



The Issue of Civilian Security in the Lithuanian-Polish Borderland between 1919 and 1922

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Abstract. The work presents the problem of the safety of civilians in the Polish-Lithuanian borderland in the period of 1919 (the beginning of fighting for the Polish-Lithuanian borderland) until the dissolution of Central Lithuania. It focuses not only on political issues and the direct impact of warfare on civilian security, but also covers sanitation and educational aspects. Based on the analysis of sanitary issues and criminal offences on the Polish-Lithuanian borderland, the author analyses the issue of everyday life of civilians in the discussed area.

Keywords. *Central Lithuania, The Second Polish Republic, Lithuania, Polish-Lithuanian relations, civilian security, borderland.*

Anotacija. Darbe pristatoma civilių saugumo problema Lenkijos ir Lietuvos pasienyje laikotarpiu nuo 1919 metų (kovos už Lenkijos ir Lietuvos pasienį pradžia) iki Vidurio Lietuvos iširimo. Darbas orientuotas ne tik į politinius klausimus ir tiesioginį karo poveikį civilių saugumui, bet ir į sanitarijos bei švietimo aspektus. Remdamasis sanitarinių klausimų ir nusikalstamų veikų Lenkijos ir Lietuvos pasienyje analize, autorius analizuoja civilių kasdienybės klausimą aptariamoje srityje.

Esminiai žodžiai: *Vidurio Lietuva, Antroji Lenkijos Respublika, Lietuva, Lenkijos ir Lietuvos santykiai, civilinis saugumas, pasienis.*

Introduction

The author understands civil security as the security of individuals, groups, communities and civil organizations in all conditions, in the face of all threats. Threats to the civilian population are primarily activities related to ongoing armed conflicts: the Polish-Soviet war, the Polish-Lithuanian conflict, and all the threats posed by armed conflict. These include criminal actions by soldiers, either arbitrary or official excessive requisitions, the formation of robber bands, unauthorised and lawless actions by paramilitary organizations, or even the creation of self-proclaimed territories where the state authority did not reach, such as the Polish Varviškė Local Government in Lithuania.

The conflict on the disputed Polish-Lithuanian territories resembled civil war. Historically, these lands belonged to the former Grand Duchy of Lithuania, united by the Union of Lublin into the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, and after its collapse became part of the Russian Empire, from which after its collapse emerged Poland, Lithuania and the ephemeral Central Lithuania. The state borders cut through homogeneous areas dividing not only localities but even individual farms. The dispute even divided multinational families. The conflict was extremely fierce. Not only regular troops took part in them. Guerilla formations, militias and paramilitary units such as the Polish Military Organisation also fought in them. People who served in paramilitary groups were often unaccustomed to military discipline.

The time frame covers the period from the Polish-Lithuanian fighting for borders in 1919 in Suwałki Region to the existence of Central Lithuania with its capital in Vilnius. Vilnius Region was incorporated into Poland on April 18, 1922, and the Conference of Ambassadors of the Allied Powers approved the eastern border of Poland on March 15, 1923, sanctioning the incorporation of Vilnius Region. The geographical scope of the article covers Vilnius Region, and Suwałki Region with Seinai.

The author also describes the case of an attempt to detach from Poland the village of Varviškė inhabited by Poles and located in the territory of the Lithuanian state.

In this paper, the author used the method of content analysis by means of which the content of archival materials on the basis of which the topic was elaborated was examined. Another method was the historical-systematic approach, which made it possible to establish existing connections between historical facts and events and systematize the gathered information. The last method applied was the narrative approach, by which these historical facts were presented in a specific order. In this paper, sanitary and educational issues were presented on the basis of the collections of the Lithuanian Central State Archives in Vilnius and Central Military Archives in Warsaw.

Current state of research

The topic of internal security in the Polish-Lithuanian borderland is one of the subjects awaiting a more in-depth analysis. Numerous scientific publications have primarily dealt with political issues related to the Polish-Lithuanian conflict over Vilnius and Suwałki Regions, and above all, the concepts of political order in Central and Eastern Europe from 1918 to 1923 (until the final incorporation of Eastern Galicia into Poland). On March 15, 1923 the Conference of Ambassadors of the Allied Powers recognized Polish sovereign rights to Eastern Galicia and established the Polish-Lithuanian border, granting Poland Vilnius and Vilnius Land. The subject of the so-called rebellion (or mutiny) of General Lucjan Żeligowski, the creation of Central Lithuania and the incorporation of Vilnius Region into Poland have frequently been discussed. However, most of the publications concerning the discussed area relate to the Polish-Soviet War 1919-1921.

There are few studies discussing factors influencing the everyday life of civilians, such as diseases, the state of education, or ongoing activities behind the war theatre in the borderland area (today, according to the author of this text, improperly called a hybrid war). Political and military struggles between Poland and Lithuania were widely discussed by Piotr Łossowski in his works entitled *Konflikt polsko-litewski 1918-1920*, Warsaw 1996; and *Po tej i tamtej stronie Niemna. Stosunki polsko-litewskie 1883-1939*, Warsaw 1985. This topic is also addressed by Tomas Balkelis in his work titled *War, Revolution and Nation-Making in Lithuania 1914-1923*, Oxford 2018 and the same author *Lemtingi metai: Lietuva 1914-1923 m. karas, revoliucija ir tautos gimimas*, Vilnius 2019.

The problems of establishing a peaceful order on the Polish-Lithuanian-Belarusian borderland and relations between the Polish Army and the civil administration are discussed in the works of Joanna Gierowska-Kałuża, *Zarząd Cywilny Ziem Wschodnich (19 lutego 1919 - 9 września 1920)*, Warsaw 2003. The issue of Central Lithuania is touched on, among others, by Wiesław B. Łach in “Bunt” Żeligowskiego. *Kulisy przyłączenia Wileńszczyzny do Polski*, Warsaw 2014.

Political situation in the Polish-Lithuanian borderland

The Lithuanian-Polish borderland, i.e., among others, Suwałki Region, Vilnius Region, were inhabited by people with the Polish, Lithuanian, Belarusian and Jewish national sense of identity, and people with an unspecified national identity – the so-called locals. Inhabitants of the Polish-Lithuanian borderland were citizens of the Russian Empire during the partitions, while during World War I, from 1915 until the turn of 1918-1919, they found themselves under German occupation in the area known as Ober-Ost. After the end of World War I, both Russia (despite the Bolshevik Revolution) and Germany, which suffered a military defeat, were still perceived as strong and stable states by inhabitants

of the Polish-Lithuanian borderland. However, the Polish state, raising from the ashes after 123 years of slavery, fought for its borders against all its neighbours. It did not have an efficient administration, therefore for many people it was a temporary creation. Its administrative, cultural and, above all, historical centre of the described region was Vilnius - an ethnically diverse city with a mixture of cultures, nationalities and religions. The city was then inhabited by Lithuanians, Poles, Jews, Belarusians and Russians. When the city was part of the Russian Empire, the largest percentage of the inhabitants were Jews (about 40%), followed by Poles (31%) and Lithuanians and Belarusians¹. The December 1919 census of Vilnius population showed that out of 129,000 inhabitants there were 72,000 Poles i.e. 56.2% of all the population, 47,000 Jews and 3,000 Lithuanians, i.e. 36.1% and 2.3%, respectively. An even higher percentage of Poles lived in Vilnius District, where they constituted 87.3% of the total population. A clear majority of Polish people was found in the following districts: Lida - 76%, Ashmyany - 68.3%, Trakai - 53.8% and Bratslav - 52.5%. In contrast, Lithuanians constituted a significant part of the population in Trakai District, 39.6%, and Švenčionys District, 27.6%.² Lithuanians lived in dense clusters in the lands of Suwałki, Lida, Druskininkai, Valkininkai and Bratslav, and in smaller groups in the land of Vilnius and Ashmyany District. Part of Lithuanians, mixed with the Belarusian, Polish and Jewish population, lived in some towns of Hrodna and Białystok Regions³. Suwałki, the town which was the object of the dispute with Lithuania, was the capital of the former Russian Suwałki Governorate.

The multi-ethnic national, linguistic and religious diversity of the vast eastern borderlands of the Republic of Poland was noticed at the end of the 19th century due to nation-building processes among Lithuanians, Ukrainians and Belarusians. When separatist and then nationalist slogans reached the inhabitants, the area began to diversify in terms of nationalities. This process was universal and involved the whole Central and Eastern Europe. Representatives of the new national movements began to question the need for the rebirth of the Polish state within its historical borders⁴.

The beginning of the Polish-Lithuanian dispute dates back to the end of the nineteenth century, when the Lithuanian national movement emerged, shaping Lithuanians into a modern nation. In Lithuania, the bearers of the influence of Polish culture were former Lithuanian boyars, strongly bonded with Lithuanian culture⁵. At the beginning of the 20th century, Poles held a belief that the capital of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania was a

¹ KOPROWSKI, Marek A., *Wilno-historia, ludzie, tradycje*, Warszawa, 2013, p. 63.

² ŁOSSOWSKI Piotr, *Konflikt polsko-litewski 1918-1920*, Warszawa, 1996, p.104.

³ IWANICKI, Mieczysław, *Ukraińcy, Białorusini, Litwini i Niemcy w Polsce w latach 1918-1990*, Siedlce, 1991, p. 130-131.

⁴ EBERHARDT Piotr, *Koncepcje granic państwa polskiego u progu odzyskania niepodległości*, *Studia z Geografii Politycznej i Historycznej* Vol. 4 (2015), p. 15.

⁵ ŁOSSOWSKI Piotr, *Dylematy polsko-litewskie. Początki zatargu. Miejsce Józefa Piłsudskiego w konflikcie*, in: *Stosunki polsko-litewskie wczoraj i dziś. Historia, kultura, polityka*, ed. ROMAN Wanda, MARSZAŁEK-KAWA Joanna, Toruń 2009, p. 47.

Polish city. At that time, Vilnius itself was a Polish-Jewish city situated in a mixed area where the Polish dialect with a strong Belarusian influence dominated. For Lithuanians, on the other hand, Vilnius was the main historical centre of Lithuania, although the Lithuanian community in Vilnius itself did not constitute more than 2% of the population. At the end of the nineteenth century, Lithuanians started to fight against the monopoly of the Polish language in social life and church in Vilnius, which paradoxically led to the increase of both Polish and Lithuanian national awareness. Belarusians were also claiming Vilnius, seeing it as one of the most important centres of their planned state⁶.

In September 1917, the State Council of Lithuania, known as Taryba and headed by Antanas Smetona, was established. It was dependent on the Germans, but it managed to issue the Declaration of Independence on 16th February 1918. The Lithuanians wanted to create a state consisting of four governorates: Kaunas, Hrodna, Vilnius and Suwałki, which met with opposition from the Polish side. In Berlin, in June 1918, there was an agreement on the recognition of the Lithuanian government by Poland. The Lithuanian authorities committed themselves to respect the rights of Poles living in Lithuania. In the autumn of 1918, facing the disaster, the Germans permitted the formation of Lithuanian government with Augustinas Voldemaras⁷.

Taking advantage of the turmoil which arose in Russia in 1918, the Polish Army started to seize the territory of Belarus. The Red Army troops marched in the footsteps of the stepping down Germans, occupying the areas abandoned by the German army and creating their own administration there. Józef Piłsudski asked the Germans to allow Polish troops to pass through the areas they occupied in order to defend Vilnius. But the German categorically refused to do so⁸.

A serious threat to the Polish-Lithuanian relations was the Suwałki problem. Until August 1919, Suwałki Region had been occupied by the German, and the Lithuanian laid claim to it. The population there was mostly Polish, and there were some Jews living in the towns. The Polish population was patriotic and organized in the Polish Military Organization (POW). The inhabitants of Suwałki Region formed one of the regiments of the Lithuanian-Belarusian Division called the Suwałki regiment⁹. On 23rd August 1919, Polish-Lithuanian fighting broke out in Seinai - the so-called Seinai Uprising. The Lithuanian troops were supported by German volunteers. The fights were, among others, over the town of Seinai and Suwałki Region.

There were two concepts of order on the borderline with Russia presented by the main Polish political camps: the incorporation of the Ukrainian, Belarusian and Lithuanian lands into Poland or the creation of a federation forming a buffer made from the newly

⁶ LEWANDOWSKA Stanisława, *Wilno 1921-1944. Czasy i ludzie*, Warszawa, 2009, p. 17.

⁷ ŁACH, Wiesław B., „Bunt” Żeligowskiego. *Kulisy przyłączenia Wileńszczyzny do Polski*, Warszawa, 2014, p. 37.

⁸ Idem, 39.

⁹ PODLASKI Kazimierz (Bohdan Szkaradziński), *Białorusini, Litwini, Ukraińcy*, Białystok, 1990, p. 61.

created states between Poland and Russia. Józef Piłsudski was a proponent of the federalist concept, and believed that security in this part of Europe could have only been ensured by neutralising Russia and reducing its territory. He wanted to create Belarusian and Lithuanian states linked to Poland in the east. He could not have imagined the Polish territory without Vilnius Region¹⁰. Roman Dmowski, a supporter of the idea of incorporation, was making plans to separate Poland and Lithuania to the west of Vilnius and leave the city within Polish borders¹¹.

Józef Piłsudski, Chief of State, while accepting a Lithuanian delegation of in the Belvedere, who petitioned him that Poland should not send troops to Lithuania, replied that he was a friend to Lithuanians and wanted to help them, but they should limit their demands to the ethnic Lithuania. Piłsudski said that *'Poland has nothing against the creation of an independent Lithuanian state, but it seems that it will be state-bound with Poland.'* With this statement, he defined his attitude towards Lithuania by giving Lithuanians a choice - either they agreed to the union, i.e. a federation with Poland, which Józef Piłsudski cared about most, or they had to approve the territory of Lithuania squeezed to its ethnographic borders. The idea of establishing a pro-Polish government in Kaunas with Stanisław Narutowicz as its head, introduced by a coup d'état carried out by the Kaunas POW organisation, was born¹².

On August 23, 1919 the city was taken over by the Polish Military Organization (PMO). Two days later they were driven back by a counter-attack launched by the Lithuanians¹³. The idea fell through as the conspirators were arrested.

Lithuania considered parts of the former provinces of Vilnius, Grodno and Suwałki as its ethnic lands, while Poland considered them as its north-eastern region. Until 1918 Poles had lived together with Lithuanians in relative peace. In May 1919, the two countries were at war when Polish and Lithuanian troops clashed near Vievis. Since the spring of 1920, the Polish-Lithuanian conflict became part of the Polish-Soviet war. It gradually escalated and lasted until November 29, 1920, when at Kaunas both sides agreed to cease fighting along the demarcation line established through the League of Nations. However, no final peace agreement was signed, only a truce, and small-scale violence from paramilitary units continued uninterrupted in the neutral zone along the demarcation line up until May 1923¹⁴. The state of war between Poland and Lithuania lasted until September 1939, when violence broke out with twice as hard force. The Polish-Lithuanian conflict

¹⁰ ŁACH Wiesław B., *op. cit.*, 36.

¹¹ EBERHARDT Piotr, *op. cit.*, p. 31.

¹² ŁOSSOWSKI Piotr, *Dylematy polsko-litewskie...*, p. 54,55.

¹³ BALKELIS Tomas, *A Dirty War: The Armed Polish-Lithuanian Conflict and Its Impact on Nation-Making in Lithuania, 1919–23*, *Acta Poloniae Historica* 121, 2020, p. 232.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 228.

was called “a dirty war” because it had never been declared. Apart from regular army units, paramilitary units also fought in this war¹⁵.

Participants in the war on the Polish and Lithuanian sides often came from the same territory. Many soldiers from the military units participating in the Vilnius expedition in April 1919 were not happy that they would have to fight the Lithuanians. However, the soldiers of the 5th Legions' Infantry Regiment seizing Vilnius were not related to Lithuania by birth. Their attachment to Vilnius Region was a historical sentiment and part of their *esprit de corps*. In April 1919, they occupied Vilnius, and when the Red Army forced them to surrender the city, what the Lithuanians saw as their last chance to regain their capital, the Polish legionnaires saw as a great betrayal¹⁶.

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Until September 1919, Lithuanians had lived with Poles quite possibly like a dog with cat, later the tension grew, the Polish commander Captain Dvozak turned the locals against us so that they would expel us from Širvintos. On September 19, 1919 Polish troops attacked the Lithuanians near Širvintos taking 30 prisoners. The fiercest battles were fought over Suwałki Region, Punksas, Seinai and Gibai, while Suwałki and Augustów were inhabited mostly by Poles. Until the middle of 1919, the region had been garrisoned by the German Ober-Ost troops stationing on the Lithuanian side¹⁸.

On August 23, 1919 Polish-Lithuanian fighting broke out in Seinai, it was the so-called Seinai Uprising. The fighting was, among others, over the town of Seinai and Suwałki Region. The Lithuanian troops were supported by German volunteers. The Polish Military Organisation (PMO) in Suwałki numbered 1,600 soldiers. A 300-person detachment began an attack on Seinai. The Lithuanians mobilized 200 guerrilla soldiers from Seinai and Lazdijai from southern Lithuania. The escalation of the conflict forced the Allied Powers to create a demarcation line, the so-called Foch Line (two lines, the second was not accepted by the Lithuanians because it left Seinai on the Polish side¹⁹. The Lithuanian government, unaware of the Curzon line, for many weeks had been trying to regain not only Seinai but also Suwałki and Augustów²⁰.

¹⁵ Idem, *War, Revolution and Nation-Making in Lithuania 1914-1923*, Oxford 2018, p. 136, Idem, *Lemtingi metai: Lietuva 1914-1923 m. Karas, revoliucija ir tautos gimimas*, Vilnius 2019, p. 264.

¹⁶ BÖHLER John, *Wojna domowa. Nowe spojrzenie na odrodzenie Polski*, Kraków, 2018, p. 134-135.

¹⁷ PODLASKI Kazimierz, *op. cit.*, p. 61.

¹⁸ BALKELIS Tomas, *op. cit.*, p. 138.

¹⁹ Idem, *War, Revolution and Nation-Making...*, p. 139; Idem, *A Dirty War: The Armed Polish-Lithuanian Conflict...*, p. 232.

²⁰ Idem, *Lemtingi metai...*, p. 281.

The PMO command counted on the support of the regular Polish army, which was delayed. On 25 August the Lithuanian troops, having been informed of the PMOs weakness, drove it out of Seinai. The last Lithuanian attack was held off on 28 August. The uprising on the Lithuanian side was suppressed, although local groups of Polish partisans continued to fight for two more months. The outbreak of hatred was influenced by the repression used by both sides during the fighting. In this way, both sides were taking revenge for unresolved local neighbourhood disputes²¹.

During the Polish-Soviet War of 1919-1921, and the Soviet offensive on Warsaw in the summer of 1920, Polish troops were forced to retreat from Vilnius Region and other eastern lands. Bolsheviks by seizing Vilnius Region had very specific plans for Lithuania. The leader of Lithuanian communists Vincas Mickevičius Kapsukas asked Lenin for permission to carry out a communist coup d'état in Kaunas. The collapse of the Soviet offensive and the Polish counter-offensive forced the Soviets to abandon their plan to take over the whole of Lithuania²².

In the context of an intensified dispute over the first demarcation line between Lithuania and Poland, in June 1919, Poland refused to recognise the independent Lithuanian state because of the alleged German occupation of that territory. In the document, Poles claimed that the inhabitants of the occupied territories did not want to belong to Lithuania and that they would have to decide about their future themselves²³.

On 12th July 1920, the Lithuanian-Soviet Treaty was signed, whose Article I stated that the Government of Soviet Russia recognised the independence of the Lithuanian State with all its legal consequences. The Lithuanian-Soviet border was established, leaving Vilnius, Hrodna, Braslaw, Postavy, Smarhon', Ashmyany and Lida on the Lithuanian side. The treaty included a secret clause that the Lithuanian government would not treat the fact that Soviet troops had crossed the Lithuanian border and seized part of the Lithuanian territory as a violation of the treaty and an act hostile to Lithuania²⁴.

Sentiment towards the Polish state and Polishness in western Belarussian and Lithuanian lands decreased steadily due to the attitude of Polish troops commanded by General Lucjan Żeligowski, including 10 ID (Infantry Division), troops from Lida and Łódź as well as the landed gentry. Poles in Lithuania also had limited rights, in addition

²¹ BUCHNOWSKI Krzysztof, *Szkice polsko-litewskie czyli o niełatwym sąsiedztwie pierwszej połowy XX w.*, Toruń 2006, p. 39.

²² ŁOSSOWSKI Piotr, *Dylematy polsko-litewskie...*, p. 54, 55.

²³ Warsaw, 24 June 1919. Letter from the Polish Ministry of Foreign Affairs to the Lithuanian Prime Minister M. Sleževičius justifiably arguing the Polish military penetration into Lithuanian lands as a result of the Bolshevik and German influence to Lithuania, *Lietuvos ir lenkijos santykiai: Nuo pirmojo pasaulinio karo pabaigos iki I. Źeligowskio ávykdyto vilniaus upēmimo (1918 m. Lapkritis-1920 m. Spalis). Dokumentø rinkinys, Sudarė Edmundas Gimpauskas, Parengė: GIMPAUSKAS Edmundas, SVARAUSKAS Artūras*, Vilnius 2012, p. 220.

²⁴ ŁOSSOWSKI Piotr, *Konflikt polsko-litewski 1918-1920...*, p. 115.

to censorship, it was not allowed to open schools, Polish-speaking persons were under suspicion and surveillance²⁵.

Between 1919 and the summer of 1920, Poland lost the character of the liberators of Vilnius because the Red Army took hold of it. The General Staff of the Polish Army by order of July 6, 1920 ordered to defend Vilnius to the end, and if this proved impossible, to return it to the Lithuanians, not the Soviets. On July 12-13, 1920, the Poles stopped the Lithuanian march on Vilnius. The Lithuanians did not put up much resistance, and the Battle of Vilnius was almost non-existent²⁶.

On August 17, 1920 the evacuation of Bolsheviks from Vilnius took place, and Miežlauskas with his staff moved to Grodno. The Bolsheviks and the Vilnius Revolutionary Committee handed over individual institutions to the Lithuanians. Bolshevik searches, arrests and executions did not stop. Tenement house owners, merchants, Jews, Christians were arrested²⁷.

The importance of the capturing of Vilnius could not be overestimated, both for the Lithuanian authorities and the public mood in the country. On 28 August the pro-government Lietuva wrote: "Today, Vilnius must be the place where new organizations need to be created without delay...to educate and spread culture to the east of Lithuania." In the city occupied by the Lithuanians, Lithuanianization became a preferred policy adopted by the authorities. Some state offices were to be moved from Kaunas to Vilnius. In the meantime, there were massive lay-offs of Polish officials, about two-thirds of whom lost their jobs²⁸.

On September 16, 1920, there was a noticeable lack of wealthy people or representatives of the intelligentsia in Vilnius; Vilnius had become a city of common folk. Apathy caused by unemployment was evident, which made the people ill-disposed towards Lithuania. The arrival of central Lithuanian institutions was awaited to provide employment for the inhabitants²⁹. However, Poles could not count on work. Vilnius' folk people, with the exception of Jews and Lithuanians, awaited the arrival of Poles. They were waiting for it while observing the growing Polish-Lithuanian conflict. There was an analogy there with waiting for the return of the Muscovites during World War I - the return of "our people" combined with the hope of economic improvement and employment. Earlier the Polish authorities, possessing money resources, led a wide support activity for the population, hiring many officials, who after the Lithuanian invasion due to the fact they did not know the language were dismissed from work³⁰.

²⁵ BALKELIS Tomas, *War, revolution and nation-making...*, p.140.

²⁶ LAURINAVIČIUS Česlovas, *Kwestie sporne w historii stosunków polsko-litewskich w roku 1920 in: Suwalky sutartis. Faktai ir interpretacijos. Umowa suwalska. Fakty i interpretacje*. Mokslinė redakcija/Redakcja naukowa: LAURINAVIČIUS Česlovas, MILEWSKI Jan Jerzy, Vilnius 2012, p. 161.

²⁷ RÖMER Michał, *Dzienniki. Tom 4 1920-1930*, Warszawa 2018, p. 93.

²⁸ BALKELIS Tomas, *A Dirty War: The Armed Polish-Lithuanian Conflict...*, p. 244.

²⁹ RÖMER Michał, *Dzienniki. Volume 4 ...*, p. 111.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 117-118

Józef Piłsudski gave birth to the idea of creating Central Lithuania as a quasi-state established by General Lucjan Żeligowski. In Poland, the public was unable to imagine the possibility of losing the already seized Vilnius. The city was to be reclaimed with the help of the town's population itself, supported by only one infantry regiment - 85th Vilnius Riflemen's Regiment, whose soldiers were recruited from Vilnius. Before Polish troops entered the city, the streets had already been occupied by Polish conspirators³¹.

Lithuania failed to maintain the balance between Russia and Poland. The plans to create an alliance between Lithuania and the Soviets became a pretext for military action by General Lucjan Żeligowski. Lithuania did not respect neutrality in the Polish-Soviet war, so the Poles treated it as a country participating in the war on the opposite side. The action of the Lithuanian government cooperating with the Red Army struck the independence of Lithuania. This attitude led to the belief that Poland, not Soviet Russia, was the biggest opponent of independent Lithuania. After the Red Army seized Vilnius, Lithuanian troops had to leave the city and the Soviet Revolutionary Committee took over³².

On September 27, 1920 the Lithuanian Special Committee for the Defence of Lithuania was formed, and on October 1, 1920 the committee received orders to closely watch Polish landowners and arrest suspects. Security was provided by Shaulis and guerrilla units. On October 26, the pro-government newspaper *Lietuva* wrote that the war against the Polish imperialists was for Lithuanians a holy war, and a campaign against the Polish landlords who wanted to enslave Lithuanian peasants³³.

On October 7, 1920, a Polish-Lithuanian military agreement was signed in Suwałki with the aim of ceasing fire and setting a demarcation line in Suwałki Region. The agreement concerned Suwałki Region, not Vilnius. Both parties to the agreement withdrew 6 km each into their own territories creating a so-called neutral zone. The demarcation line proposed by Juozas Purickis coincided with the territory allocated to Lithuania in the so-called Third Evacuation Zone. Juozas Purickis' note formally testified to Lithuania's violation of Poland's borders. The demarcation line proposed by Lithuanian Foreign Minister Juozas Purickis would be a safeguard for the Red Army against attacking Polish troops near Grodno. In Poland, there were hopes that it was possible to settle issues with Lithuania in an amicable manner, however³⁴. Józef Piłsudski was dissatisfied with the Suwałki Agreement. He planned to drag a "third party" into the conflict with Lithuania. (the "rebellious" Lithuanian-Belarusian Division was detached from the regular Polish Army). Żeligowski's rebellion was planned only in case Lithuania occupied Vilnius. According to the Suwałki Agreement, Polish Vilnius was handed over to the

³¹ ŁOSSOWSKI Piotr, *Dylematy polsko-litewskie...*, p. 57.

³² Idem, *Konflikt polsko-litewski 1918-1920...*, p. 128- 129.

³³ BALKELIS Tomas, *War, Revolution and Nation-Making...*, p. 147.

³⁴ LAURINAVIČIUS Česlovas, *op. cit.*, p. 267.

Lithuanians³⁵. On October 7, after the experience of April 1919, the Jews of Vilnius were gripped by fear because of the expected entry of the Polish army³⁶. In the morning, on October 8, General Lucjan Żeligowski with the “rebellious troops” began to march on Vilnius, engaging in skirmishes with the Lithuanian armed forces near Jašiūnai and in Rudnicka Forest. At 5 a.m. on October 9, the Lithuanians started to evacuate the Vilnius.

General Lucjan Żeligowski, the Commander-in-Chief of the Army of Central Lithuania, by virtue of the Decree of 12 October 1920 assumed supreme authority over the territory of Central Lithuania. In 1920, during the battles for the Vilnius region, General Jan Rządkowski’s 1st Corps was formed. In 1921 the armed forces of Central Lithuania were reorganized, creating two infantry divisions and a cavalry division. Public security of Central Lithuania was supervised by the State Police with strong support from the army established in March 1921³⁷.

General Lucjan Żeligowski, occupying the Vilnius region, attacked the interior of the Lithuanian state. Until May 1923, civilians from both sides had participated in violence on both sides. Nationality was the key to dividing the population into those loyal and those disloyal to the state. The Bolshevik invasion of 1918-1919 oriented the Lithuanian elites towards the West, while the struggle against Poland mobilized the entire Lithuanian society³⁸. The Lithuanians were attacked by Polish paramilitary units. A pogrom against the Jews was organized in Vilnius, Lithuanian troops were decimated and many deserters joined the fleeing Jews³⁹. The number of Lithuanians who remained in Vilnius after the entry of General Lucjan Żeligowski’s army was large. Their numbers were shown during the funeral of Lithuanian soldiers killed during the fights with the troops of General Lucjan Żeligowski. Michał Römer estimated the size of the funeral procession at three thousand people, including the entire group of Lithuanian intelligentsia from Vilnius⁴⁰.

The occupation of Vilnius by General Lucjan Żeligowski in 1920, and the subsequent incorporation of the Vilnius region into Poland in 1922 not only dashed all hopes for a Polish-Lithuanian agreement, but also posed a threat to peace in Europe. Initially, Lithuania intended to repel Żeligowski’s action militarily, but they knew that the entire Polish army was behind him. At the end of August 1920, Lithuania had about 60,000 soldiers, of which 25,000 “bayonets and 500 sabres (bayonets and sabres denote soldiers fighting in the field, where a bayonet is an infantry soldier, and a sabre a cavalryman respectively). The League of Nations decided to settle the Polish-Lithuanian conflict by concluding a truce between Lithuania and Central Lithuania. The truce was to come into

³⁵ Ibid., 287.

³⁶ MIKNYS Rimantas, *Umowa suwalska w dzienniku i publicznych ocenach prawno-politycznych Michała Römera in: Suwałkę sutartis. Faktai ir interpretacijos. Umowa suwalska. Fakty i interpretacje...*, p. 345.

³⁷ Encyklopedia Historii Drugiej Rzeczypospolitej, Warszawa 1999, p. 197.

³⁸ BALKELIS Tomas, *War, Revolution and Nation-Making ...*, p. 156.-157.

³⁹ Ibid., 151.

⁴⁰ RÖMER Michał, *op. cit.*, p. 134. The already-mentioned funeral of two soldiers - Anatanas Šliupas, and the other unknown one. Both were buried at the Rossa cemetery in Vilnius.

force on November 21, 1920. On November 17, Żeligowski's troops launched an attack on Širvintos - Giedraičiai - Dubingiai. The cavalry brigade reached as far as Kėdainiai, but Żeligowski's offensive stalled. The Lithuanian counter-attack led by General Silvestras Zukauskas in the Širvintos - Giedraičiai area led to the recapture of these towns. The League of Nations ordered the cessation of hostilities as of November 21, 1920, and the withdrawal of troops from both sides beyond a neutral 6-kilometre strip along the truce line⁴¹. After the capture of Vilnius, Lithuania found itself at war with Poland.

At the end of October 1920, a soldier of the 13th Cavalry Regiment fighting against the Lithuanians wrote in his diary that fighting on the Lithuanian front was arduous, and skirmishes were more frequent than on the Russian front. The Lithuanians fought fiercely. There was not a skirmish without wounded and killed, whereas often during an all-day battle with the Soviets there was not even a slightly wounded soldier⁴².

Piłsudski's attitude brought the Polish-Lithuanian conflict to the forum of the League of Nations. This gave Poland a lot of room for manoeuvre because the League could only act by conciliatory methods. With time, the Polish-Lithuanian conflict was pushed to the Control Commission of the League of Nations, which significantly lowered the rank of the conflict⁴³. The borders of the state of Central Lithuania had to be established by military means, since a large part of the country was occupied by the Lithuanian army⁴⁴.

During the wars for the borders of the reborn Polish Republic, the Civil Administration of the Eastern Territories was established in the east, and then the Temporary Administration of Frontline and Stage Areas. The Civil Administration of the Eastern Territories was established, among other things, to gain the local population as a voluntary and sincere advocate of Polish statehood⁴⁵. The activity of the Polish administrative apparatus, shaping the opinion of the borderland population about the emerging Polish state, had a significant impact on their attitude towards service in the Polish Army. On 1th April 1919, under a decision of the Polish General Commissioner for Eastern Regions, a recruitment branch was established to organize the conscription of volunteers to the Polish Army in the Lithuanian-Belarusian lands. This branch consisted of inspectorates located in Vilnius, Minsk and Brest and agencies in district centres⁴⁶.

The Polish State that was being formed was perceived by a considerable number of people as a strange and transient entity. Majority of peasants awaited the return of Russian government. Soviet agitators skilfully stirred up antagonisms, showing a new

⁴¹ OCHMAŃSKI Andrzej, *Historia Litwy*, Wrocław 1982, p. 303.

⁴² SZYTKIEWICZ Stefan, *Wspomnienia z wojny 1918-1920 ulana 13. Pułku Ułanów Wilenskich*, compiled by MAKSIMIUK Diana, Białystok-Warszawa 2018, p. 128.

⁴³ ŁUKOMSKI Grzegorz, *Antemurale. Schyłek Wielkiego Księstwa Litewskiego 1918-1922*, Łomianki 2018, p. 272.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 274.

⁴⁵ ŚLESZYŃSKI Wojciech, *Województwo poleskie*, Kraków, 2014, p. 22.

⁴⁶ GRZYBOWSKI Jerzy, *Białorusini w regularnych polskich formacjach wojskowych w latach 1918-1945*, Warszawa, 2006, p. 55.

deal as a dispute, in which the peasants were one party and the landed gentry, officials and the police – the other⁴⁷.

The Polish army and military administration was discredited in just a few months by incompetence and brutal military police. District Commissioners of Vilnius District of the Civil Administration of the Eastern Lands themselves admitted that they did not control the military police terrorising peasants⁴⁸. The local police consisted of local people with a very low level of culture, bad instincts and lack of qualifications⁴⁹. At the turn of July and August 1919, General Stanisław Szeptycki complained about constant quarrels between soldiers from Greater Poland units and Jews near Lida. These soldiers in the area of Minsk aroused hatred of the local people towards the Polish army⁵⁰. The Government Delegate received complaints from the Head of Bystrzyca Commune about a number of rapes and robberies committed by soldiers of the 211th Cavalry Regiment on the local population. These incidents were explained in such a way that the regiment was sent deliberately to alienate the dedicated Polish people before the planned plebiscite⁵¹. Soldiers of the 10th Cavalry Regiment having their base Lentvaris treated civilians badly and were hostile to the military police and police. The crimes committed by soldiers, especially officers, made a very negative impression on the population⁵².

Homeland security and public sentiment and crime

An extension of the armed conflict between Poland and Lithuania was the forgotten “dirty war” between paramilitary units, taking a cruel toll on both sides of the conflict. Its victims were people living on the border, not excluding women and children. The provocation of Żeligowski and the prolongation of the ethnic conflict in the borderland “poisoned” the Polish-Lithuanian relations for many years, but also provided a strong impulse for the Lithuanian national consciousness⁵³.

The Command of the Lithuanian-Belarusian Front was informed about an increasing number of assaults with robbery committed by criminals in military uniforms, and probably also by soldiers themselves. The Command of the Field Military Police of the

⁴⁷ ŚLESZYŃSKI Wojciech, *Kresy Wschodnie czyli Białoruś Zachodnia*, Łomianki, 2013, p. 40.

⁴⁸ MIRONOWICZ Eugeniusz, *Białorusini i Ukraińcy w polityce obozu pilsudczykowskiego*, Białystok, 2007, p. 28.

⁴⁹ Lithuanian Central State Archives (next LCSA), fond 20, inv. 1, file 13, Biuro Delegata Rządu Rzeczypospolitej Polskiej, Raporty sytuacyjne starostw, korespondencja w sprawach nadużyć żołnierzy polskich oraz nadawania obywatelstwa polskiego, ch. 20.

⁵⁰ RUSZCZYC Ferdynand, *Dziennik. Część druga. W Wilnie 1919-1932*, Warszawa, 1996, p. 29.

⁵¹ LCSA, fond 20, inv. 1, file. 3, Do Pana Generała Żeligowskiego Naczelnego Dowódcy Wojsk Litwy Środkowej, ch. 128.

⁵² LCSA fond 20, inv. 1, file 16, Office of the Government Delegate of the Republic of Poland Monthly Situation Reports of the district offices and political police, Situation report for July 1921, 13, ch. 90.

⁵³ BÖHLER John, *op. cit.*, p. 135.

Front together with the Field Military Police of the Vilnius Stage District ordered frequent patrols around Vilnius. All those who were caught in the act while committing a crime were sent to a field court⁵⁴. By a decision of General Kazimierz Sosnkowski, drumhead court martial were introduced in all units of the Reserve Army commanded by him in respect of military and civilian persons who had damaged means of communication. Crimes against the State armed forces by illegal storage of weapons and ammunition were also threatened with drumhead court martial⁵⁵.

From 17th May to 30th May 1920, (during the Soviet offensive), the rural population of the Vilnius area behaved patiently, not letting themselves being drawn into political activities. The Belarusian population, on the other hand, was hostile to Poland. In Vilnius District, the sympathies of small farm holders, workers and Orthodox peasants were definitely on the side of Bolsheviks⁵⁶. Belarusians looking at the retreat of Polish troops under the pressure of Tukhachevsky's offensive mostly behaved passively as if they were not affected by another change of occupation⁵⁷.

After the suspension of hostilities of Central Lithuanian troops against Lithuanian troops on November 29, 1920, both sides agreed to create a neutral belt along the entire Polish-Lithuanian border line. This, by design temporary, arrangement had worked for over two years, until the end of February 1923⁵⁸. The neutral zone was established according to article three of the armistice of November 29, 1920, and occupied on December 3, 1920. A demarcation line was established in Suwałki Region as early as in 1919, and in the autumn of 1920 a 12-kilometre demilitarised zone was established on both sides of the line. The neutral belt was 12 km wide with 6 km on each side. Part of its territory on the Central Lithuania side was administered by the Main Council of the Neutral Belt. The demarcation line created did not take into account the ethnographic, economic or strategic needs of both sides. Regular troops were not allowed to be stationed in the neutral belt, although this rule was not observed⁵⁹. In Vilnius Region, the 12-kilometre neutral strip actually meant a no-man's land zone⁶⁰. In the neutral zone running along the demarcation line the local militia performed policing functions. Military troops along with police manned the outer line⁶¹.

⁵⁴ LCSA fond 13, inv. 1, file 38, Zarząd Cywilny Ziem Wschodnich rozkazy Dowództwa Żandarmerii Polowej i Dowództwa miasta Wilna. Order L. 9, ch. 4.

⁵⁵ Central Military Archive in Warsaw (next CMA), DOE Wilno 3, sign. I. 331.22.3, Obwieszczenie o karze sądu doraźnego za niszczenie urządzeń komunikacyjnych. Miejsce postoju 2. VI. 1920 (unnumbered card).

⁵⁶ CMA, DOE Mołodeczno 1, sign. I. 331.13.1 Wilno, dnia 10. 06. 20 Raport sytuacyjny za czas od 25-go maja do 10-go czerwca 1920 r. (unnumbered card).

⁵⁷ PODLASKI Kazimierz, *op. cit.*, p. 35.

⁵⁸ ŚLESZYŃSKI Wojciech, *Bezpieczeństwo wewnętrzne w polityce państwa polskiego na ziemiach Północno-wschodnich II Rzeczypospolitej*, Warszawa 2007, p. 126.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 127.

⁶⁰ ŁOSSOWSKI Piotr, *Stosunki polsko-litewskie 1921-1939*, Warszawa 1997, p. 35.

⁶¹ ŁACH Wiesław B., „Bunt” Żeligowskiego. *Kulisy przyłączenia Wileńszczyzny do Polski 1920-1922*, Warszawa 2014, p. 217.

The border area between the neutral belt, and the demilitarized zone was a very dangerous area. There was a protracted makeshift situation in the area making life difficult for residents and threatening their safety. Neither the People's Militia of the Neutral Belt, created by the Poles, nor the Lithuanian Shaulis and partisan units helped in providing it⁶². The People's Militia of the Neutral Belt, composed of local inhabitants and divided into Polish and Lithuanian parts, did not fulfil its tasks. Assaults, murders and robberies were the order of the day, involving not only local bandits but also the Militia itself. Most of the Polish partisans were active in the Homeland Security Association, while the Lithuanian activities were coordinated by the Partisan Staff of Kaunas and the Lithuanian Riflemen's Association (Lietuvos Šaulių Sąjunga)⁶³.

In January 1921, the National Security Association was established from the former Security Guard as a social self-defence organisation. Its purpose was to provide protection against military units from Kaunas Lithuania in case of a plebiscite⁶⁴. Under the cover of citizen's militia, the Association was to form armed forces that could replace an active army if a plebiscite was organised⁶⁵.

The neutral belt split the local community, even dividing families living on both sides of the neutral belt. The People's Militia of the Neutral Belt was active on the Polish side, while the Lithuanians formed partisan units and Shaulis. Both sides carried out terrorist activities, attempted ethnic cleansing on both sides of the neutral belt. On January 7, 1921 the Shaulis attacked the town of Linkmenys killing two militiamen and captured. Terror reigned in the vicinity of Širvintos and Giedraičiai⁶⁶.

During the existence of Central Lithuania, its public security was supervised by the State Police established in March 1921, with a strong support of the army⁶⁷. The Police of Central Lithuania gradually took over the task of protecting public security from the army. The moral state and training of the local police left a lot to be desired as they also committed a number of irregularities including thefts together with soldiers⁶⁸.

Safety on the Polish-Lithuanian border was to be ensured by a neutral belt acting as a buffer zone, but in fact it created space for competition. The Polish People's Militia of the Neutral Belt, made up of local people, did not manage to provide security. Various kinds of gangs, smuggling groups and guerrilla units operated on its territory. The Inspection Committee excluded a number of larger towns from the belt because they

⁶² ŁOSSOWSKI Piotr, *op. cit.*, p. 35.

⁶³ REZMER Waldemar, *Likwidacja pasa neutralnego pomiędzy Polską a Litwą w lutym 1923 r.*, Dzieje Najnowsze No. 4, 2006, p. 32.

⁶⁴ LCSA, fond 20, inv. 1, file 15, Biuro Delegata Rządu Rzeczypospolitej Polskiej, ch 83.

⁶⁵ *Ibidem*, ch. 83.

⁶⁶ BALKELIS Tomas, *War, Revolution and Nation-Making...*, p. 154.

⁶⁷ *Encyklopedia Historii Drugiej Rzeczypospolitej...*, p. 197.

⁶⁸ ŚLESZYŃSKI Wojciech, *Policja Litwy Środkowej*, Biuletyn Historii Pogranicza No. 6, 2005, p. 8.

became bases for the enemy. One such town – Merkinė was a seat of partisan troops formed by Belarusians⁶⁹.

In the vicinity of Valkininkai, the activities of the secret Lithuanian organisation *Lietuva Saulio Sajung* whose task was to carry out sabotage attacks on villages and inhabitants, as well as to destroy technical equipment and conduct intelligence was detected⁷⁰.

During the period of Central Lithuania's existence, border crimes were a serious problem, including smuggling across the poorly guarded border and the neutral belt. Border protection was inadequate. The worst on the section manned by Polish cavalrymen, because they not only did not do the duty properly, motivating it by the fact, that cavalrymen could not make foot patrols, and for horse patrols they had no horses, but also constantly dealt with abuses. In the area of the Yavniunai Control Station, which is about 18 km, army posts were stationed only in villages, the distance between which is more than 3 viorsts, so the gaps were very poorly protected by the army and were gates for smuggling from Kaunas Lithuania. For example, at Control Station No. 7 in Rūdiškės on a section of 27 km, one company of infantry (30% of men without shoes) and a squadron of 10th Cavalry Regiment with 80 sabres were on duty at the cordon. Outposts in strength of 4-5 men were 5-6 km apart. The outposts were on duty (especially the cavalry outposts) from 8 o'clock in the morning until 12 o'clock at night; at night the soldiers slept and the cordon was unguarded. The cavalrymen did not send patrols at all, because according to the squadron leader, Lieutenant Bucholtz was ordered not to tire the horses, while: "cavalry on foot has never walked and never will." On November 26, 1920, 20 Lithuanian soldiers came to the village of Markowszczyzna, where there was a cavalry post, and took all the Polish deserters from the Lithuanian army. Agents-interrogators were not on night duty because of their fear of wolves⁷¹.

Catastrophic economic situation of Middle Lithuania made it impossible for Vilnius Region to become economically self-independent. The people in the economically, culturally, and politically neutral belt, was connected with Vilnius Region, in particular, Vilnius. Hastily drawn cordon line, subject to frequent changes, divided the lands of local farmers, which, in case of complete closure of the cordon line, would have a devastating effect on agriculture, and result in grievances against Polish authorities, as well as lay

⁶⁹ BŁASZCZAK Tomasz, *Belarusians in the Republic of Lithuania 1918-1940*, Białystok 2017, p. 174.

⁷⁰ LCSA, fond 20, inv. 1, file 16, Office of the Government Delegate of the Republic of Poland Monthly Situation Reports of the district offices and political police and correspondence on the issue of permits to enter and leave Central Lithuania, ch. 84.

⁷¹ Sprawozdanie Dyrektora Departamentu Spraw Wewnętrznych w sprawie kontroli ruchu na kordonie in: LCSA fond 19 inv. 1, file 36, ch. 329-346. Document published in: ROGUSKI Rafał, *The protection of the cordon section on the border between Central Lithuania and the so-called Kaunas Lithuania between 1921-1923*, *Historia i Świat* No. 7, 2018, p. 255-256.

foundations for separatism. Therefore, cordon movement should be treated differently from the normal border movement⁷².

Poor protection of the truce cordons with Lithuania and the USSR made it very easy for Bolshevik agitators to penetrate Central Lithuania and the Polish state. The Polish 3rd Legionary Infantry Division illegally issued passes to Kaunas Lithuania, which caused uncontrolled movement of the population, an influx of agitators and reduced the chances of Poland winning a possible plebiscite⁷³. In Vilnius District, under the influence of anti-Polish agitation under the guise of Belarusian movement, the local people, who had previously been in favour of Poland, started to behave indifferently, and in some communes, such as Smarhon', even in a hostile manner. This was evident, among other things, in the evasion of military service, or the threat of armed resistance in case of forced conscription. The population said they did not know whom to serve, because the fate of the country had not yet been determined⁷⁴.

In 1921-1923, paramilitary clashes and terror took place in the Širvintos-Giedraičiai area (eastern Lithuania) and near Varviškės (southern Lithuania). In early 1923, Lithuanian Šauliai (šauliai) attacked Avižonyš (near Širvintos), killing dozens of Polish militiamen and civilians. Three Polish paramilitaries were taken prisoner and shot by order of the military court martial in Širvintos. The assault and executions triggered a retaliatory attack by Poles on several Lithuanian villages. Acts of violence provoked equally violent reactions⁷⁵. In October 1922, a detachment of Polish partisans, consisting in particular of the inhabitants of the village of Varviškės, which was repeatedly attacked from the side of the Lithuanian neutral zone, attacked the Šauliai post in Turany killing its crew. In 1922 in the demilitarized zone of Suwałki District alone 11 armed attacks were recorded⁷⁶. Polish guerrilla soldiers from Varviškės attacked the Lithuanians, and Lithuanian partisans in retaliation attacked the village, which was surrounded by trenches and entrenchments and for two years had been living under siege⁷⁷. The armed force of the "local government of Varviškės" in Kaunas-Lithuania was made up of about 70 people,

⁷² LCSA, fond 19, inv. 1 B, file 36, Dział Kontroli Ruchu Kordonowego L. dz. 380/ 1 Wilno, dn. 5 V 1922 r. W sprawie ruchu osobowego i towarowego z terenów Wileńszczyzny do Pasa Neutralnego i z powrotem, ch. 231 (243).

⁷³ LCSA, fond 20, inv. 1, file. 3, Delegat Rządu Rzeczypospolitej Polskiej w Wilnie Nr 1543/I Wilno Do Dowództwa 2 Armji w Lidzie, ch. 112.

⁷⁴ LCSA fond 20, inv. 1, file 12, Biuro Delegata Rządu Rzeczypospolitej Polskiej, Raporty sytuacyjne powiatów, korespondencja w sprawie rozrzucania odezw komunistycznych w pow. Dnia 4/III 1921 r., ch. 283.

⁷⁵ BALKELIS Tomas, *A Dirty War: The Armed Polish-Lithuanian Conflict...*, p. 254

⁷⁶ Archives of New Files (next ANF) MSW, sign. 638 (dopływ), Sprawozdanie Referatu ochrony granicy litewskiej, łotewskiej i rosyjskiej do dnia 30.XII.1922 r. p. 204-215. in: MELNIK Jerzy, Zapomniane powstanie. Samorząd Varviškės w świetle dokumentów <http://astn.pl/r2010/zap3.htm> accessed on 10 January 2021.

⁷⁷ ŁOSSOWSKI Piotr, *Po tej i tamtej stronie Niemna. Stosunki polsko-litewskie 1883-1939*, Warszawa 1985, p. 196.

who, according to them, would not have feared even regular troops of the Lithuanian army, thanks to the convenient location for defence if not for a great lack of ammunition⁷⁸.

Although Lithuanian militiamen and riflemen organized several expeditions against the Polish partisans of the “republic” of Varviškės, they failed to destroy their headquarters and main forces. On 19 March 1923 Polish partisans attacked the village of Paliepis (in the Kapčiamiestis parish) and brutally killed five soldiers of the field guard⁷⁹. On the morning of 22nd March 300 Lithuanian soldiers from the 1st and 2nd companies of the 11th Lithuanian Infantry Division, and about 40 Lithuanian partisans carried out an attack on Varviškės⁸⁰. Twelve Lithuanian soldiers, two Polish civilians and one partisan from Varviškės were killed in the clash. On March 24 the partisan detachment from Varviškės withdrew to Polish territory, laid down its arms in the 42nd Border Guard Battalion and was taken to an internment camp in Strzałków⁸¹.

The official activities of the Lithuanian side in the conflict with Poland were to be supported by regular units of the Lithuanian army and sabotage and guerrilla units established under the auspices of the Lithuanian Riflemen’s Union. They were established while still fighting against the army of Central Lithuania in autumn 1920, and their activity intensified especially at the end of 1921 after a failure of the Polish-Lithuanian negotiations in the League of Nations arena and following a decision of the Parliament of Vilnius Region to join Poland. In the armed uprising of national minorities, the Lithuanian authorities saw an opportunity to destabilize Poland, at least to a local extent, and change the territorial situation created at the end of 1920. The maximum plan was a coordinated creation of national minorities in Poland. Support for them was supposed to come from countries in conflict with Poland: Czechoslovakia, Germany and Soviet Russia. This plan never entered the implementation phase, but preparations were made in Poland for the Lithuanian and Belarusian population⁸².

The territory in which subversion groups were to operate went far beyond the borders of the Republic of Lithuania as provided for in the treaty of 12th July 1920 and included the areas to which the Belarusian People’s Republic claimed to be contentious and which, after the Treaty of Riga, were within the borders of Poland. There were plans to start sabotage actions during the elections to the Vilnius Parliament, but this plan was blocked at the level of the Lithuanian Ministry of Defence, which did not provide weapons to

⁷⁸ ANF, MSW, sign. 638 Raport sytuacyjny Oddziału II Informacyjnego Dowództwa Okręgu Korpusu Nr III do Dowództwa Okręgu Korpusu nr III z 10.I.1923 r. p. 229–230 Text of the document in: MELNIK Jerzy, op. cit. accessed on 10 January 2021.

⁷⁹ LUČINSKAS Gintaras. Varviškės „respublika“ (1920–1923) <http://alkas.lt/2014/01/01/g-lucinskas-varviskes-respublika-1920-1923>, accessed on 12 January 2021.

⁸⁰ ANF, MSW, sign. 638, Białystok, dn. 24 marca 1923 r. Województwo białostockie Nr Pr. 259/92 T Przedmiot: Napad litewski na wieś Varviškės. p. 280–281 in: MELNIK Jerzy, op. cit.

⁸¹ ANF, MSW, sign. 638, Warszawa, dn. 26 maja 1923 r. Ministerstwo Spraw Wojskowych (Sztab Generalny) Oddział II p. 292 in MELNIK Jerzy, op. cit.

⁸² BŁASZCZAK Tomasz, *Białorusini w Republice Litewskiej 1918-1940*, Białystok, 2017, p. 230-231.

the guerrilla units⁸³. Both Belarusians and Lithuanians predicted that there would be an armed conflict between Lithuania and Poland over Vilnius. Thus, the expansion of Belarusian military units in Lithuania under the leadership of Antoni Owsianik, a former member of the Belarusian Military Commission in Minsk, was established. In case of war, the Belarusian government intended to instigate an uprising on Belarusian lands within the borders of the Polish state. The organization of the uprising was carried out by the guerilla headquarters in Kaunas, which was subordinated to the insurgent groups in Varėna), Utena and Merkinė⁸⁴. The Belarusian military activity in Lithuania stopped in 1923. In March 1923, there was international recognition of the eastern border of the Republic of Poland and the accession of Central Lithuania to it. Lithuania lost interest in the anti-Polish activities of Belarusians at that time⁸⁵.

In the ranks of the Polish Army, there were Lithuanian agitators scattering leaflets aimed at making Polish soldiers revolt. The civilian population treated propaganda rather reluctantly, but among the less educated people it caused uncertainty and instability. The leadership of the agitation action was in the hands of Lithuanian and Belarusian intelligentsia. The Bolshevik agitation, among other by the Minsk-based Bolshevik newspaper titled 'Hammer' also increased⁸⁶. One of the propaganda messages was the one entitled *To Polish soldiers. Letter 15. What is the so-called Central Lithuania for Poland?* The Lithuanians called it Żeligowia - a strangely carved out strip of land. They said that this was a very poor country and it was hard to believe that if Poles came, they would develop industry there. The Vilnius Region was indeed for Lithuania the right hand and heart and would fight to the end⁸⁷.

Education

One important part of internal security in a multinational area is education. It has influence, most of all, on the attitude of local people.

In the 1870s, the increasing affluence of the Suwałki countryside meant that peasant sons made up the majority of students in ethnically Lithuanian grammar schools. A clerical career was attractive. Mostly Lithuanian youth from the whole province came to the seminary in Seinai. One of the first groups of Lithuanian intelligentsia with an awakened national consciousness were priests, graduates of the Seinai University. Young priests fought for the Lithuanian language in church sermons, because the liturgy was

⁸³ Ibid., 233, 234.

⁸⁴ ŁATYSZONEK Oleg, *Białoruskie formacje wojskowe 1917-1923*, Białystok 1995, p. 103.

⁸⁵ Ibid., p. 104.

⁸⁶ LCSA fond 20, inv. 1, file 16, Office of the Government Delegate of the Republic of Poland Monthly Situation Situation report for July 1921, 3, ch. 83.

⁸⁷ Do żołnierzy polskich .List 15. Czym jest dla Polski tak zwana Litwa Środkowa? In the collection of the National Library - Polona digital repository available in the reading room of the National Library in Warsaw.

celebrated in Latin. The issue had been growing for years because basically none of the ordinaries knew the Lithuanian language⁸⁸.

Representatives of the Polish intelligentsia described the actions of Lithuanian priest-activists as reprehensible. Lithuanian national aspirations, including anti-Polish character, were negatively evaluated. The Lithuanian national movement was treated as a result of Russian sabotage against Polishness. The conviction that Lithuanianness is a kind of regional or linguistic distinctiveness. The cultural heritage of the former noble Republic was alive.⁸⁹ In the Seinai region there was a clear division between the Lithuanians and the Poles, which was the result of the struggle for the winning of souls and the Polish-Lithuanian cultural competition⁹⁰.

In the Polish-Lithuanian-Belarusian borderland, Polish education was supported and developed by the authorities, Belarusian schools were fully maintained and controlled, Jewish subsidized and uncontrolled, while Lithuanian schools in Vilnius were only tolerated without any financial subsidies⁹¹. Lithuanians and Belarusians spread propaganda and their own publications limiting confidence towards the Polish authorities⁹². The Polish authorities believed that most Belarusian schools taught subjects not in Belarusian, but in Russian. Belarusian secondary education was in a residual state, as there was only one junior secondary school in Vilnius, which was largely attended by Jews⁹³.

Sanitary status of the region

An important aspect of the region's security is its sanitary status, including the incidence of infectious diseases.

In Vilnius District, outbreaks of the return typhoid and typhus fever were detected. The activity of the district physician in Vilnius District was very limited due to communication difficulties. There were two hospitals in Ashmyany District, both in the district

⁸⁸ BUCHNOWSKI Krzysztof, *Szkice polsko-litewskie czyli o niełatwym sąsiedztwie pierwszej połowy XX w.*, Toruń 2006, p. 29.

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 31.

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 34.

⁹¹ LCSA, fond 20, inv. 1, file 2. Vilnius, 8th January 192, To Mr Władysław Raczkiewicz, Delegate of the Government of the Republic of Poland in Vilnius. A Report on the State of Education in Central Lithuania, p. 1. ch. 523.

⁹² LCSA, fond 20, inv. 1, file 16, Office of the Government Delegate of the Republic of Poland Monthly Situation. Situation report for July 1921, 5, ch. 86.

⁹³ LCSA, fond 20, inv. 1, file 2, Vilnius, 8 January 1921 To Mr Władysław Raczkiewicz, Government Delegate of the Republic of Poland in Vilnius. A Report on the state of education in Central Lithuania 5, ch. 525.

capital⁹⁴. The infectious disease hospital in Ashmyany was located in such a small building that the work there frequently entailed fainting and infectious diseases among its staff⁹⁵.

In Vilnius District, the number of doctors in individual districts was very small. Only from 2 to 6 doctors worked in some districts. There were districts without any hospitals at all⁹⁶. Hundreds of prisoners and fugitives from Germany gathered in Trakai where there was no organised care for them. In Lentvaris, a facility for taking care of prisoners and fugitives was being set up, and the next one was to be built in Vievis. The state of medical care in the districts was lamentable, a typhus epidemic was spreading in all the districts, while in Ashmyany, Svencionys and Novogrudok Districts smallpox posed a threat of a new epidemic⁹⁷. In Hrodna and Ashymiany Districts, the total number of patients probably reached 20-25 thousand⁹⁸. In Vilnius, there was an epidemic of typhus fever and it was spreading contrary to the previous experience that it should have decreased during a warm season⁹⁹.

Conclusions

The Treaty of Riga signed between Poland and Soviet Russia (including its separate western Ukrainian and Belarusian republics), which cut the Belarusian and Ukrainian lands into two parts separating the Ukrainian and Belarusian Soviet Republics, finally buried the idea of a federation of states separating Poland from Soviet Russia. Only Lithuania was independent, but divided between Poland (Vilnius as Central Lithuania) and the so-called Kaunas Lithuania¹⁰⁰.

After the Treaty of Riga, Poland included the area of Central Lithuania within its borders. In order to formally legalize the incorporation of Vilnius Region into Poland,

⁹⁴ LCSA, fond 13, inv. 1, file 131, The Civil Administration of the Eastern Territories. Correspondence on the fight against infectious diseases, the instructor's report on sanitary conditions. Correspondence about the sanitary conditions in the Vilnius District in July, ch. 4.

⁹⁵ Ibid., Report on the activities of the Sanitary Inspector from 1st to 15th December 1919, ch. 16. (verte).

⁹⁶ Ibid., The Civil Administration of the Eastern Territories Sanitary Inspector of Vilnius County on 20th October 1919, Report of the District Sanitary Department for August, 14.

⁹⁷ Ibid., the Civil Administration of the Eastern Territories. Correspondence on the fight against infectious diseases, the instructor's report on sanitary conditions, list of medicaments for hospitals in the Vilnius District. The Civil Administration of the Eastern Territories, Sanitary Inspector of the Vilnius District on 20th October 1919. No. 671. Report of the District Sanitary Department for August, 5, 14.

⁹⁸ Ibidem, the Civil Administration of the Eastern Territories, Sanitary Inspector of the Vilnius District on 20th October 1919. No. 671. Report of the District Sanitary Department for August, ch. 5 (verte).

⁹⁹ LCSA, fond 13 inv, 1, file 132, The Civil Administration of the Eastern Territories. Correspondence on the fight against infectious diseases. Report on the sanitary status of the city of Vilnius, Report on the sanitary status of Vilnius for the period from 1st to 8th June 1919, ch. 29.

¹⁰⁰ ŚLESZYŃSKI Wojciech, *Kresy Wschodnie czyli Białoruś Zachodnia...*, p. 43.

elections were held there on 8th January 1922. Votes were cast only on Polish lists as other nationalities abstained from voting¹⁰¹.

The neutral belt, existing since the ceasefire between Poland and Lithuania, in 1921 and 1922 became an area of intensifying guerrilla warfare, a place where sabotage troops operated and endless abuses occurred for which both sides were responsible towards each other¹⁰². The neutral belt was an area where negative phenomena typical of the border region, such as smuggling of goods and illegal border crossings from both sides, were revealed. Especially the border between Polish and Soviet Belarus was an area of activity of sabotage troops, and in the situation of weakness of Polish border formations also an area of intensified border crime. The problem was the actions of the police and military police apparatus, which often violated the law, negatively affecting the Polish statehood, which many people associated with brutal military police rather than the state caring for its citizens.

In addition to the political difficulties affecting the security of the region, everyday life in the Polish-Belarusian-Lithuanian borderland was also hindered by problems related to food supply, hunger or spreading of infectious diseases.

These diseases were spreading on a much smaller scale as in the eastern parts of Poland fighting the Bolsheviks. Because the Bolsheviks were bringing diseases from all over Asia. Besides, on the eastern Polish lands entered a mass of refugees, prisoners of war and military units of White Russia, such as General Bredov, in which many soldiers were infected with typhus. It was feared on the southern front that Budionny's horse army would bring the plague, which was detected somewhere in Tajikistan.

The Polish Army did not want to serve in a cordon, because the cavalrymen were an elite army with a strong sense of esprit de corps, not border guards or policemen. They did not agree to serve as infantry soldiers, which they perceived as detrimental to their honour.

The border population had a difficult economic life. It is likely that some of it was engaged in smuggling through the poorly protected neutral belt. The weakness of the Lithuanian statehood and of Central Lithuania, on whose territory the partisan divisions raided. A small border war was a characteristic phenomenon on the eastern borders of the young Polish state. It was fought not only on the border of Central Lithuania, but on the established Polish-Soviet border from Eastern Galicia to the Lithuanian border until the mid-1920s. The wars for the borders of this part of Europe that were fought since 1918 did not end with the incorporation of Central Lithuania into Poland, nor with the decision of the Conference of Ambassadors of the Allied Powers of March 15, 1923, to establish the Polish eastern border. This proves that this border was unrecognised by the USSR, and Poland and Lithuania remained at war with each other until 1939.

¹⁰¹ ŁOSSOWSKI Piotr, *Po tej i tamtej stronie Niemna...*, p. 194-195.

¹⁰² *Ibid.*, 195-196.

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Civilinio saugumo klausimas Lietuvos ir Lenkijos pasienyje 1919–1922 m.

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Santrauka

Darbe pristatoma civilių saugumo problema Lenkijos ir Lietuvos pasienyje laikotarpiu nuo 1919 metų (kovos už Lenkijos ir Lietuvos pasienį pradžia) iki Vidurio Lietuvos iširimo. Darbas orientuotas ne tik į politinius klausimus ir tiesioginį karo poveikį civilių saugumui, bet ir į sanitarijos bei švietimo aspektus. Remdamasis sanitarinių klausimų ir nusikalstamų veikų Lenkijos ir Lietuvos pasienyje analize, autorius analizuoja civilių kasdienybės klausimą aptariamoje srityje.

Darbe taip pat aprašoma Vidurio Lietuvos sukūrimo įtaka saugumo situacijai neutralioje zonoje. Aprašoma nepakankamai apsaugotos Lenkijos ir Lietuvos sienos problema ir sukarintų bei partizanų grupių veikimas abiejose pusėse prie Lietuvos sienos su nepripažinta laikina valstybe, buvusia Vidurio Lietuva. Tekste pateikiama nepakankamos įrangos, mokymo ir sienos apsauginio tikslo nesupratimo Lenkijos pusėje problema. Sunkios vietovės sąlygos ir nepakankamas sargybinių skaičius leido sieną tarp Lietuvos ir Vidurio Lietuvos atverti kontrabandininkams, politiniams agitatoriams ir net sukarintiems kariams.

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