
BIBLIOTHECA LITUANA I: BIBLIOLOGICAL CHRONICLE

SUMMARY

These are the original articles which, under the complicated conditions of the first Soviet and Nazi occupations, had been prepared for publication in the bibliological chronicle *Bibliotheca Lituana*. The editor the chronicle Juozas Rimantas-Slapšinskas (1908–1973), Director of the Central State Library in Kaunas (1939–50), was unable to implement the undertaking because of the onset of the second Soviet occupation, although in a dispatch to the Deputy Commissar of Education of LSSR Michalina Meškauskienė, dated 12 September 1944, he attempted to justify the necessity to revive the ready for print publication. *Bibliotheca Lituana* was suppressed for ideological reasons, as the majority of the authors of the articles fled to the West in the summer of 1944 and, from the point of view of the Soviet authorities, became enemies of the people.

Several stages can be established in the history of the launching of *Bibliotheca Lituana*. In early 1941, during the first Soviet occupation, an idea was put forward, and supported by the People's Commissariat of Education of LSSR, to establish a journal *Bibliotekų metraštis* (*Chronicle of Libraries*) and to publish it with a print run of 1,500 copies. The People's Culture Foundation allotted 14,000 roubles for the project, the Soviet press informed about the plans to publish the chronicle. But the publishing was thwarted by the onset of the Soviet–German war in June 1941. During the Nazi occupation, after arguments about the German content of the publication had been presented and promises had been made to publish articles with such titles as “Review of the German library science”, “In the libraries and archives of Germany”, “Protection of libraries in war time”, on 29 January 1944, the Press and Propaganda Department of the General Commissar of Lithuania issued a permission to publish *Bibliotheca Lituana*.

Director of the Library of the Lithuanian Academy of Sciences in Vilnius Petras Vaičiūnas, Head of the Directorate of the Education Board Juozas Raciūnas-Racevičius and other potential authors and contributors were informed by J. Rimantas of the permission to publish. The typesetting of the articles submitted to the chronicle started in Varpas printing house in Kaunas in June

1944. *Bibliotheca Litwana*, its first volume priced 15 RM (Reichsmark), was to be published with a print run of 5,000 copies. The chronicle was planned to be issued on 2 December 1944, on the sixtieth birthday of Vaclovas Biržiška, eminent bibliographer and founder of professional Lithuanian book research. But J. Rimantas could not publish the chronicle because of the change of political circumstances. Quite a number of the organizers and authors of *Bibliotheca Litwana* – brothers Vaclovas and Mykolas Biržiška, Zenonas Ivinskis, Konstantinas Avižonis, Vincas Maciūnas, Aleksandras Ružancovas, Antanas Rukša, Vincas Trumpa – fled to the West and continued their scholarly work and public activities in exile. The relations with the Soviet authorities of those who had stayed in Lithuania were complicated. Zigmas Toliušis was imprisoned by NKVD, and in 1951 deported to Siberia. J. Rimantas was fired from the post of the Director of the Central State Library in 1950, because of political motives. The career of Konstantinas Jablonskis took a more favourable turn: in 1956 he became a full member of the Academy of Sciences of the Lithuanian SSR.

Articles and other material presented in the book have been stored in the manuscript depositaries of the Martynas Mažvydas National Library of Lithuania and of the Wroblewski Library of the Lithuanian Academy of Sciences. The selection includes not only unpublished articles but also those that were printed in the war years and later. The motive to republish some articles is linked to the conceptual aim of the editors to keep intact the unified structure of *Bibliotheca Litwana*, as conceived by J. Rimantas. Aiming for greater authenticity and enduring historical value, the editors were guided by the intent to preserve the original authors' language, style, spelling of personal and place names. For the clarity of the readers these matters are discussed in page notes below.

The attempt to realize the project of *Bibliotheca Litwana* was undertaken in complicated conditions in Lithuania, but the articles were of a high level, written and presented by Lithuanian scholarly and cultural elite, which later emigrated to the West. On the other hand, in spite of unfavourable conditions for Lithuanian studies in Soviet Lithuania, imposed Marxist methodological frameworks and themes, the book research and library science were not at a standstill. But only after more thorough research it will be possible to answer the question how *Bibliotheca Litwana* and the incipient pre-war Lithuanian science of bibliology influenced the scholarly development and research directions. On the whole, *Bibliotheca Litwana* should be considered a testament to book research and, especially, to historical bibliology.