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**Persecution of Religion in 1944-1953
(Bibliographic – Historiography part)**

Efforts to describe and to analyze the religion victimization performed by the soviet authorities in 1944-1953 can be grouped only by the location and time of their origin, because it is difficult to envision clear-cut distinctions, except for the soviet estimations. Three groups of work can be distinguished: 1) works by the immigrants and foreign authors 2) works published in soviet Lithuania 3) post-soviet works. We can consider only the works of the last group to be a historic research in the true meaning because only in these works the object of analysis is appreciated as the phenomenon of the past. Meanwhile, the authors of the first two groups often appreciate antireligious action of soviet regime as an actual reality at the moment of writing. Furthermore, the „soviet“ estimations of the pending problems can be handled as one of the indirect sources of data. It is also typical to the works of emigrants and foreign authors without the already mentioned lack of historical perspective the limited use of the historical origins that were available for them. Soviet press and tendentiously sorted publications of origins, fragments of information that managed to pass the „iron curtain“ that were available for western authors often limited the opportunities of the comprehensive analysis.

J. Brazaitis was the first, who tried to systemize and appreciate the obtained information about the persecution of religion in Lithuania reoccupied by the Soviets in 1944. He did that in the middle of 7th decade by the pseudonym of J. Savasis¹. He put more attention to the post-Stalin period of the soviet politics in the point of the religion, in passing the persecution of the religion pursued during the previous years. The information, presented by J. Brazaitis was very approximate or even completely inaccurate. Summarizing the given information, he concluded that the Soviet regime before the 7th decade didn't make much damage to Lithuanian Catholic Church. After a few years, the essay² of M. Raišupis appeared in which the persecution of religion in the Soviet Lithuania was revealed through the destiny of different catholic priests. M. Raišupis was already using the original publications, which started to be published in the 7th decade in Lithuania and had to denounce activity of the catholic priests that was hostile to the soviet regime and their connection with the armed underground. Because of the publication mentioned above, rising of the „iron curtain“ and the publication of the *Chronicles of Lithuanian Catholic Church*, information

¹ J. Savasis, *The war against God in Lithuania*, New York, 1966.

about the situation of the Catholic Church in Lithuania occupied by the Soviets became one of the most important incentives for the new analysis on the relation between the regime and the Church in the West. In the end of the 8th decade the monograph of the V. Vardis (already discussed in the text) appeared. Almost at the same time, the work³ of M. Bourdeaux – the leader of the Center of Religion and Communism studies (Keaston College in Great Britain) appeared with the analysis of the position of Lithuania occupied by the Soviets. In fact, the main part of the foregoing writing is the publication of documents. M. Bourdeaux had noticed that parishes were more active in Lithuania than in other regions of the Soviet Union. That was because of the strong resistance against the occupational regime, which, in the words of the author, determined that Lithuanian Church suffered not as strongly as it would be if there were no resistance.

T. Remeikis discussed some problems of the Catholic Church existence in the conditions of the Soviet regime in the monograph on the subject of opposition⁴. S. Sužiedėlis⁵ also wrote about this period. We can also add the synthetic study *Christianity in Lithuania*⁶ to the works of the first group; the study appeared some time after the fall of the Soviet system. Editor of this book - V. Vardys, whom we mentioned already - prepared the part of this study about the history of the Church in the second part of the XX century.

First „more academic“ estimations of the relations between the Soviet regime and Catholic Church in 1944-1953 were published in the beginning of the 8th decade. Before that, „thoroughly“ selected collections of the archival documents already mentioned were released in the series *Facts Show the Blame*, which had to denunciate „the criminal activity of the clergy in the post-war period“⁷. They consisted of the MGB (Soviet Ministry of Security) inquisition files of the bishops and priests. These series were used by J. Aničas, whose study about the relations between Soviet regime and Catholic Church in 1944-1953 again perfectly represents the view of the Soviet historiography⁸. He stressed the nature of the political conflict between the Soviet government and the Church and appreciated the process of the political differentiation of the priests: „conversion of some of the priests into the loyal citizens of the Soviet Union apparently denounced provocative word of the Pope Pius XII that society is divided into believers and infidels, that there is irreconcilable line between these two groups of Catholics and atheists... ” That is why, as he

² M. Raišupis, *Dabarties kankiniai*, Chicago, 1972.

³ M. Bourdeaux, *Land of crosses. The struggle for religious freedom in Lithuania 1939-1978*, Devon, 1979.

⁴ T. Remeikis, *Opposition to soviet rule in Lithuania 1945-1980*, Chicago, 1980.

⁵ S. Sužiedėlis, *The Sword and the Cross. A history of the Church in Lithuania*, Huntington, 1988.

⁶ *Krikščionybė Lietuvoje*, Chicago, 1997.

⁷ *Žudikai Bažnyčios prieglobstyje*, red. B. Baranauskas ir G. Erslavaitė, Vilnius, 1960 (1 leidimas), 1962 (2 leidimas).

⁸ J. Aničas, *Socialinis politinis katalikų bažnyčios vaidmuo Lietuvoje 1945-1952 m.*, Vilnius, 1971.

considers, the repressions against the priests „did not have anything in common with their religious service as he servants of the cult“⁹. Although position of the Church was handled differently in the propaganda brochures¹⁰ of the Soviet authors designed for the foreign readers. The life of the Lithuanian Catholic Church was described in the beautified way and the incompatibility of the Soviet system and the religion was not stressed. It should be mentioned that there were some attempts to describe and analyse antireligious politics that were not controlled by the regime in Lithuania occupied by the Soviet Union. In the 8th decade, active participant of the „Sajūdis“ V. Skuodis managed to prepare a comprehensive study working in the underground conditions; in the study he surveyed the atheistic literature that appeared in Lithuania before 1976. This work has more bibliographic value and it gives the researches some information about the dimensions of atheistic literature published during particular periods and the topics of the publications. This study was published only after Lithuania gained its independence¹¹.

When the Soviet regime fell, favourable circumstances for the undisturbed historic estimation of the occupation period were established: 1) no was no more external political censorship; 2) secret Soviet governmental documents became available; 3) the need for the historical view on the past has risen. Persecution of the Catholic Church during the Soviet regime became one of the most popular topics. Naturally at first there was a flood of the articles in the media about the repressions against the clergy, closing down the churches, resistance of the congregation¹², announcement of the most interesting origins; furthermore, several (non-academic) books were edited¹³. Meanwhile the first scientific results of the analysis of antireligious politics were published only in the second part of the last decade of the twentieth century¹⁴. The foregoing publications had similar characteristic features as follows: 1) abundant use of the Soviet governmental institutions archival documents; 2) accentuation of the Church losses due to the

⁹ Ibid., p.182.

¹⁰ J. Rimaitis, *Religion in Lithuania*, Vilnius, 1971.

¹¹ V. Skuodis, *Dvasinis genocidas Lietuvoje*, Vilnius, 1996.

¹² B. Kašielionis, Ką baugino bažnyčios, *Apžvalga*, 1992 gruodžio 4-10 d.; N. Gaškaitė, Tebūnie Dievo valia, *Naujasis dienovidis*, 1994 sausio 21d.; A. Kašėta, Dvasininkijos aukos pokario metais, *XXI amžius*, 1994 vasario 11, 16 d.; I. Bogomolovaitė, D. Stancikas, Vysk. V. Borisevičiaus tardymas ir žūtis, *XXI amžius*, 1994 spalio 21 d.; V. Ardžiūnas, Nešvarios paslapties našta (apie kandidatų į seminariją sovietų laikais verbavimą), *Lietuvos aidas*, 1995 vasario 7 d.; V. Pšibilskis, Byla dėl Vilniaus arkikatedros 1949-1956 m., *Kultūros barai*, 1995, Nr.5, P.67-71.

¹³ B. Puzinavičius, Ketinimai steigti autokefalinę „katalikų“ bažnyčią, *Tautos atmintis*, 1997, nr.2, p.51-54; Spengla V., „Akiplėša“. KGB kova prieš Bažnyčią, Vilnius, 1996; Spengla V., Atlikępareigą. Vyskupai KGB (NKGB, MGB) kalėjimuose, Vilnius, 1997.

¹⁴ R. Laukaitytė, Mėginimai sovietizuoti Lietuvos Bažnyčią 1944-1949 m., *Lietuvos istorijos metraštis*, 1997, p.178-197; A. Streikus, Lietuvos Katalikų Bažnyčia ir ginkluotas pasipriešinimo sąjūdis Lietuvoje, *Genocidas ir rezistencija*, 1997, nr.2, p. 32-37; K. Misius, Bažnyčių uždarinėjimas Lietuvoje pokario metais, *LKMA metraštis*, 1998, t.12, p.84; A. Streikus, The Resistance of the Church to Soviet Regime from 1944 to 1967, in *The Anti-Soviet Resistance in the*

politics pursued by the Soviet government; 3) lack of contextual analysis, i.e. solitary aspects of the latest history of the Church were not connected with the main evolution of the history of the Church, Soviet system analysis, other simultaneous events of Lithuanian history, there are no comparisons with the religious institutions of other regions of the similar history to the one of Lithuania.

In the conclusions, specific actions of antireligious politics and the events described should be connected to the general processes of internal and external Soviet politics, as well as the changes in the Soviet society. The analysis of the chosen problem in such a broad context should be based on scientific literature, which would analyse the corresponding aspects of the problem. The basis of this work consists of the following: 1) works of the Russian historians, who are researching the politics of the Soviet government concerning the Orthodox Church and other religious confessions; 2) Studies about the politics of the communist regimes in the Eastern and Central Europe. From the first group, the works of J. Anderson¹⁵, B. Bociurkiw¹⁶, R. Dzwonkowski¹⁷, A. Luukkanen¹⁸, D. Pospelovski¹⁹, I. Osipova²⁰, M. Škarovski²¹ ir T. Čumačenko²² should be mentioned. B. Cywinski submitted the most comprehensive research of the relationship between the Catholic Church and the communistic regimes in the Central and Eastern Europe²³. One of the most successful attempts to provide theoretic sense to antireligious politics of the communists' regimes has been the study of P. Ramet²⁴. A journalist of the Western Germany S. Stehle, using a large number of sources, tried to take a critical look towards the politics of the Vatican towards communist regimes²⁵. Professor H. Strods explored the position of the Catholic Church in Latvia occupied by the Soviet Union²⁶. Similarly, J. Talonen explored the position of the Lutheran Church during the same period²⁷.

Baltic States, Vilnius 1999; A. Streikus, SSRS-Vatikano santykiai ir sovietų valdžios politika Bažnyčios atžvilgiu Lietuvoje 1945-1978 m., *Genocidas ir rezistencija*, 1999, nr.2, p.66-80.

¹⁵ J. Anderson, *Religion, state and politics in the Soviet Union and successor states*, Cambridge, 1994.

¹⁶ B. Bociurkiw, The shaping of Soviet religious policy, in *Problems of Communism*, 1973 May-June; to paties *The Ukrainian Greek Catholic church and Soviet state (1935-1950)*, Toronto, 1996.

¹⁷ R. Dzwonkowski, *Kościół katolicki w ZSSR, 1917-1939*, Lublin, 1997.

¹⁸ A. Luukkanen, *The party of unbelief*, Helsinki, 1994; to paties *The religious policy of the Stalinist state*, Helsinki, 1997.

¹⁹ Д. Поспеловский, *Русская православная церковь в XX в.*, Москва, 1995.

²⁰ И. Осипова, „В язвах своих скрой меня...” *Гонения на католическую церковь в СССР*, Москва, 1996.

²¹ Ī. Цѣаšĭāñēcē, *Šōññēqū ĭšqāñēqāīqū ōāšēīāū ĭšč Ńōqēčĭā č Őšōūāāā*, Москва, 1999.

²² Т. Чумаченко, *Государство, православная церковь, верующие 1941-1961 г.*, Москва, 1999.

²³ В. Cywiński, *Ogniem probowanie: z dziejów najnowszych Kościoła katolickiego w Europie Śródkowo-Wschodniej*, Warszawa, 1994, t. 1-2.

²⁴ P. Ramet, *Cross and Commissar: the politics of religion in E. Europe and the USSR*, Bloomington, 1987.

²⁵ H. Stehle, *Tajna dyplomacja Watykanu: Papiestwo wobec komunizmu (1917-1991)*, Warszawa, 1993.

²⁶ H. Strods, *Latvijas Katolu Baznīcas vesture 1075-1995*, Ryga, 1996.

²⁷ J. Talonen, *Church under the pressure of stalinism: the development of the status and activities of the Soviet Latvian Evangelical Church during 1944-1950, ?*

Also, the politics of the Soviet government concerning the other religious confessions in Lithuania is a theme that has not been explored almost at all. R. Laukaitytė reasoned relatively more positive view of the regime on the Orthodox community, talking about the situation of the monasteries²⁸. G. Potašenko published the general overview of the history of old-faith church in Lithuania²⁹. Although both of these works give only an introduction into the analysis of the theme. Meanwhile the destiny of the Lutherans, Reformats and smaller confessions in 1940-1953 was not researched at all.

Comparatively large volume of the original historic sources allows us to analyse antireligious politics of the Soviet Union. These sources can be divided into two groups as follows: 1) The archival documents of the Soviet governmental institutions that planned and pursued anti-Church politics; 2) Testimonies of the era that were written in the environment of the Church.

Documents of the Council of Religious Cults (hereinafter referred to as RKRT) that are saved in the Russian Federation's national archive³⁰ will be used in the preparation of the conclusion of the theme. These are reports and accounts of the USSR MT (Council of Ministers of the USSR), records of the meetings, and stenographs of the conversations with government officers and representatives of the religious associations. The archive fund of RKRT authorized agent in Lithuanian SSR is distributed between the two archives. The correspondence of the agent with the LKP CK and other parties is stored in the national Lithuanian archive of social organizations³¹. There are also valuable documents on this topic stored LVOA archive in the file named "The special file», were top secret LKP CK documents are stored. The other part of the archive fund on RKRT authorized agent in Lithuania is stored in the Lithuanian Central State Archive: agent's correspondence with Moscow, LSSR MT and other instances of the Soviet government; different information on the agent³². The most important documents from the Soviet security department documents are from the bureau, which directly controlled and tried to influence the activity of the religious confessions; also informational messages of the department³³, operational files on the priests of the "sects"³⁴, and the files of the convicts' inquisitions³⁵. These can be found in the

²⁸ R. Laukaitytė, *Lietuvos vienuolijų: XX a. istorijos bruožai*, V., 1997.

²⁹ G. Potašenko, Sentikių bažnyčia Lietuvoje XX amžiuje, *Lietuvos istorijos studijos*, 1997, nr.5, p.107-127.

³⁰ State Archive of the Russian Federation (hereinafter referred to as RFVA), f.6991, ap.3.

³¹ National Lithuanian Archive of Social Organizations (hereinafter LVOA), f.1771, ap.11, 92, 108.

³² Lithuanian Central State Archive (hereinafter LCVA), f.R-181, ap.1, ap.3..

³³ LYA, f.K-1, ap. 3, 10, 14, 15.

³⁴ Ibid., ap.45.

specific group of documents – messages from the agents. We have to be very careful with this type of information, because agents, in this particular case it was mostly priests, often altered the facts (purposefully or not) or they would receive incorrect information from the source, since the source would know about their collaboration. That is why it is important to try and compare information from the agents with the information from other sources. Of course, this rule applies to most of the documents of the Soviet government.

The most informative source of the second group – 81 issues of the *Lithuanian Catholic Church Chronicles*³⁶ published in the underground in 1972-1989, and other religious periodicals. Many facts about the discrimination of the congregation by the Soviet government and their resistance, as well as the estimations of the Soviet government and Church relations can be found in the documents mentioned above. Equally valuable are the testimonies of the direct witnesses of repressions (among them are priests as J. Stankevičius, J. Juodaitis, S. Kiškis, P. Rauda³⁷). These memorials let us see the particular experience of these dramatic events. In addition, they provide an alternative to ideological documents of the Soviet authorities that do not reflect the true situation at the time.

³⁵ Ibid., ap. 58. 2000 m. Lithuanian Catholic Science Academy has published a collection of documents named *Lithuanian Martyr Bishops in the Soviet Court*, which was prepared based on archival interrogation documents from the criminal cases on Lithuanian bishops repressed in 1945-1947

³⁶ Lietuvos Katalikų Bažnyčios Kronika, Chicago, t. 1-10.

³⁷ J. Stankevičius, *Mano gyvenimo kryžkelės*, rankraštis (aut. archyvas); 1965; J. Juodaitis, *Praeities šešėliai*, rankraštis (VU Bažnyčios istorijos kabinetas); S. Kiškis, *Aš padarysiu jus žmonių žvejais*, K., 1994; P. Rauda, *Nežinomi Tavo, Viešpatie, keliai*, Vilnius, 2000.

Conclusions

1. New Institutions Regulating Religious Life.

During the years of USSR – German War it became obvious that despite the various religious activity constraints carried out by the Soviet regime, religious organizations managed to retain great social authority. It led to the slowdown in the transparent chase of the religion and made the leaders of the Soviet regime temporarily discard the plans aimed at complete destruction of the Church. Other methods and tasks of religious policies were brought up: rigorous control of religious institutions' activities, limited to liturgical practice only, and guaranteeing support for the policies pursued. The abovementioned tasks were supposed to be performed by the institutions of the new soviet government: the Russian Orthodox Church Management Council under the USSR LKT (further RSBRT) established September 4, 1943 and the RKRT established in May, 1944. Although J. Stalin assigned colonel G. Karpov¹, to be the head of RSBRT, and mediate between the government and RSB (Russian Orthodox Church), basically the leader of the latter institution, similarly to the ober-prosecutor in the tsar's administrative apparatus, led the RSB spiritual government. RKRT's job was to administrate the activities of all the religious confessions that operated within the Soviet Union. G. Karpov's deputy on security matters, I. Polianskij, was appointed to be the chairman of RKRT. The emergence of these institutions marked not only the pragmatic goal of the regime to use them as a reinforcing tool but also an exceptional status of RSB compared to other "religious cults". It is obvious that the aggressive anti-religious goals of Bolshevik ideology were not altogether forgotten. However, they were not being pursued using direct compulsory measures of the authorities.

During the period starting at the end of 1944 and ending in the beginning of 1945, representatives of the RSBRT and the RKRT were assigned to Lithuania as well. They were supposed to coordinate the Soviet government policies concerning religious confessions. According to the general rule, these duties were handed to the officials, who had work experience in the Emergency Committee: A. Gailevičius (RKRT) and A.Linev (RSBRT). These representatives, along with other responsible officials of LKT, were dependent upon Lithuanian SSR puppet government as well as Soviet authorities, and this double dependency often caused a clash of interests. Up until 1953 Soviet Security authorities took precedence in the matters of antireligious

¹ G. Karpov has worked for the security authorities ever since 1922. In 1941 he was appointed the head of the USSR NKVD 4th department of the Secret political board, one branch of which was supposed to fight "counter-revolution led by the churchmen and sectarians". Appointed the chairman of the RBSRT, he did not lose his job in the NKVD.

policies. Consequently in 1945 a separate branch in LSSR MGB was established, which was supposed to regulate the activities of religious organizations. In 1946 – 1950 a separate “O” department was operating, the principal task of which was to eliminate the Catholic Church resistance to the religious life restrictions imposed by the Soviet regime. However, just like before, the main questions were answered and decisions made by the respective authorities of the Communist party.

2. Stimulation of Confessional and National Disagreements

Upon the start of the cold war an exceptional Soviet animosity towards the Catholic Church has still increased. Vatican, having become one of the fiercest enemies of the regime, was greatly concerned with the spread of the Communism in Europe in the first years of post-war. Furthermore, the Soviet regime was highly dissatisfied with the stand of the Catholic Church during wartime in the German – occupied territories and considered it to be a powerful force preventing the sovietization of the occupied territories. However, J. Stalin’s anti-catholic attitude can be accounted for not only by the anti-communist Catholic Church position, but also the goals of anti-religious policies. It was obvious that due to the centralized Catholic Church authorities whose supreme administrative and spiritual command could not be reached by Kremlin, would make it difficult for it with comparison to RSB or any other religious confessions to completely impose the authority of the regime. Therefore, in order to gain ultimate power in the Middle and Eastern Europe, the soviets badly needed to reduce the dominance of the Catholic Church in the region.

After managing to consolidate their interest sphere in Europe following the Conference in Yalta, the plans to fight Vatican started to be drafted. The soviet propaganda proclaimed the Pope the advocate of fascism. At first the soviets expected to reduce the Catholic Church’s influence in the re-occupied territory, protecting RSB whose hierarchs and regular ministers favored the policy carried out by the soviet government, while the regime had already been in full control of its activities. Pursuing the scheme passed by J. Stalin on March 17, 1945, regarding the enforcement of RSB activities in Ukraine, Byelorussia, Lithuania and Latvia, I. Polianskij, the chairman of the RKRT sent a directive to A.Gailevičius on May 8, 1945. In the directive he was encouraged to support the orthodox missionary actions among Catholics and establish orthodox fraternities in Lithuania. However, A.Gailevičius realized that in Lithuania, a country where orthodox confession is practice exclusively by Russian population, RSB has no prospects (see doc. Nr. 4). Apparently, his reasoning was observed since the RSB protection in Lithuania was not as radical as it was planned.

Not shy to publicly support the soviet regime, RSB received much better conditions for existence in Lithuania during the period of 1944 – 1953, compared to those of the Catholic Church. According to a new USSR MT resolution adopted on May 29th 1946, orthodox monasteries in Moldavia and Baltic soviet republics were given some benefits: they were given rent-free accommodation, were able to make use of lots, local authorities were deprived of the right to close them or limit their activities in any other way. Therefore, when all the Catholic monasteries in Lithuania were closed in 1949, there was one orthodox monastery for men and one for women that were still open in Vilnius. Even though there were at least several times fewer people belonging to the Orthodox Church than Catholics in Vilnius, starting 1949, there was the same amount of open Orthodox Churches as there were Catholic ones. The activities performed by RSB in Lithuania were supposed to be revived by the relics of saint martyrs John, Anthony and Eustache that were brought back to the Orthodox monastery of the Holy Ghost given under the “exclusive right”². Having the three relics back, the monastery became the attraction that brought the prayers there not only from Lithuania but also other regions of the Soviet Union. Individuals of the Orthodox confession were also encouraged to directly fight the Catholic Church. The Soviet security authorities in Kaunas urged the orthodox to demand the Cathedral “to be given back to them from the Catholics who had taken it away from them” (Crew Church. In 1946, executing the command of the soviet authorities, Cornelius, the Orthodox archbishop of Vilnius and Lithuania, passed the order to Orthodox priests to speak against Pope and Catholic ministers. Fotijus, Orthodox archbishop that replaced him, cancelled the foregoing order in the beginning of 1949. In fact, despite the efforts to support the Orthodox priests obeying Cornelius’s order, MGB was forced to admit that most of them were reluctant to foster the hatred towards the Catholic Church³.

Local occupants did not always favor strengthening of RSB in Lithuania, which was apparently fostered by Moscow. On one hand, it clashed with the fight principles against “religious superstitions”. On the other, it discredited the efforts of the local authorities to emerge as the advocate of the Lithuanian national interests. Therefore, the RSB protection trend was always fought against. For instance, LSSR leaders prevented the opening of orthodox seminary in Vilnius. The LSSR authorities were not as successful in trying to restrict other privileges possessed by Orthodox Church: they were not able to increase the dues paid by monasteries (see doc. nr. 19) and close at least several Orthodox Churches in the cities.

² These items were taken to Moscow in 1915. They were stored in the Communal Economy Museum since 1918.

³ Work report by LSSR MGB Kaunas department, dated November 1946, *ibid.*, b.56, l.57.

The soviet government has been comparatively favorable towards Lithuanian Old Believers at the very beginning too (see doc. no.5). The main reason for that was their explicitly proclaimed support for the soviet regime policies: on May 5th, 1948 the spiritual tribunal of the Lithuanian Old Believers that took place in Vilnius proclaimed that Old Believer had acknowledged and continue to recognize the divine nature of the soviet regime. Furthermore, same as orthodox confession representatives, they have submitted to all the demands of the soviet authorities, related to the regulations of the religious life. Therefore, RKRT allowed the Supreme Council of the Old-Believers (SCOB) operating in Vilnius to publish calendars; RKRT authorized agent was also ordered to make a record of all the Orthodox communities in Lithuania. Local authorities did not always favor the support provided to the orthodox however. According to the later RKRT representative B. Pušinis, even though Old Believers Church supports the soviet government policy, it remains “the most conservative and fanatical” confession⁴. LSSR authorities did not favor the idea for SCOB to become the center uniting Old Believers of the whole Soviet Union.

Soviet government in Lithuania not only tried to reinforce the traditional animosity between the Orthodox Church and the Catholics but also took advantage of the long gone tension between the polish and Lithuanians inside the church. The tactics were initially offered by the representative of the USSR NKGB in Lithuania, general I. Tkačenka (see doc. nr. 2). The plan he offered was carried out in the beginning of 1945: archbishop of Vilnius R. Jalbžykovskis and A. Savickis, the chancellor of the curia, were arrested. Both of them were later deported to Poland; LSSR MT passed a resolution, which allowed the official activity of only the theological seminary in Kaunas, so all the other theological schools, including the one in Vilnius, which was mainly attended by the ordinands of polish descent, had to be closed; the archdiocese came to be led by the archbishop M. Reins, who was forced to testify against his counterpart, R. Jalbžykovskis.

3. Efforts of the Soviet Authorities to Establish National Catholic Church in Lithuania

Realizing limited opportunities of RSB to compete with the Catholic Church in Lithuania, the soviet authorities were trying to isolate it from Vatican. According to RKRT and local authorities, it was supposed to be one of the main moves of the anti-church policy. Firstly, the break with Rome would considerably lessen the authority of the Church and dismember it, which would help spread atheism in the society. Secondly, the dismantling of the hierarchical structure would make it possible for the regime to influence the management of the Church. However, despite the consensus between various soviet government bodies regarding the establishment tactics of national

⁴ Work report for the 1st quarter of 1949 by RKRT authorized agent in LSSR, LCVA, f.R-181, ap.3, b.22, l.16.

Catholic Churches, this type of activity was rather slow. The representative of LSSR MGB and RKRT had bad luck in finding enough authoritative priests who would dare pronounce their distrust to the Pope. In the autumn of 1949, despite threats and blackmail, the protest against the Pope's decree passed on July 13th of the same year about the separation of Catholics collaborating with communists from the Church was signed only by 108 priests out of 933, among which there was no leader of the diocese or any other priest having a higher level of authority. Neither the names of those signed, nor the way of gathering them satisfied the soviet institutions having higher authority (see doc. no.17). In 1949 the resistance of Lithuanian Catholic Church hierarchs to the government was basically broken. Therefore, the activity of Church dismemberment was no longer relevant. The national church establishment actions have been suspended in 1949.

Even though the soviet regime was not able to establish the national church, Lithuanian priests were not allowed to officially interact with the center of the nondenominational Church. Any attempts to contact the Holy See without the government knowing about it were considered to be "espionage in favor of Vatican", and those involved were severely punished. For instance, the priest P. Račiūnas MIC was sentenced to 25 years in the camps of Siberia and labeled "agent of Vatican" for meeting with A. Laberge⁵, the US embassy chaplain and the parson of the single Catholic Church open in Moscow at the time. Laberge was informed of the difficulties that Church goes through in the soviet occupied Lithuania and was asked to mediate in the process of getting Pope's dispensation to consecrate new bishops⁶.

4. Replacing the Leaders of Religious Institutions

The ideas to establish the National Church were also discarded due to the fact that by 1949 the soviet governing bodies made the Catholic Church hierarchs to submit to their will. The soviet rule reestablished in 1944 primarily attempted to direct social authority of the religious institutions to fight powerful public resistance. Starting the summer of 1945 bishops and priests were required to publicly speak against the armed underground, urge people to obey the new rule. Those objecting to obey were severely victimized: in 1946 the bishop of Telšiai V. Borisevičius was arrested and shot, his assistant, bishop P. Ramanauskas was sentenced to 10 days of correctional work, and the bishop of Kaišiadorys T. Matulionis and the one of Vilnius, M. Reinys, were sentenced to 7 years imprisonment in the special Vladimir's jail.

⁵ A. Laberge was a priest of French descent, who came to Moscow in October 1945. Was accused of espionage by the Vatican and the US Intelligence Agency, and was deported from the USSR in January 1949.

⁶ Material from the criminal case of the priest P.Račiūnas, LYA, f.K-1,ap.58, b.42424/3.

The Soviet Security bodies tried to provide the conditions for them to be substituted by priests who agreed to publicly speak against armed underground and were openly unresisting to religious life restrictions passed by the soviet government. By doing so they expected to protect the Church from further repressions. The necessity of such attitude towards the authorities was positively argued by J. Stankevičius, who, following the death of prelate St. Jokūbauskis in February 1947, was named the highest authority of the archdiocese of Kaunas and who in 1946 was conscripted by the soviet security forces; it was intended to make it possible for him to become the only responsible for all the archdioceses in the territory of Lithuanian SSR (see doc. nr. 16).

However, for a time being seeking not to harm the authority of J. Stankevičius and to be able to have more control over him, the decision of leaving three (instead of formerly 6) administrative centers of the Lithuanian Catholic Church was made in 1949. For the sake of propaganda, the only bishop left free in Lithuania was the ordinary of Panevėžys K. Paltarokas, who also favored the attitude of submitting to the soviet rule. The right to have a separate administrator was also given to the archdiocese of Telšiai since its appointed administrator was P. Maželis who was also a secret associate of the soviet security structures⁷. J. Stankevičius and P. Maželis were supposed to spy on each other, while informing the authorities about bishop K. Paltarokas. This kind of triangle provided favorable conditions for the soviet security bodies to manipulate the Church hierarchs the way they preferred. All the other archdioceses' administrators of the Lithuanian Catholic Church were victimized or forced to resign.

The spiritual government of all the other religious confessions operating in Lithuania were respectively rearranged until 1949. I. Romanov, the chairman of SAT was arrested and exiled in 1948. An elderly priest F. Kuznecov, who was more indulgent towards the authority demands and was easier manipulated replaced him. In December 1949, the president of Lithuanian evangelical Lutheran consistory, E. Lejeris, who until then had hard fought the closing of the Lutheran churches, was arrested and sentenced. The new president was named A. Baltris, who avoided clashing with the authorities fearing the complete destruction of the Lutheran church in Lithuania⁸.

The Church administrators' and regular priests' allegiance to the regime had to be marked by the participation in propagandist meetings. From the beginning of the 6th decade the soviet propagandist machine had been trying to establish itself as the most peace-loving nation, surrounded by war-hungry imperialists. This kind of image was supposed to hide the aggressive

⁷ Note of L. L. Martavičius, the LSSR deputy of the minister of security under the agent "Neris", the report of December 21, 1949. LYA, f.K-1, ap.45, b.1272, l.207.

⁸ A. Hermann, *Renewal and the delay of reforms in the Lutheran Church of Lithuania, years 1985-1995*, *The New Hearth-Echoes (Naujasis Židinys-Aidai)*, 2000, nr.7-8, p.401.

foreign policy of the USSR. Annual peace advocate conferences embracing the republic and the whole union started to be organized in 1949. Delegates from various social backgrounds passionately stigmatized the British and Americans as war ringleaders and praised J. Stalin, the greatest peacemaker. Speeches advocating peace were supposed to demoralize the guerrillas. The leaders of the most influential religious confessions of Lithuania participated and spoke at the peace advocate conferences of different nature. The priests had often preached sermons on peace, spoke on the radio and their articles appeared in the newspapers. Church hierarchs and priests have also executed the command given by the soviet propaganda to deny the claims that religion is persecuted in the Soviet Union. For instance, on March 7th, 1949 J. J. Stankevičius read a report on the radio titled “The Catholic Church in the Soviet Lithuania (LSSR)” claiming that the Catholic Church in Lithuania had absolutely perfect operating conditions.

5. Radical Restrictions on Religious Life in 1948-1949 – Period of Accelerated Sovietization of Lithuania

As soon as the Soviet army units rushing to the West occupied a part of Lithuania, Kremlin started to view it as an integral part of the Soviet Union again. Thus, sooner or later Lithuania’s order of inner life had to be equalized with the model of Soviet society. However, a strong opposition of its residents hindered a rapid sovietization of Lithuania. Besides, in 1944 – 1947, Stalin was still hoping to expand the communism influence behind the democratic line between the armies of the allies. That’s why he did not force the sovietization process in the Soviet army zone, in order not to repel the rest of the people of the continent. Due to these reasons, the agricultural collectivization wasn’t performed in Lithuania until 1948. Although the great majority of habitants were not officially the owners of private property, they could actually still dispose of their farms and this granted them an economic independence.

The Soviet “religious cult” was not applied to the Catholic Church at once. In one of his first works sent to RKRT, A. Gailevičius pointed out that the Catholic Church in Lithuania is well organized and has a great influence: “80 percent of Lithuanian residents are Catholics, and the great majority of them are deeply believing peasants”⁹. The Soviet regime was hoping to use the Church authority against the opposition and impose its own order. Of course, a too hasty restriction of religious life would not have promoted the cooperation of the churchmen. Besides, restriction of Church operation would have demanded a lot of energy and attention of the authorities, and they were still busy suppressing the opposition.

The first agricultural collectivization, and first massive deportations in Lithuania started in 1948, when the armed opposition that reached its peak in 1946-1947 started to diminish. Apparently, the change of Soviet authority's antireligious policy is connected with these events. An important turn was a special LKP CK resolution passed in 1948, July 9, concerning the tasks of the party organization to uncover the hostile actions of Catholic clergy. The resolution obliged appropriate authorities to secure the registration of religious communities and ministers, to stop organized theological education, strengthen ideological indoctrination, suspend the "anti-soviet" practice of the priests. This resolution connected the Catholic Church movement with the opposition of the regime: "the party organizations do not evaluate the role of classic fight of catholic clergy and dissociate anti-popular clergy movement from the of bourgeois-nationalist underground movement" (see doc. No.9). An appointment of a new RKRT agent of Lithuania was also connected to the change of antireligious policy. An old communist and radical ideologist B. Pušinis replaced an advocate of the use of Church for the armed opposition A. Gailevičius.

6. The Purpose of Registering Religious Communities and Priests

According to Soviet laws, religious communities could function only when local authorities registered a community committee consisting of more than 20 people and made a contract with it, according to which the committee took over the building of nationalized cult, took responsibility for paying taxes, repair of the building and so on. All the clergymen could work only with the certificate from the RKRT agent at a particular registration office. Thus, the Soviet authority could effectively control the density and distribution of the priests throughout parishes. Besides, a parish committee consisting of seculars had to limit monocracy of the clergy and become an instrument of interference into the inner life of parishes, since the members of committees were confirmed by the VK (Supreme Council) of the district. In 1947, in order to destroy the Church movement from the inside more effectively, LSSR MGB sent a directive to each district section, which ordered to actively infiltrate agents into the parishes' committees (see doc. No.8).

The Catholic Church boycotted the soviet authority's request to register for the long period of time. In order to encourage clergymen to register, in the summer of 1948, the electricity was switched off in all Kaunas churches, divinity schools and curia. LSSR MT carried a resolution to close 4 largest Vilnius churches (the motive was that their parishes had not submitted applications for registration), as well as evict Vilnius and Telšiai curias from their residencies. In addition,

⁹ Letter from A.Gailevičius to the head of RKRT I.Polianskij, dated December 27, 1944, LCVA, f. R-181, ap.3, b.1, 1.1.

priests who had no certificates of registration lost their civil registrations and they lost a right to their place of residence. Finally, in the summer of 1948 the formal registration obstacle was eliminated: in June 19 1948, LSSR AT (Supreme Council) presidium carried a resolution Concerning Nationalization of Chapels, Convents and Residential Buildings of Religious Communities. This resolution forced the hierarchs of the Church to obey the requirements of the Soviet authorities and urge the priests not to stop boycotting the registration.

By December 31, 1948, 677¹⁰ out of 711 Catholic churches operating in Lithuania have already been registered. RKRT agent refused to register convents and some of parish churches of the largest cities of Lithuania. According to RKRT agent's data, in 1948-1949 36 catholic churches and chapels were officially closed in Lithuania, 22 of them were in Vilnius, 9 in Kaunas (see doc. No.21). However this data is not reliable: for some reason, the list does not contain 5 churches in Vilnius, 3 churches in Kaunas, 2 in Šiauliai and 29 other churches that stopped working in 1948-1949¹¹. Altogether in 1945-1952, about 90 churches were closed down, however the documents of the RKRT's authorized agent show only 49. After this church closing campaign, there were only 9 working churches left in Vilnius, but that was still too much for Pušinis, so he submitted a plan to Moscow, according to which there would have been only five churches left in Vilnius¹². Interestingly, a Catholic cathedral was among those churches. In a few months, in order to convince RKRT to approve the closing of the cathedral, B. Pušinis misstated that only 10-20 old ladies are praying there and so it cannot pay the taxes¹³.

The church managed to avoid the worst possible registration consequences, since the church authorities controlled this process till the very end. As the assistant of LSSR Minister of security L.Martinavičius stated, the members of church committees were used to be monks, members of religious fraternities and "fanatics implicitly serving under the orders of the priests" (see doc. No.11). That is why they did not become an effective instrument of inner parish life control. On the contrary, they partly contributed to the modernization of the Church; they promoted the seculars to more actively participate in the church life. Much more harm to the movement of Catholic Church and other religious confessions was done by Soviet Union's gained potential to control the appointments of priests. Usually the agent of RKRT registered the priests that were more active and did not cooperate with the authority to the secluded small parishes.

¹⁰ R. Laukaitytė, *op. cit.*, p.188.

¹¹ Refer to the list of churches and chapels closed down in 1945-1963, prepared by K.Misius, *LKMA Chronicle (Metraštis)*, t.12, 1998, p.95-101.

¹² Visual scheme of the alternative dislocation of churches in Vilnius, prepared by B.Pušinis, dated March 1949, RFVA, f.6991, ap.3, b.494, l.76.

¹³ Letter from B.Pušinis to the head of RKRT I.Polianskij, dated October 18, 1949, LCVA, f. R-181, ap.1, b.31, l.65.

Most of the Catholic convents working in Lithuania also did not get the registration documents. According to the laws of religious associations of the Soviet Union, convents could not formally exist, since their movement was not directly connected with the performance of religious cult. According to the Soviet propaganda, they were “the sources of distribution of parasitical reactionary world-view”. In the beginning, several men monasteries and one women monastery were registered. Later on, however, the people living in all of those monasteries were forced to leave for various reasons. Monk priests were not allowed to work in the churches of the parish, so they were forced to write statements saying they are leaving the monastery. That way, there were no more monasteries operating legally in Lithuania in 1949. However, soon enough the soviet authorities realized having chosen the wrong way to eliminate them since former monks and nuns have been positively continuing their chosen practice. The authors of alternatives suggested deporting them from Lithuania or isolating them in several big monasteries where they would engage in agricultural work.

Other religious confessions, excluding the Jewish religious communities, have not suffered so severely compared with the Catholic Church (see table 1) during the registration campaign.

Table 1. Houses of worship and ministers of the religious confessions registered by the RKRT representative by January 1st, 1951.

	Catholics	Orthodox	Old Believers	Lutherans	Reformists	Baptists	Adventists	Jews
House of Worship	670	57	47	33	5	7	5	2
Ministers	750	49	51	6	4	3	2	2

The table was drawn using statistical report prepared by the RKRT representative. LCVA, f. R-181, ap.3, b.25, l.134-135.

According to preliminary data, during the period of 1948-1953, four mosques, three Orthodox churches, three Lutheran churches and one Evangelic Reformist church were officially closed down. The data presented in the table above confirms the fact of the soviet regime having treated small religious communities unequally. In many places their members could not form a group of at least 20 members. Therefore, they could not register their own parish. Exceptions were granted for Adventists and Baptists while small communities of Jewish believers in Panevėžys, Šiauliai and Klaipėda had unsuccessfully been trying to be registered. The reasons for the rejection to open a synagogue in Šiauliai were given by B.Pušinis: people interested in opening one were supposedly speculators who wanted to receive parcels from the Unites States of America¹⁴.

¹⁴Letter from B.Pušinis to the head of RKRT I.Polianskij, dated October 22, 1948, LCVA, f.R-181, ap.1, b.22, l.64.

However, the true reason behind discrimination of Judaism was increased anti-Semitic tendencies of the soviet regime at the time.

The registration of religious communities and ministers has also meant that they have committed themselves to obey the restrictions of pastoral activities imposed by the Soviet authorities. Until then, there were no strict regulations concerning the place that priests could fulfill their religious service. Also, catechism of children has been more or less tolerated. Signing treaties regarding the use of the houses of worship in 1948, the parish committees committed not to allow performing religious service in their church by the priest not registered in that parish. They had to make sure the priest did not break the laws of the existing religious cults, which, for that matter, prohibited the priests to teach religion to children. The ministers upon the receipt of the registration card committed themselves to obey the existing rules. Finally, on September 13th, 1948, LSSR MT adopted a resolution *Regarding the registration of religious communities and prohibition to teach children religion* (see doc. No.7), which obligated chairmen of urban and rural VK's to take make sure that the cult servants do not organize special services, meetings or extra curricular activities for children and youth, as well as not to teach them religion.

In 1948 B.Pušinis had plans to close down well-attended calvarias in Vilnius and Žemaičių Kalvarija reasoning that the stands of Crucifixion are built on the nationalized land and they were not handed over according to any treaty to a religious community for religious services. However, RKRT stopped their impatient representative before he managed to close these two places of worship, offering to solve the problem informally by paying attention to political expedience, since preservation of calvarias was important “not only to catholic priests but also to a huge number of Catholic congregation that would be severely blown by the closure of calvarias”¹⁵.

7. Economical Pressure on Religious Organizations

Besides other initiatives, economic pressure markedly increased on religious organizations from 1948. After the Supreme Soviet Presidium of LSSR accepted the resolution “*Concerning nationalization of all the places of worship, monasteries and living quarters of religious communities*”, all presbyteries, houses of the acolytes, and other buildings that were not nationalized yet, got expropriated. Although the law stated that a registered parish committee was to keep its houses of worship, as well as the building for acolytes and attendants¹⁶, and use this

¹⁵ Letter from RKRT to B.Pušinis, dated October 20, 1948, LCVA, f.R-181, ap.3, b.14, l.78.

¹⁶ In the documents of the soviet authorities this building is named “storozhka” and could be translated into courtyard house; it should have been no more than 70 m² of the living space. In Lithuanian documents this building is also named “špitolė”, although the meaning of this word is not adequate to the Russian word.

property free of charge. Nonetheless, local authorities were not eager to leave even the smallest buildings to the Church.

Priests were driven out of their homes, they were not allowed to reside in the vicinity of the church, and had to move from one place to another often. By the end of 1948, curias of all dioceses had to move from their original residencies to the new ones, and those were much smaller and inferior. All the clergy were ascribed to independent workers (freelancer) category. For this reason they had to pay markedly higher residential rental fees: under 9 m² they would pay 3 rubles per m², if the space is over 9 m² – they would pay 6 rubles per m², while everyone else would be paying 35 kopeks (0.35 rubles) per m² for the same space. The rate for electricity consumption was officially set several times higher than the regular one (1.65 rubles per kilowatt-hour). Nevertheless, in some localities the priesthood was required to pay much more (up to 8-12 rubles per kilowatt-hour). The remaining pieces of land up to 3 hectares that were left to the church in 1940 were finally taken away in 1948. The church was allowed to have a piece of land no bigger than 15 ares.

Priests had to pay progressive income tax for religious ceremonies rendered. District taxation offices started to impose unreasonably high income taxes for the services rendered by the clergy without relying on their income declarations, stating that they could be false. Constantly urged by RKRT and a huge number of complaints submitted by the clergy concerning unjust implementation of an income tax they have to bear, B.Pušinis became a mediator between the clergy and the Ministry of Finances of Lithuanian SSR, asking the Ministry to calm its overly eager and energetic officials down. Nonetheless, when J.Stankevičius suggested implementing fixed monthly wages to be paid to the priests from the parish budget and calculating their income tax same as other salary-men's¹⁷, RKRT ignored his suggestion stating it does not understand the essence thereof, even though taxation system mentioned above would have realized the soviet governance ideal, when a priest is an employee working for the committee of a parish.

Other burdens imposed on the Church by the soviet administration were similar in their contradictions. Church buildings were given back to parishes to be used for free. At the same time, priesthood had to pay considerable building, real estate, rental, as well as insurance fees. Even after all those fees were paid, State Insurance Bureau of LSSR refused to pay the damages to the parish committee after the fire in the church of Pašvintinis in 1952, motivating their decision that compensation for the damages inflicted by the forces of nature would be paid to the owner of the property, in this case – the Supreme Committee of the district. In addition, this compensation would

¹⁷ A letter from J.Stankevičius to RKRT authorized agent in Lithuanian SSR, dated November 20, 1951, LCVA, f.R-181, ap.1, b.61, l.54.

be paid only if the owner intends to rebuild the property¹⁸. Since district SC did not intend to rebuild the church, compensation was never paid. Also, the truth is that Catholic Church had to pay taxes not once but twice, since the dean of the parish had to pay for the services of the servants (organist, sacristan, and cleaning ladies) besides the fees for the church building mentioned above. The servants of the parish had to pay their taxes too.

8. Obstacles in the Preparation of New Clergy

In their attempt to spread and enforce atheism in the society, soviet administration was trying to reduce and weaken the network of the houses of worship that existed, and at the same time it would not allow to prepare the new generation of clergy. There were theological seminaries operating in Kaunas, Vilnius and Telšiai during the period of German occupation in Lithuania. After the Soviets reoccupied Lithuania, only the seminary in Kaunas was allowed to operate, as mentioned above. Most of the students from the seminary in Telšiai went to study to the seminary in Kaunas, and as much as 350 ordinands started the school year of 1946/1947. Nonetheless, there were only 48 ordinands left in the seminary by 1949, due to restrictions imposed by the authorities. In their attempt to limit seminary's work, authorities took away the original building of the seminary in 1945, and hindered every attempt of the seminary to settle in the new location that would allow the seminary to operate normally. There were plans to close the seminary once and for all by the end of 1940's¹⁹.

Soviet authorities interfered with the inner operation of the seminary as well. This tendency especially increased from 1950, when the plans to completely destroy the Church were put aside, and the main attention was paid to covert work in order to undermine and cripple the Church from inside. The future of the Church depended heavily on the quality of the preparation of the new priests. Knowing that, soviet authorities made various attempts to lower and impair the quality of education in the seminary. Professors of the seminary, who trained ordinands to be faithful servants of the Church and even dared to criticize anti-ecclesiastical politics of the soviet authorities, were repressed in 1950-1953. Among those were: rector of the seminary A.Vaitiekaitis (became a rector in 1947), professors J.Grubliauskas, A.Kruša, as well as distinguished philosopher among Lithuanian Catholics in the interwar period and organizer of **ateitininkai** prelate P.Kuraitis. The authorities ordered a lay off of several other experienced teachers. In addition, the seminary was totally isolated from the free world and could not get any new information on the latest

¹⁸ Letter from the State Insurance Bureau of LSSR to B.Pušinis, dated April 3, 1952, *ibid.*, b.65, 32-33.

achievements in theological thought, as well as learn from the experience of pastoral activities of the Church in other countries throughout the world. Students of the seminary studied from prewar textbooks.

Back in 1945, soviet security organs received an order to recruit agents and infiltrate them among the students and teachers of the seminary. To recruit the students of the seminary, security agents would call the student in to the commissariat to sort out his documents²⁰. When the student arrived, security agents would try to extort a pledge from the student to cooperate by using threats of punishment, repression, or at least not being able to study in the seminary. Nonetheless, even those methods did not help much: by March 1, 1948, there were only 3 soviet security informers infiltrated in the seminary²¹.

9. Lithuanian Clergy – Victims of Stalin’s Xenophobia

From 1944 to 1953 there were 362 Catholic priests, 8 Old Believer priests, 4 Orthodox priests and 4 Lutheran pastors seized and convicted. According to R.Laukaitytė Ph.D. opinion, most of the criminal cases on the priesthood were started with the view to undermine and compromise the Church, and not because they were actually involved in the underground fighting²². Soviet regime ideology ascribed the priesthood to the camp of class enemies; spreading religious truth was considered to be ideological diversion, activity directed against the will of the people, because it strengthened bourgeois position allegedly. According to this primitive scheme, priests must have always cooperated directly with the enemies of the soviet people. In the period of 1944-1953, soviet propaganda was busy creating the image of a priest as the one to collaborate with Nazis and support “Bourgeois-Nationalists”. Repressive organs had to validate these accusations by specific facts. To this end, Central Committee of Lithuanian Communist Party (CC of LCP) even made attempts to organize public court trials of the priests. Actually, majority of repressed priests consisted of individuals that did not want to comply with the restrictions that regime set on the Church, or the ones that declined to collaborate with the soviet security organs.

Repressions and recruiting collaborators were two closely interrelated activities of NKGB-MGB. In the beginning, compromising information would be collected mostly through the help of agents. This information would then be used to blackmail the priests. Priests that were afraid of

¹⁹ A report by the head of RKRT department I.Karpov concerning his mission to Lithuanian SSR during the month of May 1949, RFVA, f.6991, ap.3, b.495, l.70.

²⁰ Priests and students of the seminary were released from the military duty so that they could not make negative influence on the soldiers.

²¹ Work report by LSSR MGB Kaunas department, dated February 1948, LYA, f.K-1, ap.14, b.82, l.23.

²² R. Laukaitytė, *op. cit.*, p.196.

possible repressions would be recruited to spy on their colleagues, and the ones that would not bend would end up in camps. In January 1949, there were 145 agents and informers working for LSSR MGB “O” unit, which controlled the activities of religious confessions. Those agents were spying on 201 individual in total (see doc. No.13). Representatives of local authorities were especially radical. They suggested blacklisting the clergy of all religious confessions and deport them all²³. This plan was not realized, but ordinands of the seminary, who had their families deported, would often be blacklisted as well. For example, 12 students of Kaunas theological seminary were arrested on May 22, 1948, and eventually deported as part of a major deportation action codenamed “Vesna” (Russian for spring)²⁴.

Repressions directed against priesthood were not solely a response to their opposition to the regime. They were a constituent part of anti-religious policy on the whole. The fact that the number of trials against Catholic priests markedly increased in 1948-49 confirms the foregoing conclusion, since that was the time when soviet authorities undertook decisive and aggressive action to shape the activities of the Church in accordance with the soviet religious cult framework (see Table 2).

Table 2. Statistical data on the number of Catholic priests sentenced in Lithuania from 1944 to 1953.

Year	1944	1945	1946	1947	1948	1949 ¹⁶	1950	1951	1952	1953
Priests arrested	5	58	57	41	22	91	60	17	6	7

Data is based on a report prepared by LSSR MVD in May 1953, *Concerning Anti-Soviet Activity of Catholic Priests in LSSR*, Special Archive of Lithuania, f. K-1, ap.10, b.151, l.198. (doc. no. 20)

10. Enforcement of Atheism on the Society

Constitution of Soviet Union recognized the freedom of antireligious propaganda only. Society was deprived of religious materials, since most of the books on religion were taken out of the libraries, and it was extremely complicated to get an approval for publishing any new books on the topic of religion. On very rare occasions, Soviet authorities would allow publishing liturgical or small informational publications, and the contents of it would be strictly censored of course. Since 1944, the only religious publications allowed were liturgical calendars published by the Catholic Church in Latin and intended for the priests, informational bulletin named “Cerkovnajja kronika” (Church chronicles) irregularly published by Orthodox clergy and calendars published by the Old

²³ Letter from RKRT authorized agent in Lithuania B.Pušinis to the head of RKRT I.Polianskij, dated November 27, 1951, LCVA, f.R-181, ap.3, b.27, l.61.

²⁴ Work report of LSSR MGB Kaunas department concerning their work with the clergy, dated May 1948, LYA, f.K-1, ap.14, b.73, l.61.

²⁵ Difference in the number of the convicted between 1948 and 1949 may be explained by the fact that a number of priests convicted in 1949 were arrested back in 1948, and some of the priests arrested in 1949 were convicted only in 1950 accordingly.

Believers. In 1947, the Catholics were not allowed to publish their liturgical calendar any more, because the publisher refused to translate the text into Russian. The actual reason behind publisher's decision was near impossibility of translating Latin liturgical terms into Russian language (refer to doc. No. 5).

Meanwhile, indoctrination of atheistic ideals financed heavily by the regime was continuously gaining speed. Besides several hundred of atheistic publications (see Table 3), there were 61 anti-religious books with a total run of 230,000 published in Lithuania in the period of 1944 – 1953²⁶.

Table 3. Number of periodical atheistic articles published in LSSR from 1945 – 1952.

	1945 m.	1946 m.	1947 m.	1948 m.	1949 m.	1950 m.	1951 m.	1952 m.	Iš viso
Straipsnių skaičius	0	4	47	100	222	116	169	113	771

Table has been drawn according to V. Skuodis, *op. cit.*, pp. 22-23.

All of the anti-religious literature was directed against Catholicism in general and against individual priests specifically, except publications discussing general questions of atheistic methodology and religious world-views. The main reason for this was persistent resistance of the Catholic Church to restrictions imposed on religious life, as well as attempts to control inside activities thereof. Most of the time, priesthood would be blamed for political disloyalty to the new regime. The second most popular topic discussed in anti-religious publications of the time was attacks on the Pope and the Vatican. Strained relations between Soviet Union and the Vatican, as well as USSR's anti-Vatican attitude could explain the prevalence of this topic.

Atheistic indoctrination of the society was an important part of the sovietization of Lithuania. All the tools of ideological conditioning were implemented for this purpose: communist party and communist youth organization, education system, publishers of periodicals, Writer's Association, Political and Science News Fellowship, which incorporated formally closed Belligerent Disbelievers Association in 1947. Specific atheist conditioning action was started in 1948: public denounced of religion by the former priests. J.Ragauskas formerly a priest and lecturer in theological seminary made the biggest impact between intellectual and other circles in Lithuania. He announced his departure from the priest's caste, which was staged by the Soviet security organs. Security officials were fast to use him for atheist propaganda and took him to give lectures all around Lithuania, J.Ragauskas wrote article for the periodicals as well. J.Ragauskas made a marked impact on the first generation of intellectuals of the soviet Lithuania, since his writings and

²⁶ V. Skuodis, *op. cit.*, p. 211.

speeches were of much better quality than rather primitive attacks of the first Lithuanian atheism propagandists on religion and clergy.

Besides maximally strict limitations on the spread of religious truth and atheist propaganda implemented on the masses, Soviet regime also directly forced people to act against their beliefs. Pedagogues were required to denounce the existence of God, criticize the Church and priesthood during the class; they were not allowed to attend religious services. Children of religious parents would be blackmailed and forced to join pioneer and communist youth organizations that had antireligious action as one of their major priorities (see doc. No. 3).

11. Interdepartmental Disagreement on the Nature of Antireligious Politics

A lot of historic researchers have noticed disagreements that would arise quite often between lower chains of soviet authorities and their governing institutions concerning the nature of antireligious action. Local authorities seemingly preferred “interventional” methods in their fight against the religion. In order to please their governing bodies and show that religious beliefs are on the decrease, local soviet authority official would choose the most straightforward and seemingly most effective method of anti-religious action – they would destroy institutional forms of religion. This method was implemented in Lithuania in 1948-1949 as well.

Antireligious activity of regional and district soviet authority officials was especially aggressive and forthright. Up to the point when notoriously radical B.Pušinis was not too happy about their actions: quite often, local soviet authorities would go so far and install loudspeakers next to the church building, and they would be blasting loud music or soviet propaganda during Mass service; unreasonably high rental and insurance fees would be imposed on the houses of worship; priests would not be allowed to perform the Mass, or local authorities would come in and stop the service in the middle of the Mass. Local authorities interpreted the right bestowed on them to give permits to parish committees for organizing processions in the churchyard or invite neighbor priests to celebrate a feast as a fully-fledged authorization to control all of the activity of religious community: e.g. they would decide whether to allow the use of the church bells, whether allow the priest to give Christmas Mass, or organize church chorus.

RKRT authorities would not always agree with anti-religious actions of its authorized agents. Correspondence documents indicate that officials in Moscow were primarily concerned with the effective control of religious organizations' activities, not an instant annihilation thereof (see doc No.10). According to RKRT, “artificially stopping the cult practice, we do not free the minds of

the people of religious superstition, but cause discontent among the believers”²⁷. Therefore, RKRT did not agree with the action implemented by B.Pušinis in 1949. During this operation, local authorities massively took away registration certificates from the priests, so that later on they could close the churches they give services at as the places of worship used wrongfully (see doc. No.14).

Disobedience of the authorized agent may also be explained by unclear distribution of power at the very top of the soviet regime. Since the spring of 1947, there was a fight for a further course of religious policy between VKP(b) CC propaganda and agitation departments on one side (M.Suslov, who has just returned from Lithuania, was a strong supporter of this organization, and after A.Zdanov’s death, he became ideological secretary of VKP(b) CC), as well as RSBRT and RKRT leadership on the other side²⁸. Each of those camps strived to get J.Stalin’s support as well as the support of the most influential members of the Politburo. Project resolution *Concerning Strengthening the Measures of Scientific-Atheist Facts Propaganda* was drawn in the autumn of 1948. Among other things, the resolution sharply criticized the activities of RSBRT and RKRT, those organs were blamed for supporting religious organizations and contributing to the increase in the religiousness of the population. In essence, this disagreement was an expression of a collision between pragmatic and interventional politics on religion. Nonetheless, when Stalin vetoed the project resolution he received on May 13, 1949, it became clear that “pragmatics” won this time.

LSSR MGB authorities also started to criticize actions of B.Pušinis after the verdict of the dictator. Soviet security organs also preferred covert destructive operation instead of overt restriction of the activity of religious organizations. RKRT even suggested removing B.Pušinis from the duties of RKRT representative in the autumn of 1949, but head authorities of LSSR managed to defend their old comrade-in-arms, since in essence they did not object to his methods. RKRT officials and authorities of the republic decided to have a talk with their colleague and recommend him to act more discreetly and ease down on the destruction of religious institutions, relegating destructive action from the inside to the competence of MGB bodies²⁹. Therefore, the decrease of the pressure on the Catholic Church in 1950 should be considered merely as a tactical change in soviet antireligious policies that kept its original goals nonetheless. Criticism of RKRT authorized agent seems to be very characteristic of the soviet governance system, when responsibility for the actions that caused discontent in the society is shifted to authorized agents that

²⁷ Suggestions drawn by the secretary of RKRT J.Sadovskij, dated October 1949, concerning further methods of work against Catholicism in Lithuania, RFVA, f.6991, ap.3, b.495, l.92

²⁸ Т. Чумаченко, *op. cit.*, p.117.

²⁹ Report by the secretary of RKRT J.Sadovskij concerning his mission to Lithuanian SSR during the month of October 1949, RFVA, f.6991, ap.3, b.495, l.92.

executed those actions directly, who misunderstood and misrepresented true policies of the soviet authorities supposedly. On the other hand, B.Pušinis did seem prefer “fundamentalist” approach towards religion that was prevalent in the apparatus of the communist party and agitation and propaganda department especially.

Short Summary

Leadership of the soviet regime has seemingly changed its approach towards the primary goals of religion policies during USSR – Germany war. Previously prevalent plans of fast and complete destruction of the religious life were changed by pragmatic approach. The idea of the new approach was to use religion as a proof of the regime's legitimacy by completely limiting pastoral activity of the religious organizations and effectively controlling spiritual leadership thereof. This metamorphosis expressed itself in the creation of institutions controlling religious life in 1943-1944: RKRT and RSBRT. Those organizations had their authorized agents operating in every republic and district of Soviet Union.

Nevertheless, imposing such a model on the Catholic Church with its spiritual leadership located beyond the limits of the sphere of influence of the Kremlin was a complicated task. For this reason, in 1939-1940, soviet regime attempted to use religion policy measure on the occupied territories, which was already tested by the tsar's authorities back in the 19th century: promotion of Orthodox Church against Catholicism. In 1944-1953 Russian Orthodox Church (ROC) received obviously preferential treatment compared to other religious confessions. However, it was obvious that ROC had limited possibilities to compete with Catholicism in Lithuania, where only a small percentage of Russian minority population belonged to the Orthodox church. Therefore soviet authorities put all of its efforts on the isolation of Lithuanian Catholic Church from the Vatican, or the creation of so called national church. There were no authoritative priests, who would dare to publicly declare their insubordination to the Pope though. So soviet authorities had to make do with cutting any connections that Lithuanian Catholic Church had with its spiritual and administrative center.

Another reason soviet authorities were encouraged to cancel their plan of creating national church in Lithuania was their success in cracking the resistance of Catholic Church hierarchs to the limitations of the religious life, and security organs seemed to have created favorable conditions for the manipulation of episcopate governors in accordance with the interests of the soviet regime. In 1948-1949, Lithuanian Catholic Church forcibly assumed additional features of the soviet religious cult. After harsh pressure was used, catholic parishes and their clergy were forced to register in the institutions of the soviet authorities, and by doing this they had to officially obey the new, essentially unacceptable rules of religious life that were imposed on the Church. Enforced registration became an effective tool of the soviet authorities for the regulation of the inner operation of religious organizations. Among other things, the new rule allowed the regulation of the distribution of the network of parishes. First of all, a number of Catholic churches that operated in

major Lithuanian cities of Vilnius and Kaunas was reduced several times; monks had to adjust to the new status of illegal operation. The last phase of the imposition of economic restrictions on religious organizations was ended together with forced registration campaign: religious organizations lost the remainder of the real estate they had left after previous sanctions, discriminatory complex taxes were imposed on the clergy, and local financial departments received full authorization for the calculation of those taxes.

In order to decrease the influence of the Catholic Church on the society, soviet regime devoted most of its energy to discrediting the priests and decreasing the numbers thereof in the period of 1944 – 1953. One of the most radical methods used by the soviet authorities to achieve the foregoing purpose was organizing political court trials and imposing harsh sentences on the priests that actively refused to collaborate with the regime. More than a third of Lithuanian clergy were involved in those trials. The future of the Church was even more affected by the restrictions that the authorities imposed on the preparation of the new clergy: the regime regulated the selection of the candidates, as well as their number and preparation quality. Discrediting of a specific priest or spiritual hierarchy of the Church on the whole was the main theme of the mass atheist propaganda implemented in 1944 – 1953. At the same time, religious organizations were not allowed to give a response to mostly unrightful accusations of the propagandists.

Local members of Lithuanian SSR leadership matured as communists in the environment of antireligious politics of the prewar soviet regime. For this reason, they did not always comprehend or wanted to agree with a more refined tactics of antireligious policies characteristic of the postwar Stalinism that emphasized covert undermining work from the inside instead of an open and hurried destruction of the forms of religious life. This difference in the approach was the main reason for the dissatisfaction that RKRT clearly expressed in the assessment of the work done by its authorized agent in Lithuania. Nonetheless, the fact that B.Pušinis managed to keep his position as RKRT representative in Lithuania despite the harsh criticism, only confirms that those differences were not essential and irreconcilable.

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