Lietuvos ir Lenkijos santykiai: nuo Pirmojo pasaulinio karo pabaigos iki L. Želigowskio įvykdyto Vilniaus užėmimo (1918 m. lapkritis – 1920 m. spalio), ed. Edmundas Gimžauskas, Vilnius: LII Leidykla, 2012. 704 p. ISBN 978-9955-847-58-8

The period 1918 to 1920 is a particularly fruitful period for research on international relations. The collapse of the continental empires entailed the emergence of national states. However, many phenomena of the interwar period – extreme nationalism, economic autarchy, and protectionism – were rather manifestations of a failing postwar order and an ensuing rise of revisionism in the late 1920s and 1930s. They were far from apparent in the immediate postwar period. The Russian Revolution and the defeat of the German Empire led to an unprecedented degree of internationalisation, with concepts of statehood, territories, and political belonging proliferating at international congresses and via international organisations. There was genuine hope that any territorial conflicts would be settled on the basis of a benevolent Wilsonian order and the right of self-determination of nations.

The power of the Western Entente, however, did not penetrate into the former Russian imperial periphery to the extent required to settle the postwar order single-handedly. The Lithuanian–Polish conflict, which is at the core of this book, rather unfolded within a complex web of power relations of Bolsheviks, retreating Germans, the Supreme Council of the Entente, and various ethnic entrepreneurs.

This fine collection of mostly diplomatic documents, edited by Edmundas Gimžauskas, is thus of great interest, as it covers an extremely volatile period of time – the years between the November 1918 Armistice and the seizure of Vilnius by Żeligowski's army. The documents are structured along chronological lines into six phases: (I) the months before the Polish army moved into Vilnius in May 1919, (II) the period of deterioration of Polish–Lithuanian relations until September 1919, (III) Poland's political isolation of Lithuania until March 1920, (IV) the period of Soviet diplomatic engagement in Polish–Lithuanian relations until August 1920, (V) the period between the Kaunas and Suwałki negotiations before September 1920, and (VI) the Treaty of Riga and the second takeover of power in Vilnius by the Polish army. There are English abstracts for all historical documents throughout the book, which makes this volume highly interesting for non-Lithuanian historians, too; although some abstracts tend to rather provide context for the document than sum up its content. The sources are either in their original Lithuanian language or translated from Polish

or Russian into Lithuanian. Some of the sources are from published collections, others from the Lithuanian Central State Archives (LCVA) and the collections of the Lithuanian Academy of Sciences (LMA). The editor provides a useful and extensive glossary.

The documents allow for a very dense picture of the time period, highlighting the contingencies offered by the retreat of the German army from the region and the lack of direct (military) influence of the Western Entente in the Polish–Lithuanian conflict. Many documents highlight the complicated nature of the Polish–Lithuanian front and the demarcation zone, as well as the Lithuanian hopes that the Polish political and military leadership would stick to the internationally determined zone and that the Entente would be powerful enough to enforce it (the Entente was not). The sources illustrate well how the relations between Poland and Lithuania developed with the changing fortunes of war in the Polish–Soviet War, indicating that Lithuanian politicians were too slow to exploit Poland's weakness in summer 1920. The selection of documents allows for an analysis of the conflict from the highest to the grass roots level. Of particular interest is, for instance, the note of inhabitants of the Krosna parish from 7 September 1919 (pp. 305–306), protesting against Polish attempts to incorporate the Suvalkai region into the new Polish state.

The internationality of the Polish–Lithuanian conflict is highlighted by the selection of documents. Some correspondence shows well on the one hand how Lithuanian and Polish diplomats competed with regards to communication with and support from the Entente, and on the other how much hope Lithuanians placed in the Entente, although its Supreme Council had little actual influence in the region. What is refreshing is that this is not a collection of documents of international law which aim at proving a legitimate claim to Vilnius, but that the sources show how ideas of legitimacy, borders, territory and statehood were subjected to and rapidly changed in the unprecedented conditions and changing orders of the immediate postwar period. This is shown in the case of places of negotiation, as the Lithuanians considered Riga, for instance, the most favourable location to negotiate peace terms with Poland (pp. 515–516). Moreover, documents are not restricted to official policy makers, but include alternative concepts of Lithuanian statehood by non-acknowledged diplomats, such as Juozas Gabrys, whose star waned quickly after the German defeat and the collapse of the order of Brest–Litovsk (pp. 98–99).

If there is something to criticise about this very useful book, it is that it misses the opportunity to provide sources which shed light on the concepts of order of the political and diplomatic actors who are behind these documents. Diplomatic history has received its fair share of criticism over past decades as a result of its overemphasis on the influence of a handful of influential men and its treatment of foreign policy as an 'arcane

sphere, which is detached from the remaining society'.¹ Over past years, the history of diplomacy (and of politics in a broader sense) thus took a number of approaches of cultural history, thus understanding diplomacy as a process-related, man-made, and negotiable system of signs. Such a history of diplomacy not only ascribes more meaning to semantics and practices, but it also challenges the congruence of agents and political systems. Or, to put it another way, it tells us more about how people understood the world, and how they put these concepts into action, than about how structures of international relations worked. For the same reasons as cited above, the years at the end of and following the First World War are a particularly enticing period of study in these regards. A new political elite emerged which was raised, educated and trained in the imperial context, but advocated states founded on an order that had no precedent in this region. It would be very interesting to learn more about how historical actors such as Voldemaras or Żeligowski perceived their own situations and the political context they were working in.

Overall, however, this volume contains a selection of documents that is useful both to Lithuanian and non-Lithuanian scholars. There are some fields that are less well-covered than others (for instance, documents on the politicisation of the Polish and Lithuanian diaspora would be very interesting), but in general, the selection works very well, and there is hardly any redundancy. It would be desirable that this book receives the attention that it deserves, particularly with research on the First World War set to shift towards the phases at the end of the war as the centenary progresses.

Klaus Richter

¹ 'Einleitung. Außenbeziehungen in akteurszentrierter Perspektive', *Akteure der Außenbeziehungen. Netzwerke und Interkulturalität im historischen Wandel*, ed. H. von Thiesen, C. Windler (Cologne 2010), pp. 1–14, here p. 5.