T. Bairašauskaitė, Z. Medišauskienė, R. Miknys, *Lietuvos istorija*, VIII tomas, I dalis: *Devynioliktas amžius: visuomenė ir valdžia*, Vilnius: Baltos lankos, 2011, 510 p. ISBN 978-9955-234-6-3

The project of writing and publishing a multi-volume history of Lithuania, initiated by scholars at the Lithuanian Institute of History, is perhaps the most serious venture of its kind to be undertaken for several years. Tamara Bairašauskaitė, Zita Medišauskienė and Rimantas Miknys are the authors of part I of volume VIII, devoted to the 19th century. Chronologically, the book covers the period from the year 1795, when the last partition of the Republic of the Two Nations occurred, until 1918, when the modern Lithuanian state was created.

It is not easy to evaluate critically this historical synthesis, most likely for two reasons. First, in seeking to assess a historical synthesis properly, it would be useful to have at hand a few similar works. It so happens that Lithuanian historiography cannot boast of syntheses of 19th-century Lithuanian history. There are a number of books discussing the whole history of Lithuania, but books dealing with only the 19th century are lacking. This is strange, since there are both many 19th-century scholars, and studies of various problems in this century. Several years after Lithuania regained its independence in 1990, one synthesis by Egidijus Aleksandravičius and Antanas Kulakauskas *Carų valdžioje. Lietuva XIX amžiuje* [Under the Rule of the Tsars. Lithuania in the 19th Century] appeared.¹ One can compare the latest synthesis with this book, but one needs to keep in mind the different circumstances of the appearance of these works and their scholarly purpose. ‘Under the Rule of the Tsars’ was the first attempt since the collapse of the Soviet Union to look at and assess in an innovative way the 19th century in Lithuania and Lithuania in the 19th century, essentially abandoning previous dominant interpretations. It presented to the general public a different image of the 19th century to the ones formed in 1918–1940 and in the Soviet period. Thus, the significance of this new synthesis lies in its attempt to apply the conception and theory of modernisation, to discuss much more thoroughly the most important problems and processes in Lithuania’s history in the 19th century, to evaluate in a scholarly way and to use the latest research, not only by Lithuanian, but also by Polish, Russian, Belarusian and other historians, and to transcend

¹ E. Aleksandravičius, A. Kulakauskas, *Carų valdžioje. XIX amžiaus Lietuva* (Vilnius, 1996).

the chronological method of teaching political history characteristic of syntheses, and to focus on the development of society and social history. In the case of Lithuania, having lost its statehood at the end of the 18th century, this seems the most rational choice.

The second reason for a critical assessment of problematic issues that may not be so significant is the danger of wading into subjective considerations, about how one would imagine the most appropriate synthesis of 19th-century Lithuanian history?

Part I of volume VIII of the History of Lithuania appeared, in 2011. In the foreword of the book, R. Miknys defines the overall concept of the work, seeking to look at the 19th century from a certain angle of the development of society. The aim was 'to reveal the becoming and development of Lithuania, as a distinctive socio-cultural phenomenon, to write a history of processes, rather than of events, with a particular emphasis on forms of Lithuanian society's life, their expression, and interaction with the processes of Europe' [p. 7]. It is no coincidence that the word 'society' ended up in first place in the title. Of course, the question may arise, whether, in investigating the 19th century, we can talk about the unified society of Lithuania, or should still be talking about societies? In our opinion, the modernisation theory was chosen to help solve this dilemma. On its basis, one can explain the characteristics of the transformation of society from caste to democratic, as well as the impact of governments, political and religious, upon this process.

On the other hand, the formation of modern nations became an important element of modernisation, as an objective historical phenomenon. Therefore, the authors of the synthesis consider one of the most significant questions to be not only how the modern Lithuanian nation was formed, but also the other nations that lived in historical Lithuania at that time.

The 19th century in Lithuanian history was a very controversial epoch. One proof of this is the concept of Lithuania itself, which experienced a distinct transformation. Lithuania was perceived in one way at the end of the 18th century, most often as the Grand Duchy of Lithuania, but in a different way at the beginning of the 20th century, as an ethnographic, mostly Lithuanian-populated region, and from 1918 the state of the ethnic Lithuanians. It is fortunate that the authors forsook the Lithuanian and Belarusian tradition in writing about the 19th century to analyse questions only of the history of ethnographic Lithuania and Belarus. The synthesis attempts to match the historical and ethnographic rudiments, which would reflect more the realities of that time. Therefore, not only the Vilna and Kovno gubernia, but all the other provinces of the so-called Northwest Province, Grodno, Minsk, Vitebsk and Mogilev, in which the Belarusian ethnos dominated, find themselves geographically at the centre of attention. This is reflected well in the maps prepared by Loreta Štutinė, showing

the accurate boundaries not only of all the listed provinces but also of the districts.

The first chapter, 'Time-Space-Man', written by Z. Medišauskienė, presents the historical and civilisational context of the 19th century. It analyses how in this century, particularly in Europe, the process of modernisation occurred. The specific expressions of modernisation that were formed and influenced not only Western, but also Central-Eastern Europe, as well as the rest of the world, are discussed. Of course, one has to stress that beyond the borders of Europe, these expressions were understood as Europeanisation, with not only positive but also negative consequences. Among the most prominent features of modernisation listed and discussed are the changes in the economy, industrialisation, in the life of society, the social transformation when the old privileged classes lost a significant part of their influence, new social groups, the intelligentsia, the bourgeoisie and the working classes, appeared and grew stronger. In political life, the greatest changes are linked with the times of the French Revolution and Romanticism's entrenched doctrine of innate human rights, and the principle of the sovereignty of nations that summoned the national movements and the spread of the ideology of nationalism in Central-Eastern Europe.

Taking into account the experience of Lithuania, the importance of the abolition of serfdom in 1861 in the acceleration of the mentioned expressions of modernisation is emphasised. Two essential things are stated: that at the beginning of the 20th century in Lithuania, a society which declared and implemented the principles of modernity was already formed; while for the government of the Russian Empire modernisation steps were not 'an immanently indispensable phenomenon' for the emergence of these principles.

The first section analyses the changes in the concept of Lithuania in the 19th century, the change of the image of historical Lithuania usually in the environment of the boyar society, and the entrenchment of the concept of a Lithuanian-speaking ethnographic Lithuania at the end of the 19th century and beginning of the 20th century. Another important factor, thanks to which the transformation of the concept of Lithuania took place, was the Imperial government, which, having officially banned the use of the name of Lithuania in the names of provinces, paradoxically preserved signs of the integrity of historical Lithuania in carrying out the territorial-administrative division of the former GDL lands. Medišauskienė analyses in depth the steps taken by the government in this area.

The innovation that no doubt positively distinguishes the discussed synthesis from other works of a similar type is the chapters which analyse perhaps for the first time, important things such as the natural environ-

ment of Lithuania in the 19th century, changes in climate and even annual temperatures, the infrastructure, ecological problems, natural resources, and so on, in such detail. Essentially, the material conditions affecting the economic development of Lithuania, and the socio-demographic changes in its society, are analysed. *Medišauskienė* not only describes the demographic characteristics and trends, but also presents and critically evaluates the methods and shortcomings of 19th-century statistical data collection, as well as the different evaluations of these sources by Lithuanian, Polish and Russian historians.

In the second section of the synthesis 'Governments: Secular and Spiritual', T. *Bairišauskaitė* in the first chapter discusses the three main types of Imperial power: Imperial rule and its changes, the administrative apparatus, and the judicial system. The modernisation theory was also adapted here in analysing the reforms by the Imperial Russian government at the beginning of the 19th century, in the second half of the century, and at the beginning of the 20th century. In this chapter, the nature of the domestic policies of each ruler of the Russian Empire, beginning with Catherine II and ending with Nicholas II, is described rather broadly. Specialists in the history of the Russian Empire will certainly not find any kind of new data or evaluations, but it will be helpful for the reader who is just starting to take an interest in this topic to become familiar with the materials provided.

Similarly, using the method of chronological instruction, the specifics of the administrative rule of the historical lands of Lithuania are analysed in detail. In addition to local government bodies such as the person of the Vilna Governor General, the offices of governors and officials of provinces and districts, an important role in strengthening the integration actions and instruments was played by the Western Provinces Committee, which acted secretly in 1831–1848, and the Western Affairs Committee, which operated in 1862–1864. Another type of rule that is widely discussed in the synthesis is the confusing court system. Up to the 1820s in the Western provinces, two types of courts functioned, those which had worked in the Republic of the Two Nations, and those newly established by the Russian Empire. Gradually, the government, in carrying out its unification policies, abolished the remnants of the old GDL's courts and rights. *Bairišauskaitė* also discusses how in Lithuania the rather liberal court reform in the times of Alexander II was implemented.

The second government, the spiritual one, had a special status. R. *Miknys* analyses the position of Lithuania's traditional Churches 'between the secular government and society'. The most oppositional and, in the opinion of the government, the greatest threat to the empire's political system, was the Catholic Church, as an institution, and its representatives, the clergy. Despite its conservative nature, especially at the level of the spiritual hierarchy, the Catholic Church not only had an important

religious impact on society, but also became a factor in national relations and assimilation (Polonisation, Lithuanisation). The Imperial government, throughout almost all of the 19th century, sought to strengthen the official Orthodox Church, and to set it against the Catholics. Traditionally, in the synthesis of Lithuania's history, most talk is about the Catholic Church. That is understandable, since it reflected the confessional dependence of the absolute majority of Lithuanians. However, in the reviewed book, another different and wider field of vision of the confessional situation, reflecting better the realities of the former GDL lands, was selected. Therefore, the history of other Christian churches, Uniate, Orthodox, Old Believers and Protestant, is discussed to a rather broad and detailed degree.

The last chapter of the book 'Society: Closed and Becoming More Free', written by Bairašauskaitė, is no less innovative than the first two. The process of modernisation is seen here through the decline of the caste society and the emergence of new social strata. Essentially, every traditional caste in the 19th century encountered the challenges provoked by modernisation and the Imperial government. After reading this section, the hypothetical conclusion is suggested that if at the end of the 18th century the Russian Empire had not conquered the GDL lands, the modernisation process would have taken place much faster. This is linked especially to the problem of the transformation of society, since the development of the Republic of the Two Nations at that time was influenced significantly by the ideas of social reform of the Enlightenment epoch.

The chapter discusses in chronological order the history of the traditional estates (the nobility, clergy, peasants and townspeople), the judicial situation, the development of local governments, and features of social modernisation. The formation of the national intelligentsia and its ever-greater weight in social and political life, and the emergence of the industrial bourgeoisie and the working class in the larger cities, became unquestionable signs of modernisation. A significant feature of the development of both the intelligentsia and the bourgeoisie was national differentiation, which contributed very greatly on one hand to the consolidation of individual nations and the strengthening of identity, but equally, on the other hand, to the disintegration of the society of the whole of historical Lithuania from a nationality aspect.

The etho-confessional communities of Lithuania, particularly the largest, the Jews, are analysed separately. The position of the Russian tsars to the 'Jewish question', the changes in policy, from attempts to integrate or even assimilate this community into the society of the empire, to efforts to preserve its individuality, to applying repressive actions, are discussed. The other confessional communities, Tatars, Karaites and Old Believers, were not as numerous. Except for Old Believers, the government essentially did not apply discriminatory policies to them, ensuring them the right to foster their religious and cultural traditions.

The last two questions discussed in the synthesis are the institution of the family and the position of women in the family and in society. This is also certainly an innovative supplement, which up to now has not been in the synthesis of Lithuania's history.

Summing up, one has to note that the book 'The Nineteenth Century: Society and Government' is so far the most serious scholarly synthesis devoted to 19th-century Lithuania. The extensive documentary information and the statistical data parts are balanced with a historical analysis of new problems, using the most recent research from historiography and the book's authors. Clearly, in this work not all the important questions of 19th-century history remained untouched, but it is hoped that this will be done in the next two volumes: 'The Nineteenth Century: The Slow Path to Modernity' and 'The Nineteenth Century: Liberation Strategies'.

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