

Church Institution during the Period of Nazi Occupation in Lithuania

Historiography and Sources

There exists only scanty historiography on this subject, since up till present almost no research has been carried out in this area. In many cases, documents published during the Soviet period and judgements formed by the Soviet historiography are still in use, although they primarily had a function of propaganda and therefore could not be considered impartial. Documents that had to reveal the collaboration of top hierarchs and the clergy with the Nazi were started to be published in the periodicals in the sixties and later on in the specialized selections of documents¹. A monograph by J. Aničas², published at the beginning of the seventies, revealed the attitude of the Soviet historiography to the position of the Church during the years of the Nazi occupation most fully. In order to demonstrate the partiality of the conclusions of the Soviet historiography, Bishop V. Brizgys published a book³ of similar contents after several years, which could be qualified as more of a testimony of an eyewitness rather than a historical research. As yet, historians have failed to document some of the statements of that publication.

Topics related to the genocide of the Jews in Lithuania attracted the greatest attention in the Post-Soviet historiography on the Nazi occupation period. Analyses of the stance of the Church emphasize this aspect as well. *We Remember: a Reflection on the Shoah*, published by the Vatican Commission for Religious Relations With the Jews on 16 March 1998, provided a great stimulus for the examination of this topic in greater detail. There was renewed the global discussion on the position of Pope Pius XII, and in general of the Catholic Church, on the Holocaust⁴. A scientific conference *Catholic*

¹ *Masinės žudynės Lietuvoje. I dalis*. Vilnius, 1965; *Bažnyčios prieglobstyje. Kalba faktai*. Vilnius, 1983.

² *Katalikiškasis klerikalizmas Lietuvoje 1940-1944 metais*. Vilnius, 1972.

³ V. Brizgys, *Katalikų Bažnyčia Lietuvoje 1940-1944 metais*, Chicago, 1977.

⁴ Among a number of monographs on this subject published after 1998, one can note the following: P. Blet, *Pius XII and the second World War: According to the Archives of the Vatican*. New York, 1999; M. Phayer, *The Catholic Church and the Holocaust, 1930-1965*. Bloomington, 2000; D. Goldhagen, *A Moral Reckoning: The Role of the Catholic Church in the Holocaust and Its Unfulfilled Duty of Repair*. New York, 2002.

Church and the Jewish-Lithuanian Relations was held in Vilnius on 8-9 October 1998, too. Many papers were read during this conference, and their authors – S. Sužiedėlis, V. Brandišauskas, A. Bubnys and others – formulated the principal problems of the research and substantiated their arguments by new sources⁵. Greater interest was started to be shown for the participation of the clergy in the rescues of the Jews during the years of the Nazi occupation⁶. Unfortunately, after the interest had subsided, the scientific research into this subject was not further developed.

Lack of primary sources is the greatest obstacle for making a successful scientific analysis of this matter. Documents from the institutions of the Nazi occupation government, which can be found in the Lithuanian state archives and which reflect relations with the religious organisations, are very fragmentary. One can rely only on the extant monthly reports of the German Security Police and an SD Commander (chiefly from 1943), which briefly mention the state of the religious organisations, and scanty correspondence between the subdivisions of this institution on the activities in this area. There are slightly more archival documents related to the subject of the research in the archives owned by the diocesan curias. The present study has made use of the documents of the Kaunas and Panevėžys diocesan curias, which are kept in the Lithuanian State Historical Archives. These are minutes of the bishops' conferences and meetings, correspondence with the institutions of the Nazi occupation authorities, letters from curias to priests, and the bishops' pastorals. Published diaries of the Archbishop of Kaunas Juozapas Skvireckas⁷ and the former prisoner of Kaunas ghetto Avraham Tory⁸ are significant sources, especially from the point of view of examination of the Church attitude towards the Holocaust and rescue activities of the Jews.

⁵ S. Sužiedėlis, "Lietuvos Katalikų Bažnyčia ir holokaustas kaip istorinių tyrimų objektas", *LKMA Metraštis*, vol. XIV, p. 121-133; V. Brandišauskas, "Holokaustas Lietuvoje: istoriografinė situacija ir pagrindinės problemos", *ibid.*, p. 135-152; A. Bubnys, "Vokiečių politika Lietuvoje Bažnyčios ir religijos atžvilgiu (1941-1944)", *ibid.*, p. 209-219.

⁶ V. Sakaitė, "Lietuvos dvasininkai - žydų gelbėtojai", *Genocidas ir rezistencija*, 2002, No 2, p. 222-232; *Išgelbėję pasaulį: žydų gelbėjimas Lietuvoje (1941-1944)*, Vilnius, 2001.

⁷ *1941 m. Birželio sukilimas* (collection of articles), ed. V. Brandišauskas, Vilnius, 2000.

⁸ A. Tory, *Kauno getas: diena po dienos*, Vilnius, 2000.

General Nazi Policy Towards the Religious Organisations in Ostland

The ideology and practice of the Nazi regime that had briefly replaced the Soviet occupation in Lithuania was Anti-Christian, too; although the direct fight against the Church was not emphasized during the war years. Minister for the Occupied Eastern Territories Alfred Rosenberg, although a committed atheist, supported the policy of the use of the religious organisations to the political-propagandist ends; since the Nazi propaganda strived to present that war as fight against godless Bolshevism. Therefore quite moderate religious policy was exercised in the territories occupied by the Reich, which up till then were ruled by the Soviet Union. Rosenberg's instructions to the German government institutions in Ostland of 3 September 1941 state that activities of the confessional organisations should not be restricted unless they overstep the boundaries of the religious practice⁹. Falsifications were also not avoided in pursuance of the propagandist aims. For instance, on 9 September 1941, the daily *Į laisvę (To Freedom)* published a report on the meeting between the Reich Commissioner for Ostland Heinrich Lohse and the Metropolitan Archbishop Juozapas Skvireckas, where Lohse allegedly stated that the Germans "paid great attention to the restoration of the Catholic Church in this area and were determined to help it with their best efforts". In truth, no similar meeting has taken place¹⁰, and this press report was merely a propagandist trick of the Nazi with a view of motivating the Church hierarchs to support the occupation authorities more.

A decree of Reich Commissioner for Ostland Lohse of 19 June 1942, which established the legal status of the religious organisations, had similar purpose¹¹. Although it had to demonstrate the ostensible tolerance of the occupation authorities towards the religious organisations, in truth it restricted their freedom. Firstly, according to this decree, all the religious communities had to register at the office of the General Commissioner. Furthermore, only persons that had no claims of the general political nature from the General Commissioner could become leaders of the religious organisations. Activities of the religious organisations were strictly limited to the exercise

⁹ A. Bubnys, op. cit., p. 210.

¹⁰ **A passage from Archbishop J. Skvireckas' notes, Kaunas Archdiocese Curia Archives (hereinafter KACA), b. 175, l. 181.**

¹¹ A. Dallin, *Deutsche Herrschaft in Rußland 1941-1945*, Düsseldorf, 1981, p. 494.

of the religious practices, and those religious communities that infringed this provision (and it could have been interpreted very broadly) could be penalized by a fine or liquidated by order of the Commissioner. According to the instructions of the Nazi authorities in Berlin, religious formations that overstepped boundaries of the general regions were also not recognised, thereby essentially ignoring the universal structures of the Church. This principle was primarily directed against the Catholic and Russian Orthodox Churches, towards which the Nazi authorities were hostile most of all and therefore tried to restrict their influence in this region, especially in Belarus and Ukraine. For instance, the curia of the Vilnius archdiocese was forbidden to cultivate relations with parishes that found themselves outside the General Region of Lithuania.

Reaction of the Nazi government to the initiative of the Lithuanian Catholic Church (LCC) to organise missions in the USSR territories occupied by the Germans conforms this as well. After the Nazi had occupied Lithuania, the former Apostolic Administrator of Leningrad Bishop Teofilis Matulionis and Archbishop of Vilnius Romuald Jalbrzykowski who had secured from Rome jurisdiction in the diocese of Minsk in the autumn of 1941 were the most active in their efforts to organise missions in Russia. Bishop Matulionis addressed the Reich Commissioner of Ostland on this matter on 25 February 1942 but received a negative reply¹². Archbishop Jalbrzykowski attempted to send priests to the east without asking permission from the Nazi government; however, they either were arrested and killed (Rev. Henryk Hlebowicz) or brought back to Vilnius. The Germans permitted only chaplains of the Lithuanian police battalions to go to Belarus. The Nazi government even did not give permission to publish pictures with the major prayers in Russian, which had to be distributed among the prisoners of war.

Church Relations with the Nazi Occupation Administration in Lithuania

The Baltic countries, who have survived horrors of the Soviet regime, perceived the Nazi as liberators from the Bolshevik occupation, or at least as a lesser evil as compared to the Soviet regime. The Provisional Government formed by the insurgents soon annulled all the laws and decrees promulgated by the Soviet government, thus the ones that were directed against the Church, as well. The LCC hierarchs were successful at

¹² *Arkivyskupas Teofilius Matulionis laiškuose ir dokumentuose*. Vilnius, 2002, p. 104-108.

establishing fair relations with the military German administration that actually ruled the country. According to Bishop Brizgys, who, with Archbishop Skvireckas residing in Linkuvėlė, continued to supervise the activities of the curia in practice, the German Military Commandants Generals von Roques and von Pohl, who were of noble descent and did not belong to the Nazi Party, were appeaseable and did not prevent the Church from *de facto* recovering the position that it had lost during the years of the Soviet rule. The authorities of the Kaunas Archdiocese were not hesitant in expressing their public support for the German army that had liberated the country from the “Bolshevik yoke”. The Kaunas daily *Į laisvę* published a statement *Brangūs tautiečiai (Dear Citizen)* signed by Archbishop Skvireckas and Bishop Brizgys, which condemned the Bolshevik crimes in Lithuania, thanked the German army for the liberation, expressed hope that freedom for religion would be respected, and urged the Lithuanian citizen to focus on the rebuilding of the country that had been destroyed by the Bolsheviks. Archbishop Skvireckas and Bishop Brizgys signed a telegram of thanks from the representatives of the Lithuanian public to Adolf Hitler, as well.

However, the German civil government, which had soon replaced the military administration, was not going to re-establish the independence of Lithuania and the position of the Church that existed before the first Soviet occupation. Indeed, initially the authorities permitted to renew activities of all the seminaries, to restore the Faculty of Theology and Philosophy at the University, to reinstate teaching of religion in secondary schools, to re-establish the institution of prison and hospital chaplains, and for monks and nuns, to return the buildings that had been expropriated. However, they did not restore the land and property ownership for the Church, and barred the religious press as well as some of the religious organisations.

The behaviour of the civil administration officials soon changed the initially favourable attitude of the Church hierarchs towards the occupation authorities. A letter of 23 August 1941 by the Commissioner of Kaunas City H. Kramer to the Rector of Kaunas Seminary became the first signal of the new relations. In it, the Commissioner reported that he had heard rumours about the organisation of Kaunas Seminary and declared that “such courses were not desirable” until the end of the war. The reply to this letter had it that the seminary was not being organised but had already been functioning for more than

300 years, that it was not some course but rather an institution of higher education, and that its activities were regulated by a document of an international law, a concordat, and therefore it was not within the remit of the City Commissioner to allow or not to allow its functioning¹³. This time the German authorities did not dare confront bishops and permitted the seminary to function; however, the false press report about the alleged meeting between Archbishop Skvireckas and Lohse, as well as rather cool reception by the General Commissioner of Lithuania Adrian von Renteln during the official visit of Archbishop Skvireckas on 25 September 1941, prompted the Church authorities to treat relations with the new invaders in a more reserved manner.

Ever-new trouble spots heightened tension between the LCC and the Nazi civil administration. At the end of October 1941 the General Commissioner charged the Councillor General for the Interior to renew the activities of the civil registry offices that had been established during the years of the Soviet occupation and to assign them the church registers of births, marriages and deaths. Since at the beginning of the Nazi occupation in many places parish priests had already retrieved the books that had been confiscated by the Bolsheviks, such demand did not contribute to the positive feelings towards the new invaders whose behaviour differed little from the previous ones. As the winter of 1940-1941 drew close, centres of typhus fever epidemic were observed in some places of Lithuania. By reason of this, the occupation authorities ordered curias to issue instructions to close churches in the centres of epidemic. Although this order was carried out (churches had been closed from 20 December 1941 until 10 February 1942 in the areas that had been announced centres of epidemic, the ones in Kaunas city among them), this caused discontent of the believers and the Church authorities; the more so, that public places (theatres, cafés, etc) were not closed. People were admitted into some of the closed churches via the side-door.

Yet another trouble spot appeared when at the beginning of the summer of 1942 the General Commissioner von Renteln ordered to cease financing of the Faculty of Theology and Philosophy and suggested the authorities of Vytautas Magnus University to eliminate the faculty from the university structure. Although even after the strong protest from the Faculty Dean Bishop Brizgys against such an undertaking the General

¹³ V. Brizgys, op. cit., p. 130.

Commissioner did not change his line, the faculty continued to function, since it received secret financing. The General Commissioner tolerated this, for it seems that Bishop Brizgys's threatening statement, which he communicated through the Councillor for Education, saying that "the General Commissariat would not get neither a word, nor a letter any longer until it changed its stance towards the Catholics" made an impact on him¹⁴. Indeed, at the beginning of 1942 the Kaunas Archdiocese had made several statements useful for the Germans: on 3 January 1942 it issued an appeal *To the Lithuanian Catholic Community*, which urged to donate warm clothes to the German army experiencing the "delight" of a Russian winter; and on 12 March 1942 it made a statement to contribute scrap metal.

On the other hand, the Catholic Church did not shun from stricter judgements on the Nazi policy that was unfavourable to the religious activities, as well. However, it is true that these were not public protests but rather attempts to directly appeal to the institutions of the occupation authorities. Already on 21 March 1942 Archbishop Skvireckas expressed concern of the Catholic Church over some of the actions of the occupation authorities, which restricted the pastoral activities and the freedom for religion, in his letter to Reich Commissioner for Ostland Heinrich Lohse. The Lithuanian Bishops also discussed relations between the Church and the occupation authorities during their annual conference in Kaunas on 6-8 October 1942. After the conference, on 16 October, they issued a memorandum to the General Commissioner, which demanded to restore the Church ownership rights, to return archives and registers of births, marriages and deaths that had been forfeited by the Bolsheviks, to establish conditions for the provision of spiritual ministrations to the Lithuanians sent for work in Germany, not to interfere with the activities of the Faculty of Theology and Philosophy, to authorize at least one Catholic weekly and one monthly, to restore the Catholic printing-houses, and to permit the functioning of the Catholic organisations; it expressed disapproval at the eviction of the Polish farmers, sending of the youth to do the obligatory work service in Germany, and ban on the religious extracurricular groups at schools¹⁵.

¹⁴ A. Bubnys, op. cit., p. 214.

¹⁵ Lithuanian State Historical Archives (hereinafter LSHA), Fund 1671, Catalogue 5, File 65, sheet 33-38.

In response to this memorandum, the General Commissioner rebuked in exasperation the Lithuanian bishops for not showing gratitude to Germany, as it had liberated Lithuania from the Bolsheviks, and raising such matters that were irrelevant in the presence of the war. He was especially displeased at the episcopate's objections to the sending of the youth to do the obligatory work service in Germany and the request to allow the Lithuanian priests to go to Germany to provide ministrations to the Lithuanian Catholics who worked there¹⁶. Von Renteln was annoyed not only by the bishops' memorandum, but also by a sermon of Bishop Brizgys, which he delivered in Kaunas Garrison Church on 11 October 1942 and criticised the occupation regime for the matters set forth in the memorandum. A Nazi demand, which was announced at the end of October 1942, to remove all the bronze church bells that did not have historical, cultural or artistic value and take them away for scrapping, made the complicated relations even more strained.

The Lithuanian bishops refused to directly support the mobilisation to a separate Lithuanian SS unit, which was announced in February 1943, and this did not improve difficult relations either. Commander of the German Security Police and SD for Lithuania Karl Jäger, who visited the curia of the Kaunas Archdiocese for this matter on 20 February, received the following reply from Archbishop Skvireckas:

“To demand support for the mobilisation from the clergy means to humiliate the soldiers themselves. Mobilisation is not the concern of the Church. There is the Bolshevik army and the Bolshevik spirit. Your concern is to defeat the Bolshevik army and our concern is to defeat the Bolshevik spirit. We have already made efforts and we will continue to do that; only the lay authorities should not hinder us from that. It is not our concern to found cannons, and it is not our concern to call men to the army.”¹⁷

The archbishop only promised to deliver a sermon against Bolshevism in the Cathedral on 4 March, the day of St. Casimir. The Kaunas daily *Ateitis (Future)* published an extract from it under the title of *To the Fight against Bolshevism*, and it was broadcast on the radio as well. On 28 February 1943 the Cathedral Vicar Zakarauskas also delivered a sermon against Bolshevism, which was broadcast on the radio, too. It

¹⁶ Letter of the General Commissioner for Lithuania of 9 November 1942, LSHA, Fund 1671, Catalogue 5, File 66, sheet 10-11.

¹⁷ V. Brizgys, *Ibid*, p. 151.

was not a first warning by LCC about the danger of the Communism; however, since it was announced during the mobilisation to an SS unit, it naturally may be interpreted as an indirect support to the mobilisation plans of the occupation authorities.

However, despite the exhortation of the Kaunas clergy to do everything in order to prevent the Bolsheviks from returning to Lithuania, the move to organise an SS unit failed, and repressions started. On 17 March, by order of the General Commissioner, all the Lithuanian institutions of higher education were closed¹⁸; and on 16-19 March the German police arrested and deported to the Stutthof concentration camp 46 intellectuals, Professor Rev. Stasys Yla and Rev. Alfonsas Lipniūnas, who were known all over Lithuania and who did not shun from criticising the policy of the Nazi occupation authorities, among them.

Some of the Church hierarchs contributed to the attempts to ease the situation. On 19 March 20 people, Bishop Brizgys and Rector of Kaunas Seminary Pranas Petraitis among them, signed a proclamation that supported the Nazi policy and urged to fulfil one's duty for the army¹⁹. On 5 April 1943 participants of the Conference of the Lithuanian representatives, 17 clergymen among them, which was organised by the First General Councillor Petras Kubiliūnas, made a similar proclamation. Moreover, Bishop Brizgys urged men on the radio not to avoid mobilisation to the auxiliary labour battalions. Indeed, such statements reduced tension; however, they had a very little impact on the self-determination of the ordinary people. Not all bishops agreed to join the move organised by Kubiliūnas. For instance, Archbishop Reinys rejected the request by the First General Councillor to give instructions to priests to urge their congregations not to avoid the mobilisation. He explained his position by presenting arguments that he could not order priests to speak about secular matters; moreover, he reminded the Councillor about the restrictions that the occupation authorities had imposed on the Church²⁰. This attitude of the archbishop was also determined by the fact that he took an

¹⁸ In compliance with this order, Vilnius Seminary was also closed for a time; even until then, contrary to Kaunas Seminary, it functioned without any official permission from the German authorities. In the summer of 1943 archbishop Reinys succeeded at obtaining such permission, and the seminary continued to function; moreover, it regained its building in the Tiltas street. Still, Gestapo did not allow using the library of the seminary.

¹⁹ V. Brizgys, *Ibid.*, p. 154.

²⁰ A letter by Archbishop Reinys of 24 April 1943 to the First General Councillor Kubiliūnas, Lithuanian Particular Archives (LPA), Fund K-1, Catalogue 45, File 771, sheet 113a.

unequivocally negative position not only on the doctrine of Communism, but also on the racist National Socialist theories, which was proved by the contents of his book *Rasizmo problema (The Problem of Racism)*, published already in 1939.

The majority of the bishops' pastorals that had been announced during the years of the Nazi occupation emphasised the threat of the Bolshevism as well; however, the best means to fight it, according to them, was not military power but the spread of the word of God and denunciation of the lie told by the Bolsheviks. This was emphasised by the joint Lithuanian bishops' letter announced in January 1943, the first pastoral²¹ of 12 May 1943 by the new Bishop Ordinary of the Kaišiadoriai Diocese Matulionis, the first pastoral²² of 8 July 1943 by the new Bishop Ordinary of the Telšiai Diocese Borisevičius, and articles by Archbishop Reinys published in the periodicals²³. Bishops, in their wish to stave off return of the Soviets, trusted the power of repentance and prayer more. In the autumn of 1943 the parish priests were instructed to celebrate a special Mass for Peace and the Country each week until the war was over and to organise a Day of Repentance with the same intention. Moreover, the Lithuanian Bishops' Conference, which was held on 5-6 October 1943, scheduled to convene the 2nd Eucharistic Congress of Lithuania in the summer of 1944, which had to revitalise the spiritual life in Lithuania depressed by the occupations.

Although tension between the Church and the German occupation authorities was slightly reduced after the summer of 1943, separate conflicts continued to occur. One of the greatest conflicts was caused in the Kaišiadoriai diocese, when the German Security Police officers stormed into the Žiežmariai church during the Sunday Mass on 10 September 1943 and started arresting people for the forced labour in Germany. The parish priest Prelate Bernardas Sužiedėlis wrote a report to the curia and called this incident the desecration of the church, while Bishop Matulionis wrote a letter of protest to the General Commissioner. Prelate Sužiedėlis was arrested in November; however, he was released following Bishop Matulionis's apology for some of the unduly drastic statements in his protest. *Potvarkis dėl ištuokų ir faktinųjų santuokų Lietuvos*

²¹ *Arkivyskupas Teofilus Matulionis laiškuose ir dokumentuose*, p. 8-12.

²² *Vyskupas Vincentas Borisevičius straipsniuose ir dokumentuose*. Vilnius, 2002, p. 265-271.

²³ A. Vasiliauskiėnė, „Arkivyskupo Mečislovo Reinio pozicija bolševizmo ir tikėjimo klausimais (spauda ir dokumentika)“, *Lietuvos aukštųjų mokyklų mokslo darbai. Istorija*, vol. XXXIX, p. 29-41.

generalinėje srityje (Decree on Divorces and Factual Marriages in the General Region of Lithuania) of 1 April 1943, which instituted civil marriage, sparked an angry protest from the episcopate, too. This matter was discussed during the bishops' conference, which was held in October 1943. The bishops decided to send a letter of protest to the General Commissioner where they emphasised that they did not consider the existing procedure for marriages legal, and demanded to re-establish the order that existed before the Soviet occupation²⁴. The same conference strongly condemned Dr. Jonas Šliūpas's proposal to practice euthanasia on terminally ill hospice patients, and decided to send a letter to Kaunas medical staff on behalf of the episcopate and to commend their statements against such Dr. Šliūpas's proposals.

There is no accurately summarised data about the number of the Lithuanian priests (the Vilnius archdiocese excluded) who were imprisoned during the years of the German occupation; however, it is likely that the number did not exceed ten. Apart from Rev. Yla and Rev. Lipniūnas, who were deported to Stutthof in March 1943, and Prelate Sužiedėlis, which has already been mentioned, the following priests experienced the "delight" of the Nazi prison: Canon Antanas Želvys, Rev. Vaclovas Tamoševičius and Rev. Romanas Klumbys were imprisoned in Lithuania, while Rev. Jurgis Paransevičius and Rev. Vytautas Pikturna were deported to the Dachau concentration camp. Three more priests were shot dead: Rev. Kazimieras Puleikis was accused of the collaboration with the Soviet security agencies, and Rev. Ignas Ragauskis and Rev. Kostas Daukantas were shot dead for the fact that they had publicly condemned the fusillade of the Jews. The fate of the Vilnius archdiocese priests was much worse. Several dozens of them were imprisoned, and around 30 were shot dead²⁵. On the other hand, there were not many clergymen who had closely collaborated with the Nazi occupation authorities, either. According to the documents of the German Security Police and an SD Commander for Lithuania, Rector of Kaunas Seminary Petraitis and Canon Mečislovas Sandanavičius were especially close and friendly to the Germans²⁶.

²⁴ Minutes of the Conference, LSHA, Fund 1671, Catalogue 5, File 67, sheet 3.

²⁵ *Życie religijne w Polsce pod okupacją 1939-1945: Metropolie wileńska i lwowska, zakony*. Pod red. Z. Zelinskiego, Katowice, 1992, p. 24.

²⁶ Report by the Commander of the German Security Police and SD for Lithuania of February 1943 to the Central Office for Reich Security in Berlin, Lithuanian Central State Archives (LCSA), Fund R-1399, Catalogue 1, File 61, sheet 8.

It was obvious from the experience of totalitarian regimes that it had been easier to control the religious organisations when their institutional centre was in the territory controlled by the regime. Therefore the Catholic Church with its universal structure was not opportune to the Nazi regime. Even before the war with the Soviet Union, the officials of the German government tried to find out whether some of the Lithuanian bishops would have not agreed to establish an independent from Vatican “national church” in Lithuania²⁷. No initiators of such kind appeared among the Lithuanian clergymen; on the contrary, the Lithuanian bishops strived to renew ties with the Holy See, which had been severed during the Soviet occupation. However, it was not easy, because after Vatican refused to recognise countries that had been occupied by the Nazi as part of Germany, Berlin attempted to isolate the Church of those countries from the Holy See. The Vatican Nuncio in Berlin was forbidden from making contacts with the bishops of the occupied countries, and letters sent by ordinary mail were checked²⁸. Nevertheless, correspondence with Vatican was partly renewed through trustees. On 8 October 1942 Archbishop Skvireckas sent a letter to the Pope on behalf of the Lithuanian episcopate, where he informed the Pope about the state of the Church in Lithuania, paying the greatest attention to the experiences of the Soviet occupation period. Similar letters were sent during the later years as well. Unlike in the period between 1940-1941, the Vatican instructions and letters used to reach Lithuania, too. Lithuania even received a financial donation (25 thousand Reichsmark) for the common matters of the congregation in 1942.

A specific situation developed in the Vilnius archdiocese, which belonged to the Church province of Poland. The Polish public and priests were much more Anti-German and closely cooperated with the Polish Anti-Nazi underground organisations. Therefore the priests of the Vilnius archdiocese suffered much more from the Nazi repressive policy. On 3 March 1942 the Gestapists stormed Vilnius Seminary during lectures and arrested all the professors and ordinands. Furthermore, 15 Polish priests of Vilnius were arrested, too. All of them were initially detained in the Lukiškės prison. Later on the professors of the seminary were confined in the forced labour camp of the Šaltupys

²⁷V. Brizgys, *op. cit.*, p. 121.

²⁸ V. Pavalkis, “Bažnyčia Lietuvoje ir Vatikanas 1940-1945”, *Aidai*, 1973, No. 6, p. 248.

manor house (Marijampolė district), while the majority of the arrested ordinands were sent for work in Germany. Archbishop of Vilnius Romuald Jalbrzykowski and Chancellor of the Curia Adam Sawicki were arrested and detained in the monastery of Marists in Marijampolė on 12 March 1942 as well. At the end of the month, all the monasteries and convents were closed in Vilnius, and their residents – 64 monks and 189 nuns – were imprisoned in the Lukiškės prison. Later on the nuns were released, but they were forbidden to live in communities and to wear habits²⁹.

Furthermore, the Nazi occupation authorities attempted to make use of the national tension in the Vilnius archdiocese, which was raised by the opposition of the Polish clergy and the congregation against Archbishop Reinyš, who had substituted the detained Archbishop Jalbrzykowski. In pursuance of such tactics, the Nazi permitted to renew the functioning of Vilnius Seminary as of 1942, since its new Rector and the majority of the ordinands were Lithuanians. For instance, the parish priest of Eitminiškės Rev. Ambraziejus Jakavonis fell victim to the hostility between the Lithuanians and the Poles, which had been fuelled by the Germans, as he was killed by the combatants of the Armia Krajowa in April 1944. On the other hand, the frequently found statements in the Polish historiography, which say that the Lithuanian clergymen made use of the German support in order to get even with the Polish clergy, do not seem to have sufficient grounds³⁰. According to the minutes of the Lithuanian Bishops' Conference that was held on 6-9 October 1942, the Lithuanian episcopate cared about the needs of the imprisoned Polish priests, the possibility of their release, and possible help for them³¹.

There developed various types of relations between other confessions and the Nazi occupation authorities. The exarch of the Russian Orthodox Church in the Baltics Metropolitan Sergius Voskresensky closely cooperated with the Nazi occupation authorities. Although until now it has not been finally ascertained who had organised the assassination of the Metropolitan on the road Vilnius-Kaunas on 29 April 1944, the new investigation³² proves that the official Orthodox Church supported the Nazi policy in the Baltic countries by taking an active part in the Anti-Communist propaganda, urging the

²⁹ A. Bubnys, op. cit., p. 217-218.

³⁰ *Życie religijne w Polsce pod okupacją 1939-1945*, p. 33-36.

³¹ Minutes of the Conference, LSHA, Fund 1671, Catalogue 5, File 65, sheet 21.

³² R. Laukaitytė, "Stačiatikių Bažnyčia „nacių tarnyboje": metropolito Sergijaus drama", *Lietuvos istorijos metraštis. 2001 metai*, 2. Vilnius, 2002, p. 149-159.

youth to join the Russian Liberation Army, etc. Therefore the Orthodox Church enjoyed a relatively high status in Lithuania. An Orthodox seminary and monasteries functioned in Vilnius. Only several individual clergymen had suffered from the Nazi repressions: Archimandrite of Vilnius monastery of the Holy Spirit Voshchenko and the parish priest of Vilnius Cathedral Rev. Jermoluk (died in the Pravieniškės camp) were arrested and detained in 1943, and in July 1943 the Nazi burnt down an Orthodox church and the pope's house in Rudamina on allegations that Rudamina pope Davidovic had maintained relations with the Soviet guerrillas. The stance of the Lithuanian Old Believers towards the Nazi occupation regime was not unequivocal. Although the majority of them supported the Soviet guerrillas and therefore were persecuted, there were also those who had been prepared to cooperate with the occupation authorities. Boris Pimonov was one of them; with the German support, he re-established the Supreme Council of the Lithuanian Old Believers and became its Chairman at the beginning of 1944.

Although Lutherans were closely associated with the German tradition in Lithuania, the occupation authorities looked with suspicion at the ministers who did not repatriated from Lithuania in 1941, and prohibited the arriving Germans to attend their service. However, in 1942 the provisional consistory succeeded at publishing the joint Lutheran and Reformist Hymnal, which had already been worked out during the period of independence. Paradoxically, the Nazi hindered the spiritual ministrations of the Germans who used to return to Lithuania even more. The authorities followed an assumption that the arriving Germans, who had to become pillars of the Nazi regime in the occupied country, were strongly saturated with the Nazi ideology, which could not agree with the Christian faith. Only too German ministers, A. Hirsch and the former Senior of the German Synod of the Lithuanian Lutheran Church Paul Tittelbach, succeeded at working their way through to Lithuania, ostensibly as farmers. Chaplains of the German army were prohibited to provide spiritual ministrations to the German colonizers who had arrived to Lithuania as well³³.

In conclusion, it is possible to state that despite a number of conflicts between the occupation authorities and the religious organisations, the Lithuanian believers could feel

³³ For more on that, see A. Hermann, "Vokiečių valdžios įstaigų ginčai dėl evangelikų kunigų gražinimo į Lietuvą 1942-1944 metais", in: *Lietuvių ir vokiečių kaiminystė*, Vilnius, 2000, p. 255-257.

themselves much more at ease during the years of the Nazi occupation, as compared to the Bolshevik rule. The Germans almost did not interfere with the internal affairs of the Church life, did not prevent the clergy from exercising pastoral care, and did not intrude upon the believers' views and lives.

The Church and the Holocaust

The problem of the stance of the Christians on the Holocaust as pursued by the Germans is highly topical today. It is impossible to deny the fact that part of the local population assisted the Germans in the persecution and killings of the Jews in Lithuania; these were the people misled by the statements of the Nazi propaganda, blinded by their wish to avenge on the whole Jewish people for the Communist Jews who took an active part in the Soviet crimes, or simply those who incidentally found themselves in the killing squads and later on did not manage to withdraw. Since the Lithuanian public was little secularised at the time, the position of the Church institution could exercise strong influence on the behaviour of ordinary people. The Pope and the Holy See are the greatest authorities in the centralised hierarchical structure of the Catholic Church. Already before the war, 14 March 1937, the Pope had issued an encyclical *Mit brennender Sorge*, where he expressed an unequivocally negative position towards the National Socialist ideology and its racist theories. There exists sufficient evidence that a special encyclical was being drafted in the summer of 1938, which had to condemn racism. Moreover, all the Catholic universities and faculties were urged to preach down the Anti-Semitism in the same year. Thus even before the occupation, the Lithuanian Catholics had to be well acquainted with the Vatican's attitude towards the Nazi racist doctrine. The book by Archbishop Reinys *Rasizmo problema (The Problem of Racism)*, published in 1939, proves that this attitude was known in Lithuania as well; extracts from the book were published in a periodical for priests *Tiesos kelias (the Road of Truth)*, too.

On the other hand, a theoretical perception of the problem did not mean that it was known how to act in the presence of the massacre that was of the unprecedented scale. Although the Jews were killed already in 1940 and in the spring of 1941 in Poland, which had been occupied by the Nazi, the mass annihilation of the Jews began only after the Germans invaded the Soviet Union. The first credible reports on the Holocaust reached

Vatican only at the end of 1941. This was one of the reasons why until then the Holy See had not announced its position on this matter. Moreover, due to the Soviet occupation in 1940-1941, the Catholic Church was practically severed from the world in Lithuania; therefore it did not know anything neither about the first killings of the Jews nor about the Vatican's position or instructions on this matter. Thus one can hold that the Holocaust was totally unexpected for the Lithuanian Catholic Church. As it was already mentioned, painful experience of the Soviet occupation determined the fact that the Germans were regarded as liberators from the Bolshevik terror. This was a strong inducement, at least initially, not to see their crimes. The more so, that the Jewish community had been little integrated into the Lithuanian society, and the conservative Catholic clergy had not rejected Anti-Judaist stereotypes and was under the strong influence of the contemporary Anti-Communist propaganda, which often levelled the Jews and the Communism. Fear of the Church hierarchs to instigate repressions against the congregation by statements on the matter of the massacre of the Jews cannot be underestimated as well. It was well known that the Nazi had declared the Jews, the Communism and the Catholicism to be their greatest enemies. Their aggressive policy towards the Catholic Church in Germany and in the occupied Poland was not a secret as well.

Nevertheless, one cannot claim that the priests and the authorities of the LCC did not react in any way to the mass killings of the Jews that had started. As yet, it is not possible to finally document or contradict testimonies about the protests of bishops against the killings of Jews. Archbishop Brizgys claimed that at the beginning of the German occupation, after having heard about the first executions of the Jews, he, together with Archbishop Skvireckas and Vicar General Prelate Kazimieras Šaulys, submitted a "long and sharp letter of protest" to the German Military Commander, which *inter alia* declared that the Jews were the Lithuanian, not German citizens, and only the courts of the re-established Lithuania could decide which of them had offended the law³⁴. A published fragment from Archbishop Skvireckas's diary, which encompasses a period from 22 June until 13 August 1941, has not recorded such a fact. Indeed, on 28 June 1941, Archbishop Skvireckas, on doctor Matulionis's and Rev. Morkūnas's request, assigned Prelate Šaulys to talk with the Military Commandant of Kaunas Colonel Jurgis

³⁴ V. Brizgys, op. cit., p. 180.

Bobelis and the authorities of the insurgents on the matter of excesses against the Jews in Kaunas; however, Prelate Šaulys only managed to reach an assistant of Colonel Bobelis, who “after having heard it, promised to report to the Commandant”³⁵.

Archbishop Brizgys claimed that archbishops of Kaunas had also protested against the establishment of ghettos; however, Archbishop Skvireckas’s diary had recorded it in a slightly different way. Entry of 11 July 1941 conveyed a story by Archbishop Brizgys about the visit of the Jewish representatives, after the plans to transfer all the Jews of Kaunas to Viliampolė had become known. Archbishop Brizgys explained to them: “The Jews most probably know the attitude of the Catholic clergy towards the Jews; however, if they now tried to publicly give their voice for the Jews, they could be crucified themselves. Of course, not all the Jews are guilty, but those who are have incited the hatred of the public towards all the Jews in general. The Jews should understand for the moment that they should not necessarily have a calculation to push their way into the Lithuanian society and that it would be better for them if they stayed beside the Lithuanians, in the places designed for them...”³⁶.

By reason of reluctance to provoke the Nazi repressions against the Church (not only against the clergy, but also against the congregation), Archbishop Skvireckas refused to sign the letter of protest by the famous Lithuanian public figures against the massacre of the Jews, which had been initiated by Dr. Ambrazevičius, as well³⁷. Dr. Ambrazevičius visited the archbishop on 19 September 1941, after having talked on this matter with the Bishop of Vilkaviškis Antanas Karosas. On the other hand, to Ambrazevičius’s answer, whether there would be proof that the Lithuanians did not approve of the massacre of the Jews, the archbishop replied: “Priests had frequently spoken against them and had fallen into the disgrace of the Germans; I have pronounced my opinion against the massacre that is contrary to the Christian morals via the representatives of the Red Cross, I have endeavoured to make my position to become known to the guerrilla headquarters, I have wrote a letter of a very serious contents on the Catholic Jews and individuals ...”³⁸. Other sources confirm that bishops dared intercede

³⁵ *1941 m. Birželio sukilimas* (collection of documents), ed. V. Brandišauskas, Vilnius, 2000 p. 272, 274.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 282.

³⁷ Fragment from Archbishop Skvireckas’s diary, KACA, File 175, sheet 181.

³⁸ *Ibid.*

for the Jews who had been baptised until 2 June 1941, so that they were not driven to ghettos, as well. The meeting of the Lithuanian Bishops, which was held on 6-7 August 1941, made a decision to write an appropriate document³⁹. The fact that Lithuanian bishops did not keep silent in the presence of the killings of Jews is supported by the testimony of bishop V. Borisevičius. In his letter of 3 January 1946 to LSSR NKGB leaders, he, among other things, stated that, “Together with Lithuanian bishops we have filed a memorandum to German authorities against the killings of Jews”⁴⁰. It is a pity that the bishop provided details neither about the date when the memorandum was written nor about its contents.

Several occasions are known when priests have publicly condemned the Lithuanians who had participated in the killings of the Jews. The parish priest of Vyžuonos town in Utena district Rev. Ignas Ragauskis was arrested because of that and shot dead together with a group of the Jews near Utena on 7 August in 1941⁴¹. On 14 September 1941, during a sermon on a feast day, the parish priest of Varėna Jonas Gilys condemned the Lithuanians who had killed the Jews⁴². The parish priest of Alsėdžiai Vladislovas Taškūnas attempted to stop the shooting of the Jews of that town, later on refused to hear the confession of one of the most active participants of the massacre, and condemned them in his sermon delivered on the Christmas morning⁴³. On 10 June 1943 Rev. Taškūnas was arrested on the grounds that he had condemned the shooting of the Jews in his sermons and had listened to the foreign radio. Later on he confirmed this to the investigator of the Soviet security⁴⁴. Some of the sources also mention several more occasions when priests publicly protested against the massacre of the Jews and warned the local citizens not to take part in them⁴⁵. Public appeals to the believers by some of the bishops contained explicit enough warnings of general character that stood with regard to

³⁹ Minutes of the meeting, LSHA, Fund 1671, Catalogue 5, File 63, sheet 3.

⁴⁰ *Vyskupas Vincentas Borisevičius straipsniuose ir dokumentuose*, p. 281.

⁴¹ Canon P. Rauda, *Nesuprantami mums tavo, Viešpatie, keliai: atsiminimai*. Vilnius, 2002, p. 173, 189-190.

⁴² Report by the Commander of the First Varėna Precinct of the Alytus district of 14 September 1941 to the Police Commander of Alytus district, *Masinės žudynės Lietuvoje*, part 2, p. 113-114.

⁴³ Testimony by an Alsėdžiai citizen Edvardas Šaulys, *Alsėdžiai*. Vilnius, 2002, p. 290.

⁴⁴ Minutes of the investigation of Taškūnas, LPA, Fund K-1, Catalogue 58, File P 14927, sheet 17-18.

⁴⁵ M. Krupavičius, *Lietuvių-žydų santykiai rudosios okupacijos metu, Lietuvos istorijos studijos*, vol. 5, p. 196-197.

the treatment of the Jews as well. For instance, a pastoral to the believers of 12 July 1941 by the Archbishop of Telšiai Justinas Staugaitis states the following:

“Let us also not forget that each individual, whether a fellow-countryman or a stranger, a friend or not a friend, is a child of the same God, and therefore our brother. If he suffers, it is our duty to help him. Naturally, the world cannot be ruled only by love, justice is also needed. If someone does wrong, they have to be precluded from that and punished. But the appropriate institutions of the public authorities will do that. Let God save you from revenge and licence”⁴⁶.

Bishops once again attempted to raise the matter of the fate of the Jews during the Annual Bishops’ Conference, which was held on 7-8 October 1941. Bishop Brizgys informed the participants of the conference about his conversation on the matter of the Jews with the First General Councillor Kubiliūnas, who declared that the Jewish question belonged to the remit of the German authorities and that they prohibited the Lithuanian institutions to intervene in this matter⁴⁷.

In this context a statement from the report of 16 August 1941 by the Commander of the German Security Police and an SD mobile killing unit A (Einsatzgruppe A) Walter Stahlecker declaring that “Bishop Brizgys had forbidden priests to help the Jews in any way” seems to be highly disputable. This statement was later on uncritically repeated in a number of quality works by foreign authors on the annihilation of the Jews by the Nazi. Bishop Brizgys categorically denies the information provided by Stahlecker and qualifies it as Stahlecker’s wish to boast of his achievements before the authorities. As the bishop mentioned himself, he was not a Bishop Ordinary of the diocese; therefore it was not within his remit to issue such instructions to priests. Indeed, on 20 March 1942 the curia circulated a letter to the deans, which reminded them: “There exist decrees by the civil authorities, which prohibit the citizens, and therefore the clergy as well, to communicate with the Jews”⁴⁸; however, this was not an authentic position of the episcopate, but merely a proclamation of the decrees of the occupation authorities.

⁴⁶ LSHA, Fund 1671, Catalogue 5, File 63, sheet 16.

⁴⁷ Minutes of the Annual Bishops’ Conference of 7-8 October 1941, LSHA, Fund 167, Catalogue 5, File 62, sheet 13.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.* p. 145.

Practical actions of Bishop Brizgys and other bishops and priests demonstrated their real attitude to the persecuted Jews. In 1943 Bishop Brizgys met a delegate of the Council of Elders of Kaunas Ghetto, former chaplain of the Lithuanian Army, Rabbi Schmuelis Sniegas for several times. The Nazi regime had proclaimed that mere communication with a Jew was criminal, so this could have gone wrong for the bishop; however he did not only willingly communicated with Sniegas, but also promised him to help organise the hiding of the Jews who had escaped the ghetto⁴⁹. The decision of the Kaunas Jews to entrust him with a secret of the location where valuables of the ghetto had been hidden in case the ghetto was liquidated, proved reliance of the Kaunas Jews on the bishop⁵⁰. When a ghetto in Telšiai underwent liquidation at the end of 1941, the Bishop Ordinary of the Telšiai Diocese Borisevičius sheltered and hid several Jewish women who had escaped the ghetto, supported the Jews who went into hiding in the villages of the Telšiai district and at homes of parish priests of the Telšiai Diocese, and in July 1944 he helped unbind from the Telšiai prison a four year old daughter of the doctors Blatai. The survived Jews of Telšiai town Moishe and Miriam Blatai as well as Dovydas Kaplanas witnessed all of this during the trial of Borisevičius already in the summer of 1946⁵¹. The Bishop of Kaišiadoriai Teofilis Matulionis helped rescue Estera Elinaitė.

Bishop Brizgys wrote that the Lithuanian bishops decided to encourage rescues of individuals already during the conference of 7-8 October 1941, after they had ascertained the German position towards the Jews, learnt their treatment of the Jews in Germany and other occupied countries, and became assured that no official steps could change the Nazi policy towards the Jews in Lithuania⁵². It is unclear, whether prompted by bishops or on their own initiative, but indeed, a significant number of priests helped the Jews during the years of the German occupation. A list of the Vilna Gaon Jewish State Museum contains names of 153 clergymen as well as 9 nuns and monks who were among the people who had rescued the Jews in the territory of Lithuania⁵³. The persecuted Jews were hid in convents and monasteries (a Dominican convent in Pavilnys, a Marist monastery in

⁴⁹ A. Tory, *Kauno getas: diena po dienos*, p. 316.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*

⁵¹ *Lietuvos vyskupai kankiniai sovietiniame teisme*, ed. A. Streikus, Vilnius, 2000, p. 181.

⁵² V. Brizgys, *op. cit.*, p. 129.

⁵³ V. Sakaitė, *op. cit.*, p. 222-232.

Žemaičių Kalvarija, a Capuchin monastery in Petrašiūnai), seminaries (Kaunas and Telšiai), and Catholic hospices (Vaiguva and Laurai). The parish priest of Kaunas Holy Trinity Church Rev. Bronius Paukštys SDB, who had provided birth certificates to more than a hundred of the Jewish children, hid the Jews at his home and with the trustworthy people in Suvalkija, Director of Vilnius State Archives Rev. Juozas Stakauskas, who had hid 12 Jews in the premises of the archives for several years, and chaplain of the Šiauliai penitentiary Rev. Vladas Požėla distinguished themselves most in their rescues of the Jews. One of the most active seculars from the organisers of the rescues of the Jews Bronius Gotautas was close to the Church as well.

Some authors blame the clergy for their indifference towards the fate of the Jews, putting forward arguments that, *inter alia*, the Jewish question was not discussed during the conferences of bishops and deans as well as during the Chapter sittings⁵⁴. One can doubt the plausibility of an argument of such kind, bearing in mind that public discussion on this matter, and especially the documentation of such deliberations, was not that secure occupation. Christening of the Jews is yet another controversial issue in the Church activities in the area of the rescues of the Jews. A number of the Jews used to express their wish to be baptised hoping to ward off repressions in 1941-1942. Unfortunately, most often this did not save them from the cruel destiny. Therefore on 8 April 1942 the curia of the Kaunas archdiocese gave the following order in its circular note to priests: “With a view of avoiding possible disturbances and even sacrilege of sacred matters, the Ordinariate, re-establishing the order that existed until present in the Archdiocese, resolves that Holy Baptism shall not be administered to the individuals of the Jewish origin without an appropriate thorough investigation”⁵⁵. A similar circular note was repeated on 17 February 1944 as well. Instructions of this kind were entirely reasonable in the situation of that time, for if the fact of baptism had been able to rescue, it would have been enough to enter fictitious birth registers, which the Church authorities surely had not forbidden. Furthermore, rabbis also frequently opposed the christening of the Jews.

⁵⁴ V. Brandišauskas, op. cit., p. 145-146.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.* p. 145.

Although, as it has been mentioned, the communication between the LCC and Vatican had been re-established during the period of the Nazi occupation, the Church did not receive specific instructions of how to act in the presence of the Holocaust. True, Kaunas Archdiocese Curia Archives have a German copy of the Christmas address of 1942 by the Pope Pius XII, which had condemned any type of genocide, from the official Vatican publication *Osservatore Romano*⁵⁶. Obviously, the side of the Lithuanian Catholic Church also planned to inform the Holy See about the state of the Jews, since the Bishops' Conference of 6-9 October 1942 decided to send a report to the Holy See, which had to discuss the issue of the ethnic minorities as well⁵⁷. However, there are no references to that in the text of a letter that was sent to the Pope.

The Lithuanian bishops and priests had an unequivocal position towards the property expropriation of the Jews that had been killed. The joint bishops' pastoral of January 1943 reads:

“After this ill-fated event [annulment of private ownership – A. S.] was turned to one's own benefit, seizures of property that belonged to others began in our country, which does not cease until present. And this is attempted by otherwise decent individuals. The greed went so far, that people steal and rob under the owner's eyes, without neither a sense of shame nor scruples. They plunder the legitimate property of the individuals of other nation with even greater impertinence. What an appalling scorn of the Christian morals.”⁵⁸

In the discussions on the matter of the Jewish property during the priests' conferences of the deaneries of the Kaunas archdiocese, the majority of the speakers held the expropriation of the Jewish property to be illegal and morally harmful, although they had different opinions of how and to whom it had to be restored.

The Soviet propaganda, which was actively searching for facts discrediting the Church and was inventing them often, successfully has been exploiting a couple of cases when the behaviour of Lithuanian priests in the presence of the Holocaust and killings of civilians in general could be doubtful. Probably, the most proclaimed by the Soviet propaganda during the war were the chaplain of the 12-th police battalion, priest Zenonas

⁵⁶ KACA, File 175, sheet 242-251.

⁵⁷ Minutes of the Conference, LSHA, Fund 1671, Catalogue 5, File 65, sheet 23.

⁵⁸ LSHA, Fund 1671, Catalogue 5, File 65, sheet 74.

Ignatavičius, and one of the leaders of the squad of Skuodas guerrillas, the chaplain of Skuodas gymnasium, priest Lionginas Jankauskas. Priest Z. Ignatavičius joined the battalion only in December 1941, when this military unit had already withdrawn from the massacres of Jews and mostly was fighting against Soviet guerrillas. Besides, the position of a chaplain was only a cover to priest Z. Ignatavičius enabling him to be a soul leader for local civilians. Whereas accusations against L. Jankauskas for his participation in the killings of civilians were based only on the testimonies collected from witnesses by the interrogators of Soviet Security. The testimonies cannot be considered reliable. In both cases the reliability of the facts provided by the Soviet propaganda may be doubted since the accusations against both priests started because of their active participation in the activities of emigrants.

Conclusions

1. The Nazi policy towards religion in the occupied eastern territories was not so aggressively Anti-Catholic as in Germany or in the occupied Poland. Under the conditions of war with the Soviet Union, the Nazi sought to subdue the religious organisations for the propaganda ends, by making use of the slogan of fight against the godless Communism.

2. The LCC authorities, similarly to the majority of the Lithuanian public, welcomed the German army, since it had rescued them from the terror of the Soviet regime that had been taking ground. The Anti-Bolshevist rhetoric in public statements of bishops was useful for the Nazi regime from the propaganda perspective.

3. Relations between the LCC authorities and the civil Nazi administration remained strained during all the period of the occupation. This was determined by the persistent restrictions of the religious activities, the non-compliance of bishops to unconditionally fulfil the wishes of the Nazi authorities, and their critique of the Nazi policy in Lithuania.

4. The Polish clergymen, monks, nuns and believers of the Vilnius archdiocese have suffered from the repressions of the Nazi regime most. This was determined by the fact that they took a more active part in the actions of the Anti-Nazi resistance.

5. Although the LCC was well acquainted with the negative position of the Holy See towards the racist Nazi doctrine, it had no practical instructions of how to act in the presence of the Holocaust that had overtook it unawares. Despite this, LCC leaders attempted to use their authority to stop persecutions of Jews. Surely, it is yet impossible to document or to contradict testimonies about direct protests of bishops against killings of Jews by reliable historical sources. Some bishops at the beginning of the Nazi occupation warned congregation against participation in killings. Besides, episcopate tried to speak for christened Jews. Several priests from the provinces also condemned massacres of Jews publicly.

6. Only several province priests have publicly condemned the massacre of the Jews. At present it is impossible to prove references to the bishops' protests against the persecution of the Jews by the reliable historical sources. It is only clear that the episcopate has attempted to intercede for the christened Jews.

7. The LCC took an active part in the rescues of the individual Jews. The majority of bishops, more than a hundred of priests, monks and nuns, and many believers joined this activity. This proves that the LCC was not indifferent to the tragedy of the Lithuanian Jews.

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List of Annexed Copies of Documents:

1. An extract from the Report by the Commander of the German Security Police and SD for Lithuania of February 1943 to the Central Office for Reich Security in Berlin// LCSA (Lithuanian State Historical Archives), Fund R-1399, Catalogue 1, File 61, sheet 8.
2. An extract from the Report by the Commander of the German Security Police and SD for Lithuania of April 1943 to the Central Office for Reich Security in Berlin // LCSA, Fund 1399, Catalogue 1, File 26, sheet 52-55.
3. A letter by Archbishop Reinys of 24 April 1943 to the First General Councillor Kubiliūnas //LPA (Lithuanian Particular Archives), Fund K-1, Catalogue 45, File 71, sheet 113.
4. Minutes of the Lithuanian Bishops' Conference of 6-7 August 1941 // LCSA, Fund 1671, Catalogue 5, File 63, sheet 1-4.
5. Minutes of the Lithuanian Bishops' Conference of 7-8 October 1941 // LCSA, Fund 1671, Catalogue 5, File 62, sheet 10-13.
6. The Lithuanian Bishops' Memorandum to the General Commissioner of 13 October 1942 // LCSA, Fund 1671, Catalogue 5, File 65, sheet 33-38.
7. Minutes of the Lithuanian Bishops' Conference of 5-6 October 1943 // LCSA, Fund 1671, Catalogue 5, File 67, sheet 1-4.