

Section of Military History in Lithuanian Army Staff (1935–1940)

Lietuvos armijos štaba Kara vėstures apakšnodalja
(1935–1940)

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The article analyses the formation and functioning of the Section of Military History in the Lithuanian Army Staff in the period of 1935–1940. The significance of military history for officer training and military planning in the interwar Lithuanian Army is touched upon. The issues of the formation of the Section of History in the Lithuanian Army Staff and the composition of its personnel are disclosed. Moreover, the functions and the methods of activity of the Section and taking over the experience of the Estonian Army are discussed. The achievements of the Section of History and its intended plans are identified. The analysis of the activity of that specific Section of the Army Staff is one component of a broader research on the studies of military history in interwar Lithuania, seeking to disclose how the research on military history was conducted in interwar Lithuania and how the findings were exploited by the main user of the studies of military history – the Lithuanian Army.

Keywords: military history, warfare, history of science, Latvia, Estonia, Lithuania, the Lithuanian Army, the Army Staff, Section of History, Stasys Raštikis, Vytautas Steponaitis, Society of Military Sciences.

Publikaciją analizėta Lietuvos armijos štabo Vėstures apakšnodaljos izveidošana un darbība 1935.–1940. gadā. Autors vispārīgi pieskaras kara vēstures nozīmei karavīru sagatavošanā un militārajā plānošanā Lietuvas armijā starpkaru periodā. Aprakstīta Lietuvas armijos štaba Vėstures apakšnodaljos izveide, personāla sastāvs un ar to saistītās problēmas, raksturotas apakšnodaljos funkcijas un darbības metodes, kā arī atainota Igaunijas armijas pieredzes pārņemšana, konstatēti Vėstures apakšnodaljos sasniegumi un identificēti nākotnes plāni. Armijos štaba apakšnodaljos darbība ir viena no plašāk analizētajām tēmām publikācijā, tādējādi atklājot kara vēstures izpētes procesu starpkaru periodā Lietuvā un Lietuvas armijas kā izpētes datu pamatlietotājas lomu tajā.

Atslēgvārdi: kara vēsture, zinātnes vēsture, Latvija, Igaunija, Lietuva, Lietuvas armija, Lietuvas armijas štābs, Vēstures apakšnodaļa, Stasis Raštikis, Vītauts Steponaitis, Kara zinātnes biedrība.

The period of 1935–1940 in the Lithuanian Army was known as the time of structural reforms and implementation of the re-armament plan. However, the Army also experienced other changes. Along with the changing attitude towards warfare, officer training, and the selection of appropriate warfare methods, the alteration previously unnoticed in historiography can be identified: during that period, studies of military history in the Lithuanian Army were institutionalised. The interest in the military history in the Lithuanian Army was not new. As early as in the 1920s, the army, and particularly part of the officers, were paying exclusive attention to military history and to Lithuanian history in general. Officers were encouraged to take interest in military history and to collect materials; military periodicals provided methodological recommendations on the research on military history. The officers who wanted to study abroad or in higher courses for officers had to take exams in military and Lithuanian history.¹

In the early 1921, the Society of Developers of Military Sciences (Lith. *Karo mokslų kūrėjų draugija – KMKD*)² was established. It was chaired by General Leonas Radas-Zenkavičius, and its First Secretary was Major Vytautas Steponaitis. Every Thursday, the Society organised lectures in the General Headquarters Hall.³ The activities of the Society soon came to an end, however, on 12–13 July 1923, again thanks to the efforts of L. Radas-Zenkavičius, the Society of Military Sciences (Lith. *Karo mokslų draugija – KMD*) was

established. Plans were made to have individual sections of the Society to study history, tactics, literature, statistics, the army morale, etc.⁴ A similar organisation (Czech. *Čekoslovenský Vedecký Ústav Vojenský*) in Czechoslovakia, established as a society of officers in 1919, was likely to have served as an example.⁵ Upon establishment of the KMD, its members were to study “*military history, and especially the issues concerning the history of Lithuania and the Great War*”.⁶

Major Vaclovas Biržiška⁷ (cultural historian, Dean of the Faculty of Law in Vytautas Magnus University (1933–1935), full-time professor) was appointed the head of the History Section of the Society of Military Sciences, however, at the end of the year, he was transferred to the reserve; therefore, in 1924, the organisational work was entrusted to Major Petras Ruseckas⁸ from the Section of Military Sciences of the General Staff. Active participants of the section included L. Radas-Zenkavičius, V. Steponaitis, professors Augustinas Janulaitis (chairman of the Section) and Mykolas Biržiška, assoc. professor Major V. Biržiška, officers Major Juozas Šarauskas, P. Ruseckas, and Capt. Bronius Basiulis.⁹ Later on, Major Petras Tarasenko,¹⁰ one of the outstanding Lithuanian archaeologists, became involved in the activity of the Section of the Society of Military Sciences. However, as of 1927, the activity of the History Section of the Society of Military Sciences, as well as the entire Society came to a standstill; after several years of discussions, in 1933, the Society was integrated into the Officers’ Club (Lith. *Karininkų Ramovė*) and finally terminated its activities.¹¹

Military history in the Lithuanian Army of the interwar period was considered to be an essential component of military sciences, as it included the material, strategies, operational art, and tactics, in

general, the basis of warfare, as no experiments were possible in that area. In 1924, the Department of Military Sciences of the General Staff published a book of L. Radus-Zenkavičius on the First World War. In its preface, the author gave a succinct description of the significance of military history: *“From the entire cycle of military courses, military history is the only one to show us the co-ordinated actions of all the warfare elements. Only military history can reveal to us how unexpectedness and other unknown factors operate in the implementation of certain plans and ideas, and no officer can consider himself fit to carry out his duties, unless he is at least to a degree familiar with military history, and especially with the Great War.”*¹² L. Radus-Zenkavičius also referred to military history in the text of the first in Lithuania military doctrine, prepared in 1922.¹³

As noted in the interwar period, *“examples of military history provide strategy of individual ‘campaigns’, as the fundamentals of strategy never change”*.¹⁴ Lt. General Zenonas Gerulaitis, Head of the Board of the Lithuanian Army General Staff in the *Introduction to Military History*, published in 1932, explained why military history was taught to officers. To quote him, the course did not seek to provide them with the knowledge of *“all the facts of the warfare in the past as that, first of all, is impossible, moreover, it is unnecessary and even harmful as the worthless stuff for the brain”*. The objective of the course was to reveal to officers *“how the knowledge of the facts from the past wars was useful in the preparation for the future wars and how the knowledge about the past can be exploited [to ensure] the future”*. The second objective of the course was by facts of military history *“to justify the military theory, which here [in the military school – V. J.] is frequently conveyed to you in a bare form of speculation, based merely on logic”*, as military

history presents the material of the military theory, thus, the two academic subjects are very closely related. Military history is impossible without military theory, as it is *“the quintessence of military history, the philosophy of military history”*.¹⁵

In 1931, Commander-in-Chief of the Army Staff Lt. General Petras Kubiliūnas in his speech given at the ceremony of the higher courses for officers emphasised: *“We must develop our own military art tactics, but not to blindly copy it from others. The tactics must be adapted to the characteristics of the army and the geographical environment. Each national army, and even each major campaign, have their own tactics.”*¹⁶ A year later, in 1932, in his speech during the opening of the courses for the General Staff officers, P. Kubiliūnas said: *“Military history gives us an opportunity to follow the gradual development of the army organisation and how the military command was accordingly managing and improving.”* Afterwards, he overviewed the military history from Napoleon’s time, highlighting the changes in the warfare, and particularly the increasing complexity of the coordination of military units.¹⁷

In 1934, Lt. Col. of the General Staff S. Raštikis wrote that, in order to become *“a good military commander, one needs not only the innate capability of a military leader, not only good experience and preparation in tactics, but also the knowledge of military history, since the history of warfare is, if not the most important, then surely one of the most important branches of military science* [spacing in the text by V. J.]”.¹⁸ The future general noted that even the most recent and modern military statute will only be a collection of dry articles, unless it contains examples, based on practical experience, with explanations in the context of military history.

The research on the Lithuanian military history can also be viewed from

a comparative perspective. Thus, e.g., in Latvia, thanks to the former Commander-in-Chief of the Latvian Army General Mārtiņš Peniķis, a two-volume history of the Latvian War of Independence was published in 1938.¹⁹ In Estonia, the Committee of the Independence War History (Est. *Vabadussõja Ajaloo Komitee*) that operated under the Army Staff also published a two-volume military history of their national independence in 1937–1939.²⁰ Both in Latvia and in Estonia, the books were republished after the restoration of Independence. In Lithuania, similar works appeared later,²¹ and the books of Vytautas Lesčius are worth mentioning,²² while Latvians and Estonians were republishing²³ the essentially analogous studies on military history of the interwar period. Why were not the works on military history of such a character and level, devoted to the analysis of the history of the Wars of Liberation, ever written and published in interwar Lithuania?

Given the above-mentioned context, the aim of the present research is to analyse the character of the activities related to the studies of military history by the Section of History in the Lithuanian Army Staff over the period of 1935–1940.

The objectives of the research include:

- 1) the analysis of the issues of the formation of the Section of History in the Lithuanian Army Staff and the composition of its personnel;
- 2) the disclosure of the functions and activity methods of the Section of History in the Lithuanian Army Staff;
- 3) the identification of the achievements and the intended outcomes of the activities of the Section of History in the Lithuanian Army Staff.

In general, the science of history has been studied in Lithuanian historiography, and the community of Lithuanian historians, their world outlooks, etc., have been

analysed. Historian Valdas Selenis has studied the community of Lithuanian historians and their activity in the interwar period.²⁴ Aivas Ragauskas²⁵ and Povilas Lasinskas²⁶ explored the issues of the science of history throughout the interwar period. Historian Aurelijus Gieda devoted his doctoral dissertation in the Humanities, defended in 2013, to the changes in the Lithuanian historicism in Lithuania from 1904 to 1940 and the issues of dissemination of the historian's profession over that period.²⁷ The historiography of military history, as well as the significance of military history for the interwar Lithuanian Army, have been discussed.²⁸ Military historian Jonas Vaičenonis has dealt with the issues of organisation of the research on military history in 1918 to 2008.²⁹ The activity of the Society of Military Sciences over a decade (1923–1933) and of its History Section was looked into by Romualdas Juzefovičius³⁰ and Vytautas Jokubauskas,³¹ however, the activity of the Military History Section, formed in the Armed Forces Staff in 1935, has not been analysed. The analysis of the issue will contribute to a better understanding of how the research on military history was institutionalised in the interwar Lithuanian Army and simultaneously, what issues of the research on military history were on the Army's agenda.

I

A new stage of the military history studies in the Army began immediately after the dissolution of the Society of Military Sciences. By emphasising the necessity of preparing and publishing monographs devoted to the history of individual military units, in 1931, V. Steponaitis suggested establishing an individual section for the purpose: it could coordinate

the activities to avoid possible chaos when each unit started developing its own history. The established centre “*would evaluate all our [Lithuania’s – V. J.] former events and indicate how one or another event ought to be presented and understood. Based on the directives of the centre, separate parts would provide monographs in an appropriate direction and spirit*”.³² The response to the above mentioned suggestion was as follows: “*The establishment of the Centre for Military History, writing an outline of the history of our own army, publishing monographs on our army units, the studies of the military history of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania, and ultimately, publishing of a periodical that would contain the materials necessary for the studies of the history of our army, its episodes, and biographies of our outstanding military men are of paramount importance.*” The author quite extensively argued the significance of the studies of military history and emphasised the fact that no synthesis, i.e. no military history of Lithuania, had been published to consistently disclose its military history, since each soldier ought to know the Lithuanian military history “*not worse than any statute, since a soldier who is not familiar with the beginning of the army formation, its deeds and achievements, will not be able to properly understand the power of its spirit and its ideals*”.³³ Based on Russia/USSR experience, V. Steponaitis accentuated the significance of organisations of the warfare science, since the officers who were not interested in the latest military literature and who did not discuss the issues of warfare sciences among them would soon start “*lagging behind the real life*” in their service.³⁴ In 1934, V. Steponaitis in the press advocated setting up a section or a department of military history that could undertake the studies of military history.³⁵ Still in 1934, the new regulations of the War Museum³⁶ stated that “*The War Museum*

is an institution of military history and education”;³⁷ simultaneously, the activity of the Military History College,³⁸ active since 1921, was terminated.

After the General Staff Colonel S. Raštikis had been appointed Commander of the Army, attention once again focussed upon the “management” of the Lithuanian military history, and a Section of History³⁹ was set up in the Department of Publishing and Education of the Army Staff. On 4 October 1935, Lt. Colonel Aleksandras Šimkus⁴⁰ was appointed its head, and from 3 March 1936, he worked as an editor of *Mūsų žinynas* [Our Reference Book].⁴¹ On 1 February 1936, Lt. Col. V. Steponaitis, a long-standing editor of *Our Reference Book* and *Military Archives* (Lith. *Mūsų žinynas* and *Karo archyvas*), was appointed the head of the Section of History.⁴² The personnel of the Section were Lt. Colonel V. Steponaitis and a historian, reserve Lt. dr. Antanas Vasiliauskas,⁴³ who started working in the Section in the spring of 1936.⁴⁴ In the request to employ him, it was stated that after “*the Department of Publishing and Education had failed to find suitable personnel for such work [in the Section of History – V. J.] among the officers*”, A. Vasiliauskas,⁴⁵ who had completed his studies abroad, was recommended. In 1935–1940, Major Jonas Laucevičius served in the Section and was in charge of the Army archives.⁴⁶ On 1 December 1936, two officers, Lt. Colonel V. Steponaitis and J. Laucevičius, served in the Section of History, and there was another vacancy for an officer. Altogether, the Department of Publishing and Education had 16 posts, and 14 of those were occupied. Reserve junior lieutenant A. Vasiliauskas served as a clerk in the Section Office, and Major A. Ružancovas was the Head of the Army Library.⁴⁷ In 1939, Major Petras Jakštas⁴⁸ served in the Section, and Major

Kazys Ališauskas⁴⁹ was also appointed to the Section of History. However, institutionally, whether by recruiting or hiring, the potential of officers who had the historian's education had not been fully exploited, since the number of the staff and reserve officers who were studying history in the university (even though not every one of them had completed the studies before 1940, as studies tended to last for a decade and even longer) exceeded two dozens,⁵⁰ while altogether, 93 historians graduated from the Faculty of Humanities, Vytautas Magnus University, over the period of 1924–1940, and 52 historians graduated from the Faculty of Theology and Philosophy.⁵¹ The potential of officers who had the historian's education was substantial, and there were doctors of science among them, however, the limited resources prevented consolidation of the majority of these specialists in the Section of History of the Army Staff for conducting research.

II

The newly formed Section of Military History had to: 1) collect and store the material of the Lithuanian military history *“seeking to portray: a) the Wars of Liberation; 2) the formation and development of the Army, and c) the entire period of ancient history”*; 2) submit collections of documents and research findings for publishing; 3) take care of the military history dissemination in the army and among the general public; and 4) organise the Army archives.⁵² Section of the personnel, first of all, had to organise the materials of the Wars of Liberation and the interwar history of the Army. However, the historical materials on the previous periods had to be collected simultaneously, the concluded research and the analyses of the battles had to complement

the exposition of the Vytautas the Great War Museum.⁵³ As stated by Brigade General Stasys Raštikis, the Section of Military History were first of all organising the card index and collecting historical materials. In 1937, the tasks were half done, and after completing them, the writing of the history of the Wars of Liberation was to have been started.⁵⁴ In 1938, S. Raštikis indicated that the work of collecting and organising materials of military history had been delayed, however, in the late 1930s, it was carried out intensely.⁵⁵ The Commander of the Army said: *“Recently, hard work had been done in the area of organisation of the military history materials. The work was carried out in the Section of History of the Department of Publishing and Education of the Army Staff and in the Vytautas the Great War Museum. We tried to involve reserve officers and “the real fighters and witnesses to the Wars of Liberation”.*”⁵⁶ The Section of Military History of the Army Staff argued that the wars of the past could not be forgotten so that the future generations would be able to defend their Motherland and emphasised: *“Our [Lithuanian – V. J.] military command, understanding the significance of the issue, became concerned about Lithuania's military history.”*⁵⁷ The Section of Military History more than once appealed to the participants of the First World War and the Wars of Liberation with a request to write memoirs and to send them.⁵⁸ The issue of the collection, systematisation, and publishing of the sources was actualised not only by the army, but also by Lithuanian historians in general. In 1932, J. Matusas wrote: *“What do we need first of all? A full collection of Lithuanian sources of history. That is the most important thing.”*⁵⁹ In 1937, Zenonas Ivinskis stated that *“the publication of the sources of Lithuanian history before had been, one could say, driven by the initiative and efforts of one person”.*⁶⁰

V. Steponaitis, appointed the head of the Section of History, reported to the military authorities that, first of all, it was necessary: 1) to establish what had been published on the subject of military history in Lithuanian periodicals and other publications; and b) to check what materials had been stored in the archives. The first task was undertaken by V. Steponaitis himself: he made a card index of the bibliography of Lithuanian military history hoping to facilitate the research on military history in the future. Simultaneously, a second catalogue was being compiled, devoted to individual battles. Steponaitis worked following prof. V. Biržiška's advice. He stated that the Army archives were quite well organised, however, not systematised, and noted: *"I still do not have a clear plan how to organise it all. As much as I know from literature, starting with the Middle Ages, papers in other archives had been catalogued (the way of cataloguing is not clear, as the system of cards is hardly suitable for the purpose, while some other people argue that the new archives are specifically organised by means of a card system), while those of the later ages are left as they are. That can be found out in the discussions with experts."* In Steponaitis' opinion, it was necessary to collect memoirs on the subjects of military history, even if part of them did not fit for publishing, as well as to get a collection of photographs. He took a critical view of the past experience: he believed it was necessary to carry out research on history, however, that could be done only after the revision of the completed work, upon having collected materials and having got together the necessary personnel – *"we shall only be able to study our wars more exhaustively and to write a history of the Wars of Liberation only when we have people. Yet it will be one of the cardinal tasks of the Section of History"*. A proposal followed to change the structure of the Section and the number of

the personnel. V. Steponaitis thought that, *"in order to speed up the work"*, they had to have three sections: the first, of the history of the Lithuanian Army, the second, of the Wars of Liberation, and the third, of the archives. He suggested inviting Dr. Zenonas Ivinskis to work in the first section, the latter having already given his agreement, however, did not detail the personnel of all the sections. It was important that the Head of the Section of Military History, being an officer, defined two academic principles: *"1) scientific freedom of work [...]; 2) the dependence must not restrict the initiative of work"*. He thought that *"the studies of the Independence period required officers with higher military and historian's education. The first problem is easy to solve due to our General Staff courses. The second problem would be easy to solve, if a scholarship was granted to an officer to complete the studies in history at our university"*.⁶¹

In 1936, V. Steponaitis went to Latvia and Estonia to get acquainted with the situation in the research on military history. In 1921, the Chief of the Latvian Army Staff, in order to collect the materials of military history, set up the Military History Commission (Lat. *Kara vēstures komisija*) which was to collect the materials of military history and to publish research on the history of the Army; its sub-commissions were active in military units.⁶² In 1930, due to the lack of funds, the Commission was discontinued.⁶³ Therefore, on coming back, V. Steponaitis reported that Latvians did not have any section in charge of the research on military history, yet the former Commander-in-Chief of the Latvian Army M. Peniķis was very much interested in military history and was writing the history of the Wars of Liberation; one volume had already been published. As stated by V. Steponaitis, the Latvian Army Archives had two employees, however, no research was carried out.⁶⁴

In the Estonian Army, the Committee of the Independence War History (Est. *Vabadussõja Ajaloo Komitee*⁶⁵) had been active since 1926, formed by the Board and the Department of Military History. In accordance with the Lithuanian archival sources, the Board had 5 members (Major General Jaan Soots, Major General Aleksandre Tõnisson, Major General Nikolai Reek, and two professional historians: Jüri Uluots and Hendrik Seep), while the Department (with the personnel of 7–9 officers) consisted of three Sections: the archives, the material collection, and the research. Basically, the historical materials on the Independence War were collected, and the card index contained 20 to 30 000 cards. The memoirs were started to collect in 1920; to get them, questionnaires were sent out (before 1 April 1936, 4 190 questionnaires were disseminated, 1 113 were responded to, and 902 respondents agreed to be interviewed). Before 1936, the memoirs of 68 persons were received, including 11 diaries. The research Section had 4 employees, however, during 10 years of their activities, no works had been published, and in 1936, the *Popular History of Independence Wars* was being edited. Thus, the personnel of the Section were basically engaged in preparatory works: they prepared extracts of documents and systematised materials. Based on the above-mentioned examples, V. Steponaitis concluded: “If we expect more efficient work from the section entrusted to me, we need to immediately re-organise it, and first of all by employing more people.”⁶⁶ In 1936, representative of the Estonian Committee of the Independence War History Lt. Colonel Mihkel Kattai informed V. Steponaitis of the finishing of editing the history of the Estonian Independence War and asked to specify the information about the development

of the Lithuanian Army, as the issue was discussed in Volume 1 of the publication.⁶⁷ After V. Steponaitis had provided the information, Estonian colleagues also asked for the information about the situation in Lithuania at the end of 1918 and for the portrait of the first President of the Republic Antanas Smetona, so that they could publish it in the book.⁶⁸ The section of military history was also a part of the composition of armies in other countries. During the interwar period, Poland, had a Bureau of Military History with four departments;⁶⁹ in Italy, military history was studied by the Bureau of History of the General Staff, etc.⁷⁰

Upon having gained some experience in Estonia, V. Steponaitis wrote to officers, clergymen, and various public figures seeking to obtain from them materials of military history, such as memoirs, documents, and photos. In some cases, his activities were similar to that of a detective: in 1936, he approached the Chief of the Army Staff to find out whose diary served as a basis for the Commander of the Army Colonel of the General Staff S. Raštikis when he was writing an article for the *Karys*⁷¹ and where he could get the diary, as “it is important for the Section of History to have that diary”. The Chief of the Staff Colonel Jonas Černius answered that “the Commander was using his own diary, and he has it, but it needs editing, therefore he cannot give it at present”.⁷² The addresses of the people who could provide historical materials were sought in the files of the *Karys* correspondence with the authors.⁷³ In archival files, dozens, and possibly hundreds of such and similar appeals to different individuals can be found. In that way, the efforts were made to collect the greatest possible number of materials relevant to the research on Lithuanian military history.

III

Next to material collection and the compilation of a card index (a catalogue), research was conducted. To include the widest possible circle of people in the research, a number of methodological recommendations on conducting research was published. Different publications on the subject of military history appeared. In 1936, the Department of Publishing and Education presented a publication of 37 pages on major operations of the Wars of Liberation;⁷⁴ employees of the Section of History A. Vasiliauskas⁷⁵ and V. Steponaitis⁷⁶ each published several works on the subjects of military history. A. Vasiliauskas was entrusted with writing the history of the *Žemaičiai* Battalion.⁷⁷ In 1940, books of authors who did not belong to the Section were published: that of Dr. J. Matusas,⁷⁸ and that of Major Petras Šeštakauskas, who had studied history⁷⁹ at the University in 1928–1934 and was an author of two books⁸⁰ (*Antique Firearms*, 1940).⁸¹ The officers of the Section of History were sent on business trips to collect materials; they went to different garrisons to get acquainted with the documents stored there. Thus, e.g., in January 1939, Major Kazys Ališauskas went to Šiauliai and Panevėžys, Major Laucevičius to Radviliškis and Tauragė, and Dr. A. Vasiliauskas, to Marijampolė, Alytus, and Vilkaviškis.⁸² In 1939, in the Section of History, the period of the Wars of Liberation with Poles was analysed.⁸³ Still during 1939, V. Steponaitis asked to extend the term of service for the Head of the Military Archives Major J. Laucevičius, as in compliance with the legal acts, majors were transferred to reserve at the age of 51. V. Steponaitis motivated his request by the shortage of the personnel who was willing and able to work and by the fact that Major J. Laucevičius was the only one who knew the files of

the archives, who was compiling a card index and had to finish the task. It was impossible to appoint A. Vasiliauskas or K. Ališauskas to the archives, as that would have interrupted the research.⁸⁴

A number of military memoirs were published, and the publications were expected to serve as useful materials for military historians in conducting research and presenting “*the objective literature of our [Lithuanian – V. J.] military history*”.⁸⁵ However, even though the memoir publishing became more intensive, their evaluation was quite controversial. The two-volume memoirs *Our Deeds*⁸⁶ by reserve Colonel Jonas Petraitis, published in 1935–1937, were criticised by the first Head of the Section of History Lt. Colonel A. Šimkus: with reference to Colonel A. Grasset’s publication *How to Write a Battle Monograph*, he wrote that the book “*was biased and of no historical value*”.⁸⁷ A publication in the *Kardas on Our Deeds* characterised it as “*a very raw material*” and named its faults: “*an uneven scale and the absence of a framework. The author does not have a clear idea what needs to be written and what can be missed. The events are described superficially, in a perfunctory manner*”; moreover, the review emphasized that the author, by accentuating his own merits, belittled the merits of others, etc.⁸⁸ When the second volume was published, it was noted that the memoirs “*did not leave any single superior who was not ridiculed, derided, or criticised, as the author thought fit*”.⁸⁹ Z. Ivinskis took a critical view of the memoirs of the Great War compiled by P. Ruseckas⁹⁰ and found little value in the book. However, no review appeared in the press, and Z. Ivinskis wrote on his draft review: “*In February 1940, censors ordered to remove it, although it was set up for publishing in the Židinys*.”⁹¹ In 1937, the Union of Volunteer Creators of the Lithuanian Army published two

volumes of memoirs of the participants of the Wars of Liberation,⁹² which were positively evaluated;⁹³ the criticism may have been rejected by the censors. The publishing of those books and of memoirs in the military press illustrated the results of the campaign launched by the Section of History of the Army Staff, which encouraged the participants of the Great War and the Wars of Liberation to undertake memoir writing, even if professional historians and officers questioned their value.

In 1937, reserve General Kazys Ladiga offered to the Army Staff to describe the military operation of the Wars of Liberation.⁹⁴ The Staff approved it, however, refused to appoint three assistants due to the shortage of the personnel. However, the Head of the Publishing and Education Colonel J. Šarauskas suggested appointing one *“clerk-typist from amongst reserve officers (reserve junior lieutenant)”*.⁹⁵ The aforementioned reserve officer was historian Dr. A. Vasiliauskas. On completion of K. Ladiga's work, on 9 May 1938, a specially formed commission consisting of J. Šarauskas, Lt. Colonel Mečius Stankaitis, Lt. Colonel V. Steponaitis, and P. Šeštakauskas concluded that the description of the Wars of Liberation with the schemas of operations of individual sections, as prepared by K. Ladiga, *“can be accepted merely as material for the further research of the Wars of Liberation”*. According to historian Dr. A. Vasiliauskas, who worked with K. Ladiga and who presented the work in the meeting, Ladiga did not study the works of other authors on the Wars of Liberation, which was considered by the Commission as part of the methodology of historical research; moreover, the author presented subjective evaluations in the text and did not observe the requirement to give references to the sources in the text. In the meeting, A. Vasiliauskas stated that *“presently there*

is an only one way of indicating the sources in science, i.e., for each reference or conclusion, the source has to be indicated either in the text or at the bottom of the text. However, reserve Gen. Ladiga did not follow the requirement”.⁹⁶ The list of the used sources was attached, however, to verify any fact, it was necessary to review all the material. The draft minutes stated that *“such primitive indication of sources was used in the 18th century”*,⁹⁷ although in the signed version of the minutes, the above-quoted evaluation of K. Ladiga's work was gone. However, the history of the Wars of Liberation intended to mark their 20th anniversary in step with Latvia and Estonia, failed to be published. For the completed work and the submitted materials (715 pages of the text and schemas in six maps 1 : 100 000), performed by K. Ladiga from 18 October 1937 to 11 June 1938, he was paid the fee of 4 200 Litas.⁹⁸

Misunderstandings also plagued the preparation of a publication devoted to the 20th anniversary of Technical Troops. Historian Dr. Z. Ivinskis, who served in the army in 1934–1935, was simultaneously writing the history of the Armoured Group (Battalion size unit, Lith. *Šarvuočiu rinktinė*), yet did not finish it. Later, when the Commander of the Group demanded for the manuscript, Z. Ivinskis asked for a fee (1 500 Litas),⁹⁹ however, the military authorities refused to pay, as they believed that a manuscript written during the service belonged to the Armoured Group, instead of the author.¹⁰⁰ The Commander of the Armoured Group asked the Head of the Military Equipment for a permission *“with the help of the police, to take away from Dr. Ivinskis the material that belongs to us”*.¹⁰¹ Still, the Chief of the Army Staff Colonel General Černius delegated the publishing of the manuscript to the Department of Publishing and Education and left the Armoured Group aside. He stated

that the Group will not be able to publish the work, and the manuscript, instead of being taken away from the author, had to be taken, evaluated, and published.¹⁰² The Heads of the Military Equipment and the Section of History, after studying the text, took the view that Z. Ivinskis had to be paid in accordance with the officially established rates.¹⁰³ Finally, Ivinskis' manuscript was published in an anniversary publication.¹⁰⁴ That is one of the cases of commissioned research on military history, abounding in misperception and misunderstandings.

In general, the formation of the Section of (Military) History in the Lithuanian Army Staff was rather a trend than an exception. The decision to have it is to be considered as somewhat delayed, and the number of its personnel was so small that they were unable to conduct wide-scale research on military history. It is obvious that two officers and one scientist-historian (employed as a clerk) were not able to carry out extensive studies of military history; that was the activity to be defined as "doing what we can" or just some "imitation" of activity, even though the setting up of the Section was an indicator of the change in the attitude of the military authorities. The personnel sufficed for the publishing of the *Military Archives* (Lith. *Karo archyvas*), the collection of materials about the Wars of Liberation, including the compilation of a card index and the preparation of one or two articles at the level of an analysis of the minor military tactics cases belonging to the period 1918–1920. However, the fact that the Head of the Section V. Steponaitis clearly identified high criteria for the academic performance and academic freedom of the Section activity and sought to expand the personnel by recruiting the most promising Lithuanian historians of the time gave hope that the Section had the potential of growth both in terms

of its personnel and its academic activity. The nucleus of merely three or four scientists-historians (who would have covered the research themes of the military history of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania, the uprisings of the 19th century, and the Wars of Liberation), with the assistance of several officers (who could have organised and supervised the card index, the archives, and the library, as well as worked with the cartographic materials, etc.) would have essentially changed the situation.

Conclusions

The Section of History of the Department of Publishing and Education of the Lithuania's Army Staff was formed after the military authorities had declared the need to conduct research on military history, with the findings to be used in the officer training and military planning processes. However, the new Section of the Staff did not manage to more substantially develop either in terms of the personnel recruitment or the publishing of research findings. The Section of History felt a shortage of the academic personnel (historians), even if Lithuania had specialists in the area. The Head of the Section widely used the experience of other countries, and especially of the Estonian Army in the area of the military history research organisation.

The Section of History had to collect materials relevant to the research on Lithuania's military history and to conduct such research. The priority was the Wars of Liberation of 1919–1920. The military history was "delegated" two principal functions: 1) the "laboratory" of warfare, seeking to identify and select the warfare techniques, relevant to and appropriate for Lithuania, and to train officers; and 2) patriotic and civic education (of soldiers and

the general public). The working methods were taken over from the academic community, moreover, it was clear that certain principles of action were taken over from the Estonian Army after the acquaintance with their system of the research on military history.

Over several years of activity, a significant amount of materials was accumulated and a number of works published. The individuals who were involved in conducting military history research, were not

directly employed or serving in the Section of History; however, the key objective – the publishing of a synthesis of the military history or a major work on the analysis of military operations on the occasion of the 20th anniversary of the Wars of Liberation – failed. In the future, plans were made to expand the activity of the Section by attracting more professional historians and by purposefully preparing officers-military historians in Vytautas Magnus University, where they would study history.

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- ⁹⁵ Letter by Šarauskas [Lith.], 27.07.1937. Šarausko 1937 m. liepos 27 d. laiškas. LCVA, 929-6-242, p. 120.
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SUMMARY

The research has shown that the Section of History at the Press and Education Department of the General Staff of the Lithuanian Armed Forces was established as a part of the declaration by the military authorities, indicating the need to conduct military history research that would be used for the purposes of officer corps' training and military planning processes. The new division of the staff, however, failed to expand both in terms of personnel recruitment and in terms of publishing the research output. The Section of History experienced the lack of academic staff (historians), albeit there were experts in this area available in Lithuania. Lieutenant Colonel Vytautas Steponaitis, who headed the Section, extensively relied on the experience of the armies of other countries such as Latvia and Estonia.

The Section of History was tasked with collecting materials relevant to the research of the Lithuanian military history and pursue the research as such. Priority was given to the 1919–1920 Wars of Independence, while military history was delegated two key functions: a) a warfare “laboratory”, the purpose of which was to highlight and select methods of warfare relevant and applicable for Lithuania and to train military cadres; b) patriotic and civic education (involving military personnel and general population). The working methods were adopted from the academic community; furthermore, it is evident that certain operating practices were taken over from the Estonian army upon close examination of the system of the research of military history implemented there.

Generally speaking, the establishment of the Section of (Military) History as part of the Staff of the Lithuanian Army was a trend rather than the exception in the context of other countries. The decision as such was even regarded as overdue, while the number of staff was minimal, and thus the Section was not capable to conduct large-scale research in the field of military history. Clearly, two officers and a single scholar of history (employed as a record clerk) were inadequate for pursuing research in military history on a wide scale; it was an activity that might be appropriately defined as “doing what we can”.

KOPSAVILKUMS

Lietuvos Respublikos Armijos štaba Publikacijų un izglitības departamenta Vēstures sekcija tika izveidota pēc tam, kad militārās vadības iestādes bija apzinājušas nepieciešamību un paziņojušas par nolūku veikt militārās vēstures pētniecību, lai izmantotu tās rezultātus virsnieku apmācībai un militārās plānošanas uzdevumiem. Pats lēmums izveidot

šādu struktūru bija zināmā mērā novēlota, un personāls bija tik nepietiekams, ka nespēja veikt plaša apjoma militārās vēstures izpēti. Sekcijas izveide tomēr liecināja par militārās vadības attieksmes maiņu pret vēstures pētniecību. Tādējādi gan sekcija lielā mērā darbojās pēc principa darīt vismaz to, kas ir iespējams. Tomēr jaunajai Armijas štāba sekcijai neizdevās gūt nopietnus panākumus ne personāla iesaistišanas, ne pētniecības rezultātu publikācijas ziņā. Vēstures sekcija izjuta personāla (profesionālu vēsturnieku) trūkumu, kaut arī Lietuvā militārās vēstures speciālisti bija pieejami. Sekcijas vadītājs plaši izmantoja citu valstu pieredzi, it īpaši Igaunijas armijas sasniegumus militārās vēstures pētniecības organizēšanā.

Vēstures sekcijas funkcijās ietilpa vākt materiālus par Lietuvas militāro vēsturi un īstenot šīs vēstures izpēti. Sekcijas darba prioritāte bija Lietuvas Neatkarības kara norise 1919.–1920. gadā. Militārās vēstures izpētei bija divi galvenie uzdevumi: 1) kara vešanas “laboratorijas” funkcijas, lai identificētu un izvēlētos kara vešanas metodes, kas bija piemērotas Lietuvas armijas vajadzībām, un lai apmācītu virsniekus; 2) patriotiskā un pilsoniskā izglītošana, kas bija orientēta uz Lietuvas militāro personālu un visu sabiedrību kopumā. Tās darbības un izpētes metodes bija aizgūtas no akadēmiskās sabiedrības, bez tam bija skaidrs, ka noteikti darbības principi pārņemti no Igaunijas armijas pēc iepazīšanas ar tās militārās vēstures izpētes organizāciju.

Pēc vairākiem darbības gadiem sekcija bija sakrājusi nozīmīgu apjomu materiālu un publicējusi diezgan plašus pētījumus. Militārās vēstures izpētei tika pieaicināti darbinieki, kuri nebija nodarbināti Vēstures sekcijā, tomēr netika sasniegts galvenais mērķis: uz Neatkarības kara 20. gadadienu publicēt Lietuvas militārās vēstures apkopojumu vai liela mēroga pētījumu, kas analizētu militārās operācijas. Nākotnē tika plānots paplašināt sekcijas darbību, uzaicinot vairāk profesionālu vēsturnieku un mērķtiecīgi sagatavojot virsniekus – militāros vēsturniekus Vītauta Dižā Universitātē, kur viņi vispirms studētu vēsturi. Tomēr netika pietiekami izmantots to vēsturnieku speciālistu potenciāls, kuri beidza šo universitāti.