

# Sebastian Rimestad

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## From empire to nation state: the consolidation of the relationship between the orthodox church and independent Lithuania and Latvia after the first world war

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Studia Podlaskie 20, 211-223

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2012

Artykuł został opracowany do udostępnienia w internecie przez Muzeum Historii Polski w ramach prac podejmowanych na rzecz zapewnienia otwartego, powszechnego i trwałego dostępu do polskiego dorobku naukowego i kulturalnego. Artykuł jest umieszczony w kolekcji cyfrowej [bazhum.muzhp.pl](http://bazhum.muzhp.pl), gromadzącej zawartość polskich czasopism humanistycznych i społecznych.

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SEBASTIAN RIMESTAD

University of Erfurt, Germany

sebastian.rimestad@uni-erfurt.de

## FROM EMPIRE TO NATION STATE: THE CONSOLIDATION OF THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE ORTHODOX CHURCH AND INDEPENDENT LITHUANIA AND LATVIA AFTER THE FIRST WORLD WAR

In the new independent nation states that appeared on the Western edge of the Russian Empire after 1917, the local Orthodox Church had to rethink its identity completely mainly for two reasons. First, it was no longer the dominant church and second, the new states claimed to be secular, not privileging any particular religious organisation. In all these states, from Finland to Poland, the Orthodox faithful were, moreover, a minority. This paper is a comparison of the relationship between the secular state and the Orthodox Church in Latvia and Lithuania. It covers the time period from 1917 until the late 1920s, when the relationship in both states had been consolidated.

The relationship between the church and the state is complicated by the incompatibility of the religious and the secular discourse. The church operates on the basis of ecclesiastical or canon law, which regulates the way it is internally organised and how it relates to other churches. Secular law, on the other hand, regulates the way citizens interact with the state. While these two types of law fulfil similar regulative, preventive and control functions, they differ in their origins. Secular law is based on state authority; it is usually codified and can in principle be applied by anyone able to read. Orthodox canon law, on the other hand, is based on divine authority, handed down to earth by God through Jesus Christ and the apostles in a long chain through the centuries to the local bishop.<sup>1</sup> Therefore, the position and authority in the church hierarchy of the responsible bishop is more important than the letter of the law. More importantly,

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<sup>1</sup> Zariņš, Jānis, 1939, *Pareizticīgās baznīcas un tās mantas tiesiskais stāvoklis Latvijā* [The Orthodox Church Properties and their legal status in Latvia], LPBS Izd., Rīga, p. 32-33; Patsavos, Lewis, 1975, *The Canonical Tradition of the Orthodox Church*, available at <http://www.goarch.org/ourfaith/ourfaith7071> (15.03.2012).

the two types of law differ fundamentally in their aims. Canon law is designed to guide the faithful towards salvation, whereas secular law is interested in controlling and regulating society. When this modern secular law became prevalent in the new nation states at the periphery of the Russian Empire, the secular authorities had very different aims from those described in terms of canon law.

In the nineteenth century, the Orthodox Church was the state church of the Russian Empire. It was heavily influenced by the state, to the extent that it was at times difficult to distinguish between the state and the Russian Orthodox Church. This was especially the case during the term in office of the ultra-conservative *Oberprokuror* of the Most Holy Synod Konstantin Pobedonoscev (1880-1905).<sup>2</sup> In the Baltic and Western provinces, although the Orthodox Church was favoured, it remained one among several churches and, in the Latvian and Lithuanian areas, definitely a minority church. There were attempts in these regions to strengthen the Orthodox Church. In the provinces of Livland and Kurland, there were spontaneous mass conversions from Lutheranism to the Orthodox Church during the nineteenth century, while the province administration of Vitebsk, Kaunas and Vilnius tried to incite conversions from Catholicism to Orthodoxy, albeit much less successfully.<sup>3</sup> Until 1905, conversion away from the Orthodox Church was prohibited. Once a member of the Orthodox Church – always a member.

After the failed revolution of 1905, when Tsar Nikolai II proclaimed a manifesto of religious freedom, conversion became possible and many reluctant Orthodox believers returned to their former faith. The role of the Orthodox Church in the eyes of many Russians – as a facilitator of Russification – remained strong and important. The church was, however, no longer able to fulfil this role, as the Latvian and Lithuanian nationalism had reached a stage where it required more than Orthodox propaganda to make them Russian.

The February Revolution of 1917 changed this drastically, as it enabled the church to act freely beyond state control. It did not hesitate to call an All-Russian Church Council – a so-called *sobor* – which gathered in Moscow in August

2 Полунов, Александр Ю., 1996, *Под властью обер-прокурора: Государство и церковь в эпоху Александра III* [Under the Power of the *Oberprokuror*: State and Church during the Reign of Alexander III], Серия “Первая Монография”, Москва. The *Oberprokuror* was a lay state functionary, responsible for the correct workings of the governing body of the Russian Orthodox Church, the Most Holy Synod.

3 Гаврилин, Александр В., 1999, *Очерки истории Рижской епархии 19 век* [Historical Sketches of the Riga Eparchy – 19th Century], Filokalija, Rīga; Staliūnas, Darius, 2007, *Making Russians – Meaning and Practice of Russification in Lithuania and Belarus after 1863*, Rodopi, Amsterdam & New York; Rimestad, Sebastian, 2011, “Die Russische Orthodoxe Kirche in den Ostseeprovinzen und in Litauen im Vergleich (1836-1905)” in Markus Krzoska (Ed.), *Zwischen Glaube und Nation*, Martin Meidenbauer, München, p. 71-85.

1917. Its sessions officially continued until September 1918, but after the Bolshevik Revolution, none of its decisions could be implemented.<sup>4</sup> In fact, only one decision was wholly implemented, namely the re-establishment of the Patriarchate, with Archbishop Tikhon (Bellavin), formerly Archbishop of Vilnius and all Lithuania becoming Patriarch. Patriarch Tikhon was now the arbiter of all unresolved canon law issues within the Russian Orthodox Church, especially since the *sobor* did not manage to implement any further decisions due to Soviet persecution. This included the question of reorganising the Orthodox Church structures in areas no longer part of Russia, such as Lithuania and Latvia.

## Lithuania

The process of 'normalisation' of church-state relations in Lithuania reached its peak in 1923. Following the First World War, Lithuania declared its independence on 16th February 1918, beginning the state-building process in the face of attempts by the German army to stay in Lithuania and Soviet attempts to spread the revolution. The region around the designated capital Vilnius changed hands several times until it was occupied by Polish forces in 1920. It remained Polish until the Second World War, forcing the Lithuanians to declare Kaunas the temporary capital.

In this complicated context, the religious policy of the young state was first and foremost directed at the Roman Catholic Church, to which slightly more than 80 % of the population belonged. The Orthodox Church was only the church of 1.13 % of the population, i.e. just over 22,000 members. Moreover, more than nine out of ten of the Lithuanian Orthodox were ethnic Slavs.<sup>5</sup> The pre-war Orthodox population of the region had been higher, but the Russian imperial authorities had evacuated the three Orthodox monasteries and much of the clergy and administration in 1915, leaving many Orthodox parishes deserted. Some of the deserted churches were used by the German army for military purposes. When the army left, the keys were often handed to the local Catholic priest.<sup>6</sup> This prompted one Catholic bishop in 1918 to ask the provisional

4 Schulz, Günter, Gisela-A. Schröder and Timm C. Richter, 2005, *Bolschewistische Herrschaft und Orthodoxe Kirche in Rußland – Das Landeskonzil 1917/1918*, LIT Verlag, Münster.

5 Laukaitytė, Regina, 2003, *Stačiatikių Bažnyčia Lietuvoje XX amžiuje* [The Orthodox Church in Lithuania in the 20th century], Lietuvos istorijos institutas, Vilnius, p. 12.

6 Laukaitytė, Regina, 2001, "Lietuvos Stačiatikių Bažnyčia 1918-1940 m.: Kova dėl cerkvių" [The Lithuanian Orthodox Church 1918-1940: Battle for churches], in *Lituanistica*, 2(46), p. 18.

government to officially hand over “all pre-war Orthodox buildings, churches and monasteries which seem to be deserted” to the Catholic Church.<sup>7</sup> There was a general anti-Orthodox mood in Lithuanian society, since the majority of the Lithuanians considered the Orthodox Church an unnecessary remnant of Tsarist rule. The first Lithuanian government, however, eager to show its secular nature, even started to prepare a law returning confiscated property to the Orthodox Church. Another Catholic bishop protested: “The Russian Church can only lay claim to what has been built with Orthodox money in Lithuania. Everything else should be given to the Catholic Church.”<sup>8</sup> The property return was never put into effect, for most of the Orthodox property was considered the property of the state property from the Tsarist era. 41 of the 72 Orthodox churches that had existed in Lithuania in 1915, together with most of the ecclesiastical land holdings, were in the hands of the Roman Catholic Church or the local authorities by 1922. Many Orthodox parishes had to content themselves with the former cemetery chapels.<sup>9</sup>

The regulations of the Russian Empire concerning religions had remained more or less in force. Therefore, the eight recognised religions of the Empire were *de jure* recognised also in Lithuania, in principle including the Orthodox Church.<sup>10</sup> However, the formalisation of this relationship was delayed, primarily because of the unclear internal organisation of the church.<sup>11</sup> The former Bishop of Vilnius and all Lithuania, Tikhon (Bellavin), had become Patriarch of Moscow, and the Eparchy (Diocese) was entrusted to his vicar, Bishop Elevation<sup>12</sup> (Bogojavlenskii) of Kaunas (an ethnic Russian, as were most Orthodox in Lithuania). The latter returned to Vilnius already in autumn 1918 and began establishing new structures in the Eparchy. He soon appointed an Eparchy council, which could not meet however, until 1920. At that time, Vilnius was already occupied by Poland, and communication across the border was extremely difficult. Elevation therefore delegated a commissary to Kaunas to take care of that part of the Eparchy.<sup>13</sup>

7 Laukaitytė, 2003, p. 24.

8 Laukaitytė, 2003, p. 24, 27-28.

9 Laukaitytė, 2001, p. 21-22; Laukaitytė, 2003, p. 36.

10 Laukaitytė, Regina, 2010, “Lietuvos religinės mažumos 1918-1940 m. valstybės globoje” [The religious minorities in Lithuania (1918-1940) in the eyes of the government], in *Bažnyčios Istorijos Studijos* [Studies in Church History], III, LKMA, Vilnius, 2010, p. 250-251.

11 Marcinkevičius, Andrius and Saulius Kaubrys, 2003, *Lietuvos Stačiatikių Bažnyčia 1918-1940 m.* [The Orthodox Church in Lithuania, 1918-1940], VAGA, Vilnius, p. 69.

12 This is a transliteration of the Russian spelling of his name. In Lithuanian it would be ‘Eleuterijus’.

13 Laukaitytė, 2003, p. 13; Marcinkevičius and Kaubrys, 2003, p. 56.

The Lithuanian government was obviously not so pleased having a resident of Vilnius as head of the country's Orthodox community. In order to satisfy the demands of the Lithuanian government, a second Eparchy council was established in Kaunas in 1921. Also in 1921, Patriarch Tikhon of Moscow officially named Elevation Archbishop of Vilnius and Lithuania, notifying the President of Lithuania seven months later. With this delay, the Lithuanian government finally recognised Elevation as the legitimate head of the Orthodox Church in Lithuania on 29th March 1922, "as long as the question of the Eastern border of Lithuania remains unresolved."<sup>14</sup> This decision had been accelerated by the developments in the Polish Orthodox Church, soliciting autocephaly (full ecclesiastical independence). Archbishop Elevation, disapproving of these plans, protested and was promptly arrested. The Lithuanian government displayed its hostility to Poland by recognising him as Archbishop. The recognition did not have much effect, as the Polish authorities had confined Bishop Elevation to a monastery. In January 1923, after the Lithuanian government had filed a complaint with the League of Nations, he was allowed to travel to Kaunas, where he was received with festivities at the railway station.<sup>15</sup>

Elevation's arrival in Kaunas initiated the second stage of the church-state relations. While the Polish Orthodox Church considered the Eparchy of Vilnius divided along the state borders, Archbishop Elevation stubbornly insisted on being the legitimate head shepherd of both parts of the Eparchy. By retaining the title *Archbishop of Vilnius and Lithuania*, he was a potential ally to the Lithuanian government in the 'Vilnius question.' Therefore, it did not insist on the creation of a Lithuanian Orthodox Church independent from Moscow, as was the case in all the other nation states on the Western edge of the former Russian Empire.<sup>16</sup>

Instead, the decision to make the Orthodox Church one of the eight recognised religious communities in Lithuania was formalised with a specific legal act in May 1923.<sup>17</sup> According to this act, the state paid the salaries of the Orthodox clergy and funded church maintenance and reparations of wartime destruction. Moreover, the state was to provide clergy education and the Orthodox Church was allowed to keep a civil registry. Although the act was called 'temporary,' it remained in force until the Second World War, providing the

14 Laukaitytė, 2003, p. 15.

15 Laukaitytė, 2003, p. 16; Mironovicz, Antoni, 2005, *Kościół prawosławny na ziemiach polskich w XIX i XX wieku* [The Orthodox Church in Polish Lands in the 19th and 20th Centuries], Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu w Białymstoku, Białystok, p. 97.

16 Laukaitytė, 2010, p. 257.

17 Laukaitytė, 2003, p. 17; Marcinkevičius and Kaubrys, 2003, p. 70.

Orthodox Church with a fundament on which it could flourish. Nevertheless, the act also contained some duties for the Orthodox Church. These included, first and foremost, that only Lithuanian citizens should be employed in the church administration and that they ought to know Lithuanian. Even the parish structure of the church was regulated by this act: only ten parishes were acknowledged, although up to 31 parishes existed at times.<sup>18</sup>

The general anti-Orthodox mood did not disappear with this legal act. According to a Catholic priest, looking back in 1930, the state funding for the Orthodox Church was disproportionate; the Orthodox had received on average 2 *litas* per year, while only 79 *centas* had been paid for each Catholic.<sup>19</sup> In the eyes of the Patriarchate of Moscow, on the other hand, Eлевferii was treated as a hero, being the only Orthodox bishop outside the Soviet Union who remained loyal to the Patriarchate.<sup>20</sup> Patriarch Tikhon granted him the right to wear a jewelled cross on his *klobuk* in 1924,<sup>21</sup> and his successor, Patriarchal deputy *locum tenens* Metropolitan Sergii (Stragorodskii), granted the Lithuanian Eparchy wide autonomy and Eлевferii the title *Metropolitan* in 1928. When Metropolitan Evlogii (Georgievskii), Exarch of Western Europe fell out with Metropolitan Sergii of Moscow, the latter elevated Metropolitan Eлевferii to Exarch of Western Europe.<sup>22</sup>

The internal developments did not interest the Catholics in the majority, who continued to complain against the treatment of the Orthodox Church, claiming that it was now time to pay back the injustices suffered during the imperial era. The government had to find a balance between the Catholic demands and the provisions set forth in the constitution and in the act of recognition. The state did not want to lose the loyalty of its Orthodox citizens. On the other hand, the Catholic influence on Lithuanian politics could not be denied.<sup>23</sup> Although the relationship between the Lithuanian state and the Orthodox Church had normalised, this did not mean that the Orthodox faith-

18 Laukaitytė, 2003, p. 29-30.

19 Cited in Petras Būčys, 1936, "Rusai stačiatikiai ir sentikiai Lietuvoje" [The Russian Orthodox and Old Believers in Lithuania], in *Athenaeum*, 7/1, p. 69. A *litas* is the Lithuanian currency, equal to 100 *centas*. See also Laukaitytė, 2003, p. 30-31.

20 Excepting Metropolitan Evlogii (Georgievskii) and Bishop Veniamin (Fedchenkov), both based in Paris and catering for the Russian Diaspora in Western Europe and several bishops that had been deprived of their Eparchy.

21 Mironowicz, 2005, p. 97, fn. 68. This is an honorary dignity, awarded to especially worthy bishops in the Slavic Orthodox Churches.

22 Laukaitytė, 2003, p. 22-23.

23 Laukaitytė, 2003, p. 34. Arūnas Streikus, 2012, "The History of Religion in Lithuania since the Nineteenth Century", in Milda Ališauskienė and Ingo W. Schröder (Eds.), *Religious Diversity in Post-Soviet Society*, Ashgate, Farnham, Surrey, p. 39-40.

ful enjoyed a privileged status. The state in 1927 signed a Concordat with the Vatican, which provided the Catholics with a special status, but this did not change their position towards the Orthodox minority significantly. Rather, the authoritarian turn in Lithuanian politics cooled the state-church relationship in the 1930s, especially in relation to the Catholic Church, which threatened to question the state's monopoly on public life. The Orthodox Church was not affected by this, and the state even sponsored a new Orthodox Cathedral in Kaunas in and organised a seminary for the preparation of new clergy.<sup>24</sup>

### Latvia<sup>25</sup>

The relations between the Orthodox Church in Latvia and the Latvian government were similarly complicated. In 1919, most of the Latvian territory was controlled by the Bolshevik Government of Peteris Stucka. This government decreed the separation of church and state on 20th February 1919.<sup>26</sup> For the churches, this was difficult, as they were deprived of any rights and defences they had previously. They were now declared an enemy of the people to be destroyed.<sup>27</sup> Once the communist regime was replaced at the end of 1919, almost anything would be an improvement from living with Bolshevik terror.

The Latvian state which emerged in 1920, after the War of Independence, included the province of Latgale, which was formerly a part of the imperial province of Vitebsk, mostly inhabited by Catholics. The young government of Latvia declared it a priority to integrate this area into the Latvian nation. To facilitate the international recognition of Latvian independence, the government held talks with the Catholic Church, expecting an agreement with the Vatican to improve their standing.<sup>28</sup> Just as in Lithuania, the Orthodox Church in Latvia was seen as a remnant of Tsarist rule, which would fade away with the waning of the Russian Empire. The government refused to acknowledge the

24 Laukaitytė, 2003, p. 59-60; Marcinkevičius and Kaubrys, 2003, p. 164-165; Streikus, 2012, p. 43. This seminary only worked for three years between 1930 and 1932. Thereafter, the Orthodox Church could not find the necessary ten candidates to be allowed to start new courses.

25 For the Latvian case, see also Rimestad, Sebastian, 2012, *The Challenges of Modernity to the Orthodox Church in Estonia and Latvia (1917-1940)*, esp. Peter Long, Frankfurt/Main et al, p. 113-141.

26 Runce, Inese, 2008, *Valsts un Baznīcas attiecības Latvijā: 1906.-1940. gads* [The State-Church relations in Latvia: 1906-1940], unpublished PhD Dissertation, University of Latvia, Riga, p. 117.

27 Runce, 2008, p. 117-122.

28 Balodis, Ringolds, "Church and State in Latvia", in Silvio Ferrari et al. (eds.), *Law and Religion in Post-Communist Europe*, Peeters, Leuven et al., 2003, p. 143.



existence of the Orthodox Church as long as it remained subordinate to Moscow. Moreover, it was so eager to reach an agreement with the Vatican that it promised the Catholic Church the Lutheran St. James's parish church in Riga as Cathedral and the Orthodox Alekseev monastery as bishop's residence. The Latvian majority, who were Lutherans, immediately began a public debate regarding the handover of the Peter-and-Paul church. Thus, the Orthodox protest was silenced. The Lutherans demanded a referendum on the handover, but not enough voters turned up to arrive at a decision.<sup>29</sup>

The Orthodox community in Latvia, counting about 9 % of the population,<sup>30</sup> was in a dire state, just as in Lithuania. It had been severely ravaged by years of war and the subsequent Bolshevik terror. Many priests and almost all church treasures, including many church bells, had been evacuated to inner Russia. Bishop Ioann (Smirnov), who had headed the eparchy until 1917, was transferred to Rjazan and the Estonian Bishop Platon (Kulbusch), who had been named temporary administrator, was killed by the Bolsheviks in 1919. Nevertheless, the Orthodox Latvians managed to organise several gatherings from 1918 to 1920 during which the church structure was re-established, and elections for an eparchy council were carried out.<sup>31</sup> Although some of the church's spokesmen wanted to sever the link with Moscow, the gatherings only agreed to send letters to Patriarch Tikhon asking that Archbishop Ioann (Pommer) of Penza, a native Latvian (Jānis Pommers in Latvian orthography), be named the new Bishop of Riga. Tikhon finally agreed in July 1921 and Jānis was allowed to travel to Riga to take up the new post.<sup>32</sup>

He stopped in Moscow on the way and received an act of autonomy from Patriarch Tikhon, who personally named him Archbishop of Riga and All Latvia. However, the Alekseev monastery in Riga, where he was supposed to reside, was to be given to the Catholic Church. Instead, Jānis took up residence in the cathedral cellar, where there was neither sun nor running water or sewage. He accepted this home in order to demonstrate his dissatisfaction with state poli-

29 Озолиньш, К., 1997, "Положение Латвийской Православной Церкви в 20-е годы XX века" [The situation of the Latvian Orthodox Church in the 1920s], in Гаврилин, Александр В. (ed.), *Православие в Латвии: исторические очерки, том II* [Orthodoxy in Latvia: Historical Sketches, Vol. II], Filokalija, Rīga, p. 25-28; Runce, 2008, p. 140.

30 The number of Orthodox faithful in Latvia rose from almost 140,000 in 1920 to 170,000 in 1930. However, the percentage of the total population stayed between 8.7 and 9.1 %. The increase coincided with the mass return of refugees from the First World War of all confessions. Озолиньш, 1997, p. 15.

31 "Latvijas pareizticīgās baznīcas pirmie, brīvie soļi" [The first free steps of the Orthodox Church of Latvia] in *Krusta Ēna*, 1/1, 1920, p. 4-6.

32 Pommers, Antonijs, 1931, *Православие в Латвии, исторические очерки* [Orthodoxy in Latvia, historical sketches], изд. автора, Rīga, p. 79; Zarins, 1939, p. 29-30; Kalniņš, Jānis, 2001, *Svētais Rīgas Jānis* [The Holy Jānis of Riga], Jumava, Rīga, p. 85-97.

cies and to prevent the cathedral being taken from the church.<sup>33</sup> As to why the Orthodox Church could not have better legal standing, the Ministry of the Interior presumably answered: "There is nothing in the Latvian laws about any Orthodox Church and its organs, nor is there anything about protection of this church. Moreover, legalisation of the Orthodox Church in Latvia is currently not in the national interest."<sup>34</sup> This answer prompted Archbishop Jānis to characterise the situation in democratic Latvia as worse than in the USSR. He attempted to counter the argument that the Orthodox Church promoted the 'Russian spirit' theologically, arguing that the Russians had little to do with the Orthodox Church, which is much older than Russian civilisation.<sup>35</sup>

Although a new law from 1923 on religious organisations guaranteed them the status of juridical persons, this was not applied to the Orthodox Church. Although Archbishop Jānis and the ethnic Russian *Saeima* (parliament) delegate A. S. Botčagovs fought hard in order to achieve legislation of their church, they could not win their case. The state authorities were determined to organise the Orthodox Church structures as it suited them. They requested information through the embassies in Finland and Estonia about the transfer to the jurisdiction of Constantinople, which the local Orthodox communities had carried out in 1923. Both states replied that they hoped a similar solution could be found in Latvia. However, they expressed their doubts because of the experienced and conservative Archbishop Jānis heading the Latvian Orthodox Church. If the Latvian government gave in to the Archbishop, that would mean defeat.<sup>36</sup>

Archbishop Jānis would not give in to government pressure, as he demonstrated during the first local council of the Latvian Orthodox Church in autumn 1923. During his opening speech, the Archbishop explained his view of the situation, with enemies all around, blind to the obvious benefits of recognising the Orthodox Church.<sup>37</sup> The strategy did not bear fruit; expropriation and discrimination continued. Between 1919 and 1925, the state had expropriated 28 of the about 150 Orthodox places of worship in Latvia, including the Riga Cathedral, which Archbishop Jānis was allowed to use, providing he did not organise a congregation there.<sup>38</sup> Moreover, the Alekseev monastery and its church, which had previously housed the Bishop of Riga, remained in Catholic hands and also the Riga Orthodox Seminary remained out of bonds to the Orthodox faithful.

33 Kalniņš, 2001, p. 100; Runce, 2008, p. 159.

34 Pommers, 1931, p. 80. All later mentions of this reply refer only to this arguably biased source; Antonijs Pommers was Archbishop Jānis' brother.

35 Kalniņš, 2001., p. 106-107.

36 Runce, 2008, p. 159-161.

37 See Rimestad, 2012, p. 127-129 for more on this speech.

38 Kalniņš, 2001, p. 105.

In 1925, then, Archbishop Jānis of Riga changed strategy. Instead of having the lay politician Botčagovs re-elected to the *Saeima*, he himself was put on the ballot. Many Orthodox, not only ethnic Russians, voted for Jānis, who then became a delegate to the second Latvian *Saeima*. He remained in the *Saeima* until it was disbanded in 1934, twice running successful re-election campaigns.<sup>39</sup> In his first *Saeima* speech in June 1926, during the debate on the 1927 state budget, the Archbishop diplomatically argued that he would not be able to call the Latvian Orthodox Church independent until it was recognised by the state. Suddenly, everything transpired very quickly and as soon as October 1926, the Orthodox Church of Latvia was recognised as a legal entity with Archbishop Jānis at its head.<sup>40</sup> It was entitled to the same rights as the Lutheran and Catholic Churches, including limited state support.

With Archbishop Jānis in the *Saeima*, it was no longer possible to ignore the complaints of the Orthodox community in Latvia. It was allowed to start clergy education in an Orthodox Seminary and was treated fairly in the next years. Archbishop Jānis had categorically refused to follow the Estonian example, switching from the jurisdiction of the Moscow Patriarchate to that of Constantinople, but he always argued that the Latvian Orthodox Church was *de facto* independent. Following the death of Patriarch Tikhon of Moscow, while affirming his loyalty to the Russian Orthodox Church, Jānis failed to recognise the new ecclesiastic leadership in Russia, thus confirming the claim to independence. However, the Archbishop's uncompromising attitude and ambiguous political stance made him a target for criticism from the political left and right as well as from some Orthodox circles. This insecure situation led to his assassination in 1934. The circumstances of the murder have never been solved and probably never will, due to the many possible culprits.

## Conclusion

In both cases, despite very different contexts and challenges, there is an important similarity. Both Elevation and Jānis were conservative and remained loyal to Moscow, unlike the Bishops in Poland, Estonia or Finland. Moreover, full

<sup>39</sup> The time in the *Saeima* has been analysed by Kalniņš, Jānis, 2001, p. 116-134; Runce, 2008, p. 162-164; Rimestad, 2012, p. 131-141.

<sup>40</sup> Zariņš, 1939, p.40. According to Kalniņš, 2001, p. 118, this was a direct result of Jānis' political efforts. Runce, 2008, p. 161-162 does not mention such a direct link, but rather the weakness of the Moscow Patriarchate.

state recognition of the two churches only appeared after the Archbishops had 'entered' the state territory – i.e. had become interesting to the authorities. In Lithuania, this happened when Eлевferii refused to follow the Polish bishops on the road to autocephaly. Especially after his arrival in Kaunas – on Lithuanian state territory – in January 1923, the Lithuanian government had to act. In Latvia, it occurred when Jānis was elected to parliament in 1925, thus 'coming closer' to the government. In both cases, the governments could no longer ignore the Orthodox Church. In Lithuania, it was a potential ally against Polish expansionism and in Latvia, its ruling Archbishop was a very outspoken parliamentary delegate.

Another important similarity was the general anti-Orthodox mood in society. In both cases, the Roman Catholic representatives were the most ardent critics of the Orthodox Church, possibly since they had experienced most antagonism from this church during the time of the Russian Empire. The dominant Lutheran Church in Latvia was too busy limiting the influence of the Baltic Germans, formerly the undisputed masters of this church, to be much concerned with anti-Orthodox criticism. More importantly, Archbishop Jānis had realised that good relations with the Lutheran Church could only benefit his church, and avoided provocations.

Nevertheless, the further developments in the two states show that the similarities end here. Whereas the Lithuanian Orthodox Church remained under the same legal regulations with the same man at its head, the Church of Latvia was completely reorganised after the still unresolved murder of Archbishop Jānis in 1934. This time, the government pushed the church out from Moscow's influence and stipulated that it switch to the jurisdiction of Constantinople.<sup>41</sup> The independence was short-lived, however, as the church was more or less forcefully integrated into the Moscow Patriarchate after the Soviet occupation in 1940. However, the fascinating circumstances of this integration are outside the scope of this paper.<sup>42</sup>

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41 See Кулис, А., 1993, "К вопросу об автокефалии латвийской православной церкви в 30-х годах XX века" [On the question of autocephaly in the Latvian Orthodox Church in the 1930s], in Гаврилин, Александр В. (ed.), *Православие в Латвии: исторические очерки, том I* [Orthodoxy in Latvia: Historical Sketches, Vol. I], Filokalija, Rīga; Rimestad, 2012, p. 160-163.

42 See Alexeev, Wassilij and Theofanis G. Stavrou, 1976. *The Great Revival – The Russian Church Under German Occupation*, Burgess, Minneapolis, MN.

**STRESZCZENIE****Od Imperium/Cesarstwa do państwa narodowego:  
Umocnienie/utrwalenie stosunków między Kościołem Prawosławnym  
a niepodległą Litwą oraz Łotwą po pierwszej wojnie światowej**

Narodowy Kościół Prawosławny w Imperium/Cesarstwie Rosyjskim został radykalnie zreorganizowany w następstwie pierwszej wojny światowej. Wprowadzenie nowych struktur wewnętrznych, do których ponownie włączono Patriarchat Moskiewski, było szczególnie istotne dla eparchii obecnie znajdujących się poza granicami Związku Radzieckiego, tak jak Kraje Bałtyckie. W każdym z tych krajów restrukturyzacja kościelna oraz „normalizacja” stosunków z władzami politycznymi odbywała się w szczególny sposób. Niniejszy artykuł bada rozwój tych zmian na Litwie i Łotwie, gdzie Kościół prawosławny był początkowo nieufnie postrzegany jako instytucja imperialistycznego państwa przez młode państwa narodowe. W obu przypadkach nowo wybrani arcybiskupi zostali nazwani w 1921 roku i obaj musieli stoczyć ciężką bitwę o prawne uznanie ich Kościoła. Jednak po „przystąpieniu” do terytorium świeckiego państwa obaj ułożyli pomyślnie swoje modus vivendi z władzami świeckimi.

**Kluczowe słowa:** Kościół prawosławny, Łotwa, Litwa, rok 1920, religia i polityka

**Резюме****От Империи по национальное государство: Укрепление отношений  
между Православной церковью и независимой Литвой и Латвией  
после первой мировой войны**

Национальная Православная церковь в Российской империи была радикально реорганизована вследствие первой мировой войны. Введение новых внутренних структур, в которые вновь включили Московский патриархат, было особенно важным для епархий, в настоящее время находящихся за пределами Советского Союза, так, как Прибалтийские страны. В каждой из этих стран реструктуризация церкви и «нормализация» отношений с политическими властями происходила особенным образом. Настоящая статья исследует развитие этих изменений в Литве и Латвии, где на Православную церковь молодые национальные государства вначале смотрели с недоверьем как на институт империалистического государства. В обоих случаях новоизбранные Епископы были названы в 1921 г.

и оба должны были вести тяжелое сражение за правовое признание их Церкви. Однако после «вступления» в территорию светского государства оба успешно сложили свои «модус вивенди» со светскими властями.

**Основные слова:** Православная церковь, Латвия, Литва, годь 1920, религия и политика