



CAUSES OF DEATH IN THE LITHUANIAN ARMED FORCES, 1919–1940

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ABSTRACT

Between the First World War and the Second World War, approximately 280 thousand men served in the Lithuanian armed forces. This is a significant figure for a country that only had a population of two to 2.5 million. Even though the Lithuanian armed forces were only involved in active military operations and low-intensity fighting from 1919 to 1923, servicemen died during the entire period up to 1940. The numbers of deaths during the Wars of Independence are well known; however, the causes of death in the Lithuanian armed forces, both from 1919 to 1920 and in later years, have not been investigated in great depth. We understand that one cause of death in an active army is active combat. In the study of war, deaths in action are further classified into deaths caused by artillery fire, machine gun and rifle fire, bayonets, etc. This allows scholars to determine the effectiveness of weapons systems and tactical elements used on the battlefield. However, the focus of this article is the causes of soldiers' deaths that are not directly combat related. In the first section, I discuss causes of death in the Lithuanian armed forces during periods of war and peace, and provide a host of examples, which include deaths caused by disease, accidents, homicide and suicide. In the last section, I present the results of quantitative analysis. The quantitative analysis is a case study of a single regiment that demonstrates the predominant causes of death from 1919 to 1940, with a separate analysis of causes of death for the period 1919 to 1920.

KEYWORDS: Lithuanian armed forces, disease, mortality, accidents, bullying, non-statutory relations, homosexuality, suicide.

ANOTACIJA

Laikotarpiu tarp dviejų pasaulinių karų Lietuvos kariuomenėje iš viso tarnavo apie 280 tūkst. vyrų. Tai reikšmingas skaičius šaliai, kurioje tuo metu gyveno 2–2,5 mln. gyventojų. Nors aktyviose kariniuose veiksmuose ir žemo intensyvumo konflikte Lietuvos kariuomenė dalyvavo tik 1919–1923 m., karių mirtys būdingos visam laikotarpiui iki pat 1940 m. Žuvusiųjų per Nepriklausomybės karus skaičiai yra žinomi, bet mirčių priežastys Lietuvos kariuomenėje nei 1919–1920 m., nei vėlesniu laikotarpiu nėra išsamiau analizuotos. *A priori* suvokiame, kad viena mirčių priežasčių kariaujančioje kariuomenėje yra kariniai veiksmai. Žuvusieji per karinius veiksmus karybos studijose klasifikuojami, bandant nustatyti, kiek iš jų žuvo nuo artilerijos, kulkosvaidžių ir šautuvų ugnies, durtuvų atakų metu ir kt. Tai leidžia nustatyti ginkluotės sistemų ir mūšio metu naudotų taktikos elementų efektyvumą. Tačiau šis straipsnis susitelkia į karių mirčių priežastis, tiesiogiai nesusijusias su mūšiais. Pirmosiose straipsnio dalyse aptariamos mirčių priežastys Lietuvos kariuomenėje karo ir taikos laikotarpiais, pateikiama visa virtinė pavyzdžių. Tarp jų išskiriamos ligos, nelaimingi atsitikimai, homicidai ir savižudybės. Paskutinė dalis rodo kiekybinių duomenų analizę. Tai vieno pulko atvejo studija, atskleidžianti, kokios mirčių priežasčių dominavo per visą 1919–1940 m. laikotarpį, ir atskirai nagrinėjanti karių mirčių priežasčių spektrą 1919–1920 m.

PAGRINDINIAI ŽODŽIAI: Lietuvos kariuomenė, ligos, mirtys, nelaimingi atsitikimai, patyčios, nestatutiniai santykiai, homoseksualumas, savižudybės.

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DEFEATING DISEASE IN THE CHANGING SOCIETY OF THE SOUTHEAST BALTIC FROM THE 18TH TO THE 20TH CENTURY

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Introduction

For the Lithuanian armed forces, the period 1919 to 1940 can be divided into several smaller periods. Established in the autumn of 1918, the armed forces were involved in active military operations from 1919 to 1920 in Lithuania's independence wars. From 1921 to 1923, military units were stationed to protect the strip of territory along the neutral zone established by Lithuania and Poland in 1920, where they participated in low-intensity exchanges of fire with Polish forces. In 1923, Lithuania reorganised its armed forces as a peacetime military, and stationed units in permanent garrisons across the country, where they remained until the beginning of the Second World War.

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During this period, Lithuania formed its armed forces entirely out of conscripts. Compulsory military service meant that military service was experienced by a large number of civilians. As young men went off to complete their military service, they were temporarily separated from their close family. In many cases, this meant the temporary loss of a family's main breadwinner or a working hand. However, military service came with greater risk, so on some occasions this separation was not a temporary one. Soldiers' deaths in the Lithuanian armed forces, the extent and the causes of these deaths, as well as reactions to them, have received little scholarly attention.

Historians analyse military deaths for different reasons and use different approaches. A common view is that armies experience most loss of life when participating in active military operations. However, historical research has shown that sometimes this is not the case. For example, during the Meuse-Argonne offensive by the Allied forces, which was perhaps the largest US military operation during the Great War, the US armed forces lost more men to influenza and influenza-related issues than on the battlefield.¹ Mortality rates in the American army were impacted by the widespread Spanish flu. From 1918 to 1920, Spanish flu made its way through Central and Eastern Europe. In Poland alone, the disease took the lives of 200,000 to 300,000 people. The pandemic did not bypass the Polish army, which was fighting the Red Army² and other adversaries at the time. New research on soldiers' deaths is also driven by the search for, discovery and identification of soldiers' remains from previous wars. The identification of victims of the First World War continues to be important in the 21st century, a century after the war.³ In France, approximately

¹ WAVER, Peter C.; BERGEN, Leo, van. Death from 1918 pandemic influenza during the First World War: a perspective from personal and anecdotal evidence. *Influenza and Other Respiratory Viruses*, 2014, vol. 8, no. 5, pp. 538–546.

² GRABOWSKI, Marek L.; KOSIŃSKA, Bożena; KNAP, Józef P.; BRYDAK, Lidia B. The Lethal Spanish Influenza Pandemic in Poland. *Medical Science Monitor*, 2017, vol. 23, pp. 4880–4884.

³ GAUDIO, Daniel; CATTANEO, Cristina; GALASSI, Andrea; NICOLIS, Franco. Men at war, recovery and analysis of soldiers' remains from the WWI and WWII Italian Front. *Forensic Science International*, 2020, vol. 317, art. 110533.

700,000 soldiers from the Great War are still considered missing. Historians contribute to the search for their remains and the research conducted by anthropologists, archaeologists and geneticists.⁴ The help of historians is also enlisted when identifying the remains of deceased soldiers found in Lithuania. In the autumn of 2022, a team from the Polish Instytut Pamięci Narodowej was conducting research in the vicinity of Lazdėnai (in the Elektrėnai district) when it discovered the remains of 14 individuals. The press release that was issued stated: 'Based on the historical information gathered, these were the remains of Lithuanian and Polish soldiers who died fighting during the 1919–1920 conflict between Poland and Lithuania. Several pieces of clothing, including uniforms and parts of uniforms, were found in the joint grave.'⁵ This burial ground was probably related to an event that took place on 15 July 1920 when the Lithuanian army's 1st Battalion of the 5th Infantry Regiment, which was travelling by train to Vilnius, encountered Polish forces.⁶

The fact that the last efforts to determine numbers of victims of war (combatants) date from before the Second World War is illustrative of just how little research has been done on deaths in the Lithuanian military during the interwar period. According to a 1935 issue of a military weekly, 'During the [Lithuanian] Wars of Independence, 1,401 soldiers died in combat, 2,677 soldiers were injured, 297 died of infectious diseases at the front, and 154 soldiers were left disabled. This amounts to 4,529 military casualties in total.'⁷ This data was later corrected by Petras Ruseckas, whose contribution to research into the casualties of Lithuania's Wars of Independence is exceptional. In 1937, he published the following figure: the Lithuanian Wars of Independence resulted in the deaths of 1,444 soldiers, Šauliai,⁸ and guerrilla fighters. With the addition of deaths from disease, this number increases to 4,256.⁹ The historian Paulius Šležas criticised the figures Ruseckas presented because they included deaths from later years (1924, 1925, 1926, 1927, etc) with the number of deaths caused by the Wars of Independence itself.¹⁰ Despite this criticism, the statement that about 1,400 soldiers died during the Lithuanian Wars of Independence

⁴ VERNA, Emeline; COSTEDOAT, Caroline; STEVANOVITICH, Alain; ADAM, Frédéric; DESFOSSÉS, Yves; JACQUES, Alain; SIGNOLI, Michel. French soldiers who died during both World Wars: from recovery to repatriation. *Forensic Science International*, 2020, vol. 316, art. 110484.

⁵ LRT.lt. Sugrįžo iš užmaršties: prie Lazdėnų rasti Lietuvos ir Lenkijos ginkluoto susirėmimo aukų palaikai [interaktyvus], [žr. 2022-09-20]. Prieitis per internetą <<https://www.lrt.lt/naujienos/kultura/12/1783481/sugrizo-is-uzmarsties-prie-lazdenu-rasti-lietuvos-ir-lenkijos-ginkluoto-susiremimo-auku-palaikai>>

⁶ LESNICKAS. 5 pėst. D. L. K. Kėstučio pulkas. *Karys*, 1927-07-13–19, nr. 28 (424), p. 254–255; DILIS. Krauju ir mirtimi Tėvynę nelaimėj vaduosim. 5 pėst. D. L. K. Kėstučio pulko šventė. *Karys*, 1938-03-03, nr. 9, p. 264; SURGAILIS, Gintautas. *Penktasis pėstininkų Didžiojo Lietuvos kunigaikščio Kėstučio pulkas*. Vilnius, 2017, p. 73–75.

⁷ BALČIŪNAS. Mūsų kariuomenės šventės turinys ir prasmė. *Karys*, 1935-11-23, nr. 47 (870), p. 1125.

⁸ Šauliai were members of the Lithuanian Riflemen's Union, a paramilitary organisation.

⁹ RUSECKAS, Petras. *Savanorių žygiai*. T. I. Vilnius, 1991 [First Edition 1937], p. 54–55.

¹⁰ ŠLEŽAS, Paulius. Recenzija: P. Ruseckas, *Savanorių žygiai*, nepriklausomybės karų atsiminimai, I d. *Naujoji Romuva*, 1937, nr. 40 (350), p. 727.

has become an established fact in Lithuanian historiography.¹¹ Without analysing the question any further, no one has taken on the task of checking Ruseckas' calculations. So even up to the present day, historians often cite numbers that include both deaths resulting from combat and peacetime losses of life.

Historiographically, we know of individual cases of deaths in the Lithuanian army. For example, scholars have written biographies of pilots who died in combat, provided descriptions of catastrophes, and so on.¹² We also know of specific accidents that resulted in the loss of soldiers' lives, for example, from a gun salute in Klaipėda commemorating the deaths of artillerymen on the occasion of the arrival of a British warship.¹³ There were also attempts to register the graves of all the Lithuanian soldiers, freedom fighters and volunteers who died between 1919 and 1940.¹⁴ Historians have also analysed the development of practices commemorating deceased soldiers in Lithuania at the time,¹⁵ and discussed the memorials erected in honour of those who died in the War of Independence.¹⁶ However, the causes of soldiers' deaths remain on the margin of scholarship.

The aim of this study is to discuss the causes of military deaths that were not directly combat related in the Lithuanian armed forces during the interwar period. In order to achieve this, I will first separate from the total number of military deaths the number of deaths which occurred during peacetime. I will then attempt to group the causes of death into categories. To conclude, I will present a case study of a single military unit, the 7th Infantry Regiment, to demonstrate the frequency of deaths by category, and their distribution by year.

The study uses data on deceased soldiers from five sources: 1) data on military losses published by Ruseckas in 1937; 2) a register of military graves published in a 2003 atlas; 3) a list of victims engraved on commemorative slabs in the crypt of the Vytautas the Great War Museum; 4) documents from the Lithuanian Central State Archives; and 5) the military weekly *Karys* (Warrior), published by the Lithuanian armed forces

¹¹ SURGAILIS, Gintautas. The 1919–1920 Lithuanian War of Liberation. In *Wars of Lithuania: A Systemic Quantitative Analysis of Lithuania's National Wars in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries*. Ed. by Gediminas VITKUS. Vilnius, 2014, pp. 149–221.

¹² *Mūsų sparnai. Lietuvos aviacijos istorija 1919–1929*. Red. Jonas PYRAGIUS. Kaunas, 1929, p. 77–88; LUKŠYS, Saulius; MINTAUTAS, Rimvydas; MONKEVIČIUS, Jonas. *Palūžę sparnai*. Vilnius, 1997; LIEKIS, Algimantas. *Lietuvos karo aviacija (1919–1940)*. Vilnius, 1999, p. 268–277, 591–617; GAMZIUKAS, Algirdas; RAMOŠKA, Gytis. *Lietuvos karinė aviacija 1919–1940*. Kaunas, 1999, p. 244–247; RAMOŠKA, Gytis. *Lietuvos aviacija*. Kaunas, 2009, p. 43, 67, 79–80.

¹³ JOKUBAUSKAS, Vytautas. Lietuvos trispalvė virš kareivinių. In *Kareivinės, tapusios Klaipėdos universitetu*. Sud. Vasilijus SAFRONOVAS. Klaipėda, 2012, p. 71–127.

¹⁴ IVAŠKEVIČIUS, Eugenijus. *Lietuvos karių, partizanų ir šaulių kapai 1919–1940. Atlasas*. Vilnius, 2003.

¹⁵ STALIŪNAS, Darius. Žuvusių karių kultas tarpukario Lietuvoje. In *Nacionalizmas ir emocijos (Lietuva ir Lenkija XIX–XX a.)* (Lietuvių Atgimimo istorijos studijos, t. 17). Sud. Vladas SIRUTAVIČIUS, Darius STALIŪNAS. Vilnius, 2001, p. 120–132.

¹⁶ VAIDOTAS, Edvinas. *Žuvusiems už Lietuvos laisvę*. Kaunas, 2018.

from 1920 to 1940. With overlapping cases eliminated, the aggregated data resulted in the most comprehensive possible list of deceased Lithuanian soldiers, covering the deaths of almost 3,500 soldiers. This list is by no means exhaustive, because individual deaths continue to be discovered. For this reason, the focus of this article will not be on the presentation of quantitative data, but on the identification and grouping of peacetime causes of death. Based on these categories, I will attempt to draw conclusions about the Lithuanian armed forces as a whole, and present a quantitative analysis of causes of death in a single regiment. The 7th Infantry Regiment of the Samogitian Duke Butegeidis was selected for several reasons. The first is the fact that the regiment existed from 1919 up until 1940, it was never disbanded like some other regiments were in 1923 and 1926, only to be reinstated later (1934). This allows us to use data from the entire period. The second reason is that the regiment was involved in active combat, unlike some units of the Lithuanian armed forces which acted in a reserve capacity or were sent to protect less important parts of the front. This enables us to separate peacetime deaths from the total number of deaths. The third but a no less important reason is that the regiment consistently and systematically registered the deaths of its soldiers, and this list has survived and is available in the archives. The existence of such a list allows us to analyse a complete dataset.

The article will also present an analysis of archival documents and published sources (periodicals for soldiers and those injured in war). Articles in the press and secret army correspondence supplement each other as sources, and help us identify trends and check hypotheses. In this article, I will also make use of pictures that document life in a military regiment as well as standards of hygiene and medical check-ups. Of course, we must bear in mind that these images depict soldiers posing specially for the occasion. Thus, these pictures do not show us the actual conditions, but what the photographer or those who commissioned the pictures wanted to show us.

Deadly diseases

The data collected as part of this research points to various diseases as the main reasons for the peacetime deaths of Lithuanian soldiers. They can be grouped in two main categories: infectious and non-infectious. Infectious diseases spread among soldiers because large numbers of men living in close proximity created favourable conditions for diseases to spread. This was why, for the army, infectious diseases were especially dangerous. The spread of such diseases was also affected by how well soldiers kept to standards of hygiene and the nature of the space in which they resided. Both written documents and iconographic material (Fig. 1 and Fig. 2) reveal that soldiers lived in rather tight quarters, and old barracks did not meet even ba-

sic hygiene requirements.¹⁷ Soldiers' boots were kept in their living quarters, and their footwraps and socks reeked of sweat, which meant there was little fresh air.¹⁸ Besides, in those tight and densely packed spaces, lice, brought in by fresh recruits, were a constant headache. Of the new recruits that joined one infantry regiment in 1930, lice were found on 51% of those who had come from the Kretinga area, 50% of those from the Tauragė area, 48% of those from the Biržai area, 39% of those from Kaunas and its area, and 13% of those from the Klaipėda region. The *Karys* weekly presented these numbers as if they were a significant improvement, because in earlier years the percentages of lice-infested newcomers had reached 70% to 80%. Despite this, in 1930, *Karys* was forced to admit: 'With regard to cleanliness, our [Lithuanian] men are still largely slobs.'¹⁹ Lice infestations were a significant concern in the army, one that was addressed by teaching soldiers how to take care of their hygiene: 'Barracks are densely packed. Lice can easily pass from one man to another. If cleanliness is not maintained, and an infectious disease is brought in, we are in for the mass spread of the disease [...] Personal cleanliness is not a thing of the privileged or upper classes: where there is a will, each man can and must be clean. A preference for cleanliness gained while serving in the army will have a great impact on life in general: it will be a great contribution to our general cultural standing.'²⁰

Another disease that frequently affected soldiers in the Lithuanian army was typhoid fever.²¹ It was referred to as 'an almost constant presence in Lithuania'.²² Outbreaks of typhoid fever occurred at all times of the year, and the mortality rate was high.²³

The army issued special-purpose circulars with instructions on the prevention of the disease.²⁴ Soldiers were encouraged to drop the habit of sharing cigarettes: 'By taking a cigarette from a friend's lips or a saliva-soaked hand-rolled one, we can catch various infectious diseases [in Lithuanian, *limpamosios ligos*, in English 'sticky' diseases]. The following diseases are especially easy to contract through saliva: consumption, dysentery, typhoid fever, parotitis, and other diseases of the gut as well as venereal diseases.'²⁵

Influenza and its complications, especially pneumonia, can also be categorised as a frequent cause of death. The Lithuanian armed forces encountered this disease and its

¹⁷ Kariuomenės gyvenimas. 1 gusarų D. L. E. Kunig. Jonušo Radvilos pulkas. *Karys*, 1930-01-30, nr. 5 (557), p. 96.

¹⁸ K-SAR, A. Kodėl pratrinamos kojos ir kaip nuo to apsaugoti kareivius. *Karys*, 1935-05-30, nr. 22 (845), p. 515.

¹⁹ KENSTAVIČIUS. Daugiau švaros! *Karys*, 1930-12-04, br. 49 (601), p. 996.

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ Vyriausiojo štabo aplinkraštis nr. 19, 1934-07-07. *Karys*, 1934-07-12, nr. 28 (799), p. 555.

²² NASVYTIS, N. Vidurių šiltinė. *Karys*, 1936-06-04, nr. 23 (898), p. 563.

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ Kariuomenės štabo aplinkraštis, 1934-07-07. *Lietuvos centrinis valstybės archyvas* (Lithuanian Central State Archives, LCVA), f. 517, ap. 1, b. 395, l. 28.

²⁵ ČEPULIS, S. Meskime nehigieniškus ir sveikatai kenksmingus įpročius. *Karys*, 1935-05-23, nr. 21 (844), p. 496.



Figure 1. Soldiers of the 2nd Infantry Regiment of the Lithuanian armed forces in their barracks, early 1930s. *Lietuvos centrinis valstybės archyvas*, P-03194



Figure 2. Soldiers of the Railway Company of the Lithuanian armed forces sleeping in their barracks in Radviliškis, 18 September 1930. *Lietuvos centrinis valstybės archyvas*, P-01774

complications in its very first year. The situation was complicated by the fact that in early 1919, 'Lithuania had no military medical institutions.'²⁶ In 1920, the commander of the 1st Infantry Regiment wrote the following to the senior physician at the Alytus County Hospital: 'I would like to inform you that on the 21st, our soldiers Kinisa and Navjūnas died of influenza with inflammation of the lung at the hospital. Today, the soldiers Jusponis and Šadnikis died of the same disease [...] I must observe that those who have contracted influenza also contract pneumonia from the slightest cold. Thus, we must ensure that, at this time, soldiers spend as little time in the open air as possible, and that they are protected from the cold in the barracks themselves. Only the healthy and strong should be positioned as guards, and only for a short while. The moment a soldier feels ill, he should be kept inside the barracks. Bathing in bathhouses should be completely stopped, as should trips to the town. Soldiers who have recovered should not be allowed on leave for ten more days because during this period the illness can still recur.'²⁷ The military physician Kazys Oželis later recalled: 'When the influenza epidemic began in early 1920, at the military hospital, you could see two patients sharing a single bed, or three or four patients lying across two beds pushed together on a bare mattress, with only their own coats to cover them, and elsewhere just on some straw on the ground.'²⁸ He believed that the hospital needed to be expanded immediately, as did its personnel. On 1 January 1920, the military hospital in Kaunas was tending to 598 patients with just seven doctors, assisted by 14 Sisters of Mercy, ten interns, six medical students, four doctor's assistants, and about 80 corporals. So the hospital personnel amounted to 120 individuals; however, only a third of them had medical training, which meant that one doctor had to attend to 85 patients. The hospital was also short of space, medical supplies and fuel. In January, 196 patients there died, and 90 unburied corpses accumulated at one point because prisoners of war could not dig graves in the frozen ground fast enough, and the gravediggers were on strike because of late pay. Oželis summarises: 'The catastrophe was under way and could not be prevented. In early 1920, the flu reared its head and promptly spread through the entire [Lithuanian] army.'²⁹

For the Lithuanian armed forces, the 1920 influenza epidemic was its first great medical challenge. According to later witness accounts, it 'mobilised all of the military's medical resources. They started creating more job positions and mobilising new doctors because the existing personnel could no longer do all the work. During this time, 60 soldiers out of every 1,000 who had suffered from infectious or parasitic diseases died' [a mortality rate of 6%].³⁰ This epidemic explains the heightened mortality rate of the 7th Infantry Regiment in 1920, which was not then involved in active combat.

²⁶ Kėdainių apskrities komendantui, 1932-02-25. *LCVA*, f. 4, ap. 1, b. 341, l. 31.

²⁷ Alytaus apskrities ligoninė, 1920-01-22. *LCVA*, f. 513, ap. 1, b. 34, l. 9-9 ap.

²⁸ OŽELIS, K. D-ro Jono Basanavičiaus vardo karo ligoninė. *Karys*, 1930-06-23, nr. 25-26 (577-578), p. 493-494.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 494.

³⁰ MANTAUTAS. Kruvinos lovos. *Lietuvos karo invalidas*, 1938, nr. 1, p. 48.

Accidents

Another peacetime cause of death should also be analysed through individual cases. Accidents came in two forms: either they involved soldiers who were on duty, or they involved reckless or irresponsible behaviour by soldiers while they were off duty.

Much data on the variety of accidents that occurred in the army can be found in an order issued by the Ministry of Defence to the armed forces in 1922: 'Death caused by recklessness and negligence is an abnormal phenomenon that should only find its place as a rarity, an exception. Unfortunately, in our case [in the Lithuanian armed forces], such incidents are much too frequent. Soldiers die of reckless behaviour with weapons, while bathing themselves, bathing horses, in boats, and so on. It seems that our soldiers swim, bathe horses, sail boats, any which way they like, without supervision or any safety measures, and the consequences of all this are that we already have an entire host of drowned soldiers this summer.'³¹

Indeed, drowned soldiers were not a rare phenomenon. The bathhouse, which was the starting point for service in a military unit, was attended by soldiers periodically, but not every day.³² In the barracks, especially the newly built ones, soldiers could at this point make use of washrooms and showers (see Fig. 3 and Fig. 4).³³ However, bathing in open bodies of water, rivers and lakes, during warm weather was a popular practice (Fig. 5). This allowed soldiers to maintain hygiene and refresh themselves when it was hot, and it was also a form of entertainment for them.³⁴ In cavalry units, bathing took place along with the horses, which the soldiers also bathed in open bodies of water.

However, every year, these bathing sessions took the lives of several soldiers. For example, in July 1925, Petras Trapulionis, a private in the 2nd Artillery Regiment, drowned in Lake Bieniūnai (Alytus district) while bathing horses.³⁵ In August 1935, Vladas Brazaitis, a senior non-commissioned officer (NCO) in the 1st Cavalry Regiment, drowned while swimming in the River Nevėžis near Panevėžys. The soldier had never been to Panevėžys before, and 'found himself in a dangerous place' while bathing.³⁶ In August 1935, Klemensas Lekavičius, a soldier in the 2nd Infantry Regiment, drowned due to an injury he sustained while bathing. His obituary states that

³¹ *Įsakymas kariuomenei*, 1922-06-27, nr. 141, p. 1.

³² Kariuomenės gyvenimas. Karo policijos mokykla. *Karys*, 1929-05-22, nr. 19–20, p. 344.

³³ GRIGORAS, S. V. Kariuomenės gyvenimas. Persikėlėme į modernišką kareivines. *Karys*, 1936-07-09, nr. 28 (903), p. 695–696; V. V. Karo Butų Valdybai 20 metų. *Karys*, 1939-05-04, nr. 18 (1038), p. 543; STATKUS, Vytenis. *Lietuvos ginkluotos pajėgos 1918–1940 m.* Chicago, IL, 1986, p. 608–609.

³⁴ *Ibid.*; VS. Maudymasis ir plaukiojimas. *Karys*, 1933-06-22, nr. 25 (742), p. 499.

³⁵ JAKŠTAS. Karių kapų tvarkymas. *Karys*, 1930-04-10, nr. 15 (567), Priedas: Mūsų karių kapai, p. 10.

³⁶ RŪSTULIS, A. Kariuomenės gyvenimas. Iškilmingai palaidojo tragiškai mirusį ginklo draugą. *Karys*, 1935-08-22, nr. 34 (857), p. 793.



Figure 3. Soldiers of the 1st Infantry Regiment of the Lithuanian armed forces in the washroom of a newly built barracks, circa 1931–1935. Lietuvos centrinis valstybės archyvas, P-31214



Figure 4. Soldiers of the Railway Company using outdoor showers in the summer, 3 July 1929. Lietuvos centrinis valstybės archyvas, P-19518



Figure 5. Soldiers of the Lithuanian armed forces bathing in a river. Photograph by A. Patamsis. *Lietuvos centrinis valstybės archyvas*, P-05396

the injury was sustained when he jumped into the River Nemunas.³⁷ In August the same year, the Baltic Sea took the life of Artūras Klidzinis, a senior NCO in the 6th Infantry Regiment. *Karys* reports that the senior NCO died while attempting to help a drowning woman. Large waves brought the body back to the shore two hours later, further on from the location of his drowning.³⁸ Julijonas Sudaris, a newcomer to the 3rd Cavalry Regiment, died in hospital after sustaining a head injury in June 1939 when he jumped into the River Jūra during an unsanctioned bathing session.³⁹

An order issued in July 1923 by General Silvestras Žukauskas declared: ‘This year has already seen five bathing accidents. I must assume that soldiers are not following rules in these units [...] Soldiers head off to swim on their own and whenever they want to. In future, in addition to soldiers on guard, bathing soldiers are to be supervised by an officer.’⁴⁰

This was not actually the first measure introduced to prevent drowning. In 1920, an order that applied to all of Lithuania’s armed forces was passed which stipulated that soldiers could only bathe in designated areas under supervision from the shore and with rescue equipment at hand.⁴¹ In 1925, additional provisions were added, which stipulated that safe locations would have to be selected for bathing in lakes and rivers, and that soldiers must be introduced to previous years’ orders regarding

³⁷ ALGIRDININKAS. Kariuomenės gyvenimas. Nelaimė per neatsargumą. *Karys*, 1935-08-22, nr. 34 (857), p. 793.

³⁸ MILEVIČIUS. Kariuomenės gyvenimas. Naujas kapas Lietuvos pajury – Klaipėdoj. *Karys*, 1935-08-22, nr. 34 (857), p. 792.

³⁹ KA-ČIUS. Kariuomenės gyvenimas. 3. dragūnų Geležinio Vilko pulkas. *Karys*, 1939-06-29, nr. 26 (1046), p. 784.

⁴⁰ *Įsakymas kariuomenei*, 1923-07-23, nr. 140, p. 1.

⁴¹ *Lietuvos kariuomenei įsakymas*, 1920-06-04, nr. 351, p. 2.

safety requirements for bathing.⁴² For this reason, designated bathing areas with defined bathing perimeters were specially set up for open bodies of water near garrisons. There was also an effort to provide the necessary rescue equipment.⁴³

Safety requirements for bathing were stipulated in several orders issued from 1920 to 1925. They were still in force in 1940. The instructions stipulated that soldiers could only bathe in designated areas. Before each bathing session, two to four soldiers would be assigned to stand watch on the shore, while three or four capable swimmers would act as lifeguards if the need arose. A boat and a rope were to be available at the bathing location, with a medical NCO keeping watch on shore. Soldiers could bathe if the water temperature was about +17°C. If the water was colder, soldiers would not be forced to bathe. Depending on the bathing location, it was preferred that 'soldiers wore bathing trunks'.⁴⁴ Individual units would have their own additional instructions on how to organise the bathing process in specific locations in a safe manner, such as bathing only in groups, positioning observers and lifeguards on the shore, having necessary rescue equipment to hand, etc.⁴⁵

These instructions were taken seriously. Officers were tried in court for failing to comply with them and placing soldiers in mortal danger. One specific case involved Captain Vincas Mickeliūnas, a company commander in the 1st Infantry Regiment, who was sentenced to two months in prison for ordering a junior NCO to take company soldiers bathing at an unsanctioned bathing location on the River Šventoji in June 1935. The court concluded that failure to comply with this instruction and other bathing rules had resulted in the drowning of Private Pranas Kuodys.⁴⁶

One cause of death characteristic of both peacetime and active combat was reckless behaviour with weapons. Here are only a few illustrative examples. In September 1925, Senior Lieutenant Vladas Olšauskas was injured and died the same day during a training session of the 2nd Infantry Regiment.⁴⁷ In September 1927, Domas Lečkauskas, a newcomer to the same regiment, was taken to a military hospital, where he died five minutes later from a gunshot wound.⁴⁸ In September 1927, 'a hand grenade exploded unexpectedly' during training, resulting in the death of Senior Lieutenant Domas Kavaliauskas, a veteran of the Great War and the Lithuanian War of Independence, while another lieutenant and 17 soldiers were injured.⁴⁹ The incident took place as Kavaliauskas

⁴² *Krašto apsaugos ministro įsakymas*, 1925-05-07, nr. 37, p. 2.

⁴³ ST-ČIUS, A. Kariuomenės gyvenimas. Įrengta maudykla. *Karys*, 1933-06-29, nr. 26 (743), p. 532.

⁴⁴ 5-ojo pėst. DLK Kėstučio pulko kariams maudytis instrukcija, 1940-06-26. *LCVA*, f. 518, ap. 1, b. 197, l. 31.

⁴⁵ Liepimas 4-am pėstininkų pulkui nr. 7, Pajuostis, 1939-06-17. *LCVA*, f. 517, ap. 1, b. 436, l. 25.

⁴⁶ Sprendimas, 1936-05-07. *LCVA*, f. 513, ap. 2, b. 24, l. 27-29.

⁴⁷ Kariuomenės gyvenimas. Nelaimė. *Karys*, 1925-09-17-23, nr. 38 (330), p. 301.

⁴⁸ Karo ligoninės telegrama Karo sanitarijos inspekcijai, 1927-09-12. *LCVA*, f. 4, ap. 1, b. 234, l. 11.

⁴⁹ 4-ojo PP gydytojo telegrama Karo sanitarijos inspekcijai, 1927-09-21. *LCVA*, f. 4, ap. 1, b. 235, l. 6.

was teaching a soldier how to throw a grenade.⁵⁰ In December 1927, the military hospital admitted Senior Lieutenant Stasys Eidukaitis of the Motor Transport Company because he had sustained an injury to his face due to the reckless behaviour with a gun of another soldier.⁵¹ In June 1928, Senior Lieutenant Nikodemus Jakučiūnas, Warrant Officer Lingys and three privates were taken to the military hospital, where Jakučiūnas and Private Antanas Šimkus died the same day.⁵² It was later reported that ‘no medical personnel were at the shooting range’, and therefore the officers bled to death because they received no medical aid.⁵³ During an inquiry, the witness accounts by medical personnel revealed that even on military training grounds, where they trained with artillery, soldiers ‘were not used to having medical NCOs close by’.⁵⁴

In 1930, a circular issued by the General Headquarters of the Lithuanian Armed Forces stated: ‘Only rarely do our [Lithuanian] military manoeuvres not result in casualties. On encountering each other during manoeuvres, excited soldiers open fire on their own, Lithuanian soldiers just like them; some consciously open fire at “the enemy” at close range, a hot-headed cavalryman hits an infantryman with a bare sabre; at night during a march, out of sheer recklessness, someone pokes a neighbour’s eyes out; while others go straight to fist-fighting, and so on.’⁵⁵

In July 1934, in the Pajuostė manor, at the barracks of the 4th Infantry Regiment near Panevėžys, recklessness led to the death of Private Jonas Vygontas.⁵⁶ In February 1935, another soldier, Aleksandras Pavydis of the 1st Infantry Regiment, was shot due to reckless behaviour and died at Ukmergė hospital. That same month, Juozas Raudonis, a newcomer to the 2nd Cavalry Regiment, died ‘of wounds’ at Alytus hospital,⁵⁷ while in June 1935, Ottau Bildau, a soldier in the 9th Infantry Regiment, died of ‘gunshot wounds to the neck’ at Marijampolė hospital.

A non-fatal but illustrative example is the case of Povilas Vilius Zaniauskas, a freshly called-up soldier who in 1935 was found guilty by the Military Tribunal of ‘not complying with rules that he was familiar with as a soldier and through inattentiveness loading his gun with combat ammunition instead of training ammunition, aiming his gun at a window, pressing the trigger, and injuring Otto Bildau, a young soldier from his own regiment, with the resulting shot. For this incident, Zaniauskas was sentenced to ten months in a military prison.’⁵⁸ In April 1937, the junior NCO Pranas

⁵⁰ Karo ligoninės telegrama Karo sanitarijos inspekcijai, 1927-09-22. *LCVA*, f. 4, ap. 1, b. 235, l. 8; A-TIS, A.T.A. vyr. leit. Domas Kavaliauskas. *Kardas*, 1927-10-30, nr. 30 (90), p. 434–435.

⁵¹ Karo ligoninės telegrama Karo sanitarijos inspekcijai, 1927-12-09. *LCVA*, f. 4, ap. 1, b. 235, l. 11.

⁵² 7-ojo PP ligoninės telegrama, 1928-06-20. *LCVA*, f. 4, ap. 1, b. 259, ap. 1, l. 18.

⁵³ Karo sanitarijos viršininko raportas, 1928-07-07. *LCVA*, f. 4, ap. 1, b. 259, ap. 1, l. 20.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵⁵ Generalinio štabo valdybos aplinkraštis, 1930-08-27. *LCVA*, f. 4, ap. 1, b. 246, l. 53.

⁵⁶ Kariuomenės gyvenimas. *Mirė. Karys*, 1934-07-26, nr. 30 (801), p. 604.

⁵⁷ Kariuomenės gyvenimas. *Mirė. Karys*, 1935-03-07, nr. 10 (833), p. 241.

⁵⁸ Kariuomenės teismo kronika. *Karys*, 1935-11-14, nr. 45 (869), p. 1115.

Radzevičius died at Šiauliai City Hospital after being injured at the Lithuanian Military Aviation Base in Zokniai after the explosion of a bomb.⁵⁹ Similar accidents continued to occur up to the very last years of the Lithuanian armed forces. For example, in February 1940, the explosion of a rifle grenade took the life of Private Juozas Radzevičius of the 2nd Cavalry Regiment's training squadron.⁶⁰

However, not all accidents that ended with the death of a soldier were related to the use of weapons. Soldiers also died in aviation accidents, often comprehensively described by the publications mentioned in the introduction. The last deadly incident in the Lithuanian Air Force during the interwar period took place in May 1939 when a plane took off at the Zokniai air base for target practice with ground targets. As the plane turned, the parachute of the gunner NCO Pranas Tamošaitis came out inside the cockpit. Tamošaitis attempted to keep hold of the parachute; however, the current of the propeller caught the parachute and pulled him out, smashing him violently against the body of the plane. The pilot managed to land, but having sustained a severe blow, the Air Force officer never regained consciousness and died.⁶¹ In June 1939, *Karys* reported that over the entire course of the history of the Lithuanian Air Force '29 deadly incidents occurred that took the lives of 36 individuals' [this number had increased to 37 by the occupation of Lithuania in 1940]. This included 28 pilots and eight reconnaissance staff.⁶² The author of the *Karys* article, Air Force Pilot Captain Kazys Mintautas, gave his assessment: 'From the bulletin of deadly accidents and the diagram of causes, we can see that the majority of accidents took place when the aircraft was being piloted by pilots with less experience. Indeed, of the 28 pilots who died, 20 of the pilots had less than 250 hours of experience manning an aircraft. Accidents occurred most frequently for the following reasons: a) pilot error, or b) aircraft or engine defects.'⁶³ Of course, this statistic was also affected by factors that the officer did not state publicly, such as the quality of the equipment, and so on.

There were also other kinds of accidents. In November 1925, three soldiers were found dead in the quarters of the 4th Artillery Regiment in Alytus: Senior NCO Urlavičius, Junior NCO Juozas Rinkevičius, and Corporal Pranas Pauža. The officers suffocated from charcoal fumes that had accumulated in the room because the furnace damper had been shut too soon.⁶⁴ In January 1937, a junior NCO in the 1st Infantry Regiment, Bronius Matulis, also died of air poisoning.⁶⁵

⁵⁹ Karo aviacijos sanitarinio punkto gydytojo telegrama, 1937-06-05. LCVA, f. 4, ap. 1, b. 437, l. 10.

⁶⁰ MIEŽLAIŠKIS, N. Kariuomenės gyvenimas. 2. ulonų L. D. K. Birutės pulkas. *Karys*, 1940-03-07, nr. 10 (1090), p. 306.

⁶¹ SPIRAUSKAS, Č. Kariuomenės gyvenimas. Žuvo psk. Pranas Tamošaitis. *Karys*, 1939-05-22, nr. 20–21 (1040–1041), p. 620.

⁶² MINTAUTAS, K. Keletas bruožų iš karo aviacijos statistikos. *Karys*, 1939-06-01, nr. 22 (1042), p. 643.

⁶³ Ibid.

⁶⁴ ARTILERISTAS. Alytus, 4-tas artilerijos pulkas. *Karys*, 1925-12-10–16, nr. 50 (342), p. 438.

⁶⁵ Karo ligoninės telegrama, 1937-01-13. LCVA, f. 4, ap. 1, b. 437, l. 3.

In April 1932, Mikas Dzikas, a hussar in the 1st Cavalry Regiment, died at the military hospital. His obituary reports that he died 'just a few hours after receiving a kick from a horse'.⁶⁶ In June 1933, Private Stasys Bedarfis of the 4th Infantry Regiment died at Panevėžys hospital after falling down the barracks stairs.⁶⁷ In January 1935, Private Jeronimas Simonavičius of the 1st Infantry Regiment was found frozen to death on the Želva to Giedraitis road in eastern Lithuania.⁶⁸ Private Andrius Jakaitis of the Supply Company of the 1st Infantry Regiment died of a head injury sustained when jumping off a train in March 1935. On leave, the soldier had boarded the wrong express train at Jonava station, and tried to jump off at the next stop but fell and hit his head badly. The injured soldier died at Kėdainiai hospital.⁶⁹ In July 1935, Petras Aleksiejus of the 2nd Cavalry Regiment died 'of injuries' at Alytus hospital.⁷⁰ Because the soldier served in a cavalry regiment, we can speculate that the cause of his fatal injury was reckless riding, or a horse's misbehaviour.

In March 1937, the corpse of Private Stasys Petrauskas of the 4th Infantry Regiment was found dismembered on a railway embankment about 1.4 kilometres from Panevėžys station. The wheels of a train had cut the victim in half at the waist and injured his head. An investigation concluded that it was an accident.⁷¹ In June 1938, soldiers were travelling to the training ground at Gaižiūnai by motorbike when they crashed near Jonava. NCO Henrikas Meškėnas was severely injured: 'The heavy blow broke his skull and he sustained concussion.' He died several days later. Meškėnas' brother Leonas also died on duty in a plane accident in July 1934.⁷² In December 1939, Lieutenant Vladas Masaitis, an officer in the 7th Infantry Regiment, died in hospital after he was hit on a pavement by a drunk driver who had lost control of his truck.⁷³

Homicide

There is little information about homicide in the Lithuanian armed forces. However, soldiers were occasionally involved in murder cases. One such case was in 1921 on the road from Vievis to Žiežmariai in eastern Lithuania. Lieutenant Commander Jurgis Kaupas of the 9th Infantry Regiment's 3rd Machine-Gun Company murdered Private Juozas Bresas of the same company. The motive for the murder was described

⁶⁶ Kariuomenės gyvenimas. *Mirė. Karys*, 1932-03-28, nr. 18 (674), p. 365.

⁶⁷ Kariuomenės gyvenimas. *Mirė. Karys*, 1933-07-06, nr. 27 (744), p. 551.

⁶⁸ Kariuomenės gyvenimas. *Mirė. Karys*, 1935-02-07, nr. 6 (829), p. 144.

⁶⁹ Kariuomenės gyvenimas. *Karys*, 1935-03-21, nr. 12 (835), p. 289.

⁷⁰ Kariuomenės gyvenimas. *Mirė. Karys*, 1935-08-01, nr. 31 (854), p. 731.

⁷¹ I PD sanitarijos viršininko raportas, 1937-03-06. *LCVA*, f. 4, ap. 1, b. 437, l. 12.

⁷² GERULAITIS, Z. Kariuomenės gyvenimas. Motociklo katastrofoje žuvo puskarininkis. *Karys*, 1938-07-14, nr. 28 (996), p. 794.

⁷³ N-AS, J. Kariuomenės gyvenimas. Traginga A. A. ltn. Masaičio mirtis. *Karys*, 1939-12-21, nr. 59 (1079), p. 1503.

by *Karys*: 'The company commander sought to get rid of a witness to his wrongdoing, which involved confiscating the valuables of private individuals and the wares of profiteers.' The officer was sentenced to death by firing squad for the crime, while Private Vladas Bujanauskas, who helped him hide Bresas' body in the forest, was sentenced to 12 years hard labour in prison.⁷⁴

Another case was in 1937 in the northern town of Radviliškis. The body of Mikas Mačiulis, strangled and stabbed with a knife, was found in the attic of the barracks of an engineer battalion. The victim had been employed in the new barracks of the engineer battalion as the main stove keeper. An investigation revealed that the civilian had been murdered by his assistant, the soldier Liudas Pamparas. *Karys* reported that the latter committed the murder 'in an attempt to enrich himself, because it was known that Mačiulis was planning a christening for his infant daughter at Easter and had in his pocket a sum of money equal to the sum of 200 litas.'⁷⁵ This story is interesting not only because it tells us something about the murder victim, but also for the rather unusual style of the murderer's execution. Pamparas was shot 'in front of the entire Radviliškis garrison. Once the murderer was shot, his corpse was buried on the spot, and all of the assembled units marched across his grave, stamping on and desecrating the place where the remains of the foul murderer rested. Thus, no sign of the grave remained in the trodden field. So ended the life of a murderer who had wished to enrich himself in the cruellest of ways.'⁷⁶ No other evidence of such rituals or similar cases in the history of the Lithuanian army has yet been found.

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Suicide

Suicide was not an unusual phenomenon in the Lithuanian armed forces. Unlike homicides, these were not isolated cases, and much less was reported about them publicly. However, archival documents testify to many instances.

The wide range of cases of suicide will become evident from a glance at some examples. In 1921, a military tribunal sentenced Senior Lieutenant Zigmas Balandis of the 4th Infantry Regiment to six months in prison and stripped him of his rank. The officer was accused of having lied about his military rank.⁷⁷ Having heard the verdict, he shot himself.⁷⁸ In February 1927, the fresh conscript Antanas Pocius of the

⁷⁴ Oficialinė dalis. *Karys*, 1921-02-16, nr. 7 (91) p. 79–80.

⁷⁵ Mirties baismė niekšingam žudikui. *Karys*, 1937-04-08, nr. 15 (942), p. 400.

⁷⁶ Ibid.

⁷⁷ After returning to Lithuania from Russia after the First World War, Balandis falsely claimed that he was an officer, although he had served as a non-commissioned officer in the Russian Imperial Army. See: Teismas. Armijos teismo valstybės gynėjo paskelbimai. *Lietuva*, 1921-04-22, nr. 87 (654), p. 4.

⁷⁸ STOLIAROVAS, Andriejus. *Lietuvos Respublikos karinė justicija 1919–1940 m.* Kaunas, 2014, p. 58–59.

7th Infantry Regiment shot himself.⁷⁹ His motive remains unclear. In June that same year, Antanas Ducys, a re-engaged senior NCO of the 4th Artillery Regiment's Howitzer Battery, shot himself in the head with a revolver. A telegram from the attending physician indicates a 'political cause of death'.⁸⁰ In October 1927, Kazys Pečiulevičius, a private in the 5th Infantry Regiment, shot himself. The motive is unknown, but reports state that he committed the act while 'on guard duty by the food store'.⁸¹ In February 1928, Iršas Grikstas, 'a young soldier' of the 2nd Telephone and Telegraph Company of the Communications Battalion, threw himself under a train. The garrison doctor identified the cause of death as 'mental illness'.⁸² In June 1928, the senior NCO Petras Einikis of the Military Academy shot himself in Kaunas.⁸³ In July 1928, the hospital of the Uhlan Company in Alytus received the corpse of Adomas Račiukaitis, a senior Air Force NCO. The hospital concluded that he was 'injured by two shots to the chest' at the training ground,⁸⁴ but from earlier investigations we know that Račiukaitis shot himself because of a particular incident. The senior NCO had been trying to evade responsibility for armed resistance against the unit guard, and failing to comply with an order to leave his weapon in the storehouse.⁸⁵ In September that same year, Vladas Gaubys, a junior NCO in the Communications Battalion's Training Company, 'shot himself in the head with a revolver'.⁸⁶

The years 1927 and 1928, for which there is much data, were not in any way exceptional. Cases of suicide continued to be reported a decade later. In February 1936, Pranas Budrikis, a soldier in the 7th Infantry Regiment, shot himself with a revolver. The incident took place in the town of Skuodas in northwest Lithuania, when the soldier returned on leave to his father's home and had been drinking.⁸⁷ There is reason to believe that the motive was a theft of money in the regiment. In April 1937, Private Pranas Jankūnas of the Anti-Aircraft Defence Detachment Automatic Gun Company died. The circumstances of his death were reported as follows: 'As he stood at his post, he fired a deadly shot from his own rifle into the region of his heart'.⁸⁸ Reports concluded that it was suicide.⁸⁹ In April 1937, the Military Hospital admitted a civilian worker in the Air Force called Alfonsas Raguolis, who died at the hospital.⁹⁰ The conclusion was that he had shot himself in the guardroom of the Air Force Head-

⁷⁹ 7-ojo PP gydytojo telegrama Karo sanitarijos inspekcijai, 1927-02-28. *LCVA*, f. 4, ap. 1, b. 235, l. 1.

⁸⁰ 4-ojo AP gydytojo telegrama Karo sanitarijos inspekcijai, 1927-06-03. *LCVA*, f. 4, ap. 1, b. 235, l. 3.

⁸¹ 5-ojo PP gydytojo telegrama Karo sanitarijos inspekcijai, 1927-10-30. *LCVA*, f. 4, ap. 1, b. 235, l. 6.

⁸² Karo technikos štabo gydytojo telegrama, 1928-02-09. *LCVA*, f. 4, ap. 1, b. 259, l. 3.

⁸³ Karo ligoninės telegrama, 1928-06-04. *LCVA*, f. 4, ap. 1, b. 259, ap. 1, l. 17.

⁸⁴ 2-ojo KP ligoninės telegrama, 1928-07-03. *LCVA*, f. 4, ap. 1, b. 259, ap. 1, l. 21.

⁸⁵ STOLIAROVAS, A. Op. cit., p. 208.

⁸⁶ Karo technikos štabo gydytojo telegrama, 1928-09-27. *LCVA*, f. 4, ap. 1, b. 259, l. 29.

⁸⁷ Nutarimas, 1936-02-09. *LCVA*, f. 520, ap. 1, b. 256a, l. 1.

⁸⁸ Priešlėktuvinės apsaugos rinktinės gydytojo telegrama, 1937-04-27. *LCVA*, f. 4, ap. 1, b. 437, l. 21.

⁸⁹ Kariuomenės teismo tardytojas, 1937-04-27. *LCVA*, f. 1324, ap. 1, b. 35, l. 8.

⁹⁰ Karo ligoninės telegrama, 1937-04-30. *LCVA*, f. 4, ap. 1, b. 437, l. 22.

quarters.⁹¹ In December 1938, Bronius Varoneckis, a junior NCO in the 3rd Infantry Regiment, threw himself under the wheels of a train while off duty near Radviliškis in northern Lithuania. The soldier had been a shopkeeper, and a shortfall of several hundred litas had been found in the cash register of the regimental shop. It was hypothesised that he 'had taken his life because he had spent the money; however, the question was not yet finally resolved'.⁹²

In April 1937, the 2nd Cavalry Regiment lost Reserve Private Antanas Mačiukevičius, who cut his throat when he received a call to participate in military exercises. Based on a report issued by a medical officer, the commander of the regiment reported to his superiors that the health of reservists coming in for military exercises was being checked. During the check-up, Reserve Private Mačiukevičius declared to the physician that 'back when he served in the hussar regiment, he would experience spells of dizziness, and the same dizziness had come over him for a brief period in the reserve several years ago, and now he felt rather weak. During the assessment, apart from a migraine, no other physical or mental defects were identified'.⁹³ However, the medical staff at the Dr Jonas Basanavičius Military Hospital came to a different conclusion: he was diagnosed with 'psychotic mania and depressive melancholia'.⁹⁴

In most cases, official documents do not reveal the true reason for suicides, simply stating that the reason for the suicide was unknown. However, one case of suicide is particularly interesting, because after another attempt to take his own life, a soldier tried to describe the reasons for his behaviour, albeit not very clearly. In November 1939, a private in the 2nd Infantry Regiment and secretary of the 2nd Company identified by the initials N.L. shot himself at his work with a revolver. This was his second suicide attempt. In the first attempt, during the spring of 1939, when he was still serving in a training company, he tried unsuccessfully to cut his wrists, and then voluntarily left the regiment. On his return, he explained that he 'had gone to the station in a daze, purchased a ticket with the last of his money, and departed for Šiauliai. From there, he went on foot towards Pakruojis [about 35 kilometres], where he came to his senses and presented himself to the police.' The company commander reported that after his first suicide attempt, it was observed that the soldier 'had a secret that he did not want to reveal, and only when I [the company commander] asked the question again and assured him that I would not disclose his secret to anyone, he confessed to me that he had sexual defects, which were known to the regiment's medical officer Lieutenant [Kazys Mečys] Mikalauskas and which he was very worried about.' The company commander found out from the regimental physician that the soldier had

⁹¹ Karo aviacijos gydytojo telegrama, 1937-04-30. *LCVA*, f. 4, ap. 1, b. 437, l. 23.

⁹² I PD sanitarijos viršininko raportas, 1938-12-16. *LCVA*, f. 4, ap. 1, b. 454, l. 48.

⁹³ 2-ojo KP pulko vado raportas, 1937-05-04. *LCVA*, f. 4, ap. 1, b. 437, l. 26.

⁹⁴ Dr. Jono Basanavičiaus vardo karo ligoninės viršininko padėjėjo raportas, 1937-04-26. *LCVA*, f. 4, ap. 1, b. 437, l. 29.

‘sought his counsel on his sexual defects’. The physician gave the soldier ‘the appropriate literature’.⁹⁵ We can only guess what kind of literature this was. In his testimony, the soldier admitted that he had considered killing himself before. ‘I wanted to do this because of my difficult internal troubles. The reason for which I suffered all this time and which made me decide to commit suicide is known to Lieutenant Mikalauskas. I will not say anything about it myself. I have nothing more to add.’⁹⁶

We can try to work out what might have pushed the young soldier to suicide by a process of elimination. The aforementioned ‘sexual defects’ could not have referred to undeveloped sexual organs, because during the screening of conscripts (Fig. 6) sexual maturity was checked as one of the eligibility criteria for military service. Young men who had issues with undeveloped sexual organs were not considered eligible.⁹⁷ What the medical committee had to check for and how was described in the ‘Instructions for the Assessment of the Health of Conscripts’. The assessment of sexual organs was to screen for ‘developmental defects (epispadia, hypospasia, etc), hydrocele and spermatocele, swelling or tumours of the scrotum or epididymis, supuration of the penis, ulcers’.⁹⁸ ‘Sexual defects’ could not refer to venereal disease either, because this would not have been a secret: many soldiers suffered from it. In order to avoid the spread of infection, the Lithuanian armed forces had already approved a procedure in 1920 that detailed the actions a soldier had to take on returning to the garrison no later than 12 hours after sexual intercourse.⁹⁹ In addition to this, military units had medical check-points and hospitals (Fig. 7), where doctors conducted check-ups during which soldiers’ bodies were carefully inspected. Such check-ups, conducted every month for each company according to an approved schedule,¹⁰⁰ unearthed various visually detectable sexually transmitted diseases.¹⁰¹ Besides, the doctor’s recommendation to give the soldier literature to read rather than prescribing treatment also points away from sexually transmitted disease and towards an issue of a different nature.

It seems most likely that N.L. committed suicide because he was struggling with homosexuality. At that time, for a Lithuanian man, and even more so for a soldier, this could have caused significant psychological distress and discomfort, especially when soldiers had to live at close quarters where there was little privacy. Even showering and bathing in open bodies of water always took place in an organised manner and with everyone together.

⁹⁵ 2-ojo PP 2-osios kuopos vado raportas, 1939 m. lapkritis. *LCVA*, f. 514, ap. 1, b. 360, l. 4–4 ap.

⁹⁶ Kvota, 1939-11-12. *LCVA*, f. 514, ap. 1, b. 360, l. 5–5 ap.

⁹⁷ Ligų ir kūno ydų sąrašas, 1936-08-18. *LCVA*, f. 1324, ap. 1, b. 9, l. 59–69.

⁹⁸ Žmonių sveikatai karinės prievolės reikalu tikrinti taisyklės, 1936-08-24. *LCVA*, f. 1324, ap. 1, b. 9, l. 77 ap.

⁹⁹ *Lietuvos kariuomenei įsakymas*, 1920-08-14, nr. 403, p. 1–2.

¹⁰⁰ PAR Sanitarijos skyrius, 1939 m. *LCVA*, f. 1324, ap. 1, b. 82, l. 2–10.

¹⁰¹ Kūno apžiūrėjimai. Medicinos lapai, data. *LCVA*, f. 4, ap. 1, b. 128, l. 1–84.



Figure 6. The committee for the selection of voluntary recruits in Klaipėda: the assessment of young men's physical condition with regard to their eligibility for service in the Lithuanian army. Klaipėda, 1934. Lietuvos centrinis valstybės archyvas, P-06692



Figure 7. A morning check-up of outpatients at the hospital of the 6th Infantry Regiment. Photograph by Mačiūnas. Lietuvos centrinis valstybės archyvas, P-02356

The approach to homosexuality in the Lithuanian armed forces at the time is illustrated well by another episode. In June 1937, two officers, a captain and a junior lieutenant, had been drinking and arrived in the evening at a spa house in Kaunas. The rowdy officers were approached by a civilian. Based on the testimony of witnesses, this was 'a suspicious-looking citizen, who was also drunk, and sang disgusting little songs with reckless abandon, kissed the captain [...] and tried to persuade him that when you were off-duty, there were no supervisors or juniors. The captain [...] and the junior lieutenant [...] did not distance themselves from the drunken citizen, but joked with him, agreeing with his lewd talk. In general, the scene gave the impression that the officers and the suspicious-looking civilian who was behaving inappropriately were old acquaintances and close friends.'¹⁰² When they were interrogated, both officers admitted to being guilty of the behaviour described, expressed their regret, and denied that they knew the individual personally. For drunkenness and 'a pathetic transgression', the captain was sentenced to 15 days in custody, while the junior lieutenant was sentenced to eight. The captain had previously been punished on more than one occasion for reporting back to duty late after leave, participating in brawls, and 'for writing songs of a pornographic nature'.¹⁰³ The army officers' biographical records indicate that both officers had families. They continued serving in the Lithuanian armed forces until 1940. After the occupation of Lithuania, one was persecuted by the Soviet government and shot in 1942, while the other fled to the West at the end of the Second World War. The records that survive and the fact that the officer continued to serve in the Lithuanian army allow us to believe that there was no systematic approach to or persecution with regard to sexual orientation. However, the living conditions and service conditions of officers and regular soldiers were completely different. So homosexuality certainly could have been a factor behind the suicide of N.L. and other soldiers. We cannot say much more about others simply because, unlike N.L., they did not survive to give testimony and have it documented and archived.

Soldiers were often driven to suicide by non-statutory relations: physical violence, various kinds of bullying, or giving young soldiers all the 'dirty' jobs around the barracks. In June 1930, in Ukmergė in eastern Lithuania, Lieutenant Ignas Jonikas beat up the soldier Kazys Arlauskas during training because the latter did not know how to do a gymnastics exercise.¹⁰⁴ The officer confessed that he had been violent with the soldier 'for educational purposes', he had only had the best of intentions, while he accused the civilians who had witnessed the event and reported his violent behaviour of spying and anti-state activity.¹⁰⁵ In a 1935 issue of *Karys*, Adolfas Sabaliauskas, the chaplain at the Military Hospital, wrote that in the Lithuanian army 'there was an

¹⁰² Kariuomenės vado įsakymas, 1937-07-02. LCVA, f. 1364, ap. 1, b. 529, l. 85.

¹⁰³ PAR ištrauka iš drausmės pabaudų žurnalo [be datos, apie 1937 m.]. LCVA, f. 1324, ap. 1, b. 34, l. 38.

¹⁰⁴ Raportas I pėstininkų divizijos vadui, 1930-06-17. LCVA, f. 513, ap. 2, b. 18, l. 60.

¹⁰⁵ Raportas 4-os kuopos vadui, 1930-06-22. LCVA, f. 513, ap. 2, b. 18, l. 62–62 apv. I.

established practice of giving younger soldiers, newcomers, all the work to do, especially the more menial “dirty” jobs, while their seniors idle about and occasionally poke fun at them.¹⁰⁶ Periodicals targeted at soldiers frequently encouraged them to avoid the disrespectful language and labels that NCOs and more seasoned soldiers directed at newcomers.¹⁰⁷ In 1939, military headquarters were forced to conclude that the Lithuanian armed forces were still full of ‘shortcomings that cannot be identified by any assessment’. One of these was that ‘a soldier is treated not as a worthy Lithuanian citizen but as an object [...] Soldiers are insulted with dirty words. Minor misdemeanours are met by junior [officers] with humiliating punishments.’¹⁰⁸ Bullying and violence could have led to individual instances of death. In 1921, *Karys* reported on a story in which a soldier committed suicide due to the bullying he experienced in his unit after falling into an outhouse pit.¹⁰⁹

A case study of a unit: the 7th Infantry Regiment

Now that we have discussed possible causes of soldiers’ deaths with specific examples, the final section of this paper will focus on the case of a single military unit, the 7th Infantry Regiment. Historical research, published sources, archival documents and the information available in the display at the Vytautas the Great War Museum have enabled us to identify the surnames of 335 soldiers who died during their service in the unit. Even though this is not an exhaustive list, for the reasons discussed in the introduction, we can confidently state that the majority of these deaths occurred in peace time. The slabs of names commemorating the victims of the War of Independence put up by the Vytautas the Great War Museum in the late 1930s include only 37 names from this regiment. The same number of names, one officer and 36 soldiers, was published by *Karys* in 1926.¹¹⁰ This number was reiterated in a written piece to mark the regiment’s tenth anniversary.¹¹¹ And even though in 1939, *Karys* revised this number, increasing it to 45 names of soldiers from the 7th Infantry Regiment who died in the War of Independence,¹¹² the number still makes up only 13% of all the regiment’s losses identified as of today.

¹⁰⁶ STEPONAVIČIUS, A. Daugiau draugiškumo ir pastabumo. *Karys*, 1935-04-04, nr. 14 (837), p. 324.

¹⁰⁷ J-ASK, J. Naujų draugų belaukiant. *Karys*, 1931-04-23, nr. 17 (621), p. 331; KUNCA, P. Meskim blogus įpročius. *Karys*, 1935-03-28, nr. 13 (836), p. 310.

¹⁰⁸ Kariuomenės štabas, 1939-12-22. *LCVA*, f. 517, ap. 1, b. 200, l. 53.

¹⁰⁹ KAREIVIS BABULIS. Nesityčios! *Karys*, 1921-02-03, nr. 5 (89), p. 46.

¹¹⁰ Kariuomenės gyvenimas. Iškilmingas pašventinimas paminklinės lentos Klaipėdos įguloj. *Karys*, 1926-02-04–10, nr. 6 (350), p. 58.

¹¹¹ BUTEGEIDIETIS. 7 p. Ž. K. B. p. istoriška apžvalga. *Karys*, 1929-08-15, nr. 32 (532), p. 538.

¹¹² Butegeidėnai, žuvę kovose dėl nepriklausomybės. *Karys*, 1939-06-29, nr. 26 (1046), p. 767.

The deaths of soldiers in the 7th Infantry Regiment will be analysed in this section from three points of reference: 1) cause of death; 2) mortality dynamics and trends; 3) location of death. In other words, I will attempt to answer here when, why and where soldiers died. I will only present quantitative results from my research here; however, in the future, this study could contribute to a more accurate assessment of the conditions for soldiers in the Lithuanian armed forces, and how they changed during the interwar period. It could help to answer questions such as what diseases young soldiers in the interwar period suffered from during their service, and how their living conditions, hygiene, nutrition and relations affected their mortality rates.

From the previously mentioned list of deaths in the 7th Infantry Regiment, we can attribute a cause of death to 205 cases (around three fifths of deaths), although in most cases information about the cause of death is far from comprehensive. For example, in ten cases the cause of death is identified as 'disease', in 40 as 'death', and a further 70 cases can be linked to active combat because soldiers 'died', were 'killed', and died 'of injuries' in active combat. However, from the information we have, we can identify other causes of death, but not the exact number of cases.

The most frequently identified cause of death was illness. Most died of typhoid fever (21 soldiers, or 10.24%), 13 (6.34%) died of pneumonia, and five (2.44%) died of tuberculosis. Fewer cases of death caused by other medical issues could be identified: three soldiers died of appendicitis, a further three died of ear infections with concurrent diagnoses (brain or lung inflammation), one died of erysipelas, one from consumption, one from leukaemia, one from meningitis, and one from paratyphus.

The second and third most frequent causes of death were suicide and accidents. The study demonstrated that at least 11 (5.37%) soldiers shot themselves, a further 11 (5.37%) drowned, three died in unidentified accidents, one died from an electric shock, and so on.

The number of deaths increased in the regiment in the mid-1930s due to typhoid fever. It turns out that at that time, the garrison in Tauragė in western Lithuania where the 7th Infantry Regiment had been transferred from Klaipėda in 1934 experienced an outbreak of typhoid fever.¹¹³ Documents conclude that the source of the outbreak was likely not the army itself, but the 'unhygienic conditions in the town of Tauragė'.¹¹⁴ Thus, in 1938 the Ministry of Defence addressed the minister of internal affairs for a third time (having previously done so in 1934 and 1936) in order to 'prevent the typhoid fever epidemic in Tauragė from spreading or repeating [...] [because] the garrison was under the constant threat of this disease'.¹¹⁵ For the town

¹¹³ Raportas Kariuomenės tiekimo viršininkui, 1938-01-04. LCVA, f. 4, ap. 1, b. 455, l. 14.

¹¹⁴ Ibid.

¹¹⁵ Krašto apsaugos ministerijos raštas Vidaus reikalų ministru, 1938-02-08. LCVA, f. 4, ap. 1, b. 455, l. 19.

of Tauragė, which had a population of less than 10,000, this issue was not a new one: in 1934 the chairman of the city council Kazimieras Voldemaras emphasised that the city's 'drainage, sewage and the cleanliness of its streets' were of paramount importance.¹¹⁶ However, the Ministry of Defence was requesting that the construction of the necessary infrastructure in Tauragė be speeded up.

If all 205 identified cases are classified as three causes of death, a) disease, b) combat, c) other (suicides and accidents), we begin to see that disease caused the deaths of 106 soldiers, active combat caused the deaths of 70, and other factors caused the deaths of 29. These numbers can be expressed respectively as 51.7%, 34.15% and 14.15% (out of 205 deaths). We must remember that these 205 cases of death by identified causes make up only 61.19% of all the known deaths in the 7th Infantry Regiment, so we cannot conclude with certainty that the main cause of death in the regiment from 1919 to 1940 was disease. However, the predominance of disease as a cause of death is clear.

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If we group all cases of death (not just the ones with clearly identified causes) according to the time of death (Diagram 1), we can distinguish two periods: 1) the War of Independence and the subsequent conflict over the administrative boundaries of Lithuania and Poland which went on until 1923; and 2) the period during which army units were dislocated in peacetime garrisons (1924–1940). This grouping, according to period, reveals that 223 soldiers (66.57%) died or were killed between 1919 and 1923, and 112 soldiers (33.43%) died between 1924 and 1940. So it seems that the majority of soldiers died in active combat. However, this does not necessarily mean that their death was caused by direct participation in combat.

The data presented in the second diagram requires some explanation about the pre-history of the 7th Infantry Regiment's foundation, because the regiment was only created in late 1919. However, its core was the Kaunas Battalion, established on 1 July 1919,¹¹⁷ with four companies, communications, engineer and machine-gun teams taken from the Kaunas Command Headquarters. In total, 624 soldiers were transferred from Command Headquarters to the battalion. The Kaunas Command was established on 5 January 1919.¹¹⁸ Thus, the deaths depicted in the diagram from January to November 1919 are not of the 7th Infantry Regiment, but its institutional precursors.

In this case it is also important to mention that the Kaunas Battalion, from which the reference regiment later grew, only departed for the front on 9 October 1919, while its first encounter with the enemy, during which two of its soldiers died (Jonas

¹¹⁶ Tauragės miesto reikalai (Pasikalbėjimas su miesto Burmistru). *Naujas Tauragės ekspresas*, 1934-09-29, p. 2.

¹¹⁷ STATKUS, V. Op. cit., p. 48.

¹¹⁸ LESČIUS, Vytautas. *Lietuvos kariuomenė 1918–1920*. Vilnius, 1998, p. 110, 113.

Jarminas and Gracijonas Sakalauskas¹¹⁹), took place on 15 October 1919.¹²⁰ However, up to this date, at least 37 of the unit's soldiers had already died.

When the relatively brief period of active combat against the West Russian Volunteer Army ended, the 7th Infantry Regiment was located in the town of Jurbarkas, before receiving orders on 15 January 1920 to depart for Ukmergė to the front line in the conflict with Poland. Five days later, the regiment took up positions in eastern Lithuania, on the front line between Vepriai and Kurkliai. The regiment stayed there for about seven months, but exchanges of fire with Polish forces were infrequent. A historical overview of the regiment describes this period as follows: 'During this time, the regiment trained and prepared for combat and actively participated in the life of Ukmergė, tidying up the city gardens, and hosting various kinds of entertainment, outdoor celebrations and plays for the civilian population.'¹²¹ This description shows that the regiment did not take part in active combat, because there was no active combat to speak of at that time. On 9 July 1920, the regiment received a report that Polish forces were retreating under pressure from the Red Army. The next day, the regiment received orders to march towards Vilnius and occupy the territory left behind by the Poles. On 15 July, the regimental command stopped at Pabradė, and at about 2pm the 7th Company, under the command of Lieutenant Juozas Černius, was the first to enter Vilnius. The regiment spent three weeks living in barracks in Šnipiškės in Vilnius, where they put things in order, performed guard duties, and trained. On 22 September 1920, the regiment received orders to depart for southern Lithuania, to the Druskininkai and Grodno strip. It was only at this point that the regiment became involved in active combat against Polish troops.¹²² Based on the dates of soldiers' deaths, the regiment was involved in active combat from late September to December 1920.

However, at least 51 of the regiment's soldiers died during the period from December 1919 to September 1920, and only a few of these deaths can be linked to combat. The remaining deaths occurred due to illness or accidents and suicides: even though only 12 out of 51 deaths had preliminarily identifiable causes, this can still be confidently stated about cases without identified causes of death. Of the identified causes of death, five losses of life can be linked to an accident that occurred in December 1919 in Raseiniai, when an explosion in a munitions store injured the soldiers who were there. Four other soldiers possibly died during an encounter with Polish forces in March 1920, and two drowned.

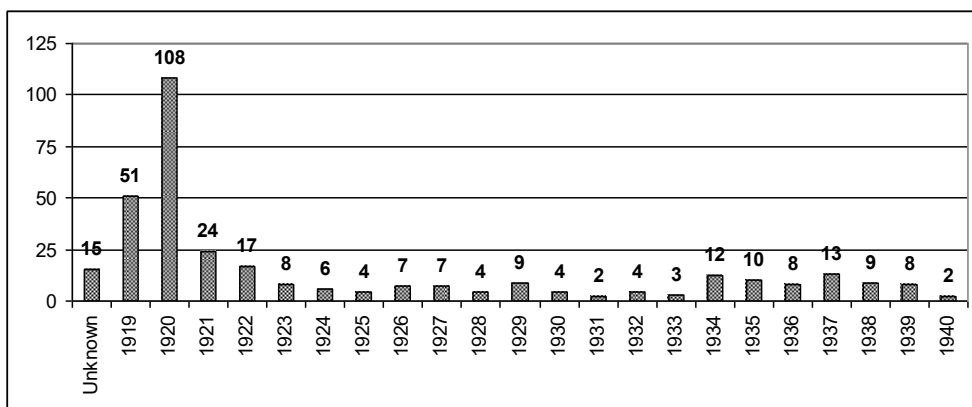
¹¹⁹ ŠNIUOLIS. 7 pėst. Žemaičių Kunigaikščio Butėgeidžio pulko istorinė apžvalga. *Karys*, 1939-06-29, nr. 26 (1046), p. 764–765.

¹²⁰ STATKUS, V. Op. Cit., p. 48.

¹²¹ ŠNIUOLIS. 7 pėst. Žemaičių Kunigaikščio Butėgeidžio pulko istorinė apžvalga. *Karys*, 1939-06-29, nr. 26 (1046), p. 763–766.

¹²² Ibid.

Diagram 1. The number of deaths of soldiers in the 7th Infantry Regiment of the Lithuanian armed forces by year (1919–1940)

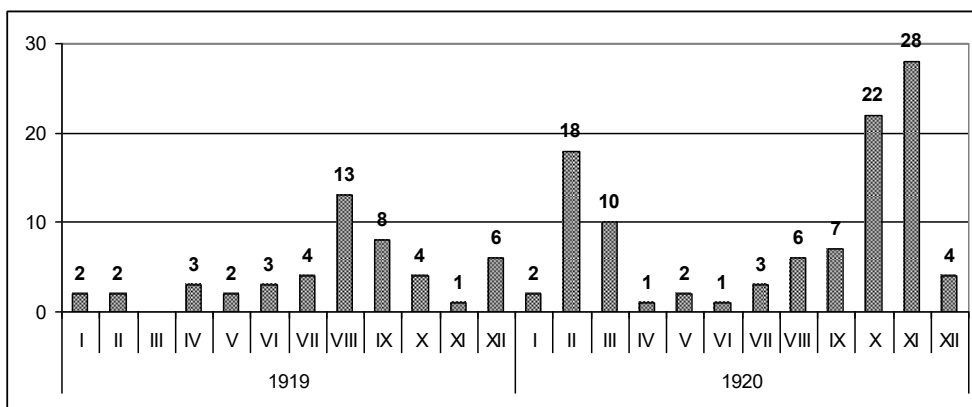


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Based on names on commemorative slabs in the basement of the Vytautas Magnus War Museum, archival documents and data published in *Karys* from 1920 to 1940.

Note: Based on cause, 15 cases of death can be attributed to the period of the War of Independence; however, current data does not allow us to attribute a specific year to these deaths.

Diagram 2. The number of deaths of soldiers in the 7th Infantry Regiment of the Lithuanian armed forces by month (1919–1920)



Based on names on commemorative slabs in the basement of the Vytautas Magnus War Museum, archival documents and data published in *Karys* from 1920–1940. The diagram presents data on deaths to which we can attribute a specific year and month.

Note: The numbers of deaths attributed to 1919 and 1920 in Diagram 1 and Diagram 2 differ because in three cases in 1919 the month of the date of death could not be identified, and there was also no possibility to represent these cases in Diagram 2. Similarly, the months of four deaths that occurred in 1920 could not be identified.

An analysis of locations of deaths is possible in 234 of 335 identified cases of deaths. Of the 234 cases, 156 deaths occurred at hospitals or medical stations: 74 at the Military Hospital in Kaunas, 19 at Ukmergė hospital, 18 at Tauragė hospital, 12 at the 1st stand-alone medical station, nine at the hospital of the 7th Infantry Regiment, five at the 1st Field Hospital, three soldiers each at the Vilnius, Šilutė, 2nd Field Hospital and the Red Cross Hospital, two soldiers died at Klaipėda hospital, and one each in the hospitals at Kalvarija, Mažeikiai, Panevėžys and Raseiniai. Apart from these cases, other identified locations of deaths include places like at home, at the company, in prison, in custody, at headquarters, at a sanatorium, in training, and at the barracks. In cases of drowning, documents sometimes indicate the bodies of water the soldiers drowned in, e.g., the River Jūra (3), the River Nemunas (1), or simply in a river or a pond.

In 1934, *Karys* published a host of notices from which we can determine where the soldiers of the 7th Infantry Regiment who died of typhoid fever and other diseases at the Military Hospital in Kaunas were buried.¹²³ This data makes it clear that even in peace time not all deceased soldiers were taken back to their home town. This study has identified 175 places of burial; of these, as many as 61 were in various Kaunas cemeteries, 22 in Širvintos, 22 in Ukmergė, 18 in Klaipėda, seven in Raseiniai, six in Tauragė, etc. In five cases, sources indicate that the deceased was transported to their home town, without indicating a specific location, even though other soldiers were transported to their home town for burial as well. The abundance of burials in Kaunas (34.86% of all cases in which the location of the burial is identified) can be linked to the fact that the city was home to the Military Hospital. As is demonstrated, it was frequently the case that those who died at the military hospital were buried in the cemeteries of Lithuania's temporary capital. Besides, for the first months of its existence, the unit had been stationed in Kaunas.

Conclusions

During the interwar period, the deaths of soldiers in the Lithuanian armed forces were the result of various causes not related to combat. An overview of causes of death and a case study of a single regiment have demonstrated that a significant number of deaths can be attributed to various illnesses. Typhoid fever, influenza and pneumonia stand out as the most common. In rarer cases, death was caused by

¹²³ Kariuomenės gyvenimas. Mirė. *Karys*, 1934-07-19, nr. 29 (800), p. 583; Kariuomenės gyvenimas. Mirė. *Karys*, 1934-07-26, nr. 30 (801), p. 604; Kariuomenės gyvenimas. Mirė. *Karys*, 1934-08-02, nr. 31 (802), p. 630; Kariuomenės gyvenimas. Mirė. *Karys*, 1934-08-23, nr. 34 (805), p. 689; Kariuomenės gyvenimas. Mirė. *Karys*, 1934-09-20, nr. 38 (809), p. 787.

tuberculosis, erysipelas, appendicitis, leukaemia, meningitis, paratyphus, and other fatal diseases. The case study of the regiment shows that the most frequent cause of death among young servicemen was infectious diseases, especially typhoid fever and pneumonia. The spread of these kinds of diseases was accelerated by the conditions of service and standards of hygiene, especially in soldiers' living quarters. Infectious diseases spread not just because of the close quarters soldiers lived at on a daily basis, but also because soldiers stationed at garrisons used the same bodies of water and infrastructure as local residents. This is especially obvious in the case of Tauragė, where the spread of disease was affected by the city's infrastructure, while its high mortality rate was affected by the closed-off nature of the barracks.

The same causes of death, unrelated to participation in combat or disease, appear throughout the entire period 1919 to 1940. These include accidents related to reckless behaviour with weapons, incidents of a domestic nature, accidents on leave, drowning when bathing, homicides and suicides. In these cases, the deaths of soldiers were affected by service conditions or the environment in which the soldiers served, and by the reckless or inattentive behaviour of the soldiers themselves. Another important factor was relations between soldiers, because some of the fatal accidents were caused not by the victims themselves but by other soldiers. Suicides, of course, were most affected by the psychological state of soldiers and their inclination towards suicide, but they were also provoked by the behaviour of others, especially violence or bullying, which were described as non-statutory relations between soldiers. It was not only commanding officers who sometimes failed to ensure a safe service environment during peace time: NCOs and sometimes even officers became involved in non-statutory actions against soldiers.

Increased mortality rates caused by influenza in early 1920 and the case analysis of deaths in the 7th Infantry Regiment point to the fact that in January and February 1920, the Lithuanian armed forces were forced to deal with an influenza epidemic that led to a high mortality rate among soldiers. This is also confirmed by statements made by interwar medics and mortality statistics. The case study demonstrates that there is no basis for linking deaths in these months to active combat because the Lithuanian armed forces were not actively involved in combat at the time. Thus, the losses of soldiers' lives in 1920 due to disease make up a significant portion of the deaths experienced by the Lithuanian armed forces. This fact should encourage us to reevaluate the mortality statistics of the Wars of Independence with a greater focus on causes of death. This would allow us to pinpoint periods of intensity for military operations, and identify time segments (months, weeks or even days) in the period 1919 to 1920 during which the Lithuanian armed forces were very actively involved in military operations.

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MIRČIŲ PRIEŽASTYS LIETUVOS KARIUOMENĖJE 1919–1940 METAIS

Vytautas Jokubauskas

Santrauka

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Platesnės apimties ir išsamesnių tyrimų, skirtų mirties reiškiniui Lietuvos kariuomenėje 1919–1940 m., kol kas nėra atlikta. Lietuvos istoriografijoje apsiribojama tarpukario (tarp 1926 ir 1937 m.) Lietuvos kariuomenės arba jos buvusių karininkų paskelbtais karo nuostolių skaičiais. Teiginys apie 1,4 tūkst. žuvusiųjų Lietuvos nepriklausomybės kare 1919–1920 m. istoriografijoje buvo virtęs savotiška aksioma. Atskirą tyrimą galima rengti apie tai, kaip plito 1937 m. Petro Rusecko paskelbtas aukų skaičius (su vardiniu sąrašu) skirtingų autorių darbuose (panašūs skaičiai tarpukariu buvo publikuojami ir kituose leidiniuose), nors istorikas Paulius Šležas dar tais pačiais 1937 m. P. Rusecko duomenis sukritikavo. Esminė minėtų duomenų spraga, kad juose į vieną sąrašą ir apibendrintą statistinį skaičių sujungti žuvę Lietuvos kariai nuo 1919 m. iki 1928 m., – aktyvūs karo veiksmai jau buvo pasibaigę *de jure* 1920 m. (remiantis Lietuvos kariuomenės įsakymu) arba *de facto* 1923 m., nors pavienių incidentų pasienyje su Lenkija pasitaikė visą tarpukarį. Kitas šios problemos aspektas, kad į žuvusiųjų sąrašą P. Ruseckas įtraukė ir tuos, kurių mirtys tiesiogiai su karo veiksmais nebuvo susijusios. Tarp karo aukų yra savižudžių, skenduolių, nelaimingų atsitikimų aukų. Be to, į aukų sąrašus nepateko dalis mirusiųjų, kadangi sąrašas buvo sudaromas pirmiausia remiantis palaidojimais, nes karo medicinos tarnyba mirčių neregistravo, tik vedė sužeistųjų ir susirgusiųjų statistiką. Į apskaitą nepateko ir dalis tų, kurie buvo išvežti palaidoti į šeimos kapavietes, ir kitais atvejais.

Šis tyrimas siekia aptarti karių mirčių, tiesiogiai nesusijusių su kariniais veiksmais, priežastis Lietuvos kariuomenėje tarpukariu. Įgyvendinant tai, iš karių mirčių statistikos pirmiausia reikėjo išskirti tuos, kurie mirė taikos metu. Toliau bandyta sugrupuoti mirčių priežastis pagal kategorijas. Galiausiai, remiantis vieno kariuomenės dalinio, 7-ojo pėstininkų pulko, pavyzdžiu, straipsnyje atskleidžiamas atskirų mirčių priežasčių kategorijų dažnumas ir pasiskirstymas pagal metus.

Vykdamas tyrimą, duomenys apie mirusius karius buvo imami iš penkių šaltinių: 1) iš duomenų apie kariuomenės netektis – duomenis 1937 m. paskelbė P. Ruseckas; 2) iš karių kapų registro, kuris paskelbtas 2003 m. atlase; 3) iš karo aukų sąrašo, kuris iškaltas Vytauto Didžiojo karo muziejaus kriptoje esančiose lentose; 4) iš Lietuvos centriniame valstybės archyve saugomų dokumentų; 5) iš kariams skirto savaitinio žurnalo *Karys*, kurį Lietuvos kariuomenė leido 1920–1940 m. Pašalinius pasikartojančius atvejus, suvesti duomenys leido sudaryti maksimaliai išsamų mirusių karių sąrašą, apimančį beveik 3,5 tūkst. Lietuvos karių mirčių atvejų. Sąrašas nėra baigtinis, nes pavieniai mirčių atvejai fiksuojami ir toliau. Dėl šios priežasties straipsnyje susitelkta ne į kiekybinių duomenų pristatymą, o į bandymą identifikuoti ir sugrupuoti mirčių priežastis taikos metu. Šias priežastis ne tik bandyta apibendrinti visos Lietuvos kariuomenės mastu. Vieno kariuomenės dalinio pavyzdžiu straipsnyje pateikiama ir kiekybinė mirties priežasčių charakteristika. 7-asis

pėstininkų Žemaičių kunigaikščio Butegidžio pulkas tam pasirinktas dėl kelių priežasčių. Pirmoji, tai faktas, kad šis pulkas egzistavo nuo 1919 m. iki pat 1940 m., t. y. jis nebuvo išformuotas 1923 m. ar 1926 m., o vėliau (1934 m.) atkurtas, kaip kai kurie kiti kariuomenės pulkai. Tai leidžia disponuoti duomenimis apie visą laikotarpį. Antroji priežastis – šis pulkas karo metu aktyviai dalyvavo kovos veiksmuose, skirtingai nei dalis kitų Lietuvos kariuomenės vienetų, kurie Nepriklausomybės karo metais buvo rezerve arba saugojami nepagrindinius fronto ruožus. Tai leidžia aiškiau išskirti taikos meto aukas iš bendro aukų skaičiaus. Galiausiai trečioji, ne mažiau svarbi, priežastis yra nuosekliai ir sistemingai pulke vestas mirusių karių sąrašas, kuris išliko ir šiuo metu saugomas archyve. Toks sąrašas leido analizuoti išsamius duomenis apie šio pulko mirusius karius.

Tyrimo metu surinkti ir susisteminti duomenys leidžia teigti, kad, be karinių veiksmų, karių mirtis Lietuvos kariuomenėje tarpukariu lėmė virtinė kitų priežasčių. Straipsnyje pateiktas mirties priežasčių pristatymas ir vieno pulko atvejo tyrimas rodo, kad reikšmingą dalį mirties priežasčių sudarė įvairios ligos. Tarp jų išsiskiria vidurių šiltinė, gripas ir plaučių uždegimas. Rečiau identifiukuoti tokie fataliniai susirgimai kaip tuberkuliozė, rožė, apendicitas, leukemija, meningitas, paratifas ir kt. Pulko atvejo analizė rodo, kad tarp jaunų vyrų dažniausia medicinine mirties priežastimi tapdavo infekcinės ligos, ypač vidurių šiltinė ir plaučių uždegimas. Tokioms ligoms plisti palankią terpę sudarydavo tarnybos sąlygos ir higiena, ypač gyvenamųjų patalpų būklė. Infekcinės ligos plito ne vien dėl ankštos kasdienės karių aplinkos, bet dėl naudojimosi tais pačiais vandens šaltiniais ir kita infrastruktūra, kuria miestuose su įgulumis naudojosi ir civiliai gyventojai. Tą ypač aiškiai parodo Tauragės atvejis: ligos plitimą įguloje ten lėmė miesto infrastruktūra, o didelį mirtingumą – kareivinių uždarus.

Tos pačios mirties priežastys, nesusijusios nei su dalyvavimu mūšiuose, nei su ligomis, kartojosi visą 1919–1940 m. laikotarpį. Tai nelaimingi atsitikimai neatsargiai elgiantis su ginklais, kiti nelaimingi atsitikimai buityje arba už kareivinių ribų, nelaimingi atsitikimai maudynių metu (nuskendimas), homicidai ir savižudybės. Šiais atvejais karių mirčiai įtakos turėjo tarnybos sąlygos arba aplinka, kurioje kariai tarnavo, pačių karių neatsargus ir neapdairus elgesys. Įtaką darė ir karių tarpusavio santykiai, nes dalį mirtinų nelaimingų atsitikimų sukeldavo ne aukos, o kiti kariai. Savižudybes, suprantama, dažniausiai lėmė karių psichologinė būseną, polinkis į suicidą, bet jas provokavo ir aplinkinių elgesys – ypač smurtas bei patyčios, apibūdintini kaip nestatutiniai santykiai tarp karių. Ne tik vadovaujantysis personalas ne visada gebėjo užtikrinti kariams saugią aplinką tarnaujant taikos metu, bet ir puskarininkiai, o kai kada ir karininkai įsitraukdavo į nestatutinius veiksmus prieš karius.

Atskirai pristatytina 7-ojo pėstininkų pulko karių mirčių priežasčių analizė. Tyrimo metu išanalizuoti šaltiniai leido identifikuoti 335 mirusius šio pulko karius. 234 atvejais pavyko nustatyti, kur kariai mirė, iš jų 156 ligoninėse ir lazaretuose. Daugiausia: 74 mirė Kaune karo ligoninėje, 19 – Ukmergės ligoninėje, 18 – Tauragės ligoninėje. Iš visų identifikuotų 7-ojo pėstininkų pulko mirusiųjų 223 kariai (66,57 %) žuvo, mirė 1919–1923 m., o 112 karių (33,43 %) 1924–1940 m. Taigi dominuoja karo laikotarpio aukos, tačiau tai dar nereiškia, jog mirčių priežastis buvo dalyvavimas aktyviuose kariniuose veiksmuose. Remiantis surinkta medžiaga, pavyko identifikuoti 205 karių mirčių priežastis, nors daugeliu atvejų tai gana neišsami informacija, pvz., 10 atvejų nurodyta, jog priežastis – „liga“, 40 – jog „mirė“, dar 70 atvejų sietini su karo veiksmis, nes kariai „žuvo“, buvo „nukauti“, mirė

„dėl sužeidimų“. Galima išskirti dažniausiai identifikuotas mirčių priežastis – susirgimus. Daugiausia – 21 (10,24 %) mirė nuo vidurių šiltinės, dar 13 (6,34 %) mirties priežastis buvo plaučių uždegimas, 5 (2,44 %) mirė nuo tuberkuliozės. Kitų medicininių priežasčių mirčių atvejų nustatyta mažiau: 3 karių mirties priežastimi tapo apendicitas, dar 3 mirė dėl ausų uždegimo ir gretutinių diagnozių (smegenų arba plaučių uždegimai), 1 dėl rožės, 1 nuo džiovos, 1 mirė nuo leukemijos, 1 dėl meningito, 1 dėl paratifo. Kita mirčių priežasčių grupė – tai savižudybės ir nelaimingi atsitikimai. Identifikavome, kad mažiausiai 11 (5,37 %) karių nusišovė, dar 11 (5,37 %) nuskendo, 3 žuvo neidentifikuotų nelaimingų atsitikimų metu, 1 užmušė elektros srovė ir t. t.

Visus 205 atvejus, kai pavyko nustatyti mirties priežastį, suklasifikavus į tris grupes: a) liga; b) kariniai veiksmai; c) kita (savižudybės ir nelaimingi atsitikimai), paaiškėjo, kad nuo ligos mirė 106 kariai, 70 tiesiogiai dėl karo veiksmy (nors oficialus pulko karo aukų skaičius mažesnis) ir 29 dėl kitų priežasčių, t. y. iš 205 atvejų procentais atitinkamai 51,7 %; 34,15 % ir 14,15 %. Tai, jog 205 atvejus sudaro tik 61,19 % visų identifikuotų 7-ojo pėstininkų pulko 1919–1940 m. mirusių karių, neleidžia konstatuoti, kad apskritai tarp mirčių priežasčių šiame pulke nuo 1919 m. iki 1940 m. tikrai dominavo ligos. Bet tokia tendencija ryškiai pastebima ir hipotezė keltina.