

“Church Institution during the Period of Nazi Occupation in Lithuania”
by Dr. Arūnas Streikus:

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So far, there has not been a deeper research into this subject. Dr. Streikus rightfully claims: “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”. I would add to this that even more often various sources, especially popular literature, retell myths that have been created by the emigration: for instance, a protest by the hierarchs of the Catholic Church to the German authorities against the massacres of the Jews that were started at the end of June 1941, or a statement that the Congress of Bishops of the autumn of 1941 has condemned the perpetrators of the genocide of the Jews.

Dr. Streikus’s conclusions rely on neither these nor other myths. As it is appropriate to an earnest researcher, he critically analyses facts and makes logical and fairly reasoned conclusions.

I do not recall who, maybe Streikus himself, wrote several years ago that the Church lost a good chance to become a hero during the years of the Nazi occupation. This is human nature that one most often demands heroism not from oneself but from others. In the summer and autumn of 1941, when around 80 % of the Lithuanian Jews were killed and the majority of the killers were the Catholic Lithuanians, the institution of the Catholic Church kept silent. There were several reasons for this silence, and fear was not the least among them. It was precarious to protest. The study under review describes all of this.

I have only one methodological remark as regards the subject of the study. Frequently Streikus does not indicate the sources, if rather secondary, of his statements. The work should contain twice as many references to the sources. I have highlighted the places in my copy under review where statements should bear references to the sources.

By the way, the use of the archival sources, apart from the literary ones, increases the value of Dr. Streikus’s study – he has used documents from the war period of the curias of the Kaunas and Panevėžys dioceses, which at present are kept by the Lithuanian State Historical Archives.

I agree to all seven conclusions that are made at the end of the work. The fifth one seems to be a little naïve: “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”. According to Streikus, one needs instructions from the authorities in order to express one’s position towards the unexpected evil and to condemn it. And this is said in relation to an institution that had vast historical experience, the LCC. Still, I think, even this conclusion may remain.