

# THE REPRESENTATION OF THE GREAT WAR ON LITHUANIAN CINEMA SCREENS, 1918–1940

Audrius Dambrauskas

## ABSTRACT

During the Great War, the main conflicting powers established the first public institutions to create and spread propaganda. Governments treated cinema as a powerful medium which might influence men's minds. While cinema became a potential weapon to use in propaganda struggles, screens in neutral states were made into battlefields. But the cinema wars did not finish after 1918. After the war, films depicting the Great War were made in various countries, and the films often contradicted each other. The article analyses the role that films and stories depicting the Great War played on Lithuanian cinema screens in the interwar period. The first part of the article discusses the relevance of themes of the Great War in the films and newsreels made in interwar Lithuania. The second part provides an overview of foreign films depicting the Great War that were shown in Lithuanian cinemas in the interwar period. Four types of films are distinguished, according to their function. Attempts are made to answer the question whether these films could have contributed to reflections on the Great War in the public sphere in Lithuania at that time.

**KEY WORDS:** First World War, cinema, film censorship, newsreels, propaganda, pacifism, militarism, memory.

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## ANOTACIJA

Didžiojo karo metais svarbiausiose konflikto dalyvėse šalyse susikūrė pirmosios valstybės institucijos kino propagandai kurti ir skleisti. Kino filmus vyriausybės vertino kaip įtaigią mediją, galinčią daryti poveikį žmonių mąstymui. Filmai tapo potencialiu ginklu, o neutralių Didžiojo karo laikų valstybių ekranai – šio ginklo kovos aikšte. Tačiau karui pasibaigus kovos kino teatrų salėse tęsėsi toliau. Skirtingose šalyse kino bendrovės kūrė Didįjį karą reprezentuojančius filmus, kurie savo idėjomis skyrėsi vienas nuo kito. Šiame straipsnyje nagrinėjama, kokį vaidmenį Pirmasis pasaulinis karas ir su juo susiję siužetai vaidino Lietuvos kino ekranuose tarpukariu rodytoje produkcijoje. Pirmojoje straipsnio dalyje vertinama, kiek Didžiojo karo tematika buvo aktuali ir atsiskleidė Lietuvoje tuo metu kurtuose kino filmuose ir kino kronikose. Antrojoje dalyje nagrinėjama, kokie užsienio valstybių Didžiojo karo tematikos filmai buvo rodomi to meto Lietuvoje, išskiriamos kelios šių filmų funkcijos. Bandoma atsakyti į klausimą, ar šie filmai galėjo tapti postūmiu Didžiojo karo refleksijai to meto Lietuvos viešojoje erdvėje. **PAGRINDINIAI ŽODŽIAI:** Pirmasis pasaulinis karas, kinas, kino filmų cenzūra, kino kronikos, propaganda, pacifizmas, militarizmas, atmintis.

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## Introduction

During the Great War, the main actors in the conflict, Great Britain, France, Germany and Russia, established the first public institutions to create and disseminate propaganda films. Cinema was seen by governments as an influential medium that could affect people's minds. Films became a potential weapon, and the screens of the neutral states in the Great War became the battleground for this weapon. For example, in 1916 and 1917, audiences in Dutch cinemas saw as many as three films on one topic, the Battle of the Somme. Each one of these films, British, French and German, treated the battle in their own way.<sup>1</sup> However, at the end of the war, the battles in cinemas continued. Film companies in different countries produced films about the Great War, differing in their ideas. This article discusses the films about the Great War on Lithuanian film screens in the interwar period.

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The subject of the article has never been discussed by researchers before. Despite the large amount of research into films representing the Great War,<sup>2</sup> the only study with a consistent review of Lithuanian cinema, the publicist book by Vytautas Mikalauskas,<sup>3</sup> did not pay much attention either to the demonstration of cinemas about the Great War in Lithuania, or to reflections of Great War themes in Lithuanian cinema production. Therefore, the article is based mainly on published and archival sources: periodicals and documents on the censorship of films. However, this causes a problem, since the Lithuanian press began to focus on cinema to a greater extent only from 1927.<sup>4</sup> That was when longer film reviews and descriptions started to appear. Until then, there were no references to films in the media, and even advertising pages provided little information on the matter, because they never announced the cinema programmes in the main cities. In addition, centralised censorship of films was introduced in 1932. Only from this year do we have information on all the films that were allowed or prohibited for distribution in Lithuania. They are stored in the Lithuanian Archives of Literature and Art, collection No 91, 'Cinema Censorship'. In this situation, it is impossible to identify exactly how many films depicting the Great War were shown in Lithuania in 1918–1940. This article makes no attempt to do this, but it can be stated preliminarily that their number should be about 200.

<sup>1</sup> DIBBETS, Karel; GROOT, Wouter. Which Battle of the Somme? War and Neutrality in Dutch Cinemas, 1914–1918. *Film History*, 2010, vol. 22, no. 4, pp. 440–452.

<sup>2</sup> KELLY, Andrew. *Cinema and the Great War*. London, New York, 1997; ESTER, Bernadette. *Film Front Weimar: Representations of the First World War in German films of the Weimar Period (1919–1933)*. Amsterdam, 2003; REYNAUD, Daniel. *Celluloid Anzacs: The Great War through Australian Cinema*. North Melbourne, 2007; *French Cinema and the Great War: Remembrance and Representation*. Ed. by Marcelline BLOCK, Barry NEVIN. Lanham, MD, London, 2016; *British Silent Cinema and the Great War*. Ed. by Michael HAMMOND, Michael WILLIAMS. Houndmills-Basingstoke, New York, NY, 2011, and many more.

<sup>3</sup> MIKALAUSKAS, Vytautas. *Kinas Lietuvoje: nuo atrakciono iki nacionalinio kino meno*. Vilnius, 1999.

<sup>4</sup> ALSEIKA, Vytautas. Apie Lietuvių kino žurnalistikos pradžią. In *Ekrane ir už ekrano*. Sud. Saulius MACAITIS. Vilnius, 1993, p. 150.

The aim of this article is to show the image of the Great War that was conveyed to viewers in Lithuanian cinemas during the period between the two world wars. This is done by reviewing the repertoire of Lithuanian cinemas at the time, highlighting the films depicting the Great War and their role in the repertoire, and showing the evaluations of films which depicted the Great War in the Lithuanian press in the interwar period. In addition, when preparing the article, there were attempts to clarify whether the theme of the Great War was conveyed in cinema production in Lithuania in the interwar period. The first part of the article discusses what stories (if any) about the Great War were reflected in Lithuanian cinematic production. The second part of the article takes a look at the cinema production of other countries shown in Lithuania, in which the Great War is depicted from various points of view: as a historical document, entertainment, or propaganda for pacifism or nationalism.

### The Great War in Lithuanian cinema production?

During the Great War, the Lithuanians were already using cinema as a propaganda tool to support the idea of independence.<sup>5</sup> However, one of the key elements in the consolidation and legitimisation of the national identity was the subsequent Wars of Independence, while the total number of Lithuanian cinemas in the interwar period was not high at all. Most showed documentary newsreels. These were created occasionally until the early 1930s, but not very often. Only from 1932 did Lithuanian newsreels become mandatory before each full film showing. This greatly increased their number. In 1935, the production of newsreels in Lithuania was given to the only concessionaire Jurgis Linartas, who produced around 50 newsreels every year. However, most newsreels created in Lithuania at that time have not survived. The few surviving examples suggest that the theme of the Great War was rare in Lithuanian-made newsreels. For example, out of the 48 editions of *Mūsų Lietuva* [Our Lithuania] created by Jurgis Linartas' company in 1936, the Great War is mentioned in only one short episode, which was not directly related to the war anyway. The episode was described as follows: '3. Aukštadvaris, Trakai county, the farm of Dr Mongirdas has

<sup>5</sup> For example, during the Great War, Lithuanians in the United States collected donations and raised support to finance the goals of independent Lithuania devastated by the war. Fundraising events were often accompanied by lectures and film showings. According to Remigijus Misiūnas, 'Cinema was travelling in the colonies [of US Lithuanians]. Next to A.T. Račiūnas, the repertoire was complemented by films received from England and France, images of war and occupation in Lithuania, Lithuanians fleeing to Russia, emigré events, and others. For example, in the autumn of 1916, they showed images of the war and the life of emigrés in an event announced about the trip of A. Kižas and V. Kitkauskas. Performances were combined with speeches, for example, J. Žilius, who was delegated by the Lithuanian [War Relief] Committee in 1916, illustrated his talks with a film about war-torn Lithuania and deportees in Russia': MISIŪNAS, Remigijus. *Informacinių kovų kryžkelėse. JAV lietuvių informacinės kovos XIX a. pab. – 1922 m.* Vilnius, 2004, p. 135.

the only stew for trout in Lithuania. Before the Great War, the farm supplied trout as far as St Petersburg or Moscow.<sup>6</sup> Ceremonies to commemorate the victims of the Lithuanian Wars of Independence were shown in a few newsreels the same year, but the participants in the Great War are not explicitly mentioned among them. These scenes often featured celebrations and events that took place in the garden of the Vytautas the Great Museum, by the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier. For example, 'Kaunas, 17 May 1936 // Our temporary capital marks the celebration of the rapprochement of the army and society [...] A series of wreaths and flowers at the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier. // Parents of volunteers who perished in the independence war by the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier: Šimutienė, Zekas, Bazaras, Jakūbaitis and Kalasiūnas, the brother of one of the perished volunteers. // Patriotic little girls shower Prime Minister H.E. J. Tūbelis and other members of the government with flowers ...'<sup>7</sup> The newsreel also draws attention to depictions of the commemoration of Lithuanians who perished in the Klaipėda military operation (1923).<sup>8</sup> In addition, in 1936, the company released an extended story about the participants in the uprising of 1863 in Kaunas,<sup>9</sup> and featured celebrations at its memorial sites, such as Sukilėlių [Rebel] Hill and monument (both in Šiauliai), unveiled in 1935.<sup>10</sup>

In many cases, showing these celebrations could be linked to honouring the victims of the Great War. For example, during the war, German soldiers set up cemeteries for their troops on Sukilėlių Hill in Šiauliai. However, this was not mentioned in the newsreels. The emphasis on Sukilėlių Hill was given to the 'monument to the 1863 rebels', and the 'parents of perished volunteers in the war of independence' were shown by the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier. Thus, stories of the Great War

<sup>6</sup> The content of *Mūsų Lietuva* newsreel No 81, November 1936. *Lithuanian Archives of Literature and Art (Lietuvos literatūros ir meno archyvas, hereafter LLMA)*, f. 91, ap. 1, b. 205, l. 33.

<sup>7</sup> Content of *Mūsų Lietuva* newsreel No 55, May 1936. *LLMA*, f. 91, ap. 1, b. 205, l. 159. The ceremony at the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier often appears in other newsreel footage from that year as well, e.g., the ceremony of delivering flags to the Nationalist Party: 'Kaunas, 8 June 1936. In the Garden of the War Museum, H.E. Prime Minister J. Tūbelis handed flags to the Kaunas nationalists [...] At the end of the ceremony, a wreath was placed on the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier': Content of *Mūsų Lietuva* newsreel No 59, June 1936. *LLMA*, f. 91, ap. 1, b. 205, l. 139.

<sup>8</sup> For instance, 'Klaipėda, 31 May 1936. // Lithuanian Academic Youth Day [...] On 1 June, students placed a wreath on the grave of victims for the freedom of the Lithuanian coast: Content of *Mūsų Lietuva* newsreel No 58, June 1936. *LLMA*, f. 91, ap. 1, b. 205, l. 144.

<sup>9</sup> 'Kaunas, 26 April 1936. An old man Raisas shows execution sites of 1863 rebels to a group of journalists with Professor Volteris in front. // The pontoon bridge was made near the Vytautas Church. This is the site where Russian cannons "swept" rebels attempting to enter Kaunas from the bridge. // The site of the hanging of a large number of rebels on Ožėškienės Street, in the courtyard of the house of Palinas No 11. The priest Mackevičius was also hanged there. From this place at Ukmergės Chausse, Raisas (then an 11-year-old boy) saw the Russians hanging Fr Mackevičius and other rebels. // Prisons for rebels were set up on Vilniaus Street, in houses Nos 2 and 18': Content of *Mūsų Lietuva* newsreel No 52, May 1936. *LLMA*, f. 91, ap. 1, b. 205, l. 174.

<sup>10</sup> '2. On 1 June 1936, young farmers from near Šiauliai gathered at a festival in Šiauliai, and went to place a wreath on the monument to the 1863 rebels on Sukilėlių Hill': Content of *Mūsų Lietuva* newsreel No 66, August 1936. *LLMA*, f. 91, ap. 1, b. 205, l. 106.

in Lithuanian newsreels were overshadowed by other stories from the history of Lithuania. This can be seen from the fact that in 1936, Jurgis Linartas was given a concession to produce newsreels in Lithuania, and the series of 48 newsreel editions of *Mūsų Lietuva* essentially represented the whole production of newsreels shown in Lithuanian cinemas at that time. The content of newsreels made in the following years (1935–1939) shows the same situation: the stories depicted in newsreels by Linartas did not draw special attention to the Great War.<sup>11</sup> Although there is not much information about newsreels made in Lithuania in the 1920s and early 1930s, the surviving material also does not lead us to believe that the theme of the Great War was relevant in Lithuanian cinema production.

A similar situation can be seen in the evaluation of art films produced at the time in Lithuania. They also depicted the fighting that took place in the aftermath of the war. The film commissioned by the General Staff of the Lithuanian army for the ten-year celebration of the Lithuanian armed forces, *Kareivis – Lietuvos Gynėjas* [*Soldier – Defender of Lithuania*, 1928], seemingly still did not show any episodes of battles for independence.<sup>12</sup> However, they can be seen in other film projects made in Lithuania. For example, in 1935 the press announced the preparations for creating a film with sound by Stepas Uzdonas, *Kruvinaisiais keliais* [*On Bloody Roads*]. It was to show not only the history of the ‘Lithuanian struggles for independence’, but also ‘life during the German occupation’.<sup>13</sup> The film *Birutės daina* [*Birute’s Song*, directed by Borisas Dauguvietis] was to become a real bomb for patriotic propaganda. In 1938, the press claimed that the film had to feature not only Vytautas, the deportation of book smugglers to Siberia, the exposure of Polish nobility scams, and the return of Lithuanian emigrés from America, but also to show ‘Lithuania under Russian rule and the struggles for independence’, since the character Jurgis in the film ‘volunteers for the Lithuanian army to fight for the freedom of Lithuania’.<sup>14</sup> Unfortunately, *Kareivis – Lietuvos Gynėjas* was banned after the first showing, and the two other projects were never implemented. If they had been, they might have become the Lithuanian equivalents of their counterparts created in other Baltic countries on the struggles for independence: the Latvian film shown in the interwar period in Lithuania *Tautas dēls* [*The Sons of the Nation*, directed by H. Ballašs, 1934], or the Estonian *Noored kotkad* [*Young Eagles*, directed by Theodor Luts, 1927], which to an

<sup>11</sup> For example, the only reference to the Great War in the entire set of 37 editions of *Mūsų Lietuva* newsreels made in 1935 was the following: ‘2. Kaunas. // a) A very diverse and varied exhibition of Dr Račkus. The exhibition was visited by His Excellency the President of the Republic. // b) Selections of metal coins from various countries. // [...] d) Banknotes issued by different countries during the Great War’: Content of *Mūsų Lietuva* newsreel No 35, December 1935. *LLMA*, f. 91, ap. 1, b. 203, l. 17.

<sup>12</sup> JURGELEVIČIUS, Petras. Pirmoji lietuviška kino filma. *Lietuvos aidas*, 1928-09-14, nr. 183 (397), p. 3–4; MIKALAUSKAS, V. Op. cit., p. 311–314.

<sup>13</sup> [Anon.] Kruvinaisiais keliais. *Lietuvos žinios*, 1935-03-07, nr. 54 (4737), p. 5.

<sup>14</sup> [Anon.] Jau sukama nauja lietuviška filma „Birutės daina“. *Lietuvos žinios*, 1938-02-17, nr. 38 (5604), p. 6. See also: [Anon.] Lietuviška filma „Birutės daina“. *Naujoji Romuva*, 1938-02-27, nr. 8 (370), p. 206.

extent concerned events in the Great War. Unfortunately, in the interwar period, Lithuania responded to such films by the neighbouring Baltic States only by expressing its grudge at its own inability to create something similar.<sup>15</sup>

Heroic scenes of battles for Lithuanian independence, covering the uprisings of the 19th century, the Wars of Independence in 1919–1920, and the Klaipėda military operation, could promote patriotism and improve the image of the army, the mainstay of Antanas Smetona's authoritarian regime, in newsreels and film projects. Scenes portrayed in newsreels often became part of the broader initiatives at military propaganda (such as the Day of Rapprochement of the Army and Society).<sup>16</sup> However, the Great War, in which Lithuanians were killed for 'the wrong goals' (not for independence) and fought on 'the wrong side' (for Imperial Russia or the Kaiser's Germany), was not seen as appropriate to be conveyed in army propaganda.

## Foreign films about the Great War shown in Lithuania

### *Documentaries*

During the Great War, newsreels or documentaries which portrayed military actions were not often shown. All the governments of the main warring countries had specialised units responsible for military cinema production. However, in Russia, the Skobelev Committee that was responsible for this<sup>17</sup> was completely unable to cope with the task: it had five camera operators on the whole Eastern Front, two of whom were foreigners, it was poorly equipped, and even faked footage of the front.<sup>18</sup> The situation in cinema was also complicated after the occupation of the future territory of Lithuania by the German army.

However, in the postwar period, the public could see more documentaries about the Great War. For example, in 1928 two episodes of the war documentary *Der Weltkrieg*

<sup>15</sup> See, e.g., N. Pamačius latvių tautinę filmą „Tautos sūnus“. *Karys*, 1935-04-11, nr. 15 (838), p. 359; ALSEIKA, Vytautas. Lietuvos filma ir propaganda. *Lietuvos aidas*, 1935-03-19, nr. 64 (2327), p. 6.

<sup>16</sup> For more about military propaganda in Lithuanian society, see: VAIČENONIS, Jonas. *Lietuvos kariuomenė valstybės politinio gyvenimo verpetuose (1927–1940)*. Vilnius, 2003, p. 129–145.

<sup>17</sup> In Russia, the monopoly on filming events at the front was granted to Skobelev's Committee for Assistance to Wounded Soldiers, established in 1904 (*Skobelevskii komitet dlia vydachi posobii poterivshim na voine sposobnost' k trudu voenam*).

<sup>18</sup> The film *Sviashchennaia voina* [*The Holy War*, 1914] released by the committee, was presented as a newsreel of the events of the First World War. But, in fact, it was a compilation of old military records, with inscriptions adapted respectively: a newsreel from 1911 showing a forest fire near San Francisco was presented as a fire in the Argonne Forest in France, etc. The shortage of films led to the fact that the number of films shown in Russia from France and Great Britain (which was also limited) featuring the Western Front exceeded newsreels about the Eastern Front, which had to be made by Russian operators. Cf. TAYLOR, Richard. *The Politics of Soviet Cinema, 1917–1929*. New York, 1979, pp. 10–14; KENEZ, Peter. *Cinema and Soviet Society: From the Revolution to the Death of Stalin*. London, New York, 2001, pp. 19–21.

[in Lithuanian *Tikras pasaulinis karas*, directed by Leo Lasko, 1927] were shown in Kaunas.<sup>19</sup> Unfortunately, there are almost no reviews of it. We have somewhat more responses to the American documentary *The First World War* [*Pasaulis ugnyje*, unknown director, 1934] which was shown in 1935, and based on the book of photographs *The First World War – A Photographic History* (1933) edited by the war veteran Laurence Stallings.<sup>20</sup> Lithuanian reviewers commented: 'The Forumas [a cinema] has an interesting show. We can see a film combined from pieces of old film reportage: *Pasaulis ugnyje* is about the Great War. It has previously been brought to Kaunas, but was banned by the censors. Now they have allowed it. And quite rightly [...] The events begin in 1903, and end with the Russian Revolution. The pacifist concept of the film deserves praise [...] We see parades for the emperor and the homeland, battles, the award of orders, and eventually burials. Thus, all the drama ends merely in graves. This was particularly emphasised in the film. War is death.'<sup>21</sup> Although documentaries of this kind seem to have been rare in Lithuanian cinemas during the interwar period, they offered cinema audiences what they could hardly have seen during the Great War because of poor supply, the realistic depiction of warfare on the cinema screen. Some art films were also aimed partly at mimicking documentaries. For example, the film *1914, die letzten Tage vor dem Weltbrand* [*Pasaulio valdovai (1914 metai)*, directed by Richard Oswald, 1931] portrayed chronologically the events over the 39 days after the assassination of Archduke Francis Ferdinand in Sarajevo. The film was based on 'The 39 Critical Days from Sarajevo to the World's Fire' [*Die kritischen 39 Tage: von Sarajewo bis zum Weltbrand*, 1928] by the German historian Eugen Fischer, and featured the historian's commentary.<sup>22</sup> However, such films were rare. Art films about the Great War usually employed simpler strategies.

### *Art films: The Great War as entertainment*

We cannot say exactly what kind of art films were shown in Lithuania during the Great War. However, films made at that time sometimes appeared on cinema screens during the postwar years. For example, in April 1919, Lithuanian audiences could see

<sup>19</sup> [Advertisement] Kino kronika. *Lietuva*, 1928-01-17, nr. 13 (2691), p. 7.

<sup>20</sup> The war experiences of Laurence Stalling, described in his bestselling book *Plumes* (1925), became the basis for the film *The Big Parade* directed by King Vidor (1925).

<sup>21</sup> [Anon.] Kauno kino savaitė. *Lietuvos žinios*, 1935-09-26, nr. 220 (4903), p. 5. The pacifist idea behind a film based on a photograph album is not exceptional. The photograph book by the German pacifist Ernst Friedrich *Krieg dem Kriege* (1924) was well known in the interwar period. From children who played with tin soldiers, it led the reader through photographs along the trenches of the Great War, demonstrating the injured bodies of soldiers, and eventually the graves of Great War soldiers. The last photographs in the book show the graves of Great War soldiers in Antakalnis Cemetery (Vilnius). This book was published ten times in Germany between 1924 and 1930, the circulation totalling 50,000 copies. Based on the following edition of the album: FRIEDRICH, Ernst. *Krieg dem Kriege*. Berlin. 1999, S. 4, 242–243.

<sup>22</sup> [Advertisement] Ekranas. *Dienos naujienos*, 1933-10-11, nr. 232 (752), p. 4.

the German film *Artur Imhoff* (directed by Paul von Woringen, 1916).<sup>23</sup> However, the war-era drama shown at the Palass cinema had nothing to do with the realities of war. It was just the story of a love triangle about a doctor, his wife who had left him, and her new lover, who needed the ex-husband's help. The countries which participated in the war did not produce only war films during the Great War. Although Russian cinematography grew significantly at that time and was widespread,<sup>24</sup> patriotic, military works were created only during the first years of the war. The biggest wave of patriotic films, such as *Slava – nam, smert' – vragam* [*Glory to us, Death to the Enemy*, 1914], also flooded the screens of Lithuanian cinemas.<sup>25</sup> However, as Russia was losing on the front, the wave of patriotic films subsided, and, as noted by Vytautas Mikalauskas in January 1915, 'You could hardly see any military films in Lithuania.'<sup>26</sup> Since the beginning of the war, German cinemas were also full of kitsch art films, such as *Wie Max das Eisernes Kreuz erwarb* [*How Max Earned the Iron Cross*, 1914].<sup>27</sup> Still, as the war went on, they also made entertainment films, such as *Artur Imhoff*.

The theme of the Great War was expressed in many entertainment films after the war. In these films, the war became the background for comedies, love stories, dramatic experiences, or spy games, which had little in common with real warfare. Sometimes the war in these films was just a small detail, a colourful accessory. For example, according to Lithuanian reviewers, 'the light and sound movie full of good humour, jokes and the latest pop songs' *Die Tochter des Regiments* [*Pulko dukte*, directed by Carl Lamac, 1933] was just an attempt to dress up an opera written in 1840 in new clothes.<sup>28</sup> The film *They Gave him a Gun* [*Karas dar nebaigtas (jie davė jam šautuvą)*, directed by W.S. van Dyke, 1937] told a story about a deserving American soldier who destroyed a whole platoon of German soldiers with his machine gun, returned home, and used his skills in the criminal world, becoming a blackmailer and murderer. Of course, the story included a love triangle. This way, the movie came closer to the gangster films that were popular at the time.<sup>29</sup> The makers of *Mensch ohne Namen* [*Žmogus be vardo*, directed by Gustav Ucicky, 1931] used the war to create a live drama story. A German soldier who was wounded in the war and lost his memory, recovers it only after 16 years. On returning to Germany, he attempts

<sup>23</sup> [Advertisement] Artur Imhoff. *Lietuva*, 1919-04-26, nr. 87, p. 4.

<sup>24</sup> For instance, in 1913, Russian producers made 129 films (most of them were very short), but Russian films comprised only 10% of all films on the Russian market. By 1916, Russia had already produced 499 films (most of them quite long for that time), while foreign films comprised only about 20% of all the films on the Russian market. National production in Russia grew from 10% of the market to 80% from 1913 to 1916. Cf. KENEZ, P. Op. cit., p. 16.

<sup>25</sup> MIKALAUSKAS, V. Op. cit., p. 90.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid., p. 91.

<sup>27</sup> WELCH, David. *Germany, Propaganda and Total War, 1914-1918*. New Brunswick, NJ, London, 2000, pp. 45-48.

<sup>28</sup> [Advertisement] Ekranas. *Dienos naujienos*, 1933-05-24, nr. 118 (638), p. 4.

<sup>29</sup> [Anon.] Ar ne baisiusis Veidemanas ekrane? *Mūsų menas*, 1938-01-15, nr. 2 (5), p. 43.



unsuccessfully to regain his former life and identity, and eventually starts a new life, perhaps even a better one.<sup>30</sup>

In other cases, the theme of war is expressed in an entertaining way. One example is the first screening of Schweik's adventures *Dobrý voják Švejk* [*Pulkininko Šveco tragedija*, directed by Martin Frič, 1931].<sup>31</sup> However, most entertainment films about the Great War included scenes about spies. Spy films often featured exclusive luxury, passion, betrayal and action. One point of reference for such films in Lithuania might be the first film about the legendary spy Mata Hari, shown in Lithuania in 1929, *Mata Hari, die rote Tänzerin* [*Aistros ir meilės šokis*, directed by Friedrich Feher, 1927].<sup>32</sup> The most famous screening of Mata Hari's life on Lithuanian screens was in 1932, when in the film *Mata Hari* [*Mata Hari*, directed by George Fitzmaurice, 1931] the spy was played by the Hollywood legend Greta Garbo. According to the media, the film 'attracted abandoned audience', although it was said that Garbo's Mata Hari is 'no stronger' than her competitor spy played by Marlene Dietrich in her film *Dishonored* [*Moteris X-27*, directed by Josef von Stenberg, 1931], which was also shown in Lithuania.<sup>33</sup> From the late 1920s to the end of the 1930s, Lithuanian dailies were full of advertisements about other adventures of Mata Hari and similar spies: 'The most famous spies on the Russian, French, German and English fronts are Mata Hari and The Red Dancer,' claimed the advertisement for the French film *La danseuse rouge* [*Raudonoji šokėja*, directed by Jean-Paul Paulin, 1937].<sup>34</sup> According to the reviewer of the film, 'We've seen a number of films like this.'<sup>35</sup>

Entertainment films were shown most in Lithuanian cinemas during the interwar period. Therefore, soon after the release of *Chances* (directed by Allan Dawn, 1931), a new film portraying a love triangle against the background of the Great War, the press would only need to state: 'A movie involving war again: not bad.'<sup>36</sup> Advertisers often presented Great War films as sensational, or linked them to resonant events of the time, thus attracting even larger audiences. For example, in the presentation of *They Gave him a Gun*, more emphasis was put not on the film itself but on the recently (1937) captured German killer Eugen Weidmann, who murdered and plundered

<sup>30</sup> [Anon.] Filmai šią savaitę Kaune. *Naujoji Romuva*, 1932-11-06, nr. 45 (97), p. 983.

<sup>31</sup> [Advertisement] Ekranas. *Lietuvos aidas*, 1931-01-08, nr. 5 (1083), p. 8.

<sup>32</sup> 'A drama in 14 acts depicting the times of the fallen Tsarism and based on the legend of the courtesan Mata Hari, shot on 15 October 1917 for espionage': [Advertisement] Ekranas. *Lietuvos aidas*, 1929-04-30, nr. 97 (581), p. 6.

<sup>33</sup> [Anon.] Nauji filmai Kaune. *Naujoji Romuva*, 1932-11-27, nr. 48 (100), p. 1055.

<sup>34</sup> [Advertisement] Raudonoji šokėja. *Lietuvos žinios*, 1937-11-11, nr. 257 (5526), p. 12. It seems that the advertisement was not very logical. Regardless of the seemingly completely random listing of the 'fronts' of the Great War, the advertisers did not realise that Mata Hari and the Red Dancer were in fact the same person. Simply, the name of Mata Hari was not used in the film, while the spy herself, as was common in French movies at that time, was presented as a Russian. Cf. CRISP, Colin. *Genre, Myth, and Convention in the French Cinema, 1929–1939*. Bloomington, IN, 2002, p. 334.

<sup>35</sup> [Anon.] Kauno kinuose. *Lietuvos žinios*, 1937-11-11, nr. 257 (5526), p. 5.

<sup>36</sup> [Anon.] Šios savaitės filmai Kaune. *Naujoji romuva*, 1933-12-10, nr. 154, p. 1004.

in France. The killer was presented as a certain alter ego reality of the protagonist of the film, a veteran of the Great War, who became a gangster in the postwar era. But this comparison was only a trick. Eugen Weidmann had nothing to do with the Great War, for he was a child at that time.<sup>37</sup> Films that were marked with the Great War label in Lithuania often had nothing in common with the Great War either. For example, a short metro film by the famous American comedians Stan Laurel and Oliver Hardy *Men O' War* (directed by Lewis R. Foster, 1929) in Lithuania was renamed *Dikas ir Dofas pasauliniame kare* [Dick and Doof in the World War]. However, the only link with the Great War was that Laurel and Hardy played unidentified seamen who were 'fighting' in the local pool of an American city park sailing in boats.<sup>38</sup> In the late 1930s, Great War films were no longer at the top of popular movie listings.<sup>39</sup> However, the constant offer of Great War themed entertainment films, and the attempts to manipulate it, shows that such films had their audience.

Besides, it should be borne in mind that entertainment films could carry a pacifist or patriotic message. For the Lithuanian censors, this was sometimes an obstruction. For example, all that was removed from the ordinary American love passion and spy movie *Stamboul Quest* [*Fraulein Doktor-Šnipas*, directed by Sam Wood, 1934] was the exotic dance scene characteristic of such films (the undoubted legacy of the Mata Hari legend).<sup>40</sup> *Dishonored* was shown in Lithuania only without the second part of the monologue 'You call it a war? I call it a slaughter! Do you call it patriotism? I call it ... killing!'<sup>41</sup> It seemed too dangerous for the Lithuanian censors to allow the viewer to discover the simple link between patriotism and the obligation on soldiers to kill in the film. Lithuanian film production itself sought to engrain patriotic moods through cinema products. But some of the films about the Great War made in other countries also sought the same.

### *Art films: The Great War as propaganda for patriotism or militarism*

In the wake of the Great War, the warring countries were primarily concerned with documentary films and newsreels, but at the end of the war they realised that art films could

<sup>37</sup> [Anon.] Ar ne baisusis Veidemanas ekrane? *Mūsų menas*, 1938-01-15, nr. 2 (5), p. 43.

<sup>38</sup> [Advertisement] Jos širdis mįslė. *Lietuvos žinios*, 1935-05-23, nr. 117 (4800), p. 8.

<sup>39</sup> Neither in 1936–1937 nor in 1937–1938 were films about the Great War included in the top ten films of the season organised by the newspaper *Lietuvos žinios*. However, they appeared in lower positions. Romantic or historical dramas were usually at the top of the polls. However, judging from the reviews of films such as *All Quiet on the Western Front* or *Les croix de bois*, it may be assumed that the films set during the Great War were most popular in Lithuania at the very end of the 1920s and in the first half of the 1930s. Unfortunately, no wider audience surveys were carried out at that time. Cf. [Anon.] Mūsų kino konkurso rezultatai. *Lietuvos žinios*, 1937-05-20, nr. 111 (5380), p. 5; [Anon.] Mūsų kino konkurso rezultatai. *Lietuvos žinios*, 1938-05-19, nr. 112 (5678), p. 5.

<sup>40</sup> Cinema censorship permission No 30433 for the film *Fraulein Doktor-Šnipas*, copy, 5 March 1935. LLMA, f. 91, ap. 1, b. 204, l. 74.

<sup>41</sup> Content of the film *Moteris be vardo* or *X-27*, November 1932. LLMA, f. 91, ap. 1, b. 20, l. 33.

become a great tool for war propaganda as well. In the postwar period, the showing of propaganda art films that were created during the war years caused various tensions. For instance, in 1927 the German envoy to Lithuania noted verbally to the Lithuanian Ministry of Foreign Affairs that Lithuania was going to show a film that could cause great outrage among German audiences in Lithuania. He claimed that in the film, 'Chaplin depicts an English soldier who accomplishes miraculous achievements in a dream, eventually capturing the Kaiser, the Crown Prince, and General Feldmarshall von Hindenburg, and passing them on to the allies.'<sup>42</sup> It was not allowed into Lithuania. The film the German envoy meant, *Shoulder Arms* (directed by Charlie Chaplin, 1918), is a typical example of war propaganda. It appeared less than a month before the ceasefire, demonstrating how Chaplin wins the war alone, by 'surrounding' 13 German soldiers, and capturing the top German leadership. Only in his dreams, of course. The film was full of war stereotypes: the German soldiers were portrayed as idiots, and officers like tiny sadists; the US soldiers in the film were brave; and ruined France was symbolised by an innocent virgin. Not surprisingly, the German Representation did not want such a film to be seen by Lithuanian audiences. The very idea of showing such a film in Lithuania was hardly planned as a protest against Germany: most likely, it was only rediscovered in 1927 and aimed to produce some income, as Charlie Chaplin was already famous throughout the world, and war films were popular again in the mid-1920s.

Another important feature of the films about the Great War in various countries was the glorification of the sacrifice made by fellow countrymen, who had fought their battles and were killed. Besides, unlike in the war films made during the Great War, films of the postwar period included some respect paid to the former enemy. However, Lithuanian reviewers did not always view such works positively. They were critical about the British film *Tell England* [*Mūšis ties Dardanelais*, directed by Anthony Asquith, Geoffrey Bark, 1931], which was supposed to portray 'English patriotism and devotion to the fatherland'. 'Certainly, it depends how a person understands patriotism. For some, patriotism is defending the land against enemies; for others, it is snatching the Dardanelles from Turkey.'<sup>43</sup> Meanwhile, *Cavalcade* [*Kavalkada*, directed by Frank Lloyd, 1933], an epic film depicting the war and life in Great Britain through the eyes of the upper classes between 1899 and 1933, was much more positively received. It was even considered to be the best British film shown in Lithuania in the 1934–1935 cinema season. However, the film's reviewer admitted that 'The English are not yet able to create films that could be distinguished from American film production,' but this rebuke is ironic, as the film was actually made in America.<sup>44</sup> Reviewers were also negative about *The World Moves On* [*Pasaulis žengia tolyn*,

<sup>42</sup> ALSEIKA, Vytautas. *Filmų priežiūra Lietuvoje = La surveillance des films en Lithuanie*. Diplominis darbas. Kaunas, 1938, p. 35.

<sup>43</sup> [Anon.] Kauno kinuose. *Lietuvos žinios*, 1935-01-03, nr. 2 (4685), p. 5.

<sup>44</sup> Š., J. Sezoną peržvelgus. *Lietuvos žinios*, 1935-06-06, nr. 128 (4811), p. 5.

directed by John Ford, 1934], showing half a century of US history. They said about the movie: 'The war is depicted fairly realistically, but they found no reason to be disgusted by it. This is a big shortcoming of the film.'<sup>45</sup>

The patriotic production of other countries also reached Lithuanian cinemas. For example, a purely patriotic Czech movie *Poručík Alexander Rjepkin* [*Poručikas Repinas*, directed by Václav Binovec, 1937] portrayed a Czech officer who deserted from the Austrian army to the Russian army, where Czech national units were created to fight against the Habsburg Empire.<sup>46</sup> Meanwhile, the hero of the Polish film *Rok 1914* [*Čerkesai*, directed by Henryk Szaro, 1932], the son of Polish landlords, 'rushed to join the Austrian army as a volunteer to fight against the Russians. Cossacks (the film deals with Cossacks; therefore, it is not clear why it is called Cherkasy) are portrayed here very cruelly, as the greatest enemies of the population, and unfavourably to women.'<sup>47</sup> Although the distribution of Polish films at that time in Lithuania was strictly limited, this film gained popularity (the advertisements promised Cossack dances and songs), and it was repeatedly shown in cinemas, including closed sessions for soldiers.<sup>48</sup> Paradoxically, some patriotic films from other countries were made even more patriotic by Lithuanian censorship. For example, the censors removed from the French movie *Le héros de la Marne* [*Marnos didvyriai*, directed by Andre Hugon, 1938] the controversial reaction by a man called to the front: 'I have nothing to be proud of being sent to the slaughterhouse.'<sup>49</sup> Sometimes the media also voiced the view that the life of army officers was wrongly, negatively depicted in military films. 'We frequently see soldiers and officers [represented] as light-headed, with no task or purpose, and eventually with the necessary attributes of women, cards and wine ... This is not quite true. If some time ago it could be claimed to be true, not any more.'<sup>50</sup> Thus, scenes in which the life of officers was portrayed negatively (such as a scene where 'officers were drinking, one of them drops glasses from the table'<sup>51</sup>), would disappear from films. Apparently, the aim was also to avoid any reference to actual problems among Lithuanian army officers.<sup>52</sup>

<sup>45</sup> [Anon.] Kauno kinuose. *Lietuvos žinios*, 1935-03-21, nr. 66 (4749), p. 5.

<sup>46</sup> [Anon.] Kauno kinuose. *Lietuvos žinios*, 1937-12-16, nr. 286 (5555), p. 5; [Anon.] Čekų filma skina kelią į Lietuvos ekranus. *Lietuvos žinios*, 1937-12-09, nr. 280 (5549), p. 5.

<sup>47</sup> [Anon.] Nauji filmai Kaune. *Naujoji Romuva*, 1932-11-27, nr. 48 (100), p. 1055.

<sup>48</sup> For instance, G., J. Gerai baigusieji apdovanojami. *Karys*, 1934-10-11, nr. 41 (812), p. 847; GRIGORAS. Matėme Sasininkų ir Neumaninkų bylą. *Karys*, 1935-01-31, nr. 5 (828), p. 120.

<sup>49</sup> Cinema censorship permission No 2250 for the film *Marnos didvyriai*, 13 May 1939, and the content of the film. LLMA, f. 91, ap. 1, b. 177, l. 28, 53.

<sup>50</sup> Ž., J. Kariškos filmos. *Lietuvos aidas*, 1935-03-05, nr. 52 (2315), p. 3.

<sup>51</sup> It refers to the scene from the film *Ritt in die Freiheit* [*Mirties mozurka*, directed by Karl Hartl, 1937]. Cinema censorship permission No 2035 for the film *Mirties mozurka*, copy, 18 February 1939. LLMA, f. 91, ap. 1, b. 190, l. 103.

<sup>52</sup> As Jonas Vaičenonis noted, in the fourth decade in Lithuania 'There were other intense attempts to form a positive image of an officer in society, while at the same time fighting the problem of alcoholism, which usually discredited an officer in the eyes of the public': VAIČENONIS, J. Op. cit., p. 130.

But most passions flared up because of German militaristic films. It is true that the Lithuanian press often reacted to them too strongly and unjustifiably,<sup>53</sup> but there were indeed some grounds for these reviews. When in 1927 the media tycoon and nationalist Alfred Hugenberg acquired the main German film company UFA, the number of nationalist films grew,<sup>54</sup> and some of them arrived in Lithuania. For instance, at the beginning of 1933, the German-Swiss film *Tannenberg* [*Tannebergo kautynės*, directed by Heinz Paul, 1932] was shown in Lithuania. Although the events in the film were accurately conveyed, and the German enemies were portrayed honestly, this expensive film about the famous German achievement was also full of scenes openly depicting military power and nationalist pathos. As Bernadette Kester notes, *Tannenberg* was a clear response to the anti-militarist films from the Weimar Republic such as *Westfront 1918* (directed by G.W. Pabst, 1930). It was supposed to unite the German people, to increase their confidence and pride in themselves. Nazi ideologues also enjoyed the film: while the anti-militarist *Westfront 1918* was banned in Germany in 1933, *Tannenberg* was distributed round cinemas in 1936.<sup>55</sup> Lithuanian reviewers reflected it as follows: 'But an even more visible example of this militarist trend, one can even say, plainly its public proclamation, was shown in *Tannebergo kautynės* [highlighted in the original]. The film, which hardly features any artistic character, depicts the defeat of the Russian army in 1914 near Tannenberg. Hindenburg was turned into the main hero of the war, simply a god.'<sup>56</sup>

After the National Socialists came to power in Germany, the number of similar works only increased. Some of them were banned by Lithuanian censors. For example, *Morgenrot* (directed by Gustav Ucicky, Vernon Sewel, 1933) praised German submarine crews during the Great War.<sup>57</sup> Other films were shown in Lithuania significantly

<sup>53</sup> For instance, Š. Kokias matome kino filmas. *Lietuvos žinios*, 1932-02-10, nr. 33 (3825), p. 6. Many of the 'militaristic' German films pointed out by the author of the article in fact had nothing to do with militarism. Meanwhile, the author's indignation that the production of the German companies Prometheus-Film and Nero-Film was not shown is even more suspicious: both companies were making openly communist production.

<sup>54</sup> WELCH, David. *Propaganda and the German Cinema, 1933–1945*. London, New York, 2001, pp. 5–6.

<sup>55</sup> KESTER, B. Op. cit., p. 113.

<sup>56</sup> [Anon.] Nauji filmai Kaune. *Naujoji Romuva*, 1933-01-08, nr. 106, p. 47.

<sup>57</sup> The first mention of this propaganda film was in the Lithuanian media: 'Hugenberg's Ufa film company produced the propaganda-combat film *Morgenrot*, depicting a German naval battle with an English squadron, which was highly offensive to the English. // Right-wingers in the English parliament are preparing an interpellation, demanding the authorities protest in Berlin about the instigating film that Hitler, Papen and Hugenberg visited officially while it was shown in the cinema' ([Anon.] „GOTT STRAFE ENGELAND!“ *Lietuvos žinios*. 1933-02-25, nr. 45 (3837), p. 3). There were attempts to show the film in Klaipėda, but the censors did not allow it. Seemingly, after banning the film in Klaipėda, there were no attempts to put it on in the rest of Lithuania (cf. List of films banned from being brought and shown in Lithuania, January–December 1933. *LLMA*, f. 91, ap. 1, b. 4, l. 51). Interestingly, this was the first film to première after Hitler came to power. The film mystifies and proclaims the heroic death of German submarine crews in the First World War. Later, the heroism of death was to be typical of many propaganda Third Reich works. For more, see: KREIMEIE, Klaus. *The UFA Story: A History of Germany's Greatest Film Company, 1918–1945*. Berkeley, Los Angeles, CA, London, 1999, pp. 205–206.

cut, such as *Patrioten* [*Patriotai*, directed by Karl Ritter, 1937].<sup>58</sup> Despite censorship, a number of German propaganda films which featured the Great War appeared on Lithuanian cinema screens, such as *Henker, Frauen und Soldaten* [*Skirtingais keliais*, directed by Johannes Meyer, 1935].<sup>59</sup>

German militarism was manifested not only on the screen but also beyond it. In particular, it intensified with the beginning of the Second World War. For example, on 29 January 1940, Bernard Gufler, the interim US chargé d'affaires in Lithuania, deposited a memorandum opposing the prohibition of the release of two American films in Lithuania, the musical comedy *Sons o' Guns* (directed by Lloyd Bacon, 1936), featuring the Great War and mocking the Germans, and *Captured!* (directed by Roy Del Ruth, 1933), about German prisoners of war. Edvardas Turauskas, director of the Political Department of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, admitted that he had seen these films, and had nothing against them. But eventually one of them was banned quite a long time after its première in Lithuania, when there were only a few showings left in the schedule. Neither film could be shown in Lithuania, not because they were blocked by the censors, but because of the resentment of Erich Zechlin, the German envoy to Lithuania. He sent a strict note stating that American films were offensive to Germany and its troops, as they were depicted '*als wahre Bestien*' in the films. Turauskas resolved the issue, promising to hold a showing of both films, to which both the US and German representatives to Lithuania would be invited.<sup>60</sup>

However, militaristic German films did not attract a wide audience in Lithuania. They were shown briefly (usually for no more than a week), they did not reappear on the screens, and we will not find their titles in popular film listings. It seems that pacifist German production had much better luck.

<sup>58</sup> The film has a banned 'scene in which Peter says that the heart is beating in the chest when you see your fellow countrymen flying, a long conversation between Peter and Teresa in the room where Peter confesses he is a German, and a proud speech by Peter in the court where he admits he was happy to help his countrymen escape from captivity, and inscriptions in foreign languages'. There was a limited number of cities where it was allowed to show the film (Cinema censorship permission No 44106 for the film *Patriotai* or *Dvi tautos*, 11 July 1938. *LLMA*, f. 91, ap. 1, b. 160, l. 161).

<sup>59</sup> The film showed events in the Great War and the fight by the German Freikorps against the Bolsheviks after the war. Highly valued by the German propaganda minister Joseph Goebbels, the film was banned after the war ([Advertisement] *Skirtingais keliais*. *Lietuvos aidas*, 1937-07-24, nr. 329 (3544), p. 11).

<sup>60</sup> Pro Memoria by Edvardas Turauskas, 2 February 1940. *LLMA*, f. 91, ap. 1, b. 12, l. 14. It should be noted that the film censors were already interested in these films before the German protests. For example, the film *Captured!* could not be shown to people under the age of 17. In addition, the censors banned scenes where 'the Germans treated English prisoners cruelly'. It is clear that these actions by the censors did not satisfy the German representatives. But they also show that the German objections were justified (Cinema censorship permission No 2692 for the film *Ir mes žmonės* or *Karo belaisviai*, copy, 9 December 1939. *LLMA*, f. 91, ap. 1, b. 185, l. 41).

*Art Films: The Great War as propaganda for pacifism*

The first pacifist movies were filmed in the interwar period on the real battlefields of the Great War. Abel Gance's *J'accuse* (1919) was among them. But in the first postwar years, the public turned its back on films on military themes. The situation changed again in 1925, when the director King Vidor created a movie showing openly military action and war losses, *The Big Parade*, becoming the most profitable film of the year.<sup>61</sup> This pacifist film opened the way for the Great War to become a popular theme in the cinema from the mid-1920s until the 1930s. Pacifist films about the Great War have become one of the most discussed subjects in cinematography. The situation in Lithuania in this case was no different.

The culmination in the discussion of pacifist films came in 1930, when the screening of *All Quiet on the Western Front* [*Vakarų fronte nieko nauja*, directed by Lewis Milestone] based on Erich Maria Remarque's work, was produced. This 'measure for all anti-war cinema'<sup>62</sup> gained great popularity in Lithuania as well. Of course, it was helped by the publication of Remarque's book in two large editions in Lithuania in 1929.<sup>63</sup> The film was so popular in Lithuania that the magazine *Naujoji Romuva* had to recall that it was 'not the first film with a pacifist character and unfocused tendencies'.<sup>64</sup> In an interview with *Naujoji Romuva*, the German pacifist philosopher Friedrich Wilhelm Foerster stated that *All Quiet on the Western Front* was not the best pacifist film; for instance, the aforementioned *The Big Parade* was better. 'There is nothing more terrible for pacifism than the pacifism shown in Remarque's film!'<sup>65</sup> claimed the philosopher, apparently with the film's unsuccessful showing in Germany in mind, accompanied by provocation, public disorder, and eventually a ban on it.<sup>66</sup> When the magazine *Kino naujienos* organised an opinion poll to create the first list of the top films in Lithuania, Milestone's work was declared the number four film of the season. However, according to the organisers, it was really worthy of first place.<sup>67</sup> In fact, for the press, the popularity of *All Quiet on the Western Front* in

<sup>61</sup> KELLY, A. Op. cit., p. 24.

<sup>62</sup> Ibid., p. 35.

<sup>63</sup> The first edition printed at the Varpas printing press in Kaunas was of 5,300 copies. There is no indication about the size of the second edition, printed at the Žaibas printing press in Kaunas.

<sup>64</sup> [Anon.] Remarko filmo pirmtakai. *Naujoji Romuva*, 1931-02-22, nr. 8, p. 200.

<sup>65</sup> [Anon.] Ką sako Fr. W. Forster apie Remarko filmą „Vakarų fronte nieko nauja“? *Naujoji Romuva*, 1931-03-29, nr. 13, p. 319.

<sup>66</sup> The film's première in Germany was accompanied by provocations initiated by Joseph Goebbels, the future Nazi German propaganda minister: they would let rats and smoke bombs into cinemas during showings, and otherwise disrupt them. The film was banned by the German censors, later allowed to be shown, and then banned again. For more, see: TEGEL, Susan. *Nazis and the Cinema*. London, New York, 2007, p. 15.

<sup>67</sup> Best film of the 1930–1931 season selected by readers of the magazine was the German drama *Zwei Menschen* [*Du žmonės*, directed by Erich Waschneck, 1930]. However, the survey sample was not big (56 replies were received), and the magazine was new and not so popular, so the survey does not necessarily reveal wider public opinion about the film ([Anon.] „Du žmonės“ – geriausias, mūsų skaitytojų nuomone, praėj. sezono filmas. *Kino Naujienos*, 1931-12-06, ekstra leidinys, p. 3).

Lithuania became a point of departure for measuring the success of the films of the years that followed.<sup>68</sup> Milestone's movie was discussed even up to four years after the première in Lithuania, as a standard for comparison with other films about the Great War.<sup>69</sup>

In addition to *All Quiet on the Western Front*, these may include *Wings* [*Wings*, directed by William A. Wellman, 1927], which appeared on Lithuanian screens in 1929. It was one of the first to show very realistic aviation battle scenes, since the director had had combat aircraft experience in the Great War. Not surprisingly, it was highly promoted by the Lithuanian Aero Club. 'I had never seen air battles so well presented,' said the reviewer. 'Sometimes realism really captivates the viewer. The Lithuanian Aero Society has good reason to recommend this film to the Kaunas audience.'<sup>70</sup> The film is also important to the history of Lithuanian cinema, as it was the first talkie, even though the sound was limited to special effects, and 'hurt many nerves' for some spectators.<sup>71</sup> In 1937 and 1938, a film based on Erich Maria Remarque's novel *The Road Back* [*Kelias atgal*, directed by James Whale, 1937], which had been translated into Lithuanian in 1931, was screened in Lithuanian cinemas for a long time.<sup>72</sup> Spectators could also see a film based on Ernest Hemingway's *A Farewell to Arms*.<sup>73</sup> Before the establishment of the National Socialists in Germany, pacifist films made in the Weimar Republic, such as *Niemandsland* [*Mirties broliai*, directed by Victor Trivas, 1931], about friendship between soldiers of five different nationalities, former enemies, in the trenches of the First World War, reached Lithuanian cinema theatres as well.<sup>74</sup> It is true that pacifist German cinema production did not usually portray the Great War directly.<sup>75</sup>

Nevertheless, after *All Quiet on the Western Front*, French-made pacifist films enjoyed great success. The number of them shown in Lithuania was quite impressive. The

<sup>68</sup> For example, 'Many films were shown by our cinemas to the Kaunas public, but except for the famous *Vakary fronte nieko nauja*, seemingly none of the films shown could enjoy so many viewers as the aforementioned film by Sovkino *Kelias j gyvenimą (Putevka v zhizn')*, screened for over two weeks in Kaunas cinemas: DAVAINIS, J. Po kinų pasidairius. *Kultūra*, 1931, nr. 12, p. 705.

<sup>69</sup> Ž., J. Kariškos filmos. *Lietuvos aidas*, 1935-03-05, nr. 52 (2315), p. 3.

<sup>70</sup> ČIČINSKAS. „Kalbamoji“ filmas. *Lietuvos aidas*, 1929-05-02, nr. 98 (582), p. 3.

<sup>71</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 3.

<sup>72</sup> [Anon.] Remarko „Kelias atgal“ ekrane. *Lietuvos žinios*, 1937-12-02, nr. 275 (5544), p. 6; [Advertisement] Kelias atgal. *Lietuvos žinios*, 1938-02-17, Nr. 38 (5604), p. 9. The film remained in 20th place in the list for the 1937–1938 film season. This was the highest place among Great War films that year ([Anon.] Mūsų kino konkurso rezultatai. *Lietuvos žinios*, 1938-05-19, nr. 112 (5678), p. 5).

<sup>73</sup> In Lithuanian *Gulbės daina*, directed by Frank Borzage, 1932: [Advertisement] Ekranas. *Dienos naujienos*, 1933-10-18, nr. 239 (759), p. 4.

<sup>74</sup> ALSEIKA, Vytautas. Mirties broliai. *Kino naujienos*, 1931-12-25, nr. 24 (29), p. 21.

<sup>75</sup> For example, *Kameradschaft* [*Juodasis auksas*, directed by Georg Wilhelm Pabst, 1931] demonstrating the unity of German and French miners in the face of danger (P., J. Juodasis auksas. *Kino naujienos*, 1932-03-06, nr. 10 (15), p. 14), or *Mädchen in Uniform* [*Moters prabudimas*, directed by Leontine Sagan, Carl Froelich, 1931], condemning the brutal Prussian education system (P., J. Moters prabudimas. *Kino naujienos*, 1932-02-28, nr. 9 (14), p. 14).



press usually mentioned the film *Les croix de bois* [*Mediniai kryžiai*, directed by Raymond Bernard, 1932], based on the novel by Roland Dorgeles (published in Lithuanian in 1931). The film's première in the Forumas cinema was attended by President Antanas Smetona.<sup>76</sup> The press claimed: 'The film is more artistic and less cruel than the German film *Vakarų fronte nieko nauja* [*All Quiet on the Western Front* was made in the USA, so apparently this refers to Remarque]. Therefore, the image of war may not be so convincing. On the other hand, it can be shown to young schoolchildren for the purposes of pacifist propaganda.'<sup>77</sup> It was argued that this film 'brought about more emotions' than *Vakarų fronte nieko nauja*, where 'there was nothing new, because of excessive explosions and shooting.'<sup>78</sup> The classic French film *La Grande Illusion* [*Baisioji šmėkla (Didžioji iliuzija)*, directed by Jean Renoir, 1937] was called a masterpiece as well. The realism of the film was highly praised: 'The staging of the film really needs to be called a masterpiece, because with its reality and artistic details, it surpasses many of the best war films, although it does not even show battlefields with all their horrors [...] The film depicts Germans who are seemingly the same people we saw during the Great War. There are bad ones among them, but there are also very good ones. The Frenchmen depicted are also living people, with all their weaknesses.'<sup>79</sup>

The quote from the review of Jean Renoir's *La Grande Illusion* is important, because it is probably the only example where the reviewer expresses his own personal experience of the Great War. ('The film depicts Germans who are seemingly the same people we saw during the Great War.') Indeed, films that depicted the Great War could have encouraged people to recall their experiences, and the reviews of these films might have become an arena for discussion on the Great War. However, we can hardly see it in the press of interwar Lithuania. This was most likely due to the fact that mostly younger people would write about films.<sup>80</sup> Pacifist films about the Great War were usually discussed from the point of view of relevant issues of that time, with the most emphasis on possible security threats. This is what they wrote about *The Road Back*: 'At the end of the film, they show the current foolish arming of countries in numbers and images. This demonstrates that the world is preparing for a new slaughter, even more fervently. The film is recommended to everyone.'<sup>81</sup>

Pacifist films were highly recommended in the press, but it was common to discuss in reviews what the trend (militaristic or pacifist) in these films was,<sup>82</sup> and pacifism

<sup>76</sup> ALSEIKA, Vytautas. Sezono balansas (I). *Naujoji Romuva*, 1933-05-21, nr. 125, p. 504.

<sup>77</sup> [Anon.] Nauji filmai Kaune. *Naujoji Romuva*, 1932-12-11, nr. 50 (102), p. 1101–1102.

<sup>78</sup> Ž., J. Kariškios filmos. *Lietuvos aidas*, 1935-03-05, nr. 52 (2315), p. 3.

<sup>79</sup> [Anon.] Kauno kinuose. *Lietuvių balsas*, 1937-05-10, nr. 228 (55497), p. 6.

<sup>80</sup> For instance, Vytautas Alseika, one of the founders of film journalism in Lithuania, was born in 1912.

<sup>81</sup> [Anon.] Kauno kinuose. *Lietuvos žinios*, 1937-12-16, nr. 286 (5555), p. 5.

<sup>82</sup> For instance, 'The film's trend is uncertain, although it can be assumed that it depicts the determination of the French to defend their homeland. There are some captivating and exciting scenes in it. But the

was often perceived only as an argument for the promotion of a film.<sup>83</sup> However, in the late 1930s, the Lithuanian press began to question the very idea of promoting pacifism through films. 'This is a pacifist film with a highly relevant topic: fighting for peace in the world,' a reviewer wrote about the French film *J'accuse!* [*Aš kaltinu*, directed by Abel Gance, 1938].<sup>84</sup> 'The film is very well made, and is very exciting [...]. In particular, the last scenes are terrifying, showing the resurrection of the dead from the death fields of Verdun and the march to stop the war [...]. But let me make some comments on the very idea of this film. Pacifism is an extremely expensive thing, fostering peace. It should be highly valued by all peoples and all nations of the world. However, things have changed. The French are endeavouring to be pacifists, while the Germans and Italians are preparing their entire countries for war. This film encourages the French to be disgusted with war, but in Germany the film is banned. So what is the use of such one-sided agitation? While some are terrified of war, others are going to enslave those pacifists, and that is nonsense.'

Susan Sontag recently noted a similar idea: pacifist films (and other visual works) which in the interwar period attempted to persuade the public to condemn war and all that was associated with it, were no longer able to perform this function. On the contrary, these works tempered society, getting it used to violent scenes of warfare, thus indirectly contributing to the preparation of people for war.<sup>85</sup> The criticism of *J'accuse!* in Lithuania partly confirms this. At the end of the 1930s, films about the Great War had already become an integral part of the entertainment repertoire, the militaristic propaganda rendered through films by the National Socialists was no longer surprising, and the Lithuanian population actually encountered it when Germany occupied the Klaipėda region in March 1939. All this enabled society to be more critical of the pacifist films that were so popular. Then Soviet military films depicting 'the defeat of German aggression' became increasingly popular.<sup>86</sup>

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name *The Road to Glory* should be replaced with *The Road to Death*', critics commented on the film *The Road to Glory* [*Kelias į garbę*, directed by Howard Hawks, US, 1936] ([Anon.] Kauno kinuose. *Lietuvos žinios*, 1936-11-05, nr. 224 (5225), p. 6). We might object to the review, because Howard Hawks quite clearly showed the Great War as a mechanised death factory in his film. So, I believe the film represents ideas of pacifism rather than French patriotism.

<sup>83</sup> 'Première! Great political film! Down with the war! Long live peace! Today, these slogans have become the voice of all humanity,' claimed the advertisement for *La Grande Illusion* ([Advertisement] Baisioji šmėkla. *Lietuvos žinios*, 1937-10-07, nr. 228 (5497), p. 10).

<sup>84</sup> It was a remake of the 1919 film of the same name ([Anon.] Kauno kinuose. *Lietuvos žinios*, 1938-09-29, nr. 223 (5789), p. 6).

<sup>85</sup> SONTAG, Susan. *Regarding the Pain of Others*. New York, 2003, pp. 82, 102.

<sup>86</sup> For example, *Glubokii reid* [*Tolimas skridimas*, directed by Piotr Malachov, 1938], where not clearly identified but predictable invaders of the Soviet Union from the West were immediately called Germans in Lithuania ([Anon.] Kauno kino teatruose. *XX amžius*, 1939-02-28, nr. 48 (800), p. 9). But this film was not related to the theme of the Great War, which was largely overlooked in Soviet films (cf. YOUNGBLOOD, Denise J. A War Forgotten: The Great War in Russian and Soviet Cinema. In *The First World War and Popular Cinema: 1914 to the Present*. Ed. by Michael PARIS. New Brunswick, NJ, 2000, pp. 172–191).

## Conclusions

In the interwar period, films about the Great War were an important component on the screens of Lithuanian cinemas. Their numbers were low in the first postwar years. However, the success of several films led to Hollywood's widespread creation of Great War movies from the mid-1920s, and other countries followed this trend. It is true that Lithuanian filmmakers did not contribute to the fever of Great War films. The subject of the Great War (military experience, occupation) was not emphasised in newsreels or art film projects. These consisted of plots supporting the heroic narrative of Lithuanian history, including the Wars of Independence, uprisings against the Imperial Russian government in the 19th century, and the implementation of the Klaipėda military operation. This production was meant to instil patriotism, and improve the image of the Lithuanian army in society; in other words, to serve the goals of the time.

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However, visitors to Lithuanian cinemas saw a wide range of films on the theme of the Great War made in various foreign countries (the USA, Germany, France, Great Britain, Czechoslovakia, Poland, etc). This made it possible for cinema audiences to see the Great War from various perspectives of the 'other'. Documentary films about the Great War could show footage filmed on the front line during the war. Due to the lack of supply, this material was previously almost unavailable to Lithuanians. Art films provided entertainment to viewers: their plots about spies, love stories and comedy scenes were shown against the background of the war. The number of entertainment films featuring references to the Great War shown in Lithuania was the highest. Other art films conveyed patriotic or militaristic moods, glorified the sacrifice made by soldiers who died in the Great War, or promoted revanchist policies. Patriotic Great War films made in various other countries were shown in Lithuania, but the number of films made in Germany was particularly high. These were characterised by numerous military references, especially after Hitler came to power in 1933, and therefore were often criticised and censored. Nevertheless, a large number of such films appeared on screens. Pacifist films denouncing the war received mostly positive reviews in the press, but in the late 1930s, with the growing German aggression and signs of war, the attitude towards such films began to be more critical.

However, foreign films representing the experiences of 'others' in the Great War do not seem to have been stimuli for the Lithuanians to promote their memories of their own Great War experiences, or to recall the victims of the war in Lithuania. In reviews, the Great War was very rarely recalled directly. This can be explained by several arguments. Firstly, some critics were members of the younger generation who had no personal experience of the war. Secondly, just like the reviews of these

films, Lithuanian cinema production revealed topical issues in the life of Lithuania: entertainment films could only highlight the latest sensations in the world; patriotic or pacifist films became an incentive to discuss politics in one country or another. Nevertheless, we cannot rule out the assumption that films on Lithuanian cinema screens on the theme of the Great War could have sparked private memories by viewers, or enabled their own military experiences to be discussed in conversations or gatherings that did not emerge into the public sphere.

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## DIDŽIOJO KARO REPREZENTAVIMAS LIETUVOS KINO EKRANUOSE 1918–1940 METAIS

Audrius Dambrauskas

## Santrauka

Didžiojo karo tematikos filmai tarpukariu Lietuvos kino ekranuose sudarė svarbią dedamąją. Pirmaisiais pokario metais tokių filmų dar nebuvo sukurta daug. Tačiau kelių juostų, kaip antai, *The Big Parade* (1925), sėkmė lėmė, kad nuo 3-iojo dešimtmečio vidurio Holivude pradėta gausiai kurti Didžiojo karo tematikos filmus, o kitos šalys šia Holivudo tendencija pasekė. Tiesa, Lietuvos kino kūrėjai prie filmų Didžiojo karo tematika karštinės neprišijungė. Lietuvių kurtose kino kronikose (tiek, kiek apie jas galima spręsti iš išlikusios medžiagos) ar vaidybinių filmų projektuose Didžiojo karo motyvai (karinė patirtis, okupacija) nebuvo akcentuojami. Juos pakeisdavo herojinį lietuvių tautos istorijos naratyvą perteikę Nepriklausomybės karų, XIX a. sukilimų prieš caro valdžią ar Klaipėdos prijungimo operacijos siužetai. Nors šie siužetai atsiskleidė tik Lietuvos kino kronikose, kurias pradėta reguliariai rodyti tik 4-ajame dešimtmetyje, jie yra ryškūs keliuose Lietuvos filmų projektuose, niekuomet nepasiekusiuose kino ekranų. Ši produkcija turėjo skiepyti patriotizmą, kelti visuomenėje Lietuvos kariuomenės, kuri buvo pagrindinis Antano Smetonos autoritarinio režimo ramstis, įvaidį, t. y. padėti įgyvendinti aktualius to meto tikslus.

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Tačiau Lietuvos kino teatrų žiūrovai matė platų spektrą skirtingose užsienio šalyse (JAV, Vokietijoje, Prancūzijoje, Didžiojoje Britanijoje, Čekoslovakijoje, Lenkijoje ir kt.) sukurtų filmų Didžiojo karo tematika. Kino teatrų lankytojams Lietuvoje tai leido į Didįjį karą pažvelgti iš įvairių „kitų“ perspektyvų. Dokumentiniai Didžiojo karo tematikos filmai, pvz., „Tikras pasaulinis karas“ (*Der Weltkrieg*, 1927), galėjo supažindinti žiūrovus su karo metų frontuose filmuota medžiaga, mat Lietuvoje Didžiojo karo metais tokios medžiagos dėl aprūpinimo trūkumų beveik nebuvo rodoma. Vaidybiniai kino filmai žiūrovams teikdavo pramogą; juose šnipų (daugiausia moterų), meilės istorijos, komediniai siužetai rutuliodavosi karo įvykių fone. Tokių, pramoginių, filmų, kuriuose būta nuorodų į Didįjį karą, Lietuvoje rodyta daugiausia. Jie turėdavo savą auditoriją, tačiau jų rinkodara būdavo siejama su šiuolaikinio realaus pasaulio skandalais ir sensacijomis, kaip antai, žmogžudžio Eugeno Weidmanno suėmimu, o Didysis karas juose tapdavo tik linksminančiu reginiu. Kiti vaidybiniai filmai galėjo perteikti patriotines ar militaristines tendencijas, aukštinti Didžiojo karo frontuose žuvusių karių atminimą arba skatinti revanšistinės politikos idėjas, propaguoti pacifizmą. Lietuvoje buvo rodoma skirtingų šalių (JAV, Didžiosios Britanijos, Vokietijos, Lenkijos ir kt.) patriotinė Didžiojo karo tematikos kino produkcija, tačiau gausia joje išsiskyrė Vokietijoje statyti filmai. Pastarieji, tokie kaip „Tannenbergo kautynės“ (*Tannenberg*, 1932), pasižymėdavo gausiomis militaristinėmis nuorodomis, todėl Lietuvoje, ypač po Hitlerio atėjimo į valdžią 1933 m., neretai sulaukdavo kritikos ir cenzūros apribojimų. Nacistinėje Vokietijoje sukurta „Morgenrot“ (1933), aukštinusį Didžiojo karo metų Vokietijos povandeninių laivų jūreivius, buvo uždrausta rodyti, o „Patriotai“ (*Patrioten*, 1937) buvo gerokai apkarpyti. Vis dėlto nemaža dalis tokių filmų į šalies ekranus pakliūdavo. Pacifistiniai, karą smerkiantys filmai, pvz., „Vakarų fronte nieko nauja“ (*All Quiet on the Western Front*, 1930) arba „Mediniai kryžiai“ (*Les croix de bois*, 1932), spaudoje buvo gausiai rekomenduojami ir sulaukdavo daugiausia teigiamų atsiliepimų. Tačiau 4-ojo de-

šimtmečio pabaigoje, augant Vokietijos agresijai ir artėjančio karo nuojautoms, į tokius filmus pradėta žvelgti kritiškiau.

Tačiau „kitų“ patirtis Didžiajame kare perteikę užsienio filmai Lietuvoje, regis, netapo stimulu, skatinusiu spaudoje prisiminti savas Didžiojo karo patirtis ar atminti lietuvių aukas šiame kare. Tiesa, Jeano Renoir filmo „Baisioji šmėkla (Didžioji iliuzija)“ (*La Grande Illusion*, 1937) recenzentas Lietuvos autorius savo atsiliepime išreiškė asmeninę Didžiojo karo patirtį („vaizduojami vokiečiai, rodos, iš tikrųjų yra tie patys, kuriuos matėme per did. Karą“). Tačiau apskritai filmų recenzijose savosios Didžiojo karo patirtys lietuvių buvo prisimenamos labai retai. Tai paaiškina keli argumentai. Pirma, kai kurie kino juostų recenzentai Lietuvoje buvo jaunosios kartos atstovai, neturėję asmeninės karo patirties. Antra, tiek lietuvių kurtoji kino produkcija, tiek ir šių filmų vertinimai atskleidė Lietuvos gyvenimo pokariu aktualijas: pramoginiai filmai galėjo aktualizuoti naujausias pasaulio sensacijas, patriotiniai ar pacifistiniai filmai – tapti stimulu vienos ar kitos valstybės politikai aptarti. Nepaisant to, negalime atmesti prielaidos, kad Lietuvos kino ekranuose regėti filmai Didžiojo karo tematika galėjo paskatinti privačius Didžiojo karo atsiminimus, aktualizuoti savąsias karo patirtis pokalbiuose ar susibūrimuose, kurie viešosios erdvės nepasiekė.