

# Lithuania in the League of Nations : an analysis of the networks of Juozas Gabrys

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# Lithuania in the League of Nations: An Analysis of the Networks of Juozas Gabrys

Monika Šipelytė

## Abstract

This article aims to study the individuals involved in Lithuanian foreign affairs, as well as their network and activities at the League of Nations between 1927 and 1939. A qualitative analysis will be undertaken of their backgrounds, ethnicity, social environment, experience, and other biographical details to determine the traits and characteristics that shaped their activity within and around this international organization. The article will also examine interpersonal communications and connections, with Juozas Gabrys as a main figure of the group, as well as the relations maintained with official Lithuanian institutions. The analysis of these networks will help shed light on the hidden side of diplomacy and reveal the significance, if any, of the differences between the official and unofficial representation of the country. A hypothesis will be proposed that, because the work within the League of Nations was an important part of Lithuanian foreign policy and a significant phase in any diplomatic career, certain interest groups sought to consistently participate in such activities.

The interwar period for Lithuania, a small state in Central Eastern Europe, was like a golden age.<sup>1</sup> Despite the tensions with its neighbour states and difficulties in creating a modern democracy between two totalitarian regimes, it was more than two decades of promising independence. From the division of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth at the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> century until the reestablishment of independence on 16 February 1918, Lithuanians were a part of the Russian Empire, an oppressed territory called *Northwestern Krai*. Therefore, after the First World War it was important for Lithuania to secure not only the *de jure* recognition of individual European states and world powers, but also its admission into international organizations as a return to the Western World. Membership in the League of Nations was raised as an objective by the Lithuanian government soon after its creation after the conclusion of the Paris Peace Conference in 1920. Lithuania was admitted into the League of Nations on 22 September 1921 and its representatives sought to participate actively in all the processes of building a new European order.

The purpose of this study is to examine the individuals involved in Lithuanian foreign affairs, as well as their network and activity at the League of Nations.

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<sup>1</sup> This project has received funding from the European Social Fund (project No 09.33-LMT-K-712-19-0063) under a grant agreement with the Research Council of Lithuania (LMTLT).

To this end, the following objectives will be undertaken:

1. An analysis of the backgrounds, ethnicity, social environment, experience, and other biographical details of those active within the League of Nations, to determine the traits and characteristics that shaped their activity within and around this international organization.
2. An examination of these individuals' interpersonal communications and network of interaction with Juozas Gabrys.
3. A comparison with the histories of the official diplomats and their activities.

This study is an exploration of diplomacy conducted behind the scenes and the methods viewed as suitable for activity within an international organization. This could be viewed as a sign of the era, in which the distinction between official and unofficial representation of one's country was not entirely clear. It raises the question of whether activities within the League of Nations were an important part of a Lithuanian diplomat's career, image, and prestige in general. We can hypothesise that if this was indeed the case, it may explain why so many different interested groups and individuals sought to participate in events taking place in Geneva.

While the records of interwar diplomacy have been consistently studied within Lithuanian historiography since 1990, the activities at the League of Nations and their significance for Lithuanian foreign and domestic policy has not been extensively explored. The historiography of the League of Nations began a century ago, simultaneously with the start of the organization's activities and Lithuania's admission in 1922.<sup>2</sup> In these texts, the League was presented as an important factor in the foreign policy of Lithuania: its official texts were translated into Lithuanian and *The Lithuanian Society for the Support of the League of Nations* was established in 1923.<sup>3</sup> As the most important questions for Lithuania raised at the League of Nations in the interwar period included the matter of the territorial and political jurisdiction of the Vilnius and Klaipėda regions, it drew the attention of foreign diplomats as well as scholars of law and diplomacy.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>2</sup> Adomas Jakštas, *Lietuva ir Tautų Sąjunga*, Kaunas 1919; Petras Klimas, *Mūsų kovos dėl Vilniaus 1323–1923 m.*, Kaunas 1923; Giršas Rutenbergas, *Tautų Sąjunga: jos idėjos plėtojimosi ir susikūrimo apžvalga, organizacija, tikslai, Lietuvos klausimai T. Sąjungoj ir T. Sąjungos paktas*, Kaunas 1931; *Tautų Sąjungos tikslai ir santvarka*, vertėjas Eduardas Turauskas, Kaunas 1932; Vaclovas Sidziuskas, *Diplomatinė istorija*, Klaipėda 1936–1937.

<sup>3</sup> Vilniaus universiteto bibliotekos Rankraščių skyrius (Manuscripts Division of the Vilnius University Library, VUB RS), f. 1, Letter from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Lithuania to Aleksandras Dambrauskas (Adomas Jakštas), 18.04.1923, b. F85, l. 156.

<sup>4</sup> Consultations de MM. Geouffre Lapradelle, Louis le Fur et André N. Mandelstam concernant La force obligatoire de la décision de la Conférence des Ambassadeurs du 15 mars 1923, Paris 1928; K. M. Widding, *Lithuania and the Vilna Conflict*, Memel 1930; Madleine Héliard, *Le Statut international du Territoire de Memel*, Thèse pour le Doctorat: Université de Paris, Faculté de droit, Paris 1932; Thorsten V. Kalijarvi, *The Memel Statue, its origin, legal nature, and observation to the present day*, London 1937.

In Soviet Lithuania, the League of Nations was not the subject of any substantial study and was only mentioned within the context of severe criticisms of the League as a harmful creation imposed upon small countries by imperialist powers – a creation that ultimately failed to resolve the most acute problems faced by Lithuanians. Analysis conducted in the late Soviet period that began to explore the history of «bourgeois» diplomacy focused primarily on Lithuania's bilateral relations with neighbouring countries, relegating all organizations and their specific analysis to the margins.<sup>5</sup> Work by Lithuanian diaspora authors in the West mostly associated the League of Nations with the politicians and diplomats active within it.<sup>6</sup>

There is a lack of research about individuals who worked or sought to work with the League of Nations: their views, motives, and personal and political ambitions have not yet been examined. As a potential perspective to fill this gap we chose to study the activities of journalist, translator, and diplomat Juozas Gabrys (1880–1951) and those in his circle. Juozas Gabrys and his colleagues were activists from the First World War period who participated in all of the most important statehood changes taking place in interwar Lithuania, such as the Paris Peace Conference (1919/20) and the Klaipėda Uprising (1923), as well as in the international disputes over Lithuanian territorial issues arising in the 1920s and 1930s. These Lithuanian, French, and Swiss activists have attracted some attention from historians, but only in individual articles about activities occurring during the First World War.<sup>7</sup> The only exceptions include the biography of Lithuania's emissary to Switzerland, Eduardas Turauskas (1896–1966), a biography of Lithuania's representative in Paris, Petras Klimas (1891–1969), and a dissertation by the author of this biography.<sup>8</sup>

5 Regina Žepkaitė, *Diplomatija imperializmo tarnyboje: Lietuvos-Lenkijos santykiai 1919–1939 m.*, Vilnius 1980.

6 P.vz.: Albertas Gerutis, Dr. Dovas Zaunius: *Mažosios Lietuvos sūnus – Nepriklausomos Lietuvos valstybės užsienių reikalų ministras*, Cleveland [Ohio] 1982.

7 B. E. Colliander, *Die Beziehungen zwischen Litauen und Deutschland: Während der Okkupation 1915–1918*, Abo [Turku] 1935; Erberhard Demm, *Ostpolitik und Propaganda im Ersten Weltkrieg*, Frankfurt am Main 2002; J. Esculles, Vytautas Petronis, *Self-proclaimed Diplomats: Catalan-Lithuanian cooperation during WWI*, in: *Nationalities Papers*, 44/2 (2016), p. 340–356; Farrokh, M. *La Pensée et l'action d'Edmont Privat (1889–1962). Contribution à l'histoire des idées politiques en Suisse*, Bern 1991; J. H., Hoffman, Volodymir Stepankovsky, *Ukrainian Nationalist and German Agent*, in: *The Slavonic and East European Review*, 50/121 (1972), p. 594–602; Saulius Pivoras, Juozas Gabrys, *Karlas Lindhagenas ir lietuvių-švedų ryšiai XX a. pradžioje*, in: *Istorija*, 74 (2009), p. 23–32; Alfred Erich Senn, *Antanas Viskantas: a Lithuanian with Polish friends*, Egidijus Motieka, [et al.] (eds), *Lietuvos Atgimimo istorijos studijos*, Asmuo: tarp tautos ir valstybės, Vilnius 1996, p. 312–320; D. R. Watson, *Jean Pélissier and the Office Central des Nationalités, 1912–1919*, in: *The English Historical Review*, 110/439 (1995), p. 1191–1206.

8 Ona Viga Čiplytė, *Eduardas Turauskas (1896–1966). Ateitininkas, teisininkas, žurnalistas, diplomatas, Lietuvių katalikų mokslo akademijos narys*, Vilnius 2016; Vilma Bukaitė, *Nepriklausomybės Akto signataras Petras Klimas*, Vilnius 2016; *Lietuvos Respublikos politiniai ir diplomatiniai santykiai su Prancūzija 1919–1940 m. (Political and diplomatic relations between the Republic*



The multifaceted studies of the history of the League of Nations and its impact on the interwar world order are important for this study as contextual historiography.<sup>9</sup> The choice of contemporary Lithuanian historians to include or exclude the activities within this organization into their overall narratives of interwar Lithuanian diplomacy is also a sign of their affiliation to historiographical schools.<sup>10</sup> To date, there is only one monograph published in Lithuanian about bilateral relations in the interwar period, taking the League of Nations as a case study, authored by Gintautas Vilkelis.<sup>11</sup> This work, however, reflects an instrumental approach to processes taking place within the League of Nations and relies little on more detailed studies published before the book's release. These studies examine issues closely related to the League of Nations and contributed significantly to an understanding of the issues of statehood and international relations that proved problematic for Lithuanian diplomacy.<sup>12</sup> However, Lithuanian historiography lacks a new conceptual approach to the «old new» interwar diplomacy, where it would be seen as a social and cultural tradition rather than an idealized occupation of the past.<sup>13</sup>

This study consults various types of sources: (1) texts by individual authors: articles, books, lectures, presentations, speeches, and interviews; (2) private correspondence; (3) official institutional documents from the League of Nations, documents issued by government agencies of the Republic of Lithuania and of

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of Lithuania and France 1919–1940), Doctoral dissertation: humanitarian sciences, history (05 H), Vilnius University, Vilnius 2013.

<sup>9</sup> Oskar Halecki, *Liga Narodow*, Poznan 1920; *La Société des Nations. Constitution et Organisation*, Geneva 1926; Maxime Leroy, *La Société des Nations. Guerre ou paix?*, Paris 1932; Alexandre Bregman, *La Politique de la Pologne dans la Société des Nations*, Paris 1932; Alfred Zimmern, *The League of Nations and the Rule of Law 1918–1935*, London 1936; Walters Francis Paul Walters, *A History of the League of Nations*, London 1952; Stanislaw Sierpowski, *Mniejszosci narodowe jako instrument polityki międzynarodowej 1919–1939*, Poznan 1986; *ibid.*, *Pilsudski w Genewie*, Poznan 1990; Marit Fosse, *La Société des Nations – ou l'Histoire d'une institution moderne oubliée*, Geneva 1998; Paul David, *L'Esprit de Genève. Histoire de la Société des Nations. Vingt ans d'efforts pour la paix*, Geneva 2000; Markku Suski, *The Autonomy of Memel*, in: *Sub-State Governance through Territorial Autonomy. A Comparative Study in Constitutional Law of Powers, Procedures and Institutions*, Berlin 2011; Martin Grandjean, *Les réseaux de la coopération intellectuelle. La Société des Nations comme actrice des échanges scientifiques et culturels dans l'entre-deux-guerres*, Thèse de Doctorat: Histoire, Université de Lausanne, Lausanne 2018.

<sup>10</sup> Vytautas Žalys, *Lietuvos diplomatijos istorija (1925–1940)*. I tomas, Vilnius 2007; Eglė Bendikaitė et al., *Lietuvos istorija. Nepriklausomybė (1918–1940 m.)*, 10/2, Vilnius 2015.

<sup>11</sup> Gintautas Vilkelis, *Lietuvos ir Lenkijos santykiai Tautų Sąjungoje*, Vilnius 2006.

<sup>12</sup> Alfred Erich Senn, *The Great Powers, Lithuania and The Vilna Question 1920–1928*, Leiden 1966; Česlovas Laurinavičius, *Lietuvos–Sovietų Rusijos Taikos sutartis (1920 m. liepos 12 d. sutarties problema)*, Vilnius 1992; Zenonas Butkus, *Lietuvos ir Latvijos santykiai 1919–1929 metais*, Vilnius 1993; SSRS intrigos Baltijos šalyse, 1920–1940, Kaunas 1998; Algimantas Kasparavičius, *Donkichotas prieš Prometėją tarpukario lietuvių ir lenkų iracionalioji diplomatija*, in: *Darbai ir dienos* (2002), p. 50–71.

<sup>13</sup> Kenneth Weisbrode, *Old Diplomacy Revisited: A Study in the Modern History of Diplomatic Transformations*, New York 2014.

other European politicians and diplomats: meeting protocols, decision commentaries, action reports, and international correspondence; and (4) memoirs and autobiographies.<sup>14</sup>

This study will point at the contradictions that existed between the self-educated generation of Lithuania's founders (including Gabrys) and the young generation of professional diplomats. A problematic-chronological approach to this subject has been chosen in order to reveal how the publishing connections established during the First World War evolved into business relationships, the creation of information offices, and the aspirations to participate in the political activities of the League of Nations.

### **Persons involved in Lithuanian foreign affairs since the First World War**

Most of the individuals whose relationships we will examine in an attempt to reconstruct a portrait of an activist within and around the League of Nations met Juozas Gabrys during the First World War or immediately afterward. We can perceive three axes along which these relationships were established: media publishing, business ties, and efforts to participate in Lithuanian foreign policy. However, we must first mention certain facts in the life of Juozas Gabrys. Juozas Gabrys-Paršaitis (1880–1951) began pro-Lithuanian activities in 1890s, when he began distributing publications printed in the Latin alphabet, then banned in the Russian Empire, while a student in secondary school.<sup>15</sup> Gabrys was imprisoned for this activity and later exiled to Odesa, where he studied law from 1901 to 1907. During a brief return to Lithuania, he served as a secretary for the Great Seimas of Vilnius in December 1905 and participated in revolutionary confrontations with Tsarist officials erupting at that time. After these events, he departed for Paris, where he studied literature, history, economics, and the social sciences at the Sorbonne until 1912. Gabrys established the *Lietuvių informacijos*

<sup>14</sup> Eduardas Turauskas, *Lietuvos nepriklausomybės netenkant*, Vilnius 1990; Petras Klimas, *Lietuvos diplomatinėje tarnyboje*, Vilnius 1991; Augustinas Voldemaras, *Pastabos saulėlydžio valandą*, Vilnius 1992; Vaclovas Sidzikauskas, *Lietuvos diplomatijos paraštėje*, Vilnius 1994; Juozas Gabrys, *Vers l'indépendance lituanienne: faits, impressions, souvenirs 1907–1920*, Lausanne 1920; Linas Saldukas (éd.), *Tautos sargyboj*, Vilnius 2007; Erberhard Demm, Christina Nikolajew (eds), *Auf Wache für die Nation. Erinnerungen. Der Weltkriegsagent Juozas Gabrys berichtet (1911–1918)*, Frankfurt am Main 2013. The unpublished sources are held by various archives: in Vilnius, at the Lithuanian Central State Archives (*Lietuvos centrinis valstybės archyvas*, LCVA) and the Vilnius University Library Manuscript Division (*Vilniaus Universiteto bibliotekos rankraščių skyrius*, VUB RS); in Switzerland, at the Swiss Federal Archives (SFA) and Les Archives de la Ligue des Nations; and in France, at the Archives diplomatiques du Ministère de l'Europe et des Affaires Étrangères (AMAEFF).

<sup>15</sup> More biographical information about Juozas Gabrys and other activists is presented in the appendix to this article.

*biuras* (LIB, Lithuanian Information Bureau) in 1911 – the first organization in Western Europe to promote pro-Lithuanian propaganda. The office was moved to Lausanne, Switzerland in 1915.

Gabrys moved to Geneva at the turn of 1919/20, when he, like many Europeans interested in politics, realized that the city would become a centre of international policy after the founding of the League of Nations at the Paris Peace Conference.<sup>16</sup> In 1925, Gabrys was appointed as a correspondent at the League of Nations for the Lithuanian newspaper *Lietuva*, the Lithuanian Riflemen's Union (Lietuvos Šaulių Sąjunga) journal *Trimitas*, and *Rytas*, a newspaper of the Lithuanian Christian Democratic Party, which was in the opposition to the authoritarian regime of Antanas Smetona.<sup>17</sup>

During the period of his activity in Geneva, international personal connections established prior to the First World War were also important for Gabrys. This group consisted of representatives of the aristocracy from Francophone countries who, while not participating in the work of the League of Nations officially, were actively promoting propaganda and other initiatives «around» the League. They were in a similar situation to Gabrys himself – not serving any duties at the Secretariat of the League or as diplomats for any particular country. But this group of activists had a considerable amount of (usually personally beneficial) interests in commerce, propaganda, and publishing, engaged in temporary assignments for delegations, and conducted real estate and rental transactions – all fields in which Juozas Gabrys and his close associates were then involved.

The first of these connections emerged during a collaboration at the *Office Central des Nationalités* (OCN), established in Paris in 1912, with the French journalist Jean Péliissier, who at the time was a correspondent for the largest French daily, *Le Matin*. The OCN embraced the following goals: (1) collecting documents related to ethnography, history, literature, art, etc., that could help portray a nation's soul, past, and future potential; (2) releasing a monthly publication aimed at the general public, circulating academic and objective articles pertaining to nations contributing to the OCN; (3) informing the world press of news concerning these nations; (4) providing opportunities for oppressed nations to learn more about each other; and (5) organizing national conferences and congresses toward this end.<sup>18</sup> The aforementioned publication, *Les Annales des nationalités*, circulated from 1912 to 1919. Three Congresses of Nationalities were organized during that period. The best known was the third, held in Lausanne, attended by delegations from various countries and during which Lithua-

<sup>16</sup> VUB RS, f. 155, b. Juozas Gabrys, La Lituanie et la Societe des Nations, b. 963, p. 552.

<sup>17</sup> Letter from Jocaitis to Juozas Gabrys, 26.08.1925, Kaunas, *ibid.*, p. 384; Permit of *Trimitas* to represent the journal at the Assembly of the League of Nations in September 1925, *ibid.*, p. 385.

<sup>18</sup> Juozas Gabrys, *Tautos sargyboj*, p. 32–33; Lietuvos literatūros ir tautosakos institutas (LLTI), f. 2, Letter of Juozas Gabrys to Jonas Basanavičius, 02.02.1912, b. 855, [l. n.].

nians raised their demand for an independent state.<sup>19</sup> Although recruited to fight at the Western front at this time, Jean Pélissier published a book in French about individuals active in Lithuania's national rebirth, entitled *Les principaux artisans de la renaissance nationale lituanienne: hommes choses de Lituanie*, in which he showered praise on Gabrys, appending his brief biography entitled *J. Gabrys: son role dans la Renaissance nationale lituanienne et son activité politique*.<sup>20</sup> After the First World War, Pélissier continued his work between Paris and Switzerland,<sup>21</sup> where Gabrys had transferred the OCN office in 1915.

Another activist who provided support and assistance for Gabrys' publishing and business ventures (and who sometimes had complicated relations with the Lithuanian government) was Friedrich von der Ropp, a descendent of Baltic Germans and a figure in Lithuanian politics with a noble title, who began collaborating with Gabrys at the previously mentioned Third Congress of Nationalities. In this event, Ropp was a representative who supported the German plan of partially independent Lithuanian statehood.<sup>22</sup> Although Ropp grew more distant from both Lithuanian and European politics in the interwar period and instead took up the cause of Catholic education in Germany, he remained Gabrys' contact in Berlin for commercial and personal affairs. Also, he wrote articles for Gabrys' journal in Geneva. We find evidence of their continuing contact up to 1937.<sup>23</sup>

Another active assistant was Gabrys' wife, Marie Henriette Desponds, who initially served as his secretary. The couple married in Lithuania on 20 November 1926. She later became involved in all of her husband's affairs, managing his correspondence and overseeing his home at La Chaux while Gabrys resided in Paris or Geneva. Unfortunately, we have few documents about Marie's specific activities – mostly surviving letters to Gabrys and papers dealing with his affairs after his death.

Gabrys corresponded with his closest associates from the *Lietuvių tautos taryba* (Lithuanian National Council, a diaspora Lithuanian organization active in Lausanne during the First World War) – Juozas Purickis, Vincas Bartuška, and Konstantinas Olšauskas – sending them publications or requesting their help with contacts in Lithuania.<sup>24</sup> But for various reasons this contact ended in

19 Déclaration des délégués Lithuaniens présentée à la troisième Conférence des Nationalités tenue à Lausanne en 1916, in: *Pro Lithuania*, 4–7 (1916), p. 79–83.

20 Jean Pélissier, *Les principaux artisans de la renaissance nationale lituanienne: hommes choses de Lituanie*, Lausanne 1918; *J. Gabrys: son role dans la Renaissance nationale lituanienne et son activité politique*, Lausanne 1918.

21 D. R. Watson, *Jean Pélissier and the ...*, p. 1195–1196.

22 Monika Šipelytė, *Šveicarijos lietuvių politinė ir diplomatinė veikla*, p. 96–97.

23 VUB RS, f. 155, Letter of G. Pfeifer to Juozas Gabrys, 26.04.1937, b. 982, [l. n.].

24 IPM/IPB (International Peace Bureau), Archives, Boite 364, Letter from the International Peace Bureau to the Press Bureau of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Lithuania, 21.07.1932, Dos. 3, Lituanie, l. n.; Letter from the General Secretary of the International Peace Bureau to



the 1930s. Olšauskas was murdered in 1933, Purickis died suddenly in 1934, and Bartuška returned to the United States.

Another area that brought Lithuanian activists together centred around commercial and business ties. While also useful for Gabrys as a means of building personal connections, these ties were primarily a guarantee of practical income and a source of funds that could be dedicated to pro-Lithuanian propaganda. Gabrys and his colleagues engaged in the export and import of goods, earning money from resale and markups, and by promoting Swiss-Lithuanian economic cooperation through the creation of the *Office Commercial Lituano-Suisse*.<sup>25</sup> In the early 1930s, Gabrys' business ties in Lithuania were represented by a young official at the Ministry of Agriculture, Juozas Miliukas. In truth, however, the main topic of their correspondence in 1925 was the creation of a new political party and Gabrys' return to Lithuania to serve as its leader.<sup>26</sup> We found no evidence that this plan succeeded, and thus further efforts were undertaken to continue commercial ties.

Gabrys maintained particularly friendly, almost familial ties with one of his most faithful and important associates and contacts in the Lithuanian political world, Eduardas Turauskas.<sup>27</sup> Their correspondence (and quite possibly their meetings) began in 1923–1924, when Turauskas was studying at the Faculty of Law at the University of Paris. They exchanged greetings on holidays and met in person in Paris or when Turauskas visited Gabrys at La Chaux, in the canton of Vaud at Lake Geneva.<sup>28</sup> Turauskas graduated from the university and earned his doctorate in 1926, subsequently returning to Lithuania to pursue a career in journalism and politics.

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the Redaction of *Rytas* in Kaunas, 22.07.1932, *ibid.*, [l. n.]; Letter from the General Secretary of the International Peace Bureau to Dr. Juozas Purickis, 22.07.1932, *ibid.*, [l. n.]. Lietuvos centrinis valstybės archyvas, f. 668, ap. 2 (Lithuanian Central State Archives, LCVA) Letter from Juozas Gabrys to Vincas Bartuška, Copy of the letter from Juozas Gabrys to Antanas Smetona, 09.05.1931, Geneva, b. 11, p. 4; VUB RS, f. 155, Letter from Konstantinas Olšauskas to Juozas Gabrys, [1926–1928 m.], Kaunas, b. 974, [l. n.].

<sup>25</sup> VUB RS, f. 155, Letter of Juozas Gabrys to unknown recipient, 07.12.1935, La Chaux, b. 980, l. 493; Letter of the *Office Commercial Lituano-Suisse* to the Board of *Lietūkis* in Kaunas, Geneva, 07.12.1935, *ibid.*, l. 498.

<sup>26</sup> VUB RS, f. 155, Letter of Juozas Miliukas to Juozas Gabrys, 26.03.1925, Kaunas, b. 963, l. 130–131; Letter of Juozas Miliukas to Juozas Gabrys, 31.03.1925, Kaunas, *ibid.*, l. 150.

<sup>27</sup> VUB RS, f. 155, Postcard from Eduardas Turauskas to Juozas Gabrys, 03.02.1924, Paris, b. 974, [l. n.].

<sup>28</sup> Postcard from Eduardas Turauskas to Juozas Gabrys, 31.01.1925, Paris, *ibid.*, [l. n.].



## Publications and business connections

Juozas Gabrys and his colleagues began publishing works about Lithuania in French and other languages before World War One, as one of the missions of the Lithuanian Information Bureau, established in Paris in 1911.<sup>29</sup> During the First World War, the press and propaganda activities intensified further after the Bureau's transfer to Lausanne and continued until 1919/20.<sup>30</sup> The activity which Gabrys pursued with particular enthusiasm immediately after moving to Geneva was his effort to re-establish a similar information office and resume publishing on issues relevant to Lithuanians and other nationalities. To be sure, this endeavour required considerable funds and connections, as well as the support of Lithuanian politicians and diplomats. As early as 1927, Gabrys wrote to the then Prime Minister of Lithuania and acting Foreign Minister Augustinas Voldemaras, saying: «I am determined to work in concert and full contact with the Lithuanian Government», and asserting that «for this effort to produce successful results, I ask that my participation in it would remain a secret.»<sup>31</sup> The fact that the chosen methods of operation had remained unchanged from the time of the Bureau's creation in 1911/12 is evident from a letter to the Lithuanian diplomat Balutis: «We will publish a joint publication (book) in French, English, and German [entitled] *The Oppressed Peoples of Poland* [...] and establish a joint permanent office in Geneva, publish a newspaper in French once a month, and organize a congress of captive nations in Geneva immediately prior to the plenary of the League of Nations in September.»<sup>32</sup> Although its political situation had changed, Lithuania's recurring confrontations with its neighbours Poland and Germany sparked a debate in the press about the compatibility of the interests of all European nations, particularly those of the Ukrainians and Belarusians.

Gabrys and his colleagues only succeeded in opening a new information bureau in the early 1930s, when the first issues of the *Revue des nations, des nationalités et des minorités nationales* were released. In the first edition we can already see that it was being presented as a continuation of the *Annales des nationalités*, released since 1912 by the Office Central des Nationalités in Paris and overseen by Juozas Gabrys and Jean Pélissier.<sup>33</sup> Contributions to the publication included articles by Ropp (under the name «Fr. de R.»), identified as a «correspondent in Berlin», and many texts written and translated under assu-

<sup>29</sup> Lietuvių informacijos biuras, Paryžius, 1911, p. 2–3.

<sup>30</sup> Šipelytė M., 2019, p. 44–48; 283–285.

<sup>31</sup> LCVA, f. 383, ap. 7, Letter from Juozas Gabrys to Augustinas Voldemaras, 17.11.1927, b. 855, Geneva, p. 235–239.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid., Letter from Juozas Gabrys to Bronius Kazys Balutis, 12.02.1928, Berlin, b. 855, p. 230–231.

<sup>33</sup> *Revue des Nationalités et de Minorités Nationales*, No 1 (191), 1931 February; VUB RS, f. 155, Letter from the German Foreign Institute in Stuttgart to Juozas Gabrys and Jean Pélissier, 27.03.1931, Stuttgart, b. 963, p. 597.

med pen names by Gabrys (as «P. G.» and «Argus») and Pélissier. *The Revue* was published monthly until 1934 and abbreviated its name in March 1932 to *Revue des nationalités et des minorités nationales*.

Around this time, the office began working with another information bureau and its editors, the Ofinor Office of Eastern Information, which published informational bulletins on issues related to European nations and countries in the Far and Middle East. Gabrys' correspondence about press issues with the head of this office, Volodimir Yermieff, began in 1933.<sup>34</sup> The bureau, with offices in Paris and Rome, exchanged publications and correspondence with Gabrys' organization, including texts and their translations.<sup>35</sup> Having begun issuing press notices in 1927, Ofinor listed Geneva as the site of its publisher.<sup>36</sup> But in 1933, Yermieff wrote to Gabrys that he had rented a wonderful flat in Paris and invited the latter to open a *Revue* office there.<sup>37</sup> This never happened, but their cooperation continued, and Gabrys invited his colleague to future events in Geneva where he planned to «convene a congress of nationalities and ethnic minorities in 1933.»<sup>38</sup> Unfortunately, we have no information about whether this event actually took place. Ofinor bulletins were published periodically every three weeks until early 1937.<sup>39</sup>

Alongside the *Revue des nationalités*, Gabrys' office also published informational bulletins in French containing news about Lithuania. These circulated in 1935 and 1936, when the bureau received direct funding from the Foreign Ministry in Lithuania.<sup>40</sup> Only a few issues are held in archives, but they are a good representation of the type of news being disseminated: statements by representatives of the Lithuanian government and the Foreign Ministry or their appearance in foreign politics, victories in bilateral negotiations, overviews of European political events, discussions of advancements in Lithuanian economics, culture, and the arts, and historical narratives that coincided with official press narratives presented in Lithuania.<sup>41</sup> The authors of the articles were not

34 After assuming and examining Juozas Gabrys' legacy in the 1960s, Albertas Gerutis remarked in his notes that Yermieff was Gabrys' Ukrainian friend who lived for a long time during the inter-war years at Gabrys' cottage in La Chaux. It may be, then, that these activists shared both informational and publishing resources. (VUB RS, f. 155, b. 666, [l. n.]).

35 VUB RS, f. 155, Letter from Juozas Gabrys to Yermieff, 14.02.1933, Geneva, b. 974, [l. n.].

36 Bulletin tri-hebdomadaire d'Informations Orientales *Ofinor*, No 489 (1933), *ibid.*, [l. n.].

37 Letter from Yermieff to Juozas Gabrys, 29.04.1933, Paris, *ibid.*, [l. n.].

38 Letter from Juozas Gabrys to Yermieff [date unknown], *ibid.*, [l.n.].

39 VUB RS, f. 155, Bulletin tri-hebdomadaire d'Informations Orientales *Ofinor*, no 907 (1937), b. 963, p. 433.

40 LCVA, f. 383, ap. 7, Letter from Ladas Natkevičius, the Embassy of the Republic of Lithuania in Paris to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Lithuania, Paris, 21.02.1936, b. 855, p. 70–71; VUB RS, f. 155, Letter from Juozas Gabrys to Kazys Bizauskas, Geneva, 20.05.1936, b. 974, [l. n.].

41 VUB RS, f. 155, Bulletin du Bureau d'Informations Lituanien, No 1 (1935), No 2, 5, 6, (1936), Geneva, b. 983, [l. n.].

identified in these publications, and the texts were attributed to the Bureau's overall activities.

In parallel to this activity and starting in 1927, Gabrys also began writing and publishing overviews in *Rytas* about events and discussions in Geneva, calling his column *Laiškai iš Genevos* (Letters from Geneva). Gabrys' friend Turauskas also contributed to this effort, serving as the publication's senior editor at the time. The first text under this title appeared in *Rytas* on 15 March 1927, specifying that the article had been written on 10 March.<sup>42</sup> At the end of that month, Turauskas wrote to Gabrys, thanking him for his texts, apologizing for the newspaper's delay, and asking him to write more contributions.<sup>43</sup> Gabrys' central themes in his public letters were closely related to the Lithuanian issues being discussed at the time at the League of Nations. Throughout the entire interwar period, the Lithuanian delegation in Geneva was mainly concerned with two issues: the conflict with Poland over Vilnius and the Vilnius region, and volatile relations with Germany over the jurisdiction of the Klaipėda region.<sup>44</sup> On both of these matters, Gabrys had a very strong opinion: The recovery of the Vilnius region had to be seen as a strategic issue of Lithuanian foreign policy, and Klaipėda as an important factor in European politics as a whole. In the early 1930s, Gabrys' approach to these two issues began to be combined into one foreign policy concept. Lithuania should have changed a friendly tone vis-à-vis Germany to one of strict opposition to its actions and then, together with the Poles, should have begun to view Germany as a common enemy. That was intended to «reset» bilateral relations with Poland without giving up Vilnius but making it a useful object of exchange.

In addition to his journalistic pursuits, Juozas Gabrys continued his commercial activity, which included a fair share of controversial transactions that sometimes threatened not only his career as a journalist, but also his life in Switzerland in general. As early as 1935, Gabrys was asserting that «given that the country of Switzerland is becoming more and more inhospitable and in light of the change in political circumstances in Lithuania, it was suggested to me that I leave Switzerland in the near future.»<sup>45</sup> After living for a brief time in Klaipėda, in the summer of 1936, where Gabrys had considerable real estate holdings and a construction business, the family attempted to return to Switzerland, but were not permitted to enter.<sup>46</sup> We learn about this problem from Gabrys' appeal to

42 Juozas Gabrys, *Laiškai iš Genevos*. I, in: *Rytas*, 15 March 1927, 59 /945, p. 1–2.

43 VUB RS, f. 155, Letter from Eduardas Turauskas, Editor in Chief of *Rytas*, to Juozas Gabrys, 29.03.1927, Kaunas, b. 963, l. 649.

44 Monika Šipelytė, Juozo Gabrio veikla Tautų Sąjungos užkulisuose: žurnalistika ar diplomatiška?, in: *Lietuvos istorijos studijos*, 48 (2021), p. 33–51.

45 VUB RS, f. 155, Letter from Juozas Gabrys to «Maître», 27.12.1935, Geneva, b. 974, [l. n.].

46 Letter of Juozas Gabrys to M. Landsbergis, Director of *Lietuvos Bankas* in Klaipėda, La Chaux, 25.04.1932, *ibid.*

the President of the Swiss Confederation, Giuseppe Motta, in which Gabrys inquired why he had been denied entry. He spoke about his home at La Chaux and his work at the League of Nations providing Lithuanians with important news. Of course, he made sure to list his services for both countries during the First World War.<sup>47</sup> News of the incident also reached the Lithuanian Foreign Ministry, which began to inquire about the reasons for it.<sup>48</sup> After a meeting between the Lithuanian Consul in Zurich with the head of the Swiss Confederation police, it became clear that the main reason for the suspension of Gabrys' right of entry into Switzerland was his refusal to cooperate with the *Police des étrangers* and his failure to maintain his residency permit. Gabrys had likely found this to be a useful arrangement: being «Swiss» but with a Lithuanian passport, leaving matters with the cantonal police in an undefined grey zone.<sup>49</sup>

It was disclosed to Lithuanian diplomats that the Swiss had also gathered material about other issues that appeared more serious than the aforementioned bureaucratic formalities:

In the event of war, Mr. Gabrys may create considerable unpleasanties for the Swiss Government, because the Swiss have very suspicious material and ties have supposedly been re-established with former associates from the First World War, etc. [...] His field of work affects Switzerland and foreign countries [...] They are fully convinced of the harmful impact of such activity to Switzerland and other countries; his wife is considered to be an accomplice and dangerous, despite being born in Switzerland.<sup>50</sup>

We should note that the Lithuanian Foreign Ministry was exaggerating the accusations somewhat, slanting for its own benefit what had been left unsaid by the Swiss Police Chief and his inability to share secret information. From Swiss police reports and «Mr. Gabrys' fairly thick file» referenced in this story, we learn about his past activities, his refusal to admit police officers onto his land at La Chaux, and testimony that «no evidence of work for other countries has been found.»<sup>51</sup> In later years, Gabrys' overall personal review remained unchanged: he continued to write reports to Lithuanian dailies and sometimes participated in

<sup>47</sup> LCVA, f. 383, ap. 7, Letter from Juozas Gabrys to the Federal Chancellor of the Swiss Confederation Giuseppe Motta, Director of the Political Department, b. 855, p. 100; Alfonsas Eidintas, *Slaptasis lietuvių diplomatas*, p. 451–452.

<sup>48</sup> Letter from Jurgis Šaulys, Lithuanian Ambassador in Berlin to the Department of Law and the Administration of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Lithuania, 03.12.1936, Berlin, *ibid.*, p. 65.

<sup>49</sup> Juozas Gabrys had a Lithuanian passport issued by the Lithuanian Consulate in Zurich on 20.12.1934, renewed on 27.12.1935, which was valid until 16.12.1937 (VUB RS, f. 155, b. 974, [l. n.]).

<sup>50</sup> Letter from Stasys Garbačiauskas, Lithuanian General Consul in Zurich to Stasys Lozoraitis, Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Lithuania, 27.01.1937, Zurich, *ibid.*, p. 61–64.

<sup>51</sup> Suisse Federal Archives (SFA), E4320B, C.10.15, 1984/29, Surveillance Report of Agent Chafard, Secret Police of Geneva, 05.08.1929, BD: 112, [l. n.].



non-political conferences, published materials critical of the Lithuanian government and especially Prime Minister Voldemaras, and, after the premier's removal, was hired by the Lithuanian government to follow and report on the activities of the Lithuanian delegation in Geneva, without directly contributing to its work.<sup>52</sup> In the 1930s, Swiss officials shared previously assembled information and explanations provided by Gabrys himself and concluded that he should be watched particularly carefully during the sessions of the League of Nations Council, but no specific information about compromising contacts was provided and there was a lack of evidence showing that he was working for the interests of other countries (besides Lithuania or Switzerland).<sup>53</sup>

In truth, one of Gabrys' contacts could have actually raised some concern for the Secret Police. This contact was the Swiss Colonel Arthur Fonjallaz, who at the time was no longer in military service.<sup>54</sup> Fonjallaz was known for conducting less-than-successful transactions with foreign capital companies and had become involved with Gabrys several years before in a strange case regarding the purchase of cannons for Lithuania.<sup>55</sup> But at that same time, both the Swiss and Lithuanian diplomats were concerned by another fact: the aristocrat's political views. Although Lithuanian sources mention that the Swiss merely suspected him of spying for fascist Italy, Fonjallaz had already begun actively working in this direction since the early 1920s, and on 11 February 1934 founded *l'Action helvétique*, uniting all pro-fascist organizations in Switzerland. Among its objectives, the union listed the fight against communism, Franco-Freemasonry, socialism, political liberalism, anti-Christian propaganda, and the internationalizing of finance. These slogans were all very close to Gabrys' own views. Gabrys was a fierce anti-Hitlerite who had criticized the re-emergence of German imperialism even before the Nazis took power and had fought against Germany's influence in the League of Nations in the resolution on the Klaipėda question. But his opinion of fascist Italy was much more moderate, more often supporting Mussolini's policies than opposing them.<sup>56</sup> Although Lithuanian diplomats expressed

52 SFA, E2001D, 1000/1552, BD: 111, Notes of the Swiss Federal Police of Foreigners collected from Officers Dumuid and Bonzon of the Police and Justice Department of the Canton Of Vaud and Officer Mathez of the Federal Ministry of Public Relations, Bern, 10.02.1935, B. 41. 12. Lituanie, [l. n.].

53 Idem.

54 LCVA, f. 383, ap. 7, Letter from Jurgis Šaulys, Ambassador of Lithuania in Berlin, to Kazys Bizauskas of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Lithuania, b. 855, 18.02.1937, p. 54–57.

55 Alfonsas Eidintas, *Slaptasis lietuvių diplomatas*, p. 259–262; LCVA, f. 383, ap. 7, Letter from Juozas Gabrys to Arthur Fonjallaz, 08.10.1934, Geneva, b. 1884, l. 42; Letter from Arthur Fonjallaz to OC Oerlikon, 11.10.1934, *ibid.*, p. 43.

56 VUB RS, f. 155, Letter from Juozas Gabrys to Adomas Jakštas (Aleksandras Dambrauskas), [after 11.08.1934], Geneva, b. 976, [l. n.]; Letter from Adomas Jakštas (Aleksandras Dambrauskas) to Juozas Gabrys, 11.08.1934 *idem*; Letter from Juozas Gabrys to Dr. Insabato, La Chaux, 08.03.1939, b. 974, [l. n.].



their anger over Gabrys' ties with «members of a certain Italian organization in Switzerland», representatives of the ruling Lithuanian Tautininkai (Nationalist) Party nevertheless participated in the Fascist International Congress organized by Fonjallaz in Montreux in December 1934.<sup>57</sup> In other words, it was not only Gabrys who manoeuvred between his own interests and those of the state – political forces in Lithuania were also seeking official and unofficial diplomatic support by all means possible. Eventually, Gabrys was given permission to enter Switzerland after no clear evidence of hostile activities against either country was found, and he resided there with brief interludes until 1951.<sup>58</sup>

### Communication and collisions with Lithuanian diplomats

The official embassy of the Republic of Lithuania at the League of Nations was closed in 1927 and remained inactive until 1937. During that decade, Lithuania's interests in Geneva were represented by either the Prime Minister, the Foreign Minister, or Lithuania's ambassadors in Paris, Berlin, and Switzerland, or sometimes by their deputies. The main argument given for closing the permanent delegation in Geneva was to cut costs. Albertas Gerutis, the delegation's secretary from 1937 onward, later explained the reasons for the reopening of the mission:

By re-establishing a legation in Geneva, our Government wished to emphasize Lithuania's adherence to the principles of the League of Nations and collective security, even if our experience in the Geneva forum was not a pleasant one. It might be better called very disappointing, in every respect. In the summer of 1937, when Lithuania's permanent delegation raised the tricolour flag over the beautiful Plein Vent villa in the suburb of Cologny, on the shores of the Lac Léman, the political skies over Europe were growing ever darker, and two years later we were struck by the thunder of the Second World War, which expelled our permanent delegation from Geneva and, soon thereafter, the League itself.<sup>59</sup>

The absence of a mission and a permanent representative often caused difficulties and misunderstandings, something that Gabrys and his colleagues sought to exploit – not only by criticizing the inconsistent Lithuanian diplomats, but also by proposing alternatives. The post of Lithuania's Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs until the autumn of 1928 was served by Augustinas Vol-

<sup>57</sup> LCVA, f. 383, ap. 7, Letter from Stasys Garbačiauskas, Lithuanian General Consul in Zurich to Stasys Lozoraitis, Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Lithuania, 27.01.1937, Zurich, b. 855, p. 62.

<sup>58</sup> LCVA, f. 383, ap. 7, Letter from Jurgis Šaulys, Lithuanian Ambassador in Berlin to Kazys Bizauskas of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Lithuania, 22.02.1937, Berlin, b. 855, p. 52.

<sup>59</sup> Albertas Gerutis, Karas ar taika tarp Lietuvos ir Lenkijos?, in: Dirva, 1980 m. 26 juin 1980 (26), p. 7.

demaras. He had been a fierce opponent of Gabrys since the conflict in 1918 with the first government of the newly independent Lithuanian state, then led by Voldemaras as Prime Minister and Antanas Smetona as elected president. After failing to secure a government post, Gabrys never forgot the grievance and lack of recognition. His relationship with Smetona was also volatile and fluctuated from attempts to ingratiate himself at any price to open and public slander. In any case, by the winter of 1928 we learn of Gabrys' first attempt to assume control over Lithuanian affairs in Geneva, combining issues pertinent to bordering nations into one organization. Gabrys asserted he was the «actual» head of such an office and asked the ministry to find «means» to ensure that his participation would not be publicly disclosed.<sup>60</sup> He also hastened to explain that he did not seek to use his reports to circumvent Vaclovas Sidzikauskas, then appointed to the League of Nations by the Lithuanian government. On the contrary, Gabrys, as a private individual, could allow himself more freedom of action and speech than the official diplomat.<sup>61</sup>

At that time, Vaclovas Sidzikauskas was an important diplomatic figure who had already made a name for himself by securing Switzerland's *de jure* recognition of Lithuania in 1921 and at the proceedings affirming the autonomy of the Klaipėda District by the Conference of Ambassadors and the League of Nations Council in 1923/24.<sup>62</sup> In the autumn of 1929, he and Voldemaras were appointed to represent Lithuania at the Assembly of the League of Nations, and in 1931 and 1932 Sidzikauskas defended Lithuania's interests in discussions over the Vilnius and Klaipėda questions at the Permanent Court of International Justice at The Hague.<sup>63</sup> In addition to proposals about how to act in the political world at Geneva, Gabrys also criticized Sidzikauskas and other diplomats for their failure to attend the meetings of the League of Nations, their arrogant behaviour with the League's officials and representatives of other countries, and illogical statements made during discussions of Lithuanian issues. These letters and reports were sent to both the Lithuanian Foreign Ministry and the President of the Republic.<sup>64</sup> As Alfonsas Eidintas has asserted, criticism of the delegation apparently meant that Gabrys and his proposals had been disregarded, and that he, unable to conceal his resentment, poured it out on Lithuania's diplomats, who often found themselves in very difficult situations.<sup>65</sup>

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<sup>60</sup> VUB RS, f. 155, b. 963, Letter from Juozas Gabrys to the Director of the Political Department of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Lithuania, 12.02.1928, Berlin, b. 963, p. 633.

<sup>61</sup> Idem.

<sup>62</sup> Stasys Martišius, Lietuvos diplomatijos virtuožas, in: Vaclovas Sidzikauskas, Lietuvos diplomatijos paraštėje, p. 9.

<sup>63</sup> Idem, p. 88–92; 106–110.

<sup>64</sup> LCVA, f. 383, ap. 7, Letter from Juozas Gabrys to Antanas Tūbelis, Deputy Prime Minister of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Lithuania, 18.11.1928, b. 855, p. 222–227.

<sup>65</sup> Alfonsas Eidintas, Slaptasis lietuvių diplomatas, p. 221.

Another individual who found himself targeted by much of Gabrys' criticism at that time, harsher even than that directed at Voldemaras, was Dovas Zaunius, who served as a representative to the League of Nations until 1927. He was appointed on 8 November 1929 as Lithuania's Foreign Minister and, as such, often represented his country in Geneva.<sup>66</sup> The main accusation was Zaunius' supposed incompetence. Although many were accused by Gabrys of this shortcoming (even those with whom he cooperated), in the case of Zaunius he was probably just trying to demonstrate his superior knowledge.

Around the time he proclaimed his position regarding replacing a «pro-German» foreign policy with a «pro-Polish» direction, Gabrys began reporting more regularly to President Smetona about the activities of the Lithuanian delegation in Geneva – not only on the level of ideas, but also about what delegation members did between meetings, with whom they met, what they were preparing, how they described their actions to him, etc.<sup>67</sup> We can thus see how Gabrys carefully and sometimes intrusively followed the Lithuanian delegates and, with the help of good contacts and a network of assistants, easily anticipated even future steps. He quickly reported everything back to the highest Lithuanian offices – without ever being asked and without any response from Smetona to Gabrys' letters. One year later, speaking out against the transfer of the Klaipėda question to the International Court of Justice in The Hague, Gabrys not only reiterated his accusations against Zaunius for his «ignorance, negligence, and dishonesty», but also threatened to bring legal action against him for «working for the Prussians» (i. e. engaging in pro-German activity).<sup>68</sup>

It appears that, despite censorship, many of Gabrys' supposedly secret and personal letters circulated in public in Lithuania and were known to diplomats abroad:

Thank you for your reports. Unfortunately, the public was unable to read all of them in Rytas. And only one of the telegrams. Of the letters, one was already intercepted. We will print the other tomorrow, but it's too soon to say if the censor will let them pass [...] Your complaint to the President, like the memorandum regarding the prior League of Nations Council session, has somehow been received and is being circulated. And so intensively that it's hard to find a Lithuanian intellectual who hasn't received or at least read it.<sup>69</sup>

<sup>66</sup> Albertas Gerutis, Dovas Zaunius, p. 161.

<sup>67</sup> LCVA, f. 922, ap. 1, Letters from Juozas Gabrys to Antanas Smetona, 02.10.1930, 23.10.1930, Geneva, b. 15, p. 103–105; LCVA, f. 668, ap. 2, Letter from Juozas Gabrys to Antanas Smetona, 22.05.1931, Geneva, b. 11, p. 1–2.

<sup>68</sup> LCVA, f. 688, ap. 2, Letter from Juozas Gabrys to M. Major Kalmantavičius-Bajoras, Chief of the Lithuanian Riflemen's Union, Geneva, [1931 May], b. 11, p. 8.

<sup>69</sup> LCVA, f. 668, ap. 2, Letter from Pranas Raiulinitis (Redaction of *Rytas*) to Juozas Gabrys, 29.05.1931, Kaunas, b. 11, [l.n.].

In other words, these reports were neither personal nor secret. Rather, they mirrored Gabrys' attempt to create a poor impression of the Lithuanian delegation to bolster his own active influence, and that of his likeminded colleagues, at the League of Nations. In addition to the complaints, Gabrys' Bureau and the administration of *Revue des Nationalités* continued to correspond with Lithuanian missions abroad, sending them their journals, and coordinated various practical matters with diplomats in Geneva.<sup>70</sup>

What Gabrys sought, expected, or hoped to win through such double activity is revealed to us through the re-emergence of Miliukas on the political scene, who inquired about potential employment in Geneva. Without specifying the agency which he was addressing, Miliukas asserted that he had written an article on the subject for *La Suisse* regarding the Lithuanian budget, which should be seen as an endorsement.<sup>71</sup> A year later, he inquired again about any opportunities to enter the League of Nations, stating that he would certainly travel to Switzerland if given a post.<sup>72</sup> Here the subject is likely Gabrys' appointment to the official list of diplomats representing Lithuania or a position within the League of Nations Secretariat, which would permit him to hire advisors or assistants such as Miliukas. We do not have Gabrys' replies to these requests, but we know the occasional recommendations of another Lithuanian regarding free posts at the Secretariat.<sup>73</sup> Gabrys also publicly expressed his position on this matter: The lack of interest among Lithuanians and their failure to participate in greater numbers in the work of the League of Nations also added to the difficulties in communication and cooperation with this organization and its individual organs.<sup>74</sup>

Despite recurring conflicts, Gabrys continued this correspondence with the President and Foreign Ministry and, after Stasys Lozoraitis was appointed as Minister of Foreign Affairs in the summer of 1934, Gabrys immediately established contact with him. After Lithuania reopened its permanent mission to the League of Nations in 1937, Gabrys sought ways to communicate with his previous acquaintances – delegation representative Kazys Škirpa and secretary Albertas Gerutis. In 1938, Gabrys complained to Lozoraitis about the latter's choice not to appoint him to the post given to Škirpa: «The motives for which

<sup>70</sup> VUB RS, f. 155, Letter from Vaclovas Sidzikauskas to Juozas Gabrys, 24.02.1932, London, b. 963, p. 589; Letter from Juozas Urbšys from the Lithuanian Embassy in Paris to the Administration of *Revue des Nationalités*, [1932 m.], Paris, *ibid.*, p. 590; VUB RS, f. 155, Telegram from Juozas Gabrys to Antanas Smetona, 09.02.1932, Geneva, b. 982, [l. n.].

<sup>71</sup> VUB RS, f. 155, Letter from Juozas Miliukas to Juozas Gabrys, 1931/1932 m., Kaunas, b. 983 [l. n.].

<sup>72</sup> Letter from Juozas Miliukas to Juozas Gabrys, 20.12.1932, Kaunas, *ibid.*

<sup>73</sup> VUB RS, f. 155, Letter from Juozas Gabrys to Pierre Comert, Director of the Information Section, 11.08.1931, Geneva, b. 963, p. 585.

<sup>74</sup> Juozas Gabrys, *Laiškai iš Ženevos. XXX. Tautų Sąjungos Sekretoriato valymas ir Lietuva*, in: *Rytas*, 26 September 1928 (217/1397), p. 1.



you have refused to appoint me are baseless [...] The matter is not about accreditation to the Swiss government, but to the League of Nations, where, I believe, you do not doubt my competence. I am informed by a reliable source that the President would approve my appointment. [...] I can assure you neither the honour nor interests of Lithuania would be harmed by my appointment to the League of Nations.»<sup>75</sup>

Unfortunately, after the outbreak of the Second World War, it became clear that the League of Nations' central mission of preserving world peace had not been achieved, and that the confidence of small nations in the collective peace-keeping organization had begun to waver. Nevertheless, in June 1940, the Lithuanian government appointed Eduardas Turauskas as its permanent delegate to the League of Nations and counsellor to its legation in Bern. Turauskas departed for Switzerland the same day that the Red Army marched into Lithuania, and continued to perform his duties until 1946. Gabrys' office also continued its activities during the war and afterward, but that is another story.

## Conclusions

In summarizing the results of this article, we should note that assembling extensive information about the chosen circle of acquaintances proved difficult, since this «community», linked by informal ties and through one individual, left behind no comprehensive description of its activity. Retracing of these connections from each individual's perspective could be the object of a further study.

When speaking about Lithuanians and activists from other nationalities who worked on issues relevant to Lithuania around the League of Nations during the interwar years, we might observe that among the Lithuanians, similar backgrounds and social statuses meant that most of the future diplomats came from self-educated rural backgrounds. It was precisely their generation that was destined to start or continue their studies in Western Europe, no longer in the Russian Empire, after securing or helping to restore Lithuanian independence. The countries chosen as places of higher education also depended on the individuals' knowledge of foreign languages. Because German and French predominated in this regard, most chose to study at universities in Germany, France, or Switzerland.

Non-Lithuanian activists in the field of Lithuanian diplomacy were usually associated with Lithuania through personal contacts, acquaintances, membership in organizations, or shared ideas that had taken shape before the First World War. Their aristocratic roots afforded them greater freedom of income and the ability to remain unaffiliated with any specific agency. It was precisely to

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<sup>75</sup> LCVA, f. 383, ap. 7, Letter from Juozas Gabrys to Stasys Lozoraitis, 29.04.1938, Geneva, b. 855, p. 24–25.



this group that Juozas Gabrys, the principal unifier of all such activists, sought to belong. Although not of noble birth himself, Gabrys was educated and talented. He began to establish contacts in the French-speaking aristocracy early in the 20<sup>th</sup> century and continued actively developing and building new ties in the interwar period.

Such «free agents» and their circles were usually viewed critically by officials in Lithuanian state institutions. This was not only because of their lack of responsibility or accountability to anyone else, but also because their views, interests, and intentions were much harder to identify in the elaborate space of international diplomacy in Geneva.

The network of interactions in Juozas Gabrys' circle was based on three fields of activity and points of departure: press publications, business connections, and the effort to influence political decisions concerning Lithuanian affairs at the League of Nations. In the world of interwar Lithuanian diplomacy, all of these interests were also closely intertwined, and thus the distinction between official and unofficial status was blurred. Where everyone knew everyone, personal interests were sometimes used in ways that were not necessarily beneficial to the state, as the individuals did not always correctly equate their own enemies with those of the state. The same was true for Gabrys' friends and associates, whose activities were marked by conflicts and nearly constant opposition to official Lithuanian representatives at the League of Nations. The significance of this group's work was therefore most evident at the level of the press and propaganda, and not in their influence on the official decisions taken. However, this multidirectional and multi-layered network of interactions confirms the proposed hypothesis that activities and victories in the League of Nations, an organization striving for world peace, were vital for Lithuania as a small and new country. This is revealed not only by the large amount of assembled diplomatic and press information, but also by the efforts of political actors from different points of view to enter, remain in, or even dominate this environment. The League of Nations therefore reveals itself as an important arena for the study of the biographies and ideas of interwar intellectuals, as well as for the analysis of their national and international ties.

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Appendix: Relevant Figures in the Social Network of Juozas Gabrys, 1927–1936

Person	Nationality	Born	Background	Primary school	High school	University	Career	Years active in LoN	Date and place of death
JUOZAS GABRYS (PARŠAITIS)	Lithuanian	Garliava (Lithuania) 22.02.1880	peasant/ intellectual	Garliava (Lithuania) 1887–1889	Marijampolė (Lithuania) 1890–1899	University of Odesa (1901–1907) University of Paris (1907–1911)	journalist, lawyer, diplomat, politician	1920–1939	La Chaux (Switzerland) 26 July 1951
JEAN PÉLISSIER	French	Aigues-Vives (Ariège, France) 1883	peasant/ intellectual	–	–	–	journalist, historian, sociologist, writer		27 March 1939
FRIEDRICH THEODOR LOUIS SYLVESTER BARON VON DER ROPP	German/ Lithuanian	Daudzgiriai (Lithuania) 09.10.1880	nobility	Dresden (Germany)	Dresden (Germany)	Martin Luther University of Halle-Wittenberg, Bergakademie Freiberg (until 1903)	mining engineer, politician, writer	1920–1937	Bad Godesberg (Germany) 21 Feb. 1964
JUOZAS MILIUKAS	Lithuanian	–	clerk/peasant	–	–	–	clerk, military official	1925–1937	–
MARIE HENRIETTE DESPONDS GABRYS	Swiss/ Lithuanian	Lussery (Switzerland) 25.02.1895	peasant	–	–	–	secretary, translator, administrator	1920–1939	[1957–1969]

Person	Nationality	Born	Background	Primary school	High school	University	Career	Years active in LoN	Date and place of death
EDUARDAS TURAUSKAS	Lithuanian	Endrejavas (Lithuania) 30.10.1896	peasant/ intellectual	Endrejavas/ Telšiai (Lithuania) 1909–1915	Bobruisk/ Saratov/ Voronezh (Russian Empire) 1915–1917	University of St. Petersburg (1917) University of Fribourg (1919–1922) University of Paris (1922–1926)	diplomat and journalist	1940–1946	Nanterre (France) 12 Sep. 1966
VOLODIMIR JEREMEJEV (YEREMIEFF)	Ukrainian	–	–	–	–	–	journalist, translator	1933–1937	–
ARTHUR ROBERT GASTON FONJALLAZ	Suisse	Prilly (Switzerland) 02.01.1875	nobility	Genève, Saint-Gall and Lausanne (Switzerland)	Genève, Saint-Gall and Lausanne (Switzerland)	Military Academy of Modena (until 1895)	colonel, politician	1931–1939	St. Moritz (Switzerland) 24 Jan. 1944
VACLOVAS SIDZIKAUSKAS	Lithuanian	Šiaudinė (Lithuania) 10.04.1893	peasant/ intellectual	Jurbarkas (Lithuania) until 1908	Techer Seminary of Veiveriai (Lithuania) 1908–1911	University of Fribourg (1911) University of Moscow 1916–1918	lawyer, diplomat	1920–1934	New York (USA) 2 Dec. 1973

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DOVAS ZAUNIUS	Lithuanian	Rokaičiai (Lithuania) 19.06.1892	intellectual	-	Tilsit (East Prussia) until 1911	University of Munich, Martin Luther University of Halle-Wittenberg, University of Berlin (Friedrich-Wilhelms-Universität) until 1915; University of Königsberg 1915–1917	lawyer, diplomat	1925–1934	Kaunas (Lithuania) 22 Feb. 1940
KAZYS ŠKIRPA	Lithuanian	Namajunai (Lithuania) 18.02.1895	-	-	Mintauja (Jelgava) Latvia until 1915	Peterhof Military School until 1916; EHT Zurich 1921; Higher Officers Courses (Kaunas) 1922; Royal Military Academy (Belgium) until 1925	colonel, diplomat, politician	1937–1938	Washington D. C. (USA) 18.08.1979

Person	Nationality	Born	Background	Primary school	High school	University	Career	Years active in LoN	Date and place of death
ALBERTAS GERUTIS	Lithuanian	Riga (Latvia) 21.07.1905	townspeople	-	Riga (Latvia) until 1919	Lithuanian University (Kaunas); University of Berlin (Friedrich-Wilhelms-Universität); University of Bern until 1933	lawyer, journalist, diplomat, historian	1937–1946	Bern (Switzerland) 01.12.1985