

Olga Mastianica, *Bajorija lietuvių tautiniame projekte (XIX a. pabaiga – XX a. pradžia)*, Vilnius: Lietuvos istorijos institutas, 2016. 200 p. ISBN 978-609-8183-13-9

Out of a longstanding interest in the question of the inclusion of the nobility in the modern Lithuanian nation, Olga Mastianica has written the book ‘The Nobility in the Lithuanian National Project (Late 19th and Early 20th Centuries)’, which is a valuable contribution to the study of Central and East European national movements. As the author notes, the question of the inclusion of the nobility in national movements was also important in other Central and East European national movements, so Lithuania was no exception. Mastianica attempts to shed some light on the issue of the (limited) inclusion of the nobility in the Lithuanian national movement, by zooming in on the *attitudes* of the Lithuanian intelligentsia towards the place of the nobility within the modern Lithuanian nation. The attitudes of prominent activists, mostly grouped according to their political-ideological affinities, are mostly inferred from a study of the press. The focus of Mastianica’s research is the newspaper *Litwa* (1908–1914), which was conceived with the help of leading figures in the Lithuanian national movement. Published in the Polish language, the newspaper aimed to present the program of the Lithuanian national movement, and more generally, ‘to defend the national, economic and social interests of Lithuania’ (p. 94). Its intended audience was Slavic-speaking people who did not speak Lithuanian, but nonetheless were brothers and sisters of Lithuanians by ‘blood’, and who wanted to live in peace with Lithuanians. Time-wise, Mastianica’s research stretches from the publication of the Lithuanian newspaper *Auszra* (1883), which symbolised an important stage in the history of the Lithuanian national movement, because it presented the program of modern Lithuanian nationalism, until the collapse of the newspaper *Litwa* in 1914. Theoretically, and thematically, Mastianica aligns herself with scholars of the study of nationalism such as A. Smith and M. Hroch. Methodologically, for the study of texts and images, the author uses the methodology of public discourse analysis, which combines critical discourse analysis (M. Foucault), and the discourse theory analytical approach (E. Laclau and C. Mouffe).

The author organises her book in four chapters. She begins with an analysis of the attitudes of the Lithuanian intelligentsia towards the inclusion of the nobility in the modern nation during the early stages of the Lithuanian national movement (Chapter One). Then she introduces the

newspaper *Litwa* (Chapter Two), and fleshes out the attitudes as represented in it (Chapter Three). Before drawing a conclusion, Mastianica delineates the reactions to the ethno-political program of *Litwa* of the Polish and Belorussian national movements, and by other Lithuanian political groups (Chapter Four).

The key findings of the research can be summarised as follows. In the early stages of the Lithuanian national movement, many Lithuanian intellectuals argued that it was important to include the nobility in the Lithuanian national movement, in order for Lithuania to function 'fully'. It was also hoped that the nobility would support the national movement financially. Usually, the nobility was already regarded as constitutive of the Lithuanian nation: the nobility shared 'blood', or was only superficially Polonised. Throughout the more politically charged stage of the nationalist movement, associated with the expanding public discourse, Liberal and Christian Democratic speakers also looked for clearer ways of integrating the nobility: the conflicts between the social classes (peasantry, nobility, clergy) were hardly spoken about, a few models for the national family consisting of the nobility and the peasantry were proposed, and the nobility was encouraged to be loyal either to the Lithuanian or the Polish national movement. Negative ideas were heard, too. It was argued that the nobility should not be included in the Lithuanian nation, because the nation was to be formed around the peasants (for example, the view of Lithuanian intellectuals in the USA), or because the nobility was always going to remain supportive of the Muscovites and/or the Polish, or simply because the nobility was of no use, due to its deteriorating financial situation. Unlike earlier opinions, Lithuanian intellectuals increasingly stressed that the nobility should support the economic and political goals of the Lithuanian national movement, rather than the need to start speaking the Lithuanian language. Later, when the main political parties were formed, the Christian Democratic Party stood out in organising explicit activities directed against Russification and Polonisation; and it was also, in the context of other Lithuanian political parties, the most supportive of the idea that the nobility should be included in the modern Lithuanian nation.

The newspaper *Litwa* was initiated by the Christian Democrats and National Democrats, who supported the idea that the nobility should start speaking Lithuanian in their family surroundings, thereby integrating into the Lithuanian nation. With regard to the question of the inclusion of the nobility, *Litwa* did not form many new ideas, but rather repeated older views of the Lithuanian intelligentsia. Eventually, and with a pressing need to retain Vilnius within the sights of Lithuania, the newspaper focused on the task of redefining the Belorussian and Polish-speaking inhabitants of Vilnius and its surroundings as 'Lithuanians'. Two main discursive strategies were employed: historical material was reinterpreted by portraying these inhabitants as historical Lithuanians, and they were encouraged to speak

Lithuanian, primarily in church. *Litwa* had a hostile attitude towards the Polish national movement; and the Polish National Democratic Party, in turn, was critical and satirical of the Lithuanian intelligentsia's political activities. The editor of *Litwa* initially collaborated with the Polish-speaking *Krajowcy* political group, while also selectively using their attitudes in his criticism of the Polish National Democrats. *Krajowcy* eventually ceased to support *Litwa*, because their radical differences in politics became more apparent. *Litwa* also collaborated for some time with the Belorussian and Ukrainian national movements: it republished articles from Belorussia and Ukraine, promoted the use of the Belorussian language in churches around Vilnius, and stressed the similarities between the Lithuanian, Belorussian and Ukrainian national movements, not least in terms of their common enemy, the Polish national movement. However, the affinity with the Belorussian movement ended once it became clear that Belorussian activists also fostered territorial national claims to Vilnius and its region. Within the territory of Lithuania, the Lithuanian national discourse supported the idea of including the nobility in the modern Lithuanian nation more on pragmatic rather than ethno-linguistic grounds. As time went on, the Lithuanian intelligentsia, and in particular the Lithuanian Democratic Party, were concerned with the question of changing the national attitudes of the Polish and Belorussian-speaking inhabitants of Vilnius and its region, and they supported the activities of M. Davainis-Silvestraitis, the editor of *Litwa*, in this endeavour, who also became the editor of *Lud* (1912–1913), a similar newspaper published in Belorussian. In the latter publication, the editor gave up the newspaper's goal to include the nobility in the Lithuanian nation, and envisioned a new goal, to propagate the ideas of the Lithuanian national movement in other countries. The radical change in Davainis-Silvestraitis' position was received critically by his colleagues, and the newspaper ceased to exist, due to financial difficulties. Overall, *Litwa* did not become a platform anchoring fertile discussions among different political groups on the question of the nobility and the Lithuanian nation, but it also shows that the Lithuanian national movement, just like other Central and East European national movements at the juncture of the 19th and 20th centuries, considered it necessary, and attempted to incorporate the nobility into the nation 'under construction'.

At first sight, the newspaper *Litwa* seems a short-lived and not-very-successful project. However, Mastianica's research is far from being unsuccessful itself. On the contrary, it helps us to understand the Lithuanian national movement better, and, more generally, it has valuable implications for the study of national movements.

In the case of Lithuania, Mastianica zooms in on a relatively short but important period in the Lithuanian national movement, and describes the crystallisation and diversification of political voices and visions. The author tackles a theme which has not yet been studied, thereby not only

filling a research gap on Lithuanian nationalism, but also positioning the case of Lithuania next to other Central and East European national movements. Avoiding generalisations, Mastianica draws a picture of public voices with microscopic precision, delineating particular attitudes and changes to them over time, their internal contradictions and affinities within particular political groups, and their interaction within a more dialogical, or even polylogical, and transnational framework of public space. This historically rich texture of voices is particularly interesting in the case of the Lithuanian national movement, which manoeuvred equipped with a memory of the state and the notion of 'nation' articulated in civic terms (as used in the slogan *Gente Lituanus, Natione Polonus*). As Mastianica shows, the discursive strategies of including the nobility in the modern Lithuanian nation (as well as 'Lithuanianising' Polish and Belorussian-speaking inhabitants around Vilnius) were tailored to a largely implicit concept of 'nation', articulated in both the ethnogenetic (related 'by blood') and ethno-linguistic senses. Curiously, in the case of envisioning the nobility constitutive of the Lithuanian nation, the Lithuanian intelligentsia used mostly ethnogenetic arguments, while the ethnolinguistic vision of the nation remained a goal to be achieved in the future.

Mastianica's research into the Lithuanian national movement also has larger implications for the study of national movements and nationalism in Europe.

First of all, by delineating various attitudes of Lithuanian and other players in the interactive polylogical transnational public space, and the changes to them, and also by highlighting the relations between attitudes (criticism, affinity, strategic reshaping and use for particular purposes, such as political, sarcasm and even silence), the author suggests that substantial work involved in national movements takes place in the discursive space, and national movements are intrinsically argumentative in character.

Secondly, Mastianica's research places the Lithuanian national movement firmly in the transnational European intellectual network of the 19th and 20th centuries, and points to a need to study nationalism and national movements from a transnational historical perspective, which highlights intellectual exchanges on a transnational map. The Lithuanian national movement was aligned with the Belorussian and Ukrainian national movements, and it was opposed to the Polish national movement. The Belorussian national movement considered the Lithuanian national movement an example to follow, while Lithuanian intellectuals, just like activists in many other European national movements, promoted the Hungarian and Czech national movements as ideals. Voices from outside Lithuania were also heard in the newspaper *Litwa*. We should not forget that it was distributed outside Lithuania, via Lithuanian student organisations which were active in Riga and Dorpat, to mention just a few distribution channels used.

Finally, Mastianica's research shows beautifully that we should not take national categories as self-evident. The meaning of a 'Lithuanian' was contested. Next to the concept of a 'Lithuanian', in terms of shared origins and language, as advocated by Lithuanian intellectuals, the Polish-speaking nobility articulated the term 'Lithuanian' differently. For example, K. Skirmuntaitė (pp. 57–58) defined the 'nation' not in terms of language, but in terms of the nation's character and individual moral attitudes, and she saw Polish culture as also containing the 'Lithuanian character and soul', while the Lithuanian language was conceived more as a pragmatic tool for understanding the Lithuanian folk national movement. Not only was the meaning of the term 'Lithuanian' contested, but those who should become a 'Lithuanian' were also in a discursive battlefield, consisting of diverse discursive strategies proposed. As Mastianica shows, the term 'Lithuanian' was also stretched and used next to other categories of self-identification, national and otherwise. For instance, Jonas Basanavičius proposed to use two terms to denote the nobility, 'a Pole in Lithuania' and 'a Polish-speaking Lithuanian nobleman' (p. 44). P. Višinskis proposed to distinguish three groups of 'Polonised Lithuanians': (1) those who 'have pure Lithuanian blood and character, but use the Polish language; most of them identify as 'Litwin'; (2) those who 'have Lithuanian blood and character, but Polish culture and ideals; they identify as 'Litwin' and 'Polak'; and (3) 'Polonised Lithuanians who have mixed blood, and purely Polish character, culture, ideals and language; they call themselves 'Polak', and only sometimes, under pressure, can they confess to being 'Litvin' (p. 60). This crafting of new concepts was also directed at the use of old terminology. Most prominently, noblemen were encouraged to choose either the Lithuanian or the Polish national movement, and those who identified as 'Lithuanus-Polonus' were called, and pathologized, as 'hermaphrodites' (p. 46, *Varpas*). As the Lithuanian case shows, articulations of national categories went hand in hand with other discursive restructurings of identity. For instance, in terms of *social origin*, and in an attempt to bridge the gap between the peasants and the nobility, the Lithuanian intellectual Pakalniškis argued that a human being should be defined not in terms of social class but rather by his individual qualities, such as wisdom and education (p. 36). The Lithuanian intelligentsia also proposed a new typology of nobility (Dambauskas-Jakštas distinguished five groups of nobility, including nobility of Russian and German origins, p. 54), and discussed which part of the nobility the Lithuanian national movement should cooperate with (such as young and small, p. 51). New social categories were also proposed, such as the term 'peasant-aristocrat' coined by Davainis-Silvestraitis (p. 120). Religious criteria were also undergoing shifts in identity politics. Most obviously, activists of the Lithuanian national movement attempted to dissociate Catholicism from 'Polish'. It was argued that Catholicism was not intrinsically a Polish

religion, since the Polish clergy had appropriated Catholicism from the Czechs. With a similar intention, Lithuanian intellectuals supported the use of the Belorussian language in Vilnius' churches, and thereby opposed the Polish national movement.

Despite the remarkable value of Mastianica's research on the nobility and the Lithuanian nation, a few critical remarks should be voiced too.

My first remarks are of a conceptual nature. It is not evident either why the author chooses the concept of 'the intelligentsia' (rather than, for example, 'intellectuals'), or how her treatment of 'the intelligentsia' and 'ideologues' as synonyms is justified. The lack of a discussion of the concept of 'the intelligentsia' also yields additional problems in choosing particular empirical material. As it now stands, the research includes cultural and political activists, of a secular and non-secular type. Furthermore, the main focus of the research, 'the Lithuanian intelligentsia' and the 'nobility', is conceptually problematic, especially given the fact that a number of activists (including the editor of *Litwa*) could be viewed as both members of the Lithuanian intelligentsia and of the nobility at the same time. If the conceptual distinction is not elaborated, it is of limited utility for research purposes.

On theoretical terrain, it would have been useful if the author had been more explicit on the theoretical assumptions of her research, as well as locating it more firmly among other theoretical approaches to the study of nationalism and national movements.

The methodological choice to use the Foucauldian critical discourse analysis in combination with the discourse theory analytical approach of Mouffe and Laclau remains overall implicit in her work. Mastianica elaborates neither what ideas of these theorists she is going to use in her research nor how. Moreover, it is also not evident how these different methodological tools could be compatible in dealing with both texts and images. It could also be questioned whether the author indeed uses the intended methodological tools successfully. For instance, 'power', as one of the key concepts in the Foucauldian framework, is nowhere explicitly discussed and treated.

A few remarks about the explanatory value of the research. While Mastianica's study is rich descriptively, it is clear that, by way of formulating particular research questions, she also has explanatory ambitions: to explain why relevant attitudes were expressed, why the changes in the relevant attitudes occurred, and why it was important for the Lithuanian intelligentsia to include the nobility in the modern Lithuanian nation. While some issues are explained better than others, the overall value of this research is primarily descriptive rather than explanatory, especially given the fact that the research focuses on the attitudes of the Lithuanian intelligentsia, leaving social, political, cultural and economic factors on the margins.

My last critical remarks are about the empirical material, which could, arguably, have strengthened this study, if it was taken into account. What seems to be missing in the research is an analysis of the attitudes of the Catholic clergy. This seems to be particularly important, because, as Mastianica also notes, many Lithuanian intellectuals envisioned society as consisting of three major social strata, the peasants, the nobility and the clergy. Moreover, the Catholic clergy was also the main, actual (though not intended) audience of the newspaper *Litwa*, which is the focus of the book. Secondly, while Mastianica has studied attitudes towards the inclusion of the nobility in the Lithuanian national movement and the modern nation, the question on how far, which part and in what sense the nobility was included, or not, in the Lithuanian national movement remains somewhat elusive. It would also have been beneficial to compare the Lithuanian case on this particular issue with other national movements in Central and Eastern Europe. Such a comparative approach would not only place Lithuania on the European map, but also render this particular research material more accessible to other scholars of European nationalism and national movements. Finally, it would have been interesting to bring the Vilnius-centred public discourse closer to the public discourse around Königsberg (East Prussia), where significant contributions to the Lithuanian national movement were also being made. Bringing the Lithuanian (under Russia) and East Prussian public discourses into the analysis would not only enrich the understanding of the Lithuanian national movement, and contribute to studies on Lithuanian nationalism, which unfortunately so far remain divided along the lines of ‘Lithuania Major’ and ‘Lithuania Minor’, but also give an insight into the particularities of identity politics on the imperial borders.

Despite these critical remarks, Mastianica’s work is definitely a very fine contribution to the field of the study of nationalism, especially as a study with such a sharp focus on a very short and intense time, when many visions and divisions were taking place before the Lithuanian nation-state was actually born.

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