

BRITISH DIPLOMATIC INVOLVEMENT IN SOLVING LITHUANIAN TERRITORIAL PROBLEMS, 1920-1923

By
Donatas Kupčiūnas

Submitted to
Central European University
Department of International Relations and European Studies

In partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts

Supervisor: Associate Professor Alexander Astrov

Word count (incl. footnotes): 17197

Budapest, Hungary
2007

Table of Contents

Introduction	4
Chapter 1: The Position of the Baltic States and Lithuania in the British Diplomatic Projections	11
1.1 Causes for Reserve.....	11
1.2 Reasons for Intéressement.....	14
1.3 The special position of Lithuania.....	17
1.4 Image of Lithuania and Lithuanians from the viewpoint of the Foreign Office	19
Chapter 2: The British Involvement in the Vilnius Dispute.....	21
2.1 The Nature of the Projected Lithuanian-Polish Relationship.....	21
2.2 British attitude towards the fate of Vilnius.....	23
2.3 Attempts to forestall the Polish adventure.....	24
2.4 The aftermath of the occupation.....	28
2.5 Attempted plebiscite.....	30
2.6 The ultimate fiasco of mediation efforts	37
2.7 System in flux and the lever of de jure recognition.....	40
2.71 The British bow to France: separate recognition of Latvia and Estonia	44
2.72 The attempts to proceed independently and yet another bow to the French	46
Conclusion.....	55
Bibliography	58

Abstract

The study examines the British mediation efforts in the Vilnius territorial dispute between Lithuania and Poland in the period of 1920-1923. Relying solely on the primary and mostly unpublished diplomatic sources of the British Foreign Office, the study tries to look at the situation when an established power becomes entangled in the problems of ‘newcomer’ states. It is found that the dispute mediation efforts were burdened, first, by the lack of the common language, or common conceptual framework, between Britain and the two quarreling newly independent states, and second, by the absence of the mutual understanding among the most important established powers, namely, Britain and France, on how to meet the problem.

Introduction

It is perhaps not an exaggeration to note that it is impossible to think about any of the foreign policy problems of interwar Lithuania without referring to its main territorial dispute with Poland over Vilnius, the ancient Lithuanian capital. As Žalys has accurately pointed out, there were many territorial disputes in Europe at the time, but no state except Lithuania was deprived of its cradle of statehood and forced to move its government to the interim capital¹. The Polish occupation of the region on 9th of October, 1920, its subsequent annexation on 24th of March, 1922, and, after the failure of all mediation efforts, the official acceptance of this *fait accompli* by the Conference of Ambassadors on 15th of March, 1923, left an enduring scar, which essentially plagued Lithuanian-Polish relations up to the end of the 20th century. Only in 1994, with the signing of the bilateral treaty of Good neighborly relations and formally acknowledging Vilnius as Lithuania's historic capital, the two countries put a period to their, as seemed before, never-ending quarrel.

Both Lithuanian and Polish historians agree at least on one thing: Vilnius dispute distorted the foreign policy of both countries, inevitably pushed Lithuania to look for relief in the side of the cunning diplomacy of the Soviet Union and Nazi Germany. It would be hard to deny that the natural Lithuanian geopolitical trajectory in the interwar period was to find *modus vivendi* with Poland without renouncing the rights to Vilnius², and that the 'geopolitical key' in the whole Central Europe was

¹ Vytautas Žalys, *Lietuvos Diplomatinės Istorija (1925-1940)* [Lithuanian Diplomatic History (1925-1940)] (Vilnius: Versus Aureus, 2007), 24.

² Raimundas Lopata and Vytautas Žalys, "Lietuvos Geopolitinis Kodas," [The Geopolitical Code of Lithuania] *Politologija* 6 (1995): 15.

Poland, whose fall eventually meant the fall of the other states in the region, including the Baltic states³.

Vilnius dispute deserved particular attention in the context of the whole Central and Eastern Europe. Despite being the potential threat to peace in the region, it is thought to be one the main reasons why the real defensive alliance has never materialized along the western Soviet border⁴. Furthermore, the failure to solve the Vilnius dispute added one more thrust to the waning prestige of the League and shattered confidence in the collective security system.

Given the seriousness of the matter, it is not surprising that, at least until the *fait accompli* was confirmed by the Conference of Ambassadors, the Allied powers not only followed the dispute closely, but in one way or another involved in its mediation. In this respect, the voice of Britain was the most important. In the end of World War I, Britain still remained in its power zenite. Together with France Britain's voice was by far the most significant among the Allied Powers, as well as in the League. Lithuanians distrusted France due to her openly pro-Polish stance in the dispute, and strongly believed, sometimes even pathetically, in British impartiality and ability to help to settle the problem. Both Lithuanian and Polish governments frequently asked the British for advice before making their foreign policy decisions, and the British word, if it was given, was considered as very important. As Hiden has observed, British naval presence and its role in the settlement of territorial questions in the Baltic indicated that in the beginning of 1920s, 'Britain ran the Baltic'⁵. Therefore,

³ Zbigniew Brzezinski, "Pokyčiai Vidurio ir Rytų Europoje: Lenkija ir Lietuva po Komunizmo Žlugimo" [Changes in Central and Eastern Europe: Poland and Lithuania after the Fall of Communism] *Politologija* 6 (1995): 5-6

⁴ See, for instance, Norman Davies, *Dievo Žaislas. Lenkijos Istorija*, vol. 2 [God's Playground. A History of Poland] (Vilnius: Lietuvos rašytojų sąjungos leidykla, 2002), 560.

⁵ John Hiden and Thomas Lane, eds., *The Baltic and the Outbreak of the Second World War* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 13.

if there was a power which could do most in the dispute mediation, it was undoubtedly Britain. And she, indeed, did.

However, it is surprising that at present there is no single study thoroughly exploring the British involvement in solving the Vilnius dispute in the period when the dispute still had chances to be solved, that is, in the period until the Allies acquiesced to the *fait accompli* in 1923. The few general publications on the foreign policy of the Baltic states in the interwar period provide only some dubious generalizations and are of little help in this case. There is nothing in this regard in Von Rauch's discussion of the Vilnius problem⁶; Crowe in his seminal book assumes that both Britain and France tended to look to the dispute through the Polish glasses⁷. Hiden only mentions that Britain actively involved in the settlement of Lithuanian-Polish quarrel in the interests of general stability, and that the British on the whole were more sympathetic towards Lithuania⁸, although in his other book he writes that Britain tended to blame Lithuania more for the intractability of the dispute⁹. Salmon assumes that Lithuanian territorial problems were remote from Britain and did not become the matter of 'acute concern' until the eve of the Second World War¹⁰. As Laurinavičius notes, although the allied governments tried to help in the dispute settlement, they were lacking efforts and responsibility to do that, and their main mistake was the long refusal to recognize Lithuania¹¹.

⁶ Georg von Rauch, *The Baltic States: the Years of Independence; Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, 1917-1940* (London: C. Hurst & Co., 1987), 99-106.

⁷ David Crowe, *The Baltic States and the Great Powers: Foreign Relations, 1938-1940* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1993), 6.

⁸ Hiden and Lane, *Outbreak*, 14.

⁹ John Hiden and Patrick Salmon, *The Baltic Nations and Europe: Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania in the Twentieth Century* (New York: Longman, 1991), 61.

¹⁰ Patrick Salmon, "British Security Interests in Scandinavia and the Baltic 1918-1939," *Studia Baltica Stockholmiensia* 3, 1986: 114.

¹¹ Česlovas Laurinavičius, *Politika ir Diplomacija: Lietuvių Tautinės Valstybės Tapsmo ir Raidos Fragmentai* [Politics and Diplomacy: the Evolution of Lithuanian National State] (Kaunas: Naujasis Lankas, 1997), 14.

The following study tries to take a closer look at this *terra incognita* in European diplomatic history. One could guess that the difficulties of the mediation efforts could be related to the broader tendencies of the time, or even to some enduring laws of international relations. It would be reasonable to anticipate that Britain in its involvement in the Lithuanian-Polish dispute faced the essential problem which was typical to the relations between, on the one hand, the established powers, who well knew the rules of the diplomatic game, and on the other hand, newly independent states, so called ‘newcomers’ in European diplomacy, with Lithuania among them. Let us now briefly consider what this ‘essential problem’ may refer to.

Kennan, examining the breakup of the Vienna Congress order in the end of XIXth century, observed that the generation of 1914 was ‘the victim of certain massive misunderstandings’, invisible to themselves¹². As Kissinger generalized, diplomacy, conceived as the adjustment of differences through negotiations, is possible only in international order which is ‘legitimate’. By the term ‘legitimate order’ Kissinger meant ‘no more than an international agreement about the nature of workable arrangements and about the permissible aims and methods of foreign policy’¹³. In the absence of this, as Kissinger puts it, ‘diplomats can still meet but they cannot persuade, for they have ceased to speak the same language. In the absence of an agreement of what constitutes a reasonable demand, diplomatic conferences are occupied with sterile repetitions of basic positions and accusations of bad faith, or allegations of ‘unreasonableness’ and ‘subversion’¹⁴. Apparently, the problem of the lack of the common language to which Kissinger refers should become especially relevant with the entry of ‘newcomers’ into the international arena. As several writers

¹² George F. Kennan, *The Decline of Bismarck’s European Order: Franco-Russian Relations, 1875-1890* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1989), 4.

¹³ Henry Kissinger, *A World Restored: Metternich, Castlereagh and the Problems of Peace, 1812-22* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1973), p. 1.

¹⁴ Kissinger, *World Restored*, 1-2.

of the English school tradition point out, with the decolonization process after the Second World War there was an unprecedented expansion of international society, but most of the ‘newcomers’ did not speak the common language, i.e., were not accustomed to the prevalent world order. Differences in cultural assumptions, political traditions and level of development increased the chances of misunderstanding in international interaction. As Watson noted, ‘governments are working in widely different frames of reference from each other; and they govern, and therefore to some extent reflect the attitudes of, peoples with different and incompatible unspoken assumptions’¹⁵. Technically, established powers, which were used to a comprehensive view of international society, become less able to deal with each problem in its individuality, and thus tend to group the problems and states together in order to retain the comprehensive view, what in turn leads to inelasticity¹⁶. Nevertheless, in the epoch of decolonization, such a complex situation was appeased by the presence of the strong bipolar gravitational field, which existed during the Cold War. However, in the interwar period, there also emerged the range of ‘newcomers’, but there was no similar structure, capable of socializing the new actors.

The following study, therefore, will try to look at the situation when an established power becomes entangled in the problems of ‘newcomers’. The hypothesis can be made that the dispute mediation efforts were burdened, first, by the lack of the common language, or common conceptual framework, between Britain and the two quarreling newly independent states, and second, by the absence of the mutual understanding among the most important established powers, namely, Britain and France, on how to meet the problems of ‘newcomers’. As far as the latter point is concerned, it is not a secret that in general, the relations between France and Britain at

¹⁵ Adam Watson, *Diplomacy: the Dialogue between States* (New York: Routledge, 1991), 163.

¹⁶ *Ibid*, 164.

the time were prejudiced by ‘frustrations, personal dislikes and thorny problems’ even in such fundamental diplomatic challenges to the Allies as the observance of German compliance of the treaty of Versailles¹⁷. Curzon’s words, expressed in 1918, are quite telling: ‘I am seriously afraid that the great power from whom we have most to fear in the future is France’, although after some time he admitted that in the immediate post-war circumstances, strong and publicly announced alliance would be in the British interests¹⁸. As it will be seen, similar Allied misunderstandings were common with regard to the Lithuanian-Polish dispute, what in turn burdened the mediation efforts.

The following study is based solely on primary British Foreign Office diplomatic sources from the National Archives of the United Kingdom in Kew, London. Most of the sources were not published before. Given the subject matter of the study, the choice of the Foreign Office as the object of analysis does not need any particular justification, although it may be added that in the interwar period, as it is frequently observed, senior Foreign Office diplomats ‘exercised enormous, sometimes decisive, influence in the making and implementation of British foreign policy’¹⁹. It is held that Foreign Secretary Lord Curzon and Prime Minister Lloyd George had a balanced relationship and there were no fundamental disagreements on the foreign policy course²⁰.

The first chapter of the study will provide the context for the discussion by looking at the general position of the Baltic states in the British diplomacy in the given period, with particular emphasis on the special position of Lithuania. The

¹⁷ Alan Sharp, “The Enforcement of the Treaty of Versailles, 1919-1923,” *Diplomacy and Statecraft* 16 (2005): 432.

¹⁸ Alan Sharp and Keith Jeffery, “‘Après la Guerre finit, Soldat anglais partit...’: Anglo-French Relations 1918-25,” *Diplomacy and Statecraft* 14 (2003): 121

¹⁹ M.L. Roi and B.J.C. McKercher, “‘Ideal’ and ‘Punch-Bag’: Conflicting Views of the Balance of Power and Their Influence on Interwar British Foreign Policy,” *Diplomacy and Statecraft* 12 (2001): 47.

²⁰ Gaynor Johnson, “Curzon, Lloyd George and the Control of British Foreign Policy, 1919-22: A Reassessment,” *Diplomacy and Statecraft* 11 (2000): 50.

second chapter will try to analyze the British mediation efforts in the Vilnius dispute until their ultimate fiasco in 1922, approaching the problem from the aforementioned theoretical perspective. Special attention will be given to the lever of de jure recognition of Lithuania, which Britain unsuccessfully tried to employ in the dispute mediation. Finally, the study will conclude with the main findings and suggestions for the future research on the topic.

Chapter 1: The Position of the Baltic States and Lithuania in the British Diplomatic Projections

1.1 Causes for Reserve

Generally, Britain's interests in the Baltic couldn't be described as vital. Till the end of the First World War, Britain was accustomed to see those territories as a significant part of the Russian empire, the ports of then Estonian, Livonian and Courland provinces providing an outlet for more than one third of European Russia's international trade²¹. Just after the Bolshevik turmoil in Russia, Britain adhered to the prevailing view that Russia will become 'normal' in the short term. This belief had major implications on the way Britain approached the three reviving Baltic states. Policy guidelines, issued in 1919 by the Foreign Office, recommend not to do anything what could 'leave Russia with any deep feeling of bitterness arising from the conviction that the Allied Powers had taken advantage of her internal political condition permanently to weaken her'²². From this point of view, the recognition of the Baltic states could create a persistent feeling of hostility between the Allies and Russia, for which the Baltic ports are of vital importance, and which would take the first opportunity to regain them²³. If the latter anticipation materialized, the recognition of the Baltic states and their subsequent admission to the League, which provided territorial guarantees for its members, would involve the Allies in the war with reconstituted Russia. Therefore, the possibility of reabsorption of the Baltic states by Russia was seen as a determining factor in approaching the aspirations of the

²¹ Hiden and Lane, *Outbreak*, 3.

²² Foreign Office confidential memorandum. 12th January, 1919. The National Archives of the UK (TNA): FO 608/196: 31

²³ *Ibid*

Baltic states²⁴. ‘Normal’ Russia, restored to its old western borders, seemed to be the far better future ally for the Powers and more credible debtor than the weak Baltic states²⁵.

These considerations did not only appear on the confidential minutes in the Foreign Office. Britain did not hesitate to share them openly not only with states as Poland and Finland, but also with the three Baltic states for which these considerations were of the most direct importance. Foreign Secretary Lord Curzon as late as in January 1921, one month before recognizing Latvia and Estonia, was frankly contemplating to his Latvian colleague that

‘warmly as we sympathized with their desire for independence, and earnestly as we hoped that they would succeed in maintaining it, we could not forget that they were small in power and population, that they belonged to the old Russian Empire, which the Soviet Government as it shed its Communist principles and increasingly developed imperialistic leanings, was bent upon recovering, and that the Powers might find themselves, as they had done in Poland, involved in an obligation to fight for those states at some future date in circumstances which might not only be difficult, but impossible’²⁶.

These were the reasons on which Curzon grounded his refusal to consider the question of the *de jure* recognition of the Baltic states, hesitating to take the responsibilities referred to in the Article 10 of the League Covenant²⁷.

Britain was of the view that the Baltic is economically tied to the Russian hinterland, and treated the Baltic states, Poland and Russia as forming a single economic unit. As Gregory stated, ‘the future <...> pointed to cultural independence with economic unity, the political relationships within that unity being in turn

²⁴ J.D. Gregory, “Attitude of His Majesty’s Government towards ‘de jure’ recognition for Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania” 2nd November, 1920. TNA: FO 371/5373: 58.

²⁵ Max Laserson, “The Recognition of Latvia,” *The American Journal of International Law* 37 (1943): 241.

²⁶ Earl Curzon to Mr. Dewhurst (Riga), 6th January, 1921. TNA: FO 371/6720: 61.

²⁷ League covenant in article 10 contained the clause that the members ‘undertake to respect and preserve as against external aggression the territorial integrity and existing political independence of all Members’, in case of aggression or threat of it committing themselves to ‘advise upon the means by which this obligation shall be fulfilled’. See “The Covenant of the League of Nations,” <www.yale.edu/lawweb/avalon/leagcov.htm>

determined on a basis of common interest and culture'²⁸. Somehow the British tended to believe that this imagined 'reabsorption' could take place 'amicably and voluntarily', in the form of federative arrangement²⁹. Clearly, as it will be seen from the following chapters, it was typical for Britain to think in such systemic terms and to expect similar instrumentally rational behavior from the newly established states; however, eventually it became clear that the 'newcomers' see the world in slightly different colors, what in turn handicapped the British efforts to deal with them.

In sum, Britain didn't put too many hopes in the permanence of the independent existence of the Baltic states, projecting their prospective return to the reconstituted Russia, and avoiding to take responsibilities which could obstruct this return. Besides, the scenario of the self-contained economic collapse of the independent Baltic states was not altogether ruled out in the British diplomatic projections³⁰. All in all, in 1921 Curzon together with his Danish colleague made a surprisingly precise forecast that the existence of the Baltic states would last only for about twenty years³¹.

In terms of concrete policies, the aforementioned approach meant, as it was already mentioned, the delay of the de jure recognition, while 'waiting and testing' whether the Baltic states can survive³². By signing the Anglo-Soviet Trade Agreement in March 1921 Britain obliged not to afford material support in the form of war material to the Baltic States in the event of hostilities between those states and

²⁸ J.D. Gregory, "Record of Interview with three Leading Lithuanians", 23rd February, 1921. TNA: FO 371/6726: 20.

²⁹ Foreign Office confidential memorandum. 12th January, 1919. TNA: FO 608/196: 31

³⁰ G. E. Tallents, "The Baltic Provinces and the League of Nations", Memorandum, November 1920. TNA: FO 371/5374: 76.

³¹ Lord Curzon minute, 17th February, 1921. TNA: FO 371/6720: 197.

³² Foreign Office memorandum "The Polish-Lithuanian Question", 11th October, 1920. TNA: FO 371/5374: 36.

Russia³³. Britain not only avoided any defense obligations in the Baltic region, but discouraged Poland and Finland from doing the same. In response to the Polish inquiry for advice on assuming defense obligations towards Latvia, the British recommended ‘mature reflection on the consequences which it involved’, vividly characterizing such obligations as a ‘blank cheque’, the cost of which could be Poland’s conflict with the reconstituted Russia³⁴.

From the financial point of view, Britain did not rush to support the Baltic states. In the end of 1920, hesitating to ‘raise the false hopes’ and thus refusing to support the opening of the economic conference of the Baltic states in London, Treasury ruled that Britain cannot support those states at the expense of the British taxpayers³⁵.

1.2 Reasons for Intéressement

Nevertheless, having in mind these reservations, Britain’s attitude towards the independence of the Baltic states was favorable. In the period when the principle of so called ‘self-determination’ was fashionable and endorsed by the winners of the war, the Baltic states, as was mentioned before, were expected to join the projected federation of the Russian states voluntarily. Strangely, giving them independence was seen as one of the ways to achieve this end. As it was outlined in the FO report, the Baltic peoples completely ‘suited’ the principle of self-determination. As they were

³³ According to the preamble of the Agreement, ‘each party refrains from hostile action or undertakings against the other and from conducting outside of its own borders any official propaganda direct or indirect against the institutions of the British Empire or the Russian Soviet Republic respectively <...> The British Government gives a similar particular undertaking to the Russian Soviet Government *in respect of the countries which formed part of the former Russian Empire and which have now become independent* [emphasis added - D.K.]. See Richard H. Ullman, *The Anglo-Soviet Accord* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1972), 474-478.

³⁴ P. Loraine to Foreign Office, 30th October, 1920. TNA: FO 371/5373: 45.

³⁵ Treasury to Foreign Office, 15th October, 1920. TNA: FO 371/5376: 7.

ethnically entirely non-Russian, and in every way more intelligent and more educated than the majority of the Russian people, they couldn't be treated as 'backward races' over whom Russia's claim for benevolent protectorate would stand³⁶.

Given these considerations, the reunion of the Baltic states with the reconstituted Russia was not the British policy, but more an anticipation, given the geopolitical realities of the region³⁷. As it was getting more and more clear that the Bolshevik regime in Russia is going there to stay, the significance of the independent Baltic states in the British interests increased. Notwithstanding the conviction that their existence is temporary, Britain had several notable incentives to support their independence as long as possible. These incentives can be broadly divided into economic, geopolitical and idealistic.

Economic. Independent and economically stable Baltic states were considered as good opening for the British trade and enterprise³⁸. It was observed that the British could be successfully involved in banking, insurance and communications sectors in the region³⁹. In addition to significant resources of timber, flax and agricultural goods, the Baltic ports of Tallinn, Riga, Ventspilis and Liepaja offered possibilities for a good 'jumping ground' for the British trade with Russia⁴⁰. It was held that Russian interests could be appeased by making the Baltic ports free, and in this way the independence could not obstruct Russia's vital interests 'any more than Dutch independence prevented German trade finding an outlet through Rotterdam and Amsterdam'⁴¹.

³⁶ Foreign Office confidential memorandum, 12th January, 1919. TNA: FO 608/196: 32.

³⁷ Max Muller to Foreign Office, 13th March, 1921. TNA: FO 371/6730: 24.

³⁸ Max Muller to Earl Curzon, 23rd March, 1921. TNA: FO 371/6730: 39.

³⁹ Wilton, "Economic Report on Lithuania", 19th May, 1921. TNA: FO 371/6725: 163.

⁴⁰ Foreign Office minute "Summary of Tilden Smith Question", 20th October, 1920. TNA: FO 371/5376 : 90.

⁴¹ Foreign Office confidential memorandum, 12th January, 1919. TNA: FO 608/196: 33.

Geopolitically, from the beginning of the Bolshevik rule in Russia the Baltic states were serving the function of the *Cordon Sanitaire* against the Bolshevik advance to the West. In their wars against the Bolsheviks in 1918-1919, Baltic states were supported by Britain ‘by any means short of actual employment of British troops’⁴². For the same reason, British military mission was sent to the Baltic states to help to reorganize their armies and ‘to do whatever possible to combat German and Bolshevik influence’⁴³. It is perhaps not an exaggeration to claim that the Baltic states owed their existence in large part due to the presence of the British Navy in the Baltic sea at the time, which contributed decisively in ousting Bolshevik as well as Bermondts forces. Due to this fact the British prestige in the Baltic ranked higher than that of any other country⁴⁴.

On the other hand, the vital British (and also French) interest at the time was undoubtedly the containment of Germany, and preventing its penetration into the Russian ‘heartland’. The frightening possibility of two after-war diplomatic outsiders, Germany and Bolshevik Russia, coming together gave the Baltic states yet another geopolitical function – that of barrier, or ‘belt’. This belt was supposed to ‘counteract the immense geographical advantage held by Germany for trade with Russia’⁴⁵. As Latvian Prime minister Ulmanis rightly observed, ‘as Germany and Russia are in the same boat, all distinctions of communist, white, red, black or pink Russian would go, and there would be a union of some nature between these countries to recover what they had lost’⁴⁶. Britain perfectly realized that, and the belt was one of the ways to try to keep the two revisionists apart. Britain looked favorably to the creation of the

⁴² Foreign Office to the Secretary to the Army Council, 21st February, 1921. TNA: FO 371/5378: 190.

⁴³ The Army Council to the Foreign Office. TNA: FO 371/6723: 71.

⁴⁴ G.E. Tallents to Earl Curzon, 15th December 1920. TNA: FO 371/5379: 107.

⁴⁵ Foreign Office confidential memorandum, 12th January, 1919. TNA: FO 608/196: 33.

⁴⁶ J.Y. Simpson to J.D. Gregory, 28th December 1920. TNA: FO 371/6719: 242.

Baltic union of the three Baltic states, which could provide common front against the Bolshevik aggression and diminish the German influence⁴⁷.

It seems that German influence in the Baltic worried the Foreign Office probably not less than the threat of the Bolsheviks. As one secret British intelligence report stated, due to its geographical location, Germany is destined 'by nature' for the Baltic export trade, and eventually it will 'get busy' competing with the British interests in that region⁴⁸. Some of the British commercial schemes in the Baltic were directed to prevent so far as possible the growth of the influence of Germany there, though anticipating that some form of coexistence in this regard was inevitable⁴⁹.

Last but not least, it seems that the **idealistic** motives were also at play. As British diplomat Nicolson retrospectively described the British stance at the time, 'there was a fervent aspiration to create and fortify the new nations whom we regarded, with maternal instinct, as the justification for our sufferings and of our victory. The Paris Conference will never be properly understood unless this emotional impulse is emphasized at every stage'⁵⁰.

1.3 The special position of Lithuania

With regard to geopolitical gravitation, the position of Lithuania from the British point of view was different from that of her other two counterparts. As Foreign Under-Secretary Gregory frankly explained the British stance to his Lithuanian colleagues, so far as Latvia and Estonia are concerned, their seashores are teasing Russia, and due to their peculiar geopolitical position sooner or later they would be

⁴⁷ E.C. Wilton to Earl Curzon, 14th May 1921. TNA: FO 371/6734: 164.

⁴⁸ Secret Political Report "Germany", 2nd December 1920. TNA: FO 371/5379: 117.

⁴⁹ J.D. Gregory to the Board of Trade, 25th October, 1920. TNA: FO 371/5376: 95.

⁵⁰ Hiden and Lane, *Outbreak*, 13.

forced to enter into some relationship with her. As Gregory has put it, ‘whatever their future, they must always lean on Russia’. According to Gregory, the position of Lithuania was different – first, she was not so vital for Russia, and second, she had a possibility to ‘choose’ (there seemed to be no other way but choose) from the three powers surrounding her – Germany, Russia or Poland. As the British of course did not suggest to turn to Germany, and as Lithuania ‘deliberately shaken off’ the Russian orientation herself, there remained only the southern neighbor, which, as Gregory believed, was a natural one, intimate in terms of religion, culture and history⁵¹.

With regard to the above mentioned Britain’s uneasiness with the influence of Germany in the Baltic states, the position of Lithuania here deserved particular attention. It was observed that the German influence is far higher in Lithuania than in other two Baltic states. Geopolitically, Lithuania lied directly on the path connecting Germany and Russia. As Military Intelligence report indicated, in addition to peaceful trade penetration, Germany is ‘quietly but steadily working to forment the Lithuanian-Polish enmity’, aiming to induce Lithuania to gravitate to itself or Russia⁵². Apparently, Curzon also shared this view⁵³. As far as economic influence is concerned, the British intelligence reported that there were a lot of Germans in all Lithuanian ministries, some of whom were hired by the German intelligence, who try to obtain a hold on Lithuania economically and interfere in the work of the Allies in Lithuania⁵⁴. Until the introduction of the Litas, until the end of 1922 Lithuania used the German currency. Moreover, the fact that every important bank in Lithuania was German controlled resulted in the handicap of the British trade, as the banks were

⁵¹ J.D. Gregory, “Record of Interview with three Leading Lithuanians”, 23rd February, 1921. TNA: FO 371/6726: 20.

⁵² R. Partiger, “General information of a military and semi-military nature for use in the compilation of the Military Handbook of Lithuania”, 10th January 1921. TNA: FO 371/6724: 138.

⁵³ Foreign Office minute “Summary of Tilden Smith Question”, 20th October, 1920. TNA: FO 371/5376 : 96.

⁵⁴ Secret Political Report, “Lithuania”, 21st November 1920. TNA: FO 371/5379: 155.

reportedly refusing to give credit to the British firms. The Foreign Office minute suggested that this unsatisfactory state of affairs could only be ameliorated by an influx of the British capital⁵⁵.

As it was already mentioned in the introduction, the Vilnius dispute was regarded by Britain as a very serious one, raising wide-enough security concerns, given the traditional insistence on stability in British diplomacy⁵⁶. In the eve of the Vilnius coup, Curzon was convinced that ‘the attitude of Lithuania is now of such capital importance as to make it necessary for it to be treated separately from the other Baltic States’. It was decided to detach Lithuania from the competence of Britain’s representative in Riga and to send the separate British commissioner to Kaunas, Wilton.

Thus, it seems that although looking from a commercial standpoint, Lithuania was seen by Britain as less important than Latvia, as she did not have such port facilities⁵⁷ and had a lower level of industrialization, from a geopolitical point of view and due to her menacing conflict with Poland, she was definitely the most ‘interesting’ country of the three at the time being.

1.4 Image of Lithuania and Lithuanians from the viewpoint of the Foreign Office

Observing and evaluating the first steps of the built-from-scratch Lithuanian diplomacy, British diplomats did not hesitate to notice its shortcomings. Curzon once

⁵⁵ Foreign Office minute, 21st April 1921. TNA: FO 371/6725: 120.

⁵⁶ See Erik Goldstein and B.J.C. McKercher, “Power and Stability in British Foreign Policy, 1865-1965,” *Diplomacy and Statecraft* 14 (2003).

⁵⁷ M. Clark minute, 23rd November 1920. TNA: FO 371/5378: 120.

described Lithuanians as ‘stupid and backward’⁵⁸. British representative in Kaunas Wilton observed that Lithuanians do not compare unfavorably with Latvians or Poles, but generalizing from the Parliament ‘sample’, Wilton thought that Lithuanian middle classes are ‘self-centered and narrow minded, and are lacking in culture and administrative experience <...> sensitive to any suspicion of supercilious treatment’⁵⁹. One report observed that the Baltic people are distinguished from Russians by greater energy, and from the Poles by their more stable character. As Tallents reported, Lithuanians by temperament are closer to the Russians and are ‘easier to deal with’ than the Latvians or the Estonians⁶⁰. Interestingly, it was noted that ‘an Englishman feels instinctively less alien in the Baltic provinces than he does in Poland’⁶¹. On the occasion of reporting the feminine adventures of one of his British counterpart, Wilton observed that ‘Lithuanians are coarse, uncultured people: their morals are decidedly loose: their society does not condemn but rather applaud a man who will prostitute his official position to obtain feminine favors’⁶². British military intelligence noticed that although the biggest problem in the Lithuanian army was the shortage of an officer class, ‘Lithuanian peasant should, if properly led, make good fighting material. He is uneducated, slow of brain, and deficient of ‘fire’, but on the other hand he is of sturdy physique, phlegmatic, persistent, and capable of great endurance of hardships’⁶³. Observing the active work of the German and Soviet secret services in Lithuania, Wilton noted that Lithuanians are not suited to the intelligence

⁵⁸ Lord Curzon minute, 17th March 1922. TNA: FO 371\8058: 48.

⁵⁹ E.C. Wilton to Earl Curzon, 11th March 1921. TNA: FO 371\6721: 3.

⁶⁰ S. G. Tallents to Earl Curzon, 12th August 1920. TNA: FO 419\2: 84.

⁶¹ Foreign Office Notes on the Baltic Provinces, November 1919. TNA: FO 419\1: 9.

⁶² E.C. Wilton to J.D. Gregory, 29th December 1920. TNA: FO 371\6721: 113.

⁶³ R. Partiger, “General information of a military and semi-military nature for use in the compilation of the Military Handbook of Lithuania”, 10th January 1921. TNA: FO 371/6724: 137.

work potentially due to their ‘natural dullness’, but they themselves think that the reason for that is their honesty of character⁶⁴.

As Ovey from the Foreign Office once observed, ‘whatever the Lithuanians do it is sure to be something idiotic’⁶⁵. Undoubtedly, the critique devoted to the young Lithuanian diplomacy by the British Oxbridge graduates was often justified and opportune. But it seems that these British slating remarks may also indicate that Britain sometimes simply did not recognize the rationale behind the certain Lithuanian moves, which were based on different assumptions. Such misunderstandings, as it will be seen, significantly impaired the British efforts to mediate the Polish-Lithuanian dispute.

Chapter 2: The British Involvement in the Vilnius Dispute

2.1 The Nature of the Projected Lithuanian-Polish Relationship

As it was already mentioned before, Britain saw Poland as the natural direction towards which Lithuania should gravitate, and projected the intimate relations between the two countries. As to the form of this relationship, the complete integration or the union on the Austro-Hungarian model was not supported by Britain. As it was marked in the Foreign Office minutes, this was not desirable as far as the peace in Europe was concerned, and it was believed that the Poles ‘should set their own house first’⁶⁶. Besides, far sighted British diplomacy realized that forcing Lithuania into a relationship with Poland was not a good choice, and this should be

⁶⁴ E.C. Wilton to Earl Curzon, 29th January 1921. TNA: FO 371\6728: 162.

⁶⁵ E. Ovey minute, 28th August 1922. TNA: FO 371\8069: 32.

⁶⁶ Foreign Office memorandum “The Polish-Lithuanian Question”, 11th October, 1920. TNA: FO 371/5374: 40.

left to time instead of trying to achieve it by direct pressure⁶⁷. This predisposition was reflected in the actual British policy. When the Polish Foreign Minister Sapieha asked Gregory whether Britain could press Lithuania to come to terms, intending to drive Lithuania into ‘some form of union’ with Poland, escaping the plebiscite and the chance of losing Vilnius, Gregory stressed that the matter is in the League and Britain has no intention to withdraw that question from there⁶⁸.

However, Britain favorably looked towards more allied relations between Lithuania and Poland in the form of *federation*. According to Gregory, as the French, Pilsudski, Sapieha and Britain all welcomed the idea of Lithuanian-Polish federation, ‘it really should in principle only remain to get the Lithuanians to agree’⁶⁹. Poland always tried to impress Britain that ‘union or very close understanding’ between the two countries could provide the solution to the problem of their precarious relations. Polish Foreign Minister Sapieha believed that if only Britain gave its blessing to such project, the realization of it ‘would encounter no serious obstacles and be relatively easy of attainment’⁷⁰. Indeed, initially Britain imagined that it would be not so hard to bring the idea of federation into being. As Foreign Office memorandum stated, ‘with a very little patience and statesmanship on the part of Poland, <Lithuania> could be brought into a close alliance leading up to federation’⁷¹. However, as it will be seen, Britain here overestimated, first, the potential of ‘statesmanship’ of the Poles, and second, the ‘geopolitical rationality’ of Lithuania. What Britain, from its global point of view, projected as a rational, inevitable and thus voluntary choice for Lithuania,

⁶⁷ G. E. Tallents, “The Baltic Provinces and the League of Nations”, Memorandum, November 1920. TNA: FO 371/5374: 76.

⁶⁸ J.D. Gregory to Max Muller, 16th February 1921. TNA: FO 688/10/12: 299.

⁶⁹ J.D. Gregory minute, 11th November 1920. TNA: FO 371/5380: 53.

⁷⁰ P. Loraine to Earl Curzon, 7th October 1920. TNA: FO 371/5373: 187.

⁷¹ Foreign Office memorandum “British Policy in the Baltic States”, 12th June 1921. TNA: FO 371/6734: 250.

looking from the point of view of the latter country was non-negotiable, as Lithuania spoke in quite a different language.

2.2 British attitude towards the fate of Vilnius

The existence of the different conceptual frameworks in which Britain and Lithuania operated could be discerned from their approach to the fate of Vilnius and to the nature of the Vilnius dispute in general.

Britain approached Vilnius problem very differently from Lithuania. Foreign Office memorandum pointed out that it would be 'wiser' for the Vilnius region to belong to Lithuania, because despite the fact that the percentage of Polish inhabitants in the town was greater, the surrounding region was not Polish. The Curzon line was still seen as the authoritative boundary⁷². Comically enough, out of all lengthy arguments, presented by the Lithuanian side in support for its claim for Vilnius, including wide sentimental historical elaborations, the British eye was caught by a very down to earth argument - the fact that the natural source of food for Vilnius is Lithuania, not Poland⁷³. British Minister in Warsaw Muller noted that all the historical and ethnographic considerations 'are quite outside the sphere of practical politics', when the problem is so obscure, because otherwise the deadlock would be a certainty⁷⁴. Moreover, for the British, it seemed that Lithuania places too much importance on the legal side of the dispute - the Polish non-observance of the Suwalki armistice, signed just before the Vilnius occupation. Tellingly, Wilton once mentioned to his Lithuanian colleague that Poland had 39 divisions compared to Lithuania's 3,

⁷² Foreign Office memorandum "The Polish-Lithuanian Question", 11th October, 1920. TNA: FO 371/5374: 38.

⁷³ Foreign Office minute, 2nd March 1921. TNA: FO 371\6725: 9.

⁷⁴ Max Muller to Foreign Office, 21st March 1921. TNA: FO 688\9\3: 80.

and hinted that the fact of the violation of the armistice by Poland could have attracted more attention if Lithuania had been in a position to *enforce* the armistice⁷⁵. On the occasion of Lithuanian request to purchase arms in order to be able to defend itself in case of the Polish attack, Foreign Office refused to allow the export, commenting that few thousand rifles would not change the situation, and the Poles would always win in this kind of rivalry⁷⁶. Such pragmatic and realistic British attitude was different from what Lithuania imagined it to be. It seems that Lithuania saw Britain as the principal Allied power, which was above the French and Polish intrigues, and which while understanding the Lithuanian woes and its unquestionable claim to Vilnius, should assume the strong anti-Polish stance. Such Lithuanian beliefs in turn generated what the British referred to as the ‘pathetic belief’ in Britain⁷⁷. As Curzon once observed, ‘the Lithuanians seem to be fanatic unaware that we have been their best, and not their big friends; and they seem quite unable to <see> their matter from any wider standpoint’⁷⁸. It appears that while Britain unreasonably expected Lithuania to think in its own terms of geopolitical rationality, Lithuania imagined Britain as something different from what she really was.

2.3 Attempts to forestall the Polish adventure

As the intentions on behalf of the Polish side to occupy Vilnius were getting clearer in the last weeks before the occupation, the British tried to forestall the adventure. Already at this pre-stage of the dispute, one could observe the lack of the mutual understanding among Britain and France on how to meet the problem.

⁷⁵ E.C. Wilton to Lord Curzon, 12th August 1922. TNA: FO 371\8063: 87.

⁷⁶ Foreign Office minutes, 2nd March 1921. TNA: FO 371\6728: 181.

⁷⁷ Foreign Office Notes on the Baltic Provinces, November 1919. TNA: FO 419\1: 9.

⁷⁸ Lord Curzon minute, 27th February 1921. TNA: FO 371\6726: 31.

Although protecting Lithuania and ensuring peaceful coexistence between it and Poland seemed to be the significant motives behind the British worries, on the larger scale, Polish military adventures directed at its neighbors weakened the Polish-Bolshevik front, impaired the making of peace with Bolsheviks, and threatened ‘not only independence of Poland, but also the peace of Europe as a whole’⁷⁹. As early as one month before the Vilnius occupation, both British and French press was warning the Poles not to undertake fresh adventures against Lithuania. ‘The Times’ urged Poland to ‘put aside all adventure and military glories, if they desire sympathy from the states who have created a free Poland’⁸⁰. Lithuania was actively urging Britain to prevent the Polish advance, and believed that energetic Allied measures could have ‘a very big effect on the Polish plans’⁸¹. Several days before the Vilnius occupation Foreign Office received signals that ‘coup de main’ is prepared by certain Polish regiments with the endorsement of ‘certain military authorities’ (obviously, Pilsudski)⁸², and military intelligence reported that officers and soldiers on the front make no secret of their intentions to march on Vilnius⁸³. Having enough information to anticipate Marshal Pilsudski’s adventure, on October 6 1920 Britain offered France to submit the joint British-French warning note to him. Emphasizing the fundamental importance which France attached to the ‘close two-power Entente in addressing the big problems, raised by the war, as well as all the questions arising in between London and Paris’, France agreed immediately, and on the same day the French foreign minister Georges Leygues prepared the the text of the joint note and submitted it to the British government. The very polite note stated that it is the question of loyalty and political reason to ensure Lithuania the possession of her capital Vilnius,

⁷⁹ J.D. Gregory to Treasury, 7th October 1920. TNA: FO 371\5374: 187.

⁸⁰ War Office Fortnightly Report, 1st October 1920. TNA: FO 371\5377: 40.

⁸¹ Count Tyszkiewicz to J.D. Gregory, 9th October 1920. TNA: FO 371\5373: 175.

⁸² P. Loraine to Foreign Office, 7th October 1920. TNA: FO 371\5373: 159.

⁸³ R. Pargiter Report, 10th October 1920. TNA: FO 371\5374: 45.

which apparently spurs the revisionist sentiments of Polish general public and of Pilsudski. Poland was urged to concentrate on its internal development, and the only explicit ‘threat’ suggested by the French in case of non-compliance was ‘certain reactions which can compromise the situation’⁸⁴.

Curzon clearly was not satisfied with the French note. In reply he indicated that the French projected message to Poland was not serious enough, as Britain initially suggested it should be. Curzon was of the opinion that the note, being so moderate and *courtois*, will not be able to dissuade the Poles from new military adventures. However, being convinced by Loraine’s dispatch that Polish military authorities at the moment renounced their advance to Vilnius, Curzon instructed Loraine in Warsaw to present the French note together with the French colleague. At the same time, Curzon indicated to the French that Britain reserves its right to press the Polish government independently by the British representative in Warsaw⁸⁵.

Ironically, even such a soft note did not receive its addressee till the *fait accompli*. Officially, the British were informed in a regrettable fashion that the French Minister to Poland Panafieu refused to present the note to Pilsudski, promising to make the French representative to obey the instructions and praising the will to act in entire accordance with Britain⁸⁶. Whether the latter intention of the French was true, it is doubtful. Here it may be relevant to consider the observations of the Soviet representative in Lithuania at the time. Axelrod in his secret dispatches to the Narkomindel, which were somehow intercepted by the British, wrote that the occupation of Vilnius resulted undoubtedly due to the French pressure (sic). Russian diplomat observed that the French commissioner in Vilnius Reboul advising general Zeligowski instead of looking after Lithuanian interests, what belonged to his

⁸⁴ The French note to Britain, 6th October 1920. TNA: FO 371\5373: 155.

⁸⁵ Lord Curzon memorandum, 8th October 1920. TNA: FO 371\5373:194.

⁸⁶ Lord Derby to Foreign Office, 11th October 1920. TNA: FO 371\5373: 214.

competence⁸⁷. For Axelrod it was obvious that the French military mission in Lithuania is actively collecting material which could compromise the Lithuanian government⁸⁸. According to Axelrod, France often acts in Lithuania as in its own house and has the dense espionage network, comprising nearly 100 agents. Aiming to separate Germany from the east, the motive of the French diplomacy in helping Poland ‘with all their might’, according to Axelrod, was to create the big Polish state from sea to sea, which they could exploit. The Soviet representative went so far to suggest that Lithuania was given to Poland by the Allies as a booty, and on the advance of the Polish forces further into Lithuania, the French would press Lithuania to capitulate⁸⁹. Axelrod was puzzled with the fact that Polish adventure evoked only a formal protest by the British, initially speculating that the British wanted to weaken France by acquiescing to her entanglement in the Baltic, but later took the view that the policy of France towards Lithuania will eventually ‘seriously annoy’ the British who do everything in their efforts to save Lithuania⁹⁰. Commenting on Axelrod’s reports, Gregory acknowledged that there is some truth in them, but he couldn’t believe that France is projecting the complete incorporation of Lithuania into Poland, thinking that the idea of federation would suit their interests as well⁹¹.

Indeed, although Axelrod’s insights could have been a bit overstated, it seems that he noticed what the British didn’t see yet or didn’t want to see – the non-existence of the clear common framework in the Allied camp to approach the Lithuanian-Polish dispute.

⁸⁷ Axelrod to Tchicherin, 15th October, 1920. TNA: FO 371\5380: 58.

⁸⁸ Axelrod to Tchicherin, 8th November 1920. TNA: FO 371\5380: 73. Axelrod made another interesting comment, which could add to the understanding of the failure of the early Soviet attempts to sovietize Lithuania. Axelrod was convinced that ‘if they will get to know what we are doing (sic!), they would make great use of it and I submit that the Poles would then gradually be made to occupy the whole of Lithuania’. Perhaps this passage led the British to believe that Soviets are not contemplating the fresh attack on Lithuania in the near future.

⁸⁹ Axelrod to Tchicherin, 23rd October 1920. TNA: FO 371\5380: 61.

⁹⁰ Axelrod to Tchicherin, 8th November 1920. TNA: FO 371\5380: 73.

⁹¹ J.D. Gregory minute, 11th November 1920. TNA: FO 371\5380: 53.

2.4 The aftermath of the occupation

Just after the Vilnius occupation, Foreign Office memorandum recommended the Allies to present a clear cut policy in the dispute and not to leave the disputants on their own. Remembering the successful Teschen territorial settlement and still counting on the Allied unity in the matter, Britain believed that the authority which she had in Lithuania and which France had in Poland would ensure the reasonable chances of imposing the agreed policy. It was emphasized that the Allies cannot acquiesce to the Polish *fait accompli*, and that diplomatic and possibly even economic pressure should be exercised in order to ensure a Polish withdrawal, before involving the League machinery⁹². As Wilton once observed, ‘both parties are tiresome, but the game is worth trying for the sake of peace in Eastern Europe’⁹³.

The British decided to take the lead in the mediation. As it was put in the Foreign Office minute, ‘it seems quite certain that no satisfactory settlement will ever be reached between the Poles and the Lithuanians themselves: a settlement must be imposed upon them’⁹⁴. Gregory was of the same view as his colleagues in FO: ‘the conclusion is that we [emphasis original – D.K.] must settle the whole business for them. They will never do it themselves’⁹⁵.

The trick of the disobedience of the general Zeligowski did not impress the Foreign Office. Well before the operation the information was received that Warsaw is going to openly disavow the plan, while secretly supporting it⁹⁶. British intelligence report indicated that the attack on Vilnius explains the intentional delays, which the

⁹² Foreign Office memorandum “The Polish-Lithuanian Question”, 11th October, 1920. TNA: FO 371/5374: 40.

⁹³ E.C. Wilton to J.D. Gregory, 9th February 1921. TNA: FO 371/6724: 200.

⁹⁴ Foreign Office minute, 13th October 1920. TNA: FO 371/5374: 13.

⁹⁵ J.D. Gregory minute, 16th October 1920. TNA: FO 371/5373: 198.

⁹⁶ Colonel Ward to Foreign Office, 8th October 1920. TNA: FO 371/5373: 167.

Polish side was instigating at Suwalki armistice negotiations by their refusal to continue the demarcation line, seeking to ensure its troops the freedom of maneuver⁹⁷.

British Minister in Warsaw Loraine instructed the second in command British military representative to warn the chief of Polish General Staff with ‘serious situation which would arise if another Fiume⁹⁸ were to be created at Vilnius, likelihood that Polish Government would be put in a most embarrassing position towards its Allies’ and that this will renew suspicions of Polish political ambitions⁹⁹. Loraine also impressed on Sapieha ‘deplorable results of any attempt to solve Vilnius question by force’, and remarked that Polish occupation of Vilnius under whatever pretext ‘could not fail to bring about strained relations between Poland and her Allies and to prejudice a number of other issues of essential importance to Poland¹⁰⁰’. Nevertheless, the first British attempts to press Poland to reverse its action failed. For such attempts to succeed, the powerful concentrated Allied pressure was essential. It is not surprising that the British efforts were doomed to failure as the Poles, seemingly, had the tacit approval of the French for their actions.

Britain, knowing the general wish of Poland to conclude the federation with Lithuania, and expecting her to behave reasonably, could not understand why have the Poles resorted to force. The Foreign Office minute, commenting on the fresh Polish action, concluded that ‘it would clearly now be more than ever difficult to think of a Polo-Lithuanian rapprochement still less union. It seems to be about any idea that the Poles have: they are certainly setting about achieving it in the oddest manner’¹⁰¹. Actually, this remark well supports the assumption that Britain and the disputants operated in quite different conceptual frameworks. Obviously, Poland grounded its

⁹⁷ Count Tyszkiewicz to J.D. Gregory, 8th November 1920. TNA: FO 371\5376: 123.

⁹⁸ i.e. protectorate

⁹⁹ P. Loraine to Foreign Office, 9th October 1920. TNA: FO 371\5373: 197.

¹⁰⁰ P. Loraine to Foreign Office, 10th October 1920. TNA: FO 371\5373: 181.

¹⁰¹ Foreign Office minute, 12th October 1920. TNA: FO 371\5373: 186.

action on the motives different from the British expected rationality. Thereby failing to prevent the Polish adventure and to induce Poland to reverse its action afterwards, but still not accepting the *fait accompli*, British diplomacy looked for a way to bring both sides to the satisfactory understanding. At that stage of the dispute settlement, as it will be seen, the British efforts did not cease being prejudiced by the lack of the common language among the actors concerned.

2.5 Attempted plebiscite

The unsuccessful attempts to solve the dispute by plebiscite expressly confirm the hypothesis that there was not only the lack of common conceptual framework in case of British communication with the disputants, but that the Allies did not have the consistent approach to the matter, what in turn diminished the chances for the mediation to succeed.

As the matter went to the League, it was Britain who urged the League to impress on the Polish representative, that the occupation of Vilnius was contrary to the obligations of Poland as a member, and that in case Poland refuses to withdraw its troops, the matter would be considered by the League. However, the French apparently were again following the different line. The chair of the Political department of the League Mantoux, after the consultation with the French government, decided to take no measures in connection with the situation in Vilnius¹⁰². Only on October 28th, more than two weeks after the Vilnius occupation, the League started to act and accepted the suggestion of the Belgian Foreign Minister Hymans to convey the referendum in the disputed territory, monitored and controlled

¹⁰² Sture Theolin, *Vilniaus Konfliktas: Begalinis Ginčas dėl Lietuvos ir Lenkijos Sienos 1917-1996* [Vilnius Conflict: the Neverending Dispute Concerning Lithuanian-Polish Border 1917-1996] (Vilnius: Vaga, 2001), 51.

by the League. Interestingly, both sides of the dispute expected the genuine results to be in their own favor. Accordingly, no one doubted that the results would favor Poland in case the Polish forces stayed in the place. As Wilton observed, ‘public expression with Zeligowski still in Vilnius would be a farce’¹⁰³. Soviet representative in Lithuania was especially pessimistic on the plebiscite. He reported to Narkomindel that by declaring for a plebiscite in Vilnius, the League only wants to safeguard its prestige, trying to avoid the ‘unenviable’ situation created by the Vilnius occupation. Although ‘on paper’ showing its loyalty to Lithuania, it had no doubt that the Christian population would opt for Poland, and the Jews were so terrorized by the Polish military presence that they either abstain from voting or will be subjected to vote for Poland¹⁰⁴.

In case Poland withdrew its troops from the district, obviously, international forces would be needed to ensure the proper implementation of the plebiscite. As Loraine summarized the arguments, the international military presence was necessary to ensure the withdrawal of the Polish troops (otherwise Poland had a ground to suspect the reoccupation of Vilnius by Lithuanians after withdrawal), to minimize the risk of Bolshevik interference and to strengthen the authority of the League’s decisions¹⁰⁵.

It can be observed that Britain’s position towards the plebiscite fluctuated. Naturally, given such an ambiguous British stance, it was then not very reasonable to expect the support for the plebiscite from the parties of the dispute. Initially, Britain looked skeptically to the international solution of the problem. This was evident from the very first post-coup encounter of the heads of the British and Lithuanian diplomacies. Needless to say, Curzon deemed his Lithuanian colleague as not very

¹⁰³ E.C. Wilton to J.D. Gregory, 3rd November 1920. TNA: FO 371\5380: 54.

¹⁰⁴ Axelrod to Tchicherin, 2nd November 1920. TNA: FO 371\5380: 68.

¹⁰⁵ P. Loraine to Earl Curzon, 10th January 1921. TNA: FO 688\093: 193.

skilled in diplomacy and not having the intelligent take on the problem of the Lithuanian-Polish relations. According to Curzon, the Lithuanian Minister's 'comparative youth and inexperience, as well as the complexities of the situation, may be held to constitute an excuse; but I have rarely in half-an-hour experienced greater difficulty in persuading any one to answer definite questions, or to adhere to the point'¹⁰⁶. After Purickis expressed the woes of Lithuania, the ambitions of its people, the wrongs committed by the Poles, the confidence in Britain and the respect for the League, Curzon found him 'more inclined to indulge in platitudes and phrases than to grapple with the real difficulties of the existing situation'¹⁰⁷. Here, it seems that while Lithuania believed at least to some extent there being a reliable system with Britain as its guarantor, Britain herself questioned its practicability. Curzon did not believe in the appropriateness of the plebiscite, hardly thinking that, supposed that Poland somehow evacuates its troops from the region, the Allies would find the available troops for securing the place at the time of voting. In case the *League* tried to undertake the task, Curzon could not imagine from what source its troops would be drawn¹⁰⁸. While implicitly detesting Puricki's tendency to assume that someone else should take the responsibility of ordering the Polish forces to leave Vilnius and observing the lack of the 'practical line' in Puricki's thoughts, Curzon put the issue in the very different framework, based on the systemic *realpolitik* considerations. He was of the view that the question was not merely of the 'Vilnius transaction', but that of 'much larger question, involving the whole future relations of Lithuania with her neighbors'. As Curzon referred to his Lithuanian colleagues, Lithuania 'though she had gallantly won, and energetically defended her freedom, was a small country, a poor country, a country of restricted resources, a country with indeterminate and

¹⁰⁶ Earl Curzon to Colonel Ward, 26th October 1920. TNA: FO 371\5374: 52.

¹⁰⁷ Earl Curzon to Colonel Ward, 26th October 1920. TNA: FO 371\5374: 52.

¹⁰⁸ Ibid

disputed frontiers'. The chief of British diplomacy almost rhetorically and in disciplining fashion asked his Lithuanian colleague:

'Did he anticipate that such a unit could permanently maintain an independent existence in complete detachment from its more powerful neighbors? Would not there be an irresistible tendency to move either in the direction of Russia on the one hand or of Poland on the other? Whatever the form of cooperation that might be adopted with either of these neighbors, had not the Lithuanian statesmen foreseen that some form of federation or incorporation must in all probability ensue? If this were so, in what direction lay the ambitions and desires of Lithuania?'¹⁰⁹.

Thus, the hint was clear – Lithuania should think less about the plebiscite, and more about intimate relations with Poland. Gregory was of the same view, observing that drawing Lithuania away from the Polish orbit would be disadvantageous¹¹⁰.

Apparently, Lithuanians approached the matter from the different dimension. Opposing the idea of federation, Galvanauskas stated that federations and alliances were not the ways to ensure the permanent peace. Such schemes economically only subordinated the weaker to the interests of the stronger, and, as Galvanauskas put it, 'belonged to pre-war diplomacy, and was going, it was universally hoped, to give way to a general fellowship of nations which would exclude political and economic rivalry'¹¹¹. In reply Gregory observed that although this is a hopeful ideal, but at present 'we are dealing with realities in a still imperfect world', and various unions are needed to avoid the Balkanization of the Eastern Europe¹¹². However, after the League took seriously enough the question of the plebiscite, Curzon in his note to the Lithuanian government threatened that if Lithuania withdraws from the plebiscite, Britain is not responsible for the consequences¹¹³. Such uncertain and changing British stance could not fail to induce Lithuania to adopt more skeptical attitude towards the plebiscite. It is of course doubtful whether Lithuania really saw the

¹⁰⁹ Ibid

¹¹⁰ J.D. Gregory minute, 15th November 1920. TNA: FO 371\5374: 75.

¹¹¹ J.D. Gregory, "Record of Interview with three Leading Lithuanians", 23rd February, 1921. TNA: FO 419\3: 8.

¹¹² Ibid

¹¹³ J. Purickis speech at the session of Seim, 4th February 1921. TNA: FO 371\6724 :176.

matters through such idealistic prism, but evidently her world view was definitely different from that of Britain.

The behavior of Lithuania was clearly not in accordance with the pattern anticipated by Britain, what further confirms the hypothesis of the study. Paradoxically, although supporting the idea of referendum in general, from its initiation till its failure Lithuania was not willing to implement referendum in the city of Vilnius and in the large parts of the surrounding district (sic!). Arguing that the inhabitants of Vilnius have never expressed their will to secede from the fatherland and join Poland, and believing, as always, in its indisputable and just claim for its ancient capital, Lithuania was sure that Vilnius belongs to her by default and there is no need for any additional expression of the popular will – referendum could be held only in some Polish occupied districts to the east of the Curzon line¹¹⁴. From the point of view of Britain, the situation was no less than ridiculous – in agreeing to settle the dispute by the means of referendum, Lithuania at the same time makes the reservation on what was definitely the crux of the dispute.

This was not the only rule which Lithuania, judging from the British standpoint, was naturally expected to observe, but failed to do it. In December 1920, Soviet Russia, for its own purposes seeking to prevent the settlement of the Lithuanian-Polish dispute, addressed the protests to both Lithuania and Poland, threatening that the introduction of ‘anti-soviet’ international forces in the disputed territory would be a menace to Russia. As far as Britain is concerned, in such cases it acted in accordance with the general Western disposition not to deal with the Soviets and to keep the bear in the cage. In practice this meant the complete disregard of the Soviet statements of such nature and treatment of them as a bluff. From the point of

¹¹⁴ Theolin, *Vilniaus Konfliktas*, 78.

view of Britain as an established power, such an attitude seemed to be completely reasonable. The problem here was that Britain probably expected the same stance from Lithuania. However, Lithuanian attitude was very different. In his meeting with Wilton, Lithuanian Foreign Minister Purickis was excusing for the wrong tactics adopted by the Lithuanian representatives at the League conference, where Lithuanians gave the undue prominence to the threatening Bolshevik note, at the same time excluding other vital points connected to the referendum. Simultaneously Purickis justified such Lithuanian stance, noting that ‘Bolshevik menace had been, and still was, a very real concern for Lithuania, a small state in close proximity to Soviet Russia and exposed to the brunt of her displeasure’. Purickis was even confident that the non-recognition of Lithuania *de jure* in the previous conference was a punishment for such Lithuanian misdemeanor¹¹⁵.

Not only Lithuania was behaving in a way different from the expectations of Britain. Britain was surprised that the anticipated unity of the Baltic states is not materializing. For instance, the Latvian Foreign Minister Meierovics without hesitation was telling Wilton that he views ‘with considerable apprehension the political problems which the possession of Vilnius would add to Lithuania’s existing anxieties’¹¹⁶. After Finland, Poland, Estonia and Latvia signed the protocol of deeper cooperation, Leeper from the Foreign Office wondered on the matter: ‘I had hoped that Poland would be rather pressed by the other three Baltic states to be as reasonable as possible to Lithuania, whose omission constitutes the weak point in the new group. There is no sign of this having taken place’¹¹⁷.

At the same time, the British expected similarly rational behavior from Poland, and again, their expectations were not fulfilled. As Muller interpreted the Polish

¹¹⁵ E.C. Wilton to Earl Curzon, 9th February 1921. TNA: FO 371\6724: 174.

¹¹⁶ E.C. Wilton to Earl Curzon, 28th September 1921. TNA: FO 371\6737: 154.

¹¹⁷ R.C. Leeper minute, 10th August 1921. TNA: FO 371\6730: 118

intentions, the occupation of Vilnius was a rather 'wild-cat scheme' with its aim to induce Lithuania into the federation after first crushing her. After this attempt failed, Muller continued, it is 'fairly clear that the Poles would be wise to let Vilnius go and also to give up the ridiculous corridor to Dwinsk. Poland at present looks upon things mainly from a strategic point of view, and it is not unnatural that she should do so'¹¹⁸. Probably relying on similar considerations, Muller's predecessor in Warsaw Loraine nohow could believe the information submitted by the British military intelligence stating that Poland had no intentions at all to evacuate Zeligowski forces and that Pilsudski and Sapieha with the rest of the Government were working together with Zeligowski to prevent the withdrawal. Loraine did not believe in the message of General Burt that 'Commission is being fooled by the Poles. Failure to obtain evacuation will intensify the Lithuanian strong suspicion of the Commission's impartiality. Circumstances point to loss of prestige of League and position will become intolerable'¹¹⁹. Indeed, as time showed, this information was completely correct, and the British, at least initially, misinterpreted the Polish disposition, and due to this misinterpretation disregarded the reliable information. These observations again point to the supposition that Britain on the one hand and Lithuania and Poland on the other hand were lacking the common language, or common conceptual framework in their interaction, what was the obstacle to the successful dispute settlement.

¹¹⁸ Max Muller to Foreign Office, 21st March 1921. TNA: FO 688/93: 81.

¹¹⁹ E.C. Wilton to P. Loraine, 4th January 1921. TNA: FO 688/93:204.

2.6 The ultimate fiasco of mediation efforts

Similar misunderstandings and misinterpretations burdened the dispute settlement till its ultimate fiasco. Poland did not succumb to the British moderate pressure to come to terms with Lithuania in the subsequent negotiations under the auspices of the League which ended without results in the end of 1921, despite the fact that Curzon sent an instruction to Wilton in Lithuania and Muller in Warsaw ‘to do anything in their power to induce the two governments to give favorable reception to Council’s proposals’¹²⁰. Again, Britain expected too much rationality from the part of the parties of the dispute. Commentating on the 1st League proposal, Muller observed that as Vilnius is in the hands of the Polish army, and as no state is both willing or able to remove those troops, Lithuanians *must be prepared* to pay the price asked by the Poles: federation or autonomy of the Vilnius canton in Lithuanian state¹²¹. However, neither Lithuania, nor even Poland accepted such a bargain. Muller well realized the peculiarity of the situation: if the settlement in the League fails, Britain will arrive at impasse – Poland remains in the possession of Vilnius, Lithuania falls to the influence of Germany or Russia, and League suffers the loss of prestige due to its powerlessness¹²². Unfortunately, this was the precise forecast of what happened afterwards.

Even after it became clear with the Polish announced elections in the Vilnius region in the end of 1921 that the elected Diet would undoubtedly and successfully appeal to the Polish Seim for the formal annexation of the territory to Poland, Britain believed that the unfortunate situation would compel Lithuania to make a rational decision to acquiesce and find some *modus vivendi* with Poland. In the feeling of

¹²⁰ Lord Curzon to Max Muller, 5th March 1921. TNA: FO 688\9\3: 91.

¹²¹ Max Muller to Lord Curzon, 19th April 1921. TNA: FO 688\9\3: 41.

¹²² Max Muller to Lord Curzon, 19th April 1921. TNA: FO 688\9\3: 44.

incapacity to press Poland, and suspecting that the Poles have the tacit approval of the French to hold elections in Vilnius, Muller suggested to let things take their course, believing that ‘perhaps at a later stage we may be able to bring our influence to bear to secure some consideration for the rights and interests of Lithuania’¹²³. Muller believed that Lithuania can only secure something at Vilnius and ‘make the best of a bad job’ by swallowing its pride and starting negotiations with Poland when the Vilnius diet assembles¹²⁴. However, Lithuania was acting on different assumptions, which allowed her even to risk her independence for the sake of keeping the hopes to get Vilnius back. As regards Poland, Britain wanted at least to achieve the autonomous status of Vilnius under the Polish sovereignty, what, in its view, would not preclude the future understanding with Lithuania. However, despite the Curzon’s warning to Poland of ‘most unfortunate effect that would be produced if the Diet sanctions the annexation of Vilnius’¹²⁵, Poland officially and unconditionally annexed the occupied territory on March 24th, 1922. Even in such a situation, Muller expected Lithuania to come into terms with Poland. Facing the impasse to change the situation in any way, Muller recommended Curzon to acquiesce to the *fait accompli*, hinting that as both parties were recalcitrant, ‘the issue has been solved by the successful assertion of the claims of the stronger power’. However, Muller believed,

‘Lithuanian government will continue to cry for the moon so long as anyone shows any disposition to listen to their tale of woe, but once it is clear that there are no sympathetic ears, there is some prospect that the disappointment will be forgotten and that Lithuania will find that her interests lie in following the example of her Baltic neighbors and in reaching a friendly understanding with <...> the principal power in Eastern Europe’¹²⁶.

¹²³ Max Muller to J.D. Gregory, 30th November, 1921. TNA: FO 688\9\3: 20.

¹²⁴ Max Muller to Foreign Office, 25th November, 1921. TNA: FO 688\9\3: 108.

¹²⁵ Lord Curzon to Max Muller, 25th February 1922. TNA: FO 688\11: 267.

¹²⁶ Max Muller to Lord Curzon, 20th April 1922. TNA: FO 688\12\3: 108.

It seems that Muller's views were shared in The Foreign Office. The FO memorandum stated that Lithuania would eventually reconcile to the loss of Vilnius¹²⁷.

However, the British overestimated the Lithuanian rationality and ability to think according to the existing geopolitical situation, at the same time underestimating the significance of Vilnius to Lithuania as her ancient capital. This significance was so high that Lithuania not only refused to have any diplomatic relations with Poland throughout the whole interwar period until the latter's ultimatum in 1938, but, as it is sometimes put in a caricatural manner, due to its love to Vilnius became pregnant with the Soviet military bases in 1939.

Obviously, all this misunderstanding and lack of common conceptual framework impaired the British mediation efforts. Yet there was another problem which was only slightly touched upon until now, and which no less significantly impeded Britain in dealing with Lithuanian problems. One of the reasons why the British failed in this regard was that there, actually, was no common framework agreed by the major allied powers Britain and France, which could throw the light on how to approach and socialize the 'newcomers'. Instead, the approach in this regard was characterized by double standards and short sighted French rivalry for influence in Lithuania vis-à-vis Britain. The next part will proceed to show how the major British lever vis-à-vis Lithuania in the latter's dispute with Poland – withholding of *de jure* recognition – was useless in seeking to commit Lithuania to understanding. When the system is 'in flux' itself, the demands of the established power make little sense, and the possibility is left for the new players to expect to outmaneuver their teachers. Apparently, this was the case in the Lithuanian-Polish dispute settlement.

¹²⁷ Foreign Office memorandum, 5th July 1922. TNA: FO 371\8063: 27.

2.7 System in flux and the lever of *de jure* recognition

Lithuania approached Britain with numerous requests for its recognition. For Lithuania, the early *de jure* recognition was claimed to be important on several grounds, which were outlined in the numerous Lithuanian notes to the Foreign Office. First of all, non-recognition of Lithuania put it in inferior legal position vis a vis Poland in the Vilnius dispute. Second, the Allied refusal to recognize Lithuania *de jure* gave Poland free hand in spreading the propaganda in the occupied region, claiming that Allies have left Lithuania to Bolsheviks. In the light of the projected self-determination of the disputed region, such propaganda could have obviously affected its outcome. Third, the non recognition of Lithuania, especially after the two other Baltic states were recognized, precluded the possibility of making the thorough alliance in the Baltic, and furthered the general diplomatic isolation of Lithuania¹²⁸.

As was mentioned before, for Britain it was useful to recognize the Baltic states on the geopolitical, economic and moral grounds. As early as in June 1920, Britain was probing the possibilities to recognize all three Baltic states *de jure* and approached France with this question. However, France refused to consider the matter by not replying to the British note¹²⁹. The interests of France and Poland with regard to Lithuania and the whole Baltic region in general were obscure. The British Commissioner in Riga Tallents maintained that it is possible to disclose the French policy in the Baltic by reading the attitude of Poland. According to Tallents, the Polish advance towards the Baltic 'is not merely a Polish scheme, but is also part of a French plan for securing a foothold on the Baltic coast, such as she has noticeably

¹²⁸ M. Narusevicius to Foreign Office, 10th March 1921. TNA: FO 371\6725.

¹²⁹ R. Lindsay to Earl Curzon, 4th November 1920. TNA: FO 371\5379: 203.

failed to secure by direct action', for the purpose of ensuring its position in the ports of Riga, Libau and Windau, and for furthering the prospects of a military alliance between Poland, Latvia, Estonia and Finland¹³⁰. It should be mentioned that Foreign Office was informed by the military intelligence after the coup that according to certain Polish-French sources, France was secretly instigating Poland to invade both Latvia and Lithuania¹³¹. Paradoxically enough, it seems that the French were thinking almost similarly, although in the reversed order – they apparently suspected the British of aspiring to dominate the Baltic. Hannotaux, the French representative in the League, detested the British dominance in the matter and believed that 'Britain was working incrementally in order to thwart the Polish throne: she wanted to subjugate the small states and especially the Baltic states, and use them as a bridge to its dominance in the North against Poland¹³²'. If we assume that Hannotaux was not the only high standing French diplomat who thought in these terms, it appears that France misinterpreted the intentions of Britain – there is no evidence, at least judging from the diplomatic correspondence analysis of the period of three years, that the British sought to dominate the Baltic against Poland. On the contrary, by trying to contain its vast territorial aspirations, Britain always sought to strengthen Poland and to 'integrate' her into the Baltic.

Britain was prepared to recognize the Baltic states as soon as the situation seemed 'ripe'. However, in the second half of 1920 the situation of the Baltic states was not perceived as such. The first reason why Britain did not consider the recognition at the time was the fear that *de jure* recognition in practice meant the admission to the League, and thus involved article 10 guarantees. For Britain, as it

¹³⁰ Tallents to Lord Curzon, 19th October 1920. TNA: FO 371\5373: 27.

¹³¹ M. Dewhunt to Earl Curzon, 16th November 1920. TNA: FO 371\5379: 85.

¹³² Julien Gueslin, "Prancūzija ir Lietuvos Klausimas (1920-1923 m.): Tarp Iliuzijų ir Realios Politikos," [France and the Lithuanian Question (1920-1923): Between Illusions and Real Politics] Istorija LI (2002): 31.

was referred in the part above, it was the anticipation of the *reconstituted* Russia in regard to which the Article 10 presupposed the conflict¹³³. For similar reasons, Britain tried to dissuade the other states from giving *de jure* recognition to the Baltic states. Finland¹³⁴ and Poland¹³⁵ were suggested to think about ‘the grave responsibility to the league’ which could arise due to peculiar international situation of the three Baltic states. Just after a year from the time the League was formed, it was perhaps not too uncommon from the part of Britain to approach this collective security-flavored clause seriously. Here it may be relevant to mention that Meierovics, the Foreign Minister of a ‘newcomer’ country, spoke in quite a different language. In reply to quite glooming Curzon’s remarks regarding the recognition, he was sure that the League will probably ‘eliminate’ the Article 10 of the Covenant as soon as in the next meeting of the Assembly, thus eliminating the cause of the British hesitation¹³⁶. Having in mind that this article was the main thing about the League, called ‘the heart of the covenant’ by Wilson, it seems that the two interlocutors really lacked the common ground.

In sum, although seeking to satisfy Baltic aspirations and stabilize the situation in the region, Britain favored the delay in recognition, leaving this question for the inter-Allied discussion in the League¹³⁷. The position of the French, as Loraine reported in the end of 1920, was similar to the British but ‘more grudging and less disinterested’¹³⁸.

¹³³ Foreign Office memorandum “The Polish-Lithuanian Question”, 11th October, 1920. TNA: FO 371/5374: 37

¹³⁴ Kidston to Foreign Office, 25th October 1920. TNA: FO 371/5373: 22.

¹³⁵ P. Loraine to Foreign Office, 30th October, 1920. TNA: FO 371/5373: 47.

¹³⁶ Earl Curzon to Mr. Dewhurst, 6th January 1921. TNA: FO 371/6720: 45.

¹³⁷ J.D. Gregory, “Attitude of His Majesty’s Government towards ‘de jure’ recognition for Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania” 2nd November, 1920. TNA: FO 371/5373: 58.

¹³⁸ P. Loraine to Foreign Office, 4th December 1920. TNA: FO 371/5373: 116.

Vilnius occupation on 9th of October strengthened the British hesitation. Britain was convinced to postpone the question of recognition, until the Vilnius dispute was settled. In other words, it decided to keep the recognition question open as a lever, if the need would arise to press Lithuania towards some kind of preferable settlement. Nevertheless, initially Britain reasonably adopted the policy of ‘non-discrimination’ in recognizing the three Baltic states. Tellingly, in response to Latvia’s request to recognize her alone, Curzon maintained that it would be difficult to distinguish the case of any Baltic state with regard to the *de jure* recognition. He couldn’t grasp why Latvia should be an exception, and thought that otherwise ‘anomalous and absurd’ position would be produced, there being no sound reasons for such a discrimination¹³⁹. Similarly keeping its insistence on the simultaneous recognition of all of the Baltic states, Britain warned Poland that it would be ‘decidedly invidious’ to recognize Latvia and Estonia, leaving Lithuania aside, and that recognizing only ‘ethnographic’ Lithuania would impair any possible settlement of the Vilnius dispute¹⁴⁰. Curzon insisted against ‘further complicating the situation by according *de jure* recognition to some but not to others of the Baltic States <...> until they have arrived at a clear understanding with the League of Nations respecting Lithuania’¹⁴¹. Thus, it seems that the British understood at least some of the Lithuanian arguments supporting their case for recognition, and were holding the position that it is important to insist, *especially vis a vis France*, that all three Baltic states should be recognized simultaneously. As Foreign Office minute observed the negative effects of the opposite policy option, ‘to exclude Lithuania from recognition, if recognition for the others is decided on, would be to render useless our own efforts

¹³⁹ Earl Curzon to Mr. Dewhurst, 6th January 1921. TNA: FO 371\6720: 45.

¹⁴⁰ J.D. Gregory minute, 19th October 1920. TNA: FO 371\5373: 11.

¹⁴¹ Curzon minute, 19th October 1920. TNA: FO 371\5373: 11.

and those of the League to settle the dispute with Poland in a reasonable way¹⁴². Interestingly, this statement was made 5 days before it was decided on 26th of January, 1921 in the conference of the League to recognize only Latvia and Estonia. What was the cause of such an instant change of the British position?

2.71 The British bow to France: separate recognition of Latvia and Estonia

It seems it was France who took the initiative at this time and insisted on the recognition of Latvia and Estonia, leaving Lithuania aside. At the Supreme Council meeting of January 26th, 1921, the decision to recognize the Baltic states together with Georgia was raised by the French. However, Berthelot considered the recognition of Lithuania as impossible until the settlement of the Vilnius dispute. Italians were favorable to the recognition of all Baltic states, and the British voice was decisive. Lloyd George and Curzon reminded the ‘reasons for caution’ which precluded Britain from recognizing those states, but considered that they cannot disagree with the general wish of the Allies. Lloyd George expressed his regrets for not recognizing Lithuania, as he was of the view that ‘she had been very badly treated by Poles’¹⁴³. Thus, it seems that at this point Britain sacrificed the case of Lithuania for the sake of the solidarity with France. Britain was caught between her will to maintain the unified allied position and her own views on the matter, which were contrary to those of the French and could possibly have made the dispute settlement easier if adopted. Indeed, on the next day, Wilton, surprised by the decision, reported from Lithuania that the verdict to leave Lithuania alone unrecognized will intensify Lithuanian suspicions that France and Poland is forcing her into the Polish federation, and will encourage

¹⁴² Foreign Office minutes, 21st January 1921. TNA: FO 371\6720: 102.

¹⁴³ Lord Hardinge to Foreign Office, 26th January 1921. TNA: FO 371\6720: 117.

German and Bolshevik intrigues¹⁴⁴. On other occasion, Wilton observed that after the non-recognition ‘the Lithuanian sentiment <with regard to idea of federation> is dead today – it is delicate even to touch on the subject’¹⁴⁵. Foreign Office minutes concluded that the refusal to grant *de jure* recognition to Lithuania ‘has definitely checked any tendencies, however slight, towards a rapprochement or federation with Poland’¹⁴⁶.

Lithuania was sensing the obvious ‘double standard’ policy. As Lithuanian representative in London Narusevicius accurately pointed out, although the fact of the unsettled Lithuanian south-eastern borders is put as a official reason for Lithuanian non-recognition, this fact did not preclude the Allies from recognizing Poland. More precisely, Poland at the time she got her *de jure* was even at the more precarious situation, since she did not have even the temporarily fixed borders with any of her neighboring states, and since she didn’t have the democratically elected government¹⁴⁷. Lithuania was well aware that the real reason for non recognition was the belief that keeping recognition as a lever will make Polish-Lithuanian settlement more easy of achievement¹⁴⁸. The Lithuanian claim was supported by both British commissioners in the Baltic Tallents and Wilton, who held that it was reasonable for Lithuania to demand to meet Poland on equal terms in prospective plebiscite or negotiations¹⁴⁹.

Nevertheless, Britain, influenced by the French, tried to press Lithuania using the recognition card. Tellingly, Gregory, while commentating such Lithuanian protests and offering to ignore them, wrote: ‘I have done my best to console Mr.

¹⁴⁴ E.C. Wilton to Foreign Office, 27th January 1921. TNA: FO 371\6720: 132.

¹⁴⁵ E.C. Wilton to J.D. Gregory, 2nd February 1921. TNA: FO 371\6724: 168.

¹⁴⁶ Foreign Office minutes, 16th February 1921. TNA: FO 371\6724: 173.

¹⁴⁷ Narusevicius memorandum “The Present Situation of Lithuania”, 14th February 1921. TNA: FO 371\6724: 205.

¹⁴⁸ E.C. Wilton to Earl Curzon, 9th February 1921. TNA: FO 371\6724: 175.

¹⁴⁹ E.C. Wilton to Foreign Office 27th January 1921. TNA: FO 371\6720: 131.

Narusevicius personally, but he points out – not without reason – that our plea about the non-settlement of Lithuanian frontiers is rather a poor one, inasmuch as we recognized both Poland and Finland long before their frontiers were fixed. So perhaps the less we dwell on this point in the future the better!’¹⁵⁰. As Curzon indicated, the conference decided to take no action until the dispute is settled, because no one felt quite sure of the conduct of Lithuania in the Vilnius dispute¹⁵¹.

However, the British couldn’t refuse to dwell on the matter for long. Wilton was constantly reporting that the adopted policy does not bring Lithuania closer to Poland, but on the contrary, makes even the reconciliation impossible, not mentioning the federative schemes, and generates suspicion towards the aims of the Allies. Commentating on the Lithuanian memorandum outlining the reasons why the Allies should recognize Lithuania, Foreign Office minutes of March 13, 1921 stated that all the arguments are very reasonable and difficult to resist, taking into account the fact that recognition to Estonia, Latvia and Poland was given before their frontiers were settled. Furthermore, it was observed that the recognition would foster a reasonable state of mind in Lithuania¹⁵². Due to these considerations, Britain started to think about changing its negative stance.

2.72 The attempts to proceed independently and yet another bow to the French

As the idea of plebiscite was abandoned by the League on March and the proposal was to start the direct negotiations between the disputants under the auspices of the League, the unexpectedly radical Polish stance and the refusal to take actions to evacuate its forces from Vilnius annoyed the British. Moreover, British military

¹⁵⁰ J.D. Gregory minute, 14th February 1921. TNA: FO 371\6720: 181.

¹⁵¹ Curzon minute, 15th March 1921. TNA: FO 371\6725: 48.

¹⁵² Foreign Office minute, 11th March 1921. TNA: FO 371\6725: 47.

representatives reported that the poles put strong efforts to colonize the Vilnius region with Polish inhabitants. It was foreseen that even if in the course of the direct Lithuanian-Polish negotiations Vilnius is ceded to Lithuania, the Poles had already prepared the way for the revolt of ‘patriotic inhabitants’, who will refuse to come under Lithuanian rule¹⁵³. In addition, Britain learned that her lever is producing the contrary results - the non recognition of Lithuania arouses the negative public opinion against the federation. These reasons led the Foreign Office to reconsider the question of the *de jure* recognition.

Wilton produced a voluminous memorandum on the political and economic reasons why Britain should recognize Lithuania *de jure*¹⁵⁴. According to Wilton, recognition would preclude Poland from the ability to press Lithuania on the federation matter, what gave no result, and would help to preserve Lithuanian independence until the situation becomes favorable for the federation. The recognition would strengthen the positive image of the Britain, and would make the British suggestions in regard to Lithuanian-Polish relations ‘almost as a command’. Responding to the Wilton’s arguments, Gregory changed his mind and agreed that recognition would give Wilton much more influence in Lithuania in directing Lithuanians into some sort of federative programme. The Foreign Office was of the view that although giving up the non-recognition as a lever, Britain would still retain the Memel card in order to press the obstinate party in Lithuania.

After the information was received that the Poles have no intention to give up Vilnius, the Foreign Office minute stated:

‘Poland has done nothing but quibble with any proposals put forward and has made none of her own. She finally brought about the break-up of the Conference by proposing that Vilnius representatives must be present. She has never moved from an uncompromising demand for

¹⁵³ Pargiter, “The Fortnightly Report for Lithuania”, 6th April 1921. TNA: FO 371\6725: 113.

¹⁵⁴ E.C. Wilton, “Minute on the grant of *de jure* recognition to Lithuania”, 5th April 1921. TNA: FO 371\6725: 101.

federation. The question is whether the time has not come to try and shake the obstinate party in Poland by showing through the *de jure* recognition of Lithuania that we mean business and contemplate, if need be, an independent Lithuania. Recognition would not get Zeligowski out of Vilnius, but it might make the Poles realize that by sticking to the Vilnius plum, they will be in danger of losing the rest of the Lithuanian cake. An independent and hostile Lithuania minus Vilnius would be much more of a menace to Poland than a Lithuania plus Vilnius closely allied, though not in actual federation'¹⁵⁵.

Owing to these considerations, in late April Britain informed France of 'intention to use *de jure* recognition of Lithuania as a means for bringing the Poles to reason', but the French reply of April 26th was negative, suggesting to delay the recognition until the dispute is settled¹⁵⁶. The French replied that the *de jure* recognition would strengthen the uncompromising party in Lithuania¹⁵⁷. Apparently, non-existence of the mutual understanding between the two Allied powers regarding the matter again burdened the settlement of the dispute. Leeper offered once more to try to induce the French, but anticipated that the French would not agree, and suggested to proceed independently. The pressure was also coming from the House – in an open letter in The Times five MP's stated that 'everybody knows the true source of opposition, and everybody knows that the British influence, properly exerted, would be sufficient to overcome it without untoward consequences'¹⁵⁸.

It seems that Curzon was convinced by the energetic feeling of his colleagues in the Foreign Office. He was prepared to tell the French that 'we mean and do it'¹⁵⁹. However, Curzon hesitated to breach away from the established practice of discussing the questions of recognition in the Council of the League and thus refused to act independently in advance, until the forthcoming Council meeting. This meant the postponement of the recognition question until September 1921. However, as it is known, in that meeting Lithuania together with the other two Baltic states was

¹⁵⁵ Foreign Office minute, 16th June 1921. TNA: FO 371\6725: 173.

¹⁵⁶ Foreign Office minute, 30th April 1921. TNA: FO 371\6725: 137.

¹⁵⁷ Max Muller to Earl Curzon, 23rd March 1921. TNA: FO 371\6730: 39.

¹⁵⁸ The Times excerpt, 28th June 1921. TNA: FO 371\6725: 193.

¹⁵⁹ Curzon minute, 26th June 1921. TNA: FO 371\6725: 174.

admitted to the League, but the recognition of Lithuania was withheld for almost one year since then. It is not difficult to guess why.

It seems that the British once again acquiesced to the position of the French, retracting their own arguments. Retrospectively commentating the British policy, Ovey stated that after the French refusal, the government ‘did not feel justified in pressing the point further’¹⁶⁰. After the French *non*, Britain returned to its negative position. As the League proposed the second Hymans scheme of the settlement of the dispute, Britain intended to press Lithuania to accept it¹⁶¹, and the recognition card was attempted again. On October 21st, the Foreign Office minute stated: ‘as we have held off so long it would hardly seem the moment to accord Lithuania *de jure* recognition’¹⁶².

In the last days of 1921 the Lithuanian-Polish negotiations under the auspices of the League broke down, and after Poland succeeded in forcing the façade elections to the Vilnius Diet in January 1922, Gregory already stated the finality in Lithuania’s geographical limits. He observed that ‘Lithuania cannot now be justifiably left out in the cold anymore’, as the recognition was used only as a ‘pawn’ in Lithuanian-Polish negotiations. As to the future of Lithuania, Gregory wrote:

‘Lithuania will therefore become isolated and can look forward only to existence as an independent state within the limits of the territory over which the Kaunas Government can assert its jurisdiction. As such she can develop more or less prosperously as a petty agricultural state without general political importance, but a prey to German and Russian exploitation’¹⁶³.

In sum, Britain was caught in opposition between her will to maintain the unified allied policy towards Lithuania, and the principles and policies which she saw as most appropriate, and which possibly were really most suitable for the settlement

¹⁶⁰ E.Ovey to Lord Hardinge, 6th April 1922. TNA: FO 371\8062: 76.

¹⁶¹ E.C. Wilton to J.D. Gregory, 19th October 1921. TNA: FO 371\6725: 212.

¹⁶² Ovey minutes, 21st October 1921. TNA: FO 371\6725: 206.

¹⁶³ J.D.Gregory minute, 31st January 1922. TNA: FO 371\8062: 48.

of the dispute. As the common agreement on how to tackle the Lithuanian problem was missing in any case, it is not surprising that the lever of recognition was causing the opposite effect. All the more as the French, it seems, have been ‘cheating’ on Britain.

2.73 The French diplomatic intrigues

It may be difficult to ‘socialize’ the newcomers not only because they speak the different language compared to the established powers. It can be even more difficult to tackle their problems if the established powers do not share the common language themselves. It appears that this was precisely the case in the current dispute. Initially, it seems that Britain sincerely believed that there can be no disagreement between her and France regarding the Lithuanian problems. When Gregory observed that Lithuanians were ‘banking’ on the differences between the British and the French with regard to their matter, he tried to convince the Lithuanians that Britain ‘throughout the controversy, seen eye to eye with the French Government, and there was not the slightest chance of divergence of views on fundamentals’¹⁶⁴.

However, eventually Foreign Office began to receive the double-edged signals. In February 1921, Wilton reported the story, allegedly emanating from the French mission in Lithuania, that non-recognition of Lithuania was due to the definite opposition of the British¹⁶⁵. Tellingly, Foreign Office minutes referred to this as a ‘typical piece of the French work’¹⁶⁶. In April 1921, Wilton reported that Narusevicius claims to be informed by Berthelot that only Britain opposes the

¹⁶⁴ J.D. Gregory, “Record of Interview with three Leading Lithuanians”, 23rd February 1921. TNA: FO 419\3: 9.

¹⁶⁵ E.C. Wilton to Earl Curzon, 9th February 1921. TNA: FO 371\6724: 174.

¹⁶⁶ Foreign Office minute, 16th February 1921. TNA: FO 371\6724: 173.

recognition, while the French and Italians support it. Wilton observed that no official in Kaunas believes this story, but the propaganda is spread in the press¹⁶⁷. The same information was received from the Lithuanian side on one more occasion in the end of April, stating that Narusevicius was told by Briand that the French will propose to recognize Lithuania *de jure* in the next session of the Supreme Council¹⁶⁸.

In 1922 May, the French really agreed to recognize Lithuania *de jure*. It seems that France was embarrassed by the Polish act of the official annexation of Vilnius, as it apparently was not according to the French plan¹⁶⁹. But France did not rush to put its position officially. On 5th of May, the French sent the note to the Foreign Office inquiring about the British position. The British note of 16th of May replied that Britain favors the *de jure* recognition, as it would improve Lithuanian-Polish relations. The British note emphasized two things: that recognition should be accorded in concert with the Allies, and that recognition should be made conditional on the river Nemunas internationalization (this was important for the British and for Poland economically)¹⁷⁰. Although the British note inquired about the views of the French on the matter, France did not hurry to reply. Probably suspecting some game, Foreign Office decided to press France for the answer¹⁷¹.

In the meantime, Dilley learned in Lithuanian MFA that Lithuanian representative in Paris was officially informed at Quay d'Orsay by Rocca that France is prepared to recognize Lithuania immediately, but that Britain is opposing this by insisting on the prior settlement of the Memel question (sic!)¹⁷². Furthermore, Dilley was confidentially informed in Lithuanian MFA that the head of Polish and Baltic

¹⁶⁷ E.C. Wilton, "Minute on the grant of *de jure* recognition to Lithuania", 5th April 1921. TNA: FO 371\6725: 101.

¹⁶⁸ Foreign Office minute, 28th April 1921. TNA: FO 371\6725: 137.

¹⁶⁹ E. Ovey minute, 13th May 1922. TNA: FO 371\8062: 114.

¹⁷⁰ E. Ovey to Count de Saint-Aulaire, 16th May 1922. TNA: FO 371\8062: 97.

¹⁷¹ R.A.Leeper minute, 6th June 1922. TNA: FO 371\8062: 116.

¹⁷² Dilley to Foreign Office, 2nd June 1922. TNA: FO 371\8062: 117

department in the French MFA Brugere officially assured Lithuanian representative that France is prepared to grant *de jure unconditionally* and immediately, but that they did not receive any reply from Britain in this regard (sic!), and that the French, ‘not wishing to make Memel an object of merchandise, does not establish any bond between the questions of recognition and the attribution of the Memel territory’¹⁷³. After the interview with Narusevicius, Ovey observed that ‘the French have gone far <...> and are even pretending the hitch in the *de jure* recognition comes from us!!’¹⁷⁴. According to Ovey, such French behavior ‘shows exactly the French intrigues to pose as Lithuania’s friend’. As he concluded, ‘the French have tried to steal our thunder above this matter, but the real test of their alleged friendship for Lithuania – or, rather, bid for Lithuanian friendship – will be when the question of the future of Memel comes up’¹⁷⁵. Curzon also anticipated something not very tactful from the French side – one of his comments stated that ‘unless we are very careful, the French will take <...> the credit of recognition’¹⁷⁶. Lithuanians seemed to be also aware of the French intrigue – Narusevicius hinted his British colleague that these statements may be French propaganda against Britain¹⁷⁷. Dilley was immediately instructed to inform Lithuanian government that such allegation is a nonsense and it presumably arose due to misunderstanding¹⁷⁸. The French were once again informed that Britain is in favor of *de jure* recognition without the further delay and independent of the question of Memel. The same note also referred to the ‘misunderstanding’, disclosing the Lithuanian source¹⁷⁹. Finally, the French replied in the affirmative on 29th of June.

¹⁷³ Dilley to Foreign Office, 20th June 1922. TNA: FO 371\8062: 132.

¹⁷⁴ E. Ovey minute, 15th June, 1922. TNA: FO 371\8062: 135.

¹⁷⁵ Foreign Office minute, 5th July 1922. TNA: FO 371\8062: 162, 169.

¹⁷⁶ Curzon minute, 11th May 1922. TNA: FO 371\8062: 93.

¹⁷⁷ Narusevicius to Harmsworth, 5th July 1922. TNA: FO 371\8062: 179.

¹⁷⁸ Foreign Office to Dilley, 10th June 1922. TNA: FO 371\8062: 119.

¹⁷⁹ Lord Balfour to Count de Saint Aulaire, 20th June 1922. TNA: FO 371\8062: 120.

Nevertheless, Lithuania was not recognized by the allies until December 1922, owing to Lithuanian refusal to accept the condition of internationalization of the river Nemunas, what was important to the British as well as Polish economic interests. However, at this time, when the British needed the French accord to retain the pressure, France agreed to appease the conditions significantly. Therefore, Britain was left ‘overboard’, and couldn’t choose but agree to reduce its demands, as Foreign Office minute noted, ‘for the sake of Allied solidarity and also not to let the French acquire merit in Lithuanian eyes at our expense’¹⁸⁰.

Or, was this game also encouraged by Lithuania itself, in order to get the support of both of the Powers? On one occasion, commentating on the Lithuanian plead for the help to induce the French to accept Lithuanian-offered compromise regarding the conditions of the recognition, Ovey noticed: ‘The Lithuanians first pretended the French were favorable while we were obstructive; now the French are obstructive and it is our duty to talk them over. According to them it is always our fault’¹⁸¹. Ovey suggested not to make any suggestions to the French regarding the recognition until the meeting of the Council of Ambassadors, because otherwise ‘Lithuanians will hope for further divergences to play off between us and the French’¹⁸². If this was the case, it seems that not only Lithuania tried to play off the Allies in order to get *de jure*. Latvian Foreign Minister Meierovics on the occasion of meeting Curzon tried to convince him that Italy and, more importantly, France (Millerand and Berthelot) have raised no objections to Latvia’s recognition, allegedly leaving the last word for Britain¹⁸³. Given this situation, Meierovics hinted that ‘it would create a most unfortunate impression, impossible to explain away, if he did not

¹⁸⁰ E. Ovey minute, 13th December 1922. TNA: FO 371\8063: 176.

¹⁸¹ E. Ovey minute, 8th September 1922. TNA: FO 371\8063: 97.

¹⁸² E. Ovey minute, 15th September 1922. TNA: FO 371\8063: 112.

¹⁸³ Earl Curzon to Mr. Dewhurst (Riga), 6th January, 1921. TNA: FO 371\6720: 45.

receive similar attention in London'¹⁸⁴. Curzon in turn observed that this is not the first time when the question is put with regard to the alleged acquiescence of France and Italy, but his own information suggested that this was not the case. The chief of British diplomacy advised Meierovics not to put so much confidence in his convictions regarding the French and Italian position. It seems that Curzon tried to shame his Latvian colleague by inquiring how come that France and Italy didn't show their support just three weeks ago at Geneva, and hinting to ask for some explanation directly¹⁸⁵.

In sum, although on the surface there seemed to be at least some kind of Allied solidarity, taking form of the Allied coordination and the League mechanism in dealing with the dispute, micro-level analysis confirms the initial hypothesis that such framework suffered from the major shortcomings – Britain and France really lacked the mutual understanding on how to treat the problem. All this turmoil could not fail to impede the settlement.

¹⁸⁴ Foreign Office minute, 4th January 1921. TNA: FO 371\6720: 85.

¹⁸⁵ Earl Curzon to Mr. Dewhurst (Riga), 6th January, 1921. TNA: FO 371\6720: 45.

Conclusion

This study tried to take a first more or less thorough look at the British mediation efforts in the gravest Lithuanian territorial problem of the interwar period. Indeed, several theoretical perspectives could be suitable in explaining the nature and the unfortunate outcome of the British involvement. The whole story could possibly be told from the realist standpoint, putting everything in terms of power relations, or even from the idealist point of departure, as it seems that some kind of ‘maternal instinct’ was indeed inherent in the British efforts in protecting the weaker side. What this study tried to do was to show that British mediation efforts were encumbered by the fact that the mediator and the disputants could not really communicate due to the lack of the common conceptual framework, which defines the basic assumptions guiding the conduct of the state in international arena. Britain, seeing the matters from the ‘high altitude’, approached the problem from the precarious geopolitical position of Lithuania. Judging from that point of view, the British and Lithuanian take on the problem started to diverge with regard to the very nature of the dispute. Britain deemed as totally impractical the Lithuanian insistence on historical, ethnographic and legal aspects of the case with no particular illusions as to the effectiveness of the international, i.e. League, dispute settlement. Instead, Britain saw the Vilnius problem in a wider context, supporting the Lithuanian claim for very practical calculations such as the welfare of the district in question and the long-term stability in the region. On the other hand Lithuania harbored the conviction that Britain understands the Lithuanian woes and its unquestionably just claim to Vilnius, thinking that Britain should automatically assume the anti-Polish stance in the matter. As Britain expected Lithuania to think in the British terms of rationality, ‘pathetic’ was the word by which

Britain characterized the Lithuanian expectations towards her. Britain overestimated both the potential ‘statesmanship’ of the Poles and the rationality of Lithuanians. In case of Poland, Britain simply could not understand why did the Poles resort to force and thus themselves precluded the possibility of eventually getting the ‘whole Lithuanian cake’. Well after the Polish adventure, Britain still treated Poland as a rational and strategically-thinking actor, disregarded the information pointing to the contrary, and expected her to give Vilnius away for its own advantage. As far as Lithuania is concerned, Britain could not understand the rationale behind the stubbornness of Lithuania, when such Lithuanian stance obviously endangered its existence in the longer run.

Furthermore, the study highlighted the absence of the mutual understanding between Britain and France and its negative role in the settlement of the dispute, what became evident with the initial stages of the quarrel. The French both tacit and overt support for the Polish case reduced the effect of the pressure which Britain attempted to put on the Polish side. Nevertheless, Britain unsuccessfully endeavored to ‘patch’ what was not really existing - the clear common framework in the Allied camp designed to approach the matter. Such common framework was simply impossible due to the mutual suspicions of the intentions of the other power to dominate the Baltic and the French attempts to cheat on sometimes naïve British belief in the Allied solidarity. In the end, Britain was left ‘overboard’ while expecting the support from the French when it was needed. All this flux apparently enabled Lithuania (and, it seems, some other ‘newcomers’) to try to use it for its own advantage.

Of course, as the study is limited to the analysis of the British and to some extent Soviet diplomatic sources, it would be very useful to complement it with the research of Lithuanian and French diplomatic documents. This could provide the

possibility to discern the deeper differences between the assumptions on which France and Britain based their stance in the dispute, identifying the very root causes of why they lacked the common language with regard to the Lithuanian-Polish quarrel.

Bibliography

1. Brzezinski, Zbysgniew. "Pokyčiai Vidurio ir Rytų Europoje: Lenkija ir Lietuva po Komunizmo Žlugimo" [Changes in Central and Eastern Europe: Poland and Lithuania after the Fall of Communism] *Politologija* 6 (1995).
2. Crowe, David. *The Baltic States and the Great Powers: Foreign Relations, 1938-1940*. Boulder: Westview Press, 1993.
3. Davies, Norman. *Dievo Žaislas. Lenkijos Istorija*, vol. 2 [God's Playground. A History of Poland] Vilnius: Lietuvos rašytojų sąjungos leidykla, 2002.
4. Goldstein, Erik and B.J.C. McKercher, "Power and Stability in British Foreign Policy, 1865-1965," *Diplomacy and Statecraft* 14 (2003).
5. Gueslin, Julien. "Prancūzija ir Lietuvos Klausimas (1920-1923 m.): Tarp Iliuzijų ir Realios Politikos," [France and the Lithuanian Question (1920-1923): Between Illusions and Real Politics] *Istorija*, Vol. LI (2002).
6. Hiden, John and Thomas Lane, eds. *The Baltic and the Outbreak of the Second World War*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992.
7. Hiden, John and Patrick Salmon. *The Baltic Nations and Europe: Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania in the Twentieth Century*. New York: Longman, 1991.
8. Johnson, Gaynor. "Curzon, Lloyd George and the Control of British Foreign Policy, 1919-22: A Reassessment," *Diplomacy and Statecraft* 11 (2000).
9. Kissinger, Henry. *A World Restored: Metternich, Castlereagh and the Problems of Peace, 1812-22*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1973.
10. Kennan, George F. *The Decline of Bismarck's European Order: Franco-Russian Relations, 1875-1890*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1989.
11. Laserson, Max. "The Recognition of Latvia," *The American Journal of International Law* 37 (1943).
12. Laurinavičius, Česlovas. *Politika ir Diplomacija: Lietuvių Tautinės Valstybės Tapsmo ir Raidos Fragmentai* [Politics and Diplomacy: the Evolution of Lithuanian National State] Kaunas: Naujasis Lankas, 1997.
13. Lopata, Raimundas, and Vytautas Žalys. "Lietuvos Geopolitinis Kodas," [The Geopolitical Code of Lithuania] *Politologija* 6 (1995).
14. Rauch, Georg. *The Baltic States: the Years of Independence; Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, 1917-1940*. London: C. Hurst & Co., 1987.
15. Roi, M.L. and B.J.C. McKercher. "'Ideal' and 'Punch-Bag': Conflicting Views of the Balance of Power and Their Influence on Interwar British Foreign Policy," *Diplomacy and Statecraft* 12 (2001).
16. Salmon, Patrick. "British Security Interests in Scandinavia and the Baltic 1918-1939," *Studia Baltica Stockholmiensia* 3, 1986.
17. Sharp, Alan and Keith Jeffery. "'Après la Guerre finit, Soldat anglais partit...': Anglo-French Relations 1918-25," *Diplomacy and Statecraft* 14 (2003).

18. Sharp, Alan. "The Enforcement of the Treaty of Versailles, 1919-1923," *Diplomacy and Statecraft* 16 (2005).
19. Theolin, Sture. *Vilniaus Konfliktas: Begalinis Ginčas dėl Lietuvos ir Lenkijos Sienos 1917-1996* [Vilnius Conflict: the Neverending Dispute Concerning Lithuanian-Polish Border 1917-1996] Vilnius: Vaga, 2001.
20. Ullman, Richard H. *The Anglo-Soviet Accord*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1972.
21. Watson, Adam. *Diplomacy: the Dialogue between States*. New York: Routledge, 1991.
22. Žalys, Vytautas. *Lietuvos Diplomatinės Istorija (1925-1940)* [Lithuanian Diplomatic History (1925-1940)] Vilnius: Versus Aureus, 2007.
23. *The Covenant of the League of Nations*,
<www.yale.edu/lawweb/avalon/leagcov.htm> [visited on 11th May, 2007]

Archival sources

1. Axelrod to Tchicherin, 15th October, 1920. TNA: FO 371\5380: 58.
2. Axelrod to Tchicherin, 23rd October 1920. TNA: FO 371\5380: 61.
3. Axelrod to Tchicherin, 2nd November 1920. TNA: FO 371\5380: 68.
4. Axelrod to Tchicherin, 8th November 1920. TNA: FO 371\5380: 73.
5. Balfour to Count de Saint Aulaire, 20th June 1922. TNA: FO 371\8062: 120.
6. Board of Trade to Foreign Office, 8th April 1921. TNA: FO 371\6725: 79.
7. Clark M. minute, 23rd November 1920. TNA: FO 371\5378: 120.
8. Curzon memorandum, 8th October 1920. TNA: FO 371\5373:194.
9. Curzon minute, 11th May 1922. TNA: FO 371\8062: 93.
10. Curzon minute, 15th March 1921. TNA: FO 371\6725: 48.
11. Curzon minute, 17th February, 1921. TNA: FO 371/6720: 197.
12. Curzon minute, 17th March 1922. TNA: FO 371\8058: 48.
13. Curzon minute, 19th October 1920. TNA: FO 371\5373: 11.
14. Curzon minute, 26th June 1921. TNA: FO 371\6725: 174.
15. Curzon minute, 27th February 1921. TNA: FO 371\6726: 31.
16. Curzon to Colonel Ward, 26th October 1920. TNA: FO 371\5374: 52.
17. Curzon to Max Muller, 25th February 1922. TNA: FO 688\11: 267.
18. Curzon to Max Muller, 5th March 1921. TNA: FO 688\9\3: 91.
19. Curzon to Mr. Dewhurst (Riga), 6th January, 1921. TNA: FO 371/6720: 61.
20. Derby to Foreign Office, 11th October 1920. TNA: FO 371\5373: 214.
21. Dewhurst to Earl Curzon, 16th November 1920. TNA: FO 371\5379: 85.

22. Dilley to Foreign Office, 20th June 1922. TNA: FO 371\8062: 132.
23. Dilley to Foreign Office, 2nd June 1922. TNA: FO 371\8062: 117
24. Foreign Office confidential memorandum, 12th January, 1919. TNA: FO 608/196: 32.
25. Foreign Office memorandum "British Policy in the Baltic States", 12th June 1921. TNA: FO 371\6734: 250.
26. Foreign Office memorandum "The Polish-Lithuanian Question", 11th October, 1920. TNA: FO 371/5374: 36.
27. Foreign Office memorandum, 5th July 1922. TNA: FO 371\8063: 27.
28. Foreign Office minute "Summary of Tilden Smith Question", 20th October, 1920. TNA: FO 371/5376 : 90.
29. Foreign Office minute, 11th March 1921. TNA: FO 371\6725: 47.
30. Foreign Office minute, 12th October 1920. TNA: FO 371\5373: 186.
31. Foreign Office minute, 13th October 1920. TNA: FO 371\5374: 13.
32. Foreign Office minute, 16th February 1921. TNA: FO 371\6724: 173.
33. Foreign Office minute, 16th June 1921. TNA: FO 371\6725: 173.
34. Foreign Office minute, 21st April 1921. TNA: FO 371/6725: 120.
35. Foreign Office minute, 28th April 1921. TNA: FO 371\6725: 137.
36. Foreign Office minute, 2nd March 1921. TNA: FO 371\6725: 9.
37. Foreign Office minute, 30th April 1921. TNA: FO 371\6725: 137.
38. Foreign Office minute, 4th January 1921. TNA: FO 371\6720: 85.
39. Foreign Office minute, 5th July 1922. TNA: FO 371\8062: 162, 169.
40. Foreign Office minutes, 21st January 1921. TNA: FO 371\6720: 102.
41. Foreign Office minutes, 2nd March 1921. TNA: FO 371\6728: 181.
42. Foreign Office Notes on the Baltic Provinces, November 1919. TNA: FO 419\1: 9.
43. Foreign Office to Dilley, 10th June 1922. TNA: FO 371\8062: 119.
44. Foreign Office to the Secretary to the Army Council, 21st February, 1921. TNA: FO 371/5378: 190.
45. French note to Britain, 6th October 1920. TNA: FO 371\5373: 155.
46. Gregory to Max Muller, 16th February 1921. TNA: FO 688\10\12: 299.
47. Gregory to the Board of Trade, 25th October, 1920. TNA: FO 371/5376: 95.
48. Gregory to Treasury, 7th October 1920. TNA: FO 371\5374: 187.
49. Gregory, J.D. "Attitude of His Majesty's Government towards 'de jure' recognition for Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania" 2nd November, 1920. TNA: FO 371/5373: 58.
50. Gregory, J.D. "Record of Interview with three Leading Lithuanians", 23rd February, 1921. TNA: FO 371/6726: 20.

51. Gregory, J.D. minute, 11th November 1920. TNA: FO 371\5380: 53.
52. Gregory, J.D. minute, 12th April 1921. TNA: FO 371\6725: 100.
53. Gregory, J.D. minute, 14th February 1921. TNA: FO 371\6720: 181.
54. Gregory, J.D. minute, 15th November 1920. TNA: FO 371\5374: 75.
55. Gregory, J.D. minute, 16th October 1920. TNA: FO 371\5373: 198.
56. Gregory, J.D. minute, 19th October 1920. TNA: FO 371\5373: 11.
57. Gregory, J.D. minute, 31st January 1922. TNA: FO 371\8062: 48.
58. Hardinge to Foreign Office, 26th January 1921. TNA: FO 371\6720: 117.
59. Kidston to Foreign Office, 25th October 1920. TNA: FO 371\5373: 22.
60. Leeper, R.A. minute, 10th August 1921. TNA: FO 371\6730: 118
61. Leeper, R.A. minute, 6th June 1922. TNA: FO 371\8062: 116.
62. Lindsay to Earl Curzon, 4th November 1920. TNA: FO 371\5379: 203.
63. Loraine to Earl Curzon, 10th January 1921. TNA: FO 688\09\3: 193.
64. Loraine to Earl Curzon, 7th October 1920. TNA: FO 371\5373: 187.
65. Loraine to Foreign Office, 10th October 1920. TNA: FO 371\5373: 181.
66. Loraine to Foreign Office, 30th October, 1920. TNA: FO 371\5373: 45.
67. Loraine to Foreign Office, 4th December 1920. TNA: FO 371\5373: 116.
68. Loraine to Foreign Office, 7th October 1920. TNA: FO 371\5373: 159.
69. Loraine to Foreign Office, 9th October 1920. TNA: FO 371\5373: 197.
70. Muller to Earl Curzon, 23rd March 1921. TNA: FO 371\6730: 39.
71. Muller to Foreign Office, 13th March, 1921. TNA: FO 371\6730: 24.
72. Muller to Foreign Office, 21st March 1921. TNA: FO 688\9\3: 81.
73. Muller to Foreign Office, 25th November, 1921. TNA: FO 688\9\3: 108.
74. Muller to J.D. Gregory, 30th November, 1921. TNA: FO 688\9\3: 20.
75. Muller to Lord Curzon, 19th April 1921. TNA: FO 688\9\3: 41.
76. Muller to Lord Curzon, 20th April 1922. TNA: FO 688\12\3: 108.
77. Narusevicius to Foreign Office, 10th March 1921. TNA: FO 371\6725.
78. Narusevicius to Harmsworth, 5th July 1922. TNA: FO 371\8062: 179.
79. Narusevicius to J.D. Gregory, 26th February 1921. TNA: FO 371\6724: 19.
80. Narusevicius, T. memorandum "The Present Situation of Lithuania", 14th February 1921. TNA: FO 371\6724: 205.
81. Ovey E., minute, 28th August 1922. TNA: FO 371\8069: 32.
82. Ovey to Count de Saint-Aulaire, 16th May 1922. TNA: FO 371\8062: 97.
83. Ovey to Lord Hardinge, 6th April 1922. TNA: FO 371\8062: 76.
84. Ovey, E. minute, 13th December 1922. TNA: FO 371\8063: 176.

85. Ovey, E. minute, 13th May 1922. TNA: FO 371\8062: 114.
86. Ovey, E. minute, 15th June, 1922. TNA: FO 371\8062: 135.
87. Ovey, E. minute, 15th September 1922. TNA: FO 371\8063: 112.
88. Ovey, E. minute, 8th September 1922. TNA: FO 371\8063: 97.
89. Ovey, E. minutes, 21st October 1921. TNA: FO 371\6725: 206.
90. Pargiter, R. "The Fortnightly Report for Lithuania", 6th April 1921. TNA: FO 371\6725: 113.
91. Pargiter, R. Report, 10th October 1920. TNA: FO 371\5374: 45.
92. Partiger, R. "General information of a military and semi-military nature for use in the compilation of the Military Handbook of Lithuania", 10th January 1921. TNA: FO 371/6724: 138.
93. Purickis, J. Speech at the session of Seim, 4th February 1921. TNA: FO 371\6724 :176.
94. Secret Political Report "Germany", 2nd December 1920. TNA: FO 371/5379: 117.
95. Secret Political Report, "Lithuania", 21st November 1920. TNA: FO 371/5379: 155.
96. Simpson to J.D. Gregory, 28th December 1920. TNA: FO 371/6719: 242.
97. Tallents to Earl Curzon, 12th August 1920. TNA: FO 419\2: 84.
98. Tallents to Earl Curzon, 15th December 1920. TNA: FO 371/5379: 107.
99. Tallents to Lord Curzon, 19th October 1920. TNA: FO 371\5373: 27.
100. Tallents, "The Baltic Provinces and the League of Nations", Memorandum, November 1920. TNA: FO 371/5374: 76.
101. The Army Council to the Foreign Office. TNA: FO 371/6723: 71.
102. The Times excerpt, 28th June 1921. TNA: FO 371\6725: 193.
103. Treasury to Foreign Office, 15th October, 1920. TNA: FO 371/5376: 7.
104. Tyszkiewicz to J.D. Gregory, 8th November 1920. TNA: FO 371\5376: 123.
105. Tyszkiewicz to J.D. Gregory, 9th October 1920. TNA: FO 371\5373: 175.
106. War Office Fortnightly Report, 1st October 1920. TNA: FO 371\5377: 40.
107. Ward to Foreign Office, 8th October 1920. TNA: FO 371\5373: 167.
108. Wilton to Earl Curzon, 11th March 1921. TNA: FO 371\6721: 3.
109. Wilton to Earl Curzon, 14th May 1921. TNA: FO 371/6734: 164.
110. Wilton to Earl Curzon, 28th September 1921. TNA: FO 371\6737: 154.
111. Wilton to Earl Curzon, 29th January 1921. TNA: FO 371\6728: 162.
112. Wilton to Earl Curzon, 9th February 1921. TNA: FO 371\6724: 174.

- 113. Wilton to Foreign Office 27th January 1921. TNA: FO 371\6720: 131.
- 114. Wilton to J.D. Gregory, 19th October 1921. TNA: FO 371\6725: 212.
- 115. Wilton to J.D. Gregory, 29th December 1920. TNA: FO 371\6721: 113.
- 116. Wilton to J.D. Gregory, 2nd February 1921. TNA: FO 371\6724: 168.
- 117. Wilton to J.D. Gregory, 3rd November 1920. TNA: FO 371\5380: 54.
- 118. Wilton to J.D. Gregory, 9th February 1921. TNA: FO 371\6724: 200.
- 119. Wilton to Lord Curzon, 12th August 1922. TNA: FO 371\8063: 87.
- 120. Wilton to P. Loraine, 4th January 1921. TNA: FO 688\9\3:204.
- 121. Wilton, E.C. "Economic Report on Lithuania", 19th May, 1921. TNA: FO 371/6725: 163.
- 122. Wilton, E.C. "Minute on the grant of de jure recognition to Lithuania", 5th April 1921. TNA: FO 371\6725: 101.