The War Is Not Over?
On the Continuity and Discontinuity between the Great War and the War of Independence as Experienced by Lithuanian Soldiers

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Peter Holquist, Roberth Gerwarth and other historians argue that, for Eastern Europe, the Armistice of Compiègne, signed in November 1918, did not mean an end of fighting and violence but a 'continuation and transformation' of the world war. However, a precise definition of the viewpoint is important when it comes to continuity. Is it from the perspective of soldiers, civilians or war refugees? For example, many of the Lithuanian veterans of World War I did not fight in the Lithuanian War of Independence from 1919 to 1920. The exceptions included officers, non-commissioned officers, and medical doctors. As a consequence, most of the Lithuanian army in 1920 was comprised of men who had not fought in World War I. In the war experience of the majority of Lithuanian soldiers, the Lithuanian War of Independence was not a continuation of World War I.

Introduction

In 2002, Peter Holquist published a book on the interaction between the First World War and the Russian Revolution. He claimed that "the war and revolution […] were not two discrete events but rather points along a common continuum."[1] According to Holquist, "the Russian Revolution served as a major precipitant for the wartime 'remobilization' after 1917

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[1] Peter Holquist, *Making War, Forging Revolution. Russia's Continuum of Crisis, 1914–1921* (Cambridge MA, London: Harvard University Press, 2002), 3.

that took place across Europe."[2] He therefore suggested that the wars that broke out in Europe after 1918, especially the Russian civil wars, could be described as "a 'continuation and transformation' of the world war."[3] The continuum of crisis—this is what Holquist called the entire period of 1914–1921 in Russia.

Although Holquist's book dealt with events in the so-called Don Territory, he was followed by a number of historians who examined the military conflicts of the early 20th century in another region, the post-imperial area that various authors referred to as "borderlands" (Oskar Halecki), "bloodlands" (Timothy D. Snyder), "shatterzone" (Omer Bartov and Eric D. Weitz), "lands between" (Alexander V. Prusin), the "European rimlands" (Mark Levene) or the European "Middle East" (Lewis Namier). For instance, when writing about "war after the war" in this region, Peter Gatrell emphasised "the close connection" between the Great War and subsequent revolutionary challenges, civil wars and "'dirty wars' fought by irregular troops and distinguished by the use of force against civilians."[4] In Ireland, a team of historians led by Robert Gerwarth at the University College Dublin and the Trinity College raised the question of whether the Great War really ended in November 1918. They rightly concluded that for much of Eastern Europe the period known in the West as the "post-war" period, "was even more violent than the war years, with more than 4 million deaths as a result of revolutions, wars, and civil wars between 1917 and the early 1920s."[5] In his last book, Robert Gerwarth referred to the inhabitants of the region as "the vanquished",[6] while Jay Winter now claims that there was in fact a second Great War in Central and Eastern Europe that began in 1917 and ended in 1923, a new stage of the Great War that was qualitatively different from the previous

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[2] *Ibid*., 2.
[3] *Ibid*., 3–4.
[4] Peter Gatrell, "War after the War: Conflicts, 1919–23" – *A Companion to World War I*, ed. John Horne (Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2010), 567.
[5] The Limits of Demobilization, 1917–1923: Paramilitary Violence in Europe and the Wider World, Final Report Summary, last update 9 March 2016, URL: <https://cordis.europa.eu/project/id/240809/reporting>.
[6] Robert Gerwart, *The Vanquished. Why the First World War Failed to End, 1917–1923* (London: Allen Lane, 2016).

one.[7] What all these arguments have in common is that they share the same goal—to try to establish an approach according to which the violence in much of Europe did not end in 1918, in fact, in some countries in the region, such as Estonia, it really only started in 1917; and that there was continuity between the Great War and the subsequent wars for the establishment of national states and their borders in the post-imperial area.

However, when it comes to the question of continuity, it is very important to be clear from whose perspective we see it—that of the soldiers, the civilians or the refugees, those who lost something in the war or those who were able to benefit from it? In this article, I want to show how important it is to assess the differences in perspective by selecting two categories of people who experienced the violence in a particular way, soldiers of Lithuanian origin who fought in the Great War and soldiers who fought for the Lithuanian national state in the years 1919 to 1920.

Indeed, two books recently published by Oxford University Press[8] have inspired the development of my argument. The authors of these books, Tomas Balkelis and Jochen Böhler, examine war and paramilitary violence in Lithuania and Poland respectively. Both authors argue for a continuity between the Great War and subsequent national wars. One argument they make for this continuity is that demobilisation did not take place there. They claim that in many cases the soldiers of the imperial armies simply switched their uniforms.

Of course, there are a number of arguments that support this statement. However, the lack of demobilisation was not equally typical of all the newly founded states of Central and Eastern Europe. The first Polish legions in the Habsburg Imperial Army were created in 1914. In response, the Romanov Empire also allowed the raising of Polish units (the Puławy Legion was the first to be formed in 1914). In the summer of 1915, the formation of Latvian rifle battalions in the Russian Army began. During

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[7]   Jay Winter, "The Second Great War, 1917–1923," *Revista Universitaria de Historia Militar* vol 7 no 14 (2018): 160–179.

[8]   Tomas Balkelis, *War, Revolution, and Nation-Making in Lithuania, 1914–1923* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018); Jochen Böhler, *Civil War in Central Europe, 1918–1921. The Reconstruction of Poland* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018).

the Great War, both Polish and Latvian national units fought in the area that later became the territory of the Polish and Latvian national states, respectively. Unlike the Latvian riflemen, many of whom were withdrawn into the depths of Russia by the Bolsheviks in 1918, some of the organised Polish troops remained in the area of the future Poland, fought for the national interests and eventually joined the Polish Army. That is why Böhler is accurate in claiming that the demobilisation did not take place and for many Polish troops active service neither began nor ended in 1918. Balkelis, however, is not precise in his attempts to show such continuity in Lithuania. In several chapters of the book, he points out that thousands of demobilised veterans of the Great War switched their uniforms and were re-mobilised into the nascent Lithuanian national army and paramilitary formations.[9] Balkelis provides some examples to illustrate his argument, but does not elaborate on the extent of the phenomenon. Thus, the reader may get the wrong impression that the same people fought in the Great War and in the three subsequent wars for Lithuanian independence. This article reconsiders his argument and tries to shed more light on the question of continuity between imperial and national armies by looking at the Lithuanian case.

How to form an army? The role of the Great War veterans in Lithuanian defence

Unlike Latvians or Poles, Lithuanians were not allowed to form their national units in the Russian armed forces until after the February Revolution of 1917, at a similar time to Estonians and Ukrainians. The entire area of future Lithuania was still occupied by the German Army at that time. Consequently, Lithuanians serving as Russian soldiers could only establish their own military units in the rear areas. They emerged in Kyiv, Smolensk, Valka/Valga, Rovno/Rivne and elsewhere.[10] Of all these units,

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[9]   Balkelis, *War, Revolution, and Nation-Making*, 9, 77, 111.

[10]   For more on the Lithuanian national units see Vytautas Jokubauskas, "An Army never Created: Lithuanian National Units in Russia and their Veterans Organisation in Lithuania in the Interwar Period" – *The Great War in Lithuania and Lithuanians in the Great War: Experiences and Memories*, ed. Vasilijus Safronovas (Klaipėda: Klaipėda University Press, 2017), 101–122.

Veterans of the First World War in the ranks of a Lithuanian national unit in Russia. The headquarters of a Lithuanian Detached Battalion in late 1917—early 1918. Lithuanian Central State Archives (LCVA), P-19269

only the Lithuanian Detached Battalion[11] in Vitebsk (as part of the 3rd Finnish Rifle Division) was formed before the Bolshevik coup. All other units were formed afterwards, so they belonged to the Russian White Movement and were treated as enemies by the Bolsheviks. The Red Army tried to draw the soldiers of the Lithuanian national units to its side. In addition, some units (e.g. two Lithuanian squadrons of the 17th Cavalry Division) became German prisoners of war. As a result, most of these units were disbanded in the spring of 1918. All this prevented them from fighting on the territory of future Lithuania or for Lithuanian national interests. Despite the hopes of their organisers that the national units would form the basis of the future Lithuanian Army,[12] the veterans of

[11] In Russian: Особый литовский батальон III Финляндской стрелковой дивизии.

[12] Cf. Ladislovas Natkevičius, *Lietuvos Kariuomenė* (New York: Lithuanian Development Corporation, 1919), 11.

the Great War did not reach their homeland in an organised form. Of all the national units, only the Lithuanian Detached Train Battalion[13] managed to return from Rovno to Vilnius in August 1918, more or less organised.[14] The situation in Lithuania was thus completely different from that in Poland, where some Polish units that had been created in Russia and France during the Great War were essentially absorbed into the Polish Army in 1918 and 1919.

The return of the ex-Russian Army soldiers to what later became Lithuania took several years. Although there is insufficient data on the course of this process, a small part of the Great War veterans, namely those who had served in the Lithuanian national units, filled in questionnaires containing some information about their experiences of military service in the late 1930s.[15] Quantitative analysis of these questionnaires shows that although 62.75 per cent returned as early as 1918, the process of their return from the frontlines, rear areas, garrisons and prisoner-of-war camps continued in the following years: another 17.68 per cent returned in 1919, 6.25 per cent in 1920, 9.62 per cent in 1921 and 2.47 per cent in 1922. Individual veterans continued to return in the following years until 1931.

In the meantime, when Germany began to withdraw its military units from the areas it had occupied in the east in late 1918, these areas were invaded by the Bolshevik armies. The Lithuanian state, which the Lietuvos Taryba (Lithuanian Council) had proclaimed in December 1917 and again in February 1918, had already come into being by this time. Its armed forces, however, were still being built. In fact, the first Prime Minister, Augustinas Voldemaras, did not consider the question of defence as something of the highest priority. In the course of November and December 1918, three regiments, two Lithuanian and one Belarusian, and the

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[13]   In Russian: Отдельный литовский обозный батальон.

[14]   Pranas Briedulis, "Mano atsiminimai. Iš Rovno lietuvių karių gyvenimo," *Karo archyvas* 4 (1928): 182–191.

[15]   At present, the questionnaires are kept in the Lietuvos centrinis valstybės archyvas in Vilnius [Lithuanian Central State Archives, hereafter LCVA], f. 1446, ap. 1, b. 3 to 29 and 46. The results of the quantitative analysis of 1,320 forms are published for the first time in this article. 1,216 of 1,320 veterans indicated the exact year of their return.

General Staff and a commandant's office were officially created in Vilnius. But the army was disastrously short of weapons, ammunition, uniforms and, above all, men. By early January 1919, the National Defence had barely 100 officers (karininkai) and no more than 700 rank and file (kareiviai) in its ranks.[16] This force was unable to resist the advancing Bolshevik Western Army. Therefore, in late December 1918, all three units, proudly called regiments, were transferred to Alytus, Kaunas and Hrodna.

While the National Defence was still being organised, in some areas men joined together to form paramilitary formations. This was not entirely uncoordinated, but in many cases they emerged autonomously. The very first of these formations emerged at the end of 1918 near the former border between the provinces of Kurland and Kaunas (Kovno). The members of these formations acted as partisans both in the areas under the control of the German military contingent (control was, of course, conditional, but that was what the Germans believed) and in the areas invaded by the Red Army.

At this stage, the Great War veterans made an important contribution. They were actively involved in leading men who knew how to handle weapons. The brothers Aleksandras and Povilas Plechavičius, former officers in the Russian Army, organised partisan activities around Seda in north-western Lithuania. Jonas Bartasevičius, another Russian officer, was the organiser of a paramilitary formation in Pašvitinys, northern Lithuania, in early 1919. These are but some examples. Among those who joined the National Defence in 1918 were also many veterans. These included the later generals Jurgis Kubilius, Mykolas Velykis, Pranas Liatukas, Jonas Galvydis-Bikauskas, Vincas Grigaliūnas-Glovackis, Julius Čaplikas and

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[16]   The Lithuanian Army numbered 144 officers and 2,676 rank and file on 1 January 1919. But these figures seem exaggerated, because the army only began to grow rapidly in the first days of January. Cf. Vytautas Jokubauskas, *"Mažųjų kariuomenių" galia ir paramilitarizmas. Tarpukario Lietuvos atvejis* (Klaipėda: Klaipėdos universiteto leidykla, 2014), 354; Vytautas Lesčius, *Lietuvos kariuomenė 1918–1920* (Vilnius: Lietuvos Respublikos švietimo ir mokslo ministerijos Leidybos centras, 1998), 248, 322; Gintautas Surgailis, *Pirmasis pėstininkų didžiojo Lietuvos kunigaikščio Gedimino pulkas* (Vilnius: Vytauto Didžiojo karo muziejus, 2011), 20–21; Gintautas Surgailis, *Antrasis Lietuvos didžiojo kunigaikščio Algirdo pėstininkų pulkas* (Vilnius: Generolo Jono Žemaičio Lietuvos karo akademija, 2014), 13–21.

Vladas Nagevičius, Colonel Kazys Škirpa and other prominent officers of the future Lithuanian Army, as well as some active organisers of Lithuanian national units in Russia such as Stasys Butkus or Petras Gužas.

In the first months of 1919, the contribution of the Great War veterans to Lithuanian defence increased even more. There were a number of reasons for this. After a change of government, the government faced challenges that made the issue of defence a critical one. Newly appointed Prime Minister Mykolas Sleževičius and Defence Minister Mykolas Velykis appealed to the people encouraging their voluntary enlistment into the National Defence on 29 December 1918.[17] A week later, on 5 January 1919, the government ordered the recruitment of all its officials who had experience of serving in the Russian Army as officers and military clerks. On 15 January 1919, the mobilisation of the remaining officers and staffers up to 45 years of age was announced.[18] In the wake of this mobilisation and due to intensive volunteering in January, the armed forces grew to about 270 officers and about 4,000 rank and file by early February.[19] It is almost certain that all of these officers and a small part of the privates were veterans of the Great War. In the spring of 1919, however, the enlistment of the Great War veterans for the National Defence seems to have reached its limits. Even though some paramilitary formations, including former Russian army officers, were co-opted into the army during 1919, the introduction of conscription transformed the army and led to a rapid change in the main body of soldiers. Through the compulsory recruitment of men born between 1894 and 1901 and the mobilisations of individual categories of the population in Lithuania, which continued throughout 1919–1920, the Lithuanian Army grew to about 46,000 men by December 1920.[20] As the Lithuanian Army continued to grow and the role of the paramilitary formations increasingly diminished, the share

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[17] "Į Lietuvos piliečius," *Lietuvos aidas*, 29 December 1918, 2.
[18] *Lietuvos įstatymai. Sistematizuotas įstatymų, instrukcijų ir įsakymų rinkinys*, sur. Antanas Merkys (Kaunas: A. Merkys and V. Petrulis, 1922), 325–327.
[19] Cf. the contradictory estimates of Vytautas Lesčius, *Lietuvos kariuomenė nepriklausomybės kovose 1918–1920* (Vilnius: Generolo Jono Žemaičio Lietuvos karo akademija, 2004), 39; Jokubauskas, „*Mažųjų kariuomenių" galia*, 354.
[20] Cf. Lesčius, *Lietuvos kariuomenė 1918–1920*, 424–429 and Jokubauskas, "*Mažųjų kariuomenių" galia*, 354.

The first public oath of the Lithuanian Armed Forces. Kaunas, 11 May 1919. Vytautas the Great War Museum (Vytauto Didžiojo karo muziejus, VDKM), Fa-23058

of the veterans of the Great War in the ranks of Lithuanian servicemen declined considerably.

The share of re-mobilised soldiers in the Lithuanian Army in 1919–1920

No historian has yet attempted to estimate how many Great War veterans were in the Lithuanian armed forces during what was later called the War of Independence. Indeed, this is a complex question, the answer to which depends heavily on what exactly counts as the War of Independence.[21]

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[21] Tomas Balkelis is critical of the concept of 'independence wars'. Cf. his attempts to view the military conflicts in Lithuania after the Great War as "a single multidirectional war rather than a series of 'liberation', 'civil' or 'revolutionary' wars": Balkelis, *War, Revolution, and Nation-*

The Lithuanian armed forces were involved in three different conflicts, including the war with the Red Army, military encounters with the West Russian Volunteer Army and the war with Poland. It was not until the mid-1920s that the entire period of the three conflicts was labelled by local authors as the "struggle for independence" (*nepriklausomybės kova*), "fights for independence" (*nepriklausomybės kovos*) or the "wars of independence" (*nepriklausomybės karai*). But the end of these wars brought some confusion. After the intervention of the League of Nations Military Control Commission in November 1920, peace was not concluded. Although both sides had ceased military action, Lithuanians continued to encounter Poles in the so-called neutral zone, a creation of the Military Commission, until this zone ceased to exist in February–May 1923. Moreover, the personnel strength of the Lithuanian Army continued to increase, reaching its peak in December 1921 – January 1922. Demobilisation commenced in the spring of 1922 and lasted until the end of 1923. All this can be taken as an argument for the claim that the war, the violence, the military actions and the individual operations actually ended in 1923.[22] However, when it comes to the question of how many soldiers were actually involved in both conflicts (i.e. the Great War and the national wars), the extent of the involvement becomes an important criterion. The military encounters in the neutral zone were indeed a small-scale conflict with rather inconsiderable forces involved. An additional argument is the fact that men who had already served in the Russian Army were released from compulsory service in the Lithuanian Army from 1921 onwards (see below). Therefore, it seems more logical to follow the "traditional" approach toward the end of the "Lithuanian wars" in this article. In 1922, the Lithuanian Army recognised the period from 5 January 1919 to 1 December 1920 as the period for military action.[23] Although

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Making, 7, 96. For more on the role of these wars in the domestic memory landscape, see Vasilijus Safronovas, "Who fought for national freedom? On the significance of the Great War in interwar Lithuania," *Acta Baltico-Slavica* 42 (2018): 189–215.

[22] Cf. Jokubauskas, "*Mažųjų kariuomenių*" *galia*, 24; Balkelis, *War, Revolution, and Nation-Making*, 1–2, 156.

[23] According to the General Staff, the war with Bolshevist Russia lasted from 5 January 1919 to 5 January 1920, the encounters with the West Russian Volunteer Army from 26 July 1919 to

military encounters and violence occurred both before and after these dates, the end of the wars was apparently equated here with the decision of the Military Commission of 29 November 1920. The Lithuanian press did not consider this decision as the end of the conflict, but the General Staff had announced on 4 December 1920 that it would no longer issue public reports, as "the cessation of military action has taken place".[24] This makes the end of 1920 an 'appropriate' time to estimate how many men with experience from the world war were in the enlarged Lithuanian Army that participated in the three wars that followed.

The round figure of 46,000 men (see above, size of the Lithuanian Army in December 1920) chosen for the estimates in this article needs further explanation. Not all of these men took part in military action (nor were all the Great War veterans front-line soldiers). Over the course of two years, 1919 and 1920, the army changed constantly. For example, non-commissioned officers who had previously served in the Russian Army were mobilised on 15 January 1919. Their demobilisation was announced on 26 February 1920, but a few months later, on 21 October 1920, there was a new mobilisation of NCO's born between 1885 and 1900.[25] In theory, this means that not all NCO's who were in the army before February 1920 were still there in December. Unsurprisingly, many men were listed as casualties, most of whom were irrecoverable. Estimates of total casualties ranged from 5,500 to 7,600.[26] Desertion from the Lithuanian Army is another factor that makes every estimate imprecise. To top it all off, para-

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15 December 1919, and the war with Polish troops from 18 April 1919 to 1 December 1920: *Įsakymas Kariuomenei*, 11 April 1922, 1.

[24] Cf. "Generalinio Štabo pranešimas," *Laisvė*, 5 December 1920, 1 and *Lietuva*, 5 December 1920, 1.

[25] *Lietuvos įstatymai*, 327, 330, 333.

[26] According to official figures from the General Staff, 1,980 Lithuanian soldiers died in 1919 and 1920 (of whom 984 died in combat, 133 from wounds and 863 from disease) and 2,463 were injured (Vladas Ingelevičius, Juozas Ūsas, Kazys Oželis et al., "Karo sanitarijos tarnyba 1918–1928 m.," *Mūsų žinynas* 45 (1928), 521, 525–526, 530). The controversy stems from different estimates of missing soldiers and prisoners of war, ranging from 1,024 to 3,147: cf. Ingelevičius, Ūsas, Oželis et al., "Karo sanitarijos tarnyba", 520; Vytautas Jokubauskas, Titas Tamkvaitis, "Du karo istorijos šaltiniai iš Lietuvos tarpukariu" – *The Unending War? The Baltic States after 1918*, eds. Vytautas Jokubauskas, Vasilijus Safronovas (Klaipėda: Klaipėda University Press, 2018), 181.

*Partisans
of the Joniškėlis
Battalion in 1919.
LCVA, A049-P046*

military formations organised by armed partisans and riflemen played an important role in all three wars. As a rule, however, they were not considered part of the Lithuanian Army. But there were exceptions, e.g. the partisans from Joniškėlis area who were co-opted into the army and formed the basis of the 9th Infantry Regiment in 1919. In view of all these factors, I have deliberately chosen a figure representing the Lithuanian Army at the time, when it had been rapidly growing for the last three months:[27] many men who were drafted into the army in those months simply did not have the opportunity to take part in military action. However, if they are included in the number for further calculations, they "represent" in a

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[27]   The army was increased from 34,736 men on 1 October 1920 to 46,481 men on 1 January 1921: Jokubauskas, *"Mažųjų kariuomenių" galia*, 354.

sense all those who took part in the war but were not in the army at the end of 1920 for the reasons mentioned above.

In the following part of this section I will present the Lithuanian army of 1919–1920, divided into three different categories, and try to give estimates of the share of Great War veterans in each of these categories.

The volunteers

'Lithuanian Army volunteer' was actually an ambiguous term. The men considered themselves volunteers because they voluntarily joined the National Defence, but it was also a legal status conferred after the fact under Lithuanian law. The government published precise criteria for the recognition of volunteers in 1928, and the recognition procedures based on these criteria dragged on for several years. According to these procedures, many men who had voluntarily joined the Lithuanian Army in 1919 and even in 1918 were not recognised as volunteers. Ladas Natkevičius, a prominent organiser of Lithuanian soldiers in the Russian 12th Army,[28] who had volunteered for the Lithuanian National Defence as early as November 1918, is a notorious example.[29] The main reason for this is that by the time such volunteers were accepted into the ranks of the Lithuanian armed forces, the government had already issued orders for their mobilisation or conscription. Men who fought in the irregular forces also faced difficulties in gaining recognition. Only 17 partisans were declared to be 'creators-volunteers',[30] although some estimates claim that in rural districts where paramilitary formations were active the level of involvement reached 0.3 to 1.5 per cent of the total population.[31] This explains the discrepancy in estimates between 10 to 15 thousand men who joined the Lithuanian Army as volunteers in 1918–1920.[32] Assuming

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[28] The Lithuanian Dragoon Detachment (actually two squadrons of the 17th Cavalry Division) in Valka/Valga was formed after being detached from the 20th Finnish Dragoon Regiment (in Russian: 20-й драгунский Финляндский полк) of the 12th Army in December 1917.

[29] See the questionnaire filled by Natkevičius: LCVA, f. 1446, ap. 1, b. 18, l. 7.

[30] Lionginas Leknickas, "Dėl kūrėjų savanorių skaičiaus," *Karo archyvas* 11 (1939), 306.

[31] Cf. Petras Gudelis, "Dėl vasaros rytų partizanų," *Trimitas* 13 (1935), 224–225.

[32] According to the highest estimate, there were 14,939 'creators-volunteers' in Lithuania: Kalpas Uoginis, "Nepriklausomybė ir savanoriai," *Karys* 2 (1970), 37. Apparently this number

that there were 46,000 men at the end of 1920, ten thousand volunteers made up 22 per cent of the Lithuanian armed forces.

How many veterans of the Great War were there among the volunteers? The question can be answered on the basis of some well-documented cases. A recently issued biographical guide of Lithuanian Army volunteers from a single rural district suggests that only 15 out of 154 volunteers from the Pumpėnai area in north-eastern Lithuania were veterans of the Great War.[33] This is 10 per cent, although we must bear in mind that some of the descriptions in the guide lack accurate biographical data. Another guide contains biographical data on 286 participants in the wars for Lithuanian independence from the Švenčionys area in eastern Lithuania, of which 60 bios (21 per cent) contain records of service in the Great War.[34] However, the latter guide lists not only volunteers but also those who were mobilised into the Lithuanian Army. If we ignore this category, we get a rate of almost 15 per cent.

It seems beyond doubt that the soldiers of the former Lithuanian national units would have volunteered to join the Lithuanian Army the moment they returned to the area controlled by the Lithuanian national government. A deliberate decision in this matter is what can be expected from men who joined the national units at a time when there was no national state. However, of the 1,220 cases explicitly documented in the

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includes rejected applications. Before 1 February 1938, the Lithuanian Army Staff had recognised 9,995 former soldiers as 'volunteers', 3,407 applications had been rejected, and another 70 men had lost this status because of their criminal misdemeanours: Leknickas, "Dėl kūrėjų savanorių," 306–307. A similar figure comes from another source: 9,981 applications from former soldiers were granted before 12 April 1937; another 200 applications for recognition were still pending: Petras Ruseckas, *Savanorių žygiai: nepriklausomybės karų atsiminimai*, vol 1 (Kaunas: Lietuvos kariuomenės kūrėjų savanorių sąjunga, 1937), 58. In 2010, an almost complete list of men recognised as volunteers by the Lithuanian government was published on the website of the private publisher Versmė. It is based on the files of the Lithuanian Central State Archives and contains 10,354 names. See Lietuvos kariuomenės kūrėjai savanoriai (1918–1923), accessed 20 Nov. 2019, URL <http://www.versme.lt/sav_a.htm>.

[33] Algimantas Stalilionis, Vykintas Vaitkevičius, *Laisvės ir Tėvynės ginti: 1918–1920 m. Pumpėnų valsčiaus savanoriai* (Vilnius: Pumpėnų kraštiečių asociacija "Pumpėniečių viltys", 2017).

[34] Jonas Juodagalvis, *Švenčionių krašto savanoriai 1918–1920* (Vilnius: Generolo Jono Žemaičio Lietuvos karo akademija, 2005).

Volunteers of the 2nd Infantry Regiment, January 1919. LCVA, P-19034

above-mentioned questionnaires, only 391 report subsequent service in the Lithuanian Army; of these, 208 were volunteers. The estimate is thus 17 per cent. According to testimonies,[35] the only national unit whose soldiers (at least the majority) were able to return to Lithuania in an organised manner in 1918 was the Lithuanian Detached Train Battalion. But that did not make the battalion's veterans an exception: only 16 per cent of them subsequently volunteered for the Lithuanian Army.

All this shows that the share of the Great War veterans among the volunteers was hardly more than 10 to 17 per cent. The majority of the young men who joined the Lithuanian armed forces as volunteers had no previous experience of military service in the Russian Army.

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[35] Briedulis, "Mano atsiminimai," 189–190.

The conscripts

Conscripts are another category of soldiers that made up the bulk of military personnel. According to data from 1 January 1921 (the closest date to December 1920), there were 33,780 conscripts in the Lithuanian Army.[36] Their number increased steadily in 1919 and 1920, reaching 18,975 on 15 May 1920, 20,380 on 1 September and 24,188 on 12 October.[37]

What was the share of the Great War veterans among the conscripts? The question can be answered by examining the different age groups that were subject to conscription. According to the Russian Conscription Statute of 1912,[38] the compulsory enlistment into military service was applied each year to one age group of men, namely those who were twenty years old on January 1 of the year of conscription. During the Great War, the age limit was lowered and the last three call-ups in August 1915, May 1916 and February 1917 involved nineteen-year-olds. Consequently, the last call-up of conscripts announced in Russia in February 1917 concerned those born before 1 January 1898.[39] However, the call-up of those born in 1897 was initiated immediately before the February Revolution in Russia. The course of events following the revolution strongly influenced the results. This is also evident from the questionnaires distributed

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[36] "Žinios apie naujokus priimtus kariuomenėn," 1 January 1921, LCVA, f. 929, ap. 5, b. 3, l. 143 ap.

[37] "Žinios apie pašauktus, priimtus, paliuosuotus ir nestojusius naujokus, gimusius 1896, 97, 98, 99 ir 1900 m.", 15 May 1920, LCVA, f. 929, ap. 5, b. 3, l. 126; "Žinios apie naujokus gimusius 1896, 97, 98, 99 ir 1900 m.", 1 Sept. 1920 – *Ibid.*, 128; "Žinios apie priimtus naujokus iki 1920, 12 spal.," 12 Oct. 1920 – *Ibid.*, 132.

[38] Ob izmenenii Ustava o Vojnskoj Povinnosti: Vysočaiše utverždennyj odobrennyj Gosudarstvennym Sovetom i Gosudarstvennoju Dumoju zakon, 23 ijunja 1912 g (Об изменении Устава о Воинской Повинности: Высочайше утвержденный одобренный Государственным Советом и Государственною Думою закон 23 июня 1912 г), *Polnoe sobranije zakonov Rossijskoj imperii. Sobranije treťe (Полное собрание законов Российской империи. Собрание третье)*, vol 32 (Petrograd: Gosudarstvennaja tipografija (Государственная типография), 1915), no. 37417.

[39] Cf. *Rossija v mirovoj vojne 1914–1918 goda (v cifrax) (Россия в мировой войне 1914–1918 года в (цифрах))* (Moscow: Central'noje statističeskoe upravlenie (Центральное статистическое управление), 1925), 17; Nikolai Golovin (Николай Головин), *Voennye usilija Rossii v mirovoj vojne (Военные усилия России в мировой войне)*, vol I (Paris: Tovariščestvo ob"edinennyx izdatelej (Товарищество объединенных издателей), 1939), 77–80, 84–86.

to veterans of the Lithuanian national units. Of the 1,184 men who had served in the Russian Army and indicated their year of birth, 763 (64 per cent) were born in the years 1890–1896, another 353 (30 per cent) in the period 1871–1889 and only 68 (6 per cent) were born between 1897 and 1903.[40] The group of 47 veterans born in 1897 is two to four times smaller than groups of those born between 1890 and 1896.

These data can be compared with information on the number of conscripts of specific age groups who joined the Lithuanian Army (see table below):

Table 1. Conscription of age groups born in 1894–1901[41]

Call-up	Year of birth	Number of conscripts (1 Januar 1921)
August 1920	1894	357
August 1920	1895	349
September 1919	1896	6,232
February 1919	1897	5,319
February 1919	1898	5,666
September 1919	1899	7,011
September 1919	1900	7,730
August 1920	1901	1,116
TOTAL		33,780

The distribution of conscripts by age group shows that those born in 1898 and younger accounted 64 per cent of the men called-up (21,523). Apart from a few individual cases, these men hardly had any experience of service in the Russian Army. Those born in 1894 and 1895, who theoretically could have been Russian soldiers during the Great War, were among

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[40]   In 1915 the territory of the future Lithuania was occupied by Imperial Germany, but already before 1915 many Lithuanians lived outside this territory in Russia. In 1915, hundreds of thousands of inhabitants of the territory of future Lithuania fled from the arrival of the Germans and lived as refugees in Russia. It can be reasonably doubted that those born in 1898–1903 really served in a national unit (the youngest of them would have had to be 15 years old in 1918). But that's what the questionnaires say.

[41]   Source: "Žinios apie naujokius priimtus kariuomenėn," 1 January 1921, LCVA, f. 929, ap. 5, b. 3, l. 143 ap.

those called up at the end of 1920 and accounted for only 2 per cent of all conscripts. As to the men born in 1896, they were called up for active service in the Lithuanian Army on 27 September 1919. But a month later, when conscription had already begun in six out of 20 districts,[42] the government decided to make an exception for those who had served in the Russian Army.[43] Although the amendment, issued on 28 October 1919, affected only those born in 1896, men of other age groups who had already served in the Russian Army were also exempted from conscription in the Lithuanian armed forces from at least 1921.[44] This is evidenced at least by several filled questionnaires from veterans of the national units born both in 1896 and earlier (1895, 1894).[45] Consequently, those born in 1897 were almost the only category subject to both Russian and Lithuanian conscriptions. But the Russian conscription of 1917, which referred to those born in 1897, was in fact to affect relatively few Lithuanian-speakers, namely those who had either been displaced by the war in 1915 to various places throughout Russia or were already living there before the "great retreat". In 1917, the areas with the highest density of Lithuanian-speakers were under German occupation.

If we take one-third of the nineteen-year-olds called up in 1917 (let us assume that one-third was the actual result, see above why) and add about the same number of men of other age groups, we arrive at a figure of no more than 3,500 conscripts in the Lithuanian Army who could have been soldiers in the Great War. Most of the conscripts were too young for such an experience and most of the former Russian soldiers avoided the Lithuanian Army due to exemptions introduced by the Lithuanian governments during conscription.

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[42]   See "Šaukimas kariuomenėn vyrų, gimusių 1896, 1899 ir 1900 mt. paskelbtas Rugsėjo m. 27 d. 1919 mt. (Įsakymas Lietuvos Kariuomenei Nr. 157 § 1)," LCVA, f. 929, ap. 5, b. 3, l. 120.
[43]   *Laikinosios Vyriausybės Žinios*, no 15, 24 November 1919.
[44]   See report on the situation as of February 1921 ("Žinios apie naujokų ėmimo darbo eigą už vasarį m. 1921 m." LCVA, f. 929, ap. 5, b. 3, l. 98) and subsequent reports in the same file.
[45]   For the year 1894, see filled questionnaire: LCVA, f. 1446, ap. 1, b. 14, l. 8. For the year 1895, see: LCVA, f. 1446, ap. 1, b. 46, l. 61. For the year 1896, see: LCVA, f. 1446, ap. 1, b. 14, l. 23; b. 16, l. 65, 70; b. 17, l. 112, 141.

The mobilised men

Apparently, the share of the Great War veterans was highest in the third category of military personnel. However, this category, which included the men mobilised in January 1919 and later, was quantitatively insignificant (about four per cent). It seems that the Lithuanian government was interested in the total number of men who could handle weapons. This could be the reason why it asked every man born between 1870 and 1900 to enlist himself at the local commandant's office. In 1920, a total of 20,388 men who had previously served in the armies of other countries were registered by these offices, which existed in every district of Lithuania.[46] However, the government had never made full use of this "reserve", as the mobilisations concerned only certain categories—veterans of the rank of officers and non-commissioned officers, former military clerks; physicians, veterinarians, feldshers (mid-level medical employees) and pharmacists; as well as men of a certain age (born between 1892 and 1901) who had either completed at least four grades of school or were high school students. In many cases, these men were indeed re-mobilised Great War veterans. But it was their occupation and/or level of education, and not their military training per se, that could lead to their continued active service.

Here are some specific examples. Petras Tarasenka was a teacher before he was mobilised in the Russian Army in September 1915 and was promoted to *praporščik* (ensign, wartime junior officer) in 1916. After demobilisation in 1918, he began teaching and studying history in Pskov. He returned to Lithuania in July 1919 and, as a former Russian officer, was immediately re-mobilised into the Lithuanian Army, where he remained on active service for thirteen years.[47] The story of Pranas Saladžius, later colonel and commander of the Lietuvos šaulių sąjunga (Lithuanian Riflemen Union), the largest paramilitary association, was almost identical.

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[46] "Statistiko[s] žinios apie kariškius tarnavusius svetimų šalių armijose gimusius tarp 1870–1900 m. užsiregistravusius apskričių komendantūrose," [1920], LCVA, f. 929, ap. 5, b. 3, l. 125.

[47] Cf. Daiva Steponavičienė, *Petras Tarasenka (1892–1962) (Biografinė apybraiža)* (Vilnius: Pilių tyrimų centras "Lietuvos pilys", 1996); Vytautas Jokubauskas, "Karininko Petro Tarasenkos tarnyba Lietuvos kariuomenėje," *Lietuvos archeologija* 41 (2015), 170–171.

Another graduate of Panevėžys Teacher Training College in 1912, he became a *praporščik* while serving in the Russian Army during the Great War. In July 1919 he was re-mobilised into the Lithuanian Army and remained on active duty as an officer until 1940.[48] The experience of re-mobilisation was also shared by Stasys Raštikis, later commander of the Lithuanian armed forces. After returning to Lithuania in spring 1918, he wanted to become a Catholic priest, entered the Kaunas Priest Seminary, but was mobilised into the Lithuanian Army in March 1919 as a former Russian officer.[49]

It would be wrong to assume that all the officers and non-commissioned officers, physicians, veterinarians, feldshers, and pharmacists who had taken part in the Great War were drawn into the subsequent wars on their return to Lithuania. Only a handful of them, however, were spared. These included disabled men, people who fulfilled other important tasks for the state (e.g. as government officials), and those who only returned to Lithuania after 1920.

The government clearly preferred qualified men. This interest was evident not only in the course of the mobilisations but also in the enlistments. Although it was highly unlikely that the February 1919 conscription, which affected men born in 1897 and 1898, concerned former officers (the officer would have had to be quite young at the time, 21–22 years old), the very first Conscription Instructions of 10 February 1919 explicitly stated that officers, NCO's and former staffers who had served in other armies were not exempt from service in Lithuania.[50]

In turn, many demobilised Russian Army rank and file who came back to Lithuania after the Great War apparently thought they had already done their duty and began their reintegration into civilian life. The government did not show much interest in calling them up. Another explanation for their weak participation could be the fact that the prospect of serving in the Lithuanian Army was definitely not overly popular.

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[48] See the questionnaire filled by Saladžius: LCVA, f. 1446, ap. 1, b. 23, l. 50.
[49] Cf. the questionnaire filled by Raštikis: LCVA, f. 1446, ap. 1, b. 21, l. 45 and his memoirs: Stasys Raštikis, *Kovose dėl Lietuvos*, d. 1: *Kario atsiminimai* (Los Angeles: Lietuvių dienos, 1956), 107–136.
[50] *Laikinosios Vyriausybės Žinios*, no 4, 5 March 1919.

Although the share of conscripts who did not show up dropped from 37.6 per cent in mid-1919 to 19.2 per cent at the end of 1920,[51] it was still high for a country at war.

Similar experience, but different soldiers

During the 1923 census of the Lithuanian population, the enumerators tried to find out how many veterans of the Great War there were in the country. They filled in the so-called war participant forms, relying on the information provided by the war veterans themselves or, in the case of the deceased, missing and unaccounted for, by their closest relatives. This endeavour definitely did not show how many Lithuanians had taken part in the Great War. What it did show, however, was the exact number of veterans who had served in various armies during the Great War and were resident in Lithuania (excluding the Territory of Memel) in January 1923. Of the 64,628 forms filled out in during the census for war veterans, 11,173 were filled out for those who had died in the war.[52] This means that the number was 53,455. Excluding the relatively small part of Lithuanians who served in the US, British or German armies, that leaves about (probably more than) 50,000 veterans of the Russian Army—officers, NCO's and privates who had gained military experience in the Great War and returned to the future territory of Lithuania after 1918.

   This article will not provide a similarly accurate and trustworthy number how many of them continued their service in the Lithuanian armed forces after their return. However, some summarising figures can be suggested, based on the considerations outlined above. Among the volun-

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[51] Based on my own calculations from: "Žinios apie pašauktus, priimtus, paliuosuotus ir nestojusius kariuomenėn naujokus gimusius 1897 ir 1898 metuose," 27 September 1919, LCVA, f. 929, ap. 5, b. 3, l. 123; "Žinios apie pašauktus kariuomenėn naujokus gimusius 1896, 1899 ir 1900 metuose," [late 1919] – *Ibid.*, l. 124; "Žinios apie pašauktus, priimtus, paliusuotus ir nestojusius naujokus, gimusius 1896, 97, 98, 99 ir 1900 m.", 15 May 1920 – *Ibid.*, l. 126; "Žinios apie naujokus gimusius 1896, 97, 98, 99 ir 1900 m.", 1 September 1920 – *Ibid.*, l. 128; "Žinios apie nestojusius naujokus," 8 October 1920 – *Ibid.*, l. 134; "Žinios apie naujokus nestojusius kariuomenėn," 1 January 1921 – *Ibid.*, l. 146.

[52] *Lietuvos gyventojai. Pirmojo 1923 m. rugsėjo 17 d. visuotino gyventojų surašymo duomenys* (Kaunas: Centralinis statistikos biūras, 1926), lxvi.

Soldiers at the graves of those who fell for the independence of Lithuania in Širvintos, Eastern Lithuania, in the 1920s. VDKM, Fa-19677

teers, the number of Great War veterans probably ranged from 1,035 (10 per cent) to 1,760 (17 per cent). The average is 1,400. Among conscripts, the number of Great War veterans hardly exceeded 3,500. It was probably even lower. As for mobilised men, 1,500 Great War veterans is probably a fairly accurate figure. If we add these numbers together, we arrive at 6,400, which corresponds to 13 per cent of the veterans who served in the Russian Army during the Great War and lived in Lithuania at the beginning of 1923, or 14 per cent of the entire Lithuanian Army at the end of 1920.

Even assuming that these estimates are speculative, it is obvious that the Lithuanian Army at the end of 1920 was dominated by men who had not experienced the Great War as soldiers. The share of Great War veterans was very high among officers, NCO's and former surgeons. A considerable amount (about one-third) of those who had served in the Lithuanian national units also continued their service in the Lithuanian Army. Of course, the officers and veterans of the national units shared their experiences with the conscripts as their commanders, instructors and mentors, but this hardly led to a common experience of the Great War and the wars for Lithuanian independence among the conscripts.

Concluding remarks

About one-seventh of all the First World War veterans who ended up in Lithuania joined the Lithuanian armed forces and/or had experience in fighting for Lithuanian independence. Officers in particular were re-mobilised relatively quickly. For the lower ranks of the military, on the other hand, the turn of 1918–1919 meant either the end or the beginning of their military experience. Therefore, it is fair to say that the Lithuanians who fought in the ranks of the imperial armies in the Great War and those who fought in the Lithuanian national wars were basically two different combat parties.

It follows that if we look at it through the eyes of those who actually fought, the turn of 1918–1919 was a major turning point not only in the 'West' of Europe, but also in some 'Eastern' parts of the continent. Many civilians indeed experienced both wars as a time of violence, deprivation, extraordinary situations, loss and misery. But, as at least the Lithuanian materials show, we cannot say the same for the military. The veterans in Lithuania had a good reason to consciously separate the two wars, and not only because they fought for the empire in one and for the national state in the other. The main reason for this separation was that these were different veterans with distinct experiences. Only a small part of the Lithuanian soldiers could see the national wars as a continuation of the military experience they had gained during the Great War. For most soldiers, the national wars brought new experiences, as they had shared the experiences of the civilian population during the Great War.

All this goes some way to explaining the later development of different mechanisms for creating social status for these two types of veterans. Before 1937, there were several veterans' associations in Lithuania that included the veterans of the Great War, but none of them was established for the purpose of uniting these veterans solely because they were veterans of the Great War. The establishment of the Association of Army Predecessors (Kariuomenės pirmūnų sąjunga) changed the situation somewhat, but it too united only Great War veterans who had also belonged to the Lithuanian national units. At the same time, the creation of the special status of Lithuanian Army volunteers and the granting of

benefits and privileges to them gained great momentum as early as the 1920s. Although the volunteers were not the largest category of soldiers participating in the three national wars, their voice was well represented and heard in public. Like many other participants in the Lithuanian war of independence, they would probably not understand the contemporary historians' proposals to link the two conflicts and show the continuity between them.

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