

The Defense's Last Witness Drew the Map

Damijonas Riauka meant to preserve my grandfather's heroism. He preserved the command structure Lithuania now prosecutes a Jew for describing.

A room in Šančiai

In June 2013 I climbed the stairs of a house in Aukštieji Šančiai, on the eastern edge of Kaunas, to a one-room apartment belonging to my host's married daughter. The man waiting for me was eighty-nine years old. He was the last living participant in the five-day Lithuanian uprising of June 1941. His friends called him the Computer, because he could produce dates and names on demand, decades after everyone else had lost them.

His name was Damijonas Riauka. He had served with my grandfather, Jonas Noreika, in the Lithuanian Activist Front. For more than twenty years he had been assembling documents, radio broadcasts, and leaflets to keep my grandfather's memory intact. He had translated roughly three thousand pages of my grandfather's KGB interrogation transcripts from Russian into Lithuanian for my mother, and where the Soviet text said bandits, he wrote partisans.

He told me the campaign by the Jews against my grandfather was getting worse. He said it was more important than ever that I finish the book and publish it. He meant the book my mother had made me promise to write, the one that would clear the family name.

Then he gave me a drawing.

What he handed me

One sheet. Hand-lettered in ink, washed with colored pencil and watercolor. A banner across the bottom reads *1941 m. Sukilimas Lietuvoje* — the 1941 Uprising in Lithuania. Cartoon panels run down the left margin inside a border of barbed wire. A laurel wreath runs down the right. In the center, drawn in ruled boxes like a table of organization, is the command structure of the uprising.¹

¹Damijonas Riauka, 1941 m. Sukilimas Lietuvoje [The 1941 Uprising in Lithuania] (pictogram), in the author's possession; described in Silvia Foti, *The Nazi's Granddaughter: How I Discovered My Grandfather Was a War Criminal* (Washington, DC: Regnery History, 2021), chapter 14, "An Unreliable Witness," endnote 1.

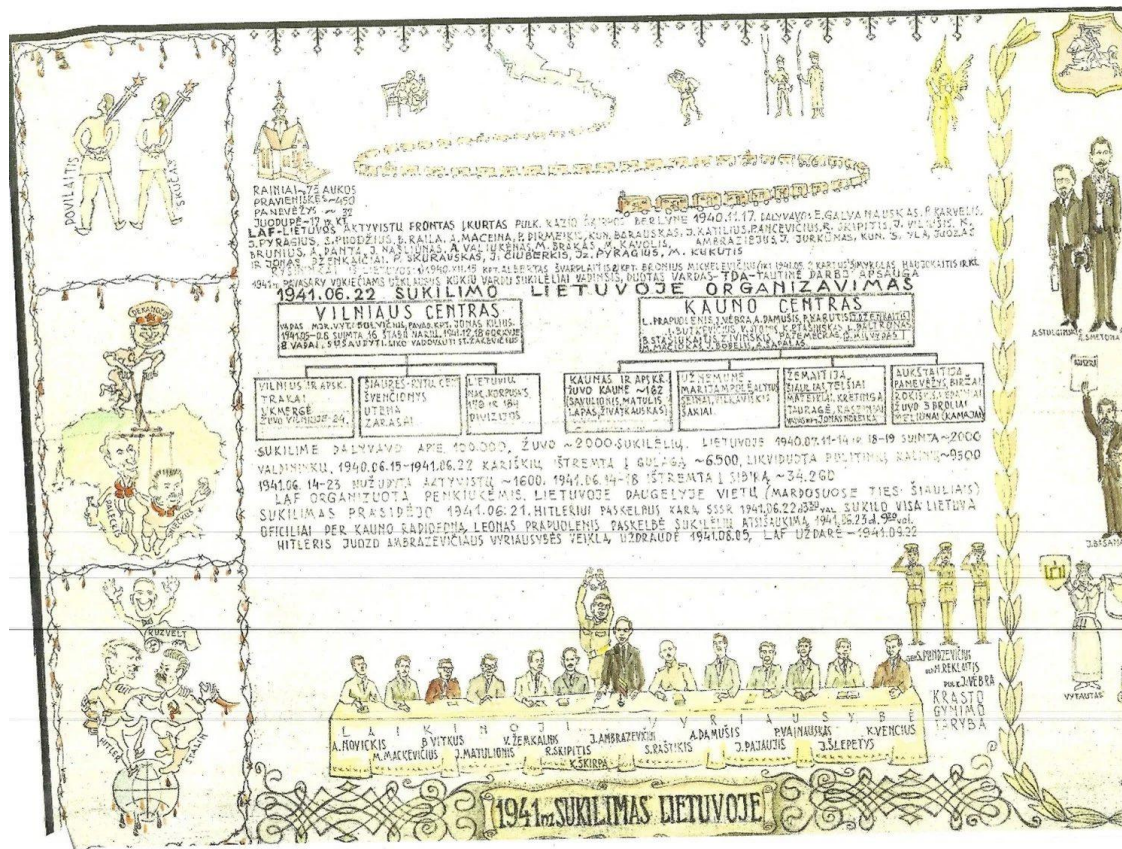


Figure 1. The sheet entire. Three registers govern it. Down the left margin, inside barbed wire, the destruction of Lithuania. Down the right margin, inside laurel, the descent of the Lithuanian nation. In the center, in ruled boxes, the command structure of the June 1941 uprising. Nothing on the sheet records the destruction of Lithuania's Jews. Original in the author's possession; photographs by the author.

He did not give it to me as an accusation. He gave it to me as evidence for the defense. He was handing his life's argument to the granddaughter he trusted to carry it.

I have carried it. Not the way he intended.

The margins: what he chose to remember

Read the left margin first, because it tells you what kind of document this is. Three panels, framed in barbed wire with drops of blood hanging from the wire.²

In the top panel two men walk with their hands bound behind them and bayonets tipped with red stars driven through their necks. They are labeled Povilaitis and Skučas. Augustinas Povilaitis ran the State Security Department. Kazys Skučas was Minister of the Interior. Moscow demanded both by name in June 1940 and shot them.

²Riauka pictogram, left margin, panels one through three; right margin, dynastic register within the laurel.



Figure 2. Top-left corner. POVILAITIS and SKUČAS, hands bound, bayonets tipped with red stars driven through their necks. The frame is barbed wire hung with drops of blood, and it runs the length of the margin. Riauka opens his account of 1941 with two Lithuanian officials killed by the Soviets in 1940.

In the middle panel a figure in a peaked cap marked Dekanozov stands on the map of Lithuania, working a marionette bar. Hanging from his strings, drawn as infants in red shorts, are Paleckis with a bottle in his hand and Sniečkus with a stone in his.



Figure 3. *DEKANOZOV*, cap marked with a red star, stands on the map of Lithuania and works a marionette bar. Suspended from it, drawn as infants in red shorts, are *PALECKIS* with a bottle and *SNIEČKUS* with a stone. The claim is that the Soviet administration of Lithuania was foreign at the strings and infantile at the hands.

In the bottom panel Hitler and Stalin embrace on top of a globe that drips blood, one holding a pistol, one a bloodied blade with a hammer and sickle on his chest. Above them, arms raised, grinning, wearing a bow tie, is a figure labeled *Ruzvelt*.



Figure 4. *HITLER* and *STALIN* embrace astride a bleeding globe, one with a pistol, one with a bloodied blade and a hammer and sickle on his chest. Above them, arms raised and grinning in a bow tie, *RUZVELT*. The panel places Roosevelt among the destroyers of Lithuania and fixes the sheet firmly in the postwar émigré idiom, decades after the events it depicts.

Now read the right margin, because it tells you what he thought he was defending. Inside the laurel, in ascending order: Mindaugas with a crown and a scroll bearing the Columns of Gediminas; Vytautas holding a shield and the map of the grand duchy; Basanavičius with his arm raised toward a placard reading *Aušra*; and above them Stulginskis, Smetona, and Grinius, the presidents of the interwar republic.

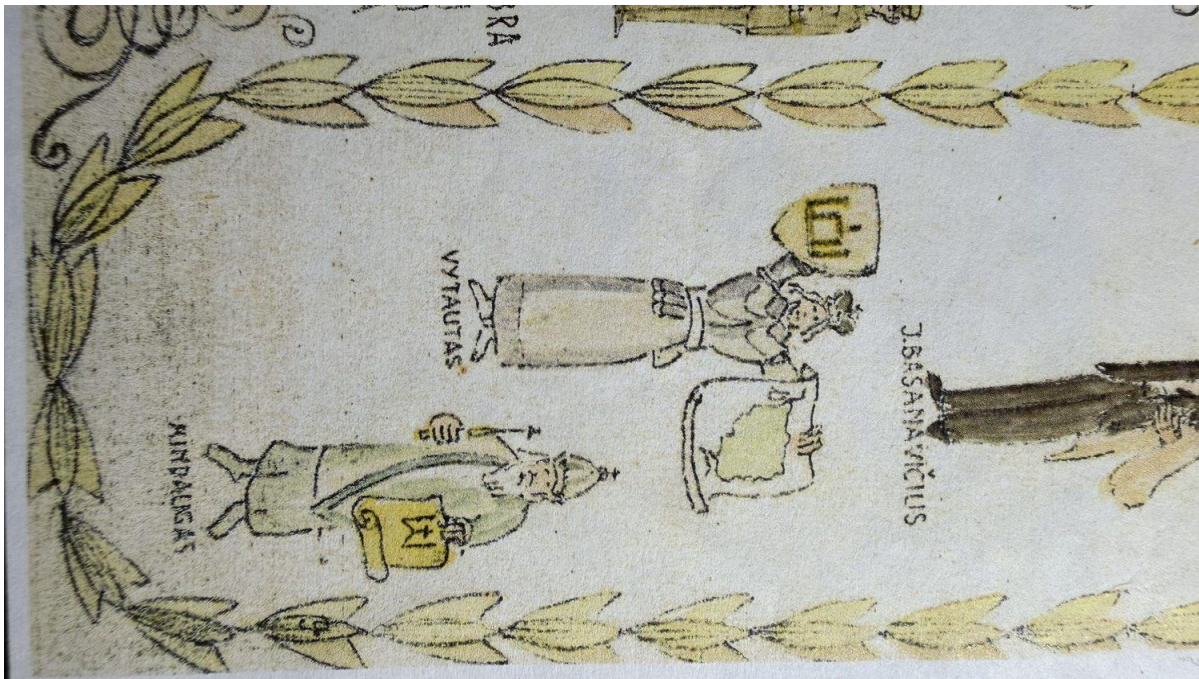


Figure 5. The base of the right margin. MINDAUGAS, crowned, with a sceptre and a scroll bearing the Columns of Gediminas. VYTAUTAS with the same shield and the map of the grand duchy. The dynastic origin of the claim, drawn inside laurel rather than barbed wire.

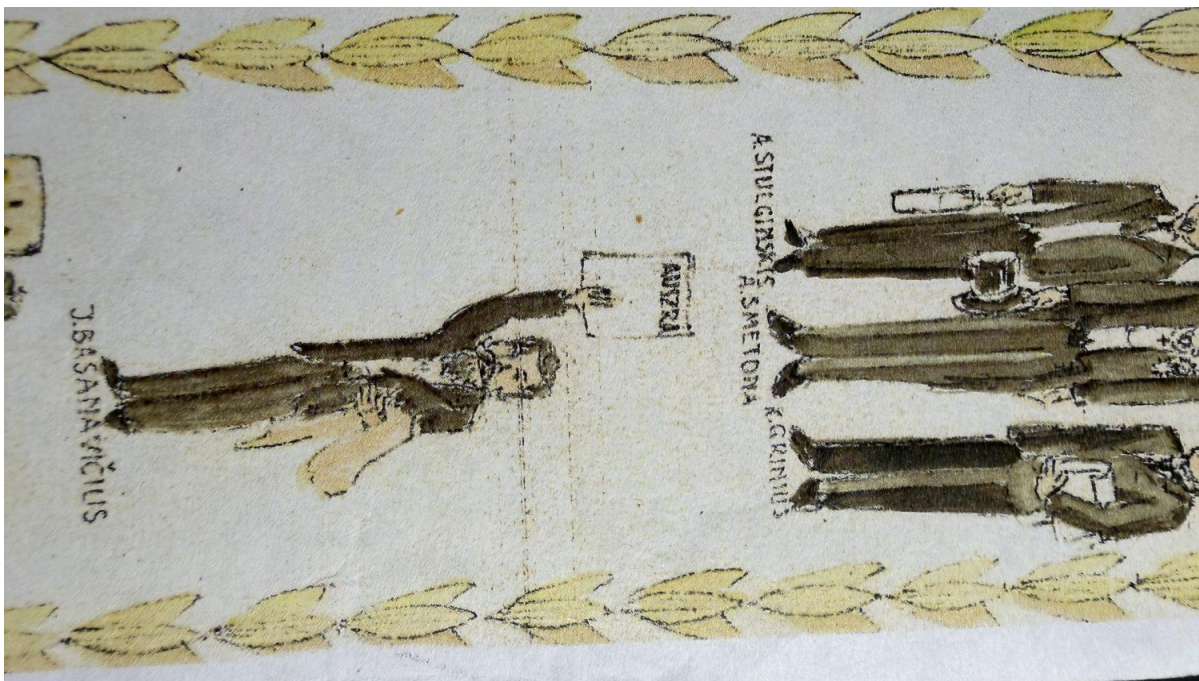


Figure 6. Higher in the same margin. J. BASANA VIČIUS raises his arm toward a placard reading AUŠRA, the newspaper of the national awakening. Above him A. STULGINSKIS, A. SMETONA, and K. GRINIUS, the presidents of the interwar republic. The margin is a line of succession, and the Provisional Government of 1941 is drawn at the end of it.

It is a line of descent. Thirteenth century, national awakening, 1918, and then, at the bottom of the sheet, seated at a long table with their nameplates in front of them, the Provisional Government of June 1941. Riauka drew my grandfather's movement as the last link in a chain that began with the founding of the state.

Across the top center a deportation train curls east, boxcar after boxcar, past a church, watched by a woman with a child.

The ledger

Riauka counted. This is the part of the sheet that I cannot get out of my head, because it shows exactly what kind of mind was at work.³

Rainiai, seventy-five victims. Pravieniškės, four hundred fifty. Panevėžys. Juodupė, seventeen. Roughly two thousand officials arrested in July 1940. Roughly six thousand five hundred servicemen deported to the Gulag between June 1940 and June 1941. Roughly nine thousand five hundred political prisoners liquidated. Roughly sixteen hundred activists killed between June 14 and 23, 1941.

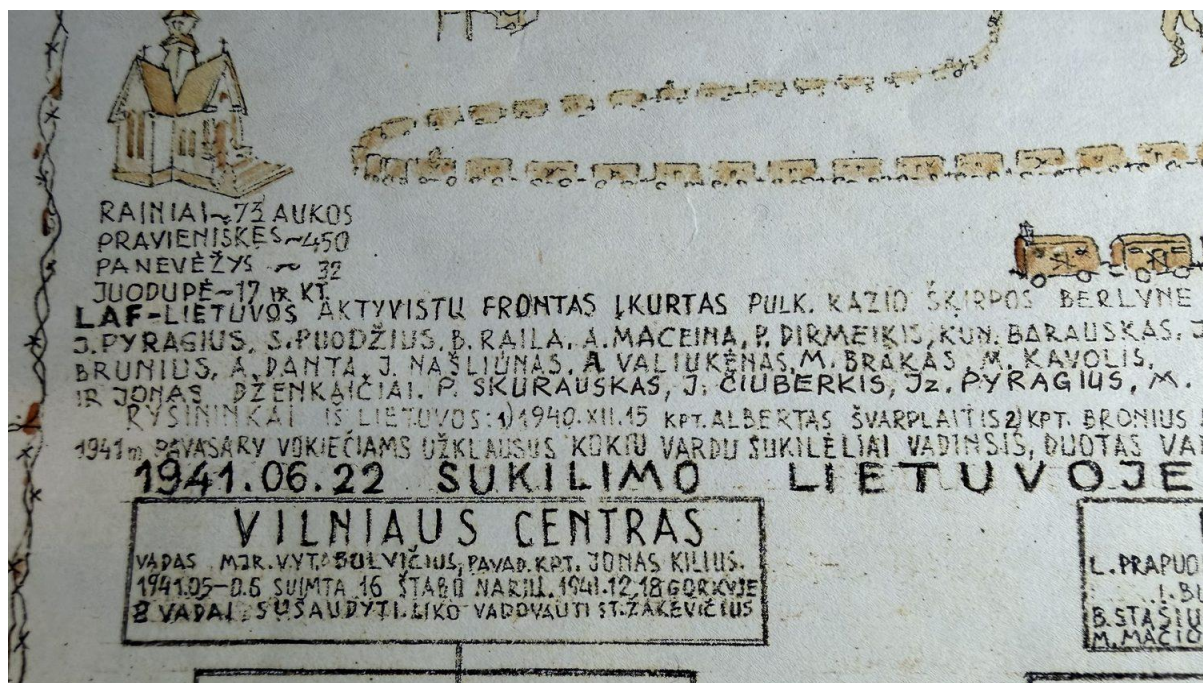


Figure 7. The upper-left block. The casualty ledger heads the sheet: RAINIAI — 75 victims, PRAVIENIŠKĖS — 450, PANEVĖŽYS, JUODUPĖ — 17. Beneath it the founding of the Lithuanian Activist Front and the roster of participants, then the VILNIAUS CENTRAS box. Every figure on the sheet is a Lithuanian figure.

Thirty-four thousand two hundred sixty deported to Siberia between June 14 and 18, 1941. Not thirty-four thousand. Not about thirty-five thousand. Thirty-four thousand two hundred sixty.⁴

³Riauka pictogram, upper-left text block. All Lithuanian text quoted in this article is transcribed from the sheet itself.

⁴Riauka pictogram, summary paragraph beneath the command diagram.

Roughly two thousand insurgents killed. About twenty-four dead in Vilnius. About one hundred sixty-two in Kaunas, and he named four of them: Savulionis, Matulis, Lapas, Živatkauskas. In the Aukštaitija box he wrote that three brothers named Meliūnai died at Kamajai.

Three brothers from one town, on a chart of a nation's history, because he knew their names and thought they should be on it. That is not a careless document. That is a document made by a man who believed that counting the dead correctly was a moral obligation.

The command tree

Above the boxes he lettered the heading: 1941.06.22, the organization of the uprising in Lithuania. Beneath it he set out the structure.

The Lithuanian Activist Front, he wrote, was founded by Colonel Kazys Škirpa in Berlin on November 17, 1940.⁵ He then listed the men who took part, and the list is long: Galvanauskas, Karvelis, Pyragius, Puodžius, Raila, Maceina, Dirmeikis, Father Barauskas, Katilius, Pancevičius, Skipitis, Vilčiusis, Brunius, Nasliūnas, Valiukėnas, Brakas, Kavolis, Ambraziejus, Jurkūnas, Father Yla, the brothers Penkaitis, Skurauskas, Čiuberkis, Dz. Pyragius, Kukutis. Beneath them the couriers: Captain Albertas Švarplaitis, Captain Bronius Michelevičius, who made the run twice before May 1941, and Mykolas Naujokaitis.

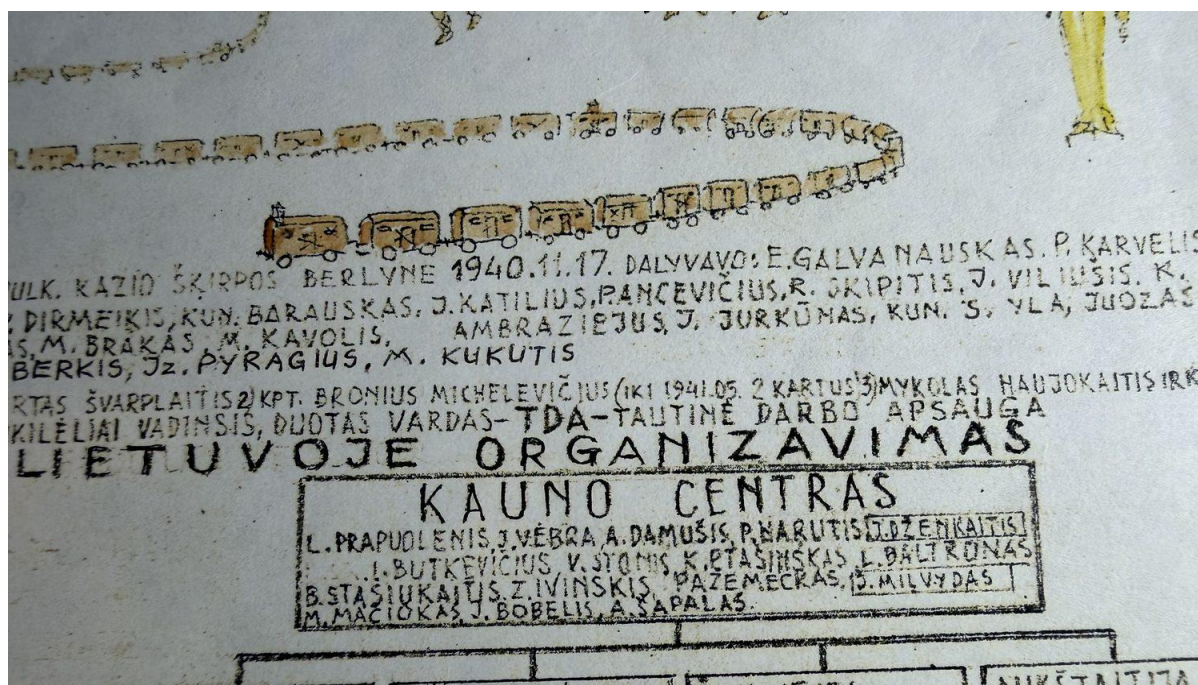


Figure 8. The founding entry, the roster, and the line that matters most in this block: in the spring of 1941, at German order, the insurgents were told what they would be called, and the name given was TDA — Tautinė darbo apsauga. Directly beneath it the heading KAUNO CENTRAS and its sixteen named members, among them J. Bobelis.

⁵Riauka pictogram, upper-left text block: LAF – Lietuvos Aktyvistų Frontas įkurtas pulk. Kazio Škirpos Berlyne 1940.11.17.

Two coordinating centers. Vilnius under Major Vytautas Bulvičius, with Captain Jonas Kilius as deputy; sixteen staff members arrested in May and June 1941; eight leaders shot at Gorky on December 18, 1941; Stasys Žakevičius left to lead what remained.⁶ Three commands beneath it.

Kaunas under Prapuolenis, Vėbra, Damušis, Narutis, Dženkaitis, Butkevičius, Stonis, Ptašinskas, Baltrūnas, Stašiukaitis, Živinskis, Pažemeckas, Milvydas, Mačiokas, Bobelis, Šapalas.⁷ Four commands beneath it. He also noted, in a single phrase, that the LAF was organized in fives.

The box in the middle

The third of the four Kaunas commands is labeled Žemaitija. Inside it Riauka listed six districts: Šiauliai, Telšiai, Mažeikiai, Kretinga, Tauragė, Raseiniai.

Beneath the districts, in smaller letters, he wrote three words and a name.

Vadas kpt. Jonas Noreika.

Commander, Captain Jonas Noreika.⁸

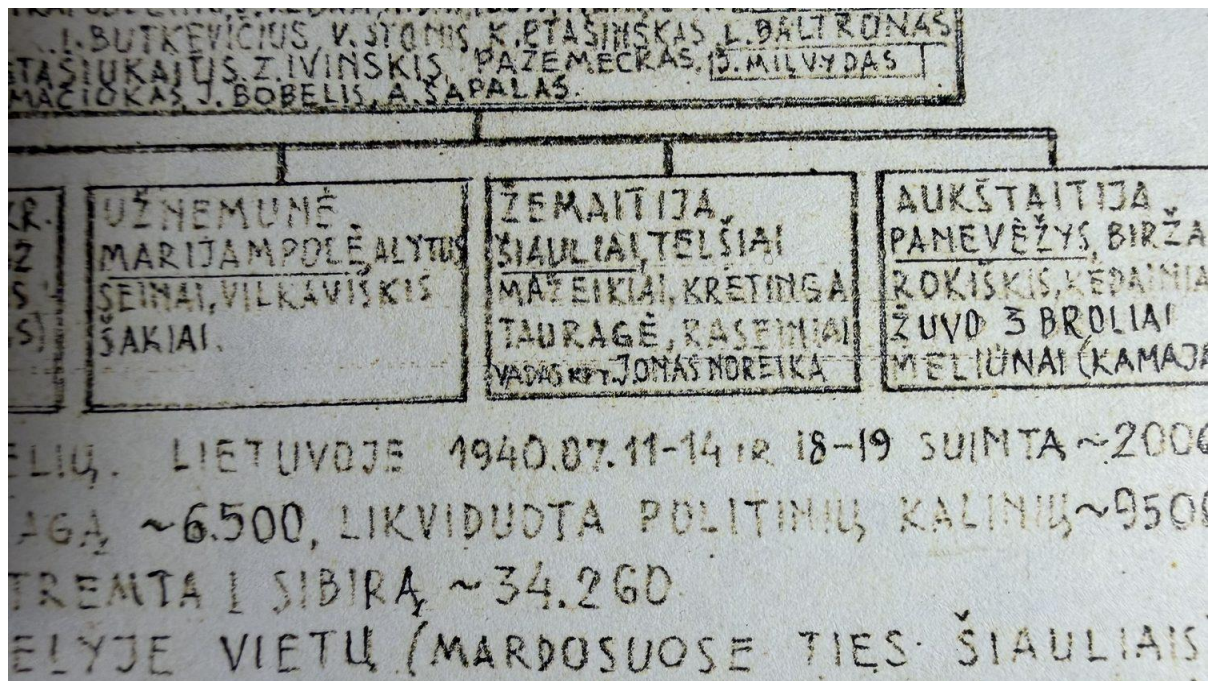


Figure 9. The evidentiary payload. KAUNO CENTRAS branches to four regional commands. The ŽEMAITIJA box lists ŠIAULIAI, TELŠIAI, MAŽEIKIAI, KRETINGA, TAURAGĖ, RASEINIAI, and beneath the districts, in smaller letters, VADAS KPT. JONAS NOREIKA — Commander, Captain Jonas Noreika. Riauka assigned him the rank and the command inside a document drawn to honor him.

⁶Riauka pictogram, Vilniaus centras box.

⁷Riauka pictogram, Kauno centras box.

⁸Riauka pictogram, Žemaitija box: ŽEMAITIJA — ŠIAULIAI, TELŠIAI, MAŽEIKIAI, KRETINGA, TAURAGĖ, RASEINIAI; VADAS KPT. JONAS NOREIKA.

He gave my grandfather the rank. He gave him the title. He put him at the head of six western districts in the summer of 1941, and he did it inside a document meant to honor him, because in Riauka's world command was the honor.

Read the chronology on the same sheet. The rising began, Riauka wrote, on June 21, 1941, at Mardosai near Šiauliai. A day before the German attack, inside the territory he assigned to my grandfather.⁹

Two months later, as chief of the Šiauliai district, my grandfather signed the order that sent the Jews of that district to Žagarė. That evidentiary chain has been set out in full elsewhere and I will not repeat it here.¹⁰ What matters on Riauka's sheet is the earlier link. He put Noreika in command of Šiauliai before the state ever admitted he was there.

The name the Germans gave

There is one more line in the upper block, easy to miss, and it is the line I would put in front of anyone who tells me the uprising was a purely Lithuanian affair. Riauka wrote that in the spring of 1941, at German order, the insurgents were told what they would be called, and the name given was TDA — Tautinė darbo apsauga, the National Labor Guard.¹¹

Not that the Germans approved a name. That the Germans issued one.

And of all the names in the world, that one. Tautinio darbo apsaugos batalionas is the Kaunas formation whose men shot Jews at the Seventh Fort in the summer of 1941 and which was absorbed into the German police battalion system before the year was out. Jurgis Bobelis, the Kaunas commandant who stood at the center of that formation, is named in the Kaunas box on the same sheet, in the same hand.

I want to be careful here, because I am not a historian and I have learned what happens when you are careless. The standard account dates the TDA battalion to the last week of June 1941. Riauka dates the German naming to the spring. I cannot resolve that from a drawing, and I am not going to pretend I can. But the discrepancy does not help the state's case. On the version I have in my hands, written by a man who spent his last decades defending the uprising, the Germans were naming the insurgents before the first shot was fired.

The table at the bottom

Along the lower edge, seated behind a long table with nameplates, Riauka drew the Provisional Government: Novickis, Mackevičius, Vitkus, Matulionis, Žemkalnis, Skipitis, Ambrazevičius,

⁹Riauka pictogram, summary paragraph beneath the command diagram.

¹⁰On the captured Lithuanian police apparatus of summer 1941, Vytautas Reivytiš, Letter No. 3, and Noreika's Order No. 962 of August 22, 1941 directing Jews of the Šiauliai district to Žagarė, see Grant Arthur Gochin, "The Coup That Captured Lithuania's Killing Apparatus," Substack (2026), <https://open.substack.com/pub/grantgochin/p/the-coup-that-captured-lithuanias>.

¹¹Riauka pictogram, upper-left text block, the line beginning 1941 m. pavasarij.

Škirpa, Raštikis, Damušis, Pajaujis, Vainauskas, Šlepetyš, Vencius. To the right of them the Council for the Defense of the Land: General Pundzevičius, General Reklaitis, Colonel Vėbra.¹²



Figure 10. The lower band. LAIKINOJI VYRIAUSYBĖ, the Provisional Government of June 1941, seated at a table with fourteen nameplates, K. ŠKIRPA among them although the Germans held him in Berlin and he never reached Kaunas. At the right, the Council for the Defense of the Land. Beneath, the banner: 1941 m. SUKILIMAS LIETUVOJE.

Škirpa never reached Kaunas. The Germans held him in Berlin. Riauka seated him at the table anyway, because in the story Riauka was telling, Škirpa belonged there.

Directly above the table Riauka wrote the ending. Hitler banned the activity of the Ambrazevičius government on August 5, 1941. The LAF was closed on September 22, 1941. He recorded the Germans shutting down the government he had just drawn in a place of honor, and he saw no contradiction in it, because to him the tragedy was that the Germans were ungrateful.

What he did not draw

He drew nothing about the Jews.

Not one Jewish town in the six districts under my grandfather's command. Not one Jewish death. Not one Jewish name, in a document where three brothers from Kamajai were worth a line of their own.

Lithuania had the highest murder rate of Jews in Europe. In Telšiai, Mažeikiai, Kretinga, Tauragė, Raseiniai, and Šiauliai, the Jewish communities were destroyed within months of the

¹²Riauka pictogram, Laikinoji Vyriausybė band along the lower edge, and the summary paragraph immediately above it.

uprising Riauka spent his life commemorating. He listed those six towns. He listed them as territory. He drew them as a chain of command and left every person in them off the page.

This is a man who could not round a number. Thirty-four thousand two hundred sixty. Seventeen at Juodupė. Four names in Kaunas. The precision is the point. The omission was not a lapse of memory in someone whose memory was his reputation.

Two lists of the same towns

On December 1, 1941, Karl Jäger compiled his summary of executions carried out in the area of Einsatzkommando 3. He listed the sites. Telšiai is on it. Mažeikiai is on it. Kretinga, Tauragė, Raseiniai, and Šiauliai are on it.¹³

Riauka named the command territory. Jäger named the killing territory. They are the same six towns, in the same months.

Riauka did not draw the killings. He drew the command. He drew the structure that operated in the places where the killings happened, in the period when they happened, under the authority of the man he loved.

The silence is the doctrine

Lithuania today runs a settled position on its wartime past. The suffering of Lithuania and the destruction of Lithuania's Jews are placed on one scale and declared to balance, and anyone who insists they do not is treated as an enemy of the nation. That position has a bureaucratic address. It is maintained by the Genocide and Resistance Research Centre, defended by the Prosecutor General, and enforced through Article 170² §1 of the Criminal Code.

I have watched that machinery work on my own family's history. What Riauka's sheet shows is the same disposition before it became policy, sitting in a private apartment, drawn in colored pencil by an old man with a ruler. Lithuanian dead counted to the individual. Jewish dead absent. Not denied, not disputed, not argued about. Simply not present.

Damijonas Riauka did not write the doctrine. He drew it.

The first name on the list

Go back to the founding roster. The name Riauka wrote immediately after Škirpa's is E. Galvanauskas.

Ernestas Galvanauskas was prime minister of Lithuania three times in the early twenties and served as a minister in the Provisional Government of June 1941. He is one of the architects of the modern Lithuanian state. He is also the reason I can say that the omission on Riauka's sheet is not ignorance.

On May 30, 1921, at the Brussels conference convened by Paul Hymans to settle the Vilnius dispute with Poland, Galvanauskas signed and submitted to the League of Nations, as president

¹³Karl Jäger, Gesamtaufstellung der im Bereich des EK 3 bis zum 1. Dezember 1941 durchgeführten Exekutionen, Kaunas, December 1, 1941.

of the Lithuanian delegation, a draft statement defining the rights of Polish-speaking citizens within Lithuania.¹⁴

Read what Lithuania proposed for itself. Minority protections recognized as fundamental principles, which no law, regulation, or official measure could contradict or override. Full equality before the law without distinction of race, language, or religion. Free use of the minority language in private life, in business, in worship, in the press, and at public meetings, with facilities to use it before the courts. The right to establish, direct, and supervise their own schools and their own religious and charitable institutions. In districts with a considerable Polish-speaking population, primary and secondary instruction in their own language, and an equitable share of state, municipal, and other public funds set aside for education, religion, and charity.

Then the machinery. Educational, religious, and charitable affairs placed under representative bodies elected by the minority itself, with the power to levy a supplemental tax on their own community to fund those institutions. A Ministry for Polish Affairs, in the cabinet. The right to use the minority language in parliament, in local representative bodies, in the courts, and in dealings with the government. And in the accompanying draft agreement, the League of Nations named as guarantor of the whole arrangement.

I will state the limits before anyone states them for me. This was a draft, submitted during a territorial negotiation, and it was never enacted. It was written for Polish-speakers, not for Jews, and I am not going to pretend otherwise. It does not by itself prove that anything was later broken.

What it proves is that Lithuania knew. By 1921 the Lithuanian state understood in precise detail what real protection of a minority requires, could design it clause by clause, and was willing to place it under foreign guarantee, at a moment when doing so served a claim to Vilnius. Sovereignty was not the obstacle. Lithuania offered the supervision itself.

And Jews had been promised too. On August 5, 1919, the Lithuanian delegation to the Peace Conference wrote to the Comité des Délégations Juives in Paris setting out eight principles adopted by the government: full civil, political, and national rights; proportional representation in the legislature; a Ministry for Jewish Affairs; free use of their own languages in the press, the theater, the schools, the courts, and government offices; the right to keep the Sabbath and the festivals; autonomy in religion, charity, welfare, instruction, and culture. The eighth principle went furthest. The organs of Jewish national autonomy were to be considered governmental organs, competent to pass resolutions binding on their own community, to levy taxes on it, and to receive state subsidies in proportion equal to those granted to the corresponding bodies of other nationalities.¹⁵

¹⁴League of Nations, C.95.M.54.1921.VII, Dispute Between Lithuania and Poland: Report by M. Hymans on the Conference at Brussels, April 20–June 3, 1921, Annex 4 (Lithuanian delegation submission of May 30, 1921, signed E. Galvanauskas).

¹⁵League of Nations Archives, Geneva, R1653/41/18339/9556, Minority Questions — Protection des Minorités en Lithuanie (1922), comprising the memorial of the Comité des Délégations Juives to the Council of the League, Paris, December 30, 1921, signed L. Motzkin, with its annex, the letter of the Lithuanian Delegation to the Peace Conference to the Comité, No. 1,701, Paris, August 5, 1919.

The letter closes with the hope that the Jews would prefer rights accepted voluntarily to rights imposed by constraint.

In the autumn of 1920 the government gave the president of the Jewish National Council a written assurance that the 1919 declaration would be written into the constitution, repeated it orally, and had it backed by a letter signed by the leaders of the parliamentary groups. In December 1921 the Comité laid the whole record before the Council of the League and asked it to see that Lithuania kept its word. Hymans, the same man who chaired the Brussels conference, appears in the League's outgoing correspondence on the Jewish file in January 1922.

The promises were made while Lithuania needed recognition. Lithuania got its recognition. The Ministry for Jewish Affairs was gone by 1924 and the autonomy was dismantled within a few years after that.

So the sheet in my house sits at the end of a long line. The state promised Jews national autonomy in 1919 when it needed standing. It designed an elaborate architecture of minority rights for Polish-speakers in 1921 when it needed Vilnius. It let both lapse once the need passed. Twenty years later the man whose signature was on the 1921 draft appears at the founding of the Lithuanian Activist Front in Berlin, and twenty years after that a veteran of that Front drew the whole national story on one page and left the Jews off it.

Nobody had to instruct Riauka to do that. He had been raised inside the habit.

The Jew on trial for saying less

Artur Fridman is being prosecuted in Lithuania under Article 170² §1, on a charge of denying and grossly distorting the country's historical record.¹⁶ Among the positions for which the state is prosecuting him are these: that the Lithuanian Activist Front coordinated with the Germans, that it was organized by region, and that its leadership included men Lithuania honors as heroes.

All three of those propositions are on Riauka's sheet. In Lithuanian. In the hand of a Lithuanian nationalist who took part in the uprising, drawn for the purpose of celebrating it.

Riauka was never summoned. No prosecutor demanded a retraction. No institution classified his archive as gross distortion. He lived out his years free and decorated, and died in 2018, and the drawing sat in my house the whole time.

The same state that decorated him is prosecuting a Jew for saying less than what he drew.

The inheritance

I am Jonas Noreika's granddaughter. I am also the person Damijonas Riauka chose to receive his archive. He gave it to me as a defender gives evidence to a defender. He assumed the inheritance would run in one direction.

When I first understood what was in the middle box, I wrote that my grandfather's involvement now looked incontestable, and that a man who really led the uprising across Žemaitija must have

¹⁶Republic of Lithuania, Criminal Code, Article 170² §1; prosecution of Artur Fridman, Case No. 02-2-00512-24.

held enormous power.¹⁷ I did not want to write that sentence. I wrote it because the document made it unavoidable.

The chart is still doing what Riauka wanted it to do. It preserves the Lithuanian Activist Front for the next generation. It names the founders. It records the command structure district by district. It states that the Germans issued the insurgents their name. It identifies Captain Jonas Noreika as commander in Žemaitija. Every one of those things is on the sheet because Riauka put it there on purpose.

The original sheet remains in my physical possession, where it has been since he handed it to me in 2013. I have promised it to the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum. Damijonas Riauka gave the document to a Lithuanian family so that it would be kept. It will be kept. It will be kept in Washington, in the archive of the museum that exists because of what happened to the people he left off the page.

The evidence was not seized from the defense. It was handed over by the defense.

What this document is, and what it is not

I want to state the limits myself, before anyone states them for me.

This is not a 1941 record. A caricature of Roosevelt, the aggregate deportation totals, the date of the Gorky executions: none of that could have been drawn in 1941. This is a commemorative reconstruction, made decades later from the memory of a man who was there. It does not prove a killing. It is not a court exhibit. It is not a substitute for the German and Lithuanian records that historians have spent thirty years assembling.

Here is what it is. A Lithuanian-language, Lithuanian-authored, nationalist-commemorative document, drawn by a self-identified participant in the June 1941 uprising, naming Captain Jonas Noreika as commander of the Lithuanian Activist Front in Žemaitija, listing the six districts under that command, recording that the insurgents were named at German order, and omitting the destruction of the Jews of those six districts entirely.

The state's position on my grandfather has always rested on the claim that no credible Lithuanian source places him in command of the LAF in Žemaitija in the summer of 1941. The Genocide and Resistance Research Centre has spent years building and defending that claim.

Here is a credible Lithuanian source. It has been in my possession since 2013.

Coda

I do not write any of this against Lithuanians. Most of the people I met in Kaunas were kind to me, including the ones who disagreed with everything I had come to say. My quarrel is with a state apparatus, a research centre, and a political class that have decided the reputation of a dead officer is worth more than the truth about two hundred thousand murdered Jews, and that have found a criminal statute to enforce that decision.

¹⁷Foti, *The Nazi's Granddaughter*, 131.

Damijonas Riauka was not part of that apparatus. He was an old man in a small room who wanted his friend remembered as a hero, and who was honest enough, and precise enough, to draw the whole structure while he was at it.

The defense's last living witness drew the map. In his own hand. In his own colors. With his own legend.