

Extracts from a Report by Einsatzgruppe A in the Baltic Countries, 1941

Reich Secret Document

Einsatzgruppe A

General Report up to October 15, 1941

II... *Cleansing [of Jews] and securing the area of operation.*

*Encouragement of Self-cleansing Aktionen (Selbstreinigungs-aktionen).**

Basing [oneself] on the consideration that the population of the Baltic countries had suffered most severely under the rule of Bolshevism and Jewry while they were incorporated into the U.S.S.R., it was to be expected that after liberation from this foreign rule they would themselves to a large extent eliminate those of the enemy left behind after the retreat of the Red Army. It was the task of the Security Police to set these self-cleansing movements going and to direct them into the right channels in order to achieve the aim of this cleansing as rapidly as possible. It was no less important to establish as unshakable and provable facts for the future that it was the liberated population itself which took the most severe measures, on its own initiative, against the Bolshevik and Jewish enemy, without any German instructions being evident.

In *Lithuania* this was achieved for the first time by activating the partisans** in Kovno. To our surprise it was not easy at first to set any large-scale anti-Jewish pogrom in motion there. Klimatis, the leader of the partisan group referred to above, who was the first to be recruited for this purpose, succeeded in starting a pogrom with the aid of instructions given him by a small advance detachment operating in Kovno, in such a way that no German orders or instructions could be observed by outsiders. In the course of the first pogrom during the night of June 25/26, the Lithuanian partisans eliminated more than 1,500 Jews, set fire to several synagogues or destroyed them by other means, and burned down an area consisting of about sixty houses inhabited by Jews. During the nights that followed, 2,300 Jews were eliminated in the same way. In other parts of Lithuania similar *Aktionen*

followed the example set in Kovno, but on a smaller scale, and including some Communists who had been left behind.

These self-cleansing *Aktionen* ran smoothly because the Wehrmacht authorities who had been informed showed understanding for this procedure. At the same time it was obvious from the beginning that only the first days after the Occupation would offer the opportunity for carrying out pogroms. After the disarmament of the partisans the self-cleansing *Aktionen* necessarily ceased.

It proved to be considerably more difficult to set in motion similar cleansing *Aktionen* and pogroms in *Latvia*. The main reason was that the entire national leadership, especially in Riga, had been killed or deported by the Soviets. Even in Riga it proved possible by means of appropriate suggestions to the Latvian auxiliary police to get an anti-Jewish pogrom going, in the course of which all the synagogues were destroyed and about 400 Jews killed. As the population on the whole quietened down very quickly in Riga, it was not possible to arrange further pogroms.

Both in Kovno and in Riga evidence was taken on film and by photographs to establish, as far as possible, that the first spontaneous executions of Jews and Communists were carried out by Lithuanians and Latvians.

In *Estonia* there was no opportunity of instigating pogroms owing to the relatively small number of Jews. The Estonian self-defense units only eliminated some individual Communists, who were particularly hated, but in general limited themselves to carrying out arrests....

3) *The Fight against Jewry*

It was to be expected from the beginning that the Jewish problem in the *Ostland* could not be solved by pogroms alone. At the same time the Security Police had basic, general orders for cleansing operations aimed at a maximum elimination of the Jews. Large-scale executions were therefore carried out in the cities and the countryside by *Sonderkommandos* (Special Units), which were assisted by selected units -- partisan groups in Lithuania, and parties of the Latvian Auxiliary Police in Latvia. The work of the execution units was carried out smoothly. Where Lithuanian and Latvian forces were

attached to the execution units, the first to be chosen were those who had had members of their families and relatives killed or deported by the Russians.

Particularly severe and extensive measures became necessary in *Lithuania*. In some places -- especially in Kovno -- the Jews had armed themselves and took an active part in sniping and arson. In addition, the Jews of Lithuania cooperated most closely with the Soviets.

The total number of Jews liquidated in Lithuania is 71,105.

During the pogrom 3,800 Jews were eliminated in Kovno and about 1,200 in the smaller cities.

In *Latvia*, too, Jews took part in acts of sabotage and arson after the entry of the German Wehrmacht. In Duenaburg so many fires were started by Jews that a large part of the city was destroyed. The electric power station was burned out completely. Streets inhabited mainly by Jews remained untouched. Up to now 30,000 Jews have been executed in Latvia. The pogrom in Riga eliminated 500.

Most of the 4,500 Jews living in *Estonia* at the start of the Eastern campaign fled with the retreating Red Army. About 2,000 stayed behind. In Reval alone there were about 1,000 Jews.

The arrest of all male Jews over the age of sixteen is almost completed. With the exception of the doctors and the Jewish Elders appointed by the *Sonderkommando* they [the remaining Jews] are being executed by the Estonian Self-defense under the supervision of *Sonderkommando* 1a. Jewesses between the ages of 16 through 60 in Reval and Pernau, who are fit for work, were arrested and used to cut peat and for other work.

At present a camp is being built at Harku, to which all the Jews in Estonia will be sent, so that in a short time Estonia will be cleared of Jews.

After the carrying out of the first large-scale executions in Lithuania and Latvia it already proved that the total elimination of the Jews is not possible there, at least not at the present time. As a large part of the skilled trades is in Jewish hands in Lithuania and Latvia, and some (glaziers, plumbers, stove-builders, shoemakers) are almost entirely Jewish, a large proportion of Jewish craftsmen are indispensable at present for the repair of essential installations, for the reconstruction of destroyed cities, and for work of military importance.

Although the employers aim at replacing Jewish labor with Lithuanian or Latvian workers, it is not yet possible to replace all the Jews presently employed, particularly in the larger cities. In cooperation with the labor exchange offices, however, Jews who are no longer fit for work are picked up and will be executed shortly in small *Aktionen*.

It must also be noted in this connection that in some places there has been considerable resistance by offices of the Civil Administration against large-scale executions. This [resistance] was confronted in every case by pointing out that it was a matter of carrying out orders [involving] a basic principle.

Apart from organizing and carrying out the executions, preparations were begun from the first days of the operation for the establishment of ghettos in the larger cities. This was particularly urgent in Kovno, where there were 30,000 Jews in a total population of 152,400. At the end of the early pogroms, therefore, a Jewish Committee was summoned and informed that the German authorities had so far seen no reason to interfere in the conflicts between the Lithuanians and the Jews. A condition for the creation of a normal situation would be, first of all, the creation of a Jewish ghetto. When the Jewish Committee remonstrated, it was explained that there was no other possibility of preventing further pogroms. At this the Jews at once declared that they were ready to do everything to transfer their co-rationals as quickly as possible to the Viliampole Quarter, where it was planned to establish the Jewish ghetto. This area is situated in the triangle between the River Memel and a branch of the river, and is linked with Kovno by only one bridge, and therefore easily sealed off.

In Riga the so-called "Moscow Suburb" was designated as the ghetto. This is the worst residential quarter of Riga, which is already inhabited mainly by Jews. The transfer of Jews into the ghetto area proved rather difficult because the Latvians living in that district had to be evacuated and residential space in Riga is very crowded. Of about 28,000 Jews remaining in Riga, 24,000 are now housed in the ghetto. The Security Police carried out only police duties in the establishment of the ghetto, while the arrangements and administration of the ghetto, as well as the regulation of the food supply for the inmates of the

ghetto, were left to the Civil Administration; the Labor Office was left in charge of Jewish labor.

Ghettos are also being set up in other cities in which there are a large number of Jews....

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* The reference is to *Aktionen* against Jews carried out by the local population.

** A nationalist organization in Lithuania that rose against Soviet rule on the day the Germans moved in.

Source: Yitzhak Arad, Yisrael Gutman, Abraham Margalio (Eds.), *Documents on the Holocaust, Selected Sources on the Destruction of the Jews of Germany and Austria, Poland and the Soviet Union*, Yad Vashem, Jerusalem 1981, Document no. 177, pp. 389-393.