INTRODUCTION: ON THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE GREAT WAR TO LITHUANIANS*

On 23 November 1934, the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier appeared in Kaunas, the temporary capital of Lithuania. A warrior who was presumed to have died during the Lithuanian Wars of Independence provided the remains of the Unknown Soldier. There were no direct references to the First World War during the consecration of the tomb. However, the ceremony itself took place 20 years after the beginning of the Great War, and the speakers emphasised that it would be a symbol commemorating all soldiers who died for Lithuania. The concept of the Unknown Soldier emerged in Europe at that time, and had a meaning in the commemorative context of the Great War.[1] Furthermore, the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier in Kaunas was not a new memorial: the remains were placed under an already-existing monument to those who died for the freedom of Lithuania. This symbol, unveiled in 1921, was clearly dedicated to those who had died in the Wars of Independence (1919–1920). However, with the burial of the Unknown Soldier, the meaning of the monument seemed to be extended, to include new fighters in the ranks of those who could be said to have died for the freedom of Lithuania, but without formally naming them.

Just two weeks earlier, on 11 November 1934, the Lithuanian-French Society in Kaunas had held a public concert of French songs and music. We do not know whether the 20th year since the outbreak of the war (and the date of the anniversary of the Armistice at the same time) was highlighted during the event. However, it was very likely no accident that this date was chosen. In the next few years, the Lithuanian-French Society, chaired by Mykolas Römeris, a prominent lawyer, rector of Vytautas Magnus University and a veteran of the Great War, continued to organise the annual commemorations on 11 November, honouring not only the French, but also the Lithuanian soldiers who perished in the Great War. These events traditionally included prayers in the student church in Kaunas, and a flag lowering ceremony at the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier.

Ultimately, in 1937, the Kariuomenės pirmūnų sąjunga [Association of Army Predecessors] was organised, becoming the first veterans' association in Lithuania to unite exclusively the former militaries of the Great War, with the goals of collecting mate-

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1 Cf. INGLIS, Ken S. Grabmäler für Unbekannte Soldaten. In *Die Neue Wache Unter der Linden. Ein deutsches Denkmal im Wandel der Geschichte*. Hrsg. von Christoph STÖLZL. Berlin, 1993, S. 151–171; WITTMAN, Laura. *The Tomb of the Unknown Soldier, Modern Mourning, and the Reinvention of the Mystical Body*. Toronto, Buffalo, London, 2011.

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rial and recording Lithuanian experiences in the Great War in a book, and of building a huge monument to all the Lithuanians who died in the war.

What do all these facts show? Is it still possible to maintain that there was no room for the memory of the Great War in interwar Lithuania, as historians have claimed up to now?[2] This set of articles encourages us to take a fresh look at this claim. It argues that in order to answer the question whether the Great War was important to Lithuanians in the interwar period, we should distinguish the national memory of the Great War from what the war meant to individuals and groups. We can only join the argument that neither national rituals nor national monuments dedicated to the Great War emerged in Lithuania during the interwar period. However, we will hardly find a state in which the entire nation looked unambiguously to the First World War on the old continent at that time, and where the memorialisation of war experiences proceeded smoothly without provoking debates. Two facts provide sufficient arguments to state that at least part of Lithuanian society sought to see the Great War and the Lithuanian contribution to it from a national perspective. One is that in the late 1930s, Lithuania was clearly approaching the monumentalisation of the Lithuanian 'national contribution' to the Great War, and the other is that the statement 'It was the Great War that gave Lithuania its freedom' was repeated throughout the entire interwar period. This collection of articles is an attempt to show, through individual attempts, that the experiences of the Great War constantly haunted residents of Lithuania throughout the interwar period. In fact, it was the main reason why, in the 1930s, part of society began to be increasingly outspoken about these experiences and the need to memorialise them. The country's political leaders did not see this change as being against or harmful to the Lithuanian historical narrative. On the contrary, Antanas Smetona, the 'Leader of the Nation', benefited from it, since the change allowed him to spotlight his own role on the path to Lithuania's freedom during the Great War.

Of course, the story about how, thanks to Smetona, Lithuania arrived at the declaration of independence of 16 February 1918 was far from meeting the striking diversity of the experiences of the Lithuanians that arose out of the Great War. So, let us try, at least in general terms, to imagine what those experiences were, which shows that the war in Lithuania was not allowed to be forgotten for a long time, before proceeding to the specific case studies in the articles in this book.

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[2] Cf. BALKELIS, Tomas. Memories of the Great War and the Polish-Lithuanian Conflict in Lithuania. In *The Empire and Nationalism at War* (Russia's Great War and Revolution, 1914–22). Ed. by Eric LOHR, Vera TOLZ, Alexander SEMYONOV, Mark von HAGEN. Bloomington, IN, 2014, pp. 241–256; ANTANAVIČIŪTĖ, Rasa. The Memory and Representation of World War I in Lithuania. In *The Art of Identity and Memory. Toward a Cultural History of the Two World Wars in Lithuania*. Ed. by Giedrė JANKEVIČIŪTĖ, Rasutė ŽUKIENĖ. Boston, 2016, pp. 175–202.

To begin with, let us recall the minor fact that Lithuania's borders only stabilised in 1923. The actual area of the young republic in the period from 1923 to 1939 was 55,670 square kilometres, including the Klaipėda (or Memel) region (2,848 km^2, or 5%). The implementation of the Klaipėda operation through its military occupation in 1923 meant that the composition of Lithuania included former territories of two former empires, Russia and Germany, with about 6% of the Lithuanian population living in the latter. This is important, because the difference between the two former imperial lands, which were then included in one state, was essential: they boasted different cultural traditions and political views, as well as the experience of participation in the Great War. During the war, the Klaipėda region belonged to East Prussia, its people served in the German army, and cultural relations continued to exist throughout the interwar period between the region and Germany. Therefore, the remembrance of the Great War in that part of Lithuania was similar to that in Germany and East Prussia.[3] The other part of the Republic of Lithuania had previously belonged to the Russian Empire, and in 1915 it was occupied by the German army. For three years, what General Erich Ludendorff once called his own 'kingdom' existed in that part of the country:[4] it was the land ruled by the Ober Ost, or the Supreme Commander of All German Forces in the East, and the Ober Ost ruled it as if it was a colony.[5] Consequently, during more than three years of war, all the future Lithuania was in German hands; however, one part was an ordinary province of the Reich, whose inhabitants were full German citizens, while the other did not even have civilian authorities.[6] The military administration was inclined to see the latter area as no more than a stockpile of resources (including human resources) that could be used to meet the needs of the German army.

Most people in the future Lithuania spent the war under German occupation. Conditions were so difficult that the 1915–1919 experience, I presume, formed the essential understanding of the concept of occupation for many Lithuanians. However, this was by no means the only Lithuanian war experience. The front line kept moving back and forth from virtually the first weeks of the war, and only stabilised on the

[3] For more information, cf. SAFRONOVAS, Vasilijus. Didžiojo karo reikšmių perteikimas Rytų Prūsijoje ir Klaipėdos krašte. Simboliai, praktikos, ritualai. *Istorija*, 2016, t. 104, nr. 4, p. 4–55.

[4] Cf. CONZE, Werner. *Polnische Nation und deutsche Politik im Ersten Weltkrieg* (Ostmitteleuropa in Vergangenheit und Gegenwart, 4). Köln, Graz, 1958, S. 87.

[5] Cf. LIULEVICIUS, Vejas Gabriel. *War Land on the Eastern Front. Culture, National Identity, and German Occupation in World War I* (Studies in the Social and Cultural History of Modern Warfare, 9). Cambridge, 2000; WESTERHOFF, Christian. 'A kind of Siberia': German labour and occupation policies in Poland and Lithuania during the First World War. *First World War Studies*, 2013, vol. 4, no. 1, pp. 51–63. The view on the Land Ober Ost as a colonial area is also revealed in its own official publication (cf. *Das Land Ober Ost. Deutsche Arbeit in den Verwaltungsgebieten Kurland, Litauen und Bialystok-Grodno*. Hrsg. in Auftrage des Oberbefehlshabers Ost. Bearbeitet von der Presseabteilung Ober Ost. Stuttgart und Berlin, 1917, S. 93).

[6] For the latest research on the military administration in the Land Ober Ost, see BARTHEL, Christopher A. *Contesting the Russian Borderlands: the German Military Administration of Occupied Lithuania, 1915–1918*. PhD dissertation. Providence, RI, 2011.

present western border of Belarus in October 1915. During the years 1914 to 1915, Lithuania experienced not only enormous economic losses, but also the large-scale voluntary or forced displacement of the population. Rapolas Skipitis will write later about the 550,000 people who were forcibly or voluntarily displaced from Lithuania to the depths of Russia in 1915.[7] This estimate, however, is clearly too low. It should be increased to 830,000, considering that only around 358,000 refugees and deportees returned to Lithuania afterwards.[8]

Another war experience that affected many people was military service. I estimate that at least 148,000 men from the future Lithuania entered the war on the Russian side. It is true that a considerable number of them were not Lithuanian speakers, as the army was formed not only from mobilised reservists and recruits, but also from the tens of thousands of soldiers deployed in garrisons on future Lithuanian territory (in Kaunas, Alytus, Kalvarija, Vilkaviškis and Šiauliai). Lithuanian speakers formed a rather small part of them. This explains why, after the war, records on only 65,000 Great War veterans were collected in Lithuania:[9] most soldiers from former garrisons in Lithuania, even if they survived the war, simply did not return. The number of Lithuanian speakers who served in the Russian army was significantly lower (it would be realistic to speak of 60,000 to 65,000). They joined the Russian army not only as conscripts, mobilised reservists or volunteers, who were assembled on the territory of the future Lithuania. Before the war, many Lithuanian speakers served on active duty in a variety of Imperial Russian garrisons outside Lithuania. Therefore, their experience did not coincide with that of those who joined the army in Lithuania. Besides, some Lithuanian speakers who were displaced to the depths of Russia joined the Russian army even after 1915, when Germany had occupied the future Lithuania. All this enabled Justas Paleckis to claim later that 'Lithuanians had to fight on various war fronts [...] On the Russian front, they fought against Germans and Austrians, on the Transcaucasian front against Turks. Furthermore, Lithuanians were present in Russian regiments that were taken to France and to the Thessaloniki front.'[10] We can only add that, while serving in the Russian armed forces, Lithuanians found themselves in different national units: in the interwar period, one could meet people who had served in the Polish legions (such as the influential lawyer Mykolas Römeris mentioned above) or in Latvian riflemen's formations (such as Lieuten-

7 SKIPITIS, Rapolas. *Nepriklausomą Lietuvą statant*. Chicago, IL, 1961, pp. 258, 265.

8 Here I mean the future territory of Lithuania, without the Vilnius and Klaipėda areas. All estimates in this Introduction are based on my own calculations. For details, see the concluding monograph in the project 'Remembrance of the First World War: A Comparative Analysis of Lithuania and East Prussia (before 1939)' (to be published in 2018).

9 *Lietuvos gyventojai. Pirmojo 1923 m. rugsėjo 17 d. visuotino gyventojų surašymo duomenys*. Kaunas, [1925], p. 307.

10 PALECKIS, Justas. *Didysis 1914–1918 m. karas*. Kaunas, 1939, p. 107. Here Paleckis refers to the Russian expeditionary corps that fought in France and on the Thessaloniki front in Macedonia in the period 1916 to 1918.

ant General Petras Kubiliūnas, chief of the General Staff of the Lithuanian army). Eventually, in 1917, Lithuanians tried to form their own national units in the Russian army. They obtained General Aleksei Brusilov's consent in principle, and started organisational activities. However, unlike the case of the Latvian riflemen's regiments, Lithuanian national units were dispersed in different places, and did not have the opportunity to fight for Lithuanian territory before the end of the war.

The experiences in the Klaipėda region were different, but similar. In 1914–1915, the Russian army invaded the area several times. The inhabitants of the Klaipėda region also experienced multiple evacuation as a frontier zone. During those invasions, around 59,000 inhabitants of the area could leave their homes for some time, escaping into the depths of East Prussia and Germany. About another 3,000 were deported to the depths of Russia as an 'unreliable' element. After the war, only two thirds of deportees returned home. Around 30,000 men from the region, Germans and Lithuanians, were called up by the German army. In the initial stages of the war, they defended East Prussia from the Russian army, and later served in divisions deployed in the rear in the Ober Ost, and also in Galicia and on the Western front (particularly at the end of the war). At least 6,000 did not return after the war, and about the same number of returning veterans were war disabled.

In 1923, about 2.17 million people lived in Lithuania, including the Klaipėda region. Based on the estimates mentioned above, we can say that about 3.6% of them had experience of military service in the Russian, German and US armies during the war. About 19.3% were former war refugees and deportees; some of them came back to their homes just after the front line had moved away; others much longer after the war had ended. Most of those remaining (about 74.2%) experienced the regime of the 'Ludendorff Kingdom', and spent the war years in the Land Ober Ost. In the Klaipėda region, more than half the territory (in which almost two thirds of all the population lived) was occupied by the Russian army during several invasions in the years 1914 and 1915. Consequently, around 4% of future Lithuanian citizens personally experienced an occupying regime, or at least invasions by the Russian army. In addition to all this, many people lost relatives, property or good health.

In exploring the long-term consequences of all these experiences, it is important to bear in mind the fact that their subsequent perception was heavily influenced by a variety of factors that emerged in the last stages of the war and during the postwar years. First, the collapse of Hohenzollern Germany and Romanov Russia meant not only the end of the political hopes generated at the beginning of the war. As the end of the war approached, everyone had to choose individually what approach to take to a change of regime, and how he or she would contribute to this change. Both in post-revolutionary Germany (which at the time also included the Klaipėda region)

and in post-Imperial Russia, millions of unwanted former participants in the war and disabled people appeared, who had to take care of their own fate. On both sides of the once-imperial territories that formed Lithuania, a long struggle started by former soldiers for their rights and for recognition of their former roles. The process was impeded not merely by financial problems, but also by the unwillingness of the post-imperial regimes to assume responsibility for the war between empires, and the welfare obligations that were assumed by those empires during the war.

Second, the meaning that was later attributed to the war also depended on how one responded to the end of the war. For those who assumed authority in the newly proclaimed state of Lithuania, the end of the war was a window of opportunity. By properly taking advantage of this period, it was possible to consolidate Lithuania's statehood, which was what was done in the end. In a large part of Lithuania, this laid the foundations for the Great War to be seen as ensuring liberation and granting freedom. However, veterans of the Great War were not in a hurry to support the idea of an independent Lithuania during the Wars of Independence. The exception was mostly officers and veterans who had already worked in the civil service at the end of 1918. In January 1919, many of them were called up by the Lithuanian army to become the first leaders and teachers of volunteers who joined in the early years of the republic.

In the west of Lithuania, a completely different view of the postwar prospects emerged. In the Klaipėda region, at least in the 1920s, one could observe echoes of social polarisation with respect to the issue of war typical of Germany in the interwar period. Just as in Germany, on that periphery of Lithuania, part of society shared a distinct mood of non-acceptance of defeat, the sincere conviction that the war was lost only thanks to the 'traitors of the homeland', and manifestations of glorification and mythologisation of the war, at a time when another part made attempts to forget the war, or at least not to glorify it, and to promote the view that the war should not be repeated, and should be regretted. Of course, in the rest of Lithuania, as compared to the Klaipėda region, society was not so polarised in the interwar period. However, there was some dispute of the predominant idea that the members of the State Council of Lithuania, the signatories to the declaration of 16 February 1918, and those who fought for the state declared by the Council of Lithuania, were proclaimed heroes.

This set of articles is an attempt to show that all the experiences briefly presented here simply mean too much to be ignored or forgotten. During the war and the post-war years, they were all repeatedly referred to in various contexts: from personal mourning to attempts to reflect on the great lesson of the war, from unpretentious individual reflections to attempts to portray wartime activities as a contribution to

Lithuania's independence. As the Great War directly affected almost every resident of Lithuania, it created a variety of associations in the interwar period. Its evaluation was as different as the experiences of the war. Some remembered every detail of the forced evacuation, while others emphasised experiences in the army or in German or Austrian captivity. Few went on writing about the enthusiasm at the beginning of the war. For most people, the war was associated with the constantly regulating and demanding Germans, terrible misery, and personal losses. The theme of the Great War was rendered in numerous songs,[11] in the poetry of Stanislovas Durskis, Julius Janonis, Faustas Kirša, Adomas Lastas, Jonas Mačiulis (Maironis), Juozas Mikuckis, Vincas Mykolaitis (Putinas), Saliamonas Šmerauskas (Salys Šemerys), Juozas Žlabys and other Lithuanian authors, and in prose works by Juozas Paukštelis, Antanas Skripkauskas, Ieva Simonaitytė, Wilhelm Storosta (Vydūnas), Juozas Tumas (Vaižgantas), Stepas Zobarskas, Antanas Žukauskas (Vienuolis) and others. Kajetonas Sklėrius expressed the theme of the war in his wash-drawings, while Pranas Domšaitis, a Prussian Lithuanian living in Berlin, created the painting 'The Lithuanian village during the war'.[12] After the war, many memoirs, diaries and autobiographical stories were written which highlighted the experience of the Great War years. Even more remained in manuscript form, some of which, reaching the present day, are being rediscovered.

What was said about the war? An evaluation of all the writings that were published in Lithuania before 1940 has shown that the theme of suffering gradually prevailed in their content, while this suffering was usually rendered through memories about the German occupation. However, the publication of these memoirs was like a barometer of Lithuanian-German relations. A book of caricatures drawn by Jaroslavas Rimkus, and published under the pseudonym Šilietis in 1922, which stated in its preface that 'Among the ruined countries of Europe, Lithuania is one of those which suffered the most',[13] was published when the Lithuanian government, after collecting material about war losses, tried to present a bill to Germany during negotiations in Berlin. In 1933–1934, many Lithuanian newspapers and magazines, including *Jaunoji karta*, *Kardas*, *Karo archyvas*, *Lietuvos žinios*, *Mūsų žinynas*, *Naujas žodis*, *Naujoji Romuva*, *Sekmadienis* and *Trimitas*, unusually frequently, in comparison with the period before, published memoirs about the German occupation as one-offs or as series of articles. All this was at the time when the Lithuanian government changed its policy in the Klaipėda region, starting the forced integration of the autonomous

[11] Cf. *Lietuvių kariškosios dainos*. Surinko M. S. ŽEMINĖLĖ [Marijona STIKLIENĖ]. Ryga, 1915 (new edition: Šiauliai, 1924); *Didžiojo karo laikų lietuvių dainos*. Surinko Jonas NORKUS. Kaunas, 1927.

[12] For reproductions of these paintings, see the following publications: *Kajetonas Sklėrius. Iš klajonių*: parodos katalogas. Sud. Jolita MULEVIČIŪTĖ. Kaunas, 2006, p. 58–59; *Nacionalinio M. K. Čiurlionio dailės muziejaus lobynas. Tapyba*. Sud. Osvaldas DAUGELIS. Vilnius, 2009, p. 221.

[13] *Vokiečių okupacija Lietuvoje 1915–1919 m. paveikslėliuose ir trumpuose jų aprašymuose*. Surengė ir išleido J. ŠILIETIS [Jaroslavas RIMKUS]. Kaunas, 1922, p. iv.

area, and thereby provoking a deep crisis never experienced before in relations with Germany. The memoirs about the Great War collected by Petras Ruseckas, the first volume of which should have been published in 1935 under the title 'The German Occupation in Recollections', were published only in 1939, and had the rather grand title 'Lithuania in the Great War', which mentioned nothing 'German' any more. Furthermore, the book had to be printed in Vilnius, in an attempt to prevent a reaction from Germany if it was published in the temporary capital Kaunas.[14] In the autumn of 1939, Lithuania was seeking to avoid problems in its relations with Germany.

It is true that there were differences between the assessments of the war prevailing in the Klaipėda region and in the rest of Lithuania. Based on their experiences of the Great War, the old elites of the Klaipėda region continued to emphasise values such as sacrifice and the determination to die for the homeland. The occupation was demonised both in the Klaipėda region and in the rest of Lithuania. Still, most Lithuanians demonised the German occupation, and the inhabitants of the Klaipėda region demonised what they called the 'Russian incursion'. In western Lithuania, which was formerly a part of Germany, this demonisation included the active participation of priests, teachers and other members of the social elite, and was played out basically during the war years. In the rest of Lithuania, ego-documents about the German occupation began to be published only after the war, although some were created during the war years as well.

However, the Great War in Lithuania was not easily forgotten, and not only due to the abundance of publications. The veterans who themselves were not able to consign it to oblivion for a long time, because, for many of them, what was experienced in the Great War became a whole life drama, were constant public reminders of the war. This is especially true of veterans with disabilities, who were repeatedly forced to prove their loss in Lithuania for more than a decade, in order to receive social welfare from the state. Instead of receiving support to cope with their problems, they felt they were left to their fate.

Indeed, the maimed in the Great War were the main headache for Lithuanian institutions that took care of the disabled. Among them, the most important was the Support Committee for War Invalids, set up in 1921. Headed by Lieutenant General Vladas Nagevičius, the prototype for the organisation was the Alexander Committee that had functioned in the Russian Empire until 1918. It sought to provide support not just for casualties from the Lithuanian army, but Great War casualties in Lithuania as well. According to statistical data provided by the committee, over three quarters of its 'clients' were war disabled veterans who had served in the Russian army during the Great War, and only a quarter were from the Lithuanian army (in

[14] Cf. BŪTĖNAS, Julius. *Lietuvos žurnalistai*. Vilnius, 1991, p. 161.

1931, the ratio was 322 to 1183[15]). However, many Great War disabled did not rush to register with the committee, as it could not offer disability pensions. The committee set up companies in which the disabled could find work, procured orthopaedic equipment, and had to fund almost all its activities from public donations.

The issue of pensions for Russian army veterans who had been maimed in the Great War had to be resolved by the Law on Soldiers' Pensions adopted in 1925. However, the actual number of individuals with disabilities to whom this law would apply was unknown when the law was being considered. When the number of applications exceeded the anticipated quota by several times, the implementation of the law had to be suspended. Only the Law on War Invalid Pensions adopted in 1930 explicitly allowed for the possibility to pay pensions to those who had been maimed before 1918 while 'serving in the Russian army'. However, under the new law, the pensions they could expect were considerably lower than for those who were disabled while serving in the Lithuanian army. Widows, orphans and parents who had lost relatives in the Great War (if they had died while serving in the Russian army) were left without any social welfare at all. The situation in the Klaipėda region was even more complicated, as the issue of providing compensation to soldiers from the German army for disabilities incurred in the Great War was almost completely beyond public discussion in Lithuania. In the interwar period, there were about 12,000 Great War disabled, widows, orphans and former deportees to Russia in the Klaipėda region (they accounted for 8.5% of the region's total population). Some of them anticipated compensation that had continually been promised by Imperial German governments during the war (not including those who could have claimed compensation for war-related loss of property according to German law). The German and Prussian authorities began to deal with the issue of compensation for material losses during the war years. However, provision for physically injured soldiers and the bereaved in the Klaipėda region was still being dealt with through humiliating allowance practices for a long time after the war. The Lithuanian government made a commitment to pay them compensation in 1928, and only because this was part of a wider package of agreements with Germany. However, it seems that the very nature of this 'duty-bound commitment' led to a further approach by the Lithuanian government, when it attempted to avoid an agreement with Germany by using the lack of precise formulation in the legal documents that regulated the autonomous status of the Klaipėda region.[16]

[15] BUKEVIČIUS, [Sergijus]. Karo invalidams šelpti komiteto 10-ties metų gyvavimo apžvalga (1921–1931). *Lietuvos karo invalidas*, 1931, nr. 1, p. 12.

[16] For detailed information on different solutions to the war losses compensation issue, see the following articles: JOKUBAUSKAS, Vytautas. 'The Tsar would not have Taken away our Pensions': Compensation for Russian Army First World War Invalids in Interwar Lithuania. *Lithuanian Historical Studies*, 2017, vol. 21. Vilnius, 2017, pp. 79–106; SAFRONOVAS, Vasilijus. Didžiojo karo sureikšminimo Rytų Prūsijoje

Fighting for their interests induced war victims to act together. Indeed, in interwar Lithuania, veterans of the Great War, and widows and orphans, were perhaps the only groups in society that came together on the basis of specific war experiences. This was especially evident in the Klaipėda region, in which, just as in Germany, war veterans belonged to several organisations at different positions on the political spectrum. One of them, Bund der Kriegsbeschädigten und Hinterbliebenen [Association of War Victims and Former Participants of the War], was more left-wing, and it included not only disabled war veterans, but also widows and orphans. Another one was active in the framework of the prewar Kriegervereine [veterans' associations] that belonged to the Kyffhäuserbund; it consisted mainly of war veterans, and had right-wing conservative attitudes. Both associations were active participants in a variety of Great War remembrance events in the Klaipėda region.

In the rest of Lithuania, compared to the autonomous western area, the organisation of Great War veterans was somewhat more complicated. Throughout the entire interwar period, they formed veterans' associations, not because they were veterans of the Great War, but based on other criteria: because they later took part in the Wars of Independence, because they had been disabled, or because they had been officers of the Lithuanian army. Undoubtedly, the ranks of the largest war veteran association, the Lietuvos kariuomenės [kūrėjų] savanorių sąjunga [Association of Lithuanian Army Creators-Volunteers], set up in 1927, which grew to 3,700 members in the 1930s, also included Great War veterans. Theoretically, they could have been members of the Lietuvos karo invalidų Vyčių brolija [Lithuanian Vyčiai Brotherhood of War Invalids], set up in 1923 (from 1936 the Lietuvos laisvės kovų invalidų sąjunga [Invalids Association of the Lithuanian Fight for Freedom], which had up to 100 members). The Lietuvos karo invalidų sąjunga [Lithuanian War Invalids Association], established in 1923, which had up to 800 members in the 1930s, consisted of those disabled both in the Wars of Independence and in the Great War. Veterans of both wars were also members of the Atsargos karininkų sąjunga [Reserve Officers Association], set up in 1924, which had up to 500 members in the 1930s.[17] Thus, in most of Lithuania, many veterans who had served in the Great War did not enjoy numerous opportunities to actualise the experience of exclusively that kind of service through participation in a common organisation. However, the situation changed slightly in 1937, when the Kariuomenės pirmūnų sąjunga [Association of Army Predecessors] was first organised. It did not include all veterans of the Great War, but it established a clear criterion of admission: former service not merely in the Great War, but in Lithuanian national units formed in Russia between 1917 and

ir Klaipėdos krašte prielaidos: nuostolių kompensavimo klausimas. *Lietuvos istorijos metraštis, 2017/1*. Vilnius, 2017, p. 127–168.

[17] Figures from: JUREVIČIŪTĖ, Aušra. *Buvusių karių organizacijos ir jų vaidmuo Lietuvos vidaus politikoje 1923–1940 m.* Daktaro disertacija. Kaunas, 2009, p. 199, 201, 208, 221.

1919. Before 1940, the association had set up 24 branches all over Lithuania, with about 1,200 members.[18] As has been mentioned, in its constituent assembly the Kariuomenės pirmūnų sąjunga declared the need to memorialise the contribution of Lithuanians to the Great War.

In addition to publications on the Great War and the activities of veterans and the bereaved, there was yet another factor that recalled the Great War and prevented ignorance of it. This was the honouring of those who died in the war, and tending their graves. After the battles of 1914 and 1915, the whole country was one huge burial ground. During the 1920s, the graves of Russian soldiers were not maintained, and in many places had already vanished a decade after the war; the maintenance of German military graves was a somewhat bigger concern, but only due to the involvement of the German government and its public organisations. However, for Lithuanians, the graves and cemeteries from the Great War were not merely invisible traces of the past. The following factors make it possible to state this. Firstly, in many places, graves and cemeteries were a formative element of the landscape, a notable and unique component in towns and cities. Secondly, during the war, many graves were dug randomly on farmers' land, or in other unsuitable places. The question of what to do with these burial sites caused tensions throughout the interwar period: at the beginning, cases arose whereby they were literally destroyed; later, some graves were moved, in order to concentrate them; ultimately, plans were prepared to pay compensation to those who had lost private land due to graves. Thirdly, the local population was faced with these graves over and over again through the collection of material about burials. In 1921, 1929, 1933 and 1936, the collection of material about German military burial sites in Lithuania took place; in 1928, material was collected about Russian military cemeteries. In all these cases, the task was entrusted to local governments, which in turn collected the information through officials and local residents.[19] To many people, the closest military cemetery to them

[18] JUREVIČIŪTĖ, Aušra. Kariuomenės pirmūnų sąjungos įkūrimas ir veikla 1937–1940 metais. *Lietuvos istorijos studijos*, 2007, t. 19, p. 98.

[19] It is impossible to provide exact estimates on how many burial places there were on Lithuanian territory. This is due both to imperfections in data collection and to the fact that, in many cases, the larger cemeteries were combined Russian and German burial places. However, for example, according to incomplete data on German military cemeteries in Lithuania collected in 1921, burials were recorded in 563 locations, while the number of buried people can be estimated at least at 39,392 (calculation based on the archival file 'Guardianship of German military cemeteries.' *Lietuvos centrinis valstybės archyvas* (*Lithuanian Central State Archives*, hereafter *LCVA*), f. 391, ap. 9, b. 29). In 1928, data on 649 Russian military burial sites were collected in Lithuania, while the number of buried people was at least 19,705 (calculation based on the archival file 'Information on Russian soldiers, prisoners of war and civilians who were killed during the World War and buried in Lithuania.' *LCVA*, f. 391, ap. 4, b. 71). These calculations included neither the Klaipėda nor the Vilnius region. In the Klaipėda region, there were 16 military burial sites, containing 257 German and 315 Russian buried individuals (DEHNEN, Max. *Die Kriegsgräber in Ostpreussen von 1914/15* (Beihefte zum Jahrbuch der Albertus-Universität Königsberg/Pr., XXVII). Würzburg, 1966, S. 135, 202–203).

was often the closest symbol of the Great War; and if in the 1920s the opinion prevailed in many places that it was unnecessary to maintain them, or that someone else (Germany) would do it, in the 1930s the situation gradually changed, in that 'German' and 'Russian' military cemeteries increasingly became places to search for 'our own' Lithuanian names in the inscriptions on graves.

It seems that a period of three years (after 1937) was too short to implement the idea of a national monument for all Lithuanians who perished in the Great War. Nevertheless, there was more than one newly erected monument to honour the victims of the Great War in interwar Lithuania. The highest concentration, due to the reasons mentioned above, was in the Klaipėda region. Monuments to fallen soldiers appeared in Kintai, Klaipėda, Nida, Pašyšiai, Piktupėnai, Priekulė, Rusnė, Smalininkai, Vilkyškiai, etc. In western parts of Lithuania, memorial plaques to fallen parishioners hung in almost every church, and every year ceremonies to honour the dead took place. But elsewhere in Lithuania, monuments to the dead in the Great War were erected as well. Thus, in 1928, a stone cross was erected to perpetuate an episode that was important to the local community in the village of Samantonys (Ukmergė district). On 25 July 1917, the villagers of Samantonys opposed the demands of the German occupying authorities to surrender their entire harvest, which resulted in the shooting of seven villagers; another two died of their wounds.[20] In 1933, in Skaudvilė (Tauragė district) a monument appeared to three riflemen from the village of Stulgiai, called partisans in other sources, who had been tortured and shot by the forces of Pavel Bermondt-Avalov in December 1919. The most interesting thing was the inscription on the pedestal of the monument: 'Honour the sons of Lithuania who died in the World War from 1914 to 1920.'[21] This is a rare case, clearly showing that in the consciousness of some people, the Great War ended not in 1918, but in 1920. Who knows what was meant by the last date: perhaps the end of the armed conflict with Poland, but the people of Skaudvilė were not directly involved in it; or perhaps it was the elections to the Constituent Assembly? In 1936, members of the nationalist youth organisation Jaunoji Lietuva [Young Lithuania] erected a monument to a Lithuanian soldier in the Russian army who had died in the Great War at the village of Masiai (Šiauliai district).[22] In 1937, participants in the Great War from the Krakiai district built a monument to Russian army soldiers who died near the River Dubysa at Pašušvis (Kedainiai district). There were more such monuments, many of which are already forgotten today. True, these few examples pale in comparison with the approximately hundred monuments to Lithuanian independence and

[20] Cf. M., J. Už Lietuvos duoną. Vokiečių okupacijos laikų kruvini pėdsakai. *Jaunoji karta*, 1934-04-08, nr. 14, p. 217–218; ŽENTELIS, Jonas. Kovos dėl duonos. In *Vepriai* (Lietuvos valsčiai, kn. 19). Sud. Venantas MAČIEKUS, Edita KORZONAITĖ, Jonas ŽENTELIS. Vilnius, 2010, p. 168–171.

[21] MAŽRIMAS, Edmundas. Lietuvos partizanų paminklas. In *Nukentėję paminklai*. Sud. Marija SKIRMANTIENĖ, Jonas VARNAUSKAS. Vilnius, 1994, p. 177–178.

[22] TEKORIUS, Romas. Kario, žuvusio I Pasauliniame kare, paminklas. In *Nukentėję paminklai...*, p. 167.

the Wars of Independence. However, in all these cases, monuments to the victims of the Great War emerged at the initiative of local communities, while monuments to independence and the Wars of Independence were predominantly initiated by powerful organisations which had extensive networks throughout the country, such as the Lietuvos šaulių sąjunga [Lithuanian Riflemen's Union]. In 1937, as soon as an attempt was made to provide a similar organisational backing for veterans of the Great War, the idea arose to construct a national monument to all Lithuanians who had died in the Great War.

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The articles published in this collection, of course, do not touch upon all aspects mentioned in the Introduction. However, I am sure they will help readers learn about many of them, and about other aspects. The seven articles cover three broad themes. The first chapter deals with cases of changes of role which occurred during and because of the war. Hektoras Vitkus argues that the years 1914 and 1915 were crucial to the change of image of the Russian army among the Lithuanian population. Andrea Griffante claims that the Great War created specific conditions for the emergence of the Lithuanian physician-intellectual, and led to their further concern with what they perceived as 'national hygiene'.

The second chapter discusses the change in status of Great War veterans in independent Lithuania. Former officers in the Russian army and veterans of the Great War became the core of the national army that the Lithuanian government began to develop in 1918 and 1919. Although the Military School was established and produced its first graduates in 1919, for a long time the nationally engaged officers did not constitute a majority among the corps of Lithuanian officers. Kęstutis Kilinskas examines the relations between different generations within the corps of officers in his article, and asks what role the fact that some officers had served in the Imperial Russian army and the First World War played in these relations. The article by Vytautas Jokubauskas is intended to illustrate how, in interwar Lithuania, some retired and active servicemen tried to create a certain symbolic capital based on their participation in the activities of the Lithuanian movement in Russia, and their service in Lithuanian national units from 1917 to 1919. This article, inter alia, shows how these attempts to shape their status advanced the dissemination of understanding about the national contribution to the Great War in Lithuanian society.

The third chapter discusses various roles that the Great War played in the Lithuanian public discourse. Audrius Dambrauskas shows that Lithuanian cinema-goers in the

interwar period also saw films about the Great War, a mainstream and transnational phenomenon in popular culture throughout Europe at that time. Eugenijus Žmuida reveals how the Great War was portrayed through particular themes, stories and influences in Lithuanian prose written during the war and the postwar period. Vygantas Vareikis examines references to the Great War in memoirs, speeches and articles by politicians and intellectuals. His article elaborates on some of the aspects discussed in this Introduction, by revealing that the collection and publication of ego-documentary material about the Great War in Lithuania was a phenomenon with organisational features, and by writing on how the Great War was portrayed by the Lithuanian political and intellectual elites.

The bibliography of publications on issues of the Great War at the end of the book should be considered a no less important part of the general undertaking to show the importance of this war in Lithuania in the interwar period.

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