

## Memel

(in Lithuanian, Klaipeda), port city on the Baltic Sea. Until 1919 Memel belonged to Germany. After World War I the city was taken away from Germany, and in 1923 it was annexed to Lithuania. In 1939 there were 9,000 Jews living in Memel, constituting 18 percent of the city's population.

The Jews in Memel were strongly affected by the tension between the Lithuanians, who ran the city's government, and the Germans, who were a majority. After Hitler rose to national power in Germany in 1933, the Nazis began campaigning for the city's return to Germany. This campaign included anti-Jewish riots and other antisemitic actions. In October 1938 the local Nazis called for the implementation of the Nuremberg Laws in Memel; at the end of that year the Nazis won 26 of 29 seats in the city's parliament, effectively making Memel part of Germany.

German troops entered Memel in March 1939. Luckily, many Lithuanians and almost all of the city's Jews had managed to escape to Kovno and other nearby towns before the invasion. However, after the Nazis took over Lithuania in mid-1941, they destroyed those Jews along with the rest of Lithuanian Jewry. When Memel was liberated by the Soviet army in January 1945, not one Jew remained.