



DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.12775/EO.2016.014>

**Audronė Veilentienė, *Valdemaras Vytautas Čarneckis: I am patriot of my homeland, Lietuvos Nacionalinis Muziejus, Vilnius 2016, ss. 415***

The monograph by A. Veilentienė *Valdemaras Vytautas Čarneckis: I am Patriot of my Homeland* was published in the spring of 2016. The book is one of the many valuable publications of the series “From the Archives of the National Museum of Lithuania” issued by the National Museum of Lithuania. The series is dedicated to the one hundredth anniversary of the state of Lithuania under the title “The February 16 library 1918–2018”.

The author of the book dr. A. Veilentiene is head of the museum of Kaunas University of Technology. She got her degree at History Faculty of Vilnius University. During the years 1987–2008 she worked in the capacity of the head of the sector of Vytautas the Great War Museum and a senior museum worker. Since December 2008 she is head of the University museum. In February 2010 A. Veilentienė defended her Doctoral dissertation “The influence of the Seimas of the Republic of Lithuania on the foreign policy in 1920–1927” and was awarded a degree of Doctor of Humanities. The areas of her scientific interest were the history of Lithuania’s statehood and diplomacy and the history of higher education in Lithuania in 1918–1940. She organized 8 scientific conferences, wrote about 50 papers of popular science, 30 scientific papers and 39 biographies of the Seimas’ members. Also, she participated in the decisive January events of 1991 and in 2001 was awarded the Medal of January 13.V. Čarneckis was born on 9 January in Pajiesys village, Marijampolė county, to the family of forestry officer Antanas Čarneckis and the farmer’s daughter Juzė Gegužinskaitė. The

family had eight children, but only three survived. Five of them died in infancy. The father was an educated man. He had a degree at Petersburg Forestry School, later was employed as a forest steward for landlord Vladimir Gavronsky in Kirsna estate, Mogiliov province. Antanas Čarneckis considered education as a great value and sought to create favorable conditions for children to get good education.

Čarneckis finished Mockava primary school in 1903, Suvalkai men's gymnasium in 1911, and was admitted to Alexander III Electrical Engineering Institute in Petersburg. During studies V. Čarneckis was an active member of Lithuanian organizations: between 1912 and 1916 he chaired the Ateitininkai group, of Petersburg students, took part in the Mutual Aid Society of Lithuanian Students and the international society of Christian students. He failed to get a higher education degree, because in 1911 he was mobilized to join the engineers' brigade of the tsarist Russia army and sent to the East front to carry out communication works in different places of the front until July 1918. On December 2–4 he took part in the congress of Lithuanian soldiers in Rovn, the Ukraine. There Čarneckis organized a battalion of Lithuanian train which brought together Lithuanian soldiers in the Ukraine and Russia, gave them shelter, food and promoted love of the motherland.

The future diplomat gained his first experience of organizational work in the committees of the Lithuanian Society to Aid War Victims, later – in the Russian army, where he rallied the Lithuanian soldiers for return to Lithuania.

Back in Lithuania Čarneckis together with A. Stulginskis worked in the Exiles and Prisoners Return Committee based in Vilnius. In the summer of 1918, in collaboration with other engineers, architects and technicians, who had returned from Russia, he established the Society of Lithuanian Technicians aiming to train artisans and skilled workers for the home country.

As the member of the State Council and the first Governments, he actively contributed to the development of the country. In the second Cabinet of Ministers headed by Mykolas Sleževičius (26–12–1918 to 12–03–1919) V. Čarneckis was appointed manager of the Ministry of Finance. The future diplomat worked as the Minister of Communications in the fourth Cabinet of Ministers. In the cabinet headed by Ernestas Galvanauskas (07–10–1919 to 19–06–1920) Čarneckis again agreed to be Minister of Communications. He was offered the position of the Minister of Internal Affairs, but he refused because of young age and inexperience, however he agreed to head the Ministry of Communications. He was only 26 then. From 21 July, 1920 to 20 May 1921 he was a member of the Kaunas City Council and belonged

to the fraction of Lithuanians. At the same time he was a member of the Central Committee of the Christian Democratic party.

In the elections of April 14–16, 1920 V. Čarneckis was elected representative of the Constituent Seimas in the 4th Telšiai constituency, in the list of the Lithuanian Christian Democrats Workers and Farmers party and belonged to the Farmers Union fraction of the Christian Democrats block. V. Čarneckis worked in the Foreign Affairs and Economy Committees in the Constituent Seimas. He also participated in the negotiations with Poland in Kalvarija and Suvalkai and was included into the composition of the diplomatic delegations to Latvia and Estonia. In the spring of 1921 he resigned from the Seimas and took diplomatic service.

He began his diplomatic career as the unofficial representative of Lithuania to the United States of America on April 15, 1921. The United States government had not recognized Lithuania, either *de facto*, or *de jure*, thus he could not hold the post on an official basis. More than a year passed before he was officially named the representative on July 28, 1922. Together with the American-Lithuanians, he was able to persuade the American Congress that Lithuania was worthy of the status of an independent country. Working in the USA V. Čarneckis won the most important political victory. He managed to achieve the recognition of Lithuania by the USA, set several societies supporting Lithuania, the most important being American Baltic Society, which successfully operated after the departure of the diplomat.

On 1 August 1922, following the adoption of the Constitution by the Constituent Seimas, at the meeting of the Christian Democrats block, Mykolas Krupavičius, Valdemaras Čarneckis and Aleksandras Stulginskis were nominated for the post of President of the Republic of Lithuania. Čarneckis refused due to unpreparedness for such a high position. On December 5, 1923, he was transferred from the USA to London under the title of *chargé d'affaires*. He represented Lithuania in Great Britain for half a year.

On June 18, 1924, he was appointed Minister of Foreign Affairs of Lithuania. Čarneckis took leadership of the Lithuanian foreign policy at the time when it seemed that the most pressing problems of the newly reestablished country had been resolved. Lithuania had been recognized as an independent state.

V. Čarneckis tried to raise the issue of Vilnius in the League of Nations, but the other countries has not accepted the proposal of Lithuanian. Then the minister has decided to send a note to the Conference of Ambassadors. It was written that Lithuania can not establish diplomatic relations with Poland while Vilnius will not be returned. In that regard, the Minister has proposed to organize an international conference.

Klaipeda Convention legitimized the Klaipeda Territory to Lithuania. Lithuania had to sign a series of agreements with Germany, the preparation of which was organized by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The Germans of Klaipeda region were not loyal to Lithuania and wrote complaints to Germany, which responded to the application of economic sanctions against Lithuania. V. Čarneckis negotiated for the award of contracts and the removal of economic sanctions.

V. Čarneckis trying to get a loan from England, but before it had to repay the debts of several British companies. In the beginning was disagreement on the size of the debt, and later, when these obstacles have been removed, England changed the government, which was not relevant to the issue of the loan.

The minister did much of the Latvian, Estonian and Lithuanian cooperation. It has established friendly relations with the Latvian Foreign Minister Z. Meierovic. It was signed a few contracts, but the interests of Poland, Germany and Soviet Union's was detrimental to the cooperation of Baltic countries.

V. Čarneckis wanted to regulate relations with Vatican. His initiative was developed concordat project and concluded negotiations committee. At that time, Poland and the Vatican signed a concordat in which the Vilnius region was assigned to the Polish ecclesiastical province. Lithuania was a great public indignation, because Lithuanian government broke off diplomatic relations with the Vatican. The minister did not want to terminate relations with the Vatican and tried to make good the conflict, but had to take into account public opinion and the Cabinet of Ministers.

V. Čarneckis focused most of his attention on the relations with Poland. They had been sharpened, when Poland broke the Suvalkai Treaty, occupied and annexed the capital Vilnius and its region, Lithuania in protest terminated diplomatic relations with Poland. The Peoples Union also failed to settle the conflict between the neighbours. In 1923 the Ambassadors Conference recognized the Eastern border of Poland leaving Vilnius region in its possession. Lithuania never agreed to that and sought to raise the issue on the international level. V. Čarneckis suggested organizing an international conference on the Vilnius problem, however, he was informed that the problem had been finally settled.

International organizations strictly required Lithuania to resolve the problem as soon as possible and to build up diplomatic relations with Poland. Klaipėda Convention provided the internationalization of the Nemunas River, therefore, Poland chose to make use of it and suggested direct negotiations in Copenhagen. V. Čarneckis disagreed with Prime Minister

V. Petruelis secret negotiations with Polish diplomats and his initiative of making concessions to Poland while getting nothing for Lithuania in return. V. Čarneckis got support from President A. Stulginskis and the majority of Cabinet Ministers. Lithuania did not give permission for Poland to use the Lithuanian railways and set up consulate in Klaipėda and suggested using the consulate of another country instead. Negotiations failed.

While Valdemaras Čarneckis was the acting Minister, his Ministry was delegated to conclude a series of new agreements on trade, navigation, return of criminals, and other matters. V. Čarneckis put forth many efforts to settle the internal affairs of the Lithuanian diplomatic service, both at the head office and abroad. He called for the Consuls' Conference and opened discussions on the issues of the staff, competence, consular activities, etc. The conference proceedings were put into practice at a later time.

V. Čarneckis retired from the post of the Minister, following the resignation of the Government led by Petruelis. He was then appointed Ambassador to Rome. He remained in the position from November 7, 1925 to February 15, 1939, where he managed to build a favorable relationship with Italy. Čarneckis was responsible for building stronger economic and trade relations. His great political achievement was that the Italian legation was established in Kaunas, the relations with Italy were improved and many agreements were signed. The Italian Government continued to support Lithuania, even after Hitler had come into power, and relations between Lithuania and Germany had become strained. In his diplomatic service and being a minister he consistently promoted cooperation between Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia, organized common meetings with the envoys of the Baltic States and the ministers' conferences, created societies of Lithuanian friends and maintained good relations with the journalists.

V. Čarneckis was awarded the 2nd degree Order of the Lithuanian Great Duke Gediminas (1932), the 2nd degree Order of the Crown of Italy (1927), the first degree Order of the Star (1933), and the second degree Order of St. Maurice and Lazarus (1939).

After being recalled to Lithuania, he was named to the post of Director of Rights and Administration Department of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. He was in office when the occupation of Lithuania occurred. Following the occupation of Lithuania, The Ministry of Foreign Affairs was liquidated and the employees were fired. After firing V. Čarneckis got employment in the Commissariat of Food Industry as a consultant, later as a deputy boss of the supply office.

In 1941, he was forcibly separated from his family, exiled to Siberia and imprisoned at the Soviet lager. The former diplomat worked as a carpenter,

then in the office, later in construction works, still later cut down trees in the woods. He was not used to hard physical work and suffered from constant hunger. He fell ill with anemia and a hard form of beriberi, spent three months in the lager hospital. After he was denounced by the former KGB agents, he was arrested and accused of counter-revolutionary activity. On 25 March 1942, with a group of Lithuanian prisoners he was sent to prison in Sverdlovsk. On October 17 1942 the KGB Special Meeting sentenced him to death. On November 4, 1942, he was shot at Sverdlovsk Prison.

The interrogation protocols revealed the picture of the last days of Valdemaras Vytautas Čarneckis. The former minister and diplomat did not give in and openly declared that he was not happy at all with the rule of the Soviets, since that regime trampled what was dear to him: "I am patriot of my country. I have been and will always be for its independence".

His family – wife Eleonora, four sons and daughter were exiled to Siberia too. At first they got to the Altaj region, a year after to the north by the Laptev Sea to Mys Mastak, still later to Bykov Mys, where they suffered from hunger and cold. Luckily, they survived and in the year 1958 returned back to Lithuania.

The preparation process to write the book was far from easy. While still working at Vytautas Magnus War Museum and with the start of revival, which provided the possibility to work productively for the sake of the state, dr. A. Veilentienė focused on the analysis of the personalities of the members of the Constituent Seimas and their destinies. That naturally led to the exhibitions dedicated to the Seimas members including V. Čarneckis. In addition, she wrote biographies in a concise biographical directory of the Constituent Seimas, which contributed to the publication of this book. The experience gained was very important for analyzing and evaluating parliamentary activity of V. Čarneckis, member of the State Council and the Seimas. A. Veilentienė carried out a comprehensive study of the life and activity of V. Čarneckis, politician and diplomat, by using an abundant base of the sources. The press of political parties of that time and materials of Lithuanian institutions, i.e. the funds of Petras Klimas, the Lithuanian Popular Peasants' Union, Petersburg's Lithuanian Students' Union, Kaunas County archives (Kaunas City Council fund), the Lithuanian Central State Archives (The Council of Ministers, Ministry of Communications, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Lithuanian Embassy in Italy), the files of the Special Archives and materials of the personal archive were thoroughly studied and analyzed.

The author's aim was to identify V. Čarneckis' principles and viewpoints on the main issues of the foreign policy, to reveal his role in making deci-

sions, to get insight into the subtleties of his political and diplomatic work, to study personality traits and to contribute to the preservation of historical memory as well as to the study of Lithuanian statehood and diplomacy.

The monograph consists of seven parts dealing with V. Čarneckis' life and activity. **Chapter I** "From the careless childhood to the whirl of the war" is divided into sections, i.e. "The family and the school year"; "Social activity and studies"; "In the whirl of the World War I". They provide the basic biographical data on Čarneckis' family, i.e. parents, sisters, their life and works. Much attention is devoted to the description of the environment, where V. Čarneckis lived and studied. The book describes his studies, active social life, military service in the army of the Russian empire and the establishment and leadership of the Lithuanian battalion in Rovno. The personalities who influenced him in becoming patriot of Lithuania are also introduced.

**Chapter II** named "Work in the creation of the state of Lithuania" includes the following subjects: Member of the State Council and of the Government and Member of the Constituent Seimas. Chronologically, that period covers the years 1918–1920. The author devotes specific attention to it and very precisely reveals V. Čarneckis' activity in the State Council, in the second Cabinet of Ministers and in the Communications Ministry in the capacity of the minister. V. Čarneckis' participation in the elections to the Constituent Seimas and activity there as a representative of the Lithuanian Christian Democratic Party is very significant in describing the problems of developing democracy of a young Lithuanian state. Great attention is given to signing the peace treaty between Lithuania and Soviet Russia and its hearing in the Seimas. Also, Čarneckis' exceptional attitude to that treaty is described, because the treaty was necessary for Russia only because "they need peace since economy in Russia is deteriorated; in order to maintain ties with the West, the Russians obtain transit through Lithuania under very favorable conditions". He regretted that the treaty failed to mention the gold fund, military fleet, weapons, recovery of property of the embassies abroad, too small pay for the war losses, etc.

**Chapter III** is designed to describe and analyze V. Čarneckis' activity as a representative in the USA and England. The first section "Raising donations for Lithuania and activity among American Lithuanians" discloses a difficult, but a necessary work for the country in seeking recognition of Lithuania's independence by the USA. That subject is continued by a second section, i.e. "Lithuania's recognition and relations with the USA government". Čarneckis', as the Lithuanian envoy's aim was to achieve Lithuania's recognition by the USA. The author focuses on the analysis of that



political act and reveals all difficulties faced by young Lithuanian diplomats. The work was successful and on July 28, 1922 the USA recognized Lithuania *de jure*. Diplomatic activity in England from 1923 to 1924 is described, when Čarneckis was offered the position of Minister of Foreign Affairs.

**Chapter IV** deals with the activity of V. Čarneckis in the position of the Minister of Foreign Affairs. He was in charge of establishing the principles and trends of foreign policy. One of the main tasks was the issue of Vilnius and relations with the Union of Nations. The problem of formation of the attitude to the relations with Germany and England as well as preparation of the concordat with the Vatican was also relevant. Those were the areas of work of the Minister of Foreign Affairs, thoroughly and professionally described in the monograph by finding new facts and introducing them to the historiography of diplomacy. The themes are analyzed in different sections. Specifically highlighted is Čarneckis' role in the negotiations between Lithuania and Poland in Copenhagen in 1925 on forest rafting along the Nemunas river. V. Čarneckis sought to ensure that Lithuania's interests were not violated and that his country was not forced to establish diplomatic relations with Poland prior to the recovery of Vilnius. V. Čarneckis developed strict instructions for the delegation, organized their hearing and adoption by the Cabinet of Ministers. He acted on the basis of the principles of democracy. That was because he sought to discuss all principal issues of foreign policy in the Cabinet of Ministers and the Committee of Foreign Policy. The author debates that issue with historian Vytautas Žalys.

A separate section in this chapter is "Administration work and social activity", where Čarneckis works in improving the work of the Ministry, working out instructions and managing financial matters are reviewed. Charity work of the Ministry in financing and presenting the artistic exhibitions abroad is also analyzed. The monograph contains some interesting facts about the help of his wife Eleonora Čarneckienė. She not only took part in receptions, but also organized them.

**Chapter V** is of special importance. It is designed to describe the activity of Lithuania's extraordinary authorized minister in Italy in 1925–1934. The chapter deals with the procedures of improving relations with Italy and the actions of the diplomat seeking to bring the Baltic states closer together. The section is named "Pabaltės arbatoš" (The Baltic teas) A separate theme is on the prominence of the name of Lithuania and creating traditions in Italy. The analysis of this particular aspect of V. Čarneckis' work is doing honor to the author, as she understood its importance for the present. That is the way to do diplomatic work for the sake of your homeland.



**Chapter VI** “A decisive period of 1939–1940 for Lithuania” deals with V. Čarneckis work for the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in the capacity of director of Law – Administration department. His responsibility was to manage the staff of the Ministry, be in charge of property management both in Lithuania and in foreign embassies, finances, archives, passports, visas, inheritance, rendition of criminals, etc. Especially complicated was the period when Poland was attacked on September 1, 1939 and Lithuania proclaimed its neutrality. V. Čarneckis was appointed to deal with issuing visas to the Polish citizens retreating from Lithuania. The author of the monograph agrees with Sandra Grigaravičiūtė’s opinion that when opening the consulate in Vilnius, the Lithuanian government claimed its right to Vilnius in the case of Poland’s defeat. This chapter describes and analyzes the negotiations on the admission of Soviet garrisons and accepting the ultimatum of the Soviets. The Government’s answer was that the ultimatum violates the treaty of mutual assistance between Lithuania and the Soviet Union signed in 1939. That indicates that Lithuania accepted the ultimatum far from obediently, but, rather, declared a protest. The facts mentioned are collected from various studies and memoirs of the contemporaries; they were analyzed and evaluated. The chapter ends with the description of oppressive mood of waiting, when V. Čarneckis, when seeing what was going on, expected some repressions; however, he didn’t believe the threat of deportation of his family.

**Chapter VII** named “Personal traits” is dedicated to the revelation of V. Čarneckis’ personality. It consists of as many as 40 pages, which is absolutely reasonable. Dr. A. Veilentienė composed V. Čarneckis’ personal portrait from the numerous facts, even though the diplomat failed to leave any memoirs. We can see not only a politician, a minister, a diplomat, but also a person, a husband, a father and a friend. With reference to the memoirs of the family members and children, the author managed to reveal personal traits of a real patriot of Lithuania. His wife’s portrait is also brightly outstanding: she was Lithuanian, USA citizen, an intellectual, a devoted mother of five children. She was her husband’s participator; even in deportation she never said that her husband was responsible for their sufferings.

The destiny of E. and V. Čarneckis following the Soviet occupation is described in **Chapter VIII**. The description of repressions based on documents and reminiscences of the witnesses is comprehensive and reasoned. The protocols of investigations stored in the Special Archives of Lithuania are of interest, since on their basis horrible dealings of Soviet structures, torture, terror and murders due to ideological differences are disclosed. The chapter also contains description of the family’s destiny and life in deporta-

tion as well as after the return to Lithuania. The material on the destiny of V. Čarneckis' children, their studies, occupation and life in their homeland is of interest, too. Their father's friends rendered all possible assistance.

The book contains *Supplements* which provide the family's documents from the archives, V. Čarneckis' publications, transcripts of speeches delivered at the Constituent Seimas, different reports on important issues, 24 pages of sources and references as well as 10 pages of personal names list. It is the proof of the abundance of the studied literature, memoirs and other sources which are of use to the researchers dealing with the theme of diplomacy. The book contains a big amount of photos illustrating the mode of life of Lithuanian diplomats and statesmen of that time.

The scientific and enduring value of the monograph is undeniable. A deep comprehensive analysis of foreign policy, formed and performed by V. Čarneckis, reveals the mechanism of formation of Lithuania's foreign policy. This is not the only theme developed in this monograph. The book gives the picture of Lithuania's history, reveals it through its foreign policy actively pursued by V. Čarneckis. Here you can see the growth and development of the personality. The author of this paper maintains that it is a new approach in biographical studies, i.e. focusing not only on the personality, but, rather, on his work and commitment to the country, thus revealing the personality. The service for the country first, then family and its history. That style of writing and its structure provide the possibility to concentrate on the country's history followed by a glance at the personal life, thus supplementing each other.

Dr. A. Veilentiene's monography was reviewed and evaluated by the reviewer Assist.Prof. Dr. Sandra Grigaraviciute, of History Didactic Centre of Lithuanian University of Educational Sciences, Vice-Dean of History faculty. She wrote: "Lithuania and the world have eventually received the monograph which will return the honor and decency to the diplomacy of the First Republic of Lithuania and will open a new fresh page in the historiography of the history of the Lithuanian diplomacy. The new generation of historians and researchers of diplomacy tends to over-estimate historiography of foreign countries, sometimes is not critical enough regarding the information obtained from the foreign archives and fails to compare it with local materials of the Lithuanian archives already approved and operating in historiography.

*Aušra Jurevičiūtė*