



Leaders of the uprising (from top):
A. Mackevičius, *ŠAM*, Poz. No. 419/VIII;
Z. Sierakowski, *ŠAM*, Poz. No. 417/VIII;
K. Kalinowski, *ŠAM*, Poz. No. 416/VIII

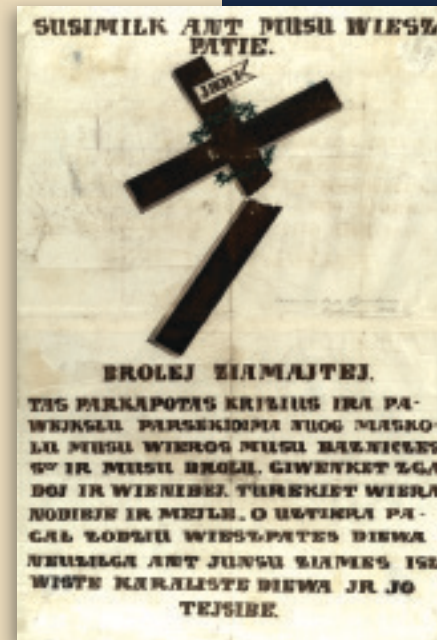
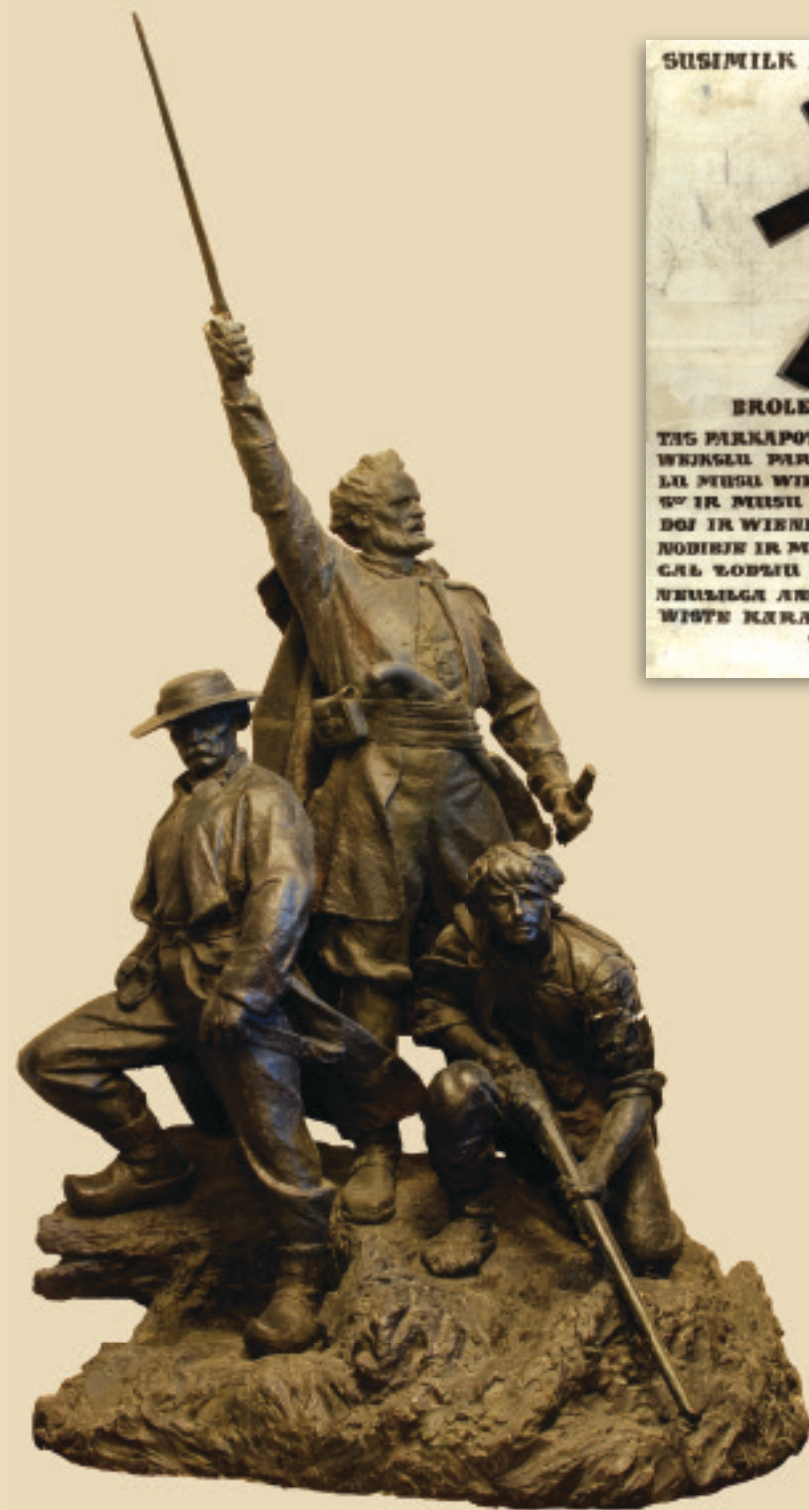
THE 1863–1864 UPRISING IN LITHUANIA

After the division of the Polish–Lithuanian Commonwealth among Russia, Prussia and Austria at the end of the 18th century, the lands of the former Grand Duchy of Lithuania went to the Russian Empire. Throughout the 19th century uprisings against the subjugators broke out more than once in different lands of the former state. One of the last attempts to restore the independent state was the 1863–1864 Uprising.

The succession to the throne of a new tsar, Alexander II of Russia, in 1855 marked the so-called Epoch of Liberty with more favourable conditions for different social groups to publicly express their ambitions. Following the example of the Kingdom of Poland and in solidarity with it, religious patriotic demonstrations started in Lithuanian cities in the spring of 1861. They were particularly numerous when marking the anniversary of the Union of Lublin (1569). Meanwhile the leaders of the conservative Lithuanian landed nobility—part of them later led the conservative wing of the Uprising (“the Whites”)—filed various petitions to the central government, requiring cultural autonomy for Lithuania. In Lithuania, like in the Kingdom of Poland, the organisation of “the Reds” began to be set up in the summer of 1861. It declared that it would not only seek to restore the Polish–Lithuanian Commonwealth, but push through social reforms as well. The Reds tried to involve the peasants in their activities; therefore they printed different agitation literature in Lithuanian and Belarusian. A Committee of the Movement of the Reds (under the leadership of Ludwik Zwierzdowski) was established in Vilnius in 1862. It subsequently re-organised into the Committee of the Province of Lithu-

Sculpture *Insurgents of 1863*.
Sculptor K. Bogdanas, 1958. VDKM, I-818

Leaflet in Lithuanian.
LMAVB RS, F22-4, p. 17a



ania, which was to organise an uprising. Probably on account of disagreement on tactical issues, this Committee aspired for equal rights with the Central National Committee in Warsaw. The Vilnius conspirators believed that Lithuania and Belarus had not prepared for the uprising yet and they feared that Warsaw might commence it too early. Serfdom was abolished in 1861 in the greater part of Lithuania, as in most of the Russian Empire (in the ethnic Lithuanian lands in the Augustów Governorate such a reform was pushed through as early as at the beginning of the 19th century). This event also encouraged the public to act: part of the peasant population was dissatisfied about the conditions of the abolishment of serfdom, and in some locations of the North-Western territory (of Lithuania and Belarus) the peasants’ unrest broke out.

It was planned to begin the uprising in the spring of 1863, however imperial authorities announced recruitment in the Kingdom of Poland, thus it started in early 1863. On January 22 the insurgents in Poland issued a manifesto that the Commonwealth of Two Nations was being re-established, estates were being granted equal rights, and peasants were being transferred the ownership of the land they worked. In fact, the insurgents in Lithuania were also guided by this Manifesto. In March 1863 the leadership of the uprising was taken over by the Whites, yet in the summer of 1863 the steering wheel of the uprising re-appeared in the hands of the Reds: in mid-July, Konstanty Kalinowski became the Plenipotentiary Commissar of the Government for Lithuania and in the middle of November of the same year the priest Antanas Mackevičius was appointed as Voivode of Kaunas.

Like in Poland, the main purpose of the insurgents in Lithuania was the re-establishment of the Commonwealth of Two Nations with the same borders as in 1772. The leaders of the



Coat of Arms with symbols of the 1863 Uprising.
RKM, AD-1023



Seal used by insurgents in the 1863 Uprising.
VDKM, E-481

uprising in Lithuania mainly carried out instructions from Warsaw, and disagreements, as one can judge from available data, arose for the most part on tactical issues. The leaders of the uprising in Lithuania, belonging to the faction of the Reds, were mainly concerned about the improvement of the social position of peasants and protection of the Catholic Church from prosecution by the authorities. Some of them saw Lithuania as a separate independent entity able to decide whom to unite with—Poland or Russia.

As compared with the 1830–1831 Uprising, military preparedness this time was much worse. In 1863–1864 only a partisan war was possible, whereas during the previous November Uprising not only a partisan war went on, but regular armies fought as well. Initially, in February–March, the insurgents’ activity was very minimal, with the squads that had arrived from the Kingdom of Poland mainly fighting. At this stage, landlords and peasants barely contributed to the insurgents. Once the Uprising commenced, the task of the insurgents in Lithuania was to interrupt both railway transport to and from St. Petersburg and Warsaw, and telegraph communication, but the implementation of these plans failed.

In the spring of 1863 the military actions of the insurgents intensified. They were particularly active in the Kovno Governorate, where peasants finally got involved in the uprising, primarily state peasants. There were even such squads for which commands were given in Lithuanian and which were led by peasants (Adomas Bitė, Kazimieras Lukošius). 1000 armed volunteers summoned by Russian revolutionists in England sailed to Lithuania, but were unable to land. Out of all the governorates of the North-Western territory (historical lands of Lithuania), the uprising received the greatest support in the Kovno Governorate and it was here that it lasted longest. The most numerous squads of insurgents, which included 500 to 1000 fighters, acted in the Kovno Governorate. In the beginning, the fight between the insurgents and Russian army units was erratic, yet the situation of the insurgents worsened drastically after they lost a battle near Biržai on 7–9 May 1863, in which the squad of Zygmunt Sierakowski was defeated and Sierakowski himself was arrested and hanged. After the annihilation of Sierakowski’s squad, the insurgents in Lithuania no longer had a joint action plan. In spite of that, strong squads of the insurgents (led by Antanas Mackevičius, Bolesław Dłuski-Jablonowski) were still active up until the end of 1863 and they even defeated tsarist army units a few times.



Belt buckle that belonged to the insurgent Bolesław Kolyszko. LNM, IM-1



A carved wooden plate for bread that belonged to the insurgent Eismantas Jovaiša. It was used as a secret sign (if the plate was on a table—there was no danger). VDKM, E-2365



In the spring of 1864, after a pause in the winter, the insurgents became active once more, but they no longer equalled in number the insurgents of 1863. According to the authorities, the tsarist army, which in the first half of 1864 had as many as 144,800 soldiers in Lithuania, was opposed by just 15,000 insurgents who were, in addition, badly armed. Having an overwhelming military advantage, the tsarist authorities, with Governor General Mikhail Muravyov at the forefront, suppressed the Uprising quite easily. The participants of the Uprising and its sympathizers were not only subject to direct repression but the Russification policy began to be implemented as well.

The Uprising soon became the subject of political and historical debates. In imperial Russian tradition it was mostly named a revolt or an uprising of the Poles, and was condemned. Polish conservative social strata also condemned the Uprising as pointless, as something which could not be and was not useful for the society in any way. Nevertheless, in Polish tradition, in which this Uprising is usually named the January Uprising, its glorification as a fearless fight for liberty was entrenched. The Uprising was also very important as a testimony of the continuity of the idea of the Polish State. In Lithuanian society, the prevailing attitude changed more than once. In the late 19th–first half of the 20th century, the events of 1863–1864 were named “Poletime” or the Uprising of the Poles, the aim of which was to restore Poland (The Polish–Lithuanian Commonwealth), hence it was considered as having nothing in common with the political programme of the Lithuanians. In Soviet times there was an attempt to turn it into an episode of the people’s (peasants’) fight with tsarism and Polish landlords. At the same time in the historical narrative of the opposition, a conception built up that the insurgents fought for the freedom of Lithuania, however the conception of freedom was either not analysed more comprehensively or was more than once comprehended as an attempt to create the State of Lithuania on a national basis. This interpretation of the Uprising is quite frequent even in present-day Lithuania.

Dr Darius Staliūnas

Weapons of the insurgents—straightened scythes.
LNM, IM 10178, IM 11750, D. e. 2394

Michael Elviro Andriolli. The death of Ludwik Narbutt near Dubičiai. 1864–1865. LDM, G-3752

Reconstruction of the flag used by the insurgents led by Povilas Šimkevičius, who fought in the parishes of Kražiai, Lioliai and Šaukėnai. VDKM, Ev-8047



Lithuanian
Collectors
Coins



50 LITAS COIN DEDICATED TO THE 150TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE 1863–1864 UPRISING

Silver Ag 925
Quality proof
Diameter 38.61 mm
Weight 28.28 g

On the edge of the coin: LAISVĖ * LYGYBĖ * NEPRIKLAUSOMYBĖ
Designed by Vidmantas Valentas and Giedrius Paulauskis
Mintage 3,000
Issued in 2013

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Abbreviations: LNM – National Museum of Lithuania, SAM – Šiauliai Aušros Museum, VDKM – Vytautas the Great War Museum, RKM – Rokiškis Area Museum, LDM – Lithuanian Art Museum, LMAVB – The Wroblewski Library of the Lithuanian Academy of Sciences
Top: Infantry grooved rifle, remade from a shotgun. Russia, Tula. Mid-19th century. VDKM, G-293

Cover: Flint lock pistol, used in the 1863 Uprising. SAM, I-G 318
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