Mal'te Rol'f, *Pol'skie zemli pod vlast'iu Peterburga. Ot Venskogo kongressa do Pervoi mirovoi*, Moskva: Novoe literaturnoe obozrenie, 2020, 576 p. ISBN 978-5-4448-1199-3

As Malte Rolf, the author of this book, notes, the translation into Russian of the study *Imperiale Herrschaft im Weichselland. Das Königreich Polen im russischen Imperium, 1864–1915* [Imperial Russian Rule in the Kingdom of Poland, 1864–1915], published in 2020, is 'more than a regular translation. It is a revised study, containing many supplements and completely new accents' (p. 7). The book's author first of all took on an ambitious task, to tell the 'whole' history of the Kingdom of Poland from 1815 until 1915, later turning his attention to the period after the 1863–1864 uprising,¹ and sought to find answers to the following questions: What provoked the confrontation between imperial officials and Polish society? What forms did this confrontation take between 1815 and 1915, and especially after the 1863–1864 uprising? How did this confrontation change? And who participated? (pp. 7, 14). Rolf makes the presumption that the imperial government was dependent on the actions and reactions of its subjects. He saw a conflictual community in the Kingdom of Poland, where actors-antagonists operated in a state of regular intercommunication, while dialogue would begin once they clashed (p. 20). In the book, the author tries to present the most characteristic examples of conflict and mutual influence, focusing most attention on the period after the 1863–1864 uprising. This is why the second chapter, 'The Establishment of the Russian Government in the Partitioned Eastern Part of Poland (1772–1863)', as the author himself admits, is an introduction to the main narrative when after the 1863–1864 uprising, the complicated functioning mechanisms of imperial officialdom in the Kingdom of Poland became even more evident (p. 18).

As the author accurately notes, the local Russian government, or more precisely, the governor-general, performed one of the main roles in implementing national policy in the Polish lands. It was none other

¹ In this review, the term 1863–1864 uprising used in Lithuanian historiography is applied. In the book, Rolf uses the term 'January uprising' (*powstanie styczniowe*), which is more common in Polish historiography.

than the governor-general who formed the localised style of governance, and who influenced decision-making in central government institutions (p. 19). By presenting a collective portrait of the (ten) governor-generals, Rolf reaches the conclusion that the local government did not have one, uniform, national policy programme: it was more of a long process of reforms, as all the measures by which the government sought to establish itself in the 'turbulent provinces' were implemented in the 1870s, ten years after the 1863–1864 uprising (p. 127). According to archival sources, some of which are put into academic circulation here for the first time, Rolf describes how and what type of national policy projects were presented by one governor-general or another. The material presented in the book is interesting, as it allows us to assess the similarities and differences in the ways of thinking of different governor-generals, and to what extent this thinking was or was not dependent on general political changes in the empire, or whether it was the result of the personal opinions of the governor-general. However, on reading the book, one question that remains unanswered, to me at least, was, why did some governor-generals, for example Petr Pavlovich Al'bedinskii (1826–1883), suggest cooperation with local Polish society (pp. 174–177)? The author offers a simple explanation for Al'bedinskii's decision: it reflected the general style of governance typical of this official, aimed at an awareness of the locals' interests, and taking them into account at least partly (p. 174). On reading Al'bedinskii's reform project for the Polish lands (1880), the questions that come to mind are, where, that is, in what districts, were there similarities (or perhaps differences?) compared to this governor-general's earlier strategies employed in the Baltic provinces and the Northwest Region, and what experience did Al'bedinskii bring with him, and what experience did he seek to use (or quite conversely, avoid) in the Polish lands?

In the third chapter of the book 'Russian Government Structures, Actors and Spheres in the Kingdom of Poland after 1863', the author uses many terms to describe national policy: 'Russification' (*rusifikatsiia*), 'de-Polonisation' (*depolonizatsiia*), 'internal construction of the state' (*vnutrennee gosudarstvennoe stroitel'stvo*), 'convergence' (*sliianie*), 'depolarisation' (*sblizhenie*), and 'consolidation' (*ob'edinenie*). He seeks to describe the content of each term he uses, noting that these terms identified different actions taken with regard to national policy (pp. 203–213). However, at the same time, these terms were not a reflection of clear, precisely formulated national policy concepts or strategies; quite the opposite, the use of these terms was rather flexible, while the choice

of one or another term depended on what needed to be accentuated (p. 203). The author similarly tries to clarify these accents, giving a wider presentation of public speeches and the discussion of ideas held by governor-generals Al'bedinskii, Iosif Vladimirovich Romeiko-Gurko (1828–1901), and Aleksandr Konstantinovich Imeretinskii (1837–1900). The approach Rolf has taken and the material he has presented are interesting, but one would still want a clearer identification of the purpose and addressees of the cited texts. When reading, the question that comes up is, in what contexts were these mentioned terms used? Did they appear in the public discourse, printed publications, or in internal inter-agency communication? We presume that these contexts and their accurate identification is just as important in order to understand why specific terms were used and the possible change in their content. The text's addressee also unavoidably determines and defines the discourse field, especially concerning something as 'slippery' as national policy.

The fourth and fifth chapters of the book are a unique history of the city of Warsaw and its population in the second half of the 19th and the early 20th century. One could boldly state that these chapters are, and will be, of interest to researchers of the city of Warsaw in the future, assessing the city's governance, its visual, technical and sanitation structures, and how they changed, and its economic and social development. It should be noted that the author quite elaborately and accurately describes points of common existence and exclusion between inhabitants of Warsaw, determining fields of cultural contact and ethnic isolation, and zones of daily contact, and partly also of conflict(s) in the city area. The author also accurately identifies the divergence between imperial officialdom and Russian city dwellers, which are often considered to be one and the same in historiography, and uses sources of a different nature to substantiate his conclusions, including the journal of an official, the Warsaw District Court public servant Apollon Benkevich. Rolf has dedicated a lot of attention to this journal, using it to prove that officials' daily interaction with the Polish city community was viewed as a completely normal phenomenon (p. 378). Benkevich 'did not like Poles', but in daily life these social groups did cooperate, for example, mutual academic cooperation in the field of collection. Rolf has also noticed cooperation with other nationalities in Warsaw on a broader level: for example, when assessing the activities of the city burgomaster (mayor).

According to Rolf, the city's governance was in the hands of the imperial bureaucracy, which was in turn the actor in the modernisation

of Warsaw. Based on examples of the city's self-government, or, more precisely, the technical and economic activities of the city burgomaster, the author reaches the conclusion that the imperial government also had an encouraging and forming influence. 'The authorities from Petersburg cannot be viewed exclusively as repressive or seeking to impede, the government must also be seen as a force that provided contexts and had a long-term, deep, and fundamental impact on local processes' (p. 361). Thus, the author suggests viewing the imperial government as a factor that had a productive impact on political, social and cultural processes, especially when viewing the development of Warsaw at the end of the 19th and the beginning of the 20th century. When we read about examples of Warsaw's modernisation, we can agree at first glance with the author's conclusions and statements. Indeed, during the period under discussion, powerful technical, economic, medical and in part social modernisation processes were under way in Warsaw. However, was this the result of imperial officialdom, or, more precisely, the Warsaw burgomaster's decision to cooperate with the local (mostly Polish) city community? Perhaps it was the outcome of the overall modernisation of cities in the Russian Empire in the late 19th and early 20th centuries regardless of whether the head of a city's government was a bureaucrat of Russian or Polish origin? At this point, I would like to present an example for comparison: the administrative centre of the Northwest Region, Vilnius.

As the author of this book himself pointedly notes, and as recent research about the national policy implemented by the Imperial Russian government in the Northwest Region has shown (primarily in studies by Darius Staliūnas),² the imperial bureaucracy's governing style, political strategies and actions were significantly different in the Kingdom of Poland and the lands of the former Grand Duchy of Lithuania, which in the 18th century together made up one state. However, at the beginning of the 20th century, when obvious modernisation processes began in Vilnius, the post of city burgomaster was held by the Pole Michał Węśławski (1849–1917), an active member of Polish cultural societies (and later, political factions as well). This was not a singular outcome of the events of 1905 either. Węśławski served as the Vilnius city burgomaster from 1905 until 1916, and neither the local nor the central government took steps to oust this veteran of the 1863–1864 uprising from his position. Conversely,

² The book's author is familiar with the work of the Lithuanian historian Darius Staliūnas. See: D. Staliūnas, *Making Russians. Meaning and Practices of Russification in Lithuania and Belarus after 1863* (Amsterdam, 2007).

as in Warsaw, so too in Vilnius, the daily affairs of running the city would be looked after by two institutions, the governor-general's board and the city burgomaster, without any great conflicts³ (p. 298). We have to agree with Rolf that the city burgomaster and the governor-general did have different priorities. Unlike the burgomaster, the governor-general was not very concerned with long-term infrastructure projects in Warsaw and Vilnius; similarly, the governor-general and burgomaster had different concepts of the city space (p. 298). But modernisation processes that were alike and yet on a different scale took place at a similar time in both Warsaw and Vilnius, where the position of burgomaster was held by individuals of different nationalities and social backgrounds.

The advantage of Rolf's book is his close inspection of Imperial Russian government policy after the events of 1905. In the second-last chapter of the book, 'The Empire in Crisis: The Kingdom of Poland in 1900–1914', the author raises interesting research questions: what strategies did the Russian bureaucracy employ in order to curb revolutionary events and unrest? How did the temporary loss of control in the Polish lands affect images of imperial officialdom's enemies? And finally, what lessons were learnt from the revolution (p. 407)? We would like to note that Rolf answers the last question very comprehensively, describing accurately *what* the revolution taught the empire's bureaucrats, and *what* it taught the local heterogenous society. Local officials acted very ambivalently in the light of the revolution's events, much like during the 1863–1864 uprising, and afterwards they lacked a united conception, and in some cases no such conception existed at all (p. 414). The difference between the actions of the local government amid the 1863–1864 uprising and the events of 1905 is that the governor-general tried to secure support, to establish a connection not just with those groups in Polish society who traditionally supported the imperial government, but also with the new Polish political factions (p. 438). In the Kingdom of Poland, the governor-general did not stop political self-organisation among Poles, which was beneficial for the representation of this social group at State Dumas. On the other hand, as the author accurately notes, the ban on activities by Polish professional and educational societies in 1909 taught members of these associations to *adapt*. Many members of these banned societies continued their activities under the banner of other legal organisations (p. 449). In other words, the universal social mobility that began after the events of 1905 was not stopped, and the

³ See also: W. Wołkanowski, *Michał Węśławski, biografia prezydenta Wilna w latach 1905–1916* (Opole 2015), pp. 139–140, 158–162, 200–201.

empire's bureaucrats gradually resigned from trying to integrate local Polish society into the all-Russian context (p. 486). On the eve of the First World War, 'Russia practically lost Poles as their subjects' (p. 489). However, the example of governance of the Kingdom of Poland, as is astutely noted by the author, allows us to comprehend all the inherent problems in ruling a multinational and multi-confessional state unit such as the Russian Empire of the 19th century (p. 15). Thus, Rolf's book is a weighty contribution not only to the history of the Kingdom of Poland, or the city of Warsaw in 'the long 19th century', but to the history of the Russian Empire's ruling structures, ruling concepts and strategies in general.

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