

JOIN UP OR EVADE? THE EVASION OF CONSCRIPTION IN LITHUANIA, 1919–1920

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ABSTRACT

For many societies in East Central Europe and the Baltic region, the First World War did not truly end in 1918. The wartime conditions of that year set the stage for the Council of Lithuania to pass a resolution restoring Lithuania's independence. Born amid conflict, and striving to establish its sovereignty, Lithuania began forming its own army in the autumn of 1918. However, building the Lithuanian armed forces required two years of intense engagement in regional conflicts. Initially, the army relied on voluntary enlistment, but this approach proved disappointing due to the low number of volunteers. As a result, the Lithuanian government implemented compulsory military service in early 1919. This article examines a widespread phenomenon that emerged during this period: the evasion of military service by Lithuanian men. On average, one in five men eligible for the draft failed to report to the draft office, and some conscripts who were enlisted subsequently deserted. The article analyses the causes of the evasion of military service, and explores specific instances of evasion in 1919 and 1920.

KEYWORDS: Lithuanian armed forces, compulsory military service, evasion of military service, desertion.

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ANOTACIJA

Vidurio Rytų Europos ir Baltijos regiono visuomenėms, kurios išgyveno Pirmąjį pasaulinį karą, dažnu atveju karas 1918 m. nesibaigė. Karo sąlygos sudarė aplinkybes 1918 m. Lietuvos Tarybai paskelbti nutarimą dėl nepriklausomos Lietuvos atkūrimo. Kare gimusi valstybė, siekdama įtvirtinti savo suverenų egzistavimą, tų pačių metų rudenį pradėjo formuoti Lietuvos kariuomenę. Jos kūrimas vyko dvejus metus intensyviai dalyvaujant ginkluotuose regiono konfliktuose. Be to, nors Lietuvos kariuomenę formuoti pradėta savanoriškumo principu, toks kariuomenės komplektavimo būdas dėl savanorių trūkumo nepasiteisino. Todėl Lietuvos vyriausybė 1919 m. pradžioje įvedė karo prievolę. Straipsnyje nagrinėjamas Lietuvoje šiomis sąlygomis pasireiškęs plačiai paplitęs reiškinys – dalies vyrų apsisprendimas vengti karo tarnybos. Vidutiniškai kas penktas naujokas neatvykdavo į naujokų ėmimo komisijas. Dalis į kariuomenę priimtų naujokų iš jos pabėgdavo. Šis straipsnis nagrinėja karo tarnybos vengimo Lietuvos kariuomenėje priežastis, būdus, analizuoja karių pabėgimo iš Lietuvos kariuomenės atvejus 1919–1920 m.

PAGRINDINIAI ŽODŽIAI: Lietuvos kariuomenė, karo prievolė, karo tarnybos vengimas, dezertavimas.

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Introduction

War, a constant and widespread phenomenon that different societies endure, takes place at a human cost. War is waged in the name of the people. In the trinitarian theory of total war, war involves society, the armed forces and the government.¹ These interacting elements create a nation's military power. The motivation to fight is an essential component of this military might, a component that has to do with the human factor.² Patriotism, which is a normative factor, can encourage an individual to join the army, serve and fight. There is a widespread belief that men were 'motivated' by the government to serve in armies by making the evasion of military service a punishable offence.³ However, the decision to become a soldier or evade military service was determined by a multitude of political, legal, economic, social and psychological factors.

In the present article, the question of motivation is analysed through the example of one Baltic state that established itself after the First World War. The period explored in the paper is set against an extraordinary backdrop of the fall of several empires and an older political order brought about by the First World War. Amidst the ruins of these empires emerged the small nation-states of the eastern Baltic region: Lithuania, Latvia, Estonia and Finland. The citizens of all four countries were forced to participate in wars post-1918 to defend their new borders and their beliefs. When the Bolsheviks reneged on the commitments they had agreed to in the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk, the governments of these new nation-states had to organise against the Red Army. This meant they would need to set up armies and attract the necessary 'human resources', without exception, the male part of the population. What is more, it was a population that had been drained by the First World War and that needed to be motivated for a new fight.⁴

As has been demonstrated by previous studies, the voluntary enlistment of men in Lithuania was not sufficient. The government had to resort to other methods of putting together an army. Similarly, voluntary recruitment did not produce the number of men necessary to create armed forces in neighbouring Latvia and Estonia.⁵ The

¹ CREVELD, Martin van. *The Transformation of War*. New York, 1991, p. 40.

² JOKUBAUSKAS, Vytautas. *Karo istorija: tyrimai, metodai, poveikis, taikymas*. Klaipėda, 2021, p. 166.

³ BERKOVICH, Ilya. *Motivation in War. The Experience of Common Soldiers in Old-Regime Europe*. Cambridge, 2017, p. 5.

⁴ Cf. SAFRONOVAS, Vasilijus. Introduction. In *The Unending War? Baltic States after 1918* (Acta Historica Universitatis Klaipedensis, Vol. 38). Ed. by Vytautas JOKUBAUSKAS, Vasilijus SAFRONOVAS. Klaipėda, 2018, pp. 7–15; BALKELIS, Tomas. *War, Revolution, and Nation-Making in Lithuania, 1914–1923*. Oxford, 2018; SAFRONOVAS, Vasilijus. The War Is Not Over? On the Continuity and Discontinuity between the Great War and the War of Independence as Experienced by Lithuanian Soldiers. In *Independence Wars in North-Eastern Europe and Beyond* (Estonian Yearbook of Military History = Eesti Sõjaajaloo Aastaraamat, 2021, 11 (17)). Ed. by Kaarel PIIRIMÄE, Toomas HIIO. Viimsi, Tallinn, 2023, pp. 11–36.

⁵ CIGANOV, Juris. *The Latvian Army*. Riga, 2019, p. 12; KOPYTIN, Igor'. *Očerki ob istorii Estonskoi armii 1918–1940 gg.: dlja prizyvnikov i voennosluzhashchikh*. Tallinn, 2011, s. 7; PAJUR, Ago. *Eesti riigikaitsepõlii-*

Lithuanian government was forced to enact compulsory enlistment in Kaunas. The beginning of the conscription process, and together with it the beginning of compulsory military service, can be set at 5 March 1919.⁶ The 'Temporary Provisions for the Enlistment of New Recruits' (*Laikinieji naujokų šaukimo įstatai*) established compulsory service *in corpore*.⁷ As the Lithuanian armed forces resorted increasingly to compulsion to grow its ranks, it was soon discovered that some men were evading military service. In the context of active military operations, going to war was not very popular among the public.⁸ The reluctance to shoulder the duty of military service was linked to conscripts' previous experiences and the uncertain relationship with the emerging state.⁹ For alongside the Lithuania of Kaunas, there still existed at the time alternate versions of the Lithuanian future: Soviet Lithuania and Polish Lithuania. Residents had to choose which warring side they would support.¹⁰ The volatile and fragile national security situation created an atmosphere of political instability in society. The institution of compulsory military service gave rise to negative associations and increased indifference to political processes. As the Lithuanian vice-minister of defence wrote, 'compulsory military service [...] is a burden for the citizen and every man will try to avoid this burden.'¹¹ Men saw compulsory military service as a punishment, and thus attempted to avoid it in any way they could.¹² A noticeable portion of conscripts only enlisted because they feared the sanctions of not complying.¹³ The importance of defending their motherland was never explained to them.¹⁴ There was also little collective solidarity in society. All of this manifested in a lack of desire to serve in the Lithuanian armed forces.

This article will analyse the causes and methods of the evasion of military service in the Lithuania of 1919–1920 in greater detail. Individuals that evaded military service will be grouped into three categories. The first category includes men whose names appeared on lists of draft-age men but who failed to show up at the conscription office. The second category is comprised of men who were enrolled in the armed

tika aastail 1918–1934. Tartu, 1999, p. 39; Article manuscript 'Disappointment in the results of voluntary mobilisation and the move to compulsory mobilisation in late 1918', 1936. *Rahvusarhiiv* (National Archives of Estonia, hereafter *ERA*), 2124-3-1870, l. 2–12.

⁶ On this day, the official gazette of the provisional government (*Laikinosios Vyriausybės žinios*) announced the 'Military Conscription Instructions' (*Kariuomenės šaukiamosios instrukcijos*) and their entry into force. – Kariuomenės šaukiamosios instrukcijos. *Laikinosios Vyriausybės žinios*, 1919-03-05, Nr. 4, p. 2–3.

⁷ *Laikinieji naujokų šaukimo įstatai*. *Laikinosios Vyriausybės žinios*, 1919-10-08, Nr. 13, 1 straipsnis, p. 1.

⁸ PACEVIČIUS, Paulius. Lietuvos kariuomenės dezertyrai nepriklausomybės kovų ir valstybingumo įtvirtinimo laikotarpiu 1918–1923 m. *Karo archyvas*, 2014, t. 29, p. 67.

⁹ LESČIUS, Vytautas. *Lietuvos kariuomenė 1918–1920 m.* Vilnius, 1998, p. 76; JAKŠTYS, Gintautas. *Lietuvos karių kasdienybė taikos ir karo metu 1918–1940 m.* Daktaro disertacija. Klaipėda, 2021, p. 45.

¹⁰ JAKŠTYS, G. Op. cit., p. 66.

¹¹ *Steigiamojo Seimo darbai*, 1922-09-13, sąs. 49, 1 sesijos 245 posėdis, p. 17.

¹² ŠNIUKŠTA, Petras. Apie dezertavimą. *Mūsų žinynas*, 1925, Nr. 22, p. 5.

¹³ Historians have recognised the fear of punishment as a key external factor motivating individuals to serve in the military. – BERKOVICH, I. Op. cit., p. 5.

¹⁴ LESČIUS, V. *Lietuvos kariuomenė 1918–1920...*, p. 158.

forces but never showed up to their command headquarters. The third category is of men who enrolled in the army but deserted it. A similar grouping of military service evaders was used by the military administration in Lithuania between the world wars.¹⁵

Lithuanian historians have previously identified the phenomenon of the evasion of military service, but have not attempted to analyse it more comprehensively. The causes and methods of the evasion of compulsory service have so far only been side notes in their research.¹⁶ Only a few publications that emerged in the interwar period, as well as several newer historical studies, have attempted to identify the principal causes and methods of the evasion of military service.¹⁷ However, compared to the aforementioned countries (Latvia,¹⁸ Estonia¹⁹ and Finland²⁰), the Lithuanian case has not been examined closely. This makes it an exceptional case and one worth a new analysis.

¹⁵ KUODYS, Modestas. Pirmasis Lietuvos kariuomenės karo komendantų suvažiavimas (1921 m. rugsėjo 20–24 d.). *Karo archyvas*, 2011, t. 26, p. 102.

¹⁶ STATKUS, Vytenis. *Lietuvos ginkluotosios pajėgos 1918–1940 m.* Čikaga, 1986, p. 439; LESČIUS, Vytautas. *Lietuvos kariuomenė Nepriklausomybės kovose 1918–1920*. Vilnius, 2004, p. 157–161; KUODYS, M. Op. cit., p. 101–102; TAMOŠIŪNAS, Alvydas. Legendinės Radviliškio kautynės. *Karo archyvas*, 2019, t. 34, p. 93; SAFRONOVAS, Vasilijus; KILINSKAS, Kęstutis; MAČIULIS, Dangiras. *Išgyventoji istorija Lietuvoje tarpukariu: vaidmenys, patirtys, vadovėliniai pasakojimai ir atminimo politika*. Klaipėda, 2022, p. 225–226; SAFRONOVAS, V. The War is Not Over?..., pp. 21, 28, 31; STOLIAROVAS, Andriejus. *Lietuvos Respublikos karinė justicija 1919–1940 m.* Kaunas, 2014, p. 108, 193, 227; JOKUBAUSKAS, Vytautas. „Mažųjų kariuomenių“ galia ir paramilitarizmas. *Tarpukario Lietuvos atvejis*. Klaipėda, 2014, p. 356–357; SURGAILIS, Gintautas. *Pirmasis pėstininkų Didžiojo Lietuvos kunigaikščio Gedimino pulkas*. Vilnius, 2011, p. 29; SURGAILIS, Gintautas. *Trečiasis pėstininkų Didžiojo Lietuvos kunigaikščio Vytauto pulkas*. Vilnius, 2013, p. 14, 16, 18, 31, 55, 163; SURGAILIS, Gintautas. *Ketvirtasis pėstininkų Lietuvos karaliaus Mindaugo pulkas*. Vilnius, 2016, p. 52; SURGAILIS, Gintautas. *Penktasis pėstininkų Didžiojo Lietuvos kunigaikščio Kęstučio pulkas*. Vilnius, 2017, p. 15, 24, 100; SURGAILIS, Gintautas. *Septintasis pėstininkų Žemaičių kunigaikščio Butėgeidžio pulkas*. Vilnius, 2021, p. 16; SURGAILIS, Gintautas. *Lietuvos kariuomenės gudų kariniai daliniai 1918–1923 m.* Vilnius, 2020, p. 164, 186.

¹⁷ ŠNIUKŠTA, P. Op. cit.; STEPONAITIS, Vytautas. Naujokų ėmimo rezultatai 1921–1927 metais. *Mūsų žinynas*, 1928, Nr. 45, p. 447–490; PACEVIČIUS, Paulius. *Lietuvos kariuomenės dezertyrai 1919–1940 m.* Magistro baigiamasis darbas. Kaunas, 2012; PACEVIČIUS, P. Lietuvos kariuomenės dezertyrai nepriklausomybės...; VITKUS, Hektoras. Žydų kariai Lietuvos (lietuvių) Nepriklausomybės (1919–1923 m.) kovose: ką žinome apie jų motyvus? In *Šiuolaikinių tautinių valstybių kūrimas rytiniame Baltijos jūros regione* (Acta Historica Universitatis Klaipedensis, t. 38). Sud. Vyantas VAREIKIS, Silva POČYTĖ. Klaipėda, 2019, p. 163–185; SEREČIKAS, Mindaugas. *Civilių gyventojų ir Lietuvos kariuomenės sąveika 1918–1923 m.* Daktaro disertacija, Klaipėda, 2023; JOKUBAUSKAS, Vytautas. *Gyvenimas ir mirtis Lietuvos kariuomenėje 1918–1940 m.* Klaipėda, 2023.

¹⁸ CIGANOVS, J. Op. cit.; JĒKABSONS, Ēriks. Military Processes Which led to Latvia's Statehood (1918–1920). In *Latvia and Latvians*: collection of scholarly articles. Vol. II. Ed. by Jānis STRADIŅŠ et al. Riga, 2018, pp. 445–475.

¹⁹ BRÜGGEMANN, Karsten. Defending National Sovereignty against Two Russias: Estonia in the Russian Civil War, 1918–1920. *Journal of Baltic Studies*, 2003, Vol. 34, No. 1, pp. 25–51; HABER, Mart. *Eestlane sõdurina. Järeldusi kaitsevää komplekteerimiseks, väljaõppeks ja juhtimiseks*. Koost. Andres SEENE. Tartu, 2008; KOPŌTIN, Igor. Eesti sõjavägi kui rahvusarmee. In *Eesti sõjaajalugu. Valitud peatükke Vabadussõjast tänapäevani*. Koost. Tõnu TANNBERG. Tartu, 2021, lk. 133–143; KOPŌTIN, Igor. *Rahvuse kool. Eesti rahvusarmee ja vähemusrahvused aastatel 1918–1940*. Tartu, 2020; KRŌONSTRŌM, Mati. *Kaptenite ja leitnantide sõda. Eesti sõjaväe juhtkoosseis Vabadussõjas 1918–1920*. Tallinn, 2010.

²⁰ AHLBÄCK, Anders. *Manhood and the Making of the Military. Conscription, Military Service and Masculinity in Finland, 1917–39*. Farnham, Burlington, 2014.

This study will be based, first and foremost, on documents that can be accessed through the Lithuanian Central State Archives. It will draw heavily on the archival collections of the Mobilisation Department (*Mobilizacijos skyriaus fondas*, No 929), the Military Court Prosecutor's Office (*Kariuomenės teismo prokuratūros fondas*, No 483), the Military Court (*Kariuomenės teismo fondas*, No 507), the Kaunas Regimental Court (*Kauno komendantūros pulko teismo fondas*, No 1502) and the Local Military Headquarters (*Vietinės kariuomenės štabo*, No 10). The case files, interrogation documents and court decisions of people prosecuted for the evasion of military service were of critical importance in the interpretation of the causes and methods of desertion. Of course, this is a very specific group of sources. As we review such materials, the question often arises whether the motives for desertion recorded in case files were not simply excuses submitted with the hope of mitigating the offence and the impending punishment. However, archival data allows us to accurately assess when and how soldiers ran away, how long they spent in hiding, where they hid, as well as the punishment that they were given. A second group of sources that this study relies on are the accounts of contemporaries. Some of these can be accessed through publications that were published by the Lithuanian armed forces between the world wars: *Karys* (1919–1940), *Mūsų žinynas* (1923–1940) and *Karo archyvas* (1925–1940).

Procuring manpower for the Lithuanian armed forces through conscription

Conscripts began to be called up to serve in the Lithuanian armed forces as soon as the Lithuanian government enacted the draft. Conscription was to be coordinated by district commanders and executed by conscription committees.²¹ The process of manning the armed forces was controlled by the military commanders.²² Recruits found out that they had been called to serve from notices posted in public places, such as the town marketplace.²³

The greatest obstacle the Lithuanian government encountered in trying to enlist conscripts in 1919 was the fact that the state borders set down in agreements did not yet exist, while the situation at the front was constantly changing. Implementing the recruitment process simultaneously across what politicians imagined to be

²¹ The call to service was implemented by the Ministry of Defence Mobilisation Department, the Supreme Inspection Committee, District Reception Committees, and local authorities. – Kariuomenės šaukiamosios instrukcijos. *Laikinosios Vyriausybės žinios*, 1919-03-05, Nr. 4, p. 2.

²² KUODYS, M. Op. cit., p. 101.

²³ Biržų–Pasvalio apskrities viršininko, naujokų priėmimo komisijos pirmininko skelbimas, 1920-08-06. *Lietuvos centrinis valstybės archyvas* (Lithuanian Central State Archives, hereafter LCVA), f. 929, ap. 5, b. 31, l. 157; Raseinių apskrities karo komendantų įsakymas, 1920-08-15. LCVA, f. 929, ap. 5, b. 31, l. 183.

Lithuanian territory was at the time still impossible. Conscripts could only be enlisted in places where command headquarters operated in fact and not just on paper.²⁴ Only after about a year did the geographic scope of conscription widen, because the Lithuanian government controlled more territory in 1920 than it did in 1919.²⁵ What is more, in the areas that went from one occupying regime to the next, every regime (the Germans, Bolsheviks and Poles) implemented its own mobilisation process.²⁶ This also explains why some men did not present themselves to the conscription office when called. Evidence of this phenomenon can be found in the testimony of one village priest. The entry for 21 May 1919 in his diary reads as follows: 'This time of changing regimes is the very worst. A man cannot know which way to go, what straw to grasp at. One feels neither hanged, nor drowned, and with no rights to speak of.'²⁷ Later, on 14 October 1920, the priest wrote: 'I don't understand these politics, today the Poles, tomorrow the Lithuanians and then back again.'²⁸

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The conscription by the Lithuanian armed forces of men born in 1897 and 1898²⁹ was carried out from 6 March to 10 November 1919. In March, the conscription process began in the districts of Marijampolė, Alytus, Vilkaviškis, Šakiai and Telšiai; in April, in the districts of Seinai, Kaunas, Kėdainiai and Tauragė; in May, in the districts of Kretinga, Biržai-Pasvalys and Šiauliai; in June, in the districts of Raseiniai, Panevėžys, Mažeikiai and Ežerėnai; in July, in the district of Ukmergė; in September, in the districts of Rokiškis and Utena; and in October, in the district of Trakai.³⁰ Men born in 1896, 1899 and 1900³¹ were called up from 15 October 1919 to 29 August 1920. Once again, conscription took place in different districts at different times. In October 1919, the conscription process took off in the districts of Marijampolė, Alytus, Seinai, Vilkaviškis, Šakiai and Kaunas; in November, in the districts of Kėdainiai, Raseiniai, Kretinga and Telšiai; and in December, in the district of Mažeikiai. In February 1920, men were called up in the district of Tauragė; in June, in the district of Ežerėnai; in July, in the districts of Trakai, Panevėžys, Ukmergė and Šiauliai; and in August, in the districts of Biržai, Utena and Rokiškis.³² Men born in 1894, 1895 and 1901 began to be called up by the Lithuanian Armed Forces on 13 August 1920, when the Constituent Seimas passed the

²⁴ LESČIUS, V. *Lietuvos kariuomenė 1918–1920...*, p. 157; STEPONAITIS, V. Op. cit., p. 447.

²⁵ SAFRONOVAS, V.; KILINSKAS, K.; MAČIULIS, D. Op. cit., p. 226.

²⁶ The Lithuanian armed forces did not have accurate information from a register of residents, so it had no way of knowing how many men it could call up or from where.

²⁷ PAULIUKAS, Antanas. *Dienynas 1918–1941 m. I knyga: 1918 m. rugsėjo 1-oji – 1926 m. birželio 30-oji*. Sud. Gediminas RUDIS. Vilnius, 2017, p. 109.

²⁸ Ibid., p. 235.

²⁹ Naujokų šaukimas kariuomenėn. *Laikinosios Vyriausybės žinios*. 1919-03-05, Nr. 4, p. 4.

³⁰ Šaukimas kariuomenėn vyrų, gimusių 1897 ir 1898 metuose, paskelbtas 1919 m. vasario 13 d., [1919]. *LCVA*, f. 929, ap. 5, b. 3, l. 119.

³¹ Įstatymas dėl mobilizacijos. *Laikinosios Vyriausybės žinios*. 1919-10-01, Nr. 12, p. 1.

³² Šaukimas kariuomenėn vyrų, gimusių 1896, 1899 ir 1900 metuose, paskelbtas 1919 m. rugsėjo 27 d., [1919]. *LCVA*, f. 929, ap. 5, b. 3, l. 120.

Law on Conscription (*Naujokų šaukimo įstatymas*).³³ This period of conscription lasted all the way to the end of 1920 across five districts: Alytus, Ežerėnai, Utena, Ukmergė and Trakai.

From 1919 to 1920, a total of 81,145 men were included in lists of those eligible for the Lithuanian armed forces. Of these, the armed forces enrolled 34,420, or 42.67%. The army needed more conscripts, but a large percentage of those called up never turned up at the conscription office. The latter group amounted to 17,149 men, or 21.13% of all the men included in the lists.³⁴ Interestingly, Jewish men, Lithuania's most populous ethnic minority at the time, were more active in presenting themselves to conscription offices than Lithuanians (from 1919 to 1920, only 18.76% of Jews did not report to the conscription office). However, fewer Jews (around 20% fewer) were actually enrolled in the army compared to Lithuanians.³⁵ Most cases of failure to report to the conscription office were recorded in the districts of Alytus (47.14%), Šiauliai (37.26%), Kretinga (36.62%), Šakiai (32.77%), Kaunas (31.72%) and Ukmergė (30.84%). The fewest cases were recorded in the districts of Raseiniai (0.45%), Seinai (1.2%), Panevėžys (1.76%), Marijampolė (1.8%) and Tauragė (2.8%).³⁶

Territorial differences gave rise to tensions in the conscription process. In the territorial units that were experiencing combat and where a state of war was declared, the procurement of manpower for the army was intensified.³⁷ The large number of men who failed to show up at the conscription office can be explained by the lack of experience on the part of the draft-administrating institutions. It was often the case that conscription lists included the names of men that were deceased or already serving in the Lithuanian armed forces on a voluntary basis.³⁸ This is why the number of men in the records of the Lithuanian armed forces who did not report to their conscription office is inaccurate. It is difficult to assess the scale of latent reluctance to serve in the army. This number does not include those who enlisted in the army out of fear, i.e. because they wanted to avoid legal liability for refusing to perform their compulsory military service. Others received exemptions from conscription

³³ Naujokų šaukimo įstatymas. *Vyriausybės žinios*, 1920-08-18, Nr. 45, p. 2.

³⁴ Žinios apie naujokų ėmimo darbo eigą 1921 m. vasario 1 d., [no date]. *LCVA*, f. 929, ap. 5, b. 3, l. 99–103 ap.

³⁵ More Jews were exempted from military service than Lithuanians: this probably had less to do with the poorer health of Jews and more with the rampant bribery of conscription officials. – JOKUBAUSKAS, Vytautas; VITKUS, Hektoras. Jews as Lithuanian Army Soldiers in 1918–1940 (a quantitative analysis). *Lithuanian Historical Studies*, 2021, Vol. 25, pp. 104–112.

³⁶ Žinios apie naujokų ėmimo darbo eigą 1921 m. vasario 1 d., [no date]. *LCVA*, f. 929, ap. 5, b. 3, l. 99–103 ap.

³⁷ SEREIČIKAS, M. Op. cit., p. 197–202.

³⁸ Marijampolės apskrities valdybos raštas Vidaus reikalų ministerijos Piliečių apsaugos departamentui, 1919-07-25. *LCVA*, f. 929, ap. 5, b. 14, l. 28; Sąrašas nestojusių naujininkų, mirusių, išėjusių svetur ir ne-teisingai įneštų sąrašuosna, [no date]. *LCVA*, f. 929, ap. 5, b. 14, l. 31–31 ap.; KAM Mobilizacijos skyriaus raštas naujokų priėmimo komisijų pirmininkams, 1920. *LCVA*, f. 929, ap. 5, b. 31, l. 166.

legally (by enrolling in universities so that they would not have to serve³⁹) and illegally (through bribery or forging documents). Even though a comparison of conscription results from 1919 and 1920 shows that the number of men evading compulsory military service was decreasing, large numbers of evaders still posed a great problem to the warring state.⁴⁰

Of the men who were not enrolled in the Lithuanian armed forces, a significant portion (35.5% of those included in conscription lists) were men who had been exempted from military service. The majority of these individuals (68.38%) were enlisted in reserve forces. On average, one in four (24.27%) of the men included in conscription lists ended up in the reserves. This occurrence was especially pronounced in the districts of Marijampolė (35.17%), Mažeikiai (35%), Tauragė (34.96%), Raseiniai (33.45%) and Ežerėnai (31.17%). In these districts, the average number of conscripts that were funnelled into the reserves was greater. In the districts of Šiauliai (17.63%), Kaunas (17.94%), Alytus (19.17 %) and Ukmergė (19.26%), fewer than average conscripts ended up in the reserves.⁴¹ Fewer conscripts were moved to the reserves in those districts where the largest numbers of men failed to show up at the conscription office. We can assume that the military administration in these districts sought to compensate for the shortage of enlisted men with candidates that would otherwise have been transferred to the reserves.

Those who received lifelong exemptions from military service in the Lithuanian armed forces made up 20.89% of exempted conscripts, or 7.41% of all the names included in conscription lists. Among the districts that had higher numbers of conscripts exempted from service for life were the districts of Telšiai (17.71%), Raseiniai (14.59%) and Tauragė (12.77%). These districts also produced the lowest numbers of conscripts who did not end up enrolled in the army. Observably fewer lifelong exemptions were granted to conscripts in the districts of Vilkaviškis (2.31%), Panevėžys (4.52%) and Šiauliai (4.87%).⁴² In districts that had fewer unenrolled conscripts, more conscripts received lifelong exemptions from military service.

Temporary exemptions due to illness made up 5.36% of all exemptions for conscripts, or 1.96% of all men included in lists of those eligible. Most exemptions of this kind were granted in the districts of Trakai (5.89%) and Telšiai (3.47%). The fewest were granted in the districts of Panevėžys (0.31%), Tauragė (0.6%) and Raseiniai (0.61%).

³⁹ Students tried all kinds of methods to put off their military service. After graduating from secondary school, they enrolled in universities. Having completed their studies in one faculty, they enrolled in another. Others requested that their military service be delayed by at least two years. – JOKUBAUSKAS, V. *Gyvenimas ir mirtis...*, p. 362.

⁴⁰ SAFRONOVAS, V. *The War Is Not Over?...*, p. 31.

⁴¹ Žinios apie naujokų ėmimo darbo eigą 1921 m. vasario 1 d., [no date]. *LCVA*, f. 929, ap. 5, b. 3, l. 99–103 ap.

⁴² *Ibid.*

Table. The results of conscription from 1919 to 1920 in Lithuanian districts (data from early 1921)

District	Listed as eligible	Enrolled in armed forces	Exempted from military service			Served as volunteers	Did not return from abroad	Sent to check health	Failed to report to conscription office
			Exempted for life	Temporarily exempted due to illness	Exempted for family-related reasons				
Pasvalys	4,155	2,477	252	1,144	55			227	
Panevėžys	4,464	2,942	202	1,190	14	37		79	
Rokiškis	3,614	1,646	239	740	103		94	792	
Ežerėnai	2,085	516	171	650	55	12	119	423	
Utena	5,474	2,459	456	1,452	133	11	477	497	
Ukmergė	7,658	2,800	451	1,475	198	11	361	2,362	
Kėdainiai	3,686	1,623	185	989	86		20	783	
Kaunas	6,582	2,688	478	1,181	147			2,088	
Trakai	2,051	918	179	579	121		254		
Alytus	9,291	2,385	534	1,782	210			4,380	
Seinai	1,904	1,159	175	465	57		25	23	
Marijampolė	2,263	1,092	236	796	63		35	41	
Vilkaviškis	4,010	1,646	93	783	64	44		1,380	
Šakiai	4,009	1,247	221	819	29	38	341	1,314	
Raseiniai	4,194	2,095	612	1,403	26			19	
Šiauliai	1,355	510	66	239		35		505	
Mažeikiai	2,007	758	135	704	24		131	255	
Kretinga	4,565	1,557	341	904	91			1,672	
Telšiai	2,501	1,370	318	562	87	3		161	
Tauragė	5,277	2,532	674	1,845	32	26		148	
Total:	81,145	34,420	6,018	19,702	1,595	206	1,291	458	17,149
			28,812						

Source: Žinios apie naujųjų emimo darbo eigą 1921 m. vasario 1 d., [no date]. LCVA, f. 929, ap. 5, b. 3, l. 99–103 ap.

Exemptions for family-related reasons made up 0.71% of all exemptions granted to conscripts, or 0.25% of all those eligible for conscription. Some draft-age men had served in the Russian Imperial Army, so they were not accepted into the Lithuanian armed forces. Their names were included in the records of men exempted from military service. Such men made up 4.48% of all exempted conscripts, or 1.59% of all those on lists of men eligible for conscription.⁴³

The large number of conscripts that did not end up in the Lithuanian armed forces (because they either did not show up at the conscription office or were exempted from military service) meant that the army failed to procure the manpower it needed. In late 1920, the Lithuanian armed forces was still short of 17,735 soldiers.⁴⁴ The number of men who did not report to the conscription office (even though some of them could have received exemptions) is almost identical to the number that the army needed to be completely formed.

'People off the streets': reasons for and methods of (not) serving in the Lithuanian armed forces

There was a myriad of reasons for evading conscription. In 1921, the military command of the Lithuanian armed forces took the results of the 1919–1920 conscription effort into consideration, and indicated the following as the main reasons for the evasion of military service: 1) bad will among the people or negative attitudes towards the state and society; 2) poor performance of organisations administering the conscription process; and 3) the country's political situation.⁴⁵

However, in this article I will attempt to provide a more detailed grouping of causes of the evasion of military service. Thus, the analysis will focus on five groups of causes: 1) political, 2) legal, 3) institutional, 4) social, and 5) psychological.

Political reasons are related to public attitudes towards the Lithuanian state and its political order. An additional factor that led to the evasion of military service was the violence and the political chaos that had continued since 1914–1915. Four years of war had had a destructive effect on the population. In the disorder left in the wake of the First World War, the Lithuanian government had to ideologically consolidate and mobilise society. As an instrument of such consolidation and control, it also

⁴³ Žinios apie naujokų ėmimo darbo eigą 1921 m. vasario 1 d., [no date]. LCVA, f. 929, ap. 5, b. 3, l. 99–103 ap.

⁴⁴ LESČIUS, V. *Lietuvos kariuomenė 1918–1920...*, p. 429.

⁴⁵ Vietinės kariuomenės brigados štabo raštas Krašto apsaugos ministrui, 1921-11-17. LCVA, f. 384, ap. 3, b. 364, l. 5.

used state-mandated force and terror.⁴⁶ In the whirlwind of conflict, the idea of a Lithuanian nation-state seemed transient, the government unstable and the army weak.⁴⁷ The Lithuanian population did not have a unanimous opinion about such a state. Many viewed the government and the armed forces with mistrust.⁴⁸ This mistrust was only reinforced by doubts about the army's preparedness to prevent the expansion of other armies.⁴⁹ As the Lithuanian armed forces fought on several fronts, control of some cities and towns passed from one side to another.⁵⁰ In addition, a grave problem was soldiers robbing civilians, prisoners of war and refugees.⁵¹ Some residents did not believe that Lithuania could survive as an independent state, did not support the vision of the nation-state, and had no wish to contribute to the creation of the Lithuanian armed forces.⁵² Such attitudes towards the prospects of a Lithuanian future and dissatisfaction with those in charge for the policies they implemented, especially with regard to requisitions and conscription, could have been the consequence of a lack of patriotism.⁵³

There were active attempts to incite against and destabilise the new political order in Lithuania.⁵⁴ It was not just the political groups that supported the idea of an independent Lithuania that were trying to sway the local population, but the communists as well. The latter were especially focused on the Lithuanian armed forces and its officers. In late 1918, in Kaunas and especially in its suburbs, communists often held demonstrations, distributed leaflets and incited locals to disobey the orders of the Lithuanian government.⁵⁵ The secret Polish military organisation Polska Organizacja Wojskowa (POW) was also drumming up support for its activities.

The *legal reasons* were, first of all, related to the absence of serious legal consequences. Conscripts could easily evade military service, and only insignificant consequences

⁴⁶ PETRONIS, Vytautas. Neperkirstas Gordijo mazgas: valstybinės prievartos prieš visuomenę Lietuvoje genėzė (1918–1921). *Lietuvos istorijos metraštis, 2015/1*. Vilnius, 2016, p. 69–71.

⁴⁷ Similar attitudes were prevalent during the formative stages of other newly independent countries in Central and Eastern Europe. Latvia and Estonia are good examples of this. – CIGANOVŠ, J. Op. cit., p. 13; KOPYTIN, I. Op. cit., s. 7; PAJUR, A. Op. cit., lk. 39; HABER, M. Op. cit., p. 192.

⁴⁸ JAKŠTYS, G. Op. cit., p. 48, 50.

⁴⁹ BULVIČIUS, Vytautas. *Karinis valstybės rengimas*. Kaunas, [1939] 2019, p. 22.

⁵⁰ LESČIUS, V. *Lietuvos kariuomenė 1918–1920...*, p. 82, 108, 128, 227, 241, 249, 261, 267, 289, 436; STATKUS, V. Op. cit., p. 31, 39, 763; RUKŠA, Antanas. *Kovos dėl Lietuvos nepriklausomybės*. T. 2. Cleveland, 1981, p. 147, 148, 169, 229, 303, 343, 346; RUSECKAS, Petras. *Savanorių žygiai*. T. 1. Kaunas, 1937, p. 16–54.

⁵¹ PETRONIS, V. Op. cit., p. 73; Įsakymas Lietuvos kariuomenei nr. 1, 1919-10-12. *LCVA*, f. 384, ap. 1, b. 13, l. 1; Vyriausybės tardymo komisijos posėdžio protokolas, 1919-06-15. *LCVA*, f. 923, ap. 1, b. 60, l. 1–2.

⁵² GUŽAS, [Petras]. Atsiminimai iš Kauno Karo Komendantūros darbų 1919 m. sausio–kovo mėn. *Karo archyvas*, 1925, t. 1, p. 198–199.

⁵³ PAULIUKAS, A. Op. cit., p. 217, 240.

⁵⁴ Santykiai su lenkais. *Kariškių žodis*, 1919-08-14, nr. 13, p. 102; Lenkų kurstymai. *Kariškių žodis*, 1919-10-17, nr. 22, p. 172.

⁵⁵ LESČIUS, V. *Lietuvos kariuomenė 1918–1920...*, p. 115; ŽILINSKAS, Jurgis. *Atsiminimai. 1885–1957*. Vilnius, 2005, p. 181.

for the failure to fulfil their duty as conscripts awaited them.⁵⁶ Various issues also emerged due to the imperfections and inconsistencies of the legal documents that regulated the organisation and implementation of conscription.⁵⁷ Without any national legal acts regulating the procurement of manpower for the armed forces, the government was forced to apply previously received law, mostly from the Russian Empire.⁵⁸ However, the procedures set out for exemptions and or temporarily delaying compulsory military service were often taken advantage of. Legally, exemptions could be granted to teachers, secondary school students, individuals with difficult family or health situations, and later clergymen as well.⁵⁹ The essential reasons given by those trying to evade military service were related to the exceptions stipulated by law for exemption from or the temporary delay of military service. These were studies, a difficult family situation or poor health.⁶⁰ For those studying at secondary schools, military service could be delayed up to 24 months. For teachers and seminarians, it could be delayed up to 28 months. However, some students never completed their studies, or did not go on to teach after completing them. The government had to decide what to do with such cases.⁶¹ Conscripts could also make use of the legal possibility to delay military service in order to help aged parents who were incapable of doing farmwork themselves. Legal regulations stipulated that if a family only had a single able-bodied man, military service could be delayed because he was fulfilling his duty to provide for his family.⁶² However, some of those eligible for conscription were consciously 'late' to report to the conscription office, because it was possible to receive a temporary delay of military service if their parents had reached the age when they were legally deemed to be incapacitated for work (55 years).⁶³

Apart from this, conscripts were not carefully inspected medically, at least until the point when the Law on Conscription was amended in 1924 to include a list of diseases and bodily defects.⁶⁴ This meant that conscripts could take advantage of the

⁵⁶ In late 1919 and early 1920, conscripts evading military service could receive a fine of 10 thousand auksinis (the Lithuanian version of the ostmark) and/or imprisonment of up to 3 months. When the Constituent Seimas passed an amendment to the Criminal Code on 21 December 1920, the evasion of compulsory military service would be met with stricter punishment. Conscripts evading military service could be fined with 5–20 thousand auksinis or receive 6 months to 2 years of imprisonment. – Marijampolės apskrities komendantų skelbimas, [no date]. *LCVA*, f. 929, ap. 5, b. 14, l. 6; Vietinės kariuomenės brigados vado raštas krašto apsaugos ministrui, 1920-11-12. *LCVA*, f. 929, ap. 5, b. 380, l. 98.

⁵⁷ KUODYS, M. Op. cit., p. 101.

⁵⁸ For more information about the legislative process relating to compulsory military service in Lithuania from 1919 to 1940: ČERNIUS, Nerijus. *Karo prievolės teisėkūra Lietuvoje (1918–1940)*. *Karo archyvas*, 2023, t. 38, p. 108–161.

⁵⁹ Kariuomenės šaukiamosios instrukcijos. *Laikinosios Vyriausybės žinios*, 1919-03-05, nr. 4, p. 2; Laikinieji naujokų šaukimo įstatai. *Laikinosios Vyriausybės žinios*, 1919-10-08, Nr. 13, p. 1–2.

⁶⁰ SEREIČIKAS, M. Op. cit., p. 205–206.

⁶¹ Rokiškio apskrities viršininko raštas KAM Mobilizacijos daliai, 1920-08-21. *LCVA*, f. 929, ap. 5, b. 31, l. 164.

⁶² Laikinieji naujokų šaukimo įstatai. *Laikinosios Vyriausybės žinios*, 1919-10-08, Nr. 13, p. 1.

⁶³ Telšių apskrities viršininko raštas KAM Mobilizacijos skyriui, 1920-07-02. *LCVA*, f. 929, ap. 5, b. 1, l. 109.

⁶⁴ Appendix to Law on Conscription. *Vyriausybės žinios*, 1924-08-20, Nr. 168, p. 5–11.

conscription process and more easily evade military service for health reasons.⁶⁵ Conscription offices continued to receive complaints about the enrolment of new conscripts in the army.⁶⁶ The complaints were mostly about military service not being delayed for newly enrolled conscripts despite significant family or health circumstances.⁶⁷

Institutional reasons included a lack of experience on behalf of the organisations that administered the conscription process and their ineffectiveness in catching deserters.⁶⁸ The large number of men who failed to show up at the conscription office and the ineffective search for them in the early stages of the conscription process had a negative effect on later calls for conscripts. Eligible men realised that if they did not turn up at the conscription office, no one would actively look for them.⁶⁹ The district commanders who were responsible for this task complained of not having enough manpower to search for individuals hiding from military service. They also emphasised the poor performance of the police in the provinces.⁷⁰

The operations of the services administering the conscription process are illustrated by the words of an officer who participated in the effort to locate men who did not report to the conscription office: 'When I left with my guards to arrest the conscripts, they complained to me why the district chief or local authorities had not given them notice [of their call to service]. Then I personally instructed them to join the army, and they all joined [...].'⁷¹ The faults of the police in the search for deserters are reflected in yet another case. One conscript, arrested for the evasion of military service, claimed he had not received any call up papers; even though he had been living with his parents all this time, no one had come to look for him.⁷² Not all cases were instances of ill will. The services simply had too little experience.⁷³ When the authorities began to organise the conscription process, various inaccuracies came up as documents were filled in. Even though the institutions administering the conscription process compiled conscription lists based on parish registers, they misspelt

⁶⁵ KAM Mobilizacijos skyriaus raštas vidaus reikalų ministrui, 1920-08-20. *LCVA*, f. 929, ap. 5, b. 31, l. 168.

⁶⁶ Complaints about enrolment had to be submitted within four weeks of the day of enrolment. It was accepted that six weeks after their enrolment, men were not released from military service even if there was a legal basis for their exemption from military service. – KAM Mobilizacijos skyriaus raštas vidaus reikalų ministrui, 1920-11-13. *LCVA*, f. 929, ap. 5, b. 31, l. 225.

⁶⁷ KAM Mobilizacijos dalies raštas Vilkaviškio komendantui, 1919-08-13. *LCVA*, f. 929, ap. 5, b. 14, l. 54; Naujokų ėmimo apyskaita, 1920-05-19. *LCVA*, f. 929, ap. 5, b. 393, l. 192.

⁶⁸ STEPONAITIS, V. Op. cit., p. 447; Nemalonios kariškiams žinutės. *Kariškių žodis*, 1919-07-10, Nr. 8, p. 63.

⁶⁹ KAM Mobilizacijos dalies raštas vidaus reikalų ministrui, 1919-08-19. *LCVA*, f. 929, ap. 5, b. 14, l. 34.

⁷⁰ Kėdainių karo komendanto raštas Vietinės kariuomenės brigados vadui, 1921-02-23 [slaptai]. *LCVA*, f. 929, ap. 1, b. 64, l. 59; Kauno miesto komendanto raštas Vietinės kariuomenės brigados vadui, 1921-03-09 [slaptai]. *LCVA*, f. 929, ap. 1, b. 64, l. 60.

⁷¹ Antano Čebelio duotas paaiškinimas Kauno apskrities pilietinės apsaugos vadui, 1919-05-19. *LCVA*, f. 929, ap. 1, b. 64, l. 10.

⁷² Kaltinamojo [Kazio Kisieliaus] tardymo protokolas, 1926-03-22. *LCVA*, f. 483, ap. 5, b. 1818, l. 20.

⁷³ KUODYS, M. Op. cit., p. 87.

conscripts' names and made mistakes when copying down their family status, date of birth and other important information.⁷⁴ Determining conscripts' ages was not always an easy task, because parish registers from some churches, mosques and synagogues had been taken to Russia and Germany in 1915 and never returned.⁷⁵ This shortcoming was addressed by suggesting that the information could be determined based on residents' testimony, confirmed by a local institution or the parish priest. However, conscription officials sometimes determined conscripts' age simply by their appearance.⁷⁶

Social reasons were not just related to cultural and economic inequality (conscripts' education, migration and occupation), they were also linked to a conscript's life experience, bribery, and even the falsification of documents. During the 1919–1920 period, the Lithuanian armed forces had to deal with high levels of illiteracy. Many conscripts had no opportunities to be educated. It is not entirely clear how many conscripts called up by the army were illiterate, because they did not yet collect information about their educational status. However, data from 1921 shows that as many as a third of those eligible for conscription were illiterate. At the time, schools had not begun to address the issue for which they were in part created, i.e. fostering patriotism and inculcating the importance of military service. People were only beginning to speak of the idea that '[...] whatever attitudes schools instil toward the nation's military preparedness are the attitudes the nation will have [...].'⁷⁷ An additional issue causing difficulties to those in charge of conscription was emigration. In 1920, 3,514 emigres left legally for the United States of America.⁷⁸ We do not know how many emigrated illegally.⁷⁹ Occupational factors also played an important role in the conscription process, as Lithuania was an agricultural region. Many of its residents made a living by farming.⁸⁰ Farmers wished to keep their manpower, and this also led to attempts to evade military service.⁸¹ It was often the case that farmers simply did not allow their sons to enlist, or hid them from recruiters. If they were

⁷⁴ In some cases, the date of birth of a conscript was transferred incorrectly to a list of eligibles, and therefore their military service was delayed. – KAM raštas vidaus reikalų ministrui, 1920-06-16. LCVA, f. 929, ap. 5, b. 31, l. 87.

⁷⁵ Rokiškio apskritys viršininko raštas KAM Mobilizacijos skyriui, 1921-07-07. LCVA, f. 929, ap. 5, b. 52, l. 65.

⁷⁶ KAM raštas vidaus reikalų ministrui, 1920-06-16. LCVA, f. 929, ap. 5, b. 52, l. 87.

⁷⁷ BULVIČIUS, V. Op. cit., p. 357.

⁷⁸ KASPERAVIČIŪTĖ, Vitalija. *Lietuvos Respublikos emigracijos politika 1918–1940*. Daktaro disertacija. Kaunas, 2011, p. 39, 88.

⁷⁹ PACEVIČIUS, P. *Lietuvos kariuomenės dezertyrai nepriklausomybės...*, p. 98.

⁸⁰ Stasys Šalkauskis estimated that in interwar Lithuania about 1.8 million individuals made up the farming class. This was a significant number for a country that had a population of just two to 2.5 million. – ŠALKAUSKIS, Stasys. *Lietuvių tauta ir jos ugdymas*. Kaunas, 1933, p. 56; JOKUBAUSKAS, Vytautas. *Causes of Death in the Lithuanian Armed Forces, 1919–1940*. In *Defeating Disease in the Changing Society of the Southeast Baltic from the 18th to the 20th Century* (Acta Historica Universitatis Klaipedensis, Vol. 43). Ed. by Milda KONTRIMĖ. Klaipėda, 2022, p. 99.

⁸¹ JOKUBAUSKAS, V. *Gyvenimas ir mirtis...*, p. 100.

arrested for not reporting to the conscription office, they could be ‘bought out’ from the local police.⁸²

Psychological reasons for the evasion of military service were many and varied. First and foremost, there was the fear of death on the battlefield or crippling injury. Separation from family or routine life also caused eligible men to shirk their duty of service. There were also men who decided not to present themselves to the conscription office because they had heard about the experiences of brothers, friends and acquaintances who had already served.⁸³ This meant the decision to serve or to evade service was also affected by family members and people in the conscript’s social circle.

There was a variety of ways in which eligible men avoided military service. There were two main methods: not reporting to the conscription office (hiding, emigrating, enlisting in the armed forces of other countries), and avoiding service by illicit means (bribery, falsifying documents, presenting incorrect information). Men who did not report to the conscription office hid in their own homes or in the homes of their relatives and close acquaintances.⁸⁴ They rarely did so without the knowledge of their parents and relatives. The military command demanded that parents and relatives of eligible men in hiding be punished. It believed that if parents told eligible men to report to the conscription office or forced deserters out of their homes, then it would be much harder for conscripts and soldiers to find a hiding place.⁸⁵ The armed forces also recorded cases of men included in draft lists already serving in German or Polish armed forces.⁸⁶ For the most part, these were Germans, Poles and Jews living in Lithuania. Many draft-age men trying to evade military service opted to travel abroad.⁸⁷ They departed for the USA, Germany, Poland, Latvia or the Klaipėda region.⁸⁸ Many draft-age men fled to Germany even before the draft was announced.

⁸² 5-ojo pėstininkų pulko 2-os kulkosvaidžių kuopos kareivių I. Šimkaus ir S. Vitkaus parodymai apie papirkimą, slėpimąsi ir nestojimą į Lietuvos kariuomenę, 1921-01-28. LCVA, f. 10, ap. 1, b. 74, l. 243.

⁸³ Kretingos apskrities mobilizacijos komisijos karininko Šlepiko pareiškimas KAM Mobilizacijos dalies viršininkui, 1920-01-05. LCVA, f. 929, ap. 5, b. 31, l. 19.

⁸⁴ Kariuomenės teismo II nuovados tardytojo raštas Kamajų nuovados viršininkui, 1931-11-20. LCVA, f. 483, ap. 5, b. 44, l. 77 ap.

⁸⁵ Vietinės kariuomenės brigados vado raštas krašto apsaugos ministrui, 1920-11-12. LCVA, f. 929, ap. 5, b. 380, l. 98.

⁸⁶ Marijampolės apskrities valdybos raštas VRM Piliečių apsaugos departamentui, 1919-07-25. LCVA, f. 929, ap. 5, b. 14, l. 28; Sąrašas Lietuvos piliečių, stojusių į vokiečių armiją, [no date]. LCVA, f. 929, ap. 5, b. 14, l. 30–30ap.

⁸⁷ There is no data for emigration from Lithuania in 1919. It is possible that the government did not issue any orders to record numbers of people crossing the state border. It was only in 1920 that departing individuals began to be registered. – KASPERAVIČIŪTĖ, V. Op. cit., p. 39, 88.

⁸⁸ Generalinio štabo Kanceliarijos skyriaus viršininko telefonograma Vietinės kariuomenės brigados vadui su Generalinio štabo rezoliucija: „reikalinga sustabdyti išvažiavimą šaukiamų kariuomenėn“, [no date]. LCVA, f. 929, ap. 1, b. 380, l. 81; Kretingos apskrities viršininko pranešimas vidaus reikalų ministrui, 1921-02-17. LCVA, f. 10, ap. 1, b. 74, l. 200–201.

At that time, the German border was practically unguarded. Soldiers running away from the Lithuanian armed forces also found refuge there.⁸⁹

Conscripts also used legally established exemptions to avoid military service, or at least to delay it. Some conscripts did so by legal means, others by illegal means. Archival sources reveal that eligible men simulated illness or bribed officials. For example, two conscripts procured falsified documents stating that they had congenital heart disease. The Panevėžys Regular Health Inspection Committee recognised that the men did not have heart disease and were therefore fully capable of serving in the army.⁹⁰ Another similar case involved conscripts paying the secretary of the conscription office to issue them service exemption documents.⁹¹ On 18 March 1920, in order to rein in bribery, the Lithuanian government added a ninth item to paragraph 14 of the Special State Protections Regulations. The item made officials criminally responsible for 'accepting bribes for the release of conscripts or soldiers from the armed forces.'⁹² Rampant bribery,⁹³ the falsification of identity documents⁹⁴ and the presentation of counterfeit medical statements regarding the health of eligible men⁹⁵ were all problems the army faced as it procured the manpower it needed through conscription. These were problems the governments of the other Baltic states also faced. This is demonstrated by the Estonian example.⁹⁶

Conscripts often had to live in hiding for six to ten years, or even more. Some were never found.⁹⁷

Failure to enlist in the Lithuanian armed forces was punishable by fines and imprisonment. In late 1920, the punishment for such activity ranged from two to six

⁸⁹ PACEVIČIUS, P. Lietuvos kariuomenės dezertyrai nepriklausomybės..., p. 98.

⁹⁰ Armijos tardytojo nutarimas nr. 1 [Petruui Matuzevičiui ir Antanui Jurevičiui], 1920-10-14. *LCVA*, f. 483, ap. 5, b. 1556, l. 3.

⁹¹ Mažeikių apskrities teismo sprendimas [Adamui Gorodeckui], 1932-02-23. *LCVA*, f. 483, ap. 5, b. 3809, l. 2.

⁹² Nr. 287. Ypatingų Valstybės Apsaugos įstatų § 14 papildymas. *Laikinosios vyriausybės žinios*, 1920-03-18, Nr. 23, p. 2.

⁹³ Jurgis Žilinskas, who was employed at the Kaunas Military Hospital, noted in his memoir that one citizen attempted to evade military service by slipping a wad of roubles into his pocket while pointing at a medical certificate. – ŽILINSKAS, J. Op. cit., p. 181. Pauliukas indicated in his memoir that the town elder of Anykščiai issued false (forged) passports to conscripts in exchange for a bribe. – PAULIUKAS, A. Op. cit., p. 330. An article by Jokubauskas and Vitkus details an episode of bribery in which a military medic of the Lithuanian armed forces and a physician from the Vilkaviškis district received bribes of 500 to 2,000 litas from four Jewish conscripts for exempting them from military service. – JOKUBAUSKAS, V.; VITKUS, H. Op. cit., pp. 105, 106.

⁹⁴ Skaudvilės ir Viežaičių apskričių naujokų ėmimo komisijos pirmininkas, 1919-08-07. *LCVA*, f. 929, ap. 5, b. 14, l. 35.

⁹⁵ KAM Mobilizacijos skyriaus raštas, 1919-08-13. *LCVA*, f. 929, ap. 5, b. 14, l. 43.

⁹⁶ An Estonian military official was charged with accepting a bribe in March 1919 in return for issuing a certificate of exemption from military service. A conscript was charged with bribing an official in the spring of 1919 in order to be exempted from military service. – *ERA*, 927-3-11. Another conscript was charged with evasion of military service and presenting a forged certificate from January to July 1919. – *ERA*, 927-3-13.

⁹⁷ Kariuomenės teismo nutarimas Nr. 1 [Boliui Jablonskiui], 1926-10-28. *LCVA*, f. 483, ap. 5, b. 1458, l. 2; Vilkaviškio apskrities komendantūros raštas Kariuomenės teismo prokuratūrai [dėl Armono Gišvantnerio], 1935-10-28. *LCVA*, f. 483, ap. 5, b. 1100, l. 17.

years' imprisonment. Those who concealed conscripts could receive fines of 5,000 to 20,000 auksinis and from six months to two years in prison.⁹⁸ Going over to the enemy's side was punishable by death.⁹⁹ Theoretically, all these measures had to prevent conscripts from evading their service. However, in practice, even the strict penalties for the failure to fulfil the duty of service and sheltering conscripts did not produce the desired results.

The deserter's path: from ideation to action

From 1919 to 1920, the biggest challenges most units in the Lithuanian armed forces faced were disease, death, and the growing numbers of attempts to flee.¹⁰⁰ In the Lithuanian army, runaways were both men who did not report for service to their post and deserters. The Military Penal Law on the Evasion of Service (*Kariškių baudžiamasis įstatymas dėl karo tarnybos vengimo*), issued on 6 February 1920, defined desertion as leaving one's post with the intention of completely evading military service. The law viewed not reporting to one's post as a type of fleeing that was not motivated by the intention of completely evading military service.¹⁰¹ Discerning the difference between desertion and not reporting to one's post was a subjective question that required the analysis of the runaway's goals and motives. Cases of failure to report to the post were investigated by the Regimental Court, while cases of desertion came under the Military Court. This meant that the penalties issued by the Military Court for runaways were more severe.

During the draft of 1919–1920, the Lithuanian armed forces enlisted 34,420 men.¹⁰² Some of these ran away. Determining the real number of runaways from the army is a difficult task. *First*, sources provide no statistical record of runaways from the Lithuanian armed forces in 1919. *Second*, statistical records of runaways from the Lithuanian armed forces from 1920 are frequently fragmented. *Third*, records conflate actual deserters and soldiers who did not report to their post under the general category of 'deserter'. Soldiers were even registered as deserters when, for various

⁹⁸ Skelbimas-įstatymas nr. 4, naujokų, užsilikusių nuo praėjusių šaukimų, reikalais, 1921-10-12. LCVA, f. 929, ap. 5, b. 52, l. 211; Vietinės kariuomenės brigados vado raštas krašto apsaugos ministrui, 1920-11-12. LCVA, f. 929, ap. 5, b. 380, l. 98.

⁹⁹ Krašto apsaugos ministro, Generalinio štabo viršininko ir Kariuomenės teismo gynėjo raštas Respublikos Prezidentui [dėl Henriko Jablonskio], 1928-03-21. LCVA, f. 929, ap. 5, b. 380, l. 25.

¹⁰⁰ VRM Piliiečių apsaugos departamento raštas apskričių viršininkams, 1920-11-22 [slaptai]. LCVA, f. 929, ap. 5, b. 380, l. 108; SURGAILIS, G. *Trečiasis...*, p. 31, 163; SURGAILIS, G. *Septintasis...*, p. 16, 94; SURGAILIS, G. *Penktasis...*, p. 5; KUODYS, M. Op. cit., p. 101–102.

¹⁰¹ Kariškių baudžiamasis įstatymas dėl karo tarnybos vengimo. *Laikinosios Vyriausybės žinios*, 1920-02-06, Nr. 19, p. 3.

¹⁰² Žinios apie naujokų ėmimo darbo eigą 1921 m. vasario 1 d., [no date]. LCVA, f. 929, ap. 5, b. 3, l. 46.

personal or family-related reasons, having been on leave, they returned to their post late. Those who were captured by enemy forces or went missing in action were also registered on lists of military runaways. *Fourth*, soldiers ran away from the army more than once, with some making the attempt up to five or seven times.¹⁰³

There was no concerted effort in 1919 to systematically collect data on deserters. Military units were often left to deal with the problem of desertion on their own. First, the problem was caused by the poor provision of supplies and difficult conditions of service. The army's attitude towards those evading military service became stricter once the provision of supplies and conditions of service improved.¹⁰⁴ The army also began to deal with deserters more stringently when in 1920 a more accurate method of registering runaway soldiers was introduced. The number of deserters captured by military commanders in 1920 was 5,082.¹⁰⁵ Soldiers who returned voluntarily to the army were also included in the lists of deserters. It is unclear when soldiers ran away from their posts before they were caught in 1920. It is possible that some had been 'inherited' from 1919. Military commanders reported 1,769 runaway and 1,281 captured soldiers in the fourth quarter of 1920. The number of runaways who were never caught was 488, or 27.58%.¹⁰⁶ More accurate information on deserters was collected in 1921. The army registered a total of 3,330 cases of desertion that year. A total of 2,486 deserters were captured, while 454 returned of their own accord. The number of deserters who were never caught was 661, or 19.84%.¹⁰⁷ Not only conscripts deserted from the army. There were deserters among the non-commissioned officers, commissioned officers and military officials. A study by Pacevičius set the number of deserters in 1919 and 1920 at 20,000. It defined deserters both as those who did not present themselves to the conscription office and those in the Lithuanian armed forces who ran away from their posts. Soldiers who attempted to run away from the army more than once were not singled out in the total number of deserters. Thus, the scale of desertion was exaggerated. Based on the number of deserters identified in historical research, it would appear that almost half the soldiers that served in the Lithuanian armed forces in 1919 and 1920 attempted to run away.¹⁰⁸ However, the number of deserters should not be read as the number of individual deserters, but as the number of individual cases of soldiers running away. In 1919 and 1920, on average 20% to 25% of runaway soldiers were never caught. Bearing in mind the number of

¹⁰³ KUODYS, M. Op. cit., p. 102.

¹⁰⁴ JAKŠTYS, G. Op. cit., p. 66.

¹⁰⁵ Vietinės kariuomenės brigados štabo viršininko pranešimas Generalinio štabo viršininkui, 1921-03-21. LCVA, f. 929, ap. 1, b. 64, l. 51-52.

¹⁰⁶ Based on my own calculations. – Vietinės kariuomenės brigados vado slapsti pranešimai krašto apsaugos ministrui, 1920-11-25 ir 1920-12-17. LCVA, f. 929, ap. 1, b. 380, l. 99-101, 104-105.

¹⁰⁷ Based on my own calculations. – Vietinės kariuomenės brigados vado slaptas pranešimas, 1922-02-02. LCVA, f. 10, ap. 1, b. 152, l. 37.

¹⁰⁸ In late 1920, a total of 41,763 soldiers served in the Lithuanian armed forces. – VAIČENONIS, Jonas. Lietuvos kariuomenės skaičiai 1920-1939 m. *Karo archyvas*, 2002, t. 17, p. 152.

deserters captured in 1920, the total number of cases of desertion during the Wars of Independence, including cases of soldiers not reporting to their posts, amounted to over 6,000. Cases of soldiers not reporting to their posts did not pose any real threat to the procurement of manpower by the army. These ‘temporary runaways’ either returned of their own accord or were soon located. The real threat to manning the army were true deserters. They fled abroad, enlisted in the armies of other countries, and sought to evade military service completely by whatever way they could devise.

The methods and causes of soldiers running away from the Lithuanian armed forces were varied. The motives of every runaway soldier were unique and determined by their individual experience. The causes of soldiers running away from the army were similar to those of eligible men who did not enlist. Those who decided to evade military service by not presenting themselves to the conscription office made their decision right away, while soldiers who had enlisted did so upon encountering the reality of military service. Factors that led to desertion included the influence of hostile propaganda and agitation, a soldier’s ethnic self-perception, problems with soldiers’ training, institutional efforts to catch deserters, psychological reasons, and other factors.¹⁰⁹ In the category of enlisted runaways, unique motives emerge for evading military service, characteristic of military life. These include fear of death, injury and being crippled in action, non-statutory relations, provision of supplies and service conditions, disease, and fear of punishment for crimes committed. Running away from the armed forces was often the result of not just the soldier’s instinctive reaction to the conditions of service, but also to instances when the state and/or the army failed to fulfil their commitments (e.g. set a finite period for military service, or provide soldiers with the necessary supplies and material support for their family members).

Political reasons were among the many reasons for desertion. These included activities directed against the political order of the state, and agitation. Factors that led to soldiers running away from the army could be found in the military environment. Some soldiers and military officials agitated against the political order of the state. They belittled the government and the armed forces of Lithuania, as well as the authority of the officers that served in them. Soldiers who participated in activities directed against the political order of the state praised the Bolsheviks and the Poles.¹¹⁰ On 22–23 February 1920, a mutiny broke out in the Kaunas Garrison of the

¹⁰⁹ PACEVIČIUS, P. Lietuvos kariuomenės dezertyrai nepriklausomybės..., p. 67–68, 75–78. SURGAILIS, G. *Trečiasis...*, p. 163.

¹¹⁰ Kaltinimo aktas apie kareivį mokomosios komandos 2-ojo Atsargos bataliono Idelį Epšteiną, 1920-02-20. LCVA, f. 483, ap. 5, b. 913, l. 3–3 ap.; Kaltinimo aktas apie Kauno stoties komendantūros komandos kareivį Augustą Frenzelį, 1920-04-20. LCVA, f. 483, ap. 5, b. 947, l. 3; Kaltinimo aktas apie kareivį Šiaulių bataliono Mykolą Ravič-Serko, 1919-09. LCVA, f. 483, ap. 5, b. 3079, l. 3; Kaltinimo aktas apie kareivį 6-ojo pėstininkų pulko Motiejų Rimką, 1920-06-26. LCVA, f. 483, ap. 5, b. 3179, l. 4; Armijos teismo išvada apie tardymą prieš karininką Rainoldą Eidrigevičių, kaltinamą priešvalstybinėje agitacijoje, paniekinimą, 1919-12-06. LCVA, f. 483, ap. 5, b. 900, l. 4–4 ap.

Lithuanian armed forces. It was the result of economic and political causes, as well as causes related to the conditions of service.¹¹¹ During the mutiny, 181 soldiers ran away from the 2nd Reserve Battalion alone.¹¹² Incitement to run away from the army was not a rare phenomenon in the Lithuanian army.¹¹³ Soldiers were incited to run and act against the government or the military command by their fellow soldiers. Soldiers became targets of agitators in environments outside the army, when they were on leave at home or in town.

Legal reasons were related to the imperfect nature of legal documents regulating the process of military service. These failed to even define the duration of military service. Relations between soldiers, rights and responsibilities, and issues of discipline were regulated by temporary statutes: the Temporary Disciplinary Statute (*Laikinasis drausmės (disciplinos) statutas*) and the Temporary Statute for the Management of Military Relations and Duties (*Laikinasis kariškių santykių ir pareigų statutas*).¹¹⁴ Soldiers often came from the lower classes. The officers came above them according to social class.¹¹⁵ Military officers and officials frequently overstepped their powers.¹¹⁶ Unclear situations even arose during court proceedings. In practice, the Army Court, established on 7 July 1919 and later called the Military Court, encountered difficulties incriminating criminal acts.¹¹⁷ Determining the true motives of soldiers running away from the army was difficult. When caught, runaways often lied and made excuses.¹¹⁸ Soldiers who had violated military discipline or run away from the army claimed that their company commanders failed to explain to them their duties as soldiers.¹¹⁹ When other soldiers saw that deserters who had been returned to their units easily evaded the penalties, they too were less fearful of running away.¹²⁰ When deserters began to receive stricter punishments, the number of runaways decreased.¹²¹ The social benefits of soldiers were not regulated by law. On 29 June 1919, the Lithuanian armed forces issued an order that established a mechanism for providing the families of volunteers and conscripts with benefits. The order stipulated that the family

¹¹¹ Economic reasons included the poor provision of food supplies, late wages, unpaid benefits for soldier's family members, and unacceptable hygienic conditions in barracks. Political reasons included the attempt to grant soldiers the right to vote in the Constituent Seimas and release political prisoners who had not fought against Lithuanian independence. Patriotic reasons included discharging military officers who did not speak Lithuanian from the army. – IVINSKIS, Zenonas. Šarvuotas auto divizionas. Šarvuotų automobilių dalinys iki jo įjungimo į Šarvuočių rinktinę (1924.I.1). *Karo archyvas*, 1940, t. 12, p. 164.

¹¹² PACEVIČIUS, P. Lietuvos kariuomenės dezertyrai nepriklausomybės..., p. 86–87, 114.

¹¹³ Emilio Kabakerio malonės prašymas Respublikos Prezidentui, 1924-09-17. *LCVA*, f. 507, ap. 4, b. 1544, l. 7.

¹¹⁴ STATKUS, V. Op. cit., p. 710.

¹¹⁵ BERKOVICH, I. Op. cit., p. 7.

¹¹⁶ Vietinės kariuomenės brigados štabo raštas krašto apsaugos ministrui, 1921-11-14. *LCVA*, f. 384, ap. 3, b. 364, l. 5.

¹¹⁷ 1919–1929 m. Kariuomenės teismas. [Parengė Kariuomenės teismas.] Kaunas, 1929, p. 12.

¹¹⁸ KUODYS, M. Op. cit., p. 102.

¹¹⁹ Įsakymas Lietuvos kariuomenei nr. 260, 1920-05-06, *LCVA*, f. 384, ap. 1, b. 23, l. 60.

¹²⁰ Lietuvos spaudos biuro pranešimas, 1919-08-12. *LCVA*, f. 516, ap. 4, b. 1, l. 93.

¹²¹ SURGAILIS, Gintautas. *Antrasis Lietuvos Didžiojo kunigaikščio Algirdo pėstininkų pulkas*. Vilnius, 2014, p. 80.

of a deceased soldier was entitled to six months of his wages and a welfare payment of six months. The family of an injured soldier could get up to three months' pay and a welfare payment of three months, depending on the severity of the injury.¹²² Continued assistance to the families of deceased or injured soldiers in the form of benefits was not addressed by the order. Thus, the issue of providing for the families of deceased and injured soldiers was left unresolved.

The category of *social reasons* includes factors such as conscripts' self-perception, lacking a sense of responsibility, problems with soldiers' education, and family-related circumstances.¹²³ Soldiers did not have any political affiliation to the Lithuanian state. Not all soldiers saw Lithuania as their motherland or homeland. Some did not want to serve beyond the limits of their home district, so they deserted when their units were transferred to other locations. For example, when the Šiauliai Battalion was absorbed into the 3rd Infantry Regiment, the numbers of deserters went up. Soldiers had no desire to leave their home towns behind.¹²⁴ Estonian soldiers also did not have the freedom to choose their district of service based on where they lived. During the struggle for the independence of their country, they were sent on combat missions beyond the limits of their homeland. It was only in 1934 that conscripts began to be drafted on a territorial basis, taking into consideration the district they lived in and the district they associated themselves with.¹²⁵ It is possible that soldiers who ran away from the army did not comprehend the consequences that awaited them in the future. Some of them did not understand the importance and responsibility of a soldier's duty.¹²⁶ Deserters were frequently condemned in the press.¹²⁷ Soldiers were sometimes pushed into running away from the army by family misfortunes (such as close relatives falling ill, family homes destroyed by fire), homesickness, and other family-related circumstances. Severed ties to close ones and the community were a significant factor in a soldier's decision to run away from the army. It was often the case that soldiers ran away to their homes to pick up clothing,¹²⁸ to see sick family members,¹²⁹ or out of longing for their homes and

¹²² Paaiškinimai išdavime pašalpų kareivių šeimynoms. *Kariškių žodis*, 1919-07-10, Nr. 8, p. 63–64.

¹²³ LESČIUS, V. *Lietuvos kariuomenė 1918–1920...*, p. 158.

¹²⁴ Vyr. ltn. Karvelio atsiminimai iš 3-čio pėst. D. L. Kun. Vytauto pulko gyvenimo, 1923-06-22. *LCVA*, f. 516, ap. 1, b. 64, l. 2.

¹²⁵ KOPYTIN, I. Op. cit., s. 27.

¹²⁶ Antano Alseikos malonės prašymas Respublikos Prezidentui, 1931-02-20. *LCVA*, f. 483, ap. 5, b. 60, l. 1–1 ap.; Krašto apsaugos ministro, Generalinio štabo viršininko ir Kariuomenės teismo gynėjo raštas Respublikos Prezidentui [dėl Henriko Jablonskio], 1928-03-21. *LCVA*, f. 483, ap. 5, b. 1458, l. 25; Nusprendimas [Jonui Bagdonui], 1920-05-31. *LCVA*, f. 516, ap. 1, b. 5, l. 12.

¹²⁷ Senas kareivis. Nemalonūs dalykai. *Kariškių žodis*, 1919-06-26, Nr. 6, p. 46.

¹²⁸ 2-o atsargos bataliono eilinio Sukockio Petro kaltinimo aktas, 1927-01-05. *LCVA*, f. 483, ap. 5, b. 3599, l. 8; Tardymas [Juozo Grigaičio], 1919-12-15. *LCVA*, f. 1502, ap. 1, b. 59, l. 13; Tardymas [Kazio Čekausko], 1921-05-10. *LCVA*, f. 527, ap. 2, b. 9, l. 7.

¹²⁹ Kaltinimo aktas apie 2 p. D. L. K. Algirdo pulko 8-os kuopos kareivį Dominiką Streiką, 1920-11-28. *LCVA*, f. 507, ap. 4, b. 3622, l. 2.

families,¹³⁰ stating that the ‘heart ached without them.’¹³¹ Soldiers ran away because they wanted to get well again after an illness¹³² or to earn some money.¹³³ Family members visited or wrote to soldiers asking them to come home. If the military command did not then grant them leave, soldiers ran home anyway.¹³⁴ One soldier justified his attempt to run away by saying he had received such a letter from his mother. The letter had informed him that his family home had gone up in flames along with the animals, so the soldier decided to desert.¹³⁵ Another soldier left his unit when he met his wife at Kaunas station on the way to an assignment. She had asked him for help renting out their flat and bringing home firewood.¹³⁶

In the group of *economic reasons*, the main reason for abandoning the army was farm work. The number of runaways increased in the haymaking season.¹³⁷ Requests for at least a month of leave for the purpose of helping with farm work reached the military command from the families of drafted men. This is illustrated by the example of one soldier. He had been granted leave, but did not return to his unit because he stayed behind to help with farm work. A town official wrote to his commander saying that ‘[the soldier] could not step away from farm work for a single day, especially during the harvest, because he was the only remaining member of the family who was able-bodied [...]’.¹³⁸ Unit commanders could make decisions about granting temporary leave for the purpose of doing farm work or for other important family matters.¹³⁹ If requests for leave were denied, the soldiers simply ran off.¹⁴⁰

Service conditions were one of the main reasons for desertion in the armed forces.¹⁴¹ How soldiers viewed the service conditions depended on their needs and their attitude. Their perception was the result of a comparison between civilian life

¹³⁰ Utenos mobilizacijos rajono Mobilizacijos skyriaus dezertyro [Antano Noriūno] tardymo protokolas, 1924-10-21. *LCVA*, f. 507, ap. 4, b. 2653, l. 25.

¹³¹ Tardymas [Antano Baiboko], 1919-09-27. *LCVA*, f. 1502, ap. 1, b. 7, l. 6.

¹³² Kauno komendantūros pulko teismo nusprendimas [Justinui Lopetai], 1920-03-13. *LCVA*, f. 1502, ap. 1, b. 64, l. 17.

¹³³ Tardymas [Ričardo Zaleckio], 1919-11-25. *LCVA*, f. 1502, ap. 1, b. 63, l. 11.

¹³⁴ Kvota [Broniaus Užupio], 1919-10-04. *LCVA*, f. 1502, ap. 1, b. 24, l. 1–7; Tardymas [Broniaus Užupio], 1920-01-15. *LCVA*, f. 1502, ap. 1, b. 84, l. 18.

¹³⁵ Tardymas [Antano Bučo], 1921-01-15. *LCVA*, f. 527, ap. 2, b. 8, l. 1.

¹³⁶ Tardymas [Juozo Maciejausko], 1920-01-30. *LCVA*, f. 1502, ap. 1, b. 56, l. 8.

¹³⁷ Vietinės kariuomenės brigados vado slapta pranešimas krašto apsaugos ministrui, kariuomenės vadui, Generalinio štabo viršininkui, I pėstininkų divizijos vadui, II pėstininkų divizijos vadui, III pėstininkų divizijos vadui, IV pėstininkų divizijos vadui, Kavalerijos divizijos vadui, Artillerijos viršininkui, Karo technikos viršininkui, Kariuomenės teismo valstybės gynėjui „Žinios už 1921 metus“, 1922-02-02. *LCVA*, f. 10, ap. 1, b. 152, l. 37.

¹³⁸ Kėdainių apskrities, Orinkiškių valsčiaus viršaičio raštas Mažeikių stoties ir ruožo komendantui, 1920-08-18. *LCVA*, f. 929, ap. 1, b. 380, l. 20.

¹³⁹ KAM Mobilizacijos skyriaus raštas Telšių apskrities viršininkui, 1920-07-13. *LCVA*, f. 929, ap. 5, b. 31, l. 107.

¹⁴⁰ Juzės Šlamiienės prašymas 1-ojo pasienio pulko vadui, 1920-09-30. *LCVA*, f. 764, ap. 1, b. 10, l. 31–32.

¹⁴¹ Due to troubles encountered in the army. *Kariškių žodis*, 1919-07-24, Nr. 10, p. 82–83.

and life in the military.¹⁴² In combat surroundings, soldiers naturally feared dying on the battlefield, being injured, or even crippled. The numbers of deserters increased during combat because soldiers wanted to protect themselves from mortal danger.¹⁴³ War is not a phenomenon that society encounters on an everyday basis. Conscripts often scattered after the first encounter with enemy forces.¹⁴⁴ A battle was a test not just of the physical but also the mental stamina of both sides. The instinctive reaction of soldiers to the conditions of service or situational motivation to survive¹⁴⁵ pushed them towards desertion. Soldiers deserted not just from the battlefield, but on the way to the front as well.¹⁴⁶ On 27 September 1920, a priest wrote the following in his diary: 'Fierce fighting is going on with the Poles near Suvalkai. Many Lithuanians from the 10th Regiment have run away from the front. The prisons are full of deserters.'¹⁴⁷ Desertion during combat was a challenge for many units. One soldier wrote in his memoirs: 'Shells exploding, flashing fire and pillars of dust rising to the sky have done their job all right: the 3rd Company [of the 1st Infantry Regiment] has also taken flight.'¹⁴⁸ Sources show that one private who was left on guard duty while his regiment engaged with enemy forces chose to use the moment to run away. He then hid for four weeks at his parents' house. His parents told the deserter to return to his post, but he then found refuge in his aunt's home and continued hiding there.¹⁴⁹ Another soldier conducted himself in a similar fashion. In order to avoid further combat, he ran away home. When the combat ended, he planned to return to his unit. The runaway returned to his unit, but had to face a penalty of four years' hard labour in prison.¹⁵⁰ These examples demonstrate the fear soldiers felt of dying or being injured on the battlefield. However, not all soldiers serving in the Lithuanian armed forces participated in active combat.¹⁵¹ We cannot assume that the fear of death on the battlefield was a universal reason for the evasion of service. In the Lithuanian armed forces, the probability of dying from illness was no less than the probability of dying in combat.¹⁵²

¹⁴² JOKUBAUSKAS, V. *Gyvenimas ir mirtis...*, p. 356.

¹⁴³ Įsakymas Panevėžio batalionui nr. 176, 1919-08-02. *LCVA*, f. 517, ap. 1, b. 1, l. 180.

¹⁴⁴ PACEVIČIUS, P. Lietuvos kariuomenės dezertyrai nepriklausomybės..., p. 72.

¹⁴⁵ The term 'situational motivation' has been proposed by Robert Rush for describing the motivation of soldiers to survive in combat. – RUSH, Robert Sterling. *Hell in Hürtgen Forest. The Ordeal and Triumph of an American Infantry Regiment*. Lawrence, KS, 2001, pp. 280, 332.

¹⁴⁶ JOKUBAUSKAS, V. *Gyvenimas ir mirtis...*, p. 375.

¹⁴⁷ PAULIUKAS, A. Op. cit., p. 231.

¹⁴⁸ ŠUKYS, Antanas. *Du mediniai ir trys geležiniai kryžiai. Atsiminimai iš Lietuvos nepriklausomybės kovų 1919–1921 metais*. London, 1964, p. 231.

¹⁴⁹ Kaltinimo aktas apie 3-iojo pėstininkų pulko 2-os kulkosvaidžių kuopos kareivį Igną Brazdžiūną, 1921-01-05. *LCVA*, f. 483, ap. 5, b. 2339, l. 6.

¹⁵⁰ Nusprendimas [Antanui Baibokui], 1921-01-17. *LCVA*, f. 527, ap. 2, b. 7, l. 4; Tardymas [Antano Baiboko], 1920-12-02. *LCVA*, f. 527, ap. 2, b. 7, l. 8.

¹⁵¹ SAFRONOVAS, V. *The War Is Not Over?...*, p. 21.

¹⁵² Various sources provide different numbers of soldiers' deaths in combat, deaths from injury, and deaths from disease. According to data from the Military Medical Service, from 1919 to 1920 a total

The numbers of deaths caused by disease were so great that at one point soldiers were buried in mass graves.¹⁵³

At the beginning, when the army was still in its infancy, there were more cases of desertion because soldiers were left with insufficient supplies of food and clothing, lived in unsatisfactory conditions, and had to suffer constant hunger, cold and frequent bouts of illness.¹⁵⁴ The provision of supplies to soldiers was a pressing issue for armies in their formative stages. The Lithuanian case was no exception.¹⁵⁵ During the first year of the country's independence, there were great difficulties in supplying the army with food and clothing, as well as preventing disease.¹⁵⁶ Food shortages led some in command to resort to unorthodox solutions. A general in the Lithuanian armed forces writes in his memoirs how he allowed his soldiers to go home for three or four days in the hope that '[...] those good mothers would provide their sons with a few tasty morsels as they returned to their regiments, and that we, who had stayed behind, could also benefit from them.'¹⁵⁷ Some slight relief was provided by new recruits coming to their newly assigned military units. They shared the food they had brought from home.¹⁵⁸ At issue was not just the quantity of food, but the quality of the food as well. The army inspector frequently received complaints about food products that had spoiled (mouldy bread, grain containing bran, rotten herrings) and rations of unvarying and poor-quality food.¹⁵⁹ It was no wonder then that in late 1920, the minister of defence approved a set of instructions on how to bake bread.¹⁶⁰

of 1,980 soldiers serving in the Lithuanian armed forces died (984 in combat, 133 from injury, and 863 from disease). – INGELEVIČIUS, Valdas; ŪSAS, Juozas; OŽELIS, Kazys, et al. Karo sanitarijos tarnyba 1918–1928. *Mūsų žinynas*, 1928, nr. 45, p. 521, 526, 530. A similar number of soldiers' deaths from disease to the one reported by the Military Medical Service was also presented in a report issued by the Lithuanian armed forces. The report indicates that 837 privates died of infectious and non-infectious diseases. – Žinios apie nuostolius žmonėmis kare su bolševikais, bermontininkais ir lenkais, 1927-06-30. *LCVA*, f. 929, ap. 3, b. 651, l. 42. Meanwhile, according to data provided by Balčiūnas, a military officer who served in the Lithuanian armed forces during the interwar period, a total of 1,401 soldiers from the Lithuanian armed forces died in combat during the Wars of Independence (1919–1923), while 297 soldiers died at the front from infectious diseases. It should be noted that this data only refers to the deaths of Lithuanian armed forces soldiers who died at the front and only of infectious disease. – BALČIŪNAS. Mūsų kariuomenės šventės turinys ir prasmė. *Karys*, 1935-11-23, Nr. 47, p. 1125.

¹⁵³ ŠUKYS, A. Op. cit., p. 150.

¹⁵⁴ ŠNIUKŠTA, P. Op. cit., p. 6.

¹⁵⁵ Latvia and Estonia also had difficulties in providing troops of supplies. – Cf. CIGANOVŠ, J. Op. cit., pp. 12–13; KOPYTIN, I. Op. cit., s. 7, 9.

¹⁵⁶ PACEVIČIUS, P. Lietuvos kariuomenės dezertyrai nepriklausomybės..., p. 77.

¹⁵⁷ GRIGALIŪNAS-GLOVACKIS, Vincas. *Generolo atsiminimai*. II–III dalys. Ats. red. Gintautas SURGAILIS. Vilnius, 2017, p. 33.

¹⁵⁸ JAKŠTYS, G. Op. cit., p. 59.

¹⁵⁹ Įsakymas Lietuvos kariuomenei Nr. 282, 1920-05-25. *LCVA*, f. 384, ap. 1, b. 23, l. 83; Įsakymas Lietuvos kariuomenei Nr. 413, 1920-08-23. *LCVA*, f. 328, ap. 1, b. 23, l. 250.

¹⁶⁰ Instrukcija duonai kepti, 1920-12-21. *LCVA*, f. 384, ap. 1, b. 23, l. 367–368.

Food was not the only shortage soldiers had to face: weapons and clothing were in short supply too. Soldiers' wages were meagre.¹⁶¹ Memoirs of the time provide accounts of soldiers walking around barefoot because not everyone had shoes and clothing.¹⁶² Unit inspections conducted by order of the command revealed that the uniforms of soldiers, especially new recruits, were in poor shape. Most soldiers wore their own clothes and only had one set of undergarments. Not all soldiers had uniform hats or bandages.¹⁶³ On 21 November 1919, a priest wrote the following in his diary: 'In Panevėžys, greater murmurs of discontent can be heard among the soldiers each time. They are clothed poorly and appear to be half naked.'¹⁶⁴ Some of the soldiers who opted to run away justified their actions by pointing to the poor provision of supplies in the army and their own poor health.¹⁶⁵ When soldiers did not return to their units on time once leave had ended, they explained they had been ill at home and had had to look after their health. It was often the case that soldiers treated themselves because they did not have enough money to call a doctor.¹⁶⁶

The army reflected the patriarchal practices prevalent in society at the time. Soldiers were viewed as immature children that commanders (superiors) had to continually discipline and train. Relations between commissioned officers, non-commissioned officers and soldiers were often accompanied by abusive behaviour. Non-statutory relations devolved into bullying, name-calling, sometimes physical and psychological abuse and threats.¹⁶⁷ Corporal punishment, for example whipping, was a widespread method of teaching lessons and punishing soldiers.¹⁶⁸ Soldiers who had run away from the Disciplinary Company¹⁶⁹ stated that they did so because of the cruelty and various forms of torture and beatings they endured from their superiors.¹⁷⁰ The army was also incapable of eliminating the bad practice of using soldiers for farm work on the family farms of officers. Soldiers were used as errand boys by officers'

¹⁶¹ Taking into account the social status of soldiers, wages were considered one of the main motivating factors for serving in the army. – BERKOVICH, I. Op. cit., p. 13.

¹⁶² Lietuvos spaudos biuro pranešimas, 1919-08-12. LCVA, f. 516, ap. 4, b. 1, l. 93.

¹⁶³ Įsakymas Lietuvos kariuomenei nr. 486, 1920-11-19. LCVA, f. 328, ap. 1, b. 23, l. 338.

¹⁶⁴ PAULIUKAS, A. Op. cit., p. 109.

¹⁶⁵ Antano Alseikos malonės prašymas Respublikos Prezidentui, 1931-02-20. LCVA, f. 483, ap. 5, b. 60, l. 1–1 ap.

¹⁶⁶ Parodymas [Antano Gailiaus], 1932-04-13. LCVA, f. 483, ap. 5, b. 978, l. 26; Tardymas apie pabėgimą iš kariuomenės inžinerijos bataliono kareivio Tiškausko Juozo, 1920-02-25. LCVA, f. 1502, ap. 1, b. 83, l. 6; Tardymas [Dominyko Streiko], 1920-03-15. LCVA, f. 507, ap. 4, b. 3622, l. 3; Naujoko Antano Dovydo prašymas Kėdainių m. ir apskr. karo komendantui, 1920-04-21. LCVA, f. 527, ap. 2, b. 10, l. 7.

¹⁶⁷ JOKUBAUSKAS, V. Causes of Death..., p. 119; JOKUBAUSKAS, V. *Gyvenimas ir mirtis...*, p. 335, 365.

¹⁶⁸ RAŠTIKIS, Stasys. *Kovose dėl Lietuvos. Kario prisiminimai*. I dalis. Los Angeles, 1956, p. 143.

¹⁶⁹ The Disciplinary Company was formed in April 1920, in part because of the substantial numbers of runaways.

¹⁷⁰ Antano Alseikos malonės prašymas Respublikos Prezidentui, 1931-10-04. LCVA, f. 483, ap. 5, b. 60, l. 22–22 ap.

wives, and as personal servants and assistants to superiors, even though this was not allowed.¹⁷¹

Soldiers also ran away from the army because they found it difficult keeping to military order and routine.¹⁷² Another reason for deserting the army was the desire to avoid the consequences of crimes committed and other violations of law. Soldiers who had committed crimes deserted because they feared punishment.¹⁷³ Occasionally, soldiers would steal from farmers¹⁷⁴ or participate in looting.¹⁷⁵ It was possible that the decision to run away from the army was based on several factors. These factors included the fear of punishment for stealing, looting, and crimes related to military service, longing for close ones, disease, and various family-related factors.¹⁷⁶ Some soldiers ran away from the army on more than one occasion. Systematic attempts to run away from the army are illustrated by the example of one runaway. He ran away the first time because he had got married and needed to do farm work at home. The second time, the soldier stayed with relatives and acquaintances. The third time, he returned home and spent time recuperating from illness.¹⁷⁷ Conscripts were not the only ones to run away from the army, men who had enlisted voluntarily also did so. Some volunteers ran off without fully understanding why,¹⁷⁸ while others were disappointed with military service and the strict discipline it involved: they had expected military life to be better.¹⁷⁹ A third group believed that they had served long enough and left of their own accord.¹⁸⁰

There were many ways to evade service and run away from the army. Typically, soldiers ran off when a suitable opportunity presented itself, or when there was less supervision. Such opportunities came up during battle, on guard duty, on assignments, or during hospital visits. It was often the case that soldiers who were admitted to military health-care institutions did not return to their units on being discharged. They justified their decision by saying that they needed more time to recuperate at home. If a soldier's actions were deemed not to have the intention of evading mili-

¹⁷¹ JOKUBAUSKAS, V. *Gyvenimas ir mirtis...*, p. 335, 364.

¹⁷² Antano Alseikos malonės prašymas Respublikos Prezidentui, 1931-10-04. *LCVA*, f. 483, ap. 5, b. 60, l. 5-5 ap.

¹⁷³ Kariuomenės teismo nutarimas Nr. 2, 1932-02-25. *LCVA*, f. 483, ap. 5, b. 1232, l. 17; Kaltinamojo tardymo protokolas Nr. 1, 1920-07-29. *LCVA*, f. 507, ap. 4, b. 1010, l. 14.

¹⁷⁴ Tardymas [Juozo Sakalausko], 1920-09-22. *LCVA*, f. 507, ap. 4, b. 3321, l. 9-10.

¹⁷⁵ Kaltinimo aktas apie kareivį 10-os baterijos Joną Tarasevičių, 1921-09-12. *LCVA*, f. 483, ap. 5, b. 3879, l. 11.

¹⁷⁶ Kariuomenės teismo nutarimas nr. 2 [Juozui Gužauskui], 1932-02-25. *LCVA*, f. 483, ap. 5, b. 1232, l. 17.

¹⁷⁷ Kaltinamasis aktas apie kareivį 4-os kuopos 3-iojo pėstininkų D. L. K. Vytauto pulko Izidorį Dailydę, 1920-06-04. *LCVA*, f. 483, ap. 5, b. 748, l. 3.

¹⁷⁸ Nusprendimas [Juozui Tarasevičiui], 1922-01-28. *LCVA*, f. 483, ap. 5, b. 3879, l. 22.

¹⁷⁹ Kaltinimo aktas dėl 8-ojo pėstininkų K. K. Vaidoto pulko eilinio Emilio Kabakerio, 1924-02-02. *LCVA*, f. 507, ap. 4, b. 1544, l. 2.

¹⁸⁰ Kaltinimo aktas apie 2 p. D. L. K. Algirdo pulko 8-os kuopos kareivį Dominiką Streiką, 1920-11-28. *LCVA*, f. 507, ap. 4, b. 3622, l. 2.

tary service completely, they were punished only for not reporting to their post.¹⁸¹ It was often the case that soldiers were late to return, or never returned at all, to their units when they were granted leave.¹⁸² Thus, one of the most popular ways of running away from the army was to not return after being on leave.¹⁸³

Deserters concealed their identity by using forged documents (pasting their own pictures and changing the information in documents).¹⁸⁴ One runaway soldier made use of a passport he found on the street and replaced the owner's picture with his own. The forged document allowed the deserter to live in hiding more easily in the Klaipėda region and find employment in manor houses.¹⁸⁵ There were other instances of forged documents. One soldier was illegally released from the army when he presented a birth certificate that indicated his date of birth as 1895. The birth certificate was consciously altered with the knowledge that men born in that year were not drafted. The local priest helped uncover this deception.¹⁸⁶ When the police searched their homes, carried out requisitions or stopped them to check their documents, deserters presented names and surnames that were not their own.¹⁸⁷

Some soldiers attempted to evade military service by pretending they were ill, or injured themselves on purpose. Others were recognised as being of unsound mind (schizophrenia, dementia).¹⁸⁸ One conscript chopped off the index finger of his right hand in a bid to evade military service.¹⁸⁹ One memoir tells of soldier who shot himself in the hand to avoid the draft. In this particular case, the court had no mercy and imposed a death sentence on the defendant.¹⁹⁰ Instances of soldiers injuring themselves during their military service, especially through the careless use of weapons, were especially carefully investigated.¹⁹¹ The Military Penal Law on the Evasion of

¹⁸¹ Parodymas [Antano Gailiaus], 1932-04-13 d. *LCVA*, f. 507, ap. 4, b. 978, l. 26.

¹⁸² Kaltinimo aktas apie kareivį Gudų bataliono Vaclovą, Jurgio sūnų, Janonį, 1920-05-25. *LCVA*, f. 507, ap. 4, b. 1429, l. 7; Skirstomojo etapo punkto eilinio Kalvėno Romualdo kaltinamasis aktas, 1926-05-10. *LCVA*, f. 507, ap. 4, b. 1636, l. 12; 5-ojo pėstininkų D. L. K. Kęstučio pulko nerikiuotės kuopos Kupės Beno tarnybos lapas, 1920-01-02. *LCVA*, f. 507, ap. 4, b. 2032, l. 2; Kaltinamojo [Antano Kairiūkščio] protokolas, 1920-08-27. *LCVA*, f. 507, ap. 4, b. 1658, l. 19–20.

¹⁸³ TAMOŠIŪNAS, A. Op. cit., p. 93.

¹⁸⁴ Kaltinimo aktas apie kareivį Gudų bataliono Vaclovą, Jurgio sūnų, 1920-05-25. *LCVA*, f. 483, ap. 5, b. 1429, l. 7; Sintautų milicijos sargybos vado protokolas [dėl Prano Jucaičio], 1920-04-08. *LCVA*, f. 483, ap. 5, b. 1370, l. 8.

¹⁸⁵ Kariuomenės teismo I nuovados tardytojo nutarimas nr. 1 [Antanui Alseikai], 1930-05-03. *LCVA*, f. 483, ap. 5, b. 60, l. 2.

¹⁸⁶ Kaltinimo aktas apie Artilerijos pulko 1-os baterijos kareivį Valdą Mickų, 1920-11-26. *LCVA*, f. 483, ap. 5, b. 2492, l. 6.

¹⁸⁷ Kaltinimo aktas apie Drausmės kuopos kareivį Kazį Šlekį, 1921-02-28. *LCVA*, f. 483, ap. 5, b. 3772, l. 3.

¹⁸⁸ Išvada byloje apie 9-tos baterijos kareivį Antaną Kairiūkštį, 1924-05-06. *LCVA*, f. 483, ap. 5, b. 1658, l. 147.

¹⁸⁹ Kaltinimo aktas apie 3-iojo pėstininkų pulko Atsargos kuopos kareivį Vincą Paškevičių, 1920-10-26. *LCVA*, f. 483, ap. 5, b. 2778, l. 3.

¹⁹⁰ ŠUKYS, A. Op. cit., p. 277.

¹⁹¹ Armijos teismo valstybės gynėjo raštas Aviacijos dalies vadui [dėl Pranckaus], 1920-08-20. *LCVA*, f. 483, ap. 5, b. 3009, l. 3.

Service identified the most frequent ways of evading military service. These were the presentation of false evidence regarding health issues, other deceptive actions with a view to avoiding military service, intentional self-harm or other types of damage to health, and incitement to desert. The law also mentions desertion on assignment, after release from hospitalisation, and joining the enemy ranks.¹⁹²

The authorities searched for runaways in the homes of their family members, relatives and close acquaintances. Runaways found employment on farms or made a living through trade.¹⁹³ The search for runaways was a long process, especially if soldiers fled abroad. Deserters departed for the USA, Germany,¹⁹⁴ Poland,¹⁹⁵ Latvia, France, Mexico and the Klaipėda region.¹⁹⁶ True deserters, of Polish or German descent, fled to Poland and Germany. There were also deserters who joined the enemy ranks.¹⁹⁷ These were typically young soldiers who had not served two months in the army. Deserters were met with a greater punishment if they deserted during a time of conflict, especially if they defected to the enemy, did not admit their guilt, or committed several crimes at once (looting, theft, misappropriating army assets, selling weapons, or were responsible for missing weapons). For the failure to report to one's post during a time of war, if it was a first-time violation, soldiers were penalised with one to six months in jail. For desertion during war, soldiers were penalised with four to 20 years of hard labour in prison, or a life sentence.¹⁹⁸ However, severe penalties failed to prevent soldiers from making the decision to run away from the Lithuanian armed forces in 1919 and 1920.

¹⁹² Kariškių baudžiamasis įstatymas dėl karo tarnybos vengimo. *Laikinosios vyriausybės žinios*, 1920-02-06, Nr. 19, p. 3.

¹⁹³ Kariuomenės teismo II nuovados tardytojo raštas Kamajų nuovados viršininkui [dėl Kosto Ališausko], 1931-11-20. *LCVA*, f. 483, ap. 5, b. 44, l. 77 ap.; Sintautų milicijos sargybos vado protokolas [dėl Prano Jucaičio], 1920-04-08. *LCVA*, f. 483, ap. 5, b. 1370, l. 8.

¹⁹⁴ Vokiečių tautybės dezertyrai bėgdavo į Vokietiją. Liudininko kvotos protokolas [dėl dezertyro Adolfo Heringio], 1935-02-22. *LCVA*, f. 483, ap. 5, b. 1261, l. 17.

¹⁹⁵ Kariuomenės teismo nutarimas Nr. 1 [Henrikui Jablonskiui], 1926-10-28. *LCVA*, f. 483, ap. 5, b. 1458, l. 2; Sprendimas Lietuvos Respublikos vardu, bylos Nr. 77 [Nestorui Skačkovui], 1927-02-26. *LCVA*, f. 483, ap. 5, b. 2924, l. 43.

¹⁹⁶ L. e. Generalinio štabo Kanceliarijos skyriaus viršininko pareigas telefonograma Vietinės kariuomenės brigados vadui su Generalinio štabo rezoliucija: „reikalinga sustabdyti išvažiuojamą šaukiamų kariuomenėn“, [no date]. *LCVA*, f. 929, ap. 1, b. 380, l. 81; Kretingos apskrities viršininko pranešimas vidaus reikalų ministrui, 1921-02-17. *LCVA*, f. 10, ap. 1, b. 74, l. 200-201. Kariuomenės teismas, pasirėmęs Karo įstatų rinkinio XXIV kn. 951 str., ieško pasislėpusių nuo tardymo ir teismo. *Vyriausybės žinios*, II dalis, 1932-10-21, Nr. 245, p. 10-12.

¹⁹⁷ Sąrašas karininkų, gydytojų, karo valdininkų ir kareivių, pabėgusių iš Lietuvos armijos į lenkų pusę, 1920-04-20. *LCVA*, f. 929, ap. 4, b. 155, l. 77.

¹⁹⁸ Kariškių baudžiamasis įstatymas dėl karo tarnybos vengimo. *Laikinosios vyriausybės žinios*, 1920-02-06, Nr. 19, p. 3.

Conclusions

In the first few years after the First World War, a whole host of reasons led soldiers not to enlist in the Lithuanian armed forces. Some men simply did not identify with the idea of the independent Lithuanian state and lacked a sense of collective solidarity. The institutions responsible for the implementation of the draft were newly established and still lacked experience. Their efforts to locate eligible men who failed to show up at the conscription office and deserters from the army were feeble. There were also instances of bribery and forged documents. Finally, some soldiers were under the influence of groups that did not support loyalty to the Lithuanian state.

Even though the strategies behind the evasion of military service and desertion have some similarities, individual reasons for the reluctance to serve also emerge. Many soldiers made the decision to run away on encountering the reality of military service. In the formative stages of the army, soldiers were very affected by the poor conditions of service, shortages of supplies, and the poorly defined relationships between the ranks. Other reasons for desertion were related to the uncoordinated efforts of responsible institutions in searching for runaways, the vaguely defined legal liability for desertion, and the undeveloped case law.

Eligible men who did not enlist fled to other countries or stayed in Lithuania and lived in hiding in the homes of their relatives or acquaintances. True deserters, of Polish or German descent, fled to Poland and Germany. Those who had already enlisted fled further afield, to the USA, Latvia, France and Mexico. In order to avoid military service, soldiers resorted to malingering, self-harm, and forging documents.

During the 1919–1920 period, every fifth conscript did not show up at the conscription office. On average, every third conscript received an exemption from military service. The varying numbers of eligible men who did not enlist in different districts of Lithuania point to the fact that there was not equal support across the country for the Lithuanian armed forces and the idea of the Lithuanian state they represented. In districts that produced noticeably higher numbers of eligible men who did not enlist, fewer conscripts were exempted from service. In this way, institutions responsible for executing the draft solved the problem of procuring manpower for the army. The number of eligible men who did not show up at the conscription office was identical to the number of men that was required to fully man the Lithuanian armed forces.

Inaccuracies in determining the scale of desertion in previous research were the result of researchers frequently attributing numbers of draft-age men who did not enlist in the army to the category of deserter. Indeed, the number of runaway soldiers does not reflect the scale of the evasion of military service. The number of cases of

desertion recorded in documents does not indicate the true number of deserters, because some soldiers ran from the army more than once. Available statistical data allows us to conclude that the number of cases of soldiers running away from the Lithuanian armed forces in 1919–1920 amounted to over 6,000. This demonstrates that the scale of desertion was not as great as previous studies have suggested (20,000).

To stem the flow of soldiers deserting the army, the government introduced more severe legal measures. However, in the short term in 1919 and 1920, this only had a minimal effect on reducing the scale of desertion.

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TARNAUTI AR IŠSISUKTI? KARO PRIEVLĖS VENĖGIMAS LIETUVOJE 1919–1920 METAIS

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Santrauka

Kaip jau yra parodę ankstesni tyrimai, kuriant Lietuvos kariuomenę Nepriklausomybės karo sąlygomis, savanoriškas vyrų įsitraukimas nebuvo pakankamas. Vyriausybei reikėjo pasitelkti ir kitus būdus kariuomenei komplektuoti. Tai tapo priežastimi 1919 m. kovo 5 d. įvesti karo prievolę ir pradėti vykdyti naujokų šaukimą. Tačiau įgyvendinti šį kariuomenės komplektavimo būdą karo sąlygomis nebuvo lengva, nes Lietuvos vyriausybė nekontroliavo visos teritorijos, į kurią pretendavo. Be to, karo prievolės įvedimas kėlė įtampą. Lietuvos kariuomenę vis labiau komplektuojant prievartinėmis priemonėmis, paaiškėjo, kad dalis vyrų tarnauti kariuomenėje vengia. Pastebima dalis šaukiamųjų į naujokų ėmimo komisijas neatvykdavo ir slapstydavosi. Tokių buvo penktadalio visų į karo prievolininkų sąrašus įtrauktų asmenų. Kiti, į kariuomenę priimti ir joje jau tarnaujantys, po kurio laiko iš kariuomenės pabėgdavo. 1919–1920 m. pabėgimo iš Lietuvos kariuomenės atvejų buvo ne mažiau kaip 6 tūkstančiai (pabėgimo iš kariuomenės skaičius, lyginant 1919 ir 1920 m. duomenis, turėjo tendenciją mažėti).

Šis straipsnis detaliau nagrinėja karo tarnybos vengimo priežastis ir būdus Lietuvoje 1919–1920 metais. Straipsnyje tai daroma karo tarnybos vengusius asmenis suskirstant į tris

grupės. Pirmoji, tai į naujokų sąrašus įtraukti, tačiau į šaukimo komisijas neprisistatę vyrai. Antroji, tai į kariuomenę jau priimti, bet į komendantūras neprisistatę vyrai. Trečioji, tai į kariuomenę priimti ir iš jos pabėgę kariai. Panašiai karo tarnybos vengusius asmenis skirstė ir karinės administracijos atstovai Lietuvoje laikotarpiu tarp dviejų pasaulinių karų.

Tyrime daromos išvados, kad apsisprendimui neiti į Lietuvos kariuomenę pirmaisiais metais po Pirmojo pasaulinio karo įtakos turėjo virtinė priežasčių. Dalis vyrų tiesiog nesitapatino su savarankiškos Lietuvos valstybės idėja ir stokojo kolektyvinio solidarumo jausmo. Institucijos, vykdžiusios karo prievolės administravimą, buvo naujai įsteigtos ir dar neturėjo pakankamai darbo patirties. Jos vangiai vykdė į kariuomenę nestojusių naujokų ar iš kariuomenės pabėgusių karių paiešką. Būta ir kyšininkavimo, dokumentų klastojimo atvejų. Naujokų nenorą atlikti karo prievolę lėmė atskyrimas nuo šeimos ar rutininio gyvenimo, baimė žūti, būti sužeistam ar suluošintam kovų metu. Pagaliau dalį žmonių veikė lojalumo Lietuvos valstybei nepalaikiusios grupės, skleidusios priešišką propagandą ir agitaciją.

Nors vengimo tarnauti kariuomenėje ir pabėgimo iš kariuomenės strategijos buvo panašios, ryškėjo ir individualūs kariuomenėje tarnaujančių karių nenoro tarnauti motyvai. Apsisprendimą bėgti iš kariuomenės lėmė karių susidūrimas su tarnybos realybe. Kariuomenės formavimosi stadijoje labai veikė prastos tarnybos sąlygos, reikiamo aprūpinimo trūkumas (kariai stokojo maisto, aprangos, gyveno blogomis sąlygomis, kentė nuolatinį alkį ir šaltį, dažnai sirgdavo), netinkamai apibrėžti subordinaciniai santykiai. Kitos bėgimo iš kariuomenės priežastys susijusios su nekoordinuota atsakingų institucijų veikla organizuojant ir vykdant pabėgusių karių paiešką, neaiškiai teisiškai apibrėžta atsakomybe už dezertyravimą ir nesusiformavusia teismine praktika.

Slapstydamiesi į kariuomenę neatvykę naujokai išvykdavo į užsienį arba likdavo Lietuvoje, bet apsistodavo namuose pas gimines ar kitus asmenis. Tikrieji dezertyrai, lenkų ar vokiečių tautybės, bėgo į Lenkiją ar Vokietiją. Karo tarnybą jau atliekantieji bėgo ir į kitas užsienio šalis – Jungtines Amerikos Valstijas, Latviją, Prancūziją ar Meksiką. Siekdami išvengti karo tarnybos, kariai simuliudavo ligas, žalodavo save ir klastodavo dokumentus.

Siekdama suvaldyti karo prievolės vengimo reiškinį, valdžia ėmėsi griežtų teisinių priemonių. Tačiau per trumpą 1919–1920 m. laikotarpį šios padarė tik minimalų poveikį, kad sumažintų šaukiamųjų neatvykimo į naujokų ėmimo komisijas ir dezertyravimo iš kariuomenės mastą.