

Gediminas Vitkus, *Wars of Lithuania*, Vilnius: Eugrimas, 2014. 304 p. ISBN 978-6094-372-75-9

For Lithuania, the history of modern warfare overlaps with the birth of the modern nation. The first modern conflicts waged on Lithuanian soil were the uprisings of the 19th century. Both the 1830–1831 and 1863–1864 insurrections broke out in Poland, against Imperial Russian rule, and spread eastwards, also engulfing Lithuanian territory. Both conflicts still displayed the age-old connection between Poland and Lithuania, but they also featured the gradual birth of a specific Lithuanian national awareness. By the time of the 20th-century conflicts, which included the revolutionary wars of 1919–1920 and the partisan war against the Soviet occupation in 1944–1953, Lithuania was not only a fully developed nation, but it also had a history as a modern, independent and sovereign state. The new collection *Wars of Lithuania*, edited by Gediminas Vitkus, focuses on these four conflicts.

Interestingly enough, the book has its background in the ‘Correlates of War’ project, which is an overall academic study launched by the University of Michigan, focusing on quantitative research into the causes and effects of warfare. *Wars of Lithuania* is something of an independent spin-off: a concise book inspired by another academic project with an international scope, and written with the intention to provide additional detailed information on one specific country. The various parts of the book are also clearly intended as commentaries on other international studies, where the Lithuanian perspective has sometimes been overlooked. The quantitative approach is quite rigorous. *Wars of Lithuania* has compiled and utilises detailed statistics and diagrams on many issues, ranging from ordinary lists of battle casualties to lists of individual capitulated soldiers and captured weapons. The book is very thorough in its approach, and gives an excellent example of how so-called ‘hard’ quantitative methods can be very fruitful in the study of the humanities.

The narrative has not suffered from the extensive data, and the book is just as well written as any popular history book. Even though the presentation includes lots of hard numbers and statistics, it is nonetheless easy and delightful to read. The chapters on the 1830 and 1863 uprisings, written by Virgilijus Pugačiauskas and Ieva Šenavičienė, offer a very good and very detailed Lithuanian perspective on two wars which were otherwise primarily Polish-Russian conflicts, but also involved other East European borderlands. The description of the individual Lithuanian rebel

bands which fought in the 19th-century uprisings, sometimes commanded by local Polish nobles, is done within the context of the wider history of the uprisings. The systematic dedication to detail is commendable, and chapters sometimes even include thorough descriptions of the insurgents' armaments, from pistols and rifles down to the very last halberd and warscythe. The chapter by Šenavičienė, in particular, is a classic example of how the quantitative methods of the 'Correlates of War' project can be fruitfully utilised in research into any conflict. The struggle of the Lithuanian insurgents, previously subsumed in the wider history of the Polish 1863–1864 uprising, is presented as its very own theatre, with a detailed record of battles and casualties. The hard, quantitative analysis thus facilitates the understanding of the Lithuanian uprising as a qualitatively distinct part of the Polish uprising.

Likewise, the chapter which deals with the 1919–1920 Lithuanian War of Independence, written by Gintautas Surgailis, is very well structured. The chapter offers a coherent portrayal of an extremely complex conflict which included battles against the Red Army, Polish forces, and the peculiar 'white' army of Colonel Bermond-Avalov, who in reality was fighting as a proxy of Baltic German forces. The quantitative analysis of the 1919–1920 war includes not only combat casualties, but also the economic effects of the war from requisitioning and looting, as well as the impact of the wartime chaos on demographics, such as marriages and the birth rate. The book consequently also shows the transition from early modern to modern warfare. Regretfully, the collection does not include a chapter on the Second World War. This is perhaps understandable, given the scale of this particular topic, and the rather wide research and many studies already written, particularly in the context of Holocaust studies. Nonetheless, a short, concise chapter providing some kind of hard data, and covering all the actions of *Litauische Schutzmannschaft* or *Sonderverbände*, as well as the activities of the Soviet partisans and the Polish Home Army on Lithuanian soil in 1941–1944, would probably have been possible to the same standard of the 'Correlates of War' project.

The final chapter on the Lithuanian partisan war against the Soviet occupation in 1944–1953 is written by Edita Jankauskienė. The chapter applies a similar quantitative analysis, and successfully divides the underground partisan war into two stages. First, the conventional Soviet military operations waged against the Lithuanian partisans at the end of the Second World War; and, second, the subsequent counter-insurgency measures, which included a more systematic utilisation of terror tactics and underground anti-partisan death squads. Twenty-five years after the collapse of the Soviet regime, the chapter still emphasises the nature of the partisan war as a national struggle for independence, and also briefly discusses the semantics of the war in Soviet historiography. Given the current trends in Russian historiography, which are once again moving towards somewhat

politicised interpretations that are eerily reminiscent of the Soviet era, this is quite an appropriate reminder.

For an international audience and academic professionals, the book has considerable value as a handy, concise portrayal of the 19th and 20th-century Lithuanian wars. These well-written case studies, which utilise quantitative methods and provide rich details on each conflict, should be considered obligatory reading for everyone doing research on East European or Baltic military history. The book is an enjoyable read, well structured, and, above all, very thorough and informative. Whereas the 'Correlates of War' project set a standard for the quantitative study of military history, *Wars of Lithuania* fulfils this standard quite splendidly.

*Jussi Jalonen*