the Lithuanian Communist party started to consider decoration of ex-partisans. There are big discrepancies between the numbers provided and the provided name lists. Thus, *group Nr.14* reports mentioned 250 fighters in the unit but managed to provide only 152 men list. The notes under the list said that they don't know about whereabouts of the others because of the lack of documentation//LSA F.14, In.1, File 1, p.1 and 6.

Additionally, together with this group they lost the lists of their informants and supporters who were later hunted down by AK.<sup>97</sup> The AK also lost its men to the Soviet Lithuanian Partisans, however, the intensity in the fighting did not reach the same extent as in the places around Nowogrodek or Swyr in Spring, 1944 in Belarus. The German reports point out that the Germans predicted the Soviet partisan conflicts with AK, in the area to the west of Swyr in Belarus.<sup>98</sup> The AK units started to mass up their forces to the South and North of the Rudniki forest in March, 1944. The Soviet Lithuanian partisan leadership thought AK together with Germans to attack Soviet Lithuanian partisans. Zimanas' partisans in Rudniki forests, in response to the apparent threats started to concentrate their forces in the triangle of Vilnius-Beniakonys-Valkininkai, destroying the bridges over the rivers.<sup>99</sup> With an approach of the Soviet-German front, both sides, but especially Poles, became more inclined to negotiate separation of the zones of influence and to avoid conflicts in an unpredictable situation. The first negotiations took place in April, 1944 and had reached an agreement that the border between both sides with the river of Salcia. When Soviet partisans wanted to cross territories under AK control, these had to supply guides and food, while Soviet partisans had in return supply AK with arms<sup>100</sup> Later, on the 25 of June the next meeting took place between "Wilk" and "Gabrys", and an agreement was reached, which would provide that the Soviet Lithuanian provide AK with arms and a joint command for the struggle against the Germans.<sup>101</sup> This meeting is noted also in the memoirs of Barauskas, however, he denies, that any agreement was reached at that day.<sup>102</sup> A similar meeting took place in Braslaw district in Belarus between the Soviet partisans and local AK command on the 31 of May, 1944. AK welcomed at the negotiations "the Soviet partisans as the guests of the Polish land." The meeting's agenda aimed at discussing: 1. separation of the influence over territories with introduction of distinct marks for the controlled areas. 2. an agreement about the mode of food requisitions and its volume; 3. passing of those Soviet partisans accused of crimes against Polish citizens into the Polish hands; 4. refusal by the Soviet partisans to mobilize in the territories under AK control; 5. return of the 8 killed members of AK.<sup>103</sup> However, the negotiations as elsewhere did not bring any positive results. The attempts to imitate preservation of the Polish statehood under the AK was not a feasible option. The fight over the territory in the *Eastern Kresy* was very different from the main imagined concern of the AK, which was as elsewhere to fight and to hold the ground before advancing Soviets (Galicia, Vilnius, Warsaw). The Soviets had their own designs for the future of the Polish *Eastern Kresy* and repelled any AK attempts to secure the territory either in Warsaw, Western Ukraine or Lithuania. The speedy approach of the Soviet German front line made the Soviet Lithuanian partisans lose interest in any accords with the AK. They escaped conflicts where it was possible with the AK partisans

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<sup>97</sup> The list of the partisans killed in action//LSA V.1, In.1, File 185, P.26-27

<sup>98</sup> Report Nr 79 of 1944 02 07//LCSA F.R.-666, In.1, File 5, p.202.

<sup>99</sup> Intelligence report//LSAPO F.1, In.1, File 24, p.10.

<sup>100</sup> R.Korab-Zebryk, *Operacja Wilenska AK*, Warszawa, 1988, p.98

<sup>101</sup> The same p.101

<sup>102</sup> A.Barauskas, *Misku frontuose*, Vilnius, 1968, p.270.

<sup>103</sup> Nationalities and Eastern Information Nr.29. Delegation of a Government for a Country[Poland]Department of Informational and Press, Eastern Sector, 1941-1945//USHMM RG-15, 045 M, Reel Nr.3, p. 65.

in Spring and Summer, 1944 and had waited for the regular Red Army to do the job not only against Germans but to get rid of the AK presence in South-East Lithuania.

#### THE JEWS AMONG THE SOVIET LITHUANIAN PARTISANS

The fight for supplies and territory under control to enable to feed large groups of men in the forests, made a substantial part, if not to say essential, of the military effort of the partisans. In these efforts, the Soviet Lithuanian partisan groups encountered resistance of the AK. Vilnius area Polish villages were dominated by AK and there are no even a hint that Polish inhabitants overall supported the Soviet partisans. There were some Polish informants, but negligent participation of the Poles in the Soviet Lithuanian partisan groups. With the Lithuanians situation was different, even though they made substantial proportion of the Soviet partisan movement, from people in the 1940-41 Communist party apparatus and organizations, LSSR administration, NKVD and other. Very often they were drivers, accountants, workers and others doing menial jobs in these institutions. The contingent was not much appealing for the mood of the mainstream population still under impression of “the Soviet first occupation” of 1940-1941 with forceful indoctrination, mass-scale repressions of the political opponents, executions etc. Anti-Sovietism and anti-Semitism of the Lithuanian population played a role in their attitudes towards the Soviet Lithuanian partisans and Soviet Union the way it was noticeable among the Polish population. From this point of view, security situation for the partisans among Lithuanians, and population’s political orientation was well captured and narrated in the report of the “Kestutis” group by J.Basciulis *nom guerre* Stalionis from the area of Siauliai :

“The enemies spy network is extensive, especially in towns and factories, there are some from the former Soviet activists like militiamen, Communist Youth and similar... Gestapo in the towns and villages also have its own spy networks.... The former “partisans” who were executing Soviet people, Jews and POWs help a lot to Gestapo. The Germans obliged every civil servant in the administration to spy and to provide information about suspicious persons . Lithuanian “Saugumas” supports secret nationalist organizations and even if they get somebody from the nationalists, they try immediately to release them, but if they get to Gestapo then “kaput” , because Germans treat them not better than us”.<sup>104</sup>

As regards to the “Jewish question” the same reporter had noted:

“Especially are despised those who executed, who were shooting Jews and Soviet citizens, and had plundered their property. Some of them never been active, but some of them completely sold themselves to the Germans and act not only against us, but against innocent civilians as well. Among Lithuanians they are simply called “Jew killers” and “Jew stranglers” or killers. Many of these people died or went “nuts”, that their end is coming close.... Often in the youth evenings they (Jew killers) were asked by someone: “what kind of suit you are wearing today? May be Moishe’s...<sup>105</sup>It is needed to note, that though there are no Jews or only few of them, but many workers are

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<sup>104</sup> The report of the “Kestutis” partisan group for 1943-44 in Siauliai district//LSA F.1, In.1, File 501, pp.140-141.

<sup>105</sup> The same p.144

disappointed with large number of Jewish civil servants under Soviet rule. Though majority feels sorry for the Jews that had suffered under German occupation, but at the same time express that for such masses of killed people there were no instances of the resistance or run away, and later would fight against the Germans. It is obvious, that Germans' propaganda did a lot through their agents, press and posters, but anti-Semitism in Lithuania is visible in all social stratas".<sup>106</sup>

This report is interesting in many respects, not only because of the informal first hand impressionist narrative, but because of the presented opinions and attitudes of the population which Soviet partisans claimed to embody.

Against the background of the mistrust and gravitation of the population to the extreme right, all country's territory was tightly controlled by the German occupational forces. Numerically, German police, Gestapo and SD forces were weak. The 3 A *Sonderkommando* (a part *Ensatzkommando A*) under command of Karl Jager, which was responsible for the main crimes against Jewish people in Lithuania, became the core of the German police security effort, when had been reorganized in 23 September, 1941 into the office of the Commander of German Security Police and SD in Lithuania (*Kommandeur der Sicherheitpolizei und des SD fur den Generalbezirk Litauen*). The head of the office was under the commander of the *Ostland* German security police and SD in Riga. They had relatively small forces of 112 people in Kaunas, 40 people in Vilnius, Siauliai district only 7, in Panevezys only 6 in 1943. German Order police (*Ordnungspolizei*) similarly had small forces-80 people in Kaunas, 65 in Vilnius, in Panevezys-26, Siauliai-26, Vilnius district 30. Apart from them, the German security police had employed motorized police units, police battalions made of Estonians, Latvians, Ukrainians. The 9<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> German SS Police regiments were active in the East-Southern Lithuania from 1943 as well.

However the core of the security forces fighting partisans and controlling the area was done by the Lithuanian police which was led by the Headquarters of the Lithuanian Liaison Officer (*Stab des Litauischen Verbindungs-Offiziers fur die Schutzmannschaft des Einzeldienstes*) under command of V.Reivytis, graduate of the Berlin Police School and attached to the *Ordnungspolizei* Headquarters. The Lithuanian police (*Litauische Schutzmannschaft des Einzeldienstes*) was represented in all 22 Lithuanian districts, with its own infrastructure having 4034 policemen in August, 1943 (25 percent were policemen who saw police service in pre-war Lithuania, however, nearly everybody served in the pre-1940 Lithuanian Army).<sup>107</sup> Additionally, there was a category of the paid auxiliary policemen (*besoldete Hilfsschutzmann*) which had the strength of 1636 in August, 1943. Much larger numerically was unpaid auxiliary police (*unbesoldete Hilfsschutzmann*), made of 7769 auxiliary policemen who received arms only during the operations. They made the core of the self-defense units in the villages opposing Soviet partisan and AK attempts to raid the Lithuanian villages in East-Southern Lithuania.

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<sup>106</sup> The same p. 155.

<sup>107</sup> A.Bubnys, *Vokieciu Okupuota Lietuva (1941-1944)*, Vilnius, 1998, p.101.

Additionally, there were 23 Lithuanian police battalions, which listed 8000 men and 300 officers on the 1 March, 1944.<sup>108</sup> Lithuanian Security Police (Saugumas) which has been subordinated to German Security Police and SD, had 886 security and criminal police officers<sup>109</sup>

Even the collaborationist Lithuanian forces for several times exceeded the groups of the Soviet resistance. However, these forces had high rate of desertion and other disciplinary problems. For example, the Lithuanian police battalions listed on the 1<sup>st</sup> of March, 1944, 2.300 deserters.<sup>110</sup> Out of 5734 listed policemen of the Lithuanian Schutzmannschaft, 257 deserted, 964 were under arrest on the 6 January, 1944.<sup>111</sup>

The Police forces were made predominantly of the members of the Lithuanian nationalist organizations. The Lithuanian nationalist underground, during the World War II supported theory of two enemies, Germans and Soviets, but did not engage in active struggle against Germans, spending their effort in propaganda effort and getting ready to fight the Soviets if they came back after Germany's defeat in the World War II. That made contacts or negotiations with the Soviet Lithuanian partisans, even in theory unlikely. The partisans did not waste time in negotiations with major Lithuanian nationalist organizations. The most they were interested to get on their side the Lithuanian police and "local troops" of Gen. Povilas Plechavičius, recruited by the Germans as a prototype of the Lithuanian army in Spring, 1944, under command of the Lithuanian officers, and initially intended to use against Soviet and Polish partisans. The first attempts to lure the policemen on their side came in Summer, 1943. Zimanas wrote, that they managed to establish contact with one police station, but Germans arrested part of the policemen. He mentioned in his report that in two other localities the policemen are members of the nationalist organizations and nobody of them wished to desert.<sup>112</sup> Snieckus ordered on the 25 May, 1944, try to instigate tensions among "Lithuanian nationalists" and Germans and thus to involve Lithuanians into armed struggle against the Germans. He decreed for the Soviet partisans, not to allow the Germans to disarm "Plechavičius" units, to agitate them and try to purge the units of the anti-Soviet officers.<sup>113</sup> However, the order was late, from May 15 to 21, 1944 was the period, when after refusal to go to the Western Front, the Lithuanian local troops of Plechavičius were dismantled and disarmed. The Officers at the Headquarters of the troops were arrested and sent to Salaspilis Concentration Camp in Latvia. Majority, of the 14 000 thousand troops deserted, later to join Nationalist Partisan Movement, after the Soviet entrance into Lithuania in Summer, 1944. Only fraction of them, around 3000 men, were sent to serve in *Flak* units on the Western Front. The only known "recruitment success" came with a formation of the unit "Vytautas." The commander of the Lithuanian company at Starlygiai senior lieutenant Vladas Slapelis, was wounded and captured by the partisans from "Vilnius" group with a help of fighters from F.Markov brigade of the Belorussian partisans. After conversation with the NKVD operative Jonas Vildziūnas and the head of the Northern party Committee Sumauskas, the officer agreed to join the partisan unit, and

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<sup>108</sup> LCSA F.3377, In. 58, File 265, p.110.

<sup>109</sup> A.Bubnys, *Vokiečių Okupuota Lietuva (1941-1944)*, Vilnius, 1998, p.93

<sup>110</sup> LCSA F.3377, In. 58, File 265, p.110.

<sup>111</sup> LCSA F.3377, In. 58, File 265, p.105.

<sup>112</sup> Zimanas letter to Snieckus 1944 08 13//LSAPI F. F.1, In.1, File 437, p.73

<sup>113</sup> A.Snieckus decree of 1943 05 25//LSAPI F.51, In.1, File 1, p.5

to try to convince the men from his Starlygiai company to follow him.<sup>114</sup> Afterwards he wrote letters trying to convince them. However, his comrades believed that Slapelis is under coercion and wants to agitate them into partisan hands. The negotiations prolonged for several days. The commander of the Slapelis' battalion ended without a success for either side. Partisans did not get more "new converts," and his commanding officers did not manage to release or exchange their subordinate to the captured partisans. During the negotiations his battalion commander uphold that "he will not let Lithuania go neither to Germans nor Bolsheviks"<sup>115</sup> Even Gen. Plechavicius regretted that his officer got into the "the gang of Jewish lads".<sup>116</sup> Later, on 25 May, 1944 the unit "Vytautas" under command of Slapelis and having 26 people from Plechavicius units and police was founded.<sup>117</sup> And this took place against the background of complete disa

However, the relationship with the local population also we problematic, and soon in winter 1943-1944 conflicts with local population started. The Soviet historiography, traditionally maintained, that everybody, except class enemies of the Soviet rule and traitors, voluntary and supported Soviet Lithuanian partisans. However, the Soviet non-partisan letters, legal and underground press, don't call Soviet resistance members as partisans. They are simply "bandits." Even Zimanas wrote, that people sometimes said: "sheeps and pigs "those partisans" take from us, but we don't see them fighting".<sup>118</sup> As a rule, the commanders of the partisan units did not report about the violation of discipline, excessive robberies, and only if superiors got interested in one or another case, the case would become known. However, the head of "Margiris" Special Affairs division Juozas Zemaitaitis *nom guerre* "Stankevicius" reported several specific incidents. The partisans from the unit "Vladas Baronas", had seriously beaten partisans' supporter and another older man demanding to give his pistol. Finally, they had stolen two golden rings. The partisan from the unit "Death to the Occupants" had shot and wounded innocent civilian. The partisans from the same unit exchanged parachute for "vodka" and when being drunk had opened fire on the nearby houses.. The partisans from the unit "Struggle" confiscated from two households the last cows. The same did partisans from the unit "Death to the Fascism". The partisans from the unit "Adomas Mickevicius" executed women and a child, without authorization of the superior officers on May 31, 1944. The author stressed that it is especially difficult to fight criminality among the partisans who come from the East. In Zemaitaitis view, the worst in this respect, were Markov and Morozov brigades in Belarus. They obstructed as a rule any investigation.<sup>119</sup> The reports about discipline violation were coming mostly from the groups in Rudniki forests. One of the reasons for numerous disciplinary violations in Rudniki, was that the partisans felt they were pretty safe and acted there in unrestricted fashion. The constant monitoring by the Southern Lithuanian Communist Party committee with all security apparatus, helped at least to supervise situation and to do some preventive work. However, lack of long term institutional culture, combined with loose organizational character of partisan movement as a whole, distance between the

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<sup>114</sup> S.Apyvala, *Sakalai broleliai*, Vilnius, 1961, p.214

<sup>115</sup> Response of the Battalion Commander//LSAPI F.60, In.1, File 1, p.79

<sup>116</sup> The same.

<sup>117</sup> Report from the unit "Vytautas"//LSAPI F.58, In.1, File 1, p.3.

<sup>118</sup> Zimanas letter to Snieckus 1944 03 03//LSAPI F.1, In.1, File 40, p.37.

<sup>119</sup> Summary of the "Stankevicius" report to Snieckus//LSAPI F. 1, In.1, File 44, pp.1-2

units, German control of the areas created numerous problems for the movement. Zimanas mentioned that leadership appointments and their empowerment, were very often problematic and created disciplinary problems:

“In the unit V. commanders were the people who were swindlers. They used to take arms from better fighters and to give them to those who were simple robbers.”

However apart from disciplinary problems, the real challenge to the Soviet partisan movement in its relations with the local population came from the self-defense forces organized in the villages by the Lithuanian police and made of the unpaid policemen (*unbesodete Hilfsschutzmannn*).

The newspaper ‘Ateitis’ had announced about organization of the self-defense at the villages to fight the Polish and Soviet partisans influence on the 21 September, 1943. The proclamation describes an agreement of the advisor of the Lithuanian Civil government Petras Kubiliūnas, General Commissar of *Ostland* Adrian Theodore von Renteln and the head of the German SS and Police over the founding of the self-defense units in the districts of Lithuania. There were plans to set up the units till the 1 October, 1943.<sup>120</sup> However, the idea was still born as the Nazis considered too dangerous to arm villagers in an unpredictable situation with contributions, mobilizations in the country. Von Renteln had been criticized by Heinrich Himler, and Gotlieb Berger, the chef of Political Leadership Staff of the Eastern Occupied Territories, for that agreement<sup>121</sup>. As a result, the Nazi basically boycotted the weapons supply to the groups which was partially implemented only through the effort of the Lithuanian police to legalize the weapons that were in the hands of the population anyway. The units were made mainly of the unpaid policemen, poorly armed with the Soviet trophy rifles, without proper discipline and inhibited by all deficiencies of the self-made forces. The proper statistics of the self defense is not existent and the information basically comes from the reports of the Soviet partisans as they were a strong point of irritation for the guerilla fighters and first line of defense for the occupational authorities. They were very helpful in securing the German authorities from the rage of the local population for the unpopular punitive actions against the partisans and their supporters. The self-defense units became the only defense line in a country where Germans were loosening from day to day their controls and were not able seriously to commit their forces to the anti-partisan warfare.<sup>122</sup> The skirmishes between the self-defense units and the partisans was a constant, very often a bloody feature, of the local scene from the late 1943 to the summer of 1944. The confrontation was fiercest around Rudniki forests. The villagers in the South-Eastern Lithuania lived in the collectively maintained villages not, as else where in Lithuania, on the farms. It was a good pre-condition for organizing collective defense activities in the countryside. The partisans in Rudniki forests were the largest contingent of guerilla fighters in all Lithuania. Poorly armed and in demand for large quantities of supplies to keep up such force they were keen to hunt for the weapons in possession by the population. This became a constant feature of the local scenery in late Autumn 1943 and Spring 1944. Killings in retribution for the killed in action members on both sides was wide spread.

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<sup>120</sup> A.Bubnys, *Vokieciu Okupuota Lietuva (1941-1944)*, Vilnius, 1998, p.121.

<sup>121</sup> R.Zyzas, *Vietine Savisauga Lietuvoje naciu Vokietijos okupacijos metais(1941-1944 )* Genocidas ir Rezistencija Vol. 1(11)2002, p. 75.

<sup>122</sup> The same, p.74.

The were reported cases of the punitive partisan expeditions against the villagers. Three instances during the Nazi occupation of burning down of the settlements with their inhabitants were reported in Lithuania. One of them was committed by the Nazis when 119 people were burnt alive on the June 3, 1944 in Pirciupiai. The Soviet partisans destroyed Kaniukai and Bakaloriskes settlements where self-defenses were in conflict with the Soviet partisans.. There were 37 people killed in Kaniukai, and 17 in Bakaloriskes. Majority of the buildings there were burnt down, cattle was slaughtered.

The psychological and military intimidation of the farmers brought some results. The resistance to the partisans was highly ineffective, the partisans as a rule limited their activities to confiscation of the weapons, clothing and foodstuff. The incidents of killing were taking place, however, the peaceful solution to the confrontation was found more often.

The campaign to disarm partisans brought some results as well. The report from 1945 indicated that Rudniki forest partisans acquired from the enemy (the lion share coming from village self-defenses), 527 rifles and 11 machine guns with 10 000 bullets.<sup>123</sup>

## MEMORY

Recent academic research on the basis of newly accessible archival material and attempts to prosecute former members of the pro-Soviet partisan movement on the same basis as other Soviet collaborators in Lithuania on charges of genocide reflect the Cold War culture. In the ideologically charged postwar world genocide has too often become a hollow concept used to compromise a political adversary. Among the émigré groups of East European descent in the United States, ethnic Lithuanian organizations were proactive in the campaign to indict the Soviet Union for genocide. The émigré narrative placed local collaboration in the Nazi mass murder of Jews in Lithuania on the same plane as the crimes committed by the Soviet regime against the Lithuanian nation. This view has made a comeback in independent Lithuania. Current Lithuanian law has come to define genocide broadly, allowing for legal prosecution of individuals who had collaborated with the Soviet regime. In essence, this Lithuanian interpretation of genocide is defined as actions based on the intention to physically annihilate all or part of inhabitants/residents who belong to ethnic, racial or religious groups, such actions as are expressed in the murder, torture or the infliction of serious injury on the members of the group, interference in their mental development, the creation of living conditions which cause the death of all or part of said peoples, the forcible handover of children from one to another group of people, or utilizing means to decrease the groups' birthrate. As stated by Lithuanian Procurator General Rimvydas Valentukevičius,

Genocide is a murder of the people of Lithuania, their torture and deportation during the Soviet and Nazi occupations and Soviet annexation.

Genocide also includes actions that seek to physically destroy all or part of the inhabitants who belong not only to ethnic, racial, national or religious groups, but also are members of social and political groups.

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<sup>123</sup> The same.p.86

The inclusion of this definition of genocide into Lithuanian law is a rightful aim of the democratic country of Lithuania in order to evaluate crimes committed by the occupation regimes and private persons.<sup>124</sup>

The investigation by the Lithuanian procurator's office against Yitzhak Arad for alleged crimes against humanity generated tensions over the Lithuanian interpretation of genocide. In the foreign media, the attempts to question Fania Branstovskaya and Rochl Margolis as witnesses in the case were often seen as an attempt to obfuscate the Holocaust and "blame the victims."<sup>125</sup> The head of the Jerusalem office of the Simon Wiesenthal Center, Efraim Zuroff, as well as numerous other interested Jewish groups, charged the Lithuanian authorities with obfuscation of the Holocaust.<sup>126</sup> According to Zuroff the questioning of the witnesses amounted to a "deliberate campaign is currently underway to discredit the brave Jewish heroes of the anti-Nazi resistance and help deflect attention from the infinitely more numerous crimes by Lithuanians against Jews during the Holocaust."<sup>127</sup>

The Center noted its grave concern over the campaign being waged by the Lithuanian authorities to create a false symmetry between Nazi and Communist crimes as part of a deliberate effort to hide the scope and extent of Lithuanian criminality during the Holocaust. In September 2008, the Lithuanian procurator's office closed the case against Dr. Arad, but according to Zuroff:

The [discontinued] case against Dr. Arad is only the tip of an ugly iceberg created in Vilnius by government officials and institutions determined to hide the truth about the critical and extremely significant role played by local Nazi collaborators in the annihilation of Lithuanian

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<sup>124</sup> the text written by the Lithuanian Prosecutor General Mr. Rimvydas Valentukevicius  
<http://www.genocid.lt/Leidyba/5/nusikalt.htm>

<sup>125</sup> Danielle Singer *Lithuanian Accuses Holocaust Survivors of War Crimes*, The Jerusalem Post, May 29, 2008, 7.

Andrew Baker, *Europe's Shameful Honoring of Vilnius*, Forward, June 26, 2008,

Adam Mullet, *Adamkus forgives Germany for Nazi Occupation*, The Baltic Times, June 19-July 2, 2008, 4.

Dana Gloger, *The Holocaust survivors facing war-crimes trials*, Jewish chronicle, London, June 06, 2006.

Lana Gersten and Marc Perelman, *Tensions Mount Over Lithuanian Probe*, The Forward, July 3rd 2008. Prosecution and persecution. Lithuania must stop blaming the victims  
From Economist.com, Aug 21st 2008

[http://www.economist.com/world/europe/displaystory.cfm?story\\_id=11958563&mode=comment&intent=readBottom](http://www.economist.com/world/europe/displaystory.cfm?story_id=11958563&mode=comment&intent=readBottom) Saturday November 8th 2008, 22:32

<sup>126</sup> Press release *Wiesenthal Center Protests Lithuanian Judicial Campaign to Discredit Jewish Heroes of anti-Nazi Resistance*, May 28, 2008

Press release *Wiesenthal Center: Closure of Fabricated Case Against Dr. Arad Welcome but is only the tip of the Iceberg of the far more serious problem of Lithuanian Holocaust Distortion and Obfuscation*, September 25, 2008

<sup>127</sup> Press release *Wiesenthal Center Protests Lithuanian Judicial Campaign to Discredit Jewish Heroes of anti-Nazi Resistance*, May 28, 2008

Jewry and the mass murder of Jews in Belarus and Poland. Thus the Lithuanians did everything possible to avoid prosecution of their own Nazi war criminals, and when pressured to prosecute the three cases brought to trial [Lileikis, Gimžauskas, and Dailidė], made sure by devious legal tactics that none of the three would ever be punished, thereby reinforcing the myth propagated by the authorities that only a few local hooligans mistreated Jews. The latest campaign to prosecute Soviet anti-Nazi Jewish partisans was merely another link in this chain of historical duplicity and distortion.<sup>128</sup>

The argument bears some similarity to the notion of the rebirth of a European “new anti-semitism,” based on political (criticism of Israel) rather than racial motifs. In this case, the new anti-semitism is allegedly masquerading as anti-sovietism. Needless to say, in Lithuanian and Polish collective memory, the Soviet partisan movement, of which the Jewish partisans were an operationally integral part, is understandably linked to Stalinism and the Kremlin; after all, even if the Jewish fighters are exempted, most Soviet partisan leaders were, in fact, Stalinists, some with biographies that would easily land them in a war crimes trial.

There is little doubt that the Lithuanian procurator’s decision to introduce charges against a teen-age Holocaust survivor and anti-Nazi fighter constituted a serious miscalculation, especially in view of the government’s record on Nazi war-crimes prosecutions, and one can speculate about the nefarious motives behind this inane and politically clueless action. Nevertheless, some care should be taken not to trivialize the meaning of anti-semitism, or exploit the specter of anti-sovietism/anti-semitism in order to silence debate over the nature of the Soviet guerilla forces at large which often were in a fierce conflict not only with Nazi collaborators but are known to have killed civilians who supported the Polish Home Army, itself an anti-German resistance movement subordinate to an Allied government. The Koniuchy case was widely publicized in Poland. The first impetus to the investigation was made by the Polish emigree groups in Canada who presented their own version of the collective memory. Their story was a repetition of the story displayed during the World War by the followers of the endek ideology in the ranks of AK.<sup>129</sup> The Institute of National Memory, Lodz Prosecutors Office had requested Lithuania’s assistance in investigating the case. As a result of the developments the issue was not properly approached by any of the NGO’s, academics or government officials. Old stereotypes once again got revived and Koniuchy, the place of the encounter between the followers of AK and the Soviet partisans, became the place for the Polish national adoration to remember the “Polish suffering in the east.” while many Jews still take it as a place where Nazi collaborators had been bravely fought. This is a sample where uncritical and not scholarly approach is prevailing in the realm of the collective memory and once again is winning over the scholarly investigations.

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129 [http://www.geocities.com/jedwabne/english/jedwabne\\_a\\_zbrodnie\\_na\\_kresach\\_2.htm](http://www.geocities.com/jedwabne/english/jedwabne_a_zbrodnie_na_kresach_2.htm);  
[http://www.citinet.net/ak/Holocaust\\_en.php](http://www.citinet.net/ak/Holocaust_en.php); <http://www.polishgreatness.com/PolishJewishRelations.html>;  
[http://www.naszawitryna.pl/jedwabne\\_1036.html](http://www.naszawitryna.pl/jedwabne_1036.html)



