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## **„The Right to Revolt:” Scientific War History Seminar in Nida**

The coming centenary of Lithuanian statehood and armed uprisings or coup d'états in one or another part of the world provoke reconsidering similar processes from the past. This preconditions the topicality of research on armed uprisings and encourages a more intensive research on armed fighting, trying to perceive why this form of resistance was chosen. In addition to the need of discussing these questions, the popularity of military history has been increasing in Lithuania in recent years. Not only military historians but also representatives of other fields have become involved in discussions. Because of the above-mentioned reasons, Nida attracted not only holidaymakers but also military historians on September 16–17, 2016, when the first scientific seminar of this kind “The Right to Revolt” devoted for the coming centenary of the Republic of Lithuania took place. Its organizers were the Institute of Baltic Region History and Archaeology at Klaipėda University represented by Dr. Vytautas Jokubauskas, Public Institution Thomas Mann Cultural Centre, company Museums in Neringa, and Lithuanian Riflemen’s Union. During the two-day seminar, scholars from Vilnius University, Vytautas Magnus University, Klaipėda University, and The General Jonas Žemaitis Military Academy shared their research on armed uprisings with a large group of Phd, Master, and Bachelor students.

The first day of the seminar started with Prof. Gintautas Mažeikis’s theoretical presentation “Social Imagination and an Uprising: The Legitimation Problem of a Revolution,” which introduced the participants with the

main reasons of citizen uprisings. The presentation focused on the features of revolutions during various periods and in different regions and the conceptions of a revolution from the perspective of different ideological attitudes. Considerable attention was devoted to the aims of revolutions: to gain freedom, happiness, or both.

Furthermore, the first seminar day was devoted to the discussion of armed uprisings in Lithuania in the 18<sup>th</sup>–19<sup>th</sup> centuries. Prof. Dr. Valdas Rakutis, Chief Researcher at Military History Centre at The General Jonas Žemaitis Military Academy, discussed a complicated phenomenon in the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth in the 18<sup>th</sup> century, i.e. the formation of military confederations. He analysed the features of Valkininkai, Tarnogród, the General Confederation of Vilnius, Sluck-Radom, Bar, and Targowica Confederations, highlighting the reasons of their formation and aims. The analysis of the features of confederations demonstrated that the main aims of the confederations were to fight against religious intolerance in the Commonwealth, a ruler who was disliked, or an influential noblemen family. Therefore, these armed political unions might be referred to as the first uprisings of nations. In addition, the disadvantages of confederations were emphasized, such as dependence on foreign countries and the focus on personal rather than public wealth.

Dr. Rimantas Miknys, the Director of the Lithuanian Institute of History, continued with the presentation on the uprising of 1863–1864 and aimed to show the development of the academic attitude towards this uprising rather than to analyse the uprising itself. The beginning of the analysis was the non-professional historiography in the 19<sup>th</sup> and at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, when the dominant attitude was to treat the uprising as a foreign issue of Polish nobility. Dr. R. Miknys discussed the turning point in the 1930s, when the uprisings of the 19<sup>th</sup> century were evaluated in the context of national liberation. A similar attitude was maintained in emigration historiography. The presenter also highlighted that during the Soviet times, the uprisings served the purposes for Marxist historiography, which praised resistance as a struggle for freedom against oppression. Finally, the newest Lithuanian historiography was reviewed, which considers aspiration for freedom and the formation of a modern civic nation as the most important aspects in evaluating uprisings.

During the second day of the seminar “The Right to Revolt,” the reports were concerned with the history of armed resistance during the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The first half of the day was devoted to the situation of 1918–1940. Prof. Jonas Vaičenonis (Vytautas Magnus University) discussed armed coup d’états in Middle and Eastern Europe, focusing on the Secret

Officers' Union, which contributed the most to the coup d'état of 1926. He highlighted the aims of this organization, which were not only to protect the country's independence but also to fight against foreigners' influence in the army and parties. The activities of Military Science Society were also revealed, as it was used as a cover by the Secret Officers' Union to reach its aims.

The topic of interwar uprisings was continued by Prof. Waldemar Rezmer from Poland, Torun Nikolaus Copernicus University. In his report, he analysed an unsuccessful military coup d'état against the government in Poland launched by the right-wing forces. Close attention was paid to the activities of Marian Januszajtis, one of the organizers of the coup d'état.

Dr. Česlovas Laurinavičius, Chief Researcher at the Lithuanian Institute of History, presented the problematics of Gen. Lucjano Żeligowski's "uprising" in Vilnius region, first concentrating on the concepts of *rebellion* and *uprising* and explaining that they are often used to justify aggression. Much attention was devoted to the demarcation line defined by Gen. Foch between Lithuania and Poland in 1919, which formed the basis to further unrest between the states. The presenter approached the problem that Lithuania's interest was for the USSR to attack Poland, while Poland's interest was to push away the USSR from Lithuania, which also aggravated the Lithuanian-Polish conflict and conditioned Lithuania's transformation to the USSR allies.

Prof. Dr. Vygantas Vareikis, a representative of Klaipėda University, analysed organizational features of Klaipėda revolt in his presentation "Indirect Operation, Paramilitarism, and Klaipėda revolt of 1923," emphasizing its hybrid actions and its predominantly romanticized evaluation. The presenter revealed that even though the so-called big Lithuania officially denied its participation and support for the revolt, it was its real organizer and soldiers-volunteers went to Klaipėda from Lithuania. Meanwhile, the Supreme Committee for the Salvation of Lithuania Minor, as a local organization of Klaipėda region, was presented as its organizer; however, in fact it was a fictitious organization.

In the last part of the seminar, the representatives of Vilnius University, Institute of International Relations and Political Science (VU IIRPS) shared their research. Prof. Dr. Kęstutis Kazimieras Girnius presented the features of partisan struggle tactics and compared the features of armed resistance in Lithuania and neighbouring countries in the 1940s and 1950s. He also introduced the seminar participants with different forms of the struggle: non-violent resistance, terror, asymmetric war, and conventional war.

The last and the youngest presenter from VU IIRPS Dr. Deividas Šlekys analyzed contemporary modern conflicts and stressed that conflicts these days transform from conventional ones to information wars. He raised the question if the object of present-day wars was soldiers or civilians. D. Šlekys expressed some criticism towards military historians and suggested not to view the world wars as a single war, having clear chronological boundaries. He also bravely criticized the representatives of the contemporary army, who do consider some conflicts to be military humanitarian activity rather than wars. As moderator V. Rakutis observed, this presentation made a considerable impact on the participants.

The last part of the seminar was devoted to the generalization of results. During the discussion, not only gratitude for seminar organizer Dr. Vytautas Jokubauskas, senior researcher at Klaipėda University, Institute of Baltic Region History and Archaeology, was expressed but also the perspectives of military history research were actively considered. The participants admitted that in society there was tension between military historians and historians of other fields; therefore, it is necessary to perceive why different attitudes exist rather than attach some labels. When discussing topical research areas in the period of fights for independence (1919–1923), the seminar participants agreed that it was especially important to analyse not only statistics but also the human factor. As observed by Prof. Dr. V. Rakutis, thorough biographical research is necessary on the reasons of fighting and withdrawing. Concerning the future of military history, Dr. D. Šlekys and others hoped that financing for military history studies and research would increase with approaching 2018. In addition, it was noted that doctoral students could research the biographies of such famous military actors as General Silvestras Žukauskas or Teodoras Daukantas. Finally, the seminar participants were reminded that in September, 2017, the Fourth Congress of Historians would take place in Kaunas; they were encouraged to consider the traditional section on military history and individual topics on military history research.

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