
It is clear and obvious to historians that collecting primary sources and putting these collections in the public domain is a priority activity in the development of historical research. Systematised thematic document collections make the work of historians easier, and increases their access to sources, especially when documents normally kept in foreign archives are published. Due to periods of political transition, wars, and the interruption of Lithuania’s statehood, more of Lithuania’s historical sources have probably been lost or taken away to other countries than is the case with other states. However, bilateral relations go some way in facilitating compensation for our lost documents with others kept in another country, as communications, connections and correspondence are recorded by both countries engaged in this interaction. An example of this possibility is the search for the original copy of a document that happens to fall within the chronological boundaries of the book under review (it is presented in the book as Document No 9, p. 60), the original Act of 16 February (Lithuania’s Declaration of Independence in 1918), as well as an original document found in German archives, a handwritten copy of the declaration. This was a significant discovery in a symbolic sense, as the content of the declaration of 16 February had always been known to us.

Broader opportunities to conduct this kind of activity systematically and consistently in the modern period in Lithuania presented themselves only in the interwar years, as for a long time there were no institutions of higher education in Lithuania (or the Lithuanian governorates); that is, there was no university where broadly institutionalised historical research or studies could be conducted in the 19th century. In 1932, the historian Jonas Matusas wrote: ‘First, what is it that we need? A complete collection of Lithuanian history sources. That is the primary thing.’

A history section was established in the Press and Education Department

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of the Lithuanian army in 1935, with one of the main tasks being to collect Lithuanian history sources and publish document collections.\textsuperscript{2}

In 1937, Zenonas Ivinskis, a historian and associate professor at Vytautas Magnus University, stated that

The publication of Lithuanian history sources has, until now, you could say, been driven by the initiative and concern of one person ... The rich past of the Lithuanian nation hardly has any of its own documents in present-day [interwar] Lithuania. There are plenty in the archives of Poland and Königsberg, in Riga and Tartu, in Danzig, and even in Berlin. And let’s not forget what an inexhaustible source the Vatican archive is! An important task in the science of history in Lithuania is to publish and register the Lithuania-related material now found elsewhere.\textsuperscript{3}

Regardless of the fact that nine decades have passed since the interwar years, when Lithuania’s historians raised these ideas and outlined what needed to be done, source research remains and will continue to remain a relevant field of activity for historians, as new and hitherto unknown or unnoticed sources are always emerging. New relevant themes and aspects always arise in society, which steer interest to certain documents and groups.

The Lithuanian Institute of History publicly declares its mission as follows:

By developing fundamental and applied research, to study the evolution of the Lithuanian nation, Lithuania’s society, its culture, economy and statehood, to gather, systematise and spread the documentary and the intangible historical heritage.\textsuperscript{4}

Thus, this publication is one of the institute’s tasks in implementing its mission. It joins the broader block of sources relating to relations between Lithuania and Soviet Russia (the Soviet Union).\textsuperscript{5}

A few years ago, in 2020, a collection of documents was published by the Lithuanian Institute of History with documents from 1917 to 1920. This is a rather important period, as it was when the question of

\textsuperscript{2}Press and Education Department, 1935–1936, Lithuanian Central State Archives, col. 929, inv. 6, file 186, p. 140.


\textsuperscript{4}Lithuanian Institute of History. \url{https://www.istorija.lt/} (accessed 30 05 2022).

\textsuperscript{5}SSSR i Litva v gody Vtoroi mirovoi voini. SSSR i Litovskaia Respublika (mart 1939 – avgust 1940 gg.), Vol. 1, eds. A. Kasparavichius; Ch. Laurinavichius; N. Lebedeva (Vilnius, 2006); Litva v politike SSSR i v mezhdunarodnykh otnosheniakh (avgust 1940 – sentiabr’1945 gg.), Vol. 2, eds. Ch. Laurinavichius; N. Lebedeva (Vilnius, 2012).
the existence of a state dominated by the modern Lithuanian nation was determined. Partial success (defended sovereignty in the territory, albeit without its capital in Vilnius) was indeed a breakthrough that determined everything that unfolded in the next century and continues to happen today. In the 21st century, the border that today runs between the former Soviet Russia (later the Soviet Union), the successor of the rights of the Russian Empire, and the countries that earned their newly won independence after the First World War, is noted as an approximate boundary separating EU and Nato countries from those lying further east.

It is likely that for a hundred years, the treaty of 12 July 1920 served as one of the reasons for this publication. This treaty, so controversially viewed by historians, defined the border between Lithuania and Soviet Russia, which was meant to follow the line Breslau (Wroclaw)–Pastavy–Maladzyechna from Latvia, and then go along the River Nemunas until the Svislach left tributary flows into the main river. Further ahead, the border took something of a detour south as far as Sztabin. Lithuania was supposed to settle its borders with Latvia and Poland in separate treaties. This happened in the first case, but in the second case it failed due to territorial disputes. According to the Treaty of Moscow of 12 July 1920, cities such as the historical capital Vilnius, Grodno and Lida were acknowledged as Lithuanian by Soviet Russia. The territories attributed to the Lithuanian state by the Treaty of Moscow were never de facto fully controlled by Lithuania during the interwar years, and the state border delineated in the document applied only on paper. The realpolitik in those days was significantly different, as a sizeable part of the eastern territory attributed to Lithuania was dominated by Belarusians, Poles and Jews, rather than ethnic Lithuanians (those who saw themselves as Lithuanians and used the Lithuanian language on a regular daily basis). It was after all the ethnographic, in addition to the historical, argument that was used during negotiations by the Kaunas government with Moscow regarding the border.

This collection contains 173 documents, divided into four sections. The published documents were gathered from various locations and sources. Some were taken from source collections published at an earlier time (such as Nos 1, 3, 4, 5, 6, 8, 49). Others come from periodical publications, such as Rygos garsas, Lietuvos aidas (Nos 2, 7, 9, 12, 21, etc). Some of the published documents were taken from archive collections: the Foreign Policy Archive of the Russian Federation (FPARF), the Lithuanian Special Archives (LSA), and the Lithuanian Central State Archives (LSCA).
The first section (35 documents) presents documents from March 1917 to August 1919, beginning with sources relating to the activities of Lithuanian organisations, the declaration of Lithuania’s independence, and documents relating to Soviet Lithuania and LitBel (the short-lived Soviet Lithuanian-Belorussian quasi-state). At the end of this period, Lithuania and Soviet Russia were engaged in a relatively active state of war, even if the front was not very long in terms of the territory of all of Russia. The chronological boundary of sources from the second section (23 documents) encompasses September 1919 to May 1920, and includes the period of Lithuania’s independent military activities (without the participation of German soldiers) against the Red Army and the search for a possible truce. The third section (56 documents) covers May to July 1920, and consists of documents that reveal the details of the peace negotiations between Lithuania and Soviet Russia in 1920. The fourth section (59 documents) is the largest in terms of its scope, featuring documents from July to December 1920, and those concerning mutual Lithuanian and Soviet Russian relations on military cooperation, control of the city of Vilnius, and other aspects.

In the introductory text, the editors discuss the fighting that took place near Alytus in February 1919 (p. 21), though it is doubtful whether the contribution of the Lithuanian army, which operated alongside German forces (the latter played a fateful role), has been presented entirely correctly, stating that a small unit of Lithuanians (in the original document nebol’shoj litovskij otrjad) was involved in the fighting, with no broader comment. Understandably, in early 1919, the Lithuanian army was just being formed, and the military factor of the German forces was undeniably important, as were international policy processes in general. However, even those few units had a role to play in the entrenchment of the statehood of the Republic of Lithuania.

The editors devote attention to presenting various alternatives in the introductory article of the publication: Soviet Lithuania, LitBel (the Lithuanian-Belorussian Soviet Socialist Republic), and Lithuania’s union with Poland. However, by the end of 1920, the prospects of a Soviet Lithuania, which may have been possible after Poland had lost to the Red Army by the Vistula, could have been highlighted somewhat more (this matter is discussed in documents such as Nos 128 and 138). In the light of an alternative future for Soviet Lithuania, even the treaty of 12 July 1920 and other processes would appear quite different as well. One

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aspect to consider was the future of Soviet Lithuania up to the 12 July 1920 treaty, and another is how the situation could be viewed after the treaty was signed. In effect, this would have meant that Lithuania, and perhaps all three Baltic States, would have met with the same fate as the Caucasus (in 1920 the Soviets occupied Azerbaijan and Armenia, and in 1921 Sakartvelo7 as early as 1920, and not two decades later in 1940.

The decision of the editors and publishers of the collection of sources to publicise retyped versions of some documents, while other documents are scanned or photographed facsimiles, is an interesting one. This inconsistency is quite noticeable, as is the fact that the documents are included, while no footnotes with additional commentary or corrections/specifications of the facts, places and figures mentioned in the documents are given in the texts themselves. That is, single documents are not contextualised, there is only an introductory article. Thus, we are presented with a collection of documents, but readers are left to analyse and interpret them on their own. This type of document collection must suffice for the academic community, apparently, but for a broader circle of readers it comes across as lacking in qualified commentary. Of course, the formation of the collection in itself has made access easier than if the documents were only to be found in archives. Despite the unequal presentation of documents and the lack of commentary about their texts, the value of this document collection increases significantly when considering the potential difficulties researchers would have to get access to some of the archives where the originals of some of the published documents are kept.

For researchers working in the field of Lithuanian studies, one of the priority activities is to tell the world about the past of the Baltic tribe, the Lithuanian nation and Lithuanian society, and its uniqueness and similarities or general trends compared with global or regional historical processes. In this publication, documents in Lithuanian or German are translated into Russian, but documents originally in Russian are not translated into any other languages. This makes it a multilingual document collection; however, the principle of language parity was not applied. It is basically aimed at readers who are proficient in Russian. For members of the academic community researching the 20th-century history of Lithuania, the Baltic States and East European countries in general, knowing Russian is indeed unavoidable. However, for a broad-

er circle of readers, the lack of language parity may be an obstacle in becoming fully familiarised with these sources.

Taking into account the fact that the Lithuanian Institute of History published document collections in 2006 and 2012 about Lithuanian-Soviet Union relations on the eve of the Second World War and during the war, and that a collection of sources devoted to Lithuanian-Russian (Soviet Russian) relations from 1917 to 1920 is now being published in 2022, we can expect that in the future, the academic community and readers at large will see more document collections of a similar kind. And this particular source collection may be beneficial and interesting to anyone who knows Russian, is interested in or researches Lithuanian history of the first half of the 20th century, or analyses international relations in Eastern Europe after the First World War, as other international policy subjects are also to be found within the context of Lithuanian-Soviet Russian relations.

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