

YEARS OF CRISIS DIPLOMACY:

GERMAN-LITHUANIAN

RELATIONS,

1933-1939

by

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A THESIS

IN

HISTORY

Submitted to the Graduate Faculty  
of Texas Tech University in  
Partial Fulfillment of  
the Requirements for  
the Degree of

MASTER OF ARTS

Approved

Accepted

Dean of the Graduate School

August, 1975

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## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I am indebted to Professor Otto M. Nelson, director of this thesis, and Professor Idris R. Traylor, Jr., for stimulating my interest in European history with their knowledge, advice, and criticism.

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## INTRODUCTION

A study of German diplomatic relations with Lithuania during Adolf Hitler's rule is valuable as a case study of Hitler's general foreign policy and his aims in the East. Hitler's actions in dealing with Lithuania were similar to his actions in other countries with German minorities such as Poland and Czechoslovakia.

German-Lithuanian relations from 1933 through 1939 cannot be analyzed without knowledge of the significant relations between the two countries during the Weimar Republic. An examination of the major diplomacy between Germany and Lithuania in the period after World War I and before the advent of Hitler can help to clarify the problem of transition in foreign policy from the Weimar Republic to the Third Reich. Although disputes with Lithuania over the Memel Territory occurred in both republican and totalitarian Germany, these disputes differed in both methods and goals.

The Treaty of Versailles, signed on June 28, 1919, created a major obstacle to future German-Lithuanian cooperation. The establishment of the Memel Territory, created by Article 99 of the Treaty of Versailles, satisfied neither Germany nor Lithuania. Germany contended, in a protest to the Paris Peace Conference on May 9, 1919, that the majority

of the inhabitants of the Memel Territory were Germans and should not be separated from Germany. Lithuania claimed Memel because it was her only deep-water and ice-free port on the Baltic Sea and contained vital industries such as forestry, amber, shipbuilding, and textiles. The diplomats at the Paris Conference did not give Memel to Lithuania because there was no stable Lithuanian government to administer it.<sup>1</sup> A government was not formed in Lithuania until the summer of 1920 because of Bolshevik invasions and an unstable political situation.<sup>2</sup>

The Memel Territory was placed under Allied control and administered through the authority of a French general and two hundred French infantry.<sup>3</sup> Under this arrangement, the inhabitants of the Memel Territory enjoyed an improving economy and a stable political situation.<sup>4</sup> Memel German protests to Allied administration were negligible because German civil servants were allowed to remain in their jobs.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Albertas Gerutis, ed., Lithuania: 700 Years, trans. by Algirdas Budreckis (New York: Manyland, 1959), p. 177; David Stephens, "The German Problem in Memel," Slavonic and East European Review 14 (January 1936): 325.

<sup>2</sup>Georg von Rauch, The Baltic States: The Years of Independence, 1917-1940, trans. by Gerald Onn (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1974), p. 79.

<sup>3</sup>Stephens, "The German Problem in Memel," p. 325.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., p. 326.

<sup>5</sup>Gerutis, Lithuania: 700 Years, p. 207.

Lithuania, fearing that Allied supervision of a stable and prosperous government in Memel would become permanent, disarmed the French garrison and took control of the Memel Territory on January 10, 1923. The timing of the takeover was significant because France was concentrating on developments in the Ruhr and was unlikely to make a strong protest.<sup>6</sup> Lithuania's gamble was confirmed by the quick recognition of the transfer of the Memel Territory to Lithuania on February 16, 1923 by the Conference of Ambassadors.<sup>7</sup> Lithuania accomplished a fait accompli just as Poland did when it seized Wilna on October 9, 1920.<sup>8</sup>

To legalize Lithuanian actions, the Conference of Ambassadors produced a document which legitimized Lithuanian sovereignty over the Memel Territory. The Memel Convention, which included the Memel Statute as an annex, was signed in Paris on May 8, 1924. The four countries serving as guarantors of the Memel Convention were Great

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<sup>6</sup>French troops marched into the Ruhr on January 11, 1923.

<sup>7</sup>Rauch, The Baltic States, p. 104.

<sup>8</sup>Wilna had been Lithuania's historic capital before it was seized by Poland; for a detailed account of the Polish-Lithuanian dispute over Wilna see Alfred Erich Senn, The Great Powers, Lithuania, and the Vilna Question, 1920-1928 (Leiden: Brill, 1966).

Britain, France, Italy, and Japan.<sup>9</sup>

The annex to the Memel Convention, the Memel Statute, is the legal document on which many of the German-Lithuanian disputes over Memel were based. The Statute's thirty-eight articles described the administrative formation of the Memel Territory, the sovereign rights of Lithuania in Memel, and the autonomous rights of the Memel government.<sup>10</sup> The disagreement between Germany and Lithuania centered around the definitions of the terms "sovereignty" and "autonomy." Many of the Lithuanian actions taken in Memel under the privilege of sovereignty were attacked by Germany as an infringement of Memel's autonomy.

Although German relations with Lithuania from 1923 to 1933 were generally tense, a *détente* of sorts was achieved in 1928 through the efforts of Gustav Stresemann, Foreign Minister of Germany, and Augustinas Voldemaras, Premier of Lithuania. This brief period of *détente* developed through the Treaty of Arbitration and Conciliation between Germany and Lithuania signed on January 29, 1928. Under this agreement, any dispute between the two countries had to be submitted to the Permanent Court of International

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<sup>9</sup> League of Nations, Treaty Series, Publication of Treaties and International Engagements Registered with the Secretariat of the League of Nations, vol. 29 (1924), No. 736, "Convention Concerning the Territory of Memel," 8 May 1924, p. 87.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 95-107.

Justice at the Hague or to a special arbitration committee.<sup>11</sup> On the same day a frontier treaty was signed in Berlin between Germany and Lithuania. This agreement marked the formal frontier line between East Prussia and Lithuania and set up a joint committee to settle any problems concerning the frontier.<sup>12</sup> On October 30, 1928, a commerce and navigation treaty between Germany and Lithuania put trade between the countries on a most favored nation basis and relegated the settlement of disputes to arbitration.<sup>13</sup>

One reason for the dramatically improved relations between Germany and Lithuania in 1928 was the problems both countries were experiencing with Poland. In 1927 Lithuania and Poland had been close to war over the Wilna question.<sup>14</sup> German-Polish relations had been tense due to the Treaty of Berlin in 1926 which strengthened the Russo-German relationship. Polish officials considered this

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<sup>11</sup>Ibid., vol. 90 (1929), No. 2042, "Treaty of Arbitration and Conciliation Between the German Reich and Lithuania," 29 January 1928, p. 245.

<sup>12</sup>Ibid., vol. 89 (1929), No. 2009, "Treaty Between the German Reich and the Republic of Lithuania, Regarding the Settlement of Frontier Questions," 29 January 1928, pp. 112-113, 117-118.

<sup>13</sup>Ibid., vol. 89 (1929), No. 2010, "Treaty of Commerce and Navigation Between the German Reich and the Republic of Lithuania," 30 October 1928, pp. 149-150, 164-165.

<sup>14</sup>Rauch, The Baltic States, p. 105.



treaty a threat to Polish security.<sup>15</sup> The Treaty of Berlin, however, was essentially a nonaggression and neutrality pledge and not an alliance.<sup>16</sup>

Another reason for the improved relations lies in the character and aims of the two diplomats, Stresemann and Voldemaras, who made the temporary *détente* possible. Although historians debate Stresemann's goals in foreign policy,<sup>17</sup> his annexationist aims toward Eastern Europe during World War I evolved to a concern for a peaceful revision of the Versailles Treaty during the Weimar period. During the war, Stresemann had urged the use of the Baltic provinces as a settlement area for German war invalids and for German *émigrés* from Russia. He believed Lithuania should be tied to Germany by a military convention, a

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<sup>15</sup>S. William Halperin, Germany Tried Democracy: A Political History of the Reich from 1918 to 1933 (New York: Thomas Crowell, 1946; reprint ed., Hamden, Conn.: Archon, 1963), pp. 338-339.

<sup>16</sup>Erich Eyck, A History of the Weimar Republic, trans. by Harlan P. Hanson and Robert G. L. Waite, vol. 2 (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1963), p. 61.

<sup>17</sup>For a positive assessment of Stresemann's foreign policy see Felix Hirsch, Stresemann: Patriot und Europäer (Göttingen: Musterschmidt, 1964), pp. 86-105, and Henry L. Bretton, Stresemann and the Revision of Versailles: A Fight For Reason (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1953), pp. 121, 125; for a negative assessment see Hans W. Gatzke, Stresemann and the Rearmament of Germany (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 1954), pp. 111-115, and Marvin L. Edwards, Stresemann and the Greater Germany, 1914-1918 (New York: Bookman, 1963), pp. 168-169.

customs union, and a single monetary and communications system.<sup>18</sup> After the war, Stresemann dropped his annexationist aims and sought a negotiated revision of the Treaty of Versailles. He strove for the elimination of the Polish Corridor and did not consider the German-Lithuanian problem over Memel a barrier to treaty negotiations.<sup>19</sup> Voldemaras also believed in conciliatory diplomacy. He thought that Lithuania must pursue a cooperative policy with both Germany and Russia in order to survive as an independent state.<sup>20</sup> However, with Stresemann's death and Voldemaras's removal from office, both in 1929, the *détente* fell apart.

Tension between Germany and Lithuania over Memel resumed in the early 1930's for several reasons. In the elections to the Reichstag in September, 1930, National Socialist representation grew from 12 to 107. This put pressure on Chancellor Heinrich Brüning's Cabinet to display more nationalist objectives.<sup>21</sup> The first public demand for

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<sup>18</sup> Edwards, Stresemann and the Greater Germany, p. 43.

<sup>19</sup> Bretton, Stresemann and the Revision of Versailles, p. 116.

<sup>20</sup> Rauch, The Baltic States, p. 121.

<sup>21</sup> Karl Dietrich Bracher, The German Dictatorship: The Origins, Structure, and Effects of National Socialism, trans. by Jean Steinberg (New York: Frederick A. Praeger, 1970), p. 172; Julius P. Slavėnas, "Lithuanian-German Friction Over Klaipėda-Memel in the Early 1930's," Lituanistikos darbai 3 (1973): 219.

the return of Memel to Germany by a German political party was made by leaders of the Staatspartei, a coalition of the former German Democratic Party and dissidents of the People's Party, on November 9, 1930. The Staatspartei, although not a political power in the Reichstag, did include among its members the German Minister of Finance, Hermann R. Dietrich, who was present at the November 9 convention.<sup>22</sup>

Social, economic, and political problems within the Memel Territory also caused deterioration in German-Lithuanian relations in the early 1930's. In the social sphere the main problems centered around education and ethnic differences. The German domination of the teaching profession in Memel caused friction. Some teachers were reported to be actively campaigning for German political parties and using students to distribute pamphlets. The influx of Lithuanian citizens to the Memel Territory also caused resentment on the part of Memel Germans who wanted to maintain social and cultural control of the territory.<sup>23</sup>

Economically, the entrance of Lithuanian citizens into the Memel Territory exacerbated unemployment. Another economic problem within the territory which affected Germans

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<sup>22</sup>Slavėnas, "Lithuanian-German Friction Over Klaipėda-Memel," p. 219.

<sup>23</sup>Ibid., pp. 220-221.

was the dispute over custom-free produce flowing into East Prussia from Memel. The East Prussian farmers could not compete with the Memel farmers' cheap produce. This, added to the fact that German industrial exports to Lithuania encountered high tariffs, resulted in negotiations between Germany and Lithuania in December 1930 and July 1931. As a result of these negotiations, the export of agricultural produce from Memel to East Prussia fell sharply.<sup>24</sup>

Political problems within the Memel Territory revolved around Otto Böttcher's visit to Berlin in December 1931. Böttcher, President of the Memel Directorate,<sup>25</sup> visited Berlin ostensibly to discuss commercial relations with Germany. Since Böttcher made the trip without informing the Lithuanian Governor of the Memel Territory, Antanas Merkys, the Lithuanian government assumed the trip was of a secret, political nature. Lithuanian officials refused to accept Böttcher's explanation that he made the trip as a private citizen and not as a representative of the Memel government.<sup>26</sup>

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<sup>24</sup>Ibid., pp. 221-222.

<sup>25</sup>The Memel Directorate consisted of five members, including a President appointed by the Governor of the Memel Territory. The Directorate exercised executive power and shared legislative power with the Landtag in the Memel Territory.

<sup>26</sup>Slavėnas, "Lithuanian-German Friction Over Kaipėda-Memel," pp. 222-223.

The Lithuanian government took severe actions by ordering Merkys to dismiss Böttcher from his post as President of the Directorate and to enforce the Lithuanian Martial Law of 1926. Böttcher was dismissed on February 6, 1932, and on February 8 Brüning appealed to the League of Nations to reinstate him. After spirited verbal battles between German State Secretary Bernhard von Bülow and Lithuanian Foreign Minister Dovas Zaunius, the Hague Court upheld the right of the Memel governor to remove any president of the Directorate who was not acting in the interests of the Lithuanian state.<sup>27</sup>

The Hague Court's decision seemed to confirm Lithuania's sovereignty over the Memel Territory. Article 17 of the Memel Statute did not provide for the removal of the president of the Directorate by the Memel governor. The court, however, ruled that dismissal power was implied in the governor's power to appoint the president of the Directorate.<sup>28</sup>

The Hague decision on August 11, 1932, marked the end of formal debate over Memel before an international court or council. Within a year Germany would fall under the control of a man with aims for rebuilding German

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<sup>27</sup>Ibid., pp. 225-227; Stephens, "The German Problem in Memel," p. 330.

<sup>28</sup>League of Nations, "Convention Concerning the Territory of Memel," p. 101.

internal strength and expanding German frontiers far beyond the pre-1914 boundaries. The Memel Territory was only a small part of Hitler's ambitious goals in the East. The aims of Weimar politicians included revision of the Versailles Treaty. But their ultimate goals were clearly not of the scope of those of Hitler. Attempts at conciliation and *détente* between Germany and Lithuania seem to have died with Stresemann, and the advent of Hitler brought new aims and methods to German diplomacy.

Historians disagree on the question of continuity or discontinuity in the foreign policies of Wilhelmine, Weimar, and Nazi Germany.<sup>29</sup> When examining the eastern aims of the German statesmen during the three periods, the elements of both continuity and discontinuity appear.<sup>30</sup> A revision of the eastern border was desired by the statesmen of Weimar Germany, but the methods of revision and the

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<sup>29</sup>For a defense of the theory of discontinuity between pre-Nazi and Nazi foreign policy in Germany see Hans Adolf-Jacobsen, Nationalsozialistische Aussenpolitik, 1933-1938 (Frankfurt am Main: Alfred Metzner, 1968); for a defense of the theory of continuity in German foreign policy from 1866 to 1945 see Andreas Hillgruber, Kontinuität und Diskontinuität in der deutschen Aussenpolitik von Bismarck bis Hitler (Düsseldorf: Droste, 1969).

<sup>30</sup>Klaus Hildebrand, The Foreign Policy of the Third Reich, trans. by Anthony Fothergill (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1973), pp. 135-140.

anticipated territorial gain for Germany were not of the radical scope of those of Hitler. The policy of compromise and upholding treaties was alien to Hitler's goals of Lebensraum and racial purity.<sup>31</sup>

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<sup>31</sup>Gerhard L. Weinberg, The Foreign Policy of Hitler's Germany: Diplomatic Revolution in Europe, 1933-36 (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1970), pp. 3-6, 8.

## CHAPTER I

### YEARS OF CONSOLIDATION AND CONFLICT: GERMAN- LITHUANIAN RELATIONS, 1933-1935

The years 1933 through 1935 in Germany, the first years of Hitler's rule, were dominated by consolidation internally and revisionism externally. Hitler's preoccupation with consolidation of power was a major cause of his moderate revisionist aims in foreign policy during the early years of his dictatorship. During this period Hitler demanded that Lithuania observe the provisions of the Memel Statute. He did not feel that Germany could force the reincorporation of the Memel Territory into the Reich.

Hitler's ultimate aims regarding Lithuania and Lebensraum in the East can be traced through his writings during the Weimar Era. Although historians debate the importance of Hitler's early writings in determining his foreign policy in the 1930's, his general policy in the East appears to have remained true to his early political and racial principles.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>For defense of the theory that Hitler's foreign policy aims were determined before 1933 see Norman Rich, Hitler's War Aims: Ideology, the Nazi State, and the



The second volume of Mein Kampf, published on December 11, 1926, includes general statements about Hitler's eastern aims. Hitler believed the major expansion of Germany should be directed towards Russia and its border states. This conquest not only would gain vast amounts of territory for Germany, but would also destroy the "Jewish-Bolshevist" threat in the East.<sup>2</sup>

More specific statements concerning the Baltic area appeared in Hitler's major work on foreign policy, written in the summer of 1928.<sup>3</sup> In this book Hitler states that the east coasts of the Baltic Sea are as vital to Germany as the Mediterranean coasts are to Italy.<sup>4</sup> He claims the need for German expansion in the East " . . . on the largest scale."<sup>5</sup>

Course of Expansion, vol. 1 (New York: W. W. Norton, 1973), pp. xiii-xv, and Eberhard Jäckel, Hitler's Weltanschauung: A Blueprint for Power, trans. by Herbert Arnold (Middletown, Conn.: Wesleyan University Press, 1972), pp. 7, 40, 42; for defense of the theory that Hitler's early writings were not infallible previews of his later foreign policy see E. M. Robertson, Hitler's Pre-War Policy and Military Plans, 1933-1939 (New York: Citadel Press, 1967), p. x.

<sup>2</sup>Adolf Hitler, Mein Kampf, trans. by Alvin Johnson, ed. by John Chamberlain et al. (New York: Reynal & Hitchcock, 1939), pp. 951, 960.

<sup>3</sup>This book was not published in the 1920's in Germany and first appeared in English translation in 1961 as Hitler's Secret Book.

<sup>4</sup>Adolf Hitler, Hitler's Secret Book, trans. by Salvator Attanasio (New York: Grove Press, 1961), p. 195.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid., p. 210.

Before these ambitious goals in the East could be undertaken, Hitler knew he must consolidate his own power over Germany. This meant stabilizing the domestic situation in Germany and strengthening the German army.<sup>6</sup> These factors help explain Hitler's policy in 1933-1935 of accepting the Memel Statute as the basis of law in the Memel Territory.

This policy was supported by the unofficial diplomacy involving Poland and Germany in late January and early February 1933. Informal discussions between two German industrialists and industrialists from France, Belgium, and Luxembourg resulted in an offer by the German industrialists to exchange the Memel Territory for the Polish Corridor.<sup>7</sup> This offer was quickly repudiated by the German Foreign Minister, Constantin von Neurath, and the German State Secretary, Bernhard von Bülow.<sup>8</sup> They deemed any indication of aggressive intentions toward Memel to be inopportune and dangerous.<sup>9</sup> On March 4, Neurath told Lithuanian Foreign Minister Zaunius that the German-Polish arrangement was

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<sup>6</sup>Ibid., p. 85.

<sup>7</sup>Germany, Auswärtiges Amt, Documents on German Foreign Policy, 1918-1945, Series C (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1949-1964, hereafter cited as DGFP), vol. 1, p. 3.

<sup>8</sup>Ibid., pp. 40-41.

<sup>9</sup>Ibid., p. 3.

launched by France and had not been seriously considered by Germany.<sup>10</sup> Zaunius remained suspicious of German intentions and brought up the question again in late May 1933. Hitler and Neurath bluntly told Zaunius that German-Lithuanian relations depended entirely on Lithuanian observance of the Memel Statute.<sup>11</sup>

The Lithuanian government was made painfully aware of the connection between German-Lithuanian relations and conditions in Memel throughout 1933. Lithuanian officials were anxious to sign an economic agreement with Germany that would send 150,000 Lithuanian swine annually to German markets. The German government repeatedly delayed signing an economic agreement because of Lithuania's anti-Nazi actions in Memel.<sup>12</sup> Not until 1936 was the trade agreement consummated.

The tensions in Memel in 1933 were caused by the formation of National Socialist parties in the territory and by differing interpretations of the Memel Statute. The first Nazi party in the Memel Territory, the Christliche-Sozialistische Arbeitsgemeinschaft (Christian-Socialist Workers' Association or CSA), was formed by Theodor von

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<sup>10</sup>Ibid., p. 101.

<sup>11</sup>Ibid., p. 513.

<sup>12</sup>Ibid., pp. 520-521, 639, 685-686; DGFP, Series C, vol. 2, p. 262.

Sass in the spring of 1933.<sup>13</sup> This Nazi organization swiftly achieved prominence by winning twenty of forty seats on the Memel City Council on May 22, 1933.<sup>14</sup> Another National Socialist Party, led by Ernst Neumann, was formed in the summer of 1933. This party, the Sozialistische Volksgemeinschaft (Socialist Peoples' Association or Sovog), professed more conservative beliefs than the CSA and thus won the support of Berlin officials who feared the publicity of overt Nazi activities in the Memel Territory.<sup>15</sup>

The Lithuanian government, fearing that National Socialism would spread quickly in the already pro-German Memel Territory, passed a series of laws to prevent the nazification of Memel. One such law, passed on June 10, 1933, allowed foreigners to gain public service employment in the Memel Territory only by permission of the governor. Germany protested that this law would put three thousand Germans out of work and was a violation of the Memel

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<sup>13</sup>Martin Broszat, "Die Memeldeutschen Organisationen und der Nationalsozialismus, 1933-1939," Vierteljahrshefte für Zeitgeschichte 5 (July 1957): 274; Ernst-Albrecht Plieg, Das Memelland, 1920-1939: Deutsche Autonomiebestrebungen im litauischen Gesamtstaat (Würzburg: Holzner, 1962), p. 91.

<sup>14</sup>Plieg, Das Memelland, p. 109.

<sup>15</sup>Ibid., p. 111; K. Duff, "Relations Between Germany and Lithuania Over Memel, 1933-5," Survey of International Affairs, 1935, by Arnold J. Toynbee and V. M. Boulter, vol. 1 (London: Oxford University Press, 1936), p. 246.

Statute.<sup>16</sup> Efforts to discuss German-Lithuanian disagreements over the interpretation of the Memel Statute in the summer and fall of 1933 produced no results.<sup>17</sup> On December 10, 1933, the law was enforced and 101 officials in the Memel Territory, mainly Germans, were dismissed from their jobs.<sup>18</sup> In addition, the Lithuanian Law on Judicial Organization, passed on September 15, extended the power of the Lithuanian Supreme Court over Memel and imposed restrictions regarding the employment of foreigners in judicial offices.<sup>19</sup>

These Lithuanian laws played straight into Hitler's hands. The Führer hoped to keep the Memel controversy as a "running sore"<sup>20</sup> poisoning German-Lithuanian relations. This strategy continued until Hitler believed Germany to be sufficiently strong to make direct, aggressive moves against Memel.

The German policy of promoting constant friction between the two countries caused Lithuania to seek protective pacts with other European countries in 1934. Lithuania

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<sup>16</sup>"Berlin Accuses Lithuania," New York Times (hereafter cited as NYT), 17 January 1934, p. 2.

<sup>17</sup>DGFP, Series C, vol. 1, pp. 748-749.

<sup>18</sup>Duff, "Relations Between Germany and Lithuania Over Memel," p. 248.

<sup>19</sup>DGFP, Series C, vol. 1, p. 749.

<sup>20</sup>Ibid., Series C, vol. 4, p. 773.

turned to her Baltic neighbors and to Russia for support in her conflict with Germany.

Negotiations for an Eastern Pact had developed in 1933 under the continuing efforts of Maxim Litvinov, Soviet Commissar of Foreign Affairs.<sup>21</sup> These negotiations reached a peak in the summer of 1934 when Litvinov proposed a non-aggression and mutual assistance pact to include Poland, Czechoslovakia, Lithuania, Latvia, Estonia, Russia, and Germany. France would be the guarantor of the pact in exchange for a Russian guarantee of the Rhineland Pact, the most important of the Locarno Treaties.<sup>22</sup>

Lithuania and Germany took opposite views concerning the desirability of the Eastern Pact. Lithuanian officials were anxious to sign a pact because they felt threatened both by Hitler's policy of friction in Memel and by the recent German-Polish Nonaggression Pact.<sup>23</sup> Lithuanian officials viewed the pact between Germany and Poland as another indication that Germany would allow Poland a free hand in Memel in exchange for the Polish Corridor. Germany reacted negatively to the proposed Eastern Pact because it conflicted with Hitler's policy of signing only bilateral treaties. Germany also did not want to join a treaty

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<sup>21</sup>Ibid., Series C, vol. 1, p. 612.

<sup>22</sup>Ibid., Series C, vol. 2, p. 880.

<sup>23</sup>The German-Polish Nonaggression Pact was signed on January 26, 1934.

system which would be dominated by France and Russia. Neurath, realizing that outright rejection would be viewed with suspicion, ordered the German embassies to treat the pact proposals in a "dilatory manner."<sup>24</sup>

From the summer of 1934 through the summer of 1935 German officials parried inquiries about Germany's attitude toward the pact by raising questions and making minor objections. Germany questioned the inclusion of Czechoslovakia in the Eastern Pact and objected to joining a pact in which she was the only "disarmed" nation.<sup>25</sup> This delaying strategy effectively nullified strong suspicion of German intentions and encouraged Poland to reject the proposals. With Poland and Germany rejecting the pact, Lithuania could not achieve the reassurances she sought for protection of her independence.

Although frustrated in Eastern Pact negotiations, Lithuania did achieve treaties with Russia and her Baltic neighbors. On April 4, 1934, Russia extended the validity of the Soviet-Lithuanian Treaty of Nonaggression, originally signed in 1931, until December 31, 1945. Although the original treaty was not due to expire until 1936, Russian officials were anxious to form an eastern front

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<sup>24</sup> DGFP, Series C, vol. 2, pp. 885-886.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid., Series C, vol. 3, pp. 124, 166, 169, 178, 228, 329, 382, 297; DGFP, Series C, vol. 4, pp. 138, 398.

in which Lithuania played an important part.<sup>26</sup>

On April 25 Lithuania expressed a desire to adhere to the Latvian-Estonian bilateral treaty of February 17, 1934. Negotiations concerning Lithuania's adherence to this treaty were delayed for two reasons. Firstly, Latvia and Estonia awaited the outcome of a power struggle between Smetona and Voldemaras in Lithuania in the spring and summer of 1934. Smetona thwarted the Voldemaras putsch and his government retained firm control of Lithuania.<sup>27</sup> Secondly, Lithuania's adherence to the treaty was delayed by her unstable relations with Germany and Poland. Latvia and Estonia did not want to become entangled in Lithuania's quarrels with Germany and Poland regarding Memel and Wilna.<sup>28</sup>

However, with Eastern Pact negotiations bogged down by German evasions, Latvian and Estonian officials concluded that a united Baltic front would give an appearance of strength.<sup>29</sup> On September 12, 1934, a Treaty of Understanding and Cooperation between Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania was signed in Geneva. This treaty--essentially an expansion

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<sup>26</sup>Albert Tarulis, Soviet Policy Toward the Baltic States, 1918-1940 (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1959), p. 87.

<sup>27</sup>Rauch, The Baltic States, pp. 162-163, 182.

<sup>28</sup>Ibid., p. 182.

<sup>29</sup>Tarulis, Soviet Policy Toward the Baltic States, p. 89.



of the Latvian-Estonian accord--provided for periodic conferences of the Baltic States at the foreign minister level and for collaboration in foreign affairs.<sup>30</sup> A special clause in the treaty excluded Latvia and Estonia from Lithuanian problems concerning Memel and Wilna.<sup>31</sup> The special clause nullified any effective united front on the part of the three Baltic States. Lithuania was left alone to face her problems with Germany over Memel.

German protests over Lithuanian actions in Memel increased in number and harshness in 1934. In addition to the dismissal of German officials and the extension of the Lithuanian Supreme Court's jurisdiction, the Lithuanian government extended the Governor's power to enforce martial law in the Memel Territory. German protests of these actions were not merely verbal. Economic pressure was placed on Lithuania by the German reduction of butter imports from Lithuania and by the German refusal to accept Lithuanian swine.<sup>32</sup>

On February 8, 1934, Lithuania passed the Law for the Protection of the State and Nation; this assessed stiff penalties for seditious activities against Lithuania and for membership in seditious organizations. Memel

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<sup>30</sup> Ibid., p. 90; The Baltic States, p. 182.

<sup>31</sup> Rauch, The Baltic States, p. 182.

<sup>32</sup> DGFP, Series C, vol. 2, p. 415.

inhabitants accused of violating this law were to be tried in Kovno by the Lithuanian Court of Appeal.<sup>33</sup> On the next day, February 9, both the CSA and Sovog were declared seditious organizations and Neumann, the Sovog leader, was arrested. On February 22 both the CSA and the Sovog were dissolved by the Lithuanian government because their leaders were allegedly plotting to separate Memel from Lithuania by force.<sup>34</sup> Within the next two months over one hundred Memellanders (people living in the Memel Territory) were implicated in the alleged Nazi plot and were arrested.<sup>35</sup> The total membership of the CSA and the Sovog at this time was 8,244, about 5 percent of the population of the Memel Territory.<sup>36</sup>

German reaction to the Lithuanian protection law and the dissolving of the CSA and the Sovog was swift. On February 23 the German Minister in Kovno presented a note of protest to the Lithuanian government. Germany also informed the British, French, and Italian governments of the protest and suggested that they persuade Lithuania to

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<sup>33</sup>Duff, "Relations Between Germany and Lithuania Over Memel," p. 248.

<sup>34</sup>Ibid.

<sup>35</sup>Ibid., p. 249; DGFP, Series C, vol. 2, pp. 655-656.

<sup>36</sup>Plieg, Das Memelland, pp. 115, 128-129.

adhere to the provisions of the Memel Statute.<sup>37</sup> The German protest was based on the charge that the protection law was too vague and elastic and gave the governor of Memel powers not authorized by the Memel Statute.<sup>38</sup>

On March 21 Lithuania replied to the German note by stating that the protection law applied to persons subject to Lithuanian jurisdiction and did not represent a violation of the Memel Statute. Lithuania also protested German propaganda activities within the Memel Territory.<sup>39</sup> One issue of a German newspaper in Memel, the Memeler Dampfboot, was confiscated on March 10 for printing negative comments about the protection law.<sup>40</sup>

The protection law also occasioned a power struggle between the governor of Memel, Jonas Navakas, and the President of the Memel Directorate, Ottomar Schreiber. On June 28 Navakas, an advocate of the Lithuanian policy in Memel, demanded that Schreiber resign from his post on the

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<sup>37</sup> DGFP, Series C, vol. 2, p. 656.

<sup>38</sup> For a summary of German complaints concerning alleged Lithuanian violations of the Memel Statute see Thorsten Waino Kalijarvi, Die Entstehung und rechtliche Natur des Memelstatuts und seine praktische Auswirkung bis zum heutigen Tag, no. 300, Historische Studien (Berlin: Emil Ebering, 1937; reprint ed., Vaduz: Kraus Reprint, 1965), pp. 176-178.

<sup>39</sup> DGFP, Series C, vol. 2, p. 656.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid., p. 656; Plieg, Das Memelland, pp. 122, 126.

Directorate because of his sympathetic attitude toward the CSA and Sovog. When Schreiber refused to resign, Navakas dismissed him and appointed a Lithuanian, Martynas Reisgys, in his place.<sup>41</sup> Under Article 17 of the Memel Statute, Reisgys and his new Directorate should have presented themselves before the Memel Landtag for a vote of confidence within four weeks of their appointment.<sup>42</sup> The Memel Landtag, dominated by Germans, undoubtedly would have censured an all-Lithuanian Directorate.

The Lithuanian government was able to prevent the Landtag's vote of censure by a legal, if unethical, maneuver. On July 12, two weeks before the Memel Landtag's scheduled meeting to vote on support for Reisgys, the Lithuanian government enacted a law which empowered the Lithuanian military commandant of the Memel Territory to dissolve organizations he considered seditious and to deprive all members of these organizations of the right to elect or be elected members of the Landtag.<sup>43</sup> The Landwirtschaftspartei, a German party with membership in the Landtag, was declared dangerous to the state and members of this party were not allowed to sit in the Landtag. In addition, all of the

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<sup>41</sup>Gerutis, Lithuania: 700 Years, pp. 243-244.

<sup>42</sup>League of Nations, "Convention Concerning the Territory of Memel," p. 101.

<sup>43</sup>Duff, "Relations Between Germany and Lithuania Over Memel," p. 250.

Lithuanian representatives failed to appear at the Landtag's opening session on July 27. This prevented the censure of Reisgys's Directorate because not enough Landtag members were present to achieve a quorum.<sup>44</sup>

Reisgys's Directorate quickly began the task of de-Germanization of the Memel Territory. From July to September over five hundred Memel officials were dismissed from their positions. These included judges, policemen, teachers, and railway officials.<sup>45</sup> A law was passed forbidding use of the German language in all schools where a majority of the pupils came from Lithuanian families. This law violated Article 27 of the Memel Statute, which placed both languages on an equal basis in the Memel Territory.<sup>46</sup>

German reaction to these developments was confined to angry protests. On July 5 Germany sent a note to Great Britain, France, and Italy protesting the dismissal of Schreiber and the appointment of Reisgys.<sup>47</sup> On July 6 the German Ambassador to Great Britain, Leopold von Hoesch, told the British Foreign Secretary, John Simon, that the Signatory Powers must take action on Lithuanian violations

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<sup>44</sup>Ibid.

<sup>45</sup>Ibid.; "Lithuania is Still Ousting German-Born Officials," NYT, 23 July 1934, p. 5.

<sup>46</sup>League of Nations, "Convention Concerning the Territory of Memel," p. 103.

<sup>47</sup>DGFP, Series C, vol. 3, p. 137.

of the Memel Statute. Simon was noncommittal, as were the French and Italian officials, toward the German request.<sup>48</sup>

By late July and August the Signatory Powers were answering German protests with an invitation to Germany to rejoin the League of Nations, where she could discuss the Memel situation in the League Council.<sup>49</sup> German Foreign Ministry officials insisted that the Memel problem be handled through normal diplomatic channels and not by the League Council.<sup>50</sup> Hitler had withdrawn Germany from the League because of the disarmament question and he would not rejoin it over the relatively minor problem of Memel.

In August 1934 the Signatory Powers, at the insistence of Germany, made démarches in Kovno and asked Lithuania to reply to the German protests. Lithuanian officials informed Great Britain and France that the Memel Statute had not been violated and that the Hague Court had already ruled on Lithuanian powers over the Directorate.<sup>51</sup> After adjournment of the September 6 Landtag session, caused by the absence of a quorum, German officials again sent

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<sup>48</sup>Ibid., pp. 139, 152-153, 157-158.

<sup>49</sup>Germany had withdrawn from the League of Nations in October 1933; Ibid., p. 282; "The Statute of Memel," The Times (London), 20 July 1934, p. 7.

<sup>50</sup>DGFP, Series C, vol. 3, p. 289.

<sup>51</sup>Ibid., p. 384.

protests to Great Britain and France.<sup>52</sup> Great Britain favored sending a collective note to Lithuania, but France and Italy preferred to wait and hope for a change attitude in Lithuania.<sup>53</sup> With no change in Memel forthcoming and the German protests increasing, the Signatory Powers made individual démarches on September 25. They also referred the German complaints to legal experts in Geneva. Should the experts conclude that violations of the Memel Statute were being committed, the Signatory Powers indicated that they would take steps to correct the situation.<sup>54</sup> Although the jurists' report found Lithuania guilty of violations of the Memel Statute, no immediate action was taken by the Signatory Powers because Lithuania promised to rectify the violations.<sup>55</sup>

As a result of the Signatory Powers' démarches, the Lithuanian government adopted a seemingly compromising and conciliatory attitude toward Germany. On November 8 Jurgis Šaulys, the Lithuanian Minister in Berlin, visited Neurath to discuss the Memel problem. Šaulys explained Lithuanian conduct in Memel as a defense against provocative acts by

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<sup>52</sup>Ibid., pp. 390-391.

<sup>53</sup>Ibid., pp. 395-396, 408, 412.

<sup>54</sup>Ibid., pp. 426-427.

<sup>55</sup>"Memel Dispute," The Times (London), 6 October 1934, p. 11; "The Memel Question," The Times (London), 23 October 1934, p. 13.

German groups that wanted to reintegrate Memel into the Reich. Šaulys hoped for an improvement in German-Lithuanian relations through the signing of a nonaggression pact. Neurath said improvement of relations depended on the forthcoming trial of Memel Germans in Kovno.<sup>56</sup> During Šaulys's visit with Bülow on November 20 the subject of a pact was discussed again. Bülow told Šaulys that rapprochement was impossible until after the Kovno trial.<sup>57</sup> These two meetings with German Foreign Office officials changed Lithuania's short-lived plan of conciliation and compromise to a plan of suppression of National Socialism in the Memel Territory.

The trial of thirty-three CSA members and ninety-three Sovog members, arrested in the spring and summer of 1934, began before a military court at Kovno on December 14.<sup>58</sup> After three months of testimony the court, on March 26, sentenced four Sovog members to death for murder, Neumann to twelve years at hard labor, and many others to lesser terms in prison. Thirty defendants were acquitted of the charge of conspiring to overthrow the Memel government.<sup>59</sup>

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<sup>56</sup>DGFP, Series C, vol. 3, pp. 599-600.

<sup>57</sup>Ibid., p. 652.

<sup>58</sup>Plieg, Das Memelland, p. 121.

<sup>59</sup>"Four Memel Nazis Sentenced to Die," NYT, 27 March 1935, p. 1.



World reaction to the court's verdict was generally unfavorable. The prosecution failed to produce evidence of a conspiracy in Memel and failed to establish a direct link between the National Socialist Party and the CSA or the Sovog.<sup>60</sup> The prosecution also failed to prove that the four Sovog members were guilty of murder.<sup>61</sup> Alexander Lawrence, a British lawyer who observed the trial, considered the sentences too harsh and incompatible with the evidence.<sup>62</sup>

German-Lithuanian relations became increasingly hostile during the three months of the trial. Germany objected to the trial taking place before a military court in Kovno because it presumably violated the judicial autonomy given to the Memel Territory in Article 5 of the Memel Statute.<sup>63</sup> Lithuania defended the use of a military court that was established by the enactment of martial law in 1926 and the protection law of 1933.<sup>64</sup> On January 19, 1935,

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<sup>60</sup>Duff, "Relations Between Germany and Lithuania Over Memel," p. 253; "Memel Trial Verdict," The Times (London), 27 March 1935, p. 14.

<sup>61</sup>Pliég, Das Memelland, pp. 246-248.

<sup>62</sup>"Britons Denounce Sentence," NYT, 28 March 1935, p. 2.

<sup>63</sup>League of Nations, "Convention Concerning the Territory of Memel," p. 97; Duff, "Relations Between Germany and Lithuania Over Memel," p. 252.

<sup>64</sup>Duff, "Relations Between Germany and Lithuania Over Memel," p. 252.

the German newspapers began a concentrated campaign against Lithuanian actions in Memel.<sup>65</sup> This was followed by reports of Lithuanian and German troop mobilization on the Memel border on January 20.<sup>66</sup> On February 12 mass demonstrations were held at the University of Berlin against Lithuanian actions in Memel. However, no mention of German invasion of Memel was made.<sup>67</sup> Hitler preferred verbal protests to direct military aggression in dealing with Lithuania.

The German reaction to the Memel verdict was immediate. On March 25, the day before the verdict was announced, Hitler told Simon that Germany would not sign a nonaggression pact with Lithuania as long as German minorities were oppressed in Memel. Hitler also told Simon that Germany would not risk war for the comparatively few Germans in Memel.<sup>68</sup> During the March 26 meeting with Simon, Hitler received a telegram announcing the Kovno verdict. He asked Simon what Great Britain would do if the Treaty

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<sup>65</sup>"Nazis Open Drive to Regain Memel," NYT, 20 January 1935, p. 1.

<sup>66</sup>"Lithuania Admits Mobilizing," NYT, 21 January 1935, pp. 1, 7.

<sup>67</sup>"Students in Reich Back Memel Drive," NYT, 13 February 1935, p. 7.

<sup>68</sup>Great Britain, Foreign Office, Documents on British Foreign Policy, ed. by W. N. Medlicott, Douglas Dakin, and M. E. Lambert, Second Series (London: Her Majesty's Stationery Office, 1946-1973, hereafter cited as DBFP), vol. 12, p. 712; DGFP, Series C, vol. 3, pp. 1,047, 1,050.

of Versailles had taken British territory and placed it under oppressive Lithuanian control. Simon did not reply to Hitler's question.<sup>69</sup> On March 27 protests against the verdict were staged by the National League for Germanism Abroad throughout Germany. The foreign press in Germany reported that the demonstrations were small and unenthusiastic.<sup>70</sup> Still, demonstrations and propaganda battles between Germany and Lithuania continued throughout 1935.

In April the Signatory Powers took decisive action concerning the Memel problem. At the Stresa Conference, held from April 11-14, the three Signatory Powers decided to send identical telegrams to their ministers in Kovno. The telegrams instructed the ministers to announce jointly to the Lithuanian government that a return to legality in the Memel Territory was imperative. If the Lithuanian government did not correct the situation, the Signatory Powers would bring the subject before the League Council.<sup>71</sup>

Lithuania took several steps to comply with the Signatory Powers' demands. On April 5, before Lithuania received the note from the Signatory Powers, the Lithuanian government replaced Navakas with Vladas Kurkauskas

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<sup>69</sup>DBFP, Second Series, vol. 12, p. 733; DGFP, Series C, vol. 3, p. 1,068.

<sup>70</sup>Otto D. Tolischus, "Nazi Fury on Memel Rises," NYT, 28 March 1935, p. 1.

<sup>71</sup>DBFP, Second Series, vol. 12, p. 908.

as governor of the Memel Territory. Kurkauskas was reputed by some foreign reporters to be more understanding of the Memel German problems than was Navakas.<sup>72</sup> Kurkauskas appointed Jurgis Bruvelaitis as President of the Directorate and instructed him to form a Directorate to include a majority of pro-Germans.<sup>73</sup> On May 2 Lithuania replied to the Signatory Powers' démarche with messages that she was attempting to achieve satisfactory collaboration among Governor Kurkauskas, President Bruvelaitis, and the Memel Landtag. Lithuania expressed hope that the Memel controversy would not be brought before the League Council.<sup>74</sup>

In May 1935 tension between Germany and Lithuania renewed as Lithuanian attempts at compromise failed. Bruvelaitis's efforts to form a new Directorate were unsuccessful because the German majority refused to participate in a Directorate led by a Lithuanian.<sup>75</sup> On May 18 Lithuanian President Smetona commuted the death sentences of the four Sovog members to life imprisonment.<sup>76</sup> The

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<sup>72</sup>"Lithuania and Memel," The Times (London), 6 April 1935, p. 12.

<sup>73</sup>"Lithuania to Name Reich as Intruder," NYT, 29 April 1935, p. 9.

<sup>74</sup>"Lithuania to Seek An Accord in Memel," NYT, 3 May 1935, p. 11; DGFP, Series C, vol. 4, pp. 112-113.

<sup>75</sup>"Memel Diet Expires," NYT, 6 May 1935, p. 10.

<sup>76</sup>"Memel Death Sentences Commuted," The Times (London), 20 May 1935, p. 13.

German Propaganda Ministry's response to Smetona's clemency was a demand that all of the prisoners be released.<sup>77</sup> On May 21 Hitler referred to the Memel situation in a speech to the Reichstag. He declared his willingness to sign non-aggression pacts with all of Germany's neighbors except Lithuania. Hitler urged the Signatory Powers to force Lithuania to obey the Memel Statute. Once the Statute was enforced, Germany would be willing to sign a treaty with Lithuania.<sup>78</sup>

Relations between Germany and Lithuania remained strained through the remainder of 1935 because of a controversy over new Memel Landtag elections. The three-year term of the Memel Landtag expired on May 4. Although the Memel Statute provided for a new election within six weeks of the expiration of the term,<sup>79</sup> the Lithuanian government delayed the new elections until September.<sup>80</sup> Lithuania hoped to build support for the Lithuanian parties within the Memel Territory before new elections could be held.

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<sup>77</sup>"Germany Not Appeased," NYT, 19 May 1935, p. 1.

<sup>78</sup>Norman Baynes, ed., The Speeches of Adolf Hitler: April 1922-August 1939, vol. 2 (New York: Oxford University Press, 1942; reprint ed., New York: Howard Fertig, 1969), pp. 1,235-1,237.

<sup>79</sup>League of Nations, "Convention Concerning the Territory of Memel," p. 99.

<sup>80</sup>"Collapse of Memel Reform Efforts," The Times (London), 6 May 1935, p. 11.

The German reaction was to suspend all diplomatic and economic relations with Lithuania until concrete proposals were made to guarantee Memel's autonomy.<sup>81</sup> On June 29 Neurath refused to receive Lithuanian Foreign Minister Stasys Lozoraitis.<sup>82</sup>

In the summer months preceding the elections, Lithuania made several moves to undermine the German parties in Memel. On August 14, 1935, an amended Memel electoral law was passed which disqualified any candidate who had belonged to court-declared subversive organizations in the preceding five years.<sup>83</sup> A new system of voting for individual candidates was introduced to replace the former method of voting for party lists.<sup>84</sup> Because the German parties united under one list and the Lithuanian parties had six lists, the requirement to vote for individual candidates would aid the Lithuanian parties.

These Lithuanian actions prompted the Signatory Powers to issue demands on September 12 and 13 at Kovno. They required that Lithuania observe the provisions of the Memel Statute during the elections and that representatives

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<sup>81</sup>DGFP, Series C, vol. 4, pp. 390, 548.

<sup>82</sup>Ibid., p. 390.

<sup>83</sup>Duff, "Relations Between Germany and Lithuania Over Memel," p. 260.

<sup>84</sup>Ibid., p. 259.

of the three powers be allowed to observe the elections.<sup>85</sup> Lithuania ignored the first demand but complied with the second.<sup>86</sup>

German last-minute actions before the elections consisted of propaganda and complaints. On September 15 Hitler spoke before the Reichstag about the forthcoming Memel elections. Hitler warned Lithuania that Germany would watch the elections closely and, if Memel autonomy was not respected, regrettable events might occur.<sup>87</sup> This speech was broadcast on East Prussian radio stations on September 28, the night before the Memel elections, in an attempt to encourage the Memel German voters and discourage Lithuanian interference in the elections.<sup>88</sup> On September 20 four German Cabinet Ministers--Hermann Göring, Joseph Goebbels, Wilhelm Frick, and Neurath--published statements concerning Memel in a special edition of the Königsberg Preussische Zeitung. The ministers warned Lithuania to cease her provocative policy in Memel or be prepared to

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<sup>85</sup>DGFP, Series C, vol. 4, p. 638; "Three Powers Bid Lithuania to Adhere to Memel Pledge," NYT, 14 September 1935, p. 1.

<sup>86</sup>"Three Powers Act on Memel," NYT, 26 September 1935, p. 12.

<sup>87</sup>"Text of Hitler's Speech to Reichstag at Nuremberg," NYT, 16 September 1935, p. 11.

<sup>88</sup>"Hitler Repeats Plea to Memel," NYT, 29 September 1935, p. 6.

face the consequences.<sup>89</sup>

Other German protests charged that Lithuania was disenfranchising ten thousand German voters and enfranchising the same number of unqualified Lithuanian voters.<sup>90</sup> This complaint had no basis in fact. The final major demonstration before the elections occurred on September 22. This day was designated as the "Day of German Folkdom," during which the German minorities in all foreign countries were honored.<sup>91</sup> The main themes of the speeches in German cities on this day were the oppression suffered by German minorities in Europe and the Lithuanian "war of extermination"<sup>92</sup> being waged against Memel Germans.

The Memel elections of September 29, 1935, were considered a fiasco by neutral observers in the Memel Territory. The combination of a large number of voters and too few voting areas allowed only 60 percent of the voters to cast ballots. Germany blamed the delay on the complicated voting system which Lithuania had announced in August. Lithuania blamed the Memel Germans for sabotaging the

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<sup>89</sup>Otto D. Tolischus, "German Ministers Attack Lithuania," NYT, 20 September 1935, p. 4.

<sup>90</sup>"Reich Sees Peril in Memel Ballot," NYT, 22 September 1935, p. 30.

<sup>91</sup>Otto D. Tolischus, "Nazis Push Unity of World Germans," 24 September 1935, p. 12.

<sup>92</sup>"Germans and Memel," The Times (London), 24 September 1935, p. 13.



elections by bringing old and crippled voters to the polls in the morning to disrupt the efficiency of the polling stations.<sup>93</sup> Nonetheless, the elections were completed on September 30. The vote on September 30 may have been influenced by Hitler's presence at army maneuvers in Landsberg, East Prussia, across the border from Memel.<sup>94</sup>

The result of the Memel elections was an overwhelming victory for Memel Germans. The German United List received 81.17 percent of the Memel votes and twenty-four seats in the Memel Landtag. The Lithuanians received the remaining five seats in the Landtag.<sup>95</sup> All German protests against the fairness and validity of the elections were dropped.<sup>96</sup>

With the election issue resolved, the remaining sore point in German-Lithuanian relations in 1935 was the formation of a new Directorate. On November 13 Governor Kurkauskas appointed a Lithuanian, Endris Borchertas, to form a new Directorate.<sup>97</sup> The protest from Germany and

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<sup>93</sup>"Germans in Memel Claim a 90% Vote," NYT, 1 October 1935, p. 18.

<sup>94</sup>Ibid.

<sup>95</sup>"Memel Vote Put at 81.17% German," NYT, 15 October 1935, p. 12.

<sup>96</sup>"Reich Press Hails Victory in Memel," NYT, 11 October 1935, p. 12.

<sup>97</sup>"The New Directory in Memel," The Times (London), 13 November 1935, p. 11.

the Memel Landtag was so severe that Kurkauskas rescinded Borchertas's appointment and gave the Memel Landtag President, Augustas Baldžius, the task of forming a new Directorate.<sup>98</sup> With the November 28 formation of a Directorate consisting of five Germans and no Lithuanians,<sup>99</sup> the Memel Territory was under the effective political control of the Memel Germans.

Hitler had reason to be satisfied with his Lithuanian-Memel policy from 1933 to 1935. He had walked a tightrope between the possibilities of Signatory Power intervention and German aggression. He did not want to apply strong diplomatic pressure on the Signatory Powers because he felt this would force them to appoint an international commission in Memel which would prevent National Socialist agitation. Nor did he want to employ direct force against Lithuania because he had more important territorial aims in mind.<sup>100</sup> By achieving his 1933-1935 goal of Lithuanian political defeat in the Memel Territory, Hitler could now afford a period of calm with Lithuania.

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<sup>98</sup>"German Will Form Directory in Memel," NYT, 18 November 1935, p. 8.

<sup>99</sup>"Heads Memel Directory," NYT, 29 November 1935, p. 13.

<sup>100</sup>DGFP, Series C, vol. 4, p. 773.

## CHAPTER II

### YEARS OF PHONEY CALM: GERMAN-LITHUANIAN RELATIONS, 1936-1937

Considering the stormy nature of German-Lithuanian relations from 1933 to 1935, the years 1936-1937 seemed a period of calm. Hitler's immediate goal, German political control of Memel, was accomplished in 1935. His most important Lithuanian goal, the reincorporation of Memel into the Reich, remained to be achieved and was the major factor in producing the underlying tension of the years of calm. This period of calm was a sham because Germany had no intentions of making political peace with Lithuania. The Memel Territory continued to be an element of friction between the two countries.

Germany's willingness to sign treaties with Lithuania during this two-year period was not an indication of goodwill and nonaggression. The economic agreements signed in 1936 signified a German attempt to revive the economy of Memel and to encourage the Lithuanian government to release the Memel German prisoners convicted of treason in the Kovno trial of 1934-1935. German diplomats deemed it vital that the new German-dominated Landtag and Directorate

develop a prosperous economy in Memel and that the National Socialist leaders in Memel--those convicted in Kovno--be released to form new Nazi organizations to aid in the reincorporation of Memel into the Reich.

The Memel Territory suffered a tremendous drop in the export of agricultural goods with the closing of the borders between Lithuania and East Prussia in the early 1930's. By 1936 Lithuania, which had also suffered economically from the reduction of trade with Germany, had found alternative markets for her produce in Great Britain, Latvia, and Estonia.<sup>1</sup> The German Foreign Ministry was pressured to restore economic prosperity in the Memel Territory as quickly as possible. Erich Koch, provincial governor and Gauleiter of East Prussia, urged on January 31 that immediate aid be given to the Memel Territory to stabilize the politically precarious position of the Memel Directorate.<sup>2</sup> In early February Baldžius, president of the Memel Directorate, urged German assistance to Memel agriculture before the Memel city council elections on February 24. Baldžius predicted a German defeat in the elections if economic aid was not given.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>DGFP, Series C, vol. 4, pp. 1,001-1,002.

<sup>2</sup>The Directorate's position remained precarious because of the governor's dismissal power; *Ibid.*, p. 1,115.

<sup>3</sup>*Ibid.*, pp. 1,122-1,123.

The possibility of economic negotiations between Germany and Lithuania was discussed in February 1936. In early February Hitler informed Neurath that economic assistance should be given to Memel.<sup>4</sup> On February 11 the Lithuanian government was approached by officials of the German Foreign Ministry concerning the possibility of a return to normal economic relations.<sup>5</sup> The Lithuanian government accepted the German proposal for economic negotiations on February 22.<sup>6</sup> The Memel city council elections, which had been postponed until May, reflected the German success in beginning economic negotiations. The Memel Germans retained twenty-five of the forty seats on the Memel city council.<sup>7</sup>

The economic negotiations, which began in Berlin on March 9 and were not completed until August 5, did not proceed smoothly.<sup>8</sup> Both countries had ulterior motives in these economic negotiations. Germany wanted to sign trade

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<sup>4</sup>Ibid., pp. 1,115-1,116.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid., p. 1,122; "German Trade with Lithuania," The Times (London), 12 February 1936, p. 13.

<sup>6</sup>DGFP, Series C, vol. 4, pp. 1,168-1,169.

<sup>7</sup>"Memel Germans Retain Seats," NYT, 27 May 1936, p. 15; Plieg, Das Memelland, p. 178.

<sup>8</sup>Arnold Toynbee and V. M. Boulter, "The Balticum Between Russia and Germany," Survey of International Affairs, 1936 (London: Oxford University Press, 1937), p. 538.

agreements with Lithuania for the purpose of opening the frontier between East Prussia and the Memel Territory. Lithuania hoped that the economic negotiations would be a springboard for a German-Lithuanian nonaggression pact. These different objectives hampered the negotiations.

During the July 8 meeting between Šaulys and Neurath the two divergent goals became clear. Šaulys insisted that a German-Lithuanian nonaggression pact be signed in the immediate future as Hitler had promised in his Reichstag speech of March 7.<sup>9</sup> In this speech Hitler stated that Germany was no longer unwilling to sign a nonaggression pact with Lithuania because the provisions of the Memel Statute were now being obeyed.<sup>10</sup> Neurath told Šaulys that a nonaggression pact was dependent upon Lithuanian cooperation towards solving Memel's economic problems. Neurath insisted that the purchase of Lithuanian swine not be made solely through the Lithuanian Sales Organization. Since Memel German farmers were not represented in this Lithuanian organization, the German purchase of swine would not aid the German farmers in the Memel Territory.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>9</sup>DGFP, Series C, vol. 5, p. 749.

<sup>10</sup>During this same speech Hitler announced the German remilitarization of the Rhineland; Max Domarus, Hitler: Reden und Proklamationen, 1932-1945, vol. 1, pt. 2 (Munich: Süddeutscher Verlag, 1965), p. 595.

<sup>11</sup>DGFP, Series C, vol. 5, p. 749.

The German-Lithuanian economic agreements, signed in Berlin on August 5, marked the successful completion of the German objective. The economic agreements provided for an increased exchange of goods, regulations governing labor and residence permits, a basis for trade payments, and the opening of the frontier between Germany and Lithuania.<sup>12</sup> Provisions were made for the export of swine, cattle, horses, cheese, and grain from Memel to Germany.<sup>13</sup> The agreements allowed Germany to make up to 40 percent of her agricultural purchases from Memel farmers.<sup>14</sup> Lithuania's objective, a nonaggression pact with Germany, was delayed for an indefinite time, due to Germany's expressed concern about Lithuania's willingness to continue to obey the Memel Statute.<sup>15</sup>

German reluctance to sign a nonaggression pact was a major factor in Lithuania's establishment of closer relations with the Soviet Union in 1936 and 1937. On May 1, 1936, the Chiefs of Staff of the Lithuanian, Latvian, and Estonian Armed Forces attended a series of discussions in Moscow concerning possible Soviet military aid to the Baltic

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<sup>12</sup>Ibid., pp. 912-913.

<sup>13</sup>Ibid., p. 913.

<sup>14</sup>"Economic Peace in the Baltic," The Times (London), 6 August 1936, p. 9.

<sup>15</sup>DGFP, Series C, vol. 5, p. 913.

States. The military importance of the Baltic States to the Soviet Union was signified by the large number of important Soviet party and military officials at the discussions.<sup>16</sup>

The Baltic States, however, remained wary of allowing Soviet bases and troops on their territory. In December 1936 the Soviet minister in Kovno, Mikhail Karsky, warned Lithuanian officials that only the Soviet Union could defend Lithuania against possible German or Polish aggression.<sup>17</sup> In February 1937 Aleksandr Egorov, Chief of the General Staff of the Soviet Army, visited the three Baltic capitals in another attempt to bind the Baltic States militarily to the Soviet Union.<sup>18</sup> The Baltic States, while welcoming the prospect of Soviet support in the face of actual German aggression, did not want Soviet bases and troops within their boundaries during peaceful periods.

The false nature of the so-called "calm"<sup>19</sup> years of

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<sup>16</sup>Bohdan B. Budurowycz, Polish-Soviet Relations, 1932-1939 (New York: Columbia University Press, 1963), p. 87; Tarulis, Soviet Policy Toward the Baltic States, p. 92.

<sup>17</sup>Rauch, The Baltic States, p. 192.

<sup>18</sup>Ibid.

<sup>19</sup>For the view that German-Lithuanian relations were satisfactory during these years see "Improvement in Memel," The Times (London), 5 February 1936, p. 7, and "Position in Memel," The Times (London), 11 February 1937, p. 7; for a more realistic assessment of this period see Henry C. Wolfe, "Why Hitler Wants Memel," Current History 45 (January 1937): 55-60.



1936-1937 is indicated by German actions concerning the Memel Territory. Although the leaders of National Socialist organizations in Memel had been imprisoned, German propaganda activity continued. Moreover, German officials attempted to persuade Lithuania to release Memel leaders convicted in the Kovno trial so that the CSA and the Sovog might accelerate their anti-Lithuanian propaganda. On February 7, 1936, Neurath instructed the German Legation in Kovno to broach the question of the release of the CSA and Sovog members convicted in March 1935. Neurath, however, was unwilling to exchange Lithuanian prisoners in Germany for the convicted Memel Germans.<sup>20</sup> Although strong diplomatic pressure to release the Memel German prisoners did not begin until 1938,<sup>21</sup> Smetona released a majority of the Memel Germans by the end of 1937.<sup>22</sup> Neumann, the leader of the Sovog and the most important figure in the Memel Nazi movement, was not released until 1938.<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>20</sup>These Lithuanians were imprisoned in Germany for alleged sabotage and propaganda activities; DGFP, Series C, vol. 4, pp. 902-903, 1,114.

<sup>21</sup>Ibid., Series D, vol. 5, pp. 437, 446, 450.

<sup>22</sup>"Lithuanian Independence," The Times (London), 18 February 1936, p. 13; "Lithuanian Reprieve of Memel-landers," The Times (London), 24 December 1936, p. 11; Veronica M. Toynbee, "North-Eastern Europe," Survey of International Affairs, 1938, by R. G. D. Laffan (London: Oxford University Press, 1953), p. 360.

<sup>23</sup>Toynbee, "North-Eastern Europe," p. 360.

German propaganda activity in Lithuania and the Memel Territory continued to flourish as indicated by the trials held in Kovno in 1936 and 1937. On May 23, 1936, four Lithuanian farmers, alleged agents of Germany, were convicted of smuggling inflammatory proclamations into the Memel Territory and Lithuania and were executed. Eight other farmers, charged with plotting to overthrow the Lithuanian government, received sentences of life imprisonment.<sup>24</sup> On October 13 ten Memel Germans received prison sentences varying from one to two years for disrupting the Memel Landtag elections held in September 1935.<sup>25</sup> On May 24, 1937, thirteen Memel Germans, accused of espionage and disloyalty, received terms of imprisonment varying from six months to two years.<sup>26</sup> German reaction to these trials was negligible because the evidence against the accused was overwhelming and the sentences, with the exception of the May 1936 verdict, were extremely light.<sup>27</sup>

German reaction to the Lithuanian Expropriation Law of September 6, 1937, was not negligible. This law expropriated over one thousand acres of land in the Memel

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<sup>24</sup>"Four Lithuanians Die as Agents of Germany," NYT, 24 May 1936, p. 31.

<sup>25</sup>"Telegrams in Brief," The Times (London), 15 October 1936, p. 13.

<sup>26</sup>Toynbee, "North-Eastern Europe," p. 361.

<sup>27</sup>Ibid.

Territory from twenty-four Memel landowners for military, railway, harbor, and customs use.<sup>28</sup> The Memel Germans believed this measure was passed to settle Lithuanians on the expropriated land. A major influx of Lithuanian citizens into the Memel Territory before the 1938 Memel Landtag elections would improve the Lithuanian political position in the territory.<sup>29</sup> The German Foreign Ministry strenuously objected to the law as a violation of the Memel Statute.<sup>30</sup> The German press attacked the passage of the expropriation law and issued veiled threats to Lithuania. In an article published in the Völkischer Beobachter, the official National Socialist newspaper, in honor of the September 18th "Day of German Folkdom," Lithuania was discounted as a serious prospective political partner for Germany. The paper warned that Lithuania " . . . might learn from those of her political friends who have comprehended that the year 1937 is not the year 1933."<sup>31</sup> The increased strength of the German army was the most obvious difference between the two years. The strong German reaction caused Lithuania to rescind the law in 1938.<sup>32</sup>

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<sup>28</sup>Ibid.; Plieg, Das Memelland, pp. 181-182.

<sup>29</sup>Toynbee, "North-Eastern Europe," p. 361.

<sup>30</sup>DGFP, Series D, vol. 5, pp. 419, 421-422.

<sup>31</sup>"Nazi Paper Warns Lithuania Sharply," NYT, 19 September 1937, p. 17.

<sup>32</sup>Toynbee, "North-Eastern Europe," p. 362.

The legality of the Lithuanian Expropriation Law was heatedly debated by diplomats from Germany and Lithuania. German officials accused Lithuania of violating Articles 5 and 32 of the Memel Statute. They interpreted these articles as giving only the Memel Directorate the power to expropriate Memel property.<sup>33</sup> Lithuanian officials argued that the expropriation of land for public utility could be made by the Lithuanian government.<sup>34</sup> Article 5 of the Memel Statute states that administration of public property belonged to the local authorities of the Memel Territory.<sup>35</sup> Article 32, the primary provision concerning the expropriation of private property, does not designate the legislative body that can order the seizure of private property. It does state that expropriation can occur only for purposes of public utility and that payment of an equitable compensation be made in advance.<sup>36</sup> The argument between Germany and Lithuania over the expropriation law indicates that the basic political disagreements regarding the Memel Territory remained and that economic agreements would not resolve them.

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<sup>33</sup>DGFP, Series D, vol. 5, p. 423.

<sup>34</sup>Toynbee, "North-Eastern Europe," p. 361; "Germans Beyond the Reich," The Times (London), 29 November 1937, p. 13.

<sup>35</sup>League of Nations, "Convention Concerning the Territory of Memel," p. 97.

<sup>36</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 105.

By late 1937 Hitler was planning his aggressive moves to achieve German Lebensraum in Europe. Two important meetings in November, the Hossbach Conference and Hitler's conversation with Edward Halifax, indicated the main territorial aims of Germany in the East. These aims, espoused in Hitler's early writings, were put in the planning stages in 1938.

The Hossbach Conference,<sup>37</sup> held on November 5, marked the first time Hitler's decision to unleash a war of aggression was discussed with his ministers.<sup>38</sup> Present at the meeting besides Hitler and Hossbach were German War Minister Werner von Blomberg, Commander-in-Chief of the Army Werner von Fritsch, Commander-in-Chief of the Navy Erich Raeder, Commander-in-Chief of the Air Force Goring, and German Foreign Minister Neurath. Although historians stress different topics as being of major importance at the Hossbach Conference,<sup>39</sup> Hitler's immediate aims became clear

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<sup>37</sup>The meeting is called the Hossbach Conference because the only written record of the meeting is the minutes taken by Friedrich Hossbach, Hitler's military adjutant.

<sup>38</sup>Bracher, The German Dictatorship, p. 307.

<sup>39</sup>For the traditional view that the major importance of the Hossbach Conference was the discussion of eastern aims see Rich, Hitler's War Aims, p. 97; for the view that the conference was important because it indicated Hitler's changing attitude toward Great Britain see Hildebrand, The Foreign Policy of the Third Reich, pp. 51-54; for a capricious view that the conference was a demonstration that war was unnecessary see A. J. P. Taylor, The Origins of the Second World War (New York: Atheneum, 1961), pp. 131-134.

at this meeting. Hitler stated that Germany's future depended on her ability to solve the problem of Lebensraum. He believed overseas colonies were not the solution to Germany's problems because they could not be used effectively for agriculture or industry. The major area of expansion could only be in Eastern Europe and could be acquired only through force. Finally, Hitler hoped to solve Germany's problem of space by 1943-1945 at the latest.<sup>40</sup>

On November 19 Hitler met with Halifax, the British Deputy Foreign Secretary, in Berchtesgaden to discuss both bilateral relations and general European problems. Halifax wanted German cooperation to create conditions that would help sustain world peace. Hitler stated that reasonable solutions to European problems were impossible to accomplish because the democracies were ruled by demagogic political parties rather than by individual statesmen possessing freedom of action.<sup>41</sup> Hitler said the robbery of Memel by Lithuania in 1923 and the treatment of German protests concerning Lithuanian violations of the Memel Statute were notorious examples of the harmful influence of political parties.<sup>42</sup> Halifax replied that his trip was purposeless if Hitler

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<sup>40</sup>DGFP, Series D, vol. 1, pp. 32-35.

<sup>41</sup>Ibid., p. 59.

<sup>42</sup>Ibid.

objected to dealing with democratic countries.<sup>43</sup>

The most important topic of conversation dealt with territorial expansion. Halifax, speaking for Prime Minister Neville Chamberlain,<sup>44</sup> seemed to be prepared to give Hitler political and economic hegemony over Central and Eastern Europe so long as it was accomplished peacefully. Halifax insisted, however, that territorial alterations be made through multilateral negotiations with all the countries concerned.<sup>45</sup> Hitler replied that Germany had a just claim to her former territory and that multilateral negotiations presented too many difficulties in reaching a meaningful territorial settlement.<sup>46</sup> Hitler, as the Hossbach Conference has shown, preferred a military conquest of Eastern Europe over a peaceful political and economic hegemony.<sup>47</sup>

These two meetings at the end of 1937 marked the termination of the phony calm period between Germany and Lithuania. Throughout the years 1936-1937 western diplomats and reporters believed that relations between Germany and

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<sup>43</sup>Ibid., p. 60.

<sup>44</sup>Ibid., pp. 55, 67.

<sup>45</sup>Ibid., pp. 62-63.

<sup>46</sup>Ibid., pp. 63-65.

<sup>47</sup>Hildebrand, The Foreign Policy of the Third Reich, p. 56.

Lithuania were markedly improving. Although economic agreements and the release of most of the 1935 Memel German prisoners occurred, the fundamental dispute over the Memel Territory remained. Memel Germans were arrested during this period and Germany continued to protest Lithuanian laws pertaining to the Memel Territory. Hitler's Lithuanian policy of "running sore" diplomacy over Memel was renewed in late 1937. At the same time his aims for Lebensraum in Europe were established for the immediate future.



### CHAPTER III

#### YEARS OF CRISIS, APPEASEMENT, AND AGGRESSION:

#### GERMAN-LITHUANIAN RELATIONS, 1938-1939

The years 1938-1939 marked the renewal of strife between Germany and Lithuania over Memel and the entrance of Soviet Russia as a major factor into German-Lithuanian relations. During this two-year period German foreign relations appear to form a pattern, or at least a tendency, wherein crises were followed by appeasement and aggression.

One sign that 1938 might be a year of change in German foreign policy was Hitler's removal of the heads of the Foreign and War Ministries and his placement of the Volksdeutsche Mittelstelle (Racial German Assistance Center or VOMI) under his personal control. On February 4 Joachim von Ribbentrop, an ardent National Socialist, supplanted the more moderate Neurath as Reich Foreign Minister. Blomberg, Reich War Minister, was removed and the post of War Minister abolished. Hitler assumed the post of Commander-in-Chief of the Armed Forces.<sup>1</sup> By a Hitler order of July 2,

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<sup>1</sup>Paul Seabury, The Wilhelmstrasse: A Study of German Diplomats Under the Nazi Regime (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1954), pp. 41-42; for a comprehensive

the VOMI was placed under Hitler's personal control and given the responsibility for ethnic and border area questions, including German minorities abroad and foreign minorities within Germany.<sup>2</sup> This decree directly affected Lithuania because of the large number of Germans living in Memel.

The pattern of crisis, appeasement, and aggression began early in 1938 with a Polish ultimatum to Lithuania demanding a reopening of diplomatic relations. The ultimatum was delivered as a result of the killing of a Polish soldier by Lithuanian border guards on the Wilna frontier on March 11.<sup>3</sup> The most important reasons for Poland's precipitate action, however, were the fear of German intentions toward Lithuania and the desire to renew diplomatic relations in order to facilitate the establishment of an Eastern European bloc of states, a "Third Europe,"<sup>4</sup> to counter the Franco-British Entente and the Rome-Berlin Axis. As long

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account of the Blomberg-Fritsch affairs see Harold C. Deutsch, Hitler and His Generals: The Hidden Crisis, January-June, 1938 (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1974).

<sup>2</sup>Hans Buchheim, "The SS: Instrument of Domination," Anatomy of the SS State, by Helmut Krausnick et al., trans. by Richard Barry et al. (New York: Walker, 1968), pp. 283-284; Rich, Hitler's War Aims, p. 280.

<sup>3</sup>Józef Lipski, Diplomat in Berlin, 1933-1939, trans. by Waclaw Jedrzyewicz (New York: Columbia University Press, 1968), p. 352.

<sup>4</sup>Hans Roos (Hans Otto Meissner), A History of Modern Poland, trans. by J. R. Foster (New York: Alfred Knopf, 1966), p. 154.

as Lithuania refused diplomatic relations with Poland, this desire would remain unfulfilled.

The ultimatum, announced on March 17, gave Lithuania forty-eight hours to restore diplomatic relations. The ultimatum prompted suspicions in many of the capitals of Europe that the Polish demands implied a resumption of diplomatic relations in order to include trade and customs agreements and the deletion of the article in the Lithuanian Constitution which named Wilna the capital of Lithuania. Although Polish officials had considered including harsh terms in the ultimatum, the only requirement sent to Lithuania was a renewal of diplomatic relations.<sup>5</sup>

Lithuania's leaders, believing a renewal of diplomatic relations would imply an acceptance of the Polish seizure of Wilna in 1920, turned to all of the major European powers for help in stalling the Polish ultimatum. From Great Britain and France, Lithuania received expressions of sympathy but no promise of military aid.<sup>6</sup> Although Litvinov, the Soviet Foreign Commissar, inquired whether or not Poland would use force, he was conspicuously unavailable to the Lithuanian Minister in Moscow, Jurgis Baltrusaitis.<sup>7</sup> Hitler

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<sup>5</sup>DGFP, Series D, vol. 5, p. 432; "Poland Sends an Ultimatum," NYT, 18 March 1938, pp. 1, 12.

<sup>6</sup>"Paris Urging Kaunas to Yield to Warsaw," NYT, 19 March 1938, p. 2.

<sup>7</sup>Tarulis, Soviet Policy Toward the Baltic States, p. 95; Budurowycz, Polish-Soviet Relations, p. 111.

reacted to the crisis by issuing a directive on March 18 to prepare the German army to enter Memel if the Poles invaded Lithuania. The entry into Memel was to occur within the first hours of a Polish-Lithuanian conflict.<sup>8</sup> The German High Command's line for occupation covered an area of six thousand square miles, more than five times larger than the Memel Territory itself.<sup>9</sup> On the same day Ribbentrop advised Šaulys, the Lithuanian Minister in Berlin, to accept unconditionally the Polish ultimatum.<sup>10</sup> Without support and under the threat of attack from Polish forces massing in the Wilna area, the Lithuanian government accepted the ultimatum on March 19.<sup>11</sup> Another victory for force was achieved in Europe at the expense of peaceful negotiation.

Hitler had reason to be pleased with the outcome of the Polish-Lithuanian crisis. The Polish policy of force gave Germany a partner in brutal methods of conducting diplomacy in Eastern Europe. Also, Hitler was encouraged by the lack of support Lithuania received from Russia,

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<sup>8</sup>DGFP, Series D, vol. 5, p. 433.

<sup>9</sup>Tarulis, Soviet Policy Toward the Baltic States, p. 96.

<sup>10</sup>DGFP, Series D, vol. 5, p. 436.

<sup>11</sup>Jerzy Szapiro, "Lithuania and Poland Decide on Peace," NYT, 20 March 1938, p. 33.

France, and Great Britain.<sup>12</sup> Appeasement in the face of a crisis encouraged more aggression. This was true in Austria, which was united to the German Reich in March 1938. Similarly, Poland created a crisis and was appeased by Lithuania. Hitler, encouraged by his success in Austria and by Polish actions, would use the same tactics in the fall of 1938 to acquire the Sudeten area of Czechoslovakia.

The year 1938 was also a crisis year in the relations between Germany and Lithuania regarding Memel. Elections to the Memel Landtag were scheduled for December, and German-Lithuanian relations were geared toward that event. It was a frenzied year of political activity which produced charges and counter-charges, riots, trials, and resignations.

On February 14 Smetona, the President of Lithuania, announced an amnesty for political enemies of the state in connection with the twentieth anniversary of Lithuanian independence.<sup>13</sup> Voldemaras, former Prime Minister of Lithuania, was released after serving four years of his twelve-year term for treason. More important to Germany, Neumann, the Sovog leader in Memel, was released after serving less than three years of his twelve-year term for treason.<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>12</sup>"Nazis Are Pleased With Polish Peace," NYT, 20 March 1938, p. 34.

<sup>13</sup>"Amnesty in Lithuania," The Times (London), 15 February 1938, p. 13.

<sup>14</sup>Ibid.

Neumann returned to Memel to organize another National Socialist Party network. He was proclaimed the "Führer of Memel" and would soon also be known as the "Henlein of Memel."<sup>15</sup>

While Neumann was busy organizing his followers in Memel, the German Foreign Ministry was engaged in drawing up a list of grievances against Lithuania concerning alleged violations of the Memel Statute. These grievances included the imposition of martial law in Memel, illegal vetoes of Landtag bills by the Memel governor, exclusion of members of Memel German parties from political office, and the exclusive use of the Lithuanian language and place names in administrative and public offices.<sup>16</sup> These grievances were given to Šaulys on March 25 by German State Secretary Weizsäcker.<sup>17</sup>

Hitler considered the termination of martial law in Memel as the most important grievance to be resolved. The martial law, which had existed since 1926, prevented Hitler from fully exploiting the return of Neumann to Memel and hindered the organization of Neumann's National Socialist Party. On April 13 the Memel Landtag, which was

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<sup>15</sup>Konrad Henlein was the leader of the Sudeten Germans in Czechoslovakia; Toynbee, "North-Eastern Europe," p. 362; Gerutis, Lithuania: 700 Years, pp. 245, 247.

<sup>16</sup>DGFP, Series D, vol. 5, pp. 445-446.

<sup>17</sup>Ibid., pp. 446-447.

dominated by German members, requested the abrogation of martial law and the removal of Lithuanian security police from Memel.<sup>18</sup> On the same day the Lithuanian government rejected a representation by Memel deputies in the Parliament to lift the twelve-year state of martial law.<sup>19</sup>

On May 7 Šaulys visited Werner von Grundherr, Director of Political Division VI and a specialist in Lithuanian affairs, in Berlin. Remembering the lack of support received from the Western Powers and Russia during the Polish-Lithuanian crisis, Šaulys was generally conciliatory regarding the German demands in Memel. He refused, however, to consider the abrogation of martial law in Memel. He also mentioned the possibility of a nonaggression pact with Germany and a few of the Lithuanian grievances against Germany.<sup>20</sup> These included verbal attacks in the German press against Lithuania, physical attacks on the Lithuanian minority in East Prussia, and offensive broadcasts over the Königsberg radio station.<sup>21</sup>

On June 25 Lithuania took another step toward

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<sup>18</sup>"Memel Diet Demands End of Martial Law in Area," NYT, 13 April 1938, p. 4.

<sup>19</sup>"Lithuania Rejects Memel Plea," NYT, 14 April 1938, p. 17.

<sup>20</sup>DGFP, Series D, vol. 5, p. 450; Toynbee, "North-Eastern Europe," p. 364.

<sup>21</sup>DGFP, Series D, vol. 5, pp. 451-452.

conciliation with the visit of Lithuanian Foreign Minister Lozoraitis to Berlin. Lozoraitis informed Ribbentrop that the Lithuanian government planned to end martial law throughout Lithuania, but would not withdraw the Lithuanian political police from the Memel Territory. Discussion of a German-Lithuanian nonaggression pact was discouraged by Ribbentrop.<sup>22</sup>

While Lithuania was trying to negotiate for a non-aggression pact in Berlin, riots were breaking out in Memel between Germans and Lithuanians. A June 21 clash between German and Lithuanian dockworkers was followed on June 28 by a riot; this occurred when seven thousand Germans assembled at the Memel harbor to greet the German steamship Preussen with a chorus of Nazi songs and "Heil Hitlers." The crew from the Lithuanian steamer Perkunas turned fire hoses on the crowd assembled at the docks, sparking the riot. As a result of the two-hour street battle which followed, two people were killed, including a sixteen year-old German boy.<sup>23</sup> The Lithuanian military commandant of the Memel Territory sentenced ten Germans to various periods of detention or imprisonment as a result of the June 21 battle. None of the Lithuanians arrested during the riot

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<sup>22</sup>Ibid., pp. 457-458.

<sup>23</sup>"Nazis and Lithuanians in Fatal Riot in Memel," NYT, 29 June 1938, p. 1.



was sentenced.<sup>24</sup> These disorders were important factors in the Lithuanian government's determination not to relax all its controls in the Memel Territory.

As a result of the Memel riots Neumann received new instructions from Berlin. After visiting the Breslau athletic festival on July 28 and 29, Neumann went to Berlin to receive instructions for the December Landtag elections. Foreign Ministry officials, worried about a recurrence of riots in Memel before the elections, told Neumann to close the ranks of Memel Germans behind a single ticket and control the radical members of his party.<sup>25</sup>

In August and September Lithuania came under increasing pressure to abrogate martial law in the Memel Territory. In August the German Foreign Ministry again revived the grievances question with Šaulys. The Lithuanian Minister explained that martial law for Lithuania could not be terminated until Parliament met in September. Šaulys again took a conciliatory position toward the remaining German demands.<sup>26</sup> By September the German pressure on the Lithuanian government to abolish martial law had increased. The Lithuanian government, unable to resist, drafted two

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<sup>24</sup>"Ten Sentenced in Memel," NYT, 11 July 1938, p. 9.

<sup>25</sup>DGFP, Series D, vol. 5, p. 462.

<sup>26</sup>Ibid., p. 463.

bills which terminated martial law and replaced it with the authority of the governor who would exercise powers to safeguard security. These compromise bills were not acceptable to Germany or Memel.<sup>27</sup> The German rejection of the compromise bills forced Lithuania to rescind martial law in late October. In Berlin, Šaulys promised that the other grievances would soon be remedied satisfactorily to Germany.<sup>28</sup>

The termination of martial law in Memel brought rapid expansion to Neumann's National Socialist organizations. The November 1 torchlight parade in which six thousand members of Nazi organizations participated is evidence of the nationalistic feeling in Memel for return to the German Reich.<sup>29</sup> Neumann no longer needed to hide his affiliation with National Socialist Germany as he had during the rule of martial law. The Memelländische Kulturbund became the Memeldeutschen Kulturverband, the change in name indicating an emphasis on the German affiliation. Members of the Kulturverband wore a wolf's emblem on their arms as did members of the Hitler Youth in Germany. Organizations paralleling the Schutzstaffel (SS or Protection Echelon),

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<sup>27</sup>Toynbee, "North-Eastern Europe," pp. 365-366.

<sup>28</sup>DGFP, Series D, vol. 5, pp. 477-478; "Report on Memel," NYT, 30 October 1938, p. 26; Toynbee, "North-Eastern Europe," p. 366.

<sup>29</sup>DGFP, Series D, vol. 5, p. 483.

Sturmabteilung (SA or Storm Detachment), and Hitlerjugend (HJ or Hitler Youth) were formed in Memel under Neumann's direction.<sup>30</sup>

More freedom was given to Neumann when the Lithuanian government returned his civic rights and the rights of other formerly imprisoned Memel Germans in mid-November. This Lithuanian action allowed Neumann to run for a seat in the Memel Landtag in December. Smetona, hoping to keep Memel Germans calm and Germany friendly, announced this conciliatory measure during the celebration of his reelection as President of Lithuania.<sup>31</sup>

By the fall of 1938 all Lithuanian conciliation had proved futile. On September 25 Hitler had issued a directive that sufficient military forces remain in East Prussia " . . . to occupy Lithuania with all speed, even if there should be armed resistance."<sup>32</sup> Another indication of the futility of conciliation was the German rejection of a planned visit to Berlin by the new Lithuanian Foreign Minister Juozas Urbšys. The German Foreign Ministry was confident that, after the December elections in Memel, a new kind of diplomacy could begin. Instead of demanding

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<sup>30</sup>Broszat, "Die Memeldeutschen Organisationen und der Nationalsozialismus," pp. 277-278.

<sup>31</sup>Toynbee, "North-Eastern Europe," p. 367.

<sup>32</sup>H. R. Trevor-Roper, ed., Hitler's War Directives, 1939-1945 (London: Pan, 1966), p. 45.

Lithuanian observance of the Memel Statute, the Foreign Ministry would demand the reincorporation of Memel into the Reich.<sup>33</sup> Conciliation of the Memel Germans had helped make this possible.

The dominant reasons which prevented an outright German seizure of Memel can be found in the world situation in the fall of 1938. On September 15 at Berchtesgaden, Hitler had promised Prime Minister Chamberlain that Memel would remain free as long as Lithuania followed the provisions of the Memel Statute.<sup>34</sup> Since that meeting, Lithuania had been extremely conciliatory to Germany. Another factor was the world disapproval of the anti-Semitic outbreak in Germany on November 9. The so-called Kristallnacht (Crystal Night), during which synagogues and Jewish shops were destroyed and looted, brought protests from all of the major Western Powers.<sup>35</sup> Germany also did not want to damage the negotiations with France which resulted in the signing of the Franco-German Declaration of Friendship on December 6.<sup>36</sup> Finally, Germany did not want to alienate Lithuania

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<sup>33</sup>DGFP, Series D, vol. 5, pp. 485-486, 488, 490.

<sup>34</sup>DBFP, Third Series, vol. 2, p. 339.

<sup>35</sup>Helmut Krausnick, "The Persecution of the Jews," Anatomy of the SS State, pp. 38-43.

<sup>36</sup>France, Ministère des affaires étrangères, The French Yellow Book: Diplomatic Documents, 1938-1940 (New York: Reynal & Hitchcock, 1940), p. 35.

completely because of political and economic reasons. Lithuania's friendship could be strategically important to Germany in a war against Russia or Poland. Economically, Lithuania's exports of butter, meat, and grain to Germany were twice as large in 1938 as in 1937.<sup>37</sup>

The problem which confronted the German Foreign Ministry in the fall and winter of 1938 was keeping the Memel Germans calm before the elections. SS-Gruppenführer Reinhard Heydrich expressed concern about this on November 28. He feared that rash Memel German actions might force Germany to reincorporate the Memel Territory at an unfavorable time.<sup>38</sup> Neumann visited Berlin on December 1, for a series of discussions with Foreign Ministry officials that continued through December 6. He expressed doubts about his ability to control the Memel Germans after the elections. Ribbentrop insisted that the elections be conducted in a peaceful and orderly manner. He asserted that any attempts to accomplish reincorporation be made through the Lithuanian government without force.<sup>39</sup> The only violent incident which marred the calm in Memel before the elections

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<sup>37</sup>The increase in German-Lithuanian trade was due to new trade agreements signed in 1938; Allan G. B. Fisher, "World Economic Affairs," Survey of International Affairs, 1938, by Arnold Toynbee, vol. 1 (London: Oxford University Press, 1941), p. 69.

<sup>38</sup>DGFP, Series D, vol. 5, pp. 491-492.

<sup>39</sup>Ibid., pp. 494, 497-498.

was the murder of a Lithuanian who failed to return a Nazi salute.<sup>40</sup>

An indication of the probable outcome of the Memel Landtag elections was seen on December 7 as Juozas Kubilius, the Lithuanian governor of Memel since 1936, resigned. Rumors then circulated throughout the Memel Territory that a citizen of Memel would succeed Kubilius.<sup>41</sup> On December 9 Viktoras Gailius, a native Memellander of moderate Lithuanian persuasion, was appointed governor.<sup>42</sup>

The elections of December 11 passed quietly and, as expected, successfully for the Memel Germans. Included on the election ballots were the United Memel German Party and four Lithuanian parties: the Peasant, Labor, Artisan, and Socialist Labor parties. The divided Lithuanian slate made the task of the Memel Germans easier. The sentiments of the inhabitants of Memel were indicated by the prominence of the green, white, and red Memel German flags and the posters of Neumann in contrast to the absence of Lithuanian banners and electioneering. The results of the election were not immediately known because of the heavy turnout

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<sup>40</sup>"Nazis Charged With Killing," NYT, 7 December 1938, p. 16.

<sup>41</sup>"Memel Governor Resigns," NYT, 8 December 1938, p. 16.

<sup>42</sup>"Memel Vote Today is Hailed by Nazis as Move to Reich," NYT, 11 December 1938, p. 53.

and the requirement that each voter cast twenty-nine separate ballots for twenty-nine of the total 149 candidates.<sup>43</sup>

On December 16 the election commission announced that the German ticket recorded 1,826,621 of the 2,095,206 votes cast, more than 87 percent of the total votes. The Memel Germans won twenty-five of the twenty-nine seats in the Memel Landtag.<sup>44</sup> In a post-victory speech, Neumann called for the end of racial borders between Memel and Germany. He believed that the Memel Germans should socially unite with Germans in the Reich. He acknowledged, however, that the political borders still existed.<sup>45</sup>

The French and British governments, guarantors of the Memel Statute, feared that the elections represented another de facto plebiscite for Hitler. On December 12, before the final results of the elections were known, both governments presented Germany with diplomatic notes demanding that Germany honor the Memel Statute and declare her intentions toward the territory.<sup>46</sup> The official German attitude toward their actions was that they were

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<sup>43</sup> Ibid.

<sup>44</sup> DGFP, Series D, vol. 5, p. 501.

<sup>45</sup> "Memel Leader Jubilant," NYT, 17 December 1938, p. 6.

<sup>46</sup> DGFP, Series D, vol. 5, pp. 502-503.

inappropriate and that Lithuania was guilty of violations of the Memel Statute.<sup>47</sup> Vladas Mironas, the Lithuanian Prime Minister, proposed that a committee of jurists decide the differences between Germany and Lithuania concerning the Statute. This committee was to include both Germans and Lithuanians.<sup>48</sup>

Events in early 1939 indicated that the solution of the Memel problem would be handled to Germany's satisfaction. Negotiations between Memel German leaders and the Lithuanian government were progressing satisfactorily during this period. On January 5 Hitler told Polish Foreign Minister Józef Beck that the Memel problem would be solved at the negotiating table.<sup>49</sup> External developments, however, indicated that Memel would soon be part of the German Reich.

Developments within Memel and Lithuania in early 1939 pointed toward the German reincorporation of the Memel Territory. Neumann's Memel German organizations made rapid progress in the first few months of 1939. Plans were made to expand the Sicherheitsabteilung, the Memel German SA, to

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<sup>47</sup> Ibid., pp. 504-505.

<sup>48</sup> "Wants Parley on Memel," NYT, 24 December 1938, p. 6.

<sup>49</sup> "Hitler Will Receive Colonel Beck Tomorrow," NYT, 4 January 1939, p. 6; Rauch, The Baltic States, p. 197.



include twenty thousand members from the ages of eighteen to fifty. The Ordnungsdienst, the Memel German SS, included men from eighteen to thirty years old. Twelve SA divisions were formed in the city of Memel. Other prominent National Socialist organizations in Memel included the Jugendorganisationen, comparable to the Hitler Youth, and the Sportbund, a National Socialist sports organization.<sup>50</sup> Another sign of the deteriorating situation within Memel was the January 7 resignation of Baldžius, President of the Memel Directorate. Two weeks later, in an apparent act of capitulation, the Governor of Memel appointed Willy Bertuleit, an aide of Neumann, to succeed Baldžius.<sup>51</sup> An indication that Lithuania was accepting the inevitability of losing Memel was the beginning of construction in February to convert the nearby fishing village of Shventai into a deep-sea port.<sup>52</sup> Heavy Jewish emigration out of the Memel Territory after December 1938 indicated that many people believed that Hitler would seize Memel.<sup>53</sup> In a January 30, 1939, Reichstag

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<sup>50</sup>Broszat, "Die Memeldeutschen Organisationen und der Nationalsozialismus," pp. 277-278.

<sup>51</sup>"Resignation of Memel President," The Times (London), 9 January 1939, p. 11; Gerutis, Lithuania: 700 Years, p. 247.

<sup>52</sup>"Fishing Village Converted Into a Port by Lithuanians," NYT, 24 February 1939, p. 3.

<sup>53</sup>Toynbee, "North-Eastern Europe," p. 377.

speech, Hitler proclaimed peaceful boundaries on the northern, southern, and western borders of Germany.<sup>54</sup>

Józef Lipski, the Polish Minister in Berlin, recognized Hitler's glaring omission of the eastern border as an implied threat to Memel and Danzig.<sup>55</sup>

These external indications were confirmed by a private conference Hitler and Ribbentrop held in late December 1938 with Neumann in Berlin. Hitler promised Neumann that the Memel problem would be settled by April 1939.<sup>56</sup> Neumann was held responsible for keeping the Memel National Socialist organizations under control during the three-month period from late December to April.

Lithuania's concessions to the Memel Germans, including a withdrawal of security police from the Memel Territory, recognition of the German language and employment of Memel German officials, and the nazification of the Memel schools created impatience among the members of Neumann's organizations for reincorporation into the Reich.<sup>57</sup> On February 3 Provincial Governor Koch summoned Neumann to his office in Königsberg. With typical SS

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<sup>54</sup> Baynes, The Speeches of Adolf Hitler, vol. 2, p. 1,577.

<sup>55</sup> Lipski, Diplomat in Berlin, p. 489.

<sup>56</sup> DGFP, Series D, vol. 5, p. 508.

<sup>57</sup> Ibid., p. 510.

"subtlety," Koch warned Neumann that, if he did not keep better order within the Memel Territory, he would be shot.<sup>58</sup> Fortunately for Neumann, the solution to the Memel problem was not delayed until April.

The first meeting of the Memel Landtag, which had been postponed at Hitler's orders since the December elections, was planned for March.<sup>59</sup> In mid-March the restrictions on Neumann's activity for reincorporation were removed by Hitler. On March 14 Bertuleit attacked the governor of Memel, Gailius, for allegedly planning to declare National Socialist organizations illegal.<sup>60</sup> On March 15, during a secret session of the Landtag, Neumann violently attacked the Lithuanian government for its failure to make substantial concessions to the Memel Germans. He declared that the inhabitants of Memel should have control over their political and economic life.<sup>61</sup> Conciliation by the Lithuanian government in early 1939 now was the basis for more demands under the threat of German aggression.

As late as March 17, the Lithuanian government continued to hope that Germany would not take military action

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<sup>58</sup>Ibid., p. 515.

<sup>59</sup>Ibid., p. 519.

<sup>60</sup>"Nazi Outburst in Memel," The Times (London), 15 March 1939, p. 13.

<sup>61</sup>"Lithuania Is Warned by Memel Germans," NYT, 16 March 1939, p. 14.

against Memel.<sup>62</sup> On March 19 Foreign Minister Urbšys visited Berlin after attending the coronation of Pope Pius XII in Rome. The following day, he received an ultimatum from Ribbentrop, demanding the outright return of Memel to Germany. The return would be transacted, Ribbentrop threatened, either through peaceful settlement or by invasion of German forces into Memel and Lithuania. Ribbentrop did not give a time limit for compliance with the ultimatum, but he suggested that time was pressing and that minor incidents in Memel during the next few days might require military intervention. Ribbentrop warned Urbšys to refrain from seeking the aid of other countries.<sup>63</sup>

Urbšys ignored Ribbentrop's warning not to seek help, and, before returning to Lithuania, visited Warsaw to see the British Ambassador to Poland and the Polish Deputy Foreign Minister. Urbšys received expressions of sympathy, but no promise of support.<sup>64</sup> Urbšys expected help from Great Britain because of her status as Signator of the Memel Statute. Support was not sought from Soviet Russia by the Lithuanian government for several reasons.

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<sup>62</sup>"Polish Watch on Germany," The Times (London), 18 March 1939, p. 11.

<sup>63</sup>DGFP, Series D, vol. 5, pp. 525-526; Gerutis, Lithuania: 700 Years, p. 248; Rauch, The Baltic States, p. 198; Toynbee, "North-Eastern Europe," pp. 379-380.

<sup>64</sup>Tarulis, Soviet Policy Toward the Baltic States, p. 99.

The Soviet Union was not a guarantor of the Memel Statute and had no formal grounds to intervene in Memel. Also, in view of Russian inaction during both the Polish-Lithuanian crisis and the German occupation of Czechoslovakia, the Lithuanian government believed a request for aid from Russia would be futile. Finally, Lithuanian officials did not want a large number of Soviet troops within Lithuanian territory for fear that they would never leave.<sup>65</sup>

Receiving no support, the Lithuanian Cabinet met with Urbšys on March 21 and decided to accept the German ultimatum. The Lithuanian Parliament ratified the decision on the same day in a public session.<sup>66</sup> A Lithuanian delegation of plenipotentiaries left Kovno for Berlin on March 22 to sign the treaty with Germany. Following a two-hour discussion, the treaty was signed in the early morning of March 23.<sup>67</sup>

On March 22 Hitler had embarked on the battleship Deutschland from Swinemünde accompanied by two battleships, three cruisers, two destroyer squadrons, and three torpedo boat flotillas. The purpose of the naval fleet was not defensive but was to impress the Memel Germans and

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<sup>65</sup> Ibid., p. 100.

<sup>66</sup> Rauch, The Baltic States, pp. 198-199; Toynbee, "North-Eastern Europe," p. 382.

<sup>67</sup> Lewis B. Namier, Diplomatic Prelude, 1938-1939 (London: Macmillan, 1948), pp. 87-88.

Lithuanians.<sup>68</sup> Lithuania's navy, which consisted of the converted minesweeper Prezidentas Smetona, left Memel for an undisclosed destination on March 22.<sup>69</sup> Hitler arrived in the Memel harbor on the morning of March 23, after a rumored bout with seasickness,<sup>70</sup> and delivered a speech at the Theaterplatz in Memel. In his speech he mentioned that the sufferings of Germany had now been made good, an implication that Germany would have no more territorial demands in Europe. This part of the speech, however, was deleted in the official Berlin release of the text.<sup>71</sup>

The German-Lithuanian treaty included provisions for the reincorporation of Memel into the Reich, evacuation of Lithuanian military and police forces from the Memel Territory, the establishment of a free-port zone in Memel for Lithuania, and a nonaggression pledge.<sup>72</sup> The acquisition of Memel not only gave Germany another deep-water port on the Baltic sea, but also gave Germany both a naval

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<sup>68</sup>Otto D. Tolischus, "Flotilla Bound for Memel," NYT, 23 March 1939, pp. 1, 6.

<sup>69</sup>"Lithuania's 1-Ship Navy, Minus Port, Disappears," NYT, 23 March 1939, p. 5.

<sup>70</sup>Leonard Mosley, On Borrowed Time: How World War II Began (New York: Random House, 1969), pp. 189-190; Namier, Diplomatic Prelude, p. 88.

<sup>71</sup>"Hitler's Speech at Memel," NYT, 24 March 1939, p. 3.

<sup>72</sup>DGFP, Series D, vol. 5, pp. 530-531.

base one hundred miles closer to the Soviet Union than Pillau in East Prussia and a strategic advantage over Poland.<sup>73</sup> A few weeks after the seizure of Memel, Hitler began the transformation of the city into a fortified naval base capable of making a direct attack on Leningrad.<sup>74</sup>

The Lithuanian policy in the spring of 1939 was one of neutrality in the face of increasing tension between Poland and Germany. Poland had made the most significant protest to Germany over the seizure of Memel. Polish fears of German encirclement and charges of Memel German reprisals against Lithuanians were denied by Germany.<sup>75</sup> On April 20 the Commander-in-Chief of the Lithuanian Army, General Stasys Raštikis, was received as Hitler's honor guest at a military parade in Berlin. Hitler offered arms to Lithuania in return for her property loss in Memel, but Raštikis refused to compromise Lithuanian neutrality. This neutrality policy was underlined by Raštikis' visit to Warsaw on May 9 immediately after his visit to Berlin.<sup>76</sup>

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<sup>73</sup>Tarulis, Soviet Policy Toward the Baltic States, p. 115.

<sup>74</sup>C. Leonard Lundin, "The Nazification of the Baltic-German Minorities," Journal of Central European Affairs 7 (April 1947): 4.

<sup>75</sup>"Memel Denies Revenge," NYT, 30 March 1939, p. 6; Toynebee, "North-Eastern Europe," p. 388.

<sup>76</sup>Tarulis, Soviet Policy Toward the Baltic States, p. 117.

On April 14 President Franklin Roosevelt sent a message to Germany asking for Hitler's assurance that territorial aggression had ended.<sup>77</sup> Lithuania replied negatively to Roosevelt's inquiry about a possible German threat to her independence.<sup>78</sup> Indeed, Lithuania's position seemed secure at this time. Lithuania had nonaggression pacts with the Soviet Union and Germany, and an implied guarantee of protection from Great Britain.<sup>79</sup>

These pacts were valuable only as long as Lithuanian neutrality was important to Germany and the Soviet Union. In April low-level discussions began between Germany and Russia concerning the possibility of a nonaggression pact. Germany's reason for negotiating was her concern about Anglo/French-Soviet talks and a possible combination against Germany. Russia's motives for negotiations with Germany were a lack of faith in the French and British determination to halt Hitler's aggression and a desire to seize as much land as possible if Hitler attacked

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<sup>77</sup>U.S., Department of State, Foreign Relations of the United States: Diplomatic Papers, 1939 (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1956-1957), vol. 1, pp. 130-133.

<sup>78</sup>Ibid., p. 146.

<sup>79</sup>The Soviet Union-Lithuanian pact was signed on September 28, 1926, the German-Lithuanian pact on March 22, 1939; the implied British guarantee was issued on March 31, 1939; Tarulis, Soviet Policy Toward the Baltic States, pp. 118, 128.



Poland.<sup>80</sup> Russia's interest in a nonaggression pact was further confirmed by the removal of Maxim Litvinov, a Jew whose policy of collective security was anathema to Hitler, from the post of Soviet Commissar of Foreign Affairs on May 3. Litvinov was replaced by Vyacheslav Molotov, former Chairman of the Council of People's Commissars, who represented a neutral position between British-French proposals and German proposals.<sup>81</sup>

From June to August a political basis was laid for the Soviet-German Nonaggression Pact. The Anglo/French-Soviet discussions were proceeding slowly because of the Soviet insistence of a guarantee of the Baltic States against indirect aggression. The British and French felt that indirect aggression was merely an excuse for a Soviet plan to seize the Baltic States.<sup>82</sup> Germany was reluctant to surrender her interests in the Baltic States, but the necessity for a nonaggression pact with Russia before the Germans could invade Poland made a compromise necessary. On July 29 Weizsäcker conceded that Germany must adjust her stand and respect the vital Soviet interests in the

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<sup>80</sup>Gerhard L. Weinberg, Germany and the Soviet Union, 1939-1941 (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1954; reprint ed., Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1972), p. 22.

<sup>81</sup>Ibid., p. 25.

<sup>82</sup>Rauch, The Baltic States, pp. 207-208.

Baltic States.<sup>83</sup>

On August 23, after a series of meetings between Ribbentrop and Molotov in Moscow, a German-Soviet Treaty of Nonaggression was signed. A Secret Protocol to the pact divided the Baltic States into spheres of influence between Germany and Russia. Lithuania fell under German control; Latvia and Estonia were part of the Russian sphere.<sup>84</sup> As a sign of the urgency of the pact, it came into effect immediately after the signing ceremony, not after formal ratification.<sup>85</sup> Hitler was free to attack Poland without interference from the Soviet Union.

Hitler's timetable for the invasion of Poland was pressing and his search for support seemed frantic. On August 29, before the actual invasion of Poland on September 1, the Foreign Ministry sent two telegrams to the German Legation in Kovno. The first telegram demanded that Lithuania remain neutral in any future conflict between Germany and another nation. The second telegram asked the German Legation in Kovno to determine whether Lithuania would stage a demonstration on the Polish frontier by means of

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<sup>83</sup>Germany, Auswärtiges Amt, Nazi-Soviet Relations, 1939-1941, ed. by Raymond James Sontag and James Stuart Beddie (New York: Didier, 1948), p. 36.

<sup>84</sup>Bronis J. Kaslas, ed., The USSR-German Aggression Against Lithuania (New York: Robert Speller & Sons, 1973), p. 111.

<sup>85</sup>Weinberg, Germany and the Soviet Union, p. 49.

troop concentrations.<sup>86</sup> The meaning of neutrality to Hitler was comparable to a military alliance.

From August 29 to September 16 Hitler continued to place diplomatic pressure on Lithuania to attack Poland. Hoping to win Lithuania's support by a guarantee of territorial gains, Hitler promised the return of the Wilna region to Lithuania.<sup>87</sup> Lithuania refused to give up her neutrality even for her historic capital Wilna, a remarkable act in this period of territorial blackmail. After the September 16 Soviet-Japanese truce which ended fighting in Manchuria, Soviet military attention turned to Eastern Europe.<sup>88</sup> Soviet troops crossed the eastern boundary of Poland on September 17 and occupied Wilna on September 20.<sup>89</sup>

Hitler, as of late September, still desired Lithuanian military and economic cooperation. On September 21 he made a final attempt to compromise Lithuanian neutrality. Ribbentrop's invitation to Urbšys to discuss the European situation and the return of Wilna to Lithuania was accepted in a spirit of neutrality by Urbšys. Ribbentrop refused to

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<sup>86</sup>Kaslas, The USSR-German Aggression Against Lithuania, pp. 113, 115.

<sup>87</sup>DGFP, Series D, vol. 8, pp. 38, 54-55, 62; Tarulis, Soviet Policy Toward the Baltic States, pp. 130-131.

<sup>88</sup>Weinberg, Germany and the Soviet Union, p. 54.

<sup>89</sup>Tarulis, Soviet Policy Toward the Baltic States, p. 134.

meet him under that condition. The possibility of a German-Lithuanian agreement was dealt another blow by Soviet refusal to allow German mediation in the Wilna problem.<sup>90</sup>

On September 25 Joseph Stalin began negotiations with Hitler for a transfer of Lithuania to the Soviet sphere of interest. In return for Lithuania, Germany would receive the province of Lublin, part of the province of Warsaw to the Bug River, and a strip of Lithuanian territory around Suwalki and Augustavas.<sup>91</sup> Although many economic and military advantages would be lost in this transfer, Hitler was willing to agree as long as the Eastern Front was unsettled and the Western Front was stalled.<sup>92</sup> The Secret Supplementary Protocol was signed on September 28.<sup>93</sup>

Unfortunately for Russo-German relations, the secret protocol did not long remain a secret. On October 3, Molotov informed the German Ambassador to the Soviet Union, Freidrich von der Schulenburg, that the Soviet Union would cede the Wilna area to Lithuania. Also, Molotov would inform the Lithuanian government that it must cede to

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<sup>90</sup>Ibid., pp. 136-137.

<sup>91</sup>Ibid., p. 137.

<sup>92</sup>Kaslas, The USSR-German Aggression Against Lithuania, p. 130.

<sup>93</sup>Ibid.

Germany the strip of territory indicated in the secret protocol.<sup>94</sup> Schulenburg objected to Molotov's suggestion because it would make Germany appear a "robber," and the Soviet Union a "donor." Ribbentrop agreed with Schulenburg, but Molotov proceeded with his plan despite German objections.<sup>95</sup>

In retaliation Ribbentrop told the German Ambassador to Lithuania, Erich Zechlin, to inform the Lithuanian government that Germany had insisted that the Soviet Union return Wilna to Lithuania. Ribbentrop also assured the Lithuanian government that the transfer of land to Germany was not of immediate importance.<sup>96</sup> The argument over appearances between Germany and the Soviet Union indicates the banality of diplomacy in the late 1930's.

The final stage of aggression was completed on October 10. On this day Lithuania signed a military agreement with the Soviet Union which allowed the construction of Soviet air and land bases within Lithuania. In return, Lithuania received Wilna and the surrounding territory.<sup>97</sup>

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<sup>94</sup>Ibid., pp. 137-138; Tarulis, Soviet Policy Toward the Baltic States, p. 140.

<sup>95</sup>Kaslas, The USSR-German Aggression Against Lithuania, pp. 138-139.

<sup>96</sup>Ibid., pp. 140-142.

<sup>97</sup>Rauch, The Baltic States, p. 213.

The independence of Lithuania was effectively terminated by this agreement. On August 3, 1940, Lithuania was incorporated into the Soviet Union.<sup>98</sup>

The history of Lithuania from 1938-1939 reveals the weaknesses of appeasement in the face of aggressive and unscrupulous nations. Using the nationality problems as an excuse, Hitler successively moved against Austria, Czechoslovakia, Memel, and Poland. With no effective help from Great Britain or France, Lithuania was forced to develop a policy of her own that could preserve her independence. The policy of neutrality appeared to be the wisest and safest course for Lithuania to follow.

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<sup>98</sup>U.S., Congress, House, Report of the Select Committee to Investigate Communist Aggression and the Forced Incorporation of the Baltic States into the USSR, Third Interim Report, 83rd Cong., 2nd sess., p. 13.

## CHAPTER IV

### CONCLUSION

Diplomatic relations between Germany and Lithuania from 1933 through 1939 did not represent a clean break with past diplomacy between the two nations. With the exception of the year of *détente* in 1928, German-Lithuanian relations were tense in the Weimar Era. The future of the Memel Territory was the main stumbling block in relations between Germany and Lithuania in both Weimar and Nazi Germany. The difference between the two periods lay in the aims of the German leaders. Hitler's goals of Lebensraum and racial purity were not shared by the Weimar political leaders. Hitler only used the Memel Territory controversy as an excuse for continuing friction with Lithuania.

Hitler's ultimate aim concerning German-Lithuanian relations was not simply a settlement of the Memel problem. Although German Foreign Ministry officials constantly stressed that a Lithuanian observance of the Memel Statute was sufficient, the German documents indicate that Hitler had aims for territorial expansion in Eastern Europe which included the Baltic states. Any trend toward conciliation in German-Lithuanian relations was merely a matter of

German expediency and was not an attempt to reach understanding and cooperation. The period of calm in 1936 and 1937 was merely economically expedient for Germany and was not initiated by Hitler as a basis for a nonaggression pact. By the late 1930's Hitler was able to drop his pretense of peaceful intentions and demand the reincorporation of the Memel Territory into the German Reich. He used the accusation of alleged mistreatment of German minorities as an excuse to move troops into Czechoslovakia, the Memel Territory, and Poland.

Lithuania's policy toward Germany from 1933 through 1939 was an attempt to cooperate economically, but resist political infiltration with force. Lithuania violated the Memel Statute several times, but in each case the actions were provoked by a fear of Nazi subversion in the Memel Territory. Lithuanian fears and actions were justified because of the activity of the Memel National Socialist organizations. Neumann's Sovog was copied from Hitler's party organization and his goal--the termination of Lithuanian control in the Memel Territory--was a violation of the 1924 Memel Convention. The desire of the Lithuanian government to reach an agreement of cooperation with Germany is indicated by the early release of the Memel Germans convicted of treason in 1935. Lithuania's conciliatory actions only led to a quick loss of the Memelland.

Lithuania's demise was similar to that of many of



the new East European nations formed after World War I. The maintenance of Lithuanian independence was hampered by the country's geographic position and minority problems, by Western retreat and ensuing totalitarian aggression. With no physical or natural barriers to protect her from invasion by Germany or the Soviet Union, Lithuania chose to follow a neutral policy in diplomatic relations with the two nations. But problems with the German minority living in the Memel Territory sparked continuous friction between Smetona's Lithuania and Hitler's Germany and rendered neutrality difficult. Great Britain and France, who accepted the responsibility of guaranteeing Memel autonomy in 1924, retreated from active support of the Memel Statute in the face of Hitler's repeated territorial demands in Eastern Europe. Without early and active resistance by Britain and France to Hitler's territorial aims, the Lithuanian policy of neutrality was futile. German and Soviet assaults against Lithuania could not be prevented in the twilight year of 1939. The tragedy of Lithuania was the tragedy of Europe, a Europe that could find no effective answer to the totalitarian policy of force and aggression.

APPENDIX A

GERMAN PLACE NAMES  
AND THEIR EQUIVALENTS  
IN LITHUANIAN USAGE

GERMAN	LITHUANIAN
Kovno . . . . .	Kaunas
Memel . . . . .	Klaipéda
River Memel . . . . .	River Nemunas
Schaulen. . . . .	Šiaulai
Tauroggen . . . . .	Taurage
Wilna . . . . .	Vilnius

## APPENDIX B

### THE MEMEL STATUTE

Realising the wisdom of granting autonomy to the Memel Territory and of preserving the traditional rights and culture of its inhabitants;

Recalling the resolution unanimously adopted by the Constituent Assembly of Lithuania on November 11, 1921;

In accord with the Decision of the Conference of Ambassadors of February 16, 1923, to which the Lithuanian Government adhered on March 13, 1923;

And having, by the Convention signed at Paris on May 8, 1924, by the representatives of the British Empire, France, Italy and Japan, of the one part, and the representative of Lithuania of the other part, agreed to grant to the Memel Territory the status of an autonomous unit;

The Republic of Lithuania enacts the following Statute:

#### Article 1

The Memel Territory shall constitute, under the sovereignty of Lithuania, a unit, organised on democratic principles, enjoying legislative, judicial, administrative and financial autonomy within the limits prescribed in the present Statute.

#### Article 2

The President of the Lithuanian Republic shall appoint a Governor of the Memel Territory.

#### Article 3

The election of deputies for the Memel Territory to the Lithuanian Diet shall take place in conformity with the Lithuanian Electoral Law.

## Article 4

The measures taken by the Lithuanian legislature in execution of international treaties and conventions shall be applicable to the Memel Territory in so far as the said treaties and conventions are not contrary to the present Statute; nevertheless, in the event of their applying to affairs which, by virtue of Article 5, come within the competence of the local authorities of the Memel Territory, it shall be for the latter to take the necessary measures for the application of the said international agreements.

## Article 5

Subject to the provisions of the preceding Article, the following matters shall be within the competence of the local authorities of the Memel Territory:

1. Organisation and administration of communes and districts;
2. Public worship;
3. Public education;
4. Public relief and health, including veterinary regulations;
5. Social welfare and labour legislation;
6. Local railways, except those belonging to the Lithuanian State, roads, local public works;
7. Regulation of the sojourn of foreigners in conformity with the laws of Lithuania;
8. Police, subject to the provisions of Articles 20 and 21;
9. Civil legislation (including proprietary rights) and criminal, agrarian, forestry and commercial legislation (including weights and measures), it being understood that all operations effected by the credit and insurance institutions and the exchanges shall be subject to the general law of the Republic, regulations governing organisations officially representing the economic interests of the Territory;
10. The acquisition of rights of citizenship, subject to the provisions of Article 8;

11. Organisation of the judicial system, subject to the provisions of Articles 21 to 24;

12. Direct and indirect taxes levied in the Territory, with the exception of customs duties, excise duties, commodity taxes and monopolies on alcohol, tobacco and similar articles of luxury;

13. Administration of public property belonging to the Memel Territory;

14. Regulation on Memel Territory of timber-floating and navigation on the rivers, other than the Niemen, and the canals within the Memel Territory, subject to agreement with the Lithuanian authorities in case such watercourses are utilisable outside the Memel Territory for timber-floating;

15. Registration of trading vessels in accordance with the laws of Lithuania.

The laws of Lithuania may extend the competence of the authorities of the Memel Territory to other matters.

Nothing in this Article shall prevent the legislative bodies of the Republic of Lithuania and the Memel Territory from taking legal dispositions to effect a unification of laws and regulations.

#### Article 6

In the absence of provisions to the contrary in the present Statute, the local authorities of the Memel Territory, in exercising the powers conferred upon them by the present Statute, shall conform to the principles of the Lithuanian Constitution.

#### Article 7

The affairs which, under the present Statute, are not within the jurisdiction of the local authorities of the Memel Territory shall be within the exclusive jurisdiction of the competent organisations of the Lithuanian Republic.

#### Article 8

The original citizens of the Memel Territory shall be the persons who acquire that status through the operation of Articles 8 and 10 of the Convention referred to in the preamble to this Statute.

Subject to the provisions of the Lithuanian law on the acquisition of Lithuanian nationality, a law of the Memel Territory shall determine the conditions on which the status of citizen of the Memel Territory may be acquired in future.

For Lithuanian nationals other than citizens of the Memel Territory, the conditions on which the said status may be acquired shall be the same as those laid down in Lithuania for the exercise of all public and political rights.

#### Article 9

The citizens of the Memel Territory shall have throughout Lithuanian territory all the recognised civil rights enjoyed by the other nationals of Lithuania.

Lithuanian nationals who are not citizens of the Memel Territory shall have in the said Territory all the recognised civil rights enjoyed by the citizens of the Memel Territory.

#### Article 10

Legislative power in the Memel Territory shall, within the limits of this Statute, be exercised by the Chamber of Representatives, elected by universal, equal, direct and secret suffrage.

Laws passed by the Chamber will obligatorily be promulgated by the Governor within a period of one month from the date on which the law has been submitted to him, unless, within this period, he shall have exercised his right of veto under Article 16. This period shall be reduced to fifteen days in the case of laws the promulgation of which has been declared urgent by special vote of the Chamber.

The laws shall be countersigned by the President of the Directorate provided for by Article 17 or his substitute.

#### Article 11

The members of the Chamber of Representatives shall be elected for three years by the citizens of the Memel Territory, in conformity with the Lithuanian Electoral Law, in the proportion of one deputy per five thousand inhabitants or for any fraction exceeding two thousand five hundred inhabitants.

Only citizens of the Memel Territory shall be eligible.

#### Article 12

The Chamber of Representatives shall meet fifteen days after each election of its members. During the succeeding years of its term, it shall meet in ordinary session on the fourth Monday in January. Ordinary sessions shall have a duration of not less than one month.

The Chamber may also be convoked in extraordinary session by the Governor in agreement with the Directorate.

The closure or adjournment of extraordinary sessions shall be declared by the Governor in agreement with the Directorate.

The Chamber must be convoked by the Governor when at least one-third of its members demand it.

The Chamber may be dissolved by the Governor in agreement with the Directorate. The elections to the new Chamber shall take place within six weeks from the date of dissolution.

#### Article 13

The Chamber of Representatives shall draw up its own rules of procedure; it shall elect its President and its officers.

#### Article 14

The present Economic Council of the Memel Territory shall continue until the Chamber of Representatives shall otherwise decide. Subject to such decision of the Chamber, the Council shall be consulted by the Chamber upon all fiscal and economic legislation before it is finally voted.

#### Article 15

No member of the Chamber of Representatives or the Economic Council of the Memel Territory may be made the object of any form of criminal proceedings, or be in any way molested, in any part of the territory of Lithuania in consequence of any act performed or opinion expressed by him in the discharge of his duties as such member. No member of the Chamber may during a session be arrested or prosecuted without the consent of the Chamber, except he is apprehended

in flagrante delicto; a corresponding immunity shall be enjoyed by the members of the Economic Council during the session of that body.

#### Article 16

The Governor shall, within the time-limit prescribed in Article 10, have the right to veto laws passed by the Chamber of Representatives of the Memel Territory, if these laws exceed the competence of the authorities of the Territory as laid down by the present Statute, or if they are incompatible with the provisions of Article 6 or with the international obligations of Lithuania.

#### Article 17

The Directorate shall exercise the executive power in the Memel Territory. It shall consist of not more than five members; including the President; and shall be composed of citizens of the Territory.

The President shall be appointed by the Governor and shall hold office so long as he possesses the confidence of the Chamber of Representatives. The President shall appoint the other members of Directorate. The Directorate must enjoy the confidence of the Chamber of Representatives and shall resign if the Chamber refuses it its confidence. If, for any reason, the Governor appoints a President of the Directorate when the Chamber of Representatives is not in session, it shall be convened so as to meet within four weeks after the appointment to hear a statement from the Directorate and vote on the question of confidence.

The members of the Directorate shall have the right of entry both to the Chamber of Representatives and to the Economic Council. They shall have the right to be heard by the Chamber and by the Council when they request it.

#### Article 18

The right of initiating legislation shall belong equally to the Chamber of Representatives and to the Directorate.

#### Article 19

Elections to the Communal and District Assemblies shall be held in accordance with the laws of the Memel Territory.



The electoral laws shall be drawn up on democratic principles.

#### Article 20

The maintenance of public order in the Memel Territory shall be assured by a local police force responsible to the authorities of the Territory; in case of need, the latter may apply to the Lithuanian Government for assistance.

The necessary police force for the protection of the port shall be detailed by the Memel authorities for service under the Lithuanian authorities.

The frontier and Customs police and the railway police shall be furnished by, and be under the direct authority of, the Lithuanian Republic.

#### Article 21

The sentences pronounced respectively by the Courts of the Memel Territory and by the other Lithuanian Courts shall have force of law in the whole territory of Lithuania, including the Memel Territory.

The same shall apply to warrants of arrest delivered by the authorities of the Memel Territory and by the authorities of the other parts of Lithuania respectively.

#### Article 22

The organisation and competence of the tribunals of the Memel Territory shall be determined by a law of the Territory, subject to the provisions of Article 24. Pending the enactment of such law, the existing organisation of the judicial system shall continue in operation.

#### Article 23

The judges of the tribunals of the Memel Territory shall be appointed by the Directorate. They shall be appointed for life and may only be dismissed on the motion of that section of the Supreme Court of Lithuania which is competent to deal with the affairs of the Memel Territory, and which will pass sentence in such cases in the capacity of Supreme Disciplinary Council of Magistrates.

## Article 24

The jurisdiction of the Supreme Court of Lithuania shall extend over the whole territory of the Republic, including the Memel Territory.

This Court shall comprise a special section for the affairs of the Memel Territory; this section shall be mainly composed of judges drawn from the magistrates of the Memel Territory, and it may hold its sessions in the town of Memel.

## Article 25

The curriculum adopted in the public schools of the Memel Territory shall not be of a lower standard than the curriculum followed in schools of the same standing in other parts of the Lithuanian territory.

## Article 26

The authorities of the Memel Territory shall carry out and cause to be carried out in the Territory the provisions contained in the Declaration concerning the protection of minorities, made by the Lithuanian Government before the Council of the League of Nations, at its meeting of May 12, 1922, with the exception of paragraph 4 of Article 4 of the said declaration.

## Article 27

The Lithuanian and the German languages shall be recognised on the same footing as official languages in the Memel Territory.

## Article 28

The Lithuanian Government will recognise the acquired rights of the officials and employees in the public services who are under its own authority but who perform their duties in the Memel Territory, and will retain those who possess the status of citizens of the Memel Territory and who were in the service on January 1, 1924.

The officials and employees in the service of the Lithuanian Administration who are citizens of the Memel Territory shall be subject to the same rules and shall enjoy the same privileges as the officials and employees of the other parts of Lithuania.

## Article 29

The authorities of the Memel Territory shall recognise the acquired rights of all the officials and employees employed in the Memel Territory on January 1, 1923.

In future the officials and employees in the service of the Territory shall be recruited, as far as possible, from among the citizens of the Territory.

## Article 30

The provisions of Articles 28 and 29 may not be invoked by officials who have availed themselves of their right to opt in favour of German nationality.

## Article 31

Until January 1, 1930, the educational authorities of the Memel Territory shall be free to employ teachers of alien nationality to the extent deemed by them to be necessary for the proper maintenance of education in the Territory.

The Directorate shall not, however, be entitled to retain in the Territory under the above provision any person against whom the Governor adduces proof that he is engaged in political agitation contrary to the interests of Lithuania.

On the expiration of the above-mentioned period, foreign teachers may be engaged by the authorities of the Territory with the consent of the Lithuanian Government.

## Article 32

Private property shall be respected. Expropriation shall only take place for reasons of public utility, and in return for the payment of equitable compensation in advance, in conformity with the laws, and provided that the provisions of the present Statute are not infringed.

The right of companies and associations, including religious and charitable organisations, to own property shall be recognised in principle.

## Article 33

The freedom of meeting and association, the freedom of conscience and the freedom of the Press shall be

guaranteed to all the inhabitants of the Memel Territory without distinction of nationality, language, race or religion, subject to the observance of the laws and regulations necessary for the maintenance of public order and the security of the State.

The same shall apply to freedom of teaching and the right of opening schools.

#### Article 34

Passports shall be delivered to citizens of the Memel Territory by the Directorate of the Territory on behalf of the Lithuanian Republic and in accordance with the regulations established by the Lithuanian Government.

In the passports shall be mentioned both the Lithuanian nationality of the bearer and his status as citizen of the Memel Territory.

#### Article 35

Within a period of one month from the coming into force of the present Statute, negotiations shall be entered into between the Lithuanian Government and the local authorities of the Memel Territory for the purpose of determining the percentage of the net yield of the Customs duties, excise duties and commodity taxes, including revenues from monopolies dealt with in Article 5, paragraph 12, which shall be assigned to the Memel Territory. In determining this percentage, account shall be taken: (1) of the average value of imports and exports per head of the population in the Memel Territory and in the other parts of Lithuania respectively during the years 1921 and 1922, special circumstances which may have influenced the returns for those years being allowed for; (2) of the additional revenue and expenditure which the transfer of sovereignty over the Memel Territory to Lithuania involves for the Lithuanian State.

The percentage thus determined may be revised from time to time by the Lithuanian Government in agreement with the local authorities of the Memel Territory.

#### Article 36

The tariffs applied on railways and ships to passengers and goods, and the postal, telegraphic and telephonic charges, in the Memel Territory, shall not be higher than the tariffs applied and the charges made for the same purposes in the other parts of Lithuania.

The tariffs applied on the Lithuanian railways to passengers and goods coming from or destined for the Memel Territory shall, in no case, exceed those applied to passengers and goods in respect of any other journey of the same length in another part of the Lithuanian railway system.

#### Article 37

The first elections to the Chamber of Representatives shall take place within six weeks from the date of the coming into force of the present Statute. The Chamber will meet fifteen days after the elections.

Only inhabitants of the Memel Territory over twenty-one years of age may take part in these elections, provided:

1. that, having acquired Lithuanian nationality on the conditions specified in Article 8, paragraph 1, of the Convention referred to in the preamble to this Statute, they do not opt for German nationality before the date of the elections;
2. that at least fifteen days before the elections they opt for Lithuanian nationality on the conditions specified in Article 8, (a) and (b), of the said Convention.

#### Article 38

The provisions of the present Statute may be modified after three years from the ratification by Lithuania of the Convention of which the said Statute forms part. The procedure of amendment shall be the following:

The Chamber of Representatives of the Memel Territory must pass the bill modifying the Statute by a majority representing three-fifths of the votes of all the members.

The modification, after being adopted by the Chamber, must be submitted for the approval of the citizens of the Memel Territory by way of referendum, if not less than one-quarter of all the members of the Chamber or five thousand citizens possessing the franchise for the Chamber so demand within the three months following the adoption of the modification by the Chamber.

If the modification is approved by two-thirds of the citizens participating in the referendum, it shall be submitted without delay for the approval of the Legislative Assembly of Lithuania. It shall not come into force unless it is approved by the said Assembly within one year from the date of its submission thereto.

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