

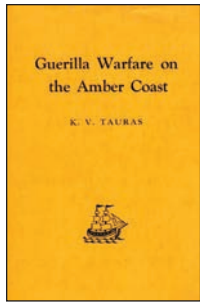
BOOK REVIEW

Guerrilla Warfare on the Amber Coast

Tauras KV, Cherne L. *Guerrilla Warfare on the Amber Coast*. New York, NY: Lithuanian Research Institute, Voyages Press; 1962. Hardback, 121 pages. ASIN: B06XGNM5K (ISBN-10: 1258496593 / ISBN-13: 978-1258496593 for newer reprints).

Review by COL (Ret) Warner "Rocky" D. Farr, MD, MPH

Guerrilla leaders seldom write books after the fighting is over. They are probably too busy setting up the new regime! Those who "lose" write even fewer books. K.V. Tauras is the pseudonym of a Lithuanian freedom fighter who withheld his identity to be able to return to the fight after this book was published in 1952. He stated that some of the book's material came from J. Lukša, who did return to the fight later and was executed by the People's Commissariat for Internal Affairs of the Soviet Union (Народный комиссариат внутренних дел [Narodnyi Komissariat Vnutrennikh Del; NKVD]).



The Amber Coast is the name given to the part of the coast of the Baltic Sea northwest of what is now Kaliningrad, Russia (formerly it was Königsberg in northern East Prussia, Germany). In this area, amber has been mined since the 19th century. The Lithuanian guerrilla experience is one of the longer unconventional warfare engagements on record. It began against the Soviets when they invaded the Baltic states in 1940, then the Lithuanian guerrillas fought the Nazis, and then the war shifted back to fighting the Russians in 1944. The guerrillas kept up an armed resistance against Soviet occupation well into the 1950s. After receiving not much expected help from the NATO allies, the groups, running out of ammunition and supplies, transitioned into an underground and concentrated on sabotage, subversion, and then on to economic and cultural resistance. The long view paid off, with the eventual emergence of a free Lithuania in 1990.

So, what pearls are contained in this thin guerrilla-war volume? The Lithuanian Freedom Army (LFA) obtained most of its arms from stocks left by the retreating Nazis, and the rest from Soviet forces by stripping enemy dead and by staging raids on NKVD arms depots. The paucity of ammunition by the mid 1950s led to a shift to more passive resistance. Ammunition corrosion and decay, combined with no source of resupply, was the LFA's

final limiting factor. Most LFA fighters built small, isolated, underground pillboxes on sympathetic farms and stored both war supplies and incriminating documentation against the Soviets in these the so-called archive bunkers.

Women were used extensively for "liaison work." This consisted of rapid conveyance of resistance plans and orders, distribution of its underground press to the public, and transportation of munitions from oversupplied units to those experiencing shortages. It was noted that the female liaisons were not only "devoted, determined, and able" but also "inconspicuous in the eyes of the NKVD." Many were teenagers, some of whom were captured and sent to Siberian gulags, while others were septuagenarians—what sleepy checkpoint guard messes with a little old lady? Another use of female auxiliaries was to provide fake stories for guerrillas needing hospitalization so that Lithuanian hospitals would not think they had become sick while conducting guerrilla actions. As in every guerrilla movement, the LFA needed a robust auxiliary and underground capability.

Demobilization, not surrender, became the path in the 1950s. With the lack of ammunition and Western support,* the decision was made to assume "resistance by peaceful means." This kept the dream alive through peaceful cultural, religious, and economic resistance, which, after 40 years (1950 to 1990), resulted in a free Lithuania. With the situation in the Ukraine (another country with a guerrilla movement history that persisted long after the Second World War) and with the current uneasiness in the Baltics and Sweden, we and they do live in interesting times!

This book was available used on the Internet and has been digitized for purchase and download to electronic readers.

*For the CIA's proposed mission in Eastern Europe supporting guerrilla movements after the Second World War, read *Operation Rollback: America's Secret War Behind the Iron Curtain* by Peter Grose. New York, NY: Mariner Books; 2001. ISBN-10: 0618154582 / ISBN-13: 978-061815458.



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