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Book review:

Kiaupa, Zigmantas. *The History of Lithuania*. Translated by C.S. Rowell, Jonathan Smith, and Vida Urbonavičius. Vilnius: Baltos Lankos, 2005, 359 pages. ISBN 9955-584-87-4.

Zigmantas Kiaupa is one of the foremost historians in Lithuania. A specialist in the Grand Duchy of Lithuania's political, cultural, and urban history, he is the author of numerous highly regarded books and articles published in Lithuania, Poland, Germany, Russia, and elsewhere. Beyond his specialties, he has also pioneered in the writing and coauthoring of several complete histories of Lithuania. Anything Kiaupa writes must be taken seriously. Furthermore, the publisher, Baltos Lankos, is the premier Lithuanian publisher of scholarly books in the humanities.

Lithuanian historians have produced few complete histories of Lithuania. The first modern scholarly synthesis of Lithuania's history was an edited volume published in the 1930s by Adolfas Šapoka, a patriotic work republished in Lithuania after it regained independence. Lithuanian scholars working during the Soviet occupation produced many fine monographs, but only two attempts at synthesizing a complete history of Lithuania. The *History of the Lithuanian SSR* and its successor were products of Soviet censorship, fear, and distortion. Both Šapoka and the LSSR are out of date by today's standards.

No doubt, some readers will want to compare Kiaupa's book with Šapokas's venerable work, or with post-Soviet works such as Alfredas Bumblauskas's *Senosios Lietuvos istorija: 1009-1795* (2005) [The history of old Lithuania: 1009-1795] or Edvardas Gudavičius's *Lietuvos istorija nuo seniausių laikų iki 1569 metų* (1999) [The history of Lithuania from the earliest period to 1569], both of which are scholarly syntheses based on the latest research. However, because it is in English, Kiaupa's work should more readily be compared to Andrejs Plakans's *The Latvians*, or Toivo Raun's *Estonia and the Estonians*. Neither of them are translations. They are consistently well-written and devoid of overt nationalism. Kiaupa's works written in the Lithuanian language have also been cogent, balanced, scholarly efforts, but sadly, in *The History of Lithuania*, Kiaupa has become a victim of poor editing and translating.

Šapoka, Gudavičius and Zenonas Ivinskis, author of *Lietuvos istorija (iki Vytauto Didžio mirties)* [Lithuanian history (until the death of Vytautas the Great)], have presented original concepts of Lithuania's history, but Ivinskis (1908-1971) died before being able to finish; readers can only hope Gudavičius continues with a second volume. In many ways, Kiaupa has completed what Ivinskis had wanted to do: a synthesis of Lithuania's political, cultural, and physical history. Using a conventional political framework, he ably incorporates all of these elements into a one-volume book of three hundred and fifty-nine pages. The appendix even includes the Lithuanian Diaspora and Lithuania Minor. Kiaupas's volumes written in Lithuanian and coauthored by his wife Juratė Kiaupienė and Albinas Kuncevičius are excellent works, but this particular translation does not do justice to Kiaupa or his work.

Although the facts are correct and the conceptual framework interesting, an American reader will find this attempted synthesis very frustrating reading. Long complex sentences may sound good in Lithuanian, but in English they tend to ramble and become even more irritating when punctuation rules are disregarded. Inadequate and misleading wording abounds: "Discussions with the Poles broke down disagreements over the Lithuanian state itself."(244), was probably meant to say the opposite. "Lithuania did not manage to locate its troops in Vilnius and on October 9 General Żeligowski's troops [sic] entered the town."(251) One surmises that the author meant that the Lithuanians had not deployed their troops in Vilnius. Other examples of poor English usage are: "the documentation that was signed was...; of bad quality" (257), "Most everyday people" (171), "...Lithuanian was balanced, even though Soviet propaganda made great noises about the achievements of socialism."(310), the Constituent Seimas becomes "the Foundation Seimas" (247), and "petered out" (314). In other cases, words such as "sheid" (310), "ternal" (142), and "pursual" (134) are not found in American or British dictionaries. They may be typographical errors, but there are too many of them. In two cases, maps in English come with captions in Lithuanian, but without English translations (261, 274). The Chronology is helpful, but also rife with writing errors.

There is no consistency in the use of orthography or diacritical marks. There is also no consistency in spelling historical names. The translators use Nicolaus Radvila (a hybrid spelling) rather than Mikalojus Radvila (Lithuanian), Nicolaus Radvil (Latin), or Mikołaj Radziwiłł (Polish). Kazimierz appears in its Polish spelling in some cases and Casimir (English) in others. "State" and "nation" are used interchangeably. The knowledgeable reader may forgive such editorial sloppiness, but the non-Lithuanian audience, for whom it is intended, will be confused. The index is filled with spelling inconsistencies. There

are few citations and too much opinion without supporting evidence. There is no bibliography. These errors and lapses have seriously tarnished an important work.

Because of Lithuania's long and complicated relationship with Poland, Lithuanian historiography has usually had an anti-Polish bias. There is too much rhetoric that may or may not be due to mangled translation: Poles had a "perverted understanding" (248) of Lithuanian history, "the megalomania and xenophobia that dominated Poland" (134), "... Polish authorities began pressurizing Lithuanian education" (252).

The most interesting part of the book deals with twentieth-century Lithuania, but it suffers from the same flaws as the rest of the book. The reader will do better to read *Lithuania in European Politics: The Years of the First Republic, 1918-1940*, by Alfonsas Eidintas, Vytautas Žalys, and Alfred E. Senn; *The Baltic States: Years of Independence, 1940-1990*, by Romuald J. Misiūnas and Rein Taagepera; or *Lithuania: The Rebel Nation*, by V. Stanley Vardys and J. Sedaitis, which are written in the style expected by American readers.

Because so few people can read Lithuanian, a one-volume work on Lithuania's history such as this could be an invaluable source for scholars, students, and interested readers. However, it needs to be geared toward a non-Lithuanian audience and written in a readable direct style to which native English readers are accustomed. One can only hope that there will be a new edition properly edited and translated.

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