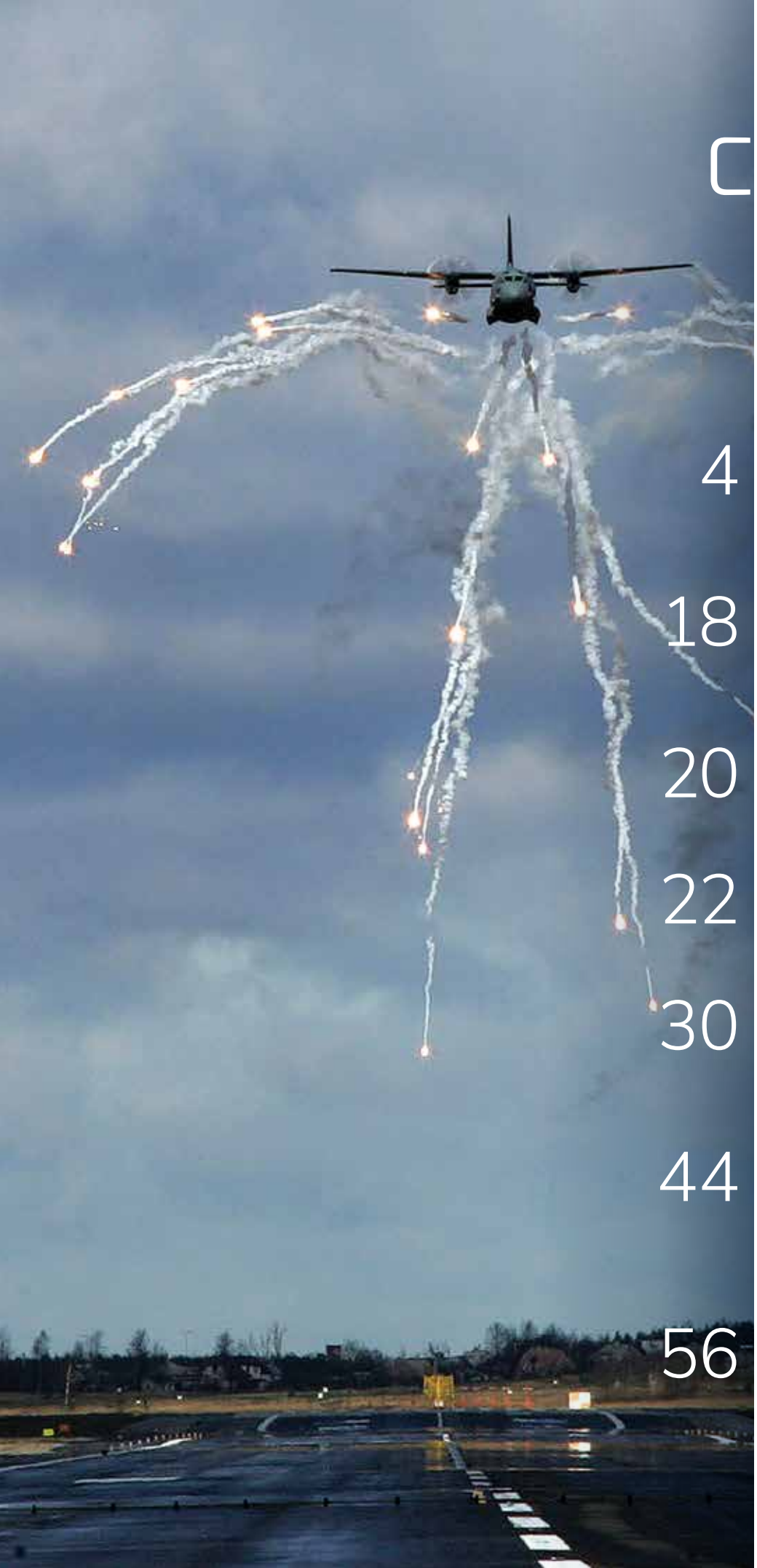
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WARRIOR

The magazine was established in 1919, during Lithuania's Independence Battles. Later revived in the USA in 1950. Re-established in Lithuania since 1991.

Dear WARRIOR readers,

One wonders what the world would look like today if, for example, back in 1943, Western powers had decided to sit down at the negotiating table with the Third Reich. Admittedly, Western Europe had already carried out such an 'experiment' in Munich in 1939, agreeing to satisfy Adolf Hitler's territorial ambitions at the time; however, that very same year it learnt perhaps the most painful lesson in history and, at least until the end of World War II, did not repeat such a mistake.

Another historical mistake by the West was highlighted in 1946 by Winston Churchill, who realised the extent of the deceit and hegemonic ambitions with which the soviet dictatorship – led by Stalin, whom the kremlin's current leader still idealises today – operated within the anti-Hitler coalition.

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy recently warned that even if the Donbas were handed over to russia, Putin would not stop. Just as Adolf Hitler did not stop in 1939, and Stalin was not satisfied with the 'spoils' granted by the secret protocols of the Ribbentrop–Molotov Pact.

In ethical terms, the very fact of negotiating with russia is a mistake. The only question is: what price will we pay as a consequence of these negotiations?

Sincerely,
Darius Varanavičius
Chief Editor

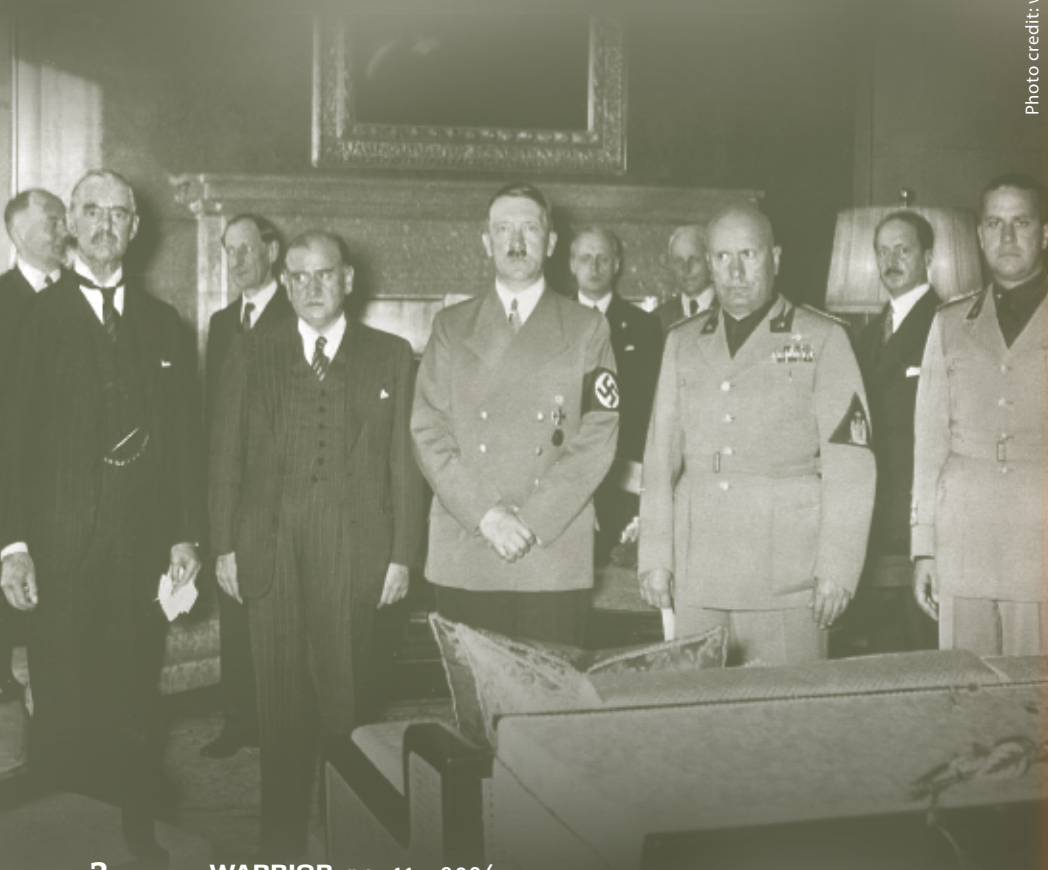


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C-27J S



Powerful engines, versatility, and the ability to take off from and land on short, unpaved runways were the key factors that led to the Lithuania's decision in 2006 to acquire three Italian-made *C-27J Spartan* transport aircraft. To this day draw the significant attention from the nation's leaders and politicians. Nevertheless, these reliable 'workhorses of the skies' continue their service, having clocked up thousands of flying hours across Lithuanian and international airspace over the past two decades.

A fifth of a century in service represents far more than just flight hours, diverse routes, tons of fuel, or the dozens of pilots, thousands of passengers, and tonnes of cargo transported by the *C-27J Spartan*. It marks a profoundly significant chapter in the history of the Lithuania's military aviation – it is not without reason that this aircraft is known as the 'workhorse of the skies'.



SPARTAN: TWO DECADES IN THE SKIES

ILONA SKUJAITĖ

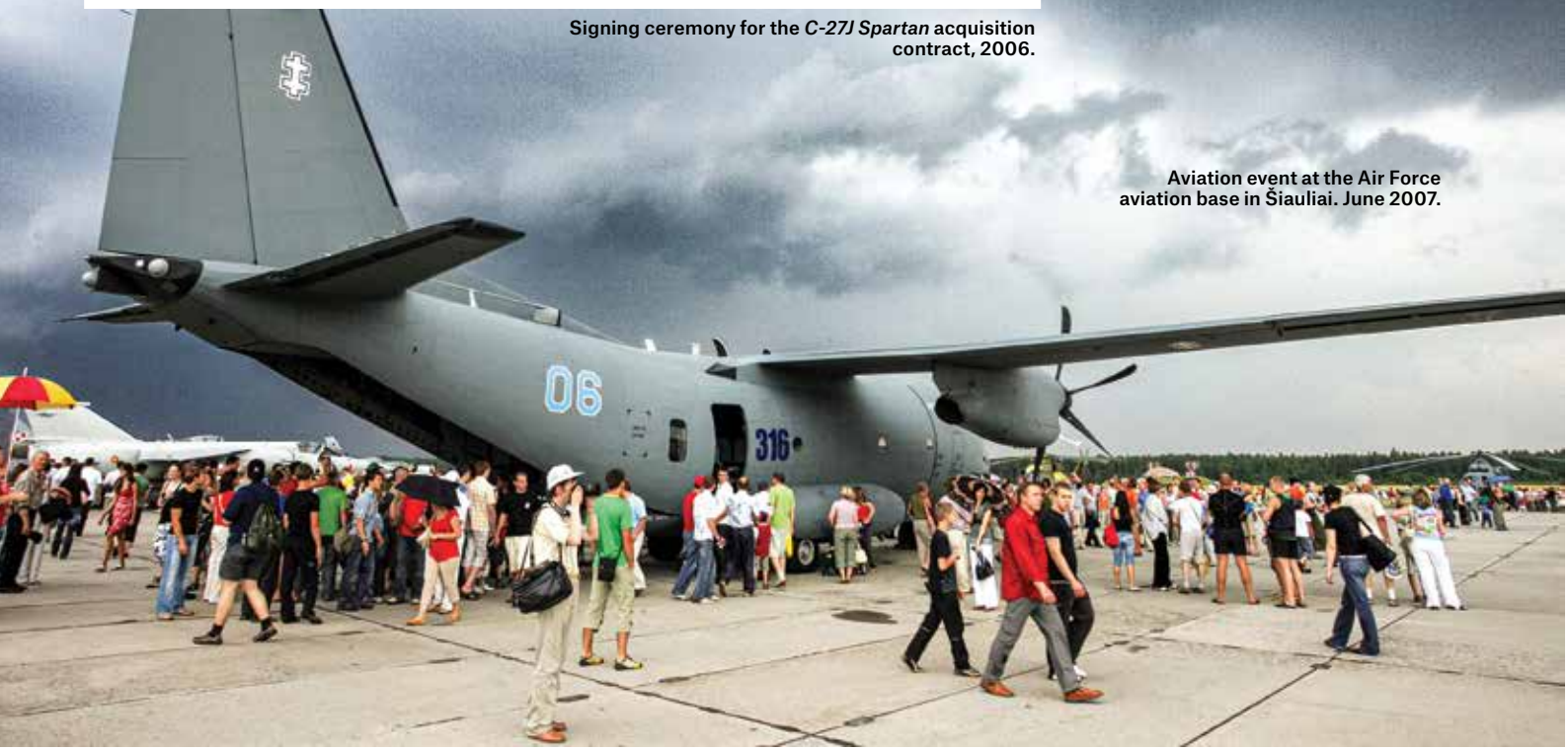
Over these two decades, the three *C-27J Spartan* transport aircraft of the national Air Force – named *Gediminas*, *Algirdas*, and *Vytautas* in honour of Lithuanian Grand Dukes – have seen it all. They have endured heated debates in the corridors of the *Seimas* regarding frequent repairs and the 'astronomical' cost of spare parts, complaints about excessive cabin noise, and public outcry when technical malfunctions grounded planned flights for the country's leadership. Yet they have also earned high praise following discreet, mission-critical operations – often revealed to the public only after completion. These are missions where crews launch at a moment's notice, day or night, to transport donor organs, deploy troops to global hotspots, or evacuate Lithuanian citizens from crisis zones.



One of the first *C-27J Spartan* pilots, Maj. Jurijus Jakšys, and the then-Commander of the Air Force, Col. Artūras Leita.



Signing ceremony for the *C-27J Spartan* acquisition contract, 2006.



Aviation event at the Air Force aviation base in Šiauliai. June 2007.



The operational reach of these aircraft spans three continents – Europe, Africa, and Asia – with *C-27J Spartan* crews carrying out high-risk missions in global hotspots such as Afghanistan, Iraq, the Central African Republic, and Ukraine. They have transported troops and weaponry, delivered humanitarian aid, and evacuated both Lithuanian citizens and allied nationals from conflict zones. Their passenger lists have featured not only heads of state and high-profile dignitaries, but also orphans from children's homes, deported Lithuanian criminals from England, and a notorious Henrikas Daktaras apprehended in Bulgaria. In one of their most unusual missions, they even relocated dolphins from the Klaipėda Sea Museum to a Greek zoo during museum renovations.

Over many years of service, the crews operating these aircraft have also changed; the pioneer *C-27J Spartan* pilots have concluded their military careers, leaving a new generation of aircrews at the controls. Furthermore, the transport aircraft themselves are now due for a vital modernization. The once state-of-the-art avionics systems installed on board no longer meet modern aviation requirements.

C-27J SPARTAN TRANSPORT AIRCRAFT

The operational profiles:

- **Troops and cargo transport;**
- **VIP transport: Executing state delegations using a specialized dedicated passenger module;**
- **Airborne and air-assault operations;**
- **Medical evacuation.**

Technical specifications:

Manufacturer	**'*Alenia Aeronautica S.p.A.*' (Italy)**
Length	**22,7 m**
Wingspan	**28,7 m**
Height	**9,6 m**
Powerplant	**2 × *Rolls-Royce/Allison AE 2100D2* turboprops (4,637 hp each)**
Maximum Takeoff Weight	**30 500 kg**
Maximum Payload	**10 000 kg**
Passenger Capacity	**Up to 50 passengers**
Flight Range: **Ferry range (zero payload)** **Fully loaded (maximum payload)**	 **5 925 km** **1 852 km**
Service Ceiling	**9 150 m (30 000 ft)**
Flight Crew	**3 (Pilot in Command, Co-pilot, Loadmaster / Flight Operator)**

Other features

- **The aircraft requires approximately 700 m of runway for take-off and about 340 m for landing. It can reach an altitude of 9 100 m and achieve a speed of 550 km/h. A single refuel is sufficient for the aircraft to fly from Šiauliai to Afghanistan.**
- **It can transport 50 soldiers or 46 paratroopers. The aircraft can be rapidly configured to accommodate 36 stretchers for patients; it is also capable of carrying a *HMMWV* off-road vehicle or an *M113* armoured personnel carrier. Three standard aviation cargo pallets can be loaded or unloaded quickly, and a module for transporting VIPs can be installed when necessary.**
- **The aircraft can remain airborne for eight hours without landing. It is equipped with an auxiliary power unit that provides an autonomous electrical power supply; depending on weather conditions, this unit can either air-condition or heat the flight deck and the passenger or cargo compartment, and it is also used to start the main engines. This capability is critical when landing at austere or temporary airfields that lack ground support infrastructure. The aircraft features integrated modern flight control and navigation systems, as well as an autopilot and an automatic engine thrust control system.**
- **These aircraft are often referred to as 'Little *Hercules*' planes because, while smaller than the American *C-130J Hercules* transport aircraft, they feature many of the same systems and are equipped with the same series of 'Rolls-Royce' engines (the *Spartan* has two, whereas the *Hercules* has four).**
- **In addition to Lithuania, these aircraft are also operated by Bulgaria, Greece, Italy, the United States, Morocco, and Romania.**

Information credit: Lithuanian Armed Forces



'Pilot-friendly'

Lt. Col. Mindaugas Garbenis, Commander of the Air Operations Group at the Air Force Aviation Base, is one of the pilots with the most flight time in the *C-27J Spartan*; his logbook records 2 900 hours spent piloting this aircraft.

It is likely that this tally will continue to grow, eventually reaching 3 000 flight hours. 'Although I currently serve on the Aviation Base staff in a leadership role, I haven't given up flying,' the officer explained. 'To be honest, I never even dreamed of becoming a military pilot at first. But after completing my studies at the General Jonas Žemaitis Military Academy of Lithuania (lith. *LKA*), we were offered the chance to continue our education at the Vilnius Gediminas Technical University Antanas Gustaitis Aviation Institute; I became interested and successfully passed the selection process. Since then, there hasn't been a single day that I have regretted my decision'.

Lt. Col. M. Garbenis belonged to the first class of cadets to become military aviators. However, when 11 newly trained young pilots arrived at the Air Force Aviation Base in Šiauliai, they were not permitted to fly the brand-new *C-27J Spartan* aircraft due to a lack of experience – at the institute, they had only flown single-engine civilian aircraft, specifically the *Cessna 152* and *Cessna 172*. Thus, they were distributed among the squadrons existing at the time – comprising transport aircraft, *L-39* light attack aircraft, and helicopters – while the controls of the *C-27J Spartan* were taken over by the country's top military aviation aces of the day – the most experienced pilots. Meanwhile, newcomers to the transport squadron spent nearly two years gaining experience flying the smaller, twin-engine, Czech-made *L-410* military aircraft, until their own turn finally arrived.



'When we were finally assigned to fly the *C-27J Spartan*, we were first sent to Italy for training, where we learned the principles of operating the aircraft using a flight simulator. While the underlying principles were largely the same, the cockpit instrumentation differed significantly: the *L-410* featured analogue instruments, whereas the *C-27J Spartan* utilized modern digital systems, requiring flight data to be entered into a computer. Upon returning from Italy, we continued to build our experience through flight operations – starting with basic training that included visual, instrument, and night flights. We refined all aircraft handling procedures and flew to various airports across Lithuania, eventually transitioning to logistical missions, transporting passengers and cargo throughout Europe. Later, we underwent military-specific training, which included landing on unpaved and short runways, conducting paratrooper drops, and flying at low altitudes. Through this accumulated experience, we became





Flights to Afghanistan posed an immense challenge for the pilots – especially when landing on the short runway in Chaghcharan, where the crew had to account for every single centimeter and plan everything with extreme care.

fully qualified co-pilots, and eventually, captains', recounted Lt. Col. M. Garbenis.

When asked for his opinion on this Air Force transport aircraft, the experienced pilot explained that, from the perspective of a newcomer to the Air Base, the *C-27J Spartan* was the largest and most modern aircraft – the one everyone wanted to fly.

'It is truly a very 'pilot-friendly' aircraft; it is easy to handle, powerful, and well-suited for tactical flights and transport missions – though, at present, there are better alternatives on the market for conducting logistics flights', the Air Force pilot stated.

The Great Challenge – Afghanistan

The *C-27J Spartan*'s most intensive operational chapter began when Lithuania joined NATO's International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) in Afghanistan – and, starting in 2005, assumed responsibility for the operations of the Provincial Reconstruction Team in Ghor Province.

In fact, this mission was one of the primary reasons Lithuania acquired the aircraft. Capable of remaining airborne for up to eight hours, the *C-27J* can take off from a runway as short as 700 metres and land on an unpaved strip of just 340 metres. Furthermore, with a single refuel, it can cover the approximately 4 000–4 500 kilometre distance from Šiauliai to Afghanistan. From 2008 onwards, these transport aircraft were







The flight from Šiauliai to Afghanistan took approximately 15 hours, including a scheduled stop – sametimes in Azerbaijan – for crew rest and refueling.

used regularly to move troops and cargo, provide logistical support, and conduct medical evacuations – flying directly to the Chaghcharan unpaved airfield in the capital of Ghor Province, as well as to other bases in the region.

'Back then, as unexperienced *C-27J Spartan* pilots, we weren't allowed into the 'hot spots', but we listened intently to our colleagues' accounts of the flight conditions – navigating through mountain gorges at low altitude to avoid enemy attacks, and landing on Chaghcharan unpaved strips that lacked both airport infrastructure and air traffic controllers, where Lithuanian ground troops guided the aircraft in for a landing via radio. These were likely neither easy nor comfortable flights – neither for the passengers nor for the pilots', recounted Lt. Col. M. Garbenis.

He first flew to Afghanistan himself only a few years later, occupying the so-called 'third seat' in the cockpit – a position intended for an instructor or observer – yet the memories remain vivid to this day.

'The aircraft was operated by an experienced crew, and I watched as the pilots maintained radio communications and carried out other flight procedures. Since it is impossible to fly from Lithuania to Afghanistan in a single day – as crews require mandatory rest and the aircraft needs to be refuelled – we landed in Azerbaijan after a flight of about eight hours. From there, it was only about another five hours to Kabul. During the flight, it was truly fascinating to observe a landscape so unfamiliar to our eyes: the deserts and numerous oil platforms in Azerbaijan, and the massive mountains surrounding Kabul. The flight planning process itself was also highly interesting; there is a distinct difference between flying in peaceful skies and operating in the airspace over a country at war. Consequently, before entering Afghanistan airspace, we had to coordinate the entire flight route with United States military personnel, obtain the necessary clearances, and secure new call signs for the aircraft', recounted Lt. Col. M. Garbenis.

It wasn't long before he was returning to Afghanistan, this time at the controls as both co-pilot and aircraft captain. His missions took him mostly into Kabul, Kandahar, and Herat – airports that were civilian at their core and managed by air traffic control, but adapted for wartime operations.

'Flying into a combat zone gave me invaluable experience', the veteran *C-27J Spartan* pilot emphasized. 'I now have a firsthand understanding of how to







operate in a hostile environment. More than anything, it showed me what the reality of tactical flying actually is – as opposed to mere theory or training exercises'.

When asked about the most dangerous moment experienced while flying to Afghanistan, Lt. Col. M. Garbenis recounted an incident where the aircraft's 'flares' – thermal countermeasures designed to deceive and divert anti-aircraft missiles – deployed automatically.

'It is an automated system, and on one occasion, while we were flying to Kabul, it triggered quite unexpectedly. Suddenly, both the missile warning system and the

The country's politicians also frequently visited the Lithuanian troops in Afghanistan.



INTERNATIONAL TACTICAL TRAINING FOR *C-27J SPARTAN* CREWS

For many years, the Air Force's *C-27J Spartan* aircraft and their crews have been actively participating in the European Tactical Air Transport Programme (ETAP) and the annual 'European *Spartan*' exercises. These initiatives, organized by the European Defence Agency, help strengthen military cooperation and tactical readiness.

REALISTIC TACTICAL ENVIRONMENT AND SCENARIOS

The primary objective of this training is to strengthen the tactical capabilities of aircrews, standardize common procedures, and enhance interoperability within an increasingly complex geopolitical environment. Over the past five to seven years, pilots from Lithuania have been sent to participate in this training to gain invaluable experience through complex exercise scenarios that closely mirror real-world crisis situations.

- **Low-altitude flights: training in manoeuvring within enemy territory while avoiding radar detection.**
- **Fighter escort and threat simulation: flights are conducted with fighter escorts, simulating enemy actions and air defence scenarios.**
- **Tactical cargo transport and airdrops: precise delivery and parachute-dropping of cargo in unprepared zones.**
- **International environment: transport aircraft from various European countries participate in the exercises, with crews flying in joint formations to ensure seamless cooperation between personnel from different nations.**

Information credit: European Defence Agency



laser warning system on board began to blare. Apparently, they had detected some sort of flash. At first, I was a bit shocked – the incident gave everyone on board a proper scare – but, fortunately, everything ended well', the military pilot explained.

A New Generation and Modernisation

Urrently, the first flights for two new *C-27J Spartan* pilots are taking place at the Air Force Aviation Base, overseen by an instructor who has arrived from Italy. One of them, 1st Lt. Mykolas Velžys, says that while he certainly did not dream





of becoming a military pilot as a child, he took the opportunity to explore the profession after enrolling in the *LKA* – and has now ended up in the pilot's seat of a *C-27J Spartan*.

'I recently returned from training in Italy, conducted by the aircraft manufacturer in Turin, where we studied theory and trained in a flight simulator', the new *C-27J Spartan* pilot explained. 'We completed 15 three-hour sessions, honing flight control procedures and practicing for various emergency scenarios – such as simulated fires and different engine or avionics malfunctions. I really enjoy flying this aircraft; its engines are incredibly powerful, allowing it to lift off easily from short runways – a capability not found in many other planes. Furthermore, the *C-27J Spartan* is quite manoeuvrable; despite its weight, it can execute sharp turns in the air.

1st Lt. M. Velžys, a new pilot of the *C-27J Spartan*, is most impressed by the power of the aircraft's engines and its maneuverability.



Initially, we flew during the day with an instructor in good visibility conditions, performing basic exercises – take-offs, straight-and-level flight, turns, landings, and other manoeuvres – to get accustomed to the aircraft's handling characteristics. In a flight simulator, you don't get a true sense of this massive aircraft's actual weight, so you have to get used to its specific behaviour through hands-on experience. Later on, the training will cover instrument flying, night operations, and military tactical training. Personally, I'm most looking forward to the air-dropping of cargo – to me, that seems like one of the most interesting and dynamic tasks'.

Lt. Col. M. Garbenis notes that the transport squadron could use more young military pilots than it currently has; however, the reality is that the military must compete with the civil aviation sector for them: 'Admittedly, the situation is somewhat easier now because pilots have been included in the list of professions in short supply within the Lithuanian Armed Forces. This has made it possible to offer them higher salaries – an important step, given that pay in the civil sector is significantly higher. Furthermore, the initiative to encourage cadets to become military pilots is proving quite effective; each year, there are interested candidates who, upon completing their

aviation studies, join the Air Force Air Base for service'.

When asked whether 20 years of service for a military aircraft – one that has earned a reputation as a 'workhorse' – is a long or short time, military pilots from different generations note that, with proper maintenance, this is still a perfectly reasonable age for an aircraft to remain in service. While issues such as material fatigue can arise, the *C-27J Spartan* fleet undergoes regular maintenance, and a comprehensive avionics upgrade is planned for the near future. This follows the State Defence Council's decision to postpone the acquisition of new military transport aircraft until approximately 2030; consequently, the Ministry of National Defence and the Lithuanian Armed Forces Command have opted to modernise the existing *C-27J Spartan* fleet, ensuring these aircraft can continue to operate successfully until 2036.

The Lithuanian Armed Forces have signed the €20 million contract with the Italian company '*Leonardo S.p.A. – Aircraft Division*' for the logistical support of *C-27J Spartan* aircraft. The Italian firm has committed to providing spare parts repair and replacement services, calibrating ground equipment, upgrading systems, and training personnel. The contract is for a three-year term, with an option to extend it up to nine years; furthermore, should the need arise – or to minimise aircraft downtime in the event of a malfunction – there is a provision for the additional procurement of parts and maintenance services, valued at several million euros. These measures are expected to ensure the long-term operational readiness of the Air Force's *C-27J Spartan* transport aircraft, facilitate efficient logistical planning, and guarantee that this 'workhorse of the skies' continues to successfully carry out missions both domestically and within international and NATO operations. ■



Photo credits: Alfredas Pliadis, Lukas Kalvaitis, Air Force Aviation Base archives.


LITHUANIAN AIR FORCE
VYTAUTAS



TWO DECADES OF THE *C-27J SPARTAN*: KEY FACTS AND MILESTONES



Deployed at the Lithuanian Air Force Šiauliai Air Base, the *C-27J Spartan* tactical transport aircraft have, for two decades, served as an indispensable component of the Lithuanian military's logistical support and operational-level exercises. These aircraft replaced the ageing, soviet-made *An-26* transport planes, offering exceptional technical versatility, powerful engines, the capability to land on unprepared, unpaved runways, and the ability to cover long distances without the need for refuelling.

Acquisition and Naming

In June 2006, the Ministry of National Defence of the Republic of Lithuania signed a contract worth €75 million with the Italian company '*Alenia Aeronautica S.p.A.*' for the acquisition of three aircraft. The agreement stipulated that the aircraft would arrive in Lithuania in stages and would be named after Lithuanian Grand Dukes:

- *Gediminas* (side number 06) – arrived in Lithuania in 22 December 2006;
- *Algirdas* (side number 07) – arrived at the Šiauliai Air Base in 6 December 2008;
- *Vytautas* (side number 08) – delivered in 12 October 2009.



International Exercises and Pilot Training

Since 2011, *C-27J Spartan* crews have participated almost annually in the international 'European *Spartan*' exercise, typically held in mountainous countries such as Bulgaria, Portugal, Romania, and Slovakia. During these exercises, Lithuanian pilots train alongside their counterparts in low-altitude flying – simulating combat conditions – as well as night-time flight operations.

- Pilot Training: Pilots from the Air Force travel to Italy annually to train using specialized flight simulators..
- Tactical Interoperability: *C-27J Spartan* crews regularly collaborate with Special Operations Forces and other units to conduct airdrop operation exercises in Lithuania.
- Flights with Allies: Several times a year, tactical training exercises are conducted alongside Allied fighter jets (such as *F-16*s, *F-18*s, etc.) tasked with securing the airspace of Baltic countries.



International Missions and Flights

C-27J Spartan transport aircraft play a vital role in the international arena and in facilitating travel for the country's leadership.

- Military operations: the aircraft have regularly transported troops, weaponry, and cargo, and have delivered humanitarian aid during international missions in Afghanistan, Central Africa, Ukraine, and Iraq.
- Evacuations: the crews of these aircraft have frequently evacuated citizens of Lithuania and other nations from volatile conflict zones.
- Flights for national leadership: supporting the Office of the President and the Government of the Republic of Lithuania, making official travel for the nation's leadership across the European Union and beyond seamless and secure.



Unique Flights

Over twenty years of service, *C-27J Spartan* crews have carried out numerous unique missions.

- Transportation of dolphins (2010): during the renovation of the Lithuanian Sea Museum Dolphinarium, the dolphins were flown on a special flight to the Attica Zoological Park in Greece, and later – accompanied by their offspring – safely

flown back to Klaipėda. Throughout the flight, the animals were cared for by the dolphinarium's staff.

- Transport of cultural assets: in 2008, a collection of paintings by the renowned artist Niko Pirosmani was flown from Georgia to Lithuania on a special flight for an exhibition. In 2009, pilots successfully transported paintings by Mikalojus Konstantinas Čiurlionis and other prominent Lithuanian artists back from Ukraine, where they had been on display.
- Mission Christmas': one of the most heartwarming traditions has become a charity initiative organized by the President of the Republic of Lithuania, Dalia Grybauskaitė, in which a *C-27J Spartan* aircraft transported children from care homes and large families to Lapland to meet Santa Claus.

Medical and special tasks

The aircraft cabin can be configured with up to 36 medical berths, making the *C-27J Spartan* ideally suited for time-critical missions.

- Medical evacuation and organ donation: crews conduct emergency flights to transport donor organs for transplantation, or to repatriate Lithuanian soldiers who have been killed or wounded abroad.
- Law enforcement operations: the aircraft has been used to transport criminals deported from the United Kingdom, and it also successfully carried out the extradition of Henrikas Daktaras to Lithuania who had been detained in Bulgaria.

Accumulated flight hours

The Air Force's three *C-27J Spartan* aircraft have already logged thousands of flight hours in both Lithuanian and international airspace:

- *Gediminas* (side number 6) – 4 205,28 flight hours;
- *Algirdas* (side number 7) – 5 656,30 flight hours;
- *Vytautas* (side number 8) – 4 606,27 flight hours.

Prepared by Aušra Bukienė,
Air Force Base S-5 Specialist











Higher Sabotage Threat

The *Bundeswehr* has raised its assessment of the russian sabotage threat to its second-highest level, warning that German forces themselves could face attacks at home, according to a classified internal analysis reported by public broadcaster '*WDR*' and newspaper '*Süddeutsche Zeitung*'.

The report's findings point to a potentially broader threat than German military security specialists had previously anticipated. Their concerns had centered on installations training Ukrainian troops, alongside naval bases and shipyards. The new assessment says authorities can no longer geographically confine specific sites deemed vulnerable, warning instead of an all-around deterioration in the security situation, with concrete actions possible in the near term.

The reassessment follows the discovery of an apparently crashed drone near Wunstorf air base in northern Germany in September. Investigators found a can containing explosives a few meters away, according to the report. They suspect the aircraft may have targeted military planes rather than civilian cargo aircraft.

'*WDR*' and '*Süddeutsche Zeitung*' reported that investigators believe the Wunstorf drone had lain near the base for about two years, citing technical analysis by Germany's Federal Criminal Police Office. Its construction resembled an explosives-equipped drone used in a failed attack at Leipzig/Halle Airport in early August, the outlets reported, though it would have significantly predated the Leipzig incident.

The military analysis draws a distinction between the two incidents: While Leipzig presented an indirect threat to German forces, targeting Ukrainian aircraft instead, Wunstorf likely involved the *Bundeswehr* itself as the target. The assessment describes russia as almost certainly possessing the capability, and very likely an increased motivation, to act against German forces and facilities, as well as Ukrainian partners in Germany.

It also concludes that russia's use of drones as weapons crossed a previously anticipated 'red line' involving an intention to cause physical damage or potentially lethal effects. The German government has publicly attributed the Leipzig drone attack to russia following a month-long investigation.

The analysis links the suspected campaign to efforts to weaken political and public support for Ukraine in Germany. At the operational level,



it assesses that moscow seeks to disrupt equipment deliveries and training, undermining Ukraine's ability to defend itself.

An Operational Command spokesperson told '*WDR*' that the *Bundeswehr* currently considers the sabotage risk 'substantial' because of the increased threat. This places it at the second-highest level of the military's risk assessment scale, '*Süddeutsche Zeitung*' reported.

The military is strengthening protective measures at its installations to safeguard personnel and facilities, the spokesperson said. The warning follows suspicious drone flights over sites associated with Germany's *Arrow 3* missile-defense system and *Patriot* maintenance facilities. German security authorities suspect russian involvement in those and other surveillance incidents, '*WDR*' reported.

Russia has consistently denied involvement in sabotage and hybrid attacks, and has blamed Germany for staging incidents to whip up anti-russian sentiment. Moscow's ambassador to Berlin previously dismissed Germany's allegations over Leipzig as 'absurd' and described the incident as a 'provocation.'

Information credit: www.defensenews.com
Photo credits: www.flickr.com, www.defensenews.com





'The West Can't Stop Me'

Washington blamed moscow at the United Nations for deliberately moving a russian military satellite with an undisclosed mission 'dangerously' close to a US-registered satellite believed to serve Ukraine, with officials vowing to defend American interests in space.

The russian satellite, *Cosmos 2612*, spent more than two weeks maneuvering toward *ICEYE-X36*, a radar satellite operated by the American arm of Finnish company 'ICEYE' that supplies imagery to Ukraine's military through some of its spacecraft, then shadowed it from as close as a third of a mile through the weekend of 17 October.

US Undersecretary of State Thomas G. DiNanno called the russian satellite's behavior 'threatening,' and said the country had been 'intentionally maneuvering dangerously close to a commercial satellite, behaviors consistent with on-orbit weapons operations.' Space historian and former NASA astrophysicist Jonathan McDowell said that he believed it is the first rendezvous in low Earth orbit between two active satellites without one owner's approval.

The close encounter came weeks after Air Force Secretary Troy Meink publicly confirmed that the US has weapons in orbit and the Space Force picked two companies to build space-to-space reconnaissance satellites. It also followed reports that trillionaire Elon Musk – under White House orders – slowed the military-grade *Starlink* that Ukraine relies on, rendering some of the country's essential air defense weapons useless.

The operation fits a wider russian campaign of intimidation against Europe and the US that lets russian president Putin 'poke the West in the eye and watch the West do nothing,' according to Clayton Swope, deputy director of the Aerospace Security Project at the Center for Strategic and International Studies. 'They prove a point – the West can't stop me,' Swope added during a CSIS panel on the encounter.

As the US and its allies increasingly rely on commercial capabilities for national security, key assets like satellites have 'become vulnerabilities that can be exploited by our adversary,' according to Greg Gillinger, senior vice president of strategy and development at Virginia-based 'Integrity ISR', who also spoke on the CSIS panel.

The impact of a possible satellite attack could reach well beyond one company or country, since commercial satellites now carry much of the imagery and connectivity militaries fight with, experts said. Musk's *Starlink* slowdown in Ukraine showed how quickly a military force can suffer when that access is throttled without notice – and how easily local geopolitical conflicts can explode into global security crises.

On 12 October, commercial trackers feeding the US military's Joint Commercial Operations cell flagged the possible rendezvous when *Cosmos 2612* slid into *ICEYE-X36*'s orbit roughly 345 miles above Earth, according to 'Integrity ISR's' newsletter.

On 15 and 16 October, the russian satellite moved from more than 200 miles behind *ICEYE-X36* to roughly 3 miles away before mo-

ving in closer and holding position through the weekend, tracking firm 'LeoLabs' said in a statement reported by CNN. Both satellites travel at roughly 4 miles (7 kilometers) per second, so getting two objects 'within a hundred meters or even a kilometer' of each other is 'the equivalent of flying in a very tight formation in an aircraft,' Gillinger said. 'Russia didn't accidentally get within a kilometer of *X36*,' he said. 'It is an indication of intent that they're sending a message.'

'ICEYE', whose radar satellites see through clouds, smoke and darkness, expanded cooperation with Ukraine's military, pledging continued imagery 'on tactical timelines,' according to a January statement. However, the company has not confirmed which of its satellites serve Kyiv.

Moscow has warned since the first year of its full-scale invasion that Western commercial satellites helping Ukraine could become legitimate military targets. 'ICEYE' said it is 'aware of the situation and tracking it closely' and that its 'constellation architecture is designed for continuity and resilience,' a spokesperson told 'Air & Space Forces Magazine' earlier.

Russia's intent behind the satellite maneuvers remains unclear. According to 'LeoLabs', an American space technology company, possible aims range from intelligence collection and close inspection to coercion and groundwork for future operations against satellites. The maneuvers demonstrated capabilities that could be used to 'inspect, characterize, shadow, or potentially interfere with another spacecraft,' though they 'do not establish hostile intent,' the company said.

Analysts could not yet say whether moscow planned an attack and then reversed course, or was orbiting nearby for another purpose entirely. Russia could have been doing 'a dry run' for a future attack, or the satellite could have been carrying a weapon, from a jammer to a laser to a projectile, Swope explained. 'Was the intent to blow up the satellite? No,' he said. 'Was the intent to put some type of energy on the satellite? Probably... I don't know why you'd need to maneuver in this way, this close, unless you wanted to do something that involved putting energy on that satellite.'

The russian satellite has since pulled back, but not far. It was again flying at *ICEYE-X36's* altitude holding roughly 250 miles (400 kilometers) behind it, and could 'easily close that gap again at the time and place of their choosing,' Gillinger said. Russia could try to approach another 'ICEYE' satellite within weeks, as two more satellites from the same launch will soon line up with the orbit of a second satellite, *ICEYE-X37*, according to 'Integrity ISR'.

If they move in, 'we could see another scenario where another commercial satellite is closely trailed by one of these russian satellites,' Gillinger said.

The retreat began 18 October, two days after President Donald Trump signed an executive order waiving tariffs and most economic restrictions on russia. Swope said Trump's move to ease sanctions 'could have been a reason why Putin said, 'You know, now's not the time to exacerbate tensions specifically with the United States. Maybe we should pause this operation.' 'If you're getting close to a deal on something, why jeopardize that?' he said. The potential for a conflict in space has been growing in recent months.

Washington 'appears to lack response options' if russia threatened US military and commercial satellites with a nuclear weapon in orbit, according to the conclusions from a 2025 war-game scenario where fictional russian space objects threatened American interests.

There is no public indication that *Cosmos 2612* carries a nuclear weapon, but Swope said that there is also still no internationally recognized rule for determining if a maneuver like this one should be considered hostile – or what international standards should be followed in a response. 'Even though we all can make a good case on why this was [hostile], there's no norm that you could point to,' he said.

Without a clear response plan or real consequences for aggression, menacing satellite moves like this one are 'literally just a spigot that russia could turn on and off' to increase pressure on adversaries, Swope said. Russia, he added, 'is going to turn it on again.'

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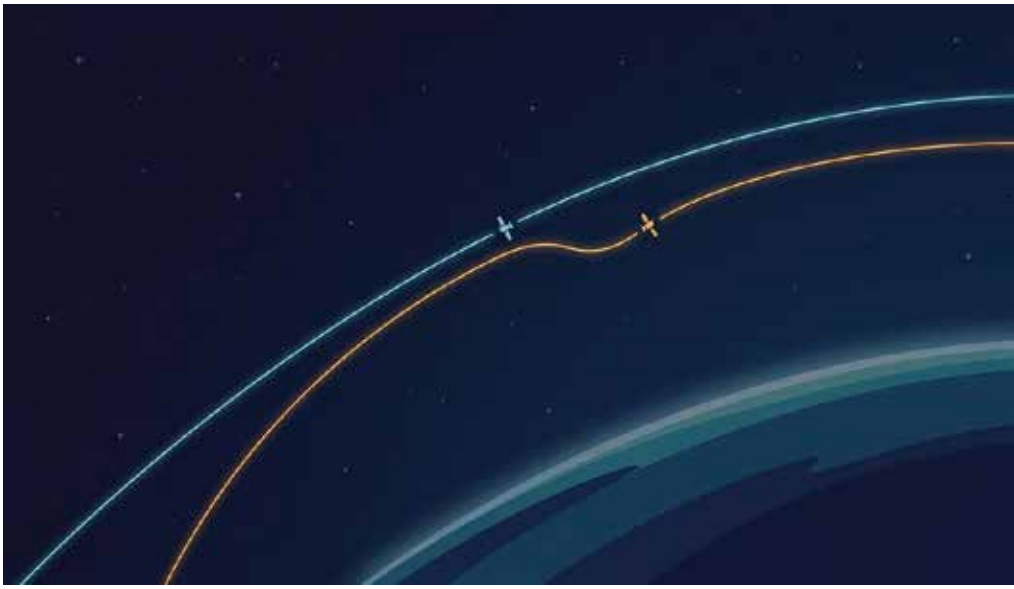


PHOTO ESSAY



THE LONG



G-AWAITED: AT LAST!

In mid-October, it happened. At the General Silvestras Žukauskas Training Area in Pabradė, the first tank crews from the 'Iron Wolf' Infantry Brigade conducted loading drills and live-fire exercises with *Leopard* tanks – a milestone marking a new phase in the Lithuanian Armed Forces preparations for the nation's armed defence.

'The brigade's long-standing cooperation with German military units – which began in 2017 with the deployment of the first NATO enhanced Forward Presence Battle Group in Lithuania – created an excellent environment and opportunities to seamlessly develop the Tank Battalion's capabilities within the brigade. It also allowed for high-quality troop training, conducted alongside our partners, well before the arrival of the new combat platforms', shared Col. Darius Meilūnas, Commander of the 'Iron Wolf' Brigade, reflecting on the initial live-fire exercises.

Highlights from the training and exercises, featuring close cooperation with a 93rd Armoured Battalion (*Panzerlehrbataillon 93*) of the German Armed Forces, were captured by SSgt. Spc. Karolis Kavolėlis and Pvt. Džiugas Švaikauskas.































DARIUS SUTKUS

STEN: SIMPLE, CHEAP, AND MEAN

Winston Churchill blessed its production. The future Queen Elizabeth II learned to shoot with one. Even Otto Skorzeny, the ace of sabotage, admired it. Yet, to many soldiers, it was nothing more than 'the creation of a drunken plumber'. This is the *STEN*: one of the most controversial submachine guns of World War II.

Why, then, did the British even need a weapon like the submachine gun? One might assume that the conservative subjects of the British Empire would scarcely be keen on a type of weapon that, for the time, was rather peculiar. Consider the setup: there was the pistol for personal self-defence; there was the rifle – the primary weapon of the infantryman; and there was the machine gun for fire support. But this – this was something altogether puzzling: it was like a rifle, yet it fired pistol ammunition – and even consumed it at the rate



of a machine gun! Wouldn't it have been better to stick with the good old-fashioned, bolt-action *SMLE* rifles?

However, whether one liked it or not, it was necessary to adapt to the realities of the situation. By the British classification of the time, the 'machine carbine' might have seemed like a strange, ammunition-wasting hybrid – but once the war began, the perspective on it shifted dramatically.

In 1940, the British Expeditionary Force in France established a vast network of infrastructure. Warehouses, fuel depots, and airfields required protection by light, compact weapons with sufficient firepower, and it was determined that submachine guns were well-suited for the task.

Meanwhile, the Royal Navy was also seeking similar weapons to equip its newly formed commando units. It went without saying that bolt-action rifles were entirely inadequate for conducting surprise raids on enemy coastal installations.

Ultimately, circumstances forced an overhaul of the arsenal in a drastic fashion: during the evacuation from Dunkirk, the British lost an unacceptably large quantity of weaponry – a gap that had to be filled as a matter of urgency.

It was believed that the Germans, in their intent to invade the British Isles, would launch an airborne and amphibious assault of immense scale. Having already encountered German submachine guns, the British recognized their firepower and assumed that the enemy landing forces would be armed exclusively with them. A countermeasure of equal capability was required.

Thus, a compact, low-recoil automatic weapon emerged as the ideal candidate for repelling the potential attack.

Candidates

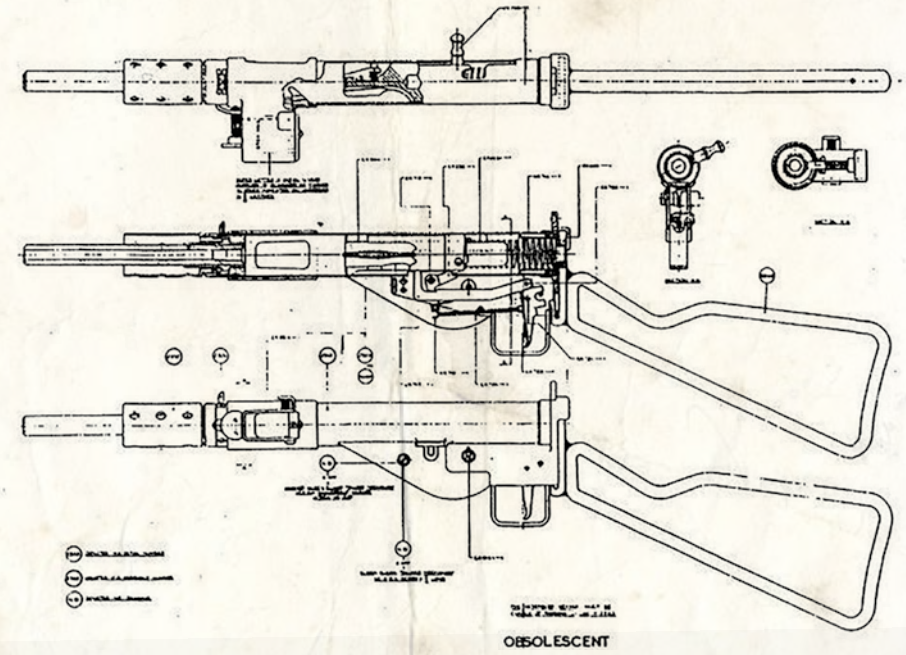
So, the demand had emerged. But what of the supply? As it turned out, there was more than one contender.

As early as the interwar period, the 'Birmingham Small Arms' Company ('BSA') manufactured licensed versions of the *Thompson* submachine gun. Two variants were produced: the 1926 and 1929 models. These were not exact clones of the American originals; 'BSA' engineer George Norman introduced modifications to suit European requirements – removing the pistol grips and incorporating a more traditional rifle wooden stock. Furthermore, the weapons could be adapted to fire various types of ammunition, depending on the needs of a potential buyer.

Unfortunately, however, the 'BSA'-manufactured *Thompsons* were produced in very limited numbers and failed to impress the British military authorities. Perhaps the price was an issue (we will touch upon this later), or perhaps decision-makers were hindered by a stereotypical mindset – worrying about how their soldiers would look carrying weapons associated with American gangsters.

Ironically, actions spoke louder than official words. Many newly formed commando units were, in fact, equipped with *Thompsons* shipped from across the Atlantic – to the extent that the weapon's silhouette even appeared on the units' official insignia. However, the supply of these American submachine guns remained severely limited by the German maritime blockade and the precarious state of the British economy.

Another contender was the *Lanchester*, designed in rather a hurry by the 'Sterling Engineering Company'. It was clearly modelled after the German *Bergmann MP28/II*. It appeared rather cumbersome (though, by British classification, it was technically a carbine), featuring a massive yet comfortable wooden stock and a straight magazine – capable of holding as many as fifty rounds – that protruded prominently from the side. Once it became clear that something



Most of its components, including the stock, are made from tubing of various diameters. It's no wonder the *STEN* was dubbed the 'plumber's delight'.



The first *STEN* prototype still featured wooden components. Soon, not only were these discarded, but so was everything else that could possibly be removed.

simpler and faster to manufacture was needed, the *Lanchester* was slightly simplified. In total, during its brief production run from 1940 to 1942, approximately 100 000 of these submachine guns were produced, the vast majority of which went to the Royal Navy.

However, none of the models mentioned above achieved widespread adoption or enduring fame. They were simply eclipsed by another weapon, which we will discuss next.

Two Constructors, One Arsenal

The second half of 1940. The situation in Europe was unenviable. The nazis had occupied the greater part of it. For some time, the soviets had been *de facto* allies of the nazis; the soviet union was not only securing the German rear but also supplying them with strategically important raw materials needed for the war industry. And that war industry was operating at full capacity to crush Britain – which remained unoccupied but was effectively surrounded and standing alone.

Winston Churchill had already addressed the nation, urging resistance and the will to fight. But with what were they to fight, when weapons were in such short supply? Back in June, during the desperate evacuation from Dunkirk, 75 000 tons of various ammunition, 10 000 machine guns, and approximately 90 000 small arms had been left behind on the other side of the Channel. Meanwhile, the newly formed Home Guard alone consisted of one and a half million Britons.

Throughout the 1930s, the British Ordnance Board had been mired in endless debates over whether a submachine gun was even necessary – and, if so, what kind it should be. It now became clear that it would be impossible to procure enough *Thompsons*, nor was it feasible to manufacture *Lanchester* submachine guns.

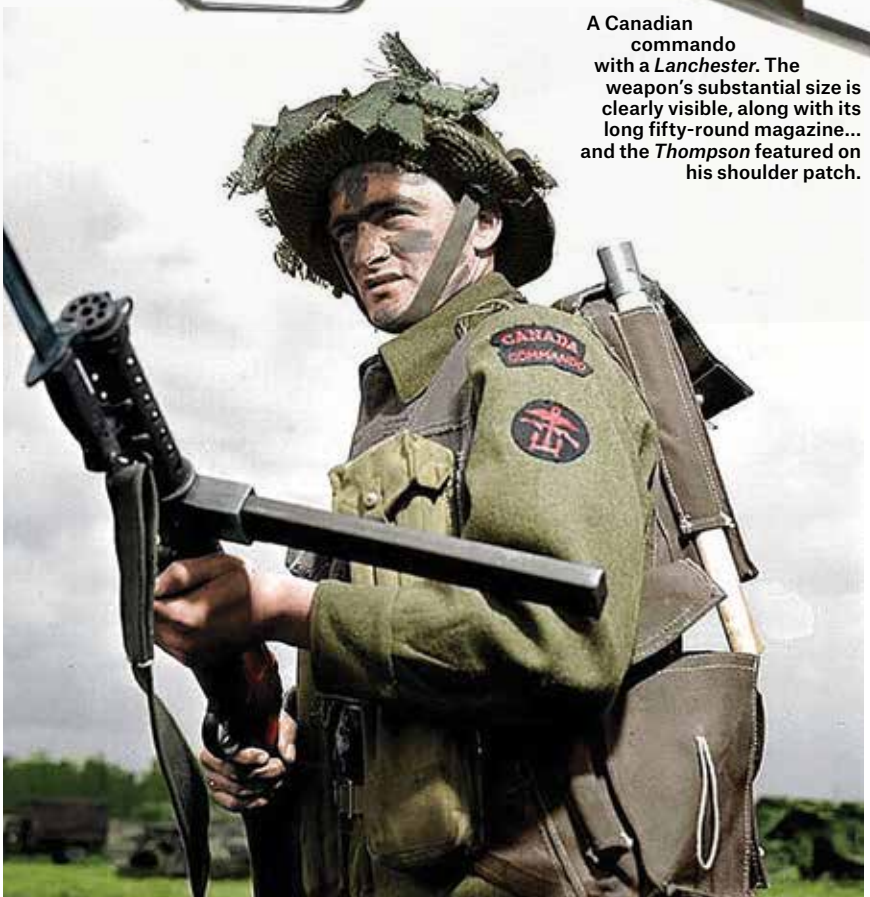
'It seems the most pressing issue at the moment is to begin, as quickly as possible, the production of some form of automatic weapon – one acceptable to all three branches of the armed forces', was the conclusion eventually reached by someone on the Ordnance Board.

And it appeared that such a weapon did emerge. Nearly six months after Dunkirk, a design was submitted by two men – and officials seized upon it like a drowning man clutching at a straw.

Who were these men? Lt. Col. Reginald Shepherd, an Inspector of Armaments at the Ministry of Supply, and Harold Turpin, a senior designer at the Royal Small Arms Factory, Enfield.

Their surnames are significant because they formed the basis for the name of the weapon they proposed: the *STEN*. In this acronym, 'S' and 'T' represent the initials of the designers' surnames, while 'EN' stands for Enfield. Although Shepherd would later claim after the war that 'EN' stood for 'England', the Enfield connection remains the generally accepted and far more established version.





A Canadian commando with a *Lanchester*. The weapon's substantial size is clearly visible, along with its long fifty-round magazine... and the *Thompson* featured on his shoulder patch.

It is noted that two working prototypes were produced in just 39 days. Following brief testing and rapid refinements, the Shepherd and Turpin design was adopted for service on March 7, 1941, as the *'STEN Machine Carbine, Mark I'*. According to estimates, a single person could manufacture one in 12 hours.

But that was not the end of it. A couple of months later, the *Mk I* was simplified even further, to the point where its individual components could, in theory,

STEN

- **Type – Submachine gun**
- **Country of origin – Great Britain (licensed and unlicensed versions were also produced in other countries)**
- **Modifications – 7 main British variants, including two versions equipped with silencers**
- **Design started December 1940**
- **Adopted into service March 1941**
- **Operating principle – Blowback**
- **Ammunition – 9×19 mm *Parabellum***
- **Magazine capacity – 32 rounds (to prevent jamming, it was typically loaded with fewer rounds)**
- **Rate of fire – Approximately 550 rounds per minute**
- **Effective range – Up to 100 m**

be manufactured in any reasonably well-equipped garage – and in even less time. Anything deemed unnecessary was stripped away. Notably, the design completely dispensed with wooden parts – elements traditionally considered essential for an 'ordinary' weapon.

Yet, this was no ordinary weapon; it was the *STEN Mk II* – a design that defied the conventions of the time and would soon become one of the most widely produced submachine guns of the World War II. On 13 June 1941, this model, along with other examples of weaponry, was presented to a government delegation.

June 13 1941 presentation. Winston Churchill tests a newly manufactured *STEN Mk II*.

First Impression

The industrial era was an age not only of technical thought but also of engineering culture. By these standards, the *STEN* fared poorly – it was, in effect, the 'ugly duckling' of the weapons world. Its overt primitivism, crude weld seams, and utter lack of refinement were glaring.

The sight of it was an affront to the eye and a source of irritation, even for those indifferent to aesthetics.

To anyone accustomed to the meticulous work of design engineers, polished surfaces, and well-resolved forms, this weapon must have appeared as a 'monstrosity' – clumsily cobbled together from scraps of pipe and sheet metal. When it first appeared in combat units, it triggered a storm of reactions, ranging from mild revulsion to fits of uproarious laughter.



The first encounter. The expressions on the soldiers' faces are deeply ambiguous.

Imagine the contrast. British commandos, who until then had wielded the substantial *Thompson* – a weapon with a reputation for being formidable – learned that they were to receive new automatic weapons. Naturally, everyone expected something even more impressive, but what they saw was something they had never anticipated. Wits among the ranks quipped that the thing must have been cobbled together by a plumber's apprentice after a few pints of ale, using whatever scraps happened to be lying around...

'Plumber's delight', 'sewage pipe', and 'tin can' – these were some of the more printable epithets applied to the *STEN*. But let us recall: the Eiffel Tower, too, once struck the people of Paris as truly hideous. Yet, in time, that structure became a symbol of the French capital – a Paris now unimaginable without it.

A similar fate awaited the *STEN*.

Drawbacks

One needs to get accustomed to any weapon; in this case, the process simply took some time. The primary complaint from the troops was that the *STEN* would occasionally fire when it should not, yet jam when it was actually needed. The former issue was a common flaw in almost all primitive automatic weapons operating on the open-bolt principle. If the buttstock were carelessly struck against a hard surface, it could indeed trigger an accidental, uncontrolled discharge.

As for jamming, this technical drawback causes not only immediate stress but also a general lack of confidence in the weapon. Furthermore, a jam can sometimes lead to very serious consequences.

A textbook illustration of this technical failing occurred during the well-known World War II special operation 'Anthropoid' – launched in 1942 to eliminate the notorious *SS* officer Reinhard Heydrich, who was then serving as the head of the


The *STEN Mk II* in all its glory. Raw weld seams are clearly visible.

Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia. The resistance underground obtained a *STEN* submachine gun through the British secret service, the SOE. Resistance fighter Jozef Gabčík brought the weapon to the ambush site inside a briefcase hidden under a layer of hay. However, at the critical moment, instead of a burst of gunfire, there was only a click – the weapon had jammed. Reinhard Heydrich did eventually die, but not from a bullet; rather, he succumbed to a blood infection caused by shrapnel from a grenade thrown at his vehicle.

It is difficult now to determine why the *STEN* failed to fire at that critical moment. The weapon was brand new. Perhaps it had not been properly cleaned to remove the thick factory-applied storage grease? Maybe Gabčík had not tested the *STEN*, or simply lacked proficiency with this particular submachine gun? Or perhaps a defective round was to blame?

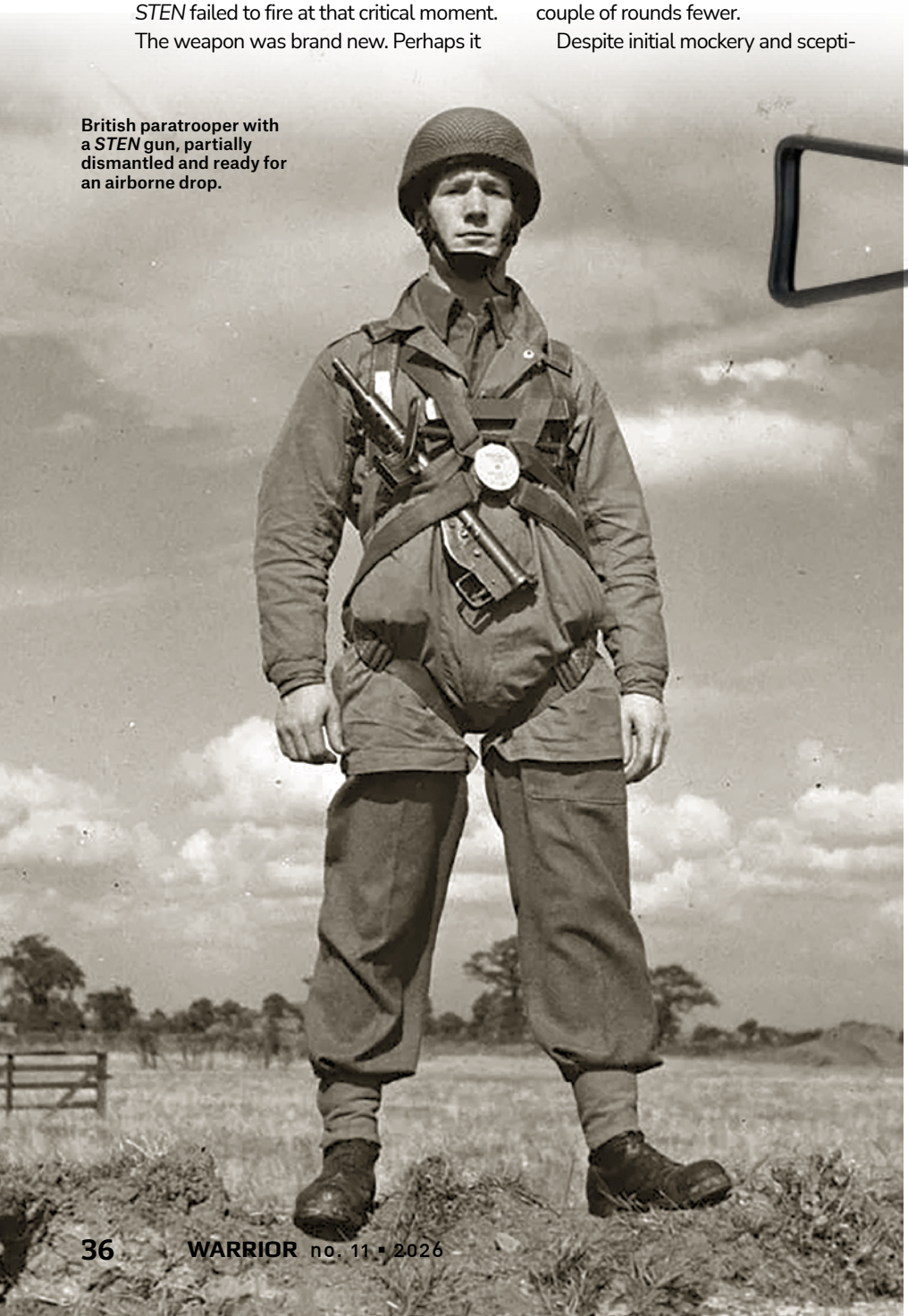
In any case, no weapon – not even the most modern – is immune to jamming, and this historical model is certainly no exception to this rule.

The British themselves soon figured out how to reduce the risk of the *STEN* jamming. The method was ridiculously simple: instead of loading the magazine to full capacity, one simply had to put in a couple of rounds fewer.

Despite initial mockery and scepticism, attitudes toward the *STEN* began to change quite quickly. Soldiers grew accustomed to it – and, in the process, discovered its advantages.

What About the Advantages?

First and foremost, the *STEN* was simple – and that was a distinct advantage for everyone. Simple to use, simple to disassemble and reassemble, and, in the event of a malfunction, easy to repair on one's own; what more could a combatant ask for? Furthermore, thanks to this inherent simplicity, the submachine gun was highly compact. It could be easily concealed or transported covertly – a feature highly valued by various underground anti-hitler resistance groups, to whom the *STEN* was supplied via illicit channels by the British special service, the SOE.



British paratrooper with a *STEN* gun, partially dismantled and ready for an airborne drop.

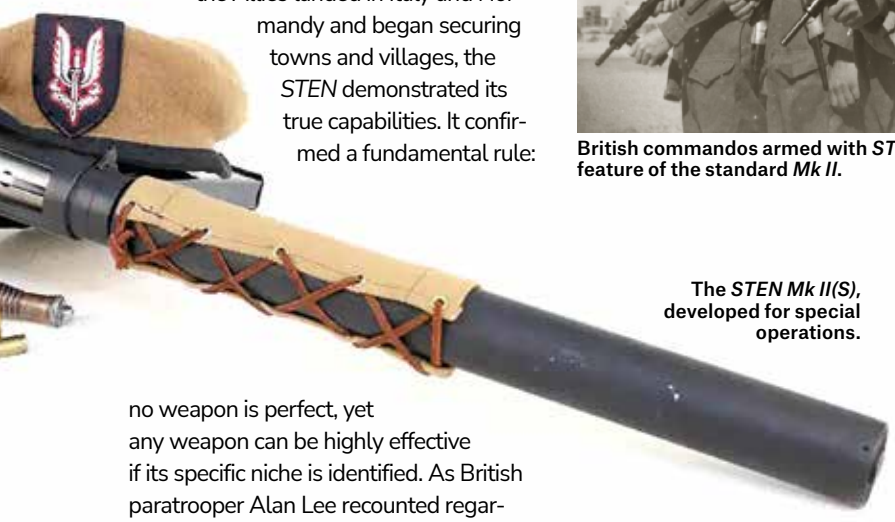


The *STEN* was exceptionally lightweight. Its second iteration, the *STEN Mk II*, weighed about 3 kg unloaded – a remarkably low weight for the era. This was nearly a kilogram lighter than the *Lee-Enfield No. 4* rifle, which was the standard service weapon back then.

When comparing the dimensions and firepower of the two weapons, the *STEN* – being compact, lightweight, and capable of automatic fire – offered clear operational advantages. It was easy to carry during long marches, when every gram weighed heavily on a soldier's shoulders. It was also simple to handle when boarding or disembarking from various types of transport, including armoured vehicles, landing craft, and aircraft. Consequently, these qualities made the weapon highly valued by specialised forces.

The *STEN* became a key feature of a different kind of warfare – one defined by manoeuvre rather than static positions. While military theorists were initially uncertain about the potential applications of the submachine gun, the realities of combat soon defined its role. The *STEN* first proved its worth during the British raid on Dieppe on 19 August 1942. Although the operation itself failed to achieve its intended objectives, the engagement demonstrated that the seemingly primitive *STEN* was in no way inferior to other comparable weapons.

Another tactical domain where this simple firearm proved its worth was close-quarters combat – now commonly referred to by the acronym *CQB*. Once the Allies landed in Italy and Normandy and began securing towns and villages, the *STEN* demonstrated its true capabilities. It confirmed a fundamental rule:



The *STEN Mk II(S)*, developed for special operations.

no weapon is perfect, yet any weapon can be highly effective if its specific niche is identified. As British paratrooper Alan Lee recounted regarding his combat experiences: 'When you went into a village or went into a house, whatever it was, it was a reliable weapon. It wasn't a convenient instrument for anything over 100 yards, but for anything close-quarters, it was very reliable.'

Company Sgt. Maj. Stanley Hollis was awarded the Victoria Cross following the D-Day landings. During the assault, he managed to silence a well-fortified and camouflaged German firing position. As Hollis later recounted: 'I saw the guns moving in the slits. So I grabbed my *STEN* and charged forward, firing it like a fire hose. They returned fire but missed. I don't know – perhaps they were even more panicked than I was'. Circling around the fortification, the sergeant found two dead Germans, while several others appeared to be in a state where, as Hollis later put it, 'they were probably ready to forget the whole war'. His success was forged by sheer determination, a stroke of luck, and his *STEN*.



British commandos armed with *STENS*. Note the improvised forward grips, which were not a feature of the standard *Mk II*.

Thus, it took time for the *STEN* to earn a more respectable reputation. In truth, attitudes toward the weapon remained somewhat ambivalent even until the end of the war.

The Royal Marines Commandos never changed their insignia; to this day, it still features – not the *STEN* – but the classic American *Thompson* submachine gun, affectionately known as the 'Tommy gun'.

Perhaps the most vivid expression of the ambivalent feelings surrounding the *STEN* came from a Canadian soldier, who dedicated an entire ode to it. There is little need to quote this 'trench poetry' in its entirety – a single extract will suffice to capture the overall sentiment:

'You wicked piece of vicious tin!
Call you a gun? Don't make me grin. <...>
But when you're with me in the night,
I'll tell you, pal, you're just alright!'

The Victor of the Economic Front

While it is a widely acknowledged fact that the *STEN* was never going to win any beauty pageants, this overlooks one crucial detail: it was economical.

If the saying goes that 'beauty demands sacrifices', then, in the realm of firearms, the logic is simple: a beautiful weapon requires significant funds, materials, and labour.

Indeed, a German *MP-40*, for instance, is aesthetically pleasing and crafted with precision – but all those milled and polished surfaces came at a rather high cost.

Compared to the *MP-40*, the *STEN* looks rather odd – much like a moped parked next to a 'Harley-Davidson' motorcycle. However, there is a catch...

For every single German submachine gun produced at the *'Erma'* arms factory in Erfurt, the British – working in facilities little more sophisticated than bicycle repair shops and garages – could manufacture



Being cheap and fast to produce, the weapon directly contributed to the victory.

at least three *STENS*. It was estimated that, with the necessary equipment and an optimised production process, a single *STEN* required only five to six man-hours to complete. Furthermore, thanks to an innovation proposed by Walter Hackett, a manager at the company 'Accles & Pollock', the barrel of a *STEN* could be produced in just a dozen of seconds!

It is also worth noting that many of the weapon's components were manufactured exclusively through stamping – a process that generates significantly less production waste. This not only conserves metal but also eliminates the need to expend costly energy on recycling manufacturing scrap.

Next, the *STEN* cost the British Treasury approximately 2.5 pounds. No, that is not a mistake – we are referring to the British pound of that era, which was a substantial and robust currency. Two and a half pounds was roughly equivalent to 10 US dollars at the time; adjusted for modern inflation, that would amount to approximately 200 US dollars today. Meanwhile, the production cost of the German *MP-40* was four times higher. And if you think that is expensive, think again: the *Thompson* – a fine piece of weaponry considered the gold standard for submachine guns back then – cost 200 US dollars in 1938. That was an astronomical sum for the time (the modern equivalent would be at least 4 780 US dollars for a single submachine gun!).

While America could afford such luxury during peacetime, as soon as it entered the war, the *Thompson* was simplified, and its cost dropped to 70 dollars.

For that same amount, the British managed to produce five to seven *STENS*, depending on the variant.

That was a staggering economic advantage for a country isolated by a naval blockade – a nation so desperately short of raw materials for its war industry that citizens were unscrewing brass door handles to be melted down into shell casings.

Moreover, whether by design or not, the British made a shrewd decision by selecting the right type of ammunition. The 9x19 mm *Parabellum* round was used by the Germans – meaning that neither British saboteurs, the resistance movements they supported, nor, ultimately, the British Commonwealth forces that landed on the continent would face a shortage of ammunition. As early as the spring of 1941, during the Eritrean campaign, the British had captured large quantities of these rounds – along with other spoils – after defeating Italian colonial forces. Consequently, a significant proportion of the bullets fired from a *STEN* towards the enemy were, in fact, manufactured by that very enemy.

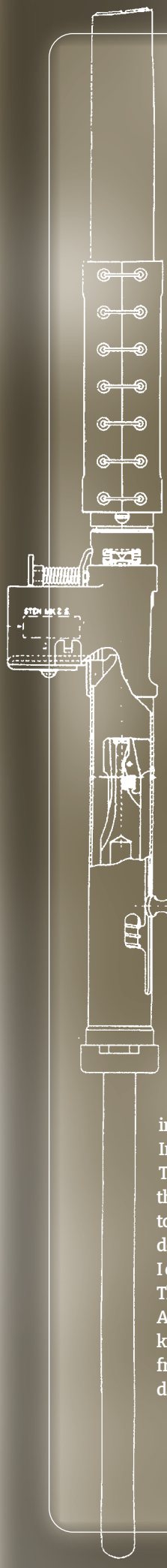
Ultimately, the outward ugliness of the *STEN* was a sacrifice made to hold one's ground on the economic front. And, as we can see, the British managed to cope with this challenge.

The Enemy's Assessment

Let us now return, for a while, to the Third Reich. One might wonder: what connection could it possibly have to a British weapon firing from the other side of the barricades – or, on occasion, even from within the rear?

The matter is quite simple. As long as the *Wehrmacht* was advancing victoriously, the *STEN* was viewed with disdain. Following British setbacks at Dieppe and in North Africa, a number of captured *STENS* fell into German hands. Naturally, the conclusion reached was this: if Churchill was allowing such a primitive, technical oddity to be mass-produced, then London must be scraping the

THE QUIET BRITON



Finally, *STEN* possessed one further advantage – though, for a time, this was known only to a very narrow circle of experts.

A special variant of the weapon, the *Mk II (S)*, developed in 1943, was designed for sabotage and covert operations. This does not mean the *STEN* gun was festooned with an array of tactical accessories; by the standards of the day, a suppressor – designed to dampen both the muzzle flash and the sound – was sufficient. The barrel of the weapon was modified by drilling several holes into it. Through these, a portion of the propellant gases would escape into a chamber containing a system of baffles. While this naturally reduced the bullet's velocity, it effectively silenced the weapon's sharp discharge report. Notably, the primary development work for this device was carried out by an interned Polish weapons engineer, Lieutenant Kulikowski, along with a team of personnel under his supervision.

Naturally, this increased the weapon's dimensions and weight. Furthermore, it was recommended to fire only single shots. In a tight spot, nothing stopped a shooter from firing short bursts, but doing so caused the suppressor to heat up rapidly. This posed no issue for the shooter, as the component was encased in a heat-resistant sleeve made of asbestos and canvas. However, prolonged firing in long bursts would simply render the suppressor inoperable, as its internal components would overheat and fail.

Given that adherence to these recommendations relied entirely on individual discipline, some *Mk II (S)* units were modified to fire exclusively in single-shot mode.

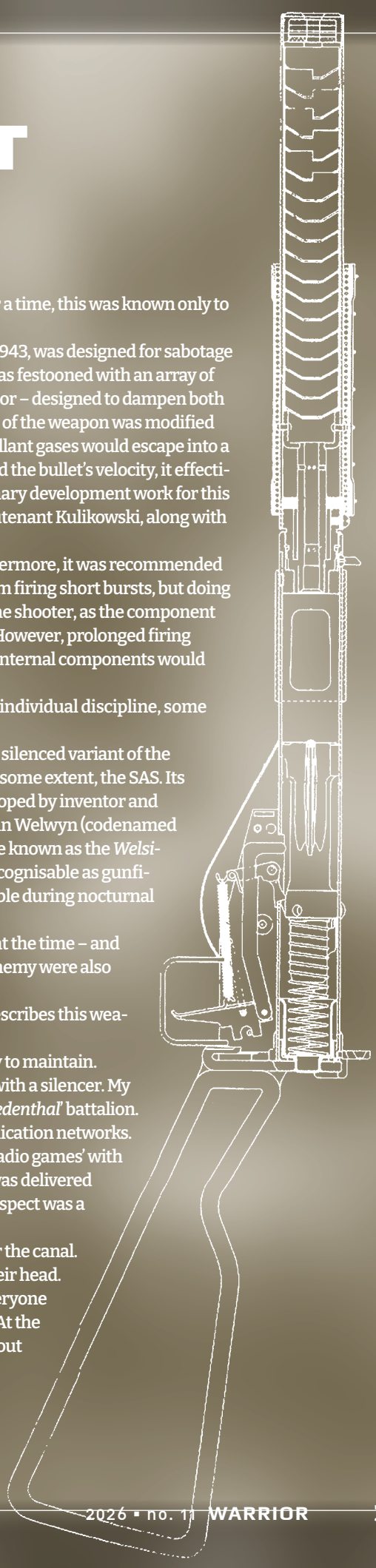
The *Mk II (S)* was primarily used by commandos. However, a distinct, silenced variant of the *STEN* was developed for more clandestine services – the SOE and, to some extent, the SAS. Its suppressor featured a slightly different design. The device was developed by inventor and engineer Maj. Hugh Reeves at the SOE's special-purpose workshops in Welwyn (codenamed *Station IX* and *Department Q*), and this specific suppressor came to be known as the *Welsilencer*. It rendered the sound of a shot negligible – or at least unrecognisable as gunfire – and eliminated the muzzle flash entirely; this proved invaluable during nocturnal sabotage operations.

The fact that a submachine gun could fire so quietly was impressive at the time – and not just within the British Commonwealth. Assessments from the enemy were also received, and they are both interesting and revealing.

Here is how Otto Skorzeny – the Third Reich's foremost saboteur – describes this weapon model in his memoirs:

'The British also possessed excellent weapons – lightweight and easy to maintain. In particular, I would like to mention the *STEN*, which could be fitted with a silencer. My interest in this type of weaponry grew when I took command of the '*Friedenthal*' battalion. In the Netherlands, we uncovered several dormant resistance communication networks. This gave our special services the opportunity to engage in intriguing 'radio games' with the enemy. I even ordered a silenced submachine gun from London; it was delivered to me fifteen days later by a Dutch captain of a Swedish ship – a man I suspect was a double agent.

I opened the window of my office and fired at a flock of ducks flying over the canal. There was nothing but a faint hiss. Not a single passerby even turned their head. And so, I became the first German to be armed with a silenced *STEN*. Everyone knows the advantages such a weapon offers to soldiers in special units. At the front, a reconnaissance team equipped with such weapons could carry out daring feats with minimal casualties.'





December 1944. Soldiers of the German 3rd Parachute Division during the Ardennes counteroffensive. One of the paratroopers can be clearly seen holding a *STEN* gun.

bottom of the barrel (which was, in part, true) – and the 'British plutocrats' were surely facing imminent defeat (on this point, however, the Germans were mistaken).

In 1942–1943, the Germans discovered yet another channel through which to acquire *STEN* guns. German intelligence, operating effectively, uncovered and began controlling a significant portion of the French Resistance's agent networks – along with their supply channels, through which, naturally, *STENS* were also being delivered. Consequently, the Germans began to view these weapons in a different light.

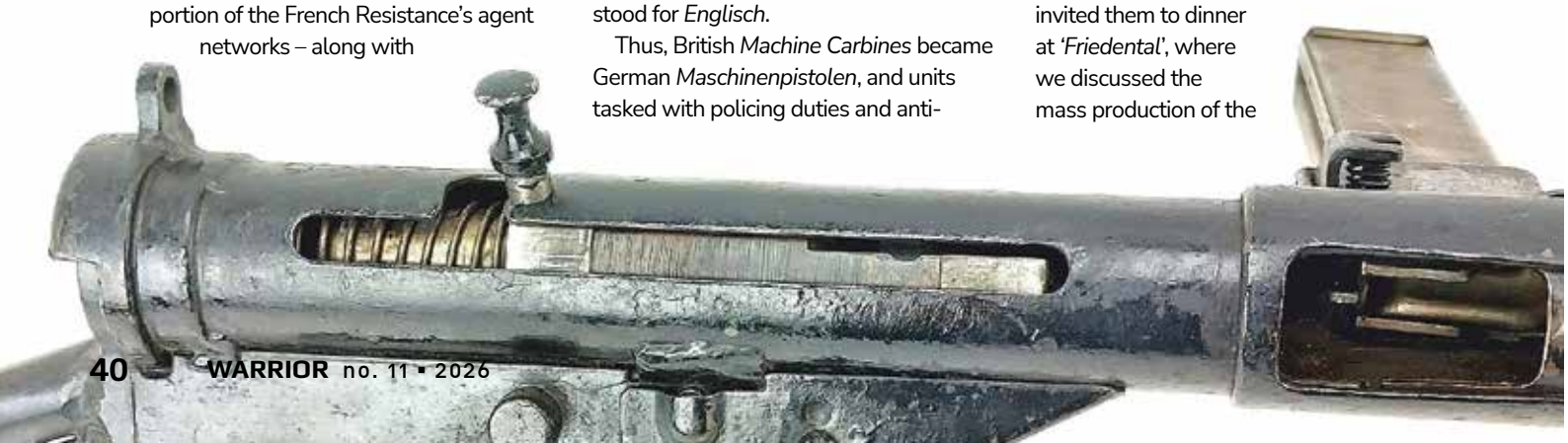


One of the variants of the German *MP-3008*, produced within the workshops of a Hamburg shipyard.

As the era of major victories faded and arms shortages set in, these captured submachine guns were officially adopted into the Reich's arsenal: the *STEN Mk II* was redesignated as the *MP-749(e)*, and the 'silenced' *Mk II (S)* as the *MP-751(e)* – where the 'e', according to the German nomenclature of the time, stood for *Englisch*.

Thus, British *Machine Carbines* became German *Maschinenpistolen*, and units tasked with policing duties and anti-partisan operations were equipped with them – though, it seems, not in sufficient numbers. That there had long been a need for simple, inexpensive submachine guns is evident from the revelations of the aforementioned Skorzeny.

He was primarily interested in 'silent' models, but the very notion of manufacturing their own versions of an enemy weapon was radically innovative – so innovative, in fact, that it seemed almost implausible. Consequently, Herr Otto had to resort to a bit of theatrical flair. Let his own words tell the story: 'I attempted to convince two high-ranking officers from the *Wehrmacht* High Command – representing the military supply and ordnance departments – of the merit of this idea. I invited them to dinner at *'Friedental'*, where we discussed the mass production of the



STEN; the officers' reaction was reserved. The meeting took place in the spring; the weather was fine, and after dinner, I suggested that my guests take a stroll in the park. As we walked, I suddenly grabbed them by the arms:

'Forgive me, gentlemen,' I said. 'But you are no longer alive. And, in all likelihood, neither am I.'

Taken by surprise, they jumped:

'Dead? We're dead?'

At that moment, one of my men standing behind us switched on the lights. Holding a silenced *STEN*, he pointed to the spent casings scattered on the ground – only moments earlier, he had emptied a full magazine, firing it into the air.

The armament officials were undoubtedly stunned by their own quiet, theoretical demise. The lesson was not without purpose. Here is the official response received from the board: 'In principle, you are correct. But you must agree that the *STEN* is an inaccurate weapon. Furthermore, the *Führer* has stated more than once that it is the right of the German soldier to possess the best possible weapons in every respect. Therefore, we cannot take responsibility for the production of this submachine gun (even a silenced one), which is less accurate than those currently manufactured in Germany. Heil Hitler!'

Skorzeny viewed this as sabotage, though it was more likely a case of systemic avoidance of responsibility and a lack of communication between departments. However, things took a turn for the better when the problem came to the attention of *Reichsführer-SS* Heinrich Himmler himself...



France, late August 1943. Gen. Arthur Phleps, commander of the '*Prinz Eugen*' Division, examines with interest a weapon unfamiliar to him.

Too Late!

In October 1944, several arms manufacturers – '*Sauer*', '*Haenel*', and '*Mauser*' – received an unusual order from the Reich Security Main Office (*RSHA*): to urgently produce a quarter of a million precise copies of the *STEN* submachine gun, intended for use by police and *Waffen-SS* units. While everyone understood the perils of crossing Heinrich Himmler, practical realities dictated otherwise. Only '*Mauser*' took on the order; the other companies were already overburdened with work. Consequently, the quantity was reduced to just 10 000 units. In official documentation, these weapons were assigned the codename *Gerät Potsdam* (literally 'Potsdam Device') and the designation number *V.7081*.

The *RSHA* handed over several captured *STENS* to design engineers, who prepared the blueprints and manufacturing tooling within a month and a half. By mid-December, production began at a record-breaking pace, and the order was completed by the end of January 1945.

Once Himmler's department had broken the ice, other agencies followed suit. The Special Commission for Infantry Weapons (*Sonderkommission Infanteriewaffen*) instructed the manufacturer to simplify the *STEN* copy even further. To simplify something already so simple might seem redundant, but the answer was straightforward: crumbling front lines and Allied bombing raids had forced a revision of the doctrine of 'Aryan superiority'. The objective was to enable the decentralized production of the weapon – cheaply, quickly, and by unskilled labour. In other words, the nazis, now staring defeat in the face, began to think exactly as the British had after Dunkirk. The only problem was that this realization came four and a half years too late.

Naturally, the design engineers at *Mauser* took on this challenge as well. The magazine well was fixed in a downward-facing position – much like that of the German *MP-38/40* – and adapted to accept German-pattern magazines. Consequently, the ejection port was relocated to the top. The barrel was permanently secured within the receiver, which itself was made slightly longer. All of this was designed by November 1944, in parallel



with the preparatory work for '*Gerät Potsdam*'. This simplified variant was designated the *MP-3008* (codenamed *Gerät Neumünster*).

The intended process was as follows: '*Mauser*' would distribute blueprints and 150 *MP-3008* prototypes to small enterprises, which would then undertake production. The completed units would subsequently be sent to inspection and distribution points.

Unfortunately, this plan worked only on paper. Records indicate that the work was divided among approximately 30 suppliers and 14 final assemblers. However, it has proved impossible to identify all of them from the surviving weapon specimens. This inconsistency goes beyond mere markings; the weapons themselves exhibit noticeable structural differences. Evidently, the various workshops possessed differing technical capabilities, and components were manufactured as best they could be – often through improvisation using whatever materials were at hand.

One can only draw comfort from the fact that these devices were not the worst things the German arms industry attempted to produce during the final years of the war. Compared to the various '*Ersatz*' weapons intended for the *Volkssturm* – which were, mostly in theory, meant to be fired – the *Potsdam* and *Neumünster* models actually seem quite tolerable.

Unfortunately, the efforts of these makeshift weapons makers appear to have been in vain. By the time these German clones of the *STEN* gun were ready for deployment to the battlefield, the territory of the Reich had shrunk to such an extent that the Germans were no longer in a position to carry out acts of sabotage, let alone counterattacks.

Behind Enemy Lines

Over the course of the war, the British mass-produced a staggering number of *STEN* guns – so many, in fact, that researchers cannot agree on the exact total. It is suggested that nearly 4,5 million of these weapons is, if anything, a conservative estimate.

Consequently, there were more than enough to go around. Even King George VI had a *STEN* of his own; he carried it with him throughout the war and even taught his daughter – the future Queen Elizabeth II – how to use it. A shooting range was set up right in the palace grounds.

Such a high-profile example, combined with the sheer abundance of these submachine guns, gradually convinced the troops that bolt-action rifles were a thing of the past.

There were enough *STENS* to go around – and not just for the British; large numbers of these simple weapons made their way into occupied territories through various illicit channels. Churchill was a strategist. While many of these shipments might have been lost, the *STEN* guns that reached the hands of anti-nazi resistance members would serve their purpose. The more the Germans were kept occupied by underground fighters, the fewer forces and resources they could divert to face the main Allied armies.

Over the course of a couple of years, approximately 11 000 *STENS* were delivered to the Polish underground alone and over 4 500 to the Danes. There were also enough for the French and the Norwegians.

However, the Germans sensed something amiss almost immediately and perceived it as a clear threat. As early as 1942, a parachute was discovered along with a container full of weapons intended for the Norwegian resistance movement, '*Milorg*'. The head of the occupation administration, *Reichskommissar* Josef Terboven, promptly issued an order stating that anyone found in possession of a *STEN* would face the death penalty. Furthermore, many underground networks were uncovered, and resistance members often faced grave risks: upon arriving at a designated drop-off point, they might find not a

shipment of weapons, but rather *gestapo* officers waiting to greet them.

This prompted some resistance fighters to manufacture their own *STEN* guns. The Poles produced the largest number of these homemade weapons – an estimated 1 300 units or more. Notably, around twenty underground workshops were involved in this effort; the Poles not only succeeded in producing accurate copies of the *STEN* but also designed their own version, known as the *Błyskawica* (eng. Lightning).

The Norwegians and Danes produced similar quantities – approximately 800 homemade *STENS* each. Interestingly, Danish resistance groups utilized some rather sophisticated covers for their illicit arms production – for instance, operating out of a bicycle repair shop or a construction company located in the heart of Copenhagen.

The Eternal Veteran

The story of the *STEN* is a strange one. It was created in a rush, driven by an urgent need, and was viewed essentially as a stopgap weapon – a 'quick fix' to meet an immediate demand.

One might assume that once the war ended, design engineers would get to work on new blueprints to develop a proper submachine gun, and that memories of this 'plumber's delight' would gradually fade away...

Far from it! Even after the British armed forces were reduced to peacetime levels, the *STEN* remained in service. While it was eventually phased out in favour of the *Sterling* submachine gun, the *STEN* – as a weapon of choice for British commandos – even saw action in the Korean War. Stored in arsenals, *STENS* were occasionally issued to British troops or law enforcement personnel whenever unrest broke out in countries across the Third World – for instance, during the Suez Crisis. The *STEN's* official service in the British forces did not come to a definitive end until the early 1960s.

The key phrases here are 'in British forces' and 'officially'. In fact, officially, these submachine guns remained in use – for varying lengths of time after the war – by the security and military forces of France, the Netherlands, Norway, Greece, Turkey, and other countries; in the Indian Armed Forces, they even remained in service until 2003!

Unofficially, original *STEN* guns – or clones thereof – have been used in almost every local conflict. In practical terms, this has continued to this day.

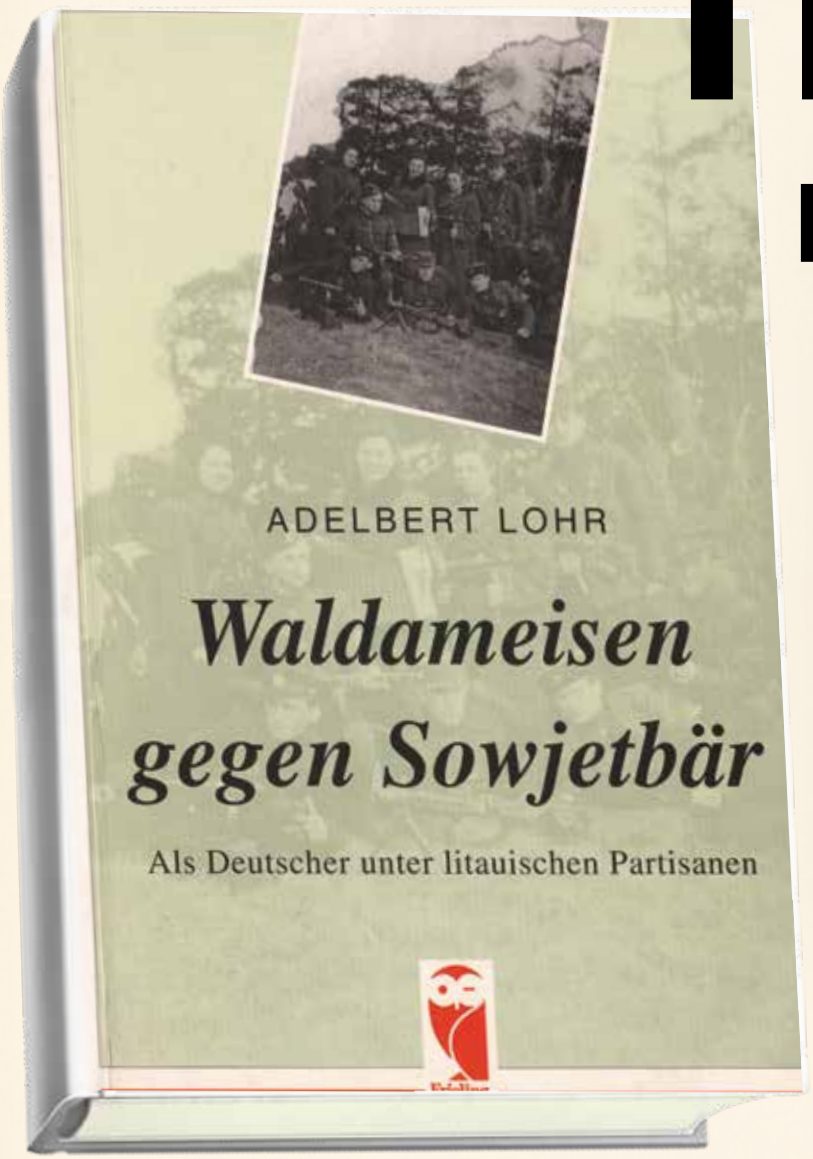
It is doubtful that the two creators of this weapon, who developed it in just over a month, could have imagined that their creation would have such a long history... ■

The *STEN* even saw combat long after the war. Despite its simplicity, it secured a permanent place in the history of weaponry.



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FOREST ANTS
THE SO
PART III



In a recent issue of WARRIOR (No. 3, 2026), we wrote about foreign fighters who, in the postwar years, chose to join the Lithuanian partisans and fought alongside Lithuanians against the soviet occupation. Continuing this theme, we present our readers with the extraordinary story of one of them: German soldier Adelbert Lohr.

S AGAINST OVIET BEAR



These are the memoirs of the German soldier. In the autumn of 1944, A. Lohr's fate unexpectedly became intertwined with that of Lithuania as the German forces retreated, the soldier, cut off from his unit, refused to surrender to the soviets and went into hiding in our country for almost five years. In the first part of this article, we recounted A. Lohr's time in hiding in Lithuanian villages and the people who, risking their own safety and that of their families, helped him survive. He later joined the Lithuanian partisans and became a fighter in *Genys*' unit, adopting the nom de guerre *Jurgis*. In the second part, we recounted his life in the partisan unit, the daily struggle against the soviet security services, the constant danger of being betrayed, and the deaths of his comrades. A. Lohr faced difficult challenges – he was wounded and, as a result, had to temporarily leave the unit. Nevertheless, he did not sever his ties with the partisans, but whilst in hiding, he continued to wait to see how his fate would unfold. The second part ended with unexpected news from Germany – A. Lohr received a letter from his homeland.

The letters

In early 1947, I wrote a letter home. To protect my identity, I did not indicate my real name. We gave the letter to a farmer who was travelling to the market – we asked him to buy a stamp in town and pop the envelope into a postbox. At that time, there was neither a post office nor a postbox in the village.

Whilst waiting for a reply, one night the six of us went to see a communist named Gediminas. We told him that if he received a letter from Germany, he should keep it until we returned – we would come and collect it. Gediminas was then living on the very farmstead that had once belonged to our first partisan commander, Antanas. The soviets had handed it over to Gediminas after they had unsuccessfully attempted to arrest Antanas – he had managed to get away in time and go into hiding. Of course, we didn't tell Gediminas when we'd be back, otherwise he might have immediately informed the police or the *NKVD*,* and we would have been arrested straight away.

* In his memoirs, Adelbert Lohr refers to the soviet security services as the *NKVD*. This repressive organisation (the *NKVD* – People's Commissariat for Internal Affairs) was reformed into the *MGB* (Ministry of State Security) in March 1946. The *MGB* took over the main functions related to repression, surveillance and the fight against partisans.

Whilst living on the Rimgailos' farm and recovering my injured arm, I used to write a letter home roughly every six months. The farmer, Rimgaila, would take my letters into town and post them there, as there were neither stamps nor post boxes in the village. Meanwhile, my comrades-in-arms from the *Genys'* group would occasionally visit the farmer, to whom the reply letters from Germany were to be sent. We also knew that the local authorities were checking foreign correspondence, so I couldn't tell my family too much about what was going on here. Nevertheless, it was a sign that I was still alive – I could at least hint that 'my life was hanging by a thread'. No doubt my loved ones must have had many questions.

However, I never received a reply.

I often looked for a way out and considered the possibility of walking the 2 000 km back home. But how could I bring myself to cross the Iron Curtain, travelling through Poland and East Germany, when I had already learnt from other refugees just how dire the situation was even in neighbouring East Prussia? After all, my family in Germany had no idea how hard things were for me. I had already written to my family in the spring of 1947, but by the start of 1948 there had been no reply. I never believed that my family would ever receive my letter at all. I simply wrote a few lines. Once, when partisans from *Genys'* group visited my 'headquarters', they also reported that there were still no letters addressed to me. Perhaps the farmer had destroyed the letters? We were unable to ascertain this. After all, he was a communist who had been given the house and farm of the partisan commander Antanas. I would have been overjoyed if I'd ever received a letter from home. All contact with my loved ones had been cut off since September 1944. I knew nothing about my brother, who was still at the front in 1944, and even less about my other brother, who had been missing since November 1943. All I could do was survive and wait. Fortunately, being young and in good health, I was still able to endure the hardships and tribulations, and at first it was only the hope of the spring warmth that kept me going. Gradually the snow melted, the days grew longer, and the cold nights grew shorter, but the *NKVD* were now raiding the villages with increasing frequency. Such is life – for every good thing, there is always a bad one.

And then a miracle happened: one night, men from *Genys'* group turned up at my hosts' house. Overcome with joy, Kazimieras ran up to me in the barn: '*Jurgis*, your friends from the Green Army are here!" In fact, five of them had arrived. They stood in the room and, with joy and pride, handed me a letter – a letter from Germany, from Bodensee [Lake Constance – translator's note], a real message from home. It had been written by my sister-in-law, whom I hadn't yet met. That was how I learnt about the wedding of my younger brother Adolf, which had taken place a year earlier, and the fates of other close relatives. My brother was lucky: after eight weeks in American captivity, he returned home safe and sound. The letter had been travelling for a whole year. My friends had collected it from a secret collection point for post, but I never found out how long it had been lying there. I hadn't received any news from home for four years. Now, at least, I knew that my parents were alive. As for my elder brother, they still knew nothing about him – he had been missing in russia since 1943, when I myself was still fighting at the front.

My friends said their goodbyes, promising to visit again soon. My hosts were also delighted for me – after all, they were the ones who'd been taking my letters into town. Now, at least, I knew that news of me had reached Bodensee, although my family certainly had no idea of the miserable and dangerous conditions in which I'd been forced to live here.

Three weeks later, I stopped by the Rimgailos' again. The farmer's wife smiled from the bottom of her heart – a second letter had arrived. I couldn't wait and opened it right there and then. It was from my sister-in-law again, but this letter had taken only half a year to arrive, rather than a whole year. The letter once again recounted everyday matters – nothing had changed at home. My sister-in-law wrote about weddings and deaths, confirmed that she had received my letter, and said that everyone was delighted to have a sign of life from me, although my mother wept a great deal and prayed for me. There was still no news of my brother Josef.

The Rimgailos, of course, wanted to know everything, and I was happy to share my joy. I asked how long the letter had been lying there, and learnt that it had been brought a few days earlier by the men of *Genys'* group.

The Rimgailos didn't know how long it had been with the addressee – the communist – either. Whilst I was there for another hour or so, I told my benefactors what had happened to me during that time, and after a quick lunch I set off on my way again.

In mid-January, I wrote a few lines home again. The most important thing was that my family received a sign of life. If I'd written about my living conditions, I would have written far too much and only sown fear. I no longer have the letter I wrote at that time, but I have kept the envelope. The date is clearly visible on the stamp – 'Vilnius, 1949-I-28'. That was the last sign of life I sent from Lithuania.

I used to go to Kazimieras Rimgaila's family's house to write my letters. They were the only ones who still had writing paper, envelopes, a quill pen and ink. Other farmers had no idea what writing materials were. All these items remained in extremely short supply for another four years after the war. Emilė didn't even have a simple pencil. Living conditions were, and remained, poor and monotonous. Everyone was waiting for things to improve, but nothing changed. Even in russia things were bad, and the russians had won the war. But people there had long since become accustomed to such poverty.

The Germans

On one occasion, the Rimgailos told me that a family of German origin lived nearby. They also mentioned that they no longer spoke German. I was overcome by a great sense of curiosity, so after about four weeks I decided to pay them a visit. I'd found out a few things about this family beforehand: it consisted of the mother (a widow) and her sons, Petras (Peter) and Jonas (Johann). There were also two daughters, but they no longer lived with them – they were working as servants on farms to earn a living. Her son Petras was a cobbler and worked from home, so he was able to support his mother and brother. The family lived in a large farmhouse, next to which stood two large but empty barns, situated just 15 metres from the village road.

One dark evening, I crept cautiously up to the house and knocked on the window. Upon learning that I was German, the owners welcomed me with extraordinary warmth. I told them that I had heard about their German origins. They confirmed this, though they themselves did not know how many generations back it went. The house in which they lived had belonged to people who had fled to Germany just before the second soviet occupation in 1944. We talked for a very long time, then I said goodbye. The hosts assured me that I was welcome to drop by again, but only after dark. During the day, people are constantly coming to them – bringing shoes to be repaired – so visiting during daylight hours would be dangerous.

Christmas 1948 was approaching. People couldn't afford to treat themselves this year either – it seemed as though time had simply stood still. Nothing was happening on the political front either. People simply went about their daily lives. The farmers had once again made a little home-distilled spirit for the festivities (illegally, of course) – it was the only luxury they could afford at Christmas. For me, these festivities were no different from any other day; it was just that my thoughts constantly drifted back to my homeland, to my loved ones back home. To have been at home at that time would have been the greatest gift!

A few days before Christmas, I popped in again one evening to see the German-born shoemaker Petras Kaupaitis (Peter Kaupaitis). He told me that on Christmas Eve he'd like to get together with his brother and sister, and invited me: '*Jurgis*, just come along.' After quite a bit of hesitation, I accepted the invitation.

On Christmas Eve, as soon as it got dark, I went to see Petras. Before long, we set off – walking mainly across fields. There wasn't much snow. After walking about 3 kilometres, we reached his relatives' farmstead. Petras introduced me to the hosts, who welcomed me very warmly. I suspected that Petras had already spoken to them about me. There was a lot of loud chatter all around, most of which I understood perfectly. There was plenty of food and, of course, the 'black' moonshine to drink. I didn't like that cheap alcohol – it seemed rather nasty – but I didn't want to spoil the festive mood, so I forced myself to drink a little of it. After about three hours, having thanked them for their hospitality, I headed back.

When I finally reached my bed and got ready for sleep, one thought kept going round and round in my head: what hospitable people live in Lithuania. Still, the fact that I'd been invited to Petras' relatives' home aroused a certain suspicion. Perhaps it was a trap? On the one hand, I blamed myself for being too suspicious, but, on the other hand, it was precisely that vigilance that had allowed me to survive a whole year in hiding, in the underground.

1949 arrived. On festive evenings, I would visit people I knew well and wish them all much happiness and good health. Wherever I went, I was always treated to a meal. However, the hosts would also feel a sense of relief when they found out I wasn't planning to stay the night.

One such evening, I stopped by the Rimgailos' house. I told them where I'd been – I had no secrets from this family. We also talked about our hopes for the New Year and what it might bring us. The future, however, looked very bleak...





In the bear's claws

In the last few days of January, whether I wanted to or not, I had to visit the cobbler Petras again – my shoes were in desperate need of repair. It was evening. I approached the house cautiously and knocked on the window. Petras opened the door and told me I should come back the next morning. I objected, saying it would be too risky during the day, but he assured me: 'It's been quiet lately!'

So the next morning I crept cautiously back to the cobbler's house. Only Petras, his elderly mother and twelve-year-old Johann were at the farmstead. The boy was supposed to be outside, keeping watch for anyone approaching. After about half an hour, Johann ran in from the yard and shouted: 'The russians are coming!'

The large old house had two doors: the front one led straight onto the road, and the back one led into the yard. Wearing only my socks, I rushed to the front door, as I'd hoped the *NKVD* men would come from the yard. However, they turned in from the street. I started to run. The russians shouted: '*Stoy*!' [rus., 'Stop!' – translator's note]. I didn't stop; in the blink of an eye, the first shots rang out. Gasping for breath, I sprinted on for another 150 metres or so, until I suddenly felt a searing pain in my left leg. The bullet had hit my shin, but hadn't broken the bone. Nevertheless, gritting my teeth, I carried on running.

After dashing a further 100 metres or so, I saw three russians attacking from the left. The situation became hopeless. I quickly threw my pistol into the snow, but, unfortunately, it remained lying on the surface, on a hard crust of snow. Another bullet pierced my right side – I fell, but still tried to get up. I was already kneeling when one of the russians ran up and struck me on the forehead with the butt of his rifle. The soviets spotted the pistol, and I could still hear them shouting: 'Bandit, bandit!' Before losing consciousness, I managed to see a russian – probably an officer – push a soldier with Mongolian features away from me.

I came round in the cobbler's bed – it turned out the russians had doused me with cold water. Then the *NKVD* men clumsily bandaged my leg, side and head. They had a radio and talked on it for a long time, but I could only make out a word here and there. In the end, I didn't care any more. My thoughts were with the good people who had helped me for many years. I knew that the life I had – though meager, yet free until then – had come to an end. Once again, my fate was uncertain, a fate I had been trying to escape for four long years.

After about an hour, an *NKVD* officer ordered me to get ready to leave. They tossed me a pair of old boots – not, of course, the ones I'd brought in to be mended. Those shoes had nothing but wooden soles. They'd also brought my leather fur hat inside, but one of the russians immediately kept it for himself and tossed his own greasy, dirty russian woollen hat at me.

Then we set off. The russians arrested the cobbler as well, simply because I'd been with him whilst he was repairing my shoes – for that alone, the cobbler was also to blame. Or perhaps Petras was a traitor, and the russians arrested him just to avoid arousing suspicion and thus protect him?

We walked about 5–6 km, mostly

across fields. Finally, barely able to drag our feet, we reached a farmer's house. They shoved me inside and sat me on the floor by the stove.

Around midnight, I heard loud shouts from the russians outside. Shortly afterwards, three high-ranking officers appeared. They gave me a quick look – seeing my bloodied face and bloodstained shirt, they started shouting: 'You, bandit!' They spat in my face and punched me. Then, having placed a chair in front of me, they shouted: '*Sadis*!' [rus., 'Sit down' – translator's note]. One of the officers knew a little Lithuanian. He first asked whether I was a genuine German from the Reich or a local Lithuanian German. I replied that I was a genuine German.

Before that, I'd been weighing up whether it would be better to present myself as a Lithuanian or a German. In the end, I decided to tell the truth. If I'd lied, the *NKVD* men would probably have found out the truth anyway.

Then one of the officers began demanding that I reveal where the other partisans were hiding. I replied that I didn't know, and immediately felt a punch to the face. I assured them that I was on my own, but the *NKVD* officers refused to believe me. The same question again, the same answer again, another punch to the face. Eventually, they backed off.

The interrogation lasted over an hour. One of the officers was writing everything down. Eventually, they started asking where I'd been all that time. I gave a very general answer – staying with various farmers. Of course, they then demanded their surnames. When I replied that I didn't know them, I was punched in the face again. And so ended both their wish for me to have a good evening and their farewell. The officers conferred for a few more minutes, then went out into the yard with their Mongolian guards.

Once I'd recovered a little, the events of the previous day immediately flashed before my eyes again, and I was gripped by a relentless fear of a bleak, grey future. A new phase awaited me – an even harder and more terrifying life...

* * *

At dawn, the russians ordered the farmer to harness two horses to the cart. My left leg, which had been shot, began to ache terribly. I could only walk with support. I couldn't climb into the cart by myself, so two russians grabbed me and threw me in as if I were a log. I screamed in pain. Two russians with submachine guns marched in front of the cart, whilst another two, also armed, followed behind. Where were they taking me? It was 5 February 1949.

After travelling about 6–7 kilometres, we reached a forest, and there was a steep slope. The horses bolted down the slope in leaps. The russians walking at the front barely managed to jump out of the way and soon fell about 100 metres behind. They ran after us, screaming like madmen. All I could think about now was one thing – escape. The opportunity was truly excellent. But I couldn't even stand on my left leg, let alone run. I could have disappeared quickly into the woods, but because of my injury I didn't have the slightest hope.



At last, the road levelled out. The soviets shouted their usual '*Stoy!*' at the farmer. The cart gradually slowed down, and the russians caught up with us. Whilst we were still some distance ahead of them, the farmer managed to whisper to me that the russians had ordered him to take me to Šilalė. We reached it shortly afterwards.

At the *NKVD* headquarters, I was led into a bare room containing nothing but a few chairs and a table. There I was left alone. Suddenly the door flew open and some enraged man, shouting 'You shot my mother!', lunged at me. He struck me on the head with all his might. I shouted back at him: 'I didn't kill your mother!' Fortunately, a russian officer and a doctor entered at that moment. They put a stop to the violence.

The doctor examined my injuries and re-bandaged the wounds. He realised straight away that I wasn't Lithuanian and asked how it had all happened. I told him. We were able to talk for a few minutes whilst we were alone. The doctor wished me luck and said: 'I feel sorry for you!'

After about an hour, I was loaded onto a *kuzavas* (a truck – editor's note). It was loaded with sacks of grain. I was made to sit on top of those sacks. The *kuzavas* was covered with a tarpaulin. Two *NKVD* officers sat in the back, guarding me. We were now travelling westwards along a potholed country road. No one said where we were going. As evening fell, we arrived in some town. I was taken to a two-storey building and locked in a large room on the ground floor.**



There were four or five senior russian *NKVD* officers in the room. Soon the same procedure began – the first word the russians hurled at me was 'bandit'. Then came a barrage of the usual russian swear words, directed at my mother. There were no religious swear words among them – presumably because these staunch bolsheviks wanted nothing to do with faith. The officers spat at me and once again struck me hard across the face. They clearly didn't like my face at all. If it hadn't been covered in blood, it would probably have looked just as 'handsome' as their own russian mugs. When they'd had their fill of fun, one of them led me down to the cellar, which was used exclusively for prisoners. Once we'd gone downstairs, the russian unlocked the cell door and shoved me inside. It was a small cell, big enough for two people at most. There was no heating – just a narrow bunk, about 1,20 metres wide and 1,80 metres long, raised about 30 centimetres above the floor. The distance from the bunk to the cell door was barely 80 centimetres.

A dim light burned above the door all night – the guards needed to see what the prisoners were doing. I was shivering with a terrible chill; I couldn't stop trembling. Food was the last thing on my mind. All I'd had that day was a piece of bread and a glass of milk, which the farmer's wife had given me that morning. Because of the bitter cold and my nerves, which were in tatters after the horrific events of the day, I could only dream of sleep. Thus began my second day in the clutches of the bolsheviks. You simply had to learn to adapt to the rhythm of the prison...

In the other cells, you had to get up at 6 in the morning. You were only allowed to sleep from 10 in the evening until 6 in the morning. I didn't get up at 6, but the guards said nothing. Apparently, they let me sleep because of the injuries I'd sustained. Eventually, when the guards saw that I hadn't stopped chattering my teeth, they threw a blanket over me.

Later that morning, a russian man ente-

** The author of these memoirs was taken to the internal prison of the Lithuanian SSR *MGB* Tauragė County Department, known as *Šubertinė*.

red the cell. He was holding an automatic rifle. First, he unwrapped the bandage from my forehead and shaved my head completely bald. Afterwards, he put the bandage back on, but very carelessly.

The following night was very restless – the horrific screams of people being tortured and beaten penetrated the walls and reached even my solitary cell. I also constantly heard the cell doors being unlocked and prisoners being herded into interrogation rooms.

After about two weeks, I was taken to hospital. There, my wounds were redressed, and the doctor quietly wished me luck. I never found out whether he was Lithuanian or russian, but he spoke Lithuanian. Then it was back to prison. On the way to my cell, the guard snapped sternly: 'You won't be lying down any more!' That was a blow to me. If I sat down, the blood would rush to my leg and it would hurt terribly. I tried to position myself so that I could rest my injured leg on the bunk. But I had to keep a constant eye on the guard so that I could lower my leg quickly when he approached. Fortunately, the creaking floorboards gave him away in advance.

It took a few weeks for the pain in my leg to subside. The other wounds were less noticeable – the pain from them was bearable. The bullet on my right side had struck between my ribs and passed straight through. My clothes were caked in blood and looked disgusting – I was still wearing the bloodstained military field uniform that had been torn during my arrest.

The long days and nights in solitary confinement gave me plenty of time to reflect. My thoughts mostly revolved around the past, home and my brief youth, which I had scarcely had, as I had become a soldier as soon as I turned nineteen. I kept remembering the difficult and dangerous times at the front and my period as a partisan in Lithuania. I wondered how the others were faring in the forest, and how the sympathetic farmers were getting on. So many things were going round in my head... But at least I was still alive. The chance of returning home soon had already been slim even during my previous 'freedom', and now, having been taken prisoner, it had vanished entirely. It is almost impossible to escape from the clutches of the bolsheviks. This regime knew how to torture and oppress people. The concept of 'human dignity' was alien to them. Animals were treated better than people. When we exchanged fire with the *NKVD*, they mourned their shot dog more than their fallen comrades. A human life meant nothing to them. I had no hopes for the future – after all, what good could possibly happen to a 'bandit' in a kingdom of injustice... All that awaited me was uncertainty!

* * *

One morning, after four weeks of solitary confinement in a small cell, I was taken up to the top floor. A russian officer was sitting in the office; he had apparently been waiting for me. He introduced himself as Captain Glasser. Wow, so there was a Jew in the soviet secret services! There was another person in the office who wasn't introduced to me, but it was clear that he was an interpreter. He translated from Lithuanian into russian. Many Jews spoke both German and Lithuanian, but Captain Glasser showed no sign of knowing either language.

Through the interpreter, he asked how I'd actually ended up in Lithuania. That was when I decided to tell my first lie. Recalling a German soldier who had briefly joined Antanas' partisan unit in 1945, I began to recount his story. That soldier, who was originally from East Prussia, had arrived in Lithuania from the Courland Pocket. It was September 1945. Fortunately, I had questioned him in detail at the time about his unit and had noted down the regiment and division numbers. The soviet army command knew perfectly well which German units were facing them on the front line. In exactly the same way, the *Wehrmacht* command always knew which russian forces were causing them difficulties. So I gave Captain Glasser not my own unit number, but that of the aforementioned soldier. Glasser wrote it down. In this way, I safely concealed the most dangerous period up to September 1945 – the time when, together with Antanas, we killed four *NKVD* officers.

Captain Glasser then demanded to know how and where I had spent my time until my arrest on 5 February 1949. He was particularly interested in which villages and which people had provided me with support. I knew that Antanas had already died, so I mentioned his name – of course, only in connection with events from September 1945 onwards, after the shootout with the *NKVD*. Eventually, I had to admit that, after Antanas' unit had disbanded, I had been hiding on my own with farmers. I said that I knew neither the surnames of those people nor the names of the villages. 'Why, then, did the farmers feed you, since you're not Lithuanian?' – this question threw me off balance. After all, I couldn't tell him that the Lithuanians held us Germans in higher regard than the russians. However, I think he understood this perfectly well himself.

During subsequent interrogations, I admitted that in the spring of 1946 I had rejoined the partisan unit. Captain Glasser asked why, and I replied: 'All the farmers were simply afraid to hide me.' I also said that the locals would usually only take me in for one night and one day.

Having realised during the first interrogation that Captain Glasser was Jewish, I thought he would be full of hatred towards the Germans because of all the atrocities the Nazi regime had committed against his people. I expected all sorts of harassment, but that did not happen. He did not even strike me, unlike the other officers. I do not think he felt any pity for me, but perhaps he saw the mark of my difficult fate on my face. First of all, the interrogator asked why I had become a soldier and whether I had served in the SS. I was able to answer this question honestly: 'No.'

It was only after several interrogations that he finally got to the heart of the matter. By now, the interrogator was very interested: 'Why did you join a band of bandits?' The term 'bandits' did not bother me in the slightest, as I had already grown accustomed to it. 'The farmers were afraid to take me in,' I replied. I was surprised that he didn't ask anything about Antanas' partisan group, for whose leader's head a reward of 50 000 roubles had, after all, been offered. However, he was very keen to obtain information about *Genys*' group. He was interested in how many people were in it, and most of all he wanted to know their first and last names. All I could say in response to this question was that I did not know their real names. That was true; besides, I did not want to know them myself. As I have already mentioned, every partisan had a pseudonym, and that was quite enough for me. He also wanted to know where the unit was hiding and with

whom they were staying. All I could say was that the partisans' area of operation covered the forests between Tauragė, Šilalė and Skaudvilė – an area stretching for about 30 kilometres. Of course, Glasser also asked where we got our food from. I replied that we requisitioned food from collective farms and farmers. He demanded that I name these farmers and their places of residence. I replied that I could not do so, as we would arrive at night and leave in the dark, before dawn.

Later, he began to ask about firefights with the *NKVD*. I avoided this topic and insisted that I had simply been lucky – my unit had never taken part in such clashes. I also explained that the composition of the partisan units often changed, and that the fighters avoided open combat. I added that, in my opinion, both sides avoided firefights because the soviets feared us just as much as we feared them. The interrogator showed no reaction whatsoever to this statement. I got the impression that Captain Glasser was more understanding than I had expected, and that his only concern was to get through his shift as quickly as possible. However, this was merely a deceptive illusion...

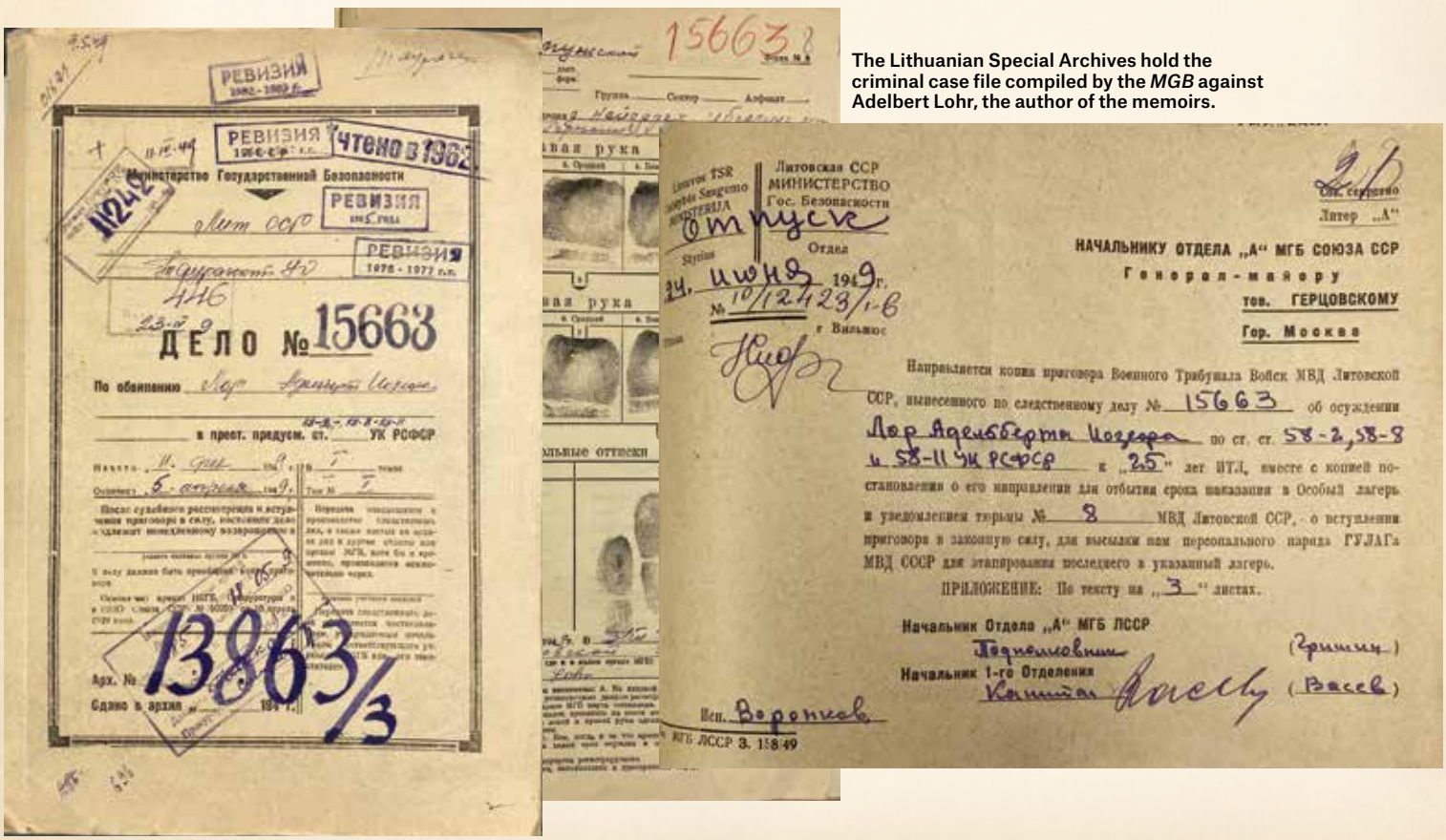
During one of the interrogations, the interrogator leafed through the files at length, and then stated that he knew I had once stayed in one place for a long time. Frightened, I hesitated and denied everything. Then he grew serious: 'If you don't confess, I'll make sure you end up where the night-time screams come from. Have you ever heard them?' I confirmed that I had. Then he concluded: 'We'll be talking again. Think about my questions!'

By then it was already early April 1949. Two days later, I was taken away for questioning again. As soon as I arrived, Captain Glasser stated sternly that this time he wanted to hear the truth. Over those two days and two nights, I'd devised a plan to tell a half-truth. So I mentioned Juozas Montvydas – a man with whom I'd sometimes stay for a few days. The partisans knew he was a soviet informer, and he knew that the partisans knew this, so he was afraid to directly betray anyone – he understood perfectly well what the partisans would do to him in such a case. The interrogator muttered: 'Well, at least that's something!' – and jotted down Juozas' first name, surname and village. The interrogation ended unexpectedly quickly. I was told to return to my cell, but Glasser added menacingly that he hoped to hear even more next time.

That night, unable to sleep, I wondered how I could protect the good people who had helped me so much. But how could I do that?

Then it occurred to me to mention an elderly woman – Emilija, with whom I had been in hiding. I firmly believed that, given her very advanced age, the soviets would leave her alone. Two days later, the situation became serious. Glasser cut straight to the point: 'Either you tell the truth now, or I'll take other measures!' It wasn't hard to guess what he meant. I hesitated a little longer, but eventually said that I had been staying with an elderly woman called Emilija. My confession was immediately recorded in the transcript – Emilija's name and the village where she lived were noted down.

After this interrogation, I was left in peace for more than a week. However, one morning I was taken back to the interrogator's office. Glasser's first question was whether I would stand by my latest statement. I replied briefly: 'Yes.' He then opened the door and brought in the soviet informant I had mentioned, Juozas Montvydas, and the elderly woman Emilija. The confrontation began.



The Lithuanian Special Archives hold the criminal case file compiled by the *MGB* against Adelbert Lohr, the author of the memoirs.



First, Glasser asked J. Montvydas: 'Do you recognise this man?' – and pointed his finger at me. Montvydas denied it: 'No, I do not recognise this man and have never seen him.' Then I intervened: 'Don't you remember how you yourself brought me food to the barn, where I was hiding in the hay, whilst your wife was too afraid to climb the ladder? And when you were building your new house, wasn't it you who took me in and hid me in the loft?' Montvydas turned pale. Glasser asked: 'Is that true?' Montvydas hesitated for a long time, but eventually admitted everything. He also confessed that I would often stay with him for three or four days, sometimes even a whole week.

Then Glasser turned to the old woman. She immediately began to weep. Whatever the interrogator asked her, she always answered 'yes', even though sometimes this was not at all true. Glasser realised that the woman was completely distraught. She wept constantly and kept repeating: 'Am I going to have to die in prison now?' Glasser even tried to calm her down: 'No, no!' Then they were both led away.

All I could do was hope that they would both be able to return home – after all, Montvydas was an *NKVD* informant, and Emilija was so old, frail and broken that she would be of no use for the *NKVD*. Nevertheless, I was deeply tormented by the fact that, whilst being interrogated, I had uttered this old woman's name.

* * *

Spring arrived again. Almost nothing had changed in the basement cell. Every day I was given the same lukewarm grain soup with a few fish bones and a lump of sticky, damp bread.

On 9 May, just before midday, I was led out of the cell. I thought that, as the soviets were commemorating 9 May – the day of Germany's surrender – they, as the victors, would take me into town and stage a public humiliation in front of the police building. The chekists often organised such show trials. But things turned out differently. I was taken upstairs to a large room. Five high-ranking officers were seated at a long table, and behind them on the wall hung a large red flag bearing the hammer and sickle. I was told to sit down on a chair. They explained to me that a military tribunal – my trial – was to take place there. I was told that two officers would act as my defence counsel. Then the indictment was read out – first in russian, then in Lithuanian. I was charged under Article 58 of the russian Criminal Code: treason (paragraph 2); resistance to state authority and terrorism (paragraph 8); and participation in the activities of an anti-soviet organisation (paragraph 11). Legally, they should not have tried me under this Article 58 at all, as I was not, after all, a citizen of the soviet union. Those two so-called defence lawyers were of no help to me whatsoever, as they were also on the prosecution's side. The proceedings lasted about half an hour. At the end, the verdict and the sentence were read out. However, I knew full well what my fate would be even before I was brought into the 'courtroom'. I was sentenced to 25 years' hard labour in camps in Siberia. I had to sign to confirm that I accepted the verdict. If I had refused to sign, the judges would have forced me to do so. It was actually a strange feeling – in an instant, I calculated in my head in which year I would return home and how old I would be then. I would have returned home in 1974, aged 53. That is, if I survived at all... The bolshevik regime needed a cheap labour force! That's simply how they filled the labour camps. People were usually sent to regions with the harshest climates, where survival was incredibly difficult. As was well known, this had already been the case in tsarist times, though back then it was mostly criminal offenders who were sent to Siberia. But even back then, the authorities knew perfectly well how to oppress and torment people. After all, in the East, a person was never really a person – just a statistical unit. They simply did not value human lives.

* * *

It wasn't until around the middle of June that I was taken out of my cell again. This time, I was ordered to take all my belongings with me – I had nothing but a leather jacket and a wooden spoon. At first I thought they were going to move



The prison in Šilutė, where the author of the memoirs, Adelbert Lohr, was imprisoned in 1949. The official name of the prison in 1949 was the Lithuanian SSR *MVD* (Ministry of Internal Affairs) Prison No. 8.

me to another cell, but the russian simply pointed towards the rear exit. When I stepped out into the courtyard, I saw a truck standing there. In the *kuzavas*, three prisoners were sitting with their backs to the cabin, surrounded by several soldiers armed with automatic rifles. I was ordered to get into the vehicle. As I was unable to do so on my own, one of the russians helped me – of course, no more gently than the last time. I had to sit down just like the others. Then the soldiers with automatic rifles climbed into the *kuzavas*. So there was no chance of escaping. The prison gates opened, and we set off towards the exit from the town. The destination of the journey remained unknown, and we were immediately strictly forbidden from speaking to one another. Half an hour later, it started to rain. The guards put on their raincoats, whilst we poor wretches were soaked to the skin in no time.

The bumpy ride along unpaved, potholed roads continued for about two hours. Finally, we reached a small town where a large red-brick building stood. The truck stopped at the entrance, the gates opened, and we found ourselves behind bars once more. We were led into a large room. The door slammed shut behind us. Now we were able to talk amongst ourselves. One Lithuanian said that this was Šilutė – the former German town of Heydekrug (known in Lithuanian as Šilokarčema).

We spent about an hour in this room, and then we were distributed among the cells. I ended up in a cell where there were already two Lithuanians. Both of them had also been sentenced to 25 years and had been waiting for a long time to see what would happen next.

After a while, the cell door opened – two soviet officers and a woman wearing a russian uniform, also an officer, entered. They asked for my name. When I told them, the woman exclaimed: 'Ah, a German!' She looked me in the eye, then scanned me from head to toe and said to one of the officers: 'Extra rations.' The woman was a doctor; I think she could see that I was completely emaciated. After four and a half months of interrogation in prison, it could not have been otherwise. Deep down, I was very glad that this woman, although she was russian and an *NKVD* officer, had shown such human understanding towards me. When the officers and the doctor had left, and the cell door had slammed shut again, my two fellow prisoners confirmed that the doctor had been very kind to me. She did not usually display such generosity.

We chatted for quite a while. One of my cellmates immediately used Morse code to inform our neighbours about the new arrival – me.

* * *

This official state prison in Šilutė turned out to be a longer 'stop' for me. Life here was monotonous. The nights were peaceful, unlike in Tauragė, which had an interrogation cell and was terribly disturbing due to the night-time interrogations and torture. In Šilutė, however, the prisoners were already convicted 'enemies of the people', so it was fairly quiet both day and night. Monotony reigned, occasionally

'broken up' only by prisoner inspections and searches. The food was also the same, but nevertheless incomparably better than in Tauragė. There was constant chatter and speculation amongst the prisoners about where the *NKVD* would send us, as most of the prisoners (one might say all of them) had been sentenced to forced-labour camps.

It was always very stuffy in the cell. There was no access to the courtyard in this prison; none of us knew why. We never saw summer. All we could do was stare at the four walls. That is how my youth slipped away. One might say that we ended up in this dreadful hell through no fault of our own; it was all because of that accursed war.

* * *

A lot changed at the start of August. Prisoners were constantly being led out of their cells – they were all forced to take their meagre belongings with them. One was taken from my cell as well, so in the end there were only two of us left. We couldn't guess where the men were being taken. In mid-August, it was my turn. I was led down the stairs to the prison yard. There stood a tarpaulin-covered truck. I was ordered to get in. Inside the *kuzavas*, four rows of benches had been set up, and prisoners were already seated there, but more were brought in later until all the seats were filled. About a metre from the rear of the *kuzavas*, there was an iron fence with a door. On either side of them stood a chair, where two *NKVD* officers armed with submachine guns took their places. In the cabin, apart from the driver, there were also two armed russians. The truck stood in the prison yard for a good half an hour before it finally set off. Where were they taking us? No one was told, and besides, the usual ban on talking was strictly enforced once again.

The journey took a very long time. We had no watches, so we could only guess how much time had passed. The *NKVD* officers, on the other hand, almost all had a watch – most of them had been taken from German soldiers when they were captured. Finally, after a long journey, we reached Vilnius, where we were locked up in a huge prison. All its windows were covered with planks nailed diagonally across them. From the cells into which we were distributed, all that could be seen were the bars and those wooden barriers.

I was led into a large room containing about 70 prisoners. They were all lying directly on the floor. As soon as I arrived, one of the prisoners showed me a spot where I could sit or lie down. Another fellow prisoner immediately came over and began asking why I had been arrested. I had nothing left to hide, so I told him everything about my life in Lithuania between 1944 and 1949. I admitted that I had fought alongside the partisans for Lithuania's freedom. My companion recounted this story aloud to the other prisoners, and they listened very attentively. Finally, he asked the others to find some cloth for a bag – and they provided it. Someone skilful quickly sewed a small sack from that cloth, which they presented to me almost ceremoniously as soon as the work was finished. Many gave me dried bread and cheese. So very quickly I had a sack full of food. All the prisoners were Lithuanians – they showed me great compassion and understanding.

One fine Sunday morning in August, we were ordered to gather our belongings in a hurry. We realised that everything was about to change again – we were being taken to Siberia, free of charge. All around us were heavily armed chekists; there were automatic weapons, machine guns and dogs everywhere. We were marched on foot from the prison yard to the railway goods yard, where we were crammed into livestock wagons... ■

Prepared by Dalius Žygelis
and Imantas Tamošauskas
Continued in other issues of WARRIOR



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Drawing by Ramūnas Vaitkus

The Final Duel

Poland's 1938 ultimatum and threats against independent Lithuania, coupled with the dangers facing Lithuanians from all sides, placed a heavy psychological burden on the nation: at that time, there was a particular need for some kind of heroic gesture. Such a gesture came on 1 May 1938, when Pranas Žižmaras, a Lithuanian, and a Pole from Vilnius fought a duel in occupied Vilnius. This duel was unlike any other – P. Žižmaras fought not for his own honour, nor for a lady's favour, but for his scorned homeland and the honour of the Lithuanian people.

On 17 March 1938, Poles in Vilnius held rallies, and threatened the Lithuania of Kaunas (the *de facto* capital at the time) with war. Fierce members of the *Endeks* (a radical nationalist party) delivered fiery speeches; one of them, J. Chom-Chomski, was their leader. Having called the Lithuanians 'dwarfs' and 'scum' at the rally, J. Chom-Chomski and his friends went to a restaurant to celebrate. Shortly afterwards, a Lithuanian scout and a teacher at Vytautas the Great Grammar School, P. Žižmaras, entered the restaurant and, in the hushed dining room, delivered a symbolic slap to the orator, threw down a glove and handed him a visiting card – such was the ritual for challenging someone to a duel. It was agreed that they would fight with swords. Pranas did not know how to wield a military sword, and here came an unexpected twist: a Polish officer was hired to train him.

The venue for the duel was the former Polonia Hall, as it was known at the time, opposite the gates of Bernardine Garden. The duel was to continue until three muscles were injured. P. Žižmaras was the first to suffer. He sustained a slight graze to his chest. After the break, it was Pranas' turn. He slashed the Pole's eyebrow, cut into a muscle in his arm and injured a rib. The duel was stopped. Pranas was declared the winner.

The duel was publicised in independent Lithuania by the press and on the radio. That same summer, the local Olympic Games were held in Kaunas. A group of athletes from Vilnius, including the scout P. Žižmaras, took part. The people of Kaunas welcomed Pranas as a hero. He was carried on people's shoulders from the station to the competition venue. In Vilnius, however, attempts were made to cover up the duel; when questioned, both participants denied that it had taken place, as duels were prohibited.

Source: MARECKAITĖ, Gražina. *Debesų karžygys: legenda apie Praną Žižmarą*. Vilnius: *Kultūros barai*, 2007.