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Lithuanian Activities of the Students of Seinai Theological Seminary

Seinai Theological Seminary was established in 1826. The initiative of founding the seminary belonged to Mikalojus Manugevičius, the bishop of Seinai. The founding of the diocesan theological seminary was inspired by the desire to train clergymen for the pastoral work in diocesan parishes. At that time, the Tykocin seminary of the missionary monastery existed in the territory of the diocese of Seinai or Augustów¹, but it was not capable of meeting the needs of the diocese. The most acute problem was that there were not enough priests who were good enough in Lithuanian to do pastoral work in Lithuanian parishes. Bishop Manugevičius realised it well. When visiting the Lithuanian part of the diocese, he observed that there were few Lithuanian priests in the areas where people knew only Lithuanian. The bishop realised the problem could only be solved by establishing a seminary under the church of the cathedral. With this matter he approached the official commission on religion and education. He insisted that a second theological seminary was a necessity and wrote that the residents of the districts of Marijampolė, Kalvarija, and part of Seinai spoke Lithuanian and there had to be a seminary for young Lithuanians². The hopes that young people from Lithuanian parishes would enrol in the seminary were confirmed in the very first year. According to the suffragan

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¹ About the name of the diocese, see e.g.: W. Guzewicz, *Spór o diecezję*, in: *Kościół w Polsce. Dzieje i kultura*, ed. J. Walkusz, vol. 18, Lublin 2019, pp. 25-37; W. Guzewicz, *Administrative, legal and historical conditions of the establishment and functioning of the diocese in Sejny on the Polish-Lithuanian border*, in: *Sekcja dejin štatu a práva a teorie štatu a práva. Zbornik V. ročníka medzinárodnej vedeckej konferencie Banskobystrické zámocké dni práva 14-15 november 2019*, ed. M. Turošik, Belianum 2020, pp. 51-57.

² Cf. W. Jemielity, *Diecezja augustowska czyli sejneńska w latach 1818-1872*, Lublin 1972, p. 83; A. Katilius, *Katalikų dvasininkijos rengimas Seinų kunigų seminarijoje (XIX a.–XX a. pradžia)*, Vilnius 2009, p. 79.



bishop Augustinas Polikarpas Marciejevskis, who administered the entrance examination, of the 29 candidates who took the examination 27 were Lithuanians and two were Poles³. As many as four future priests came from the parish of Liudvinavas, two from Marijampolė, Leipalingis, Rudamina, Kalvarija, Vladislavov (Naumiestis) each, and one from other parishes each. Geographically, the first candidates were spread almost evenly across the whole Lithuanian-speaking part of the diocese. Students from Lithuanian parishes prevailed in later years as well. Geographical origin was identified for 910 individuals out of 1196 successful candidates, which amounted to 76.0% of all students. To sum up, 687 students (75.5% of 910 individuals) came from the Lithuanian part of the diocese: from the counties of Vladislavov (Naumiestis), Marijampolė, Vilkaviškis, Kalvarija, and part of Seinai. One hundred and seventy-eight (19.6%) students came from the Polish part of the diocese, and 45 (4.9%) of the students came from outside the diocese⁴. By the parameter of social origin, it turns out that the majority of the clergy were of peasant origin. Peasants accounted for 80.4%, the nobles for 15%, and urban residents for 4.6%. The data on the social background were identified for 980 individuals or 81.9% of the total number of the students⁵. The peasant background can be mostly associated with Lithuanians (one representative of peasant origin or another was a Pole); the nobles should be mostly associated with the Poles (there were a couple of the nobles who spoke Lithuanian), while the ethnic origin of urban residents is difficult to determine.

With the data on geographic and social origins available, let us attempt at least an approximate estimate of the ethnicity of the seminary students. Thus, with individuals of peasant origin from ethnic Lithuanian parishes prevailing in the theological seminary of Seinai from 1826 to 1903, 80% or 81% of Lithuanian-speaking persons, that is, ethnic Lithuanians could have enrolled in it⁶. Statistical data on the ethnic origin of the students comes from the period of 1904-1908. In 1904, the Lithuanians in the seminary made up 71.5% and the Poles 28.5%. At the end of the period, in 1908, there were 53.6% of Lithuanians, 42.8% of Poles, and one (3.6%) Belarusian⁷. We can observe the trend of the falling number of Lithuanian students at the seminary of Seinai. Between 1909 and 1915, the numbers of Lithuanian and Polish students evened out.

Looking at the ethnic composition of students at the theological seminary of Seinai, we can reasonably inquire about the students' Lithuanian studies at the seminary. Understandably, the central aim of a theological seminary as an educational institution is to provide priests with subject and spiritual background for their pastoral activities in parishes. That was what the seminary was

³ Cf. *ibid.*, p. 164.

⁴ Cf. *ibid.*, p. 183.

⁵ Cf. *ibid.*, p. 176.

⁶ Cf. *ibid.*, p. 205.

⁷ Cf. *ibid.*, p. 206.

mainly engaged in. The other kind of activity was the students' voluntary work carried out in their free time, that is, outside their main duties of subject and spiritual studies. On the other hand, the students' Lithuanian studies cannot be separated from the manifestation of national self-awareness of the Lithuanian public on the whole. Clearer manifestations of the formation of the modern Lithuanian nation should be sought after the suppression of the 1863-1864 uprising. The strengthening of national self-awareness was raising new tasks to the clergy. It was very important for the national self-awareness of priests to be formed while still at the seminary; after graduation, the priests were to contribute to the heightening of national awareness of the parishioners and legitimising the Lithuanian language in church practice (especially in added services and chanting⁸) in their parishes. For this reason, Lithuanian activities of the seminary students were important in the formation of a new generation of the clergy for whom the aspirations of Lithuanian nationalism were no longer foreign. However, this kind of nationalism cannot be compared with current processes in Europe (Poland or in Hungary, for example). Lithuanian activities of the seminary students in the second half of the nineteenth and the early twentieth century should be approached from the perspective of that particular time when the modern Lithuanian nation was emerging and the students' activities were an integral part in the formation of a modern nation.

Any discussion about secret activities encounters the problem of historical sources, and Lithuanian aspirations of the students of Seinai Theological Seminary are not an exception. In addressing this issue, the students' correspondence would be an invaluable source. However, we could not find such correspondence. Therefore, reminiscences of the participants in these events are a relevant source when discussing these secret activities. Before the Second World War, Juozapas Stakauskas, a priest and a historian, wrote a study about Lithuanian activities of the students at the theological seminaries of Seinai, Kaunas, and Vilnius, which was based on the reminiscences of the former students. His study is frequently referred to in the present work. Reminiscences of the participants in these events have been published in the press, but they are of a fragmentary nature. The object of research determined it being based on the recollections of Lithuanian priests, while those by Polish priests are less known to us.

In this paper, we will attempt to discuss two issues: the use of the Lithuanian language at the seminary and the secret organisation of the seminary students. In answering the first question, we will primarily focus on the environment that was instrumental to the use of Lithuanian at the seminary and the forms of the use of Lithuanian. The second issue is relevant in the overall con-

⁸ For more on this see: W. Jemieliuty, *Język nabożeństw w parafiach mieszanych polskoliteńskich przed I Wojną Światową*, in: *Przeszłość natchnieniem dla teraźniejszości*, ed. K. Brzostek, Elk 1996, pp. 260-282; A. Katilius, *Pridėtinų pamaldų kalba Seinų vyskupijos bažnyčiose: XIX a.–XX a. pradžia*, in: *Vyskupo Antano Baranausko anketa dvasininkams (1898)*, ed. A. Katilius, Vilnius 2012, pp. 11-58.

text of the Lithuanian national revival or Lithuanian nationalism. The ongoing social processes were placing new demands on the clergy and the seminary was the place where the future clergymen had to prepare themselves for functioning in changed conditions.

The use of the Lithuanian language at the seminary

At the theological seminary of Seinai, the language of instruction was Latin and later also Polish. It was only in 1904 that Lithuanian was officially introduced in the seminary. It is not clear what language the students spoke to each other during the first decades of the seminary, but most likely it was Polish.

Before the uprising of 1863-1864, there was no any massive expression of the Lithuanian identity in the seminary; it, however, does not mean that there were no students at the seminary who cared about Lithuanian matters. Priest Antanas Tatarė (ordained in 1834) wrote and published literary works in Lithuanian. Martynas Sederavičius (ordained in 1859), Tatarė's pupil at the parish school of Lukšiai and later a book smuggler, was a conscious Lithuanian. Priest Motiejus Brunza (ordained in 1848) published a Lithuanian primer in Suvalkai in 1859. There were more Lithuanian-minded students at the seminary, of course.

The uprising of 1863-1864 triggered the formation of Lithuanian national self-awareness of the students at the theological seminary of Seinai, its intensification, and their attempts to engage in the activities of national revival. These changes should be linked to the reforms of Bishop Konstanty Ireneusz Łubieński, which he undertook at the seminary between 1864 and 1866. According to his plan, studies at the seminary of Seinai had to last for six years. The first year of studies was to be spent on a preparatory course, the second and third years on philosophical studies, and the remaining years on the studies of theological subjects. Due to the shortage of funds and premises, the plan was not implemented. Bishop K. I. Łubieński's initiatives to transform the studies and the professors who had come to work there were highly valued by the graduates of the seminary. Priest Adomas Grinevičius-Jungtas wrote in his memoir: "He was a man of scholarship and was concerned about raising the level of scholarship among the students. He invited the best-educated priests of the diocese and instructed them to work as professors at the seminary"⁹. Jonas Totoraitis thus described the spirit of that time:

"Almost all students were Lithuanians, and only very few were Poles. The Lithuanians were not nationally-aware, but the rising level of instruction at the seminary led them towards it. No one prevented or hindered the Lithuanian students, who still spoke Polish, to live their Lithuanian life. Just like ordinary people, the students enjoyed singing in Lithuanian. In evenings, at rest time, the seminary resounded with Lithuanian songs. During their holidays, the students

⁹ *Kun. Adomo Grinevičiaus-Jungto atsiminimų bruožai*, "Žvaigždė" 1925, no. 9, p. 13.

would learn new songs from their families and friends and would sing them all year long. Almost each student had a song collection, a *kantička*¹⁰.

Stanisław Jamiołkowski, a professor in the Polish language and literature, who worked at the seminary from 1864 to 1872, encouraged the students to engage in actual movement. According to Totoraitis, this professor admired the Lithuanian songs sung by the students, learned some Lithuanian himself, and urged the students to collect the songs as samples of Lithuanian poetry¹¹. Moreover, professor Jamiołkowski would instil love for literature and the desire to write during literature classes. The interest in folk songs yielded results. In the summer of 1866, a collection of folk songs accumulated during holidays was compiled; unfortunately, it was not published due to the obstruction by the authorities. The most active song collector was Adolfas Lapinskas (ordained in 1868), who collected 150 songs in the environs of Kalvarija. Thus, the reforms of Bishop K. L. Łubieński and encouragement by Professor Stanisław Jamiołkowski created conditions for the Lithuanian students to take a closer look at their native language and to start using it, primarily through the Lithuanian song.

For the Lithuanian students, singing Lithuanian folk songs was one of the ways of expressing their national identity. They sang them in the palace of the seminary during their free time and when taking walks. It would turn out that some of the students had musical talents, and Vincentas Aleksandravičius was one of them. Juozapas Stakauskas wrote about him in his monograph:

“Vincentas Aleksandravičius, who headed a choir of selected singers from 1882 to 1887 while a student at the seminary, worked a lot to cultivate the Lithuanian song. This choir was exclusively Lithuanian; it would daily sing hymns in four voices in the chapel and on important feasts in the church. During recreation, it would sing Lithuanian folk songs taking turns with the ordinary unorganised choir”¹².

Jonas Totoraitis, who studied at the seminary from 1890 to 1895, also placed emphasis on the significance of the Lithuanian song in the seminary: “In evenings, when they had more than half an hour of free time, they would sing Lithuanian songs; they would do the same when taking a walk in the woods (they would go there twice a week in the afternoon)”¹³. Pranciškus Būčys re-

¹⁰ J. Totoraitis, *Iš mūsų atgijimo istorijos*, “Ateities spinduliai” 1916, no. 1, p. 40. About Jonas Totoraitis MIC (1872-1941), see e.g.: A. Katilius, *Rev. Prof. Jonas Totoraitis MIC: Ideas and Conceptions*, “Studia Elckie” 22(2020), no. 1, pp. 45-59.

¹¹ Cf. J. Totoraitis, *Iš mūsų atgijimo istorijos*, p. 40; *Kun. Adomo Grinevičiaus-Jungto atsiminimų bruožai*, “Žvaigždė” 1925, no. 8, p. 6, no. 9, p. 14.

¹² J. Stakauskas, *Naujieji nacionalizmai ir Katalikų Bažnyčia Lietuvoje*, ed. A. Katilius, Vilnius 2003, p. 236.

¹³ J. Totoraitis, *Šiek tiek apie J. E. vysk. P. Būčio veikimą*, “Tiesos kelias” 1927, no. 1, p. 17.

called that in summer, Lithuanian songs could be heard far away through the open windows of the seminary¹⁴. Thus, singing was one of the most important means of the use of the Lithuanian language and the national self-expression for the Lithuanian students. They would sing Lithuanian songs up until the closure of the theological seminary of Seinai.

Lithuanian students spoke Lithuanian among themselves. Totoraitis observes that they would do this too much at times: “The Lithuanian students spoke Lithuanian a lot among them, so much that sometimes they would check and encourage one another to speak Polish in order to learn that foreign tongue”¹⁵. Polish was necessary to socialise with the parishioners in case they were appointed to work in Polish parishes; also, some subjects in the seminary were also taught in Polish.

As has already been mentioned, teaching of Lithuanian at the theological seminary of Seinai was introduced in 1904. Before that, the students mastered the skills of the Lithuanian language in secret. Why in secret, one would ask. The answer to this question might be the following: learning Lithuanian was required of the future priests who, after graduation from the seminary, could deliver sermons and deliver other religious services in pure Lithuanian. The modernising society would no longer accept the Lithuanian word pronounced carelessly. Secret teaching of Lithuanian can be considered an addition to the educational process in the seminary because it was not done officially. After the introduction of the Lithuanian language, secret teaching of Lithuanian raised different tasks to itself.

How was Lithuanian taught? One of the ways was taking private lessons. Another way consisted in students with more advanced knowledge of Lithuanian teaching their fellow students in an organised way, like, for example, giving secret lessons of Lithuanian. Juozapas Laukaitis (he was the first professor in Lithuanian when the teaching of the language was introduced), Pranciškus Būčys, Kazimieras Urbanavičius, and Petras Bulvičius were secret teachers of Lithuanian. When the civil authorities started posing the danger of possible searches in the seminary, this form of teaching was abandoned and priority was given to individual teaching. Essays would be written on Lithuanian literature, the history of Lithuania, or some other topic. The students would exchange these essays and each reader would leave his remarks, or someone who knew Lithuanian better would correct language mistakes. More often than not, Juozapas Vailokaitis would correct the mistakes.

The administration of the seminary tolerated the students’ efforts to improve their Lithuanian. In the academic year of 1903/1904, the lessons of Lithuanian at the seminary were taught by Antanas Šmulkštys. The students no longer hid at night-time but gathered in one hall during their afternoon or eve-

¹⁴ Cf. P. Būčys, *Kunigų lietuviškumas ir bedievybė Lietuvoje*, “Tėvynės sargas” 1949, no. 1, p. 34.

¹⁵ J. Totoraitis, *Šiek tiek apie J. E. vysk. P. Būčio veikimą*, p. 17.

ning recreation. Once Juozas Giedraitis, the rector of the seminary, caught the students engrossed in their studies. He did not tell them off; he even spoke to them in Lithuanian and expressed interest in some aspects of the Lithuanian language¹⁶.

Secret learning of Lithuanian at the seminary was also revived during the last five years of the seminary's activities, despite the fact that Lithuanian was taught at the seminary officially. Feliksas Bartkus wrote in his reminiscences:

“In my days at the theological seminary of Seinai, Lithuanian was taught in two ways, officially and secretly. Officially, it had a designated professor and the same number of classes as Polish, that is, six lessons a week in the first and second years and three weekly lessons in the third year. Not only us, the Lithuanians, had to attend them, but the Poles as well, as requested by Jałbrzykowski. What did we learn in those lessons? Nothing, totally nothing! [...] What we were not able, could not, or didn't want to do during the official lessons of Lithuanian, we tried to catch up at the secret lessons. This gap had to be filled. The students had to be trained to express their thoughts in writing. They also had to be acquainted with the former workers of our press and with their work. Last but not least, new workers had to be nurtured for our press. All this used to be done during the secret lessons of Lithuanian. They would take place in the premises of the seminary's bookshop [library], with the administration unaware of them, of course. The key teachers were the fourth-year student Mykolas Krupavičius and fifth-year student Jonas Reitelaitis”¹⁷.

Early in the twentieth century, training sermons were one of the forms of the use of Lithuanian. According to Stakauskas, Antanas Šmulkštys was probably the first to deliver training sermons in Lithuanian. The Lithuanians would give their sermons in Lithuanian, and the Poles in Polish. The entrance examination could be taken in Lithuanian. Mykolas Krupavičius, who took the entrance examination in 1908, remembered that it could be taken in Polish or Lithuanian¹⁸. Feliksas Bartkus, who became a student of the seminary in 1911, noted that in addition to these two languages, answers could be given also in Russian¹⁹.

Priest Totoraitis MIC, who from 1911 was a spiritual father at Seinai Theological Seminary, described a conversation with one of the students in a letter to priest Jurgis Matulaitis MIC:

“I asked one student if it was true that reading or writing in Lithuanian was forbidden. He said he personally was not forbidden, just like those who were excellent students. How do you know then, I asked, that [Lithuanian is] forbidden and persecuted? Himself, [the vice-rector] does not do anything, but when he comes

¹⁶ Cf. J. Stakauskas, *Naujieji nacionalizmai ir Katalikų Bažnyčia Lietuvoje*, pp. 225-226.

¹⁷ F. Bartkus, *Mano kelias prie altoriaus*, Chicago 1967, pp. 52-53.

¹⁸ Cf. M. Krupavičius, *Atsiminimai*, Chicago 1972, p. 113.

¹⁹ Cf. F. Bartkus, *Mano kelias prie altoriaus*, p. 38.

upon, he sends for the rector and the latter tells one off. How do you know he sends for him? The rector does not visit rooms, or very rarely, but when the vice[rector] catches somebody reading Lithuanian, soon the rector visits him. Meanwhile, the Poles can read whatever they want and nobody stops them, and they can be the worst students”²⁰.

In his letter of 1 April 1913 to Matulaitis, Totoraitis noted that the Lithuanian students in Seinai had been dealt a blow: “they were divided, to be in groups with Poles. If the Lithuanians read or wrote Lithuanian, the Poles saw that and threatened to report them. The vice-rector ordered the sermons to be written in Polish, although before that the Lithuanians could write and deliver [sermons] in Lithuanian”²¹.

The episodes from the life of Seinai Theological Seminary described by priest Totoraitis MIC point to the ethnic tensions that existed between Lithuanian and Polish students, which, in turn, reflected national differentiation among the clergy: some came to support Lithuanian nationalism, while others adhered to the Polish side.

The students’ secret society

Initially, the students were not organised and the Lithuanian spirit let itself be felt through some individuals. The emergence of organised activities was probably influenced by the fact that nationally-aware young men from the gymnasium of Marijampolė enrolled in the seminary of Seinai. Antanas Staniukynas, who studied at the seminary from 1884 to 1889, was the one to initiate secret organised activities of Lithuanian students at Seinai Theological Seminary. He started from a secret library the users of which formed the core of the seminary’s student organisation. According to Stakauskas, the library seemed to consist of two parts. Less dangerous books were kept in the north-western tower that the students called *szczurnik* (‘ratbag’). Stakauskas wrote that “the books were mostly related to Lithuanian studies, in Polish and Russian, for example, works by Hilferding, Kuršaitis’s grammar, Donelaitis’s works”²². Lithuanian publications printed abroad during the period of the ban on the Lithuanian press were hidden much more ingeniously:

“A secret storage was chosen for keeping the forbidden Lithuanian literature in the seminary, which was set up in latrines, in the locked up section of the seminary’s rector, in a box on a beam under the seat. The box was placed in such a way that it could not be seen either from above, through the hole of the seat, or from below, when the latrines were cleaned. The entrance to this storage was se-

²⁰ Jonas Totoraitis’s letter to Jurgis Matulaitis of 31 May 1912, *Lietuvos centrinis valstybės archyvas (LCVA)*, f. 1674, ap. 2, b. 107, l. 32v-33.

²¹ A. Katilius, *Kun. Jonas Totoraitis MIC, Seinų kunigų seminarijos dvasios tėvas*, “Terra jatwezenorum” 12(2020), no. 1, pp. 236-237.

²² J. Stakauskas, *Naujieji nacionalizmai ir Katalikų Bažnyčia Lietuvoje*, p. 215.

cured and literature taken with the help of a forged key and at least two guards in the corridors, to prevent being caught by the rector”²³.

This is what Jonas Totoraitis wrote about the students’ secret library: “[They] had set up a secret Lithuanian bookshop which had many Lithuanian books published before the Polish period [the uprising of 1863-64] and therefore not forbidden by the Russian authorities, and also works on Lithuania in Polish or Russian”²⁴. In all likelihood, Totoraitis refers to the secret library after the search conducted in the seminary. After the closure of the seminary in Kielce and the search carried out by the administration of the seminary of Seinai, the students realised the danger of keeping the forbidden literature. Pranciškus Būčys wrote:

“We realised the existing danger. The stoves were stocked with the *Varpas* and other counter-state publications; only books of ‘innocent’ content or those legally published within the borders of Russia remained in the little library. We were impatient so see how slowly paper was burning”²⁵.

In 1888, the students’ association acquired an organisational structure: Adomas Tomas Žilinskas was elected the first chairman and Andrius Dubinskas the treasurer and librarian. The association went through at least three stages of its activities. During the first period, it operated in a more liberal way, but after the closure of the seminary in Kielce, strict conspiracy had to be resorted to in fear of repression by the civil authorities. The organisation of ‘fives’ was introduced. It was initiated by Ignotas Čižauskas, who became a student of the seminary in 1895 and corresponded with Jonas Jablonskis in Mintauja. Jablonskis instructed Čižauskas about the direction of activities and how the Lithuanian language, literature, and history should be studied. The organisational core or the central board of the association of the ‘fives’ consisted of five persons: the strongest ones were chosen from among fifth-year students, also one student from the fourth-, third-, and second-year, each. The first year was not represented. Each member of the central ‘five’ had to organise their own ‘five’ of the closest friends from the same year, if possible, being the fifth member and being very secretive about the central ‘five’. Each member of a ‘five’ had, in turn, to organise his own secret ‘five’, and so on. In this way, all students were involved in the secret organisation. The central ‘five’ supervised the activities of the association, but other members were unaware of their work. The ‘fives’ would hold their meetings somewhere in hiding. In summer, they would go for a walk in the woods and meet under a tree agreed on in advance²⁶. In spring 1904, the secret organisation of the ‘fives’ broke

²³ Ibid., pp. 215-216.

²⁴ J. Totoraitis, *Šiek tiek apie J. E. vysk. P. Būčio veikimą*, p. 17.

²⁵ P. Būčys, *Kunigų lietuviškumas ir bedievybė Lietuvoje*, p. 34.

²⁶ Cf. J. Stakauskas, *Naujieji nacionalizmai ir Katalikų Bažnyčia Lietuvoje*, p. 199.

down due to personal rifts. A new secret organisation of students was established, which operated until the First World War.

The aims and forms of the students' secret activities were adapted to the conditions that existed during each period. The statute of the organisation foresaw the following priorities of its activities: "(1) to maintain the Lithuanian spirit in people, and therefore, to distribute the Lithuanian press after graduation from the seminary, (2) to self-educate in the Lithuanian language, to attempt improving the Lithuanian style to the extent of being able to deliver sermons normally and without barbarisms. Therefore, the students decided to speak Lithuanian among themselves"²⁷. Mykolas Krupavičius's words give some idea about the tasks of the association during the third period of its activities:

"In my times, our Lithuanian activities were concentrated in a secret society that engaged more talented Lithuanian students who stood out for their courage and fighting spirit against Poles. Our world was small, just like our aspirations: to strengthen the national spirit and understanding of the future priests, to nurture the predilections and talents, in short, to educate a worker and a leader useful to the Lithuanian life within the borders of at least one parish. Such secret operation was often strictly forbidden, and would be severely punished if caught"²⁸.

Not only did the students read the secret Lithuanian press, but they also distributed these publications. Juozapas Stakauskas wrote that all students of the seminary were book smugglers at the time and distributed Lithuanian literature:

"The seminary of Seinai was a channel of considerable contraband of Lithuanian books. Its students voraciously read the papers from abroad and distributed them across the diocese. Lithuanian books would be brought to the seminary secretly: the administration was not aware of this"²⁹.

The students would load the press in the attics of the seminary building and later would either post it or distribute in the diocese during their holidays or would hand the publications to their relatives who would visit them in the seminary. For many years, Adomas Grinevičius, the vicar of Kalvarija, would supply the seminary with the Lithuanian press. Later, the students received the press from Vincas Bielskus from the village of Balsupiai of Marijampolė parish. Lithuanian books reached the seminary from other channels, too.

The students of Seinai seminary not only distributed the banned publication, but also assisted in publishing them. Memoirs and other sources provide a good account of the relations between the students of the seminary of Seinai and the initiators and publishers of the *Varpas*. Juozapas Stakauskas writes:

²⁷ Ibid., pp. 192-193.

²⁸ M. Krupavičius, *Atsiminimai*, p. 143.

²⁹ J. Stakauskas, *Naujieji nacionalizmai ir Katalikų Bažnyčia Lietuvoje*, p. 216.

“The *Varpas* was not born yet but its idea was already well known to the Lithuanian students in Seinai. The Lithuanian students in Warsaw, who made up their minds to publish the *Varpas*, forwarded its programme to the students in Seinai and asked for their opinion. [...] Later the secret association of the students of Seinai, with mediation of priest Adomas Grinevičius, Dr Kaukas, and Dr Petras Matulaitis, maintained close contact with students in Moscow and Warsaw and published the *Varpas* and the *Ūkininkas* together with them”³⁰.

Students Antanas Milukas, A. T. Žilinskas, Jonas Kriščiukaitis, Juozapas Laukaitis, Andrius Dubinskas participated in the second, third, fourth, and fifth conventions of the *Varpas*³¹. However, the communication between the students of Seinai and the publishers of the *Varpas* broke down. Vincas Kudirka’s strict criticism of *Caritatis*, the encyclical of Pope Leo XIII on the Church of Poland, in *Tėvynės varpai* in 1894, contributed to the breakdown.

The students of the seminary of Seinai not only assisted in the management of the published literature or in the organisation of the publishing process; they published their own small newspapers, translated books, wrote articles, and works of literature. Newspapers of five titles were published in the seminary.

The first to publish a newspaper was the student Antanas Milukas. In 1890, he started a small hand-written newspaper *Knapt*, which only lasted for a short time. It was replaced by the newspaper called *Visko po biškį* (A Tiny Bit of Everything), a dozen or more issues of which appeared. This one was followed by the paper *Viltis* (Hope), edited by Pranciškus Būčys. Antanas Milukas wrote: “Each member of the association had to write an article from time to time, which would be presented at the association meeting and then published in the newspaper. Outstanding articles would appear in foreign papers *Ūkininkas*, *Varpas*, and *Apžvalga*”³². Students Jonas Kudirkevičius and Vincentas Dargis (both studied from 1889) would copy the newspaper by hand. According to Pranciškus Būčys, the newspaper would appear on Saturdays. He wrote that

“On a Saturday, the newspaper would be handed to the oldest fifth-year Lithuanian, who had to quickly read it and then hand it over to his closest friend, making sure that the newspaper would be read by all Lithuanians within a week. On Saturday evening, it would return to the editorial board”³³.

Around 1898, *Viltis* was suspended, because the case of the association ‘Sietynas’ started at that time and searches in the seminary were expected. In 1902, the secret association of the ‘fives’ launched the magazine *Jaunuomenės*

³⁰ Ibid., pp. 206-207.

³¹ Cf. R. Miknys, *Lietuvių liberalų periodinės spaudos organizavimas 1888-1905 m.*, “Lietuvos mokslų akademijos darbai. Serija A” 1988, no. 3, p. 60.

³² *Spaudos laisvės ir Amerikos lietuvių organizuotės sukaktuvės*, antra laida, pranaičių Julės lėšomis, Philadelphia, Pa, [s.a.], p. 380.

³³ P. Būčys, *Atsiminimai*, surašė Z. Ivinskis, vol. 1, ed. J. Vaišnora, Chicago 1966, p. 83.

draugas (A Friend of the Young), which was edited by Juozapas Švedas, who became a student of the seminary in 1900. When the association disbanded, the *Jaunuomenės draugas* stopped as well. Later the student newspaper of the theological seminary of Seinai resumed and was called *Jaunimo draugas*. It was managed by Antanas Šmulkštys and Juozapas Juozaitis (both entered the seminary in 1903), Juozapas Aleksa (became a student in 1903), and Motiejus Petrauskas (1905). This publication was approved by the administration of the seminary: each issue would be reviewed by the rector or the vice-rector. The last editor of *Jaunimo draugas* was Adomas Jasenauskas (became a student in 1904). It was during his term as an editor that the publication of the newspaper stopped in 1908. This was done on the order of the rector Vincentas Blaževičius. Juozapas Stakauskas wrote:

“Jasenauskas takes the newspaper to the vice-rector Vincas Dvaranauskas asking for his approval [...]. The vice-rector says, ‘you will no longer publish the newspaper’. The reason behind the closure was the following: the Polish students were also publishing a newspaper. Their editors and contributors were under-achievers. The administration closed their newspaper, and when the Polish newspaper was closed, the Lithuanian one had to be suspended as well, in order to maintain equality and avoid misunderstandings”³⁴.

The students of the seminary made no more attempts at publishing a newspaper.

The students of the theological seminary of Seinai engaged in various sorts of creative activities. Learning creative writing should first of all include the students’ essays that would be read and discussed at the meetings of the secret organisation. On the other hand, it should be pointed out that the students used to send their writings and articles to Lithuanian newspapers. Initially, they sent their work to the newspapers published abroad and later, after the ban on the Lithuanian press had been lifted, published their articles in Lithuanian periodicals. It should be noted, though, that even when the ban was lifted, the students could collaborate with Lithuanian newspapers and magazines unknowingly to the administration of the seminary. Among the most active contributors to the press, the following names can be mentioned: Antanas Milukas, Pranciškus Būčys, Andrius Dubinskas, Juozapas Laukaitis, Juozapas Vailokaitis, Antanas Šmulkštys, Mykolas Krupavičius, Petras Gerulis, Jonas Reitelaitis, and others. It was at the seminary that Vincas Mykolaitis-Putinas published his first attempts at poetry.

The students tried their hand at writing fiction, too. This kind of activity would become more prominent during the last years at the seminary. Juozapas Stakauskas even referred to the students’ organisation as a literary society. Vincas Mykolaitis-Putinas, Petras Gerulis-Kragas, Juozapas Leonardas Avižienis,

³⁴ J. Stakauskas, *Naujieji nacionalizmai ir Katalikų Bažnyčia Lietuvoje*, p. 235.

Vytautas Gurevičius, Motiejus Petrauskas, and Jonas Reitelaitis stood out for their literary talent. Petras Gerulis-Kragas distinguished himself as a literary critic and scholar. He was expelled from the seminary for his active collaboration with the press. Motiejus Gustaitis, Antanas Civinskas, Pranciškus Augustaitis, and Antanas Šmulkštys, who studied earlier, were also endowed with literary talent. The seminary students took interest in various aspects of the history of Lithuania. Here, mention should be first of all made of Jonas Reitelaitis. Historical research he had conducted during his years in the seminary was published in *Vadovas*, *Šaltinis*, and *Lietuvių tauta*. Antanas Šmulkštys was also interested in the history of Lithuania, while Jonas Totoraitis, who took keen interest in history during his studies at the seminary, defended his doctoral thesis on Mindaugas in Fribourg in 1904.

Although the students' activities were secret, the professors of the seminary were aware of them. What did they think of it? Professor Stanisław Jami-ółkowski, who has been mentioned above, encouraged the students and supported them as much as he could. According to Justinas Staugaitis, who studied at the seminary from 1885 to 1890, the administration took hardly any interest in the issue of the Lithuanians³⁵. Stakauskas wrote that Pawel Krajewski, the rector, did not hinder the students to engage in Lithuanian activities³⁶. At the beginning of his term, rector Jonas Giedraitis went as far as to forbid the students to speak Lithuanian in public, but the Lithuanian students asked him to lift this ban. He did not revoke it formally, but would pretend he did not hear them speaking Lithuanian and no longer raised the problem of the language. At times, he would talk to the students in Lithuanian, read their newspaper, and would even correct in his own hand what he considered to be incorrect. Rector Giedraitis tried to be objective in nationality-related issues and earned respect of both the Lithuanian and the Polish students for it. This is what Pranciškus Būčys wrote about professors of the seminary in his memoir:

“Professors Vincas Blaževičius and Antanas Staniulis approved of the students' secret Lithuanian activities. The old professors, Lithuanians Matas and Eliziejus Strimavičius and Martynas Čepulevičius kept aloof but did not reprove the Lithuanian spirit. Pranciškus Augustaitis would show favour to the students' Lithuanian activities but would not contribute in any way. Secret correspondence would reach the students through the seminary's physician Kaukas”³⁷.

The younger professors of the theological seminary of Seinai were very positive towards Lithuanian students and their social activities, because they had taken part in secret Lithuanian activities as students themselves.

³⁵ Cf. J. Staugaitis, *Mano atsiminimai*, the second expanded edition, Vilnius 2006, p. 119.

³⁶ Cf. J. Stakauskas, *Naujieji nacionalizmai ir Katalikų Bažnyčia Lietuvoje*, p. 238.

³⁷ P. Būčys, *Kunigų lietuviškumas ir bedievybė Lietuvoje*, p. 34.

At this point it is worth taking a look at the activities of the Polish students of the seminary. We do not have any data on any organisation of Polish students at the seminary of Seinai. However, they were also active, organised various events, and wrote articles for the Polish press. Anton Kukliewicz, Anton Gerwel, Andriej Gawędzki, Józef Perkowski, Anton Roczkowski, and Czesław Rydzewski were the most zealous among the Polish students³⁸. Professors would correct the articles by Polish students and send them to the editorial offices of periodicals. Franciszek Wądołowski, a professor in the Polish language and literature, took special care of this³⁹.

What were the relations between Lithuanian and Polish students at the seminary? During two last decades of the nineteenth century, after the national awareness of the Lithuanian students began to actively express itself, the relations between Lithuanian and Polish students were not hostile, but “a perceptible difference between them was felt”⁴⁰. At that time, the principle prevailed among the students of the Seinai Theological Seminary that the common path to priesthood prevailed over national differences⁴¹.

Bishop Antanas Baranauskas made efforts to unite Lithuanian and Polish students into one community. Stakauskas remembers that through Priest Staniulis, the bishop inspired joint Lithuanian-Polish association “Uolių lyga” (The League of the Zealous)⁴², but this association lasted only for a year.

At the beginning of the twentieth century, tensions started building up between Lithuanian and Polish students and their relations deteriorated. The Polish students were rather indifferent even to the lifting of the ban on the Lithuanian press, an event of great significance to the Lithuanian students. Feliksas Bartkus, who had been a seminary student during the last five years of its existence, also mentions the palpable tension between Lithuanian and Polish students and their strained relations⁴³.

Secret Lithuanian activities at Seinai Theological Seminary yielded results. A new generation of priests concerned about social matters emerged in the late nineteenth-early twentieth century. This thesis is confirmed by the fact that priests were active in the work of the ‘Žiburys’ educational and cultural association established in the province of Suvalkai in 1906. This association opened 63 branches in various locations across the province. The board of each branch had a chairperson, a deputy chair, a treasurer, a librarian, and a secretary. According to the data collected by Kazys Šapalas, priests chaired 57 branches. There were no priests on the boards of three branches of ‘Žiburys’. Priests were

³⁸ Cf. [S. Czyżewski], *Ks. Dr. Romuald Jalbrzykowski arcybiskup metropolita wileński*, Archives of the Archdiocese of Białystok, I. 33.

³⁹ Cf. J. Stakauskas, *Naujieji nacionalizmai ir Katalikų Bažnyčia Lietuvoje*, p. 251.

⁴⁰ J. Staugaitis, *Mano atsiminimai*, p. 120.

⁴¹ Cf. A. Szot, *Abp Romuald Jalbrzykowski metropolita wileński*, Lublin 2002, p. 21.

⁴² Cf. J. Stakauskas, *Naujieji nacionalizmai ir Katalikų Bažnyčia Lietuvoje*, p. 202.

⁴³ Cf. F. Bartkus, *Mano kelias prie altoriaus*, p. 59, 61.

members of boards in the branches that they did not chair. In the parishes with several priests, two or three of them would be members of the board⁴⁴.

Conclusions

1. Learning the Lithuanian language at Seinai Theological Seminary was stimulated by the reforms of Bishop K. I. Łubieński and encouragement of Professor Stanisław Jamiołkowski. One of the forms of the use of Lithuanian was singing of folk songs. This was particularly important before the early twentieth century. Singing Lithuanian folk songs was one of the aspects of the ethnic identity. Officially, the Lithuanian language was not taught at the seminary until 1904. For this reason, Lithuanian students at the seminary started learning Lithuanian secretly as they realised they would need it in their pastoral work. Those who knew Lithuanian better taught it to those whose knowledge of the language was insufficient. Secret teaching of Lithuanian remained after official teaching of Lithuanian was introduced in the seminary. Lithuanian students spoke Lithuanian among themselves, but they learned Polish too, to be able to work in Polish-speaking parishes. Early in the twentieth century, the Lithuanian language was legitimised for the delivery of training sermons and in entrance examinations.

2. The Lithuanian activities of the students should be viewed in the context of Lithuanian nationalism. National revival was raising specific requirements to the Church and it was important that the seminary trained future clergymen to respond to the demands of the public. Late in the 1880s, a secret association of Lithuanian students was founded at Seinai Theological Seminary. Having changed its organisational structure three times, the association functioned until the First World War. The founding of the association was triggered by the setting up of the students' secret library. Lithuanian activities of the seminary students acquired different forms. One of them – and relevant to the whole national movement – was the distribution of banned Lithuanian literature. Seinai Theological Seminary was one of the centres of distribution of such literature. Not only did the students distribute banned literature, but they also contributed to its printing and prepared their own hand-written newspapers. One of the forms of the students' activity was writing essays that would be read at the meetings of the association. Some students wrote articles, first for the illegal Lithuanian press, and later, after the lift of the ban, to legally published papers. The students tried their hand at writing fiction and engaged in historical research.

Translated from Lithuanian by Diana Bartkutė Barnard

⁴⁴ Cf. K. Šapalas, *Žiburio' draugija ir jos mokyklos*, ed. T. Gustienė, V. Pukienė, A. Katilius, Marijampolė 2009, pp. 159-316.

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Lithuanian Activities of the Students of Seinai Theological Seminary

Summary

From 1826 to 1903, about 80% of the students of Seinai Theological Seminary were ethnic Lithuanians, and Lithuanian was their or their parents' native language. The question about Lithuanian activities of the Lithuanian students at the seminary is therefore well founded. During first decades of its existence, national consciousness of the Lithuanians was not relevant. For performing pastoral work in Lithuanian parishes, the Lithuanian brought from parental home was sufficient. Using the Lithuanian language at Seinai Theological Seminary was stimulated by the reforms of Bishop K. I. Łubieński and encouragement of Professor Stanisław Jamiołkowski. First of all, the use of Lithuanian manifested itself through the singing of Lithuanian folk songs. Singing Lithuanian songs stressed the ethnic difference between the Lithuanian and Polish students of the seminary. Officially, the Lithuanian language was not taught at the seminary until 1904. For this reason, Lithuanian students started learning Lithuanian secretly: they realised they would need it in their pastoral work. Seminary students spoke Lithuanian among themselves, thus demonstrating their national awareness, but they also learned Polish at the seminary. The students' Lithuanian activities should be viewed in the context of Lithuanian nationalism. National revival was raising specific requirements to the Church and it was important that the seminary trained future clergymen to meet the demands of the public. The students engaged in Lithuanian activities through participation in a secret association of future Lithuanian priests. One of the forms of its activities was distribution of the banned Lithuanian press. The students not only distributed banned literature but also contributed to its printing and publishing: they produced hand-written newspapers in the seminary and wrote articles, first for illegal publications and later, after the ban on the Lithuanian press was lifted, for legally published periodicals.

Keywords: Seinai Theological Seminary, seminary students, Lithuanian activities, Lithuanian language, folk songs.

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