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WAR HISTORY MADE FUN

Partisan's Last Word



Dear WARRIOR readers,

This year, the commemorations of the 9th of May, a day of Soviet nostalgia, were relatively quiet and even modest in the cities of Lithuania. In Vilnius, perhaps the effect of the dismantled memorial statues was still being felt. However, the old Yedinstvinists still managed to shine on the TV airwaves, repeating the old mantra of 'insiders shot at their own', while their younger minions were shouting about the Banderites murdering innocent civilians in Donetsk and Luhansk. Sometimes one wonders — what is it that makes young media representatives, who have grown up and been educated in a free Lithuania, pay attention to such figures? Why do they have access to Lithuanian channels, if only for one day a year, if only for a few minutes?

Uncharacteristically modest for Putinists, too, was the annual parade in their own capital. When a tank, the museum's only exhibit, was seen rolling across Red Square, the internet was filled with apt comments — 'All the other Russian military equipment has been left in Ukraine for good...'

Even Admiral Rob Bauer, chairman of NATO's military committee, is now openly saying that Russia is sending T-55 tanks to the front lines in Ukraine. The number on this Russian marking, the Admiral pointed out, refers to the vehicle's year of manufacture. But the head of the Alliance's most important military institution also stressed the quantitative aspect: regardless of the fact that these tanks are hopelessly outdated, the Russians have plenty of them.

All the historical experience of warring with Russia shows that its quantity and its utterly cynical attitude towards human life can only be countered by quality, values and unity. Ukraine has been a demonstration of the practical implementation of these principles since 2014. And in a few months' time, in Vilnius, we will have the opportunity to see what the Alliance's approach to these principles will be, whether declaratively or effectively.

Sincerely,
Darius Varanavičius
Chief Editor



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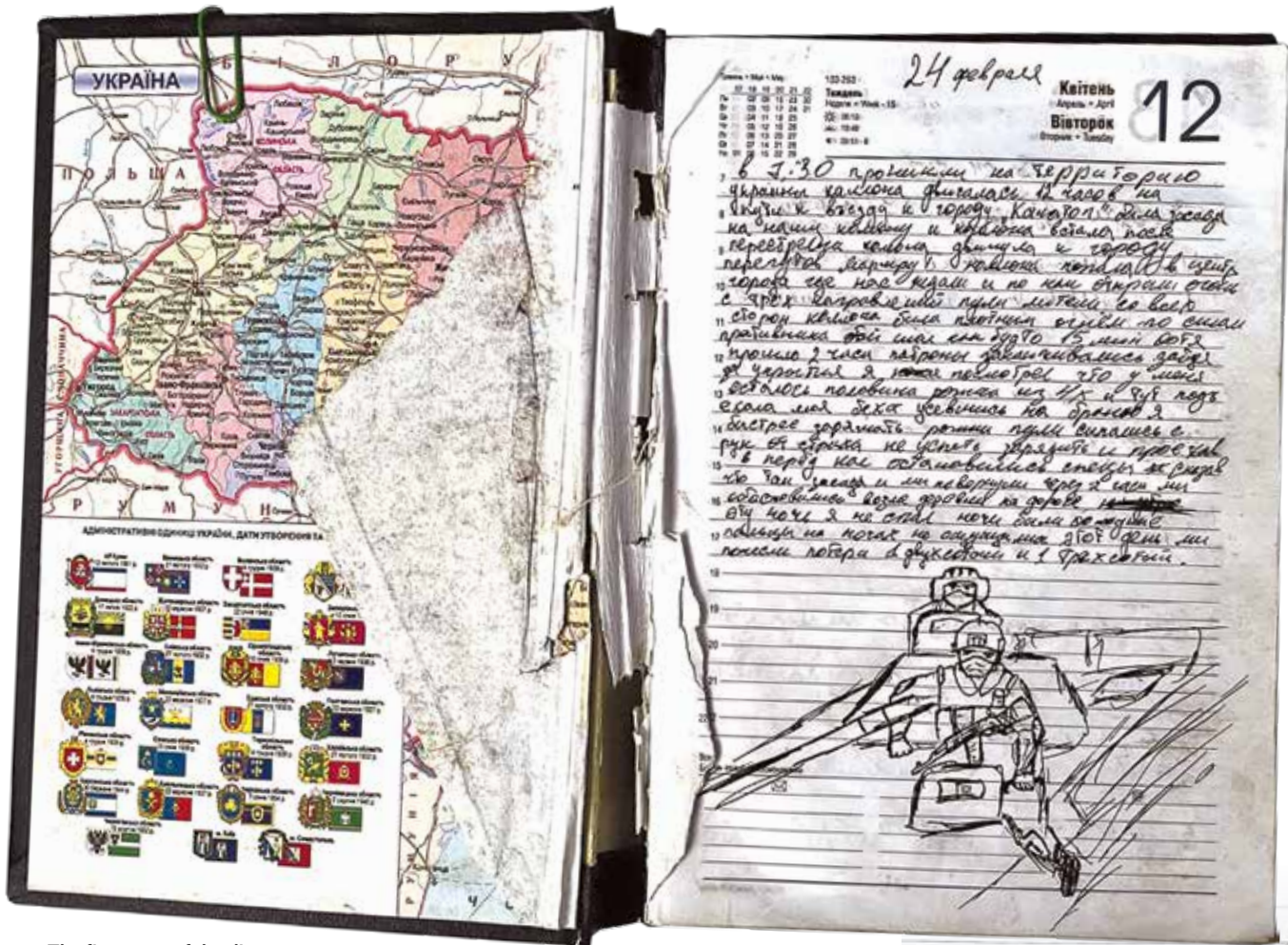
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FROM THE „Z” DIARIES. OCCUPATION THROUGH THE EYES OF THE OCCUPIERS

'Dear diary'... Many people associate this genre of writing with romanticism or perhaps sentimental adolescent dreams. But we are not going to talk about anything sentimental here at all. Below we present three different diaries. The authors of these diary entries had dreams of earning more money, plans for the future... Only the money they earned is tainted with blood, and for some there is no future before them. For some of them, their lives ended in Ukraine, the country they entered uninvited, with guns in their hands.

A diary is a strange genre of writing to begin with. Sometimes they contain reality and subjectivity intertwined in a rather strange way, which is perhaps why they are not considered to be documentary in nature. Judging by the style of writing and the content of the diary entries shown below — it is clear that their authors are neither scholars nor moral luminaries. "A couple of things surprised me," wrote A. Kashporovsky, a Ukrainian journalist and a soldier in the territorial defence forces, after reading the notes of the occupiers. "First of all — illiteracy.



The first page of the diary found near Kyiv.

Diary No. 1: The unknown and freezing feet

These are the people who complain that we are supposedly persecuting the Russian language because we do not allow them to communicate in it, but in reality their command of the language is worse than that of the Ukrainians". For this reason, the texts had to be slightly adapted in order to be at least in line with the basic rules of grammar and punctuation. Any specific terms or jargon which may be characteristic of the Russian army have been italicised with an explanation — the author's explanations are in square brackets.

What you are about to read are not literary masterpieces, but authentic documents which will allow you to get to know the psychological portrait of an occupier and how he felt about his actions.

On 23 March 2022, a group of Ukrainian soldiers inspected the village of Lukyanivka in the Kyiv region. The village had just been liberated from the Russian forces. A unit of the occupying forces had set up camp in a more spacious building close to the church. These improvised barracks, however, had to be abandoned a short time later. The withdrawal was both unexpected and urgent. Many uncollected belongings were left behind in the building. The soldiers of the 'Second World Army' were in a hurry and had no time to pack their dry rations or equipment — rucksacks, boxes of bullets and hand grenades were scattered around the rooms. Some of the items found were clearly 'borrowed' by the 'de-Nazifiers' from the local people.

Among the items was a notebook with



diary entries written by a Russian soldier. The author could not be identified. However, the context suggests that he was a contract soldier. The entries begin on 24 February 2022 and continue until March 20th.

"24th February, 7:30 a.m. We entered Ukrainian territory. We had been moving for 12 hours, there was an ambush on the road entering the town of Konotop, so our convoy had to stop. After the skirmish, the convoy started moving again towards the town, but due to a mix-up in the route, it ended up in the centre of the town, where another ambush was waiting for us. We were fired on from three sides. Bullets came from everywhere, but we fought back with concentrated fire. The battle seemed to last 15 minutes, but in fact 2 hours had gone by. We were running low on ammunition. When I went behind a cover, I saw that only half of the 4 ammunition packs were left [strange, because if only two were used up, then either the firefight was much shorter, or it was not as intense as

the author of the diary says]. Then one of our BMPs [infantry fighting vehicle, *Boyevaya Mashina Pyekhoty*] stopped near me, I sat down on the armour and started to load the ammunition quickly, the bullets were flying out of my hands, I was afraid I wouldn't be able to load them in time, and as we drove on we were stopped by one of the special officers who told us that there was another ambush ahead, so we turned around and two hours later we finally settled down on a road near a village. I didn't sleep at all that night. It was cold and I couldn't feel my toes. Our losses that day were 1x two hundred and 1x three hundred [codenames for 'killed' and 'wounded'].

25th February. In the morning we came under fire from the direction of the village, the boys [i.e. the soldiers of their unit] started to 'clean up' the buildings and set up an all-round defence, *saliarka* [diesel fuel] was running out, as was ammunition, there was ammunition left for about an hour of fighting, this made us nervous that we'd be attacked but

there was nothing to defend ourselves with. We took all the civilians down to the basement, set up block posts and waited for the column with the fuel and ammunition to arrive. No sleep for the third night.

28th February. All the convoys had arrived and we continued to move, marauding, searching the shops for food, but they'd all been cleared out before us. The cold is unbearable, my feet and fingers are becoming numb. We stopped by the roadside for the night.

1st March. It's early morning, it's starting to snow, my whole body feels cold. We've boiled some water for tea; it feels like thousands of ants are crawling all over my skin as I drink. After about 2 hours, the column was back on the road again. We were running out of petrol. Just before entering the town we stopped to let a convoy of tanks pass. When we entered the town, the marauders had already taken everything out — there was rubble and chaos all over the place. After passing through



A Ukrainian roadside in the early days of the Russian invasion.

the town, we set up camp on a farm, the mechanics started to drain *saliarka* from the tractors, while others searched every building for the necessary materials. Night came and we drank some wine, which calmed the adrenaline, but at night some snipers started attacking us. I slept in a garage, it was warm enough.

2nd March. The morning began with a cup of coffee. As I slept, I dreamt of home. The desire to return home is prolonging my life. I've been worried about my parents since the first day of the war and I miss **** [name withheld] very much. Tears come to my eyes when I picture my loved ones. I've taken up smoking. The cigarettes are as weak as straw, but the alcohol isn't too bad. For the time being, my company has settled on a farm. The others have gone to fight to retake the bridge from the *Ukrops* [Ukrainians] so that the convoy can pass through and move on to Kyiv. Today Zelensky is supposed to sign the peace agreements. Suddenly, everyone had to gather their things and we left. We settled in a village and set up an all-round defence, the night was cold, I thought of my love all night. I miss you so much that my heart aches. I keep thinking of the time I spent with you. I wish I could go back to those days. I'm tired of this war, I'm freezing to death here, there's nothing but death all around. The old ladies are always crying, and

sometimes I shed a tear myself. The only consolation is that at home you are all together as a family, that the blue sky is above your heads, that you, my brothers and my sister, are all at home. Everyone has to make sacrifices, but I don't want my brothers to see or feel what I'm doing here. That's why I'm here. I am worried that my mother is very worried and that she does not sleep at night, that she cries a lot, it hurts my heart and I wish that I could hug all of you very soon.

3rd March. The morning started with no coffee and feeling freezing cold. We went to a greenhouse to warm up. We put pads in our shoes to absorb the moisture. Our section formed a column and we drove off to some place, I don't know where, 3 km away we came across a group of missing scouts, they were just walking along the road with tears in their eyes. They were one of our own, we

had been looking for them for two days, their faces seemed to be both happy and sad at the same time. Of the 17, 12 came back. They said they had been hit by rocket-propelled grenades and that two 'boxes' [i.e. armoured vehicles] had stopped working. The 'Kombat' [Battalion Commander] got shot in the head, two machine guns were left to cover the group as they retreated, so they probably got killed in the fighting. This is how the day passed.

6th March. The morning is cold, as usual. We captured a Ukrainian soldier who had been shot, interrogated him, found out where the enemy was and how many there were. We passed some tank drivers with whom we were resting in the town, I asked them about my friend Valiera, he is alive and well, my heart was filled with peace. In the evening the column started moving again,





'Vasia, look, we're being filmed'. The Marodiens see a security camera in a company office.

off somewhere, but I and a few others stayed behind to hold our positions. It is now the 6th of March. I am getting more and more homesick. I love you, my darlings. I will be home soon!

7th March. The morning started well, the boys put the kettle on, we made some tea out of jam, I went round the security perimeters to do a check, packed a rucksack for a possible retreat with ammunition and some grenades to last for about an hour of fighting. We were bombed all night long, and it was very hard to get to sleep. Today I found out that my cousin had been killed yesterday, and it made my chest tighten up with pain. All the relatives are crying. We wish you eternal glory, my brother, we mourn you. Every day I think of the time we spent together, of every moment, but it brings a smile to my face when I think that I will soon be going home. I hope that this war will also end soon!!!

8th March. Today I phoned home to congratulate my relatives on the holiday. The day went on as usual, a bit of artillery fire, but nothing more than that. A couple of our tanks went out to scare the *Ukrops* with a few rounds. They came back and about 15 minutes later the *Ukrops* appeared and started shooting at us. Those sons of bitches, straight at the

hangars with all our equipment, which resulted in two fuel trucks being blown to bits, only one is left now. All night long we kept expecting to be attacked. I made a path for the group to retreat and laid down six grenades along the way, and that's the way the night went.

9th March. The morning started as usual, without coffee. The men managed to make a fuel truck out of the two damaged ones. I made a phone call home and also to my sweetheart. We had orders to escort the petrol trucks and so we set off, stopped in a neighbouring village, had a cup of tea and then made our way to where our boys were. On the way back, a projectile fell in front of us. Ruslan, the mechanic, stepped on the accelerator and drove back to the shop, shouting 'air'. When I came out of the hatch [the hatch of an airborne combat vehicle], I saw shrapnel flying all over the place. I hurried to open the other hatches and then we all dived into a basement. You could hear gunfire and exploding shells everywhere. After 10 minutes a wounded tank commander was brought in. I bandaged his leg so that it was numb and then we carried him over to the BMP. One of the mechanics drove him to the nearby village, while the rest of us jumped into one of the *matalyga*'s

[MT-LB caterpillar tractor] and followed behind. The men started picking up the wounded and the dead to move them. Among the dead was our commander. When we returned to the village, I saw the men taking off the equipment of one of the dead enemy soldiers. They gave me his belt, which was completely covered in blood. A wounded *Spetsnaz* [an acronym for 'Special Purpose'] soldier was brought in. He and I got to know each other when I was putting bandages on him, then we generously 'wet our throats' [had a drink]. Kolia seemed like a good lad.

13th March. After I came back from my shift, I lay down to rest, woke up and had breakfast. Sergejic came over. We congratulated him on his birthday.

14th-16th March. The morning is cold as usual. My toes are starting to die. The days went by as usual, I kept thinking of home, of the people I love and of those who are waiting for me to return. I fall asleep thinking of home and my loved ones and wake up to the cold and the sound of bombing. I correspond with you; reading how you all spent your day makes me feel better. And when I call you on video, I feel as if I were at home with you.

17th-20th March. The morning is

the same as usual, but the weather is starting to get warmer. The days were as usual. There was a shooting, we did a 'clean up', I taught a boy how to storm a building, I helped pensioners by bringing them groceries."

The diary ends with this last entry. President Zelensky did not sign the 'peace agreements', neither on the 2nd of March, as the soldier of the 'special operation' had hoped, nor at a later date. The fate of this diary's author is unknown, but easily predictable...

Diary No. 2: A passion for guns and farm plans for the future

This diary was found by Ukrainian soldiers who were part of the liberation operation in the Kharkiv region. The pages were scattered among the rubbish of abandoned posts. The author was from Pskov, a scout with the nickname 'Dog' from the 25th Separate Motor Rifle Brigade, based in Luga. He signed the contract when he was in his twenties, shortly after he had completed his military service. The notes allow us to reconstruct the course of events as follows: the reconnaissance battalion in which 'Dog' served was transferred to Belgorod and on February 24th crossed the Ukrainian border and tried to take the outskirts of Kharkiv.

The diary contains several interesting episodes relating to psychological operations. As the morale of the occupiers was declining, 'political-educational work' was carried out on them. This included showing them pseudo-documentary videos fabricated by Russian propagandists about alleged atrocities committed by the Ukrainians. The aim was to arouse hatred among the Russian soldiers. At the same time, they were to be intimidated into not surrendering to Ukrainian captivity.

"Introduction...

Hi, I've decided to start a diary. So I don't forget anything...

Today is 28 March 2022. I arrived in this chaos after crossing the border on the night of 23rd to 24th February. It's a bit funny when you're wished a happy holiday [meaning the former Soviet Army

Day, now Defenders of the Motherland Day in Russia] before being told 'we're going to cross the border at night, get your equipment ready'.

Well... I'm going to skip through the events of the last few days...

23rd February... and 24th February... 'Prepare your equipment, take your combat kits (ammunition, grenade launchers). At midnight the convoy will set off for the border'. We prepared our uniforms, we packed our rucksacks, we chose our armour [bulletproof vests], and all this was accompanied by jokes about a 'happy day of celebration'.

My God, how everyone wanted to punch anybody in the face who said that.

Night time... We got into the 'metal' [meaning armoured fighting vehicle] and the convoy started moving towards the border... The night went by very quickly... After the dawn, it became easier to see around us... The usual road, with the occasional BTR and 'Tiger' [lightly armoured all-terrain vehicle] still smoldering on the side of the road. And so the day went.

A couple of days later...

We had a stop in a village, a very rich village... The next day, or the same day, the first Ukrainian UAV [unmanned aerial vehicle] appeared. We call it the 'Bird'. We managed to shoot it down with a silent weapon, but those idiots, who had been serving for 3-4 months, shat in their pants, thinking that the enemy was attacking them... A chaotic shoot-out began between ourselves. My friend Yefim was hit by a bullet in

the neck or in the cheek, I don't know exactly, I couldn't see it, because I was sitting in the 'metal' and acted as a shooter, and the field of vision was blocked by the ***** [curse word] Ural of the gunners, damn it... I never saw Yefim again after that. They say he lost a lot of blood and was hospitalised in Moscow and later decommissioned. The same day, or the next day, we found a house. We managed to set up camp there and shelter from the shelling.

A few days later, we saw for the first time PMC [private military company] representatives. They were men dressed in mocha camouflage, wearing trainers, not military boots... They were operating in small groups of 4 to 6 people... Seemed like fun guys. Our guys asked who they were and where they came from, and they said: 'From nowhere, we're just visiting. It's quite boring here, so we're going to Kharkiv. It's fun there, there are girls'. But Kharkiv is under the control of the Ukrainian Armed Forces. Trying to break through with such a small group is guaranteed death...

These guys — the PMC men, mercenaries, they are not on the territory of the RF [Russian Federation], but only in the formal sense... They fight not for their country, not for any government, but for money, huge sums of money, and there are many, everywhere. If there's a war — they're there... It's rumoured that they don't live long, you know? A year, maybe two years — not more. But it's just a rumour, it needs checking, I can't confirm one hundred percent...

"I looked up and saw that the turret of a tank was on fire about 15-20 metres away..."



A bloody afterglow after the launch of two missiles. One can only imagine what the skies of Kharkiv must have looked like after the massive shelling by missile complexes.



The diary describes the shelling of a suburb of Kharkiv.

The week before and after the 10th of March...

We were given the task of escorting the convoy and returning. We were moving as a part of the convoy through a section of some kind of forest. We were told that we were going to be under the command of a different unit... There I experienced first-hand what it is like to have a mine explode within 5 metres of you... Here is what happened... For some reason, my instinct for self-preservation is not the same as that of the others, usually when we hear explosions, even if they are far away, everyone runs for cover or falls to the ground, but not me... I don't pay any attention...

I was warming up my coffee in a mug on a bonfire when the shelling took place, and the bonfire was only a metre or so away from the 'metal'... My friends, one after the other, all went inside, while I stayed by the fire all alone... and then... BOOM!

Ringling in the ears. I was showered with earth from the explosion. A second later I found myself in front of the 'metal', where I had tried to dig a trench earlier, but the frozen ground was like stone... Hell, it's easier to chop wood than to break through such soil... I looked up and saw that the turret of a tank was on fire about 15-20 metres away... I

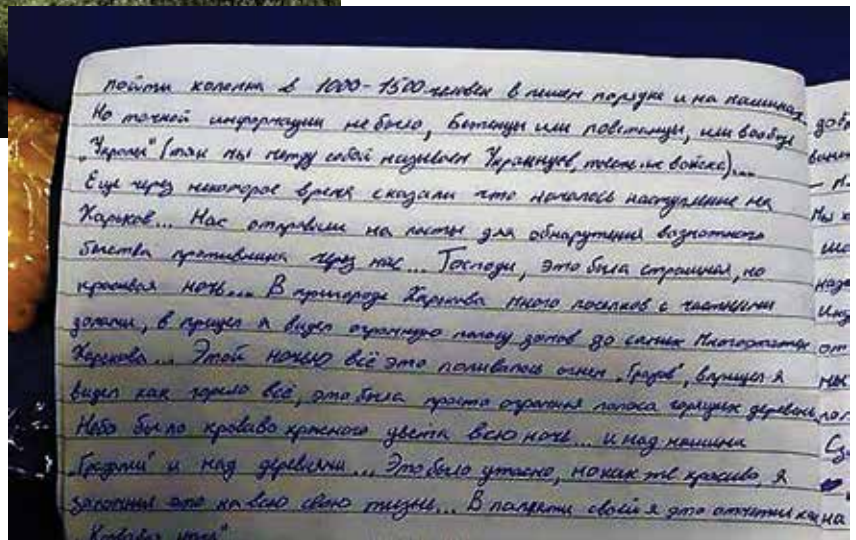
thought it ***** [exploded] there, but I was wrong. Later I saw the explosion pit where it fell, it was behind the IRM [Amphibious Engineer Reconnaissance Vehicle] which was parked behind my 'metal', so I was only protected from the blast by having the IRM standing between me and the mine...

The ringing in my ears lasted for about five minutes. Then either I got used to it or it actually stopped. Ten minutes later I finished my coffee as if nothing had happened, but this time I was sitting inside the 'metal'.

A few days later the supplies arrived (food, water, clothes), and I was given a pair of rubber boots with fur inside, which are very warm, and my feet sweat terribly in them... But by that time I'd already got frostbite on my kidneys (I was suffering from urinary incontinence), and that's probably when my toes froze

off. I couldn't feel them. I couldn't move them. Everyone was also given a *telnyashka* [blue striped undershirt], which I still wear today.

A few days later we received information that a column of about 1 000 to 1 500 people, on foot and in cars, was about to leave Kharkiv. But there was no precise information about who they were — refugees, rebels or just *Ukrops* in general. That's what we call Ukrainians amongst ourselves, i.e. their army... Some time later we had word that there had been an attack on Kharkiv. We were assigned to posts to see if the



enemy was going to pass us by... God, it was a terrible but beautiful night. In the suburbs of Kharkiv there are a lot of private neighbourhoods. Through my lens I could see a huge strip of houses right up to the blocks of flats in Kharkiv. That night 'Grads' [self-propelled multiple rocket launchers] were used to set fire to everything. I watched as it all went up in flames. The sky was a blood-red colour all night long, over the 'Grads' and over all the villages. It was horrible, but it was such a beautiful thing. I am going to remember it for the rest of my life. I have marked that night in my memory as 'the bloody night'.

[As it later turned out, the suburb of Saltovka, near Kharkiv, was shelled by the 25th Artillery Brigade of the Russian Army.]

A few days later we got ordered to return. We went back to the KP [command post]. It was an army post, or

maybe a brigade, fuck knows...

There was a wine cellar there... Fifteen-year-old red sweet wine — the best I've ever had... 20 years of ageing — tasted amazing, as a civilian you'd never have had a chance to drink that, it costs a fucking salary, maybe two.

Later we found a car for ourselves, 'Chance'. We revived it and took it for a ride... Then we resurrected a 'Two Sevens', which we still drive today. Fuck, it's true, it really is a 'combat classic'.

Then there was an order to change positions. We took 'Chance' and 'Two Sevens' and moved elsewhere... 'Falcon', that bastard, ***** [ruined] it. He tried to turn into the corner at too high a speed... Our 'Chance' got stuck hanging over a ditch, and without saying a word, the bastard just left it and went off drinking wine and smoking cigarettes all night...

The day after we arrived, we moved to another place again. But we discovered that there were turkeys and chickens nearby... We went there regularly to feed them, we took eggs from them, we 'thinned them out' one by one. The shish kebab we made from them was amazing... Later we found a *taganok*, as the boys called it. It was a small pot with a lid and steam valves... The turkey would cook so perfectly in it that the meat would fall off the bones, and the bones themselves were no harder than bread... Somebody has a picture of us all sitting in a group around a huge table like at a big party...

A big house stood behind us, but I wouldn't call it a house... 15 metres away a projectile ***** [exploded], made a big hole, damn it... Right on top of the chicken coop... It's like there was never a fence there... I'm not usually wearing a *bronizilet* [bulletproof vest], so it's a good thing none of the shrapnel hit my back. In that house there was also a BMW 325i, push button start, the roof comes down, a Dodge Charger, a convertible, I think it was a Mustang... Fucking *Ukropian* Rubliovka... [rich district on the outskirts of Moscow]. Come to think of it, on February 23rd it was announced that anyone who wanted to could leave. So people dropped everything and left such valuable possessions here just to survive...

We were joined by 'Gnad', 'Liocha', 'Juvelyr', 'Gogulin', 'Piton'. One day they were bombing right next to us...



Occupiers captured enjoying the private home of a Ukrainian family.

The house where the liaison officers were staying was on fire, and the 'Juvelyr' ['Jeweller'] was making such a fuss that there might be injured people... In the end, he and 'Rydik' ***** [rushed] over there... 'Rydik' was not wearing any armour, just a *tonkache* [a light vest made of anti-shell material]. The commander didn't allow the others to go in there, because there was a high probability that the others would be injured by the shelling as well... 'Juvelyr' soon returned, 'Rydik' stayed there, later a car came to pick him up and took him to the hospital. He survived, he is going to walk. All is well...

24th March. We found a way to get into Russian territory — to take a shower, go shopping, to get laid... I went over with the last shift of the day. Somehow everything had become more expensive... 33 000 roubles was only enough for a camouflage coat of the PMC type, camouflage trainers, tactical gloves, a mask, binoculars and a mobile phone... The worst fucking touch screen phone costs 8 grand. I bought my Techno Kenon for 12 grand... 12x50 binoculars cost almost 7 grand... A camouflage coat — 6 grand... Fuck that...

A girl for hire costs 4 thousand an hour.

I liked Lena. I had to borrow 12 thousand from 'Jenot'...

A few days before, by the way, they had assigned to us a detachment of

infantry boys. Well, they didn't just give them to us. These guys are conscripts, they've only been serving for 4 months... They have been placed with us...

Our guys found a new 250cc bike. They resurrected it, now they ride it everywhere, or maybe not resurrected, they just started it.

25th and 26th March. Back from Belgorod. I can't remember, either the 25th or the 26th, the boys found a ***** [very nice] dagger in some house. God, it's so beautiful... I'll ask Jamal to sell it for me in Russia... Fuck, someone is looking for instruments, someone is looking for jewellery, someone is looking for fakes or other electronics, I'm only interested in weapons.

27th March. I saw on the Ukrainian news that we are called fascists... Occupiers, looters... even though they themselves are oppressing the Russians living on Ukrainian territory. These ***** [homos] are blocking money transfers from Russia to people, they are raising prices for Russians... The most upsetting thing was that the news just showed them giving people a test to check their knowledge of Ukrainian, a series of words like 'strawberries' and some others... If you get it wrong — you get hit or shot in the forehead... And that's what they're saying and showing on the fucking TV... Fuck... And these bastards call us fascists and occupiers. We never once allowed ourselves to harm civilians...

Once, our men went to a house where a grandmother and a man lived, so the boys helped them to lock their dogs in the shed and brought them food and water almost every day. Although, as it turned out, they did in fact have some water. They found petrol for their generator... So there you go. How are we fascists, we're not the ones hiding behind the backs of civilians to avoid being hit by artillery. Fucking Kharkiv is only standing here because our guys can't destroy it to the ground. There are still a lot of civilians in the city...

28th March. In the morning we were told to pack our things and get ready to leave for God knows where. There are rumours that we'll be sent back somewhere... It's evening... The news came: tomorrow one of our boys is going to be back with us, he had the chicken pox and was in the hospital, and now he's coming back... But he has brought some bad news with him...

We are the 2nd platoon of the 1st company, there is also a 1st platoon, or rather there was... Some of them are wounded, some of them are killed, some of them are captured, and tomorrow we are going to see a video of one of ours being beaten by the *Ukrops*...

These ***** [homos] should be suffocated indiscriminately, ***** [damned] *Ukrops*...

29th March. In the middle of the night, someone in the village set off a firework in the sky. Our boys went out to look for it, and they found the firework, but they didn't find out who did it. There was a bombing during the night. During the day I went to a nearby house to have a coffee. When I came back I found out that the guys had found Thompsons, a PPF, an MP-40 and a bunch of knives in some house... Too bad, ***** [I missed it]... ***** [so much for that]. I went to the house where the weapons were found with '*Falcon*', '*Juvelyr*' and '*Italian*'... There were lots of models there... In the sofa there was a combat RPK, a TT mock-up, revolvers, knives that turned out to be mock-ups, a short sword, German daggers and knives in general... We gave everything to the FSB [Federal Security Service] as trophies, we kept the knives for ourselves. Now I have a German dagger and a ***** [wonderful] Soviet *Spetsnaz* knife... I am happy!!! What a

knife — until the end of my service it will be of great help to me in the field and for survival in the forest... Amazing... I think it's worth giving the dagger to my mother. There used to be one in the house, but it had a thicker blade and was burnt in a fire, we couldn't find it. I am going to send it to her as a souvenir...

31st March. I didn't write anything on the 30th because nothing happened. But there's a lot going on today. In the morning we went out to look for some things, we came under fire and had to sit in the nearest house. Then we were sent out again, there was a dog in the hangar and we had to shoot it, and in the neighbouring farm there was a rocket sticking out of the ground, or rather its tail was visible. Then we went out to get something to drink, a glass of compote. In the evening a friend came with a video of Azov men torturing prisoners, although there is no real torture, the bastards just mock, they shoot their legs during interrogation, and he said they burn them afterwards... Fucking Nazis, you wouldn't even wish for an enemy to be captured by them... Afterwards the men smoked silently for another ten minutes, and I heard words like 'fucking hell', 'how', 'bastards'... In the stocks of humanitarian aid there were more letters from civilians thanking us for the protection of the homeland and for the fight... I will try to save them and publish them on my social media profile. A sincere thank you to all the people who believe in us, it warms the soul and raises the fighting spirit... There were also a few crosses, strips of paper with prayers on them... I put on the cross, I took a piece of paper with a prayer on it. I will put it in my armour... To sum up — the Azov men are disgusting pieces of shit, and these are the kind of people who shouldn't be allowed to live!

As it turned out later, the 1st platoon was declared missing, so it's not clear what happened to them. They say someone managed to get out, but I can't say anything more.

2nd April. In the morning it was announced that the enemy could be operating in our uniforms, in our vehicles. So a regime of silence was imposed. That's what I call it... No aimless wandering around in the countryside, only to carry

out tasks... It is allowed to open fire on those who simply loiter on the roads... Yes, someone has definitely gone mad...

14th April. The events of the last few days are as follows: they took 'Ryz', they gave him a No. 168 [probably referring to Article 168 of the RF Criminal Code on the loss or damage of material goods due to negligence]. Then Vadik was taken. Serioiga detonated a grenade in a drunken state — the result: 1x300. I polished the knives... I sharpened the *Spetsnaz* knife... I was given a summer uniform and a new pair of shoes... But I put them aside, shit, I don't want to wear them out... I don't like the mocha camouflage any more... The 'combats' and the ZP [i.e. the salary] came. Now there must be about 200 000 roubles in my bank account — not bad, it's just a pity that I can't find out the exact figure. I'll write down the things I'll do when I'm back...

1. To buy a German shepherd dog, I remember there was an organisation in Pskov that trained service dogs. I'll have to look into it...

2. To celebrate the return, how could we not...

3. Buy equipment, combat and shotguns... Training will be beneficial...

4. Oh, rings, must buy rings... When I'm back — I have to propose to Nastya and go to her parents... I'll even buy a suit and a white shirt...

5. To finally get that fucking driving licence...

6. Buy a car...

7. Solve the problem of where to live and where to store all my things... ***** [tired] of having something here, something there and something else somewhere else...

*Talk to Natasha about a business proposition that I hope she won't refuse...

*Try to make contact with the 76th Division. I need to break into them somehow... I hope they have an intelligence team there. I don't want to get out of intelligence, but I do want to get out of the 25th [Brigade]...

*Must travel around the motherland (see how people live, visit the relatives)... I saw Natasha's daughter once, which could well be the first and last time... [Continues discussion about his relatives]

There is also the possibility of multiplying the money. But you have to get

through to 'Saffron'... Which is a bit complicated, but maybe not that complicated. This guy always knows a way to get you more money...

I have seen the way the local people live here. The houses are like fucking mansions. But as it turns out, it takes about 8 years to build a mansion like that... Which means... I'm almost 21... I have to get on with this, life is short, I have to have my own mansion built by the time I'm 30...

First you need a plot of land... Then you need the foundations and the basement... Then the first floor... Then the second floor... Then the roof... The interior and the furniture...

It's the evening of the same day. While I was writing all this, 'Tatarin' or 'Beluga' said that he was stacking the 200's... Without heads, without any organs... I don't know when, who and where they were stacked. But one thing is clear... Ukraine has gone mad. The war in Chechnya comes to mind...

Information has come through that the *Ukrops* have conscripted the *Zeks* [prisoners] into the war. The word is that they have been released and that all of them are being drafted. They say there are two battalions... ***** [damn]... Two battalions of *ZEKs*... [Note: as you may know, it was around this time that the plan of the Wagner Group to fill its ranks with recruited Russian prisoners was born].

There was some artillery fire. A shell



A logical finale: unused loot.

came from behind the 'Italian'. It hit him in the ass... Fuck knows how, but it came through the roof as he was running around on the ground below. He said it burnt his bum. Fuck, it's funny, but the guy's got two birthdays now. And now he's carrying this shard...

In general... In Belgorod, Russia, a bridge was blown up and a mortar was found in some apartment... So it's pretty bad in Russia too!

In the 6th company, which joined us briefly once, it turns out that my countryman was serving there... Ostrovsky... 77 km away from Pechory and Pskov... Basically... His family received a message to the following effect: 'So-and-so, year of birth, was killed somewhere'. Sometimes the *Ukrops* send different messages to the families of the fallen boys...

There was a lot of commotion about the *Ukrops* who were caught in disguise at the border... What happened in Belgorod shows that not all of them were caught... That's fucked up... This is a threat to the families of all the soldiers...

['Sinner'], who is 'Juvelry', told us that

his friend was arrested a few months later when he returned from the SAR [Syrian Arab Republic]... And that makes you think...

And all this leads to the conclusion that God is preserving stocks...

Even today, artillery shelling has hit the local people... They took an old man away, I think. People say his leg was cut off. I hope it is not true. I hope he survives... I don't want the civilians to suffer so much...

I think that's it. It's time to go to bed..."

This is where the notes stop. There are other events that we know happened that help us to trace the rest of the story. When the Ukrainian Armed Forces launched their counter-offensive, the occupying forces began to retreat. Later, the Russian army reported that 'due to losses in the Kharkiv area, units of the 25th Omsbr [Separate Motor Rifle Brigade] of the 6th Army have left the combat zone and have returned to the vicinity of Nechoteyevka in the Belgorod region'.

The author of this diary was not among those who returned. His plans for





the future — it seems — were not meant to come true. Along with the other killed occupiers, 'Dog' remained somewhere near Kharkiv.

Diary No. 3: "what suicidal people think"

These last notes were found in Trostiance, in the area of Sumy that was liberated by the Ukrainian troops. The Ukrainian MP A. Goncharenko got hold of the original pages. He was the first to publish the diary on his account on the Telegram social networking site. Of the three, this is the shortest diary, if you can call it that at all, and the style of writing becomes more and more fragmentary with each sentence, like a synopsis of the film 'Apocalypse Now'...

"03.03.2022. 11 days after having left, we have settled down. Everything here is in a terrible state. We looted all the shops and smashed the windows, we're like fascists. The people here are afraid of us. For the second day in a row we have been listening to Ukrainian radio. They are calling us occupiers. I had a phone call with my family back home. They are happy to hear from me, and I am even happier! I will be back soon.

04.03.2022. We installed a PSNR [Portable Ground Reconnaissance Station] on one of the buildings here. Surprisingly, the thing had a good battery, but we couldn't pick up anything... I saw a dead body in real life, it was shocking. I've not seen Kostia. I miss my wife a lot... At 8 p.m. we came across a shop. We decided to take shelter there. I took two Ukrainian handbags and a blender for my wife. I wanted to bring her something more, but there is nothing left. Everything has been stolen from here. We found some bed linen in the

shop and decided to stay there for the night. I found a duvet. You just put the machine gun under your pillow and go to sleep. How I wish I could hug my love, hear her beautiful voice again. I love her. Hearing the voices of my loved ones was so good. I will call them again tomorrow.

I've been called to Division. But do I need it? I am doing well here. I found another pair of shoes, but my feet got sweaty in them in the evening. I'll have to find some other shoes and begin to live more or less comfortably. Kristina, I'm so bearded right now! You wouldn't want to kiss me, ha-ha. But I've noticed: I'm ginger. That's the way my beard is. I want to draw it for you. Maybe something will come out. I never thought I'd be writing a diary.

Don't remember the date. I have just made some coffee for the nightshift. It's been a while since I've updated the diary. What's going on... The days go by so fast.

1. I started going to the front lines with the scouts. It's scary, but I'm needed there.
2. I saw a man who shot himself and two others who were killed. I didn't think that life could be taken so easily. We who are alive do not realise that we are

just breathing and not taking in life.

3. A stray bullet is scarier than anything else. One of us was almost killed like this.

It is amazing that I am able to call my love on a daily basis. Life has settled down somewhat here. We brought in a TV and started watching the news. They are being brainwashed here. 'Glory to Ukraine'... Every day there is more and more tension, but we will manage. I need to solve the money problem. I'd like to call you at night, but it's the most stressful time of the day. You can't relax. I wonder what suicidal people think about just before they shoot themselves."

This is where these rather wild thoughts come to an end. Now these notes will go to the National History Museum of Ukraine, where they will become one of the exhibits of the thematic exhibition 'Ukraine — A Crucifixion'.

There are other documents waiting for their turn as well. The time will come when they will become legal evidence. They will be testimonies of war criminals against themselves. ■

Prepared by Darius Sutkus

Fragment of notes found in Sumy, liberated by Ukrainian troops.



Photo sources: facebook.com, reddit.com, golos.com.ua, tcn.ua, cnbc.com, enigma.club, motorbiscuit.com, bbc.co.uk, unian.net



"An occupier? Me?..."

The two of them are seated at a table in front of the camera. One of them is always the same person: the Ukrainian journalist Volodymyr Zolkin. The other is different every time, and the number of those interviewed is already approaching half a thousand. All of them are Russian soldiers. Occupiers captured by the Ukrainians. In the hope of being exchanged, they agreed to be interviewed. Each one of them is an individual case, but the details are often very stereotypical...

— So, how have you been the past month and a half? When it seems that your motherland doesn't give a damn about you? For some reason, the motherland has abandoned its fine soldier. How does that look to you?

— "Part of me is not surprised," replies the 23-year-old prisoner, wiping away tears with the back of his hand.

His hands are not in handcuffs and his tears appear to be genuine. He has just been given a telephone so that he can have a word with his mother. She said she tried to get information about her missing son, but the military commissariat officer told her, as if nothing had happened, that 'your son is on a mission'.

— Funny, isn't it? A mother spends a month and a half looking for her child and is told: 'Your son is serving, everything is fine'. Do you still have any doubts about who is deceiving you here and who is keeping you off the POW list? Now, imagine that this interview hadn't happened and that nobody saw you — what then?

— I would be kept here forever...

— "When you go back to your cell, tell your colleagues how hard your mother had to try to prove that you were imprisoned," the journalist concludes, adding with a touch of sarcastic bitterness, "... well, to give the rest of them hope".

But there is one question that Volodymyr always asks.

— We need to know — are you an occupier or not? You will try to prove to me that you are not, and I will prove to you the opposite.

And this is where things get interesting. Most of the Russian soldiers already captured start to adopt stereotypical clichés: No, no, I'm not like that...

— Then why did you come to the territory of a foreign country?

The most common answer is 'we

were threatened with a court case and a prison sentence...'

— A man who comes to another country that did not invite him with a gun in his hand is an occupier. How are you different from the Nazis who attacked people in 1941?

This analogy usually works well. You can see the confusion in the eyes of these prisoners right away. And then the truth comes out: 'Yes, I was forced, but I didn't do anything wrong. I didn't kill people. I didn't loot...'. Even those whose military speciality is literally 'a sniper' use this claim.

I suppose a 'sniper' alone cannot be the only judgement. The infantry division does have a sniper position, but in the 'Second World Army' it is often only on paper — a soldier listed as a sniper usually not only has no idea what a 'thousandth' or a 'derivation' is, but often has never even held his SVD rifle.

But when a *Grad* launcher operator starts talking about his innocence, it's really funny, if it didn't make you boil with rage.

Since the beginning of the invasion, many of these occupiers have been bragging about their 'achievements'

on social media. They've been sending home proof of their 'trophy'... You can't really list everything. How many bodies of peaceful citizens are still to be recovered from under the rubble of the apartment blocks? How many Ukrainian citizens have been left without their loved ones? How many children were deported to the territory of the aggressor?

And finally, who killed the civilians at Bucha? Where did the mass grave at Izium come from?

But, of course, all these occupiers who have become prisoners of war insist: 'I didn't shoot...'. And if they did, it was blindly, and if they didn't do it blindly, then they had to... 'We are just ordinary people, nothing depends on us, we have no part in politics...'

Anyone who has to listen to these confessions must have nerves of steel.

Sir Winston Churchill, who was fond of aphorisms, said it well: "A prisoner of war is a man who tries to kill you and fails, and then asks you not to kill him".

It is sickening that some of these war criminals are not only hiding their evil deeds. Some of them do not even realise that they are criminals. 'We are not marauders — the management didn't feed us, so we just took what we could find... The hosts are gone anyway'.

The most horrifying thing is that war crimes in the occupied territories are not just the theft of jewellery by a gunman Vania, not just the shooting of a house by



These are just a few of the people who have been identified as having been involved in the Bucha massacre. Some occupiers think that the war crimes they have committed they will not have to answer for.

a tank driver Vasya, or the rape of a girl in a block post by Fedia from the *Rosgvardiya*. These are not isolated incidents. They represent the systemic state of the Russian power structures. Hatred and violence have also been prevalent there in the form of *dedovshchina* [abuse of junior conscripts], and although this has often been hidden, it is now all pouring out of the screens of Russian television and the blogs of the 'war journalists'.

"We are going to defeat everyone, we are going to kill everyone, we are going to rob everyone who needs to be robbed. Everything will be just the way we like it," said Vladlen Tatarskiy, a former criminal turned 'correspondent', as he smiled happily to his millions of viewers.

And while this is presented as just

a personal opinion, it doesn't take an eagle's eye to see that it's all 'blessed' by those at the very top of the pyramid of violence. Even the very broadcast of Tatarskiy's message did not come from just anywhere — it came from a private party in the Kremlin.

Which is actually very symbolic. Equally symbolic is the fact that the instigator of violence soon became the victim of violence himself.

And I'm not saying that everyone deserves a memorial bust filled with TNT. But every war criminal — from the ordinary Vasya's to the extraordinary Vova's — must receive a legitimate assessment of their actions in Ukraine..

Prepared by Darius Sutkus

Nothing has changed, the same happened to us in 1941 in Rainiai. A mass grave was found in the woods near Izium — about 450 people: men, women and children. Many of the bodies were found with signs of torture. Only about two dozen of those killed were soldiers.



Photo sources: youtube.com, dailyrecord.co.uk, reuters.com



NATO Chief: Ukraine's 'Rightful Place' Is In the Alliance

NATO chief Jens Stoltenberg defiantly declared last month that Ukraine's 'rightful place' is in the military alliance and pledged more support for the country on his first visit to Kyiv since Russia's invasion just over a year ago.

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy urged Stoltenberg, who has been instrumental in marshalling support from NATO members, to push for even more from them, including warplanes, artillery and armoured equipment.

The Kremlin has offered various justifications for going to war, but to this day it repeats that preventing Ukraine from joining NATO remains a key aim

of its invasion, arguing that Kyiv's membership in the alliance would pose an existential threat to Russia.

NATO leaders said in 2008 that Ukraine would one day join the alliance, and Stoltenberg has repeated that promise throughout the war, although the organisation has set no path or timetable for membership.

"Let me be clear, Ukraine's rightful place is in the Euro-Atlantic family," Stoltenberg told at a news conference last month. "Ukraine's rightful place is in NATO."

Zelenskyy said he was grateful for an invitation to a NATO summit in Vilnius, Lithuania, in July, but said his country needed a road map to membership.

"The time has come for the (alliance's) leaders to define the prospects of Ukraine's acquisition of NATO membership, to define the algorithm of Ukraine's movement towards this goal, and to define security guarantees for our state for the period of such movement — that is, for the period before NATO membership," he said.

Stoltenberg said he and Zelenskyy discussed a NATO support program for Ukraine.

"This will help you transition from Soviet-era equipment and doctrines to NATO standards and ensure full interoperability with the alliance," Stoltenberg said. "NATO stands with you today, tomorrow and for as long as it takes."

He also noted an announcement by Denmark and the Netherlands that they plan to provide Ukraine with at least 14 more refurbished *Leopard 2* battle tanks by early 2024.

The fighting in recent months has become a war of attrition, with neither side able to gain momentum. But Ukraine has recently received sophisticated weapons from its Western allies and is expected to launch a counter-offensive in the coming weeks.

Russian President Putin has warned that Moscow could use 'all available means' — a phrase seen by some as a threat to use nuclear weapons — in response to an attack on its territory if Ukraine attempts to retake Moscow-occupied territories.

NATO has no official presence in Ukraine and provides only non-lethal support to Kyiv, but Stoltenberg has been a strong voice of the alliance throughout the war.

A procession of international leaders has made the journey to Kyiv over the past year, and the former Norwegian prime minister is one of the last

major Western figures to do so.

NATO, formed to counter the Soviet Union, has long feared being drawn into a full-scale war with nuclear-armed Russia. But as the West has moved from reluctantly providing helmets and uniforms to tanks, warplanes and advanced missile systems, high-level visits have become routine.

Kremlin spokesman Peskov has said that preventing Ukraine from joining NATO remains one of the goals of what Moscow calls its 'special military operation'. In a conference call with reporters, Peskov said Ukraine's accession would pose a "serious, significant threat to our country, to our country's security".

Earlier this year, Finland joined the alliance, abandoning decades of neutrality in a historic realignment of Europe's post-Cold War security landscape. While NATO says it poses no threat to Russia, the Nordic

country's accession dealt a major political blow to Putin.

Finland's membership doubles Russia's border with the world's largest security alliance. Neighbouring Sweden is also expected to join in the coming months, possibly by the time US President Joe Biden and his NATO counterparts meet in Vilnius in July.

The alliance's focus has been on bolstering defences on its own territory as a deterrent against an attack by Putin on any member country. Under NATO's collective security guarantee, an attack on one member is considered an attack on all.

Information and photos courtesy of:
www.defensenews.com





HIMARS: Joint Training with Allies

On 17-19 April, Brigadier General Arturas Radvilas, Commander of the Lithuanian Land Forces, visited Poland to participate in the first meeting of the European High Mobility Artillery Rocket System (*HIMARS*) Initiative (EHI), which was organised by the US Army V Corps and the Polish Armed Forces. Preparations to integrate the High Mobility Artillery Rocket System into the structure of the Lithuanian Armed Forces began after signing the *HIMARS* Acquisition Agreement with the United States in 2022.

The integration will be carried out in coordination with the allies, especially the neighbours — Estonia, Latvia and Poland.

The purpose of the event was to discuss and familiarise the participants with the integration of *HIMARS* into the functioning military structures. Topics discussed included the readiness of crews and personnel, logistical solutions, principles of system operation and, most importantly, the use and enablement of long-range

precision fires in military conflicts.

The EHI defined its next steps, which include training of personnel, headquarters staff and specialists, and logistical support. The final step is a 20-week military training cycle to complete the system's operational readiness.

The signed *HIMARS* acquisition contract covers the procurement of eight launchers with live and blank

ammunition, including various types and combat-ready guided missile pods, such as the ATACMS (Army Tactical Missile Systems) with an effective range of 300 km. Lithuania is purchasing the systems together with the other Baltic states. The first *HIMARS* deliveries are scheduled for 2025.

Information and photos provided by the Lithuanian Armed Forces.



The Ministry of National Defence plans to spend more than EUR 3.1 billion over the next ten years on military stocks of ammunition of various calibres as part of the planned development of the national defence system. The amount is worth at least 12% of the total annual defence budget and a one-fifth increase compared to previous ambitions.

"The qualitative change in the approach to capability building involves a complex approach to armament projects. That's why the most advanced weapon systems for national defence are being purchased, along with the corresponding ammunition, and the infrastructure for housing, maintaining and storing the equipment is being developed," says Minister of National Defence Arvydas Anušauskas.

The Minister notes that the development of the military arsenal has been one of the top priorities in recent years, receiving more and more attention and funding from the Ministry of Defence each year. This is related not only to the tense regional security situation, but also to the extensive modernisation of the Lithuanian Armed Forces: the acquisition of the NASAMS mid-range air defence system, the High Mobility Artillery



Over EUR 3.1 Billion for Military Stocks

Rocket System (*HIMARS*), *Vilkas* infantry fighting vehicles, *JLTV* joint light tactical vehicles, *PzH2000* and *Ceasar* howitzers, tactical drones and other capabilities.

In the past year, the Ministry of National Defence has been particularly focused on military stockpiling in the wake of the dramatic change in the geopolitical situation. 2022 was a record year in terms of stockpiling, with almost a fifth of the defence

budget (a substantial 18.3%) allocated to it, plus the funds pledged during the year. In comparison, in 2021 the funding amounted to 17.7% of the defence budget and in 2020 to 11.2%. This year, appropriations for military stocks are planned to reach around a quarter of a billion euros (13.4% of the defence budget). This is twice as much as in 2020 (115.6 million euros).

Ammunition accounts for the bulk of the stockpile, i.e. 90%. The remaining 10% is made up of various engineering items and explosives. Battle-decisive munitions (BDM), which are extensively used by NATO, account for the largest share of ammunition procured for the Lithuanian Armed Forces (three quarters).

A part of the acquisition of military supplies is intended for routine training of the armed forces, i.e. for exercises and training events. However, the majority of the purchases is intended for stockpiling.



Information and photos from: www.kam.lt

THE 'PERKŪN SOLDIERS WHEELS

ILONA SKUJAITĖ

First, you hear them rumble. Then the bikers appear on their motorcycles, wearing their usual leather jackets or vests, decorated with the distinctive insignia of the Lithuanian Armed Forces. Although not an official military unit, these soldiers of various ranks (from private to general) have formed the 'Perkūnas MCC' (Lithuanian Armed Forces Motorcycle Club) club, and in their spare time they take part in various events to show the public a different – unusual and eye-catching – face of the national defence system.

15 years on the road

For motorcyclists, spring is the most anticipated time of year. After long winter evenings spent in garages, repairing, cleaning and restoring their 'steel horses', they can finally hit the road. This year, spring was even more special for the Motorcycle Club of the Lithuanian Armed Forces 'Perkūnas MCC', as the club celebrated its 15th anniversary on the 31st of March.

Nearly a hundred motorcyclists from all over Lithuania came to Kaunas for the occasion — newcomers, old-timers,

guests of honour and their families. The event was full of talks, entertainment, congratulations and memories of the club's founding. Back then, in the 'grim' year of 2008, Lithuania was in the midst of the so-called 'war on the roads', with a high number of deaths registered in road accidents. The press at the time wrote as follows: "All those who ride are conscienceless, brave suicides, organ donors. Death breathing in their ears does not frighten these slaves of speed. Drivers and pedestrians are frightened by the tricks of these 'Britvinians' [those who ride 'Britten' motorcycles]". The statistics on fatalities at the time were indeed alarming — 19 people were killed



AS MCC' – ON





Andrius Grigaravičius, President of the Lithuanian Armed Forces Motorcycle Club 'Perkūnas MCC' (third from the left), is happy to see the warrior-biker community growing.

and 147 injured in the first nine months of 2007, and 23 people were killed and 184 injured in the same period in 2008. In response to the situation, the police and many other organisations launched the 'STOP the War on the Roads' campaign, the Lithuanian Motorcycle Sports Federation began looking for ways to improve the country's riding culture, and the newly formed Motorcycle Club paid tribute to all the victims with a civic action called 'We are for Peace on the

Roads'. In the first year of its existence, the club not only took part in various motorcycling events, but also in various social activities. It organised various charity events, visited children in hospitals, donated blood and bought donor cards.

In that first year, the desire to not only unite a group of motorcycle enthusiasts within the Lithuanian Armed Forces, but also to do something meaningful

was evident. And this desire has not diminished in 15 years. Andrius Grigara- vičius, the club's president, has lost count of the number of campaigns and events that have been part of the club's history. "Although we were all brought together by our hobby of riding and travelling on motorcycles, our club's activities continue throughout the year, even when we can't ride due to weather conditions. Social activities are also very important to us, and we are especially active in various events of the Lithuanian Armed Forces, where we try to present the activities of the Armed Forces to the general public. For example, our motorcade accompanied the Vytis monument that was transported all over Lithuania, we regularly participate in the Army and Society Days, various celebrations of the units of the Lithuanian Armed Forces and the Lithuanian Riflemen's Union. We have signed an agreement to co-ope- rate with the Vytautas the Great War Museum in Kaunas, and we participate in each other's events. For many years we have attended the cadet training camp in Juodkrante, and our members have participated in the children's summer

Since its creation, the club has been paying a lot of attention to its merchandise and the club's distinctive colours and symbols.



camp organised by 'Wind Fairies'. It would be nice to organise a children's motorised military camp someday, but it is quite difficult, so for now we prefer to go where we are invited — to camps, town festivals and other events. We are open to suggestions, we like to interact with the public," said the President of the Lithuanian Armed Forces Motorcycle Club 'Perkūnas MCC'.

A club that is growing

Much attention has been paid to the club's clothing and distinctive signs — colours and symbols — since 'Perkūnas MCC' was founded. Since this club is unique in that it unites only soldiers (serving and retired), it is not surprising that it has obtained permission to use the symbol of the Lithuanian Armed Forces in its club emblem, while the two crossed swords is a symbol that is already quite widely used in the world.

Equally important are the club's many long-standing traditions. One of these is the formal induction ceremony for new members. Welcoming new members was also one of the highlights of celebrating the Club's 15th anniversary. During the ceremony, the new members

Meeting with the Azov troops

On April 19th, the Vytautas the Great War Museum was visited by members of the legendary Azov Brigade, which has become a symbol of sacrifice for one's homeland. The brigade defended the Ukrainian city of Mariupol for 82 days under war conditions and held its position in the Azovstal steelworks. During the meeting, the Azov troops spoke about the price of love for one's country. They talked about their experiences on the battlefield and their attempts to resist Russian propaganda. Authentic footage and materials about the Azov Brigade were also presented and shared.

Among the participants were Ruslan Serbov, a defender of Azovstal who lost a leg in the fighting in Mariupol and was taken prisoner by the Russians; Vitaliy Skidan, a defender of Kyiv who was seriously wounded; Oleksandr Chupryniuk, a member of the Ukrainian Armed Forces and head of the organisation 'Support for Ukraine'; Olena Tolkachyova, head of the Azov Angels Foundation, which is responsible for the rehabilitation of soldiers.

The Azov Brigade was formed in 2014, during the events in Maidan. Its soldiers were among the first to fight in occupied Donbass. In 2015, Azov troops recaptured Mariupol from the Russians, which has since become the brigade's home base. Azov came to the attention of the world at the beginning of 2022, when the men and women of Azov heroically held their position at the Azovstal steelworks for 82 days. The Azov fighters are currently holding their ground in the occupied towns of Bakhmut, Vuhledar, Maryinka and Avdiivka.

At the invitation of the organisation 'LDK Palikuonys' (Descendants of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania), the Ukrainian Azov Brigade, which defended Mariupol after the Russian attack, visited Lithuania from 16 to 23 April. Representatives of the Motorcycle Club of the Lithuanian Armed Forces 'Perkūnas MCC' met them at the Vytautas the Great War Museum.



A308

AZOV FENOMENAS - IŠ ARTI

Lietuvoje lankysis Mariupolio gynėjai - iš rusų nelaisvės ištrūkę „Azov“ kariai.

Autentiška medžiaga pasidalins ir ją pristatys „Azovstal“ gynėjas, mūšiuose Mariupolyje kejas netekęs ir rusų nelaisvę iškęs Ruslanas Serbovas, Kyjivą gynęs ir sunkiai sužeistas Vitalijus Skidasas, Ukrainos kariškis, organizacijos „Parama Ukrainai“ vadovas Oleksandras Čuprynjukas, karių reabilitaciją besirūpinančio fondo „Azovo angelai“ vadovė Olena Tolkačiova ir kiti.

Vieta:
Vytauto Didžiojo
Karo Muziejus
K. Donelaičio g. 64,
Kaunas

Data ir laikas:
04.19 d.,
17:30 val.
Renginyje vietos
ir nemokamos

were presented with their badges by the Club President. The badges were placed in a special place — just below the crossed swords. The old-timers then lined up in the 'Walk of Honour' that the newcomers had to pass through, shaking hands with each member as they passed and drinking champagne from a special goblet (made from an orifice).

According to A. Grigaravičius, the president of the club, it was a pleasure not only to meet, discuss and celebrate the anniversary, but also to discuss the plans for the future, as the club continues to grow: "I remember when the first meeting of the club in Rukla in 2008 was attended by about 40 bikers from all over Lithuania, and the initiation group was about 6-7 people who later set out to establish the club. I am glad to see that there are more and more soldiers in the Lithuanian Armed Forces who are interested in motorcycles. We would like to invite everyone to join us. At the moment we have about 60 full members and about the same number of applicants. We also have several women in our ranks."

Founded with three regional branches

in Kaunas, Vilnius and Klaipėda, the club has now added a branch in Alytus. "We also have good news in the northern part of Lithuania. Our club's branch in Mažeikiai has recently started its activities and will unite motorcyclists from the Samogitia region. And in the future there will be other branches in Šiauliai and Panevėžys as well. We are also planning to co-operate more closely with the Riflemen's Union," said the Club President.

The motorcyclists of the 'Perkūnas MCC' club also cooperate with their colleagues abroad. "In neighbouring Latvia there's a motorcycle club called 'Patrioti MMC', which is also represented by the Army. This is probably the reason why we have a very friendly relationship with this particular club. Recently, when the Baltic Way anniversary events took place, it was our club that was invited by the Latvians to bring the Lithuanian flag to the border. Another friendly military club that is based in Sweden is the 'Brothers in Arms MC'. A representative of our club, who lived in Sweden, met their members and a friendly relationship was established. This year the Swedes are expected to visit us here in Lithuania," said A. Grigaravičius.

In this club, everyone is equal — no one pays attention to military ranks in their free time.



Who can be a member?

When talking about the club's activities, its president often mentions that it is a family of like-minded people. It brings together people from across the national defence system: "Soldiers understand each other very well; they don't need to be told what the army is, its missions, or about order and discipline. We really feel one another on a profound level, so when we first meet another serviceman — we always have something to discuss. There is a special sense of togetherness in the club. We have naval, air, land and riflemen in our ranks. Membership of the club is also open to cadets from the General Jonas Žemaitis Military Academy of Lithuania. Moreover, we are probably the only motorcycle club in Lithuania to have a military chaplain. In conclusion, if a person is part of the 'system', has a motorcycle and is in agreement with the rules of the club and the general rules of the motorcycle community, then our doors are always open to them."

It seems that the club president has heard the myth that the club follows the same hierarchy as the military, with a very strict order and so on. But he assures that the uniforms, ranks and military order remain outside the club's doors. "What we do in the club is leisure, a hobby, a gathering of like-minded people. Nobody pays attention to military ranks here, because it is not a military unit. All statutes and regulations are left outside the door. There are no compulsory jobs or obligations. There are only voluntary activities. The fact that we are connected by the Lithuanian Armed Forces only helps us to understand each other better. For example, we all understand and know what on-call, training or six-month missions are. Order is order, and if everyone is working within the same system — there are simply fewer questions," says Grigaravičius.

However, 'Perkūnas MCC' does have a set of rules for organising its activities. So it takes some time to become a full member. "Pretty much all the clubs have some kind of rules for the selection of people who are really interested in the activity. In the first year, people usually

Most of the members ride long-distance touring motorcycles, but there are also sports and semi-off road motorcycles.

just want to get a feel for it. In

the second year, they become candidates and get some club badges, start paying club fees, and after three years, if no one objects, they become full members through a general vote," says the club president.

A sense of unity and freedom

A. Grigaravičius, who has been leading the 'Perkūnas MCC' club for 12 years, says that this activity is not just a hobby for him personally. It's also a very important part of his life, which requires a lot of energy, time and resources. When asked if it is difficult to be the president of the motorcyclists, Andrius just laughs and assures us that he loves this activity and that he does not even count the number of hours that he spends on it. He admits that sometimes the routine gets a bit boring, but after some rest everything falls into place and the moments of joy, the feeling of brotherhood that is not lacking in a group of like-minded people, overshadow any problems.

"The thing that fascinates me the most about being a part of this club is the travelling on a motorcycle and the feeling of freedom. It may seem to some outsiders that it's all about riding in the cold, in the



wind, with flies flying into your mouth and being exposed to all kinds of dangers. But for most of us it's adrenaline, freedom, happiness and a feeling of joy," says Grigaravičius.

When asked how long he'd go without riding, the club president avoids giving a straight answer, but admits that as spring approaches, he's itching to get on a bike as soon as possible. "Imagine, all winter long bikers have been taking care of their bikes — the oil and tyres have been changed long ago, all that's left is to get on and ride. But in Lithuania, like this year, you often have to wait until the spring weather is good enough for the roads to be safe. That impatient feeling of waiting is probably all too familiar to all bikers, and this year the cold spring has turned it into a long wait for everyone," says Andrius.

Another important part of the club's activities is taking care of your bike and discussing it regularly with your fellow

members. We have long winters here in Lithuania, so there's plenty to talk about: some people may be content with the basics, such as brake pad and oil changes and preparing the bike for the season, while others are busy with various improvements and 'beautifications'.

According to the club's president, most of its members ride long-distance touring motorcycles, but there are also sports and semi-off road motorcycles. "But it's not the make, price or country of manufacture that counts. It's the desire to ride and the unique feeling of freedom, the roar of the engine and the good feeling of being part of your own group," says the club president.


The members of the 'Perkūnas MCC' club usually travel in groups of 5-6 bikes, because it is not very comfortable to travel in a larger group, and their routes take them not only across Lithuania, but also abroad. ■



Photos from the 'Perkūnas MCC' archives.

HENRY LAZARUS GAIDIS

LITHUANIAN AMERICA IMMIGRA FLAGS



Lithuanian-American woman, draped in an American flag, from the 19th company of 'Vyčiai' (Knights) Society in Baltimore, 1914.

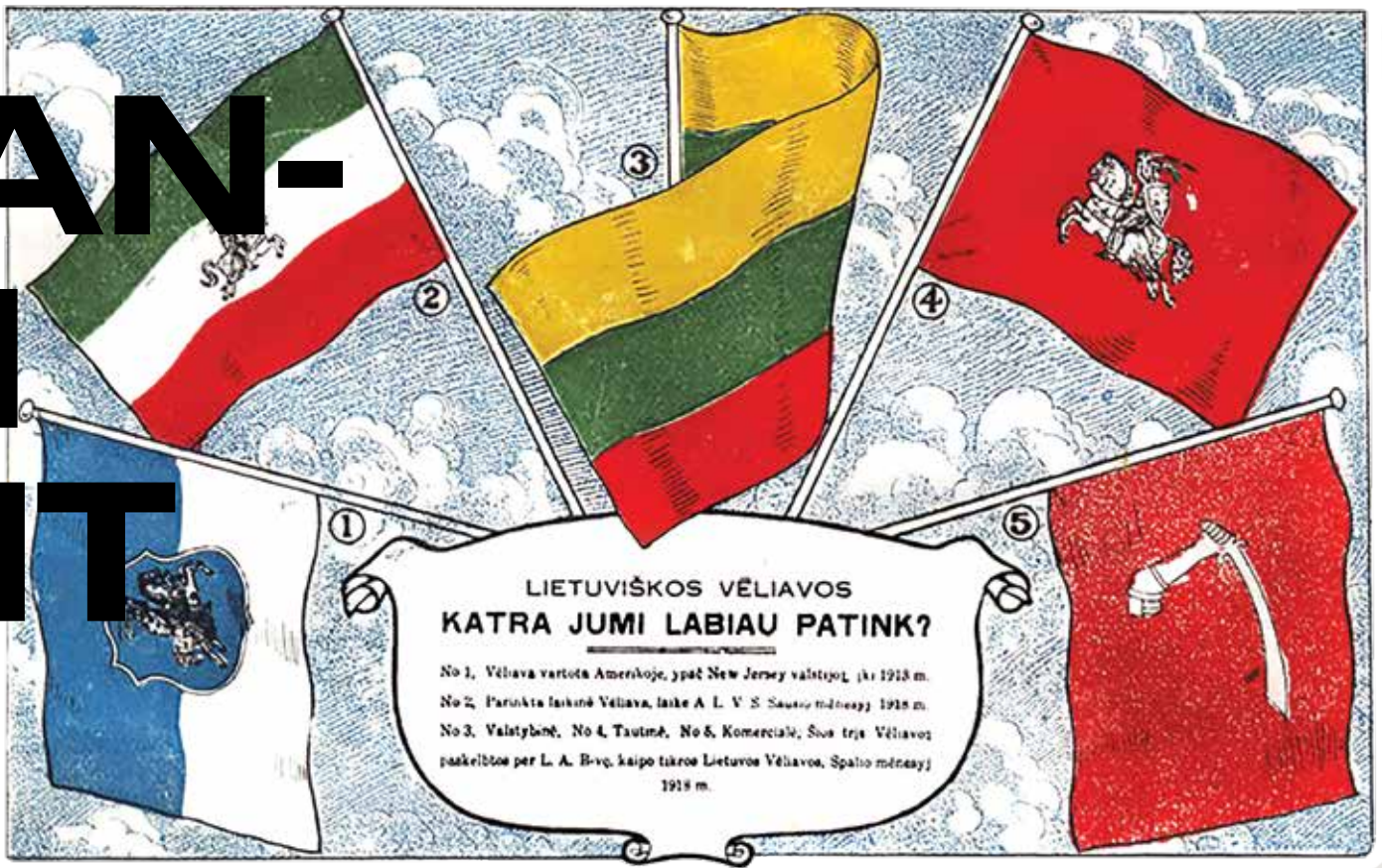
At the end of the XIXth century in the context of national awakening, Lithuanian patriots on both sides of the Atlantic realized a great need to have some type of flag to distinguish themselves from Russians and Poles. However, that was not possible in a land that was still under the tsarist Russia. It was only in America that Lithuanians could proudly display their flag proclaiming their ethnic heritage for all to see.

Secular and religious flags

History documents that the majority of Lithuanian immigrants who arrived in the United States in the late 1880s suffered great hardships, but within twenty years they had established vibrant communities in major cities from Boston to Baltimore

and from New York to Chicago. The establishment of these communities generally followed the same pattern of growth. The first priority of a new immigrant was to find a place to live and a way to support himself economically. They tended to live and work in the same areas because of the security and friendship offered by other immigrants who spoke the same language. Soon the handful of early arrivals were

LITHUANIAN-AMERICAN



joined by their many compatriots and even relatives, and began to form their own ethnic communities. Once these communities had a sufficient ethnic population, they sought to establish religious societies and a church. Following the establishment of these religious societies and churches, this growth soon included a wide variety of secular and social organisations and meeting places. Just as quickly, these Lithuanian immigrants began to Americanise and join their new countrymen in their existing social and political activities. They quickly learned that there was strength in unity, and that immigrants could accomplish more by banding together. These activities undoubtedly included participating in the celebration of all the nation's holidays and joining their new countrymen in trade unions and, for those who became citizens, in political parties. In those days, American patriotism was rampant and the flag was flown everywhere. Undoubtedly, seeing the great love Americans had for their flags was one of the first things the new immigrants wanted to emulate, so that they too could show their pride in their own ethnic heritage.



Lithuanian-Americans with US flags and immigrant tricolours during the ceremony on July 4, 1918.

Although most Lithuanian immigrants were familiar with their historic Vytis national emblem, only a few old veterans of the Polish-Lithuanian insurrection of 1863-1864 could recall a Lithuanian flag. For most immigrants, the only recollection of a Lithuanian flag in their homeland were the local Catholic banners they saw at church religious and social events. With the Lithuanian national awakening, Lithuanian patriots on both sides of the Atlantic quickly

realised the great need to have some sort of flag to distinguish themselves from Russians and Poles, but this was not possible in a land that was still under the tsarist Russian and Prussian-German occupation. It was only in America that Lithuanians could proudly display some sort of flag that proclaimed their ethnic heritage for all to see. The dilemma was how the far-flung Lithuanian-American communities could agree on the colour and design of such a flag.



Patriotic Lithuanian-American women from Baltimore with US and Lithuanian flags, 1918.

consciousness. Unfortunately, his efforts often brought him into public conflict with both Poles and many Polish educated Lithuanian priests. This secular religious conflict stemmed from Šliūpas' passionate urging of Lithuanian-Americans to regain their self-respect and to emphasise Lithuania's great national heritage. As the majority of Lithuanian immigrants continued to cling to their Catholic religious upbringing, Dr J. Šliūpas saw the Polonised Masses they attended, largely dominated by a Polish hierarchy, as a major obstacle to the revival of their ethnic consciousness and national pride. As a result, he not only supported the efforts of the Lithuanian community to establish their own churches, but also insisted that their services be conducted in the Lithuanian language.

After the establishment of a Lithuanian Catholic Church, the most

Over time, two main types of flag design evolved: a light blue and white striped flag, largely adopted by Lithuanian religious societies, and a similar green, white and red striped flag adopted by secular community organisations. Both flags generally featured a traditional Lithuanian Vytis emblem, with or without a shield, in the centre.

The influence of Dr J. Šliūpas

Although historians have not been able to establish when the first Lithuanian-American flag appeared, there is no doubt that such flags came into common use shortly after the advent of the Lithuanian nationalist movement and the arrival of Dr Jonas Šliūpas in the United States. During the period from 1894 to 1920, when Dr J. Šliūpas lived in America, he became the figurehead and the most prominent American leader supporting the revival of Lithuanian



Emigrant women from Lithuania, around the 1920s.

common goal of immigrants was to establish a local benevolent society to provide sickness, disability and death benefits to paying members. Many earlier arriving Polish local churches had established such benevolent organisations, and later arriving Lithuanian immigrants had initially joined such existing societies. To increase its membership, the Polish National Alliance (PNA) sought to recruit Lithuanians and Ukrainians and adopted the seal of the Polish-Lithuanian Uprising of



1863-1864 as its membership insignia. This insignia featured the images of the Polish eagle, the Lithuanian knight and the Ukrainian angel, but the majority of its leaders and members were Polish.

During this period, Lithuanian-Americans became politically active in virtually every one of their established communities. One of the most obvious factors preventing the Lithuanian National Awakening from becoming widely known was the lack of a recognisable Lithuanian national holiday and flag, similar to the American 4th of July celebration and the Star-Spangled Banner, around which its supporters could rally. In 1892, members of the Baltimore Copernicus Society recommended that Lithuanian-American societies across the country begin celebrating the abolition of serfdom by Russian Tsar Alexan-

Flag of the Lithuanian National Awakening in America, around the year 1900.

der III in 1861 as their national holiday. As a result, the great success of the Baltimore Lithuanian Community's March 4, 1891 Emancipation Day celebration in honour of their nation's own heritage and contributions became an annual event that continued

in virtually every community until World War I. Although history does not document when these Lithuanian-American communities began waving flags as such events, they logically grew out of these celebrations.



A group of Lithuanian emigrants from New Jersey and Connecticut photographed against the background of the US flag and the Lithuanian tricolour.



Lithuanian emigrants in the USA initially used church flags at their events.

Flag colours and design

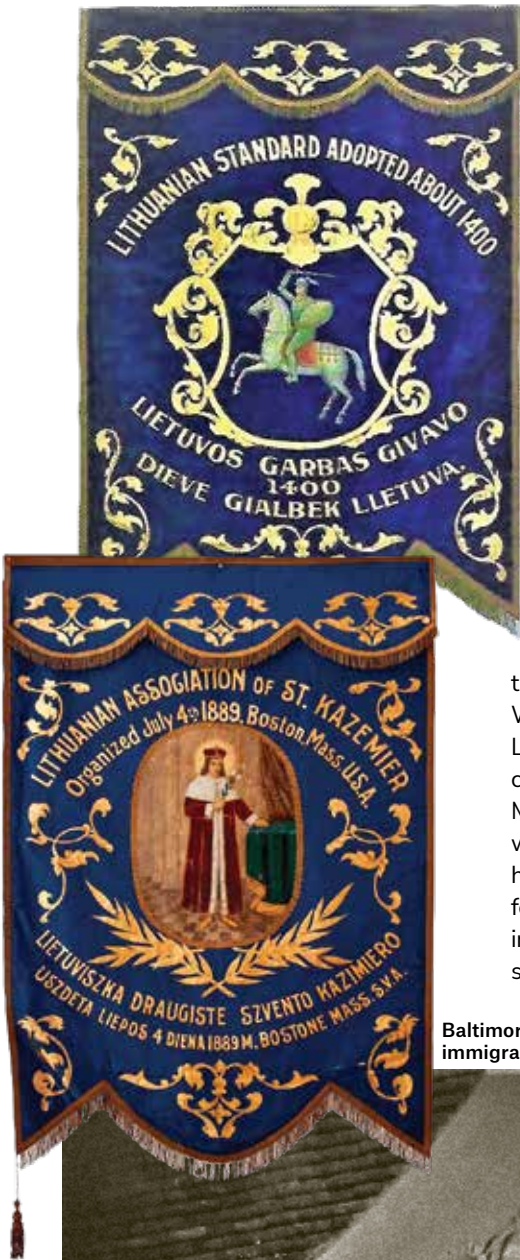
There was no formal Lithuanian-American agreement regarding the use of flags within the widely dispersed communities, but over time two main types of flag designs developed.

Flags of the first type were generally made of a solid-coloured silk cloth with an embroidered or hand-painted image of Christ, the Virgin Mary or the patron saint of the church, surrounded by the name of the church or religious organisation.

Most of these flags were made using the three traditional church colours. White signifies the purity of Christ the Lord, blue and white are the traditional colours associated with the Blessed Mother, and red is the colour associated with martyred saints. Although the hanging church banners worked well for annual slow moving processions in or around a church, they were not suitable for frequent and prolonged



Green, white and red were commonly used in the first American-Lithuanian national flags.



Baltimore Lithuanians proudly showing the US and the immigrant flag with the Vytis symbol.





The paraphernalia of the Third National Lithuanian-American Congress held in Brooklyn (New York) on 13 March 1918.



world. However, both became victims of the movement they symbolised. Having learned of the signing of the Lithuanian Declaration of Independence on 16 February 1918, the existing Nationalist and Catholic factions joined together to call for a Third National Congress of Lithuanian-Americans.

At this convention, held on 13 March 1918 at Madison Square Garden in New York, the traditional convention membership badges and the convention hall itself were decorated with the secular green-white-red flag — a clear indication of the use of this flag at the most important Lithuanian-Ameri-


can event. Here, community members representing virtually every Lithuanian organisation in the United States at the time declared their support for the new Lithuanian Republic and called upon the United States to do the same. Upon learning that the established republic had adopted a yellow, green and red striped flag as the Lithuanian national flag, the Lithuanian-American immigrant flags ceased to be flown and were largely forgotten by history. ■

American-style outdoor social events.

It is clear from the surviving Lithuanian-American flags and contemporary photographs that the two main types of flags developed and were used at secular events. A light blue and white flag with horizontal or vertical stripes was used mainly by the Lithuanian religiously affiliated societies and was used at both religious and secular events. A horizontal green, white and red stripe flag was used by secular community organisations. Both of these striped flags featured some sort of traditional Lithuanian Vytis emblem.

History clearly documents that the Lithuanian-American immigrant flags described were the first clearly visible symbols of the Lithuanian National Awakening displayed to the





No one in the civilised world doubts that Ukraine isn't just fighting its own war, but is fighting the civilised world's war for democratic values on this planet. If Ukraine were to lose the fight against Russia, then our faith in the values of Western civilisation, our trust in the right of citizens to their own property, freedom or simply the natural right to life, would collapse with it.

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Today we are witnessing unique events unfolding before our very eyes. They are being created by the heroic resistance of the Ukrainian people against the armed forces of the Russian Federation (RF), which are many times larger than the Ukrainian Armed Forces in every respect: equipment, weapons, personnel, military capacity, strategic-operational depth, and so on. This allows the RF not only to safely regroup its forces, replenish them (without having to fear attacks on its territory), but also to prepare for new offensives with impunity. What the Russians lack, however, is the essential element — the motivation to fight.

More than nine years of war in eastern Ukraine spilled over into the depths of the rest of the country on 24 Februa-

ry 2022. Military operations of all kinds have taught us many military lessons, which have provided fodder and work for a number of global think tanks and so-called 'couch generals'. The experience that has been gained through blood in conventional warfare is an invaluable experience not only for the Ukrainian or Russian military staffs. All of the experience gained and the lessons learnt can be useful and applicable to the defence of NATO countries as well. In order to provide a concentrated overview of some of the key aspects, however, it is necessary to look at this through the lens of the applicability of the lessons to our present-day military context. It is also a matter of clarification as to what practices and lessons we can apply to ourselves.

By understanding the nature of the threat, its origins and the capabilities of the enemy forces, we can draw conclusions about how the enemy has

changed its military structures over the course of the war and what the trends are. As a result, we can then determine our own needs for the development of military power and set priorities for the development of capabilities. Based on these criteria, we can then develop not only preventive alternatives, but actually much superior capability. In this context, we can prepare implementation plans, plan the necessary resources, adjust the plans and properly prepare our national defence capability needs, aiming not only to counter the enemy, but also to be superior to him. The criteria for superiority remain classic: identifying threats before the enemy, being able to shoot and reach further, manoeuvre more efficiently and, above all, fight more motivated and fiercely. This would make it possible not only to defeat the enemy, but also to deter them from their intentions by demonstrating our own will to fight and to win.

LESSONS FROM RAINE AT WE MUST ARN

COL. ALEKSIEJUS GAIŽEVSKIS



Military power — part of the material or spiritual totality of forces of a state or union of states that can be or are used for military-political purposes.

(Source: Lithuanian Encyclopaedia)

In simple terms, a country's ability to protect itself from an external enemy, thus ensuring the security of its own and, in Lithuania's case, NATO's eastern borders, is military power, which is an integral part of state power. A professional, well-trained and motivated soldier must

always be at the forefront of a country's defence. Next come weapons and equipment superior in speed, accuracy, range and effectiveness. Therefore, the task of the Lithuanian Armed Forces is to develop its soldiers' ability not only to control their weapons and equipment, but also

to use them effectively in military tasks in all weather conditions and seasons. At the end of the day, however, the will of the man/warrior to defend and resist is often the most important aspect.

But let's start with the basics. The first thing you need to do to prepare for battle is to know your enemy. You need to have a very good understanding of their military readiness, their capabilities, their motivation and their will to fight. The Russian forces fighting in Ukraine are mainly made up of ground forces, the navy, the air force and special operations units. And as much as we like motivational videos of Russian forces being destroyed, the reality is: they are far from being destroyed. Russia has a considerable reserve of forces and a great deal of potential to rebuild them. Today it is simply not possible to say that Russia's human resources have been exhausted. And if the Russian authorities have the political will to do so, the war will go on for as long as the ruling regime in the Kremlin wants to stay in power.

As it stands, however, the military of the RF has so far failed to carry out its strategic mission of the 'de-Nazification and demilitarisation' of Ukraine. They have not even been able to hold on to the occupied territories. In many cases



they have had to retreat quite quickly to avoid the complete destruction of their main offensive forces. Let's not forget that the offensive forces on the front line are the most heavily invested, so the loss of the first echelons is not only a loss of initiative, it is also a loss of the most effective initiative potential of the army. After suffering heavy losses, the offensive forces of the RF were either partially destroyed or forced to retreat. Then units not trained in conventional warfare began to be used in military operations, the so-called 'Russian jazz'. These were mainly units of the internal army of the RF, the National Guard, the security forces, the police, etc. Ensuring the maintenance of occupied territories is their immediate task in such operations. However, many of them were forced to fight as regular military units due to the lack of human resources and the rapidly changing dynamics of warfare. In other words, instead of a rapid and planned withdrawal in the event of failure, non-combat units have been used to fill the gaps in the defence line in order to main-

tain the occupied territories at all costs. This has resulted in huge losses for the Russian armed forces and for the non-military formations that are supporting it.

This particular war has also seen the emergence of a relatively new military phenomenon — the use of private military companies (PMC) in military operations. Although this is nothing new in the history of warfare, their use in most of the Ukrainian frontlines and military operations has demonstrated the inability of the RF armed forces to carry out independently not only the strategic, operational, but also the basic tactical tasks assigned to it. It is important to note that apart from the most notorious private military company 'Wagner', often referred to in the media as the group of 'Putin's chef', there were and are other paramilitary formations (it is highly debatable whether they can be called companies): 'Redut', 'Patriot', various ultra-radical groups, volunteer battalions, military formations of the governors of the RF, etc. (for more information, see the

March 2023 issue of WARRIOR). After the Ukrainian Armed Forces practically destroyed, or rather rendered ineffective, the first offensive wave of the RF forces, these private military companies owned by Russian oligarchs or similar entities essentially took the initiative on various fronts. However, one very important aspect has immediately come to light. These companies are totally dependent on the Russian armed forces for logistics, combat support (artillery, aviation), intelligence, etc. Moreover, although the basic model of military training of Russian military units is similar, the motivation of these mercenaries to fight differs from that of regular military units. Mercenaries are mostly motivated by getting paid more than regular RF troops are paid. As for their tactical advantage, unlike regular troops (mainly infantry), mercenaries tend to use small-unit tactics in military operations. It must be admitted, however, that Russian mercenaries were among the first in the Russian military structure to learn from the successful

Minister of National Defence of the Republic of Lithuania Arvydas Anušauskas recently paid another regular visit to Ukraine.





place the manpower lost in the fighting. They are also expected to be able to hold the occupied territories. As a result, even they tend to be exhausted quite quickly. Personnel who are not directly involved in combat (due to physical disabilities or lack of trust) are mostly used for engineering and logistical military needs: digging of defence trenches, fortifications, but also in logistics — for logistical tasks, etc. National mobilisation has certainly 'replenished' the regular military units of the Russian Federation with some 'meat', but it has not changed the situation in the sphere of specialities, where there is a serious lack. The armed forces of the RF lack professional drivers, mechanics, medics, junior commanders, various military specialists, and much more. 'Partially mobilised' soldiers, often from regular forces or the same private military companies, are used for the so-called 'reconnaissance battles'. In essence, Ukrainian firing points are uncovered and the Russian regular forces adjust their mortar, artillery, air or rocket fire systems accordingly, at the cost of their lives (which are worthless to the RF). We must not forget another group, the Ukrainians themselves, who are given Russian passports in the occupied territories and then mobilised into the Russian armed forces, often without their consent. They are thus forced to fight against their own country. However, they should not be underesti-

combat experience of the Ukrainian forces and apply it to the improvement of their tactical skills. One such example was the capture of Soledar in Ukraine. Faster tactical victories and tactically superior positions were achieved by advancing from the flanks in small units, attacking where defences were weak, circumventing where resistance was strong, and cutting off supply routes. It was in this way that important objects

and areas in the east of the Ukraine were taken. But perhaps the greatest 'advantage' of the Russian forces is, unfortunately, their total disregard for their own losses and their disregard for human losses.

Besides mercenaries, locals from the occupied territories (especially from Donetsk and Luhansk regions) are also forced to fight. In most cases, they are used not only as a human resource to re-





mated, because they themselves know that they are betraying their country as soon as they take up arms, and of course they are treated as betraying their country. In other words, Russia has no need or desire for them either. Such an enemy — without a future and without prospects — is very problematic.

Let's take a step back for a moment. Up until 2014, the system of military training in Ukraine was virtually identical to that of the Russian armed forces. Since 2015, at the invitation of the Ukrainian leadership, a number of NATO members have contributed to the modernisation of the Ukrainian Armed Forces and the improvement of their military training. The basic military courses held in Ukraine were based on the Lithuanian Armed Forces' military training model and supported by our instructors. In addition to these courses, Lithuania was also instrumental in training Ukrainian specialists: snipers, military police, deminers and other specialists needed by Ukraine. Equally important was the training of junior commanders. Ukraine began sending its non-commissioned officers (NCOs) to Lithuania for training, and Lithuanian instructors have been

involved in implementing concepts and curricula for training and readiness of Ukrainian NCOs in the Armed Forces. It is a great pity, however, that the transformation and implementation of all the desired reforms for the modernisation of the Ukrainian Armed Forces in line with modern NATO standards could not be fully achieved by 2022. There are a number of key reasons for this. The first is the war in eastern Ukraine, which began in 2014. It has been a distraction not only in terms of attention but also in terms of material and human resources. The second is the legacy of the Soviet Union, which is still very much present in the Ukrainian military system. Nevertheless, in spite of the continuing institutional shortcomings, the superiority of the results of the new military training system over the Soviet one is obvious. The fundamental changes in the system of military education were connected with the change in the leading military element, when things began to change from the Soviet mentality to the relations and standards of the West. The importance of junior commanders in the military training and command system and their invaluable role in battle planning

and execution began to be recognised by the leading authorities of the Ukrainian Armed Forces. This is one of the key aspects of victory. NCOs in the Ukrainian Armed Forces have begun to become respected warriors. In parallel, specialists, commanders and officers have been trained in Western leadership models and modern decision-making processes in line with NATO standards.

Fast forward to 24 February 2022, the Russian armed forces has launched a full-scale invasion of Ukraine on four fronts. Ukraine declares a national mobilisation. Not surprisingly, the rapidly expanding army units began to lack junior commanders to take charge of the mobilised troops and lead them into battle. All the instructors, some of the best specialists in their field, were quickly thrown into the heart of the war. As a result, there was no one left to professionally train and prepare reserve troops for the replacement of casualties or for the preparation of the next shifts of mobilised troops. And so the training of military specialists the army desperately needed came to a virtual standstill. The art of war is not something that you learn once and then it stays with you for a life-



time. Tactics change, weapons systems change, and then there is teamwork, the discipline of civilian life, not to mention the decline in physical fitness. Simply brushing up on your military skills, familiarising yourself with the use of weapons, is not enough. With the first waves of missile and air strikes, the RF has almost completely destroyed many of Ukraine's military training centres, which has created major challenges for Ukraine in the training of regular army units as well as territorial military units. In addition to destroying military training infrastructure, the RF's ability to launch long-range strikes against targets in the interior of Ukraine, disrupting and damaging large concentrations of troops, has made military training very dangerous.

In addition to all these problems related to training, a major challenge was adapting the technical training of personnel (in wartime conditions) to completely different platforms of military capability that began to be delivered from all around the world. Neither the logistics nor the people themselves were fully prepared and adapted to such challenges, despite the fact that the countries providing military assistance tried to transfer to Ukraine tools already known and used by the Ukrainian Armed Forces. Nevertheless, the military units quickly reorganised themselves and began to manage on the basis of their individual situations and understanding.

Some prepared memos, others shared instructional videos on Youtube, some translated instructions, some contacted former course mates from abroad to ask for help, etc. For example, for the same M113 armoured personnel carriers, even the repair keys that are needed are specific — American. The more platforms there are to deal with — the greater the challenge in terms of military training and logistics.

It is often the case that the strategic plan can change as soon as the first shot is fired. It is therefore important to understand the principles of command and control and to be able to adapt them to the reality of the situation on the front line. But in any case, the emphasis is definitely on management and leadership. On the Ukrainian front, logic dictates that there can be no centralised management where the battle is being fought. There can only be decentralisation according to the principles of 'goal-oriented leadership', because those who are on the ground see and know better what needs to be done to achieve the best result. In contrast, in the military units of the RF, leadership is centralised to the greatest extent possible. Their battalion and company commanders are constrained because only officers can order fire support. In most combat companies, platoon commanders are sergeants. Therefore (due to doctrinal restrictions and the peculiarities of military training)

they are not given the right to order fire support independently. It is up to the junior commanders involved to see the real picture of the battle and to decide when and where to direct the fire support in the most effective way to achieve the maximum effect. This is where the Ukrainian Armed Forces stand to benefit. Thanks to the NATO training system, Ukrainian sergeants are trained to make independent decisions. They have the competence and authority to make fire support decisions in their areas of responsibility. Not to mention smaller fire support assets, such as 60mm mortars, which the Ukrainian Armed Forces can deploy at squad or team level, allowing their junior commanders to make more independent decisions compared to Russian armed forces commanders.

Russia's overconfidence in an easy victory has cost them dearly. By overestimating itself and underestimating the incredible unity and resilience of the Ukrainian Armed Forces and civilian population, Russia suffered a crushing defeat in the interior of Ukraine and a forced retreat of its forces back to the eastern region in the very first months of the full-scale invasion. Not only did Russia fail to build up sufficient offensive expeditious and operational capabilities, but it was also realistically unable to maintain its logistics, support, supply routes and command and control elements. All of this was either too scattered or, on the contrary, too concentrated in one place, which was destroyed by quick Ukrainian raids, ambushes or concentrated artillery fire. Later, Russia changed the composition of its battle groups according to the military operations it was conducting, but in the meantime the Ukrainian troops had already managed to take the lead in the attack and destruction of high-value Russian targets: command posts, their logistics, artillery and air systems, mass concentration areas, railway crossings, bridges, and so on. The Russian armed forces had started the large-scale invasion with battle group fighting, but now that the 'special operation' has become this full-scale war, a radical change has begun. Having failed to achieve what it set out to achieve, Russia has begun to make internal military structural changes. Unprepared for a long, gruelling

war, Russia was unable to fight the many Ukrainian tactical groups that inflicted heavy losses on the Russian armed forces, both in close combat and deep behind the frontline, destroying high-value targets and cutting off vital support. The Russian Defence Staff, realising that it could not fight the Ukrainian formations it faced across the whole of Ukrainian territory, initiated a structural change back to Soviet military doctrine. Following the RF leadership's assessment that the battle group formations had failed to live up to expectations by failing to achieve military objectives, there is now a shift (or rather a return) to the structures of World War II, with regiments, divisions, etc. being formed, and the tactics of small units being limited to special operations units and PMCs, as well as to conducting rapid operations, usually assault missions.

On the battlefield, one of the most effective combat support elements is combat aviation. It is fast, accurate and effective, but the radical change in the capabilities of the anti-aircraft systems of the Ukrainian Armed Forces has blunted the impact of the military aviation of the RF. In Ukraine, the 'Iron Dome' may not

yet be completely closed, but the aviation of both sides is severely limited by the performance of effective anti-aircraft systems. Currently, to protect combat aviation units and pilots themselves, unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs) and drone systems have taken the lead in the air-space. Manned aviation tends to operate only deep in the rear of the battlefield and rarely crosses the front line. With mutually strong air defences on both sides, we are moving to the next level of warfare, where manned air systems will be reinforced and in some cases replaced by UAVs and kamikadze drones. Manned aviation will still be involved in combat and logistical support, but air-to-ground missile systems will be launched from safe areas, while logistical aviation and medical air support will operate in the background. Drones have proven their worth not only in reconnaissance (both close-range and long-range), but also in artillery fire correction, rocket salvo systems, and the delivery and dropping of explosives directly on the 'enemy's head'. It is no secret that this also has a strong de-motivating effect on the enemy. Admittedly, the effect is not the same as that of combat aviation. But on the other

hand, there is almost no loss of very expensive personnel, and the loss of a UAV is many times less costly. The military units of both the Russian Federation and the Ukraine are also using drones to coordinate the operations of their assault teams in the so-called online mode. During the dark hours of the day, the drones' cameras and thermal imagers are used to identify units and military equipment, adjust direct and indirect fire on the basis of their thermal energy, and destroy the enemy very efficiently.

The effectiveness of Russian military equipment — both heavy and often light — depends on the time of year and the natural conditions. Ukraine's fertile soil does not always allow full use of armoured vehicles in combat manoeuvres, while Ukrainian anti-tank systems, artillery and anti-tank mines successfully stop and destroy any military equipment that comes under concentrated fire. This is one of the main reasons why combat vehicles are forced to travel on road infrastructure. This, however, becomes an advantage for the Ukrainian Armed Forces in the exploitation of combat ambushes (long and short range), the stopping of enemy columns, and the

Areas retaken from the occupiers are particularly damaged.



destruction of blocked enemy columns or tactical groups by rocket and artillery systems. It is also important to emphasise the protection of armoured vehicles against anti-tank weapons: flexible armour nets are much more effective than the twisted, fixed metal frames used by the Russians. If Russia had studied the experience of NATO operations in Iraq and Afghanistan, it would have learned that NATO countries have long since switched to flexible technical security nets with metal sensors in their operational areas. The Ukrainians, having benefited from joint operations with NATO, have used this experience to protect their equipment from Russian anti-tank systems, while Russian equipment is less protected from NATO weapons.

Fighting in densely populated areas is the most unpleasant thing, especially for the civilian population. However, it is important to recognise that the battle for cities and towns is not just a matter of not losing yet another place of residence or a foothold on the map. The most important reason for this is the ability of any military unit to take advantage of the fortification advantages that the urban infrastructure offers: camouflage, protection by artificial means and logistics. Almost any force deployed in open areas can be easily identified using modern

thermal imaging technology and other surveillance tools. Once a target has been identified, it is virtually guaranteed to come under a never-ending hail of bullets, from which it is very difficult to hide in an open area. Protection in open areas requires digging into the ground and maximum dispersion of forces, which has a negative effect on concentrated firepower. The advantage of urban combat, however, is that every building, bridge and so on is an artificial obstacle. As for the even greater advantages of fighting in populated areas, it should be noted that Russia was prepared for a two-dimensional operation (land and air, and with limitations at sea). In Ukraine, however, it was forced to fight in three dimensions (admittedly not on all fronts). The third dimension is the underground infrastructure. Most of the Ukrainian cities have a considerable amount of underground systems. Kyiv has the deepest underground metro system in the world, which not only provides the capital's inhabitants with shelter from Russian missile attacks, but is also the basis for a long and very successful military resistance. The underground systems of the Azovstal steelworks in Mariupol are also worthy of mention. To succeed in defeating these underground systems, you need separate and specially trained units

capable of fighting such underground battles. Russia was not ready for these circumstances. The difference between defending and attacking in open area is calculated at 1:3, while defending in populated area the ratio doubles to 1:5, and in some cases can even reach 1:10. But there is a downside. Apart from the total destruction of civilian infrastructure or its inoperability after the fighting is over, fighting in populated areas results in huge civilian casualties. Ukraine's response to this, however, has been to conceal certain power generation facilities and sensitive equipment in order to protect them from destruction. Other aspects relate to logistics. In and under the city there are favourable conditions for hiding ammunition and food supplies, for setting up hospitals, for storing generators and, above all, for protecting oneself from the heat radiation. This radiation practically 'shines' on the screens of thermal imagers and invites the fire.

In military prioritisation of joint operations and destruction, high-value targets are first identified, their destruction is prioritised and sequenced, and then the most effective means of destruction is selected. Unable to defeat the Ukrainian forces, the RF army decided to change its tactics for selecting and destroying targets. Ins-



stead of targeting military installations, Ukrainian economic and energetic facilities were destroyed. According to the RF Defence Staff, this was intended to reduce their opponents' willingness to fight and force them to surrender by breaking their will to resist. However, the opposite has happened. Ukraine has adapted to energy disruptions. It has learnt how to conceal and protect energy sources and decentralise energy production. Ukraine's advantage is that it has focused its military resources on destroying Russian military targets. As a result, it is able to maintain a stable frontline defence and even launch successful counter-attacks. It is estimated that when the full-scale invasion of Ukraine began, Russia used about 10 % of its military strikes to target Ukraine's civilian infrastructure, while the rest were aimed at military targets. Today, the Ukrainians are able to preserve this infrastructure by means of camouflage and manoeuvres, as they have very cleverly decentralised their military command and logistics. In recent months, Russia has focused more than 50 % of its strategic missile strikes on the civilian energy infrastructure of Ukraine. For the Ukrainians, however, it takes about 5 to 7 days to fully restore the energy supply that has been disrupted. Typically, 14 days to a month elapse between Russian missile strikes in Ukraine. Sadly, however, Ukraine does not yet have the capability to retaliate with strikes of the same nature and effect against Russian military and civilian energy infrastructure in Russia's interior, so Russia has a huge advantage in this respect. But even if they were able to do so, it seems unlikely that the Ukrainians would choose to directly target Russian civilian facilities. Unless, of course, Russia's energy and other infrastructure had been adapted to serve the military industry. In that case, it would become a legitimate military target for destruction.

Technical training of troops is now also one of the most important aspects of self-protection against artillery fire. At the beginning of the large-scale invasion of Ukraine, infantrymen naively tried to hide behind trees or in roadside ditches. But after the heavy losses they suffered,



they learnt their lesson and began to dig in as soon as the tactical situation allowed. Despite the fatigue of the soldiers, trenches and so-called foxholes not only provided protection from artillery and air strikes, but also allowed for an effective and lasting defence. Such protection can save resources (ammunition, medical supplies, food, water, etc.) from direct destruction. In any case, however, the defensive barricades have to be very closely coordinated with the logistical supply lines. If the supply routes to the defensive positions are not secured, there will be nothing left to fight with after an intense battle has been fought. If it is not possible to dig in and ensure uninterrupted supply to the defensive positions, then the only option is to take the defensive position in a populated area, where security, supply, maintenance and camouflage can be ensured for a longer period of time. Interestingly, both sides have learnt to replenish their logistical resources by making quick raids, pushing the enemy out of his defensive trenches and then, by the time they return, the stockpiles are already 'cleared'.

The RF clearly has the upper hand in this theatre of war in Ukraine with the

electronic warfare tools it has at its disposal. From time to time they have the ability to completely cut off Ukraine's communications on certain sections of the front, but fortunately not for too long, as this also has an effect on the electronics of the RF armed forces itself. No Internet connection — means no aerial view, no control. And when you have new and not yet 'well-oiled' units, command and control problems are guaranteed. Compare this to Russia, which uses its own *GLONASS* satellite-based communications system. Russia has about 18 satellites in orbit, which you'd think would be enough to meet Russia's needs, but they're more focused on serving northern Russia, and the Russians have reportedly recently started experiencing malfunctions with the satellites already orbiting. Let's compare this with the *STARLINK* system from the United States, which is used by the Ukrainian Armed Forces. This system currently has over 2 500 satellites in orbit. The speed and accuracy of the information — is a critical factor in the battle and often determines the course and the outcome of the battle itself. ■



10 Essential Steps

Let's ask ourselves what we could do to be properly prepared in the face of a potential enemy:

- 1.** Knowing and understanding what high value targets we have and what protection measures we need to identify and apply in time to protect them. These can be many and varied: camouflage, mobility, appropriate anti-missile and anti-aircraft measures, etc. Don't forget that there is always the possibility that hostile diversionary groups will be active and will carry out acts of sabotage. Staff headquarters should no longer operate in tents, which are easily identified and destroyed, given the experience of the war in Ukraine. Soldiers must be able to use thermal and electromagnetic radiation camouflage and be equipped with special protective gear. This needs to be a focus not only in the training of staffs, but also in the training of individual soldiers.
- 2.** To ensure that we do not inadvertently destroy friendly forces when destroying ene-

my targets, we must continually update our capabilities and skills to rapidly identify our own and enemy military equipment, weapons, personnel and, in particular, aircraft.

- 3.** Continually upgrade skills and train with tools not only already integrated, but soon to be, that 'see farther, move faster, hit more accurately and destroy more efficiently' than the enemy's equivalent.
- 4.** Military education and training must be based on the principle of maximum decentralisation of command and control of military operations, the ability of units to operate autonomously, and the provision of all fire support systems capable of being handled and carried by the units to enable them to conduct military operations as independently as possible.

- 5.** Establishment, training and maintenance of a personnel pool. One of the most important aspects is that each military unit must not only be able to rapidly assemble the personnel assigned to it, but also to train them in accordance with the wartime structures and the military training cycles of the unit. It is up to the commander of the unit to decide when and for which training cycles and phases of specialised training the reserve troops are to be called up.



Photo source: www.flickr.com

6. Strengthening of society's resistance to propaganda is a necessity. The Lithuanian people have a unique 'gene', which goes back to the time of King Mindaugas. Since then, the spirit of patriotism has only been strengthened by the heroic marches of the Independence Battles, by Lithuania's struggles during the 'War after War', and by the patriotism of the defenders of freedom on the 13th of January. And yet, we have to admit that the Russian propaganda has had an impact on a certain part of the Lithuanian society, which is still part of the group that loves the Russian television. The Russian propagandists are finding followers among them, and they are breeding collaborators who will be useful to them later. This part of Lithuanian society is very vulnerable and, as a fifth column, it can become a serious internal problem in a situation of crisis. Given the fact that we are a democracy, we have to take legal measures. In this case, educational measures, in order to present alternative information to an audience under the influence of Russian propaganda. This would help them to understand the lies spread by the Russian government. It would also undermine the Kremlin's attempts to sow discord among the

citizens of the same country. Every leader must pay sufficient attention to the civic education of his subordinates and ensure that the image of the soldier-citizen in the state is attractive. This will undoubtedly have a positive impact on the proper selection of personnel and, subsequently, on the quality of combat training.

7. Every citizen of the Republic of Lithuania must have knowledge and understanding of his or her place in the armed and unarmed defence system of the State. Leaders of institutions and organisations must be aware of the importance of participation in the State's armed and unarmed resistance and be encouraged to actively participate in exercises. It is only through training and exercises that one becomes aware of one's duties and functions, how to operate the equipment, what means are necessary, etc.

8. Strategic objects of economic importance and critical for the Republic of Lithuania must be prepared to be used in wartime conditions, and alternative energy sources need to be provided. In order to ensure the continuous long-term maintenance of the State and its armed forces (and not only), renewal of resources, etc., it is necessary to calculate the necessary

reserves, prepare the State's strategic reserves.

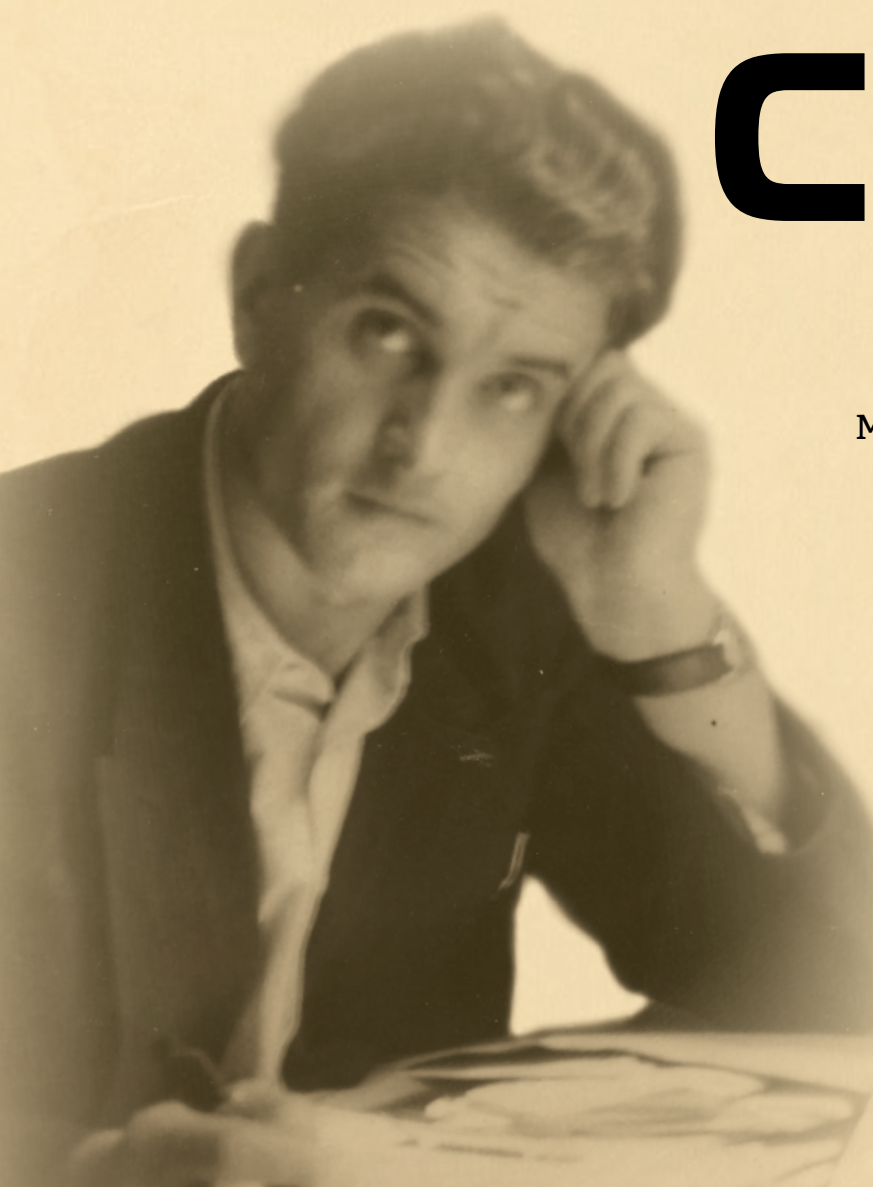
9. All those involved in the armed defence of the State must have the most uniform basic military skills and regularly participate in the updating of their knowledge and skills. This will enable them to join the armed defence of the State from the personnel reserve without delay and to take their place in the defence system when required.

10. A system of early information to the public, of preparedness, of evacuation and of protection must be in place. And it must be exercised on a regular basis.

The combat equipment and the combat capabilities enable us to be the first to see the enemy and to destroy him. Well-trained commanders are able to make timely and correct decisions. However, the most important aspect is the motivated and combat-ready soldiers of the Lithuanian Armed Forces, and the citizens of the Republic of Lithuania, who are always ready for armed and unarmed resistance. Soldiers must have confidence in their commanders, and commanders must have confidence in their soldiers.



"HE THOUGHT HE FIND ANOTHER TO BREAK THRU THE 'IRON CURTA



At the end of 2022, a book by Vidmantas Valiušaitis entitled "Juozas Lukša Daumantas in the Memoirs of His Wife Nijolė And in the Testimonies of His Contemporaries" was published by the Genocide and Resistance Research Centre of Lithuania. For you, the readers of WARRIOR, here are the reviews written by historians and a few excerpts taken from the book itself.

"**T**he core of this publication is the personality of Juozas Lukša. However, the context of the partisans' mission in the Free World, the behind-the-scenes, which often remain marginalised, is also interestingly presented," writes Professor Valdas Rakutis. "One of the parties at work in the book is the secret services of the Soviet Union and the

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agents recruited by them. At different times and in different circumstances, they operated alongside the hero of our book. The documents presented to the reader not only do not slander the Movement for the Struggle for Lithuanian Freedom, the betrayals and doubts it has suffered, but they also show the whole environment, the conditions and the tragedy of the activities of our fighters. There is no doubt that acting in such conditions is like the impossible marches of the demigods of ancient Greece, on the basis of which the consciousness of the Poles and the ideals of the youth of ancient Greece were formed. What an invaluable contribution these stories will make to our young people!

Juozas Lukša's own assessment of the outcome is also important, providing a comprehensive picture of the work done to publicise the misdeeds of the occupiers and the damage they had done to the country, and a realistic portrayal of the nature of resistance activities, which significantly changed the images and narratives prevailing at the time. This, in turn,

established the real and attractive image of a fighting partisan, giving meaning to the resistance movement and providing a model for the patriotic diaspora. The letters and documents left behind by Lukša became the basis not only for the intelligence services of the Free World to understand the nature of the Soviet repressive structures, but also to link the Lithuanian resistance movement to the issues of the Cold War. This was of great help in the defence against the narratives and the negative images that were created by the Soviet power elite. This function is still important today, when there are constant attempts to smear the Lithuanian Struggles for Freedom and its heroes."

One of the parts of the book is an interview with Nijolė Bražėnaitė about the occupiers, Lithuanians, meeting and marrying J. Lukša and family dramas. The interview was recorded on 15 December 2010 in Sparkill, New York, USA. An excerpt is presented below.

Author of the book

Vidmantas Valiušaitis is a journalist, columnist, editor, political and cultural commentator, researcher of the history of World War II and post-war history, author of numerous publications and books, such as "Let's Speak Ourselves, Let's Hear Others. The Tragic Years 1940-1941" (2013), "I Mourn the Living, I Call for the Dead. The Devil's Aria in the Dome of Politics" (2013), "Valiušaičiai: 400 Years of History" (2015), "The Lady of the Venetian Tavern. 'Mūsiškiai' and Other Strangers in Their Own History" (2018), "Historians Don't Use Part of the Sources. Dr Augustinas Idzelis And the Drama of Interpreting Lithuanian Occupations" (2019), "Juozas Lukša Daumantas in the Memoirs of His Wife Nijolė And in the Testimonies of His Contemporaries" (2022). He is the editor, commentator and author of articles accompanying the books: "The Pillar of Fire: 25 Years without Juozas Brazaitis. Letters, Documents, Testimonies" (2000), Kazys Škirpa's "The Uprising

for the Restoration of Lithuanian Sovereignty. A Documentary Review" (2020), Kęstutis Skrupskelis' "Attacked We Defended Ourselves: Events of 1940-1941 and its Origins" (2021), "June Called for a Fight. In Memory of the Lithuanian Uprising of 23 June 1941", volumes I and II (2021).

V. Valiušaitis is a laureate of the Vincas Kudirka Prize (2014) and a nominee for the Lithuanian Journalists' Union Medal 'For Merits in Journalism' (2018). He works as a senior researcher at the Martynas Mažvydas National Library of Lithuania.



Vidmanatas Valiušaitis: How do you remember 15 June 1940, when the Soviet occupation army invaded Lithuania?

Nijolė Bražėnaitė: On that day, we had just finished our last exams at the Aušra girls' gymnasium in Kaunas. Later, my friends and I went for a walk along Freedom Avenue. Suddenly we saw some tanks passing by. We'd heard that something related to the Soviet Union was

going on, but seeing them for ourselves was a very big experience. We stopped, we stopped speaking. The people around us were speechless too. Some were even in tears. They just looked on and remained silent. Then a number of people, probably secret Communists, most of them Jewish, ran up to the soldiers with flowers in their hands and kissed them. I would not say that there were crowds of

them, but there were quite a few of them who were running up to the tanks. While we were just standing there, wiping the tears from our eyes. People understood what seeing the Soviet tanks meant. Everybody had a very good understanding. It was clear that there would be some kind of climax with the Soviets, just from the descriptions in the newspapers. The only thing people had no idea about was how, what and when. But a very sad surprise was in store for Lithuania.

V. Valiušaitis: How did your destiny unfold?

N. Bražėnaitė: I had a twin sister named Vida. Unfortunately she is no longer alive. Our mother was a widow. She raised us four children and looked after my two grandmothers — her own mother and my father's mother. My father had died in 1932. My mother was very worried about what to do next. Her main concern was our education. She was just kind of stubborn about trying to get us educated somehow. In the autumn of 1940 we were in the last year of gymnasium. This was the time when the biggest changes in the curriculum took place: religious education was abolished, the teaching of history and literature was significantly changed, the classical languages and foreign languages were abolished. Instead, Russian was added. Each class was supervised by a *politruk* (a political officer). Our class was under the supervision of a young man of small stature, with a dashing manner, perhaps of Jewish origin. He used to call all the pupils whose parents had any kind of wealth 'blue bloods'. We were called the blue-blooded Bražėnai girls — one Vida, the other Nijolė.

V. Valiušaitis: Do you remember the deportations of June 1941?

N. Bražėnaitė: During the night we heard the sound of trucks. We didn't know what was going on. Mrs Zaunienė had gone to congratulate her old friend and colleague Antanas Kučingis (on his name day) on the 13th of June. She returned very late, perhaps one o'clock at night. It was already the 14th of June. Back then, the brother of President Antanas Smetona lived in our neighbourhood. His daughter was Raštikienė. At that time she was in prison, and General Raštikis was in hiding. So the three Raštikiai

Nijolė Bražėnaitė, 1950.



girls were looked after by Smetona's grandparents. One of them was a baby of only a few months old, and the others were perhaps between two and four years old. We could see their house from our kitchen balcony. That night I saw a truck drive up to that house. Soldiers with rifles got out of the truck and broke into the house. The two grandparents and the little girls were soon taken out. They threw them into the truck like they were dogs and they drove away. This is the only episode of deportation that I have seen with my own eyes. Similar abductions happened all over Lithuania. But what I saw happened in our neighbourhood <...>.

The people were very, very much waiting for the war to start. In fact, at that time, the war was already well under way. The only difference was that armed people were fighting against the defenceless: they were taking people prisoner, torturing them, deporting them and often killing them. And the defenceless did not understand the reason why this was happening to them. They had done nothing wrong. In the beginning, they did not even try to defend themselves, even though they had weapons of their own. That is why all of us were waiting for a change to come. Especially when the best people of our nation were being put behind bars. They were being tortured, deported and killed. People waited for the war as a kind of salvation. At the beginning of the uprising in 1941, my mother gave us permission to set up a rebel headquarters in our house in Aleksotas. Two students, Stasiukaitis and Brėdikis, were also living there and were in hiding. They immediately joined the rebels, as did my brother Algimantas, who was a year older than Vida and me. He was assigned to guard the Aleksotas bridge with a group of other fighters.

The greatest joy of the people was when Levas Prapuolenis announced Lithuania's independence on the radio <...> I remember how everyone clapped, congratulated each other and cried with happiness. And we cried together, too. This was before the German Army invaded.

When the German Army entered, people reacted calmly. I didn't see



Nijolė Bražėnaitė spoke with the author of the book Vidmantas Valiušaitis on 15 December 2010, Sparkill, New York, USA.

much enthusiasm. I didn't see anyone running up to the soldiers with flowers to welcome them. The Germans arrived with their tanks and armoured cars, and I think people's only hope was that at least life would not be as bad as it had been under the Bolsheviks. At least that was the hope. As the German saying goes, '*Ordnung muss sein*' (There must be order). We also knew that a Provisional Government had been formed, and we hoped that it would be able to cope and defend Lithuania's independence.

The Paleckis and Ambrazevičius governments cannot be compared. One of them was our downfall, while the other at least gave us a little hope. I think the Lithuanian Provisional Government hoped to defend the interests of the country. Unfortunately, the forces were unequal. It was torn apart, scattered. Some were sent to concentration camps, others were exiled to Berlin. For example, my uncle Petras Karvelis — he wasn't in the Lithuanian Provisional Government, but he ended up in Berlin because he had very close connections with the government. And when he was in Berlin, he had to report to the Gestapo every single day. It was practically house arrest <...>.

When the Germans closed the university, my mother simply didn't know what to do. Somehow, with the help of Father Gruodis, who was a Jesuit and who had contacts not with the Nazis but with the German Catholics, twenty students ma-

naged to get permission to continue their studies in Germany. My twin sister and I were amongst these. This meant that we were separated from our mother and we did not see her again for 22 years. We ended up in Berlin with my uncle, Petras Karvelis. He was forced to live there. I was admitted to the third semester of the medical faculty at the University of Berlin. Before I left, however, it was agreed with the Pajaujis group that I would be a kind of liaison. They would send their reports to me in Berlin and I would have to pass them on to the Lithuanian group that had formed in Berlin. Among them were some well-known people, including my uncle <...>.

In 1944, the Americans began the bombing of Berlin. The bombing was brutal. And I remember thinking, 'My God, we love you and here you're bombing us!'

I was inspired by my mother's advice: 'Children, study, even if everything around you is falling down!' Everything was indeed falling down, but Vida and I were driven to continue studying. We left Berlin, I went to Giessen and Vida went to Marburg. There were universities. I continued my studies at the Faculty of Medicine, and Vida at the Faculty of Humanities. I got into the fourth term. But then they started bombing Giessen too <...> What to do next? The city was in ruins, the university was no longer open, studies were on hold. There was no way



Pictured is Nijolė Bražėnaitė. The inscription on the back of the photo reads — 'To my dear Juozukas, your distant and dear Nilė. Sancellemoz, 1949.12.13'.

to stay there, but where was I to go? <...> I had a connection to the city of Innsbruck. Many of my student refugee friends were there. My classmates Marytė Arštikaitytė and Danutė Katelytė were among them. Come here, they said, find a way, we have managed to settle down here. So we went to Innsbruck. Our friends took us in <...>.

We, the Lithuanian students who had fled to Innsbruck, had to fight to stay there. This was because the Austrians didn't know who we were. There were 140 of us Lithuanian refugees, and all of us wanted to study! In the end, Henrikas Nagys, who was our chairman and representative, convinced the Austrians, after much pleading, that we were neither Nazis nor Communists, but just refugees fleeing the approach of the Soviet Army. And that all we wanted to do was study. Eventually they accepted us <...>.

After the war, Innsbruck was occupied by the French. French scouts were active all over it. One of them was Mrs Gradassi. Her husband was a captain in the French Army. She was a scout herself. And she wanted to help the student

refugees in any way she could. I was able to speak French, German and English at that time. That is how I became friends with Mrs Gradassi. And the French, being the occupiers, lived in very big flats. She and her husband had four daughters. One day, all four daughters came down with a bad cough. They were very sick. On top of that, she broke her leg on a skiing trip and had to be in hospital. And at that time, my sister and I were sitting our final exams at the university. She asked us to do her a favour: whether we could move into her flat and look after her girls while we were also studying at university? So we moved in. And in those days there were no vaccinations and no serious medicines. Nothing like that! We had to study and take care of them at the same time. How we managed to pass the exams, who knows? But we graduated! We got our diplomas. Mrs Gradassi recovered as well. She decided to do something to show her gratitude so she gave me and Marytė tickets to go to Paris. Danutė had already contacted her relatives and left for Canada. Sister Vida, after recovering a little, went to live with

our aunt and uncle in Tübingen. That is how Marytė and I ended up in Paris in 1947. It was there that I met Juozas Lukša.

It was the year 1948. Thanks to Mrs Gradassi, I found myself quite by chance in that city, working at the National Centre for Blood Transfusion in the Saint-Antoine Hospital. In June or July, Juozas also arrived in Paris. He was accompanied by Jonas Pajaujįs from Sweden. It was Mr Pajaujįs who introduced me to Juozas for the first time. I had no idea who he was. He was introduced to me as 'Skrajūnas' (alias Flyer). What an unusual name, I thought. It was only later, when Juozas and I became friends, that I began to find out what kind of 'bird' this 'Skrajūnas' was... <...>

Normally we would meet in the *Jardin du Luxembourg* — the Luxembourg Gardens. But that was pretty rare. I didn't really know where he lived or what he did for a living. But he always used to tell me about his family, about Lithuania, about where he came from, which we were both forced to leave. It was only when I was in a sanatorium that I really found out who Juozas was.

In October or November of that year, I became very ill with phthisis. I was in hospital for 6 months, in the same hospital where I worked. Juozas and I had become very close by then, so he started writing to me. He wrote almost every day. He might have visited me only a couple of times or three times. I used to notice that the letters he wrote to me came from different addresses. He had to change his place of residence all the time. But I knew that he was being taken care of by the Bačkiai family.

V. Valiušaitis: But weren't you frightened by the fact that a person is shrouded in a kind of mystery, that he is constantly changing his place of residence?

N. Bražėnaitė: Since I knew J. Pajaujįs well and was introduced to Juozas through him, it was clear to me that Juozas was connected with the resistance. But that didn't bother me at all. Why should it? Of course, I might have had a different attitude if someone had approached me in this way without a clear reason. But in this case, it was clear to me that this was an extraordinary

person. I knew that he had a very close relationship with the Bačkiei family. The Bačkiei would not have let just anybody into their circle of friends. And they were protective of Juozas. And, of course, they were also protective of me.

V. Valiušaitis: And how did you meet Juozas Brazaitis? Brazaitis was a witness at your wedding...

N. Bražėnaitė: I didn't know much about Brazaitis at the time. I didn't have any connection with him. I knew him only as my teacher from my former gymnasium, and later as the head of the Lithuanian Provisional Government. And not much else. It was through Juozas that Brazaitis reappeared on my radar, because he used to write to me about him in his letters. Juozas was in very close contact with Brazaitis at that time. I was in the sanatorium for almost a year, and Juozas

was writing to me all the time.

I was discharged from the sanatorium on 23 June 1950. And it was then that we decided to submit to God's will — whatever will be, will be. I decided to marry Juozas. So the question arose as to who was going to be present at our wedding. We knew that the wedding was going to have to be a very secret affair. I thought that maybe only my uncle, my aunt and my cousin Ugnė would be there. But who else was Juozas going to invite? I didn't want to persuade him to invite anyone. He might not be happy with what I suggested. So the wedding ended up being attended by very few: the Bražėčiai, the Prapuoleniai, my aunt and uncle, and Ugnė. We were married

by Prelate Krupavičius. And that was that...

The week after the wedding was probably very different from that of the other newlyweds. We were staying in a hotel in Treifelberg, but there was very little time for us to be on our own. There was always someone from the *VLIK* (Supreme Committee for the Liberation of Lithuania) coming over. They spent long hours talking to Juozas. It was important for them to establish some kind of relationship. To agree on what role the *VLIK* would play when Juozas returned to Lithuania. That's why members of the *VLIK* came to Treifelberg almost every day. They talked, talked, talked, and talked...

I'm sure they agreed on the Morse

The wedding of Juozas Lukša and Nijolė Bražėnaitė.
In the front row (from left): Petras Karvelis, Prelate Mykolas Krupavičius, Nijolė Bražėnaitė, Juozas Lukša, Veronika Karvelienė. Second row (from left): Vlada Brazaitienė, Ugnė Karvelytė, Birutė Prapuolienė and Juozas Brazaitis. 23 July 1950, Tübingen, West Germany.



key — I don't know if I'm calling it right — to read the cipher text. Juozas settled this with Brazaitis and left him this key.

Julijonas Būtėnas also came once. He was supposed to be Juozas' best man, but he couldn't get out of his commitments and couldn't make it to the wedding. So Juozas had no best man at the wedding. Canon Kapočius also visited Treifelberg. So did Prelate Krupavičius. He visited frequently.

And what was left for Juozas and I? Only the nights and the mornings. And that was our most precious memory.

V. Valiušaitis: Did you know that after the wedding you will have only one week before your husband's departure for Lithuania?

N. Bražėnaitė: I knew that we would only have one week, because everything had to go according to plan, not according to how we would have liked it, but according to the conditions and the reconciliation of this terribly short time. Juozas knew that a week later he would be intercepted by the American Intelligence Service. He had to complete his mission. And of course it was very

difficult for me. One day after the other was just melting away. The time flew by. I knew we had to part, but I didn't know if we would ever see each other again.

V. Valiušaitis: Were you expecting Juozas to come back?

N. Bražėnaitė: Of course I expected that. He thought he would find another way to break through the 'Iron Curtain' and come back, like before. But what it would have been like if he had done that, I don't know. Would he have been able to leave the fight there behind and stay here? He himself had no idea what would be in store for him there. It was only when he returned that he saw that the resistance had weakened considerably. In 1953, three years after his return, the resistance died out completely.

V. Valiušaitis: Did you have any luck contacting him after he left?

N. Bražėnaitė: There was only one letter from Juozas after he was flown to Lithuania... For a very long time nothing was heard from him. We were all waiting. The members of the *VLIK* would ask me if I had received any news. I always asked them the same question.

I was very anxious to hear if Juozas had returned happily. But none of them knew anything. I was in close contact with Brazaitis, I used to see him quite a lot. He always tried to comfort me. Juozas considered him to be the representative of the Lithuanian resistance in the diaspora. The Baden-Baden Resistance Congress (1948), attended by Jonas Deksnys, even gave Brazaitis a mandate. Deksnys wanted to persuade them to recognise the *VLAK* (Supreme Committee for the Reconstruction of Lithuania). As it turned out, however, the *VLAK* had been set up by the MGB agent J. Markulis-Erelis. In fact, Juozas had been suspicious of Deksnys ever since their meetings in Poland and Sweden. He conveyed this opinion to Krupavičius and others. This is how the *VLAK* project failed.

Finally, a letter arrived from Lithuania that had to be deciphered, probably a few months after Juozas had left. Professor Brazaitis received it, not me. He deciphered it using the agreed key. But this letter had nothing to do with the resistance... It was to check if the communication was working. The letter was then

Juozas Lukša and Nijolė Bražėnaitė-Lukšienė during their post-wedding week in the mountains around Tübingen, West Germany. July 1950.



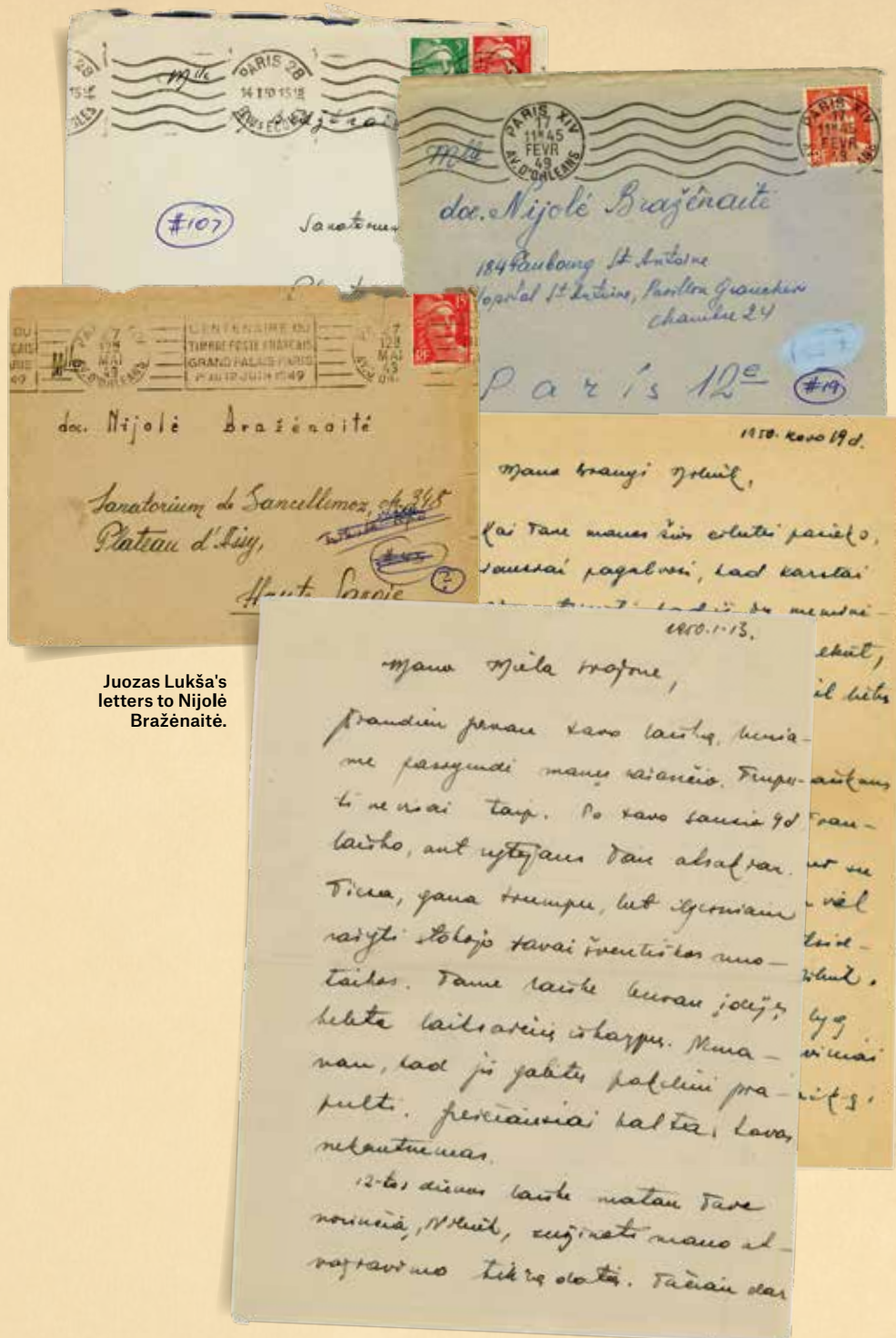
given to me, but today it is kept at the Juozas Lukša Museum in the gymnasium in Garliava, to which I gave the letter.

I don't know if there were any more letters or not. But certainly the emotional connection remained. Especially here in the diaspora, many articles have been written about Juozas. Partisan songs were always sung wherever I went, at every event. Most of them Juozas brought here and passed on. It used to be so painful for me to listen to those partisan songs that I simply avoided going to those parties. Maybe four or five years later — I thought, why do I always have to torture myself and listen to something that is so painful?

Juozas had actually asked me to destroy the letters he had written to me (written 1948-1950 in France). But I could not destroy them. So, instead, I just hid them away and I never opened them. Never. Except on one occasion, in 1976, when the commemorations of the 25th anniversary of his death took place in Chicago and in Toronto. I was invited to say something about Juozas, but I thought: what can I say? I am going to get up there and not know what to say. I don't want to cry. I'd like to avoid that. And then I thought — there are his letters, maybe I can read something from them that isn't personal, that's appropriate for everyone to hear.

And in those letters I found a lot about what was important to him. What he felt as a fighter who had consciously committed himself to the struggle. It was his memories, the images he had stored in his mind, his agony, his reasons for staying out for so long and not returning earlier. He expressed everything in his letters. So I made some copies of those letters and read everything I could find <...> And when the independence of Lithuania was restored, I started to think — if I die, my family won't even know what to do with them, what they are... So when the Garliava gymnasium was allowed to be named after Juozas Lukša, and his memorial museum was created — after long struggles and disputes, I'm grateful to the headmaster Vidmantas Vitkauskas — I decided to give them everything I had about Juozas.

V. Valiušaitis: How and when did you



Juozas Lukša's letters to Nijolė Bražėnaitė.

learn of Juozas Lukša's death?

N. Bražėnaitė: Oh...that's another story... <...> I stayed in Roitlingen and worked for VLIK until Charles J. Kersten joined VLIK. That was in August of 1953. And this was a very big turning point in my life.

Kersten was the US congressman for Wisconsin and was determined to investigate the seizure of the Baltic states. His aim was to thoroughly document the issue and influence 'big politics' so that the American government would be obliged to raise the case of the Baltic occupation in international forums. The so-called

Kersten Commission was set up and began to interview extensively those who could competently testify to the facts of Soviet abuse and annexation.

Kersten arrived in Roitlingen for a meeting with the leadership of the VLIK. He was accompanied by his wife, his daughter and two other people accompanying him. One of them was Marytė Kižytė. She lived in New York and was the director of the Information Centre of the Lithuanian-American Council (LAC). She contributed greatly to the work of the group that carried out Kersten's efforts to investigate the occupation of the Baltics.

I was asked to dress up in my national costume and to greet the Kerstens with a bouquet of flowers. I was also asked to say a few words to Mr Kersten when he arrived. A Gala Dinner was held to honour him and, perhaps because I spoke English, I was asked to sit next to him.

Mr Kersten was an extraordinary man, he had a wonderful ability to take an interest in other peoples' lives. He must have been told by someone that I was the wife of Juozas. He knew some things about me. And so he started to ask me questions. I told him that I was a doctor, but could not work as one because I was not a German citizen. That I was working for VLIK instead. When he found out I was a doctor, maybe not that night, but later he approached me and said: "We have a serious shortage of doctors in the United States. Would you like to come to America?" I answered: "I love being a doctor. I would love to work in this field, but I don't know how."

Kersten stayed in Roitlingen for a few days. And every time we saw each other, he would say the same thing: "Nijole, I have to think about how to make it possible for you to come to America". And I would say to him: "Oh that would be great. But I don't know if it's possible".

And then one morning, when I had just woken up, there was a knock at the door. I opened it to find Kersten. He told me that the news had come that Marytė Kizytė's mother had died in New York. She had not yet been told. And he said to me: "Would you, as a doctor, like to go with Marytė to the funeral of her mother?" It was such a surprising question. I was so confused for a moment. After thinking for a minute, I replied: "Yes, of course I could accompany her".

I was taken to the consulate immediately. Kersten then explained to me exactly what had happened. I quickly filled in all required forms. The people there really helped me that day from the bottom of their hearts. After that, they took me to a hotel. Marytė had at last been told what had happened. The same day, in the afternoon, a mass was held in a cosy chapel near Munich. It was held in memory of Marytė's mother.

After Mass, people from the US Consulate came to the chapel. They brought flowers. They told me that it

was the first time in the practice of the consulate that a visa had been issued in such a short time, in just a few hours. They congratulated me. They gave me flowers. And then they handed me a US visa. Not an emigrant visa, but a visitor's <...>.

That's how I, a poor refugee, ended up on board the SS America. I crossed the Atlantic with Congressman Kersten's family and their companions from Europe to the United States of America <...>.

We arrived in New York. I will never forget that day. I never thought that a man like Kersten, who is a member of Congress, well known not only in America but around the world, would be so considerate of someone as insignificant as me. He wanted to make sure I got through security and that I had no problems. He spent two hours with me, ignoring the fact that there were many people waiting for him, including journalists from influential newspapers, magazines and radio stations. What was he wasting his time on? On me, a poor refugee from Lithuania.

I have no words to describe the nobility and generosity of this man. He didn't care that he was going to be surrounded by correspondents, that questions were going to be asked, that articles were going to be written about what he was doing. His unfinished business was to make sure that I crossed the American border safely. And it was Kersten <...> the same Kersten who, with the help of Congress, secured the legislation, a special decree, that protected me and gave me the right to stay in America and look for work <...>.

V. Valiušaitis: So you went to America without knowing anything about Juozas' fate?

N. Bražėnaitė: Knowing nothing... It was three years after his departure and nobody had any idea what had happened to Juozas.

At that time, I was working as an assistant doctor in the pathology department and had a lighter workload, so my health was much better. But the years went by and I had no news of Juozas. Then came 1956. I was staying at Marytė's and one day I suddenly got a call from Kersten: "Nijole, I want to come and see you and tell you something". He flew all

the way from Milwaukee to meet me. He had examined the testimony of a number of people, in particular that of a former colonel in the Soviet army, Burlickis, who later applied for political asylum in the United States and became a dissident. Colonel Burlickis' testimony to him was about the destruction of a group of people who had been dropped in Lithuania by American intelligence. He said that the Soviets knew all about it. And that one of the people, with the nickname of 'Miškinis' (Forest Man), was one of the most important people that the Communists wanted to catch. Dead or alive.

At first Kersten didn't realise he was talking about Juozas. It was only later, when he looked into the matter, that he came to the conclusion that 'Miškinis' must be Juozas. Whether he had other information from elsewhere, I don't know. But Kersten assured me that Burlickis had given his testimony about the way in which Juozas had been surrounded. Whether he claimed that Juozas had been betrayed or liquidated, I don't know.

So it was Kersten who told me that Juozas was no longer alive. It was already 1956. Six years had passed since we parted, and he had been taken in by the American Intelligence Service, and five years since his death.

Lieutenant-Colonel G. Burlickis's Statements to the Kersten Commission

Munich, Germany, 28 June 1954.

House of Representatives, House Select Committee to Investigate Communist Aggression and the Forced Incorporation of the Baltic States into the USSR.

Mr Kersten: Will you state your full name, please.

Lieutenant-Colonel Burlickis: I am Grigori Stepanovich Burlickis: Burlickis is the surname, Grigori is the first name, Stepanovich is the second name.

Mr Kersten: Mr. Counsel, will you proceed.

Mr McTigue: Is it true, Colonel, that you are a former MVD lieutenant-colonel who was in command of the 2nd Battalion, 668th Soviet Border Guard

Division of the MVD until your defection to the west in June 1953?

Lt. Col. Burlickis: Yes.

Mr McTigue: Did you go to school in Russia?

Lt. Col. Burlickis: Yes, civil and military education both received in the Soviet Union.

Mr McTigue: Colonel, where were you sent after the deportation operation?

Lt. Col. Burlickis: After the deportation operations were finished my unit as well as many other units were transferred to the territory of the Lithuanian Republic, in order to fight the so-called bandit-movement.

Mr McTigue: The so-called bandit-movement was the resistance movement against the Communists in Lithuania, is that correct?

Lt. Col. Burlickis: Yes, indeed.

Mr McTigue: When were you assigned to Lithuania? When did you come there?

Lt. Col. Burlickis: After the deportation

of the Crimean Tartars, either at the end of June or beginning of July of 1944.

Mr McTigue: Will you tell us something about what happened there?

Lt. Col. Burlickis: After the Red army has occupied Lithuania and the Germans left, the Soviet Government has started creating a party and administrative apparatus for Lithuania, beginning with the central committee of the Communist Party in Lithuania at the top and going all the way down to the smallest village.

The absolute majority of the Lithuanian people did not want this party, and administrative Soviet apparatus. The more advanced part of the population organized itself in what the Soviets called bandit bands, and these so-called bandit groups disposed, liquidated the Soviet Party and administrative representatives. They killed them <...> In order to strengthen the party apparatus and the Government apparatus at the various levels in the

various command levels of the Lithuanian Republic, the Soviet Government sent a great number of troops into Lithuania.

Within these many units which were transferred to the region of the Lithuanian Republic was also my unit.

From July 1944 to February 1945, I participated in the fight against the so-called bandits. I was in a few counties in Lithuania. I was in the territory of Vilnius County, Tauragė County, Šiauliai County, Kaunas County, Jurbarkas County, and many others.

Mr Kersten: These so-called bandits were young men, young Lithuanian patriots trying to fight for the independence of their nation of Lithuania; is that not right?

Lt. Col. Burlickis: Absolutely correct. But these so-called bandits were supported by the other majority of the Lithuanian population. At the very beginning in the territory of the Lithuanian Republic there

Charles Joseph Kersten speaking on the Voice of America radio station (the early 1960s).



were a great number of the so-called bandit formations: they were very numerous and consisted of many people. They were armed with light weapons. The weapons were of both Soviet and German manufacture; they also had machineguns, heavy machineguns, Soviet machineguns, Maxim system machineguns, and they had German machineguns made in the Škoda factory in Czechoslovakia.

Some Lithuanian partisans were also armed with light artillery. In some places,



Professor Juozas Skirius, historian at VMU:

“It is both gratifying and surprising how the author has managed to cover more than one and more than two archives, and not only from Lithuania, when looking at the sources gathered in this book. He has also used the archives of the Central Intelligence Agency of the United States. Not only has he made use of it and selected the material from it, but he has also translated from English into Lithuanian very important documents written by American and British intelligence officers. The book contains documents from the American Lithuanian Cultural Archives (ALKA) in Putnam, Connecticut. There he worked with the Kazys Škirpa and Mykolas Krupavičius funds, which are of great importance for our history. The author also visited the Hoover Institute in California. This is where the important archives of the diplomat Edvardas Turauskas are kept. He also had access to material from Lithuania, from the Special and Central State Archives. The style of his work is also remarkable: as a true historian who is not content with using only one source, one archive, but who tries to cover as much ground as possible, to go deeper.”

Professor Juozas Skirius, historian at Vytautas Magnus University. From the presentation of the book "Juozas Lukša Daumantas in the Memoirs of His Wife Nijolė And in the Testimonies of His Contemporaries" by V. Valiušaitis at the Martynas Mažvydas National Library of Lithuania on 10 March 2023.

not only NKVD units but also regular Red Army units and aviation were deployed to fight the so-called bandits. This was especially true in the vicinity of Kazlu Ruda, near Kaunas, in Kaunas County. As time went on, the army felt increasingly exhausted, the struggle was still going on, but the local apparatuses of the Soviet government and party at all levels had not yet been set up. The so-called bandits proved to be a tough nut to crack. They were impossible to catch. Knowing the area in which they were operating very well, and supported by the local population, they knew exactly what we were up to, what we were planning; by the time we put our men in the back of trucks and went on an operation against these bandits — they had already found out about it and disappeared from the area. If they had to fight us, they did so only when it was absolutely impossible to avoid it. However, whenever they had a chance, they of course, tried to win a fight <...>.

Mr McTigue: Colonel, did your men, who were highly disciplined soldiers, ever get sickened by the things that they had to do in connection with the reign of terror in Lithuania?

Lt. Col. Burlickis: At that time, that was 1944 and 1945, I have not seen any open signs of revulsion on the part of my soldiers.

Mr McTigue: Did you see it later?

Lt. Col. Burlickis: In April of 1945 my unit and I were transferred to East Prussia on the border of Poland, and in April of 1949 I was again returned to Lithuania, to the region bordering on Poland. During 1950–51 the entire fight against the so-called bandit movement of Lithuania was entrusted to two MVD divisions, divisions for special tasks — the 2nd and 4th Special Tasks Divisions. The headquarters of the 2nd Special Task Division was located in Vilnius, and the commander was General Vetrov, and the 4th Division for Special Tasks was located in the city of Šiauliai and the commander of this division was General Piashov (In truth, the headquarters of the Soviet 4th Rifle Division, commanded by Vetrov, was in Vilnius, and that of the 2nd Division was in Šiauliai. Piashov mentioned by G. Burlickis was actually in command of the 7th Division, stationed in Belarus, which

used to be sent to Lithuania to carry out operations). These two divisions, under the command of these two generals I just mentioned, are actually doing all the work and all the fighting against the so-called bandit movement in the territory of the Social Soviet Republic of Lithuania, of course, in connection and cooperation with the local units of the MVD.

In 1949–51 from the members of these two divisions which I have just mentioned, there were many occasions when soldiers, sergeants and even officers, in fulfilling these horrible tasks which were given them by the Government deserted as a sign of protest. And the orders to comb through the various forests in order to search for these so-called bandits, these soldiers fulfilled only formally, superficially. These soldiers in doing it were holding onto an old soldier's proverb which reads 'One day passed by' — which means it is one day nearer to the time when I become a civilian again.

Mr McTigue: Who was the most famous and troublesome Lithuanian, Colonel, in your experience among the partisans?

Lt. Col. Burlickis: The most troublesome and the acknowledged leader of the entire so-called Lithuanian bandit movement was a Lithuanian by the name of 'Miškinis'. The Lithuanian people considered this 'Miškinis' to be a national hero, and he had a tremendous authority among the Lithuanian people.

Mr McTigue: What happened to him, Colonel, do you know?

Lt. Col. Burlickis: From 1948 to 1949 and 1950 during these years, according to the information which was supplied by the territorial organs of the MVD, it was said that 'Miškinis' has finished a two-year intelligence course in an American school, and in 1950 came back to Lithuania, was dragged back to Lithuania, and was at that time in the neighbourhood of the Prienai forests. In order to liquidate his group and himself a lot of troops were concentrated, brought together.

The operations for the capture and liquidation of 'Miškinis' were all lead by Kruglov himself. He was in charge of the entire operation. Having been surrounded and having found himself in an absolutely hopeless situation, in accordance with information from territorial organs of the



The last known photo of Juozas Lukša. From left: commander of the Džūkai Detachment of the Dainava District Vincas Daunoras-Unguryis, commander of the Southern Lithuania (Nemunas) Partisan Area Sergijus Staniškis-Viltis, partisan Vytautas Garmus-Pavasaris, and chief of the Intelligence Division of the Headquarters of the Supreme Armed Forces Juozas Lukša-Mykolaitis. Prienai forest, May 1951.

MVD, 'Miškinis' committed suicide.

Mr McTigue: Was his body ever identified, Colonel?

Lt. Col. Burlickis: I do not know that. At that time I was in charge of guarding the border and did not participate in that operation. There are two legends which I heard from the organs of the MVD. One of the stories or legends was that when he was caught in a hopeless situation in the Prienai forests, in a clearing of the forest, and having been completely surrounded, he committed suicide. The other legend was that he was surrounded in a restaurant in the city of Kalun [?] where he was eating with some friends, and having found himself completely surrounded by the enemy and in order not to fall into the hands of his enemies he committed suicide. Which of the two versions is correct — I do not know. The fact is that he disappeared.

Mr Kersten: Was it not the custom of Lithuanian partisans before they were captured sometimes to put a hand grenade to their head or face so that they could

not be identified so that their relatives would not suffer by virtue of their partisan activity?

Lt. Col. Burlickis: I do not know of any occasion when they blew up grenades in front of their faces, I know something else though. I know another thing, that the Lithuanian guerrillas when surrounded, even if they were found, never surrendered themselves alive, but always committed suicide. Those who could not offer any resistance at the time of their capture and who were actually taken by the Soviet troops, managed to commit suicide even after they were in the MVD prisons, they used to commit suicide by hanging onto their own underwear, they used to jump out of the windows, and so forth, but never gave that information to the Soviets, to the MVD organs, which they demanded.

Mr Kersten: So that they always made sure that they would never give information by these acts; is that correct?

Lt. Col. Burlickis: Absolutely correct.

Mr McTigue: Do you believe that

even today the partisans such as the Lithuanian partisans whom you have just described are fighting battles for a free world in the forests and swamps of East Europe?

Lt. Col. Burlickis: I think so. I am convinced that it is so especially in Lithuania, Latvia, Estonia, western Bialovesze, and western Ukraine.

Mr Busbey: Colonel, you stated earlier in your testimony that the Lithuanian bandits, or partisans — the underground — would commit suicide before they would surrender. What effect did that have on the MVD or Red Army? What did they think of people doing that, rather than surrendering to the Kremlin?

Lt. Col. Burlickis: It is very difficult to say anything on this subject because no Soviet officer or no Soviet soldier would dare to express his opinion or say his impression to me on this subject. In the Soviet Union you do not talk about these things. It is a different story if you ask me about my own opinion. I saw these people did not want to give information extracted from them. My opinion is they are real patriots of the nation. ■

Prepared by Dalius Žygelis



Drawing by Ramūnas Vaitkus

Partisan's Last Word

1962 Accounts of eyewitnesses. When given the last word, one of Lithuania's last freedom fighters, Juozapas Streikus-Stumbras, spoke for two hours. He didn't defend himself, he didn't deny anything. He accused! When asked by the Judge, "Why did you kill Soviet citizens?" Juozapas replied:

"I didn't kill anyone. We executed people on the basis of our battlefield laws. And we were not punishing Soviet citizens. We were punishing traitors!

For what purpose? Was it me and my men who invaded the vastness of Russia? Or was it we, the Lithuanians, who dragged the Russians into the uninhabited northern lands? Did we attack you? Did we plunder your homes? No — it was you who invaded our country, who seized our homesteads and burned many of them down to ashes!

Mark my words: Lithuania will be free. Our tricolour shall rise again. Today you are powerful and armed, you have already sentenced the whole Lithuanian nation to death, but you will never succeed in killing our love for Lithuania, our faith and hope to survive the Red Plague.

There will come a day when you will be cursed by all the nations that you have enslaved! The time will come when you will be judged and when you will have to answer to humanity and to history for the crimes that you have committed against the nations that you have enslaved.

I fought with honour. It's a pity that we have a different idea of what honour is. Perhaps we should not have defended ourselves. Instead, we should have hunted you down and shot you without any rules of honourable combat.

I am not asking for a pardon from the occupiers. I have no regrets, except perhaps one... We taught our children how to grow bread and how to plant trees. But we should have taught them how to shoot, without mercy, because the occupiers did not spare any of us. And they will continue not to spare us, and they will continue to plunder, and they will continue to exhaust our nation until it learns to defend itself like the bees defend their hive, until all of us, together as one, meet the enemy with a gun in our hands.

As I die, I have no regrets about living my short life this way: I have defended my homeland, I have loved Lithuania and I am dying free. You will not be able to kill these feelings."

For more on J. Streikus, see WARRIOR magazine issue no. 6, 2022.
Sources: <http://www.lks.lt>, <http://www.partizanai.org>