

Democracy and Catholicism in XXth century Lithuania

Lithuania, like many other countries of Eastern Europe, has very complicated

history of democratization during XXth century. After the crisis of Russian Empire it

has entered the first experiment of democratic governance, which lasted unfortunately only one decade. In the end of 1926 the democratic political system was substituted by an authoritarian regime of nationalist origin, which wasn't able to preserve the country from

aggression of Stalinist regime. Nationalist Republic of Lithuania, which lasted half a century, has left a very deep imprint in the political culture and even mentality of Lithuania. The main difficulties of the new democratization process, started after the collapse of the Soviet system in 1990. A critical rethinking of the Soviet past, even if quite dynamic in the academic sphere, is hardly visible in the public sphere, where nostalgia for "good soviet times" is still alive and strengthened by the efforts of former soviet officials.

contemporary history of Lithuania, is the role of Catholicism for the fate of democracy in the country. Was it advancing democratization or responsible for the failures of democratic

history. This article should be considered for all the above mentioned periods of Lithuanian

history's main consequences and objectives of the research project.

1) In the period since 1918 when the public sphere and political scene in Lithuania

was dominated by ideas of Christian democracy. It is important to understand the intentions

of Christian Democracy in Lithuania and its role in the development of the country.

of various churches, such as the hierarchy of Russian, etc., or the general tendencies of

2) In the period of authoritarian rule (1926-1940) the dense network of Catholic social organizations has constituted one of few remaining alternatives to ever restricted field of free public self-expression. It can be presumed, that efforts of the Catholic Church

to preserve its space of social activity against the attacks of political authoritarianism

distinctly strengthened self-consciousness of the Catholic community and have prepared it for future challenges. More detailed research in this field would help to

develop a deeper understanding of the role of Catholicism in the development of Lithuania.

witness tolerance and to offer aid for the persecuted. The issue continues to be controversial until today, so closer examination of it from the perspective Catholicism versus Democracy can offer new insights in the field.

4) Already during the Nazi occupation, basic structures of the underground activities emerged which grew later into the strong armed resistance movement during the first system before the occupations, civil society there have been quite strong. The research sources indicate that the social network of former Catholic youth organizations was very important as a tool of mobilization. Similarly the Catholic social philosophy

authorities against the Church needs to be examined from that perspective as one of

5) The new wave of public protest against the Soviet system, inspired by Catholics,

example of Catholics for the genesis of the massive liberation movement, which emerged in Lithuania at the end of 1980's. It can be suggested however that for a large part of Lithuanian society, at the moment, Catholicism (Catholic Church) remained only as a symbol of consciousness but not as a significant development.

The project will analyze mostly traditional methods of historical research - description problem-oriented and comparative analysis - summarizing already existing research on some objects as well as introducing primary sources. On the other hand the research will be open to interdisciplinary approach employing some elements of methodology used in

answers to dilemmas raised by democratization. Besides the fate of Lithuanian

Catholicism in Eastern Europe, especially when compared with countries whose society

and culture were strongly dominated by the Catholic Church (Poland, Slovakia or Hungary). So it can offer interesting material for a comparative analysis as well to

Catholicism in other parts of the world which are having very different experience of the XXth century.

Possible publication outlets:

Religion, State & Society

Kirchliche Zeitgeschichte

Church History Studies in Christianity and Culture

The Journal of Ecclesiastical History