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Book Review

Ignotas Domeika, *Mano kelionės, Volume 1 (My voyages)*. Vilnius: Pradai, 2002. 489 pages, illustrated. Translated by Ona Slavėnaitė and Dalia Saukaitytė from the original Polish manuscript kept for more than a century at the University of Vilnius.

Ignotas Domeika (1802-1889) was one of the most distinguished Lithuanian scientists of his generation, but he established both his scientific and literary reputation in far away Chile, his second and adopted home. He spent forty-six years there teaching, exploring, writing and reforming the Chilean higher education system. He was president of the University of Chile, almost immediately after Andres Bello. He is held in such a high esteem there, that the discoverers of a new species of dinosaur found in southern Chile named it Domeikosaurus in his honor, also, a mountain peak and mineral he discovered have been named after him. Domeika graduated from the University of Vilnius in 1822 with a degree in mathematics and natural sciences, but he took additional courses in several other fields. He was arrested with several hundred other university students by the Russian police for belonging to two semisecret student organizations, (one of them led by Adam Mickiewicz). Due to the influence of his uncle, however, he was not banished to Siberia, but confined to his uncle's estate and barred from any scientific or academic employment in the Russian empire. He remained in this provincial isolation until the outbreak of the 1831 Polish-Lithuanian rebellion against the tsarist regime.

This volume of memoirs begins with his decision to join the rebels and is divided into three parts of approximately the same length. It covers the years 1831 through June 1838, when he arrived in Chile. Domeika writes vividly about his experiences; and this volume not only tells an interesting story, but will appeal to different groups of historians, because it is a valuable historical eyewitness account by a perceptive and intelligent observer.

The first part deals with the 1831 rebellion, the dangerous encounters and the final tragic retreat into Prussian territory. Domeika was nearly executed by his own side when he was taken for a spy when on a mission as a courier. He was almost taken prisoner by the Russians in a firefight near Kaunas. He describes events and personalities vividly, and this part of his memoir will be of interest to Lithuanian historians since it becomes available in Lithuanian for the first time. Historians of science will find the second part quite interesting because after his release from Prussian custody, Domeika eventually travels to Paris. It was still the leading scientific center of Europe, and he describes the many scientists that he met or whose lectures he attended. In 1834 he became a student at the prestigious Ecole des Mines of Paris and graduated three years later. Shortly thereafter came an offer to go to Chile and teach mineralogy and chemistry in the province of Coquimbo. Most of the second part deals with the trials and tribulations of the exiles, cut off from their homes and families. As usual, however, Domeika had a knack for witnessing important events, and in Paris, he saw an assassination attempt on the King while he was passing in an open carriage in a parade.

The third part is interesting as a travel adventure. The trip to Chile took four months in those days and, in addition to visiting some islands and Brazil, Domeika and Charles Lambert, a mining entrepreneur who had brought the job offer to Paris, decided to travel from Buenos Aires through the Argentinian pampas and cross the Andes into Chile. This was a dangerous trip, because by then winter had set in, and they barely made it into Chile. To top this, the first day at the town of La Serena, where he was obligated to teach for six years, Domeika experienced his first earthquake, the account of his adventure is a valuable source for Latin American historians who will find interesting comments from a competent observer.

Among the illustrations included in this volume is a beautiful photograph of the majestic Andes at the approximate spot and time of winter when Domeika crossed them. It was taken by Vladas Vitkauskas, the famous Lithuanian alpinist, who planted the Lithuanian flag on Mount Everest and the highest peak on every continent, including the Aconcagua in Chile. He also retraced some of Domeika's trips through the Atacama desert and the mountains of Chile on the geological expeditions described in the next two volumes. The remaining illustrations are directly connected with Domeika's life in

Vilnius at the university or his residence in Paris. The volume has been beautifully edited and produced, and there is a biographical note about Domeika up to the moment he starts speaking about himself and his travels.

Romualdas Šviedrys