

The Maps and Mapmakers that Helped Define 20th-Century Lithuanian Boundaries - Part 6: Post-Versailles, Mapmakers Struggle to Depict Lithuania

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In the previous five articles in this series, I showed you how mapmakers depicted the boundaries of Lithuania from 1771 (Fig. 1) to the final Versailles Peace Treaty recommendations of

June 28, 1919 (Fig. 2), the official end of World War I. Before I show you how map and atlas publishers struggled for years to depict accurate boundaries for newly declared (February 16,

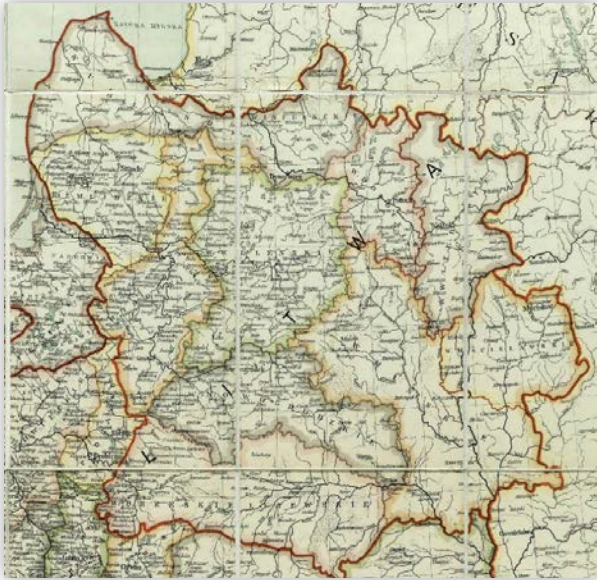


Fig. 1: 1771, Jan Babirecki's 1894 "Polska w roku" showing Grand Duchy boundaries. <http://www.rcin.org.pl>

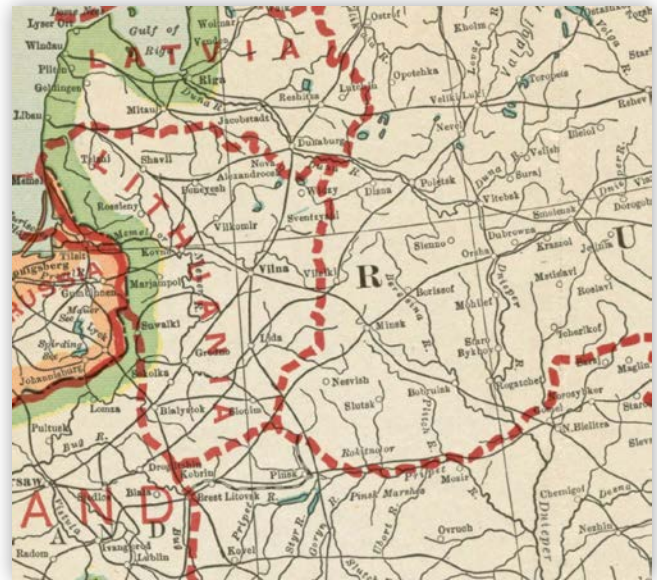


Fig. 2: 1919, C.S. Hammond: "Europe, Showing the Proposed New States." Boston Public Library

1918) re-independent Lithuania, see how three publishers (in addition to the publisher of the Versailles recommendations

map with which I ended my previous article in this series) didn't even agree on "final" Versailles boundary recommendations:



Fig. 3: c. 1920, "L' Europe," Société De Cartes Géographiques <http://www.mapywig.org>

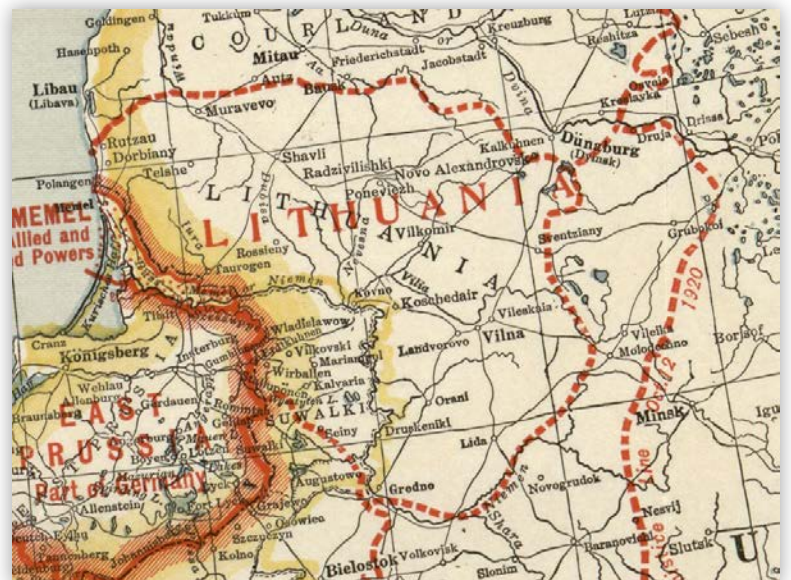


Fig. 4: 1920, National Geographic Magazine, "Europe, Showing Countries as Established by The Peace Conference at Paris." U.S. Library of Congress: <http://www.loc.gov>

While World War I ended June 28, 1919, multiple local wars in Eastern Europe continued to rage (Lithuanians vs. Poles, Soviets and Bermondists, for example) and national boundaries were in flux, until March 18, 1921, when the Riga Peace Treaty finalized the borders of Lithuania, Poland and the Byelorussian Soviet Socialist Republic until the start of World War II.

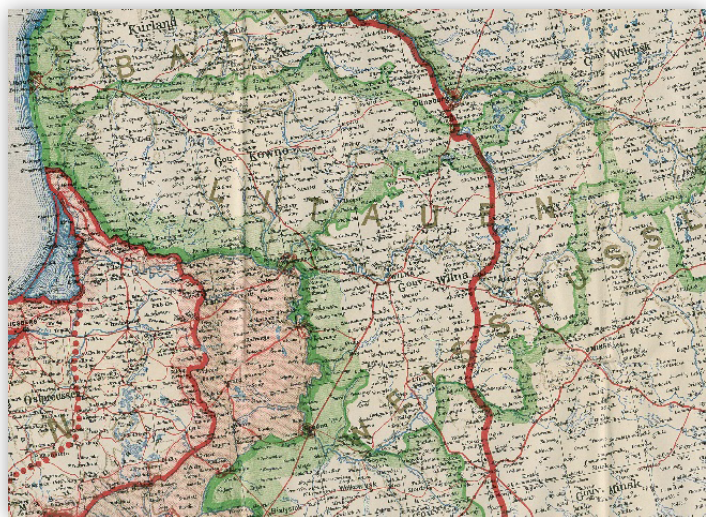


Fig. 5: 1917, "Russian War Front" (translated) *wikimedia*

A late 1917 Russian war zone map (Fig. 5) from venerable German map and atlas publisher Carl Flemming Verlag, with Lithuania defined as "Kowno" and "Wilna" guberniyas, showing the eastern frontline in September 1917, was recycled, overprinted with a new title and boundary lines in 1923 (Fig. 6), but was still woefully out of date.

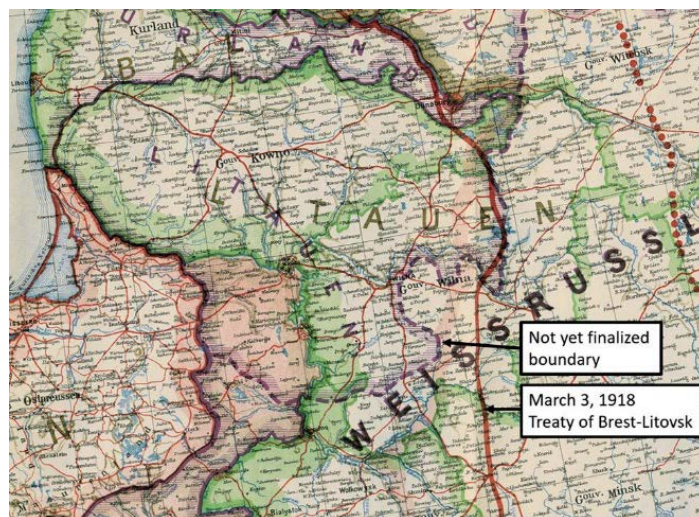


Fig. 6: 1923, "The New States in the East" (translated) *wikimedia*

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Since creation and publication of boundary maps always involves at least some lag from treaty signings, here's a list of events that influenced mapmaker guesses as to probable country boundaries, beginning with the Versailles Treaty. After the list, I'll show a number of those guesses by commercial publishers and geographical institutes. I'm skipping the many "patriotic" maps created on all sides, often based on ethnic boundaries.

(It might be helpful to remember that the Grand Duchy was a multi-ethnic, multi-language metropolitan state that lasted over 500 years, a state within which ethnic Lithuanians were a majority only from its founding in 1260 (an estimated 67.5%) to its acquisition of Ruthenian territories in 1340, when ethnic Lithuanians represented an estimated 30% of the population. As the Grand Duchy expanded at the expense of Russia during the 14th century, ethnic Lithuanians represented just between 10% and 14% of the total population.¹)

Post-Versailles (June 28, 1919) Timeline

- **July 27, 1919:** The Entente – Britain, France, Italy and Japan – faced with rejection of its June 18 proposed demarcation line between Lithuanian and Polish forces, offers a second boundary, called the "Foch Line" (Fig. 7). It, too, is ignored by both sides.
- **December 8, 1919:** The Allied Supreme Council proposes yet another boundary line, later called the "Curzon Line" (Fig. 7) between the Soviet Union and Poland. Neither the Poles nor the Soviets accept it at the time, but it later

becomes a foundational element in determining Poland's Eastern border. The line was extended north into Lithuania, establishing a proposed boundary between Lithuania and Poland, in 1920.

- **July 12, 1920:** Lithuania's Constituent Assembly (Steigiamasis Seimas) signs the **Soviet–Lithuanian Peace Treaty**, wherein the Soviet Union recognizes fully independent Lithuania and its claims to the Vilnius Region. The treaty contains a secret clause allowing Soviet forces unrestricted movement within Soviet-recognized Lithuanian territory during any Soviet war with Poland.²
- **July 14, 1920:** The advancing Soviet army captures Vilnius from Polish forces for a second time.
- **August 17, 1920:** Peace talks between Poland and Soviets begin in Minsk but are interrupted by a nearing Polish-counter-offensive.
- **August 26, 1920:** Vilnius is handed back to Lithuanians, following the defeat of the Soviet offensive. The victorious Polish army returns and the Soviet–Lithuanian Treaty increases hostilities between Poland and Lithuania.
- **September 21, 1920:** Peace talks between Poland and the Soviets resume in Riga. The Soviets propose two solutions, the first on September 21 and the second on September 28. The Polish delegation makes a counteroffer on October 2. Three days later the Soviets offer amendments to the Polish offer, which Poland accepts.

¹ Letukienė, Nijolė; Gineika, Petras (2003). "Istorija. Politologija: kurso santrauka istorijos egzaminui." Vilnius: Alma littera: 182.

² Łossowski, Piotr (1995). "Konflikt polsko-litewski 1918–1920." Warszawa: Książka i Wiedza. pp. 126–128. ISBN 978-83-05-12769-1.

- October 7, 1920: The Suwałki Agreement (Fig. 7) between Lithuania and Poland is signed, leaving Vilnius on the Lithuanian side of the armistice line. It never goes into effect.
- October 8, 1920: Polish General Lucjan Żeligowski, acting on Józef Piłsudski's orders, invades Vilnius, capturing it the next day.
- October 12, 1920: Żeligowski establishes the Republic of Central Lithuania on the same day that an armistice is signed (to go into effect October 18) between Poland and the USSR.
- March 18, 1921: The Riga Peace Treaty “finalizes” the borders of Lithuania, Poland and the Byelorussian S.S.R. until World War II. It gives Poland an Eastern border that was, on average, about 250 kilometers (160 miles) east of the Curzon Line.
- January 8, 1922: A General Election is held in the “Republic of Central Lithuania,” but is boycotted by non-Poles. Results are unrecognized by the Lithuanian government and the League of Nations.³
- March 24, 1922: Central Lithuania is annexed by Poland.
- March 1923: The League of Nations Conference of Ambassadors (the ambassadors of Great Britain, Italy, and Japan accredited in Paris, and French minister of foreign affairs) awards the Vilnius region to Poland. Lithuania rejects the decision and breaks all relations with Poland until 1938.

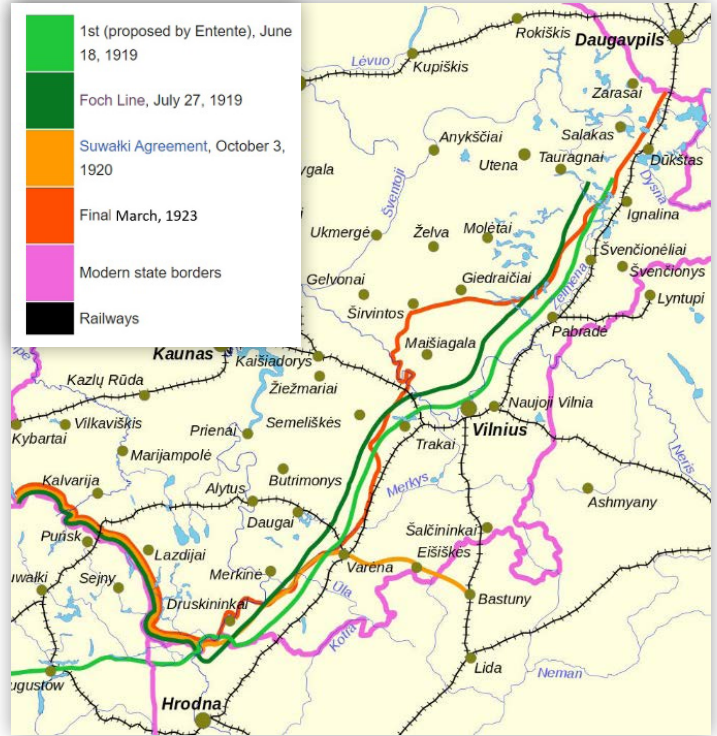


Fig. 7: 1919 - 1939 Proposed borders between Lithuania and Poland. Renate3, based on “Lietuvos istorijos atlasas” (ISBN 5-415-01577-9), on [wikimedia](#)

Mapmakers attempt to depict Lithuania’s boundaries

Were you, say, a U.S. immigrant from Lithuania or Poland – of whatever heritage – interested in seeing whether your ancestral town or shtetl was within newly-independent Lithuania’s or

Poland’s boundaries, here’s a small sampling of what you would find from 1919 to 1923 in an atlas or newspaper depiction:



Fig. 8: 1919 [dated], Jan Zabiełto, “Rzeczpospolitej Polskiej.” <http://www.mapywig.org>



Fig. 9: 1920, Harmsworth Atlas: “Baltic Provinces,” London. [Kapochnas](#)

³ Eidintas, Alfonsas; Vytautas Žalys; Alfred Erich Senn (September 1999). Edvardas Tuskenis (ed.). “Lithuania in European Politics: The Years of the First Republic, 1918-1940.” New York: St. Martin’s Press. p. 84–85. ISBN 0-312-22458-3.



Fig. 10: 1920, The Times of London, "The Republic of Lithuania." *Kapochunas*



Fig. 11: 1920, London Geographical institute, "The Peoples Atlas," "Poland and the New Baltic States" *wikimedia*

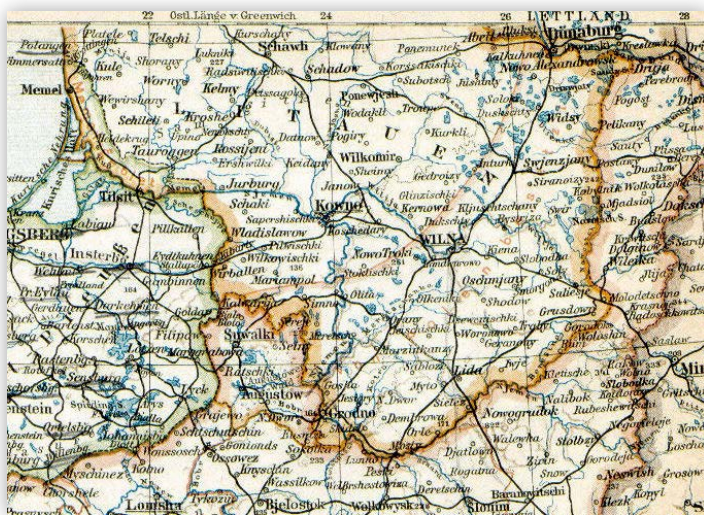


Fig. 12: 1921, Bibliographisches Institut Leipzig, "Polen." *hansaword on eBay*

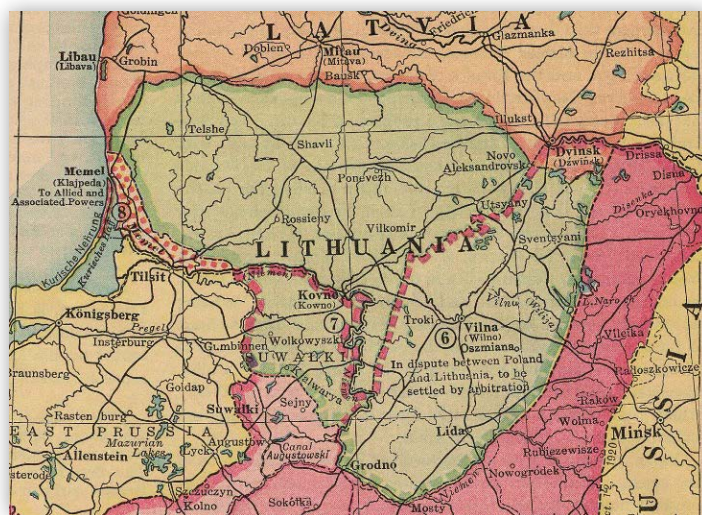


Fig. 13: 1921, Funk & Wagnalls, "Poland and [Old] Lithuania [in green]." *Kapochunas*

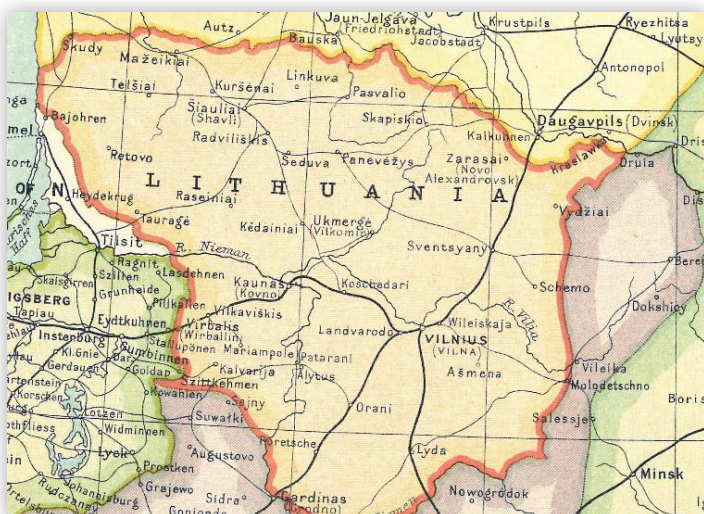


Fig. 14: 1921, "The Times" Survey Atlas of the World, "Eastern Europe." *Kapochunas*



Fig. 15: 1921, Józef Michał Bazewicz, "Map of Poland with its current borders" (translated) <http://www.rcin.org>

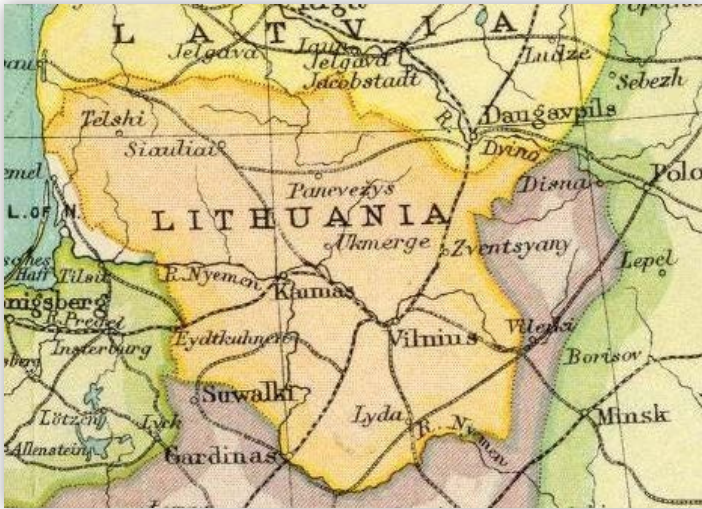


Fig. 16: 1922, J.G. Bartholomew, "Europe – Political." <http://www.davidrumsey.com>

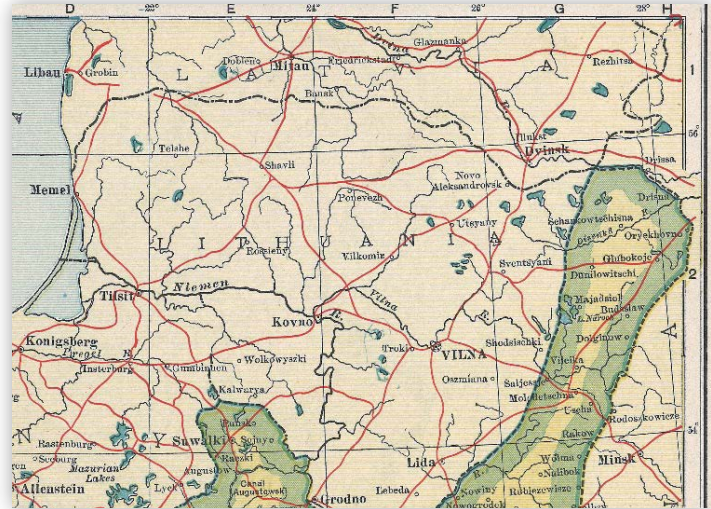


Fig. 17: 1922, L.L. Poates Eng'r. Co., "Poland." *Kapochunas*

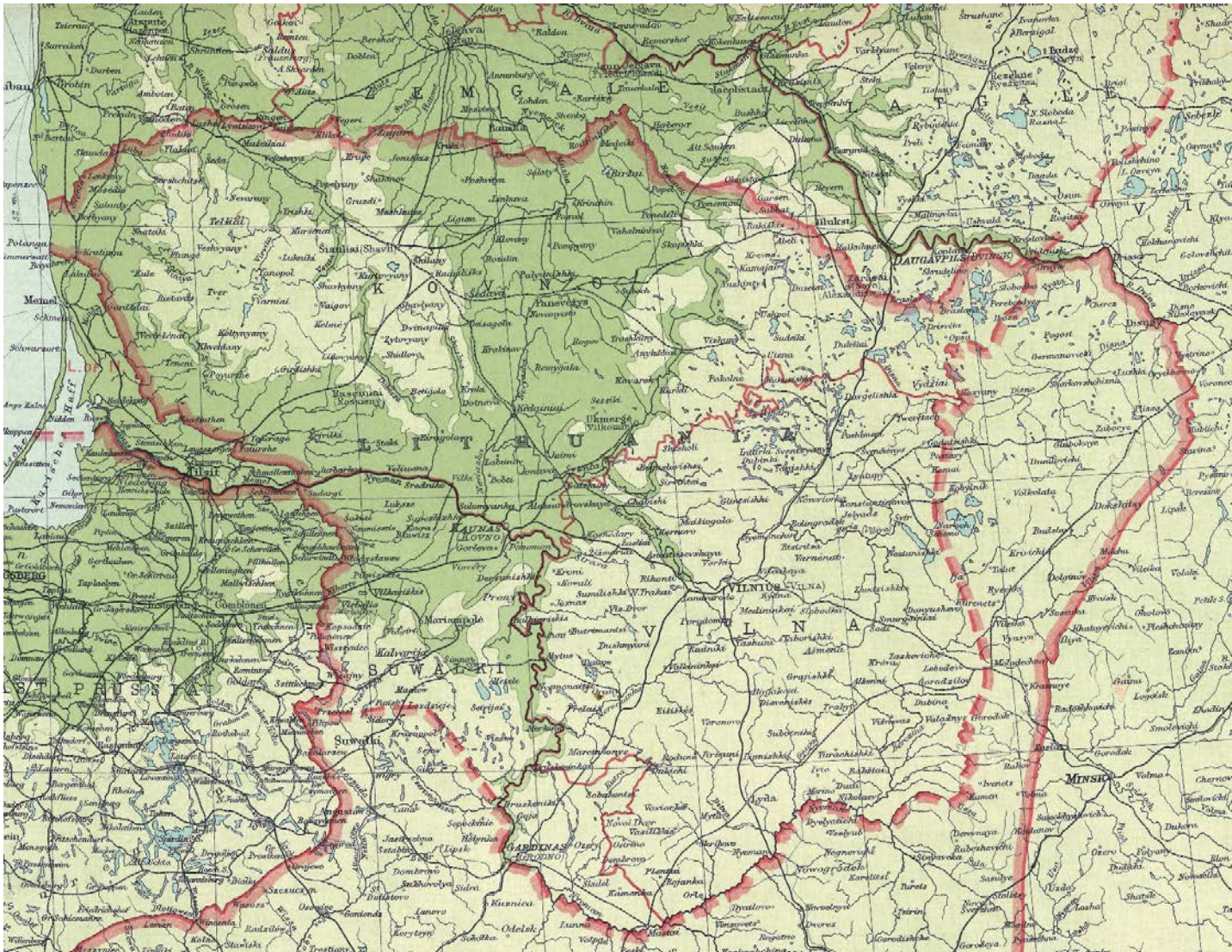


Fig. 18: 1922, "The Times" Survey Atlas of the World, "Baltic States & East Prussia," with no definition of the dotted line. *Kapochunas*

How long did it take for mapmakers to get up to speed on Lithuania's true interwar boundaries?

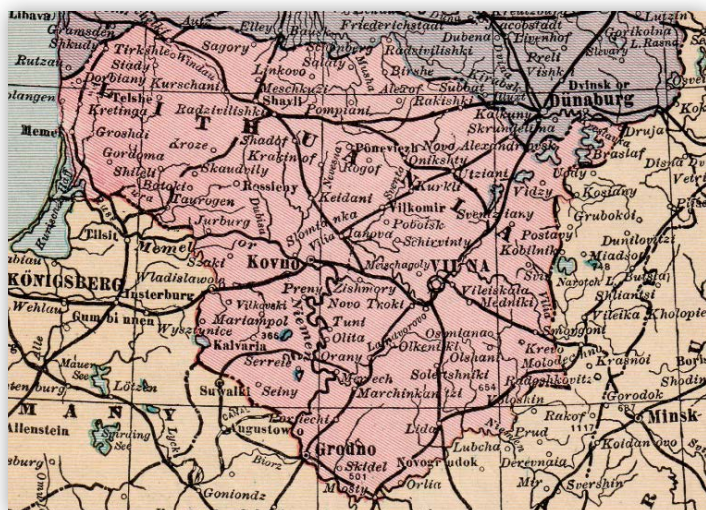


Fig. 19: 1923, C.S. Hammond, "The Baltic States." *Kapochunas*

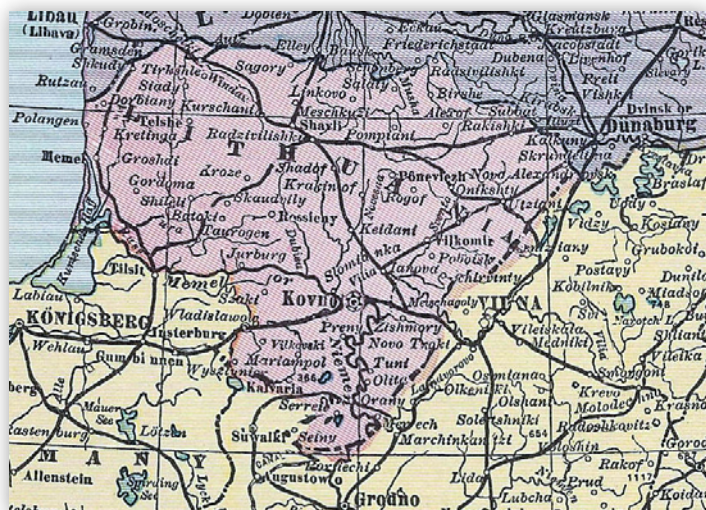
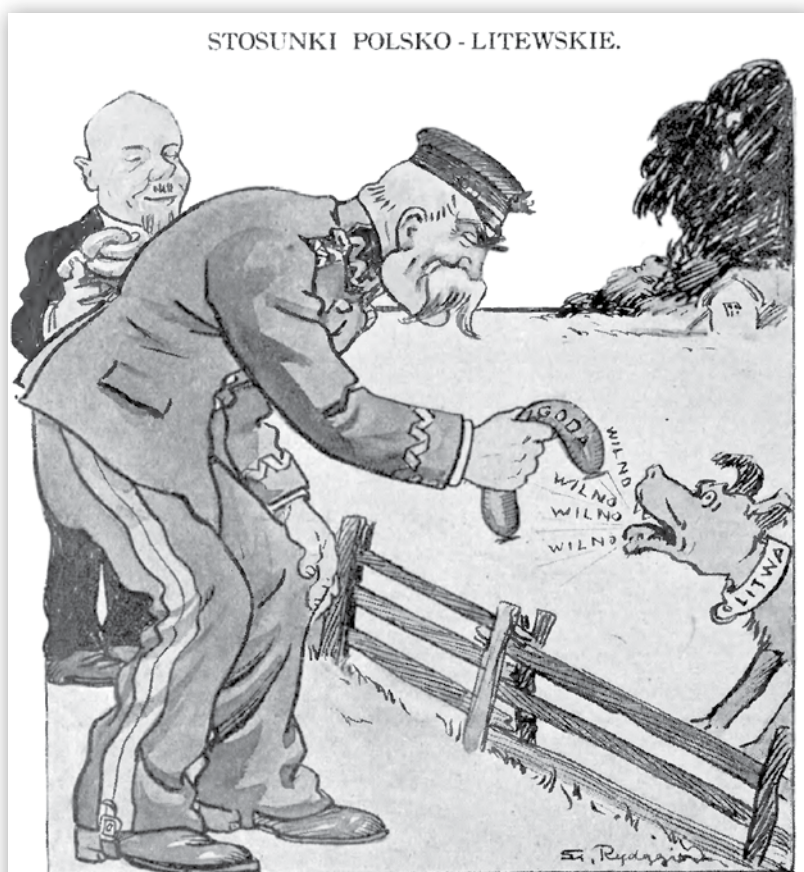


Fig. 20: c. 1924, C.S. Hammond, "The Baltic States." <http://www.etsy.com>

Grodno, Lida, Vilna and Vidzy are in Lithuania in the 1923, but not in the c. 1924 map.

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Marszałek Piłsudski. — Naści, piesku, kiełbasę...
 Piesek. — Choćbyście mi nawet Wilno dali, to zacznę szczekać o Grodno i Białystok, bo już taki jestem...

Postscript:

A 1934 cartoon from the Polish satirical magazine *Mucha* criticizes Lithuanian unwillingness to compromise over the Vilnius region. Marshal Piłsudski offers the sausage labeled "agreement" to a dog with a collar labelled "Lithuania." The dog, who has been barking "Wilno, Wilno, Wilno," replies "Even if you were to give me Wilno, I would bark for Grodno and Białystok, because this is who I am."

On March 17, 1938, Poland delivers an ultimatum to Lithuania demanding that it establish diplomatic relations with Warsaw within 48 hours, and that the terms – including renunciation of claims to the Vilnius region – be finalized before March 31st. Lithuania accepts, by the deadline, the loss of the region as a fact (*de facto*), but not as in accordance with law (*de jure*).⁴

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⁴ Streit, Clarence K. (March 19, 1939). "Pressure on Poles Weakens Demands". *The New York Times*