

Review of the study by Vygantas Vareikis *Preconditions of Holocaust. Anti-Semitism in Lithuania (19th century – first half of 20th century till 15 June 1940)*

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I shall express my opinion of the article under review in several stages. I shall firstly review the most general and principal things and then try to discuss details that could be called editorial things and which may depend upon the intentions of the client, the load of the work imagined, the possible result or the result aimed at, and, finally, upon the financial conditions of the contract.

Vareikis set himself the task of describing in a short study a very long and controversial period in the history of Lithuania that could hardly be called a complete epoch. In the introductory remarks Vareikis did not identify separate periods that should be marked in the 19th cent. and at the beginning of 20th cent., and which indeed were characterized by rather different mental features, diverse relations between *our people* and *strangers*, and, finally, by various external circumstances. In other words, according to the academic standard for research in the field of history, the chronological limits of the research must be defined. With respect to the text under review, this standard was not adhered to.

Vareikis' research is very clearly motivated: the author definitely considers the one hundred and fifty years of Lithuanian Jews' history a strictly determined movement towards the Holocaust. It is logical, since the Holocaust was perpetrated, and it is an evident fact that Lithuanians took a part in it, hence everything that had happened in the past led directly to the tragic end. However, many researchers have noted that anti-Semitism and the Holocaust cannot be considered absolutely identical. The text under review leaves no space for debate on possible historical alternatives. From the perspective of history as an academic discipline, the text is rather pragmatic than problem-orientated in character, while the reviewer is a supporter of problem-orientated approach.

I should also add that a deeper review of historiography is missing in the introductory remarks. Although anti-Semitism has not been directly researched and described in Lithuania, still the number of works on the relations of Jews and Lithuanians in 19th and 20th cent. is definitely higher than the author appears to know judging from his article. A historiographical dimension would allow the reader to see more clearly the contribution by the author to the research of the problem. A short study published in a small circulation by the efforts of the USA community of Lithuanians, *Setting the Record Straight. The Historical Perspective on Modern Lithuania and its Minorities. 1. Lithuanian and its Jews.* should be mentioned, as well as some publications on the social and ethnic relations in the 19th cent. Lithuania.

The material collected by Vareikis on anti-Semitic tendencies and anti-Semitic breakouts in the thirties and forties of the 20th cent. is definitely new. The author researched Lithuanian State archives and collected examples of viewpoints formed by various repressive institutions while also making use of the data collected by the institutions. This is a good and reliable way to describe certain moments that were not demonstrated on the surface of the life of the society. Vareikis also did a rather detailed research into the Lithuanian periodicals of the inter-war period, collecting a great variety of articles which indeed help to form a full picture of the tendencies

displayed in public and the attitude of the Lithuanians to the Jews that was formed then. All this adds to making the work by Vareikis undoubtedly valuable.

The analysis of anti-Semitism in the period of the 1st Republic leads to a supposition that Vareikis had not yet exhausted all of his resources, the material available and his experience. An impression is created that the author could have succeeded in separating more clearly the position of the Lithuanian authorities regarding the Jews and anti-Semitism, and the anti-Semitic tendencies of "middle-class" Lithuanians and broader sections of society. It is really worth re-examining the facts from this aspect, however, the analysis by the author does not include it.

Very similarly could be discussed a possibility, if not a necessity, to separate the "plebeian" layer of Lithuanian anti-Semitism from the ideological layer, which is also the intellectual layer. It is impossible to address all the issues from the same aspect while not trying to discuss a complicated phenomenon layer by layer, problem by problem. The material presented by the author and the interpretation version are convincing in an elementary, popular case. However, when addressing the scale of a purely theoretical pre-war anti-Semitism, a wider intolerance is revealed. Vareikis has more difficulties in dealing with more sophisticated theoretical problems than with the issues discussed above. The author could have integrated into the text a productive discussion in articles by Skrupskelis, Mockunas and Donskis on the viewpoints of organised Catholics and the Lithuanian Activist Front published in the *Akiraciai* in several recent years.

The author of the article under review was most poorly prepared for revealing the attitude of the 19th cent. Lithuanian society and the farmers to the so-called our people and the strangers. Vareikis did not mention the changing position of the Lithuanian gentry that expressed its views mostly in Polish, while the material on the issue is really available (e.g. Moravskis' memoirs). In some cases it even appears that Vareikis discussed those times, marked by the Russian repressive policy and the attempts of forcible integration of the Jews, as well as that of Lithuanians, as the national minority of Russia, by basing himself more on the English publications than on the works by Lithuanian, Polish and Russian authors. Hence the strange tendency in the article to indicate the historical (not historiographical) terms in English and not in the language in which they were coined. I should like to include the following examples: "*seslumo zona*" (residential zone), p.1, or "*Kahalu taryba*" (The Kahals' Council), p. 18.

Certainly, many pages of the history of the 19th cent. Lithuania still remain unread, but the period of the revival of Lithuanian nation and its modernisation is being researched rather extensively. When ignoring this one faces the danger of falling into the trap of provisory writing.

I should like to add one more general feature. The author, typically of most authors who have researched similar problems, sees no need to research the manner of living and conduct of Litvakai as one of the causes, though not the most crucial one, of the misunderstanding.

At this stage I should like to turn to several more detail-like and episodic statements in order to either disagree with them, to question them or to ask for them to be explained.

- The statement that the development of Lithuanian-Jewish relations is defined by "an estrangement that increased in the inter-war Lithuania

(1918-1940)...” (p.1) is questionable. On the contrary, it is more likely that civic integration increased at that time, I should think.

- In the Lithuanian historiography, the term *maskilim*, not *maskiliiu*, is already set. It might be added that Larisa Lempertiene has recently maintained an excellent thesis at the Vilnius University on these issues and on the Chaimas (not *Haimas*, as in Vareikis’ text) of Voložin.
- The author should be more careful and definite in using the following categories: *emancipation*, *integration*, *anti-Semitism*, *anti-Judaism* (*anti-Judaism convictions*).
- In pages 6-7, various anti-Semitic pamphlets are enumerated, but the Protocols of Zion Sages, publicised in Lithuania then, are not mentioned.
- Lithuanian nationalism that aimed, according to Vareikis, at “*a maximum expansion of the national territory*”, “*creation of the Grand Lithuania*” (p. 10), should take a long time to be proved. In my opinion, these are thoughtless statements drawn from incorrect historical parallels.
- In 1915, the Russian authorities forcibly evacuated from Lithuania not only Jews...(p.13). It was not the nationality that determined the evacuation.
- Vareikis should read the article by Morkunaite in the *Kaunas History Chronicles*, v.2, on the language relations in the Kaunas City Council (p.16).
- All critical remarks regarding the Jews are being related to anti-Semitism... A rather faulty tendency of straightforward generalisation might be traced. It is doubtful whether all the critical remarks should be linked to anti-Semitism.
- Is the stating that part of the Jews approved the communism and the repeating of slanderous remarks calling the Jews capitalists and exploiters, the same kind of anti-Semitism? I should think that the problem was much more complicated...
- “the right Catholicism [katolicizmas]”, p.22... (no comment). [Russianized spelling of the word *Catholicism* in Lithuanian]
- The statement “*the majority of Lithuanian Jews were not Communists*”, p.27, sounds fairly correct if the author is referring to the party.
- The conclusions are drawn not quite from the essence of the text (see Conclusion No 4).

At the end of my review I should like to assure that Vareikis had undoubtedly made great efforts to research the Lithuanian anti-Semitism. The text he produced is a significant academic article opening the pages of a recent past, provoking discussions and the need of further research.