

## INTRODUCTION

Research into guerrilla warfare appeared after Lithuania regained its independence in 1990, along with the many monuments and memorials to the freedom fighters, funerals for partisans whose corpses were desecrated many years ago, the restoration of their bunkers, and the publication of numerous memoirs. However, for more than a decade, influenced by the tradition of the Lithuanian diaspora, historians have mostly debunked and denied the Soviet propaganda narrative. According to Bernardas Gailius, the authors tried to overcome the Soviet indoctrination in Lithuanian society. They condemned Soviet rule, and identified with the partisans,<sup>1</sup> thereby creating an epic image of the partisan war within the margins of carefully accumulated and described facts.<sup>2</sup> Gradually, however, the significance of the historic events of 1939 to 1953 (with the exception of the events of the Second World War) diminished in the collective memory, for they were partly replaced by the victims of the violence in Vilnius on 13 January 1991, the collapse of the USSR, and other historical events that changed the lives of that generation.<sup>3</sup>

The topic of the anti-Soviet resistance, and thereby the subject of the partisan war of 1944 to 1953, reestablished itself in the Lithuanian public discourse in 2005, when political and public discussions on the assessment of 8 and 9 May, resulting in Russian retaliation, arose. According to Alvydas Nikžentaitis, it is these discussions that paved the way for the promotion of a narrative about the loss of Lithuania's independence and the sacrificial struggle for it.<sup>4</sup> The narrative about the love of freedom within the Lithuanian nation and its defence, lasting for centuries, already exists in the works of Maciej Strykowski (1582) and Albert Wijuk Kojalowicz (1650), and it was widely and convincingly written about in Imperial Russia by Simonas Daukantas (after 1822).<sup>5</sup> However, now the master narrative includes the 1939 secret agreements between Vladimir Molotov and Joachim von Ribbentrop, the anti-Soviet guerrilla war, the underground publication of *Lietuvos katalikų bažnyčios kronika (The Chronicle of the Catholic Church in Lithuania)*, and the public self-immolation of Romas Kalanta. In Nikžentaitis' words, it was a story of resistance with a happy ending, the restoration

<sup>1</sup> GAILIUS, Bernardas. *1944–1953 m. partizanų karas šiuolaikinėje Lietuvos istorinėje, politinėje ir teisinėje kultūroje*. Daktaro disertacija. Vilnius, 2009, p. 17–18.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., p. 46.

<sup>3</sup> Cf. GAIDYS, Vladas. Kolektyvinės atminties tyrimai Lietuvoje 1989–2009 metais. In *Nuo Basanavičiaus, Vytauto Didžiojo iki Molotovo ir Ribbentropo. Atminties ir atminimo kultūrų transformacijos XX–XXI amžiuje*. Sud. Alvydas NIKŽENTAITIS. Vilnius, 2011, p. 332.

<sup>4</sup> NIKŽENTAITIS, Alvydas. Atminties ir istorijos politika Lietuvoje. In *Atminties daugiasluoksniškumas: miestas, valstybė, regionas*. Sud. Alvydas NIKŽENTAITIS. Vilnius, 2013, p. 531–532.

<sup>5</sup> KUOLYS, Darius. Simonas Daukantas – „įspėjęs ateities dvasią“. *Liaudies kultūra*, 2018, nr. 4, p. 27–29.

of independence, with participants in the Sąjūdis movement considered as the successors to the anti-Soviet armed resistance.<sup>6</sup>

The annexation of Crimea in 2014, and its weighty impact on public attitudes in Lithuania (Russia's actions were viewed as a sign of a threat to national security), was another factor that impelled an interest in civic resistance, and therefore in the history of Lithuania's struggles for freedom and independence in the 20th century.<sup>7</sup>

Then there was the controversy over Rūta Vanagaitė in 2017. This public figure accused Adolfas Ramanauskas-Vanagas, one of the commanders of the Lithuanian partisan movement, of cooperating with the KGB. The scandal caused by her accusation has not yet been fully studied, but its impact is obvious: there was another wave of attention from politicians, public and media figures, education experts, artists, and researchers of the partisans. Many of them opened partisan diaries or memories for the first time, they became acquainted with the research, and they undertook citizenship (civic) education on various scales and of various means. However, many questions that unfolded in recent years about the Lithuanian partisans, their aspirations, their forms and methods in the struggle, their creative legacy, and their everyday life, are still waiting for detailed answers.

What was the role of historians in providing answers to these questions? After examining Lithuanian historiography from 1991 to 2006 on the subject of the guerrilla war, Mindaugas Pocius found that there were two main approaches in writing about the partisans. A heroic-romantic approach prevailed, depicting the partisans as impeccable heroes, almost perfect, without sin. It ignored unpleasant facts, embellished them, or disclosed them moderately.<sup>8</sup> A critical approach, on the contrary, reflected on historical events, and sought to force public opinion out of its stagnation.<sup>9</sup>

A few years after the publication of Pocius' article, Gailius returned to the topic of historical interpretations, and came to the conclusion that the two historiographical approaches described by Pocius formed under the influence of the intellectually most important Lithuanian diaspora organisations, Lietuvių fronto bičiuliai (Friends of the Lithuanian Front) and Santaros-Šviesos federacija (the Santara-Šviesa Federation). Some members of Lietuvių fronto bičiuliai were active in the anti-Soviet and anti-Nazi resistance, and took part in the June Uprising on 22–29 June 1941. Therefore, the historical studies written within their ideological framework, many of which

<sup>6</sup> NIKŽENTAITIS, A. Op. cit., p. 531–532.

<sup>7</sup> Cf. RAMONAITĖ, Ainė; PETRONYTĖ-URBONAVIČIENĖ, Ieva; SKIRKEVIČIUS, Paulius; VOSYLIUS, Eugenijus. *Kas eitų ginti Lietuvos? Pilietinio pasipriešinimo prielaidos ir galimybės*. Vilnius, 2018.

<sup>8</sup> POCIUS, Mindaugas. 1944–1953 metų partizaninio karo Lietuvoje istoriografija. *Istorija*, 2006, t. 64, p. 56.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 60. Pocius treated the historiography of the Lithuanian diaspora as a separate direction (written outside Lithuania, without access to primary sources).

were influenced by *Partizanai (The Partisans)* by Juozas Lukša-Daumantas,<sup>10</sup> were often perceived as instruments in the ongoing resistance to the Soviet regime. They had to substantiate the Lithuanian tradition of resistance, and set an example to the new generation.<sup>11</sup> After 1990, some of the most important works on the Lithuanian partisan war derived from this ideological framework. Their authors include Kęstutis Girnius, Nijolė Gaškaitė, Dalia Kuodytė, Algis Kašėta and Bonifacas Ulevičius.<sup>12</sup>

Historians who cherished the ideas of Santara-Šviesa took a completely different view. Heavily influenced by Jonas Deksnys, the founder of the Lietuvių rezistencinė santarvė (Lithuanian Resistance Union), they were emphatically critical of guerrilla warfare, and that, of course, contradicted the statements from Lietuvių fronto bičiuliai.<sup>13</sup> In post-Soviet Lithuania, the most important successors to the Santara-Šviesa approach, which emphasised the futility of the anti-Soviet armed resistance, were Liudas Truska<sup>14</sup> and Mindaugas Pocius.<sup>15</sup>

In view of these two traditions, the only account of the history of Soviet Lithuania published so far<sup>16</sup> has failed to provide a conceptual picture of the partisan war, despite the fact that it was produced by a large group of authors representing different historiographical approaches. The whole later historiography for the period 2006 to 2019 can be characterised not so much by a romantic approach or a critical assessment of the partisans, as by the search for fundamentally new concepts, theoretical approaches and methods, or even methodologies.

For instance, Bernardas Gailius examined the powers of the partisan leadership from the perspective of the precedent of the Lietuvos Taryba (Council of Lithuania) in 1918–1920, and laws passed by the Seimas (parliament) of the Republic of Lithuania in 1996–2000. He claims that none of the officials appointed by state institutions or the national defence command under the Constitution of the Republic

<sup>10</sup> [LUKŠA, Juozas] DAUMANTAS. *Partizanai. Už geležinės uždangos* [Chicago, IL, 1950]. The last Lithuanian issue was the fifth edition: LUKŠA-DAUMANTAS, Juozas. *Partizanai*. Ats. red. ir sud. Kęstutis KASPARAS. Kaunas, 2005. For the first abridged version in English, see [LUKŠA] DAUMANTAS, Juozas. *Fighters for Freedom: Lithuanian partisans versus the U.S.S.R. (1944–1947)*. Translated from the Lithuanian by Ernest John HARRISON and Manyland Books. New York, 1975. The entire work first came out in English in the translation by Laima Vincė: LUKŠA, Juozas. *Forest brothers: the account of an anti-Soviet Lithuanian freedom fighter, 1944–1948*. Budapest, New York, 2009.

<sup>11</sup> GAILIUS, B. *1944–1953 m. partizanų karas...*, p. 36.

<sup>12</sup> GIRNIUS, Kęstutis. *Partizanų kovos Lietuvoje*. Chicago, IL, 1987; GAŠKAITĖ, Nijolė; KUODYTĖ, Dalia; KAŠĖTA, Algis; ULEVIČIUS, Bonifacas. *Lietuvos partizanai 1944–1953 m.* Kaunas, 1996; GAŠKAITĖ, Nijolė. *Pasi-priešinimo istorija, 1944–1953 metai*. Vilnius, 1997.

<sup>13</sup> GAILIUS, B. *1944–1953 m. partizanų karas...*, p. 46.

<sup>14</sup> TRUSKA, Liudas. *Lietuva 1938–1953 metais*. Kaunas, 1995.

<sup>15</sup> POCIUS, Mindaugas. *Partizaninis pasipriešinimas Lietuvoje 1944–1953 m.: kova su kolaboravimu kaltintais gyventojais*. Daktaro disertacija. Klaipėda–Vilnius, 2005. See also: POCIUS, Mindaugas. *Kita mėnulio pusė: Lietuvos partizanų kova su kolaboravimu 1944–1953 metais*. Vilnius, 2009.

<sup>16</sup> *Lietuva 1940–1990. Okupuotos Lietuvos istorija*. Vyr. red. Arvydas ANUŠAUSKAS. Vilnius, 2005; *Lithuania in 1940–1991: the History of Occupied Lithuania*. Ed. Arvydas ANUŠAUSKAS. Vilnius, 2007 (1st ed.), 2015 (2nd ed.).

of Lithuania were able to function as such. Consequently, the partisan leadership, which operated throughout Lithuania from 1944, and the united leadership of the Lietuvos laisvės kovos sąjūdis (Movement for the Struggle for the Freedom of Lithuania) from 1949, took over all their legal powers.<sup>17</sup> The partisans were a force that 'had the mandate of the nation and, in accordance with that, as well as international and national law, defended the state from aggression with weapons, and thus formed an organisation which is usually called an army. In addition, this organisation had the authority to act on behalf of the nation and the state.'<sup>18</sup>

These statements were further developed and revised by Aistė Petrauskienė, who viewed the Lithuanian partisans not so much as the legal successors to the Lithuanian state, but as an underground political institution operating during the second Soviet occupation.<sup>19</sup> In her words, after the state lost territorial control and independence, the idea of the state remained, due to the fact that part of the nation, united by political aspirations and military means, resisted the occupation, and, over a decade, created a specific phenomenon which can be called an underground state.<sup>20</sup> According to Petrauskienė, the underground state manifested and legitimised itself by the partisans' right to rule, their social policy, military organisation and administration, financial system, communications network, underground press and proclamations, as well as maintaining diplomatic relations with foreign countries.<sup>21</sup>

These interpretations were followed by attempts to show the Lithuanian partisan war in an international comparative context<sup>22</sup> and the use of the methodology of war correlates.<sup>23</sup> The professional archaeological investigation of partisan war sites emerged;<sup>24</sup> some authors showed the importance of social networks in the formation and functioning of freedom fighter structures on a local level;<sup>25</sup> while others used the prosopographic method to describe the collective life of members of the

<sup>17</sup> GAILIUS, Bernardas. Partizanų vadovybės įgaliojimų pripažinimo teisiniai pagrindai ir padariniai. *Genocidas ir rezistencija*, 2006, nr. 2, p. 159; cf. GAILIUS, Bernardas. Partizanų teisių atkūrimo klausimu. *Naujasis Židinys-Aidai*, 2003, nr. 5, p. 238–245.

<sup>18</sup> GAILIUS, B. Partizanų vadovybės..., p. 164.

<sup>19</sup> For more on this, see: PETRAUSKIENĖ, Aistė. *Partizaninio karo vietos: jamžinimas ir įpaveldinimas nepriklausomoje Lietuvoje*. Daktaro disertacija. Vilnius, 2017, p. 157–184; PETRAUSKIENĖ, Aistė. Lietuvos partizanų pagrindžio valstybės bruožai. *Tautosakos darbai*, 2017, t. 53, p. 155–174.

<sup>20</sup> PETRAUSKIENĖ, A. *Partizaninio karo vietos...*, p. 161.

<sup>21</sup> PETRAUSKIENĖ, A. Lietuvos partizanų..., p. 171.

<sup>22</sup> GAILIUS, Bernardas. Partizanų karas ir demokratija Europoje. In *Libertas & Pietas. Lietuviškasis konservatizmas: antologija 1993–2010*. Sud. Mantas ADOMĖNAS. Vilnius, 2010, p. 271–292.

<sup>23</sup> JANKAUSKIENĖ, Edita. 1944–1953 m. Lietuvos partizaninis karas su Sovietų Sąjunga. In *Lietuvos karai. Lietuvos XIX–XX a. nacionalinių karų sisteminė-kiekybinė analizė*. Sud. Gediminas VITKUS. Vilnius, 2014, p. 213–270 (= *Wars of Lithuania: a Systemic Quantitative Analysis of Lithuania's Wars in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries*. Ed. by Gediminas VITKUS. Vilnius, 2014).

<sup>24</sup> For more on this, see: PETRAUSKAS, Gediminas; PETRAUSKIENĖ, Aistė. Naujausiųjų laikų konfliktų archeologija: Lietuvos partizaninio karo tyrimų atvejis. *Lietuvos archeologija*, 2014, t. 40, p. 221–253.

<sup>25</sup> NOREIKA, Dainius. Apie socialinių tinklų reikšmę kolektyvinio veiksmo vyksmui ir istorijos pažinimui. *Politologija*, 2015, nr. 4, p. 159–172.

partisan leadership.<sup>26</sup> New approaches to the Lithuanian partisan war of 1944–1953 are also what characterise the three articles and the thematic collection of documents published in this volume of *Acta Historica*.

Greta Paskočiūmaitė uses a wide range of Lithuanian partisan publications (proclamations, bulletins, newspapers and occasional publications), and analyses almost 1,000 pseudonyms of partisans, to show how they revived late 19th-century and early 20th-century images of the Lithuanian historical narrative. She attempts to show what influence the grand dukes of Lithuania, Gediminas, Kęstutis and Vytautas, the main characters in the historical narrative, had in strengthening and perpetuating the partisan struggle. Although Austė Nakienė and Aistė Petrauskienė have done some research into the partisans' memory and culture so far, Paskočiūmaitė is the first to provide a study of the partisans, their messengers and supporters, on such a scale, looking at the topic of the partisan war from a cultural turn approach, and opening up a completely new perspective on our understanding of the historical consciousness of the freedom fighters.

The author shows that the partisans did not seek the restoration of the historical truth, or its critical evaluation, but looked carefully for storylines and heroes that could give greater meaning to the partisan struggle and ensure its continuity. The backgrounds, education, views, and, to some extent, the positions held by freedom fighters, often influenced what pseudonyms they chose, whereas members of the partisan leadership of various ranks were responsible for giving names to subordinate organisational units. The interrelations between these pseudonyms and unit names, their combinations, and the comparison of data from all three anti-Soviet resistance areas, east, west and southern Lithuania, are all important tasks for future research.

The anti-Soviet armed resistance in Lithuania after the Second World War is often compared to the resistance in Ukraine. So far, individual aspects of the armed struggles and their suppression have already been compared by Arvydas Anušauskas and Tomas Žilius. But Darius Juodis does this for the first time on the basis of documents stored in the archives of the Sectoral State Archives of the SBU, the Ukrainian Security Service. The initial results of the analysis are summarised in his article, which examines the suppression of the armed struggle for the freedom of Ukraine in 1944–1953, and the phenomenon from the same period and of the same nature in Lithuania. The histories of the two anti-Soviet resistance movements differ slightly (the Organisation of Ukrainian Nationalists was founded in the 1920s), and the scale of the guerrilla struggle also differed (Ukraine was much bigger, its population was much higher, and the partisan movement involved more men and women), but the suppression tactics, methods and means used by Soviet security agents were essentially the same.

<sup>26</sup> ŽILYTĖ, Enrika. Partizanų vadų kolektyvinė biografija. *Lietuvos istorijos studijos*, 2016, t. 38, p. 84–112.

The international context of the Lithuanian partisan war and its research are important in many respects. For example, Juodis shows that security agents in Ukraine and Lithuania both falsified statistics of partisans killed and weapons and ammunition seized in their reports. The comparative aspect is also important when analysing the activities of the agents-stormtroopers operating in Lithuania. In 1946, Aleksei Sokolov, one of the founders of these groups, came to Lithuania from Western Ukraine. At that time, there were already 150 groups of agent-stormtroopers in Ukraine, each with an average of nine members, who interrupted communications between members of the partisan leadership, and sought to capture and recruit the partisans.

The article by Gediminas Petrauskas deals with the decade-old field of the complex investigation of partisan war sites, which combines the analysis of archaeological artefacts and historical sources with research into military tactics. For many years, searches for partisan sites were carried out in Lithuania without proper preparation, while many bunkers of the partisan leadership were destroyed. Today, there are grounds to discuss individual directions in professional research into bunkers, dug-outs and their surroundings, camps, battlefields, and other guerrilla war sites. Their geographical coverage is shown in an appendix to the article, a catalogue of all partisan war sites researched by archaeologists in Lithuania between 2010 and 2019.

As the last participants in the partisan war and their contemporaries are no longer able to take part in searches for old partisan sites due to their health, or they cannot answer specific questions about the locations of sites, the importance of archaeological research into them will continue to grow. Thus, Petrauskas' contribution, which shares the Lithuanian experience and provides detailed statistics, is also important in that it reliably outlines the guidelines for future research of this kind.

In preparing the source publication, the author of these lines also chose to share a new perspective, by expanding the investigation into the partisan leadership for the first time from members of the Presidium of the Council of the Lietuvos laisvės kovos sąjūdis (Movement for the Struggle for the Freedom of Lithuania, LLKS), and eight signatories to the 16 February 1949 declaration, to the full composition of the LLKS Council as a collective body. In the period 1949 to 1953, as many as four dozen partisan commanders from all over Lithuania were members of the Council.

The 88 documents provided in this volume revise the known information so far, and add considerable data on the personalities of many LLKS Council members: their characters, attitudes, duties, ways of fighting, as well as their attitudes towards the most important issues addressed by the highest command.

Some partisan documents and texts from the underground press have already been published in Lithuania.<sup>27</sup> However, the present collection of documents is not limited to any chronological, thematic or territorial principle. The aim is to show connections between historical texts when wording was transferred from one document to another (the case of the LLKS Council declaration), to examine the development of ideas, the culture and content of disputes or the written exchange of views (discussions on LLKS ideology, the future borders of Lithuania, the prospects of the state and the nation), and to share reflections on the partisan war and the attempts to describe the struggle for freedom (writings on the history of Lithuania and the LLKS). The publication brings together all these texts, names their authors, shows the context of their appearance, and provides other important explanations. It is the first time the LLKS Council, the highest governing body of the partisan organisation, is presented as an institution in such detail. Not only are its history and activities shown, but also the contribution of its individual members to the deliberations and adoption of resolutions, although some of them have not been established, or documents showing it have not yet been discovered. From the documents published in this volume, we can see that these members were not merely armed soldiers: they emerge as politicians and statesmen.

To readers who are not well versed in Lithuanian affairs, it is important to emphasise that many nations that fought for freedom used the word 'partisans'. According to Carl Schmitt, the term refers to a politically active fighting party or group of citizens, and is characterised by irregularity of military activity, mobility, political activism, and the 'tellurian character'.<sup>28</sup> Partisans' irregular activities distinguish them from the regular army. Their mobility means that, from a tactical point of view, they are lightly armed and fast-moving soldiers. The 'tellurian character' refers to the connection between the partisans and their place of operation, primarily with their home and their homeland, and emphasises the defensive nature of their activities. Political activism is the cornerstone criterion to define partisans.

The Lithuanian partisans, as well as the Ukrainian and Polish partisans, differed in military and legal terms from the resistance movements in West European countries who fought during the Second World War, for they were well-organised volunteer armies.<sup>29</sup> All the partisans operating in Europe during and after the Second World War, to a greater or lesser extent, assumed responsibility for the future states, and

<sup>27</sup> *Nenugalėtoji Lietuva*. Kn. 3: *Lietuvos partizanų spauda (1944–1949)*. Sud. Algimantas LIEKIS. Vilnius, 1995; Kn. 4: *Lietuvos partizanų spauda (1950–1956)*. Sud. Algimantas LIEKIS. Vilnius, 1996; *Laisvės kovos 1944–1953 metais. Dokumentų rinkinys*. Sud. Dalia KUODYTĖ, Algis KAŠĖTA. Kaunas, 1996; *Partizanai apie pasaulį, politiką ir save. 1944–1956 m. partizanų spaudos publikacijos*. Sud. Nijolė GAŠKAITĖ-ŽEMAITIENĖ. Vilnius, 1998; *Lietuvos partizanų Tauro apygarda (1945–1952)*. Sud. Nijolė MASLAUSKIENĖ. Vilnius, 2000.

<sup>28</sup> SCHMITT, Carl. *The Theory of the Partisan: a Commentary/Remark on the Concept of the Political* [1963]. Michigan, 2004, pp. 9–14.

<sup>29</sup> GAILIUS, B. *1944–1953 m. partizanų karas...*, p. 272.

laid the foundations for them. On 15 March 1944, the French Conseil National de la Résistance (CNR), and on 16 February 1949, the Council of the LLKS, adopted and promulgated exceptional political documents, in which the partisans called themselves an interim government, until the appropriate governing institutions could be established democratically, and spoke of human rights, and social and economic reforms.<sup>30</sup> The document of the French CNR became the programme for the first government. The declaration of the Council of the LLKS was promulgated as a legal act of the Lithuanian state; however, this happened much later, on its 50th anniversary.

The image of the Lithuanian partisans as Forest Brothers, which is internationally recognised and prevalent in historiography, is still based on narratives that elevate the struggle for freedom, courage and sacrifice.<sup>31</sup> This image, however, says very little about the partisans' main aspiration to build a new democratic state. It is precisely this aspect that is highlighted in this publication, which provides the most important documents, along with detailed commentaries.

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<sup>30</sup> For more on this, see: GAILIUS, Bernardas. Partisan warfare, European democracy and Lithuania. In *Demokratija Lietuvoje: pilietiškumas ir totalitarizmas XX amžiaus istorijos lūžiuose*. Ed. Mingailė JURKUTĖ, Nerijus ŠEPETYS. Vilnius, 2011, p. 332.

<sup>31</sup> Cf. LUKŠA, J. *Forest brothers...*