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Cold War Lithuania:
National Armed Resistance
and Soviet Counterinsurgency

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Image from cover: LSSR MGB 298th Rifleman Regiment following a two day fight against the Simonas partisan group in the Kaunas district, 1 November 1949. During the operation 5 partisan bunkers were destroyed and 19 partisans killed. *Source:* Thanks to the “Minaeva Collection.”

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We solemnly believed that freedom and the rights of men were the sacred things they had been declared to be in the Atlantic Charter. We therefore did not even consider the possibility that the Allies might not continue to carry on the fight until that freedom and those rights had been restored.

—Lithuanian partisan leader Juozas Luksa, 1947¹

Following the defeat of Nazi Germany, the Soviet Union sought to reestablish its control over the areas of Eastern Europe that it had occupied prior to the Russo-German war. These areas included Western Ukraine, Byelorussia, and the Baltic States of Lithuanian, Latvia, and Estonia.² In these regions, the Soviets found well-organized underground resistance movements that were determined to hold off the complete Sovietization of their homelands, a task the Soviets had initially begun in 1940 and 1941, but which had been interrupted by war. While complete victory over the Soviets was recognized as an unreachable goal, these resistance fighters fought on in the hope that either the Soviets would grow weary of waging war or, as the above statement by Juozas Luksa suggests, the Western powers would return to finish the job of liberating Europe. Therefore, the period of 1944 to 1953 in this region is marked by an intense conflict between Eastern European guerrillas and Soviet counterinsurgency forces.

The nationalist resistance movements in Eastern Europe have been given significant attention since the collapse of the Soviet Union.³ The majority of these studies keep their focus on the resistance movements themselves.⁴ A number of works have provided significant insight into the nature of Western “liberationist” policy in Eastern Europe during the early Cold War. However, these works have been based almost exclusively on British and American activity.⁵ By using recently opened Soviet archives, this essay offers a new vantage point for considering the Soviet counterinsurgency in Lithuania and a fresh perspective on the Cold War in Eastern Europe.

The Lithuanian experience is representative of the anti-Soviet resistance movements as a whole and also provides an intimate glimpse into the changing tactics of Soviet forces as they sought an effective way to pacify this region. Insurgencies are a recurring phenomenon in the history of nineteenth- and twentieth-century imperialism and the Cold War.⁶ In many of these rebellions, the insurgent forces possessed advantages such as intimate familiarity with the terrain and locale, the

support of the local population, and the fact that it was difficult for the opposition to differentiate between insurgent and innocent civilian. The histories of these insurgencies reveal the difficulties and many outright failures that counterinsurgency forces faced. Therefore, the success of Soviet counterinsurgency in Lithuania after World War II provides a unique lesson in the challenges and responses present in such situations.

This is not to suggest that the Soviet experience in pacifying Eastern Europe was without its share of traps and pitfalls. Moreover, the difficulties the Soviets encountered in gaining control of this area did not escape the notice of Western intelligence agencies who, after the Anglo-American and Soviet wartime partnership had collapsed into a hostile Cold War, sought measures not only to increase the hardships of the Soviets, but also to potentially “roll back” Soviet dominance in Eastern Europe. Furthermore, while the United States and Great Britain assisted the resistance movements in Lithuania and the surrounding territories in an effort to wiggle them free of Soviet control, the Soviet Union used its successful counterinsurgency tactics to gain control of these resistance networks and then use them to entrap Western-trained agents. Therefore, an investigation into Lithuanian anti-Soviet resistance in the years following the war not only offers a look at Soviet counterinsurgency tactics, but also provides us with a lesson in the early history of the Cold War in Eastern Europe.

During the first Soviet occupation of Lithuania, from 1940 to 1941, the Soviets introduced several of the pacification policies that they would use again, after the defeat of Germany. These measures—staged elections, deportations, and preliminary strikes against armed resistance groups—were quickly enacted, but in the face of intense Lithuanian nationalist resistance from 1944 to 1947, they proved to be ineffective. When these and basic military tactics failed to subdue the opposition, the Soviets looked for a more effective means of achieving their goals.

In short, Lithuanian postwar nationalism manifested itself in an armed resistance movement, supported by a local populace unwilling to capitulate to Soviet demands of economic, political, and cultural assimilation. In order to eliminate this resistance, the Soviet authorities had to go beyond physical force and attack the very fabric of Lithuanian society. Such a shift in tactics on the part of the Soviet security forces, however, would only come after three years of struggle and difficulty. Soviet policies were opposed at every level by the Lithuanian resistance as NKVD-NKGB forces struggled to combat small, elusive, and locally supported detachments of Lithuanian partisans.⁷

The years 1946 and 1947 marked a turning point. Undisciplined destruction battalions and frustrated Red Army soldiers had had little success in their attempts to pacify the resistance.⁸ Furthermore, conventional military tactics proved to be ineffective against the ever-changing partisan movement. In the winter of 1946-1947 the partisans had not been hiding in the woods, but instead had begun to live semi-legally, in small groups no larger than five people. During the day they would hide their weapons and work on the farms of their supporters. At night, when required, they would gather with their leaders, who were often living legally, in groups of ten to fifteen and conduct their attacks on Soviet troops and installations. Afterward they would stash their guns and again scatter to the farms of their supporters. Without proper intelligence, the Red Army's efforts against such bands produced few results. Clearly, in the eyes of Soviet leaders, counterinsurgency tactics had to change.

Another concern of the Soviets was the increasing level of Western involvement. By 1946, according to documents from the Lithuanian archives, the MGB was aware of contacts between the resistance movement and Lithuanian émigré groups in the West. It was soon clear to the Soviets that the Lithuanian partisans were looking to the Soviet's Cold War antagonists, the United States and Great Britain, for help in their struggle. Thus, the Soviets were forced to change their tactics first, because they had been unsuccessful and second, in order to resist Western intrigues in the Baltic States.

The Development of Soviet Intelligence Operations

In examining Soviet secret police documents it is possible to discern a distinct shift in Soviet policy. It began with a reassessment of policing techniques in Lithuania by NKVD chiefs and progressed into a developmental stage where new tactics were devised. Thus, primarily in 1947 and 1948, new ideas were developed and certain measures were adapted for use in Lithuania. By 1949 Soviet activities begin to reflect the new tactics.

One of the glaring weaknesses that many of the NKVD chiefs identified was the lack of intelligence. As early as 1943, even before Soviet forces set foot on Lithuanian soil, NKVD officials issued directives for readying *agentura*, or networks of informers, in the Baltic States.⁹ In his report of that year, Commissar of State Security Piotr Gladkov outlined a plan for sending Soviet agents into the forests "on the pretext of hiding from persecution by the organs of the NKGB." He calculated that by "infiltrating such agents into the bandit groups, the groups could

then be “exposed and liquidated.”¹⁰ In late 1945 Lithuanian NKVD Major General Juozas Bartasiunas instructed his subordinates to use German occupation documents, particularly those of the Gebitskomassariat, the SS, and local police battalions, to identify collaborators.¹¹ Following this pronouncement, NKVD commissar Kobulov ordered his subordinates to conduct a review of the entire *agentura* network, to eliminate any useless contacts, and to establish qualified operatives as reliable resident controllers. He also ordered that operations against bandit groups “must be carried out carefully, [and] bandit groups should be solidly encircled so bandits cannot escape.” He cautioned that operational plans had to remain secret, known only to a few operatives. Finally, following successful operations, captured enemies were to be interrogated to glean any and all useful information.¹²

NKVD Lieutenant General Ivan Tkachenko added to the slew of directives emanating from the NKVD centers in Vilnius and Moscow. In addition to the diminished efforts of NKVD troops, he grumbled, the use of *agentura* had been completely ignored. As well as strengthening existing networks and establishing new ones, Tkachenko ordered the establishment of more listening posts in bandit areas and areas of high traffic.¹³ The NKVD heads gave the apprehension of partisan leaders the highest priority.¹⁴

Perhaps the best appraisal of the NKVD’s operational problems was provided by K. Vlasov, the chief of staff of the NKVD’s 137th Riflemen’s Regiment, who listed the shortcomings he perceived, and his proposed remedies, in a letter to the Soviet leadership. According to Vlasov, the battle with the partisans was ineffective for a number of reasons. Searches for bandit groups usually turned up nothing because the searchers were regular army troops working without the participation of NKVD operatives. Operatives who did participate lacked accurate intelligence on bandit locations. Furthermore, Vlasov wrote, units responsible for finding and eliminating the bandits limited themselves to those who had recently committed acts against Soviet authority. They ignored partisans already arrested, their local supporters, relatives, and other anti-Soviet elements as sources of intelligence on partisan activity. Local authorities also failed to take appropriate action against those guilty of partisan activity or their family and friends. On the political front, Vlasov felt that the failure to unify political elements within the local leadership and create an effective farm system meant that locals were easily influenced and hence did not know the truth about the Soviet regime. The workers were easily scared into following the partisans, while the midlevel managers worked according to partisan directives. Finally, Vlasov reported that Soviet control only extended to the city

centers. In the surrounding countryside and farms (where the large majority of the population lived) the bandits were in control and Soviet authority was weak.¹⁵

As a means of rectifying these perceived problems Vlasov offered a number of suggestions to his superiors. First, in order to overcome the limited Soviet presence in the countryside, he proposed a tighter bureaucracy, with more command centers, telephone lines linking them, and a clear chain of command. With regard to operational methods, Vlasov recommended better use of intelligence: before undertaking any military action operational chiefs would need to have prior knowledge of bandit numbers, movements, and hiding places. In addition to better organization of military units working closely with intelligence agents, “army groups should operate clandestinely, trying to avoid contact with locals unless absolutely necessary.”¹⁶

With consensus on the need for more and better *agentura*, the issue then became the recruiting of effective agents. Tkachenko issued a directive sanctioning the use of money and goods to facilitate the recruitment of agents,¹⁷ but there were other obstacles to effective recruitment.

Practice has shown that LSSR [Lithuanian Soviet Socialist Republic] NKGB operatives are not putting forth appropriate efforts to enlist qualified agents in order to identify anti-Soviet underground and foreign agents. Recruitment is hurried, is not carried out in a studious manner, and characterizations and compromising materials are not being gathered. Thus, agent enlistment and information gathering is being hampered. This unprepared and hasty process of recruitment is compromising our networks and is hurting our work.

This analysis, by NKVD Major General Dmitri Jefimov, touched on a critical point regarding Soviet recruitment methods. In the early stages of the struggle against banditry, many NKVD sector chiefs focused more on military action than on recruitment of new agents. NKVD operatives themselves undertook this task very rarely, regarding it as only secondarily important. In response, Jefimov ordered a change in recruitment procedures.

In an effort to remedy the process of selecting qualified recruits and appraising their work, we suggest that you create lists of possible candidates. Recruitment lists are to be made by each operative. On this list should be included such data as the operative believes to be important in identifying qualified candidates. Regional chiefs, their deputies, and section chiefs must make sure to constantly supervise the recruitment of agents and to be fully involved in the process.¹⁸

Such a statement made clear the new priority of Soviet counterinsurgency in postwar Lithuania.

To execute these new plans, the Soviets brought in a counterinsurgency specialist, MVD Major A. M. Sokolov. In early 1946, Sokolov was transferred from his post in the West Ukraine, where he had originated the use of *spetsgruppy*, or special forces, in the disorganization, infiltration, and suppression of anti-Soviet rebels. Sokolov had achieved such success with his operations that he had written the principal *spetsgruppy* training manual outlining procedures for disrupting partisan resistance.¹⁹ The initial Soviet change in tactics involved using smaller contingents of shock troops to find and eliminate the partisans, rather than large detachments of Red Army soldiers. Sokolov, however, noticed immediate problems. “The first special operation group, organized from ‘peoples’ defenders’ as bandit groups, produced poor results. Of the eighteen special group members, twelve were thieves, who instead of working would steal, cause problems, and avoid all tasks assigned.” He then proposed a radical alternative. “I believe it is best to organize these groups from bandits who have either been captured, legalized, or who have turned themselves in. We do not need to train such people how to be bandits. On the other hand, it has proved impossible to teach the ‘peoples’ defenders’ how to act like partisans. They did not know the bandit jargon, did not know how to properly wear the bandit emblems, and were always stealing. The true bandits noticed all this and naturally suspected them of being soldiers. Thus we must use former bandits for these groups.”²⁰ Using Lithuanians to fill the ranks of the Red Army or as local officials had become a standard practice for the Soviet leadership during its occupation. However, using Lithuanian partisans, the sworn enemies of the Soviet occupation regime, to combat the resistance movement was a radical proposal.

Sokolov believed the most effective means of defeating the armed resistance movement was to “disorganize” the partisans through infiltration. Using Soviet operatives to accomplish this had proved ineffective because the partisan groups were suspicious of any newly arrived partisans. Therefore, Sokolov proposed a number of deceptions: “In order to gain admittance into bandit groups, our specialists often have to go through the families, supporters, or leadership of these bands, people living legally. This group often acts as a filter for newly arrived bandits. Thus our specialists now have to undertake bandit activity in order to gain the trust of the bandit support networks. Sometimes it involves a pre-arranged theft, but sometimes it involves an actual gunfight with our own troops.”²¹

The first step involved gaining the trust of the partisans’ supporters or, as Sokolov termed it, “legal” residents. Only by working through the locals connected

with the resistance movement could the *spetsgruppy* gain access to partisan circles. This was often accomplished with staged gun battles between actual Red Army troops and *spetsgruppy* pretending to be partisans. In this manner, the *spetsgruppy* would gain the trust of those locals associated with the anti-Soviet resistance. At this point, however, the false partisans would remain on their own to build up their reputation as bona fide resistance fighters. Once they became well-known, the *spetsgruppy* made use of several concocted scenarios to get to the partisans themselves. For example, either through a staged gun battle or just by spreading a rumor, the notion that the false partisan group had been largely destroyed would be created among the local resistance groups. Later, a few of the false partisans, who had supposedly survived their group's destruction, would return and be accepted by the support network. Another variant involved a claim that the false partisans had been captured by Soviet forces. A few of these would then "escape" and find their way back among the locals. Claiming to be in need of aid, the false partisans would ask to be put in contact with the local partisan detachments. Having previously gained the trust of the locals, the *spetsgruppy* request would be honored. Once they had gained access to the real partisans, the *spetsgruppy* would either call in the Soviet military to eliminate them, or remain with them as part of the growing Soviet web of infiltration of the partisan ranks.

Such deviousness on the part of the Soviets may seem extravagant but it was necessary for the simple reason that it was the most effective way to disorganize and eliminate the Lithuanian partisans. Lithuanian nationalist opposition to the Soviet occupation regime was so strong that, as shall be seen, infiltration through any other means was difficult at best. It was such undercover groups participating in *maskirovka* (masquerade operations) that began to undermine a resistance movement dependent upon the trust and cooperation between separate partisan groups and with the local population.

Of course to create effective undercover groups, the proper candidates with foolproof cover stories were needed. Those selected for such duty were taken from several groups. Partisans who had accepted Soviet amnesty but against whom Soviet authorities held compromising material were often pressed into service. Others, including family members or friends who had been arrested, were put to work as undercover operatives in exchange for a promised full pardon. Soviet authorities made sure to protect those who joined the ranks of the false partisans and their families from possible reprisals. Nonetheless, as Sokolov wrote, "when bandit groups drop in on [the families of our agents], they seem to work harder."²²

A U.S. Army Counter-Intelligence Corps (CIC) report from 1948 provides insight into the nature of the recruitment and training of Soviet agents. On 25 June 1948, German police arrested a Lithuanian, Simas Peciulonis, in Kassel, in the American zone of occupied Germany. He was promptly turned over to the CIC for questioning. Peciulonis, a native of Kaunas, had been conscripted into the Red Army in 1946. In lieu of being posted to frontier duty, Peciulonis decided to attend an MVD training school in the Vilnius suburb of Antakalnis. During his interrogation, Peciulonis described the extensive training he received in a variety of MVD/MGB operational procedures such as gathering information on suspects, surveillance of suspects, arresting suspects, interrogation of arrestees, building up informants' networks, and the liquidation of anti-Soviet elements.

Our teacher told us to get out all possible information from the arrestees. During interrogations all means were allowed, that is, beating, torturing, terror, etc. This course was not only conducted theoretically, but we were actually taken to interrogations where we could see how arrestees were beaten to unconsciousness. Arrestees were hung up on the wall with tied hands, needles or sharp wooden sticks were pushed under the finger nails, sensitive parts of the body were cut with knives, hands and legs were torn apart, there was also a special tub in which the arrestees had to lie until they became unconscious or confessed. Unconscious arrestees were treated with cold water. If arrestees did not confess and would go on a hunger strike, they were forced to eat and treated in a very nice way. If that turned out unsuccessfully, they were again tortured until they dropped dead. There was also a very amiable way of interrogating. The arrestee got cigarettes, schnapps, and good food, and was methodically coaxed into talking. Suddenly he was asked questions which he could not answer, because he did not know them. He was then tortured to death. This was taught by Lieutenant Trafimov.

Peciulonis also related his instruction in setting up *agentura* networks.

We were taught how to use people who had information concerning persons or groups. Informants were promised rewards. They had to sign a paper and got a secret cover name. First, the informant was kept under surveillance. If his work was satisfactory, he was not kept under surveillance. Informants had to go to all organizations and meetings where people with alleged anti-Soviet attitudes gathered. It is the MVD's method to have as many informants as possible, in all branches of public life. We were also instructed how to work in the British-American zone. We were to pick out reliable people in DP camps and among German civilians. We were to choose people whose financial conditions were

bad, or whose morale was on a low standard. They were to be won by promises.

Peciulonis was sent into the American zone of Germany to infiltrate the Lithuanian communities within the displaced persons camps and to set up informants' networks among Lithuanians and Germans.²³

Soviet Infiltration of the Lithuanian Resistance Movement

One of the most successful MGB infiltration plans was an operation code-named "West." Begun by the LSSR MGB's second Division, it was dedicated to "the identification of Lithuanian emigrant nationalists and Lithuanian military leaders." Over the next several years, largely because of the success of Operation West, the information it produced, and the methods employed, Soviet police forces managed to develop even more damaging penetration of the partisan movement at the highest levels. This operation is also revealing for its description of the resistance leadership both in Lithuania and within the émigré community.

In 1946, the LSSR MGB identified and liquidated several partisan groups, underground organizations, and their headquarters in Lithuania. Among these were the Supreme Lithuanian Partisan Union (Vyriausias Lietuvos partizanų sąjunga), the Supreme Lithuanian Liberation Committee (Vyriausias Lietuvos Išlaisvinimo Komitetas, VLIK), and the National Freedom Council (Tautos Išlaisvinimo Taryba). These organizations had attempted to develop ties with Lithuanian émigré groups in the Anglo-American occupation zones in Germany and Sweden in order to get aid from Great Britain and America. In their return, the émigré organizations had been fostering ties with partisan organizations in Lithuania.

Operation West is typical of the Soviet efforts to infiltrate partisan ranks. Regarding [the contacts between the partisans and émigré groups], the MGB Second Division Chief Ilja Pockaj reported, "we have decided to take over these channels of communication to infiltrate our *agentura* into Lithuanian nationalist organizations and into foreign operations centers, so that we can dismember and liquidate the armed bands." Toward this end the MGB used the liquidated Lietuvos Tautinė Taryba (Lithuanian National Council) and through one trusted agent began a pretended reconstruction of the Taryba.²⁴

In May, this agent, code-named "Azuolas" (Oak), made contact with the Zalias Vėlnis (Green Devil) group, the leaders of which had been acquaintances of the agent.²⁵ Using the Green Devil chiefs, the Soviet agent was able to make contact

with the Tauras or "A" region organization. At the end of May, Azuolas was invited to the Southern and Eastern Lithuanian partisan leaders' meeting as a representative of the Didziosios Kovos (Great Battle) region. The leadership took him to the Tauras region headquarters, in the deep woods, thirty kilometers outside the city of Kaunas.²⁶

At this meeting, the agent met the Tauras region chief, Mykolas-Jonas (Michael-John), the Iron Wolf band leader, Ziedas (Ring), and other leaders of the partisan movement who were discussing the tactical questions facing the partisan armies and the prospects of a unified central leadership. Following instructions given to him by his Soviet controllers, agent Azuolas, as the Taryba representative, pushed for a reduction in armed attacks because, he argued, these only led to the further annihilation of the Lithuanian nation. In fact, many of the delegates agreed that these ideas were logical, but Azuolas could not convince anyone to implement tactical changes because, as he found out, in the fall of 1945 several representatives of the Lithuanian émigré community had managed to sneak into Lithuania and gave direct orders that anti-Soviet activities and armed attacks should continue.

Azuolas reported to his superiors the following speech by partisan Mykolas-Jonas: "Lithuanians in the West are doing everything they can to free Lithuania. The VLIK is trying to send more men to join the fight in Lithuania to help this organized battle against the Bolsheviks. They hold and will continue to hold the partisans' fight as the sacred measure of Lithuania's liberation." According to Azuolas, "This news raised the spirits of the nationalists, and gave them a breath of hope."²⁷

On 6 April 1946, the Tauras district chiefs again invited the Soviet agent to their headquarters to meet with newly arrived "journalists" from the West. Upon his return, he reported that at one meeting in the region controlled by the Vytis group, the partisans met with two illegally arrived VLIK ambassadors who were introduced as Alfonsas and Andrius. Alfonsas and Andrius organized a meeting with the leaders of the partisan forces, in which they proposed the organization of central leadership organs. Their chief purpose in Lithuania was to organize the Supreme Committee for the Liberation of Lithuania (Vyriausias Lietuvos Atstajmo Komitetas, VLAK) under which the VLIK would be its foreign partner.²⁸

With the organization of a central leadership, it was resolved that all the active Lithuanian organizations would form the VLAK. This committee became the highest political organ, in charge of all political and military activities in Lithuania, and would remain in contact with the Lithuanian leadership abroad through delegations. "The foreign delegation (VLIK) is the principal representative of the Lithuanian peace initiative abroad. It coordinates the emigrant efforts and is work-

ing with the diplomatic missions. The delegation will maintain ties, and will help the Lithuanian partisans with money, clothing, weapons, and medical supplies. The delegation, along with the VLAK, will strive with all its might to fight for the liberation of Lithuania.”²⁹ At the same time it was decided that while the VLAK was being organized, its functions would be carried out by a temporary committee with Azuolas as its head.

Azuolas was also able to report to his superiors the membership roster of the foreign delegation, which consisted of many well-known Lithuanian émigrés such as Reverend Krupavicious (chairman), Professor Brazaitis, Dr. Podolskis, and professors Kaminskas, Zemaitis, Meskis, and Valiukas. Azuolas’s report also included a list of nationalist organizations that had been established within the Anglo-American occupation zones in Germany. These included the Lithuanian Freedom Fighters’ Alliance (Lietuvos Laisves Kovotuju Sajunga, LLKS), the Lithuanian Front (Lietuviu Frontas), Independent Lithuania Will Bloom (Nepriklausoma Lietuva-Atzalynas), the Christian Democratic Alliance (Kriscioniu Demokratu Sajunga), the Social Democrats (Socialdemokratai), the Peoples’ Alliance (Liaudininku Sajunga), and the Lithuanian Partisan Alliance (Lietuvos Partizanu Sajunga).³⁰

In the first half of July, Azuolas again traveled to meet with the Western emissaries Alfonsas and Andrius. From discussions with Alfonsas, he learned that Andrius had departed for the Alytus region, where he had illegally transported his wife who had been living in Kaunas, in the hopes of smuggling her through Poland and into the British zone in Germany. In discussing the contacts between the emissaries abroad and the forces in Lithuania, Alfonsas reported preparations to establish a radio station in one of the district headquarters.

Regarding the character of the nationalist effort, Alfonsas informed Azuolas that continued armed resistance was wasteful, because the resources and time for such efforts were minimal. It was more important, according to Alfonsas, that the partisans save their strength and begin to ready themselves for the coming battle, when the war between the Soviet Union and Great Britain would begin. Alfonsas believed that it was essential to operate in this manner, in order to trick the MGB apparatus into believing that the partisans had been weakened and the Soviet regime in Lithuania had gained strength.

On 7 September, a “meeting” of Azuolas’ Taryba was held which included agents Azuolas, Jonynas, Kibirktis, headquarters chief Genelis, the headquarters security chief Vytenis, Zemaitia chief Lokys (Bear), and Aukstaitija chief Ozka (Goat). Azuolas was joined by Gediminas and Jonynas in the task of infiltrating the organization’s leadership. Meanwhile, the MGB residents set up a trap for several

partisan leaders. The Green Devil chief was invited to Vilnius where he agreed to meet in an apartment building that, unbeknown to him, was controlled by the MGB. Upon his arrival he was arrested.³¹

The activities of agent Azuolas demonstrate the level to which the Soviets had succeeded in penetrating the partisan ranks. Soviet MGB files reveal the shocking identity of Azuolas—none other than the respected Doctor Juozas Markulis who, by the late 1940s, had assumed one of the top posts among the Lithuanian partisans.³² Thus, by the end of 1949, the Soviets had penetrated the highest echelons of the resistance movement. This would spell trouble for the Western intelligence agencies who at this time had begun recruiting their own Baltic agents to be used as covert operatives against the Soviet Union.

Liberationism and the Red Web: The Early Cold War in Lithuania

The original impetus for the armed resistance movement in Lithuania had been the belief that an all-out effort was needed simply to hold off sovietization of Lithuania until the Western democracies came to their aid, possibly in the form of another world war. Partisan movements throughout Eastern Europe had taken the principles of the Atlantic Charter to heart. In preparing for the armed revolt in 1941, however, resistance leaders in Lithuania did not believe aid from the West, and in particular Great Britain, was forthcoming. At that time, the partisans considered Britain too geographically distant and too preoccupied with the war to be of any assistance. “Under such conditions it is doubtful that England would have the necessary willpower and energy to take up the new task of compelling the Soviet Union to withdraw from the Baltic States, which would mean a war with the Soviet Union. It seems especially unattainable now, because England is actually seeking support from the Soviet Union.”³³

Following the war and the breakdown in Western-Soviet relations, the growing Cold War rhetoric on the part of Great Britain and the United States renewed hope within the resistance movement that help was on its way. President Harry Truman’s speech declaring the Truman Doctrine raised the hope of liberation. He promised support for all the nations fighting for their freedom and extended \$4 million in aid to Greece and Turkey. In response to this declaration, the partisan newspaper *Laisvės Rytas* (Freedom’s Morning) declared, “All these latest events show that at this time the final stage of preparation for war is under way.”³⁴

Their hopes were futile. Neither Britain nor the United States was contemplating war. Nonetheless, in 1947, with the birth of the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA), and the creation of the president's National Security Council (NSC), the United States began to look at possibilities for aiding anticommunist movements in Soviet-occupied areas. On 28 June 1948, the NSC issued directive 10/2 authorizing "assistance to underground resistance movements, guerillas and refugee liberation groups."³⁵ Additionally, the Office of Policy Coordination (OPC) was created with the mission of running operations in Soviet-held territories. On the agenda for the OPC was undertaking "preventative direct action," which entailed the "support of guerrillas, sabotage, countersabotage and demolition, evacuation and stay-behinds."³⁶

Not only were the mechanisms for liberationism put in place, but the success of U.S.-led anticommunist policies in Italy, Greece, and Turkey, bolstered U.S. confidence in such a plan working in Eastern Europe. Furthermore, the June 1948 break between Yugoslavian leader Josip Tito and the Soviet Union offered the possibility of defections from the communist bloc elsewhere. George Kennan, Washington's resident Soviet expert, voiced his optimism regarding the split. "The possibility of defection from Moscow, which has heretofore been unthinkable for foreign communist leaders, will from now on be present in one form or another in the mind of every one of them."³⁷ It is clear, therefore, that the United States viewed the anti-Soviet resistance movements as key battlegrounds in the early Cold War. Moreover, Kennan identified the Baltic States as having a "special status in our eyes" as one of the areas the U.S. might try to aid in the hope of stirring up unrest within the Soviet empire.³⁸

Britain's MI6 also attempted to aid resistance movements. The Baltic States took on intelligence significance for the British soon after the start of World War II. Sweden in particular received attention from MI6 for its large number of Balts who began arriving in Stockholm after fleeing first Soviet and then German occupation. A Lithuanian-British network was established as early as 1943. Lithuanian partisan Algirdas Vokietaitis managed to escape to Sweden, where he established contact with Alexander "Sandy" McKibbin of MI6. Over the course of the next year contacts facilitated by Vokietaitis provided McKibbin and MI6 with information on German mobilization, arrests of locals, the establishment and operation of numerous ghettos for the Jewish population, and the strength and disbursement of the German naval fleet in the Baltic Sea. In August 1944, however, Vokietaitis was captured by the Germans and sent to Stuthoff concentration camp, which effectively ended any communication between the British and the Lithuanian partisan movement.³⁹

Following the end of the war in Europe, MI6 sought to revive its Baltic liaisons, and toward this end Section IX, the anticommunist sector, was reopened. McKibben was sent back to Stockholm to reorganize the intelligence networks that had been left behind, while in London, members of Section IX studied captured German intelligence files containing dossiers on individuals who could be of use for intelligence-gathering and infiltration operations in the Baltics. U.S. intelligence services took a similar course. Hundreds of Counter-Intelligence Corps (CIC) agents conducted countless interviews among the thousands of Baltic refugees in the Allied controlled displaced persons camps in western Germany. Both agencies began recruiting agents for potential Baltic operations.⁴⁰

Among the earliest recruits targeted, interestingly enough, by both MI6 and the CIC, was a Lithuanian historian and Oxford graduate, Stasys Zakevicius. Zakevicius had acted as an advisor to the German occupation administration and then escaped to Denmark ahead of the oncoming Red Army. After being relocated to a Western displaced persons camp, Zakevicius created the Lithuanian organization Lithuaise Freiheits Kämpfer or Lithuanian Freedom Fighters, whose membership soon swelled to include all three Western occupation zones of Germany. CIC operatives estimated its membership at well over two thousand active members in addition to a “great number of passive sympathizers.” In an interview with CIC Special Agent Gaston Amson, Zakevicius confirmed that the leaders of the organization were in contact with Lithuanian partisans. Zakevicius said that at the beginning of 1946 there were thirty thousand to thirty-five thousand active partisans battling approximately fifty thousand NKVD personnel and twenty thousand armed members of local destruction battalions.⁴¹

Along with Zakevicius, Western intelligence services recruited another Lithuanian émigré nationalist, Juozas Deksnys. Deksnys was a well-known journalist who had escaped to the West in 1945. Sent back into Lithuania by MI6 in May 1947 to establish contact with the partisans and assess their strength, Deksnys’s first order of business was to organize a group through which the West could communicate directly with the partisans. He immediately met with Dr. Juozas Markulis, and the two soon organized the United Democratic Resistance Organization, which was to become the primary contact for MI6. Deksnys joined Markulis as a member of the leadership of UDRO. Markulis, born in Pittsburgh in 1913, had attended seminary in Kaunas and graduated from Vytautas the Great University with a degree in medicine in 1941. During the war he remained active in the underground nationalist movement, and after the Soviet reoccupation of Lithuania he decided to join the partisan ranks. In the spring of 1945, however, Markulis was captured by MGB forces and,

by the time of his contact with Deksnys, was working as the MGB agent Azuolas. Deksnys, therefore, immediately found himself in a precarious position.

The activities of Markulis have already been documented. Because of Deksnys's relationship with Markulis as well as his close ties to Western émigrés, he became an immediate target of MGB forces. By 1947, he had made numerous trips in and out of Lithuania, conferring with resistance leaders, bringing supplies from the West, and apprising MI6 of the conditions in Lithuania. In late 1948, MGB agents, most likely tipped off by Markulis, captured Deksnys as he attempted to hide himself in a farm soon after landing on the Lithuanian coast. It is apparent that at this point Deksnys himself became an MGB double agent. MI6, however, remained unaware of this fact.

In *The Red Web*, Tom Bower documents the attempts by Britain and the United States to support the resistance movements in all three of the Baltic States. He firmly concludes that these operations were doomed from the start. The Soviets were aware of almost all the comings and goings of Western agents and assistance into the Baltics. Part of this was due to the elaborate spy network in place in high levels of government both in Washington and London. One of the Soviet's most valuable and highly placed intelligence operatives was Kim Philby who, by October 1944, received an appointment as head of the aforementioned Section IX, the MI6 division responsible for anticommunist and anti-Soviet counterintelligence. With this valuable "mole" in place, the Soviets gained advance knowledge of many of the operations planned by British intelligence and its American counterpart.

While the nature of Philby's role in spoiling liberationist operations in the Baltic States is not fully known, Philby himself later admitted foiling more than one Western operation in Soviet-controlled territory. A British mission to send trained émigrés into Georgia in 1948 failed after Philby tipped off the Soviets. He later wrote, "It was an unpleasant story, of course. The boys weren't bad. Not at all. I knew very well that they would be caught and that a tragic fate awaited them. But on the other hand, it was the only way of driving a stake through the plans of future operations."⁴² Philby was well aware of other missions conducted by MI6 and the CIA including those in the Ukraine which were designed to aid the Ukrainian nationalist leader Stepan Bandera, who was conducting a guerrilla war against the Soviets. In his autobiography, Philby wrote of the agents the West sent in who were never heard from again. "A first party, equipped by the British with [wireless telegraph] and other clandestine means of communication, was sent into the Ukraine in 1949, and disappeared. Two more parties were sent the following year, and remained equally silent. . . . I do not know what happened to the parties

concerned. But I can make an informed guess.”⁴³ Whether Philby provided specific information on anti-Soviet operations in the Baltic States or not, the Soviets were clearly apprised of Western activities, which gave them a decided advantage in the Cold War in the Baltic States.⁴⁴

Another factor that hampered liberationism in the Baltic States was the degree to which the Western powers underestimated the level of Soviet control and infiltration of their efforts. Bower quotes one British official who remarked, “It’s a peasant society. Just peasants and women in horse-drawn carts. No problem for us.”⁴⁵ Philby himself, speaking in reference to failed CIA operations in Albania, stated: “I do not intend to say that the people were happy under the regime, but the CIA did underestimate the degree of the control the authorities had over the country.”⁴⁶

Therefore, American and British efforts in the Baltic States had little chance for success. Both organizations recruited Baltic émigrés whom they trained, equipped, and then either parachuted or dropped by boat on the Baltic coast. Members of the resistance movements themselves were smuggled out of the region to receive training and supplies and inform the Western powers of the status of the resistance.⁴⁷ However, with their advance knowledge of Western efforts, and their increasingly successful efforts to penetrate and control Lithuanian resistance groups, the Soviets, as shall be seen, began to turn the tables on Western liberationism.

While the MGB continued to weave its web to ensnare more and more Western-trained operatives, operations continued to combat those resistance forces still operating in the Lithuanian countryside. The Soviet forces sought to streamline their combat operations against small partisan groups, looked for new opportunities to disrupt partisan activities, and used their newly turned agents to foment dissent within the resistance movement itself. In addition to these new methods, the Soviets also resorted to their previously employed pacification policy of deportation.

Deportations as Reprisal

In light of the failure of the destruction battalions, the Lithuanian resistance to Soviet elections, and the ongoing struggle with the partisans, Soviet leaders decided to deport twelve thousand Lithuanian partisan families at the start of 1948. An order to initiate such an operation, signed by Stalin himself, was delivered to the Lithuanian party leadership. In it, Stalin expanded the number of those to be deported to include anyone who had contact with the partisans, such as “illegal residents, the families of those killed in armed skirmishes, the families of convicted bandits, nationalistic

families, and those kulaks and their families who aided them.” The deportations were ordered for May 1948, and the deportees to be sent to the Krasnoyarsk and Yakut regions in the USSR where they would be put into “forest labor camps.”⁴⁸

The deportations of 1948 demonstrate a clear difference between Soviet state policy and Soviet policing policy. Deportation, a policy long employed throughout the Soviet empire, was put in place immediately after both occurrences of Soviet occupation, in 1941 and 1944.⁴⁹ Such a policy, however, was not in line with the plans of Soviet police officials in Lithuania. The fact that it was handed down by Stalin himself shows that it was more a habitual reaction to the problems created by the resistance than a measure initiated within the MGB establishment in Lithuania. Despite its disconnectedness from the new policy being implemented by Soviet secret police leaders, the deportations still served to significantly disrupt the resistance movement and its efforts.

On 18 May 1948 the operation code-named “Vesna” was begun. In all, 12,134 families were targeted, representing 48,000 Lithuanians. Thirty train stations across the republic were set up for the removal of the deportees. Thirty-two doctors and sixty-six medical nuns were brought in, and an additional 1,050 troops were sent in to defend the railroad bridges.⁵⁰ On 22 May, 11,345 families totaling 39,766 people were collected, driven out to the railroad stations, and loaded onto the wagons. This took place throughout the night, from midnight to five in the morning.⁵¹

From Soviet documents we learn of an unlucky Lithuanian, Anthony Joseph Stasiskis, who was one of the many whose families were targeted for deportation. *Agentura* reports present Stasiskis, born in 1884, as a resident of the Kaniuku farm in the Uzpalio district within the Utenos region. The reports note that Stasiskis was never honored with any medals or decorations from the Soviet Union and had not served in the Soviet Army. In addition, he was accused of anti-Soviet actions: “It is known that Stasiskis is opposed to the Soviet regime and is a leader in agitating anti-Soviet sentiments among the inhabitants.” Further charges were reported: Stasiskis had a weapon concealed in his garden; his brother-in-law was in a bandit group during the German occupation; he was a leader of the Nationalist party; he had a hired work force, making him a kulak; and he had nighttime meetings with bandit groups. Upon reviewing these reports, local officials found that many of the charges were not completely accurate. The “weapon” turned out to be an old hunting rifle; the former bandit identified as Stasiskis’s brother-in-law was neither his brother-in-law nor in any way related to Stasiskis; he had never been a party leader. And as for his work force, on one occasion he had hired two brothers to help him

with his harvest. Despite all these discrepancies, the charges remained and Stasiskis and his family were still deported.⁵²

The Stasiskis case demonstrates that even those who were only suspected of anti-Soviet behavior were marked for deportation. Local officials were determined to fill the quota set by Stalin, but still had trouble rounding up all those selected. While they successfully collected over eighty percent of the targeted deportees, nearly ten thousand of those designated for deportation evaded capture. One Soviet official was perplexed: “Many of the prospective deportee kulak families had vacated their homes and were hiding somewhere. This then raises the question, how were these people able to learn of the upcoming measures?”⁵³ The answer lay in the effective partisan warnings issued to the population. Furthermore, Soviet officials reported a number of armed skirmishes with the Lithuanian resistance. Several of these were ambushes set up by the partisans. Nonetheless, according to Soviet reports, these had limited effect. Fifty-seven partisans were killed, sixty-nine were captured or arrested, and MVD troops captured a large cache of weapons and ammunition. During all this activity, two party officials were killed and two were injured.⁵⁴ While their warnings saved some, armed interventions by the partisans appeared to have little effect.

The deportations of 1948 were not part of a larger shift in Soviet counterinsurgency policy, but rather symbolized the traditional Soviet response to political opposition. In the face of internal problems and a losing struggle against the partisans, MGB chiefs in Lithuania had realized the need to adapt their strategy. Through the first few years of occupation, they attempted to subdue the resistance movement using brute force. The partisans’ success at evading Soviet attacks, and the MGB’s own difficulties at controlling its personnel, clearly indicated that a new plan of attack was needed: conventional warfare tactics would not work against Lithuanian guerilla fighters. The Soviet state’s solution was to remove a portion of the resistance support network through deportations. Those in the Soviet policing apparatus, however, responded with a shift in tactics that involved taking a more intuitive approach to the struggle against banditry. This included reevaluating the nature of Soviet military tactics.

Spetsgruppy: Soviet Shock Troops in the Fight Against the Partisans

MGB chiefs grew concerned that many “operations” conducted against the partisans involved nothing more than sending a small force to an area where bandit

activity had occurred, having it look around, and then leave.⁵⁵ Such activity was often built on the frustrations of MGB soldiers who, while enjoying some success, still faced an often elusive and very dangerous prey. An operation to liquidate partisans in the Ziuriu-Gudeliu region illustrates the fact that, despite taking numerous precautions, eliminating partisans even when their location was known to the MBG was a difficult and deadly task.

On 22 April 1950 the 353rd Sauliu Regiment commander, Pobutov, received news that three partisans from the Tauras group had been spotted in the Ziuru-Gudeliu region. He decided to send a military detachment to search out and destroy the bandits. The detachment was comprised of thirteen men from the 4th Sauliai Company, thirty-two men from the 5th Sauliai Company, nineteen men from the 9th Sauliai Company, ten men from the special battalion, and eleven MGB destruction battalion members. Captain Silinov was put in charge of the group of seventy-four. Not having time to create a formal plan of attack, Silinov decided to do the following: Along the perimeter of underbrush, thirteen men would circle in from the west, eleven destruction battalion members would come around from the east, and nineteen men with a search dog would approach from the southwest perimeter. The remaining men would begin a search from west to east, with six in reserve. As the group prepared to begin their sweep it was ascertained that thirty peat extraction workers were within the search perimeter. Captain Silinov organized their removal, making sure to determine that there were no partisans among them.

At 1730 hours, the search began. At 1840, after moving eastward 600 meters, Senior Lieutenant Sivkov's group encountered a partisan who shot and injured Junior Sergeant Matvejev at a distance of seven meters. Another soldier saw two partisans moving through the brush and began firing in their direction. One was injured but managed to hide, while the other escaped to the north. On the left wing a partisan, seen running, was shot and killed. In the spot where the partisans were first encountered, the soldiers found one pair of shoes and some clothing. The injured sergeant was evacuated to the Kaunas hospital, and Captain Silinov radioed back what had occurred to regiment headquarters.

At 1920, Silinov organized another sweep, this time in the opposite direction. The partisan who had been injured earlier had secreted himself in the thickets, and when the search party got to within eight meters, he opened fire, wounding one man in the stomach. The partisan had not been detected by anyone in the detachment. Escaping for approximately seventy meters, the partisan again hid in the thicket. MGB Senior Lieutenant Avramenkov and Sergeant Zubkov proceeded to lead the left wing of the search party. Again the partisan allowed the soldiers to approach

within six meters and then let off a three-shot burst, hitting Zubkov in the left chest. Zubkov attempted to return fire but his weapon jammed. Another soldier fired in the direction of the shots, but missed. The partisan, still undercover of the thick brush, managed to slink away.

The second search party also managed to walk unknowingly into shooting range of this particular partisan. Private Chizikov was ambushed from a distance of six meters and seriously wounded in the chest and stomach. The partisan again was able to escape capture. Finally, two men were able to get within range of the partisan's hiding place unobserved. They threw three grenades at their target and finally managed to kill him. After taking care of the second partisan the remainder of the 4th and 5th Sauliai companies undertook a third search, but reported no results. Since there had been word of three partisans in the area and only two had been killed, Commander Pobutov, who had arrived at 2030, strengthened the encirclement with sixty-two more men and three dogs. At 2330 another search began. The men were paired up and spread apart by forty meters. At approximately 040, three partisans, who from the beginning of the operation had been hiding in a water-filled hole, attempted to sneak past the picket line. Hidden nearby were two privates who, after calling for the bandits to stop, shot and killed all three as they attempted to escape.⁵⁶

Clearly, Soviet military tactics had changed. As Pobutov's operation demonstrated, MGB troops conducted very careful and meticulous searches rather than simply rushing in. But the results of the operation demonstrate the problems that continued to plague MGB forces even when facing only small numbers of partisans. During an operation in which five MGB soldiers were either wounded or killed, Commander Pobutov's detachment only managed to find and eliminate five partisans. Moreover, these same five partisans managed to avoid capture for seven hours by a task force that by the end of the operation numbered over a hundred men. The partisans were very familiar with the ground they operated on and had become expert at avoiding detection. While the Soviet forces inevitably succeeded, their success was often costly.

On 23 January 1951, the MGB 34th Regiment, 7th Company found a forest bunker in the Piliunas region. The bunker door was open and the fresh tracks of one person led out. Not far from the bunker, company members encountered an unknown woman. Upon being approached she reached into her pocket, pulled out a pistol, and shot herself in the head, causing severe injury. She was identified as the wife of partisan leader "Biliunas." A few hours later 7th Company's Private Ogarkov found another bunker from which partisans began to fire at him. The bunker was blocked off and the company commenced firing, throwing six grenades into the bunker. After

the firing from the bunker ceased, a local resident was sent in who reported that there were two dead partisans inside. The bodies and contents of the bunker were then removed. A battalion member then noticed a curtain on the side of the bunker. Behind it was a third partisan who had leapt out and fired three pistol shots, fatally wounding a sergeant who had also been in the bunker. He then jumped out of the bunker, but was shot as he attempted to escape.⁵⁷

Even by 1950, while the partisan movement was slowly weakening, the difficulties encountered by MGB troops continued. However, the MGB's use of agent-informers and deception operations were becoming more and more successful.

Double Agents and Informers

The MGB had begun the practice of paying its informants, and by 1950 that procedure was widely used. The February 1950 payment registry shows that the MGB had hundreds of informers whose average payment was 6,000 rubles, but some were paid as much as 21,000 rubles for six months' work.⁵⁸ MGB Regional Chief Viacheslav Romachev reported on the contract work done by one A. Sumskiene: "Sumskiene showed up at MGB Lazdijos headquarters and reported that on the Rutkauskas farm there was a secret bunker in which was bandit Zvirblis—responsible for several acts of mass terror against Soviet citizens. Based on this information, the bandit was liquidated. Sumskiene was paid 500 rubles."⁵⁹

The MGB also infiltrated its informers into the ranks of prisoners and deportees. *Agentura* were particularly useful in prisons because they could learn of anti-Soviet actions being planned, escape plans in the works, or attempts by the partisans on the outside to free their imprisoned comrades. In addition to gaining information among the prisoners, informers were also placed among prison personnel to learn of any prison employees who exhibited anti-Soviet sentiments or who were helping the prisoners in anyway. The MGB also ran deception operations in the prisons to extract knowledge from unsuspecting individuals.

One such target was Vytas Demelevicius, a known supporter of the Varpas band who was arrested by the MGB in October 1951. During interrogation he refused to admit his ties to the partisans. When questioning failed, the officers in charge introduced an agent into his prison cell. The agent soon learned that Demelevicius had been rewarded by the partisans of the Varpas band for his constant support of the group. In addition to being awarded a medal for his service, he was also entrusted with a number of important documents which, he divulged to his cellmate, he hid

in a bottle that he then buried. Demelevicius would not reveal the location of these documents or the whereabouts of his partisan friends, but he told the agent that if his wife, the sister of partisan leader Girenas, was ever captured she might give all this away. Needing no further prompting, the MGB quickly arrested Demelevicius's wife, Maryte.

Under questioning Maryte Demeleviciute confirmed that her husband had close ties with partisans but revealed nothing about the documents given to him. In order to gain the information Demelevicius possessed, the MGB concocted a ruse to trick him into giving away what he knew. The MGB returned Demelevicius to his cell at the same time his wife was being brought out. It was then explained to him that his wife had told them all about the documents he had received from the Varpas group. In truth, Demelevicius had himself given away this information. Nonetheless, believing that his wife had been coerced into revealing all, Demelevicius eventually disclosed the location of the documents. The information gleaned from these documents led to the arrest of three partisans.⁶⁰

Beyond prisoners, the MGB also approached the large population of deportees for potential *agentura* recruits. LSSR MGB Minister Piotr Kondakov issued a directive to his operational groups to locate possible agents among those deported to Siberia and "find those who might be brought back to Lithuania on condition that they infiltrate bandit gangs and work for us."⁶¹ While money or ideology motivated some, MGB authorities banked on the fact that the promise of a return from exile would entice others.

The realities of "arranging" the escape of those willing to participate and then seamlessly reintegrating them into Lithuanian society without arousing suspicions proved to be difficult. An agent known as "Ochotnik" was brought back from Siberia and put in place as an agent-informer among his old family and friends in Sauliai county, with the task of infiltrating the resistance movement. It soon became apparent, however, that many Lithuanians were aware that Ochotnik had not escaped, but was in fact working with the MGB. A letter was intercepted in May 1953 written by Ochotnik's sister: "It is so sad that my brother Juozas made such a mistake. Even in an eternity he will never be able to make amends for it. Oh Lord, what people are these, who punish their brothers and neighbors. Now Juozas has left his family in Siberia and what fate awaits him. Today he murders others, what will happen tomorrow. He gave his soul to the devil and devoured his family." Ochotnik's controllers quickly recalled him to avoid comprising their other operations.⁶²

Despite certain setbacks, the *agentura* network had, by the early 1950s, become quite extensive. This is revealed in the numerous and detailed files the MGB had

compiled on dozens of partisans through an equally large number of sources. The file on partisan J. Vilicinkas, for example, was based on information gathered from sixteen different agents. The agents provided their handlers with a biography of the partisan: he had been a teacher in the town of Sakiv and joined the partisans after his parents were deported in 1949. The MGB was able to confirm his continued presence within the partisan ranks through several reports from agents who were either ambushed by partisan groups and recognized Vilicinkas or were undercover agents in partisan groups that came into contact with the suspect. The MGB also collected information from persons who had questioned locals about Vilicinkas or even seen him or made contact with him personally.⁶³ In short, through their network of agent-informers, the MGB was able to make a record of those who knew Vilicinkas, those who helped him, the partisans he worked with, the people he met with, persons he talked to, and many of his movements. Such comprehensive knowledge was gathered and held on many suspected anti-Soviet agitators. This information could then be used to further infiltrate the resistance movement or eliminate those targeted.

Agent-informers not only supplied intelligence sources, they themselves often killed or captured partisans and their supporters. In one instance several partisans payed a visit to an agent. The MGB, aware that the visit was to take place, provided the agent with poison which he was to introduce into the beverages of the partisans. He put the poison in a pitcher of milk, but the partisans noticed a sour taste and asked for something else to drink. Apparently, the poison did not mix well with milk and the agent's plot was a failure.⁶⁴

In another operation, two partisan leaders visited MGB agent-informers Zita and Gluosnis at their apartment. Gluosnis offered them a drink (doctored with poison) and a snack. The partisan leaders excused themselves, stating they had just recently eaten. Gluosnis then went out to his garden, where a small group of MGB soldiers was hidden. After receiving further instructions from their lieutenant, he returned to the apartment. When the partisans began to take their leave, Gluosnis, knowing what awaited them outside, walked them only to the door and then closed it and remained inside the apartment. Within seconds, the partisans were killed by gunfire from the hidden soldiers.⁶⁵

Such operations became typical for the MVD-MGB agent-informers by the 1950s. At the end of 1953, MGB chiefs reported that the organization held nearly five hundred apartments in which operations just like the one run against Kmitas and Bartkus were conducted.⁶⁶ In light of the fact that search and destroy missions, even when successful, were often costly and time-consuming, the Soviet security

apparatus relied more and more on undercover agents and undercover operations to ferret out and eliminate resistance fighters through another tactic, disorganization.

Dezorganizatsiia

MGB *dezorganizatsiia* operations largely followed the guidelines originally proposed by Major Sokolov. For instance, using a bandit who had been captured by the Latvian MGB, partisan leader A. Butenas was invited to a meeting in the woods. When the specialist group rushed in to capture him, he shouted to a comrade, who had remained in their camp, for help. Butenas was hit in the head with a rifle butt and subdued. The other partisan was killed. The group then forced Butenas to identify several local supporters. Afterward, he was led to a large swamp and killed.⁶⁷

In an April 1950 operation, Ziogas, the deputy commander of a partisan band, was captured and forced to work for a specialist group. Accompanied by Ziogas, the group then visited a number of local supporters and was able to convince them that it was a real partisan group. Ziogas managed to arrange a meeting with a regional commander and a partisan who had recently returned from America. MGB troops lay in waiting and they were both killed.⁶⁸

At times the MGB went to great lengths in its *disorganizatsiia*. In April 1950, partisan Stankevicius was captured. During his interrogation he refused to answer any questions, so the MGB second division chief Pockajus hatched an elaborate deception plan. Stankevicius was told he was being transported to Vilnius for further questioning. He was turned over to two *spetsgruppy* members dressed in MGB uniforms. On several occasions during the journey, the driver claimed that the truck was having mechanical problems and was not operating properly. Finally, at a prearranged spot he stopped, claiming the vehicle could go no further. The *spetsgruppy* operatives decided that they, along with their prisoner, would walk to the nearest town to call for another car. After having walked about one-third of a kilometer the "soldiers" were stopped by "partisans" (*spetsgruppy* dressed as partisans). The soldiers immediately began to run, were fired upon by the false partisans, and then fell to the ground pretending to be dead. The false partisans blindfolded Stankevicius and led him around the woods for two hours. Finally, they took him to a camp site where he was unmasked. There they accused him of being a traitor, but Stankevicius, protesting his innocence, claimed that he told the MGB nothing. As a "test" of his loyalty, the false partisans questioned Stankevicius about his activities and his knowledge of the partisan movement, thus extracting the information that Stankevicius had initially

been unwilling to divulge. Using this information, the MGB was able to locate the bunker of the leader of the Vytis gang and kill all five chiefs inside.⁶⁹

By 1949 and into the early 1950s, the Soviets had not only succeeded in the physical elimination of a sizeable portion of the Lithuanian resistance movement, but had managed to instill distrust and paranoia among the partisans and those who supported them. The provocations of the false partisans produced confusion as to which members were legitimate resistance fighters and which were Soviet provocateurs. Furthermore, local collaborators were afraid to help the true partisans for fear of falling victim to a Soviet trap.

Terror: Violence as a Policing Method

Perhaps it was the frustration of fighting a largely unseen enemy, or simply an abuse of power, but even in the early 1950s, Soviet officials were very concerned about reports of torture and misconduct emanating from the Lithuanian counties. A majority of the reports were from prisons where prisoners undergoing interrogation were severely beaten, sometimes to death. In January 1949, the MGB section arrested Teofilija Gavenaite, who had been working in the local sanitarium. During questioning Gavenaite admitted having ties with armed resistance groups and gave out some of the names of these partisans. On the night of 16 February, Gavenaite was questioned by Captain Plevako. When she refused to reveal all the names of the partisans known to her, Plevako began to torture her. Gavenaite was then turned over to three other officers, who continued to torture her until 3 a.m. Soon after being returned to her cell, Gavenaite committed suicide by hanging. Postmortem examination revealed severe internal injuries to her liver and pancreas. Captain Plevako, attempting to cover up his actions, approached a different medical examiner, a friend, and convinced him to falsify Gavenaite's death report.⁷⁰

MGB sources reveal several other instances where officials attempted to cover up the physical abuse of prisoners. On one occasion prisoners who had been severely beaten were only released after their wounds had somewhat healed and were less visible. Another MGB captain forced his prisoners to strip so he could examine the effects of his beatings. In another instance, wounds were discovered only after a prisoner was finally allowed admission into hospital for a high fever.⁷¹

Even in the later stages of pacification the Soviet leadership in Lithuania remained sensitive to the possibility that such conduct would provoke new defections to the resistance movement, against which they were beginning to have some success.

“Such abuse of power,” wrote one MGB official, “undermines Soviet authority and eliminates possible cooperation by locals. Those culpable should be sanctioned and firm directives should be sent out.”⁷²

This brings us to one of the most striking aspects of Soviet counterinsurgency policy. Throughout the period of armed resistance in Lithuania, Soviet officials were particularly sensitive to troop and party misconduct. Instances of unsanctioned violence were reported immediately, and those responsible were dealt with quickly and severely. And yet, on certain occasions Soviet authorities purposely utilized violence in several specific fashions to terrorize those who aided the partisans into ceasing their activities.

Juozas Luksa recalls how the NKVD began to train its forces: they were first “familiarized with the habits of our partisans” and then dressed in partisan uniforms, “complete with unit insignias on their sleeves and regulation caps,” which had been obtained from deceased partisans. These provocateurs were used to discredit the resistance movement by performing brutal attacks, rapes, and murders on the population. Luksa recounts one instance in which a band of provocateurs commenced looting a village and murdering the Communist officials. He notes, however, that the majority of the village officials were in fact secretly collaborating with the resistance movement. After committing these murders, the false partisans attempted to enlist the aid of local residents. When this aid was refused, the residents were taken into the woods and tortured as “Russian collaborators.” A few days later this same group returned to the village, this time dressed as MGB soldiers. They returned to the homes of those who had aided them while they were masquerading as partisans and executed them. In this way the local populace was placed in a catch-22 scenario in which they were tortured and killed either for refusing to help the fake partisans or for doing just that.⁷³

The NKVD also began the macabre practice of exhibiting the corpses of dead partisans as a means of further discouraging local support for the resistance:

[The] NKVD had recently begun to desecrate partisans' bodies in an attempt to discourage the continued growth of the armed resistance ranks. The policy had been adopted on 15 February 1946. Henceforth, the bodies of all partisans were to be seized and conveyed to the nearest public square, where they would remain exposed in full view of everyone.

One of the first incidents of this kind involved seven members of Viesulas' company, who had been killed during the course of an NKVD ambush. Their bodies were promptly taken to the village of Garlaiva, where they were first of all dumped in the public square to be abused, cursed, pummeled and spat upon by the [NKVD]. Afterwards, the corpse of the group commander was propped up in an upright standing position and made to look as though he were addressing the others. After the finishing touch had been added by stuffing a faucet into the corpse's mouth, the tableau was considered ready for the eyes of the town's people.⁷⁴

An article from the Dainava region partisan newspaper, *Freedom's Bell*, provided further commentary on this Soviet practice.

The Bolsheviks are innately insidious and violent, therefore they now use their final and lowest "war method"—the desecration of partisan corpses. The Red barbarians are not satisfied with just throwing these corpses onto the streets. Corpses are thrown in barns, trash piles, sewage pits, swamps, and rivers. The corpses are often burned or mangled by dogs. The partisan corpses are thrown into the streets with their internal organs cut out and shoved in their mouth, or the corpses are cut into pieces and thrown into the public toilets. Eyes gouged out, covered with rocks and sticks—[the bodies are] left out for a week—people prevented from removing them.⁷⁵

The desecration of corpses was used as a warning for potential partisans and their supporters. Public display was also a way to identify family and friends of the deceased. In June 1949, five partisan corpses were placed in a sitting position against a fence outside MGB headquarters in the Radvilskis region. MGB operatives were then secretly stationed in various locations around the immediate area. As locals passed by the bodies, the MGB agents watched their reactions carefully. Those who showed even the slightest trace of recognition or emotion were immediately detained for questioning.⁷⁶

In this manner state-sponsored terror was used to combat the resistance. Unlike the random hooligan acts which the Soviet authorities closely monitored and attempted to eliminate, the desecration of corpses, violence perpetrated on partisan supporters, and rape, became commonly used tactics. Through such sanctioned brutality, the Soviets issued a stern warning to those considering helping the partisans in any way and effectively eroded popular support for the resistance movement.

Growing Paranoia: The Partisan Response to Provocation

The partisans did their best to respond to their growing internal disintegration by attempting to root out the provocateurs in their midst. Testifying before the United States House of Representative Committee on Communist Aggression in 1954 MGB Lieutenant Colonel Grigori Burlitski stated that the partisans focused such efforts almost exclusively on Lithuanians who were perceived as traitors. "It is characteristic that these so-called bandits liquidated and disposed of the party leaders and the administrative leaders, but only those who were actually Lithuanians, because they considered that these people were traitors to their own country. And these resistance groups did not touch, did not molest the representatives of the party and the government who were Russians, Ukrainians, or belonged to other nationalities of the Soviet Union."⁷⁷

In a further effort to root out traitors within their own ranks, the partisan leadership established a penal code that called for the execution of any member of the resistance movement who was caught spying for the Soviet forces, revealing the presence of partisan bunkers and hiding places, killing or conspiring to kill fellow partisans, denouncing partisans or their families to the Soviet officials, "consciously uprooting the national consciousness," or "instilling in others the spirit of assimilation."⁷⁸ A bulletin from the partisan leaders summed up the partisan war on collaborators: "Lithuanian partisan, punish mercilessly those who have sold out their country, their nation for a crumb of gold, a spoon of good food. Remember that the blood of a traitor will never fall upon your head because you are fighting a holy war for national freedom and independence."⁷⁹ Such strong language reflected the desperation felt by the partisans as they viewed their nationalist fight crumbling from within.

In addition to dealing with its own, the partisan leadership immediately sent out warnings to the population such as the following proclamation:

The Bolsheviks have released provocateurs into our nation who become close to real Lithuanians and attempt to learn the activities of our freedom fighters. The provocateurs, pretending to be partisans, collect food, clothing, and other materials from residents. There have occurred instances where these provocateurs will arrive at a Lithuanian's residence where later, according to plan, an army detachment arrives and a "shoot-out" occurs. After everyone has departed this resident is arrested as a partisan supporter. Another means of provocation is the use of women "partisans." Being women they are more often accepted into homes and, since they are believed to be harmless, are furnished

with all sorts of information. What has occurred is that the provocateurs manage to find people with weak orientations, who, not meaning any harm, tell them everything they know and end up helping the enemy. The Lithuanian partisans caution all inhabitants to not interact with these insidious types and to avoid contact with any unknown partisans or their supporters or provide them with any information or aid. If suspicious persons are seen, they should be immediately reported to the nearest partisan detachment. Those who ignore this declaration will be punished as enemies of the nation.⁸⁰

The proclamation was followed by a number of guidelines. Lithuanians were warned not to make contact with any strangers. Furthermore, no food or information was to be given to such people.

Additionally, partisan groups worked to spread information about known provocateurs. The Prisikilimo partisan group circulated a bulletin on the activities of one known provocateur, Juozas Rudzionis. Following the Soviet occupation Rudzionis had joined the Radviliskis partisan group. Within a few months he was captured by the Soviets. Under interrogation he divulged information that led to the deaths of five partisans. Soon after, Rudzionis managed to “escape” his captors and rejoin his partisan unit. The Prisikilimo partisans determined that Rudzionis had betrayed four other partisans and had disappeared. The partisans also warned of other provocateurs posing as partisans or offering food or drink, such as a woman by the name of Gene Meskauskaite, who had attempted on several occasions to poison partisans. Even a priest, Tamulevicius, was reportedly attempting to poison resistance members using liquor or candy supplied by the MGB, prompting resistance leaders to warn its members against partaking in any celebrations where candy or drink were distributed by unknowns.⁸¹ These partisan records showed that Soviet disorganization actions forced partisans to spend their time defending against provocations rather than fighting Soviet forces.

In fact, such proclamations and warnings spelled the doom of the resistance movement, even if it continued for several more years. The partisans enjoyed early success largely because they could always count on the support of Lithuania’s inhabitants regardless of where they were in the country or how well they knew those whom they approached for help. By the early 1950s, Soviet infiltration, deception, and disorganization had sown distrust and paranoia among the partisans and their potential collaborators, thus effectively crippling the support network that the resistance movement depended on for survival.

Counterinsurgency as Cold War Counterintelligence: The End of Liberationism

As described previously, British and American intelligence agencies had identified Lithuanian and other Eastern European anti-Soviet resistance movements as potential foils in the Cold War struggle for control of the region. With highly placed moles such as Kim Philby, however, the Soviets possessed some advance knowledge of Western operations. Furthermore, the Soviet's own counterinsurgency efforts had undermined and penetrated the very resistance groups that the British and Americans sought to help. Likewise, internal partisan distrust assisted in the Soviet use of the partisans as a counterintelligence asset, as Soviet agents tried to use the resistance movement as a means of infiltrating Western operations. Led by MGB provocateur Juozas Markulis, the Soviets had already splintered the resistance leadership. The movement was further split by the growing suspicion of the loyalties of Markulis and Juozas Deksnys by partisan leaders like Luksa and Zakevicius. In effect, Soviet counterinsurgency would not only hamper Western liberationism in the Baltic States, but would aid Soviet counterintelligence operations as well.

In May 1949, Deksnys and two other partisans, Kazimieras Pyplys and Vaite-lis Briedis made their way back into Lithuania from a brief trip into Poland. Upon sneaking across the border they encountered a farmer who gave them some food. The farmer said he had noticed some armed men in the area, but could not tell whether the men were partisans or not. Concerned that the armed men were MGB troops who had been alerted to their presence, the three men decided to split up and go into hiding. After several weeks, Pyplys and Briedis reunited, but were unable to determine the whereabouts of their travel companion. Within a week, a letter reached them, written by Deksnys. "I have been waiting for some time now for any word or news from you and not receiving anything, I myself am trying to reach you. After no small difficulty we managed to reach our destination and have settled in. Please, be a good friend and try your best to join me here." Arriving at the proposed destination, the two were ambushed. Briedis was captured while Pyplys managed to escape, though eventually he too was apprehended. Deksnys had betrayed them.⁸²

In reality, both the MGB and MI6 were advocating the same course for the Lithuanian partisan movement, that of passive resistance. Each side was primarily interested in using the Lithuanian resistance to obtain intelligence and disinformation to be used against the other. Despite the obvious advantages of keeping armed engagements to a minimum, the Soviet security forces were even more interested in maintaining their "web" in order to weaken local resistance, and also to tie up the

resources of Western intelligence agencies. MI6 also believed that armed conflict would diminish the usefulness of the partisans. Any resumption of serious armed insurrection, MI6 reasoned, would lead to the ultimate destruction of the remaining partisans by a swift Soviet reprisal and thereby destroy valuable intelligence contacts behind the iron curtain. This is not to say that MI6 was uninterested in facilitating the Lithuanian fight against Soviet forces, just in limiting the scope of these attacks. A report from the Lithuanian archives provides us with a case study of a typical operation carried out by British intelligence.

On the night of 10 December 1950, agents of MI6 landed an intelligence force on the Lithuanian Baltic coast. The group consisted of two radio operators and a third agent, "Gintautas." After having escaped to Britain and received training by MI6 operatives, they were now ready to rejoin the partisan forces in the woods and establish a direct communication link with British forces in the West.⁸³

A few months earlier, on 23 October, Gintautas left his comrades in the forest and slipped into Poland. From there he proceeded to the American-controlled sector of Berlin where, with fictitious documents, he was able to procure a British passport under the name of Assmann Wilhelm. On the 28 October he flew to Hamburg and then proceeded by train to the town of Porta. There he was met by the MI6 resident, and member of the Lithuanian émigré leadership, Professor Stasys Zakevicius, code-named "Butautas." Butautas warmly received the agent. With profuse apologies for the length of the journey Gintautas had to endure, he showed the agent to his quarters and apprised him of the activities of the émigré community. The agent himself reported the status of the resistance movement.

On 8 November, Butautas provided the agent with a forged Polish passport in the name of Alexander Bondarski and drove him to Hamburg where, after procuring a visa from the British consulate, they flew to London to meet with other members of the Lithuanian émigré resistance leadership and British Intelligence officers. In London the agent was put up at the Hotel Royal where he met a number of times with the "foreign delegation" which consisted of the former Lithuanian ambassador in Rome, Stasys Lozaraitis; the British intelligence resident from Stockholm; the "information center" chief Bronislaw Zilinskas, code-named "Sarunas"; the former Lithuanian ambassador in London, Kazys Baltutis; and Butautas. They agreed that it was essential to provide material support to the Lithuanian underground, the condemned VLIK, the leading Catholic priest Mykolas Krupavicius, and to help the underground movement by any means necessary. They agreed that it was important to maintain ties with the partisan movement and to change the "information center"

into the “Lithuanian resistance foreign service” (Lietuvos rezistencijos uzsienio tarnyba), led by its chief, Stasys Lozaraitis.

On 20 November, Gintautas was taken to the home of the two radio operators, “Rasa” and “Juraitis,” and was introduced as an illegal arrived from Lithuania. The London intelligence staff and Butautas instructed Gintautas in the use of ciphers and codes. They provided him with four codebooks, ciphers for sending messages abroad, 40,000 rubles, a pistol, ammunition, and food for his return journey. Before he departed from London, the British intelligence chief gave him the passwords he would need when he reached the headquarters of the agent Japertas on the Lithuanian coast. He was to hide with this agent while he made contact with the group led by Juozas Deksnys.

On 30 November, the agent, along with the radio operators, was flown by special airplane to a town in Western Germany. On 6 December they drove to Hamburg and on the eighth arrived on the Baltic coast where they boarded a British torpedo boat (this same boat was used to deliver earlier groups.) Three days before the final day of departure, the agents met again with Butautas. He delivered the news that the Americans had learned that Deksnys had been captured by the Soviet security forces and was transmitting messages dictated to him by the Russians. Because of this, Butautas recommended that they avoid Japertas and instead find their own way to the agreed upon location, and that the letters, money, and radios that were to be handed over to Deksnys be held until they received further instructions.

On 9 December, the landing party arrived on the Swedish coast and then, following training with a rubber raft, the party reached the drop-off point at 2300. The agent and the radio operators reached the shore near Palipegiriū-Kunigiskiu farm. The raft was pulled away from the water, sliced up, and hidden in the bushes. After that the group moved about three kilometers inland, hid their weapons, backpacks, radios, and money, and found the village from which they took a train to Kaunas. There Gintautas dropped off the radio operators and traveled on to Vilnius to report.

Gintautas made contact with MI6 upon his return to Lithuania and assured them of the success of his mission. What the British intelligence agents who sent him, or the partisan groups that awaited him, did not know, however, was that Gintautas was a Soviet operative from the start. The manner in which he managed to gain the trust and support of both his partisan comrades, the Lithuanian émigré leadership, and British intelligence demonstrates the effectiveness of Soviet *agentura* networks in not only infiltrating but participating in, and carefully monitoring, Western-led operations. Naturally the Soviets were not able to catch all agents sent in to Lithuania and the Baltic States. The bottom line, however, was that the Soviets not only

knew about Western efforts to aid the resistance movements, but in fact wove an intricate “web” to lure and control any groups sent in. Direct confirmation of the Soviet agenda of misleading Western operatives comes to us from MGB documents. In a letter to his subordinate in Lithuania, Soviet MGB Deputy Minister E. Pitovranov wrote that the most important element of operations against the British was “to send the English Intelligence agency down the wrong path and, by creating fictitious opportunities, the Soviet security forces can capture their agents.”⁸⁴ The Soviets created false partisan groups who greeted their new comrades and then either maintained the illusion in order to entice more agents and supplies from the West, or “turned” these agents and used them as infiltrators.

In this manner, Western liberationism in the Baltic States and Eastern Europe as a whole was effectively finished by 1953 and officially stopped by 1956. Gregory Mitrovich points to the Soviet detonation of the world’s first hydrogen bomb, which led to a decided shift in the nuclear balance, as a cause for the demise of Western efforts in Eastern Europe. “The conclusion that peaceful retraction of Soviet power from Eastern Europe could not take place unless the balance of power shifted decisively in the United States’ favor spelled the end of America’s efforts to liberate Eastern Europe, since nuclear weapons no longer made such a shift possible.”⁸⁵ Richard Aldrich further argues that the events in Hungary in 1956 demonstrated that liberation of Eastern Europe was not a goal, but merely a Cold War strategy: “It is hard to resist the conclusion that events in Hungary not only confirmed the bankruptcy of liberation as a strategy, but also underlined the manner in which many Cold Warriors in the West had already shifted away from a simple strategy of liberation. They were not primarily interested in the fate of individual Eastern bloc countries and instead regarded resistance movements in the East as mere footsoldiers in a wider campaign of pressure and counter-pressure that extended across all of Europe.”⁸⁶

But perhaps the best argument for the collapse of Western liberationism comes from Tom Bower, who argues that once the British and American intelligence agencies realized that not only were their operations being thwarted but were being used against them, continuing such a policy would only serve to help the Soviets. “In 1956 [MI6’s Head of the Northern Area] Harry Carr discovered that his whole intelligence network in the Soviet Union was part of a deception organized by the KGB. The partisans and sympathisers were in fact KGB officers, some of whom had been sent to London to be indoctrinated and employed by MI6. The intelligence submitted to the British government as reliable information had been concocted by the KGB in Moscow.”⁸⁷ In short, the Cold War in Eastern Europe was won by the Soviet Union.

Conclusion

Through the period of 1944 to 1947, the Lithuanian partisans, operating in small groups and hiding on the farms of supporters or in secret forest bunkers, managed to thwart the pacification efforts of the Soviet NKVD and MGB using ambushes and guerrilla tactics. By 1947, MGB authorities realized the need to change their operations. In light of the failure to eliminate the nationalist resistance, the growing Cold War, and the possibility of Western involvement in Eastern Europe, the MGB looked toward less overt methods by which to undermine Lithuanian resistance. Through the use of intelligence agents and informants' networks, the MGB slowly infiltrated the movement. Furthermore, by using deception and disorganization tactics, the Soviets were able to confuse and sow distrust within the resistance ranks and between the partisans and their local supporters. In this way the Soviets attacked the very fabric of Lithuanian society, disrupting the social cohesion that had made a successful resistance movement possible. Moreover by establishing false partisan organizations, the Soviets were able to entrap many Western agents sent in to aid the resistance movement.

A study of Lithuanian nationalist resistance represents a history of all anti-Soviet resistance that occurred after the Second World War. The Soviet Union faced nationalist opposition in all its western borderlands—Lithuania, Latvia, Estonia, Belarus, and the Ukraine. Furthermore, the paths of each of these regions as remnants of the Russian Empire are quite similar. The armed resistance movements themselves and the Soviet counterinsurgency that resulted were similar as well, clearly illustrated by studies of the postwar period in Eastern Europe.⁸⁸

The uniformity in Soviet counterinsurgency tactics throughout the western borderlands becomes obvious particularly in Jeffrey Burds's work on armed resistance in the Ukraine. Infiltration, disorganization, and corpse desecration were all standard tactics used both in the Ukraine and in the other border states. Moreover, an extract from the papers of a Ukrainian partisan leader demonstrate the mistrust and paranoia that these Soviet policies caused within the Ukrainian underground: "The Bolsheviks try to take us from within, through *agentura*. And this is a horrifying and terrible method, [since] you can never know directly in whose hands you will find yourself. At every step you can expect [an enemy] agent. From such a network of spies, the work of whole teams is often penetrated. . . . *Agentura* has brought major losses to the [Ukrainian underground] organization." Hence, similar tactics produced similar results. The fact that Sokolov, the main architect of many of these policies, worked in both Lithuanian and the Ukraine leads Burds

to conclude, “We can extend such [counterinsurgency] practices to all countries in the Soviet western borderlands, since the same NKVD/NKGB officers often moved from one republic to another, depending on the degree of local resistance.”⁸⁹

The Lithuanian experience, therefore, provides a microcosmic lens through which to examine the nature of postwar anti-Soviet resistance in Eastern Europe and the counterinsurgency tactics employed by the Soviets. Furthermore, this experience is also an informative chapter in the history of the Cold War. Interestingly, anti-Soviet resistance in Eastern Europe was fueled by the liberationist sentiments of the wartime allies and emboldened by the attempts of Western intelligence agencies to roll back Soviet influence. Neither the resistance fighters nor Anglo-American intelligence were a match for Soviet counterinsurgency. The Cold War would spawn numerous other insurgencies but few, if any, would be dealt with so successfully and would lead to such effective control, as the Soviet pacification of Eastern Europe.

Notes

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Note on Archival Citation: Files from the former archive of the Lithuanian SSR Committee of State Security [Lietuvos SSR Valstybes saugumo komitetas] (LSSR VSKA) are cited by the old archival numeration of fond, file, and page number due to the fact that, at the time of their collection and examination, this archive had not been completely cataloged and incorporated into the Lithuania national archive system. Files from the Lithuanian SSR Archive of the Ministry of Internal Affairs [Lietuvos Respublikos Vidaus Reikalų Ministerijos Archyvas] (LVRMA) and the Lithuanian SSR Archive of Public Organizations [Lietuvos Valstybinis Visuomenės Organizacijų Archyvas] (LVVOA) are cited by fond, inventory list, file, and page number.

1. Juozas Lukša was one of the key leaders of the Lithuanian armed resistance movement following World War II. In 1947 he escaped to the West where under the name Daumantas he published his account of the events. Lukša returned to Lithuania, where he was betrayed and eventually killed by the Soviets in 1950. Juozas Daumantas, *Fighters for Freedom* (New York: Manyland, 1975).

2. Under the guise of mutual assistance treaties which imposed Red Army garrisons on the soil of the Baltic States, and utilizing trumped-up charges of criminal acts, the Soviets forcibly annexed Lithuanian, Latvia, and Estonia in June 1940. They had already absorbed territories in Ukraine, Poland, and Byelorussia as stipulated in the Secret Protocols of the Nazi-Soviet Pact of August 23, 1939, following the German invasion of Poland.

3. Works on anti-Soviet resistance have been flooding out of organizations such as the Genocide and Resistance Research Center in Vilnius, Lithuania, which is itself responsible for the publication of almost one hundred monographs on the subject including: Viktoras Alekna, *Uže Zalia Giria: Sovietu Prevarta ir Laisves Kovos Sirvintu Rajone, 1940–1953* [For the Green Forest: Soviet Repression and the Fight for Freedom in the Sirvintas Region, 1940–1953] (Vilnius: Lithuanian Genocide and Resistance Research Center, 1999); Arvydas Anusauskas, ed., *The Anti-Soviet Resistance in the Baltic States* (Vilnius: Lithuanian Genocide and Resistance Research Center, 1999); Adolfas Ramanauskas-Vanagas, *Daugel Krito Sunu . . . Partizanų Gretose* [Many Sons Fell . . . within the Partisan Ranks] (Vilnius: Lithuanian Genocide and Resistance Research Center, 1999).

4. A few notable pieces on Soviet counterinsurgency include Jeffrey Burds, "Agentura: Soviet Informants' Network and the Ukrainian Underground in Galicia, 1944–48," *Eastern European Politics and Societies* 11, no. 1 (1997): 89–130; Jeffrey Burds, "Gender and Policing in Soviet West Ukraine, 1944–1948," *Cahiers du Monde russe* 42/2–4 (April–December 2001): 279–320; Jeffrey Burds, *The Early Cold War in Soviet West Ukraine, 1944–1948*, *The Carl Beck Papers 1505* (Pittsburgh, Pa.: Center for Russian and East European Studies, University of Pittsburgh, 2000); and Alex Statiev, "Social Conflict and Soviet Counterinsurgency in the Western Borderlands, 1944–50" (Ph.D. diss., University of Calgary, 2004).

5. Among them: Tom Bower, *The Red Web: MI6 and the KGB Master Coup* (London: Aurum, 1989); Richard J. Aldrich, *The Hidden Hand: Britain, America, and Cold War Secret Intelligence* (New York: Overlook Press, 2001); Peter Grose, *Operation Rollback: America's Secret War Behind the Iron Curtain* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 2000); and Gregory Mitrovich, *Undermining the Kremlin: America's Strategy to Subvert the Soviet Bloc, 1947–1956* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 2000).

6. A short sampling of insurgencies includes the Philippines, Rhodesia, South Africa, Palestine, Vietnam, Afghanistan, Chechnya, and of course Iraq.

7. In March 1946, the NKVD, the People's Commissariat of Internal Affairs, became the MVD, the Ministry of Internal Affairs, and the NKGB, the People's Commissariat of State Security was changed to MGB, the Ministry of State Security. While the NKVD took charge of the pacification of Lithuania in the first few years of occupation, on 21 January 1947 the MGB took charge of Lithuanian state security, and it was under the auspices of the MGB that Soviet counterinsurgency would develop.

8. Particularly in the early stages of resistance, the Soviets relied overwhelmingly on enlisting the support of native Lithuanians. These "destruction battalions" (*istrebitelnye batal'iony*) were used as shock troops in attacking partisan cadres. These groups were known as "Stribs," taken from the Russian word *istrebitel*, meaning "destroyer" and were generally made up of local "volunteers." The "stribs," however, would become a liability for the Soviets. Not only would these undisciplined military detachments fall victim to the better-prepared and more mobile partisan units, but their often criminal behavior, including assault, robbery, and rape, against local inhabitants and Soviet bureaucrats alike would further undermine Soviet authority.

9. Collective regulations for *agentura* work, 3 January 1943, Lietuvos Sovietines Saiungos Respublica Valstybines Saugumo Komiteto Archivas [Lithuanian S.S.R. Committee of State Security Archive], f. 3, b. 19/108, l. 142–43. Hereafter cited as LSSR VSKA.

10. "An NKGB Report on Initial Armed Skirmishes with Lithuanian Resistance Groups," 21 June 1941, reprinted in *Lituanus* 8 (1962): 44. Hereafter cited as "Gladkov Report."

11. Bartasiunas directive, 25 December 1945, LSSR VSKA, f. 3, b. 16/9, l. 76–119.

12. Kobulov directive to NKVD sectional chiefs, 9 April 1945, LSSR VSKA, f. 18, b. 3/12, l. 41–45.
13. Tkachenko directive to strengthen the fight against banditry, 17 August 1945, LSSR VSKA, f. 8, b. 1/4, l. 67.
14. Tkachenko, Bartasiunas, and Jefimov directive regarding the liquidation of bandits, 15 October 1945, LSSR VSKA, f. 18, b. 3/12, l. 49–50.
15. MGB Army 137th Riflemen Regiment Chief of Staff K. Vlasov's letter to Moscow with recommendations on how to better battle the partisans, 20 September 1947, LSSR VSKA, f. 3, b. 41/102, l. 51–54.
16. Ibid.
17. Tkachenko's order to NKVD-NKGB operational sector chiefs regarding material incentives for *agentura*, 17 December 1945, LSSR VSKA, f. 18, b. 1/4, l. 18.
18. Jefimov's directive regarding the recruitment of suitable candidates, 19 September 1946, LSSR VSKA, f. 3, b. 15/8, l. 3.
19. For more on Sokolov and his efforts in the Western Ukraine see Burds, "*Agentura*."
20. A. Sokolov's reports on organization and use of special operations groups, 2 September 1946, LSSR VSKA, f. 3, b. 22/4, l. 68–71.
21. A. Sokolov's report on *spetsgruppy*, 24 December 1946, LSSR VSKA, f. 3, b. 22/4, l. 175–77.
22. A. Sokolov's reports on organization and use of special operations groups, 2 September 1946, LSSR VSKA, f. 3, b. 22/4, l. 68–71.
23. CIC Dossier, Simas Peciulonis, National Archives and Records Administration, RG 319, Records of the Army Staff, Records of the Office of the Assistant Chief of Staff, G-2, Intelligence, Records of the Investigative Records Repository (IRR), Security Classified Intelligence and Investigative Dossiers, 1939–1976, box 173, XE233440.
24. LSSR MGB Second Division Chief Ilja Pochkaj's report regarding MGB efforts to infiltrate its *agentura* into the VLIK, 20 August 1946, LSSR VSKA, f. 3, b. 5582, t. 3, l. 18. Hereafter cited as "Pochkaj Report."
25. Lietuvos Laisves Kovos Sajunga (LLKS) [Lithuanian Freedom Fighters Union] Tauras Chief "Faustas" report, 27 July 1949, LSSR VSKA, f. 3, b. 44618/3, t. 10, l. 25–26. Hereafter cited as "Faustas Report."

26. "Pochkaj Report," 20–21.
27. *Ibid.*, 24.
28. LLKS Tauras Regional Chiefs Meeting Notes, 3 May 1946, Lithuanian Deportation and Resistance Museum Archive, f. 3, b. 1, l. 8–22, reprinted in *Laisves Kovu Archyvas* 1 (1991): 12–22.
29. "Pochkaj Report," 25.
30. *Ibid.*, 24–26.
31. *Ibid.*, 26–28.
32. Only in July 1949 was "Azuolas" identified by his partisan comrades as an MGB agent, after he attempted to poison several partisans' food. Faustas Report, 25.
33. "Instructions to the Underground by the Leadership of the Lithuanian Activist Front on the Timing of an Anti-Soviet Insurrection," reprinted in *Lituanus* 8, (1962): 45–46.
34. "Partisan Press on World Events," 15 March 1947, reprinted in Thomas Remeikis, *Opposition to Soviet Rule in Lithuania, 1945-1980* (Chicago: Institute of Lithuanian Studies Press, 1980), 211.
35. As quoted in Grose, *Operation Rollback*, 8.
36. *Ibid.*, 124.
37. As quoted in Mitrovich, *Undermining the Kremlin*, 37.
38. As quoted in Bower, *The Red Web*, 91.
39. Stephen Dorril, *MI6: Inside the Covert World of Her Majesty's Secret Intelligence Service* (New York: Touchstone, 2002), 271–78.
40. Stockholm was a particular hotspot for the recruitment of Baltic agents. See Jeffrey Burds, "The Soviet War against 'Fifth Columnists': The Case of Chechnya, 1942-4," *Journal of Contemporary History* 42, no. 2 (2007): 267–314.
41. CIC Dossier, Stasys Zakevicius, NARA, RG 319, Records of the Army Staff, Records of the Office of the Assistant Chief of Staff, G-2, Intelligence, Records of the Investigative Records Repository (IRR), Security Classified Intelligence and Investigative Dossiers, 1939–1976, box 255, XE189523. Hereafter cited as "Zakevicius Dossier."

42. Genrikh Borovik, *The Philby Files: The Secret Life of Master Spy Kim Philby* (Boston: Little, Brown, and Company, 1994), 252.
43. Kim Philby, *My Silent War: The Autobiography of a Spy* (New York: Modern Library, 2002) 157–59.
44. Genrikh Borovik, who interviewed Philby in Moscow before his death and who had access to the KGB's file on Philby, concluded, "Even though Kim Philby did not ascribe the failure of diversionary operations as a whole to his own activity as a Soviet agent, his role was significant." *The Philby Files*, 271.
45. Bower, *The Red Web*, 135.
46. Borovik, *The Philby Files*, 271.
47. The policy of "liberationism" was planned but never successfully implemented. See Grose, *Operation Rollback*, and Mitrovich, *Undermining the Kremlin*.
48. USSR Council of Ministers' Order Regarding the Deportation of 12,000 Lithuanian Partisans, their Supporters, Farmers, and Political Prisoners, 21 January 1948, Rusijos Federacijos Prezidento Archyvas [Archive of the President of the Russian Federation, hereafter cited as RFPA], Document 15; reprinted in Eugenijus Grunskis, ed., *Lietuvos Gyventoju Tremimai, 1940–1941, 1944–1953, Metais Sovietines Okupacines Valdzios Dokumentuose* [The Suffering of the Lithuanian People, 1940–1941, 1944–1953, from the Documents of the Soviet Occupation Regime] (Vilnius: Lietuvos Istorijos Institutas, 1995), 305–06. Hereafter cited as *LGT*.
49. For more on Soviet deportation policy, see Terry Martin, "The Origins of Soviet Ethnic Cleansing," *The Journal of Modern History* 70, no. 4 (December 1998): 813–61, and *The Affirmative Action Empire: Nations and Nationalism in the Soviet Union, 1923–1939* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 2001).
50. LSSR Minister of Internal Affairs J. Bartasiunas's and SSRS MVD Army Commander V. Cockovo's Report to SSRS Minister of Internal Affairs S. Kruglov Regarding the Preparations for Operation "Vesna," the Deportation of Lithuanian Partisans, Their Supporters, Political Prisoners, and Kulak Families, 18 May 1948, RFPA, f. 9479, ap.1, b. 427, l. 1–2, reprinted in *LGT*, 351–52.
51. SSRS Deputy Minister of Internal Security S. Ogolcov's and LSSR Minister of Internal Security D. Jefimov's Report to SSRS Minister of Internal Security V. Abakumov Regarding the Deportation of Lithuanian Inhabitants, 28 May 1948, Lietuvos Respublikos Vidaus Reikalu Ministerijos Archyvas [Lithuanian S.S.R. Archives of the Ministry of Internal Affairs, hereafter cited as *LVRMA*], f. 135, ap.7, b. 61, l. 230a–236. Hereafter cited as "Ogolcov Report."

52. Case Against Farmer A. Stasiskis, Kaniuku farm, Uzpaliu District, Utenos Region, document no. 11380, 28 April 1948, LVRMA, f. 135, ap.7, b. 8055/5, l. 1–21.
53. LSSR Local Party Secretary K. Dziulis's Report to the Lithuanian Communist Party Secretary A. Sniekis Regarding the Deportation of the Partisans, Their Supporters, and Kulak Families of the Birzu District, 30 May 1948, *Lietuvos Valstybinis Visuomenes Organizaciju Archyvas* [Lithuanian S.S.R. Archive of Public Organizations, hereafter cited as *LVVOA*], f. 1771, ap. 52, b. 36, l. 9–10.
54. "Ogolcov Report," 383.
55. LSSR MGB Deputy Minister Piotr Kapralov's directive to MGB Kaunas chiefs, 23 December 1950, LSSR VSKA, f. 3, b. 45/18, l. 11–13.
56. MGB report on operation to liquidate partisans in Ziuru-Gudeliu, 25 April 1950, LSSR VSKA, f. 3, b. 41/92, l. 276–85.
57. MVD Army's 4th Sauliai divisional staff's operational report on the activities of the 24th, 261st, 298th, and 353rd Sauliai regiments, 23–25 January 1951, 25 January 1951, LSSR VSKA, f. 3, b. 47, l. 336–38.
58. MGB agent payment registry, 1 February 1950, LSSR VSKA, f. 10, b. 6/12, l. 15.
59. MGB Regional Chief Viacheslav Romachev's report on A. Sumskiene, June 1950, LSSR VSKA, f. 3, b. 41/57, l. 190.
60. MGB report on the use of *agentura* in prisons, 29 November 1951, LSSR VSKA, f. 8, b. 6/7, t. 1, l. 175–77.
61. LSSR MGB Minister Piotr Kondakov's directive, 9 February 1953, LSSR VSKA, f. 10, b. 9/8, l. 271.
62. LSSR MVD Senior Inspector Ivan Lobkov's report regarding the exposure of an undercover agent, June 1953. LSSR VSKA, f. 10, b.9/8. l. 282–83.
63. MGB dossier on J. Vilcinkskas, August 1952, LSSR VSKA, op.b.f. b. 6911, t. 3, l. 158–60.
64. LSSR MGB Senior Inspector Lobkov's report, 5 May 1952, LSSR VSKA, f. 16, b. 154/5, l. 24–25.
65. LSSR MGB Senior Lietuenant Besenev's report on murder of partisans A. Kmitas and J. Bartkus, 22 October 1953, LSSR VSKA, op.b.f. b. 1983, t. 3, l. 205.

66. MGB report on apartments held for meetings, 21 December 1953, LSSR VSKA, f. 10, b. 10/4, l. 16.
67. MGB Sector Chief Pandelis's report on the capture and death of partisan A. Butenas, 12 August 1950, LSSR VSKA, op.b.f. b. 7509, t. 2, l. 5–7.
68. MGB second Division Chief Pochkaj's report on SG efforts to eliminate partisans from Tauras, Vytis, and Vytautas groups, August 1951, LSSR VSKA, f. 3, b. 56/22, l. 58–65.
69. Ibid.
70. LSSR MGB Inspector Yuri Rabkinov's report on torture in MGB prisons, 20 January 1950, LSSR VSKA, f. 10, b. 6/6, l. 180–86.
71. Ibid.
72. Ibid.
73. Daumantas, *Fighters for Freedom*, 81–82.
74. Ibid., 125.
75. "Desecrated corpses in the street—Bolshevik triumph," *Freedom's Bell*, 20 November 1947, LSSR VSKA, f. 3, b. 44618/3, t. 11, l. 48–49.
76. Daumantas, *Fighters for Freedom*, 125–26.
77. U.S. House of Representatives, 83 Congr., 2d sess., *Fourth Interim Report of the Select Committee on Communist Aggression* (Washington, D.C., 1954), 1372.
78. "Excerpts from a Partisan Penal Code," *Partizanas*, 20 July 1951, reprinted in Remeikis, *Opposition to Soviet Rule*, 247–50.
79. "From a Bulletin of a Partisan Commander," 7 July 1951, reprinted in Remeikis, *Opposition to Soviet Rule*, 246.
80. Lithuanian Freedom Fighters Union, or LLKS, proclamation for citizens, "Guard Against Provocateurs," 15 August 1949, LSSR VSKA, f. 3, ap. 1, b. 5, l. 13.
81. LLKS Priselimo partisan leadership's information for other groups regarding the provocateur Juozas Rudzionis, 11 April 1949, LSSR VSKA, f. 3, b. 7726/3, t. 4, l. 124; LLKS Tauras partisan leadership's report on uncovered MGB provocation plot to poison the food of partisans, 27 July 1949, LSSR VSKA, f. 3, b. 44618/3, t. 10, l. 25–26, LLKS leader Vanagas's report on MGB provocateur, 2 February 1950, LSSR VSKA, f. 3, b. 47726/3, t. 4, l. 126.

82. As quoted in Liutas Mockunas, *Pavargės Herojus: Jonas Deksnys Triju Zvalgybu Tarnyboje* [A Tired Hero: Jonas Deksnys in the Service of Three Republics] (Vilnius: Baltos Lankos, 1997), 368.

83. The following account is based on LSSR MGB Minister P. Kapralov's report to the SSRS MGB Center regarding the activities of agent "Gintautas," 24 December 1950, LSSR VSKA, f. 3, b. 109/20, pp. 6–11.

84. SSRS MGB Deputy Minister E. Pitovranov to LSSR MGB Minister P. Kapralov, 25 January 1951, LSSR VSKA, f. 3, b. 109/20, l. 287.

85. Mitrovich, *Undermining the Kremlin*, 162.

86. Aldrich, *The Hidden Hand*, 341.

87. Bower, *The Red Web*, i.

88. Mart Laar's study of the Estonian "forest brothers" demonstrates the numerous similarities of the partisan experience throughout the western borderlands, as does Juris Ciganov's work on Latvian anti-Soviet resistance. Juris Ciganov, "The Resistance Movement Against the Soviet Regime in Latvia between 1941 and 1944," in *The Anti-Soviet Resistance in the Baltic States* (Vilnius, Mintis: 1999), 122–46; Mart Laar, *War in the Woods: Estonia's Struggle for Survival, 1944–1956* (Washington, D.C.: Compass, 1992).

89. *Derzhavnyi Arkhiv L'vivskoi oblasti*, f. 3, op. 2, d. 456, l. 190, as cited in Burds, "Agentura," 127.