

Alternatives to Lithuanian ethnonationalism in the 19th century

Critical remarks on recent debates in Lithuanian
historiography

by

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Attempts to write counter-factual histories, trying to find answers to the question 'what if...' are not new.¹ In Polish historiography, for example, pondering such questions is an age-old tradition.² Frequently, the course of alternative events is also debated in research on nationalism.³ In this paper I would like to assess historiographic alternative possibilities of Lithuanian nationalism and formulate some new ideas concerning them. In general, one can detect the following counter-factual scenarios in historiography on this topic:

- the foundation of Lithuanian national identity on civil rather than ethno-cultural values⁴;

¹ See, for example, ALEXANDER DEMANDT: *Ungeschehene Geschichte. Ein Traktat über die Frage: Was wäre geschehen, wenn?*, Göttingen 1984; *Co by było, gdyby... Historie alternatywne* [What Would Have Happened if... Alternative Histories], ed. by JANUSZ OSICA and ANDRZEJ SOWA, Warszawa 1998.

² MICHAŁ BOBRZYŃSKI: "Gdyby" w historii ['If' in History], in: *Co by było, gdyby* (cf. footnote 1), pp. 6-8.

³ IAROSLAV HRYTSAK: Ruslan, Bohdan, and Myron: Three Constructed Identities among Galician Ruthenians/Ukrainians, 1830-1914, in: *Extending the Borders of Russian History. Essays in Honor of Alfred J. Rieber*, ed. by MARSHA SIEFERT, Budapest – New York 2003, pp. 97-112.

⁴ This alternative is fairly frequently defined in Western historiography using the terms 'Western' or 'civil (political)' as opposed to 'Eastern (European)' or 'cultural' nationalism, although this dichotomous division has increasingly come under criticism: according to critics, even 'typical' French civil nationalism strongly accents the significance of history and culture as national indicators. See HEINZ-GERHARD HAUPT, CHARLOTTE TACKE: *Die Kultur des Nationalen. Sozial- und kulturgeschichtliche Ansätze bei der Erforschung des europäischen Nationalismus im 19. und 20. Jahrhundert*, in: *Kulturgeschichte heute*, ed. by WOLFGANG HARDTWIG and HANS ULRICH WEHLER, Göttingen 1996, S. 263-264. This, of course, does not deny that differences between the types of nationalism formed in Western and Eastern Europe exist, although the concepts of '(ethno)cultural nation' and 'civil nation' should be understood as ideal types.

- the establishment of Samogitian rather than Lithuanian nationalism⁵;
- the orientation of the Lithuanian national movement towards Russian culture.

Before engaging in a discussion of these alternatives, it is central to remember the possibility that Lithuanians, through integration, acculturation, and assimilation, could have constituted a part of a so-called 'historical nation' (that is, either the Polish or Russian). Academic Lithuanian historiography has only discussed this scenario in a limited fashion. Entertaining such an alternative is, of course, not worthy of attention to those who hold a primordialist view. According to them, the appearance of Lithuanian ethnonationalism was objective and inevitable. But a similar problem has been discussed in the case of Ukrainian nationalism, where it was observed that the Little Russians became Ukrainians rather than Russians because the Russian authorities were unable to implement a consistent, expedient national policy; the Romanov empire was insufficiently modernised in order so that 'objective' circumstances (that is, people's greater mobility, urbanisation, etc.) were unable to hasten assimilation. The project of the so-called "all-Russian nation" or "tripartite Russian nation" competed with Polish nationalism, and a "Ukrainian Piedmont" existed.⁶

The famous mid-nineteenth century publisher, journalist, historian, and statistician Adam Kirkor became a symbol of the first alternative scenario to Lithuanian ethnonationalism discussed in Lithuanian historiography.⁷ Drawing on multiple analyses of this famous Vilnius cultural figure, the Lithuanian historian Antanas Kulakauskas has concluded that,

"on the eve of the 1863-64 Uprising[,] conditions had formed in Lithuania for Lithuanian national culture to form (that is modern national culture typical of modern times) and the basis for this was a synthesis of peasant sub-culture with the values of the gentry culture of the Grand duchy. The tendency for a united trilingual community to form became clear. This tendency could have spread if the 1863 Uprising had been a success."⁸

⁵ Samogitia is the western region of Lithuania. In the nineteenth century this term was sometimes used for all of Kaunas Province. At the same time, Samogitia could also have a narrower meaning, denoting merely the territory where the inhabitants spoke one of the dialects of Lithuanian, namely Samogitian.

⁶ ALEKSEI MILLER: *Rossiiā i rusifikatsiia Ukrainy v XIX veke* [Russia and the Russification of Ukraine in the 19th Century], in: *Rossiiā – Ukraina. Istoriia vzaimootnoshenii*, ed. by ALEKSEI MILLER et al., Moskva 1997, pp. 145-155.

⁷ The *Krajowcy* Movement, which started at the beginning of the 20th century, should presumably not be considered an alternative to Lithuanian nationalism since its conception was, in and of itself, a response to the national movements that had already formed (primarily Lithuanian and Polish).

⁸ ANATANAS KULAKAUSKAS: "Šaka atskilusi nuo tautos..." Lietuvos bajorijos ir LDK bajoriškiosios kultūros vaidmuo lietuvių tautiniame atgimime" ['A Branch Split off

The Uprising of 1863 and the Russian policy, which changed concomitantly with it, are usually considered in historical literature as a turning point in the history of Lithuanian nationalism. According to this narrative, after the 1863 Uprising the new leaders of Lithuanian nationalism, who by and large came from the Suwałki Province (a part of the Kingdom of Poland) and had studied at Russian universities thanks to special scholarships, later preferred to work with the authorities rather than with the Poles in pursuing Lithuanian rights. Other authors state that in the second half of the nineteenth century the leaders of modern Lithuanian nationalism adopted the pan-Slavic conception of an 'ethnographic nation', which, on the one hand, allowed them to ethnographically distance themselves from the Poles, but on the other hand pushed the Lithuanians towards the Russian geopolitical sphere of influence.⁹ In other words, the policy of the Russian authorities was one of the most important if not the most important reason for the anti-Polish attitude of Lithuanians.

Beginning in the mid-nineteenth century we can find some Lithuanian intellectuals that part from the linguistically and culturally Polonised nobility. They perceived historical Lithuania as a region which had maintained its singularity from the Kingdom of Poland.¹⁰ Extensive research has revealed that a separate programme, a different discursive approach, for studying Lithuanian historical sources had been developed in the mid-nineteenth century with a clear aim to prove the distinction between "our" history from that of Poland.¹¹ Still, the idea raised about the 'formation of a Lithuanian national trilingual community', in my understanding, has certain deficiencies.

I will begin with the least important matter. First of all, doubts arise concerning the intentions of Kirkor himself. Prior to the 1863 Uprising, he promoted the idea that Lithuania differed from Poland within the guise of a

from the Nation ...' The Role of Lithuania's Nobility and GDL Noble Culture in the Lithuanian National Awakening], in: *Sietynas* 3, 1988, pp. 75-98. The same idea was formulated by SAULIUS PIVORAS: *Lietuvių ir latvių pilietinės savimonės raida. XVIII a. pabaiga-XIX a. pirmoji pusė (Lyginamasis aspektas) [The Development of Lithuanian and Latvian Civil Consciousness. Late 18th Century – First Half of the 20th Century (A Comparative Aspect)]*, Kaunas 2000, pp. 131-132.

⁹ ČESLOVAS LAURINAVIČIUS: *Netradicinė recenzija Leono Sabaliūno monografijai "Lietuviška Socialdemokratija iš perspektyvos, 1893-1914 m." [A Non-traditional Review of Leonas Sabaliūnas' Monograph "Lietuviška Socialdemokratija iš perspektyvos, 1893-1914 m." (Lithuanian Social Democracy from a Distance, 1893-1914)]*, in: *Liaudis virsta tauta*, ed. by GYTIS VAŠKELIS, Vilnius 1993 (*Lietuvių Atgimimo istorijos studijos*, 4), pp. 437-448.

¹⁰ ZITA MEDIŠAUSKIENĖ: *Kas skyrė ir kas jungė lietuvius bei lenkus XIX a. viduryje [What Separated and United Lithuanians and Poles in mid 19th Century]*, in: *Istorija* 40, 1999, pp. 12-18.

¹¹ REDA GRIŠKAITĖ: *Simono Daukanto raštai, Laiškai Teodorui Narbutui: epistolinis dialogas [The Letters of Simonas Daukantas. The Letters to Teodoras Narbutas: An Epistolary Dialogue]*, Vilnius 1996, pp. 11-170.

historical-cultural perspective. But other information known about his activities and acquaintances interferes with this picture of Kirkor as a promoter of a 'united trilingual community'. In the late 1830s and early 1840s he practically wrote only in Russian, and in one letter to Józef Ignacy Kraśzewski he even stated that he had decided not to write in Polish ever again.¹² During the Uprising of 1863 he was the official editor of the newspaper *Vilenskii vestnik* and had earned the trust of Vilnius governor general Mikhail Murav'ev. In 1865-66 he even proposed a project for ecclesiastic union which would in all likelihood have led to the elimination of the Catholic Church in the Russian Empire (with the notable exception of the Kingdom of Poland).¹³ This information gives cause to doubt that Kirkor could be described as a promoter of the idea of a 'united trilingual community'.

It is also difficult to justify the possibility of this alternative for more general reasons. First of all, we should remember the social conflict between Lithuanian speaking peasants and the estate owners as well as the influence this conflict had within other social groups on the national Lithuanian-Polish conflict.¹⁴

Indubitably, some imperial officials nurtured thoughts of using "divide and rule" as a policy principle, but there were also those who opposed the employment of such measures.¹⁵ Regardless of this opposition, Russian policy was nonetheless able to induce interethnic conflict. For example, repressions by the authorities after the 1863 Uprising appear to have disrupted cultural centres in the lands of the former Grand Duchy of Lithuania (GDL), especially the one in Vilnius, and the local nobility became a 'consumer of

¹² MAŁGORZATA STOLZMAN: *Czasopisma Wileńskie Adama Honorego Kirkora* [The Vilnius Journals of Adam Honory Kirkor], Kraków 1973, p. 36.

¹³ MIKHAIL DOLBILOV, DARIUS STALIŪNAS: "Obratnaia uniiā": Proekt prisoedineniia katolikov k pravoslavnoj tserkvi v Rossiiskoi imperii (1865-1866 gg.) ['Counter Union': The Project to Incorporate Catholics into the Orthodox Church in the Russian Empire (1865-1866)], in: *Slavianovedenie* 2005, vol. 5, pp. 3-34.

¹⁴ ZITA MEDIŠAUSKIENĖ: Apie dvarininkų ir valstiečių santykius ne iš klasių kovos pozicijų [On the Relations between Peasants and Landlords from Other Points of View than the Class-struggle One], in: *Dvaras modernėjančioje Lietuvoje. XIX a. antra pusė – XX a. pirma pusė*, ed. by GIEDRĖ JANKEVIČIŪTĖ and DANGIRAS MAČIULIS, Vilnius 2005, pp. 15-25.

¹⁵ As early as the 1850s, when the idea had arisen to segregate 'Samogitians' and 'Poles' in schools, the principal critique admonished the policy of divide and rule: "All measures, by which it would be sought to divide the inhabitants of the Western Region from an ethnic perspective would hardly correspond to the government's objectives since this region is subject to the ruler of the Russian superstate and must ally itself with Russia." Official letter from the Overseer of the Vilnius education district to the interior minister, 29 January 1854, Rossiiskii gosudarstvennyi istoricheskii arkhiv (Russian State Historical Archive, St. Petersburg, henceforth RGIA), f. 733, op. 62, d. 1224, l. 89.

the cultural production' created in ethnic Polish lands – they began to view the lands of the former GDL as an ordinary Polish province.

Moreover, alongside the tendency to accent the difference between the lands of the former GDL and the Kingdom of Poland, there was another notably strong tendency amongst the Polish-speaking nobility to accent the affinities of all the lands of the former Commonwealth of the Two Nations. At the same time, the concept of an ethnic Lithuania as the true Lithuania was already being promoted in texts printed in Lithuanian. An important contribution to this concept, for example, appeared in the booklets of Mikalojus Akelaitis (Michał Akieliewicz). He claimed that the concept of Lithuania also included the lands of East Prussia, which encompassed the area where Lithuanians of Lithuania Minor lived. Some regard this as the source of the modern conception of the state of Lithuania.¹⁶

The interpretation under discussion also fails to explain why all the national movements of the non-dominant ethnic groups that formed in the empires of Central and Eastern Europe in the nineteenth century were ethno-cultural rather than civil in nature. Finnish nationalism, which was eventually able to unite the Finnish- (Fennoman) and the Swedish-speaking (Svecoman) movements, might be the only exception. But this exception only proves the rule. Throughout the nineteenth century, the Grand Duchy of Finland had broad autonomy in the Russian Empire and the domination of a Swedish-speaking elite was caused not so much by their social or economic influence over the peasants as by their position in the administration. When Russian authorities attempted to implement an aggressive integration policy in Finland at the close of the nineteenth century, the Swedish-speaking elite began to look for allies. In this way the Swedish- and the Finnish-speaking inhabitants began to unite in the face of a common enemy.¹⁷

Thus the proposed conclusion is that the ethnocultural nature of Lithuanian nationalism was inevitable, but that this inevitability should not be understood in a primordialist fashion. Rather, it can be explained through the formation of a specific intelligentsia within an East Central European, multi-ethnic empire. The argument is as follows: modernisation initiated in the Russian

¹⁶ ZITA MEDIŠAUSKIENĖ: Lietuvos samprata XIX a. viduryje [The Conception of Lithuania in the Mid-Nineteenth Century], in: *Praeities baruose*, Vilnius 1999, pp. 217-224, here p. 223.

¹⁷ RISTO ALAPURO: *State and Revolution in Finland*, Berkeley 1988, pp. 89-100; KALLERVO HOVI: Der finnische und estnische Nationalismus. Ein Vergleich, in: *Finnns and Hungarians between East and West. European Nationalism and Nations in Crisis during the 19th and 20th Centuries. The Proceedings of the III Conference of Finnish-Hungarian Historians in 1988*, Helsinki 1989 (*Studia Historica*, 32), pp. 52-53; HANNES SAARINEN: Staatsvolk oder Minderheit? Die Identität der schwedischsprachigen Bevölkerung in Finnland vor dem Ersten Weltkrieg, in: *Entwicklung der Nationalbewegungen in Europa 1850-1914*, ed. by HEINER TIMMERMANN, Berlin 1998 (*Dokumente und Schriften der Europäischen Akademie Otzenhausen*, 84), pp. 365-377.

Empire by the bureaucratic apparatus promulgated unification impulses, which led to the cultural assimilation or acculturation of other nations. At the same time, the process of modernisation created conditions for the formation of a new social stratum – the intelligentsia – who still found it difficult in large part to establish themselves in the traditional structures of the Empire. For example, since Lithuanians were Catholics, they were treated as ‘potential Poles’ and not hired by either administrative institutions or schools. Therefore, the intelligentsia created or joined opposition movements. Seeking support also amongst the peasantry, they had no alternative but to give ethnocultural values or social problems prominence. The elevation of the prominence of these values should also be connected to the intelligentsia’s objective of disassociating themselves from the traditional elite.¹⁸ Thus, one could tentatively conclude that ethnocultural nationalism of non-dominant ethnic groups in Central and Eastern Europe was inevitable.

There was another alternative. Samogitia, it is known, was the most important region for the Lithuanian national movement prior to the Uprising of 1863 and for some time afterwards. Moreover, until the mid-nineteenth century, in addition to attempts at creating a standardized Lithuanian from several principle dialects, there were also various projects to create a Samogitian language, which would serve as a common language for all ethnic Lithuanians and/or on par with two other standard languages: Aukštaitian and Prussian Lithuanian.¹⁹ Considering the significance of standardized language for the national movements of this European region, the language project would perhaps be the most radical example of Samogitian separatism (from Lithuanians).²⁰ Still, even if the Samogitian dialect had become the basis for a common language, it is highly speculative that the national movement would

¹⁸ VLADAS SIRUTAVIČIUS: Vincas Kudirka’s Programme for Modernizing Society and the Problems of Forming a National Intelligentsia, in: *Lithuanian Historical Studies* 5 (2000), pp. 99–112.

¹⁹ Giedrius Subačius has raised the hypothesis that “it could have happened that[,] had Russia not banned the Lithuanian press after the 1863 Uprising, a common Great Lithuanian language with more Samogitian elements but also with some Aukštaitian grammatical forms would have perhaps continued to form in the environment, in which Valančius wished to create a Samogitian Academy”. GIEDRIUS SUBAČIUS: *Žemaičių mąstymo apie bendrinę kalbą istorijos metmenys* [The Dimensions of the History of Samogitian Thinking about a Common Language], in: *Metmenys* 72 (1997), pp. 125–148, here p. 147.

²⁰ Standard Lithuanian was formed by the end of the 19th and the beginning of the 20th century and has since been based on the southern sub-dialect of the Western Highlanders’ (*aukštaičiai*) dialect. The fact that this dialect became the basis of the common language is in large part connected with the circumstance that the Suwałki (Suwalki) Province became the centre for the Lithuanian national movement in the second half of the 19th century.

have become a 'Samogitian' movement since the ethnonym "Lithuanian" was markedly more practical in declaring historical succession.

The third possibility, i.e. the possibility of a culturally pro-Russian orientation, has received little attention in historiography to date.²¹ To my knowledge, such a possibility occurred in the mid-1860s when the Russian authorities attempted to introduce Cyrillic letters into Lithuanian. In this case we intend to make the claim that a different Russian national policy might have influenced the development of Lithuanian culture in another direction.

It is necessary to acknowledge that positing such assumptions is not new in historical literature. Historians have already noticed that the nature of nationalism of non-dominant ethnic groups is largely dependant on the policy of imperial authorities. In this context, the ideas of the German historian Rudolf Jaworski are especially interesting. He states that the different governing techniques of the three empires corresponded with various Polish 'responses' in the nineteenth century. That is to say, repressions in the Russian Empire corresponded with conspiratorial activities and eventual uprisings; policies of systematic assimilation in Prussia (and later in the German Empire) corresponded with systematic work to preserve Polish culture; and a subtle search for balance in Austria (and later in Austria-Hungary) corresponded with negotiations and agreements.²² John D. Klier also discussed this problem in a similar manner, asking why Jews in the Russian Empire, unlike their fellow Jews in the Habsburg Empire, were not loyal subjects even though they were generally considered an 'imperial nation' within the Russian Empire. For example, Jews with various political views always supported imperial statehood in Russia, the state within the boundaries that existed in the nineteenth century, and made it a political priority. Klier argued that the judeophobe mindset of the imperial government created conditions that actively encouraged the movement of Jews into political opposition, be it revolutionary or 'bourgeois'.²³

The same problem could be discussed in the case of Lithuanian nationalism. During the interwar period several Lithuanian researchers stated that the Cyrillic letters in Lithuanian works were received with success in Lithuanian society.²⁴ Nevertheless, it is fairly difficult to confirm this assertion, especially

²¹ Politically speaking, Lithuanian nationalism and especially rightwing activists were in large part inclined to be pro-Russian. How else was it possible to aspire for a Lithuanised Vilnius, especially considering the fact that the majority of the population consisted of Jews and Polish-speaking city residents?

²² RUDOLF JAWORSKI, CHRISTIAN LÜBKE, MICHAEL G. MÜLLER: *Eine kleine Geschichte Polens*, Frankfurt am Main 2000, pp. 270-271.

²³ JOHN D. KLIER: *Why Were Russian Jews Not Kaisertreu?*, in: *Ab Imperio*, 2003, No. 4, pp. 41-58.

²⁴ JUOZAS TUMAS: *Rusų rašmenims nepasisekus. 25 metų sukaktuvėms* [The 25th Anniversary of the Failure of Russian Writing], in: *Lietuvos aidas*, 1929, No. 82;

since few facts are known about the motives and frequency of Lithuanians' Cyrillic usage in private correspondence²⁵; what is known is that there was only one Lithuanian book written in Cyrillic as due to private initiative (all others were ordered by the government).²⁶ Thanks to research carried out during the Soviet era and during the last 15 years concerning a fairly large corpus of information about book smugglers, the activities of Telšiai Bishop Valančius²⁷, the illegal press, etc. we can now state that Lithuanian society did not accept Cyrillic.²⁸ Still, there is some legitimacy in questioning Lithuanians' positive or negative reception of this experiment at the outset.

It is not easy to determine what the initial reaction of the peasants was to Lithuanian books in Cyrillic that began to be distributed. Nevertheless officials, in founding so-called "schools for the people" in Kaunas Province, submitted several reports which described the reaction of the peasants to the Lithuanian primers published using Russian letters. Šiauliai Gymnasium Inspector Sergei Popov reported: "Speaking of the primer, I showed it to the peasants everywhere, except Salantai. Everywhere this primer was met with especial coldness and even plain displeasure".²⁹ Recognizing that these books could become a potential obstacle to founding schools, Popov began to act more cleverly and later did not initially even show peasants this primer,

VACLOVAS BIRŽIŠKA: Spaudos draudimo klausimai [Questions on the Press Ban], in: *Kultūra*, 1929, No. 5, p. 249. Of course, the worldview of the public figures of that time was also reflected in the discussions that took place in the 1920s and 1930s: it could be said that the anti-Polish atmosphere, which predominated during the entire period of the Second Republic, created more favourable conditions not so much for an anti-Russian as for an anti-Polish conception of history. Therefore one should not be surprised by the discussions of contemporary historians, in which these at times favourably assessed Russian authorities' presence in Lithuania in the 19th century, including the introduction of the Cyrillic alphabet in Lithuanian writing.

²⁵ JURGITA VENCKIENĖ: Kirilika rašytas lietuviškas atvirukas (XX amžiaus pradžia?) [A Lithuanian Postcard Written in Cyrillic (Early 20th Century?)], in: *Archivum lithuanicum* 6 (2004), pp. 315-318.

²⁶ MYKOLAS BIRŽIŠKA: *Lietuvių tautos kelias į naują gyvenimą. T. II: Atbundanti tauta – darbai, žygiai ir veikėjai* [The Lithuanian People's Road to a New Life. Vol. II: The Awakening Nation – Works, Movements, and Chief Figures], Los Angeles 1953, p. 8.

²⁷ For more on Valančius, see: VYTAUTAS MERKYS: Bishop Motiejus Valančius, Catholic Universalism and Nationalism, in: *Lithuanian Historical Studies* 6 (2001), pp. 69-88.

²⁸ ANTANAS TYLA: *Garšvių knygnešių draugija* [The Society of Garšviai Book Smugglers], Vilnius 1991; VYTAUTAS MERKYS: *Draudžiamosios lietuviškos spaudos kelias 1864-1904* [The Road of the Banned Lithuanian Press 1864-1904], Vilnius 1994; IDEM: *Knygnešių laikai 1864-1904* [Book Smugglers' Times, 1864-1904], Vilnius 1994; RIMANTAS VĖBRA: *Lietuviškos spaudos draudimas 1864-1904 metais* [The Ban on Lithuanian Press during 1864-1904], Vilnius 1996.

²⁹ Popov's report, 28 July 1864, Manuscript Department of the Russian National Library, St. Petersburg (Otdel Rukopisei Rossiiskoi natsional'noi Biblioteki – henceforth OR RNB), f. 523, d. 263, l. 9.

acquainting the more reliable among them with the new publication only after they had agreed to found a school.³⁰ Thus, even from the official's report we see that the peasants viewed the Lithuanian primer printed in Cyrillic at the very least cautiously or with distrust.

On the other hand, it is easier to reconstruct the view of educated Lithuanians. As is known, the idea to replace Latin letters with Cyrillic ones was formulated first not by imperial officials, but rather by the Lithuanian intelligentsia as early as 1859 as they formulated ways to dissociate themselves from the Poles.³¹ Many members of the intelligentsia offered their services or co-operation in preparing the first publications in Cyrillic after the Russian authorities began their experiment.³² Additionally, there is no knowledge of whether Valančius would have resisted the introduction of Cyrillic from the very beginning. Some Lithuanians, incidentally, were not ashamed even in the interwar period to contribute to the introduction of Cyrillic in Lithuanian writing.³³

Thus the question arises why the Lithuanians changed their view of this experiment by the Russian authorities. I will attempt to substantiate a version that this change was determined by the altered policy of imperial authorities.

At the outset, the publication of Lithuanian texts in Cyrillic characters was intended to become a component of the more general programme to de-Polonise Lithuanians. Some officials and influential Slavophiles thought that this step would not halt the development of Lithuanian writing, rather encourage it: Lithuanian could be standardised and taught in schools (including secondary schools), which had previously not been the case.³⁴

Additionally, such a letter-replacement project could have also appealed to educated Lithuanians. They were not unique in this. Part of the Latvian intelligentsia, seeking to reduce the influence of the Germans in the Baltic

³⁰ Popov's report to the Overseer of the Vilnius education district, OR RNB, f. 523, d. 58, l. 2.

³¹ Profesorius Andriaus Ugianskio laišakai į vysk. Valančių [Letters from Professor Andrius Ugianskis to Bishop Valančius], in: *Tauta ir žodis* 7 (1931), pp. 326-336, here p. 331.

³² A letter from A. Urbanavičiaus to the Overseer of the Vilnius education district, 27 December 1864, and not hired by either, f. 523, d. 61, l. 1-2; MERKYS: *Knygnešių laikai* (cf. footnote 27), pp. 30, 34.

³³ Iš Tomo Žilinskio atsiminimų [From the Recollections of Tomas Žilinskis], in: *Lietuvos mokykla, antrieji ir tretieji metai*, Kaunas 1919/1921, p. 488; M. BIRŽIŠKA: *Lietuvių tautos kelias* (cf. footnote 26), p. 8.

³⁴ For more on this issue, see: DARIUS STALIŪNAS: Identifikatsia, iazyk i alfavit litovtsev v rossiiskoi natsional'noi politike 1860-kh godov [Identification, Language, and Script of Lithuanians in Russian Nationality Policy (in the 1860s)], in: *Ab Imperio*, 2005, No. 2, pp. 225-254.

region, also proposed “returning” to Cyrillic.³⁵ It is interesting that part of the Lithuanian intelligentsia viewed this experiment positively. For example, Andrius Ugianskis, who was the first to raise this idea, worked in Kazan, where Nikolai Ilminskii had just begun his activities. The mass conversion of some national groups to Islam, which had begun there, forced the authorities to look for antidotes. In order to resist the penetration of Islam and pan-Turkism, the well-known missionary and scientist Ilminskii began to prepare the publication of various Volga region non-dominant ethnic groups in Cyrillic in the mid-nineteenth century. In other words, Cyrillic was used to create the writing for the local languages and was intended to strengthen their identity and protect them from the Tartars’ assimilation project.³⁶ Quite possibly, Lithuanian intelligentsia – especially those who worked in Kazan and had anti-Polish attitudes – could consider Ilminskii’s system a model for Lithuanians.

However, Lithuanian educational policy in the North West Province fell into the hands of people who promoted a different type of nationality policy. The bureaucrats of the education district of Vilnius interpreted the introduction of Russian characters as a means of facilitating the learning of Russian by Lithuanians: like the project to institutionalise the teaching of Russian in primary schools, introducing Cyrillic into Lithuanian was received as part of the attempt to turn the language into a Russian dialect and to convert

³⁵ PAULIS LAZDA: *The Phenomenon of Russophilism in the Development of Latvian Nationalism in the 19th Century*, in: *National Movements in the Baltic Countries during the 19th Century*, ed. by ALEXANDER LOIT, Stockholm 1985, pp. 129-135, here p. 130.

³⁶ It is a very interesting coincidence that in 1858 (a year before Ugianskis had the idea of switching to the Russian alphabet in Lithuanian), Ilminskii, together with his colleague Sablukov, proposed a programme, which later acquired the name “Ilminskii’s system”: ROBERT GERACI: *Window on the East. National and Imperial Identities in Late Tsarist Russia*, Ithaca – London 2001, p. 58. It should also be noted that Jonas Juška, with whom Vilnius Education district overseer Ivan Kornilov in early 1864 discussed the possibility of using the Cyrillic alphabet in Lithuanian, was also in Kazan beginning in 1862. See ANTANAS MOCKUS: *Broliai Juškos: Lietuvių liaudies dainų rinkėjai ir leidėjai* [The Brothers Juška: Collectors and Publishers of Lithuanian Folksongs], Vilnius 2003, p. 68. Attention should be paid to the fact that, as early as the mid-nineteenth century, the Juška brothers proposed introducing new characters with diacritic marks in the Lithuanian alphabet, having previously used the same letters as in Polish. In scientific literature these experiments are explained as an aspiration of the Juška brothers to simplify the alphabet on an ‘economic basis’, i.e. to express the same sounds with fewer letters (L. PETRAS JONIKAS: *Lietuvių bendrinės rašomosios kalbos kūrimas antrojoje XIX a. pusėje* [The Creation of a Standard Lithuanian Written Language in the Second Half of the 19th Century], Čikaga 1972, pp. 194-196 [I would like to thank Jurgita Venckienė for information on this publication]). But in this place it would be worthwhile asking whether these experiments were prompted by an aspiration to dissociate themselves from the Poles.

Lithuanians to Orthodoxy, the latter of which was impossible at the outset due to the religious devotion of the Lithuanians, which was regarded a fanaticism.

This altered policy, especially the rewriting of religious books in Cyrillic, apparently also induced Valančius to resistance.³⁷ One could assume that the replacement of the letters in religious books was also the greatest inducement for the resistance on the part of Lithuanian peasants. According to Popov, after he had succeeded in convincing the peasants of the benefits of the primers rewritten in Cyrillic, the peasants asked about the prayer books. After hearing that these as well would be published using Russian letters, "all of them became silent and bent their heads".³⁸ In other words, there seemed to be a threshold of acceptance; rejection was markedly higher in the case of religious publications.

Thus, according to one hypothesis, the Russian authorities might have been able to achieve better results in introducing Cyrillic into Lithuanian writing if they would have implemented their policy more cautiously and if they would have (at least for some time) refrained from manipulating religious books. Moreover, the authorities probably would not have received such resistance from the Catholic clergy. Secular books with Russian letters would have had a certain demand, and in a cultural sense Lithuanians, especially the less religious, would have yielded more to Russian influence and, consequentially, would have been more loyal to the empire.³⁹

I do not, of course, wish to thereby say that merely subtler policies would have been sufficient to push out the traditional alphabet. Such a displacement was impossible as long as Lithuanians were Catholic. In various contexts of that time the alphabets were closely connected with religion: Latin with Catholicism, Gothic with Protestantism, and Cyrillic with Orthodoxy. The imperial authorities, even after the 1863 Uprising, when Belarusian Catholics were forced in large numbers to convert to the Orthodox faith, left the

³⁷ According to Lithuanian historian Vytautas Merkys, Valančius was unable to trust officials, who "[stuck] their hands into Catholic prayer books"; the latter did indeed attempt to introduce Orthodox elements into Catholic prayer books and ignored the bishop's comments: Cyrillic "remains unsuited for Lithuanian's special phonetic features". The faithful, in his opinion, would not buy such books. See VYTAUTAS MERKYS: Motiejus Valančius: tarp katalikiško universalizmo ir tautiškumo [Motiejus Valančius: Between Catholic Universalism and Nationality], Vilnius 1999, pp. 705-713.

³⁸ A copy of Popov's report, 28 July 1864, in: OR RNB RS, f. 523, d. 263, l. 9.

³⁹ This, of course, does not mean that there were no members of the Lithuanian intelligentsia who promoted an almost reckless Russophile line. For example, the teacher Andrius Botyrius stated in 1884 that Lithuanians had no possibility of being an "independent nation" and that they needed to unite with the Russians. See a letter from A. Botyrius to Ivan Davydovich (Delianov?), 18 September 1884, RGIA, f. 733, op. 121, d. 764, l. 156-163.

Lithuanians in peace.⁴⁰ In other words, the conversion of Lithuanians to the Orthodox faith was not an immediate goal.

The importance of religion in selecting script is well illustrated in the case of the Belarusians. Beginning with the 1905 Revolution, Belarusian publications in Latin and Russian alphabets competed, but Cyrillic began to dominate fairly quickly. In 1912 the decision by the newspaper *Naša Niva* to no longer publish the newspaper in both alphabets – rather to retain only Cyrillic, since publishing in two alphabets was expensive – could be considered the symbolic victory of Russian letters. But this decision was determined primarily by the religious composition of the Belarusians: the majority were members of the Orthodox Church.⁴¹

This article, like a discussion of any other alternatives, can be criticised for its presumed futility. In my opinion, the discussion of counter-factuals is useful in that it allows one to reject a teleological view of historical events and accentuate the effect of certain decisions (such as changes in the Russian nationality policy vis-à-vis script-replacement) on long-term processes (in this case, the cultural orientation of Lithuanian nationalism).

⁴⁰ DARIUS STALIŪNAS: Rol' imperskoi valsti v processe masovogo obrashcheniia katolikov v pravoslavie v 60-e gody XIX stoletiiia [The Role of the Imperial Government in the Mass Conversion of Catholics into Orthodox Believers in the 1860s], in: Lietuvių katalikų mokslo akademijos metraštis 26 (2005), pp. 307-347.

⁴¹ SIARHEJ TOKT': Latinita ili kirilitsa: problema vybora alfavita v belorusskom natsional'nom dvizhenii vo vtoroj polovine XIX – nachale XX veka [Latin or Cyrillic Alphabet: The Problem of Alphabet Choice in the Belarusian National Movement in the Second Half of the 19th – Early 20th Century], in: Ab Imperio, 2005, No. 2, pp. 297-319.