

**SUPPRESSION OF ARMED RESISTANCE. USE AND ROLE OF MILITARY AND  
PARAMILITARY UNITS  
THE CHEKIST ARMY AND STRIBAI**

**Historiography**

The research by Soviet era historians (P. Olek, A. Rakūnas, S. Laurinaitis, etc.), which is mostly about the so-called class war and rural collectivisation, is not very valuable since, first, they followed the previous Marxist “truths”, of which the most important was: the Lithuanian people themselves, only helped by others, especially “the great Russian nation”, overthrew the enemy of the people and created a socialist order and, second, the KGB archives were not freely accessible to them.

After the restoration of Independence, some work was done in investigating the repressive military structures of the occupants. A little bit is known about the Soviet Home Guard but there is still a shortage of statistical data, information about the Guard’s inner life, its training, its tactics, the interaction of the units permanently stationed in Lithuania with temporarily detached units, etc. Almost all the data located in Lithuania’s archives is in circulation; it is possible to find data for further expanding and deepening the topic only in Russia’s archives. There is more data revealing the activities of the Stribai and their problems, however there are also gaps here since a part of Stribai files were shipped to Russia (including over 16 thousand Stribai personal files) and many files were destroyed.

One of the first historians who acquainted our society through popular articles with the crimes committed by the Soviet Home Guard was Dr. E. Grunskis. In 1990-1991 in the journal, “Pasaulis” (“World”), he published articles about the tragedy of Klepočiai and the neighbouring villages of Dzūkai (southern Lithuanians), about the family murdered in Švendriai village, about the fourth division, about its commander, etc. Incidentally, in 1996 the same author in the nineteenth number of the journal, “Laisvės kovų archyvas” (LKA) (“Freedom Wars Archive”) published a thorough article about the historiography of the Stribai, in which he mostly surveyed the works of Soviet historians on this topic.

The most important documents about the Home Guard and the Stribai, which are located in Lithuania’s archives (mostly the LYA), have been published. Thus, in the book published in 1996, *Lietuvos partizanų kovos ir jų slopinimas MVD-MGB dokumentuose 1944-1953 m (The Struggles of the Lithuanian Partisans and their Suppression in MVD-MGB documents: 1944-1953)*, 18 documents were published about the Guard’s activities and 19 documents about the Stribai. Dr. A.

Anušauskas has published several Guard documents in the book, *Lietuvių tautos sovietinis naikinimas 1940-1958 metais* (*The Soviet Decimation of the Lithuanian nation: 1940-1958*) (Vilnius, 1996). In 1995, J. Starkauskas published the article, “Iš 4-sios gen. Vetrovo divizijos veiklos 1950 m.” (“From the activities of General. Vetrov’s 4<sup>th</sup> Division in 1950”) together with several tens of documents in the 14<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> numbers of the journal, LKA. Principle documents about the Home Guard and Stribai were published in the same author’s book, *Čekistinė kariuomenė Lietuvoje 1944-1953 metais* (*The Chekist Army in Lithuania during 1944-1953*) (Vilnius, 1998, 54 documents) and in the monograph, *Stribai (Stribai)* (Vilnius, 2001; 46 documents).

Dr. A. Anušauskas was the first to more broadly research the activities of the Home Guard and its subdivisions in the monograph mentioned above, in which several chapters are devoted to the Guard. The crimes against humanity, which were committed by the Russian soldiers at the inspiration of the instructions of their senior officers, are accented. A summary of various data for 1946-1948 about the activities of units of the Home Guard in the USSR, which data was brought out of the Russian state military archive by Dr. A. Anušauskas, made a breakthrough in some of the evaluations. New criteria for evaluating the resistance of our country to the occupation emerged after data for various countries was used. Dr. A. Anušauskas summarised this data, only perhaps too narrowly, in the article, “NKVD kariuomenės dokumentai Rusijos karo archyve” (“NKVD Army Documents in the Russian Military Archive”) (the journal, “Genocidas ir rezistencija” (“Genocide and Resistance”), 1997, no 1: pp. 176-182).

J. Starkauskas wrote the two monographs mentioned above. In the book, *Čekistinė kariuomenė Lietuvoje 1944-1953 metais* (*The Chekist Army in Lithuania during 1944-1953*), he tried, mostly on the basis of operational combat notices from the various kinds of Chekist army units, to recreate the activities of that army and to make some generalisations. However, because he lacked data, it is only partially revealed here and there. In the monograph, *Stribai (Stribai)*, he more completely portrayed the formation of the Stribai, their activities, and tried to create a social portrait of them.

J. Starkauskas, before these monographs appeared, published a string of articles in the journal, “Genocidas ir rezistencija” (nos 1, 2, 3, 4, and 5), which, slightly corrected, formed chapters in the monographs.

In the monograph by K. Kasparas, *Lietuvos karas (Lithuania’s War)* (Kaunas, 1998), the 1944-1946 spring period of the partisan war is described and many of the battles of that time are listed in fair detail, the data being drawn from both the archives and from the recollections of witnesses. Quite a few generalisations and conclusions are presented. However, the enemy army is mentioned only in passing, mentioning one or another regiment.

The witnesses or creators of books and articles have published quite a bit of information about the individual battles with the enemy. **The LKA has published separate books and many articles of**

**this nature**. Some of them, such as the “The Battle of Labanoras Forest (Kiauneliškis)” (no 14), by V. Striužas, “The Assault on Gaurė” recorded by V. Albonaitis (no 12), etc. are fairly informative. R. Kaunietis collected and published very valuable recollections in four thick books, *Aukštaitijos partizanų prisiminimai (Recollections of Aukštaitija’s Partisans)*. In these and other recollections, the Russian Home Guard is generally anonymous while the Stribai are usually personified and named. In general in the recollections of rural inhabitants, somewhat more space is devoted to the Stribai than to the army since this latter did what they were instructed to do and disappeared from the people’s horizon until the next time and, in addition, they operated much more secretly. Meanwhile the Stribai were constantly troublesome not only as political opponents but also through their constant thievery and robbery.

### **The Chekist Army**

The Chekist army was commissioned to implement and uphold the dictates of the Communist Party in the country itself and the occupied regions. The USSR began to create it immediately after the revolution of October 1917. It survived many reorganisations. On 1 April 1945 the following types of Chekist army units existed: frontier, home guard, rearguard protection, convoy, and government communications army units<sup>1</sup>. At that time, the NKVD controlled all the types of these army units. The Chekist army had most of the soldiers, over 900 thousand, in the first half of 1945. Later the number of its soldiers was gradually reduced. All these types of army units operated in Lithuania.

During the years of the Second World War, the Chekist army usually operated behind the front lines and almost did not participate in the battles. In August of 1941 it deported the Trans-Volga Germans to Siberia and the North, in November of 1943, the Karaites, in December of 1943, the Kalmucks, in January-February 1944, the Chechens, Ingushes, and Kalmucks, and in May-June, the Crimean Tartars, Turks, and Kurds. After occupying the Baltic States and western Ukraine, a large force of the Chekist army was sent there in order to suppress the resistance to the new occupation.

The Chekist army was an armed force, which had to carry out the operations planned by the Chekist operatives. However, in the first stage of the war against our partisans, 1944-1945, all the units and even subunits of the Chekist army had their own reconnaissance and counter-intelligence organs and usually operated autonomously unless in contact with local, so-called area NKVD-NKGB organs. The scale of resistance in our country was so large that there was a shortage of active agents, especially at the beginning of the occupation, and the operatives were unable to supply the army with so-called operative information and throughout the entire period of the

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<sup>1</sup> Liubianka **VČK**-KGB, Moscow, 1997, s. 43

partisan war the army frequently groped along, organising various assaults at locations likely to be held by partisans.

The Chekist army decided the strategic combat assignments: pushing the partisans away from the major cities, especially Vilnius, smashing the larger partisan units beginning with their staffs, protecting especially important strategic objects as well as the Party and Chekist leadership, and securing the coast and border with Poland. The least significant work of the war was entrusted to the so-called Stribai squads composed of mostly (over 80 per cent) local inhabitants. Although they were fairly plentiful (There were over 10 thousand in 1945; later their numbers decreased.), these squads due to their low combat level were able to perform only certain work: units guarded district centres, Party and repressive organ headquarters, and accompanied county and district officials (who were themselves armed) travelling on various political and economic assignments to villages.

The Chekist army units, which operated in Lithuania. The first Chekist army units to advance into Lithuania, which occurred in July 1944, were 5 Frontier Regiments: the 15<sup>th</sup>, 86<sup>th</sup>, 132<sup>nd</sup>, 217<sup>th</sup>, and 331<sup>st</sup> of the III Belarussian Front NKVD Rearguard Protection Army. (The front's rearguard protection units were finally formed in May 1943 when this army's command was created. After the creation of this army, the frontier regiments had approximately 1 thousand soldiers each; the frontier sections and rifle regiments had as many soldiers. This type of army travelled immediately behind the front line and its assignment was to liquidate any German sympathisers as well as German soldiers and reconnaissance units remaining behind the front, to arrest their own deserters, etc. In Lithuania, besides this work, they also immediately began to fight with the armed Lithuanian underground and, in 1944 until the beginning of 1945, also with Polish **akovcas**.) After this combined unit, 3 Regiments: the 31<sup>st</sup>, 33<sup>rd</sup>, and 216<sup>th</sup>, of the I Baltic Front Rearguard Protection Army advanced into Lithuania. In 1945, both of these combined units were transferred to East Prussia, where the same "procedure" was carried out so that starvation and even cannibalism occurred. Both combined units were again returned to Lithuania in June and reinforced by three rearguard protection regiments from the Leningrad front, which regiments remained in Lithuania until October when almost all the regiments of this type were disbanded.

Other group, which actively operated during the entire period of the partisan war, was the frontier sections. There were six of these in Lithuania during 1944-1955 (most of these also operated later): the 23<sup>rd</sup>, 94<sup>th</sup>, 95<sup>th</sup>, 97<sup>th</sup>, 113<sup>th</sup>, and 115<sup>th</sup>. Three of them: the 23<sup>rd</sup> (which guarded the coast), the 94<sup>th</sup>, and the 97<sup>th</sup> (which guarded the borders with Poland and with East Prussia), were in our country the entire period of the partisan war. Beginning in February 1945, the frontier sections stationed to guard the border, performed double duty by not allowing the partisans to communicate with foreigners (An almost completely impermeable border was created beginning in 1947.) and

also fought with the partisans at a distance of up to 50 km by forming various combined sections amounting to up to 1 thousand soldiers.

The 4<sup>th</sup> Home Guard Division (From 1949 to 1951, its eight regiments were formed into two divisions, the 2<sup>nd</sup> and the 4<sup>th</sup>), which was reorganised in 1951 into the I Security Section, troubled the Lithuanian people and partisans the longest and most consistently. After arriving in Lithuania with 4 regiments, in 1946 it was increased to 8 regiments. These consisted of the 25<sup>th</sup>, 137<sup>th</sup>, 261<sup>st</sup>, 298<sup>th</sup>, 32<sup>nd</sup>, 34<sup>th</sup>, 273<sup>rd</sup>, and 353<sup>rd</sup> rifle regiments and another several regiments, which belonged to the division briefly.

Home Guard divisions stationed in neighbouring countries and students on training assignments from various USSR Chekist schools fought in Lithuania, especially in 1944-1946.

While the Second World War was going on and while there was a state of war in Lithuania, i.e. until June 1946, the Chekists strove to draw the units of the Red Army (as of February 1946, the Soviet Army) into the struggle against the partisans. It is possible to understand what the possibility of co-operation was from Order no 58 of 27 March 1945 of the commanders of the Belarussian-Lithuanian Military District. (See document 3. A little later the Baltic Military District was created.) The most important part of this order is an instruction to the garrison commanders, city commandants, and commander officers of the combined units and units to sweep a zone of no less than 10 km from their stations and to organise sweeps of the surrounding area no less frequently than two times a month. Two huge sweeps are known, which encompassed huge areas of Lithuania, in which many Red Army units taken from the front participated together with NKVD units. Huge army masses, the soldiers, deployed in long lines, slowly advancing forward searched everything in turn: towns, villages, forests, arresting anyone suspicious to the soldiers and shooting them one after another<sup>2</sup>. There were also more instances where individual Red Army units assisted the Chekists, especially during Communist celebrations. (See document 7. The Communists endowed their celebrations with a special, plainly sacred significance.) However, perhaps the most significant contribution of the Red Army (Soviet Army) units to the war against our partisans and the imposition of the Soviet system on the country was that they, mostly stationed in the county centres, guaranteed the safety of the occupiers living there. And because this army was large with no less than 9 divisions, i.e. about 30-50 thousand soldiers, at the beginning of 1946<sup>3</sup>, it was only their presence that guaranteed that the partisans did not attack any city or town, in which a Red Army garrison was stationed.

How many Chekist army units were permanently stationed in Lithuania at any one time? A certificate signed by one of its commanders, Gen. Golovka, (see document 2) indicated that at the

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<sup>2</sup> J. Starkauskas, *Čekistinė kariuomenė Lietuvoje 1944-1953 metais*, Vilnius, 1998, pp. 224, 118.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid*, p. 225.

beginning of 1945 this army numbered 16 370 soldiers. However, the sections and regiments listed there do not include specific NKVD army units, i.e. the 211<sup>th</sup> Railway Protection regiment, which had about 1.2 thousand soldiers and two convoy army regiments, the 240<sup>th</sup> and the 223<sup>rd</sup>, which had about 1000 soldiers each. Thus the Chekist army numbered about 20 thousand in all. I think that there were about another 3-5 thousand temporarily detached soldiers in Lithuania at that time. There were 20 Chekist army regiments, which also had about 20 thousand soldiers, in Lithuania in August of that year. (See document 19.) There were 12-13 Home Guard rifle regiments permanently stationed in our country in the first half of 1946 and 8 permanent regiments from the end of that year until 1951 and 5 from 1951 to 1953.

Besides these Chekist army and Red Army (Soviet Army) units, 2.5-4 thousand operatives, 4-6 thousand police officers, 6-10 thousand Stribai, and 5-7 thousand armed Soviet Party activists also fought against the partisans and fortified the occupation regime. This against each partisan fought about 10-15 armed occupants and collaborators. (In the spring of 1945 there were about 30 thousand partisans, in the summer of 1946, about 4.5 thousand, in the spring of 1947, about 3.5 thousand, in the spring of 1948 2.3 thousand, in the autumn of 1950 1.2 thousand, in the spring of 1950 550, and in the spring of 1953, 250<sup>4</sup>). And perhaps most important, a conscript army of informers operated in various ways (usually by terrorising, i.e. threatening arrest or deportation) against the partisans and the underground in general. In 1949, they numbered 26.4 thousand<sup>5</sup>.

Command. At the highest level (The individual combined units, units, and subunits were led by their direct commanders, i.e. various ranks of officers from general to junior lieutenant), the most chaotic command period was from 1944 to 1945. The supreme commanders of the USSR repressive organs, i.e. NKVD People's Commissar L. Beria and NKGB People's Commissar V. Mekulov, constantly received fairly thorough information from several sources about the situation in our country and tried to control both the operatives and the army from Moscow (See documents 1 and 21.). The officers directly executing their plans, who were entrusted with the annihilation of any resistance against the occupiers, were the adjutants to these commissars, Colonel Generals A. Apolonov and B. Kobulov. Both of them signed many letters while they were in Lithuania and A. Apolonov was assigned a residential home in Vilnius. This colonel general practically controlled the entire USSR Home Guard because, beginning on 28 October 1944, he was appointed commander of the Supreme Command of the USSR NKVD Home Guard<sup>6</sup>. Both generals signed many documents regulating the activities of both the operatives and military personnel in Lithuania. (See documents 4, 5, 6, 7, and 24.) The officer executing their instructions when these men were absent from Lithuania was the representative of the USSR NKVD-NKGB in Lithuania, Lieutenant

<sup>4</sup> N. Gaškaitė, D. Kuodytė, A. Kašėta, B. Ulevičius, Lietuvos partizanai 1944-1953 m., Kaunas, 1996, p. 366-367.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid, p.386.

<sup>6</sup> J. Starkauskas, Čekistinė kariuomenė ..., p. 65.

General I. Tkachenka, who himself also made significant decisions. A very important link in the army's command until the cancellation of the state of war in Lithuania in mid-1946 was 9 operative sectors (7 later remained), which were created by an order of 16 December 1944 and who were controlled by Chekists from lieutenant colonel to general.

After the cancellation of the state of war and the creation of 200 permanent Home Guard garrisons, command of the army (and operatives) was simplified. LSSR MVD Minister J. Bartašiūnas commanded them and his assistant for army matters was Division Commander Gen. P. Vetrov. Later, beginning in 1947, the army passed to the command of the MGB, which was commanded by LSSR MGB Minister General D. Jefimov (until the beginning of 1949) and P. Kapralov (until April 1953; there were other MGB ministers briefly in command) and their assistant for army matters was the commander of the 4<sup>th</sup> Division. The army was commanded analogously in the counties and districts (until 1950) where the MGB county branch supervisor's assistant for army matters everywhere became the commander of the garrison stationed there.

Stages of the struggle. Three stages of the struggle are clearly seen, which stages were determined by the tactics used by both the occupiers themselves and the partisans and by the prolonged war. During 1944-1945 it was attempted, after concentrating a large army force in certain places, to shatter the large partisan bands by sudden devastating blows and to throw terror into the partisans by arresting people. At that time the partisans stayed in large bands of up to several hundred people, were being commanded by Lithuanian Army personnel, prepared bunkers, trenches, and other fortifications, and attempted to wage a stationary war. In some battles, they succeeded in withstanding the pressure the Russian army but usually they lost in fighting a more numerous enemy and at the end of 1945 the partisans began to change their tactics. Many partisans, both at their own risk and at the instruction of some commanders, left the forests and resumed a legal life. (The farmers could not feed several tens of thousands of men nor the small Lithuanian forests hide them. In addition, after hope became more distant that a conflict would arise between the Western countries and the USSR, the hope of a speedy liberation became remote.) About 4-5 thousand men distributed in small bands remained and began to hide themselves in well-concealed hiding places, usually various kinds of bunkers. After the creation of a well-operating communications and support system, they used to collect into bands of several tens of men or more only in individual cases (to attack towns, prepare ambushes, execute death sentences on traitors, etc.).

The tactics at the beginning of the partisan war (staying in large bands and stationary warfare) and the just won great Second World War gave the Soviets the idea that it would be possible to quickly shatter armed resistance in Lithuania and afterwards any other resistance. Therefore, the instructions of L. Beria to "clean out the Lithuanian nationalistic element" within 2-3 weeks came

about<sup>7</sup>. The occupiers failed to appreciate the specifics of a partisan war (even though they had had lessons in Central Asia). Only on 19 December 1951 was the instruction issued by LSSR MGB Minister P. Kapralov in a meeting of MBG personnel “...to liquidate the nationalist underground within 2-3 months<sup>8</sup> finally executed, i.e. after almost 7 years had passed; there was no longer the power and, most importantly, reason to continue fighting with arms. But let us return to 1945. The Communists and Chekists gradually understood their Cassock style of fighting used in 1944-1945 with its multitude of victims and in general brutal and savage behaviour was not providing the desired results and on 12 October 1945 L. Beria signed new directive instructions (See document 21.), in which it was suggested (This gentle formulation, which, obviously, came from those times when the Chekist commanders were educated intelligentsia, was used as well in the most terroristic Chekist documents.) to intensify the work of the agents and to use the army only when they knew where and what the partisans were doing. In this case, according to L. Beria’s directive, “...the NKVD army under your command will suffice to execute the assignments entrusted to you.” (At that time, the rearguard regiments were disbanded.)

After the disbanding of these regiments, only four regiments of the 4<sup>th</sup> division, several auxiliary regiments, and the frontier sections stationed on the border remained of the pure Chekist army in Lithuania. Meanwhile the strikes by the partisans strengthened and the danger arose that all sparse supporters of the occupiers could be beaten. The county Party committees flooded the central committee and A. Sniečkas with requests to reinforce the protection of the county and especially the district centres. A solution was found when on 26 March 1946 MVD Minister J. Bartašiūnas created 163 Home Guard and 27 frontier guard garrisons at the county and district centres<sup>9</sup>. A short time before, the number of the division’s regiments had been increased to nine.

After the creation of the 200 permanent garrisons, the second period of the war began and continued until 1949 and the collectivisation of our villages. With the army becoming ever more mobile (obtaining more and better transport and communications equipment) and able to quickly bring hundreds and even thousands of soldiers to any spot, the number of garrisons was gradually reduced and those remaining enlarged. (In small garrisons of, let us say, a squad of 15-25 soldiers, no one was left to fight the partisans since some soldiers were guards while the others performed chores in the kitchen, supply, construction, etc.) In 1950, both the 2<sup>nd</sup> and the 4<sup>th</sup> divisions had only about 60 garrisons, i.e. more than threefold less than in 1946. During this period of the war, the strikes against the partisans gradually increased and became more precise. (In 1946, 2143 partisans

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<sup>7</sup> Laisvės kovų archyvas, no. 11, 1994, p. 103.

<sup>8</sup> A. Anušauskas, *Lietuvių tautos sovietinis naikinimas 1940-1958 metais*, Vilnius, 1996, p.291.

<sup>9</sup> J. Starkauskas, *Čekistinė kariuomenė...*, p. 251.



died, 1947, 1540, in 1948, 1135, in 1949, 1192, in 1950, 635, in 1951, 590, in 1952, 457, and in 1953, 196<sup>10</sup>.)

The attempts to break the main resistance of the partisan bands with sudden concentrated strikes were also not renounced at this time. Thus at the beginning of October 1946, the nine regiments of the 4<sup>th</sup> division, reinforced by another three rifle regiments, divided Lithuania up into six operations sectors (more or less according to the districts where the partisans operated), left their barracks, and created tank ambushes and a network of concealed positions “on paths likely to be used by the bands, individual bandits, and their signallers, especially at night,” while by day they had to send out as many RPG’s as possible, even small ones. Meanwhile, the soldiers of the three additional regiments, divided into groups of 200-300 soldiers, had to strike into those forests and villages where there could be partisans whenever they had operative information <sup>11</sup>. These and similar attempts were also made later. (See document 29.) Thus in the autumn of 1949 an attempt was made to shatter the partisans who still remained by creating the so-called black squads. These squads, not encumbered with chores, could be quickly sent from one location to another.

In the third period of the war, 1949-1953, the army operated especially actively during 1949-1950 since the start of the forced sudden relocation into collective farms raised the resistance and even rage of not only the partisans (who were already too few in number to be able to successfully resist) but also the majority of the peasants in general. The majority of the partisans had already died by that time and the Soviets were heavily replenished with new soldiers, large bands of collaborators grew, and a good tactic for penetrating into villages was prepared. Thus, beginning in 1949, the Soviets began to actively and effectively to occupy the village localities, which had until then, especially at night, been controlled by the partisans. An armed band of people, which consisted of Stribai sent from the district centres, local Soviet Party activists, and so-called collective farm activists, was created at the village neighbourhoods and at the offices of the collective farm. The relocation of the villagers into collective farms undermined the partisans’ economic base since the countryside remained without food and until 1954-1955 even the people on the collective farms were half starved. (Another factor, which destroyed the resistance’s base, was that the majority of the partisans’ supporters had been exiled.) But this penetration into the villages as if through the power of local collaborators was possible only because the occupation army stood behind them.

During the last several years of the partisan war, the remaining five Home Guard regiments were mostly used in various so-called special operations, the main performers of which were the

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<sup>10</sup> .N. Gaškaitė et al. *Lietuvos partizanai 1944-1953 m.*, p. 349.

<sup>11</sup> J. Starkauskas, *Čekistinė kariuomenė...*, pp. 259-260.

stormtrooper agents. Then when the stormtrooper agents shot or arrested partisans, the army imitated them, shooting or otherwise making noise as if it had done it.

The methods, tactics, and behaviour of the Chekist army. In coming to Lithuania, the Chekist army brought with it tested so-called methods of warfare, which had been used during the civil war in suppressing resistance in Central Asia and the North Caucasus. These methods are so-called roadblocks, operations, ambushes, concealed positions, RPG, and several more rarely used methods such as observation points. The only new method of warfare, which the Chekists prepared for use long before, was the so-called CVG, the massive use of which began in approximately 1950.

Roadblocks were a method of warfare where military posts were fairly densely located on traffic routes (roadsides, crossroads, the outskirts of forests and villages, etc.) likely to be used by people and partisans, which roadblocks created a sort of net, into which fell all the people who were moving in the district where the post was located. The roadblock method was very effective at the beginning of the partisan war when many people, who were not especially clever people, were moving about but later their value decreased since people had learned how to avoid the “net”.

An operation was the noisiest method of warfare; usually many army units were used during it, the commanders of the operatives usually carried them out whenever they had information about what location the partisans were at or was suspected they could be. The majority of the operations were one-day affairs, however it was not uncommon for them to last several days or even weeks. Prior to the operation, usually two long lines of staggered soldiers would surround a particular area (a village or group of villages, a forest, a part of one, etc.). After surrounding it, the soldiers, proceeding one after another at intervals of 10-20 m or in groups, used to comb-agitate the entire surrounded area, fighting with any partisans encountered and pushing them out of forest into open fields towards the staggered lines of the envelopment, which usually shot them. Sometimes the the combing was repeated after some time or days, frequently in another direction. Several tens to several thousands of soldiers used to participate in operations. Thus when operations were organised on 21-31 July 1945 in Kaunas, Kėdainiai, and Raseiniai Counties, six rifle regiments were employed. When J. Lukša-Skirmantas, who had arrived from the West, was being sought on April 19-May 29 1951 in forests of Kazlų Rūda, up to 2 thousand soldiers participated in this operation on some days<sup>12</sup>. An especially large number of operations were organised at the beginning of the partisan war. If the Chekists are to be trusted, they organised 8807 operations in Lithuania in 1945 and as many as 15 811 in 1946<sup>13</sup>, i.e. as many as 43 daily but obviously a part of them were not classical operations and a part of the so-called service squads were also allocated to them. Later, when the partisans were distributed in small bands of 3-5 people, the chain operations

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<sup>12</sup> J. Starkauskas, *Čekistinė kariuomenė...*, p. 54.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid*, p. 54.

lost their value in part and were organised less often. Thus only 515 operations were organised in 1948<sup>14</sup>. Frequently the highest commanders themselves promoted the organisation of grandiose operations in the entire territory of Lithuania like Col. Gen. A. Apolonov did in his directive of 5 February 1946. (See document 24.) The generals especially loved operations since they could make an appearance in them.

When the army units had no information from operatives about the partisans or their information was only approximate, the company and platoon commanders at their own discretion would send so-called service squads of 10-20 soldiers, which operated using RPG, hidden position, or ambush methods. RPG was usually carried out during the day and concealed position and ambush by night.

RPG (an initialism of the Russian *razvietivatelno poiskovaja grupa* (reconnaissance search group)) consisted of fully armed soldiers who travelled 15-30 km per day on forest paths, forest outskirts, and similar localities searching for traces of the existence of partisans and if they happened upon these, they strove to find and wipe out the partisans. RPG was the most popular method of warfare, comprising over half of all the squads sent out in some years.

Ambush and concealed position were similar methods of warfare. They were frequently organised at night, stationary, established at locations near roads, crossroads, fords, the outskirts of villages, etc. that were likely to be visited by partisans. Any partisans who found themselves in the line of sight of the soldiers in concealed positions were usually shot; an attempt was sometimes made in ambushes to capture them alive. Concealed positions were usually established after dark, removed by day, and re-established another night at the same location (if none of the inhabitants had blundered upon them). By day, the soldiers rested after withdrawing into the forest, in abandoned cottages, sometimes at the homes of conscripted men, etc.

CVG (an initialism of the Russian *chekistko voiskovaja grupa* (Chekist Army Group)) was a very dangerous method of warfare, however the soldiers were especially reluctant to use it since it required a great deal of additional effort. Its essence was that a permanent group of soldiers was formed who had to fight not in general with all the partisans one day here, another there but with one specific band of partisans until they were completely wiped out. All the soldiers of that squad had to know as much as possible about that band of partisans and each specific member of it: their methods of camouflage, behaviour, support base, signallers, etc.

Various types of small attacks were being endlessly organised since the military required that no less than 2/3 of the soldiers constantly participate in battles. (Although in reality only about half of the soldiers did so and on some days only about 25 per cent since the others were resting, training, recovering, performing guard duty, performing chores, etc.) On average, one battalion (A

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<sup>14</sup> Ibid, p.62.

regiment contained three.) organised 150-170 RPG, about 30-50 concealed positions, and 1-3 ambushes per month. Because until 1951 no less than 8 Home Guard regiments operated in Lithuania, therefore during 1946-1951 there were about 2900-4100 RPG, 720-1200 concealed positions, and 24-72 ambushes scattered around Lithuania every month and during a year about 40-70 thousand of various types of service squads “used to operate.” Thus in 1947 the army executed 563 operations (Of these 529 were carried out on the basis of information from the MGB about partisan basing locations and 34 without any information.) and sent out 72 030 various types of small service squads. (Of these, 14 538 were sent on the basis of information, 57 492 without any.) However, in 1948, as has been mentioned, 515 operations were organised and only 30 177 various types of small squads were sent out<sup>15</sup>. Doubtless the feverish army activity decreased because ever more information was collected from the agents and the strikes were becoming more accurate.

Crimes committed by the army. Each nation has the right to defend its freedom even with arms. All of our approximately 15 thousand dead partisans are victims of aggression. But the partisans, being armed, could at least defend themselves from the aggressors. The murder of unarmed inhabitants who frequently did not attempt to defend themselves and other wrongs are especially painful and many of them can be treated as war crimes.

Without a doubt, the events of the Second World War determined the savage behaviour of the Chekist army. The Soviets fought very ferociously in the war, frequently pushing their own people into hopeless homicidal attacks. Each victory was achieved through huge sacrifices. The lives of their enemies were appreciated even less. Disorder followed in the Soviet Union after the war, the economic collapse, the exhaustion of the people and other similar problems also did not induce a respect for human life. Thus it is not surprising that most of the crimes were committed immediately after the war. The brutal unlawful behaviour, robbery, and violence of the Chekists, their army, and especially the Stribai and armed activists continued throughout the entire Stalinist period but the murder of entirely innocent people almost stopped. Beginning in 1947, the army strikes were made almost entirely against the partisans and the civilian inhabitants were already rarely murdered at their hands.

There are still other reasons, which conditioned the crimes committed by the army. Very important among them is ideology. Marxism and especially its most vulgar variety, Leninism-Stalinism, in general did not have mercy for any so-called enemy of the people. “The enemy of the people must be annihilated,” was the principle slogan of the Communists of that time. Especially reliable, even fanatical youths, in addition to being frequently especially brutal, were selected for special kinds of army units, especially frontier units. Similar youths were selected for the Home Guard, where they frequently went completely berserk while serving in it. Shut up in military posts

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<sup>15</sup> J. Starkauskas, *Čeistinė kariuomenė...*, p. 58.

completely isolated from the local inhabitants, they were forced to see an enemy in each Lithuanian and after some time began to think like that Chekist operative, “If you shoot any Lithuanian, you will nevertheless hit an enemy.” Constantly seeing the property of others as not worthy of respect and, even more, not respecting life, the men who joined the Chekist army were usually completely morally corrupted and carried out the most drastic instructions of their commanders without hesitation. Another reason for the merciless behaviour was the constant pressure by both the operatives and the military to murder more, to be active participants. It is only necessary to read through the directive of B. Kobulov and A. Apolonov of 8 June 1945 (See document 4.), the 5-page directive signed by the same people on the next day, 9 June (See document 5.), the directive of June 18 (See document 6; these latter two documents were prepared and signed in Vilnius.), the directive of June 28, and the directives of the beginning of August and 8 and 13 October 1945 of I. Tkachenka (See documents 10, 19, and 20.) in order to understand that the army had no choice: they had to strive at any price to break the resistance and not being able to this quickly, to imitate this activity by murdering innocent people and registering them as “bandits” that had been killed. All the documents mentioned are eloquent; here is a quote from one of them, a directive from I. Tkachenka to the commanders of all the kinds of army units and to the commanders of the operatives (See document 19.): “The work results of our army’s organs have not yet been so disgraceful since the Germans were driven out of the republic as those during the first five days of October. 20 regiments during 5 days killed only 56 bandits and arrested 158 /.../ You must eventually understand that institutionalised irresponsibility for delegated matter cannot be tolerated any more in the army or its organs....” The directive instructed the army that they would not return to barracks until the partisans who had organised the attack were killed or arrested. It instructed to punish those who were fighting poorly. And this was not empty threat. At the end of 1945, 4 of the 7 operative sector commanders were replaced and the NKVD and NKGB county and district branch and subbranch commanders were constantly being replaced, frequently demoting them; some, like NKGB Trakai County Commanding Officer Major Komarov, were sentenced. (Komarov received a 6-year gaol sentence.)<sup>16</sup> From the beginning of 1946, understanding that the resistance had deeper roots than had been affirmed until then (Purportedly the Germans had organised the resistance.), the directives from commanders became more restrained although there was still no lack of exhortations and even threats. The requirements for the Chekist army were increased and it began to be demanded that the partisans be attacked and pursued even at night. (See document 26.)

Besides the ideologically motivated selection and constant ideological training, a series of privileges of a material or other nature instilled ferocity in the officers of the Home Guard. This meant only the possibility of not being sent to the front. (Only the frontier guards and only for the

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<sup>16</sup> J. Starkauskas, *Čekistinė kariuomenė...*, p. 51.

first days of the war had to fight somewhat, all the others remained behind the front for the entire war.)

It should be noted that the highest Chekist commanders and especially the Party functionaries understood that in activities of the Chekist, including those of the army, there was a great deal of ignorance and even cowardice and that all of this was concealed by various deceptions. This is what V. Shcherbakov who temporarily replaced A. Suslov wrote in March of 1946 to Moscow to VKP(b) CK Secretary A. Ždanov: “The MVD and MGB are not conducting an offensive war nor do they have good agents. As many as 50 per cent of the MVD soldiers are unusable in military operations. /.../ Drunkenness, marauding, hooliganism, revolutionary justified violations (illegal arrests, beating those arrested, etc.) /.../ have become frequent occurrences. /.../ The illegal arrests cloak their inactivity and cowardice.”<sup>17</sup>

The imperious, frequently even hysterical demands by the leadership to destroy the underground-resistance to the occupiers as fast as possible by killing and arresting more people provided great opportunities for the already not especially highly moral Chekist **soldiers, fanatic** Communists, and especially sadists and people without scruples. Historians are debating how many of the 12 213 of our people who died in 1944-1945 (according to the data of P. Raslan) were our partisans, how many unarmed men who were still hiding from conscription in the Red Army (There were tens of thousands of unarmed men in hiding. Of about 70 thousand Lithuanians conscripted into the Red Army during the war, about 25 thousand died. Most of our men reasoned that if they were already fated to die, it would be closer to home and for themselves and not the interests of others.), and how many completely innocent, in no way either actively or passively opposing anyone but who accidentally found themselves in the sights of the occupier’s soldiers. (Many of our village idiots were shot in this manner.) Dr. A. Anušauskas maintains that during 1944-1955 more than a third of those shot and listed as purportedly partisans were in reality not<sup>18</sup>. I think that among those over 12 thousand people who were shot even about half could be such people. (Precisely how many unarmed men were shot we will never know now.) We think the fact that as many as over 5 thousand unarmed men were shot in those years is supported by the data and deductions presented below.

One of the most important pieces of evidence is the following: During 1944-1945 the number of purported partisans killed and arrested does not correspond at all to the number weapons seized from them. This data does not correspond in almost every battle report. In a report to L. Beria and V. Merkulov for January 1945 (See document 1.), it was written that that month 1242 “bandits” had been killed, 2653 arrested, i.e. in all, “3895 bandits were liquidated” while only 1394 weapons were

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<sup>17</sup> A. Anušauskas, *Lietuvių tautos...*, p.275.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid*, p. 262.

seized, i.e. only approximately every third partisan had a weapon. When the 137<sup>th</sup> and 261<sup>st</sup> Rifle Regiments carried out operations in Rokiškis County on 8-12 January 1945, at that time, 122 men were shot and 229 arrested (A part of these were also partisans.) while 45 weapons were seized (5 machine guns, 6 automatics, and 34 rifles)<sup>19</sup>. When the 261<sup>st</sup> Regiment rampaged in Ažagai and **Staroliškės** forests in Panevėžys County on 27 March 1945, 121 purported partisans were shot and 18 arrested while 7 machine guns, 5 automatics, and 30 rifles were seized<sup>20</sup>. There is similar data in almost all the reports and operatives' battle summaries for 1944-1945. The exceptions occurred only when a real battle had been described and not a criminal operation. In addition, it is necessary to keep in mind that after the war weapons had been discarded in many places; it was possible to find them at people's houses nor was the accounting at the Chekist warehouse especially strict.

Meanwhile later, from approximately mid-1946 until the end of the partisan war, the number of those killed and arrested and the number of weapons seized was not disparate, frequently there were more weapons since the partisans frequently carried several weapons each. (See documents 31 and 32.)

The Chekist commanders not without reason required that operatives' battle summaries also indicate the number of weapons seized. In this way, obviously, an attempt was made to control the situation to some degree, to not allow the massacre of entirely peaceful people by army assaults. It was suspected, and not without grounds, that the Chekist army only pretended to fight and shot peaceful inhabitants while the partisans remained healthy and fought on. Commissar J. Bartašiūnas had to explain more than once how it happened that after shooting or capturing half of the partisans, their numbers not only failed to decrease but even increased. (He explained that new bands had been formed, the one that had scattered long ago had reformed, etc.) This is what 4<sup>th</sup> Division Smersh Section Commanding officer Zuikov wrote to I. Tkachenka and J. Bartašiūnas: "...facts were recently discovered concerning the criminal activities of the officers in performing their official duties where the individual commanders, in order to conceal their inactivity in the struggle with banditry, began to murder peaceful inhabitants." (See document 14.) And Lithuanian Frontier District Military Prosecutor Col. S. Grimovičius in his report to the CK and to A. Sniečkas explained the crimes committed by the Chekists as follows: 1) a savage war is raging, many people have died in view of the soldiers and officers, therefore those soldiers with weaker constitutions have lost moderation and reason, "they consider each local inhabitant to be a bandit or a supporter of one and therefore do whatever they wish to them;" 2) a part of the soldiers and officers are morally corrupt, self-seekers, and/or lazy; they, therefore, conceal their inactivity with arrests and executions; 3) still others in this war are seeking to enrich themselves by plundering, robbery, and

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<sup>19</sup> Ibid, p. 227.

<sup>20</sup> J. Starkauskas, *Čekistinė kariuomenė...*, p. 400.

extortion. This and one other prosecutor attempted to somewhat restrain the terror of the operatives and military, even convicting especially wild military personal. According to the colonel, 328 security organ and army officers, sergeants, and privates were handed over to the military tribunals in 1945 for high crimes (“unlawful” executions and murders, rapes, and robbery). Most of the crimes were committed in the first quarter of 1946, i.e. 137, including 55 people who were “unlawfully” executed or murdered, 62 raped or savagely beaten, and 120 farmhouses that were plundered. Without a doubt, this was only a small part of the crimes, which the Soviet justice organs discovered. There were many ways to conceal a crime: “shot while trying to flee,” “died from a weak heart,” “committed suicide in the room,” etc. It was impossible to successfully fight against the crimes committed by the military and therefore the highest officials sanctioned the majority of them and the thinking of the very prosecutors was fettered by Marxist dogma. This is also what S. Grimovičius wrote to the CK: “In this complex, unusually difficult work, especially under the conditions in Lithuania, mistakes are possible and allowable. But outrageous and systematic mistakes, when these become massive and unfixable, such mistakes cannot be mistakes. It is possible to error once or twice but not until you lose consciousness. We consider such mistakes to be perversion.”<sup>21</sup> According to him, it would emerge that each Chekist could shoot or torture 1-2 people but a third would be too much.

Incidentally, the partisans quickly noticed this behaviour by the Chekist army; in one of his orders, the Commander of the Great Battle District, J. Misiūnas-Žalias Velnias (The Green Devil) wrote: “The enemy cannot destroy us /.../ so he kills the people who fall into his hands and carries them to town to show people that a bandit was killed.”<sup>22</sup> This situation did not satisfy the Chekist commanders and especially the Party functionaries working in the provinces since they could not boast (and so receive awards) that they had shattered the resistance. The majority of our people received the new occupiers if not as enemies, then very suspiciously. By the Chekist operatives and their soldiers going on the rampage, it confirmed the worst warnings about the Communist terror. (Although a certain dose of terror had been received in 1940-1941, nevertheless the wartime and post-war terror was even worse.) Having almost no supporters, the Communist Party functionaries had to be supported almost entirely by the Russian occupiers and their vermin. In addition, both the Chekists and the Party functionaries became gradually persuaded that reckless terror would not necessarily prostrate and break the people; it frequently makes the stronger ones fight harder.

The military, understanding that the data that only every third or fourth “bandit” arrested or killed had a weapon, which was being presented by them, was doubtful, often explained it by the fact that the purported partisans, in running from them, had thrown their weapons away. Sometimes

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<sup>21</sup> Ibid, pp. 14-15.

<sup>22</sup> LYA, f. 1, ap. 3, b. 5/1, t.2, l. 122.



in order to make it more credible why these discarded weapons were not found, they would write that the “bandits” had sunk them in the swamp. Doubtless such instances occurred but keep in mind that a weapon was a partisan’s main guarantee of rescue (J.Lukša-Skirmantas called them “our mistresses” since frequently even when sleeping they did not let go of the weapons.), thus it is not very credible that as many as two thirds of partisans threw them away during a battle or pursuit. Finally, as has already been mentioned, around mid-1946, they began to fight more precisely, to shoot real partisans and not all the “locals” in general and the number of weapons and of killed or arrested partisans began to almost ideally coincide.

Another “method of warfare” used by the Chekist army was burning down any cottages, in which partisans were surprised, including as well a multitude of frequently innocent human victims and large material losses. This barbaric behaviour was also promoted in 1944-1946 by the directives of the highest Chekist commanders. Lt. Col. G. Burlitski, who had fled to the West, perhaps best **revealed** these instructions to the commission of Congressman Ch. Kersten. (This was formed in 1953 and operated until 1954 and investigated the occupation of the Baltic States as an international crime.) These are the instructions (The further actions of the Chekists confirmed the truth of his words.) in a meeting convened in September 1944 given by S. Kruglov, then first deputy to L. Beria, who spoke in the name of J. Stalin and L. Beria, to the commanders of the units stationed in Lithuania, their assistants for political and reconnaissance matters, the chiefs of staff, and operatives’ commanders: “He also ordered the army’s actions to be intensified in fighting with the so-called bandits. He ordered it to search the forests, forest openings, and villages; he also gave the instruction that if during so-called combing operations some attempted to flee, even in a case where the person was unarmed but tried to flee, that person would be considered a bandit. Against people, who were trying to flee even if they were unarmed, against those people firearms must be used and they must be shot without mercy. No court was necessary. If these people concealed themselves in or ran into a home or peasant cottage or a village, then that house, cottage, or village must be considered the bandits’ cottage, the home of village bandits, and all these houses, cottages, and villages must be burned down. All the property remaining in the house, village, or peasant farm and the domestic animals should be considered to belong to the bandits and must also be confiscated and turned over to the local Party authorities or into the control of the local Soviet.”<sup>23</sup>

Thus, any cottage or even village, in which partisans were surprised or even if they attempted to conceal themselves there and were not armed, had to be destroyed. In this way, an attempt was made to deter the supporters of the partisans. They frequently behaved this way. During almost every assault, one or another cottage was burned down and sometimes they were burned down on a massive scale. Of these massive burnings, especially widely known are the massacres organised on

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<sup>23</sup> Baltijos valstybių užgrobimo byla, Vilnius, 1997, p. 790.

23 December 1944 in the Panemunė Dzukija (southern Lithuanian) villages of Klepočiai, Rylišķiai, Lizdai, etc, which massacres were organised by two battalions of the 331<sup>st</sup> and 86<sup>th</sup> Frontier Regiments led by operatives, who had come from Vilnius. Sent due to the insubordination of the inhabitants of Dzukija, their ignoring of the occupation authorities, and refusing to enlist in the army, the occupiers during several days shot about 40 people (A part of these were burned in their cottages.) and burned down about 50 cottages<sup>24</sup>. The 13<sup>th</sup> Frontier Regiment organised no smaller a cottage burning and murder bacchanalia on 18-21 December 1944 in Čekiškė locality, Kaunas County, where 56 people were murdered and 29 cottages burned down. (In another report, it was written that 46 “bandit cottages” were burned down.) The same regiment on 22 December in Vilkija District shot 16 people and burned down 9 cottages<sup>25</sup>. On 22 December 1944 in **Meleišiškės** village in Troškūnai locality 12 people were murdered and 4 houses burned down. There were many such reports especially while the Second World War was still raging. The Chekists usually explained their work, i.e. the burning of cottages, thus: “...9 bandit farmsteads were burned and the bandits in them shot” (from the summary of a 20-25 December 1944 battle by I. Tkachenka to M. Suslov and A. Sniečkus<sup>26</sup>). After the war, an armed person could enter any cottage and the partisans would not necessarily conceal themselves in the homes of people, who especially supported the partisans. In addition, we know (in comparison to the well investigated Panemunė Dzukija village tragedy) that there were no partisans in general in most of the cases of burned cottages; they were burned down for punishment, for disobedience, out of a desire to strike fear and it appears credible that frequently they shot the owner of the cottage and/or several members of the family. (If they shot a woman, they almost always threw her corpse into the burning building since to the naked eye it is difficult to determine the sex of a burnt corpse; in such a case it was reported that so many “bandits” were burned in the building.)

In general, the Chekists, both operatives and military personnel, were, after shooting someone for nothing (or shooting someone who had already been arrested but appeared suspicious in their eyes), masters in registering the person on paper in such a way that he became a “bandit.” Such behaviour was frequent. (See documents 14 and 15.)

Perhaps the most horrible of the Chekist army crimes registered by Smersh, where peaceful inhabitants were burned and murdered, registering this as if it were a battle with “bandits,” and the executed or burned family as “bandits”, was committed on 1 August 1945 in Švendriai village, Šiauliai County when the 217<sup>th</sup> Frontier Regiment’s First and Second Guard Units (about 60 soldiers) in a completely clear situation murdered two families. (The witnesses have described in fair detail the peripeteia of the murder of one family; see the third part of document 16.) This event

<sup>24</sup> A. Anušauskas, *Lietuvių tautos...*, p. 119-121.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid*, p. 198-199.

<sup>26</sup> LYA, f.1, ap. 10, b. 10, l. 99.

is distinguished by the fact that a blatant crime was committed with such a large number of soldiers participating.

Usually this was done in small groups of three to five soldiers, as was done on 31 August 1946 in Prienai Neighbourhood. There, soldiers Smirnov, Glushin, and Bulavin of the 34<sup>th</sup> Regiment, wishing to be rewarded for shooting a “bandit”, wanted to shoot J. Tamulevičius, who looked to be a “bandit” however he, wounded, fled. Then the soldiers shot B. Šimkus and presented him as a partisan corpse. It appears that these soldiers, who arrested Tamulevičius, had reported to their unit that they shot a “bandit” and because this person fled instead of allowing himself to be shot to death, in his place they shot another, the first who fell into their hands<sup>27</sup>.

Why were cottages burned down so readily and on such a massive scale? (I think that just during the period of the state of war in Lithuania, i.e. 1944-mid-1946, over 1000 cottages were burned down; later a further several hundred were burned down.) Such a manner of warfare was very convenient for Chekist soldiers: after firing a house or cottage with incendiary bullets, if there were partisans in the buildings, they had to, while protecting themselves, either burn or make a dash for it when they were not difficult to shoot by both day and night since everything is very visible against the backdrop of a fire. Thus, such a manner of warfare suited the interests of the Russian soldiers since they could kill their enemies without risking anything. Also it was convenient for them to throw any civilian inhabitants into the burning buildings (or leave those previously shot in them), reporting to the leadership that so many “bandits”, whose bodies could not be identified, were burned in the “buildings defended by the bandits.” This manner of fighting for some time also suited the highest Chekist and Communist Party leadership since they were attempting to terrify the people by showing that the least resistance would call down merciless repression. However, as has been mentioned, they gradually became persuaded that exaggerated repression does more than just terrify people. Therefore, on 2 June 1946, a directive from J. Bartašiūnas appeared, which forbid with certain provisos (It was still allowable to burn buildings down if they posed a danger to Russian soldiers.) the burning down of cottages, especially when there were others close by. The Chekists also set fire to and burned down cottages afterwards but not in such numbers.

The fierceness of the Chekist soldiers was determined by many things: the hatred of the so-called enemy of the people determined in general by Marxism, the already mentioned selection system created by the Communist leadership for special kinds of army units, the fear during the war of being sent to the front, and many other things. After the end of the war, the Chekist army was motivated by material incentives. By an order of 14 June 1945 by A. Apolonov, the NKVD army, until the fulfilment of its assignments in Lithuania, was supplied with first quality food rations and the army’s soldiers and operatives even had to receive that food free of charge together with

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<sup>27</sup> J. Starkauskas, *Čekistinė kariuomenė...*, p.45.

officers' bonuses<sup>28</sup>. The gifts of money received by officers, sergeants, and common soldiers for partisans who were killed or arrested alive induced reckless fierceness in the soldiers. For a group of partisans, which had been killed, J. Bartašiūnas and later the MGB ministers, usually used to award 300-600 roubles to an officer, or several of them and 50-200 roubles for sergeants and common soldiers. (At that time, a lieutenant's monthly salary was about 600 roubles.) When celebrating the establishment date of some Chekist regiments, the regiment used to be awarded a certain amount of money, which used to be distributed to the soldiers who had better distinguished themselves, i.e. who had killed more partisans. The commander of the 4<sup>th</sup> Division, P. Vetrov used to constantly scrounge for gifts from A. Sniečkus for himself and his soldiers. In celebrating the first anniversary of the establishment of the division, besides everything else, he wrote, "...I am requesting your instruction to award American gifts." Besides money, Chekist soldiers used to be awarded valuable gifts at that time, i.e. watches, razors, cigarettes, etc. If one received battle orders and medals, it was possible to expect promotion in the service, higher rank, etc.

The soldiers, especially the common ones, were kept isolated from the local Lithuanian inhabitants during the entire period the Chekist army stayed in Lithuania and especially strictly during the period of the partisan war. They were constantly told that if not all, then the majority of Lithuanians were bandits and German henchmen who, if one turned one's back, they would immediately put a bullet in it. Constantly being chased and tired, frequently living on only dry rations for whole weeks, the Chekist soldiers were constantly enraged and saw our people as the cause of their hardships.

It is possible to state that this army frequently committed one other high crime. Because they were paid the same for dead partisans as for live ones (Only at the end of the partisan war did they begin to value partisans, who were taken alive in hopes of obtaining knowledge from them.), i.e. per head, thus they also frequently strove to shoot those taken alive on one or another pretext, usually simulating flight. They did not have to feed or guard a corpse. In addition, a dead man (if he was not a partisan) could not prove that he was not a partisan, that the rifle thrown down beside him was not his, etc. The commander of the NKVD rearguard army at the Leningrad front, Col. Mal, who at that time had been rampaging in North Lithuania, had to explain the shooting of 10 people by his soldiers under suspicious circumstances on 25 August 1945<sup>29</sup>.

All the crimes that have been mentioned are enumerated in counterintelligence documents. (Our people have cried a sea of tears in their recollections but not very many partisan documents recording Chekist crimes have survived.) Why in general were they enumerated there? First, as has already been mentioned, the leadership suspected that its army simulated fighting, shot civilians,

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<sup>28</sup> Ibid, p. 43.

<sup>29</sup> J. Starkauskas, *Čekistinė kariuomenė...*, p.47.

and presented them as partisans. Meanwhile, the partisans remained healthy and alive. Second, these actions eroded the already low authority of the Communists in the eyes of our nation; therefore, some Party organs strove to somewhat restrain “unlawful executions.” Third, a certain animosity between the individual Chekist structures, which the leadership promoted, also played a large role in revealing the crimes of one or another repressive structure. Thus Chekist operatives constantly complained about the soldiers to the higher authorities stating that these men, after being supplied with information about partisans, were unable to shoot them, behaved unscientifically, got frightened, released them, etc. Meanwhile, the military personnel constantly claimed that they vainly scoured the forests since no information had been received from the operatives. Without a doubt, the individual counterintelligence officers, especially from Smersh, due to their ideological beliefs more or less conscientiously established what they called “violations of social justice.”

In addition to the fundamental crimes mentioned above, which are suited to be called crimes, the Chekist army committed many criminal crimes, i.e. robbery, theft, and sometimes murder with the aim of robbery. (See documents 8 and 12.) Sometimes these terrible crimes by operatives and military personnel were discovered, as is enumerated in document 9, which “eroded the authority of the NKVD-NKGB organs in eyes of the working people.” The idea that it is irrational to torture those arrested if they did not reveal information slipped into other documents.

The Red Army brought our people yet another avalanche of disasters, especially when returning through Lithuania from the front or when part of them were deployed in our country. When the front passed through Lithuania, our country was comparatively little ravaged by the Russian soldiers if one does not include the destruction done by the battles at the front. It helped that Lithuania was considered a part of it, i.e. a part of the USSR, and the soldiers were not allowed to openly rob, rape, and murder. Another fate befell three counties in the Klaipėda region, where all the men from 15 to 50 were shut up in filtration camps while all the women from 12 to 70 were raped according to NKGB agents under A. Guzevičius. Almost all the animals were slaughtered and the household property either stolen or smashed.

Deadly tired, ulcerous, sick, frequently hungry, and enraged by all the hardships that had descended on them because of the Second World War, the Russian soldiers returning from the front instinctively hated the comparatively quiet and, as they thought, comfortable bourgeois life of our people. This is how it appeared to some soldiers (The quotes are taken from letters kept by the military censors.): “Boris, I have travelled around almost all of Lithuania and chanced to be at many farmsteads checking documents and I well know how the peasants live. You and I haven't experienced **independent** life yet and it appears marvellous. Almost every peasant has 5 riding horses each and 6 milk cows, 10 pigs, about 30 sheep, and countless chickens, ducks, geese, and turkeys, 10 to 30 ha of land, lives well, and the farmstead has a house, cowshed, stockyard, granary,

sauna, horse shed...” (from a letter from P. Kiseliov from the 29072 B military detail to a friend in the Vologda area)<sup>30</sup>. Or again: “Lithuanians live very well on the farmsteads. They each have three to five cows but are very greedy. There have been cases where they poisoned the milk, vodka, or all the products in general and sold them. There have been such cases among us where soldiers were fatally poisoned. Living here is very dangerous. They really hate us.” (from L. Kotov from the 83290 military detail to a friend in the Moscow area)<sup>31</sup>. But looking through the eyes of the Russian soldiers, it was nothing to rob villains and dispatch those unwilling to divide up their property in good will. All of this became so widespread that on 10 September 1945 I. Tkachenka sent out a letter to the NKVD-NKGB county department commanders (See document 13.), in which he wrote that he was receiving many complaints from the civilian inhabitants concerning robbery and even murder by Red Army military personnel. He requested that they report such incidents since a report had to be prepared for the People’s Commissariat of VKP(b) CK and Defence. I. Tkachenka in September 1945 prepared a certificate about the violence of the soldiers of the Baltic Military District (See document 18.), in which he wrote that in June and July military units, as the permanent Baltic District army, had been relocated from East Prussia to Lithuania and had established garrisons. According to him, “A significant part of the officers, sergeants, and common soldiers in almost all of the parts of the District systematically get drunk, rob, and beat up the citizens, rob flats and farms, cause other havoc, and massively violate the revolutionary order.” In the conclusion, he wrote that the leadership was not opposing the criminals and even covering for them. However, he later, evidently, changed his mind and the same I. Tkachenka, with the help of J. Bartašiūnas and D. Jefimov, on 4 December 1945 wrote (See document 23.) that the Baltic Military District has investigated the facts and determined that Red Army units travelling through Lithuania and bandits dressed up in Red Army uniforms had committed most of the crimes. At that time some Red Army soldiers were robbing fairly ingeniously, for example in Radviliškis Neighbourhood they went to a cottage and informed the people that they were being deported to Russia and ordered them to take everything of value and food with them; after travelling a short distance, they threw the people out and drove off with all the possessions. Later letters refuted the propositions that only those returning from the front tried to deceive people. On 12 March 1946, NKVD Šilutė County Department Commander wrote his senior officers (See document 25.) that the soldiers of the small units stationed in the county had in July alone committed ten robberies and thefts and after the 97<sup>th</sup> Artillery Regiment arrived, its soldiers robbed and harassed the NKVD employees. Incidentally, on 10 November 1945, in a letter by I. Tkachenka sent to L. Beria about a rampage by military personnel during the October holidays, all the events revolved about the fact

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<sup>30</sup> LYA, f.1, ap. 10, b. 22, l. 276.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid, b. 10, l. 50.

that the military personnel in Kaunas and Vilnius were assaulting the NKVD employees. (See document 22.) This contraposition between the various Chekist units and other kinds of army units lasted throughout the entire existence of the Soviet Union; during the war and post-war years it was especially savage entirely because the Chekists who had remained behind the front during the war took all the most substantial places after the war. The Red Army soldiers continued to successfully pilfer (perhaps just beating people less) since the war that had just ended had completely loosened the already lax morals of the Soviets and the especially bad food and miserable life only incited crime. As is seen from a letter signed on 16 April 1946 by J. Bartašiūnas (See document 27.), one anti-aircraft defence unit stationed in Ukmergė County in just a month and a half committed 11 reported thefts. (It is necessary to believe that many more remained unreported.)

Thus, the peaceful inhabitants, no less than those who resisted the occupation, suffered from the Chekist soldiers. Clearly, it is impossible to use especially brutal forms of force to suppress resistance without having the soldiers be enraged and under such circumstances they begin to no longer select who and how it is necessary to punish. Usually various military units formed from local inhabitants, mostly the dregs of society, make that bacchanalia of violence all the worse.

### **Stribai**

The Stribai were a “local armed unit” established in Lithuania by resolutions of the LKP(b) CK and LKT and intended to fight “with banditry and other anti-Soviet elements.” Especially significant were the CK and LKT resolutions to found a squad of 20-40 Stribai in each district. (See document 33.) Similar squads (Only they were always called destroyer battalions, *istrebitelnyje bataliony* in Russian; the Lithuanian contemptuous term of “Stribas” comes from “*istrebitel*”.) were also established in all the regions newly occupied by the USSR: Estonia, Latvia, Belarus, Ukraine, and Moldova. (In the last three, only in those parts which were newly occupied.) But the establishment of the USSR destroyer battalions began after the beginning of the Second World War by an NKVD order of 25 June 1941<sup>32</sup>. They existed throughout the entire period of the war and were assigned to fight German saboteurs and spies behind the front lines but as the front moved to the west, the NKVD began to filter through the people remaining in the occupied zones.

In the beginning, the Stribai in Lithuania (like the corresponding units in all the other regions) were considered to be volunteer squads fighting Soviet enemies during their free time. However, because our partisan bands began to ever more press the small islands of occupation authority, the district centres, in a sea of villages, the occupiers and collaborators were forced to make the Stribai professional hirelings; however this was not done immediately since, with the war going on, there was a shortage of material resources in all areas of life. Therefore, in the beginning, only attempts

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<sup>32</sup> J. Starkauskas, *Stribai*, Vilnius, 1201, p. 22.

were made to raise their combat level and mobility, protect them from shooting one another, and get them into barracks. (In the beginning, these were usually buildings not suited for this, usually the brick buildings of the rich citizens, which were suitable for defence.) The first time J. Bartašiūnas did this was on 14 February 1945<sup>33</sup>. But then a great many problems arose since there was nothing to feed the Stribai lodged in the barracks. Although the Soviet authority also made an effort, dividing up among them a great deal of the property of first those with so-called excess property and later those deported, allowing them to almost steal legally, giving them small amounts of money from the small local budget, etc. The Stribai, because many of them came from the poor, i.e. workers and small landowners, of **lumpenproletariat** towns and church villages, were very hard to manage in the beginning. The majority of the Stribai stopped having problems with having enough to live on (But not all since the salary, especially in the beginning, was nevertheless was small.) when on 22 August 1945 the USSR LKT, reacting to the multiple requests of their stooges in Lithuania for the maintenance for the Stribai, appointed a staff of 11 thousand, giving them the same wage as village police officers received at that time. (See document 38. With the improvement of the economic position, the salary was increased from 300 roubles in 1945 to 470 roubles in 1952. In addition, after some time, the Stribai began to receive free food bonuses, the value of which sometimes amounted to over 200 roubles.) The Stribai staff, who were being paid at the request of the USSR authorities, was always renewed, but with resistance only weakening and after it was noticed that there was a lack of people willing to serve, the staff was gradually reduced. During 1945-1946, 11 thousand staff personnel were appointed, during 1947-1951, 8 thousand, and during 1952-1953, 6 thousand<sup>34</sup>. One of the reasons that also forced both the occupiers and the collaborators to decide to make the Stribai a professional hired army was that the Stribai, while they were receiving no salary and were almost unable to perform their own work (those that had any), completely plundered even the poorest farms, ever more not just stealing but openly plundering while the more moral of those among the ranks of the Stribai were prepared to quit. (See document 37.)

The Communist Party more than the Chekists took care of the Stribai, the Communist Party CK issuing twenty something documents regulating the activities, housing, and material supply of the Stribai and similar things. In the counties (and beginning in 1950, in the districts), the Party committees also strove to actively command the Stribai. The Chekists were more in charge of the **operative** combat work of the Stribai while the Party organs took care of educating and supporting them materially although often these things were intertwined. Being between two nursemaids, the Stribai, especially when the restructuring of the repressive structures was taking place, were often

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<sup>33</sup> Ibid, p. 29-30.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid, p. 32.



left without the required leadership. The leadership for the Stribai improved a great deal beginning in 1948 when Stribai command staffs, usually consisting of 4 people, were founded in the counties. The founding of these Stribai staffs was induced by not only a desire to standardise the activities of the Stribai but also the preparation for the collectivisation of the countryside, mobilising all the forces of the collaborators for this. In general the Chekists did not consider the Stribai to be entirely theirs; these could not call themselves the employees of these repressive organs or take advantage of the privileges these employees possessed (medical, support, etc.) since they were not paid a salary out of the Chekist budget. The Stribai had to wear Soviet Army uniforms but without insignia (They held no military rank.) although they wore a five-pointed star on their cap or forage cap. They were not administered the military oath although they were tried under the Soviet Army Statute. Because, especially in the beginning, there was a lack of Russian military uniforms, the Stribai used to wear any clothing.

Fighting the partisans in Lithuania fell to the soldiers of the Home Guard, who were more mobile (having transport and communications equipment) as well more combat ready and disciplined. In almost every case where something was precisely or approximately known about partisan base locations, the Home Guard was sent there and in joint operations the Stribai were almost always deployed in the enveloping lines. And behind them the Chekists frequently deployed their own soldiers to arrest or battle any partisans who burst through the Stribai.

Although there were comparative quite a few Stribai, (in 1945, from 8 to 10 thousand, in 1946, from 6 to 8 thousand, in 1947, from 6 to 7.5 thousand, etc.<sup>35</sup>), their contribution to the war against the partisans was small. Only during some months in 1945 when little of the Home Guard remained in Lithuania and the Stribai had to almost alone withstand the blows of the partisans (Besides the Stribai at the district centres, 3-6 operatives permanently resided there, the same number of police officers and about 10 armed activists. The numbers of the latter grew every year.) did they purportedly kill about 3600 partisans (37 per cent of all who died that year.) In the other years of the war, they killed from 13 to 25 per cent of the partisans. And only in the last years of the war, 1950-1952, did their contribution again increase somewhat<sup>36</sup>. It is very credible that in 1945 the Stribai, like the other armed structures of the occupiers, shot not so many partisans as unarmed men still hiding from conscription in the Red Army. The Stribai were bad soldiers. The partisan commanders used to say that were it not for the occupation army standing behind the Stribai, the partisans would have taken care them within several days.

In spite of the efforts of all the occupation authority's structures, especially the Party committees, the ranks of the Stribai were 15 to 40 per cent short the entire time. Only during the

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<sup>35</sup> J. Starkauskas, *Stribai*, p.77.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid*, p. 379-381.

war, because the Stribai were not conscripted into the army, did their numbers jump to 10 thousand. In Lithuania at that time, there was a lack of men willing to risk their necks to fight for foreign interests. In raising the combat level of the Stribai, an effort was made to hammer some elementary motivation to fight into their heads during various political activities. In explaining the Marxist fundamentals, a special effort was made to instil the law of the struggle of the classes since many who joined the Stribai had in reality experienced a great many both real and alleged social wrongs during the years of Independence and/or the German occupation.

In order to raise the combat level of the Stribai and to exhort them to rid themselves of unknown and unreliable people, the Chekists created many documents. The majority of those written were form-like, copying the same ideas from previous documents but the problems connected with the Stribai were the same throughout the entire decade: their poor combat level, cowardice, minor and major crimes, endless infractions, real or alleged ties with the partisans, etc. From the letters received from Moscow on these and other topics, it has been ascertained that the majority of the Stribai poorly defended themselves when attacked so that it was necessary to punish them for cowardice, surrendering weapons, and treason, issue an instruction to elevate the cult of dead Stribai, etc. From the letters of the commanding officers in Moscow, it is possible to form the image of how the Stribai acted in other countries. (See document 36.)

Perhaps the most typical and notorious case of the cowardice of the Stribai and their inability to defend themselves occurred on 9 July 1946 in Pumpėnai locality when 21 armed "Reds" including 6 Stribai and the entire district authority drove into a partisan ambush while travelling in trucks and did not even attempt to offer any resistance but threw down their weapons and attempted to save themselves by running away. The partisans killed 15 of them. (See document 41.)

One of the principle measures, in the opinion of the Chekists, to help to make the Stribai more combat ready and less criminal was a mandatory check of them prior to allowing them to become Stribai and later, "Chekist attention" of them i.e. constant monitoring of them using agents and informers. For this, special schemes for monitoring the Stribai were prepared. (See document 50.) Instructions were constantly being received from Moscow on how to introduce order among the Stribai, how to handle the barrack's regime, guard duty by the Stribai, etc. (See document 42.) And letters travelled to Moscow, in which it was confirmed that the instructions of the commanding officers were being carried out, that the Stribai were being constantly checked, etc. (See document 43.) In an effort to reduce the wrongs done to civilians by the Stribai, their ability to dispose of weapons was limited. (See document 55.) It is stated in Chekist documents that many traitors were encountered among the Stribai and therefore they had to be constantly checked since they stole, beat people, and in other ways committed crimes and infractions. (See documents 40, 44, and 49.) However, all this correspondence helped little since the majority of those who became Stribai came

with a criminal nature and past and the post-war Soviet system itself, in which the property of others was not respected, even human life, corrupted the Stribai. In order to lift the fighting spirit of the Stribai at least a little, the Chekists also convicted one or another of those who had fled from the field of battle. (See document 46.)

The confused post-war political situation, bonds of blood, water, and friendship, and other factors fated that the Stribai were not a very reliable armed force. The partisans influenced the Stribai the entire time using threats (When asked by the Party secretary why they were unable to completely fill out the Stribai squads, two reasons were usually presented: people feared the revenge of the partisans, especially for their families, and second, the poor material support for the Stribai.), appeals to the patriotic feelings of the Stribai, and other actions. Even in 1952 when the partisans of the Žemaičiai District, distributed a proclamation with an exhortation not to become Stribai, the Chekists reacted to it very seriously. (See document 54.) In general, the ties of hundreds and perhaps even thousands of Stribai with the partisans were very confusing. About 200 Stribai went over with their weapons to the partisans and about as many were convicted of ties with the partisans (usually for passing reconnaissance information and ammunition). About 2.5 thousand Stribai were discharged as unreliable<sup>37</sup>.

Then when the Chekists began to diligently check and react to not only their crimes but also their infractions (drinking on duty, asleep at their posts, abandoning their post, etc.), they had to discharge hundreds every year. (For example, in 1951, about 2 thousand Stribai were discharged.) The new personnel arrived with even less combat experience and the Chekists were overwhelmed by enlistment and discharge documents. Therefore, the commanding officer of 2N Command, Col. I. Pochkaj on 24 September 1951 indicated that the Stribai had been discharged for “infractions little short of a crime and the erosion of the authority of the MGB organs.” (See document 53.)

The Stribai were at the very bottom of the hierarchy of Soviet officials. They were usually commanded by whoever wanted to: police officers, district and especially county officials, etc. The Chekists on rare occasions attempted to restrict this pushing and pulling of the Stribai. One of these attempts was made in 1948 when it was instructed that the Stribai must travel to assaults only under the command of operatives. (See document 47.)

The Stribai were not so much an armed force as guides and translators for the occupiers since the latter were unfamiliar with the region. They somewhat protected the district centres but the other combat assignments they performed without spirit. The second purpose of these squads was that those of them who earned the trust of the occupiers and showed a little intelligence were selected to service in the so-called organs (the police and, in part, the MGB) and hold lower posts of authority (usually neighbourhood chairmen or secretaries, later collective farm chairmen or their

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<sup>37</sup> J. Starkauskas, Stribai, p.432.

assistants, etc.). In all during 1945-1953, 3587 Stribai were transferred to the police and MVD-MGB organs and 1365 Stribai into Soviet Party work, a total of 4952 Stribai<sup>38</sup>. Incidentally, these transfers, or more precisely promotions, were also one of the reasons for the low combat level of the Stribai since usually the more competent Stribai with stronger characters were promoted.

After the violent battles of 1945, as has been mentioned, and obviously with the silent consent of the Party organs (They were afraid that the occupiers' scarce supporters would be beaten.), the Stribai were drawn into the sidelines of the battles and according to the written statements of some Chekists, "protected only themselves, the activists, and some buildings," no longer participating in battles. Later, after the peasants began to be massively driven into the collective farms beginning in 1949, they were deployed to protect these collective farms or more precisely, the people in charge of the collective farms. The Chekist leadership constantly attempted or at least imagined that they were attempting to change the situation by pushing the Stribai into the combat arena. (See document 51.)

Stormtrooper agents, who acted in the name of the partisans, were usually selected from the strongest Stribai, especially until 1950. (See document 39.)

In carrying out the instructions of the Communist Party and its leader, A. Sniečkus, the Chekists strove to enlist as many as local inhabitants, especially Lithuanians, as possible as Stribai. (See documents 48 and 49.) This was done for various considerations: seeking greater support among the local inhabitants, involving them in the battles with their own side, seeking to destroy national solidarity, setting some classes of inhabitants against others, and wanting to prove (sometimes also to themselves) that the "Lithuanian people themselves are creating a socialist society by fighting for it," etc.

One of the documents, which clearly reveals the post-war horror, the rampages of the occupiers and especially the collaborators, is a letter written in 1947 by P. Turauskis, a poor peasant from Varniai village to some high Soviet official (This is believed to be Justas Paleckis; see document 45). Obviously the person was on the side of the soldiers since in writing about the killing of 4 Stribai, he wrote as follows: "I could provided many facts why they hate and fear us. That is why they consider a Communist to be a thief, robber, bribe taker, and in general, a devil." Here is yet another quote from the letter: "They talked into working in Varniai in the State Security Organs but when I saw that there was no truth but lies everywhere, it was suggested that I provoke people and provide false information so that they would reveal their activities but I refused to do this." Thieving and robbing Stribai and police officers, who frequently brutally torment the innocent, Chekists, and bribe-taking managers, this is what our good peasants clearly saw in their own and the neighbouring districts. Many Stribai participated in all those orgies as one of the principle actors.

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<sup>38</sup> Ibid, p. 112.

It is possible to accuse all the Stribai to a man as having participated in crimes against humanity as all of them actively participated in deporting our people to Siberia and the North.

## Conclusions

1. After the Soviet Union occupied Lithuania a second time in 1944, the Communist occupation administrative and economic regime in the country established various repressive structures (Chekist operatives, the Chekist army, police, Stribai, prosecutor's office, courts, and armed activists). Of these, the Chekist operatives were the brain centre and formulated the goals together with the Party organs; the main people executing these goals, the armed force, were various types of Chekist army units (rifle regiments, frontier regiments and sections, and various auxiliary NKVD-MVD-MGB army units).

The Stribai (As of 18 September 1945, they were officially called the "Defenders of the People.") were an armed "local unit" consisting of mostly local inhabitants (over 80 per cent) established by LKP(b) CK and LSSR LKT resolutions of 1944 but in reality peculiar hirelings who beginning in September 1945 received a salary with various supplements from the Soviet budget.

2. The main strikes by all the repressive organs were directed against the nucleus of the resistance to the occupiers, i.e. the partisan bands; the Chekist army fought almost entirely against them. Because resistance was almost universal (In 1945 there were about 30 thousand men in the partisan bands.) and the majority of Lithuania's inhabitants, especially the peasants, actively or passively supported the partisan bands, therefore the majority of Lithuania's peoples suffered the repression of the occupiers' structures. The majority of the Chekists (both operatives and military personnel) considered all Lithuanians to be "bandits" and used to say it was unimportant whom you shot, you would nevertheless hit a "bandit."

3. The occupation army in Lithuania was fairly large. During 1944-1945, there were over 20 regiments, in 1946, 14 regiments, during 1947-1951, 10 regiments, during 1952-1953, 5-7 regiments. (A regiment consisted of about a thousand soldiers.) The 4<sup>th</sup> Rifle Division, the long-time commander of which was (until 1950) Maj. Gen. P. Vetrov, began to play the lead role beginning in 1946. Often units of the Soviet Army (until mid-1946 called the Red Army) aided the Chekist army in battles, especially until the cancellation of the state of war in Lithuania in mid-1946. There were no less than 9 divisions (i.e. about 30-40 thousand soldiers) of the Soviet Army in Lithuania in 1946. Units and subunits of 2-3 Chekist divisions, the staffs of which were beyond the borders of the country (the 6<sup>th</sup>, 7<sup>th</sup>, and 10<sup>th</sup> divisions in Belarus, the 5<sup>th</sup> in Latvia, etc.) constantly operated in Lithuania. The students of USSR Chekist schools, commonly numbering several hundred soldiers, were constantly carrying out "training" in Lithuania. The power of the entire occupation army was not just in its numbers but also its mobility. After the end of the Second

World War, the Chekist army, better supplied with transport and communications equipment, was able within 1 hour to send several hundred soldiers to any location in Lithuania and after several hours, thousands.

There were also quite a few Stribai although there was a shortage of traitors; each year from 15 to 40 of all the staff positions for Stribai went unfilled. (During 1945-1946, 11 thousand Stribai staff positions were allocated, which paid the same salary as was paid at that time to village locality police officers, during 1947-1951, 8 thousand roubles, and during 1952-1953, 6 thousand.) In all, over 20 people, including over 16 thousand of our nationals, served as Stribai.

4. The Chekist army, also assisted by the Soviet Army, decided the strategic goals in the partisan war (to destroy partisan staffs and larger units, push the partisans away from the major cities and the border, etc.) while the Stribai were capable of performing only certain tactical assignments, of which the most important were the following: guarding district centres, especially those where there were buildings belonging to the Communist Party, repressive structures, and/or Soviet institutions, and accompanying Soviet Party activists travelling to villages on economic and political assignments although these activists were often themselves also armed. The Stribai failed to perform the first assignment, i.e. guarding district centres from attacks by partisans, and beginning in March 1946 the protection of the most vulnerable centres was entrusted to the Home Guard, which established permanent garrisons at these locations. The Stribai somewhat guarded the activists although they were frequently attacked together with them in partisan ambushes. The Stribai usually guarded district activists but Home Guard soldiers usually accompanied county managers to village localities.

5. That neither a class war nor a civil war occurred in Lithuania in the post-war years of 1944-1953 is proven by the number of partisans who died at the hands of the Chekist soldiers. The soldiers in 1946 killed 79 per cent of the partisans, in 1947, 87 per cent, in 1949, and 81 per cent. This army also killed approximately 4/5 of the partisans in the other years, except perhaps only in 1952-1953 when the **stormtrooper agents** and, in part, the Stribai killed the majority. (According to all the Chekist data, over 20 thousand partisans died in the partisan war but, in the opinion of researchers, over 5 thousand unarmed men, mostly shot in 1944-1945 when these were hiding from being conscripted into Red Army and sent to the front, have been included in this number.) The Stribai, police, armed activists, etc., i.e. those repressive structures, which were created mostly from local inhabitants, killed the remaining 1/5 of the partisans. But they were able to kill this many only because the occupation army was standing behind them. The exception is 1945 when the Stribai killed over 3.6 thousand (over 35 per cent of those killed that year) partisans, however, it is definitely possible to state that only half or less of these were partisans. The remaining were unarmed men hiding from conscription into the Red Army. Over a thousand Stribai themselves

died that year and the Communist Party kept quiet, fearing that its scarce supporters would be beaten, and pulled the Stribai off to the side of the battles. In 1945, the Stribai had to fight fairly actively because, especially with the war going on, there was a shortage of Chekist army soldiers and, obviously, because the LKP CK perhaps had hopes that the new authority would succeed in overcoming the resistance on its own.

6. The Chekist army in Lithuania acted very brutally. During 1944-1946 it was almost uncontrollable and only constantly exhorted to murder more. During 1944-1945 from 1/3 to half of the 12 thousand purported partisans killed by the Chekist army at that time were not partisans, only usually unarmed men still hiding from conscription in the Red Army. Beginning in 1946, the strikes by the army were more precisely strikes against people really resisting although quite a few innocent people suffered at that time as well.

7. Not only the exhortations of the Communist Party and Chekist leaders to kill more in order to break the resistance of the partisans more quickly but also the incentive system itself motivated the army's brutality. Throughout the entire period of the partisan war, the officers received 300-600 roubles each for killing partisans, sergeants and common soldiers 50-200 roubles each. The Stribai also received smaller bonuses. Because they were paid the same for partisans who were killed or taken alive, in order to suffer as little as possible, partisans who were taken alive were often killed, usually by simulating flight. Besides money, the soldiers used to receive things as bonuses (very often watches), vacations, military rank, orders, medals, and during the war, presents sent by Americans. NKVD units with few exceptions stayed behind the front throughout the entire period of the war; therefore, solely in return for a comfortable life, their soldiers executed all the instructions of the leadership.

8. In the war with the partisans (in part also with the majority of Lithuania's people), the army used certain methods of warfare imported from Russia: operations, roadblocks, RPG, ambushes, concealed positions, observation points, etc. The only new method of warfare, the massive use of which began approximately in 1950, was CVG. The essence of this method was that a permanent group of 10-30 soldiers and operatives operated not in general against all partisans, today here and already tomorrow in another location but specifically against a certain band of partisans until their complete annihilation.

Of all the methods of warfare, the burning down of cottages was especially barbaric when partisans who were resisting were found there or when the Chekists, wishing to punish the people of a certain neighbourhood for disobedience, only simulated a battle and burned cottages, in which there were no partisans. This method of warfare, according to which any place, where partisans were located, was considered their stronghold, was renounced in June 1946 when the state of war was cancelled in Lithuania. However, they also continued, although less frequently, to plundered

the cottages of our peasants since this method was renounced only in part, it being allowed to burn them down if they posed a danger to the lives of the Chekists. I think that by mid-1946, about a thousand cottages had been burned down and afterwards during the remaining period of the war, several hundred more.

9. The conditions for serving created for the soldiers in part caused the brutality and savageness of the army. The Chekist soldiers were entire isolated from the local inhabitants, constantly being ideologically trained by stating that if not all, then the majority of Lithuanians were enemies and it was necessary to annihilate them. They were told that the hated Germans had organised the resistance. The selection of men for the Chekist army determined a great deal. They used to select physically stronger, brutal, ideologically reliable young men.

10. It is possible to distinguish three periods in the activities of the Chekist army in Lithuania: 1944 to the beginning of 1946, 1946 to 1949, and the remaining period. In the first period, the frontier regiments and sections operated especially brutally, these and also the rifle regiments not only fought with the partisans but also attempted intimidate the entire nation through generally excessive terror. Without a doubt, the Second World War, which lasted until May 1945 also caused the savagery of the Soviet Army at that time. At the end of 1945, the Chekist commanders, especially their supreme commander, L. Beria, drew the conclusion that **while the nation remains unbroken, creating an army of overt (so-called Soviet Party activists) and covert (agents and informers) collaborators** while the majority will not forced to conform until the resistance of our nation is broken. Beginning in March 1946 after the establishment of the permanent garrisons in not just all the counties but also in most of the district centres (They were established especially in those, which the partisans were actually able to occupy. Until then the army had been operating using the method of Cossack ravages, i.e. ravaging a neighbourhood and then moving to another locality), the occupiers sort of recognised that their fantastic plans like the instruction of L. Beria himself “to shatter the armed underground within 2-3 weeks” had failed and that a long and troublesome war awaited them. (Incidentally, the Party and Chekist leaders also instructed tens of times later to shatter partisans within a certain time, usually within two-three months.)

The third stage of the war began with 1949. During 1946-1948, the balance of the activities of the partisans and the occupiers shifted only a little in favour of the latter but beginning in 1949, the Soviets assumed the initiative for good. This shows a reduction in the number partisans, new methods of warfare (mobile combined squads, CVG, etc.), and an attempt to push the Stribai into combat arena by sending them from the district centres to the village localities to guard the property and chairmen of the newly founded collective farms. At that time, only about 2 thousand partisans remained and they were unable to oppose the onslaught of the Soviet structures into the villages, which they had controlled until then, especially at night. In general, although with great efforts



(Not just the partisans but almost every peasant resisted. The ways used to drive them into the collective farms was the most brutal.), the collective farms that were founded cut off the partisans' food base since the people on the collective farms themselves began to starve and were unable to feed the partisans.

11. Probably not one Lithuanian served in the Chekist army (Out of the several hundreds of Chekist soldier surnames discovered in our archives, not one was Lithuanian.) but the Stribai, as has been mentioned, consisted of over 80 per cent local inhabitants, mostly Lithuanians. During the war, many enlisted in the Stribai squads in order to avoid being conscripted into the Red Army (The army did not conscript Stribai; their "front" was in Lithuania.) and later they were enticed by the possibility of walking around with a weapon, being someone, and receiving good benefits since the majority of the Stribai stole something during every search and especially during the redistributions of the wealth and the deportations. Later, after death flowed on all sides, those enlisting as Stribai wanted to avenge the death of those close to them. A certain number of the men enlisted as Stribai due to actual or alleged social wrongs experienced during Independence and/or the German occupation.

About 60-65 of the Stribai consisted of small landowners and hired workers. Almost 30 per cent of them were illiterate or barely literate and only about 50 per cent had finished elementary school. About 50 per cent of them were strongly engaged politically (i.e. belonged to the VKP(b) or VLKJS), however there were few confident, highly motivated fighters among them. Even fewer among them had strong personalities.

12. The partisans sometimes bought weapons from Soviet Army soldiers. No traces have been found that any partisan band maintained even commercial ties with Chekist soldiers. Meanwhile, acknowledging that the majority of the Stribai firmly served the occupiers, it is also necessary to acknowledge that fairly confusing relationships existed between part of the Stribai and the partisans, which relationships were caused by ties of blood and friendship, the propaganda assault by the partisans, which appeal to the national feelings of the Stribai, and finally partisan threats against and blackmail of the families of the Stribai. The partisans infiltrated quite a few of their own people into the Stribai squads. Several hundreds of Stribai with their weapons went over to the partisans, several hundreds were convicted of having ties with the partisans (Usually the Stribai handed over intelligence information as well as ammunition and weapons.), and thousands were discharged as not completely reliable.

13. The Communists and Chekists had a sufficient troops in Lithuania to be able to smash the partisans in any open battle. The Stribai usually assisted the occupiers not as fighters but as guides and translators for the Russian army and the Chekists since the occupiers were unfamiliar with the region and did not know the language. They also acted as spies quite a bit.

14. The Stribai were poor soldiers, frequently running away after the first partisan shots. Their combat level was also reduced by the fact that the Communist Party had made them nearly the main reserve for low Party, Soviet, and repressive organ staffs. After it was certain that a Stribas had certain qualities, among which the most important was the trust of the occupiers, he used to be promoted. (The Stribai were at the lowest level of the repressive apparatus hierarchy.) During 1945-1953, over 1.3 thousand Stribai were transferred to Soviet Party work and over 3.5 thousand to the MVD-MGB and police.

15. The Chekist army in Lithuania realised Russia's Communist imperial games, creating through force a foreign and unacceptable political and economic model for our country. The Stribai, fighting with weapons for the interests of the occupiers against the partisans defending Lithuanian independence, became our country's traitors. This is their greatest fault. In addition, they committed many greater or lesser crimes. The majority of them due to their negative tendencies and due to poverty (The majority had come from the poor classes. They received no wages for about a year and the wages they began to receive were not large enough to support a family.) stole all the time and even robbing. They were constantly stealing during searches, especially during the deportations. The Stribai used to pull the bodies of killed partisans around the town squares, mocking them in every way. All of the Stribai to a man participated in deporting innocent people to Siberia and the north of Russia and therefore can be accused of crimes against humanity.