

Format de citation

Staliūnas, Darius: Rezension über: Nicolas Daniel Winkler, Vorstellungen politischer Ordnung in Litauen. Entwicklungen und Diskussionen seit dem nationalen Erwachen (im frühen 19. Jh.), Marburg: Verlag Herder-Institut, 2018, in: Zeitschrift für Ostmitteleuropa-Forschung (ZfO), 70 (2021), 2, S. 279-280, <https://recensio-stag.lorax.syslab.com/r/48a7507829f14f70a7dc3b4e4c18227b>



copyright

Cet article peut être téléchargé et/ou imprimé à des fins privées. Toute autre reproduction ou représentation, intégrale ou substantielle de son contenu, doit faire l'objet d'une autorisation (§§ 44a-63a UrhG / German Copyright Act).

gen werden können;³ bei der Einführung wäre schließlich eine Prüfung der Kommasetzung ratsam gewesen. Insgesamt betrachtet schmälern diese Mängel aber nur wenig die Gesamtleistung dieser überzeugenden Übersetzung und Edition: Mit diesem Band liegt E.s zugleich humorvolle und kritische, überaus angenehm zu lesende Reiseschrift in einer Fassung vor, die zu vielen Reflexionen und hoffentlich auch zu zahlreichen interdisziplinären Forschungsansätzen anregen wird.

Namur

Valérie Leyh

- ³ Statt „Des devoirs qui nous furent d’abord imposés / Que nous avons depuis longtemps oubliés / De l’amour sincère qui nous fut d’abord révélé / Que nous avons *rejeté depuis*“ (S. 153, meine Hervorhebung) hätte „Que nous avons *depuis rejeté*“ (meine Hervorhebung) gewählt werden können.

Nicolas Daniel Winkler: Vorstellungen politischer Ordnung in Litauen. Entwicklungen und Diskussionen seit dem nationalen Erwachen (im frühen 19. Jh.). (Studien zur Ostmitteleuropaforschung, Bd. 41.) Verlag Herder-Institut. Marburg 2018. VII, 398 S. ISBN 978-3-87969-431-0. (€ 72,-.)

This study examines the relationship between everyday ideas of political order and the established democratic order in Lithuania from the nineteenth century until the present. The underlying idea is that democratic order in Lithuania is unstable, and that there are no guarantees that it can survive in the long-term. Nicolas Daniel Winkler locates the source of contemporary Lithuania’s social issues in the past.

He dedicates a significant part of the book (Chapter 2) to a discussion of how the prevailing image of the “right” political order in Lithuanian society changed over different periods in history. Some of the sub-chapters in this section are based on primary sources (press articles, for instance); others rest on research already conducted by other researchers. W. explains the emergence of the Lithuanian nationalists in the second half of the nineteenth century as the peasant class’s educated offspring searched for a society where they would not be demoralized on account of their roots or language.¹ It was precisely this group that created the Lithuanian national myth (the national identity ideology) which dominates in the Lithuanian world view even today. He writes that, at the end of the 19th century, Lithuanian nationalists created a vision of an ideal, authentic society that could not be found in reality, but that could be learned through history, language and folk culture. A very important element of this image was the character of the pre-political community. Also, Lithuanians spent a majority of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries under the occupation of foreign states, while some of the era of the independent republic was also tainted by an authoritarian regime; thus, through this entire period, there was a strong expression of distancing from the state and politics in the broader sense within society.

I can agree with most of the statements presented in this chapter (for example, the dynamics of the imagined hierarchy of enemies, where Russians replaced the Poles as the prime enemies of Lithuanians in the late Soviet period and during the early stages of independence; and the non-existence of political perspective in society after Lithuania joined NATO and the European Union, etc.). However, it should not come as a surprise that, having presented a characterization spanning such a long period, the author may face some criticism. W. claims that, up to World War I, the Lithuanian national movement had not become a mass phenomenon, and that the idea of independence only arose during the war

¹ For a similar interpretation, see: VLADAS SIRUTAVIČIUS: Vincas Kudirka’s Programme for Modernizing Society and the Problems of Forming a National Intelligentsia, in: Lithuanian Historical Studies 5 (2000), pp. 99-112.

(p. 80), yet there are works in historical literature clearly refuting such theses.² On occasions, I missed closer attention to the circumstances behind one or another phenomenon. When writing about the formation of Sąjūdis in 1988, the author claims that reflections of a Soviet understanding of politics were visible in the establishment of this organization, where the avantgarde initiated and led social change, while the most important decisions would be discussed only within a narrow circle of leaders (pp. 135–136). It could appear that the Soviet Union with its whole repressive, albeit weakened, apparatus no longer existed.

Chapters 3 and 4 are dedicated to the dominant images of political order in today's Lithuanian society. W.'s thesis about dangers facing democracy is based on the observation that a majority of society feels estranged from the state, that it is not actively involved in political life, and that political party leaders have just as little faith in the public as the public has in them. According to W., democratic order appeared and has functioned in Lithuania from the late twentieth century due to three reasons: as a prerequisite for ensuring Lithuania's independence from Russia; due to the need for control from the beginning of its restored independence because the two dominating political forces—the reformed former Communist Party of Lithuania and the Sąjūdis independence movement—did not trust one another; and also because the political leaders at the time viewed the democratic order as an “easily transferable set of rules and procedures.” It is precisely this kind of instrumental treatment of political order that is identified in this book as a threat to the stability of the democratic order. Lithuania's membership in NATO and the European Union is correctly identified here as one of the most important guarantees for democracy in Lithuania, however, a danger arises that the political processes in Poland or Hungary could lead to a point where being a member of NATO or the European Union will no longer be associated with adhering to a democratic order. In this way, the very strong stimulus for maintaining democracy in Lithuania will simply disappear.

Moreover, W. finds problems in Lithuanian society that place the democratic order at risk. He alleges that a constant threat to democracy in today's Lithuania are the tensions between the two concepts of the nation that function in the social discourse: the ethnolinguistic nation that formed in the late nineteenth century along with the beginning of Lithuanian nationalism, and the civil nation, whose elements we see in the modern Lithuanian constitution, for example. As Lithuanians see it, the ethnolinguistic nation is the state creating the community that is mentioned during state holidays and is at the center of the historical master-narrative; also, Lithuanianism in this picture is associated with upholding certain morals. Even though W. notices historians' attempts at searching for alternative episodes from the past that could be used for the creation of another ideology, not one based on the creation of ethnolinguistic identities, its impact is questionable. In the author's view, stabilizing democracy in Lithuania is necessary so that society will see “its political order as a representation of the humanity of the Lithuanian citizen and as a representation of the concepts of political order it gained from its historical struggles” (p. 350).

Thus, this book should be useful to everyone interested in the history of Lithuanian political thought, and especially Lithuanian nationalism. This work can be used in comparative research of modern societies. In such studies, one may ask how similar and how different the reasons for an unstable democracy are in post-Soviet countries compared to countries that have experienced a longer period of democracy, what influences have been at play in the rise of populist parties in various societies.

Vilnius

Darius Staliūnas

² DARIUS STALIŪNAS: *About Some Dissertations Devoted to the Lithuanian National Movement Defended at Foreign Educational Institutions*, in: *Lithuanian Historical Studies* 17 (2012), pp. 167–185.