

“GENTLEMEN’S AGREEMENT” OF LITHUANIA AND THE USSR

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As far as we were able to determine the term “gentlemen agreement” was first used in international practice at the beginning of this century. In 1907 the USA and Japan gave this name to the international agreement according to which Japan assumed the responsibility of not giving passports to immigrants to the USA (except for some categories of businessmen and specialists), while the President of the United States on his part promised to endeavor that San Francisco abolish the discriminatory prohibition of Japanese children being taught together with whites.¹ In later years the “gentlemen agreement” began to be used more broadly in diplomacy. Its importance and meaning was discussed in historiography and international law.

In the tradition of Western international law a “gentlemen agreement” is usually understood to be a verbal act, not recognized as a juridical act. According to it, such an agreement of diplomats or politicians “recognizes only a concurrence of the wills of the agreeing states,” but does not entail any juridical consequences.² In fact, in the period between the world wars there were instances when the League of Nations Commission for Legal Affairs or the International Court, taking note of the circumstances of the formation of unsigned agreements as well as their importance recognized their juridical effect or consequences.³

The lawyers, diplomats, and historians of the Soviet school interpret the “gentlemen agreement” in a different way. According to them, the “gentlemen agreement” is a special kind of informal international agreement, of a simplified manner, based upon the special mutual trust of the states, having the same juridical validity as signed treaties.⁴ According to Soviet tradition the “gentlemen agreement” can be verbal or written, but does not have the “usual text of a treaty.”

Thus, the difference between the traditional Western and Soviet “gentlemen agreement” is sufficiently clear. In our opinion, it arises from principle matters: the different origins of international law and the interpretation of its relation with an international treaty. According to the formula of the Vienna Convention, a treaty is an agreement of subjects of international law regulating international rights.⁵ The Soviet position in this respect is different: a treaty is an agreement of subjects of international law “regulating the rights of international treaties.”⁶ In our understanding, in the latter case any kind of moral imperatives are eliminated from *jus gentium* leaving only the bare nature and actions of political interests.

In analyzing the circumstances, development, and consequences of making the “gentlemen agreement” between Lithuania and the Soviet Union, all the previously mentioned events have to be considered.

¹ *The New Encyclopaedia Britannica* (Chicago, 1991), 5, p.186.

² E. J. de Arechaga, *El derecho Internacional Contemporaneo* (Madrid, 1980). (Compare with E.X. de Arechaga, *Sovremennoye mezhdunarodnoye pravo [Contemporary International Law]* (Moskva, 1983), p. 62).

³ *Ibid*, p. 63-64; J. Brownlie, *Principles of Public International Law* (Oxford, 1973). (Compare with J. Brounli, *Mezhdunarodnoye pravo [International Law]* (Moskva), 2, p. 349-350).

⁴ *Slovar mezhdunarodnogo prava [Dictionary of International Law]* (Moskva, 1982), p. 39-40; *Slovar mezhdunarodnogo prava [Dictionary of International Law]* (Moskva, 1986), p. 71.

⁵ J. Brounli, *Mezhdunarodnoye*, p. 306.

⁶ *Kurs mezhdunarodnogo prava [Course of International Law]* (Moskva), 4, p. 6.

The “Gentlemen agreement”^{*} was made in Moscow on September 28, 1926 while signing the Lithuania-USSR Nonaggression Pact. Lithuanian Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs Mykolas Slepevičius and USSR People’s Commissar for Foreign Affairs Georgii Chicherin made this pact.⁷ According to it, the states made the commitment to exchange all information and coordinate their political policies in regard to Poland and to some extent the Baltic states of Latvia and Estonia. Moreover, the Soviet Union promised Lithuania to influence Germany and other friendly states in a beneficial manner, to support in general Lithuania’s position in the international arena, and through Germany also in the League of Nations.⁸

For self explanatory reasons such an agreement of two gentlemen was kept in total secrecy. Lithuanian diplomats concealed their gentlemanliness completely. Lithuanian Ambassador to Russia Jurgis Baltrušaitis, who was the most ardent member of the Kaunas-Moscow “gentlemen club”, it seems did not trust the security of the diplomatic pouch and telegraph for sending information on this matter. The question was coordinated *tête-à-tête* with Premier Slepevičius when Baltrušaitis or Moscow embassy secretary Leopoldas Bagdonas visited Kaunas. Only several of the highest state officials in Kaunas knew about Slepevičius’s deal with Chicherin which in principle can be regarded as a secret protocol to the Lithuania-USSR Nonaggression Treaty. Even the Seimas (parliament) was not informed about this act.

In analyzing the prehistory and circumstances of the creation of the “gentlemen agreement” we have reason to believe that its initiator was Moscow, which after investigating the tendencies of Lithuania’s foreign policy and diplomacy offered Kaunas a program of “gentlemen” cooperation. That in Lithuania at that time there was little understanding of the style and content of gentlemen agreements in diplomacy is supported by an assertion of Baltrušaitis. After the change of governments in Lithuania after the *coup d’état* of December 17, 1926, according to Baltrušaitis “There was little understanding in Kaunas what such an agreement meant.”⁹ The Lithuanian diplomat,

* In discussing the Lithuania-USSR “gentlemen agreement” one should explain two things. First, we did not succeed in finding the text of the “gentlemen agreement” in the archives. However, there is no doubt about its existence; in preparing the new edition of the “gentlemen agreement” in the spring of 1931 FMPC board member Boris Stomoniakov gave the instructions “to find the gentlemen agreement of 1926 in the archives.” The main points of the “gentlemen agreement” of 1926 mentioned in this article are reconstructed from secondary documents: the discussions of Lithuanian and Soviet diplomats on renewing and expanding the mentioned agreement. Another matter is the technique for forming the “gentlemen agreement”. Unfortunately, we can not provide final opinions on it. After analyzing the documents preserved in the RFFAA archive, we are inclined to believe that the Lithuania-USSR “gentlemen agreements” were formed in written form and confirmed by the signatures of the representatives (foreign affairs ministers) of the states. Thus, not the Western, but the Soviet meaning of “gentlemen agreements” was realized. On the other hand, it is also possible that the “gentlemen agreements” were confirmed not by signatures, but only by the word of honor to comply with the concrete “letter and spirit of the agreement.”

⁷ Algimantas Kasparavičius, *Didysis X Lietuvos užsienio politikoje. 1926 metų Lietuvos ir Sovietų Sąjungos sutarties sudarymo analizė [The big ‘X’ in Lithuanian Foreign Policy. The Analysis of Conclusion of the 1926 Lithuania - USSR Nonaggression Treaty]* (Vilnius, 1996), p. 246; Rusijos Federacijos Užsienio politikos archyvas [Russian Federation Foreign Policy Archives (henceforth - RFFPA)], F. 0150, Ap. 17, Apl. 35, B. 5, L. 94 (SSRS užsienio reikalų liaudies komisaro M.Litvinovo diplomatinis dienoraštis 1929.10.22 [The diplomatic diary of USSR Foreign Affairs People’s Commissar M. Litvinov 22.10.1929]).

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ RFFPA, F. 0150, Ap. 20. Apl. 41, B. 6, L. 67-68 (URLK kolegijos nario B.Stomoniakovo 1931.04.21 pokalbio užrašas Nr. 24999 su Lietuvos pasiuntiniu J.Baltrušaičiu [Notes from a conversation of FMPC [Foreign Ministry People’s Commissariat] board member B. Stomoniakov on 21.04.1931 No. 24999 with Lithuanian envoy J. Baltrušaitis]).

who arrived in Kaunas shortly after the *coup d'état*, had to make serious efforts until he could explain the meaning and rules of the gentlemen club formed by Slepevičius and Chicherin to the new Premier and Minister of Foreign Affairs Augustinas Voldemaras, who “was accustomed to do without international acts.”*

Except for the extravagance¹⁰ and the poetics of two Jurgis and one Petras - Baltrušaitis, Savickas, and Klimas the diplomacy of the First Republic (at least until the beginning of the 1930s), unfortunately was not distinguished by rich fantasy, fanciful style, or splendid manners. The activities often were coarse. For example, seeking to resist the federalistic-union ideas of Józef Piłsudski, which at times threatened to grow into more material force, Lithuanian politicians and diplomats almost fatally sought the support of Russia. Lithuanian requests to protect them from the Poles would at times raise sneers in Moscow. The USSR FRPC** section head Stanislav Ganetski once commented this way about the annoying pleas from Kaunas: “Don’t they exaggerate the threat from Poland. We do not have information on this question. This unfortunate state is so blocked up that it is afraid of everything, everywhere, and all the time.”¹¹

The Lithuania-USSR “gentlemen agreement” arose in such a shadow of fear. In 1926 during Lithuania’s negotiations with Russia about the creation of a political treaty, the diplomats of Kaunas quite simply (one could even say primitively) tried to organize for Lithuania a Russian shelter. Juozas Purickis, the director of the Policies and Economics Department of the Lithuanian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, in the winter and spring of 1926 tried to convince Moscow to form a military alliance with Lithuania.¹² At the same time Leonas Bistras, the premier of the Christian Democratic government, and his authorized Minister of Foreign Affairs Meišlovas Reinys held discussions for adding a secret protocol to the planned Lithuania-USSR Nonaggression Treaty. Lithuania desired that in it Russia would not only diplomatically and politically support the struggle of the Lithuanians for Vilnius, but if the need arose to defend with all its military forces Lithuania’s independence, and in the period of peace would make a commitment: “to guarantee the territory now controlled by the Lithuanian government.”¹³

After the elections of the III Seimas, the government of the left of Center coalition of Populists and Social Democrats that gained power did not in essence change the aims and methods for implementing Lithuanian foreign policy. Practically the same demands as during the time the Christian Democrats ruled were raised for a political pact with the USSR. Looking at the wishes of Lithuanian politicians and diplomats retrospectively, a sacrilegious idea arises that at times Kaunas almost sought the status of a Moscow protectorate. Of course, the more sensitive reader could try to reject such rebukes against Lithuania’s national diplomacy by the “danger from Poland.” But in so doing an even more sticky question would arise: was the threat to Lithuania from Russia in the interwar period smaller? We will allow the implied opponent to formulate an answer to this question himself.

* This is what professor Augustinas Voldemaras once said about himself.

¹⁰ RFFPA, F. 0150, Ap. 17, Apl. 35, B. 5, L. 84 (SSRS užsienio reikalų liaudies komisaro M. Litvinovo diplomatinis dienoraštis 1929.09.30 [The diplomatic diary of USSR Foreign Affairs People’s Commissar M. Litvinov 30.09.1929]).

** Foreign Ministry People’s Commissariat.

¹¹ RFFPA, F. 0151, Ap. 7, Apl. 6, B. 2, L. 14 (URLK kolegijos nario Stanislavo Ganeckio 1922.08.18 laiškas Nr. 775 Rusijos pasiuntiniui Lietuvoje Jakovui Davtianui [Letter of FMPC board member Stanislav Ganetskii 18.08.1922 No. 775 to the Russian envoy in Lithuania Jakov Davtian]).

¹² Algimantas Kasparavičius, *Didysis*, p. 156.

¹³ *Ibid*, p. 78-80.

The Soviet Union regarded the previously mentioned initiatives of Lithuanian diplomacy skeptically (as totally unacceptable “wild offers” (*dikii predlozhenie*)¹⁴ which had to be made more civilized. After rejecting in principle the possibility of making a military convention, the idea of a secret protocol and the requests to guarantee the independence and territorial integrity of Lithuania (foremost from the imagined aggression by Poland), Soviet diplomacy in the middle of the 1920s succeeded in convincing Slepevičius to accept the “gentlemen agreement.” This, apparently, served to enrich the Kaunas fantasy of gaining an alleged political partner or ally and to some extent ease the pain of this political bachelor’s obsession, or, in other words, to help Lithuania avoid international isolation. The making of the “gentlemen agreement” in 1926 was also meant to show the triumph of Soviet “civilization” in Lithuanian diplomacy.

In other words, it would be risky to assert that this indeed did happen. Although the Kaunas-Moscow “gentlemen agreement” worked quite smoothly from 1926 to early 1929 (Lithuanian military officers held talks with the USSR military attaché over Poland’s military capacity and Lithuania’s defense plans, diplomats held consultations over relations with Poland and the Baltic states),¹⁵ discords also occurred.

Moscow trusted the foreign policy carried out by the National Party (*tautininkai*) (*Voldemaras*) only conditionally because it understood that if the dispute with Poland were settled, Lithuania would become one of the latter’s strategic partners. When in the spring of 1927 Premier and Foreign Minister *Voldemaras* decided to normalize relations with Poland to some extent, to give up the declared “war status” policies,¹⁶ one did not have to wait long for Soviet reaction. Although cooperating directly with *Voldemaras* and *Baltruðaitis*, the Russian diplomats did not oppose and even supported

¹⁴ RFFPA, F. 04, Ap. 27, Apl. 187, B. 124, L. 1-2 (URLK kolegijos 1926.01.20 posėdžio protokolas Nr. 8 [Minutes of the meeting of the FMPC board 01.20.1926 No. 8]); RFFPA, F. 04, Ap. 27, Apl. 187, B. 124, L. 6 (URLK kolegijos posėdžio 1926.04.07 posėdžio protokolas Nr. 40 [Minutes of the meeting of the FMPC board 27.04.1926 No. 40]); RFFPA, F. 0151, Ap. 20, Apl. 42, B. 10, L. 59 (Išrašas iš 1931.05.26 M.Litvinovo pranešimo URLK kolegijai [Excerpts from the report of 26.05.1931 to the FMPC board by M. Litvinov]).

¹⁵ Algimantas Kasparavičius, *Didysis*, p. 276-281; RFFPA, F. 0150, Ap. 15, Apl. 29, B. 9, L. 61 (URLK kolegijos nario B.Stomoniakovo 1927.04.11 pokalbio užrašas Nr. 5481 su J.Baltruðaičiu [Notes from a conversation of FMPC board member B. Stomoniakov on 11.04.1927 No. 5481 with J.Baltruðaitis]); RFFPA, F. 0151, Ap. 15, Apl. 29, B. 9, L. 1-5 (B.Stomoniakovo 1927.12.15 pokalbio užrašas Nr. 43643 su J.Baltruðaičiu [Notes from a conversation of FMPC board member B. Stomoniakov on 15.12.1927 No.43643 with J.Baltruðaitis]); RFFPA, F. 0151, Ap. 15, Apl. 29, B. 9, L. 6-12 (SSRS pasiuntinio Nikolajaus Krestinskio 1927.11.08 pokalbio užrašas su Lietuvos pasiuntiniu Vokietijoje Vaclovu Sidzikausku [Notes from a conversation of USSR envoy to Germany Nikolai Krestinskii on 08.11.1927 with Lithuanian envoy to Germany Vaclovas Sidzikauskas]); RFFPA, F. 0151, Ap. 15, Apl. 29, B. 9, L.44-45 (SSRS užsienio reikalø liaudies komisaro pavaduotojo M.Litvinovo 1927.06.06 laiðkas Nr. 3407 SSRS užsienio reikalø liaudies komisarui G.Èierinui [Letter of the USSR Foreign Ministry People’s Deputy Commissar M. Litvinov on 06.06.1927 No. 3407 to USSR Foreign Ministry People’s Commissar G.Chicherin]); RFFPA, F. 0150, Ap. 16, Apl. 33, B. 9, L. 43-68 (SSRS ágaliootojo atstovo Lietuvoje Arosevo 1928.08.28 ir 1928.08.30 pokalbiø užrašai su A.Voldemaru [Notes from a conversation of USSR designated deputy in Lithuania Arosev on 28.08.1928 and 30.08.1928 with A. Voldemaras]); RFFPA, F. 0150, Ap. 16, Apl. 33, B. 9, L. 33-42 (B.Stomoniakovo 1928.07.16 laiðkas S.Aleksandrovskiiui [Letter of B. Stomoniakov on 16.07.1931 to S. Aleksandrovskii]); RFFPA, F. 0150, Ap. 17, Apl. 35, B. 5, L. 8-9 (B.Stomoniakovo 1929.01.23 pokalbio užrašas Nr. 6577 su J.Baltruðaičiu [Notes from a conversation of B.Stomoniakov on 23.01.1929 No. 6577 with J.Baltruðaitis]); RFFPA, F. 0150, Ap. 17, Apl. 35, B. 5, L. 16-17 (B.Stomoniakovo 1929.02.05 pokalbio užrašas Nr. 6648 su J.Baltruðaičiu [Notes from a conversation of B.Stomoniakov on 05.02.1929 No. 6648 with J.Baltruðaitis]).

¹⁶ Algimantas Kasparavičius, T. Mieliauskas, “Lietuvos-Lenkijos santykiai ir Lietuvos kariuomenės modernizacija 1926-1939 metais [Lithuanian-Polish Relations and the Modernization of the Lithuanian Army in 1926-1939]” *Karo archyvas [War Archive]*, XV (Vilnius, 1998), 146-147.

such a policy, FRPC office secretly asserted that it was essential in all possible means to inspire the foreign press and the Lithuanian opposition because only a strong opposition “just as in previous years will keep Lithuania from drawing nearer to Poland.”¹⁷ It should be noted that although not desiring it, the Lithuanian opposition at that time poured lots of water on Moscow’s political mill. The Populists and Christian Democrats in the press and in private talks with USSR envoys explained that the policy of “war status” with Poland is the only correct one and its abandonment would mean a renunciation of Vilnius.¹⁸ Although in December 1927 in Geneva Lithuania under quite complicated circumstances gave up its pompastic “war status” policy in regard to Poland, Voldemaras, however, due to subjective and objective reasons did not succeed in any essential manner to improve relations with Poland.

After the doubtful attitude of Moscow during the time of the crisis in the relations of Lithuanians and Poles at the end of 1927 and especially after the deceit at the beginning of 1929 when Lithuania joined the so-called “Litvinov protocol” (the historian Èslovas Laurinavièius investigated this intriguing history).¹⁹ The faith of Voldemaras in the Soviets finally was shaken. In the spring of 1929 the premier asserted that a “crisis of trust” between Lithuania and the USSR had begun.²⁰ A threat even arose to the “gentlemen agreement” made by Slepevièius because Voldemaras declared that the Bolsheviks *de facto* did not give Lithuania anything and did not offer anything concrete, but only sought a coordination of activities and secrets.²¹ The advocate of good relations with the USSR Baltruðaitis was also criticized. The chief accused him of “immeasurable” optimism, favoring, and even obsequiousness to Russia.²² Soon afterwards it became clear that Voldemaras wanted to “correct” the “gentlemen agreement” and raised questions about the formation of a Lithuania-USSR military convention. In view of the two facedness and methods of activities of Voldemaras, one can not reject that the latter proposals to the Soviets were only an attempt of a provocational manner seeking to find out the political aims and essence of their policies toward Lithuania or to gain concessions in other areas.

¹⁷ RFFPA, F. 0151, Ap. 15, Apl. 23, B. 2700, L. 20 (URLK referentès Levkoviè 1927.03.30 atmintinè URLK kolegijai [Pro-memoria to the FMPC board by FMPC advisor Levkovich on 30.03.1927]); RFFPA, F. 0151, Ap. 15, Apl. 23, B. 2700, L. 18 (URLK referentès Levkoviè 1927.04.06 praneðimas URLK kolegijai “Dël Lietuvos klausimo” [Report to the FMPC board by FMPC advisor Levkovich “About the Lithuanian Question” on 06.04.1927]); RFFPA, F. 0151, Ap. 15, Apl. 23, B. 2700, L. 14 (SSRS atstovybës pirmojo sekretoriaus Dovydo Skalovo 1927.05.11 praneðimas URLK kolegijai [The report to the FMPC board by the USSR embassy in Lithuania First secretary Dovyd Skalov on 11.05.1927.05 to the FMPC board]).

¹⁸ Ibid; “Rimta padëtis [Serious Situation],” *Lietuvos þinios [News of Lithuania]* (03.01.1927), 1; “Lenkija ir Pabaltijys [Poland and the Baltic States],” *Lietuvos þinios [News of Lithuania]* (24.02.1927), 1; “Dël naujos krypties uþsieniø politikoje [On New Directions for Foreign Policy],” *Lietuvos þinios [News of Lithuania]* (01.03.1927), 1; “Laikas suprasti [Time to Comprehend],” *Lietuvos þinios [News of Lithuania]* (14.03.1927), 1; “Kas ið Genevos? [What from Geneva?],” *Rytas [Morning]* (07.12.1927), 11; “Ar galimas kompromisas tarp Lietuvos ir Lenkijos? [Is a Compromise Possible Between Lithuania and Poland?],” *Rytas [Morning]* (09.12.1927), 1; “Laiðkai ið Genevos [Letters from Geneva],” *Rytas [Morning]*.

¹⁹ Èslovas Laurinavièius, “Litvinovo protokolas (1929 m. vasario 9 d.) ir Lietuvos diplomatija [Litvinov’s Protocol (of February 9, 1929) and Lithuania’s Diplomacy],” *Politika ir diplomatija [Politics and Diplomacy]* (Vilnius, 1997), p. 157-187.

²⁰ RFFPA, F. 0150, Ap. 17, Apl. 35, B. 5, L. 28-29 (B.Stomoniakovo 1929.03.02 trumpas pokalbio uþraðas Nr. 6749 su J.Baltruðaièiu [A short note of a conversation of Stomoniakov of 02.03.1929 No. 6749 with J.Baltruðaitis]).

²¹ Ibid, L.28; Alfonsas Eidintas, “Lietuva Europos pacifistinèje politikoje 1928-1930 m. [Lithuania in the Pacifist Politics of Europe in 1928-1930],” *Lituanistika*, 3(11) (1992), 5.

²² Ibid.

As in 1926 Moscow categorically rejected the idea of a military convention, but, however, agreed to hold negotiations on a “gentlemen agreement.” On May 23, 1929 the Political Bureau of the VKP (B) decided to ratify a new “gentlemen agreement” with Lithuania about exchanging information in respect to Poland and the Baltic states.²³ Unfortunately, I must regret that I was unable to find any data about its content in the archives.

After becoming familiar with Moscow’s position in the beginning of June 1929, Baltrušaitis told FMPC board member Boris Stomoniakov that he “is fully satisfied with Moscow’s counterproposals,” but doubted whether Voldemaras would find them acceptable because “in Lithuania the prejudice that Lithuania is very important to its neighbors as a buffer state, similar to Belgium or even more important than Belgium has become strong. Therefore, the neighbors are interested in guaranteeing Lithuania’s independence.”²⁴ The Lithuanian representative also tried to prove that Voldemaras himself should make a new “gentlemen agreement” with the USSR Foreign Ministry People’s Commissar Maksim Litvinov. For that reason it was urgently proposed to the latter that he go to Kaunas.²⁵

However, Litvinov did not visit Lithuania’s provisional capital in 1929 and, apparently, the plans to revise the “gentlemen agreement” were not fulfilled. After the dismissal of Voldemaras from his duties (formally he resigned) at the beginning of the fall of 1929, the new Minister of Foreign Affairs Dovas Zaunius²⁶ and President Antanas Smetona²⁷ himself hastened to declare that there was no “confidence crisis” between the countries, that the government understood Moscow’s position and would not seek a military convention, that Lithuania would abide by the “gentlemen agreement” and strengthen friendly ties with the USSR.²⁸ Baltrušaitis also tried to convince Moscow that after “the departure of Voldemaras Lithuanian policies would not change but would lack the extravagance.”²⁹ Litvinov, in turn, assured Baltrušaitis that “our policies in regard to Lithuania remain unchanged from when during the visit of Slepevičius the Nonaggression pact and “gentlemen agreement” were signed.³⁰

By the way, after the resignation of Voldemaras from the posts of premier and foreign minister, President Smetona not only apologized to the Soviet representative “for the outbursts of Voldemaras,” but also declared that “he did not know anything

²³ Rusijos naujausios istorijos dokumentø saugojimo ir tyrimo centras [Russia’s Center for Protecting and Investigating Documents of the Latest History (henceforth - RCPIDLC)], F. 17, Ap. 162, B.6, L.82 (Išrašas iš SSRS VKP(b) CK Politinio biuro 1929.05.23 posėdžio protokolo Nr. 81 (Ypatingas aplankas Nr. 79) [Excerpt from the protocol of the minutes of the USSR All-union Communist Party (Bolsheviks) Politburo of Central Committee No. 81 on 23.05.1929 (Special paper No. 79)]).

²⁴ RFFPA, F. 0150, Ap. 17, Apl. 35, B. 5, L. 65-66 (B.Stomoniakovo 1929.06.03 trumpas pokalbio užrašas Nr. 7111 su J.Baltrušaičiu [A short note of a conversation of B.Stomoniakov of 03.06.1929 No. 7111 with J.Baltrušaitis]).

²⁵ Ibid, L.65.

²⁶ Ibid, L.84 (SSRS pasiuntinio Lietuvoje Michailo Karskio 1929.09.30 pranešimas URLK [The report to the FMPC of envoy to Lithuania Mikhail Karski on 30.09.1929]).

²⁷ Ibid, L.94 (M.Litvinovo 1929.10.22 diplomatinis dienoraštis [The diplomatic diary of M. Litvinov on 22.10.1929]).

²⁸ Ibid, L.93 (Michailo Karskio 1929.10.22 pranešimas URLK [Report to the FMPC of Mikhail Karski on 22.10.1929]).

²⁹ Ibid, L.84 (Michailo Karskio 1929.09.30 pranešimas URLK [Report to the FMPC of Mikhail Karski on 30.09.1929]).

³⁰ Ibid, L.94 (M.Litvinovo 1929.10.22 diplomatinis dienoraštis [The diplomatic diary of M. Litvinov 22.10.1929]).

about the proposed military convention of Voldemaras.”³¹ This supposes a certain kind of controversy: did Smetona in this way try to separate himself from the risky and unsuccessful policies of his former associate or on the eve of the resignation of Voldemaras was the role of the president in foreign policies only marginal?

The “gentlemen agreement” assumed a qualitatively new dimension in 1931 when the Lithuania-USSR Nonaggression treaty was extended. Lithuania once again initiated the revision of the “gentlemen agreement” treaty. The most important reason were the changes in Europe’s political constellation and the swiftly deteriorating Lithuanian relations with Germany. On April 22, 1931 Baltruðaitis presented to Moscow a proposed project for the “gentlemen agreement.” This supports the explanation that in the beginning of the 1930s Lithuania sought to correct in essence the accents of the “gentlemen agreement” with the USSR: to expand the geography of the “gentlemen agreement” require the Soviet Union to influence Italy and Persia to act in behalf of Lithuania; to get Moscow’s “support for Lithuania’s rightful position in the Klaipėda case with Germany; to assure the support of the USSR in neutralizing Germany’s aggressive tendencies in regard to Lithuania; to strengthen and expand the article of the 1926 “gentlemen agreement” on an “open and total” explanation of mutual relations and political tasks, as well as periodic, comprehensive mutual information in regard to Poland, Latvia, and Germany.³² Moreover, Kaunas took steps that the “gentlemen agreement” would be separated from the Lithuania-USSR Nonaggression Treaty.

The main author of this project, most likely was Zaunius. Undoubtedly, while preparing the document he held consultations with President Smetona, who as revisionism in Germany became clearer turned more to Russia.³³ Baltruðaitis and other Lithuanian diplomats, apparently made some corrections. Comparing the content of this project with the “gentlemen agreement” made by Slepevičius in 1926 two essential differences can be noticed: 1. it was more anti-German than anti-Polish, 2. Lithuania’s diplomacy matures and begins to understand the dangerous precedent and the harm made to the state’s national interests by wrapping official, public international treaties with secret additions, and therefore it was attempted to separate the “gentlemen agreement” from the protocol extending the Lithuania-USSR Nonaggression Treaty.

Kaunas succeeded in realizing only part of this “gentlemen” program. The Soviets described the Lithuanian proposed project as “not very successful.”³⁴ Moscow categorically expressed its opposition that the Klaipėda question be mentioned in the agreement and rejected the symmetry principle of commitments by the two states. That meant that Moscow wanted to get more than it gave. Stomoniakov explained to Baltruðaitis in a fatherly manner that Lithuania can not “be interested in information about our relations with Yemen and Hejaz,” but if Lithuania wanted to have the

³¹ Ibid.

³² RFFPA, F. 0150, Ap. 20, Apl. 41, B. 6, L. 61 (J.Baltruðaièiu 1931.04.22 URLK áteiktas “dþentelmeniðko susitarimo” projektas [The project of the “gentlemen agreement” of J. Baltruðaitis of 1931.04.22 presented to the FMPC]).

³³ RFFPA, F. 0151, Ap. 20, Apl. 29, B. 6, L. 50 (B.Stomoniakovo 1931.03.28 pokalbio uþraðas Nr. 24900 su J.Baltruðaièiu [Notes from a conversation of B. Stomoniakov on 28.03.1931 No. 24900 with J. Baltruðaitis]); Ibid, L.76-77 (B.Stomoniakovo 1931.04.27 pokalbio uþraðas Nr. 30022 su J.Baltruðaièiu [Notes from a conversation of B. Stomoniakov on 27.04.1931 No. 30022 with J. Baltruðaitis]).

³⁴ Ibid, L.67 (B.Stomoniakovo 1931.04.21 pokalbio uþraðas J.Baltruðaièiu [Notes from a conversation of B. Stomoniakov on 21.04.1931 with J. Baltruðaitis]); Ibid, L.77 (B.Stomoniakovo 1931.04.22 pokalbio uþraðas Nr. 30022 su J.Baltruðaièiu [Notes from a conversation of B. Stomoniakov on 22.04.1931 No. 30022 with J. Baltruðaitis]).

comprehensive support of the USSR on general or specific questions, “we have to have information about all the significant facts about Lithuania’s international position.” After such arguments Lithuanian diplomats could only agree that such an asymmetry of the “gentlemen agreement” is . . . “correct and acceptable.”³⁵

Zaunius and Litvinov approved a new edition of the “gentlemen agreement” at about 20:00 on May 25, 1931 in Geneva to which both ministers had come for a League of Nations Assembly. The planned in advance scenario for making the “gentlemen agreement” was somewhat changed at the last moment. Reporting on this event to the FMPC college Litvinov wrote: “It had been agreed to meet with Zaunius in Geneva at half past three in the afternoon. I had left free for him the whole afternoon, but Zaunius telephoned that we would not be able to come before seven in the evening (...) I had to invite him for supper (...) We exchanged information with Zaunius about third countries and approved the Gentlemen agreement according to the Moscow formulation.* Zaunius did not offer any wild proposals as Baltruðaitis had, he did not also talk about a military union (...)”³⁶

A day later Zaunius met with Litvinov in Geneva once more. The Lithuanian envoy to France Petras Klimas also participated in this meeting of “gentlemen.”³⁷ I could not find any data about what was discussed. However, it seems that both sides remained happy with the meetings in Geneva. On June 2, 1932 talking with Stomoniakov Baltruðaitis did not hide his “satisfaction with the achieved results” in Geneva. Moscow also did not have any objections with the results of this meeting.³⁸

How, when and to what degree the states complied with the “gentlemen agreement” is another broad theme. At this time one can only note that both sides did not make excessive efforts. Moscow gave Lithuania more an alleged support of a propaganda type. Kaunas in turn was also not very zealous) in providing information to Moscow. For example, Moscow usually learned about secret Lithuanian diplomatic contacts with Poles only after the negotiators had parted without results.³⁹ Of course while such principles of informing one another were in effect, misunderstandings also arose: about the secret Lithuanian negotiations with Piłsudski in Vilnius and Warsaw, Moscow would at times learn even before Kaunas informed them.⁴⁰ Smetona himself would restore the “gentlemen” relations of the states in such cases. Finding an opportunity, the president would express regret to the Russian envoy for the past “misunderstanding”, the “negligence” of the foreign minister or some other diplomat

³⁵ Ibid.

* See Appendix No. 1 for the text of the “gentlemen agreement.”

³⁶ RFFPA, F. 0151, Ap. 20, Apl. 42, B. 10, L. 59 (Iðraðas ið M.Litvinovo 1931.05.26 praneðimo ið Þenevos á Maskvą URLK kolegijai [Excerpts from the report of 28.05.1931 by M. Litvinov from Geneva to the FMPC board in Moscow]).

³⁷ Ibid.

³⁸ RFFPA, F. 0150, Ap. 20, Apl. 41, B. 6, L. 102 (B.Stomoniakovo 1931.06.02 pokalbio uþraðas Nr. 30188 su J.Baltruðaièiu [Notes from a conversation of B. Stomoniakov on 02.06.1931 No. 30118 with J. Baltruðaitis]).

³⁹ RFFPA, F. 0151, Ap. 19, Apl. 39, B. 6, L. 105 (SSRS laikino reikalø patikètinio Lietuvoje A.Fechnerio 1930.07.24 praneðimas URLK [Report to FMPC of 24.07.1930 by the USSR charge d’affaires to Lithuania A. Fechner]); RFFPA, F. 0151, Ap. 19, Apl. 39, B. 5, L. 80-81 (B.Stomoniakovo 1930.09.02 pokalbio uþraðas Nr. 6287 su J.Baltruðaièiu [Notes from a conversation of B. Stomoniakov on 02.09.1930 No. 6287 with J. Baltruðaitis]).

⁴⁰ RFFPA, F. 0150, Ap. 23, Apl. 46, B. 6, L. 206 (M.Karskio 1933.11.29 diplomatinis dienoraðtis Nr. 347 [Diplomatic diary of M. Karski on 29.11.1933 No. 347]).

and he would inform Moscow about the curves of Lithuanian diplomacy from a retroactive date. Stressing that the Soviets can not become insulted because they get the information from the first lips - those of the very president.⁴¹

In place of conclusions

Due to reasons known to everyone the diplomacy of the Lithuanian Republic in the first half of the 20th century was formed without a more serious theoretical tradition and even a minimally professional corps. It was formed mostly from intellectual people in the humanities who for the most part were educated in Russia's universities, possessed a system of values characteristic of the mentality of that country. Thus the sufficiently long steady journey of the foreign policy and diplomacy of the between the wars Lithuania along the safe political water route of Russia (Soviet Union) should not be too surprising today. On the other hand, not to see or to ignore this sad historical event, I think, would be dangerous not only to the contemporary historiography and diplomacy of Lithuania.

Seeking guarantees and model of secure international existence, Lithuanian diplomacy in some cases did not escape from some questionable forms of activities, dilettantism or even the destruction of international relations. Moreover, the problems which the diplomats of the reborn First Republic had to resolve were not standard ones. The Lithuanian-Polish territorial conflict, the differently understood and interpreted national identity of the states, the problems of geopolitical security and securing sovereignty entangled the historical partnership of Lithuania and Poland into not historical destruction. Lithuania turned away from Poland and turned to Russia. The secret diplomacy of the between the war Lithuania can serve as an example of that: regressing from the episodic secret point⁴² of the July 12, 1920 Peace Treaty of Lithuania and Russia until the secret companion, the "gentlemen agreement," of the September 28, 1926 Lithuania-USSR Nonaggression Pact. The irony of the latter international treaty, ignoring its later metamorphoses persecuted Lithuania until the fateful year of 1940. And, perhaps, it was one of the preludes of the Soviet invasion of Lithuania.

Appendix No. 1

The "Gentlemen Agreement" of Lithuania and the Soviet Union Confirmed by D. Zaunius and M. Litvinov in Geneva on May 25, 1931.⁴³

I

a) The Union government promises to inform the government of Lithuania about its relations with the Baltic states, Poland, Germany, and Western states to the extent that these relations touch Lithuania's interests from its international position;

⁴¹ Ibid.

⁴² For more information see: Èeslovas Laurinavièius, *Lietuvos ir Sovietø Rusijos Taikos sutartis [The Peace Treaty of Lithuania and Soviet Russia]* (Vilnius, 1992), p. 149-150.

⁴³ RFFPA, F. 0151, Ap. 20, Apl. 42, B. 10, L. 50 (1931.05.25 D.Zauniaus ir M.Litvinovo patvirtintas Penevoje Lietuvos ir SSRS "dþentelmeniðkas susitarimas" [The "gentlemen agreement" of Lithuania and the USSR approved in Geneva on 25.05.1931 by D. Zaunius and M. Litvinov]).

b) The Union government further promises, according to its possibilities to give Lithuanian diplomatic assistance against third countries resolving questions involving Lithuania's problems in general or in detail.

II

a) The Lithuanian government promises the Union government to inform it about **all** (boldness - A.K.) its relations with Baltic states, Poland, Germany, and Western states if these questions from the viewpoint of the international position of the USSR or from the viewpoint of international position of Lithuania are important (predstavliayut interes);

b) The Lithuanian government promises the Union government according to its possibilities to provide diplomatic assistance in cases when that can be significant from the viewpoint of the international position of the USSR.

Translated by Saulius Girnius