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## **Conflicts over the Language of Additional Service in the Samogitian (Telšiai) Diocese: The Cases of Zarasai and Čekiškės Parishes**

In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, one of the distinctive features of the Catholic Church in Lithuania was the struggle over the use of language in additional services. At that time, the language of the liturgy was Latin. Local languages were used in additional services, which included gospel readings, sermons, supplications, the Rosary, Lamentations, processional singing, and May, June, and October devotions. The problem of the use of local languages in the additional services was a relevant issue in all three Lithuanian dioceses of Vilnius, Samogitian (Telšiai), and Sejny (Augustów). The struggle was between the Polish language, which had always been used in the parishes, and the Lithuanian parishioners, who demanded their right to use the Lithuanian language in additional services. The process of changing languages was a difficult one in the parishes of all three dioceses, and especially in the Diocese of Vilnius. In the Samogitian (Telšiai) diocese and that of Sejny (Augustów), this process was easier as there were more parishes with ethnic Lithuanian inhabitants. The issue of language use was most acute in mixed Polish-Lithuanian parishes. In purely Lithuanian parishes, Lithuanian was introduced into additional services without much difficulty, and at the beginning of the twentieth century, Lithuanian was used in additional services in such parishes. The situation was different in the so-called mixed parishes. The Polish parishioners did not want to give up their positions: they were determined to keep Polish in additional services. When Lithuanian parishioners demanded rights for their mother tongue, conflict situations often erupted. In this article, the term ‘conflicts’ is used to describe disputes in parishes over the use of language in additional services. Conflicts in parishes can be likened to the term ‘battles’ that took place between believers of the same parish based on

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ethnic preferences. Conflicts in churches over the use of the language of additional services took many forms, ranging from petitions to diocesan superiors and the civil authorities to scuffles in churches, disruptions of singing, and even bloodshed. In general, the conflicts in churches can be described as manifestations of Lithuanian and Polish nationalism in the Catholic Church.

We are not yet aware of all the parishes in the Samogitia (Telšiai) Diocese that experienced more or less conflict over the use of languages in additional services. This is the objective for further research. According to current information, conflicts over the use of languages in additional services in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries occurred in the following parishes: Zarasai or Ežerėnai (at the time, Novoaleksandrovsk), Čekiškė, Raseiniai, Panemunėlis, Žeimiai, Karmėlava, Josvainiai, Kėdainiai, Kulva, Bukonys, Skaruliai, Paželvė, and others. The object of present research is two parishes that differed in the ethno-cultural sense: Zarasai and Čekiškė. In the former, it was the Lithuanian parishioners who demanded their rights, and in the latter, it was the Polish believers. These parishes did not stand out among other parishes of the Samogitian (Telšiai) Diocese and can be regarded as typical parishes of this diocese. We assume that similar events took place in other conflicting parishes of the Samogitian (Telšiai) Diocese.

Historical literature has paid little attention to the conflicts over language use in additional services in the Samogitian (Telšiai) Diocese. We can mention the publications that appeared before the First World War, which discussed the situation regarding the use of languages in the Samogitian (Telšiai) Diocese<sup>1</sup>. The author of this article also wrote about the linguistic situation in the parishes of the Samogitian (Telšiai) Diocese<sup>2</sup>. Vilma Žaltauskaitė in her article discusses the diary of Rev. Juozapas Liasauskis, the former parish priest of Zarasai, which he wrote while he was serving in Zarasai. In it, Rev. Liasauskis touches on the conflict over the use of languages in additional services<sup>3</sup>. Mindaugas Balkus writes about the Lithuanisation of the churches of Kaunas in the 1920s<sup>4</sup>.

“The article analyses the situation in two parishes of the Samogitian (Telšiai) Diocese with regard to the use of languages in additional services. An attempt will be made to delve into a couple of issues. One of them concerns the

<sup>1</sup> K. Š. [Kazimieras Šaulys], *Mūsų santykiai su lenkais*, “Draugija” 1910, no. 41, p. 59-73; Pelicanas, *Lenkystė Kauno gubernijoje*, “Viltis” 1911-10-09, p. 1.

<sup>2</sup> A. Katilius, *Konflikty polsko-litewskie o język nabożeństw mieszanych (polsko-litewskich) parafiach na przełomie XIX i XX wieku*, in: *Pozostawione historii: Litwini o Polsce i polakach*, ed. K. Korzeniewska, V. Sirutavičius, Kraków 1999, p. 109-120; A. Katilius, *Konfliktai dėl kalbos vartojimo pridėtinėse pamaldose: lietuviškos spaudos refleksija*, “Lietuvių katalikų mokslo akademijos metraštis” 2023, vol. 46, p. 87-107.

<sup>3</sup> V. Žaltauskaitė, *Luomo tapatybės ženklai Romos katalikų dvasininkų dienoraščiuose (XIX a. antroji pusė–XX a. pirmieji dešimtmečiai)*, in: *Egodokumentai ir privati Lietuvos erdvė XVI–XX amžiuje. Straipsnių rinkinys*, ed. A. Pacevičius, Vilnius 2013, p. 403-423.

<sup>4</sup> M. Balkus, *Kauno bažnyčių lietuviėjimas XX a. 3-iajame dešimtmetyje*, “Soter” 2014, vol. 49 (77), p. 24-35.

struggle for the rights of Lithuanian sermons and other services, considering the parishioners' place of residence, i.e., the geographical distance between their place of residence and the parish church. The conflict between Lithuanian- and Polish-speaking parishioners arose at the time of the sermon in one language or the other, before or after the Holy Mass. The second issue is the aspirations of the Polish parishioners to introduce services in Polish, considering the number of parishioners demanding additional services in Polish.

### The parish of Zarasai

Already at the end of the nineteenth century, the Lithuanian press noticed the problem of the Lithuanian language in Zarasai parish. The illegal newspaper *Tėvynės sargas* [The Homeland Guardian] wrote that there were parishes in the Zarasai region where sermons were not preached in Lithuanian. Among these parishes was Breslauja, while, for example, sermons were preached in Lithuanian and Polish in the parish of Pelikonys. Regretfully, the article in the newspaper does not indicate what the situation in Zarasai parish was<sup>5</sup>.

In 1911, Rev. Juozapas Žilinskis, the parish priest and dean of Zarasai, explained that in the church of Zarasai, additional services were held entirely in Polish, sermons were preached in Polish on Sundays and feast days, and Lithuanian sermons were preached on all the solemn feasts and on the first Sunday of every month<sup>6</sup>.

In 1914, in the *Viltis* [Hope], Liudas Gira maintained that the order of additional services established by Gasparas Cirtautas, the bishop of the Samogitian (Telšiai) Diocese, in the parish of Zarasai on 27 October 1912

did not diminish the rights of the Polish language in the slightest way; the rights of the Polish language here, as in many of our churches, are even too great. Without breaking a single hair of Polish additional services, that order introduced by the bishop only gave Lithuanians the right to hear sermons in their own language on major annual feasts and on the so-called 'holy' Sundays (the first Sunday of every month), nothing more; since the Lithuanians in the parish of Ežerėnai live mostly in distant homesteads, the bishop set the time of the sermons in Lithuanian before the Holy Mass, and the Polish sermons immediately after it. It seems that the Poles have not yet felt any resentment or humiliation that the Lithuanians, who had the longest time to return home, could have left the church earlier after having heard the Word of God earlier, without being detained by an unnecessarily forced lecture in Polish – an incomprehensible sermon in Polish. But the Poles from Ežerėnai saw in it the greatest manifesta-

<sup>5</sup> *Nuo Zarasų padangės*, "Tėvynės sargas" 1899, no. 3, p. 32-33.

<sup>6</sup> Explanation of the parish priest and dean of Zarasai, Rev. Juozapas Žilinskis, to the bishop of the Samogitian (Telšiai) Diocese, 1911-09-16, Lithuanian State Historical Archives (*Lietuvos valstybinis istorijos archyvas*, hereinafter LVIA), f. 1671, ap. 4, b. 226, l. 5.

tion of *zachlanność* [greed], a kind of *finis Poloniae* for the Polishness in Ežerėnai<sup>7</sup>.

According to the reporter of the newspaper *Viltis*, Zarasai is situated in ethnographic Lithuania. The area of Zarasai parish had always been inhabited by Lithuanians, some of whom, for various reasons, succumbed to Polonisation over time. The Lithuanian nature of Zarasai is reflected in the Lithuanian names of the town's parts. According to the correspondent, the inhabitants of Zarasai spoke Lithuanian a hundred years before. The article reads:

However, still recent traditions of the Lithuanian language (old people still remember the inhabitants of Ežerėnai [Zarasai] using the Lithuanian language) do not prevent the townspeople of Ežerėnai from calling themselves Poles, and not just any Poles but those who do not even want to know the language of the Lithuanian 'yokels'<sup>8</sup>.

The author of this article has no information on the language that the sermons were preached and sung a hundred years before and assumes that Polish was spoken in the same way as in the whole Vilnius Diocese, since Zarasai was part of it at the time. The use of Polish in church contributed to the Polonisation of the townspeople. Yet since time immemorial, on feast days, the Gospels were read in Lithuanian and sermons were preached in it alongside the Polish sermons.

In Zarasai, it was relatively quiet until 26 May 1913. On that day, a general meeting of the Zarasai branch of the 'Saulė' [The Sun] society was held to elect a new chair of the branch. The Zarasai branch of the society had been in operation for five years, and general meetings were always held at the appointed time. On that day (it was a Sunday), too, after the mass, people began to gather in the hospital for the poor, where the 'Saulės' society had its reading room. In total, about 40-50 people came, of whom 30 were here to join the society. Before the meeting, the branch secretary was entering the names of the new members in the books. At that time, a large group of Polish men and women started gathering in the yard of the hospital. Three of that group burst inside and shouted, in Polish: break up, it is not your place, go away from here. When the secretary tried to calm them down, one of those inside started swearing. Another one turned the bench on which the Lithuanians were sitting upside down. More Poles, shouting and yelling, burst inside. Then the secretary of the branch asked the Polish policeman in the yard to tame the troublemakers. Finally, a senior policeman appeared, and the most active hecklers were pointed at to him. He wrote down the names of those troublemakers, asked the witnesses some questions, and then attempted to drive away the group gathered in the

<sup>7</sup> L. G. [Liudas Gira], *Lenkininkų žygiai Ežerėnuose (Specijalė mūsų korespondencija)*, "Viltis" 1914-01-16, p. 2.

<sup>8</sup> *Lenkininkų skandalai Ežerėnuose (nuo savo korespondento)*, "Viltis" 1913 liepos 26, p. 1.

yard. However, the Poles did not disperse; they waited for an hour and a half for the meeting to end. As the Lithuanians were leaving the meeting, the Poles formed a line and insulted the former in all manner of ways. In consequence, police produced a report and brought four Poles to book. The report was sent to the governor of Kaunas, but he forwarded the case to the judge of Zarasai<sup>9</sup>. Immediately after the meeting of the 'Saulė' society, two Polish delegates went to Bishop Gasparas Cirtautas in Kaunas and demanded the existing order of services in the church revoked and the parish priest Rev. Juozapas Liasauskis removed from Zarasai. Back from Kaunas, the delegates began to spread the word that the Lithuanian language would be abolished in the church of Zarasai and that Rev. Liasauskis would be transferred. Things took a different turn, however. Through the police, the bishop officially answered that according to the instruction of 27 October 1912, the order of services could not be changed and the parish priest would not be removed. The bishop's instruction did not silence the Polish parishioners, and they decided to fight<sup>10</sup>.

The newly appointed parish priest Rev. Juozapas Liasauskis tried not to do anything that would cause a turmoil in the church. Even on his first Sunday in the parish (when the new parish priest introduces himself to the parishioners), he spoke only in Polish, because it was a Sunday for Poles. However, incidents could not be prevented. According to the established order, two sermons had to be preached during the feast day of 21 June 1913: a Lithuanian one before the Holy Mass and a Polish one after it. Rev. Liasauskis himself delivered the sermon in Lithuanian, but his sermon was constantly disturbed by the Polish hymn singers (there were no Lithuanian hymn singers in the church): they sang uninterruptedly during the whole sermon. The parish priest first tried kindly to ask the hymn singers to be quiet, and then asked the *brostvininkai* or *broliukai*, the servants of the church, to silence them, but it did not help. Rev. Liasauskis then raised his voice and began to preach the sermon, but the Poles kept singing. When he finished, the hymn singers also fell silent. The priests gathered for the feast decided to celebrate the Mass without any hymn singing. From the pulpit, the parish priest announced in Polish that there would be no Holy Mass, nor vespers, nor confession, nor sermon in Polish because the priest who was supposed to give the sermon refused to deliver it. The Poles did not expect that and decided to send a telegram to the bishop. The parish priest also wrote a report to the bishop about how everything went. The bishop instructed the local dean to investigate. The dean conducted the investigation by inviting witnesses and priests from other parishes, who were present on that feast day. However, a crowd of Polish parishioners who had gathered in the churchyard and even invaded the parish house during the investigation, were disturbing the dean's investigation. It was held on 4 July. They threatened not to let Rev. Liasauskis

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<sup>9</sup> L. Gira, *Lenkininkų skandalai Ežerėnuose (nuo savo korespondento)*, "Viltis" 1913-07-28, p. 1.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid.

enter the church on Sunday, 7 July. No one prevented the priest from entering the church. He was allowed to read the Gospel in Lithuanian, but when the sermon began, the scenario of the feast day was repeated: the Poles began to sing hymns. The parish priest did not attempt the sermon but only celebrated a mass without hymn singing, and there was neither vespers nor a Polish sermon. After the mass, Poles collected signatures for letters to the archbishop of Mogilev and the bishop of Samogitian (Telšiai) Diocese<sup>11</sup>. A newspaper correspondent thus described Polish antagonism towards Lithuanians:

The Poles of Ežerėnai [Zarasai] hate the Lithuanians so much that even those Poles or Polish speakers who dare to intercede on behalf of the rights of the wronged Lithuanians, or who only visit Lithuanian homes, are almost excluded from among the citizens of Ežerėnai. They are avoided, they are not visited anymore, because the greatest sin in Ežerėnai is sympathy for Lithuanians or friendship with them<sup>12</sup>.

A correspondent of the *Vilniaus žinios* [Vilnius News] even wrote down the following: ‘why should I listen to a Lithuanian-Pagan sermon – it is better to become an Orthodox’<sup>13</sup>.

On 7 July 1913, the Polish parishioners of Zarasai parish lodged a complaint with the bishop of Samogitian (Telšiai) Diocese against the parish priest Juozapas Liasauskis. The complaint, however, did not include any facts about the disagreements between Polish-speaking parishioners and the parish priest. The Bishop asked clarifying questions:

(1) Did Rev. Liasauskis mention to anybody that he was going to completely remove the Polish language from the Zarasai church and introduce the Lithuanian language?

(2) Did Rev. Liasauskis deviate from the bishop’s order of 27 October 1912 regarding the preaching of sermons in Lithuanian, which Rev. Žilinskis announced on 6 January 1913?

(3) If the parish priest hid the Blessed Sacrament for adoration during a Holy Mass, was it not because the Polish parishioners interfered with the Lithuanian sermon?

(4) Were Lithuanian sermons preached in the Zarasai church on solemn feasts and on the first Sundays of the month before the arrival of Rev. Liasauskis?

(5) To whom, in particular, Rev. Liasauskis did not give absolution in confession, simply because they confessed their sins in Polish?

(6) Provide data on which of the Polish-speaking children the parish priest refused to teach the catechism and prepare for confession in Polish, forcing the Lithuanian language on them.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid., p. 2-3.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid., p. 3.

<sup>13</sup> Jaunikaitis, *Lietuvių lenkų santykiai Zarasuose*, “Lietuvos žinios” 1913-07-13, p. 3.

(7) Did the parish priest force any of the Polish-speaking parishioners to speak Lithuanian at all?

(8) Why are the parishioners dissatisfied with the investigation of the dean sent by the bishop and did not wish to complain to the bishop about all the circumstances of the investigation, what were the precise words and actions of the dean that offended the parishioners, why the dean sent only a laconic telegram to the bishop, and why did the parishioners take their reproaches to the dean to the public prosecutor?

(9) Did not a crowd of parishioners invade the rectory where the dean's inquiry was taking place and thus prevent the inquiry from being completed?<sup>14</sup>

The questions clearly show what accusations the Polish parishioners made against the parish priest Juozapas Liasauskis.

The parishioners of Zarasai answered the bishop's questions:

(1) When asked by a delegation of *broliukai* [church servants who maintained order in the church during masses] and parishioners whether the Polish language would not be completely removed from the church, Rev. Liasauskis categorically replied that the Lithuanian language would be introduced in the church immediately, even if the parish priest would have to experience martyrdom. Witnesses are listed with all the answers.

(2) As for the instruction of 27 October 1912, we, parishioners, categorically declare that we do not know whether the former parish priest Rev. Žilinskis announced from the pulpit that there would be a Lithuanian sermon on the first Sunday of every month, against which, of course, we, parishioners, have nothing against, since it had been delivered in the past on feast days after the Holy Mass; however, we were not told exactly what the instruction of 27 October 1912 meant, which only explains the fact that the revocation of the said instruction was not communicated accordingly. Once or twice, Rev. Žilinskis preached Lithuanian sermons before the Holy Mass, but because of that a Polish sermon was preached in the middle of Holy Mass. Now, in a parish where Polish is the predominant language, the sermon in Polish is – granting the wishes of the new arrivals-chauvinists – relegated to the background and replaced by the longest Lithuanian sermon, which is preached by the parish priest with great zeal. And what about the Polish sermon? It is better not to mention it. Apart from reproaches and threats to the parishioners, there is nothing else in these sermons. One needs to hear these sermons to accurately evaluate them. Only after experiencing what we, parishioners, have gone through will it be possible to understand the psychology of the people who have taken it upon themselves to defend their mother tongue against such disrespect from their spiritual father.

(3) and (4). We, parishioners, believe that the closing of exposition of the Blessed Sacrament is due to the fault of the parish priest, whom we kept asking before every feast not to preach a Lithuanian sermon before the Holy Mass, because the vast majority of the parishioners do not want to listen to such a sermon

<sup>14</sup> A letter of the bishop of the Samogitian (Telšiai) Diocese, 1913-08-07, LVIA, ap. 4, b. 226, l. 59.

and do not understand it. There have even been cases during the Mass when Lithuanians themselves, most of whom understand the Polish sermons, asked the parish priest the same. However, the parish priest categorically asserted that he had no respect for his parishioners and, aware of the consequences, he persisted in his sermon and once even called the police to help him. This is the spiritual relationship our spiritual father has with us and the means by which he wants to influence us.

(5) It was very sad to hear from the parishioners that the parish priest drives them away from confession and does not give absolution to those who speak Polish just because they refuse the Lithuanian language. These were the facts, and they must be taken into account. Once again, in order to clarify violations of these rights in a more comprehensive and simpler way, it must be done in place through a spiritual investigation.

(6) Rev. Juozapas Liasauskis, when teaching children the catechism, treated Polish-speaking children in a biased and rude manner. Once he said to the Polish-speaking boys and girls: why do you speak this language of the burlaks, you'd better speak Russian if you don't know Lithuanian.

(7) Parishioners who came to the parish house, and on other occasions, were required to speak Lithuanian, and he would not respond to the greeting *niech będzie pochwalony* [pol.; 'Praised be Jesus Christ'] at all or sometimes answered in Lithuanian. Equally important is the fact that Rev. Liasauskis showed an attitude towards our beliefs that is hardly appropriate for a Catholic priest. For example, some parishioners, when joining St Anthony's and other fraternities, took the attributes of these fraternities to be consecrated. The parish priest refused to consecrate them, saying that he did not want to consecrate all sorts of strings and shackles for horses and that he did not recognize St Anthony.

(8) and (9). As for the dean's 'investigation', one can only say with bitterness that it was not the dean personal idea to carry out an investigation, he only invited four church servants who had signed the telegram to Your Excellency, and, under threat of imprisonment, suggested they sign the papers, apparently in order to conclude the investigation by merely collecting these signatures. However, lacking the authority of the parishioners to take any action on behalf of the parishioners, the church servants, decided to inform the parishioners gathered at the parish house. The clergy completely ignored the parishioners and did not want to listen to any requests, even of the elected delegates, and to calm them down, the dean opened the window and shouted, in a thunderous voice, 'anyone who does not listen to the Lithuanian language, will be in the prisoners' company and in jail'. Parishioners standing closer remarked to the dean that in many parishes Lithuanians are unfair towards the Poles, despite the fact that most of the parishioners speak Polish and do not understand Lithuanian, and do not even let them read the Gospel in Polish, and noted in passing that for the building of the church in Salakas (by the parish priest Krzyżanowski), donations were also made by Poles, and during the consecration of the church, where the Poles were also present, the Gospel was not even read in Polish. In response, Dean Krzyżanowski began to insult the parishioners and punched a parishioner standing nearby in the chest, causing her to fall down and be picked up by those standing nearby. One can only wonder at the restraint shown by the parishioners

against such criminal actions by the clergy. One wonders what respect can be shown to such clergy who treat their flock in such a degrading way<sup>15</sup>.

Having provided such information, the Polish parishioners of Zarasai asked the clergy to revoke the resolution of 27 October 1912 and to allow the Polish sermon to be preached during the Holy Mass and the Lithuanian sermon after it. They demanded removal of the parish priest Liasauskis from the parish and appointment of a priest who would be a true spiritual father to his parishioners, without making ethnic distinctions.

The unrest in the Zarasai church recurred at the beginning of August 1913, during the celebration of the Forty Hours' devotion. On the first day of the feast, the Lithuanian sermon was delivered without interruptions. On the second day, before the Gospel could be read in Lithuanian, the Poles started singing in all sorts of voices, which led to the interruption of the feast in the church. The Poles sent telegrams to the bishop asking him to resume the services and to remove the parish priest from the parish. The bishop instructed the parish priest not to expose the Blessed Eucharist until the noise in the church ceased. The Bishop's instruction was announced on 15 August. His letter reads:

Since in the church of Ežerėnai, on solemn feasts, before the Blessed Eucharist, which is exposed for public adoration, some parishioners praying in Polish dare to riot in order to disrupt the Lithuanian sermons, clearly despising the instruction of their bishop and breaking Christ's commandment of love of neighbour, I advise you to continue to abstain from the exposition of the Blessed Eucharist until the riots do not cease. Solemn feasts should only be celebrated in the ordinary way, without missing any part of the service<sup>16</sup>.

On 15 August, the troublemakers prevented the reading of the Gospel in Lithuanian and the sermon. Warned by the Lithuanians that the troublemakers would be brought to justice, they sang not in one group but spread out among the people to make it more difficult to track them. The excesses of the Polish troublemakers continued on 1 and 8 September<sup>17</sup>. Polish intrigues against the parish priest continued, and delegations went to St Petersburg and Kaunas. Instead of the parish priest Liasauskis, they sought the appointment of the former vicar of Zarasai, Rev. Henrikas Šumanas, who was sympathetic to the Poles<sup>18</sup>. According to the correspondent of the *Viltis*, the Poles from Zarasai are 'flooding' the offices of Kaunas and St. Petersburg with their requests for Rev.

<sup>15</sup> A letter of the parishioners of Zarasai parish to the bishop of the Samogitian (Telšiai) Diocese, 1913-08-24, LVIA, f. 1671, ap. 4, b. 226, l. 60-62.

<sup>16</sup> L. G. [Liudas Gira], *Lenkininkų žygiai Ežerėnuose (Specijalė mūsų korespondencija)*, "Viltis" 1914-01-17, p. 2.

<sup>17</sup> Prašaleitis, *Iš santykių su lenkais. Zarasai*, "Viltis" 1913-10-19, p. 1.

<sup>18</sup> L. G. [Liudas Gira], *Lenkininkų žygiai Ežerėnuose (Specijalė mūsų korespondencija)*, "Viltis" 1914-01-17, p. 3.

Šumanas. The petition to the Bishop of the Samogitian (Telšiai) Diocese of 8 September 1913 simply reads:

A request by the undersigned parishioners of the Roman Catholic Church of Ežerėnai to His Grace RC Bishop of Telšiai or Samogitia. The former vicar-administrator of Ežerėnai RC Church, loved and respected by all, our dear spiritual father Rev. Enrikas Šumanas, has been transferred to the town of Telšiai. Deeply concerned about this transfer, we cannot understand why exactly the spiritual superiors deprived us, the parishioners, of the beloved and respected, extremely popular for his availability and compassion for others, and exceptionally kind-hearted Rev. Enrikas Šumanas. Willingly or unwillingly, one wonders: the vote of four thousand parishioners for the transfer of the unloved parish priest Liasauskis, who has definitively lost any confidence there was, is not being heard, and the beloved priest, as if he had committed an offence, is being removed without delay. With an aching heart, fearing for the future of our faith, we have to believe, willy-nilly, that the spiritual superiors may be under the influence of petty chauvinist politicians trying to create an atmosphere for the promotion of their own ideas of 'rebirth' and priority around the house of God, even if it is at the expense of and with disdain for other, their own brothers. Other believers are already ironic about this topic... Willingly or unwillingly, one has to believe the boasts of a handful of Lithuanian chauvinists temporarily residing in our city, that Rev. Šumanas has been expelled by them and that in 3-5 years the parish will be purely Lithuanian. But why has Rev. Šumanas been transferred? The answer seems clear: it was a stranger to their politics... We, the four thousand parishioners, cannot accept this state of affairs and, in order to eliminate all misunderstandings, in order to preserve the unity and integrity of the parish and in order to bring calmness to the parishioners' minds which have been stirred up to the extreme, we take the liberty of asking Your Grace once again: (1) By order of His Holiness of 1910, to remove the parish priest Liasauskis without delay, after he has definitively lost all respect and trust among the parishioners, and (2) to appoint our beloved Rev. Enrikas Šumanas as our parish priest, because it is only this appointment that would bring peace and integrity to the parish; then we will see that the Spiritual Superiors care for us, listens to the voice of their flock, and bravely meet our needs and our requests. We reiterate that this appointment is the only way to restore the prestige of the clergy and the demoralised parish life: by having a fervently loved and respected by all priest as a parish priest, we will be sure that everyone's mother tongue will not be persecuted, that a Pole, a Lithuanian, a Belarusian, and on the whole, every faithful son of the Catholic Church, will have the opportunity to satisfy their spiritual needs and to listen to God's word having an impartial spiritual father, who will only do what the high name of the Pastor demands of him<sup>19</sup>.

<sup>19</sup> L. G. [Liudas Gira], *Lenkininkų žygiai Ežerėnuose (Specijalė mūsų korespondencija)*, "Viltis" 1914-01-18, p. 2; cf. A request from the believers of Zarasai parish to the bishop of the Samogitian (Telšiai) Diocese, 1913-09-08, LVIA, f. 1671, ap. 4, b. 226, l. 11-26. Includes the parishioners' signatures.

About two thousand parishioners signed this appeal. Having received a reply from the diocesan curia that the bishop would not change his decision, they sent an appeal to the archbishop of Mogilev. The following requests were worded in the appeal: (1) To revoke the instruction of the bishop of the Samogitian (Telšiai) Diocese of 27 October 1912 on the order of additional services. The appeal requests that the Polish sermon be preached before the Holy Mass and the Lithuanian sermon on the first Sunday of the month, after the Holy Mass. (2) To remove the parish priest Juozapas Liasauskis as having lost the trust of the parishioners. (3) To appoint such a priest who 'would equally treat the Lithuanians and the Poles'. It would be the only way to raise the prestige of and respect for the clergy and to calm down the parish. Rev. Henrikas Šumanas could be such a parish priest<sup>20</sup>. Rev. Antanas Survila, the former vicar of Telšiai, who replaced Šumanas, was also abused simply because he, like the parish priest, was a Lithuanian.

The Polish parishioners decided to boycott pastoral Christmas visits. When such rumours spread, the parish priest trusted the vicar with these visits. Pastoral Christmas visits were to start on 21 November 1913. On the eve of the visits, on 20 November, a short letter in Polish was handed to Rev. Survila: 'Please be informed that we will not allow priests on their pastoral visits in Polish homes until we have a clergy that is impartial and supportive to the parishioners. So please forsake the mission of pastoral Christmas visits altogether, because our door is closed to our present clergy!'<sup>21</sup> Nevertheless, it was decided to start the pastoral Christmas visits, as the announcement about them had been made from the pulpit and forsaking them would be interpreted as some kind of an achievement of the Poles. Also, the priests were convinced that the Polish townspeople, who kept some distance from these events, would not support the boycott. When pastoral Christmas visits began, the priest was given the best possible welcome in the first few houses. People complained that agitators were visiting their homes, urging them not to receive the priest. On the first day of the pastoral Christmas visits, only three houses did not receive Rev. Survila. On the second day, the priest was not received in several homes; the same happened on the third and fourth days. During the period of the pastoral visits, the agitators urged people not to receive the priest in their homes. One woman said that she had received an anonymous note saying that if she received the priest, she would be hit with a stone. The threat did not scare her, and she welcomed the priest. Another woman said that she did not receive the priest because that was what intelligent Poles did and she did not want to fall behind them<sup>22</sup>.

<sup>20</sup> L. G. [Liudas Gira], *Lenkininkų žygiai Ežerėnuose (Specijalė mūsų korespondencija)*, "Viltis" 1914-01-18, p. 3.

<sup>21</sup> L. G. [Liudas Gira], *Lenkininkų žygiai Ežerėnuose (Specijalė mūsų korespondencija)*, "Viltis" 1914-01-23, p. 2.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid.

The Poles of Zarasai parish used various ways against the parish priest Rev. Liasauskis to achieve his removal from the parish. The correspondent of the *Viltis* describes a complaint of Polish parishioners to the governor. According to the complainants, the parishioners asked the parish priest to hold services in Polish and Russian. However, he did not agree and only protected the Lithuanian language. Yet even such a lie did not help them to achieve the removal of the parish priest, because the secular authorities also understood the true intentions of the snitches. In addition, Polish parishioners sent various letters to Polish newspapers, to the effect that there were no sermons in Polish in the Zarasai church, only in Lithuanian. The parish priest Liasaukis refuted these fabrications and made newspaper editors regret they had been misled<sup>23</sup>.

After the death of Bishop Gasparas Cirtautas, Canon Petras Borovskis became the administrator of the Samogitian (Telšiai) Diocese. On 8 October 1913, the parish priest Rev. Liasauskis wrote a report to the administrator that the bishop's instruction was not only ignored: the stubbornness of the Polish believers had risen, as they did not even allow the Gospel to be read in Lithuanian. In his letter of 18 November 1913, the diocesan administrator replied that no sermons, either in Polish or in Lithuanian, were to be preached in the church until a new order was issued. Thus, from 24 November 1913, no sermons were preached, in any language, in the church of Zarasai<sup>24</sup>.

The Lithuanians sued the hymn singers who made noise in the church during Lithuanian sermons on 21 June, 7 July, 3 August, and 15 August 1913. The trial dragged on until 18 July 1914. The reporter of the *Viltis* wrote that there was no end in sight to it.

The parish priest Rev. Juozapas Liasauskis was removed from Zarasai parish at his own request. On 3 March 1914, he received the order to commence his duties in the parish of Papilė. On 25 March 1914, the new parish priest Vladislovas Bortkevičius summoned a delegation of Polish parishioners to the parish house. What was said there was unknown to the newspaper's correspondent, but the Poles were happy and said that 'Litva' was finished. However, the Poles were disturbed by the fact that the next day, 26 March, the parish priest invited Lithuanians. The Poles sent their Lithuanian-speaking 'correspondent' to the meeting, who said he did not support either side. The Lithuanians explained that it was very troublesome for them to listen to a Polish sermon during one Holy Mass, because they had to listen to two sermons, and there was no need to learn Polish, and the delegates affirmed they would not interfere with the Polish sermon<sup>25</sup>.

At Easter 1914, a Lithuanian sermon was preached in the church, and nobody disturbed it. As he was delivering a Polish sermon on the following Sun-

<sup>23</sup> L. G. [Liudas Gira], *Lenkininkų žygiai Ežerėnuose (Specijalė mūsų korespondencija)*, "Viltis" 1914-01-28, p. 2.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid.

<sup>25</sup> X., *Turėdami savo bažnyčioje...*, "Viltis" 1914-04-01, p. 2.

day, the parish priest reminded the congregation that the Poles confessed they had done wrong by making noise in the church and promised not to make any more noise if things were not what they wished. May devotions were to be in Polish for Poles and in Lithuanian for Lithuanians<sup>26</sup>. It was announced that Lithuanians were not allowed to sing after the sermon, after the Gospel reading, and during May devotions. This instruction was probably due to the fact that the Lithuanians sang the hymns more beautifully than the Poles<sup>27</sup>. One could say that Lithuanian May devotions were peaceful. Only on the first day of the devotions, two Polish women assaulted a Lithuanian woman on her way to church. The Lithuanian woman sued the women who attacked her<sup>28</sup>.

In the summer of 1914, Lithuanian-Polish relations were good, except that the Lithuanians were forbidden to sing hymns even at the times when the Poles were absent from services. Also, the Poles saw the church as their national property, and a couple of incidents confirm this. In the summer, a deceased Lithuanian was brought to the church. The priest sang 'The Angel of the Lord' in Lithuanian and the people sang that hymn in Lithuanian as well. This angered the Poles who demanded an explanation from the vicar as to how he could sing in Lithuanian in their church. The other incident happened when on a Sunday in July, the parish priest read the Gospel in Polish and was about to start reading in Lithuanian when Polish hymn singers started singing. They sang one stanza and fell silent, because the parish priest did not kneel down; he was standing and waiting for the Poles to stop singing. Meanwhile, the Poles pretended they had forgotten themselves and that was why they started singing<sup>29</sup>.

On 3 June 1915, Bishop Pranciškus Karevičius, of the Samogitian (Telšiai) Diocese, issued an order regarding the arrangement of the additional services in the church of Zarasai. First of all, he revoked the order of 27 October 1912 of his predecessor, Bishop Gasparas Cirtautas, and set out the procedure for additional services in the Zarasai church in five points<sup>30</sup>:

(1) For sermons and hymn-singing in Polish on all Sundays and feast days, the time will be from 7 a.m. to the Holy Mass, as well as chanting during processions, after the vespers, and the Stations of the Cross devotions before the vespers, and other chanting at the will of the parishioners after the vespers; hymn-singing Lithuanian will be from 6 a.m. to 7 p.m. every Sunday and on feast days.

(2) after the Holy Mass and on feast, each Sunday and on feast days, to read from the Gospels in Lithuanian, to sing a verse of a hymn in Lithuanian, and to

<sup>26</sup> J., *Kaip jau žinoma...*, "Viltis" 1914-05-07, p. 2.

<sup>27</sup> *Velykų pirmą dieną...*, "Aušra" 1914-05-08, p. 224.

<sup>28</sup> J., *Pas mus lietuvių lenkų santykiai...*, "Viltis" 1914-06-18, p. 2.

<sup>29</sup> X., *Šią vasarą Zarasų parapijoje...*, "Viltis" 1914-08-17, p. 2.

<sup>30</sup> *Ekc. Žemaičių vyskupo Pranciškaus Karevičiaus įsakymas Zarasų bažnyčios klebonui*, "Viltis" 1915-06-10, p. 1.

preach a sermon or a catechism teaching in Lithuanian. After that, allow the singing of 'The Angel of the Lord', 'Eternal Rest', and 'Praised Be the Holy Sacrament'. On the feast days when the Polish version of the Stations of the Cross is not sung, to assign the entire time before vespers to the singing in Lithuanian.

(3) May and October devotions in the evening will be held in Polish, while Lithuanian services will be held from 6 a.m. to 7 a.m. with Lithuanian hymn-singing.

(4) Reflection in Polish to be held in the Fourth Week in Lent, and in Lithuanian, annually on Thursday, Friday, and Saturday before the Fourth Sunday in Lent. On those days, morning and evening prayers, twice a day spiritual reflections to be read in Lithuanian, one sermon to be preached every day, singing in Lithuanian to be allowed at all masses and singing of supplications in Lithuanian after the Mass to be allowed, and to allow the Stations of the Cross to be walked in Lithuanian on those three days.

(5) Preparation of children for the first confession and Holy Communion and the ceremony of First Holy Communion to be done separately for the Lithuanians and the Poles.

In the same issue of the *Viltis*, there was an article 'On the arrangement of service in the church of Zarasai', which read that Bishop Karevičius

set a new example of how a true diocesan pastor, who must be equally fair to both the majority and the minority, must behave. Expressing our joy that the Lithuanians of Zarasai have at last obtained the just order for which they had so long been thirsting, and that now, when the Diocesan Shepherd has shown his will, it is to be hoped that the Poles of Zarasai will no longer hinder the Lithuanians from exercising the rights they are entitled to in their common church, and it only remains for us to express our wish to see such a fair protection of the rights of the Lithuanians in the other parishes and churches in our homeland<sup>31</sup>.

Despite the order established by the bishop, the Poles of Zarasai parish interfered with the singing in Lithuanian at the appointed time. Because that, Bishop Karevičius forbade any hymn-singing in both languages, and both the preaching of sermons and the exposition of the Blessed Sacrament was suspended. When the Gospel was read in Lithuanian after the Holy Mass, the hymn singers began to crowd around the pulpit and push the listeners standing nearby. One girl was punched in the nose and started bleeding, and was spat on by a Polish female hymn singers<sup>32</sup>.

Bishop Karevičius wrote in his memoir that after he had imposed a small interdict on the church in Zarasai, the Poles sent a complaint against him to the minister. The complaint reads that everything in the church of Zarasai used to

<sup>31</sup> Be parašo, *Del pamaldų sutvarkymo Zarasų bažnyčioje*, "Viltis" 1915-06-10, p. 1.

<sup>32</sup> Korespondentas, *Nauji Zarasų lenkininkų žygiai (Nuo mūsų specijalinio korespondento)*, "Viltis" 1915-07-10, p. 1.

be in Polish, and now the bishop introduced Lithuanian service and sermons, and as a result, the Polish language was close to being eliminated from the church. Therefore, they asked the minister to reverse the bishop's order and leave everything in the church as it used to be. Having received no reply, they sent a second complaint, repeating the allegations of the first complaint and demanding the removal of the parish priest. Both complaints were forwarded to the bishop, who asked to provide accurate information about the facts mentioned in them. The bishop set out everything as it was and sent copies of the complaints to Canon Kazimieras Prapuolenis in Rome for translation into Latin and handing to the Secretary of State and the Congregation<sup>33</sup>.

Only by the parish priest Juozapas Liasauskis followed the order of Bishop Cirtautas of 27 October 1912 to the letter. His predecessor Rev. Žilinskis and his successor Rev. Bortkevičius were opposed to the Lithuanian language<sup>34</sup>. A correspondent of the magazine *Vairas* points out that Bishop Karevičius's order gave too few rights to the Lithuanians; the time assigned for the service in Lithuanian was too early, because Lithuanians lived mainly in the parish villages and it was difficult for them to reach the church in time. Lithuanians should be given the same rights as Poles on one feast per month, and Poles should be given the same rights as Lithuanians on that feast<sup>35</sup>.

### **Rev. Juozapas Liasauskis's Diary about the Conflict in Zarasai Parish**

When Rev. Dr Juozapas Liasauskis was a parish priest of Zarasai, he kept a diary<sup>36</sup>. As he writes early in his diary, Rev. Liasauskis was begging God and people not to be assigned to a mixed parish and especially not to Zarasai (Ežerėnai) district. However, he was appointed to the town of Zarasai. When he arrived in Zarasai, he still found the old parish priest, Rev. Žilinskis, who told him that May devotions should be conducted in Polish and Lithuanian. Not in his wildest dreams did he think that the first time he stepped into the pulpit he would not say a single word in Lithuanian, but that was exactly what happened. Doctor Domininkas Bukantas warned him that it would not be possible to hold May devotion in Lithuanian and to preach sermons on feasts and on first Sundays of the month. The Poles did not like the parish priest's decision to catechise children in Lithuanian. Even more disliked was the organist, who taught young Lithuanians to sing the litany and some secular songs. They began to demand the removal of the library of the 'Saulė' society from the parish house and forbidding the organist to teach singing in Lithuanian, because there would

<sup>33</sup> P. Karevičius, *Mano gyvenimo ir atsiminimų bruožai*, eds. A. Gaigalaitė, A. Katilius, Vilnius 2006, p. 243.

<sup>34</sup> P. K., *Iš Zarasų padangės*, "Vairas" 1915. no. 21, p. 334.

<sup>35</sup> Ibid.

<sup>36</sup> Kun. Juozapas Liasauskis, *Dienoraštis, 1913-1914* [Diary of Rev. Juozapas Liasauskis], Archive of the Kaunas Archdiocesan Curia (*Kauno arkivyskupijos kurijos archyvas*, hereinafter KAKA), file no. 611.

be no Lithuanian singing in the Zarasai church<sup>37</sup>. The Poles thought that the parish priest would abolish Polish and introduce Lithuanian. They threatened to close the library themselves and demanded that the Lithuanian sermon not be preached after the votive – instead, the Polish sermon should be preached at that time<sup>38</sup>. The parish priest said he would not change the existing order. Three people were chosen to speak with the parish priest. He explained that it was impossible to forbid people, even Lithuanians, to worship God with hymns in their mother tongue. When their demands were not met with a positive response, the Polish believers demanded the parish priest removed. Having received nothing from the bishop, they started reporting the parish priest to the police: that he spoke only Lithuanian in the church, that he spoke Lithuanian with those who spoke Polish. They demanded an interrogation, otherwise they would cause a ‘riot’ in the church<sup>39</sup>. Under such conditions, it was difficult to fulfill his greatest desire to educate and enlighten the people entrusted to him. Moreover, the parish priest Rev. Liasauskis received threats of physical violence against him. In his diary, Rev. Liasauskis mainly writes about the events already described in this article.

### The Parish of Čekiškė

Almost a third of the parishioners of Čekiškė parish spoke Polish at home but they also had a good command of Lithuanian. Meanwhile, only few of those who spoke only Lithuanian spoke Polish. Polish was not used in the church, nor were Polish sermons preached or hymns sung, and no one questioned this. However, the movement of raising the issue of the use of Polish in additional services reached the parish of Čekiškė as well. In the spring of 1909, stirred up by the Poles in Kaunas, the nobles of the parish started demanding sermons be preached in Polish. They wrote a petition, went to the bishop in Kaunas, and outlined their demands to him. The bishop promised to grant the request if it proved just. He sent a letter to the parish priest of Čekiškė parish asking him to write down the wishes of the parishioners regarding the language in which they wanted sermons to be preached. The parishioners themselves were to produce such lists, without the involvement of the parish priest. According to the bishop’s instructions, the entire parish was to be divided into three parts, with two list takers assigned to each part: one from among the Lithuanian-speaking inhabitants and the other from among the Polish speakers. The two list takers were to walk together around the area assigned to them and write down the answers of each inhabitant individually in their own books. The two list takers would have had to walk together to control each other so that the lists would be taken correctly. The bishop had instructed them to write down

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<sup>37</sup> Ibid., l. 69.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid., l. 69v.

<sup>39</sup> Ibid., l. 69.

separately the answers of those who necessarily wanted Lithuanian sermons and those who wanted Polish sermons; also, to write down separately the answers of those who did not care whether the sermons were in Lithuanian or Polish. Upon the completion of the survey, all the list takers were to bring their notes to the parish priest, under whose supervision they were to be transcribed in duplicate: one sent to the diocese, the other left in the parish archives<sup>40</sup>.

The nobles of the parish were dissatisfied with the bishop's instruction. They thought that their request would suffice and that in Čekiškė parish, the bishop would order the sermon and other services to be delivered in Polish on one Sunday and in Lithuanian on the following Sunday. In their appeal to the bishop, the nobles stated that half of the parish was Polish. After the survey, it may have turned out that the Poles were not so numerous here. For this reason, the nobles did not want to comply with the bishop's order and asked the parish priest to introduce Polish services in the parish of Čekiškė on his own will. The parish priest refused to grant such a request on the grounds that it was necessary to fulfill the bishop's order, that is, to draw up the lists<sup>41</sup>.

The Lithuanian-speaking parishioners were even more dissatisfied with the bishop's instruction. They realised that their rights would be curtailed if Polish services were introduced in the church in Čekiškė. The Lithuanians also went to the bishop and asked him not to make any changes. They pointed out that all the nobles had a good command of Lithuanian and understood it well. The introduction of Polish services would disadvantage the Lithuanian speakers because they did not understand anything in Polish. The bishop advised them not to resist, to live in harmony, and to carry out his instruction regarding the survey. The Lithuanians decided not to take part in the survey and sent a letter to the bishop that he alone could introduce Polish services in the church in Čekiškė, if this could not be done without it<sup>42</sup>.

After receiving such a letter, the bishop sent a new instruction to the parish priest and told him to compile a list of those parishioners who absolutely wanted Polish services. As soon as they received such an instruction, the Poles rushed to conduct the survey. Mass agitation was stirred up to have as many parishioners as possible to sign up. The survey was conducted without any control whatsoever: anyone and in any numbers were entered in the list, without even being asked. The Lithuanian-speaking parishioners realised that they had done wrong by not signing, as the bishop had told them to do, because there would have been few people willing to attend Polish services. Most Polish-speaking parishioners would have signed up for the sermons to be preached in any language. The list takers wrote down that each Polish-speaking parishioner definitely wanted a Polish service. Giving rights to the Polish language would mean curtailing the rights of the Lithuanian language. According

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<sup>40</sup> Čekiškėnas, *Čekiškė*, "Viltis" 1909-07-03, p. 3.

<sup>41</sup> Ibid.

<sup>42</sup> Ibid.

to the correspondent, this problem could actually be solved in such a way that one could eat one's cake and still have it. In the parish of Čekiškė, near the Krūvandai nobility village (pol. *okolica*), there was a cemetery chapel. Many families of the local nobility lived in the vicinity of that chapel. Another nobility village was on the other side of the parish, very close to the filial church of Lesčiai. Previously, a request was made to install a priest in the Krūvandai chapel and make it a filial church, but this did not happen. It would be best if the bishop appointed a priest to the Krūvandai chapel and that priest could preach sermons and conduct other services to the nobility in Polish, while the old arrangement of services in the church in Čekiškė could remain intact. The author of the report concluded: 'If this were done, the hatred of the peasants towards the nobility, which can be observed today, would disappear sooner, while it may become even greater with the introduction of Polish services in the church of Čekiškė'<sup>43</sup>.

Aleksandras Dambrauskas-Adomas Jakštas, the editor of the magazine *Draugija*, responded to the publication in the *Viltis*. He considered the case of Čekiškė as typical and therefore decided to look at it from it from all angles<sup>44</sup>. Concerning the method of parishioner statistics in determining the language to be used in additional services, the author of the article acknowledges that

the ecclesiastical leadership grants our parishes a great deal of autonomy: the parishioners acquire the right to choose their own language, to conduct the church service and to keep statistics on the various languages spoken, without the intervention of a parish priest, and the ecclesiastical leadership retains only the right to give final approval to the parishioner's decisions and to enforce them legally<sup>45</sup>.

On the one hand, there is nothing theoretically wrong with such a principle, but in practice it can also have negative consequences, for example, people wanting to choose the ministers of the church and even the parish priest. The author goes on to say that everyone resorts to justice. The nobles, for the sake of justice, demand Polish services, the Lithuanians, for the sake of justice, want to keep the existing order, the bishop wants to satisfy the wishes of both sides, and the correspondent suggests that the Poles use the Krūvandai chapel. There is one principle of justice, but there are as many understandings of it as there are people. The author of the article attempts answering the following questions: (1) what is justice in general, and (2) what does this justice really require in the scheduling of additional services in the churches of Lithuania? We will not delve into the first question, while the quote below sheds some light on the author's more general attitude to language in churches:

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<sup>43</sup> Ibid.

<sup>44</sup> A. Jakštas, *Teisybė ir kalbų klausimas Lietuvos bažnyčiose*, "Draugija" 1909, no. 33, p. 25-43.

<sup>45</sup> Ibid., p. 27.

The law of Lithuania is as real and unquestionable in the ecclesiastical matter of languages as it is for parishioners and priests. For just as Poland has the right to only the Polish language in its churches, just as Germany or France have the right to have services in German or French only, so Lithuania has a full and unquestionable right to have only the Lithuanian language in its churches, and, whether some like it or not, the dominant language in the churches of Lithuania must not be the Polish but Lithuanian. Polish should only be supported where it is absolutely necessary, such as in the larger towns of Lithuania, where there are a number of genuine Poles, or where the Polonised people do not understand Lithuanian. In the provinces, however, whoever has been living among Lithuanians for a long time must speak Lithuanian and has no right to demand the Polish language in churches. If anyone insists on it, such a demand is as strange and irrational as the persistence of a group of Lithuanians settled in Poland to introduce the Lithuanian language into the local Polish churches would be strange and irrational. The demand for Polish sermons and worship in Lithuania is, in our opinion, identical with the demand that we, Lithuanians, should recognise our country as a province of Poland. Because only when Lithuania became an integral part of Poland would local Poles have the right to demand the Polish language in Lithuanian churches. But as long as Lithuania is not yet a province of Poland, the introduction of the Polish language into our churches is not an ecclesiastical work, but a political manoeuvre to extend the ethnographic borders of Poland<sup>46</sup>.

The author of the article writes that were the Polish language introduced in parishes such as Čekiškė,

‘threefold rights of others’ would be violated, in particular: (1) the rights of indigenous Lithuanians, who would hear only half of the Word of God than before. For Lithuanians as monolingual speakers, the Word of God is twice as necessary as it is for Poles, who speak both languages; (2) the right of the local priests, who, unwilling to neglect the Lithuanians, would have to do twice as much work: to preach two sermons, to organise duplicate catechisation of the children, to organise two different May and October devotions; (3) the right of our land, which as a Lithuanian land would not be able to calmly tolerate the ongoing Polonisation under the guise of faith; (4) the right of the Church itself, which would be disgraced from a divine institution to a dirty tool of Polish politics. The Church has the right to remain the pillar of truth and the foundation of justice<sup>47</sup>.

Were the Church to support Polish claims, it would give Lithuanians an opportunity to believe that the Church is unwilling to recognize: (1) the rights of Lithuania as a separate independent ethnographic region, (2) the rights of the Lithuanian language as the dominant language in that area, (3) the independence of that region from Poland<sup>48</sup>.

<sup>46</sup> Ibid., p. 37-38.

<sup>47</sup> Ibid., p. 38.

<sup>48</sup> Ibid., p. 39.

Of course, such reasoning of the Lithuanians would be wrong, because the Church recognizes equal rights for all countries, peoples, and their languages. The Church has no reason to value Poland more than Lithuania, and if it recognizes the rights of the Polish language in Poland, it cannot deny the rights of the Lithuanian language in Lithuania.

The Poles decided that almost half of the inhabitants of Čekiškė parish pretended not to understand Lithuanian. Then the most zealous nobles appealed to the parish priest to hold half of services in Polish. The parish priest agreed to further investigate the matter and to request the bishop's opinion, but he refused to introduce Polish service as not authorized to do it. The representatives of the nobles were angered by the pastor's response and called him a *litvomanas* (i.e., one who respects everything Lithuanian). They then decided to appeal to the bishop and hoped for a positive response. The bishop did not want to 'say a word against the will of a few Poles'. He asked them to give him a list of the parishioners of Čekiškė regarding the language they would like services to be held. Lithuanians also went to the bishop. Lithuanians and Poles were to elect three representatives each to compile a list based on the plan described above. Lithuanians refused to take part in the survey and it was the Poles alone who had to do it. The list takers registered a total of 1552 parishioners wishing to attend Polish services. The bishop forwarded the list to the parish priest. After hearing this and realising that they were included in the list of those who demanded Polish service, the parishioners began to ask to be removed from the list in droves. It turned out that the list takers included everyone who spoke Polish in the list, often without even asking them, and also those who said they did not care about the language. The list thus shrank to the point where it lost its value. To solve the problem, the bishop proposed two solutions: to send a commission of priests to the parish or to compile a more accurate list of parishioners. The parish priest suggested that the list be compiled during pastoral Christmas visits in the parish. The bishop sent a sample list form, in which the sequence number, sex, surname, first name, age, and the preferred language of service – Lithuanian, Polish, or no difference. Each adult had to be answer for themselves, and parents had to answer for their children. When the list was compiled after the pastoral Christmas visits, it turned out that 3110 parishioners signed up as Lithuanians, 986 as Poles, and 205 as either this or that<sup>49</sup>.

Considering the statistics of the parishioners, on 1 October 1911, Bishop Gasparas Cirtautas established the following schedule in the church of Čekiškė: additional services on three Sundays and feasts in Lithuanian, and on the fourth Sunday in Polish, and sermons were to be delivered in two languages: one in Lithuanian, the other one in Polish. Ensuring the rights of the minority by allowing sermons, homilies, and hymn-singing to the minority in their mother

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<sup>49</sup> Ne Bajoras, *Čekiškės bajorų didvyriški žygiai*, "Viltis" 1910-06-16, p. 1-2.

tongue, he provided the majority of the parish with sermons, homilies, catechisation, and May and October devotions in Lithuanian, with the exception of the hymn-singing on the fourth Sunday or a feast of each month, which was assigned to the minority of the Poles. Establishing the schedule of services in this way, Bishop Cirtautas maintained: 'In the issue about the language at the additional services in the church of Čekiškė, I followed the Church's commandments of justice, conscience, and pastoral duties'<sup>50</sup>.

The first sermon in Polish was delivered early in 1912. This was done by the newly appointed parish priest, on his first Sunday in Čekiškė: first he delivered a sermon in Lithuanian and after that in Polish. The reaction of the Lithuanian parishioners to the Polish sermon was thus described by the correspondent of the *Viltis*:

So, seeing such an extraordinary privilege for the Poles, during the first Polish sermon given by the new parish priest, the Lithuanians of Čekiškė were restless in the church: they were stamping their feet, moving, coughing, and they started to rush out of the church outside<sup>51</sup>.

On the second Sunday, the parish priest preached the Polish sermon at 10.30 a.m. So early in the day, there were only few people in the church and not a single Pole among them. It is a time when people gather in church, squeak and slam doors, pound their frozen feet on the floor, knock snow off their shoes, and the like. Just then the parish priest was giving a sermon to the Poles and announced that he would always give a Polish sermon at that time. The parish priest of Čekiškė replied to this newspaper report. According to him, the Lithuanians in Čekiškė believed that every Sunday he preached in Polish to make things better for the Poles, and they did not believe that this was what the bishop had ordered. Because of this, the Lithuanians were angry with the parish priest. The reaction of the Poles was even more surprising. Some of them thought that the bishop had scheduled sermons for every fourth Sunday, while other sermons were added by the parish priest himself. Others believed that the parish priest added sermons every Sunday out of malice, to annoy them, as if he was mockingly throwing Polish sermons at them<sup>52</sup>.

### Conclusions

As in other Lithuanian dioceses late in the nineteenth and early in the twentieth century, conflicts over the use of the Lithuanian or Polish language in additional services arose in the Samogitian (Telšiai) Diocese. Conflict situations unfolded mainly in the so-called mixed parishes inhabited by Lithuanian

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<sup>50</sup> J. E. Žemaičių vyskupo Kasparo Cirtauto paaiškinimas dėl Čekiškės bylos, "Viltis" 1911-12-16, p. 1-2.

<sup>51</sup> Čekiškės lietuvis, *Pas mus atvažiavo...*, "Viltis" 1912-02-02, p. 1.

<sup>52</sup> Kun. Gaigalas, Čekiškės klebonas, *Čekiškė*, "Viltis" 1912-02-08, p. 2.

and Polish parishioners. The object of the study is different situations in two parishes of the diocese. In one of them, Zarasai parish, it was the Lithuanian parishioners who demanded their rights, while in the other, Čekiškė parish, it was the Polish believers. In Zarasai parish, the Polish believers conflicted mainly about the time assigned for the sermons in Lithuanian or Polish. At the bishop's instruction, the time for the Lithuanian sermon was scheduled before the Holy Mass, because the Lithuanian-speaking parishioners lived mainly in the villages outside the town and it usually took them long to travel to the church. Meanwhile, the Polish sermon was preached after the mass, because the Polish-speaking parishioners were townspeople, and the church was closer to them. The main tool in the struggle of the Polish parishioners was the singing of hymns during the Lithuanian sermon, thus attempting to disrupt it. The Poles were dissatisfied with the parish priest Rev. Juozapas Liasauskis for following the bishop's instruction to the letter and wanted him to be removed from Zarasai parish. Yet the conflict in Zarasai parish did not escalate to acrimony or bloodshed in the church.

Until 1909, the language of the additional services and sermons in the parish of Čekiškė was Lithuanian. However, the Polish-speaking parishioners, mostly the nobles, thought that a Polish sermon should be preached in their parish church. The most important criterion for introducing Polish sermons was statistical, that is, the number of parishioners who wanted sermons in Polish. A survey of the parishioners was carried out, during which they were asked in which language the sermons should be delivered. In this survey, 986 people signed up as Polish and over 3000 as Lithuanian. In view of this, Bishop Gasparas Cirtautas introduced sermons and hymns in Polish on every fourth Sunday and on feasts in the parish of Čekiškė.

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### Summary

Conflict situations unfolded mostly in the so-called mixed parishes inhabited by parishioners of Lithuanian and Polish. The article discusses different situations in two parishes of the Samogitian (Telšiai) Diocese. In one of them, Zarasai parish, it was the Lithuanian parishioners who demanded their rights, while in the other, Čekiškė parish, it was the Polish believers. In Zarasai parish, the Polish believers conflicted mainly about the time scheduled for the sermons in Lithuanian or Polish. At the bishop's instruction, the time for the Lithuanian sermon was set before the Holy Mass, because the Lithuanian-speaking parishioners lived mainly in the villages outside the town and usually it took them long to travel to the church. Meanwhile, the Polish sermon was preached after the mass, because the Polish-speaking parishioners were townspeople, and the church was closer to them. The main tool in the struggle of the Polish parishioners was the singing of hymns when the Lithuanian sermon was preached,

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**Keywords:** additional service, conflicts over the language of the service, Samogitian (Telšiai) Diocese, Zarasai parish, Čekiškė parish.

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