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DANGIRAS MAČIULIS* – VILNIUS (LITHUANIA)

RIVALRY FOR INFLUENCE BETWEEN THE CATHOLIC CHURCH AND POLITICAL REGIMES IN THE LITHUANIAN EDUCATION SYSTEM IN 1918–1940

Abstract

In the interwar period of the 20th century, the formation of the national education system took place in Lithuania. The Catholic Church sought to actively participate in the creation of this system in order to consolidate the principles of the organization of its educational system. The political regimes in interwar Lithuania sought to create a unified national education system, and the Catholic Church sought to make the educational system in line with its principles in the field of education. The article reviews how the Catholic Church and political regimes competed for dominant influence in the field of education in Lithuania during the interwar period (1918–1940). It is said that the struggle for influence in youth education was most clearly manifested in the field of secondary education (higher than primary education), because the position of the Catholic Church in this field was the strongest: Catholic educational societies had created a network of private schools.

The Catholic Church and the Christian Democrats defending its position held the view that only a confessional school that nurtures the Christian spirit is suitable for Catholic children. Therefore, the state is required to finance private Catholic schools that meet the educational ideals of Catholic society. Catholic public figures and Christian Democrat politicians proposed to implement the principle of cultural autonomy in the country's education system, which would guarantee the financing of private Catholic schools.

During the period of Lithuanian parliamentarism (before the coup d'état of December 17, 1926), the position of the Catholic Church in the field of education clashed most strongly with the viewpoint of left-wing political forces. The leftist political forces sought to entrust the state with the right to determine educational ideals. The idea of a denominational school was alien to the left wing – they considered it an internal concern of the religious community itself,

* Dangiras Mačiulis – Ph.D. history, Lithuanian Institute of History
e-mail: dangirasmaciulis@yahoo.com
https://orcid.org/0000-0001-6496-1538

and the introduction of compulsory religious education in schools contradicted the fundamental values of the left-wing activists.

After December 17, 1926 the nationalist political regime, established during the coup d'état, was guided by the rule that the monopoly of education must be in the hands of the state – only it has the exclusive right to educate its citizens. These attitudes were reflected in the education reform carried out in the mid-forties, which not only unified the educational chain up to high school, but also demonstrated the government's unwavering political course towards the monopolization of the educational system. The monopolization of education by the state brought the nationalist government into conflict with the Catholic Church, which, defending its rights in the education system, demanded the implementation of the principle of cultural autonomy. The government sought to monopolize education and ended this process in 1938, the year the new Constitution of Lithuania was adopted.

Keywords: Catholic Church; Catholic schools; Republic of Lithuania (1918–1940); cultural autonomy; education policy

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Up until World War I, the Lithuanian national movement had only a generalised vision for a national education system, based on the goal of having schools teaching in Lithuanian rather than Russian, and making primary education compulsory. Lithuanian Catholic public figures wanted schools to be Lithuanian not only in the linguistic sense, but in the religious sense as well, i.e., to be Catholic in spirit. On the eve of the declaration of Lithuania's independence in 1918, the Catholic education societies Rytas and Žiburys had already managed to establish private Catholic schools.

The beginning of a symbolic, consistent creation of a national education system came in 1922 when the Constituent Seimas adopted the Lithuanian Constitution, which guaranteed its citizens compulsory primary education. However, the formation of a national education system in Lithuania continued throughout the whole interwar period of the 20th century. The Catholic Church sought to actively participate in the creation of this system, wanting to entrench its attitude toward the principles for the organisation of an education system in Lithuania. The interests of the Church in the educational sphere were defended by politicians belonging to the Christian Democrat party. Catholic intellectuals shaped the vision for a Catholic education system, while its practical implementation was left to schools established and maintained by Catholic societies. Political regimes in interwar Lithuania sought to create a united national education system, while the Catholic Church wanted the education system to meet its principles in the education sphere. The attitudes of politicians in government and the Church toward the organisation of an education system did not always correlate and even became a point of conflict over influence in the educational realm. The aim of this article is to review how the Catholic Church and political forces in government competed over influence in the Lithuanian education system in 1918–1940. In order to answer this question, this article will focus on the secondary level of education where Catholic edu-

cation societies held the strongest position and whose organisation provoked the most disagreements between the Church and the political authorities. There are no papers dedicated to the analysis of this question in Lithuania's historiography; however, certain aspects were touched on in the monograph by Saulius Kaubrys,[1] which contains a thorough discussion of the formation of the education system in Lithuania in the years 1918–1940 and in the monograph on the development of secondary level education in interwar Lithuania by Remigijus Motuzas.[2]

During the parliamentarism period

In 1917 the Catholic priest Pranciškus Būčys published a series of articles in the *Draugas* newspaper released in the United States, which came out as a separate book one year later in Chicago entitled *Apie apšvietą* (On Education). Būčys proposed his vision for handling the education system in Lithuania as soon as it would become an independent state.[3] Būčys' recommendations on how to manage the Lithuanian education system were infused with his experience ofhaving lived in a Russified environment, where Catholics were forced to constantly defend their right to religious practice and where the establishment of a Catholic education system (from the primary to the higher education level, all being Catholic) was like a faraway dream. The experience of daily life under tsarist Russian authorities in Lithuania only served to highlight the issue raised by the Catholic Church in many European countries of how to create an education system meeting Catholics' interests in a state that sought to unify its education system whilst ignoring the interests of different faiths. The growing aspirations of states to create unified, civil-orientated national education systems that aimed to erase various differences, including religious ones, appeared to Catholics as an encroachment on their right to have an education system based on religious principles. In practice, this raised the question of how the state and the Church should share influence in the educational sphere, where each side had different interests In addition, Catholics were concerned over the unstable and changing political circumstances created by parliamentary and monarchical republics, where a favourable state education policy could suddenly, within a day, switch against Catholics' interests if the balance of political power in a state changed. Būčys tried to recommend a future national education system model that would see it maximally protected from changing political circumstances or the objectives of a specific political force to use the education of the youth to pursue its own interests. He believed that this would only be possible when the state rejected any pretensions to holding the monopoly on education in its hands, and would only see to satisfying society's needs in the educational sphere, first of all, by creating the material conditions allowing groups representing various faiths or world views to establish their own schools. He suggested a proportional allocation of state funding for education to be shared among such groups depending on their size. The state would have to be obliged

[1] S. Kaubrys, *Lietuvos mokykla 1918–1939 m.: galios gimtis*, Vilnius 2000.

[2] R. Motuzas, *Lietuvos vidurinės mokyklos raidos 1918–1940 metais pedagoginės kryptys*, Vilnius 1995.

[3] P. Būčys, *Apie apšvietą*, Chicago 1918, p. 5.

to ensure the introduction of compulsory primary education and to have the right to set a minimum universal teaching curriculum, yet it could only interfere with the teaching content if it was found to threaten the constitutional foundations of the state, threatened social morality or fostered religious and national discord.[4]

Būčys did not intend to present a detailed outline of the future Lithuanian education system – he only proposed a generally characterised vision for an education system that would satisfy Catholics' interests. It should be noted that in 1917 he was not accentuating the idea of cultural autonomy as such (it was only outlined in terms of form), but rather the necessity of introducing universal compulsory primary education in Lithuania, presenting it as a necessary condition for the advancement of the civilisation of Lithuanian society. These ideas were not produced by Būčys himself. His reasoning reveals that he was drawn to the education system model () in Switzerland, where compulsory universal education was implemented via private schools and each national community had its own school, while the level of societal well-being appeared to be the obvious outcome of compulsory universal education. These ideas proposed by Būčys became a unique foundation for subsequent Lithuanian considerations about the type of cultural autonomy model to be adopted. It could be added that by this stage, Catholic society in Lithuania already had experience in the establishment of private schools – the Catholic Saulė and Žiburys educational societies had already been noted for such achievements in the educational sphere.[5]

Lithuania regained its independence in 1918 being barely literate – in the general context of European states, population literacy indicators were rather low. According to data from the first census of the Lithuanian population carried out on September 17, 1923, out of 1,645,183 inhabitants older than 10, those who were literate or half-literate numbered 1,108,147, which was 67.36 percent of the population. However, it is thought that in fact, only half of the Lithuanian community was literate, meaning they could both read and write. Thus, the state's main concern in the educational sphere became the creation of a national education system and the liquidation of analphabetism.

The Catholic Church fostered no hopes that schools under the state's jurisdiction would ensure an education nurturing the Catholic spirit. It maintained that only a confessional school, where the Church oversaw teaching conducted in the spirit of Christianity, was suitable for Catholic children. The best option seemed to be the establishment of Catholic schools in each parish. However, it soon became clear that the lack of funding meant it would be impossible to maintain private Catholic schools. Lacking the opportunity to create a network of confessional schools, the Church considered as its primary aim the creation of a control mechanism that would halt even the slightest expressions of secularisation or religious indifference

[4] Ibidem, pp. 39–50.

[5] V. Pukienė, *Lietuvių švietimo draugijos XX a. pradžioje (1906–1915 metais)*, Vilnius 1994; V. Pukienė, *„Žiburio" draugija – tautinio švietimo ir krikščioniškojo ugdymo puoselėtoja Užnemunėje*, „Soter", 24 (2007) pp. 47–56; K. Šapalas, *„Žiburio" draugija ir jos mokyklos*, Marijampolė 2009.

in the schools of Lithuania. It sought to entrench the domination of a confessional school in the national education system via respective laws.

The Constituent Seimas, which began its work in 1920, became the space where the state and Catholic Church strove to gain their influence in the educational sphere as soon as deliberations on laws regulating the education system commenced. For example, the deliberations on the draft law on primary schools by the Seimas in 1921–1922 were long and harsh. The fundamental question raised during these discussions concerned the role of the state in the education system and how the state and the Church should share their influence in the educational sphere. Most debates centred on whether the state should hold a monopoly on education in its hands alone, or the opposite – private initiative should see to educational matters. The deliberations on this draft law saw two opposing views regarding the state's role in the educational sphere clash: one asserted the state's monopolistic right to the education system, while the other demanded educational matters be entrusted to private initiative, obliging the state to ensure the funding needed to support private educational initiatives.

Two political parties came head to head at the Constituent Seimas over this question – the Social Democrats and the Christian Democrats. The leader of the Christian Democrats, Fr Mykolas Krupavičius, accurately named this clash between parties a fight over ownership of the child.[6] The Christian Democrats, who were the most influential political force in the Seimas, when seeking to implement their idea of a confessional school, defended the right of private initiative in the educational sphere and sought to reduce the state's role. They looked upon a school as a certain kind of continuation of the Catholic family, as far as education was concerned.[7] In their and the Catholic Church's view, the educational ideals of Catholic society could only be implemented by a confessional school, which in practice meant a private Catholic school, and recommendations were made to oblige the state to comprehensively support the initiative of establishing private schools and to demand the right for pupils to undertake the universal compulsory curriculum.[8]

Unlike the Christian Democrats, the Social Democrats sought to strengthen the state's role in the educational sphere. They looked upon the education system, above all, as the most significant institute of civil socialisation in the state and wanted no other body but the state to set educational ideals. The idea of a confessional school was a foreign concept to them – they considered it an internal concern of each religious community. It was the Social Democrats in particular who opposed demands to introduce a religion as a compulsory subject in schools.[9] However, at that time little depended on the Social Democrats as it was the Christian Democrats who were dominant in the parliament.

The authors of the Lithuanian Constitution passed by the Constituent Seimas in 1922 were the Christian Democrats, who were particularly concerned to educate young people in the Catholic spirit; this was a matter on which the Christian Dem-

[6] Constituent Seimas meeting on 1921 09 13, *Steigiamojo Seimo darbai*, Kaunas 1920–1922.

[7] Constituent Seimas meeting on 1921 11 18, *Steigiamojo Seimo darbai*.

[8] Constituent Seimas meeting on 1921 04 08, *Steigiamojo Seimo darbai*.

[9] Constituent Seimas meeting on 1921 11 18, *Steigiamojo Seimo darbai*.

ocrats would not back down. In order to create the conditions for the establishment of a confessional education, compulsory teaching of religion was entered into the Constitution, along with a provision that stated that "the education of children is the supreme right and natural duty of their parents." The accent on parents' "natural duty" underlined in the Constitution was meant to imply that the state could not direct parents on how to raise or educate their children.[10] In this way, they sought to educate children exclusively under the supervision of religious communities.[11]

The Lithuanian Constitution of 1922 legitimised the privileged status of confessional schools, compared to other schools. This was done by constitutionally entrenching the right of private confessional schools, which followed the legally set minimum curriculum, to receive funding from the state budget for educational purposes that was commensurate with the number of Lithuanian citizens who officially belonged to that particular religious organisation.[12] This may be considered a partial implementation of the principle of cultural autonomy or its very idea, yet it is obvious that this provision was brought forth by the Constitution's authors, the Christian Democrats, thinking first of all about Catholic schools and seeking ways of ensuring funding for their operation.

Discussions about the state's rights in the educational sphere resumed in the Lithuanian parliament in 1923 with the deliberations on the draft Law on Higher Schools (in this context, higher than primary schools), which Catholic society perceived as an attempt at bringing all secondary education under state control. The greatest evil of this draft law, according to Catholic society, was the potential given to the state to change the status of private schools to state schools.[13] The Catholic press ran articles arguing that even though the draft law's authors did not publicly voice their opinions against private Catholic schools, they planned the regulations on private schools, which would result in them being de facto nationalised.[14] Būčys' idea of cultural autonomy was recalled as being able to defend the right of private Catholic schools to exist. The sensitivity of Catholic society regarding the higher schools issue was particularly strengthened by the fact that in this case, unlike when primary schools were being established, the initiative of Catholic society had already played a major role – the domination of private Catholic schools in Lithuania at this time was obvious.

Independent Lithuania inherited a sparse network of higher education schools. At the beginning of independence, Catholic education organisations displayed a great deal of initiative. In 1918–1919, it was the Catholic Saulė and Žiburys education societies that established the most gymnasiums and pre-gymnasiums (secondary schools) – in this way, public initiative compensated for the state's

[10] M. Rėmeris, *Lietuvos konstitucinės teisės paskaitos*, Vilnius 1990, pp. 421–422.

[11] M. Römeris, *Lietuvos konstitucinės teisės paskaitos*, d. 1, Kaunas 1937, pp. 442–444.

[12] Ibidem, pp. 444–448.

[13] A critic of this law, the Catholic Teachers' Union of Lithuania dedicated the entire November 1923 issue of the *Lietuvos mokykla* periodical to this matter, publishing the draft Law on Higher Schools and articles criticising it by S. Šalkauskis, A. Maliauskis and P. Būčys.

[14] J. Grinius, *Kun. prof. Pr. Būčio pažiūros į privatinių mokyklų sistemą*, „Lietuvos mokykla", (1923) no. 11, p. 464.

lack of opportunities.[15] However, it soon became clear that public initiative alone would not suffice to maintain these schools, and that the state would have to take over their funding. Even when the schools' nationalisation process soon got underway, a large number of private gymnasiums remained open. In 1925 there were 13 state and 28 private gymnasiums in Lithuania. A large portion of the budget of 19 of these private gymnasiums came from grants received from the state, while the proportion of funds collected by the actual gymnasiums' founders made up on average less than 10 percent of the gymnasium budgets.[16]

In 1925, after two years of debates in the Seimas, the Law on Secondary and Higher Schools was finally passed. It legalised the existence of private schools and their right to receive the state's financial support, which in effect ensured the operation of such schools. The law only legalised the practices already in place and the extensive rights of private schools. Understandably, the law was still a long way off from the ideal education system envisioned by the Catholic Church, yet at that time it was difficult to expect more as economic reasons were not favourable for the implementation of an all-encompassing confessional education system. The Catholic Church and Christian Democrats who defended its interests had to be satisfied that they had dominant influence in the secondary education sphere. Despite the campaign to nationalise secondary and higher education schools, the proportion of private education remained large. In 1926 in Lithuania around two-thirds of students learning at a higher level attended private schools,[17] including private Catholic schools, which dominated Lithuanian secondary education.

It may be said that by this time, the rudiments of the principle of cultural autonomy in education had in a sense been realised – a student who graduated from a Catholic gymnasium could go on to study in the Faculty of Theology and Philosophy at the University of Lithuania, which was under the jurisdiction of the Catholic Church. Of course, actual cultural autonomy was still a way off. On the other hand, the urgency of this idea receded somewhat, as Catholic society believed in the strong positions held by the Christian Democrats in political life, and there was a widespread belief that they would continue to form education policy. However, the situation soon changed.

The Third Seimas that convened in June 1926 saw the Christian Democrats lose their positions as political leaders, despite having been the most influential political party in earlier parliaments. The Lithuanian Popular Peasants Union, which had won the greatest number of seats, formed a coalition with the Social Democrats under Mykolas Sleževičius. The portfolio of the minister of education went to Social Democrat Vincas Čepinskis. He was in favour of increasing the state's role in the educational sphere, claiming that the state had to hold the monopoly on education and take responsibility for the education of all children, yet at the same time, pedagogues were regarded as trustworthy and educational institutions were to be given greater autonomy. Čepinskis was firm in voicing that the Church

[15] Motuzas, *Lietuvos vidurinės mokyklos raidos 1918–1940 metais pedagoginės kryptys*, pp. 65–66.

[16] *Švietimo Ministerijos įstaigų 1925 m. apyskaita*, „Švietimo darbas", (1926) no. 12, p. 1576.

[17] *Lietuvos statistikos metraštis 1924–1926 m.*, Kaunas 1927, pp. 62–68.

had to be separated from schools, while the teaching of religion was to be shifted from schools and over to the Church and the family. The minister acknowledged the right of private and confessional schools to exist; however, in his view, the state should not be obliged to provide them with funding.[18] Leftists consistently sought to distance the Church from the educational sphere.

The Christian Democrats met the government's plans for the educational sphere with disdain, fearing that these plans would soon have a negative impact on the schools run by Catholic organisations. In trying to get ahead of the Ministry of Education's unfavourable decisions, the Christian Democrats rushed to pass constitutional rights that would guarantee parents the right to establish private schools and to be able to teach their children in the spirit of their faith, and finally, would ensure funding allowances for those private schools that met with the set requirements. The majority-holders in parliament were reminded that it would be anti-constitutional if the government cut off support for confessional schools.[19]

The leftist government announced that the elimination of illiteracy would be its most critical objective in the educational sphere. They wanted to introduce compulsory primary education immediately; however, when they began to calculate the expenses needed to do this it became evident that significantly larger budget assignations than usually applied to education would be required. While doing these monetary calculations, "internal reserves" were also reviewed more closely, meaning – regular budgetary allocations for education. More attention was given to the funding of higher education as well – a recommendation was made to reject allocating support for private schools. The decision to reduce financial support for private higher education schools was to have the greatest negative impact on those private schools run by Catholic education societies. The Catholic daily *Rytas* admitted that if support for private schools would be cut, many would be forced to close.[20] The Christian Democrats viewed the severance of support for private schools as a conscious attack on the Catholic Church by leftist political forces.[21]

In 1926, when the existence of private Catholic schools was called into question, Catholic activists resurrected the idea of cultural autonomy. This time Catholic activist Kazys Pakštas spoke out about the enormous threat society faced "harsh infighting and the break-up into small, fanatical groups," noting that the greatest points of contention in public life in Lithuania arose not when different political interests clashed, but when different attitudes towards matters of education emerged. Pakštas proposed his "pacification" plan aimed at the arguing sides – implementation of the principle of cultural autonomy, which would guarantee each group holding a particular world view its own space.[22] The keystone of the embodiment of his cultural autonomy project was meant to be the school. He suggested that the state should guarantee its citizens the freedom to hold a particular worldview – cultural autonomy ("the right to free cultural self-determination") via schools fostering

[18] Z. Mačionis, J. Čepinskis, *Profesorius Vincas Čepinskis*, Vilnius 1992, pp. 93–103.

[19] Seimas meeting on 1926 06 22, *Seimo stenogramos*, Kaunas 1926–1927.

[20] K. Jokantas, *Lietuvos švietimo programos reikalu*, „Rytas", (1926) no. 229, p. 2.

[21] Seimas meeting on 01 12 1926, *Seimo stenogramos*.

[22] K. Pakštas, *Kultūrinės autonomijos problema*, „Židinys", (1926) no. 6–7, pp. 451–452.

various world views. He urged that Catholics, freethinkers, Jews, Protestants and Orthodox believers should be given the right to have their own schools in Lithuania, adding that this list was not exhaustive.[23]

These recommendations, which emerged when the Christian Democrats lost their influence in the formation of education policy, were accompanied by apprehensions that the leftist politicians who had taken over the Ministry of Education would try to reduce the Catholic Church's influence in education as much as possible. In this way, the idea proposed to the leftists about the urgent implementation of the principle of cultural autonomy was marked by the desire to shift all the leftists' initiatives away from maximal secularisation of the educational sphere towards the construction of separate education spaces – suggesting that the leftists should also be concerned with the appearance of schools that complied with their own world view. Once the cultural autonomy project had succeededin Lithuania, where the absolute majority of the population were Catholics, the Church's position in the educational sphere would strengthen, while the leftist plans for a reform of the education system would be doomed to fail. However, soon enough the political circumstances shifted again, in favour of the Catholic Church.

The period of authoritarianism

After the state coup of December 17, 1926, government authority ended up in the hands of the Nationalists and the Christian Democrats. Nationalist Antanas Smetona stood at the forefront of the authoritarian regime, while the Christian Democrats won back the Ministry of Education – L. Bistras was reinstated as its minister. The Nationalists hardly interfered in educational matters at this point, leaving all decisions to the Christian Democrats. The latter, first of all, revised the education ministry's budget and in the next state budget of 1927, they increased support for private schools by two and a half times.[24] Hoping to be in new government's graces, coupled with generous funding, the Lithuanian Episcopate soon urged the Catholic educational societies Žiburys and Saulė to establish new Catholic schools, while priests were to open parish primary schools.[25]

In its declaration, the government of Augustinas Voldemaras announced it would seek for schools to be Lithuanian and Catholic. The government declared its approval of confessional schools and promised to fund private schools on par with state schools. Funding for private schools would increase in accordance with the principle of proportionality, as outlined in Article 74 of the Lithuanian Constitution.[26] In practice, this financial support for private schools would meant their complete funding from the state budget, in line with state school norms. This echoed the Christian Democrats' political programme in the educational sphere. On the eve of the Christian Democrats' withdrawal from Voldemaras' government, in the spring of 1927, education minister Bistras was asked by a journalist to comment

[23] Ibidem, pp. 454–455.

[24] *Valstybės išlaidų sąmata 1927 metams*, „Vyriausybės žinios", (1927) no. 257, pp. 25–26.

[25] Lithuanian State Historical Archives (LVIA) col. 1671, inv. 5, file 18, p. 8. Protocol from the Lithuanian Bishops' Conference, 1927 01 15–16.

[26] Seimas meeting on 1927 02 25, *Seimo stenogramos*.

on the rumours that a cultural autonomy project was being devised; the minister responded that adhering to the principle of cultural autonomy would put an end to arguments about the treatment of different world views in education; however, before this matter could be completely solved, the ministry was obliged to draft a law that would equalise funding for private and state schools.[27] Yet, only a couple of weeks after this interview, the Christian Democrats withdrew from the government and went over to the opposition. Bistras' undertaking to equalise the rights of private and state schools was left unrealised. Nationalist Konstantinas Šakenis, who became the next education minister, took to implementing the Nationalists' education policy programme, which was based on the goal of concentrating the education monopoly in the hands of the state.

Catholic public figures and intellectuals understood that by monopolising education in the hand of the state the Nationalist, above all, aimed at reducing the Catholic Church's influence in the education of the younger generation. By opposing these government objectives, the Catholic intellectuals highlighted the relevance of the cultural autonomy idea. One of the most consistent supporters of the cultural autonomy idea was Professor Stasys Šalkauskis, whose academic interests and public activities were directly related to the Catholic education of the younger generation. In 1927, in their suggestion to embody the idea of cultural autonomy, Šalkauskis and Pakštas prepared a project for how to amend the Lithuanian Constitution where they recommended changing the existing Chapter VII of the Constitution "The Rights of National Minorities" to "Cultural Autonomy," and to accordingly rewrite Chapter IX of the Constitution as "Education Affairs." Guided by the principles of cultural autonomy, the recommended amendments were meant to remove the political regime's influence in the fields of education and culture, and each cultural (religious) community would be granted the right to freely establish and administrate their own schools and receive a proportionate part of state budget funds for educational needs.[28]

The authors of this project noticed that certain rudimentary forms of the principle of proportional funding for educational institutions already existed in the current Constitution – they recalled the existing provisions: the right of national minorities to "use a proper part of the sums that are allocated by the Government and municipalities for educational and charity affairs," and the provision announcing that private confessional schools implementing the minimum curriculum as outlined in laws may receive financial support from the state. Such projects were, of course, unnecessary for the Nationalists, whose goal was to monopolise the educational system by the state and thus these amendments went against their plans.

In the new Lithuanian Constitution announced on May 25, 1928, whose authors were now the Nationalists, the state was guaranteed the monopolistic right to decide what type of education was deemed necessary for the young citizens of Lithuania.[29] Incidentally, as if to appease Catholic society, this Constitution still had

[27] Ze., *Pasikalbėjimas su p. Šv. Ministeriu Dr. L. Bistru apie jo žinioje esančios ministerijos darbus*, „Rytas", (1927) no. 85, p. 3.

[28] Ibidem.

[29] Rėmeris, *Lietuvos konstitucinės teisės paskaitos*, pp. 421–422.

the provision confirming the right of private confessional schools implementing the minimum curriculum as outlined in laws to receive a sum of support from the state treasury for educational expenses that would "match the number of Lithuanian citizens and pupils officially belonging to the particular religious organisations running those schools."[30]

However, this declarative provision differed from the government's actual attitude towards private confessional schools. On April 2, 1927, soon after the political friendship between the Nationalists and Christian Democrats had broken down, publications appeared in the Nationalist press revealing the bad situation that had developed in private Catholic higher education schools, where the political influence of Christian Democrats was alleged to have taken hold.[31] The Nationalist press launched a campaign against schools administrated by Catholic societies – efforts were made to push the view on society that Catholic higher education schools were actually in a state of disorder. In this way, the government began to purposefully ready public opinion for upcoming higher education reforms.

In September 1927, Lithuania and the Vatican entered into a concordat that regulated the rights and freedoms of the Catholic Church in the country. Lithuania's bishops and Christian Democrat activists hoped that the concordat would not only serve as a reliable guarantee for the creation of an autonomous Catholic teaching space, but also as a barrier against the state's monopolistic ambitions to educate the younger generation. However, it was not long before these hopes collapsed – gymnasiums belonging to Catholic societies soon began to feel the state's monopolistic ambitions in the educational sphere.

The articles that appeared in the official government press argued that state gymnasiums were undoubtedly better than private ones, both in terms of teaching quality, pedagogical cadres and the freedom of possessing one worldview or another. They also highlighted the civically socialising role of state gymnasiums.[32] The political regime claimed that a private school could not guarantee that it would educate "more loyal, better citizens than a state school" – private schools were reproached for showing insufficient concern that their students would truly be taught to be loyal to Lithuanian nationalistic ideals and the political regime.[33]

Lithuania's bishops, who stood in defence of private Catholic schools, asserted in 1928 that the ideal of a Catholic school is a confessional school where all "teaching, training and upbringing is based on the teachings of the Catholic Church," and private schools funded by the Catholic Saulė and Žiburys societies were, in fact, the closest to the Catholic school ideal. Appealing to the concordat, they defended the right of these societies to receive budget allowances for these schools.[34] The Vatican joined in too – its representative in Lithuania Luigi Faidutti urged the government to abandon its plans to nationalise schools belonging to

[30] *Lietuvos valstybės teisės aktai (1918. II. 16–1940. VI. 15)*, Vilnius 1996, p. 19.

[31] *Mokyklos negalavimai*, „Lietuvis", (1927) no. 121, p. 1.

[32] *Valstybinės ar privatinės?*, „Lietuvos aidas", (1928) no. 47, p. 1.

[33] S. Povilaičius, *Privatinės ar valstybinės mokyklos krizė?*, „Lietuvos aidas", (1928) no. 48, p. 4.

[34] LVIA, col. 1671, inv. 5, file 22, p. 56. Protocol from the meeting of bishops of the Lithuanian Province of the Catholic Church, held on 1928 03 27–29.

Catholic societies. The government's response was that the idea of reducing support for such schools was not grounded in opposition to Catholic schools per say, but was purely out of the need to save on expenses.[35] The political regime sought to smooth over the conflict with the Church regarding education as much as possible, yet it was not prepared to abandon its plans to gain a monopoly on education.

What was the Ministry of Education's position regarding Catholic private higher education schools? It should be noted that the ministry did indeed seek to create a rational (in effect this meant a geographically equal) network of educational institutions, that is why it looked upon Catholic private schools (which in principle did not differ at all from state schools) as a constituent part of the national education system, and the prospects for their existence were assessed above all on how they (primarily in terms of their geographic location in relation to other schools) contributed to the formation of a network of educational institutions meeting the needs of society in Lithuania. Guided by this provision and trying to rationalise the network of secondary and higher education schools, it was found that the state could definitely get along without certain schools. The Ministry of Education was ready to support only those schools that were deemed necessary for the optimal educational institutions network. A majority of the private Catholic schools, in the view of the Ministry of Education, simply rationally supplemented the network of state schools, thus no plans were made to abandon supporting them as yet. However, the government did not leave behind one strategic goal – to implement a state monopoly in the educational sphere. Incidentally, it did not force this goal but it did seek to have a state gymnasium in each regional centre, as at the time, some regional centres had only private gymnasiums.

Through its nationalisation of schools, the Ministry of Education was exploiting the fact that the actual financial contribution made to societies and organisations running schools was actually very small. In 1930, a state allowance was granted to all Lithuanian private gymnasiums and they were all (except for the Kaunas Adults Gymnasium belonging to the Teachers' Union of Lithuania) in the hands of Catholic organisations. The founders of these gymnasiums collected only around a quarter of all the funds needed to maintain their schools themselves.[36] In theory, the Ministry of Education allowance should have only had to cover the financial gaps in a private school's budget, and was allocated exclusively for teachers' wages, whereas the society or organisation running the school was meant to cover the school's other expenses; however, aside from actual school fees, the schools did not collect any other form of funds and would thus try to fill in their financial holes by simply raising school fees. In this way, the parents of students attending private gymnasiums had to pay double of the previous cost to send a child to a state gymnasium. What is more,students' parents were sometimes left without any other options as their town had only a private gymnasium.[37] Understandably,

[35] *Lietuva ir Šventasis Sostas (1922–1938): slaptojo Vatikano archyvo dokumentai*, Vilnius 2010, pp. 218–221.

[36] Data from: *Švietimo ministerijos 1930 V. D. metų veikimo apyskaita*, Kaunas 1931–1932.

[37] Lithuanian Central State Archives (LCVA), col. 383, inv. 7, file 1475, p. 86. Ministry of Education pro memoria dated 1930 01 07 on the question of private school fees.

this kind of situation raised dissatisfaction among students' parents and led them to demand that the government should nationalise one or another private school. The government seeking to nationalise schools could be assured of this "voice of the people" to support its objectives, who hoped that education would cost less at state schools.

By late 1929, activists from Catholic organisations who looked after education and the proper nurturing of young people seemed to think that Catholic schools had already entered the "period of forced liquidation." At the end of 1929 Lithuania's bishops appealed to Lithuanian government and issued an ultimatum to satisfy the Catholic Church's demands in the educational sphere "in the immediate future," adding that otherwise the bishops "would not be able to remain silent" and would appeal to the faithful by means of a pastoral letter where they would explain that the "situation between the Church and the State in Lithuania is not of the Bishops' doing."[38] This letter, which was perceived as a threat, annoyed the government but did not really frighten it. In response, prepared by education minister Šakenis, the government rejected all accusations ofrestricting the operation of private Catholic schools – this was how the reduction in the funding of schools was interpreted.[39]

The Christian Democrats in the opposition did not remain on the sidelines either – at the beginning of 1930 they, defending the interests of the Catholic Church, sent the following message to the political regime: if the ruling authorities wanted good relations with the Catholic Church, the state had to allow the Church to not only freely educate society, but it should also support Catholic schools. The political regime was warned: the Church would not enter into any compromises over a Catholic education, thus, if the government wanted to avoid a direct conflict with the Church, it had to meet its demands.[40] These warnings had no effect on the political regime – in the autumn of 1930, the Ministry of Education banned the most influential Catholic students' organisation – the Ateitininkai – from operating in schools.

At the congress of the pro-government Jonas Basanavičius Lithuanian Teachers'-Nationalists' Union held on May 25, 1933, the political regime's leader Antanas Smetona outlined his education policy principles and vision for a national school. He stressed that schools had to not only teach but also meaningfully foster the young generation – to educate a citizen who would become the creator of a state grounded in nationalist principles. Secondly, he accentuated that the educational monopoly had to be in the hands of the state – it ought to have the exclusive right to educate its citizens (at least in the sense of determining the teaching content). Smetona noted that it was "not just the state but also the Church that wishes to educate the nation's young population," and this gives rise, allegedly, to the "debatable question, who should educate the youth: the Church or the State?" Smetona

[38] LVIA, col. 1671, inv. 5, file 28, pp. 23–25. Letter from the bishops of the Lithuanian Province of the Catholic Church dated 1929 12 14 to the President of the Republic of Lithuania.

[39] LVIA, col. 1671, inv. 5, file 28, pp. 30–31. Letter from the Minister of Education of the Republic of Lithuania K. Šakenis dated 1930 01 08 to the Kaunas Metropolitan Archbishop J. Skvireckis.

[40] *Bažnyčia ir Valstybė*, „Rytas", (1930) no. 7, p. 1.

named Italy as a good example to follow as far as handling the educational sphere is concerned, as "the national education of young people had been acknowledged there, yet without pushing away the Church's influence"; however, the Church was to be entrusted only with the ethical side of learning. Having underlined the state's right to monopolise the education of young people, the president categorically rejected the Catholic Church's claims upon the educational sphere, asserting that: "It is the State and municipalities that establish schools, not the presbytery."[41] The government press published reminders of Smetona's ideas on several occasions, highlighting that the political regime's goal was to create loyalty towards Lithuanian nationalist ideals along with an education system grounded in loyalty to the political regime.[42]

In June 1934, Šakenis, having spent seven years in the education minister's chair, stood down along with other members of the Government. The resignation of the Cabinet of Ministers following the failed putsch turned out to be an opportune time to change the education minister. The former rector of the Academy of Agriculture Juozas Tonkūnas became the new education minister and decided to implement a reform of the education system. Or more precisely, the reform his predecessor had already begun and which had become hopelessly stuck.

As soon as the Ministry of Education spoke publicly about the necessity of an overall school reform in 1934, Lithuania's bishops decided to remind the faithful of the Church's provisions regarding matters of education and upbringing. It was not the planned structural reforms of the education system that provoked concern, but the declarations coming from the government that the actual teaching content had to be reviewed, along with its reproaches that schools lacked proper fostering of the "national spirit." The Episcopate was worried that if the political regime tried to "inspire national spirit" in schools, Catholic private schools would end up being completely eliminated, which is why in the spring of 1934 they hurried to remind their flock that teaching Catholic religion alone does not make a school a Catholic one, but rather all aspects of education had to be undertaken in the Catholic spirit.[43]

The Vatican's representatives in Lithuania would resort to diplomatic démarches over the nationalisation of private Catholic society schools and the other lesser restrictions placed on their operation; however, these attempts did not produce results. In 1934 the Vatican diplomat Antonino Arata, when informing the Vatican state secretary Cardinal Eugenio Pacelli about the situation of Catholic higher education institutions in Lithuania, stressed that so long as Catholic society in Lithuania was unable to maintain schools from its own funds (at least, for the most part) and was unable to organise teaching in accordance with the Church's

[41] *Valstybės Prezidento A. Smetonos kalba, pasakyta š. m. gegužės mėn. 25 d. mok. Tautininkų dr. J. Basanavičiaus s-gos visuotiniam skyrių atstovų suvažiavime*, „Tautos mokykla", (1933) nr 11, s. 194; *Respublikos Prezidento kalba, pasakyta (25-V) Basanavičiaus mokytojų sąjungos susirinkime, atpasakota jo pagrindinėmis mintimis*, „Lietuvos aidas", (1933) no. 119, p. 1.

[42] *Visiems viena vaga!*, „Lietuvos aidas", (1934) no. 50, p. 4; *Mokykla ir tautos saviaukla*, „Lietuvos aidas", (1934) no. 53, p. 4.

[43] LVIA, col. 1671, inv. 5, file 41, pp. 15–16. Protocol of the meeting of bishops from the Lithuanian Province of the Catholic Church, held on 1934 04 17–18 in Kaunas.

legal requirements, and at the same time keeping them at "the same cultural and didactic level as state schools," they [private Catholic schools] would remain at risk of being nationalised by the government for one reason or another, and the Vatican's representative would only be able to voice protests, which would have absolutely no impact on the government.[44]

The Ministry of Education's school reform aimed to not only unify the secondary education system, but to also embody the idea that the school brings up a citizen in the spirit of loyalty to Lithuanian nationalist ideals and the political regime. The indiscriminate implementation of this principle in practice would mean that Catholic society would have to simply forget about the idea of a confessional school. This led to the revival of the idea of cultural autonomy within Catholic intellectual circles. In the 1930s, the idea of cultural autonomy gained popularity among young Catholic intellectuals. The first actual Lithuanian dissertation in the field of sociology just so happened to be dedicated to this topic – in 1933 Pranas Dielininkaitis defended his doctoral dissertation on "The State and Education" at the Sorbonne University.[45] In this dissertation, Dielininkaitis provided evidence for the necessity of organising a so-called "synthesised education system" in Lithuania (to be based on the principle of cultural autonomy).

A "synthesised education system" is one where the goal is to combine on the one hand the educational interests of the state, which seeks to create a united national education system, with those of different social groups within the state, grounded in religious, ethnic or other differences. The state is given the right to create a united national education system and to set minimum compulsory curriculum requirements for all education institutions, giving it the right to control all such institutions. However, at the same time, the state is not only obliged to respect the right of separate ethnic or religious groups to establish their own private schools, but it also must facilitate the material circumstances for the functioning of these schools – primarily, by equally allocating funds from the state budget for education among state and private schools.[46] Dielininkaitis began writing his dissertation back when Catholic intellectuals still fostered the hope of convincing the Nationalists of the idea of cultural autonomy; however, by the time his dissertation was completed and published, the opportunities of the Catholic Church to be operant in the educational sphere had already been significantly reduced. The regime's efforts to control the education sphere revived the relevance of the idea of cultural autonomy.

In early 1936, the Catholic periodical *Naujoji Romuvoja*, which was a central voice for the most influential Catholic intellectuals of the day, published a declaration prepared by the group of intellectuals entitled "Towards the creation of an organic state." It recommended a vision for the reform of state life in Lithuania. The authors did not hide their leanings towards the ideas of corporatisation, while in the cultural sphere, they proposed the application of the cultural autonomy principle. In an institutional sense, they suggested this principle be implemented

[44] Ibidem, p. 488.

[45] P. Dielininkaitis, *Mokyklos laisvė ir valstybė*, Šiauliai 2000, p. 53.

[46] Ibidem, pp. 222–228.

by establishing a Supreme Council of Culture.[47] Incidentally, the actual concept of cultural autonomy and the principles for its implementation were not detailed – this was left for some time in the future.

The political regime did not meet this declaration with great enthusiasm. The regime viewed demands for cultural autonomy as the Christian Democrats' will to recover their lost influence with the assistance of cultural and educational institutions.[48] The regime feared that left uncontrolled, educational and cultural life in the state would become a fertile hotbed for bringing up cadres for the opposition. The idea of cultural autonomy reminded the political regime of Catholic society's efforts to open its own university, which ended up being blocked.

The political regime's response to the idea of cultural autonomy was that new laws regulating primary and secondary schools in Lithuania were introduced at the beginning of the 1936 academic year. In fact, there was no real response from the government as these laws had been in the drafting stage for several years. The new laws, which in effect constituted the reform of the education system, unified the educational chain leading up to higher education. The secondary education reform largely had the effect of centralising the management of educational institutions and blocked private school founders from exerting their influence on the internal life of the school. The law allowed municipalities, social organisations and individual Lithuanian citizens to establish private schools as before; however, their activities were to be under the close watch of Ministry of Education officials, who were given the right to decide on the size of fees at private schools.[49] The government declared that its secondary school reform sought to unify secondary education, increase its level of teaching and better prepare pupils for studies in higher education institutions.[50] In fact, it was so important for the political regime that the new laws legitimised the state's domination in education and highlighted the fostering function of schools – they meant to foster young citizens in the spirit of loyalty to Lithuanian nationalist ideals.[51]

The new laws did not stop the establishment or existence of private confessional schools, but they did restrict their operation and itbecame more difficult to open new private schools. The state clearly demonstrated its will to stop their emergence and to hasten their closure. In March 1936, upon submitting the draft Law on Secondary Schools to the Cabinet of Ministers for deliberation, education minister Tonkūnas openly stated that it was inappropriate to encourage the establishment of private schools or to financially support the ones already operating. Headded that private school teachers could not be given the same rights as state school teachers as the state's policy was geared towards the nationalisation of schools.[52]

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[47] *Į organiškosios valstybės kūrybą*, „Naujoji Romuva", (1936) no. 8, pp. 173–174.

[48] V. Rastenis, *Pastabos apie valstybių santvarkas*, „Mūsų kraštas", (1936) no. 9, p. 8.

[49] *Lietuvos valstybės teisės aktai (1918. II. 16–1940. VI. 15)*, pp. 365–369.

[50] Motuzas, *Lietuvos vidurinės mokyklos raidos 1918–1940 metais pedagoginės kryptys*, pp. 176–178.

[51] *Naujieji pradžios ir vidurinio mokslo įstatymai*, „Tautos mokykla", (1936) no. 18, p. 405.

[52] LCVA, col. 391, inv. 2, file 2226, p. 30. Notice from the Minister of Education dated 1936 03 06 to the Prime Minister, 1934.

The Nationalist government asserted that the new laws "laid down the guidelines for a better, improved Lithuanian school"[53] – this was indeed their objective, yet at the same time they also sought to establish laws that gave greater powers to the government in the educational sphere, thus the new laws paved the way towards a state monopoly on education. In short, the Ministry of Education programmed the death of private schools. Antonio Arata, the Vatican representative in Lithuania, when evaluating the above laws on primary and secondary schools in October 1936, agreed with the Lithuanian Catholics' opinion that this was the government's way of eliminating any chance of survival for private Catholic schools.[54] This reflected the already quite evident changes in the educational sphere: in 1926 two thirds of students learning at a higher than primary school level attended private schools, whereas by 1937 the same proportion were now attending state schools.[55] We can notice that if we dismiss those private schools that belonged to national minority communities, the percentage of Lithuanians attending state schools would be even greater. By 1937, Catholic schools had already lost their monopoly on education.

The state's monopoly on education was finally completed in 1938 with the adoption of the new Lithuanian Constitution, which, in the words of government representatives, legitimised the fact that the state "was not just an observer, overseer and judge" but that "the state itself is in command of upbringing and education."[56] During the deliberation on this Constitution, the Episcopate still tried to prove to the government that its draft law ignored and narrowed the Catholic Church's rights in education and even submitted its own recommendations that meant to preserve its position in the educational sphere – for example, recommendations were made to include the provision that "the fundamental bases for upbringing and education are the family, school and the Church."[57] However, the authors of the Constitution ignored these recommendations and as a response to suggestions to create the conditions for the implementation of cultural autonomy, they replied that this kind of course of action for educating its citizens would not be suitable for Lithuania.[58] The 1938 Constitution acknowledged the significance of faiths in terms of education as well as the right of private individuals, faiths and social organisations to establish educational institutions, but, only the state was given the exclusive right to have command over education: "The State is the leader of education-related tasks and oversees educational institutions and schools." The family and school were named as the "fundamental bases" of upbringing and education (this changed the provision found in the 1922 Constitution, which declared that "all schools are under the State's supervision within the boundaries outlined in laws"). The Lithuanian Constitution of 1938 no longer had the provisions that were initially outlined in the 1922 Constitution and remained in the 1928 edition

[53] *Nauji švietimo įstatymai*, „Lietuvos aidas", (1936) no. 350, p. 4.

[54] *Lietuva ir Šventasis Sostas (1922–1938): slaptojo Vatikano archyvo dokumentai*, pp. 548–550.

[55] *Lietuvos statistikos metraštis 1937 m.*, Kaunas 1938, pp. 71–77.

[56] L. Vaitiekūnas, *Auklėjimas ir švietimas 1938 m. konstitucijoje*, „Vairas", (1939) no. 22, p. 385.

[57] LVIA, col. 1671, inv. 5, file 50, pp. 20–21. Letter from the bishops of Lithuania dated 1938 02 02 to the President of Lithuania, Prime Minister and Speaker of the Seimas.

[58] M.K., *Mokykla Naujosios Konstitucijos projekte*, „Lietuvos aidas", (1938) no. 63, p. 3.

that entrenched the right of private confessional schools with the minimum school curriculum outlined in laws to receive a proportion of the state budget from the treasury for educational purposes which "matched the number of Lithuanian citizens and pupils officially belonging to the particular religious organisation running that school."[59] The Episcopate identified the omission of this constitutional provision as "very unfortunate" and did not refrain from criticising the new Constitution, in which the rights of the Catholic Church were narrowed in the state.[60]

In their explanations of the new Constitution's provisions regarding education, the Nationalists claimed that the spirit of the Constitution declared that "the standard is a state school, while a private [school] is an exception or an appendage to the standard," arguing that the state school had already become "synonymous with a normal school" in Lithuania. The right for private schools to exist was not denied; however, they were considered only as a sporadic exception, adding that the state was prepared to tolerate these schools only so far as they did not challenge the state's monopoly in the educational sphere. It was noted that the Church, "as an organisation for fostering virtues and providing religious education," was given the freedom to spread its teachings, yet it was added that the Church should never forget that according to the Constitution, only "the State is the leader of education-related tasks."[61]

The provisions in the new Constitution relating to the educational sphere significantly dampened even the most ardent proponents of the idea of cultural autonomy – there were no further strong attempts to bring it to relevance. However, attempts were made to save the situation of private schools, namely, by Christian Democrat politicians. The so-called "united front" Cabinet of Ministers formed by Jonas Černius in March 1939 included members of the opposition. The Christian Democrat Leonas Bistras was again appointed education minister. He hoped to revise the Nationalists' education policy. In a press conference held after three weeks of heading the ministry, Bistras criticised the goal of monopolising the education of the youth in the hands of the state and spoke enthusiastically in favour of private schools, which, in his words, were "the true bases of the Lithuanian spirit and nationalism," asserting that in terms of their pedagogical achievements, the majority of private schools had surpassed state schools, and promised to increase financial support for private schools, as far as the state treasury would allow this.[62] However, his initiatives – for example, a project to amend the Law on Secondary Schools presented to the Seimas on June 13, 1939 – were rejected by the Nationalists who dominated the parliament. The discussion that arose on this occasion in the Seimas again highlighted the divide between the Nationalists and the Christian Democrats (and the Church which they represented) regarding their attitudes to the position of private schools in the state: the Nationalists stood firmly against the very existence of private schools and supported the state monopoly on education, whereas

[59] *Lietuvos valstybės teisės aktai (1918. II. 16–1940. VI. 15)*, pp. 7–32.

[60] LVIA, col. 1671, inv. 5, file 55, p. 14–23. Lithuanian bishops' memorandum dated 1939 05 01 to the Government of Lithuania.

[61] Vaitiekūnas, *Auklėjimas ir švietimas 1938 m. konstitucijoje*, pp. 386–387.

[62] Pr., *Kaip vykdys tarp mokytojų lygybę*, „XX amžius", (1939) no. 88, p. 9.

the Christian Democrats agitated in favour of private schools. The Nationalist-led Seimas decided to not even consider the amendment to the law submitted by the Christian Democrat minister.[63] It became very clear that the Seimas would block any attempts made by Bistras to revise the Nationalists' education policy.[64] In this way, the Nationalists who held power in their hands again demonstrated that there would be no compromises on a state-held monopoly on education and that they would not be sharing their influence in the educational sphere with the Church.

Instead of a conclusion

In interwar Lithuania (1918–1940) the Catholic Church and political regimes rivaled one another for domination in education. This struggle over influence in the education of young people was most clearly expressed in the field of secondary education (meaning higher than primary level education), as the Catholic Church's position here was the strongest: Catholic educational societies had created a network of private schools. Contemporaries called this rivalry in the educational sphere an argument over ownership of the child: is the child deemed the property of the state and thereby it has the right to monopolise its education?, or conversely – does the state, represented by the Ministry of Education, only have to ensure material provisions for the maximum development of the educational sphere, creating the conditions allowing private initiative to be fully expressed in the field of education?

The Catholic Church and the Christian Democrats defending their position maintained that only a confessional school providing an education in the Christian spirit was suitable for the children of the Catholic believers. Therefore, they demanded that the state should fund private Catholic schools that followed the teaching ideals of Catholic society. Catholic public activists and Christian Democrat politicians suggested that the principle of cultural autonomy be implemented in the Lithuanian education system, according to which funding for private Catholic schools would be guaranteed. However, only when the Christian Democrats lost their dominating influence in political life and private Catholic schools were faced with the threat of closure didCatholic activists start to actively popularise this cultural autonomy principle.

During Lithuania's period of parliamentarism (up to the state coup of December 17, 1926), the Catholic Church's position in the educational sphere clashed most sharply with the attitudes held by leftist political forces. Leftist political forces looked upon the national education system, above all, as the most significant civil socialisation institute in the state and sought to entrust the state with the right to set educational ideals. The idea of a confessional school was completely foreign to them – they held it to be the internal concern of a particular religious community, while the introduction of compulsory religious education opposed in principle leftist fundamental values. Therefore, when leftist political forces acquired the dominant position in the Lithuanian parliament in 1926, they immediately began thinking about cutting funding for private Catholic schools.

[63] Seimas meeting on 1939 06 22, *Seimo stenogramos*.

[64] K. Tolutis, *Privatinės ar valstybinės mokyklos?*, „Tautos mokykla", (1939) no. 13, p. 294.

The Nationalist political regime, which wasestablished after the state coup of December 17, 1926, maintained that the monopoly on education had to be in state hands – only the state could have the exclusive right to educate its citizens. The educational system was tasked with fostering a citizen who would be loyal to Lithuanian nationalist ideals and would grow up to become the creator of a state grounded in nationalist principles. These provisions were reflected in the education reform conducted in the middle of the 1930s, which created not only a unified chain of education leading right up to the higher education level, but also demonstrated the government's unswerving political course towards monopolisation of the educational system.

The monopolisation of education by the state brought the Nationalist government into conflict with the Catholic Church. Catholic activists defending the Church's rights in the educational sphere recommended the implementation of the principle of cultural autonomy, which was intended to secure freedom for the existence of confessional schools; however, this was deemed unacceptable to the political regime in power at the time. The government continued to seek to monopolise education, and this process was completed with the adoption of the new Lithuanian Constitution in 1938.

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RYWALIZACJA MIĘDZY KOŚCIOŁEM KATOLICKIM A REŻIMAMI POLITYCZNYMI O WPŁYWY W SZKOLNICTWIE LITEWSKIM W LATACH 1918-1940

Streszczenie

W okresie międzywojennym XX wieku w Litwie kształtował się narodowy system edukacji. Kościół katolicki starał się aktywnie uczestniczyć w jego tworzeniu, aby utrwalić zasady organizacji swojego systemu szkolnictwa. Władze państwowe w Litwie międzywojennej dążyły do stworzenia jednolitego narodowego systemu edukacji, a celem Kościoła katolickiego było, aby tworzony system odpowiadał jego założeniom w tej dziedzinie. W artykule zanalizowano jak Kościół katolicki i władze polityczne rywalizowały o dominujące wpływy w dziedzinie edukacji w Litwie w okresie międzywojennym (1918-1940). Stwierdzono, że walka o wpływy najdobitniej przejawiała się na polu szkolnictwa średniego (wyższego niż podstawowe), ponieważ pozycja Kościoła katolickiego była tu najsilniejsza: katolickie towarzystwa oświatowe miały sieć szkół prywatnych.

Kościół katolicki i broniący jego pozycji chrześcijańscy demokraci stali na stanowisku, że dla katolickich dzieci odpowiednia jest tylko szkoła wyznaniowa, która pielęgnuje ducha chrześcijańskiego. Dlatego żądano od państwa finansowania prywatnych szkół, które spełniają ideały edukacyjne społeczeństwa katolickiego. Katoliccy działacze społeczni i politycy chadecji proponowali wprowadzenie do systemu edukacji zasady autonomii kulturalnej, która gwarantowałaby finansowanie prywatnych szkół katolickich.

W okresie parlamentaryzmu litewskiego (przed zamachem stanu z 17 grudnia 1926 roku) stanowisko Kościoła katolickiego w dziedzinie edukacji najmocniej kolidowało z poglądami lewicowych sił politycznych, które dążyły do powierzenia państwu prawa do określania ideałów wychowawczych. Idea szkoły wyznaniowej była przedstawicielom lewicy obca – uważali ją za wewnętrzną sprawę wspólnoty wyznaniowej, a wprowadzenie obowiązkowej nauki religii w szkołach stało w sprzeczności z podstawowymi wartościami lewicowymi.

Narodowcy, którzy doszli do władzy w wyniku zamachu stanu z 17 grudnia 1926 roku kierowali się zasadą, że monopol na edukację musi być w rękach państwa – tylko ono ma wyłączne prawo do kształcenia swoich obywateli. Poglądy te znalazły odzwierciedlenie w przeprowadzonej w połowie lat trzydziestych reformie, wskutek czego nie tylko ujednolicono system edukacyjny aż do szkoły wyższej, ale także pokazano niezłomny kurs polityczny władzy w kierunku monopolizacji przestrzeni edukacyjnej w rękach państwa. Doprowadziło to rząd narodowców do konfliktu z Kościołem katolickim, który broniąc swoich praw, domagał się realizacji zasady autonomii kulturalnej w systemie szkolnictwa. Władze dążyły do zmonopolizowania edukacji w rękach państwa i zasadniczo zakończyły ten proces w 1938 roku, uchwalając nową Konstytucję Litwy.

Słowa kluczowe: Kościół katolicki; szkoły katolickie; Republika Litewska (1918-1940); autonomia kulturalna; polityka edukacyjna