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– Chapter 9 –

THE WAR AND THE KILLING OF THE LITHUANIAN JEWS

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On 24 June 1941, only two days after the war with the Soviet Union began, in the small Lithuanian town of Gargždai, the first killings of Jews in the German-occupied Soviet Union took place. That afternoon, a commando from the German Security Police and the security service (the SD) from Tilsit and a division of the Security Police from Memel shot 201 people.¹ After this massacre of civilians, a series of further shootings followed along the Lithuanian border. In this way, by 18 July 1941, more than 3,300 people had been killed.

The killings on June 24 in Gargždai have been described by the Stuttgart historian Eberhard Jäckel, according to whom the head of Einsatzgruppe A, Dr. Walter Stahlecker, did not stop at the killing of adult men but allowed “also Jewish women and children” to be shot. This led Jäckel to the conclusion that Stahlecker received verbal instructions on 17 June 1941, during a conversation with his commanding officer Reinhard Heydrich, the head of the Reichssicherheitshauptamt (RSHA, the headquarters of the security service of the Reich), “that he had to, or had permission to, kill all Jews.”²

This view, which has great significance for the analysis and interpretation of the development of the genocide of the Jews as a

whole, rests on the opinion given by the Munich historian Helmut Krausnick as an expert witness in the Federal German court proceedings in Ulm in 1958 with reference to statements from those charged with the killings in the Lithuanian border regions. According to Krausnick, on 23 June 1941, Stahlecker had instructed the local police leaders in Tilsit to “implement the special treatment of all Jews, including women and children, as well as of Lithuanians suspected of Communism.”³

This assumption appears questionable, both in the light of more recent sources and from the evidence given in the records of the Ulm *Einsatzgruppen* trial itself. The approximately 10,000-12,000 (predominantly Jewish) victims of the first wave of killings in German-occupied Lithuania were in the first place Jewish men and Communists. Jewish women and children were as a rule excluded from these shootings. The first half of this chapter re-appraises this discussion of the context and the issuance of orders for the first killings in Lithuania.

In August 1941, a new phase was launched. The German civil authorities, already established at the end of July 1941, switched over to a policy of massacring very nearly the entire Jewish population—men, women, children—in the rural areas. From August 1941 on, the Jewish population in the larger towns of Lithuania were subjected to mass selections to which tens of thousands of Jews fell victim. Within a few months at least 120,000 Jews were shot and killed by German and Lithuanian police, who carried out their task with an inconceivable brutality. The Lithuanian police were established by the German occupation authorities in the very first days of the war, and came under German control. Approximately 45,000-50,000 Jews survived these selections. They were confined to ghettos in order to be put to work for a short period for the German war industry.⁴

The second part of this chapter focuses on the background to this transition from the first to the second phase of the murderous German policy in Lithuania in August 1941. If, as I am trying to show, no order had been given for the total annihilation of the Lithuanian Jews by the beginning of the war in June 1941, how did it come to be that only six weeks later the German leadership then decided to kill not only Jewish men as previously envisaged, but also women and children, in hundreds of mass shootings? In comparison to other regions in occupied Soviet territory, what happened in Lithuania came especially early and amounted to a policy of almost total annihilation—but why? In order to investigate questions about the motives and the timing of the radicalization of the

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anti-Jewish policy in Lithuania, a reconstruction of the German decision-makers' views of the events is needed. How did the regional German authorities perceive the situation, and how did it appear to the leadership of the Reich?

The war with the Soviet Union, launched with high expectations, took center-stage in the thinking of the National Socialist regime. It is common to argue that there was a close ideological connection between German war aims, the conduct of the war, and the killing of the Jews. By early 1941, the German leadership, as Andreas Hillgruber argued as long ago as 1972, was depicting this war against the Soviet Union as a "*Weltanschauungskrieg*" to exterminate "Jewish Bolshevism" and to procure "*Lebensraum*" for the German people.⁵ In this light, the killing of Eastern Jewry during the course of the war would appear at the very least to have already been decided at the outset of the war. Other authors have laid more emphasis on the unexpectedly poor progress of the war, which led the National Socialists to switch their focus, influenced by their antisemitic *Weltanschauung*, to killing the Jews at once, as a "sacrifice and an act of vengeance" for the difficulties encountered in the pursuit of the war and for the prospect of the defeat of the Third Reich: an act of vindictiveness, one might say.⁶

The doubt as to whether these arguments give a satisfactory analysis of the concrete relation between war, antisemitism, and the killing of the Jews in occupied Soviet territory marks the starting point for the following considerations about the structures and motives of the German murder campaign in Lithuania in the summer and fall of 1941.

The Initial Phase: The First Shootings and Pogroms of June-July 1941

The 176th Infantry Regiment under Major General Robert Sattler, part of the 61st Infantry Division, was given the task, as part of Army Group North, of conquering the town of Gargždai on the first day of the attack on the Soviet Union. Through Gargždai ran the only road in the entire region covered by the corps. The bridge there over the Minija was of important strategic significance and could be quickly secured by skirting around Gargždai. However, the Second Battalion's intention "to take the place by surprise" was thwarted because Russian frontier troops defended the area obstinately.⁷ In the battle, which lasted until the afternoon of 22 June, probably about 100 Germans lost their lives. Of the approximately 3,000

inhabitants of the small town, there were 1,000 Jews, living particularly in the area to the west of the town, which was most heavily fought over, where the Soviet frontier troops had their emplacements.⁸ German troops reported that "civilians had also" taken part in the battles.⁹ On 23 June, many of the townspeople, who had tried for the most part to take shelter in cellars, were driven onto the marketplace. There the Jewish population and alleged Communists were probably separated from the rest of the population by frontier police from Memel and the helping hands of Lithuanians from Gargždai. Some 600-700 Jews had to remain overnight in the town gardens. The frontier police officials took those Jewish men above fifteen years of age away to a meadow to the west of the town, where they were guarded by German customs officials.¹⁰ Following the directive to impose collective punishments against the civilian population in places which resisted,¹¹ a German company leader, with the agreement of the division leadership, informed the nearby frontier police position of the situation in Gargždai. The case was handed over to the frontier police, since the company had to make haste in order to catch up with the regiment, which had already moved on. The mobile units of the Wehrmacht were not themselves to carry out "special search and cleansing actions," since their priorities were to engage in "battle and [forward] movement."¹² The frontier police commissariat at Memel informed their superiors at the state police station in Tilsit, which then made a request to the RSHA in a special priority telex for directions as to what was to be done in view of the fact that the numbers of people arrested by the Wehrmacht had grown appreciably.¹³

On 24 June, the leader of the state police station, Hans-Joachim Böhme, and the head of the SD, Werner Hersmann, met with Stahlecker. Whereas Böhme and Hersmann, as they put it when charged in 1958, said that they had received the order to kill the Jews of Gargždai from Stahlecker, their report to the RSHA of 1 July 1941, read quite otherwise. There it was stated that they had discussed the situation with Stahlecker on 24 June, who "in principle" gave his "agreement to the cleansing actions in the area around the German borders."¹⁴ In this document there is no question of an order, but rather of Stahlecker's "agreement," which therefore suggests that Stahlecker was reacting to the recommendations of Böhme and Hersmann. Seventeen years later, the State Court of Ulm mistakenly took these statements to mean that the accused had been given an "imperative order" (*Befehlsnotstand*).

In fact, however, the state police station at Tilsit instructed Gestapo Chief Dr. Erich Frohwann and SD-Chief Edwin Sakuth

from the frontier police commissariat at Memel to prepare for the shooting of 200 able-bodied men. On 24 June, 200 men—Communists and predominantly Jews—were shot under the direction of the state police station in Tilsit and of the frontier police commissariat in Memel, their valuables having been taken before the shootings. A woman who had married a Russian commissar was also killed. The remaining Jewish women and children were locked up in barns guarded by Lithuanian police at the other end of the town and the women were put to work. Almost three months later, on 14 and 16 September, these approximately 300 women and children were then shot by German and Lithuanian police in two “actions” in a forest six to seven kilometers north-east of Gargždai.¹⁵

The state police station in Tilsit received Stahlecker’s agreement not only to shoot Communists and Jews in Gargždai but also to further killings in the Lithuanian border region. Already on the following day, 25 June, the same Kommando shot 214 men and a woman in Kretinga, and 111 men two days later in Palanga. In Kretinga on 25 June, Jewish women and children were explicitly excluded from the killings, according to the state police report.¹⁶ In Palanga, the local commander, also commander of the airbase there, placed at the Kommando’s disposal a firing squad of sixteen to twenty men from the 6th Air Training Company of a fighter squadron from the airfield nearby.¹⁷ Luftwaffe soldiers from Air-fleet 1 had already driven the Jewish men into the synagogue, where they guarded them while the women were isolated in the Pryšmančiai Farmyard. As in Gargždai, the Jewish women and children from Palanga and Kretinga were shot by Lithuanian and German units two months later, at the end of August and the beginning of September 1941.

In the process of the first killing actions, a further Einsatzkommando was formed, grouping Wehrmacht units with the frontier police commissariat at Memel and the state police station in Tilsit, under their ambitious leader Hans-Joachim Böhme.¹⁸ This Kommando had received extensive authorization for “cleansing actions” in the Lithuanian border area for which Sonderkommando 1b under Erich Ehrlinger and Einsatzkommando 3 under Karl Jäger had already been assigned. On 4 July, Heydrich’s authorization was transmitted to the other *Einsatzkommandos*. According to Heydrich, in order to secure and ensure the freedom of movement of the *Einsatzgruppen* and *Einsatzkommandos* he had given state police stations the “authorization to carry out cleansing actions in newly-occupied territories across the border from their sectors.”¹⁹

The defense strategies of the accused in the trials in Ulm of 1958 gave rise to the myth that Stahlecker and Heydrich had issued an order for the killing of Jewish men, women, and children to the state police station at Tilsit at the beginning of the war. As in the Nuremberg Einsatzgruppen trials, here it was a question not of historical fact, but of the “defense line” with which the accused sought to exonerate themselves.²⁰ Stahlecker’s “agreement,” Heydrich’s “authorization,” and the fact that it was above all Jewish men of an age for military service and Communists who were murdered contradict the supposition that at the beginning of the war precise instructions were given for the murder of the whole Jewish population in occupied Soviet territory. When on 30 June 1941, the Lithuanian police chief of Alytus, a town in the south of Lithuania, offered to kill all of the Jews in the whole region with a squad of 1,050 Lithuanian police and partisans in a few days, it was rejected by the German side.²¹

There are some rather clearer hints in another set of instructions given to the *Einsatzkommandos* in Lithuania at the beginning of the war. Hans-Joachim Böhme, the head of the Tilsit state police station, who used the situation in the first days of the war to become the head of one of the *Einsatzkommandos*, was apparently instructed by Stahlecker and Heydrich “to shoot Jewish men aged sixteen or over as well as dangerous Communists.” Böhme himself named one such order in defending himself in court, when he sought to deflect the charge that he was responsible for the murder of Jewish women and children.²² A similar instruction is documented for the region bordering Kaunas. On 15 August, SS-Hauptsturmführer Joachim Hamann of Einsatzkommando 3 in Kaunas instructed the head of the Lithuanian constabulary to seize and isolate all Jewish men older than fifteen in the provincial commissariat of Kaunas, as well as all Jewish women who had been active Communists.²³ The testimony of Böhme was of course given in connection with the question of his responsibility for the shooting of women and children, and the instruction from Hamann to the Lithuanian police was issued at a later time, but the presumption that there was an instruction for the killing of Jewish men over fifteen years old as well as all persons suspected of being Communists is confirmed by the practice of the killings in these first weeks of the war.

Only those Jewish men who were seen as absolutely necessary for the continued operation of industries central to the war effort were explicitly excepted from these killings, in particular Jews who were skilled workers. They were allowed to live after the intervention of the German industrial detachments for whom they worked

in ghettos under German control. The general instruction in this regard was sent from the Economic Directorate of the East (Wirtschaftsstab Ost, WiStab Ost) to the regional industrial units on 15 July 1941. These received an order "to leave Jewish skilled laborers in service [where working on] production important for the war effort [and] where no substitute is available and the maintenance of production depends on it."²⁴

The systematic action of the Tilsit state police station *Einsatzkommando* in the Lithuanian border region—involving the targeted arrest and murder of specific groups of Communists and of Jewish men and the isolation of the Jewish population, gathering them for the most part into places on the outskirts of the areas in which they lived—was typical of the campaign of the German and Lithuanian police against the Jews before mid-August across the whole of Lithuania. *Einsatzkommando* 3 in Kaunas and the part of *Einsatzkommando* 2 active in northern Lithuania up to the beginning of October also focused on these groups.

SS-Unterrführer Krumbach from the state police station in Tilsit, under interrogation for his role in the shooting of Jewish men in Kretinga, described the situation in June 1941 with greater clarity than his superiors did when defending their action in court on the ground that they were only following "imperative orders." To the question "How and why was the shooting of all of the Jews to take place, as it was explained to you? Were women and children also discussed?" Krumbach answered "Böhme and Hersmann explained to me then that according to an order from the Führer, the whole of Eastern Jewry had to be exterminated so that there would no longer be Jewish blood available there to maintain a world Jewry, thus bringing about the decisive destruction of world Jewry. This affirmation was by itself not new at that time and was rooted in the ideology of the Party. The *Einsatzkommandos* of the Sipo [Security Police] and of the SD were instituted for this task by the Führer... To my question what should happen to the Jewish women and children who remained and to the families of the Soviet officers, who after all had to be taken care of and supported, I received the reply that these would in all probability be accommodated in specially constructed camps. Full particulars of these were however still not known, and the time was also not yet ripe for a decision to be made."²⁵

In an analysis which appeared in 1991, Peter Longerich argued that the "commanders of the extermination units" had received a "kind of general authorization to kill the Jewish population in the conquered territories, without numerical restriction, which was lev-

eled to begin with essentially against men."²⁶ Even if Longerich's thesis "of a technique of instruction based on interaction" were to hold true,²⁷ the assumption that the heads of the *Einsatzgruppen* were given a "general authorization" is too vague. One should rather speak of a specific conception of terror and murder on the part of the Security Police as a systematic means of waging war, which determined the activities of the German death squads formed in the first months of the war. Many statements made before and after 22 June 1941, point to the fact that to the German political, military, and Security Police leadership this was a matter above all else of quickly eliminating the "Jewish-Bolshevik leadership strata," which from the National Socialist point of view constituted the core of the Soviet state. The concept rested on the line laid down by Hitler: "The Jewish-Bolshevik intelligence must be removed since up until now they have been "oppressors" of the people."²⁸ The German leadership believed that the murder of these most important "*Weltanschauungsträger*" [carriers or vehicles of an ideological world-view] would greatly accelerate the collapse of the Soviet state.

The model for this concept was provided by the murderous progress of the Security Police in Poland after September 1939 against the Polish leadership stratum.²⁹ In spring 1940, it was used by the General Government as a means to secure the "complete control of the Polish people in this area" as a permanent feature of the German occupation regime, when Hitler gave the following instruction to General Governor Frank: "What we have now identified as the leadership level in Poland, that is to be liquidated; [if a new leadership were to] grow again, it is to be apprehended and done away with in an appropriate period of time."³⁰ In a more extreme and expanded form this concept was to be executed during the war against the Soviet Union and now took in those Jewish men "fit for military service."

The discussion of the plans for killing campaigns in the spring of 1941, i.e., before the war, shows that the "commissar instructions" and the "legal decree" dealt with not only the political commissars in the Red Army but also the entire group defined by the National Socialists as the "leadership strata" of the Soviet state, whose murder was eventually undertaken both by the army and by the *Einsatzgruppen*. On 25 April 1941, Alfred Rosenberg turned—in view of the lack of personnel—against the option "of a general elimination of all state, communal, and local functionaries... A general extermination, as both one of the first acts of battle and also later through the use of civil authorities, would be a measure

which, politically and socially, would later inevitably be revenged terribly."³¹ There was however no dissent with respect to the "senior and the highest commissars." It was self-evident, according to Rosenberg, "that naturally tens of thousands of oppressors of the peoples of the East would have to be wiped out."³² The Wehrmacht leadership by contrast turned against the restriction that "only high and very high functionaries should be executed," since it appeared to be difficult to have to separate "the different levels of officials," and it would also be a waste of time.³³

In the last draft of these "Directions for the treatment of political commissars" of 6 June 1941, there was, then, no further mention of the "treatment of political functionaries"; the Wehrmacht was now only concerned about the political commissars, but only in a broad sense.³⁴ The rest of the "carrier stratum" in the occupied regions of the Soviet Union was to be turned over to the security divisions and *Einsatzgruppen*, who would thus have more time for "sorting" and investigating those with political responsibilities. General Quartermaster Eduard Wagner had negotiated this division of responsibilities with Heydrich, with the result that the security divisions were to concentrate on the big transportation roads while "the forces of the Reichsführer SS in the hinterlands would mainly take charge of the areas between the runways."³⁵ The German forces' short- and long-term goals no longer appeared to be in conflict with each other, since the killing of Communists and Jewish men would create "the basis for the final removal of Bolshevism," and at the same time would "secure the areas lying between the supply routes."³⁶

The well-known statements made by Heydrich in his letter to the leadership of the SS and the police of 2 July 1941, accordingly envisaged "hitting the Jewish-Bolshevik leadership strata as effectively as possible."³⁷ Heydrich's instructions took account of Rosenberg's objections of April 1941 to the murder of persons "still useful for industry, union work, and trade." Of the lower levels of officials, "solely" the "radicals" were to be done away with, while all middle-ranking and senior political functionaries were to be killed immediately.

Heydrich's orders to the Security Police and the criminal instructions of the Wehrmacht should be seen as an expression of a process of the division of labor in a "war of *Weltanschauungen*" to which both were committed. Both series of instructions were linked by a concept which emerged from within the Security Police: to kill off the leadership of the Soviet state so as to be able to subjugate the whole country quickly. In the RSHA and Security Police lead-

ership group around Heydrich, but also far beyond that group as well, Jewishness was seen as the "racial" basis of Bolshevism. The murder of the Jewish men was seen as a way of executing the order to "liquidate" the Soviet leadership stratum.³⁸

During these initial phases, the male members of the "Jewish intelligence strata" were to be wiped out, not only in the border areas of Lithuania but in the whole of Lithuania.³⁹ The systematic progress of the German and Lithuanian police in the towns and villages of Lithuania, registering, arresting, and finally killing the upper class of the Jewish community of the day, came out of this concept of radical preventive terror. In addition, the numerous "pogroms" which took place in many parts of Lithuania in the first weeks after the outbreak of war were as a rule of a systematic character: frequently Lithuanian, but also German, police made targeted arrests. In some areas, and above all in Kaunas, the head of Einsatzgruppe A, Stahlecker, instigated deadly pogroms in which the entire Jewish quarter of a town was attacked. In two nights in Kaunas alone, over 2,000 Jews were barbarically murdered. Although Einsatzkommando 7A notified the RSHA from Vilnius (Vilna) that the "self-cleansing efforts" had been intensified there, they did not succeed in organizing a manhunt as murderous as the one in Kaunas.⁴⁰ One objective of the pogroms was nevertheless achieved: a "campaign of arrests" was immediately introduced and Communists and Jewish men were taken into custody.⁴¹

Heydrich's calculation, however, had still further ramifications. The leaders of the *Einsatzgruppen* had to give these pogroms the appearance that Lithuanians had "spontaneously" begun them, taking revenge on "the Jews" in brutal massacres and wild mass shootings for their supposed Bolshevik activity,⁴² so that in this way they might prevent the responsibility of the German Security Police for these killings from becoming known "outside."⁴³ In the wake of these "wild" pogroms, the Security Police could even appear to be a guarantee of order—and here there are clear parallels with the utilization of the pogroms in Germany of 9 November 1938, by the Security Police and SD.⁴⁴ Heydrich wanted to set up a basis for legitimizing—in the eyes of "German circles"—the implementation of anti-Jewish policy by force. The Jews had to disappear from the occupied territories on the grounds of peace, order, and coexistence with the indigenous population in these areas, ruled by relatively few German personnel. The Security Police wanted to secure its position as an institutional check on the "wild wrath of the people" and claimed sole responsibility for anti-Jewish policy in the occupied Soviet Union, against the claims of other

German bodies, and above all that of the civil administration. Nevertheless, the Security Police only received an all-encompassing authority for this area in 1943.

Before the beginning of the war, the German leadership had planned on a quick Wehrmacht victory over the Soviet Union, a matter of a few months. After this victory, the Jews were to be deported "to the East," as it was generally said; in June and July 1941, this referred more concretely to the northern regions of the Soviet Union around the Arctic circle, where a large proportion of the Soviet Gulag were. Beyond such vague hints, there were thus far, however, no written plans or material on this project; all deliberations on it thus stand on an insecure foundation.⁴⁵ From March 1941 on, all previous planning undertaken by the RSHA and the Reich Commissar for the "resettlement" of the Jewish population could not be implemented to the expected extent. The war for "loot, *Lebensraum*, and annihilation" had also to make it possible for National Socialist population policy planners to overcome the difficulties they were facing in making the "ethnic cleansing of the land" a reality.⁴⁶

As absurd as such a plan for the deportation of European Jewry "to the East" may seem today, in June 1941 the National Socialist leadership clearly took it to be a real possibility. The living conditions there, whether it be in the Pripyat marshes or in the camps of the Gulag Archipelago, were so abject and cruel that in this scheme the prospect of a genocide was visible.

It can thus be asserted that with respect to the first seven weeks of the war in the areas under German occupation, there was in June 1941 still no order envisaging the total elimination of the Jewish population during the war. In expectation of a speedy military defeat of the Soviet Union, vague but exceedingly brutal plans were laid to deport the Jews living in the area under German control to more easterly areas of the occupied Soviet Union after victory. For those people seen by the National Socialists as the most dangerous potential opponents of German rule—the "carrier class" of the Soviet state, Jewish men of fighting age, and especially "the intelligentsia"—an immediate killing campaign was discussed and adopted. This killing program followed from a racist preventive-policing concept and was tuned to the interests of the military. The defeat of the other side in the war was thus to be accelerated and the risk of potential resistance minimized. To this end, a division of labor was discussed and set out between the Wehrmacht, Security Police, and the leaders of the future civil authorities of the occupied Soviet Union. The first instructions given to the Einsatzgruppen

were to arrest and kill all Communists and Jewish men over fifteen years of age. The first killings also then took place in those areas from which there had been reports of actual resistance.

The Second Phase: August to November 1941

In mid-August 1941, in contrast with the earlier period covered above, the killings suddenly developed on a greater scale. In the north and northeast of Lithuania, German and Lithuanian units began to kill Jewish women and children. Within three months, by the end of November 1941, at least 120,000 Jews were shot.

A review of the literature on the German occupation regime in Lithuania makes clear that the background for the extension of the killing program to include Jewish women and children has rarely been investigated.⁴⁷ Aside from the later works of H.-H. Wilhelm,⁴⁸ there has been no more intensive reflection on the question because studies have proceeded from the assumption that a decision to kill *all* of the Jews in the Soviet Union had been taken before the war against the Soviets began. To be sure, Yitzhak Arad did describe the different phases of the anti-Jewish policy but merely conjectured that this was a product of a "technical" problem: the capability of the *Einsatzkommandos* to undertake a planned and graduated process.⁴⁹

In order to trace the question of the radicalization of the anti-Jewish policy at this time in Lithuania, the developments of summer 1941 will now be examined in more detail, and above all from the perspective of the German decision-makers. What had changed for German decision-makers in the region and for those in Berlin? In pursuing this line of inquiry, it is necessary to contrast German expectations of the war with the Soviet Union and the actual progress on the ground. As a result of the unexpected turn in the war, two core areas of German occupation policy were now of the utmost importance: military security and the issue of supplies.

The overall objective of the German war plans was to encircle the main troop divisions of the Red Army in the first weeks of combat, in order that, according to the constantly-repeated formulation of Hitler, the "vital force of the enemy be annihilated."⁵⁰ The Commander-in-Chief of the Army, von Brauchitsch, envisaged the initial phase thus: "Presumably heavy battles at the borders, lasting up to four weeks. Subsequently there would only be a small amount of resistance left to be dealt with."⁵¹ The Red Army would already be defeated before the German army reached the Dvina

and Dniepr rivers, in the Baltic this meant a decisive conflict while still in Lithuania and west of Latvia.⁵² Without considering any alternative whatsoever, every plan proceeded from the assumption "that they would in fact succeed in preventing the Red Army from escaping to the interior of the Soviet Union."⁵³ Army Group North, comprising twenty-eight divisions, was given the task of "preventing Russian forces capable of fighting from retreating from the Baltic to the east and creating conditions for further speedy advances in the direction of Leningrad."⁵⁴

In the event, however, the military campaign did not develop as expected. Despite the speedy progress of Panzergruppe 4 and parts of the 18th and 16th Armies—Lithuania was fully under German occupation within five days—the main forces of the 8th and 11th Soviet Armies succeeded in pulling back behind the Dvina, partly in an unplanned retreat, partly on the order of their commanding officers. Although the 11th Soviet Army failed to establish lasting defensive positions either at the Dvina or in the area of Pskow and Ostrow, many of its divisions remained battleworthy, and in the Luga sector there was enough time for the Soviet troops to erect defensive lines.

This overturned the assumption underpinning German strategy that, after fierce battles at the beginning of the war behind the old borders of Russia, the path to Leningrad would essentially be free. Following similar developments in the area covered by the Germans' 16th and 18th Armies, the easy possession of the land which had been expected failed to materialize across the entire area covered by Army Group North. From mid-July 1941, it proved particularly difficult for Panzergruppe 4 and the 16th Army to stabilize their sectors at the front in the face of counterattacks from the Red Army.⁵⁵ On 26 July, the Chief of the General Staff, Halder, already foresaw the position over the entire frontline "ending in stable [entrenched] warfare," and two weeks later he declared, "What we are undertaking now are the last desperate attempts to prevent stable warfare setting in."⁵⁶ The "Blitzkrieg" had failed, since the main fighting forces of the Red Army in the north of the Soviet Union had not been defeated in the first weeks of the campaign.⁵⁷ The Germans' underestimation of the "Russian Colossus" became clear in the second half of July, the German attack having already failed to achieve its objective.⁵⁸

However, the Soviet retreat and the German strategists' underestimation of the fighting power as well as the equipment of the Red Army were only one aspect of the impending collapse of the German military's tactical plans. Personnel and material require-

ments had not been calculated generously and supply and provisioning problems proved to be of major significance for the military situation of the German troops.

Starvation Policy as a Tool of War

Before the war against the Soviet Union a starvation policy of incredible proportions was planned against the Soviet population.⁵⁹ A central goal of the war against the Soviet Union was to tackle the economic constraints faced by Germany, in particular with respect to grain and oil, through the exploitation of Soviet resources. In order to attain this objective, it was decided with "approval from the highest level," that "many tens of millions" would have to be allowed to starve to death.⁶⁰ At the same time, the starvation policy was conceived of as a weapon of war. Within the shortest time, two-thirds of the entire German army was no longer to rely on the Reich for provisions, but—as it was put in the instructions of 23 May 1941, which laid the basis for the policy—they "had to be provisioned entirely from the East."⁶¹

In concrete terms, for the supply of Army Group North, in particular in relation to fuel and provisions, a supply base was to be constructed on the Lithuanian-Latvian border in Dvinsk (Daugavpils in Latvian), to replace delivery from the Reich with goods to be found in the occupied Baltic as quickly as possible. It was clear from the outset that east of the Dvina the supply operation would become more difficult.⁶² In the event, however, Panzergruppe 4, racing ahead of the 16th and 18th Armies, faced far greater supply problems than expected. The distance which had grown between the Panzergruppe and the infantry armies behind it was enormous, the roads in an exceptionally poor condition and, on top of that, they were constantly overused. In this situation, the intervening areas were "not exploited economically"—as the Head of WiStab Ost, General Wilhelm Schubert, reported, "the population robbed energetically" and the Panzergruppe demanded "motorized economic guard troops," which could not be deployed.⁶³ From the outset, supply questions were seen as a problem of control and security and not only as a question of requisitioning, procuring, and transporting goods.⁶⁴ Already on 1 July, General Quartermaster Wagner noted that "The pacification of the hinterland is causing considerable trouble. The singularity of our military strategy has resulted in far-reaching insecurity in the hinterland, where there are isolated enemy detachments."⁶⁵ Moreover, both the infantry

units of the 16th Army—which were to be supplied from Lithuania and parts of Latvia—and the units of the 18th Army in Estonia took to the field under conditions in which, as industrial detachments reported, the basic supply process was out of control. The orderly securing of goods to which the army had aspired was thus aggravated. The attempt to bypass the supply problems encountered on land by using supply ships in the Baltic also collapsed, since the German battle fleet had failed to capture the Baltic islands, which, still occupied by the Soviets, lay in the way.⁶⁶

The supply and provisioning situation came further to the fore in mid-July together with the worsening military position on the front. On 17 and 18 July, the head of Panzergruppe 4, General Erich Hoepner, forcefully reproached those responsible for army supplies.⁶⁷ Hoepner's units often received only one train per day from the supply base at Dvinsk, instead of the planned ten trains. The whole of Army Group North, instead of receiving the thirty-four trains it claimed to need each day, only exceptionally received as much as eighteen trains per day. For the attack planned in the second half of July by Panzergruppe 4 on Leningrad the whole supply capacity of Army Group North would have had to be placed at their disposal, which would have brought the 16th and 18th armies to a complete standstill.⁶⁸ In the following weeks, the attack on Leningrad had to be postponed seven times solely because of supply problems.⁶⁹ At the same time the military position of the 16th and 18th armies was in a critical state.⁷⁰ On 23 July, Hitler had stressed that what interested him above all else was the attack on Leningrad, to which end "everything possible" should be dedicated.⁷¹ However, General Quartermaster Wagner could not make the necessary supplies available to Panzergruppe 4.⁷² For this reason in July 1941 it was already decided not to try to capture and destroy Leningrad and Moscow immediately, but instead to seal off and starve both cities.⁷³ Supply was not only increasingly endangered by transport conditions; in addition, the procurement of essential goods was already proving to be far more difficult than had been expected. The whole German war effort seemed to be threatened by this. At the end of July, a staff officer in the Economic Armaments Office (Wirtschafts-Rüstungs-Amt, WiRüAmt) summarized his view of the position in the areas covered by Economic Inspection Groups North and Center and outlined the limitations on troop movements caused by supply problems: "We have to be able to count on not finding any supplies in place. If the advance only goes this slowly, and with the ever-greater supply problems it will hardly be possible to go any faster, Russia will systematically

burn everything down (viz. Minsk), as it has so masterfully accomplished in every campaign for hundreds of years."⁷⁴

Supply Difficulties in the Area Covered by Army Group North

The German organizations responsible for the supply of the Wehrmacht knew beforehand that the military's objectives rested essentially on whether they succeeded in securing the necessary supplies quickly enough. In the first days of the war, reports came from Lithuania that rich sources of basic provisions had been found. The picture changed very quickly however. The liaison officer with the General Quartermaster reported to the WiRüAmt: "On 27 June incoming reports corrected the previous picture. In Lithuania army stocks almost totally destroyed. Planned destruction of the remaining stocks prepared. Realization prevented by Lithuanian self-defense. For that reason, such large stocks as that in Kovno can generally not be counted on."⁷⁵ The various bodies dealing with procurement and transport were increasingly finding it difficult to procure the amounts of goods demanded of them and to transport them to the front.

The 16th Army, for instance, then constantly engaged in fighting with the Soviets, depended for its supplies on the Dvinsk supply center. As early as 17 July the Chief Quartermaster of Army Group North, Major Alfred Toppe, had arranged for this supply base to be established, "as far as possible using booty and supplies from the land," and to procure and secure resources in the area southwest of Dvinsk.⁷⁶ At the same time the first reports came in from the liaison officer of Wirtschaftsstab Ost at Army High Command 16 which appeared to affirm the supposition that east of Latvia and Lithuania a "famine, with all its consequences," had set in. The Russian officials had fled, German troops requisitioned supplies without being subject to any control, and the harvest was endangered. "The civilian population was threatened by the specter of starvation!"⁷⁷ The geographical spread of the famine was of course from the outset a calculated development. It was intended to facilitate the German war effort and not—as now in practice proved to be the case—to endanger it. German soldiers were often badly supplied, as a letter from the field of 23 July from the area near Dvinsk illustrates: "This war requires iron nerves and composure. That we are often short of provisions is only to be blamed on the bad rail and street connections. Often we are very tight with our provisions, but

despite this we must endure. We must at this time last the whole day with half a loaf of bread.... How often I have longed for a proper meal, but unfortunately ..."⁷⁸

Hitler was informed by Halder of the great difficulties faced by the 16th Army.⁷⁹ Yet on 27 July, the whole of Panzergruppe 3 from Army Group Centre further south was also ordered to go to the supply base at Dünaburg for provisions, albeit not yet to support Army Group North militarily.⁸⁰ The Army Group leaders were clear that they were thus faced by "barely solvable problems" of supply.⁸¹

In mid-August the branch office responsible for the provisioning of Army Group North under General Quartermaster Wagner, Supply Region North (Versorgungsbezirk Nord), established that in the whole area covered by the 16th Army there was no more livestock left to be taken.⁸² Reports came in that the farmers were already totally impoverished and lacked all provisions, even lacking nourishment for themselves.⁸³ From October all reports spoke of a catastrophic food situation northeast of the Baltic states.

In the wake of food shortages in the rural areas east of the Baltic frontiers, the food shortage came to a head particularly quickly in the Baltic cities. At the beginning of July, Kaunas had supplies of flour and meat for six weeks, and from Vilnius it was reported that remaining foodstuffs would last two weeks.⁸⁴ On 9 July, Wirtschaftsstab Ost reported to Wirtschaftsinspektion Nord in Kaunas that in order to secure the hinterland it would be necessary to feed the most needy of the native population. In pursuit of this aim, the "residues" of foodstuffs from the newly-established indigenous authorities were to be released.⁸⁵ Finally in Kaunas and Vilnius ration cards were given out, with the proviso that "the amount given out would not be fixed at the outset ... but determined after each daily restocking."⁸⁶ Any right the inhabitants of the towns then held to specific quantities of provisions was to be disregarded. The stores that had been taken were low. Only 5,000 to 6,000 tons of grain were left in the depots from which the towns of Kaunas and Vilnius also had to be supplied.⁸⁷ In August and September, however, 6,500 tons were delivered to the Wehrmacht,⁸⁸ and the towns officially ran out.

Since the German troops, as predicted, were provisioned "off the land," the food situation in the Lithuanian towns next to the rural areas northeast of the borders was "extraordinarily difficult" at all times.⁸⁹

Supply Region North made great efforts—in vain—to be informed of the extent of the "direct provisions taken for troops from the land," in order to be able to determine the magnitude of

the provisions still needed.⁹⁰ In July 1941, the repeated strongly-worded instructions of Keitel and Wagner to the effect that the economic service centers should at least be kept informed of the involvement of German soldiers in obtaining provisions and livestock holdings, remained unheeded.⁹¹ The quantity of consumers, on the other hand, was easier to record. In mid-July 1941, the Lithuanian administration responsible for the food industry in Kaunas arranged that by 1 September all mayors and regional directors count those of their inhabitants who did not grow their own food, meaning those "living in the villages and towns and not possessing a plot of land." This would help to determine "how many inhabitants needed to be provided with food centrally."⁹² The German authorities eventually made their food provision budget on the basis of 803,000 inhabitants.⁹³

At the end of July, the leadership of the Reich turned its attention to the economic problems faced in the war, since the "assumption that operations would be very quick could no longer be made."⁹⁴ The previous plans for the starvation policy and the economic exploitation of the occupied regions had to be modified.⁹⁵ On 22 July, Herbert Backe, State Secretary in the Reich Supply Ministry, gave a "Report on Provisions" to the main figure responsible for the war economy, Hermann Göring.⁹⁶ Göring then, on 27/28 July, summarily ordered that "agricultural products in the occupied regions of the East be centrally registered and be taken to the troops according to the advice given by German supply bases." Only those people "performing important tasks for Germany" were to receive provisions.⁹⁷

From now on, in consequence, labor capability and potential decided who received provisions and who did not. The previous geographical division of the occupied lands into "contributory zones," condemned "to die off," and "surplus zones," which would become "production areas," was modified.⁹⁸ Those people from whom no more work in the service of German war industry could be expected were exposed to a merciless starvation policy.

Likewise on 28 July 1941, Wagner and the chief quartermasters of the three army groups decided to refill the holdings of the supply bases by 15 August. After 15 August, they were even to begin stockpiling.⁹⁹ Eventually on 12 August, two weeks later, Wagner laid down the requisitioning targets, the delivery quantities for each quarter of the year, to be made available from 1 September 1941, to 31 August 1942 under the jurisdiction of Supply Region North.¹⁰⁰ These targets were very high and amounted to 250,000 tonnes annually in grain for bread alone.¹⁰¹ From that, at

least 120,000 tonnes were to be supplied from Lithuania.¹⁰² This amount was the equivalent of some 15 percent of the expected Lithuanian harvest of 800,000 tonnes of wheat and rye.¹⁰³ The economic departments of the German occupation authorities made the Lithuanian administration responsible for compliance with the delivery demands and for allocating individual districts with specific requisitioning demands. Nevertheless, these orders, too, proved far too difficult to fulfill.¹⁰⁴

The German civil occupation administration was clear that this would aggravate the food problem for the population in the Baltic. The food and agriculture department of the Reichskommissariat pointed out that Göring "decided ... that the Wehrmacht takes absolute precedence as a consumer ... over the indigenous civilian population. The deficit in meeting the procurement needs of the Wehrmacht, which you know full well, will thus be fulfilled under all circumstances, in an emergency at the expense of the native civilian population."¹⁰⁵ On 31 July, a meeting was recorded in the records of the body with overall responsibility for economic policy in the occupied Soviet Union, Wirtschaftsführungsstab Ost: "Backe asked about the possibility of sending a letter from the Reich Marshal [Göring] to the places concerned. Körner informed the meeting that the clear instructions of the Reich Marshal were that the interests of the food industry of Greater Germany clearly were to take priority in all supply questions in the newly-occupied area."¹⁰⁶ In the same conversation, Backe and Hans Joachim Riecke, leader of Chefgruppe Landwirtschaft (agricultural economics) in WiStab Ost and at the same time the division leader for food and agriculture in the Ministry for the East, stressed that the civil administration also had "from now on to begin to supply the population with [only] the smallest rations." The delivery of food supplies was thereby directly connected to basic questions of not only a medium-term production increase, but also a fear of growing resistance in the territories which had been plundered.

The Supply of Provisions for Jews

The German occupation authorities in Lithuania sought from the outset to set up a racist hierarchy for the supply of food, which at the end of July 1941 was again intensified on the instructions of the leadership of the Reich. This hit the Jews on the one hand, where they did not appear useful to the Germans as skilled workers, and on the other the Soviet prisoners-of-war. Over 200,000 prisoners-

of-war died in Lithuanian camps under the supervision of the Wehrmacht during the first six months of German occupation.

In the first half of July the military administration had already arranged food rationing for the whole of Lithuania. This established a distinction between Jews and non-Jews. The non-Jewish population was supposed to get the parsimonious amount of 1750 grams of bread, 200 grams of flour, 150 grams of grits, 400 grams of meat, 125 grams of lard and 125 grams of sugar per week. The Jewish population by contrast received practically nothing. For them, the allotted amounts each week totaled only 875 grams of bread, 100 grams of flour and 75 grams of grits.¹⁰⁷ Jewish quarters were cut off from the stocks of the town administration and from the kitchens of large factories.¹⁰⁸ When quotas were fixed for the stocks and coupons introduced on 12 July, Jews could only buy at specific times and from special shops, "in order to shorten queues."¹⁰⁹ In the registration of the population for their nutritional allowance, "persons of Jewish origin ... were to be registered separately."¹¹⁰ On 5 August, the *Deutsche Zeitung im Ostland* (the German Newspaper in the East) summed up the most important orders of the civilian authorities under the heading "The new norms in this industrial area": "Goods must only be handed out to Jews if adequate stocks exist to meet the needs of other inhabitants."

In contrast to the starvation rations in the more easily-controlled prisoner-of-war camps, the draconian food rationing for the Jewish population could not be enforced in this way: insufficient personnel meant they could not control the procedure. The instructions nevertheless document the intention of the German regional occupation authorities to reduce the problems of supplying provisions at the cost of the Jewish population and rapidly to force this population into profound misery. The connection between National Socialist provisions policy and anti-Jewish measures did not only affect Lithuania. On 28 July, Göring instructed that the policy be applied by the entire German occupation administration in the Soviet Union. Moreover, in reply to a query from WiStab Ost he added "that the Jews in the areas administered by Germany had no business to be there any longer. Where they have to be put to work, this must take place in the form of work units.... Provisions must be particularly regulated and overseen."¹¹¹ With these words the overall guidelines of the anti-Jewish policy of the Reich leadership at this time were formulated.

The civil administration established in Lithuania at the end of July was given the task of translating this policy into action, together with the SS and police authorities. The Reichskommissar for the

East (*Reichskommissar für das Ostland*, RKO), Hinrich Lohse, spoke briefly afterwards, noting that “the decision of the Führer ... [was that the] Germanization of Reichskommissariat Ost should be the ultimate goal” and that the Jews should be “completely removed from this area.”¹¹² However, what was really meant by the guidelines given by Hitler and Göring—that the Jews be “completely removed from this area,” and that the Jews had “no more business to remain in areas occupied by Germany”—was still unclear. In the course of the discussion between the Security Police and the civilian administration in the next week-and-a-half over the “Provisional Guidelines on the Jewish Question in Reichskommissariat Ostland” issued on 13 August, a number of contradictory interventions were made on the subject. What is clear however is that a revision of the previous plans was under discussion. On 6 August, the head of Einsatzgruppe A, Stahlecker, observed in the margin of a letter giving his view of the draft guidelines for the civilian administration: “The draft foresees resettlement from the open country into the towns. If, now, resettlement is to be tackled, this must take place in a fundamental sense, as follows.”¹¹³ Stahlecker then outlined, evidently on the basis of previous plans, his conception of “areas reserved for Jews” into which the Jews could be “pumped” so that they could be “profitably used for work” there. Stahlecker’s formulation with the emphatic “now” made clear that the Security Police were also having to change their plans with respect to the Jewish population as a whole. The “resettlement” had clearly been planned for later, probably after a speedy victory. This victory was retreating, however, farther and farther into the distance.

What were the results of the discussion between the civilian administration and Einsatzgruppe A? It is possible to reconstruct the decision-making process, in part from eyewitness statements from the postwar trials (which were sometimes very detailed), and partly from examining the policy as it actually developed at the time.

After the end of July 1941, the position of the Jews of Lithuania became more and more difficult. Those Jews who lived on the land were mostly isolated outside populated areas, in synagogues, barracks, barns and abandoned farms. Many thousands of men had already been arrested or murdered. Since women, children, and older men were basically forbidden to leave these improvised camps, they suffered from hunger and disease spread easily. A number of the women were put to work. The Lithuanian police and administration were responsible for guarding them and supplying provisions.

On both the local level and the level of regional commissariats, the worsening supply situation was now discussed *ad infinitum*. At

this stage, as many witnesses recalled, it was already clear that with respect to the nutritional wants of Jewish women and children no further allocations were to be made. They were rather to be killed.¹¹⁴ Thus a Gestapo official from Memel explained in the course of these discussions that Jewish women and children in any case did not work and, as useless consumers of food, had therefore to be done away with.¹¹⁵ In response, the Lithuanian administration had refused to give food coupons to Jews. In July 1941, the mayor of Kretinga complained to the SD that he did not know how the Jews should be fed.¹¹⁶ The Lithuanian mayor installed by the Germans in Gargždai pressed for foodstuffs to be provided for the Jewish women and children in Kretinga, the county seat. The German administration explained, however, that the Jews were “useless eaters” and instructions were for them to be killed.¹¹⁷ The Regional Commissar of Šiauliai, Hans Gewecke, instructed the Lithuanian district president and mayors that they should have the Jewish women and children shot by Lithuanian police, overseen by Germans.¹¹⁸

All in all, the witness statements are largely in agreement; by contrast, the surviving records from the civilian administration only give a few signs of this, and these moreover require careful scrutiny. On 13 August, the order was issued for the ghettoization of all Jews in the Šiauliai regional commissariat within the next fourteen days: the rural Jews were to be concentrated in county towns and were to be supplied with provisions from the Lithuanian town administrations.¹¹⁹ Because of the state of the sources, this must leave open the question of whether or not the statements of the leader of the Tilsit state police station, Böhme, made in connection with a massacre of over 500 Jewish women and children in Batakiai, are true. At the trial, he maintained that SS-Hauptsturmführer Hans Merten, the town commissar charged with overseeing provisions for Taurage (Tauroggen), had said of these killings that a “definitive solution” of this kind followed from the civilian administration’s guidelines of 13 August on the “Jewish Question,” according to which the Jews “were to be ghettoized and at the same time subjected to a limitation of their food provisions.”¹²⁰

On 3 September 1941, the first clear reference found in the sources thus far was made to the effect that the German Security Police in an area in Lithuania had now been instructed “to liquidate all Jews.”¹²¹ Since the discussion between the civilian administration and the Security Police turned solely on the question of Jewish workers and their families, an agreement must have already taken place in the course of August that the remaining Jewish population be killed. The provisional guidelines “for the handling of the Jews

in the area of Reich Commissariat East" of 13 August give some information about this arrangement: "The open country is to be cleared of Jews."¹²² This took place in the next three months. The inclusion of Jewish women and children in the killings was not a subject of controversy between the civilian authorities and the SS, in contrast to the question of Jewish workers, as the events of the following weeks and months showed.

The killing of the Jewish women and children of Lithuania began on 15 August in the rural regions of northeast and north Lithuania and was then pursued in and around Kaunas. Of the over 90,000 Jews killed up to the middle of October 1941, over 40,000 had lived in the northern Siauliai regional commissariat and over 30,000 in the region of Kaunas.¹²³ On the basis of the witness statements above, largely in agreement on this point, it is clear that provisions problems in Lithuania and in the region of Army Group North in general constituted an important, and possibly a decisive, factor in the decision to kill, instead of feeding, "useless" Jewish women and children.

Results

This examination of anti-Jewish policy in the Baltic has shown that first the military and six weeks later the civilian occupation apparatus in this region came under massive and increasing pressure to act. The unexpectedly difficult position for the armies in the regions at the front, east of the borders of the Baltic, impacted in particular in two respects on the area which was now the "hinterland of the front." On the one hand, more and more goods from the occupied countries had to be requisitioned solely for supply and in the face of logistical transport difficulties be quickly placed at the disposition of the German troops. On the other hand, as the decision-makers saw it, supply and transport problems were inescapably tied to questions of security. The order from *Wirtschaftsstab Ost* of the beginning of July noted above, to feed only the most needy of the indigenous population, was motivated by the need to "secure the hinterland." In addition to this, the transports were not to be exposed to attacks, a risk which appeared to be a potent one because of the relatively thin security forces of the German occupation regime. Both of these problem areas—the procurement of foodstuffs and the securing of the "hinterland of the front"—appeared to the National Socialists to be resolvable through a more radical policy with respect to the Jewish population. In January

1942, *Einsatzkommando 3* correspondingly recounted the murderous deeds of the so-called *Hamann Kommando*, responsible for the killing of some 60,000 Jews: "In the course of the work of this commando, which covered the whole of Lithuania, it was seen that it would not be possible to stabilize the sectors lying to the rear of the front through the liquidation of a few Jews."¹²⁴

The killing of the Jews could be rationalized according to supposedly real constraints. A higher amount of foodstuffs was left for the remaining population and, most important of all, for German soldiers. At the same time it was said that this would improve the security position. The prospect envisaged before the war that the whole Jewish population would be deported "to the East" presupposed a victory over the Soviet Union and appeared for the time being to be unrealizable.

Facing a war which was claiming many victims, the National Socialist occupation authorities now confronted the question of whether foodstuffs should be placed at the disposition of the Jewish population isolated at the rural margins or go rather to the soldiers fighting at the front. The Lithuanian administration was made formally responsible for the provision of food to Jews in the country and in the ghettos, but the Lithuanian administration depended on the apportioning of foodstuffs under German control. The German administration was, however, unable to make deliveries to the soldiers of its armies and tank divisions without falling back on the Reich for supplies. Its instructions nevertheless read otherwise, and within weeks they became more and more urgent: the administration had to substitute increasing quantities of supplies from the Reich with supplies from the occupied territories. In addition, they faced the instructions issued by Wagner that from 15 August they were to begin to increase the stocks in the supply bases and shortly thereafter achieve very high quarter-yearly deliveries of bread, grain, meat, etc., to the armies. In this context, Göring's order to feed only those working for the German war industry clearly implied that the Jewish section of the population was to be denied the right to live. It was left to the regional occupation administration to determine how exactly the decrees of Hitler and Göring were translated into action.

In reconstructing the perspective of the German decision-makers in Lithuania during this period, it becomes evident that after mid-July 1941 their position appeared to come to a head in unexpected and—in terms of their objectives—threatening ways. The administration was soon placed under increasing time pressure and faced with increasing demands for greater supplies. In this situation

the immediate killing of the Jews of Lithuania increasingly appeared from their antisemitic viewpoint to be a real option. The personnel for carrying out such a killing campaign was available thanks to the radical representatives of the German Security Police in the Baltic and Lithuanian policemen who were prepared to collaborate. This was even more true after the SS had widened its network of support bases and personnel in Lithuania at the beginning of August. Himmler had visited Kaunas on 29 July, and on 2 August ordered the SS posts to expand.¹²⁵ The Lithuanian police units were assimilated into the constabulary under the SS and police station chiefs,¹²⁶ who for their part were placed under the SS leaders, the heads of the police force, and the General Commissar for "police security."¹²⁷

The regional occupation authorities, however, needed the authorization of the Reich leadership for the systematic murder of the Lithuanian Jews. This was a question of systematic mass murder on a scale which ultimately only Hitler could have authorized. Like the German authorities in Lithuania, the Reich leadership also saw that their objectives were increasingly sliding into the distance and that the time available for the campaign was running short. Before the war against the Soviet Union began, Hitler had stressed that it was essential that there be no delays.¹²⁸ In July 1941, Hitler therefore asked for an up-to-date timetable: "How much time do I still have before I have to be finished with Russia, and how much time do I still need?"¹²⁹ Canaris wrote of the situation in Hitler's headquarters "that the atmosphere there was very nervous, since the Russian campaign—as is increasingly the case—is not drawing to a close 'according to the rules of the game.' The signs are increasingly clear that the war has not led to the internal collapse we expected, but rather to a strengthening of Bolshevism."¹³⁰

The delays caused by the unexpectedly poor military progress of the war effort not only raised a question mark over the implementation of previous strategic planning: it also affected "Hitler's entire program."¹³¹ The "serious crisis"¹³² evident from mid-July to mid-August 1941 endangered the cornerstone of National Socialist war diplomacy, the hope of dragging England onto the German side through control of the European continent, and above all else the aspiration to stop the United States from entering the war. Indeed, exactly the opposite began to appear likely. Instead of a "lightning victory" over the Soviet Union, a long drawn-out war of attrition was emerging,¹³³ which would moreover in all likelihood have to be conducted against an alliance of states which would gradually cooperate more closely and which also had a greater military potential.

The exact date of the eventual conversation between the Reich leadership and the regional occupation authorities in the Baltic about the killing of the Jews in this part of the occupied Soviet Union has thus far not been pinned down. The leaders of the bodies responsible for the civil administration, the economy, the Security Police, and the Wehrmacht had many opportunities to make arrangements orally at the end of July or in early August.¹³⁴ The result of these conversations has already been shown above: Lohse spoke on August 1 of the "decision of the Führer" that the Jews be "completely removed from this area."¹³⁵ Two weeks later it finally became clear that there was no longer a question of deporting the Lithuanian Jews "to the East," but rather that they were to be exterminated by the German occupation authorities with Lithuanian assistance. On 15/16 August 1941, German and Lithuanian units killed 3,200 Jewish men, women and children in Rokiškis near Dvinsk, which fell within the regional commissariat of Šiauliai under Hans Gewecke, a close friend of Hinrich Lohse.¹³⁶ With respect to the date, it is probable that the note by Goebbels on a meeting with Hitler on 19 August also related to the killing campaign against the Lithuanian Jews which had now been embarked upon on a large scale: "We also spoke about the Jewish problem. The Führer is of the conviction that his earlier prophecy in the Reichstag—that if the Jews succeeded in provoking a world war once again, it would end with the extermination of the Jews—was coming true. In these weeks and months it has proven accurate with an almost uncanny certainty. In the East the Jews have to pay the price; in Germany they had in part already paid and they would in the future have to pay still more."¹³⁷

This examination of the situation in the north of the occupied Soviet Union in summer 1941 lays bare a multitude of factors in the political process which contributed to the speed with which the Lithuanian Jews were killed. Already before the war the National Socialist leadership had planned that all of the Jews would, as soon as possible, be completely "transferred" out of the Reich Commissariat of the Eastern Territories. The plans also implied the very rapid and thorough pauperization of the Jewish population: the supposed "Jewish-Bolshevik intelligence" had to be destroyed immediately. National Socialist security policy was the most important element in this calculation. Nevertheless, it was not foreseen at this early date that the decision to kill all of the Jews would be taken during the war.

The fundamental historical context in which the racist and economically-motivated plans to exploit and expel the Jews developed

into the sudden murder of the majority of the Jewish population was primarily the unexpectedly unfavorable course taken by the war. There can be no doubt that the Germans' anti-Jewish policy had already escalated before the war against the Soviet Union to such an extent that the killing of the Jews had moved into the realm of the possible. The intent to exterminate the Jews was clear from the plans for deportations. The analysis of the policy as it actually developed makes it seem possible that further factors were also necessary. The modification of the racist starvation policy targeted at large parts of the Soviet population in Lithuania meant first and foremost the pauperization of the Jewish population, which was to be denied the right to live. The mass killings were in this connection legitimized on the grounds of National Socialist security policy, which saw in the Jewish population per se a threat to the "stabilization of the rearwards sections of the front." Food and security policy appear thereby to have been the two crucial aspects which led to a radicalization of anti-Jewish policy and made the decisive changes and transitions possible.¹³⁸

With regard specifically to Lithuania, the sudden murder of a large part of Lithuanian Jewry while the war was still underway appeared to the National Socialist decision-makers in the occupation administration to be a means of reducing a threatening and unexpectedly difficult situation, first and foremost with respect to the German war industry, and at the same time as a way of minimizing security and policing concerns. With respect to the increasing time pressures and the rapidly-intensifying pressures to take action it was decided that "the Jews have to pay the price." In the antisemitic perception of National Socialist decision-makers this could even be portrayed as a legitimate "emergency defense" against the Jews, alleged to be the "mortal enemies" of the German people.¹³⁹

It seems to me for these reasons to be questionable to claim that the basic frame of mind in which these decisions arose was chiefly a product of the intoxication with victory of the National Socialist leadership, rather than of more pragmatic considerations.¹⁴⁰ Perhaps it would be better to say that the successful radicalization of the policy was a product of the situation in which decision-makers were allegedly facing extremely threatening shortages and constantly increasing time pressures. These problems were then to be overcome by virtue of National Socialist "pragmatism," meaning with politically-motivated violence, the terror of a "racial deterrence policy," and targeted killing campaigns motivated by the argument that some must die so that others can live or fight better.

Notes

1. Incident reports, USSR (Ereignismeldungen UdSSR, abbreviated EM below) No. 26, 18 July 1941, Bundesarchiv (BA) R 58/214.
2. Eberhard Jäckel, "Die Entschlußbildung als historisches Problem," in Eberhard Jäckel and Jürgen Rohwer (eds.), *Der Mord an den Juden im Zweiten Weltkrieg: Entschlußbildung und Verwirklichung* (Frankfurt a.M., 1987), pp. 9-17, here pp. 16f.
3. Helmut Krausnick, "Hitler und die Befehle an die Einsatzgruppen," in Jäckel and Rohwer, *Mord*, pp. 88-106, here p. 99.
4. An overview of the killing of the Lithuanian Jews is given by Yitzhak Arad, "The 'Final Solution' in Lithuania in the Light of German Documentation," in *Yad Vashem Studies* 11 (1976): 234-272. The figures given for Jewish victims and survivors are both minimum numbers. Exact statistics are not likely to be found. The figure given by Dina Porat of 175,000 Lithuanian Jews killed by the end of 1941 is probably somewhat too high. Dina Porat, "The Holocaust in Lithuania. Some unique aspects," in David Cesarani (ed.), *The Final Solution: Origins and implementation* (London/New York, 1994), pp. 159-174, here p. 161.
5. Andreas Hillgruber, "Die 'Endlösung' und das deutsche Ostimperium als Kernstück des rassenideologischen Programms des Nationalsozialismus," in *VfZ* 20 (1972): 133-153. Compare Gerd R. Ueberschär, "Der Mord an den Juden und der Ostkrieg: Zum Forschungsstand über den Holocaust," in Heiner Lichtenstein and Otto R. Romberg (eds.), *Täter—Opfer—Folgen: Der Holocaust in Geschichte und Gegenwart* (Bonn, 1995), pp. 49-81.
6. See Philippe Burrin, *Hitler und die Juden: Die Entscheidung für den Völkermord* (Frankfurt a.M., 1993), p. 172, and Arno J. Mayer, *Krieg als Kreuzzug: Das Deutsche Reich, Hitlers Wehrmacht und die "Endlösung"* (Reinbek, 1989), p. 660.
7. Proceedings of the State Court of Ulm against Bernhard Fischer-Schweder and others, Staatsarchiv Ludwigsburg EL 322, Vol. 8, p. 1955. Testimony given on 30 January 1957, by the company commander of the 3rd/I.R. 176.
8. Statement of one inhabitant from Gargždai, Feliksas S. *Ibid.*, Vol. 8, pp. 2095-2097.
9. Walther Hubatsch, *Die 61. Infanterie-Division 1939-1945. Ein Bericht in Wort und Bild* (Friedberg, 1983), p. 18.
10. Bill of indictment against Fischer-Schweder and others, *ibid.*, Vol. 13, p. 3374. Rabbi Meir Levin and a Jewish doctor, Dr. Uksmann, who had been the district doctor under the Soviets, were cruelly mistreated and murdered. See Dov Levin (ed.), *Pinkas HaKehillot, Lita* (Book of the Communities) (Jerusalem, 1996), p. 190.
11. Decree of Hitler of 13 May 1941 about the exercise of martial law in the "Barbarossa" region and giving particular measures taken by the troops. Printed in *Anatomie des SS-Staates*, Vol. 2 (Munich, 1989), pp. 182f.
12. Covering letter of 24 May 1941 from Brauchitsch for the martial law decree of 13 May 1941. Printed in *ibid.*, Vol. 2, pp. 185f.
13. See EM No. 2, 23 June 1941. BA R 58/214.
14. Registered letter from the Tilsit state police station of 1 July 1941 to the Reichssicherheitshauptamt (RSHA) IV A 1. Re: Cleansing campaigns on the other side of the former Soviet-Lithuanian border. Zentrale Stelle der Lan-

- desjustizverwaltungen zur Aufklärung von NS-Verbrechen in Ludwigsburg (ZStL), Sammlung UdSSR, File 245 Ag No. 254-257, pp. 2-5.
15. Only Rachel Jamai survived this massacre. See Pinkas HaKehillot, p. 190.
 16. "A decision was taken not to renew the action since only Jewish women and children remained in Krottingen." Registered letter from the Tilsit state police station to the RSHA of 1 July 1941, see n. 14.
 17. ZStL 207 AR-Z 72/60, Proceedings against H.-H. St. In these proceedings there are explicit descriptions of the murders, committed by Luftwaffe members. The degree of the participation of Wehrmacht units in the shootings at Kretinga is still not easy to clarify.
 18. See also Jürgen Matthäus, "Jenseits der Grenze. Die ersten Massenerschießungen von Juden in Litauen (June-August 1941)," in *ZfG* 44 (1996): 101-117. Matthäus has not considered the role of the Wehrmacht correctly, since he had not seen the trial records in the Ludwigsburg State Archive and the appropriate evidence did not appear in the bill of indictment or in the text of the judgement.
 19. Einsatzbefehl No. 6 from Heydrich to the heads of the *Einsatzgruppen*, 4 July 1941. Sonderarchiv Moskau 500-5-3, p. 48.
 20. See Alfred Streim, "Zur Eröffnung des allgemeinen Judenvernichtungsbefehls," in Jäckel and Rohwer, *Mord*, pp. 107-119, here p. 111.
 21. Letter from the "Self-Defense Leader" of the Alytus region, the chair of the executive committee of the regional authorities, and the regional police chief, to the German commanders of the town in Alytus, 30 June 1941, Lietuvos Centrinis Valstybes Archyvas (LCVA) (Central State Archive of Lithuania) R 1436-1-29, Bl. 12f.
 22. Judgment of 28 August 1958, against Fischer-Schweder and others. Printed in C.R. Rüter and Adelheid L. Rüter-Ehlermann (eds.), *Justiz und NS-Verbrechen. Sammlung deutscher Strafurteile wegen nationalsozialistischer Tötungsverbrechen 1945-1966* (Amsterdam, 1976), Vol. 15, p. 201.
 23. Circular letter from Hamann to Reivyitis, 15 August 1941. LCVA R 693-2-2, Bl. 2.
 24. Telegram from WiStab Ost to Verteiler B of 15 July 1941, Re: Employment of Jewish skilled workers, Latvijas Valsts Arhivs (Staatsarchiv Lettlands) (LVA) P 70-2-52, Bl. 202.
 25. ZStL 207 AR-Z 51/58. Proceedings against A. Krumbach and others. Interrogation of A. Krumbach on 7 October 1958, Vol. 1, pp. 86-87.
 26. Peter Longerich, "Vom Massenmord zur 'Endlösung'. Die Erschießungen von jüdischen Zivilisten in den ersten Monaten des Ostfeldzuges im Kontext des nationalsozialistischen Judenmords," in Bernd Wegner (ed.), *Zwei Wege nach Moskau: Vom Hitler-Stalin-Pakt zum "Unternehmen Barbarossa"* (Munich, 1991), pp. 251-274, here p. 267.
 27. *Ibid.*, p. 269.
 28. Entry for 3 March 1941, Percy E. Schramm (ed.), *Kriegstagebuch des Oberkommandos der Wehrmacht (KTB OKW)* (Munich, 1982), Vol. 1, p. 341.
 29. See Uwe Adam, *Judenpolitik im Dritten Reich* (Düsseldorf, 1972), p. 305.
 30. Werner Präg and Wolfgang Jacobmeyer (eds.), *Das Diensttagebuch des deutschen Generalgouverneurs in Polen 1939-1945* (Stuttgart, 1975), pp. 211f.
 31. Nuremberg document PS 1020. Memorandum No. 3. Re: UdSSR, p. 7f. Italics in original.
 32. *Ibid.*, pp. 6f.
 33. Discussion notes made by Tippelskirch OKW/WFS/Abt. L (IV/Qu) of 12 May 1941. Published in *Anatomie des SS-Staates*, Vol. 2, pp. 179f.

34. Directions for the treatment of political commissars from the OKW, 6 June 1941. Printed in *Anatomie des SS-Staates*, Vol. 2, pp. 188-191.
35. Thus Wagner on 15/16 May 1941, in a speech to Security Division 285, which was later active in the Baltic. Cited by Ralf Ogorreck, *Die Einsatzgruppen und die "Genesis der Endlösung"* (Berlin, 1996), p. 42.
36. Statements on 6 June 1941, by Nockemann, the leader of RHSA Amt II, made in a conversation with General Quartermaster Wagner, representatives from the Security Police, army officers and the counter-espionage department of the OKW. Cited by Ralf Ogorreck, "Die Einsatzgruppen der Sicherheitspolizei und des SD im Rahmen der 'Genesis der Endlösung'. Ein Beitrag zur Entschlußbildung der 'Endlösung der Judenfrage' im Jahre 1941," unpublished Ph.D. dissertation (FU Berlin, 1992), p. 42. The published version of Ogorreck's dissertation mentioned in n. 35 unfortunately omits 51 pages of the dissertation (pp. 36-87), which describe and analyze in the most thorough way to date the history of the genesis of the instructions which were later considered to have been criminal acts.
37. This is the formulation in EM No. 43 of 5 August 1941. BA R 58/214. Heydrich's letter of 2 July 1941, is published in Peter Longerich (ed.), *Die Ermordung der europäischen Juden* (Munich, 1989), pp. 116-118.
38. See Ulrich Herbert, *Best: Biographische Studien über Radikalismus, Weltanschauung und Vernunft, 1909-1989* (Bonn, 1996), pp. 163-180 and pp. 237-245.
39. See EM No. 32 of 24 July 1941. BA R 58/214.
40. EM No. 9 of 1 July 1941. BA R 58/214.
41. EM No. 10 of 2 July 1941. BA R 58/214.
42. Heydrich discussed this (orally) on 17 June, recalling it once again on 29 June and drawing up instructions for it in writing on 2 July 1941. Longerich, *Ermordung*, pp. 116-119.
43. See the full report of Einsatzgruppe A of 15 October 1941. There it appears as: "It was however not undesirable that they, [the German Security Police] at least initially, did not give the appearance of using the clearly unusually harsh measures, which would certainly elicit a stir in German circles. It must be shown to the outside world that the native population itself took the first measures, of its own accord, in a natural reaction against centuries of oppression by the Jews and the terror of the Communists in former times." Sonderarchiv Moskau, 500-4-93.
44. See Ulrich Herbert, "Von der 'Reichskristallnacht' zum 'Holocaust'. Der 9. November und das Ende des 'Radauantisemitismus,'" in *idem.*, *Arbeit, Volkstum, Weltanschauung: Über Fremde und Deutsche im 20. Jahrhundert* (Frankfurt a.M., 1995), pp. 59-79.
45. See Götz Aly, "Endlösung": *Völkerverschiebung und der Mord an den europäischen Juden* (Frankfurt a.M., 1995), pp. 268-279; Burrin, *Hitler und die Juden*, pp. 114-116; Hans Safrian, *Die Eichmann-Männer* (Vienna/Zurich, 1993), p. 169.
46. Aly, "Endlösung," p. 319. Already at the end of March 1941, a plan put forward by Heydrich to Göring for the "Solution of the Jewish Question" faced jurisdictional questions from the future Ostministerium (Ministry for the East); memorandum of 26 March 1941, from Heydrich after meeting with Göring. Sonderarchiv Moskau, 500-3-795, Bl. 145. Until the end of September, Adolf Eichmann thought of the "occupied Soviet Russian territories" as a "territory for the establishment of clearance contingents"; see Aly, "Endlösung," pp.

76. Letter from branch office GenQu Nord Dept. II B to distributors on 17 July 1941, re. Registration of captured property and rural resources for the sustenance of operations. LVA P 70-1-3, Bl. 1.
77. Enclosure 52 (23 July 1941), war diary of the VO of OKW/WiRüAmt (IV Wi) at the Army High Command (Armeeeoberkommando, AOK) 16. 22 June–14 February 1942. BA-MA RW 46/261.
78. Letter from the field of 23 July 1941 from Private First Class M.F. of the 256th Inf. Div., which as part of the 9th Army (Army Group Center) had conquered the south of Lithuania. Extracts published in Hans Manoschek (ed.), *“Es gibt nur eines für das Judentum: Vernichtung”: Das Judenbild in deutschen Soldatenbriefen 1939-1944* (Hamburg, 1995), p. 37.
79. Notes by Halder of 23 July 1941, for a report to Hitler. KTB Halder, Vol. 3, p. 127.
80. General Wagner to Halder on 23 July 1941. KTB Halder, Vol. 3, pp. 103 and 106. On 15 August 1941, Hitler decided to assign Army Group North three divisions from Panzergruppe 3 for military purposes too. KTB Halder, Vol. 3, p. 179.
81. Discussion between all three Army Group heads on 25 July 1941. KTB Halder, Vol. 3, p. 120.
82. Enclosure 96, KTB IV Wi AOK 16. BA-MA RW 46/261.
83. Enclosure 80, *ibid.*
84. EM No. 12, 4 July 1941, and No. 14, 6 July 1941. BA R 58/214. Report from Marrenbach on July 6 about journey of 1-4 July 1941, to Vilnius and Kaunas. BA-MA, RW 31/90b.
85. Telegram from WiStab Ost to Wi In Nord of 9 July 1941. LVA P 70-1-2, Bl. 2. On 11 July 1941, this instruction, in exactly the same wording, was sent as “Special Instruction No. 7” to all economic offices. LVA P 70-2-52, Bl. 190.
86. Report of 31 July 1941, from Captain Reiner and Kriegsverwaltungsrat Ihde of WiStab Ost about a reconnaissance trip to Riga, Dvinsk, and Kaunas. Sonderarchiv Moskau, 1458-40-221, Bl. 68-72.
87. Statement of account of IV Wi AOK 18 relative to stocks on 20 July 1941. LVA P 70-2-40, Bl. 2.
88. Statement of account re. Requirements of Army Group North (16th and 18th armies, Panzergruppe 4) for meat, lard, and flour in August and September 1941. LVA P 70-1-16, Bl. 39.
89. Full report of Einsatzgruppe A of 15 October 1941. Sonderarchiv Moskau 500-4-93, p. 68.
90. Branch Office Gen.Qu. Nord II B to AOK 18 on 4 July 1941, re. Guidelines for the management of the economy in the newly-occupied regions. LVA P 70-2-1, Bl. 14-15.
91. Entry of General Thomas on 18 July 1941, “Ergebnis der Vorträge beim Reichsmarschall und bei Keitel am 17.7.1941.” BA-MA RW 19/512, Bl. 37-39. GenQu Wagner re. Land use in the hinterland. Copy to WiRüAmt, Stab 1a, on 1 August 1941. LVA P 70-1-2, Bl. 16.
92. The Kaunas food industry administration to the mayors of all towns and villages and community directors. 16 July 1941. LCVA R 1444-1-13, Bl. 162.
93. Note by the head of the agricultural economics directorate (Chefgruppe Landwirtschaft, Chefgr. La) of WiStab Ost re. Report on working trip around Riga, Kaunas, and Minsk in the period 24 October to 2 November 1941. LVA P 70-2-38, Bl. 83-88.

94. “Richtlinien für die Führung und den Einsatz der Wirtschaftsdienststellen in den neu besetzten Ostgebieten” of 11 August 1941. Published in Rolf-Dieter Müller (ed.), *Die deutsche Wirtschaftspolitik in den besetzten sowjetischen Gebieten 1941-1943* (Boppard, 1991), pp. 418-420.
95. Meeting of Wirtschaftsführungsstab Ost on 31 July 1941. BA-MA RW 31/11, Bl. 99-109. Brief by KTB WiRüAmt of 31 July 1941, entitled “Organisationsfragen Russland.” BA-MA Wi-ID/1222.
96. Entry for 22 July 1941, in Göring’s desk diary. IfZ Ed 180/5.
97. Order of Göring on 27 July 1941, “Schwerpunkte und Methoden der wirtschaftlichen Ausbeutung der Sowjetunion.” BA-MA RW 31/188, Bl. 74-76. Report of 29 July 1941, from General Nagel giving the replies of Göring to questions put by WiStab Ost. BA-MA RW 31/97.
98. Economic policy guidelines of 23 May 1941 (n. 62), p. 156f.
99. KTB Halder, Vol. 3, pp. 125 and 129.
100. This is made clear in a letter from Supply Region North of 11 September 1941, to the Chief Intendant with the Wehrmacht Commander-in-Chief in the East, re. Supply requirements for rations for Army Group North, 15 September to 15 December 1941. LVA P 70-1-4, Bl. 54.
101. Owing to the poor harvest, the distribution of bread grain was lowered by 55,000 tonnes in the autumn. 195,000 tonnes of supply needs remained to be delivered. Statement of account for Food and Agriculture Department in the RKO of 31 January 1942: provision conditions and delivery to the Wehrmacht. LVA P 70-1-16, Bl. 119.
102. Memorandum of a member of Chefgr. La. of WiStab Ost re. Report on working trip to Riga, Kaunas, and Minsk in the period 24 October to 2 November 1941. LVA P 70-2-38, Bl. 83-88.
103. Note by Krauss (RKO): conversation with the General Commissar in Kaunas, Food and Agriculture Department, 16-18 October 1941. Latvijas Valsts Vestures Arhivs [Latvian Historical State Archive] (LVVA) P 1018-1-155, Bl. 24.
104. Supply Region North, 1 October 1941, to Wi In Nord, re. Release of rationed food and luxury goods from the country to the food rationing offices. LVA P 70-1-7, Bl. 26.
105. Letter from Martin Matthiessen, leader of the economics department in the RKO, 5 November 1941, to division leaders in Kaunas, Riga, and Minsk, re. Utilizing the land for the Wehrmacht. LVVA P 69-1a-10, Bl. 537.
106. In the record for the head of WiStab Ost, this passage has been emphasized. RW 31/11, Bl. 99-109. The State Secretary responsible for the four-year plan, Paul Körner, was charged by Göring with the direction of Wirtschaftsführungsstab Ost.
107. Order of the garrison in Alytus to the civil authorities, 14 July 1941. LCVA R 1436-1-38. On 16 July the Lithuanian police were ordered to keep an eye on this food rationing. LCVA R 1436-1-29, Bl. 19-20. In the town garrison in Vilnius, at the beginning of July it had already been decided to leave only half as much rations for the Jews as for the rest of the population. Report from Marrenbach of 6 July on a trip to Vilnius and Kaunas, 1-4 July 1941. BA-MA, RW 31/90b.
108. EM No. 33, 25 July 1941. BA R 58/214.
109. EM No. 17, 9 July 1941. BA R 58/214.
110. Kaunas food industry administration to the mayors of all towns and villages and community superintendents. 16 July 1941. LCVA R 1444-1-13, Bl. 162.