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The Diary of a Partisan

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The Diary of a Partisan

A year in the life of the postwar

Lithuanian resistance fighter Dzūkas

Genocide and Resistance Research Centre of Lithuania
Pasauliui apie mus

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Foreword

The 1944–1953 partisan war in Lithuania against the Soviet occupying power is little known in the West. News about the heroic efforts to resist the occupation and the aspirations to re-establish statehood seldom penetrated the Iron Curtain. The world was well informed about later uprisings against the totalitarian regimes in Hungary, Czechoslovakia and Poland, but the armed resistance to the Soviets, which lasted for almost ten years in Western Ukraine and Lithuania (and almost as long in Estonia and Latvia), remains almost unknown.

The Soviet occupation, which started in 1944, claimed about 20,000 partisan lives over a decade. More than 120,000 people were sent to hard labour camps or imprisoned. No fewer than 113,000, most of them old people, women and children, were exiled to Siberia.

Lionginas Baliukevičius (1925–1950), the writer of this diary, lived in tragic times. The terrible ordeal which the country had to endure revealed the mature outlook of the young man and his strong principles, according to which he perceived freedom not only as freedom for himself but also for others.

His diary shows the tragic personality of an idealist who had the courage to look directly at the world and at his own life. This mirror of the soul reflects his most secret thoughts, doubts and hopes. His views, longings and aspirations are shown against the background of merciless fighting. While writing his diary, Baliukevičius often looked back to the past: to his happy childhood, his experience as a prisoner of war, and his first years as a partisan. Out of the context of everyday life crystallised general statements about essential issues for the sur-

vival of the nation and the state. His fervent patriotism and his intense hatred of the occupying power did not stop him taking a critical look at prewar Lithuania. He shows the short-sightedness of the politicians, their squabbles, their pseudo-patriotism, and the cowardly stance taken by the leaders at a critical moment for the country.

Having accurately pointed out the causes which brought Lithuania to the catastrophe in 1940 and the first Soviet occupation, Baliukevičius analyses the vital political, national and moral issues of postwar times. His understanding of the international and domestic situations was surprisingly clear. Like all of the rest of the country, following closely world developments on the radio, he awaited signs for hope from Western democracies, if not of military action, then at least of moral and political support. The indifference of world powers to the sufferings of his people, and a premonition of his death, made Baliukevičius determined to fight to the end. His determination and his heroism were intertwined with his dreams of seeing a peaceful and free life, and of starting a family.

In his diary, Baliukevičius expresses his great love for the motherland, and speaks with sympathy of his poor countrymen, at the same time as expressing his fear about Lithuania's fate under the occupation. Besides his thoughts, in which the subjects of eternity and his anticipated death are intertwined, the diary also reflects the problems and everyday life of the Dainava partisan district. The writer was happy with the progress made in consolidating the Lithuanian Movement

for the Fight for Freedom, and was sad about the misfortunes: the deaths of his comrades, and the mass arrests and deportations of civilians.

The occupying authorities, unable to annihilate the fighters by brute force alone, organised secret operations with the help of the MGB-MVD. In order to break the organised fight for freedom, scores of newly recruited spies and agents were deployed. The target was the partisan leaders. One of them, Baliukevičius, died a hero's death on 24 June 1950.

Lionginas Baliukevičius was given the highest partisan award posthumously, the Freedom Fighters' Cross, First Degree. After Lithuania regained its independence, he was promoted to the rank of colonel by presidential decree, and received the Order of the Vytis Cross, First Degree. A monument was put up where he was killed.

His diary gathered dust for 40 years in the archives of the KGB, together with other partisan documents obtained during operations conducted by secret agents. The diary covers one year in the life of the partisans. Convinced that this document will contribute greatly to the understanding of the history of the 1944–1953 armed resistance, the publishers have gone against the author's wish not to publish the diary. The book also contains photographs of Baliukevičius' family and his comrades.

The circumstances under which the author kept his diary predetermined the factual material used and its literary features. Because of the constant danger that the diary might fall into the hands of the enemy, Baliukevičius wrote only in pass-

ing about some important organisational aspects of the partisans. There are very few place names. People are referred to by their code names. The entries are irregular, sometimes with month-long breaks.

On behalf of the publishers, I would like to express my sincere gratitude to Guntis Šmidchens, of Washington University, for his deep understanding of the diary and the partisan war in Lithuania. I also extend my warmest thanks to the translators Irena Blekys and Lijana Holmes and to Michael Biggins who helped them.

Algis Kašėta

General editor of the Lithuanian language edition

Introduction. Fighting for Liberty in Lithuania

We are sure that this diary of a free person, not afraid to die for his ideals, will outlive its time, and that it will help young people hold on to their idealism as they learn about past struggles for freedom,” writes the general editor of the Lithuanian language edition of this book.¹ In Lithuania today, memories of the country’s war for independence from the Soviet Union are central in national history writing, and a critical component of national identity. For historians outside of Lithuania, the battles fought against Soviet security forces by the Lithuanian “Forest Brothers” from 1944 to 1952 offer a critical example in the study of military resistance movements worldwide.

Terminology is a complicated issue. The word “partisans,” in contrast to “guerrillas,” is often thought to describe regular soldiers who undertake irregular operations on the flanks or rear of the enemy; a recent reference work, however, adds that the word can also denote a “large, organized and disciplined force that has characteristics of a regular army yet wages guerrilla warfare,”² and this definition clearly applies here. The Lithuanians who fought against Soviet security units from 1944 to 1952 numbered in tens of thousands, their activities and command structures were coordinated on both the regional and national level; and they maintained organizational discipline in chain of command, in military opera-

1 Algis Kašėta, *Nepalaužtas laisvės troškimas*, in *Liongino Baliukevičiaus – partizano Džūko dienoraštis*, Vilnius, 2002, p. 19.

2 Ian F.W. Beckett, *Encyclopedia of Guerrilla Warfare*, Santa Barbara, Calif., 1999, p. 181.



Joana and Kostas
Baliukevičius in 1927

Kostas Baliukevičius'
furniture workshop

Joana and her sons
Lionginas and Kostas in
1928

tions and in relations with the civilian population. Such is the picture of Lithuanian partisans which emerges from archival documents as well as this book.

On the other hand, the Lithuanian partisans lacked the support of a native or foreign regular army which often benefits partisan fighters, most notably through supplies of weapons and ammunition. Although regional and national connections did exist, as the war progressed actual fighting was coordinated in ever smaller groups and geographical areas. Thus the word “guerrilla warfare” aptly describes their activities in the years after World War II: surprise attacks on expeditionary units, military convoys or bases, symbolic disruption of Soviet government structures, assassination or other punishment of enemy collaborators, and rapid dispersal deep into forests to avoid engagement with the large, regular military forces. Guerrilla warfare usually depends on local farmers for intelligence, new recruits, food and other logistical support, and this was certainly true of the Lithuanian fighters. When the Soviet government eliminated Lithuanian farming communities through mass deportations and forced collectivization, the war’s balance shifted decisively against the partisans. “Utterly Alone,” the title of a recent film about these historical events, aptly describes the state of the Lithuanians in the late 1940s.³ In these increasingly desperate conditions, the partisan leader Lionginas Baliukevičius, code name “Dzūkas,” wrote a diary documenting his own participation in the war.

Historical context of the diary

The history of the Lithuanian partisan war has been well described in English language publications.⁴ Seeds of resistance were planted during the Soviet occupation of Lithuania in 1940 and 1941, when mass arrests and deportations, cou-

3 Jonas Vaitkus, dir., *Vienui vieni* [DVD-R], Vilnius, 2004.

4 V. Stanley Vardys, “The Partisan Movement in Postwar Lithuania,” *Slavic Review*, 22 (1963): 499-522; Thomas Remeikis, *Opposition to Soviet Rule in Lithuania 1945-1980*, Chicago, 1980, p. 39-64, 177-274; Roger D. Petersen, *Resistance and Rebellion: Lessons from Eastern Europe*, Cambridge, 2001; George Reklaitis, *Cold War Lithuania: National Armed Resistance and Soviet Counterinsurgency*, Pittsburgh, 2007.

pled with the nationalization of private property, convinced many Lithuanians that Sovietization must be resisted by all means possible. Under Nazi occupation from 1941 to 1944, Lithuanian leaders and public followed a strategy of passive resistance, with the notable result that, unlike elsewhere in Eastern Europe, the German administration failed in its attempts at mass conscription or mobilization of Lithuanian men into military or labor battalions.⁵ At the end of World War II, tens of thousands of Lithuanian men went into the forests to fight for Lithuanian independence, first using weapons abandoned by the retreating German army, then switching to materiel captured from Soviet forces. After the mass deportation of “kulak” farmers, and the reorganization of rural populations into collective farms, beginning in March 1949 a steady war of attrition brought the partisan activities to an end.⁶

Research before 1991 was hampered by lack of access to sources in Soviet archives and the impossibility of collecting survivors’ testimonies. The accuracy of earlier descriptions, however, has been confirmed in studies published after 1990, when Lithuania renewed its independence. The broad outlines of the war first became known in the West through personal accounts of Lithuanian partisan leaders such as Daumantas (the pseudonym of Juozas Lukša), who traveled abroad in 1947 in an unsuccessful attempt to gain Western support while the battles were still ongoing.⁷ Today, many annotated editions of primary sources have been

5 Saulius Sužiedelis, “The Military Mobilization Campaigns of 1943 and 1944 in German-Occupied Lithuania: Contrasts in Resistance and Collaboration,” *Journal of Baltic Studies* 21, 1 (Spring 1990): 33-52; Thomas Remeikis, ed., *Lithuania under German occupation, 1941-1945: dispatches from US legation in Stockholm*, Vilnius, 2005, p. 613-652.

6 Arvydas Anušauskas, ed. *The Anti-Soviet Resistance in the Baltic States*, Vilnius, 1999, p. 23-83; Romuald Misiunas and Rein Taagepera, *The Baltic States: Years of Dependence, 1940-1990*, Berkeley, 1993: 83-94; see also a brief overview in Dalia Kuodytė and Rokas Tracevskis, *The Unknown War: Armed Anti-Soviet Resistance in Lithuania in 1944-1953*, Vilnius, 2004.

7 Juozas Daumantas, *Fighters for Freedom: Lithuanian Partisans versus the U.S.S.R.*, transl. E.J. Harrison, New York, 1975 (Lithuanian edition published 1950).

published, and scholars have easy access to the partisan press and documents, Soviet government decrees and other internal records of the war’s progress, as well as the memoirs of surviving partisans. Research can now approach many topics that earlier scholars could not describe: the specific outlines of organizational structures; case studies of regional and local fighting groups; roles of individual leaders; locations of partisan bunkers and documentation of specific battles; identification of persons formerly known only by their code names; and reconciliation of oral and written memoirs by partisans with documents found in the archives of Soviet security organizations.⁸

Many volumes of historical documents and research have been published, but the diary of Lionginas Baliukevičius (1925–1950), code name “Dzūkas,” stands out among them as a unique primary source. It is a personal experience narrative written in real time, as critical events unfolded. The author joined the partisans of southeastern Lithuania (Dzūkija) in 1946, and was soon appointed the group’s chief of staff, with the task of publishing and information dissemination. Out of all partisans active in Lithuania in 1948 and 1949, this diary’s author was among the best informed in international political affairs as well as the actual condition of the war in Lithuania. Skilled in foreign languages, Baliukevičius listened to international radio news broadcasts and reported on them to the partisans; he was personally acquainted with all of the groups and many individual fighters in his region; he attended regional and national officers’ conferences; he wrote editorials and reports for the newspaper “The Bell of Freedom,” a mimeographed publication which at its peak

8 *Laisvės kovų archyvas* (Vilnius: 1991-); Nijolė Gaškaitė-Žemaitienė, *Partizanai apie pasaulį, politiką ir save: 1944-1956 m. partizanų spaudos publikacijos*. Vilnius, 1998; Nijolė Gaškaitė, Algis Kašėta, Juozas Starkauskas, eds. *Lietuvos partizanų kovos ir jų slopinimas MVD-MGB dokumentuose: 1944-1953 metais*, Kaunas, 1996; Kęstutis Remeika, et al., eds., *Lietuvos partizanų Vytauto apygardos Tigro rinktinė, 1945-1950: dokumentų rinkinys*, Vilnius, 2003; Romas Kaunietis, ed., *Aukštaitijos partizanų prisiminimai*, Vilnius, 1996; Juozas Starkauskas, *Stribai: ginkluotieji kolaborantai Lietuvoje partizaninio karo laikotarpiu, 1944-1953*, Vilnius, 2001.



Brother Kostas, ca. 1945

Lionginas and his parents
in front of their house in
Alytus on 12 July 1943

Joana in 1969, after
returning from Siberia

was printed in 1,800 copies. In 1949, he was appointed to the position of local commander and later elected district commander.

Baliukevičius was a person gifted not only with broad knowledge and sharp analytical skills, but also the literary talent needed to set complex situations and thoughts to paper. As the editor of partisan publications, he had a responsibility to his readers as well. He had the difficult task of passing accurate information to the partisans, while at the same time maintaining fighting morale. For Baliukevičius, it soon became clear that a rumor which had sustained the resistance was false, and that the Western powers would not intervene in Lithuania. He also knew that the ranks of the partisans were being decimated by intensifying Soviet offensives. It is in this context that the text of this book was created.

In April of 1949, Baliukevičius began to type a copy of the diary he had been keeping for the past year. It is this typed copy which was preserved, probably by accident, in the archives of the Soviet security police, and it is this text that has been translated here. Researchers have found scattered archival references to entries in a diary by Baliukevičius which describe events after the last date in this edition (June 6, 1949), but such a longer manuscript has not been found. It is now thought that the original, handwritten copy was destroyed during a routine purge of the KGB archives.⁹ Earlier editors have not discussed why Baliukevičius decided to make a typed copy. He must have decided to do so in order to share his experiences and thoughts with somebody else; perhaps he saw that the diary could inform other fighters while strengthening their fighting morale. The introductory words of the typed diary state that if the author were killed, the diary should be given to his brother and fellow partisan, Kostas. At the very least, then, the author wished to share the copy with his brother. The diary thus is a text consciously created to explain the author's reasons for fighting. As he struggles with the recurring demons of hopelessness and apathy, Baliukevičius formulates the ideology of a partisan, an ideology which guides him in his fight to the death.

⁹ Kašėta, *Nepalaužtas laisvės troškimas*, p. 18.

The birth of a partisan leader and thinker

Lionginas Baliukevičius was not a typical Lithuanian partisan. Unlike most fighters, who came from families of rural farmers, he was born and grew up in the town of Alytus, where his father was a successful furniture salesman. He had relatives in the countryside and was well acquainted with the region where he later fought with the partisans, but his aspirations were those of an urban intellectual: at the age of nine in 1934, he was enrolled in the Alytus gymnasium, a humanities high school which would prepare pupils for university studies; he was an active participant in sports, scouts, and marksmen's organizations. In 1943, he enrolled in the medicine program at Kaunas University. In the diary, Baliukevičius dreams of returning to his university studies and mentions books he is reading while hiding out in a bunker: he refers, for example, to Virgil, Ibsen and Tolstoy, revealing a strong bent for literature and the humanities.

It was his schooling which gave Baliukevičius the tools needed for effective writing, and perhaps also the impulse to philosophize about the purpose of life. The need to connect his thoughts to those of others emerged as he moved among the many hidden bunkers where the partisans based their activities. There, he gained personal connections and familiarity with facts on the ground that helped him gauge what words he could say to strengthen morale. The respect that his peers felt for him and his printed editorials is documented by the fact that he was unanimously elected regional commander in 1949. He was, in other words, one of the partisans, but unique among them in his ability to formulate feelings and ideals in concrete, written words.

The reasons why Baliukevičius became a partisan are also different from many others who volunteered or were conscripted into the ranks in 1944 and 1945, when World War II had not yet ended and partisan activities seemed to have a realistic chance of success. Baliukevičius interrupted his studies in 1944 to join the resistance in the "Local Force" (Vietinė rinktinė), an independent Lithuanian military unit which immediately after its formation was converted

by the Germans into a labor battalion. Unlike many Lithuanian men who managed to desert from such units before Germans assumed control,¹⁰ Baliukevičius was forcibly sent to work in Czechoslovakia. His unit was subsequently captured by the Soviets, and assigned to work in the Donbas coalmines of Ukraine. Baliukevičius then deserted and returned to Lithuania, where his deserter status carried the constant danger of arrest by the Soviet police. He thus had no choice but to become a partisan in 1946, at a time when the partisans were no longer on the offensive.¹¹ After Baliukevičius' mother and uncle were deported to Siberia in 1947, his brother Kostas (who was born in 1926) likewise entered the war in the forest to avoid arrest and deportation.

Although Baliukevičius enlisted at least in part because he had no other choice, his reasons for subsequently devoting all of his intellect and energy to the partisan war are entirely a result of rational ideology. His thoughts, which at times "scatter and run everywhere"¹² in the partisan bunker, were mobilized to create a conscious, self-reflective ideology, an ideology that he shared with his peers. It is here that the diary contributes to an understanding of guerilla fighters and their motivations for fighting to the death. For Baliukevičius, there is no viable alternative to joining the partisans; surrender would mean either death in Siberia or execution in prison. Furthermore, the choice to join the partisans is the only available moral choice. He could not sell out like the "Anglo-Saxon" politicians described in the diary, leaders who conveniently forgot democratic ideals while allowing East Europe to pass into Stalin's sphere of influence. According to Baliukevičius, Western politics were defined by greedy self-interest: "What matters most is to keep that imperial British lion from getting too thin and the American dollar strong."¹³ Abandon-

10 Sužiedelis, "The Military Mobilization Campaigns", p. 42-45.

11 Fellow partisan Adolfas Ramanauskas-Vanagas recalled that Baliukevičius had wanted to escape to the West but was unable to do so. Kašėta, *Nepalaužtas laisvės troškimas*, p. 6.

12 Diary entry for 19 October 1948.

13 Diary entry for August 1948.



Lionginas shortly after leaving Alytus gymnasium

Lionginas as a partisan, known by the code name Dzūkas

ing the Lithuanian independence movement would achieve nothing, and it would also be an immoral betrayal of the country and his deported relatives, as well as of those partisans who continued to fight. There was, then, no moral alternative to dying in battle.

Ideological foundations of the Lithuanian independence movement

The death of Baliukevičius on June 24, 1950, was the result of a rational decision. With his location betrayed by an infiltrator, his bunker was surrounded and attacked by Soviet forces. He and three members of his staff realized that escape was impossible, and committed suicide to avoid the risk of being captured alive, tortured and forced to betray the remaining partisans and bunkers. This was the death prescribed by their oath when they joined the partisans.

During the decade after World War II, more than 20,000 Lithuanian partisans died fighting the Soviets in the forests of their native land. Many of them were killed before Baliukevičius began writing his diary, and many others followed him in death, among them his brother Kostas who was killed on February 16, 1951. Few personal documents remain that would cast light on reasons why each of these individuals continued to fight for years after Soviet rule was firmly established in Lithuania. The diary of Lionginas Baliukevičius is a document of one person's philosophical struggles to define his own principles. At the same time it is also a voice representing many others, from the rank and file up to the commanding officers. Their determination to continue fighting until death was based on the conviction that theirs was a just war, a war based on the most fundamental moral principles.

As World War II engulfed the Baltic, Lithuanian leaders had pursued policies that aimed to preserve the Lithuanian state without compromising morality in favor of political expediency. Declarations of neutrality by President Smetona before the 1940 Soviet occupation rejected the possibility of alliance

with either the Nazis or Soviets; with the onset of the Soviet occupation in 1940, Smetona traveled to exile in the USA and thus denied the Soviets the semblance of a legal transfer of power from his government to theirs. Even under Nazi occupation in 1941–1944, the Lithuanian ethnic directorate pursued a policy of passive resistance and sabotaged German attempts at mass conscription of the Lithuanian population into military or labor battalions. When in 1944 the Lithuanian partisan leaders chose violent tactics in defense of Lithuanian independence, they based their actions not only on the idea of national self-preservation, but on the Atlantic Charter and international laws according to which the Soviet occupation was illegal. Collaboration with the illegitimate Soviet government would have been a crime, and even passive submission to Soviet rule would have been an immoral betrayal of their country.

In March of 1949, Baliukevičius wondered about the historical significance of his own choice to fight with the partisans:

Consider the partisan struggle. In the early days there were so many men strong as oaks and brave as lions! Only a few of those are still among us today. The faces of the fallen pass again and again before our eyes. So many of them, an entire world of the dead! Who will understand and write about this unprecedented heroism? Will future generations know how to value the bravery of these people?¹⁴

Today in Lithuania, memories of the partisan war are a key element of national identity. Historians highlight the fact that Lithuanians resisted an illegitimate Soviet government to defend national self-determination, as it was prescribed at the time by international law and the Atlantic Charter. History also reminds the Lithuanians to be wary of the Western democracies who abandoned democratic ideals during their negotiations with the Soviet Union

14 Diary entry for 24 March 1949.

after World War II, leaving the Lithuanian nation at the mercy of Stalinist terror. A generation later, on March 11, 1990 the democratically elected Lithuanian government renewed the country's independence from the Soviet Union. Memories of the partisans were a vivid part of the revived Lithuanian independence movement. Participants recall that partisan songs were sung at most mass political demonstrations, strengthening the resolve of participants not to give up the fight; partisan songs were disseminated in numerous publications with enormous circulation.¹⁵

Unlike the partisans before them, the participants in the Lithuanian independence movement of 1988–1991 explicitly rejected violence as a means to national self-determination.¹⁶ The political context of both independence movements, however, was similar: then, as now, success in achieving independence depended on the support of Western democracies. Lithuanians thus remained painfully aware of the partisans' lesson: the Western democracies might again choose the path of political expediency and compromise instead of international law and democratic principles to determine events in Lithuania.¹⁷ This time, however, Lithuania's independence movement reached its goal.

Four decades after Lionginas Baliukevičius argued that he and the Lithuanian partisans must persist in the face of hopeless conditions and not give up the battle for liberty, his diary was discovered in the archives of the now-defunct KGB, and published by historians of independent Lithuania. And now it is finally available in English translation.

15 For example, a single edition of the popular partisan songbook *Sušaudytos dainos* (Vilnius, 1990) was printed in 50,000 copies.

16 Gražina Miniotaitė, *Nonviolent Resistance in Lithuania: A Story of Peaceful Liberation*, Cambridge, 2002. For an example of the leaders of the independence movement explicitly rejecting violence and revenge, see the 16 January 1991 speech by Vytautas Landsbergis, in *Laisvės byla 1990-1991: Kalbos, pranešimai, užrašai, laiškai, pokalbiai, interviu, įvairūs dokumentai*, Vilnius, 1992, p. 206-207.

17 Vytautas Landsbergis, *Lithuania Independent Again*, Seattle, 2000, p. 172, 302-304.

In this new, more hopeful historical context, the entry written on November 10, 1948, rings with optimism:

I feel that I love my country more and more. If someone today offered me freedom in America, I wouldn't go. It's better to be killed here, fighting honorably, than wait with my hands clasped for something to drop from somewhere. In the end our blood won't be shed in vain. We'll have the right to look anyone straight in the eyes, because we didn't abandon our homeland. And who will defeat us if we are not afraid to die, if we have defeated even death?

Guntis Šmidchens
University of Washington, Seattle

23 June 1948 - 6 June 1949

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Under no circumstances is this diary for public use. I wrote it just for myself.
In the event that I am killed, please pass this diary on to my dear brother Kostas.

For all others who are fated to live and find this diary, I ask you not to read it,
but to destroy it. That is my last wish.

If the finder lives long enough to reach the long-awaited freedom of our
dear country, then I send the warmest greetings from the Other Side. But if it
is to be that the slavery of our dear Lithuania is prolonged, then let him not
be afraid of his hard fate, but just the opposite: I wish him powerful spiritual
strength.

God be with you,
Partisan Dzūkas

Written in the bunker, April 24, 1949, 6:20pm
Present in the bunker were A. Ramanauskas (Hawk), Julius Karpis (Lark),
Vaclovas Petrauskas (Elm), and Vitalius Kuzmickas (Tornado)

June 23, 1948

A couple of days ago I received a letter from my brother. He promised to come, but now I'm starting to worry about him. What if he's recognized here in the village? What if he's captured by the Russians and the istrebitels?

Life has really changed. I remember us all still living at home. We had everything we desired. All of it has been destroyed by war and the Russians. Now we're just homeless squatters. I own a machine gun and a pistol, which is always with me, my brother has a few books and lives with strangers, and my poor Mama and uncle are in the Urals. Just as the partisan song says, "Dear Mother, you're in the Urals, Father's in a cold, cold grave ..."

Yesterday, Vytas, Nemunas, and Woodpecker visited us. We tried to clear up their misunderstandings.

For the second day in a row we are listening to the radio that Mikas bought. So far it works pretty well. Ankara is hard to get on the dial. The static makes listening very difficult.

We are preparing to publish our small newspaper. The editorial piece, written a month ago, will be mine. We don't have a lot of paper. We asked Lightning to



A meeting in Punia Forest in 1947 of the leaders of the Dainava region

send us more, but we have yet to hear from him. Every day we wait for him and Rye and Hawk to arrive.

Today is foggy with intermittent rain. I'm in the "gravel pit," writing my diary. I can hear shepherds singing somewhere. They are singing a partisan song written by Wolf. The first time I heard that song was on a spring day by the Nemunas River while I was on my way to see Oak. Sailor, Stork, Vaitkus, Oak, and Pakštas who came with us that day, today are no longer with us.

The first major (?) gathering of all the Dainava district leaders was being held at Oak's. Those were memorable days spent in the "riflemen's hall" (the name for our bunker, where we held our meeting) in the Punia Forest. We gathered there for three evenings in a row. Some acquaintances of ours were also present: Maple (Subačius), Eagle (Petrauskas) and, of course, Oak himself. To us, Oak felt like a real leader and we his children. He has really aged since I last saw him in Alytus. Maybe it was his beard. His hands were covered with bandages. He said it was eczema. Later, after Oak was killed, Stork told me that Oak had known me even from a much earlier time.

A whole year has gone by since then. Now Little Father is successfully in charge of things there. If only it were not for all those deaths, all those deaths. But where is there no death?

Exactly three years ago, in the summer of 1945, I was sitting in a prisoner of war camp in Brno. Even though I was in a prison camp, I made myself at home there. Of course, one shouldn't compare a camp to one's home. I was in charge of maybe five kitchens, so the food there was great. But I missed my freedom and, therefore, I missed everything. I remember, as if it were today, how often I used to sit by the camp's barbed wire fence and watch with longing as life went on unrestrained in the street outside. Beautiful and elegantly dressed Czech women, young girls, drifted by ... And I would feel as if my heart was bursting. I would have this incredible longing for my homeland, familiar places, friends, girls. Oh, how charming those Czech girls looked! There were a couple of big houses in front of our camp. Many people lived there. A beautiful girl lived on the first floor and through the fence I gazed at her window quite often. Many times our

eyes would meet. As if such a girl would care for some prisoner dressed in a white sailor's uniform!

Nobody can imagine how precious freedom is to a prisoner. All our conversations constantly revolved around it. We fantasized about it.

Then we all ended up in a camp with about twelve or more Lithuanians. To our greatest joy, from the first day, all of us ended up working in the kitchen. I even became a "supervisor." That is why our situation was incomparably better than other prisoners'. It was really bad for the Germans. Throngs of them stood in front of our kitchen asking for bread! Nothing else, just bread. You could get watches, cameras, gold rings and more in exchange for bread. Those proud German officers looked so pitiful standing in front of our kitchen after starving for a few days.

I spent close to three months in that camp. Then we were transferred to the foreigners' camp. It wasn't as good there. We met someone named K and another Lithuanian who had already managed to forget the language. But after spending some time with us he could speak it decently again.

Then we left for Budapest, Hungary. The camp there teemed with loathsome Russians whom we just couldn't get along with. That camp was situated on the banks of the Danube.



Oak (right)

Later, I traveled on the roof of a train through Hungary, Romania, and Moldavia. Maybe I will write about that trip sometime, if the mood strikes me.

Enough writing for today. It's time to stretch out the antenna and listen to the radio.

June 24, 1948

My mood is completely spoiled by the awful rain pouring for the second day in a row. Our bunker is in old gravel pits and has a thin layer of dirt over the ceiling. Now that it has started raining, the water is leaking as if through a sieve onto our heads, beds, and papers. On the "second-floor" bed we put plates, saucepans, and cups given to us by our hosts. Slowly, the whole ceiling gets soaked, the paper peels away. Around one o'clock in the morning, I take all the pillows and blankets to the "first floor."

The bunker started to look better, when, around two, Rye, Šarūnas, and Nameless stormed inside, soaked. Lightning didn't come. So far, nobody can find him anywhere. Morning finally came. I hadn't slept. I offered my bed to the visitors. Today our bunker is like a pigsty. Wet paper is everywhere, water is still leaking through. And it doesn't help that we started printing our newspaper. It's hardly possible for six men to be in a two by five little bunker. It's so damp and suffocating!

I've been outside since early morning. I can't stand that stale air in the bunker. From time to time I glance at the sky, and in my thoughts beg God to stop the rain. But my prayer remains unanswered. The whole sky is covered with a thick, grey layer of clouds which intermittently spit rain.

Today Hawk stamped the passports of four partisans, while I with my signature extended and registered them. If we only had good equipment we could really help people. Right now we make passports for people with a few wooden stamps made by Arminas, now deceased. We are operating as if we were living in the ancient times of Vytautas the Great.

June 30, 1948

A couple of days ago when Mikas came to visit, we brought him to our bunker. We hope he won't betray us. And besides we do have to trust somebody! Who knows where fate has set traps for us?

Our bunker was a bit of a disappointment to Mikas, or at least it seemed that way to me. It looked really bad after the rain. Papers were hanging from the ceiling and it was fairly dark since Woodpecker had shattered the lamp's glass. We didn't scold him for that, because he had brought with him a big basket full of berries, cakes, and bacon. Our food supplies haven't been that great, but today we had a wonderful feast.

Mikas didn't stay. He'll be back in a couple of weeks. We came to an agreement about a so-called writer, who, according to Mikas, is capable of writing editorials, once having belonged to the Union of Young Writers, and is now somewhere in a province disguised as a teacher. All of them are like this now.

Besides, Mikas will swipe a mimeograph machine and a typewriter from a health facility, but before he does that we have to send him a couple of pistols so he can "carry out his plan more effectively." Before he comes, he'll get a suitcase



Lieutenant Colonel
Juozas Vitkus (code name
Kazimieraitis)

from us with twenty-five to thirty kilograms of explosives. He's going to try to blow up the NKGB headquarters. If it works, it will be great.

Mikas is a good man. He's sincere and really devoted to our movement. He's the one who took me to Favor. For that, he spent a year in prison, but that didn't scare him off.

I wrote a letter to R, asking him to help Mikas whenever possible. Of course, I mentioned courage, sacrifice, and so on. Those were his words some time ago. Now we'll see what they really mean. Mikas says R is pretty scared. Maybe my letter will inspire him.

We finished printing the newspaper. Too bad we couldn't include the latest news about the Comintern's communiqué damning Marshall Tito. These days I enjoy listening to the radio and hearing those devils fighting amongst themselves. I refuse to believe Tito would resist Moscow. The day before yesterday some Austrian commentator spoke on the theme "I don't believe there'll be a war." He supported his theories by claiming that Russia seems to be afraid of a war and therefore won't make a move. Besides, the Russians are quite advanced in the field of bacteriological research and that makes even the Americans quite uneasy. Both sides are afraid of each other. Not to mention the Lithuanians, and what they must feel when they hear such talk. Somehow, I feel indifferent to such matters. I'm convinced there will be a conflict. Not this year, I think. If the partisans knew how I thought, they'd declare me a heretic. Like the rest of the people, they are all counting the days until war begins.

July 2, 1948

According to Hawk, today is the second anniversary of the death of Colonel Kazimieraitis. I remembered that it's almost a year since Oak was killed ...

I have been in a pretty good mood these last few days. Maybe it's because I keep hearing on the radio about Tito's resolve to resist Moscow. I'm also waiting for my brother's visit. I don't have a lot of work now. I'm transcribing foreign news. Soon we'll start publishing our newspaper again.

Today our hostess informed us that in the morning about three kilometers from their home the partisans killed two istrebitels. One istrebitel with a machine-gun escaped. The istrebitels had been combing Willow's fields by the river. We were warned that the Russians could come here too, since the place where all this happened is not that far away from us.

July 7, 1948

Finally Lightning and Hawk are with us and they've brought Rye and Willow. I was starting to wonder about them, after not receiving any mail from them for three months. Even with significant obstacles in their way, Lightning and Hawk would still have written. We had come to the conclusion that Hawk was probably killed and Lightning must have been injured, leaving only Elm. Willow, we concluded, must have been killed together with Rimvydas. However, to our great joy and surprise, it all turned out to be wrong. Even our Rimvydas is alive. Hooray! According to Žilvinas, Rimvydas is having little success getting through to the Taurus command. There are many deaths there. Partisans extinguish faster than stars in the sky. Otherwise there is lots of good news. We got a report from



Partisans of the Iron Wolf group of the Kazimieraitis unit cleaning their guns in the summer of 1947: Lightning (first from left), Willow (fourth), Dzūkas (fifth), and Hawk (sixth)

the chief of the Taurus command about those who went abroad. Everything turned out alright and the men came back safely. They have sent numerous directives, "Pro Memoria," and so on. It seems like everything is happening on a much bigger scale than I had imagined. Our diplomatic representatives are also active. But I'll say more about that some other time.

Yesterday we took pictures of ourselves. We pretended to be real hard workers and even brought out two typewriters to show off, to show our headquarters in action.

Overall things are alright, I just want to see my brother, but so far, there's no sign of him. If he doesn't come today or tomorrow, we might not see each other.

Nameless still hasn't supplied us with pistols. Mikas is probably cursing me out there. The suitcase with explosives is not ready either. To tell the truth, it's hard for Nameless to do everything by himself. Recently he brought us meat, probably taken from right under the noses of the istrebitels. He's really crafty about such things and works as hard as a horse.

I spent the whole day today writing a brief review of our district's monthly activities. It's been two days since it rained and it's so beautiful outside, the sun shining so pleasantly. Alas, there wasn't time to climb out of the bunker. It seems there's no chance to see the sun anymore.

July 12, 1948

Our lives are so rich with adventures that I'm unable to record it all in my diary. We've been really fortunate these days. Granted, there are a few problems, but good news still prevails.

First of all, my brother did come. K has really changed since the last time I saw him. He's not what he was four or five years ago. Now he's a grown, mature man. At first, we both seemed nervous. But only at first.

He imagined us all differently. He thought we were "loose," drinking, going out with girls, shooting recklessly. But he found us living like monks. We were like blackbirds, all dressed in black fatigues made by Lightning, truly resembling monks.

I was trying to show K the real face of the partisan movement. I showed him various legal files and even some of the things we received from abroad, like photos, and so on. He was so interested in all of it, he offered to join us. Frankly, I don't want that. If I die, at least he'd be alive to console and help our mother. I responded with a "no" to his new idea. However, if the mongols start to bother him then I might change my mind.

He stayed with us for about two days. I was observing him and understood just how affected he was by our work. In the evening, while K was still here, V brought Mikas. Since he had not received his pistols or his suitcase, he bicycled over to see us. We arranged for somebody to bring those things to him at an agreed-upon place. We also worked out a set of signals. I gave Mikas a couple hundred to buy some duplicating paper and he left immediately.

K left the next day at noon. He promised to return in a month. I asked him to write a piece about the life of a contemporary student.

After K left, only Hawk and I remained in the bunker. What boredom. Somehow I didn't feel like going back to my old work. Lark has already been gone for a couple of days. He took a letter written by Hawk to some colonel, a partisan leader near Kaunas. I started writing the news again. Hawk started



A meeting of the command of the Dainava region on 6 July 1948: Dzūkas and Willow (standing), Hawk and Rye (sitting), Hawk (lying)

putting together last year's congratulatory notes written in the Foreign Delegation bulletin.

On July the 10th we started printing our newspaper. In the evening, Nameless dropped by and a bit later so did Thrush. He brought us a note from Rye asking me or Hawk to come and see him. As it turned out, the reason for this invitation was the printing press. Thrush and I left the next day. We found Rye in his four-walled bunker. I was drenched to the bone. Rain poured on the way there and, worst of all, we had to walk through cornfields. Our feet were completely soaked.

We went to lie down while Rye stayed awake to keep guard. Around ten in the morning he woke us up. We ate and then a citizen was brought to the bushes nearby, thirty-two to thirty-four years old, with an intelligent face, short, black wavy hair, and a reserve officer.

We talk about the press. It's available but costs 2,500 rubles and that's too bad, since we only have a couple of hundred. Without the money we can't get the machine and, besides, we have to bring it ourselves from Vilnius. This citizen is very clever. He talks in vague terms. Rye feels he's trying to gather some information. It turns out he works for British intelligence, under the direction of the British embassy in Moscow. It sounds somewhat incredible. He avoids talking about it further and I don't ask him any more questions. As it happens, he knows Rimvydas. We arrange another meeting, where Hawk would also be present. We part soon since he needs to leave. We exchange good-byes and he wishes us "strength."

I stay with Rye, pondering a question this citizen asked me: "Did you listen to the Friday news from Vilnius? I'm wondering about the outcome of the game with Minsk's Dinamo team?" Today is Saturday. If he's a spy, he's a very clever one. If I had answered that question he would have easily figured out that our command post is fifteen to twenty kilometers away from our meeting place.

For dinner we go to the house of another farmer. We walk everywhere in the daytime: people are so nice here. If the Russians are seen anywhere, people come in throngs to tell us. Rye has lived here for two months without a hideout. The

Russians don't come here very often, even though the place is full of partisans. Hundreds of people see them, but not one has been betrayed.

At dusk, we walk through the village. In the distance young men sing a partisan song and I'm thinking how difficult it is for that Bolshevik to make a communist enclave out of our village. He would need many years to "re-educate" the village so he could wipe out the "relics of former ideology" from people's consciousness.

I'm escorted by Tiger and a new recruit named Linden. The last few kilometers I walk alone. I find all our men asleep. Lark is back too.

It turns out that today some woman with two girls came upon our men. She was up to no good, but the day ended peacefully. Nameless really scared us today. He told us not to waste a minute and get out. That woman's stepson is an istrebitel notorious for his cruelty. If Nameless told us the truth then our situation is critical. Even if she turns us in, we can still stay undisturbed in our bunker for a week or so.

Today we were discovered by yet another woman, but, according to our hosts, she's okay. Nameless says she likes to talk. It's not worth believing Nameless, since, in my opinion, he judges people based on his own very strange views.



Dzūkas (left) and Nameless

It's eleven o'clock already and I feel uneasy. But it is nighttime and I believe nothing will happen.

Around midnight, Pilot, Woodsman (he's the one who blew up a club in Merkinė in the spring), and Woodpecker come back riding in a cart.

July 18, 1948

The last three or four days have been filled with intense work. Hawk, Lark, and the others went out to prepare a new bunker. Woodpecker and I remained so we could finish publishing our newspaper. After three days and sleep-deprived nights, eaten alive by fleas, we finished our work. In the evening we washed up in a bathhouse. Nemunas, Ūla, Juniper, and Leaf came while we were eating supper. During the day we stayed at V's. Nemunas brought money and shoes (Polish ones) for me and Hawk, and a few pairs of pants, and so on. These men are really nice. They pour their hearts out helping us. Nemunas had a couple of matters to attend to, but couldn't do it without Hawk. Looks like Leaf wants to return home. His mother begged for him to be released. I think that Leaf couldn't be more than seventeen. He's still a child. He's so thin and scrawny – definitely not yet a mature man. He joined the partisan movement out of the blue, just for the heck of it. All of a sudden he was filled with fire, which went out just as quickly. I did let him go home. He spoke of going to Vilnius and living with his brother. I gave him a lecture on keeping secrets about partisan activities, and so on. It seems Leaf won't be leaving today, since neither Ūla nor Woodpecker knows where his home is.

Nemunas brought us instruction booklets written by some Polish officer. I'll have to look for a translator since I won't be able to do it myself.

Rimvydas appears suddenly around midnight. I really wasn't expecting to see him here, and we even greet each other with a kiss.

We aren't getting much sleep tonight. There are so many impressions that I'm lying with my eyes open, looking at the stars and dreaming about everything:

my homeland, those who perished, my brother, and also my mother, suffering in Siberia, and a partisan's fate.

Morning comes. It's already the 19th of July. How time flies. Soon I will have spent two years of my life as a partisan. It seems that the constant tension and danger make all the events in life pass before your eyes and through your consciousness, the same way that a passenger sees villages, crossroads, hills fly by from a speeding train.

Today I'm re-packing our things again. We'll transport them by cart in broad daylight, hidden in bales of rye. It'll be safer this way, as the places we have to go through aren't safe at nighttime – the Russians have been setting traps there every other night.

At noon we bid farewell to V and slowly proceed to Farmer B's. We eat at his place, and after a couple of hours we are on our way again. The runs have been torturing me for a couple of hours. I can hardly walk. Towards evening one of the farmers brings some boiled water infused with caraway seeds. This somewhat alleviates my condition. Somehow, by morning, we reach the place where our men are digging a bunker.



The command of the Dainava region with fighters of the Kazimieraitis unit: Dzūkas (front row, first from left), Hawk (next to him), and Rimvydas (back row, left)

July 20, 1948

We still can't find our men by the bunker. Maybe they are sleeping in some barn. I'm so exhausted that I just slump to the ground and fall asleep, but the morning is so cold that I'm awake in a half hour. Our men appear when it's completely light outside. We find out that they've been lying in a meadow, buried inside a stack of hay about a hundred meters from where we were. They continue their work while I get some hay and lie down. I sleep the whole day without a bite of food. By evening, the bunker is completely finished.

July 21, 1948

Today we have a meeting with that English "spy." However, most of us believe he's an NKVD spy, and a very clever one, whose every word is carefully chosen and who is quite familiar with our situation. Since early morning, Hawk, Rimvydas, and I have been discussing how we should talk with him. Thrush finally tells us he's arrived and we go to see him.

We find him lying down. We greet each other. Our first minutes together are unpleasant, full of tension. He's clearly feeling uneasy and his first meeting with Rimvydas seems completely unnatural. Just the two of them talk at the beginning. A few sentences are exchanged about their memories of times gone by. The "spy" (Gelgaudas) asks Rimvydas if he's still just as "spoiled" as he used to be.

Later we start talking about the matter at hand. Hawk questions Gelgaudas about his "work." Gelgaudas answers, tells his story, but does it in a vague, evasive manner. His story is not a sincere account, but a jumble of coincidences. This goes on for a couple of hours or so, until we hear that the farmer whose woods we are hiding in is being paid a visit by Russians and istrebitels. We stop for a while to retreat a bit farther from our meeting place. We settle in some brush about a half kilometer away and continue talking. We talk for about four hours more. This long performance and the act of choosing

only the right words completely tires us out. We agree to meet with Gelgaudas' "boss" about getting the materials (military news). Before that happens, our men will have to pick up the printing press in Vilnius, when Gelgaudas delivers it there from Šilutė.

After that, we all chat about various things. In reality, only Gelgaudas talks, while we either stay quiet or laugh at his jokes, putting in a word or two once in a while. Gelgaudas cracks one joke after another. He doesn't feel that comfortable in our quiet company. Finally, we say goodbye. We shake hands as if we were friends. We can't guarantee a hundred percent that he's MVD – just look how bravely he takes our newspapers to deliver them to Vilnius. Then I remember Butk. from Vilnius. We could actually send him newspapers by mail. He wasn't afraid. This Gelgaudas fellow really resembles him.

After Gelgaudas departs we go over our conversation with him. Rimvydas, speaking like a prophet, insists that Gelgaudas is an MVD spy. I start to believe myself just how little hope we have in getting that printing press.

When evening comes, we bring in our things.

July 24, 1948

We have finally gotten our bunker organized. It looks nice. It's just too bad I can't listen to the radio. Somewhere out there is the antenna, the rotary press and my work clothes. Twice we went to the place where the man said he took our goods. All the hay and straw was turned over, but our things weren't found. It's possible that V still has them, or maybe the poor man took them all back. That day they were really in a hurry to unload all the stuff, since the Russians and istrebitels weren't that far away.

The Russians also stayed in our village for a couple of days. And to think we hadn't even camouflaged ourselves! Our men had a shoot-out in Bogušiškės village, and now the Russians are combing Varčia Forest.

When Rimvydas arrived, jokes flowed freely. Lark has been chuckling non-stop for a few days.

July 27, 1948

Yesterday we had pleasant and not-so-pleasant news. We received a new packet from Tauras command. Pilot and January have been killed. Both of them were still new partisans. Nameless came yesterday and informed us that Pilot presumably had been wounded and taken alive. Pilot knew our bunker's location. That fact troubles us, but we decide to stay put. Pilot wouldn't betray us. Just in case, we decide to take turns standing guard until morning. I do the first shift. I'm writing a commentary to accompany a cartoon. It's not coming together.

Today Hawk, Rimvydas, and I divided up the chores. I'll be in charge of the press and information unit.

I can't write any more today. I really want to sleep. I've slept for only a couple of hours.

August 1, 1948

Yesterday and today Russians and istrebitels have been rampaging through our village. We lock ourselves in for a couple of hours at a time. Today the bunker feels so stuffy I can hardly stand it. K will come to see me again.

August (?)

We've been forced out of our bunker yet again. By now we've been discovered by all of the farmers living in the vicinity and there was one among them the Soviets would have called a "poor, disenfranchised peasant." When he discovered our bunker, we weren't alarmed by his poverty as much as by the fact that in three years he hasn't paid any taxes or done any service. Who, in Soviet times, could refuse to pay taxes and not be punished? In the words of our "host," this guy really knows how to talk like a big patriot, a zealous Lithuanian, but he's probably a Judas.

So this guy took to us really quickly. But we didn't take to him. His appearance, his face, and speech were that of a true Judas. A couple of days ago he came to

complain to us while pretending to need advice on how to meet grain quotas. According to him, they are forcing him now to pay taxes. But how can he pay without having even a ruble? We finally give him three hundred rubles, and with that money he plans to buy ten kilograms of butter and take it as a bribe to the party organizer and maybe buy himself out of his obligations. A couple of days passed by and this citizen showed up and told us that, while in a drunken stupor, the partorg had revealed to him that partisans came to bathe at his neighbor's place. On top of it, this partorg knows for a fact that partisans linger at his neighbor's place for extended periods of time. "Linger." This word was written on a little piece of paper that he brought, as if he couldn't understand what it meant. What a two-faced idiot! He probably doesn't even sense what a dangerous game he has started. He wants to be nice to both sides. He's turning people in and he's also warning them. In any case, we can't stay here anymore. We decide to move. K is here. He has been with us for more than a week. He has written an article. Lightning and Hawk are also here. It's so hard to part with K.

While our things are being taken to Rye's, we go looking for a new place for our bunker. It's raining. The night is dark. There are thirteen of us. It is such a pity to leave a bunker as good as this. We've all been deeply involved in our work



Fighters of the Iron Wolf group in the summer of 1947

and managed to accomplish a great deal. As it stands now, the work will have to be postponed for a week or more. We cross the lake to get to Woodpecker's place. Although it's not a long trip, I feel totally exhausted. Sitting in a bunker drains the life out of you, just the same as a prison cell would.

We spent the day in a barn. Woodpecker's men joined us here. Pigeon and his men from the officer Juozapavičius' group are here as well. We "make a meeting" during the day. Hawk swears in the new recruits. Rimvydas and I give our speeches. I summarize the political news.

Finally we have found a place for our bunker. It is a bit too much in the open. If they don't see us digging, it'll be all right.

We go out to meet Student. This guy has lived without supervision for too long. He's outlived his usefulness to us.

Yesterday and today remind me of those first gentle days of autumn. The sky is somewhat cloudy and the air is so cool and pleasant. It is especially beautiful at the end of day. It seems as if this is the last good-bye to summer. These days somehow affect my mood. I feel a bit melancholy. Memories seem to surface and I feel sad for the beautiful days gone by ... I would like to study again, to achieve something more. Oh, these beautiful, peaceful, and, at the same time, sorrow-tinged days! But maybe they're only sad for me! I'm trying to compare them to the days of my previous life, looking for similarities. I remember the vistas from a hilltop in Vizgirdas Forest. You can see the forests stretching out in front of you and the Nemunas River snaking through them. The beautiful lands around Alytus, Kaunas on a Sunday evening, the Graz mountains, the mines of Donbas, the plains and solemn nature of Ukraine: all of that seems so lovely today and so far away, so unreachable ... Even those damned mines in Ukraine today seem to be covered in a veil less grim than I remember it to be. I can almost hear those mannish Ukrainian women's voices singing. Those songs have a peculiar beauty; they are sad and serious, like the lives of the people living in that land. These days I'm flooded with images of the past, all of them are so dear and beautiful. Unexpectedly, your heart seizes up: the passage of time, youth, and love – everything is flying past you ... In front of us is the unknown, a terrible unknown.

Those Anglo-Saxon diplomats in Moscow are deciding the fate of millions. I have doubts they remember us at all. (I have in mind here not just the partisans and Lithuania, but all of Eastern Europe.) They probably can't agree on the spheres of influence, so who cares about us here? What matters most is to keep that imperial British lion from getting too thin and the American dollar strong. I don't want to write such hateful lines, it doesn't befit these beautiful days.

It seems like Lightning is also overcome with similar moods. We remind each other that we are grown men: I'm twenty-three and he is twenty-six. We didn't notice when we grew up, maturing too soon with guns in our hands and danger around us. Can it be we are grown men already? It seems that not so long ago we were children, students. How time flies! It's been four years since the day I abandoned Lithuania. After that it's a jumble. A soldier's daily bread, travels, adventures, prisoner-of-war camps – a mishmash of life, so to speak. Now I'm back in Lithuania. But this Lithuania is not the same: people seem different, most of my acquaintances are gone and all my friends have disappeared. I'll have to live by my memories: at least they make me feel good.

Student never came. The only one to come from that group was Lark (Little Mustache's brother) and Tank Operator. Apparently, Lark had a narrow escape yesterday. They had a meeting with supposed partisans. And, of course, they were attacked by them. Only Lark managed to escape. Tarzan, Pilot, and one other person were killed.

We depart in the evening. Woodpecker and I leave last. We walk through such dense marshes that I lose my pilot's cap. We find our friends asleep in the barn. Hawk is complaining about being tortured by fleas and there are millions of them near the threshing floor. There is no more room for us and I leave with Woodpecker to bed down somewhere else.

By dawn we are on the road. We can't stay any longer, since the Russians set up ambushes here yesterday. Finally, we reach the place we have selected for our bunker. Around ten in the morning we start to dig. The ground is not that difficult to work with. By evening, we are almost finished, with only the planks left to be put in.

Nameless and Woodsman leave to get more planks right after dinner. This is a big bunker, so we may need more than one cartload of planks. Woodpecker, Lark, and I also go to get some planks in the village. A couple of kilometers away we find a blade at someone's place. We cut the planks, stack them into the cart and haul them back. The night is exceptionally bright. People are asleep; only the dogs are barking. They can sense us. We come back to our "landlord." Nameless still isn't there. Soon he appears, on foot, since he and Woodsman loaded the cart with so many planks that on the way a wheel broke. We unload our planks and then go to give them a hand. I think about the fact that we are riding around the village as if there were no Russians in the vicinity. We reload the planks on our cart and hurry back. By the time we cut them and bring them in, the sun has already come up. While we're putting the planks in, we are approached by a citizen. It's the same person who has been pestering Woodpecker for several days, asking him if he could join the partisans. His brother was a partisan and was killed. This incident slightly spoils our mood. We finish our work at around ten, and our host's son plows the earth over the bunker so the white sand is not visible. Swallow pours black dirt into the furrows. I never expected a bunker could be masked so well. We don't have time to make an entrance, since we are informed that the Russians are staying about one kilometer away from



In the summer of 1948:
Nameless, Hawk, Dzūkas
and Woodpecker

us. Before retreating into the bushes, we cover the opening with branches. When evening comes, we finally finish the entrance.

Today we all go our own ways. Rimvydas and Woodpecker go to Vyta's. Lark, Nameless, and I leave to bring back our things, while Hawk and Lightning go to Student's.

August 20, 1948

We've been at Banadas' for three days now. We won't be leaving today or tomorrow. I found Arūnas, the liaison for the BDPS presidium, visiting here at Banadas'. It appears I knew him from my days in Alytus. He doesn't remember me. This citizen is very talkative. "A regular officer" is how he describes himself.

I send Nameless to go to Hawk with a message. He leaves during the day. Arūnas and I go to visit "the host" for a chat. We chat for a few minutes about the past. As our host invites us to share some honey, someone in the yard cries out that a group of party operatives is coming into the village. I beat it out of the cottage into the marsh. Lark is playing cards with Banadas' men. I warn them. I camouflage the bunker. We remain above ground. The group is not dangerous to us. In the meantime, people take their cows and disappear into the brush. Herders, children, dart from corner to corner with messages. Only the elderly stay at home. So this is how the activists do their famous "educational work."

The longer I'm holed up in the bunker, the more intensely I feel its effects. I wish I could be free for a little bit, just to wander through the villages. Now I can imagine how hard monastic life must be and how hard it is for a young person to be shut in. By nature I'm passionate. It's not something I share with others, of course. I'm considered to be a "cold Englishman." Unfortunately, those who say that are very mistaken. Under this seemingly cold exterior hides a burning heart of rare intensity...

The most important thing for today is to at least get the bathhouse heated up. Then we could wash up, change our shirts, and that alone would bring happiness to our lives.

Our whole purpose is to maintain a partisan movement that is spoken about only with respect. It's sad that stains, dark stains which blacken us, still appear.

Those who really know Lithuania, her character, her history, her suffering, will also understand us. Sometimes we suffer so much. Man is not made of iron (even iron rusts and crumbles after a short time) and that's why sometimes one begins to doubt: will our strength last? What will come of Lithuania if she loses the best part of her? (It's not just the partisans I have in mind.) What will happen if, at the fateful moment, there isn't anyone to resurrect her, to heal her? Maybe little people with their political "shopkeepers," their own political squabbles, will again begin to educate us with the motto: "He who does not defend liberty is not worthy to be free." It's a sad story and its end is still not in sight. Enough of that. Today they'll bring paper and again we'll publish "The Bell of Freedom." Let the Asiatics get furious, but we'll still fight on!

The "remnants of the nationalist bourgeoisie" will not disappear so quickly!

August 22, 1948

Sunday. It's a beautiful, hot summer day. Last night Hawk returned with Woodsman, Šarūnas, Rye, and others. Kostas will take the first BDPS shipment. After that we'll set up permanent direct contact.



Partisan leaders in 1949:
Wormwood (left) and
Dzūkas

While we talk, some people announce that istrebitels and the MVD have set up nearby. We move away to continue talking, since the party activists will be combing someone's fields. In the village there is a big commotion: people hurry with their animals into the marsh to hide. The marshes swarm with partisans and people. Unexpectedly, Wormwood returns, but we don't meet him until after dinner. It wasn't possible to talk with him at any length. Hawk left with all of them while Lark and I remained. It looks like we won't be able to move our things for some time, since the stribes and the MVD are spending the night about half a kilometer away. It's not good to bang around with the cart under their noses. Even though today is Sunday, "the group" is still at work. Six istrebitels appeared not far from us about a hundred meters away, but they don't disturb us at all.

It's now been several days since we had any work. It's very boring. If it's going to be like this much longer, we could go crazy. The partisans have something to do, they play cards. Today all day long they play "One Thousand" with Lark.

Slowly, evening draws near. It's gloomy and boring. I didn't even feel how quickly spring and summer passed. Soon fall will be here, and after that winter, spring, summer ... *Tempora fugaces*. Today my heart feels so empty. Melancholy



Fighters of the Šarūnas unit in the summer of 1948

and apathy take hold of me again. I long so much for a life: peaceful and full, but here ... here there can't be any apathy or any dreams, just battle. Each day the battle is more brutal, more secretive. Here you can't dream, or you'll perish. Be smart, be careful, be watchful and shrewd, then you'll live. It would be good not to have to think about these things, but I must.

Yesterday I found out about my mother and uncle. They are both old and can't find work. They said that now they beg. Mama wrote that she is barely able to gather half a bag of potatoes a day. What will happen to them when winter comes? K is no longer able to continue his studies. He also doesn't have enough money to live on. So it's out of the question for him to help Mama.

September 13, 1948

It's cold towards evening. Today I slept in the marsh, since our landlord got dispossessed as a "kulak" and I didn't want to remain in the bunker.

October 6, 1948

I have very little time to keep my diary. Hawk and Rimvydas left to meet with the leader of the Tauras command. It's been more than a month since they left. He wrote to me a few times during the trip. The leader of the Tauras command was killed. Hawk and Rimvydas separated. Hawk journeyed on and won't return for awhile.

I work alone with Lark. We have published a few issues of "The Bell of Freedom." Winter is not far off. We need to find a new place for a bunker. It's already our third winter, but it seems that centuries separate me from my past. Is it possible that I lived then? Lord, what a hard fate. I don't want to complain, to cry about it, but at least I can tell myself a partisan's fate is hard.

Today, I'm alone. Lark and Woodpecker have gone to deliver our publications. The radio in the bunker is playing some kind of French chansons. I climbed

outside. Around me was a deep silence. Soon it will be a full moon. It's already the size of a sickle. Could anyone imagine that in the middle of this field there is a bunker with a radio playing French songs?

Rye is no longer with us. The poor guy was killed, and killed through a betrayal. He went to a person to order shoes for his sister living in the Urals. That person betrayed him by bringing the Russians to his place. Who can replace him? There is no one like him. An empty space will remain.

October 19, 1948

I'm alone in the bunker. It poured all night and I read a German novel about a man and a woman who were artists and in the end found happiness working the land. Land and children – the ultimate purpose, according to them, that made living worthwhile. Of course, this doesn't have anything in common with our lives. We are totally different people. We have only one goal, only one idea that drives us – a free Lithuania, while everything else has faded into the background. Yes, yes, family, children ... I wonder if we'll have a chance to start our own families? I'm thinking about myself. Thoughts like these come into my head



Rye in the summer of 1948

more and more often, but ... if not for this “but” it would be possible. In that word, “but,” my biggest, innermost struggles are hidden.

Apathy overtakes me, especially when I'm alone. I know something has to be done, but at the same time I'm unable to lift a finger. At these moments I just sit and think and think. Sometimes I don't even think, I just sit, while my thoughts scatter and run everywhere.

That's what happened yesterday. The weather outside was awful. Rain was coming in through the bunker's entrance. You could hear the wind shaking the trees. If only the radio had worked, but it didn't, as if on purpose. It had suddenly stopped working.

Probably no one will come today. Often, it sounds as if someone is coming, but then it turns out it's only frogs hopping outside the window. Once there was a loud noise above that made me draw my pistol. Most likely, it was the frogs again.

Tonight the sky cleared completely. A full moon, reddish, is already high. I lie around all day, and can't get anything done. I keep thinking about the future.

Hawk returned a couple of days ago, but he's gone again. He needs to arrange our winter plans with the other men. This time we're relocating farther away, but I won't write down where – the mongols might seize my diary. I'm happy with that place. It will be merrier there and I think I won't feel so lonely. Lark and Woodpecker are also gone. They went to bring back axes and bags for packing.

Rimvydas is wounded and bedridden at Thinker-Tiger's. It turns out that he, Lightning, and a couple of other men had gone to the hospital in Alytus. They wanted to free Tiger, who was hospitalized there. Everything was well planned, but then Rimvydas' typical absent-mindedness spoiled everything. Elm also showed up. They had met an istrebitel. Rimvydas started up a conversation with him. Elm left to look around for another one, when Rimvydas, forgetting about his own, followed after Elm. When Elm asked him about the istrebitel who was left behind, only then did Rimvydas remember him. He found him and drew a pistol on him, finished him off. But then another one appeared. Rimvydas and Elm had to jump through a window, because the istrebitel had locked the doors. It ended with Rimvydas getting his hand wounded from behind and his knee

sliced by glass. Lightning would have been killed if not for his binoculars. The bullet struck the binoculars on his chest and shattered them.

Next day Tiger was taken somewhere else. I can only imagine how poor Tiger felt. Freedom was right before his eyes. Lightning, it seems, took it very hard. When Hawk was telling me about it, I could hardly contain myself. Oh, that Rimvydas, Rimvydas! He's as lucky as that brother in the tale of the brother with seven misfortunes, while his absent-mindedness is just amazing.

October 29, 1948

A few days ago Mikas (Audrūnas) visited me. We made a number of decisions.

For several days in a row, I've been sitting in Lightning's old bunker. I helped dig out this bunker about a year-and-a-half ago. It has now turned into a real cave. The walls have rotted with moldy and torn pieces of paper. The kerosene lamp in the bunker flickers and smokes more than usual. The whole ceiling is blackened from the smoke. It's like a prison cell.

The "new place" I came here for is hard to find. Without Lightning here, nothing can get started. One bunker has been made but it will take a lot more



Tiger in the summer of 1948

planning to make it comfortable. Nine of us can't live together, especially during the winter. For one thing, too many footprints, for another, too hard to get food delivered.

Whole days have been spent thinking how to make it habitable here. Lucky are those who don't worry too much about their future. I can't do that. How we establish ourselves here will determine the success of our work.

I keep thinking about creating a separate press and propaganda section. Maybe then the work would go smoother. I could devote myself to one task, which would make it considerably easier, and the work itself would be different, too.

Litas, Thinker, and Nightingale have arrived. Litas wanted to summon Hawk as soon as possible, but he's gone to Šarūnas' team. It turns out that Litas met Faust, the newly elected leader of the Tauras command. They say Faust is a young man, not a soldier, and that he was a teacher. We had a meeting with Litas, Faust, and Tiger, the leader of the Iron Wolf command in the Tauras region. Hawk was elected as the new leader of southern Lithuanian operations. Litas was authorized to be Hawk's proxy and came to establish contact with the partisans of western Lithuania. I sent an urgent letter. Oh, if those who live free abroad could only imagine what conditions we work in! If only they knew a small part of it! I don't have time to write about what happens here in our partisan life each day, hour, and minute. Only a small portion of my inner experience is on these pages.

The weather outside isn't fit for a dog. It's dark. It's raining. There's mud everywhere – outside and inside the bunker. Little Father (Litas) sleeps. It's good that he can sleep. I can't. My head has been filled with troubling thoughts these past five days.

Beet, Elm, and Tornado returned with a side of bacon. Only Beet came into the bunker. Now he and Nightingale are lying below whispering about something. Hawk, the leader of the Iron Wolf command, went out with some cooking pots to the landlord.

Little Father is snoring loudly while I'm anxious and nervous, smoking ... I'm smoking again. I have no willpower, I am absolutely weak-willed.

Sometimes I try to calm myself with, “Hey, it’ll be alright.” Since we already have the type, we’ll set up the press. I’ll take over the whole printing section. We’ll start up our propaganda machine full speed. But how to get it started when you have to think about arranging everything, from repairing the broken radio to getting at least a kilogram of paper? When the smallest thing is missing, the work stops. That’s how it is now: we don’t have a bunker and to equip one suitable for our work is hard. But it’s not just about setting up the bunker! There’s the lack of men, educated people and the ones we have are slowly dwindling away. It’s hard to find new people to take the places of those who have been killed, and the newcomers can’t replace the ones who were killed. In our district about a thousand have been killed. What a terrible number! It’s hard to think about it.

The disunity of our people also hampers our work. There are many wonderful and dedicated people. The partisan war has produced hundreds of heroes who have earned that name a hundred times over. However, there are also small-minded people. I am inclined to think that this is the result of widespread ignorance in our nation. Here’s a small example. Not too long ago we went to someone for food. He was a successful farmer, or, in Bolshevik terms, a “kulak.” We asked him for meat, but the man offered some dried crusts of bread and



Rimvydas (left)

started to lament that he had absolutely nothing. As it turns out, he had six pigs and dozens of fowl. Of course, we took several turkeys for ourselves, so you can imagine how he cursed us out and in his heart condemned us and probably wished us a speedy death. This blind little man trembles over one kilogram of meat while we partisans don’t give a thought to our survival, even standing in the way of the istrebitels and the NKVD when they come to this man demanding grain requisitions. He trembles over his own penny while we sacrifice everything and have thrown aside our own fortune as if it were a worn-out glove. He’s afraid to lose any old rag, not realizing that tomorrow or the next day, they will come to inventory his wealth, dispossess and exile him as a kulak, while his wealth will go to newcomers and degenerates. What can you say about a man who begrudges his own people but gives it away to strangers?

I remember him, how gloomily he sat on his bed without saying a word. What was he thinking then? No, he doesn’t understand what a homeland means, what Lithuania is all about. For him, homeland is a sack of coins. Truly, if he wasn’t afraid of the partisan, or if the Bolshevik was a little bit more humane, he would be the first to glorify the Soviet system. There are many people like that here. What they need is a crack of the whip, because it’s the only thing they fear and listen to, and the only speech they understand.

The landlords of this bunker are poor people, almost beggars, but their hearts are made of gold. They have nothing, wear rags, and live in a sloping, decrepit cottage (if it can even be called a cottage), but still they give us their last bite of bread. And this is not some kind of pretense: they aren’t doing it out of fear, since over so many years, we have come to recognize and evaluate a man from the first glance or intonation of his voice. You feel these people with your whole soul, that they only wish you well, that they also long for a new life just as we partisans do. What in the end forces a man to be this way? He could as easily be the first two-bit scribe or an “official” of this new order. Certainly he wouldn’t lose anything, since he has nothing to lose now.

It seems that the closer people are to a church, the more distant they are from God, and the more things they have, the more they grow to like them, binding

themselves to them and loving them more than anything, even their own homeland. Such pathetic wretches, such spiritual paupers!

I remember Arūnas, an “officer” and the BDPS liaison. He’s an educated man, a teacher, but a small man. He’s preoccupied with small business deals, wants to buy a motorcycle, and tries to impress the village partisans with his fancy jackets. He imagines himself a big shot, but in reality he’s so small. Yes. Only hardships, ongoing struggles, and constant obstacles bring out a man’s true character. We had so many “heroes, personalities” during our years of independence! Where are they now? They disappeared like soap bubbles in the wind. New people rose to the surface, people that nobody had heard about or seen before.

November 5, 1948

Some Russian folk songs float into our new bunker on the radio waves from Moscow, melancholy, slow, and heavy. One feels something plaintive, even heartrending in these songs ... I can’t listen to them with a calm heart, and every time I hear them, the wounds reopen. God, how close these songs are to you and how far away our entire life is.

Our new bunker is quite big (2.3 by 3.3 meters) but cold. Is it really going to be as cold as the hole that we had at Kytras? We spent all last winter shivering. In my mind’s eye, even now, I see Rimvydas, Hawk, and myself doing squats in the bunker to stay warm.

The last couple of days have been truly hard. The weather is extremely nasty. It’s raining and there’s mud everywhere. This is a real test of my will. I have been to visit Banadas. There I found Lark, Kapsas, and one other recruit who is determined to work with us. With their help, we moved all of our things about thirty kilometers. We ended up feeling dead tired. What a start for our recruits!

I found Lightning had returned. Near Onuškis, he blew up a truck that was carrying the town’s whole garrison, nineteen men in all. He took two machine guns, ten automatics, five assault rifles and five pistols. Everyone armed themselves from head to toe. But we can’t seem to avoid disasters: recently

Vycka’s (Tornado’s) brother, Pigeon, and some unknown man were killed. Beet was away and escaped death. It was very strange that the bunker was taken unawares during the night. It seems someone betrayed them. All three shot themselves with pistols. It’s a daily story. Outwardly, Vycka looks calm. Who knows what’s going on inside?

I’m beginning to shiver all over. It’s bitterly cold. My feet are soaked through. On the other hand, the old bunker where we lived temporarily was exceptionally stuffy, a real hell. The bunker wasn’t that big, but seven of us lived there. There wasn’t any space to turn around. Full of mud and fleas. The fleas didn’t let me sleep for several days. Afterwards, I got used to them, fatigue won out, and I slept as if I were dead. You even get to thinking, “Can hell be any worse?” Today, for example, Elm and I roamed through the woods. The autumn evening was dark and rainy, and we carried all sorts of belongings, trudging through the mud with holes in our shoes. I’ll benefit a lot from this hardship if it doesn’t kill me. But this is just a minor thing if only the rest goes well. We do have the manpower to work. Today the Russians were lurking all around the edge of the woods. Apparently they’re afraid that the October Revolution celebration could be disrupted.

November 10, 1948

Hawk returned from Šarūnas’ team. The situation there, thanks to Warrior, has totally changed. The deep-rooted “traditions” of drunkenness are gone. For instance, the whole squad led by Kalnius doesn’t drink at all. Long battles calmed even the hot-headed daredevils. The men saw that hard drinking led to destruction. It’s worth rejoicing at such an improvement. Our strength lies in our souls, our hearts, but not in our weapons.

Hawk leaves again, maybe this time even for Samogitia. I’m left by myself with the whole “store.” It’s possible that Warrior will come to help.

Our curly-haired poet (Kapsas) is leaning toward not staying with us. He thinks and thinks and always reaches the same conclusion – not to stay with us

under any circumstances. Everyone values his own hide. It is a rare intellectual that can make up his mind to die for his country. Somehow they've all become narrow-minded, petty. They would agree to spit on our nation now and repent for it later as long as they don't die now.

*We will come as one
From the rivers Mūša, Neris and Lėvuo
While in our arteries and veins
The blood of our ancestors still flows ...*

These are Kapsas' words, but now he doesn't dare to live by them. I understand that we can't all go out into the forest, but we also need intellectual support. We very much need a stream of new blood to replenish our ranks. What would happen if everyone started to give up? It's not for nothing that our people say:

*Fatherland, where are the singers now
Who created their songs for you?*



The occasion of the visit by Hawk, the leader of the Dainava region, to the Šarūnas unit in 1948: Warrior, the leader of the Šarūnas unit (first from left), and Hawk (second)

Truly, where did they disappear, those who instilled love for our fatherland, who inspired courage inside of us, who proclaimed that it was an honor to die for one's country? Is it possible that this was just the sound of empty barrels and nothing more? Our poet defends himself by saying he wants to sustain his creativity, his family. But aren't there higher ideals?! Of course, maybe we aren't capable of understanding his creative flights of fancy. Yet, it's well known that the villager has always fought for the homeland. He never asked to be repaid. When someone threatened the homeland, the villager went out to fight with his pure, simple and firm Lithuanian heart. He knew the enemy needed to be defeated and so he fought – the bast-shod volunteer and today's partisan.

Very often I think about my homeland, what are you? Why are your children so strange, so uncommonly stubborn? From where does this great resistance spring?

I feel that I love my country more and more. If someone today offered me freedom in America, I wouldn't go. It's better to be killed here, fighting honorably, than wait with my hands clasped for something to drop from somewhere. In the end, our blood won't be shed in vain. We'll have the right to look anyone straight in the eyes, because we didn't abandon our homeland. And who will defeat us if we are not afraid to die, if we have defeated even death?

Everyone is asleep in the bunker. I am on guard alone with my endless dreams. My thoughts fly like birds, and hot waves flood my chest ...

November 12, 1948

Yesterday almost the whole day we spent in "discussions" with Kapsas. He said he didn't want to join us because it could destroy his family. Unfortunately, all his arguments fell apart when confronted with our responses. For example, he said he only lives for creative work. Art is his highest purpose. It would be interesting to see how he would reconcile this purpose if he "adapted" to the current system and started glorifying our Father Stalin, and his collective farms. How will the thinking part of the nation look back later at such a "poet," who

worshipped our nation's biggest murderer when our country was awash in blood? Of course, as soon as he's no longer in danger and, let's say there aren't any more Bolsheviks, people like him will again sing "hymns" to love, devotion, and so forth, on and on. They are all like that. When freedom comes, they will all become patriots and wise men again with their ideology and advice, but when our homeland is in danger, they can only fall despicably on their knees, look fearfully around, go with the flow and dare not resist.

Why is it that his family is more precious than our families? I understand what it means to lose a mother, a brother. But don't we need to dedicate ourselves to something?! For the sake of our future, some of us need to risk everything, even death in a sacred struggle. Maybe these sacrifices will bring a better and brighter life to Lithuania. Maybe these sacrifices will teach the next generation how to defend their country, to be united and so forth.

Both of those so-called poets (Kapsas and his friend) read their works yesterday. A heavy mood like black tar spurts from each line of their poetry. But almost everything revolves around their individual experiences and sorrows. There is not one word here that would inspire the youth or the nation's resolve, the hope for a better life, not one word about the heroism of



A meeting of partisans of the Grand Duke of Lithuania Vytautas group of the Kazimieraitis unit between 23 and 25 April 1948. Hawk, the leader of the Dainava region, awards a decoration to Vytas-Merkys, the leader of the group

the countryside. All these lines reek of narrow-mindedness, are heavy with fear, hopelessness, and desperation. Can such art rouse a nation to move and feed the flame of love for one's country? If everyone becomes infected with such pessimism, what will happen? It's very clear that the situation of our nation is infinitely grim, but it doesn't mean that we should throw up our hands in despair. The spread of such defeatist attitudes only serves the Bolsheviks. People are dejected for a time, but then, bit by bit, they adjust. Mighty is the person who in the hardest of times can sing. Isn't it absolutely true that Maironis, Kudirka, and other poets were able to awaken our country from centuries of sleep?

I don't understand what ideas whistle through Kapsas' head. He prattles on about "going into literature." But how can he "go there" if he allows excrement to fill his soul? And finally, what use is creativity if you don't use powerful words to show the burdens of your homeland now, instead of later, when everyone is free? Then, many will be able to write and speak. Instead, create now, when death, pain, and suffering dominate every step of our lives. I think that Kapsas values his life more than he does his creativity. If they only shot wooden bullets, he would join. But how can he join now when he could be killed ...?

Today I sorted type for our press. Too bad we only have half the letters. What can we expect? – the NKVD to send us the press? They'd be stupid to do that. We'll continue publishing our newspaper with the mimeograph machine. Kapsas brought us a new one.

It's been some time since I've heard anything about Kostas. I wonder how the poor soul is doing? He has neither money nor food. And most importantly, he can't help Mother. Oh, my dear Mother, will I ever see you again? I parted so quickly with Father and now I've pushed you out into the Urals. Father perished, but I hope that at least you, my dear Mother, are alive. I'll never forget July the 10th, 1944, when I was separated from family and homeland for the longest time I'd known. It was such a starry night, the kind that only happens in summer. And yet, dear God, how sad it was! That night, my parents moved out of the house because the news of approaching Bolsheviks was getting more frightening

with each day. I stayed behind in the empty house. Outside, lying on the bench, I couldn't fall asleep all night. Back then I didn't know or comprehend what my future would be. The sky buzzed with airplanes. Far in the distance you could see rocket fire: they were bombarding our towns. There was sadness in my soul, and not only in mine but in all our souls, a sadness and emptiness. A new wave of war was rolling over our country.

The next day I saw Father. I said good-bye. I was already in a German uniform going to Samogitia where the "homeland defense" units were organizing. Father cried, and cried like I'd never seen him do before. I cried too, but not as much ... After that we parted. A few weeks later, a piece of shrapnel struck his temple and he died so quietly while sitting next to Mother that for a moment she was not aware of it. And me? I wandered all over Lithuania. Nothing came of the "homeland defense" brigades. We had hoped to defend the homeland in disgusting German uniforms. But the Germans didn't differ much from the communists. They deceived us and used us.

So many millions of people are suffering. For what? Why is there such great injustice in this small world? God, why do You inflict such a heavy burden on man? Why do so many millions die without achieving or giving anything back



By a bunker

to life? In the end, what's the answer to all this suffering? Are we born only to die and disappear, as if we had never existed?

It is absolutely quiet outside and in the bunker. Everyone is asleep and I am on guard, as usual, alone in my torment and in my thoughts. Some commentator in London is lecturing coolly and rationally about the fate of the Ruhr industries. Oh those English politicians! They talk and talk and they buy and sell everything, even whole nations. If only they talked less, maybe today would have been different.

A terrible cough tortures me for the fourth straight night. I need to lie down.

December 12, 1948

For a whole month I've had no time to write anything in my diary. I was up to my neck in work. After Hawk left, we published two pages of "The Bell of Freedom." After that I saw Kapsas off. Rimvydas and I had to prepare material for abroad. Finally, Rimvydas left, too. Again we published a two-page issue of "The Bell of Freedom," including a call to boycott the elections. Imperceptibly, a whole month went by.

A few days ago the Russians searched the woods. About ten mongols crossed the entrance of Lightning's bunker. Lightning was ready with a pistol.

Here or there, men are killed all the time. Not far from us four partisans were killed.

December 23, 1948

These last days have not been work days. It's deadly boring to sit like this. Usually I sit for a while by the radio and then go to bed. I can't force myself to write. It's quite cold in the bunker. Yesterday, Lightning brought an electrical detonator. Outside we'll place an anti-personnel mine. If Russians come across the bunker we can explode it by setting it off from inside with the help of the battery. We'll set the mine when it snows, so we don't leave footprints behind.

The snow is still there after ten days. Looks like it won't be melting. P comes by sled each day to hide our footsteps. There isn't any way we could hide them ourselves.

Yesterday, Elm and I made quite a circuit of the area on foot. We brought back a control grid for the mimeograph and white overcoats for winter.

I wanted to meet with Mikas. He didn't arrive. Apparently his mother had burned our parcels. Unfortunately, our training manuals happened to be in them. I was furious. I wrote a harsh letter to Mikas and now I'm sorry that I reacted that way.

Today we go to the bathhouse.

Tomorrow is Christmas Eve. It's the fifth Christmas that I will have spent God-knows-how.

In 1944, I didn't observe Christmas Eve at all. I was on guard at the Graz airport. It was a starry night and looking up I thought about how far away Lithuania and my family were. In 1945, on Christmas Eve, I was loading coal in the Donbas. In 1946, the day before Christmas Eve, our bunker was betrayed. Lightning and I had moved to a nearby bunker just a few hours before. During the day, cottages were burning. When I climbed out of the bunker and saw the



Bauras, who was arrested by the MGB on 7 March 1949

smoke, I first assumed it was coming from the landlord's chimneyless hut. It turned out the smoke was coming from the burned barn. Nykštaitis, Key, Lord and Vytenis died then. It's been exactly two years since that happened. Lightning and I then walked all night. We barely managed to sneak past the Russians. We slept in an old bunker. In the morning, we washed and ate Christmas Eve dinner at O's (who's now been arrested and sits in jail).

In 1947, I spent Christmas Eve in Šilai.

So now it's 1948. This time we decided to eat Christmas Eve dinner in our bunker. Kapsas promised to come. Today I'll have to check.

December 24, 1948

Yesterday we washed in the bathhouse. We took some gifts to our "stove tenders."

It's not cold outside. Unfortunately, it snowed all day. Now we'll have to make new pathways. It either rains or mists. Visibility is less than forty meters.

We decided to have Christmas dinner at Bauras' after all.

Lark and Lightning left to wait for Kapsas, but it looks like he won't be coming.

Elm and I decorated our bunker. We are preparing to celebrate Christmas even underground! Strange, isn't it?

I tried to listen to the radio. Berlin talks about Christmas, the Finnish station is broadcasting a children's hour, and from Moscow, numbers, socialist competition and poods. That's all one hears all year – for over thirty years now! Constant lies and revolting deceit. They lull you with tales about paradise, happiness, and joy, while they've created such a hell here on earth.

I can't even imagine to whom this Bolshevik propaganda is directed. Nobody reads it, and if they do, they still don't believe what they've read. Who can write such nonsense? The newspapers report Lithuania is all in bloom, when in reality it is bathed in blood. There are no words to express all of this. Stalin is a vulgar fool. Every newspaper page overflows with letters, pledges, and promises to that "dearest, beloved ..." It's sickening to read it. I don't believe that a smart communist could trust any of that drivel. Stalin – a genius, coryphaeus, a father,

a teacher ... Stalin knows everything, he taught this and that, he said when and how, he can foresee things a hundred years down the road, and he's the greatest military leader ... I wonder if somewhere in India or Tibet the idols are worshipped more. Stalin is such a fool, allowing people to worship him this way. Of course, if he was just a fool, it wouldn't be half bad, but his stupid nature is inseparably bound up with Asiatic cruelty.

Boy, I've sure cleared up some questions about the man concealed in the Kremlin! I have to laugh at myself and my "philosophizing."

It's five in the afternoon. The radio broadcasts Christmas greetings from Trygve Lie and Evatt: "The UN is the only pillar of strength supporting the peace, and now it has to help prevent the war ..." Isn't it ironic?!

December 25, 1948

We ate our Christmas Eve meal at Bauras'. There were eight of us: Lightning, Hawk, Lark, Vilnis, Tornado, Elm, Willow, and myself. We said grace, sang the national anthem, and started our meal. After a couple of hours we returned to our bases.



The commanders of the Kazimieraitis unit of the Dainava region with fighters of the Iron Wolf group in the winter of 1948: Rimvydas, Lightning, Hawk and Dzūkas (back row, from left), Kudirka, Hawk, Beet and Swallow (front row)

It wasn't even dawn yet when someone started knocking on our "hole." It turned out to be Swallow and P who came to fetch Elm so he could show them Lightning's bunker. Swallow had left Catfish and the injured Engineer at P's. On Christmas Eve, Engineer and Scout had been delivering anti-election appeals to the communications center. They were coming back down the highway when they came upon patrolling mongols. Engineer didn't notice them until they were only about three meters away. When asked in Russian by the mongols "Who goes there?", Engineer fired a shot at them. The mongols also opened fire. There wasn't much of a shoot-out. Engineer was hit near the groin, the bullet apparently grazing his hip bone. Scout beat a hasty retreat. Engineer crawled by himself to a farmhouse, took some horses and rode "home." But he left traces of his blood on the road. Fearing that the Russians would follow him, Engineer decided not to stay at home but immediately departed to Lightning's place. Elm left and came back after a while with Willow, who will stay the night with us, since Lightning doesn't have much room.

It's evening. Elm and Tornado leave to get some beer. Slowly our place fills up with all the "little Lightnings" (Hawk, Willow, Tornado) and their leader. We listen to the radio. Christmas songs are on every station. The king of England, the Pope, Truman, and others send their Christmas greetings. Music, songs fill the air ... It's so lively out there. In our bunker underground eleven men gather to celebrate Christmas. Where did that Christmas so full of warmth and cozy peacefulness go? Christmas underground! I'm writing these sentences and shivering from the cold.

I can't say our mood is full of Christmas spirit. It's artificial. Everybody is pensive, joking only once in a while.

Finally Tornado and Elm bring two kegs of beer. It's around two in the morning by the time everybody goes their own way. We bed down, too.

Today my mood is down, below zero. Once more I'm starting to feel certain that the coming year of 1949 won't bring anything good. "Against bolshevism, a new life needs to be built in Western countries, a life that

supports the well-being of the whole society, which would act as a magnet, slowly drawing to it even the Eastern countries" – these words approximate the words of Western diplomats. So the first thing they want to do is to build a new life in the West. How long that will take nobody knows. Maybe five years, but possibly even ten or more. Let's say it will take five years. What will be left of Lithuania in five years? It's sad, so incredibly sad, to think that all of us here are on death row, counting the last hours and minutes of our lives. The hands on the clock of life are moving slower and slower. We work and we fight ...

January 1, 1949

*Ask not for whom the bell tolls,
It tolls for thee ...*

The New Year has arrived. It's twenty to two in the morning. It's night. Only Lark and I are in the bunker. Lark is asleep and I am listening to the radio. Not that long ago they broadcast New Year's greetings. What will this year bring?



Partisan leaders of southern Lithuania at the beginning of 1949 on the way to Žemaitija: Faust, the leader of the Tauras region (second from left), and Hawk (third)

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It's cold in the bunker and I can't concentrate on writing the news for "The Bell of Freedom." I don't want to sleep. I'm waiting for Elm and Vilnis. At least they'll make some coffee.

I keep worrying we haven't accomplished enough. Most importantly, we don't have Indian ink. We'd be able to at least get some propaganda out.

I don't know what's wrong with me. There are more and more of these instances where I can't do anything at all. I can't even read. Even now I'm forcing myself to write in my diary. But there are also hours of creativity, when I work and write with a sense of elation

I remember one thing. I heard on the radio that during a foreign policy debate Britain's House of Commons condemned Franco's Blue Division which fought against bolshevism. Isn't that strange? Condemnation for fighting against bolshevism. What kind of politics is that?! They were afraid of the Germans, but now they've got a real devil. Let's see how they deal with him.

January 9, 1949

The "elections" are going at "full speed." People aren't voting at all. The mongols are afraid to appear with their ballot boxes in our villages. Yesterday the mongols ordered a hundred and thirty wagons to one of the voting precincts. They probably figured that if they ordered that many there might be a chance of twenty actually coming. And they were right.

Banadas, Scout and Maple were killed a few days ago. The last two were fairly new partisans. It looks like the Russians discovered their bunker from the bloody tracks left by the wounded Engineer. They say that before the three of them shot themselves they broke their weapons apart and cut up their shoes and clothes. Personally, I feel sorriest for Banadas. For some reason, I always mourn more the death of an older partisan. One more loss from that group that I met in the first days of my partisan life.

71

January 14, 1949

Warrior, "the successor," has finally arrived. He had to stay put and wait for a long time, spending more than a week at Biliūnas', since he couldn't travel any further after Banadas' death.

After a couple of days, Kapsas also showed up. It turns out he lost his list with encoded last names and the date for the meeting and now had to come on his own.

I miss Hawk a lot. I had worked with him more than with others and we got to know each other well. So far, Warrior and I haven't done any work. But today we'll start with the awards presentation.

According to the Russians, our corner of these woods is a real "den of thieves." For a few days we have around thirteen or fourteen people in both bunkers. No one senses that here, underground, the earth is teeming with living creatures. It's really strange to think that people above us drive, chop wood, and are not aware of anything.

It's a real mess around our bunker. Not too long ago, for three straight days the villagers were sawing trees on the ceiling of our bunker. When they carried their logs over the entrance it seemed as though it would cave in.



Partisans of the Iron Wolf group of the Kazimieraitis unit in the winter of 1948: Lightning and Hawk (in the middle row, fourth and fifth from left), and Dzūkas (behind them)

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On "election" day we brought out a German land mine. For our "friends." We have two other mines just like that one in our bunker. They won't take us down so easily.

The last two nights were spent in heated discussions on various topics. We touched upon almost everything: religion, society, foreign politics, social problems, and so on and so forth. Of course, we blasted everything. We came to the conclusion that, just as Jakas once wrote, Christianity, together with Vatican politics, is experiencing a tragic time. Everyone especially attacked "materialistic priests," more concerned with purses than with spiritual nourishment. But, I'll write more about it next time. Right now our men just came back from the bathhouse. I avoid writing in my diary in front of others, because I'm not as open with myself then.

January 15, 1949

Yesterday I prepared one matrix. I still need to print invitations. Warrior and Lark wrote certificates. Kapsas continues to write what he calls the "druliad." At least, people will get a laugh out of it once we publish it.

The poet and I argue from time to time. Kapsas, in justifying himself, defends writers. In his opinion, one has to try to "survive" so one can do good for the nation with creative work. There's some truth to that. I think you can fight the occupation without sacrificing personal aspirations. What's the point of trying to save your own hide if by doing so you are only helping the mongols? Who needs a writer who is only able to write in freedom? Who needs a poet who sings and talks only in freedom about the nation's suffering, heroism and sacrifice? I've always maintained and always will that a real man is a man who awakens the nation now, someone who, without concern for his own safety, rouses the nation with his mighty word. How can you respect a writer who, while quaking in his shoes, fawns over the occupier and later, once independence is achieved, starts singing about battles, sacrifices for his homeland, and so on? Only a turncoat can behave this way.

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Kapsas and Vilnis often like to insist that Antanas Miškinis died for nothing. It would've been better if he had just waited it out quietly so that at least he could have continued to write, while now many years will have to pass until Lithuania gives birth to another poet like Miškinis. But what Kapsas and Vilnis forget is that this poet, who is lost to us, has become all the more dear. His example will remain forever a guiding light, reminding us and future generations how to defend ourselves from aggressors. He's a real example of this. And these real examples inspire and teach us. Miškinis is gone, but his work rouses those frozen in fear and inaction. His sacrifice demands revenge and battle. It reminds us of the sacredness and necessity of our fight.

What would happen if nobody wanted to sacrifice? What value does a freedom achieved without bloody sacrifices hold? Without sacrifice no one learns to value or defend freedom. In the end, what would strengthen the nation and its will and mold its character? This struggle will be a painful reminder in the future. Much will have to be learned from it. This struggle shows us what a Lithuanian has and what he still needs, what's to be fostered and what's to be done away with.



Fighters of the Grand Duke of Lithuania Vytautas group of the Kazimieraitis unit: Vytas-Merkys is in the foreground

I try not to get into arguments; instead, I listen more, because when I talk about this matter I get agitated. This whole struggle, all those painful sacrifices are in every fiber of my heart and I get furious with anyone who tries to scorn this struggle or diminish its importance.

We often talk about former parties and the squabbles within them. We have two blocs here: the Scouts and the Futurists. Some here praise their own organization and put down the others', and vice versa. All the same, Kapsas and Vilnis would have to agree that, in the end, the Futurists were an organization too restrictive for men's souls. There was too much partisanship, subjectivity and fanaticism. I certainly agree that the Futurist organization was useful in developing one's inner being, enriching it, but unfortunately, as I said, it was one-sided. Many things were distorted and misrepresented. They turned youths into fanatics. The Scouts, on the other hand, were more objective. While stressing physical fitness, they instilled love for one's country in people's hearts and promoted chivalry, politeness, abstinence from alcohol, and so on. All very useful and good. The bad part was that their leaders, as enemies of the Futurists, turned the youth against them, as well.

Still, such debates are very useful to us. They train one to think deeper, to look for new ideas, and weigh solutions. They are something like a contest of morals.

Furthermore, I can't let it go without airing the issue of those who spoil our national anthem by wanting to insert the word "God" in place of "sun." I'm not indifferent. I do believe in a higher Being who is in charge of the universe and even the smallest part of it – man's fate. However, such narrow-mindedness cannot be tolerated. It's so obvious that they want to push through their own party line into the anthem. Why change the words of Vincas Kudirka? Are they saying that God is just as much of an egotist as Stalin is to have His name shouted everywhere? God has to be in your heart, not on your lips. What would happen if all the political parties of Lithuania wanted to change Kudirka's "sun" to just whatever pleased them? One has to marvel that the Bolsheviks haven't yet inserted Stalin's name.

January 16, 1949

Yesterday Elm and I went to the village. I didn't go there on any important business, just to get some air. We passed through six homesteads. We visited a couple of messengers. I was hoping to find some ink, but except for the letter from Tiger, I didn't get anything.

In wintertime I have less fear of being attacked or encountering the mongols. Most importantly, lying low to the ground makes you a bad target. Chasing someone through the snow is also difficult. Winter also makes it hard to shoot back.

This year the partisans aren't encountering as many ambushes. However, more of us are being discovered in our bunkers. In case something happens we have prepared mines. So far we live with no danger in sight. Only once did the Russians pass over Lightning's bunker. We don't worry much about footprints. Of course, one day, we may suffer sad consequences because of that.

January 30, 1949

Warrior, Lark, Vilnis, and Elm have left for the village. Lightning said that one of the farmers asked them over for dinner. They'll probably have some beer. I didn't go. It's such a great pleasure sometimes to be by yourself.

Kapsas left a couple of days ago. He had written four hundred and fifty stanzas of "Red Paradise." He promised to bring some paper in about a week. All in all, he's a decent man.

I'm not getting any letters from Hawk. I hope nothing has happened to him. According to my calculations, he should already be on his way back.

Rimvydas, it seems, won't be crossing the border in winter. Especially as I heard six men were killed at the border. Of course, there's little pleasure making it across the border in wintertime. The Russians can track your footprints everywhere. If only he had left us about a month earlier everything would have been fine, but ... the man went to the hospital and got a bullet in his hand.

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Lately we haven't been working as hard as we used to. We planned to publish a four-page issue of "The Bell of Freedom" to celebrate February the 16th, but we have only enough paper for a single page. It's like a vicious circle – if we have ink and printing plates, we don't have paper, when we have paper we have neither ink nor printing plates. If only I had a couple of weeks to roam, sooner or later I would definitely find a "hole" that would provide me with paper.

Last Sunday we spent the day with four teachers, three men and one woman. I know one of them very well. Audrūnas recommended him as a good man and I recruited him. Amongst them there was also an artist. I placed an order with him for two projects: a cover for "Red Paradise" and a printing plate for "The Bell of Freedom."

The woman teacher is from Suvalkija. She said she's quite familiar with the partisans of Tauras district and their life. Unexpectedly, this woman's story came out. It appears that she was harassed by the Taurians. At the beginning she worked for them as their messenger. She had taken care of at least forty-four business-related matters for their headquarters. After a few of their partisans died, the Tauras district members put her under suspicion. How much truth there is to this story is hard to say. According to A, this woman is trustworthy; she helps all those persecuted by getting them forged documents. We decided to get to the heart of this matter. This teacher, by the way, promised to send us a collection of poetry sent to her by a female student in Siberia.

February 2, 1949

Fifteen men and three women, all partisans of the Grand Duke of Lithuania Vytautas group, have been killed. All of us took this news very hard. Fifteen men! Fifteen men crossed off our already short list. Oh God, why are You punishing us like this?

Rumors about these deaths reached us a while back, but we didn't want to believe them. Yesterday Nemunas, Šarūnas, and Woodsman came to see Lightning and confirmed this sad news. Nemunas would've died too, had he not left with Šilutis just a few hours before.

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As I suspected, Vytas-Merkys' men were taken by surprise while they were sleeping. It looks like somebody led the mongols to the bunker, since they attacked at midnight. Vytas, Storm (a Polish officer), Marytė-Birutė and others died there. Tarzan and his men were also caught unawares. Only Giedrius and Milda escaped. Milda got wounded in the hand. Poor soul, she went through so much! Two of the partisans were killed by Byelorussians – that's all we need now, the Byelorussians to start attacking us!

The news depressed me so much that I couldn't work.

Today Warrior and I went to Lightning's place. Nemunas looked seriously depressed. He looked diminished. What can you do? After consulting we made a new action plan. Let those Russians push against us all they want – we won't give in! Thank goodness, only two of the old partisans were killed: Vytas and Tarzan. We still have enough of the old wolves who'll steer this group further. Without them, the situation would be very grim.

Nemunas will now be the leader of the group. Balys becomes his assistant.

I explained the political situation to the men. I have a hard time talking politics to anybody, especially to civilians. It seems to me they are just waiting to hear the date when the war will start. What can I tell them? Can I tell them



At a meeting of the Grand Duke of Lithuania Vytautas group of the Kazimieraitis unit between 23 and 25 March 1948: Birutė, Dzūkai, Milda, Ramunė, Hawk and Akacija (a messenger)

about conferences and notes? They don't understand those things. People are used to evaluating political situations based on fantastical rumors. It's so difficult, so insanely difficult to tell them something reassuring. For four years we've been doing just that. It's not easy to keep repeating the same phrases over and over again. Even I, who know more about the existing situation, can't find words to explain it, so how is an ordinary partisan supposed to?

In the last few days the political situation has become more lively. Stalin started a peace "offensive," while the West, the "great equivocator," wants to see the words put into action and that's it. Oh those politicians! I'm so tired of hearing their postulations and statements.

I'm looking at the year ahead with great unease. I keep remembering Trofimov's report called "Strengthening Political Work in the Village." The army has completely taken over Alytus. I wonder if it'll start strengthening that "work." The Communist Party just ended its big congress in Estonia. The congress participants pledged, in their letter to Stalin, to completely collectivize all of Estonia. It looks like the internal politics of Lithuania will be moving in the same direction. If that happens, our little country will be reduced to a land of paupers and cemeteries. Actually, it is almost a cemetery now.

February 10, 1949

After Kapsas left we published another issue of "The Bell of Freedom" dedicated to February the 16th. Our newspaper is miserable. It's only one page long since we didn't have enough paper. The ink wasn't mixed well and soaked through the pages so some of our copies came out blotchy. What a pain. For a few days now we've been sitting without work. We'd like to get those public proclamations out, but there's still no paper.

Elm and I went to see Nemunas. Unfortunately, Kapsas didn't deliver more paper by the promised time. Audrūnas went to both cities, Kaunas and Vilnius, and, of course, didn't get any printing plates. It's enough to drive you crazy! Thank goodness Nemunas was able to buy four storage batteries. Now we'll have some in reserve.

We went to Nemunas on foot. Lightning warned us not to drive, because the mongols have ambushes set up in nearby villages and, come dawn, they conduct extensive searches. The mongols picked a real good time for that. Usually at that time partisans are returning from their nightly exploits and then their bunkers are rarely camouflaged. I often think that we might also be caught one day for not camouflaging properly. I have to say that luck is still on our side. For example, last winter we had a bunker set up in Kytras' yard. All through the night the bunker would stay open and we kept our antenna stretched across the whole yard. All we needed was for the Russians to come upon us unexpectedly and we'd be finished. What a miraculous place that was: we lived there all winter and the Russians never came by once. Only one time were we threatened by a greater danger, when the Russians surrounded Nameless and Planet at a neighboring farm. Planet was killed, but Nameless managed to escape. After this incident we moved out of our "fortress" to stay a couple of days with Jogaila. But that's another story ...

So, Elm and I left on foot. It was a beautiful and pleasant winter night. Slightly misty, but bright enough to walk. The villages were suspended in silence and only the crunching sound of snow under our feet disturbed it. How wonderful



Fighters of the Kazimieraitis unit: Nemunas (back row, third from left), Vytas-Merkys (fourth), Šarūnas (fifth), Balys (seventh), Tarzan (middle row, first from left), and Šilutis (front row, left)

to travel on nights like that, especially for me who spends whole weeks in a bunker. Entire weeks, months, and years underground is not a laughing matter! And when I get a chance to be in daylight, my eyes, not used to the light anymore, keep watering for a couple of hours.

This time, while we traveled, Elm was more vigilant than usual and even infected me with this hyper-vigilance. As soon as we left the forest Elm said: "Something's wrong with me today. I have a headache and I've got this strange feeling."

He mumbled something else, and I understood that Elm "feels" some kind of shoot-out might happen. Things like that really affect me. I can't stand any partisan superstitions and I never try to overanalyze my own dreams or give a commentary on them. Actually, I don't dream very often. I consider that to be a great attribute.

Friends often talk about their dead friends, remembering them one by one. When such talk happens just among partisans, I can still tolerate it, but with civilians around, I feel a physical pain. In general, I can't talk about such things in front of civilians. I think that people would be horrified by the high number of losses and take fright or avoid joining the partisan movement.

When I'm alone, I often think of those who perished. My God, there are so many! Our country is so small and with few exceptions, only the best men are dying: young, full of resolve, brave ... In the future Lithuania will have need of such men. Sometimes I look toward the future with such pessimism that I start to believe in nothing and my heart aches. Of course, no one notices how I'm really feeling inside. Everything stays hidden deep within me.

In only one month our district lost about fifty men! No commentary is necessary here. Just thinking about it a little bit is enough to make your hair stand on end! And that's why I don't want to talk about these things. You have your work, you know your goals so you work and fight until your final hour comes. If it's in the stars, you'll live to see freedom and if not – we'll all see each other on the Other Side.

Thoughts like these and others come to mind often. I'm more of a dreamer than a doer. But in the end, do I really know myself? Which of us really knows himself well?

February 16, 1949

Today is February the 16th – Independence Day. Our nation's independence and sovereignty are “sustained” in the camps of Vorkuta or in a very well-camouflaged bunker. Where is the Atlantic Charter? Radio commentators in their serious, didactic, and arrogant voices explain that the Western countries see and know all about the current situation and, of course, they will bring liberation – but now ... now patience is required since now is not the time. As for the fate of Lithuania, it seems that nothing can be done just yet; maybe later, after the war ...

I've been afflicted with damned boils, and for six days I've barely been able to move – there are so many of them. Right now I'm sitting again at the table in our bunker still not able to bend my legs properly. No less troubling are the never-ending thaws plaguing us this winter. Just a couple of days ago another



Fighters of the Grand Duke of Lithuania Vytautas group of the Kazimieraitis unit: Mindaugas, Lark, Balys and Nemunas

one started again, driving us into pessimism and rage at the water, now more frequently making its way inside and dripping on our heads.

Warrior and I sleep on the “upper floor,” thus we were the first to get rained on. There's already a puddle on the floor, but that's a trifle. What will we do when the puddles appear on our “beds?” Today we are discussing how to stop the leaks. We can't come up with anything. Twice already we've lined our bunker with tar paper but it still doesn't help.

We still haven't received any paper from Kapsas. He sent only a letter. Who the heck knows why he decided to visit his hometown instead of trying to bring us paper as soon as possible.

Hawk doesn't write. He went to visit his “Samogitian aunt” and got stuck there for a while.

This idleness drives me insane. Vilnis brought back some books. Now everybody is engrossed in reading. Recently I read *The Gods are Thirst* and *Penguin Island* by Anatole France. He's a great writer. The characters he portrays in *The Gods are Thirst* really remind me of today's partisans. Otherwise, I really don't care for revolutionary fanaticism. To come to the point where the guillotine becomes your “beloved,” requires one to be truly blind.

February 19, 1949

The MVD spies have started an offensive around us. They've put all the places we inhabit under surveillance. Already last year, the spies created quite a wide net of surveillance in the village of K. Our men went through the villages with sticks “changing” a few minds back. This year is no different. Our suspicions are reinforced by the many betrayals to the MVD operatives that confirmed for them Lightning's presence in the village of K. They probably don't sense our presence, otherwise our little forest might have become tight quarters indeed.

G betrayed our summer bunker at Job's. This citizen gave away everything he knew about us. Rainys was betrayed also. I specifically sent a person to warn him ...

G's place was searched thoroughly. You can imagine how thorough the search was, if they found an uninhabited bunker way out there and, most importantly, under a snow-covered field. There was another bunker in the yard, but they didn't find that one. Biliūnas and one other partisan were sitting in that bunker at the time of the search. Both of them got quite a scare at midnight, when MVD operatives were poking the ground with iron crowbars.

It feels like spring outside. There's no snow in the fields, so we can't go out with our white overcoats anymore. There's water and mud everywhere. The snow covering our bunker is melting in spots, but there are other dark shadows in the forest which make the dark patch on top of our bunker less obvious.

February 21, 1949

Today our men left to hunt down a spy. A stranger was spotted prowling nights and evenings around people's windows in the village of B. Our men will stay in three or four of those homesteads and wait for him to appear.

March 3, 1949

After three weeks, even I crawled out to get some fresh air. Elm and I hurried over to see Beet. We had some business to take care of.

The entrance to Beet's bunker is through an old cowshed. The shed isn't close to the other farm buildings. To deliver food, the hosts have to walk about four hundred meters. It's not a bad bunker. If you bend over you can actually walk in it. The walls are lined with Russian wallpaper. The bunks are orderly: there are mattresses and sheets. Beet lives here in comfort like a gentleman.

It's quite "spacious" for three people to live there. Otherwise, the bunker is boring inside. There are no books. Actually, there are two: Shakespeare's *Hamlet* and *Macbeth*. Everybody criticizes those books, cursing and calling them completely uninteresting, hard to understand, and so on. I hand Žalgiris an issue of "The Bell of Freedom" to read. Plowman wants to read the "gossip." I'm

waiting to see what impression our little newspaper will make. When Žalgiris starts to read about the USA building new airplanes, Plowman utters in a melancholic voice: "They are only just building them ..." and he sighs. And then he adds: "Starting a war is not as simple as smoking a cigarette."

This casualness bothers me somewhat. But after more than four years of battles I do understand his feeling. When you can't even breathe fresh air or see light for weeks on end, it can really suck all the enthusiasm out of you even when you're an idealist.

Plowman joined the ranks of the partisans quite unexpectedly. Somehow he found us. At forty-six, he's already getting on in years. He's constantly worried about his wife, exiled to Siberia, and his children who stayed behind in Lithuania. If he could only work peacefully again in the fields, tend the cattle – he constantly dreams. He's a good man, pious, hardworking, likes to talk – in a word, the prototype of our decent villager.

Around ten in the evening, Elm and I set out to go back home. Outside, the snow has been blowing relentlessly for twenty-four hours. We waded through the snow in the fields. It's hard for me to walk, since my boils haven't healed yet. On our way we drop in on a farmer to get some meat – we've eaten all the supplies given to us by our hosts. They're afraid of the Russians. They aren't used to having "bandits" around ...

March 4, 1949

Stomping through the snowdrifts, Kapsas unexpectedly showed up today. It seems his documents and money were stolen and that's why he couldn't get the paper for us. After receiving my letter, he borrowed some money and came as fast as he could. He brought "The Lighthouse," a new Soviet journal. The short story by J Dovydaitis was particularly vivid in my mind. It describes an expatriate Lithuanian, worn out and sick, returning home from the Canadian forests. The story line is really similar to the one by Vienuolis called "The Returned." I can't imagine how anyone could create more disgusting and bald-

faced lies than this. Just imagine: the exhausted, starving, and sick refugee finds himself back in the kingdom of "Paradise!" Abroad, he was lied to by priests about the terror raging in Lithuania. While here, only "happiness" is all around us! Lenin's lights "twinkling" in every village ... Stalin personally concerned with the "well-being" of all Lithuanians ... Can there be a greater lie!?

Vilnis and Kapsas keep insisting that Dovydaitis isn't a bad person. His father is a professor who is now sitting in a Russian concentration camp.

The father is dying in a camp, while the son is talking gibberish about some Bolshevik heaven! The son is a real bastard. When Lithuania is independent again, he'll probably be screaming the loudest that the Bolsheviks made him write this way. I'm so angry, I can hardly stand it. If I could get a hold of that loathsome creature I'd sing him a song about "Paradise"! Can this be called "adapting to a situation?" No, it is selling your soul, it's spitting on yourself. I can't comprehend how a person becomes such a worm, a reptile.

It seems "The Lighthouse" will also be distributed to Lithuanians living abroad since both journal issues deal with Lithuanian emigré life. What malicious deceit! More than one Lithuanian refugee might come to the conclusion that a "different" life has begun in Lithuania. It's good the Americans at least closed all of the Soviet repatriation missions in Germany. Those nests of liars should've been torn apart a long time ago.

We are all surprised by the recent political developments. Like wound-up gramophones, all the communist parties in other countries started repeating Thorez's report that they will not fight against the communists of the USSR. That's really surprising.

To my way of thinking, the communists are getting ready for an intense offensive, maybe even war, so they are attempting to shape public opinion beforehand. Another sensational news item came through the radio waves today: Molotov and Mikoyan have been forced to resign. Molotov will be replaced by Vyshinsky. What this means is that Molotov, no longer in the good graces of Moscow, has outlived his usefulness. It's possible that the Politburo has

started to split into two factions and the moderates are beginning to be driven out by Stalin. It's really interesting to see how all of this will turn out.

On the evening of March the 6th, Lark, Elm, and I set out to see Nemunas, because Kapsas didn't bring the paper when he came to see us and instead left it with Audrūnas in Alytus. Kapsas' "Red Paradise" was already written a while ago and all the printing plates had been formed, so we needed to publish it as soon as we got paper. We decided to start printing on March the 9th.

Finally, the thing we most feared happened: both of our bunkers were destroyed, our dearest and best men were killed. Our plans fell apart so suddenly and with such force, we never imagined it could happen this way. Deep new wounds have opened in my heart and there's so much darkness in my soul ...

March 13, 1949

In the past few days I had been in such a good mood. I had a good reason – my work was going smoothly, although maybe not as fast as I would've liked. We had enough printing plates and paper. Lightning and I had made arrangements and it seems that in the future we wouldn't have a paper shortage.

Our headquarters was well off with plenty of educated people and a variety of resources. In the future we were going to show off what we are all about. We were going to ...

That Saturday, the night of March the 5th, everybody agreed with my proposal to publish, as soon as possible, a bulletin directed specifically towards the intelligentsia. It was intended to be our first attempt at a more candid presentation of our organization's mission and ideas in the sphere of publishing and propaganda. The bulletin was going to address the various problems that happen in partisan life which often make our people confused and talk about rumors and so on. All these things were to be clarified. We wanted to make clear the reasons why the occasional black stains continue to appear on our organization's character. We planned to address the indifference, the passivity,

the fawning, and the excessive fear of the red idol by some members of our intelligentsia. For the first time, we wanted to speak the bloody truth about what goes on in the mind and soul of our organization and what our veteran partisans feel in their hearts. Yes, many things needed to be said ...

Warrior, Vilnis, Kapsas, and I discussed all these issues. We spoke with passion (at least in my view). We longed to convey our passion to the intellectuals and hoped our words would move them to action. Can there be a Lithuanian intellectual today who doesn't grieve over his homeland's fate? No, such people can't exist.

Specifically, we decided that Warrior would write the introduction about the main ideological tenets of our battle, misunderstandings, and so forth. Kapsas would prepare an essay entitled "Bolshevik Literature and our Intelligentsia." Vilnis would compose some poetry, while I would evaluate the current international situation.

After all these "discussions" I went to sleep, but not for long. When I got up, I found Kapsas had almost finished writing his essay. He gave it to me to read and point out the weak spots in his piece. I read it through a couple of times and gave him my observations.



Fighters of the Iron Wolf group of the Kazimieraitis unit. Mountain Ash (back row, left), Dzūkas and Lightning (front row)

On the evening of March the 6th, Lark, Elm, and I started to get ready for our trip. Swallow arrived before dark. We gave him our "freshly baked" anti-collectivization appeals.

Baurukas brought us food. We ate and started to say our goodbyes.

"God be with you, fellows! I wish you all the best," I said to those staying behind.

"Good luck, we wish you happiness ... see you soon," came the answers.

"Just be careful, take care of yourself, it's dangerous if there's any Russians around here," said Kapsas, sounding concerned, having found out that the Russians were lying in ambush somewhere at the edge of the forest.

I promised to bring gifts: a piece of sausage for Kapsas, candy for everybody else. Jokingly, to Baurukas, I said: "God be with you. Perhaps we'll never see each other again."

I remember those words even now. They're not unusual words. Jokingly, we say them to each other often. But isn't our fate strange? It's so easy to say something and it happens. Are we really in control of our lives? Everything is happening as if in a dream, a horrible dream ...

We came to the wood lot. The weather was cool, but you could hardly feel the wind in the forest. Somebody was riding ahead of us. It was our men, Lightning, Hawk (the Iron Wolf Brotherhood), Willow, and Tornado in sleds. Seized by some gentle feeling, I patted Lightning on his cap. We asked them for the best place to get a wagon, exchanged a few more words and then parted.

A harsh wind was blowing when we left the forest. A blizzard. Somehow, we managed to get a wagon. We went to visit the "women" where we left some money for ink. Along the way, we visited a couple more acquaintances, one of whom was the messenger who was going to bring us paper from Alytus.

By dawn we had reached the bunker where we were to spend the day and crawled in.

This bunker was cold and damp. From the moisture all the paper had peeled off and hung now like pieces of rags. Brr ... it was cold to the bone ...

We were roused around eleven on Monday morning. It was announced that Audrūnas had arrived. Elm and I climb outside. It's beautiful: the sun is shining;

the air feels clear and not cold. My eyes start to water from the bright light. We look at each other and we're surprised at the deathlike pallor of our faces. What else can you expect if you've been sitting in a bunker for a couple of years?

Here is Audrūnas. He's wearing a saddlecloth over his coat, making him look like a real kulak. It turns out he came straight from B's and brought us a typewriter.

As we're chatting, Audrūnas notices army trucks loaded with soldiers coming down the highway. Both of us stare at the road. About a hundred and fifty meters away from us, there's a seemingly unending caravan of trucks. The mongols sitting in the first vehicles are wearing white overcoats. I call Elm. The vehicles keep moving about fifty meters' distance from each other.

"Eight, nine, twelve ..." we count.

All of them are full of mongols. A thought pops into my head: "Where are they going?" Our attention is drawn to the two armored vehicles in the middle of the colonnade. After that there are more trucks. I begin to feel uneasy. If those trucks are going anywhere, it must be for us! They are either coming for us or heading to the pine woods! No, no way are they going to the pine forests! They must be heading to our Kalesninkai Forest. In the last few days there were a couple of spies who were shot dead near this forest and, besides, it hasn't been



Dzūkas and Swallow (back row), Lightning and Hawk (front row)

searched since autumn. I check my watch. It's twelve thirty. It seems too late in the day for them to start combing the woods. The mongols will surround the forest today and start their searches tomorrow.

"They are coming for us," I tell Elm, pointing at the moving vehicles. Altogether around thirty trucks crammed with mongols have passed by. If only they knew they were being watched!

It's as if some voice inside my head keeps repeating that these Russians are going to search our woods. I decide to stay here for today. I say goodbye to Audrūnas.

"You hang in there, now!" he tells me.

"I'll hang in, all right!" I laugh.

We crawl into the bunker again. Lark and Elm have doubts whether these Russians will search our forest. This evening, we'll decide whether to stay or leave. Our decision will depend on whether our messenger has gotten our paper.

We drive over to see him. The paper hasn't arrived yet. We'll have to wait another day. Elm and Lark leave to bring back the topcoats. In the meantime, I'm explaining to the citizens the complicated international situation, commenting on Molotov's dismissal, and so on. I'm lecturing as if out of a textbook. I calm the people down by trying to convince them that this situation cannot go on for very long and they agree with me:

"Of course, things can't continue this way forever. But, still those damn English and Americans are waiting too long."

Elm and Lark return.

"We're done for! Not far from Žemaitėliai, people heard explosions and shots. They're saying our bunkers have been discovered," Elm whispers.

This news hits me like a bolt of lightning. Weakness comes over me and for a while I'm silent. God, my God, have they really found our bunkers? Is it possible they are all killed? Is it possible we've lost the fruits of our hard labor of these past two years? I can't think straight. I pull myself together and ask our host and Nemunas to leave us alone. Elm tells me what he's heard. The whole forest was surrounded and sealed off. About four in the afternoon the explosions and

shootings started. One of the explosions was so big that people saw the smoke rising above the forest some four or five kilometers away. There was general agreement about the location of these events: some motioned towards Lelionys, while others towards Žemaitėliai. One of the women messengers came running to warn us not to go back.

It's clear. They found our bunkers. But which one? Was it Lightning's or ours? Or maybe both?

We return to our bunker in a funereal mood. On our way, we drop in on Nemunas. All of us are quiet; what is there to say now? As it is, a lot has been said. We really have no desire to crawl back into the bunker. Not knowing about our men's fate is so tormenting that we can't sit still. Going anywhere would be better than sitting in one place. Sitting is just torture!

Nemunas leads us to see Student. We're hoping to find Swallow there. It's possible that Swallow, after hearing all those shots and explosions, would go to Student's.

The moon is full. It's almost as light as day. It's cold driving. We're dressed only in uniform jackets and camouflage topcoats.

Finally, we reach the notorious "students." They really do live like students. Their dark entrance is visible from tens of meters away. They aren't camouflaging



Lightning, the leader of the Iron Wolf group of the Kazimieraitis unit, in the summer of 1948

it day or night. Why hide it, they say, if the people here are good? What kind of logic is that?! And what would happen if the Russians suddenly started combing the woods? A bunker like yours will definitely be found, we tell them. But the "students" are convinced that the Russians won't search any woods during the winter. They live in a dreamworld!

We don't find Swallow at Student's, nor do we get any more news ... We go back to Nemunas. Nobody knows anything for certain. Only rumors abound.

"Seven dead and one taken alive."

"Five dead and three escaped."

"Eight dead."

"One of them had a beard."

"No, two bearded men were found, while another two were burned and mutilated so badly that their corpses were barely recognizable ..."

And on and on it goes. How do you reconcile all these accounts? I feel as though a worm has burrowed into my heart and is poisoning my blood. Everything is destroyed. The traitors followed us for a long time and finally tracked us down. Our frequent outings must have betrayed us. I see all of them in my mind's eye: Lightning laughing, Warrior sad, sickly, and nervous, Vilnis, who recently joined the partisans, Kapsas, Hawk (the Iron Wolf Brotherhood) ... Poor Hawk.

We move on. Maybe Al will know something? But again it's the same: one person said this, another something else, and a third told yet another story. One thing, though, catches our attention. People are whispering among themselves about seeing two civilians running down the main street of Takniškės village towards Alytus at ten on Monday morning. They were wearing only jackets and were in a big hurry.

At first I wasn't suspicious. But Lark remarks immediately: "Could Kapsas and Vilnis have killed Warrior in his sleep and then run off to Alytus?"

I don't want to believe it, yet something here seems true. No, they couldn't have betrayed us, and in such a treacherous way, like two sinister snakes. Both of them are poets, intellectuals, both lamented the fate of our nation. If they really

wanted to destroy our command headquarters, they, especially Kapsas, had had better opportunities to do it. They could have betrayed Hawk and me and they could have done it before we left. I'm not a literary critic, but I think the writings they'd brought with them had come from their hearts and were not just lip service ... I don't believe it. Such treachery and evil betrayal hasn't occurred in the history of the partisan movement. By far, this would surpass the betrayal by Judas. Kapsas wrote his "Red Paradise" with great sincerity. How could he write it and then so easily betray us? I'm consumed by these thoughts, trying to untangle it all. Who can we trust, if people like them betray us?

At Al's I compose a letter to Swallow. I ask for a meeting. It's not worth our while to go to him: for one, we don't know the situation there, and second, he might be gone. If Swallow and his men are home, they'll come once they get my letter. This moonlight hinders our movements. If only it were a little bit darker, but now everything is as bright as day. Even our camouflage topcoats don't help. It's as if the moon is mocking us!

Stunned, we return to the bunker. We only know that both of our bunkers were discovered: first one, then the other. Why had the Russians not attacked both bunkers at once? Our men, once they heard the explosions and shots



The entrance to the bunker where Warrior was killed. This photograph was taken by the MGB on 7 March 1949

coming from the neighboring bunker, would've run out of their bunker. I still think something doesn't make sense.

Swallow doesn't arrive the following day. Nemunas has been to Alytus. He tells us that it is only hearsay that four partisans were killed, a bearded one among them. That means that people managed to escape from one of the bunkers, including Lightning. Nemunas says he's heard that a man living near the woods by the village of Z insisted he saw Lightning and one other man Monday evening. How I hope that it's true!

We go back to Al. We find out that there were more people who witnessed two civilians walking down the Takniškės main road. Both of these civilians caught up with a man who was driving to Alytus and forced him to give them a ride. The man was seen by someone who promised to get us his last name as soon as possible. If this really happened, we'll have proof in our hands. A description of those civilians' features or some details of their clothing would be enough to identify Vilnis and Kapsas. At first, I couldn't believe that both of our scribblers could do something like that, but now doubt penetrates me, painful like a festering wound.

Al prepares the bath and gets us shirts. I walk like a robot into the bathhouse. I start to analyze Kapsas and Vilnis and still can't believe any of this. It's true that the whole time he was staying with us Vilnis was always sullen, apathetic and lazy. I remember he asked me once to let him go home to see his mother. I sternly opposed him and he never mentioned it again. Maybe he was already thinking about escaping from us then? Maybe he became disillusioned with partisan life, our cruel battles and fate? Maybe as a poet, he imagined our life as better, painted in prettier colors? Instead, here he was confronted with danger, battle, and death. There is no other way here: death or freedom. It's all or nothing, just like in Ibsen's play *Brand*. One needs nerves of steel, an iron will and heart. There's no room for disappointment. Fight to the death or freedom. Once you join the partisans, immediately abandon any scheming to survive. Life is precious and needs to be preserved, but not at the expense of others.

Was Vilnis ready for all of that? It's hard to say, but now it seems to me he was weak-willed, despite telling us he had no fear of dying. Was Kapsas like him too?

His personality was more complex. He always insisted that artistic expression was his highest goal and everything else was peripheral to him. What do you value more, your homeland or creativity? we used to ask Kapsas. He would start to philosophize then, but we would keep pressing him with our questions until, backed into a corner, he was unable to answer us. "You can do anything in the name of creative work," Kapsas would repeat. His mood would change a couple of times a day. Sometimes he would be happy, working with enthusiasm, but at other times he'd plunge into such gloom that it was hard to look at him. He would lie there unable to fall asleep, thinking. It seemed as if he was constantly fighting some battle with himself.

I keep thinking about Kapsas, and Vilnis, and still can't accept the idea that they could be traitors who killed Warrior in his sleep. Their writings, those writings ... I've read their poetry and there's no way that it was written mechanically. Besides, Kapsas knew us much earlier, he was acquainted with Handsome for a whole year. I just can't figure it out ...

We approach the bathhouse. It's already heated. We undress quickly and bathe. It's too bad we don't have any birch branches. We try to beat ourselves with straw bundles, but it's not the same. After bathing, I exchange shoes with another man. This kind man graciously gives his to me. If only more people were like him!

Next day we meet with Swallow and Tornado. So, Tornado is alive! We learn that Willow is also alive. That means that in our bunker (command headquarters) were killed Warrior, Kapsas and Vilnis, and that Lightning's bunker (headquarters of partisan Kazimieraitis' team) lost Lightning and Hawk. It's sad, very sad, but at least we can breathe easier that there were no traitors among us.

We have a brief meeting. I change the time for the distribution of proclamations and the warning letters to teachers. We arrange our contacts. In the meantime we'll wait for Hawk (the leader of Dainava command and the acting leader of the whole region). I take Tornado with me. He knows the roads and the people here and it will be easier for us to not get lost. Elm knows this territory well.

We decide to fire up the coals in the bathhouse tomorrow, since Tornado hasn't taken a bath in a while and another bath won't hurt us either. However, we don't heat the bathhouse, instead we're determined to go to the place of the incident.

People are trying to talk us out of going, telling us that the Russians are rampaging there every night. We ignore their pleas and the fact that it's a full moon and take a two-horse wagon towards the "women."

We travel cautiously, guns at the ready, looking around. Our journey is uneventful all the way to the "women." It's quiet there, as if nothing had happened.

At the "women," I find a letter from Hawk telling me that he's planning to spend the second half of the month at Little Father's.

We're on the Takniškės main road. Traveling fast, we scan every nearby farmstead. It seems there aren't any Russians here tonight and uneventfully we enter Kalesninkai Forest. About a hundred meters more and we reach Lightning's bunker.

Our hearts start pounding. The mystery slowly unfolds. At the "women" one of the female messengers tells us that four partisans died in one bunker and one



Mountain Ash (left)

in the other. I don't say anything, but feel that I'll have to start believing what I've been unable to accept.

The whole forest has been trampled over by the Russians. Footprints upon footprints ... Not far from the bunker we notice long, well-worn pathways. This is where they must have started to surround the bunker. The first line is about a hundred and fifty meters away from the bunker, the second seventy-five meters, and the third around fifty meters. Wherever there was a pine tree or a tree stump there is evidence that a crouching mongol was there. No one could have escaped through this cordon.

And here's the place that was Lightning's bunker. Now it's just a black hole in the ground surrounded by piles of sand. We look for bloody footprints. Maybe we'll find the spot where our men fought after they stormed out of the bunker. Even the Russians have been telling stories about the powerful resistance waged here. We examine the ground, but it's hard to find any traces of blood at night. Pine tree branches lopped off by bullets tell the story of a fierce battle waged here, an honorable battle that finally brought death to our brave Lightning ...

Burned planks litter the ground. There's real heroism here: everyone in the bunker died and everything was destroyed with them. On the path leading to the bunker there's a rag lying on the ground. We pick it up. It's a piece of blanket singed and soaked in blood. A bit further on we see water kegs bent and riddled with bullets. The kegs are blackened from the smoke and fire. Pieces of paper are scattered everywhere in the wind. A grim sight. The moonlight and tree shadows only increase the feeling of desolation.

Lightning, dear Lightning, can it be you are really gone? Can it be you were destined to die now, when we need you most? I lean over to peer into the depths of the pit, my eyes examining the bunker's entry, and I'm trying to imagine how this terrible tragedy took place. And it almost seems that I can see you, Lightning, in the bunker, hurling grenades out through the opening. For the last time, you tell the men what needs to be done. You were the one who forced your way out into this hell and fought! You must have terrified our enemies! Lightning, my dear Lightning, you are gone ...

Inside of me, there's so much hatred growing towards the traitors. Those damned cowards, those bastards! If only I could get my hands on you! I'd give up years of my life to look you in the eyes. Then you'd find out how a traitor dies.

I remember two years ago when Lightning and I examined the bunker where Vytenis, Lord, Nykštaitis, and Key perished ...

We walk towards our bunker, about a kilometer away from Lightning's. It's strange, there aren't many footprints here. The bunker wasn't completely surrounded. The ceiling has caved in. The bunker was clearly blown up by the Russians themselves. I jump inside and start rummaging around the boards, hoping to find some scraps of documents or any remnants of our equipment. Alas, I don't find anything at all. It's clear there was treachery here, just as Lark had said! The walls of the bunker are hacked up by the fragments of mines we left behind. It was probably done on purpose by the mongols to make it appear that all three men, Warrior, Kapsas, Vilnis, had blown themselves up.

Right now, I have an almost complete picture of what happened here. Vilnis and Kapsas decided to go back, which was only possible if they snitched. It's also possible that Kapsas came to see us this last time with that plan already in mind. What demonstrates this further is the fact that Kapsas, on his way to see us, first stopped at Grasshopper's (Lightning's landlord) so that Grasshopper would lead him first to Lightning's bunker. Probably he hadn't yet memorized the location of Lightning's bunker and wanted to make sure he knew. As long as Lark, Elm, and I were in the bunker, Kapsas and Vilnis didn't dare start their treacherous work. But left alone with Warrior they had the perfect opportunity.

Could they have plotted this vile act a long time ago? It's hard to know. When the three of us left, they had the opportunity to freely discuss their plan of action. I wonder which one of them thought of it first and convinced the other to go along? I think it was Kapsas. He was trying to convince Vilnis that there's no point to being a partisan, since sooner or later you'll die just like everybody else. And there's little hope of staying alive, because the Bolsheviks will soon launch an even more powerful offensive against the partisans. There's

no hope for war, and even if it were to happen, it probably wouldn't start until twenty or thirty years from now. Besides, Vilnis hadn't played a significant role in our command headquarters and no one took him seriously there. So it was better to snitch and in that way return into the ranks of Soviet writers, where a little talent widened one's opportunities for a good life and good pay.

I keep wondering what made Kapsas take this step. It's possible he spoke with someone like Mieželaitis whom he trusted so much. Mieželaitis, in turn, could have informed the MGB about our connections with Kapsas. Maybe the MGB then forced Kapsas to carry out this horrible plan. First, he betrayed the bunker at G's place. That was the start, and later on Kapsas was completely in the hands of the MGB. He couldn't escape them because they would have exposed his role in the betrayal of Job's and G's bunkers.

Of course, it could have happened another way. Any way you look at this, they found a great opportunity for their betrayal. On Sundays, because we get up around five in the afternoon, it meant that Warrior was going to sleep around daybreak. They killed Warrior while he was sleeping, then Kapsas and Vilnis hurried off to Alytus as fast as they could. That's when people saw them running. According to witnesses, one of the civilians was wearing a coat while



Arms recovered by the MGB from a destroyed partisan bunker

the other just had a jacket. (Vilnis' coat was left at Bauras' place, so there was no way for him to get it.) That's why the trucks were traveling so late (around one o'clock Central European time), that's why the Russians were in a hurry and only surrounded that small part of the forest where our bunkers were. That's why there were no signs of battle near our bunker; that's why we couldn't find any scraps of documents since the Russians had calmly emptied out our bunker and that night blew it up with our own mines. That's why the corpses were scrupulously guarded from people's sight, only allowing the party operatives to view them. The rumors that seven or eight partisans were killed was started by the MGB themselves in order to confuse us. Only Warrior died in our bunker, while Lightning died in his bunker with Hawk, Mountain Ash, and Howdy (the last two had only come to Lightning's bunker on Sunday evening).

We can't comprehend such great vileness, such damned treachery. What kind of people are those two, really? Where's their conscience? This was done by two people we trusted – intellectuals, passable writers, Lithuanians, Futurists ... There aren't any words to describe all of this. Oh you bastards, bastards! So this is the kind of people we still have among us!

We found out that Vilnis and Kapsas had already betrayed Bauras' son P. They betrayed the person who had done so much good for them, had protected and cared for them more than he did for himself.

Now the party activists have become emboldened. The stribs are going to the village of Buda without any fear. Why should they be afraid now? Those they once feared are dead.

How many more people will Vilnis and Kapsas betray? There's much they don't know, but Vilnis did visit some of our contacts. Maybe those contacts won't be arrested just yet, but sooner or later they'll be dealt with ... My head is spinning.

Today we'll spend the day somewhere close to Buda. We drive through the village. We go to visit a farmer whose cottage is hidden in a thicket. If the mongols decide to drop in on him, it will be easy to retreat into the woods under the cover of bushes. We keep the horses harnessed and leave them in the barn.

The family immediately gets up and prepares beds for us to sleep in. Three of us go to sleep, while the fourth stays up on guard. I can't fall asleep, and lie awake until dawn.

So this is the new wave of intellectuals who were supposed to replenish our decimated ranks! This wave has thinned our ranks even further with their most villainous acts! What harm did Warrior and Lightning do to Kapsas and Vilnis? Hawk even impressed them with his quiet nature and laconic manner. They were received with openness and sincerity. I always tried to help Kapsas, and worried about his safety when sending him out on a trip, and this is how the bastard repaid us! Oh, how he repaid us!

The day goes by slowly. It's getting dark. We're told that the mongols have been at neighboring farms. They also visited Bauras. People are saying that Bauras' girls were crying and running around the village, looking for vodka, because if they didn't bring any back the mongols threatened to arrest them all. Of course, how could Bauras protest any of this? As it stands now, they can take everything away from him, and he's forced to keep quiet.

We hoped to meet with Grasshopper (Lightning's landlord), but the place where we were hoping to find him is full of mongols. In early morning, the mongols converged by cars on Kalesninkai village. They're still hanging around the woods looking for some kind of third bunker – an ammunition depot.

Not being able to meet with Grasshopper, we decide to go to Swallow's. The weather is cold. It's snowing. The wind is blowing large clumps of snowflakes into our eyes. As we drive, we can't see what's ahead of us. We enter the forest. Here it's quiet and we can get away from the snowstorm, but maneuvering around tree stumps in our two-horse sled is difficult. Every hundred meters or so, Tornado orders us to get out, since the sled keeps catching on a stump. We travel this way for more than an hour. We stop at Swallow's bunker. It's very well disguised: the ground all around it is even with small pines "growing" over it. This bunker could only be found through a betrayal.

In the bunker we find seven partisans. Together with us that makes eleven. This bunker is bigger than ours. It's arranged the same way, with a narrow path running over its entrance.

March 14, 1949

The bunker feels stuffy. I take off my jacket and sweater, but I still feel hot.

After I tell Swallow about Kapsas' and Vilnis' treachery, he decides not to stay in this bunker a day longer. Kapsas and Vilnis don't know about this bunker, but Vilnis could have picked up from our conversation that Swallow stays in this corner of the forest. It's really risky to stay here – if the Russians get even an inkling that we are here, they'll dig up the whole forest in order to find us.

Staying with Swallow improves my mood somewhat. All of the men are kind, sincere, and joking around. Their jokes and village humor help us relax. They are really kind fellows! It's easier to fight, even easier to die with men like these at your side!

The sun is visible through the bunker's openings. Water drips through one of them. The thaw has begun.

Towards evening Swallow makes coffee. We drink it and then clear out. It's quite impossible to ride in the sled today. It's hard to walk, as our feet sink deep into the mud. I make a stop at my uncle's place, but don't find any family or friends. Just last year my uncle was dispossessed as a kulak, and after failing to pay 18,000 rubles in taxes he ran away and thereby avoided the mass deportation that took place on May the 22th to 24th, 1948.

March 15, 1949

We drive over to the "women" to meet with Tiger-Thinker. On our way, we stop at Al's. He tells us about the searches conducted in Z and R villages. The mongols, armed with crowbars and pickaxes, made a mess of the farmers' yards – threw straw and hay out of barns, hacked holes in threshing floors in numerous places in barns, and knocked over foundations. They report seeing the MVD listening for something with their ears pressed on special equipment they placed on the ground. I think that the MVD are probably using the same equipment the Germans used to find survivors under rubble or under mounds of dirt. An article in "Signal"

said this equipment is capable of picking up the slightest underground sound or thump. What haven't those Russians used against us? Thousands of soldiers, light tanks and armored vehicles, dogs, and now even this kind of equipment. Recently they've conducted extraordinary searches for bunkers. For instance, in one district they overturned all the biggest stones in the fields and poked the ground all over.

Everybody must be asleep already at the "women," since there's no light there. In the village the dogs are barking furiously. Maybe there are mongols wandering somewhere close by.

It looks like Tiger and his men won't be coming.

I sit down at the table to write letters to Little Father and Tiger. I warn them that Hawk shouldn't cross the Nemunas on his way back and that it's better for him to wait for me at Little Father's. We'll discuss the new developments there. I mentioned that Vilnis and Kapsas probably noticed the arrival date in Hawk's letter and have informed the MVD, since now both of the banks of the Nemunas are teeming with their operatives.

As we returned, I thought we did the right thing by not betraying the location Lark, Elm, and I visited on March the 6th. Kapsas kept asking me about it insistently. The MVD people went the opposite direction, towards the village of M, which Vilnis



Little Father-Litas, the leader of the Dzūkai unit (left), with Wormwood, the leader of the Šarūnas unit, in 1950

overheard me saying was my initial destination. Now there are reports of about twelve trucks filled with MVD operatives conducting searches there. On our way we stop to eat at one of our messengers'. We are told Audrūnas had asked here for the letters I wrote. Kapsas has probably already betrayed Audrūnas, and if the MVD haven't arrested him yet it's only because they want to catch him in flagrante; and besides, if they arrest Audrūnas, it will become clear that Kapsas is a traitor (the MVD think we still don't know this). I wrote a letter to Audrūnas encouraging him to join the partisans. But at what price? They'll deport his parents, his brother, and confiscate their belongings. Is he ready for that? What's left for him to do but join? If he falls into the hands of the MVD they'll take him apart bone by bone. You can sacrifice yourself for your parents or for your homeland! There's only one choice.

March 16, 1949

The bunker is so cold that we can't crawl out from underneath the blankets. Since the bunker is in a yard, we have to stay inside for fourteen or fifteen hours a day, so we just spend our time snoozing. Lack of air is our biggest problem. Maybe that's why it's so cold. The window is kept open at night.

I'm leafing through issues of "Trumpets." They are full of patriotic articles, impassioned speeches, and talk about men who sat at the helm of the state. Their proclamations have an air of extraordinary bravery and commitment. Now all of that is gone. Those mighty men got scared, grew weak, and now hide under false names; shod in bast shoes, they herd cows, play toady, drop to their knees, repent, and wonder about reorienting their lives. Out of depression, they drink themselves into a stupor, drowning their hardships, their thoughts, and themselves in vodka.

March 17, 1949

Around noon, the landlord's son announces that last night the mongols set up ambushes at a number of nearby farms. They searched one farmer during the night and again in the morning. This is also the work of Kapsas. He probably forgot the

name of the last farmer, who was asked to keep the papers, since they searched his neighbor too. Could they have sensed our presence? People are saying the Russians are questioning residents about some escaped partisans. That means they're looking for us.

There are still three days until we meet with Tiger-Thinker. We don't want to be inside the bunker because it's a real trap. The doors of the entrance are so heavy that if the Russians find the bunker, you might as well forget about trying to open them by yourself. Yet it's hard to spend the day outside not knowing this place or the people well.

We go on foot to Kudirka's. It's very bright. The dogs are barking. I can't stand barking dogs at night when it's bright.

Finally we are at Kudirka's. He lives in some logged-out pine forest. These places are somewhat familiar to me from the fall of 1946 when Lightning and I used to walk around here.

The bunker is big. The floor is flooded with water. The camouflage is bad. The entrance is hidden only with cut fir trees. You have to walk over the fir branches to get into the bunker. The branches get trampled over and the fallen needles clearly show the way.

Here we find the runaway Grasshopper (Lightning's landlord). Grasshopper's wife and child are also hiding not far away. Other people in their home were arrested, but were released after being recruited. One of Grasshopper's brothers-in-law was told by the MVD to track down Grasshopper and his "gang." Once the "gang" was found Grasshopper would be released. "Why would we want your brother-in-law? Track down the gang and we'll let him go. You will both be forgiven everything," explained the "kind-hearted" MVD interrogator to the brother-in-law. While going over the photographs of the partisans, this interrogator let out a series of curses directed towards Tiger-Thinker: "And this bull, this snake, this horse, this mother f..., this mother f...! swearing in the choicest, richest Russian curses, as he handled Thinker's photograph. It seems that Thinker's 'capitalist' appearance and his stoutness irritated the MVD. Later the interrogator showed him a picture of Rimvydas. "Do you know this one?" "No, I don't. Maybe he's a Jew?" "Nothing of the kind! This is Rimvydas. How many times has he come to see you?"

Grasshopper also told us what he heard when his brother-in-law and the Russians were talking about the attack on Lightning's bunker. Apparently the Russians knew the bunker was mined, so they started shooting to provoke our guys. They were successful in part because the exploding mines couldn't do much harm to the MVD hiding behind the tree stumps. According to Grasshopper's story, only Lightning tried to get out of the bunker, and halfway out he was cut down in a salvo of gunshots. Those who remained inside burned everything and either shot or blew themselves up. The corpses were taken from Alytus to Vilnius. Mountain Ash and Howdy were unrecognizable. Vilnis and Kapsas were barely able to identify them.

March 18, 1949

Apparently, yesterday, we walked right past the Russians and they didn't notice us. Six Russians had set a trap in a farmer's cottage near the road that we were on. The farmer was told to block the door and cover the windows. One window was left uncovered for the soldier on guard. There were no guards outside. If someone were to knock and ask if there were any strangers around, the owner was told to open the door and say that it was just family inside.

The guard must have been asleep when we went by the cottage.

They are setting a lot of traps throughout the area. There is talk going around that near the village of G six partisans were killed, including Šarūnas. This winter there are really huge losses.

March 19, 1949

From Kudirka's we are marching to Beet's.

At Beet's we sleep for twenty-four hours straight. A few times his cheerful landlady comes to visit.

"You are truly visitors," she remarks. "Here you meet for a few days, then you part and who knows for how long, maybe forever."

Yes. Yes. We are truly visitors. All partisans are visitors on this land and don't want to overstay their welcome or become bothersome. Appearing like meteors, they blaze and then burn up much like their youth, their desires, ideas and hopes.

I explain to Beet what his squad needs to do to survive. The Iron Wolf squad still remains without a leader until Hawk returns.

In the evening we go back. The blizzard lasts all day and night. There's so much snow it reaches our knees. It's so hard to walk. We decide to take a wagon and here it seems as if fortune was guiding us. Unable to get a horse, we walk out of the cottage. Suddenly Tornado stops and whispers: "Russians!"

About fifteen meters away from us we see Russians scattering. A Russian voice rings out in the dark giving commands.

Quietly and quickly we run crouching across the yard. We are waiting for rockets and shots, and then it becomes apparent that the Russians haven't seen us. We climb to the top of a small hill. It's a convenient spot, and the Russians don't scare us. With so much snow it's not much fun to have a shoot-out. It's impossible to run. Lark gets completely winded.

What a coincidence! If the landlord had had a horse we would certainly have had a shoot-out with the Russians. Very likely we would have been surrounded in the cottage.

We make a big arc around the farmstead and trudge further. We reach Kalesninkai Forest. It's even harder to go through the woods. We inch forward step by step. Lark is trailing behind, cursing under his breath. He is totally exhausted. All of us are tired, and we stop on a hillock to rest.

We go to visit the "women." Thinker is not here, but he has sent a letter.

Finally we are "home."

March 22, 1949

I received a letter from my brother Kostas-Rainys. He writes that he has left Kaunas. So ends his peaceful life. What am I going to do about him? Is it really going to be necessary to take him into the partisan movement? I don't want to

see him in our ranks. I don't think he is suited for this kind of work. He won't be able to endure this sort of hardship. I feel sorry for him. If only one of us could survive to help Mother and Uncle. I don't worry about my fate, but he has to stay alive.

Warrior also received a letter, written by Oak. I gather from his letter that he isn't happy with the results of his meeting with Litas. If I could at least find Hawk at Litas', then all of us could discuss this.

In his letter, Tiger-Thinker arranged for a meeting today. We'll have to go.

March 24, 1949

I'm back in the Punia pinewoods after almost two years. I arrived here yesterday with Saulius and Peony.

We spent the day with Saulius in the hut, using the bunker only to sleep in. Their bunker is adjacent to the hut and its entrance is fitted into it. We're lucky we didn't have to spend the whole day in their "hole." There's very little room in there. We can barely all fit in. The ceiling of the bunker is covered in tin which lets the water trickle down into a trough placed on the ground. The water-soaked straw is



Fighters of the Dzūkai unit's Margis group: Beet and Saulius (standing), Hawk, Peony, Žilvinas and Tiger-Thinker

rotting. It's cold lying in the bunker. I tried to cover my head with the blanket, but the smell was so nasty that I quickly stuck my head out again.

I really don't like this bunker. And not just because it's small, low and damp, but because in the worst case there's no way you could open the entry door by yourself. The entrance is blocked by a barrel filled with grain, and on top of it there are sacks of flour.

Somehow we suffer through the night. In the morning the landlady gets us up. We climb out. The light dazzles our eyes. The dull day creeps by slowly. I write in my diary. Later I jot down questions to discuss with Hawk and Litas. Once I've finished writing, I sit at the table with my endless thoughts. I watch our host's family. Our farmers still live poorly and so much more is needed for them to be able to live like farmers in the West. That's the way it is here: the cottage is small, with only one room standing in for a kitchen, dining room, bedroom and sitting room. The windows are tiny. The walls are rotten and shabby, the ceiling darkened from the smoke. There is no floor. Instead, there's the pitted and dirty ground. There is almost no furniture, only a table and some boards placed on tubs along the wall for benches. There are two beds, roughly nailed together. The parents cover themselves with sheets of indeterminate color, and their five children with a variety of clothes. During the day you wear them, and at night they take the place of covers. The hut is without decorations. It's true, there are some pictures of saints, but with time, smoke, and the flies, they long ago stopped being pictures but just blackened scraps of paper. The family itself looks ill. The parents and children have pale, sallow faces, and bluish circles under their eyes.

However, this is not the only family that looks or lives like this. Many live this way. It's possible it used to be much better, but I haven't seen that. Now the poverty is universal! There are no rays of hope for a better life. The only entertainment is hootch, and after that there are fights. Hootch has simply taken over the village. Everyone is making it, pushing it and drinking it, even the children. The nation is awash in blood, tears, and dark despair, while in hootch, it seems, they've found their solace and temporary comfort. How many idiots, criminals, degenerates, embezzlers, prostitutes and feeble-minded will these accursed years bring to

Lithuania! Some say that the Bolshevik years of occupation and fighting will toughen the nation. What remains, they say, will be steel. Maybe some will be like steel, heated and tempered in this battle. But there won't be many of them. A lot of steel will be used up in battle. What will remain are many, many rusted and twisted pieces of iron, and even more pieces of clay. Here is the evidence. The best part of the nation is fighting and dying, or finishing their days in exile and in jail. All the idealists, the nation's elite, are fighting, not afraid to die for their country. Fighting and dying since there is no battle without losses, just as there is no freedom without battle and sacrifice. What remains are the cowards, the toadies, the alcoholics, the weak-willed sycophants of the Bolshevik apparatus, the swindlers and the hypocrites ... all of these will survive. Not many of those who fought for their country and its people will be left.

Consider the partisan struggle. In the early days there were so many men strong as oaks and brave as lions! Only a few of those are still among us today. The faces of the fallen pass again and again before our eyes. So many of them, an entire world of the dead! Who will understand and write about this unprecedented heroism? Will future generations know how to value the bravery of these people? A part of the nation will understand, but there will be those



Arms and paper records from the bunker of the Margis group of the Dzūkai unit, which was destroyed by the MGB in August 1947

who will trample everything into the dirt. Those who crawl can't understand eagles! Used to dirt and dung, how can they value something nobler? A parasite is only able to take, but does not give.

Our beloved village is also beginning to change, the village with its St John Nepomucen, Isidore the Plowman, and the Mater Misericordia whose heart is pierced by the seven swords. The village is weary of that damned deceit and terror. People are getting worse, says Saulius.

People aren't getting worse, they're just tired from the huge strain on their nerves and the long wait for freedom. That's more apparent where there are fewer partisans.

As soon as the sun sets, we cross the Nemunas by boat. Along the way I think what a cruel death it would be if the Russians suddenly started shooting at us from the banks of the river. How many times have we crossed our lakes and rivers like this! Many times and always with luck!

We don't find Thinker. I'm uneasy. Is it possible he got scared of the Russians who are searching the woods one and a half kilometers away, on the other side of the Nemunas? He knew I was coming. I'll have to spend twenty-four hours in Beet's and Willow's bunker. The bunker is old, dug out a year ago. Inside it's dark from a smoking kerosene lamp. At first we don't find Beet and Willow, but they finally come in around two in the morning. Thinker spends the day somewhere in the village. The snow chased him out of the bunker. It turns out that Willow is the son of that landlord we stayed with during the day two years ago when we went through the Punia woods to visit Oak. There, Thinker and Pakštas had settled in with them at the edge of the Nemunas. After Linen had betrayed the bunker, Willow's family was arrested and deported. Willow and his sisters managed to run away. Now he's a partisan.

I lie down. Beet has lit the small stove and is cooking barley. His "culinary attempts" continue until morning. The weather is clear and very beautiful. It's already spring. It's as if I can see spring coming, but it's in my heart that I feel it the most. How dear you are, spring, after such a cruel winter that brought us so many losses!

I don't want to crawl into the bunker, and so for a while I stand at the entrance inhaling this pure air. A few years ago, this forest surged with partisan life! Now only three to four partisans live here from time to time. Back then, two years ago, we met at Oak's, in the "Riflemen's Hall." Of those who participated in the meetings in this "hall," only Hawk, Nightingale, and I remain. Linen became a traitor. Lapaitis and Lark were taken alive but betrayed nothing. They say that Woodsman drowned in the Nemunas. Rye died because of a traitor. Lightning was killed through a betrayal. Howdy met the same fate. Pakštas and Maple were killed because Linen revealed their bunker. Stork was killed with Smith, Wolf, Lion, and little Oak. All of them died at the hands of traitors. Back then there were so many men, so many ideas, dreams, plans, and now everything is buried under the ground. Only the pines and spruce still rustle, just the way they did before. But even these are being mercilessly destroyed. Even the trees have a hard time surviving!

I crawl into the bunker. It's dark as hell. If only Thinker would show up this evening, then we would move on. I just can't sit in one place too long.

March 27, 1949

Sunday. The sun is pleasantly warm above the Punia pinewoods. I'm writing in my diary while sitting on a tree stump with my face turned to the sun. After sitting a long time in the bunker, it's so peaceful to feel the warmth of the sun's rays and the pure forest air.

I met with Thinker, but it's not so easy to get to Little Father. Mongols are everywhere.

On March the 25th the deportations started again. Deportation is taking place under "democratic" conditions. It's hard to say how many people were touched by this misfortune, but the machine-gun chatter coming from different sides of the forest shows that this time the Bolsheviks are sweeping widely.

We make our way towards the Nemunas. We're hoping to find some of the people in hiding who could tell us more about what's going on in the villages.

Along the edge of the forest we see a small group of people. They look sad and depressed.

“That’s it, men ... If it goes on any longer – we’re finished,” says one of them.

People are talking about which families were taken away. Again, many have lost their homes, their property, and their loved ones and neighbors.

People are trying to escape deportation any way they can. Those who live by the woods went into the forest with all their worldly possessions. Everyone seems stunned: they don’t know where to go or what to do. In the villages, people go from one house to another, just so they don’t remain at home, even when “elsewhere” is still the same place. So all day long John goes to Peter’s and Peter goes to John’s. It’s so hard to look at people who are so hopeless. I see many with tears in their eyes. After all, brothers, sisters, and relatives are being deported. I can’t find words to console them. What could I possibly say to them? I stand alone, leaning against a pine tree, and think: “What will be left of Lithuania if this terror goes on much longer?”

Spring is coming, but not to Lithuania. Again I approach the people who are speaking with Hawk (from Margis), Tiger-Thinker, and others. I listen to their conversation. It’s impossible to listen with a calm heart to what people are saying.



Tautmylis-Spyruoklis and Lapaitis-Patrimpas, leaders of the Vaidotas group of the Dzūkai unit, by the entrance to their bunker in the spring of 1947

Just after dawn one person saw two girls who had escaped the claws of the MVD running barefoot on the frozen ground. The MVD was chasing and shooting at them for several kilometers. The girls’ legs were wounded and bloody. I feel a charge go through me – such cold mornings, snow and ice everywhere. Another tells of an old woman running with an infant in her arms and crying. A small boy, apparently fleeing the MVD, was dragging a big sack. Tired from the effort, the child collapsed over the sack and burst out sobbing. I feel bitterness welling up in my throat. Pain squeezes my heart so that I can barely stand it. I’m overcome with anger that we partisans are so helpless. If there were more of us, we would shoot all these MVD villains, but now there are just three of us ... How much fight can you put up with a couple of automatics packed with moldy cartridges? Can the Punia Grand Duke Margis group with thirteen remaining partisans really disrupt the deportations going on in this region? How helpless have we become? We have to keep hiding and waiting in the woods until the mongols finish carrying out their executions.

On the other side of the Nemunas the snow is barely visible. The sun has already melted it. Not even one cloud in the sky. The fields look somehow gray. I wonder if there will be anyone left to cultivate the land this year. Here and there, we hear bursts of machine gun fire. Evidently, people are running. Cartridges are being emptied without pause. “In Lithuania, a peaceful and productive life, national in form, socialist in content, is being built ...” National in form. Those are the istrebitels engaged in annihilating people. The socialist content is terror.

The Bolsheviks picked a time for the deportations when it would be hard for people to hide, someone observes. There’s a lot of snow in the woods, the footprints are obvious. People can’t hide animals or their possessions.

Truly, in this respect, the MVD has a lot of experience. This “honorable” institution has thought through all the details. And where would all these refugees hide? Even the villages are full of those in hiding. The young people, of course, will want to join the partisans. A story without end: deport some, kill others here.

One farmer, at my request, brings me some Soviet newspapers. Prosperity, joy, and happiness gush from each page. Collective farms, their construction

and organization ... Lithuanian women drive tractors, following the example of Pasha Angelina ... An image of some corpulent Katya decorated with medals was spread out in the middle of the page ... Further on – a crisis in America, famine in England, strikes in Italy and France ... Freedom-loving people being persecuted ...

What garbage! What could you possibly still read here! It's always the same old stuff over and over again, and, of course, always Stalin's name.

The messenger arrives with Beet (from Margis), and we get into sleds and drive out to take a look around. We find two of our women messengers who had fled into the woods for fear of being deported. One of them has been in hiding for some time and isn't working for us any more. Recently she was arrested. They tortured her terribly. Even now she hasn't recovered from the beatings. Her hair is sparse (the MVD ...), her face is pale and bloodless. But the young woman did not betray anyone. What an example she is to the men!

I remember Nemunas Wave's stories of how the MVD interrogated women. They stripped them and then some three or four interrogators raped them one right after the other. They beat them over their breasts and genitalia ... And even then, despite the torture, most of the women messengers would not reveal anything! Nemunas Wave is in jail once again. What a Lithuanian heroine! Not one person has suffered because of her. She is really devoted to the resistance. I can see her now, the way she came to us in the winter of 1947, past the Russians and through the snowdrifts, freezing, bringing us a typewriter. Often she would deliver printing plates and paper. In Vilnius she organized a distribution network, belonged to some secret organization, and wanted to publish a newspaper. It seemed she was the organization's most active and daring member. She called me and Lightning "brothers." She took care of many things for the welfare of those deported and jailed. What a wonderful young woman!

Our men are lighting a campfire. I remember when we visited Vytautas-Merkys a year ago. The men at the campfire acted, recited poetry, sang ...

In the evening, the three of us go to Thinker's bunker. The others remain by the fire where they'll sleep. It's a bit cold but it won't be so bad on the spruce branches.

Thinker's bunker is arranged well. You can walk upright. There's a small stove and a primus cooker. There's plenty of food. You could say it has all the conveniences. Only Thinker and Hawk (from the Margis command) live here. I like it that they have honey. We make our "coffee" two or three times a day. Slightly burned bread crusts substitute for coffee.

After "coffee" we'd usually start talking on a variety of topics. Those two point out that our nation isn't united, that the partisan battle would be more successful if the intellectuals were not afraid of sacrifice. They attack the "kulaks" for being tied too much to their wealth, that it is the poor who give the most heartfelt support to the partisans.

The Margis regiment leader, Thinker-Tiger, is an old partisan. Few of them are still alive. In the last few days, two partisans from their group, Amber and Dreamer, were killed. Someone discovered their bunker. The Russians tried to take them alive by shooting a rocket through the entrance, believing that the smoke and flames would choke the partisans. In the meantime, both had time to kill themselves. They say that Amber, fearing that his friend would surrender, first shot him and then killed himself. Thinker misses Amber a lot. He was the bravest man in the group. A while back, he and his friends attacked



Partisans of the Dzūkai unit's Margis group by the grave of fallen comrades: Peony, Saulius and Žilvinas

a Russian truck, killing five soldiers. They took two machine guns, a rifle, and two automatics.

I just learned that Eagle, the group leader of the Dzūkija Grand Duke Kęstutis command, was killed. He was the last man from Adam's staff. They are all gone now. Adam and Ramunis drowned in a lake. Negro was also killed; now it was Eagle's turn. He was betrayed by Radastas. Damn those new recruits! Recently, more and more of them turn up who surrender and then betray their friends. You could just take a coward like that and rip him to pieces! There's no way they will part with their lives. Apparently they schemed about how "to stay alive" and it never entered their minds that they need to get used to the idea that one day they'll have to depart this world and there won't be time to weigh their actions; instead, they'll have to act quickly. It's hard for a man who values his own life too much.

March 28, 1949

I stay in the pinewoods one more day, and again, in the evening, depart for a meeting. Although the sun has set, it's still light. We stop to wait till darkness falls. The Nemunas flows quietly, sparkling and gray just like steel. On both shores there are still blocks of ice. The sky is light blue; only the side where the sun has set is glowing crimson. A star lights up, then another. The other bank of the Nemunas is already submerged in darkness. The forest looms above it, its dark contours becoming more pronounced against the sky. What a beautiful sight!

"Let's go!" says Tiger, adding: "Here, on this side, the Russians have been lying in ambush."

He points toward a thick oak and bushes.

How about that – even places like this are used for ambushes! I need to mention that the partisans are mostly using this side of the river. Overall, the Punia woods are not very suitable for partisan activities. They are large, about 2,500 hectares, but are surrounded by the Nemunas River. Its isthmus is more

than two kilometers across. That's why the Russians can surround the pinewoods with few men. The isthmus is always well guarded.

Tiger tells us that during his first days as a partisan he belonged to a partisan cavalry squad. It sounds unbelievable now, but back then they used to ride horses day and night. The pinewoods were home to a hundred and fifty partisans. When people would see them they would start fantastic rumors. "There are thousands of partisans gathering in the woods ... they are preparing to storm Alytus ... They are armed to the teeth! They have machine guns and mortars," people said. The partisans moved about in large groups. Mornings, they would all gather in the forest. Large camp fires blazed. Partisan songs echoed. "What can the Russians do to the partisans? Let them try, and they'll find out who they are dealing with! As it is, the Russians avoid the edges of the forest anyway, and don't dare come within two kilometers of it ... The forest is our best and safest home."

I remember Lightning telling me about his first days as a partisan. Back then, they were really in charge of the situation. A strib is not a soldier. They were caught like mice. But soon that romantic period came to an end. Hundreds of MVD flooded the villages. Offensive followed offensive. Surprise attacks



Resting

made it impossible to wander around in big groups. They were forced to form smaller units. As time went by, there were battles and ambushes; the enemy was recruiting spies and kept exerting more and more pressure. Every year saw the thinning of the partisan ranks, since the rookies weren't replenishing them at a fast enough rate. The partisans started to move around in even smaller groups than before. Bunkers appeared ... That's how the partisan struggle "evolved".

The evening is cold. The ground, warmed up by the sun during the day, is now encased in a hard crust. You can hear the sound of someone opening and closing doors. A dog is barking on the other side of the Nemunas. Somebody's footsteps can be heard by the river. Talking loudly, a few men push a boat out. The evening is so quiet you can hear the subtlest sound.

We walk in single file by the side of the river. Sensing our presence, peewits let out a scream. They are extremely sensitive. Partisans can infer the presence of Russians by the screams of peewits and the barking of dogs.

We finally reach the farm, where we'll wait for Little Father's partisans. The owner tells us about the deportation. She says people were rushing from one side of the Nemunas to the other. So all day long they rowed back and forth, since Russians and stribs were on both sides of the Nemunas. Those who



Fighters of the Dzūkai unit's Margis group: Ramunis and Gailius (first and second from left)

were arrested were taken to Alytus, where loudspeakers blared earsplitting marches. Music and tears. You are being deported and sent on your way to music. This is the fate of the whole nation: they deport and shoot people to the accompaniment of communist propaganda music.

Finally Ramunis comes and leads us out. Walking with Ramunis, we immediately feel Little Father's "regime." Ramunis walks through the fields almost on the tips of his toes so that the dogs don't start barking. We, too, move cautiously, trying not to leave any tracks. Ramunis avoids walking even on a small road, since the frost-covered snow is very squeaky.

Here's the bunker. I slide inside. I greet everyone. Little Father hasn't changed, his face is still pale and the tip of his nose is swollen and bluish in color. He moved into this bunker just today. Pigeon, his aide, and Gailius are also here. Some of the men leave and the three of us – Little Father, Pigeon, and I – remain in the bunker.

I tell them about our tragedy. Little Father thinks that Kapsas and Vilnis had already been recruited when they started working with us. I had thought often about this even a while back. Even back when Kapsas lived in Lynežeris, people were talking about five partisans, Handsome's men, who were killed because of Kapsas' treachery. Of course, we didn't believe it then. After Handsome's group had scattered, Kapsas also disappeared. Much later, he suddenly appeared at Vytas-Merkys'. When the MVD noticed that we didn't suspect anything, they charged him with another, more important task. Kapsas waited while Hawk and Rimvydas were away, in no hurry to carry out his treachery. He was waiting for a better opportunity. In order to gain our trust even further, he put Vilnis into our ranks, bought a rotor, printing plates, and so on. Kapsas said he had been expelled "with great noise" from the Young Writers' Union for writing anti-Soviet poetry, satires, and so on, during the German occupation. Even back then he could have been recruited and given a special task, so he could correct his past "mistakes." The nature of Kapsas' former friendship with Cvirka is also unclear to me.

I also remember now Kapsas once telling me that he was forced to write a public "confession" in "Tiesa." He stressed with a certain pride in his voice

that he had not written that “confession” and instead slipped away into some corner of the country to teach. Maybe he was actually sent there with the task of following partisans, to get closer to them, and so on?

It still remains unclear to me why Kapsas and Vilnis shot Warrior, but did not “take care” of the rest of us, since they had wonderful opportunities to do it. Their actions were probably dictated by circumstances. Certainly, it wasn’t their humanity. A couple of days before the betrayal, I told Kapsas straight to his face that I had heard rumors about his supposed betrayal of Vytautas-Merkys and the bunker at G’s. Could that have aroused his suspicion that we were on to him? Also, Kapsas, on his last visit, brought with him all the letters I had asked him to take to Kaunas. When I asked him if he’d be able to take the same letters to Kaunas for a second time, he asked me to give him a couple of addresses, supposedly for the purpose of delivering them to someone else, in case one of the people couldn’t be found. It could have been a special maneuver on his part to track down an even wider net of our messengers. After some thinking, I told Kapsas not to bother taking the letters.

“Why? Don’t be afraid. You can trust me. I know one contact person, what difference would it make if I knew a few more?” Kapsas insisted.

I didn’t answer. When I departed the next day, I took the letters with me. When Kapsas asked where I was going and how long I would be gone, I answered that it was no concern of his and that I’d be back soon anyway. After that, we said goodbye. Could my behavior have appeared suspicious to him? Maybe he thought we were leaving to gather information about him? Was he afraid that, under the right circumstances, one of his evil deeds would suddenly come to light? If he sensed all of that, he must have decided to act quickly. I don’t consider Kapsas and Vilnis to be brave, so the best chance to carry out their plan was when they were left alone with Warrior. Thus Warrior was shot in his sleep.

Little Father thinks that Warrior could have noticed something, which then led to the confrontation. I don’t believe this. Warrior, like all of us, trusted them, and, therefore, wouldn’t have noticed anything out of the ordinary.

Of course, it’s hard to unravel it all now, but with time a lot of things will become clear.

When I talk about all of this, I start to feel heaviness in my heart. Such great losses to our district and during such a critical time! Who will replace these wonderful partisans, the elite of the movement?

April 7, 1949

It’s really hard to be in Little Father’s bunker. They only open the entry about six o’clock in the evening. Often there’s not enough air. It’s been worse since being on the road we haven’t been able to use a bathhouse and scrub ourselves clean. Since I’ve been in this bunker I’ve “bred” quite a kolkhoz of lice, which don’t give me any peace, day or night.

Any day now Hawk is expected back. Little Father and I discussed temporary measures to fix the worsening situation in our district. I’ll have to step in as leader of the Kazimieraitis squad. I would have left to go back, but fortunately we received a letter from the leader of the Iron Wolf squad, which is under the Tauras command, that Hawk was coming. I decide to wait a little longer. In the



Fighters of the Šarūnas unit: Warrior, the leader (centre)

meantime, we publish number sixty-two of "For our Ancestor's Homeland," the newspaper of the Dzūkai team.

Hawk finally arrives. We had missed each other during this long trip and kissed each other in greeting. Thank goodness ... I had really been looking forward to his return.

After the first moving minutes of our reunion pass, we become silent. Finally Hawk starts to talk. He shows the various "fetishes" he's brought. His backpack is crammed with all kinds of publications and newspapers from other districts. For a couple of hours we talk about our misfortune, about Hawk's journey, and his accomplishments.

Soon Hawk goes to bed. I quickly scan the statute of the Lithuanian Movement for the Fight for Freedom, the LLKS declaration, and the proclamations directed at the population and the partisans, and so on. From now on, we won't be calling ourselves just partisans, but freedom-fighting partisans.

Hawk's travels were fruitful. After so many years of combat, so many losses, we finally achieved the unification of all the fighting units. The Lithuanian Movement for the Fight for Freedom is all over Lithuania! But at what cost! It's frightening to think of that long, long list of the fallen ...

Hawk told us a lot about the Samogitian partisans. They go around in groups and don't really use bunkers. People there are very good. The residents in several villages are aware of the partisans' daytime location and at the first sight of the Russians they run to inform the partisans. So that's what Samogitians are like! If that's the truth, then, bravo!

The Samogitian partisans suffered greatly from Eagle's activities. It's hard to describe all the cunning strategies employed by Eagle for the MGB, in order to destroy the partisan movement. Many people didn't believe that Eagle was a provocateur; they were only convinced when they learned it the hard way. Samogitians speculate that Eagle was installed by the Politburo as early as 1941 to squelch Lithuania's underground movement. Under the guise of patriotism, Eagle assembled around him quite a few of the

intellectual elite. Eventually, he made contact with the Lithuanian partisans. Then, following a carefully laid out plan by the MGB, he exposed a lot of our underground activists. He even kept contacts with foreign entities. He sent special bulletins and news items in order to cause disorientation among Lithuanians living abroad, to raise pessimism about the partisan movement, to make them think the Bolsheviks weren't inflicting terror on Lithuania, and so on. Eagle didn't concern himself very often with ordinary partisans, even when he knew of their hideaways. On the contrary, in order to inspire more of their trust, he even took care of the wounded partisans in Kaunas and Vilnius, letting them go after they got better. It's hard to estimate the damage he caused to our organization's centralization process, how many people he betrayed, how many activists and messengers were arrested and tortured, how many people were put to death and partisan leaders killed by his schemes. The consequences of Eagle's actions can be felt acutely by all of us even to this day.

By contrast, Eagle did relatively little damage to the Dainava command. This is thanks to Oak's vigilance, or maybe his inclination to mistrust any sort of newly created authorities.

When Hawk first arrived in Samogitia, he, too, was immediately deemed a provocateur. The local partisan headquarters knew nothing about the Dainava command. They knew of Hawk's arrival, but many didn't want to go to a meeting. Eventually, Grasssnake (Vytautas) decided to go by himself. After meeting with Hawk, Grasssnake still didn't trust him and advised him to leave. After three days of interrogating Hawk, Grasssnake finally decided to trust him. There's a peculiar detail to this "interrogation." After one of the partisans saw Hawk's new automatic rifle, he decided to check the ammo in its cartridge clip. When they found out that the ammo was produced in 1947, they became suspicious – where would a partisan at this time get new ammo? I don't know how Hawk justified himself to make them trust him. He had acquired that rifle in a trade with Mountain Ash, who had taken it as a trophy from a truck blown up by Lightning in the autumn of 1948 near Onuškis village.

April 14, 1949

Hawk and I went to Balbieršgirė Forest. I met there with Kostas. He's been trying to meet with me for a couple of weeks now. He decided to join the partisans. Kostas has no illusions about it. He thinks that once you become a partisan, you don't think about surviving! I don't want to contradict him.

Damn Balbieršgirė! I've never laid eyes on such a nasty forest. It's so full of marshes and dampness that even the best shoes won't keep your feet dry. I was careful at the beginning, trying to walk on the driest paths possible, but with my shoes full of holes and the soles peeling there's no reason to avoid the marshes. I just march straight through all the puddles longing for the sandy forests I worship.

While we were walking through Balbieršgirė, it started snowing. It snowed almost all night and we worried that the mongols would track our footprints, since wherever we walked we were leaving dark trails.

In Balbieršgirė we spend a couple of days with Axe. We sleep outside by a campfire. A tarp is stretched above our heads. Once in a while it rains. Everybody is feeling a bit cold, especially me, with my shoes all soaked through. Hawk and I joke as if we're actually proud and happy to lead such dangerous and varied lives. At least we are alive!

Mother-in-Law is like a mother to us. This is her fifth year of helping the partisans. Earlier she had lived with her husband and children in a farmstead at the edge of the forest. She was betrayed by Radastas, which ended her legal life. Her husband and daughter were deported. She was left alone with her other children. They started hiding. Now most of her time is spent in the forest with Axe's men. She cooks for them, darns their clothes, makes their beds, and so forth. She's a wonderful woman. Even the betrayal of that villainous Radastas hasn't changed her attitude towards the partisans.

I can't take Kostas with me yet. We agree upon the date of his arrival. Right now, Kostas will go to Kaunas to buy us a radio and some other equipment.

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April 17, 1949

Again, we are at Little Father's. We decide that Hawk and I will travel towards our temporary base while Little Father will stay behind to publish the LLKS Council's declaration, its resolutions, and also "The Bell of Freedom." At least the MVD will see that we're not yet defeated.

Upon my arrival I found a letter from Lark. "Šarūnas," he writes, "is alive, but all of the people from Geidukonis group are dead, including Klonė." Thank God, at least Šarūnas was spared. We ask of You, God, so little!

Lark, by the way, writes that he accepted some forester named Maple into the partisan ranks and that the latter had come running to them with all of the cash from the forestry business. Hawk and I are getting suspicious that Maple is an undercover agent like Kapsas and Vilnis. Hawk tells us that, during his trip, he happened to hear that the Bolsheviks have been allotting gigantic sums of money for partisan liquidation. Perhaps the Bolsheviks will now try to break us down by sending spies and provocateurs instead of hordes of mongols. They'll try to push traitors into the partisan ranks so they can blow up our organization from the inside. Our district has already experienced some of this; for example, the case of partisan



Maple

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Arūnas from the Šarūnas squad, or the incident with a certain messenger in the Iron Wolf command's Kazimieraitis squad. It's to be expected that the Bolsheviks will find traitors among the population tempted to sell out their brothers for big sums of money. I think this moment is the most critical for our district. If the coming months don't crush us, then maybe we can again stand on firmer ground.

And Nameless, the last partisan from the Peliksas group, has been killed. Four brothers are dead ... What must their mother feel now? She has only one son left, and even he is in the Urals. Storm died in a bunker, along with Sailor and Linen. Cuckoo lost his life in a battle with the MVD. Rye, the third brother of Nameless, was surprised by the MVD in a village. He tried to run, but, having weak lungs, quickly ran out of breath. Seeing no hope of escape, he shot himself. Now came Nameless' turn ...

We tried to leave today, but had to return because of the mongols. Damned waste of time! Upon our return we find a young woman in our bunker. She has brought us some Easter gifts. Little Father is boiling some eggs on a Primus stove.

So tomorrow is Easter. Oh, Easter, bright and joyful Easter, where have you gone? Have I spent many Easters like this? Yes, I have ... It's not like the Easter I used to look forward to when I lived at home. That joyful Easter at home seems so very far away, like a dream, just a beautiful creation of my imagination ...



Dzūkas, the leader of the Dainava region, in the autumn of 1949

No Father or Mother, no uncle. The earth has embraced my father. Maybe soon we'll see each other; maybe we'll be happier there?

What kind of Easter are you having, dear Mother, out there in the inhospitable Urals? You are crying, crying with sorrow, remembering us ... What a heavy burden you carry, Mama, what a cruel son I must have been to have brought such hardship upon you! Mama, my Mama, what else could I have done? Only God knows if I was right in what I did; I feel my conscience constantly eating away at me for the fate that has befallen you ...

My uncle won't survive, he won't see freedom. He's too old and too sick to be able to live in misery in the Urals.

The eggs are done and Little Father turns off the stove. We'll start celebrating at midnight. Little Father takes a prayer book and invites us to pray.

My thoughts are far away from prayers. Like restless birds, they flit here and there, not landing on anything. We sing the national anthem after our prayer and sit down at the "table."

Staying at Little Father's we've become half-starved. We're sick to death of his groats and rancid bacon, and now our ears are bobbing up and down as we devour all the delicious things brought to us by the young woman.

April 21, 1949

We leave Little Father's on April the 19th, and the next night we reach our "base." Our host tells us that there are six partisans in the bunker. Swallow and Catfish are here.

April 25, 1949

A bird cherry tree with long, drooping branches grows by the entrance to the bunker. Soon it will have leaves. In the summertime the green branches completely conceal the bunker. A small stream winds past several meters below. Both banks are thick with bushes. Violets and marsh marigolds bloom. This bunker is a true summer home.

The air and all of nature smell of spring. Too bad we can't enjoy it. We have to be content with what we can see and hear through a narrow slit in the entrance: a small branch of the bird cherry, a few penetrating rays of sun, the stream's murmur and the birds singing in the hazelnut bushes.

The nights are so wonderful now! They feel pleasantly warm, refreshed by a slight wind. Walking through the fields, you try to inhale as deeply as you can.

How wonderful life would be if it weren't for this damned terror! There are moments when my heart is stung by anxiety. It always visits me, and maybe all the others, at times when a little bit of luck and happiness touch our lives. I feel then as if someone is whispering inside of me that we won't succeed, that something will happen which will turn our plans upside down. And then I wait for something ... For what? Just misfortune, just failure.

Hawk, Tornado, and Elm have left to dig a new bunker. Lark and I remained to arrange the mailing of packets. Rainys needs a pistol and I'm in need of new shoes, since the ones I have are barely holding together.

Our district these days is overrun with numerous spies. After Lightning and others were killed, all kinds of scum grew bold. The party activists are singing that old song how there's nothing to fear, now that the partisans are supposedly eliminated.



Reconnoitring

The drumbeat of kolkhoz propaganda is banging louder and louder. In places where there are fewer partisans, people have actually been deafened by its sound and, having no other alternative, are joining kolkhozes. I was recently told that in some places the stribs allowed people to keep only their dwellings but took away their land, which they started ploughing with their famine-producing tractors.

For partisans the kolkhoz is one of the sorest topics of discussion. Everybody weighs in on what will happen if this situation continues. To tell you the truth, supported by the armed MVD and gangs of stribs, this kolkhoz monster will be difficult for us to resist. But we could at least delay collectivization.

Most of us are wondering: "Will we hold out much longer when the kolkhozes are everywhere?" We could hold out using some extremely resourceful tactics. There are some really good people in kolkhozes, but they'll bring a lot of scum too.

In the meantime, people won't leave us alone. It's so difficult to answer their questions: "What will happen, men, after we are all herded into the kolkhozes? Do you think there'll be a war this year? They say that communists are really persecuted in America. Someone in Kaunas was saying that he had been told by some official." And it's the same every day, on and on. You do your best to reassure them, looking for something positive to say, but sometimes you are just quiet. "This can't go on for too long, sir," you answer with generalities. "I think so too, but all of us here will die out while we are waiting for something to happen. They say that near Šiauliai and Joniškės kolkhozes are all over the place." You tell the person it's a temporary thing, but in your heart you are resigned.

People are looking to the West, searching for any glimmer of hope, happy with the smallest details, distorting and exaggerating all kinds of facts. But the West is cold. It's as if the Baltics don't exist. If you are big and mighty, the truth is on your side. Then they see you and talk about you. What a terrible scandal that Chinese communists bombed and destroyed an English ship, killing forty-four sailors. What a scandal! There's not one word about us, when we are losing more than that every day. Maybe talking about it would harm trade relations between England and Soviet Russia?

April 26, 1949

TO A PARTISAN'S MOTHER

*My lips often form
That dear word, "Mother of mine."
But you are silent, as if not hearing,
On the other side of a door closed forever.*

*Mother, dear, have you not yet rested
From such heavy, burdensome sufferings?
Is your breast still not soaked
From bitter tears?*

*Orphan, from your tears
The hardest walls will tremble,
But still your mother will not
Rise from the grave to comfort or utter a word ...*

*Why, Mother, did fortune's smile
Adorn your lips?
Is it sweet pain to hear the enemy
Calling you "a bandit's mother"?*

*As time goes by, my dearest mother,
Your absence will be harder to bear.
Fields and woods I have traveled through;
Tell me, where and when will I find you?*

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*... Soon the willows, the white cherry will blossom
But the youth of the past will not return ...*

*Bloody sun goes out quietly ...
I walk through my native village.
Maybe I will forget everything in the world,
Just you, I will never forget.*

*It's sad to return to my native village,
Only heaps of ashes to be seen.
The sad scene does not console the heart,
Many bitter tears fall.*

*In thought even the old maple
Has seen many difficult hours,
Seeing people driven to Siberia,
Seeing houses set ablaze.*

*The Šaltuona whispers quietly,
Strokes the bare heads of stones.
Many soldiers she saw die for freedom,
Bathed in their blood many times.*

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*When I was little, a tale was told to me
By my dear mother in the quiet evenings
About a sea bird, a blue butterfly,
Wings as blue as the sky above.*

*She said that somewhere streams run full of milk,
While the sun bathes in a lake of wine.
On every stem a white blossom sways,
So many flowers like a dense wood.*

*Every day I wanted to end up in that land,
Where the sun is golden and with lakes of wine ...
But my dreams scattered like the wind,
I remained an orphan on a muddy ground.*

*I then understood that all rivers run with water,
Only mother can tell stories.
I understood that there are no blue butterflies,
That the golden sun remains unreachable.*

April 29, 1949

It's four in the morning. The sun isn't up yet. The sky in the east is light red. In just a half hour the sun will come out. Until then it's cold.

Eight of us spent the day in the forest of K. We are digging a bunker for the second day and haven't yet finished it. It's incredibly stupid to dig at night. I keep jabbing the earth with the shovel, only to keep hitting the same spot again. Digging is hard, in any case. The wet clay sucks out all our energy. The clay sticks to our shovels, making them increasingly heavy, pulling us to the ground. With envy, we remember the pine forest partisans, for whom digging a bunker is a mere trifle, since it's easier to work with sandy soil.

Finally the sun, a big fiery disk, becomes visible through the trunks of the pine trees. This sun is beautiful. I never used to notice its beauty before.

Already, the birds are loudly singing their rounds. Somewhere in the distance a cuckoo calls. It's the first time I've heard its call this spring. They say that if you have money when a cuckoo sings, you won't be short of money that year. As it happens, I do have some money.



Forests provided the partisans with shelter

The roosters are crowing. The village is waking up. For us it's the start of "nighttime." After you've been digging all night, you want to lie down. My friends are already asleep.

A small campfire burns next to me. The flames make me so groggy I can hardly hold my pen. It's still too cold to sleep, and I don't have anything to cover myself with. Out of all of us, Tornado feels the most comfortable here. He's just like Johnny in that story by Žemaitė who falls asleep as soon as he hits the ground. When the fire starts to go out, Catfish gets up, collects an armful of twigs and throws them into the fire. He, too, must be cold. I remember when, back in the autumn of 1946, Catfish and I slept in Varčia forest. Our short overcoats were all we had to cover ourselves with. The night was so cold we had to get up about five times to restart the fire. After getting warmed up we would lie down again until it was so hair-raisingly cold that our teeth chattered.

The dogs have started to bark loudly in the village of K. Have the party activists come back to collect their debts?

The sun is right at the top of the trees now, but it's still too cold to sleep. After napping for a half hour, Swallow is up, warming himself by the fire. Even Tornado got up to join him, but a minute later he was in dreamland again. It's not so easy to fall asleep in a forest in April, when pine branches don't offer much warmth.

A woodpecker pecks away nearby. He's hammering away like a machine gun. It seems he doesn't have a headache from such loud pounding.

Catfish is a true machine gunner. Even his automatic rifle, resting on his cartridge clip next to a pine, resembles a machine gun. He looked funny, firing his machine gun in Šiukščiakalnis, where we laid six or seven stribs to rest. Catfish was almost falling backwards, when he was standing upright firing his very heavy FN. He probably shattered all of God's windows. He even sent a couple of rounds past my legs, too.

My brother Rainys (they still call him Tobacco) has been a partisan for three days now. It's his second day helping to dig the bunker. In the beginning it will be hard, oh, so hard. It's true that initially it's fun and interesting. Everything

seems new and full of surprises. But after a week or two, every rookie starts thinking about things. There was a time when I, too, would have thought about my future and the possibility of death. After a while though, your new life pulls you in and you think less. Whatever will be, will be. It's as if a game of chance starts which little by little engages your body and then your soul.

April 30, 1949

Somehow, we managed to finish the digging. It was a difficult job. We had to hurry during the short and dark night, since an unfinished and unconcealed bunker can't be left for daytime. If somebody sees it, forget about staying in it. Like some fairy-tale robbers near treasure, we worked silently, furtively, looking around, listening for dogs barking ... The bunker we dug wasn't deep: we could only walk in it bent over. We would have dug deeper, but we reached water.

Hawk, Elm, and Rainys stay to finish the bunker. Tornado, Lark, and I leave to bring over our things. On our way we stop to visit our old acquaintance. The woman complains about life.



Hawk and Rainys (standing), Little Father-Litas (sitting, third from left), and Dzūkas (fourth)

“It would be better if the cuckoo didn’t call and the sun didn’t shine,” she says apathetically.

Indeed, adorned in green meadows, this enchanting world which brought us the restless cuckoo’s call and the melancholic partisan songs of young men and women exposes the tragedy of our land even more. What a gigantic contrast exists between nature in springtime and people’s lives! Nature revives, everywhere life awakens, yet there’s nothing beautiful, nothing good to be found in people’s lives, just mold, agony, and the anguish of waiting for something. How is it possible for people not to be tormented, knowing that this beautiful spring isn’t meant for them, hasn’t come to them?

Tomorrow is May the 1st, the so-called day of the people’s workforce review. It’s a day of joy for that communist scum. They’ll drink until they’re stupid, and will worship Stalin, their “father”. They’ll force people to go to meetings, participate in demonstrations, shout “Hurrah” at the top of their voices, carry banners with slogans prescribed by the Communist Party Central Committee ... And people will do everything they are ordered to do: they’ll shout “Hurrah,” march in columns past reviewing stands, and so on. Don’t even think about resisting the party!

May 3, 1949

A couple of days ago I had to take care of a number of things.

I was planning to meet Audrūnas, but it didn’t work out. Apparently, Audrūnas had come on Friday. He probably didn’t get my letter, which set Monday as our meeting day. It looks like he is not going to join the partisans. I understand him well – he feels sorry for his parents. Maybe he actually feels sorry for himself, but it’s unlikely.

Audrūnas’ present life is like living on top of a powder keg ready to explode at any moment. He was, of course, betrayed by Kapsas. The MVD also found his report in our bunker. They’ll be able to easily figure out his identity by the handwriting.

Audrūnas is naïve, trusting for the moment that the MVD is not looking for him. I’m a hundred percent certain that the MVD knows I keep in touch with Audrūnas. If he’s not arrested now, it’s only because they are waiting for a better opportunity to catch him red-handed, or most likely they follow him hoping he’ll lead them to me.

Now is the most opportune time for Audrūnas to join our ranks. Too bad he doesn’t want to do it. There are many who wait and bide their time until the MVD arrests and deports them. Instead of strengthening our movement, bringing to it new energy, initiative, and ideas, they find themselves mining coal in the Urals. Their actions remind me of the “politics” of an ostrich, which, when sensing danger or running from pursuing hunters, suddenly stops and sticks his head in the sand – since nobody supposedly sees him, he thinks the danger has passed and he can relax ...

Throughout history, people have spoken about sacrifice, but what matters is what one does. The words “Let everyone feel the nobility of sacrifice ...” are addressed to the fighters by our LLKS. I hold a person able to make a total and sacred sacrifice to be a fortunate person, because he’s conquered himself, the biggest obstacle in the world; and only then does he feel true happiness, true dedication, the sweetness of pain and nobility, and all of that raises him above others.

I see only one goal in this struggle: freedom or death. But death is not always a complete self-sacrifice. I want to and strive to walk the path of total selflessness, but, alas, I’m only halfway there. I have forsaken many things, but by far not everything. I’m still a prisoner to my own comforts, to myself ... Ah, I just don’t know how to put it down in words ...

I’ve written many letters to Audrūnas asking him to come over to us, but he still hasn’t given me a definite answer. He holds an ace in his hand – his parents – and I’m unable to counter that. Of course I feel sorry for his old parents. If he leaves, his parents will be exiled, and who knows if they will be able to bear those hardships in the Urals ... In other words, he becomes the person who hastens the death of his parents. I’ve become such a person, and that’s why at times it’s

so incredibly hard. On the other hand, I feel my love growing each day for that dear, suffering Lithuania, the land of wayside crosses, and I'm afraid I don't think enough about my parents. Maybe I'm committing a great sin, but God, who alone sees what's inside me, won't condemn me, since what I'm trying to do is not just for my family, but for many Lithuanian families, mothers, fathers, brothers ...

It would be good if Audrūnas joined our ranks, because one educated man, if he puts even a part of his heart and soul into our cause, takes the place of ten partisans. I think Audrūnas could be that person.

I've wasted a lot of time these past few days trying to find an antenna, insulated wires, and insulation. These are small things, but they are so hard to get. I wonder if anyone will understand that many partisans died just for those "small things."

Today, we packed all of our belongings and were ready to take off in the wagon, when one of our women messengers came running to tell us the mongols are conducting searches right in the area we were supposed to go through. Looks like we'll have to stay put for another day.

We return to our "summer home" by the river. On our way we stop to visit a certain "Polish gentleman." He gives us a gift – an automatic rifle. It's missing



Fighters of the Šarūnas unit
mount a look-out

some parts, but he promises to find them by tomorrow. The rifle is quite rusty, but Rainys will make it shine after working on it for a couple of days. What matters is that the barrel is still good.

The "Polish gentleman," just like the rest of the people, complains about kolkhozes. Already there are some people who have voluntarily applied to join the collective farms. Most of these volunteers are the stribs living in or next to the small towns.

Lately the party activists have started using a different method to persuade people of the "advantages" of the kolkhoz set-up. They invite farmers to a district and put them one by one into a small room where four to six activists prove the "advantages" with curses, intimidations, and beatings. Sometimes these "proofs" bewilder a poor person so much that he's unable to do anything but sign. Well, even Stalin himself has said that peasants can't be made to join the collective farms by force, only through goodwill. According to him, people have to come to their own conclusions about the advantages of the new agricultural system. So those activists are "diligently" carrying out Stalin's order. Except those Lithuanians are still hardheaded – be they the poor, well-to-do farmers, or even kulaks! Used to their old ways, they ignore newfangled ideas.

May 7, 1949

Even though the night was bright and the area these days full of mongols and stribs collecting their loans, Tornado, Lark and I still managed to slip through to a newly set-up command center with a wagon full of our things.

If we had had to wait even one more day, the three of us would have gone to the village of X to set up an ambush for the stribs. It was such a perfect night for an ambush, bright as day. There were seven stribs and two women. Among this gang was Rudžionis, the head of Alovė rural district's executive committee. What a wonderful prize he would have made. It's possible we wouldn't have been able to get all of them, but half of them would have been left stretched out on the road. We would have let this whole gang get as close as ten or twenty meters

from us and then we would have just emptied our guns with all the rounds we had in our clips. If any of those remaining returned fire, we would have used a grenade on each of them ... That would have taken care of them.

If not for these duties and all kinds of assignments, which consume all our free time, a few of the men and I would be able to avenge Lightning, Warrior, Hawk, and others! From the rumors floating about, we can judge that people are waiting for partisans to act. For example, one fellow told us that he heard about partisans in Daugai throwing a bomb into some hall; eight were killed somewhere past Daugai; and out there past Valkininkai, a whole MVD garrison was supposedly destroyed. Of course, nothing like that actually happened. At least, people are finding some comfort in rumors. It's so hard to listen to them! You know for sure that nothing happened, but still you feel you could just go out there and raise some kind of hell. There's just no time to do it all. We have to establish contacts, dig out bunkers, get equipment, find food, replace worn-out shoes, and so the list goes on. I feel pain and heaviness in my heart when I hear stories about groups of three or four stribs walking around here and there. Lightning is gone; otherwise he would have already taught them a lesson.

We rumble noisily out of the village of X. Lark drives the wagon. Tornado and I march about one kilometer ahead of him. We travel on back roads, waking up dogs everywhere along the way. Once in a while we listen out for the clatter of the wheels, just to make sure that Lark's wagon hasn't broken down. So far our journey is proceeding without hindrance. We make a stop at "Women's" place. There we find out that earlier this evening twelve mongols, armed to the teeth, went down this same back road we are on now, headed in the same direction. But now that we are already on the road, we can't turn back. We warned Lark that if he hears Tornado and me shooting at the mongols, he is to turn around and go back as fast as the horse can pull him. We reach the forest uneventfully. As we walk carefully by the farmhouses sitting right next to the back road, our hands grip the rifles with their safety latches off. I even have my finger touching the trigger. All I'll need to do is pull on the lock ... That's what dear Lightning taught me some time ago.

Unfortunately for Lark, real trouble started in the forest. The wagon fell apart. We somehow managed to hold it together with wire. Hopefully we'll be able to get home. Tornado and I take the lead again. But soon we have to return because Lark whistles to alert us that he needs help. Again the wagon breaks down. Damn it! It's almost dawn. Tornado sets to fix it, but nothing works. Lark and I don't know anything about the mechanics of a wagon, and so our attempts at helping Tornado are more than ridiculous. We laugh and are angry at the same time. If there had been more trouble our journey really could have ended in tragedy. Tornado wanted to push the horse aside, but the horse just got up and fell over on his side. We barely pulled him back up by his tail. It seems the horse was so tired from all the springtime work and tonight's long journey he could hardly lift his hooves.

It looks as though we won't be able to fix the wagon, so we run to the nearest farmer to get another one. But we don't find a wagon there. We only take a horse. The farmer comes with us. With his help we somehow manage to fix the wagon, and without replacing the horse we quickly resume our journey. Now it's full daylight, but people aren't up yet. Reining in the horse and wagon, we finally reach our "home."

Our men have fixed up the bunker inside, but an additional bunker needs to be dug out for our "office." We dig it out the next night, put in a ceiling and pile dirt over it. In the morning our host harrows and plants peas in the soil. Peas had been planted once before, so now the process is repeated. What a springtime planting!

Last night we finally finished installing our bunker. Our woodworking projects produced some real curiosities. We were trying to make our table square, but it came out having many angles with all kinds of cuts in it. We had no luck with measuring our boards and each time they came out too long. We had to cut everything twice.

This bunker will definitely be well ventilated. Hawk brought back from Samogitia a new method of digging bunker openings. We used this method now. It's fantastic. A drill is made by mounting a shovel onto a long stick with a

handle. This drill can be used to make openings five to six meters long and wide enough for a dog to freely crawl through.

Although manual labor is difficult for him, Rainys works along with us, breaking up the monotony of the work with all kinds of phrases and scientific expressions that he has amassed during his years of study. Oh, and he picked another code name for himself – Silent One. He chose the name from a dictionary, despite getting more suggestions than any dictionary could offer. We kept suggesting names like Raštikis, Vorošilov, Slow-wit, Turk, and so on. I immediately turned his Silent One into Kilas ...

Today we could listen to the radio. The Berlin blockade is over. The English and the Americans are trying to feel triumphant, but unfortunately for them the skies in the Far East are starting to darken. The communists keep marching forward. At the same time, some kind of negotiations are going on, but the communists might as well just spit on them. Who needs to negotiate when you are successful? If truth be told, it's a good tactic – keep beating the enemy and don't let him come up for air. All of this keeps putting the Americans and the English in a really bad mood while the communists can sense victory. Asia is not a trivial matter. Masses of yellow-skinned people against white-skinned imperialists! It's the goal of the communists. Dark Asia, charmed by communist slogans, armed with modern and refined technology, is stirred up to go against the West. The Politburo surely knows what it's doing ...

And in the West, the conferences, or better yet, the tussle between the four leaders will start again. Who knows how much more they'll talk there? The hackneyed explanations given by the commentators are putting me to sleep.

Besides, the Russians have declared war against the English and American airwaves. All the BBC and Voice of America radio station broadcasts in Russian are being heavily jammed. What kind of "curtain" has there been up till now, if a person pressing his ear to the radio could easily listen to capitalist slander over the airwaves? The comrades know how to manage. They'll make it so that a person will not only forget what he's heard but also won't even want to listen to anything. Now that's democracy for you! Nobody listens to anything, nobody

tells each other anything, and everyone is afraid, trembling and even fearing to be afraid. Everyone lives for today. You've eaten, gotten drunk, you still haven't been arrested – that's okay. Then, you continue drinking (if, of course, you have money to pay for it), eating (if there's food on the table), and stealing (if you are a communist), and so it goes on, until one day you'll find yourself in some forced labor camp. But even there you can still survive, if you know how to spy on others, turn them in and help the camp *nachalniks*, or supervisors, steal ...

May 8, 1949

On this day and month, exactly four years ago, in Czechoslovakia, I was captured by the Russians. A memorable day, that I will not forget until I die ...

The sun wasn't up yet, I remember, when we started to retreat from a small Czechoslovakian town towards Prague in order to surrender to the Americans.

It was a beautiful morning. The sky was blue as a cornflower, promising a splendid day. It was chilly and we wore overcoats. Trembling from cold, we were quickly pulling in cigarette smoke.

"Quick! Let's go!" the Feldwebel commands rang harshly and forcefully.

In the transport most of the Lithuanians rode together with the Hungarians. Even though we formed quite a long column, we were proceeding forward in an orderly manner without crowding. We reached a well-paved asphalt road. It was the highway connecting Prague and Brno.

It must have been a pleasure for the horses to pull heavily loaded wagons on a road as good as this one. We were looking around. Czechoslovakia is a civilized and cultured country. You can see that from the first glance.

What did fate hold in store for me and the others? Something extraordinary was about to happen. Cars were zooming, armored vehicles and tanks were crawling, and motorcycles and trucks were clattering by.

Those Russkies will really get their lights punched out, now that the Germans have been crushed. That's what most of us thought back then. With the help of what's left of the German army, the English and the Americans will start a new

war. We thought it would be a brief war ... We counted the months, saying we'd be back soon in our homeland we miss so much. Memories took hold of the men, and everyone started to dwell on images of their country and their past feelings, and they started to make plans for the future ... I thought about the family I left behind, my home. Are they still alive?

A half hour later, all those hopes were dashed.

A couple of cars raced past us at great speed. Soon after, a couple of motorcycles with sidecars roared by. We didn't pay much attention to them, since all of us were deep in our own thoughts and memories. Suddenly a couple more motorcycles swept by with some kind of white rags attached to the poles.

"Russians!" somebody yelled in Lithuanian, and I immediately recognized the gray overcoats and the puttees of Red Army soldiers, so familiar to me in Lithuania.

A few of our non-commissioned officers cursed and gritted their teeth. Everyone was white as a sheet. I probably was too. At that instant, we all saw what the future held for us.

"This is the end of us, men," Petras P uttered softly.

By now, crudely made tanks were rolling by us, with the angry, dirty faces of mongols sticking out and staring at us.



An unidentified partisan of the Dzūkai unit

"The war is kaput!" the Russians kept shouting to us.

With their hands raised, the Hungarians were saluting the mongols. We quickly threw our pistols into a puddle. I tore up my diary and scattered the pieces along the road. I hurled my binoculars against a stone. The Germans were ripping off their epaulets and identification badges.

We didn't think to resist, it would've have been futile. Everywhere around us were the "unconquerable" ones. If only we had been dressed as civilians, it would have made it easier for us to maneuver around. But even the right clothes didn't mean much if you didn't have the right documents.

The mongols started ransacking our transport. A continuous stream of Russian curses flowed. And that's when a real tragicomedy began. The air was buzzing with dozens of Soviet bombers. The mongols started shooting red and green flares, but it was as if the Soviet pilots didn't notice the signals from their own people. We heard an ear-piercing whistle.

"They're bombing!"

We just had enough time to run around the corner of a house and fall into a heap on top of each other when we heard the first explosions. One bomb exploded just a few meters from us. Glass started to fall. We could hear the moans of the wounded. The Russians still tried to signal with their flares, but a series of exploding and incendiary bombs kept falling. Curses and moans blended into a single sound.

"What the hell is this?" we were thinking. "Why are the Russians bombing their own people?"

On the highway the trucks loaded with ammunition were ablaze. The explosions were deafening. Horses, still hitched to wagons, were galloping madly in the nearby fields. Many of them died.

Finally the plane flew off. Only then did we notice all the dead by the roadside. Most of them were Russians. One poor Russian's head was wounded by a piece of shrapnel. He was washing the wound with water from a puddle, and after he wrapped his head in a rag he just threw up his hands in despair. A Ukrainian

explained to us that when units at the front start a sudden rapid advance, they frequently get attacked by their own people.

The image of this unexpected bombardment was soon replaced by other images. Russians, cursing and threatening us with clenched fists, brought us back to the road.

“Do you have a smoke?”

“Hand over your watch!”

“Ur, ur, ur, ur!” barked the Reds rounding us up.

What the hell do they want? I thought, unable to understand their yapping. One of them pointed at hands. Oh, they are demanding watches! Those who were quick were able to hide them, while the rest had their watches quickly pulled off. They wanted mine too, but I told them I didn't have one and showed them my hands.

“Somebody else took it already,” I said.

“You're lying! Mother f...!” He immediately frisked me.

As he was searching me, one of them found an eight-millimetre bullet in my watch pocket.

“Where's the revolver, the pistol?”

The Russians jumped at me, threatening me with their fists. I started to explain that I gave the pistol away and the bullet was all I had left.

“Are you a Vlasovite?”

“No, I'm Lithuanian.”

I showed him my student card and my Lithuanian passport and noticed that he was totally illiterate. What good luck! The Russian got confused looking at the yellow cover of my student card, mumbled something and left.

The highway looked like a gigantic market place.

“Take off your boots ... give me your watch ...” echoed everywhere.

After searching all of us, the Russians ordered us to go back on the highway. They explained that somewhere on the way we'd find a camp. We picked up our backpacks and marched back. Our men came upon wagons filled with food. We loaded kettles up with marmalade, butter, and honey, and with these provisions, continued on.

Russian light tanks rolled down the road in an unending stream. They were real *tachenki*, small and crooked tanks. Inside them a couple of cannonballs mingled with women's shoes, boots, and luggage stolen along the way.

The *tachenki* were passing each other, rolling along every which way. Because of the disorder, trucks couldn't pass by. The drivers cursed the soldiers riding in the wagons, shaking their fists at them.

Is this an army? I asked myself, surprised. No order, no discipline; it looked more like a herd of Asian animals forcing its way into a land of fairy tales. The proletarians are hurrying to pillage. Whoever gets there first will get the best loot.

Of course we had plenty of fist-shaking and cursing directed at us. All of us Lithuanians agreed not to respond in Russian. It was dangerous to utter anything in Russian, because they'd take you for a “Vlasovite.” All the corpses lying along the roadside spoke eloquently of the fate of a “Vlasovite.” So to every question asked by a Russian, we answered:

“*Verstehe nicht* [I don't understand].”

“You damned German!” the mongols cursed after hearing an answer in German.

You could feel a deep hatred of Germans coming from the Russians. That hatred fell equally upon us. So that they wouldn't suspect we were Lithuanians, we all tried to stick together, speak seldom, and only in whispers.

Little by little we got used to the Russian curses, the interrogations, and threats, and we stopped paying attention to them. We were surprised by the number of Russian slogans on their trucks:

“*Vperiod na Berlyn!* [Forward to Berlin!]”

“*Smert niemietskim zakhvatchikam!* [Death to the German occupier!]”

And so forth ...

We stopped to rest in a small town and stretched out on a green lawn by a church. A drunken Russian almost trampled us with his horse. We jumped out of its way. Fortunately, another Russian appeared and drove the angry drunken jockey away.

A priest was on his way to the church. Hearing a foreign language, he stopped and started asking us questions. When he found out we were Lithuanians he was surprised that we were fighting the communists. Trusting the priest, we told him what had happened in Lithuania in 1941. The priest didn't want to believe this. Why – according to him, Soviet Russia was a democratic country. That response was like someone pouring boiling water over us. Here's a priest for you: he's found democracy in communism! Even today I remember the words the priest spoke. I remember his fascination with the Red Army. That priest, I think, now has quite a different opinion. Yes, the Czechs will now see the real face of communism. They believed in a fairy tale, but now they are living a dark reality, seeing its true colors, without embellishment.

The journey to Brno left some vivid impressions. The Czechs, taking us for Germans, threw rocks and sticks at us. It was hard for us Lithuanians to endure such contempt for fighting against the biggest enemy of our homeland – the Bolsheviks. The fascists did a lot of damage, but not as much as those who today, in the name of democracy, “defend” the peace and are members of the UN.

What other choice did a Lithuanian have than to fight? We know what happened in the Rainiai Forest in Pravieniškės. Should we have helped the communists fight against the Germans, so that similar events would repeat themselves? No way! A German is not our brother by a long shot, but a Bolshevik was and will remain our greatest enemy.

Isn't it ironic, the fate of those Lithuanians who sincerely fought against Bolshevism during the German occupation? Maybe they were politically naïve to think that they could fight Bolshevism by allying themselves with the Germans, or even with the devil, since even he is not as frightening as the Bolshevik. All they longed for was payback, revenge for all the victims of 1941, while everything else paled into insignificance. I was one of those Lithuanians ...

The battalions of Plechavičius and the so-called war school in Marijampolė were perfect mirrors reflecting the mood of Lithuanian youth in those days. What made young men join the Local Reserves in such high numbers? Was it love for Hitler, or was it attachment to the *faterland*?

Neither! The wickedness of Hitler's pack of dogs stirred up enough hatred, but it paled in comparison to an even greater hatred towards Bolshevism. Who can condemn this youth who numbered in the thousands? Who can really say that they were Hitlerites, even though they joined the German side to fight the war? Why didn't Lithuanians join the SS legions, and why weren't the Germans successful at forming a significant number of SS legions in Lithuania, as they did in Latvia and Estonia? But even the Estonians and the Latvians were a thousand times justified, because where could they go when the communist beast was already at their doorstep? Not everyone could escape to the West; but to stay and blindly surrender to communist tyranny was worse than senseless. Only those who are villains themselves can afford not to fight the Bolshevik villain.

The Baltic leaders were probably bad politicians. They didn't know how to buy and sell their country. They didn't know how to “peddle” their feelings. That's why they made good soldiers, unafraid to die for their country in the face of danger.

The injustice we experienced in Brno burned like a chest wound. While the Bolshevik beast was triumphant, we were considered to be “war criminals!” The Czechs spat at the prisoners of war, but it was really themselves whom they covered in spit. By now, they have probably figured it out. Of course, they didn't know the Bolsheviks, but now they know that it is easy to judge. Let's not judge others so easily, lest we ourselves be judged ...

May 10, 1949

Our host was arrested by the Russians, so we had to get out of our newly installed bunker quickly. He wasn't arrested for his politics, but since we don't know him very well, we can't risk staying there. We can trust only the ones who've been tested. As our recent lessons showed us, there aren't many people who you can trust completely.

Again we are in the forest sleeping by a campfire ...

May 12, 1949

Today, with great difficulty, we finished digging a second bunker. Luckily for us, we were able to work during the day. We didn't do any construction inside, since we weren't able to get any boards. We used another "improvement" – a shovel, usually used for smoothing out fields.

The shovel left deep grooves and now it's difficult to camouflage the bunker, since the ground here is usually covered with flowers and grass. We masked the bunker with last year's dry leaves. The places that are covered with leaves look different from the rest of the ground, and a trained eye will spot this anomaly immediately. In the fall, when the leaves start falling, it will be a first-rate bunker. Everybody jokes that in the meantime we should plant it over with some peas, or maybe dahlias and carnations. Tornado suggested making a puddle over the bunker and tying a pig nearby. Everybody roars with laughter at this suggestion.

It's a big bunker. We call it the "hall." Well, under the circumstances, the bunker, which is three and a half meters long, two and a half meters wide, and 1.8 meters high, is a real hall to us. When I think back to earlier bunkers, I have to say, we've made real progress here. It's an evolution.



Partisans digging a bunker inside a house pass the sand out

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Back in 1946, so-called "pig" bunkers were really common, where you could only sit in them and had to literally crawl in through the opening. Nobody was concerned then with conveniences, and people were satisfied with dugouts and hideaways which were only used for sleeping. "Ventilation," or *dishnyks*, as the Margis command called breathing holes, were made by poking holes with ordinary thin sticks, leaving the bunkers stuffy all the time. When Russians would come to stay at a farm that had a bunker, partisans often passed out from the lack of air inside. The bunker we stayed in last winter was really great, just because of its "ventilation" system. Even with the entry closed, we could stay in it for days.

Nowadays, partisans are digging big (given the circumstances of partisan life, really big) bunkers. There's no need to crawl on all fours, and a few steps can even be taken standing up. Small tables, benches, garbage bins, and so on, have appeared. Nameless and Swallow are unsurpassed in their bunker construction skills.

It's not everywhere that partisans can dig deep bunkers. In the vicinity of Simnas and also in much of the Tauras district, ground water is reached quickly. In Balbieriškės it seems almost impossible to build a decent bunker.

It would be interesting to have a book published that talked solely about the installation of partisan bunkers. What a variety of clever strategies, what inventiveness! In the twentieth century man lives burrowed underground! All those deceptive entrances and various camouflage methods. Are there places that have not been used by partisans for their bunkers?! I don't think so. Bunkers under cattle sheds, under barn floors, under garbage or wood chip piles, under wood sheds, sheep pens, hen houses, in barrels buried in marshes, behind double walls, in false attic ceilings, under stoves and thresholds ... For some bunkers you crawl in through a bread kiln, for others through the back of a stove ... Miraculously opening walls, ceilings, and barrels ...

There are bunkers next to streams, in girls' gardens, in bushes and wheat fields; near narrow paths and roads, in root cellars, cemeteries, churchyards, near wells and inside them and in small villages ... Anywhere and everywhere

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there are bunkers, starting with pine forests, where even today partisans live in open bunkers, and ending with the plains, where the bunkers are completely concealed under layers of earth more than a meter thick, and where entry doors are so thick and heavy they can only be lifted by a couple of men ...

The history of bunkers is interesting. Those who know it also know how difficult it was to fight. And still they fought!

Today, there's little the MVD don't know about methods of building bunkers. That's because of the work of traitors and provocateurs. Whatever knowledge the MVD have about how bunkers are built, it's still a rare occurrence that a bunker is found during a search, unless a traitor or an agent or a spy leads the Russians right up to the entrance.

May 16, 1949

For two straight days the three of us have been hiding in the brush around the village of Y. The brush consists of really small islands of young alder trees, a few meters square, scattered through the unplowed fields. The Russians haven't yet turned their "revolutionary vigilance" this way, so we feel quite comfortable here.

This is our fifth day in this region. Two nights were spent in our summer home by the bird cherry tree. It's really beautiful there now; the trees are blossoming and nightingales sing all night.

At the "summer resort" we found out that the Russians were spotted lying in ambush not far from Nemunas and his neighbors. We were quite surprised when our informants told us this, since the last time the Russians set up an ambush here was more than a year ago. It's true that once during the winter, after they had destroyed two of our command centers, the Russians made a move in this direction hoping to track us down. Afterwards, they weren't seen in these parts again. That means somebody must have tracked us here. We don't believe any spies have been recruited from among the local residents. It's strange to have an ambush there. Is this more fallout from the betrayal by Vilnis and Kapsas? Or

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did some local notice me and report it to the MVD? My red hair is distinctive and bright enough for the Russians to figure out who the person is and what he's up to from the report. We'll have to be more careful.

I met with Audrūnas. A week before our meeting, Hawk, Rainys, and I sent him letters and an official invitation asking him to join us in our underground activities. Audrūnas agreed, but first he'll still try to relocate his parents to Kaunas. To abandon your old parents is a big sacrifice, but we had to ask it in order to get our district back on its feet.

Audrūnas told me there were times he wished his parents had been exiled, so that he wouldn't have to care if his secret work was discovered. That way his parents would not blame him.

I understand his turmoil well, the inner battle between his feelings of duty to strengthen our movement and love for his old parents. To some, it would appear very cruel to wish one's parents exiled; but let them think about the soul, striving with all its strength to fight against the fiercest enemies of our country, and how intense the suffering becomes whenever that's thwarted. To abandon your country in its greatest need and to abandon your parents are two different things. Even Hugo's novels dealt with such contrasts.

We agreed on a day when Audrūnas will finally come to join us. He wanted the meeting slightly postponed, but we can't wait since we have work to do and besides, he could get arrested at any moment. I gave him 3,600 rubles to buy one more radio, a typewriter, and so on.

I noticed Audrūnas' heavy sigh when I said goodbye.

"Well," he said to me, "we'll be starting a new life."

"Yes, we will ..." I answered, thinking that he, like most young partisans, especially those from the ranks of intellectuals, can't avoid the difficult inner struggle, the hours of serious thinking. I saw it all in his eyes, and his deep sigh told me that he felt as if he was going to his own execution.

Goodbye life! As difficult as it's been, my veins still pulsed with life. While now ... now only God knows ... I read in Audrūnas' eyes.

"Hey, look, choose a good place for the bunker," he added, looking back.

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“Hmm ... we'll see ...”

I'm really happy that Audrūnas will join us as our new brother-in-arms. Life will be easier with him around, while the difficult hours won't be so hard to bear.

For two days we've been waiting for Litas and his closest colleagues. Soon the district commander's meeting will take place. We found out that Wormwood, Hawk, and Šarūnas have already arrived.

This meeting won't be as well attended as the one that took place in 1947. Back then, there were more than thirty unit commanders, while now there'll be considerably fewer. Litas, Tiger, and Dove will represent the Dzūkai unit; Šarūnas, Swallow, and, if he comes, Woodsman, the Kazimieraitis unit; Wormwood and Hawk will represent the Šarūnas unit. Our unit is represented by Hawk, Lark, Rainys, and me. So, at the most, there will be twelve people. Rimvydas didn't come.

Today we spent the day at the farm of a very poor woman. Poverty has really sunk deep roots here. Her husband is dead. She was left alone with six children, the oldest of them barely twelve years old. In this large family the primary worker is the twelve-year-old boy, who plows, harrows the fields, and feeds the cattle. Her other boy herds cattle for someone else. For a whole summer's work he'll get four and half poods of rye. All her other children are still small. The youngest girl is three years old. The whole family is dressed in rags. It's a hard sight to bear!

Our hostess tells us about her life. She doesn't complain, but her voice betrays great pain and disappointment, and this squeezes my heart like a vise. Cradling her daughter in her arms, she sounds tired and resigned ... Oh God, how worn down she is!

Half of her property is marshland. She has almost no animals. She had one cow, but it recently died. The horse looks as weak and worn out as its owner. The family's main supply of food is the eggs that a couple of hens still keep laying.

The owner tells us that their life under President Smetona was better. Back then she had a couple of milking cows, pigs ... True poverty started later. Her husband fell seriously ill. He couldn't do any work. She did all the farm work by herself.

We are deeply touched by her account. Life can be so hard!

Our hostess is trying to apologize for not being able to feed us, but we set her at rest, telling her not to worry about it.

The family spent the last year living in a barn because their hut fell apart. The barn was the only decent building, if one could call it that. It was their house, cattle shed, and granary all in one. Somehow, they managed to build a new hut.

The only adornment on this farm is a big pear tree growing next to the hut and now arrayed with white blossoms. The little hut appears to be drowning in those branches.

Except for a few pots, there are no housewares. We wanted to borrow a bucket, but unfortunately the hostess didn't have one. We didn't ask for a towel, believing she didn't have one and not wanting to hurt our hostess' feelings.

When Lithuania becomes independent again, families like this should be supported and taken care of, otherwise they are the ground in which seeds of discontent, anger against the government and crime can take root. Can a Lithuanian who grew up in such poverty be a good patriot? Hardly. He'll either become a communist or be ready to do anything for a mere penny. How can he develop a healthy Lithuanian consciousness if he can't make ends meet? Social support and protection administered by the government would diminish the sizeable number of these politically “misguided” Lithuanians.

I have slowly come to the realization that the state pays very little attention to our villages. How much talent has been lost here, how many capable people who could do good for the nation have been doomed!?

It is exactly midnight. I'm scribbling in my diary while staying at farmer N's. Tornado keeps shifting on a bench. The fleas are keeping him awake. I can't sit still either, I feel them leaping around on my body. Lark ran away from the fleas to sleep in the barn. Say what you will, in the summer there is no shortage of fleas in our village. Thousands of them are swarming in the huts. The “landlord” and his family snore away peacefully, oblivious to them.

I'm becoming really disabled these days. My heel is hurting and I had to exchange my shoe for a rubber boot. Two big boils appeared on my back,

preventing me from wearing suspenders or putting on the straps of my rucksack. I'm carrying my rifle over my left shoulder, but it's inconvenient and uncomfortable, since the cartridge clip keeps falling off into the sand.

People are again starting to talk about a new deportation. Most people go to visit each other instead of sleeping at home. They are guessing the deportation will start on the 15th or the 20th. Today, in Alytus, almost all of the party activists were mobilized. There is lots of traffic on the roads. A great number of trucks have arrived in Kaunas and Vilnius.

These are all clear signs the Bolsheviks are preparing an invasion. Of course, one can expect a massive clean-up of partisans first, and then the same forces will deport the rest of the people. Two birds killed with one stone! Some people have calmed down, thinking that the army has come only to purge the partisans. Maybe the MVD is trying to intimidate the partisans so they won't even dare to stick their noses out of their bunkers during the deportations. This handy maneuver is known to us. After so many years one instinctively feels what the Bolshevik is up to.

May 22, 1949

Litas, Dove, and Tiger finally arrived. We managed to hobble over to the meeting place. Today the meeting is over. Goodbyes and good wishes echoed as all the attendees went their own ways.

"All the best! Good-bye!"

"Good luck! Watch yourself now. There aren't that many of us left anymore."

"May success and happiness follow you!"

Who knows if, in a year, even half of those who attended the meeting will still be alive? Hawk, Nightingale, and I are the only ones left from our group who were at the rally back in 1947. The rest have already been buried.

A meeting – a word evoking a certain official coldness. Once uttered, it unexpectedly conjures up images of old archives, tables stacked with boring writings and legal cases. It brings to mind dusty halls and every stripe of scribbler with shiny

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elbows ... Say "meeting" and I immediately see in front of me glasses hanging from the end of a nose, and hear papers rustling and a monotonous voice reading ... The atmosphere in a meeting usually lulls you to sleep ... Our meeting was held under quite different circumstances. Instead of a dusty hall there was a forest filled with annoying mosquitoes; twigs were our defense against their attacks. There were no great amounts of paper, files, or writing ... You brought only what could fit into a rucksack. It's easy to imagine what was in every rucksack: bullets, cartridge clips, grenades, medicines, a few personal belongings, photographs ... There was no room for papers and files – all of that had to be stored in one's head. Hawk was the only one who brought a rucksack stuffed with papers.

Hawk opened and led the meeting. Wormwood and I carried out the secretarial duties. The meeting lasted for two days. On the first day we discussed new organizational issues and the resolutions accepted by the Council of the Lithuanian Movement for the Fight for Freedom. At night we don't sleep outside, because nearby the mongols, who arrived in thirty trucks, are conducting searches of villages and the surrounding brush. We found out about the searches only around noon. During our meetings we tried to speak and conduct ourselves quietly. On the first day we were alarmed several



A meeting of leaders from southern Lithuania in the summer of 1950: Little Father-Litas (standing, centre), and Rainys (kneeling, right)

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times. At the sound of breaking twigs we kept grabbing our guns. Luckily for us the mongols decided not to comb this forest, otherwise it would have been difficult to avoid a shoot-out.

The next day was quiet. The election for district leader started after the election for regional representative to the Supreme Command. There were three candidates for district leader: Rimvydas, Wormwood, and me. Since Wormwood was the only person able to lead the Šarūnas unit, his candidacy, naturally, fell through. I was elected the district leader by secret ballot, and was also charged with temporarily leading the Kazimieraitis unit. Wormwood remained the leader of the Šarūnas unit, and Dove continued as Dzūkai unit leader.

After discussing a number of issues, we wrote up the protocol, made our closing speeches, and departed.

I am now the leader of two hundred and fifty living and about a thousand dead partisans; a ruler of the living and the dead ... I'm in charge of all the district's activities, and with that all the responsibility rests on my shoulders, and should any accusations come up I will be the one to answer for them.

At the end of these ceremonies I felt extremely tired, and as lonely as I've ever been. I so much wanted to find myself a quiet, peaceful place without any people,



Wormwood (first from left),
Woodsman (third), and
Willow (fifth)

just orchards in blossom with bees buzzing, houses submerged under green ivy and filled with beautiful, soothing books ... Oh, those golden fairy tales, why is it only there that such a life exists but not on earth? How terribly vile is man! Why does he have to devour, drown, and kill others who are already suffering? Why has he sown the seeds of hatred, treachery, and hypocrisy? Oh, Virgil, Virgil, when will the golden age you sang about return?

I'm a foolish dreamer. There are no blossoming orchards with buzzing bees in this world if you don't feel first in your soul the pristine beauty of the orchards and the peaceful drone of the bees. Whatever lies in the depths of a man's soul is reflected in the world outside us.

May 24, 1949

Nine men and I are digging a place for our command center. A light breeze from the fields brings the sounds of hymns to the forest.

"People are walking toward the crosses," Šamas observes.

"People are walking toward the crosses while we are digging in the ground," Biliūnas says, laughing.

It's true: with us everything is always backwards.

Yesterday we prepared materials for the bunker: we cut the boards, wooden pegs, beams, bought some nails and tar paper for the walls, and so on. Now the building materials are ready – only the digging is left to do.

Today we got up at three in the morning, had a bite to eat, and started working. It's nine o'clock now, and more than half the bunker is dug out. What matters the most is that all of us are in a good mood as we work. And there's a reason for that. Before partisans dig a bunker, they always speculate about what kind of soil they'll be dealing with: will it be sand or clay, and what type of clay? If it's sand, the work is easy and doesn't require much effort. If it's clay or sticky clay, the work is difficult, and requires picks. Today, as luck would have it, we encountered sand mixed with clay, which makes the digging even easier than if it had been only sand. It's hard to pick up a good shovelful of sand, but now hardly a grain falls back into the pit.

“Pine forest” partisans dig out their bunkers quickly. The soil there is light and sandy, although the walls keep collapsing during the digging. The “dirt clod” partisans are always jealous of the “pine forest” folks for their light, good soil. However, the pine foresters are no less envious of the dirt clod partisans: the latter live in a more prosperous countryside, enjoying meat, milk, and butter more often. On the other hand, pine foresters are often horrified by the plains where the dirt clod partisans live. For them the forest is their father and mother. It protects them, hides them and provides certain comforts. That’s why pine forest folk would never exchange their forests for the richer Suvalkija plains. They say it’s better to eat less and stay in the forests.

I consider myself to be more of a dirt clod partisan. However, when I’m digging bunkers, I often recall the light and fluffy sand of the pine woods, and wonder why I’m pushing a shovel into this lumpy soil? I still think the hills, forests and brush of Dzūkija are better suited for partisan activities than the bare plains of Suvalkija.

I don’t like big forests. Being in one always makes me feel as if I’m in a sack. It’s hard to sense when you are in danger; and when it comes, it comes unexpectedly, resulting in numerous casualties. More importantly, big forests make you less vigilant, while open spaces accustom you to danger as part of daily life and prepare



Partisans of the Šarūnas unit
clean their guns

you for any calamity. This could also affect one’s character, since I have noticed that dirt clod partisans are always braver than pine forest ones. The former don’t avoid possible confrontations, ambushes, and attacks, while the pine forest partisans just snooze in their woods. There are exceptions, of course, like the partisans knocking around in the forests of Perloja. Those people are unconventional characters: they fight against any authority. Even the pine forest partisans really can’t be accused of cowardice; on the contrary, they are brave, only their leaders are complacent. A fearless leader who radiates bravery will move anyone to action.

What makes the pine forests inconvenient is that the inhabitants of those areas usually live in villages, not in isolated farmsteads. There are many places where one or two villages are nestled in the forest tract. This makes it very easy for the Russians to set up ambushes. One small group of Russians would be enough to prevent you from slipping into the village. On the other hand, in the dirt clod areas you can easily avoid the Russians and bypass any farmsteads by traveling along furrows through cornfields, along the perimeters of meadows, and through the brush.

I could write many more things about “dirt clods” and “pine forests,” but I won’t, since it’s gotten me off on a tangent, from writing about digging bunkers to writing about who knows what.

Today is a beautiful day and it reminds me of summer. How time flies! It wasn’t that long ago that we lived in winter bunkers; yet yesterday, when I walked through the fields, I noticed how tall the grain is and it gave me pause: in a month or two autumn will be here again ... It should be a really splendid one, judging from the orchards that are flowering everywhere, blossoming like they haven’t done in a long time. When so many fruit trees are in blossom, people say everything will end well.

May 26, 1949

We dug and then camouflaged the bunker, distributing the soil around so evenly that there was no visible elevation. We covered the bunker with last year’s dry

leaves and pine needles. It was raining yesterday and we took advantage of the rain to plant wild flowers and greenery. On top of the bunker we tossed a couple of old tree stumps and hazelnut bushes. We furnished the inside of the bunker. It doesn't differ that much from other bunkers we've built, except here we made three plank-beds.

May 27, 1949

Today we slept in Swallow's old bunker. We came here yesterday to pick up a few things. We thought we could carry them back ourselves, but it looks like we'll have to find a wagon.

There's still two hours left before it gets dark. All our things are packed, we wait for a wagon. Lark, just like a real one, is humming a tune. He has a pleasant voice, and his songs are making me somewhat sad, bringing back old memories.

"You disappeared into the thicket of pines, just like in a dream ..."

It is Lord's favorite song. During my first days as a partisan, Lord and I walked around in this very place. It was preternaturally quiet then, and now the Russians are lying in ambush every night. Spies seem to be everywhere.



The brothers Audrūnas and Radvila outside their parents' house in Alytus in 1948

Today everything is finally in order. It's become quite cozy inside the bunker, with the mattresses, pillows, and blankets we brought inside yesterday.

There'll be seven of us living here: me, Swallow, Lark, Šamas, Catfish, Audrūnas (if he comes), and Swallow's wife. She'll be in charge of our household. Maybe it will be even better for us this way, since we have to travel some distance in order to get food and over time we could be discovered. Too bad we can't make soup; but what can we do? We'll just have coffee instead.

Yesterday I received a letter from Radvila, Audrūnas' brother and it affected me in a rather unpleasant way. Radvila writes that he and Audrūnas "have decided to hold out as long as possible." He also adds that we are not taking their parents into consideration. Here's a possible difficulty: will Radvila make Audrūnas change his mind? Maybe Audrūnas has chosen a stalling tactic, he's trying to delay joining us for as long as he can?

It's a strange situation. Our movement can only exist as long as there is enough intellectual strength, and once that disappears our movement comes to an end. At the same time, our intellectuals decide to join the partisans only after every bridge to their legal lives has been completely burned. Unfortunately, they can't really predict how long they can hold out. The MVD don't announce ahead of time when they're going to arrest someone; they plan to exterminate their victim at the time when he least expects it. Finally, everybody hangs on "as long as possible," until the arrest; and, of course, once arrested, it's impossible to "hang in there," nor is it possible to do anything good for the movement.

Two kinds of great forces keep colliding: either you sacrifice your parents by joining our ranks, which makes our struggle easier by supporting the whole nation and awakening it; or, for the sake of your parents, you survive until you are arrested and taken away, most likely with your parents. This second scenario is of no benefit to the movement. On the contrary, your labor strengthens the power of Soviet Russia. It's a terrible thing to lose one's parents or to push them into hardship – indeed it's a crime; but the bigger crime is to give nothing to your nation, to abandon it at a time when it needs you most. No sacrifice is too great for the sake of one's homeland. Every sacrifice which lessens the suffering of one's country is just and necessary.

May 28, 1949

Tornado and I are again spending our days at the “summer house.” Since the last time we were there a couple of weeks ago, it has gotten overgrown with grass. The bird cherry tree, so lush with leaves, has become like a living wall covering the entrance to our bunker.

I came here to pick up a dispatch sent by the Supreme Command. I looked through it yesterday. It is mainly the SC’s directives, instructions, and so on. There was also the first issue of “Alongside the Worrying Christ.” I find the writing somewhat weak. The editorial is too philosophical, written in such a ponderous style that you keep going over the text to understand what Merainis is trying to say. Our lower rank leaders will have a really hard time understanding it. Yet it feels good that our work is proceeding in a planned and organized way. After leafing through those modest contributions I felt re-energized to work even harder! Maybe the articles reflecting their authors’ ardent and pure passion, love for our homeland, and for our movement affected me. May God look favorably upon them all!

By now all of Lithuania knows about Kapsas and Vilnis. The Supreme Command reproduced my account of the “distinguishing characteristics” of



Lunch: Dzūkas is in the centre

these provocateurs and distributed it widely throughout our movement. That dirty scum won’t be able to do any more harm anywhere.

I was especially interested in Žadgaila’s information about the five hundred agents that the Bolsheviks recently sent out all across Lithuania, for the purpose of establishing contact with people who could help them track down the locations of partisans. We were also informed that after this “attack” by the agents, the MVD might start a massive raid on June the 10th. Those Bolsheviks are doing their work alright!

The collectivization process has reached its peak. Because of this, villagers sleep in the fields and not in their homes. Round-the-clock meetings are being held in villages. It’s even hard to put into writing all the odd things that are happening. This is how “volunteer” sign-ups for a kolkhoz take place: a strib forcibly grabs a person’s hand and guides it to sign the petition. What a method!

Yesterday we found out that somewhere in the Butrimonys area, partisans shot a couple of overly zealous kolkhoz proponents. This is unavoidable. Armed operations and punishments are needed, otherwise the residents won’t be able to give any justification to the party activists why they aren’t joining kolkhozes. Partisans are hurting the government everywhere: they aren’t allowing kolkhozes to be created, they are organizing boycotts of elections, urging residents to refuse both grain delivery and fulfillment of their forest service to the state.

Now if we can only successfully meet up with Beet and bring order to the Iron Wolf command we’ll show the Bolshevik how to establish kolkhozes!

June 1, 1949

Finally, Hawk and I went to see Beet. The men were fed up with the temporary confusion after Lightning’s death and said they were anxious for leadership.

We formed a temporary leadership for the Iron Wolf command. Beet was designated command leader and Swallow was made his deputy. Revenge was

made chief of staff with Žalgiris as his deputy. Terror was in charge of one squad and Swallow of the other.

Beet is an excellent soldier, but, in my opinion, taking care of organizational matters is not his strong suit. The men respect him as the old and brave fighter that he is. His rival is Swallow; but the men don't want him as leader because he's still too young. Regardless, it seems to me that Swallow would be much more capable of taking charge of the command's affairs than Beet. But in the end, the opinion of the men needs to be considered, since there's not much use in having a leader who carries no authority.

Revenge is a young guy who has finished four years of high school. He's brave and resourceful; he has distinguished himself in battle and has a good sense of direction. He might make a good leader someday, but for now he should get more training. By his appearance Revenge gives the impression that he's suited to command. In truth, he still has a lot of the characteristics of a raw youth, but partisan life matures a person quickly.

Terror is also a great guy. He's brave, friendly, and wears his heart on his sleeve. Being a large man, he looks like a blacksmith. He actually did some blacksmithing a while back. Terror was telling us frankly of how he took care of things up to now and how he got wounded a second time.

"I can't complain about the men – they do listen to me. They go wherever I tell them to," said Terror.

According to him, when it comes to battle, the men are eager to fight.

Bravo, men! Lightning's fighting spirit lives on in them. They don't panic, and their weapons are always at the ready, to fight to the death.

Samogitian tried to put in a few claims of his own. He was unhappy that he wasn't singled out for leadership, even though he's known as a courageous old partisan who has suffered at the hands of the enemy, losing all his old friends and his brother. Samogitian was resentful of the fact that a young partisan like Terror was chosen to be the leader of the group rather than himself. What's the answer to such a claim? Samogitian is as fearless as the devil, but he's ill, has bad nerves and suffers from epilepsy. We reassured him

that he won't be forgotten and will be given recognition in the future, and so forth.

Who says you don't need diplomacy in leading partisans? Oh, it's needed – a lot is needed! We're dealing here with volunteers, not draftees. They are all colorful and stubborn types with no one to oversee them. All of them have stared into the face of death many times. They are not afraid of death, so what else is there to fear? That's why you need the right approach in order to lead them.

June 2, 1949

It's early evening. The air feels heavy. A swarm of mosquitoes buzzes over the opening to the bunker. Today I'm leaving to pick up Audrūnas. I wonder if he'll come.

We pass through fields. The nights are short and bright now. The moon is already quite large. It's warm. Our clothes are completely drenched in sweat. Swallow and Lark can't keep up and keep asking Tornado, who is speedily marching forth, to wait for them. Tornado is a real tank. He always keeps to a straight line moving through marshes, fields, or bushes. There's always a string of curses directed at him from behind.

Tornado is an interesting partisan. He can't sit still and has to be constantly on the move. He likes to walk a lot so it's a real torture for him to hibernate in a bunker. He hates any kind of work which requires attention and precision. Hard work is another matter. He may be absentminded, forgetful and a daredevil, but he's still a good man.

June 6, 1949

The morning is cold and slightly foggy. My mood matches it exactly. This is the third day that Swallow, Lark, and I are wandering around the area of X, waiting for Audrūnas. He said he would definitely arrive on either the

3rd, 4th, or 5th, but has yet to come. Our work is really hampered by this and we can't do what we need to do, while the time just keeps flying. Most importantly, I don't have the right assistant, nor do I have any equipment: no typewriter, no paper, and no decent radio. In a word, nothing. I was thinking about getting into the city and grabbing a typewriter from N school, but it turned out there's none there. There are typewriters in the city center, but it's hard to get them now, during summer, when the nights are so short and, besides, the Nemunas River is an obstacle.

These last days I put in purchase requests for paper, carbon paper, and other things. Maybe they'll actually be bought. A typewriter costs over 8,000 rubles. That's a lot of money that we don't have. I thought about all kinds of solutions to this problem, but I didn't come up with anything worthwhile. I don't have a person in the city that could help me with this.

Why is Audrūnas not coming? This aimless hanging around really gets under my skin. You wait and you wait without knowing if he'll ever come. Maybe he changed his mind ...?

Right under our noses spies, agents, and stribs are wandering around and it makes me mad that we can't deal with those bastards because of all the



A meeting of the leaders of the Tauras and Dainava regions in 1950: Little Father-Litas (standing, third from left), Hawk (fourth), and Rainys (fifth)

endless business matters. The host at our "summer house" told us that as soon as we left, a provocateur paid him a visit. He pretended to be a refugee in need of a hiding place and asked him for money. When he didn't get what he wanted, he threatened him with a kolkhoz. The host ran over to inform us of this, but we had already gone. Too bad! We would've shown him some kolkhozes!

With their heads covered with sheets, my friends are snoring away. Lark's snores are earthshaking. He always sleeps soundly, and whatever position he lies down in, he wakes up in the same one. He lay down with his cap on, and now it's hanging ridiculously from his ear. I couldn't help but burst out laughing.

Tornado doesn't snore, but he sleeps so deeply that once in a while, when he stirs violently, he hurls me to the side. Only the top of Swallow's head and the tips of his shoes peek out from under the blanket.

This morning we set up our camp on a bluff in a tiny clearing that measures two meters by two meters. There's hardly enough room for all of us, but there's no better place on this slope. If not for this clearing we would all be sleeping tied to a tree, otherwise we would just roll down into the river.

It's cold ... I need to have a smoke or I'll fall asleep. The first rays of the sun are breaking through. Maybe the day will be clear and warm.

The cigarette smoke clears my mind. I look down. Through the tree branches you can see a meadow on the other side of the stream. I catch myself thinking about my conversation with an old man of around sixty. Lightning dug a bunker at his place last year. That's where we spent the last weeks of this past winter, after the MVD blew up our home. If not for that bunker, we would have had to spend our days staying with farmers.

This "Dziedomokas," as Elm called him, is a character, interested in politics. Whenever you dropped in on him he would start talking about "these times," curse the government, the Americans and the English, praise Hitler, and so forth. There would be no end to his speeches, postulations, stratagems, and complaints.

“So tell me guys, don't you have any feelings about all of this? What about 'nowadays,' do you think it'll all stay the same?” Dziedomokas would almost always begin this way.

Then I would begin my evaluation of the political situation. The old man would sit, puff on his pipe, and groan.

“Oh, Jesus, oh Jesus, what a life in these swamps ... To heck with all them English and them Americans ... Hitler, he would've already declared war a long time ago!” the old man would say angrily.

I explain to him that you can't start a war so quickly. First, you have to prepare thoroughly. The whole world does it that way: you arm yourself and then wait for the right opportunity. Hitler acted quickly, winning a lot of battles, but he was unable to keep it going to the end ... After my long explanations the old man appears to be satisfied, only to launch a new question:

“D'ya think something will happen this year?”

I simply avoid answering this question. Just to say there'll be war won't satisfy the old man. I have to prove it. I explain one more time that nobody knows when the war will begin, but it will be soon because ... and so on and so forth.

Dziedomokas starts complaining again about life:



Audrūnas, Dzūkas and
Wormwood

“What a life, what a life ... Who thought up them damn governments? They don't do ya any good, 'cept strip your last rags away. Take them kolkhozes ... God knows, if things keep goin' this way and if war don't come this year everybody will be herded into kolkhozes. And what about them taxes! Who needs 'em! You don't know what you're gonna do, where you're gonna go, you can't lift your arms or your feet, your head is buzzin' with all kinds of worries. As long as ya stay sleepin' everything's fine, but just as soon as ya get up and start mullin' over things, ya don't know what's gonna happen. If only there wasn't so much land to deal with ... But now, all them marshes and ditches have been messed over and destroyed ...”

The old man was probably talking here about his marshes and ditches that had been counted as part of his arable land. While talking, he got so agitated that his voice became reedy, at times even turning shrill.

The old man's disposition is well known to all of his neighbors. He could be plowing his field, when suddenly something comes to mind and he plops down to ponder. As soon as he sees a neighbor nearby, he leaves his horses and runs over to him. For starters, he talks about the weather, the crops, the livestock, about various rumors, and then finally he says:

“What do ya think, will anything good come outta all this? God knows, people are speculatin' about this and that ...”

The sun is setting and now reaches the tops of the trees. A cold dampness drifts in from the Nemunas. A light wind passes through the treetops. The small forest rustles and then is so quiet again you can only hear the birds singing.

Since early morning the mongols, shooting from their tanks, have been making the air tremble. The boom of cannons echoes in the plains of the Nemunas. The communists are not asleep. How pleasant it would be to hear such thunder coming from the West.

A slight anxiety seizes me. I don't know where it comes from. There's no looming danger. To the contrary, it's so peaceful here. It's when it's peaceful and I don't have work to do that this feeling overcomes me. Like an uninvited pesky guest, it always ruins my serenity. I feel depressed. I sit and I think, but

my thoughts don't materialize into anything. I stare without feeling at the tree branches moving in the wind; I hear farmers talking somewhere out there ... That's life. My soul bears a heavy burden. It's as if my blood has become one with my melancholy. With one deep breath I want to blow all of it away, but it's not possible. In six years, that melancholy has coalesced within every fiber of my heart ...

Today I finished reading Tolstoy's *Resurrection* and his short story "In the Caucasus." What a great writer he is and his books are a pleasure to read! He's been dead for a long time now, but his books will live forever ...

Glossary

AUKŠTAITIJA, DZŪKIJA, SAMOGITIA (ŽEMAITIJA), SUVALKIJA – names of the regions of Lithuania

BDPS – General Democratic Resistance Movement (Bendras demokratinio pasipriešinimo sąjūdis) an underground Lithuanian resistance organisation

DAINAVA, TAURAS – names used by the partisans for military zones of Lithuania. The country was divided into military zones, each with a separate command structure

ISTREBITEL (usually shortened to srib) – a member of the local reprisal squads that operated in the Lithuanian countryside after the war, and which were brutal in using force to put down resistance to the Soviet regime

LLKS – Lithuanian Movement for the Fight for Freedom (in Lithuanian Lietuvos Laisvės Kovos Sąjūdis)

MARGIS, IRON WOLF, KAZIMIERAITIS, GRAND DUKE KĘSTUTIS, GRAND DUKE VYTAUTAS – names of partisan military formations

MGB, MVD, NKVD – former Soviet intelligence and counterintelligence agencies, forerunners of the KGB

List of code names

ADAM (ADOMAS) – Vladas Baciūška (1910–1947)
AMBER (GINTARAS) – Juozas Beinoravičius (?–1949)
ARMINAS – Bronius Balčius (1926–1948)
ARŪNAS – Juozas Vizbaras, a BDPS Presidium messenger, an MGB agent
AUDRŪNAS-MIKAS-VAIŠVILKAS – Mikas Babrauskas (1924–1950)
AXE (KIRVIS) – Stasys Vasiliauskas (1924–1949)
BALYS – Teofilis Valickas (1921–1949)
BANADAS – Vladas Gavelis (1924–1948)
BAURAS-BAURUKAS – Petras Šerpenskas (arrested in 1949)
BEET (BUROKAS) – Jonas Radžiūnas (1919–1950)
BEET (BUROKAS, MARGIS GROUP) – Konstantinas Kibauskas (1922–1949)
BILIŪNAS – Gabrielius Turskas (1917–1952)
BIRUTĖ – Marytė Budėnaitė (1923–1949)
CATFISH (ŠAMAS) – Juozas Baranauskas (1922–1949)
CUCKOO (GEGUTIS) – Vincas Ivanauskas (1915–1947)
DREAMER (SVAJŪNAS) – Vladas Vancevičius (1931–1949)
EAGLE (ARAS) – Mykolas Petrauskas (1910–1947)
EAGLE (ARAS) – Pranas Baranauskas (1922–1949)
EAGLE (ERELIS) – Juozas Markulis, an MGB agent
ELM (GUOBA) – Vaclovas Petrauskas (1926–1950)
ENGINEER (INŽINIERIUS) – Alfonsas Diksa (1926, arrested in 1949)

FAUST – Aleksandras Grybinas (1920–1949)
FAVOR (MALONĖ) – a partisan signaller
GAILIUS – Pranas Malinauskas (1928–1951)
GELGAUDAS – the MGB agent Lauras
GIEDRIUS – Adomas Bagdonas (1930, arrested in 1949)
GRASSHOPPER (ŽIOGAS) – Petras Ašmenskas (?–1952)
HANDSOME (GRAŽUOLIS) – Stasys Jovaišis (arrested in 1950)
HAWK (SAKALAS) – Jurgis Jurelionis (1922–1951)
HAWK (VANAGAS) – Adolfas Ramanauskas (1918–1957)
HAWK (VANAGAS, MARGĖNŪ) – Stasys Piličiauskas (1920–1950)
HAWK (VANAGAS) – Viktoras Kazlauskas (?–1949)
HOWDY (LABUTIS) – Petras Šilanskas (?–1949)
JANUARY (SAUSIS) – Jonas Barysas (?–1948)
JOB (JOBAS) – a partisan signaller
JOGAILA – a partisan signaller
JUNIPER (ĖGLIS) – Juozas Alekševičius (1928–1949)
KALNIUS – Jurgis Gylys (1920–1949)
KAPSAS – Kostas Kubilinskas, a writer, the MGB agent Varnas
KAZIMIERAITIS – Juozas Vitkus (1901–1946)
KEY (RAKTAS) – Alfonsas Mikailionis (?–1946)

KLONĖ – Adolfas Gecevičius (1918–1949)
KOSTAS-RAINYS-TYLIUS – Kostas Baliukevičius (1926–1951)
KUDIRKA – Jonas Turskas (1916–1951)
KYTRAS – a partisan signaller
LAPAITIS – Juozas Petraška (1916, arrested in 1947)
LARK (VIEVERSYS) – Julius Karpis (1927–1949)
LARK (VIEVERSYS) – Stasys Burneika (1929–1949)
LARK (VYTURYS) – Vincas Juozaitis (1922, arrested in 1947)
LEAF (LAPAS) – Algirdas Radzevičius (1932, arrested in 1949)
LIGHTNING (ŽAIBAS) – Vaclovas Voveris (1922–1949)
LINDEN (LIEPA) – Jonas Šimelionis (1927–1949)
LINEN (LINAS) – Antanas Macevičius (1915, arrested in 1947)
LINEN (LINAS) – Pranas Svirskas (?–1947)
LION (LIŪTAS) – Pranas Baranauskas (1925–1947)
LITTLE FATHER-LITAS (TĖVUKAS, LITAS) – Sergijus Staniškis (1899–1953)
LORD (LORDAS) – Ričardas Golšteinas (?–1946)
MAPLE (KLEVAS) – Bronius Paulauskas (1928–1948)
MAPLE (KLEVAS) – Vytautas Subačius (1920–1947)
MAPLE (KLEVAS) – Vytautas Vitunskas (b. 1930)
MERAINIS – Juozas Šibaila (1905–1953)
MIKAS – Mikas Babrauskas (see Audrūnas)

MILDA – Antanina Lukšytė-Garšvienė (1924, arrested in 1949)
MOTHER-IN-LAW (UOŠVĖ) – Valerija Valukonienė (1904–1949)
MOUNTAIN ASH (ŠERMUKŠNIS) – Jonas Kazlauskas (1919–1949)
NAMELESS (BEVARDIS) – Pranas Ivanauskas (1925–1949)
NEGRO (NEGRAS) – Jonas Grincevičius (1920–1948)
NEMUNAS – a partisan signaller
NEMUNAS – Vincas Kalanta (1924–1949)
NEMUNAS WAVE (NEMUNO BANGA) – the partisan signaller Česnulevičiūtė
NIGHTINGALE (LAKŠTINGALA) – Motiejus Jaruševičius (1920–1951)
NYKŠTAITIS – Adomas Kamandulis (1915–1946)
OAK (ĄŽUOLAITIS) – Jonas Cibulskas (1914–1947)
OAK (ĄŽUOLAS) – Tamulevičius, an MGB agent
OAK (ĄŽUOLIS) – Domininkas Jėčys (1896–1947)
PAKŠTAS – Jonas Jusas (1913–1947)
PEONY (BIJŪNAS) – Dominykas Balinas (1925–1951)
PIGEON (BALANDIS) – Jonas Kuzmickas (?–1948)
PIGEON (BALANDIS) – Vincas Ambrazevičius (?–1951)
PIGEON (KARVELIS) – Jonas Radziukynas (1927–1949)
PILOT (LAKŪNAS) – Alfonsas Kasiulynas (1927–1948)
PILOT (LAKŪNAS) – Juozas Eimanavičius (?–1948)
PLANET (PLANETA) – a partisan signaller

PLAUGA KAZYS – partisan signaller
PLOWMAN (ARTOJAS) – Bronius Plytnikas (1903–1949)
RADASTAS – Juozas Bujanauskas (1929, arrested in 1949)
RADVILA-ŠVENDRYS – Augustinas Babrauskas (?–1950)
RAMUNIS – Romas Sadauskas (1920–1951)
RAMUNIS – Vladas Reklaitis (1923–1947)
REVENGE (KERŠTAS) – Vladas Šarkus (?–1949)
RIMVYDAS – Jurgis Krikščiūnas (1919–1949)
RYE (RUGYS) – Jonas Ivanauskas (1916–1948)
RYE (RUGYS) – Jonas Jakubavičius (1918–1948)
SAILOR (JŪRININKAS) – Albertas Perminas (1923–1947)
SAULIUS – Jonas Baranauskas (1924–1951)
SCOUT (ŽVALGAS) – Danielius Dabrovoliskas (1923–1948)
SMITH (ŠMITAS) – Vladas Karpuška (1912–1947)
STORK (GANDRAS) – Kostas Šimelevičius (1922–1947)
STORM (AUDRA) – Vladas Novikevičius (1910–1949)
STORM (ŠTURMAS) – Antanas Ivanauskas (1921–1947)
STUDENT (STUDENTAS) – Alfonsas Bucevičius (1920–1949)
SWALLOW (KREGŽDĖ) – Petras Savickas (1924–1949)
SWALLOW'S WIFE (KREGŽDĖS ŽMONA) – Bronė Diksaitė-Savickienė (?–1949)

ŠARŪNAS – Feliksas Daugirdas (1910–1949)
ŠILUTIS – Juozas Šilanskas (1920–1949)
TANK OPERATOR (TANKISTAS) – Julius Jarmalavičius (?–1949)
TARZAN (TARZANAS) – Motiejus Dzidzevičius (1917–1948)
TARZAN (TARZANAS) – Stasys Stakutis (1925–1949)
TERROR (SIAUBAS) – Vladas Dabrovoliskas (1927–1949)
THINKER-TIGER (MYSLINČIUS-TIGRAS) – Stasys Raklevičius (1904–1949)
THRUSH (STRAZDAS) – Jurgis Čaplikas (1923–1948)
TIGER (TIGRAS) – Juozas Baltrušaitis (1926–1949)
TIGER (TIGRAS) – Petras Kriščiulevičius (arrested in 1949)
TIGER (TIGRAS) – Pranas Sviklas (1924–1949)
TORNADO (VIESULAS) – Vytautas (Vitalius) Kuzmickas (1924–1950)
ŪLA – Juozas Lukšys (1912, arrested in 1949)
VAITKUS – Juozas Šarkus (?–1947)
WOLF (VILKAS) – Adolfas Trunsė (?–1947)
WOLF (VILKAS) – unknown partisan
VILNIS – Algirdas Skinkys
VYTAS-MERKYS – Adolfas Baublys (1913–1949)
VYTAUTAS-GRASSNAKE (ŽALTYS) – Jonas Žemaitis (1909–1954)
VYTENIS – Petras Plytnikas (1922–1946)

WARRIOR (KARIŪNAS) – Benediktas Labenskas (1918–1949)
WILLOW (ŽILVINAS-ŽILVITIS) – Jonas Kedas (1929, arrested in 1949)
WILLOW (ŽILVITIS-ŽILVIS) – Julius Makaravičius (1927–1949)
WOODPECKER (GENYS) – Petras Vaitkus (1910–1953)
WOODPECKER (GENYS) – Stasys Klimašauskas (1925–1949)
WOODSMAN (GIRINIS) – Bernardas Navickas (1930–1949)
WOODSMAN (GIRINIS) – Juozas Puškorius (1917, arrested in 1947)
WORMWOOD (DIEMEDIS) – Juozas Gegužis (1923–1951)
ŽADGAILA – Petras Bartkus (1925–1949)
ŽALGIRIS – Juozas Šarkus (1927–1951)
ŽEMAITIS – Jonas Žideckas (1928, arrested in 1949)

Compiled by Algis Kašėta

This list of code names includes only those mentioned in the diary
of Lionginas Baliukevičius

