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Discussing Characteristics of Economic Nationalism in the 1930s: The Case of Lithuanian and Jewish Relations

Key words: nationalism, economic nationalism, ethnic conflicts, anti-Semitism in Lithuania

Summary

The purpose of the article is to highlight the characteristics of economic nationalism through an analysis of the relations between Lithuanians and ethnic minorities (Jews) in cases of the protectionist economic policy of the Lithuanian government as well as ethnic discrimination and ethnic conflicts in 1930–1940. The author of the article has highlighted the general characteristics typical of economic nationalism in a number of forms. Firstly, the protectionist economic policy of the government, the aim whereof was to oust entrepreneurs of other nationalities, especially Jewish, and to increase the relative number of Lithuanians in the trade and banking business sectors. Secondly, the discriminatory policy of the authorities against Jewish individuals to ensure that the latter could not take civil service positions in state and municipal institutions (which in fact eliminated them from working within the authorities). Thirdly, causing ethnic discord in the media, shaping a negative and hostile opinion about ethnic minorities, e.g. by accusing Russians of Russification and labelling them as invaders; by accusing Jews of stealing businesses from Lithuanians and labelling them as exploiters of Lithuanians; by accusing Poles of Polonization and anti-Lithuanian attitudes, etc. Fourthly, activities of economic organizations or movements targeting ethnic minorities and demanding to restrict their businesses, boycott their goods and services. Fifthly, public rallies and demonstrations instigating the nationalist sentiment, e.g. the typical slogan of nationalist rallies “Lithuania for Lithuanians”, “making the business Lithuanian again”, “Lithuania to become Lithuanian”. Finally, provoking ethnic conflicts or acts of violence against ethnic minorities (including damaging property by arson or otherwise, and physical violence against representatives of ethnic minorities. The author of the article has drawn several conclusions, the main being that there were multiple reasons which prompted the rise of economic nationalism. They were primarily related to the economic, social, and cultural gap between ethnic minorities and Lithuanians. In particular, the protectionist economic policy (which exhibited certain aspects of ethnic discrimination) pursued by

the Lithuanian government with the aim of ousting entrepreneurs of several nationalities from industrial, financial, and trade sectors widened the economic gap between ethnic minorities and Lithuanians. Another important reason for the development of economic nationalism was the building of a nation state, where ethnic minorities were perceived as an obstacle to an ethnocentric state, its economic modernization, and to Lithuanians competing with representatives of other nationalities. At the local level, ethnic conflicts would sometimes escalate into physical violence, essentially against one ethnic minority (Jews). This was, to some extent, affected by the anti-Semitic sentiment instigated in the press, the anti-Semitic activities of some organizations, and, partly, the protectionist economic policy pursued by the government that aimed to restrict or oust Jews from key businesses. The study of Lithuanian-Jewish relations from the perspective of economic nationalism expands the field of research on anti-Semitism as a phenomenon in interwar Lithuania. And looking ahead, we must show zero tolerance for the acts instigating national hatred and they must always entail criminal prosecution to prevent the nationalist sentiment (anti-Semitism) from spreading in our society.

Ekonomiskā nacionālisma raksturīgās iezīmes 20. gadsimta 30. gados: lietuviešu un ebreju attiecību piemērs

Atslēgas vārdi: nacionālisms, ekonomiskais nacionālisms, etniskie konflikti, antisemitisms Lietuvā

Kopsavilkums

Raksta mērķis ir izcelt ekonomiskā nacionālisma raksturīgās iezīmes, analizējot attiecības starp lietuviešiem un etniskajām minoritātēm (ebrejiem) saistībā ar Lietuvas valdības protekcionistisko ekonomisko politiku, kā arī etnisko diskrimināciju un etniskos konfliktus 20. gadsimta 30.–40. gados. Rakstā aplūkotas vispārīgās iezīmes, kas raksturīgas ekonomiskajam nacionālismam: 1) valdības protekcionistiskā ekonomiskā politika. Tās mērķis bija izspiest citu tautību, īpaši ebreju, uzņēmējus un palielināt lietuviešu īpatsvaru tirdzniecības un banku sektorā; 2) varas iestāžu diskriminējošā politika pret ebrejiem, kas liedza ieņemt civildienesta amatus valsts un pašvaldību iestādēs (kas faktiski tos izslēdza no darba varas iestādēs); 3) etniskās nesaskaņas veicināšana plašsaziņas līdzekļos, veidojot negatīvu un naidīgu viedokli par etniskajām minoritātēm, piemēram, apsūdzot krievus rusifikācijā un dēvējot tos par iebrucējiem; apsūdzot ebrejus uzņēmumu atņemšanā lietuviešiem un dēvējot tos par lietuviešu ekspluatētājiem; apsūdzot poļus polonizācijā, pretlietuviešu noskaņojumā utt.; 4) ekonomisko organizāciju vai kustību darbība, kas bija vērsta pret etniskajām minoritātēm un pieprasīja ierobežot to uzņēmējdarbību, boikotēt to preces un pakalpojumus; 5) publiski mītiņi un demonstrācijas, kas kurināja nacionālistiskus noskaņojumus, piemēram, tipiski saukļi: „Lietuva lietuviešiem”, „padarīt uzņēmējdarbību atkal lietuvisku”, „Lietuvai jāklūst lietuviskai”; 6) etnisku konfliktu provocēšana vai vardarbības akti pret etniskajām minoritātēm (tostarp īpašuma bojāšana, piemēram, dedzināšanas vai citā veidā, kā arī fiziska vardarbība pret etnisko minoritāšu pārstāvjiem). Ekonomiskā nacionālisma pieaugumu veicināja vairāki

ienesli, galvenokārt saistīti ar ekonomisko, sociālo un kultūras plaisu starp etniskajām minoritātēm un lietuviešiem. Jo īpaši Lietuvas valdības īstenotā protekcionistiskā ekonomiskā politika (kurai piemita arī etniskās diskriminācijas elementi), kuras mērķis bija izspiest dažādu tautību uzņēmējus no rūpniecības, finanšu un tirdzniecības sektoriem. Vēl viens būtisks ekonomiskā nacionālisma attīstības iemesls bija nacionālas valsts veidošana, kurā etniskās minoritātes tika uztvertas kā šķērslis etnocentriskas valsts izveidei, tās ekonomiskajai modernizācijai un lietuviešu spējai konkurēt ar citu tautību pārstāvjiem. Vietējā līmenī etniskie konflikti dažkārt pārauga fiziskā vardarbībā, galvenokārt pret vienu etnisko minoritāti (ebrejiem). To zināmā mērā ietekmēja presē kurinātais antisemitiskais noskaņojums, dažu organizāciju antisemitiskā darbība, kā arī daļēji valdības īstenotā protekcionistiskā ekonomiskā politika, kuras mērķis bija ierobežot vai izspiest ebrejus no nozīmīgām uzņēmējdarbības jomām. Lietuviešu un ebreju attiecību izpēte no ekonomiskā nacionālisma perspektīvas paplašina pētījumu lauku par antisemitismu kā parādību starpkaru Lietuvā. Raugoties nākotnē, jāievēro nulles tolerance pret darbībām, kas kurina nacionālo naidu, un tām vienmēr ir jāparedz kriminālatbildība, lai novērstu nacionālistisku noskaņojumu (antisemitisma) izplatīšanos sabiedrībā.

Introduction

In the present-day Europe, there is a tendency for intensifying anti-Semitism due to conflicts in the Middle East. This also raises concerns for the Lithuanian community, as politicians with a noticeable influence on public opinion get involved in the inciting discord between nations. The anti-Semitic comments and Holocaust denial by Remigijus Žemaitaitis (born 1982), which were treated by the Constitutional Court of Lithuania as a breach of the oath of the Lithuanian parliament (*Seimas*) member and a gross violation of the Constitution, did not prevent him from being elected to the Seimas in October 2024 along with the candidates of his newly founded political party “The Nemunas Dawn” (*Nemuno aušra*). To make things worse, they were invited by the Social Democratic Party to form the governing majority and the coalition government. Such a position of the Social Democratic Party is viewed highly negatively by the Lithuanian politicians, political scientists, journalists, intellectuals, representatives of public organizations, residents, and some politicians of the United States, Germany, Poland, and Israel¹. The situation has provoked criticism for the damage to the reputation of the state, causing tensions, confrontations, and protests in Lithuania. The question is what consequences the Lithuanian community may face in the future from a historical perspective, i.e., where we need to look for answers in the

¹ According to Ben Cardin, the chairman of the U.S. Senate Foreign Affairs Committee, when “the tide of anti-Semitism is rising in the world, providing a platform for anti-Semitic rhetoric and hate speech is not only a betrayal of common democratic ideals, but also a physical threat to the security of Jewish and minority communities”. According to the Chairman of the Foreign Affairs Committee of the German Bundestag, Social Democrat Michael Roth, the coalition of the Lithuanian Social Democrats with the party “Nemuno Aušra” is incompatible with left-wing values. Polish Senate Vice Marshal Michał Kamiński expressed concern about the involvement of “openly chauvinistic and anti-Semitic forces” in the formation of the Lithuanian government. Yuli Edelstein, the chairman of the Committee on Foreign Affairs and Defence of the Israeli Parliament, is concerned about “the rise and influence of a party with anti-Semitic ties in Lithuania” (Socialdemokratai pritarė koalicijai 2024; Skėrytė, Jakučionis 2024; Jakučionis 2024; Perminas, Jakučionis, 2024).

policy of the interwar Lithuanian governments regarding ethnic minorities. The economic nationalism approach might explain the ways in which national politics affects economics, and what discussions about the relationships between national identities and economic processes were taking place in Lithuania during the interwar years of the twentieth century. The purpose of the article is to highlight characteristics of economic nationalism through an analysis of the relations between Lithuanians and ethnic minorities (Jews) in cases of the protectionist economic policy of the Lithuanian government as well as ethnic discrimination and ethnic conflicts in 1930–1940. Characteristics of economic nationalism are examined based on the research methods of document analysis, qualitative content analysis, and the comparative method. The document analysis method is used to collect empirical data and analyse the protectionist economic policy of the Lithuanian government as well as the cases of ethnic conflicts in society. The method of qualitative content analysis is applied to examine ways in which the growing tendency of ethnic tensions, hostilities, and conflicts in the society between Lithuanians and Jews were covered for a broad audience in media. The comparative method serves to reveal attitudes of the Lithuanian government and the inhabitants towards the ethnic minorities (Jews). The sources and literature may be classified into two groups: the first includes journalist articles in the weekly newspaper “Business” (*Veršlas*)² discussing economic issues of everyday life related to ethnic minorities (Jews). The second group encompasses research articles of such authors as Liudas Truska, Vygantas Vareikis, Gediminas Vaskela, Vladas Sirutavičius, Darius Staliūnas, and others, examining the social and economic policies and economic relationships between Lithuanians and ethnic minorities in the interwar period. Liudas Truska analysed the interwar relations between Lithuanians and Jews, discussed aspects of discrimination against Jews in the state governance, economic sector and daily life, and revealed the xenophobic and anti-Semitic views expressed by Lithuanians in the pages of the weekly newspaper “Business” (*Veršlas*) in the 1930s (Truska 2003, 2004, 2005). Gediminas Vaskela examined the origins of economic nationalism in the emerging modern Lithuanian society and discussed cases of discrimination against ethnic minorities by Lithuanians (Vaskela, 2006). In the introduction of their book “When xenophobia turns into violence. The dynamics of Lithuanian-Jewish relations in the 19th and first half of the 20th centuries” (*Kai ksenofobija virsta prievarta. Lietuvių ir žydų santykių dinamika XIX a.–XX a. pirmoje pusėje*), its authors Vladas Sirutavičius and Darius Staliūnas discussed the pre-conditions for anti-Jewish pogroms in Lithuania from the 19th century to 1940 (Sirutavičius, Staliūnas 2005). Vygantas Vareikis revealed the features of anti-Semitic instances of violence in interwar Lithuania (Vareikis 2005). Dangiras Mačiulis

² *Veršlas*, a weekly newspaper of the Lithuanian Business Association, was published in Kaunas in 1932–1940. It had the supplements *Amatininkas* (Craftsman), *Jaunasis prekybininkas* (Young Merchant), *Jaunasis verslininkas* (Young Entrepreneur). 457 issues were published with circulation of 5000–10,000 copies (*Veršlas*). It analysed the business situation in Lithuania, wrote on cooperation, banking, trade issues, expressed a negative and discriminatory attitude towards businessmen of different nationalities, especially Jews. Algimantas Kasparavičius described the weekly *Veršlas* as “a mouthpiece for economic, cultural, and political anti-Semitism” (Kasparavičius 2005, 127).

examined the anti-Semitic collective (pogrom) case of Leipalingis on 18 June 1939, and identified the reasons, acts of violence against Jews and the people involved in them, also the punishments that were imposed on them (Mačiulis 2005). Audronė Janužytė analysed and compared the features of economic nationalism in the 1930s, 2008–2009, 2015, highlighting their similarities and differences (Janužytė 2021).

Characteristics of economic nationalism

We can notice the growing tendency of ethnic tensions, hostilities, and conflicts in society in the process of building the nation-state of Lithuania. This tendency was prompted by global and national economic situations, the political and democratic crisis in Europe with the establishment of authoritarian regimes in Lithuania and other European countries, as well as the anti-Semitic and aggressive foreign policy of Nazi Germany against neighbouring states (Janužytė 2021, 49). As can be seen from numerous articles, conflicts between Lithuanians and ethnic minorities increased in the economic sector in the 1930s. It could be maintained that economic nationalism was emerging as a phenomenon inspired by the protectionist economic policy actively pursued by the Lithuanian Government with respect to Lithuanian business people since the 1930s. Gediminas Vaskela, studying national aspects of strengthening the economic positions of Lithuanians, discerns the origins of economic nationalism which, in his opinion, are characteristic of “any nation that is reborn and on its way to modernity” (Vaskela 2006, 149). Liudas Truska refers to the economic policy pursued by the Government as Lithuanisation of businesses or “making the business Lithuanian again” (Truska 2003, 40; 2005, 148). However, it is difficult to agree in full with the concept of Lithuanisation of businesses since the protectionist economic policy of the government and the movement of Lithuanians for the restriction of the rights of ethnic minorities and groups in the economic sector in the 1930s was mainly directed against banking, trade, and other business sectors operated by entrepreneurs of other nationalities. The processes taking place in the economic policy and in the society may be referred to as economic nationalism. According to Andreas Pickel, “[E]conomic nationalism can be understood as a specific ideology and policy doctrine [...] in light of a specific case study [...] because it responds to problems situated in a particular historical, political, cultural and social context.” (Pickel 2005, 2, 4). We can define some characteristics of economic nationalism by analysing the case of Lithuania in the interwar period.

The first characteristic is the protectionist economic policy of the government of Lithuania. Its aim was to oust entrepreneurs of other nationalities, especially Jewish, and to increase the relative number of Lithuanians in the trade and banking business sectors. The active state-wide protectionist economic policy manifested in the regulation of the agricultural sector, incorporation of state-owned enterprises, management of foreign trade through licenses and permits as well as in supporting and enabling Lithuanian businesses by means of the policy of concessionary credits and investments, state orders, also permits and concessions. It has produced results: up to 60% of the entire industry, including crafts, was owned by Lithuanians at the end of the 1930s. Lithuanian companies dominated in exports and imports; for example, in

the spring of 1939, exports of Lithuanian companies accounted for 81.2% of the country's exports, and the volume of their imports constituted 52.2% of the country's imports. Jewish businesses of that period accounted for 15% of exports and 35.5% of imports in the country, whereas companies owned by entrepreneurs of other nationalities accounted for 3.8% of exports and 10.9% of imports³ (Truska 2003, 40). Assessing the protectionist economic policy of the time, Prof. Steponas Kolupaila (1892–1964) argued that laws were created to protect the country's masters (i.e., Lithuanians – the author's remark) from the interests of foreign competitors (Kolupaila 1937, 1). In the opinion of Liudas Truska, most Lithuanian politicians and intellectuals of that time perceived Lithuania as a state of only Lithuanians, while the right-wing radicals even demanded the expropriation of Jewish capital (Truska 2004, 72, 74).

The second characteristic is the discriminatory policy of the authorities against Jewish individuals, which ensured that the latter could not take civil service positions in state and municipal institutions (which in fact eliminated them from working within the authorities) (Sirutavičius, Staliūnas 2005, 18). As shown by the research of L. Truska, individuals of Jewish nationality actually could not work at the offices of the president and ministers, military schools, or diplomatic establishments, and very few of them were employed in state and municipal institutions⁴. The same can be seen from the statistical data of the period: in 1934, for instance, 477 out of 35,200 civil servants in state and municipal institutions were Jewish, including 290 working as school teachers. The Ministry of National Defence had 1,800 civil servants, and only 9 were Jewish; the Ministry of Interior employed 5 Jews among its 5,600 civil servants (and 2 Jews out of 3,600 police officers); the Ministry of Foreign Affairs had 3 Jews among its 162 employees; and municipalities employed 60 Jews among their 3,000 civil servants, and only 1 Jew worked among 1,300 military officers although soldiers of Jewish ethnicity made up 4–5% of the army at that time (Truska 2004, 73). Another example of discrimination is associated with the restrictions placed on Jewish individuals when acquiring land (Vareikis 2005, 160). It should also be pointed out that, although the relative number of Jews in the economy of Lithuania decreased due to their emigration,⁵ business bankruptcies, and protectionism with respect to Lithuanian businesses and economic nationalism, the Jews still owned 40% of the industry and crafts in the country, and more than 50% of the retail trade in the late 1930s. Many Jews were specialists of free professions, lawyers, educators, or doctors. In 1937, for instance, 341 out of 798 doctors in Lithuania or 42.73% were Jewish (Truska 2003, 40). All of this affected the domestic policies of Lithuania with respect to its ethnic minorities, specifically in the form of restrictions of their civil rights and

³ Based on the 1923 census, Lithuanians owned 13.3% of trade, 61.8% of industry and crafts, 14.3% of transport, communications and other enterprises (Truska 2003, 39). The majority was owned by businessmen of other nationalities, especially Jews.

⁴ Based on the data of the population census of 17 September 1923, the total of 2,028,971 inhabitants lived in the territory of Lithuania (excluding Vilnius region), of which Lithuanians constituted 83.88 per cent (1,701,863), Jews constituted 7.58 per cent (153,743), Poles constituted 3.23 per cent (65,599), Russians constituted 2.49 per cent (50,460), Germans constituted 1.44 per cent (29,231), Latvians constituted 0.73 per cent (14,883), Belarussians constituted 0.22 per cent (4,421), and 0.1 per cent of the population were of other nationalities (Lietuvos gyventojai 1923, XXXVI–XXXVIII).

⁵ Between 1920 and 1940, some 30,000 Lithuanian Jews left the country, most moving to South Africa and Palestine, and the Jewish populations fell to approximately 150,000 (Polonsky 2012, 229).

discrimination against them as representatives of ethnic minorities; shaping negative attitudes towards ethnic minorities in the mass media; and even provoking physical violence against them at the local level.

The third characteristic is causing ethnic discord in the media, prompting a negative and hostile opinion about ethnic minorities. It should be noted that the pages of the “Business” (*Veršlas*) weekly were in general marked by a negative attitude towards entrepreneurs of various ethnic minorities, and often published discriminatory statements against them, suggesting that the Government should make all public contracts with Lithuanians, prohibit the Lithuanian youth from working for individuals of other nationalities, adopt laws favouring Lithuanians in competition against representatives of other ethnic groups, and enable Lithuanians to gradually take over the businesses of ethnic minorities. For instance, the idea was that “if over 85% of all assets could be accumulated in the hands of Lithuanians [...]”, it would be “the most democratic requirement” (Ko mes norime 1938, 1). Others argued that it would be quite democratic to require that Lithuanians owned at least 90% of the entire economy of the country (Kovas 1939, 4). The wishes expressed by Emilija Putvinskaitė-Marcinkevičienė (1908–1995), the head of the Riflewomen organization, for Lithuanian entrepreneurs to implement the idea of Lithuania being only for Lithuanians are a particularly illustrative claim (Kapitalai 1939, 2).

A negative attitude towards ethnic minorities was also reflected in the media. For instances, articles in “The Motherland Guardian” (*Tėvynės sargas*) referred to Russians as those who bring Russification, oppose to and persecute Catholicism, lie, steal, and are lazy exploiters willing to rob Lithuanians of their land. Jews were blamed for economic hardships, exploiting Lithuanians, taking capital out of the country, granting favourable credit only to people of their nationality (other Jews), abusing the trading monopoly in rural areas, and undermining Lithuanian entrepreneurs, preventing business growth and the creation of economic prosperity in the country. They were accused of swindling, cheating, and stealing, and people were encouraged to boycott Jewish goods, restrict the rights of Jews to lease or acquire land, and even to limit their civil rights. Poles were accused of Polonising Lithuanians, being unwilling to speak Lithuanian, and poaching famous historic figures of Lithuanian origin, and people were invited to abstain from buying goods from Polish traders (Vaskela 2006, 150–153, 155).

The fourth characteristic concerns activities of economic organizations or movements aimed at ethnic minorities and demanding to restrict their businesses and boycott their goods and services. One example of this is the Lithuanian Business Society founded in 1930, which chose the phrases “Lithuania for Lithuanians”, “making the business Lithuanian again”, “Lithuania to become Lithuanian” as its slogans and was active from 1930 to 1940. It promoted economic nationalism with obvious features of economic anti-Semitism. Members of this organization demanded economic reforms in the country that would enable businesspeople of other nationalities (especially Jewish) to be pushed out from the industrial, commercial, and business sectors. They even suggested confiscating the assets of Jewish people based on the Law on Land Reform of 1922, which allowed the expropriation of land from

Polish landlords for a symbolic fee (*Po žemės reformos 1935*, 2). In the 1940s, this society had over 100 divisions, with its membership exceeding 5,000 (Truska 2023, 40). Their ideas were also supported by conservative Christian political parties and organizations such as the Lithuanian Nationalist Union, the Lithuanian Christian Labour Party, the “Young Lithuania” association of national Lithuanian youth, etc.

The other characteristic is linked with public demonstrations instigating nationalist sentiment; e.g. the typical slogan of nationalist demonstrations – “Lithuania for Lithuanians” – is insulting both to the feelings and the dignity of people of various nationalities and also violates the Constitution of Lithuania which states that all persons are equal before the law and their rights may not be restricted, nor may they be granted any privileges on the ground of nationality or belief. For instance, Juozas Markulis (1913–1987), one of the lecturers of the Lithuanian Christian Workers’ Union, made a public promise not to buy goods from people of other nationalities at a lecture on “making the business Lithuanian again” in 1935, which was attended by 200 members of the Lithuanian Catholic youth federation (*Pavasarininkai 1935*, 3; Truska 2003, 45). On 19 February 1939, a resolution addressed to the government was adopted and signed by 500 participants at a festival of Skaudvilė. It was demanded in the resolution to impose restrictions on the rights of Jews, i.e., by prohibiting trading on Sundays, shifting the market day from Sunday to Saturday, banning ritual slaughtering of cattle, and depriving Jews who illegally settled in Lithuania after 1918 of their citizenship (*Skaudiviečių rezoliucija 1939*, 5; *Lietuviškų verslų diena 1939*, 4). On 15 August 1939, proclamation leaflets of the Business editorial board containing the slogan “Lithuania for Lithuanians” were distributed at a cooperation festival held in Jurbarkas, which was attended by 4,500 people (Truska 2003, 43).

Another characteristic is related to national conflicts and anti-Semitic acts of violence. Examples of anti-Semitic campaigns include the dissemination of leaflets against Jews, defacing non-Lithuanian signs, breaking windows in Jewish houses, companies, and shops, as well as acts of brutality and collective violence. Most of the violence against Jews was carried out by lower-middle-class Lithuanians in small towns, and by gymnasium learners and university students in Kaunas (Vareikis 2005, 165). One example of collective violence (a pogrom) is the incident in Leipalingis on 18 June 1939, where local Jews were assaulted and the windows of their homes were smashed (the window panes of 22 Jewish houses and the synagogue were broken). The Jews were protected from physical attacks only by police intervention. Five individuals were sentenced to one month of imprisonment or a fine of 1,000 Lithuanian litas each, and 13 individuals were sentenced to 1 week in custody or a fine of 200 Lithuanian litas.⁶ Another example of collective violence was the pogrom of 30 October – 1 November 1939 in Vilnius during which 22 Jews were seriously injured and 13 were left with minor injuries at the hands of Polish aggressors. The Jews accused the Lithuanian Government of failing to prevent the violence and blamed the Lithuanian police for supporting the aggressive crowd. The passivity of the authorities can be explained by their attempts to reduce ethnic tensions and to stabilize the situation in the recently regained Vilnius Region (Vareikis 2005, 179). Nonetheless, it should be

⁶ For more, see: Mačiulis 2005, 181–212.

pointed out that no deaths occurred in anti-Jewish riots or pogroms in the interwar period in Lithuania.

Conclusions

There were several reasons which prompted the rise of economic nationalism. They were primarily related to the economic, social, and cultural gap between ethnic minorities and Lithuanians. In particular, the protectionist economic policy pursued by the government with respect to Lithuanian businesspeople did not consolidate the society of Lithuania. On the contrary, it deepened the economic gap between Lithuanians and ethnic minorities, and exhibited certain aspects of ethnic discrimination, with the aim of ousting entrepreneurs of several nationalities, especially Jewish, from industrial, financial, and trade sectors. Another important reason for the development of economic nationalism was the building of a nation state, where ethnic minorities were perceived as an obstacle to an ethnocentric state, its economic modernization, and to Lithuanians competing with representatives of other nationalities.

At the local level, ethnic conflicts would sometimes escalate into physical violence, essentially against one ethnic minority (Jews). This was, to some extent, affected by the anti-Semitic sentiment instigated in the press, the anti-Semitic activities of some organizations, and, partly, the protectionist economic policy pursued by the government that aimed to restrict or oust Jews from industrial, banking, and trade businesses.

The study of Lithuanian-Jewish relations from the angle of economic nationalism expands the field of research on anti-Semitism as a phenomenon in interwar Lithuania. And looking ahead, there must be zero tolerance for the acts instigating national hatred and they must always entail criminal prosecution to prevent the nationalist sentiment (anti-Semitism) from spreading in the society.

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