

THE PUBLICATION OF A MODERN LITHUANIAN LANGUAGE LUTHERAN HYMNAL IN THE SOVIET PERIOD

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Abstract

During the 'Khrushchev Thaw', the Soviet government eased its anti-religious policies, and this opened up the possibility for the Lithuanian Lutheran Church to publish its first postwar hymnal. However, due to its too 'modern' language, the 1956 hymnal was not introduced in parishes, but was only intended for personal use. The demand for a hymnal in line with the modern Lithuanian language remained relevant. Therefore, the 1970 synod decided to prepare a hymnal, the texts of which would be closer to the old hymns in the 1936 Lithuania Minor hymnal. The hymnal was published in 1982, and was introduced for use in many parishes. The third edition appeared in 1988. The article describes the challenges the Church faced in preparing a hymnal during the Soviet period, both internally and from the atheist Soviet government, which viewed religious literature as the manifestation of a foreign ideology.

KEY WORDS: Lutheran Church, hymnal.

Anotacija

„Atšilimo laikotarpiu“ sovietinei valdžiai sušvelninus antireliginę politiką, Lietuvos liuteronų bažnyčios Konsistorija atspausdino pirmąjį pokarinį giesmyną. 1956 m. knyga dėl pernelyg modernios giesmių kalbos parapijose nenaudota, skirta tik asmeniniam naudojimui. Giesmyno, kuris labiau atitiktų bendrinės kalbos normas, poreikis išliko, tad 1970 m. Sinodas nusprendė parengti naują giesmyną, tik nurodė senąsias giesmes redaguoti taip, kad savo turiniu jos per daug nenuotiltų nuo 1936 m. „Pagerintų giesmių knygu“. Knyga publikuota 1982 m. ir sėkmingai naudota daugelyje parapijų. Trečioji giesmyno laida pasirodė 1988 m. Straipsnyje aprašyti iššūkiai, su kuriais susidūrė Liuteronų bažnyčia rengdama giesmyną sovietinės ateizacijos laikotarpiu tiek jos pačios viduje, tiek iš komunistinės valdžios pusės, kuri į religinio pobūdžio literatūrą žvelgė kaip į svetimos ideologijos apraišką.

PAGRINDINIAI ŽODŽIAI: Liuteronų bažnyčia, giesmynas.

DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.15181/mtd.v0i9.2594>

Introduction

In 1956, after a dozen years of Soviet rule in Lithuania, the Lithuanian Lutheran Consistory received permission to publish a small hymnal and prayer book in the modern Lithuanian language. It was an event of great significance, because never before had the Soviet government permitted the publication of such a formidable piece of religious literature by the Lutherans. The hymnal appeared in print in 1957,¹ but it was not well received by the congregations, and in the course of time it fell into disuse. What was most important about it was that the communist government allowed it to be printed and distributed at all. Still, copies of the old hymnal were no longer available, and existing copies were wearing out. A new hymnal was sorely needed, and in 1982 it finally appeared. This hymnal marked the beginning of a gradual transition from the old to the new Lithuanian language. Some parishes still resisted its use. It was eventually the appearance of a third edition in 1988 which marked the acceptance of a single standard hymnal by almost all congregations.

This short article describes the attempts by the Church to produce a hymnal in the modern Lithuanian language, and its negotiations with the communist government and its agencies to obtain permission to publish it. It also describes the great sensitivity of the communist government with regard to publishing any and all religious material in Lithuania. Finally, it indicates why the 1956 hymnal was rejected by most congregations and was set aside, as well as the movement towards greater consensus, which led to the acceptance of the 1982 and 1988 editions.

The principal sources revealing the processes involved include material found in the Lithuanian Central State Archives (LCVA), the personal papers of Bishop Jonas Kalvanas Sr (JKA), and the archives of the Consistory of the Lithuanian Lutheran Church (KA).

¹ The hymnal was printed in the spring of 1957, but since the year of publication was not given and the foreword was written in 1956, official Church records list its publication date as 1956.

1. Attempts to produce a modern language hymnal before the Second World War

Pagerintos Giesmių knygos,

turiose
brangiausių senos ir naujos

Giesmės

įrašytos

Diewui ant Garbės

ir

Lietuwiniſkams ant

Duſių Įſganymo

podraugiu

Maldu Knygomis

bei nauju trečioſios Dalies Papildymu

Naujai išleido Klaipėdos Preſto
Ewangelizacijai Konfliktai
1936 Metais

Spausdinta įpaustumeje „Situtaria“
Klaipėda, Palangos gatvė 23/24

The title page of the 1936 ‘*Improved Hymn Books*’, the last edition of the Prussian-Lithuanian hymnal

At the time of the Soviet occupation in 1940, Lutherans in Lithuania were part of a church which was divided into three separate ethnic groups, Lithuanian, Latvian and German. Each group worshiped in its own language and had its own hymnal. The hymnal of the Lithuanian-speaking congregations, *Pagerintos giesmių knygos* (Improved Hymn Books), was in fact the hymnal of Lithuanian-speaking congregations in East Prussia, the north-east borders of which were known as Lithuania Minor. This hymnal had a long and noble ancestry, dating back to the 16th century, when the first Lithuanian-language books appeared in print. It was the legacy of the pastors Martynas Mažvydas, Baltramiejus Valentas and other early Lithuanian writers. Pastor Danielius Kleinas produced the first Lithuanian grammar and edited hymns to comply with the rules of his Lithuanian grammar. Printed in Lithuanian *fraktur* typescript, the hymnal went through many editions and continued in use into the 20th century

as a single hymnal for use not only by Lutherans in East Prussia and Memelland but also in Lithuania Major.

The hymns continued in use, even though many of the words were no longer part of the modern Lithuanian language as defined by Jonas Jablonskis

in his *Lietuviškos kalbos gramatika* (Grammar of the Lithuanian Language). Jablonskis based his work on his West Highland (Aukštaitija) dialect, together with some features of the older Prussian Lithuanian dialect. His language was that of the Kaunas and Suvalkija regions. Most Lithuanian Lutherans, however, inhabited regions in west Lithuania along the borders of East Prussia and the Klaipėda district (Memelland in German) which were annexed by Lithuania Major in 1923. In this region, the Lutherans were still happy with the old Lithuania Minor hymnal, and considered only a few minor corrections to be necessary. Congregations in the central region around Kaunas found the old Prussian book archaic, and younger parishioners found the wording of the hymns rather amusing. In addition, the Lithuania Minor hymnal still included prayers for the King of Prussia, his court, his government and his armies. Although the offending words were omitted by pastors, their mere presence on the printed page was thought by many to be quite offensive. It was obvious to the Lithuanian Lutheran Consistory in Kaunas that a new hymnal was needed, but there was no general agreement as to how and when it could be prepared and published.

The initial work on the new book was inspired by the 1935 decision of the autonomous Consistory of the Klaipėda region to republish the Lithuania Minor hymnal. The Kaunas Consistory brought the matter before the Ministry of Education, the supervisory body for all churches, asking that the project be cancelled. The ministry approached the governor of the Klaipėda region about it. He took no action, because the Consistory of the Klaipėda region was an autonomous body. A new edition of the Lithuania Minor hymnal, lacking only the prayers for the King of Prussia, was published in 1936.²

A swift reaction to the publication of the Lithuania Minor hymnal came from the Kaunas Consistory. On 5 June 1936 it declared that the book was unacceptable for use in parishes of Lithuania Major, and that its dissemination in those parishes would not be permitted (*Lietuvos...*, 1935–1940, 63). At the same time, it announced its decision to proceed with the publication of its own hymnal in modern Lithuanian. The decision to publish a Lithuania Major hymnal did not include anywhere any use of the word ‘Lutheran’. It referred rather to ‘Evangelicals’. This terminology was used because of the closure of

² For additional information, see Petkūnas, 2012, 7–26; Petkūnas, 2019, 6–40.

the Lutheran patriotic organisation Pagalba, which had led to the introduction of unifying tendencies in the Church, and plans to unite the Lutheran and Reformed churches into a single administrative body. These plans also included the incorporation of congregations in the Klaipėda region into the new body of the Prussian union. The Memellanders, however, were determined to remain independent, and the plan to unite the Lutheran and Reformed churches in Lithuania Major came to nothing. Still, the proposal that a common Evangelical hymnal be produced survived. The Reformed Church proposed that extensive use be made in it of Reformed and Lutheran hymns, which had been edited by the Reformed minister Adomas Šernas. By 1937, he had completed the preparation of no less than 697 hymns in modern Lithuanian.

The Kaunas Consistory had serious reservations about the use of Šernas' hymns, because they departed so radically from the old language of Lithuania Minor, and appeared to be influenced by rationalism. As a result, Lithuania Minor congregations in the Klaipėda region rejected the new book. Pastor Jonas Pauperas, who was responsible for the initial work on the new hymnal, stated that only 179 hymns edited by Šernas were usable, an additional 150 could be used if edited, and another 55 would require extensive corrections.³ Technical and editorial commissions to officially undertake the work of preparing the new hymnal were appointed by the Kaunas Consistory on 9 February 1938. The Consistory declared that hymns from three sources should be included: the Lithuania Minor hymnal, the Šernas collection, and other modern sources. The work would be sponsored by the Lithuanian Ministry of Education (*Lietuvos...*, 1935–1940, 179–183). By 1939, the commission had examined and passed judgment on no less than 959 hymns. At its 26 September 1939 meeting, the Kaunas Consistory decided that the new hymnal should contain no more and no less than 500 hymns (*Lietuvos...*, 1935–1940, 293–294).

Patriots formerly associated with Pagalba and lay preachers in the Klaipėda region protested strongly against the hymnal project. They claimed that it promoted the destruction of an ancient and honourable language. They stated that although a word or two could be modernised here and there, the ancient tongue should be regarded as sacrosanct, and congregations should continue to use it. Letters of complaint flooded the Ministry of Education.

³ LCVA f. 391, a. 4, b. 738, 182.

An insurmountable obstacle to the publication of the new book was the 1940 occupation of Lithuania by the Soviet Union. The speedy sovietisation of Lithuania, and the spread of anti-religious policies, all but eliminated any possibility that the book would be produced. The repatriations to Germany from January to March 1941 forced the departure of almost all those involved in the hymnal project. A new Consistory was formed, which consisted partly of former Pagalba members and lay preachers who were firmly opposed to the publication of a new book. On 30 April 1942, the Consistory summarily declared that it had no intention of promoting the publication of any hymnal which included hymns edited by Adomas Šernas (Lietuvos..., 1942).

At this point, the Reformed Church took the initiative and declared that it intended to publish an Evangelical hymnal. It stated that, in its opinion, 500 hymns was far too many. They proposed a book with 388 hymns, in which some of the prayers were revised and the 'Tėve mūsų' (in German 'Vater unser') was replaced by the 'Mūsų Tėve' (Unser Vater) to bring it in line with Reformed usage (A. Balčiausko..., 1942). This hymnal was published in 1943 under the title *Evangelikų giesmynas su maldomis* (An Evangelical Hymnal with Prayers). The book's introduction stated inaccurately that the book had been authorised jointly by the Reformed Collegium and the Lutheran Consistory. It went on to state that the new hymnal was meant to strengthen ties between the Lutheran and Reformed churches in their service to the Lord and to each other (Evangelikų..., 1942, 5–6). Lutheran pastors and

Isleido: Lietuvos Ev. Reformatų Kolegija
ir Lietuvos Ev. Liuterionių Konsistorija.

*Evangelikų
Giesmynas
su maldomis*



Kaunas, 1942

The title page of the 1942 'Evangelical Hymnal with Prayers'

some members of the Consistory found these statements offensive. On 23 May 1943, the question of the acceptance of the new book was put on the agenda of the Consistory, and the Consistory stated that it was unacceptable for use in Lutheran congregations, although its use in Kaunas and Telšiai parishes could be permitted, since those congregations had been reestablished after the Soviets returned to Russia (E. Lejierio..., 1943).

At the same time, the Consistory acknowledged that a new hymnal based on pure Lutheran sources with special attention to the Lithuania Minor hymnal had to be published. To make it acceptable to all congregations, no radical departures from the wording of the Lithuania Minor book would be permitted. On 15 September 1943, a new hymnal commission was appointed to undertake the work, with a projected publication date set for the 400th anniversary in 1947 of the first Lithuanian book, the Catechism of Martynas Mažvydas. Wartime conditions impeded the work of the commission, and it is unclear how much it was able to accomplish before the Soviet reoccupation of the country in the summer of 1944 (Lietuvos..., 1943; J. Kalvano..., 1943).

2. Soviet restrictions on Church publications

In the early days of the Soviet occupation, churches were led to believe that they would be free to print and distribute religious literature for priests and believers. Indeed, in 1946 the Roman Catholic Church was permitted to print for the use of its priests a general instruction on the proper use of the Roman Breviary. However, when the Archdiocese of Vilnius asked for permission to publish in Latin a liturgical calendar for the year 1947, Commissioner Alfonsas Gailevičius informed it that first he would need an accurate translation of the work in both Lithuanian and Russian so that it could be properly examined in Vilnius and Moscow. Chancellor Edmundas Basys responded that it was not possible to translate the calendar, because the terms used throughout the Church were always in Latin. Consequently, permission to print the calendar was denied. Meanwhile, Russian Old Believers were permitted to publish some religious material. On 20 July 1947, Commissioner Gailevičius sent the Supreme Council of the Old Believers 145 copies of their instructions for liturgical

observances for the year 1947, but he noted that additional material, which they had wished to append to it, was not approved. The reason given was that the material did not use the approved version of the Russian Cyrillic alphabet, and that in any case, there was not enough paper.⁴ In 1945 the Lutheran Church was permitted to print only 200 clergy identification cards and 200 travel permits (E. Leijerio..., 1945). When the church asked for permission in 1947 to publish a commemorative document celebrating the 400th anniversary of the printing of the first Lithuanian book, the Catechism by Pastor Martynas Mažvydas, it was informed that it would not be allowed to do so (Lietuvos..., 1974).

No explanation for government policy concerning the printing of religious literature was given, but it was clear that the churches would have great difficulty in obtaining the necessary permission. The Lithuanian communist government feared the power of the churches to influence their followers, and society in general, and was determined to curb that power. Religious publications were classified as ideologically harmful anti-atheist propaganda. A lack of paper was often cited, although there was always enough paper when communist material had to be printed.

Articles blaspheming God, and ridiculing priests and believers and the Christian doctrine of creation, could be found in almost every journal and newspaper, along with very slanted interpretations of Church history. Every school lesson and lecture, even in unrelated areas such as mathematics, were expected to include derogatory remarks about religion.

Only when the churches parroted the communist line on matters such as the so-called 'struggle for peace and harmony among nations' did one find any positive mention of religion and churches, and only when churches made public declarations in support of these principles, were such statements allowed to appear in print, as proof of the claim that there was freedom of religion in the Soviet Union. In the approval of the Soviet peace initiative, V. Gostev, assistant chairman to Igor Polianskii, chairman of the Council for the Affairs of Religious Cults in Moscow, wrote to Commissioner Bronius Pušinis in Vilnius informing him that the proceedings of the Peace Conference of the Churches, recently held at Zagorsk, would be printed not only in Russian, but also in English, German, French and Arabic.⁵

⁴ LCVA f. R-181, a. 1, b. 9, 22.

⁵ LCVA f. R-181, a. 1, b. 58, 95.

As late as 1948, the Roman Catholic hierarchy held out the hope that it could publish literature for its members. In that year, the representative of Bishop Kazimieras Paltarokas approached Commissioner Pušinis with a copy of a hymnal entitled 'Fasting Hymns' (*Pasninko giesmės*) and asked for permission to publish it. Pušinis examined it closely, and then stated flatly that it was filled from beginning to end with anti-Semitic Jew-baiting, which could not be tolerated in the Soviet Union. He reminded him that Stalin's Constitution stipulated punishment for all those who sought to create ethnic tensions and set one group of Soviet citizens against another. A similar refusal came in 1949 when the Roman Catholics asked for permission to publish 50,000 copies of a children's Catechism. In his rejection, Pušinis stated that he found nothing in it to incite or inspire Soviet patriotism.⁶

The proscription of religious publications was a matter of great importance to Pušinis. In his April 1953 report to Moscow, he stated that the Soviet press was doing an effective job in enticing Church members one by one to cast off the shackles of their Christian idealism, and that it was of great importance that nothing should be published that would hinder the work of the communist press.⁷

3. Changes in government policy concerning Church publications

The appointment of Nikita Khrushchev to the position of first secretary of the Communist Party made it clear that the Church would find the road ahead very bumpy and full of obstacles. Khrushchev and his close advisors seemed to believe that it really was possible to build a socialist workers' paradise in the Soviet Union. That would require steadfast confidence, determination and single-minded devotion to the communist cause. These could be accomplished if Stalin's leniency towards the Russian Orthodox Church was put aside. On 7 July 1954 the Party issued a decree entitled: 'The Serious Shortcomings of Scientific-Atheist Propaganda and their Correction'.⁸ Even before the document appeared, Georgy Malenkov, the chairman of the USSR Council of Ministers, warned Khrushchev that the decree was a declaration of war against the Church,

⁶ LCVA f. R-181, a. 3, b. 17, 6.

⁷ LCVA f. R-181, a. 3, b. 36, 11.

⁸ LYA LKP f. 1771, ap.11, b. 111, 9–13.

and that it would create a host of problems for the government. Fearing a wave of restrictions and oppression, religious activity increased dramatically. Many decided not to delay the baptism of their children and other religious activities. The Party quickly recognised that it had blundered, and scrambled to revise its position. On 11 November 1954, a new decree came off the press entitled ‘The Misdirection in the Application of the Scientific-Atheist Propaganda among the Populace’. In it, the Party admitted that the division of people into opposing categories of believers and non-believers was counter-productive to its efforts to build a united socialist society (Шкаровский, 2005, 349–351). As a result, priests and bishops were soon able to return to their churches from Siberia, and permission was given to print some religious material. Changes in official government policy now made it possible for the Lutheran Church to prepare and publish literature for use in its parishes for the first time since the end of the war.

The first initiative to publish Christian literature in Lithuania came from the Roman Catholic Church. Party officials in Lithuania understood that the matter was so serious that it should be referred to Moscow and the USSR Council of Ministers itself. On 12 December 1954, Pušinis approached Party Secretary Antanas Sniečkus, asking for a decision on the request from the Roman Catholic Church that it be permitted to publish a calendar and prayer book. Sniečkus replied without hesitation that the request must be approved, since this was within the terms of the clear instruction of Comrade Georgy Malenkov, the chairman of the Council of Ministers of the Soviet Union.⁹ The material was subsequently published and distributed early in 1955, and Pušinis announced that it was a great event in the life of believers.

Next, the Lutherans came to think that they too could ask to publish a calendar. This would entail not only the writing and compilation of appropriate material, but also a literal translation of every word into Russian, so that it could be reviewed in Moscow. Furthermore, the publication of a calendar would be expensive. The privilege of obtaining a subsidy to make literature easily affordable was reserved for atheists. The Consistory decided to ask Lutheran parishioners to subscribe in advance, so that it would have the money to publish the booklet. The price was set at the usual price for propaganda literature of

⁹ LCVA f. R-181, a. 3, b. 38, 54.

considerable size. However, the calendar would be little more than a pamphlet, because the Consistory understood that only the most innocuous articles stood any chance of being approved by the censors. On 14 January 1956, Pušinis complained to Polianskii, Sniečkus and Mečislovas Gedvilas, the chairman of the Council of Ministers of the Lithuanian SSR, that the publication of the Roman Catholic and Lutheran calendars had taken an inordinate amount of his valuable time, since everything had to be checked and double-checked.¹⁰

The Lutherans, who had paid ten roubles per copy for their calendar (*Lietuvos TSR evangelikų bažnyčios kalendorius*), received a pamphlet consisting of a calendar listing the names of the Sundays, saints' days, and name days, along with the Church's statute, regulations for pastors, and a page for notes. This document of only 30 pages was all that the commissioner and the government would permit.

All material from Church sources had to be minutely inspected for hidden meanings. Pušinis wrote to Polianskii on 1 March 1956 that Chancellor Juozapas Stankevičius of the Kaunas Archdiocese wanted to capitalise on the fact that in 1955 the church had been permitted to publish 5,000 copies of a prayer book. Now he wanted to publish 50,000 copies of a revised edition, and a Catholic journal as well. Pušinis stated that his careful examination of this material indicated that Stankevičius had subtly changed the wording of the prayer which asked that 'God might come down from heaven and bring harmony and peace among the nations', to read instead that 'He might come down and bring true freedom to the Roman Catholic Church'. Pušinis stated that Stankevičius' intentions were quite clear. He wanted to send a signal to the Vatican indicating that he was leading the struggle against the Bolsheviks, that in Lithuania there was only misery and hardship, divorce, lawlessness, poverty and thieving, and that the Church was in chains. In Pušinis' view, Stankevičius was hoping that the Vatican would reward him for his vigilance by making him a bishop.¹¹

¹⁰ LCVA f. R-181, a. 3, b. 43, 33–34.

¹¹ LCVA f. R-181, a. 3, b. 44, 21–23.

4. Attempts by the Consistory to publish a hymnal

In 1956, the Lutheran Consistory also sought permission to publish a hymnal and prayer book. On 7 March it established a commission, consisting of pastors Jonas Armonaitis, Arvidas Briedis, Vilius Burkevičius, Jonas Kalvanas and Jurgis Sprogys. It was instructed to compile a volume, based on the collection of 500 hymns originally gathered by the prewar hymnal commission, with a special emphasis on the traditional Lithuania Minor hymnal *Pagerintos giesmių knygos* (LTSR..., 1955–1990, 10).

On 19 June, Pušinis informed Polianskii that he had told the Lutherans that this request should be put before the Lithuanian Council of Ministers for action. On 27 June he wrote to Motiejus Šumauskas, the chairman of the Council, recommending that the request for the publication of 2,500 copies of a new Lutheran hymnal be approved. He stated that this was an important matter, since the Lutherans were using old German and Latvian hymnals, which contained ideologically unacceptable material. When his letter went unanswered, he wrote to Sniečkus on 16 August asking for approval for the publication of 2,000 copies of the hymnal, 200 catechisms, and 2,000 calendars. He stated that the situation was critical, because congregations were using hymnals that had been smuggled into the country from other countries and contained subversive material. When he heard nothing, he wrote on 15 September to the Central Committee of the Lithuanian Communist Party stating once again that it was of great political importance that the Lutherans be permitted to publish this hymnal.¹² Finally, on 3 October, he was able to write to the director of the Vaizdas publishing house in Vilnius informing him that permission was given for the publication of 2,000 copies of the Lutheran hymnal *Maldu ir giesmių knygelė* (Little Book of Prayers and Hymns).¹³

5. Complaints about the hymnal project

The plans for a new Lutheran hymnal also met with obstacles from within the Lutheran Church. During this period, there was growing dissension in

¹² LCVA f. R-181, a. 1, b. 91, 76, 140, 146.

¹³ LCVA f. R-181, a. 1, b. 91, 157.

the congregations. It was occasioned by the death of the Consistory chairman Ansas Baltris, and the tensions that emerged in the 1955 synod chiefly because of the growing influence of inadequately trained lay preachers in the Klaipėda region, and pastors who had formerly been members of Pagalba. These groups claimed that the Lutheran Church and its Consistory were now under the control of 'Latvians'. Furthermore, they stated that the language of the Lithuania Minor hymnal was sacrosanct, and only very minor corrections, approved by recognised Lithuanian language experts, should even be considered. They were outraged that the new hymnal was being prepared by 'Latvians', who held the noble language of Lithuania Minor in contempt and were determined to destroy it.

While this hymnal was still being prepared, a protest was presented to Pušinis on 4 October 1956 by the deacons Adomas Kybelka, Martynas Rūgys, Mikas Mickus and Martynas Ponešis, and by the Šilutė parish chairman Jonas Rupkalvis. They stated that they disapproved emphatically of the project. They insisted that a proper hymnal should be prepared by experts who knew the 'true' Lithuanian language, the language of Kristijonas Donelaitis, Liudvikas Gediminas Rėza and Fridrichas Kuršaitis. All previous Lithuanian hymnals and other Lutheran literature had followed the noble tradition of this form of speech, but the new book was being prepared by the Consistory chairman Burkevičius, who was not a Lithuanian himself but a Latvian, and who, together with his companions, did not comprehend the principles and the vocabulary of the true Lithuanian tongue. Ample proof of their incompetence was evident in the mangled 1956 calendar. Many of the names included were not Lithuanian, and there was non-essential material such as the phases of the moon and times of sunrise and sunset. The booklet was full of linguistic errors, and also included the unacceptable Church statute, which had been approved illegally in the 1955 synod. For this shoddy piece of work, the people had been forced to pay ten roubles in advance. When they finally received the work, they cast it aside in disgust, saying that they had been charged far too much for what was no more than a piece of nonsense. The complainants stated that for ten roubles they could have published a beautiful book with pictures. They charged that the Consistory had published a book

which discredited the name of the Lutheran Church in Soviet Lithuania. They asked that the commissioner should withhold permission to publish the new hymnal and any other literature produced by this 'Latvian' Consistory, since none of it was acceptable, no one would buy it, and it was no more than a waste of valuable time, paper and money (Saugū..., 1956).

Their derogatory comments fell on deaf ears, and the new hymnal was completed on Reformation Day, 31 October 1956. However, its publication was delayed. On 15 January 1957, Pušinis reported to Polianskii, Gedvilas and Sniečkus that in the past year he had had to censor no less than ten religious books. It was a monumental task that was still going on. The Central Committee and the Council of Ministers had stated that Lutheran and Roman Catholic material could be published only after it had been carefully reviewed, and every sentence which might have a hidden meaning had been edited. Before the printing presses could roll, word came that the books were not to be printed until the Central Committee of the Lithuanian Communist Party had decided how many copies were to be produced. When no word came from the Central Committee, Pušinis complained that he was getting daily calls about the books. Among the complainants was the director of the Vaizdas publishing house, who told him that the typesetters had done their work and the plates were ready to be put into the presses, but because of the delay he no longer had sufficient type for other important publications, and his work schedule was now held up.¹⁴

6. The publication of the new hymnal

The hymnal came off the presses on 7 March 1957 under the title *Maldų ir giesmių knygelė* (Little Book of Prayers and Hymns, Lietuvos..., 1958, 48). Although the Consistory had requested that 2,000 copies be printed, the government approved the printing of only 1,000.¹⁵ It was indeed a small book of only 264 pages, which consisted of 188 hymns, the liturgy, prayers for special occasions, and selected psalms.

¹⁴ LCVA f. R-181, a. 3, b. 46, 32–35.

¹⁵ LCVA f. R-181, a. 1, b. 163, 62.

MALDŲ IR GIESMIŲ
KNYGE L Ė



EVANGELIKŲ-LIUTERONŲ
KONSISTORIJOS LEIDINYS

The title page of the 1956 *‘Little
Book of Prayers and Hymns’*

The introduction, dated 31 October 1956, stated that now, for the first time, the Lutheran Church had a hymnal in modern Lithuanian that properly respected and reproduced the familiar and beloved Lutheran hymns in acceptable wording. It was not meant to replace the official Lithuania Minor hymnal, but to supplement it. It was being published for use in the home, at small gatherings, and also on occasion in Church services, by those who wished to pray and sing in the modern Lithuanian tongue (Giesmių..., 1956, 3–4).

The Consistory chairman Burkevičius presented the book to the Consistory on 14 March 1957. Parishioners purchased it, but many pastors were loath to intro-

duce it in divine services. Consequently, its use was limited primarily to private and home use. On 31 August 1959, the Consistory instructed pastors and deacons to encourage the dissemination of the book among their parishioners, and to distribute it especially among Lithuanian Lutherans living abroad (LTSR..., 1955–1990, 18–19, 46–47).

7. New Party policies and their effect on religious literature

The improvement in relations and the more liberal attitude of the Communist Party towards religious publications led the Christian churches in Lithuania to believe that the door was now open to go ahead with the publication of calendars, prayer books, and other Christian literature. In addition, the Roman Catholic Church hoped to launch the publication of a Catholic journal, since the Moscow Patriarchate had been permitted to publish such a journal. Plans for the journal seemed to proceed smoothly. However, dissensions aro-

se within the Roman Catholic ranks after the publication by Stankevičius of a strongly worded criticism of the aborted revolution in Hungary. Writing in *Tiesa* (the Lithuanian version of *Pravda*), he condemned the insurgents in Hungary. In an angry response, the Archdiocese of Vilnius and the Diocese of Panevėžys withdrew their representatives from the editorial board of the journal. Pušinis was happy to see such dissension arising in the Church, and on 7 July 1957 he asked Sniečkus and Šumauskas what position the government should take on it. Should the publication of the journal be permitted to move forward or not? The KGB made its position clear. It stated that if the journal was not going to serve the entire Roman Catholic community in Lithuania, then it should not be published at all. Sniečkus and Šumauskas agreed, and the journal never made it into print.¹⁶

Later in 1957, the Lithuanian Communist Party decided that the liberalising policies that had been instituted in 1954 had gone too far and were injurious to the spread of Marxist-Leninist socialism. It was time to reevaluate the 1954 policies and tighten control. The preparation of a new decree under the title ‘Concerning the Shortcomings of Scientific Atheist Propaganda in the Republic and the Means for its Improvement’ preceded any similar actions in Moscow and other Soviet republics.¹⁷ It introduced a new wave of atheist propaganda and stricter administrative control over the Lithuanian churches. A comprehensive statement from the Central Committee in Moscow to establish a unified policy throughout the Soviet Union was approved in 1958.

The main attack was directed against the Russian Orthodox Church of the Soviet Union, which had enjoyed a privileged position since 1943. In Lithuania, the Lutheran Church lost three more houses of worship. More central in the Lithuanian programme was stricter control over all aspects of religious life. Pastors Jurgis Sprogys and Jurgis Gavėnis were taken to court because they had broken the law by teaching catechumens in groups rather than individually. Both lost their registrations. This was Gavėnis’ second appearance in court. He had earlier been sent to Siberia. This time he was able to avoid imprisonment.

¹⁶ LCVA f. R-181, a. 3, b. 46, 43.

¹⁷ LYA LKP f. 1771, a. 191, b. 348, 18–65.

Extreme measures curtailing religious publications were implemented slowly. The Lutheran Church was permitted to publish calendars in 1957, 1958, 1959 and 1960. Roman Catholics were also permitted to publish calendars during this period, along with two prayer books, a book of the Gospels, and a liturgical calendar.¹⁸ The last calendars appeared in 1960. Commissioner Justas Rugienis was appointed to replace Pušinis. It was his plan to close down the Lutheran Consistory and the Roman Catholic diocesan chapters, the central administrative authorities in their churches. He managed to close down the Panevėžys chapter, but he had so much difficulty trying to control the priests that the plan had to be dropped.

The proscription of religious publications continued until 1966, when liturgical changes mandated by the Second Vatican Council had to be implemented in Lithuania. This necessitated the publication of a new three-volume *Collectio Ritum iuxta Rituale Romanum (Romos katalikų apeigynas)*. In 1968, the Lutherans were again permitted to publish a calendar. No further proscriptions were enacted and enforced during the communist era.

8. The 1982 hymnal

Based on the renewal of more liberal attitudes in the Communist Party towards the publication of some religious literature, the Lithuanian Consistory began to make plans for the publication of a revised, enlarged and improved hymnal. It was clear that the 1956 hymnal would never gain acceptance, chiefly because of its radical departure from the language of the old hymnal. In order to be accepted, a new hymnal would need to conform more closely to the language of the 1936 Lithuania Minor hymnal. On 5 March 1970, the Consistory decided to apply to the commissioner for permission to publish 1,000 copies of a new hymnal under the familiar title *Giesmių ir maldų knygelė*.¹⁹ The 23 August 1970 meeting of the second postwar synod approved the request, but added that the texts must conform as far as possible with the 1936 *Pagerintos giesmių knygos*.²⁰ Although Commissioner Rugienis repor-

¹⁸ LCVA f. R-181, a. 1, b. 282, 66–67.

¹⁹ LCVA f. R-181, a. 1, b. 163, 62.

²⁰ LCVA f. R-181, a. 1, b. 175, 42, 53.

ted the action to Moscow on 8 September 1970, he did not indicate either approval or disapproval, and no action was taken.²¹ The Consistory repeated the request on 8 November 1971, stating that there were no longer any copies of the 1956 book, and the extant copies of the old books were wearing out. They also cited the fact that the old books had been printed in archaic *fraktur* and contained words which had gone out of use. The Consistory established a hymnal commission to be headed by Jonas Kalvanas Sr, and including as its members Artūras Timpa, Jonas Okas, Petras Knispelis, Vilius Sprogys and Jonas Rupkalvis. The commission was permitted to call on the collaborative services of other qualified people.²²

The preparation of a new book would take several years, but the needs of the Church were immediate, and so in its meeting on 1 August 1973, Kalvanas applied to the commissioner for permission to publish 1,000 copies of a booklet of 14 hymns.²³ The request was denied. On 20 June 1976, the third postwar synod again repeated the request that it be permitted to publish a new hymnal.²⁴

By 1979, the preparation of a hymnal with 330 hymns had been completed, and on 1 May 1979 the Consistory decided to submit the manuscript. On 18 June 1979, Jonas Kalvanas presented the completed manuscript to the commissioner. On 8 August the Consistory stated that it was hoped that the book could be published and brought into use for the 450th anniversary of the Presentation of the Augsburg Confession (LTSR..., 1955–1990, 127131).

The new commissioner, Petras Anilionis, who wanted to exercise extraordinary control over the churches, far beyond what Moscow dictated, dragged his feet and saw to it that the approval process would take far longer than was really required. On 6 October 1979 he reported to the Lithuanian Council of Ministers that the evaluation of the hymnal by the appropriate ‘administrative agencies’ had been completed, but he himself did nothing to see that the approval process moved forward. He indicated that the Consistory had revised its request for a 1,000 copies, and was now asking that 2,500 copies

²¹ LCVA f. R-181, a. 3, b. 82, 107–109.

²² LCVA f. R-181, a. 1, b. 175, 2–3.

²³ LCVA f. R-181, a. 1, b. 204, 52.

²⁴ LCVA f. R-181, a. 1, b. 203, 107.

be printed.²⁵ On 30 August 1980, more than a year after the submission of the manuscript to the commissioner, the Consistory repeated the request that the printing of the book be authorised (LTSR..., 1955–1990, 130–131). Again, Anilionis did nothing, but reported to Moscow on 9 January 1981 that the publication of the book would be included in the plans for that year.²⁶

Nine more months passed. Anilionis wrote to the Council for the Affairs of Religious Cults in Moscow on 14 September 1981 that the Lutherans had once again reviewed their request, and were now asking for 5,000 copies. He stated that since there were only 27 Lutheran congregations in the country, and most of them were small,²⁷ 3,000 copies should be more than enough

to satisfy their needs. He added that the Central Committee of the Lithuanian Communist Party had approved the publication of the hymnal, and asked Moscow for a final decision. That decision came on 13 October. Now the manuscript would need to be reviewed by the Lithuanian Glavlit, the central office of censorship, to check for hidden meanings and messages. He submitted the manuscript for their examination on 16 December 1981.²⁸

Another year passed. Bishop Kalvanas pressed the commissioner for the publication of the book in commemoration of the 500th anniversary of the birth of Martin Luther, since the 450th anniversary of the Presentation of the Augsburg Confession had long since been and gone. The book was



VIENAM DIEVUI GARBĖTI

5 Moz. 32,3

GIESMIŲ IR MALDŲ
KNYGELĖ

Antras pataisytas ir papildytas
leidinys

LIETUVOS
EVANGELIKŲ-LIUTERONŲ KONSISTORIJA
Vilnius—Tauragė
1982

The title page of the 1982 *‘Little Book of Hymns and Prayers’*

²⁵ LCVA f. R-181, a. 3, b. 103, 244.

²⁶ LCVA f. R-181, a. 1, b. 246, 3.

²⁷ LCVA f. R-181, a. 3, b. 108, 257.

²⁸ LCVA f. R-181, a. 1, b. 249, 69.

finally printed in Vilnius on 15 December 1982 (LTSR..., 1955–1990, 142–144). It appears that Kalvanas was not able to alter his original preface, which made no mention of Luther’s birthday, but spoke instead of the anniversary of the Augsburg Confession, although the date of the preface was changed to 1982 (Giesmių..., 1982, 4). In addition to its 330 hymns and selected prayers, the book also included Luther’s Small Catechism and several important articles of the Augsburg Confession.

9. The 1988 hymnal

Although some parishes rejected the new book as a ‘desecration’ of the noble language and the great hymns of past ages, other congregations were willing to use it. More hymns were needed, and on 29 November 1986 the Consistory proposed the preparation of a third edition of *Giesmių ir maldų knygelė*. A commission headed by Bishop Jonas Kalvanas Sr was named. The membership consisted of Kurtas Moras, Jonas Okas and Mečislovas Bekeris (LTSR..., 1955–1990, 157–158). The real work of editing fell to Bishop Jonas Kalvanas, as had been the case with the earlier edition. Within a year, the manuscript was completed, and Commissioner Anilionis could write to the Council for the Affairs of Religious Cults in Moscow on 10

November 1987 that Bishop Kalvanas wished to publish 3,000 copies of it in 1988. He stated that the appropriate agencies in Lithuania approved the



VIENAM DIEVUI GARBE:

5 Moz. 32, 3

GIESMIŲ IR MALDŲ KNYGELĖ

III-sis pataisytas ir papildytas
leidinys

LIETUVOS
EVANGELIKŲ-LIUTERONŲ KONSISTORIJA
Vilnius — Tauragė
1988

The title page of the 1988 *‘Little Book of Hymns and Prayers’*

plan.²⁹ The winds of perestroika were blowing, and the government was no longer willing to obstruct religious liberty and the publication of literature. In January 1988, Moscow responded that it agreed to the publication of the 3,000 copies of the revised and expanded hymnal of 376 hymns.³⁰ The hymnal appeared in print in 1988. According to the preface, it commemorated the 425th anniversary of the death of Martynas Mažvydas, and the 275th anniversary of the birth of Kristijonas Donelaitis (Giesmių..., 1988, 6–7).

The introduction of the new book in congregations went smoothly, and over the next five years congregations which had rejected the earlier work fell into line, and the book came to be the Church's standard hymnal.

The determination of the Consistory to preserve as far as possible the language in the 1936 Lithuania Minor hymnal was still a bone of contention for many. Soon voices would be heard asking for a hymnal in the modern Lithuanian language. An additional problem was that the book included no music, and many declared that a future hymnal surely ought to correct this deficiency.

The appearance of the 1988 hymnal, however, did mark an important step forward in the congregations, and prepared the way for the preparation of a hymnal which would meet the standards of modern Lithuanian speech.

Conclusions

The lengthy and difficult path towards the publication of postwar hymnals in Lithuania was impeded by the communist government, which saw a need to curb as far as possible any real progress in the publication of any Christian literature whatsoever. In particular, it appears that the Party and the commissioner for religious affairs realised that hymnals played a pivotal role in Lutheran worship, and understood that such projects would contribute to the revitalisation of Church life.

The hymnal project was also hindered by the insistence of many pastors and congregations that alterations in the language of the hymns should be undertaken only with great care and consideration for the revered language of

²⁹ LCVA f. R-181, a. 1, b. 289, 50.

³⁰ LCVA f. R-181, a. 1, b. 295, 11.

the Lithuania Minor hymnal. The failure to exercise sufficient care in this was doubtless the most important factor which led to the failure of the 1956 hymnal to find acceptance. In subsequent hymnal projects, the Consistory and its hymnal commissions had to adhere as closely as possible to the traditional wording of the hymns, which had come to be regarded as sacred heritage in the hymnal of Lithuania Minor. The adoption of a very circumspect attitude and conservative revision opened the way for the increasing acceptance of the 1982 and 1988 hymnals by both pastors and Church members.

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LIETUVOS LIUTERONŲ GIESMYNO, PARENGTO PAGAL BENDRINĖS KALBOS NORMAS, PUBLIKAVIMAS SOVIETMEČIU

Darius Petkūnas

Santrauka

Straipsnyje aprašomos Lietuvos Liuteronų Bažnyčios pastangos sovietinės ateizacijos laikotarpiu išleisti giesmyną bendrine lietuvių kalba. Įgyvendinama ši siekį Bažnyčia patyrė įvairiausių trikdžių iš sovietinės valdžios, kuri kontroliavo leidybą ir į religinę literatūrą žvelgė kaip į svetimos ideologijos apraišką. Bažnyčiai kilo iššūkių ir jos pačios viduje. Tuo metu oficialus bažnyčios giesmynas buvo „Pagerintos giesmių knygos“, kurio paskutinė laida pasirodė Klaipėdoje 1936 m. Kadangi Mažosios Lietuvos giesmyno kalba nebeatitiko bendrinės kalbos reikalavimų, dar prieškario Konsistorija parengė naują giesmyną, tačiau dėl 1941 m. repatriacijos nespėjo knygos publikuoti. Naujai suformuota Konsistorija nusprendė, kad giesmių tekstai redaguoti per daug radikaliai, tad atsisakė knygą spausdinti. 1942 m. ši giesmyną atspausdinus Evangelikų reformatų kolegijai, Konsistorija paskelbė, kad knyga netinkama naudoti parapijose. Karo ir pokario laikotarpiu dvasininkai laikėsi nuomonės, kad giesmyno tekstus reikia redaguoti atsargiai, keičiant tik vieną ar kitą nebevertotiną žodį ar stiliaus trūkumus. N. Chruščiovo „atšilimo laikotarpiu“ esant galimybei publikuoti religinę literatūrą, Konsistorija nusprendė parengti naują giesmyno laidą, tačiau neturėdama laiko ir pajėgumų redaguoti senųjų giesmių tekstų apsisprendė daugelį giesmių paimti iš 1942 m. giesmyno. 1956 m. giesmyno įžangoje Konsistorija pažymėjo, kad knyga nepretenduoja pakeisti senųjų giesmių knygų, ji skirta tik tikinčiųjų asmeniniam naudojimui. 1970 m. Sinodas nusprendė parengti pataisytą ir papildytą giesmyno laidą, tekstus labiau derinant „su tikinčiųjų pamėgtomis 1936 m. Klaipėdoje išleistomis pagerintomis giesmių knygomis.“ Rankraštis įteiktas Religijų reikalų įgaliotiniui 1979 m., tačiau dėl įvairių sovietinės valdžios darytų trikdžių giesmynas atspausdintas tik 1982 m. Knyga naudota daugelyje parapijų. Trečioji „Giesmių ir maldų knygelės“ laida pasirodė 1988 m. ir parapijose buvo palankiai sutikta.