Мария Павлова, *Литва в политике Варшавы и Москвы в 1918–1926 годах (Постсоветские и восточноевропейские исследования, 10)*, Москва: Аспект пресс, 2016. 176 p. ISBN 978-5-7567-0833-2

While I was in Moscow recently, I managed to get a copy of a monograph by the young historian Maria Pavlova, which directly concerns issues of interwar Lithuania. It is, in essence, a study of the diplomatic problems Vilnius faced during that period. The monograph was based on the author's dissertation, defended in 2012. At first glance, it is a small book, containing 172 pages, including appendices; but it requires attentive reading, as the information in it is presented very concisely. The author is familiar with the rich historiographical literature on the Vilnius question, while the book's factual originality stems from the use of material from Russian, Lithuanian and Polish archives. In addition, it even makes reference to the diary of Mykolas Romeris (Michał Römer), kept in the library of the Lithuanian Academy of Sciences. Whoever has seen the original in Polish will know just how much effort reading it demands (the author knows both Polish and Lithuanian). Unfortunately, while she was trying to decipher the separate volumes of the diary in the Academy's library, they were most likely already deciphered, translated into Lithuanian, and published.¹ On the other hand, the literature she used for this monograph reveals just how many new studies have been published in Russia in recent years (by Alexander Rupasov, Genadi Matveyev, Irina Kukushina, etc) that are relevant to researchers of Lithuania's interwar history. This shows why the science of history requires a timely exchange of information.

The monograph's introduction presents the following general characterisation of the interwar period: newly independent smaller states also played an important role alongside the larger states; Poland's goal of dominance in the Central Europe region and its comparison with the larger states is noted. But a similar characterisation can also be applied to Lithuania, a

¹ Reference is made here to volumes of the journal from which material was used in the monograph, and which, at least theoretically, could have been used by the author prior to the defence of her dissertation: Mykolas Römeris, *Dienoraštis. 1918 m. birželio 13 – 1919 m. birželio 20-oji; 1919 m. birželio 21-oji – 1920 m. kovo 15-oji; 1920 m. kovo 17-oji – 1921 m. sausio 12-oji; 1921 m. sausio 13-oji – 1921 m. lapričio 7-oji*, par. R. Miknys (Vilnius, 2007–2012).

state with a small territory and population, lacking any serious international ambitions, yet which by its geo-political situation found itself in the sphere of interest of five larger countries, England, France, Germany, Poland and the RSFSR/USSR. In this context, the Lithuanian-Polish conflict became a persistent international conflict, lasting almost the entire interwar period, heightening tensions in the whole region, and bringing on the outbreak of the Second World War (p. 6). This treatment by the author suggests that the approach to the matter in her monograph will be serious. Apart from the introduction, the monograph consists of four chapters, a conclusion, statistical data about the composition of the population in the Vilnius region in the early 20th century, and photographs depicting Soviet diplomats who were associated with Lithuania in one way or another. There is even a photograph showing the peace negotiations between Lithuania and Soviet Russia in May–July 1920 in Moscow. To finish, there is a list of endnotes (476 in all), and a bibliography. A noticeable omission is an index of names; unfortunately, this is still typical of publications in Russia.

The first part spans the period from the emergence of the Lithuanian-Polish conflict during the First World War until September 1920, when the conflict turned into an international affair. The dominating leitmotif is that with the end of the First World War, the Entente states could not resolve the fate of Poland, and much less Lithuania, and that this circumstance meant that Soviet Russia could participate in the ‘process of the territorial-political formation of the region’ (p. 40). The second part of the monograph presents a discussion of the unsuccessful attempts by the League of Nations to solve the Lithuanian-Polish conflict in 1920–1921. The third part covers the period from January 1922 to October 1925. It looks at the efforts by Warsaw to expand its domination of the region, at the same time as isolating Soviet Russia/the USSR. There is also a discussion of the Soviet idea to reach a ‘general agreement’ with Poland, various territorial exchange projects, and the development of the issue of transit along the River Nemunas. The fourth part is devoted to the evolution of guarantees and the idea of a mutual non-aggression pact, and the signing of the treaty between Lithuania and Soviet Russia on 28 September 1926. Ultimately, the author reaches the conclusion that it was Moscow, and not Warsaw, that managed to treat Lithuania as an element of its security system (p. 141).

Generally speaking, the monograph gives a chronological overview of basically all the episodes known in diplomatic history. But thanks to the original archival material she uses, these episodes are made more relevant. Some examples: Soviet diplomacy’s efforts to ‘completely confuse’ the meaning of the Moscow Peace Treaty of 12 July 1920 and the Treaty of Riga of 5 October 1920 (p. 63); the projects of Viktor Lorenz to share territories with Poland (pp. 90–91); the decision of the Political Bureau of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Russia (Bolsheviks) following the failed putsch in Tallinn to transfer ‘fighting groups’ under

the leadership of communist parties in separate countries (p. 94). However, the possibility of an original interpretational vector would actually be of great interest, which is something we shall try to discuss (here) with the author, at least remotely.

Understandably, the author's position on the signing of the peace treaty between Lithuania and Soviet Russia on 12 July 1920 in Moscow is at the centre of attention for Lithuanian readers. We could say that this is a central question, and is thus worthy of special attention. In analysing the course of the peace negotiations, the author has tried to prove that at the time, Soviet Russia had already rejected the idea of Lithuania's immediate Sovietisation. She claims that the goal of Lithuania's politicians to preserve the country's sovereignty actually coincided with Moscow's interests at the time (pp. 6, 31–32). We agree that the interpretation of the Lithuanian-Russian peace negotiations exclusively in the context of potential Sovietisation would be rather limited (p. 33). However, if we maintain that both Soviet-Lithuanian negotiations, and the treaty that was signed, were the result of more than just a war-related conjuncture, and that the treaty featured objective content for regulating Lithuanian and Russian interstate relations, then the task of historians would be to work out how to extract that content from the war-related conjuncture, giving it a potentially firmer international foundation.

Unfortunately, what we read, perhaps against the author's will, essentially confirms the version prevailing among Western historians up till now that Moscow's interests regarding Lithuania were limited to the context of the war against Poland. The author stresses several times how important it was for the Red Army to protect the left wing of its western front from a possible strike from the Lithuanian (!?) or Latvian armies (p. 5, 31). This is quite surprising, as Lithuania did not share a territorial border with Soviet Russia, while the material at hand testifies to only one unambiguous Soviet request, that the Lithuanian army should strike the Polish army from behind in the Vilnius region.² Perhaps, when looking in this direction from Moscow, the difference between Lithuania and Latvia was not always visible. Since at the very beginning of the negotiations, the Lithuanian delegation demanded a separate act for the recognition of the Lithuanian state, with Vilnius as its capital, not relating it to the peace treaty, the Soviets suggested as a counter demand signing a treaty with Lithuania on a military pact directed against Poland. The author is inclined to view this possibility as a compromise (p. 33), alleging that it was important for Soviet Russia that, having received this kind of act of recognition, Lithuania would not suddenly halt the negotiations, or worse, side with the anti-Soviet coalition. At the same time, the author claims

² See: *Lietuvos istorija*, I dalis, T. X: E. Bendikaitė, A. Kasparavičius, S. Kaubrys [ir kt.], *Nepriklausomybė (1918–1940 m.)* (Vilnius, 2013), pp. 249–259.

that Moscow did not associate recognition of Lithuania with the formation of a military union. When on 18 June the Lithuanian delegation refused to sign the military pact, negotiations over the peace treaty did not end, and by 30 June negotiations on the most important questions in the treaty were already finalised (p. 34). Towards the end of the negotiations, Soviet Russia agreed to make a significant concession in Lithuania's favour: to give it Vilnius and part of the Vilnius region (p. 34). In turn, Lithuania also made a concession: instead of a military pact, it agreed to sign a secret (?)³ appendix, based on which the Red Army was given the right to use Lithuanian territory in the fight against Poland (p. 35). This exchange of concessions should be treated as a compromise. Thus, the Lithuanian-Soviet Russian peace treaty signed in Moscow should be understood as the result of Russia's expression of goodwill towards Lithuania. When the Red Army occupied Vilnius (14 July), as we know, the implementation of Lithuania's sovietisation programme commenced. But the author does not see any major problems with this, alleging that the Red Army was simply caught up in a wave of enthusiasm following its achievements, and besides, the Moscow treaty had not yet been ratified (p. 37).

We can agree that mistrust of how Lithuania might act did play a certain role in the behaviour of the Soviets. However, at this point, it is important to take into account all the factors that might have been important, and how these factors were actually interrelated. Unfortunately, for some reason, the author does not cite in her monograph the documents testifying to the approach of Vladimir Lenin, the chair of the Council of People's Commissars, towards the treaty with Lithuania that his diplomats had prepared. For example, in his notes dated 10 July, barely two days before the treaty was to be signed, Lenin still stressed: 'It is important for Lithuania to be Sovietised.'⁴ Then we would have a clearer image of just how thin the line was that separated Lithuania's sovietisation and non-sovietisation programmes.

The author is correct to note that at the beginning of August, thanks to the initiative of the diplomats Adolph Joffe and Georgy Chicherin, the sovietisation of Lithuania was stopped (p. 37–38). But again, the monograph creates the impression that this happened thanks to the same expression of goodwill.

³ Calling the appendix to the Moscow treaty as unilaterally 'secret' gives it a negative connotation (which is commonly done in Polish historiography), even though the appendix was not secret in the classic sense, as it was published by the Soviets, with only Kaunas trying to hide it under a veil of secrecy when its collision with the Spa project became apparent.

⁴ *The Unknown Lenin. From the Secret Archive*, ed. R. Pipes (New Haven, 1996), pp. 85–88; В.И. Ленин, *Неизвестные документы 1891–1922* (Москва, 2000), pp. 358–359.

The author sees the resolution of the Spa Conference (9 July 1920) as insignificant. Of course, the impact of the resolution was rather limited, mainly because Poland did not want to carry out the obligations it had taken on itself. But I doubt there are reliable grounds for not seeing any kind of causal link between the Spa resolution and the Moscow treaty signed three days later. For some reason, Curzon's note to Moscow (11 July) is not mentioned in the monograph, which explains why there is no data about the line defined in the note which the Red Army was not meant to cross, i.e., to keep a distance of 50 kilometres from the Hrodno-Vilnius-Daugpils railway.⁵ Poland, meanwhile, was to withdraw behind the line of 8 December 1919 (Poland's temporary eastern border as defined by the Entente), and to cede Vilnius to Lithuania. Once Warsaw and Moscow had accepted these conditions, a peace conference was to be held in London, where the conflicting countries, Soviet Russia, Poland and Lithuania, would be invited to discuss peace in the region. This was how Lithuania's neutralisation was envisaged. But Poland did not want to cede Vilnius to Lithuania (even though formally it had accepted the Spa condition), while the Red Army ultimately crossed the Curzon Line, as based on the appendix to the Moscow treaty, to which Lithuania had given its agreement.

At this point, we are faced with the open question of why the Spa project failed: was it because the Lithuanians did not give the Poles a clear answer, agreeing to take back Vilnius in accordance with the Spa resolution? Or was it because the Poles were in principle more inclined to leave Vilnius to the Soviets, expecting to reclaim it more easily from them than from the Lithuanians? But once the Spa project failed, the neutral position proposed for Lithuania collapsed. It was no surprise that once the Red Army occupied Vilnius, the plan for the sovietisation of Lithuania went into full swing.

In this regard, there is no reason why the episode of the Spa resolution should be dismissed. Especially since it was merely a symptom of processes on a much broader scale. The general context of those times would allow us to suggest that the Soviet leadership's peace negotiations with Lithuania, as with the other Baltic countries, were closely related to the negotiations taking place in London between Leonid Krasin, the Soviet representative, and British politicians. The basis of the negotiations was the neutralisation of the Baltic States. Also, the Baltic States were foreseen as performing a bridging function for trade links between Russia and the West. From Moscow's perspective, this presumed the formation

⁵ In the monograph, the Curzon Line is mentioned when describing the line of the Suwałki Treaty (p. 50), but this is not entirely accurate. First of all, the Curzon Line did not go through the Suwałki region, which is why it should not be compared to the line of 8 December 1919. In addition, the characteristics of the 'southeastern' part of the Suwałki Line are also geographically misleading.

of a break in the blockade of Soviet Russia. It is worth noting that the Lithuanian government only resolved to commence peace negotiations with Soviet Russia once it was assured of England's support, when at the same time other large states were categorically against making peace with the Bolsheviks. During the same period, the negotiators in London also searched for a way to end the Russo-Polish war. Thus, in this context, had Lithuania entered a military pact with Soviet Russia against Poland, it would have withdrawn from the neutral zone, and found itself solely in the context of the Russo-Polish war. Was a sovereign Lithuanian state possible in this context? Perhaps only through Soviet Russia's goodwill, which is essentially what is suggested in the monograph.

Nevertheless, the need for neutrality in the east Baltic appeared to be stronger than the logic behind a military conjuncture. Neither Soviet Russia nor England was satisfied with the fact that from the middle of July, the negotiations between them had been interrupted, due to complications in seeking to end the Russo-Polish war. A new impulse was needed for the talks to resume. The Soviet diplomats understood this first. Lenin supported their arguments. On 4 August, he agreed that the planned sovietisation of Lithuania should be postponed, and that the evacuation of the Red Army from Lithuania should commence. Negotiations in London resumed. It was at this point that the process of Lithuania's neutralisation began. This moment justifiably marks the end of the first part of the monograph.

In the second part, the author chooses to launch her study from the note from the Polish minister of foreign affairs Eustachy Sapieha, dated 5 September 1920, to the League of Nations, in which Lithuania is accused of cooperating with the Soviet Union. In the author's view, in terms of pursuing Poland's interests, this note was a mistake, because once the League of Nations became involved in the conflict, Poland could not take Vilnius back directly in the context of a war against Soviet Russia. It had to resort to a *fait accompli* (the disguised strike by General Żeligowski). In actual fact, the note should be regarded as the beginning of the involvement of the League of Nations in resolving the Polish-Lithuanian conflict. However, in treating it as a 'mistake' in Poland's interests, the author does not pay enough attention to the circumstance that the mentioned involvement of the League of Nations was not to Lithuania's advantage at the time. With its involvement, the League of Nations automatically eliminated the conference of larger states planned for early September (in accordance with the Spa project), in which Soviet Russia could also have participated.⁶ Thus, in

⁶ Evidence of the possibility for such a conference comes from the telegram to Kaunas from Alfred Tyszkiewicz, Lithuania's representative in London, dated 8 September 1920, Lietuvos valstybės centrinis archyvas, f. 383, ap. 7, b. 74, l. 130; see: *Suvalky sutartis: faktai ir interpretacijos / Umowa Suwalska: fakty i interpretacje*, sud. Č. Laurinavičius (Vilnius, 2012), pp. 42–51, 268–272.

this context, the League of Nations' format for Poland was a more suitable alternative, and it is quite likely that Sapieha had precisely this in mind. When the idea of a conference of the larger states fell through, Poland's diplomats started trying to eliminate the mediation of the League of Nations, and tried to give its conflict with Lithuania a solely bilateral form. Incidentally, Poland was not entirely successful in this aim.

In the author's opinion (p. 156), in occupying Vilnius, Poland violated three obligations it had assumed: the Spa Conference resolution of 9 July 1920, the Council of the League of Nations resolution of 20 September 1920, and the Suwałki Agreement of 7 October 1920. Regardless of this, Poland managed to avoid sanctions, and kept control of Vilnius (p. 64). Why was it able to do this?

Here we come to another very important event in the period under discussion: the preliminary peace agreement between Poland and Soviet Russia of 5 October 1920 in Riga. This agreement produced the 'Polish Corridor' between Lithuania and Russia. In practice, this meant that Lithuania had its role as a bridging state taken away. We cannot say that there is no direct link in the monograph between the agreement and the *fait accompli* in the Vilnius region. Nevertheless, the author is inclined to view the Riga agreement as 'a success in the negotiations process' (p. 63).

In the monograph, the most interesting question, why Soviet Russia accepted Poland's recommended version of the agreement, remains open (p. 60). Some uncertainties also remain relating to Lithuania's position: on page 47, the author claims that Lithuania did not respond to the Soviets' suggestion of 29 September to form a military pact. But on page 52 it is said that 'by October 1920, Lithuania was obviously drifting further away from its neutral position to the Soviet side.' In both cases, reference is made to Lithuanian sources, but the answer to this contradiction appears to lie somewhere in Russian archives. Some documents suggest that Soviet Russia was satisfied with a 'neutral' Lithuania, but without any direct connections with Russia.⁷ The monograph presents an interesting fact about how, after the signing of the Riga preliminaries, Commissar Georgy Chicherin received approval from the Political Bureau of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Russia (Bolsheviks) to see to the elimination of the corridor through the Vilnius region (p. 59). But this fact comes without a source reference (!). In one way or another, we know that Chicherin did not manage to realise his intention mentioned in the Riga Peace Treaty (of 18 March 1921), and the corridor was not eliminated. We should note at this point that Poland would also have been interested in changing the

⁷ See: the telegram dated 1 October 1920 from the Senior Commander of the army to Chicherin, The Archive of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation f. 04, ap. 27, b. 204, l. 8; the telegram dated 23 October 1920 from Axelrod, the delegate of the RSFSR in Kaunas, to Moscow, *ibid.*, b. 196, l. 27.

formula of the Riga preliminary clauses ('the decision regarding attribution of the territories of Lithuania and Poland which are under debate lies solely in the hands of Lithuania and Poland'). Until the signing of the treaty, the Poles had plenty of opportunities to be convinced that the mentioned formula meant that Soviet diplomats could speculate on the contradictions of the Moscow and Riga treaties. Even so, for some reason, the formula of these preliminary clauses was not changed.

The development of all the subsequent events could be treated as attempts by Warsaw and Moscow to bring 'neutralised' Lithuania over to their respective sides. The question of transit through Lithuania and the formation of various alliances were some of the means employed towards this goal. In terms of political orientation, there is no doubt that Moscow was successful. The monograph gives a relatively adequate account of the peripeteia associated with the signing of the agreement between Lithuania and the USSR of 28 September 1926. All that is missing is a discussion of the 'gentleman's agreement', based on which Kaunas and Moscow promised to share secret information. The development of the question of transit, despite being very interesting, would require additional studies before it could be verified. Information on this topic in the monograph comes mainly from Russian sources, which is why the basis for Lithuania's arguments suffers somewhat. An example could be the assessment of the notes to Lithuania from Yakov Dovtian, the RSFSR delegate in Kaunas, of 10 August 1922, with demands to resolve the question of neutralising the River Nemunas together with Soviet Russia. In the monograph, this note is termed as being 'very unsatisfactory for Kaunas' (p. 97). But we should take into account that at that time, the Lithuanian government was trying to decide how to defend itself against the Entente's collective demarché regarding transit. Being aware of earlier traditions in Lithuanian diplomacy (such as the Hyman project), it is likely that the note could even have been 'requested' by the Lithuanian government itself. This was argued in the opposition press in Lithuania at the time as well.⁸

More information on the motives of Belarus would be preferred, as they appear contradictory in the monograph. In one case, there are attempts to interpret the Belarusian factor as an alternative in Moscow's strategy in the Lithuanian argument with Poland (pp. 92, 160), or as 'having nothing to do with the transit issue' (transit in this case is from Hrodno to Klaipėda along the River Nemunas [p. 98]). In the end, when we talk about transit from Soviet Russia through Lithuania, we should bear in mind that it can take different forms: one kind is transit along the Nemunas to Klaipėda; transit through Lithuania to Germany is something else altogether ... something for the young researcher to consider in the future.

⁸ A. Voldemaras, 'Dėl Rusų notos', *Tėvynės balsas*, 144 (1922).

Generally speaking, Maria Pavlova's monograph constitutes quite a successful entry into the ranks of interwar researchers. For the most part, she has maintained the traditions of researching the history of diplomacy. However, the author's potential suggests a prognosis about her abilities to take on issues on an even broader scale. For example, when discussing the genesis of the Polish-Lithuanian conflict, the author draws the conclusion that the conflict did not depend just on the economic and cultural dominance of the Poles in Vilnius, or on the Poles' strong sense of superiority compared to the autochthon peasants (the Lithuanians), but also on the conviction of the Poles that the Vilnius region had always been Polish. In her view, constructive cooperation was simply impossible under these circumstances ... (p. 19). These claims may not be acceptable to all readers. However, they do encourage us to explain the origins and reasons for the Polish-Russian and Russian-Lithuanian conflicts on a similar level.

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