

Book Notes: [Forest Brothers: The Account of an Anti-Soviet Lithuanian Freedom Fighter 1944-1948.](#)

By Juozas Luksa, 422 pages, 2010.

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This is a must-have if you are keeping a library on the subject of anti-communist resistance. It is a written account of the anti-Soviet partisan fighting in Lithuania after the Soviets pushed the Germans out of that country on their push into Germany and victory in their Great Patriotic War.

You will witness the most dedicated, selfless and focused fighters in this book. People who see their lives as contributions to liberty, with NO concern for their well being. They assume they will die, or see a US-led attack on the Soviets and a liberated Lithuania. Imagine that faith in a country that had no intention of every helping the Lithuanians and little interest in the heroic partisan efforts. Imagine a struggle where you either keep moving and attacking, or hold a grenade or land mine up against your face when cornered and pulling the pin so your identity will not be known and your family will not be boxcar'd off to Siberia. Those were the two options of the day.

Themes in the book will reinforce anything you've heard about the dirty, primitive and evil of the WWII Russian soldier. You will read a more thorough account for every type of rifle and sub-machine gun and its value on the battlefield and the partisan's appreciation for the more effective (German) weapon systems. You'll hear criticism of enemy soldiers who can't fight from a partisan leader who never hesitated to kill Soviets at any range and with or without any tactical advantage.

P4: "Miskiniai – The Forest Brotherhood.

P5: 250k Lithuanians were deported or imprisoned during 1944-1951.

P7: The author's mother to her sons: "I give you my blessing as you set out on this holy battle. May the Lord God protect you. Swear that you will never allow yourselves to be taken alive."

P21: 13,000 Soviets were killed by partisans.

P22: "The fact of the existence of a resistance movement encouraged a sense of defiance among the population."

P37: When the Soviets came in, "most people hesitated." They "became victims of circumstance."

P50: Contact with Soviets: "It was difficult to convince the Russians that it was actually true

that during independence every Lithuanian farmer had his own independently run farm with his own farm animals and other wealth.” A Russian LT who the author’s family fed: “When we fought in Minsk, at Ilmen, they kept lying to us, telling us we were going to liberate the proletariat. It’s been a month already that I’ve been traveling around Lithuania, and for the first time in my life I see their lies for what they are. I haven’t yet found the exploiter, nor have I seen the exploited.”

P54: Russians would loot and rob, sometimes rape and murder. It became rampant, and those who reported the crimes went to jail.

P59: As the Russian crimes became known, many joined the Partisans. When asked where they went, the Russians were told “a fox took him,” or “he went out to hunt rabbits,” or “he went fishing.”

P68: “If we are destined to die, then we will die on our native soil, defending our freedom, and not somewhere far away, scattering our bones in the name of a new form of slavery was the decision of Lithuanian’s farm boys, who had grown up close to the earth on their native land.”

Russians used American-made cattle cars to deport Lithuanians to Siberia.

P88: The author bribed Soviet officials to smuggle food into partisans that were in jail.

P95: Partisan Goal: “to paralyze the activities of the Bolsheviks by interrupting the execution of their plans and to destroy the Soviet Interior Forces wreaking havoc in the provinces. Their other task was to maintain law and order and to protect civilians from the constant looting by Red Army soldiers and Russian civilians alike. They avoided open clashes with the Red Army units.”

P98: Stribai: Lithuanian informers. “Society’s trash”

P119: Partisans would impersonate Russians, and would assassinate “notorious Communists.” They would also go to Lithuanian farmers at the market and demand lower prices. Some farmers wouldn’t barter, others would and claim family members who were informers/stribai. For the latter, the partisans would identify themselves and take their food.

The Battle of Kalniskes: 8 partisans kill over 400 Soviets.

P121: Battle of Gerciai: 290 Soviets killed, 33 partisans killed.

P123: Soviet unit tried to dress as partisans to find the partisans. Part of their act included killing Soviet officials!

P124: “The invisible hand of the partisans worked constantly. Bolshevik NKVD officers, virulent

Communists, traitors, and bands of thieves and looters, disappeared constantly. Partisan activity became more and more secretive. The result was that the people mythologized the partisans. The people were impressed by the partisans' ability to acquire weapons, their organization, their discipline, their high morals, their secretiveness, and their sense of justice."

P125: "The fate of all citizens labeled "middle class" according to the Bolshevik mentality was the same. The label "middle class" was given to anyone who resisted the Soviet regime, even if that individual did not own much land – not even ten hectares."

P137: the partisans hear about the bombing of Hiroshima, and start believing the US will now come to help them.

P142: The Soviets offer Amnesty to partisans. The partisan must surrender a weapon as part of the deal.

P150: Mistaken identity. Villagers capture three Russians stealing. They send for Soviet authorities. The Soviets are told three "looters" are captured. The Soviets interpret "looter" as "bandit" or "partisan" and rush to the farm only to find their own.

P157: "...we were being hunted like wild animals. We suffered all of it only because we would not kneel before the occupier, because we would not deceive our own conscience, and because we still honored our most sacred ideals: we wanted to be free and we wanted our nation to be free."

P173: the partisans would disrupt the Soviet "elections." One tactic was to paste cartoons on walls at night, and to post the cartoons in the farmland near roads. Some of these were booby-trapped and would kill Russians who tried to remove the signs.

P176: Read how the Communist system impoverishes the citizens. How a farmer who tries to comply is bled of this wealth, then is delinquent in his taxes and is thrown in jail or deported.

P 185: Favorite song:

Through the old house, through the cherry orchard  
We'll greet the enemy with red bloody fruit.  
Don't cry Mother, we are going away,  
We are travelling beyond the wayside cross.

To battle, to battle, to battle, my friends,  
The homeland is calling us,  
Soon the fields will smell of gun powder  
And blood will darken the skies....

P187: another tactic to disrupt the Soviet “elections” was to run operations the night before. The constant gunfire kept the Soviets up all night and they would be exhausted on election day.

P190: A farmer refuses to vote. “I’m not going to vote in their election, the devil take them! I might die tomorrow and they’re going to force me to sell my soul to the devil in my final hours! They’ll never catch me! They can all take a trip to hell!”

P193: the partisans successfully disrupt the “elections.” Only 28% of Lithuanians voted (mostly in the city) and the Soviets announced that 96% of the Lithuanian population voted and the Communist on the ballot received 96% of the vote.

P194: “In general, the Bolsheviks believed and tried to convince their troops, that the partisans came from the upper classes. Because of this prejudice they often misjudged which local people were aiding the partisans.”

P196: The partisans had too many volunteers and had to turn many away, including an entire high school class.

P197: The partisans stop a Soviet car and hold two soldiers, a major and some communists. The major is argumentative so the partisan takes the major’s gun belt. The Soviet soldiers laugh and joke because the major will likely get a 10 year sentence for letting his belt be taken away. The partisans take the weapons, then hand a gun to a Soviet soldier and tell him to kill the Communists, which he did. One soldier said, “For once, the bastards got what they deserved.”

P201: Author explains the deportations (20,000) at the same time Russia was sitting in judgment of Germans at the Nuremberg trials.

P211: The Soviets would place partisan corpses in the town square, under surveillance. If a Lithuanian stopped for too long at a body, the Soviets would arrest that person, torture them, and eventually link that person to the corpse.

P214: In 1946 the partisans held a 5:1 kill ratio with the Soviets.

P221: receiving reports from the West: “It appeared that the conscience of the West was taking its sweet time waking up to our problems.”

P226: Ambush tactic: two partisans disguised as civilians attend a mandatory town meeting held by a Communist. They each take bad shots at the Communist, which leads to a reaction force of 30 Interior troops being sent to the town. They are ambushed on their way, and 28 are killed.

P229: Battle in Tauras district. 36 Soviets killed, 5 partisans killed.

P236-237: Partisans use multiple tactics to steal food from Soviet inventories.

P238: leaflets used to demoralize and disrupt Lithuanian informers. Partisans also attacked – killing all in a daylight attack at Gizai.

P242: The Soviets would give soldiers a 3-day pass so the soldiers could go home and get food for the coming weeks. The Soviet Army could not feed its troops.

P248: Soviets try to infiltrate the partisans. Use clothing from dead partisans. Almost succeed, but fail to make the cross when at dinner with a farmer. They killed a couple communists who had already fallen out of favor, and they staged a mock battle with Soviet troops.

P256: The partisans used nicknames for each other. One nickname had a Lithuanian meaning for “sun” and when that name was asked in interrogations – “Do you know sun?” – the prisoner would say “yes” and point to the sky.

P288: the author loses an American flashlight in a battle. He thinks the Soviets will be worried when they find it. “The Communists hated the West. They believed that we were invulnerable only with foreign help.”

P290: Partisan Rimvydas: “You never can know where life takes us, Uncle. We get our orders and we carry them out until we end up spread out in a market square somewhere. If you’ve made the decision to die for your country, no one asks you on which market grounds you want to leave your corpse for the Bolsheviks to mangle.”

Farmer: “It’s true, men. Our times are so cursed that even after he dies a man can find no peace. They can’t catch you alive, so they vent their anger on your corpse.”

P297: More news from the West: “They have abandoned us at Yalta and Potsdam! They are making the same mistakes over and over again!”

P303: Soviet torture and mutilation included: “Perkunas had been sliced into three pieces on a table saw while he was still alive. The unit leader Girininkas had horse manure shoved into his mouth, his eyes, and his wounds as he lay dying. The partisan Eumis refused to betray his brothers-in-arms during torture and interrogation. The Soviets Interior Forces cut his tongue out of his mouth.”

P309: American vehicles. “...August 10-11 1947 throughout the night 300 American vehicles packed with Soviet Interior Forces arrived in the Punia Forest.”

P322: The author, before becoming a combat unit leader, led the unit that printed partisan

newsletters from multiple hidden locations. One publication was called The Freedom Scout.

P326: Partisan prayer:

Lord, you who have liberated the people and inspired them with a thirst for freedom, we pray to you, restore the days of freedom to our homeland. Grant us the strength to bear the life of a partisan. Saint Casimir, lead us in battle, as you led our forefathers.

P327: Battle plan: "In every action our tactics were to deal the enemy a sudden blow, to inflict maximum losses on him, and then to withdraw."

P329: "mass deportations" at farms. "The gangs of Bolsheviks, armed to the teeth, walked like packs of grim reapers from farm to farm, handing out death sentences." The partisans attacked, surrounding and killing 67 Soviets with 6 partisans.

P337-338: A partisan "stumbled upon" a Soviet ambush on a partisan apartment. He kills 5 NKVD and liberates the dozen partisans.

P339: Few Lithuanian farmers joined the collective farms (Kolkhozs). To force them to join, the Soviets would offer 'waivers' in tax relief, exemptions and other favors. It doesn't work.

P353: The partisans pass a cemetery while on patrol. "In the snow, among young firs, stood lines of wooden crosses over soldier's graves. These were the graves of Germans. Russians never put crosses over their graves. The Russians put up screaming red stars."