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**ASSIMILATION OR ACCULTURATION?**

**RUSSIAN IMPERIAL POLICY TOWARD LITHUANIANS IN THE 1860s**

**by**

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**Abstract**

The author presents a new and sophisticated interpretation of the efforts made during the 1860s to promote the expression of the Lithuanian language using the Cyrillic alphabet. In the process the paper pays due attention not only to emerging social currents, regional political imperatives and the development of the imperial educational system, but also to the linkage between alphabet and religious denomination.

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**Assimilation or Acculturation?****Russian Imperial Policy toward Lithuanians in the 1860s.**

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Historical studies of the introduction of the writing of Lithuanian in Cyrillic characters certainly provides a good example of how the same event can be viewed in many different ways. On the one hand there is the work of Lithuanian and Polish historians, while on the other we have assessments from western and Russian scholars. In part, the differences between the two ‘camps’ arise from the various source bases researchers have used. The works of Lithuanian historians, especially those written in the Soviet Union, usually were based on very solid archival material, which was much better than that available to scholars in the US or Russia. However, the differences in the evaluations of Russian imperial nationalities policy were determined by many more important factors.

Lithuanian and Polish historians usually regard the ban on the use of traditional Latin and Gothic characters, and the imposition of the Cyrillic alphabet on writing in Lithuanian as the clearest proof that the imperial authorities sought to turn the Lithuanians into Russians.<sup>1</sup> Sometimes this experiment is referred to by Lithuanian

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<sup>1</sup> A. Tyla, ‘Prie lietuviškųjų spaudinių gotiškėmis raidėmis uždraudimo istorijos’, *Lietuvos TSR aukštųjų mokyklų darbai: Bibliotekininkystės ir bibliografijos klausimai*, t. 6, 1967, p. 171-174; *Lietuvių spaudos draudimo panaikinimo byla*, edited by A. Tyla, Vilnius, 1973; R. Vėbra, ‘Lietuvių spaudos draudimo panaikinimo byla’, *Lietuvos TSR aukštųjų mokyklų mokslo darbai. Istorija*, t. XVI (2), 1976, p. 34-50; V. Merkys, *Nelegalioji lietuvių spauda kapitalizmo laikotarpiu (ligi 1904 m.). Politinės jos susikūrimo aplinkybės*, Vilnius, 1978; A. Tyla, *Garšvių knygnešių draugija*, Vilnius, 1991; V. Merkys, *Draudžiamosios lietuviškos spaudos kelias 1864–1904*, Vilnius, 1994; V. Merkys, *Knygnešių laikai 1864–1904*, Vilnius, 1994; R. Vėbra, *Lietuviškos spaudos draudimas 1864–1904 metais*, Vilnius, 1996; A. Tyla, ‘Lietuviškos spaudos draudimas: kova, praradimai ir politiniai rezultatai’, in: *Žodžio laisvė. Lietuviškos spaudos atgavimo šimtmečiui paminėti*, edited by R. Skeivys, Vilnius: Lietuvių literatūros ir tautosakos institutas, 2004, p. 15-24; P. Łossowski, ‘Russian

historians as the ‘ban on Lithuanian publications’ *tout court*. At the same time, western and some Russian historians treat these actions on the part of the authorities as an attempt to cut Lithuanians off from Polish influence, or so-called depolonisation.<sup>2</sup> According to Aleksei Miller, the authorities sought by these means to acculturate rather than assimilate the Lithuanians. ‘The aim was not to turn Lithuanians into Russians but to draw them as far apart as possible from the Poles <...> It was more realistic to hope that after becoming accustomed to using Cyrillic, the Lithuanians would be able to learn Russian more easily, not *instead of* Lithuanian but *alongside* Lithuanian.’<sup>3</sup> On the basis of a detailed analysis of the history of the introduction of Cyrillic characters into the writing of Lithuanian, Mikhail Dolbilov offers an interesting interpretation which suggests that the introduction of Cyrillic should be regarded not as an assimilatory measure but rather as social policy. In his opinion, it is doubtful whether officials imagined that they could ‘draw Lithuanians into the arena of Russian civilisation, if not into the Russian nation’ and thinks that ‘for Vil’na Education District officials the implantation of Cyrillic into Lithuanian writing was a social process,’ while for higher-ranking civil servants it was a tool for ‘depolonisation.’<sup>4</sup> In this article, a different and new interpretation, based on archival sources, will be presented.<sup>5</sup>

As has been said many times, the most important ideologist promoting the use of Cyrillic for recording Lithuanian and other languages was Nikolai Miliutin’s aide in

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Authorities’ Policy Towards National Minorities. Prohibition of Lithuanian Publications, 1864-1904’, *Acta Polonia Historica* 88, 2003, p. 66.

<sup>2</sup> Th. R. Weeks, ‘Official Russia and Lithuanians, 1863–1905,’ *Lithuanian Historical Studies*, vol. 5, 2001, p. 68–84; A. Miller, ‘Kalba, tapatybė ir lojalumas Rusijos imperijos valdžios politikoje,’ in: D. Staliūnas (ed.), *Raidžių draudimo metai*. Vilnius: Lietuvos istorijos instituto leidykla, 2004, p. 22; M. Dolbilov and A. Miller, *Zapadnye okrainy Rossiiskoi imperii*. Moscow: Novoe literaturnoe obozrenie Dolbilov, Miller, 2006, p. 249.

<sup>3</sup> A. Miller, *Imperiia Romanovykh i natsionalizm. Esse po metodologii istoricheskogo issledovaniia*. Moscow: Novoe literaturnoe obozrenie, 2006, p. 67, 89, 92.

<sup>4</sup> M. Dolbilov, ‘Imperijos biurokratija ir lietuvių kalbos lotyniškais rašmenimis draudimas 1864–1882 m.,’ in: D. Staliūnas (ed.), *Raidžių draudimo metai*. Vilnius: Lietuvos istorijos instituto leidykla, p. 111–137; idem, ‘Prevratnosti kirilizatsii: zapret Latinicy i biurokraticheskaiia rusifikatsiia litovtsev v Vilenskom general-gubernatorstve 1864–1882 gg.,’ *Ab Imperio*, 2005 vol. 2, p. 255–296.

<sup>5</sup> This article is based on part of my book *Making Russians. Meaning and Practice of Russification in Lithuania and Belarus after 1863*, Amsterdam, New York: Rodopi, 2007.

implementing education reforms in the Kingdom of Poland, the famous slavophile Aleksandr Hil'ferding. According to Hil'ferding and some of his supporters, the replacement of traditional Latin and Gothic alphabets with Cyrillic was supposed to become an important instrument for acculturating the Lithuanians.<sup>6</sup> According to this idea, alphabet change was not intended to halt the development of written Lithuanian, but rather to encourage it. The Lithuanian language was supposed to become standardised, and to be taught in schools, including secondary schools (which had not been the case before).

It is interesting that some educated Lithuanians regarded this experiment favourably. In fact, they had even formulated the same idea earlier than Russian officials did. For example, the first to raise the idea in 1859 was Andrius Ugiaskis, who worked in Kazan', where by chance the famous scholar Nikolai Il'minskii was also becoming active.<sup>7</sup> The mass conversion of certain national groups to Islam was taking place there, and so the authorities were forced to look for ways to counteract the trend. In order to counterbalance Islamisation and Pan-Turkism, the famous missionary and orientalist, Il'minskii, began to organise the publication in Cyrillic of texts for certain Volga ethnic groups. In other words, the creation of writing in local languages in Cyrillic characters was supposed to strengthen their identities and protect them from the Tatar assimilation project. This programme, which came to be known as the Il'minski System, was begun in 1858, that is, a year earlier than Ugiaskis formulated his proposal. We have no direct evidence that Ugiaskis knew Il'minskii or even the education system he was creating, but such a probability does exist. At that

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<sup>6</sup> *Assimilation* should be understood in this article as a process culminating in the disappearance of a given group as a recognizably distinct element with a larger society. By contrast, *acculturation* signifies a form of adaptation to the surrounding society that alters rather than erases the criteria of difference, especially in the real of culture and identity. These definitions are taken from: B. Nathans, *Beyond the Pale. The Jewish Encounter with Late Imperial Russia*. Berkeley, Los Angeles, London: University of California Press, 2002, p. 11.

<sup>7</sup> R. Geraci, *Window on the East. National and Imperial Identities in Late Tsarist Russia*. Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 2001.

time Kazan' was not a large city and educated people and those working in education must have known one another. We may suspect that Ugianskis like some other educated Lithuanians, who contributed (or at least wished to contribute) to the spread of this experiment, thought that the Il'minskii System was quite suitable for Lithuanians too as an anti-Polish measure, and so some educated Lithuanians not only were not afraid of the experiment, but actually sought to take part in it themselves. In this case they were not unique. Some Latvian intellectuals sought to reduce the influence of the Baltic Germans by proposing a 'return' to Cyrillic.<sup>8</sup>

It comes therefore as no surprise that during the first stage in the Cyrillicisation of written Lithuanian, which the language historian Giedrius Subačius calls the 'enthusiastic beginning' (1864–1866), that Russians were not the only ones to take part. Some educated Lithuanians tried to create a new Lithuanian alphabet in order to express Lithuanian sounds better and thus we could indeed call their work an attempt to create a '*Lithuanian Cyrillic for Lithuanian.*' To this end they not only introduced several new letters, which were not typical of Russian Cyrillic such as <ô> to represent the [uo] diphthong and <ÿ> for the [au] diphthong with a stressed [u], and an apostrophe to mark the shortening of a vowel or separate the prefix from the subsequent vowel of the root. They also threw out certain Russian letters which they regarded as useless, such as <Ы>, <Ф>, <Ъ>.<sup>9</sup>

Evidence that the hopes of those educated Lithuanians, who took part in the process of rewriting Lithuanian in Cyrillic, that written Lithuanian could develop with the new letters along with Lithuanian folk culture, were not completely vain is provided

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<sup>8</sup> P. Lazda, 'The Phenomenon of Russophilism in the Development of Latvian Nationalism in the 19<sup>th</sup> Century,' in: A. Loit (ed.), *National Movements in the Baltic Countries during the 19<sup>th</sup> Century*. Stockholm: Almqvist & Wiksell, 1985, p. 130.

<sup>9</sup> G. Subačius, 'Lietuviška ir rusiška lietuviškų spaudinių kirilika 1864–1866 metais,' in: D. Staliūnas (ed.), *Raidžių draudimo metai*. Vilnius: Lietuvos istorijos instituto leidykla, 2004, p. 139–173. The hard sign was only used in Russian at the end of words after a hard letter.

by imperial education policy in the Kingdom of Poland and, specifically, in the Augustov *Gubernia*, where Lithuanians lived. In the Kingdom of Poland, after the traditional Latin alphabet had been prohibited and Cyrillic had been imposed by force, Lithuanian was taught not only in primary schools but also in grammar schools and the teacher training college, and special scholarships were awarded for Lithuanians to attend university. This confirms once more the claim that the introduction of Cyrillic for written Lithuanian not only could have been, but really was connected with the acculturation of Lithuanians and the restricted fostering of their ethnic culture, while at the same time increasing the influence of Russian culture.

However, this nationality policy was implemented only in the Kingdom of Poland. The imperial ruling- and intellectual élite regarded the North Western Province (Vil'na, Kovno, Minsk, Grodno, Vitebsk and Mogiliov provinces at that time) as Russian national territory, not just a part of the empire, and so a different policy had to be followed there.

The role of Lithuanian written in Cyrillic in the North Western Province becomes clearer after an examination of the reforms to reorganise education here in the aftermath of the 1863 Uprising. The so-called 'people's schools' were established first in Belarusian areas. The Vil'na Education District leadership set about establishing these schools in the Kovno *Gubernia* later, in spring 1864. In the summer of 1864 preparations began on setting up 'people's schools' in the Kovno *Gubernia*. These schools had to find teachers. Catholic clergy or church servants (such as sacristans) were regarded as being dangerous. It seems from the official documents of the time that Vil'na governor general Mikhail Murav'ev sought to drive Polish teachers out of schools and may have tolerated Lithuanian teachers, while the overseer of the Vil'na Education District Ivan Kornilov and many other officials responsible for educational

matters regarded religious affiliation as the most important criterion for ensuring the loyalty of teachers.<sup>10</sup> Thus, as Catholics, Lithuanians were also unsuitable as teachers.<sup>11</sup> After it had been decided to replace Catholic teachers with Orthodox ones it was necessary, as the Vil'na Education District overseer had instructed, to look for future teachers who were not only Orthodox but also could speak (or would wish to learn how to speak) Lithuanian. Certain Vil'na Education District officials, it seems, really did intend to find or train such teachers.

But such a seemingly natural solution to the problem, whereby teachers and pupils could converse with one another, needed time and money. The Vil'na Education District officials thought that both of these commodities were in short supply.<sup>12</sup> Therefore, after 'consulting' local Orthodox clergy in Kaunas, the Education District inspector responsible for establishing so-called 'people's schools' in Kovno *gubernia*, Nikolai Novikov, proposed that candidates who 'did not speak the local dialect' be appointed to teach. This proposal was based on the fact that male peasants understood Russian just as well as Polish and so Russian could not 'be completely unheard of' for their children.<sup>13</sup> However, some other officials admitted in their reports that most peasants did not understand Russian.<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> In May 1864 Kornilov collected data about VED schools and instructed that information be gathered about the religious affiliation of teachers. Other data about teachers was not requested: note from the VED overseer to Grigorii Grigor'evich(?), 12 May 1864, *Lietuvos valstybės istorijos archyvas* (Lithuanian State Historical Archive; henceforth – LVIA), f. 567, ap. 4, b. 978, l. 111.

<sup>11</sup> 'The education authorities did not approve such proposals because they could not trust Lithuanian peasant children, who had become Polonised completely while studying at grammar schools [*gimnazii*] and had witnessed Polish demonstrations and rebellion and sometimes had even taken part in them, and are still under the strong influence of Roman Catholic priests': 1864 account of the people's schools, LVIA, f. 567, ap. 6, b. 1514, l. 34.

<sup>12</sup> After discussing Shul'gin's proposals the VED Overseer's Council decided that it was too expensive to keep the seven boys at Kovno Grammar School and that the Molodechno Institute could train such teachers: Kornilov's resolution on the report from Assistant VED Overseer, I. Shul'gin to the VED Overseer, 7 July 1864, *Otdel Rukopisei Rossiiskoi Natsional'noi Biblioteki* (Manuscript Division of the Russian National Library; henceforth – OR RNB), f. 523, d. 219, l. 25.

<sup>13</sup> Report from N. Novikov to the VED Overseer, I. Kornilov, 25 August 1864, OR RNB, f. 377, d. 120, l. 12; N. Novikov's report for the last four months of 1864, OR RNB, f. 523, d. 184, l. 44.

<sup>14</sup> Report from D. Kashirin, 15 August 1864, OR RNB, f. 523, d. 263, l. 1.

A decision was taken to employ graduates of Orthodox seminaries in the ‘people’s schools’ which were now being founded.<sup>15</sup> In 1864 alone 39 such potential teachers came, followed by 97 in 1865, mostly from the Vologda Seminary.<sup>16</sup> Why exactly were the graduates of these schools selected? First of all, we should remember that the authorities did not have a great deal of choice. Teacher-training colleges were only just starting to be established (except in the Baltic *Gubernias*) and there was a shortage of teachers. The selection of graduates from Orthodox establishments seemed to guarantee that they had been educated in a Russian way and an Orthodox spirit. This aspect of their outlook, according to Vil’na Education District officials, was much more important than the seminarists’ teaching abilities. It was thought that seminary graduates would be socially close to their pupils and would not look down on them. Moreover, it was hoped that their birth in the families of village priests would lead them to accept the meagre wages on offer (150 rubles) and help them meet the arduous tests facing them in an unfriendly environment.<sup>17</sup> In other words, they would not raise too many demands for living conditions. However, in this case we should note the context of the empire as a whole. First of all, the reformers like Interior Minister Piotr Valuev considered that the authority of the Orthodox clergy could be improved among the masses by increasing the role of the clergy in popular education.<sup>18</sup> On the other hand, because of what was in effect a caste system, the sons of Orthodox clerics could

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<sup>15</sup> Novikov’s view of the nationality of teachers or other VED employees is illustrated well by a letter from a slightly later period to his superior, Kornilov: ‘there is a vacant post for an inspector of Šiauliai Grammar School. I ask only one thing: do not appoint a German or an insipid Russian. The Kovno Gubernia is a Sevastopol’, and Šiauliai Grammar School is like Malachov’s room. May the Russian be twice as bad as the German <...>’. Letter from N. Novikov to I. Kornilov, 3-4 September 1865, *Rossiiskii Gosudarstvennyi Istoricheskii Arkhiv* (Russian State Historical Archive; henceforth – RGIA), f. 970, op. 1, d. 784, l. 5–6.

<sup>16</sup> A.[?], ‘Istoricheskii ocherk narodnykh uchilishch v Kovenskoi gubernii,’ *Zhurnal Ministerstva narodnago prosveshcheniia*, 1870, July, section ‘Sovremennaia letopis’, p. 45.

<sup>17</sup> General remarks of the VED overseer on the report from ‘people’s schools,’ 1864, LVIA, f. 378, bs, 1865, b. 1697, l. 157–160.

<sup>18</sup> G. L., Freeze, *The Parish Clergy in Nineteenth-Century Russia. Crisis, Reform, Counter-Reform*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1983, p. 241, 244.

not move into another class and this meant there was ‘over-production’ of members of their social stratum. Finally the fierce struggle which had been going on for several years between the Education Ministry and the Orthodox Church over who was to control primary education is an important factor in this context. The Holy Synod opposed the attempts by the Ministry to bring all schools under its control.<sup>19</sup> In 1864 the result of this struggle was still unclear and the question of which institution would train future teachers remained unresolved. In this fight, the Orthodox Church enjoyed the support not only of famous slavophile Ivan Aksakov’s *Den*’ newspaper, but also influential Mikhail Katkov’s *Moskovskie vedomosti*. These publications exerted an influence over Vil’na Education District officials too and certain of them, as is well known, corresponded with these influential campaigners. In other words, through their actions on the Kovno *Gubernia*, Vil’na Education District officials attempted to tip the balance in arguments over who would be most suitable to run primary education in favour of the Orthodox clergy. Having resolved that graduates from Orthodox seminaries would make the best teachers for Lithuanians, it remained to be decided whether to look for suitable candidates in the Western Province or Central Russia. Priority was granted to seminarians from the Russian *gubernias*. According to Novikov, seminarians who came in from the central *gubernias* of the empire spoke Russian more correctly than local Russians because ‘a mixture can be heard of words and forms from all the local languages in the local Russian language.’<sup>20</sup> Thus only newcomers from the central *gubernias* could teach local people correct Russian.

Seminarians who came to the Kovno *Gubernia* were supervised first and foremost by the director of ‘people’s schools,’ who together with Vil’na Education

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<sup>19</sup> J. Krumbholz, *Die Elementarbildung in Russland bis zum Jahre 1864*. Wiesbaden: Franz Steiner Verlag, 1982, p. 218–221; S. Alekseeva, *Sviateishchii sinod v sisteme vysshikh i tsentral’nykh gosudarstvennykh uchrezhdenii poreformennoi Rossii 1856–1904*, St Petersburg: Nauka, 2003.

<sup>20</sup> N. Novikov’s report for the last four months of 1864, OR RNB, f. 523, d. 184, l. 34.

District officials had to train the future teachers; their lessons were attended by inspectors and a few months later trial lessons were held before they were appointed as teachers.<sup>21</sup> During this period they were not taught Lithuanian, it seems unless they studied it by themselves from books provided by Vil'na Education District officials.<sup>22</sup> Novikov considered that this problem could be resolved in school: the teacher would teach his pupils Russian words, while the latter would teach him Žemaitijan ones.

Thus Novikov and his fellow officials in the Vil'na Education District began to implement what they saw as a swifter model for establishing 'people's schools,' whereby newcomers from the central *gubernias* of Russia had in effect to go straight to the 'people's schools' that were being founded and learn the popular language at the same time as teaching Lithuanian peasants Russian. They did not train for their future job first by learning Lithuanian and acquiring basic teaching skills in advance. As far as we can determine from evidence from certain Vil'na Education District officials, the way teachers communicated first with their pupils was rather reminiscent of how Daniel Defoe's Robinson Crusoe spoke to Man Friday on the desert island. Since the teacher and his pupils could not talk to one another, at first the latter were taught Russian words by having domestic objects pointed out to them.

This state of affairs required a different kind of textbook. Therefore the Vil'na Education District officials took pains to see that monolingual textbooks would no longer be published (in Lithuanian with Russian characters), replacing them instead with bilingual texts, where Lithuanian would be written in Cyrillic like the Russian text.<sup>23</sup> These primers, and later other books, were supposed in this way, according to

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<sup>21</sup> General remarks on the 1864 Report on VED people's schools, LVIA, 378, bs, 1865, b. 1697, l. 179.

<sup>22</sup> N. Savel'ev, Report of the Kovno Directorate of People's Schools, 1870, LVIA, f. 567, ap. 5, b. 1827, l. 262.

<sup>23</sup> Report from the VED overseer to the governor general of Vil'na, 4 October 1864, LVIA, f. 378, bs, 1862, b. 629a, l. 219; report from N. Novikov to the VED overseer, 21 December 1866, LVIA, f. 567, ap. 6, b. 1608, l. 3–6.

the officials at least, to have a dual function, teaching Lithuanian pupils their own language and Russian, while helping Russian teachers learn the local language. Although Novikov's ideal was that teachers should learn as little Lithuanian as possible, 'it was to be desired that the Žemaitijans learn enough to be able to understand their teacher's language rather than have the teacher learn their Žemaitijan language.'<sup>24</sup> For this very reason books were published for Latvians in the Latvian schools of the Vitebsk *Gubernia*, where a Russian translation would be published alongside the Latvian text, written in Cyrillic.<sup>25</sup>

This account of the early history of the foundation of so-called 'people's schools' in the Kovno *Gubernia* shows clearly that the Vil'na Education District authorities implemented a different education policy from the one which was proposed by Hil'ferding. Now we will try to explain what aims the Vil'na Education District officials sought to achieve through these reforms.

If we wish to solve this problem we must first take note of how the relationship between language and the way it is written down was understood. Some local officials claimed that the 'Polish alphabet' had Polonised the Lithuanians just as much the Gothic alphabet (use of which for Lithuanian was banned in 1872) had apparently Germanised them.<sup>26</sup> Writing Lithuanian in the 'Polish alphabet,' according to Novikov, was needed in order to spread use of the Polish language.<sup>27</sup> A similar explanation was given for the use of the Latin alphabet to write Belarusian.

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<sup>24</sup> Letter from N. Novikov to I. Kornilov, 8 February 1866, RGIA, f. 970, op. 1, d. 784, l. 7–8.

<sup>25</sup> Note from Assistant VED Overseer A. Serno-Solov'evich, to the VED overseer, 11 August 1867; note from the acting director of people's schools in Vitebsk to the VED overseer, 3 August 1867, LVIA, f. 567, ap. 6, b. 1709, l. 1, 7.

<sup>26</sup> Note from the governor general of Vil'na to the head of the Government Commission for Internal and Religious Affairs, 6 September 1865, Tyla, 1973, 76; note from the acting head of the Supreme Press Administration to the Vil'na Foreign Publications Censor, 15 December 1872, LVIA, f. 1241, ap. 1, b. 18, l. 85.

<sup>27</sup> Report from VED Inspector, N. Novikov, to the VED overseer, March 1867 (no exact date), LVIA, f. 567, ap. 6, b. 1685, l. 3.

How was the Polonisation process understood? The answer to this question can be found in the explanations offered by the Russified Latvian deputy archivist in the Vil'na Central Archive, Ivan (Janis) Sproģis, as to why the Russian alphabet was essential to Latvian. It seems that Polish words and the very structure of the Polish language were finding their way into Latvian along with the 'Polish alphabet.'

'The main attempt to Polonise Catholic Latvians in the Vitebsk *Gubernia* via books was deeply rooted in the Roman Catholic clergy's aim to accustom them to the Polish language via their own Latvian books. This is why in their works, such prayer books, catechisms and especially in their sermons, they constantly use Polish words in their Latvian language, even though there was no need or sense in so doing. Alongside the extensive use of various Polish words in written Latvian, the publishers of Latvian books have introduced virtually the whole structure of the Polish language, which, like individual Polish words, is little suited to Latvian.'<sup>28</sup>

Thus the Polonisation of Lithuanians, Latvians or Belarusians, according to Russian officials at that time, was happening through writing: Polish letters, Polish words, and finally the very structure of the Polish language were being introduced.

Now let us examine how the change of alphabet in written Lithuanian progressed. The local Russian authorities quickly rejected the adaptation of Cyrillic to represent Lithuanian phonemes, which, as we have already discussed, had attempted to pay as much attention as possible to Lithuanian phonetics, and so they gave priority to another system, which Subačius claims to have been '*Russian* Lithuanian writing in Cyrillic.' The main creator of this version from the 1860s was a teacher, Ivan Krechinskii. In this instance only the letters of the unmodified Russian alphabet were left. Krechinskii transliterated Lithuanian words in such a way as they would look similar to their Russian equivalents.<sup>29</sup> Novikov had instructed Krechinskii to take as

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<sup>28</sup> Copy of undated note from Deputy Archivist in the Vil'na Central Archive, J. Sproģis to the VED Chancery, LVIA, f. 378, bs, 1866, b. 1492, l. 14.

<sup>29</sup> G. Subačius, 'Lietuviška ir rusiška lietuviškų spaudinių kirilika 1864–1866 metais,' in: D. Staliūnas (ed.), *Raidžių draudimo metai*. Vilnius: Lietuvos istorijos instituto leidykla, 2004, p. 157–173; idem, 'Development of the Cyrillic Orthography for Lithuanian in 1864–1904,' *Lituanus*, 51/2, 2005, p. 35–41.

examples Lithuanian and Russian words which had related roots.<sup>30</sup> In the end it was proposed that ‘grammatical violence’ be applied: ‘if it is possible to allow Polish word usage, then there is no reason not to allow the use of Russian words. Both amount to grammatical violence.’<sup>31</sup> This means that what the Poles had done in an earlier period to the Lithuanian language should be done now by Russians. In other words, Vil’na Education District officials not only introduced Russian letters into written Lithuanian but also sought to bring such writing as close as possible to Russian, and show their close connections. Sometimes local officials even called their new creation a ‘Russo-Lithuanian dialect’ [*russko-litovskoe narechie*].<sup>32</sup>

The decision to use only Russian characters was conditioned by several factors. First of all, the imperial officials, and not just they, hoped that a single alphabet would have great power as an integrator, while separate alphabets separate nations.<sup>33</sup> Moreover, supporters and opponents of alphabet change argued as to which alphabet would express Lithuanian phonetics best. The modification of Russian Cyrillic, that is the inclusion of certain Latin characters, easily undermined official arguments over the superiority of the Cyrillic alphabet.<sup>34</sup> Alongside these ideological motives there was a practical one too. Indeed officials did not disguise too much the fact that educational reform and alphabet change were not necessary in the Kovno *Gubernia* in order to teach Lithuanians ‘to write in their ethnic dialects’ (as Vil’na governor general Konstantin Kaufman claimed) but solely in order to facilitate the learning of Russian:

<sup>30</sup> A.[?], ‘Istoricheskii ocherk narodnykh uchilishch v Kovenskoii gubernii,’ *Zhurnal Ministerstva narodnago prosveshcheniia*, 1870, June, section IV, 171.

<sup>31</sup> Draft of letter from N. Novikov to I. Kornilov, 11 September 1864, OR RNB, f. 523, d. 66, l. 4.

<sup>32</sup> Report from the VED inspector to the VED overseer, 4 October 1868, LVIA, f. 567, ap. 5, b. 386, l. 62. However, this phrase by Novikov could perhaps be ‘translated’ in a different way, with ‘Russo’ referring to the alphabet and ‘Lithuanian,’ to the language itself.

<sup>33</sup> Thus Il’minskii sought to bring *inorodtsy* closer to the Russians via use of Cyrillic, while keeping them apart from each other at the same time. To this end he tried to create a separate Cyrillic alphabet for each group of *inorodtsy*: M. O. Tuna, ‘Gaspirali v. Il’minskii: Two Identity Projects for the Muslims of the Russian Empire,’ *Nationalities Papers*, 2002, vol. 2, p. 270.

<sup>34</sup> Note from A. Petkevičius, 20 October 1864, LVIA, f. 378, bs, 1862, b. 629a, l. 261–262.

‘...neither Russian people’s schools and the textbooks being drafted for them, nor the leaders in this matter and teachers, can or should be bothered whether the pupils in such schools learn the Žemaitijan and Lithuanian languages, so long as they learn Russian. The aim of all this matter, I repeat, is for pupils to learn Russian as quickly and as easily as possible.’<sup>35</sup>

Thus we should not be surprised by the fact that at best the Lithuanian language was given only an auxiliary role in ‘people’s schools’ in the Kovno *Gubernia*, that is, it was to be used until children learned sufficient Russian. However, even such a level of using Lithuanian was not allowed everywhere, as many teachers arrived in the *gubernia* without knowing the peasant language at all. It is understandable that, when visiting these schools, local officials checked the pupils’ knowledge of Russian, but it never occurred to anyone to check their competence in Lithuanian.<sup>36</sup> It is hard to say what was done with Cyrillic Lithuanian textbooks in the Vil’na *Gubernia*, whether they were also sent.<sup>37</sup> Sometimes Vil’na Education District officials alleged that Lithuanians from the Vil’na *Gubernia* were furnished with basic explanations in ‘their native dialect.’<sup>38</sup> There is no firm evidence, however, that Lithuanian was tolerated even as an auxiliary language in that *gubernia*. From the 1865–1866 academic year onwards even religion was supposed to be taught in Russian to Lithuanians in the Kovno *Gubernia*, and religious instruction in Lithuanian for first year pupils was treated as a temporary concession, to be permitted until Lithuanians learned Russian.

Local North Western Province officials sought to have teaching done in Russian alone also for pragmatic nationalist reasons. After being removed from office as Vil’na Education District overseer, Kornilov suggested to his former subordinate, Vasili

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<sup>35</sup> Report from VED Inspector, N. Novikov, to the VED overseer, 7 October 1870, LVIA, f. 567, ap. 6, b. 1677, l. 4.

<sup>36</sup> A.[?], ‘Istoricheskii ocherk narodnykh uchilishch v Kovenskoii gubernii,’ *Zhurnal Ministerstva narodnago prosveshcheniia*, 1870, July, section ‘Sovremennaia letopis’, p. 47, 63.

<sup>37</sup> Note from the VED overseer to the director of the Vil’na People’s Schools Directorate, 17 June 1864, LVIA, f. 567, ap. 4, b. 954, l. 12.

<sup>38</sup> Report from the director of the Vil’na Schools Directorate to the VED overseer, 2 May 1882; report from the VED overseer to the minister of education, 11 September 1882, LVIA, f. 567, ap. 26, b. 342, l. 5, 15.

Kulin, who was still working for the Vil'na Education District, that he should popularise the practice already established in 'people's schools' in the Kovno *Gubernia* of having Russian teachers, who at first were unable to communicate directly with their pupils, teach children Russian. Kornilov suggested attention be paid to the following aspect:

‘...a Russian boy surpasses a Žemaitijan, when both have the same abilities and both master writing in Russian at the same time. How much time will be required for the Žemaitijan boy or little Jew [*zhidenek*] to achieve the same results as Russian boys? While one year is enough for a Russian, the aliens [*inorodtsy*] require, most probably, two or three.’<sup>39</sup>

In other words, the teaching method which uses only the Russian language for instruction naturally gave the advantage to Russians, who were intended to dominate within the empire.

There are other signs too which show that the local authorities did not even seek to make Lithuanians more used to Lithuanian books transliterated into Cyrillic. Throughout the whole period of publishing Lithuanian in Cyrillic up to 1904, only 55 titles were published—or a little more than 60 if we count all the various parts of the print run.<sup>40</sup> From the early 1870s religious literature and even calendars were no longer published for Lithuanians and Latvians in the Vitebsk *Gubernia*. The authorities also did not tolerate private initiatives from Lithuanians, who campaigned to stop their fellow nationals boycotting Lithuanian books in Cyrillic, to publish books in the Russian alphabet. Finally from 1874 there was no longer any official censor in Vil'na, who knew Lithuanian. This post was reintroduced only at the start of the twentieth

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<sup>39</sup> Letter from I. Kornilov to V. Kulin, 25 October (year not indicated), RGIA, f. 970, op. 1, d. 908, l. 138.

<sup>40</sup> V. Merkys, 'Lietuvių draudžiamosios spaudos ir tautinės tapatybės sąsajos,' *Knygotyra*, vol. 44, 2005, p. 11.

century, and then simply because large numbers of underground Lithuanian books in the Latin alphabet were falling into the hands of the authorities.<sup>41</sup>

It is understandable that after removing Lithuanian from schools there were similar plans to eliminate it from the public sphere as a whole. When the language was not being taught even in primary schools, in effect it was not supposed to have any public function. The public arena was reserved for Russian. Thus it is no surprise that Lithuanians, for example, could be arrested just for speaking Lithuanian in the presence of a justice of the peace.<sup>42</sup>

Thus the implementation of education policy and the deliberations of Vil'na Education District officials about the aims of alphabet change for written Lithuanian permit us to assert that the local authorities sought to Russify the Lithuanians linguistically. However, does Russification in terms of language automatically mean that the authorities sought to assimilate Lithuanians? As far as we know, a majority of the active supporters of the adaptation of Cyrillic for use in writing Lithuanian who worked in the Vil'na Education District regarded religion as the most important denominator of nationality. Thus attempts at restricting the functioning of Lithuanian to the domestic level alone, or even attempts to remove it from the family circle, according to these officials could not signify total assimilation.

Nonetheless, in various nineteenth-century sources we can find evidence that there were close connections between one alphabet or another and a specific religion (Latin characters were associated with Catholicism, Gothic ones with Protestantism, and Cyrillic with Orthodoxy). It seems that certain Vil'na Education District officials at least also hoped that after Lithuanians adopted Cyrillic, they would one day accept

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<sup>41</sup> V. Merkys, *Knygnešių laikai 1864–1904*. Vilnius: Valstybinis leidybos centras, 1994, p. 78–79, 84, 90–93.

<sup>42</sup> L. Mulevičius, *Kaimas ir dvaras Lietuvoje XIX amžiuje*. Vilnius: Lietuvos istorijos instituto leidykla, 2003, p. 71.

Orthodoxy, since ‘an alphabet often serves as a promulgator of ideas, usually religious ones, for an ethnic group [*plemia*] having no claims to independent life.’<sup>43</sup> It seems that this was the intention behind proposals to translate the Orthodox Liturgy into Lithuanian and hold prayers in this language in Orthodox churches.<sup>44</sup> It is likely that Vil’na Education District officials treated the use of Russian letters for writing Lithuanian as a preparatory move towards making the people Orthodox. As has been noted, the Lithuanians were regarded as being religious to the point of ‘fanaticism.’ It seems that Novikov was the only one to claim otherwise. However even he sometimes uttered thoughts about the zealotry of the local masses.<sup>45</sup> The problem was how to select suitable methods to achieve the spread of Orthodoxy. It was clear to Vil’na Education District officials that the Lithuanians were so religious that they could not be converted to Orthodoxy immediately without any preparatory work, and so Novikov reported to Katkov that:

‘...we are printing these booklets [Catholic hymns in Lithuanian in Cyrillic] against our will because the time for open conflict with Catholicism has not yet come, because without this book the ordinary people would be helpless, most simply because it has become a holy text, despite the fact that it did not originate in the Church at all.’<sup>46</sup>

Of course, the imperial authorities’ view of the introduction of Russian characters for writing Lithuanian, which sought not to standardise written Lithuanian through use of Cyrillic but only facilitate the learning of Russian and aid thereby the conversion of Lithuanians to Orthodoxy, changed the Lithuanian view of this experiment. The transliteration of secular and religious books and the prohibition on

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<sup>43</sup> Draft of letter from N. Novikov to I. Kornilov, 11 September 1864, OR RNB, f. 523, d. 66, l. 16. Later these thoughts were reflected in the following publication: N. N. N. [N. Novikov], ‘Vpechateleniia moskvicha na Zhmudi,’ *Vilenskii vestnik*, 1866, no. 75.

<sup>44</sup> Note from the director of Kovno Schools Directorate to the inspectors of Zarasai, Panevėžys, and Ukmergė District Schools, 12 February 1866, *Kauno Apskrities Archyvaas* (Kaunas District Archives; henceforth – KAA), f. 567, ap. 1, b. 12, l. 49.

<sup>45</sup> N. Novikov’s report for the last four months of 1864, OR RNB, f. 523, d. 184, l. 13; letter from N. Novikov to M. Katkov, 24 August 1865, OR RNB, f. 523, d. 500, l. 26.

<sup>46</sup> Letter from N. Novikov to M. Katkov, 24 August 1865, OR RNB, f. 523, d. 500, l. 13.

using the traditional alphabet forced even educated Lithuanians, primarily Bishop Motiejus Valančius, to oppose this measure. A significant reason for rejecting the measure was the ignoring of Lithuanian phonetics, but the most important obstacle to Lithuanians' acceptance (or at least tolerance) of the written forms imposed by the authorities was connected with matters religious. This was especially so because local officials sought to change the content of Catholic texts too.

It must be said, however, that such an implementation of nationality policy, whereby there were even attempts to minimalise the function of Lithuanian in primary schools and to begin teaching children Russian from their very first lessons onwards, fostered doubts in the minds of certain local North Western Province civil servants. Unlike Kornilov and Novikov and certain other leading Vil'na Education District officials, some lower-ranking officials and teachers admitted that teachers who spoke the local language were working better and achieving better results in teaching Russian.<sup>47</sup> Some teachers were prepared to spend their summer vacation learning Lithuanian.<sup>48</sup>

After some discussions both in North Western Province as well as in the capital, the Panevėžys Teacher Training College was founded in 1872. It was open to 'young men of all Orthodox classes, who wish to devote themselves to teaching in Vil'na Education District primary schools, primarily in the Kovno *Gubernia*.'<sup>49</sup> Although official correspondence mentioned more than once that would-be teachers had to be able to communicate in their pupils' language, such a requirement was not made of college entrants nor was their provision for the study of Lithuanian there. Quite

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<sup>47</sup> A. [?], 'Istoricheskii ocherk narodnykh uchilishch v Kovenskoii gubernii,' *Zhurnal Ministerstva narodnago prosveshcheniia*, 1870, July, section 'Sovremennaia letopis', 48; report from the acting director of the Vitebsk School's Directorate to the VED overseer, 3 August 1867, LVIA, f. 567, ap. 6, b. 1709, l. 4–7.

<sup>48</sup> Report from N. Zhukov, a teacher in Pagiriai People's Schools (Ukmergė District), to the VED inspector, 24 May 1865, KAA, f. 293, ap. 1, b. 4, l. 5.

<sup>49</sup> Statutes of the teacher training college in Panevėžys (Kovno *Gubernia*), LVIA, f. 567, ap. 5, b. 2917, l. 141–144 and an additional unnumbered leaf.

soon, in 1873 a suitable teacher was found, namely the Panevėžys District treasurer, Zakhar Liatskii, who, with the approval of the college authorities, began to hold three weekly ‘Žemaitijan dialect’ lessons.<sup>50</sup>

Thus on the one hand the education policy instigated in the Kovno *Gubernia* after 1863 was amended from the beginning of the 1870s. Unlike Novikov and his fellow-minded officials, Vil’na Education District officials now acknowledged that there could be more efficient teaching, primarily of Russian, only when the teacher could speak to his pupils in their own language. All the same, this correction to nationality policy did not in essence change either the strategy of educational policy or the status of the Lithuanian language. Teachers would learn Lithuanian solely to be able to teach Russian more efficiently, while Lithuanian retained just an auxiliary role.<sup>51</sup>

### **Conclusions**

Thus the replacement of traditional Latin and Gothic alphabets with Cyrillic, according to Hil’ferding and certain of his supporters, was supposed to become an important instrument for acculturating the Lithuanians. According to this idea, alphabet change was not intended to halt the development of written Lithuanian, but rather to encourage it. The Lithuanian language was supposed to become standardised, and taught in schools, including secondary schools, as had not been the case before. This policy was implemented not in the North Western Province but in the Kingdom of Poland. There Lithuanian was taught not only in primary, but also in secondary schools and the teacher training college; and special scholarships were founded for Lithuanians to study at Russian universities.

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<sup>50</sup> For the correspondence on this matter, see the file “O vvedenii v Ponevezhskoi uchitel’skoi seminarii obucheniiia zhmudskomu iazyku,” LVIA, f. 567, ap. 5, b. 4017. The matter of whether future teachers really did learn Lithuanian is the subject for another study.

<sup>51</sup> We have not dealt here with the Protestant parish schools.

However, Lithuanian educational matters in the North Western Province fell into the hands of those pursuing a different nationality policy. Vil'na Education District officials, especially Inspector Novikov, who was responsible for setting up 'people's schools' in the Kovno *Gubernia*, interpreted the introduction of Cyrillic into written Lithuanian as a means to facilitate the learning of Russian (so that Lithuanians would have to learn one alphabet rather than two); therefore, when transliterating, scant attention was paid to Lithuanian phonetics; letters were selected so that transliterated Lithuanian words would look as similar as possible to their Russian equivalents; in other words, there were attempts to bring Lithuanian closer to Russian and Lithuanian children were supposed to learn Russian from their first year in school (which Hil'ferding regarded as complete nonsense). There were attempts to strip Lithuanian of all possible public functions and in the end the introduction of Cyrillic was regarded as a means to convert Lithuanians eventually to Orthodoxy. This could not be done immediately because Lithuanians were regarded as devout to the point of fanaticism. Thus Vil'na Education District officials introduced Cyrillic into written Lithuanian in the hope that this move would lay the foundations for Lithuanian assimilation. The conversion of Lithuanians to Orthodoxy was supposed to follow on from linguistic Russification.

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