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COUNTRY USSR (Lithuanian SSR)

SUBJECT The Resistance Movement in Lithuania

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History of Resistance Movement

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- In the years 1945-1948, there was very active resistance against the Bolsheviks in Lithuania. Mobilization and arrests, deportations and the expectations that war was imminent led people to open resistance against the occupying Soviets and filled the forests with partisans. In 1944, not less than 30,000 Lithuanians were mobilized into the Red Army. In the provinces, special army units carried out the mobilization. Whoever tried to oppose them was shot down on the spot without mercy. Consequently, many men took to the forests.
- The mobilized Lithuanians were first taken to Kharkov and after a month or so brought back to Lithuania to the former military barracks at Ukmerge (55-04N, 24-20E) and to the military training grounds at Jonava. People began to desert to the partisans, not in ones and twos but in tens and more, every night.
- The activity of the partisans was quite spontaneous. The population helped them as much as they could; the farms helped with food; the priests aided in whatever way they could; nurses and doctors helped with medical supplies stolen from the hospitals. The partisans were everywhere. In the Dzūkai region (northeastern Lithuania) there were real military formations conducting their activities, not in groups of 5 or 10 men, as they do now, but in groups of a hundred or more. Several villages, for example, Sereciaus (55-04N, 23-25E), were attacked several times; and after killing Communists the partisans would withdraw. Real battles with MGB and Red Army units were fought. Rumors were spread that the Americans and British had dropped parachutists here and there in Zemaitija (low Lithuania) and Suvalkija (region near the former East Russia-Polish border) and that they were helping the partisans. The Lithuanian Laisves Kovotojai (Struggle for Freedom) partisans wore uniforms. All this kept the morale of the nation very high indeed and gave the people hope that liberation was near. Until 1948-49 the people talked of nothing but the imminent war, and it was expected every spring.

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4. The occupying Soviets made every effort to destroy the partisan movement. In some places, for example, aukstaitija (High Lithuania) they brought in large military units. In 1946-7 they surrounded the whole area and stayed there for months, clearing up the forest bush by bush. The bodies of the partisans they killed were thrown in heaps in the open market-places of the villages and left there for weeks, and then new ones were brought. If persons showed any feelings because their brothers or sons were among the slain, they were arrested and deported. There were no limits to the sufferings of the people, and now there is scarcely a family in Lithuania of which some members have not been either killed by the Russians or arrested or deported or killed by the partisans out of revenge.
5. Active resistance might have been prevented if the people had known beforehand that there would be no war in the near future; and, of course, if the partisans themselves had had good leadership and had been organized on a strictly military basis with strong discipline, then many of the losses could have been avoided. On the other hand, it must be admitted that the partisan movement was inevitable. The Russians were, and are, hated to such an extent that for many people there was no alternative but to join the partisans.

Present-day Partisan Activity

6. At the present time there are still partisans in Lithuania. It is very difficult to say how many, possibly 2,000 or more in the whole country. But the Soviet authorities are no longer worried as they were before; the MGB men say that after a few years the partisans will have perished anyway. But they are still being fought by special MGB troops, the so-called Skrebal, among whom are also Lithuanians who are paid 400-500 rubles per month. The MGB are also assisted by the militia.
7. The partisans are no longer well-organized. They operate in small groups of 7 - 12 - 14 men, and these groups do not have good contact, if any, among themselves. The Soviets are stamping them out, and they have no alternative but to go on and to defend themselves to the last. They have also become very cruel and in their turn are killing everyone whom they suspect of being Communist or of favoring the Bolshevists. As a result, many innocent persons have perished, according to source.
8. The position of the farmers is particularly difficult. They have very little food themselves now, but the partisans do not ask - they simply come and take whatever they can find. Another thing that frequently happens is that the farmer who has been visited by the partisans will have a visit from the Russians, who come to carry out controls, and he cannot deny that the partisans have been there. Then, no sooner have the Russians gone than the partisans are back again. Thus the farmer is attacked on both sides, each accusing him of aiding the other. In this manner, too, many innocent peasants have lost their lives, according to source.

Passive Resistance

9. There is no obvious or noticeable evidence at the present time of passive resistance organization, nor is there any knowledge, among the ordinary



public, of any illegal newspapers or leaflets. In 1948, underground leaflets were occasionally distributed in the street of Kaunas, and from time to time students were printing such leaflets. One group was arrested in 1948-49; they had not been sufficiently careful, distributing the leaflets openly in churches, etc. There have been signs of late, however, which indicate that it is very likely that efforts have been made to organize illegal national activities.

- 10. Although every Lithuanian is fully convinced that Bolshevism must perish, he has learned from the hard lessons of recent years - life and liberty being very dear - to dissemble and to dance to the Russians' tune. This does not mean that the people would not join in underground activities now. In fact, the majority would do so and would be prepared to sacrifice themselves, provided that they had clear aims before them and knew why and what they were fighting for, and when liberation would come. They feel that they need organization, instruction, and leadership; patriotism alone is not enough.