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Mag. Johannes Langer

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Never say you are walking the final road
When leaden skies conceal blue days.
Because the hour we have longed for will yet come
Our step will beat out like a drum: We are here!

From the green land of palms to the white land of snow
We arrive with our anguish, with our pain
And wherever a spurt of our blood has fallen
Our might and our courage will sprout.

The morning sun will gild our day;
And yesterday will vanish with the enemy
But if the sun and the dawn are late in coming
May this song go from generation to generation like a password.

This song was written with blood, and not with pencil-lead.
It's no song of a free-flying bird;
A people amongst collapsing walls
Sang this song with pistols in their hands.

This Yiddish song was written during the Holocaust by
the young Vilna poet Hirsch Glick. The song was
adopted as the official anthem of the Vilna partisans
shortly after it was composed in 1943.

Table of Content

PERSÖNLICHE ERKLÄRUNG	3
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	4
ABBREVIATIONS	8
INDEX OF FIGURES	9
1. INTRODUCTION	10
1.1. SCOPE OF THE STUDY	11
1.2. RESEARCH QUESTIONS	11
1.3. HYPOTHESES	12
1.4. METHODOLOGY	12
1.5. CHAPTER OUTLINE	15
2. COLLECTIVE MEMORY	16
2.1. THE HISTORY OF COLLECTIVE MEMORY STUDIES	17
2.1.1. MAURICE HALBWACHS	17
2.1.2. PIERRE NORA	18
2.1.3. ALEIDA AND JAN ASSMANN	19
2.2. CAPTURING COLLECTIVE MEMORY	21
2.3. THE RISE OF MEMORY AS A CRISIS OF HISTORY?	24
2.4. THE ROLE OF THE HISTORIAN	26
2.5. PROBLEMS IN MEMORY STUDIES	27
2.6. TRANSNATIONAL MEMORY PLACES	27
3. HOLOCAUST REMEMBRANCE	29
3.1. EXPLAINING THE INEXPLICABLE	30
3.1.1. THE INTENTIONALIST APPROACH	30
3.1.2. THE FUNCTIONALIST APPROACH	31
3.1.3. THE NECESSITY OF OPENNESS	32
3.2. DIFFERENT CULTURES OF HOLOCAUST REMEMBRANCE	32
3.2.1. AUSTRIA	32
3.2.2. FRANCE	34
3.2.3. GERMANY	35
3.2.4. ISRAEL	37
3.2.5. SOVIET UNION	38
3.2.6. UNITED STATES	39
3.2.7. CENTRAL AND EASTERN EUROPE	40
3.3. MEMORY IN A TRANSITION PERIOD	41
4. THE HOLOCAUST IN LITHUANIA (1941-1944)	42
4.1. SITUATION OF PRE-WWII LITHUANIA	42
4.2. THE SOVIET OCCUPATION INTERLUDE	45
4.3. OPERATION BARBAROSSA	47
4.4. THE DESTRUCTION OF THE LITHUANIAN JEWRY	49
4.4.1. THE PERSECUTION OF JEWS (22 JUNE – JULY 1941)	49
4.4.2. MASS KILLINGS OF ALL JEWS (AUGUST – DECEMBER 1941)	51
4.4.3. THE "CALMER PERIOD" (JANUARY 1942 – MARCH 1943)	54
4.4.4. THE FINAL LIQUIDATION (APRIL 1943 – JULY 1944)	55

4.5. SOVIET LIBERATION VS. SOVIET OCCUPATION	59
5. HOLOCAUST REMEMBRANCE IN LITHUANIA	61
5.1. HISTORICAL RECEPTION OF THE HOLOCAUST IN LITHUANIA	61
5.1.1. THE TIME OF SILENCE (UNTIL 1990)	62
5.1.2. NOT YET READY TO DEAL WITH THE PAST (1991-1995).....	65
5.1.3. THE PEAK OF ATTENTION (1995-2005)	67
5.1.4. A NON-ISSUE (SINCE 2006).....	68
5.2. DEALING WITH THE PAST	69
5.2.1. TWO SCHOOLS OF LITHUANIAN'S HOLOCAUST HISTORIANS	72
5.2.2. DEBATE ABOUT NUMBERS.....	73
5.2.3. THE ESTABLISHMENT OF THE INTERNATIONAL COMMISSION.....	75
5.3. COLLECTIVE MEMORY OF THE HOLOCAUST IN LITHUANIA	77
5.3.1. OFFICIAL REMEMBRANCE.....	77
5.3.2. THE NEGLECT TO REMEMBER	78
5.3.3. WAR CRIMINALS.....	81
5.3.4. HOLOCAUST EDUCATION.....	82
5.3.5. WWII COUNTER-MEMORIES	82
5.3.6. THE "KGB MUSEUM".....	83
5.3.7. WHAT TO REMEMBER?.....	84
5.4. THE THESIS OF TWO GENOCIDES	85
5.5. UGLY DEBATES	88
5.5.1. THE AFFAIR WITH THE DAILY <i>RESPUBLIKA</i>	89
5.5.2. JEWISH PARTISANS	90
5.5.3. NAZI PARADE	91
5.5.4. RESTITUTION	92
5.6. CONCLUSION	92
6. A EUROPEAN COLLECTIVE MEMORY?.....	94
7. CONCLUSION	97
BIBLIOGRAPHY.....	99
ANNEX 1: INTERVIEW STRUCTURE.....	104
ANNEX 2: PICTURES OF INTERVIEWS	105
ABSTRACT (ENGLISH)	108
ABSTRACT (DEUTSCH).....	109
LEBENS LAUF	110

Abbreviations

CARC	Council of Religious Affairs
CCPCG	Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide
EG	Einsatzgruppen (Special-Operation Units)
EK	Einsatzkommando (Operational Command)
EU	European Union
KZ	Konzentrationslager (Concentration Camp)
LAF	Lietuviu aktyvistu frontas (Lithuanian Activist Front)
LKP	Lithuanian Communist Party
LSSR	Lithuanian Soviet Socialist Republic
NKGB	Komissariat Gossudarstvennoi Besopasnosti (People's Commissariat for State Security)
NKVD	Narodny Komissariat Vnutrennikh Del (People's Commissariat for Internal Affairs)
NSDAP	Nationalsozialistische Deutsche Arbeiterpartei (National Socialist German Workers' Party)
PG	Provisional Government of Lithuania
POW	Prisoner of War
RSHA	Reichssicherheitshauptamt (Reich Main Security Office)
SD	Sicherheitsdienst (Security Service)
SK	Sonderkommando (Special Command)
SS	Schutzstaffel (Defense Squads)
SSR	Soviet Socialist Republic
TDA	Tautino darbo apsauga batalionas
UK	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland
UN	United Nations
US	United States of America
USHMM	United States Holocaust Memorial Museum
USSR	Union of Soviet Socialist Republics
WWI	First World War
WWII	Second World War
YIVO	Yidisher Visnshaftlekher Institut (Yiddish Scientific Institute)

Index of Figures

Figure 1: Interviews conducted in Vilnius in February 2009	p. 9
Figure 2: Communicative memory and Cultural Memory	p. 14
Figure 3: Two applications of the term “collective memory”	p. 22
Figure 4: Globally remembered events of the last 100 years	p. 28
Figure 5: Books and articles published in Soviet Lithuania referring to Jewish mass killings (1940-1975)	p. 63

1. Introduction

Research and writing about the Holocaust has never been pushed ahead as during the last 20 years; the Holocaust has become incorporated in the collective memory in the Western world. Since the 1980s, some scholars claim, the Holocaust has become generally accepted as *the* genocide and the trauma for human mankind in the 20th century. In 2005, even the United Nations declared an International Holocaust Remembrance Day on 27 January, like several states have declared their national commemoration days, among them Germany (1996) and the UK (2001). Also the European Parliament officially mourns the murder of six million Jews during WWII every year on 27 January, the day when Auschwitz was liberated in 1945 by Soviet troops.

It is often forgotten, however, that in large parts of the world the Holocaust is remembered differently than in the Western world – or not at all. Despite the fact that the Holocaust is acknowledged as a tragedy, it is recognized as one humanitarian disaster among many others. The remembrance of the Holocaust is still primarily limited to the Western world – and even the Western memory is split. After the break-up of the Soviet Union, the formerly Moscow-controlled states in Central and Eastern Europe as well as new independent states created out of the USSR, among them the Baltic States, challenged the common Western interpretation of WWII and the consensus on the role of victims and perpetrators during the war. The “collective memory” of events during WWII, as understood by Maurice Halbwachs, varied tremendously between Central and Eastern Europe on the one hand and the remembrance in Western Europe and North America on the other hand.

In 2004, the EU welcomed ten countries to join the union. Among the new member states were the Baltic States, which had demonstrated in the past 20 years that they have a different view on the events in WWII than Western European countries. Although the US and the EU pressured the political elites in the Baltic republics to account for their own past, particularly for the involvement in the Holocaust, Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania had developed an uncritical narrative about the German occupation from 1941-1944. Regarding themselves as victims of both Hitler’s and Stalin’s occupation regimes, with no third option available during WWII, the Baltic States proposed the thesis of two genocides having taken place during WWII. The two-genocide-theory claims that genocide occurred under the Nazi rule and also took place by the Soviets against ethnic Estonians, Latvians, and Lithuanians – and the people of the Baltic States eventually suffered much more under Stalinist rule than they did under the German occupation. It is thus recognized, not least to please the West, that the Nazis had killed millions of people, primarily Jews. At the same time it is highlighted that the Soviets were far worse than the German occupation during the brief interlude in 1940-1941 as well as from 1944 to the early 1950s.

This thesis takes one of the Baltic countries, Lithuania, as a case study to look into a different national collective memory than the one existing in Western Europe. The country was chosen because I lived in 2004-2005 for 14 months in the capital of Lithuania, Vilnius, and worked as a “community servant” in the Vilna Gaon Jewish State Museum.¹ Lithuania is a typical case, because like other former Communist states in Central and Eastern Europe it requires vociferously that

¹ In Austria every young men has the duty to serve in the military, typically after finishing high school. Alternatively, it is possible to do a community service which is lasting three months longer than the military service. Since 1992 it is also possible for Austrians to do the community service abroad, offering three different types of services: social service, Holocaust memorial service, and peace service in institutions around the world.

Western Europe should recognize not only Hitlerite crimes but also those of Stalin. The reason behind such claims is that Lithuania seeks to portray the whole nation and its entire people as a victim of Communism while denying its own involvement during the Nazi occupation, but also during the Stalinist time.

Although Europe increasingly closes ranks economically as well as politically thanks to the integration process of the European Union, the memories of the past still divide the continent. Eastern Europe's claims of victimization have often led to controversies and emotional debates with their Western partners, proving that the cultures of remembrance still differ to a great extent. The horrors of WWII were the main motivation to build up a common united Europe, which eventually led to the creation of the EU. The gap between the memories of Western and Eastern Europe actually seems to be so huge that 65 years after the end of the war a common European perspective on WWII is still hardly possible. Some EU member states like Lithuania demand that the overall EU should recognize their history. Indeed, far better knowledge about the historical tragedies of the 20th century in Eastern Europe is necessary among Western Europeans who are often unaware or ignorant towards the history of the new member states. At the same time, the memory of nations like Lithuania has to become more self-critical and less nationalistic before a Europe-wide recognition is reasonable. Having said that, it must be clear that only with an interest in the history of each other and a critical and self-reflexive perception of the troublesome 20th century, the still existing borders in the heads of many Europeans may be overcome.

Having in mind how divided the current situation in Europe still is, it seems impossible to claim the existence of a universal memory of the Holocaust. Although the murder of six million Jews is a decisive moment in the history of the Western world, it still has to overcome opposition in many parts of the world, not least in Eastern Europe.

1.1. Scope of the Study

The background of this thesis is based on memory studies, more concretely on the interdisciplinary concept of "collective memory," which is based on the writings of Maurice Halbwachs and scholars who have further developed the concept since the 1980s. Thanks to memory studies, it is possible to discover major narratives about a country's past. In order to provide new insights in the field of collective memory in Lithuania of the Holocaust, 16 expert interviews were conducted for this research paper in February 2009 in the Lithuanian capital Vilnius. The selected people influence and shape the discourse of the Holocaust in Lithuania and are brokers of collective memory in the country. This thesis wants to broaden the discourse of the Holocaust in Lithuania not only by presenting what happened in Lithuania during WWII and the annihilation of the Lithuanian Jewry. Rather, it is of interest how Lithuania's elite shapes society's memory of the Holocaust.²

1.2. Research Questions

The central research question of this thesis is threefold:

² According to the knowledge of the author of this research paper, the only other publication dealing with the Lithuanian collective memory on the Holocaust is Hektoras Vitkus, who wrote his dissertation at the University of Klaipeda in Lithuanian "Holokausto atminties raida lietuvoje" (*The Development of the Holocaust remembrance in Lithuania*) in 2008. A short summary of his dissertation can be found online: http://www.ku.lt/hmf/istorija/doc/Vitkus_Hektoras.pdf

- 1) How is the Holocaust remembered in Lithuania?
- 2) Has a common “collective memory” of the events during WWII emerged in Lithuania?
- 3) Where does the Lithuanian collective memory on the Holocaust differ in comparison to Western European countries?

1.3. Hypotheses

Based on the research questions, this thesis's hypotheses are as follows:

1) The Holocaust remembrance in Lithuania is weak and most of the time a non-issue. Although never in Lithuania's modern history more people were killed on Lithuanian soil than during the Holocaust, the killing of Jews is ignored because of the involvement of some Lithuanians in the shooting of Jews during the German occupation.

2) The collective memory of Lithuanians of WWII stresses the suffering of Lithuanians during the Stalinist occupation while the crimes committed by the Germans and Lithuanian auxiliaries are edited out. Although Lithuanian Jews were citizens of Lithuania, they have not been perceived as victims of the country or as being part of Lithuanian society. On the opposite, Jews are still regarded as mainly responsible for the killing of ethnic Lithuanians during Stalinist times, actually committing “genocide.”

3) Lithuania's collective memory on the Holocaust is very different to the collective memory in Western European states. Although every European country has its own problem to deal with the past, Lithuania is on a particularly low level to deal in a self-critical way with the involvement of Lithuanians in Nazi crimes, particularly the participation in the Holocaust. While an International Commission was set up in 1998 by the Lithuanian president to come to terms with the past, the Commission has primarily focused on the Soviet crimes so that 13 years after its establishment parts of the planned publications on the Holocaust are still missing. Moreover, the work of the International Commission has not reached a broader public in Lithuania and its work on the Holocaust has remained invisible.

1.4. Methodology

The methodological basis of this work rests on historical discourse analysis as well as qualitative research interviews. In 1973, Michel Foucault presented the historical discourse analysis as a new method for history studies – influenced by the *Annales* school, the French post-Structuralism, and the tradition of French epistemology.³ Foucault stressed the positivism of discourses while he denounced hermeneutics. The historical discourse analysis is based on signs, and the most important system of signs is language – although language in historical scholarship is not as important and complex in comparison to other fields, like linguistics. The central element of the historical discourse analysis is the repetition and homogeneity of similar sayings or writings. In fact, the discourses are a corpus of single texts, which build together an imaginary corpus, usually resting on remnants that are hardly visible anymore. At a certain point of time it is possible to

³ Foucault 1980.

observe only a limited number of statements although from a purely linguistic point of view the statements are infinite. It is actually the discourse that is structuring the possibilities of statements and organizes the likelihood of statements. The rules and regularities, the historical changes, the possibility of constructing reality, and its societal impact are of interest in the historical discourse analysis. The texts used should be as representative as possible for the discourse, there should be enough texts, and the texts should cover a broad time period. Neither the text nor the context should get an explicit priority; both aspects should always be kept in mind while the historical discourse analysis is carried out.⁴ Secondary literature such as monographs, anthologies, and academic journal articles has been used as the basis of the selected texts. Of course, I have made an effort to crosscheck the arguments and findings against information obtained from as many different sources as possible.

The qualitative expert interviews conducted for this research paper are based on a semi-structured interview guide. It covers certain themes, topics, and questions during an interview rather than complying with a fixed script of standardized questions. Hence, semi-structured interviews are relatively open and flexible, and furthermore represent an interactive approach that enables respondents to talk about their point of view. Additionally, through their expertise interviewees can add relevant points to the research carried out, which had not been anticipated by the interviewer. Therefore, the semi-structured interview guide is a convenient method for this thesis in gaining previously unavailable information. Furthermore, it is a tool to comprehend the Lithuanian collective memory of the Holocaust.

The semi-structured interviews were conducted with Holocaust experts in Lithuania in order to get an insight into the Lithuanian collective memory of the Holocaust. Collective memory is effective when the memory-narratives become an element of social communication. Those people who have the power to define the society's collective memory can set the norms and form a political public. Experts are considered people who have a well-grounded expertise in the topic of interest, a special access to information due to their position. The information shared by the experts in the interviews is regarded as a vital source for this thesis, whereby the expertise on specific issues and not the general knowledge of the interviewee was of interest.

At the outset of this research paper, around 10 expert interviews were planned to be conducted in Vilnius, the capital of Lithuania. During the preparation for the trip to Vilnius in February 2009, it became obvious that not all interviewees were available as the time was limited to three weeks.⁵ Thus, more experts in Lithuania were contacted by email or telephone in order to make sure that enough interview material would be collected. Surprisingly, even more experts than expected agreed in the end to be interviewed. It was of help that I had been living in Vilnius for 14 months in 2004-2005 and had a good overview of possible contacts from the beginning. During the stay in February 2009 in Vilnius, new contacts were arranged and additional interviews were conducted. Overall 15 interviews with 16 experts on the Holocaust in Lithuania have been carried out from 13-26 February 2009 in Vilnius (see Figure 1).

⁴ Landwehr 2008.

⁵ Among those who were also considered as interviewees but due to time constraints or other reasons were not interviewed were the following people:

- Markas Zingeris, Director of the Vilna Gaon Jewish State Museum;
- Dovid Katz, Professor and expert on Jewish life in Lithuania and Yiddish;
- Alfredas Bumblauskas, History Professor at Vilnius University;
- Danute Selcinskaja, Head of the Department of Righteous Gentiles;
- Jurgita Verbickiene, Center for Studies of the Culture and History of East European Jews;
- and the historians Valentinas Brandisauskas, Liudas Truska, Saulius Suziedelis, and Petras Stankeras.

Figure 1: Interviews conducted in Vilnius in February 2009

Prenome	Name	Institution	Position
Ronaldas	Racinskas	International Commission for the Evaluation of the Crimes of the Nazi and Soviet Occupation Regimes in Lithuania	Executive Director
Arunas	Bubnys	Genocide Archives	Historian
Ruta	Puisyte	Vilnius Yiddish Institute	Assistant Director
Arvydas	Anusauskas	Lithuanian Parliament	Member of Parliament
Dalius	Norkunas	TV3, private TV station in Lithuania	Journalist
Ricardas	Doveika	Lithuanian Catholic Church	Priest
Rachel	Konstanian	The Vilna Gaon Jewish State Museum	Deputy Director for Research
Tomas	Tomilinas	Lithuanian Parliament, Committee for Human Rights	Political Staff Member
Dmitrij	Kuly	Public Relation Freelancer	Freelancer
Dalia	Bukeleviciute	Vilnius University, Department of New Ages	Historian
Simon	Alperavicius	Lithuanian Jewish Community	Head
Sarunas	Liekis	Vilnius Yiddish Institute	Head
Wyman	Brent	Vilnius Jewish Library	Librarian
Terese	Birute Burauskaite	Genocide and Resistance Research Center of Lithuania	General Director
Judith	Lewonig	Journalist from Austria, based in Vilnius	Journalist
Adaibert	Wagner	The Vilna Gaon Jewish State Museum	Holocaust Memorial Service

Source: Own illustration

As all interviews were taped, overall 18 hours of recorded material were collected in Vilnius. The interviews lasted between 29 and 130 minutes, on average an interview lasted approximately 70 minutes. Eight interviews were carried out in English, three interviews in German, and four interviewees provided translators from English to Lithuanian and *vice versa*. The language issue was the biggest challenge during the interviews, because only one interview was conducted with an English native speaker while for others English was the second, third, or even fourth language. Particularly problematic were those interviews with translators, because three of the four translators had evident problems to translate the questions, and an even more challenging task was to understand the answers of them. Although the author of this thesis has tried to become proficient in Lithuanian, he remains at a low level of understanding the language at best. Moreover no financial means for a professional translation of the interviews could be made available.

Having the interviews conducted, the next step comprised the analysis of the data collected. First, all recorded interviews were transcribed. The transcription of the conducted interviews was a compromise between preciseness and comprehensibility of the material collected in Vilnius. Although it was a time-consuming effort, it has to be noted that the interviews were transcribed in full length in standard orthography. Non-verbal expressions were excluded, despite the few exceptions where such expressions influenced the meaning of the sentence or statement. As a next step, the core of

qualitative content analysis, the text of the interviews was read carefully, and finally, it had to be decided which information was indeed relevant for the research paper and had to be included.

1.5. Chapter Outline

Following this introductory chapter, the theoretical aspect of this thesis, collective memory is introduced (Chapter 2). Chapter 3 presents Holocaust remembrance in different countries, not least to better understand the Lithuanian context. In Chapter 4, the Holocaust in Lithuania from 1941-1944 is outlined. Chapter 5 discusses how the Lithuanian collective memory perceives the Holocaust in Lithuania. The question whether a common European collective memory on WWII and the Holocaust is possible with the example of Lithuania's memory is covered in Chapter 6. Finally, the conclusions of this thesis will be presented in Chapter 7.

2. Collective Memory

For many historians the term collective memory is still new, despite the fact that it is already devalued by its excessive use. Much talk on memory, in particular on collective memory, during the last 20 years has led to the development of a new area of research. At the same time, criticism and doubts remain toward the conceptual, methodological, and even the scientific validity of collective memory. Yet, memory studies are still in fashion touching not only upon history but the humanities in general. Nonetheless, collective memory is in constant crisis because of its alleged ambiguity and the problem that it has no additional explanatory value as such. Hence it depends on the methods used and the problems posed whether or not collective memory is of advantage. In addition, Alon Confino suggested to think the history of memory as the history of collective mentality in order to better understand that people's perception are shaped by beliefs and representations of the past.⁶

Collective memory unites a shared identity of a social group, whether it is a small family or a whole nation. Certain images of the past are remembered, whether experienced or not. Therefore, remembrance is usually defined as "the ability to recount something that happened in the past."⁷ While remembrance is taking place first and foremost on the individual level, the social surrounding influences every person to belong to one or several groups.

When the wave of memory studies started in the humanities in the 1980s, memory got the leading term of cultural studies. By that, cultural history experienced a revival through the influence of cultural studies. Hence, the concept of culture has become the leading term and compass for historians and by that the notion of memory to see how people construct a sense of the past. Andreas Huyssen even suggested that a "memory-boom" is taking place in countries like France, Israel, Germany, and the US.⁸ Moreover, memory is potentially able to connect social sciences, the humanities, and science. Often these days, interdisciplinary cooperation in academia is wanted and promoted, and memory certainly has the chance to offer the tools for successful collaboration. Future research projects aiming to include scholars from different backgrounds will be interesting and useful for such case studies like in the present thesis about the Holocaust in Lithuania.

The rise of memory which has captured the academia but also a wider audience since the 1980s was explained by Michael Kammen with the multitude of anniversary events, the rise of multiculturalism, the fall of Communism, and the politics of victimization and regret.⁹ Of particular importance is certainly the fact that the generation who experienced WWII and the Holocaust is diminishing and the communicative memory will be lost. As history opened itself up to subaltern disciplines like oral history, also memory became attractive; some historians additionally tried to get rid of an alleged elitist image of their profession.

The popularity of memory also brought up a multitude of different results, versions, and understandings of collective memory. There is indeed a threat that memory turns into a catch-all category where substantial meaning gets lost. All the more important it is now to give a comprehensive overview in this chapter of collective memory. First, this chapter deals with the history of collective memory studies, focusing on the most important representatives who have shaped the concept of

⁶ Confino 1997:1389.

⁷ Zelizer 1995:214.

⁸ Huyssen 1995.

⁹ Kammen 1995:247-251.

collective memory. Second, collective memory is presented the way it is understood in this thesis. Third, it is discussed whether all the discussion on memory has to be understood as a crisis of history. Fourth, the traditional role of the historian's self-understanding is questioned. Fifth, problems in collective memory are debated and finally, transnational memory places are discussed.

2.1. The History of Collective Memory Studies

In the 19th century historians started to professionalize their discipline and decided to rely on written documents instead of memories, arguing that memory was far more arbitrary and more likely to be subject of distortion. Nonetheless in the early 20th century, Hugo von Hofmannsthal (1874-1929) used collective memory for the first time during the "crisis of historicism" in 1902. He wrote that the "damned up force of our mysterious ancestors within us [have] piled up layers of accumulated collective memory."¹⁰ Only few inquiries in memory were conducted thereafter, among the few people doing so were experimental psychologists like Henri Bergson and clinical psychoanalysts like Sigmund Freud. Émile Durkheim (1858-1917) wrote extensively on commemorative rituals in *The Elementary Forms of Religious Life*, but only focused on memory in relation to primitive societies.¹¹

2.1.1. Maurice Halbwachs

It was the French Sociologist Halbwachs (1877-1945) who is usually taken by historians as the primary theoretical reference point to approach collective memory. Although largely ignored during his times, Maurice Halbwachs's *Les cadres sociaux de la mémoire* is seen today as a starting point in the history of memory studies.¹² His reception was controversial among his colleagues in Strasbourg; Charles Blondel and Marc Bloch criticized that Halbwachs's collectivization of psychological phenomena should only touch the individual. During the same time art historian Aby Warburg (1866-1929) wrote about memory, although independently from Halbwachs. It was Halbwachs who shifted the discourse from a biological to a cultural framework. While Warburg used but never fully developed the notion of social memory, Halbwachs was the first to systemically use collective memory, which he understood as the collectively shared representation of the past. Yet it has to be kept in mind that his book *La mémoire collective*, only published subsequently, remained unfinished because the Nazis killed the French sociologist as a 68-year-old in the KZ Buchenwald.

Halbwachs, a disciple of Durkheim, proposed a simple three-stage model of memory: he divided the history of memory into a pre-modern, modern, and post-modern period. He emphasized the function of everyday communication and the imagery of social discourse that helps to understand questions of historical representation. Memories, according to Halbwachs, do not become a repository for all past experiences but become generalized "imagos" which are embedded in a social context. Memories depend on how they are brought together and structured as "[i]t is in society that people normally

¹⁰ Cited in Olick/Robbins 1998:106

¹¹ Durkheim [1915] 1961.

¹² Halbwachs [1925] 1992.

acquire their memories. It is also in society that they recall, recognize, and localize their memories."¹³ Only autobiographical memory is experienced by ourselves and yet shaped by our group membership, while historical memory approaches us via historical records. Halbwachs identified history as a reference to the remembered past where people do no longer have an "organic" relation with the past and the social relations are broken as they belong to the "graveyard of knowledge." Therefore, history steps in when there is no memory anymore. In contrast, collective memory is an active past which is still alive, although it might not be linked to direct experiences that are responsible for identity formation. Nonetheless, collective memory does not "take on a life of its own"¹⁴ because only individuals remember, although together with other persons.

Despite the frequent reference to Halbwachs, a lot of historians are uncomfortable with Halbwachs's anti-individualism, as he believed that individual memory is entirely socially determined and it is impossible for individuals to remember in a consistent manner outside of their social group.¹⁵ Therefore, despite being seen as a father figure of collective memory, most disciples of memory seek distance from Halbwachs. The French sociologist's tragic death went hand in hand with the disappearance of the term collective memory; Halbwachs's work remained buried in oblivion for 40 years.

2.1.2. Pierre Nora

The scholarly boom on collective memory started with two publications in the first half of the 1980s, which are on the one hand Yosef Yerushalmi's *Zakhor: Jewish History and Jewish Memory* and on the other hand Pierre Nora's *Between Memory and History: Les Lieux de mémoire*.¹⁶ Both works were built on the legacy of Halbwachs and became very popular in academia but also among a broader audience and inspired whole disciplines to incorporate collective memory as one of their new catch phrases. It is claimed, however, that the emergence of memory as a keyword only changed the linguistic practice by combining other phenomena already known like oral history, autobiography, and commemorative rituals.¹⁷ Problematic was that Nora and Yerushalmi put memory and history in opposition. Among others, Amos Funkenstein criticized such a division because all remembering occurs within social contexts of environment and discourse.¹⁸

Yerushalmi pointed out that "collective memory [...] is drastically selective. Certain memories live on; the rest are winnowed out, repressed, or simply discarded by a process of natural selection which the historian, uninvited disturbs and reverses."¹⁹ The use of memory did not go along with an increased interest in how popular or folk culture construct the past but often just renamed folk history, popular history, oral history, or public history by memory and used it as a new meta-historical category.

While today Halbwachs's work is at the center of attention, it got little reception during his lifetime and the decades after WWII. Today, Nora is seen as particularly useful with his concept of *lieux de mémoire*, the so-called places of

¹³ Halbwachs [1925] 1992:38.

¹⁴ Olick/Robbins 1998:111.

¹⁵ Kansteiner 2002:181; Olick 1999:334-335.

¹⁶ Yerushalmi 1982; Nora 1989. Pierre Nora's essay "Entre mémoire et histoire" (1984) was translated and appeared in a special issue "Memory and Counter-Memory" of the journal *Representations* in spring 1989.

¹⁷ Klein 2000:127-128.

¹⁸ Funkenstein 1993.

¹⁹ Yerushalmi 1982:95.

remembrance. In contrast to Halbwachs, Nora believed that collective memories were still existent in the 19th century during the French III. Republic but got lost during the 20th century and thus places of remembrance like geographical places, monuments, and rituals but also philosophical or scientific texts became important. In Nora's epic seven volumes *Les Lieux de mémoire* the French remembrance is covered intensively. Among the examples he cites are the Eiffel Tower, Jeanne d'Arc, Paris, the French flag, Versailles, or the Marseillaise. Nora claimed that the French society, like others, is in a period of transition losing the natural collective memory. Identified places of remembrance are artificial reminders of a specific past of the French nation and a particular French identity, mainly related to peasants, who are a community of remembrance *par excellence*.

It is important to stress that Nora's collection of *lieux de mémoire* is heterogeneous and has neither a hierarchy nor a stringent story or sense. The problem is that Nora's places of remembrance are taken from such a diverse background that one might ask what is actually not a *lieux de mémoire*. Nora claimed that all cultural phenomena related to the past on a collective level may become a place of remembrance. Nora has to be seen in the legacy of the *Annales* school where he mirrored the French historical consciousness which was described as a troubled and disembodied nation. In his view, during the 19th century the role of memory was diminished because of the industrial and social modernization removing the traditions and rituals that provided a backing for the local communities' memory.

2.1.3. Aleida and Jan Assmann

In the German speaking area, it was Aleida and Jan Assmann who have dominated the field of collective memory for the last 20 years. In the meantime their merits are appreciated also abroad so that they are in fact leading figures in memory studies; nonetheless, the majority of their work is still not published in English, which of course limits their influence in the Anglo-American scientific community. In the late 1980s, Jan Assmann, an Egyptologist, developed a distinction of the collective memory to a communicative and cultural memory based on the work of Halbwachs.²⁰ Communicative memory is based on group-specific carriers. In other words, informal oral day-to-day communication and the recollection of a life experience, limited in time by a maximum of eighty to a hundred years, are the instable and disorganized basis of communicative memory. In contrast, cultural memory consists of images, monuments, rites, or texts to recall important events in the history of the respective collective group as it exists independently of its carriers – may it be priests, shamans, or archivists. In the center of cultural memory are often mythic events like the battle of Troy or the exit from Egypt (*The Exodus*).

Jan Assmann described central elements of cultural memory as the following: (1) social groups need cultural memory to derive awareness of distinctive features which brings a "concretion of identity;" (2) cultural memory has the capacity to reconstruct; (3) particular frames as "stable formations" have to distinguish cultural memory from the communicative one by giving sense of continuity through pictorial images or rituals; (4) organization and obligation helps to keep a "cultivation" how to remember and to conduct a differentiation in importance of memories; and (5) cultural memory is

²⁰ Similar separations can be found in works from John Bodnar, who distinguishes vernacular and official memory as well as from Hirst & Manier who separate lived and distant memory (Bodnar 1996; Hirst/Manier 2002).

reflexive to provide a self-image of the group and gives interpretation for common practice.²¹ It is important to note that culture is not understood in a broad sense but rather attributed to civilization or culture as a monument. Like the communicative memory, also the cultural memory is a phenomenon of culture (see Figure 2).

Figure 2: Communicative memory and Cultural Memory

	Communicative memory	Cultural memory
Sense of time: Placing the event in the	Day-to-day near horizon / dimension of the "living environment"	Cultural away horizon / dimension of the "monument"
Semantics: Analysis of the event as	Experience of life (first-hand or second-hand)	Incidents of far-reaching importance for the overall cultural formation
Functions of the remembrance: The production of	Group-specific, social spirit	Culture or nation-specific spirit

Source: Erll 2006:118.

According to Jan Assmann's terminology, the remembrance of the catastrophes of WWII are currently in a process of transformation, a so-called floating gap, from the communicative to the cultural memory, whereby the transition period ultimately leads to a crisis of memory.²² Moreover, Jan Assmann stressed in his concept of memory that he not only wanted to think in dual poles like Halbwachs with memory and group or Warburg with memory and the language of cultural forms. He rather proposed a triangle of memory, culture, and group – all of them interrelated.²³ To be sure, Jan Assmann explicitly contrasted cultural memory from history or historical conscience as it has an own relation to the past, identified not by identifiable sources but rather cultural texts.

Aleida Assmann, professor of English and comparative literature, developed the ideas of her husband further. In the late 1990s, she proposed to make a differentiation between "functional memory" (*Funktionsgedächtnis*) and "storage memory" (*Speichergedächtnis*) to get a better understanding of cultural memory. The functional memory is the "inhabited memory" with "pregnant" (*bedeutungsgeladenen*) elements and stands for all active components of cultural memory. It is responsible for the fine selection used to build up and prove the group identity as well as it defines values. In contrast, the storage memory is "uninhabited memory" with no "vital relation" to the present. It contains all disordered elements of the past, the meaning of which has not yet been determined. The unstructured and not connected elements of storage memory may enter the functional memory as construed and finely composed elements, which produce "spirit" (*Sinn*). Hence the functional memory is central for the construction of identity and the legitimation of the current form of society. Also, the storage memory is a resource for the future functional memory that may lead to cultural renewal or cultural change.²⁴

By her differentiation of functional and storage memory, Aleida Assmann was able to pay attention to documents in archives or long forgotten art objects, widening the range of potential objects which might be worth considering. The differentiation between storage memory and functional memory proved that Jan Assmann's term of cultural memory is not

²¹ Assmann/Czaplicka 1995:130-133.

²² Echterhoff/Saar 2000:1.

²³ Assmann/Czaplicka 1995:129.

²⁴ Assmann 1999:134-140.

just bringing up the term tradition in new clothes.²⁵ To sum it up, the significance of Aleida and Jan Assmann's theory lies in the attempt to describe the relation of cultural remembrance, the shaping of collective identity, and political legitimation.²⁶

2.2. Capturing Collective Memory

In this section, collective memory and how it is understood in this research paper is outlined. Olick and Robbins called collective memory a "non-paradigmatic, trans-disciplinary, center-less enterprise,"²⁷ which is an example of how close disciplines can cooperate in methods and research questions. Such an advantage entails much heterogeneity and is a challenge for memory studies. Therefore, the set-up has to be clear. A particular useful definition of collective memory comes from Barbie Zelizer:

Unlike personal memory, which refers to an individual's ability to conserve information, the collective memory comprises recollections of the past that are determined and shaped by the group. By definition, collective memory thereby resumes activities of sharing, discussion, negotiation, and, often, contestation. Remembering becomes implicated in a range of other activities having as much to do with identity formation, power and authority, cultural norms, and social interaction as with the simple act of recall.²⁸

Traditionally, historians have distinguished history and memory since the 19th century. As pointed out in the chapter above, it were the ideas of the sociologist Halbwachs that led to the simultaneous and sometimes even competitive use of collective memory and history. As so many different academic fields discovered collective memory for themselves, it does not come as a surprise that Wulf Kansteiner called collective memory a "slippery phenomenon."²⁹ While Nora and also Funkenstein suggested that historical consciousness could be used interchangeably with collective memory, there is actually a difference in meaning. The term historical consciousness has a reflexive engagement with the past and is hence more useful in museum studies or history education than in memory studies.³⁰

While history is described as being "both the past(s) and the narratives that represent pasts as historical memory in relation to presents/presence, collective memory is a conceptualization that expresses a sense of the continual presence of the past."³¹ Therefore Gedi and Elam argued that collective memory is only valid on a metaphorical basis, the same way as historians treat customs, myths, and traditions that represent "the psyche of a society, a tribe, a nation."³² In other words, memory is a "discursive construct" which constitutes itself in different environments.³³ In addition, it is important to stress that collective memory should not be conceptualized on a psychological basis, as it is hard to differentiate individual from collective memory, but to understand the term in a metonymical way.

²⁵ Eriq 2005:33.

²⁶ Assmann/Assmann 1994.

²⁷ Olick/Robbins 1998:106.

²⁸ Zelizer 1995:214.

²⁹ Kansteiner 2002:180.

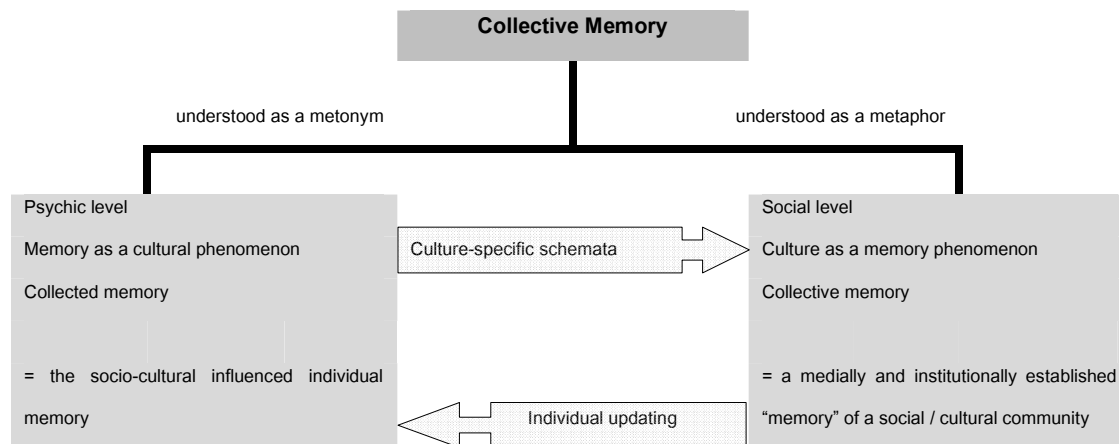
³⁰ Trofanenko 2008:584.

³¹ Crane 1997:1373.

³² Gedi/Elam 1996:35.

³³ Pethes/Ruchatz 2001:13.

Figure 3: Two applications of the term “collective memory”



Source: Erll 2005:97.

As we have seen above, three important scholars of collective memory – Yerushalmi, Nora, and Halbwachs – pointed out that historical memory is alive in the present and constantly interacts with collective memory. The strong bias towards the present is summed up by Crane, “[c]ollective memory can preserve the memory of lived experience, in living experience, and sustain the loss of other memories.”³⁴ Therefore, it privileges the contemporary interest while it can take hold of historical and socially remote events. Problems arise when a floating gap between memory and history is created, the transformation from experienced memory to “dead” history.³⁵

In the following some characteristics to identify collective memory are pointed out. First, collective memory is based on individualistic principles, as it is grounded on the collected memories of group members on the level of families, professions, ethnic groups, nations, or even supranational entities like a European collective memory. Every individual can be part of several mnemonic communities, from the private to the public sphere. A group or society itself cannot remember as it ultimately depends on individuals, who do the remembering. The remembrance includes public commemorative symbols or rituals that are open to the interpretation or reaction of a group of individuals who can influence the degree of openness or reception. Shared symbols only stay real and meaningful as long as they are treated like symbols in practice and it is questionable to claim that commemorative structures have a life on their own because “only people have lives.”³⁶ Thus, sterile commemorations with monochromatic tendencies will not be accepted and reified by the individual. It is rather through coexistence and communication with other people that memory can be attained, absorbed, and shared – ultimately resulting in collective memory.³⁷ Although in the creation of collective memory everyone can participate, not all individuals can do that equally and on the same level of activeness. This is clearly shown by the fact that elites can manipulate others to their own advantage through the memories they have shaped.³⁸

³⁴ Crane 1997:1383.

³⁵ Niethammer 1999.

³⁶ Olick 1999:338.

³⁷ Assmann 2004:5.

³⁸ Zelizer 1995:230-231.

Second, as collective memory rests upon individuals, there is always the possibility that different rememberers in a group judge and value memories in different ways. Groups can provide joint definitions of past events, but there can also exist deep divisions within a group on what and how to remember. To discover the various groups, two approaches are feasible: the democratic approach, which values all respondents equally, or a redistributive approach, like oral history projects, to bring up neglected or disenfranchised memories.³⁹ Additionally, the elitist approach can be useful because opinion leaders can strongly influence the overall group. By elite in this research paper experts like historians and museum directors are understood to lead the way in official interpretations of past events; additionally also politicians, journalists, teachers, and religious representatives can be mentioned. Whichever approach is taken to uncover the divisions, it is common to meet competing narratives.

Third, it has to be understood that collective traumatic events in history are deeply entrenched in society, like Japan's victim narrative concerning the nuclear attacks on Hiroshima and Nagasaki from the US in 1945. Attempts to limit a whole nation to a singular will or desire cannot be taken seriously, because such a perception would *per se* be too simplistic since too many factors would be ignored. Yet, if influential and large communities of memory constantly repeat collective narratives, a collective diagnosis is valid.⁴⁰ A nation's suffering and victim discourse makes national traumas flourish in collective memory. In the case of Japan the own imperialism and exploitation of South-East Asia before and during WWII is downplayed or forgotten. Reflections on the own wrongdoings in China, South Korea, or elsewhere in South-East Asia are not integrated in the collective memory of the Japanese because of the dominating victim narrative.

Fourth, since the 20th century it has usually been the state which is able to manipulate, invent, or correct collective memory and can blame its own citizens guilty of misremembering. Competing memory agents from the past and try to construct conflicting memories, different rival ideologies, and political interests. Statesmen believe that via symbolical representation – like rites, monuments, and anniversaries – also later generations, which have not lived through a specific period of history, have a connection to those particular events in history the state would like to remember to its own advantage. Earlier, until the end of the 18th century, powerful religious institutions also provided strong narrative patterns and stimulated memories which they benefited from. The classic contributions of Hobsbawm and Ranger as well as Anderson argue that a lot of national traditions were just invented in order to consolidate states and build up myths for a nation's own sake.⁴¹ Today, the more power a state has and the less democratic it is, the more it will interfere with the manipulation of collective memory. The elites of a state are constrained in their action by collective memory like Germany's foreign policy because of the Nazi past, the reluctance of the United States to provide troops for peacekeeping missions to Africa after the military failure in Somalia in 1993, or the recollections of dictatorship in the transition periods in Latin America after the 1970s or 1980s.

Fifth, collective memories are strongest when they can transcend the original event's time and space. They get powerful on their own and are omnipresent as it happened with memories of the Holocaust in the American society, which shares images about the Holocaust without having personal links to the events which occurred.⁴²

³⁹ Olick 1999:338.

⁴⁰ Olick 1999:344.

⁴¹ Hobsbawm/Ranger 1983; Anderson 1991.

⁴² Kansteiner 2002:189.

Sixth, collective memory is not only about remembering but also about forgetting events. In any case it is clear that a total recall is impossible, because the complete remembrance of the past would exceed our abilities. In fact, the total recall would lead to a point of complete forgetting as Nietzsche has pointed out already in 1871. Imagining a small island situated somewhere in a huge ocean would be a metaphor of showing how much we actually record in our brain – almost nothing. Michel Foucault has coined the term *contre-mémoire* to hint to experiences where shameful or hurting memories are put aside and forgotten.⁴³

Seventh, collective memory is constructed. In fact there is no objectivity of the past as it happened and the reality as it took place. One may doubt whether historians are able to present the realities of earlier times, but for sure memory is more subjective, highly selective, and how individuals remember and shape the collective depends on the moment and circumstances of remembering. Those individuals are *vice versa* influenced by others in their social group.

All in all, it can be said that collective memory is an additional layer to reflect on the past through a particular lens. As Jörg Rüsen put it, “[r]emembrance does not permit the past to pass away.”⁴⁴ In general, collective memory “aggregated individual recollections, to official commemorations, to collective representations, and to disembodied constitutive features of shared identities.”⁴⁵ This thesis focuses on individual recollections gathered from experts in the Holocaust discourse in Lithuania, as well as figuring out constitutive features of shared identities by looking on WWII and the importance of its understanding in Lithuania for the nation’s independence gained in 1991.

Many other examples could be found and hence David Lowenthal’s words are still valid when he wrote about an almost universal concern of “how people in general see, value, or understand [the past].”⁴⁶ It is obvious that collectively shared knowledge of the past is generating a contesting space where a multitude of narratives come together, open for the power of interpretation. Therefore, constant negotiations on collective memory can be observed in social groups, often represented by states.

2.3. The Rise of Memory as a Crisis of History?

During the last decades several scholars announced out of different motives the “death of history,” most prominently Francis Fukuyama declared in 1992 after the fall of the Iron Curtain the “end of history” and Jean Francois Lyotard suggested an “incredulity towards meta-narratives” which ultimately led to the collapse of the “grand narrative.”⁴⁷ On a more continuous basis, at least a “crisis of history” was diagnosed, dating back to Antoine Augustin Cournot (1801-1877).⁴⁸ In particular around the 1960s, history seems to have missed methodological advances and trends in sociology, political science, and psychohistory.

History as a term is already ambivalent. History provides several dichotomous contrasts: 1) it refers to what happened in the past as it was experienced but at the same time covers the thoughts and statements about ongoing events;

⁴³ Foucault 1980:130-133.

⁴⁴ Rüsen 1997:117.

⁴⁵ Olick 1999:337.

⁴⁶ Lowenthal 1985:xxvi.

⁴⁷ Fukuyama 1992; Lyotard 1984.

⁴⁸ Confino 2000:43.

2) it can refer to an objective experience of an overall group or to collected items linked to a subjective personal history; and
3) in the German tradition, as late as the end of the 18th century a distinction developed between history as story and history as a collective memory.⁴⁹ After all, history is only taking place when individuals act or not and a historian is picking it up, taking the memory, interpreting and thereby externalizing the historical event or process, and signifying it for historical interpretation. Hence, historians create a form of collective memory by selective remembrance of their determining which findings they focus on and which documents they read in the archives.⁵⁰

According to the well-known French historian Francois Furet, “[h]istory, even scholarly history, is not and never will be an exact discipline, in the sense that one speaks of the exact sciences. There will never be a consensus among historians as to the criteria that distinguish scientific from nonscientific history.”⁵¹ The rules of the game in history are therefore defining not those of a science but rather those of a profession. Consequently, when “historians attach an almost fetishistic importance to mastering professional ‘skills,’ which concern only the documentary aspect of their work, it is because they have no other criteria for defining their guild.”⁵²

Historians often distrust the memory discourse and are still afraid that collective memory might turn out as a Trojan horse for history. In a more positive view, historians can do both: study the past and at the same time integrate the findings of theoretical developments like postmodernism. Yet Kerwin Klein is suspicious that “the conservatism of the academia” led to the rise of “memory talk” in the 1980s because memory like some other “few empty slogans” should have been a response to post structuralism.⁵³ Also other disciplines in the humanities or social sciences became interested in the historical discourse. Conflicting histories, in particular related to national histories, have fascinated media as well as academia and found its way to the concept of collective memory.⁵⁴

An example of the contested field of history and memory is historiography, because it often seems that it is not important anymore what happened but rather how it is read and understood. Historiography as a special branch of the historical discipline is *about* historians and is linked with other historical sub-disciplines, notably the history of ideas. As a consequence, the methods used and the subjects chosen are often interlinked with neighboring disciplines like linguistics, philosophy, psychology, and sociology. Historiography is therefore also influenced by new trends in neighboring areas and is often in a state of change. As the focus of historiography has opened up to the social and cultural sphere, memory moved to the center of explanation. Thus postmodernists questioned the truth claim and objectivity of professional historiography because the distinction between knowledge and interpretation respectively history and memory cannot be drawn.⁵⁵

Moreover, professional historians have often placed themselves in the middle of identity struggles and legitimized nationalist movements and hence constructed as much “truth” as they have uncovered myths.⁵⁶ Scholars writing history follow a particular purpose; influenced by their time, the selection and interpretation of the sources is taken – which eventually is always arbitrary. It remains unclear whether historiography fulfills primarily a scientific function or a memorial

⁴⁹ Crane 1996:5.

⁵⁰ Crane 1996:21-23.

⁵¹ Furet 1983:408.

⁵² Furet 1983:408.

⁵³ Klein 2000:144.

⁵⁴ White 2001:493.

⁵⁵ White 1973; Veyne 1984.

⁵⁶ Novick 1988.

function exemplified in the debate on historicism in the second half of the 1980s between Martin Broszat and Saul Friedländer. The two historians had an intensive argument about how the Holocaust shall be seen; basically the debate took place on a contested field between an “objective and scientific” frame and a “subjective and remembering” frame of tackling the Holocaust.

Theoretical developments in related fields, including post-structuralism, deconstruction, postmodernism, social constructivism, *posthistoire*, and *nouvelle histoire* were expected to change the historical discourse entirely. The boom of and interest in memory studies proved that history was opening up to such developments. A monolithic “collected unity” (*Kollektivsingular*), which Reinhart Koselleck suggested, had been undermined and it will be hard to keep the old pace. It has to be clear that memory can be no alternative to history. As Jan Assmann suggested, the history of memory should be not in opposition to the historical discipline but rather be a part of it like social history, history of ideas, or *histoire mentalité*.⁵⁷ Furthermore, Jörn Rüsen introduced the term “historical remembrance” that constituted a way to portray historical consciousness through a specific culture of history.⁵⁸

2.4. The Role of the Historian

All historians put their scholarly work in a historical environment, also called background, which has to be seen in relation to the historical writing that takes place within it. Therefore, “facts speak only when the historian calls on them: it is he who decides to which facts to give the floor, and in what order or context.”⁵⁹ It is thus about the mindset and psychological factors related to the historian which need to be kept in mind to understand their writings and interpretations.⁶⁰ Without such reflections it might be easily overlooked how the constant interactions between the past and the present as well as between facts and the historian influence the gain of historical knowledge. This raised the question “who is writing whose history, for whom and for what,” which puts the historian’s self-understanding in the center.⁶¹ Accordingly, Jan Cowens cautioned, “historians are just as likely to write in support of memory as they are to seek its destruction.”⁶² The problem, however, is that historians are often not aware that the present moment they are writing at influences how and what they tell of the past. James Young thus called on historians that “we need to acknowledge that the history we write is worth writing at least partly because of where we stand now.”⁶³ Historians, in other words, should acknowledge that it is impossible to be completely neutral; instead the history guild is the shaper of any given written history.

In fact, the difference between history and memory is not that wide at all because both are compiled from a complex setup of lived experience and written history. All the more, however, it has to be recognized that historians have lost “the monopoly over the discourse of the past” because the discourse of today’s historians is only one of many about the past.⁶⁴ The often self-claimed objectivity can get problematic because the historian is in interplay with a broader public and shares a

⁵⁷ Assmann 1998:26.

⁵⁸ Rüsen 1994:214.

⁵⁹ Carr 1961:11.

⁶⁰ Confino 2009:8-9.

⁶¹ Arad 1997:414.

⁶² Cowens 1998:95.

⁶³ Young 1997a:57.

⁶⁴ Robin-Maire 2008:40.

common memory with the society living around him.⁶⁵ Also Susan Crane argues in such a direction, pointing out that the historian is confirmed in society as a rememberer although historians often see themselves as witnessing rather than remembering lived experience of others through their work, which ranges from working in archives to conducting interviews. Hence, the “self-reflexive historian” integrates the own historical research as a lived experience into collective memory.⁶⁶ In the words of Dominick LaCapra, memorialization is an “attempt to counteract the projective reprocessing of the past through which we deny certain of its features and act out our own desires for self-confirming or identity-forming meaning.”⁶⁷

2.5. Problems in Memory Studies

Despite the enormously growing literature in the last 20 years, memory studies have still not been able to present conceptual and methodological advances in the understanding of collective memory processes. Until today one cannot confidently claim that collective memory is “necessarily linear, logical, or rational.”⁶⁸ Moreover it is criticized that meanings of different monuments and memories of certain personalities were already in place at an earlier stage and the term collective memory is used for it only now, basically being a poor substitute for older terms.⁶⁹ Such a claim is right but misses the point because collective memory offers a more useful term to capture the reception of the past. Potentially, memory studies are also opening pitfalls for “nationalist, revisionist temptations” because memory can be misused by chauvinist actors, although a historian can avoid such temptations with accurate research.⁷⁰ In conclusion, Nora brings it to the point what the problem of collective memory for many historians is: they are just “perpetually suspicious of memory.”⁷¹

2.6. Transnational Memory Places

All the “memory talk” that has popped up in the last 20 years cannot only be identified on the national level. With the phenomena of globalization starting with the end of the Cold War, there were more claims that also global memories have been established. The world regions are increasingly interconnected; cultural transfer has not led to a homogenized global culture but with technologies like TV, radio, and the internet many people around the world participate in the global markets, which has led to a feeling that also distant events get a greater impact for the individual although that person maybe lives far away from these events. Historical narratives, like on the national level, are increasingly used by various actors on a transnational level claiming that currently the emergence of a new cosmopolitan memory is on its way, as suggested by Ulrich Beck.⁷² In comparative studies carried out until the mid-1990s, no other event than WWII was mentioned above a 3%

⁶⁵ Diner 1997:305.

⁶⁶ Crane 1997:1382.

⁶⁷ LaCapra 1994:64.

⁶⁸ Zelizer 1995:221.

⁶⁹ Confino 1997:1397; Olick 1999:334.

⁷⁰ Crane 1997:1375.

⁷¹ Nora 1989:9.

⁷² Beck 2002.

threshold while in the younger generation also the end of Communism and 9/11 had to be included, as it can be seen in Figure 4.⁷³

Figure 4: Globally remembered events of the last 100 years

Table 1: Political events considered most important within the last 100 years (in %)
Includes respondents born 1970 to 1989.

	<i>Europe</i> (N = 2984)		<i>North America</i> (N = 299)		<i>Latin America</i> (N = 137)		<i>Africa</i> (N = 81)		<i>Asia</i> (N = 380)		<i>Oceania</i> (N = 187)	
1	WW2	65.8	WW2	56.2	WW2	50.4	WW2	49.4	WW2	54.5	WW2	52.9
2	1989/90	43.6	1989/90	35.5	1989/90	46.0	End of Apartheid	38.3	Foundation of a country	42.1	WW1	32.1
3	WW1	31.1	Cold war	19.1	Revolution	24.8	1989/90	24.7	1989/90	27.9	9/11 attacks	23.5
4	European Union	17.3	9/11 attacks	16.7	WW1	20.4	WW1	21.0	WW1	17.6	1989/90	23.5
5	Cold war	15.6	WW1	15.4	9/11 attacks	13.1	9/11 attacks	16.0	9/11 attacks	15.3	Women's rights movement	13.9

Glowsky et al. 2007:7.

The statistic is based on very small samples, with the exception of Europe, and focuses on the younger generation. In all six regions around the globe three events are mentioned among the top 5: WWII, WWI, and 9/11. Surprisingly, regional events are not that important; exceptions are the European Union in Europe or the end of Apartheid in Africa.

⁷³ Glowsky et al. 2007:3-6.

3. Holocaust Remembrance

A topic particularly worthwhile to study in collective memory is the Holocaust due to the various perspectives it offers on that subject. Collective memory can contribute to the understanding of the inexplicable: a wide range of disciplines can be distinguished, from psychology to the social sciences, from art history to comparative literature. Yet, the Holocaust – commonly referred to as the killing of six million Jews during WWII by the Germans and their auxiliaries⁷⁴ – has also become a transnational, global phenomenon as Levy and Sznajder argued.⁷⁵

Saul Friedländer asserted in *Memory, History and the Extermination of the Jews in Europe* that the Holocaust was such an extreme event in history that it is impossible to actually cover the events in a usual frame of historical discourse. Only on the basis of individual remembrance could such a collective trauma be tackled.⁷⁶ Having said that, it can be problematic, however, when the remembrance of the perpetrators is included as well; if we do not apply a necessary amount of cautiousness towards the traumas of perpetrators and their children, comparisons with their victims will pop up and competing narratives of perpetrators and victims will lead to ugly debates that ought to be avoided.

Currently, remembrance of the Holocaust is experiencing a floating gap. During the past 20 years oral historians have used intensively the chance to interview and speak with people who lived through WWII; their memories have been collected in countless publications. Yet the chance to talk to people who actually remember what they lived through and who were old enough then to understand what they saw is diminishing; soon this chance and with it the communicative memory will be gone. Hence we live in a time which the Assmanns define as the change from the communicative to the cultural memory. The currently experienced transition period is also a time of memory crisis. Conflicts of remembrance take place between different groups that try to get the dominant position in the collective memories on WWII.

In the discourse of historians, scholars cannot be differentiated along national boundaries. There is no particular “American school” or “German school” of understanding the Jewish genocide. Instead, as we shall see in the first section of this chapter, there are other means to differ on the interpretation of the Holocaust, the intentionalist and the functionalist school of understanding the Holocaust. The second section explores some brief case studies about how the Holocaust has been received in a selection of countries, exploring a diverging view on the genocide. An important factor is the relation of different national narratives toward WWII. Some collective memories have direct connections to the perpetrators of WWII (like in Germany or Austria; in some German-occupied countries parts of the society helped the Nazis); others share a common victimization (like in Israel) and a third group are “spectators” from the outside (like in the US). Hence it is impossible to speak of a universal, transnational collective memory of the Holocaust because all those different groups have a different relation to the Holocaust.

⁷⁴ Subsumed in the term “Germans” during WWII are also Austrians. As the Republic of Austria ceased to exist in 1938 because of the annexation to the Third Reich, Austrians were considered citizens of Nazi Germany. Whenever the term “Nazi” is used, it is not with the intention to deindividualize the abhorrent crimes committed by citizens of the Third Reich.

⁷⁵ Levy/Sznajder 2002.

⁷⁶ Friedländer 1993.

3.1. Explaining the Inexplicable

Although the horrendous crimes of the Nazis were covered in mass media not least because of the Nuremberg trials, the mass killings of Jews were soon “forgotten.” As a result of the Cold War rhetoric of the United States, not the German crimes but rather those of the Soviet Union were in the focus in the West. The first large volumes on the Holocaust, with a few exceptions, were only published in the 1960s. A first boom of interest took place with the TV series *Holocaust* in 1979 that was followed by further academic interest and research. Since the 1990s, a wide range of academic disciplines has discovered the Holocaust as a field of interest. It is a topic which may never be fully explained, because the events that happened are too unbelievable. Still, the Holocaust should not be mystified to an event “outside” history and the implications of the crimes should be fully recognized.⁷⁷

Even among historians no consensus yet has been found about how to read the Holocaust. In academia two different approaches have developed to explain the rise of the Nazis and the mass killings of Jews. While the intentionalist approach argues that the Germans attempted the extermination of all Jews from the very beginning, the functionalists claim that the Holocaust had developed out of the course of the war. In the following, the two approaches are introduced.

3.1.1. The Intentionalist Approach

Intentionalist scholars⁷⁸ were dominant in the immediate post-war decades and combined scholarly objections with moral indignation.⁷⁹ Their understanding why the Nazis annihilated six million Jews can be summed up with the following five points: (1) to highlight the intentions prior to Nazi ideology in Germany, based on subsistent anti-Semitism – to eliminate the Jews; (2) to see a German pathology distinguishing it from the rest of the West, the German *Sonderweg*; (3) to use an explicitly moralistic rhetoric; (4) to see Jews as the primary victims of Nazi persecution; and (5) to define the uniqueness of the Holocaust in ideological terms.⁸⁰

The conclusion was drawn that the Shoah was not just an accident of German history, but it is clear who is responsible for it. One should focus on the actions of the Nazi regime; from the very beginning the Nazi leadership expressed its intentions through an unfolding of its ideology, in particular by Hitler.⁸¹ One of the most famous representatives of the intentionalists was Lucy Dawidowicz, who affirmed that Hitler’s ideas about Jews “determined the anti-Jewish policies of the German dictatorship from 1933 to 1945, and [...] furnished the authority for the murder of the Jews in Europe during World War II.”⁸² It is as well clear for the intentionalists that the Holocaust is unique as “the greatest crime in the history of humanity.”⁸³

⁷⁷ Bauer 1990.

⁷⁸ Also known as ideological-intentionalist, because of their focus on anti-Semitism as an ideology of the Nazis.

⁷⁹ Moses 1998:199-200.

⁸⁰ Lang 1990b; Moses 1998.

⁸¹ Bessel 2003:15

⁸² Dawidowicz 1981:59.

⁸³ Levi 1989:4.

3.1.2. The Functionalist Approach

The other classic approach to explain the Holocaust is structural-functionalism, which rose during the 1960s and became popular in the 1980s. At the origin laid an attempt of left-wing scholars to break up the existing conformity on how the Shoah had to be understood. The most prominent exponent of the functionalists was Raul Hilberg, a Vienna-born Jew who luckily escaped Austria in 1938 and wrote the classic *The Destruction of the European Jews* (1961). Hilberg used both the concept of singularity and the structuralist methodology, arguing, "in the last analysis, it [the Final Solution] is inexplicable."⁸⁴ Moreover it was stressed that the inherent self-propelling mechanisms of the German "machinery of destruction" with its dreadful efficiency led to a point of no return. Michael Marrus pointed out that "[t]he machine, at a certain point, no longer needed an operator and required no master plan or blueprint."⁸⁵

The following six points sum up the understanding of functionalists: (1) anti-Semitism is insufficient as an explanation of the Holocaust; while pogroms had happened also in Eastern Europe before WWII, only during the period of the Third Reich the killing of Jews adopted such a systematic and industrial style; (2) bureaucracy rather than ideology is determining the "Final Solution;" (3) the Holocaust was a process of "cumulative radicalization,"⁸⁶ which diminishes the role of Hitler in the genocide; (4) the Holocaust is so complex that it can only be understood from the perspective of the perpetrators and the way they thought; (5) a new type of perpetrator evolved, the *Schreibtischtäter* ("desk-perpetrator");⁸⁷ and (6) Jews are no longer seen as the primary victims of the Nazi racial policy, but Roma and Sinti, homosexuals, and POWs are added; a hierarchy of victims is yet seen as highly inappropriate.⁸⁸ Understanding the Nazi mindset consequently needs a "focus on the dynamics of decision-making processes and the institutional pressures inherent in the Nazi system of government."⁸⁹

The functionalist approach was problematic as it helped some German revisionist historians to justify the deeds of their fellow people and to distinguish between the average Germans and the Nazi regime. As Friedrich Meinecke put it already in 1950, Hitler was "foreign to us Germans."⁹⁰ Conservative German historians in the 1980s like Martin Broszat, Ernst Nolte, or Andreas Hillgruber could argue quite cynically in one way or another that the Holocaust was an "accidental byproduct of the war."⁹¹ Functionalism was thus used as a revisionist excuse: the "Final Solution" was never planned, as the American historian Arno Mayer argued.⁹² What led to the Shoah, one may conclude in line with functionalism, was just a result of the pressures of the failed German *Blitzkrieg* in the East. Thus, the functionalist approach is open for flaws coming from revisionists and another explanation is needed.

⁸⁴ Hilberg 1961:14.

⁸⁵ Marrus 1994:98.

⁸⁶ After having Jews excluded on legal terms with the Nuremberg laws in 1935 and having rounded them up in ghettos with the outbreak of WWII. The third and final stage, extermination, was reached in 1941. The Nazis decided in an inhumanly rationalist way that there was not enough food for Jews after the attack on the Soviet Union on 22 June 1941 and thus had no right to live anymore.

⁸⁷ Ordinary German bureaucrats helped in the process of murdering the European Jewry without any moral questioning of their own wrongdoing.

⁸⁸ Arendt 1958; Moses 1998; Zukier 1994.

⁸⁹ Bessel 2003:15.

⁹⁰ Meinecke 1950:35.

⁹¹ Zukier 1994:3.

⁹² Mayer 1988.

3.1.3. The Necessity of Openness

Both, intentionalism and functionalism, have their advantages and flaws. For better explanations for the Holocaust it is necessary to overcome the old rivalry between the two schools. As Ian Kershaw already concluded in the mid-1980s, “intention” and “structure” are both essential elements of an explanation for the Third Reich and need synthesis rather than being set in opposition to each other.⁹³ In other words, no serious historian dealing with the Nazi regime would exclude the two approaches but will instead use both and leave the disadvantages out. Intentionalists are focusing too much on Hitler and their only causal variable is anti-Semitism, which is not enough to explain that Jews were killed in an industrial and bureaucratic way. An example of a functionalist weakness is that it cannot explain historical discontinuities and also contains contradictions “by stressing the modern bureaucratic structures and at the same time the notion of radical singularity.”⁹⁴

The dispute between Browning and Goldhagen in the 1990s showed that the debate between intentionalism *versus* functionalism was not over. Christopher Browning reached the conclusion that “ordinary men” were the perpetrators in the Holocaust. Men from the Reserve Police Battalion 101 shot tens of thousands civilians, among them Jews, “Gypsies” and Slavs, on the territory of today’s Poland. Yet, Browning claimed that those men were not obsessed by any unique German evil but were rather average people – everyone in a Western society could have done the same considering the circumstances of these times.⁹⁵ In strong opposition, Daniel Goldhagen maintained that the determination between “evil Nazis” and “ordinary German” was wrong, ultimately all Germans are guilty. Moreover, the Germans allegedly inherited anti-Semitism since generations, eventually going back until Luther.⁹⁶ Yet, as Alex Hinton pointed out, Goldhagen’s move took the emphasis away from abstract structures of the events and institutions of the Holocaust and focused on the perpetrators instead. By that, Goldhagen could ask “one of the most fundamental questions about the Holocaust: what motivated individual Germans to annihilate Jews?”⁹⁷

3.2. Different Cultures of Holocaust Remembrance

Different countries are chosen to present an overview how the Holocaust is remembered there: Austria, France, Germany, Israel, the Soviet Union and the United States. Also Central and Eastern Europe as a region is covered. The section about the Soviet Union is rather short because sub-section 5.1.1. deals intensively with the remembrance in the LSSR.

3.2.1. Austria

Austria perpetuated a portrait of itself as Hitler’s first victims rather than his most enthusiastic allies. Immediately after WWII, Austria started quite cynically a discourse of collective amnesia, despite the fact that it ran against historical reality. While it

⁹³ Kershaw 1985:81.

⁹⁴ Kansteiner 1994:155.

⁹⁵ Browning 1992.

⁹⁶ Goldhagen 1996.

⁹⁷ Hinton 1998:12.

was right that Austria had not existed on legal grounds after the *Anschluss* in March 1938, a lot of Austrians were very actively involved with the Nazis, and in proportion to Germany, many more Austrians were heading KZs or where high-ranking SS officers, and particularly involved in the “Final Solution” of the European Jewry. In 1955, Austria restored the country’s sovereignty and managed to institutionalize a collective amnesia. As most post-WWII politicians in Austria were either political victims of the Nazis or lived in emigration, it was all the easier to claim that actually *all* Austrians were victims of the Nazis. Such a discourse was able to go on until the end of the Cold War but shifted the historical memory drastically in Austria and was a wake-up call that memories on WWII had to go over again. Until then, Austria rested its memory on the involvement of Austrians in the Holocaust on a state of denial, usually neglecting the Holocaust as a whole.

A crucial year in Austria’s non-remembrance of its own involvement in the Holocaust was the year 1986 with the “Waldheim affair.” Kurt Waldheim, UN Secretary General from 1971-1981, ran as the conservative candidate for Austria’s president election in 1985. A journalist discovered that Waldheim refrained to mention his real involvement from 1938 to 1945 in his newly published autobiography; in particular he wrongly denied to have been in Thessaloniki between 1942 and 1943. While it seems certain today that Waldheim was not directly involved in the killings, he approved anti-Semitic propaganda and despite his denial he must have been aware that partisans were shot close to his office. The biggest problem, in the Austrian and international context, was however the fact that Kurt Waldheim was not able to formally apologize for his involvement with the Nazis and personally had not seen any wrongdoing of him whatsoever. There only remain the famous words that describe his personal mindset like that of every other typical male Austrian who was a soldier in WWII: “I did nothing more in the war than hundreds of thousands of Austrians; I did my duty as a soldier.” It was because Waldheim fitted the Austrian mindset so well, he was elected in 1986 as president of Austria, the highest position in the state. The US declared him as a *persona non grata* and Waldheim became internationally isolated while he served as president for one term until 1992. Waldheim’s personality serves as a symbol for Austria’s mentality towards the horrendous crimes committed by many Austrians during WWII, also in the Holocaust: a state of denial, ignorance, and perceiving oneself as the ultimate victim, negating any own wrongdoings.

Only in the early 1990s, the old denial slowly broke up – ironically as a consequence of the Waldheim affair. Austria remained shunned in diplomatic circles after 1986 because of the repercussions of the Waldheim controversy. Only in 1991, Austria’s Chancellor Franz Vranitzky acknowledged in a speech in parliament that Austria had a shared responsibility – although not the country as such but Austrian citizens – of what happened during WWII and offered apologies to all victims, finally departing from the myth of “Hitler’s first victim.” While the symbolic step by an Austrian official came very late – only 46 years after the end of WWII (!) –, many Austrians were not prepared for Vranitzky’s move and ultimately denounced it.

In the 1990s, Jörg Haider, a nationalist-populist politician, was a dominating figure in Austrian politics. He knew well how to play with anti-Semitic sentiments in Austria, usually not facing any negative consequences – particularly not of his voters. His anti-Semitic attitudes helped the civil society to strengthen its efforts to address the Holocaust and Austria’s involvement. Finally, after denying any payment for 50 years, since 1995 restitution have been paid to all victims of the Nazis, whereby in 2001 the last open questions were addressed. Nonetheless the Nazi victims have no legal claim and the Austrian state is paying a “voluntary payment.” From 1998-2003, a historical commission dealt with the restitution of “Aryanized” art, for example former Jewish paintings that were bought for a far too cheap price by Austrians or the republic

of Austria. For far too long Austria played an inglorious role dealing with restitution and its unjust enrichment. Although some paintings were returned, there are still many question marks concerning paintings in Austrian federal museum. All in all, Austria was able to overcome, after a very long time, its state of denial but is in comparison to its northern neighbor Germany far behind in almost all areas related to the Holocaust, be it education, commemoration, or restitution.

3.2.2. France

For a long time the myth that the country was in *complete* resistance to Nazi policies remained in France and the claim persisted that no collaboration in anti-Semitic policies of the Germans had taken place. In the immediate post-WWII period, the French were occupied with themselves and the discourse focused on purge and amnesty. It was followed by the arrival of the Gaullist myth that almost all French were active in the Resistance while only a few scoundrels were collaborating with the Germans. This resulted in collective amnesia, neglecting the French participation in the Holocaust based on “a tacit agreement, from the moment of the Liberation [...] to remain silent about the defeat of 1940 and the Vichy regime itself.”⁹⁸ A huge change in a broader public brought the two-part 1969 documentary film *Le chagrin et la pitié* (“The Sorrow and the Pity”) which covered the French resistance as well as the collaboration, arguing that the French collaboration was also based on anti-Semitism. The documentary caused a public outcry because it broke up the old Gaullist myth of the French resistance; in fact it was so controversial that the documentary was shown in French TV only in 1981. With the 1967 Israeli-Arab war, however, Jews were not only put in the victim role but also seen as perpetrators.

In the 1980s and 1990s French collaborators were trialed – Klaus Barbie, Maurice Papon, and Paul Touvier – who attracted a lot of public attention. The trials forced the French to rethink the role of Vichy during WWII. Nonetheless, only 50 years after the implementation of the Final Solution the first major academic colloquium in France to deal directly with Vichy and the Holocaust took place in 1992.⁹⁹ Thus, the suffering of Jews under Vichy was recognized in France only rather recently. Importantly, French president Jacques Chirac recognized the French responsibility of the deportation and extermination of French Jews on 16 July 1995 at the *Vélodrome d'Hiver*, a sports stadium where Jews were put inside prior to their deportation, which started on that day in 1942.

A huge impact in the French debate on the Holocaust had the launch of the book *Le livre noir du communisme* (“The Black Book of Communism”), compiled by Stéphane Courtois in 1997, who asserted that “[i]n contrast to the Jewish Holocaust, which the international Jewish community has actively commemorated, it has been impossible for victims of communism and their legal advocates to keep the memory of the tragedy alive, and any requests for commemoration or demands for reparation are brushed aside.”¹⁰⁰ A somewhat similar claim can be found in Eastern Europe, also in Lithuania, that only Jews are seen as victims while Stalinist victims are ignored in Western Europe. Courtois challenged the consensus in the Western world that the Holocaust was unprecedented and for some even made the crimes of Stalin worse.¹⁰¹ Similarly, the French historian Alain Besançon complained that the “excessive memory of Nazism” is accompanied by

⁹⁸ Lucette Valensi, quoted in Golsan 2000:10.

⁹⁹ Lucette Valensi, quoted in Golsan 2000:12.

¹⁰⁰ Courtois 1999:19.

¹⁰¹ Dean 2006:51.

“amnesia about communism.”¹⁰² In fact, the French journalist Nicolas Weill used the term “Holocaust Fatigue”¹⁰³ to describe the French situation which Joan Wolf complained about “too much” Jewish memory.¹⁰⁴ Moreover it was claimed that “the Jewish people” devoted all their energies in making sure that the Holocaust is remembered.¹⁰⁵ Often, participants in the debate imply a hegemonic Jewish voice on how the Holocaust has to be seen and should be remembered in order to downplay and distort the historical truth of other events at the time, notably the crimes of Stalin.

In 2005, the *Mémorial de la Shoah* in Paris was opened as the central memorial of the Holocaust in France. Overall, it can be said that the French state as well as the French public has always covered the Holocaust quite intensively; however it was for a long time a taboo to talk about the French collaboration and the own involvement of the Holocaust. In the last 20 years or so the picture has changed and the Vichy period is seen critically.

3.2.3. Germany

Often, Germany is cited as a role model of how official institutions of a country but also its citizens can deal with their own past (*Vergangenheitsbewältigung*), particularly the period of the Third Reich from 1933-1945. After the war the situation was different. During the first 20 years of the post-WWII period, it is portrayed as common sense that Germans treated National Socialism with amnesia and collective silence.¹⁰⁶ Dagmar Barnouw criticized the “German malaise of repressed collective memory.”¹⁰⁷ Although Germans were forced by the allies to be confronted with the horrible crimes committed in former KZ or with films, the repression of their own Nazi past was common sense and instead the focus was directed to build-up the country again. As the dominating historiography emphasized, Western Germans pointed to the war crime trials in Nuremberg or official political acts like the restitution of Holocaust survivors but did not want to deal with the committed crimes themselves. The basic ambition was to overcome the trauma of the Third Reich and start a normal life again. Alon Confino, however, claimed that while repression and denial existed, Germans believed that they and their nation were the victims of the war, rather than being the perpetrator.¹⁰⁸

For Germans the *Schuldfrage* (“question of guilt”) has always been in the center of debate, more precisely it is about a constant sense of guilt for the Holocaust and other crimes of the Nazis. Karl Jaspers developed a differentiation between moral and metaphysical guilt as well as those guilty of crimes but also political guilt of the national collective.¹⁰⁹ Also the remark of Ralf Dahrendorf has to be kept in mind that the term *Kollektivschuld* signifies in German more than collective guilt in English, because the German understanding of the word would bind every individual for all time to an irredeemable metaphysical torment.¹¹⁰ As a consequence, cyclical debates and regular outbursts on the Nazi past took place in Germany because of the alleged claim that Germans would be collectively guilty. Apart from that, Dan Diner claimed that in fact the

¹⁰² Besançon 1998a:27.

¹⁰³ Weill 2004:88.

¹⁰⁴ Wolf 2004:74.

¹⁰⁵ Besançon 1998a:25.

¹⁰⁶ Benz 1990:12.

¹⁰⁷ Barnouw 1996:202.

¹⁰⁸ Confino 2000:95-97.

¹⁰⁹ Jaspers 1996:51-53.

¹¹⁰ Dahrendorf 1976:288-289.

Holocaust “might well be defined as an identity-forming foundational event” for Germany.¹¹¹ The sense of guilt has produced a public discourse about the mass crimes of Germans across generations. The Holocaust is consequently *the* paramount event in German history. In particular one place was branded in the conscience of Germans: Auschwitz. The death camp of Auschwitz Birkenau became the synonym for the industrial killing of innocent people, particularly Jews. In other words, the Holocaust has become part of the German collective memory from an early stage onwards.

Aleida Assmann differentiated three phases of German remembrance of WWII.¹¹² The first phase (1945-1957) can be described as a communicative hush-up and coming to terms with the past with a massive blockade of remembrance. The second phase (1958-1984) is earmarked with the criticism of how to master the past: the Eichmann trial, impulses of the critical theory, the *68-generation*, and investigations of Nazi crimes in Ludwigsburg started. The third and final phase is about remembrance as official commemorations started. Symbolical-ritual signs have become more important, also in public media. Former Chancellor Helmut Kohl was for Assmann a good ambivalent figure for Germany, he “celebrated reconciliation.” At the same time he tried to put German victims on the same level as the Germans.

Yet, such remembrance and “mourning” of the Holocaust only has happened on such a broad basis since the mid-1960s. With the so-called *68-generation* the comparison of German victims and victims of Germans started to vanish from public discourse. An important event was certainly the visit of Chancellor Willy Brandt in 1970 in the Polish capital Warsaw when the German Chancellor knelt down in front of the Ghetto memorial. It also showed the problem of ritualizing commemoration, because it cannot be repeated at every memorial event without losing its aura and meaning. Almost all Holocaust scholars identified the 1980s as a time when consensus on the Nazi past was finally reached. In contrast to that, from the mid-1980s to 2000 several outbursts in the German discourse on the Holocaust occurred. It started with US President Ronald Reagan's visit of the Bitburg cemetery in 1985¹¹³ and was swiftly followed in the following year by the *Historikerstreit* (“Historians’ Dispute”). In essence, the dispute can be summed up by the complaint of the German historian Ernst Nolte that “the past will not fade away,” which was strongly opposed by a coalition of left-liberal historians, politicians, and journalists. The left-liberals in Germany were also able to contest the demands of historian Martin Broszat that Germany should historicize the Nazi past. Interestingly, Friedländer supported Broszat by stating that “[t]he extermination of the Jews of Europe is as accessible to both representation and interpretation as any other historical event.”¹¹⁴ Critics, however, feared that a historicization of the Holocaust would diminish its exceptional role for Germany's self-understanding as a country. In 1988, the Conservative politician Philipp Jenninger held a speech in the German *Bundestag* commemorating the 50th anniversary of the so-called *Reichskristallnacht*, after which he had to step down.¹¹⁵

After the German reunification some political observers feared that the Holocaust would be forgotten. The critics were proved wrong because throughout the 1990s the mass murder of Jews was as present as never before. Between 1995 and 2004 an exhibition about the *Wehrmacht* was traveling through Germany, and also Austria, which caused an outcry

¹¹¹ Diner 1997:301.

¹¹² Assmann/Frevert 1999:143-145.

¹¹³ US President Ronald Reagan visited the German Chancellor Helmut Kohl and together they visited the soldier cemetery at Bitburg where Reagan honored the soldiers of the Wehrmacht as the “bravest among the brave.” Only because of the pressure of the American public, also the memorial museum at the KZ Bergen-Belsen was visited to commemorate the victims of the Nazis.

¹¹⁴ Friedländer 1992b:2.

¹¹⁵ Although Philipp Jenninger did not say anything offensive in his speech, he offended the moral standards that the Federal President Richard von Weizsäcker had set three years earlier at the commemoration event of the 40th anniversary of the end of WWII (Assmann/Frevert 1999:269).

because the “pure” image of “ordinary German soldiers” who “only did their duty” was damaged. Over a million people visited the exhibition, which dealt with the crimes of the *Wehrmacht* between 1941 and 1944 in Eastern and Southeastern Europe. Although the exhibition was technically on a rather low standard it received a huge and controversial response as it tackled the German collective memory of the role of the German army during WWII. It challenged the common view that a small clique of the Nazi elite was responsible for all the crimes while the population at that time, including the soldiers, was allegedly unaware of the mass killings.

The reception of Daniel Goldhagen’s book *Hitler’s Willing Executioners*, published in Germany in 1996, has to be seen in the context of the *Wehrmacht* exhibition. Unsurprisingly, the book caused fervent debates as Goldhagen claimed that in the roots of the German identity a specific, unique, and virulent “eliminationist” anti-Semitism can be found. Somewhat unexpectedly, many Germans accepted Goldhagen’s theses although most historians fiercely rejected his work. Another intensive dispute took place between the writer Martin Walser and Ignaz Bubis, head of the German Jewish Community. Walser claimed at his “Peace Prize Speech” on 11 October 1998 that he wanted to look away when being confronted with pictures from the Holocaust and criticized that the term Auschwitz would be misused as a moral cudgel (*Moralkeule*). Bubis opened a debate claiming that Walser wanted to draw a line under the remembrance of the Holocaust. All those debates proved according to Aleida Assmann a stress ratio between individual experience processing and cultural remembrance.¹¹⁶

The celebrated *Memorial to the Murdered Jews in Europe*, opened in May 2005 in Berlin, is for some Germans a “stigmata” instead of a “stigma.”¹¹⁷ The Holocaust memorial in Berlin is a tourist magnet for Germans as well as for people from all around the world. As Young acknowledges, “only rarely does a nation call on itself to remember the victims of crimes it has perpetrated.”¹¹⁸ “Coming to terms with the past” may even serve as an “export model” from Germany. Instead of fading away, the remembrance of WWII is more colorful and lively than ever before, particularly of the Holocaust.

3.2.4. Israel

According to Daniel Gutwein, three stages of memorization of the Holocaust in Israel took place: divided memory, nationalized memory, and finally privatized memory.¹¹⁹ The first phase started immediately after WWII when the horror of the Holocaust was uncovered. At the preamble of the Israeli declaration of independence in 1948 the term *Shoah*¹²⁰ is mentioned for the crimes of the Nazis against Jews, which has been officially translated into English as Holocaust. Publications of Yad Vashem also used the term Holocaust for their translation of *Shoah*.¹²¹ The Holocaust itself was perceived in a dichotomous way in Israel. On the one hand, identification with the victims and their suffering and on the

¹¹⁶ Assmann/Frevert 1999:24.

¹¹⁷ Moses 2007:154-155.

¹¹⁸ Young 1992:270.

¹¹⁹ Gutwein 2001.

¹²⁰ The term Holocaust derives from Greek (*holókauston*) and means literally “whole burnt.” In the 12th century the Latin term *holocaustum* was developed with specific reference to a massacre of Jews. Since the 1960s, scholars use the term Holocaust in English to refer exclusively to the Jewish genocide. Shoah derives from a biblical word and means calamity. Since the 1940s Shoah is the standard term in Hebrew for the destruction of the European Jewry. This thesis uses Holocaust as a standard term because it is more commonly used in literature.

¹²¹ Novick 2003:179.

other hand the struggle of the Zionists for statehood took place which highly venerated the heroic ghetto fighters but denigrated those who went “like sheep to the slaughter.”¹²² A virtual cult started about Holocaust survivors, who were remembered as heroes. Also Yad Vashem always focused on heroes as well. Another example is Yom Hashoah, the “day of the Holocaust and of heroism” in Israel, which is the national Holocaust Memorial Day. It is set on the date when the Warsaw Ghetto uprising started and thus puts heroes in the center of attention. The century-long accusation of cowardly Jews was to be finally put aside; the rest of the world should realize that Jews are also strong and powerful. Yet, often heroism concentrated itself on Zionist groups which were particularly influential.¹²³ Holocaust survivors struggled with those outside the survivor community. Often they remained silent because they wanted to forget their trauma and some even felt guilty for surviving while others died. The most difficult challenge however was probably the “shame of telling a story that must [have appeared] unbelievable.”¹²⁴

A new period started with the Eichmann Trial (1961) and the Six-Day War (1967), the Holocaust in Israel became “nationalized memory.” The slogan “never again” was handled as a crucial part of Israel’s self-understanding, combined with the impression that “the whole world is against us.”¹²⁵ It was also felt that a second Holocaust was possible. The Israeli victory against Arab states in 1967 gave confidence to survivors to tell their experiences. Since the late 1970s, the Holocaust has been discussed more intensively in the media. Israeli historians, influenced by Zionism, had a major impact on the Israeli collective memory by constructing a nationalized Holocaust memory.

Since the 1980s it has been generally accepted in Israel that the collective memory of the Holocaust is essential in political and cultural terms for the construction of Israel’s identity. Thus, the period of “privatized memory” started.¹²⁶ The so-called second generation began to search for the fate of their parents. Individualized memories about the Holocaust became influential. According to Daniel Gutwein, the privatized memory undermined the Zionist identity of Israel.¹²⁷ As Henry Wasserman noted in the left liberal monthly *Politika*, the Holocaust victims were nationalized to serve Israel’s national interests and by that transformed Israel’s basis.¹²⁸ Basically, the left in Israel wanted a change of the memory of the Holocaust as they perceived the memory narrative as self-righteous, xenophobic, and aggressive. It wanted to change the Holocaust memory towards one that would portray an “alternative, humanistic and collective Israeli policy.”¹²⁹

3.2.5. Soviet Union

The outline about the Soviet Union is going to be brief because in sub-section 5.1.1. an intensive discussion is taking place about the Holocaust remembrance in the Lithuanian SSR. After WWII the USSR was quick to recognize the newly created state of Israel in 1948. During the 1950s the relations soured, and after the Israeli victory in the Six-Day War of 1967 they came to a complete break. Afterwards, Soviet propaganda demonized Israel and Zionism. As a matter of fact, the anti-

¹²² Gutwein 2001:37.

¹²³ Novick 2003:186.

¹²⁴ Friedländer 1992a:48.

¹²⁵ Gutwein 2001:38.

¹²⁶ Gutwein 2001:36.

¹²⁷ Gutwein 2001:39.

¹²⁸ Wasserman 1986.

¹²⁹ Gutwein 2001:41.

Zionism of the Soviets was lukewarm anti-Semitism. Only during the final years of the Soviet Union the relations with Israel were re-established.

In the Baltic SSRs, the Soviet authorities were more favorable to Holocaust commemoration than in other parts of the USSR. After the liberation the places of mass murder were left “totally unmarked.” In late 1946, the Council of Religious Affairs (CARC) was asked by the Vilna *kehillah*¹³⁰ whether it was allowed to erect a monument at the mass graves of Paneriai. Further memorial stones were set up in other towns of the Lithuanian SSR.¹³¹ As Mordechai Altshuler argued, “Soviet Jewry, like Jewish communities in most East European countries, fervently wished to memorialize the victims of the Holocaust. Soviet Jews acted intensively for years, even during Stalin’s last days, to make this possible.”¹³²

The Soviet Union neutralized Jewish suffering in its memories because its ideology prevented it from recognizing that Jews had suffered disproportionately simply because of their religion. Jewish victims were often subsumed as “Soviet citizens” that were murdered by bourgeois nationalists – another example are also the Lithuanian police battalions.¹³³ The collaboration of Soviet citizens with the Nazis during WWII was a difficult topic to deal with for the USSR authorities. The crimes committed by the Germans and its auxiliaries were so brutal and fatal that almost everyone in the former Soviet Union, at least in the Western parts, could see oneself as a victim.

3.2.6. United States

After WWII, like everywhere else in the world, the Holocaust was not officially remembered in the United States. Nonetheless, with the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum (USHMM) the US today maintains, next to Yad Vashem, the biggest Holocaust museum in the world. All around the country are Holocaust museums as well as Holocaust departments at universities. This change is going back to the 1970s and 1980s, when it was recognized by larger parts of society that the Holocaust indeed was a very shocking event for humanity, very different in quantitative and qualitative amount of earlier pogroms, and also distinct in comparison to other cruelties of the Nazis.

Before that, the situation was different because many Americans, among them many Jews, were just not able to grasp what happened. The accounts during WWII were contradictory and rare,¹³⁴ only after the war numbers were revealed but still could not portray the actual size. Also American history textbooks had been silent for a long time about the Holocaust.¹³⁵ One factor that one should not forget is that Holocaust survivors, like in Israel, were not regarded as heroes after the war. The attitude towards survivors was compassion or even disdainfulness, they were perceived as belonging to “old Europe.” However, one had to belong to the winners and not to a group of victims.

William L. Shirer’s bestseller *The Rise and Fall of the Third Reich* presented the horrors of the Nazi regime to a larger audience again – although Shirer wrote very little about the Holocaust, reflecting the non-existing discourse of his

¹³⁰ The *kehillah* is the local Jewish communal structure established in the interwar period as a modern, secular, and religious representation of Jews in Central and Eastern Europe.

¹³¹ Altshuler 2002:278-279.

¹³² Altshuler 2002:296.

¹³³ Bubnys 2003:117.

¹³⁴ Novick 2003:35-45.

¹³⁵ Korman 1970.

time.¹³⁶ Novick argued that since the 1970s the Holocaust has not been remembered anymore as a Jewish remembrance but has rather become part of the American collective memory.¹³⁷ The increase of attention towards the Holocaust in books, films, and commemorations led to more sensibility to the issue across the American society. In 1977, the so-called “Nazi hunter” Simon Wiesenthal established the Simon Wiesenthal Center in Los Angeles to confront anti-Semitism and hate and to promote human rights. The TV series *Holocaust* which ran in four parts over 9.5 hours on NBC in 1978 and was highly popular and influential; it had certainly the biggest impact on the American public. Most probably, Americans have learnt more about the Holocaust on those four evenings in front of their TV than the three decades before. A short but severe debate started in 1985 when US president Ronald Reagan visited the cemetery in Bitburg. The dispute was around the question whether he was commemorating fallen SS men and whether or not he would visit a concentration camp as well.

A new peak of attention was reached with Spielberg’s film *Schindler’s List* in 1993 which brought the Holocaust to the attention of people around the world, particularly in the US. It also helped to establish the USHMM, which had been quite controversial in US Congress before. Since the 1990s the Holocaust has also been part of political debates, in particular during times of mass murder. In Bosnia, Rwanda, and Darfur the phrase “never again” was often used, implying that no other genocide should take place. Analogies to the Holocaust were drawn by US presidents, like Clinton with Bosnia in 1992, to persuade a majority of American citizens in favor of harsh sanctions or military interventions. Yet such comparisons are highly problematic as they tend to trivialize the Holocaust

For common Americans the Holocaust became one of the few moral orientation points they can agree on. Although the country is ethnically and ideologically split on so many points, the Holocaust is able to unite Americans in the condemnation of evil.¹³⁸

3.2.7. Central and Eastern Europe

Academic historians of the Moscow-controlled socialist countries in Central and Eastern Europe found the topic of Jewish history largely inappropriate after WWII. As their former Jewish neighbors were gone and own fellows were involved in the killings, a “conspiracy of silence” was set up among historians about the mass killings of Jews.¹³⁹ This does not mean, however, that the Holocaust as such was denied: the topic just never came up. Although in countries like Poland only few Jews had survived, which usually had emigrated, the “Jewish question” had remained as the 1968 “anti-Zionist” campaign brought to light.¹⁴⁰ Poland primarily claimed to be a victim during WWII, which is certainly the case. Nonetheless, according to Jan Gross, some Poles collaborated in several regions in Poland and anti-Semitism also continued to poison their minds.¹⁴¹

After the end of the Cold War, a broad transformation took place about how WWII – and its emerging core, the Holocaust – should be included in national narratives. As elsewhere in Europe, but particularly in the transition countries of

¹³⁶ Rosenfield 1994.

¹³⁷ Novick 2003:267.

¹³⁸ Novick 2003:27.

¹³⁹ Weeks 2007:411.

¹⁴⁰ Weeks 2007:418.

¹⁴¹ Gross 2007.

Central and Eastern Europe, the Holocaust had indeed an impact on the political discourse and the political reality – although differently than in Western Europe. Central and Eastern European states made clear that they wanted to deal primarily with their own traumas of WWII and with Communist crimes. The Holocaust often had not much space in the debate on the past, particularly where collaboration was high – like in the Baltic States, Belarus and the Ukraine – because some politicians feared that the newly gained independence might be undermined in case some “freedom fighters” against the Soviets would be denounced as “Jew killers.” Moreover, the nexus of property/memory caused fears that very valuable property, particularly in the end of the 1990s, would be taken away by foreigners.

Thanks to the European integration, also Central and Eastern Europe has come to terms in commemorating the Holocaust. In many countries in the region a Holocaust remembrance day was established: 27 January in Estonia, 16 April in Hungary, 19 April in Poland, 3 May in the Czech Republic, 4 July in Latvia, 10 September in Slovakia, and 29 September in the Ukraine as well as in Lithuania.

3.3. Memory in a Transition Period

Levy and Sznajder argued that the ability of the state to control memory completely is eroding, and the state's privileged status for articulating collective identity loses ground.¹⁴² Collective memory should not be seen in a way that the past forces its will upon present time. On the opposite, people put together collective memory; it depends on them how and what is remembered. Often there is neither time nor personal connection to an event in the past. It depends on historians, politicians, teachers, journalists, museum directors, and religious representatives, if and how something is remembered. In a time of change, when children cannot ask their great grandparents anymore about WWII or have to be lucky enough that their grandparents are still alive, personal stories about the Holocaust will be gone. Hence, for children it depends primarily on the school what they are taught and how. Also, they will be influenced by documentaries, debates, historical films on TV, or historical blockbusters in the movie theaters about the past. It will also depend on printed media like newspapers and magazines what kind of articles they publish about the past.

It is also about politicians who regularly use the past for commemorative or anniversary events and jubilees – it is in their power to decide if and what they remember. Not least the memory discourse also depends on historians. Their influence should certainly not be underestimated, as it is usually them who influence the elite's discourse on the past. While every individual can decide for its own if and which information it takes up to remember the past, it is strongly influenced by group or opinion leaders. It will depend on the event, person, or place which is remembered, how united the collective memory is going to be. Serbs, for example, collectively remember the saga about the Battle of Kosovo Polje in 1389, where the Ottoman army won against Serbian troops. Nonetheless it became a fictional symbol for the Serbs of the alleged threat of constant Islamization by the Ottomans. Another example is Poland, which remembers its three partitions in the 18th century as a national tragedy in which they were betrayed by all neighbors.

¹⁴² Levy/Sznajder 2002:90.

4. The Holocaust in Lithuania (1941-1944)

During summer and fall of 1941 the main events of the Holocaust in Lithuania occurred.¹⁴³ Overall, it is estimated that more than 200,000 Jews were killed from 1941-1944, which amounts to above 90% of Lithuania's Jewry. The events on the territory of the small Baltic country are appalling – considering the speed, gruesomeness, and enormity of the Jewish annihilation. It has to be underlined that without the German invasion into the Soviet Union, the mass killings of Jews would have most probably not taken place. Moreover it has to be stressed that it were the Nazis who organized and planned the persecution of Jews. In spite of that, there were Lithuanians who demonstrated their willingness of being part of the Jewish destruction in one way or another. During the first days of the invasion pogroms erupted, organized by locals. The subsequent participation of the Lithuanian police battalions and auxiliaries in the organized killing of Jews leads to the conclusion that a certain part of the Lithuanian society directly participated in the Holocaust.

In this chapter, a brief overview of the history of the Lithuanian Jewry before WWII will be given. Next, the Sovietization of Lithuania in 1940 and 1941 is portrayed, followed by an account of the German invasion into the Soviet Union, the so-called *Operation Barbarossa*, which started on 22 June 1941. The major part of this chapter is dedicated to the Holocaust itself, subdivided into four time periods: (1) the persecution of Jews from the end of June till the end of July 1941; (2) the mass murder of the Lithuanian Jewry in summer and fall 1941; (3) the ghettoization period in 1942 and 1943; and (4) the fate of the last remaining Lithuanian Jews in 1944. Finally, the last section covers the end of the Nazi occupation of Lithuania in 1944, asking whether the Soviets liberated the country or led it to another occupation period.

4.1. Situation of Pre-WWII Lithuania

Around Europe the spread of “scientific” anti-Semitism can be traced back into the 19th century. The age-old anti-Judaism of the church changed its appearance in the context of modernization and nationalism in the 19th century. Radical anti-Semitic thoughts by Joseph-Arthur Gobineau and Houston Stewart Chamberlain laid the cornerstones for anti-Semitic parties and movements in almost all European countries; new doctrines of racist anti-Semitic ideas thrived.¹⁴⁴ Since the 1870s a “solution to the Jewish question” had been contended about in various publications. Jews were perceived as one of *the* problems society allegedly faced. They were seen as a “fifth column,” who were organizing a “global conspiracy” with their “foreign blood.” The notorious *Protocols of the Elders of Zion* was particularly popular in Tsarist Russia, but was also widespread around Western Europe. After the Russian October Revolution in 1917, not only the “capitalist Jew” but also the “Bolshevik Jew” could be found as a new accusation against Jews; these stereotypes were combined with an alleged racial inferiority of Jews.

¹⁴³ Giordano 2003:1.

¹⁴⁴ In *The Inequality of the People's Races* (1853-1855 in four volumes), Gobineau did not write directly against Jews but the ideas expressed laid the foundations for modern anti-Semitism. Chamberlain, in contrast, was an Englishman by birth but a nationalized German who published racist German-centrist ideas and eventually fascinated the German bourgeoisie but also emperor Wilhelm II, and later on Adolf Hitler.

In the Lithuanian context, Lithuanian scholars often stress that during the time of the Grand Duchy in medieval times, Lithuanians and Jews coexisted peacefully next to each other. The first Jews on today's Lithuanian territory arrived in the 12th century and were tolerated and protected by the Grand Duke. The situation changed after the third partition of Poland-Lithuania in 1793, because the Russian Empress Catherine II prohibited Jews to move about freely and created a "pale of settlement" at the North-Western provinces of the Tsarist Empire. As a consequence, Jews were concentrated in the area of today's Lithuania, the Eastern parts of Poland, and Belarus. Jews were not allowed to work in the Tsarist administration or as lawyers, and could neither own land nor operate a farm. In the territory of today's Lithuania, Jews either lived in the bigger cities like Vilnius or Kaunas or they dwelled in secluded *shtetls* in isolation. The Lithuanian Jewry often described themselves by the Yiddish term "Litvaks," implying that they composed a distinct and special Jewish culture. Vilnius was known as *Yerushalayim de Lita* ("Jerusalem of Lithuania"), which underlines the importance of the city for the Eastern European Jewry.

During the 19th century the Lithuanian nationalist movement developed an opposition between human beings on the one hand and Jews on the other. While the typical Lithuanian citizen was portrayed as a farmer with positive moral characteristics, Jews were representing dark, infernal powers.¹⁴⁵ Most Jews were neither rich nor were they part of the intelligentsia because of the unfavorable conditions in the pale of settlement. The *shtetls* often functioned as a ghetto-like place. Jews in the area of today's Lithuania spoke Yiddish, Russian, Hebrew, or Polish – but usually not Lithuanian, at least until WWI. The Lithuanian national movement manifested itself on an ethno-linguistic basis, proclaiming that only those who spoke Lithuanian could be valuable for the Lithuanian society, which led to an exclusion of most Jews at the time.¹⁴⁶ In economic terms, Jews were accused during the 19th century of being responsible for making the peasants drunk, although it were the Catholic noblemen who had an interest that their vodka was traded by the Jews. Often, Lithuanian publicists portrayed the Jews as "dirty" and "filthy." The Catholic Church portrayed the Jews as their enemy – next to the devil, heretics, and heathens. Catholic priests, also in light of the Tsarist anti-Catholic policy, put many efforts in strengthening the Catholic identity of Lithuanians, particularly peasants, which led to intolerance toward other confessions.

In 1897, 350,000 Jews or 13.1% lived in the boundaries of today's Lithuania, which was part of several Tsarist provinces. The Jews from Vilnius had a big influence in overall Tsarist Russia. The *Bund*, a Jewish social-democratic movement, was established in Vilnius on 7 October 1897 to unite all Jewish workers in the Russian empire. Moreover, Vilnius was the center of Zionism in Russia from 1905-1912. After the Russian October Revolution, Lithuania declared its independence on 16 February 1918, which soon afterwards was followed by the independence fights of 1919/1920. Apparently, many young Jews joined Lithuanian guerillas in the fight against the Poles for the Vilnius district. During the first years of independence, Jews enjoyed cultural autonomy to quite an extent.¹⁴⁷ While Lithuania signed a declaration of the defense of the rights of national minorities on 12 May 1922, the *Seimas*, the Lithuanian parliament, refused to ratify the

¹⁴⁵ Vareikis 2004:132.

¹⁴⁶ The leader of the Lithuanian national rebirth, Vincas Kudirka, promulgated traditional religious anti-Judaism as well as modern, racist anti-Semitism (Vareikis 2004:138-140).

¹⁴⁷ Liekis 2003.

declaration in 1923 on the initiative of the Christian Democrats Party.¹⁴⁸ According to the 1923 census, 153,743 Jews lived in Lithuania (without the Vilnius district which belonged to Poland in the interwar period), amounting to 7.6% of the population.

After the consolidation of the Lithuanian state in 1922/1923, minority rights degraded. During the 1920s, anti-Semitic attacks were organized against Jewish shops in Kaunas, the Lithuanian capital in the interwar period, and elsewhere which failed to bear Lithuanian signs. According to Vytautas Vareikis a mutual “speechlessness” developed, catalyzing the dehumanization of Jews during the Holocaust. Most of the time, anti-Semitism was based on economic reasons. In addition, racist ideas were developed, like those of Antanas Maceina, who wanted to have an “organic state” consisting only of ethnic Lithuanians while minorities should be “marginalized.”¹⁴⁹

In 1926, the new Lithuanian president Antanas Smetona established an undemocratic, authoritarian regime after a coup d'état. The coup was organized by the army and supported by the Lithuanian Nationalists Union as well as the Lithuanian Christian Democrats. Smetona announced, without asking the *Seimas*, a provisional constitution in 1928, which increased the president's powers a lot. In 1930, Augustinas Voldemaras was ousted from office as prime minister. Smetona ruled as a dictator until 1940, adopting the title *tautos vadovas* (“leader of the nation”) and started a personal cult. During his reign, Smetona cleared the Jews from public service and protégéd Lithuanian businesses. Lithuanian-Jewish relations deteriorated because an ethnic-based Lithuanian nationalism was developed, fuelling anti-Semitism and treating Jews in fact as second-class citizens particularly in the second half of the 1930s.

Vilnius in particular was known for its Yiddish culture during the interwar period. The city, where almost a third of the population was Jewish, was a vibrant center of Jewish life and organizations. The *Yidisher Visnshaftlekher Institut* (“Yiddish Scientific Institute” or YIVO), established in 1925, contributed to the scientific research on the Yiddish language and culture. It also had branches in Berlin, Warsaw, and New York – the latter one becoming a safe haven and the new headquarter after the Nazis arrived in Vilnius; YIVO exists in New York until today.

The Lithuanian right extremists got in touch with the German Security Police as well as the Foreign Office in Berlin in the second half of the 1930s. Voldemarists, followers of the former prime minister, were able to acquire arms and funds from Nazi Germany from early 1938 onwards. Interestingly, however, in June 1939 the response of the German Ministry of Foreign Affairs to the request for a larger fund in order to carry out pogroms was that Lithuanian “for some [had] been successfully working to exclude the Jews from Lithuanian economy” and hence Jews did play no role in public life anymore.¹⁵⁰ It was common again, like in medieval times across Europe that Jews conducted “ritual murder” and were accused of kidnapping missing children, without any proof.¹⁵¹ During the 1930s, particularly during the second half of the decade, anti-Semitism was growing in Lithuania. Lithuanian anti-Semitism was based on economic factors, on traditional anti-Judaic attitudes fuelled by the Catholic Church as well as on racist propaganda, mainly influenced by the Third Reich. Overall it also has to be kept in mind that in comparison with other countries like Poland and Romania, no pogrom took place in Lithuania in the interwar period.¹⁵²

¹⁴⁸ Vareikis 2004:143.

¹⁴⁹ Tauber 2004:110.

¹⁵⁰ Dieckmann/Suziedelis 2006:100-101.

¹⁵¹ Vareikis 2004:130.

¹⁵² Weeks 2007:418.

4.2. The Soviet Occupation Interlude

The USSR occupied Lithuania in June 1940 as a result of the German-Soviet partition of Eastern Europe. It was a direct consequence of the secret protocols which were attached to the 28 September 1939 signed *Border and Friendship Treaty* between the Third Reich and the Soviet Union. Lithuania, which refused to take part on the German side of the war against Poland a month earlier, was transferred at the request of the USSR to the Soviet zone of influence. As a result, Lithuania profited from the closer affiliation to the Soviet Union as in October 1939 Lithuania incorporated the city and region of Vilnius to its territory from the Soviet occupied territories of Poland – a fact which is hardly mentioned by Lithuanian scholars nor is it part of Lithuania's collective memory.¹⁵³ The price Lithuania had to pay was to allow Red Army garrisons to be stationed on Lithuania's soil. On 15 June 1940 the Lithuanian government accepted the Soviet ultimatum, although it violated international agreements, enabling the Soviet Union to occupy Lithuania. The final annexation took place on 3 August 1940 as the USSR Supreme Council decided to incorporate Lithuania to the Soviet Union.¹⁵⁴

Members of the *Komsomol* ("Young Communist League"), among them many young Jews, welcomed the Soviet tanks in June 1940 in Kaunas. The Jewish salutations are deeply engraved in the collective memory of Lithuanians: It did not matter how many Jews were actually present in Kaunas and, of course, non-Jewish Lithuanian citizens were saluting the Red Army as well and participated in the *Komsomol* as well as the Lithuanian Communist party (LKP). Still, Jews were seen as the traitors of the country.¹⁵⁵ The hate against Jews had developed during the hardships of the interwar period. In particular the stereotype of the Jew as a Bolshevik was commonly found in Lithuania, as elsewhere, and was basically used as a synonym.¹⁵⁶ Common facts were ignored, as many Jews were related to Zionism or they were religious and had nothing in common with Communist ideas. Nor did it matter that many Jews fell victim of the Soviets and were deported in June 1941 to Siberia. What was important for many Lithuanians was the fact that there were some active Jewish members in the LKP. All their hatred was directed against Jews, fuelled by the alleged proof that the anti-Semitic propaganda was right claiming that "Jewish foreign blood" would undermine Lithuania. The construction of such an absurd virtual reality of the time was the outcome of people's belief and perception of their time; certainly, the difference is drastic to the actual facts in the archives.

Joachim Tauber compared Germany's situation in 1918/1919 with Lithuania in 1940/1941. In Germany, people looked for a scapegoat after the defeat in WWI and accused the Jews of being responsible; in the latter case, the loss of statehood to the USSR and the only passive resignation to the Soviet occupation caused trauma and anger among

¹⁵³ During the interwar time, Vilnius was mentioned in the Lithuanian constitution consistently as the capital of Lithuania, although it was Polish territory. Kaunas, however, was solely the "provisional capital" of Lithuania. The return of Vilnius to Lithuania thanks to the Soviets had to be paid with independence by the Lithuanians.

¹⁵⁴ The USSR incorporated Lithuania because of rigged and falsified elections.

¹⁵⁵ Tauber 2004:111.

¹⁵⁶ The stereotype of the "Jewish Communist" can be met until today in Lithuania. The documents in the archives, however, present a different picture. When Lithuania was occupied by the Soviets, the LKP had 1,600 members, among them 36% Jews. In Kaunas, the capital of the inter-war period, Jews were representing 76% of the LKP members (Eidintas 2003:14). The percentage of Jews in the party was constantly reduced throughout the next months. Lithuanians were participating, of course, since the beginning in the LKP, although that fact is often ignored, and their percentage was rising. In 1940, from 254 people accepted to the NKVD, the notorious Soviet secret security service, there were 44 Jews and 118 Lithuanians (Eidintas 2003:19). While Jews were overrepresented, claims that Jews dominated the NKVD in Lithuania are not true. Another issue was the dismantling of the Catholic Church, which the atheist authorities ordered. In fact, Lithuanians believed that it were the Jews who wanted to destroy the Catholic Church. It is often ignored that Jews suffered disproportionately under Communist rule as they lost their property through collectivization, as many Jews were active businessmen during the interwar period.

Lithuanians. A moral crisis throughout the country was created, not least in the intellectual and political elite of Lithuania.¹⁵⁷ Thus, the economic and political crisis during the 1930s ultimately created a psychological crisis during the Soviet occupation. Alfonsas Eidintas stated that the Lithuanian society was paralyzed and broken in 1940.¹⁵⁸

Not surprisingly, many Jews saw the Soviet Union as the lesser of the two evils on Lithuania's border as reports about the Nuremberg laws and the Jewish discrimination in the Third Reich also reached Lithuania's Jews. Despite the fact that Stalin was an anti-Semite himself, anti-Jewish policies in the USSR were neither evident nor reported in the media.¹⁵⁹ In any case, the Nazi option was literally *no* option for Jews. Moreover, the interwar period led to an exclusion of Jews in Lithuania's public service, the media, and the army. Hence, the mere presence of Jews in these sectors caused distress and anger among a large part of Lithuanians which fuelled the view that Jews ruled Lithuania although it was obviously the Soviets who controlled the Lithuanian SSR. Yet, it was just another sign that the stereotype of the Jewish Communist was deeply entrenched in society. The real Lithuanian tragedy was the fact that in case the Jews would not have been so excluded during the interwar period in independent Lithuania, it would have been more common to see Jews in higher or leading positions in government.¹⁶⁰ On the opposite, Lithuanians believed that Jews committed genocide of ethnic Lithuanians during the Soviet occupation in 1940-1941. As a result, many Lithuanians, until today, believe in the thesis of a "double genocide," which will be dealt with more intensively in section 5.4. Basically, it was the idea that Jews could not expect any mercy during the time of the Holocaust because the Jews allegedly had betrayed Lithuania already between 1940 and 1941 and committed genocide against Lithuanians.¹⁶¹

In the following, a lot of numbers and statistics are going to be presented. The collective memory of Lithuanians has a very different picture on the involvement of Jews in the first Soviet interlude than the numbers of the archives actually display. Consequently it is of importance to demystify the allegations of the "Bolshevik Jew" in Lithuania. Liudas Truska did some intensive research on the years 1940 and 1941 and came to the conclusion that there was no Jewish betrayal of the Lithuanians. On the contrary, Truska discovered "nasty behavior" of Lithuanians and mentioned that the government of Lithuania, where no single Jew was represented, accepted the ultimatum of the USSR, but without protest despite the breaches of treaties by the Soviet Union. Officers of the Lithuanian army were the first to welcome the occupying army. In the so-called People's Seimas, which asked for the entrance into the Soviet Union, 67 Lithuanians, 4 Jews, 3 Poles, 2 Byelorussians, and one Latvian were present.

In the Lithuanian Communist Party, at the end of 1939, a third of the members were Jews.¹⁶² Shortly before Lithuania was annexed to the Soviet Union on 15 June 1940, the LKP consisted of 1,261 members, among them 54% Lithuanians and 31% Jews. Jews in the LKP branch of the city of Kaunas were particularly active, constituting 71% of all members in June 1940. After a small increase of Jewish LKP members in July, until October 1940, the share of Jews in the LKP fell to

¹⁵⁷ Tauber 2004:112.

¹⁵⁸ Eidintas 2003:15. Lithuania's society was faced with successive blows: the Polish ultimatum, the loss of Klaipeda, the Soviet ultimatum and Smetona's exile, the social atomization of Soviet rule, and finally the German invasion produced a profound social demoralization. An atmosphere was created which fostered the spread of unfavorable phenomena such as anti-Semitism, opportunism, and collaboration.

¹⁵⁹ Since WWII Stalin had become paranoiac. Shortly before Stalin's death it became apparent that he thought about a purge of Jews. In January 1953 a group of Kremlin doctors were arrested on charges of plotting the medical murder of high-level Soviet officials. The 15 doctors, most of them Jewish, were accused of poisoning party leaders on orders from the American Joint Distribution Committee, a Zionist organization. The charges, which got to be known as "Doctors' Plot," were withdrawn after Stalin's death in the same year. Yet, the Soviet campaign against Jews amplified.

¹⁶⁰ Eidintas 2003:22.

¹⁶¹ Eidintas 2003:13.

¹⁶² It is commonly estimated that Lithuania in 1940/1941 had about 3 million inhabitants, among them 208,000 Jews (7% of the population).

16% from the 5,365 LKP members. Such a development was accompanied with the expulsion of LKP members who were forced to leave the Communist Party or left on voluntary grounds, among them 49% Jews.¹⁶³ Until June 1941 the number of Jews in the LKP had fallen further to 13% of the overall total of 4,918 party members, while Lithuanians constituted 47%.¹⁶⁴

In the Central Committee of the LKP were 24 Lithuanians, 5 Jews, and 18 Russian-speaking members in February 1941. Among the 49 LSSR People's Commissars and their deputies were only 5 Jews, while there were 26 Lithuanians present.¹⁶⁵ Among the candidates for the People's Seimas were 4 Jews – 5% of the future MPs –, while Lithuanians accounted to 86%.¹⁶⁶ Among the 15 members of the presidium of the Provisional Supreme Soviet were 13 Lithuanians and one Jew.¹⁶⁷ In the NKGB¹⁶⁸ 55 Jews were working, representing 11% of its members and among the 94 people in higher ranks were 5 Jews in May 1941. Jews had to suffer even more than Lithuanians in economic terms. Out of the 986 factories nationalized, 57% of them belonged to Jews. Moreover, Jews formerly owned 83% of the nationalized workshops.¹⁶⁹

15,000-18,000 Lithuanian citizens were forcefully deported by the Soviets in June 1941, only a few days before the Germans started to invade the Soviet Union. Interestingly, Lithuanian historiography had forgotten for a long time to point out that among those deported were also Jewish Lithuanians, to be exact 13.5% of the deportees.¹⁷⁰ At the same time, it was often suggested that to a large extent it were Jews who were responsible for the deportations. According to Arvydas Anusauskas, during 1939-1941 overall 23,000 people from Lithuania were deported to the Soviet Union, among them 9,100 non-Lithuanians.¹⁷¹ The *International Commission for the Evaluation of the Crimes of the Nazi and Soviet Occupation Regimes* in Lithuania pointed out that in the period from 14-19 June 1941 alone, overall 12,832 people from Lithuania were deported. In addition, 4,663 detained prisoners were expelled to Siberia.¹⁷²

As Theodore Weeks concluded from Truska's contributions, the following accusations against Jews in Lithuania should be mentioned: (1) Jews welcomed the Red Army and Sovietization, (2) Jews were inordinately represented in the Communist Party and in the NKVD apparatus, (3) Jews were favored over Lithuanians by the new Soviet rulers, and (4) Jews were spared of the arrests and deportations suffered by Lithuanians in the period of 1940/1941.¹⁷³ These myths, summarized above, can often be met in Lithuania until today. The supposed mass involvement of Jews in the Soviet occupation structures in the years 1940/1941 is clearly proven to be inaccurate.

4.3. Operation Barbarossa

In the morning hours of 22 June 1941, Nazi Germany started the so-called *Operation Barbarossa*, the code name for the German invasion of the Soviet Union. Despite some disbelief of revisionists to this day, the evidence clearly suggests that

¹⁶³ Maslauskienė 2002:124-128.

¹⁶⁴ Maslauskienė 2002:135.

¹⁶⁵ Giordano 2003:3.

¹⁶⁶ Maslauskienė 2002:57.

¹⁶⁷ Maslauskienė 2002:73.

¹⁶⁸ The NKVD was divided on 3 February 1941 into the NKGB (State Security People's Commissariat) and the NKVD (People's Commissariat for Internal Affairs). The NKGB was responsible for ensuring the security of the state while the NKVD kept the general internal affairs.

¹⁶⁹ Truska 2003:269-270.

¹⁷⁰ Giordano 2003:3.

¹⁷¹ Anusauskas 2002:9.

¹⁷² Zingeris/Racinskas 2003:2.

¹⁷³ Weeks 2007:422.

the Third Reich had planned the Soviet invasion since autumn 1940. In fact, the attack against the USSR had already been scheduled for May 1941, but Italy's losses in the Mediterranean, in particular Greece, delayed the incursion.¹⁷⁴ Preparations for an immediate Soviet attack on Germany were not the case.

First of all, it has to be understood which plans the Germans had before their invasion of the Soviet Union. In particular interesting for this thesis is the fate of the Jews. It is indeed a gloomy picture one encounters; plans that seem unbelievably abhorrent, but actually true. The Nazis had developed plans to restructure Eastern Europe at least since 1939, including the Western parts of the Soviet Union. According to the 1941 developed *Generalplan Ost* ("General Plan East"), the German *Lebensraum* ("living space") had to be extended.¹⁷⁵ 31 million Slavs should be removed from their current territory and deported further eastward; some other 30 million may die of organized famine.¹⁷⁶ Jews had no space in those plans at all and were not even mentioned, implying that they would be annihilated. The German *Herrenmensch* ("superior being") should dominate "the East" as a master and be served by servile Slavs.¹⁷⁷

The Nazis planned to overrun the Soviet Union and destroy the Red Army right away.¹⁷⁸ After a prompt victory against the Soviets thanks to a *Blitzkrieg* strategy, the Germans intended to turn their full attention towards the invasion of the UK.¹⁷⁹ Yet the Germans were notoriously understaffed to actually control the newly seized areas.¹⁸⁰ Consequently the need for involvement of the locals arose and the Nazis depended on their help. At the same time, no resistance was to be possible because the Germans used to answer with utter terrorization of locals. The specific policies were carried out in an ambiguous manner because SS, *Wehrmacht*, and civil authorities fought for influence in the newly occupied territories of the Soviet Union. The result was an institutional struggle, which occasionally led to contradictory policies of the Nazis. In any case, a human being had no value in the conception of the Nazi ideology and that had a big impact on the Soviet invasion. In the logic of the Germans, potential betrayers had to be killed.¹⁸¹ Yet such a perverted understanding of life was radicalized even more during the first weeks of *Operation Barbarossa*. Until the invasion of the Soviet Union, Jews in all territories under German influence were treated brutally. The Soviet invasion opened new doors for a circle of violence that eventually should lead to the *Endlösung* ("Final Solution") of the European Jewry.¹⁸² It has to be kept in mind that Soviet

¹⁷⁴ Shirer 1960:740-753.

¹⁷⁵ The "General Plan East" was developed by the Planning Group III B of the "SS-Planning Office for the Strengthening of the German National Character" of the Security Service of the RSHA and the Institute of Agrarian Policy at the Berlin based Friedrich-Wilhelm-University between 1940 to 1942 to re-organize the territories east of the Third Reich, which should be incorporated to win new *Lebensraum* for Germans, to Germanize Eastern Europe. Later, also Alfred Rosenberg, the so-called chief ideologist of the Nazis, dealt with the "drive toward the East." The ideas of "German living space in the East" go back to the 19th century and were developed by the German nationalist movement.

¹⁷⁶ Dieckmann/Suziedelis 2006:108-109, Gerlach 1999:46-76.

¹⁷⁷ For the Baltic States, including Lithuania, such a policy implied the following: all Jews should disappear completely. The Baltic States should provide the Germans with "living space," whereby "racial suitable" people already living there should be assimilated with the newly arriving Germans. Those people in the Baltic States who were considered "racially inferior" as well as the larger part of the population should be removed; what they would have to expect was left unexplained. The remaining Baltic people should build a *Gau* ("county") with the Germans (Dieckmann 2003:66-67).

¹⁷⁸ Plans for the conception of the war against the Soviet Union were developed in Berlin during the period of December 1940 to February 1941. The military strategy worked out implied strategic and logistical considerations that included the involvement of Himmler's SS troops between March and May 1941.

¹⁷⁹ The NS elite was convinced that it was necessary that the resources of the Soviet Union were controlled by the Third Reich, particularly oil and wheat (Gerlach 1999:44-94).

¹⁸⁰ It is often underestimated what scale the German planning of the invasion in fact had from the outset. The *Wehrmacht* calculated to obtain their supply from the local population – to whatever cost. Famine and terror were seen as necessary as long as the troops at the front got their supplies.

¹⁸¹ The *Wehrmacht* was given the right for collective violence in the Soviet Union. German military tribunals were not allowed to sentence any military subject during the war in the East. Consequently, the Soviet population was denied any legal protection. Hence, the *Wehrmacht* deliberately allowed the killings of the SS and Himmler's police units (Priemel 2003:27). Furthermore, historical research proves that the *Wehrmacht* was involved in the Holocaust at all levels and from the very beginning of the Soviet invasion (Streit 1997; Gerlach 1999).

¹⁸² The Germans killed their victims according to the course of the war. It always depended on security, war economy, and the overall context whether or not killings took place. It is clear in any case that the Jews were to be killed completely (Herbert 1998).

Jews were targeted first by the Nazi killing machine.¹⁸³ Research suggests that the mass killings of *all* Jews, also women and children, had been conducted from late July 1941 onwards.¹⁸⁴

4.4. The Destruction of the Lithuanian Jewry

The subsequent section is going to cover the core events in which this research paper is interested. It is about the destruction of the Lithuanian Jewry from 1941-1944. Those events will be embedded in chapter 5 in the context of the Lithuanian collective memory about those events described now.

According to the renowned Lithuanian historian Liudas Truska the Holocaust in Lithuania is exceptional, even in the European context, in four regards: 1) the direct or indirect involvement of Lithuanian institutions in actions against Jews; 2) higher anti-Semitism of the local population in comparison to other occupied territories, whereby Truska argued that this is mainly linked to the Soviet occupation interlude 1940-1941; 3) the massive extermination of Jews in a very early stage of the German occupation, where already about 75% of Jews were killed until the end of 1941; and 4) the huge number of people killed, as some 95% of the Jews perished.¹⁸⁵ In the following, an overview is given of what happened between 22 June 1941 and July 1944. It is structured in four parts. The separation of the subsections is footed on a temporal basis, as well as on the certain stages of intent, method, and scale.

4.4.1. The Persecution of Jews (22 June – July 1941)

The Lithuanian SSR was the first Soviet republic to be attacked by the divisions of the *Heeresgruppe Nord* ("Army Group North") of the *Wehrmacht* in the morning hours of 22 June 1941 on their way to Leningrad. The German invasion started without declaring war to the USSR and thus caught Moscow by surprise. Already two days later, Vilnius and Kaunas, the two most important cities of the LSSR, had already been secured by the German army, which rapidly moved forward as the Red Army was retreating quickly. Immediately behind the army, mobile troops followed – so-called *Einsatzgruppen (EG)*, organized by the German Security Police and the Security Service –, which had the task to "cleanse" the area of "dangerous subjects," a euphemism for Jews and Communists.¹⁸⁶ In the Baltic States, it was the EG A which was responsible for "cleansing" the hinterland under the lead of Walther Stahlecker.

¹⁸³ The "Final Solution" for *all* Jews in German influenced territory began to develop in late 1941 (most likely in October), whereby no written document can be detected, as all related documents were most likely destroyed by the Nazis. Only later, extermination camps, in Belzec, Sobibor, and Treblinka started to run under the General Government in 1942. Moreover, Chelmo (*Kulmhof*), Majdanek and not least Auschwitz, served as extermination camps although at the same time the Germans used those camps as labor camps. The killing of Jews in extermination camps became known under the code name *Aktion Reinhard* ("Operation Reinhard").

¹⁸⁴ On 31 July 1941, Göring authorized Heydrich to "make all necessary preparations [... for a] total solution of the Jewish question" (Browning 2004:315). Such a remark did not yet refer to the entire German occupied territory, but specifically to the Soviet Union. Interestingly, Matthäus remarked that the Nazi leaders were pretty unsure which impact the invasion and the killings would have. Hence, even Goebbels instructed his propaganda machine not to focus on the killings of "Judeo-Bolshevist" elements but rather on portraying the attack on the USSR as an "act of liberation" (Matthäus 2007:221).

¹⁸⁵ Truska 2003:262.

¹⁸⁶ On 28 April 1941 the EGs were empowered "within the framework of their mandate to take executive measures against the civilian population" (Buchheim et. al. 1967:171-173). The EGs consisted of the Security Service, the *Waffen-SS*, the Security Police and the Order Police, consisting overall of some 3,000 men in 1941. At the beginning, four EGs were established which were subdivided in *Einsatzkommandos (EK)* and *Sonderkommandos (SK)*. The EG A, responsible for the Baltic States, consisted of 990 men. It was constituted of SK 1a, EK/SK 1b, EK 2, and EK 3 (Hilberg 1961:299-303). The EGs were responsible for the shooting of civilians,

The German invaders were welcomed by a large part of the population. Lithuanians cheered in almost euphoria-like salutations and welcomed the Nazis with flowers. Such a reception stood in strong contrast to other experiences in Europe since September 1939.¹⁸⁷ There was hope that Lithuania would regain its independence although such aspirations were certainly naïve.¹⁸⁸ Germany had conducted a special policy towards the national minorities, among them Lithuanians, in the Soviet Union since spring 1941.¹⁸⁹ Certain groups should be prepared to take over responsibility after the German invasion of the Soviet Union and an anticipated quick victory. In Berlin it was believed that they had full control over the Lithuanian underground movement, because of the Lithuanian émigré circles.¹⁹⁰

During the first days of the German invasion, several pogroms took place across Lithuanian territory.¹⁹¹ The local population murdered thousands of Jews, targeting able-bodied men of working age.¹⁹² The most frequently cited massacre in literature is the one in the Lietukis garage in Kaunas on 27 June 1941. In public overall some 50-60 Jews were killed by Lithuanian nationalists.¹⁹³ The largest pogrom during the first days, however, was the one in Vilijampole from 25-27 June 1941; probably up to a thousand Jews were killed.¹⁹⁴ The happening of pogroms may most likely be explained by anti-Semitic sentiments, but it also suggested that the murder took place out of political reasons. Citizens of Lithuania, Jewish and non-Jewish, were accused of being Communist, justifiably or not, and shot by locals on the spot. The role of the German Security Police during these pogroms remains unclear, but the Nazis incited Lithuanians to actions against Jews.¹⁹⁵ Evidently shootings were conducted by the Order Police from Memel (today Klaipėda) like in the town of Gargzdai, situated in the border area between the Third Reich and Lithuania, where already on 23 June overall 201 Jews were arrested and shot the next day.¹⁹⁶

On 28 June 1941, only 6 days after the commencement of the invasion, the territory of the Lithuanian SSR was under German control. As early as 30 June 1941, five Lithuanian auxiliary police companies were set up, two of them at the disposal of SK 1b. Lithuanian soldiers of the Red Army, organized in the 29th Territorial Riflemen's Corps, deserted in

mainly Jews and Communists, behind the frontier. The EGs had the task to kill the Jews, Communists and other "hostile elements" immediately in their village, town or city (Gilbert 1994:64-65).

¹⁸⁷ Tauber 2003:40-41, Levin 1997:222. Such a paradox is explained by Lithuanian historiography with the Lithuanian experience with the Soviet occupation and the fact that Lithuania was not a free, independent country in 1941 (Zizas 2003:29-30).

¹⁸⁸ On 23 June 1941, Lithuanians thought to present the Lithuanian Provisional Government (LPG) to the Germans as a *fait accompli* to regain independence. There was hope that the Nazis would grant Lithuania the same status as the Slovakia protectorate. Yet the government had a short expiry date. Already on 5 August 1941 the LPG was dissolved. Despite the claims of members of the LPG to have no relation to the "Provisions about the Situation of Jews," it is clear that the LPG were in favor of the establishment of a concentration camp for Jews. Moreover, the prime minister and the minister of interior both signed the "Provisions about the Situation of Jews." Hence, Valentinas Brandisauskas (2003:51-53) concludes that the selective memory shown of former members of the LPG is shattering their other claims in written texts and remembrances.

¹⁸⁹ Lithuanian rebels, particularly the LAF, had not only distributed anti-Semitic propaganda but also encouraged anti-Jewish actions since March 1941. The LAF, established in November 1940 in Berlin, declared that Jews lost the "hospitality right" to stay in Lithuania because of their collaboration with the Soviets. In practice, Lithuanian Jews were outlawed by the statement of the LAF that had quite some influence on parts of Lithuania's society and eventually the LAF had its contribution in the killing of Jews (MacQueen 1999:23).

¹⁹⁰ Dieckmann/Suziedelis 2006:118.

¹⁹¹ Pogroms are understood as spontaneous outbreaks of violence or riots directed against a particular part of the population, usually based on ethnic or religious reasons. Pogroms can be unorganized but also premeditated and involve victims. Dov Levin identified over 40 localities where pogroms took place before or during the arrival of the *Wehrmacht* in the end of June 1941 (Levin 2000:218).

¹⁹² It was Reinhard Heydrich, chief of the Security Service, who ordered that local pogroms should take place. An exact number of Jewish victims of pogroms by Lithuanians cannot be determined. The Jäger report stated that Lithuanian locals murdered 4,000 Jews across Lithuania during the first days of the invasion. Usually, it was the LAF, operating from Berlin, which had an influence on some parts of the population. It has to be stressed that the pogroms usually took place without interference from the local population. The EGs, however, actively incited locals to carry out pogroms (Arad 1982:48). According to Martin Gilbert's *Atlas of the Holocaust* until 16 July 1941 already 12,500 Jews were killed on Lithuanian soil – including pogroms and the first shootings, but before the real massacre began (Gilbert 1995:73). Also Hilberg notes that in Lithuania "spontaneous" pogroms were raised in Lithuania although he also mentions that it was a surprise for Stahlecker that it was at the beginning not that easy to incite Lithuanians starting pogrom against Jews on a bigger scale (Hilberg 1961:325).

¹⁹³ According to the photos taken, it can be estimated that it were ten perpetrators who killed the Jews. They used iron bars and wooden sticks.

¹⁹⁴ The estimates range from 600 to 1,000 Jews killed in the pogrom. As all too often the sources vary significantly.

¹⁹⁵ Dieckmann/Suziedelis 2006:126, 130-134.

¹⁹⁶ Matthäus 2007:223.

masses and often joined the Lithuanian auxiliary police, helping Germans to shoot “dangerous elements.” Such collaborators with the Nazis were sometimes anti-Soviet partisans after WWII. By the institutionalization of Lithuanian collaboration, the pogroms stopped and the organized killing started. The extermination of the Lithuanian Jewry began; male Jews in the age between 15 and 60 years old were shot.

The first mass shootings took place in the 7th fort in Kaunas, whereby at one instance in early July 1941 the Lithuanian commander Bronius Norkus allegedly killed 3,000 Jews without order. Those Jews were not shot regularly but in an “uncontrolled” manner, which led to fears in the Security Police that conflicts with the *Wehrmacht* might arise. Hence it was decided by the German Security Police to form *Mordkommandos* (“special death squads”) under German lead, the so-called *Rollkommandos* (“flying squads”), because they were motorized. The “Hamann commando,” as the “flying squads” were also known, got the task to shoot Jews in “controlled” killings and in an organized manner.¹⁹⁷ In nearly all instances, at first male Jews were shot so that they would have no possibility to offer resistance. Despite the killings which took place during the first five weeks of the German occupation in Lithuania, the vast majority of the Jewish community was still alive.

4.4.2. Mass Killings of all Jews (August – December 1941)

In mid-July 1941, the Army Group North of the *Wehrmacht* only slowly moved forward. The strategy of a *Blitzkrieg* had already failed at a very early stage, although this was only recognized admittedly in winter 1941. The German army was neither able to bottle up the Red Army in the North nor was it able to get supplies from the hinterland, which had direct consequences for the Baltic States. The food supply was shortened for all people in the occupied territories. They were classified into different categories which determined how much food they would get. The selection followed racial and national-ethnic criteria. Such plans ultimately led to the barbaric conclusions that most Jews would be “dispensable” and excluded from any supply. The mass murder and ghettoization was consequently a “necessity” in the logic of the Nazis in order to achieve their own objectives.¹⁹⁸ Such an assessment goes in line with the order of Reinhard Heydrich on 17 July 1941, to kill *all* Jews in the Soviet occupied territory.¹⁹⁹ Starting in August 1941, the “flying squads” of Hamann followed those orders, shooting Jewish women and Jewish children en masse on Lithuanian territory, implementing the “Final Solution.”²⁰⁰

The shootings led in general to no disagreement of the Security Police with the *Wehrmacht* and the newly set up civil authorities. Interventions are reported, however, in Kaunas, Siauliai, and Vilnius during a later stage in 1941. Of concern were not the shootings themselves but rather the question of what to do with Jewish men “who were still economically useful.”²⁰¹ Initially, Jews who were considered a security threat or being Communists were to be killed.²⁰² Yet, the Security

¹⁹⁷ SS *Obersturmführer* (first lieutenant) Joachim Hamann, born in 1913, was delegated to Section IV (*Gestapo*) of the EK 3. Good insight in his crimes committed can be found in Stang’s book about the “flying squads” (Stang 1996). The participation of his men in the killing varied from instance to instance but mainly consisted of the Lithuanian auxiliary police (Heine 2003:93).

¹⁹⁸ Dieckmann 2003:66-70.

¹⁹⁹ Hillgruber 1997:193.

²⁰⁰ Eckert 2003:134; Heine 2003:95.

²⁰¹ As soon as the civil authorities and the *Wehrmacht* had understood that the *Blitzkrieg* strategy would not work, they intervened at the killings and insisted that the remaining ghettos in Vilnius, Kaunas, and Siauliai would continue to exist. Such a move was not done out of humanitarian reasons but for the sole rationale that such *Arbeitsjuden* (“Work Jews”) would be needed for economic reasons.

Service under Heydrich and Himmler widened the list almost immediately to the ultimate aim to “liquidate as many Jews as possible.”²⁰³ Next to Jews, also numerous Communists were shot, though to a far lower degree and it was often unclear whether those people really were members of the Communist Party or not.

The Lithuanian auxiliary police conducted most of the shootings. Yet it has to be stressed that also the Germans took part in the mass killings – not only as organizers and commanders but also as shooters themselves.²⁰⁴ Among the German troops involved were EK 1b and the EK 3.²⁰⁵ Often, the Lithuanians looted Jewish property after the arrest of Jews. It is estimated that in Hamann’s “flying squads” a ratio of 1 German to 8 Lithuanians was the average.²⁰⁶ Yet it varied on the killing and situation how Hamann’s killing operations functioned, usually adapting to the local situation. Interestingly, instead of asking how non-Jewish Lithuanians could have reacted, the publication of the *International Commission for the Evaluation of the Crimes of the Nazi and Soviet Occupation Regimes* goes on saying that “the majority saw no way out, no chance to escape or resist – the terror from the Germans and their collaborators was too great, and the environment, too hostile.”²⁰⁷ Yet it is clear that many Lithuanians were involved in the killing. Both, German as well as Lithuanian policies led to the Holocaust in Lithuania. Anyhow, the Jews were trapped in summer 1941 – there was no possibility to escape; only those were lucky who were able to retreat with the Red Army. Or as Dieckmann and Suziedelis put it,

many Lithuanian regional and local officials, as well as police and civilians, were involved in the entire gamut of activities which aimed to: identify, select, separate and then isolate the victims; plunder their property; and finally, participate in their murder. Although the initiative did not come from the Lithuanians, many made use of the impunity, the lawlessness made possible by German anti-Semitic policies. At the same time, there was room for individual choice both among the German and Lithuanian actors.²⁰⁸

The ghettoization process in the Lithuanian provinces started in end of July and lasted until mid-August 1941. Already in November 1941 the ghettos were already emptied again completely because of the shootings of Hamann’s “flying squads.”²⁰⁹ A different situation took place in the larger cities with a vast Jewish population, namely Vilnius, Kaunas and Siauliai. In those cities, three big ghettos were established between July and September 1941. It is estimated that around 40,000-45,000 Jews who survived the shootings of 1941 were confined in those ghettos.

As early as 30 June 1941, the SK 1b established a “concentration camp” at the site of the 7th Fort of Kaunas. At first used as a killing site to shoot male Jews, it was later used as a prison. In early July 1941, a ghetto was set up in the 9th Fort of Kaunas by the order of Stahlecker. On 15 August 1941, Stahlecker and Jäger declared by this date all Jews from Kaunas

²⁰² In the beginning of the German occupation, different German units claimed to “free” Lithuania from the Communists. As the stereotype of a Jew being a Communist was so deep-rooted, many Jews were killed without being related with the Soviet regime or the LKP at all; some were even in opposition to it. Also some Lithuanians were accused of being Communist and thus shot – without it being the case. In any case it cannot be claimed that during the first days or weeks of the German occupation political murder was conducted. From the very beginning Jews were killed on racial grounds.

²⁰³ Dieckmann/Suziedelis 2006:114-116.

²⁰⁴ Dieckmann/Suziedelis 2006:136.

²⁰⁵ SK 1a, EK 2, EK/SK 7a, and EK 9 were as well partly and temporarily involved in the killings on Lithuanian soil. SK 1a was involved in the first killings after the invasion in the border zones between Lithuania and the Third Reich. EK 2 was active in Zemaitija, but there are only few sources available. Yet, EK 2 was very likely involved in the killing of some hundred Jews in Siauliai. In particular EK 9, responsible for Vilnius from 1 July until 8 August 1941, was responsible for killings in the early days of the occupation. It is estimated that they killed 5,000 Jews from 4-20 July 1941. On 9 August 1941 Jäger’s EK 3 arrived (Arad 1982:77-78). In fact Jäger’s EK 3 turned out to be the most murderous unit of all EGs (Hilberg 1961:309). During the killings, the EKs and SKs always had to rely on assistance from local police, auxiliary police, or Lithuanian partisans.

²⁰⁶ Dieckmann/Suziedelis 2006:174.

²⁰⁷ Dieckmann/Suziedelis 2006:164.

²⁰⁸ Dieckmann/Suziedelis 2006:164.

²⁰⁹ In Jäger’s report of 1 December 1941 an example of the experience of Hamann’s “flying squads” is explained according to the village of Rokiskis. In detail Jäger is describing that first the right spot for digging pits had to be found. When these were located and dug out, the people to be liquidated would be brought there. As in the case of Rokiskis, 3,208 people were transported over a distance of 4.5km. The “work” had to be done in 24 hours, hence 60 from the 80 available Lithuanian partisans had to take care of the transport and cordon off the area. The other partisans were shooting the Jews together with Hamann’s men.

had to be in the Ghetto. Some 30,000 Jews had to move to the city district Vilijampole, by the Jews called *Slobodka*, where until then 15,000 people lived.

In Vilnius, the so-called *Ypatingas Burys* ("Special Squad") became infamous for their behavior and deeds. They were at first subordinated to EK 9 and later moved on to the German Security Service. The *Ypatingas Burys* consisted of Lithuanian volunteers and was used like a German *Sonderkommando* by the Nazis. The overall number of people involved varied most probably between 40 and 100 people, whereby an exact amount can hardly be given to this date. It is also almost impossible to identify a number of killed people the *Ypatingas Burys* are responsible for.

On 2 October 1941, after the mass shooting of 2,236 Jews in Zagare the "flying squads" of Hamann were dissolved. Hamann had completed his abhorrent job, because there were no more Jews alive in the Lithuanian provinces.²¹⁰ In the larger cities, mass shootings continued. The *Große Aktion* ("great action") on 28 October 1941 was the most horrible killing in Vilnius. In autumn 1941, Jews from other countries around Europe were brought to Kaunas and shot immediately. About 1,000 foreign Jews were killed in the 9th Fort, among those Jews from Vienna, Frankfurt, and Munich. The biggest massacre took place on 29 October 1941, when nearly 10,000 Jews were shot at the 9th Fort in Kaunas on a single day.

The infamous "Jäger Reports" of 10 September 1941 and 1 December 1941 are often cited documents of the Holocaust. The two reports are one of the few surviving Nazi documents directly proving the killings, as the Nazis were able to destroy most of the other documents before the victory of the Allies. The Jäger reports state in detail which command at which date and place killed a certain amount of people.²¹¹ Yet, the report of 1 December 1941 cannot give a comprehensive picture of the first half of Germany's occupation in Lithuania. The problem is that Jäger "only" covers the area under the jurisdiction of his EK 3, excluding the Western border regions of Lithuania, some parts of the Siauliai district and some of the murders in Vilnius, most prominently the "Yom Kippur Action." In particular Vilnius is problematic because no one is able to say how many Jews were in Vilnius in late June 1941 as many Polish Jews had fled just months before from the Nazis as a result of the Molotov Ribbentrop pact. As a consequence, the numbers of murdered people are much higher than the given number of the Jäger report.

The shootings in summer and fall 1941 killed the majority of Lithuania's Jews. Never have there been killed that many civilians on Lithuanian soil in modern history. In Lithuania it was moreover not necessary to first define and concentrate the Jews as it was done in Germany before the destruction could start. Jews were almost killed immediately in Lithuania as the limitation of legal rights, the ghettoization as well as the physical destruction virtually took place almost simultaneously in many instances. Accordingly, the whole Lithuanian Jewry on the countryside was killed during 1941 and a part of the Jews in the bigger cities.²¹² In fact, between mid-August and mid-September 1941 some 60,000 Lithuanian Jews were shot during four weeks.²¹³ On 1 December 1941 already about 75% of the Lithuanian Jewry was liquidated, the Jewish

²¹⁰ Heine 2003:94.

²¹¹ Jäger differentiated between Jews, Communists, Lithuanians, Poles, criminals, partisans, Russians, POWs, mental patients, gentile villagers, terrorists, and Germans. The absolute majority of killed people are by far Jews, who are differentiated between adult male and female Jews and Jewish children. On 10 September 1941, 76,355 deaths are reported; on 1 December 1941, it is stated that Jäger's unit murdered 118,303 Lithuanian Jews since its arrival. Moreover Jews of Latvia and Belarus were killed as well as German and Austrian Jews in the 9th Fort. For Jäger, the shootings were a mere matter of "organization."

²¹² Bubnys estimated that 100,867 Jews in the Lithuanian provinces (except the cities of Vilnius, Kaunas, Siauliai and Panevezys) were killed during 1941. The number is in stark contrast to the 65,967 Jews killed according to the Jäger report from 1 December 1941. The difference can be explained by the fact that the Jäger report has not included the districts of Kretinga, Taurage, Mazeikiai, Telsiai, Siauliai, Vilkaviskis, and Sakiai as the EK 3 was not responsible for these areas. Only 4,000 Jews (or 3.8%) survived the year 1941 in the Lithuanian province (Bubnys 2003a).

²¹³ Dieckmann/Suziedelis 2006:174-175.

communities of Lithuania were virtually destroyed. As a consequence the 150,000-160,000 Jews killed until the beginning of November 1941 are the highest number in the whole German occupied USSR until then and represented the most systematic murder of Jews.²¹⁴ According to the International Commission, “[n]ever have so many been killed on Lithuanian soil in so short a time.”²¹⁵ Indeed, the Holocaust was the bloodiest incident on Lithuanian territory in modern times.²¹⁶

4.4.3. The “Calmer Period” (January 1942 – March 1943)

Most Lithuanian Jews were already massacred during 1941. From 1942 onwards the “actions” against Jews had stopped for 1.5 years, but continued further in 1943 when the Jews left in the ghettos were sent to concentration camps. Indeed ghettos cannot be seen as a halt of the Jewish destruction but as a respite from death. Although the Nazis cynically contended that ghettos were set up to protect Jews, the reason behind the erection of ghettos was the exploitation of Jewish labor force. In the ghettos Jews had to wear yellow stars, their manpower was exploited, and numerous humiliations took place. The attitude by the German occupiers can be explained by the course of the war. In 1941, the Nazi authorities focused on the ideological battle against Jews and Communists, the repression of any kind of autonomy, and the economical exploitation of the occupied territory. In 1942, the economic colonization started to come to the center of attention and Jews were needed inside and outside of ghettos to achieve the economic goals of the Nazis. The situation changed in 1943 again when Soviet partisans and other started to sabotage and attack Germans from the hinterland and when it became clear that the battle of Stalingrad was lost.

On the one hand, rural ghettos in towns and villages were established usually just for a few weeks. Afterwards, in particular after mid-August 1941, the ghettos were liquidated and all inmates shot. Moreover, the Nazis were successful to implement a strategy of *divide et impera* (“divide and rule”), so Jews had to quarrel among themselves who would be killed. Hence the *Ältestenrat* (“Council of Elders”) had to decide for example in Kaunas who would get *Arbeits-scheine* (“work permits”). It was an ultimate decision about live and death, because without a work permit there was no reason to exist anymore in the eyes of the Nazis. The Germans forced the *Ältestenrat* to take the decisions because otherwise all Jews would be killed. Facing such a dilemma, it was often decided, as in Kaunas, to rescue at least some instead of killing them all. In Vilnius the head of the *Judenrat* (“Jewish Council”), Jakob Gens, faced a similar situation. Gens wanted the best for his people, yet he became continuously a more tragic person by fulfilling the demands of the Nazis.

In April 1943 the German Security Service chief informed the RSHA that 44,584 Jews were left in Lithuania: 23,950 in the Vilnius ghetto, 15,875 in the Kaunas ghetto, and 4,759 in Siauliai ghetto. Of these, 30,000 Jews were considered as *Arbeitsjuden* (“work Jews”).²¹⁷

²¹⁴ Dieckmann 2003:64. The overall number of Jews killed in Soviet territories occupied by the Germans until end of 1941 is estimated between 500,000-800,000 Jews (Matthäus 2007:219).

²¹⁵ Dieckmann/Suziedelis 2006:175.

²¹⁶ Dieckmann/Suziedelis 2006:175.

²¹⁷ Bubnys 2004:216.

4.4.4. The Final Liquidation (April 1943 – July 1944)

In February 1943 it was decided by the German administration that the “calm period” should come to an end. The districts of Svyriai and Asmena, formerly belonging to Belarus, were annexed to the general district of Lithuania and consequently cleansed of Jews. The ghettos in Svencionys, Mikaliskes, Asmena, and Salos were liquidated during March 1943.²¹⁸ Moreover, the labor camps and ghetto camps in the Vilnius district started to shut down. In April 1943, mass shootings took place in Paneriai, killing around 5,000 Jews.²¹⁹

In 1943 and 1944 a German victory against the Soviet Union became more and more questionable. Moreover, the Lithuanian hopes for its own sovereignty were not taken into account. While at the beginning of the German occupation, a participation in the Holocaust was seen as a favorable act to please the Germans, such participation was vanishing. Anti-German tendencies started to rise with 1943. As the Nazis were defeated at Stalingrad and elsewhere, there were more efforts to recruit Lithuanians for the army and also the attempt to colonize the country; all these factors brought Lithuanians in opposition to the Nazis.²²⁰ Many Lithuanians tried to distance themselves from the Nazis – not only because of the German occupational policy, but also because a return of the Soviets after the German defeat at Stalingrad seemed already likely. Nonetheless, there was no change in their attitude towards Jews; the underground press only tried to deny any complicity with Jewish murder. Anti-Semitic views and anti-Polish views in the area of Vilnius continued to thrive.²²¹ The Holocaust and its tragic development did not attract considerable attention at the Lithuanian anti-Nazi press, which neither wrote about the genocide openly nor condemned the murder of Jews firmly and principally. It also did not encourage its audience to save Jews or help them in any way.²²²

Soviet partisan activities rose during the last months of 1942. During the year 1943 punitive actions of the Germans were taken against the local population and villages because they did not subscribe to manpower enlistment, allegedly helped army deserters, or assisted partisans.²²³ On 21 June 1943, Himmler ordered to close all remaining Jewish ghettos in the *Reichskommissariat Ostland*, drive the Jews to concentration camps and the inmates were not allowed to leave the KZ from 1 August 1943 onwards. Yet the civil administration did not follow the orders, because it wanted to maintain its labor camps, as they were a source of substantial income.²²⁴

In October 1943 the ghetto in Siauliai was transformed to a concentration camp. On 15 July 1944 the KZ was liquidated and some 2,000 Jews were deported to the KZ Stutthof. Women and children were further sent to Auschwitz, men were taken to Dachau. Bubnys estimated that only 350-500 Jews from Siauliai survived the Holocaust.²²⁵

At the beginning of August 1943, there were some 18,500-19,000 Jews in the Vilnius ghetto. During August and September 1943 some 7,130 Jews were deported to the labor camp at Vaivara, Estonia. Hence, 11,000-12,000 Jews were left in Vilnius. On 23 September 1943 with the help of German and Ukrainian forces the ghetto of Vilnius was liquidated,

²¹⁸ Arad 1982:357-358

²¹⁹ Bubnys 2004:215-216.

²²⁰ Arad 1982:355.

²²¹ Dieckmann 2003:73.

²²² Truska 2003:264.

²²³ Arad 1982:372.

²²⁴ Arad 1982:401-403.

²²⁵ Bubnys 2004:218.

although it is estimated that some 2,000 Jews remained in hiding.²²⁶ About 5,000 Jews were deported to the gas chambers of Majdanek. Moreover, some 8,500-9,500 Jews were brought to Estonia, approximately 1,400-1,700 women to the Kaiserwald concentration camp outside of Riga, Latvia, and some hundred old or sick people were shot at Paneriai.²²⁷ The people in the concentration camps of Vaivara, Klooga, and Lagedi were either killed during their time in the camps or further deported to the KZ Stutthof on 19 July 1944. Already a week later 1,893 Jews – only women and children – from the Kaunas and Siauliai ghettos were moved from Stutthof to Auschwitz. The remaining Jews had to leave again in January 1944 when the Red Army approached. In a march, without being provided with food, the KZ inmates had to walk westwards during severe winter conditions. Only some people were able to survive although the whole group was on the eve of liberation.²²⁸

Additionally, there were still some 2,300 people at large camps in “Kailis” and the HKP. The people in hiding fled to the woods through the sewer, some found refuge by Christian acquaintances. On 2-3 July 1944, the labor camps of Vilnius were liquidated as the German front had broken down and the Red Army quickly approached the city. Most Jews were killed, only some hundred Jews in Vilnius were able to experience the liberation by the Soviet army.²²⁹ Overall some 2,000-3,000 Jews out of 57,000 Jews in Vilnius survived according to Arad.²³⁰

The Kaunas ghetto was transformed to a concentration camp due to an order of Himmler in the fall of 1943. The SS became responsible for the KZ. 2,000 Jews were deported to Estonia, some 700 to Auschwitz in October 1943.²³¹ In March 1944, 1,300 children and old people were taken out of the KZ Kaunas and deported to Majdanek and Auschwitz. When the Soviets liberated Kaunas in July 1944, the KZ was burnt down and blown up. Some 2,000 Jews at most were in the city, about 8% of the Ghetto population at the beginning, as some Jews were hiding or fighting in the forest.

Finally, it should be discussed which units were involved in the murder of the Lithuanian Jews. Overall it can be said that the German Security Police and Security Service (SD) was supported logistically and by personnel from the *Feldkommandanturen* (“Field Commands”) and the Security Divisions of the *Wehrmacht*,²³² German Police Battalions,²³³ other civilian and military police agencies and the German civil administration. In order to overcome the shortcomings of the personnel, Lithuanians were employed as well to humiliate and kill Jews in Lithuania. Among them were irregular forces like the *baltaraisciai* (“white-armed bands”), those of Klimaitis, units of the *Tautino darbo apsauga batalionas* (TDA)²³⁴ which were later known as *Schutzmannschaften* (“Self-Defense Battalions”), police departments and local constabularies, agents and officers of the Lithuanian Security Police, and “significant elements of the Lithuanian civilian administration, both transitional organs of the first weeks of the occupation as well as the later permanent institutions.”²³⁵ The Lithuanian Police Battalions were developed out of armed forces of the LAF, the TDA, partisans, unemployed and deserters of the 29th

²²⁶ The 23 September was chosen by the Lithuanian government to remember the Holocaust in Lithuania.

²²⁷ Arad 1982: 420-436.

²²⁸ Arad 1982:447-449.

²²⁹ Arad 1982:446-447.

²³⁰ Arad 1982:470.

²³¹ Dieckmann 1998:455.

²³² In particular the 207th, 281st, 285th and 403rd Security Division of the *Wehrmacht* have to be mentioned.

²³³ Primarily the 11th and the 65th German Police Battalion were involved in the Holocaust. In addition, the 2nd, 9th, 105th and 131st Battalion operated in Lithuania and helped in the detention and murder of Jews.

²³⁴ The LPG formed the TDA as the basis for a future Lithuanian army. Soon, they were reorganized by the Nazi authorities, a process which happened several times. In August 1941 they were known as *Pagalbines policijos tarnyba* (“auxiliary police”), but only three months later, in October 1941, they were renamed into *apsaugos batalionas* (“security battalions”). Just two months later, they were again reorganized and attached to the *Lietuviu savisaugos dalys* (“Lithuanian Self-Defense Units”).

²³⁵ It has to be stressed that not all of the people were involved in the killing of Jews, yet – depending on the organization – a large part of them were directly or at least indirectly involved.

territorial rifle corps of the Red Army.²³⁶ Those subjects were recruited on a voluntary basis to the battalions, although this fact is often contested in Lithuanian historiography. The *leitmotifs* of the Lithuanian Police Battalions were anti-Communism, anti-Semitism, Lithuanian nationalism, and the outlook for a regular income.²³⁷

In Vilnius a slightly different development in comparison to Kaunas took place. The newly created *Vilniaus atsaitymo tarnyba* (VAT) ("Reconstruction Service Vilnius") lasted until October 1941, consisting of five so-called self-defense police battalions, employing overall 82 officers and 1,932 troops.²³⁸ The 1st and 4th Battalions were used for guard duty in Vilnius, the 2nd went to the extermination camp of Majdanek, the 3rd was involved on a regular basis in *Sonderaktionen* ("special actions") against Jews and the 5th should secure the tracks of trains in the district of Vilnius. In Kaunas, also five police battalions were created and existed until November 1941. They consisted of overall 3,470 people. In Siauliai and Panevezys one police battalion each was established. The police battalions were reformed in the end of 1941 and got numbers from 1-15. In mid-1942 they were given additional battalion numbers: 250-265²³⁹ and 301-310. Overall, 25 battalions were formed in Lithuania, involving 12,000-13,000 Lithuanians. While at the beginning there was "no shortage of volunteers willing to join the battalions," the situation changed in 1943.²⁴⁰

Concerning the shootings it can be stated that the 1st and 3rd Company of the 1st (later 13th) Battalion in Kaunas definitely was involved in the shootings in the 7th Fort.²⁴¹ Usually the 3rd Company was used for shootings in Kaunas as well as in the Lithuanian provinces, but also the entire 1st battalion was used to assist in the mass murder. It has to be stressed that when the 3rd Company arrived in the provinces as "flying squads" with some German troops and some dozens of its own men, everything had already been prepared. The local police or Lithuanian "partisans" had already captured the Jews of the town and dug ditches where the innocent and defenseless civilians were to be shot.²⁴²

Other Lithuanian police battalions were also used outside of Lithuania, like the 2nd (later 12th) police battalion from Kaunas that killed together with the Germans about 46,000 people in Minsk, the great majority of them being Jews. Other Lithuanian police battalions were used in the Ukraine, as guards or to fight partisans. The 4th Company of the 4th (later 7th) Police Battalion was also involved in the killing of Jews. Also the 1st Police Battalion of Vilnius was used in 1943 to kill Jews of the ghetto in Vilnius and Jews from towns in Eastern Lithuania, the number of Jews whom they shot in Paneriai is estimated with some 5,000. They were also involved in other killings, guarding Jews to their murder site. The 2nd Police Battalion of Vilnius was involved in shootings in Paneriai as well. The 3rd Police Battalion of Vilnius helped in "special actions" against Jews, basically referring to the killing of Jews. They also guarded Jews to Paneriai and were involved in the shootings. It is reported that they enriched themselves by the valuables of the victims. In November 1941 they were transferred to Minsk. The 10th Police Battalion was the one from Panevezys. They helped to build up the ghetto and later guarded it. Also in the mass killings of August 1941 they were involved. The 14th Police Battalion from Siauliai was used in the mass murder of the Jews from the ghetto in Zagare.

²³⁶ Bubnys 2003:117-118.

²³⁷ Dean 2003:281.

²³⁸ Bubnys 2003:118-128.

²³⁹ Police battalions 260-265, according to Bubnys, were never created (Bubnys 2003:118).

²⁴⁰ Zizas 2003:70-71.

²⁴¹ Lather the 4th Fort was used, and from October 1941 onwards mainly the 9th Fort was used for mass shooting of Jews.

²⁴² Bubnys 2003:120-121.

De facto all Police Battalions were involved in the Holocaust. The 1st and 2nd battalions were indeed killer commandos in Lithuania and Belarus. It is very obvious that the Lithuanians helped the Germans in the killing, being so to speak the henchmen of the Lithuanian Jewry. At least ten Lithuanian battalions were involved in the genocide according to the current findings in the archives. Between 1942 and 1944 also the battalions 250-259 were involved in killing civilians, not in Lithuania though, because there were no Jews to kill besides those in the three main ghettos. No information was found so far about the involvement of the 4th, 5th, 6th, 8th, and 9th battalion in the killing of Jews according to Bubnys – but it cannot be automatically concluded that they were not directly or indirectly involved in the Holocaust just because the documents are missing. The 15th battalion, however, was most likely involved in Jew killings in Belarus.²⁴³ Overall Bubnys estimated that Lithuanian police battalions killed 78,000 Jews in Lithuania, Belarus, and the Ukraine, together with the *Gestapo* and local policemen.²⁴⁴

It has to be noted that no Lithuanian SS legion was formed. In February 1943 there was the attempt of the Germans to create a SS formation like the 15th and 19th *Waffen* SS division in Latvia and the 20th *Waffen* SS division in Estonia. The Nazis were caught by surprise when the Lithuanians refused to set up an SS division because they thought it would be an honor for Lithuanians. The result of the refusal was harsh, but not extraordinary. No extremely strict repressions followed because of the simple lack of Germans in Lithuania as the troops had to watch out for Soviet partisans in Northern Russia and Belarus. Nonetheless, the universities in Kaunas and Vilnius were closed and Lithuanian intellectuals were deported to the KZ Stutthof, yet under comparatively favorable conditions.²⁴⁵

Anti-Semitic attitudes of the LAF but also the Lithuanian Provisional Government are well documented. Dieckmann and Suziedelis conclude that “[t]here is no doubt that Lithuanian collaborators played an important role in the genocide. Whether that assistance was indispensable is another question.”²⁴⁶ It is yet clear that “a considerably larger number” of Lithuanian auxiliaries took part in individual action or helped in secondary roles like hunting Jews in hiding, securing the perimeters of killing operations and guarding detainees. The Lithuanian PG did not publicly disassociate itself from the ongoing genocide.

On the whole, at least 410,000 people lost their lives because of the German occupation in Lithuania between June 1941 and summer 1944.²⁴⁷ The killing of the Jews in Lithuania has to be seen in a special context because they were the only victim group that had to be eradicated totally. Overall, it is estimated that in over 200 Lithuanian locations Jews were murdered, to a large extent during summer and fall 1941.²⁴⁸ There were more than 200,000 Jews before the German invasion, but only 45,000 were left in the end of 1941. The remaining Jews in the ghettos were usually killed as well during the events until 1944. In 1945, it is estimated that 8,000-9,000 Lithuanian Jews were still alive, spread all around Europe.

²⁴³ Bubnys 2003:128.

²⁴⁴ Bubnys 2004:211.

²⁴⁵ Zizas 2003:72-75.

²⁴⁶ Dieckmann/Suziedelis 2006:176.

²⁴⁷ Next to more than 200,000 Jews, also at least 170,000 Soviet POWs were killed on Lithuanian territory or at a 25km broad German-Lithuanian boarder strip. Moreover, Dieckmann estimated that at least 40,000 people died in Lithuania in spring 1944 because of hunger. Furthermore it is estimated that 10,000 people had to die because they were non-Lithuanian Jews, Soviet activists, partisans, gypsies and mentally disabled (Dieckmann 2003:63). Not up to 45,000 non-Jewish Lithuanians died during the Nazi occupation but rather 5,000 were killed from 1941-1944, claimed Zizas. He approximated that 1,500-2,000 Communists and about 1,000 Poles were killed, as it were mainly Poles who were sent for forced labor to Germany. Moreover, most of the other casualties were from the anti-German resistance (Zizas 2003:121-123).

²⁴⁸ Atamuk 2000:172.

Hence the Lithuanian Jewry was de facto inexistent after WWII as many were afraid to return and they emigrated to Palestine or the US. The Nazis had indeed reached their aim to destruct the Lithuanian Jewry.²⁴⁹

The Vilna Gaon Jewish State Museum in Vilnius has gathered data on more than 3,000 people saving Jews, and 2,700 Lithuanians who helped Jews to survive. The figures are not finite. As the research of the Holocaust history advances, the number of saviors is growing, continuously new names of saviors of Jews are identified. There are various motives behind Jew saving: political, social, personal, diplomatic, or territorial reasons, and lots of others that are difficult to classify and are usually subjective in nature. Yet the chances of Jewish survival were low.²⁵⁰ The bitter truth of history is that Lithuania did not have any organized underground movement and no effective effort was made to save Jews. Thus, the absolute majority of Jews were exterminated and only individual courageous people, whose numbers was, unfortunately, only small, tried to save them.²⁵¹

Without the Lithuanian collaboration with the Germans, the persecution, ghettoization, and mass murder of the Jews would not have been possible in such a speed and enormity.

4.5. Soviet Liberation vs. Soviet Occupation

In summer 1944, the Soviet "liberators" arrived in Lithuania. The world became divided between good and bad. All those who collaborated with the Nazis were in physical threat. Others, who were victims of the Nazi regime or fought against the German oppressors, celebrated the Red Army. A year later, also Western Europe was liberated led by US troops. From 4-11 February 1945, at the collapse of the Third Reich, the US, the UK and the USSR divided Europe in two zones of influence for restructuring Europe after the victory against Nazi Germany. It was the follow-up of the conference in Tehran in the end of 1943 and was succeeded by the Potsdam conference in July 1945. East-Central Europe after Yalta had no option. In terms of guilt, Lithuanians tried their best to accuse the Nazis guilty of everything. While it is clearly true that the Germans organized the Jewish genocide and many other crimes against civilians but also POWs, there was also native collaboration.

During the German invasion into the Soviet Union it is estimated that a total of over 20 million Soviet people were killed.²⁵² Soldiers of the Red Army were killed on the battlefield or taken as POWs – which usually meant their death too, as over 60% of Soviet POWs died because of the inhumane treatment of the Germans.²⁵³ Soviet citizens were often starved to death; as an "inferior race" many people in the SU were killed, particularly on the claim of being Communist or Jewish. In July 1944, the front that crossed Lithuanian while moving to the West marked a breakthrough, a new page in the history of the Lithuanian people.²⁵⁴ When the Red Army reoccupied the territory had lost earlier in the war and advanced to the West, the Soviets dealt harshly with the numerous Nazi collaborators. In Lithuania alone, it is estimated that the Soviets deported 130,000 Lithuanians from 1941-1953 to Siberia. Moreover, 100,000 Lithuanians were brought as prisoners to labor camps,

²⁴⁹ Dieckmann 2003:63.

²⁵⁰ Zizas 2003:109-110.

²⁵¹ Zizas 2003:115.

²⁵² Streit 1997:105.

²⁵³ Krivosheev 1997.

²⁵⁴ Zizas 2003:120.

into the so-called *gulags*.²⁵⁵ Finally, it is estimated that about 65,000 Lithuanians fled the country in 1944 and arrived in displaced persons camps in Germany. Most of them have known what had happened with their former Jewish neighbors during the last three years in Lithuania, but usually they kept quiet.

The state-backed narrative would present it as the second Soviet occupation. One occupier, the Nazis was changed by another, the Soviets. It was the second Soviet occupation.²⁵⁶ The Red Army, that liberated Lithuania, did not bring the true freedom or independence with it. The Nazi occupation and dictatorship were replaced by another occupation and dictatorship. Together with the German occupiers and their collaborators, thousands of “innocent” people from various strata of the Lithuanian society, first of all, from the intelligentsia, escaped the Soviet regime by fleeing to the West. Soviet sources recognized that there were 4-5 farms in each rural district of the Siauliai County where the owners had fled together with the Germans. According to the Soviets those farmers did not possess major assets, the Soviets had not inflicted any harm on anyone, and they escaped just “out of fear.” The situation was more or less similar all over Lithuania. By 1949, farms of 13,928 “people’s enemies” who escaped to the West were appropriated to the Soviet land reform fund, amounting to more than 485,000 hectares of land.

According to the data of the Soviet Special State Commission that worked in autumn 1944 to spring 1945, 300,000 civilians were killed; later, due to political considerations, the losses were inflated, and the concept of massive annihilation of various nationalities emerged in the domain of historiography. The Lithuanian émigré and foreign historiography, however, had a larger variety of opinions and evaluations. Historians from abroad were prone to swell the actual consequences of the Nazi occupation and demographic losses of the population.²⁵⁷

Wyman Brent, the librarian of the Vilnius Jewish Library, explained the situation of 1944 neatly:

While Stalin did not kill the Jews in the mass numbers obviously as Hitler did, he was also no a friend of the Jewish people. He was also really not a friend of the Lithuanians. I am not going to say Stalin was any better with the Lithuanians. He was not. There were mass deportations of Lithuanians no matter what the religion. There were killings, there were seizures of property, there was all of this. There was the real attempt to crush the Lithuanian spirit by the Stalinist government. *So while technically he liberated Lithuania from the Germans, he did never free the country.* When you think about the fact about the two Lithuanian independent days, one just took place and one is coming up in March. Both of them are when Lithuania celebrates its freedom from Russia. That tells you what friend Russia has been to Lithuania.²⁵⁸

²⁵⁵ Truska 2003:273.

²⁵⁶ Interview Liekis, 24 February 2009 in Vilnius

²⁵⁷ Zizas 2003:120-121.

²⁵⁸ Interview Brent, 24 February 2009 in Vilnius.

5. Holocaust Remembrance in Lithuania

Until today the Holocaust is still an open painful sore in Lithuania's history. The key question, as Liudas Truska points out, is thus whether Lithuanians are able to recognize today the events that happened almost 70 years ago.²⁵⁹ For many Lithuanians, however, the Holocaust is an issue of historiography and does not involve any personal or moral relevance. Although 20 years have passed since Lithuania's independence, it is hard for most Lithuanians to acknowledge what some of their compatriots did during the German occupation to Jewish fellow citizens. Instead of taking over the moral responsibility for the collaboration with the Nazis, a narrative of excuse can be met and the victim discourse continues. Even worse, victims of the Holocaust are cynically accused of being guilty. The Lithuanian collective memory tends to forget facts and rather remembers myths about the events during WWII. Such a combination helps neither the country nor the citizens of Lithuania. On the contrary, it fuels misunderstanding and disputes.

5.1. Historical Reception of the Holocaust in Lithuania

The Lithuanian Jewry was shattered and basically extinct after WWII. In fact, 70% of the Jews in Lithuania were Jewish Russian immigrants to the LSSR. Nonetheless, a Yiddish-run secondary school existed in Vilnius until 1959. Most Jews in Lithuania tried to migrate to Israel in 1969, inspired by the Six-Day War – but were often stopped doing so by the KGB.²⁶⁰ Although in 1970 the great majority of Jews indicated Yiddish as their mother tongue, the great majority spoke Russian. During the *Perestroika*, a number of 20,000 Jews is given for the LSSR.²⁶¹

Today, only 4,000 Jews are left. The material and economic suffering during the transition period, a common feeling of instability and insecurity about the thought that events as those experienced in the 1940s might happen again, led to the decision of many Jewish families to leave Lithuania, in most cases to Israel.

All in all, four different phases of Holocaust memory in Lithuania are identified in this diploma thesis: 1) the Soviet rule between 1944-1990 in the Lithuanian SSR, in which the Holocaust was hardly an issue; on the contrary, the Lithuanian émigré community in the US built up a counter-memory denying any involvement in the Holocaust; 2) the silence on the mass killings of Jews in Lithuania continued after Lithuania's independence between 1991-1995; 3) ambitious plans to account for the past and a peak of interest in the Holocaust by society as well as academia can be observed between 1995-2005; and 4) since 2005, when Lithuania joined NATO and the EU, the interest in the Holocaust in Lithuania has been continuously decreasing.

²⁵⁹ Truska 2003:262.

²⁶⁰ The Soviet regime tried to prohibit mass emigrations because it was politically undesirable. After the 1967 Six-Day War, the USSR broke off the diplomatic relations with Israel and Soviet Jews had to suffer from anti-Zionist propaganda, accompanied with harsher discrimination. During the 1970s, Jews did emigrate from the Soviet Union to Israel.

²⁶¹ Zingeris 2003:291-293.

5.1.1. The Time of Silence (until 1990)

The first phase of Holocaust remembrance can be dated in the time of the Soviet occupation of Lithuania between the years 1944-1990. Immediately after WWII, a Jewish museum was founded in Vilnius in 1945. There was an attempt to collect remaining Jewish cultural artifacts after the Nazi occupation. The archival work, however, soon came to an end again as the Soviet authorities closed down the museum in 1948 and destroyed most of the collected material. Overall, the Soviet time in Lithuania is a difficult period to assess in relation to the Holocaust because what is known today stems from publications and articles in media that fell victim to the censorship of the authoritarian Soviet system. The Lithuanian journalist Dalius Norkunas claims that Lithuanians have known “about the Holocaust during all those years, even in Soviet times. This was not forbidden. They were not silent about it, but there was not much talk either. But they never talked about their own atrocities, the atrocities executed by the Soviets themselves.”²⁶²

Different remembrances or accounts on how the Holocaust was remembered hardly exist today, because most people who lived through WWII have already died and no larger oral history projects had been organized until about ten years ago. Some stereotypes like the “Communist Jew” have survived in Lithuania although the Soviet Union hardly had transported and propagated such a view. The return of the deported and banned Lithuanians from Siberia certainly had an impact on Lithuania’s collective memory. Also some rare contacts with Lithuanians in exile shaped the picture, since these often had a very conservative or nationalist view on WWII. On the other hand, the *Extraordinary State Commission for the Establishment and Investigation of the Crimes of the Fascist German Invaders*, which was set up in late 1942 by the Soviets, investigated the Nazi war crimes. The problem about this commission was the fact that often the NKVD was involved when the crimes were documented, which often politicized and sometimes even falsified the events which took place according to its own interest. The commission produced both, historical truth but also propaganda in the interest of the Soviet regime.²⁶³

Figure 5: Books and articles published in Soviet Lithuania referring to Jewish mass killings (1940-1975)

	1940-45	1946-50	1951-55	1956-60	1961-65	1966-70	1971-75	Total
Books	3	3	-	11	14	10	3	44
Articles	20	1	1	19	27	3	7	78

Source: Kohr 2003:249.

According to Michael Kohr (see Figure 5), overall 44 books and 78 articles touching the mass killings of Jews have been published in Lithuania between 1940 and 1975 – most of them in Lithuanian and not necessarily in an academic style. Until 1947 several accounts were published about the crimes of the Nazis, yet with the mass deportations to Siberia and the collectivization such accounts stopped to be distributed. The situation changed in 1958 when a separate department in the Academy of Science was founded to deal with the publishing of archival documents. Yet the published accounts were criticized as being popular science and propaganda, although scientific methods were applied. The publications only partly

²⁶² Interview Norkunas, 18 February 2009 in Vilnius.

²⁶³ For example, the Katyn affair was blamed on the Germans. See, for example Sorokina (2005:824).

concerned the Holocaust and did not use any term like Holocaust or Shoah; often they dealt with anti-Soviet “bandits,” as the Lithuanian partisans were called by the Soviets. This marked a turn from a juridical to an historical account of the events in Lithuania during WWII. Moreover, since the early 1950s a systematic omission of Jews took place in historiography. While during the first years of post-WWII clear hints to the specificity of the mass murders against Jews were addressed, the victim’s identity was steadily taken away by the Soviets.²⁶⁴ In 1958, in the 9th Fort in Kaunas, a museum was opened to show the crimes of the German Fascist occupation, but the identity of the victims was not referred to.

In the mid-1960s there were books published about the mass murder in Lithuania which clearly pictured that the absolute majority of victims were Jews while Lithuanians were involved in the killings in basically all instances. Those writings raised concerns among Lithuanian scholars that the Soviets wanted to portray Lithuanians as a people of cruel murderers. Yet, Kohr argued that such criticism is not valid as the Soviet publications usually did not directly accuse Lithuanians but rather, following the somewhat simple black-and-white historiography of the time, “bourgeois nationalists.”²⁶⁵ A publication of the Institute of History in 1975 spoke of 170,000-190,000 Jews killed.²⁶⁶

Although a few books were published in relation to the German mass murders, it was certainly a problem that historiography in Lithuania did not find appreciation anymore by the general public because it was seen as a mere tool of Soviet propaganda. Such a view is, of course, calamitous. Moreover, Soviet historiography in most cases presented the victims as “peaceful Soviet citizens,” without identifying their ethnicity. Monuments at Holocaust sites in Lithuania referred to Soviet instead of Jewish victims, as elsewhere in the USSR.²⁶⁷

After 1975, the Holocaust topic was not dealt with intensively in Lithuania while in the Western world the interest in the subject just began to emerge. There was also a change going on from blaming Lithuanian collaborators to focusing on Lithuanian heroes who fought in the Communist opposition in the underground and the Soviet partisans in the woods. This change in dealing with the Jewish genocide was related with the emigration of many Jews in the early 1970s to Israel and a stark anti-Zionism of Moscow, which basically was hidden anti-Semitism. In 1984, a memorial against fascism, not referring to the Holocaust, was erected at the 9th Fort in Kaunas. In the mid-1980s, a debate about war criminals in exile started again. Already in the 1960s a few publications about Lithuanian war criminals had been published in the USSR but had failed to evoke a response in the West.

Overall, Kohr came to the conclusion that Lithuanians could have been able to grasp that some 200,000 Lithuanian Jews have been killed on racial grounds during the Holocaust according to the publications available to them. Yet, the racist conception behind the Jewish genocide would not have been understood by the Soviet and there are doubts, as pointed out earlier, that Lithuanians actually believed the narrative of WWII, accusing the Soviet accounts of being a mere Soviet propaganda tool.²⁶⁸ The executive director of the International Commission, Ronaldas Racinskas, stresses that “the killing of Jews was presented as the killing of innocent Soviet civilian people in our schools.”²⁶⁹ Racinskas continues to explain that two different kinds of killing in Lithuania took place, being either based on the class level or on social grounds as the killing

²⁶⁴ Kohr 2003:248-250, 256.

²⁶⁵ The term “bourgeois nationalist” helped to draw a line between all enemies the Soviets faced. Hence it was easily possible to deduce such explanations as propaganda.

²⁶⁶ Kohr 2003:250-252.

²⁶⁷ Interview Alperavicius, 23 February 2009 in Vilnius.

²⁶⁸ Kohr 2003:258.

²⁶⁹ Interview Racinskas, 13 February 2009 in Vilnius.

by Soviets, or on racial pseudo-scientific theories as those organized by the Nazis. This difference, however, was not explained to Lithuanians in textbooks or class.²⁷⁰ Furthermore, there was the problem that most Lithuanians learnt much less or nothing about the Holocaust in text books, films, or monuments in comparison to people in Western Europe. Indeed it must have been difficult to understand after the independence in the 1990s that suddenly the Lithuanians were those who had war criminals among them, because the Soviets had always stressed that in the USSR all war criminals had been sentenced a long time ago while the West did not prosecute the war criminals living in their countries. In addition, Soviet Lithuanian historiography and today's historiography has criticized the writings of Lithuanians in exile about WWII on more or less the same grounds. Such ironies that both Western and Soviet literature, questioned the Lithuanian émigré historiography, was certainly challenging and puzzling for Lithuanians.²⁷¹

In contrast to the Soviet historiography, the Lithuanian émigré literature constructed a completely different picture of WWII during the time of the Cold War. Lithuanians were presented as victims of two murderous dictatorships, adding the victims of both regimes together without specifying the Jewish particularity of the Nazi killings. In the 1970s, when the interest in the Holocaust in the US was rising and a number of publications also addressed the Holocaust in Lithuania, the Lithuanian émigré community had to deal with the "painful question" of the Jewish killings. Almost in line, all authors tried to minimize the role of Lithuanians or denied any involvement at all. Even the liberal Lithuanian press in the US had their stereotypes about the Holocaust in Lithuania: 1) it was too early to deal with the Holocaust; 2) Jews were traitors of the country as it could be seen during 1940-1941; 3) Jews were mainly comprising the NKVD and thus responsible for the murder of thousands of Lithuanians during the first days of the war; 4) Jews were annihilated by the Germans; only very few Lithuanians participated in the Holocaust and if so, they were the scum of society and not representing the average Lithuanian citizen; 5) Lithuanians did not kill anyone outside of Lithuania because Lithuania was the only Eastern country without an SS legion; 6) in case Lithuanians were be guilty, it would have been just the response to the Jewish guilt against Lithuanians; 7) as the Soviets were not objective, the trials against Lithuanians after WWII were unfair and biased; and 8) Jews would control the Western press and mass media and thus no objective view on the Holocaust in Lithuania was possible.²⁷² These eight points illustrate the difficulty of working with the past for the Lithuanian émigré community. Instead of dealing critically with the Lithuanian past, the discourse was built on ignorance and negligence. The common response concerning the involvement of Lithuanians in the Jewish killings was blaming the Jews of killing Lithuanians.

The first who tried to change the émigré narrative was Tomas Venclova,²⁷³ a novelist, dissident, and member of the Lithuanian Helsinki Committee. He openly wrote in 1975 that Lithuanians killed Jews during the Holocaust and it was not only a Jewish catastrophe but an even bigger catastrophe for Lithuania. Thus Lithuania has a moral responsibility to cope with the Holocaust.²⁷⁴ Another important article was written by Saulius Suziedelis, who presented the anti-Soviet uprising as well as the killings of Jews but also the "anti-Semitic tendencies" of the LAF in a new light.²⁷⁵ Yet it was still common sense to portray the Lithuanian involvement in such finely tuned words such as the following: "As the Lithuanian nation suffered

²⁷⁰ Interview Racinkas, 13 February 2009 in Vilnius.

²⁷¹ Kohr 2003:258-259.

²⁷² Truska 2003:266-267.

²⁷³ Lithuanians recognized Venclova as a national poet and a literary scholar; he was, however, not only a dissenter of the Soviet Union but also remained alienated from the Lithuanian intelligentsia and the Lithuanians themselves (Donskis 2002:9-10).

²⁷⁴ Truska 2003:267.

²⁷⁵ Truska 2003:267-268.

through the period of Soviet terror in 1940 and 1941, 'one or another' Lithuanian may have appeared, afflicted by the sufferings of the Bolshevik period, having lost his parents or loved ones, having lost the will to resist and drawn into the massacres."²⁷⁶ Such a state of denial existed throughout the Cold War in the émigré community in the US.

During the phase of the *perestroika*, Lithuanians started to get rid of the Soviet regime with a national movement called *Sajudis*, founded in 1988. Also a lot of Jews joined *Sajudis*, "in the hope to get their own rights back."²⁷⁷ This was of big help for the movement of national rebirth, because the Soviet authorities tried to portray *Sajudis* as radical nationalist which was ultimately undermined with the Jewish support. In a famous letter, Lithuanian intellectuals asked to finally acknowledge the losses of the Jews and that they were killed innocently. Moreover, the first exhibition on Jewish culture in Kaunas was opened by a Jewish cultural association (*Yidische Kultur Gesellschaft*) which was founded by Emanuelis Zingeris in May 1989. According to the vice-director of the Jewish State Museum, Rachel Kostanian, there was a lot of enthusiasm among Jews in Lithuania because, finally, they were recognized and "Lithuanians and Jews stood in one row."²⁷⁸

5.1.2. Not yet Ready to Deal with the Past (1991-1995)

The second phase of remembrance started with the independence declared on 30 March 1990 and was followed by the democratic transition of Lithuania. Just before the Lithuanian independence, there were "anti-Lithuanian articles" in the American press, claiming that Lithuania had a nationalist movement which killed Jews in 1941. For locals, who just had turned their attention from Moscow to the West a big surprise took place; Lithuanians were confronted with accusations of having taken part in the Holocaust. Sarunas Liekis, head of the Vilnius Yiddish Institute, describes the Lithuanian reaction: "Who is doing this? Are there KGB agents in the US? What is going on? They did not get it."²⁷⁹

In the first years of independence, Lithuanian historians and the general public were far more interested in the years of the Stalinist regime (1940-1941 and 1944-1953) and the terror against the Lithuanian population than in the Jewish genocide. Still, a Center for Judaic Studies was established at Vilnius University in 1993. Also, the first conference on the Holocaust took place from 11-16 October 1993, focusing on the ghetto in Vilnius. Among the scholars to commemorate the 50th anniversary of the ghetto liquidation were Israeli, Russian, French, and Dutch historians. The results were published in a booklet called *The Days of Memory*.²⁸⁰ Yet the Holocaust was almost no issue in academia and basically no research on this subject took place. Hence at international conferences, Truska noted, Lithuanians spoke about the Lithuanian-Jewish relation in the 19th century and the time until 1940, but it were historians from abroad that spoke about the Holocaust.²⁸¹ An initiative from the Jewish museum in the early 1990s suggested incorporating Jewish history and particularly the Holocaust in the curricula of students, which was denied with the argument "we do not know our own history." There was thus a feeling among Jews that "it is still us and them. We are still not one body."²⁸²

²⁷⁶ Zizas 2003:11.

²⁷⁷ Interview Kostanian, 19 February 2009 in Vilnius.

²⁷⁸ Interview Kostanian, 19 February 2009 in Vilnius.

²⁷⁹ Interview Liekis, 24 February 2009 in Vilnius.

²⁸⁰ Kostanian/Zingeris 1995.

²⁸¹ Truska 2003:268.

²⁸² Interview Kostanian, 19 February 2009 in Vilnius.

Importantly, a memorial at the 9th Fort in Kaunas was unveiled in 1991 to commemorate the more than 30,000 Jewish victims who were killed at this site during the Nazi occupation. Thanks to independence, the head of the Lithuanian Jewish Community, Alperavicius, also saw a start of recognizing the victims as Jews and not only as somewhat abstract Soviet citizens.²⁸³ Nonetheless, there were not many Jews left anymore. In 1989 there were only 11,170 Jews or 0.3% of the overall population living in the LSSR. After independence even more Jews left the country, as the economic prospects were low, they were not restrained by the authorities anymore, and they were afraid of growing anti-Semitism. Rachel Kostanian, vice-director of the Jewish State Museum, survived the Holocaust because she was fortunate enough to get on a train to the Soviet Union before the *Wehrmacht* arrived in 1941. She explains the difficult situation for many Jews after Lithuanian independence and the burden of memory on Jews because of the inexistent Holocaust remembrance:

We were saved in Russia. Of course, everyone had to speak Russian in order to survive. Many Jews came back to Lithuania after WWII and continued to work here. It was in the sub-consciousness, however, that we do not go to Lithuanian schools – we go to Russian schools. Maybe I was also aware of the attitude of our parents and those who survived. [...] As soon as there was a possibility to leave, many Jews left after the Lithuanian independence, maybe half of them or maybe even more. It was not a surprise, because this question to go or not to go had been ripe in society for years. Why would they leave? Lithuania is independent, Jews are acknowledged. They let us to establish a Jewish community, a Jewish cultural center, a museum, a Jewish school, and a Jewish kindergarten was opened. *They would leave because of the historical memory.* Because Jews were afraid; Jews were afraid to stay because of the Holocaust.²⁸⁴

Already in October 1994, Lithuanian Prime Minister Adolfas Slezevicius had been invited by Israeli Prime Minister Rabin to come to Israel and Slezevicius had apologized officially for the participation of Lithuanians in the Holocaust. Yet, mass media in Lithuania called it the most unpopular decision of the government in 1994.²⁸⁵ A year later, Lithuanian president Algirdas Brazauskas apologized in the Israeli parliament, the *Knesset*, publicly in a speech in the name of the Lithuanian nation for those Lithuanians who participated in the Holocaust. It was a victory in diplomacy and the international arena, but back home it was not appreciated. It was, however, the turning point in Lithuania to deal with the past, paving the way for more intensive research on the topic. Liekis explains that in the early 1990s, “the reactions were based on the narrative that we [Lithuanians] are a victim ourselves. What should we excuse for? They would say that basically the Jews were victims, but we are victims too.”²⁸⁶ Also Dmitrij Kulik, a PR freelancer, remembers “a very strange reaction” after Brazauskas’s visit to Israel: “The majority of the people were against what he said, it was very unpopular. After the visit we began to call each other ‘Jews killer nation’. And it was always meant sarcastically.”²⁸⁷ The journalist Dalius Norkunas claims, however, that “it is not demeaning yourself; you are not getting humiliated by saying sorry. I think it was a very nice gesture of Brazauskas.”²⁸⁸ Norkunas’s opinion seems to be rare though – which is not much of a surprise. Many Lithuanian historians at the beginning of the 1990s were publically pushing the idea that not Lithuanian nationalists but Germans, criminals, and the “scum of society” were involved in the Jewish genocide. Any guilt of the nation was rejected and disclaimed as Soviet propaganda.²⁸⁹ According to Sarunas Liekis, Lithuanians were exposed to the Holocaust for the first time on a broader scale with Brazauskas’s gesture, which for many was a shocking experience.

²⁸³ Interview Alperavicius, 23 February 2009 in Vilnius.

²⁸⁴ Interview Kostanian, 19 February 2009 in Vilnius.

²⁸⁵ Zingeris 2003:296.

²⁸⁶ Interview Liekis, 24 February 2009 in Vilnius.

²⁸⁷ Interview Kulik, 20 February 2009 in Vilnius.

²⁸⁸ Interview Norkunas, 18 February 2009 in Vilnius.

²⁸⁹ Interview Liekis, 24 February 2009 in Vilnius.

Indeed, many Lithuanians for the first time heard about the Holocaust and a possible involvement of locals in the mass murder of Jews. It was the start of a long journey to crack the collective Lithuanian memory on WWII but until today the transition is very slow or non-existent.

5.1.3. The Peak of Attention (1995-2005)

The third phase of remembrance started around 1995 when the interest in the Holocaust rose and how the role of Lithuanians should be interpreted. The main reason why the destruction of Lithuania's Jewry got attention may well be linked to the wish joining Western organizations like EU and NATO.²⁹⁰ The two institutions in particular wanted to see a critical self-reflection on the past of the Baltic countries. In Nida (September 1997) and in Telsiai (September 2001) international conferences were organized on Lithuanian-Jewish relation, among the topics was also the Holocaust. Also in Germany a couple of conferences on Lithuanian Jewish culture and history took place like the one in Leipzig (2002) about the "Jerusalem of Lithuania," which basically dealt with Jewish culture in Vilnius. During this decade also a wide range of books by Lithuanian scholars and Lithuanian institutions was published on a huge variety of issues related to the Holocaust in Lithuania. Furthermore the interest of foreign historians on the topic reached a peak. The lack of information on the Holocaust in Lithuania which a historian had to face in the early 1990s was constantly reduced and Holocaust research notably intensified.

The historian Dalia Bukeleviciute explains the rise of interest in the Holocaust by stating that "the Jewish topic and the Holocaust became popular 15 years ago, because in this field of research money came from the Israeli embassy, of Lithuanian diplomats, and the Jewish community. This field became interesting and students started to get interested too."²⁹¹ In fact, the interest to deal with the Holocaust was brought from the outside and was not a genuine interest which started from the grass root level. Kulik describes the way how the Jewish genocide was perceived during the 1990s:

During Soviet times the common narrative stressed the genocide of all Lithuanians and the Soviet people committed by Germans. The understanding of the Holocaust was only shaped 15 years ago [in 1995] when our president Brazauskas went to Israel and said, 'we Lithuanians are guilty for Jewish people killed here in Lithuania'. It was this point when we Lithuanians started to reflect the Holocaust as a Jewish tragedy. Beforehand, it was a non-nationalistic understanding of the Holocaust. We just did not care who was killed – Lithuanians, Jews, Poles and so on. The Holocaust is so new, so fresh. Many politicians became just desperate in the reflection of the Holocaust. They grew up in the understanding that it was not a Jewish thing and thus had to rethink what happened.²⁹²

In 1998, the *International Commission* was established in Lithuania (see sub-section 5.2.3.). The Commission's task was to research and teach about the Holocaust. They opened so-called Tolerance Centers at high schools around Lithuania to speak about the Jewish genocide as well as about tolerance. Also the Jewish State Museum organized travelling exhibitions about the Holocaust and Jewish culture in Lithuania. The International Commission organized seminars for teachers, particularly those who led a Tolerance Center, in order to make sure that the Holocaust would be dealt with in the curricula, as it was often officially included but the teachers were unable to cope with it. Rachel Kostanian appreciates that

²⁹⁰ Giordano 2003:2.

²⁹¹ Interview Bukeleviciute, 21 February 2009 in Vilnius.

²⁹² Interview Kulik, 20 February 2009 in Vilnius.

development but wonders as well why teachers would not bring their students to the Jewish State Museum and the Holocaust exhibition.²⁹³ Generally speaking, the interest of the Lithuanian society in visiting the Jewish museum was very narrow, as I have experienced myself in the Holocaust exhibition during 14 months in 2004/05. Also, a Tolerance Center was installed in Naugarduko Street 10 in Vilnius in 2004, which is run by the Jewish State Museum. Although the facilities are very modern, one might wish for more activities going on in the future as well as for more visitors at the events.

5.1.4. A Non-issue (since 2006)

After Lithuania had joined NATO and the European Union in 2004, the interest in the Holocaust and Jewish topics diminished. Wyman Brent, librarian of the Vilnius Jewish Library, states that “the Lithuanian state still wants to treat their Jewish members as second-class citizens. They have to do the minimum. But when it comes to giving more than the minimum, giving from the heart – I do not see that.”²⁹⁴ Also Tomas Tomilinas, a staff member in the Lithuanian parliament, puts it bluntly: “The politicians do not care anymore about the Holocaust. The fact of being inside the EU for them means that we are democratic and conscious enough. The job is done.”²⁹⁵ Ruta Puisyte from the Yiddish Institute explains that the Holocaust became “like a business concern of the elite. It is, however, not a concern for Lithuanians. Now, Lithuanians only react and do something when voices from abroad make them feel uncomfortably.”²⁹⁶ The historian Dalia Bukeleviciute confirms that “in the last five, six years it has not been so popular any more like 15 years ago” to study Jewish topics or the Holocaust. She furthermore stressed that “we do not have such interested professors now. The professors who were interested in Jewish questions are now interested in other topics as well. They are diplomats, emigrated, or have other projects. The younger generation of students is not so interested in this question, because they are not part of the independence wave as we have been.”²⁹⁷

The Lithuanian historiography on the Holocaust in Lithuania is declining in the last years. According to the historian Arunas Bubnys a lot of reasons can be mentioned but first and foremost, a lot of topics of the Holocaust in Lithuania have already been covered like the most important events, the different stages, chronology, the number of victims, and the particularities of the situation in Lithuania. A number of topics, however, is not yet examined, particularly the Lithuanian involvement in the Holocaust and the question to which degree the institutions were involved. He confirms that the public, academic, and political interest in the Holocaust has diminished since 2005 in comparison to the decade before. There are no major discussions on the Holocaust taking place in society. Professional historians continue their work but the public usually does not notice.²⁹⁸

The first Lithuanian head of state after independence and today's Member of European Parliament, Vytautas Landsbergis, claimed in January 2005 that on EU level both Nazi and Soviet crimes should be remembered – and on an equal level. In the European Parliament discussions were going on that Nazi symbols should be banned in the entire EU.

²⁹³ Interview Kostanian, 19 February 2009 in Vilnius.

²⁹⁴ Interview Brent, 24 February 2009 in Vilnius.

²⁹⁵ Interview Tomilinas, 20 February 2009 in Vilnius.

²⁹⁶ Interview Puisyte, 18 February 2009 in Vilnius.

²⁹⁷ Interview Bukeleviciute, 21 February 2009 in Vilnius.

²⁹⁸ Interview Bubnys, 17 February in Vilnius.

Landsbergis suggested that in this case also Communist symbols should be banned. Russian officials, however, criticized this move claiming that Soviet and Nazi crimes would be made equal which would not be acceptable. Also EU Justice Commissioner Franco Frattini said in February 2005 that it would not be appropriate to include the red star as well as hammer and sickle in an EU law on racism. The EU dropped its initial proposal to include the ban of Nazi symbols because of the resistance of some member states. The head of the Yiddish Institute, Liekis, defends Landsbergis by claiming that what he actually demanded is the criminalization of Soviet crimes on EU level. Liekis calls it “a political struggle.”²⁹⁹ His colleague in the Yiddish Institute, Ruta Puisyte, is more critical:

I do not think they [Landsbergis and others] say equal footing; they want the Soviet crimes to be acknowledged. But when they come to Western partners and speak about Soviet crimes, they take this Holocaust example to try to explain the Soviet crimes. And then somehow they make it kind of equal although the message is to speak about the Soviet crimes. I have only read the document of an Estonian official. He said that the Jews got what they deserved during the Holocaust. Now it is time to speak about the Soviet crimes. It was very clearly a wrong comparison in this letter.³⁰⁰

Liekis sees a lot of problems in terms of perception and education in the society as a whole. Stereotypes about the Jewish conspiracy in connection with the current world economic crisis flare up again. “Overall, however, I would not see something special – especially in comparison to the Polish situation; and the situation in Russia is much worse.”³⁰¹ Since 2007, school classes have started to visit the Holocaust exhibition of the Jewish State Museum, which is very much appreciated by Rachel Kostanian. She believes that educational projects are most important to have an impact on the younger generation. Concerning the general events, however, she is quite pessimistic – particularly because of the accusations of former partisans.³⁰²

5.2. Dealing with the Past

The issue of memory is complex in Lithuania. The Jewish memory and the Lithuanian memory of WWII differ to a great extent. The emphasis is put on different issues and periods. In general there are few projects to deal critically with the Lithuanian past; on the opposite, often a glorification of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania takes place – the time when Lithuania had its biggest territorial extension in the 14th and early 15th century. Such a handling of history is symptomatic because it stresses grandeur and importance while darker sides of history are ignored. The problem according to Sarunas Liekis, director of the Vilnius Yiddish Institute, is that basically two versions of what was happening during WWII exist, a Lithuanian one which particularly emphasizes of what was good and what was bad for the locals and a generally accepted one in the rest of the world. Hence, as soon as a remembrance day for Holocaust victims is introduced, also a day for the Stalinist victims will be requested.³⁰³ It is, of course, valid that also Stalinist victims are remembered. Nonetheless, a construction about the past arises where “they,” the Jews, should get their remembrance day as long as “we” secure “ours,” the

²⁹⁹ Interview Liekis, 24 February 2009 in Vilnius.

³⁰⁰ Interview Puisyte, 18 February 2009 in Vilnius.

³⁰¹ Interview Liekis, 24 February 2009 in Vilnius.

³⁰² Interview Kostanian, 19 February in Vilnius.

³⁰³ Interview Liekis, 24 February 2009 in Vilnius.

Lithuanian one. In a sense, it helps in the short run that everything is institutionalized because heated debates on which memory is “better” can be avoided, but it also prevents the asking for critical questions about the past.

Ruta Puisyte, assistant director of the Vilnius Yiddish Institute, adds that in Lithuania the Nazi occupation did not leave deep traces in the collective memory, because “the ethnic Lithuanian population did not experience such harsh suffering.” The Jewish community, however, got such a blow that about 96% of the Jewish community was killed which is an “unbelievable suffering. *But it has little or no place in the Lithuanian collective memory*, which also effects how politicians and organizations behave.”³⁰⁴ The words in italics are emphasized because Puisyte makes clear that two competing memories about WWII are existing – one from Lithuanians and one from Jews about the Holocaust in Lithuania. Interestingly, she continued to explain that famous Lithuanian Jews are acknowledged and people are proud about famous people born here in Lithuania, also Jews. But Puisyte was concerned about the other Jews: “99% of the Jewish community was not famous but they still deserve to be remembered. They lived here; they contributed to economy, culture, and political life in Lithuania.”³⁰⁵

Liudas Truska argued that the antipathy towards dealing with the Holocaust is grounded in the *mentalité* of the Lithuanian people. Since the late 18th century, Lithuania had been occupied by foreign powers. Lithuania existed as an independent country only during the rather brief period from 1918-1940.³⁰⁶ The repression during Tsarist and Soviet times led to a collective feeling of victimization among Lithuanians. Out of such an understanding of history and on the basis of a rather black-and-white analysis, Lithuanians had *per se* been the good ones. It was rather hard to grasp that also some of their own people were guilty of crimes and were in the role of a perpetrator. Consequently, their own people were understood as good and full of virtue. The “others,” – including Jews, Russians, Poles, Gypsies, and Germans – were those who were bad and responsible for crimes taking place. In particular among the Lithuanians émigré community a heroic-understanding of history was developed after WWII which was begging for sympathy. Lithuania’s history was being based on the struggle and the suffering of ethnic Lithuanians.

The concept of memory developed by Aleida Assmann is a useful tool to understand the case of Lithuania.³⁰⁷ Lithuanians after WWII developed mechanisms to justify the past in the same way as they did after the end of the Cold War and since the transformation to an independent Western-orientated market economy. The difference to the German case is that the self-relief mechanisms were broken up in the end of the 1960s with the so-called *68-generation* in Germany. Such a movement which broke with the past and the (grand)parents has never existed in Lithuania. There was a strong break with the Communist past, at least on the surface because in reality many legacies of the Soviet past have continued to influence Lithuania’s society. The change to a democratic society took place in 1990/91 in a fragile environment. Lithuanian officials and intellectuals made an effort to glorify Lithuania’s own past in the inter-war period. They stressed that the newly established country was continuously independent between the two world wars; as a consequence they were somewhat ignoring the time of the dictatorship of Smetona (1929-1940) or arguing that a semi-authoritarian regime was a necessity at the time. It has to be kept in mind that some Lithuanians feared that their national independence would have been doubted

³⁰⁴ Interview Puisyte, 18 February 2009 in Vilnius.

³⁰⁵ Interview Puisyte, 18 February 2009 in Vilnius.

³⁰⁶ Truska 2003:262-263.

³⁰⁷ Assmann/Fervert 1999:140-142.

in case they would have dealt with their past by themselves. Yet the Holocaust is and was never about any kind of “national collective guilt” of Lithuanians. Most important is the responsibility of the Lithuanian society as well as historiography to critically reflect on Lithuania’s role during WWII and to have open discourses about it in society. An example is Suziedelis who claims,

[t]he only way for Lithuanians to lighten the load of the difficult history of 1941 is to embrace it [...] To admit that the country’s moral and political leadership failed in 1941, and that thousands of Lithuanians participated in the Holocaust, is one of the preconditions for Lithuania’s acceptance as a member of the trans-Atlantic community of nations. Recognizing a historic burden is not the same as accepting collective guilt. No honest person argues that Lithuanians are a nation of criminals, or that today’s Lithuanians are responsible for what happened in 1941 (any more than contemporary Americans are responsible for slavery). But the legacies of such crimes, the historical burdens, remain.³⁰⁸

Until today, the majority of Lithuanians wants all attention toward the suffering of Lithuania’s own people during the Soviet occupation. Most people remain at the same time indifferent about the Holocaust. A victim narrative is dominant while the role of being perpetrators themselves is hidden. Often, “the others” are responsible and arduous questions to oneself are not asked. Lithuania’s own history is seen as a constant struggle for recognition and suffering from foreign powers, as well as the inequity of “others” on Lithuania’s own territory. The Lithuanian émigré circle helped to reinforce the victim discourse in a very conservative manner.

Different accounts, different stories: some stress it were Germans who shot Jews. Others stress that the Lithuanian police murdered under German supervision. Even in the International Commission’s publications some contradictions can be found. The reason of such discrepancy is that Lithuanian historians who research on the Holocaust can be divided into two groups, a traditional and conservative one as well as a critical school. Another line of explanation is offered by Sarunas Liekis about the reaction of locals to the Holocaust: “The absolute majority knew what was going on. So what happened? It did not change anything. Jews were executed, their property was taken.”³⁰⁹ He continues to argue that greed and economic tensions of a population where 85% of the population lived in rural areas before WWII, thus often lacking higher education, could easily be utilized to anger and hatred against Jews. Moreover, minorities were not integrated into Lithuania’s society. On the contrary, Jews were clearly separated from their ethnic Lithuanian neighbors, which certainly did not help to build up strong relations.

Often, the hope is expressed that the younger generation will have a different view and will be more tolerant and open. Rachel Kostanian, vice-director of the Jewish State Museum, cannot agree because school students “say that Jews put blood of children, of Christian children for Maza. This is still happening today in the 21st century, it is still alive. We heard that from our grandmother. The stereotypes are still alive. Lots of work has to be put in, mostly by teachers.”³¹⁰ Puisyte also presents a rather gloomy picture of the Lithuanian youth:

The young generation was surveyed about tolerance and to a big surprise the outcome was that they were indifferent and intolerant to people of other groups. And I remember that I invited once kids from a class and showed them some teaching material I was working on. And we discussed about anti-Semitism. But not only that, but also how we deal with black people. And I was so surprised to hear that these young people are so self-confident. But they are here in Lithuania, they are Lithuanians among Lithuanians, they are Catholics among

³⁰⁸ Suziedelis 2001.

³⁰⁹ Interview Liekis, 24 February 2009 in Vilnius.

³¹⁰ Interview Kostanian, 19 February 2009 in Vilnius.

Catholics. But try to look to another country and then you will be treated like rubbish because you are from Eastern Europe, from a poor country. Then you will feel what it is to be a minority.³¹¹

The historian Arunas Bubnys points out that the Holocaust is not a topic Lithuanians want to deal with. The majority wants to be silent about it and avoid speaking about the topic. Related to that is the problem that historiography and the public are not in exchange, which is making it more complicated for historians to convey their message. Also scholars in Lithuania, however, have a problem with the “dilemma” that some Lithuanians were not only fighting for the “good” cause and were anti-Soviet partisans but were also perpetrators during the Nazi occupation. According to Bubnys it is hard for the public to accept these facts too: “It is something alien. It is not our sacrifice but a foreign sacrifice.”³¹² Moreover, the situation is complicated by the fact that “Jews deal most of the time with Jewish history and Lithuanians deal with Lithuanian history. Thus, there exist parallel worlds. This has been a fact since many, many years.”³¹³ Also, Bubnys stressed that “the Lithuanian population was hit ten times more by the Soviet regime than by the Nazi regime. It is an objective fact. Thus, the Lithuanian collective memory and historical consciousness perceives the Soviet occupation regime as a bigger deal and much worse than the Nazis.”³¹⁴

5.2.1. Two Schools of Lithuanian’s Holocaust Historians

A new generation of historians made an attempt in the second half of the 1990s to demystify the complex history during and around WWII. There were accounts to break up old understandings with a more critical narrative about Lithuania’s past. In Truska’s words, it was hard for historians to do so, facing criticism by media and politicians like “Communist provocations,” “remainders of Soviet thought,” or “fouling their own nests.”³¹⁵ Dalia Bukeleviciute stresses that Lithuania’s historians can hardly be compared to their colleagues in Germany or the US; Lithuania is too small and does not have enough resources. It is almost arbitrary if a topic is covered or not. Often, not the whole range of archives is available because some are able to read German next to Lithuanian and Russian but have a hard time with English or the other way around.³¹⁶

The problem to this day remains as it was already created during WWII by the Lithuanian anti-Nazi resistance which refused to see any involvement of Lithuanians in the shootings of Jews and blamed all of it to the Germans and, in case locals were involved, it was either the “scum of society” or Poles who wore Lithuanian uniforms. Hence the belief was established that Lithuanians were innocent of the crimes that happened.³¹⁷ Lithuanians in exile supported such a perspective, among them the famous intellectual Mykolas Birziska in the 1950s. The Lithuanian encyclopedia, which has been published in the US since 1953, also asserted that it was a lie of the “world Jewry” and Lithuanian Communists that Lithuanians were involved in the killings. Rather Germans in Lithuanian uniforms, former Communists, and Soviet POWs shot the Jews.³¹⁸

³¹¹ Interview Puisyte, 18 February 2009 in Vilnius.

³¹² Interview Bubnys, 17 February 2009 in Vilnius.

³¹³ Interview Bubnys, 17 February 2009 in Vilnius.

³¹⁴ Interview Bubnys, 17 February 2009 in Vilnius.

³¹⁵ Truska 2003:263.

³¹⁶ Interview Bukeleviciute, 21 February 2009 in Vilnius.

³¹⁷ Truska 2003:263-264.

³¹⁸ Truska 2003:264.

Today, two schools of historians in Lithuania's historiography can be detected according to Liudas Truska: a traditional school and a critical one. The traditional school is still in line with the émigré historians: 1) the LAF had no anti-Semitic basis but only propagated some artificial anti-Jewish statements to satisfy the Nazis; 2) rhetorical questions pop up frequently asking whether or not the Jews committed genocide against Lithuanians, and while it is seldom spoken out loudly, it is usually implied that this was indeed the case; 3) it were the Germans and not the Lithuanians who killed Jews; and 4) traditional historians sometimes openly admit that their purpose is to rehabilitate Lithuanians, among them the police battalions who were Lithuanian patriots. Among those historians are Stanislovas Buchaveckas, Sigitas Jegelevicius, and Jonas Mikelinskas.³¹⁹

The critical school slowly developed in the mid-1990s and was more open to face the whole truth. It tried to judge events without being ashamed of blaming its own country, and looking upon the whole picture. The most outstanding historian so far has been Liudas Truska who critically reflected on the first Soviet occupation between 1940 and 1941 and influenced a whole generation of Lithuanian scholars on WWII. Another important historian is Valentinas Brandisauskas, who openly wrote about the anti-Semitism of the LAF although sometimes a narrative of excuse can be found in his writings. One of the Lithuanian historians who dealt with the Holocaust in Lithuania most intensively is Arunas Bubnys, who was also interviewed for this research paper. Yet also Bubnys, despite his scrupulous work in the archives and his excellent German language skills that help him to understand nearly all sources available, is often influenced by a traditional point of view as he sometimes tries to downplay the role of the Lithuanians in the Holocaust.³²⁰ Other historians who can be included in the critical school are Saulius Berzinis, Stastys Knezys, Alfonsas Eidintas, Ruta Puisyte, Vaidotas Reivytiis, Rimantas Vanagas, Linas Vildziunas, and Rimantas Žirgulis.

Also the head of the Jewish Community in Lithuania, Simonas Alperavicius, complained about Lithuania's historians because "there are not so many who write very objectively and write things without mistake."³²¹ As an exception, Alperavicius singled out Professor Liudas Truska for his independence and accuracy. Arunas Bubnys confirmed that many Lithuanian historians only write about "good things" while they avoid the "bad" ones, which would be "very typical" for Lithuanian historiography. Moreover, it is a concern for Bubnys that there is not only a lack of debate between historians and the public but as well a shortage of discussion among historians themselves in Lithuania.³²²

5.2.2. Debate about Numbers

Often, there is a debate about numbers in Lithuania: how many Jews were actually killed? From a moral point of view it is a questionable debate because in the end it does not matter how many Jews from Lithuania were killed. In any case, the huge majority of Jews was killed – almost a complete extinction; and, even more striking, Jews were targeted by the Germans and their auxiliaries on a racial basis and were singled out in comparison to all the other victim groups of the Nazis. It is, however, impossible to determine an exact amount of victims because it is impossible, despite documents like the Jäger

³¹⁹ Truska 2003:269.

³²⁰ Truska 2003:272. I was under the same impression during the interview with Arunas Bubnys and the reading of his articles.

³²¹ Interview Alperavicius, 23 February 2009 in Vilnius.

³²² Interview Bubnys, 16 February 2009 in Vilnius.

report, to account exact figures of body count. Too few sources survived WWII because the Nazis destroyed most of the documents and hence any absolute figures will be impossible to provide. One of the problems is to know how many Jews were there on Lithuanian territory on the eve of the German invasion on 22 June 1941. It is known how many Jews were deported by the Soviets before the invasion – which ironically had saved their lives from the Germans. Yet different numbers are provided when it comes to the question how many Jews were able to escape from Lithuania to the Soviet Union.³²³

The estimated number of killed Jews varies between 165,000 to 254,000 men. Often the figure of 94% of perished Lithuanian Jews is cited, although it remains somewhat unclear how this percentage is created as the overall figure of killed Jews varies to such an extent. A usual figure provided, like from Truska, is that from 22 June 1941 until the liberation in 1944 around 200,000 Lithuanian Jews were killed.³²⁴ Bubnys estimated a number of 195,000 to 196,000 dead, exemplifying 95% of the Lithuanian Jewry. He further stated that 208,000 Jews lived in Lithuania on 1 January 1941, whereby 8,500 could escape to the Soviet Union; 1,500-2,000 escaped the ghettos of Vilnius and Kaunas and 2,000-3,000 survived concentration camps at the end of the war.³²⁵ The International Commission provided the number of 9,000 surviving Lithuanian Jews after the liberation of the Red Army.³²⁶ According to the International Commission, 200,000-206,000 Jews were killed on Lithuanian soil: around 190,000 Lithuanian Jews, 8,000-10,000 Jews from Poland, nearly 5,000 Jews from Austria and Germany and 878 French Jews.³²⁷

Common estimates state that around 60,000 Jews lived in Vilnius.³²⁸ When Vilnius was returned to Lithuania in October 1939, some 12,000-15,000 Jews from the newly German occupied Polish territories arrived. Moreover, Vilnius was the only location in the Soviet Union where Jews could get certificates to get to Palestine; hence many Zionist youth organizations were based temporarily in Vilnius.³²⁹ Some 5,000 Jews could escape before the Nazis arrived,³³⁰ whereby 1,500-2,000 Jews from Vilnius entered the USSR.³³¹

MacQueen further estimated that 33,000 Jews of Vilnius were killed in 1941 in Paneriai; a similar number is given by Arad, who provided the number of 33,500 Jews of Vilnius being murdered during 1941.³³² Still some 20,000 Jews were in the ghetto of Vilnius, 12,000 officially while 8,000 were in hiding. Yet it has to be kept in mind that the numbers of Jäger are too low, as he excluded for example the “Yom Kippur Aktion” on 1 October 1941; hence the numbers are higher than Jäger’s account, as, for example, Schur wrote in detail about the action and assumed that 3,900 Jews were killed.³³³ In 1944 only about 2,100 Jews were still in labor camps in 1944 and in addition “some hundreds” were in hiding. Overall he estimated that after the liquidation of the ghetto still some 3,000 Jews were alive in Vilnius.³³⁴ Less than 5,000 Jews were

³²³ Dov Levin asserted that 15,000 Jews managed to escape to the Soviet Union from Lithuania (Levin 2000:199). Yitzhak Arad assumed a figure between 4,000-6,000 (1976:234), while Rimantas Zizas (2006) for the International Commission argued that about 8,000 Jews escaped to the USSR. The different numbers show the difficulty to come to a commonly accepted conclusion. Moreover, it remains a crucial question which areas are included, e.g. Vilnius.

³²⁴ Kohrs 2003; Truska 2003.

³²⁵ Bubnys 2004:218.

³²⁶ Zingeris/Racinskas 2006:278.

³²⁷ Zingeris/Racinskas 2006:279.

³²⁸ Arad 1982:28.

³²⁹ Lustiger 2003:186.

³³⁰ MacQueen 2003:114.

³³¹ Arad 1982:34-35.

³³² MacQueen 2003:106; Arad 1982:215-217; Lustiger 2003.

³³³ Schur 1997:62; Arad 1982:216.

³³⁴ Schur 1997:198, 204.

still alive when the Red Army liberated Vilnius – in concentration camps around Europe, in the forest, or in the Soviet Union.³³⁵

Interestingly, Lithuanian scholars often wrote about “scum” when it comes to Lithuanian collaborators, implying that a “normal” Lithuanian would have never been able to help the Germans in the killings. The whole article of Vyngantas Vareikis in the publication of the International Commission can be seen in such a light of excuse and downplaying the role of Lithuania and ethnic Lithuanians in the Holocaust.³³⁶ As it is impossible to deny the Holocaust, it seems that at least the role of Lithuania’s “own” native fellows should be minimized.

5.2.3. The Establishment of the International Commission

In 1998, the US initiated a proposal for the Baltic States to establish historical commissions to assess the legacy of the Nazi and Soviet occupation. The Lithuanian President Valdas Adamkus established the *International Commission for the Evaluation of the Crimes of the Nazi and Soviet Occupation Regimes* by decree in the same year. Prominent historians and public figures from Lithuania as well as Germany, Great Britain, Israel, Russia, and the US were invited to join the Commission.³³⁷ Without compensation they were asked to contribute; their reports had to be adopted by consensus from all experts in the Commission. The executive director of the Commission points out that the chosen people were

not just intellectuals or public figures but they also represent in some way an understanding and a discourse about a particular thinking on the totalitarian occupation regimes in Lithuania. *The different collective memories contradict each other*, the Commission is like a cup or pot, it is a small model of the big international society to find common grounds. Our Commission is unique in Lithuania. We produce an international recognized view of Lithuanian history of the occupation of the totalitarian regimes. It is most important that all views are considered and on the consensus-basis all our conclusions are reached.³³⁸

In the understanding of the Commission, “the genuine revival of mutual respect and trust between the Lithuanians and Jews as well as an integration of Lithuanian culture into that of the West is possible only through acknowledgement of the extent of the Holocaust.”³³⁹ Emanuelis Zingeris, chairman of the International Commission and long-time head of the Jewish State Museum in Lithuania, went further by stating “[w]e managed to avoid mutual opposition. Jewish Commission members did not solely discuss the topic of Lithuanian collaboration with the Nazis, while the Lithuanian Commission members did not simply attempt a defence of their ethnic brethren.”³⁴⁰

The goals of the Commission were “objective research,” the stimulation of the process of historical justice, education of society, and the advice of national decision-making bodies. The Commission itself argued that by creating two subgroups, one dealing with the Holocaust between 1941-1944 and one dealing with the period of 1940-1941 and 1944-1953, it was possible to “distinguish clearly between the crimes committed by the two regimes and to avoid superficial analogies during

³³⁵ MacQueen 2003:112.

³³⁶ Vareikis 2004:119-120.

³³⁷ Among the members of the International Commission who were researching on the Holocaust in Lithuania were Egidijus Alexandravicius, Yitzhak Arad, Andrew Baker, Alfredas Bumblauskas, Christoph Dieckmann, Dalija Epstein, Kestutis Girnius, Martin Gilbert, Gershon Greenberg, Konrad Kwiet, Nicolas Lane, Brigitte Mihok, Norman Naimark, Peter Ruggenthaler, Saulius Suziedelis, Julius Smulkstys, Linas Tatarunas, Joachim Tauber, Liudas Truska, Vyngantas Vareikis, and Rimantas Zizas.

³³⁸ Interview Racinskas, 13 February 2009 in Vilnius.

³³⁹ Zingeris 2006:96.

³⁴⁰ Zingeris 2006:96.

their analysis and evaluation.” A member of the International Commission, the historian and Member of Parliament Arvydas Anusauskas argues that “both, the Nazis and Soviets were criminals and equal.”³⁴¹ The Commission therefore followed the wish to take both occupations on an equal footing despite its rather different context. To be sure, under both occupations a lot of people suffered; but as Rachel Kostanian, vice-director of the Jewish State Museum, pointed out, “making it parallel does not sound to me right.” Sarunas Liekis has no problem to compare the Soviet and Nazi crimes in one Commission; it is “totally legitimate” to compare.³⁴² Bubnys understands “that many Western historians see it as a relativization of the Holocaust,” but they should consider the Lithuanian situation. According to Bubnys, “both perpetrators, both regimes are looked upon in a just and objective way.”³⁴³ Also the historian Arunas Bubnys supports the idea to deal with both occupation regimes in one institution because of the Lithuanian situation. By that, more interest of the Lithuanian public could be created – because there would be more identification with the work of the Commission. In fact the interest of the Lithuanian public was never there.

The volume *Preconditions for the Holocaust: Antisemitism in Lithuania* is like the other publications of the International Commission a bilingual volume, and appeared in the series “The Crimes of the Totalitarian Regimes in Lithuania.” It contains two substantive articles: Vygantas Vareikis on anti-Semitism in Lithuania up to 1939; and Liudas Truska on “The Crisis of Lithuanian–Jewish Relations, June 1940 to June 1941.” The book concludes with over 100 pages giving facsimiles of primary documents, which is obviously very useful. Theodore Weeks argued in his review that Vareikis’s contribution suffers a red line and consists of a number of serious faults, whereas he called Truska’s contribution “satisfactory” work which “provides an excellent example of the kind of ‘self-critical history’ that can move the field – and possibly the Lithuanian nation – forward.”³⁴⁴ One of the big problems is the low quality of the English translation, a challenge the International Commission faces throughout all documents they published.

The publication *The Persecution and Mass Murder of Lithuanian Jews During Summer and Fall of 1941*, compiled by the historians Christoph Dieckmann from Germany and Saulius Suziedelis from Lithuania, is particularly useful for their exemplary regional case studies of Jurbarkas and Utena and by revealing some new primary sources in the annex.³⁴⁵ To judge the book from its cover it looks like a lot of content. Yet, the overall results of research on the Holocaust in Lithuania are rather brief: 79 pages in English are indeed not a lot. As the book is bilingual, has an intensive annex, as well as some pictures, it offers content-wise not enough information. On four pages, the International Commission published their “conclusions” on how the Nazi occupation from 1941 to 1944 should be interpreted – an official version of history has been created. Such a state-backed version of history is also criticized as Liekis points out that “the Commission was a mistake in general. The state did not have to take the responsibility for evaluating the past. Instead I would give more funding for NGOs and academics to write about the Holocaust, deal with the history, and organize conferences.”³⁴⁶

Overall, the publications of the Commission seem unfinished. The initial outline of the work plan of the Commission points out topics like “The period of ghettoization 1941-1944”, “The extermination of the Jews as a spiritual and cultural

³⁴¹ Interview Anusauskas, 18 February 2009 in Vilnius.

³⁴² Interview Liekis, 24 February 2009 in Vilnius.

³⁴³ Interview Bubnys, 17 February 2009 in Vilnius.

³⁴⁴ Weeks 2007:421-423.

³⁴⁵ Dieckmann/Suziedelis 2006.

³⁴⁶ Interview Liekis, 24 February 2009 in Vilnius.

community,” “The confiscation and/or destruction of Jewish property and assets,” “The role of institutions and individuals participating in the political, police, military, social and legal structures of the occupying power” and “The Role of Lithuanians and others in the local population as perpetrators and/or collaborators in the Holocaust.”³⁴⁷ All of these topics are not covered in one of the three main publications.

Liekis criticizes that the International Commission “has written these volumes and they made a lot of conferences. And what is the result? Is this version internalized, accepted in the historical narrative here or elsewhere?”³⁴⁸ Ultimately, Liekis implies that this was not the case. The historian Bukeleviciute, lecturer at Vilnius University, also claims that “the Commission does not play any role. It has not had influence on our research or caused interest in the Lithuanian society. If you look to the books which were published, they were very interesting. But I have not noticed any influence on our research from the Commission while working in the field.”³⁴⁹

Bubnys, who was involved in the work of the Commission, is more optimistic about its work. He is optimistic about the six volumes of the Commission, three about the Nazi occupation and three about the Soviet occupation. Bubnys is, however, critical that the research was done already in 2000/01 while the publications on the Holocaust were published only four or five years later. He implied that not enough money was available and the procedure to find consensus was very hard, particularly because of the fact that the members of the Commission met just twice or once a year. As a consequence, the Lithuanian public was not interested anymore in the work of the Commission.³⁵⁰ Since 2005, the Commission basically finished their scientific production and solely concentrated on educational efforts through so-called Tolerance Centers. Teachers receive training in order to be updated on the latest Holocaust research and methods how they can include topics like anti-Semitism but also tolerance in general into their curricula. Today, approximately 60 Tolerance Centers exist throughout the country.

5.3. Collective Memory of the Holocaust in Lithuania

5.3.1. Official Remembrance

Overall, there are about 200 old cemeteries and monuments of mass killing sites in Lithuania. Usually, the local administration has to take care of these sites. Ruta Puisyte made clear that “when we talk about what we call institutional memory of the Holocaust, there is something done. Not just something, but a lot. All around Lithuania all the Holocaust sites are marked. Number one is to mark the graves, naming the victims, dates, numbers and in most of the cases also the perpetrators, the Nazis and the local collaborators.”³⁵¹ The official Holocaust Remembrance Day in Lithuania is the 23 September, the so-called *National Day of Mourning for the Victims of the Holocaust in Lithuania*. The date was chosen in 1994, and from that time it has been commemorated every year, because on that day the Nazis liquidated the Vilnius Ghetto

³⁴⁷ International Commission 1999, Outline of Work Plan <http://www.komisija.lt/en/body.php?&m=1173548714> [accessed 11 September 2010].

³⁴⁸ Interview Liekis, 24 February 2009 in Vilnius.

³⁴⁹ Interview Bukeleviciute, 21 February 2009 in Vilnius.

³⁵⁰ Interview Bubnys, 17 February 2009 in Vilnius.

³⁵¹ Interview Puisyte, 18 February 2009 in Vilnius.

in 1943. The date chosen was criticized because during the Vilnius ghetto liquidation day also Estonians, Ukrainians, and Germans helped to clear the ghetto from Jews. Another event, like the “Great Action” in the Kaunas ghetto when about 9,000 Jews were killed by Lithuanians would have sent a different signal.³⁵²

Even 20 years after the Lithuanian independence, “the worst case for remembrance and the presentation of the memory of the Holocaust is Paneriai.”³⁵³ Although the place of mass execution of 80,000-100,000 civilians, mostly Jews, during the German occupation is situated just outside the Lithuanian capital, there is no overall concept existing how the mass shootings took place and who was killed. In fact, every ethnic group has its own memorial and no overall concept can be met. Sarunas Liekis, director of the Vilnius Yiddish Institute, criticizes that “there is a cross for Poles, there is a cross for Lithuanians, the memorial for the Jews”³⁵⁴ – but the overall concept is missing. Unless visitors of Paneriai have a local guide or a good book with them, it will be unclear what actually happened there during WWII. Thus, Paneriai serves as an example of the multiple and incompatible collective memories in Lithuania.

5.3.2. The Neglect to Remember

Patriots *versus* murderer – the debate about Lithuanian partisans is hard to judge because the picture is certainly complex. A black-white perspective is in any case failing to represent the historical past. It is a problem, however, that some people who are remembered as heroes killed innocent civilians, among them mostly Jews. For Lithuanians it is important in their self-understanding that the fight for freedom against the Soviet occupation is the fundamental basis for an independent, democratic Lithuania. Such a remembrance, however, is not in line with the few survivors of the Holocaust, with Lithuania’s Jews, and all those who deal with the Holocaust in Lithuania seriously, particularly people from abroad. It also proves that Lithuanians have not come to terms with the fact that some of their national heroes were perpetrators during WWII as well. A different attitude would certainly be possible in case the Lithuanians would deal with their history differently, in the sense of a more objective and critical understanding of their own past instead of glorifying it.

Today, most Lithuanians do not want to know about the role of Lithuanian perpetrators during WWII but rather want to focus on themselves as victims of the two super powers at the time. When in Lithuania one talks about Jews during the Holocaust, it is usually referred to Lithuanians who rescued Jews and by that a critical self-examination is avoided. While Jew saviors, of course, deserve admiration and respect, they are often used by Lithuanians to hide the participation of Lithuanians in the mass killings. In this regard also the comments of the Lithuanian historians Arvydas Anusauskas and Peteras Stankeras have to be seen who reviewed the book of the German historian Knut Stang “Kollaboration und Massenmord.” Anusauskas criticized Stang that one could get the impression that Lithuanians were responsible for the Holocaust in the whole of Europe and Stankeras went further by stating that the German historian tried to shift the guilt away from the Germans to the people in the German-occupied territories.³⁵⁵ Although the book has indeed severe weaknesses as the translation from Lithuanian terms into German is often very weak and also the geographical locations are sometimes

³⁵² Interview Puisyte, 18 February 2009 in Vilnius.

³⁵³ Interview Liekis, 24 February 2009 in Vilnius.

³⁵⁴ Interview Liekis, 24 February 2009 in Vilnius.

³⁵⁵ Cited in Herzog 2005:55-56.

mixed up. Nonetheless the book of Stang, published already in 1996, remains one of the first important accounts of the Lithuanian collaboration – although the research went further in the meantime.

The Lithuanian clergy presented a letter of repentance and apology on 14 April 2000. The bishops regretted that “some children of the Church failed to show compassion to persecuted Jews during WWII, made no use of all means available to them for the protection of Jews, and, what is more, manifested a lack of determination to influence Nazi collaborators.” Clearly, no sign of actual responsibility can be found. It is still very hard for the Lithuanian Catholic Church to come to terms with what happened and critically reflect on its own role during the German occupation. During the same time, two daily newspapers, *Valstieciu laikrastis* and *Lietuvos aidas*, came up with anti-Semitic attacks. In an article on 18 November 2000 in the respected daily *Lietuvos rytas*, 21% of a survey answered that they do not want to have a Jew as a neighbor.

As Lucian Hölscher pointed out, remembrance is a shift of the remembered circumstances, a repression of the initial in favor of a retrospectively modified event.³⁵⁶ Thus remembrance constitutes a reconstructed past which provides and strengthens identity-building of a social group. Clearly, the events in 1941 are remembered in a totally contrasting way by Jews and Lithuanians. A good example is the reception of the Germans in the Lithuanian SSR in June 1941. While the ethnic Lithuanians welcomed the *Wehrmacht* with flowers and euphoria, Jews were anxious and desperate.³⁵⁷ The biggest problems remains that the Lithuanian narrative is still a traditional, if not to say a reactionary one. Ruta Puisyte, assistant director of the Vilnius Yiddish Institute, was travelling around Lithuania for oral history projects to talk with locals about WWII. Her impressions about the Lithuanian remembrance of Jews in small towns are giving a close insight of the remembrance in Lithuanian villages:

It is possible that some people did not even notice that Jews disappeared. This illustrates the gap in memory. *They did not even exist in the memory, so no suffering took place.* The Lithuanian farmer survived but it was different when the Soviets came: the farmer had to learn a new anthem, a new language, the neighbor was sent to Siberia. The father might have been called to go to the Soviet army and finally the cow and horse had to be surrendered. So, the farmer suffered from the Soviets. But when it comes to the Jews, who cared? The child goes to school which was beforehand a Jewish house. It is convenient as it is in the center of the village. Maybe the Church failed to teach people to love your neighbor, such a Catholic country. Teaching to love your neighbor, but when your neighbor is killed, people do not even notice.³⁵⁸

Tomas Tomilinas, a staff member of the Human Rights Committee of the Lithuanian Parliament, argues that basically every Lithuanian village has experienced some killings of Jews as it happened in the village of his own parents. However, “the people did not feel the scale of that.” First of all they were thinking about themselves and “Jews were a separate story.”³⁵⁹ Such a view was confirmed by Bukeleviciute who explained that “in villages people did not understand what was going on, they had no problem with the Nazi occupation. *In Lithuania we sometimes say it is better than the Soviet occupation.*”³⁶⁰ Also the Catholic priest Ricardas Doveika stresses that “for a person it was impossible to get a grasp of what is going on. They were intimidated, they were losing everybody around, and they were psychologically tired.”³⁶¹ Thus, the journalist Norkunas points out that “as a rule you were never talking about those 1940s and 1950s during Soviet time in your family, because it

³⁵⁶ Hölscher 1989:8.

³⁵⁷ Tauber 2003:41.

³⁵⁸ Interview Puisyte, 18 February 2009 in Vilnius.

³⁵⁹ Interview Tomilinas, 20 February 2009 in Vilnius.

³⁶⁰ Interview Bukeleviciute, 21 February 2009 in Vilnius.

³⁶¹ Interview Doveika, 18 February 2009 in Vilnius.

was forbidden.³⁶² Also Tomilinas says that the Holocaust “was not spoken about. My grandparents said that they were friends of Jews but they just disappeared. They do not really want to speak about the killings. People are feeling quite guilty about not doing anything about it.”³⁶³ Tomilinas comes to the conclusion that

anti-Semitism is cultural. You are getting this from your parents. You understand why you hate Russians, because they are the aggressors. You understand why you must hate the Poles, because they have taken our language away. You understand why you have to hate the Americans because the Soviets told you that they are bad. You understand everything. But you do not understand why you hate the Jews. But you still do it.³⁶⁴

In contrast, the Catholic priest Ricardas Doveika argues that “Lithuania has always been an agricultural country; education was not very wide-spread. That’s why people very often take up the information very primarily and very directly, rather than reflecting and making their own point of view out of it.”³⁶⁵ And Doveika expresses his gratitude that

we are the lucky ones, because we have two different sources to learn from. The historical written sources and also the living sources, that means our grandparents living through history. The sources written by historians or others are being evaluated only on a bigger, on a macro-scale. Meanwhile, the testimonies of our grandparents are very personal. They are rather complementing each other than negating each other.³⁶⁶

He goes on explaining that the Nazis successfully convinced the Lithuanians that Jews were Bolsheviks and thus had taken part in the Soviet killings. Kostanian, however, described her impressions about Lithuania’s collective memory of the Holocaust very negative. “Grandmothers tell that Jews use Christian blood and Jews are guilty for Sovietization, the Jews are Communists, and they are the bloody Bolsheviks. They are the cause for deportation of Lithuanians. So they got what they earned.”³⁶⁷ Bukeleviciute further explains the relation of historians to common people in Lithuania. Lithuanians

have a different, their own history. An own history is developed in the period of grandfathers and grandmothers. All Lithuanians, all people have a different history of this period, family history. The interpretation depends on this, what heritage we have. Own heritage, what I have, my friend has, my other friend. We have different ones. This time, 1938-1953 is different for all people. It depends where your grandfather and grandmother were living, which background they had and what happened with them during WWII or afterwards.³⁶⁸

Not least it is so different because it took the country until the 1960s to actually grow together in unity according to Bukeleviciute. Moreover, the population in Vilnius after WWII was almost completely changed. The vibrant Jewish community was gone. “Lithuanians are fully aware of that and do remember it.”³⁶⁹ In contrast, the librarian of the Vilnius Jewish Library, Wyman Brent, thinks that while “not many Lithuanians would deny the Holocaust, I do not think the Lithuanians fully understand exactly what was lost. The numbers of people that were lost, the culture that was lost, the buildings, the items, and the books that were lost.”³⁷⁰

³⁶² Interview Norkunas, 18 February 2009 in Vilnius.

³⁶³ Interview Tomilinas, 20 February 2009 in Vilnius.

³⁶⁴ Interview Tomilinas, 20 February 2009 in Vilnius.

³⁶⁵ Interview Doveika, 18 February 2009 in Vilnius.

³⁶⁶ Interview Doveika, 18 February 2009 in Vilnius.

³⁶⁷ Interview Kostanian, 19 February 2009 in Vilnius.

³⁶⁸ Interview Bukeleviciute, 21 February 2009 in Vilnius.

³⁶⁹ Interview Norkunas, 18 February 2009 in Vilnius.

³⁷⁰ Interview Brent, 24 February 2009 in Vilnius.

5.3.3. War Criminals

In 1992, the Supreme Council of Lithuania, which later became the *Seimas*, adopted the “Law on the Responsibility for Genocide Committed Against Lithuanian Inhabitants.” The General Prosecutor’s Office was commissioned to investigate and evaluate subjects involved in the genocide committed against Lithuanians. Indeed the cases of Aleksandras Lileikis, former chief of the Vilnius Security Police, and his deputy, Kazys Gimzauskas, were brought to court but both culprits, such were the claims, were in “poor health” and hence “unfit” for trial.

In 2000, the law was amended to prosecute also those people accused of crimes during WWII who cannot attend the hearing. Hence, the cases of Lileikis and Gimzauskas were reopened in June 2000. Yet, Lileikis died in September 2000 and his case was consequently dismissed. On 14 February 2001, the Vilnius Regional Court found Gimzauskas guilty of committing genocide against Jews. Another subject was Antanas Gecas (or Gecevicus), who allegedly was involved in the killings of Jews and other nationalities in Lithuania and Belarus.³⁷¹ In February 2001 the Vilnius City District Court No. 2 requested from the UK to extradite Gecas, which was accepted by the British authorities. Yet, Gecas died in September 2001. Overall, twelve criminal proceedings were opened whereby only in one case the subject, Algimantas Dailide, was convicted in 2006. The Lithuanian court decided, however, that Dailide was too old to be jailed in prison, so that he now lives in a small town in Germany.

Racinskas believes that some people who are responsible for atrocities are still somewhere around and alive and “that is not right because there is a personal legal responsibility and a collective moral and political responsibility.” While being very frank, he waters down his words quite a bit when he goes on to state, “it is not so important, personally speaking, where these old people spend the last years of their live, whether in a hospital bed outside or inside a prison. They are very old, the victims and perpetrators are passing away.”³⁷² The reason why in general terms very few people were prosecuted in independent Lithuania is explained by Racinskas by the fact that most people were punished during Soviet times, either to death, to jail, or to Siberia. Some were also able to escape to the West.

Many Lithuanians were offended by a controversial offer made by Efraim Zuroff, the Jerusalem head of the Simon Wiesenthal Center, an international Jewish human rights organization based in Los Angeles. After criticizing Lithuania for ineffective action against Nazi collaborators, Zuroff offered the equivalent of about 3,500 USD to anyone who had information that could be useful for investigations. Zuroff’s attempt was interpreted by some as “bribery” to betray neighbors and acquaintances.³⁷³ Also Dalius Norkunas, the Lithuanian journalist seems to be still angry: “I think Mr. Zuroff’s efforts are a little bit too much. He is not like god who knows everything and who does know what was right and wrong. We should not trust, believe, or take it for granted what he says.”³⁷⁴

³⁷¹ Antanas Gecas was an officer of the 12th Lithuanian Police Battalion and served during fall 1941 in the German occupied territory of Belarus. At least those facts are known for sure. The participation of every individual is not known exactly, but a large part of the 12th Battalion was involved in a number of mass murders in and around Minsk (Dean 2003:277-279).

³⁷² Interview Racinskas, 13 February 2009 in Vilnius.

³⁷³ Burstein 2004:2.

³⁷⁴ Interview Norkunas, 18 February 2009 in Vilnius.

5.3.4. Holocaust Education

With the creation of the International Commission in Lithuania also the Holocaust education was strengthened in the country. Interestingly, often the focus was put on Anne Frank instead of Lithuanian examples to which school students might be closer attached. Lithuania's Steering Group, created by the International Commission, presented a plan on National Holocaust Research and an Education Program to the Intergovernmental Task Force on Holocaust education in 2000, which Lithuania eventually joined in 2002. The program aimed at the development of a mature and responsible civil society with tolerance and respect for universally accepted human values, which should be achieved through modern programs in education about the Holocaust. Every school student should be taught on the Holocaust and therefore the teachers of secondary schools should receive special training. Thus, the historian Arunas Bubnys is optimistic about the future because "the younger generation is very good in dealing with the Holocaust memory because it is more tolerant, less nationalist, and more cosmopolitan."³⁷⁵ The young generation in Lithuania certainly knows more about the Jewish genocide than the generation in the age above 40. Still, a problem until today are Lithuania's school books which are riddled with mistakes about the Holocaust,³⁷⁶ and usually present it as something foreign to Lithuania referring to Auschwitz but not to Lithuania's own sites of mass killings like the 9th Fort in Kaunas or Paneriai just outside of Vilnius. The head of the Lithuanian Jewish Community, Simonas Alperavicius, is expressing his ambiguity about the topic. On the one hand, he is happy that the Holocaust is dealt with in schools at all – this was not the case during Soviet time. Nonetheless, on the other hand he feels that the Holocaust is downplayed as a "small episode" in Lithuania's long history.³⁷⁷

5.3.5. WWII Counter-memories

One of the events remembered most in Lithuania regarding WWII is in fact 14 June 1941, which is a central part of Lithuanians' collective memory. About 15,000 people were deported, among them young children and old people. It was indeed a shock for Lithuania. The deportations led to a hasty departure of many Lithuanians to the woods to be safe of other Soviet deportations. In such an environment the Germans arrived. However, these events are often equated to the Jewish killings – a fact that Ruta Puisyte brings up:

What I disagree with are wrong comparisons. It is absolutely wrong to compare the Paneriai murder side and people exiled to Siberia and make them equal. People did not return alive from Paneriai, but people from Siberia returned, many of them. Lithuanians suffered a lot and lost their property. They maybe could not return to Lithuania, they had to go to other places or stay in Russia. But it cannot be compared and made equal.³⁷⁸

It was the absolute understanding of Lithuanians that a Jew is a Bolshevik and vice versa. The stereotype of the Communist Jew survives until today although research definitely shows a much more differentiated picture and a lot of allegations turned out to be a myth. Moreover, and related to that, it is claimed that Jews were ultimately thriving for world

³⁷⁵ Interview Bubnys, 17 February 2009 in Vilnius.

³⁷⁶ Interview Alperavicius, 23 February 2009 in Vilnius.

³⁷⁷ Interview Alperavicius, 23 February 2009 in Vilnius.

³⁷⁸ Interview Puisyte, 18 February 2009 in Vilnius.

dominance. Hence some deeper hatred had to be present; otherwise it is hard to explain the outburst of violence. Some nonetheless see rage and revenge as a main reason.³⁷⁹ The journalist Norkunas states:

In the 1990s, we knew all the facts about the Holocaust and what scope it has had here. Everybody knew it. But at the same time nobody elaborated too much about it either. With the start of independence people started to talk and document all the things what happened to Lithuanians after WWII. We started to know and talk much more about it, because there was practically no Lithuanian family which was not touched in one way or another. Somebody's aunt or brother, somebody was killed.³⁸⁰

According to Tomilinas, "Lithuanians are not satisfied that the Holocaust issue is repeatedly coming up, because we do not have to concentrate on this issue too much. I think this is a common idea among elites and also society as a whole, *because the Holocaust does not say anything anymore to us.*"³⁸¹ In very direct words Kulik describes the narrative about the Jewish Communist:

Jews had this reputation to be Communists. Within the whole Soviet Union it was known that Jews and Communists from the beginning were very much related. Just take Karl Marx, Karl Liebknecht, or Rosa Luxemburg as examples. In Lithuania they hate Communism. We all hate Communism and we were the first state to declare independence of the Soviet Union. This hate helped us to fight against the Soviet regime. This hate against Communism inside of Lithuanians is also very much related to Jews.³⁸²

Kulik's conclusion is that "historical justice related to Jews does not seem very important for us. There are no Jews anymore, and it is all about history."³⁸³ The reason behind that is a competition of victim roles and the feeling that Lithuania faced a very difficult situation. While the latter is certainly true, it is not of help to consequently ignore the past. To get out of this circle seems difficult as Tomilinas explains that "most people are still thinking in ethnical terminology. People still do not understand what citizenship is about in this country. Citizenship is combined with the ethnical identity."³⁸⁴ As a consequence a person has to be an ethnic Catholic Lithuanian to be a proper citizen of the country. Tomilinas also shares a personal story: "I have a seven months old daughter, her name is Sarah. Together with my wife we have given her the name. After announcing our decision to our family, we got a big pressure to change the name because it is a Jewish name and thus stupid to choose because this girl will have a really bad life in this country. I did not understand that at all."³⁸⁵

5.3.6. The "KGB Museum"

The events in June 1941 and during the time of 1944-1953 are covered by the *genozidas muzejus* ("genocide museum"), which is, interestingly, called in English and other languages *KGB museum*. The difference in name proves that the museum has two target groups. For Lithuanians it should represent the suffering of Lithuanians during the Soviet occupations and the heroic fight of Lithuanian partisans against the foreign power from the East. Only on one panel, however, it is mentioned that during the Nazi occupation of Vilnius the same building was used by the Gestapo as their head quarter and was also a place of torture. No further reasoning is deemed necessary by the museum. In earlier times, the *KGB museum* even presented the

³⁷⁹ Tauber 2003:45-46.

³⁸⁰ Interview Norkunas, 18 February 2009 in Vilnius.

³⁸¹ Interview Tomilinas, 20 February 2009 in Vilnius.

³⁸² Interview Kulik, 20 February 2009 in Vilnius.

³⁸³ Interview Kulik, 20 February 2009 in Vilnius.

³⁸⁴ Interview Tomilinas, 20 February 2009 in Vilnius.

³⁸⁵ Interview Tomilinas, 20 February 2009 in Vilnius.

Jews as those who were responsible for the genocide against Lithuanians.³⁸⁶ While those links are removed on the panels today, there are no critical self-reflections of those gross errors in the past.

The other target group of the museum is tourists from all around the world. For them, it is a visit to the *KGB museum*. Consequently it is usually no surprise for them that they are only confronted with the Soviet crimes committed in and outside the building. The most disturbing fact however is that the Holocaust is not mentioned at all. Ruta Puisyte explains the way the *KGB museum* argues: "There is a Jewish museum. It is their business to speak about the Holocaust. We, they would say, we will speak about the Soviet genocide."³⁸⁷ Also my own experience is that when the museum staff is asked about the Holocaust in the *KGB museum*, they respond that one can visit the Jewish State Museum as they present "their" genocide there.

5.3.7. What to Remember?

Halbwachs's analysis, although written in 1925, can be easily linked to the killing of the Lithuanian Jewry during the Holocaust. It is Halbwachs who reminds us that the majority of the events in the past are not unremembered due to antipathy, reluctance, or indifference. The problem is that those groups which could have remembered the events are inexistent, as almost all of Lithuania's Jews were annihilated and Jews from other parts of the Soviet Union moved to Lithuania after WWII.³⁸⁸ Since 1996, an almost forgotten part of Lithuania's recent history is reviving again although slowly and with loopholes. Moreover, it is rather a revival outside of Lithuania than in Lithuania's society itself, which still tries openly as well as indirectly to stop such a development. It is feared that foreigners attack Lithuania's collective memory and the current historical narrative is undermined. The experience of Ruta Puisyte gives some insight:

When I was working in the Jewish museum, I was always inviting people who might be interested in seeing the Holocaust exhibition. And I invited a lady and she said, no, I do not want to come because otherwise the Jews will accuse me. And I thought to myself, do not worry, no one will accuse you. And if facts and photographs accuse you, then maybe there is really a problem out there. Anti-Semitism is so widespread in Lithuania and it is so sad. It maybe also does not help the people to think about the Holocaust as a pain because they think about their own pain first. They do not think about the pain of others, that others suffered greatly. It is hard to believe that a victim made others a victim. This anti-Semitism is terrible. Ordinary people say that it would be good if the Nazis would kill all of the Jews. Whatever Jews do, they could do great things, but no, there is something behind it. You cannot trust a Jew. Recently I had a seminar on anti-Semitism. We invited teachers who work on this topic, who are so-called "in favor" of Jews. And still, I found out that they have anti-Jewish stereotypes: Einstein is nice, but this ugly Jew, it is maybe not bad that he suffered, because he is ugly. I am sorry.³⁸⁹

The journalist Norkunas also complains that "a lot of politicians abroad, especially in Israel, are referring to Lithuanians as the Jew killers. Although I think you should not apply such names to a whole nation as such, of course there were some, a lot of people, who were helping to kill; but there were not much less who were helping to save Jews. The killing machine was too strong."³⁹⁰ Still, he demands that "it is very important to know and not to forget about history."³⁹¹ Also the executive director of the International Commission, Racinkas, explains in length:

³⁸⁶ Interview Alperavicius, 23 February 2009 in Vilnius.

³⁸⁷ Interview Puisyte, 18 February 2009 in Vilnius.

³⁸⁸ Halbwachs [1925] 1980:71.

³⁸⁹ Interview Puisyte, 18 February 2009 in Vilnius.

³⁹⁰ Interview Norkunas, 18 February 2009 in Vilnius.

³⁹¹ Interview Norkunas, 18 February 2009 in Vilnius.

Inevitably, Lithuania fell victim to two totalitarian regimes. Because of different ideologies and different ways of exploring its policies, different ethnic, political and social groups suffered from these regimes and their destiny was different. Their different collective memory was shaped among these groups accordingly. Inevitably, it comes to a kind of comparison. When we are talking about the Jews, of course the Holocaust was the probably most horrible thing, not just in the 20th century but in all Jewish history. The collective memory among the Jews is very clear. When we are talking about ethnic Lithuanians, we compare the destiny in one way or another of the Nazi occupation with the Soviet occupation. Unfortunately, I would say, even if the Jewish community were citizens of Lithuania.

Racinskas concludes:

The Holocaust in Lithuania is really a big shame of our country and nation, although we were occupied during this time. There was no Lithuanian state. It was organized by the Nazis. If not the Nazi occupation, everyone agrees that such things would not have happened. But that does not mean that this people are not responsible for what they did. And also it does not mean that in our days we should not feel a moral responsibility to understand that correctly, to explain to our people that in any way this behavior is not acceptable and to educate our society in a responsible way that it will never happen again.³⁹²

5.4. The Thesis of Two Genocides

Ever since WWII, large parts of the Baltic countries and the Western part of the Ukraine felt the Soviets were not liberating them but rather experienced another occupation by the Soviets. A victim syndrome was developed as Lithuanians saw themselves as a constant victim of powerful nations.³⁹³ The Soviets mostly targeted the major ethnic group with deportations to Gulags and labor camps, which led to the claim that allegedly “genocide” took place; basically a re-writing of Soviet history about the events of WWII took place. After Lithuania’s independence, the *Lithuanian Center for Research on Genocide and Repression* in Vilnius was established to document the “Lithuanian genocide.” It does not, however, deal with the Holocaust during the Nazi occupation but rather the political repression during the Soviet occupation against ethnic Lithuanians. Lithuanians understand genocide as their own national suffering during Stalinist times and include cultural and spiritual as well as physical genocide. The use and understanding of the word genocide in such a way inevitably causes problems because it is understood differently elsewhere. Even worse, it leads to the concept of “two genocides” that are somehow connected in a cause-and-effect relationship. For many Lithuanians, the result is an alleged symmetry in balancing guilt and suffering – which is ultimately misleading.³⁹⁴

First of all it has to be clear what genocide actually is. In 1933, Raphael Lemkin, a young Polish lawyer of Jewish descent, suggested to declare the extermination of national, ethnic, or religious groups an international crime. Lemkin referred in particular to the 1915 mass killings of Armenians by the Young Turks in the Ottoman Empire. After escaping to the United States, Lemkin coined the term “genocide” in his book *Axis Rule in Occupied Europe* in 1944, suggesting that the systematic and deliberate destruction of people is a crime against international law. The international community accepted Lemkin’s idea of genocide whereupon the Nuremberg Trials considered the Holocaust not as a distinct crime committed by individuals but as an aggressive war on a global scale. Lemkin continued to campaign for a universal acceptance to forbid genocide, which in 1948 resulted in the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide (CPPCG) passed by the newly established United Nations and entering into force in 1951. The CPPCG should investigate crimes committed with the intent to destroy a national, ethnic, racial or religious group. Five characteristic points can be identified:

³⁹² Interview Racinskas, 13 February 2009 in Vilnius.

³⁹³ Interview Bubnys, 17 February 2009 in Vilnius.

³⁹⁴ Senn 2001.

(1) killing members of a particular group; (2) causing serious bodily or mental harm to members of the group; (3) forcibly transferring children of the group to another group; (4) deliberately inflicting on the group conditions of life calculated to bring about its physical destruction; and (5) imposing measures intended to prevent births within the group.³⁹⁵

Following these five conclusions of the CPCCG, it is very obvious that the Holocaust was indeed genocide. All five points correspond; the Holocaust seems like the ultimate genocide. Considering the crimes committed against Lithuanians by the Soviet authorities, it is much more difficult. In fact, none of the five points matches clearly because not *all* Lithuanians were targeted by the Soviets, rather the class enemy: the bourgeoisie and nationalists. It also has to be kept in mind, however, that the Soviets pressured the international community of the time not to include social and political groups as victims of genocide, fearing to be accused itself. This point is today very much stressed by conservative Lithuanians. The historian and parliamentarian Arvydas Anusauskas claimed that, “[w]e approve that social and political groups are victim of genocide in our law, but the international community did not approve it. Every country has its own law and own understanding of history.”³⁹⁶ Anusauskas points to the fact that according to Lithuanian law, the Soviets committed genocide against Lithuanians. It is indeed difficult for Lithuanians to grasp why no genocide should have happened when even the law puts it like that. Such a problem is of course a sign that the law is actually politicized. A remark of Dmitrij Kulik sums up the debate: “I think it is an absolute chaos with the word genocide. We just do not really understand what it means.”³⁹⁷

Often, contemporary politics in the Baltic States are nationalistic. Each of the Baltic republics seems not only to deny the involvement of some of their citizens in WWII but even worse, they are honoring the wartime collaborators as anti-Soviet national freedom fighters. In the Baltic States the disputes about WWII has become politicized on such a level that often a serious debate about the Holocaust is not possible anymore. People from the Baltic States on the one hand and Russians on the other hand use WWII for agitations in the political arena. They play a blame game to gain political advantages and actually seek for any historical truth.³⁹⁸ Particularly challenging is the debate in Estonia, where a monument for Estonian freedom fighters was built; these soldiers were actually portrayed in SS uniforms. They are seen as heroes in the eyes of nationalist Estonians while international observers and particularly Russia see it as an unacceptable move.

In Lithuania the theory of two genocides still exists to this day, although it does not match the reality of the times.³⁹⁹ It is the ultimate attempt to bring the Nazi occupation and the Soviet occupation on the same level and also their crimes should be similar and comparable. Interestingly enough, as soon as Lithuanian historians were no longer able to deny the participation of Lithuanians in the mass killings of Jews during WWII, accusations against Jews were raised. A “symmetry” of suffering of both people should be portrayed.⁴⁰⁰ In the end, also the International Commission is a demonstration of equalization of the two occupations. Moreover, Simonas Alperavicius, head of the Lithuanian Jewish Community, complained that while at the beginning the International Commission had the clear focus on the exploration of the Holocaust, the Soviet crimes soon stood in the center of attention in the Commission. Furthermore, the International Commission tried to re-focus its work on education while the Ministry of Education should be responsible for that.

³⁹⁵ Salih 2006:32.

³⁹⁶ Interview Anusauskas, 18 February 2009 in Vilnius.

³⁹⁷ Interview Kulik, 20 February 2009 in Vilnius.

³⁹⁸ Shneer 2009:130-131.

³⁹⁹ Interview Alperavicius, 23 February 2009 in Vilnius.

⁴⁰⁰ Donskis 2002:7.

The International Commission in Lithuania also has its problems to come to terms with the thesis of two genocides. It is not actively challenging this myth and rather supports it indirectly. In the conclusions on the topic *Deportations of 14-18 June 1941*, it was pointed out that “[d]eportations are seen as a crime of genocide or a crime against humanity.”⁴⁰¹ Grunskis also says that the deportations were genocide. Interestingly, many Lithuanian authors refer to the time from 1940-1953 (Truska) or 1940-1958 (Anusauskas) when they write about the Soviet period, ignoring the period from 1941-1944 where the German occupied the country.

Racinskas remarks that “[w]e cannot call what happened during the Soviet time necessarily genocide, but crimes against humanity or war crimes.”⁴⁰² Also Bubnys would not call it genocide but rather “Soviet repression.” He stresses that during the time of Stalin intensive terror was carried out, but the Lithuanian nation remained its homogeneity and also regained its state sovereignty. “If it would have been genocide, we could not talk today of a Lithuanian people or a Lithuanian state.”⁴⁰³

Quite a large part of Lithuanian society, including the intelligentsia, still believes that Jews were collectively responsible for mass killings of Lithuanians, the deportations of civilians, and the commitment of other atrocities on the eve of the German occupation during the brief Soviet interlude 1940-1941 in Lithuania. Kulik says that “many people believe in their heart that those Lithuanians who killed Jews did so not because of the fact they were Jews but because of the fact that they are pro-Communist.”⁴⁰⁴ And Tomilinas supports his idea by stating that Lithuanians can admit that “we were part of killing Jews – but the Soviets killed us. This is the standard answer of everybody. This idea is produced and being cultivated among elites. They would tell young people to admit the killing of Jews and not to avoid this question. But they would urge as well that we were also the victim.”⁴⁰⁵ Thus, Racinskas concludes that the common narrative claims that

we were victims, but what is important is that in one situation a same person is a victim and in another situation it is a perpetrator. It gives not the right to get a perpetrator because you were beforehand a victim. In explaining the difficult situations we have extreme positions. There are some Jews who are saying that all or at least generally Lithuanians are nationalist, fascist, collaborators, and perpetrators. They are responsible of what happened during the Holocaust in Lithuania. There is another extreme nationalist view in Lithuania. Very deep in their heart they believe that the Jews were responsible of the Communist occupation in Lithuania in 1940.⁴⁰⁶

The accusation of the historic guilt of Lithuania’s Jews may almost be treated as a fact in the Lithuanian discourse as wicked as it may sound. In Lithuania’s popular consciousness the Jewish guilt is deeply embedded. Jews are said to have been involved in subversive and treacherous activities and they lacked loyalty and patriotism towards the nation. Yet, Donskis claimed that the problem is not only Lithuanian anti-Semitism, but instead the “insensitivity” about Jews and the “defensiveness” of the own past.⁴⁰⁷ Dovid Katz called this attitude “Holocaust obfuscation”, which does not deny but “minimize, trivialize, justify, try to fault the victims for alleged wrongs, and exaggerate and misname other evils to achieve the desired ‘equivalence.’”⁴⁰⁸

⁴⁰¹ Zingeris/Racinskas 2003:4.

⁴⁰² Interview Racinskas, 13 February 2009 in Vilnius.

⁴⁰³ Interview Bubnys, 16 February 2009 in Vilnius.

⁴⁰⁴ Interview Kulik, 20 February 2009 in Vilnius.

⁴⁰⁵ Interview Tomilinas, 20 February 2009 in Vilnius.

⁴⁰⁶ Interview Racinskas, 13 February 2009 in Vilnius.

⁴⁰⁷ Donskis 2002:7.

⁴⁰⁸ Katz 2009:259.

5.5. Ugly Debates

“Different social groups in Lithuania have a different memory on the Holocaust. It depends on education, mainly on education. The people who attend school right now receive different information than 20-30 years ago.”⁴⁰⁹ Arvydas Anusauskas, Lithuanian Member of Parliament and historian is optimistic than in the future the discourse on the past will be more positive. Also, the historian Bukeleviciute expresses her opinion in such a way: “In cemeteries there are more Jews than Jews are in the streets in Lithuania today. Thus, we have no problem with Jews today in Lithuania. I do not feel anti-Semitism in Lithuania. Still, the term Jew has some bad meaning. *It is from our heritage, a historical heritage.* I think my generation and the younger one do not have it anymore. But the generation which is now 50 years old, they have it.”⁴¹⁰

Even further went the Catholic priest Doveika: “I would not see any anti-Semitism arising in Lithuania. Although a year ago, there have been some examples of members of the Jewish community who presented themselves as the absolute victim. Not seeing anything else than that. When you are lifting yourself above everything else, it is also arising some response.”⁴¹¹ Such comments are seen by Tomilinas as “secret anti-Semitism alive in all parts of society. It is quite evident.”⁴¹² Racinskas gives a similar reply by stating that

the general attitude in society is more silently anti-Semitic than silently liberal. There is an active and a silent position. If politicians stand up very strongly against anti-Semitism, their popularity is shrinking. The politicians are not shaping the attitude of society but are rather following the present attitude. They are trying to say what the people want to hear. It is generally a problem with the Lithuanian civil society which is not as mature as Western countries. Any civil movement was considered a threat from the Soviet regime. General obedience, one view, one position and no pluralist view. It is a general problem in our society.”⁴¹³

The historian Bubnys talked about the role of intellectuals in the process of conquering anti-Semitism. He claimed that many intellectuals believe that too much talk about it makes the situation even worse. They think that bad feelings would even intensify and negative emotions would lead to scandalizations, ultimately producing more anti-Semitism. The problem for Bubnys is the so-called “middle generation” of those who are 40-60 years today and rule the country. Most of them have “different stereotypes and ethno-centrist thoughts.” He is optimistic, however, that the new generation is pro-European, tolerant and not anti-Semitic. The old generation will remain with its stereotypes but in ten years the situation in politics, academia, schools, and mass media will be different.⁴¹⁴

In the following, four examples of the last years are given where the collective memory of the Holocaust in Lithuania is strongly interwoven with anti-Semitism. The examples show how important a critical self-reflection of the Lithuania's own involvement in the Holocaust would be.

⁴⁰⁹ Interview Anusauskas, 18 February 2009 in Vilnius.

⁴¹⁰ Interview Bukeleviciute, 21 February 2009 in Vilnius.

⁴¹¹ Interview Doveika, 18 February 2009 in Vilnius.

⁴¹² Interview Tomilinas, 20 February 2009 in Vilnius.

⁴¹³ Interview Racinskas, 13 February 2009 in Vilnius.

⁴¹⁴ Interview Bubnys, 17 February 2009 in Vilnius.

5.5.1. The Affair With the Daily *Respublika*

On 20 February 2004, a front-page article “Who Rules the World” in the popular Lithuanian daily *Respublika* was published by the editor-in-chief and owner, Vitas Tomkus. The tabloid *Vakaro zinios*, as well owned by Tomkus, printed the story as well. “We should be especially careful with Americans, because America is ruled by Jews” and Jews “use the issue of the Holocaust to conceal their own crimes,” wrote Tomkus.⁴¹⁵ A cartoon illustrated a Jew and a homosexual holding up a globe, revealing that Jews and gays control the world. In a series of “letters,” Tomkus further explained the readers his view on Jews and gays. The articles played with common stereotypes about Jews. Without doubt, the articles and the cartoon were anti-Semitic and even reminded some of Nazi propaganda as it was published in the notorious weekly Nazi newspaper *Der Stürmer*.

Nonetheless, it took four days until a condemnation by some 40 public organizations appeared. On 26 February the Council on National Minorities called the incident an “oblique exhortation to start pogroms.” Still, it took Prime Minister Algirdas Brazauskas until 1 March until he called the articles “irresponsible.” The editor of *Vakaro zinios*, Raimundas Celencevicius, denied in a talk show on Lithuanian TV that the articles were anti-Semitic or xenophobic and criticized the “exaggerated reaction whenever Jews were mentioned, as opposed to other minorities.”⁴¹⁶ Puisyte argues that “when the cartoon appeared for the first time, NGOs reacted. It was thanks to NGOs and the Soros foundation that a case was started. They hired a lawyer to start a case against the author and owner of this article.”⁴¹⁷

The head of the Jewish Community, Simonas Alperavicius, argues that one should react to articles like those from Tomkus, but open protest letters from Lithuanian intellectuals like Donskis and Alexandravicius have to be carefully drafted to resist further provocations of Tomkus.⁴¹⁸ While Alperavicius is making a valid point, it is also a dangerous sign that silence should be applied as a means against anti-Semitism. Such a strategy is potentially perilous as the discourse is in the hand of right-extremists and ordinary people regard their populist outcries as normal.

The Lithuanian journalist Dalius Norkunas stresses “that it makes a bad picture of all Lithuanians, but it is just this particular strange guy who is having his ideas. Unfortunately he is the owner of *Respublika*. What can we do? It is a pity.”⁴¹⁹ For Sarunas Liekis, “*Respublika* is a clear case where the guy is manipulating and he is an anti-Semite out of conviction.”⁴²⁰ As the owner of the newspaper he would be able to present certain news and certain positions. Still, Tomkus’s views would not be dominating. However, Lithuanians “also have tendencies – as in any closed society that people use conspiracy theories. And Jews fit the conspiracy theories very well: free masonry or world capitalism.”⁴²¹

⁴¹⁵ Burstein 2004:1.

⁴¹⁶ Burstein 2004:1.

⁴¹⁷ Interview Puisyte, 18 February 2009 in Vilnius.

⁴¹⁸ Interview Alperavicius, 23 February 2009 in Vilnius.

⁴¹⁹ Interview Norkunas, 18 February 2009 in Vilnius.

⁴²⁰ Interview Liekis, 24 February 2009 in Vilnius.

⁴²¹ Interview Liekis, 24 February 2009 in Vilnius.

5.5.2. Jewish Partisans

Lithuanian courts were not very active to capture Lithuanian collaborators of the Nazis. On the contrary, the General Prosecutor's Office was interested in Jewish partisans in 2007 because Jews have actively fought against the Nazi regime while hiding in the woods. Allegedly they committed crimes against Lithuanian civilians, which was seen by the courts as justification to open the case against the well-known and respected Israeli historian Yitzhak Arad, who was born and raised in Lithuania. Moreover, the court investigated the case of the librarian of the Yiddish Institute in Vilnius and former partisan Fania Branzovskia, but in the end did not open a case.

Yitzhak Arad was a member of the International Commission and because of his prominence Lithuania received wide-spread pressure to stop the proceedings against Arad, which indeed happened in the end. The Jewish community in Lithuania, however, was quite bitter that not cases of the real war criminals but rather those of the victim group were investigated. While the head of the Lithuanian Jewish Community, Simonas Alperavicius, was happy that intellectuals in Lithuania spoke up against the investigations of the courts, Rachel Kostanian from the Jewish State Museum was far more critical. She complains that the Lithuanian elite remains quiet after such incidents, be it politicians who react too late or intellectuals who do not speak up.⁴²² Obviously, the impressions about public pressure against anti-Semitic occurrences are different.

The affair started when a fragment of Arad's book on his memories of WWII was published in the daily *Respublika*. The newspaper questioned how a historian who allegedly was terrorizing Lithuanian civilians can be a member of the International Commission. On the basis of this publication the former head of the Lithuanian Genocide and Resistance Center and now Member of Parliament, Dalia Kuodyte, wrote a letter to the General Prosecutor's Office asking to open the case, which they eventually did. Lithuania asked Israel to extradite Arad to Lithuania for questioning, which Israel fiercely denied. The Lithuanian Chief Prosecutor suspected that Arad was involved in crimes against Lithuanian civilians committed by partisan groups during WWII. According to the historian Bubnys, the court did not understand history and its connections. The judges thought that they have to react and furthermore stood under the pressure to prosecute also "others" and not only Lithuanians. "In fact, the whole affair is the ignorance of the Attorney General. Of course there are reasons for these decisions, but I think they are not political but rather mental. The General Prosecutor's Office wanted to show that they are good Lithuanians and present a case where people have done something bad against Lithuanians. That is, of course, my subjective opinion."⁴²³

Clear words are also found by Liekis: "The state and the Prosecutor General's Office got fooled. It was stupid, really stupid. If I would be prosecutor, I would not have taken this case. There is no evidence, it is a long time ago and based on memoirs. Closed."⁴²⁴ And in fact, the case had to be closed because not enough was found. Racinskas suspects that "without the international pressure and the debate, the case would probably still remain open."⁴²⁵ Racinskas tries to understand the reasoning of the court: "They see it from a legal perspective. A person was murdered and it has to be

⁴²² Interview Alperavicius, 23 February 2009 in Vilnius.

⁴²³ Interview Bubnys, 17 February 2009 in Vilnius

⁴²⁴ Interview Liekis, 24 February 2009 in Vilnius.

⁴²⁵ Interview Racinskas, 13 February 2009 in Vilnius.

explored. It was during the war, Soviet partisans were clashing with Lithuanian partisans. Of course, there were also civilian victims – but this was war. Moreover, Arad was very young like 17 or 18-years-old. He was saving his life in the forest and was not the leader of the squad.”⁴²⁶ Moreover, Racinskas concludes that “in the end they had no evidences for what they were saying and it was very harmful. The purpose was historical revisionism and it was done in an anti-Semitic way because only Jewish-origin partisans were picked up.”⁴²⁷

5.5.3. Nazi Parade

In spring 2008 a parade of neo-Nazis took place on the streets of Vilnius. It was reported that skinheads marched along the main avenue of Vilnius and screamed “Juden raus.” While the Jewish community and others were shocked about this incident, they got even more concerned about the reaction or, more adequately put, the non-reaction from Lithuanian officials. The Lithuanian President waited for ten days to condemn the incident; it is unclear for which reason he waited that long. Puisyte describes the situation in the following way: “Nobody reacted, until someone from abroad or embassies here said you cannot keep silent. You have to say something – only then they condemned.” Tomilinas, who works at the Human Rights Committee of the Parliament, states: “The first idea which was expressed was that it is Russian work. The first idea was that KGB agents have made this people walk through Lithuania on the street to discredit this country. This was the first comment on that incident after a week.”⁴²⁸ Kostanian explains herself the late reaction of politicians that “they are afraid of the electorate to lose votes. It is not popular to speak up for Jews, they would lose votes. Neither the police nor the politicians, no one reacted.”⁴²⁹

The Nazi march was put to the courts; five of the main demonstrators got penalties, much to the negative surprise of the Lithuanian Jewish Community who wanted to see more people sentenced. Ruta Puisyte sees also in many Western countries instances of anti-Semitism, but these are strongly condemned from officials, NGOs, and intellectuals. However, “this does not seem to be the case in Lithuania.”⁴³⁰ Arvydas Anusauskas, Member of Parliament, claims that “anti-Semitism is happening, you cannot avoid it. Those right-extremist organizations are marginal; usually they avoid anti-Semitic rhetoric in public. Politicians do not allow themselves to use anti-Semitic rhetoric.”⁴³¹

In contrast to the events, the *Seimas* passed a law to ban Soviet symbols. Nazi symbols were already prohibited by an earlier law, but the discussion about the Nazi march focused on the question whether Nazi symbols were used by the skinheads. Interestingly, the debate did not focus on the Nazi symbols but why only Nazi symbols and not also Soviet symbols are forbidden.⁴³²

⁴²⁶ Interview Racinskas, 13 February 2009 in Vilnius.

⁴²⁷ Interview Racinskas, 13 February 2009 in Vilnius.

⁴²⁸ Interview Tomilinas, 20 February 2009 in Vilnius.

⁴²⁹ Interview Kostanian, 19 February 2009 in Vilnius.

⁴³⁰ Interview Puisyte, 18 February 2009 in Vilnius.

⁴³¹ Interview Anusauskas, 18 February 2009 in Vilnius.

⁴³² Interview Wagner, 26 February 2009 in Vilnius.

5.5.4. Restitution

Some Lithuanians remain bitter over the Jewish community's attempts to gain back its valuable pre-WWII property. In fact, the demographic situation has completely changed particularly in Vilnius. Before 1939, Vilnius was mostly populated by Poles and Jews. After WWII, the Soviet Union did not allow private estate. When independence was gained, the situation changed. Lithuania got a restitution law which turned out to be tricky for certain parts of the population. Restitution is only possible for Lithuanian citizens, regardless of their place of residence and religion before 1940. In Vilnius, many Jews populated the old town. The very few Jews who survived are not Lithuanian citizens today because they moved to Israel, the US, or elsewhere. Since the second half of the 1990s, intense debates on restitution have taken place. Liekis explains that "the restitution issue is used by anti-Semites. The restitution issue touches also very practical every-day interests of some groups who have an interest to support this kind of theory that Jews should not be given this or that."⁴³³

Since 1992, religious institutions have been able to ask for their former property and the Jewish Community got a synagogue back as well as the building at Pylimo Street 4. Other institutions, however, including cultural institutions that existed before WWII are not allowed to ask for restitution because the law does not recognize any continuity Liekis comments that "it is not easy, but there was also the lack of political will for a long time. There was just willingness to delay and not to solve the issue. The situation is not getting better because of that."⁴³⁴ Interestingly, the restitution issue seems to be a reason that easily fuels anti-Semitism in Lithuania. The historian Bukeleviciute described it in the following way:

When Jews started to talk about the property question, Lithuanians began to feel anti-Semitic. When Jews say that one cannot build on this field new houses because there was a cemetery or a synagogue, one cannot build a supermarket in this house because it was Jewish property, Lithuanians begin to feel anti-Semitic. Not anti-Semitic feelings in general, only in these problems we began to feel anti-Semitic. Now it is Lithuania. Lithuanians are talking Lithuanian, Lithuania belongs to Lithuanians. This property is Lithuanian because this belongs to Lithuanians.⁴³⁵

Also Tomilinas observed restitution related to the question of anti-Semitism. People often look at this issue in the following way: "The Jews want our property. They do not understand that this property was owned by Jews. There is also a policy towards not giving the Jews the property back."⁴³⁶ The restitution is also linked with the citizenship law, which according to Tomilinas was designed in a way that Jews will not get their property back. The situation, however, had improved recently, particularly between the Jewish Community and the government of Lithuania.⁴³⁷

5.6. Conclusion

It is clear that Lithuania cannot become an open, modern, democratic, and tolerant society without coming to terms with its painful history. The Holocaust and anti-Semitism tells a lot about the ability of modern human beings in case there is no critical self-reflection and sympathetic understanding of the other. In the eyes of the young executive director of the Jewish Community, the old generation of Lithuanians would have to drop their old stereotypes about Jews. My own experience

⁴³³ Interview Liekis, 24 February 2009 in Vilnius.

⁴³⁴ Interview Liekis, 24 February 2009 in Vilnius.

⁴³⁵ Interview Bukeleviciute, 21 February 2009 in Vilnius.

⁴³⁶ Interview Tomilinas, 20 February 2009 in Vilnius.

⁴³⁷ Interview Tomilinas, 20 February 2009 in Vilnius.

suggests, however, otherwise. Having traveled throughout Lithuania to visit 15 senior high schools in winter and spring 2005, I experienced gross anti-Semitic allegations. Most of the time, those kids never had seen a Jew nor had a clue what Judaism actually is. However, their stereotypes were already passed on through their family; the grandparents are able to control the collective memory on the past in the personal space.

Of course, there are as smart, interested, and open-minded kids among the students as elsewhere. It is also clear that Lithuania is not a country full of bad people where everyone is an anti-Semite, racist and xenophobic. Particularly younger people in Vilnius are very open, interested, and cosmopolitan. Nonetheless, the prevailing collective memory on the Holocaust in Lithuania let doubts remain whether the changes will come quickly and not another generation has to come in order to achieve somewhat normal relations between Jews and the rest of the population in Lithuania. Too many people in the countryside but also in the bigger cities are losers of the transition period and globalization. They remain bitter that a certain amount of people has profited a lot from transforming the country to a Western-style market economy while they have not received their share yet. Not least a higher living standard among all Lithuanians, further improvements in the education system, and the take-over of the younger generation may shape the collective memory of the Holocaust in Lithuania in a more positive direction. The conditions to deal with the dark past of the Nazi occupation period in a self-critical and self-reflected manner seem to be not existent so far. It will take more time doing so.

6. A European Collective Memory?

It does not make much sense to start a debate on the uniqueness of the Holocaust. The simple declaration of uniqueness would lead to a trivialization of other huge crimes like the Armenian genocide in 1915, the Ukrainian Holodomor 1932/33, Cambodia under the Khmer Rouge from 1977-1979, or Rwanda 1994. Of course, the Holocaust was unique in some ways, particularly having in mind its industrial and organized character of mass killings, but at the same time one can also find parallels with other genocides. From a historical perspective it seems valid to see the Holocaust as an extreme example of mass murder and on European continental soil as *the* extreme example of the 20th century. The Holocaust demonstrated what “ordinary men” are able to do. To be sure, Germans and Austrians planned and organized the Jewish genocide and together with their auxiliaries committed horrendous crimes during WWII. The hands of time cannot be turned back, thus the most important lesson of the Holocaust today is to be aware of what people are potentially able to do and that a potential perpetrator lurks inside all of us. Thus it is more important to think about ways how we can prevent such horrible events from happening again. For being able to do so, we would also need a common narrative and understanding of the events during WWII. So far, however, the efforts have failed – even inside Europe – despite the fact that the Holocaust might be an example where all countries and people could come together to research and understand the ultimate evil.

The Holocaust has become a ruling cultural symbol in Western culture. As Noble Peace Laureate Elie Wiesel put it, the Holocaust was “a unique Jewish tragedy with universal implications.”⁴³⁸ The Holocaust bears a lot of consequences, many things can be learnt from the “symbol of modernism.” A problem for some people remains for some people is the question what actually is subsumed under the term Holocaust. As pointed out at the beginning of this diploma thesis, it is understood as the brutal murder of six million Jews during WWII. At the same time it should certainly not be forgotten that millions of POWs, communists, Slavs, homosexuals, and Roma and Sinti (also known as “Gypsies”) were murdered as well. A big impact on the remembrance of the Holocaust certainly had films and documentaries. It was mentioned in chapter 3 that the American TV series *Holocaust* in 1978 and Steven Spielberg “Schindler’s List” of 1993 had a huge impact on its audience, not only in the US but in the overall Western world. Although Spielberg’s film was criticized, among others by Claude Lanzmann as a “kitsch melodrama,” the film provided a better understanding of the Holocaust for many people and also it also made remembrance possible.

In Central and Eastern Europe there is often a different understanding on WWII. There is the understanding that the West actually does not recognize the crimes committed by the Soviets. Arvydas Anusauskas, Lithuanian historian and Member of Parliament, stressed that “40 years ago the West did not know what happened in the Soviet Union, they were not informed.”⁴³⁹ And since then not much has changed claimed Anusauskas, because Western and Eastern Europe are different as in countries like Lithuania there are monuments about Nazi and Soviet crimes while in the West there can be only found monuments of Jewish victims. Also Sarunas Liekis, head of the Vilnius Yiddish Institute, criticizes that “the West is usually ignoring the Soviet factor. It is a ‘D-Day version of history;’ it is a one-sided version of history which is basically

⁴³⁸ Cited in Goodman 1984:146.

⁴³⁹ Interview Anusauskas, 18 February 2009 in Vilnius.

reflecting the Western European experience.”⁴⁴⁰ Both agree that the Central and Eastern European experience of WWII is not reflected by Western Europe. In fact, also the Baltic States popularized a “D-Day version of history” after their independence in which the liberators came from the West while the liberators from the East were occupiers and enemies. Anusauskas makes clear that historians and politicians understand that Lithuanians collaborated with the Nazis; the problem for him is rather the Lithuanian society that did not understand the collaboration because “Lithuania was occupied at that moment. They did not have a chance and were forced to collaborate with the Nazis.”⁴⁴¹

Ruta Puisyte is not optimistic that a common European understanding on the Holocaust can be achieved in the future, “because history is not common.”⁴⁴² The historian Dalia Bukeleviciute mentions another factor: “When I was studying in Prague, I understood that it very much depends where historians are born and which heritage they have.”⁴⁴³ She contends that there is not only a Western European but also a specific Central European understanding of the Soviet Union, whereby Central Europe is much closer to the Eastern European understanding respectively the former parts of the USSR. Like Puisyte she is convinced that “we will never have a narrative like in the West. We will have our own, our Lithuanian standpoint for genocide and for the Jewish question.”⁴⁴⁴ Also Dmitrij Kulik agrees that Lithuanians think that “Western Europe will never understand us very good. They were pretending to understand us. But now they are friends with Russia again.” As a consequence, Lithuanians “try to protect our version of history. I think we are developing this equality of Soviet and German occupation.”⁴⁴⁵

The Catholic priest Ricardas Doveika puts common questions forward that are raised in Lithuania: “Not many people are now talking about the Holodomor, the Ukrainian big famine, where millions of people died; hundred thousands of Lithuanians were deported to Siberia; the Russian intelligentsia has been destroyed all over. Sometimes you wonder then of this exclusive attention to just one single ethnical unit [Jews] while the eyes are closed to all the rest.”⁴⁴⁶ Thus, he argues more efforts to analyzing the Soviet crimes have to be made; it has to be studied as thoroughly as it was done with the Holocaust. The result would be, according to Doveika that an equilibrium between Nazi and Stalinist crimes would be reached although he also stresses that it should not be made on an equal footing because each specific group had different experiences. At the end he is wondering again: “Why is the Holocaust very well presented during the Nazi period but not that much during the Soviet times?”⁴⁴⁷ Quite similarly, Ronaldas Racinskas, executive director of the International Commission, sees a “pro-Russian” and even a “pro-Soviet” discourse prevailing in Western societies. According to Racinskas, the “Russian factor” has a huge impact. Western historiography looks upon the Soviet occupation of the Baltic States after WWII in 1944 as a separate issue from the WWII, almost as internal Russian relations. The Soviet attack on Finland, however, is not presented as a local dispute. In the end, “when it comes to the liberation of Europe, I absolutely agree that one part of Europe, the Western part of Europe, was happy to be liberated by Western powers.”⁴⁴⁸ Ultimately, the Central and Eastern European states were not happy to be liberated. As a consequence, Racinskas cannot understand the

⁴⁴⁰ Interview Liekis, 24 February 2009 in Vilnius.

⁴⁴¹ Interview Anusauskas, 18 February 2009 in Vilnius.

⁴⁴² Interview Puisyte, 18 February 2009 in Vilnius.

⁴⁴³ Interview Bukeleviciute, 21 February 2009 in Vilnius.

⁴⁴⁴ Interview Bukeleviciute, 21 February 2009 in Vilnius.

⁴⁴⁵ Interview Kulik, 20 February 2009 in Vilnius.

⁴⁴⁶ Interview Doveika, 18 February 2009 in Vilnius.

⁴⁴⁷ Interview Doveika, 18 February 2009 in Vilnius.

⁴⁴⁸ Interview Racinskas, 13 February 2009 in Vilnius.

60th year celebration of anniversary of WWII in Moscow because from there “actually WWII started.” Such a statement clearly is in contrast to conventional wisdom that Nazi Germany started WWII with its aggressive and militaristic policy on 1 September 1939 against Poland. Overall, he sees “a little bit of double-standard attitude towards one and towards another totalitarian regime” from Western historiography and politicians.⁴⁴⁹

More critical are Tomas Tomilinas and Dmitrij Kulik. For Tomilinas the Lithuanian society is quite conservative, if not nationalistic. According to him, Lithuania is still in the process of nation-building and by that influences the minds of politicians and historians a lot.⁴⁵⁰ Kulik describes that with the process of joining the European Union, also some people in the elite said that a reflection about the Lithuanian identity should take place. These people said that we should openly speak about the fact that Lithuanians killed Jews, but “people were totally against that.”⁴⁵¹

Nonetheless also Tomilinas wants “to promote the idea of Stalin’s regime as genocide in the West, because it was the case.” Western and Eastern Europeans should share the evidences and their experiences. The West should begin to understand the feelings of Eastern Europeans because Lithuanians can provide the idea of a complex understanding of history.” Similar experiences had Adalbert Wagner, the Austrian volunteer at the Jewish State Museum, who gathered experience with high school students across Lithuania, talking with them about the Holocaust and tolerance. Wagner remembers to be told by high school students: “When the West will finally start to build museums about the Communist genocide, also the Lithuanians would deal with the Holocaust. As long as this is not the case, the Soviet genocide would be important.”⁴⁵² Thus, also among high school students the idea of injustice done to Lithuanians is strong.

People in Eastern Europe are also hurt by experiences in Western Europe. “For me, it is disgusting to see guys in the West with a picture of Stalin on their back. This is absolutely stupid.”⁴⁵³ Tomilinas makes clear that he is against Nazi symbols but that he cannot understand why the same does not happen with Communist symbols. Such an inner turmoil can also be seen in the comment of Racinkas: “Lithuanians must inevitably understand in some way their responsibility. First we have to understand that the Jews were victims of a tragic genocide. On the other hand, Jews and also the collective memory of the West should recognize that in some way the Lithuanians were also victims. Then we start the dialogue, this bilateral recognition has to come from both sides. It cannot be just recognition from one side.”⁴⁵⁴ One of the main problems is thus identified by the historian Arunas Bubnys who criticizes that too few discussions are going on to compare Nazism and Stalinism. There are a lot of historians who deal with one of the occupation powers, but not with both. As a consequence there are not enough comparisons produced. Moreover, there are few historians who write about Lithuania in WWII in a European context, usually it is too much localized, faults Bubnys. For the future, Bubnys expresses the hope that “Western Europe know more about Eastern Europe and the other way around. That would be good.”⁴⁵⁵

⁴⁴⁹ Interview Racinkas, 13 February 2009 in Vilnius.

⁴⁵⁰ Interview Tomilinas, 20 February 2009 in Vilnius.

⁴⁵¹ Interview Kulik, 20 February 2009 in Vilnius.

⁴⁵² Interview Wagner, 26 February in Vilnius.

⁴⁵³ Interview Tomilinas, 20 February 2009 in Vilnius.

⁴⁵⁴ Interview Racinkas, 13 February 2009 in Vilnius.

⁴⁵⁵ Interview Bubnys, 17 February 2010.

7. Conclusion

Lithuania has two competing narratives of collective memory of the Holocaust. Lithuanians follow largely a narrative that presents themselves as the victim of WWII. Having the choice of two regimes, either Stalin or Hitler, the country and its citizens had no chance. Lithuania had to suffer under both occupation regimes, but the Communist regime was even worse. This line is in strong contrast to the Jewish memory of the Holocaust in Lithuania. Although it were the Germans that implemented the Holocaust, without the local collaboration in Lithuania the Jewish mass killings could not have taken place that quickly and thoroughly.

Lithuania's elite has recognized since the mid-1990s that Lithuanians took part in the Holocaust but almost in the same breath it is underlined that many Lithuanians also rescued Jews. The conclusion is that instead of a self-critical discourse about the past, it is preferred to whitewash their compatriots. Among common Lithuanians it would be added that Lithuanians might have taken part in the killing of Jews, but just as an act of revenge and anger because the Jews had committed deportations and killings of ethnic Lithuanians. In fact, Jews are equalled to the Soviet occupation power which is proven wrong by serious history books and the archives (see section 4.2.). It is not only denied in the collective memory that also Jews were deported, it is implied – and sometimes openly said – that Jews committed a genocide against Lithuanians.

One problem is the utterly wide understanding of genocide in Lithuania that ultimately leads to the belief that genocide was committed by the Soviets. The main challenge, however, seems that the Jewish genocide is not recognized as part of Lithuania's history. It is "them," the Jews, who were killed. Although they were Lithuanian citizens it always seems that they were aliens and not natives to the country. Although an International Commission was created by the Lithuanian President in 1997 and three publications about the Holocaust in Lithuania were produced, the Commission was not able to deal with the Lithuanian collaboration in depth. It also has to be kept in mind that the Commission was created to please Western organizations like NATO and the EU because Lithuania wanted to join these institutions which eventually happened in 2004. Ever since, also the interest in the Holocaust has diminished.

It has to be recognized that during Soviet times it was hard to grasp that mass killing against Jews took place during WWII because the Soviets presented it never in ethnic terms but underlined that "Soviet people" were murdered by the fascists. Moreover, some historical accounts were also misused for propaganda and in fact people started to mistrust historiography. It was more important what was told in the family at the kitchen table; particularly influencing have been, of course, the grandparents who eventually had lived through WWII. Thus, collective memory of the Holocaust in Lithuania is hardly created by institutions but is rather found in the personal space. The narrative is consequently full of stereotypes, mistakes, and whitewashing of Lithuania's own role. At the same time, Jews are accused of having betrayed Lithuania and committing genocide against ethnic Lithuanians. After independence, many politicians and historians hardly tried to change these beliefs; on the contrary, such a view was even manifested.

Since the second half of the 1990s there have been more historians who reflect critically on Lithuania's past. Also the work of the International Commission in education through so-called Tolerance Center's at high schools around Lithuania

will have an effect in the long run. So far, however, the Holocaust remains a non-issue. The Soviet crimes are in the center of attention because the victim narrative is prevailing.

Lithuania demonstrates that not even the Holocaust serves as an example where a common European history could be written. Too many differences still exist, not least in Western Europe where little understanding about the general course of history in Central and Eastern Europe can be found, particularly around the events in WWII and the complex situation many countries had to face during that time. Still, it cannot be an excuse for countries like Lithuania not to change their behavior towards the past more actively.

The collective memory of the Holocaust is in a critical transition period because it is on the brink from the communicative to the cultural memory. Indeed, the generations who experienced WWII themselves are passing away. The crisis in memory, which such a floating gap creates, is experienced differently in Lithuania because of its Soviet legacy. Not only the grandparents' generation but also the second generation after WWII is strongly shaped by their elders. In contrast to the *68er generation* in Western Europe, the older generation was never revolted against; during the time of the USSR it was hardly possible and after independence there were no critical questions asked either. On the opposite, grandparents were often seen as heroes because of the hardships they had to go through in Stalinist times. The participation or at least the ongoings during the German occupation is a non-issue.

Thus, a collective memory of the Holocaust in Lithuania which critically reflects the past will remain an alien narrative to Lithuanians also in the near future. In the long run, however, it might be possible that the Holocaust is fully incorporated in Lithuania's history.

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Annex 1: Interview Structure

The interviews conducted in Vilnius from 10-28 February 2009 had the following structure which were individually adapted to every interview.

First part: The Holocaust

- How would you characterize the remembrance of the Holocaust of today's Lithuania? What is the role of historians? How do you see the role of politicians?
- How is the Holocaust remembered by average people? What events are people aware of when it comes to the events around WWII (1939-1944)?
- What was the role of Lithuanians during the Holocaust?
- How do you see the time from 1941-1944 for Lithuania? Has Lithuania been liberated in 1944?
- Has the population actually understood what the Holocaust is?

Second part: Anti-Semitism in today's Lithuania

- In the last years, instances of anti-Semitism in Lithuania were recorded. What are their roots? What is your explanation of the cause of their occurrence?
- The Prosecutor's General Office of the Republic of Lithuania announced investigations against Ms. Brantsovsky and Mr. Arad. They were accused of being involved or having information about Soviet crimes against local Lithuanians during WWII. On the other hand, Ms. Brantsovsky and Mr. Arad are saying that they were just fighting against the Nazis. How would you perceive these cases?
- Which role are playing Jews today in Lithuania?
- Are people (historians, politicians, public figures) openly speaking out against cases of anti-Semitism? What is the role of Lithuanian media?

Third part: Remembrance

- Is there a difference between the collective memory and the facts of history?
- In 1998 the International Commission was established. How would you evaluate their work so far?
- What is Germany and Austria doing for the remembrance?
- It is often heard by Lithuanians that the Nazi and the Soviet past should be put on an equal footing. In their eyes, in Western Europe the whole focus is put on the victims of the Nazis, while the victims of Stalin are forgotten. What is your perception of this discussion of "writing history in the correct way"?
- Quite some people perceive that a different past is faced how the events are covered. What can be done to write a common history? Would it even be useful or possible to have a common history? What are your suggestions for a better understanding in the future?

Annex 2: Pictures of Interviews



Rachel Kostanian, vice-director of the Jewish State Museum on a pre-visit of the "Green House" in Pamenkalnio street 12 on 11 February 2010.



Ronaldas Racinskas, executive director of the International Commission for the Evaluation of the Crimes of the Nazi and Soviet Occupation Regimes in Lithuania at his office in Gedimino avenue 11 on 13 February 2010.



Arunas Bubnys, historian, at his office in the Genocide Archives in Gedimino avenue 40 on 17 February 2010.



Ruta Puisyte, historian and assistant director of the Vilnius Yiddish Institute at her office at Vilnius University on 18 February 2010.



Arvydas Anusauskas, historian and Member of Parliament, at his office in the Seimas on 18 February 2010.



Dalius Norkunas, journalist at a private TV channel, in his apartment in Vilnius on 18 February 2010.



Ricardas Doveika, Catholic priest, in the apartment of Dalius Norkunas in Vilnius on 18 February 2010.



Dmitrij Kulik, PR freelancer, and Tomas Tomilinas, staff member of the Human Rights Committee of the Lithuanian Parliament, in Double Coffee at Gedimino avenue on 20 February 2010.



Dalia Bukeleviciute, historian and lecturer at the Department of New Ages at Vilnius University at the History Institute on 21 February 2010.



Simon Alperavicius, head of the Jewish Community in Lithuania at his office in Pylimo street 4 on 23 February 2010.



Sarunas Liekis, historian and head of the Vilnius Yiddish Institute at his office at Vilnius University on 24 February 2010.



Wyman Brent, librarian of the Vilnius Jewish Library, in the "Green House" at Pamenkalnio street 12 on 24 February 2010.



Terese Birute Birauskaite, general director of the Genocide and Resistance Research Center in Lithuania, together with the interpreter at her office at Didzioji street 17 on 24 February 2010.



Judith Lewonig, independent journalist from Austria and based in Vilnius, after the interview at Gedemino avenue in Vilnius on 24 February 2010.



Adalbert Wagner, "Gedenkdiener" from Austria, at the "Green House" at Pamenkalnio street 12 on 26 February 2010.

Abstract (English)

Two competing narratives exist in Lithuania's collective memory of the Holocaust in Lithuania. Lithuanians follow largely a narrative that presents themselves as the victim of WWII, particularly during the Stalinist occupation. This line is in strong contrast to the Jewish memory because about 95% of Lithuania's Jewry was wiped out during the Nazi occupation. Although it were the Germans who organized and implemented the Holocaust, without the local collaboration in Lithuania the mass killings of some 200,000 Jews could not have taken place that quickly and thoroughly. Lithuania's elite has recognized since the mid-1990s that Lithuanians took part in the Holocaust. Instead of a self-critical discourse about the past, it is preferred to whitewash their compatriots. The main challenge is that the Jewish genocide is not recognized as part of Lithuania's history. It is „them,“ the Jews, who were killed and not Lithuanians. Although they were Lithuanian citizens it seems that they were aliens and not natives to the country. The collective memory on WWII itself is mainly shaped by the grandparents who eventually had lived through WWII. Thus, collective memory of the Holocaust in Lithuania is hardly created by institutions but is rather found in the personal space. A collective memory of the Holocaust in Lithuania which critically reflects the past will remain an alien narrative to Lithuanians, most likely also in the near future.

Keywords: collective memory, *Holocaust*, *Jews*, *Lithuania*, *memory*, *remembrance*

Abstract (Deutsch)

In Litauens kollektivem Gedächtnis sind zwei Narrative über den Holocaust in Litauen auszumachen. Litauer sehen sich vor allem als Opfer des Zweiten Weltkriegs, besonders während der stalinistischen Okkupation. Im Gegensatz dazu steht die jüdische Erinnerung weil während der Nazi-Besatzung *de facto* das litauische Judentum vernichtet wurde. Obwohl die Deutschen den Holocaust organisiert und implementiert hatten, waren sie auf die lokale Kollaboration von Litauern angewiesen um den Massenmord an etwa 200,000 litauischen Juden so rasch und gründlich durchzuführen. In Litauens Elite wird seit Mitte der 1990er eingestanden, dass Litauer am Holocaust beteiligt waren. Es wird aber kein selbstkritischer Diskurs über dieses dunkle Kapitel der Vergangenheit geführt sondern vielmehr wird versucht die eigenen Landsleute reinzuwaschen. Eine der größten Herausforderungen ist der Umstand, dass der jüdische Genozid nicht als Teil der litauischen Geschichte wahrgenommen wird: Es wurden Juden und nicht Litauer ermordet. Obwohl Juden die litauische Staatsbürgerschaft inne hatten wurden sie als Außenstehende und nicht als Einheimische betrachtet. Das kollektive Gedächtnis in Litauen ist vor allem von der Generation der Großeltern geprägt die den Zweiten Weltkrieg durchgemacht hatten. Daher wird die kollektive Erinnerung an den Holocaust in Litauen kaum durch Institutionen sondern vor allem im persönlichen Raum geformt. Bis heute ist eine kritische Auseinandersetzung mit dem Holocaust in Litauen im Land selbst kaum anzutreffen und auch in näherer Zukunft ist nicht davon auszugehen, dass sich daran etwas ändert.

Tags: *Erinnerung, Gedächtnis, Holocaust, Juden, kollektives Gedächtnis, Litauen*

Lebenslauf

PERSÖNLICHE INFORMATIONEN

Geboren 25. Februar 1985 in Saalfelden am Steinernen Meer
Nationalität Österreich
Familienstand Ledig

AUSBILDUNG

Seit 08/2010 Graduate Student an der School of International Service der American University in Washington DC, USA
M.A. in International Peace and Conflict Resolution (2010-2012), Fulbright Scholar

08/2007-06/2008 ERASMUS-Jahr an der Universität Uppsala, Schweden
Friedens- und Konfliktforschung, Eurasische Studien

10/2005-12/2010 Diplomstudent der Geschichte an der Universität Wien
Diplomarbeitsthema: "Current Discourses on the Holocaust in Lithuania"
Schwerpunkte: Osteuropäische Geschichte, Globalgeschichte, Frühe Neuzeit, Zeitgeschichte

10/2005-05/2010 Diplomstudent der Politikwissenschaft an der Universität Wien
Diplomarbeitsthema: "The 'Responsibility to Protect' and the Case Study of Darfur: An Inadequate Concept?"
Schwerpunkte: Internationale Beziehungen, Europa und Europäische Union

10/2001-03/2003 Außerordentlicher Student der Universität Salzburg
'Hochbegabtenprogramm' vom Landesschulrat Salzburg; Kurse in Geschichte, Politikwissenschaft, Rechtswissenschaft

09/1999-06/2004 Bundeshandelsakademie 1 Salzburg

SPRACHKENNTNISSE

Deutsch: Muttersprache
Englisch: Fließend (TOEFL IBT: 108/120)
Schwedisch: Basiskenntnisse
Französisch: Basiskenntnisse
Litauisch: Basiskenntnisse
Latein: Kleines Lateinum

AUßERUNIVERSITÄRE TÄTIGKEITEN

Chefredakteur des unabhängigen Magazins "Global View" (07/2008-12/2009)
Verantwortlich für sechs Ausgaben der vierteljährlichen Zeitschrift, herausgegeben von der Österreichischen Gesellschaft für Außenpolitik und die Vereinten Nationen (ÖGAVN) und dem Akademischen Forum für Außenpolitik (AFA) <http://www.globalview.at>

Leiter des Debattierclubs in Uppsala (09/2007-05/2008)
Organisiert von der Uppsala Association of International Affairs (UF) in Uppsala, Schweden <http://www.uf-uppsala.se>

Aktives Mitglied des Akademischen Forums für Außenpolitik (AFA) (seit 08/2003)
Consultant (seit 01/2010); Vorstandsassistent (10/2006-06/2008) <http://www.afa.at>
Regelmäßige Teilnahme beim AFA-Debattierclub (03/2006-11/2009)
Teilnahme bei acht Model United Nations (MUNs) in London, Oxford, Reykjavik, Stockholm, Uppsala und Wien

Aktives Mitglied bei den Jungen Europäischen Föderalisten (JEF) (seit 10/2002)
Direkt gewähltes Mitglied des Federal Committee der JEF Europa (2005-2007), Vorstandsmitglied von JEF Österreich (2005-2007), Vizepräsident von JEF Österreich (2003-2005)
Generalsekretär von JEF Salzburg (2002-2004) <http://www.jef.eu>

Aktiv engagiert in der Schülervertretung (2001-2003)
Mitglied der Bundesschülervertretung (2002-2003) <http://www.bsv.at>; BMHS-Landesschulsprecher in Salzburg (2002-2003) <http://www.lsv.salzburg.at>; Schulsprecher-Stellvertreter in der HAK 1 Salzburg (2001-2002),