A PRAGMATIC ALLIENCE

**Jewish-Lithuanian Political Cooperation
at the beginning of the 20th Century**

Edited by

Vladas Sirutavičius and Darius Staliūnas

LITHUANIA? BUT WHICH?

The Changing Political Attitude of the Jewish Political Elite in East Central Europe toward Emerging Lithuania, 1915–1919[1]

MARCOS SILBER

A Jewish folktale tells of a meeting between Dr. Shimshon Rosenboim (1859–1934), head of the delegation of the newly born Lithuanian Republic to negotiations with the Soviets, and Adolph Joffe (1883–1927), head of the Soviet delegation:

> As the two delegates took their seats, the two Jews [Rosenboim and Joffe] faced one another. The first point of the agenda was determining the border between the two countries.
> "Dr. Rosenboim," said Commissar Joffe, "how far do you propose the borders of your great Lithuania should extend?" His voice dripped with sarcasm, for after all, the representative of the great Union of Socialist Republics was addressing representatives of a tiny fledgling state.
> "As far as the Jews pray *nusach Lite,*" replied Dr. Rosenbaum, tongue in cheek…
> [The two] Jews burst into laughter. Joffe turned to the Russian [members of the delegation] saying, "Comrades, if this is to be the basis of our negotiations, Lithuania could incorporate not only Minsk but even Moscow!"[1]

This tale, which joins fiction to history, presents the diverse geographical perceptions of the scope of Lithuanian territory. It highlights the difference between formal states and ethno-cultural minorities, attesting to a time when new political norms had not yet been formalized. By relating the outburst of laughter it signifies mainly the Jewish interpretation of the Lithuanian borders relating to the internal Jewish cultural divisions ostensibly irrelevant to the international relations. The story reveals the contested meaning of "Lithuania" from various angles, the tensions over the geopolitical extent of the Lithuanian state, but also the need to accommodate the interpretations to a certain political reality–namely Lithuania's borders in the earliest formative period. There seem to be three orders: Soviet, Lithuanian and Jewish. From the point of view of the international system the first two seem acknowledged and legitimized, but their dele-

gates surprisingly are not "authentic Russians" or "authentic Lithuanians." Rather, they are Jews. However, it turns out, that the Jews have their own autonomous geography independent of the formal political system. This chapter presents the changing meaning of such questions among the Jewish elite, which saw itself included in one or another type of "Lithuanian" project (whatever this concept meant) according to the fluctuating circumstances in such a turbulent time. What should the geographical borders of the new Lithuanian state be? What kind of relations should it have with neighboring states, as well as within, among its various populations and societies? How should they be governed? In short, what kind of country are we talking about when we speak of Lithuania, in terms of its ethnic Jewish component?

This chapter examines these questions from the sociohistorical standpoint, especially in regards to the Vilnius Jewry in a period of liminality. This pertains to the interval between two stages and two distinct situations: the Russian imperial order and the Lithuanian national state, and takes place from 1915 to 1919, when the territory was disputed among different states and nations and its fate was far from clear.

On the Eve of the German Occupation

Regarding folktale, Jews had their own centuries-old history of Lithuania as a sociohistorical concept. Its literature is vast, embracing mainly the territory inhabited by the Litvak*s*, Lithuanian Jews, which roughly overlapped the historical Grand Duchy of Lithuania, and was much larger than Ethnic Lithuania, where the Litviner (Yiddish for gentile ethnic Lithuanians) lived compactly. The scope of Lite, "Jewish" Lithuania, is similar to the areas under the authority of the Lithuanian Jewish Council (Waad medinat Lita) from the late sixteenth and seventeenth centuries until the eighteenth century. This includes large parts of the northwestern region of imperial Russia (the Vilnius and Kaunas Russian *Gubernia* [governorate], the Grodno, Minsk, Vitebsk region), as well as parts of Kurland, northeastern parts of Prussia, and part of northeastern Congress Poland (Suwałki region).

Like the vast majority of Jews in Congress Poland and the Pale of settlement in imperial Russia, the Litvaks (Jews born in Lite and their descendents) at the end of the nineteenth century were in great measure an urban population. According to the official statistics of the 1897 census, 615,691 out of 1,414,157 Jews in the northwestern provinces resided in

the cities (43% in a region with average urbanization of 11–12%). The average percentage of Jews in the towns of the northwest was 52 percent.[2] So in most cities Jews were the majority of the population–a very significant factor in our understanding of their economic activities and politicization. It was a population deeply rooted in Yiddish language and culture. According to the same census, 99.3 percent of the Jews in the region declared Yiddish as their mother tongue. The region was the heartland of modern Jewish politics during the late nineteenth century. In fin de siècle Russia the Litvak*s* were a vibrant social element in the shaping of Jewish ethnopolitics, who also considered the fate of the region and the country's configuration. The major Jewish parties and ideological groups addressed the question of the desired future status of the Lithuanian territory (as Lite), although not as often as the Polish question or other national or territorial questions. Sometimes it was clearly delineated, while other times only vaguely envisaged.

The opening anecdote shows up the moment of negotiations, and even shows that the Jews' viewpoint regarding Lithuania's desired scope was not homogeneous. Different Jewish parties addressed the future of the region differently, trying to present their specific "Jewish" point of view. The main parties' theoretical positions are examined in this chapter, taking into account that the purpose of this chapter is to scrutinize the connection between the ideological and practical levels, when the practical implications of the theoretical positions were clear and the debate about Lite/Lithuania's future was deemed relevant. Also discussed in this chapter is the fate of "Lithuania" (whatever that might mean) from four different angles representing four streams in Jewish politics: Dubnowian Folkism, Bundism, Russian Zionism (some of whose adherents later became the "Lithuanian Zionists"), and German Zionism (according to the plans this movement presented to the German Foreign Ministry in the early days of World War I.)

Simon Dubnow (1860–1941) was the *spiritus movens* of Jewish diaspora nationalism. His main ideas on the subject were published in his famous *Letters on Ancient and Modern Judaism*, the canon of the Folkist party in particular (designed according Dubnowian ideas). His foremost concept was the endurance of great multinational states in general and the Russian empire in particular. He rejected the idea of dismantling the imperial order into independent nation-states, which implied his idea about a possible Lithuanian state. Rather, he envisaged the metamorphosis of the Russian empire into one state composed of nations or nationalities—an alternative to the classic objective of nation-states. Dubnow did not be-

lieve that territory was an essential condition for national existence. Moreover, he saw a process of deterritorialization of nations, with the implication of no linkage between territory and nation. Accordingly, no grounds existed to justify the division of nations into autochthonous and foreign.

But his concept did not negate collective rights for the different nations. According to Dubnow, depriving nationalities of their rights would breed constant unrest and numerous insurrections and disorder, which would threaten the state's existence. Formal equality of the nations constituting this state, he claimed, would ensure the coexistence of them all, and equal opportunities for the development of each.[3] The division of the Russian empire into national territorial units was against the state's interest, understood by Dubnow as the need to keep it whole. The breakdown of the great Russian empire's economy into smaller economic units would lead to poverty and endless economic crises. Such a program was also unfeasible on demographic grounds, since the various ethnic groups overlapped. The Russian northwest offered an excellent example. There, nations and ethnic groups lived intermingled in a single territorial unit. Any attempt by the nationalities to break the empires up into smaller territorial units (e.g. a small Lithuania separated from Poland, Ukraine, or even Belorussia), would simply result in bloodshed and economic stagnation. Only national autonomy based on the personal principle could preserve the advantages of a great state yet satisfy its nations' wishes, without the disadvantages attendant on its division into smaller units.[4]

With regard to the Jews, this idea enabled a synthesis of Jewish nationalism and loyalty to the state.[5] The political purpose of autonomism, as Dubnowian ideology was often called by the Jews, represented mainly in the Folkist party, was to abolish the hegemony of any one national group over another. Such an idea aimed to attain equality, formally as well as factually, for the various nationalities (including the Jews) that lived in the state.[6]

In the early 1900s the autonomist idea penetrated the political thought of east European Jewry almost entirely. The first Jewish party in Russia to adopt it was the Bund, tentatively at its fourth conference in 1901 and unreservedly after 1905.[7] In addition to the fourth conference's crucial resolution on the national question, which led to the adoption of their program on cultural autonomy, the Bund decided to add the word "Lithuania" to the party's name (Algemeyner yiddisher arbiter Bund in Lite, Poyln un Russland). The addition was significant in that it reflected the leadership's conception that Lithuania was different from Russia, having its own na-

tional character. Moreover, as the historiography of the Bund stressed, it reflected "a factual shrinkage" of Russia to the southern Pale of Jewish settlement (the Ukraine).[8]

With regard to its recognition of regional differences in western Russia notwithstanding, and despite its conflicts with the Russian Social Democracy, the Bund never renounced its all-Russian orientation. Despite bitter attacks by the Polish Socialist Party (PPS; (Polska Partia Socjalistyczna) or the Lithuanian Social Democratic Party (LSDP; (Lietuvos socialdemokratų partija), the Bundist leadership in Vilnius, as elsewhere, clung onto the view that Russia's breakup into national states would generally undermine the unity of the Jewish people and particularly cause the consequent fracture of the Jewish working class. In Lite the Bund found itself between the devil and the deep blue sea, that is, between the PPS and the LSDP. The former exerted pressure on the Bund to support the independence of Poland, broadly defined geographically. The LSDP, by contrast, expected Bund members in Vilnius, Kaunas, Grodno, and Białystok to support its formulation of Lithuanian national aspirations. It endorsed partial dissociation from Russia and the constitution of a democratic Lithuania, federated with other states (including Russia), where the Jewish population would enjoy some cultural autonomy. Certainly, some Bundists regretted their party's indifference to the Lithuanian national claims as expressed by the LSDP.[9] However, they did not alter the fundamental position of the Bundist leadership. Despite the gap between the two parties on the region's desirable future, they cooperated in organizing strikes, antigovernment demonstrations, and the like. They also kept channels of communication open to review practical steps.[10]

Between 1901 and 1906 most Jewish national parties adopted the autonomist posture for a variety of reasons.[11] The Bund accepted the idea of cultural autonomy for essentialist-historicist reasons. The Vozrozhdenie group did so for instrumentalist-political reasons as personal autonomy would provide the Jewish nation with effective (state) instruments to direct the massive Jewish migration to a specific territory, thereby achieving the territorialization of the Jews.[12]

After Dubnow and the Dubnowist followers (crystallized in the Folkist party) and the Bund, Zionism was the third element in this discussion. Zionism was more receptive to territorial claims than the Bund and Dubnow were. Since the Zionist movement had territorial demands over Palestine, it accepted territorial demands of other nations in imperial Russia. Regarding the Czarist empire, the Helsingfors conference of Russian Zionism in 1906 decided actively to support different national movements' efforts to democ-

ratize it. Russian Zionists supported federalization of the empire along ethnonational lines. The idea of ethnic units did not mean separatism. The larger context into which national units were to fit was the idea of a democratic federal Russia. They did not name the territories explicitly. However, if the contours demarcated in the new Zionist program reflected some very roughly ethnogeopolitical main lines, the inference would be clear. It mentioned five regions: Poland (including Suwałki province), Russia, the South (Ukraine), the Baltic region (Kurland), and Lithuania (the northwestern province). According to the Helsingfors program the territorial nations should exercise territorial autonomy; however, the minorities should receive broad personal-national autonomy. According to the Zionist reordering, political power would be divided among the ethnic groups, irrespective of where their members lived. This new extraterritorial administrative apparatus would complement the conventional territorial foci of power. Therefore, the state would be organized along two axes: territorial and national. Essentially territorial issues would be separated from national issues (education, culture, or any other matter of cardinal importance to the specific nation), thereby preventing oppression of minority groups by the hegemonic or majority group. Autonomy within the framework of a federal democratic Russia was the ultimate national Zionist goal in Russia.

The Helsingfors conference caused a sea change in the Zionist program. It acknowledged the Zionists' duty to play a significant role in the political struggle for the civil and national rights of the Jews in imperial Russia. In the Helsingfors program Zionism combined its work for the territorialization of the Jews and for its autonomistic efforts in imperial Russia, giving both equal precedence. In reverberation of the Vozrozhdenie group, it was first stated that the struggle for national autonomy in the diaspora would crystallize the Jewish nation. Second, national-personal autonomy would provide the necessary apparatus to mold Jewish existence according to the Zionist vision in all fields of the Jewish existence, from education to emigration and colonization. The apparatus would be a national communal body that would reshape the traditional *Kehilleh* Jewish democratic all-empire or territorial assembly.

Finally, we refer to the German Zionists. Their point of view became relevant because of the involvement of the movement in Germany's war efforts.[14] At the beginning of World War I leading Zionists in Germany, such as Max Bodenheimer (1865–1940), Franz Oppenheimer (1864–1943), and Adolf Friedemann (1871–1933), established the German Committee for the Liberation of Russian Jewry (Deutsches Komitee für die Befreiung der russischen Juden), which in 1914 November became the Committee for the

East (Komitee für den Osten – henceforth KfdO). This committee was composed of leading figures from Jewish organizations in Germany. Because it included personalities across the entire political, social, and ideological spectrum of the German Jewry, it acquired prominence among the committees acting on behalf of eastern European Jews. Its aim was to provide political assistance to the Jews of the Russian empire in German-occupied areas, and also to obtain the Jews' support for and loyalty to Germany and its allies. The committee's basic assumption was that these Jews had a common interest with Germany: to shift the western border of Russia eastward in order to distance Russia and weaken its influence on Central Europe.

The political plan that the committee drew up for a new European order after the war included a proposal to expropriate the western regions of the Russian empire (its northwestern and southwestern provinces and Congress Poland), to establish a huge buffer state between Russia and Germany. Accordingly, the KfdO did not countenance any independent or even autonomous Lithuania, Poland, Ukraine, etc. The committee assumed that this huge state would be multinational in practice, and no ethnonational group would be a majority. A delicate demographic balance would therefore exist among the different nationalities. According to the committee, this balance would stop all possible rebellious Polish national pretensions for German Poznań, because the non-Polish minorities would object vehemently to the inclusion of the district in the proposed political entity. Equally, a pro-German and anti-Russian orientation would be sustained. The committee members thought that such a state would be a convenient ally of Germany and would regard Russia as its main enemy.

According to the Committee's plan, the future state would acknowledge its multinational nature and grant the various minorities—including the Jews—the right to live in accordance with the principles of personal national autonomy. From a formal legal standpoint, this national autonomy would not be based on territory but on each individual's national affiliation, irrespective of place of residence.[15] Thus all ethnonational groups in the country (Poles, Ukrainians, Belorussians, Jews, Lithuanians, Germans) would be able to take part equally in building it. The KfdO's approach to an independent Lithuania, therefore, was negative.

These are mainly ideological evaluations in a theoretical situation. However, the question of the future of Lite/Lithuania became relevant under the German occupation when the region's future was discussed. It was then, that the ideological and theoretical approaches had to be considered in view of the changing reality.

"The Flourishing of Our Fatherland Will Be Federative": From the Beginning of the German Occupation to the Establishment of the Taryba (the Vilnius Arena)

In the very last years of Russian rule a few small groups of federalist-autonomists did indeed form in Vilnius. They included Lithuanians, Belorussians, Poles, and a few Jews. Some questions discussed were the autonomy or independence of Russia's northwestern provinces and the kingdom of Poland. The issues contested were the type of Lithuania's future autonomy, its political extent, and its ethnopolitical constitution. Although the Lithuanians increasingly backed the concept of an ethnic Lithuania the Jews rejected it, proposing a broader autonomous territory—including as much of the former Grand Duchy of Lithuania as possible—as part of the Russian empire remade in a constitutional and federative form.[16] Tsemah Szabad (1864–1935), then a member of the liberal Constitutional Democratic Party (KD; Konstitutsionno Demokraticheskaia partiia) and one of the active Jewish leaders in such encounters, stated that due to the negligible number of Jewish representatives, as well as the secret character of the meetings, the group made no impact on the "Jewish street."[17] Contrary to the Polish question, for instance, the question of what kind of Lithuania should come into being remained esoteric for the Jewish public in Vilnius.

At the very beginning of German rule in Vilnius, Lithuanian national leaders such as Jonas Vileišis (1872–1942), a populist; Ausgustinas Janulaitis a member, of LSDP (1878–1950), and Jurgis Šaulys (1879–1948), a Democrat, met with Belorussian representatives (among others the brothers Anton [1884–1942] and Ivan [1881–1919] Luckiewich) and two Jewish KD members: Tsemah Szabad and Grigorii Romm (1862–1930). They created the "Interim Council of the Confederacy of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania."[18] In December 1915 the new organization called for "the creation of an independent state on the lands of the former Grand Duchy of Lithuania."[19] The demand was published in a proclamation entitled "Universal" in four languages (Lithuanian, Belorussian, Yiddish, and Polish). The document's tendency toward independence is clear, as is its interpretation of "Lithuanian" as civic and inclusive.[21] It proposed full and equal national rights for all its nationalities, facilitating the inclusion of local Jews who demanded such rights. The publication of a Yiddish version of the document, and the mention of Jewish representatives in the organization, could have been interpreted as approval by the latter of such a requirement.

However, that was apparently not the case. Tsemah Szabad stated in the beginning of 1918 (when it was clear that some kind of a Lithuanian

political entity would arise and Jewish representatives were discussing how to be incorporated in it) that the leaflet's content was not supported by all the participants of the organization. He wrote, "Some of them [the members of the organization] published a proclamation with strong separatist tendencies, [so] the few Jewish members of the organization [Szabad himself and Romm] refused to sign such a document." [22] It was their way to express their disagreement with the leanings of independence, whatever the concept "independence" means in those tortuous days.

The proclamation was followed in February 1916 by a more articulate and clear demand for an independent state, with a parliament in Vilnius, which should cover, broadly, the region administered by the German military occupation regime (Oberost). The new proclamation demanded the creation of a new political entity embracing the governorate of Kaunas and Vilnius, the ethnically Lithuanian parts of the Suwałki and Grodno governorate, the northwestern part of the Minsk governorate, as well as part of Kurland (giving the envisioned entity access to the Baltic Sea). It asserted that the new entity should guarantee "full rights to all the nations residing in the land," without expressly mentioning the national components of the planned state. [23] This proclamation, demanding an independent state geographically demarcated mainly by the Lithuanian and Belorussian ethnic elements, was totally ignored by Szabad, and probably Romm too, the Jewish leaders close to that council. It seems that they were not even informed of it. [24]

In spite of the disagreement on the future "Lithuania," Szabad, and Romm's dialogue continued in various institutions, partially legitimized by the new German authorities, organized on an ethnic foundation. [25] The ethnification process intensified during the German occupation among the Jews was reinforced by the partial recognition by German forces of the Yiddish language, implementation of schooling on an ethnic basis, and the Russian language losing ground among the Russified sectors of Jewish society (or at least increasing de-legitimization of its use), on the one hand. On the other hand, there was internal consolidation of the Jewish organizations in each of the main cities of the Oberost, which gave rise to broad recognition of the national character of the Jews.

According to Szabad the Jewish public was mainly indifferent to the independence trends of Lithuanian leadership in Lithuania until early 1917, when the local Jewish leadership began to realize that it should address the question of Lithuania's future. [26] The March revolution in Russia, on the one hand, and on the other hand, the deliberations in Petrograd of Lithuanian representatives—the so-called little Sejmas, which proclaimed

the Lithuanian national demand of home-rule –the Yidisher Kultur Farayn in Lite (Jewish Cultural Union in Lithuania) was established in Vilnius in March 1917. It was a semilegal Jewish umbrella organization, "with no distinction of streams and tendencies, all the living forces ignoring differences of property or class," whose main task was to discuss and articulate the Jewish position on the new political developments.[27]

Boris Halpern (1868–1944), the organization's driving force, offered his view as a starting point on the question of the region's political future. In a letter to the top leaders and organizations of Vilnius Jewry he set out his views on the connection of the region to other states. He formulated a statement similar to that of Szabad, with whom he was in close dialogue, "We should believe that the flourishing of our fatherland will be federative."[28] He was aware that his political standpoint was debatable; however he emphasized the necessity to create a broad forum in order to find a common phrasing of the Jewish demands that would particularly present a minimal program of Vilnius Jewry, and generally of Litvak Jewry.[29]

Following his call, in April 1917, a group of Jewish democrats (mainly former KD members) and socialist circles formulated a proclamation. In it they proposed an agenda of five main questions: (1) How should Lithuania be instituted? (2) How should it be administered? (3) How should national-cultural autonomy be implemented? (4) How should the Jewish national institutions (the Kehilleh, Jewish organized community) be instituted? (5) What means should be proposed to the Jews for the reconstruction and development of the destroyed Jewish economy?[30] As a whole, these questions were intended to answer the question: "What kind of Lithuania?"

In the early summer of 1917 the union wrote its platform in answer to the questions. First and foremost it emphasized that "taking into account the vital interests of our region, Lithuania should be an integral part of Russia,"[31] to be transformed, following the revolution, into a federation of nationalities: a democratic republic. They proposed that Lithuania be one of the components of such a federation, in which each nationality would obtain cultural-national autonomy and would be governed by its own institutions. The main institution of the Jewish nationality would be the Jewish community, the Kehilleh.

Echoing Dubnowian ideas, the union's political orientation was to Russia, with the demand that it be kept whole. From this point others were derived. The first was the requirement of a "nationalities state," as distinct from a "national state" or a "bi-national state." That meant a state none of whose nationalities enjoyed any advantage or preference. Each nationality

would administer its "national" needs without consideration of its distribution throughout the country.

Their main concern was that a national or bi-national state would oppress the Jewish minority on two levels: cultural—it would enforce assimilation; and economic—it would lead to discrimination in the reconstruction of the devastated economy (after two years of rapacious German occupation), as well as continuation of the economic exclusion of the Jews. Belonging to Russia would guarantee the minority status of all the nations in the new democratic Russia, composed of dozens of nations. The traditional economic ties of the Vilnius region with the Russian market would offer a good chance of reconstructing economic life in a broad economic frame. Otherwise its detachment from the Russian market would aggravate the crisis.[33] Their position was shared by political leaders of other Vilnius nationalities.[34] We do not know exactly who the addressees of the platform were; they could have been socialists and democrats from the Lithuanian and Belorussian movements, who maintained contact with Bundist and Jewish democrat leaders.

As is well-known, in late July 1917 the Germans decided to set up in Lithuania a "purely Lithuanian Trustee Council." It convened at once. Its members explicitly mentioned the Russian orientation of Jewish politics to explain why the Jews were not invited to join it. Petras Klimas (1861–1969) said, "The Jews… looked only after their own interests and wanted to join Russia, even though they are ethnically different from the Russians. The Jews thus had no interest in Lithuanian independence, so the Taryba's bureau did not consult with them."[35] Antanas Smetona (1874–1944) expressed his view that the Jews were "an indifferent element" that would not promote the "Lithuanian national interest."[36] From the socio-political point of view of Klimas, Smetona, and their fellows, "Lithuanian" was taken in its ethnic meaning, and in terms of geopolitics it was interpreted as its ethnographic spread. The editorial of the first issue of *Lietuvos Aidas* stated that the medieval Grand Duchy—"the old Lithuania from the Baltic to the Black Sea"—"cannot return" and was just "a beautiful historical memory. Today, we Lithuanians wish to live within those borders long inhabited by native Lithuanians. The foreign elements among us are the minorities, whose corresponding rights we will recognize, as is the case in other free, democratic states."[37] Such a statement was unacceptable to all the Jewish parties without exception. First, it indicated that the ethnic Lithuanians would decide the extent of Lithuania without negotiating with the other inhabitants of the region. Second, it treated other ethnic groups as foreigners, therefore incompetent to present their own

visions and political projects. The interests of the local Jews were re-
garded as foreign linked to foreign interests and their visions regarding the
territorial scope were considered egoistic. Such an ethno-Lithuanian po-
litical project was far from the vision then expressed by the Jewish parties
and political leanings.

On 18–22 September 1917 a Lithuanian conference was held in Vilnius
under German approval with the participation of 222 (ethnic) Lithuanians.
This composition, and the position adopted by the Lietuvos Taryba (the
twenty members Council of Lithuania elected by the conference), sparked a
Jewish political response. The Yidisher Kultur Farayn in Lite called for a
meeting of opponents of the new Lithuanian institution on the eve of the
Lithuanian conference. All the Jewish political organizations (Bund, Paolei
Tzion, Jewish democrats, as well as Zionists[38]) attended the gathering, as
did representatives of (mainly leftist) parties of other nationalities (Lithua-
nian Social Democracy, Russian Social Democracy, Belorussian Social
Democracy, Social Revolutionary (SR) Party, a representative of the Polish
socialists, Polish democrats [Polskie Stronnictwo Demokratyczne na Lit-
wie], Belorussian Hromada). To legitimate the meeting twelve speakers
delivered a speech, each in their own language, illustrating thereby the de-
sired model of Lithuania: an ethnically egalitarian state. After the debate a
resolution was adopted that questioned the legitimacy of the Lithuanian
conference because it was not democratically constituted and because it
ignored representatives of the other ethnonational groups. That way,
Lithuania was understood in its geohistorical meaning, and the Taryba's
ethnonational concept was rejected. The resolution emphasized that "the
political autonomy of Lithuania, on the grounds of democracy … could
properly meet the national and cultural needs of all the nations of Lithuania:
Lithuanian, Belorussian, Polish, and Jewish."[39] The main claim was that
only an assembly "democratically elected by all the inhabitants of Lithuania
and Byelorussia, with no discrimination on the base of nationality, religion,
and sex," was entitled to decide "on the future fate of Lithuania, her domes-
tic organization, her relations with bordering states, and the principles of
cohabitation with neighboring countries."[40]

The representatives of the political parties formulated a declaration that
addressed the main bone of contention concerning the future fate of the
region. Interestingly, Rosenboim, the representative of the Zionists, was
absent when the resolutions were formulated and did not sign them.[41] It
was, probably, due to the anti-German tone of the discussions. The first
point of the declaration underlined the geopolitical scope of the region:
Lithuania and Belorussia. However, the difficulty in demarcating the ex-

act geographical limits is explicit in the resolution, "The definitive demarcation of the limits should take into account the totality of the economic and cultural interests of all the country's [national] communities."[42] It seems that there was no discussion of the political structure of "Lithuania and Belorussia," which should include minority rights.[43] Relations with Russia and Germany were discussed. The resolution stipulated that these should be decided in a democratically and universally elected constitutive assembly. The legitimacy of the Lithuanian conference was questioned, and its measures were deemed "usurpation."[44]

The Jewish democrats of the Yidisher Kultur Farayn in Lite crystallized as the Folkist party, adopting its main ideas from Dubnowian theory and proposals. The party was lead by Tsemah Szabad and Boris Halperin and it declared its objection to the German orientation of the Lithuanian assembly, reaffirmed by Smetona in Berlin in November 1917.[45] The new Jewish organization rejected the German orientation for two reasons: national and economic. The former because the German Reich did not recognize its Jewish minority as a national minority, and enforced its acculturation. The latter because of the economic destruction by the German occupation and because the incorporation of Lithuanian territory into the Prussian orbit would perpetuate the economic disadvantage.[46]

Likewise they opposed another orientation presented by the Polish national circles: the union with Poland, primarily because of refusing to acknowledge the Jews as a national minority. [47] Polish political circles in Warsaw, as well as Jewish members of the integrationist camp there, tossed around the possibility of influencing the Jewish population in Vilnius toward a Polish orientation.[48] At a confidential meeting in Warsaw on the political orientation of the Jews of the eastern borderlands, some of the Jews of the integrationist camp, which probably initiated the meeting (such as Stanisław Kempner [1857–1924]), proposed that Polish authorities make concession on the cultural level since between Litvak*s* and Poles "the cultural difference should be considered."[49] Others (such as Bolesław Eiger [1868–1922] a renowned figure among Warsaw's assimilationists) recommended "recognition of some minimal national rights for the Jews."[50] The leading Polish figures in the meeting, such as Ludomir Grendyszyński (1859–1922), a member of Temporary Committee of the Provisional Council of State (Komisja Przejściowa Tymczasowej Rady Stanu), rejected such propositions.[51] Ludwik Abramowicz (Liudvikas Abramavičius), who was present at the above gathering, maintained, as expected, that the Jewish question in Lithuania and Byelorussia was inseparable from that of the future of the country. He held that the Jewish

population would not adhere to a position contradictory to the majority of the local population, so it would be influenced by their attitude toward Poland. "The masses in Lithuania and Belorussia incline toward Russia," he said, explaining in another way the ostensibly Russian orientation of the Jewish local population. He doubted, accordingly, that "the Jewish element in Lithuania, which in great extent is Russified, especially its intelligentsia, will declare yourself in favor of the idea of Polish state-hood."[52] As a result of the Polish grouping, Eliahu Olschwanger (1878–1952), one of the editors of the only Vilnius Yiddish daily, wrote, "We do not want to be transformed into "Polish Jews." We want the same national and social rights as the Poles and to defend our particular character … as the Poles defend theirs." [53] He went on, "We do not want union with Po-land … but if Vilnius is attached to Poland we will recruit all the Jews in order to defend our Jerusalem of Lithuania which is so precious to us, like Warsaw or Cracow are precious to the Poles."[54]

The Yidisher Kultur Farayn in Lite, and its successor the Folkist party, based their rejection on the Polish orientation mainly on two factors: eco-nomic and national. Economically, they argued, Lithuania "has never had anything in common with Poland [!]"; moreover, the tendency to exclude the Jews from the economic life in Poland was due to its worsening anti-Semitism there. Nationally, they objected because of the wholesale refusal of the Polish parties to recognize the Jews as a nation, with the concomi-tant result of depriving them of their legitimate national rights.[55]

The Jewish democrats grouped around the Folkist party supported the Russian orientation. They proposed the constitution of a "Lithuanian de-mocratic Republic," generally defined geographically according to the historic borders of the Grand Duchy. It would be part of a federative union with Russia (and implicitly with other republics that would be inherit of the old Russian imperial order). That kind of federation would resolve the economic limitations of the Lithuanian territory, as well as satisfying its requirements. The Russian context would provide Lithuania with energy, an outlet to the sea, and good fluvial communications; it would also serve as the main market of the local industry and manufacture, [56] and "because of the new and great economic opportunities open in the new and free Russia."[57] The Folkists emphasized that the new democratic Russia would constitute an appropriate context for the national rights of all the nations in Lithuania.[58] In contraposition, Germany did not recognize the Jews' national rights.[59]

Only part of the Zionists expressed a similar orientation. Jakub Wy-godzki was probably the most notorious Zionist who disagreed with a

German orientation.[60] However, the two main central figures of Vilnius Zionism and outstanding leaders of Vilnius Jewry, the chairman and vice chairman of the Central Committee of Vilnius Jewry during the years of the German occupation: Shimshon Rosenboim and Rabbi Yitshak Rubinstein (1880–1945), the leading figure of Orthodox Zionist Vilnius Jewry, adopted a German orientation.

In December 1917 the Bund and the Vilnius branch of the LSDP held a joint meeting. The resolutions rejected the possibility that the borders of the state would be determined according to the configuration of the frontline and wartime circumstances and not according to the "vital necessities and the economic, social, and cultural interests of all the population of Lithuania-Belorussia."[61] Such a decision, which supported a united "Greater Lithuania" project, reflected mainly the Bund position, but it also expressed some marginal voices in the Lithuanian national movement, which presented another, less heard, project. It proposed inclusion of all ethnic groups with no ethnic hierarchy in the construction of the state, and legitimization of their different interests.

In Vilnius the Taryba composed of twenty members, all ethnic Lithuanians stipulated that five or six representatives of the national minorities (including two Jews) should be co-opted.[62] In Berlin Taryba members vaguely asserted that "the national minorities in Lithuania should be guaranteed the conditions satisfying their cultural necessities."[63] Such phrasing did not satisfy the Jews' concern over forced acculturation; still more dangerous in their eyes was political exclusion and economic marginalization based on ascription. Furthermore, the widely publicized words of Smetona in Berlin, who did not mention autonomy but merely "equal rights" for the minorities in general and the Jews in particular, did nothing to mitigate the suspicion and alienation of the Jewish elite from Lithuanian leadership.[64] On the contrary, Šaulys's explanation—that "all the legal limitations based on national or religious denomination will be abolished and that the national minorities will be guaranteed civil equality [emancipation] and also freedom in their cultural life will be completely guaranteed"[65]—deepened the suspicion that national autonomy as envisaged by the Jewish leadership would not be considered. Rather, the western model of emancipation would be adopted, with pressure for acculturation. Anxieties continued to worsen due to the interpretation of the "Lithuanian interest" as agricultural, while craft and commerce, economic branches with an enormous Jewish presence, were ignored. The claim that Lithuanian agricultural products would find markets in Germany, rather than the competition its products would encounter in some kind of eco-

nomic union with agricultural Russia, intensified the suspicion.[66] Such economic explanations alienated Jewish circles, like the Folkists, who explained the economic interest as precisely the opposite.

The conditions for representatives to be co-opted to the Taryba deepened the mistrust even more, "The representatives of the minorities in the Taryba must agree with the resolution of Lithuanian independence; they must not take part in any anti-Lithuanian activities, and must, at least, understand Lithuanian."[67] Although the ethnic Lithuanian position, or at least independence, was determined as the only valid means to implement the "Lithuanian" interest, other positions were ruled invalid or illegitimate. In such a context it was harder to urge the Jewish elite to a rapprochement. Another condition was interpreted as a means of exclusion, namely knowledge of Lithuanian. This was key because of the poor knowledge of the language in the local Jewish population. Petras Klimas in the *Lietuvos Aidas,* echoing Smetona (its editor-in-chief),[68] stated in an article, "It cannot be permitted that because of the minorities the Lithuanians will be forced to use a foreign language." The article was published in Yiddish translation in Vilnius only Yiddish daily *Letzte Nayes*[69] to make known the exclusionist tendencies of leading figures in the Lithuanian national movement. Such figures ignored the fact that the autonomy proposed by the Jewish leaders was in no way intended to acculturate the Lithuanians but to defend the minority's culture from the acculturative pressure of the state. Moreover, Smetona stipulated in an article also translated into Yiddish that "Non-territorial minorities [a euphemism for the Jewish minority], as distinct from the territorial minorities, will not be allowed to use their language in their official relations to the state authorities. They should be satisfied with the use of their language within the bounds of their cultural needs."[70] This meant there was to be no recognition or consideration of Yiddish, the vernacular broadly used by local Jews in any official realm (even in the cities where the Jews constituted a majority or a significant part of the population) provoking disadvantage to the Jewish public in a nationalizing state. It will not be established nor will cultural autonomy be considered the specific Jewish interests; or worse, they will be disqualified as "foreign" or "non-Lithuanian."[71] Such statements, widely distributed among the readers of the only Yiddish newspaper in the region, distanced them from the Lithuanian aims as presented by these foremost Lithuanian leaders. Voices like those of the Social Democrat Steponas Kairys (1879–1964), who were unhappy with the basic decision of social exclusion of the minorities and the construction of an ethnic hierarchy of citizens, were not heard in the Jewish public

sphere.[72] The chasm between the Lithuanian Taryba and the Jewish political leadership deepened.

"For the Jews it was clear that Lithuania would not be what it was," stated Tsemah Szabad with grief and deep sadness in late 1917, in reference to the recent political events.[73] Tsemah Szabad, the leader of the Vilnius Folkists, expressed his disappointment with his Lithuanian partners from the early days of the German occupation, the time of the Interim Council of the Confederacy of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania, namely the aforementioned Jurgis Šaulys and Jonas Vileišis. "Whereas the Lithuanian leaders, Dr. Šaulys, Ing. Kairys, and lawyer Vileišis, with whom the Jewish democrats had gone together theretofore, have become members of the council composed of twenty ethnic Lithuanians, the question being asked whether the Jews should go to such a council."[74] By joining the Taryba, Jonas Vileišis and Steponas Kairys provoked Szabad's dismay; however, both members, because of their civic tendencies, could enhance those of the institution from within, rather its exclusive ethnocentric nationalistic tendencies, defended by the majority of its members.[75]

"The Lithuanians [Litviner] were elected by their especial assembly… The question stirred the political consciousness of the Jews of Vilnius, and many of them understood that other than bread-and-butter matters, which sustain today's existence, questions related to the future should be elucidated. Such questions should not be answered by individuals but by an assembly of representatives of all the Jews from Lithuania in its entirety."[76] It should be an assembly that would answer the question which Lithuania the Jewish population desired.

"The Jews Accept the Autonomy of Lithuania": Zionist Organization and the German Authorities

Arthur Hantke (1874–1955), one of the leaders of German Zionism and one who enjoyed good contacts in the German Foreign Ministry in Berlin, visited Vilnius after learning of the Lithuanian conference held there in September 1917. He wished to hear the impressions of the Vilnius Zionists about the latest political developments. Following his conversations he presented the Oberost authorities with the Jewish position. Echoing the Vilnius Zionists, and on behalf of Lithuanian Jewry, he called for the annexation of the Białystok-Grodno regions to Lithuania since the Vilnius Zionists rejected the interpretation of Lithuania according to its ethnonational lines, favoring instead its historical terrain as much as possible.

Hantke stressed that the Jewish population would not agree to the "division of the Lithuanian Jewry into two halves," a division "that weakens the influence of each of the two halves."[77]

Regarding the Taryba, Hantke, on behalf of Lithuanian Jewry, requested its recognition as a national minority and the concomitant co-optation of Jewish representatives in accordance with their percentage in the population (1/6, i.e., four representatives out of twenty-four). Those representatives should be elected by an all-Lithuanian Jewish national conference that should include representatives of the Grodno-Białystok administrative zone.[78]

Hantke remarked that Lithuanian Jewry understood that the "autonomy of Lithuania" was being discussed even in Russia where it was broadly approved, "and the Jews accepted such decision."[79] This point is very important because it was the position of some Jewish circles, mainly Zionists like Rosenboim close to Hantke, who agreed to some kind of autonomous Lithuanian entity, attached to Germany in consequence of the geopolitical circumstances. The word "autonomy," meaning in this case territorial autonomy, more so reflects the limited sovereignty implicit in the geopolitical reality of late 1917 than the opposition to independence; an unrealistic political aim at that time. Hantke explained that the Lithuanian Jews rejected a Polish orientation because of the tightening tension between the two nations and the absolute impossibility of finding any Polish partner to Jewish claims of national rights; by contrast, the Jews were ready to engage in a struggle with the Lithuanians for their rights if the latter were unwilling to accept them. The Jews would reject any constitutional arrangement that did not guarantee their national rights.[80]

Hermann Struck (1876–1944), a German Zionist member of the KfdO, appointed referent for Jewish affairs at the German headquarters in Kaunas,[81] communicated to Hantke the tendencies in the German administration with regard to Hantke's arguments and demands while trying to influence his (Struck's) superiors. The German administration of the region called "Lithuania" (then roughly coinciding with the Kaunas, Suwałki, and Vilnius governorates occupied by Germany) acquiesced to the inclusion of Jewish representatives (three were mentioned) at the proposed Jewish conference of Lithuanian Jewry, but the German administration in the Białystok-Grodno zone rejected out of hand the petition for Jewish representation from there. Those German authorities said the inclusion of Jewish delegates would spur the representation of other undesirable elements, especially Poles, in the Taryba. More so they feared that the convening of a conference of Jews from both German administrative zones

would promote the vision of Greater Lithuania along the lines of the Jewish project; this was entirely different from that of the Germans, or at least the project the Germans were intent on accomplishing through the Taryba. The controversy in the German administration prevented a decision being taken.[82] Wilhelm v. Gayl (1879–1945), head of the political section in the German administration, wrote to Hantke, "Each of the questions is so intertwined with the others that now it is not possible to make a decision concerning one of them without addressing the others. That holds true especially regarding the question of the Jewish conference."[83] The paltry gains of the German Zionists weakened the position of the Vilnius Zionists. The Folkist camp in Vilnius was the one acquiring an increasingly central role.

A Lithuanian Nationalities State Instead of an Ethnonational Lithuania

Considering the new conditions, Vilnius Jewry was compelled to articulate some response. The most urgent question was whether to join the Taryba by sending two Jewish representatives or not. The central committee of Vilnius Jewry decided that such a cardinal decision should be taken by the broadest possible sectors of the Jewish public. A special meeting of the central committee was called, with representation of all the different organizations and political groups: from Zionists to Bundists; from the religious to the ultra-secular, the wealthy, the middle-class, and the proletariat; from welfare organizations to cultural, economic, and professional groupings.[84]

Despite the differences and nuances across the wide range of representatives, the committee did accept a resolution. The very fact of a common decision and the presentation of a united Jewish front were considered a success among themselves. [85] The meeting resolved to reject the proposition to send Jewish representatives to the Taryba,[86] as "other minorities rejected it, too."[87] This decision was taken despite the somewhat contrary inclination of the chairman, Rabbi Yitshak Rubinstein. [88] Rubinstein unofficially agreed and in principle with the Lithuanian proposal of cooption, regardless of his deep concerns about the timing of such a political step. He was highly mindful of the potential results of such a move in the prevailing conditions. Nevertheless, resisting the pressure of the liberal wing of leaders of German Jewry (James Simon [1851–1932], Paul Nathan [1857–1927]) to accept the Lithuanian proposition, he commented,

"It is impossible to go along with the Lithuanians and not to create mortal enmity with the Belorussians and the Poles."[89] In other words, he was not against the idea of joining the Taryba in principle if the Jewish minority will be entitled to real minority rights guaranteeing real equality. However, he wished to coordinate such a step with representatives of the other minorities.[90]

On 29 October 1917 the representatives of Vilnius Jewry (Shimshon Rosenboim and Yitshak Rubinstein, both Zionists, and Tsemah Szabad, a Folkist) delivered their resolution to Jonas Vileišis, a member of the Taryba. The resolution underlined the illegitimate character of the Taryba as a nondemocratically elected assembly, and its narrow character that disregarded part of Lithuanian territory. But it did open the possibility of cooperation, indicating that it could be implemented "after calling a Jewish national conference in Vilnius, freely elected by the totality of the Jewish population authorized by the military administrations of Lithuania and Białystok-Grodno."[91] This summarizes the main Jewish conditions: a democratic machinery, national recognition, and a broader Lithuania conceived as much as possible in historical, not ethnographic, terms. The latter two expressed the conception of Lithuanian nationalities state instead of an ethnonational Lithuania. According to Petras Klimas, Rosenboim said that the Jews "are not satisfied with two or three representatives," adding that according to Rosenboim the Jews also demanded "a broad Lithuania with Minsk, Vitebsk, and Mogilev. They also want a national curia."[92]

Concurrently, the same Jewish representatives submitted a petition to the head of the German military administration, asking for authorization to convene a "national conference freely elected by the totality of the Jewish population in Oberost."[93]

The formation of a united Jewish front in face of the politics of the Taryba and the Oberost authorities was certainly an internal achievement, highly appreciated by different Jewish political leaders.[94] The main requirements publicly presented by the Jews were a broad Lithuania—geographically (historic Lithuania or at least the Oberost region) and socially (ethnically egalitarian, guaranteed minority rights)—with institutions democratically elected. The general Jewish consensus made unclear the internal debate over important issues. First and foremost was the question of national autonomy, which in fact united all the parties and factions, but divided them, too. It united them because in Vilnius not a single Jewish faction existed that denied the necessity of national autonomy, from the ultrareligious faction at one extreme to acculturated or Russified Jews

at the other. All demanded national autonomy. The question was, what kind of autonomy? The two main models were either personal or cultural.

The most moderate cultural model was that of the Bund. It claimed cultural autonomy based on recognition of Yiddish as a state language, to be equally used in all state institutions (thus becoming transformed into a societal language).[95] On the practical level it meant formalization of the communication between the bureaucratic apparatus and any individual addressing it in that individual's vernacular—in our case Yiddish. Second, it demanded Yiddish state schooling and an institutional body democratically elected to administer it. The Bund set no economic condition beyond the cultural level, very broadly understood. The demand for cultural rights did not reflect separatism, it explained. Quite the contrary, acknowledgment of the difference would facilitate the accommodation of the Jewish nation, and paradoxically the class identification of the individual freed from ethnocultural oppression.

At the opposite end was the Zionist and Folkist model of broad personal autonomy. This would include equal recognition of the Yiddish language implicit in the cultural autonomy program, including Yiddish or Hebrew schooling (among the Zionists, Rosenboim astutely proposed postponing the discussion avoiding the unproductive debate on Hebrew or Yiddish.[96] The Folkist party stated explicitly that it did not matter[97]). It should include, too, some mechanisms to secure equal distribution of state resources among all the citizens regardless of their national ascription. For example, they called for a national curia or the formation of national cadastres to guarantee the proportional representation of the Jews in the parliament-to-be and in other elected institutions.[98] They also asked for the creation of institutions devoted to the reconstruction of the local economy, which should statutorily include Jewish representatives to ensure no deprivation or discrimination of the Jewish population in such a process.[99] Zionists and Folkists were profoundly worried about exclusionist tendencies in various strata of the Lithuanian national movement, especially the intensification of efforts to exclude Jews from their middleman role by creating ethnically composed consumer cooperatives. "National autonomy should defend the Jews against bankruptcy. The economic struggle against the Jews began, unfortunately, with the support of the German authorities," Zionists stated in an anti-German tone.[100] In such a case, stated Rubinstein in Berlin, the western model of emancipation and equal civil rights would not defend the Jews against exclusionist tendencies in the future Lithuanian state.[101] For such reasons he underlined the necessity to ensure participation of Jewish representatives in all official (state and

municipal) institutions.[102] Before a forum in Berlin of leading Zionist figures and members of the socialist parties of the German parliament, Rubinstein stated his belief that "the constitution of an electoral curia and proportional representation of the Jews in the parliament and administration give us the certitude that the rights constitutionally allocated will be truly and practically accomplished."[103]

Other than the reasons that united Folkists and Zionists in their advocacy of the personal variant of the national autonomy, the latter contained one more. Moyshe Shalit (1885–1941), echoing the Vozrozhdenie discussion a decade earlier, explained that Zionist work had two aspects. The first was "the Land of Israel and Hebrew language as the two main elements"; the second was "national personal autonomy [which] is a road to Zionism, to the 'Zionization' of Jewish life, [and then] to the Land of Israel. Sooner or later the Jewish Sejm [the democratically elected assembly of the Jewish autonomy that was to function as a parliament] and the Jewish autonomous institutions in the Jewish communities … will take part in the regulation of Jewish emigration to the Land of Israel and in the colonization of the Land of Israel."[104] In other words, personal autonomy would be an instrument to carry out the territorialization of the Jewish people. According to the Zionists' strategy, personal autonomy, as a compulsory state institution, would provide the necessary means to support the Zionist project in the Land of Israel.

As mentioned above, another bone of contention was the orientation—Russian or German?[105] The Russian orientation of the Jewish leadership was a constant theme in the Lithuanian leadership.[106] Martynas Yčas (1885–1941) was cited as threatening to implement a Lithuanian boycott against the Jews, intended to undermine such a "Jewish" orientation, "convincing" them in that way to support an independent state.[107] The Russian orientation was indeed dominant among members of two Jewish parties: the Bund and the Folkists. Both expressed it openly. The Bund publicly stated its support for the federative option in an all-Russian frame. For example, on the eve of May Day in 1917, the Bund proposed a struggle for "a free autonomous Lithuania united with Russia."[108]

The Folkists published a similar statement in January 1918, "The economic and political perspectives lead us to clearly state our position regarding the democratic Russian Republic and say that only in the frame of a federation with it [Russia] will the economy and culture of Lithuania flourish."[109] Both organizations kept up a dialogue with the Lithuanian political leadership. The Bund maintained close ties with the Lithuanian social democrats,[110] the Folkists with the liberals—particularly Szabad,

who kept in touch with Vileišis.[111] Thus their positions were well-known outside the Jewish community.

In contrast to the sometimes noisy Russian orientation of the Bund and the Folkists, others, mainly Zionists (but not all the Zionists[112]), supported a German orientation. This gradually gained strength from the second half of 1917, being much more central after the collapse of the Provisional Government in Russia and the increasing fear of the Soviets. Rosenboim and Rubinstein, both leading figures among the Vilnius Zionists, supported this leaning, which meant the insertion of Lithuania in one or more versions of the German Mitteleuropa plan. They were very cautious in vaunting it. Outwardly they asserted that they feared a strident expression could harm the Jewish refugees from Lithuania in Russia.[113] However, the low popularity of the German forces among the local Jews, due to the rapacity of the German occupation,[114] probably did not allow them to make manifest their German orientation. Such half-hearted support on the part of Jewish leadership in Vilnius created the image that the Jews held an anti-German political attitude.[115] Nahman Rachmilewitz (an orthodox Jew connected to the *Agudah* who paid the *shekel* and as such was considered a Zionist, but at the same time was a founding member of the Folkist party) emphasized another explanation for the growing German political orientation. He asserted that the Bolshevik revolution had propelled part of Jewish public opinion towards a German orientation.[116]

Orientation of this sort dictated the predisposition to accommodate the various demands. Russian-oriented Jews rejected the Taryba's authority because, in addition to the reasons mentioned above, that body was allegedly German-oriented.[117] Most of the Russian-oriented Jewish political leadership considered the Taryba an institution lacking authority even over the ethnic Lithuanians. However, the German-oriented Jewish leaders tended to compromise with the Taryba, because they realized that its main source of authority was the German regime, which would dictate the resolution of the situation according to its interests and will. In such a case it was preferable to accommodate the Jewish aims and needs to the new order.

The differences and disputes within the Jewish community were hardly heard outside. The voices inside the Jewish community that were open to some dialogue and possible compromise were not presented outside the inner circles. For instance, when their attitude toward the Taryba was discussed among Kaunas' Zionists, the opinion that demanded an approach to the liberal members of the Taryba was not heard out of the organization.[118] Rosenboim's tendencies toward compromise, too, were overshad-

owed by others, more reluctant to compromise (e.g., Szabad). Moreover, while Rosenboim and Rubinstein in the inner corridors pushed for some kind of arrangement vis-à-vis the Lithuanians, when negotiating with them they presented a noncompromising position as an inherent component of the political negotiations. This created a firm image in Lithuanian circles of Jewish opposition to Lithuanian dissociation from Russia.

"We Do Not Object to a Lithuanian State on the Condition That It Guarantees National Freedom and Equality"

The declaration of Lithuanian independence on 16 February 1918 intensified the anxiety of the Jewish population and the consolidation of a united Jewish political front in the immediate political circumstances. In an article published in the Yiddish daily in Vilnius, Eliahu Olschwanger (1878–1952), one of the newspaper's founders, treated the new state as an accomplished fact. He called for the consolidation of a united front of all the national minorities, presenting, if possible, a unified position on the new Lithuania-in-formation. Concerning the Jews, he asked principally for their recognition as a nationality since "all other Jewish demands are the outcome of this guiding principle—the autonomous administration and protection of the national, cultural, and economic interests of the Jews and the recognition and equality of Yiddish."[119] However, to illumine this Jewish nationality, and establish it in practice, Olschwanger called for "the organization of the Jewish community in a democratic way and the convening of a Jewish conference of all Lithuanian Jewry, which will create a united organization… Only then will it become clear if there are differences among the demands of Lithuanian Jewry."[120] The Zionists vociferously demanded the reorganization of the Jewish community to deal with a wide spectrum of activities, under a political leadership democratically elected. Behind this requirement was the conception shaped in Helsingfors that such a community would serve as a basis on which to build personal autonomy.[121]

In consequence of a wide-ranging operation orchestrated by the Action Committee of the Zionist movement in Berlin and the KfdO from early spring until fall 1918, an account of which is beyond the scope of this chapter, the German authorities addressed the question of the special rights of the Jews in the new Lithuanian state.[122] The Reich Chancellery, under Secretary of State Freiherr von von Falkenhausen (1869–1946), in his capacity as Reich Commissar for Lithuania, issued a declaration in 6

July 1918 to the representatives of the KfdO. He noted that the decision on the final internal relations between Lithuanians and others was the prerogative of the Lithuanian state. However, in "Greater Lithuania" (Litauen grössere Umgang) for "all the national minorities civil equality, freedom of religion and care of their character and traditions will be kept," and "therefore, the Jewish nationality will be entitled to autonomous arrangements concerning its cultural concerns" and "an extensive cultural autonomy."[123] Moyshe Shalit, editor-in-chief of the Vilnius Hebrew Zionist weekly *Unzer Ossid*, applauded the declaration: the triumphant Great Power recognized the Jews as a nation entitled to national rights. Therefore, it acknowledged Lithuania as a nationalities state instead of a nation-state, "a state that encompasses four main nations. [W]hen one of the nations, the Lithuanians [Litviner], is constituted as the ruling nation, then the happiness of the land could be reached only through national autonomy for all the other nations."[124] Shalit underlined that the Jews were acknowledged as entitled to cultural autonomy, but indicated that a broader autonomous frame, namely personal autonomy, would become within reach through the implementation of cultural autonomy. For the German-oriented Lithuanian Zionists, cultural autonomy could not shore up the delicate Jewish position in the new state-in-formation, still defend the Jews less against the exclusionist trends of the ethnocentric Taryba.

The implementation of Falkenhausen's declaration impelled Vilna's Jewish leaders to negotiate with the Taryba and reach a compromise. Clearly, the German authorities would not intervene openly in such an issue.[125] Paul Nathan pressed the Lithuanian Zionists to negotiate with the Taryba. Rosenboim explained to him that the Jews were ready for co-option to the Taryba and for working together with the Litviner against Polish claims to the country. He even stressed that "the Jews will advocate the autonomy of the country with all their energy."[126] By this phrase he once again revealed his tendency to support the autonomy of Lithuania in a German Mitteleuropa frame, according to his German political orientation. However, he stressed that the problem was not "to reach or not to reach" a compromise. "The question of recognition of the Jews as a nation and granting them national rights is not an abstract conceptual issue… it deals with real things, the safeguarding of existing rights and the creation of new ones."[127]According to Rosenboim , in a letter to Hantke written in German, the main problem was that the Taryba dismissed the demand for proportional representation because it did not accept the principle of equal citizenship. "[T]hey, regardless of us or others, are not ready to concede [to the national minorities] a sufficient number of votes [in the parlia-

ment]; this is because they refuse to give up formal sole rule and because they want to acknowledge the Litviner as the chosen people of Lithuania."[128] Not by chance, as on many other occasions, did he choose the word Litviner, even when he wrote in German, instead of Lithuanians [Litauer]. This was to intimate that the Litviner were a fraction of the entire Lithuanian population, like the Litvak*s* (or the Poles or Belorussians), and that Lithuania should be designed as an egalitarian state that rejects ethnic hierarchy in access to and sharing in power. Moreover, he did not demand only formal acknowledgment, but practical. As an experienced social activist under the German occupation,[129] he was acutely aware of the gap between official recognition of national particularity and practical influence on the power system.

Echoing Rosenboim's perception of power sharing, the *Jüdische Rundschau*, the leading Zionist weekly published in German in Berlin, stated, "[T]he question of self-determination, self-government has [finally] arisen"; "Lithuania has acquired a Land-Council chosen only by the Litviner, by-passing other nationalities… The Litviner … have begun with politics, which might be highly dangerous for a country like Lithuania, inhabited by various nationalities possessing the same right to and the same wish for national life. Under no circumstances is there room for a ruling nation. From the very start it should be ensured that no nationality, not to mention those just liberated, will conduct a politics of imperialism and oppression and constraint."[130] That acceptance of a new Lithuanian political entity became increasingly evident in the Jewish public sphere, especially among Zionists. However, as Olschwanger emphasized, "We do not object to a Lithuanian state, on condition that it guarantees national freedom and equality."[131]

The question was connected to the Polish claims on the city and region and the reluctance of the local Jewish leadership to accept it. "To Whom Does Vilnius Belong?,"[132] asked Moyshe Shalit in a series of articles early in October 1918 when the question of Vilnius' geopolitical attachment arose on account of the collapse of the German regime and indications that the Germans had left the question of the city's future open.[133] Shalit directed his articles against the inclusion of the city in the Polish state and supported its being in a Lithuanian one. His argument highlighted Jewish support (as interpreted by Shalit) for the Lithuanian cause—with certain stipulations. His main claim was that Vilnius was no less Jewish than Polish; in fact, the Jews constituted the salient urban ethnic element "not only in Vilnius but in all the cities of Vilnius governorate."[134] In contrast to the oppressive policy of a Polish regime, "[w]e affirm that among the national

colors of Vilnius, the Jewish color takes its place… [W]hen the Poles come and want to get their hands on Vilnius … we feel, first, our complete right to raise our voice and to show our color."[135] He clearly emphasized that "Lithuania should be an autonomous state and Vilnius should be its capital! … The focal point is not outside but inside, within Lithuania."[136] In other words, in light of the Polish menace, the question was not "Lithuania—to be or not to be?" but "Which Lithuania?" How would it address and include all its citizens. With the German declaration that legitimized his claim, he asserted that the main factor for accommodating the national minorities in Lithuania, including the Jews, was "complete civil and national equality, equal conditions for the four nations in Lithuania and the remaining national minorities on the basis of national-personal autonomy. Lithuania in a viable form on a large scale is the only answer to the national needs in such a state formation."[137] Without doubt, Shalit, like many other Zionists, basically did not alter the Zionist model of the desired state. The only significant change was acceptance of detachment from Russia, even among Zionists' former supporters of the Russian orientation. However, it doesn't mean the acceptance of the model of a Lithuanian state that envisaged the Taryba. Shalit wrote his articles at the height of general disorder, when anarchy was in the air and a Soviet menace was perceived by them.[138]

The acceptance grew in late October and November 1918, after the German capitulation and the German revolution. Facing the last remnants of German pressure and an imminent threat from the Soviets, the Taryba showed some change to the minorities in its model. Under pressure it reluctantly phrased a model more inclusive, geographically and socially. The German authorities similarly pushed Rosenboim and Rubinstein to join the Taryba, and as a step in that direction[139] a Zionist conference took place in Vilna on 5–8 December.[140] It substituted the eternally requisite assembly of the all-Lithuania Jewish community. The representatives reflected the concept of Great Lithuania, which were represented organizations from Vilnius, Kaunas and Suwałki and from Grodno and Białystok, among other places. The conference resolutions reflected the desired "Lithuania," which now was at the epicenter of the debates. With regard to the kind of autonomy a debate arose regarding the demand of the creation of a Jewish curia in the parliament. The youngest, the more radicals, and those who returned from Russia, like Josef Berger, tended to be against it. It was considered a "reactionary" instrument, unnecessary in a truly democratic country. The older, like Wygodzki or Rosenboim , demanded it.[141] In any case it was universally emphasized the necessity of

"not only national autonomy, but the warranty of it implementation," emphasizing, too, the necessity to be equal partners in the legislative process as well as in the governmental instances.[142] The question of "which Lithuania," regarding its geographical scope and structure arose in spontaneous debate. The young and promising Jacob Robinson (1889–1977) from Suwałki, presented his deep doubts concerning a federal solution to the territorial question.[143] It was a similar statement to that of the Kaunas Zionists who considered it unnecessary to debate such a question.[144] As expected, some representatives insisted on the historical borders of old Lithuania, although the reasons were not historical but ethnonational. A large Lithuania would encompass a greater number of Jews and be a more ethnically complex state. This would enlarge the number of Poles, which (according to the supporters of this proposition) would improve mutual relations between Poles and Jews. Some other unidentified voices, adopting the ethno-Lithuanian conceptualization, preferred a "smaller" Lithuania, an "ethnic Lithuania." They based the argument for a "little" Lithuania" on fears of a Polish reaction, as well as the wish to show flexibility toward the Litviner who were more open to compromise. Moreover, if the Litviner were truly ready to share power it would be unnecessary to create a coalition of minorities in a broad and ethnically heterogeneous territory.[145] Indeed, inclusive discourse on the part of leading members of the Taryba brought to certain expressions of flexibility among the Zionists regarding desired geographical scope of the Lithuanian state.

In the end, the resolutions of the Zionist conference spoke about a Greater Lithuania. The conferees envisaged a free and democratic Lithuania "based on full equality and national personal autonomy for its entire people (national-personal Autonomie seiner Völker),"[146] which reflected their vision of an ethnopolitical egalitarian state, in which even the Litviner would enjoy personal autonomy. Regarding Jews joining the Taryba, the stipulations were the following: "The Taryba must share our view concerning its competence," that is, probably, addressing the question of Greater Lithuania; "proportional representation for all nationalities living in the country,"[147] that is, machinery that would guarantee equal inclusion in the political system; and "the Taryba will not hinder the proclamation of a Jewish Communal organization, the convening of a congress of Lithuanian Jewry and the creation of an institutional body of national-personal autonomy."[148]

The Zionists did not relinquish their highest vision—Jewish national autonomy in an egalitarian Great Lithuanian. In Zionist eyes were the new geopolitical situation that forced the Taryba formally to acquiesce, almost

in the surface, to the new conditions. It accepted a larger Lithuania than planned and incorporated Belorussian representatives (nine in all—six from Vilnius and three from Grodno); it also spoke of abandoning the idea of an ethnonational hierarchical political system.[149] However, the latter was merely words because the formally declared ethnoegalitarian program clearly made no practical difference to the Taryba's ethnopolitical program.

As a result, Jewish representatives joined the Taryba. According to their expectations as presented at the Zionist conference and transmitted to Berlin, seven Jewish representatives were supposed to enter the Taryba, four from Vilnius and three from the provinces.[150] In fact, only three joined: two Zionists (Rosenboim and Wygodzki) and one Folkist/Orthodox (Rachmilewitz).[151] "Why did I join the Taryba?," asked Wygodzki shortly after the Zionist conference. He explained that circumstances forced the Jewish representatives to join. The other options were worse: the Germans were pulling out and there was clear danger of a power vacuum, which would lead to anarchy. The old Russian order was gone forever; Poland, because of its anti-Semitic policy, was out of question; the Soviet experiment boded ill and made the Russian orientation unwanted for those who rejected the soviet order in light of the gathering menace of a Soviet invasion. Neutralism was impossible under the present circumstances. The Taryba was changing, co-opting Belorussians and democrats, and it left room for a wide range of activities leading to the realization of autonomy.[152]

However, among the youth sympathy for the Left increased.[153] In 1918 October the Bund clarified its position on the Soviets and on a possible Bolshevik revolution, as well as on the workers' council that was formed in Vilnius with the German revolution and the collapse of the German regime.[154] The Bund stated plainly, "In Lithuania there is no Revolution," phrasing the statement in a way that did not sound antirevolutionary; it also asserted that in the "workers' council" a "balanced position" between right and left was needed, and would be played by the Bund. On the one hand, the Vilnius Bund leaders rejected any initiative on the part of the workers' council to take power by force.[155] On the other hand they rejected the Taryba and any political cooperation that went with it.[156] The Bund openly demanded cultural autonomy, seeing in the *Kehilleh* the main organ to implement it.[157]

However, the influence of communism on the Bund members increased at the very end of 1918.[158] Then, the Bund sounded a distinctly pro-Soviet note. It did so together with the LSDP and the SD Party of

Lithuania and Belorussia, heartened by the promise augured by 1919, the Soviet occupation of the city, and its incorporation into the Lithuanian-Belorussian Soviet order.[159] The new soviet order altered again the circumstances. The main arena of the struggle to define which Lithuania moved away from Vilnius.

Conclusion

The Jewish vision of Lithuania was based in two assumptions: first, that the Jews as an integral part of society were legitimately entitled to express their own vision of the future state. According to that, most of the political figures active in the "Jewish street" in Lithuania during 1915–1918 indicated their preference for national autonomy within the framework of a federal democratic Russia. Democratic Russia was understood as a democratic country reorganized according to the principle of national self-determination that includes the right to use one's own language and to develop one's own national culture in a political structure ethnically egalitarian. These aims did not need full sovereignty but only internal sovereignty that was seen as more important than sovereignty in the international sense. Why was it so? The answer lies, on the one hand, on the desire to maintain the unity of the millions of Jews in a multiethnic, democratic, and egalitarian huge Russia. On the other hand, they regarded the Lithuanian territory as not economically viable, too small, too weak, and too underdeveloped in an unfavorable geopolitical constellation in the middle of three powerful neighbors (Russia, Germany, and Poland). They even interpreted the Jewish economic interest as linked to Russia and not to Germany or Poland.

If not a federal democratic Russia they expressed their support for a Greater Lithuania in order to maintain the unity of the Litvak Jewry, on the one hand, and in order to avoid the construction of a state with one ethnic majority and one salient ethnic minority, the Jews, on the other hand. The vision of most Jewish parties was that of a nationalities state, in the belief that some kind of coalition of minorities that compelled reciprocal accommodation was the best choice. The nightmare was a nationalist state constructed in nationalizing lines and ethnic hierarchy that treated its Jewish minority with disdain and hostility.

The second assumption was that the Jews, as an integral part of society, were entitled to equality on all levels of societal life. In a multiethnic state the autonomist program in its different versions (personal or cultural)

was instrumental in the demand for a fair distribution of the state's resources. It was an option that could be interpreted as authorization to receive a share of the available resources in order to advance the social mobility of such a minority group. Such ethnoegalitarian sharing of the state's resources would admit Jews to the corridors of power.

None of the above-mentioned organizations and ideologies based its demands on universal messages, but called for symbolic recognition of Jewish culture, which had been marginalized by the central government. It demanded a more equitable distribution of power, but also formal acceptance of the Jews as an ethnic group like other ethnic groups in the state, and of their culture as equal to that of others. For the Jewish intelligentsia, therefore, autonomistic claims were an instrument to challenge the hegemonic culture. In the context of the liberalization and democratization of the state, the Jewish intelligentsia demanded recognition as a legitimate group (equal to the Lithuanian, Belorussian, Polish, German, or Russian intelligentsia), and Jewish culture as equivalent to the Lithuanian culture and other ethnonational cultures present in the public sphere. Such a Through their program, the Jewish intelligentsia desired to abolish the ascendancy of a Lithuanian hegemonic culture, and to obtain not only formal, but also symbolic, and above all concrete and tangible equality.

Separation of Russia in a full sovereign ethnonational Lithuanian nationalizing state was seen as frightful choice. It was during the last part of 1917 and during 1918 that a change had occurred. The Lithuanian politics, the German dominance, and at the same time the impossibility of relying on Soviet Russia, were the main factors that provoked the abandonment of the federalist option among Zionist and Folkists. When the political steps of the Taryba were interpreted as going toward an ethnically egalitarian state, the Zionist and Folkists accepted the idea of a fully sovereign Lithuanian state that would accommodate its minorities in an egalitarian way.

NOTES

1 David L. Gold, "Yiddish Linguistics and Jewish Liturgical Boundaries as Determinants of Non-Jewish Political Boundaries? Shimshn Royznboym the Boundaries of Interbellum Lithuania," *Jewish Language Review 2*, 1982, pp. 60–61. Gold cites Chaim Shapiro, "Of Poland, the Baltic States & the Jews, Some Personal Footnotes to History, Some Personal Footnotes to History.," *The Jewish Observer 7*, no. 10, 1971, p. 19. Both sources use the transliteration "Yaffe" instead of the better known "Joffe" used here.

2 See Yaakov Leschinski, *Dos yidishe folk in tzifern*, Berlin: Klal Farlag, 1922, pp. 54–58, 60, and appendix. For statistics on the Jewish population in Vilnius and in the Vilnius governorate in that period see Jarosław Wołkonowski, *Stosunki polsko-żydowskie w Wilnie i na Wileńszczyźnie 1919–1939*, Białystok: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu w Białymstoku, 1969, pp. 30–37.

3 Mattityahu Mintz, "Leumiut Yehudit ve-Leumiut shle miutim akherim," *Leumiut vePolitika, Perspektivot Khadashot*, ed. Jehuda Reinharz, Gideon Shimoni, and Yosef Salmon, Jerusalem: Merkaz Zalman Shazar, 1996, p. 201.

4 Dubnow explained his outlook in a number of essays published between 1897 and 1907 in *Voskhod*. In 1907 the essays were compiled systematically into a book and published in Russian: S. M. Dubnow, *Pisma o Starom i Novom evreistve 1897–1907,* St. Petersburg: Obshchestvennaia polza, 1907 . Renée Poznanski translated the essays into French (Dubnow, *Lettres*), adding a preface and notes, and compared the essays originally published with the later versions in the 1907 book. Given the scholarly apparatus of that book, I refer to the French version. Simon Doubnow, *Lettres sur le judaïsme ancien et nouveau*, Paris: Editions du Cerf, 1989, pp. 199–201.

5 This idea fits into the broader category of ideologies known as "consociationalism," which aims to combine democracy and national pluralism. See Arend Lijphart, *Democracy in Plural Societies: A Comparative Exploration,* New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1977; James G. Kellas, *The Politics of Nationalism and Ethnicity*, New York: St. Martin's Press, 1991, pp. 77–78, 135–142. See also Anthony D. Smith, *Theories of Nationalism*, 2nd Ed., New York: Holmes and Meier, 1983, pp. 442–446; Stephen Ryan, *Ethnic Conflict and International Relations*, Aldershot: Dartmouth, 1995, pp. 6–1/

6 Mattityahu Mintz, "Leumiut Yehudit u-Leumiut shel Miutim Akherim," pp. 201–224.

7 Yonatan Frankel, *Nevuah ve-Politika, Sotzializm, leumiut veYehudei Rusia 1862–1917*, Tel Aviv: Am Oved, 1989, pp. 245—61; Yoav Peled, *Otonomia tarbutit u-maavak maamadi*, Tel Aviv: HaKibbutz HaMeuhad, 1997, pp. 60–61.

8 Joshua Zimmerman, *Poles, Jews and the Politics of Nationality, the Bund and the Polish Socialist Party in Late Imperial Russia, 1892–1914*, Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2004, p. 123; Moshe Mishkinsky, "Regional Factors in the Formation of the Jewish Labor Movement in Czarist Russia, *YIVO Annual of Jewish Social Sciences 14*, 1969, pp. 35–36.

9 For example, Uriah Katsenelbogen (1885–1980) who was deeply engaged in a project of bringing the Lithuanian culture to the Jews, in this way making them sensitive to the LSDP claims.

10 Leonas Sabaliūnas, *Lithuanian Social Democracy in Perspective, 1893–1914*, Durham: Duke University Press, 1990, pp. 27, 52–53, 102–103; Zimmerman, *Poles, Jews and Politics of Nationality,* pp. 87–88, 96, 112–113.

11 In fact, all of them, except for the S.S. or "Territorialists" before 1911, and to a certain extent the Vinaver's Popular Group. For a general description of autonomism see Oscar Janowsky, *The Jews and Minority Rights (1898–1919)*, New York: AMS Press, 1966, pp. 68–130.

12 Zhitlovsky's influence was evident here. See Ytzhak Shichor, *Si'at "Vozrozhdeniye," Itpatchutah ha-Idiologit vehaIrgunit,* M. A. thesis, Tel Aviv University, 1970; Frankel, *Nevuah*, pp. 138–140; Mattityahu Mintz, *Ber Borokhov, haMa'agal haRishon (1900–1906),* Tel Aviv: Tel Aviv University, HaKibbutz HaMeuhad, 1976, pp. 318–327;

Abraham Greenbaum, *Tenuat Hatechiah "Vozrozhdeniye" uMifleget haPoalim haYehudit Sotzialistit, mivkhar Ketavim*, Jerusalem: Merkaz Dinur, 1988, pp. X–XV; Mattityahu Mintz, "Shalosh Teudot myemei pulmus 'Vozrozhdeniye' erev veidat Poltava shel mifleget haPoailim haYehudit haSotzial Demokratit Poalei Tzion," *haTziyyonut 5*, 1978, pp. 310–334.

13 Ytzhak Gruenbaum, "MeVarsha ad Helsingfors," *Katzir, Kobetz leKorot haTenuah haTzionit beRussia 1,* 1964, pp. 21–42; Arieh Rafaeli Tzentziper, "Veidot Artziot shel Tzionei Rusia," *Katzir, Kobetz leKorot haTenuah haTzionit beRussia 1,* 1964, pp. 76–103; Yitzhak Maor, *HaTenuah haTzionit beRusia*, Jerusalem: Magnes, 1986, pp. 315–320; Alexander Orbach, "Zionism and the Russian Revolution of 1905: The Commitment to Participate in Domestic Political Life," Bar-Ilan, 24-25, 1989, pp. 7–23; Matitiyahu Mintz, "Work for the Land of Israel and 'Work for the Present,': A concept of Unity, a Reality of Contradicition," *Essential Papers on Zionism*, ed. Jehuda Reinharz and Anita Shapira, New York and London: New York University Press, 1996, pp. 161–170.

14 On this issue see Zechlin's important work, Egmont Zechlin, *Die deutsche Politik und die Juden im Ersten Weltkrieg*, Göttingen: Vandenhocck & Ruprecht, 1969.

15 A great deal has been published about the Committee for the East. See especially Max Bodenheimer, *Prelude to Israel,* ed. by Henriette Hannah Bodenheimer, translated by Israel Cohen, New York: Thomas Yoseloff, 1963; Max Bodenheimer, "The Story of the Hindenburg Declaration," *Herzl Yearbook 2,* 1959, pp. 56–77. See also Zechlin, *Die deutsche Politik und die Juden*, pp. 126–138; Zosa Szajkowski, "The Komitee für den Osten and Zionism," *Herzl Yearbook 7,* 1971, pp. 199–240; Jay Ticker, "Max I. Bodenheimer: Advocate of Progerman Zionism at the Beginning of World War I," *Jewish Social Studies 43,* 1981, pp. 11–30; Jehuda Reinherz, ed., *Dokumente zur Geschichte des deutschen Zionismus*, *1882-1933*, Tübingen, 1981, pp. 148–151; Steven Aschheim, "Eastern Jews, German Jews and Germany's Ostpolitik in the First World War," *Leo Bacck Institute Year Book 28,* 1983, pp. 355–365; Isaiah Friedman, *Germany, Turkey, Zionism, 1897–1918*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977, pp. 231–236; Yfaat Weiss, *Etniut ve-ezrahut*, Jerusalem: Magnes, 2000, pp. 35–38.

16 Šarūnas Liekis, *A State within a State?*, Vilnius: Versus aureus, 2003, pp. 43–45.

17 Tzemakh Szabad, "Iberzicht," *Vilner Zamelbuch 2,* 1918, pp. 22–23.

18 Liekis, *A State within a State?* pp. 50–51.

19 Ibid.

20 The leaflet containing the four versions was published in Petras Klimas, *Dienoraštis*, 1915.XII.1-1919.1.19, Chicago: A. Mackaus knygų leidimo fondas, 1988, pp. 328–331.

21 Liekis, *A State within a State?* pp. 50–51.

22 Szabad, "Iberzicht," pp. 22–23.

23 "Citizens," Yiddish Scientific Institute, New Jork, (YIVO), RG 10, Box 29, Folder 386.

24 Szabad mentioned only one proclamation, that of 1915 December. Szabad, "Iberzicht," pp. 22–23.

25 See, for example, Yaakov Wigodzki, *In shturm, zikhroines fun di okupatzie tzaitn*, Vilne: Kletzkin, 1926, pp. 43–45, 100–103; *Shul Pinkos, finf yorn arbet fun tzentralen bildungs komitet, 1919–1924*, Vilne: Tz.b.k., 1924, pp. 26–26; Israel Klausner, *Vilna, Yerushalim deLita, dorot acharonim, 1881–1939*, Bet Lokhame ha-Getatot: Bet Lokhame ha-Getatot and ha-Kibbutz ha-Me`ukhad, 1983, pp. 117–119.

26 Szabad, "Iberzicht," pp. 22–23.

27 Boris Halpern, "Der Yidisher Kultur Farayn in Lite," *Pinkos far der geshikhte fun Vilne in di yorn fun milkhome un okupatzie,* ed. Avrom Virshuvski, Shmul-Leyb Tzitron, and Tzemakh Szabad, Vilne: B. Tsionsohn, 1922, p. 689.

28 Ibid.

29 Ibid., p. 690.

30 Ibid., p. 691.

31 Ibid., p. 692.

32 Ibid., pp. 692–693.

33 Szabad, "Iberzicht," p. 22.

34 Halpern, "Der Yidisher Kultur Farayn in Lite," 692–693.

35 *Lietuvos Valstybės Tarybos protokolai, 1917–1918*, eds. Raimundas Lopata and Alfonsas Eidintas, Vilnius: Mokslas, 1991, p. 38. Cited with minor changes from Liekis, *A State within a State?* p. 58.

36 Ibid. , p. 43.

37 Petras Klimas, *Iš mano atsiminimų*, Vilnius: Lietuvos enciklopedijų redakcija, 1990, p. 131, according to Joachim Tauber, "No Allies: The Lithuanian Taryba and the National Minorities 1916-1918," *Journal of Baltic Studies 38*, no.4, 2007, p. 438.

38 The Zionists were absent when the resolutions were formulated. Ytzhak Broydes, *Vilna ha-Yehudit ve-'Askanea*, Tel Aviv: Istadrut Olei Vilna ve-ha-Galil, 1939, pp. 315–316.

39 "Deklaration" YIVO, RG 29, Box 14, Folder 293. See also, Wiktor Sukiennicki, *East Central Europe during World War I, From Foreign Domination to National Independence*, Boulder, Co: East European Monographs and Columbian University Press, 1984, pp. 373–374.

40 "We must go back a bit far in that our input", Central Zionist Archives (Jerusalem)(CZA),, Z3/131; see also Sukiennicki, *East Central Europe during World War I*, pp. 373–374.

41 Broydes, *Vilna ha-Yehudit*, p. 316.

42 "Deklaration"

43 Ibid.

44 Ibid.

45 A. Smetona, *Die litauische Frage*, Berlin: Das neue Litauen, 1917. The statement was made on 17 November in Berlin and was broadly known to the foremost figures in leading Jewish circles in Berlin and among Vilnius Zionists.

46 Halpern, "Der Yidisher Kultur Farayn in Lite," p. 697.

47 Ibid., p. 698.

48 "Lithuanian Jerusalem is in danger Lietuvos Mokslų akademijos Vrublevskių bibliotekos Rankraščių skyrius (Manuscript Department of the Wroblewski Library of the Lithuanian Academy of Sciences) (LMAVB RS), F. 255, b. . 929.

49 "Deliberation on the Jews in the Borderlands, Warsaw," 14 January 1918 , LMAVB RS, , F.79, b.. 830.

50 Ibid.

51 Ibid.

52 Ibid.

53 Ibid.

54 Ibid.

55 Halpern, "Der Yidisher Kutur Farayn in Lite," p. 698.

56 Ibid.

57 "Lithuanian Jerusalem is in danger '...1a.

58 Halpern, "Der Yidisher Kultur Farayn in Lite," pp. 698–699.

59 Ibid.

60 Struck to Arthur Hantke, 29.9.1918, CZA, Z3/134. See also, Tzvia Balshan, "Ma'avakam shel Yehudei Lita 'al zekhuioteiem ha-leumiot 1917–1918," *Shvut 10,* 1984, p. 70. Yaakov Wigodzki was imprisoned because his obstinate opposition to German policy. Wigodzki, *In shturm, zikhroines fun di okupatzie tzaitn*, pp. 120–127.

61 "Nokh haYishev ha das fun der algemeiner fareinigter mitglider farzamlung fun di vilner organizatsie fun 'Bund' un der SD partei in Lite," YIVO, RG 10, Box 29, Folder 293.

62 Liekis, *A State within a State?* pp. 60–61.

63 Ibid., pp. 64–65.

64 Leo Rosenberg, *Die Juden in Litauen. Geschichte, Bevölkerung und Wirtschaft, Politische Forderungen*, Berlin and Munich: Verlag der Neuen Jüdischen Verlag, 1918, p. 38; Antanas Smetona, *Die litauische Frage*, p. 31; "Zur Lage in Litauen," *Jüdische Rundschau*, 16 August 1918, p. 253. For the position of the Taryba on the national minorities see Tauber, "No Allies," p. 437.

65 "The future of Lithuania and its relations with its neighbors," Annenberg Rare manuscript collection, Van Pelt Library, University of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia, PA (Van Pelt UPENN), Šaulys collection, Folder 18 .

66 Ibid.

67 Petras Klimas, *Le développement de l'état Lituanien à partir de l'année 1915 jusqu'à formation du Gouvernement provisoire au mois de novembre 1918*, Paris: J. Langlois, 1919, p. 87; Sukiennicki, *East Central Europe during World War I*, p. 375.

68 Smetona's statement cited by Liekis, *A State within a State?* p. 59.

69 "Di Forshteyershaft fun di minderheytn in Litvishn landrat," *Letzte Nayes*, 10 March 1917.

70 "Di Melukhe Shprakh far Lite," *Letzte Nayes*, 18 October 1917.

71 See, for example, Tauber, "No Allies," pp. 436–437.

72 Ibid., p. 436.

73 Szabad, "Iberzikht," p. 23.

74 Ibid., pp. 23–24.

75 Gediminas Ilgūnas, *Steponas Kairys,* Vilnius: Vaga, 2002; Jonas Aničas, *Jonas Vileišis,* 1872-1942, Vilnius: Alma Littera, 1995.

76 Szabad, "Iberzikht," pp. 23–24.

77 Arthur Hantke to the Oberost administration, 26 October 1917, CZA, Z3/172.

78 Balshan, "Ma'avakam shel Yehudei Lita 'al zekhuioteiem ha-leumiot 1917–1918," p. 70.

79 Arthur Hantke to the Oberost administration.

80 Ibid.

81 Aba Stražas, "Die Tätigkeit des Dezernats für jüdische Angelegenhaiten in der 'deutschen Militärverwaltung Ober Ost," *The Russian Baltic Provinces between the 1905/1917 Revolutions,* ed. Andrew Ezergilis and Gert von Pistohlkors, Köln-Wien: Bhölau Verlag, 1982, pp. 315–330.

82 Struck's memorandum on his meetings sent to Hantke, 26 December 1917, CZA, Z3/131.

83 Gayl to Hantke, 28 December 1917, CZA, Z3/131.

84 "Der Tzentral Komitet," p. 230.

85 "Fun'm tzionistishn miting," *Letze Nayes,* 10 October 1917.

86 Struck to Hantke, 26 December 1917, CZA Z3/131. According to Struck, the referent for Jewish issues in the Oberost administration with Rubinstein three representatives were spoken of (Rubinstein, Rosenboimm, and Rachmilewitz) out of twenty-five (12%). All other sources mention two representatives. Three representatives reflect quite accurately the percentage of the Jews in the population (14.63). Rosenberg, *Die Juden in Litauen*, p. 18. It is possible that this first agreement led Mathias Erzberg to maintain that the Jews refused to receive representation according to their percentage in the population. See Erzberg to EAC, 11 January 1918, CZA, Z3/21.

87 Hantke to Verwaltung Oberost, 26 October 1917, CZA, Z/3 131.

88 Protocol, 4 February 1918, CZA, Z3/207.

89 Ibid.

90 Struck to Hantke.

91 See Liekis, *A State within a State?* pp. 61–62.Here the translation is mine, according to the signed copy of the document found in YIVO, RG 29, Box 29, Folder 385.

92 Klimas, *Dienoraštis*, p. 215 (entry from 15 January 1918).

93 "To his Highness the Lord Chief of Militrverwaltung Lithuania," 29 October 1917, YIVO, RG 10, Box 2-29, Folder 377.

94 Szabad, "Iberzikht," p. 23; "Fun'm Tzionistishn miting," *Letze Nayes*, October 16 1917.

95 The concept of societal language, as defined by Will Kymlicka, refers to the value of a language recognized by the state and used in a wide range of state institutions, such as schools, the legal system, the economy and government. Kymlicka, *Politics in the Vernacular: Nationalism, Multiculturalism and Citizenship*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001, pp. 25–27, 53.

96 First and Second protocol, YIVO , RG 29, Box 14, Folder 304.

97 "The general Jewish People's Party in Lithuania," CZA, Z3/131.

98 Klimas, *Dienoraštis*, p. 215; Letter to Salinger 2 January 1918, CZA, Z3/132. For the Folkists see:" The general Jewish People's Party in Lithuania," CZA, Z3/131.

99 "The general Jewish People's Party in Lithuania," CZA, Z3/131; Halpern "Der Yidisher Kultur Farayn in Lite," p. 699.

100 Protocol, 4 February 1918, CZA, Z3/207.

101 Ibid.

102 Ibid.

103 Ibid.

104 Moyshe Shalit, "Di Tzioninzirung fun yidishn lebn," pp. 9–11.

105 The question of orientation is connected to the question of the measure of autonomy or independence. How much sovereignty should be granted? All the political groups understood that in the existing geopolitical conditions some concessions were needed regarding the features of sovereignty.

106 See above and Liekis, *A State within a State?* pp. 58–59; Tauber, "No Allies," pp. 435–436.

107 Rozenboim to Paul Nathan, 21 February 1918, CZA, Z3/207.

108 Leaflet from May 1917 ("Proletarians of all countries, unite"),YIVO, RG 10, Box 29, Folder 293.

109 Halpern, "Der Yidisher Kultur Farayn in Lite," p. 698.

110 "Nokh haYishev ha das fun der algemeiner fareinigter mitglider farzamlung fun di vilner organizatsie fun 'Bund' der SD partei in Lite," YIVO, RG 10, Box 29, Folder 293.

111 Halpern, "Der Yidisher Kutur Farayn in Lite," p. 693.

112 See, for example, Wigodzki, *In Shturm*, pp. 120–127.

113 Protocol from 8 July 1918, CZA, A126/40/2.

114 On the despoliation policy of the German occupation regime in Lithuania see Fritz Fischer, *Germany"s Aims in the First World War*, London: Chatto and Windus, 1967, pp. 273–279, 436–437, 456–472, 598–608; Jürgen Matthäus, "German Judenpolitik in Lithuania during the First World War," Düsseldorf: Droste Verlag, 1962, pp. 165–166; Vejas Gabriel Liulevicius, *War Land on the Eastern Front*. Culture, National Identity, and German Occupation in World War I, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000, pp. 66–68, 77, 93, and passim. In this context see Isabel V. Hull, *Absolute Destruction, Military Culture and the Practices of War in Imperial Germany*, Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2002, pp. 226–262.

115 Simon Rosenboim to Paul Nathan, 21 February 1918, CZA, Z3/207.

116 Note by Klee dated 13 January 1918, CZA, Z3/13 and a second note by Klee, 16 January 1918, CZA, Z3/377.

117 In such a context see Stražas, "Die Litauische Lamdestag als Instrument des deutschen Ostpolitik 1917–1918" pp. 341–363; Joachim Tauber, "Stubborn Collaborators," pp. 194–209.

118 Protocol of the meeting of the Zionist organization in Kaunas held on 5 October 1919, CZA F/46/1.

119 According to Zur Judenfrage in Litauen, 1 May 1918, CZA, L6/108.

120 Ibid.

121 Richard Lichtheim to Kurt Blumenfeld, 2 February 1918, CZA, Z3/728.

122 On this declaration see Zechlin, *Die deutsche Politik und die Juden*, pp. 235–237; Tzvia Balshan, "Ma'avakam shel Yehudei Lita 'al Zekhuioteihem haLeumiot 1917–1918," pp. 77–79.

123 "A statement of the Jewish problem in Lithuania," pp. 434–435.

124 S [Moyshe Shalit], "Vegn der Tzukunft fun di Litvishe Yidn," pp. 8–9.

125 Balshan, "Ma'avakam shel Yehudei Lita," pp. 79–80; Liekis, *A State within a State?* p. 69.

126 Rosenboim to Nathan, 6 May 1918, CZA, Z3/133.

127 Ibid.

128 Ibid.

129 Eglė Bendikaitė, "Intermediary between Worlds. Shimshon Rosenbaum: Laweyer, Publicist, Pacifist," *Osteuropa, Impulses for Europe, Tradition and Modernity in East European Jewry*, ed. Manfred Sapper, Volker Weichsel, and Anna Lipphardt, Berlin: Berliner Wissenschafts Verlag, 2008, pp. 173–176. See Klausner, *Yerushalaim deLita*, pp. passim.

130 "Zur Lage in Litauen," *Jüdische Rundschau*, 18 August 1918, p. 254.

131 "Lithuanian Jerusalem is in danger."

132 *Letzte Nayes*, 6 October 1918 and 8 October 1918, according to "Wem darf Wilna gehören?" LMAVB RS, , F. 255, b. . 929.

133 Erich Matthias and Rudolf Morsez, eds., *Die Regierung des Prinzen Max von Baden*, p. 196; Sukiennicki, *East Central Europe during World War I*, p. 805.

134 *Letzte Nayes*, 6 October 1918.

135 Ibid.

136 *Letzte Nayes*, 8 October 1918.

137 Ibid.

138 See Liekis, *A State within a State?* p. 75.

139 Marianne Bienhold, *Die Entstehung des Litauischen Staates in den Jahren 1918–1919 im Spiegel Deutscher Akten*, Bochum: Studienverlag Dr. N. Brockmeyer, 1976, p. 139; Balshan, "Ma'avakam shel Yehudei Lita," pp. 80–81; Liekis, *A State within a State?* p. 76; Tauber, " No Allies," p. 440.

140 On the conference see Ezrah Mendelsohn, *The Jews of East Central Europe between the Wars*, Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1983, p. 219; Balshan, "Ma'avakam shel Yehudei Lita," p. 81; Liekis, *A State within a State?* p. 76; Eglė Bendikaitė, *Sionistinis sajūdis Lietuvoje*,Vilnius: Leidykla, 2006, pp. 66–68. See also in this volume Bendikaitė, "The Lithuanian Zionist Conference, Vilnius, December 5–8, 1918."

141 The First National Conference of the Zionists of Lithuania, 14 December 1918, , CZA, L/114; Report of the attorney Rosenboim from Vilnius, Lithuania on, CZA, L/114; Report of Dr. Berger from Kaunas 7 January 1919, CZA, L6/113.

142 The speech of the lawyer, Mr S Rosenboim on the Zionist Conference at Vilnius , LMAVB, f. 255, b. . 929, l. 31a; The First National Conference of the Zionists of Lithuania, 14 December 1918, For more on Rosenboim"s speech see Bendikaitė, *Sionistinis sajūdis Lietuvoje*, pp. 67–68.

143 The First National Conference of the Zionists of Lithuania

144 Protocol of the meeting of the Zionist organization in Kaunas held on Saturday night, Parashat Noakh 5679 [seventh of Cheshvan; 12 October 1918], CZA, F/46/1.

145 Leib Yaffe and Yosef Berger to Berlin, 14 December 1918, CZA Z3/135.

146 Bendikaitė, *Sionistinis sajūdis Lietuvoje*, 67; Mendelsohn, *The Jews of East Central Europe between the Wars*, p. 219; Balshan, "Ma'avakam shel Yehudei Lita," p. 81; Liekis, *A State within a State?* p. 76 The translation here is mine based on Political resolutions of the first Zionist Conference in Lithuania, CZA, L6/114. See the resolutions of the Zionist Conference in Vilnius published by Eglė Bendikaitė "The Lithuanian Zionist Conference, Vilnius, December 5–8, 1918," in this volume.

147 The translation is mine based on "Politische Resolutionen der ersten zionistische Konferenz in Litauen," CZA, L6/114. See the resolutions of the Zionist Conference in Vilnius published by Bendikaitė, "The Lithuanian Zionist Conference, Vilnius, December 5–8, 1918," in this volume.

148 Balshan, "Ma"avakam shel Yehudei Lita," p. 81; Liekis, *A State within a State?* p. 76. The translation here is mine based on   Political resolutions of the first Zionist Conference in Lithuania

149 Tauber, "No Allies," p. 440 and see in this context, "Report on negotations with Lithuanian Government," Vilnius, 20 November 1918, Archives of the German Foreign Office (Auswärtiges Amt), (Berlin), (AA), Wk. 20d, No 1, Bd. 27;

150 LMAVB RS , F. 255, b.. 929, l. 24; Report of Mr. Rosenboim, a lawyer from Vilnius, Lithuania on Lithuania, CZA, Z3/135.

151 Liekis, *A State within a State?* pp. 77–78.

152 LMAVB RS , F. 255, b. . 929, l. 24. See in this context, Eglė Bendikaitė, "Litvak pro-Lithuanian Political Orientation c. 1906–c. 1921," *The Vanished World of Lithuanian*

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153 Szabad, "Iberzikht," p. 9.

154 Ibid.

155 "Arbeterrat," *Unzer shtime*, 1 (5 December 1918), p. 1. See also LMAVB RS, , F. 255, b. . 929, l.. 28a.

156 Report of Mr. Rosenboim, a lawyer from Vilnius, Lithuania on, , CZA, Z3/135.

157 Eliahu Yaakov Goldshmidt, "Di yidishe prese in Vilne," pp. 590–592.

158 Shmul Agurski, *Der Idisher Arbeter in der Komunistisher Bavegung (1917–1921)*, Minsk: Melukhe Farlag fun Vaisrusland, 1925, pp. 72–73.

159 Proletariat of the world unite, Van Pelt UPENN, Šaulys collection, Folder 18.