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Simonas Jazavita
(Vytautas Magnus University –
Kaunas, Litwa)

Diplomatic activities of Kazys Škirpa, the first lithuanian envoy to Poland, in March–December, 1938

Słowa kluczowe: Kazys Škirpa; stosunki polsko-litewskie; polityka zagraniczna Litwy w okresie międzywojennym; historia dyplomacji

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Introduction

Colonel of the General Staff and diplomat Kazys Škirpa (1895–1979) is one of the most complicated personalities in the Lithuanian history of the 20th century, especially to the researchers of foreign policy. It is difficult to evaluate the activities of this person unambiguously: in 1915, when he was only 20, he had an idea to establish Lithuanian troops in the Russian army; later he became the first volunteer in the Lithuanian army and was especially active in the fights for the independence of Lithuania. He was studying military sciences in Switzerland and Belgium. After graduation, he was the leader of the Lithuanian secret service, and in 1926 he was appointed the Chief of the General Staff, this way becoming the most important person in the Lithuanian army *de facto*. He was the only one who attempted to resist against the coup d'état in December, 1926. Therefore, he was disfavoured by the new authorities and President Antanas Smetona and appointed to a diplomatic service against his own will: he was the Lithuanian military attaché in Berlin in 1928–1937. In 1937, when he understood that he could

not perform military service in Lithuania because of artificial obstacles, he accepted the suggestion to go to reserve and to become an accredited envoy to the League of Nations. However, soon, even though he held this position only until December, 1938, when he was appointed to Germany, this short period was particularly important in the Lithuanian – Polish relationship, as well as in the history of the whole Middle Eastern Europe. The aim of this article is to analyse Škirpa's diplomatic activities in Warsaw in March–December, 1938, on the basis of archive material, people's memoirs, and historical research. In order to reach this aim, the following objectives have been formulated:

1. To discuss the circumstances of appointing Škirpa as an envoy to Poland in order to answer the question why the Lithuanian authorities chose this personality;
2. To analyse Škirpa's contacts with the Polish politicians and public figures and their importance in the development of bilateral relations;
3. To analyse Škirpa's contacts with the diplomats of other countries in Warsaw and their impact of the Lithuanian-Polish relationship.

The events in the relationship between Lithuania and Poland in 1938 have been researched sufficiently; however, the activities of Kazys Škirpa, the first Lithuanian envoy to Warsaw, has not been analysed in greater detail either in Lithuanian, or in Polish historiography. This period was fragmentally discussed by Polish historian Piotr Łossowski, who mentions that Škirpa's views were anti-Polish and pro-German¹; therefore, he was not the best choice for this position. Other Škirpa's activities are also described by other authors. Waldemar Rezmer has described his activities in a different context, i.e. during battles for Vilnius in 1919². Wanda Krystyna Roman has analysed the relationship between USSR and the Baltic countries and shortly mentioned Škirpa's negotiation with USSR envoy to Berlin Aleksandr Skvarcev in September, 1939³. This topic has been actively developed by Russian historian Natalia Lebedeva, whose informative article

¹ P. Łossowski, *Lithuania's Neutrality in the Polish – German War of 1939*, "Acta Poloniae Historica", Vol. 42, 1980; P. Łossowski, *Litwa a sprawy polskie 1939–1940*, Warszawa 1985.

² W. Rezmer, *Walki o Wilno w styczniu 1919 roku – początek wojny polsko – sowieckiej*, „Europa Orientalis. Studia z dziejów Europy Wschodniej i państw bałtyckich” 2010, nr 2.

³ W. K. Roman, *Polityka Związku Radzieckiego wobec państw nadbałtyckich (Litwy, Łotwy, Estonii) we wrześniu i październiku 1939 roku*, „Europa Orientalis. Studia z dziejów Europy Wschodniej i państw bałtyckich” 2010, nr 2

was published in Lithuanian⁴. In the Lithuanian historiography, Škirpa's activities have been discussed in greater detail; the articles by Linas Locaitis⁵ and Žana Vaščova⁶ can be mentioned, as well as the documents published by Jonas Vaičenonis⁷. Undoubtedly, Škirpa's activities have been reviewed by the most notable researchers of the First Lithuanian Republic⁸; however, the research on his diplomatic activities in Warsaw has been fragmentary. Algimantas Kasparavičius's research should be distinguished because this historian with his colleague Pawel Libera from Poland compiled an important document collection from Lithuanian and Polish archive funds⁹. Therefore, the author of this article aims at investigating Škirpa's activities in the context of Lithuanian-Polish relationship in March–December, 1938, in a more complex way. In addition to the above-mentioned historiographical basis, the information from the Lithuanian Central State Archive, the Funds 648 (the Lithuanian Embassy in London), 668 (Stasys Lozoraitis), 671 (the Lithuanian Embassy in Berlin), and F. R. – 952 (Tomas Remeikis), as well as Fund 15 (Juozas Urbšys) from the Manuscript Department of Martynas Mažvydas National Library of Lithuania have been used in the present research. As for published sources, the images (i.e. photos and visuals) on the internet should be mentioned, which are preserved in the Polish National Digital Archive (Narodowe Archiwum Cyfrowe) and accessible online. Memoirs should be emphasized and, particularly, Škirpa's memoir book *Lietuvos nepriklausomybės sutemos (Dusk of the Lithuanian Independence)*¹⁰. On the other hand, the book was written many years later, and it contains various corrections, which contradict other sources. His

⁴ N. Lebedeva, *SSRS ir Pabaltijys 1939–1941 m. (Lietuvos pavyzdys)*, Lietuva Antrajame pasauliniame kare, Vilnius, 2007.

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

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

⁷ *Dokumentai pasakoja. Lietuvos kariuomenės vyriausiojo štabo viršininko plk. K. Škirpos Lietuvos kariuomenės vystymo planas*, Karo archyvas, t. 21, Vilnius 2006; Karo archyvas, t. 22, Vilnius 2007.

⁸ V. Žalys, *Lietuvos diplomatijos istorija*, t. 1, Vilnius, 2007; A. Kasparavičius, *Lietuva 1938–1939: Neutraliteto iliuzijos*, Vilnius 2010; A. Eidintas, *Antanas Smetona ir jo aplinka*, Vilnius 2012; N. Šepetys, *Molotovo – Ribentropo paktas ir Lietuva*, Vilnius 2006; Č. Laurinavičius, *The Lithuanian Reaction to The Loss of Klaipėda and the Combined Gift of Soviet „Security Assistance“ and Vilnius*, Northern European Overture to War, 1939–1941– From Memel to Barbarossa, Leiden 2013.

⁹ *Lietuvos ir Lenkijos diplomatiniai santykiai 1938 – 1940 m.*, Vilnius 2013.

¹⁰ K. Škirpa, *Lietuvos nepriklausomybės sutemos (1938–1940)*, Chicago–Vilnius 1996.

written heritage in periodicals should be evaluated as well; for instance, his articles in the publication *Mūsų žinynas (Our Reference Book)*. Naturally, this heritage should be analysed more critically as well and the provided material with archive documents should be compared. The reflections provided by Škirpa's contemporaries and acquaintances might be considered separately (e.g. the USA ambassador in Warsaw Anthony Drexel Biddle Jr.¹¹ or Polish military attaché in Lithuania Col. Leon Mitkiewicz¹²).

Connection between Škirpa's Appointment and Accepting the Ultimatum

The relationship between Lithuania and Poland has been diverse: from hundreds-years-long union to open hostility and even military encounters. Even though the relationship between modern Lithuanian and Polish states were extremely bad during the Interwar period, which is proven by the situation without diplomatic relationship and dominating negative stereotypes in the societies, the increasing German armament in the 1930s caused anxiety for many European countries, especially the neighbouring states. In 1933, the factual leader of the Polish state Marshall Józef Piłsudski suggested fighting with Germany, which was becoming stronger, before it was too late¹³; however, as its main ally France did not support this idea, next year he decided to sign a non-aggression pact with this country. These events scared the Lithuanian political elite. As it was afraid of possible closer contacts between Poland and Germany, the search for counterbalance started. France and the Soviet Union were mentioned as the countries which could help. This was related to Stasys Lozoraitis, the Lithuanian Minister of Foreign Affairs, visit to Moscow in 1934¹⁴. Nevertheless, the ideas about looking for compromise with Poland were also considered. Therefore, Antanas Smetona needed a politician who did not have a negative attitude towards

¹¹ *Poland and the Coming of the Second World War. The Diplomatic Papers of A.J. Drexel Biddle Jr., United States Ambassador in Poland 1937–1939*, Ohio State University Press 1976.

¹² L. Mitkiewicz, *Kauno atsiminimai 1938–1939*, Vilnius 2002.

¹³ P. Stachura, *Poland, 1918–1945, An Interpretative and Documentary History of the Second Republic*, New York 2004, p. 120.

¹⁴ A. Kasparavičius, *Lietuvos kariuomenė Maskvos politinėse ir diplomatinėse spekuliacijose (1920–1936)*, Lietuvos Nepriklausomybei – 80, Vilnius 1999, p. 37.

Poland¹⁵. The new Chief of Army, Col. Stasys Raštikis had the same opinion as minister Lozoraitis¹⁶. Žalys humorously refers to the common foreign policy of these two important men of the state as *the tandem of two Stasiai*¹⁷. Stasys Lozoraitis met with Polish Minister of Foreign Affairs Józef Beck for several times informally and was looking for compromises. The negotiation went wrong as the diplomatic relationship was not renewed. This was not useful for both sides because the relationship was renewed by the unpleasant way of presenting an ultimatum. This caused substantial dissatisfaction and distrust in Lithuania and a slightly exaggerated and inadequate joy in Poland. However, this determined the establishment of diplomatic relationship between the two countries.

Immediately after the ultimatum, Lithuanian society did not support the decision of the authorities, as people perceived the acceptance of the ultimatum as renouncing Vilnius and humiliating the state. Thus more radical political powers, such as radical right politicians or communists, used this situation for their benefit¹⁸. According to Liudas Truska, recapturing Vilnius had been the moral symbol of the nation; when it was factually renounced and the ultimatum was accepted, it seemed to be a humiliation of the nation, which caused its moral crisis¹⁹. Smetona had to take measures to remedy the situation. An example of this could be the article with a meaningful title ‘*Visa Tauta iš paskutiniųjų pasižada ginti Nepriklausomybę*’ (‘The whole Nation Promises to Protect its Independence by all Means’), which was published on the first page of the semiofficial newspaper *Lietuvos aidas* on March 22, 1938. The article claims ‘full trust in the Chief of Our Nation and his appointed Government’²⁰ which was emphasized in bold. Another measure to suppress spontaneous dissatisfaction of society and army was to appoint the first Lithuanian army volunteer, retired General Staff Colonel Kazys Škirpa as the first envoy to Poland. This person had many supporters

¹⁵ A. Petraitytė-Briedienė, *Lietuvos diplomatinės tarnybos šefas Stasys Lozoraitis (1940–1983)*, Vilnius 2012, p. 40.

¹⁶ He was the Chief of the Army since January 1, 1935. On November 23, 1937 he was raised in rank to Brigade General. On April 23, 1940, he was dismissed and raised to the rank of Division General.

¹⁷ V. Žalys, *Lietuvos diplomatinės tarnybos ir kariuomenės vadovybės sąvoka įtvirtinant Lietuvos valstybingumą 1923 – 1938 metais*, *Lietuvos Nepriklausomybei – 80*, Vilnius 1999, p. 68.

¹⁸ Read more: G. Janauskas, *Jėga nėra teisė. 1938 metų ultimatas ir Lietuvos visuomenė, Darbai ir dienos*, t. 30, Kaunas 2002, p. 93–116.

¹⁹ L. Truska, *Antanas Smetona ir jo laikai*, Vilnius 1996, p. 344–346.

²⁰ *Visa Tauta iš paskutiniųjų pasižada ginti savo Nepriklausomybę*, *Lietuvos aidas*, 1938.03.22, p. 1.

in society and in the army; therefore, he even had to get an important position. Otherwise he would have become ‘a martyr.’ Nevertheless, the position had to be abroad as Smetona and the people close to him were afraid of political rivals and attempted to keep them at a distance.

As the resentment of society towards officers was substantial after accepting the Polish ultimatum (in many cases they even tried to avoid going out to streets, being afraid of unapproving looks²¹); a hypothesis may be formulated that appointing the officer famous for his combative attitude to diplomatic service in Poland was necessary in order to revive the moral image of officers, as supporters of Smetona’s authoritarian regime, in society. For this reason, the officer famous for his negative attitude towards Poland was chosen. As an active participant in the Lithuanian fights for independence in 1919–1920, Škirpa considered Poland to be the major threat to Lithuania; therefore, he was looking for allies in Moscow before the coup d’état, being the Chief of General Staff, and in Berlin, when he had a diplomatic job. Naturally, it seemed that the arrival of such an envoy could not construct new relationship between the two neighbouring countries very positively. However, it is worthwhile to analyse another, the less visible side, of Škirpa’s activities in Poland, which has not been analysed as much as Škirpa’s attempts to shift the Lithuanian foreign policy to the pro-German direction.

Škirpa’s Contacts with Polish Politicians

As noted by Škirpa himself in his memoirs, the decision to go to Poland seemed to be difficult. After almost forty years, he wrote that at that time he was feeling that ‘little by little, a noose of the former Union of Lublin is tightened around Lithuania’²². Therefore, he decided to use his position in Warsaw to do everything in order to prevent this. However, comparing his own memoirs with archive material, it is not difficult to note that Škirpa managed to reduce his distrust in Poland and to try and find common points. First, the presentation of credentials to President of Poland Ignacy Mościcki was very successful. During the reception, he praised Lithuanians very

²¹ J. Vaičenonis, *Lietuvos kariuomenė valstybės politinio gyvenimo verpetuose (1927–1940)*, Vilnius 2004, p. 152.

²² K. Škirpa, *Lietuvos nepriklausomybės...*, p. 65.

much, emphasizing that they created the state *out of nothing*²³. This way, it was approved that Poland adapted to the conception of a new and national state of Lithuania and did not intend to negate its legitimacy or propose the tradition of the union. In addition, the President mentioned that Škirpa would find considerable support in Warsaw. He thanked the President and emphasized diplomatically that ‘despite the special circumstances under which I start this mission, [...] I am *tabula rasa* for the relationship which I will try to establish’²⁴. When Škirpa left the reception, he mentioned that he was extremely excited when the orchestra played the Lithuanian anthem, and the emotion was especially strengthened by the fact that this happened in Warsaw²⁵.

In addition to this, President Mościcki left a really favourable impression; therefore, he had no doubts that ‘the President would like to form good relationship between both countries’²⁶. This impression was correct, and Mościcki remained Lithuania’s friend till the end of his life²⁷. On the contrary, Smetona ignored the Polish envoy Franciszek Charwat in Kaunas. Naturally, different communication could be related to the size of the countries and different aims. A larger country tends to find its supporters among foreign diplomats, while the concession of a smaller state is considered to be its weakness without any reason. It is more important to draw attention to the fact that Škirpa was accepted very ceremoniously after a short period of time when in March, 1938, Lithuania was massively addressed not too friendly. Most probably, Škirpa’s meeting in Warsaw might have been a part of the changing position mentioned by Krzysztof Buchowski, who discussed the changes in Polish press and society in relation to Lithuania after accepting the ultimatum²⁸.

Still, there were some officials who viewed Lithuania unfavourably, and it was especially complicated to find a compromise with them. Škirpa and Tadeusz Kobylanski, the Head of the East European Department at Ministry

²³ 1938.03.31, Lithuania’s minister in Poland K.Škirpa report to minister of foreign relations S. Lozoraitis, Lietuvos centrinis valstybės archyvas – (Lithuania Central State Archive), further – LCVA, f. 648, ap. 1, b. 23, l.12.

²⁴ Ibid., l.13

²⁵ K.Škirpa, *Lietuvos nepriklausomybės...*, p. 77.

²⁶ 1938.03.31, Lithuania’s minister in Poland K. Škirpa report to minister of foreign relations S. Lozoraitis, LCVA, f.648, ap.1, b.23, l.14.

²⁷ For instance, when he was talking to Jurgis Šaulys privately in Bern on April 6, 1940, he optimistically said: ‘Vilnius will never be an obstacle between Poland and Lithuania. Never...’ (Lietuvos ir Lenkijos diplomatiniai santykiai, p. 540).

²⁸ Read more: K. Buchowski, *Litvomanai ir polonizuotojai, Mitai, abipusės nuostatos ir stereotipai lenkų ir lietuvių santykiuose XX a. pirmoje pusėje*, Vilnius 2012, p. 407–430.

of Foreign Affairs of Poland, had absolutely different opinions. Škirpa addressed him several times, asking for some actions favourable to Lithuania regarding Vilnius region; he was especially interested in closing Lithuanian schools, which started in 1936, soon after the death of Marshall Józef Pilsudski. However, Kobylanski did not want to compromise and thought of some diplomatic evasion. During one visit, he claimed that psychological relationship would improve after establishing free movement between the states²⁹; the other time he maintained that Poland had already done many good things to Lithuania as it did not demand to cross out Vilnius from the Constitution of Lithuania³⁰. It is known that Kobylanski was the person who sought to present a much stricter ultimatum to Lithuania. In order to improve the relationship, Škirpa attempted to look for personal contacts, who could be useful as mediators. One of the first people suitable for this task was Škirpa's acquaintance from his job in Berlin, Estonian envoy Johannes Markus, whom Škirpa met even before the introduction to the president and the presentation of credentials³¹. Taking into consideration the fact that Estonian diplomats often acted as mediators between the Polish and the Lithuanians, such a choice seemed to be purposeful. Latvia also tried to be a mediator between the two neighbouring countries³². For this reason, Škirpa organized a meeting with the Estonian representative, as well as with his colleague from Latvia, and referred to them as 'our political partners'³³. It should be noted that this tradition could have been followed from the time when he was working in Berlin. During the meetings of envoys from the Baltic countries, Škirpa often participated as well, even though Latvian and Estonian military representatives did not attend these meetings³⁴.

However, both in Berlin and in Warsaw, the most important helpers were influential locals, having a positive attitude towards Škirpa or the country that he represented. Earl Stanisław Tyszkiewicz, the Deputy

²⁹ 1938.04.01, Lithuania's minister in Poland K. Škirpa report to minister of foreign relations S. Lozoraitis, LCVA, f.648, ap.1, b.23, l.18–19.

³⁰ 1938.04.02, Lithuania's minister in Poland K. Škirpa report to minister of foreign relations S. Lozoraitis, LCVA, f.648, ap.1, b.23, l.22.

³¹ K. Škirpa, *Lietuvos nepriklausomybės...*, p. 80.

³² Read more: E Jakobsons, *Latvijos užsienio reikalų ministro V.Muntero bandymas tarpininkauti Lenkijai ir Lietuvai sprendžiant 1938 m. kovo mėnesį plykstelėjusį konfliktą*, Lietuvos istorijos metraštis, 2011, nr 1, Vilnius 2012, p. 113–134.

³³ 1938.04.06 K. Škirpa Pro memoria. About meeting with Estonia's minister Markus and their military attache, LCVA, f.648, ap.1, b.23, l.24.

³⁴ *Baltijos valstybių vienybės idėja ir praktika 1918–1940 metais. Dokumentų rinkinys*, Vilnius, 2008, p. 580, 588.

Burgomaster of Warsaw, should be distinguished, as his father Aleksandras lived in Kretinga and was renowned as a patriot of Lithuania. Because of contacts with this person, Škirpa found a connection with his son as well. An important aspect to note is that the earl was worried about weak democracy, especially in France, and its compromises to communists. Thus, the only possibility to outweigh it seemed to be fascism and its radical variety National Socialism³⁵. Škirpa did not want to agree with this and tried to maintain that anti-communism in Germany was provoked in order to justify massive armament, and a considerable number of officers tended to compromise with the Soviets³⁶. In fact, there is no basis to disbelieve in Škirpa's version as he spent many years in Germany. Officers of that time tended to believe in Otto von Bismarck's doctrine established in the 19th century that Germany had to maintain sufficiently friendly relationship with Russia in order to avoid war on two fronts. The defeat of Germany during WWI had to be an additional incentive. Škirpa even maintained that the Germans had not taken into consideration any measures in order to reach their aims. He claimed that during the strike of farmers from Suvalkija, they were using anti-Lithuanian or even open communist propaganda. In addition, he had heard that a substantial number of German officers would like to see Poland under Soviet rule. In order to strengthen his arguments, he even emphasized that the behaviour of Germans is exemplified by the fact that they had brought Lenin and Trotsky to Russia³⁷. The question arises why it was necessary to express these ideas if he was cherishing pro-German views. Nevertheless, it seems that in historiography the statement about his pro-German views is dominant, but overstated if not too early. A presumption can be formulated that in 1938 Škirpa was unfavourable towards Germany and Nazi expansion; therefore, he was trying to find potential allies for Lithuania elsewhere. A logical possibility could have been Poland, and he was trying to influence its policy towards the direction useful for Lithuania. It seemed necessary for him to inform Lozoraitis that 'he was talking like this purposefully, so that responsible Polish officials would hear this'³⁸. In addition, he wanted to show that Lithuania and Poland might have a powerful enemy in the future. Škirpa thought that the situation 'when there is a competition between me and Mr. Charwat who first

³⁵ 1938.04.07 K. Škirpa Pro memoria. About meeting with count Tyskiewicz, vice-burgomaster of Warsaw, LCVA, f. 648, ap. 1, b.23, l.30.

³⁶ Ibid., l.31.

³⁷ Ibid., l.32.

³⁸ Ibid., l.30.

is going to place flowers on the unknown soldier's grave³⁹ was abnormal and hindered cooperation. Even if Škirpa supported Germany more than Poland, he understood that friendly relationship between these two countries would be the worst scenario for Lithuania. Therefore, he was taking all measures to prevent Lithuania from becoming the target of these countries.

In addition to Tiškevičius, Škirpa found more people in Warsaw favourable to Lithuania. Julian Urniaz, a Lithuanian Pole, who frequently visited Warsaw and had important acquaintances here, was among them. He tended to go and visit Škirpa as well. In addition, Urniaz served in the separate Vilnius battalion headed by Škirpa and was a staff clerk⁴⁰. This might have facilitated their relationship. Another person especially favourable of Lithuania was Minister of Social Security Marian Zyndram Kościałkowski. Even though it might seem that his job was hardly related to foreign affairs, he was an influential politician, who had been the Prime Minister in 1935–1936, and one of the closest Pilsudski's friends and associates. This person originally came from Pandėlys; therefore, he was closely attached to Lithuania. He told immediately that he preferred talking to Škirpa privately as a person who was bothered by the question of East Prussia 'night and day'⁴¹ rather than a minister. He and Škirpa discussed in great detail why the countries had not managed to agree on a common position against common enemies in 1918–1920. It should be noted that these two people were on the opposite front sides at that time. Still, even this person thought that the danger from Germany was directed only to the Baltic states, excluding Poland. Škirpa replied that, first, Germany would be interested in restoring the borders of 1914. At the same time, the envoy was lobbying the Lithuanian schools of Vilnius region. He claimed that Poland was not doing anything in order to gain psychological Lithuanians' support, which could be useful in the future. Kościałkowski replied that the relationship was destroyed by Kobylanski; therefore, he suggested addressing his brother Bogdan Kościałkowski, who was an advisor on Lithuania at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. All this was reported to Lozoraitis by saying that Kościałkowski 'undoubtedly had pro-Lithuanian views'⁴². It seems that he was not hindered by the fact that Kościałkowski had had .an im-

³⁹ Ibid., 1.36.

⁴⁰ 1938.05.09, Lithuania's minister in Poland K. Škirpa report to minister of foreign relations S. Lozoraitis, LCVA, f.648, ap.1, b.23, 1.58.

⁴¹ 1938.08.01, Lithuania's minister in Poland K. Škirpa report to minister of foreign relations S. Lozoraitis, LCVA, f.648, ap.1, b.23, 1.110.

⁴² Ibid., 1.112.

portant position in the fights against Lithuania. This situation revealed that Škirpa could forget grievances of the past, if this was caused by the changed situation and an unclear and sufficiently menacing future.

One more person influential in Warsaw was Cardinal Aleksander Kakowski, whom Škirpa visited as a representative of another Catholic country and left a really good impression⁴³. Cardinal's friendliness could help the envoy in finding more favourable people. However, as Škirpa was accompanied by prelate Julius Maciejauskas, this caused dissatisfaction for Kazys Bizauskas, an influential actor of the Lithuanian Christian Democratic Party and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs⁴⁴. Thus, this visit was not useful for Škirpa because it contributed to a further tension between these two people; taking a narrow view, this could not have been useful for Škirpa's career. Still, because of political aims, this person could risk his personal position. This is demonstrated by the fact that he met and actively discussed various questions even with Polish opposition members, who maintained close relationship with Gen. Władysław Sikorski⁴⁵, who lived in France and was disliked by the present regime. Possibly, these decisions were influenced by his experience as a secret agent and good analytical skills useful in a diplomatic position.

When one receives much pleasant attention, it is difficult not to get involved into the phenomenon referred to as *becoming local* by Alfonsas Eidintas, i.e. a diplomat starts representing the country where he was accredited rather than his/her own country⁴⁶. Smetona, possibly, foresaw that this might happen and appointed Škirpa, whose deep grievance about Vilnius could not arouse these sentiments and make substantial compromises for Poland. Škirpa himself noted this threat. In his personal letter to his friend and diplomat Albertas Gerutis to Geneva, he claimed that 'it is even more complicated to reach one's goals in Warsaw than anywhere else especially when I feel too much of 'brotherly' Polish love'⁴⁷. From this phrase, it becomes clear that the envoy tried not to trust in diplomatic talks because he was not sure about the real thoughts of his interlocutors. Naturally, one should not think that he himself was always sincere. He definitely had to experience various reactions as he was meeting with the most influential state

⁴³ 1938.05.22, Lithuania's minister in Poland K. Škirpa report to minister of foreign relations S. Lozoraitis, LCVA, f. 648, ap. 1, b. 23, l.66.

⁴⁴ K. Škirpa, *Lietuvos nepriklausomybės...*, p. 78.

⁴⁵ 1938.08.31, Lithuania's minister in Poland K.Škirpa report to minister of foreign relations S. Lozoraitis, LCVA, f. 648, ap. 1, b. 23, l.133–134.

⁴⁶ A. Eidintas, *Ambasadorius. Tarnyba savo valstybei svetur*, Vilnius 2003, p. 172.

⁴⁷ 1938.05.05 K. Škirpa personal letter to A.Gerutis, LCVA, f. 668, ap. 1, b. 603, l.8.

actors in Poland. In addition to the above-mentioned ones, he visited Prime Minister Gen. Felicjan Sławoj Składkowski, President of Warsaw city Stefan Starzyński, Vice-Minister of Foreign Affairs Jan Szembek, Minister of Trade and Industry Antoni Roman, Minister of Post and Telegraphs Emil Kaminski, Minister of Transport Col. Julijusz Ulrych, Minister of Religions and Education Prof. Wojciech Świętosławski, Head of Senate Aleksander Prystor, Vice-President of Seimas Stanisław Schaetzel, Head of the General Staff Gen. Waław Stachiewicz, Marshall J. Piłsudski's widow Aleksandra Piłsudska, famous historian Prof. Władysław Wielhorski, and other people who had various views and professions⁴⁸. This demonstrates that Škirpa was looking for the people who were favourable of Lithuania and could help him. Actually, it was not too difficult as many of these people were eager to meet the Lithuanian envoy themselves. Škirpa was waiting to meet the Head of the Second Department (Secret Service) of the Polish Army Staff Tadeusz Pełczyński. Škirpa knew a lot about him already from his secret service dossier, which he obtained from Polish Military and Aviation Attaché in Germany Col. Lieut. Antoni Szymański, who was Škirpa's colleague in 1932–1937. As he claimed, the Lithuanian was disliked by the Germans because of his behaviour unsuitable to a diplomat; therefore, they were even surprised about his appointment to Warsaw⁴⁹. Even though this contradicts the dominant data in historiography, there is no basis to reject them totally. Maybe his information is not precise⁵⁰; however, Szymański did not have any reason to distort the data that he was sending to his authorities. The statement that Škirpa supported the pro-French and pro-Soviet side also provokes many thoughts, even though this should not be rejected, taking into consideration his studies in the French-speaking part of Switzerland and Belgium, and the early activities⁵¹. The attention should be drawn to the last remark in his rapport:

⁴⁸ 1938.07.08 K.Škirpa Pro memoria. June 17th report in Government about tendencies of Poland foreign policy, LCVA, f. 648, ap. 1, b. 23, l.92.

⁴⁹ *Lietuvos ir Lenkijos diplomatiniai santykiai 1938–1940 metais...*, p. 137.

⁵⁰ This is emphasized by constant statements in his rapports that Škirpa is very close to the governing layer of Lithuania, which did not correspond to reality because of his past in the opposition.

⁵¹ An example could be Škirpa's article published in 1922, where he presents the Swiss army and defence system in a very positive way (*Ginkluotos šveicarų pajėgos organizacija*, "Mūsų žinyna"s 1922, nr 8, p. 322–342), as well as one of his first works after the coup d'état (*Nauja mobilizacijos organizacija Prancūzijoje*, "Mūsų žinynas", 1927, nr 35, p. 247–248).

‘I inform that the contacts of Col. Škirpa, similarly to Minister Šaulys, are still very close with the Soviet Embassy in Berlin’⁵².

This demonstrates that Škirpa maintained sufficiently close relationship with the Soviet representatives at the end of the 1930s. Even though he viewed Communism as an ideology and the system of government negatively,⁵³ Russia as a geopolitical factor did not seem to be as dangerous for Lithuania as Poland or Germany at least until the end of 1939.

It is understandable that the Polish secret service viewed Škirpa not only as a Lithuanian representative but also as an agent of Germany and, possibly, the USSR. It is not surprising that Pełczyński, who was late to a diplomatic event very much, rushed from it immediately after meeting Škirpa, who got an impression that he appeared in the event only for this reason⁵⁴. With the head of Polish secret service, he discussed the threat that Germany and USSR caused to both states; however, Škirpa expressed his dissatisfaction about difficult life conditions of Lithuanians in Vilnius region as well. Nevertheless, Škirpa had the most difficult conversations with the above-mentioned Kobyłanski and Beck, the Minister of Foreign Affairs. The latter, whom Škirpa did not like, was responsible for all Polish foreign policy planning. It is understandable, as both politicians had similar character features and tended to fight ‘strictly’ for their ideas. In fact, Beck implemented the so-called ‘hard line’⁵⁵ with respect to Lithuania. Therefore, negotiations would always be tough with him. This Polish politician was well-known not only in Europe. Even though his policy would not be understood even by his allies, they took into consideration the importance of Poland and respected its policy. For instance, British and American diplomats called Beck a person without scruples⁵⁶ after the ultimatum to Lithuania. Even though the chief of the Polish diplomacy tried to behave correctly and even in a friendly manner when he communicated with Škirpa, he usually hinted to foreign diplomats that he did not want to concede to Lithuania and was rather waiting for it to understand the situation and join Poland without

⁵² *Lietuvos ir Lenkijos diplomatiniai santykiai 1938–1940 metais...*, p. 138.

⁵³ K. Škirpa, *Kariuomenės kūrimo pirmos pastangos ir pirmos kliūtys*, “Mūsų žinynas”, 1938, t. 31, nr 11–12, p. 703.

⁵⁴ 1938.05.22, Lithuania’s minister in Poland K. Škirpa report to minister of foreign relations S. Lozoraitis, LCVA, f. 648, ap. 1, b. 23, l.66.

⁵⁵ S. Sužiedėlis, *Vilniaus klausimas ir lietuvių – lenkų konfliktas ketvirto dešimtmečio krizės ir Antrojo pasaulinio karo kontekste*, [in:] *Lietuva ir Lenkija XX a. geopolitinėje vaizduotėje*, Kaunas 2012, p. 162.

⁵⁶ 1938.03.23, Chancellor of USA embassy in Great Britain H. V. Johnson report to USA secretary of state C. Hull, LCVA, f. R-952, ap. 1, b. 66, l.10–14

reservations. For example, he explained to the USA ambassador Biddle in July, 1938, that Germans would start pressing Lithuania about Klaipėda, and this would cause greater dependence on Poland. When saying this, he was visibly joyful⁵⁷. Of course, this person should not be viewed as a demon, which was done by Škirpa, who was trying to portray him as an enemy of the independence of Lithuania. However, it should be noted that Beck did not seem acceptable even to Latvia, which had not had a similar conflict with Poland, because of his dominant and uncompromising tone. When Latvian envoy Mikelis Walters was commenting about a four-hour Beck's visit to Munters in Riga, he told Škirpa that Beck would like 'to walk the Baltic states on his own leash'⁵⁸. When Škirpa was talking to Polish Vice-Secretary of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs Mirosław Arciszewski, he reproached that despite finding many supporters in the Polish society, in the government he felt 'certain stubbornness, which did not lead anywhere'⁵⁹. Meanwhile, Arciszewski responded that Beck intended to provide concessions, but the Lithuanian Prime Minister (Vladas Mironas – S. J.) started talking about them publicly; therefore, the concessions had to be postponed. Otherwise, Polish society would consider that the Minister did not cope with pressure from Lithuania⁶⁰. Still, it seems that when the geopolitical situation was getting tense more, these two politicians, having totally different views, started finding common topics. One of the last conversations took place on November 4, 1938. At that time, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs started to understand that Germany, which triumphed after Munich agreements, would focus its attention on Klaipėda, but most probably, this was only a rehearsal before Gdansk. Thus, finally, Škirpa even praised Beck for his press releases favourable to Lithuania, and the latter was visibly satisfied, hearing such envoy's words⁶¹. However, the person with whom it was the most difficult to communicate was the above-mentioned Kobylanski. During one reception, he even praised Hitler and condemned the Czechoslovak state; at the same time, he also admitted that in the case of German aggression, he would expect help not only from France but also

⁵⁷ 1938.07.08, Ambassador of USA in Poland A. Drexel – Biddle report to secretary of state C. Hull, LCVA, f. R-952, ap. 1, b. 66, l.114.

⁵⁸ 1938.08.01, Lithuania's minister in Poland K. Škirpa report to minister of foreign relations S. Lozoraitis, LCVA, f. 648, ap. 1, b. 23, l.114.

⁵⁹ 1938.08.09, Lithuania's minister in Poland K. Škirpa report to minister of foreign relations S. Lozoraitis, LCVA, f. 648, ap. 1, b. 23, l.117.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, l.117.

⁶¹ 1938.11.04, Lithuania's minister in Poland K. Škirpa report to minister of foreign relations S. Lozoraitis, LCVA, f. 648, ap. 1, b. 23, l.167–168.

from Great Britain. Škirpa's reaction was important here. He explained Kobylansky that 'there are millions of communists in Germany; just they are dressed in brown'⁶². In his opinion, only Japan benefitted from the Anti-Comintern Pact because it incited the Germans against the Soviets. Besides, there was no sense in trusting the English as they would consider only their own interest. Kobylanski did not like these Škirpa's ideas, and he even asked how after spending many years in Germany, he did not want to understand that the USSR and Germany would never agree with each other, and even suggested a bet. Škirpa, on the other hand, suggested Kobylanski writing down these words in his calendar and seeing who was right in the future. Unfortunately, Škirpa seemed to be more insightful than his colleague, as the future events demonstrated.

Škirpa's Relationship with the Diplomats of Other Countries in Warsaw

At the time, Warsaw was one of more important cities on the world's political map. Therefore, trustworthy and often highly experienced diplomats were working here. Larger states had their embassies here, while the smaller ones, including Lithuania, had only legations. Naturally, Škirpa started looking for acquaintances among abundant diplomats in Warsaw. In addition to the above-mentioned Estonian envoy Markus, who was the main mediator between Lithuania and Poland, Škirpa started looking for people with whom he could cooperate more closely in order to ensure the Lithuanian interests. At that time, the ambassadors of the UK, France, and Germany played the major role in Warsaw; however, both the envoy himself and other staff of the legation did not avoid meetings with colleagues from other countries, especially Latvia and Estonia.

As for the large states, Škirpa's meetings with Great Britain ambassador Sir Howard William Kennard should be mentioned, who played an important role in the diplomatic life in Warsaw. On March 16, 1938, he suggested Kobylanski, Szembek, and Michał Łubieński, the planners of the Polish foreign policy, to press Lithuania because it was the right time and it would accept the ultimatum⁶³. It is not surprising that Škirpa did not have

⁶² 1938.06.07, Lithuania's minister in Poland K. Škirpa report to minister of foreign relations S. Lozoraitis, LCVA, f. 648, ap. 1, b. 23, l.82.

⁶³ A. Kasparavičius, P. Libera, Įvadas, *Lietuvos ir Lenkijos diplomatiniai santykiai 1938–1940 metais*, Vilnius 2013, p. 12.

closer contacts with him. Kennard hinted that the Polish would like to have more Polish schools in Lithuania. Škirpa was unpleasantly surprised by 'this Polish whim' and complained to Kennard that the Polish had many more schools in Lithuania than the Lithuanians in Poland⁶⁴. Thus, a visit of the authoritative ambassador did not help to regulate a topical question of national minorities. This could have been influenced by pro-Polish views of the British and the fact that Škirpa himself was distrustful about the orientation towards the UK. He considered that 'the English always care about their own interests at the expense of others'⁶⁵ and if they wanted to help Lithuania, they were simply too far. He was also doubtful about the military strength of this state.

The relationship with French ambassador in Warsaw Leon Noel was developing along different lines. He seemed to be more interested in making concessions for Lithuania in order to attract it to the Polish side. It was Noel who suggested Škirpa to direct attention to pro-Lithuanian views in the academic spheres in Warsaw⁶⁶. Škirpa used this piece of advice and met with other scholars as well, in addition to the above-mentioned Wielhorski, who was known as a prominent supporter of the agreement between Lithuania and Poland⁶⁷. He could also have more detailed discussions with Noel, after which Škirpa was sure that the French considered the approach between the Polish and the Germans as a maneuver. However, he forced his interlocutor to admit that the agreement between Poland and Germany in 1934 enabled the armament of the latter. Naturally, such statements did not disappear in vain. Since 1934, distrust in its strategic partner, Poland, was increasing in France because of its non-aggression pact with Germany, while the number of supporters of Lithuania, which was the first to judge nazists in court, was increasing. Envoy to Paris Petras Klimas, who spent many years there, contributed significantly to those changes. It seems likely that Škirpa was also trying to benefit from the above-mentioned situation. Most probably, he purposefully asked Noel if the mobilization of retired Polish could not be directed towards Czechoslovakia, i.e. the state which was often considered to be even more important and faithful ally than Poland in French political layers.

⁶⁴ 1938.04.26, Lithuania's minister in Poland K. Škirpa report to minister of foreign relations S. Lozoraitis, LCVA, f. 648, ap. 1, b. 23, l.48

⁶⁵ 1938.06.07, Lithuania's minister in Poland K. Škirpa report to minister of foreign relations S. Lozoraitis, LCVA, f. 648, ap. 1, b. 23, l.82

⁶⁶ 1938.05.05, Lithuania's minister in Poland K. Škirpa report to minister of foreign relations S. Lozoraitis, LCVA, f. 648, ap.1, b 23, l.53

⁶⁷ K. Buchowski, op. cit., p. 466.

In fact, the most important Škirpa's diplomatic victory could be considered his good relationship with USA ambassador Drexel Biddle Jr. This diplomat had bought and furnished the most luxurious villa in Warsaw⁶⁸. When he was greeting Škirpa, he said that his arrival reminded him of the arrival of a film star rather than a diplomat, and, disregarding diplomatic protocol, embraced him before the formal introduction. To quote Škirpa, it seemed to be 'as if we were good acquaintances since the time immemorial'⁶⁹. Taking into consideration the fact that Biddle was extremely popular in his homeland⁷⁰, such a compliment proves that Polish press and society devoted enormous attention to Škirpa's visit. Interestingly, Škirpa had talked about the Anglo-Saxons and their model of foreign policy negatively for several times (even though, mainly he had the British in mind – S. J.); however, he maintained sufficiently good relationship with the USA ambassador. For instance, during the famous presidential hunt of pheasants on November 26, 1938, he was noticed talking to Biddle and sitting in the carriage together. Only influential Polish state actors and the diplomats from three countries (i.e. Lithuania, the USA, and Great Britain)⁷¹ went on this hunt by a long and antique carriage. In the video of this hunt, one can clearly see Škirpa, who was participating very actively⁷². These meaningful details emphasize once again the scope of attention to the Lithuanian envoy in Warsaw, as well as reveal friendly relationship with his American colleague. Their relationship could have also been reflected in his attitude towards Lithuania. For instance, in his report to Washington on April 22, 1938, Biddle claimed that the latent Polish imperialism was especially manifested during the Polish ultimatum to Lithuania, which was incited by

⁶⁸ N. S. Busch, *Ambassador Biddle*, "Life", 1943.10.04, p. 114.

⁶⁹ K. Škirpa, *Lietuvos nepriklausomybės...*, p. 80.

⁷⁰ He was the son of a multimillionaire and a famous USA social actor, as well as a businessman. In 1939–1943, he was the USA envoy to the Polish, French, Czechoslovak, Yugoslavian, Norwegian, Belgian, Luxemburgish, Dutch, and Greek temporary governments in London. Later, he served as a General Mayor in the staff of the USA army chief Dwight Eisenhower, where he contributed significantly to the success of the operation 'Overlord.' He was considered to be the best specialist, regarding the small European nations and their anti-Nazi underground. Later, he was one of the most important people in rebuilding Europe according to the 'Marshall's Plan' programme.

⁷¹ Polowanie reprezentacyjne w lasach Komory Cieszyńskiej, Polskie Narodowe Archiwum Cyfrowe, S.1-G-2744-1, <http://audiovis.nac.gov.pl/obraz/78553:1/>, seen 2015.05.11.

⁷² Polowanie dla dyplomatów w lasach cieszyńskich, Polskie Narodowe Archiwum Cyfrowe, S.MF.318, <http://www.repozytorium.fn.org.pl/?q=pl/node/8166>, seen 2015.05.11.

an ‘open flame’⁷³ in his opinion. One should pay attention to the fact that Biddle was considered to be one of the most influential and friendliest foreign diplomats, who were trusted by the Polish government of that time⁷⁴. Therefore, his favourable attitude towards Lithuania could have helped him become a more objective mediator; mediation by the arbitrator often seeks to improve the relationship between the conflicting sides.

Biddle also provided his own evaluation of the situation, which could influence the USA policy, even though this country was not active with respect to Europe at that time. In his report to Washington in December, 1938, he wrote that the Germans were planning to destroy Poland, using Vilnius region as bait for Lithuania. At that time, the plans of Nazi authorities were not based on a solely racial basis; therefore, in the secret service and diplomatic circles in Berlin, the idea of ‘Great Ukraine,’ which had to become a German ‘granary’ and a effective control mechanism of Russia, was still pervasive⁷⁵.

The USA diplomat reacted to this situation by vividly saying that Lithuania and Czechoslovakia, which had been two detached arms of the Soviet, were becoming the attached arms of Germany⁷⁶. When discussing the situation with the Turkish envoy in Warsaw, he mentioned that Hitler could use Klaipėda as a toy, which would make Kaunas government to accept the German protectorate. The possibility of a coup d’état supported by the Germans was also discussed, after which the authority could be given to Voldemaras⁷⁷. While reading Škirpa’s memoirs, one gets an impression that he could support similar plans (except the most radical plan, i.e. armed coup d’état, which he objected all his life), hoping that this might preserve Klaipėda region to Lithuania.

It should be noted that it was Škirpa who disseminated similar information in Warsaw. Therefore, the USA ambassador might have included much information discussed in private meetings in his reports, especially taking into consideration the fact that another person with whom the USA ambassador maintained relationship was Markus. Putting efforts together, they attempted to affect the Polish government and to soften the ultima-

⁷³ T. Hunczak, *Polish Colonial Ambitions in the Inter-War Period*, “Slavic Review”, Vol. 26, No. 4, 1967, p. 654

⁷⁴ C. Morley, Foreword, *Poland and the Coming of the Second World War. The Diplomatic Papers of A.J. Drexel Biddle Jr., United States Ambassador in Poland 1937–1939*, Ohio State University Press, 1976.

⁷⁵ *Poland and the Coming of the Second World War.....*, p. 260.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 260.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 261.

tum to Lithuania⁷⁸. It seems purposeful for Škirpa to be willing to preserve the contact with Biddle as personal contacts and relationship are often especially important in the diplomatic world. This is illustrated by the fact that Škirpa was asked to attend a feast in the USA embassy when he was leaving the legation. Even though he tried to keep the farewell short with other diplomats, he accepted the invitation to the USA embassy with pleasure. As Škirpa claims, Biddle was not only his first acquaintance in Warsaw, but also his neighbour. Thus, he even invited a photographer to take a picture for memory when Škirpa was leaving⁷⁹. Therefore, one can think that the relationship with this famous American diplomat remained warm. Even though Biddle was a nice person, he managed to find a large network of contacts useful for the USA, as his later activities indicate. During that evening, Škirpa used serious arguments and explained to his colleague that Hitler could propose an agreement to Stalin, and the latter could accept it⁸⁰. In addition, Škirpa claimed that Hitler was free to act; thus, probably he could remember the conception *Drang nach Osten* and would turn to the East, to Poland⁸¹. Half a year remained to the invasion to Prague and the famous Hitler's speech in Reichstag, when he harshly criticized Poland. This demonstrates that Škirpa foresaw the German strategy very well, or he simply knew it because of his contacts in influential German political and military circles.

One can understand why Škirpa told Biddle that Poland left him great impressions, that he was glad about the improvement of the relationship, and even why he praised Beck. However, why did he brag to the USA ambassador that he had been happy to find out about closing 'Vilnius liberation union'⁸², when he claimed in his memoirs that this way 'the Polish spat on the rights of our nation and love to their historical capital'⁸³. Thus, contradictions can be noted again, which can be interpreted differently, and the answers pose new questions.

At the end of 1938, when the political situation in Europe was becoming more and more menacing, attempts were made to find closer contacts between Lithuania and Poland. In historiography, the statement is dominant

⁷⁸ 1938.03.17, USA ambassador in Poland A. Drexel – Biddle report to secretary of state C. Hull, LCVA, f. R-952, ap. 1, b. 66, l.84.

⁷⁹ K. Škirpa, *Lietuvos nepriklausomybės...*, p. 105.

⁸⁰ 1938.12.06, USA ambassador in Poland A. Drexel – Biddle report to secretary of state C. Hull, LCVA, f. R-952, ap. 1, b. 66, l.155.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*, l.156.

⁸² *Ibid.*, l.157.

⁸³ K. Škirpa, *Lietuvos nepriklausomybės...*, p. 103.

that Škirpa was replaced by Šaulys because of his pro-German attitudes and unfavourable opinion about Poland. On the other hand, as Mitkiewicz claims, he perceived this change as a concession to Berlin rather than Warsaw⁸⁴. The Colonel was really insightful. The USA diplomats in Warsaw had the same opinion⁸⁵. From the middle of November, the officials at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Germany did not accept either Šaulys or legacy adviser Karečka. Thus, the representatives were replaced in Germany and Poland purposefully. Gerutis mentions that Škirpa did not get on well with Šaulys when they were working together in Germany in 1931–1937. From the time when he was working in the Council of Lithuania in 1917–1918, Šaulys did not trust the Germans and their *realpolitik* and became especially unfavourable when National Socialists came to power⁸⁶. Being a supporter of closer contacts with Poland, Šaulys could start working. In addition, he was supported by his old personal friend Smetona and new Minister of Foreign Affairs Urbšys, with whom he also had friendly relationship, as can be seen from their personal letters⁸⁷.

What were Škirpa's Aims in Warsaw?

A question arises: if Škirpa trusted in Germany so much, why did he seem to be more anti-German at least from his reports than most Polish politicians with whom he was communicating? In order to answer this question, two hypotheses might be formulated. First, Polish politicians sincerely believed that Hitler Germany would not violate its agreements; therefore, a Lithuanian diplomat was useful for them, because he was trying to convince them after long years of work in Berlin that this state focused on the aim, and the agreements could turn into a simple sheet of paper. However, it should also be noted that nice actions and speeches are typical of a diplomatic position, but they are rarely sincere. Therefore, a more realistic version can be formulated that as a former officer, the diplomat could subordinate to the implementing the reconciliation idea with Poland supported

⁸⁴ L. Mitkiewicz, op. cit., p. 131.

⁸⁵ 1939.01.19, Interim charge d'affaires of USA embassy in Poland N.Wirship report to secretary of state C.Hull, LCVA, f. R-952, ap. 1, b. 66, l.165.

⁸⁶ A. Gerutis, *Pulk. K.Škirpa – sukilimo inspiratorius*, "Europos lietuvis", 1981.06.22, nr 25, p. 2.

⁸⁷ 1932.03.28 ir 1939.08.03 J. Šaulys personal letters to J. Urbšys, Lietuvos nacionalinės Martyno Mažvydo bibliotekos rankraščių skyrius (Martynas Mažvydas National Library of Lithuania Manuscript Room), f. 15, b 344, l.1-2.

by Minister Lozoraitis and a significantly large group of Lithuanian intellectuals. For instance, Mykolas Riomeris expressed the idea that all concern should be focused on the preservation of Klaipėda rather than the liberation of Vilnius by any means, as it was more beneficial for the state⁸⁸.

The third hypothesis might also be formulated, which would emphasise the duality of his diplomatic activities. It should be added that Škirpa understood perfectly well that if Germany and Poland act together, the chances of Lithuania's survival are very low. Therefore, he tried to destroy the relationship between these two countries from the inside by creating mistrust in high Polish military and political circles. He admitted himself that there were no eternal friends and enemies in politics as 'it is in constant evolution, depending on circumstances'⁸⁹. Thus, there is no surprise that he explained the same to the Germans in 1939 in order to reach closer cooperation; he claimed that 'politics is not history. It proceeds together with life'⁹⁰. In addition, according to Škirpa, politics is public and private at the same time; therefore, it is possible to state one's aims, and to fulfill the other ones.

Nevertheless, this comparatively simple conclusion is negated by a simple rhetorical question: Did not the Germans know about the ideas expressed by Škirpa to the officials of Poland and other states? Naturally, they also carried out the same diplomatic secret service, while the relationship between Škirpa and Hans von Moltke, the German ambassador in Warsaw, was the best⁹¹. How could this be understood? In the Soviet historiography, the answer to this tricky question was very simple. For instance, Škirpa seemed to be an old agent of Hitler's secret service to historian (as well as the former representative of the Soviet underground and NKVD officer) Boleslovas Baranauskas⁹². One should not forget that the small books from the series *Faktai kaltina* (*The Facts Accuse*) aimed at discrediting the exiles to the USA government and society, putting guilt on the ones who had more or less contacts with the Germans. Thus Škirpa, who had many contacts, was a perfect example.

Still, it seems the most likely that Škirpa was simply a person who attempted to direct the events in such a way that was useful for Lithuania,

⁸⁸ M. Riomeris, *Baltijos politinės problemos*, "Kultūra", 1935, nr 8, p. 435–442.

⁸⁹ 1939.01.04 Lithuania's minister in Germany K. Škirpa report to minister of foreign relations J. Urbšys, LCVA, f.671, ap.1, b.15, l.6.

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 1.9.

⁹¹ 1938.05.23 Lithuania's minister in Poland K. Škirpa report to minister of foreign relations S. Lozoraitis, LCVA, f. 648, ap. 1, b. 23, l.72–73.

⁹² *Faktai kaltina. Archyviniai dokumentai. VII rinkinys: „Geležinis vilkas“*, Vilnius 1965, p. 138.

at the same time adjusting to various circumstances. Maybe he was hiding the face of a political opportunist behind hundreds of plans and conceptions. Gerutis and other Škirpa's friends remember his extremely quick reaction, the ability to analyse the changing situation very quickly, to adapt, to attempt, and to benefit as much as possible⁹³. The main aim valued by Škirpa was free Lithuania with Vilnius as its capital, and this aim did not change as it was permanent and valuable *per se*. This might be the answer to such a mysterious change in the views of this person. Naturally, his diplomatic activities in Warsaw cannot be viewed unambiguously: even though he was not an enthusiastic supporter of cooperation with Poland, he did a lot in reducing the tension in the relationship between both countries, which was not useful to either of them.

Conclusions

Kazys Škirpa was appointed to the position of an envoy to Poland not only because he graduated from the Academy of General Staff and had substantial experience as a war attaché, but also because since the military conflict between Lithuania and Poland in 1919–1920, he was famous for his uncompromisable attitude towards Poland. His appointment had to decrease the dissatisfaction of the Lithuanian society in the government, which was expressed very strongly after accepting the ultimatum in March, 1938. There is an important reason related to the subtleties in the Lithuanian internal policy. President Antanas Smetona wanted to see Škirpa outside the country because he and his closest associates considered him to be a possible political rival. In addition, this was an obvious possibility to prove to the opposition that the people who openly oppose the regime of the Nationalists are appointed to an important position.

In Warsaw, Škirpa maintained relationship with a substantial number of the most important officials of the Polish state. He communicated with President Ignacy Mościcki, Minister of Foreign Affairs Józef Beck, Head of the East European Department at Ministry of Foreign Affairs Tadeusz Kobylanski, Head of the Second Department (Secret Service) of the Polish Army Staff Tadeusz Pełczyński, Deputy Burgomaster of Warsaw Earl Stanisław Tyszkiewicz, Minister of Social Security Marian Zyndram Kościałkowski, Cardinal Aleksander Kakowski, and many others. First,

⁹³ A. Gerutis, op .cit., 1981.06.15, nr 24, p. 2.

he was looking for allies among the people who were anxious about the threat from Germany, which could unite Lithuanian and Polish politicians. The latter were interested in his long lasting experience of a military and diplomatic job, and his vast knowledge in German politics. In addition, Škirpa was developing constant lobbying about the position of Lithuanians in Vilnius region, which seemed unacceptable to a part of Polish officials. These nuances caused problems in the search for compromise; however, when Germany was strengthening, these questions became of secondary importance.

In Warsaw, Škirpa maintained close contacts with the diplomatic representatives of other countries. Traditionally, the relationship was friendly with the colleagues from Latvia and Estonia, the countries which did not have territorial conflicts; therefore, they could be mediators in resolving the most complicated problems. Škirpa's cooperation with the USA ambassador Anthony Drexel Biddle Jr. was especially beneficial in the search for the compromise between Lithuania and Poland, as he was especially respected in the diplomatic circles in Warsaw. Thus, this diplomat knowledgeable in the European affairs could take the role as a mediator, while the information provided by Škirpa allowed him to inform his own country about the subtleties of the German politics.

Even though Škirpa did not become an enthusiastic supporter of closer contacts with Poland, the job in Warsaw made him rethink some of his views and to choose the direction of a more constructive dialogue with colleagues in Poland, which undoubtedly contributed to decreasing tension between the neighbouring states in 1938.

Streszczenie

Działania dyplomatyczne Kazysa Škirpy, pierwszego litewskiego posła w Polsce, w marcu–grudniu 1938 r.

Artykuł poświęcony jest działalności pierwszego posła litewskiego w Polsce, pułkownika sztabu generalnego Kazysa Škirpy w Warszawie od marca do grudnia 1938 roku. Mimo że uczestniczył on w wielu najważniejszych wydarzeniach historii Litwy XX w., a jego działalność dyplomatyczna i polityczna miała wpływ również na inne państwa regionu, w historiografii działalność ta nie doczekała się należytej uwagi. Celem niniejszej pracy jest wypełnienie tej luki, czyli zbadanie działalności dyplomatycznej K. Škirpy w minionym okresie. W celu realizacji wyznaczonego celu, przedstawione zostają okoliczności mianowania K. Škirpy

na stanowisko posła litewskiego w Polsce, dokonana zostaje próba odpowiedzi na pytanie, dlaczego władza litewska wybrała właśnie tę osobę, analizie poddane są kontakty K. Škirpy z polskimi politykami i działaczami społecznymi oraz ich znaczenie dla stosunków obu państw. Omawiane są relacje litewskiego dyplomaty z przedstawicielami innych państw w Warszawie oraz ich wpływ na stosunki polsko-litewskie. Z zebranego materiału wynika, że K. Škirpa został wyznaczony na wspomniane stanowisko nie tylko dlatego, że znany był jako zwolennik bezkompromisowego stanowiska wobec Polski i dlatego mógł zmniejszyć niezadowolone litewskiego społeczeństwa wywołane przyjęciem ultimatum. Wpływ na tę decyzję miały również wewnętrzne sprawy litewskiej polityki. Prezydent Antanas Smetona wołał przenieść wpływowego oficera za granicę, wykazując tym samym opozycji, że na ważne stanowiska wyznacza również osoby otwarcie sprzeciwiające się reżimowi narodowościowemu. W Warszawie K. Škirpa utrzymywał stosunki z większością najważniejszych polskich urzędników państwowych. Przede wszystkim szukał sojuszników pośród tych, którzy zaniepokojeni byli wzrastającą groźbą od strony niemieckiej. Ludzi tych interesowało wieloletnie doświadczenie wojskowo-dyplomatycznej pracy K. Škirpy w Berlinie i jego dobre orientowanie się w niemieckiej polityce. Równoległe K. Škirpa cierpliwie rozwijał stały lobbing w sprawie sytuacji Litwinów na Wileńszczyźnie, co dla niektórych polskich urzędników było nie do przyjęcia. Czynnikiem ten bardzo utrudniał poszukiwanie kompromisu. W Warszawie K. Škirpa ściśle współpracował również z przedstawicielami dyplomacji innych krajów. Tradycyjnie przyjacielskie były jego stosunki z kolegami z Łotwy i Estonii. Duży pożytek dla kompromisu pomiędzy Litwą a Polską przyniosła ścisła współpraca K. Škirpy z ambasadorem Stanów Zjednoczonych Anthonym Drexelem Biddlem juniorem, który cieszył się dużym szacunkiem wśród warszawskich warstw dyplomatycznych. Choć K. Škirpa nigdy nie został szczególnie entuzjastycznym zwolennikiem zbliżenia z Polską, okres jego pracy w Warszawie zmusił go do przemyślenia niektórych poglądów i przynajmniej tymczasowego zwrócenia się w kierunku bardziej konstruktywnego dialogu z kolegami w Polsce, co bez wątplenia przyczyniło się do zmniejszenia napięcia pomiędzy sąsiadami w 1938 r.

Summary

Diplomatic activities of Kazys Škirpa, the first lithuanian envoy to Poland, in March–December, 1938

The article discusses the activities of the first Lithuanian envoy to Poland, General Staff Colonel Kazys Škirpa in Warsaw, in March–December, 1938. Even though this person participated in many important events of the Lithuanian history in the 20th century, and his diplomatic and political activities were related to other countries of the region as well, he has attracted only fragmentary attention in historiog-

raphy. Therefore, the aim of the present article is to investigate Škirpa's diplomatic activities in Warsaw in March-December, 1938. In order to fulfill the aim, the circumstances of appointing Škirpa as an envoy to Poland are discussed; the research also aims to answer the question why the Lithuanian government chose this personality; Škirpa's contacts with Polish politicians and public actors, the importance of these contacts in the development of bilateral relationship, as well as Škirpa's relationship with the diplomats of other countries in Warsaw and their influence on Lithuanian – Polish relationship are analysed. It becomes clear that Škirpa was appointed to this position not only because he was famous for his uncompromisable attitude towards Poland and, therefore, could decrease reproaches of Lithuanian society to the government about the ultimatum, but also because of internal political reasons. President Smetona wanted to see this influential politician outside the country as well as to prove to the opposition that the people who openly oppose the regime of the Nationalists are appointed to an important position. In Warsaw, Škirpa maintained relationship with many important Polish officials; first, he was looking for allies among those who were anxious about the threat from Germany. These people were interested in his long lasting experience in a military and diplomatic job, and his vast knowledge in German politics. Meanwhile, Škirpa was developing constant lobbying about the position of Lithuanians in Vilnius region, which seemed unacceptable to a part of Polish officials. This complicated the search for compromises. In Warsaw, Škirpa maintained close contacts with the diplomatic representatives of other countries as well. Traditionally, the relationship was friendly with the colleagues from Latvia and Estonia, however, Škirpa's cooperation with the USA ambassador Anthony Drexel Biddle Jr. was especially beneficial in the search for the compromise between Lithuania and Poland, as he was especially respected in the diplomatic circles in Warsaw. Even though Škirpa did not become an enthusiastic supporter of closer contacts with Poland, the job in Warsaw made him rethink some of his views and to choose the direction of a more constructive dialogue with colleagues in Poland at least temporarily, which undoubtedly contributed to decreasing tension between the neighbouring states in 1938.

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