

# THE INTENSITY OF COMBAT IN THE LITHUANIAN WAR OF INDEPENDENCE IN 1919 AND 1920

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## ABSTRACT

The war which covered the future territory of Lithuania in 1919 and 1920 after the end of the First World War has already been described several times by historians. The army loyal to the Lithuanian government in Kaunas took part in military action against three enemies: the Red Army, the Polish army and the West Russian Volunteer Army (a military formation of the Bermontians). When considering parallels, continuity and differences between the First World War and the three conflicts in Lithuania known as 'the War of Independence', historians have pointed out a crucial difference: the relatively small Lithuanian army was engaged in low-intensity military action. However, the question of the intensity of the combat has not specifically been addressed in research so far. This paper offers a new approach to analysing the intensity of the two-year war. For the first time, the authors have juxtaposed three data sets: analysing the number of days of combat, assessing the frequency and impact of the use of heavy weapons (artillery and/or aviation), and comparing it with data on the losses of the Lithuanian army's manpower.

**KEYWORDS:** intensity of combat, low-intensity warfare, small army, Lithuanian War of Independence.

## ANOTACIJA

Karas, kuris, pasibaigus Pirmajam pasauliniam karui, 1919–1920 m. apėmė būsimąją Lietuvos teritoriją, istorikų jau ne kartą aprašytas. Lietuvos vyriausybei Kaune lojali kariuomenė jame dalyvavo kariniuose veiksmuose prieš tris priešus – Raudonąją armiją, Lenkijos kariuomenę ir Rusijos Vakarų savanorių armiją (bermontininkų karinę formuotę). Svarstydami apie paraleles, tęstinumą ir skirtumus tarp Pirmojo pasaulinio karo ir šių „Nepriklausomybės karu“ Lietuvoje vadinamų trijų konfliktų, istorikai jau yra atkreipę dėmesį į esminį skirtumą – santykinai maža Lietuvos kariuomenė dalyvavo žemo intensyvumo kariniuose veiksmuose. Tačiau karinių veiksmų intensyvumo klausimo ligšioliniai tyrimai specialiai nenagrinėjo. Šis straipsnis siūlo naują priegą dvejus metus trukusio karo intensyvumui analizuoti. Pirmą kartą autoriai sugretino tris duomenų masyvus – analizavo kovos dienų skaičių, vertino sunkiosios ginkluotės (artilrijos ir / ar aviacijos) panaudojimo dažnumą ir poveikį, lygino visa tai su duomenimis apie Lietuvos kariuomenės gyvosios jėgos nuostolius.

**PAGRINDINIAI ŽODŽIAI:** karo veiksmų intensyvumas, žemo intensyvumo karas, maža kariuomenė, Lietuvos nepriklausomybės karas.

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The first decades of the 21st century are far from being a period of peace and free trade, just as Francis Fukuyama predicted in the immediate aftermath of the Cold War. Tensions over ongoing wars continue to be acute and war remains high on the global agenda. This raises questions that encourage a return to past war experiences.

In addition to the global wars that shook the world order the most, the 20th century saw a host of much smaller conflicts. This was also the case after the First World War, which cost tens of millions of lives. It overshadowed local, but in some cases important, armed conflicts.<sup>1</sup> One of them is the Lithuanian War of Independence, which took place in 1919 and 1920. As a factor shaping a modern state and nation, it is relevant not only to Lithuanian society, but also to its neighbours. And as an example of a struggle with limited resources against an enemy many times superior, it is still relevant in debates on war and theory.

The Lithuanian War of Independence, which is the subject of this article, was a kind of continuation of the First World War in the east Baltic region. From a local, national perspective, this and similar wars are often seen as separate phenomena: the Lithuanian War of Independence, also known as the Wars of Independence or the Freedom Struggles, the Estonian War of Independence (*Eesti Vabadussõda*), the Latvian War of Independence (*Latvijas brīvības cīņas*), and the war between Poland and Soviet Russia (*wojna polsko-bolszewicka*, also known as *wojna polsko-sowiecka*, *polsko-radziecka* or *polsko-rosyjska*). Some wars are sometimes invisible because of other wars. The political science researcher Gediminas Vitkus<sup>2</sup> pointed out more than a decade ago that in the United States the Lithuanian war of 1919–1920 is often not distinguished from the war campaigns and operations of Poland and Soviet Russia. In response, Lithuanian researchers produced a full study in English on the Lithuanian wars of the 19th and 20th centuries.<sup>3</sup> Vitkus revisits this issue in this collection.<sup>4</sup> But from a certain distance, all these military conflicts fall within the broader period of the 1914 to 1923 war, which lasted almost a decade.

The most obvious link between the wars of 1914–1918 and 1919–1920 is the fact that in the latter war the Lithuanian army was commanded by former officers of the Russian Empire, veterans of the First World War. They essentially transposed their experience and knowledge of warfare, from tactics to operational planning and unit

<sup>1</sup> GATRELL, Peter. War after the War: Conflicts, 1919–1923. In *Companion to World War I*. Ed. by John HORNE. London, 2010, pp. 558–575.

<sup>2</sup> VITKUS, Gediminas. Lietuvos nacionalinė kariavimo patirtis „karo koreliatų“ duomenų rinkinyje. *Karo archyvas*, 2011, t. 26, p. 321–346.

<sup>3</sup> *Wars of Lithuania: A Systemic Quantitative Analysis of Lithuania's National Wars in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries*. Ed. by Gediminas VITKUS. Vilnius, 2014.

<sup>4</sup> See his article '1919–1920 metų Lietuvos nepriklausomybės karo nominacijos ir pripažinimai' (pp. 225–238).

management, to a new phase. The new war was fought in the spirit of the First World War, but on a scale many times smaller. It was essentially a war of manoeuvres. This was later identified by those who played leading roles in the war itself.

A study of the war that took place on the territory of Lithuania in 1919 and 1920 provides an insight into the development of the war in Eastern Europe after the signing of the Armistice at Compiègne on 11 November 1918 and the Treaty of Versailles. This is an episode about how the war continued after the war in Europe was supposedly over. First World War veterans and the society that lived through it became involved in a new war.<sup>5</sup> The historian Tomas Balkelis has already revealed the impact it had on the development of the Lithuanian state and society from the beginning of the First World War until 1923, when the violence on the border between Lithuania and Poland finally ended.<sup>6</sup>

This article focuses on a different issue. As we know, the First World War was very different from previous wars, due to advances in technology: artillery, rapid-firing weapons and aviation led to an increase in the use of destructive fire.<sup>7</sup> But at the same time, the soldier who had to take part in the battles remained the same. The infantry had to attack and take up positions at the decisive moment, in some cases fighting with bayonets. On the Western Front, this was routine. Attack followed attack, and territorial gains were minimal. Such warfare quickly showed how absurd some of the military training before the war was. Even the German infantry, suffering huge losses from enemy artillery and machine gun fire, sometimes attacked the enemy in drill formation.<sup>8</sup>

The Lithuanian War of Independence was, at first sight, different from the First World War. First of all, this probably means in scale and intensity, not the principles of warfare or the impact. During the Battle of the Somme in 1916, the British artillery fired a tonne of shells into a 2,000-square-metre area, using 1.5 million shells a day.<sup>9</sup> A few years later, the Lithuanian army was firing at best a few hundred or a thousand shells a day. The conventional understanding of the Great War is that it lasted 1,568 days: four years, three months and two weeks. Lithuania fought for 697 days in a war that was never officially declared against it.<sup>10</sup> Research has also shown

<sup>5</sup> 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.

<sup>6</sup> BALKELIS, Tomas. *War, Revolution, and Nation-making in Lithuania, 1914–1923*. Oxford, 2018.

<sup>7</sup> GAT, Azar. *War in Human Civilization*. Oxford, 2006, p. 532.

<sup>8</sup> GROSS, Gerhard P. *The Myth and Reality of German Warfare. Operational Thinking from Moltke the Elder to Heusinger*. Lexington, KY, 2016, p. 129.

<sup>9</sup> KEEGAN, John. *The Face of Battle. A Study of Agincourt, Waterloo and the Somme*. London, 2004, pp. 207–208.

<sup>10</sup> According to the order of the Lithuanian army on 11 April 1922, the war with the Red Army lasted from 5 January 1919 to 5 January 1920, with the West Russian Volunteer Army from 26 July 1919 to

that the War of Independence of 1919–1920 did not cover the entire territory of the future Lithuania, but only parts of it.<sup>11</sup> But the matter of the intensity of combat has not been studied in depth.

Historians have given it only minimal attention.<sup>12</sup> The most extensive studies of the War of Independence available in Lithuanian, by Kazys Ališauskas,<sup>13</sup> Antanas Rukša<sup>14</sup> and Vytautas Lesčius,<sup>15</sup> are dominated by a sequential description of military action; these authors did not seek to reveal the intensity. Only Lesčius attempted to describe the intensity of the war in terms of the phases of warfare. The author defines them as operations planned by the military command.<sup>16</sup> This approach allowed him to determine the duration of the military action rather than to compare the different phases of military action with each other. One of the co-authors of this article has also tried to investigate the intensity of the combat. He defines intensity by locating the military action geographically, and by explaining the dynamics of the areas identified.<sup>17</sup> This research approach has allowed for the identification of the areas covered by the military operations. But it has not yet answered all the questions, as it has not developed the capacity to assess the impact on the military forces. In addition, Gintautas Surgailis attempted to determine the duration of the military operations, but not the entire Lithuanian War of Independence. He presented his structured data in a chart (see Chart 1 below).<sup>18</sup> They show the number of days per month that Lithuanian troops were engaged in hostilities, but not the intensity of the

15 December 1919, and with Poland from 18 April 1919 to 1 December 1920. – Įsakymas kariuomenei Nr. 83, 1922-04-11. *Lietuvos centrinis valstybės archyvas* (Lithuanian Central States Archives, hereafter LCVA), f. 384, ap. 1, b. 46, l. 78. To calculate the duration of this war, we subtract four days from the 365 days of 1919 and 30 days from the 366 days of 1920.

<sup>11</sup> SEREIČIKAS, Mindaugas. *Civilių gyventojų ir Lietuvos kariuomenės sąveika 1918–1923 m.* Daktaro disertacija. Klaipėda, 2023, p. 41–58; LAURINAVIČIUS, Česlovas, et al. 1919 metai: Lietuvos kovos su Raudonąja armija ir bermontininkais. Lenkijos skverbimasis į Lietuvą. In *Lietuvos nacionalinis atlasas*. T. II. Parengė Algimantas ČESNULEVIČIUS et al. Vilnius, 2016, p. 60.

<sup>12</sup> VAIČENONIS, Jonas. Dvi kariuomenės – dveji tyrimai. *Darbai ir dienos*, 2000, t. 24, p. 183–190; VAIČENONIS, Jonas. 1921–1940 m. laikotarpio Lietuvos kariuomenės tyrimai. *Karo archyvas*, 2003, t. 18, p. 339–354; VAIČENONIS, Jonas. Lietuvos karo istorijos tyrimų organizavimas 1918–2008 metais. *Istorija*, 2009, t. 73, p. 59–67; LESČIUS, Vytautas. Dėl Lietuvos kariuomenės kūrimo ir nepriklausomybės kovų istoriografijos. *Lietuvos istorijos studijos*, 2002, t. 10, p. 35–50.

<sup>13</sup> ALIŠAUSKAS, Kazys. *Kovos dėl Lietuvos nepriklausomybės 1918–1920*. T. I. Chicago, 1972.

<sup>14</sup> RUKŠA, Antanas. *Kovos dėl Lietuvos nepriklausomybės*. T. II–III. Cleveland, 1981–1982.

<sup>15</sup> LESČIUS, Vytautas. *Lietuvos kariuomenė 1918–1920*. Vilnius, 1998; LESČIUS, Vytautas. *Lietuvos kariuomenė nepriklausomybės kovose 1918–1920*. Vilnius, 2004.

<sup>16</sup> LESČIUS, Vytautas. Kovų su bolševikais ir bermontininkais etapai. *Karo archyvas*, 2000, t. 16, p. 57–91.

<sup>17</sup> SEREIČIKAS, Mindaugas. Geographical Localization and Intensity of the Lithuanian Wars of Independence with the Red Army. *Vēsture: avoti un cilvēki = History: Sources and People*, 2019, Vol. 22, pp. 215–224.

<sup>18</sup> Surgailis found that military clashes and operations with the Red Army took place on only 211 out of 337 days, with the West Russian Volunteer Army on 77 out of 109 days, and with the Polish army on 360 out of 584 days. In this respect, it should be borne in mind that Surgailis had a different view of the duration of wars than the Lithuanian army did in the interwar period (see note 9). For comparison, see SURGAILIS, Gintautas. The 1919–1920 Lithuanian War of Liberation. In *Wars of Lithuania: A Systemic Quantitative Analysis of Lithuania's National Wars in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries*. Ed. by Gediminas VITKUS. Vilnius, 2014, pp. 203–205.

combat. In other words, these data only show that fighting took place, but it is not clear how intense it was.

The main aim of this article is to analyse this matter, i.e. to offer a more complex approach to the question of how intense the military action was during the Lithuanian War of Independence. Authors who have addressed the issue so far have understood it either as the duration of the military operations, or as the action of armies in occupying territories, or as the number of days during which military action took place. However, the use of one of these three criteria selectively does not, in our view, really reveal the intensity of the combat. Armies can manoeuvre a lot and eventually occupy territory without in the meantime encountering real resistance. Simply counting the duration of operations or the number of days of hostilities ignores the unevenness of the military action: one day might see artillery battles, and the next a sporadic exchange of fire between guards. In all cases, researchers have so far not evaluated criteria to reveal the impact on the military. For example, the loss of manpower, the amount of ammunition used in military action, the use of different types of weapon (artillery, aviation).

## Research approach

Before presenting in this article the results of our approach, we need to explain the steps in the research we carried out. Our first task was to assess the capabilities of the main actors in the war, infantry, cavalry, aviation and artillery, and the tactics of their use in the military action of 1919 to 1920. This is an indispensable context for a deeper analysis of the intensity of the combat. The following three subsections in this article are devoted to it.

Next, we sought to re-analyse the duration of the military action. For this analysis, we collected data on battles based on their date, but excluded very low-intensity clashes (between patrols, scouts, etc).

The next step in our research was to assess the use of different types of weapons in the military action. We collected data on the use of artillery and/or aviation in military operations. We have analysed the use of artillery at the front, regardless of which side used it. When assessing the use of aviation, we have excluded only aerial reconnaissance, as it is less relevant to the question of the intensity of combat. Using a graphic analysis of quantitative data and descriptive statistics, we combined heavy weapons (aviation and/or artillery) data with battle data by date. This allowed us to identify intense periods *versus* operative pauses.

Finally, another aspect that we have decided to assess is the loss of manpower. First, we analysed the distribution of the wounded by month over the two years of the war. Second, we looked at the distribution of deaths by date of death. Finally, we compared these casualty data with military actions by date and artillery and/or aviation deployment data. We believe that an approach that considers all of these data, rather than just one of them selectively, allows us to get closer to a more fundamental answer to the question of which periods of hostilities were the most intense (breaking points) and which were less intense.

Why did we choose this research approach? It was due to several factors. The Lithuanian War of Independence saw around 1,000 battles (some relatively small). The Lithuanian army sometimes faced the enemy several or a dozen times a day. There is sometimes a lack of data to reasonably distinguish between minor clashes and major battles. But the presence of artillery, we would argue, adds a unique weight to a battle, as the effect of the guns is much greater, both in terms of artillery fire power and range, and in terms of the psychological effect on soldiers. Sources repeatedly refer to the fear of soldiers at the start of artillery shelling. The British major-general Jonathan Bailey stated that in the First World War about 45% of Russian troops, and on the Western Front, about 58% of British troops, were killed by artillery. During the Second World War, about 51% of Soviet troops, about 75% of British troops in North Africa and about 70% of German troops on the Eastern Front were also killed by artillery fire.<sup>19</sup> Of course, in 1919–1920 the Lithuanian army lacked artillery, as did its enemies. Infantry often had to operate without the support of artillery fire. This is why the involvement of artillery in determining the intensity of the combat is so important in this war.

Aviation was at that time still an innovation in warfare technology, capable of inflicting significant casualties and damage to military infrastructures. The First World War saw the emergence of the doctrine of air dominance, pioneered by the Italian General Giulio Douhet.<sup>20</sup> Individual elements of this doctrine manifested themselves in the Lithuanian War of Independence. The most active use of aviation was made by the Lithuanian army and the Red Army. The West Russian Volunteer Army (Bermontians) and the Polish armed forces were more passive in Lithuania in this respect. The number of aircraft involved in military operations ranged from one to a maximum of five at a time. During the whole period of 1919 and 1920, no belligerent used a formation of more than two links. The use of military aviation capabilities for air support was not uniformly active either. It was most actively practised in the spring and summer of 1919, and in the autumn of 1920. Its wider use was hampered by a shortage of pilots, and, in particular, by a persistent shortage of aviation fuel. For example, in the

<sup>19</sup> BAILEY, Jonathan. *Field Artillery and Firepower*. Oxford, Basingstoke, 1989, p. 5.

<sup>20</sup> DOUHET, Giulio. *The Command of the Air*. Washington, 1998.

autumn of 1919, when the Lithuanian army was conducting an offensive against the Bermontians, it was unable to use aviation in the battles. This was primarily because Lithuania had already fired the German pilots it had hired earlier, and only had a few pilots capable of carrying out independent combat tasks.<sup>21</sup>

Armoured vehicles were used episodically by all four belligerents, including the Lithuanian army, in the hostilities of 1919 and 1920. The use of armoured cars and armoured trains was minimal. The trains were dependent on railway lines, and artillery units with limited mobility were in operation; armoured cars were armed only with machine guns. The fragmentary use of armoured vehicles led us to exclude them from our study on the intensity of the warfare.

Another important caveat is that we assessed the intensity of the combat from the perspective of the Lithuanian army. It was small compared to its opponents: sometimes ten times smaller than the enemy forces. However, the opponents (especially Soviet Russia and Poland), who were fighting other wars at the same time, were only able to direct a small part of their forces against Lithuania. The Lithuanian army was developing and growing, but by December 1920 (at the end of active hostilities) it numbered only 45,000 soldiers. By comparison, the Russian West Volunteer Army (the Bermontians) numbered some 51,000 to 52,000 soldiers,<sup>22</sup> the Polish Army on 1 September 1920 numbered 944,000 soldiers,<sup>23</sup> and the million-strong Red Army on the Western Front in 1919 numbered some 97,000 soldiers.<sup>24</sup> All this means that what we have identified in the research results as high-intensity for the Lithuanian army were relatively small-scale, localised operations for the Polish and Soviet Russian armies, and in some cases also for the Bermontian formations. On the other hand, the study of the intensity of warfare, given the small size of the army and the low intensity of combat, is relevant for a deeper understanding of the course and the dynamics of the war.

After analysing unpublished and published sources, we collected and systematised data on the battles of the Lithuanian army with other forces (the date and place), the use of artillery and aviation in individual military actions, and the losses of the Lithuanian army. We processed this data with Microsoft Office Excel. We have analysed the intensity of the combat using a graphic representation of the data, which not only helps to better communicate structured data to the reader, but also allows for an initial assessment of it. We also used basic descriptive statistics methods to calculate relative values, which allow for consistent and valid comparisons. We have

<sup>21</sup> RAMOŠKA, Gytis. Lietuvos karo aviacija Nepriklausomybės karuose. *Plieno sparnai*, 1994, Nr. 2, p. 4; PESECKAS, Leonardas. *Karo lakūno pasakojimas*. Kaunas, 2006, p. 18.

<sup>22</sup> *Latvijas atbrīvošanas kara vēsture*. Virsred. Mārtiņš PENIŅIS. Rīga, [1938] 2006, 50. lpp.

<sup>23</sup> WYSZCZELSKI, Lech. *Wojsko Polskie w latach 1918–1921*. Warszawa, 2006, s. 86.

<sup>24</sup> MELTIUKHOV, Mikhail. *Pribaltiiskii platsdarm v mezhdunarodnoi politike Mosky (1918–1939 gg.)*. Moskva, 2015, s. 117.

also used indices to assess the dynamics of military intensity. We compiled them by translating nominal data on military action and casualties into coefficients chosen by us, taking into account the nature of the warfare.

By presenting the nature of the actions of different types of troops (infantry and cavalry, artillery and aviation) during the war in separate subsections of this article, we aim to justify the selection of the criteria for assessing the intensity of the warfare and the differentiation of their values.

Of course, we are aware that the approach we are presenting here is still to some extent limited. This limitation is mainly due to the amount and nature of the data. For example, as regards the number of wounded, it has to be stated that at the beginning of 1919, the military sanitation of the Lithuanian army was just beginning to develop, so there are no comprehensive and reliable data on the wounded for this period. There is also a lack of data on the nature of the injuries and information on the enemy with whom the soldiers were wounded.<sup>25</sup> It is very likely that some of the wounded in 1919 and 1920 did not go to military sanitary institutions. The dates of death for some individuals remain unknown. In addition, some soldiers did not die immediately, but only some time after the battle in which they sustained their injuries. In addition, it is likely that in assessing the data we missed a number of days when we thought the infantry action was not of sufficient intensity, resembling a random firefight based on a source, which was not the case. Or we simply did not find any evidence of hostilities on a particular day in the sources we consulted.

Despite these limitations, we believe that we have accumulated and evaluated sufficient data to draw conclusions about the intensity of the combat during the Lithuanian War of Independence.

## Traditional combatants: infantry and cavalry

In the first half of the 20th century, infantry formed the largest part of military forces. The cavalry was declining in numbers due to advances in rapid-firing weapons and motorisation. Infantry units also dominated in the Lithuanian army during the War of Independence: on 15 December 1920, the army consisted of 14 infantry regiments, three battalions and four divisional staffs, with about 30,200 soldiers. At the same time, there were 1,913 soldiers in the cavalry regiments, and 45,300 in total.<sup>26</sup> The infantry thus accounted for 66.7% of the total force, and the cavalry for 4.2%. The possibility of expanding the cavalry was limited by two factors that were difficult to

<sup>25</sup> Karo sanitarijos raštas Rikiuotės skyriaus viršininkui, 1927-04-07. LCVA, f. 4, ap. 1, b. 210, l. 3.

<sup>26</sup> LESČIUS, V. *Lietuvos kariuomenė 1918–1920...*, p. 423–429.



overcome. First, the lack of qualified personnel (trained and experienced officers). Second, the lack of material resources (arms, ammunition and horses). Farmers were reluctant to give horses to the army, as a decade of wars (1914 to 1923) and constant requisitions had severely depleted agriculture, their main source of food and income.

Cavalry regiments were often divided into smaller units (squadrons or platoons) by the military command and assigned to infantry units. In addition, some cavalrymen acted as infantry simply because of the lack of horses. Thus, the military leadership had limited scope for the wider use of cavalry tactics.<sup>27</sup> For example, in the spring of 1919, the infantry battalion that marched from the provisional capital Kaunas, in which the future general Stasys Raštikis served, was accompanied by a cavalry unit: 'The hussars of the 2nd Squadron also went on foot. They differed from infantrymen by the white bows on their caps (infantrymen had yellow ones). And, of course, the hussars were very proud of their clanging spurs, even though they did not yet have the horses to use them on. The infantrymen used to ridicule them, calling them 'wooden hussars'. But those wooden hussars, without horses but with spurs and swords, fought very valiantly at the front.'<sup>28</sup>

In 1919 and 1920, there were only a few, sporadic cavalry attacks. In August 1919, during an attack on Zarasai in northeast Lithuania, a hussar of the 2nd Squadron was wounded in the head during the battle with the Red Army and later died. The hussars lost several horses and horsemen in the attack. On 26 August, during an attack on the town of Smalvos nearby, another hussar distinguished himself, despite the enemy's superiority and artillery and machine gun fire: 'attacked the Bolshevik train with true cavalry strength in cavalry formation, stormed the town with other hussars, created confusion there and facilitated the capture of the town'.<sup>29</sup> In March 1920, a Lithuanian cavalry squadron of 12 fought in the Vilnius region and held back an attack by a Polish cavalry squadron.<sup>30</sup> These are small, tactical-level examples of cavalry actions. However, in the autumn of 1920, when a Polish cavalry brigade broke deep into the rear of the Lithuanian army, the Lithuanians lacked a mobile unit or formation that could move at the same pace and pursue the threatening Polish *uhlans*. The Polish cavalrymen were resisted by members of a paramilitary organisation, the Lithuanian Riflemen's Union. Sent 'to chase and hunt' the Polish cavalrymen, the Lithuanian infantry battalion was unable to make contact with the enemy.<sup>31</sup> Major Vytautas Bulvičius aptly noted in his 1939 book that 'the Lithuanian

<sup>27</sup> KRAUNAITIS, [Izidorius]. Mūsų kavalerijos organizavimas ir jos veikimas pirmame nepriklausomybės dešimtmetyje. *Mūsų žinynas*, 1928, Nr. 45, p. 349–378.

<sup>28</sup> RAŠTIKIS, Stasys. *Kovose dėl Lietuvos. Kario atsiminimai*. I dalis. Los Angeles, 1956, p. 138.

<sup>29</sup> KRAUNAITIS, I. Op. cit., p. 360.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid.

<sup>31</sup> JOKUBAUSKAS, Vytautas. *Netiesioginis poveikis ir Lietuvos karinis saugumas 1919–1940 m.* Klaipėda, 2019, p. 26–27.

army in the Augustow operation<sup>32</sup> and the invasion of the Polish cavalry brigade<sup>33</sup> also had to survive difficult moments of crisis only because of the lack of cavalry.<sup>34</sup>

Another important fact is that during the War of Independence, the Lithuanian army was developing and fighting on the front at the same time. These two parallel processes have made it more difficult to achieve the objectives set for military units. At the end of 1920, the staffs of all four divisions of the Lithuanian army had only four to six officers each, and the army was short of 778 officers (in a force of 45,300, there were 1,123 officers, 101 physicians, 416 military officials, 16 clergymen, 2,076 civilian employees, and 41,582 soldiers, so that *de facto* there were 37 soldiers to every one officer).<sup>35</sup> The lack of skilled military personnel does not make it easy to innovate in warfare. In addition, most Lithuanian officers were veterans of the First World War. In the Russian Empire's training institutions, they had often received only a condensed version of training. The army lacked weapons and ammunition, and used a mixture of German and Russian-made weapons systems. Heavy machine guns were in short supply, with more than half of them being light. Most of the cartridges had an iron casing, making it difficult for less skilled soldiers to fire them.<sup>36</sup>

In the 1910s, bayonet attack tactics were still widely used by the armies of various countries. This was known as a *strike* before the enemy was shelled by artillery. The ability to combine fire and strike as a tactical element was apparently the essence of warfare at that time. In Lithuania in 1933, Stasys Raštikis, the future commander of the army, argued:

...artillery only helps the infantry to get closer to the enemy; the most challenging moment of a battle, when soldiers must confront the enemy directly, rests solely in the hands of the infantry. Infantrymen also have their own means of fire to prepare and facilitate the moment [...] With their final blow, the bayonet charge, the infantry overcomes the enemy's resistance or destroys the enemy completely [...] After the bayonet charge has driven off the enemy, the infantry secures their positions, reinforces them, and defends against subsequent attacks.<sup>37</sup>

As early as August 1919, Raštikis wrote about bayonet fights:

<sup>32</sup> The Sejny-Augustow operation was carried out by the Lithuanian army in September 1920 to capture Augustow and its surroundings.

<sup>33</sup> This refers to the raid by a Polish cavalry brigade on the rear positions of the Lithuanian forces in November 1920, see more: KOREŚ, Daniel. *Kiejdany: 17–24 XI 1920*. Warszawa, 2021, s. 24–25.

<sup>34</sup> BULVIČIUS, Vytautas. *Karinis valstybės rengimas*. Kaunas, 1939, p. 196.

<sup>35</sup> LESČIUS, V. *Lietuvos kariuomenė 1918–1920...*, p. 423–429.

<sup>36</sup> VITKAUSKAS, Vincas. *Mūsų pestininkai. Mūsų žinynas*, 1928, Nr. 45, p. 232.

<sup>37</sup> RAŠTIKIS, Stasys. *Pėstininkų reikšmė kautynėse. Karys*, 1933-08-03, Nr. 31 (748), p. 620.

At the appointed hour, our artillery ceased fire. That was our cue to launch an attack. After creeping even closer to the village [Svilčikai], we attacked the Bolsheviks with bayonets. They returned fire, did not accept our bayonet attack [i.e. did not engage in close combat soldier to soldier with bayonets], and began to flee. Such bayonet fights are usually won by whoever has the stronger nerves, the colder blood, and a clear goal to fight for.<sup>38</sup>

These and other memoirs of war participants, recounting episodes of military action, illustrate accurately the tactics widely used in Lithuania during the War of Independence. The war veteran J. Brazinskas described a bayonet attack near the River Daugava and Daugavpils in August 1919:

After a brief exchange of gunfire, a brave commander commanded 'Forward!' We jumped out of the trenches shouting 'Hurrah!' and attacked the Bolsheviks. However, we did not achieve our objective, because heavy Bolshevik machine-gun fire held some of our soldiers in the trenches, while the rest of us were forced to refrain from advancing and to continue the battle on the open flat field. We heard heavy rifle fire. Soon the Bolshevik machine guns and rifles fell silent; our rifles also fell silent, because we were out of ammunition. On receiving this news, the commander of the Marijampolė soldiers gave the order to fix bayonets and attack. There was a loud 'Hurrah!' from the people of Joniškėlis, and an explosion of hand grenades. The Bolsheviks did not hold their ground. They fled, abandoning their positions and leaving us with rather large spoils of war.<sup>39</sup>

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In the autumn of 1919, the main newspaper in the country wrote about the taking of Radviliškis in northern Lithuania as follows:

The suburbs have changed hands several times. The fight, with minor interruptions, lasted from 6am to 7pm: At 7pm. the enemy was driven away using bayonets with great losses [...] The soldiers distinguished themselves by their bravery and firmness of character.<sup>40</sup>

Another example is the attack by the 1st Battalion of the 8th Infantry Regiment during the Battle of Širvintos-Giedraičiai in eastern Lithuania on 21 November 1920:

The task was carried out by two platoons of the 1st and 3rd Company, under the command of officers, operating from separate points but in the same direction, towards Šešuolėliai manor. These two platoons, within a kilometre or more of the enemy's firing line, rose in unison and attacked. The soldiers were almost entirely new recruits; the more frightened ones even had to be driven forward. The rules for crossing no man's land were also impossible to obey: they

<sup>38</sup> RAŠTIKIS, S. *Kovose dėl Lietuvos...*, p. 148.

<sup>39</sup> BRAŽINSKAS, J. Paskutinis smūgis (Atsiminimai). *Karys*, 1928-03-28–1928-04-03, Nr. 14 (462), p. 254; [No author.] Kovos bermontininkų fronte (Mūsų korespondento). *Lietuva*, 1919-11-29, Nr. 259, p. 2.

<sup>40</sup> [No author.] Kovos bermontininkų fronte (Mūsų korespondento). *Lietuva*, 1919-11-29, Nr. 259, p. 2.

had to attack in one go. The enemy's machine guns and rifles unleashed a relentless barrage of fire, but fortunately for us it was too high. This lifted the spirits of the new recruits, who began to believe that bullets miss the brave. Hoarse from screaming and out of breath from the long run, without bayonets, they bravely attacked the Polish trenches. The enemy's nerves could not withstand such a frantic and bewildering attack, and they fled.<sup>41</sup>

These are fairly typical situations that illustrate how infantry operated at the front in 1919 and 1920.

Vincas Vitkauskas, a participant in the War of Independence, later a general and the last commander of the Lithuanian army, assessed the infantry's performance in the conditions of that time a few years later in the following words:

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In tactics, our infantry in 1919 and 1920 still applied the Russian approach. The combat unit is a company. A chain in a battle. There is no depth. The tendency is to keep the whole front line. There is little requirement for autonomy for individual shooters and smaller units. But our semi-manoeuvre, semi-guerrilla warfare gradually, and sometimes unintentionally, forced us to find new ways of fighting. The initiative of individual fighters is developing rapidly. Often, in some places, at least smaller units are already beginning to secure the rear, and in some battles machine guns are already being fired over the infantry [...] In short, although the new doctrine had not yet been taught, the old one, as I mentioned, has been gradually and spontaneously abandoned.<sup>42</sup>

Vitkauskas' opinion about the guerrilla nature of the War of Independence was supported by another participant in this war, General Vincas Grigaliūnas-Glovackis:

In 1919, seeing that we would have to fight a guerrilla war, I decided to organise [the infantry] regiment under my command as an independent unit, equipped with cavalry, engineering and artillery [...] The war was not a positional guerrilla-type conflict [...] It was a guerrilla war. We did not have the forces to take up a strong position over almost 100 kilometres [...] I have already mentioned that the war was a guerrilla war, with us attacking at times, and the Bolsheviks striking at others.<sup>43</sup>

Raštikis remembered the situation in the spring of 1919 as follows: 'There was neither war nor peace on the front. There were no major battles, but there were quite a lot of smaller bloody clashes and skirmishes.'<sup>44</sup> Three participants in the War of

<sup>41</sup> ŠAMANAS. Atsiminimų nuotrupos. *Karys*, 1939-07-20, Nr. 29 (1049), p. 846.

<sup>42</sup> VITKAUSKAS, V. Op. cit., p. 232-233.

<sup>43</sup> GRIGALIŪNAS-GLOVACKIS, Vincas. *Generolo atsiminimai*. II-III daly. Ats. red. Gintautas SURGAILIS. Vilnius, 2017, p. 42, 62, 71, 75.

<sup>44</sup> RAŠTIKIS, S. *Kovose dėl Lietuvos...*, p. 140.

Independence, later generals in the Lithuanian army, in memoirs written at different times and in different circumstances, said the same thing: the war was low intensity. The units operated in a wide range of areas, often using tactics more typical of guerrillas. Guerrillas, of course, also operated alongside regular military units. They were united by the Lithuanian Riflemen's Union, a paramilitary social organisation founded in the summer of 1919. In the period between the two world wars, the Lithuanian army considered it the basis of territorial defence.<sup>45</sup>

## Artillery, the god of war

Between 27 January 1919 and the end of 1920, the Lithuanian army received 118 guns and howitzers, 27 mortars, 16 bombers, 230,467 artillery shells, and 14,224 mortar mines. It received all this from Germany, acquired it as spoils of war, or bought it from the British, and managed to form 11 gun batteries and two howitzer batteries. Having enough heavy artillery was a constant problem: at the end of April 1919, the Lithuanian army had 14 guns, at the end of December 1919 it had 25 guns, and at the end of December 1920 it had 72 guns.<sup>46</sup> Some of the guns received were unusable, and some were lost by the Lithuanian army in 1919 and 1920. Therefore, in the autumn of 1920, the army had approximately 30 to 44 guns at its disposal in the military action against the Polish forces.<sup>47</sup>

Sources reveal the extent to which artillery was used in isolated cases. However, there is no systematic data on the use of projectiles during the war. The data we have suggest that in some cases the batteries fired a few hundred or even thousands of shells per day. In 1919 and 1920 the artillery supported the infantry with individual batteries, and sometimes even with platoons (two guns each). Only very rarely was the fire from several batteries concentrated. For example, at the beginning of October 1920 in the Varėna-Perloja district in southern Lithuania, three batteries were active during the battle.<sup>48</sup> At the beginning of August 1919, the Red Army fired about 600 shells at Lithuanian positions in a single day, killing one Lithuanian soldier and wounding seven others.<sup>49</sup> In November 1919, when the Lithuanian army attacked the Bermontians in Radviliškis in northern Lithuania, the artillery battery supporting the

<sup>45</sup> JOKUBAUSKAS, Vytautas. Territorial Defence and Partisan Resistance (Lithuania's Experience). *Lithuanian Annual Strategic Review 2017–2018*, 2018, Vol. 16, pp. 331–371.

<sup>46</sup> LESČIUS, V. *Lietuvos kariuomenė 1918–1920...*, p. 360–378.

<sup>47</sup> ŠIPELIS, Juozas. Artilerijos gyvenimo pirmas dešimtmetis. *Mūsų žinynas*, 1928, Nr. 45, p. 284.

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 277.

<sup>49</sup> JOKUBAUSKAS, Vytautas; TAMKVAITIS, Titas. Du karo istorijos šaltiniai iš Lietuvos tarpukariu. In *The Unending War? The Baltic States after 1918* (Acta Historica Universitatis Klaipedensis, Vol. 36). Ed. by Vytautas JOKUBAUSKAS, Vasilijus SAFRONOVAS. Klaipėda, 2018, p. 191.

1st Infantry Regiment fired 270 shells a day (including 186 fougasse and 84 shrapnel shells).<sup>50</sup> In September 1920, during the war with Poland, the 7th Battery, supporting the 5th Infantry Regiment at the front, fired 454 shells a day during intense fighting. In October 1920, during the fighting with the Poles in the vicinity of Rykantai in eastern Lithuania, the Lithuanian 2nd howitzer battery fired 380 shells at the enemy one day, and 500 shells the next day. In November 1920, the 10th battery fired 400 shells at the enemy in one day at the front in the vicinity of Musninkai in eastern Lithuania, and 500 shells the next day in the same theatre of war. Only for the battle near Musninkai on 19 November 1920, it is known that Polish forces fired 'about 2,000 shells in a single day in that section'.<sup>51</sup>

Artillery had a twofold effect on soldiers: it killed, and it affected their psychology, instilling a fear of death. In August 1919, during the battles near Zarasai in northeast Lithuania, the Vilnius Battalion came under intense artillery fire from the Red Army. The officer Raštikis, who took part in the fighting, wrote:

Many of my volunteers were experiencing heavy artillery fire for the first time in their lives, and they had little understanding of how a soldier should respond under such circumstances. An artillery shell seriously wounded one young volunteer of the 4th Platoon. The splinter took out his entire armpit. The unfortunate soldier began to scream out of pain, or perhaps out of fear, calling out to God and his mother for help. There were more wounded, but they either remained silent or moaned softly. Paramedics rushed in, carrying the injured man away from the front line of fire, but his cries could still be heard in the distance. My soldiers were deeply affected by those cries. Meanwhile, the Bolshevik artillery started firing volleys. After a few unsuccessful and undisciplined shots, they started to shoot quite correctly. The shells of one of the volleys exploded before reaching our position. The shells of the second volley detonated behind our position. Now we had to wait for the next row of shells to actually hit us. The appropriate conclusion should have been to change our position immediately, i.e. to move to another location. I gave the command, but my soldiers were in no hurry to obey it. I repeated it again, still to no avail [...] Why were the soldiers at first reluctant to abandon these positions? [Raštikis asked rhetorically and answered himself.] First, they were still inexperienced. Moreover, the horrifying cries of their wounded comrade and the relentless enemy artillery fire had terrified them, like the hypnotic gaze of a venomous snake, pinning them to the ground where their true death awaited.<sup>52</sup>

Poorly trained and inexperienced soldiers who were exposed to artillery fire not only became disoriented and froze in their trenches, but many also attempted to desert out of sheer fear.<sup>53</sup>

<sup>50</sup> SURGAILIS, Gintautas. *Pirmasis pėstininkų didžiojo Lietuvos kunigaikščio Gedimino pulkas*. Vilnius, 2011, p. 109–112.

<sup>51</sup> JOKUBAUSKAS, V.; TAMKVAITIS, T. *Du karo istorijos šaltiniai...*, p. 200.

<sup>52</sup> RAŠTIKIS, S. *Kovose dėl Lietuvos...*, p. 151–152.

<sup>53</sup> Tardyamas, 1920-12-02. *LCVA*, f. 527, ap. 2, b. 7, l. 8.

## Aviation, a new dimension of war

Rapid technological advances during the First World War brought warfare into the airspace. The aircraft scouted enemy positions, bombed and destroyed ground targets with machine gun fire, and fought in air battles. During the War of Independence, the Lithuanian army primarily used aviation for intelligence gathering, with targeted attacks being less frequent. The aviation involved in military operations attacked troop concentrations and strategic objects, and disrupted the movement of enemy forces on the ground; only a few times was it used against air targets, such as enemy aircraft or balloons used for observation and the correction of artillery fire.

The aviation forces deployed by the Lithuanian army against the Red Army consisted of 8 German LVG C. VI aircraft and three to five air crews. By the autumn of 1920, the Lithuanian army had almost four times as many aircraft of various types, but still lacked pilots.<sup>54</sup> According to Lithuanian military intelligence, the Bermontian formations operating in northern Lithuania had 20 aircraft in September 1919, while their forces in the entire area of hostilities, which covered the territory of Lithuania and Latvia, numbered about 120 aircraft. However, the Bermontians rarely used aviation in military action on the territory of Lithuania, and mostly for reconnaissance flights.<sup>55</sup> The aviation units of the Polish army were most active in military operations with the Lithuanian army in the autumn of 1920, after the 16th Reconnaissance Squadron was transferred from Lida to the Kirtimai airfield near Vilnius.<sup>56</sup>

With the improvement of material supplies and the increase in the number of pilots, the Lithuanian army used aviation more and more frequently in military operations. In 1919, it made about 500 flights and spent 250 hours in the air, and in 1920 it made 750 flights and spent 1,000 hours in the air.<sup>57</sup> The fourfold increase in the number of hours flown was primarily due to the relatively long distances between the aerodrome and the area of military operations. Another reason was the nature of the tasks required by the military command: many long reconnaissance flights.<sup>58</sup> Of the 750 flights made in 1920, 102 were into enemy-controlled territory, i.e. combat flights.<sup>59</sup>

<sup>54</sup> RAMOŠKA, Gytis. Pirmieji Lietuvos karo aviacijos lėktuvai 1919–1923 m. *Plieno sparnai*, 1992, Nr. 1, p. 2–7.

<sup>55</sup> BUKHMAN, Moshe. Bermontininkų aviacija. *Plieno sparnai*, 2018, Nr. 11, p. 61.

<sup>56</sup> RAMOŠKA, Gytis. *Lietuvos aviacija*. Kaunas, 2009, p. 34.

<sup>57</sup> Visų skraidžiusių asmenų išskraidytų valandų ir atliktų skridimų grafikas, [no date]. *LCVA*, f. 1323, ap. 1, b. 461, l. 29.

<sup>58</sup> Aviacijos dalies [dienynas] 1920–1921 metais. *Lietuvos aviacijos muziejus* (Lithuanian Aviation Museum), *LAM RD 477*, l. 1–29.

<sup>59</sup> MIKĖNAS, Jonas. *Gyvenimo skrydis*. Kaunas, 1994, p. 23.

In the War of Independence, aviation usually performed one of two main tasks that emerged during the First World War: reconnaissance of enemy territory, and destruction of identified targets. The latter task had to be carried out by aviation in the context of intense ground battles, either as ground forces were developing operational success, or as they were disrupting a rapid offensive by opposing forces.

It was common in 1919 and 1920 for one to three aircraft a day to fly over enemy-held territory, where they attacked the ground targets they found. In April 1919, in one of the flight reports in central-eastern Lithuania, the crew of a military aviation aircraft wrote:

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There is no movement towards Siesikai in the Jonava district. Two bombs were dropped on Siesikai, one bomb on Pagirėliai, and two bombs on Pagiriai. Two groups of 25 to 30 people were spotted between Pagiriai and Siesikai. No traffic was seen between Pagiriai and Panevėžys.<sup>60</sup>

When flying over enemy-controlled territory, the pilots hoped to detect enemy units. One military pilot recalled combat flights in the autumn of 1920:

Heaven help us to find the Poles [...] Nothing else mattered at that moment. It was the one and only desire. A big important enemy compound where every one of our bombs would be truly effective!<sup>61</sup>

Air crews targeted their fire power at the enemy positions they detected, employing machine guns and bombs of varying explosive yields. One air reconnaissance officer detailed the task in November 1920 as follows:

As far as I could determine, it was mostly artillery and machine-gun parts, and a significant amount of military trains. As the Poles were occupying a large area quite densely, we made three slow flights over the area. I dropped two large bombs and some small bombs. One bomb hit the middle of the road, between the train carriages. From time to time I fired the machine gun. Although the enemy's movement was considerably increased when we flew in, the unexpectedly accurate bombing of the train carriages was the impetus for the extremely rapid dispersal of troops and train carriages in all directions over roads and fields.<sup>62</sup>

<sup>60</sup> PESECKAS, L. Op. cit., p. 28.

<sup>61</sup> DOVYDAITIS, Jonas. Vienas padangių rytas pasakoja [Antano Stašaičio atsiminimai]. *Lietuvos sparnai*, 1939-02-15, Nr. 3 (51), p. 49.

<sup>62</sup> ŠIDLAUSKAS, Romualdas. Pataikėme į gurguolę. In *Savanorių žygiai*. T. I. Sud. Petras RUSECKAS. Kaunas, 1937, p. 243–244.



The air force also bombed objects of tactical and operational importance. In November 1920, Polish aircraft operating from the Kirtimai aerodrome made railway stations and bridges their main targets. On the last day of October 1920, the Polish air force bombed Ukmergė, a town close to the front in eastern Lithuania, where Lithuanian army rearguard units were operating. However, the bombs hit a crowd of civilians, killing 11 and seriously wounding 13.<sup>63</sup> At the beginning of November 1920, two Polish planes bombed Kaišiadorys railway station, firing machine guns at the railway station and at the railway wagons. At the same time, Polish planes bombed Kaunas aerodrome, dropping eight bombs over two days, injuring one soldier. We also have information that on 19 November four Polish planes, operating in the rear of the Lithuanian army, bombed a bridge over the River Neris near Čiobiškis in eastern Lithuania.<sup>64</sup>

The military formations that took part in the War of Independence did not yet have a sophisticated anti-aircraft defence system. They used machine guns and soldiers' personal weapons to defend themselves against aviation, which damaged planes and injured pilots. For example, Juozas Kraucevičius, the commander of Lithuanian military aviation, stated in a report to the General Staff of the Lithuanian army that in the autumn of 1920, planes returning from combat flights were damaged by rifle and machine gun fire and had to be repaired.<sup>65</sup> In September 1920, after returning from one flight, Lieutenant Jurgis Dobkevičius found six bullet holes and damaged parts in his aircraft, and Lieutenant Juozas Kumpis found eight bullet holes, and damage to the wings and fuselage. Moreover, during this flight, Lieutenant Juozas Pranckevičius sustained a gunshot wound to his arm.<sup>66</sup> Another aircraft, which took part in a combat flight in early November 1920, had 16 bullet holes.<sup>67</sup> There were also more serious losses. At the beginning of April 1919, the Red Army managed to wound the air reconnaissance officer Konstantinas Fugalevičius<sup>68</sup> when they fired on a Lithuanian military aircraft. At the beginning of October 1920, five Lithuanian military aircraft in southern Lithuania were tasked to bomb the railway station at Varėna, controlled by the Polish army. During this operation, Polish troops shot down the LVG C. VI aircraft piloted by Lieutenant Juozas Kumpis. The pilot died of his injuries, and the reconnaissance pilot Lieutenant Pranckevičius was injured for a second time.<sup>69</sup>

<sup>63</sup> [No author.] Lenkų žvėriškumas. *Trimitas*, 1920-11-11, Nr. 15, p. 27; [No author.] Mūsų Vyriausybės atsakymas tautų sąjungai. *Karys*, 1920-11-13, Nr. 45 (77), p. 425.

<sup>64</sup> RAMOŠKA, G. *Lietuvos aviacija...*, p. 34–36.

<sup>65</sup> Oro laivyno vado pareiškimas Nr. 6933 Generalinio štabo viršininkui, 1920-12-16. *LCVA*, f. 930, ap. 2D, b. 54, l. 11.

<sup>66</sup> KAVALIAUSKAS, Vilius. *Lietuvos karžygiai. Vyties kryžiaus kavalieriai (1918–1940)*. T. I. Vilnius, 2008, p. 675–678.

<sup>67</sup> ŠIDLAUSKAS, R. Op. cit., p. 243–244.

<sup>68</sup> KORBUTAS, Nerijus. Konstantinas Fugalevičius. Karo lakūnas, aviacijos mokyklos viršininkas. URL: <<https://www.plienosparnai.lt/page.php?272>> [accessed 10.05.2024].

<sup>69</sup> SEREIČIKAS, Mindaugas. Nepriklausomybės kovose žuvingas lakūnas ltn. Juozas Kumpis. *Kardas*, 2015, Nr. 1 (465), p. 18–19.

## The intensity of combat: analysis of quantitative data

208 | Having discussed the capabilities of the main participants in the military operations of the Lithuanian War of Independence (infantry, cavalry, aviation and artillery) and the tactics of their use, we can now turn to a quantitative analysis of the intensity of the warfare. As was noted in the introduction, Gintautas Surgailis has made the most substantial contribution to the historiography on this issue, focusing on the duration of the military action rather than the intensity. According to Surgailis, the Lithuanian army started organised fighting against the Red Army on 1 February 1919 and continued until 4 January 1920. Surviving documents say that during these 337 days, only on 43 days did no military action take place for: there were seven days of no fighting in February, 11 days in March, seven days in April, two days in June, one day in July, three days in September, six days in October, and two days in December. The last clash with the Red Army took place on 3 January 1920, when Lithuanian army scouts crossed the River Daugava near Daugavpils and attacked the Red Army.

From the beginning of the clashes between Lithuanian troops and the West Russian Volunteer Army (28 August 1919), both sides tried to avoid open military clashes, which is why they lasted only seven days in September. The number of clashes in October and November increased significantly: in October, documents do not provide data on military clashes for only six days, and in November for only one day. The evacuation of the Bermontians to Germany began in early December. As the Lithuanian army advanced, they encountered only small groups of looters left behind. Thus, December was essentially limited to small-scale operations to eliminate looters. According to Surgailis, the war with the Bermontians lasted 109 days, of which 77 days were spent in hostilities between the Lithuanian army and the West Russian Volunteer Army.

On the Polish front, the combat operations alternated between periods of intensified action and moments of relative calm. The main allied countries and Lithuania tried to stop them. Surgailis considers the beginning of the hostilities to be 26 April 1919. He found 131 out of 250 days of hostilities between the Lithuanian and Polish armies documented in 1919. In April and May they were almost non-existent, but then they became more frequent. The longest period of non-combat was from 9 to 21 August 1919. On the Polish front in the following year, 1920, there were 13 days of non-combat in January, ten days in February and March, 13 days in April, six days in May and June, and eight days in July. The fewest clashes between Lithuanian and Polish forces took place in August, when the Polish army was retreating under pressure from the Red Army, and the Lithuanian army was occupying the areas vacated by the Poles. According to Surgailis, there are no documented clashes between Polish and

Lithuanian forces between 29 July and 24 August, i.e. over 26 days. This was the longest operational pause, due to the Red Army's successful offensive, which pushed the Polish forces almost to Warsaw. From September to November, the situation changed completely, with only three days without military action. The fighting ended on 30 November 1920, so the war with Poland lasted 584 days, according to Surgailis, and the hostilities lasted 360 days.

Understanding that in 1919 the Lithuanian army had to fight on three fronts, we can state that during 1919 it did not engage in combat operations for only seven days: on 7 February, 11 March, 7 April, 2 May, 2 June, 27–28 December. (To be more precise, we have not been able to find in historical sources any evidence of any hostilities on these days.) From January 1920, when only one enemy remained, the longest period of time without direct military encounters was the 27 days in the summer of 1920 already mentioned.<sup>70</sup> Although Surgailis did not make all his calculations public, he did organise them in a chart, a reworked version of which is presented here (Chart 1). This gives a certain picture, and opens the way for further discussion on the issue of the intensity of combat.

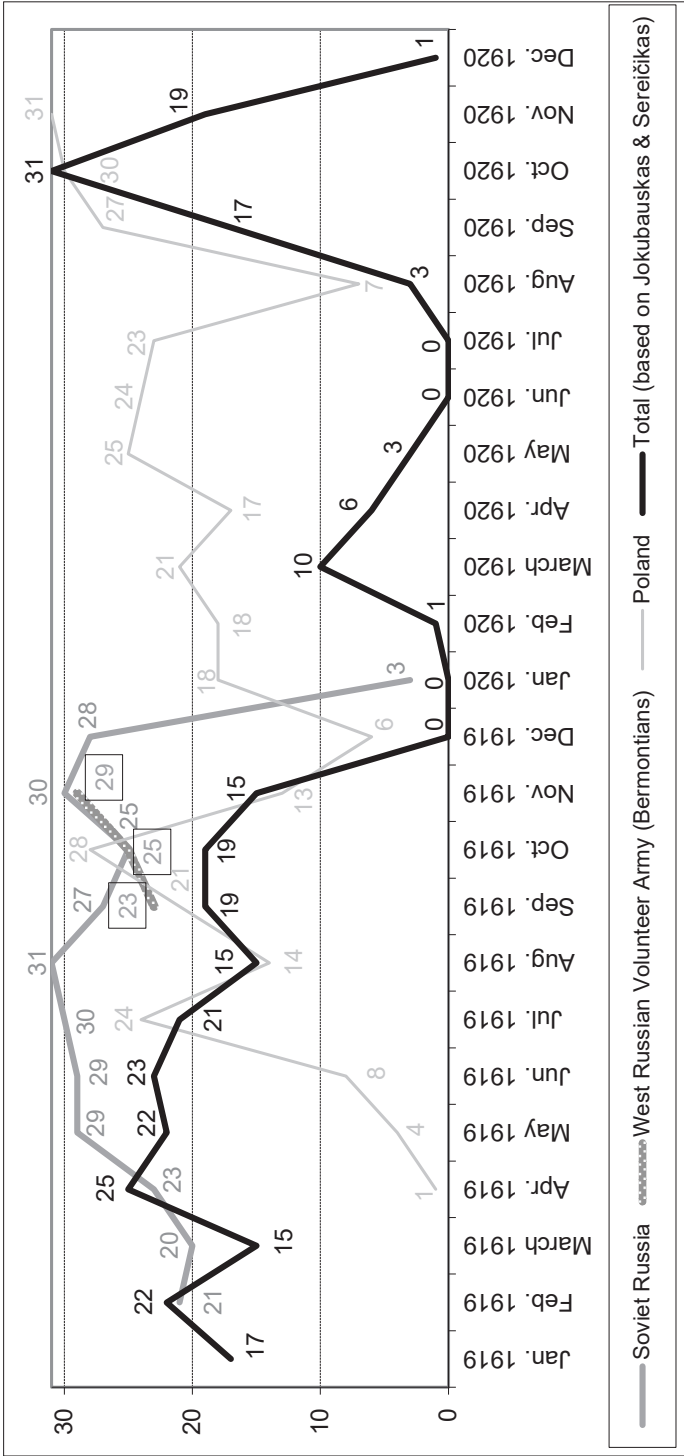
Based on this analysis by Surgailis, we sought to refine and develop his data. First, we reviewed the number of combat days using a wide range of published and unpublished sources (see Table 1 for the results). Second, in order to adjust the number of days of fighting, we collected data on the use of artillery and/or aviation in battles. Finally, we consolidated the data, assigning a value of 1 to days of combat involving artillery and/or aviation, and a value of 0.5 to days where only infantry, supporting cavalry, or other troop types were engaged. This is summarised in Chart 2, where 0 indicates no military action, 0.5 indicates a low level of military action, and 1 indicates intense military action.

Comparing our results with those of Surgailis, we see a significant difference in the period from January to August 1920. Surgailis's description of this period includes many days when hostilities took place, but our selection criteria suggest that they were either absent or much less intense. This difference is apparently due to Surgailis's decision to include or exclude all encounters with the enemy in low-intensity warfare. The fact that in the first seven months of 1920 the war took on the character of a shoot-out between guards is also evidenced by documents of the Lithuanian army. A chronological description of all the hostilities, prepared in 1926, states that on 15 December 1919, the Lithuanian army reached the then Lithuanian-German border. Another entry in the document reads: 'On 6 July 1920, the Lithuanian army began facing new challenges, as the Bolsheviks, engaged in conflict with the Poles and gaining the upper hand, started pushing their forces into Lithuania.'<sup>71</sup> According

<sup>70</sup> SURGAILIS, G. *The 1919–1920 Lithuanian War...*, pp. 203–205.

<sup>71</sup> JOKUBAUSKAS, V.; TAMKVAITIS, T. *Du karo istorijos šaltiniai ...*, p. 195.

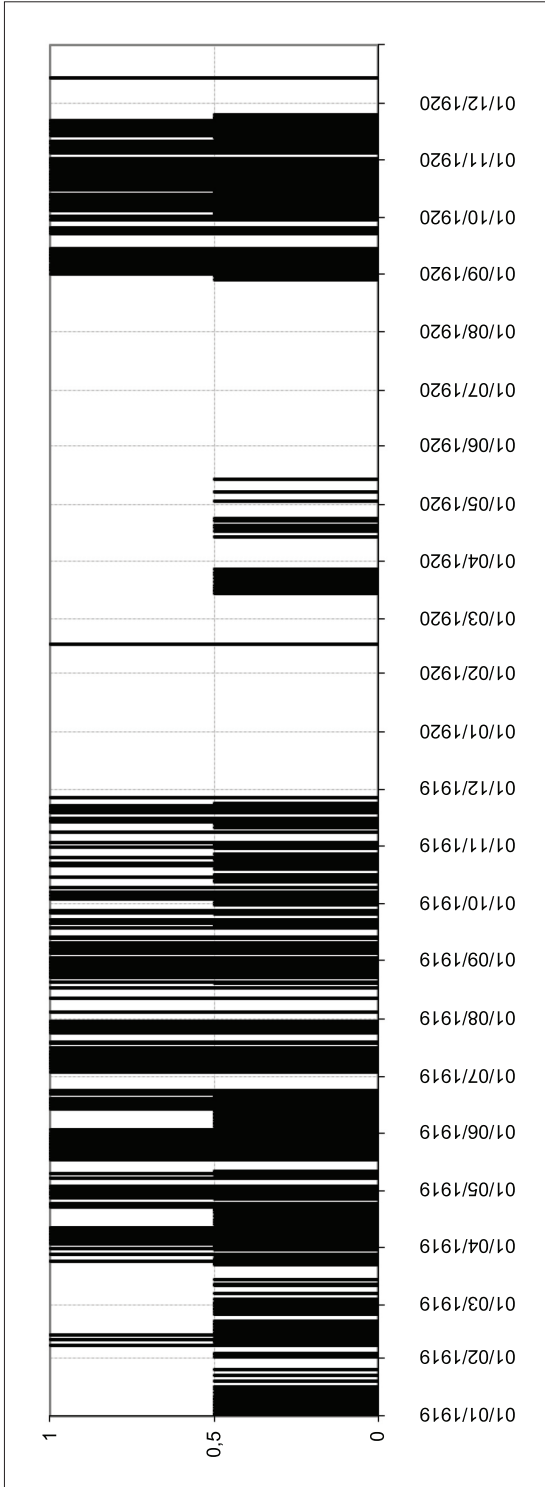
Chart 1. Military action in the Lithuanian War of Independence, in days per month



Based on: SURGAILIS, G. The 1919–1920 Lithuanian War..., p. 205; data collected by the authors of this article, Table 1.

This chart is based on data collected by Surgailis, which, according to the historian, should be published in more detail in the journal *Karo archyvas* in 2024–2025

Chart 2. The intensity of the Lithuanian War of Independence 1919–1920, by day



Compiled from Table 1 (see below).

The value 1 signifies days when artillery and/or aviation were used; the value 0.5 denotes days when infantry units and supporting cavalry and other types of troops were engaged in action. The same values are not summed up in this chart: e.g. two or more artillery engagements are still marked as 1, while three infantry engagements in different locations are still marked as 0.5

Table 1. Artillery and aviation in combat during the Lithuanian War of Independence

Month	1919			1920		
	Combat days*	The following were used on how many of them:		Battle days*	The following were used on how many of them:	
		Artillery	Aviation		Artillery	Aviation
January	1-11; 13; 15-16; 19; 22; 25					
February	1-3; 7-20; 24-28	7; 10; 13		16	16	
March	1-2; 4; 7; 11-12; 14; 22-23; 25; 27-28; 30-31	28; 31	24	14-18; 20; 22; 24-25; 27	16	
April	1-11; 13-15; 17; 19-24; 26-27; 29-30	2; 3; 4; 5; 6; 7; 8; 9; 10; 11; 23; 27; 30	4; 22; 23; 24; 29	13; 16; 18-19; 22-23		
May	1-3; 7-8; 10-11; 17-31	3; 17; 18; 19; 20; 21; 22; 23; 24; 25; 26; 27; 28; 29; 30; 31	2; 3; 7; 10; 18; 19; 20; 21; 27; 28; 29; 31	2; 7; 14		
June	1-23	2; 13; 14; 15; 16; 21; 22; 23	13; 14; 15; 16; 17; 18; 19			
July	3; 5-14; 16; 18-19; 24-30	3; 6; 7; 8; 9; 10; 11; 12; 13; 14; 16; 19; 25; 26; 27; 28; 29; 30	18; 24			
August	4; 11; 17; 19-20; 22-31	4; 11; 17; 20; 22; 23; 24; 25; 26; 27; 28; 29; 30; 31		28; 30-31		31
September	1-2; 4-6; 8-10; 12-13; 18-20; 22; 25-27; 30	1; 2; 4; 5; 6; 8; 9; 10; 12; 13; 20; 22	18; 24; 26; 27	2-5; 7-10; 13-14; 22-25; 29	2; 3; 4; 5; 8; 9; 10; 11; 12; 13; 14; 22; 23; 24; 25	3; 7; 29
October	1; 3; 9; 12-16; 19-22; 24-25; 27; 30-31	3; 5; 7; 9; 15; 21; 22; 25; 31		1-31	1; 4; 5; 7; 8; 9; 11; 12; 13; 15; 16; 19; 21; 25; 27; 28; 29; 30; 31	4; 5; 6; 7; 8; 9; 13; 17; 18; 19; 20; 21; 22; 23; 24; 28; 29; 30; 31

Month	1919			1920		
	Combat days*	The following were used on how many of them:		Battle days*	The following were used on how many of them:	
		Artillery	Aviation		Artillery	Aviation
November	1–2; 8; 10; 12–15; 18–23; 26	2; 8; 13; 14; 15; 18; 19; 20; 21; 22; 26		1; 4–7; 9–10; 12–14; 16–24	1; 4; 5; 6; 7; 9; 10; 13; 14; 16; 17; 18; 19; 20; 21	1; 5; 6; 7; 13; 19; 20
December				14		14
Total:	213	107	31	91	50	31

Based on: Paskutiniai įvykiai mūsų santykiuose su lenkais. *Karys*, 1920, Nr. 41, p. 388; Generalinio štabo pranešimai. *Karys*, 1920, Nr. 42, 45, 47, p. 399–401, 423, 440; Karinė apžvalga. *Karys*, 1920, Nr. 44, p. 411; Žinios Lietuvoje. *Karys*, 1920, Nr. 46, p. 433; Mūsų kariuomenės bei krašto gynimo organizavimo ir kovų dėl Lietuvos Nepriklausomybės svarbesnieji įvykiai prieš 10 metų. *Karys*, 1929, Nr. 2, 4, 5, 6, 8, 9, 10, 14, 15, 16, 19–20, 21, 22, 23, 24, 25, 26, 27, 28, 29, 30, 31, 32, 33, 34, 35, 36, 37, 38, 39, 40, 43, 44, 45, 46, 47, p. 22, 54, 70, 86, 122, 138, 154, 222, 238, 254, 312, 350, 366, 382, 398, 418, 435, 450, 466, 483, 498, 514, 530, 546, 562, 578, 594, 610, 626, 642, 662, 710, 726, 742, 758, 778; Svarbesni įvykiai prieš 10 metų. *Karys*, 1930, Nr. 28, 29, 32, 36, 37, 39, 40–41, 42, 43, 44, 45, 46, 47, p. 542, 562, 622, 702, 726, 766, 786, 822, 858, 878, 898, 918, 938; ŠIPELIS, J. Op. cit., p. 263–286; LESČIUS, V. *Lietuvos kariuomenė nepriklausomybės kovose...*; JOKUBAUSKAS, V.; TAMKVAITIS, T. Du karo istorijos šaltiniai..., p. 191; SURGAILIS, Gintautas. *Pirmasis pėstininkų didžiojo Lietuvos kunigaikščio Gedimino pulkas*. Vilnius, 2011, p. 177–242; RAMOŠKA, G., Lietuvos karo aviacija Nepriklausomybės..., p. 2–9; RAMOŠKA, G. *Lietuvos aviacija...*, p. 22–37; Aviacijos dalies [dienynas] 1920–1921 metais. *Lietuvos aviacijos muziejus, LAM RD 477*, l. 1–29; SEREČIKAS, M. *Civilių gyventojų...*, p. 41–58.

\* We refer here to encounters (contact) between the Lithuanian army (independently and/or together with the German army and paramilitary guerrilla units) and the armed forces of its opponents as skirmishes. We do not consider individual shooting and minor contact (clashes between guards, small units conducting close reconnaissance, and other cases of low-intensity military action) to be skirmishes. The Lithuanian army was deployed in the area of military operations during longer or shorter operational pauses, but did not manoeuvre, and did not engage in active military operations, but only tried to ensure control over protected areas. Therefore, we have not included exposures to single fire, especially short clashes between small units (smaller than a division).

to this document, 'A Brief Overview of the Most Important Battles and Encounters of the Lithuanian Army with the Enemy in 1918–1923', there was nothing 'important' going on at the front at that time.

Describing the artillery's participation in the War of Independence, the periodical press for soldiers pointed out that the artillery of the Lithuanian army took part in the battle on 28 March 1919, and that the offensive was halted after this battle due to the impassability of the roads. Only local shoot-outs followed thereafter. The infantry, supported by sparse artillery, resumed the attack only a month later on 27 April. In July 1919 there were many local clashes on the front, but no major changes. An attack was attempted on 7–10 July, but after several days of fighting, the Lithuanian forces retreated to their positions of 18 June. It was not until 23 August that a large-scale offensive was launched, pushing the Red Army forces behind the River Daugava by 30 August.<sup>72</sup> Changes in natural conditions brought pauses in the war, when battles were not fought or when armies limited themselves to reconnaissance raids and skirmishes, but temporarily did not conduct offensive operations due to weather conditions.

Chart 2 shows the operational pauses. The activities of the Lithuanian army were limited to tactical skirmishes, but no intensive military action took place. The long, and sometimes very long, periods of operational pauses confirm the impression of a low-intensity war in 1919 and 1920, which we have formed from the statements of the future generals of the Lithuanian army quoted above.

As we mentioned when we introduced the approach, all this does not, in our view, give a full picture of the intensity of the warfare. We propose to consider a third criterion: loss of manpower. These are data on Lithuanian soldiers killed or wounded in 1919 and 1920. These data are not fully comprehensive. They may be revised in the future, as it is sometimes not possible to attribute delayed deaths to a particular phase of the war, when a soldier died of injuries days, weeks, or even months later.

Data on injuries in 1919 and 1920 were collected by the Military Sanitary Service. But it presented the losses by month. Therefore, in presenting the results of the study, we first present separately data on fallen soldiers individually. In total, we identified 688 military deaths that can be dated to a specific day (Chart 3). We then present the absolute numbers of killed and wounded soldiers, and the ratio by month (Chart 4). In this case, the data on the wounded are not ours, but are based on the already-mentioned statistics on wounded and treated soldiers from the Military Sanitary Department.

<sup>72</sup> ŠIPELIS, J. Op. cit., p. 265, 267–269.



The casualty and wounded figures confirm that there were no intense hostilities from January to August 1920 (Chart 3). The most active fighting took place from July to November 1919, and from September to November 1920. The first half of 1919 saw military engagements, but the fledgling military sanitation system was not yet equipped to record the large numbers of wounded soldiers at the time. Therefore, the data for losses for this period lack reliability.

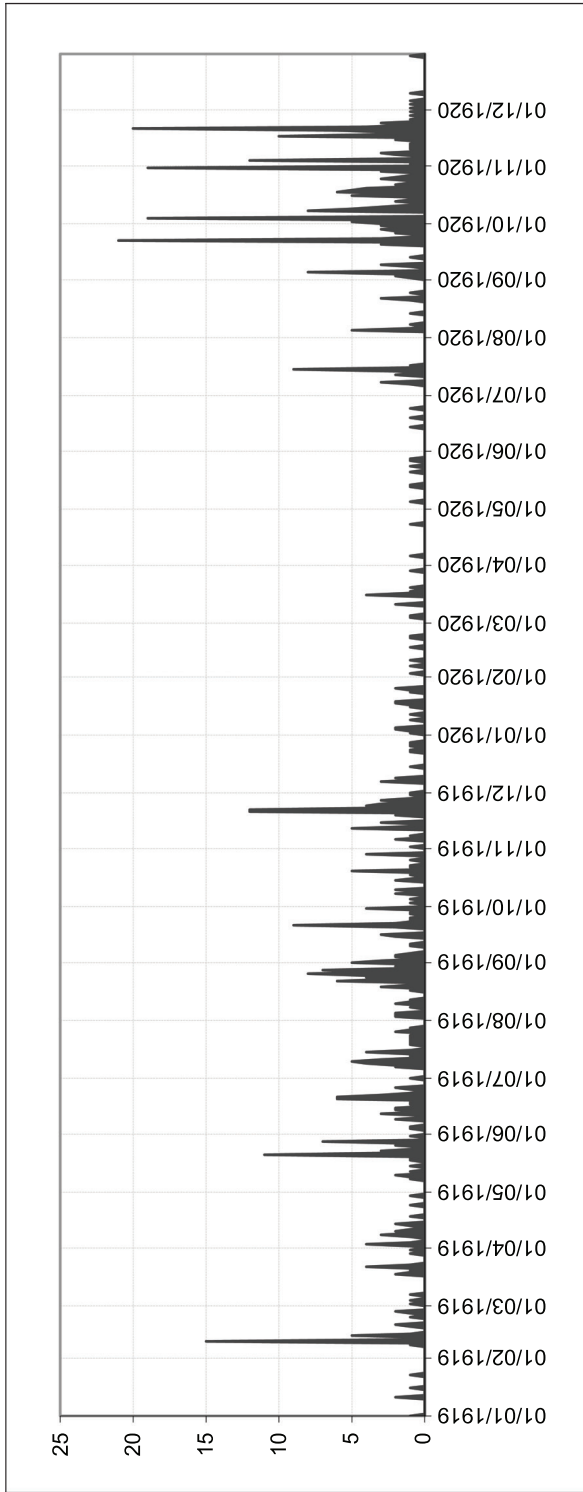
The ratio of killed to wounded soldiers is also an indicator. During the First World War, the ratio of deaths (including deaths from disease and accidents) to wounded in most armies was approximately 1 to 2.5.<sup>73</sup> In our study, the ratio is much higher in certain months. This could be explained first of all by the fact that not all the casualties have been identified (984 soldiers were killed,<sup>74</sup> which means that the dates of death of 296 soldiers have not been identified). This is confirmed by the overall known ratio of killed to wounded in 1919 and 1920: when we know that the number of killed was 984, and the number of wounded was 2,463, we get a ratio of 1 to 2.5. This ratio would be in line with the average of all deaths and injuries in the First World War if it were not for the fact that the number of wounded in the War of Independence was actually higher, but some of them were not 'accounted for', as the military sanitation system was not yet operational in the first half of 1919. This is one possible interpretation. Another (not necessarily alternative, but perhaps more complementary) interpretation is that in low-intensity warfare, with less use of artillery, and with skirmishes between guards and scouts, there were fewer deaths and serious injuries, but a higher incidence of minor wounds.

Based on the data collected, the periods of intensified military action can be described by days. On 10 February 1919, 15 Lithuanian soldiers were killed, artillery was used in the battles that day. On 18–28 May 1919, 30 soldiers were killed, not only by artillery but also by aviation (six days). On 7–14 July 1919, 18 soldiers were killed, and artillery was used. Between 22 August and 2 September 1919, 47 were killed using artillery. On 21–23 November 1919, 26 soldiers were killed, and artillery was used for two days. On 2–5 September 1920, 13 soldiers were killed, artillery and one day of aviation were used. On 22–24 September 1920, 25 soldiers were killed, and artillery was used. On 1–5 October 1920, 29 soldiers were killed, artillery was used for three days and aviation for one day. On 8–10 October 1920, 16 soldiers were killed, and artillery and aviation were used for two days. On 30–31 October 1920, 21 soldiers were killed and artillery and aviation were used. On 16–24 November 1920, 49 soldiers were killed, artillery was used for six days and aviation for two.

<sup>73</sup> Cf. the section 'Killed, wounded, and missing.' In SHOWALTER, Dennis E.; ROYDE-SMITH, John Graham. World War I. *Encyclopaedia Britannica*. URL: <<https://www.britannica.com/event/World-War-I>> [accessed 20.05.2024].

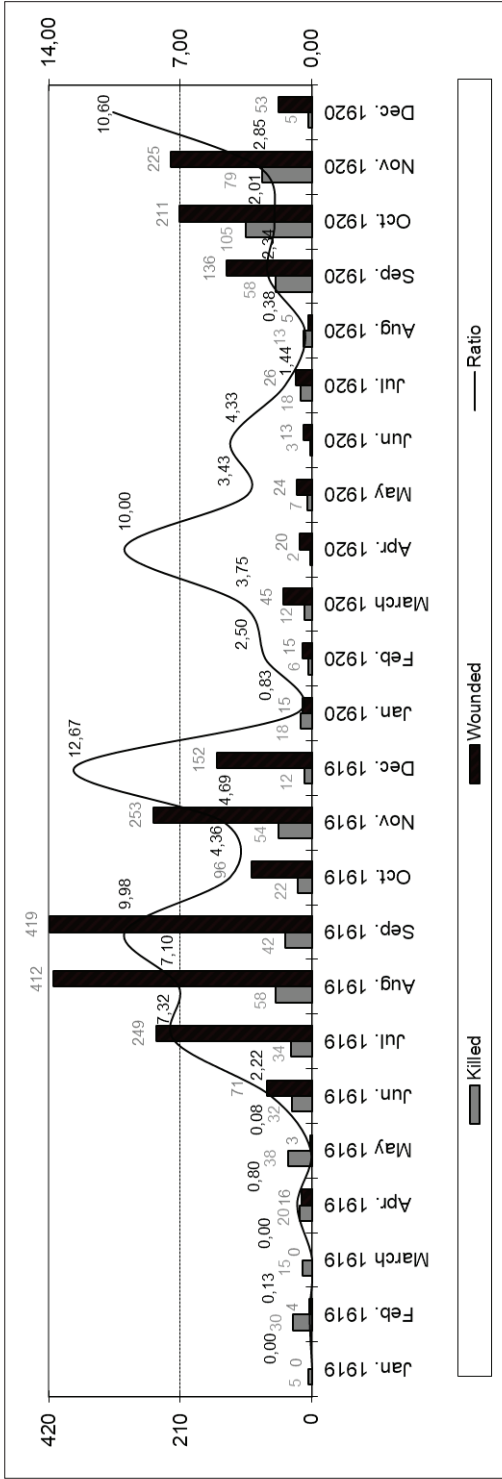
<sup>74</sup> BARKAUSKAS, S. Op. cit., p. 240–241.

Chart 3. The number of Lithuanian soldiers killed in 1919–1920, by day



Based on: JOKUBAUSKAS, Vytautas. *Gyvenimas ir mirtis Lietuvos kariuomenėje 1918–1940 m.* Klaipėda, 2023

Chart 4. Deaths and injuries of Lithuanian soldiers in 1919–1920, by month and their ratio



Based on: JOKUBAUSKAS, V. *Gyvenimas ir mirtis...*

The final step in our research was to compare the number of Lithuanian soldiers killed and wounded in the War of Independence by month and the number of days of infantry, artillery and aviation battles. This allowed us to calculate the change in the intensity of combat by month (see Table 2).

Table 2. Killed and wounded in the Lithuanian army, days of fighting when infantry, artillery or aviation were used

Year, month	Absolute numbers		Intensity values**			Sum of intensity
	Fatalities***	Injured	Sum of battle values*	Fatalities 2 = 1	Injured 7 = 1	
January 1919	5	0	8.50	2.50	0.00	11.00
February 1919	30	4	14.00	15.00	0.57	29.57
March 1919	15	0	9.50	7.50	0.00	17.00
April 1919	20	16	26.50	10.00	2.29	38.79
May 1919	38	3	36.00	19.00	0.43	55.43
June 1919	32	71	23.50	16.00	10.14	49.64
July 1919	34	249	24.00	17.00	35.57	76.57
August 1919	58	412	19.50	29.00	58.86	107.36
September 1919	42	419	18.00	21.00	59.86	98.86
October 1919	22	96	17.50	11.00	13.71	42.21
November 1919	54	253	16.00	27.00	36.14	79.14
December 1919	12	152	0.00	6.00	21.71	27.71
January 1920	18	15	0.00	9.00	2.14	11.14
February 1920	6	15	1.00	3.00	2.14	6.14
March 1920	12	45	5.00	6.00	6.43	17.43
April 1920	2	20	3.00	1.00	2.86	6.86
May 1920	7	24	1.50	3.50	3.43	8.43
June 1920	3	13	0.00	1.50	1.86	3.36
July 1920	18	26	0.00	9.00	3.71	12.71
August 1920	13	5	2.50	6.50	0.71	9.71
September 1920	58	136	25.00	29.00	19.43	73.43
October 1920	105	211	47.50	52.50	30.14	130.14
November 1920	79	225	28.50	39.50	32.14	100.14
December 1920	5	53	1.00	2.50	7.57	11.07
Total:	688	2463	-	-	-	-

Based on: Nuostoliai sužalotais ir mirusiais nuo žaizdų, 1927 m. LCVA, f. 4, ap. 1, b. 210, l. 4; BARKAUSKAS, S. Op. cit.; JOKUBAUSKAS, V. *Gyvenimas ir mirtis...*

Note: the values of the figures are relative, but changing them would not affect the overall trend and the presentation of the dynamics of the war. The numbers in the table and the chart would change, but not the dynamics.

\* Calculated from data in Table 1. Days when infantry were involved are given a value of 0.5; for days when artillery was also used a value of 1 is added, and for days where aviation was also used another value of 1 is added.

\*\* Two soldiers killed equals 1, one soldier 0.5. According to the available data, the ratio of killed to injured was 1 to 3.58 (2463: 688 = 3.58). Therefore, the value of the injured is calculated according to the principle of one fatality for every 3.5 injured. Thus, 1 equates to seven wounded in the table. We have excluded some of the dead (without a date of death), but we have also excluded some of the wounded (in the first half of 1919, when the military sanitation system was not yet operational). Following this adjustment according to the type of fighting (infantry, artillery and aviation), casualties and wounded, similar values are given.

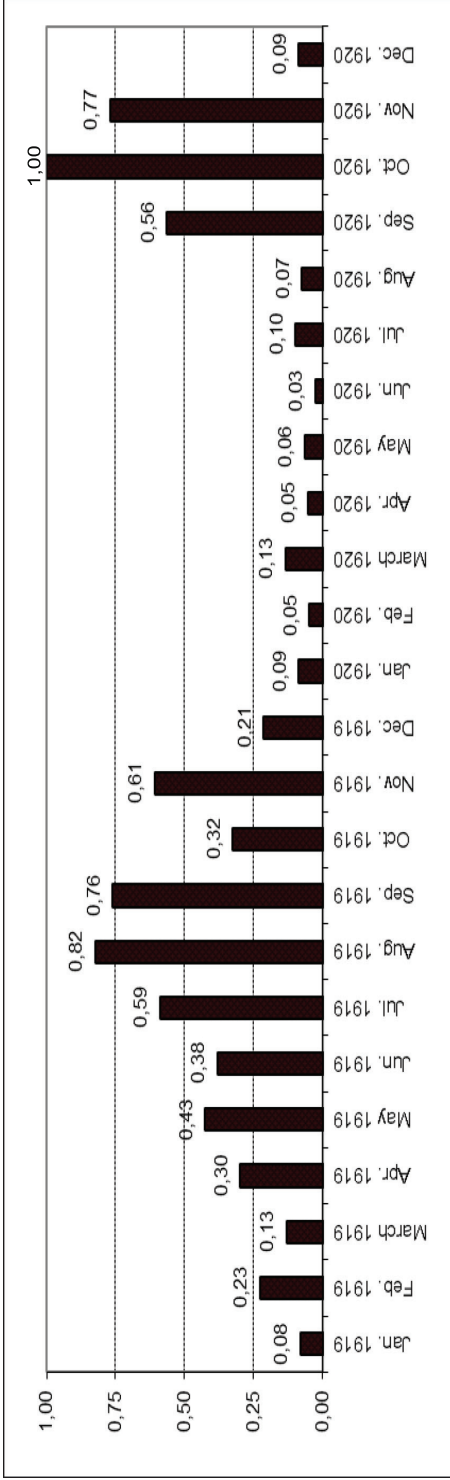
\*\*\* Includes the deaths of Lithuanian soldiers when the date of death could be established. This is not the final number of casualties during the War of Independence. About 1,000 Lithuanian soldiers were killed in battle during the war.

These aggregated data confirm the previous estimates made by analysing the data on a cross-sectional basis. The first three months of 1919 saw a very low number of wounded, and little use of artillery and aviation. This was due to the fact that the Lithuanian army was still in its formative stage, lacking medics and heavy weaponry. On the front line, the situation was saved by the support of German troops and their direct participation in the fighting, which is not documented in this study. August, September and November 1919 saw the most intense independent actions of the Lithuanian army on the fronts. In 1920, only three months stand out in terms of intensity: September, October and November (Chart 5). In October 1920, hostilities took place every day, and for 19 days the army used artillery and aviation. In October, 211 Lithuanian soldiers were wounded and 105 were killed. It was the most intense month of the War of Independence.

## Conclusions

After assessing the participation of infantry in battles, the use of artillery and/or aviation, and the data on the wounded and the fatalities in the war, this article identifies the stages of the intensity of the Lithuanian War of Independence. The first phase is January to March 1919. During this period, the army used artillery and aviation less frequently in combat. The second phase is from April to early December 1919. The army formed several batteries and increased the use of artillery. The casualties also increased, and with the establishment of a more efficient military sanitation service, statistics on injuries began to be recorded consistently during the summer.

Chart 5. A summary of the intensity of the 1919–1920 Lithuanian War of Independence by month (with the most intense month, November 1920, being equal to 1, and the armistice or peace 0)



Note: The intensity of the war is calculated on the basis of five criteria (the use of infantry, artillery and aviation in combat, casualties and wounded). The average of the intensity of combat in 1919–1920 is 0.328. The deviation from the average reveals the changing dynamics of the war. The available data show that four months were close to the average, while seven months were double or even triple the average

The third phase was December 1919 to August 1920. This was a relative operational pause, during which local clashes and relatively low intensity warfare took place. By August 1920, the number of clashes and casualties had dropped significantly, and the army made less or no use of artillery and/or aviation. The fourth stage was short, but it was the most intense. This was from September to November 1920, when the Lithuanian army fought against Polish forces. According to the casualty figures, the most intense months of the war were October and November 1920. According to the wounded statistics, August and September 1919 were the most intense months. The only month when the Lithuanian army fought without stopping, using artillery and aviation, was October 1920.

After systematising and analysing the data on the dates of the battles, the use of artillery and/or aviation, and the number of wounded and killed soldiers, we can see clear correlations. Increased numbers of days of hostilities and the use of artillery and/or aviation are associated with increased casualties. The dynamics of the numbers of killed and wounded soldiers is also similar. The data allow us to identify the most intense days and periods of the war. But at the same time, they reveal some pauses between battles (a day, or two or three), and a longer break at the beginning of 1920. All this raises new questions. How and for what did the Lithuanian army use the pauses between battles? How did they use the longer break to strengthen the army (or why did they not)?

This study was primarily an attempt to verify, on the basis of quantitative data, the historiographical narrative of the triple structure of the War of Independence, its periodisation according to three enemies (Soviet Russia, the Polish army, and the West Russian Volunteer Army) and military operations. Our study adds to the understanding of the war with data from several different cross-sections, revealing the intensity of combat. The analysis of the data on the dead and wounded adds to the data collected during research on the dates of battles, and reveals that the period from January to August 1920, which has so far been treated by researchers as a period of hostilities, was characterised only by military contact (skirmishes), but not by intense battles.

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## KARO VEIKSMŲ INTENSIVUMAS LIETUVOS KARE DĖL NEPRIKLAUSOMYBĖS (1919–1920 METAI)

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### Santrauka

Lietuvos nepriklausomybės karo veiksmų chronologijai ir operacinei erdvei yra skirta išsamių tyrimų, o karinių veiksmų intensyvumas iki šiol nesulaukė didesnio istorikų dėmesio. Istoriografijoje 1919–1920 m. Lietuvos nepriklausomybės karo veiksmų intensyvumą bandyta nustatyti analizuojant karinių veiksmų dinamiką ar skaičiuojant dieny, per kurias vyko kariniai veiksmai, skaičių. Vis dėlto šie du tyrimo būdai nevisapusiškai įvertina karinių veiksmų intensyvumą. Todėl siekiant užpildyti aktualią tyrimų spragą, straipsnyje, pasitelkiant plačią kiekybinių duomenų bazę, keturiais analitiniais pūviais iš Lietuvos kariuomenės perspektyvos analizuojamas karinių veiksmų intensyvumas.

1919–1920 m. Lietuvos kariuomenė, Raudonoji armija, Lenkijos kariuomenė ir Rusijos Vakarų savanorių armija (bermontininkai), vykdydamos karinius veiksmus, daugiausia pasitelkdavo pėstininkus ir juos remiančius kavalerijos dalinius. Neretai pėstininkai po

parengiamojo apšaudymo šautuvais, kulkosvaidžiais ir / ar artilerija dalyvaudavo durtuvų kautynėse. Kavalerijos daliniai veikė remdami pėstininkus, dažnai mažais padaliniais (eskadronais arba būriais). 1919–1920 m. artilerijos veikimas buvo ypač svarbus remiant pėstininkų veiksmus. Dažniausiai, kaip ir kavalerijos atveju, artileristai taip pat veikė santykinai mažais padaliniais (vienos baterijos, o kartais būrio). Prasta kelių infrastruktūra ir amunicijos stoka riboja galimybes plačiau pasitelkti artilerijos pajėgumus. Vis dėlto ir nedidelių artilerijos padalinių pasitelkimas turėjo pastebimą poveikį, ypač psichologinį, – prastai apmokytiems ir patirties stokojantiems kariams jie kėlė baimę ir skatino dezertyruoti. 1919–1920 m. kariniuose veiksmuose pasitelkta Pirmojo pasaulinio karo naujovė – aviacija. Naikinant priešų gyvąją jėgą ir bombarduojant svarbius objektus naudoti santykinai maži aviacijos pajėgumai – viena dvi lėktuvų grandys.

1919–1920 m. vykusių karinius veiksmus galima apibūdinti Martino van Creveldo vartota *žemo intensyvumo karų* sąvoka. Tyrime perskaičius (patikslinus) kovos dienų skaičių ir šiuos duomenis papildžius informacija apie artilerijos ir / ar aviacijos (sunkiosios ginkluotės) naudojimą fronte, buvo nustatyta, kad intensyvūs kariniai veiksmai vyko 1919 m. balandžio pradžioje ir pabaigoje, birželio pirmojoje pusėje ir nuo birželio pabaigos iki liepos vidurio. Ypač intensyvus laikotarpis buvo 1919 m. rugpjūčio antroji pusė ir rugsėjo pradžia. Vis dėlto 1919 m. vasara ir ruduo pasižymėjo permainingu intensyvumu – nors kautynės vykdavo beveik kasdien, tačiau sunkioji ginkluotė (artilėja ir / ar aviacija) pasitelkta sporadiškai ir pats karinių veiksmų intensyvumas buvo netolygus. Remiantis tyrime surinktais duomenimis, 1920 m. sausis–rugpjūtis buvo ilgokai trukusi operacinė pauzė, kurioje dominuoja žemo intensyvumo kariniai veiksmai (patrulių susišaudymai, pavieniai incidentai kontakto linijoje). Intensyviausias karinių veiksmų laikotarpis fiksuojamas nuo 1920 m. rugsėjo pradžios iki 1920 m. lapkričio 20 d. – tuo metu Lietuvos kariuomenė kasdien, su retomis išimtimis, dalyvaudavo kovos veiksmuose, kuriuose pasitelkta sunkioji ginkluotė.

Kovos dienų skaičius ir sunkiosios ginkluotės naudojimas tyrime buvo sugretintas su kautynių poveikį Lietuvos kariuomenei rodančiais kiekybiniais žuvusiųjų ir sužeistųjų duomenimis. Šie duomenys patvirtina, kad 1920 m. sausį–rugpjūtį intensyvūs karo veiksmai nevyko, o aktyviausiai kautasi 1919 m. liepą–lapkritį ir 1920 m. rugsėjį–lapkritį. 1919–1920 m. žuvusiųjų ir sužeistųjų santykis yra 1 ir 2,5, tai atitinka Pirmojo pasaulinio karo visų mirčių ir sužeidimų vidurkį.

Tyrime Lietuvos nepriklausomybės kare žuvusių bei sužeistų Lietuvos karių skaičius ir pėstininkų, artilerijos bei aviacijos kautynių dienos buvo agreguotos į indeksą, kuris leidžia įvertinti karo veiksmų intensyvumą ir jo dinamiką. Apskaičiuotas indeksas patvirtino ir patikslino anksčiau tyrime fiksuotus intensyviausius karinių veiksmų laikotarpius ir operacines pauzes. Nustatyta, kad 1919 m. pirmus tris mėnesius buvo itin mažas sužeistųjų skaičius, retai naudota artilerija ir aviacija. 1919 m. rugpjūtį, rugsėjį ir lapkritį vyko intensyvūs veiksmai frontuose. 1920 m. intensyvumu išsiskiria tik trys mėnesiai: rugsėjis, spalio ir lapkritis. 1920 m. spalio buvo intensyviausias 1919–1920 m. Nepriklausomybės karo mėnuo.