

THE POSITION OF LITHUANIA IN THE JAPANESE-GERMAN RELATIONSHIP: COOPERATION BETWEEN KAZYS ŠKIRPA AND HIROSHI OSHIMA IN 1935–1939



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ISSN 1392-0588 (spausdintas)

ISSN 2335-8769 (internetinis)

<http://dx.doi.org/10.7220/2335-8769.67.10>

2017. 67

SUMMARY. The present article aims at discussing the foreign policy of the Republic of Lithuania in the 1930s, focusing on the development of relationship between two particularly powerful states of that time, Germany and Japan. The cooperation between the Lithuanian military attaché and later envoy to Germany Col. Kazys Škirpa and the Japanese military attaché and later Japanese ambassador to Germany Gen. Hiroshi Oshima is considered. Both men had quite a lot of similarities and they both finally turned out to be great enthusiasts of the pro-German geopolitical orientation. Unsurprisingly, they managed to coordinate their political positions despite the fact that they closely communicated personally. For such a small country as Lithuania this was especially important as the attempts of the German-Japanese alliance, which started with the Anti-Comintern Pact in 1936 and terminated in a fiasco after Germany had signed an agreement with the USSR in 1939, influenced the position of Lithuania. Japan was striving for a strong geopolitical counterbalance against the USSR and did not agree to sign a pact with Germany against Western states. Moreover, it did not develop anti-Semitism in its policy, which was typical of the Third Reich. When WWII started, Germany and Japan ended in different sides of barricades. Even though Lithuania was formally neutral, it expressed considerable benevolence to Poland that had lost and to its allies, France and Great Britain. Japan was disappointed with Germany and was striving to establish a counterbalance against the USSR; therefore, it was also interested in cooperation with this coalition. The best example of this is Chiune Sugihara's, titled Righteous Among the Nations, activity in Kaunas. Attention should be paid to the fact that although Lithuanian institutions knew about the close relationship among the Japanese Vice-Consul, the Polish underground and Western allies, they created most favourable conditions for their successful activity in saving Polish citizens, mainly of Jewish nationality. All this activity terminated in the territory of Lithuania only when the country was occupied by the USSR army, which was the ally of Nazi Germany at the time.

KEYWORDS: Kazys Škirpa, Hiroshi Oshima, Chiune Sugihara, Lithuania's – Japan's relations, Germany's – Japan's relations, Lithuania's – Germany's relations, international relations in interwar period.

INTRODUCTION

Japan, the country of rising sun, is far away from Lithuania, across all Asia continent and many thousands of kilometres. Therefore, it became known to the Lithuanians only in the 20th century. The first view of Lithuanians towards Japanese was related to the Russian-Japanese war in 1904–1905, where many prominent officers of the prospective Lithuanian army participated. Such prominent people, like Silvestras Žukauskas, Juozas Kraucevičius, Jonas Galvydis–Bykauskas, Antanas Kaškelis, Maksimas Katche, Konstantinas Kleščinskis and many others, who contributed significantly to the creation of Lithuanian armed forces, underwent baptism by fire during this war. The victory of Japan was surprising for many nations and not only marked the new period in the warfare history, but also influenced the revolution in Russia in 1905 that preconditioned the changes in the policy of Nicholas II. These changes were definitely related to a significantly lower imperial oppression in Lithuania: the political parties started operating legally, and the use of Lithuanian language considerably increased. These were important stages, leading to 16 February 1918, the day of Lithuania's independence.

The independent Lithuania had been attempted to consolidate its status as an independent state for a long time, as well as to gain diplomatic recognition from foreign powers. Japan, after a long hesitation, recognised Lithuania only in 1922. Naturally, the country had its own interests that will be briefly discussed further below. This is also related to the main Japanese representative in question, Hiroshi Oshima. Since this person, who played a sufficiently significant and very controversial role in the Japanese history, had many foreign affairs with almost his equivalent in Lithuania, i.e., the first volunteer, officer, diplomat and politician Kazys Škirpa, the aim of this article is to show the parallels between these two at first sight hardly comparable states, Lithuania and Japan, in the 1930s. In order to reach the aim, the following objectives have been formulated:

1. to discuss the cooperation between the Lithuanian and Japanese diplomats, Colonel Kazys Škirpa and General Hiroshi Oshima in Berlin in 1935–1939;
2. to discuss how the dynamics of the German-Japanese relationship influenced the changes in the geopolitical situation of Lithuania in 1935–1940.

The relationship between Škirpa and Oshima did not end in 1939. On the contrary, they were very significant in 1941, in a more complicated and bloody atmosphere of World War II. Later, Oshima also became interested in the problems faced by already occupied Lithuania. The presence of Japan as one of important geopolitical powers throughout the world, was extremely to Lithuania, at

least more important than it is interpreted nowadays. In addition, in historiography, Japan's assistance to Lithuania was elaborated only in the context of Chiune Sugihara's activity, for which he was later awarded the Righteous Among the Nations title. Meanwhile, a complex analysis of this history has not been finished. Therefore, it is expected that some seemingly contextual issues, discussed in the present article, might contribute to a more complete understanding of the history. In addition, the historiography discussing various aspects of international politics of the 1930s is evaluated by integrating archival sources from the Lithuanian Central State Archive (henceforth, LCSA) fund 648 (Lithuania's legation in London), fund 671 (Lithuania's legation in Berlin) and the Manuscript Department of Martynas Mažvydas National Library of Lithuania (henceforth, MDMMNLL) fund 61 (Kazys Bizauskas) and PR-1241 (Various Manuscripts). Besides, the ideas of a substantial number of authors who wrote on this topic are incorporated into the present research, for instance, Carl Boyd's,¹ who collected biographical facts about Hiroshi Oshima, Ernst Presseisen's,² who discussed the Japanese-German relationship in great detail, David Kranzler's,³ who researched a specific attitude of the Japanese towards the Jews exhaustively, and many others. Despite the fact that the aforementioned works were written quite a long time ago, later research, conducted by Hiroaki Kuromiya and Georges Mamaliya,⁴ supplements the analysis on the issue by only a few more subtle observations. As far as Lithuania's historiography relating to Škirpa is concerned, one could address a few specific articles discussing various topics – Linas Locaitis's article written in 1998⁵, Žana Vaščova's in 2002,⁶ and Simonas Jazavita's in 2016.⁷

¹ Boyd C. *The Extraordinary Envoy. General Hiroshi Oshima and Diplomacy in the Third Reich, 1934–1939*. University Press of America, 1982.

² Presseisen E. L. *Germany and Japan. A Study in Totalitarian Diplomacy 1931–1941*. Hague, 1958.

³ Kranzler D. *Japanese, Nazis & Jews, the Jewish Refugee Community of Shanghai 1938–1945*. New Jersey, 1988.

⁴ Kuromiya H., Mamouliya G. *The Eurasian Triangle: Russia, The Caucasus and Japan, 1904–1945*. Warsaw & Berlin, 2016.

⁵ Locaitis L. Plk. K. Škirpos pasiūlymo Vokietijai ir Tarybų Sąjungai garantuoti Lietuvos nepriklausomybę bei paramą dėl Vilniaus klausimu, *Lietuvos istorijos studijos*, t. 6. Vilnius, 1998.

⁶ Vaščova Ž. Vienas prieš daugumą. Kazio Škirpos kurta saugios Lietuvos koncepcija. *Darbai ir dienos*, t. 30, 2002.

⁷ Jazavita S. Diplomatic Activities of Kazys Škirpa, the First Lithuanian Envoy to Poland, in March - December, 1938. *Europa Orientalis. Studia z Dziejów Europy Wschodniej i Państw Bałtyckich*, nr. 6 (2015), Torun, 2016.

CHANGES IN THE GEOPOLITICAL SITUATION OF LITHUANIA IN THE 1930s

When Adolf Hitler came to power in January 1933, Lithuania's relationship with Germany was dreadful. National-Socialism re-rehabilitated revisionist attitudes that were widely spread in German society. One of the areas where the manifestation of the attitudes took place was Klaipėda. Lithuania was the smallest country that "hurt" Germany after Versailles, therefore, Germany's attitude towards the Eastern neighbour depended on the relationship with Poland. When the relations worsened, the attitude towards Lithuania became more favourable, but when the German-Polish relationship improved in 1934, Lithuania experienced a complicated period. This was also reflected in Škirpa's thinking. Here the context of Lithuanian foreign policy and the appearance of this person in a diplomatic position in Germany should be shortly described. Even though Lithuania became independent after the collapse of the Tsarist Russian Empire, the most severe issue after WWI was struggle for Vilnius City: Although Lithuania considered Vilnius to be its historical capital, Poland, which also makes claims to this city, occupied it using armed forces. This influenced the subsequent Lithuanian foreign policy. Lithuania was looking for allies, especially those which could help regain Vilnius from Poland. Before 1926, Lithuania had considered the USSR geopolitical ally as it was the only state regarded Vilnius a Lithuania's city. However, since 1927, Lithuanian authorities started looking for a possibility to regain Vilnius with the help of Berlin. The new Nationalist regime sent one of political opponents, Škirpa, who was a former Chief of the Army Staff in the left-wing government to work in legation in Germany. Having become a military attaché in Berlin in 1928, Škirpa started intensive contacts with German officers and representatives of other countries.

In 1934, during refinements in the German army, Škirpa adopted an especially sympathetic tone towards the representatives of the old Reichswehr, who seemed to resist to the new government of National Socialists. On January 31 of the same year, one of the strongest Hitler's opponents, Gen. Kurt von Hammerstein was forced to leave the office of the Chief of the General Staff. Škirpa clearly supported him in his report and claimed that he had attempted to reach an agreement with France, the USSR, and the Baltic countries. Meanwhile, the Nazis

broke friendly relationship with Soviet Russia and the Baltic countries <...> and even started dreaming about dividing Soviet Russia. In addition to that, they are trying to include not only England and Japan, but also Poland into these plans.⁸

⁸ 1934 01 09 Lithuania's military attaché in Germany K. Škirpa report to the commander of General Staff Second Unit J. Lanskoronskis. LCSA, F. 648, ap. 1, b. 35, l. 27–28.

This demonstrates that at the time Škirpa expressed a traditional Lithuanian foreign policy thinking that was characteristic of the time as first he was searching for a counterbalance for Poland. However, aggressive propaganda, which was started in Germany against Lithuania changed the situation. In 1935, Škirpa established a contact with Major Horst Rössing and tried to negotiate on reestablishment of the relationship between the countries. This possibility still seemed to be real, especially taking into consideration the fact that, according to Horst Rössing, such respectable military officers as Gen. Ludwig Beck still valued and often remembered Škirpa. However, Škirpa reported that Germany seemed to be a more serious enemy to Lithuania than Poland.⁹ In addition, the courage of the Lithuanian state to bring to trial the Hitlerites of Klaipėda region contributed to the political tension between Kaunas and Berlin and considerably agitated German society. The youth in storm trooper uniforms marched by the Lithuanian legation, shouting various insults. Envoy Jurgis Šaulys even received anonymous letters, which contained various messages, to start with threatening to kill and to end with joyful pride of Lithuania, a small country that did not fear to stand against Hitler.¹⁰ Using his acquaintances, Škirpa managed to approach Alfred Rosenberg, a rising ideologist of NSDAP (Nationalsozialistische Deutsche Arbeiterpartei – National Socialist German Workers' Party), and asked him to affect the German Führer and help in riding out the storm, sparked by the renowned case of Hitlerites of Klaipėda region as Lithuania was the first state that publicly brought National Socialists to trial.¹¹

THE JAPANESE FACTOR IN ŠKIRPA'S DIPLOMATIC ACTIVITY

Even though Škirpa and Oshima knew each other from the period when they both served as military attachés of their respected countries, their cooperation gained new momentum when Germany started pressing Lithuania, and its authorities appointed Škirpa to Berlin, hoping that he would use his acquaintances, resist pressure, and assist in preserving Klaipėda region in Lithuanian composition. He reached Berlin at the very end of 1938 and soon met his old acquaintance Georg Leibbrandt, who was close to Alfred Rosenberg, an influential NSDAP actor.¹² In

⁹ 1935 01 16 Lithuania's military attaché in Germany K. Škirpa Pro memoria. About discussion with major Rössing. LCSA, F. 648, ap. 1, b. 36, l. 1–3.

¹⁰ 1935 03 30 Lithuania's envoy in Germany K. Šaulys report to minister of foreign affairs S. Lozoraitis. LCSA, F. 648, ap. 1, b. 36, l. 71–72.

¹¹ 1939 01 20 Lithuania's envoy in Germany K. Škirpa report to minister of foreign affairs J. Urbšys. LCSA, F. 648, ap. 1, b. 39, l. 11.

¹² *Ibid.*, l. 11.

1938, when Škirpa served as an envoy in Poland, Leibbrandt sent him the book *Moskaus aufmarsch gegen Europa* (*Moscow Stands against Europe*) with his own dedication. Later, they both exchanged New Year cards.¹³ Thus, when Škirpa came to Berlin as a Lithuanian envoy, Leibbrandt invited him to meet for lunch in “Hotel Bristol.” Here a suggestion was also expressed for Lithuania to join the Anti-Comintern Pact and this way demonstrate that it was choosing the West rather than the East because, according to Leibbrandt, Lithuania did not have another choice.¹⁴ Škirpa expressed agreement to the policy of the Anti-Comintern Pact. However, he did not rush to engage either, indicating that Lithuania’s internal policy is pro-western and anti-communist, but it maintained useful economic relationship with the USSR and did not want to exasperate it. Possibly, he did not want to anger his chiefs in Kaunas, who viewed the strengthening Germany with huge fear, and indicated in his report to the Minister that he had supported Leibbrandt’s ideas only because of attempts to increase his interest in the Lithuanian matter.¹⁵

Contacts with Oshima were inevitably renewed after Škirpa had provided diplomatic credentials to Hitler. He held a fancy feast to foreign diplomats on March 1, 1939, during which the representatives of Lithuania and Japan met again, and this time as the chiefs of their state legations rather than military attachés. In order to consolidate friendly relationship, the diplomats went to the smoking room, where they met Joseph Goebels, the Minister of Propaganda of the Reich. Oshima introduced Škirpa as his personal friend and a former Dean of military attaché. Goebels responded that he had heard about Škirpa before and encouraged Lithuania to resolve all problems concerning Klaipėda as soon as possible; otherwise, the situation would be the same as with Czechoslovakia.¹⁶ This was more than an obvious threatening. Unsurprisingly, Škirpa attempted to take advantage of the relationship with his acquaintance, an influential Japanese diplomat, respected by the chiefs of the Third Reich. Many years after the war, Škirpa mentioned in his memoir book that Oshima was a good friend of his, and even their families were in close contact:

This office developed our really sincere friendship to such an extent that during various military exercises **the Germans always traditionally reserved a car for us both. Our wives also maintained a friendly relationship.**¹⁷ (*bold is mine – S. J.*). This is an eloquent fact.

¹³ *Ibid.*, l. 12.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, l. 18.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, l. 18.

¹⁶ 1939 03 03 Lithuania’s envoy in Germany K. Škirpa report to minister of foreign affairs J. Urbšys. LCSA, F. 648, ap. 1, b. 39, l. 87–88.

¹⁷ Škirpa K. *Sukilimas Lietuvos suverenumui atstatyti*. Washington, 1973, 239.

In Berlin, Škirpa had to do really hard work. After the Munich conference in 1938, he was increasingly convinced that Germany, being the most powerful country in Europe, dictated the agenda of world politics, and Lithuania had to adapt to it, willingly or not. Earlier Škirpa also supported the attitude that Lithuania had to gain considerable support from one of its powerful neighbours.¹⁸ However, the Germans maintained a very negative attitude towards Lithuania after their victories. For this reason, the Lithuanian envoy directed communication to the diplomats of other countries. In March already, Škirpa started official diplomatic visits to foreign diplomats operating in Berlin, and one of the first ones was Oshima. He provided Škirpa with the information that he had been waiting for: he noted that the German attitude towards Lithuania had significantly changed. Besides, he praised the neutrality policy of Lithuania and did not forecast any more serious upheavals in 1939, as those survived in 1938.¹⁹ Retrospectively, this seems to be naive; however, it should be added that in Oshima's opinion, Hitler would make sudden decisions in case circumstances changed, and his opinion alone would be sufficient to make them.²⁰ According to Škirpa, Oshima then promised him to say some nice words about Lithuania to the Germans. A sufficiently significant role was played by Admiral Wilhelm Canaris, the Chief of the German Military Intelligence Abwehr, who was a close Oshima's friend and co-worker. They both were considering plans on how nation conflicts inside the USSR could be used and how this large empire could be destroyed.²¹ Special attention was paid to the Ukrainians and Caucasus nations. Škirpa also played his role as he maintained tight relationship with the fighters of the Organisation of Ukrainian Nationalists (OUN).

CHANGES IN THE JAPANESE-GERMAN RELATIONSHIP AND LITHUANIA

It should be emphasized that after his becoming an ambassador, Oshima's influence decreased compared to the times when he was one of the main architects of the famous Anti-Comintern Pact. Being a military attaché, he managed to direct the policy of his country towards the direction more favourable to Germany due to his underhand games. However, when he became a diplomat, his disagreements with the contemporary Minister of Foreign Affairs Hachirō Arita were exposed.

¹⁸ Vaičėnionis J. Lietuvos kariuomenės modernizacija (1926–1939). *Darbai ir dienos*, t. 21, 154.

¹⁹ 1939 03 07 Lithuania's envoy in Germany K. Škirpa report to minister of foreign affairs J. Urbšys, LCSA, E. 648, ap. 1, b. 39, l. 104.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, l. 105.

²¹ Waller J. H. *The Unseen War in Europe. Espionage and Conspiracy in Second World War*. New York, 1996, 149.

He opposed to closer communication with the Third Reich and ensured the support of the largest part of the Japanese political elite, including the Prime Minister Hiranuma Kiichirō.²² At the time, Germany was intensively looking for a strong partner, and Japan seemed to be one of the most suitable solutions. On January 30, 1939, Hitler praised the Japanese nation, giving a speech in Reichstag. Nevertheless, his attempts to involve Japan into a strong union were not successful, since Japan agreed to form a common union only against the USSR. The fact that the Japanese could go far in this area is proven by Oshima's conversations with Reichsführer Heinrich Himmler, one of the highest persons in NSDAP hierarchy, where he admitted that he had sent a group of fighters from his agency to the Caucasus to kill Joseph Stalin.²³ The Germans were looking for a strong ally; however, the Japanese were not in a hurry to come into contact, even more so that they did not aspire to fight with Western countries.²⁴ This demonstrates key differences between Germany and Japan of that time. If there were different opinions and different political ideas in Germany, Führer and his devoted supporters had the most influence. In Japan, there were three strong interest groups: the army, the navy and civil authorities.²⁵ Still, despite Oshima's aspirations while he was residing in Berlin, the Japanese political elite emphasized very clearly that they might join the coalition with Germany and Italy only if it was directed against the USSR. However, they refused to stand against Western democracies. This stance of elite was also confirmed by Emperor Hirohito.²⁶ This policy of Japan was not enough for the Germans, and one of the attempts to change the situation was the contacts between the Germans and the Soviets, which started in May, 1939.

In same month, May 1939, Germany invaded Czechoslovakia, annexed Klaipėda, and strengthened its authority. Its authority increased among Japanese officers, who started disobeying civil authorities.²⁷ The new Lithuanian envoy in Berlin Škirpa behaved similarly. He was talking to Werner von Grundherr, an adviser of the Baltic Department of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Germany and after he was scolded for a long-lasting Lithuania's "anti-German" attitude, Škirpa expressed his personal point of view: Being a military *attaché*, *I had a similar conception of*

²² Boyd C., op. cit., 88–90.

²³ Kuroyama H., Mamoulia G., op. cit., 173.

²⁴ Weinberg G. L., *Hitler's Foreign Policy 1933 – 1939. The Road to World War II*. New York, 2010, 724.

²⁵ Presseisen E. L., op. cit., 204.

²⁶ Boyd C., op. cit., 100.

²⁷ Presseisen E. L., op. cit., 207.

*Lithuania's relationship with Germany for many years <...>, i.e., to align to Germany, but at the time I was a person too small to fulfil my idea.*²⁸

In this case, Škirpa and Oshima's activity had many similarities: neither of them attempted to approach Germany, and both of them were supported by the political elite of their states. Finally, political and military elite of Japan did not allow country to become a close ally of Germany.²⁹ One may perceive that the attitude of the navy and the civil authorities was united, i.e., that they refused to join "The Pact of Steel" and changed the course of events,³⁰ which extremely annoyed Ribbentrop, the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Germany, who cooperated closely with Oshima and expected to attract Lithuania to its side.³¹ In May of the same year, Hitler decided to start a war against Poland and determined that it was handier to form a union with the USSR and to defeat European states in the first place.³²

In this story, it is worth to discuss one more key problem which hindered Škirpa from the fulfilment of his plans. It was Germany's annexation of Klaipėda Region in March, 1939. After the annexation of Klaipėda, it seems that Škirpa attempted to save everything that was possible to save and tried to encourage hope for geopolitical orientation to Germany. During his visit to Ernst Woermann, the Vice-Secretary of the Political Department of the German Ministry of Foreign Affairs, he was trying to mitigate the persecution of Lithuanian citizens living in Klaipėda Region, by convincing the Germans that this behaviour would psychologically reduce Lithuania's admiration of Germany.³³ According to historian Arūnas Bubnys, this behaviour was beneficial as *it suspended the zest of Nazi gunmen to terrorize the Lithuanians and the Jews remaining in Klaipėda.*³⁴ On the other hand, when talking to the diplomats of other countries, Škirpa attempted to prove that the situation would be safer as a problem acute to the whole region had been overcome, though painfully.³⁵ The diplomat still believed that it was a possibility to regain Vilnius instead of Klaipėda with the use of the Third Reich power. This idea is not

²⁸ 1939 01 04 Lithuania's envoy in Germany K. Škirpa report to minister of foreign affairs J. Urbšys. LCSA, F. 671, ap. 1, b. 15, l. 6–9.

²⁹ Representative example – In May 15 of 1939 Minister of Japanese Navy Mitsumasa Yonai promised to the USA Ambassador Joseph Grew that Japan would participate in activities of Anti-Comintern pact strictly against affairs of the USSR and not against other countries (Boyd C., op. cit., 106).

³⁰ Bussemaker H. T. *Paradise in Peril. Western Colonial Power and Japanese Expansion to South-East Asia*. Heemstede, 2001, 674.

³¹ Boyd C., op. cit., 102.

³² Presseisen E. L., op. cit., 215.

³³ 1939 03 24, Lithuania's envoy in Germany K. Škirpa's report to the Minister of Foreign Affairs J. Urbšys, LCSA, F. 671, ap. 1, b. 15, l. 70.

³⁴ Bubnys A. Lietuvos interesų gynimas Klaipėdos krašte 1939–1940 metais. *Acta historica universitatis Klaipėdensis*, t. 21. Klaipėda, 2010, 160.

³⁵ Kasparavičius A. *Lietuva 1938–1939. Neutraliteto iliuzijos*. Vilnius, 2010, 109.

purely invented. Historiography expresses an opinion that Hitler could postpone the annexation of Klaipėda, hoping to attract Lithuania closer to Germany as an anti-Polish ally. However, the reaction of local Germans sparked off a public stir. Even Führer himself could not disobey the opinion of his society; therefore, he had to act opportunistically.³⁶

In the summer of 1939, combat actions started between Japan and the USSR. These actions did not turn into an official war, but the relationship between these countries was in an absolute decline. Therefore, closer contacts between the USSR and Germany in August shocked Japan.³⁷ This influenced the Prime Minister Kiichirō's resignation. Talking to his generals, Hitler explained everything in a shorter way: even though he had been trying to convince the Japanese since the autumn of 1938, they had been imposing conditions; thus, he decided to join Soviets. He accused the Japanese of irresolution and called them "half monkeys."³⁸ On the other hand, Hitler perceived that his idea was not supported in Germany. A large part of Wehrmacht officers tended to support China, when discussing the Japanese-Chinese conflict.³⁹ Naturally, the German Führer was angry as the refusal of the Japanese destroyed his plans to isolate the navy of Great Britain. He had had an idea that the isolation of Britain would mean the isolation of all Western world, which was a signal for him to concentrate on his plans in the East. Considering alternative development of the events, one may presuppose that the USSR would have had difficulties in withstanding blows from two sides, the consequences of which could have changed the course of Second World War completely.

This sequence of events caused troubles not only in Berlin, but also in Tokyo. Oshima found out about a possible Germans' agreement with Soviets from Ribbentrop during the Hitler's 50th anniversary celebration; however, he did not pass the information to Tokyo. One of the versions of his decision could be that this seemed so unrealistic for the Japanese that they would not have believed it.⁴⁰ Even the Lithuanian press announced that before Ribbentrop left, Oshima had been trying to persuade him for one and a half hour.⁴¹ There is no room for friendship in politics. When at midnight, on August 22 Oshima found out that Ribbentrop had flown to Moscow, he went to Ernst von Weizsäcker, the State Secretary's of Germany, house. According to Weizsäcker's observation, the face of the Japanese

³⁶ Taylor A. J. P. *The Origins of the Second World War*. London, 1961, 74.

³⁷ Presseisen E. L., op. cit., 217.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, 218.

³⁹ Kuroyama H., Mamoulia G., op. cit., 171.

⁴⁰ Presseisen E. L., op. cit., 215.

⁴¹ Ribbentropas pas Molotovą. *Vakarinis Lietuvos aidas*, 1939 rugpjūčio 23.

Ambassador was strict and grey. Even then Weizsäcker quietly explained to Oshima that Poland was the guiltiest for this sequence of events as Germany could not tolerate its aggressiveness and was forced to join the USSR.⁴² This might have been a subtle insult to the partner who had failed. As will be discussed later, Japan maintained really friendly relationship with Poland all the time. Soon afterwards, during negotiations in Moscow, Molotov started encouraging his colleague from the Reich that Hitler himself should urge the Japanese to concede in the Far East.⁴³ However, this action in Japan was viewed as a betrayal by Germany. As a result, the relationship between the countries started breaking as in the eyes of the Japanese it was the Germans who broke the Anti-Comintern Pact.⁴⁴ In this context, Oshima, being a supporter of closer relationship with Germany, did not seem to be useful in Japanese politics, especially taking into consideration the fact that the new government of Nobuyuka Abe preferred balanced international politics. Oshima's political career was saved by Emperor Hirohito's support.⁴⁵ Despite the fact that the Emperor was very angry when he found out about the USSR-German agreement,⁴⁶ it seemed he had decided to preserve the influential General for the future in case international politics changed. Meanwhile, Stalin most benefited in terms of the situation: he managed to destroy the cooperation between Japan and Germany, and the image of the Japan's military was destroyed by the conflict in Far East, which had been provoked by Soviets. They were resolved in favour of the Russian not only because of Gen. Georgy Zhukov's, who headed the USSR soldiers, military skills, but also due to the fact that a Soviet spy led the expedition group of Japanese soldiers.⁴⁷ Even though recalled to Tokyo, Oshima did not hold any important political position and his possibilities of influencing the authorities of his country were very limited. In 1940, he still attempted to convince the political elite via his acquaintances officers that the main Japanese enemy was the USSR rather than the USA.⁴⁸

In this situation, Škirpa started behaving differently, even though the methods that he chose reminded of the ones tried out by his Japanese colleague. Oshima often wrote articles to the most important German newspapers. Škirpa also wrote a controversial article to one of more important German newspapers *Berliner Boersen Zeitung*. This article made Juozas Urbšys, the Minister of Foreign Affairs, who was on holiday at that time, extremely angry. In the letter to his Deputy Minister Kazys

⁴² Truska L., Kancevičius V. *Lietuva Stalino ir Hitlerio sandėrio verpetuose*. Vilnius, 1990, 30.

⁴³ Presseisen E. L., op. cit., 224.

⁴⁴ Boyd C., op. cit., 109.

⁴⁵ Bix H. P. *Hirohito and the Making of Modern Japan*. Harper Perrenial, 2001, 352.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 354.

⁴⁷ Kuromiya H., Mamoulia G., op. cit., 198.

⁴⁸ Vagts A. *The Military Attache*. Princeton University Press, 1967, 86.

Bizauskas, he resented that the article was written in an openly Nazi rhetoric, and this way it was identified with the aggressor, who had taken away Klaipėda from Lithuania.⁴⁹ The Minister considered this to be a self-willed attempt to comfort public opinion about aggressive German aspirations and to demonstrate that this was a country favourable to Lithuania.⁵⁰ Then he half seriously, half mockingly, asked Bizauskas: *How come Škirpa is competent in these matters? Does he participate in Fuhrer's secret meetings?*⁵¹ (the words in bold are mine – S. J.). Urbšys was extremely disappointed by the fact that Škirpa had been talking on his initiative. In his opinion, such political declarations could be expressed only by the Government. Therefore, he complained to Bizauskas that it was necessary *to warn Škirpa very clearly* (underlined by J. Urbšys – S. J.) *that diplomats have a tongue to hide such things rather than express the things that should not be talked about.*⁵²

Apparently, a gulf was opening between the political elite responsible for foreign policy with President Antanas Smetona as a leading personality and disobedient Škirpa. Convinced with the German power, Škirpa possibly started viewing his position with a higher appreciation, therefore, he became braver in disseminating his suggestions. It was clear that he exceeded his powers as a diplomat against the will of the authorities, perceiving that he would not be recalled from Berlin as the Germans trusted him and could veto another candidate. Using these methods, Škirpa resembled Oshima very much, who also used to cause headaches in Tokyo by his conceptions. A few times Oshima just did not mention the activities of Germany which were not favourable to Japan as he did not want to cause anger among the political elite of his country.

THE MOST COMPLICATED PARALLELS IN THE JAPANESE AND LITHUANIAN HISTORY

In order to create an intrigue, it is necessary to discuss some peripeteias of Japanese Vice-Consul Sugihara's, Righteous among the Nations, arrival to Kaunas. As soon as Oshima found out about possible contacts between Moscow and Berlin, he sent Sugihara to Kaunas so that he could understand the plans of the Germans in the Eastern Front more clearly, which was considered to be a vital interest of

⁴⁹ 1939 08 15 J. Urbšys personal letter to K. Bizauskas. MDMMNLL, F. 61, b. 231, l. 7.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*

⁵¹ *Ibid.*

⁵² *Ibid.*, l. 8.

Japan.⁵³ This demonstrates that Oshima did not trust the Germans, even though he maintained a close contact with them. Of course, mostly Japan was afraid of the strengthening USSR, which caused a threat to its interests in China, isolation of the country, and, eventually, possibly “export” of the Communist ideology.

Paradoxically, soon after his arrival to Kaunas, Sugihara established relationship with the Polish underground, which was dispersed in the country. Even though officially Lithuania was a neutral state, when Second World War combats started, everything was different in reality. Škirpa, who aimed at attracting the authorities of his state to support Germany and the USSR at the beginning of the war and regain Vilnius with the help of weapons, represented the minority. Unfortunately, the scope of this article does not allow to discuss the complicated period in greater detail, but the author of this article focused on it in his Master thesis, and this might be published as a separate publication in the future.⁵⁴ When writing these pages, the author had a debate with other historians, such as Alfred Erich Senn,⁵⁵ Nerijus Šepetys,⁵⁶ etc., who mentioned this episode in one or another context. Regardless of how this controversial period is evaluated, one should not forget that both Germany and its ally at the time, the USSR,⁵⁷ manipulated with Lithuania’s aspiration to regain its historical capital, and, taking into consideration the fact that striving to regain Vilnius was the main aim which united the nation in inter-war Lithuania, it is not difficult to note that it was not that easy to reject the ideas of the sinister Reich on this question.

Nevertheless, that, it is especially important to note that practically all state political elite overlooked Poland, viewed this long-lived rival favourably, and allowed interning of thousands of Polish refugees, while the first and the last Polish military attaché in Lithuania Col. Leon Mitkiewicz operated here sufficiently successfully and established an agency network, which was definitely known to Lithuanian Intelligence Structures. This was due to the fact that the agency of France, the ally of Poland, was developing its network successfully. The Lithuanian army and intelligence elite expressed favour to France and allowed it to operate sufficiently

⁵³ Kranzler D., op. cit., 311.

⁵⁴ Jazavita S. K. Škirpos įtaka Lietuvos užsienio politikai 1927–1940 m. Magistro darbas. Vytauto Didžiojo universitetas, 2015, 60–74.

⁵⁵ Senn A. E. *Lithuania 1940: Revolution from Above*. Amsterdam–New York, 2007, 44–47; Senn A. E. Kazys Škirpa Lietuvos nepriklausomybės sūtemose. *Akiračiai*, 1997, nr. 2 (286), 16.

⁵⁶ Šepetys N. Lietuva Trečiojo reicho taikiklyje: neįvykusi protektorato istorija (1939–1941). *Lietuva Antrajame pasauliniame kare*. Vilnius, 2007; Šepetys N. *Molotovo–Ribentropo paktas ir Lietuva*. Vilnius, 2006.

⁵⁷ Diplomats of USSR in Berlin tried to convince Škirpa that *Poles are true enemies of Lithuania as they are occupants of Vilnius*. These arguments, similar to those of German diplomats, were able to persuade Škirpa that it was possible to take Vilnius with an ease in September 1939. (More on conversations with diplomats of the USSR – Škirpa K. *Lietuvos nepriklausomybės sūtemos (1938–1940)*. Chicago, 1996, 211.)

openly.⁵⁸ Accordingly, it was helping the Polish, who were the allies of France. Thus, in this situation, the Japanese contacts with Poland were not surprising. Apparently, a large part of the political elite of the country of the rising sun attempted not to break relationship with Western states, and viewed the USSR as the main rival. In this case, Sugihara maintained the position of the political elite of his country.

Moreover, Japan was not exceptionally in favour of Germany and was just looking for a counterbalance against the USSR in Europe. As indicated by the USA intelligence documents, the General Staff of Japan maintained sufficiently close relationship with the intelligence of Poland and the Baltic countries. Before coming to Kaunas, Chiune Sugihara was working in Helsinki, with no coincidence, while Gen. Makoto Onodera is even a more mysterious person. He started his office as a Japanese military attaché in the Baltic countries and played a central role as a Japanese military attaché in Sweden during the years of WWII; at the same time, he maintained intensive relationship both with the Third Reich's foreign intelligence and with Polish underground fighters.⁵⁹ It should also be noted that in 1936 Onodera was sent to Riga to spy the USSR. Here he was interested in the possibilities of the Baltic region countries to help Japan. This demonstrates that the main argument of the Japanese was geopolitical safety, and they were just looking for allies in Europe. In Poland, the Prometheism doctrine was famous, the aim of which was to divide the USSR into many small national states. In 1937, when the contacts of Japan with Germany were more intensive, they were more intensive with the Polish intelligence as well.⁶⁰ These contacts partly demonstrate that the USSR dictator Joseph Stalin started his great refinement that year: he was afraid that he might need to fight in two fronts. In general, the USSR-Japanese conflict and its scope are often scarcely evaluated. Stalin anticipated that it was possible to agree with the Nazis, hoping to deceive them, and this was successful in 1939, yet it did not work in 1941. However, in Japan there was no group which would attempt to agree with the USSR; in addition, Japan grounded its foreign policy on the basis of interests rather than ideology. Therefore, the Japanese were looking for allies in a number of European countries, i.e., not only in Germany, but also in Poland and the Baltic countries. Stalin's fear is proven by the fact that during the period of the Great Terror many more people were killed as true or suspected "Japanese spies" rather than "German spies."⁶¹ Nevertheless, it should be noted that

⁵⁸ Anušauskas A. *Lietuvos žvalgyba 1918–1940*. Vilnius, 2014, 262.

⁵⁹ Doerries R. *Hitler's Last Chief of Foreign Intelligence. Allied Interrogations of Walter Shellenberg*. Routledge, 2003, 186.

⁶⁰ Kuromiya H., Mamoulia G., op. cit., 156.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 198.

finally Stalin managed to achieve what he had aspired for. His biographer Simon Sebag Montefiore describes the scene when in April, 1940, the Japanese Minister of Foreign Affairs Yōsuke Masuoka had not been convinced by the benevolence of the Germans and showed up in Moscow when coming back from Berlin and signed a non-aggression pact. This was the only time when the dictator himself accompanied the foreign guest absolutely drunk and one of those rare cases when he was glad sincerely.⁶² A large-scope war between the USSR and Japan did not take place, even though its danger emerged several times in the 1930s.

All these issues are related to the real subtlety of intelligence network in the context of Sugihara activity. When saving the Jews, Sugihara closely cooperated with the Polish underground with actively operated in Kaunas.⁶³ When the war started between Germany and Poland, Lithuania was a perfect country to observe what was going on in reality as formally it had declared neutrality, even though a large part of the authorities was in favour of Poland and its allies in the West. In this case, it is not complicated to indicate what Japan was in favour of. Therefore, Sugihara started operating against the interests of the new allies, i.e., Germany and the USSR as opposing to the interests of his country, Japan.⁶⁴ This could be grounded by the fact that Sugihara, who knew Russian perfectly and had to work in the USSR, was not accepted to the country, possibly due to viewing him as a dangerous spy.⁶⁵ As Lithuania had to maintain a careful policy towards Germany and an extremely careful policy towards the USSR that had brought its soldiers to the country, Sugihara resorted to Mitkiewicz, the Polish military attaché's help.⁶⁶ He had managed to create a favourable impression in high military circles in Lithuania, and this was one of the main reasons why these contacts were accepted. The main Sugihara's co-workers were the representatives of the Polish Military Intelligence in Lithuania Ludwik Hrynciewicz and his assistant Jerzy Daskiewicz; they both were collecting material about the movement of the German navy in the Baltic Sea and the dislocation of military troops in East Prussia. They shared this information with the representative of the French Military Intelligence Gabriel Pichon, who helped to transmit it to the Western allies.⁶⁷ In all this complicated *Gordium Knot*, another diplomat, who was working in Kaunas, played an important

⁶² Montefiore S. S. *Stalinas. Raudonojo caro dvaras*. Vilnius, 2011, 404–406.

⁶³ Strelcovas S. *Antrojo pasaulinio karo pabėgėliai Lietuvoje*. Daktaro disertacija. Kaunas: Vytauto Didžiojo universitetas, 2007, 79.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 80.

⁶⁵ Ivanovas B. Chiune (Sempo) Sugiharos veiklos Kaune 1939–1940 m. probleminiai aspektai. *Genocidas ir rezistencija*, 2001, 1 (9), 11.

⁶⁶ Strelcovas S., op. cit., 80.

⁶⁷ Anušauskas A., op. cit., 262.

role; it was the envoy of Great Britain Thom Hildebrand Preston,⁶⁸ who was famous for his benevolence towards Lithuania. Undoubtedly, the Japanese Government also received this material. In addition to that, this cooperation helped saving thousands of Polish Jews' lives. Even though the heroism of Sugihara as a person does not cause any doubts, it is important to note that Matsuoka, who became the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Japan in 1940, supported saving the Jews and did not cherish anti-Semitic ideas,⁶⁹ even though he was inclined to maintain closer relationship with Germany. Japanese pro-Semitic attitudes were well-known in Lithuanian press at the time.⁷⁰ Other important option was the so-called The Fugu Plan, according to which, a group of Japanese officers tried to help Jews to get into Japan, Shanghai in particular.⁷¹ A few most important employees of the Polish intelligence went to Königsberg with Sugihara in September, 1940, where they were working with Japanese passports.⁷² Sugihara was working at the period when Oshima, famous for his support to Germany, had gone back to Japan, and a less influential diplomat, Saburo Kurusu, who did not provide support for the Germans, was working in his position. On the contrary, he had an American wife; therefore, he was striving to find contacts with the USA and using secret channels. It is important to emphasise one factor, who is often underrated. The unofficial support of the Lithuanian political elite was often forgotten, which allowed foreign actors, namely Sugihara, Mitkiewicz, Preston and Pichon, to pursue a common goal, which saved many lives. If the Lithuanian authorities had attempted to please the Germans, all this network would not have had suitable conditions to operate. The only question remains how far and how successfully this "Northern Casablanca", to put it into the words of historian Egidijus Aleksandravičius, would have operated in Kaunas if the existence of the independent state of Lithuania had not been terminated by the USSR occupation. This Nazi German ally of that time did not tolerate any resistance in Lithuania and was in a hurry to sovietise the occupied country.

⁶⁸ Gaunt D., Reichskommissariat Ostland, *The Routledge History of the Holocaust*, Routledge, 2011, 211.

⁶⁹ Kranzler D., op. cit., 332.

⁷⁰ A representative example could be a short article called "Japanese will not persecute Jews" published in the centre left newspaper "The Lietuvos Žinios" in the beginning of 1939 (Japonai nemano persekioti žydų, *Lietuvos žinios*, 1939 02 28, 2).

⁷¹ More on this topic see in monography of D. Kranzler, used in this article.

⁷² Strelcovas S., op. cit., 81.

THE DIPLOMATS BETWEEN ANTI-SEMITISM AND THE STRUGGLE AGAINST
COMMUNISM

In 1939, Škirpa attempted to direct the Lithuanian foreign policy towards Germany. Some anti-Semitic ideas can be traced in his activities, and they were gradually increasing. This might surprise at the beginning, especially taking into consideration that he was close to the left-wing Lithuanian Popular Peasants' Union and maintained close relationship with influential actors of this political current, such as Mykolas Sleževičius or Felicija Bortkevičienė; he was familiar with extremely pro-Semitic politicians, such as Kazys Grinius or Jonas Vileišis as well. M. Sleževičius, who held the position of the Prime Minister of Lithuania several times, was respected by Škirpa and considered to be an example of a politician; he had especially good relationship with Lithuanian Jews. For this reason, he had even become a victim of opponents of anti-Semitic propaganda.⁷³ However, this factor was more notable when Škirpa started communicating with the Nazis. A complicated question that even today is difficult to answer still remains: To what extent were his anti-Semitic statements sincere or conjunctural in order to please the Germans? Some ideas of such conjunctural anti-Semitism might be noted in Škirpa's conversation with Alfred Rosenberg, one of the main ideologists of NSDAP; Škirpa mentioned that Lithuania had changed its direction from the East to the West, and, in his opinion, approximately 90 per cent of anti-Communist agitation was stirred up by the Jews.⁷⁴ A timid conclusion might be proposed that radical and anti-Semitic attitudes were influenced by the will to adopt the culture of a Western and European country, which was considered to be more advanced and more developed; therefore, its development features seemed to be appealing and right. The motive of "New Europe" should also be mentioned, which Škirpa sincerely believed in and took it as future reality after the occupation of Lithuania when he was establishing the Lithuanian Activists' Front (LAF).⁷⁵ On the other hand, he was always more interested in the geopolitical motive. Therefore, Škirpa compared the situation of 1940–1941 with the one faced in 1919: it seemed to him that Germany was simply an ally, which could help Lithuania to entrench its independence, and all means were acceptable for this purpose. Historians have noted that these attitudes were not rare among Lithuanian officers and members of the Lithuanian Riflemen's Union as favour to Germany was preconditioned by

⁷³ Venclauskas L. Propagandos aksesuarai ar nuoširdus antisemitizmas. *Darbai ir dienos*, t. 50, 2008, 217.

⁷⁴ 1939 03 13 Lithuania's envoy in Germany K. Škirpa's report to the Minister of Foreign Affairs J. Urbšys. LCSA, F. 648, ap. 1, b. 39, l. 155–157.

⁷⁵ 1940 11 17 K. Škirpa's lecture "Sketches of Lithuanian Activist Front Platform". LCSA, F. 648, ap. 2, b. 582, l. 131.

Wehrmacht's power and order, as well as the feeling of European civilisation rather than an ideological appeal.⁷⁶

The main factors why Oshima was oriented towards Germany so strongly were his complete anti-Communist conviction and disappointment in democracy, which in his eyes was not able to defend itself from Communism or juxtapose anything against it. Thus, even though he felt hatred to Communism, he did not direct it towards the Jews, contrary to his interlocutors in Germany, as anti-Semitism was not typical of Japan. For instance, on January 16, 1939, he wrote a letter to Tokyo, where he asked about the possibilities to help one unspecified Jew, who had assisted the Japanese Intelligence in collecting material about the events that occurred in Russia in 1905, during the Russo-Japanese war. It is interesting to note that Oshima referred to this as repayment for help.⁷⁷ Actually, more instances are known when even fierce anti-Semites tried to help one or another person of Jewish nationality, or even had friends among Jews. Therefore, the established relationship among different nations could be regarded as political anti-Semitism, which in this case was typical in the sense that a certain part of community members stood out from the representatives of an opposing group. One of the more interesting examples is an influential member of the Organisation of Ukrainian Nationalists (OUN) Rico Yaryi, who was close to Stepan Bandera, the Chief of the organisation. Škirpa closely communicated with Yaryi and contacted with the Chief of Abwehr Canaris through him. Yaryi maintained close relationship with the latter.⁷⁸ An interesting fact may be noted that Yaryi's, often referred to as Bandera's right hand, wife was a Jew.⁷⁹ Canaris later even became a well-known saver of Jews, he was even able to save a few important Jews who worked for Abwehr. Attention should also be paid to the fact that a person of the Jewish nationality, H. Flashenberg, was working in the Lithuanian legacy in Berlin as a press attaché; he was a known journalist. Therefore, Škirpa, who had communicated with him closely and more than once, interceded for him against the Nazis in 1939.⁸⁰ Their relationship terminated after the occupation of Lithuania in June, 1940 because Flashenberg was among the employees who performed the commands of the marionette Ministry of Foreign Affairs, while Škirpa refused to obey the instructions from Kaunas.

⁷⁶ Jokubauskas V., Vaičėnionis J., Vareikis V., Vitkus H. *Valia priešintis: paramilitarizmas ir Lietuvos karinio saugumo problemas*. Klaipėda, 2015, 109.

⁷⁷ Hanyok R. J. *Eavesdropping on Hell: Historical Guide to Western Communications Intelligence and Holocaust, 1939–1945*. National Security Agency, 2004, 100.

⁷⁸ 1939 01 12 Lithuania's envoy in Germany K. Škirpa's report to the Minister of Foreign Affairs J. Urbšys. LCSA, F. 671, ap. 1, b. 15, l. 22.

⁷⁹ Rossolinski-Liebe G. *Stepan Bandera: The Life and Afterlife of a Ukrainian Nationalist. Fascism, Genocide, and Cult*. Stuttgart, 2014, 155.

⁸⁰ Škirpa K. *Lietuvos nepriklausomybės sutemos (1938–1940)*. Chicago, 1996, 438.

Of course, these are only isolated instances, which should be considered as part of gratitude for something or personal relationship. An important fact is that while talking about his trip to Kaunas in 1940 Škirpa mentioned a large number of Jews, especially the youth, who supported the USSR; he viewed this as a betrayal during the period really complicated to Lithuania, and at the same time he understood that most Jews considered the occupation by the USSR “a lesser evil” than the possible intervention of the Third Reich.⁸¹ Even though Germany was not carrying out the Holocaust at that time, it was notorious for its anti-Semitic policy. It seems that in Škirpa’s opinion, the Lithuanian citizens of different ethnic groups fell into different geopolitical categories according to their fears: Germany seemed to be a lesser evil for the Lithuanians, while the USSR seemed a less threat for the Jews. In short, it might be noted that this motive remained in force for some time, yet, later it was expressed less directly. Coming back to the issues concerning Oshima, when he was invited to participate in a conference in Krakow in May, 1944, where the Germans invited the representatives of many nations to consider the “question of the Jews”, Oshima explained that Japan could participate as an observer, only for fear to insult Germany. On the other hand, Japan’s policy was absolutely different, thus, there was no need to attract a lot of attention from the allies’ propaganda, which would be guaranteed during such a conference.⁸² In October, 1941, the Prime Minister of Japan Hideki Tojo attempted to appoint Oshima Minister of Foreign Affairs; however, he changed his mind due to the latter’s anti-Soviet attitudes. Besides, Tojo eschewed annoying the USSR, with whom a Non-aggression Pact had been signed.⁸³ In this case, Oshima also resembled his colleague from far-away Lithuania. In 1934, remembering the circumstances of forming the Lithuanian army, Škirpa mentioned that the revolution in Russia in 1917 created favourable conditions for each nation to create its own state; the negative side of this phenomenon was the appearance of the “Bolshevik worm”, which, according to Škirpa, prevented the states from any creative activities.⁸⁴ When Lithuania lost its independence in 1940, Škirpa organized the Lithuanian Activists’ Front (LAF) and hoped that Lithuania would regain it taking advantage of the war that was taking place between Germany and the USSR, which had occupied Lithuania. Naturally, due to the situation, his hostility to the Bolshevik ideology increased considerably; however, the inability to distinguish ordinary Jews from the ones who contributed

⁸¹ *Lietuvos aneksija: 1940 metų dokumentai*. Vilnius, 1990, 95.

⁸² Hanyok R. J., op. cit., 103.

⁸³ Boyd C., op. cit., 142.

⁸⁴ K. Škirpa, *The First Efforts. Another Word Instead of Introduction*. [Memories from 1917–1919, manuscript]. MDMMNLL, F. PR-1241, l. 1–2.

to the occupation of Lithuania by serving to the Communist party and repressive structures enhanced many anti-Semitic ideas, that were expressed in LAF works. Still, the motive of betrayal is more noticeable in Škirpa's considerations: it seemed to him that the Jews helped the Soviets and supported Communism as an entire system; thus, in his eyes, they betrayed Lithuania and the Lithuanians during the most complicated period in the nation's history.⁸⁵ Undoubtedly, the fact that anti-Semitism was a dominant ideology in the German foreign policy contributed to anti-Semitic feeling in countries, which, being oppressed by Soviets and convinced that Germans would be better than the Soviet invaders, preferred a closer relationship with Germany.⁸⁶ This fact should be taken into consideration. Politically, this might have caused the hostilities to the Holocaust, even though, naturally, this was not either the only or the most important reason: LAF's influence in Lithuania was not absolute. Notable historians Liudas Truska and Saulius Sužiedėlis agree that despite really rude anti-Semitic statements, LAF texts did not refer to plans of killing the Jews.⁸⁷ In this context, the Germans' power should not be underestimated. Škirpa could not influence many processes after he had stated that he had been struggling for independent Lithuania rather than for a province of the Third Reich, and was isolated in Berlin by the Gestapo in the beginning of Nazi-Soviet war in June 1941.

CONCLUSIONS

1. There were a few common features typical of both Lithuanian and Japanese diplomats in the anxious atmosphere of the 1930s, which could be characterized by the geopolitical pragmatism, hatred towards Communism and admiration of military and political power of Germany. In addition, the phenomenon of anti-Semitism should be evaluated separately, i.e., to what extent it was sincere or conjunctural. One should not forget that Lithuania attempted to match the most powerful state from a technological, economic and military perspective, i.e., the Third Reich, which based its foreign policy on anti-Semitism as an ideology, forced other states and their representatives to take up these ideas as well. Therefore, considering Škirpa's and Oshima's activities, it is not surprising that these two men, serving as officers and diplomats, could find common topics as

⁸⁵ 1940 July K. Škirpa's non-published project called "Memorandum to Lithuanian Nation", LCSA, F. 648, ap. 2, b. 582.

⁸⁶ Hildebrand K. *The Third Reich*. London, 1984, 35.

⁸⁷ Truska L. Tikros ir primestos kaltės. Žydai ir lietuviai pirmuoju sovietmečiu 1940–1941. *Darbai ir dienos*, t. 34, 2003, 307.

their lives were developing out in clear parallels. This also demonstrates that even in the worldview of that time, Lithuania and Japan, although separated by a long distance geographically, were not that far away from each other in other senses.

2. Taking into consideration the fact that Japan viewed the struggle against the USSR as the main element of its foreign policy, we should understand that the relationship of the latter with Germany was also influenced by this situation. Japan was looking for allies in Europe, but its main requirement for a prospective ally was an anti-Soviet position: on the contrary to Germany, Japan's interests were not ideological. After the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact, Japan attempted to distance itself from the cooperation with the USSR as it considered the country its main enemy. Lithuania was also trying to do the same as far as its possibilities as a small country allowed; it created the conditions for the Polish underground to operate, which was actively supported by Great Britain and France, as well as by Japan itself, only in a more sophisticated way. Paradoxically, Škirpa and Oshima, the officers and diplomats known and respected in their own countries, Lithuania and Japan, had much in common due to the fact that the political elite both in Kaunas and Tokyo viewed their initiatives in a very reserved way and were much more careful about the policy of the Third Reich. On the other hand, even viewing the activities of the two historical figures retrospectively, we should not forget that their activity was based on their conviction that they were defending their countries by providing them with possibilities to survive.

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LIETUVA VOKIETIJOS IR JAPONIJOS SANTYKIŲ VERPETUOSE: LIETUVOS
IR JAPONIJOS DIPLOMATŲ KAZIO ŠKIRPOS IR HIROSHI OSHIMOS
BENDRADARBIAVIMAS 1935–1939 METAIS

SANTRAUKA. Šiame straipsnyje siekiama naujai pažvelgti į XX a. ketvirto dešimtmečio Lietuvos Respublikos užsienio politiką per dviejų ypač galingų to metų valstybių – Vokietijos ir Japonijos santykių raidą. Tiriamas Lietuvos karo atašė, vėliau pasiuntinio Vokietijoje pulkininko Kazio Škirpos ir Japonijos karo atašė, vėliau ambasadoriaus Vokietijoje generolo Hiroshi Oshimos bendradarbiavimas Berlyne. Abu šie asmenys turėjo nemažai panašumų ir ilgainiui pasirodė kaip dideli provokiškos geopolitinės orientacijos entuziastai. Nieko nuostabaus, kad artimai bendraudami asmeniškai jie galėjo derinti ir politines pozicijas. Nedidelei Lietuvai tai buvo svarbu, nes Vokietijos ir Japonijos aljanso bandymai, prasidėję po Antikominterno pakto 1936 m. ir baigęsi fiasko Vokietijai sudarius sutartį su SSRS 1939 m., darė įtaką ir tuometinei Lietuvos padėčiai. Japonija, geopolitiškai atsiribodama nuo SSRS, nesutiko dėtis su Vokietija į

paktą prieš Vakarų valstybes, o savo politikoje nepuoselėjo ir antisemitizmo, kurį skelbė Trečiasis reichas. Per Antrąjį pasaulinį karą Vokietija ir Japonija atsidūrė skirtingose barikadų pusėse. Nors Lietuva formaliai buvo neutrali, neoficialiai didelės simpatijos buvo demonstruojamos pralaimėjusiai Lenkijai ir šios sąjungininkėms – Prancūzijai bei Didžiąjai Britanijai. Nusivylusi Vokietija ir atsiribodama nuo SSRS, Japonija taip pat buvo suinteresuota bendradarbiauti su šia koalicija. Garsiausias to pavyzdys yra Pasaulio tautų teisuolio Chiune'ės Sugiharos veikla Kaune. Verta atkreipti dėmesį, jog Lietuvos institucijos žinojo apie glaudų Japonijos vicekonsulo ryšį su lenkų pogrindžiu bei Vakarų sąjungininkais, bet sudarė visas sąlygas jiems sėkmingai veikti gelbėjant daugiausia žydų tautybės Lenkijos piliečius. Visa ši veikla Lietuvos teritorijoje nutrūko tik tada, kai ją užėmė okupacinė tuometinės Vokietijos sąjungininkės – SSRS – kariuomenė.

RAKTAŽODŽIAI: Kazys Škirpa, Hiroshi Oshima, Chiune Sugihara, Lietuvos ir Japonijos santykiai, Vokietijos ir Japonijos santykiai, Lietuvos ir Vokietijos santykiai, tarptautiniai santykiai tarpukariu.