

Arūnas Bubnys

THE ŠIAULIAI GHETTO



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GHETTO

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**Translated from the Lithuanian:
Arūnas Bubnys „Šiaulių getas“, 2014**

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THE ŠIAULIAI GHETTO



Genocide and Resistance
Research Centre of Lithuania

Vilnius, 2014



View of the central Šiauliai from a steeple of Sts. Peter and Paul Church in 1943. The Grand Choral Synagogue of Šiauliai is located near the central square



UDK 94(474.5)„1941/1944“:94(33)+
[323.15+343.3](474.5)(=411.16)(091)„1941/1944“

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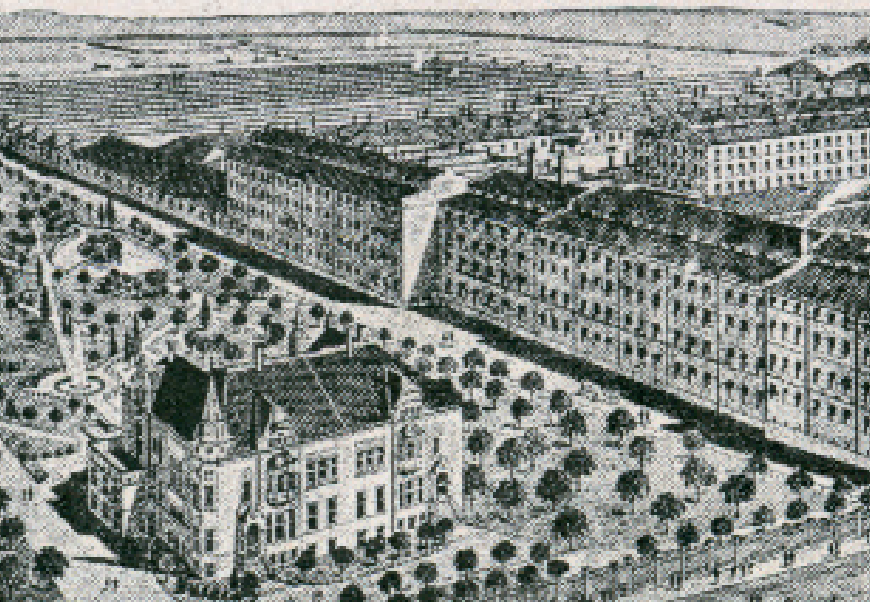
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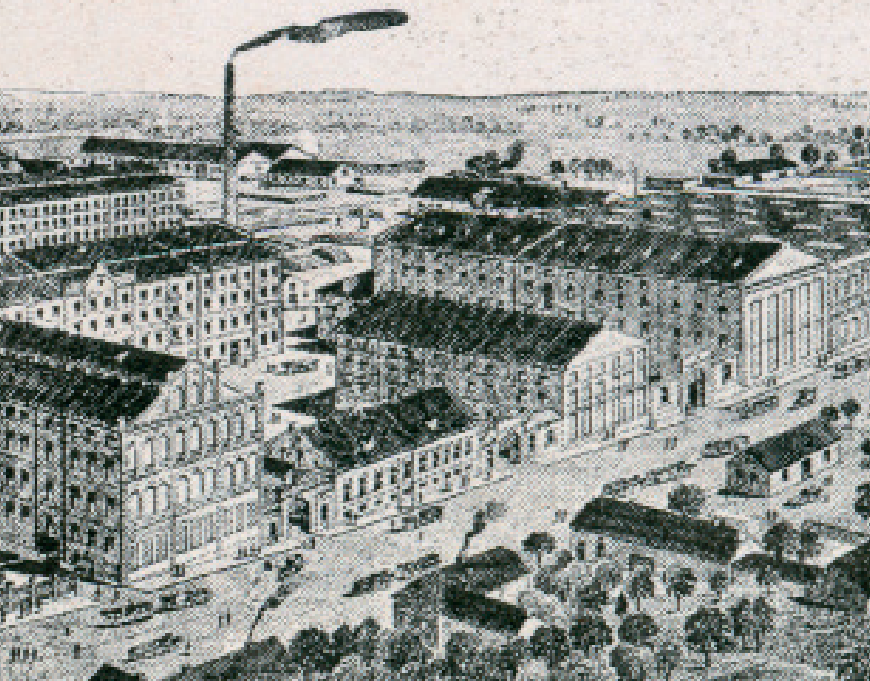
ISBN 978-609-8037-43-2

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The Chaimas Frenkelis-owned leather factory. Circa 1930



Introduction

The Jewish community was settled in the town of Šiauliai since the first half of the 18th century. In 1748, the Jews of Šiauliai constructed a synagogue and, during the next year, the town's Jewish cemetery was established. In the second half of the 19th century, the industry flourished in Šiauliai. The impact of the local Jewish community on the industrial development was big there. In 1877, the leather factory, which was owned by Chaimas Frenkelis (Khaim Frenkel), was established as well as many other industrial enterprises. The Šiauliai Jewish



Chaimas Frenkelis,
the owner of the leather factory in Šiauliai. Circa 1930



The Town Board of Šiauliai, which was elected
on Feb. 20, 1925 (*from left to right*): Juozas Naujalis,
Burgomaster Jackus Sondeckis, Samuelis Petuchauskas

community was one of the most numerous Jewish communities in Lithuania before WWII. There were 9,847 Jews living in Šiauliai in 1902. In 1915, when the army of the Kaiser's Germany approached the town, the majority of Jews fled to Russia. After WWI, many of them returned back to their native town.

The Jews of Šiauliai took part in all kinds of activities during the independence of Lithuania: they had their labor unions, banks, sections of political parties, synagogues, religious schools, gymnasiums, libraries, kindergartens, a hospital, and other institutions. There were some 6,500-8,000 Jews living in Šiauliai on the eve of WWII¹. In 1939, after the Nazi Germany occupied the Lithuania's Klaipėda region and Poland, many Jews, who fled from the Klaipėda region and Poland, found refuge in Šiauliai. Jewish refugees hoped to find a job to get some means for living in the big Jewish community of Šiauliai. However, only until the Nazi invasion of 1941, refugees lived in some peace there. There were 98 Poland-born Jews (without including Jews from the Lithuania's Vilnius region) and 68 Klaipėda region-born Jews in the Šiauliai Ghetto, according to the data by the general region of Lithuania (*Generalbezirk Litauen*) of May 26-27, 1942².

After the Soviet occupation of Lithuania, living standards dropped. All the big Jewish-owned industrial and trade enterprises were nationalized by the Com-

munist government. All the non-Communist political parties and organizations were banned as well as all the schools and gymnasiums, where lessons were taught in Hebrew. Jewish pupils were forced attending school on Saturdays. The Red Army officers' families moved into the houses of many Jews. The NKVD carried out arrests of Jewish political activists and rich Jews. During the mass deportation of June 14, 1941, the Soviets deported 202 Jews of Šiauliai to Siberia and other remote areas of the USSR³.

Arrests and killings of Jews and laws discriminating Jews in 1941

After Germany invaded the Soviet Union, some Jews of Šiauliai made an attempt to escape to Russia. On June 26, 1941, the German army took Šiauliai. The Soviets, showing little resistance, retreated from Šiauliai. During the takeover of Šiauliai, four German soldiers, 11 Lithuanian anti-Soviet partisans and 51 civilian were killed⁴. During the first days of the war, some 1,000 Jews fled to the East. Some of those, who failed to escape from the approaching front-line, returned to Šiauliai⁵.

At the beginning of the war, like in the rest of the Šiauliai district and other Lithuanian towns, the Lithuanian Activist Front (hereafter LAF) members and anti-Soviet rebels (at the time, they called themselves the partisans, although the common people called them *baltaraiščiai* ("men with white armbands," in Lithuanian; after a few weeks, those groups of rebels were reorganized into the auxiliary police). The Lithuanian partisans chased the remaining or retreating Red Army troops, members of the Communist Party and the party's youth organization Komсомol, Soviet officials and Soviet sympathizers. The Nazi-inspired persecutions of Jews began soon after the Soviet retreat.

After the Germans took Šiauliai, the Lithuanian administration and police were recreated. Many President Antanas Smetona-era state functionaries and policemen returned to their posts. The LAF's Šiauliai board included J. Vilutis, A. Raulinaitis, V. Pauža, V. Ivanauskas and P. Juodis. Capt. L. Virbickas was the commander of the LAF headquarters, which at the time, meddled into the issue of appointments in the local administration and other administration matters. However, after the creation of the Lithuanian civilian administration, the role of LAF became insignificant. Hans Gewecke, territorial commissioner (*Gebietskommissar*) of Šiauliai, ordered to suspend the LAF activities since Sept. 29, 1941⁶.

In 1941, a German soldier makes photos of prisoners during their execution in the Kužiai Forest, some 12 kilometers from the town of Šiauliai





The digging of pits for executions near the Kužiai Forest





Members of the Jewish Community in the Šiauliai arrested as hostages. Left to right: lawyer Israel Abramavitch, unknown, businessman Simon Rosenberg, unknown, Šiauliai Chief Rabbi Aron Baksht, businessman Kadish Shapiro, customs official Elijah Pen, member of the Rabbinical court Abraham Itzik Nochumanski, a refugee from Poland





Ignas Urbaitis, at the beginning of the German occupation, occupied the post of Šiauliai region's administrator (until Aug. 5, 1941)⁷. Juozas Naujalis occupied the post of Šiauliai town burgomaster (until July 5, 1941). Later, he was replaced by Petras Linkevičius. Vaclovas Gedvila and Antanas Stankus were appointed as his deputies. Stankus also was appointed as the commissioner for Jewish affairs (the latter position was occupied by him until Feb. 1, 1942)⁸.

Antanas Vabolis became the first chief of the local order police of the Šiauliai town while Albinas Grėbliūnas became his deputy. At the time, 75 policemen served in the ranks of the town's police. The Lithuanian order police was obliged to obey to the German military's local commandant office. The main task of the police was to keep law and order regarding local civilians and their property⁹.

There were various German institutions functioning alongside the Lithuanian administration: the war commandant's office (its functions were passed to the territorial commissioner, *Gebietskommissar*, in August 1941), the secret military police of the German Wehrmacht (*Geheime Feldpolizei*), the squad No. 2 of the German task force, *Einstazgruppe A* (later, its functions were passed to the Šiauliai department of the German security service SD). At the beginning of the German occupation, the mass murders of Jews were carried out by the A group commander,

SS-Hauptscharführer Werner Gottschalk¹⁰. In the second half of July 1941, the Third Company of the German police battalion No. 65 arrived to Šiauliai. In the summer of 1941, the Third Company took part in the killings of Jews as well.

On June 30, July 1 and July 5 of 1941, the first mass arrests of the Šiauliai Jews were carried out. There were 20 well-known members of the Šiauliai Jewish community among the arrested Jews: Aronas Bakštas (Aaron Baksht), the community's rabbi, and other rabbis as well as lawyers, businessmen and the Jewish gymnasium's teachers. There were sneers at the arrested persons. Their belongings were confis-



The prison of Šiauliai in the 1910s



The monument to Jews killed in the Kužiai Forest

cated. Until July 11, 1941, this group of the locally well-known Jews was kept in the prison of Šiauliai, and, later, they were shot dead after a false accusation of attempt to attack the German soldiers. Until the establishment of the Šiauliai Ghetto, some 1,000 Jews of Šiauliai were shot dead¹¹.

Exhumed bodies in a pit in a little forest
near the village of Pročiūnai



On June 29, 1941, the first Jews were murdered and buried in the Kužiai Forest, some 12 kilometers from the town. During the summer of 1941, several thousand Jews of Šiauliai and the Šiauliai district as well as ethnic Lithuanians and Russians, who were members of the Communist Party and the Komso-mol, were shot dead in the Kužiai Forest. According to witnesses, the shootings were carried out by the Germans¹².

From July 1941, the Nazi Germans used to drive trucks, full of Jews and Soviet activists, from the Šiauliai prison to the Šiauliai-Radviliškis road (some seven kilometers from Šiauliai, near the Pročiūnai village) and kill them there. The mass murder site was located in a little forest, far away from living houses – so, the local people of the area could not hear the sounds of shootings and screams.

In 1944, eight big pits and 732 human remains were found in the site. Not only Jews were killed there – persons of other ethnicities (mostly ethnic Lithuanians) from the town of Šiauliai and the district of Šiauliai were killed there as well. The shots were fired from rifles and machine guns in the daytime, according to a testimony by Rakauskas, who lived in the Pročiūnai village during WWII. The executions were carried out by the German security police and the SD¹³.

There were four young Jewish men, who were forced to dig pits there and who managed to escape: Berelis Šilanskas, Dovydas Furmanas, Chackelis Fleišėris (after the war, they moved to Israel) and Leiba Kanas (after the war, he moved to the U.S.). German Kraulich, the chief of the Šiauliai prison and the camp of Soviet prisoners-of-war, took an active role in the mass shootings of Jews¹⁴.

In September 1941, the massive killings of the Jews of Šiauliai were carried out near the village of Bubi-ai, some 15 kilometers from Šiauliai. The victims were brought by trucks. There were 10 trucks, which were full of victims. The exact number of victims is unknown. The executions usually started in the afternoon and they were carried out until the sunset. Jews were ordered to undress. They were beaten and ordered to march to pits¹⁵. According to witnesses, the orders were given by the German officers, although the *baltaraiščiai* also took part in the shootings. Some several hundred persons were shot dead there¹⁶.

A special commission carried out the registration of Jews in the ghetto since Sept. 7. On Sept. 10, trucks with armed policemen arrived to the ghetto. They surrounded the house on Padirsių Street 2 and took some women (Fainštein, Smilga and others) and their children while husbands of the detained women were working in the town (they found out about the police action only after their return from work).

Soon after it, policemen, carrying the lists with names, went from house to house detaining elderly people and some young Jews as well. Some children, although their names were not included in the list, decided to join their grandparents and parents. The detained – such as Eliezeris Goldšteinas, 66-year old teacher of the Šiauliai Jewish gymnasium, and his wife; teacher Taibė (Taibelė) Šneider and her elderly farther – were transported from the Šiauliai Ghetto. The ghetto inhabitants thought that the detained were taken to the ghetto in the town of Žagarė. However, as it became known later, they were detained for their execution.

On the next day, the action continued. Policemen, carrying their lists of names and searching for elderly Jews, went from house to house. Some of the persons, who were named in the lists, managed to hide successfully. However, others were less lucky, including Mauša Kravecās, music professor of the Šiauliai Hebrew gymnasium, and his wife. One of the detainees managed to escape. He managed to hide in Šiauliai. Mendelis Leibavičius (Mendel Leibowitz), the head of the Judenrat (“Jewish Council,” in German) of the Šiauliai Ghetto, visited the survivor and found out that the detained were shot dead in a little forest-based pits near the village of Bubiai.

The survivor got an injury, but he managed to climb from the pit and escape to Šiauliai. Later, one more escapee confirmed the tragic information¹⁷. On Sept.

13, 1941, the new registration was carried out in the Šiauliai Ghetto. Konstantinas Liuberskis was in charge of this action. The Jews of the ghetto, who were still able to work, got a yellow-color certificate. The decision to issue this type of certificates was made by a special commission, which was overseen by Liuberskis. The final word belonged to Liuberskis: a negative decision regarding the issuing of the certificate was, in practice, a death penalty. The ghetto prisoners tried hard to get the certificate. Old people disguised themselves: dyed their hair, shaved off their beards, smoothed out their wrinkles. The ghetto barbers had a record numbers of elderly clients. Burginas, a Judenrat member, succeeded in helping many elderly ghetto inhabitants: he took the blue-color certificates and changed them with the yellow-color certificates. Finally, Burginas himself had a problem getting a yellow-color certificate¹⁸.

On Sept. 7-15, 1941, Jewish men, women and children, who were brought from Šiauliai, were executed in the Gubernija Forest's sector named Normančiai. According to the locals' testimonies, the total number of 25 big trucks, with a capacity to transport 40 persons each, arrived to the forest. The victims were brought by a yellow-color passenger bus too. The executions were carried from 15:00 to 16:00. The shootings were carried out by the *baltaraiščiai* (auxiliary police). The killings were overseen by the German officers. In November 1944, a Soviet commission exhumed bodies there. The victims' showed the im-

pact of bullets. According to the commission, some 1,000 persons were killed there¹⁹.

The executions of the Jews of Šiauliai were especially massive in September 1941. On Sept. 7, the Lieut. Romualdas Kolokša-commanded squad arrested 47 Jewish children of an orphanage and two employees of an orphanage. The arrested were brought to a forest and shot dead. On Sept. 13, policemen arrived to the ghetto, detained some elderly people and brought them to an execution site outside the ghetto. The last large-scale execution of Jews in 1941 was carried out on Dec. 8-15: 72 Jews of Šiauliai, who were used for work in the Šiauliai district's villages, were executed due to the orders from Gewecke, territorial commissioner (*Gebietskommissar*) of Šiauliai, as well as the heads of the German security police and the SD. The execution was carried out by the policemen of Kuršėnai, Stačiūnai, Radviliškis and Pakruojis²⁰. SS- Standartenführer Karl Jäger, who was the head of the German security police and the SD in Lithuania, was in favor of immediate killing of all the Jews of Šiauliai. He sent his subordinate, SS- Obersturmführer Joachim Hamann to Šiauliai to organize the total extermination of Jews there. However, the territorial commissioner stopped the initiative. The commissioner's reasoning was based on the need of factories (of high value for the German interests, such as the Frenkelis' leather factory) for Jewish workers and specialists. The decision was made to keep, at the temporary basis, Nazi inter-

ests-suitable Jewish workers and their families in the Šiauliai Ghetto²¹.

The statistical data of the fall of 1941 shows the decrease of the Jewish population numbers. On Aug. 20, 1941, the Šiauliai municipality informed the Šiauliai territorial commissioner that the town's population was 36,200, including 30,801 Lithuanians and 5,034 Jews²². In November 1941, the Šiauliai municipality informed the Šiauliai territorial commissioner that the town's population that the town's population was 39,678, including 35,000 'Aryans' and 4,674 Jews²³.

The legal discrimination of Jews was introduced alongside the arrests and killings of Jews. Jews, gradually, lost their civil rights and property. On July 5, 1941, Jews were banned raising the Lithuanian national flag on their houses due to the order from the burgomaster of Šiauliai. On July 7, 1941, the same order regarding the district's Jews and the Lithuanian national flag was issued by the head of the Šiauliai district to the heads of local rural communities and the district's little towns²⁴. Both orders were a step towards the exclusion of Jews from the Lithuanian society. On July 15, 1941, Šiauliai Burgomaster Linkevičius ordered Jews to give all their radio sets to the municipality's administration until July 16, i.e. to bring radio sets to the municipality storehouse, which was located on Tremtinių Street 4. Those who failed to do so were threatened with legal

persecution, according to the order²⁵. The order's intention was to limit the Jewish population's access to information and drag the Jewish community's spirit down.

The Jewish registration was carried out before the establishment of the Šiauliai Ghetto. All the Jews of Šiauliai were obliged to register at the Šiauliai municipality (Gaisrininkų Street 3) from July 19, 1941



A yellow badge in the form of a Star of David on Kuršėnai dweller Chackelis Fleišeris during his imprisonment in the prison of Šiauliai. August 1941

until 8 p.m. of July 22, 1941. Jews were obliged to come with their documents. They were threatened with punishments in case of their failure to register²⁶.

On July 18, 1941, the burgomaster of Šiauliai, after his consultation with the German military commandant Konowski, issued a notice regarding the Jewish affairs. The notice informed that those Jews, who left the town at the beginning of the war, lost their right to come back to the town. Those who disobeyed to the notice's requirements were threatened with arrests. Starting from July 20, 1941, all the Jews were obliged to have a yellow badge in the form of a Star of David on the left side of the breast.

Jews were allowed to walk the streets and show up in public places from 6 a.m. to 8 p.m.²⁷. On July 23, 1941, the head of the Šiauliai district issued the notice No. 6, which was directed against the Jews. There were 11 bans on various activities in the notice. The Jews living in the little towns of the Šiauliai district were obliged, from July 25, 1941 to Aug. 15, 1941, to move to places appointed by the local administration heads and burgomasters of towns of the Šiauliai district. The Jewish communities were obliged to consult with the local municipalities regarding this move – any disobedience was punishable²⁸.

The order No. 9 of Aug. 2, 1941 from the Šiauliai burgomaster was issued: it was further limiting the rights of Jews. According to the order, Jews are

Įsakymas Nr. 9

1. Gyventojams žydams draudžiama naudotis šaligatviais. Žydai privalo eiti dešiniuoju kraštu važiuojamo kelio ir eiti vienas po kito.

2. Gyventojams žydams draudžiama naudotis visomis pasivaikščiojimo bei poilsio vietomis ir viešaisiais parkais bei skverais. Taip pat jiems draudžiama naudotis viešose vietose išstatytais suolais.

3. Gyventojams žydams draudžiama naudotis visomis viešosiomis susisiekimo priemonėmis, kaip auto taksi, vežikais, autobusais, garlaiviais ir pan. Visi viešojo susisiekimo priemonių savininkai ar nuomotojai privalo nurodytų priemonių matomoje vietoje iškabinti skelbimą su užrašu: „Žydams draudžiama“.

4. Nesilaikantieji šio įsakymo nuostatų bei jiems priešaraujantieji bus griežtai baudžiami.

5. Šis nutarimas galioja nuo šios dienos.

Šiauliai,
1941 m. rugpjūčio mėn. 2 d.

Šiaulių miesto Burmistras

Spaustuvė „Grafika“ Šiauliai.

The order No. 9 of Aug. 2, 1941 from the Šiauliai burgomaster

to walk single file on the right side of the street and not allowed to use any public transportation – punishments were promised in case of disobedience to the order²⁹. On Aug. 13, 1941, Gewecke, the newly appointed commissioner of the Šiauliai district, issued the decree No. 2 requiring Jews to sew a yellow badge in the form of a Star of David on their outer garments' left side and on the back as well; Jews were banned from renting their houses to non-Jews and employing non-Jews³⁰. Therefore, the Jewish population was further isolated. It was some disobedience among the Jewish population and ethnic Lithuanians towards the discriminatory decrees.

"It is necessary to control how the citizens of Jewish ethnicity obey to the law banning them from employing non-Jews for work because there is some information that this law is ignored," the LAF headquarters of the Šiauliai town and the Šiauliai district wrote to the head of the Šiauliai district administration and the police chiefs of the Šiauliai town and the Šiauliai district on July 30, 1941³¹. Bronius Paliulionis, chief of the police of Šiauliai district, taking into account the information from LAF, ordered his policemen to check if Jews are using Lithuanian laborers³². The discriminatory laws were not the only problem for the local Jews: many of them were fired from work and, therefore, they got serious problems with food.

The German military commandant office No. 819 reacted to this food shortage. "There are complaints about the food supply problem for Jews in the local food stores. I ask you to facilitate the possibility for Jews, according to the existing laws, to purchase food items and I empower you to appoint shops and specify their working hours for this task," the German military commandant office wrote to the burgomaster of Šiauliai on July 16, 1941³³. The reaction to this letter was quick. On July 19, 1941, the director



Jewish children waiting for food. Šiauliai, 1941

of the consumer cooperative of Šiauliai informed the burgomaster of Šiauliai that three food shops were opened to Jews: Tilžės Street 119, the corner on Venslauskio Street and Varpo Street and the corner on Venslauskio Street and Ežero Street³⁴.

The Šiauliai Ghetto creation and orders regarding the Jewish property

The German occupational power started to plan the establishment of the Šiauliai Ghetto since the first half of July 1941. At the time, Antanas Stankus, a deputy of Šiauliai Burgomaster Linkevičius, was appointed as the commissioner for Jewish affairs. The order to establish the Šiauliai Ghetto came from the German military commandant of Šiauliai. Stankus, organizing the ghetto and the move of Jews to the ghetto quarters, used locally well-known Jews. The Jewish Committee was established for this purpose. The committee included Mendelis Leibavičius, who was an owner of a shop selling cars and motorcycles, trader Beras Kartunas and manufactory owner Faivelis Rubinšteinas³⁵.

On July 18, 1941, the burgomaster of Šiauliai announced the conditions regarding the removal of

Jews to the ghetto. All the Jews living in the town of Šiauliai were obliged to move into places, which were indicated by the municipality administration of Šiauliai. The municipality's housing department, together with the representatives of Jewish community, was empowered to take care about all the practical details of the move. The move of the Jewish population to the ghetto was overseen by the German military commandant of Šiauliai and policemen of the town of Šiauliai and the Šiauliai district.

The burgomaster's announcement of July 18, 1941 indicated that all the Jews should move to the little town of Žagarė and the suburb of Šiauliai, which was commonly known as Kaukazas. Non-Jews, who lived in both above mentioned areas, got a right to move to other areas of Šiauliai. The Jews of Šiauliai were obliged to get rid of their real estate – exchanges of real estate with the ethnic Lithuanians, who lived in the town of Žagarė and expressed their wish to move to Šiauliai, were indicated as the priority in this real estate issue. The special bureau of the Šiauliai municipality's housing department was obliged to oversee the Jewish real estate issue. All the Jewish real estate of Šiauliai, which was not sold or passed in some other way to new non-Jewish owners, was taken by the municipality of Šiauliai.

Earlier, Jews were banned to employ non-Jews³⁶. The Jewish Committee members, taking into account all the difficulties related to the mass removal of Jews,

visited the municipality of Šiauliai and asked to re-think the issue of removal of Jews (who could not be contained in the Šiauliai Ghetto) to Žagarė. The Jewish Committee asked to allow these Jews to move to some other quarter of Šiauliai. The agreement with the Šiauliai municipality was not reached and the Jewish Committee appealed to the military commandant of Šiauliai. The commandant took into account the reasoning of the Jewish delegation: he called to the burgomaster of Šiauliai ordering to the latter to find one more area of Šiauliai for the ghetto³⁷.

The area of Trakų Street and the area of Vilniaus Street (the latter was called Kaukazas) were designated for the ghetto. Both ghetto areas were separated by the Vilniaus Street. The distance between two ghetto areas was 300 meters. The Jewish Committee got a room in the Šiauliai municipality's office. The Šiauliai municipality financed the fence construction around the ghetto while the Jewish Committee was obliged to supply the workforce for the fence construction. After the fence was constructed, Jews were moved to the ghetto areas. Stankus established several commissions for this move. Each commission was made up of three persons: a teacher, a representative of the municipality and a policeman. Commissions got a task to distribute special documents to Jews for the move into the ghetto. Commissions also documented all the property of Jews (especially, gold and other valuables) and took it for the municipality's

needs. It took several weeks to move all the Jews to the ghetto and confiscate the property of Jews³⁸.

On Aug. 9, 1941, the burgomaster of Šiauliai issued an announcement specifying the ghetto creation issue. The town's Jews were ordered to move to Kaukazas, the area of the Trakų Street and Ežero Street as well as the area named Kalnelis (later, the Kalnelis area was excluded from the ghetto creation plan). Until Aug. 13, 1941, Jews were obliged to inform the commissioner for Jewish affairs at the municipality of Šiauliai about their living place and real estate. Jews, who lived in the ghetto creation areas, were obliged to inform the municipality administration about flats, where they would prefer to live³⁹. Firstly, the Jews of Šiauliai were moved to the Kaukazas ghetto and, later, to the Trakų Street ghetto. On Aug. 15, 1941, the removal of all the Jews to both ghetto areas was finished⁴⁰. Some 4,000-5,000 Jews were moved to the ghettos of Šiauliai.

There were 300 little houses (their total living space was some 8,000 square meters) in the ghetto areas of Šiauliai. It was not enough space there and, therefore, some Jews were moved to a synagogue and kept there. Later, the majority of them (elderly people and people not able to work) were transported to Žagarė and shot dead there⁴¹. The ghettos were surrounded with a two meter-high fence, which was made of barbed wire. The ghetto gates were guarded by policemen. The exit from ghettos was allowed



The monument marking the place of the gate of the ghetto of Trakų Street and Ežero Street

only with special permission documents. The overpopulation problem and the problem of shortage of housing were partially 'solved' due to the killings of Jews. During the first days of the ghetto existence, some Jews were moved to a synagogue and the retirement home on the Vilniaus Street. These Jews were registered and the lists with their names were passed to Stankus. On Sept. 4, Leibavičius visited these places and found them to be empty. After several days, some 50 Jewish children from an orphanage and several dozen of elderly people were executed⁴².



The ruined nursing house for Jewish elderly people on
Vilniaus Street in 1944



The Jewish forced laborers are escorted back to the ghetto after their working hours at a workshop for repairing the German army's accoutrements. 1942





The food store and the hospital of 40 beds were established in the ghetto. Since September 1941, the Šiauliai Ghetto inhabitants were forced to work in the Žokniai Aerodrome, various factories, the peat-bog of Rekyva, the arms factory of Linkaičiai, the sugar factory of Pavenčiai, and other places⁴³. Jews got no cash for their work. The labor exchange (*arbeitsamt*) sent money to the ghetto administration⁴⁴. Since the fall of 1941, the majority of Jews were forced to work in the Frenkelis leather and shoes factory. The factory was administrated by former Wehrmacht pilot Müller while V. Šumnauskas, who was sympathetic to Jewish workers, was the chief bookkeeper of the shoes factory.

Šumnauskas got an idea to make a list of the Frenkelis factory's Jewish workers and their family members. The list of the family members also included many people, who had nothing to do with the families of the Frenkelis factory: persons living illegally in the ghetto, persons not able to work and orphan children. The list showed that every worker of the factory had some five or seven family members. The list was handed to Müller, director of the factory, and the latter passed it to higher German institutions. The list got approval from Gewecke, the territorial commissioner of Šiauliai. The list-related affair aimed to convince the authorities that the Frenkelis factory, which worked for the Wehrmacht, kept functioning only due to Jewish workers: the ghetto prisoners got some hope to survive⁴⁵.

At the end of August 1941, Stankus got the order from the Gebietskommissariat to change identity documents of Jews. The procedures for document change were supposed to allow the authorities to know the exact place of living of every Jew. Until then, many Jews migrated between the Trakų Street ghetto and the Kaukazas ghetto. The new document-related action also was supposed to allow the authorities to pick those who were not able to work (and, therefore, destined to the town of Žagarė). It was a plan to solve the ghetto overpopulation problem. Stankus established a special commission, which was ordered to change the documents and make lists of persons, who were not able to work.

The town's authorities and the Jewish Committee implemented the order in the Trakų Street ghetto (the order was not implemented in the Kaukazas ghetto). The workers of high qualification got documents, which were printed on pink paper, while simple workers got documents, which were printed on yellow paper, – those, who were not able to work, got no documents. Several dozen of those, who were not able to work, were transported to Žagarė and, later, executed there⁴⁶. When Stankus and the Jewish Committee members tried to find out why some Jews were transported from Šiauliai, the Gebietskommissariat representatives stated that it is an order from higher chiefs and there is not enough space for keeping all the Jews of Šiauliai in the local ghetto⁴⁷.

During the creation of the Šiauliai Ghetto and after it, the occupational authorities were especially interested in the Jewish property. During the creation of the Šiauliai Ghetto, Jews were allowed selling their belongings and real estate. Those, who wanted to sell it, were obliged to register with the municipality's administration (Gaisrininkų Street 3). Those, who wanted to purchase something from Jews, were obliged to get permission from the municipality's administration. It was forbidden to sell or buy the property of Jews without the municipality's permission⁴⁸.

After Jews were moved to the ghetto, their confiscated gold and other valuables, on the basis of inventory lists, were handed to the Gebietskommissariat. Some of other property, like furniture, also was taken by the Gebietskommissariat officials while the rest of property was allowed to sell to the locals⁴⁹. Even after the ghetto creation, the occupational power still thought about the Jewish property. There were many orders and notices regarding this issue.

On Aug. 18, 1941, the municipality's commissioner for Jewish affairs issued a notice obliging all the persons, who bought the Jewish property, to register with the municipality's administration until Aug. 23, 1941. The exception was made only for those, who already passed this registration procedure and got the permission to buy Jewish property from the mu-

nicipality's commissioner for Jewish affairs⁵⁰. Later, this term was prolonged more than once. According to one of the prolongation announcements, the final term was supposed to end on Dec. 1, 1941⁵¹. The Nazi occupation-era authorities made arrangements regarding the Jewish property during almost the entire period of Nazi occupation.

On Dec. 11, 1942, *Tėviškė*, a newspaper of Šiauliai, published the Gewecke's notice No. 37, which prolonged the Jewish property registration until Dec. 20, 1942. The notice stated that it is the last chance "to register the Jewish property." The Gebietskommissar stated in his notice that "those persons, who own money or some work to Jews, also should register – there are very few registrations of this kind, although there are many of such loan papers in my office [...]; the surnames of some debtors are known and they should await harsh punishment if they will not register."⁵²

On Sept. 4, 1941, the Jewish issue was discussed at the meeting of the Šiauliai district's local administration heads and police chiefs. The Šiauliai district's Koommissariat officials stated to the Lithuanian administration officials that "all the Jewish property is confiscated and administrated by the district's Kommissariat; the district's local heads are responsible for the registration of Jewish goods and real estate."⁵³ Jews were denied their rights regarding their property. The Germans ordered to hand Jews,

disobeying to such laws, to the German police⁵⁴. On Sept. 10, 1941, the head of the town of Šiauliai and the district of Šiauliai, issued (on the basis of the German civilian administration rulings) "The orders to liquidate the goods and chattels of Jews and Communist escapees." The orders stated the following:

the following of the confiscated goods should be preserved: "luxury furniture, rolls of materials for sewing clothes, unused clothes;"

the relevant goods should be passed to our institutions: schools, rural administration, posts, orphanages and houses for retirement, hospitals, etc. – however, the one-fourth of the property must remain untouched until further orders;

other goods should be donated to those who suffered due to the war or sold in auctions while unusable and damaged goods should be liquidated;

the agriculture-related goods should be left for the tenants;

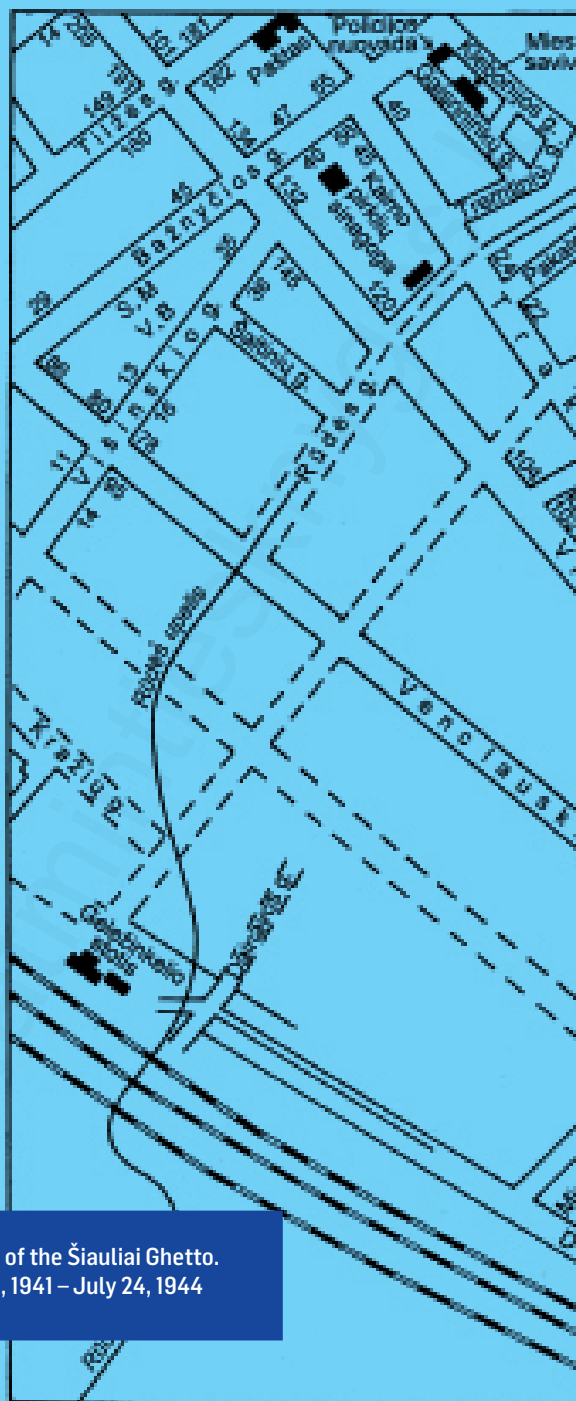
money, which will be received for the sold goods, should be passed to the district's administration;

all the liquidated goods should be registered and this information should be kept in files;

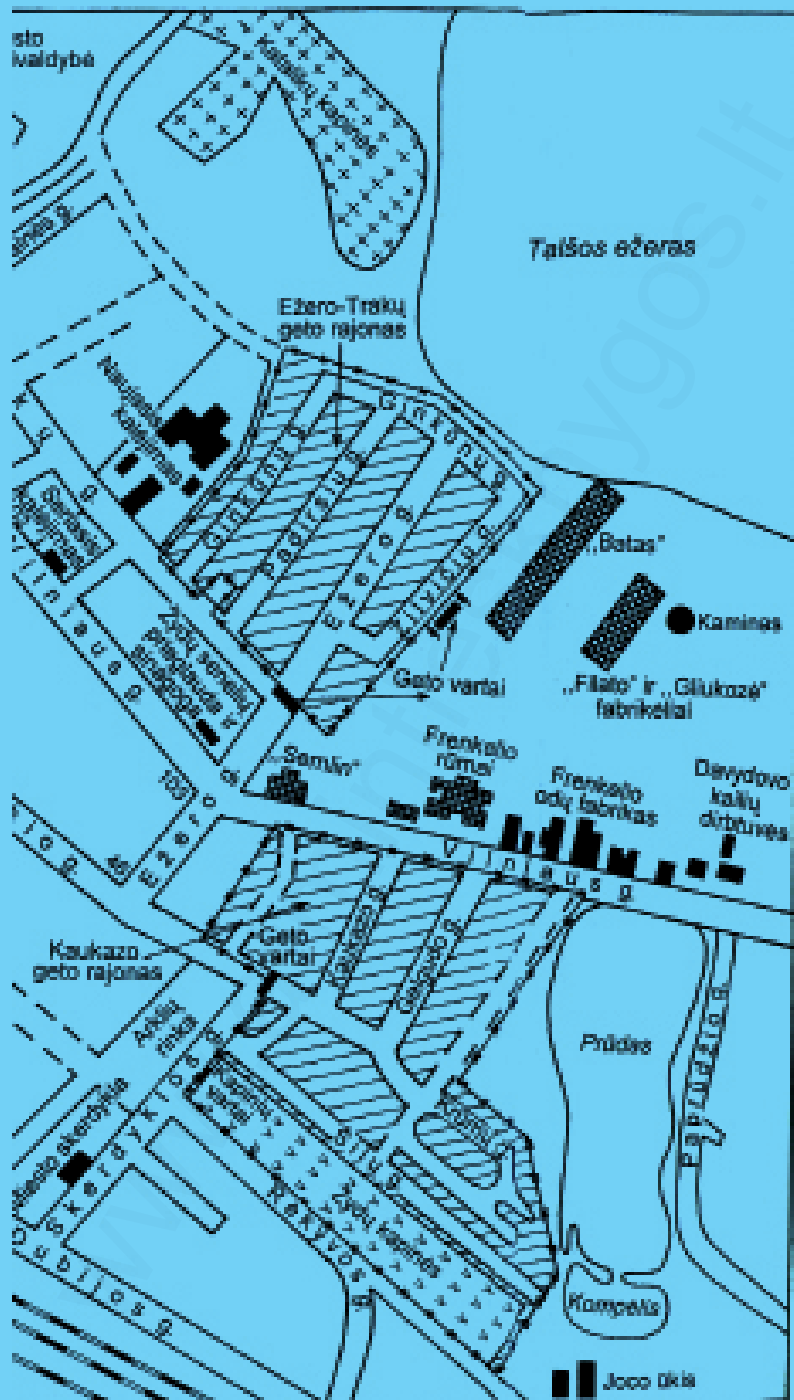
the commission, with a participation of a police representative, should be created to make arrangements regarding the goods⁵⁵.

On Oct. 18, 1941, Gebietskommissar Gewecke sent his letter regarding the property of Jews, political parties and organizations to the heads of local administration and burgomasters. He ordered to expropriate all the synagogues, the Jewish community's shops, archives, libraries as well as flats of rabbis, Jewish bookstores and art shops⁵⁶. The burgomaster of Šiauliai, in response to the Gewecke's letter, stated that there is a bookcase with religious books in the yard of the synagogue on Tilžės Street 136; there are other two synagogues – on Varpo Street 19 and Varpo Street 27 – however, there are no Jewish books or art items there; the State Library of Šiauliai took 1,300 Jewish books; those books are kept in the library's storage and not available for people visiting the library⁵⁷.

The German occupational administration allowed some part of the expropriated property to be sold to the locals. On Oct. 14, 1941, the Gebietskommissar of Šiauliai informed the local administration heads that "expropriated Jewish goods, except the most valuable items, can be sold under control of the commission appointed by the district's head and the burgomaster; all the income should be sent to the Gebietskommissar's special account I."⁵⁸ In the end of October 1941, the Gebietskommissar allowed to



The map of the Šiauliai Ghetto.
July 18, 1941 – July 24, 1944



the Lithuanian administration to sell the remaining furniture of Jews, requiring sending the money to the same account of the Gebietskommissar⁵⁹.

The ghetto life

The Jewish administration and the Jewish police, like in the ghettos of Vilnius and Kaunas, were established in the ghetto of Šiauliai. During the ghetto creation period, in July 1941, the Jewish Committee (Leibavičius, Kartunas and Rubinšteinas) was established. After the establishment of ghetto, the Jewish Committee was reorganized into the Jewish Council (*Judenrat* in German). The Jewish Council administrated the ghettos of Trakų Street and Kaukazas. Until the spring of 1944, Leibavičius was the head of the Jewish Council. He died during the Soviet airstrikes on Šiauliai in the summer of 1944⁶⁰.

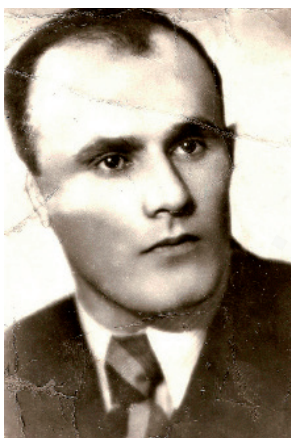
The locally well-known Jews of Šiauliai were the members of the Jewish Council: Aronas Kacas, B. Kartunas, Aronas Heleris and Berelis Menachemas Abromavičius. Teacher Eliezeris (Leizeris) Jerušalmis (Eliezer Yerushalmi) was the Council's secretary. The Jewish Council, communicating with German and Lithuanian administration institutions, was partly in charge of the ghetto's interior affairs. The Council appointed the administration heads of the

Trakų ghetto and the Kaukazas ghetto. The administration heads of the Trakų ghetto were Samuelis (Šmuelis) Burginas, S. Kulčenickis and Chaimas Černiavskis (he was responsible for work assignments) while doctor Vulfas Peisachavičius was responsible for the health care issues in the ghetto⁶¹. The ghetto administration was responsible for keeping in order work assignments, food supplies, sanitary conditions in the ghetto, and other everyday matters.

In the beginning of September 1941, Efroimas Gensas was appointed as the head of the Jewish Ghetto Police in the Trakų ghetto. He was in charge of 11-12 policemen. Jewish policemen had no guns. They were armed only with clubs made of rubber and they wore armbands with the Star of David and the inscription "the Jewish Ghetto Police" in German and Yiddish. There were some 10 Jewish policemen in the Kaukazas ghetto as well. The Jewish Ghetto Police was responsible for law and order in the ghetto: resettlement, fight against criminal activities (theft, speculation), sanitary conditions, forming of brigades for work. Violators of the ghetto order were punished with fines, shutting in a confinement cell or a temporary ban to work. These punishments were appointed by the ghetto court. The Jewish Ghetto Police had a duty to conduct searches of ghetto inhabitants returning from work back into the ghetto – it was forbidden for these workers to bring food and other items into the ghetto. Sometimes, the ghetto policemen, after finding such illegally brought food,

confiscated the food while such law breakers were beaten by these policemen or locked for some time in a confinement cell⁶².

On Sept. 8, 1941, the process of resettlement of Jews into both ghetto areas of Šiauliai was over and these areas were isolated from the rest of the town.



The Šiauliai Ghetto prisoners, Aronas Rozengardas, who died in the Stutthof concentration camp, and his wife Liuba Galperinaitė-Rozengardienė (all the details of her tragic fate remain unknown). Their daughter Ida, who was born in the ghetto on June 4, 1942, was put to sleep and secretly brought out, in a basket, of the ghetto before the Children's Action. She was brought up by the family of Adolfas and Zofija Staškevičius. Photos courtesy of Ida Vileikienė

It was possible to enter or leave the ghetto area only with a special permission paper and only in columns of workers⁶³.

Gensas was the head of the Jewish Ghetto Police in the Trakų ghetto until April 1944. Gensas resigned from this post and became an ordinary worker due to his disagreements with Georg Pariser, the new elder of this ghetto. Ch. Berlovičius replaced Gensas in the post of the head of the Jewish Ghetto Police in the Trakų ghetto⁶⁴.

Dovydas Fainas was the head of the Kaukazas Jewish Ghetto Police while Zavelis Gocas was his deputy (in 1943, Gocas replaced Fainas in the post of the head of the Kaukazas Jewish Ghetto Police)⁶⁵.

On Feb. 7, 1942, the occupational administration banned for the ghetto-based women to give a birth. This ban was envisaged to start from Aug. 15, 1942. The ghetto-based doctors were made responsible for implementation of the ban – they were supposed to carry out abortions. However, even after Aug. 15, 1942, some women gave a birth in the ghetto⁶⁶.

Some 10-20 ethnically mixed families, where one of the spouses was not Jewish (usually ethnic Lithuanian man or woman), were forced to live in the ghetto. Some of the mixed families managed to survive: the family of Jewish doctor Kantaravičius (his wife was an ethnic German and they had two children);

the family of Lithuanian civil servant Žilinskas (his wife was a Jew and they had two children); the family of Lithuanian post employee Mockus (his Jewish wife was forced to obey to the sterilization procedure); the family of Lithuanian doctor Lukinas (his wife was a Jew and they had two children). Other ethnically mixed families were murdered: in July 1941, Jewish farmer Rozas, his wife ethnic Lithuanian wife and their child were shot dead; in March 1942, civil servant Volfbergas, his ethnic Lithuanian wife and their two children were shot dead. The fate of several ethnically mixed families remains unknown⁶⁷.

There were some underground anti-Nazi groups in the Šiauliai Ghetto. In the end of 1941, the Zionist youth movement activists established their organization there. In 1942, a self-defense organization was established there. Members of the later were Zionists as well as Communists. This organization got some guns, but it not carried out military actions. The underground publications *Masada*, *Hatehiya* (*The Revival* in Hebrew) and *Mi'ma'amakim* (*Out of the Depths* in Hebrew) were published in the ghetto. The underground activists planned to escape and join some Soviet partisans group or make an uprising at the time of the German retreat, but the plans were not implemented⁶⁸.

In the beginning of April 1942, Šiauliai Burgomas-ter Linkevičius informed the Jewish Council about

the plan to reduce the Trakų Street and Ežero Street ghetto's territory. According to the plan, all the houses of Trakų Street were excluded from the ghetto as well as the one-fourth houses of Ežero Street and some houses of Žilvičių Street. Some 1,000 Jews were supposed to leave these houses and move to the remaining ghetto areas. The Jewish Council, trying to minimize this reduce, initiated talks with the authorities. The Council managed to convince the Gebietskommissariat representatives that the reduction of the territory would worsen the living standards of Jews and it could result in lower labor productivity. Therefore, the Šiauliai municipality administration got just a few houses on Trakų Street, which formerly stood on the ghetto territory⁶⁹.

In 1943, schools were established in both areas of the ghetto: 90 Jewish children attended the school in the Trakų ghetto and 200 Jewish children attended the school in the Kaukazas ghetto⁷⁰. On April 29, 1943, Jerušalmis wrote in his diary that a semi-legal elementary school was opened in the synagogue building in the Trakų ghetto. It worked from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. There were four groups of pupils and their total number was 90. The school of the Kaukazas ghetto was opened in the synagogue building too: seven groups of the total 200 children studied there. The initiative to open the ghetto-based schools belonged to Jewish Council member Heleris and Jerušalmis, who was the Jewish Council secretary. Children, regardless to difficult circumstances, were enthusiastic

about attending the school and they studied hard. Children also worked in the ghetto gardens: 12 year old children already felt as adults and worked there⁷¹. The ghetto schools were closed on the first days of October 1943. The elder children were obliged to go to work while the younger children took care about their little sisters and brothers at home⁷². There were 4,775 inhabitants in the Šiauliai Ghetto in February 1943: 1,156 children below 13 years old, 3,383 adults from 14 years old to 60 years old and 236 persons over 60 years old⁷³.

Until October 1943, Šiauliai Gebietskommissar Gewecke was in charge of the Šiauliai Ghetto, but, since Oct. 1, 1943, the Šiauliai Ghetto, like the Kaunas Ghetto, was passed under the control of SS. The ghetto became a concentration camp, the Šiauliai branch of the Kaunas concentration camp. At the beginning, SS-Hauptsturmführer Heinrich Förster was its head. Later, this post was occupied by SS-Hauptscharführer Herman Schleef (or Hermann Schlöf, according to some sources; born in 1906; before his appointment to Šiauliai, his previous workplaces were the Sachsenhausen concentration camp in Germany and the Kaiserwald concentration camp near Riga). The ghetto's exterior was guarded by 30 SS men of Bessarabian origin, who were commanded by SS Rottenführer Hans Hening. Some 10 policemen of the Jewish Ghetto Police were responsible for the order inside the ghetto.

The ghetto prisoners' passports declared invalid and all the ghetto's trade relations with the outside world were stopped⁷⁴. The first command from Förster (which was made at 6 a.m. on Sept. 23, 1943) was the following: 500 Jews must go to work in the Zokniai Aerodrome near Šiauliai. Only adults and children above 10 years old were ordered to work there. There were no barracks for Jewish workers near the airfield yet. The Jewish Council managed to gather 400 workers and promised to find the rest of workers on the next day. Förster categorically banned to take children below 10 years old to a camp near the airfield. It was necessary to establish a kindergarten because many parents were separated from their children⁷⁵.

After the SS took over the ghetto's management, the Jewish Council still existed for some time, but, since April 1, 1944, its powers, in fact, were handed to German Jew Georg Pariser. His deputies were Burginas, who took care about the ghetto's supplies and provisions matters, Mendelis Leibavičius, who took care about the administrative issues, Berlovičius, who was the head of the Jewish Ghetto Police, Černiavskis, who was the secretary, doctor Pesachovičius, who was responsible for the sanitary and medicine issues, and Joselis Leibavičius, who was responsible for the lodging issues⁷⁶.

Pariser, the ghetto's elder, was very loyal to the German authorities and became a secret informer of the

chief of the concentration camp. Pariser told the Germans about six Jews, who planned to escape from the ghetto. These Jews were arrested and sent to the stricter concentration camps⁷⁷.

In the end of October 1943, due to mass sending of Jews for work in other places of Šiauliai and the Šiauliai district, the Kaukazas ghetto was dissolved and its remaining 1,200 prisoners were moved to the Trakų-Ežero ghetto. All the workshops, which were unnecessary for the maintenance of the ghetto, were closed. Only the workshops of shoemakers, sewers and chemicals producers were left. Many Jews of the Šiauliai Ghetto were sent to work outside the ghetto. According to the German documents, the figures were the following: 1,500 Jews to the Zokniai Aerodrome, 250 Jews to the arms factory in Linkaičiai, 250 Jews to the brickyard in Daugėliai, 250 Jews to the sugar factory in Pavenčiai, 250 Jews to the town of Akmenė, and 350 Jews from the liquidated Vilnius Ghetto to the Frenkelis leather factory. A big workers' camp was built near the newly-established factory (*Armeebekleidungsamt* in German) producing the German army uniforms. In March 1944, more than 800 Jews worked there. The camp's warden, Austrian Bawitz, was famous of his cruelty. The living conditions in some of the Jewish labor camps were harsh due to a lack of food and basic commodities⁷⁸.

The mass extermination of Jews in the summer-fall of 1941 was followed by a relatively calm period.

Anyway, on April 6 (Sunday), 1943, Becalelis Mazoveckis, due to his attempt to smuggle some food and cigarettes into the ghetto, was hanged in public in the Kaukazas ghetto. Ewald Bub, deputy territorial commissioner of the Šiauliai district, ordered to commit this murder. Mazoveckis, before his death, asked other Jews to take care about his wife and children. His execution was attended by the representatives of the Šiauliai district's Gebietskommissariat, the Gestapo and the German police. Mazoveckis behaved courageously: before his execution, he said to the crowd of ghetto prisoners that he will plead for them in the Heaven. Ghetto prisoners Kerbelis and Davidovičius were forced to put a noose around his neck. Mazoveckis stood on a table. The table was moved away and Mazoveckis died in convulsions. Many of the Jewish women, who were forced to watch the execution, fainted. After 10 minutes a doctor checked the pulse of Mazoveckis and said that the hanged was dead. Bub, leaving the ghetto, ordered to keep the dead body hanging for one more hour. Bub allowed only the Jewish Council members and gravediggers to participate in the Mazoveckis funeral⁷⁹.

The ghetto prisoners, who tried to smuggle some food into the ghetto, usually, got physical punishments. On May 23, 1943, the Gebietskommissar ordered to lash 10 Jews, who were detained for smuggling of food. The public punishment was carried out near the house on Gelgaudo Street 2, in the

garden of the Kaukazas ghetto. The ghetto prisoners were ordered to gather there and watch the punishment. Several Germans from the Gebietskommissariat arrived to watch the public punishment. The punishment was revoked to a minor boy due to the pleading from the Jewish Council. The detained, one after another, were ordered to lie on a table and policemen flogged 15 times each of the detained with rubber sticks. Some of the punished got some more hits with a stick covered with lead from policeman Belkštys, who was well-known for his cruelty⁸⁰.

On Oct. 17, 1943, regardless to a ban, Kušelevskis, a prisoner of the Daugėliai camp, and two boys went from the camp to a neighboring village to ask for some food. The camp's guard detained them when they were coming back. The boys were allowed to return to the camp, but the camp's commandant shot dead Kušelevskis from a pistol. "I killed 15,000 Jews of Slonim – he is just one more man," said the commandant⁸¹.

On Nov. 5, 1943, the selection of Jewish children and the Jews, who were not able to work, was carried out. SS-Hauptsturmführer Förster commanded the action. He told the Jewish Council that children and the elderly will be transported to a kindergarten in Kaunas where they will get the necessary care. The ghetto prisoners were ordered to leave their barracks and the selection was carried out in a yard – the Jewish children, the sick and the elderly were ordered

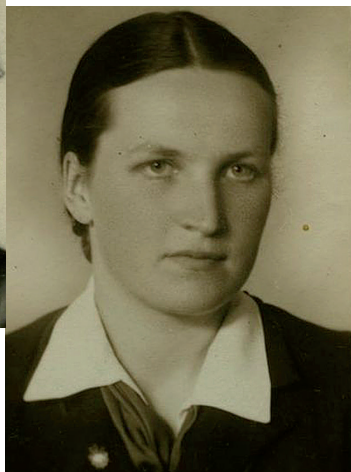
to go to one side of the yard while the Jews, who were still healthy and able to work, were pushed to the other yard's side. The barracks were searched by the Ukrainian policemen of the Vlasov Army (the Russian Liberation Army led by former Red Army general Andrei Vlasov). It was a looting because they carried away the most valuable things.

They grabbed children by their hair and threw them into trucks. Parents, who tried to liberate their children, were beaten with butts of guns. During the action, the ghetto women screamed and shouted. The Jewish Ghetto Police Chief Gensas, probably wanting to calm the crowd, handed, in a demonstrative manner, his three year old daughter to a Ukrainian policeman. The action was carried out from 7:30 to 16:00. On that day, SS men and the Vlasov Army's men deported 570 Jewish children and 260 elderly Jews from Šiauliai to the German concentration camps (probably, the Auschwitz concentration camp). Two members of the Jewish Council, Kartunas and Kacas, as well as children's doctor Uras (Uri) Razovskis joined the convoy on their own will. According to other sources, 506 children below 10 years old, 68 children of 10-13 years old, 56 elderly men and 135 elderly women as well as 26 sick or disabled persons were deported during the action while 227 children succeeded in hiding and avoiding deportation during the action.

However, many of parents, who returned to the camp after the working hours, experienced a shock after not finding their children at home. On the same day, the same action was carried out in the labor camps of Daugėliai and Pavenčiai – 15 children and four elderly persons were deported from there. Immediately after the action, some families tried to escape from the ghetto and many of the ghetto-living parents, frightened by the recent children's kidnapping, made attempts to bring their children out of the ghetto and hand them to ethnic Lithuanian families⁸².

Seven year old Ruta Kronaitė-Segal was brought out of the ghetto and hid in her father's workplace for several days. Later, with a help from Lithuanian doctor Domas Jasaitis, she found her refuge in the Lithuanian farmers' family of Ona and Antanas Ragauskas. They lived in a village located some 10 kilometers from Šiauliai. Jasaitis and his wife Zofija managed to help to many Jews of Šiauliai: Jerusalimskienė, the wife of a gymnasium teacher, and her two sons as well as the wife of doctor A. Kamberis and her five year old son were transported to the farmstead of V. Zubovas near the town of Akmenė. The Jasaitis family also found a refuge for the Jewish girl named Chanė as well as for Rudminaitė, the daughter of the Šiauliai gymnasium director, and other escapees from the ghetto⁸³.

In the beginning of 1944, the Šiauliai Ghetto prisoner Nisonas Fromanas got a letter from his wife, Polina Froman, who earlier escaped from the ghetto. His wife wrote that she, their daughter and the wife's mother, with a help of local farmers, hide in a village. She urged her husband to escape from the ghetto as soon as possible. She informed her husband that, at a certain time, Lithuanian Alfonsas Sungaila and his wagon pulled by a horse will be waiting for him to bring him to a village. On the fixed day, Fromanas escaped from his workplace and went to the market-place where Sungaila waited for him. Sungaila took



Sisters, Danutė Venclauskaitė and Gražbylė Venclauskaitė, were active in rescuing of Jews during the Nazi occupation

Fromanas to the house of Veronika Petrauskienė in the village of Vaiguviškiai. Later, Fromanas and his family lived in secret in villages of the Šiauliai district until the end of the German occupation⁸⁴.

Their daughter, Sulamita Lev, who was born on June 7, 1941, wrote in one of her letters about her parents' hiding: "My parents succeeded in escaping from the Šiauliai Ghetto. I don't know the exact date of escape because I was a little girl then. However, my mom told me that we were still in the ghetto when the 'children's action' was carried out. After our escape, we hid in homes of Lithuanians: in the home of the Baškys family in the village of Pabutkalnis, in the home of the Petrauskas family in a village near Vaičiuva, in the home of the Rabinskas family in a village near the town of Kelmė. Our last hideout was located near Vaičiuva – the farmstead's owner was Marija Rusteikaitė. She knew who we are and she hid us."⁸⁵

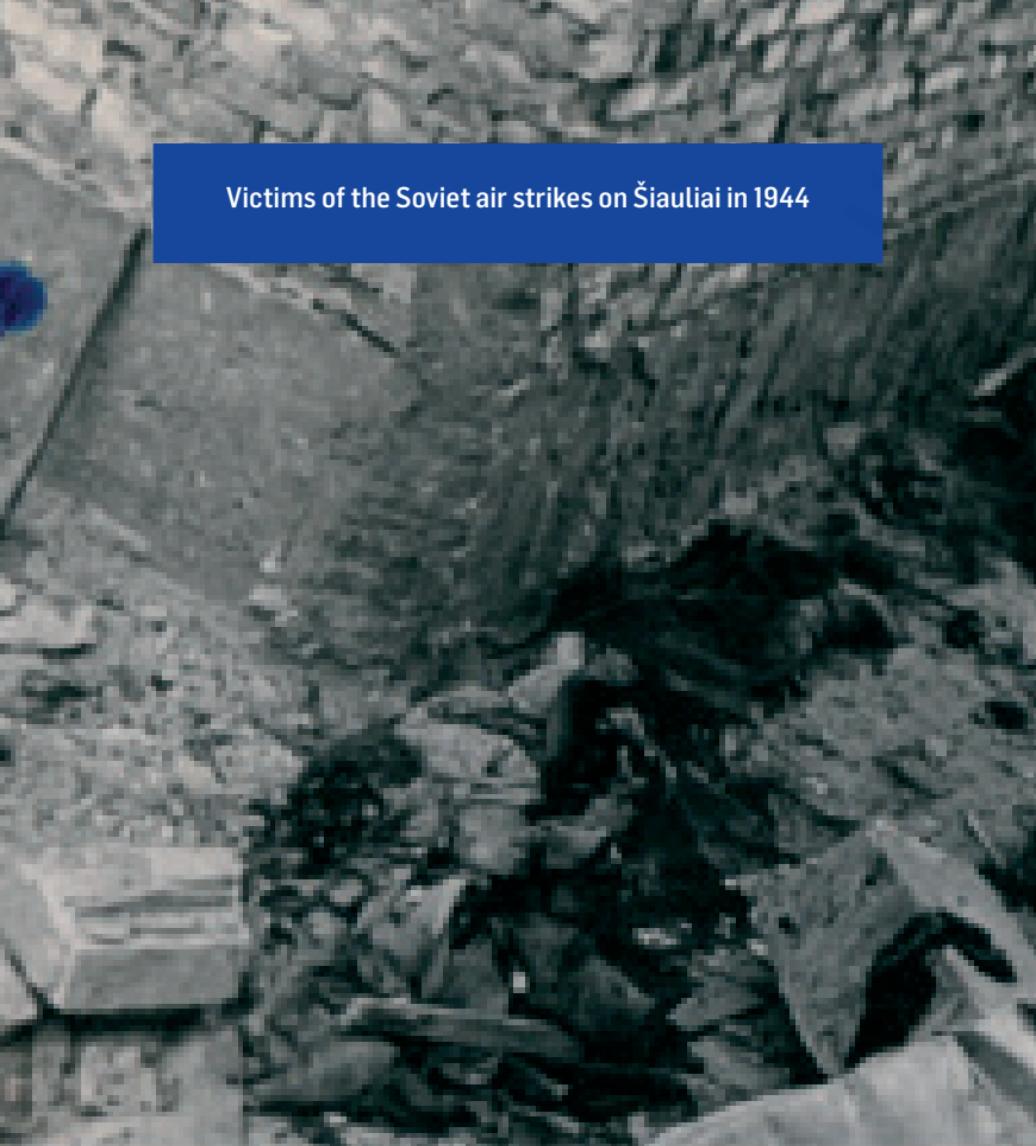
One of the ways to offer some kind of help for Jews was to create jobs for them and employ them. Šiauliai dweller Danutė Venclauskaitė opened several workshops for making gloves and brushes. She employed Jewish women of no professional experience. Venclauskaitė succeeded in getting for her workshops the status of a supplier for the Wehrmacht. The employment of Jewish women saved their lives at least for some time because unemployed Jews were killed first⁸⁶.

On Dec. 12, 1943, Feldwebel Graudel, the commandant of the Jewish labor camp in the town of Akmenė, ordered to detain and kill eight Jewish children and one Jewish woman. The Vlasov Army's men shot them dead in front of the other camp's prisoners.

Graudel also shot dead Jewish worker Geršonas Žemaitiškis. The latter was ill and could not work. Graudel took a pistol and he shot Žemaitiškis in the presence of many witnesses.

On July 8, 1944, just before the ghetto's evacuation, the last mass murder of Jews was carried out in the Šiauliai Ghetto. Some Jewish workers of the Frenkelis factory, after they found out about the planned evacuation, ran away. Reinhardt, the factory's director, ordered to open fire at escaping Jews: two women and two children were shot dead.

In the end of March 1944, the labor camp of Akmenė was liquidated and its prisoners were moved to other camps⁸⁷. In November 1943, the census of the Šiauliai Ghetto's prisoners was carried out. There were



Victims of the Soviet air strikes on Šiauliai in 1944

2,078 Jews in the ghetto: 851 men and 1,157 women. Then the Jews, who got a work, were entitled to higher food portions – they got the same amount as ethnic Lithuanian workers. Most of the Jews worked at the Frenkelis factory⁸⁸.

The ruined Frenkelis leather factory. Šiauliai, 1944



Вахтанг Котэадриш 189





Ruined buildings of the Kaukazas ghetto
located in front of the Frenkelis leather factory. 1944





Šiauliai on fire – the Soviets took Šiauliai
after fierce battles. July 1944



The ruined Grand Choral Synagogue of Šiauliai on Varpo Street. 1944

The ruined gate of the ghetto of Trakų Street and Ežero Street. 1944



Liquidation of the Šiauliai Ghetto and deportation of its prisoners to the Nazi concentration camps of Germany and Poland in 1944

On July 8, 1944, when the Red Army already entered Lithuania, Schleef (Schlöf?), the ghetto's commandant, informed the Jewish Council about the coming liquidation of ghetto and evacuation of its prisoners to Germany. The ghetto prisoners were in panic after hearing the news. Several hundred Jews run via the Frenkelis factory's yard to neighboring fields. Siegel, one of the factory's supervisors, and Antanaitis, a warden of the Šiauliai prison, fired shots from their pistols at the escapees. Two Jewish women and two Jewish children were shot dead. SS men jumped on a truck and drove in the same direction to stop the escapees. The escapees were forced to return to the ghetto⁸⁹.

The Nazis transported some 5,000 Jews from the labor camps of the towns of Joniškis and Panevėžys (these Jews were brought by the Nazis there from many countries: Germany, Hungary, the Czech lands, Estonia, etc.) to the Šiauliai Ghetto. Wilhelm

Stötzler (born in 1893; a former supervisor in the concentration camps of Sachsenhausen, Neuengamme and Groß-Rosen), who arrived from Germany, was in charge of the Šiauliai Ghetto liquidation⁹⁰.

On July 15, 1944, the Nazis began the ghetto liquidation operation. At the beginning, some 3,000 Jews of the Panevėžys OT (*Organisation Todt*) labor camp and 433 Jews of the Joniškis OT were transported by freight trains from these camps to camps in other countries. On July 19, one more group of the Šiauliai Ghetto prisoners, 1,990 persons, left by train to camps in other countries. On the night from July 21 to July 22, the Soviet aviation began intensive bombardments of the town of Šiauliai. The Soviet bombs fell on the ghetto territory as well: several Jews, including Mendelis Leibavičius, former chairman of the Jewish Council, were killed by these bombs⁹¹. On July 22, the third group of the ghetto prisoners was forced to march on foot to the Pavenčiai railway station – on the next day, they were transported from there to the Stutthof concentration camp. During the ghetto liquidation, 16 elderly and ill Jews were killed by intravenous injections.

On July 24, 1944, the last remaining ghetto prisoners (160 persons) were transferred by road to the Salaspils concentration camp near Riga. Later, these Jews of Šiauliai, together with other prisoners of the Salaspils camp, were brought by a ship to the port city of Danzig. They were transported by a train from

there to the Stutthof concentration camp. Later, the group's men were transported to the Dachau concentration camp while some part of women and children was brought to the Auschwitz concentration camp. During the Šiauliai Ghetto liquidation, many buildings, including the ghetto-based hospital, were set on fire – some 70 patients were killed. Only some 350-500 Jews of Šiauliai survived until the end of WWII⁹².

The majority of the evacuated Šiauliai Ghetto prisoners were sent to the Stutthof concentration camp. On July 24, 1944, the last train with the Jews of Šiauliai arrived at Stutthof. On the next day, SS men made a selection of the Jews, who were transferred from the ghettos of Kaunas and Šiauliai. All the children below 16 years old and their mothers, who were not able to work, were transported for executions in Auschwitz. The Jews of Šiauliai, who stayed in Stutthof, were imprisoned in separate camps for men and women. The living conditions were horrible in the concentration camp: SS men and the interior administration chiefs (the latter group was made of the camp's prisoners) terrorized the ordinary prisoners. Each day, many prisoners died due to hunger, illnesses and tortures. There were 800 Jews from the Šiauliai Ghetto living in the barrack No. 13 where 200 bunk beds were installed. Some 5-8 persons were forced to share one bed⁹³.

Many of the Jews from Šiauliai, who were transferred to the Dachau concentration camp, ended up in subsidiary camps of Dachau. Leiba Lipšicas and his father, Morduchas (Mordechajus) Lipšicas, were sent to the camp No. 10 near the town of Utting, located some 80 kilometers from Munich, in Bavaria. SS men and the interior administration chiefs terrorized the ordinary prisoners there as well. As the Western Front approached, all the prisoners were returned from these subsidiary camps to Dachau.

On April 25, 1945, some 10,000 prisoners of Dachau, who were still able to walk, were forced to march on foot to a castle in the Austrian mountains. Some 2,000 Jews of the ghettos of Kaunas and Šiauliai were in the marching column. During the march, prisoners, who were unable to walk anymore, were shot immediately. On May 1, the march's guard did run away. The prisoners met the U.S. Army tanks near the town of Waldkirchen. The Americans transported the former prisoners to the military barracks in the little town of Bad Tölz. The former prisoners got some food and medical treatment there. Some of the former Dachau concentration camp prisoners died there due to illnesses and exhaustion⁹⁴. As it was mentioned above, some 350-500 Jews of Šiauliai survived until the end of WWII⁹⁵.

Cilė Bervičienė (born in 1918) was among these Jews of Šiauliai, who survived. She had five brothers and five sisters. All the sisters died in Auschwitz. Her son

Miša died due to diphtheria in the Šiauliai Ghetto. In 1944, Bervičienė was transferred to the Stutthof concentration camp. In 1946, she returned to Šiauliai⁹⁶.

There were four time periods during the existence of the Šiauliai Ghetto. The first period was the time period of September-November 1941. The ghetto administration – the Jewish Council, the ghetto police and other institutions – were created during the period while the mass murders of Jews were carried out (especially, in September 1941).

The second time period – from the end of 1941 to the summer of 1943 – was a ‘quiet’ period. There were no mass murders during the ‘quiet’ period.

During the third period – from September 1943 to mid-July of 1944 – the Šiauliai Ghetto becomes a concentration camp. The SS became responsible for overseeing the prisoners.

The fourth period was the second half of July 1944. The Šiauliai Ghetto was liquidated and its prisoners were transferred to the concentration camps in Germany⁹⁷.

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Bu-11 The Šiauliai Ghetto / Arūnas Bubnys ; translated by Rokas Tracevskis. – Vilnius : Genocide and Resistance Research Centre of Lithuania, 2014. – 84 p. : iliustr., faks., portr.

ISBN 978-609-8037-43-2

Šiame leidinyje apžvelgiama Šiaulių žydų bendruomenės ir geto istorija nacių okupacijos laikotarpiu, išskirti svarbiausi geto istorijos etapai ir būdingi bruožai, pateikta aukų statistika, apibūdinta geto vidaus administracijos struktūra ir jos funkcionavimas.

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Arūnas Bubnys

THE ŠIAULIAI GHETTO

Translated by Rokas Tracevskis
Designer Klaudijus Gelžinis

Published by the Genocide and Resistance Research Centre of Lithuania, Didžioji str. 17, LT-01128 Vilnius, Lithuania

Printed by AB “Spauda”, Laisvės ave. 60, LT-05120 Vilnius, Lithuania