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Self-proclaimed diplomats: Catalan–Lithuanian cooperation during WWI

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The topic of international cooperation between national movements before the end of World War I (WWI) has still not received sufficient scholarly attention. It is common for national historiographies to concentrate on the case of their own nation. When it comes to international relations, however, connections with neighboring nations and national movements – chief adversaries in the achievement of national goals – are usually prioritized. Nevertheless, even before and especially during the war there was a vibrant scene where non-dominant nationalities could practice international diplomacy, conduct discussions, share experiences, build coalitions, and so on. This article explores one of such examples of international relations conducted between the representatives of two nations – the Catalans and the Lithuanians. They came in contact before the war at the Paris-based *Union des Nationalités* (the Union of Nationalities), an organization that was designed to unite and support non-dominant national movements. Despite being located on the opposite sides of Europe and having no apparent direct connections, the Lithuanians and the Catalans established common ground for cooperation, which especially peaked during WWI.

Keywords: World War I; Catalans; Lithuanians; nationalism; international cooperation

The topic of international cooperation between national movements before the end of World War I (WWI) has still not received sufficient scholarly attention. It is common for national historiographies to concentrate primarily on the case of their own nation. When it comes to international relations, however, connections with neighboring nations and national movements – chief adversaries in the achievement of national goals – are usually prioritized. Nevertheless, even before and especially during the war there was a vibrant scene where non-dominant nationalities could practice international diplomacy, conduct discussions, share experiences, build coalitions, and so on. These unofficial and self-proclaimed national diplomats collaborated under a variety of international organizations in areas such as the defense of the rights of nations, support for pacifist, autonomist, federalist, and other movements. Even if having no real political power to influence greater changes, there is little doubt that these proto-diplomatic activities were instrumental in

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setting the scene for the post-war Paris Peace Conference and the establishment of the League of Nations.

This article explores one such example of international relations conducted between the representatives of two nations – the Catalans and the Lithuanians. They had met before the war at the Paris-based *Union des Nationalités* (Union of Nationalities), an organization that was designed to unite and support non-dominant national movements. Despite being located on the opposite sides of Europe and having no apparent direct connections, the Lithuanians and the Catalans established common ground for cooperation, which especially peaked during WWI.

Different contexts, similar goals: political evolution of national movements

It is well known that ideas of national or cultural autonomy dominated the scene of pre-WWI national movements (Smith and Hiden 2012, 9–25). Even though the Catalan and the Lithuanian national movements appeared and developed under rather different political, social, and cultural conditions, the strive for national autonomy was one of the main topics that allowed for international dialogue to appear.

The Catalans

By the end of the nineteenth century, a distinct and comprehensive Catalan nationalism – also known as "Catalanism" – emerged. Its doctrine evolved mainly from a study, titled *Lo Catalanisme*, written by political and cultural activist Valentí Almirall (1841–1904). Its main principles rested on demands for the Catalan language to be used in the public sphere, the protection of Catalan industries, and to some extent the introduction of autonomous local administration (Figueres 1990; Pich 2002, 2003, 2004). Crystallization of the Catalanist demands continued further with the emergence of national political groups and parties. One of the first, established in 1891, was the *Unió Catalanista* (Catalanist Union). It drafted a constitutional project, where Spain and Catalonia should have become a dual state, following the example of the Austro-Hungarian monarchy (Llorens 1992, 1996; Termes and Colomines 1992; Ucelay-Da Cal 2003). The *Unió* propagated dynastic and elitist political attitudes, refusing to participate in electoral competition with other political groups. This caused dissatisfaction among the younger nationalists. Disagreeing with the course of the *Unió*, they left the organization in 1901 setting up a new political party – the *Lliga Regionalista* (Regionalist League). Despite continuing to promote dual monarchy, the *Lliga* nonetheless chose to take an active part in the country's political life and participate in elections as the main Catalan national party (Llorens 1989; Ucelay-Da Cal 1984, 213–219). In May 1901 they managed to secure a number of seats in the Spanish Parliament (Ehrlich 2004; Molas 1972; Riquer 1977).

Catalan political polarization continued when in 1906 a group of dissidents left the *Lliga* and established the *Centre Nacionalista Republicà* (Nationalist Republican Center). It advocated liberal left-wing policies and the achievement of Catalan autonomy within the Spanish republic, which was a new turn in the political agenda. Thus, the *Lliga* and the *Centre* became two major political rivals representing the right and the left wings of Catalan nationalism. Later, in 1910, the *Centre* merged with other republican groups and formed the *Unió Federal Nacionalista Republicana* (Nationalist Republican Federal Union, UFNR) (Casassas et al. 2006; Camps i Arboix 1970; Izquierdo and Rubí 2009). Throughout this political evolution, the *Unió* kept its elitist standpoint, perceiving itself as the only true adherent of the original Catalanism. Soon, however, change in the

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group's leadership brought a certain degree of liberalization, which in turn made it possible to establish closer alliance with the UFNR (Colomer 1977, 10–16, 1984). In this way by 1906, so-called Catalan Solidarity was achieved.

In the midst of this political evolution, the first projects for the unification of all Catalan-inhabited lands appeared. In 1904, following Prime Minister Antoni Maura's (1853–1925) draft on the establishment of "municipal commonwealths," the *Lliga* prepared a new project, which aimed at widening the administrative powers of the Provincial Councils. Later, in 1906, one of the *Lliga* leaders, Enric Prat de la Riba (1870–1917), proposed further restructuring, which among other things intended delegating local authorities with powers to manage public works, welfare, and education. In the Catalan case, this also meant unification of the four Catalan-inhabited provinces under a single regional government. In 1907 after some deliberations, the Spanish cabinet agreed to form the provincial governments, but it took another four years (1911) for the four Provincial Councils of Catalonia to agree on regional unification. Prat de la Riba, who since 1907 was the president of the Provincial Council of Barcelona, brought the Catalan regional unification agreement to Madrid. In a few months Spanish authorities acknowledged the establishment of Catalonian self-government, which became known as the *Mancomunitat de Catalunya*.

After 20 years of political organization and struggle, the Catalans finally reached their first milestone – the achievement of self-governance. Even though it was still not full autonomy, the successful merger of the Catalonian provinces under a single administration was a significant victory. For many non-dominant national movements, the *Mancomunitat* became perhaps the first example that it was possible to peacefully achieve national autonomy.

The Lithuanians

On the other side of Europe in the Russian empire, the Lithuanians were pursuing similar goals. Their national awakening began in the mid-1870s, but the sociopolitical situation was rather different. The restrictive policies introduced by the Russian imperial authorities after the unsuccessful uprising of 1863 greatly hindered the evolution of Lithuanian nationalism. Suppression of the Catholic Church, banning publications in Latin letters (1865–1904), attempts at Russification, and other prohibitions were primarily aimed at the forceful integration of non-Russian peoples of the western borderlands. From the positive side, the abolishment of serfdom in 1861 partially opened imperial universities for Lithuanian peasants, which was one of the factors that brought about the emergence of the Lithuanian national intelligentsia. To some extent, the imperial authorities ignored the gradual growth of Lithuanian nationalism, because it was the Poles and Polonized elites who were perceived as the main Russian adversaries in the region. It was believed that strengthening anti-Polish attitudes among the Lithuanians would have increased their loyalty to the empire. However, due to ongoing Russification and suppression of the Catholic Church, Lithuanian nationalists also developed strong anti-Russian tendencies (see, for example: Aleksandravičius and Kulakauskas 1996; Kulakauskas 2000; Staliūnas 2004, 2007). In this way, anti-Polishness and anti-Russianness lay at the core of modern Lithuanian nationalism.

The political crystallization of the Lithuanian national movement began during the last decade of the nineteenth century. Early Lithuanian national intelligentsia can be divided into two relatively distinct political groups: the secular and the clerical (on the social structure of the Lithuanian national movement, see: Hroch 1985, 86–97). The first political parties were the Lithuanian Social Democratic Party (established in 1896), the Lithuanian

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Democratic Party (1902), the Lithuanian Farmers Union, and the Christian Democratic Party (both in 1905) (Sabaliūnas 1990; Miknys and Motieka 1990; Miknys 1995). As the ultimate goal, all parties claimed some form of autonomy or federalism for the country. The most radical program came from the Lithuanian Democratic Party, which in 1903 as its goal proclaimed an independent Lithuania. After the Revolution of 1905, however, it reverted back to autonomism.

Political and social tensions brought on by the 1904 Russo-Japanese war resulted in the revolution of 1905. In the midst of turmoil, in November 1905 an event known as the Vilnius Assembly took place. Representatives from all Lithuanian political and nonpolitical groups gathered in Vilnius to discuss the future of the country and establish a common national program. The joint declaration stated that Lithuanians opted for wide national autonomy within the Russian empire, that "Lithuania" consisted of "core ethnographic territory" and economically, culturally, and ethnically linked peripheries (Čepėnas 1977, 345–347; Motieka 1996, 84–96, 2005).

The Vilnius Assembly was the most important event in the pre-WWI history of the Lithuanian national movement. Many new faces appeared on the political scene such as law student Juozas Gabrys-Paršaitis (1880–1951). At the Assembly he was one of the secretaries and cofounders of the Lithuanian Farmers Union – a revolutionary inclined national democratic group supported by the peasantry. Due to his active participation in the unrest, Gabrys was forced to emigrate. He settled in Paris and continued his previous engagements: writing for the Lithuanian press, publishing textbooks, educational pamphlets, collections of Lithuanian literary works, and so on. Soon Gabrys came to realize his talent for propaganda. Life abroad presented him with the opportunity to promote Lithuanian national demands for international audiences. In 1911, with financial support from the Lithuanian diaspora in the USA, he opened the *Lietuvių Informacinis Biuras* (Lithuanian Information Bureau, LIB). Its purpose was to disseminate knowledge about Lithuanians in articles, books, public lectures, art, and ethnographic exhibitions, by encouraging Western scientists to research the Lithuanian past and present, and so on (*Lietuvių informacijos biuras* 1915; Gabrys 1920, 21–48; Senn 1977).

At the same time, he continued studying by attending lectures at the École des Hautes-Études. As a political émigré and active participant in the revolution, he attracted the attention of numerous leftist scholars and politicians, chief among whom was the prominent French historian Charles Seignobos (1854–1942). Gabrys' acquaintance with Seignobos was the turning point that brought him onto the scene of pre-WWI international activism. His main achievement was the co-establishment of the first international organization of national movements – the *Union des Nationalités*. It is here that the Lithuanians and the Catalans met for the first time.

The first international of nationalities (1912–1914)

The 1911 negotiations for the *Mancomunitat* was but the first step toward wider Catalan autonomy. It was realized that in order to achieve better results, the Catalans needed to acquire much stronger support on the international scene. A number of organizations were already active in Europe. One of the newest was the *Union des Nationalités* (sometimes referred to as the *Office Central des Nationalités*, or *Office Central de l'Union des Nationalités*, forthwith UdN). It was established in 1912 and dissolved sometime in 1919. The driving forces behind the Union were French journalist Jean Pélissier (1883–1939) and the Lithuanian political emigrant Gabrys.

To a great extent the establishment of the UdN was thanks to Gabrys and Pélissier's acquaintance at the Universal Races Congress in London (26–29 July 1911). The Congress

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was a nonpolitical, popular as well as scientific event organized to discuss racial, ethnic, and national questions "in the light of science and the modern conscience, the general relations subsisting between the peoples (…), with a view to encouraging between them a fuller understanding, the friendliest feelings, and a heartier co-operation" (Spiller 1911, v).

Gabrys, however, came to the Congress with the intention to carry out political agitation against the Russian oppression of the Lithuanians. The British ignored his demands to speak in public, not wanting to inconvenience the Russian delegation. Somewhat unexpectedly Gabrys received assistance from the French, who admitted him as unofficial member of their delegation. During the following days he managed to distribute his propaganda material, make a speech in one of the Congresses sections, and be introduced to a number of prominent people (Gabrys 1911).

There he met Pélissier – a promising young journalist who was greatly interested in national movements. Inspired by the general idea of the Congress, they, together with a group of French intellectuals, decided to create a new organization which would specifically deal with nationalities issues ("A New International Bureau" 1912, 13–14).[1] After thorough preparations, on 16–20 June 1912, the founding conference took place at the École des Hautes-Études in Paris. The president of the Union became the mathematician and future Prime Minister Paul Painlevé (1863–1933), joined by three vice presidents: publicist and prominent leader of the pacifist movement Émile Arnaud (1864–1921), radical socialist Paul Meunier (1871–1922), and the already mentioned historian Seignobos. The practical matters of the Union were managed by two secretaries general – Gabrys and Pélissier (Soutou 1995; Watson 1995).

The French had many reasons for hosting such an organization. First, it presented an interesting opportunity not only in managing, but also to some extent in indirectly influencing national movements, especially in Central and Eastern Europe (Mares 1991). It was predominantly the French-speaking intellectuals of leftist, internationalist, and/or pacifist worldviews who dominated the UdN, even though many prominent international members and collaborators were listed on the front page of the UdN's periodical *Annales des Nationalités* (Soutou 1995, 15).[2] The organization claimed to provide a platform for the so-called oppressed peoples, the autonomist and independence movements, to voice their claims and lobby for international support. At the same time, young and less experienced nationalists could learn to conduct international propaganda by taking part in the Union's meetings, public lectures, and so on (Aulneau and Seignobos 1913).[3] This also added a specific psychological dimension: oppressed and ignored at home by the ruling authorities, the nationalists were warmly welcomed at the UdN. Such an affirmative reaction from some of the world's leading scholars and politicians was as pleasing as it was inspiring. Democratic and to some extent socialist ideology was taken from the labor unions – the idea that was found in the writings of one of the UdN's patrons, the French economist Charles Gide (1847–1932). Therefore at the outset, this international union of nationalities intended to follow the principles of syndicalism (*Syndicat des Nationalités*) (Gabrys 1920, 31).

The Catalans were among the first to join the Union. Represented by several members of the *Lliga Regionalista*, chief among who was the architect Josep Puig i Cadafalch (1867–1956), the Catalan representative at the Spanish Parliament and fierce defender of the *Mancomunitat* project (Puig i Cadafalch 1912). Another two Catalans, listed as members on the board of patrons of the organization, were Francesc Cambó (1876–1947), one of *Lliga's* main leaders, and the journalist and feminist activist, Carme Karr (1865–1943). Interestingly enough, it was *Lliga's* conservative wing that maintained relations with the UdN despite that two leftist politicians (Antoni Rovira i Virgili (1882–1949) and Pere Coromines

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(1870–1939)) were also officially associated with the organization.[4] Gabrys was the only actual Lithuanian representative at the Union. Even though Catholic priest Konstantinas Olšauskas (1867–1933) was on the list of patrons, there is no evidence that he actually participated in any of the activities. Nevertheless, Gabrys's position as the UdN's secretary general made him an important figure and it was because of him that knowledge about Lithuanians was introduced in Catalonia.

The first remarks about the Baltic nation appeared as early as 1905, when journalist and historian Rovira i Virgili published articles on European nationalisms (Bernades 1975). He collected information from foreign newspapers, historical and anthropological works, and presented them in a more popular form. The articles became the basis for the first volume of his influential *Història dels moviments nacionalistes* (History of the Nationalist Movements) (1912), which included chapters on national movements in Finland, Poland, Lithuania, Ukraine, Schleswig-Holstein, Alsace-Lorraine, and Flanders (Ferrer 2008). Describing the rivalry between the Lithuanians and the Poles, he stated that "while the Poles moan under the oppression and fight for their freedom, they use similar methods against the Lithuanians that are used on them [by the Russians – JE, VP]" (Rovira i Virgili 1912, 2008, 107). The style of his argumentation would indicate that the main source for the Lithuanian chapter was Gabrys' propaganda brochure distributed during the Congress of Races.

As mentioned earlier, the successful outcome of negotiations between the Catalan nationalists and the Spanish authorities regarding the self-government of Catalonia made them an exemplary case. During the presentation of the UdN at the World Congress of International Associations in Brussels (15–17 June 1913), Gabrys chose to discuss five special cases: the Bohemians, the Catalans, the Latvians, the Lithuanians, and the Ukrainians. Even though Lithuanian issues occupied most of his presentation, the Catalans stood out as the most successful autonomist movement at the time. The *Mancomunitat*, in Gabrys' words, was but the first step – a "project-minimum" – for the future. Still, the Catalans had to protect this achievement from the pressure of the Spanish authorities (Gabrys 1914b). This was one of the main reasons for the Catalan nationalists to seek international support.

In December 1913, the *Lliga* secured the *Mancomunitat* at the Spanish Parliament and Catalan self-government was launched in April 1914. It consisted of four Catalan provinces – Barcelona, Tarragona, Lleida, and Girona – under a single government headed by Barcelona's Provincial Council, Prat de la Riba. Even though the new structure did not provide full autonomy (the Catalan Parliament was missing, the regional government needed more financial resources, and so on), it nevertheless was clearly perceived as a serious step toward the introduction of home rule, similar to what Irish nationalists were struggling for in Great Britain (Balcells, Pujol, and Sabater 1996; Izquierdo 2001, 2002, 2006).

The internationalization of European (and even non-European) nationalisms flourished just before 1914. The war, however, dramatically changed this landscape. When the Catalans continued fighting to widen their autonomy within neutral Spain, the Lithuanians found themselves caught in between warring Russia and Germany, but at the same time the breakdown of the old system presented new opportunities for the future (Gabrys 1914a).

"One for all and all for one:" building Catalan–Lithuanian cooperation

The war halted most of the UdN activities. Pélissier joined the French army and for several years suspended his participation in the organization. Officially he was substituted by the French publicist Yvonne Pouvreau (Gabrys 1917, 21). She was a close Gabrys ally and,

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as it was rumored, his lover.[5] Since 1911 Pouvreau was associated with the LIB, most probably working as a translator. In 1915 she also joined the Lithuanian war relief organization *Lituania*, established by Lithuanian emigrants in Switzerland. In this way, after Pélissier's departure Gabrys became the only manager and strategist of the UdN, remaining in this position until the closure of the organization.

At first his full attention was dedicated to Lithuanians. He became greatly preoccupied with propaganda campaigns, war relief, mediation between the Lithuanian diaspora in the USA and the homeland, collecting information on the Lithuanian POWs in Germany, and so on. Only in late 1914 did he return to UdN matters by organizing the Second Conference of Nationalities (26–27 June 1915) (Gabrys 1920, 60). As it was reported, representatives of 15 nationalities attended the meeting, all of whom unanimously signed the declaration, which among other things called for peace, delimitation of boundaries of nations based on their self-determination, and protection of national minorities by international law ("Conférence des Nationalités" 1915). It seems, however, that the Conference and its declaration went almost unnoticed.

Russia's joining the war as a member of the Entente greatly complicated Gabrys's propaganda campaigns. The French started censoring all publications directed against its allies. Moreover, during the first half of 1915 the German army advanced into Russia and by early autumn occupied almost all of the Lithuanian-inhabited territories. In light of these events, Gabrys decided to relocate the UdN and LIB to Lausanne, Switzerland. Upon arrival, he secretly got in touch with the German ambassador to Bern, Gisbert von Romberg (1866–1939), and offered his services to the German authorities, thus entering complicated political games with the Germans and the Entente (Eidintas 1992a, 53–59; Eidintas 1992b; Senn 1967). This game for both sides later gave him a reputation as a notorious "political adventurist" – a title that he could not erase until the end of his life.[6]

Upon arrival in Switzerland in late 1915, Gabrys, Pouvreau, and several local Lithuanians (most of whom were theology students or Catholic priests) started organizing war relief efforts for the Lithuanian POWs. This endeavor later grew into a long-running campaign for providing material and financial support for all Lithuanians under the German administration. In parallel, with consent from the German authorities, Gabrys organized secret meetings of Lithuanian national activists to discuss the future of the country. In the meetings which took place in Berne from 28 February to 1 March 1916, a call for Lithuania's independence was announced ("Résolutions des patriotes lithuaniens" 1916, 18). It is important to note that to some extent German authorities secretly supported the organization of Lithuanian nationalists. Since the beginning of the war, the German Foreign Office was involved in a number of complicated schemes (and von Romberg played an active part in many of them) that aimed at creating ethnic, political, and other tensions within Russia. It was expected that secret support of Russia's ethnic minorities, political radicals, pacifists, anti-war campaigners, etc., would create social and political tensions, thus causing Russia to withdraw from the war (Zeeman and Scharlau 1965, 145–152).

Therefore during the meeting in Bern, it was decided to intensify and widen the Lithuanian propaganda campaign. Gabrys claimed that it was his idea to approach the UdN's Iberian contacts in order to establish Catalan–Lithuanian and Basque–Lithuanian committees (Gabrys 1920, 103–104; Misiūnas 2004, 90–91). The reason to pursue the connections with Spain was the neutrality and special privileges that the state had. After the occupation of Belgium on 10 September 1914, the American and Spanish ambassadors in London formed the Commission for Relief in Belgium. With the agreement of other warring countries (including Germany), the Commission acted as the intermediary for the

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transportation and distribution of food consigned for the Belgium population. Separate relief organizations were established for Poland, Galicia, Serbia, Armenia, Syria, and other countries. In parallel to that, the Spanish diplomatic corps had the right to mediate between the POWs, the Red Cross, and other international organizations (Dennet 1919, 202).

In this way in the spring of 1916 the Lithuanian connections with the UdN's Iberian representatives, especially the Catalans, started to intensify. As the acting secretary of the Union and the representative of the *Lituania* war relief organization, Pouvreau was dispatched to Spain for the propaganda campaign on behalf of the Lithuanians. Sending her was not accidental, because Pouvreau was somewhat known from her articles in Catalan newspapers on Balkan nationalism and the Polish question. On 15 April she gave her first speech at one of the main Catalan cultural institutions, the *Ateneu Barcelonès*. The public lecture was advertised as an important event to attend (Pouvreau 1915a, 1915b). This was clearly the case, because for the Catalan audience she was introduced by one of their prominent national leaders, journalist Alfons Maseras (1884–1939).[7]

The appearance of the Lithuanian (and the UdN) connection during the war benefited the Catalans as well. As mentioned earlier, they were looking for international support that could help pressure Spanish authorities to introduce full national autonomy. At that time Maseras was one of the leading figures in this fight.[8] Following Rovira i Virgili's ideas of Catalan republicanism, Maseras believed that the war presented an opportune moment to acquire French and British support for the future transformation of the Spanish monarchy into a republic. It was expected that the new state would be organized on the principles of either a federation or a confederation, that is, a political system that would be beneficial for Catalan autonomy (Cortade 1969; Ferrer 2004, 2005; Rovira i Virgili 1914–25, 1916). Thus an international Catalan campaign to gain "external sympathy" was launched. One plan was to create some sort of propaganda organization, similar to the Paris-based *Comitè d'Action Tchèque à l'Etranger* (The Czech Action Committee Abroad) or the *Polish Press Bureau* (Hetherington 2012, 245–260). Their goal was to clearly show that the Catalan position differed from that of the Spanish government. For propagandistic reasons, despite the neutrality of Spain and her somewhat closer relations with the Entente, in Republicanist and Catalan propaganda the monarchy was depicted as a strong admirer of the central powers. Such parallels were intended to place Spain in line with other multinational and oppressive empires (Aubert 1995; Barreiro Gordillo 2005; Carden 1979). In this context, the UdN's (i.e. Gabrys's) express interest in Catalans hit the right chord and it seemed that this relation could benefit both sides.

Pouvreau, however, pursued her own agenda. It is rather obvious that her speeches were designed to include all the necessary pedigree to appeal to Basque, Catalan, and Spanish audiences (Pouvreau 1916b). In her first speech she mainly focused on Lithuanian history, highlighting parallels between the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, oppression of the Lithuanians under Polish rule, and the union of the Castile and Catalano-Aragonese crown.[9] A somewhat similarly constructed speech was given a month later where she discussed the future of nationalities in postwar Europe.[10] Moreover, active campaigning for the Lithuanian cause was not limited only to Catalonia. On 26 May Pouvreau addressed Spanish people at the *Ateneo* in Madrid. She even intended to meet King Alfonso XIII and present him with a memorandum on the situation of the Lithuanian POWs in German camps, but the King did not grant her the audience. Pouvreau continued to the north of the country, where on 15 June she made public appearances in Basque country. Her personality and skills left strong impressions on the audiences. Besides being a talented

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speaker, the fact that she was also a woman must have been a rather significant factor too. Maseras praised her skills in the Catalan women's magazine *Feminal* (Maseras 1916).[11] In the end, her tour in Spain lasted for two and a half months and it was very well received by locals (Estevez 1992).[12]

These public lectures also had an educational value for Basque, Catalan, and Spanish audiences. Even among the intellectuals, the existence of Lithuanians was barely known. Since the beginning of WWI, the Catalan weekly separatist magazine *La Nació* mentioned Lithuania only twice: as an "oppressed nation" and as a country with large emigration to the USA. The latter fact was somewhat more important, because with the growing Catalan emigration the problem of preserving national identity in foreign countries arose and numerous Lithuanian diasporas served as a good example to study.[13] Pouvreau's speeches also struck a more sensitive, humanist cord: a week after the first speech, *La Nació* still kept wondering how nations, like the Poles, who were under the same Russian oppression, could "pretend to be free so to oppress [other] natural nations [Lithuanians] which also have the right for freedom." The newspaper reminded its readers of Rovira i Virgili's earlier remarks concerning the complicated relations between the two nations.[14] Interestingly enough, it was the same Gabrys propagandist pamphlet which he distributed during the Congress of Races that again served as the main source of information.

Yet it was the Lithuanians who gained the most from Pouvreau's tour. First, as the result of the propaganda campaign, the Catalan–Lithuanian and Basque–Lithuanian committees were established. Local scholars enthusiastically joined them to get acquainted with Lithuanian history and language. These committees also became the representatives of the *Lituania* war relief organization. Moreover, the tour also benefited LIB's propaganda objective: articles on the Lithuanians appeared in a number of Spanish (*El País*, *La Accion*, *El Liberal*, etc.), Catalan (*La Veu de Catalunya*, *El Poble Català*, *La Nació*, etc.), and Basque (*Euzkadi*, *la Tarde*, *El Noticiero Bilbaíno*, etc.) periodical publications (Pouvreau 1916a).

From Spain Pouvreau rushed back to Lausanne to help organize the UdN's Third Congress of Nationalities, which took place on 27–29 June 1916. Even though declaratively the event supported Entente's policies, in reality, however, the Congress was funded and directed by Germany and its agents, chief of whom were Gabrys and another Lithuanian representative, Baltic German, Friedrich von der Ropp (1879–1964) (Demm 1984). One of their main goals was to strengthen anti-Russian feelings among the participants, especially those who represented peoples from the Russian empire. In parallel, Gabrys was focused on the Catalans, represented at the Congress by Maseras and Joaquim Bassegoda Casas. In his main speech Maseras reiterated the basics of Catalanist doctrines: the Catalan language had to become the official language in local administration and schools, the Catalan Parliament had to be established, and, finally, that in the future Catalonia would opt for its political sovereignty. Following Maseras, Bassegoda Casas also declared Catalan solidarity with the neighboring Basques.[15]

During the Congress the Lithuanian organizers showed exceptional attention to the Catalan and Basque delegates. Perhaps as a sign of appreciation for the recent warm welcome, Pouvreau enthusiastically praised the Iberian representatives, naming them the most sincere partisans of the UdN cause, who selflessly supported others and thus exemplified the motto: "One for all and all for one" (Gabrys 1917, 87). Later, on 3 July, Gabrys, Pouvreau, and the Lithuanian delegation held a banquet honoring Catalans and Basques. Gabrys raised a toast stating that "when Lithuania recovers its freedom, our sons will learn at school that beyond the Pyrenees there exists Catalonia and the Basque Country, [something] which is not taught today under the oppressive regime."[16] It is difficult to say which oppressive regime he was referring to: the Russian or the German.

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Even if one could doubt Gabrys's sincerity due to his involvement in clandestine political games, it would be hard to underestimate the gratitude that the Lithuanians and their supporters had for the Iberian people. Thanks to Pouvreau, the "Iberian connection" was established and solidified during a very short span of time. The Lithuanians, who several months ago were barely known and cared even less about in Spain, now had two rather strong local support organizations with a number of scholars, politicians, nationalists, and other prominent people as their members. Besides the interest in history, culture, and language, the main function of the committees was to serve as alternative transportation hubs for transferring correspondence, money, and other material support from the Entente countries to the *Lituania* war relief organization and further to the Lithuanians in the German-occupied country.

Arguably, the Catalan benefit from the established contacts was somewhat smaller. Primarily their gain was in getting international attention, which they did by being named as an exemplary member of the UdN. They were one of the most mentioned nations in the protocols of the Third Congress of Nationalities. Special attention that the heads of the UdN showed for the Catalans and the Basques not only singled them out during the international meeting, but also must have boosted their hopes that the UdN presented a good chance for the internationalization of their autonomy claims. In parallel, the declarative support of the Congress for the Entente might have been appealing for the Catalan delegation too.

Pragmatic relations (1916–1917)

The work of the Catalan–Lithuanian Committee started soon after the end of the Congress. In the end of August 1916, Lithuanian diasporas in the USA acquired President Woodrow Wilson's consent to hold a one day collection for the benefit of occupied Lithuania (Bartuška 1937, 83–99). Demonstrating solidarity, the Catalan–Lithuanian Committee also announced a long-term collection of money for the Lithuanians.[17] On 15 November they published a declaration which stated that from all the devastated regions in Europe, Lithuania was the one which suffered the most. Similar to Pouvreau's speeches, Catalan sympathy was aroused by drawing parallels between Lithuanian and Catalan history: "Lithuania [or Catalonia – JE, VP] had a glorious history and once it was a powerful state, which freely decided to joint Poland [or Castile – JE, VP], despite deep racial and linguistic differences." The Lithuanians were described as fervent Catholics (just as the Catalans and the whole Spain): "Which Christian won't help another Christian? Which nation, despite its own sufferings, won't help another nation?"[18] The address was signed by a number of prominent Catalan leaders such as Maseras, Rovira i Virgili, and senator Joan Garriga i Massó (1871–1956), to name a few (Massot 2005; Pons 2007; Pons et al. 2011). The names reveal that most of the Catalan–Lithuanian Committee's board was closely connected with *Lliga* and were active supporters of *Mancomunitat*.

Every week, from mid-November 1916 onwards the collected sums and the names of the donors were published in the Catalan press. Members of the Committee's board took the lead with donations. Some of them also convinced their family members and relatives to contribute to the cause. Among the donors there were many national activists from the *Lliga*, the *Unió Catalanista*, the UFNR, and other organizations such as the head of the *Catalan Volunteers Brotherhood Committee* (the organization for the Catalan volunteers fighting in the French Foreign Legion), doctor Joan Solé i Pla (1874–1950). The majority of the donors were educated people, intellectuals, writers, publicists, etc., closely connected with the University of Barcelona.[19] The end of the collection was announced on 31 August 1917. During nine months a total sum of 536 pesetas ($2500 in 2015 dollars) was donated

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for the Lithuanian war relief fund.[20] Other initiatives also contributed to support Lithuania such as a five-month newspaper, *La Nació*, campaign, *El Poble Català* Christmas's collect, or money collected by Catalan volunteers (Martínez Fiol 1991, 175–183). These were not very large sums, but considering the war-time situation and the fact that Lithuanians were still a very little known national group – this was generous support, a gesture within the spirit of the UdN.

Another Catalan–Lithuanian cooperation took place during the so-called Lithuanian Day. On 20 May 1917, Pope Benedict XV agreed to hold a one-day collection for Lithuanians in all the Catholic churches of the world (Gabrys 1920, 174–180). For the organization of the event the Lithuanian Executive Committee (*Comité exécutif lituanien*) was established in Switzerland. It produced thousands of agitation leaflets in different languages, which depicted Lithuanian sufferings under Russian rule, oppression of the Catholic Church, devastation brought by war, and so on. Several members of the Committee acted as couriers in dispatching the propaganda. The dissemination in the Iberian Peninsula and Latin America was given to Priest Olšauskas, who, as mentioned earlier, was the second Lithuanian loosely associated with the UdN. In Spain he immediately contacted the Lithuanian–Catalan Committee asking for urgent assistance in dispatching Lithuanian propaganda material to Latin American countries. It was crucial that the packages were sent from Port Cadiz in order not to be checked by British customs at Gibraltar, because, as it was well known, the anti-Russian texts would have been confiscated. This operation was carried out successfully and Olšauskas still had time to agitate for the Lithuanian cause by visiting the bishop of Barcelona, Enric Reig (1859–1927). Also he tried getting an audience with the King, but without any success (Steponaitis 1940, 104). Nevertheless, even with the ongoing collections, the Catalans were rather keen on donating money. The total sum of the one-day collection reached 577 pesetas and 500 French francs. It needs to be said that apart from support for Serbian orphans, the aid for the Lithuanians was the largest war-relief campaign in Catalonia during the whole WWI.[21]

By the end of the war, however, the association between the Lithuanians and Catalans started to fade. The uneven political perspectives of the two countries became even more manifest. Gabrys, who was deeply involved in political machinations with the Germans and Entente, gradually lost his interest in maintaining the "international of nationalities" and the UdN started to lose its purpose. The Lithuanians were rapidly moving closer toward their independence which was proclaimed on 16 February 1918, whereas the Catalans remained isolated within neutral Spain, pursuing the old goal – wider autonomy within the Spanish monarchy. It was understood that independent Catalonia seemed rather unrealistic at the time. Therefore, in autumn 1918 the *Lliga* began campaigning for the introduction of home rule. Even achieving these demands proved to be too difficult: the combined force of the Catalan left-wing nationalists, the republicans, and the separatists was not powerful enough to introduce the changes.

By the end of the war, Gabrys's cunning political schemes (or so he thought) and personal ambitions collided with other Lithuanian political groups. Out of desperation or trying to implement yet another plan, in 1919 he and Ropp unsuccessfully attempted to stage a coup in Lithuania with the help of several German Freikorps units (Čepėnas 1986, 539–544). After that he was ostracized from the country and spent most of his remaining life in Switzerland.

It would seem that echoes of wartime Catalan–Lithuanian cooperation remained only in Catalonia. In 1920 Maseras published a report in the *Butlletí de l'Associació Protectora de l'Ensenyança Catalana* where he presented the development of the teaching of the Lithuanian language from the mid-nineteenth century until WWI. Probably this was one of the last

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references to the Baltic country in the interwar Catalan press. Yet the importance of Catalan activities in the UdN was not completely forgotten: in 1935 the newspaper *La Veu de Catalunya* stated that Pouvreau's monograph on the Catalans was "the first publication on the international scene to present the problem of Catalan autonomy in its whole complexity" (Pouvreau 1917).[22]

Conclusion

The international cooperation of national movements before the end of the WWI reveals several general trends that dominated this scene. First, it can be argued that organizations such as the UdN played an important role in the internationalization of non-dominant national movements. The three congresses of nationalities provided a variety of examples in tactics, propaganda, and lobbying, which were beneficial for greater dissemination of nationalist demands and putting pressure on ruling powers. Participation in the UdN's activities gave the nationalists an opportunity to make direct contact and discuss the progress of their struggle, such as, for example, becoming familiar with the Catalan *Mancomunitat* project.

Undoubtedly, interest and support from some of the prominent scholars and politicians strengthened the self-confidence of the otherwise politically weak national intelligentsias. Under the Union's organizational umbrella ("one for all and all for one," to use Pouvreau's description), they started forming a group which, even though having small political power, could nonetheless act as a kind of modern nongovernmental organization – the role that the League of Nations had during the interwar period. The UdN's organization as a "syndicate of nations" carried strong democratic, socialist, and modernist tendencies which, arguably, also added particular ideological potency and popular support.

As can be seen from the discussion above, the cooperation between the Catalans and the Lithuanians developed within the UdN's ideological framework. For the Lithuanians the importance of the "Catalan connection" can be divided into two periods: before and during the war. During the prewar period, the Catalans were perceived as one of the leaders of the autonomist movement in Europe. Gabrys admired the *Mancomunitat*, although most probably realized that direct transfer of the model was impossible in the Lithuanian case. With the outbreak of the war and the collapse of the old imperial order, however, the Lithuanians found themselves in a qualitatively different situation – the independence of the country became more realistic than ever before.

Due to the neutrality of Spain, the Catalan political struggle for autonomy was complicated. The new plan to internationalize Catalanism and thus pressure Spanish authorities, brought them closer to the UdN, Gabrys, and the Lithuanians. Thanks to Pouvreau's propaganda tours, the Catalans started supporting the Lithuanians and hoped for assistance in their own struggle. Such action not only put the Catalans on the international scene, but it also consolidated their own national claims (Núñez Seixas 2010, 7–25). Unfortunately, these hopes did not materialize. There were many reasons why the Catalan–Lithuanian cooperation failed. Perhaps one of the main problems rested in the transformation of the relations: when the Catalan national leaders still dwelled within the pre-WWI UdN's spirit of syndicalism and cooperation of national movements, the Lithuanians (i.e. Gabrys) saw this connection as an opportune and pragmatic alliance.

The short-lived Catalan–Lithuanian encounter before and during WWI was but one example of international cooperation. Led by self-proclaimed diplomats, politicians with little experience, and populists, many small nations struggled in their attempts to acquire and secure autonomous countries or independent states.

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Notes

1. As Pélissier explained in one of his informational letters, the organization was aimed at

   > isolated nationalities, which left to themselves can do nothing to regain their liberty or safeguard their autonomy and independence, we urged their grouping, leaguing and uniting for getting to know one another, and creating amongst them a sort of moral federation as a prelude to and condition of a closer union. (Pélissier 1912, 119)

2. It is interesting to note that among the supporters of the UdN was the future American President Woodrow Wilson, although whether he was actually involved in the organization is not clear.
3. It is worth noting that Gabrys gave lectures on the Lithuanians, which were rather well-referenced in the introduction by Seignobos. The Catalans, on the other hand, received special attention: a separate chapter was composed by a specialist on the Iberian Peninsula, Angel Marvaud (Marvaud 1913).
4. See correspondence between the folklorist Rossend Serra i Pagès (1863–1929) and Pélissier, 1911–1912, *Arxiu Històric de la Ciutat de Barcelona*. The journalist contacted him to obtain names of possible candidates for patronage.
5. Pouvreau claimed that she was with Gabrys since 1911 (Pouvreau's letter to Bartuška (Paris, 20 June 1922), Lithuanian National Library, Rare Books and Manuscripts Section, Fond F29–1501, 34).
6. Twenty years later Gabrys rebuffed these accusations, stating that all along his strategy was gaining the best possible outcome for the Lithuanians no matter who would have won the war. German annexation of Lithuania meant that they became the new power in his homeland, and therefore without any moral reservations he started dealing with the Germans (Gabrys 1937).
7. It is somewhat unclear whether Pouvreau and Maseras knew each other before this meeting. Most probably they met in Paris, where Maseras had worked as a journalist since 1910. There were rumors that they might have been in a romantic relation before her involvement with Gabrys. The existence of such a personal connection could also explain the relative easiness and success of Pouvreau's tour in Spain.
8. This internationalization had many forms. For example, Maseras was an active member of the *Comitè de Germanor amb els Voluntaris Catalans* (Catalan Volunteers Brotherhood Committee), which was established to support Catalan volunteers in the French Foreign Legion – an act that in the future might have influenced France's support (Alomar 1915; Esculies and Martínez Fiol 2014).
9. See, for example: "Hostessa illustre" 1916, 2; "Per la Lithuania. Conferència Mlle. Pouvreau" 1916, 1; "Sobre Lituània. Conferència important" 1916, 1; "Para que Lituania viva" 1916, 10–11.
10. "Per la Lithuania. Conferència de Mlle. Ivonne Pouvreau" 1916, 1.
11. "En voz baja" 1916, 1; "A l'Ateneo de Madrid" 1916, 2; "Propaganda nacionalista" 1916, 1; "Mlle. I. Pouvreau en el Ateneo" 1916, 18.
12. Lithuanians planned that Pouvreau would tour the USA together with the Russian opera singer Rozova, thus combining entertainment and public lectures. However, probably due to the lack of funding, the trip was cancelled (Misiūnas 2004, 90 (footnote)).
13. "La nova Europa que s'obira," 1915, 4; "Havana" 1915, 4.
14. *La Nació* 1916, 5–6. Hungary was seen as an oppressed nation that aimed to oppress others.
15. "La III Conferència de les Nacionalitats de Lausanne," *La Nació*, July 8, 1916, 5–6; "La III Conferència de les Nacionalitats, de Lausanne," *La Nació*, August 5, 1916, 5–6; "III Conferencia de las Nacionalidades," *El Poble Català*, July 24, 1916, 1; "III Conferència de les Nationalitats. L'exposició," *El Poble Català*, July 25, 1916, 1; Gabrys 1917, 78–86.
16. "El banquete de los lituanos," *La Veu de Catalunya*, August 13, 1916, 1; "Una intervenció lloable," *La Nació*, August 12, 1916, 4.
17. *La Nació*, October 21, 1916, 8.
18. "Pro-Lituània," *Gent Nova. Portaveu del Centre Catalanista Gent Nova de Badalona*, December 2, 1916, 5–6; "Per l'amorosiment del calvari lituà," *La Nació*, December 9, 1916, 7. Information about the preparations for the collects in the USA and Spain was also announced in the German-

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controlled Lithuanian press. The official newspaper in the Lithuanian language, *Dabartis* (The Present), informed that the Catalan initiative was headed by Senator Joan Garriga i Massó (1871–1956) ("Naujas veiksmas Lietuvai šelpti," *Dabartis* 93, 1916, 1).

19. As an example, Pau Turull, director of the nationalist magazine *Messidor*; Joan Pérez-Jorba, art critic established in Paris; Lluís Nicolau d'Olwer, lawyer and Medievalist, member of the Youths of the *Lliga* (5), Ferran Valls Taberner, Medievalist, professor of the former and member of the *Lliga* (5); Albert Bastardas, lawyer and vice-president of the *Mancomunitat*, leading member of UFNR (5), Manuel Folguera Duran, engineer and member of *Unió Catalanista* (10); Frederic Pell Cuffí, doctor and member of *Unió Catalanista* (5); the writer and friend of Maseras, Narcís Oller, 5; Pilar Puig Macià, daughter of Josep Puig i Cadafalch (15); Joaquim Casas Carbó, lawyer and editor (5); Joan Cirera Sampere, doctor (10); Ramon Enric Bassegoda, poet and journalist (5); Josep Ros Guell (5), Anfós Sans Rosell, writer and member of *Unió Catalanista* (2,50), among others.
20. "Per la Lituània" *La Nació*, December 23, 1916, 2; "Per la Lituània" *La Nació*, January 13, 1917, 3; "Per la Lituània" *La Nació*, February 3, 1917, 4; "Per la Lituània" *La Nació*, *La Nació*, February 17, 1917, 3; "Per la Lituània" *La Nació*, March 8, 1917, 8; *La Nació*, April 7, 1917, 8; *La Vanguardia*, February 2, 1917, 3; *La Vanguardia*, April 1, 1917, 5; *La Vanguardia*, June 2, 1917, 3; *La Vanguardia*, August 21, 1917, 3.
21. For example: *La Nació*, June 10, 1916, 8; August 5, 1916, 4; August 19, 1916, 6; August 26, 1916, 2; September 9, 1916, 4; October 7, 1916, 4; November 25, 1916, 7.
22. "De Ginebra estant," *La Veu de Catalunya*, October 2,1935, 11.

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