

THE PROVINCIAL REFORMS OF CATHERINE THE GREAT AND THE BALTIC COMMON IDENTITY

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In 1783, the Order for the Administration of Governorates of 1775 entered into force, establishing regency in Estland and Livland. As an outcome, the provinces which had so far enjoyed extensive autonomy, had to rearrange their administrative and judicial institutions pursuant to the all-Russian model. This article is dedicated to the question as to what extent could the 1775 provincial reform by Catherine II manage to fulfil its main declared aim – to uniform the bureaucratic governance of Russia and by way of this, make it more rational – in the Baltic provinces (Estland, Livland and Courland); and what was the relevant impact on the creation of a common identity among the ruling German-speaking class in the nineteenth century.

According to the general standpoint in Baltic history-writing, the regency period which lasted from 1783 to 1796 was merely an episode without any long-term implications. Such an opinion is prevalent in school textbooks and in recommended study aids for higher education institutions.¹

Was regency merely a transient episode without any lasting consequences? So far, the regency period has been primarily assessed from the viewpoint of the local German-speaking upper classes – the nobility and burghers – who viewed the implementation thereof as a power demonstration of the Russian Empire, and were most unpleasantly affected by regency and regarded the restoration of the old order as their great achievement. History is always written by the victors and thus, such a viewpoint has been the most predominant one in Baltic historiography. Georg von Rauch has said: “Baltic history has always been the justification of our existence, it

¹ See, e.g.: *Eesti ajalugu. IV. Põhjasõjast pärisorjuse kaotamiseni*, ed. by Mati Laur, authors Mati Laur, Tõnu Tannberg, Helmut Piirimäe (Tartu: Ilmamaa, 2003); Mati Laur, *Eesti ajalugu varasel uusajal 1550–1800* (Tallinn: Eesti Entsüklopeediakirjastus, 1999), 89. Secondary school textbooks: *Eesti ajalugu*, 1, ed. by Ain Mäesalu, Tõnis Lukas, Mati Laur, Tõnu Tannberg (Tallinn: Avita, 1996); Andres Adamson, Toomas Karjahärm, *Eesti ajalugu gümnaasiumile* (Argo, 2004), on p. 27 there is a note that in 1796, the old system was restored in a slightly altered manner, regarding, for example, taxation.

had to vindicate the tasks and goals we had set for ourselves.”² Such a Baltic-German concept of history is indeed understandable, however, it is not a sufficient reason why certain events or phenomena could not be viewed from another position in the twenty-first century.

The fact that the system created after the re-establishment of the so-called old order was far from being identical with what had been the case prior to 1783, has not been so far thoroughly analysed. This alone confirms that other viewpoints could also be feasible. The following is an observation of which of the institutions, founded by the central power, continued with their operation, and how this altered the societal arrangement in the Baltic provinces and, in turn, the attitudes of the upper classes. Differently from many previous ones, the current research is focused on the institutional structure of society, paying only minimal attention to the activities and opinions of individuals. A separate research subject for the future could delve into the implications of regency for the middle and lower classes, both in a shorter and longer perspective.

Earlier treatments of the problem

As the historiography of regency in Baltic history-writing has been comprehensively summarised by Otto Heinrich Elias in his monograph published in 1978, the following will be just a brief overview of the relevant subject matter.³

The enlightened men of letters in the Baltic provinces welcomed the reforms of Catherine the Great with great enthusiasm. August Wilhelm Hupel (1737–1819) described the new system as early as 1784, in his journal *Nordische Miscellaneen*.⁴ The same year, Catherine commissioned the descriptions of all governorates in Russia, pursuant to a prescribed structure. However, the collected material proved to be inconsistent, and in 1786, Hupel was assigned with an honourable task to arrange the material obtained from Livland into a requisite overview. Based on the latter,

² “Baltische Geschichte war immer Rechtfertigung unserer Existenz, Rechtfertigung der Aufgaben, die uns zugefallen waren, und der Ziele, die wir uns setzten.” Georg von Rauch, “Geschichtsbewusstsein und Identität”, *Jahrbuch des baltischen Deutschtums*, 30 (1983), 14–16 (15).

³ Otto-Heinrich Elias, *Reval in der Reformpolitik Katharinas II: die Statthalterchaftszeit 1783–1796*, Quellen und Studien zur Baltischen Geschichte, 3 (Bonn-Bad Godesberg: Wissenschaftliches Archiv, 1978), 1–5.

⁴ August Wilhelm Hupel, “Über den Aufbau neuer Städte in Hinsicht auf das Russische Reich, besonders auf Liefland. Nebst andern kürzern Aufsätzen etc”, *Der Nordischen Miscellaneen achttes Stück von August Wilhelm Hupel* (Riga: Hartknoch, 1784).

he compiled a sequence to his famous publication *Topographische Nachrichten*, providing an overview of the basic operating system of the governance of Riga and Tallinn (Reval) in 1789.⁵ Indeed, this work has remained to be the most profound description with regard to the system of institutions and administrative agencies established during the regency period.

Apart from contemporary evaluations, the period of regency was not a research matter up until 1841 when Otto Müller published his treatise written in the spirit of the historical-juridical school. Only a system which has developed historically and naturally, could be a good one, according to Müller, whereas regency, on the contrary, epitomized a governance with unlimited arbitrariness from the state (*Herrschaft unbegrenzter Willkür*), which gave absolutely no consideration to the historically developed circumstances.⁶ Müller advocated the view that benefits of progress need to be fully utilized – he was, for example, one of the founders of the Riga Polytechnic in the later stage – but the historically developed legal order had to remain intact.

The codification of the first two parts of the provincial law, compiled in 1845, also proceeded from the same principle.⁷

In the era of the liberal reforms of the 1860s, there were also some more balanced opinions published with regard to regency, wherein positive aspects were underlined next to negative ones, e.g. Theodor Bötticher wrote in the *Baltische Monatsschrift* in 1861: “[...] the actual core of the provinces such as church order, language, German law-based private law and law of procedure remained totally untouched by this [...] separation of the judiciary from the administration, town councils, limitations to obligations regarding guilds – all these postulates of the modern state and societal life were already existent therein; and despite its short duration, regency left behind persistent beneficial traces in Riga, and was particularly beneficial for the administration and fiscal matters.”⁸

A clear and obvious attitude against regency was taken during the second half of the 1860s when the centralization pressure by the state began

⁵ Indrek Jürjo, *Liivimaa valgustaja August Wilhelm Hupel (1737–1819)* (Tallinn: Riigiarhiiv, 2004), 160; August Wilhelm Hupel, *Die gegenwärtige Verfassung der Rigischen und Revalschen Statthalterschaft. Zur Ergänzung der topographischen Nachrichten von Lief- und Ehtland* (Riga: Hartknoch, 1789), 3.

⁶ *Die Livländischen Landesprivilegien und deren Confirmationen*, ed. by Otto Müller (Leipzig: Otto Wiegand, 1841), 154.

⁷ *Provinzialrecht der Ostseegouvernements. Th. I: Behördenverfassung; Th. II: Ständerecht* (St. Petersburg: Buchdruckerei der Zweiten Abtheilung Seiner Kaiserlichen Majestät Eigener Kanzellei, 1845).

⁸ Theodor Bötticher, “Der Domainenverkauf in den Ostseeprovinzen und das Güterbesitzrecht”, *Baltische Monatsschrift*, 3 (1861), 334–425 (384, 387).

to create recognizable historical parallels, and the national movement of Estonians-Latvians, on the other hand, undermined the footing of the upper classes of the provinces. This trend is most explicit in Julius Eckart's work *Die Einführung der Statthalterschaftsverfassung* (Establishment of Regency), which, due to numerous reprints, has indeed remained one of the standard volumes regarding the given subject matter. According to Eckart, regency was a bureaucratically distorted copy of the historically evolved (and thus legitimized) arrangement of Livland, and the top-down implementation only caused confusion in the local circumstances. Eckart did not deny economic prosperity during the time of regency, however, he did not attribute this to the system of governance but instead to good crops and a favourable turn in the market. He saw the benefit of "these terrible years" in the fact that the urban and rural upper classes of the provinces managed to understand the value of solidarity in their actual goals. The burghers and the nobility, who witnessed the restoration of the old order, had indeed managed to learn and forget something in the meantime, in Eckart's opinion.⁹ In the year after the publication of his above-mentioned work, Eckart also published a number of commented sources, including the chronicle of Neuendahl, a merchant from Riga, which became the main source material for everyone who considered the regency period to be negative. The relevant text is also discussed in greater detail below.¹⁰ Particularly characteristic is Eckart's general standpoint – although regency did have some advantages and there were supporters also among the locals, the order was still *a priori* bad as it had been established top-down and artificially, whereas the old system, irrespective of its drawbacks, was legitimized due to the fact that it had evolved historically into what it was.¹¹

A thorough research on regency was published by Friedrich Bienemann at the beginning of the next Russification wave.¹² Bienemann projected a number of contemporary problems to the past, incl. the religious conver-

⁹ "Die Edelleute und Bürger, welche die Wiederherstellung der alten Verfassung erlebten, hatten in der That etwas gelernt und etwas vergessen", Julius Eckart, "Die Einführung der Statthalterschaftsverfassung in Livland (1783)", *Die baltischen Provinzen Russlands: politische und culturgeschichtliche Aufsätze von Julius Eckart* (Hannover-Döhren: Verlag Harro v. Hirschheydt, 1971 (nachdruck der Ausgabe Leipzig 1869)), 230–259.

¹⁰ *Bürgerthum und Bürokratie: vier Kapitel aus der neuester livländischen Geschichte*, ed. by Julius Eckart (Leipzig: Duncker & Humblot, 1870).

¹¹ Eckart, "Die Einführung", 104ff.

¹² Friedrich Bienemann, *Die Statthalterschaftszeit in Liv- und Estland (1783–1796): ein Capitel aus der Regentenpraxis Katharinas II* (Leipzig: Duncker & Humblot, 1886). It is true that Catherine II favoured the Orthodox Church as state church, however, this did not cause any considerable problems during the 18th century.

sion movement and the concerns of the re-converted. Such an extremely biased work was another standard source text, next to that of Eckart's, for German-speaking readers for nearly a century.

Thus, even Hubertus Neuschäffer, in his profound research on the relationships of Catherine the Great with the Baltic provinces, focused on the pre-regency period, and dedicated a lot of space to persons and agrarian issues, yet leaving the regency system totally aside. He indicated that as Bienemann had already written about the period, and as Elias was writing at the time, there was no need for him to dwell upon this matter.¹³ The most thorough empirical treatment about the town of Tallinn has indeed been compiled by Otto Heinrich Elias. His viewpoint was much more neutral than that of the authors of the nineteenth century. Elias summarized that the arrangement in Tallinn in the 1780s was not compatible with the needs of the time. Preconditions for conducting the reforms were there, yet there was no power which could have implemented them. The stimulus had to come from the top. The provincial reform of Catherine the Great actually meant to arrange the codification of laws which was one of the tasks of the state during the Enlightenment. The reverse movement – by way of abolishing the regency – left this task unaccomplished. And as the restitution was also incomplete, Elias presumed that it was particularly because of this why the nationality issue turned out to be so acute in the later stage. Elias indicated clearly that the regency period was actually beneficial for local peoples.¹⁴

Yet in a substantial survey *Baltische Länder*, the regency period is again viewed as merely an episode.¹⁵ To a large extent, the same viewpoint is also prevalent in more recent Estonian-language literature.¹⁶ According to the underlying idea in Mati Laur's article, explicitly dedicated to Catherine II's manifestations of enlightened absolutism in the Baltics,¹⁷ the changes that took place at the time in the society of Baltic provinces, were an outcome of the internal societal development. The reforms by Catherine the Great

¹³ Hubertus Neuschäffer, *Katharina II. und die baltischen Provinzen: Beiträge zur baltischen Geschichte*, 2 (Hannover-Döhren: Hirschheydt, 1975), 8.

¹⁴ Elias, *Reval in der Reformpolitik Katharinas II*, 194–195.

¹⁵ *Baltische Länder*, ed. by Gert von Pistohlkors (Berlin: Siedler, 1994), 291.

¹⁶ Mati Laur, *Eesti ala valitsemine 18. sajandil (1710–1783)* (Tartu: Eesti Ajalooarhiiv, 2000); *Eesti ajalugu. IV. Põhjasõjast pärisorjuse kaotamiseni*.

¹⁷ Mati Laur, "Der Aufgeklärte Absolutismus der Kaiserin Katharina II im Baltikum", *Narva und die Ostseeregion*, ed. by Karsten Brüggemann (Narva: Tartu Ülikooli Narva kolledž, 2004), 185–192.

did facilitate the integration of the provinces into the Russian Empire, however, the relevant impact on social structures was short-lived.

The aims of the 1775 provincial reform

In order to better understand the effects and implications of the provincial reform by Catherine the Great, it would be expedient to have a closer look at the relevant aims. To a certain extent, Catherine was an ideal sovereign of the enlighteners. At an age of 14, she came to a foreign land, without acquaintances and connections. Thus she was as if a *tabula rasa* for the enlightened men to write their good and right thoughts on.¹⁸ Catherine filled her days with reading. Her first significant document, *Nakaz* or the Instruction to the Legislative Commission, was a compilation of the works by influential representatives of political and social thought of the time.¹⁹ *Nakaz* suggests ideas about the separation of legislative, executive and judicial powers, and the laws appropriate for each nation due to their geographical position, according to Montesquieu's *The Spirit of the Laws*. In addition, there are Beccaria's thoughts from *Crime and Punishment* (1764), suggesting, among other things, to abolish torture and the death sentence. *Nakaz* also presents the principles of Adam Smith's moral theory (1759) stipulating that individual freedom is based on the capacity of man to act consciously and in accordance with the principles of natural law.

In the introduction it is possible to read that it is the duty of each honest man to see his country at the highest level of well-being, glory, peace and happiness (p. 2) and each citizen under the protection of law that would not inhibit his well-being but prevent wrongdoings (p. 3). The laws have to take into account the circumstances of people for whom they are drafted (p. 5). Bearing in mind the size of Russia, absolutism is the only thinkable form of governance, its final goal is the glory (*Ruhm, Slava*) of the citizens, the state and the emperor which would also guarantee freedom and well-being for each citizen (pp. 8–16). Liberty in the state means the freedom

¹⁸ R. Yu. Vipiper, "Ekaterina II i prosvetitel'nye idei zapada (po povodu stoletnei godovshchinny smerti 1796 g. 6 noyabrya)", *Ekaterina vtoraya: pro et contra* (Sankt-Peterburg: Izd-vo Russkoï Khristianskoï gumanitarnoï akademii, 2006), 658–674 (659) (first published: *Mir Bozhii. Ezhemesyachnyĭ literaturnyĭ i nauchno-populyarnyĭ zhurnal dlya samoobrazovaniya*, vol. 12 (1896), 1–17).

¹⁹ [Ekaterina], *Ihrer Kaiserlichen Majestaet Instruction fuer die Verfertigung des Entwurfs zu einem neuen Gesetz-Buche verordnete Comission* (Moscau: in der Kaiserlichen Universitaets-Buchdruckerey, 1767). [edaspidi Nakaz], the publication is in two parallel languages, Russian and German.

to do what must be wanted and not to be forced to do what is not wanted (p. 37). Equality means that all citizens are equal in the eyes of the law, i.e. that the same laws apply to everyone (p. 34). The Legislative Commission was given a task to draft such good laws that the Russian people would enjoy the greatest possible happiness in the world (p. 521). *Nakaz* has been reproached for being too complicated – which is true – yet the choice of quotations clearly shows what Catherine intended to do in her country. Whether it was also possible is yet another issue.

It has been often argued that the 1767 Legislative Commission, which knowingly dissolved without managing to give the Russian nation the best or even any code of laws, was a big failure having in no way any impact on the decisions made upon the ruling of Russia.²⁰ Actually, the majority of the more substantial principles presented by Catherine in *Nakaz*, can be found in the 1775 Order for the Administration of Governorates (and in relevant laws), hence there is a direct genetic connection between these two documents. This is how the empress herself understood this – in the foreword to the Order for the Administration of Governorates of 1775, it is clearly stated that this is the continuation of the process, of arranging the laws, halted due to the break-out of the Turkish war in 1768. In the end of the foreword, Catherine asks for blessing for this undertaking “so that the Order for the Administration of Governorates would serve for many years for the happiness of the subjects, and that real administration of justice would grow, habits would improve and Christian virtues would spread, and in everyone’s heart there would be a growing endeavour to precisely fulfil their duties, and despise senseless waste of time, luxury and laziness.”²¹

Thus the empress took advantage of the lesson, made the amendments and did not waive from the basic principles. The main goal of enlightened ruling was to rationalize governing, i.e. to make sure that everyone (incl. towns, estates, institutions, individuals) had a specific position in the state machinery, with clearly determined rights and obligations. This was indeed the direction of both documents.

The Order for the Administration of Governorates of 1775 can be considered as a distinctive quintessence of enlightened rule. The law was meant for the entire Russian Empire, but it was not simultaneously applied

²⁰ V. Sergeevich, “Otkuda neudachi Ekaterininskoi zakonodatel’noi komissii?” *Ekaterina vtoraya: pro et contra* (Sankt-Peterburg: Izd-vo Russkoi Khristianskoi gumanitarnoi akademii, 2006), 240–302 (first published: *Vestnik Evropy*, 1 (1878), 188–264).

²¹ [Ekaterina Vtoraya], *Uchrezhdeniya dlya upravleniya gubernii Vserossiiskii Imperii* (Moskva: Senatskaya tipografiya, 1789), foreword 1775, I–VIII.

everywhere. By way of the reform, attempts were made to achieve the separation of powers and clarity in functions, with a wish to preserve the estates of the realm as the support of absolutist monarchy.²² Or as Boris Mironov has indicated, this was the time when estates were actually established in Russia.²³ This, however, was not valid with regard to the Baltics as the system here originated from the Middle Ages and its preservation was facilitated by cultural (incl. linguistic and ethnic) differences.

The first steps of enlightened governance in Livland

In German-language literature, Julius Eckart has started a tradition according to which the Order for the Administration of Governorates was compiled by the Livonian nobleman Johann Jacob v. Sievers (1731–1808), at the time when he was the governor of Novgorod (1764–1776). His source of inspiration, regarding the work of police and judicial bodies, was his homeland Livland. According to Eckart, it was very beneficial for Novgorod, as there was no earlier order whatsoever, but an extreme injustice when the same system was extended to the Baltic provinces.²⁴ In Russian-language tradition, on the other hand, there is quite an opposite and widespread opinion – that Catherine drafted the Order for the Administration of Governorates on her own, within five months.²⁵ Neither of these viewpoints is probably totally true. Definitely, the provincial reform did not take place overnight. And the idea-wise connection between the Instructions to the Legislative Commission and the Order for the Administration of Governorates has already been highlighted above.

In order to observe the development of the Order for the Administration of Governorates, it is necessary to go back to the 1760s. In 1764, Catherine

²² Vipper, “Ekaterina II i prosvetitel’nye idei zapada”, 658.

²³ The Order for the Administration of Governorates introduced an estate-wise principle in the judicial system (the adjudicators needed to be of a similar estate as the person being tried), the self-governance of the estates of the realm was regulated by way of *The Charter to the Nobility* and *The Charter to the Towns* (1786). See in detail: Boris. N. Mironov, “Social policies of Catherine II and their results: establishment of estate paradigm in law and social consciousness”, *Russland zur Zeit Katharinas II: Absolutismus – Aufklärung – Pragmatismus*, ed. by E. Hübner, J. Kusber, P. Nitsche (Köln-Weimar-Wien: Böhlau Verlag, 1998), 115–136; Boris. N. Mironov, *Social’naya istoriya Rossii perioda imperii (XVIII – nachalo XX veka): genezis lichnosti, demokraticheskoj sem’i, grazhdanskogo obshchestva i pravovogo gosudarstva*, 1 (St. Peterburg: D. Bulanin, 1999).

²⁴ Eckart, “Die Einführung”, 234–235.

²⁵ See, e.g. *Institut general-gubernatorstva i namestnichestva v Rossijskoj Imperii*, I, ed. by V. V. Cherkosov (Izd. Sankt-Peterburgskogo Universiteta, 2001), 44.

the Great visited Livland and Estland.²⁶ Following the visit she wrote to prince Alexander Vjazemski who had been recently appointed the chief prosecutor at the Senate, with an aim to make Little Russia, Livland, Estland, Finland and the Smolensk area more Russia-like.²⁷ Thus, during the next years, certain lenient measures were applied to rule the provinces of Livland and Estland in a better manner, primarily to strengthen the central power in the spirit of Enlightenment.

Namely, in 1765, George Browne, the governor-general of Livland, following the instructions from Catherine the Great, presented his propositions to the Livonian Diet – a programme comprising 14 items to improve the conditions of peasants. One of the most important items therein was the clause allowing the peasant to own movable private property, and the requirement for estate-owners to establish peasant schools. Naturally, the preconditions for such reforms had taken shape within the local society, yet it is a fact that for the implementation there had to be “a push from the top”.

The same year, in 1765, a state-run committee was appointed to resolve the dispute between the craftsmen and the town council (during the state visit of Catherine to Tartu in 1764, the citizens had presented a petition to the empress, although it was actually forbidden to submit any kind of petition). Thus, as an outcome of the committee work, the positions of a syndic and burgomaster of justice (both were legal experts) were created and a so-called citizens’ agreement (*Bürgervergleich*) was signed between the town council and the townspeople. Up until today, this agreement has not attracted a major interest of researchers,²⁸ and there is unfortunately not enough space to delve in this subject matter herein. In brief, the agreement regulated a number of spheres in urban life, and provided explanations as to which of the existing regulations – regarding market organization, garment arrangement, fishing rights, etc. – were valid and which were not. By the way, the comments to clause 32 states that the non-Germans of suburbs cannot be treated as serfs unless they belong to patrimonial estates. This civic agreement functioned as a minor constitution,²⁹ and served as

²⁶ Regarding this occasion, see, e.g. Laur, *Eesti ala valitsemine 18. sajandil*, 235–239.

²⁷ “[...] with the mildest means possible so that they would cease looking to the woods like wolves” (Edward C. Thaden, *Russia’s western borderlands, 1710–1870*, ed. by Edward C. Thaden, with the collaboration of Marianna Forster Thaden (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1984), 17).

²⁸ Still, Peeter Treiberg has used this when writing about the history of Tartu: *Tartu ajalugu XVII ja XVIII sajandil (aa. 1625–1800)*, offprint from the book *Tartu* (Tartu: Postimees, 1926), 53–54.

²⁹ *Bürgervergleich*, 1765 (Estonian Historical Archives [Eesti Ajalooarhiiv, henceforth EAA], f. 995, n.1, s. 34); see also G. F. Bunge, *Darstellung der Gegenwärtigen Verfassung*

the main basis for the legal order in Tartu for the next one hundred years (up until the enforcement of the 1877 town law). Thus, the state power had already intervened in the regulatory manner in the organization of the local life. But as all this took place within the framework of the German legal order, accepted by the locals, it did not bring about any major protests.

In 1766, the empress issued a police decree for Livonian small towns.³⁰ This was applied in Kuressaare (Arensburg), Valga (Walk), Viljandi (Fellin), Limbaži (Lemsal), Valmiera (Wolmar), and Cēsis (Wenden). With regard to the background of drafting this document, there is less information available than in the case of the civic agreement in Tartu. The police decree concerned administration, church governance, obtaining of civic rights, organization of crafts and trade, fire safety – again, this was a legal document attempting to systematically regulate a wide spectrum of domains, substantiated with the fact that there was no earlier police arrangement and without this, society could not flourish. Undoubtedly, this was an intervention of state power to local matters, yet as it only concerned small towns where there was no wealthy and powerful patriciate, the decree again did not cause any major protests.

In 1766, an imperial edict was issued to establish an audit committee of Saaremaa (Ösel), under the office of the governor-general; the task was to survey estate lands and amalgamate the plots in order to restructure the economy in Saaremaa.³¹ There is probably no need to add that this was aimed at increasing the state revenue.

During the next years, the priorities of state authorities moved elsewhere and the provinces could organize their internal life pursuant to their own discretion.

Establishment of regency

In 1775, the provinces of Livland and Estland were merged under the leadership of governor-general Browne, without implementing any other provisions of the Order for the Administration of Governorates for the time being.

In 1782, the customs border between Estland and Livland and the rest of the Russian Empire was abolished, providing new opportunities to develop

der Stadt Dorpat (Riga: [bei Wilhelm Ferdinand Häcker], 1827).

³⁰ *Polnoe sobranie zakonov Rossijskoï imperii* [henceforth PSZ], I, 12636 (4 May 1766).

³¹ PSZ, I, 12658 (24 May 1766), see also *Arhiivijuht I: riigi, kohtu ja omavalitsusasutused*, ed. by Lea Leppik (Tartu: Eesti ajalooarhiiv, 2003), 212–213.

trade with Russia. New imperial customs offices were set up on the western border of Estland and Livland.³²

On 3 May 1783, the feudal tenure estates with formal service obligation were re-organized into hereditary tenure estates, i.e. freely transferrable properties in Livland, Estland and also in the territories of Ukraine and Byelorussia. This was a skilful move by the empress to win the landowners to her side.

Poll tax for each male peasant and craftsman was introduced on 29 May 1783. As a result of this measure, the state revenue in the Baltic provinces grew by nearly 50%. The question, of where did Catherine get money to establish all the new institutions, has so far not been studied by researchers. August Wilhelm Hupel, a contemporary of these events, has made some calculations: in 1774, the province of Livland, incl. Saaremaa provided 146,000 roubles of revenue for the Russian state; together with natural imposts (*Naturallieferungen*), this revenue totalled 220,000 roubles, with an additional 500,000–800,000 roubles from custom duties. In Estland, the estates and customs duties provided approximately 90,000–100,000 roubles of income. After the establishment of regency, poll tax and the customs system, the state revenue from the Governorate of Riga (province of Livland) increased to 1.5 million roubles, and from the Governorate of Tallinn (province of Estland), to 280,000 roubles.³³ Indeed, it is possible that a more in-depth research into the matter would provide somewhat different figures, yet it is definitely spectacular that a remarkable increase in state revenue was achieved in a way that caused so few protests (still, there were peasant riots in connection with the introduction of the poll tax), and the new system also brought about local economic prosperity.

On 3 July 1783, the Order for the Administration of Governorates entered into force in the provinces of Estland and Livland, with the relevant administrative and judicial institutions. The system became fully developed when the Charter to the Nobility and the Charter to the Towns were implemented in 1785, regulating, respectively, the self-government of the nobility and that of the towns. The entire new system – the governorates' order and the charters had to facilitate the rationalization of local administration and better harness the provincial nobility and wealthy townspeople in administrative work and other socially beneficial undertakings.³⁴

³² As of 27 September 1782, there were two border guards per approx. each 10 km. Pursuant to the law from 11 December 1784 (PSZ, I, 16105), the governor-general appointed 238 border-guards and 24 supervisors.

³³ Hupel, *Die gegenwärtige Verfassung*, 158–159.

³⁴ Thaden, *Russia's western borderlands*, 23.

Alexander Tobien, the apologist of Livland's *Ritterschaft* (a corporation of the noble landlords), has commented on the emerged situation, pointing out that the provinces were degraded to governorates.³⁵ The offended tone in Tobien's comment is more understandable when having a closer look at the arrangement, annexed to the Order for the Administration of Governorates, regarding the sequence of provincial officials at festive processions. Namely, the Land Marshal (a high official of the nobility) and the accompanying representatives of the nobility were only in the 21st position (judicial institutions with the representatives of peasantry were positioned before them!), followed only by the mayor and citizens.³⁶ In a class society where such symbolic positions were indeed significant, it was definitely a great insult for the nobility who were used to think of themselves as the masters and governors of the province.

Pursuant to the Order for the Administration of Governorates, the following new institutions were established in the province: the first place was assumed by the governor-general or vice-regent, a joint position for two provinces. His main task was to be the highest representative of state power (the empress) with a relatively broad scope of authority: he commanded the police, local garrisons and could suspend the implementation of court decisions.³⁷ In addition, the position of a governor, representing legislative power, was established in each province. Next to the governor, a provincial government was formed as an executive body with two divisions – Russian and German. In addition, to provide legal supervision, a position was created for the attorney-general who had two assistants – one in civil matters and the other for criminal cases.³⁸

In order to manage the state treasury, particularly the poll tax system and state forests as an important source of revenue, departments of finance were established at the governorates, together with district-level treasuries.

With an aim to have more efficient governance, it was necessary to improve communication, and a regular postal service was established. In

³⁵ “[...] dass Livland dem russischen Reich willkürlich einverleibt und “zu einem Gouvernement” hinabgedrückt wurde”, Alexander Tobien, *Die Livländische Ritterschaft in ihrem Verhältnis zum Zarismus und russischen Nationalismus*, 2 (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1930), 229.

³⁶ *Uchrezhdeniya dlya upravleniya gubernii Vserossiiskii Imperii*, 251–256.

³⁷ See Lea Leppik, “Die Generalgouverneure im Baltikum – Instrumente zur Vereinheitlichung des Russischen Imperiums oder ein Schutz der baltischen Sonderordnung?”, *Estland und Russland: Aspekte der Beziehungen beider Länder*, ed. by Olaf Mertelsmann, *Hamburger Beiträge zur Geschichte des östlichen Europa*, 11 (Hamburg, 2005), 53–76.

³⁸ Order for the Administration of Governorates from 7 November 1775 (PSZ, I, 14392).

addition, two new towns – Võru (Werro) and Paldiski (Baltischport) – were established in connection with the new administrative order (in the entire Russian Empire, there were more than 200 new towns).

Boards of public welfare had to be responsible for public order, education and health issues within the governorate. The appointed district doctors and midwives, who were required to have passed examinations at the state medical body, worked under the boards of public welfare. Likewise, all the almshouses, work and correctional houses and schools had to operate under the subordination of the board. The state provided the board of public welfare with start-up capital, which could be given out as loans to private persons, and the income from interest was used to do beneficial things.

According to the Statute of Public Schools from 5 August 1786, a two-level school network was established – upper schools (*Hauptvolksschule*) in provincial towns and lower schools (*Niedervolksschule*) in district towns. The schools were free of charge, open to all free estates (i.e. serfs could not enter the schools as they were in the ownership of landlords), and meant both for boys and girls.

The already existing welfare institutions were allowed to continue with their operation. However, there is still no precise overview regarding the work of the boards of public welfare as the relevant materials in the history archives are almost totally unused.³⁹ Likewise, there have been no attempts to assess the significance of welfare boards within the entire institutional system created by Catherine the Great, although she concentrated the majority of her enlightened endeavours in there. The fact that education, health care, welfare, and law and order were unified under one institution shows that there was understanding of the reciprocal connections of their functions. Everything that was planned could not be implemented, however, it is of great relevance that it was the first time when education and welfare were regarded as the responsibility of the state.

The autonomy of Baltic provinces was most painfully affected by the new judicial system envisaging a three-level court system for all classes.⁴⁰ The

³⁹ True, a record group of the Estonian Historical Archives (EAA, f. 51, *Eestimaa üldhoolekande kolleegium, Estländisches Kollegium Allgemeiner Fürsorge*) shows that the majority of the materials from the regency period have gone missing in the course of time. There are only a couple of files about this period. The material about Livland, mostly kept in Riga, has been preserved slightly better. Yet the relevant reports and correspondence are naturally also held in other places (e.g. in the archive of the Baltic governor-general, record group 291).

⁴⁰ See the scheme, e.g.: Elias, *Reval in der Reformpolitik Katharinas II*, 82; *Arhiivijuhut I*, 470.

judges were elected for a fixed term, and each estate had to be adjudicated by its peers. In the old system, stemming from medieval times, the courts had also been administrative and, in some cases, even fiscal institutions, often functioning as the police. In the new system, courts were clearly separated from administrative responsibility, and the police functions were performed by a separate police agency, regulated by the all-Russian Police Code for Towns, issued on 8 April 1782.⁴¹

The estates of the realm were granted limited self-government, the organization of which was ultimately regulated in 1785 by the Charter to the Towns⁴² and Charter to the Nobility.⁴³ Peasants were seen as the private property of the nobility, and although Catherine contemplated to issue a similar charter with regard to the peasants of state estates, the idea was not realized. According to a number of researchers, serfdom actually deepened in Russia during the reign of Catherine the Great, which is not surprising bearing in mind that the nobility obtained a number of additional privileges. For the Baltic nobility, however, the Charter strongly limited their existing rights and entitlements. The executive bodies of the noble corporations (*Landratskollegium*) ceased their operation. The new bodies of the nobility could elect their district marshals, and the governor-general had to approve one of the two proposed candidates as the provincial marshal; likewise, an advisory noble convention worked at the governor-general's office. Thus, the nobility were no longer masters in their own lands, but instead, merely state servants with an advisory voice, who were only entitled to make decisions concerning their internal matters.

It is evident from the archival documents that the implementation of the new system was not easy. As late as in 1787, the governor-general wrote that the new arrangement of the nobility has caused a lot of confusion and opposition.⁴⁴ The voluminous file contains recurrent substantiations from Estland's and Livland's noble corporations and larger towns, how the new system violates their privileges and is totally inappropriate in the local circumstances.⁴⁵ In 1792, the Livonian *Ritterschaft* finally adopted a new 150-clause procedure for behaving under the circumstances of regency.⁴⁶

⁴¹ Ustav Blagochiniya from 8 April 1782 (PSZ, I, 15379).

⁴² PSZ, I, 16187.

⁴³ PSZ, I, 16188.

⁴⁴ Governor-general Browne's report to Catharine II, from 10 April 1787 (EAA, f. 291, n. 1, s. 1726).

⁴⁵ Delo o dvorjanskom i gorodovom polozenii, 1786 (EAA, f. 291, n. 1, s. 1520).

⁴⁶ Instruktion für die Beamten der Livländischen Ritterschaft während der Statthalterschaft (EAA, f. 909, n. 1, s. 252).

There were also protests in towns, although the creation of the new elected representative bodies – the general town council and the council with six members – was somewhat smoother. The councils were elected by way of unequal curias. Lay judges were elected at the meeting of the town community. A new tax system was imposed on townspeople, and the right of becoming a citizen was no longer dependent on the origin but on paid taxes or declared capital.

Winners and losers

The enlightened heads of the time welcomed the new system with high hopes as it seemed much more modern and rational than the old one. The future professor of Tartu University, Daniel Georg Balk (1764–1826), who was at the time still working as a doctor in Courland, expressed his expectations in a publication in 1795, immediately after the annexation of Courland by Russia, that now it was finally possible to create a better system in health care, hire physicians and midwives in counties, etc.⁴⁷

The new administration was much larger than the old one, which means that quite a few of the so-called new people got a prestigious position with fixed salary. Their status did not depend on their title or the fact of being a member of a town councillor's family, but instead, on the table of ranks of the Russian Empire.

The new system allowed new people an opportunity to become citizens, with the pre-requisite of personal freedom and economic self-sufficiency. Religious restrictions were abolished. Everyone could become a tradesman, but for craftsmen the old German-type guild system was maintained. Yet the same person could simultaneously be a craftsman and a merchant.⁴⁸

The effect of the Charter to the Towns in Estland has been most thoroughly delved into in the case of Tallinn, with the new book of the citizens of the town (1786–96) being published. The cover article of the book gives a splendid overview of the actual implementation of the town law.⁴⁹ According to the *Bürgerbuch*, the number of citizens in Tallinn increased by four

⁴⁷ Daniel Georg Balk, *Was war einst Kurland und was kann es nun unter Katharinas Szepter werden? Eine medizinischpolitische Abhandlung für Gesetzgeber und Richter in höheren Tribunälen* (Mitau: Steffenhagen, 1795).

⁴⁸ Elias, *Reval in der Reformpolitik Katharinas II*, 103.

⁴⁹ *Tallinna kodanikeraamat 1786–1796*, ed. by Csaba János Kenéz, Tallinna linnaarhiivi toimetised, 9 (Tallinn, 2006). Cover article written in cooperation with Kalmer Mäeorg, pp. 13–33.

times (on the account of Estonians, Russians, unmarried tradesmen, the *Literaten* (educated burghers)), compared with the time before the reform.⁵⁰

In the courts of lower instance, it was necessary to have lay peasant judges when hearing the cases of the peasantry. Generally, it is not known as to who those peasant jurors were yet their social status had to undoubtedly move up. The extent and mechanisms of social mobility during the regency period is a subject matter still waiting to be researched.

Most painfully, the new system affected the privileged nobility and the patricians. The replacement of lifelong land councillors (*Landräte*) with the district marshals re-elected after every three years seemed offensive, and the appointment of peasant lay judges in judicial institutions a total anomaly.⁵¹ Old-established citizens' families had a contemptuous attitude towards the new citizens who had obtained the position by way of utilizing the new fiscal system. During the old system, Riga had had its representation in the Diet of the nobility, but now when the self-government bodies of each estate were independent and subordinated to the governor, they had no such thing.⁵² All this was viewed as a decline in customs and as corruption. The arguments of the opponents of regency were vividly presented in the diary of Neuendahl, a tradesman from Riga: he regarded the reforms to be excessive and detrimental for Riga, and the separation of the administration, police and courts as useless and incomprehensible, enabling inexperienced people to assume the posts.⁵³ Later researchers, however, have shown that after the lifting of customs barriers, trade and shipping proliferated significantly in Riga, and in the economic sense, this seemed to have been beneficial for all.⁵⁴ In fact, Neuendahl himself also admitted economic prosperity – life was good, new cafes were opened, commerce increased, yet interestingly, he saw no connection between all this and regency.

In his review of Riga and Tallinn governorates, Wilhelm Christian Friebe, an enlightened economist, also underlined the benefit of the new customs policy for Riga, and also for Pärnu (Pernau) (larger volumes of

⁵⁰ *Tallinna kodanikeraamat 1786–1796*, 5.

⁵¹ Tobien, *Die Livländische Ritterschaft*, 25–26.

⁵² Carl Mettig, *Geschichte der Stadt Riga* (Riga: Jonck & Polievsky, 1897), 402.

⁵³ J. H. R. Neuendahl, "Materialien zur Chronik von Riga von 1783–97", *Bürgerthum und Bürokratie: Vier Kapitel aus der neuesten livländischen Geschichte*, ed. by J. Eckart (Leipzig: Duncker & Humblot, 1870), 364–370.

⁵⁴ Thaden, *Russia's western borderlands*, 29.

goods were shipped through Pärnu as this was more favourable than the route though Riga or Tallinn).⁵⁵

If Catherine the Great really meant that the Baltic provinces “should cease looking to the woods like wolves”, then educational reform should have been more prioritized during the reorganization process. Russia was one of the first countries in Europe (after Prussia and Austria) attempting to introduce compulsory secular elementary education.⁵⁶ In reality, however, the impact of educational reform was relatively weak in the Baltic provinces. Catherine the Great had hoped that the more wealthy members of society would start contributing to education, however, in reality this was not quite the case. The state-provided school system mainly worked in towns, being insufficient even in urban premises. Thus public education in the Baltic provinces still continued to be primarily the responsibility of the Lutheran Church and that of the estate-owners.⁵⁷

Still, some new educational institutions were established and the existing ones reorganized under the boards of public welfare. According to Hupel, the high school (*Gymnasium*) in Riga had been reorganised and a new schoolhouse was built in Cēsis. Public upper schools, with Russian as the language of instruction, were opened in Riga in 1789, and in Tallinn in 1790. A private institution, a school for noble ladies was opened in Vinni (Finn) in 1784, with the curriculum operating as if it were a small Smolny Institute for Baltic provinces.⁵⁸ Likewise, the lower school in Põltsamaa (Oberpahlen) (which was not a district town!) was also launched upon private initiative in 1788, wherein some poverty-stricken Estonian and Russian children could obtain education free of charge. Hupel notes with a touch of praise that in addition to Livland where more rural schools were

⁵⁵ See Wilhelm Christian Friebe, *Physisch-ökonomisch' und statistische Bemerkungen von Lief- und Ehstland oder von den beiden Statthalterschaften Riga und Reval* (Riga: Hartknoch, 1792), 91–99.

⁵⁶ George K. Epp, *The educational policies of Catherine II* (Frankfurt am Main, Bern, N.Y.: Lang, 1984), chapter III.

⁵⁷ Jan Kusber, *Eliten- und Volksbildung im Zarenreich während des 18. und in der ersten Hälfte des 19. Jahrhunderts. Studien zu Diskurs, Gesetzgebung und Umsetzung, Quellen und Studien zur Geschichte des östlichen Europa*, 65 (Franz Steiner Verlag, 2004), 265–266, 407.

⁵⁸ *Statuten des evangelisch-weltlichen adelichen Fräuleinstifts, Johann Diederichstein zu Finn genannt in Ehstland, gestiftet von Johann Diederich von Rennenkampff... und Dessen Gemahlinn, Jacoba Charlotta von Rennenkampff, geborne Baronne von Tiesenhausen; unter der Regierungszeit der Grossen Catharina der IIten Kaiserinn von Russland* (Reval: [s.n.], 1784).

opened already after the 1765 school decree by governor-general Browne, the relevant action has become more active also in the province of Estland.⁵⁹

An upper school was opened in Kuressaare in 1788 and in Tartu in 1790. By the year 1790, lower public schools were operating in nearly all urban settlements of the territory of Estonia.⁶⁰

However, it is not possible to talk about a mass-scale establishment of new schools as in most cases the old existing institutions were simply reorganized. In comparison with other regions of the Russian Empire, there were many more schools in the Baltic provinces. The content of education remained uneven, yet in some schools the “normal method” approach was applied (i.e. it was strictly prescribed as to what and how should children be taught in specific age groups), more practical subjects were integrated in the curriculum, and also Russian language classes. State schools could indeed be well-equipped and have good teachers, but they could not compete with the local traditional schools seemingly preferred by the parents. The number of upper school students in Riga and Tallinn did not exceed 100, and decreased to a critical level by the turn of the nineteenth century.

The fact that there was no well-functioning system of teacher training was actually the most severe problem. A report from 1799 shows that Russian was not taught in lower public schools as there was a lack of appropriate teachers. Indeed, the lack of teachers remained to be an obstacle – those graduating from the St. Peter’s School in St. Petersburg wanted to continue their studies, and there was no national institution to train teachers for the lower schools in the Baltic provinces, the existing teachers came from a few private schools.⁶¹

Yet the idea of school education to be a state matter, and secular, was implemented as a network of public provincial high schools, district schools and elementary schools at the beginning of the nineteenth century. The educational reform of Catherine II emphasized elementary education. This fact and the relatively rigid unwillingness of the Baltic nobility to take into account the topical tendencies in the education policy of Russia were the main reasons for recurrent (but failed) attempts to restore the Swedish

⁵⁹ Hupel, *Die gegenwärtige Verfassung*, 139.

⁶⁰ See a more precise overview: *Eesti kooli ajalugu, I: 13. sajandist 1860. aastateni*, ed. by E. Laul (Tallinn: Valgus, 1989), 256–261.

⁶¹ An Sr. Excellenz den Lief- und Estländischen Herrn Civil-General-Gouverneur wirklichen Geheimrat und Ritter von Nagel aus dem Collegium der allgemeinen Fürsorge des Livländischen Gouvernements Bericht, 9. Juli 1799 (Latvian State Historical Archive [Latvijas Valsts vēstures arhīvs], 1. f., 2. apr., 242. l., 27. lp.).

era university either in Estland or Livland.⁶² However, the indirect impact of the regency period can be observed in the creation of a joint commission of provinces, the work of which finally resulted in the reopening of the Tartu University, an institution contributing most to the integration of the provinces during the nineteenth century.

Disestablishment of regency

Usually, the relevant chapter would end with a statement that the regency period was a mere episode in the history of Estland, Livland and Courland. However, the immediate contemporaries were of a different opinion. Garlieb Merkel (1769–1850) wrote: “Emperor Paul changed this and ordered the old system to be restored, yet the roots of the once torn-out plant had mostly dried by the time, making it impossible for it to blossom in its previous glory. Restoration was feasible, but only with modifications.”⁶³ We can admit, when looking at the institutional system, that the majority of newly created institutions continued operating: manors remained as hereditary tenure estates, the provincial government, attorney-general, department of finance with district-level treasuries, new customs agencies and the new customs policy, boards of public welfare and their subordinate schools, hospitals, district doctors and midwives, the new administrative division into districts (*Kreis*), and the two new towns, postal system, new roads and constructed courthouses – all this persisted.

The only thing that was actually revoked was the judicial system, and when restored, it was not like it had been twenty years ago. A principal change had taken place: in the earlier period, courts had also been administrative institutions, but now, the judicial institutions – *Oberlandgericht* in Estland, *Hofgericht* in Livland and *Oberhofgericht* in Courland – staffed by the members of the *Ritterschaften*, had ceased to operate as administrative authorities (the provincial government had assumed this responsibility). True, the *Landratskollegien* of the *Ritterschaften*, the membership of which was approximately the same as that of the *Oberlandgericht* or the *Hofgericht*,

⁶² Lea Leppik, “Ülikool enne ülikooli”, *Johann Wilhelm Krause, 3: linnaehitajana Tartus = als Stadtbauer in Tartu*, ed. by Juhan Maiste (Tallinn: Eesti Keele Sihtasutus, 2011), 57–86.

⁶³ “Kaiser Paul hob sie auf und befahl die alte Verfassung wiederherzutellen, doch die Wurzeln des einmal Ausgerissenen waren grossenteils verdorrt; es konnte nicht mehr in alte Ueppigkeit gedeihen. Die Herstellung war nur mit Modifikationen möglich [...]”. Garlieb Merkel, *Darstellungen und charakteristiken aus meinem Leben* (Leipzig: K. F. Köhler, 1839), 69.

could again have a say in local issues. Throughout the nineteenth century, the provincial government and its subordinate network of institutions continued to expand, both numerically and influentially, thus gradually diminishing the impact of the *Ritterschaften*.

The involvement of lay peasant judges in court institutions adjudicating the relevant cases had had a positive outcome, therefore it was considered expedient by the Livonian *Ritterschaft* to continue with this also after the abolition of regency, pursuant to the 1804 parish courts regulation (i.e. that peasants were represented in parish and district courts). Likewise, Tobien notices a major change in the mentality of the nobility during the regency period. The younger generation, raised in better economic conditions, had a more idealistic worldview, and consequently, the Diet of 1797 adopted a number of decisions which were supposed to alleviate the life of peasants.⁶⁴

The enforcement of military conscription in Estland, Livland and Courland was the price to be paid for abolishing regency and restoring the privileges of the noble corporations. Naturally, there were also other reasons yet the fact that these statements are adjacent in the relevant decree is indeed meaningful.⁶⁵

The magistrates in towns again had judicial, police and administrative functions, but in larger towns, the institution of the state police, under the governor-general, was retained. Yet even more significant was the fact that the new fiscal system remained the same, and (partially) also the procedure of becoming a citizen depending on paid taxes, not origin. As the fiscal system of towns was not restored in the old form, the majority of new citizens could preserve their civic rights. “The good old times” were never to return.

The posts of district doctors and midwives were maintained. The majority of new schools, hospitals, almshouses, orphanages, work and correction houses were reorganized at the beginning of the nineteenth century and distributed under the area of government of the new ministries established in 1802. Upper schools in Tallinn and Riga were restructured into provincial high schools. Lower schools were transformed into district or

⁶⁴ Tobien, *Die Livländische Ritterschaft*, 26–30.

⁶⁵ With regard to conscription, see in length: Tõnu Tannberg, “Eesti ala vene sõjaväeüsteemi integreerimise tagajärjed: kas “kahesaja-aastane rahuaeg” või verekümnis impeeriumi altarile?” *Eesti mees Vene kroonus* (Tartu: Ilmamaa, 2011), 11–38 (16–24); “Erst nachdem Kaiser Paul durch den denkwürdigen Restitutionsukas vom 28. November 1796, als Entgelt für die Aufhebung der von seiner Mutter Katharina II. widerrechtlich in Livland eingeführten Statthalterschaftsverfassung, das russische Rekrutengesetz auf Livland übertragen hatte, nahm der zeremonienlose Menschenhandel ein Ende”. Tobien, *Die Livländische Ritterschaft*, 19.

elementary schools. The principle that education is the responsibility of the state had become deeply rooted. Still, pursuant to the 1820 school regulation, peasant schools were removed from under the school commission of the university, and transferred to the sphere of influence of the nobility and the church. Town schools, however, still remained within the university's school commission, i.e. under the care of a state institution.

The hospital of the Tallinn Board of Public Welfare eventually developed into a modern clinical hospital; in Riga, a similar hospital was rearranged into a state-of-the-art mental hospital in the nineteenth century. So far there are no thorough studies about the history of these institutions, although the state-based system functioned up until 1917. Baltic-German researchers have always been focused on their own institutions and agencies, leaving an impression as if there was no public welfare system at all. For instance, in his profound study about charity organizations in Riga, Alexander Tobien does not even mention the mental hospital on Alexandershöhe (*Hospital zu Alexandershöhe bei Riga*), as it was managed by a public institution, not the town.⁶⁶

Consequently, it is not at all possible to talk about a full restitution of the institutional system. The Middle Ages never came back.

Implications on the common identity

The Baltic governorates of Russia were created as an administrative unit during the regency period, prescribed from the top. After a brief interlude during the reign of Paul I (1796–1801), the provinces were united under the authority of the Baltic governor-general (1801–1876). The institutions established during regency were aimed at raising the administrative capacity of the Russian state, and the majority of these continued operation after the abolition of regency. The period had created greater similarities between the provinces and with regard to the entire Russian Empire. This way it was much easier for the state to rule provinces. At first, the impact of the provincial reform was mainly discernible at provincial and district centres, yet this served as a platform for a further offensive, and the Russian state did not leave this unutilized during the nineteenth century. So the restored town magistrates and noble corporations were forced to share more and more of their power with the state, gradually losing their position. Thus,

⁶⁶ Alexander Tobien, *Das Armenwesen der Stadt Riga: eine historisch-statistische Studie* (Riga: R. Ruetz, 1895).

the codification of provincial laws, completed in 1845, could no longer turn back history.

Institutional similarity, created during the regency period, facilitated the Russian state to govern the provinces, and also mutual communication between the provinces. Yet the impact of the jointly endured experience was somewhat ambiguous and contradictory. Joint resistance against the state power created an earlier non-existent common feeling among the upper classes of the provinces – a relevant example thereof is the first interprovincial committee, a body to establish the University of Tartu, convened in 1799, whereby the *Ritterschaften* of the three provinces – but not yet the elites of the towns – sat down at one table. On the other hand, the nobility and the upper classes of towns also obtained experience that in order to retain their privileged status with regard to the indigenous peoples, they needed the support of the Russian state, and as a result, their ignorance regarding the central authority decreased. During the following period, emphatic loyalty to the Russian throne was characteristic of the upper social stratification (nobility in particular) in the Baltic provinces, until the overthrow of tsarist power. The self-being of the Baltic provinces was associated with old privileges, and attempts were made to preserve these at any cost. The Lutheran confession, as the basis of the Baltic identity, was highlighted more and more.

Naturally, all this was a long process – even at the beginning of the nineteenth century, the three provinces were still quite separate. The University of Tartu, reopened in 1802, had a powerful integrating effect – from all three provinces, young people of noble, civic and even peasant origin could become acquainted and together obtain their education at the university. All this development could actually have been quite different if the plan to establish a university for the Baltic provinces in Pskov (1786) had come true, or if Courland had been amalgamated with the Vitebsk province, which was actually discussed after the last Partition of Poland. Thus, the administrative activity of the Russian state had an extremely significant role in moulding the common identity of the Baltic provinces. The possibility to emancipate the peasants without conflicts (believed in by a number of enlightened pastors) was indeed taken away. The nobility and the old families of town councillors put their heads together to protect themselves from the emerging peasants, and asked for help from the Russian tsar and the (Lutheran) God.

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KOKKUVÕTE: *Katariina II kubermangureform ja Venemaa Läänemereprovintside ühisidentiteet*

Artikkel on pühendatud küsimusele, millisel määral suutis Katariina II 1775. aasta kubermangureform täita riigivalitsemise bürokraatliku ühtlustamise eesmärki Läänemereprovintside ja kuidas see mõjutas provintside ülemkihi ühisidentiteeti. Vaatluse all on ennekõike institutsionaalne struktuur, mitte üksikisikute arvamused.

Asehalduskord, mis kehtestati Eesti- ja Liivimaal 1783 ja kaotati 1796, ei jäänud vaid episoodiks, nagu seda on kirjeldatud enamikus Balti ajaloo üldkäsitlustes. Valgustatud valitsejana püüdis Katariina II hoolitseda riigi ja valitseja au ja kuulsuse eest. Venemaa pidi tema võimu all saama maailma parima seadusandluse ja Venemaa kodanikud seeläbi kõige õnnelikumateks riigikodanikeks maa peal. Seadusandluse parendamise eesmärgil kokku kutsutud ülevenemaalisele seadusandlikule komisjonile koostas Katariina ise juhise (*Nakaz*, 1767). Selle kompilatiivsele iseloomule vaatamata annab dokument hea ettekujutuse, mida Katariina II oma riigis teha tahtis. Kuigi seadusandlik komisjon läks laiali Venemaale uut seadustikku andmata, leiame me suurema osa selles sisalduvaid põhiprintsiipe 1775. aasta kubermanguseadusest, mille eesmärk oli riigivalitsemise ühtlustamine ja seeläbi ratsionaalsemaks muutmine.

Eriõigustega provintside olemasolu ei olnud valgustatud valitsemise seisukohalt ratsionaalne. Keisrinna järjekindlusest annab tunnistust, et Liivi- ja Eestimaa provintside valitsemiskorra parendamine sai alguse palju varem kui 1783, esimesed sammud selles suunas tehti juba aastatel 1765–66, kui riiklikult kehtestati politseikorraldus Liivimaa väikelinnadele ning reguleeriti Tartu linna õiguskorda või maakasutust Saaremaal. 1783. aastal kehtestatud kubermanguseadus oma uute administratiiv- ja kohtuasutustega koos pearahamaksu, uue tolli-, politsei-, linnade ja aadli omavalitsuse korraldustega lõi provintside uut moodi situatsiooni, millele selle pikema kestuse korral oleks ilmselt kasu lõiganud kohalikud rahvad (eestlased ja lätlased). Uus kord suurendas teisalt ka Vene riigi administratiivset suutlikkust.

Asehalduskorra kaotamise järel ei taastatud vana korda kaugeltki täies mahus. Suurem osa uusi riiklikke administratiivasutusi jäi alles ja vanad seisuslikud organid (peamiselt kohtud) taastati paljuski muudetud kujul. Administratiivne sarnasus lubas Vene riigil ka edaspidi provintse tugevamini valitseda, teisalt kergendas suurem sarnasus ka provintside

omavahelist suhtlemist. Kõige märgatavamad olid muutused linnades, kus uus maksusüsteem oli kodanikkonda pöördumatult muutnud.

Provintside ülemkiht sai asehalduskorrast kahetise kogemuse – ühise vastupanu kogemus liitis eri provintside aadlikke ning linna ja maad omavahel. Hea näide sellest oli esimese provintside ühiskomisjoni – Läänemereprovintside protestantliku ülikooli taasavamise komisjoni – moodustamine, mille töö tulemusena taasavati 1802. aastal Tartu ülikool, suurim integreerija järgneval 19. sajandil. Teisalt mõisteti, et säilitamiseks oma privileege põlisrahvaste suhtes, on vaja Vene riigi tuge. Balti identiteedi osaks said rõhutatult ajalooliselt kujunenud õiguskorra säilitamine, lojaalsus Vene troonile ja luterlik religioon kui provintside eripära alus.