



Algirdas Sabaliauskas. *We, the Balts*. Translated by Milda Bakšytė-Richardson, edited by R.E. Richardson. With an introduction by William R. Schmalstieg. Science and Encyclopedia Publishers. Vilnius, 1993. Paperback. 152 pages.

In 1987, Professor William R. Schmalstieg wrote a charming review of the original book by Professor Sabaliauskas, *Mes Baltai* which was published in *Lituanus*. On page IV of the introduction of the book under review here. Professor Schmalstieg writes:

"I have always been impressed by Algirdas Sabaliauskas' ability to render the study of linguistics and languages into popular, interesting and easy-reading prose.

When I read the present book *Mes Baltai* I was just as impressed as always and in my review (*Lituanus*, Vol. 33, No. 3, 1987, pp. 76-80) I wrote "... it would be a great service to the Baltic field if someone were to translate it (i.e. *Mes Baltai*) into English."

It turned out that a certain person in the Boston area took this appeal, as it were, seriously. Milda Bakšytė-Richardson had not even seen the book itself since it was hardly available at that time in the United States. She contacted Professor Schmalstieg who mailed her a xerox copy of the book. One thing lead to another, the translator even traveled to Lithuania and worked together with the author of the book. Dr. Algirdas Sabaliauskas. After the translation was done, then there was the question of the publisher, and there ensued a search on both sides of the Atlantic for a possible publisher. Eventually, the newly unified state publishing firm, "Mokslo ir enciklopedijų leidykla" ('Science and Encyclopedia Publishers') undertook this task. As a result, we have now an attractive little volume, with clear print and easy on the eye.

The only remaining Baltic peoples are Latvians and Lithuanians. Although, in the geographical and geopolitical sense, Estonians are usually included as well as in the name "Baits, Baltic States," etc. Linguistically, the Estonian language belongs to a different family of languages altogether. The Estonians are Finno-Ugric people, and their language is related to Finnish, Hungarian, and other languages of the Finno-Ugric group, while the Latvians and the Lithuanians are Indo-Europeans.

The book has the following chapters: Introduction; Lithuania is where the Birches grow; The Baits and Slavs as Relatives; In Search of Lithuania—Lakes and Rivers. Why Did They Give the Lithuanians Such a Name? What the Lithuanians Borrowed from Others; What Lithuanians Gave to Others; The Translator Enters Serfdom; The Secret of the Basel Library: Did Ukrainian Tailors Speak Prussian?; A Prussian Language Dictionary is Published in Moscow; One Who Has Spoken Prussian, Lithuanian, and Latvian; When did the Last Prussian Die?; A Lesson in the Prussian Language; Dictionary of Pagan Dialects; The King of the Swedes Ravages Apuolė; Sigrida Immortalizes Her Husband; Zarasai—The Land of the Ancient Selonians; Who Knows What That German Cat Is Saying?; Simonas Daukantas Lives in Latvia; The Muse Comes from Daugava; A Nation of Songs and Singers; Scholarship on Native Language and Culture; The First Latvian Lesson; The Second Latvian Lesson; Brothers and Sisters, Take This Book; A Grammar Should be Based on the Living Language of the People; Where Do We Go From Here?

In chapter one, the author very daintily touches upon the very controversial and unsolvable problem of the original homeland of the Indo-Europeans, and then proceeds to write about the ancient Baits who, at that time, were much more numerous and much more widely spread than they are today. There were, in olden times, several other Baltic languages, all now extinct. The most famous of the dead Baltic languages is Old Prussian.

A propos, this Baltic (not Germanic/Teutonic) language supplied the Modern German words *Preusse* "Prussian" and *Preussen* 'Prussia,' now meaning something like militaristic Northern German, or sometimes, all of the Germans, and even all of Germany. Originally it was the name of only one Baltic, I repeat, non-Germanic nation or language. Anyhow, Professor Sabaliauskas devotes several chapters to the lost, extinct Baltic languages. (By the way, there is a movement in Germany as well as in Lithuania to revive the dead Old Prussian language, but this writer doubts that it will turn out to be successful...)

Thus, we do get a small sample of Old Prussian, then also of the other extinct Baltic languages: Curonian, Selonian, Zemgalian, and of the most mysterious ones: Yatvingian and Galindian.

Certainly, the major part of the book is devoted to the two living Baltic languages, Latvian and Lithuanian. We do get a little glimpse into their history, and even into their grammatical and lexical structure. All of this is done very correctly, with the latest data of Baltic linguistics. And this is not a dry, boring book. Sabaliauskas writes with love of his subject, but clearly and attractively. The book is almost an adventure story.

At least from this reviewer's point of view, however, there is one shortcoming. Namely, why does the author discuss only the relationship of the Baltic languages with the Slavic languages? In my opinion, the relationship of the Baltic languages with any of the more archaic Indo-European languages, such as Hittite, Tokharian, Sanskrit (i.e.. Old Indic), Greek, Latin, even the Germanic and Celtic languages, is just as interesting and just as important, if not more so. Adding a few more chapters devoted to the discussion of the relationships mentioned above, would have made this book much more important and more interesting to students of the Indo-European languages and linguistics.

Both the translator, Milda Bakšytė-Richardson as well as the editor, Professor Robert E. Richardson, have done excellent work. This reviewer, however, would have enjoyed two more chapters or "items."

One is a short bibliography of the main reference books on the Baltic languages, including Old Prussian, Latvian and Lithuanian. This would have enhanced the book tremendously. The other is a detailed index of the most important items discussed, including names, books, even important lexical items. These would have helped the user to locate the desired item much more quickly. Now, even though I have read both the original Lithuanian and this English translation carefully, I still have to waste a lot of time looking up items.

In spite of the few elements I've found to criticize. *We, The Balts* is a very fine popular and at the same time scholarly introduction to the Baltic languages and Baltic linguistics.

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