

## **Preconditions and Sources of the Molotov-Robben trop Secret Protocols (1922-1932)**

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The task of this paper is threefold: 1) to answer the question when, where and why the idea was raised and discussions were carried out on turning Eastern Baltic region into the object of an international political deal and trace the development of the said discussions; 2) to clarify whether the Baltic states themselves and Poland as well as their policies did not instigate such trends and contributed to the international situation where they found themselves on the eve of the breakout of World War II; 3) to establish the methods and means employed by the Soviet Union (Russia) in its efforts to extend its political influence onto the Baltic states and prepare itself for their annexation.

### 1. Rapallo prelude

Crowned with the Peace Treaty of Versailles, World War I essentially ended in a global and unsecured compromise rather than in a victory. The winners were not more satisfied with the outcome of the Peace Treaty than the losers. Being disappointed in the development of the Peace Conference of Versailles, the Americans turned away from the European political arena without completing their peaceful mission. As British historian A. J. P. Taylor noted, when the Peace Treaty of Versailles was signed, Great Britain shared vague hopes that it would be revised and France had even vaguer hope that the Treaty would be enforced<sup>1</sup>.

On the other hand, the consolidation of the Bolsheviks in Russia predetermined that the final stage of the war signalled not only Entente's loss of a very significant ally in the East, but also the violation of the historical balance of powers in Europe. As the Bolshevik Russia turned into an unpredictable military force, Europe lost its very important factor of geopolitical stability. The said political deformations resulted in a paradoxical situation in Europe at the end of the twenties: the states that strove for peace maintenance and stability with their capacities eventually little surpassed the powers which were interested in destruction of the post-war Peace of Versailles.

Such a situation could not last for a long time. Therefore, the architects of the Versailles Peace started looking for the ways to enhance peace and stability assurances in Europe. In 1922, an international conference was called in Genoa with that intention. Its initiators England and France hoped that the conference would improve the relations with prostrated Germany, and lay foundations for the reestablishment of the relations with the Bolshevik Russia. Unfortunately, these hopes did not justify themselves. On the contrary, having found themselves in the role of the grand outsiders of Europe, Russia and Germany managed to use this international forum for

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<sup>1</sup> A.J.P. Taylor, *Nuo Sarajevo iki Potsdamo. Europa 1914-1945.* - Vilnius, 1994. p. 69.

their own destructive purposes. On 16 April 1922, these countries agreed on so-called Treaty of Rapallo where they decided to abandon their earlier debts and reparation with respect to each other, recognised each other *de facto* and *de jure* and grounded their mutual economic, political and military co-operation<sup>2</sup>. Germany became a power state of Europe which officially recognised the Bolshevik Russia by establishing standard diplomatic relations.

This event radically stirred the policies of post-Versailles Europe and stroke a serious blow to the pacification of the Old Continent. Thus, there were reasons for American historian Herald von Riekhoff to consider the Treaties of Rapallo “one of the most important and dramatic events of the diplomacy of the inter-war period”<sup>3</sup> in Europe. In my opinion, there are grounds to state that namely Rapallo became one of the first preludes to the Russia-Germany treaties on the division of spheres of influence in Poland and the Baltic states. Moreover, it can also be said that alongside evident economic reasons for concluding the treaties of Rapallo (German technologies and experts were necessary for Russia’s revival, whereas Germany was in need of Russia’s raw materials and market)<sup>4</sup>, there was a political implication, namely the willingness of these countries to reform the political map of Eastern Europe, which was equally important.

One of the authors of the Treaty of Rapallo, German diplomat Count Ulrich von Brockdorff-Rantzau, was positive that as a result of the Great War, Russia and Germany were “destined to share the common fate”, therefore, they had to act jointly<sup>5</sup>. On the eve of signing the Treaty of Rapallo, the diplomat wrote to Reichswehr Commander-in-Chief General Hans von Seeckt in his *Pro Memoria* the following: “Poland is the crux of the East [*Europe*, A.K.]. The existence of Poland is unbearable and incompatible with vital interests of Germany. She must vanish and so it will due to its internal weakness and through Russia’s and our assistance. (...) Poland can never offer any advantage to Germany neither economic, as she is not capable of development, nor political, as she is France’s vassal.”<sup>6</sup>

Indeed, the same year Brockdorff-Rantzau arrived at Moscow as the first envoy of the Weimar Republic and established relations with Soviet Foreign Minister and People’s Commissar Georgy Chicherin, which was not only close, but also warm and personal<sup>7</sup>. The German diplomat resided in this country practically until his death at the end of the twenties. During this time the close friendship of both the diplomats was not broken either.

Berlin’s view and stance regarding Poland and Russia was a real gift to the latter. At least during the first stage of their realisation, the revisionist intentions of the Weimar Germany in Eastern

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<sup>2</sup> K. Rosenbaum, *Community of Fate. German-Soviet Diplomatic Relations 1922-1928*. Syracuse University Press. New York, 1965. p. 29.

<sup>3</sup> H. von Riekhoff, *German-Polish Relations 1918-1933*. - The Johns Hopkins Press, Baltimore and London, 1971. p. 53

<sup>4</sup> K. Rosenbaum, op. cit. p. 27-28, 101.

<sup>5</sup> *ibid.* p. 52.

<sup>6</sup> H. von Riekhoff, op. cit. p. 31

<sup>7</sup> K. Rosenbaum, op. cit. p. 31.

Europe could be rather fruitfully concerted with the Bolshevik claims to regain the territories at the Baltic sea that had been governed by the Tsarist Russia, as well as those in Western Ukraine, Western Belarus and Bessarabia. In this respect British historian A.J.P. Taylor was right asserting that foreign policy exercised by the Bolsheviks during the inter-war period did not differ a lot from imperialistic aspirations of the Tsarist Russia<sup>8</sup>. Moscow's approach to Poland and the rhetoric that was used by the Soviet diplomats regarding the country were similar to those employed by the colleagues Germans. At the beginning of June, soon after concluding the Treaty of Rapallo, member of the Commissariat of the Russian People's Commissars of Foreign Affairs (hereinafter referred to as PCFA) Stanislav Ganecky passed the following comments on Poland: "the situation with the Polish is still unclear. These servile of the French do not know the position to stand for. It seemed that Warsaw wants to get further from Paris and get closer to us, but does not dare to do that openly. They are threatened with the Treaty of Rapallo."<sup>9</sup>

Some time later, another Soviet diplomat Ivan Lorenc defined the Russian policy with respect to Poland in the following way: "Poland would not dare to worsen the relations with us when energetic actions have been turned against it. The issue of our conflict with Poland is crucial for our Baltic policy, where we have a rising issue of return of our influence in these countries. To concede at least in something to so-called Poland means the blow to the extension of our influence in the Baltic countries. Poland will have to surrender in the presence of the threat of our power. It will be forced to do so by internal and international situation."<sup>10</sup> Apart from other issues and with these considerations the Russian diplomat had in mind tense relations between Poland and Lithuania and unsuccessful efforts of the former to establish the Baltic Entente, which could have become a serious barrier to the aggressive intentions of Moscow and Berlin in the future.

However, we have to recognise with regret that the Baltic states and Poland themselves assisted Russia's and Germany's revisionist policies and projected division of the spheres of influence in a peculiar way. A particularly grateful factor for the said policy was the territorial conflict between Lithuania and Poland and uncoordinated foreign policies of the Baltic states. In autumn 1920, so-called mutinying forces occupied Vilnius<sup>11</sup>, and Poland shamefully lost not only small bits of the international authority<sup>12</sup> of its own and the whole region, but also the functions and possibility of being a potential stabiliser in Easter Europe. The fierce hostility between the Lithuanians and Poles fatally threw the former into the pitiful claws of Russia, whereas the latter got into the trap of aggressive policies of the same state making their own steps and by their free will. Manipulating the problem of Vilnius in a diligent and inventive manner, Moscow instigated the Lithuanians against the Poles: on the one hand, they promised to recognise Vilnius as Polish,

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<sup>8</sup> A.J.P. Taylor, op. cit. p. 72.

<sup>9</sup> Letter of Stanislav Ganecky, member of the PCFA to the Russian representative in Lithuania Y. Davtian, 1 June 1922.// Foreign Policy Archive of the Russian Federation (hereinafter referred to as FPARF). F.0151. Ap.7. Apl.6, B.2, L.216.

<sup>10</sup> I. Lorenc's 23 September 1923 report to member of the PCFA Viktor Kopp // Ibid. Ap.9 Apl.9 B.2 L369.

<sup>11</sup> P. Lossowski, *Konflikt polsko-litewski 1918-1920*. - Warszawa, 1996. s.175-185.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid. s.194-195.

whereas on the other hand, they issued empty and non-obliging declarations to give the impression that they supported Lithuania's aspirations for its historical capital.

The correspondence of the Russian diplomats in Kaunas, Moscow and Vilnius reveals characteristics of such policies. From time to time, the reports noted that the task of the Russian diplomats was not to return Vilnius to Lithuania, but make efforts that the issue of Vilnius remained unsolved since it paved the way for expanding Russia's political influence in the region and complicated the stability of Eastern borders of Poland. At the beginning of 1922, when Russian envoy to Lithuania Yakov Davtian proposed to raise the issue on Eastern border of Poland on the international level and in this way to support the aspirations of Lithuania regarding Vilnius, the PCFA Commissariat retorted to their incomprehensible employee that such a step would hardly coincide with the Russian interest in Lithuania<sup>13</sup>. On another occasion I. Lorenc noted that "Vilnius issue" was the key to Russia's relations with Lithuania<sup>14</sup>. Therefore, the main task of the Soviets in Lithuania was to fight with the Polish influence and maintain anti-Polish opposition, "to persecute Poles and nationalists" so that they would not agree with Poland or jointly "use Lithuania against Poland"<sup>15</sup>. According to the diplomat, this Russian policy was efficiently supported with "our non-obliging" and "benevolent" statements to Lithuania on the issue of Vilnius.<sup>16</sup>

It should be recognised that in the twenties I. Lorenc was probably the most sincere of all the Soviet diplomats who cared that the issue of Vilnius would end in stalemate. In October 1924, when Lithuanian Foreign Minister Valdemaras Èerneckis proposed to hold an international conference on the solution to the issue of Vilnius, I. Lorenc wrote to the PCFA college: "(...) the Lithuanian note practically have no chances of winning (...) taking into consideration our hints in the press that the solution of Vilnius issue would not restore the balance in Eastern Europe, and that we should consider this deeper and more extensively, without forgetting other problems in a row, first of all those that are related to the recognition of Eastern borders of Poland"<sup>17</sup>. At the same time the diplomat could not help mocking such Russian assistance to Lithuania. "The Lithuanians would 'win' a lot out of such 'assistance' of ours"<sup>18</sup> said I. Lorenc enjoying his wisdom.

In 1924-1925, after numerous consultations with German diplomats, I. Lorenc explained Moscow for several times that joint aspirations of Russia and Germany in the Baltic area "was

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<sup>13</sup> S. Ganecky's letter No 103 of 2 March 1922 to Russian envoy in Kaunas Y. Davtian //FPARF. F.0151. Ap.7. Apl.6. B.2. L.492-493.

<sup>14</sup> I. Lorenc's report of 13 October 1923 to PCFA college member V. Kopp // Ibid. Ap.9 Apl.9 B.2 L.266.; I. Lorenc's report of 4 February 1924 to V. Kopp // Ibid. F.04. Ap.27. Apl.183. B.64 L.24.

<sup>15</sup> I. Lorenc's report of 15 September 1923 to PCFA college member V. Kopp // Ibid. F.0151. Ap.9. Apl.9. B.2 L.396.

<sup>16</sup> I. Lorenc's report No 103 of 21 November 1924 to PCFA college member V. Kopp //Ibid. F.04. Ap.27. Apl.183. B.67. L.148.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid.

the anti-Polish line” and prevention of firm establishment of England and France over there.<sup>19</sup> In the beginning of summer 1925 and “having studied the measures” that would allow Russia to split the countries of the Baltic region, he arrived at a conclusion that “the issue of Vilnius is the most serious obstacle for the conclusion of the Baltic Entente (...) The issue of Vilnius breaks down the Baltic block.”<sup>20</sup> According to the diplomat, the Lithuanian-Polish relations are “very delicate, painful and threaten with large-scale political consequences” for the region. Therefore, “as it has already been done earlier, it is important to us to prevent the enhancement of the Polish position in Lithuania rather than support Lithuania.”<sup>21</sup>

Making efforts to split the Baltic states from Poland, the Soviets acted in a similar way in other Baltic states: Latvia and Estonia, and partly in Finland. In the mid of the twenties when the negotiations were conducted between the USSR and its Western neighbours on concluding bilateral non-aggression treaties, the PCFA stated that “it is expedient to employ all the means in the negotiations with the Baltic states to disrupt their relations with Poland (...)”<sup>22</sup> It was also jointly decided to demand that the Baltic states should disrupt all their political conferences with Poland<sup>23</sup>. However, the characteristic feature was that from the very the middle of 1925 straight to the conclusion of the 1934 Baltic Accord, political conferences of the Baltic states did not actually take place. In the efforts to enhance Baltic distrust in Poland, the Soviets would organise different propaganda actions. For example, an article was inspired in the Italian monthly “Politika” of 1925 where alleged proposals of Poland to Russia to divided the Baltic states into the spheres of influence among themselves were analysed.<sup>24</sup> The Russian diplomats also alluded to in Kaunas, Riga and Tallinn on the alleged Poland’s proposals to Moscow to divide the Baltic states between themselves.<sup>25</sup>

Exerting its influence in the region, the USSR made efforts not only to isolate the Baltic states from Poland, but was also concerned that they would not come to an agreement among themselves. At some time or another when Latvia and Estonia refused to support Lithuania’s policy regarding Vilnius, the Soviet diplomats hurried to use this event for anti-Latvian and anti-Estonian propaganda in Lithuania.<sup>26</sup> From time to time the Soviets themselves consciously stirred up such discords. The scheme for Moscow speculations was rather simple: the Russian envoys in Riga, Tallinn and Kaunas would take slightly different positions in the discussions of the same problems and ask their interlocutors to keep the details of the conversation secret.

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<sup>19</sup> I. Lorenc’s report No 139 of 7 March 1925 to PCFA college member V. Kopp //Ibid.Apl.184. B.81. L.92.

<sup>20</sup> I. Lorenc’s report No 64 of 8 August 1924 to PCFA college member V. Kopp //Ibid.Apl.183. B.65. L.94.

<sup>21</sup> I. Lorenc’s report No 185 of 16 June 1925 to PCFA college member Semion Aralov //Ibid. Apl.184. B.80. L.192.

<sup>22</sup> Extract from the minutes of sitting 2 June 1926 No 62 of the PCFA college // Ibid. F.04 Ap.27 Apl.187 B.124 L.17.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid.

<sup>24</sup> I. Lorenc’s report No 164 of 2 May 1925 to PCFA college member S. Aralov //Ibid.Apl.184. B.80. L.86.

<sup>25</sup> A. Kasparavičius, *Didysis X Lietuvos ūpsienio politikoje. 1926 metų. Lietuvos ir Sovietų Sąjungos nepuolimo sutarties sudarymo analizė.* - Vilnius, 1996. p. 87.

<sup>26</sup> PCFA college member S. Aralov’s letter of 15 June 1925 to I. Lorenc in Kaunas //FPARF F.04 Ap.27 .Apl.185. B.86. L.32.

Later, information “leak” was organised (often through a neutral diplomat of the third country who suspected nothing) and consequently it would turn out that [...] the Latvians and the Estonians “plot intrigues” against Lithuania (hush!). After one similar operation during the first days of January 1924 I. Lorenc reported to PCFA college with satisfaction: “(...) Galvanauskas was rather insulted on Meierovics and Akel for total ignorance of Lithuania and failure to report on all the last developments behind the scenes on the negotiations. I pushed several buttons through the third parties to worsen their relations even more.”<sup>27</sup>

On the other hand, there was disharmony enough among the Baltic states thanks to the Russian diplomats. While communicating with the envoys of foreign states, including those of the Soviet Union, the Latvian diplomats prompted for several times that although the Lithuanian-Polish conflict was very harmful for Latvia from political point of view and objectively, Latvia would only win from this economically, since large quantities of foreign goods were transported as transit through Daugpilis, Liepaja, and Riga on the account of Lithuania, therefore, the Latvian Government collected more taxes.<sup>x28</sup> Pretending to have nothing malignant in mind and only considering such economic victories of Latvia, Russia made further efforts to increase the flow of goods via this country, thereby, decreasing that transited through Lithuania.<sup>30</sup>

The sceptical viewpoint of a part of the Lithuanian politicians regarding the prospects of “non-historical sovereignty” of their Northern neighbours - Latvia and Estonia - did not escape the eye of the USSR diplomats. There is no secret that during the inter-war period some Lithuanian politicians had doubts whether the states of Latvia and Estonia (which had not had their statehood earlier) could consolidate their position on the political map of Europe. Such scepticism negatively influenced the consolidation of the Baltic states themselves and gave incentives to Lithuania to continue escaping “too close ties” with Northern neighbours.<sup>x</sup> The

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<sup>27</sup> I. Lorenc’s report No 24 of 1 January 1924 to PCFA college member S. Aralov //Ibid.Apl.183. B.64. L.2.

<sup>x</sup> However, these delicate and complex inter-relations of the Baltic states were particularly playfully reflected by French diplomat in Kaunas Gabriel Padovani’s report to Prime Minister: sensitive shamefulness of the Baltic states hinders them to lift a veil from the Lithuanian-Polish relations thereby showing that lifting the veil could uncover something indecent.<sup>29</sup>

<sup>28</sup> The copy of the report by French diplomat in Lithuania G. Padovani to Prime Minister E. Herriot in Paris, April 1925 (ca 1924-1925, the USSR diplomats in Lithuania in some ways received certain copies of the reports by G. Padovani to Paris. The reports of the French diplomat were likely to have been copied. They were translated into the Russian language afterwards and sent to the PCFA college. In this way more than a dozen of copies of G. Padovani’s reports to Paris appeared in Moscow. Indeed, this was not the only sin of the Soviet diplomacy. Round 1922-1923, the USSR diplomats in Lithuania had their agent infiltrated into the office of the Lithuanian Government. In the middle of the twenties, the Russian agents in Moscow for several times managed to make photographs of the diplomatic correspondence of Lithuanian envoy Jurgis Baltrušaitis.)/ FPARF. F.04. Ap.27. Apl.184. B.80 L.66-67.

<sup>29</sup> The copy of the report by G. Padovani to Prime Minister Ed. Herriot in Paris, April 1925 // Ibid. L.58.

<sup>30</sup> I. Lorenc’s report No 43 of 14 May 1924 to PCFA college member A. Aralov //Ibid. Apl.183. B.66. L.1. I. Lorenc’s report No 44 of 17 May 1924 to PCFA college member A. Aralov //Ibid. L.11.; I. Lorenc’s No 100 of 12 November 1924 to PCFA college member V. Kopp //Ibid.B.67 L.126.

<sup>x</sup> Prof. Augustinas Voldemaras, the then Minister of Foreign Affairs, was likely to be the first to doubt the prospects of sovereignty of Latvia and Estonia in public during Paris Peace Conference. We suppose that such attitude was partly stimulated by his profession of a historian. Moreover, this viewpoint of Voldemaras

reports of the Soviet envoy in Kaunas to the PCFA college on the Lithuanian reaction to the attempts of the Bolshevik pouch in Tallinn in December 1924 seem to be characteristic within this context. The diplomat wrote: “Lithuania was always sure that we would never put up with the loss of Tallinn and Liepaja ports, therefore, the issue of independence of Estonia and Latvia remains problematic. Moreover, we would seem to be more inclined to the independence of Lithuania, since we apparently should have no stimulus against it.” These thoughts made a number of Lithuanian politicians, first of all, Smetona and Voldemaras, think that Lithuania should not be allied with Latvia and Estonia, since it is not worth for it to pull chestnuts out of fire. The events in Tallinn only reinforced such a point of view (...) <sup>31</sup> Simultaneously, the envoy indicated that he heard from several different serious sources about serious doubts of the ruling Christian Democratic Party concerning the Entente of the three Baltic states. Its leaders, including Antanas Dmulkd̄tys and Minister of Communications Balys Slipys, questioned whether “it is worthwhile to engage with Latvia and Estonia, for it is an issue of what they could give to us?” <sup>32</sup>

Generalising the Russian activity in the Baltic states in the middle of the twenties, its diplomats stated that “our diplomatic attacks in the Baltic states, including fast manoeuvres and retaining initiative in our hands, has already predetermined full clarification of the situation, which significantly eases our further steps.” <sup>33</sup>

Fostering its goals, Russia also carefully observed common political trends in Europe and the actions of the power states as well as their views regarding the Baltic states and Poland. Characteristic attention was already paid to in the Genoa Conference. The Russian delegation assessed the situation in Genoa in the following way: “the role of the small states, including Lithuania, is equalled to that of the simplest supers who by their presence adorned only one plenary sitting, and later, just the lunch table during the banquette. (...) Lithuania protested against Poland, but nobody is interested in it. There is consistent and simple trade going on between Lloyd George and Barthou<sup>x</sup> on the one hand, and Lloyd George and Churchill on the other. The outcome is hardly predictable, as it seems that they would fail to find a common talk.” <sup>34</sup> Another piece of Russian information from Genoa was also similar: “The French maintain warlike and are going to disrupt the negotiations when the first opportunity is offered. Considering his position in England, Lloyd George had to be on friendly terms with the French.

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could have been predetermined by his rather wide circle of acquaintances of 1917-1918 with the politicians of Russian bourgeois and Menshevik wing who did not imagine Russia without non-freezing ports in the Baltic sea.

<sup>31</sup> I. Lorenc’s report No 137 of 27 February 1925 to PCFA college member V. Kopp //Ibid. F.04. Ap.27. Apl.184. B.81. L.83-84.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid. L.84.

<sup>33</sup> I. Lorenc’s report No 24 of 1 January 1924 to PCFA college member V. Kopp //Ibid. Apl.183. B.64. L.2.

<sup>x</sup> David Lloyd George, Prime Minister of Great Britain. Louis Barthou, Prime Minister of France.

<sup>34</sup> The letter of 28 April 1922 of the Russian delegation in the Genoa Conference to Russian envoy in Kaunas, Lithuania, Y. Davtian // Ibid. F.0151. Ap.7 Apl.6 B.2. L.310.

On 15 April the negotiations among Churchill, Litvinov, Lloyd George and Chancellor<sup>xx</sup> and Barthou were conducted, however, the deadlock was not broken”.<sup>35</sup>

More interesting and intriguing news reached Moscow from the delegation in Genoa with the conference drawing to an end. One letter specified that “(...) Lloyd George proposes to renew the border issue. England proposes and supports the Curzon Line. It is hard to guess what Lloyd George tries to achieve. If his proposal is sincere, it is likely to threaten France.”<sup>36</sup> An interesting fact is that during the Genoa Conference, Lloyd George also alluded to the Lithuanian delegation that Eastern border of Poland has not been finally defined yet.<sup>37</sup>

Naturally, such a statement of the British Prime Minister was likely to give hopes to Lithuania, however, it could be questioned what the said statements by Lloyd George could have meant. The question becomes even more delicate having the knowledge that on the eve of the Genoa Conference, Latvia, Estonia, Poland and Soviet Russia signed a joint protocol on the principles established by the mutual peace accords in Riga.<sup>38</sup> Strangely enough that the British Prime Minister heard nothing about the Riga protocol. Was Lloyd George likely to make efforts to draw Russia closer to the Entente and Western Europe? Lloyd George’s comfort to the Lithuanians makes the situation vaguer. In our understanding, its essence totally differed from the proposal to Russia and was far from that imagined by the then Lithuanian politicians and diplomats. The documents did not fully reveal the implications of Lloyd George either. The words by the Prime Minister of Great Britain that the Eastern border of Poland had not been finalised were not necessarily to mean that it would be changed (the Lithuanians were inclined to think so), but could also mean that the final solution to this problem rested on the Entente Conference, and the Conference of the Ambassadors to be more precise, rather than on the Russian-Polish Peace Treaty. Thus, in its efforts to fulfil its aspirations, Lithuania should not concentrate on the crux of the Polish-Russian relations by relying on Russia to a large extent, but rather looked for the ways of solution in the West.

Soon after the said statements by Lloyd George, the PCFA came to the conclusion that if Russia won nothing in Genoa, “Genoa would still help us to destroy the capitalist camp, since they make efforts to agree with us individually.”<sup>39</sup> This showed that Moscow misinterpreted the position of the English Prime Minister. After the Genoa Conference and conclusion of the Rapallo Treaty, the Soviet diplomacy in the Baltic states and Poland focused on the fact that the

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<sup>xx</sup> German Chancellor Dr. Joseph Wirth who was in office from May 1921 to November 1922.

<sup>35</sup> PCFA college member S. Ganecky’s letter of 23 April 1922 to Y. Davtian in Kaunas // Ibid. L.297.

<sup>36</sup> PCFA college member S. Ganecky’s letter of 4 May 1922 to Y. Davtian in Kaunas // Ibid. L.297.

<sup>37</sup> Y. Davtian’s report No 135 of 9 May 1922 to PCFA college member S. Ganecky on the conversation with Lithuanian Foreign Minister Vladas Jurgutis // Ibid. L.304.

<sup>38</sup> È. Laurinavièius, *Politika ir diplomatija*. - Vilnius, 1997. p. 150.

<sup>39</sup> PCFA college member S. Ganecky’s letter of 12 April 1922 to Y. Davtian in Kaunas // FPARF. F.0151. Ap.7. Apl.6. B.2. L.359.

fear of Russian notably increased in these countries, for they feared that Russia could agree with power states behind their backs and on their account.<sup>40</sup>

Unfortunately, the good intentions of Lloyd George in Genoa were likely to have pushed Russia to the opposite direction. In the middle of the summer 1922, Soviet envoy in Lithuania J. Davtian made a concrete proposal to the PCFA college: to call the conference of Russian envoys and discuss the issue whether it was useful for Russia to keep to the peace treaties with Poland and the Baltic states.<sup>41</sup> According to J. Davtian it was high time to the Western borders of Russia reviewed and “liquidate all our mutual dreams” with Western neighbours.<sup>42</sup> The College did not support such a proposal because it thought that it was too early. Soviet Deputy Foreign People’s Commissar Maksim Litvinov modified the idea by proposing to pay more attention to Poland and domesticate it and only then think about the solution to the Baltic issue.<sup>43</sup>

Moscow realised that, although recently re-established, yet ambitiously and energetically claiming to get the status of the “power state” in Europe, Poland was the splinter in its annexationist plans in the Baltic states. The Polish federalist ideas (of Jozef Pilsudski and his political allies) frightened Moscow not for they could have directly threatened the existence of the Russian state, but for they could have efficiently halted Russia from Western Europe and prevented Russian (Soviet) traditional penetration into Eastern border of the Baltic states.<sup>44</sup>

Namely due to this fact Moscow rather hopefully viewed the decision of the Conference of Ambassadors of 15 March 1923 on Eastern borders of Poland. Having studied the formula of the Conference decision concerning Eastern border of Poland thanks to the Lithuanian diplomats, the Soviets concluded that these borders are recognised only on the basis of the benevolent agreement between Poland and Russia, which meant that the Entente did not commit itself to defend those borders and leave their stability to the “responsibility of Poland.”<sup>45</sup>

Considering the fact that the Soviet themselves considered the border established by Riga Peace Treaty of 19 March 1921 incorrect and forced upon them as a result of unfavourable balance of powers, there were no doubts what such a conclusion of the Russian diplomats meant.

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<sup>40</sup> Y. Davtian’s report No 102 of 26 April 1922 to PCFA college member S. Ganecky // Ibid. L.349.; PCFA college member S. Ganecky’s letter of 4 May 1922 to Y. Davtian in Kaunas // Ibid. L. 297.; Y. Davtian’s report No 163 of 28 May 1922 to PCFA college member S. Ganecky // Ibid. L. 230.; PCFA college member S. Ganecky’s letter of 1 January 1922 to Y. Davtian in Kaunas // Ibid. L.216-217.

<sup>41</sup> Y. Davtian’s report No 220/4 of 11 July 1922 to PCFA college member S. Ganecky // Ibid. 141.

<sup>42</sup> Ibid.

<sup>43</sup> Ibid.

<sup>44</sup> I. Lorenc’s report of 23 September 1923 to PCFA college member V. Kopp // Ibid. F.0151. Ap.9 Apl.9 B.2. L.369.; I. Lorenc’s report No 84 of 24 September 1924 to PCFA college member V. Kopp // Ibid. F.04. Ap.27 Apl.183. B.67. L.59-62.

\* By the way, the then Lithuanian Minister of National Defence Balys Slijys shared the same opinion.

<sup>45</sup> Diplomatic diary No 7 of USSR diplomat in Lithuania Inokentij Kozevnikov of 23 March 1923// Ibid. F.0151. Ap.9 Apl.9a. B.6. L.73.; I. Lorenc’s report No 74 of 1 September 1924 to PCFA college member V. Kopp // Ibid. F.04. Ap.27 Apl.183 B.67. L.10-11.

By projecting the revision of its Western borders, the Soviet Union studies the policies of other neighbouring states too. The Russian diplomats in Kaunas maintained very good relations with Consul Jan Galia from Czechoslovakia. The Soviet diplomatic reports mention it for several times that the latter regarded Russia with favour and often provided with “valuable information.”<sup>46</sup> The Czechoslovakian consul tried to persuade his colleagues from Moscow on several occasions that his country would never fight against Russia (neither jointly with French, nor with the Polish), since the Czechs are always Russianphiles.<sup>47x</sup> However, according to J. Galia, if Russia was aware of its history, it could never trust Poland. Moreover, the consul recognised that political drawing nearer of Lithuania and Poland - a union or confederation - would not be acceptable for his country, since Czechoslovakia in that case would feel a greater threat and pressure from the side of Poland.<sup>48</sup> In addition, Czechoslovakia would lose its market in Lithuania.<sup>49</sup> One report by I. Lorenc informs on the following: “Galia promotes anti-Polish policy in Kaunas. That is important for the Czechs not only from political, but also from economic point of view. They do not wish at all to have the Lithuanian market turned into that Polish after the Lithuanian-Polish agreement. They sell to Lithuania agricultural machinery, manufacturing, glass, foot-ware, etc.”<sup>50</sup> Another reports adds that “During the last days Halija put the emphasis on the anti-Polishness, was interested in Lithuanian-Polish relations and worked against the agreement. He noted for several times that Prague would never tie itself with Warsaw on Eastern borders of the latter. Both in the South and in the North, Prague considers the Polish borders questionable.”<sup>51</sup> At the same time, with a notable confidence (what should not be denied as too exaggerated) and probably wishing to emphasise his diplomatic talent or merits, the Russian envoy stated that “Galia views the Baltic states sceptically.”<sup>52</sup>

The Scandinavian stance did not favour the Baltic states either. For a long time in between the wars, Sweden, Norway and Denmark doubted the vitality of the Baltic states and considered them to be the zone of Russia’s and Germany’s political influences well as the venue for their preparatory jump of the commercial invasion into Russia.<sup>53</sup> It was fairly likely that such an approach of the Scandinavians was not a big secret to the Soviet diplomats. Moreover, forestalling the events, the realisation of the Molotov-Ribbentrop secret protocols in the summer of 1940 and the sad fact - the occupation of the Baltic states - in view of Danish diplomat in Lithuania C.G. Worsaae in his report to Copenhagen, was interpreted as a natural

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<sup>46</sup> I. Lorenc’s report No 137 of 27 February 1925 to PCFA college member V. Kopp // Ibid. Apl.184. B.81. L.84.

<sup>x</sup> Scepticism by J. Pilsudski regarding the Czechoslovakian foreign policy and reproaches due to its pro-Russian orientation should be recalled in this case.

<sup>47x</sup> Diplomatic diary No 22 of 22 June 1923 by USSR diplomat in Lithuania I. Kozevnikov // Ibid. F.0151. Ap.9. Apl.9a. B.6. L.11.

<sup>48</sup> Ibid.

<sup>49</sup> I. Lorenc’s report No 137 of 27 February 1925 to PCFA college member V. Kopp // Ibid. Apl.184. B.81. L.84.

<sup>50</sup> Ibid.

<sup>51</sup> I. Lorenc’s report No 140 of 10 March 1925 to PCFA college member V. Kopp // Ibid. 99.

<sup>52</sup> Ibid.

<sup>53</sup> V. Mažeika, *Danijos santykiai su Lietuva 1918-1940 m.: požiūriai, interesai, politika/* script of doctor’s thesis. - Vilnius, 1999.// The Manuscript Department of the Institute of the Lithuanian History. p. 75-134.

development.<sup>54</sup> Recalling that the Germans felt at home in Denmark since April 1940, the last comment of the Danish diplomat was fairly understandable as the expression of subjective suffering or reproach, since his country had already been occupied by enemies.

Although the policy of the United States of America in Europe and the Baltic states in particular, was not characterised with active steps in the twenties, Moscow carefully observed the steps taken by this country with respect to the Baltic states. Russia interpreted international *de jure* recognition of the Lithuanian, Latvian and Estonian Governments granted by the USA on 28 July 1922 in its own usual manner. Attention was drawn to the fact that the recognition was provisional - until there was "disorder" in Russia, therefore, it basically did not contradict to the principle of united and unified Russia (to be understood as that within the territory of the Tsarist Empire).<sup>55</sup> According to the then Soviet envoy in Lithuania J. Davtian, the USA to a large extent "did not play a dirty trick" to Russia by recognising the governments of the Baltic states. In one of his reports to the PCFA college, the envoy noted: "having studied the English text carefully I came to the conclusion that strictly speaking, America has not plotted anything special, unless we consider the expression "disturbed". On the contrary, it seems to me that by recognising the Baltic states, America makes an exception (...) We, therefore, recognise you until the Bolsheviks are in power in Russia. That is a characteristic feature."<sup>56</sup> The PCFA college did not recommend its representatives to greet the Governments of the Baltic states on their recognition by the USA, but only to note that the "allies only follow the tracks that we paved long ago."<sup>57</sup>

On the other hand, it should be noted that international recognition of the Governments of the Baltic states *de jure* was granted by Washington after the Genoa Conference and on the basis of the Rapallo Treaty. Historian J. Skirius thinks that such a step by the US administration was preconditioned by the wish of the latter to trade with Russia, and the Baltic states were treated as the best starting point for such a trade.<sup>58</sup> However, we should not deny the fact that the recognition was stimulated by the dangerous prelude of the Russian-German relations after the Rapallo Treaty, which rather clearly manifested the goals of Russian Bolsheviks. In other words, this recognition was aimed at setting Russia towards democracy, reminding unlawful nature of the Bolshevik Government and putting the emphasis on non-compliance of revisionist aspirations with the principles of international law.

## 2. Bells of Locarno

Held in October 1925, the Locarno Conference was another international event that basically stripped the problem of the international security guarantees for Poland and the Baltic states and reanimated the discussions on the divisions of the sphere of influences in this region. Having

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<sup>54</sup> Ibid. p.218-224.

<sup>55</sup> Y. Davtian's report No 243 of 4 August 1922 to PCFA college member S. Ganecky // FPARF. F.0151. Ap.7. Apl.6. B.2. L.74.

<sup>56</sup> Ibid.

<sup>57</sup> PCFA college member S. Ganecky's letter of 31 July 1922 to Y. Davtian in Kaunas // Ibid. L.91.

<sup>58</sup> J. Skirius, *Lietuvos uþatlantiþes diplomatija 1918-1929 metais*. Vilnius, 1995. p.65.

invited Belgium, Czechoslovakia and Poland, the countries of the Entente once again made efforts to solve overripe security problems of Western Europe and too long lasting issue of political reintegration of Germany into Europe. The organisers of the conference did not repeat the mistake made earlier: the Soviet Union was not invited to Locarno. There were two reasons behind: firstly, there was fear that the Repallo disgrace as it was during the Genoa Conference would repeat, and secondly, it was likely that the main goal of the Locarno conference was to break through a fairly thick and dangerous axis of Russian and German friendship in the future. Moreover, it should also be noted that the Baltic states were not invited to the conference either. The fact that Latvia and Estonia were not invited could be explained by the absence of a common border with Germany, however, the failure to invite Lithuania which formally shared the same concerns on the stability of the border with Germany as Poland did, meant that the latter was treated in the West as the unquestionable part of politically safe -corridor of the Soviet Union and Germany in diplomatic terms.

Nevertheless, the Locarno Conference resulted more successfully than that in Genoa. It was crowned with the Rhine guarantee pact which strengthened the inviolability of Western borders of Germany with France and Belgium. Great Britain and Italy obliged themselves to guard the effectiveness of this treaty.<sup>59</sup> In exchange to the refusal of revisionist ideas, Germany was promised a permanent seat in the Council of the League of Nations. A year later this promise was implemented and as the then press wrote “Germany sat in between England and France at the honourable table of the League of Nations”. Despite remaining demilitarised zone of Rhine and other military restrains of Germany, the Weimar Republic restored its status of a power state of Europe in the mid of the twenties. A.J.P. Taylor was probably right asserting that the Locarno Conference finally concluded World War I in Europe, and the renunciation of the agreements became the prelude of World War II eleven years later.<sup>60</sup>

In 1927, the intellectual elite of Europe generously honoured Foreign Minister of Germany Gustav Stresemann for the Locarno achievements by awarding him with Nobel Peace Prize in Oslo. The secret and probably real inspirer of the Locarno spirit Lord Edgar D’Abernon, Ambassador of Great Britain in Germany, almost at the same time deserved another title in the European diplomatic spheres. He was nicknamed “German Lord protectorate”.<sup>61</sup> That was also a usual title given to E. D’Abernon by the then Polish diplomatic service.

It is not difficult to find the explanation of such behaviour of the Polish diplomats. Despite sufficient French support, Poland as well as Czechoslovakia failed to receive the guarantees regarding inviolability of its borders with Germany in Locarno Conference. Warsaw and Prague had to remain satisfied only with arbitral treaties with Germany. The consequences brought about by within the context of the Rhine guarantee pact to the frightened rather than losing party

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<sup>59</sup> H. von Riekhoff, op. cit. p.110.

<sup>60</sup> A.J.P. Taylor, *The Origins of the Second World War*. - London, 1964. p.82.

<sup>61</sup> M. Baumgart, *Niemcy w polityce Brytyjskiej (1923-1926)*. In: *Niemcy w polityce międzynarodowej 1919-1939*. T.I. Era Stresemanna. - Poznan, 1990. s.212.

could be left for the main hero of Locarno, Nobel prize winner G. Stresemann who was also nicknamed “decent German” to be generalised.

The German Foreign Minister was comparatively open and frank in stating his position regarding the eventual consequences of Rhine guarantee pact already by the eve of concluding the pact. He indicated that after recognising *status quo* in the West, the issue of the provisional status of Eastern borders of Germany became even more evident. Since that moment Poland was to confront Germany and Russia face to face, and the situation in Eastern Europe would become relatively calm. Moreover, G. Stresemann noted that “by that moment Russia would not be *de facto* obliged regarding the border with Poland (...). With Russia’s willingness to act and constantly rule over“ the territories behind its Western borders or otherwise “would turn on the issue of the Baltic states and Poland and open a new chapter in the European history.”<sup>62</sup> Indeed, the Minister also indicated that we should not think that the said changes would be carried out with the help of war or arms. The realisation of those issues “would be the subject matter of a big international conference where the new right of self-determination of nations would be generated.”<sup>63</sup> It should be noted that G. Stresemann’s hopes partly came true if we recalled the 1938 Munich Conference and employed irony. At the beginning of 1926 after the Locarno Conference and Rhine guarantee pact had been concluded, G. Stresemann noted in his letter to U. Brockdroff-Rantzau in Moscow that “politically speaking, the Locarno pact provides no security or consolidation guarantees to Poland, rather on the contrary”.<sup>64</sup> Moreover, it should not be forgotten that: the Locarno Conference enabled Foreign Minister of Great Britain August Chamberlain to get out from G. Stresemann that the revision of Eastern borders of Germany in case this issue urged for solution before the event, would not be carried out by military means: war and armed blackmail, in any case.<sup>65</sup> With this respect, the thoughts and forecast of the German foreign minister could be interpreted without any irony as sufficiently loud call on danger regarding Poland and the Baltic states.

Yet, despite all the efforts of Great Britain, the Russian-German political axis remained only cleaved, but unbroken. Locarno treaties have not provided positive solutions. The Rapallo prelude successfully extended throughout the second half of the twenties: in October 1925, the Weimar Republic and the USSR concluded a treaty which approved the agreements in Rapallo, and the countries entered into the non-aggression and pact on neutrality in April 1926.<sup>66</sup> A. Chamberlain was very dissatisfied with the latter, although, having a fear that the situation might even get worse, he did not blame Berlin officially.<sup>67</sup> Berlin did not support London when the diplomatic relations with Moscow of the latter became so tense that they were disrupted in

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<sup>62</sup> H. von Riekhoff, op. cit. p.88.

<sup>63</sup> Ibid.

<sup>64</sup> J. Korbelt, *Poland between East and West. Soviet and German Diplomacy towards Poland 1919-1933.* - New Jersey. 1963. p.194.

<sup>65</sup> A. Kasparavičius, op. cit. p.315.

<sup>66</sup> The treaty between Germany and USSR of 12 October 1925 // *Dokumenty vneshney politiki SSSR.* Moskva, 1963. T.8 S.583.; *Zd. Wroniak, Polska - Francja 1926-1932.* - Poznan, 1971. S.78.

<sup>67</sup> M. Baumgart, op. cit. s.217-218.

spring in 1927. The USSR-German co-operation during 1926-1928, including that secret military, was almost the most intensive throughout the inter-war period.<sup>68</sup> Therefore it is hard to oppose the historians who think that close relations with Russia were successfully used by G. Stresemann as blackmail against Western states aimed at gaining concessions and more comfortable strategic position for the revanche of the Weimar Republic.<sup>69</sup>

As if replying to the said considerations by G. Stresemann, USSR envoy in Lithuania Sergey Alexandrovski at least twice during autumn 1925 raised the question in front of the PCFA whether it would be useful for Russia to renounce the Riga Peace Treaty with Poland.<sup>70</sup> However, G. Chicherin was not inclined to rush. He considered not only the prospect of sharing the spheres of influence with Germany, but also the possibilities of sharing the zones of influence with Poland. Appealing to his secret talks with French politician and leader of radical socialists Anatoli Monzie who negatively viewed the sovereignty of Lithuania, he proposed that Russia would abstain from disagreement, if Poland annexed Lithuania, and G. Chicherin raised such an alternative: Russia submits Lithuania to Poland, and Poland and France gives up Galicia and makes no obstacles to annex Bessarabia.<sup>71</sup>

It is hard to judge to which extent such visions of G. Chicherin corresponded political reality, however, no matter how strange that would seem, already in February 1925, French diplomat in Lithuania G. Padovani's report to Paris specified that: "there is a fear in Lithuania that Poland might have entered into the agreement with the Soviets: the latter have their hands freed in Latvia and Estonia, and Poland in Lithuania, respectively."<sup>72</sup> Even if the suspicion by G. Padovani was groundless, we suppose that this fact reveals that stereotypical reproach of the Lithuanians to the French for their allegedly anti-Lithuanian orientation and favouring the Polish were not always grounded.

In the mid of 1926, S. Aleksandrovski "improved" the latter plan in the discussions with G. Chicherin. In his opinion, Russia should receive not only Galicia and Bessarabia, but also Latvia and Estonia in exchange to submission of Lithuania to Poland.<sup>74</sup> However, simultaneously, the envoy recognised that such concessions to Russia by the French and Polish would be almost impossible. Therefore, it was more realistic to think not about the fundamental peace with

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<sup>68</sup> A. Skrzypek, *Niemcy w polityce Związku Radzieckiego w latach dwudziestych XX wieku. In: Niemcy w polityce międzynarodowej ...* s.268-269.; K. Rosenbaum, op. cit. p.220-241.

<sup>69</sup> Ibid.

<sup>70</sup> USSR envoy in Lithuania S. Aleksandrovski's report No 64 of 10 November 1925 to PCFA college member S. Aralov// FPARF F.04. Ap.27. Apl.185. B.85. L.16.; USSR envoy in Lithuania S. Aleksandrovski's report No 68 of 20 November 1925 to PCFA college member S. Aralov//Ibid. 45.

<sup>71</sup> USSR Foreign Affairs People's Commissar G. Chicherin's letter of 2 May 1926 to S. Aleksandrovski in Kaunas// Ibid. F.0151. Ap.13. Apl.25. B.2661. L.38-39.

<sup>72</sup> The copy of the letter by French diplomat in Lithuania G. Padovani to E. Herriot, February 1925//Ibid. F.04. Ap.27. Apl.184. B.81. L.69-70.

<sup>74</sup> USSR envoy in Lithuania S. Aleksandrovski's report No 121 of 13 July 1926 to PCFA college member S. Aralov// Ibid. Apl.186. B.102. L.1-7.; report (continuation of report No 121) by USSR envoy in Lithuania S. Aleksandrovski of 20 July 1925 to PCFA college member S. Aralov// Ibid. L.20-22.

Poland and division of spheres of influence, but for the moment this country grew weak and its opinion should not be taken into consideration.<sup>75</sup> Simultaneously, the diplomat warned the college that Germany was not to be trusted in full, since it “carries out its own foreign policy.” According to S. Aleksandrovski, Berlin could mature the following eventual plan: first of all, Poland would be allowed to occupy Memel (Klaipėda) and Lithuania and the Soviet Union would have access to Latvia and Estonia, in exchange to Danzig and regaining the corridor. According to the envoy, Russia could hardly dismiss such a proposal if it would have come as an issue. Moreover, Germany would afterwards easily rout Poland and regain Memel (Klaipėda) by employing Russia and jointly with England carry out the strike against Russia itself.<sup>76</sup> The diplomat recognised in his report that such thought had been stimulated by long-lasting observance of Germany and conviction that Brest-Litovk ideas were still living among the Germans, and that “Germany of President Hindenburg only slightly differs from that of Kaiser Wilhelm.”

Still, despite this warning of S. Aleksandrovski, the Russian and German diplomats often discussed the issue of the division of spheres of influence in the Baltic states and Poland during the second half of the twenties and the beginning of the thirties. This issue was one of the most popular, therefore, different scenarios were developed. Moreover, the issue was discussed not only by diplomats and politicians, but also by influential journalists. The truth was that such friendly discussions of the Russian and German diplomats often ended on an anxious note. For example, queer silence prevailed at the beginning of 1927 after the conversation with PCFA college member Boris Stomoniakov and Paul Scheffer, Auswärtiges Amt in Moscow. By modelling the structure of the revanche by the Weimar Republic, P. Scheffer declared that “the main issue in Eastern Europe was undoubtedly the issue of the Polish-Germans, Polish-Russians and the Baltic states,” and that the solution could be the following: Poland returns Danzig and the corridor to Germany in exchange to Klaipėda and Lithuania. Such plans, according to P. Scheffer, were “popular with the general public of Germany’s society” although the Government did not rush to support them.<sup>77</sup> At the same time P. Scheffer also stated that the implementation of such a scenario would be favourable for the USSR as well, since “with the acquisition of the corridor, Germany could significantly strengthen its military force and thus suppress Poland from both the sides when a favourable moment comes.”<sup>78</sup> B. Stomoniakov was seriously annoyed by such a prospect. Having rejected the draft, he answered rudely that “why should Germany suppress Poland, if it had already completed the regulations of its Eastern borders.”<sup>79</sup>

The dissatisfaction of the Soviet diplomat with such a scenario was fairly foreseeable: with the implementation of revisionist plans of Berlin, Moscow could have lost its partner in division of

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<sup>75</sup> USSR envoy in Lithuania S. Aleksandrovski’s report No 121 of 13 July 1925 to PCFA college member S. Aralov // Ibid. L.2.

<sup>76</sup> Ibid. L.4.

<sup>77</sup> Verbatim report of short conversation of PCFA college member B. Stomoniakov of 7 January 1927 with P. Scheffer // Ibid. F.0151. Ap.15. Apl.29. B.9. L.89-90.

<sup>78</sup> Ibid. L.90.

<sup>79</sup> Ibid.

Eastern Europe and remained with its territorial claims alone. Moreover, despite rather harmonious co-operation of the countries, the Soviet were constantly followed by the shadow of fear for rather quick consolidation of Germany. Russian envoys regularly reminded PCFA that he could only partly rely on the Germans.<sup>80</sup>

Another aspect should be also noted. The plan for territorial exchange as provided by P. Scheffer was popular not only among the German society. In 1925-1929 it was lively discussed among the diplomats of Europe.<sup>81</sup> There are grounds to suspect that the author of this idea was the aforesaid Lord E.V. D'Abernon.<sup>82</sup> As it might seem, such a plan could look attractive for the sake of tranquillity of great powers of Europe (England and France), since they were willing to eliminate the dangerous tension between Poland and Germany and break the Moscow-Berlin Axis. Without elaborating, we should only note that the British and French diplomacy analysed different versions of this plan: if Poland were not satisfied with Klaipėda port only, it would be given that of Liepaja<sup>83</sup> and the return of Vilnius to Lithuania was thought to give an appetite.<sup>84</sup> Unfortunately the British diplomats in Kaunas and Warsaw had to state regretfully that the Lithuanian and Polish governments categorically rejected such a trade.<sup>85</sup> French diplomat in Kaunas G. Padovani did not succeed more when he tried to threaten (or maybe tempt) with this project Lithuanian Foreign Minister Valdemaras Èarenskis.<sup>86</sup> After his conversation with V. Èarenskis, the diplomat noted in his report to Paris that "the minister has been probably misinformed, however, he categorically refuses to recognise intentions of the Germans to tempt the Polish with the perspective to exchange Memel to Danzig."<sup>87</sup> Unfortunately, but the report does not make it totally clear what the minister failed to believe: whether the plans existed at all or whether they were initiated by the Germans. Due to this reason it becomes unclear what was the intention of G. Padovani: to tempt or to threaten?

According to American historian H. von Riekhoff, the German Government was not interested in the plan at all. Nevertheless, Berlin did not avoid to escalate it through diplomatic channels, since that was the way to "examine" revisionist plans by G. Stresemann of the Weimar Republic

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<sup>80</sup> I. Lorenc's report No 83 of 22 September 1924 to PCFA college member V. Kopp // Ibid. F.04. Ap.27. Apl.183. B.67. L.56.; Extract from letter of 20 January 1931 of provisional charge d'affaires of the USSR in Finland I. Kartashov to PCFA college member V. Kopp // Ibid. F.082. Ap.14. Apl.67. B.39. L.30.

<sup>81</sup> H. von Riekhoff, op. cit. p.250-255.; Z.J. Gasiowski, *Stresemann and Poland after Locarno* // Journal of modern history. - 1973. - Vol.45 no.1.; J. Slavėnas, *Stresemann and Lithuania in the Nineteen Twenties* // Lituanius. - 1969.; A. Kasparaviėius, *The Political Projections of the Great Powers with respect to eastern Europe, 1925-1926* // Lithuanian Historical Studies. - Vilnius, 1996.

<sup>82</sup> A. Kasparaviėius, *The Political Projections of the Great Powers with respect to eastern Europe, 1925-1926* // Lithuanian Historical Studies. - Vilnius, 1996. p.171.

<sup>83</sup> I. Lorenc's report No 150 of 8 April 1925 to PCFA college member S. Aralov // FPARF. F.04. Ap.27. Apl.184. B.80. L.22.; diplomatic diary No 27 of USSR envoy in Lithuania S. Aleksandrovski of 23 October 1925. "Conversation with Latvian envoy in Lithuania Anton Balodz" // Ibid. Apl.185. B.80. L.87.

<sup>84</sup> H. von Riekhoff, op. cit. p.250.

<sup>85</sup> Ibid.

<sup>86</sup> Copy of the report by French diplomat in Lithuania G. Padovani to E. Herriot in Paris, April 1925 // FPARF. F.04. Ap.27. Apl.184. B.80. L.66-67.

<sup>87</sup> Ibid.

on the international scale.<sup>x88</sup> This conclusion of the historian was proved by the statements of German diplomats in Kaunas and Moscow. The German diplomats noted for several times that their country would not allow to be involved in such exchange, since Danzig and Memel are equally dear and necessary to Germany.<sup>90</sup> It was characteristic that the latter plans were the most popular during the époque of the Locarno treaties. At the end of the twenties, after the death of G. Stresemann and dismissal of G. Chicherin from the PCFA, the idyll of the Russian-German relations started to die out gradually. This process was even speeded up at the beginning of the thirties by the nazi movement that spread over Germany. However, becoming more and more evident, ideological divide between Russia and Germany did not change strategic pursuits of the countries. Revisionism remained the most stable chain of Moscow-Berlin partnership. With the post of the ambassador in Riga, former Director of Eastern Affairs Department of Foreign Ministry of the Weimar Republic Herbert von Dirksen wrote to Foreign Minister Ernst Curt in spring 1930: “we should not allow for disturbing the fundamentals of our relations with the USSR laid by the Rapallo and Berlin treaties due to the reason that the preconditions which called for such a policy remained until the present. Our view towards Europe has not changed: we might have achieved our tactic goal by Locarno policy which allows us for the freedom of actions and total concord with England and France, but also that strategic.”<sup>91</sup>

The strategic partnership between the Russian and Germans was slightly obscured by the Polish-USSR non-aggression treaty of June 1932.<sup>x</sup> Already on the eve of concluding the pact,

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<sup>x88</sup> In addition, the propaganda methods of revisionist plans were also employed by the diplomacy of the Soviet Union which from time to time stimulated or at least did not prevent rumours that Russia would regain the Baltic states sooner or later. The Russian diplomats used the phraseology of “not harmful” sometimes referring to the “Baltic cordon countries” and Europe.<sup>89</sup>

<sup>89</sup> Letter of PCFA college member B. Stomoniakov to S. Aleksandrovski in Kaunas, 26 October 1926// FPARF. F.0151. Ap.13. Apl.26. B.2662. L.19.

<sup>90</sup> I. Lorenc's report No 142 of 17 March 1925 to PCFA college member V. Kopp on the conversation with German envoy in Lithuania E. Schrötter // Ibid. F.04. Ap.27. Apl.184. B. 81. L.111.

<sup>91</sup> G. Rosenfeld, *Wpływ linii politycznych i Rapallo i Locarno na stosunki niemiecko-polskie*. In: *Niemcy w polityce międzynarodowej...* S.81-82.

<sup>x</sup> The Polish-USSR negotiations on concluding the non-aggression treaty were started at the end of 1925. Meantime, however, Warsaw made enthusiastic efforts to conclude collective regional security pact - Eastern Locarno - and bilateral non-aggression treaty with the USSR had not been signed. Having considered Warsaw's proposal, Latvia, Estonia and Finland also stayed out of concluding non-aggression treaties with USSR. In autumn 1926, the Soviet diplomacy triumphed only in Lithuanian which was “in the state of war” with Poland.<sup>92</sup>

In 1926-1930, with the collective actions of Russia and Germany, the idea of Eastern Locarno was finally buried. Poland and the Baltic states were left in the total vacuum of security. In 1931, having used the threat of growing nazism in Germany, the Soviets successfully renewed the campaign of signing non-aggression treaties. In January 1932, Finland was the first to “fall down”. On that occasion, PCFA college member Raivid wrote: “Concluding the non-aggression treaty with Finland is a big achievement, since it has broken through the united front of the Polish cordon. In addition, we gained neutrality and other successful formulas.”

<sup>92</sup> For more information on the Lithuanian-USSR non-aggression treaty see.: A. Kasparavièius, *Didysis X Lietuvos uþsienio politikoje*. - Vilnius, 1996.

in his letter to deputy ambassador in Moscow Fritz von Twardowski, Director of Eastern Affairs Department of Foreign Ministry of Germany Richard Meyer regretted that the treaty would only burden “revision of our Eastern border with peaceful means.”<sup>94</sup> However, the concern of the German diplomat was likely too early. Soon after Josef Stalin openly recognised that Russia would never be the guarantee of the Polish borders.<sup>95</sup> As concrete policy of Moscow reveals the latter not only refused to become the guarantee of Eastern Polish borders, but also extensively contributed to destabilising Western borders of that state. Assisting Germany at the beginning of thirties when economic crisis broke out in Europe, the USSR supplied the Germans of Poland and Danzig with “(...) planned and systematic assistance (...) against the Polish aggression.”<sup>96</sup> Supporting German companies in Danzig, larger and larger volumes of the USSR and Germany’s goods were directed through this port. Russia increased its imports from Danzig at the same time supporting German companies. When Moscow lacked money for additional orders, Germany itself agreed to credit them.<sup>97</sup> Thus, the co-operation between Russia and the Weimar Republic was based on mutual benefits.

Another aspect should be noted too. At the beginning of the thirties when the Weimar Republic saw its decline and neared to its downfall without any restraints, Russia felt itself rather consolidated. The homework done by the Russian diplomats earlier allowed it to hope that Germany would not turn against it in the immediate future. The knot of common interests of Moscow and Berlin became so tight that the Soviets were not particularly threatened by coming into power of extreme rightists in Germany. At the beginning of summer 1932, passing comments on the tense political situation in Germany and government’s eventual foreign policy as formulated by new Chancellor Franz von Papen, member of the PCFA college B. Stomoniakov defined the dilemma of the Russian-German relations in the following way: “von Papen government (...) is supported by the Prussian landlords and Reichswehr, but there are supporters of the USSR among them too, at least in Reichswehr. However, Germany’s policy will firstly depend on international conjuncture. If France refused all reparations, allowed Germany to arm and what is more important, reviewed its Eastern borders, Germany would likely jointed anti-Soviet camp without a delay. The change of Eastern borders of Germany in particular was hardly expected without the said course of events, and in addition, von Papen could not introduce radical modification to his position with respect to USSR. It is also hard to believe that pressed by the rightist opposition, Pilsudski could refuse Danzig, even if he were offered Lithuania in exchange. Thus Germany cannot step away from Rapallo.”<sup>98</sup>

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<sup>93</sup> PCFA college member Raivid’s letter of 25 January 1932 to Kaunas to USSR envoy in Lithuania Mikhail Karski // FPARF. F.0150. Ap.21. Apl.46. B.18. L.12.

<sup>94</sup> G. Rosenfeld, *Wplyw linii politycznych z Rapallo i Locarno na stosunki niemiecko-polskie*. In: *Niemcy w polityce międzynarodowej...* s.82.

<sup>95</sup> *Ibid.* S.83.

<sup>96</sup> USSR diplomat in Danzig I. Kalina’s letter No 210/288 of 15 April 1931 to USSR envoy in Poland Vladimir Antonov-Ovsijenka and PCFA college// FPARF. F.082. Ap.14. Apl.67. B.39. L.88-89.

<sup>97</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>98</sup> Verbatim record of the conversation between PCFA college member B. Stomoniakov and Lithuanian envoy J. Baltruðaitis of 11 June 1932 // *Ibid.* F.0150. Ap.21. Apl.45. B.6. L.63.

As subsequent events showed, the forecast by one of the most senior and influential member of the PCFA college was rather precise and measured. The Weimar Republic did not step aside from the Rapallo policy. Moreover, even after the triumph in Munich, the Hitler Germany returned to the Rapallo policy too. The renaissance of the Rapallo policy became decisive for Europe for it presented it with the World War II and its pitiful consequences.

Instead of conclusions:

1) the criminal political projections of Russia and Germany which were carried out on the eve of the breakout of World War II through the Ribbentrop-Molotov secret protocols, had matured in Europe for more than a dozen of years and underwent several metamorphosis. Throughout the whole inter-war period there was a public secret that Germany and Russia had not reconciled and would not reconcile with their existing borders. In this way Europe was gradually domesticated to them and just faced the revisionism of the Germans and the Soviets or even was made to believe that that was unavoidable. Such shifts of political thoughts would prove that international law in the inter-war Europe was not undergoing the golden age. The states that prevailed in the system established by Versailles and were potentially capable of organising the defence of international law in Europe, unfortunately seemed to be more concerned not with its defence but rather of the ways of how to satisfy the revisionists, at least those of Germany, in the most cheapest and painless way. Thus with this respect, it would not be precise to state that the treaties between Russia and Germany of 1939 as well as their secret protocols had not taken Europe by surprise. At the same time, there are no grounds to ascertain that the political responsibility for the 1939 Russian-German treaties and their consequences rests on the then governments of these countries.

2) the Baltic states and Poland, being the newly re-established after World War I, evidently lacked international political experience, agreement of interests and diplomatic maturity. Therefore, there was no wonder that the countries themselves failed to become the tool and guarantee for Eastern European security, stability and pacifism independently, but constantly requested for guardianship and protection by Western democracies. Unfortunately, the Baltic states and Poland did not contribute a lot with their inter-war policies to root out the revanche of Germany and Russia. More to it, until the beginning of the thirties Lithuania even cherished certain hopes in relation to the revanche of the said states to the extent it was directed against Poland, and anticipated to solve its problem of the historical capital, too. No matter how paradoxically that would sound, a part of the responsibility rests upon the states which became the victims of the secret protocols of Molotov-Ribbentrop.