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THE SOVIET APPROACH TO THE LITHUANIAN PARTISAN MOVEMENT (1944-1990)

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ABSTRACT

The main goal behind this work is to examine how the armed anti-Soviet Lithuanian resistance was depicted in Soviet literature, and which meanings it created and conveyed to readers. The work will show which written methods were used in the formation of this approach, and how they changed in different periods. Specific topics will also be analysed where they were especially emphasised in Soviet publications.

The scientific novelty. This is one of the few works which specifically presents the image of Lithuanian partisans which was created through Soviet propaganda. The Soviet attitude towards Lithuanian partisans was analysed mainly in works which were written in Lithuanian, so this also remains relevant to modern analyses in foreign publications. The Soviet image distorted the historical circumstances of the past. This image is not an irrelevant event of the past but a tool of modern propaganda, one which is constantly being modified to adapt it to the times.

Conclusions. Soviet propaganda referred negatively and contemptuously to anti-Soviet Lithuanian partisans, and the terms 'bandits' and 'bourgeois nationalists' came into force to describe them. The authors of propaganda-related materials relied on the concept of class theory. The attitude which they expressed in their written work was characterised by tendency and uniformity, both of which reflected the official position of the Soviet government.

During the most active periods of partisan fighting, the Soviet press published relatively little information about the partisans. The selected and published information – all of which was somewhat tendentious – was intended to intimidate resisters, would-be resisters, and their supporters. Between 1950 and 1990, the production and publication of materials was part of a propaganda enterprise which was firmly controlled and coordinated by the Soviet authorities. Their purpose in carrying out this industry was to portray the anti-Soviet resistance in the darkest colours and shades. It was not possible to form a general picture of the resistance from such prints, written as they were with multiple errors and omissions. The image of the partisan movement as a non-autonomous phenomenon, an image which was formed through the use of propaganda, presents a negative social and personal image. The Catholic Church is considered to be a promoter and supporter of the partisan resistance.

Keywords: Lithuanian partisans, Anti-soviet resistance, soviet propaganda, historiography

РАДЯНСЬКИЙ ПІДХІД ДО ЛИТОВСЬКОГО ПАРТИЗАНСЬКОГО РУХУ (1944-1990)

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АНОТАЦІЯ

Мета роботи – дослідити, як збройний антирадянський литовський опір зображувався у радянській літературі, які значення він створював і передавав читачам. У роботі буде показано, які письмові методи використовувалися при формуванні цього підходу, і як вони змінювалися у різні періоди. Також будуть проаналізовані конкретні теми, де вони особливо висвітлювалися радянськими публікаціями.

Наукова новизна. Робота представляє образ литовських партизанів, створений радянською пропагандою. Радянське ставлення до литовських партизанів аналізувалося переважно у роботах, написаних литовською мовою, тому це також залишається актуальним для сучасного аналізу в іноземних виданнях. Радянський образ спотворював історичні обставини минулого. Цей образ не є неактуальною подією минулого, а залишається інструментом сучасної пропаганди, який постійно модифікується, щоб адаптувати його до сучасності.

Висновки. Радянська пропаганда негативно та зневажливо ставилася до антирадянських литовських партизанів, застосовуючи для їх опису терміни «бандити» та «буржуазні націоналісти». Автори пропагандистських матеріалів спиралися на концепцію класової теорії. Ставлення, яке вони висловлювали у своїх письмових роботах, характеризувалося тенденційністю й одноманітністю, що відображало офіційну позицію радянської влади.

У найактивніші періоди партизанської боротьби радянська преса публікувала відносно мало інформації про партизанів. Відібрана й оприлюднена інформація – вся вона була певною мірою тенденційною – мала на меті залякати учасників опору, потенційних учасників опору та їхніх прихильників. У 1950-1990 рр. виробництво та публікація матеріалів було частиною пропагандистської діяльності, яка жорстко контролювалася та координувалася радянською владою. Їхньою метою у проведенні цієї індустрії було зобразити антирадянський спротив у найтемніших кольорах і відтінках. З таких відбитків, написаних як вони є, з численними помилками та пропусками, неможливо було скласти загальну картину спротиву. Імідж партизанського руху, як несамостійного явища, образ, сформований за допомогою пропаганди, представляє негативний суспільно-особистісний образ. Католицька церква вважається промоутером і прибічником партизанського опору.

Ключові слова: литовські партизани, антирадянський опір, радянська пропаганда, історіографія

INTRODUCTION

Between 1944-1953 an organised, armed, anti-Soviet resistance took place in Lithuania. These dates have already been established in modern Lithuanian literature serving as the boundaries for the beginning and the end of any organised resistance. During this period the organisational structure of Lithuanian partisan units, military tactics, and the information-based fighting were all created and underwent extensive change. If we examine the phenomenon of the resistance in more detail, we can see that it is full of events which can be explored more deeply in separate standalone works.

Until the period in which the USSR underwent a process of transformation (in the late 1980s), these topics could not be studied objectively or in detail due to existing Soviet censorship and various restrictions and prohibitions which arose from it. The topic could be studied only by *émigrés*, but Lithuanian emigrants had limited sources available which made it difficult to conduct any extensive research. The collapse of Soviet power and the opening up of the former Committee's for the State Security (KGB) archives provided a huge impetus to conducting research – the archive of the Lithuanian Communist Party (LCP) was also opened up - all of which helped to reveal various aspects of the partisan movement.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The Lithuanian partisan movement's general theme in Soviet literature can be compared to the tide coming in. There have been periods in which the anti-partisan theme was widely escalated (such as in late 1950s, the 1960s, and the later 1980s), and periods of relative silence as if these events themselves had been silenced or were at least being downplayed (such as in the early 1970s). When studying such literature, it is easier to make generalisations because the writing style was characterised by a process of standardisation, along with the main theses having to represent the official position of the Soviet government, so there could be no fundamental differences or diversity of viewpoints.

Work by Lithuanian historians often examine only briefly the available Soviet literature on this topic, drawing attention to its clear propaganda content, its distortions and falsifications of facts. Soviet literature is discussed by some authors in more detail. One of the first to do this was the expatriate author, Kęstutis Girnius, in his book, 'Partisan fights in Lithuania'¹, which was published for the first time in the USA. He could, fairly extensively and critically, assess the content of the available literature, notice actual discrepancies, and so on, in order to provide what, at that time, would be new, objective insights about the anti-Soviet Lithuanian partisan movement. In this case, the author could read information between the lines.

After 1990, after the opening up of the archive, Soviet literature became even less relevant. As the background to its creation became more evident so more objective information was sought from other sources. More extensive critical reviews of Soviet literature appeared in the work of some historians, with at least a few of those being mentioned here. The historian, Kęstutis Kasparas, in his book 'Lithuanian War', divided publications from the Soviet era into several groups (such as work by historians or journalists), all the while pointing out their shortcomings². There are articles by historians which cover Soviet literature³. It should also be noted that a dissertation was prepared which examines the Soviet attitude towards Lithuanian partisans, along with those of the Lithuanian diaspora and the locals⁴. However, this work will discuss slightly different angles of view than those in the aforementioned works.

¹ *Girnius K.* Partizanų kovos Lietuvoje. Vilnius, 1990.

² *Kasparas K.* Lietuvos karas, Kaunas, 1999.

³ *Pocius M.* 1944-1953 metų partizaninio karo istoriografija. *Istorija*. 2006. Vol. 64. P. 52-64; *Grunskis E.* Sovietinių «liaudies gynėjų» («stribų»). Lietuvoje istoriografija. *Lietuvos istorijos metraštis*, 1997. Vilnius, 1998. P. 271-288.

⁴ *Jurkutė M.* Lietuvos partizanų karo atmintis: sovietinis, vietinis ir išeivijos pasakojimai. Vilnius, 2016. URL: <https://bit.ly/4aDjp2g>

The Soviet authorities never referred to the anti-Soviet fighters as partisans. They were given lesser names, and often derogatory names. For example, in the first post-war years the combination of words 'German-Lithuanian nationalists' (the national labels could be interchanged) was used quite widely to emphasise links with the wartime occupation Nazi Germany regime (essentially fascist in nature). However, over time the concept of 'bandits' took hold in order to highlight the alleged criminal nature of their activities (although such criminality was often political in nature), with such a label supposedly being the most understandable and influential to the emerging and constantly-indoctrinated Soviet people.

Next to this word, in 'scientific' literature, the compound 'bourgeois nationalists' was more often used, which corresponded to the theory of class struggle. The term 'bourgeois nationalists' is very widely used, with this turning into a description of an ideological enemy.

At the very beginning (in the summer of 1944), the Chekists did not come up with a unified term. The labels 'insurgents' did appear of course, while 'white partisans' eventually became limited to common Soviet labels. In the course of the fighting, the common label 'nationalist underground and its armed gangs' can be found in literature.

Soviet historians sometimes even tried to claim that 'the elements of the civil war appeared in the republic during the stages of the class struggle of this period'⁵. Only in this case the fact of the occupation itself is not mentioned, or the fact that the suppression of resistance was organised by security structures (which were led by foreigners), and the military force was the USSR's own internal army (one in which Lithuanians did not serve at the time).

SOVIET INFORMATION ABOUT PARTISANS DURING THE FIGHTING

It may seem strange, but during the most active partisan battles, very little information about these battles was printed in the Soviet press – compare this to later periods. Why was there such relative silence? This is partially due to the censorship rules of the time, which prohibited the publication of information about anti-Soviet organisations and the fight against them, except in official reports. But the LCP certainly wanted to write about it and to use it in a propaganda battle. Censorship prohibited the publication of the scope, figures, and methods being involved in the fight against anti-Soviet organisations⁶.

Perhaps due to the intersection between these two approaches (either allowing or prohibiting), separate news items about the partisans appeared in official publications. As mentioned, little information was printed which, in turn, was often inaccurate. But even a fragmentary reference to the fighting testified to the fact of its existence. At that time the most popular descriptions in the press of the partisans were in the form of 'German-Lithuanian nationalists', or simply as 'bandits'.

According to calculations which involve Soviet historians, a total of 270 works were published between 1945-1951, 'revealing the connections between the nationalist underground and the political clergy and their anti-people activities'⁷. These were general propaganda works which used standard phrases and which contained little or no concrete facts, let alone any objectivity. What were the most common instances in

⁵ Rakūnas A. Klasių kova Lietuvoje 1940-1951 metais. Vilnius, 1976. P. 213.

⁶ Streikus A. Minties kolektyvizacija. Cenzūra sovietų Lietuvoje. Vilnius, 2018. P. 147-148.

⁷ Rakūnas A. Klasių kova Lietuvoje 1940-1951 metais... P. 185.

which there were hints of an ongoing fighting? First of all, when the various resolutions by the Soviet authorities regarding the resisters were made public, they often contained threatening content. In December 1944, the plenum of the Central Committee of the LCP ordered the application of economic sanctions against partisan families (which involved the confiscation of their land and property), and other measures against 'bourgeois nationalists'. This resolution was published in the press⁸.

Another clear statement of the fact that the struggle did in fact exist comes through appeals by the representatives of the Soviet government to those who were fighting against the government or who were simply hiding out to avoid being mobilised into the Red Army. We will mention only a few main appeals by the formerly supreme Soviet Lithuanian authorities, all of which were published in the press. There were more of them though: representatives of the Soviet authorities in individual region often approached anti-Soviet fighters, and this information appeared in the local press. Such calls in Lithuanian literature are now referred to as calls for 'legitimation'. The first universal appeal was printed in a two-page newspaper format in February 1945⁹.

This is how they invited in those who wanted to surrender, because if they didn't then there was the definite risk that their relatives would be in danger of being shamed. However, the Second World War was not yet over, and there was no voluntary desire to join the Red Army, just as the government was not to be trusted. For these reasons, the results of any legitimation tended to be poor. Not even those who were hiding out from mobilisation alone, not to mention the participants of the partisan movement itself, were legitimised. Another appeal was submitted in June in the same year, but it was already only half as long¹⁰. These again called for surrender, with supporters of the struggle being threatened to face potential criminal liability: hostilities in Europe had ended, future prospects were bleak, large groups of partisans had already suffered losses, and some partisan groups had already been dispersed. For these reasons, the peak of legitimation was in the summer and autumn of 1945. In 1946, the leadership of the Soviet Socialist Republic of Lithuania repeated the statement that, for 'avoiding unnecessary sacrifices', those who resisted 'would not be deprived of their opportunity to return to a peaceful life'¹¹. The year 1946 was of a more ominous nature. An order which was issued by Josifas Bartašiūnas, the Internal Affairs Commissioner of the Soviet Socialist Republic of Lithuania, was distributed as a proclamation which was printed in its thousands. These threatened to 'arrest and deport the families of bandits and the members of bourgeois nationalist organisations who have not surrendered to the authorities of the People's Commissariat of Internal Affairs'¹². Such collective punishments had already been applied. The relevance of the topic was shown by repeated appeals. Fragmentary information about those who had been legitimised was published in the press, and proclamations were sometimes distributed which were drawn up on behalf of those who surrendered, with them urging others to do the same. It can be said that the process of legitimation itself did not necessarily guarantee a peaceful life, with many such people remaining in the Soviet security register.

⁸ Lietuvos KP(b) CK IV plenumo rezoliucija. *Tiesa*. 1945-01-07. P. 2-4.

⁹ Į lietuvių tautą! *Tiesa*. 1945-02-10. P. 1-2.

¹⁰ Brangūs broliai ir sesers!, Tarybų Lietuvos piliečiai! *Tiesa*. 1945-06-03. P. 1.

¹¹ Tarybų Lietuvos piliečiai! *Tiesa*. 1946-03-09, P. 1.

¹² Lietuvos partizanų kovos ir jų slopinimas MVD-MGB dokumentuose 1944-1953 metais / Compiled by N. Gaškaitė, A. Kašėta, J. Starkauskas. Kaunas, 1996. P. 491.

The presence of a resistance could be felt from various speeches at official events. From the podium, government officials often levelled accusations against those who resisted. During the plenum of the Central Committee of the LCP (hereinafter referred to more simply as the central committee), Moscow's deputy and supervisor in Lithuania, Michail Suslov, highlighted the following tasks: 'to strengthen the fight against the Lithuanian-German bourgeois nationalists, to purify the Soviet apparatus from foreign elements'¹³. It can clearly be seen that search for alleged enemies amongst one's own people was a characteristic phenomenon of the period. Various condemnations were expressed, and not only by persons at the highest echelons of government. In July 1945, during the first so-called 'Soviet Lithuanian Intelligentsia Congress', one of the speakers issued the following statement: 'We must fight with all our might against the bourgeois nationalists and their banditry'¹⁴. All of the aforementioned material was printed in official newspapers of the time.

A pamphlet which was drawn up by the head of the People's Commissariat of Internal Affairs of the Soviet Socialist Republic of Lithuania (later known more manageably as the Ministry of Internal Affairs) regarding the fight against the partisan movement was also published at this time¹⁵. In it, the author warns that it is necessary to break ties with the partisans and 'legitimate' them. People are invited to help eliminate these 'gangs'. Another pamphlet was published which contained a biased and distorted history of 'bourgeois nationalists'. In this one the goal was formed in which 'the defeat of bourgeois nationalism is a vital matter for the people'¹⁶. Such publications clearly had a practical purpose in terms of propaganda.

Another source evidencing the fact of resistance is what were commonly called reportage articles from staged courtrooms. Here, in 1945, the central committee decided to organise show trials for propaganda purposes. No fewer than thirteen open trials were held that year¹⁷. Most of the time, to enable smoother propaganda work, broken resistance members were selected so that the demonstration process could not turn into an anti-Soviet rally. Therefore such acts were pre-directed by the government. One should not trust the distorted reportage information which was being printed in the newspapers, but such materials also testify to the very existence of a partisan resistance. After 1945, public trials (with the exception of individual cases) were generally abandoned. Everything took place in closed meetings which were held by the military tribunal, and often even in private meetings of the special council under the Soviet Union's Ministry of Internal Affairs. After all, too much information being released to the public on the subject may have demonstrated too high level of resistance.

It is also possible to find other references to 'bandits' in the context of other events or descriptions without naming such bandits as principal figures, but such references will be few in number.

The publication of said information had a direct practical side, one which was aimed

¹³ Lietuvos KP(b) IV plenumas. *Tiesa*. 1945-01-04. P. 2.

¹⁴ Pirmasis Tarybų Lietuvos inteligentų suvažiavimas. Antroji suvažiavimo diena. *Tarybų Lietuva*. 1945-07-14. P. 1.

¹⁵ *Bartašiūnas J.* Su šaknimis išraukime pikčiausių lietuvių tautos priešus – lietuviškus vokiškuosius nacionalistus. Vilnius, 1945.

¹⁶ *Mickevičius J.* Buržuaziniai nacionalistai – pikčiausi lietuvių tautos priešai. Vilnius, 1948. P. 38.

¹⁷ Из сообщения от сентября 1945 г. председателя Военного трибунала войск НКВД Литовской ССР полковника юстиции Халявина. *Lithuanian Special Archive*. F. 1771. Ap. 8. B. 183. L. 16-19.

at intimidating resisters and would-be resisters, and also their supporters and family members. And all of this was further strengthened by the Soviet reality, its various repressions which could involve permanent arrests, exiles, terror campaigns, or economic pressure. All of this must have demoralised participants in the Lithuanian underground. Information which has been published in regard to the 'bandits' testified to the fact that the anti-Soviet resistance was a major problem for the authorities, with such resistance being suppressed not only by armed means. But at the same time it was not possible to form a more objective picture of the resistance itself based only on this information.

Other forms of messaging about the anti-Soviet struggle appeared in the press even less often. There is the occasional piece of information about the deaths of Soviet activists both in republican and local press releases. The theme of all such articles is similar, generally tending to condemn the actions of the partisans while noting the merits of any deceased individuals and classing the Soviet future as being a 'bright future'. Such writing styles were to be transferred to later literature releases, those in which the image would be established in Soviet propaganda of partisans as murderers of innocent people who even so cannot prevent social progress. Similar longer or shorter death notices used to appear in the regional and local press, but over the years this could be seen to decrease, especially when a comparison is made between press materials of 1945 and those of 1950, and this cannot be explained solely by the weakening of partisan resistance. We will not find a single criterion which explains why the death of one Soviet official was announced and another was left in silence.

However, public silence was what tended to greet most of the deaths of representatives of the Soviet authorities. Sometimes the fate of individual officials is reported, but the true circumstances are deliberately concealed¹⁸. It shows the tendency of remaining silent by the Soviet authorities and attempting to conceal information, along with a general unwillingness to publicise such disadvantageous information.

This applies to press publications until 1953, the end of organised partisan resistance. After 1953 only a small partisan groups of about two or three people or individual fighters remained active within Lithuania. However, news about them still appeared, especially after 1956 when the press increasingly published partial reportage news about partisans. Such releases did not cover the full story, and especially not the full back-story, but only presented such individuals as contemporary characters. At that time deaths of Soviet officials were seemingly rare but when one happened, the regional press could not keep quiet about it, sometimes even devoting an entire issue to that extraordinary event. In 1956, the Jieznas district newspaper, 'Lenin Road', devoted almost an entire issue to the death and official departure of the chairman of the local collective farm, Aleksandras Mazuronis, illustrating the event with photographs¹⁹. The speech by the first secretary of the central committee, Antanas Sniečkus, was published in which he said that 'we know that there is still an enemy hiding out somewhere who wants to lance us with its poisonous sting. Our security agencies must commit to rooting out such remnants of the enemy', he continued, 'but nothing will be able to stop our onslaught. The enemy and all kinds of exploiters have

¹⁸ Steponas Bakevičius. *Naujasis kelias*. 1947-02-26. P. 1; Povilas Tryčius. *Tiesa*. 1950-10-21. P. 4; Povilas Tryčius. *Valstiečių laikraštis*. 1950-10-22. P. 4.

¹⁹ *Lenino keliu*. 1956-11-14. P. 1-3.

already been broken. The days of exploitation will not return'²⁰. The state security committee, however, did not have time to investigate the circumstances of these events.

There were other articles which covered the search for partisans. One article was printed in a republican magazine with the warning title: 'People: a wolf amongst you'²¹. The article itself seemed suspicious. Reading such articles requires additional knowledge that would help to reveal the background of the events and understand references provided in them.

The press also described trials which were held for the last of the partisans in the early 1960s. In the Soviet Socialist Republic of Lithuania's supreme court sessions, judges and prosecutors were usually especially selected to hear a particular case, so there was certainly a lack of objective hearing of any such case. The propaganda side of the case was reflected in various contemporary publications²². Such public trials which were organised only for especially selected audience, not all citizens, were clear acts of propaganda, driven perhaps by the hope of instilling all citizens with the fear that the Soviet hand of justice could reach anyone. Once again, the partisan fighting was being compromised by propaganda.

Oddly enough, the Soviet press – or at least two of its newspapers – published a short message in 1965 about the death of one of the last partisans²³. We will never really be able to work out precisely why particularly this story was selected for publication.

As we can see, during those periods which witnessed the most active partisan battles only limited information was being published in the Soviet press about them, but the reader was still able to understand that a battle was ongoing without understanding its scope, and without receiving accurate or specific information on it.

There was a conditional increase in publications which covered the last partisans, with news also appearing which was of a more reportage nature. All of the information which has been discussed here and which was published by the Soviets tended to be biased and strongly ideologically-engaged. In order to be more objectively able to understand the circumstances behind these events, additional sources are required.

SOVIET PROPAGANDA ACTIVITIES

Following the end of the period which witness organised partisan resistance, by the second half of the 1950s, publications regarding the recent past began to come out in Soviet Lithuania, at the same time as news was being printed about the last partisans. All of this seems to have coincided, although none of the releases contradicted each other. The production of publications was not part of a popular 'people's initiative' but was instead a propaganda enterprise which was controlled and coordinated by the Soviet authorities, with the purpose of portraying the anti-Soviet resistance in the darkest colours and shades. The office of the central committee decided in 1958 that it would oblige other institutions to engage in publishing activities²⁴. Most of the time,

²⁰ Ibid. P. 2.

²¹ *Radaitis V. Žmonės, vilkas tarp jų. Švyturys*. 1964. No 9. P. 11-13.

²² Nuo liaudies keršto nepabėgsi. *Spalio vėliava*. 1962-06-21. P. 2; Nuo liaudies keršto nepabėgsi. *Spalio vėliava*. 1962-06-23. P. 3; Teisiamųjų suole – banditas. *Panevežio tiesa*. 1962-06-20. P. 2; Teisiamųjų suole – banditas. *Panevežio tiesa*. 1962-06-22. P. 4; *Žemaitytė T. Žudikui – mirties baudmė. Spalio vėliava*. 1962-07-05. P. 4.

²³ Likviduotas banditas. *Tiesa*. 1965-03-31. P. 4; Likviduotas banditas. *Valstiečių laikraštis*. 1965-04-02. P. 4.

²⁴ Lietuvos kultūra sovietinės ideologijos nelaisvėje 1940-1990 m. / Compiled by *J.R. Bagušauskas, A. Streikus*. Vilnius, 2005. P. 264-265.

plans for the means of propaganda turned into printed material (such as books, brochures, or articles in the press), and sometimes radio programmes, film reviews, or other areas. It can be said without doubt that not all of the plans were fully implemented. Many remained only on paper. There is no clear explanation as to why this happened. Such propaganda materials were aimed not only at formulating the opinion of local readers in terms of anti-Soviet resistance (especially those who no longer remembered the years of fighting), but also at influencing the opinion of Lithuanian emigrants. But while the influence of the latter was too ineffective, there were no more highly effective means of influence available to such individuals.

Printed materials could conditionally be divided into 'scientific' (in the Soviet sense) and other. Their main ideas did not differ, however. The same negative portrayal of partisans prevailed, containing consistent and similar accusations, with the result that generalisations can often be made about such literature.

The emergence of 'external' scholarship was to be helped by the established editorial office of Archival Documents Publishing, which was formerly supposed to operate under the Lithuanian Soviet Socialist Republic's Academy of Sciences. However, its subordination was quite different. That institution was more closely related to the Institute of History which was run from the central committee. Former Soviet security officers and secret collaborators also found work in the editorial office. Boleslovas Baranauskas, a former employee of the system, was appointed manager. The editorial office operated until the mid-1970s, but the intensive publishing work here had already stopped at the end of the 1960s. The KGB selected and submitted archival material to the editorial office. Obviously, this important fact remained hidden from potential readers. The aforementioned editorship began publishing the series of books which were known 'Facts Accuse'.

Apart from serving other purposes, the first volume states that the publications will demonstrate 'the banditry activities of bourgeois nationalists following the liberation of Soviet Lithuania, and the connections of such nationalists with the intelligence services of foreign imperialist states'²⁵. Other goals were intended to show the activities of 'bourgeois nationalists' from the period in which the old German empire under Kaiser Wilhelm had occupied the country right up until the modern day.

It should also be noted that, before the series appeared, small-scale books were already being published to discredit the partisans²⁶. These tell in a fictional, sensationalist form of story about the brutality of the 'bandits', and their senseless reign of terror against Soviet activists who were, in fact, simple pro-Soviet individuals who had families to protect. The books used archival material from the KGB, which is biased and often distorts the real facts.

Most of the books in the 'Facts Accuse' series which stretch to nine parts were devoted to the Second World War period in order to show how 'bourgeois nationalists' helped the Nazis and their supporters. Of the nine volumes, three were almost exclusively dedicated to the partisans, with a few which were of mixed content. These collections of various documents mainly repeat protocols which were being used in interrogations of resistance members, who had been arrested, and various witnesses.

²⁵ *Hitleriniai žudikai Kretingoje* / Compiled by *B. Baranauskas*. Vilnius, 1960. P. 5.

²⁶ *Vabalas A. Kraują sugėrė Dzūkijos smėlis*. Vilnius, 1960; *Vabalas A. Mirties pėdsakai prie Nevėžio*. Vilnius, 1960.

All material was from criminal cases which had been selected by the KGB²⁷. Of course, at that time it was possible to read valuable details in the printed protocols because nothing similar was being published elsewhere, but doing so usefully required critical thinking and analysis on the part of the reader.

As mentioned, the editorial office's publishing work eventually ceased, although the KGB sent it so much archival material – including hundreds of authentic partisan documents – that an entire set of ten volumes could have been produced. Instead, this remained stored in the editorial office's archives, and was later held in the Party Institute's archives. The reason for this is hard to pinpoint. Perhaps these tendentious publications had quite the opposite effect, encouraging people to be interested in the history of the resistance²⁸. They revealed the wide panorama of mass resistance, which is why the leadership of the LCP had to stop publishing such details²⁹. Over time, these documentary booklet collections became the most frequently cited (and retold) works of Soviet historians and publicists, since there were no other archival sources and, moreover, the material in the publications corresponded to the official opinion in regards to the anti-Soviet struggle. Some of the editorial office's publications were later simply reprinted without having anything new to say, thereby simply avoiding any real work or imitating it under the prevailing conditions of the later Soviet period.

Only a few Soviet historians dealt with the partisan movement in a schematic and limited way because this was too ideologically-engaged subject, one in which no creative freedom was possible. Perhaps it was precisely this circumstance which discouraged some historians from researching it at all. During the entire Soviet period only a few works were written on this topic. Perhaps, more precisely, dissertations which were related to this topic were in fact prepared, and some of them were even turned into articles. One of the first 'scientific' books to be published had a simple and ideologically-explanatory title: 'Class struggle in Lithuania'.

It should be noted that Soviet historians considered the end of the armed struggle to take place in 1951, with its beginning in 1940, even before conflict had ignited between Nazi Germany and the USSR³⁰. It was not only in the aforementioned book but elsewhere in which explanations were attempted for everything by casting them through the prism of the class struggle, abundantly quoting the works of the 'classics' of Marxism-Leninism to do so and applying them to a specific situation.

The situation is recounted in some detail in which the 'overthrown classes' – mainly referred to as 'bottlenecks' as Lithuania was an agrarian country – tried to regain their lost positions, to recover their nationalised wealth. Nationalism is also condemned, while artificial internationalism is exalted. From such books it was not possible to gain a general picture of the resistance, its structures, its organisational activities, and so on. Either that such details were offered with conscious or unconscious mistakes being included (meaning that the authors really did not know that much about their subject), which could cause the reader to reach the completely wrong impression. There was

²⁷ At the same time, without even mentioning that during the Stalinist era, testimony was retrieved from those arrested using means of physical influence, moral pressure, which in itself raises doubts about the accuracy or correctness of the facts recorded in the protocols. But for the Soviet authors, it was a material that served as disclosing.

²⁸ *Kasparas K. Lietuvos karas...* P. 37.

²⁹ *Tininis V. Sniečkus 33 metai valdžioje.* Vilnius, 2000. P. 138.

³⁰ From the perspective of the Soviet security offices, only persons who took part in the struggles up until the end of 1951 are recognized as participants in the fighting against the 'bourgeois nationalists'.

only the constant repetition of 'terror' against the 'peaceful' Soviet people, whether they were activists, working peasants, settlers, collective farmers, or anyone else. In the 1980s, more similar 'scientific' works appeared, although these too said nothing which was conceptually new, or they repeated old accusations. Such works deliberately omitted a good deal of information which did not correspond to any theories of class struggle, such as the role of the Soviet security forces and the internal military when it came to suppressing any resistance, and in its role in carrying out mass repressions and so on. Soviet historians selectively quoted and polemicised with the works of authors of the Lithuanian diaspora, accusing the latter of forgeries. In these cases, Soviet historians had the exclusive right to familiarise themselves with such works, which the ordinary reader could not even touch. But referring to such works as source material simply informed the reader that such works exist abroad. There were no more objective scientific studies being carried out until 1988, when the late USSR process of transformation began in Lithuania. Dogmatic Soviet historians, having lost the monopoly of a single-voiced opinion, still maintained their views only to find they no longer received the approval of a larger part of society. One of the first authors who opposed them called their approach 'Blind nostalgia regarding the past.'³¹

Another area of Soviet-period scholarly works which covered the partisans was related to legal issues³², an area which had the tendency to attract a good deal of ideological enthusiasm where concepts of socialist law could be applied.

The majority of propaganda-based literature consisted of articles about 'bandits', with these being issued by various publicists (mainly journalists), and which appeared in the republic's press, mainly district editions. Larger works are referred to as 'documentary outlines'. It has often been pointed out that the authors of such works had limited access to archive documents from the KGB or, more precisely, those documents which had been selected and presented to them. Sometimes it is difficult even to identify the author because they would be protected by the use of pseudonyms.

The regional press wrote about local events, mentioning places and people which would have been known to the local reader. The number of articles on such topics throughout the period can be counted in the hundreds. The titles of the written works were evocative and easy to remember, while the style was sensational, but primitive and following an approved template. Popular facts would be cherry-picked, or simply distorted or falsified, and sometimes even the authors themselves made mistakes and confused themselves in regard to the use of facts in their work, sometimes contradicting their own writing. Most of that writing covers the senseless terror being doled out by the 'bourgeois nationalists', and the bright tomorrow which the 'bandits' were unable to prevent. Sometimes the authors of such works became witnesses (sometimes fictitiously), usually preparing their memoirs with the help of literary co-authors. The same Soviet writing clichés prevailed here too, only within this context personal feats were presented which pushed such articles to the limits of the demonstrative modesty of a Soviet citizen, although the note of personal self-importance which is usually inherent in memoirs would still creep through.

Back in 1988-1990 a number of essays by representatives of the 'people' poured into the press, honouring outraged partisans who were defending the executors of

³¹ *Pečiulis S.* Akla praeities nostalgija. *Komjaunimo tiesa*. 1988-04-21. P. 1.

³² *Станисловайтис Р.* Осуществление функции подавления сопротивления свергнутых классов в Советской Литве в 1940-1951 гг. Тарту: Тартуский гос. ун-т, 1970.

Soviet repression. It is not clear whether these were letters which had been written anonymously or were the real opinion of living individuals, and the intervention of the KGB cannot be ruled out.

There existed a situation in which Soviet historians re-told stories of publicists and publicists re-told stories of Soviet historians, but all of them presented basically indistinguishable versions of the same picture. It was necessary to depict the partisan fighting as negatively and suggestively as possible, often involving the use of memorable book titles, simple text, and clearly-understandable sentences, so that every reader, regardless of their level of education or their profession, would understand that depiction without any additional explanations being required.

The next stage in this particular work is to take a look at which themes dominated such publications.

THE NON-AUTONOMOUS MOVEMENT

The oft-declared enemy of the Soviet government was the mystical western world, also referred to as being bourgeois, capitalist, or imperialist, which did nothing but make plans to destroy the USSR. Internal opposition (in the form of the resistance) is depicted as a non-autonomous phenomenon, one which was inspired and supported from abroad. History shows that propaganda from totalitarian and authoritarian regimes rarely comes up with anything new. Typical statements were regurgitated following the escalation of international feuding during the Cold War.

From the very beginning, propaganda claimed that the resistance in Lithuania was inspired by fascist Germany, hence the expression 'German-Lithuanians' appeared. The publicly-announced resolution by the plenum of the Central Committee of the Lithuanian Communist Party stated the following in this regard: 'bourgeois nationalists, raging over the territory of Lithuania, no matter they are called, have sold their own country to German imperialists and are now placemen of the Fascist Germany and serve the German imperialists like loyal dogs'³³. At that time and later, and based on this, it was claimed that Germans fought in the ranks of the partisans or that they even led the partisan units³⁴. In fact, Germans only tended to join partisan units after being detached from their units on the front, or there were German soldiers who had escaped from PoW camps, but they did not take up positions of command. In terms of propaganda, such happenings could be turned in a useful direction by emphasising individual cases. However, this 'argument' would not have been required when attempting to justify the position in general.

When the Cold War began, the main enemy was the United States and its allies. Documents which were being issued by the Ministry of State Security were already stating that foreign special services and the Lithuanian emigrant organisations³⁵ which were being supported by them were encouraging resistance and terror. This did not at all correspond with reality of course, but the call was made from foreign countries to save their energy and avoid unnecessary sacrifices. However, the Soviet Union tended to publish its propaganda in a somewhat different way with the result that such

³³ Lietuvos KP(b) CK IV plenumo rezoliucija. *Tiesa*. 1945-01-07. P. 2.

³⁴ *Bartašiūnas J.* Su šaknimis išraukime pikčiausių lietuvių tautos priešus... P. 10-11; Lietuvos komunistų partijos kova su nacionalizmu / Compiled by V. Lazutka, K. Surblys, K. Valančius. Vilnius, 1987. P. 101-102.

³⁵ Soviet propaganda also made a lot of publications about their ties.

statements became embedded in ordinary literature. The officers of the soviet state security committee and the soviets propagandists and the historians spoke about the inspiration being supplied to them by the actions of the intelligence agencies of the US and 'imperialist' states³⁶. It was announced that foreign radio stations promised help and incited the fight, with thousands being 'fooled by hostile propaganda and, most importantly, by incendiary, provocative rumours which reached Lithuania from across the Atlantic'³⁷. This also failed to coincide with reality, as foreign countries did not directly promise or incite anything at all.

In the first post-war years, there was a widespread opinion in Lithuania that a war would break out between the west and the east because the western countries would not accept the seizures committed by the Soviet Union. This is what was believed by the partisans and those Lithuanians who did not participate in the resistance. The Soviet side interpreted matters in their own way. Such generalisations led to the comparison of specific US war plans with contemporaneous partisan appeals about the future war³⁸, although in reality the partisans were not nearly so well informed about the international situation.

Lithuanian partisans were linked by weak and fragmented ties with the west. The only partisan who managed to travel farther to the west was Juozas Lukša. In 1947 he and his comrades twice crossed the border between the USSR and Poland. He reached Poland during the first such mission and was able to return after completing his work there. During his second 'foreign expedition' he reached Sweden, West Germany, and France. There he communicated with Lithuanian emigrants, sought support for the partisan movement, studied at the US intelligence school, and in 1950 returned to Lithuania accompanied by two more Lithuanian missionaries. Later, in 1951, he was killed during an ambush by the Ministry of State Security.

While in the west, he prepared the book, 'Partisans Behind the Iron Curtain', which became the main source for émigrés about the partisan fighting which ran to several editions. The Soviet authorities knew about it. Therefore, they engaged in the work of compromising the main character, while also attempting to discourage or mislead the Lithuanian diaspora. At the beginning, a series of articles appeared under the headline 'Hawks from the Other Side', being published in the official newspaper, 'Tiesa'.

The material was provided by Soviet security services. The work was checked and reviewed by state security committee staff. This series of articles was turned into a book, which ran to two editions³⁹ and was also translated into Russian⁴⁰. The book was intended to be widely used in propaganda materials and was distributed abroad. The book's main character was the aforementioned Juozas Lukša, whose distorted biography is presented. The book's hero is accused of collaborating with all of the enemies of the Soviet Union. Other participants of the resistance were also shown negatively. The book was written evocatively and in simple sentences, thereby combining documents from the state security committee and the artistic 'wisdom' of

³⁶ *Petkevičius J.* Drauge su liaudimi. *Tiesa*. 1984-06-22. P. 2; *Buržuazinių nacionalistų gaujų siautėjimas Dzūkijoje* / Compiled by *V. Ditkevičius*. Vilnius, 1964. P. 7; *Laurinaitis S., Rakūnas A.* Kovoje už socialistinę Lietuvą. Vilnius, 1983. P. 54.

³⁷ *Augus A.* Iliuzijų kvaitulys. *Komjaunimo tiesa*. 1988-04-14. P. 2.

³⁸ *Laurinaitis S., Rakūnas A.* Kovoje už socialistinę Lietuvą... P. 74; *Laurinaitis S., Rakūnas A.* Atomio šantažo kvaitulyje. *Laikas ir įvykiai*. 1981. No 10, P. 20.

³⁹ *Chienas M., Šmigelskis K., Uldukis E.* Vanagai iš anapus. Vilnius, 1961.

⁴⁰ *Хиенас М., Шмигельский К., Улдукис Э.* Стервятники с чужой стороны. Вильнюс, 1961.

the authors. The most serious charges against Lukša involved the collaboration with the CIA and terrorism, although the foreign missionaries apparently came back to Lithuania for another purpose and did not kill anyone after their arrival. All of those partisans who had connections with foreign missionaries were accused of working for foreign special services⁴¹.

However, opposition to Lukša by another hero also becomes evident in the book. On the second foreign 'mission', Jonas Kukauskas arrived in Lithuania, before being arrested by the Ministry of State Security to be recruited to help lure Lukša into a pre-prepared ambush. However, the book portrays this Kukauskas as an enlightened citizen who has discovered the correct path, this being allegiance to the Soviet government. This work was a continuation of the series of articles entitled 'Hawks Do Not Return to the Nest', which was not published in book form. Lukša was the most famous partisan amongst the emigrants, so he never managed to disappear from the sight of any of the pro-Soviet authors. The same accusations were repeated in later Soviet publications⁴². These said nothing new, instead repeating the same falsifications.

Soviet security also sent agents into the west, presenting them as members of the resistance. Some of them were disclosed, some of them carried out the assigned tasks. Here, a cycle of articles was created, entitled 'The Courier Goes to the West'⁴³, which describe the journey of a 'Soviet spy' in the west - although according to a legend which was created by the Chekists he was allegedly a partisan liaison. The articles describe his penetration into emigrant circles, where he collected necessary information and returned to Lithuania to help liquidate the 'bourgeois nationalists'. The author was a security worker, and was therefore sufficiently informed about the real operations of the Chekists, but the series of articles confuses everything and does not seek to restore the true picture. The author probably wanted to focus on the results of his investigations and once again 'unmask' 'foreign' Lithuanians.

In conclusion, it can be stated that Soviet propaganda saw the partisan movement as a non-autonomous phenomenon, which had been inspired by fascist Germany, and which was later supported and directed by the special services of western countries which allegedly promoted terror within the country. Real and alleged connections for the partisans with the west were presented by Soviet propaganda as 'anti-people activities', in other words, as treason.

GENERAL IMAGE OF THE PARTISANS

The view was constantly being reinforced that these 'bandits' carried out senseless killings, thereby pouring out their bitterness on the new Soviet way of life. Their actions were seen as being desperate, and they were pictured as being powerless against socialist transformation. The authors often added scenes of torture into their descriptions of events, thereby attempting to illustrate the brutality of the 'bourgeois nationalists', which was often only evident in the imaginations of the writers themselves. Very often, the same stories would be rewritten from one body of text to another, often confusing details in the process.

⁴¹ Kruvinos žudikų pėdos. Nacionalistų antiliaudinė veikla pietinėje Žemaitijos dalyje / Compiled by R. Čepas. Vilnius, 1968. P. 8-9.

⁴² Laurinaitis S. Žmogžudžius kelia ant pjedestalo. *Tiesa*. 1984-01-24.

⁴³ Ditkevičius V. Kurjeris eina į Vakarus. *Švyturys*. 1966. No 19. P. 14-16; No 20. P. 17-19; and No 21. P. 11-13; and in 1967. No 12. P. 13-15; No 13. P. 18-20; and No 14. P. 5-7.

Most often such literature mentioned dead civilians as examples – whether peasants, settlers, collective farmers, ‘working peasants’, or others – with all of them being described as ‘innocent people’, while sometimes the term ‘people loyal to the Soviet government’ is used. As the propaganda put it, such terror was directed against ‘the best sons and daughters of men’⁴⁴. Also mentioned are low-level Soviet officials (in rural areas), along with activists, militiamen who had been killed, and members of destruction squads⁴⁵, with such people being called ‘*stribai*’ (this label comes from the Russian word ‘*istrebitel*’), although Soviets as such are rarely mentioned. Soviet Security officers and soldiers of the internal army (Russian-speaking of course) would also be included⁴⁶.

Which general figures were available in propaganda literature to play the role of victims of the ‘bandits’? These were often illustrated with examples, but not with general statistics. Even the encyclopaedia provides such data as ‘a lot’, ‘thousands’, but not precise statistics⁴⁷. Several books in the ‘Facts Accuse’ series printed lists of ‘people who had been killed by bourgeois nationalists’ (according to the organisers, some were incomplete), with such details being supplied by district, although only information from eight districts was published in total⁴⁸, and when these lists were compiled there were more than forty districts in Lithuania. Further work was halted.

The circumstances behind the deaths which were included in the aforementioned lists can now be verified. However, it is worth noting that the lists did not include dead Russian-speaking Soviet security personnel, or military personnel from the Soviet internal army, or other such individuals. Only in some cases were members of the destruction squads recorded. The deaths of individuals were included in the ‘Small Lithuanian Soviet Encyclopaedia’ (1966-1971) which covered several deputies, teachers, and kolkhoz managers, but such biographies were reduced in numbers in the ‘Lithuanian Soviet Encyclopaedia’ (1985-1988). However, it was not possible to form a common opinion from information in one or another such encyclopaedia.

It is noteworthy to point out that such encyclopaedias refer to the period between 1945-1946 where the number of Soviet henchmen who were killed in the fighting reaches nine hundred⁴⁹. This figure was constantly repeated by Soviet authors.

According to the calculations of the state security committee, more than thirteen thousand people died at the hands of partisans. This figure appeared in Soviet literature in the 1970s⁵⁰. Then it started to grow, towards the end of the Soviet era, to about twenty-five thousand⁵¹. In 1988, the state security committee initiated a process in which it worked with the Institute of History to compile a list of the dead⁵². The figure

⁴⁴ *Jermalavičius J.* Liaudies gynėjai – liaudies didvyriai. *Laikas ir įvykiai*. 1983. No 10. P. 21.

⁴⁵ In 1944, the paramilitary units of the Soviet government, which were mostly made up of local residents, operated until 1954. In 1945, such units were propagandistically called ‘people’s defenders’ and were aimed at fighting against anti-Soviet partisans, but mainly participated in Soviet mass repressions.

⁴⁶ Buržuazinių nacionalistų gaujų siautėjimas Dzūkijoje... P. 79.

⁴⁷ Buržuaziniai nacionalistai. *Mažoji lietuviškoji tarybinė enciklopedija*. Vol. 1. Vilnius, 1966. P. 291.

⁴⁸ Buržuazinių nacionalistų gaujų siautėjimas Dzūkijoje... P. 171-230; Kruvinos žudikų pėdos... P. 235-330.

⁴⁹ Liaudies gynėjai. *Mažoji lietuviškoji tarybinė enciklopedija*. Vol. 2. Vilnius, 1968. P. 340.

⁵⁰ *Laurinaitis S., Rakūnas A.* Kovoje už socialistinę Lietuvą... P. 128.

⁵¹ *Jarmalavičius J.* Istorinė tiesa bus išaiškinta. *Tarybų Lietuva*. 1990-12-20. P. 2.

⁵² KGB slaptieji archyvai / Compiled by *Kristina Burinskaitė ir Lina Okuličiūtė*. Vilnius, 2011. P. 107-108.

grew again, but the committee did not have time to publish any specific information because the onset of the Soviet transformation period at the end of the decade made such publications unfavourable. Circumstances surrounding deaths of individual civilians in the partisan fighting remain a problematic issue, one which is examined in current Lithuanian materials which, however, attempts to distance itself from the clichés of Soviet propaganda.

How did propaganda depict the effects of partisan fighting? Here is the encyclopaedia entry: 'the republic have suffered much loss and damage'⁵³. According to historians of that time, the partisans 'hoped to weaken the social base of the Soviet government and, even if they could not paralyse it, then they could at least weaken the activities of the general population in rebuilding the national economy and in embracing socialism'⁵⁴. Other takes on this theme involved statements along the lines of 'the nationalist underground created great difficulties in building socialism in the countryside'⁵⁵, or 'causing painful losses to the Lithuanian nation... and preventing the restoration and socialist transformation of the national economy, improving the well-being of people in general, and developing the culture of the Lithuanian nation'⁵⁶. On the other hand, the Soviet authorities could not explain the concept that the partisan fighting threatened the destruction of the Soviet government, as this would indicate its weakness. 'It would be wrong to overestimate the scope of the armed struggle within the Soviet territories, the abundance of the bourgeois nationalist underground, or its threat, without harming the country's economy and culture... the underground did not shake Soviet power, and also did not stop the people of Lithuania from taking their chosen socialist path, and did not stop the development of the national economy and culture,'⁵⁷ said the Soviet historian. Therefore the words 'weaken' and 'preventing' were used, and the state security committee chairman used the combination of words 'the situation has worsened'⁵⁸.

What picture was painted when it came to personal partisan qualities? Such individuals were painted as being cruel individuals who came from a social environment which was alien to the authorities. They hid in the woods, and were constantly drunk.

These were propaganda's stereotypes. If necessary, biographies could be entirely invented which would be suitable to discredit specific individuals. When explaining everything through the prism of class struggle theory, emphasis was placed on the origins of the partisans, with such an origin usually being amongst a group known colloquially as the 'bourgeoisie'. According to Soviet publications, such a group was liquidated in its entirety in 1949-1950⁵⁹.

It has been stated in propaganda materials that partisan commanders had previously held important positions in independent Lithuania or during the Nazi occupation, or were the children of such officials. This, however, did not correspond to the real-world situation, which was something that the Soviet side also fully

⁵³ Buržuaziniai nacionalistai... P. 291.

⁵⁴ Laurinaitis S., Rakūnas A. Kovoje už socialistinę Lietuvą... P. 83.

⁵⁵ Augus A. Buržuazinio-nacionalistinio pagrindžio sutriuškinimas Tarybų Lietuvoje (1944-1951). *LKP istorijos klausimai*. Vol. 10. Vilnius, 1971. P. 72.

⁵⁶ Laurinaitis S., Rakūnas A. Kovoje už socialistinę Lietuvą... P. 109.

⁵⁷ Rakūnas A. Liaudies gynėjai socializmo kūrimo sargyboje. *Laikas ir įvykiai*. 1986. No. 15, P. 23.

⁵⁸ Petkevičius J. Drauge su liaudimi. *Tiesa*. 1984-06-22. P. 2.

⁵⁹ Olekas P. LKP kova už socialistinį žemės ūkio pertvarkymą Tarybų Lietuvoje. Vilnius, 1966. P. 108.

understood. Therefore such people sometimes were categorised as being misled individuals of a suitable social origin who had ended up in partisan units. This was discussed at the very beginning. 'Lies and nationalist demagoguery have turned the heads of a certain part of the population', said at the plenum of the Central Committee of the Lithuanian Communist Party⁶⁰. Statements have also been made regarding those who were fraudulently involved into partisan fighting in the appeals for legitimation either⁶¹. In emphasising the humanity of the Soviet government, propaganda provided an opportunity to return to the correct path. Later, Soviet authors wrote about people, especially young people, who had been misled by 'bourgeois' propaganda, but the Soviet authorities allowed them to return 'to the right path'⁶². Ostensibly, this was done by promoting the achievements of socialism, carrying out mass explanatory and educational work, and so on, without mentioning repressive Soviet policies. Apparently, misguided people were talked about until the end of the Soviet era, showing that 'brother stood against brother'⁶³. It has also been stated that the partisans forced people to join their ranks by threatening them⁶⁴. This last statement sounds completely unconvincing, as it is widely known that the partisan fighting was essentially based on the principle of voluntary participation.

When writing about specific partisans (usually commanders), it was customary to draw attention to their previous privileged position in society. Those who served in military structures which were subordinate to Germany are especially mentioned, because such service itself was considered a crime⁶⁵. Both commanders and ordinary fighters were called 'traitors of the motherland' to the expression 'fighting against the people of Lithuania' or its variants.

Specific partisan commanders are mentioned relatively rarely and briefly, without going into too much biographical detail, unless an alternative biography was created from real facts and inventions. It can be assumed that they did not want to name all of those individuals who led the partisans, so that people would not be able to make them heroes and so that the public would not be able to understand the real extent of the resistance. Top partisan commanders came under the spotlight of propaganda. For example, in the ninth volume of the 'Facts Accuse', interrogation protocols were published where they concerned the chief Lithuanian partisan leader, Jonas Žemaitis-Vytautas, following his arrest, which describe the circumstances which surrounded the founding of the Lithuanian Freedom Fighters Movement, an organisation which united various partisan groups⁶⁶. This corresponds to historical fact.

At that time, such propaganda made it possible only to understand that these 'bandits' were not random individuals as such, but that they had their own organisational structure. Another case involved Žemaitis' partisan deputy, Adolfas Ramanauskas-Vanagas. There was even a book which was dedicated to him, along with

⁶⁰ Lietuvos KP(b) IV plenumas. *Tiesa*. 1945-01-04. P. 1.

⁶¹ Į lietuvių tautą! *Tiesa*. 1945-02-10. P. 2; Brangūs broliai ir sesers!, Tarybų Lietuvos piliečiai! *Tiesa*. 1945-06-03. P. 1.

⁶² Rakūnas A. Klasių kova Lietuvoje 1940-1951 metais. Vilnius, 1976. P. 171-192; Laurinaitis S. Rakūnas A. Kovoje už socialistinę Lietuvą. Vilnius, 1983. P. 76, 83.

⁶³ Jermalavičius J. Vienpusiškai be atsakomybės. *Tiesa*. 1988-04-30. P. 2.

⁶⁴ Buržuazinių nacionalistų gaujų siautėjimas Dzūkijoje... P. 8.

⁶⁵ Laurinaitis S., Rakūnas A. Kovoje už socialistinę Lietuvą... P. 77-78.

⁶⁶ Kruvinos žudikų pėdos... P. 226-228.

articles in the press⁶⁷. He is accused of ordering the deaths of five hundred people (these accusations come from a criminal case, from which it appears that the author was familiar with fragments of the case which had been compiled by the state security committee)⁶⁸. He was even given an unusual, atypical title for Lithuania, that of an 'ataman', with this title being created by basing it on names which originated from Russia.

The names of other partisan commanders can still be found in the local press, but a positive description of them would be much harder to find. Various biographical inconsistencies also abound. The publications even created dialogues between partisan commanders and ordinary people, and invented quotes (allegedly, the programme which was being initiated by one district commander was to: 'Immediately shoot the communist beggars')⁶⁹. The real-world image was of course being distorted, and the contents of authentic documents were being copied.

In the following years efforts were made through the press to compromise those resistance participants who had returned to civilian life from their time in the gulags, if they continued their anti-Soviet activities and did not contact the Soviet authorities. Allegations were brought up from the past. The initiative often came from the KGB, so it was not by chance that tendentious articles appeared in the press⁷⁰. The Soviet side especially viewed in a dim light anyone who failed to change their views after returning to civilian life from the gulags, but instead continued their disobedience.

At least two additions often appeared at the end of propaganda pieces. Firstly, curses were added for each specific partisan or for all⁷¹. Secondly, descriptions of the promised bright future were also added. One of the many examples states: 'In the fierce struggle, the shots by the bandits became rarer and rarer after they had been directed against the people, against life, because the people themselves initially stood for it. Finally, the shots stopped completely. Life remained shot-free. The collective village spread its wings in preparation for a great flight – a flight to happiness'⁷². What the Soviet reality really was, and how it differed from vision which was plastered across the propaganda one, is another question entirely.

It can clearly be seen that, when writing about the partisans, a negative social and personal image of them was formed, with accusations of killings being emphasised, and it being claimed that they were powerless to prevent further socialist progress. Various forgeries or biased facts were used in such publications to prove the charges.

THE ROLE OF THE CATHOLIC CHURCH

The Soviet Union promoted aggressive atheism, brutally destroying everything which was related to religion. Propaganda portrays religion as an opponent of progress, as the embodiment of darkness. An image of the enemy was also provided. In Lithuania the Soviet authorities confronted the Catholic Church, which was influential at the time, and tried to destroy its independence, to distract believers from the faith. In the post-

⁶⁷ Vabalas A. Krivinojo apsišaukėlio pėdsakai. *Valstiečių laikraštis*. 1960-06-29. P. 2.

⁶⁸ Vabalas A. Kraują sugėrė Dzūkijos smėlis. Vilnius, 1960. P. 71.

⁶⁹ Gumbaragis A. Rašyk laiškus Marytei. *Švyturys*. 1966. No 23. P. 17.

⁷⁰ Juras A. Su ginklu prieš savo tautą. *Raudonoji vėliava*. 1981-03-06. P. 2; Čepulytė D. Atpildas už klastingą šmeižtą. *Tiesa*. 1983-05-22.

⁷¹ Strakšys A. Šūviai klasėje. Kas ir kaip „vadavo“ Lietuvą. *Moksleivis*. 1986. No 10. P. 13.

⁷² Žobakas A. Gyvenimas lieka nesusaudytas. *Naujas gyvenimas*. 1966-02-26. P. 3.

war years efforts were made to establish an autocephalous church in Lithuania, i.e. one which was independent of the Vatican's authority. Following the collapse of this Soviet project⁷³, the Soviets were unable to fully subjugate the church organisation to their interests and it remained a force of opposition. Terrorising the clergy, or carrying out acts of repression or economic pressure, did not help. Propaganda publications tried to compromise the church and its representatives in various ways. Amongst all other accusations, the church was accused of aiding 'fascist' Germany, and later of supporting the partisan movement. After the war, people felt strong religious attachment which was nursed in the family environment. In addition, church attendance could be considered to be one form of resistance against the Soviet government⁷⁴. This was incompatible with the process of introducing atheism, so it was another incentive to compromise the clergy, to eliminate them from public life. At the same time, propaganda emphasised that the rights of believers were not being violated, which in itself did not correspond to reality.

One book in the 'Facts Accuse' series was aimed at the Catholic clergy with the clearly incriminating title, 'Murderers in the Sanctuary of the Church'⁷⁵, which went to a second edition and was reprinted for several decades. No other book in the series has been printed so many times, which is also testament to the attention which was being given to the clergy.

Almost every major work has more or less written about helping 'bourgeois nationalists'. This view was constantly promoted, whilst also serving as an ingredient of atheism. The clergy were portrayed as a former privileged class which controlled considerable wealth and therefore supported the 'bourgeois' system while opposing Sovietisation. Everything was squeezed into the framework of the class struggle ideology. The Catholic Church was also portrayed as a non-autonomous reactionary force which was being inspired by 'international clericalism' (i.e. the Vatican) to fight against Soviet rule. The church is portrayed as the inspirer of partisan fighting. Some priests were simply portrayed as torturers or murderers, comparing them to inquisitors. A favourite propaganda ploy involved these 'inquisitors' apparently branding their victims with the shape of a star⁷⁶. What gets lost in the propaganda is precisely who was carrying out such acts of alleged brutality, and places and times become extremely hazy. Some of his alleged 'crimes' are based on testimony which had been obtained from a former partisan⁷⁷. After 1990, said partisan admitted that 'those testimonies... were not worth the paper they were written on. They were the result of fasting in solitary confinement and, peculiarly, diving underwater with hands and feet tied'⁷⁸.

Of course, it must be said that Lithuania's Catholic Church was in a difficult situation. Due to the threat of destruction which was emanating from the Soviet authorities, the church's high leadership could not publicly support the resistance – even though, at the same time, it refused to publicly condemn it, despite Soviet pressure – while other clerics had their own doubts about the expediency of the partisan fighting. However,

⁷³ *Laukaitytė R.* Sovietų valdžios kova su Vatikanu pirmuoju okupacijos dešimtmečiu. *Lietuvių katalikų mokslo akademijos metraštis*. Vol. 23. Vilnius, 2003. P. 381-389.

⁷⁴ *Truska L.* Lietuva 1938-1953 metais. Kaunas, 1995. P. 152.

⁷⁵ *Žudikai Bažnyčios prieglobstyje* / Compiled by *B. Baranauskas, G. Erslavaitė*. Vilnius, 1960.

⁷⁶ *Dagelis A.* *Dviveidžiai*. Vilnius, 1962. P. 155.

⁷⁷ *Chienas M., Šmigelskis K., Uldukis E.* Vanagai iš anapus. Vilnius, 1961. P. 257-259.

⁷⁸ *Lelešius J., Baliukevičius L.* Dienoraščiai. Kaunas, 1994. P. 16.

there were priests who supported the partisans in every way (such as hiding them in their own homes, or providing them with food and clothing), played the role of liaison officers, and performed religious rites. As time passed, so even more priests joined the unarmed anti-Soviet resistance.

Soviet propaganda did not deny repressions against the clergy, as evidenced by printed excerpts from their interrogation protocols⁷⁹, but did not clearly indicate the scope of any repression. According to the Ministry of State Security, a total of 362 members of the clergy suffered in this way⁸⁰, with most of them being imprisoned in gulags while others were shot. We will not find such information in any Soviet publication, but we will find some forgeries. For instance it is stated that Bishop Vincentas Borisevičius 'died'⁸¹, but in fact he was shot in prison, something which the Soviets did not want to admit. This particular lie could have been invented by the state security committee and spread by propagandists.

The Soviet authorities found groups of 'advanced' priests who maintained one or another relationship with the authorities, being forced to participate in acts which were organised by the authorities in which they would have to speak out on one issue or another. Those who signed a petition which called for an end to the partisan fighting are to be commended⁸², although they did not reveal any behind-the-scenes stories of quite how this was achieved.

Following the suppression of the partisan fight, representatives of the church continued their passive resistance, primarily by supporting the national spirit. Believers used to visit churches quite a lot. Constant propaganda publications and constantly-repeated phrases testified to what a dangerous force the Soviet side considered the Catholic Church, an organisation which they sought to compromise on the basis of trumped-up accusations which turned into expressions of contempt.

CONCLUSIONS

Soviet propaganda always referred negatively and contemptuously in regard to anti-Soviet Lithuanian partisans. The terms 'bandits' and 'bourgeois nationalists' were introduced specifically to describe them. Writers of propaganda publications relied on the concept of class theory. The attitude which was expressed in written work was characterised by tendency and uniformity, both of which reflected the official position of the Soviet government.

During the most active periods of partisan fighting, the Soviet press published far less information about the partisans than it did in later periods. Broadcasting was restricted by means of censorship rules. Any published information (in the form of Soviet decrees or appeals) was often vague, but was certainly politically biased. The aforementioned publication had a direct practical side, which aimed to intimidate those who resisted, those who wanted to resist, their supporters, and also their family members. The very publication of news about the partisans testified to the fact that the anti-Soviet resistance was a major problem for the government, one which it sought to eliminate. But based only on this information, a more objective picture of the resistance

⁷⁹ Žudikai Bažnyčios prieglobstyje...

⁸⁰ Komunistinio režimo nusikaltimai Lietuvoje 1944-1953 m. Vol. 3 / Compiled by *Vytautas Tininis*. Vilnius, 2003. P. 251.

⁸¹ Bažnyčios prieglobstyje. Kalba faktai / Compiled by *K. Strumskis*. Vilnius, 1983. P. 29.

⁸² *Aničas J.* Antiliaudiniu keliu. Vilnius, 1976. Pp. 123, 161-162.

itself could not be formed. There were also omissions because they did not want to publicise information which was not useful to the Soviet authorities. After 1956, publications appeared which covered the last of the active partisans. Reading any of the aforementioned work requires additional knowledge which would help to reveal the background behind the events being described, making it possible for the reader to understand the hints which are often contained in the articles.

Between 1950-1980, the production and publication of materials was a propaganda enterprise which was controlled and coordinated by the Soviet government, whose purpose was to depict the anti-Soviet resistance in the blackest possible colours. Materials could conditionally be divided into scientific (in the Soviet sense) and other. Their main ideas did not differ, with the same negative portrayal of partisans prevailing, along with constant similar accusations. It was not possible to build up a general picture of the resistance, its structures, organisational activities, and so on, from such publications. They were written with conscious or unconscious errors or omissions (ie. the authors didn't really know the true facts). The titles of publications were evocative and easy to remember, while the style was emotional but came from a basic set of standardised formats for such materials. Popular facts were cherry-picked, or were simply distorted or falsified. It was necessary to depict the partisan fighting as negatively and as suggestively as possible for the readers.

The image of the partisan movement as a non-autonomous phenomenon was shaped by propaganda. In general, it was claimed that the resistance in Lithuania was inspired by 'fascist' Germany, and, at the beginning of the Cold War, it was supported by the special services of western countries. Real and alleged connections for the partisans with the west were presented in Soviet propaganda as 'anti-people activities'.

Writing about the partisans tended to create a negative social and personal image of them, emphasising accusations of killings and claiming that despite their attempts they were powerless to prevent further socialist progress. Various forgeries or biased facts were used in publications to prove any charges.

The Catholic Church was considered as being a promoter and supporter of partisan resistance. Constant propaganda publications and constantly-repeated standardised phrases testified to what a dangerous force the Soviet side considered the Catholic Church, which had to be compromised on the basis of trumped-up accusations which turned into contempt.

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