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LITHUANIAN INSTITUTE OF HISTORY

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ŠIPELYTĖ

On the statehood of Lithuania: Diplomacy  
and Politics of Lithuanians in Switzerland  
in 1915–1919

**SUMMARY OF DOCTORAL DISSERTATION**

Humanities,  
History and Archaeology – H 005

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VILNIAUS UNIVERSITETAS  
LIETUVOS ISTORIJOS INSTITUTAS

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Šveicarijos lietuvių politinė ir diplomatinė  
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valstybingumo klausimu

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## SUMMARY OF DOCTORAL DISSERTATION

### Research problem

The activities of Lithuanians in Switzerland during the First World War is a part of history of modern Lithuanian state. The analysis of their organizations reveals new essential layers of the ideas and practices of the state creation. Also, research of their projects of the future state helps to clarify thinking strategies in this Lithuanian intellectual centre abroad and its relations with other Lithuanian communities.

In this dissertation the term *Lithuanians in Switzerland* is understood as the intellectual core of Lithuanians, who had formed three main organizations there: *Lithuanian Information Bureau*, *Lithuanian National Council* and “*Lituania*” *relief comitee of war refuges*. The first organization was established in France in 1911 and moved to Switzerland in the summer of 1915 by journalist, translator and politician Juozas Gabrys, who had been studying in Paris since 1907. The second organization was established in the same 1915 with the help of the Lithuanian students of University of Fribourg: Juozas Purickis was studying theology and philosophy during the period of 1912–1917 and Vladas Dzimidavičius-Daumantas was a philosophy student during that time. The third organization, which lasted 1915–1919, was established with the purpose to help Lithuanian war refugees and captives in the German as well as Habsburgian empire. Antanas Steponaitis, also a philosophy student of University of Fribourg in 1913–1918, was a chairman of this organization. Konstantinas Olšauskas and dr. Vincas Bartuška joined Lithuanian activities in Switzerland at the beginning of 1917. All these characters are in the main focuse of this research.

Although, this research is not a quantitative analysis of Lithuanian emigrants in Switzerland and it is not intended to explore sociological or demographical changes in their community. The term

*Lithuanians in Switzerland* was chosen with some precautions: it does not involve all the Lithuanians, who lived in this country during the First World war, but the names of those who expressed themselves as the representatives of Lithuanian nation and were involved in organizations and political activities. Also, *Lithuanians in Switzerland* (*Šveicarijos lietuviai* in Lithuanian) was the concept, used during the times we investigate: our persons of interest were given this name by other centres of Lithuanian *emigrées* and accepted that name in their communication and sometimes were using *šveicariečiai* (those, who are from Switzerland) simultaneously. Due to that, we will use both terms equally in this research.

During the First World War politicians and diplomats of the stateless nations were very active in evolving and spreading their ideas, political beliefs and concepts of the future states they would like to build. Lithuanians were not an exception, so their expressed their future hopes in various forms of projects and organized advertising campaigns to spread them across Europe and United States of America, where were a lot of Lithuanian emigrants. Analysing the term *project* we have in mind it as synonymous to an action plan, the particular offer in verbal or written form, stating how to accomplish a certain vision of a state. In our research these projects were analysed through two perspectives: *inner* – how Lithuanians in Switzerland saw their goals and activities and *outer* – how their actions were seen by the politicians and diplomats from the other countries. Such approach offers a perspective to analyse the projects of a state as a connection between ideas and their realization.

### Research object

Research object is diplomacy and politics of Lithuanians in Switzerland, including preparation of the state projects, press publishing, organization of conferences and visions of restoration of Lithuania's independence which they represented.

## Research aim and objectives

Research aim is to analyse the activities of Lithuanians in Switzerland towards the question of statehood, the influence of inner and outer factors to the patterns of their behavior.

Research objectives:

1. To analyse the circumstances of the establishment and the schemes of activity of Lithuanian organizations in Switzerland.
2. To discuss the declarations of the Lithuanian conferences held in Switzerland and their impact to the *Lithuanian Question*.
3. To examine the projects of the state offered by the Lithuanians in Switzerland and to name their main features.
4. To analyse territorial visions of the future Lithuanian state.
5. To expose the relationships of *šveicariečiai* with the officers of the German Empire and Entente countries.
6. To examine the narratives of Lithuanian press in Switzerland and its relations with the features of German propaganda.
7. To trace the change of views and decline of influence of Lithuanians in Switzerland towards the statehood after the Declaration of Lithuania's Independence on February 16, 1918.

## Research chronology

Research chronological limits extend more than the years of the First World War (1914–1918) and cover 1915–1919. In this dissertation we will focus on the activities of Juozas Gabrys as a leader of Lithuanian movement in Switzerland before the war, but the main questions of the topic begins in the summer of 1915, when he resettled his work and publishing house in Lausanne. Research is finished in 1919 due to the choice of analyzing the conflict between Lithuanians in Switzerland, and Gabrys in particular, with the

Council of the State and its ideas of Lithuanian policy after the Declaration of Independence of the 16<sup>th</sup> of February in 1918. Also, almost all Lithuanian political organizations in Switzerland were closed in the same year.

### Research novelty and relevance

This research is focused on the analysis of the activity of Lithuanian's in Switzerland and its authenticity. It is one of the most difficult questions on the topic because it is very hard to measure the authenticity of the thought in a certain group of activists. We need to find out whether the political projects of future Lithuania were copied from the plans of German authorities and diplomats or unique political thought and original ideas of Lithuanians in Switzerland. The partial realization of this understanding is possible by dividing the question into sub-sections. So, we will try to figure out the relevance of certain event or project with the personal attitudes and ambitions as well as obedience to deliberately installed conjuncture. In this research we will try to explain what was *Lithuanian statehood* back then and *how* it was imagined and how should have been implemented.

The analysis of historiography shows that the researches of Lithuanian political history were intended to sum up as much events and personalities as possible, that way some aspects of the state projects and organizations were left behind or illustrated without proper analysis. This choice is reasonable in historical synthesis and it gives us a chance to fulfill the gap as well. Due to that, this research is focused on the inner examination of the activity of the political group, the texts and relationships of its members, analysis of their self-perception. So, we have chosen Lithuanians in Switzerland as a case study and the goal is to answer not only to the question *how* the projects of Lithuanian statehood was created, but also *why* they were chosen, realized and communicated in a certain manner.

The novelty of this study depends on the perspective in which political and diplomatic activity is analysed through – projects of restoration of independence of Lithuania and their communication. Also, the case study of Lithuanians in Switzerland is expanded and specified. The analysis of Lithuanian press and correspondence, combined with the new primary sources that were never used before, let us discover more complex and more accurate picture of the concept of state among the Lithuanians in Switzerland. We will emphasize its unique features in this research, so the aspect of private and public communication of the state projects is very important as well.

This dissertation is relevant for the fulfilment of miscellaneous narrative of the creation of Lithuania outside its borders. This form of statehood is keen to the political history of 20<sup>th</sup> century Lithuania, which has been occupied several times during that time. Also, it reveals the variety of the ideas of the state, their continuity and change, but more important – vitality in the stateless society.

#### Research methodology

This research is based on various methods of qualitative analysis: chronological approach is combined with problem approach. Chronological layout of this dissertation has been chosen due to the attempt of analysing simultaneous processes, which could be better understood from the time perspective and their causes and consequences explained more consistently. Analysis of historical-archival material (most of it has not been examined thoroughly or at all) is combined with the information known from the historiography and have been analysed using methods of synthesis and interpretation. Of course, this research is essentially an historic one, so a chronological descriptive method has been applied as well to justify these interpretations. Other methods, such as content analysis, has been used specifically for some topics, for example for the examination of the narratives of Lithuanian press in Switzerland.

This research as a whole also could be seen as a case study – consistent analysis of the formation of the ideas and activities towards the statehood in a certain place and time. Despite the critical analysis of the collected data, some comparisons are brought to this study as well to reveal the specifics of different Lithuanian emigration centers. Although comparative analysis is not the key methodology of this thesis.

In this dissertation we use the term *communication* to define the spread of visions of the state. These visions were based on the sociocultural experiences of the people, who sought to draw guidelines of the future political entity. This aspect of political activities is important because it shows the connection between the ideas of a person or a community, their potential of creativity and their actions to express an idea. This type of communication is always orientated to a dialogue or to the techniques to engage the dialogue as a way to express one's idea or project. This field of action is very inconsistent and through the mechanisms of reception, response, critique, censorship and political conjuncture it changes all the subjects involved. That's how we could capture the practices of the person in an extraordinary situation. Whereas the activity of Lithuanians in Switzerland left behind a lot of sources of personal and public communicative practice, it is keen to analyse the movement of state projects and their ideas to get a full picture of this group of intellectuals.

Also, we have to mention the subjects which are not in our scope of research, but are tightly connected with the analysed questions. Firstly, it is the analysis of different nationalist movements and their interactions, which are in the field of studies of nationalism. We have chosen only one small community of Lithuanian national movement, so the generalisations about it could not be applied to all Lithuanian activity during the First World War. As well as comparisons with other national movements is not our objective. For example, in our research of projects of common Latvian-Lithuanian state, we have tried to reveal the groups of

interest (in this case – Baltic Germans) whose ideas were similar to those of Lithuanians in Switzerland and not to compare all the offers of Lithuanian and Latvian national movements. The models of relations with future Russia or Poland is important to our topic, but also only as a part of Lithuanian projects and not in comparison with ideas of the intellectuals of these countries and it would need a separate research.

The same could be said about the projects of the Lithuanian statehood which were planned in other emigration centres in Europe and the United States of America. In this analysis we could not submit a full picture of their ideas, but we have used their projects and positions which were declared during the Lithuanian conferences and debates. Moreover, it should be highlighted that territorial dependence to a political center is one of the features of an identity which was chosen by researcher to investigate: for example, political views or other sociocultural factors could have been chosen as well. That means, that „a place“ in this research means a community of individuals who purposefully have chosen common activity and responsibility.

### Dissertation structure

This dissertation consists of five chapters which are lined up in chronological order. In these chapters, with the purpose to underline main problems and topics of each year, analysis of events and activities is delivered problematically and each chapter has four or three subdivisions. One issue is analyzed according to three principles: 1) international context is seen as an assumption of the strategies and actions of certain questions keen to Lithuanians in Switzerland; 2) conferences, meetings, projects, memoirs and press publications are analyzed as representing not only the actions of these people, but political views and ideas as well; 3) their strategies to achieve political goals and its consequences, changes in communication with the German authorities and their conjuncture,

influence of Lithuanians in Switzerland to the question of modern Lithuania are sought to explain. So, in this research we try to link assumptions of the visions of Lithuania, attempts to communicate that vision in both private and public ways, practical projects to achieve it and their possibilities to function in reality. Hopefully, the chosen structure of the dissertation will help to set forth target information and to reveal the main features of the activities of Lithuanians in Switzerland during the First World War.

## I. CREATION OF LITHUANIAN ORGANIZATIONS IN SWITZERLAND IN 1915

In 1915 Juozas Gabrys initiated the transfer of his organization, *Lithuanian Information Bureau*, which he had created in Paris in 1911, to the French part of Switzerland. In the same year here *Lithuanian National Council* (LNC) was established. There were several reasons why Gabrys took on these decisions. Firstly, the censorship in France was very hostile to the Lithuanian propaganda, which was seen as a weapon against the ally of France, Russian Empire. Secondly, Gabrys deliberated successful contacts with some of the German diplomats in Switzerland and they encouraged him to develop his activities here. They all had common interests to break down Russian imperial ambitions and it partly concurred with the aspirations of independence and self-governing of Lithuanian national movement. The main task of LNC was to reinforce Lithuanian political activity in Switzerland and some Lithuanian students of University of Fribourg secretly joined this organization in the autumn of 1915. In the activity of LCN we could trace back the features of the ideas of all Lithuanian national movement which were promoted long before the outbreak of the First World War. Although, these notions were merged with the political views and attitude of certain members of this Lithuanian center of emigration. Promises of German authorities in Switzerland to ensure Lithuanian autonomy

back in the country also had the impact of inner consolidation and the beginning of common work in this group.

## II. FIRST LITHUANIAN CONFERENCES AND THE PROJECTS OF STATEHOOD IN 1916

At the beginning of 1916 Lithuanians in Switzerland started a series of national conferences. This kind of event was seen as a possibility to meet Lithuanian activists from other countries as well as to demonstrate political maturity of their organizations. *Conference of Bern* was actually held in Lausanne between the end of February and the beginning of March in 1916. The declaration of this conference was written in strongly anti-Polish spirit and this position was announced in public. Juozas Gabrys had anti-Polish attitude since the beginning of his political career, other members of LNC joined his point of view and isolated themselves from common work with Polish intellectuals in Switzerland or Lithuanians who had pro-Polish intentions. Next Lithuanian conference was held also in Lausanne on the 25th–30th of April in 1916. In the resolutions of this conference was stated that Lithuania seeks to separate from the Russian Empire, wants to gain its own independence and promises to be an ally with those, who would help to achieve this goal. This promise leads to the request to Germany to help in creating the new state and it shows a wish of Lithuanians to strengthen anti-Russian spirits in Switzerland and insinuate to German diplomats in this way. This document, as well as resolutions of *Conference of Bern* could be linked with the desire of the religion, cultural and political integrity and independence of Lithuania, a wish to create practical conditions for it to flourish. This idea continues a path to *detach* themselves from the neighbour nations and define the territory of future

Lithuania physically as well as mentally. Also, this shows preferably links with the possible winner of the war.

Accordingly with the first Lithuanian conferences, an interest to the Lithuanian question grew up in the political and diplomatical circles who resided in Switzerland. With the aim of expanding the knowledge and interest even more, Gabrys started organizing international meetings which had to be interesting for representatives of Entente as well as neutral countries. As an example of this kind of gathering we have analyzed *3rd International Congress of Nations* which was organized at the end of June in 1916 in Lausanne. During this event Lithuanian interests of independent country was combined with propaganda useful for Germany's aims in the Ober Ost territories. Gabrys and his colleagues got some attention from the press and embassies, but the real meaning of this congress was a bit overestimated from Lithuanian point of view. It was more significant for Lithuanians in Switzerland and their self-determination as representatives of a nation than for the sequence of events in an international policy and its estimation.

Alongside with the organization of this event, Lithuanians in Switzerland had their own private meetings where Lithuanians from USA, Vilnius and Lausanne took part. These two gatherings, named *Conference of Lausanne I* and *Conference of Lausanne II* was organized at the joint of June and July of 1916. One of the decisions of great importance was the plan to transform LNC to a wider organization – *Highest Lithuanian National Council* (HLNC) – which should have been composed of the representatives from all Lithuanian emigrant centres abroad as well as from the country itself. Unfortunately, the project of this institution have never been fully realized and it never worked together in Switzerland for the longer time than few weeks. Moreover, in these conferences Lithuanian delegates confirmed that the main goal of their diplomacy and propaganda actions is to retrieve the independence of Lithuanian state, although it was seen only as an uncertain possibility in the future.

In the connection with these ideas, in the autumn of 1916 Lithuanians in Switzerland prepared a *Mémoire relatif a la Reconstituion de la Lithuanie Indépendante* (Memorandum related with Independent Lithuania). Although, this document did not have the direct impact to the actions of the German government towards the administration of Lithuania, it is an eloquent example of political imagination of this group of intellectuals. In this *Mémoire* notions of the territory, form of government, historical legacy of a state and ethnographic criteria were defined. The concepts of independent state and constitutional monarchy were expanded later in 1917 and especially in 1918, but we could trace the origins of these ideas in this project and to prove their continuity.

### III. PRESS PUBLISHING, SEARCH OF ALLIES AND RELATIONS WITH GERMANY ON PURPOSE OF INDEPENDENCE IN 1917

In 1917 Lithuanians in Switzerland intensified their propaganda campaign for the independent Lithuania. In international press publications and their own publishings these intellectuals started critics on the German authorities, especially for their behavior in the territory of Lithuania and for the postponement of the transfer of self-governing to Lithuanian politics in Vilnius. Although Gabrys and his colleagues had some agreements with German representation in Bern and had accepted to include some texts against Russian government in their publications, those texts were seen as convenient for Lithuanian purposes as well. On the other hand, anti-German propaganda was justified as a cosequence of different attitudes towards the empire in the LNC itself, and Gabrys in front of German officers always blamed his colleagues for that. In our research we have analyzed those publications as examples of communication strategy wich was consciously organized and well prepared.

Later on anti-German propaganda was focused on retrieving the recognition of the independence of Lithuania from France and Great Britain. Also, in some cases it could be seen as the redemption of some pro-German texts and real posture among Lithuanians in Switzerland. So, from the sources we could see that this publishing centre was very active and productive since 1916. When alongside *Lithuanian Information Bureau Lithuanian National Council* was created, informational activity evolved into efforts to form Lithuanian policy abroad and not only announce about other's decisions. The press publishing in different languages in a neutral country was seen as crucial thing for the communication of Lithuanian politics and their state projects, so it was funded generously and a lot of time was dedicated for this kind of activity. But Lithuanians from LIB and LNC did not wanted to be connected with pro-German publications in public, so separate magazines were dedicated for Entente's audience (*Pro Lithuania*) and for Germany and its supporters (*Litauen*). Paralelly the activity of *Central Bureau of Nations* was continued and *Analles des Nationalités*, where Lithuanian question had its share, was published under the control of Juozas Gabrys.

Lithuanians in Switzerland had several perspectives, wich were important for their communication goals in the Western and Eastern countries and helped Lithuanian politics in homeland in the spring and summer of 1917. Firstly, after the February Revolution in Russia, Lithuanians sent an appeal to the Provisonal Government with the request to recognize political independence of Lithuania. There was no answer and due to that Lithuanian organizations in Russia were also incapable to create a legit represantation of Lithuania with the support of Russians. Simultaneously, we could trace some changes in the views of Lithuanians in Switzerland towards the Poland and its politics. Although, we do not have partucular projects of co-operation with Polish politicians, Gabrys, who was especially anti-Polish before, changed his position due to

the international circumstances and a possibility to gain independence more quickly in cooperation with neighbour countries.

Secondly, Gabrys was very keen to use his pre-war connections in French political and intellectual circles and to boost their interest in Lithuania. He argued that otherwise Germany or Russia will take a total control of the country and its people. So independent and neutral Lithuania in the alliance or federation with neighbouring territories (one of them – Kurland) was offered to France, Great Britain and USA. These countries should be given a crucial support for Lithuania in the case of winning the war. Unfortunately, Lithuania was seen as an integral part of *New Russia* and uncertainty in international politics did not give a chance to support Lithuanian projects of independence.

Thirdly, Gabrys stated that ignorance and arrogance of Entente powers resulted in Lithuanian political aspirations towards cooperation with Germany and even brought new views in German government's policy. With the agency of German representative Romberg in Bern, Gabrys and other Lithuanians made a connection with Matthias Erzberger, the leader of center-catholic party in Reichstag. Lithuanians tried to improve the positions of their projects of Lithuanian independence, a creation of National Council in Vilnius and transfer a civil governmental powers to themselves. This orientation and co-operation was quite successful, because center-left parties were opposite to the annexationists and military leaders, had interests in finishing the war and giving an autonomy to the Eastern territory as fast as possible. These connections helped a lot in the process of creating Lithuanian National Council in Vilnius in the autumn of 1917 and strengthened the political weight of Lithuanians in Switzerland as agents of international policy.

As a step towards real independence of the country Lithuanians saw the convocation of Vilnius Assembly in the autumn of 1917 and the elections of Lithuanian Council (Taryba) afterwards. Lithuanians in Switzerland were very active supporters of this event and advocates as well in German as international press and private

discussions. This move and new organization in Vilnius was seen as a guarantee of a power takeover from German military authorities and a base for the first Lithuanian government in the future. Although, Gabrys had a slightly different motivation from other members of NLC to support this idea and worked on his own popularity, the creation of *Taryba* was seen as a result of common work of all Lithuanian centres in emigration as well as in Vilnius itself.

#### IV. CONTRIBUTION AND REACTION OF LITHUANIANS IN SWITZERLAND TO THE DECLARATION OF INDEPENDENCE OF LITHUANIA IN 1918

The year 1918 was very important for all the Lithuanians around the world, not only for the reason of the Declaration of the Independence of Lithuania at the 16<sup>th</sup> of February, but also for the diplomatic struggle for the recognition of the state afterwards. Following the path of Lithuanian's retreats from the Russian and Polish states In our research, we could notice that there was not such kind of declaration towards the German empire. The election of State Council (*Taryba*) was held in quite pro-German atmosphere and all the supporters of German-Lithuanian collaboration thought that the agreement of 11<sup>th</sup> of December of 1917 was the highest point of political independence that could have been received in that situation. Due to that, from the Lithuanian's in Switzerland point of view, the decision of *Taryba* to announce complete independence in the 16<sup>th</sup> of February was seen as a contradictory.

Analyzing the development of monarchical ideas of their group, we noticed that this kind of projects were the most sustainable and consistent. The first offers to German authorities of Lithuania's political autonomy in German empire made by Juozas Gabrys in 1915. In these plans Lithuania was pictured as partly-independent state in the empire: this factor was seen as a guarantee of stability for

a newly created state and the only chance to gain recognition in Europe. Although, this plan should have stopped annexation plans of German military authorities as well as bolshevik's attempts to get back control of Lithuanian territories. Also, despite the fact that Lithuanians had connections with Polish intellectuals in Switzerland in 1918, they did not considered a common moarchy project or revival of the Commonwealth and sharply critized those type of ideas in the press. After the election of Wilhelm Duke of Urach as Lithuanian king Mindaugas II at the 11<sup>th</sup> of July, all the propaganda resources in Switzerland were redirected to this question and its promition in the international context. Although Gabrys and other Lithuanians had different views towards the question of monarchy and proper candidates, this group of Lithuanians were one of the strongest supporters of the monarchy in a newly created state.

All in all, the core of Lithuanian activity in Switzerland in 1918 was to gain an international recognition of the independent Lithuania and this goal was ephasized in the declarations of *Vilnius Conference* and later in the decissions of *2<sup>nd</sup> Conference of Bern*. In the views of Lithuanians in Switzerland, *independence* was imagined as stated in the agreement with Germany of 11<sup>th</sup> of December 1917 – *in the tight connections with Germany*. Although, these intellectuals and especially Gabrys had other connections and interests, he was very keen to get this recognition not only from Germany itself, but also from the Entente countries. In his point of view, at first this recognition should have been given for the state and afterwards for him as the only representative of this state abroad.

This attitude was not common within the members of *Taryba* in Vilnius and some other polititians. Their conflict started during the elections of a king in the summer of 1918 when Olšauskas and Purickis were the main agitators for Urach from Wütembergs and Gabrys prefered the monarch from the neutral country, Spain the most, and never officially recognized his elections. The conflict strengthened during the *3<sup>rd</sup> Conference of Lausanne* when the delegates form Lithuania, USA and Switzerland even did not agreed

on the official declaration and the culminated after the conference when the publication in the Suisse German press against Gabrys with the fake signatures of Taryba members was released. Simultaneously, Gabrys tried again to gain the support of the French government and with this help to overcome the power of Taryba in Lithuanian politics as well as German plans of anexation and unification.

## V. END OF LITHUANIANS' IN SWITZERLAND ACTIVITIES AND THEIR RELATIONSHIPS WITH EMERGING LITHUANIA IN 1919

Our research showed that from the autumn of 1918 Juozas Gabrys and his supporters found themselves in the opposition of provisional government of Lithuania, so they were trying to get the back up for their visions from the new alliences. Once again Gabrys applied to the Entente countries and searched for the support for the upcoming Peace Conference where he hoped to be one of the leaders of Lithuanian delegation. That was why he planed to move LIB alltogether with its employees back to Paris. In the offers to French diplomats Gabrys stated that he could re-establish *Highest Lithuanian National Council* as an opposition of Taryba and could succeed in completing his new plans of federation or independence of Lithuania.

In the same year of 1919 the decission to close up two other Lithuanian organizations in Switzerland was made. Lithuanian National Council and „*Lituania*” Comitee for War Refugees were liquidated by their members at the meeting of 22<sup>nd</sup> of July in Lithuania and at the 16<sup>th</sup> of September this decission was aproved by Gabrys in Switzerland. Although, at the same time the decission to close LIB was made, Gabrys unsuccessfully attempted to continue its activity until 1920.

## Conclusions

1. Lithuanian National Council (LNC) was established in Switzerland in the autumn of 1915. At the same time Juozas Gabrys, the head of Lithuanian Information Bureau, transferred his organization, created in 1911, from Paris to Lausanne. This was forced by the French censorship as well as Gabrys' personal contacts with the German officers in Switzerland. Their interest in Lithuanian questions was similar to his intentions towards the future of Lithuania, so LNC was created and other intellectuals joined this organization. Our analysis revealed that in the second half of 1915 key features of Lithuanian activity in Switzerland was: 1) aspirations to adjust to the quickly changing international situation; 2) pre-war concepts of the statehood; 3) opportunities given by the new communication network. This reflects in the texts, as well as at the events and projects produced by Lithuanians in Switzerland.

2. During the conferences of 1915–1916 where Lithuanians from various political centres participated, the main features of their imagined future Lithuania was revealed. First of all, due to their opinion, it should have been *separated* from Russian empire as well as possible future Poland. Although, these principles could be seen as a continuation of pre-war Lithuanian considerations, Lithuanians in Switzerland tried to adjust them to the current political situation and hoped to achieve their realization. Also, at the 1916 LNC was planned as a part of the structure of Supreme Lithuanian National Council, which ought to shelter Lithuanian councils from all Europe and USA. Unfortunately, this plan was never fully realized and later the name of SLNC was misappropriated used by Gabrys' organization.

3. As early as 1915, at the projects of reestablishment of the Lithuanian state constitutional monarchy had been chosen as the most suitable form of government. That kind of (in)dependence was also suitable while maintaining German support. The significance of monarchy and a wish of foreign price was also expressed in the

fundamental memorandum of Lithuania's restitution which was distributed by LNC from the summer of 1916 until the autumn of 1918. By creating this document, Lithuanians in Switzerland wished not only to present the certain plan of the future of Lithuania to the German authorities, but also to gain the influence in formation of an independent or partially dependent Lithuanian state. Historical as well as territorial concepts of the state were applied to justify this project.

Although the slogans of total independence of Lithuania were expressed during the *3rd Congress of Nations* at the summer of 1916, that was not a crucial part of Lithuanian propaganda later and was not repeated in other projects of Lithuanians in Switzerland. „Independence“ was perceived as a partially independent kingdom in the German empire, at the territory of Ober Ost. Our research revealed that the concept of a monarchy was one of the most stable and consistent components in the Lithuanians' in Switzerland ideas towards the statehood. Moreover, we discovered that the republican attitudes which have been highlighted at the memoirs of the main figures is later evaluation of their thoughts and actions.

4. The territorial concept of a future state was very important to Lithuanians in Switzerland and their activities. The limitation of an “own” territory was significant in public debates with a possible future neighbours which were carried out about disputed border areas. From the 1915 in the press we could find their position that ethnographical, historical and decisional criteria are the most important ones for the setting of state borders. During the spring of 1916, when discussions with Polish intellectuals continued, the ethnographic feature gained two perspectives: 1) the aim to reestablish Lithuania only in its “own lands” as an opposition to the revival of Commonwealth which was offered by Polish politicians; 2) the content of this perception was explained as including the possibility of choosing one's identity and the importance of the legacy of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania as an argument to gain the rights to the historical capital Vilnius and its region. In his texts Gabrys also emphasized economical benefits of some Baltic ports or cities, geopolitical and strategical intentions. That

was why sometimes Memel, Grodno and Minsk was attributed to the Lithuanian sphere of influence.

Offering the projects of a new Lithuanian state for the German diplomats and politicians, intellectuals in Switzerland tried to adjust to their territorial interests as well as used terminology – the first projects defined the territory which coincided with Ober Ost, including Latvia and Courland as autonomous regions. Simultaneously, as early as the autumn of 1915, in the communication of Lithuanians in Switzerland showed up a topic of *Minor Lithuania* (Part of Eastern Prussia) which was pictured as an integral part of the future Lithuanian state and a part of governorate of Suvalkai (Suwałki) was declared as Lithuanian as well. During the years of 1916 and 1917 this model had minor changes and was declared that Lithuania's territory should include the provinces of Vilnius, Kaunas, Grodno, Suvalkai, the parts of Minsk and Łomża provinces and a part of Courland with Palanga.

In the conferences of the autumn in 1917 the resolution of *Vilnius conference* was approved: Lithuanians aspire “an ethnographical Lithuania”, although without precise definition of “ethnography”, which allows to reach out for wider territories in the Eastern part. Despite that, the concept of Gabrys for a “great Lithuania” was declined. But this requirement changed during the summer of 1918 and with the elections of a monarch The State Council declared the ambition to a larger territory (that of whole Ober Ost) and started to search an alliance of such a concept of Lithuania. The complexity and sensitivity of the question of Lithuanian territories was emphasized at the inner correspondence of the German as well as Entente officers and, also, in their responses to Lithuanians. Although, during the Paris Peace Conference the positions of Gabrys and the leaders of Lithuanian State Council did not match and they were not operating together, the requirement of the largest possible territory of Lithuania remained.

5. The cooperation of Juozas Gabrys with German authorities had an influence on his perception of the state creation as well as to the

decisions he made as a leader of Lithuanians in Switzerland. Within the first agreements with Germans, Gabrys had promised to propagate pro-German and anti-Russian ideas among his compatriots in exchange of easier communication with Lithuanians in the country and financial support for his organizations and press. Our analysis offers an interpretation, that Lithuanians tried to use the crossroads of interests with Germans, but they were not in unconditional favorability of all the questions.

From the middle of 1917, when the self-gouvernement was not transferred to Lithuanians as had been promised by Germany, intellectuals in Switzerland began their campagne of blackmail. They frightened German diplomats in Bern, that they would announce in neutral and Entente press some of gathered information about the misconduct of German army and brutal living conditions in occupied Lithuanian territory. These statements promoted diplomats to require some obedience to Lithuanians and their offers form the central government and to participated in various projects of Gabrys. It was presented as attenuation of Russian influence in the region and a way to minimize the threats to German international image of Lithuanian publications abroad.

Also, one of the most successful connection, made by Lithuanians in Switzerland, was a dialogue and cooperation with the German Reichstag and its members. Lithuanians searched and found the politicians who were opponents of German annexionists and believed in the future of Lithuania as a independent country. They also supported the candidate to Lithuanian throne, Wilhelm von Urach, and demanded of the remission of military regime in Ober Ost. The goals of social-democratic and liberal parlamentarians were to end the war as soon as possible and to exclude military officers from the total power in the country. These were the points in common with Lithuanian politicians, so both sides took a chance to participate in communication. This line of participation in “international” politics also shows that Lithuanians in Switzerland were not only active in this

field, but also saw it as their prerogative and sought to dominate in it from the autumn of 1917 until the summer of 1918.

6. This analysis showed that the gain of recognition of Lithuania's independence from Entente countries was seen as one of the main goals in Lithuanian activity in Switzerland. Unfortunately, this was not as successful as the relationships with German officers. We have analyzed *The 3<sup>rd</sup> Congress of Nations* as an example of Lithuanian efforts to attract European attention. This event took place at the summer of 1916 and was supported by German representation in Switzerland. Although, Gabrys saw this congress as a huge success of his leadership, the real impact was overestimated and the consequences were more significant for Lithuanians themselves than international politics and relations.

From 1916 until 1918 Lithuanians in Switzerland had very strict position of alienation in the relationships with Poland and Russia. Although, we could notice a slight diminution of anti-Polishness in the views of Gabrys after the Russian revolution of February in 1917, there were no projects of the common state back then. In the communication with Western Europe for Lithuanians was very important to emphasize their historical statehood, so they mixed together historical narrative of GDL greatness with the current issues of Lithuanian activity. This so-called *unique* tradition of the state had had guaranteed the rights to the reestablishment of Lithuania, independent from Russia as well as Poland.

But this attitude of Lithuanians in Switzerland caused some problems in communication with France and Great Britain – they were allies of Russia and supported Poland's claims for independent state. Due to that, attempts to establish direct relations with authorities of these countries were unsuccessful in 1917 as well as at the beginning of 1918. As a consequence of this, Lithuanians justified their proximity to the German ideas. In their texts we find an opinion that Russian revolution had not helped to solve Lithuanian problems and bolshevik's authorities were drowning in their own troubles, other Entente countries had no interest in Lithuania, so they were

driven to the appeal for help from Germany. Also, Lithuanians had high hopes to the fact that United States were involved in the war and large community of Lithuanians there could influence American authorities on the positive decisions towards Lithuania's independence.

All in all, communication, for example, with French politicians and diplomats were developed only at the personal level of Gabrys and his friends – official response to the projects of LNC was given only at the end of 1918. At that time, after a conflict between Gabrys and State Council, he did not intend to cooperate with this institution anymore and sought the help from abroad to displace the State Council from the leadership of Lithuanian politics. Despite that, our analysis showed that the perspective of recognition from Entente states, which was emphasized by Gabrys, was appropriate and the failure in this point during the First World War led Lithuania to further difficulties with international recognition afterwards.

7. Lithuanian press in Switzerland was very important mode of communication and now it is a good representative of intellectuals and their ideas. This source allows to figure out the main topics of perception of the politics as well as political communication and self representation of the activists. Although, Lithuanians were using the financial support from German embassy in Bern, our analysis of their press of 1916–1917 showed that the content of the texts dramatically varied from the repetition of the propaganda clichés to the fierce attacks on the German military administration and Ober Ost, German politics or even German nation. In the middle of 1917 at the beginning of negotiations of the establishment of Taryba in Vilnius, these anti-German texts were used as a threatening to German administration to take into account Lithuanian demands.

Despite the fact of collaboration with German diplomats, Lithuanians in Switzerland intended not to be bounded with German authorities in public, so they published different journals for various audiences: *Pro Lit(h)uania* was for the Entente and *Litauen* – for the Central Powers. Simultaneously, the activity of *Central Office of*

*Nations* was continued and its journal *Annales des Nationalités* also contributed to the promotion of the Lithuanian as well as other national questions. Step by step Lithuanians in Switzerland tried to change the anti-Russian content of their publications to the positive ideas of the reestablishment of Lithuania and future schemes of its culture, education, politics and administration. Although, it is very hard to evaluate the impact of these publications to the readers, we could state that the significant impact was made to the Lithuanians themselves: to their ideas, self-perception, self-education and intellectual discussions of certain questions.

8. The analysis in this dissertation offers one more interpretation of the impact of Lithuanians in Switzerland to the independence of Lithuania. It is a question of formation of the Lithuanian Council (later State Council) in Vilnius. The creation of Lithuanian government and administration in the country was seen as one of the most important tasks of the Lithuanians in emigration. The success of this act lies in collaboration of all political centres abroad as well as in Lithuania, common message to German authorities and common resistance to their oppression. Although, Gabrys had intended to expand his influence and to control State Council as a leader of LNC, he also made every effort to ensure that this council would have decisive not only advisory voice in the relations with German authorities.

Despite this, Lithuanians in Switzerland saw the restitution of the state of Lithuania based on the act and agreement with Germany of 11<sup>th</sup> of December of 1917, not on the Declaration of Independence of 16<sup>th</sup> of February of 1918. They also congratulated the recognition of the German empire of 23<sup>rd</sup> of March in 1918. That was determined by the importance of international recognition in their attitudes as well as their projects of Lithuania which were based on close relationships with Germany. When the center of Lithuanian policy moved to Vilnius, it became clear that these kind of projects could not be accomplished any more. Also, Juozas Gabrys and his allies stumbled upon the conflict with the leaders of the State Council and

the Lithuanian center in Switzerland started to vanish. In the autumn of 1918, when Germany signed the act of capitulation in the First World War and Taryba formed the first government of Lithuania, some of the members of Lithuanians in Switzerland joined the political activity in Lithuania. While others stayed with Gabrys and searched the ways to gain foreign support to overcome Taryba and to take over the power by force.

## ACADEMIC PUBLICATIONS ON THE DISSERTATION THEME

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Monika Šipelytė was born in Panevėžys in 1989. She studied Cultural history and anthropology at Vilnius University, Faculty of History in 2008–2012 and she holds degree in history. In 2012–2014 she studied master of History at the same faculty, then continued doctoral studies at the Lithuanian Institute of History in 2014–2018.

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## NOTES

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On the statehood of Lithuania: Diplomacy  
and Politics of Lithuanians in Switzerland  
in 1915–1919

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