

# TURKEY-LITHUANIA RELATIONS BETWEEN 1923 AND 1940 ACCORDING TO TURKISH DOCUMENTS

*Araştırma Makalesi / Research Article*

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## ABSTRACT

The beginning of Turkey-Lithuania relations dates back to the Ottoman Empire period. These relations, which resumed with the establishment of the Republic of Turkey, continued uninterrupted until the invasion of the Republic of Lithuania by the Soviet Union in 1940. This study deals with the Turkey-Lithuania relations dating back to World War II. The development of relations between the parties and the factors affecting this development are examined. Turkish resources including the archives of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in particular were used in this study. The relations between the two states were mostly within the framework of trade agreements. The parties also signed a treaty of friendship within this period. Other than the arrest of Antanas Paškevičius-Poška, a Lithuanian investigator who was suspected of being a spy, no other incidents causing any tension took place. The distance between the two countries and the fact that Lithuania is a small market are the main reasons limiting the relations. As a result of this, the volume of trade between the two countries were low for many years. No diplomatic representative offices could be opened in either country, and relevant contacts were provided through accreditation. In addition, no mutual consulates could be established during the specified period. On the other hand, the invasion of Lithuania and its subsequent annexation were not recognized by Turkey.

**Key words:** Turkey, Lithuania, Baltic, economic relations, Antanas Paškevičius -Poška.

## TÜRK BELGELERİNE GÖRE TÜRKİYE-LİTVANYA İLİŞKİLERİ (1923-1940)

### ÖZ

Türkiye-Litvanya ilişkilerinin başlangıcı Osmanlı Devleti dönemine dayanmaktadır. Türkiye Cumhuriyeti'nin kurulmasıyla da devam eden bu ilişkiler, Litvanya Cumhuriyeti'nin 1940 yılında Sovyetler tarafından işgaline dek kesintisiz sürmüştür. Bu çalışmada İkinci Dünya Savaşı yıllarına kadar süre gelen Türkiye-Litvanya ilişkileri konu alınmıştır. Tarafların ilişkilerinin gelişimi ve bu gelişime etki eden faktörler irdelenmiştir. Çalışma, başta Dışişleri Bakanlığı arşiv belgeleri olmak üzere Türk kaynaklarından faydalanılarak hazırlanmıştır. İki devlet arasındaki ilişkiler daha çok ticari anlaşmalar çerçevesinde gerçekleşmiştir. Taraflar bu süreçte dostluk antlaşması da imzalamışlardır. Litvanyalı araştırmacı Antanas Paškevičius-Poška'nın casus olduğu şüphesi ile gözaltına alınması dışında gerginlik yaratan başka bir olaya tesadüf edilmemiştir. İki ülke arasındaki mesafe ve Litvanya'nın büyük bir pazar olmayışı ilişkileri sınırlandıran başlıca nedenler olmuştur. Bunun bir sonucu olarak iki ülke arasındaki ticaret hacmi uzun yıllar düşük seyretmiştir. Karşılıklı diplomatik temsilcilikler açılmamış ve bu yöndeki temaslar akredite olarak sağlanmıştır. Ayrıca belirtilen dönemde karşılıklı konsolosluklar da oluşturulamamıştır. Öte yandan Litvanya'nın işgali ve sonrasında ilhakı Türkiye tarafından tanınmamıştır.

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** Türkiye, Litvanya, Baltık, ekonomik ilişkiler, Antanas Paškevičius -Poška.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

The beginning of Turkey-Lithuania relations dates back to the Ottoman Empire period. The first relationship is said to have taken place after Grand Duke Jagiełło of Lithuania became king of Poland in 1386 (Ortaylı, 2011). The relations became really intense after the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth was founded in 1569. During this period, the parties acted with an understanding of strategic friendship. Despite this understanding there was always fierce competition between them. Both parties were engaged in an indirect war through the Crimean Khanate and the Ukrainian Cossacks (Öztürk, 2017).

Both the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth and the Ottoman Empire got weaker over time. The commonwealth collapsed towards the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> century. Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth was divided among Austrian, Prussian and Russian empires. The Ottomans never recognized or justified the consequences of the division of the Polish-Lithuanian state in 1795. The Ottoman Empire also opposed the suppression of the 1831 and 1863 uprisings (Miškinienė, 2012). Although Lithuania gained its independence after World War I, it remained under the occupation of first Germans and then Soviets during World War II (Lorot, 1991: 7). The Soviet occupation lasted until the Republic of Lithuania re-declared its independence in 1990.

On the other hand, the Ottoman Empire collapsed after World War I. New states were founded on some parts of their territory while some other parts were occupied by western states. Turks founded the Republic of Turkey in 1923 after their struggle for independence on the remains of the empire.

An important development regarding the relations between the Ottoman Empire and Lithuania took place after World War I. The Lithuanian government and the Central Committee for the Relief of the Lithuanian War Sufferers in Switzerland applied to the Ottoman embassy in Berlin with a petition on 13 August 1918 for the release of Lithuanian soldiers who served in the army during Tsarist Russia period and were captured by the Ottoman Empire during the war. The petition was as follows:

*“We have learned that there were many Lithuanian prisoners of war in the Ottoman Empire. Peace was made with Russia a long time ago (the Treaty of Brest Litovsk is meant) and we ask the Ottoman government to release the Lithuanian prisoners of war and allow them to return to Lithuania as it is necessary to release them under international laws because they belonged to the former Russian army. If there are Lithuanian captives who have to stay in Turkey due to illness or other reasons, we kindly request you to help both the Lithuanian government and the Relief Committee send them help, enable them to contact their relatives, and meet their religious needs.”* (BOA, HR.SYS./2231.13).

After the request, the Sublime Porte's legal counsellor stated in a statement sent to the Grand Vizier that the Ottoman Empire had agreed to the separation of Lithuania from Russia in accordance with the provisions of the Brest-Litovsk agreement. The counsellor further stated that only a part of the Ottoman prisoners of war who were in Russia under the treaty and had to be released had returned to their homeland, the rest had not yet returned, but it would be appropriate to release the Lithuanians among the Russian prisoners. Immediately after the consultation, the War Office was instructed to prevent Lithuanian prisoners getting sick, to house the sick in hospitals, and to bring all prisoners to Istanbul for transfer to Lithuania (BOA, HR.SYS./2231.13; Temel, 1998: 46).

Another important issue regarding Turkey-Lithuania relations is the existence of two Turkish groups living in Lithuania, albeit in small numbers. One of them is the Karaim Turks. The Turks in this group, who are descendants of the Khazars, are Jewish (Anadol, 2003: 150). The other Turkish group consists of Crimean Tatars and Sunni Muslims (Krata, 2014: 133; Jamontaite, 2015: 46; Litvanya Uzak Batının Tatarları, 2004: 131-132). Vytautas, the Grand Duke of Lithuania, took both groups with him to his country after the war with the Golden Horde state in 1397. The Duke placed these Turks around the castle in Trakai, the capital at the time, since he admired their fighting skills

(Anadol, 2003: 152; Kobeckaite, 2010).<sup>1</sup> Those Turkish groups lost most of their language and culture over time, but managed to preserve their religion (Cumhuriyet, February 11, 1938).

The relations between Turkey and Lithuania are mostly discussed within the framework of the relations between Turkey and the Baltic states in Turkish sources.

However, one of the two important studies on the relations of both states is a language thesis conducted at Vilnius University in 2013 (Volkov, 2013). The other is the Congress on Turkey-Lithuania Relations held in Vilnius in 2019 (Ünver, 2019). Studies in Congress contain fairly limited information about the time period studied in this article. On the other hand, the mentioned thesis discusses the relations between Lithuania and Turkey between 1918 and 1940, and it is the first work in this direction. But the study in question was mainly prepared using Lithuanian sources, and its content is limited.

Both that congress and other studies contain very limited information about the date range of this article. Turkey-Lithuania relations between 1923, the official foundation date of the Republic of Turkey, and 1940, the year when Lithuania was occupied by the Soviet Union and the relations between both states were terminated, are discussed in this study. The development of relations between the parties and the factors affecting this development are examined. Turkish resources were used in the study. In this context, the documents of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Directorate of State Archives, the data of the Turkish Statistical Institute and the press were used.

## 2. DEVELOPMENT OF RELATIONS

Republic of Turkey and the Republic of Lithuania are the states founded as a result of their struggle against imperialism (Duman, 2019: 14). Bilateral relations between these countries without any bilateral issues since past (Duman, 2019: 14) began in the early years of the establishment of the state of Turkish Republic (BOA, HR.İM./43.12). In fact, Turkey replaced the Ottoman Empire in Lithuania's ongoing relations with the Ottoman State. During those years, however, there were no direct diplomatic representations between the countries. Relations were conducted by embassies in different countries through accreditation. Both countries made diplomatic contacts through their embassies in Warsaw until the late 1920s (DİAD, 553/43007.42072.1.). The acting ambassador in Riga, Estonia took over this mission in 1929 (DİAD, 553/42954.43036.1; BOA, HR.İM./230.22).<sup>2</sup> Ibrahim Osman Bey was appointed to the chargseship. After the abolition of the acting ambassador's office in order to save money in the budget, it was decided that Turkey's representation duties in Latvia, Lithuania and Estonia should be carried out through another representative office. After deciding that the Moscow embassy of Lithuania would represent Turkey at the same time (DBTDA, 553/42959.43041.5; DBTDA, 553/42959.43041.9.), it was also decided that Latvia, Lithuania, and Estonia would be represented by the Moscow embassy of Turkey in the capacity of extraordinary envoy and minister plenipotentiary. With this decision taken in 1932, Hüseyin Ragıp Bey, the Turkish Ambassador to Moscow, assumed this mission (BCA 30.18.1.2/28.40.19; DİAD, 553/42953.43035.1; T.R. Official Gazette, August 27, 1932). Vasıf bey, who was appointed to replace Ragıp Bey in 1934, took over the mission (BCA, 30.18.1.2/49.75.16.). Jurgis Baltrušaitis was Lithuania's ambassador to Moscow during the same period (DİAD, 553/42959.43041.9; Cumhuriyet, May 12, 1932).<sup>3</sup> It is remarkable that these two states, which was under Soviet / Russian threat and occupation throughout history and still feel this threat, establish diplomatic relations through Moscow embassies.

Vasıf Bey's mission to represent the Baltic countries did not last long. Turkey opened a representative office in Tallin in 1935. Osman Nuri Batu was appointed as the ambassador. The embassy was accredited to Lithuania on 4 September 1935 (The Republic of Turkey Ministry of

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<sup>1</sup> Also see, İeva Vasiliauskaite, Karay Türklerinin Dini Yapıları "Kenasa"lar, Mimar Sinan Güzel Sanatlar Üniversitesi, Sosyal Bilimler Enstitüsü, İstanbul 2018; Jamontaite, *ibid.*, p. 79-94.

<sup>2</sup> Although no documents could be obtained, it is likely that the Lithuanian Embassy in Riga was accredited to Turkey in the same period.

<sup>3</sup> Baltrušaitis played an important role in the development of Turkey-Lithuania relations. Volkov, 2013: 22).

Foreign Affairs, (n.d.): s.359, 367; DĪAD, 553/42948.43030.1; T.R. Official Gazette, July 25, 1935).<sup>4</sup> and Mr. Batu was appointed as the minister plenipotentiary to the Lithuanian government (T.R. Official Gazette, August 31, 1935).<sup>5</sup> So, the Tallin embassy assumed representation of Turkey in Lithuania. Three years after that development, Mr. Batu submitted a request to the Foreign Ministry for establishment of an honorary consulate in Lithuania. The letter dated 4 December 1938 stated that a trade agreement and a clearing agreement could be made soon between the two countries, and the workload of the embassy would substantially increase after those agreements due to the distance between Kaunas<sup>6</sup> and Tallin and restrictions on foreign exchange. The letter also stated that it would be appropriate to open a consulate in Kaunas in order to ensure that those works were carried out on site, ensure the development of trade and imports in Lithuania, and to provide the necessary statistics (DĪAD,553/42946.43028.1).

Although there were not so many commercial and political activities with Lithuania to necessitate opening a consulate, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs deemed it appropriate to open an honorary consulate for development of relations and referred the matter to the Council of Ministers (DĪAD,553/42946.43028.3). However, there was no positive decision from the council. Batu made several more written applications to the Foreign Ministry regarding this matter. He repeated the necessity of an honorary consulate by stating that some Lithuanian merchants had contacted merchants in Turkey because of the commercial agreements that were likely to be made with Lithuania and that bilateral trade could reach a good level in a short time. Nevertheless, there was no change in the government's decision (DĪAD,553/42946.43028.2; DĪAD, 553/42944.43026.1).

### 3. FRIENDSHIP TREATY AND INTIMACY IN RELATIONS

After their foundation, Turkey and Lithuania began to develop initiatives to be recognized in international arenas and develop relations within the framework of the principle of reciprocity (Duman, 2019: 14). Both countries made bilateral agreements with different countries in the 1920s, mostly with commercial and security concerns. One of the meetings for this purpose took place between these two countries. It is understood from the available data that the first friendship treaty between Turkey and Lithuania was signed in 1925 (BOA, HR.İM./158.3; DĪAD, 553/43007.42072.1).<sup>7</sup> However, no further information about this treaty could be found. On the other hand, this treaty did not enter into force, and the parties began negotiations again in 1926 for a new treaty of friendship probably because they thought the former treaty needed revisions.

Lithuania made the first proposition and informed Turkey of its willingness to negotiate a friendship treaty. Jurgis Baltrušaitis, the Lithuanian ambassador to Moscow, visited Zekai Beyefendi, the Turkish ambassador to Moscow, to discuss the matter.<sup>8</sup> During his visit, Baltrušaitis stated that Lithuania had signed a defense treaty similar to the Turkish-Russian Friendship Treaty (1925) with Russia on 15 September in Kovno, and that the parties had recognized each other's territorial integrity, unlike the one signed by Turkey. He said that the treaty was kept confidential at that time due to the displeasure that might occur because of making an agreement with Russia in addition to the inconvenience that could be created by Memelians who had complained to the League of Nations about Lithuania, and that the treaty would be announced after the return of the Lithuanian prime minister and minister of foreign affairs from their expected trip to Moscow. The ambassador also

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<sup>4</sup> The embassy in Tallin was also accredited to Latvia in the same year. (DĪAD, 553/42948.43030.1).

<sup>5</sup> After a short while, he went to present his credentials to the President of the Republic of Lithuania Antanas Smetona. The photo of this meeting is available in funds of the Lioniurlionis Art Museum. (Miškinienė, 2012).

<sup>6</sup> Upon the occupation of the Lithuanian capital Vilnius by Poland, the city of Kaunas (Kovno) was the capital of Lithuania in the period between 1920 and 1939. ([Kaunas, 2020](#)).

<sup>7</sup> Turkey signed a separate treaty of friendship with Estonia and Latvia in 1925. The treaty signed with Latvia came into force in 1926. Because Estonian General Jonan Laidoner prepared an anti-Turkey report on the Mosul problem, the Treaty of friendship with Estonia was approved in the Parliament in 1927. (T.R. Official Gazette, January 17, 1926; T.R. Official Gazette, May 28, 1927; Dilek, 2010: 13).

<sup>8</sup> Baltrušaitis believed that Lithuania needed cooperation not only with its neighbors or former European countries, but also with Eastern countries (Miškinienė, 2012).

stated that Lithuania intended to expand its economic relations with Turkey, and a friendship treaty was desired by Lithuania to ensure that, but it would make an offer on this issue only after the prime minister's arrival in Moscow (BCA, 30.18.1.2/11.33.12). After this development, the Turkish government authorized Zekai Bey to make the agreement (DĪAD, 553/42955.43037.26). However, no agreement could be made. Baltrušaitis paid a second visit to the Turkish embassy in Moscow in November 1928 and repeated his wish to make a treaty of friendship with Turkey. Authorized by the government to sign, Baltrušaitis submitted a draft to the Turkish embassy (DĪAD, 553/42955.43037.27). Two months after the visit, Balterosaitis reappeared at the embassy to receive an answer. However, the ambassador said that he had not received any instructions from his government yet (DĪAD, 553/42955.43037.24). The reply from the Turkish Foreign Affairs came on 22 January 1929. Accordingly, the project presented by Lithuania was essentially accepted. However, the third article of the project containing a *most-favored-nation clause* for all economic and commercial relations and customs transactions between the two governments was found to be contrary to Turkey's interests. Therefore, it was demanded that the relevant article be amended as follows: “*The parties shall regulate the commercial and industrial affairs and navigation, import, export, transit and customs tax transactions between them by a special agreement. Until the ratification of this agreement, these issues can be resolved temporarily with a Modus Vivendi.*” The Turkish government wanted the agreement to be signed as soon as possible, and therefore authorized the Moscow embassy to sign it (BCA, 30.18.1.2/1.11.4; DĪAD, 553/42955.43037.18; DĪAD, 553/42955.43037.7; DĪAD, 553/42955.43037.3.). Lithuania accepted the specified amendments. Ambassadors of both countries signed the treaty of friendship on 17 September 1930 in Moscow (DĪAD, 553/42958.43040.1; Cumhuriyet, September 19, 1930). The treaty included the following clauses:

1. Peace, sincere and lasting friendship will be irrevocably in effect between the Republic of Turkey and the Republic of Lithuania.
2. The parties agree on the establishment of political relations between the two states in accordance with the principles of International Law. Both parties agree, on the condition of reciprocity, that their political representatives benefit from practices established in the territory of the other under the rules of Public International Law.
3. The parties have agreed to regulate commercial and consular transactions between their countries and residence conditions of citizens of the other party on each other's territory in accordance with the Public International Law and on the basis of full reciprocity in the future.
4. This agreement shall be ratified, and the ratification certificates shall be exchanged as quickly as possible in Ankara.

The agreement shall enter into force fifteen days after the exchange (DĪAD, 553/42956.43038.1).

The agreement includes the establishment of a sincere and eternal friendship between the two parties, starting political and consular relations, and deciding residence and trade agreements. The agreement was put to a vote on 23 March 1931 at the Grand National Assembly of Turkey, approved on the same day (DĪAD, 553/42956.43038.4.; DĪAD, 553/42956.43038.1), and entered into force on 31 March (T.R. Official Gazette, March 31, 1931).

On the other hand, the dialogues between both countries improved from day to day. In 1929, Ibrahim Bey, who went to Kaunas, received compliments from the President Augustinas Voldemaras to whom he presented his letter of credence. In this speech, Voldemaras told the Turkish acting ambassador that although there were no Turkish subjects in Lithuania, the descendants of the northern Turks who settled among the Lithuanians and learned the language of the country and maintained their religion were granted the rights and patronage that every Lithuanian had (DĪAD, 553/42954.43036.1). Baltrušaitis, the Lithuanian ambassador to Moscow, came to Turkey in 1932 to submit his letter of credence and to sign friendship and trade agreements, and he said the following to President Mustafa Kemal:

*“As a faithful interpreter of the feelings of the Lithuanian nation and government, I would like to declare that I am going to do everything in my power to support and further increase the friendship and good relations between Lithuania and Turkey during this honorable mission entrusted to me.*

He continued his speech with the following words about Turkey's war of independence:

*“As a friend who remotely watched the last wonderful struggle undertaken by the Turkish nation for independence, I am happy that I am going to be able to closely observe the extraordinary efforts made by Turkey to realize its goal in the peace arena from now on.”*

In response to those beautiful words of the ambassador, the president said, *“I am happy to hear you say that the Lithuanian nation and government wish to further increase the friendly relations between Turkey and Lithuania.”* He went on as follows:

*“I am highly moved by your friendly interest and appreciation of the struggle we started to defend our independence and the efforts we have made to achieve our national goal of ensuring the development and prosperity of the Turkish nation in a rapid and peaceful manner as well as your wishes about myself. We appreciate the happy results of the efforts made by the Lithuanian nation with the aim of achieving and maintaining national independence and development as well.”* (Cumhuriyet, May 21, 1932; Miškinienė, 2012).

The ambassador told the following to the press before leaving Turkey:

*“This is the second time I have come to your country.<sup>9</sup> I found Ankara much changed. There is an evident and great work of progress all over your country. I have been here for ten days and I have witnessed great progress and development in other cities as well in this period of time. Turkey has proven that it has acquired a historic chance thanks to the exceptional statesmen it has.*

*We want to be good neighbors to everyone. Our relations with neighboring states are amicable as well. However, we have two pending issues with Poland: The Vilno city which Poland took from us 10 years ago, and the Memel issue. The Memel dispute is a very important matter that concerns international politics. It particularly concerns Baltic countries such as Lithuania, Finland, and Estonia. Our political relations with Poland have been terminated for this reason.*

*Since political relations with Turkey have been established, efforts will also be made for the development of commercial relations between the two countries. Lithuania has been buying tobacco from Turkey for a long time. We are also thinking of buying fresh and dry fruits.”* (Cumhuriyet, May 23, 1932).

Lithuania supported that Turkey was a member to the League of Nations in 1932 (Ağır, 2019: 63). It is seen that Lithuania supported Turkey again in the elections of non-permanent member to the League of Nations a year later (Kaubrys, 2019: 220). Vitéz Pesthy József Leó Müller, the honorary Consul General of Lithuania, was among the Hungarian delegation coming to Ankara to celebrate the tenth anniversary of the proclamation of the Republic in 1933 (Cumhuriyet, October 28, 1933). The Lithuanian president Antanas Smetona sent a congratulatory telegraph to the Turkish president Mustafa Kemal for the ceremony (Cumhuriyet, November 4, 1933). Shortly afterwards, on the occasion of Lithuania's national holiday, the president of Turkey sent a congratulatory telegraph to the president of Lithuania (Cumhuriyet, February 26, 1934). These congratulatory messages between the two leaders continued until Atatürk's death (Cumhuriyet, February 25, 1935; Cumhuriyet, February 21, 1936; Cumhuriyet, November 7, 1936; Cumhuriyet, February 24, 1938; Şimşir, 2001: 255-264).<sup>10</sup> In 1938, the minister plenipotentiary Kazys Bizaukasi from Kaunas

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<sup>9</sup> He first came in October 1931 for the exchange of the friendship treaty.

<sup>10</sup> The telegraphs between Atatürk and Smetona were published in a four-volume work by Bilal Şimşir, which deals with telegraphs between Atatürk and foreign heads of state. See. (Şimşir, 2001).

attended Atatürk's funeral, representing the President of Lithuania (Şimşir, 2001: 264). The Lithuanian press closely followed Atatürk's illness and published articles praising him on his death (Büyük Yasımıza İştirak Edenler November 15 1938; Ulu Şefimize, Dünyanın Hayranlığı November 16 1938; Toksoy, 2006: 178).

An exchange of notes took place between Turkey and Lithuania in order to achieve equality in visa fees in 1939.<sup>11</sup> Another contact took place between the two countries during World War II. During the Soviet occupation of Lithuania, a petition from Vilnius to the Turkish Red Crescent Society bearing the signature of Ahmad who was the head of a charity<sup>12</sup> reported that 300 Turks in the city were suffering a lot from the Russian occupation, requesting aid from the Red Crescent (DİAD, 553/42997.42062.4). The Turkish Ministry of Foreign Affairs requested information about the letter from the embassy in Tallinn. The ambassador sent the following reply:

*"The Turks among the Vilnius people are known as Tatar minorities. Some incidents broke out in the city due to famine and high prices caused by the Russian occupation and asylum-seeking civilians and soldiers of Poland whose economy was damaged by the war. The Lithuanian government, the International, British and American Red Cross societies and private institutions are currently helping people and refugees as much as possible."* (DİAD, 553/42997.42062.1).

The embassy's telegraph was immediately reported by telephone to the Prime Minister's office by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (DİAD, 553/42997.42062.1). In addition to this development, the International Committee of the Red Cross requested the Red Crescent Society of Turkey to assist the Red Cross Society of Lithuania. However, only a small amount of financial aid could be provided as it was not possible to send food and clothing due to the adverse effects of war (BCA, 30.10.178/234.34).

Lithuania's diplomatic relations with Turkey were terminated after the Soviet occupation of the Baltic states in 1940. The embassy in Tallin that was accredited to Lithuania was closed. The occupation and subsequent annexation were not recognized by Turkey (Türkiye-Litvanya İlişkileri, (n.d.).<sup>13</sup>

#### 4. A SMALL TENSION: SUSPECTED SPYING

The suspicion of an espionage incident in Turkey created a little tension between Turkey and Lithuania. A Lithuanian citizen named Antonas Paskevicius-Poška was arrested in Erzurum province on 14 January 1935 on suspicion of being a spy (DİAD, 553/42993.42058.18; DİAD, 553/42993.42058.7). The first information that he was a spy was given to the Turkish authorities by Soviet sources (DİAD, 553/42993.42058.25; DİAD, 553/42993.42058.14). The investigation showed that the person had made suspicious trips to Turkey and engaged in some Kurdish activities (DİAD, 553/42993.42058.18; DİAD, 553/42993.42058.7). The report on the person stated that he was trying to spread dangerous ideas by engaging in dialogue with some people under the pretext of scientific research, and that it was understood from the investigation of some notes and documents. The report also emphasized that it was highly probable that the person was spying for a foreign government (DİAD, 553/42993.42058.14).

After being imprisoned for 15 days, Poška was placed under police custody at the Trabzon Hotel in Galata, Istanbul. The Lithuanian Embassy in Moscow reported to the Turkish Embassy that Poška was arrested while returning to his home country from India, where he was conducting

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<sup>11</sup> Exchange dates: 26 May 1939 and 17 June 1939. (The Republic of Turkey Vilnius Embassy, [April 18, 2020](#)).

<sup>12</sup> Kızılay (The Turkish Red Crescent) is a Turkish institution founded in 1868 that provides assistance to people without discrimination within the framework of universal principles.

<sup>13</sup> Diplomatic activities between Turkey and Lithuania resumed on 3 September 1991 after Lithuania declared its independence. The Turkish government opened an embassy in Vilnius, the capital of Lithuania, in the early 1992. The embassy in Vilnius was accredited to the states of Estonia and Latvia with the same resolution (T.R. Official Gazette, January 3, 1992). Lithuania's embassy in Turkey was opened in 1997 (Siyasi İlişkiler, (n.d.)).

scientific investigations, by passing through Turkey. The ambassador was demanding that the person be sent home (DĪAD, 553/42993.42058.29).

Turkish Ministry of Foreign Affairs sent an instruction to the embassy in Tallin regarding the matter. The instruction was to investigate Poška, born in 1903, holder of passport serial no 45066-5865 dated 19 June 1926 issued in Kaunas (DĪAD, 553/42993.42058.24). Ambassador Batu told the ministry that the investigation could not be carried out because of the distance of the person's birthplace and asked for permission for an official investigation (DĪAD, 553/42993.42058.23). The Foreign Affairs did not grant the requested permission, considering that a formal investigation would not be appropriate (DĪAD, 553/42993.42058.22). After a while the Turkish embassy in Moscow gave the Ministry of Foreign Affairs some information on the matter. The letter stated that Poška had been investigated by the Soviet Commissariat for Foreign Affairs. Although the Turkish authorities stated that they obtained the information about Poška being a spy from a Gentlemen's Agreement of Soviet origin, the Soviets said they had no such information (DĪAD, 553/42993.42058.21). Apparently the Soviets were denying the information, or the Turkish authorities had fabricated it to reinforce the suspicion that he was a spy.

Following the embassy's response, Poška was deported to Bulgaria on 2 June 1936 after being held in Turkey for five months as there was no certain information about him (DĪAD, 553/42993.42058.18; DĪAD, 553/42993.42058.7). In addition, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs sent a circular to all its consulates and requested that Antanas Poška, who was probably spying for a foreign government, not be granted a visa if he ever wanted to come back to Turkey (DĪAD, 553/42993.42058.14).

Poška was deported and his belongings, passport and money were not returned to him. Therefore, Poška requested the return of his passport, 17 British liras, 50 US dollars, camera, two suitcases containing his scientific studies in India, an anthropological device owned by the University of Oxford, and other belongings through the Lithuanian Embassy in Moscow as soon as he arrived in Bulgaria (DĪAD, 553/42993.42058.16).

In February 1937, the political affairs director of the Lithuanian Ministry of Foreign Affairs sent a memorandum to Turkey's Embassy in Tallin. Three points were laid out in this memorandum:

Firstly, Poška went to India with a team from Oxford University to conduct scientific studies and made his travels for that purpose,

Secondly, Poška was treated badly by officials during his detention and especially during his transfer to Edirne,

The third point was the return of the belongings containing the results of his scientific investigations. A list showing the value of these items was also added to the memorandum (DĪAD, 553/42993.42058.9).

The Lithuanian director also verbally stated that they did not know the truth of the matter, and that they would not file a formal complaint for the time being, in case Poška was mistaken for a suspect who was being pursued (DĪAD, 553/42993.42058.7).

The file sent to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs by the Turkish Ministry of Internal Affairs stated that the probability of him being a spy was very high according to the police. The fact that his passport had 108 pages, he had travelled many times with the passport, he had meetings with Kurds in Turkey, his source of income was not known, he had made clear statements to Turkish officials about Kurdishness, and that he had notes confirming those statements was given as evidence supporting the allegation.

But Foreign Affairs disagreed with the Internal Affairs about the evidence. Since passports were issued or extended for a long time by many foreign states, the fact that the person was still using the passport he had received as a student was not a legal problem. It was also confirmed by the Lithuanian Ministry of Foreign Affairs that he had travelled to the east to conduct investigations. Therefore, the evidence put forward could not be regarded as valid reasons for proving that Poška was a spy. The important point was to determine whether the person's actual notes – as both he and the Lithuanian Foreign Affairs had claimed – were reviews and records from the point of view of



racial and linguistic affinity between Lithuanians and Eastern nations, or articles aimed directly at disrupting the unity and integrity of Turkey. The fact that a man who would spy for the Kurdish issue made publicly critical statements to the Turkish authorities in a manner that would expose his duty and identity, and that he would take notes with the intention of spying and carry them recklessly on him, especially without thinking that he would attract attention when meeting with the public in small places where the smallest actions of foreign tourists stood out made it difficult to accept the allegations (DĪAD, 553/42993.42058.9).

As a result, the Turkish Ministry of Foreign Affairs concluded that Poška had taken notes without thinking about its impact on the sensitivity of the respective country while conducting investigations on his field without the intention of espionage, and that the notes were regarded by the Turkish authorities as notes with a nature that would disrupt national unity and integrity. It also requested the Ministry of Internal Affairs to launch an investigation into the alleged battering of the man when he was being taken to Edirne. It was demanded that such actions be avoided so that Turkey and its representative offices would not face any problems in the international arena (DĪAD, 553/42993.42058.9). The Minister of Foreign Affairs stated that the claim of the Ministry of Internal Affairs could be true but ordered the Tallinn embassy to explain the matter as stated above and not to ask for any clarification as the ministry did not want to dwell on the matter anymore (DĪAD, 553/42993.42058.8). On the other hand, Poška's belongings were not returned as requested on the last item of the memorandum.<sup>14</sup>

## 5. ECONOMIC RELATIONS

The first known important contact on Turkish-Lithuanian commercial relations took place in 1926. Lithuania was importing rubber to Turkey at the time. However, because there was no commercial agreement, high customs duty was charged for the product. Trying to overcome this situation, Lithuania wanted to enter into a special and scheduled trade agreement containing a *most-favored nation clause* with Turkey in 1926 on the basis of reciprocity. It informed the Turkish embassy in Warsaw about the request (DĪAD, 553/43007.42072.1). Two years later, a delegation from Lithuania arrived in Istanbul, Turkey, to make a trade agreement. The Turkish government requested that the Lithuanian representatives be welcomed and both customs officers and police officers provide them with any assistance they needed (BOA, HR.ĪM../226.71). In the following days, mutual negotiations began to be held to establish a *modus vivendi* on trade and residence issues. Lithuania submitted a project on this subject to Turkey in 1929 (DĪAD, 553/42955.43037.15; DĪAD, 553/42955.43037.7). Turkey deemed the project suitable (DĪAD, 553/42955.43037.8). But the negotiations did not lead to an agreement in those years.

One of the major products exported by Turkey was tobacco, which was also exported to Lithuania. Turkey's tobacco exports to this country increased in 1932. In 1933, the Lithuanian government was considering turning tobacco sales into a monopoly. Turkey's ambassador to Moscow, Ragip Bey, who went to Lithuania to present his letter of credence at the time, asked for permission from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to make an attempt at selling tobacco (DĪAD, 553/43005.42070.2). Giving permission, the ministry intended to make a short-term *modus offer* and agreement containing a *most-favored-nation clause* between the two parties limited to customs duties in order to facilitate the purchase in case Lithuania bought tobacco in large amounts (DĪAD, 553/43005.42070.1). However, contrary to the expectations, sales of the product declined over the years. The decline was caused by Lithuania's maximum tax on the product. This made it even more important for Turkey, whose exports were adversely affected, to enter into a trade agreement with Lithuania. A document in the Foreign Affairs archive on the issue stated that tobacco export was still not possible because there was no agreement between the parties, but there was interest in Turkish tobacco. Meanwhile, the Greek delegate was on his way to Lithuania for negotiations. The document

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<sup>14</sup> The absence of any information on this subject in the documents of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs about the researcher and Poška's statement in an article published years later about his belongings not being returned to him indicate that those items were not returned (Vidūnas, 2015: 76).

suggested that efforts should be made to sign an agreement with Lithuania and, if that was not possible, to offer trade via Russia, France, and Belgium (DĪAD, 553/43001.42066.56).

Following those developments, the Turkish Ministry of Economy asked the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to make a commercial agreement with Lithuania on a reciprocal basis. The request was conveyed through the accredited Moscow embassy because Lithuania did not have a representative in Turkey. A modus vivendi agreement containing a *most-favored-nation clause* limited to urgent tariff issues was deemed appropriate in the first place as negotiations for a comprehensive agreement would take long. Once the Modus agreement was in place, negotiations were to continue for a swap settlement in the second phase. As the provisions of the agreement and identification of the products to be handled would lead to a long negotiation, they wanted to carry out the transaction immediately in proper manner and to make it definite. Therefore, the Turkish Ministry of Foreign Affairs asked the Moscow embassy to make proposals to send a diplomatic note to the Lithuanian government immediately in accordance with the *most-favored-nation* status, requesting Lithuania to send a delegation to handle the second-tier negotiations in Turkey. Since the aim was to save time, the embassy was informed that the Turkish government would not object if they requested to carry out the negotiations for the second proposal in Lithuania (DĪAD, 553/43001.42066.60; DĪAD, 553/43001.42066.61).

During those developments, Lithuanian Foreign Minister Stasys Lozoraitis was in Riga for the conference of Foreign Ministers of the Baltic states. After being informed of the matter, Nuri Bey, Turkish ambassador to Talinn, went to Riga and conveyed Turkey's request to Lozoraitis. Lozoraitis agreed to the demands but said he would give a definitive answer after consulting his government. He said they could not send a delegation to Turkey to discuss the clearing agreement because they were negotiating trade agreements with Russia and some other states, and that they wanted the negotiations to be held in Kaunas if possible (DĪAD, 553/43001.42066.33). In 1935, when the negotiations were held, Lithuania introduced a quota in addition to the high tax it had imposed on Turkish tobacco. This reduced Turkey's tobacco sales to this country drastically. Lithuania had started to procure the tobacco it needed from Turkey's neighbors. 384,800 tons of tobacco worth 1,420,800 LT (*Lithuanian Litas*) were imported to Lithuania from Bulgaria, Greece and Russia in 1934 (DĪAD, 553/43004.42069.1).

The Lithuanian government stated that Turkish tobacco was appreciated but they imposed a quota on the product as no products could be exported to Turkey (DĪAD, 553/43003.42068.4). According to Lithuanian statistics, the products and quantities imported from Turkey were as follows:

**Table: 1** Exports of Turkey to Lithuania (1932-1936)

Products	Year						
	1936		1935	1934		1933	1932
	kg.	liter	liter	kg	liter	liter	liter
Fragrant resin such as balsam, musk etc. used in perfumery	200	1,100	-	-	-	-	-
Tomato	-	-	-	400	400	100	-
Walnut, nut and chestnut	-	-	-	-	-	-	10,400
Seed	-	-	-	100	-	-	100
Tobacco	22,300	72,300	85,900	193,900	1,006,800	126,700	158,800
Raw mushrooms	-	-	-	16,600	6,200	-	-
Tanned Leather and By-products	-	-	23,300	3,500	3,000	-	-
Cement	-	-	-	-	-	-	2,400
Cigarette	-	200	300	-	200	-	-
<b>Total</b>	<b>22,500</b>	<b>73,600</b>	<b>109,500</b>	<b>214,500</b>	<b>1,016,600</b>	<b>126,800</b>	<b>171,700</b>

Source: (DĪAD, 553/43004.42069.1; DĪAD, 53/43001.42066.22).

The Lithuanian government reported this to Turkey's embassy in Tallin, and ambassador Batu examined the list of products exported by Lithuania in order to solve the problem. The main export products on the list were food such as cereals, linen, vegetables, livestock, meat etc., pharmaceuticals, soap, cosmetics, leather, wool products, cardboard and paper. When the ambassador could not notice any products that could be exported to Turkey, he reported the issue to the Turkish Foreign Ministry and proposed that tobacco exports could be realized with indirect concessions. The proposal was to import materials from a third country with the same value as tobacco to be exported to Lithuania and to export materials of the same value from Lithuania to that country and offset them with our exports. The proposal stated that indirect concessions could be made with Belgium and Austria in particular. The Turkish ambassador discussed the matter with the Lithuanian Foreign Minister Lozoraitis and Lozoraitis said indirect concessions had been made before and they could be made again with Turkey. In addition, as a result of the negotiations, the Lithuanian government asked for a trade and a clearance agreement with Turkey (DĪAD, 553/43003.42068.4).

The investigation conducted by the Department of Economics of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs revealed that the situation was not like the ambassador had reported. Since the trade between both countries was to the disadvantage of Turkey, Article 32 of the Law No. 11 on the *Protection of the Turkish Currency* was applied to this country.<sup>15</sup> Turkey had an export deficit due to the trade with Lithuania in the period between 1934 and 1936.<sup>16</sup> During the said period, Lithuania exported thick rawhide and matchsticks to Turkey and bought tobacco in return. Therefore, there were products that Lithuania sold directly to Turkey (DĪAD, 553/43003.42068.1).

In addition, the Directorate of Finance thought that a trade agreement with Lithuania containing equivalent terms would improve the trade relations of both countries just like the agreement with Estonia. Therefore, they thought it would be appropriate to make a trade and clearing agreement on an equitable basis because an agreement on the *clearing intermediary* basis with Lithuania was not convenient for business (DĪAD, 553/43003.42068.1). The draft of the *modus vivendi* project was sent to the Turkish Embassy in Tallinn (DĪAD, 553/43001.42066.15). The negotiations were held between the commercial division of the Lithuanian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Turkish Embassy in Tallinn. During the negotiations, Lithuania stated its willingness to strike a deal with Turkey with the same principles as its trade and clearance agreements with Greece. The agreement included some provisions regarding the public and navigation and it was more detailed. Moreover, an important reason for refusing the conditions offered by Turkey was the opposition of the Lithuanian central bank which requested the import value to be paid in foreign exchange. For this reason, they had made clearing agreements first with Germany, then with Greece and Hungary. Norkaitis, director of the trade division of Lithuania, said that although some tobacco had been imported after the agreement with Greece, Turkish tobacco was demanded because it was better, but the product was ignored because it was subject to threefold customs duty due to the lack of an agreement between the two countries. It was also known by Turkey that Lithuanian cigarette factories had been demanding Turkish tobacco for a long time and had applied to the Turkish authorities in this respect (DĪAD, 553/43001.42066.13).

Turkey made an offer to make imports freely from Lithuania to Turkey by leaving at least 20% exchange margin between imports and exports with Lithuania in its favor. But the offer was not accepted. Norkaitis stated that he would agree to sign a trade and payment agreement with Turkey within the framework of the trade and payment agreements made with Latvia on 12 January 1938

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<sup>15</sup> The said article was amended by Decree No. 4579, which was issued in about the same days. Accordingly, it would be possible to make imports from a country that sold more goods to Turkey than those it purchased from Turkey and did not have a clearing agreement or any other agreement of the sort in the same amount of the exports made to that country under general terms. The exports would be based on FOB (Free on Board) prices. Lithuania was one of the included countries. (Cumhuriyet, May 30, 1936).

<sup>16</sup> According to a document belonging to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Turkey's foreign trade deficit to Lithuania was 21,332 Liras in 1935. However, there is a surplus of 3,429 Liras in favor of Turkey in the data of the General Directorate of Statistics of Turkey. (DĪAD, 553/43003.42068.1; BIUM, 1937).

after consultation with his government. Lithuania did not want quota lists added to the agreement. It preferred that permission be granted for the import of all kinds of products in accordance with the import regimes of both countries. They informed the Turkish side that they were ready to immediately sign an agreement in which only the types of products, or quotas in addition to the types, were determined without specifying the quantities (DİAD, 553/43001.42066.6).

A clearance agreement was drafted after the negotiations. After reviewing the draft, the Turkish Ministry of Economics thought it was necessary to make some changes.<sup>17</sup> Accordingly, the new agreement draft was submitted to the Lithuanian government (DİAD, 553/42999.42064.34). Lithuania accepted the requested changes (DİAD, 553/42999.42064.33; DİAD, 553/42999.42064.32). Turkey authorized Nuri Batu, the ambassador to Tallinn, to sign the agreement as soon as possible (DİAD, 553/42999.42064.12; DİAD, 553/42999.42064.31; BCA, 30.18.1.2/86.18.6). Batu went to Kaunas on 20 March 1939 to sign the agreement. Both parties examined the texts of the modus vivendi, trade and clearance agreements for the last time and agreed on them. The Lithuanian side stated that the official name of the state was *Republique de Lithuania*, requested that it should be written that way so that the agreement text and provisions would have a rapport and unity. They also requested that the realizable positions and paragraphs be marked with *EX* in all trade agreements signed by them, like the trade agreement between Turkey and Estonia, in order to state that other items included in the relevant positions or paragraphs were excluded from the items on the lists, and to provide ease of application. The Turkish side did not object to the demands because it did not have an effect on the basis and the type and quantity of goods. After the necessary changes, it was decided that the agreement would be signed on 22 March. However, Norkaitis told Batu that the lists needed to be rearranged as the import and export of some products such as cotton, cotton yarn and cellulose were not possible because the weaving factories and manufacturing places of some other goods were outside the border because Lithuania was obliged to leave Memel to Germany on the same day (DİAD, 553/42999.42064.26).

The modus vivendi, trade and clearance agreements between Turkey and Lithuania were signed on 7 June in Tallinn (DİAD, 553/42999.42064.14). It was decided to put the agreements into force on 22 June (DİAD, 553/42999.42064.12). However, the date of ratification was delayed because the copy of the agreement was not submitted to the Turkish Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The agreement was signed by the Turkish president on 3 September 1939 and published on the Official Gazette dated 20 September 1939 stating that it would be valid as of 22 June (DİAD, 553/42999.42064.8; DİAD, 553/42999.42064.4; T.R. Official Gazette, September 20, 1939).

During the negotiations for the abovementioned agreements, Turkey joined a multilateral agreement including Lithuania with a law enacted on 22 November 1938 (T.R. Official Gazette, November 22, 1938). The agreement intended to reduce the formalities that merchant ships were subject to in the contracting countries as much as possible (T.R. Official Gazette, November 22, 1938).

There was an increase in trade between the two countries after the agreement. The trade volume between Turkey and Lithuania in the said period was as follows:

**Table: 2** Turkey's Exports and Imports with Lithuania (1928-1940)

Years	Difference Turkish Lira (TL)	Export TL	Import TL
1940	16,862	51,634	34,772
1939	31,594	32,634	1,040
1938	-2,791	1,241	4,032
1937	0	0	0
1936	-59,453	200	59,653
1935	3,429	3,514	85

<sup>17</sup> Articles 4, 8, and 9, list number 1 and list number 2 (DİAD, 553/42999.42064.33).

1934	-14,904	13,456	28,360
1933	6,765	6,786	21
1932	22,573	23,201	628
1931	-2,869	0	2,869
1930	-287	628	915
1929	-10,348	8,570	18,918
1928	-1,528	0	1,528

**Source:** Directorate of Statistics and Audit of the Ministry of Finance of the Republic of Turkey, *Haricî Ticaret için Yıllık İstatistik (Annual Statistics of Foreign Trade) 1928*, Part I, Ankara 1929, p. 194; Directorate of Statistics and Audit of the Ministry of Finance of the Republic of Turkey, *Haricî Ticaret için Yıllık İstatistik 1929*, Part I, Devlet Matbaası, Ankara 1930, p. 244; Directorate of Statistics and Audit of the Ministry of Customs and Monopolies of the Republic of Turkey, *Haricî Ticaret için Yıllık İstatistik 1930*, Part II, Hamit Matbaası, İstanbul 1932, p. 286-287; General Directorate of Statistics of the Prime Ministry of the Republic of Turkey, *Haricî Ticaret 1933 Yıllık İstatistik*, Devlet Matbaası, İstanbul 1935, p. 143, 145; General Directorate of Statistics of the Prime Ministry of the Republic of Turkey, *Haricî Ticaret Yıllık İstatistik 1936*, Kısım-2, Recep Ulusoğlu Basımevi, Ankara 1937, p. 146; General Directorate of Statistics of the Prime Ministry of the Republic of Turkey, *Haricî Ticaret Yıllık İstatistik 1939*, Part-II, Yeni Cezaevi Matbaası, Ankara 1940, p. III, X; General Directorate of Statistics of the Prime Ministry of the Republic of Turkey, *Haricî Ticaret Yıllık İstatistik 1942*, Part II, Recep Ulusoğlu Basımevi, Ankara 1943, p. III, XI.

As can be seen in the table, trade volume was in favor of Lithuania by a small margin over the years. Turkey had a trade surplus in 1932, 1933, 1935 as well as the years 1939 and 1945 corresponding to the period in which trade agreements were made between these two countries and World War II took place. The statistics do not contain any data for 1937. Lithuania became the country with the highest amount of income in Turkish Liras between 1928 and 1940.

The distribution of the quantities and values of the commercial goods whose total value is given in Table 2 is as follows by years:

**Table: 3** Turkey's Exports to Lithuania (1928-1940)

Product	Tobacco		Herbs		Grains		Fresh Grapes / Nuts		Wood Products		Other	
	Quantity (kg.)	Value (TL)	Quantity (kg.)	Value (TL)	Quantity (kg.)	Value (TL)	Quantity (kg.)	Value (TL)	Quantity (kg.)	Value (TL)	Quantity (kg.)	Value (TL)
1940	118,723	51,634	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
1939	33,251	13,161	1,279	117	-	-	111,439	19,371	-	-	-	-
1938	-	-	-	-	-	-	7,225	1,241	-	-	-	-
1937	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
1936	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	5,000 <sup>18</sup>	200
1935	2,234	1,204	-	-	9,800	1,122	-	-	-	-	10,033 <sup>19</sup>	1,188
1934	4,936	12,524	-	-	9,800	932	-	-	-	-	-	-

<sup>18</sup> The export product is fish.

<sup>19</sup> The export product is vegetable dye.

1933	9,466	5,786	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	4,900 <sup>20</sup>	1,000
1932	11,045	23,201	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
1931	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
1930	-	-	-	-	1,000	252	1,337	348	163	24	1 <sup>21</sup>	4
1929	5,683	8,520	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	4 <sup>22</sup>	50
1928	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-

**Source:** Directorate of Statistics and Audit of the Ministry of Finance of the Republic of Turkey, *Haricî Ticaret için Yıllık İstatistik 1928*, p. 194, 244; Directorate of Statistics and Audit of the Ministry of Customs and Monopolies of the Republic of Turkey, *Haricî Ticaret için Yıllık İstatistik 1930*, Part II, Hamit Matbaası, İstanbul 1932, p. 286-287; General Directorate of Statistics of the Prime Ministry of the Republic of Turkey, *Haricî Ticaret 1933 Yıllık İstatistik*, Devlet Matbaası, İstanbul 1935, p. 306; General Directorate of Statistics of the Prime Ministry of the Republic of Turkey, *Haricî Ticaret Yıllık İstatistik 1936*, Kısım-2, Recep Ulusoğlu Basımevi, Ankara 1937, p.146; General Directorate of Statistics of the Prime Ministry of the Republic of Turkey, *Haricî Ticaret Yıllık İstatistik 1939*, Part-II, Yeni Cezaevi Matbaası, Ankara 1940, p. 188-189; General Directorate of Statistics of the Prime Ministry of the Republic of Turkey, *Haricî Ticaret Yıllık İstatistik 1942*, Part II, Recep Ulusoğlu Basımevi, Ankara 1943, p. 146.

**Table: 4** Lithuania's Exports to Turkey (1928-1940)

Years	Paper and Paperboard Calendar		Rubber		Tarpaulin and tarpaulin products		Leather		Matchstick		Canned Fish		Other	
	Quantity (kg.)	Value (TL)	Quantity (kg.)	Value (TL)	Quantity (kg.)	Value (TL)	Quantity (kg.)	Value (TL)	Quantity (kg.)	Value (TL)	Quantity (kg.)	Value (TL)	Quantity (kg.)	Value (TL)
1940	-	-	-	-	-	-	24,006	34,772	-	-	-	-	-	-
1939	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	5,099 <sup>23</sup>	1,040
1938	-	-	1,292	1,530	-	-	-	-	26,714	2,476	-	-	82	26
1937	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
1936	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	443,623	59,648	-	-	3 <sup>24</sup>	5
1935	-	-	-	-	178	85	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-

<sup>20</sup> The export product is sesame.

<sup>21</sup> The export product is rubber and by-products.

<sup>22</sup> The export product is ready-made clothing.

<sup>23</sup> The export product is glue.

<sup>24</sup> The export products are 3 kilograms of hemp worth 2 Liras and indefinite amount of bulbs worth 3 Liras.

1934	4	14	-	-	-	-	2,027	2,326	184,956	26,020	-	-	-	-
1933	5	15	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	4 <sup>25</sup>	6
1932	1,770	415	54	213	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
1931	-	-	-	-	5,577	2,869	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
1930	3	3	28	109	1,274	770	-	-	-	-	3	8	27 <sup>26</sup>	25
1929	1	2	29,654	16,070	-	-	-	-	2,221	1,727	1,063	736	626 <sup>27</sup>	383
1928	340	62	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1,300	314	3,491 <sup>28</sup>	1,152

**Source:** Directorate of Statistics and Audit of the Ministry of Finance of the Republic of Turkey, *Harici Ticaret için Yıllık İstatistik (Annual Statistics of Foreign Trade) 1928*, Part I, Ankara 1929, p. 194, 244; Directorate of Statistics and Audit of the Ministry of Customs and Monopolies of the Republic of Turkey, *Harici Ticaret için Yıllık İstatistik 1930*, Part II, Hamit Matbaası, İstanbul 1932, p. 286-287; General Directorate of Statistics of the Prime Ministry of the Republic of Turkey, *Harici Ticaret 1933 Yıllık İstatistik*, Devlet Matbaası, İstanbul 1935, p. 306; General Directorate of Statistics of the Prime Ministry of the Republic of Turkey, *Harici Ticaret Yıllık İstatistik 1936*, Kısım-2, Recep Ulusoğlu Basımevi, Ankara 1937, p. 146; General Directorate of Statistics of the Prime Ministry of the Republic of Turkey, *Harici Ticaret Yıllık İstatistik 1939*, Part-II, Yeni Cezaevi Matbaası, Ankara 1940, p. 188-189; General Directorate of Statistics of the Prime Ministry of the Republic of Turkey, *Harici Ticaret Yıllık İstatistik 1942*, Part II, Recep Ulusoğlu Basımevi, Ankara 1943, p. 146.

Table 3 and Table 4 indicate that the products exported most by Turkey to Lithuania over the years are tobacco, grains and fruits. Lithuania's exports include rubber, matchstick, tarpaulin and tarpaulin products in particular. Exports were made by Lithuania to Turkey, but no products were sold by Turkey in 1928 and 1931. As mentioned earlier, the statistics do not show any trade between the two countries in 1937.

In addition to all these, no significant activity was observed in tourism, which is another area of activity that can be considered from commercial, social, and cultural aspects. There is no information about tourist visits between the parties in Turkish statistics. A development reflected in those documents is the information that the government of Lithuania would not charge customs duties on tourism propaganda materials to be sent from Turkey to a state institution, consulate or tourism union in Lithuania. The Turkish Government made the same decision in response (T.R. Official Gazette, September 24, 1936).

## 6. CONCLUSION

Turkey and Lithuania states are similar to each other in terms of perceiving a threat and the recognition efforts in the international arena when they were founded. Both states particularly felt the Soviet threat closely. Contacts between both countries began in the 1920s and continued uninterrupted until 1940 when Lithuania was occupied by the Soviets. No representative offices were opened directly between the countries during the specified period. For this reason, relations were conducted by other embassies through accreditation. Turkey's embassies in Warsaw, Riga, Moscow and Tallin respectively fulfilled this mission. This mission was undertaken for Lithuania by the embassies in Warsaw and, although not for sure, Riga, and Moscow after 1932.

The distance between the two countries and the fact that Lithuania is a small market are regarded as the main reasons limiting the relations. As a result of this, the volume of trade between

<sup>25</sup> The export product is cigarette paper.

<sup>26</sup> The export products are 16 kg of cereals worth 9 Liras and 11 kg of iron worth 16 Liras.

<sup>27</sup> The export products are 625 kg of wood products worth 363 Liras and 1 kg of textile products worth 20 Liras.

<sup>28</sup> The export products are 452 kg of minerals worth 60 Liras and 3,038 kg of ready-mixed paint, chemicals, and medical resin worth 1,072 Liras.

the two countries was low for many years. The increase occurred after 1939 when commercial agreements were made. On the other hand, the years of increase coincide with World War II. It could not be determined whether the war played a role in the increase. Another interesting point about trade relations is that the Lithuanian statistics (Table 1) and Turkish statistics (Table 2 and Table 3) given in the study do not match. This reduces the reliability of the data. Therefore, this information should be evaluated in order to have a general idea about the size of the trade volume and the types of the commercial goods.

Relations between Turkey and Lithuania developed in a good way, albeit slowly. The fact that the parties made efforts to increase mutual economic activities and signed a series of agreements as a result is noteworthy as it shows the importance attached to the relations. Another important development in this regard is that Turkey did not recognize the annexation of Lithuania by Russia during World War II.

On the other hand, social and cultural relations between the parties did not improve. Despite people of Turkish origin living in Lithuania, no contact could be found in this regard. The only noteworthy rapprochement is the request for assistance from Turkey on behalf of the Tatar Turks living in Lithuania during World War II. Although no information could be found about Turkey's assistance, the correspondence indicates that this assistance was most likely realized.

There were no major incidents that disrupted or strained relations between the two countries. The detention of a Lithuanian researcher who was suspected of being a spy in Turkey created a little tension, but the problem was solved before it got any worse. The way the incident was handled is an important indicator of both countries' efforts to keep relations intact. It is also understood that the spying suspect was released not because he was considered innocent, but because of lack of evidence and the desire for relations with Lithuania to remain intact. Therefore, the said person was prohibited from entering the country and his belongings were not returned. On the other hand, the activities that caused the incident are important as they demonstrate the sensitivity of Turkey about its national unity and integrity. It is not surprising for a state whose internal affairs were constantly interfered with and whose ethnic groups were provoked during the Ottoman period to be sensitive about this matter.

In conclusion, Turkey-Lithuania relations made good progress, albeit slowly, between 1923 and 1940. Consequently, relations were quickly established after Lithuania declared its independence in 1990, and a year later Turkey's first embassy in the Baltic countries was opened in Lithuania.

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## **ABBREVIATIONS**

BCA: The Presidency Republic of Turkey, Department of State Archives, the Republican Archive

BIUM: General Directorate of Statistics of the Prime Ministry of the Republic of Turkey

BOA: The Presidency of Republic of Turkey, Department of State Archives, the Ottoman Archive

DIAD: The Presidency of Republic of Turkey, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Turkish Diplomatic Archives

ISS: Institute of Social Sciences.

LT: Lithuanian Litas

TL: Turkish Lira

T.R.: The Republic of Turkey

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## GENİŞLETİLMİŞ ÖZET

### Amaç

Bu çalışmada II. Dünya Savaşı öncesi Türkiye-Litvanya ilişkileri incelenmiştir. Osmanlı Devleti döneminde başlayan iki ülke ilişkileri, Türkiye Cumhuriyeti döneminde de devam etmiş ve Litvanya'nın Sovyetler Birliği tarafından işgal edilmesine dek sürmüştür. Bu çalışmanın amacı belirtilen tarih aralığında her iki ülke ilişkilerinin ne derecede geliştiği ve bu gelişime etki eden faktörleri ortaya koymaktır. Türkiye-Litvanya ilişkilerine dair yapılan çalışmaların sayısı azdır ve bahsi geçen çalışmalarda elinizdeki bu makalenin tarih aralığına dair ortaya konan bilgiler de oldukça sınırlıdır. Ulaşılan yeni bilgiler ışığında her iki devletin ilişkilerinin gelişiminin yeniden değerlendirilmesi gerekliliği ortaya çıkmıştır.

### Metodoloji

Bu çalışma, Türk kaynakları üzerinden hazırlanmıştır. Her iki devlet arasındaki ilişkiler, sosyal, siyasi ve ekonomik yönlerden incelenmiştir. Oluşturulan her bir başlıkta kronolojik sıra takip edilmiştir. Çalışma, her ne kadar Türk belgeleri üzerinden hazırlansa da zaman zaman Litvan kaynaklarına da müracaat edilmiştir. İncelenen dönem, Türkiye Cumhuriyeti'nin kurulduğu 1923 yılı ile Litvanya'nın Sovyetler tarafından işgal edildiği ve ilişkilerin kesildiği 1940 yılı aralığıdır.

Çalışmanın başlıca kaynakçasını Türkiye Cumhuriyeti Devlet Arşivleri Başkanlığı belgeleri oluşturmaktadır. Bu kapsamda Kurumun en çok Dışişleri Bakanlığı arşiv belgelerinden faydalanılmıştır. Bu durum özellikle her iki devlet arasındaki diplomatik ilişkilerin gelişiminin detaylı bir şekilde ortaya konulmasına olanak sağlamıştır. Yine aynı Kurumun Cumhuriyet Arşivi ve Osmanlı Arşivi belgeleri de çalışmaya katkı sağlayan kaynaklardır. Ayrıca basından da faydalanılmıştır. Taranan gazetelerden çalışmaya katkı sağlayacak bilgilere T.C. Resmî Gazetesi ile Cumhuriyet gazetesinden ulaşılmıştır.

Türkiye-Litvanya ilişkilerine dair daha önce yayımlanan kaynaklardan fazla faydalanılamamıştır. Daha çok Türkiye-Baltık devletleri ilişkileri çerçevesinde ele alınan bu çalışmalar, sayıca hem az hem de bu çalışmanın tarih aralığına dair fazla bir bilgi içermemektedir.

### Bulgular

Yapılan çalışmayla II. Dünya Savaşı öncesi Türkiye-Litvanya ilişkilerinin sosyal, siyasi ve ekonomik yönden ne derece geliştiğinin ortaya konulması hedeflenmiştir. Bu kapsamda Osmanlı devleti dönemi başlayan iki devlet arasındaki ilişkilerin Türkiye Cumhuriyeti döneminde de aynen devam ettiği görülmüştür. Ancak doğrudan diplomatik ilişkiler ilk yıllarda tesis edilememiştir. Diplomatik ilişkiler farklı ülkeler üzerinden akredite olarak yürütülmüştür. Siyasi anlamda her iki devlet arasındaki ilk önemli yakınlaşma 1925 yılında imza edilen Dostluk Antlaşması'dır. Ancak bu antlaşma yürürlüğe girmemiştir ve antlaşma hakkında başkaca bir bilgiye ulaşılamamıştır. Takip eden yıllarda bu yöndeki görüşmeler devam etmiş ve 1930 yılında yeni bir Türkiye-Litvanya Dostluk Antlaşması imzalanmıştır. Her iki devlet arasındaki bir diğer münasebet Cumhurbaşkanları düzeyinde karşılıklı gerçekleşen kutlama telgraflaşmalarıdır. 1939 yılında Türkiye-Litvanya Arasında vize harçlarında eşitlik sağlamak üzere nota teatisi gerçekleşmiştir.

Litvanya'da Karay Türkleri ve Kırım Tatarları adlarında iki Türk grubu yaşamaktadır. II. Dünya Savaşı yıllarında Litvanya'nın Rus işgal sırasında zarar gören ve zor durumda olan 300 kadar Litvanyalı Türk, Türkiye'den yardım istemiştir. Karşılıklı ilişkileri bozan bir olaya rastlanmamıştır. Sadece Litvanyalı bir akademisyen olan Antonas Paskevicius-Poška casusluk şüphesi ile gözaltına alınmıştır. Poška'nın Türkiye'de gözaltında geçen süreciyle ilgili önemli bilgilere ulaşılmıştır.

Türkiye-Litvanya arasında ekonomik ilişkilere dair ilk önemli temasın 1926 yılında gerçekleştiği görülmüştür. Her iki ülke arasında 1926 yılında başlayan görüşmeler uzun bir aradan sonra 1939 yılında sonuca bağlanmış ve bu tarihte modus vivendi, ticaret ve kliring anlaşmaları imzalanmıştır. Görüşmeler başladığı 1926 yılı ile sonuçlandırıldığı 1939 yılı arasındaki gelişmelere dair önemli bilgilere ulaşılmıştır. Ekonomiye dair her iki devletin 1928-1940 yılları arası karşılıklı ithalat ve ihracat dökümleri elde edilmiştir. Bu kapsamda ülkelerin birbirlerine en çok ihrac ve ithal ettiği ürünler sıralanmıştır. Belirtilen dönemde Türkiye-Litvanya arasında sosyal ve kültürel açıdan kayda değer bir faaliyete rastlanmamıştır.

## Sonuç ve Tartışma

Türkiye-Litvanya arasındaki ilişkiler belirtilen dönemde ağır ancak olumlu bir yönde seyretmiştir. Her iki devlet Sovyet tehdidini yakından hissetmiştir. Litvanya ile akredite olarak yürütülen diplomatik temaslar sırasıyla Varşova, Riga, Moskova ve Tallin Türk elçilikleri üzerinden sağlanmıştır. Litvanya'nın ise bu görevini Varşova, kesin olmamakla birlikte Riga ve Moskova elçilikleri yerine getirmiştir.

Her iki ülke arasındaki mesafe ve Litvanya'nın büyük bir pazar olmayışı ilişkileri sınırlandıran önemli nedenler olarak görülmüştür. Bunun bir sonucu olarak iki ülke arasındaki ticaret hacmi uzun yıllar düşük seyretmiştir. Artış, ticari anlaşmaların yapıldığı 1939 yılından sonra kaydedilmiştir. Diğer taraftan artışın yaşandığı yıllar II. Dünya Savaşı'na denk gelmektedir. Savaşın bu artışta bir rolü olup olmadığı saptanamamıştır.

Öte yandan taraflar arasında sosyal ve kültürel anlamda münasebetlerin gelişmediği görülmüştür. Litvanya'da yaşayan Türk kökenli insanlara rağmen bu yönde bir temas rastlanmamıştır. Bu konuda tek dikkat çekici yakınlaşma II. Dünya Savaşı yıllarında Litvanya'da yaşayan Tatar Türkleri adına Türkiye'den yardım talebinde bulunulmasıdır. Türkiye'nin yardım ettiğine dair bir bilgiye rastlanılmamışsa da konuya dair yazışmalar bu yardımın büyük olasılıkla gerçekleşmiş olduğunu göstermektedir.

İki ülke ilişkilerini bozan ya da gerginleştiren önemli bir olay meydana gelmemiştir. Casus olduğu şüphesiyle Litvanyalı bir araştırmacının Türkiye'de gözaltına alınması küçük bir gerginlik yaratmışsa da sorun büyümeden halledilmiştir. Olayın ele alınış biçimi, her iki ülkenin ilişkileri bozmama yönündeki çabasının önemli bir göstergesidir.

Her iki devlet arasındaki ilişkiler 1940 yılında Litvanya'nın Sovyetler Birliği tarafından işgal edilmesiyle kesilmiştir. İşgal Türkiye Cumhuriyeti tarafından tanınmamıştır. İlişkiler tekrar Litvanya'nın 1990 yılında bağımsızlığı kazanmasıyla yeniden başlayacaktır.