

Darius Staliūnas,
*Making Russians. Meaning and Practice
of Russification in Lithuania and Belarus
after 1863*

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Darius Staliūnas's new book *Making Russians* is a meticulously researched and well-written monograph. This was the main thought that lingered around as I immersed myself in its pages.

Making Russians is about the nationality policy of imperial Russia in Lithuania and the North Western Province of the empire (NWP, which primarily includes Lithuania and Belarus: the Kaunas, Vilnius, Minsk, Mogilev, Vitebsk, and Grodno gubernias) in the nineteenth century. The monograph consists of six parts of various length: "I. Administrative Boundaries and Nationality Policy" (p. 27–41); "II. The Search for a Nationality Policy Strategy in the Early 1860s" (p. 43–56); "III. The Meanings of Russification" (p. 57–70); "IV. Separating 'Them' from 'Us.' Definitions of Nationality in Political Practice" (p. 71–129); "V. Confessional Experiments" (p. 131–188); "VI. Metamorphoses in Language Policy" (p. 189–305).

I would separate the texts written so far on the prohibition of Latin characters for Lithuanian into at least two general categories: heroic and critical. Heroic texts include traditional Lithuanian topics, which include the production of illegal Lithuanian books and newspapers in Latin letters; the heroism of book smugglers; clandestine Lithuanian schools persecuted by the Russian authorities; and clandestine organizations of illegal press distribution. Such heroic texts do not pay much attention, however, to what was happening in the camp of "the enemy," in the bowels of the Russian Empire. Heroic texts often interpret the empire as a more or less homogeneous *other*.

Staliūnas criticizes some of the traditional Lithuanian research as teleological (p. 22). This does not mean, however, that his conclusions always contradict the traditional research. He only tries to be as unbiased as he can.

I would label Staliūnas's book critical and interpretative. He attempts to grasp empire's way of thinking, to analyze ideas of an imperial bureaucrat, and to

represent the diversity of the empire's discourses. Staliūnas is all ears to the polyphonic voice of the empire.

Here I give an example of Staliūnas's writing about ideas, in which he discusses the planned re-opening of Vilnius University – which never happened during the rule of the empire:

the claim that the governor general of Vil'na **intended** to apply the measure to all NWP [North Western Province] Catholics is likely to be correct. We can answer the question of whether Murav'ev **intended** to apply the *numerus clausus* to Lithuanians, after finding out what the governor general **meant** in this case by the term "person of Polish descent," which he used on this and other occasions, as when he set certain conditions for admitting Poles to the higher education institution he **planned** to establish in Vilnius. After studying more carefully the **project** drafted on Murav'ev's initiative for opening a university in Vilnius, we have grounds for doubting that the application of this prohibition to Catholic peasants (that is, first and foremost Lithuanians) was in line with the governor general's primary **intentions** (p. 104–105; bold typeface—G. S.).

I have emphasized certain keywords in this quote to better explicate the prevailing tone of Staliūnas's discourse.

Staliūnas speaks to those who are already familiar with the events of the time period. The author himself declares merits of his book "first and foremost" as having "greater nuances":

The image of Russian nationality policy presented in the book differs from the assessments usually offered by Lithuanian, Belarusian or Polish historians first and foremost because we present a depiction of the aims of imperial nationality policy with greater nuances (p. 21).

The main idea in the brains of the bureaucrats at the time was, as I deduct from Staliūnas's book, to depolonize NWP. Moreover, the authorities tended to translate this deprivation of Polonicity into Russification.

Among other issues, Staliūnas discusses the way the bureaucrats treated Lithuanians at length. His conclusions uncover contradiction in their arguments:

The fact that anti-Polish discriminatory policy was most often not applied to Lithuanians [Catholic peasants] shows that the authorities believed that, even if they did not become Russians, they would not become Poles either and would remain Lithuanian. However, [...] where officials applied discriminatory policy and regarded Lithuanians also as Poles or at least considered the possibility of their being Poles, show that they did not much believe that Lithuanians could become Russians (p. 129).

Staliūnas gives convincing examples to demonstrate the inconsequence in bureaucratic behavior. For instance, the Catholic peasant

Ovchino-Kairuk could be allowed to work as a doctor in the Shvenchiany [Švenčionys] Grammar School because he was the “son of a simple peasant and through his origin presents a *sui generis* guarantee of his political reliability” (p. 99).

On the other hand, Lithuanians were not allowed to be teachers in “people’s schools” because “the Catholic clergymen had great influence over them” (p. 99–100).

Staliūnas also elaborates on nationality issues. For instance, he discusses the notion “persons of Polish descent” (also “persons of Russian descent”, p. 72–84) as used by the authorities. After the Uprising there was a decree issued “on 10 December 1865 saying that ‘persons of Polish descent’ were prohibited from acquiring estates in the Western Province” (p. 75). Bureaucrats needed a definition of who was a person of Polish descent: “the authorities regarded religion as the most important attribute of the nationality of a person from the Western Province” (p. 75). Staliūnas quotes Ivan Aksakov, an influential journalist, who “when writing about the 10 December Decree named Catholicism as the most important sign of Polonicity” (p. 77).

Staliūnas analyzes cases where after switching from Catholicism to Orthodoxy, certain landowners ceased being regarded persons of Polish descent and were permitted to acquire new land: “a change of religion was tantamount to a change in nationality” (p. 78). However, four years later, in 1869, a new definition of who was considered a person of Polish descent was formulated. This time, “descendants of these converts to Orthodoxy could be regarded as being Russians only after they ‘have finally rejected their Polish views and tendencies and the Polish language itself’” (p. 78). I believe Staliūnas grasps this turning point in language attitude among the bureaucrats. In the late 1860s, they added language as a crucial factor in deliberation of a person’s nationality. We know that Lithuanian language as a primary token of nationality was understood by Simonas Daukantas and Jurgis Pliateris some decades earlier. From the late 1860s, the Russian administration also began to grasp language as a criterion of national identity (along with religion).

Russian ethnographers also placed particular emphasis upon native language: “After the 1863–1864 Uprising language was recognised most often as the most important denominator of nationality in ethnographic descriptions” (p. 113). So, if the late 1860s were a turning point in acclaiming language as pivotal token of nationality, then the engineering of a Cyrillic script for Lithuanian was an attempt to russify one aspect of that token.

Staliūnas’s ability to demonstrate the lack of consistent policy toward the *inorodsy* in various aspects of bureaucratic thought and his ability to track down turning points in the paradigms of bureaucratic reflection endows Staliūnas’s book with a particular strength. I am certain I shall base my own future scholarship on the results of Staliūnas’s research.

Now I shall mostly concentrate on language and linguistic issues.

The third part of the book, “The Meanings of Russification,” is a direct projection of Staliūnas’s monograph title: *Making Russians*. It is not only about languages, but about the meaning of certain words as well. The main question explored in this section of the book is what the word *Russification* meant at the time.

Staliūnas quotes the famous dictionary of Russian language by Vladimir Dal’: “*obrusit’* [Russify] and *obrusit’sia* [become Russian] as ‘to force someone to become, or become Russian (oneself)’ ” (p. 59–60). Staliūnas continues:

We might deduce that the verbs *obrusit’sia* and *obrusit’* were presented in this concise manner not because what they meant was obvious to all but rather because in Russian discourse at that time they had many meanings (p. 60).

I would tend to think that if these words had many meanings, those meanings might have been reflected in the dictionary.

Finally, after an elaborate analysis Staliūnas infers that

In the discourse of those days Russification could be understood in various ways, as assimilation, acculturation or integration. This term had different meanings with regard to different national groups within the NWP. In the Belarusian case it most often meant assimilation; in the case of the Jews, acculturation and integration; in the Polish case it meant most often political integration although some times this was more like assimilation. In the case of the Lithuanians or Latvians the term Russification was used seldom (p. 70).

This conclusion is one of the most essential ones—it lays the foundation for the subtitle of the book: *Meaning and Practice of Russification*. Staliūnas dissects the meaning of Dal’s verb *obrusit’* into the several meanings of the noun *Russification*.

I try to imagine Staliūnas adjusting Dal’s dictionary. Let’s say Staliūnas introduces the entry *Russifikatsiia* (‘Russification’) and lists its meanings in this order:

- (1) ‘assimilation into a Russian’
- (2) ‘acculturation into Russian culture’
- (3) ‘integration into the Russian State’

All of these meanings have a common seme of ‘making one more Russian,’ so Dal’s “concise” definition encompasses Staliūnas’s meanings too. On the other hand, a modern lexicographer might picture these meanings as the content of an encyclopedic dictionary entry, or even an encyclopedia entry, rather than of a language dictionary, since they are related to concrete nations.

Who were the people whose words Staliūnas transformed into the meanings of *Russification*? Mostly the same bureaucrats. It means that all three reconstructed

meanings were variations of one imperial perspective. And I am not certain that the Lithuanian perspective was the same. I would guess that Lithuanians understood *Russification* primarily in its first meaning—‘assimilation into a Russian’. The authorities were aware of this, otherwise, why would they try to avoid the word *Russification* in a Lithuanian context (p. 267)? They rightly feared that the word would alienate Lithuanians.

Limiting the meanings of *Russification* only to the language of authorities overshadows the possibility of exploring its specific usage by other groups. No doubt the Lithuanian perspective was not among Staliūnas’s objectives; he concentrated on imperial discourses. But this missed perspective makes it difficult to single out the voice of the independent scholar from the imperial chorus.

The sixth part of Staliūnas’s monograph is exclusively linguistic: “Metamorphoses in Language Policy” (p. 189–296). It begins with the Polish language: “The Elimination of Polish from Public Life.” The subtitles for this chapter follow: “Depolonising Schools” (p. 192–194), and “Policy Towards Polish Books” (p. 194–199).

Staliūnas emphasizes evident efforts to eliminate Polish from public life in the NWP: “in 1863 a drastic moves [sic!] began to eliminate Polish from public life” (p. 189); “The local authorities [...] at once set about eliminating Polish from the public arena” (p. 189); “Polish libraries were to be closed down” (p. 189); “official institutions hung up signs saying it was ‘forbidden to speak Polish’” (p. 190); “pro-Russian Catholic priests like Senchikovskii, even proposed forbidding Polish inscriptions on tombstones, but the authorities did not follow this through” (p. 190–191). These measures meant that the functions of Polish had to be shrunk to the home usage in NWP, although in neighboring Poland things were much different.

Shuvalov, head of the Third Department, criticized the instance, where it was possible to speak in Polish in a railway carriage in central Russia or the Kingdom of Poland but not while the same train was in Kaunas (p. 191).

I wonder how the authorities enforced the usage of Russian in public spaces and on that train while crossing the Kaunas gubernia. Did they have spies listening to the spoken languages and then fining those who were caught? Nothing is said about the way oral usage of Polish was punished. But it is said that the Polish schools were persecuted and an “impressive fine of up to 900 rubles” was imposed (p. 193).

In 1864 Polish textbooks were forbidden for the peasantry (p. 194) and shopkeepers could not sell Polish books (except for the prayer books). But Polish books flooded NWP from Poland and “in 1869 publishers were allowed to have Latin characters ‘to publish Polish books’ ” (p. 194).

Aleksandr Hil’ferding and Stanisław Mikucki attempted to use Cyrillic for Polish, but this measure was not popular even among the NWP authorities:

only members of the upper classes in the NWP were to be regarded as being Polish, while the common people were to be protected from Polonisation. [...] Polish textbooks, even those printed in Cyrillic, could only sustain knowledge of Polish among peasants. Russifiers in the NWP did not desire this at all. In other words, in the NWP the greater Russif[i]ers were not those, who proposed distributing Polish books in Cyrillic, but those who opposed this proposal (p. 198).

Staliūnas helps the reader to develop an understanding of Polish as the most unwanted language in the NWP by the authorities.

The next language discussed in Staliūnas's book was Yiddish. The heading of this chapter reads "Jews and the Russian Language" and the subtitles are: "Russification à la Murav'ev" (p. 200–209), "Is There a Future for the 'Jargon'?" (p. 210–215), "In What Language Should the Jews Pray?" (p. 215–223), and "The Metamorphosis in the Views of Ivan Kornilov on the Jewish Question" (p. 223–230).

Staliūnas quotes John Doyle Klier: "Murav'ev was too busy hanging Poles to worry too much about the Jews" (p. 200). Still, Staliūnas discusses the compulsory teaching of Russian that was introduced for Jewish boys. The intention was "to spread the Russian language among the Jewish population" (p. 209).

Local officials termed the Yiddish language a "jargon" (p. 210). Staliūnas notes that

In the 1860s, a period of almost wholesale Cyrillicisation of various languages in the western borderlands of the Russian Empire, not a single proposal was voiced, as far as we know, to introduce the Russian alphabet in Yiddish writing (p. 210).

To explain this difference in attitude between the Polish, Lithuanian, Belarusian, and Ukrainian languages, Staliūnas forwards several arguments: the otherness of Yiddish; the lack of a serious belief in the possibility of converting Jews to Christianity; and that "there was no future whatsoever for this language, so that it was simply not worthy of Cyrillicisation" (p. 211).

In 1866, governor general Konstantin Kaufman considered "ousting the Jewish jargon from the press" (p. 212). But he was hesitant and never completed his intention. His successor Eduard Baranov was even milder, he merely ordered censors "to replace words lacking in the jargon [...] with Russian words" (p. 213), instead of taking them from German. It sounds like a project of lexical engineering. Still I believe it was easier for Baranov to give instructions than for the censors to accomplish. Today we would expect a linguistically educated person to receive the task to unearth word origins. But Baranov did not demand linguistic preciseness. Staliūnas says "he was evidently hoping to make the Russian language more comprehensible and familiar to the Jews" (p. 213). In other words, Baranov did not care about the genesis of words—any possible mistake by a censor in favor of a Russian word must have been welcomed.

Also, “Interior minister Valuev, did not uphold these prohibitive measures. The minister pointed out that it was impossible to interfere with the activities of a private society” (p. 214). So Yiddish was also allocated a different status because the Jews were considered to be a separate society.

Among various considerations on the topic of alphabet change in 1866, Alexander Georgievskii (future chairman of the Academic Committee of the Ministry of Education) pushed forward an interesting proposition, “namely to publish a Russian translation of the Bible for Jews ‘in the Jewish alphabet’ ” (p. 221). The Bible was not actually translated in this alphabet into Russian, unlike the Lithuanian translation of the Catholic Catechism in a mixture of Hebrew and Yiddish alphabets by the Catholic bishop Jonas Krizostomas Gintila in Alsėdžiai in 1855 and later (the manuscript is kept in the National Martynas Mažvydas Library in Vilnius).

The Lithuanian language forms one more chapter of this section. The title of the chapter reads: “The Introduction of Cyrillic for Writing Lithuanian” (p. 233). The first two subtitles are: “The Origins of the Ban on the Latin Alphabet” (p. 235–241) and “The Introduction of Cyrillic as Lithuanian Acculturation” (p. 241–249). Staliūnas pays significant attention to the initial decision to ban Latin letters for Lithuanian. There are at least several candidates who might be considered the inventors of the idea: Ivan Kornilov, Vasilii Kulin, Mikhail Murav’ev... Even Andrius Ugianskis, a Lithuanian teacher and professor in Kazan.

Staliūnas contemplates why governor general Mikhail Murav’ev did not issue a written circular about the ban on Latin characters for Lithuanian. There are claims that Murav’ev just gave oral orders to not publish Lithuanian books: “it is more likely that Murav’ev most probably no longer allowed such books through the system” (p. 240). Staliūnas offers several possibilities: “Perhaps there was no need to issue a written order because the censors were subjected directly to governor general’s instructions”; another interpretation—Murav’ev was irresolute, or the Lithuanian issue was not a priority for him (p. 241). Finally, Staliūnas does not say which of the possibilities he evaluates as the most reliable.

The aims of the Cyrillization of Lithuanian were expressed by the governor general Kaufman:

Cyrillic would help “release the ordinary masses from Polonisation, enlighten them, make them completely literate, and teach them to write in their own ethnic dialects and the Russian language” (p. 242).

Well, then, along with the cultural aspects—to make the masses completely literate—Kaufman (and Interior Minister Petr Valuev) had the goal of teaching the Russian language. Teaching Russian *was* among the main goals of using Cyrillic letters for Lithuanian. While reading their own language in Cyrillic, Lithuanians would acquire the Cyrillic tool for mastering Russian.

The next subtitle, “The Foundation of ‘People’s Schools’ in the Kovno Gubernia” (p. 249–260) consists of a segment on the schools in part of Lithuania.

Staliūnas writes about the search for teachers in the Kaunas gubernia:

[...] Shul’gin, reported on 7 July 1864 to Kornilov that he had already found seven Orthodox boys who were prepared to learn Žemaitijan. The same month Murav’ev reported to Education Minister Golovnin that he had candidate teachers, who “spoke both Russian and Lithuanian” (p. 255).

I wonder what their names were, since I guess they may have been the ones who edited the book *Руководство къ изученію Русско-литовской грамоты* (Vilnius, 1875). Unfortunately, there probably is no way of tracing them down. Staliūnas also mentions that inspector Dmitrii “Kashirin at most may have spoken only a little Lithuanian” (p. 259). I would like to know how Staliūnas came to this conclusion, since I have also researched Kashirin’s ability to use written Lithuanian.

The next subchapter is about Cyrillic letters for Lithuanian and is titled “The Introduction of Cyrillic as an Instrument to Assimilate Lithuanians” (p. 260–269). Staliūnas attempts to find answer the question of why supporters of the alphabet change wanted or needed it. After finding Inspector Nikolai Novikov’s words, that “it will be possible to create [...] Žemaitijan languages” (p. 260–261), Staliūnas asks if Novikov really intended to set about encouraging the standardization of the Lithuanian language and to spread the public’s use of it? (p. 261).

Staliūnas gathers multiple examples that deny the intention to standardize Lithuanian in Cyrillic. The same Novikov claimed that “The aim of all this matter, I repeat, is for pupils to learn Russian as quickly and as easily as possible” (p. 264–265). Novikov “argued in similar vein about alphabet change [...]: ‘the new schools are bringing in their wake the Russian alphabet and the alphabet will later pave the way for the Russian language’ ” (p. 265). Staliūnas finds that “local authorities did not even seek to make Lithuanians more used to Lithuanian books transliterated into Cyrillic” (p. 266).

Then comes Staliūnas’s conclusion:

the implementation of education policy and the deliberations of VED officials about the aims of alphabet change for written Lithuanian permit us to assert that the local authorities sought to Russify the Lithuanians linguistically (p. 267).

It seems that his conclusion supports what many Lithuanian schoolchildren are being taught—that Lithuanians suffered from attempts to efface their nationality (linguistic Russification is often taken as the only one needed to destroy ethnic identity).

But I am confused by some earlier paragraphs. In the Kingdom of Poland, which was another part of the Russian Empire,

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 (p. 249).

Staliūnas concludes:

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 (p. 249; italics—G. S.).

I am not persuaded the notion of “restricted fostering” works well here. The introduction of Cyrillic was immediately followed by the prohibition of the traditional Latin alphabet, so why is the suppression of a traditional way of culture to be seen as a kind of culture strengthening? Well, yes, there were some scholarships, there was some schooling in Lithuanian, but this was not connected to the Cyrillic script as a fostering measure. On the contrary, Cyrillic letters helped foster Russian imperial goals and make Lithuanians loyal imperial citizens, with only some trifles of Lithuanian culture along the way as a means to smooth the achievement of their objectives.

After his meticulous examination of ample document corpus, Staliūnas reinforces his conclusion about the aim of Cyrillization. He adds that

the concept of political correctness existing at the time did not allow civil servants to describe their policy as Russification *ipso verbo*. Only on occasion, often in private correspondence, did local NWP officials speak about their aim to Russify the Lithuanians (p. 267).

Staliūnas gives a convincing example from a private letter of the VDE overseer Kornilov, who was dissatisfied with the future teachers in the Kaunas gubernia coming from the inner provinces of Russia: “Do those dunderheads really think such scoundrels can Russify anyone?” (p. 267).

Even if the linguistic assimilation in the late 1860s became an imperative part of nationality change, it was not the only one:

As far as we know, a larger part of active supporters of the adaptation of Cyrillic for use in writing Lithuanian [...] regarded religion as the most important denominator of nationality (p. 267).

And the authorities were searching for a way to destroy the dominance of Catholicism: “It is likely that VDE officials treated the use of Russian letters for writing Lithuanian as a preparatory move towards making the people Orthodox” (p. 267). Novikov is quoted again: “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” (p. 268; square brackets—D. S.). Staliūnas demonstrates the intentions of the authorities to assimilate Lithuanians not only via language, but via religion as well, just the supporters of Russification did not feel strong enough to achieve these goals immediately. They saw the Cyrillic Lithuanian texts as a burdensome transitory measure. From 1874 on there was

no censor for Lithuanian books in Vilnius, so new Lithuanian books could not be printed there—even in Cyrillic.

Staliūnas observes about the Lithuanian language written in Cyrillic that: “Sometimes local officials even called their new creation a ‘Russo-Lithuanian dialect’ [*rusško-litovskoe narechie*]” (p. 264). In a footnote, he also recognizes another interpretation of the term: “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” (p. 405). I would read the phrase differently: *rusško-litovskoe narechie* does not imply any hint of the written language, it is solely about the spoken dialect. The word *rusško* is not an alphabet indicator here, but a geographical or political segment of the compound term. There was a need to differentiate between the two branches of the Lithuanian language: Prussian-Lithuanian in Prussia and Russian-Lithuanian in the Russian Empire. Having this opposition in mind, the term *rusško-litovskoe narechie* yields the sense of a dialect of Lithuanians in Russia.

The fifth subtitle is: “Amendment of the Methods of Russian Primary Education” (p. 269–277). Among other topics we are informed about the Teacher Training College in Panevėžys. Staliūnas observes that: “In 1868 the situation changed” (p. 271). Aleksandr Potapov took the office of governor general of Vilnius. According to Potapov, “local people, that is, ‘Belarussians, Lithuanians, Žemaitijans or Latvians’ could be employed as teachers so long as they had received the appropriate education” (p. 271). The Teacher Training College was established in Panevėžys in 1872, and Lithuanian language began to be taught there (still in Cyrillic letters) in 1873. It was also “admitting Žemaitijan converts” to Orthodoxy (p. 275). Staliūnas does not find, however, any essential change in education policy strategy:

However, this correction to nationality policy did not in essence change either education policy strategy 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 (p. 276–277).

The last subchapter about the Lithuanian language concerns its place in Protestant parish schools: “The Fate of Protestant Parish Schools” (p. 277–281). Even if there were attempts to make Protestant schools similar to the “people’s schools,” even if Novikov reiterated that “the Russian alphabet will be more useful to local inhabitants than all the rest because it will introduce and facilitate the learning of Russian for the masses” (p. 279), the conditions in these schools remained unique. Until 1874 “religious instruction for Protestants was taught either in German or ‘the local dialects,’ namely Lithuanian or Latvian” (p. 281).

The last of the languages that Staliūnas discusses is Belarusian. “Cyrillic was an important sign of Russianness” (p. 270). Curiously, this sign was not per-

ceived in the same way for Polish and Lithuanian. Local authorities did not want to allow Cyrillic letters to be used in Polish primers, but they were used for Lithuanian. Authorities were afraid that the Polish prayer books in Cyrillic might lure too many Russians (Orthodox believers) into the Catholic faith. In the Lithuanian case the authorities did not fear this. They expected that Lithuanians would be easier to lure into the sphere of Russian culture and religion. It seems that the combination of the Cyrillic alphabet with the Polish or Lithuanian language was understood as constructed of two parts: one Russian, another Polish or Lithuanian. And the local authorities must have indirectly agreed that in case of the combination of Cyrillic and Polish, the Polish part was stronger and more influential; in case of Cyrillic and Lithuanian, however, the Russian segment was dominant. Otherwise Cyrillic Lithuanian would have been equally unacceptable.

Cyrillic publications in Belarusian were scarce, since the authorities were not fond of them: they considered Belarusian a dialect of Russian and interpreted its texts as an attempt to promote a separate nationality. Also, "Belarusian books in the Latin alphabet posed a threat because, according to officials, they strengthened Polish influence over Belarusian peasants" (p. 285). Since most of the officials did not want Belarusians to be Belarusians or to become Poles, both the Latin-Belarusian, and the Cyrillic-Belarusian models were rejected. In eyes of the officials no graphemization for Belarusians was needed; they had to write Russian.

Authorities permitted the Polish language to be written in the traditional Latin alphabet since they were not able to compete with it in Poland, but they tried to isolate other ethnic groups from the Polish language and its Latin characters (they called them "Polish"). Lithuanians were permitted their language to a very limited extent, but not in Latin script, just Cyrillic. Belarusians were denied both their language and any alphabet whatsoever. Lithuanians appeared to present the least threat to the empire: their ability to attract potential Russians into their nationality was less powerful than that of the Poles and Belarusians.

The last paragraph of Staliūnas's monograph speaks about alternatives in history:

Thus an hypothesis naturally forms to the effect that the Russian authorities could have achieved better results in adapting Cyrillic to written Lithuanian if Hil'ferding's more cautious policy had been followed, and, for a while at least, religious books had not been touched (p. 305).

Staliūnas makes his prognosis:

This, of course, does not mean that such a more subtle policy alone would have been enough to cause the rejection of the traditional alphabet. Such a rejection would have been inconceivable for as long as Lithuanians remained Catholic (p. 305).

Right. Even if the poor quality of Lithuanian texts in Cyrillic was another important factor for educated Lithuanians to launch the counter production of books in Latin alphabet, there is no doubt that the strongest motive for Lithuanians to stick to the Latin script was Catholicism: they were assured by their priests that Latin characters were sacred for all Catholic nations on the planet.

* * *

No doubt that Staliūnas raised the bar for his narrative: his tone most often sounds neutral and unbiased. Still sometimes evaluative words spring out and diminish the neutrality of his text. For instance:

The policy of the Russian authorities in the 1860s sought [...] to turn historical Lithuania in all its senses into the NWP. [...] The *optimistic* strategy, which was typical particularly of Murav'ev, sought to subject as large a territory as possible to the control of the governor general of Vil'na (p. 41; italics—G. S.).

The attribute *optimistic* means optimism only from Murav'ev's perspective. And since it is Staliūnas's who picks up the word, I hear his voice converging with empire's discourse.

In another instance, Staliūnas retells the thoughts of Kulin: "VED Inspector Kulin saw no need to set up a Junior Seminary, where the teaching [...] would take place in Žemaitijan" (p. 253). Since Staliūnas retells in his own words, I would expect him to use contemporary terms. But his term *Žemaitijan* has Kulin's meaning (many bureaucrats used terms *Žemaitijan* and *Lithuanian* interchangeably, as absolute synonyms, to denote the same 'Lithuanian language'). Further in the paragraph Staliūnas elaborates on Kulin's ideas: "He seemed not to oppose not only the fact that religion would be taught in Lithuanian but also that Lithuanian would be a separate subject on the curriculum" (p. 253). This time Staliūnas uses *Lithuanian* with the modern meaning, even if he retells Kulin's thoughts again (Staliūnas gives other quotations that help form the idea that Kulin was used to the term *Žemaitijan* 'Lithuanian'). The reader can be certain that even in the cases where Staliūnas writes *Žemaitijan* 'Lithuanian' without quotation marks, he does not attach the modern sense to it (today *Žemaitijan* means 'a dialect of Lithuanian'). This is Staliūnas's slip of the tongue, which re-occurs on several occasions.

I have spent some time analyzing the system Staliūnas developed to write the names of cities. The same name is often given promiscuously in two different ways. For instance, the name of Lithuanian capital city Vilnius:

(1) is often written *Vil'na* (e.g., *Governor Ivan Shestakov of Vil'na*, p. 40; *Vil'na Gubernia*, p. 314; *Orthodox bishop of Vil'na*, p. 28). Staliūnas established a rule for his book to use *Vil'na* in the compound names of institutions that encompass the name of Vilnius. The apostrophe evidently marks it as transcription from the Cyrillic script (as in many other cases; e.g.: *Murav'ev*, p. 30; *Hil'ferding*, p. 48; and *Vil'komir*, p. 259).

(2) elsewhere is written *Vilnius* (e.g., *Vilnius*, p. 30; *Vilnius churches*, p. 31; *Vilnius Cathedral*, p. 31), which is the recent Lithuanian, as well as English, received spelling of the name.

Thus, throughout the book Staliūnas writes both *Vil'na* and *Vilnius* to denote the same reality. One of the paradoxes is that these compound names often did not contain the proper noun *Vil'na* (Russian *Вильна*) at all in the Russian Cyrillic original. For instance, Staliūnas's *Vil'na Gubernia* (p. 314) was *Виленская Губернія* in Russian. Here *Виленская* was an adjective, deriving from the city name. Thus, if Staliūnas intended to keep at Russian form, he should have transliterated **Vilenskaia*. He used, however, the Russian version of the city name in nominative singular even in the cases when Russians themselves did not. And vice versa, Staliūnas used the Lithuanian (English) version of *Vilnius* as a separate proper name, and this was exactly where the Russians had used *Вильна*, not *Vilnius*.

Moreover, Staliūnas treated only Lithuanian city names in this manner. For instance, he used only the English version of the name *Warsaw*, even in compound names, for instance, *Grand Duchy of Warsaw*, p. 315, *Warsaw Public Library*, p. 197. According to Staliūnas's system, I would have expected him to use transliterated form **Varshava* in these compound names as well (Russian *Варшава*). In the following sentence we have both *Warsaw* and *Vil'na* in same contexts: "to transfer them from the jurisdiction of the **Warsaw** governor general to that of the **Vil'na** governor general" (p. 314). Also instead of *Moscow University* (p. 197) I would expect transliteration **University of Moskva* (compare to *University of Vil'na*, p. 102). And the variation in the two following names is obviously something that had been overlooked: *Orthodox bishop of Vil'na* (p. 28) but [*Catholic*] *bishop of Vilnius* (p. 33; cf. also *Orthodox bishop of Lithuania and Vilnius*, p. 143).

Double spelling of the same names seems to be a cumbersome solution to a simple problem. Unfortunately, it dominates the book and distracts reader's attention too often. And again, the choice of the Russian names for Lithuanian cities (even if only in compound names) endows Staliūnas's narrative with the tone of the imperial voice.

* * *

The results of Staliūnas's research are convincing and hardly disputable. His monograph *Making Russians* uncovers the Russian Empire as a diverse, contentious, and deliberating political entity. An empire with multiple brains that ponders, evaluates the situation, hesitates, and occasionally makes decisions. Through the figures of imperial bureaucrats, Staliūnas attributes a human face to the silhouette of the Russian Empire itself.

I enjoy learning what people were thinking. To read Staliūnas's book is to understand the way arguments were being constructed. Staliūnas brings you a close proximity of authorities' considerations. For the development of imperial ideology on nations the monograph is a magnifying lens.

No doubt Staliūnas's *Making Russians* is a path-breaking monograph in understanding aspects of Russification, the variety of attitudes and related policy toward different languages, the shifts in nationality, linguistic and religious particularities, and marginal or forgotten ideas. All this is what makes Staliūnas's book a bible for a scholar—no serious scholarship in the field can escape consulting it hereafter.

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