

Unforgettable Names of Lithuania

Justinas SAJAUSKAS



LITHUANIAN PARTISAN MILITARY DISTRICTS

1949-1950



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Novel of miniatures



The General Jonas Žemaitis Military
Academy of Lithuania



Genocide and Resistance Research
Centre of Lithuania

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On the cover: monument for the partisans of the *Tauras* military district in Marijampolė. Unveiled in 2003.
Monument designer: Alfonsas Vincentas Ambraziūnas.

Taken from J. Sajauskas '*Neužmirštami Suvalkijos vardai*' (*'Unforgettable Names of Suvalkija'*)

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Foreword



Before the reader starts turning the pages and gets absorbed into the happenings described in this book, one must be introduced to the basic facts about the partisan war and the number of deportations in Lithuania. This book focuses on Southwest Lithuania; however, the partisan war took place in all the country, not only in the southwestern region. It was a large-scale, all-embracing and organized resistance movement that lasted long years in the territory of Lithuania.

The partisan war was at its peak in the period of 1944–1953. This period can be divided into three stages: the first stage – a spontaneous resistance to the occupation that encompassed all the nation (July 1944–May 1946); the second – the struggle of well-organized partisan squads against the occupant government settling in the country (May 1946–November 1948); and the third – the activities coordinated by the unified partisan military and political command and the suppression of the resistance (November 1948–May 1953).*

To fully understand the tremendous loss that Lithuania suffered during the partisan war – people killed at war together with the executed, imprisoned and deported to Siberia – one must be aware that there were around 3 000 000 citizens of Lithuania according to the data of the 1940 census.** Not less than 456 000 of Lithuanians became victims of the Soviet terror, genocide and abuse.*** As various sources state, more than 20 000 fighters were killed during the partisan war.

* Nijolė Gaškaitė, „Pasiaprašimo istorija 1944-1953 metais“, Atviros Lietuvos Fondas, http://www.partizanai.org/failai/html/pasiaprašimo_istorija.htm#d17, 2013 12 17

** Adolfas Damušis, „Lietuvos gyventojų aukos ir nuostoliai Antrojo pasaulinio karo ir pokario 1940-1959 metais“, Second edition, <http://partizanai.org/failai/html/lietuvos-aukos.htm>, 2013 12 17

*** Adolfas Damušis, „Lietuvos gyventojų aukos ir nuostoliai Antrojo pasaulinio karo ir pokario 1940-1959 metais“, Second edition, <http://partizanai.org/failai/html/lietuvos-aukos.htm>, 2013 12 17

This was, and still is, a huge loss for Lithuania because buildings and economy can be quickly rebuilt, but it takes much more time to recreate the demolished intelligence, the stratum of farmers, the class of educators or the destroyed military force. When the brightest minds and the most active people of the nation were annihilated, the Lithuanian identity was broken for a long time. Up until now, we have felt the consequences of this loss, and we will continue to feel it.

There were a lot of memoirs and articles published about the partisan war and suffering of political exiles and deportees to Siberia after the restoration of Lithuanian Independence in 1990. Many historians issued their essays on this topic, several feature films and documentaries were also made. Yet when we talk to European foreigners or people from more distant parts of the world, we notice that they either have very little knowledge or do not know anything about the postwar partisan struggle or resistance movement in Lithuania at all. They are not aware of the imprisonment and deportations of the Lithuanian people to the cold Siberia in the period of 1940–1941 and later, after 1944. This “blank spot” in the minds of foreigners exists not because of the information shortage in foreign languages on the Internet. Those who are interested in the Lithuanian history or partisan war can easily find the main information. But there are very few fiction books about the Postwar

written by Lithuanian authors and translated into foreign languages.

I hope that this book – more fiction than documentary – will expand the knowledge of the foreign reader: it will provide more information about this period in Lithuania or will induce the interest. Justinas Sajauskas does not write about numbers or death toll statistics in his book. Instead, he reflects the feelings of the postwar Lithuanians, their everyday experiences and insight about “stribs”, chekists, or the “activities” of the Soviet soldiers in Southwest Lithuania. The author masterfully depicts events in miniatures and comments on them in the voice of an ordinary villager, town dweller, partisan or another character showing exactly how inseparably partisan war was related to all strata of society.

I believe this book will help the foreign reader to empathize with the postwar Lithuanians – what they felt, how they lived; it will help to comprehend the fragility of the human existence and the thin line separating life from eternity in the fighting Lithuania of those days.

Colonel Eugenijus Vosylius
*Commandant of The General Jonas Žemaitis
Military Academy of Lithuania*

Preface

‘...It is enough to consider the partisan struggle. How many men there were in the first days – strong as oaks and brave as lions. Only a few of those have remained amongst us to this day. The faces of the fallen pass, again and again, in front of our eyes. And how numerous they are – a whole world of the dead! Who will understand, who will describe their heroism, whose like the world has not heard of until now? Will the future know how to give what is due to the heroic sacrifice of these people? Part of the nation will understand them, but there will be some who will trample all this into the mud...’

*LIONGINAS BALIUKEVIČIUS-DZŪKAS**
Commander of the Dainava Military District

FOR FREEDOM AND FATHERLAND

There are dozens of books that narrate, in various ways, the story of an extraordinary decade in the history of Lithuania – the decade of the partisan resistance. These books include the narratives of the partisans themselves – of the ones who

* Partisans’ battle-names, assumed for the reasons of conspiracy, are printed after a hyphen. Sometimes there are more than one alias – additional ones follow after comma. Wherever these aliases, appellations of military districts, periodical titles vel sim are translatable, their translation is provided within square brackets.

survived – as well as the narratives of their liaison agents and supporters, women who loved them and were loved in return, and their brothers and sisters. They also include the collections of documents and diaries that contain thoughts of the fallen, written down, perhaps, with no hope that anyone would ever read and understand them. Sometimes they also include academic research and monographs of professional historians. In any case, one may state with confidence that the partisan war is well-known, at least in Lithuania, and that its names, dates and events are known as well... What kind of history we will write for it, time alone will show. As someone unoriginally, but aptly put it, every generation writes its own history, or history for itself, interpreting in its own peculiar way the causes, effects and motivations of the historical events. Yet such considerations are less important than the need for this period of history to find its proper place both in collective memory and academic studies.

In contrast to the sources already mentioned that may help us in our study of partisan history, a huge archive of partisan photographs has been unduly neglected. Those photographs may be approached from two points of view. On the one hand, one may use them as documentary material for studying partisans’ everyday life, dress and armaments. On the other hand, one may observe faces and eyes of young men and women, and sometimes

these are more eloquent than most texts. The photographic evidence consists of thousands of photographs scattered in museums and public as well as private archives throughout Lithuania. From a more pragmatic standpoint, this testimony of a period fraught with extraordinary tension raises controversial thoughts in that it presupposes the question: was it not a crude violation of the rules of conspiracy? Can anything justify the risk of having photographs taken? For we know that once those photographs had found their way into the hands of the MGB (Ministry for the State Security, precursor of the KGB), they became an instrument in analysing the composition of partisan groups and also turned into incriminating evidence. This evidence was used in the repression of the family members of the identified partisans as well as against the arrested participants of the struggle for freedom. This is attested by the case-documents from the KGB archives, where photographs were treated not only as visual source-material, but also used as documentary evidence in the interrogations, and were thus included in the prosecution's file. The photographs attached to such legal files have the persons represented in them meticulously numbered and are covered with Russian inscriptions that show they have been carefully studied.

Why then, one may ask, do we have so many photographs from every single partisan military

district? It is true that some of the commanders, such as Juozas Vitkus-Kazimieraitis, Jonas Žemaitis-Vytautas and several others, are hardly ever to be found in the photographs. Yet this does not alter the nature of the problem, for even these commanders did not forbid taking pictures, nor did they seek in any way to regulate this activity despite consistently avoiding being photographed themselves. Besides, one may note that taking pictures was shunned in the period of 1944–1946 – there are hardly any pictures from that period. The year 1946 marks a change in the tactics of partisan activity: conspiracy becomes the top priority, operative units get smaller, major military clashes are avoided, etc. It is paradoxical that almost precisely at this moment there is a noticeable increase in the number of photographs, as taking photographs becomes a universal practice in 1947. There are photographs taken of important events, such as conventions and meetings of the commanders, training exercises, etc., and of individual partisans both supreme commanders and ordinary fighters. Former partisans recount how they tried to hide and disguise inferior clothes or shoes that were falling apart, and sometimes several fighters took their turns to be photographed wearing the same pair of military trousers.

Many photographs were posed with a view to imitate certain kind of activity, for example, publishing of underground periodicals. The Commander of the

Dainava Military District Lionginas Baliukevičius-Dzūkas records this practice in his diary: 'Yesterday we were all photographed as we were playing strenuous workers, we even brought along two typewriters for this purpose. We were supposed to represent military headquarters at work...'

One may notice that some photographs contain imitations of training exercises, exchanges of fire, military raids *vel sim*. Thus, partisan photographs, just like any documentary source, should not be approached uncritically. On the other hand, the clarification of this circumstance may help to answer, at least partly, the earlier question why the photographs were thought to be worth taking, even taking into account the risks involved.

It is apparent that by the end of 1946 there were no so-called 'accidental' people left in the forests anymore ('accidental people' meaning persons hiding from the Soviet military mobilisation, romantics who had joined the fight only for a few weeks, etc.). The situation was becoming increasingly more transparent, just as the hope of achieving the goals of military struggle and remaining alive was decreasing. In the full recognition of this fact, and also maintaining their struggle to be a significant period in the Lithuanian history, partisans sought to leave behind a panoramic view of the various aspects of their activity, a view that would be as wide and as comprehensive as possible, for the

benefit of future generations. One can only try to guess just how important it was for them to survive, even if only in a photograph, and to bequeath their smile or sadness to the future, if not in their living offspring, then at least in their photographic likeness. Of course, diaries were also written, particular events documented, the documents from the headquarters were filed, and archives formed. In most cases all of this was simply placed inside huge tin cans for milk or water and buried. Only one or two reliable persons would be informed of their whereabouts. In other words, partisans did everything within their reach to preserve and to pass on to the future the signs of their times, and without those signs the complex mosaic of the Lithuanian history would never be complete.

The present album seeks to follow the structure dictated by the logic of history itself. Each of its chapters is devoted to a partisan military district, of which there were nine, or to a topic that constitutes a focus of attention in its own right, such as the partisans' supreme command, armament, periodicals *vel sim*. Every chapter contains a textual part, which conveys the essential information and which, along with the captions of the photographs and the extended index, forms the informative part of the album. Thus, the authors' intention is to relate the history of the post-war partisan movement in a manner that would be accessible

even to those who are uninformed or know very little about it. In selecting photographs for the album, the editors did not limit themselves to the archives of the Museum of Genocide Victims. The editors are grateful to those museums and private persons who lent photographs and assisted in the identification of the persons depicted, thus helping to dispel the mists of oblivion at the same time. The editors express their gratitude to the direction of Šiauliai 'Aušra' Museum, their dear colleague Aurelija Malinauskaitė, Utena Ethnographic Museum, Skuodas Museum, National Museum of Lithuania, historians and ethnographers Stasys Burba, Edvardas Dirmeikis, Andrius Druškus, Juozas Jankauskas, Alfredas Jonušas, Romas Kaunietis, Jonas Ozgirdas, Zita Paulauskaitė, Valdas Striužas, Gintaras Šidlauskas, Aldona Vilutienė, partisan Leonas Laurinskas, and all who have helped with their advice and consultations. Only the joining-together of such allied force enabled us to summarise in this book our work of fourteen years that were spent collecting partisan photographs, and to present it as a testimony of those events that were taking place in Lithuania from 1944 to 1953.

In the years 1944–1945, Europe and the whole world was dizzily happy with the thought that the threat posed by Nazism had finally been overcome, and that the war, which carried away millions of lives, destroyed cities and changed the world, was

finally over... Lithuania, as well as other Baltic states that had lost their independence already in 1940, and which were beginning to feel the peculiar flavour of the 'Soviet paradise', was dominated by very different feelings.

It was then that a battle started in Lithuania, a national war, which aimed at the restitution of the Lithuanian state. Thousands of men gathered in the forests drawn by the hope that the military stand against the Soviets would not have to be long – only as long as it took to pass the resolutions of the Peace Conference, which were supposed to implement the principle of national self-determination. Sadly, Lithuania's hopes and confidence in it were dashed: for nine years Lithuania was obliged to wage its war all alone.

By 1945, the forests of Lithuania may already have contained around 30,000 partisan fighters commanded by former officers of the Lithuanian Army, members of voluntary pre-war Šiauliai [Riflemen] Association, students and school teachers. Large units of up to 200 men were formed and their battles with the Soviet Army had features characteristic of engagements between two regular armies. In the first years of armed resistance (1944–1946) alone, ca. 10,000 partisans were killed, while the overall death toll for the whole period of resistance is estimated at over 20,000 partisans (and ca. 2,000 liaison agents and supporters).

At first, armed resistance was to some extent irregular and sporadic, and the structure of the movement, based on military territorial principles, formed very gradually and with immense difficulties. Until 1948, three military regions were formed in the whole territory of Lithuania; each region was made up of military districts, districts consisted of brigades with their own operating areas and brigades further consisted of companies and platoons.

Structural subdivisions had their own subordinate headquarters which, at least until 1948, were commanded by the officers of the former Lithuanian Army.

The partisans promulgated documents prescribing military regulations through which they sought to maintain military discipline and also to avoid unauthorised activities and unnecessary bloodshed. The same purpose was served by the introduction of military uniforms and badges as well as other appropriate signs of recognition.

On 16 February 1949, the supreme command of the partisan movement the Presidium of the Council of the Lithuanian Freedom Struggle Movement (Lietuvos laisvės kovos sąjūdis, or LLKS) was established. Unlike previous attempts at unified organisation, this supreme command succeeded in securing the allegiance and subordination of

all the Lithuanian partisan commanders who participated in the constitutive assembly. The political Declaration of LLKS is a document, which is now recognised as an integral part of the Lithuanian legal system – bridges historical chasm between Lithuania in 1918 and 1990. An aspiration for freedom, independence and democracy is part of that all-important legacy of guiding values bequeathed to the future.

Lithuania by the generation that lived by the principle ‘Give to Fatherland what you owe’...

From the book “For Freedom and Fatherland”, Vilnius: LGGRTC, 2007, p. 237–239.

I. THE **C**ENTRE

MARIJAMPOLĖ

During the Nazi occupation times, Ašmonas worked as a jailor. As new occupants were approaching, he urged his friends:

“Men, don’t run away, we’ll have to defend Lithuania.”

No one knows if the young man’s friends listened to him, but he himself – stayed and defended. For three years. Until, while rescuing friends, he was killed in the forests of Kazlų Rūda.

MARIJAMPOLĖ

A Russian soldier, patrolling streets, gets acquainted with a local beaut and, as soon as he comes back to the barracks, he starts writing a letter: Come. She will come, he’s sure – she is the one wiled towards the barracks. But will she recognize him among the many rest? Their first meeting was so short.

For a moment his hand stops.

“Come. I’ll be without medals,” he finally finds an impeccable hint.

MARIJAMPOLĖ

The arrested Lazdynas is brought to the infamous Bagdonas’ house and gets dragged from one room to another. On the second floor he sees a bloodstained and bullet-battered corner, a handful of machine-gun cartridges scattered on the ground.

For some – it’s just a flinch, for others – the end of the road.

THE JAVONIS BROOK

The early post-war years. Autumn. Morning.

Having spent the night at her classmate's, Grybauskaitė and her friend rush to the white one – Rygiškių Jono gymnasium. Gasping for breath, a third friend catches them near the Town Park:

“What’s in the Javonis!.. What’s in the Javonis!..”

“What?” they go to check.

In the brook – narrow enough for a chicken to jump – two naked dead bodies float. One of them is a woman – her beautiful long hair is tousled by the stream.

MARIJAMPOLĖ

An arrested man is lead out from a *strib** house, so-called Bagdonas' house. He will be put to jail. The prisoner steps over the threshold and sees a stout man in a Lithuanian military uniform lying on the ground. A Russian, standing nearby, prods the body with his boot and gapes:

“Sh*t, so fat!”

MARIJAMPOLĖ

The interrogator waits till the woman, whom he had ‘questioned’, regains her consciousness. Then he pulls a Lithuanian flag out of the wardrobe, tears the bottom part off – it’s red**! – and throws the rest at the arrested.

“Here, make yourself a bandage!”

* a *strib* – Lithuanian abbreviation of the Russian word *istrebiteľ* (‘destroyer’). The plural of this term was applied to the members of the so-called ‘people’s defenders,’ who had been recruited ostensibly to protect the Lithuanian people from ‘bandits’. In actual fact, these were collaborators of the lowest case, brutally tramping the signs of any patriotism or armed resistance among Lithuanians themselves.

** Color *red* is associated with Communism (e.g. the red flag or often used in the combination with other communist symbols)

MARIJAMPOLĖ

After interrogation, Kazynaitė is lead back to the cell. On the way she sees a dead man being carried on a bloodstained stretcher. His lifeless arm is hanging over its edge.

In the cell she sees her father’s jacket hanging on the nail.

She’s already seen her father.

MARIJAMPOLĖ

The arrested Žvingila is put to a cell where another unfortunate just like him is already struggling. After sharing his troubles – very similar, by the way, to Žvingila’s, the new friend teaches him the Morse code.

Learn, bandit! Comrades operativniki* behind the wall have been waiting long for your information!

MARIJAMPOLĖ

Some Russian interrogated Viltis in prison. An interrogator was just like hundreds before who terrorized the country during the dark post-war period. His father, on the other hand, a warden, was a different kettle of fish. When the prisoner after a crippling interrogation was brought back to the cellar, the warden used to unlock the door-window and whisper quietly:

“Спи, девочка, спи** – sleep.”

Then if he heard someone stepping down the stairs, he fisted the door to wake her up.

Bearing in mind how difficult for the prisoners it was to endure without sleep – it was an unutterable generosity.

* Russian word for a group of people responsible for fulfilling orders, e.g. arresting people. It could consist of *stribs*, militia men or other people.

** *Russian*: Sleep, girl, sleep.

MARIJAMPOLÉ

Seeing no other way to escape from prison, the arrested Giedraitienė recruited herself and just after being released, hid.

Not getting the promised information, the *chekists** dragged her cousin to the same prison and started to interrogate her, but the poor woman could no way help them.

“Мать, мать”, I told you not to beat her!” – with great resentment one interrogator sniffed at another.

MARIJAMPOLÉ

One high-school girl, Medelytė, decorated partisan uniforms with little flags, another high-school girl reported her. As the ‘criminal’ was under-aged, she got a very mild punishment – barely ten years.

Ten years it was.

MARIJAMPOLÉ

Some *strib*s came to an old woman, who rented a corner to secondary-school boys Sinickas and Grinkevičius and started to search their beddings.

“What are you looking for? There’s nothing here!” the hostess approaches the ‘defenders’.

“We’ll see what these bandits are hiding!” say the *strib*s and push her away.

The woman tries to resist but can only watch as one of them pulls out a brand new gun from his pocket and hides it under the pillow.

* a *chekist* – a member of *Cheka*, the first Soviet secret police organization, that controlled everything in the society in the Soviet Union

** Russian curse word

A minute later the gun is found, of course.

An important piece of evidence! Just enough for twenty-five years.

MARIJAMPOLÉ

After the lessons are over, several students are standing near the girls’ school, some teachers are also strolling nearby. A slim young man approaches the girls.

“Which one is the *komsorgė*?” he asks.

The girls cast a glance to a group of conversing teachers.

“That one!” someone shows.

The young man pulls out a gun and shoots. The *komsorgė* falls down and starts to scream.

“D-damn, missed it!” curses the shooter and disappears.

It turned out that only the activist’s** earlobe was hurt.

MARIJAMPOLÉ

After coming to herself, the girls’ school’s *komsorgė* demanded:

“Take me to the party committee***!”

Teachers – what can they do? – drag the activist to the shiny palace, lay her down on the couch in the corridor and, setting proper expressions on their faces, wait till the future victim of the class struggle dies.

As nothing happened, they dispersed.

* a female leader of the Komsomol section (Russian abbreviation of ‘Vsesoyuzny Leninsky Kommunistichesky Soyuz Molodyozhi’, English ‘All-Union Leninist Communist League of Youth’)

** an activist – a collaborant, the red activist

*** *here*: the headquarters of the Communist party

MARIJAMPOLĖ

An early spring, blizzard outside. Having shot *komsorg** Labanauskas in the Teachers' Seminary, Gintaras and Audrūnas hurry along Gedimino street out of the town.

"Look, Laukaitytė!" Gintaras recognizes a woman, slithering on the pavement. "Is it really her?" – "Yes!" – "So shoot!" Gintaras, who missed in a similar situation not so long ago, hesitates.

"You shoot."

Audrūnas raises his gun and Laukaitytė slumps.

Soon after Gintaras got killed, Audrūnas was arrested. During interrogation he assigned this shot to his dead friend and redeemed himself with a concentration camp only.

MARIJAMPOLĖ

Partisan Pušėlė's sister remembers:

"Nelė always used to take me with her when she went to visit her friends or colleagues. Sometimes we visited Greisas, who helped us to get soap, cigarettes, materials for coupons... He used to be very hospitable.

One Sunday, after Mass, we went to visit Greisas again and Nelė warned me:

"When he goes to the kitchen to get fruit, you stay in the room, I'll go to help him. When you hear a shot – don't be afraid and don't run away, we'll leave quietly."

I was speechless – so scared.

Unfortunately, or maybe fortunately, we didn't find Greisas at home. We lingered there for some time, but he didn't come back."

* the male leader of the Komsomol section

MARIJAMPOLĖ

Senkutė failed to shoot Greisas at his own apartment, but she didn't give up the idea to eliminate this horri- fier of Marijampolė. The girl's determination got even stronger after September 1946, when her brother partisan Giedrulis was killed near Gižai, in the Radušynė attack.

This time the determined girl decided to follow another plan: advised by the men of the Vytautas corps, she announced a pancake party on Shrove Tuesday and started to invite high officials in advance. Greisas was the first to be invited, of course.

"I'll make a party to remember, so that several districts will hear about it," she blurted out to her younger sister Teresė.

"What party?" the teenager was surprised.

"We'll invite everyone and kill them all. And then – good bye, sweet life!"

And so she did: invited everybody, shot them down and later lost her life as well.

Only Greisas dodged out again. It was not his time yet, neither was it the triumph time of Šarūnas – one of Marijampolė high- school students and a future partisan.

KUMELIONYS

Both women-partisans – Pušėlė and Saulutė – were injured during the Pancake Day's party's shooting. Saulutė was wounded by shooter Mažytis' bullet, Pušėlė was shot by the escaping Taraila. She wanted to stop the 'party's' musician, but he, bewildered with fear, fired at her. The bullet crossed Pušėlė's arm and Taraila broke the door and rattled down the stairs.

The three attempters hurried to the rail crossing where two sledges were waiting for them. They were taken to Kumelionys where the corps' chief Vampyras and squad 'doctor' Aušrelė took

care of them. The girls were taken to the house and lain to beds in a separate room.

Late in the evening the squad men started to come to the house. As they were discussing the recent event, they heard a knock on the door.

“Who’s there?” jumped the hostess.

Silence. Then again: knock knock.

She carefully opened the door and a cat got quickly inside. Maybe because of fear, maybe because of anxiety, the hostess had forgotten that her tommy-cat always knocked like that to be let in.

“Thanks God it’s just a cat, otherwise we’d be both dead now,” said Vampyras to Pušėlė. “First – you, then – me.”

MARIJAMPOLĖ

With his throat shot, Taraila broke away from Senkutė’s flat and headed towards the hospital, but being scared and disorientated he lost his way and was found by a soldier on Vilkaviškis bridge. The soldier brought him to the hospital and then – to the Cheka headquarters.

It took a while to clear everything up. The injured can’t talk, neither can he write decently... Well said: one trouble – not a trouble.

MARIJAMPOLĖ

Aronas Greisas interrogates signalwoman Žvaigždutė. After the thirty-seventh blow she jumps through the door – it appears to be unlocked – grabs the rails and screams:

“Help! Greisas is going to kill me!”

Greisas was replaced by Svirskis.

MARIJAMPOLĖ

Accompanied by a lieutenant, the chief officer

of Marijampolė MGB Department’s operative unit and in all people’s minds – an interrogator, Aronas Greisas came to Rygiškių Jono gymnasium and arrested a schoolboy Petrauskas – the Pancake’s party’s case was being investigated. As the arrested boy lived near the school, the *chekists* dropped in his place to look for evidence.

The lieutenant stayed outside and Greisas with Petrauskas went into the room. The schoolboy was a supporter of the passive resistance and carried a gun in his coat pocket. As he stayed alone with Greisas, he shot the notorious interrogator.

The event stirred all the town. Some people rejoiced, the others grieved. And everyone talked, and talked... One of the versions of what happened was: when Greisas saw a gun pointed at him, he fell on his knees and tried to squeeze under the bed.

But every child knows that only an enemy of the people could’ve spread such a malicious slander about the magnificent *chekist*.

MARIJAMPOLĖ

During Greisas’ funeral, senior pupils of Rygiškių Jono gymnasium were ordered to come to the graveyard near Teachers’ Seminary. In the first row – the classmates of the attempter. They had to put a wreath on the grave at the end of the ceremony.

“We wreathed Bronius’ deed,” quipped his classmates, going home after the funeral.

MARIJAMPOLĖ

Beside the others, Karčiauskaitė was interrogated by the sadist Greisas too.

“I’m not vengeful,” said the woman 50 years later, “but when I heard that Greisas was shot, I cried and danced of joy.”

MARIJAMPOLĖ

Schoolboy Naginionis chose forest. His sisters stayed home and he tried to visit them at every opportunity.

“Some people fight for their lands, others – for their farms... What are you tormenting yourself for?” Once moaned his sister brushing parasites off her brother’s jacket.

“Me? – for Lithuania!” answered the eighteen-year-old.

MARIJAMPOLĖ

Exile of 1951. The senior Lazauskai are dragged to the railway station. At this time their daughter, a pupil at Rygiškių Jono gymnasium, attends lessons. Naturally, she must be ‘added’ to her parents. But in the same gymnasium two sons of the infamous interrogator rub the bench. They are often familiar with their parents’ secrets, which are not always acceptable. The two Svirskučiai warn Lazauskaitė and she hides.

Unable to find the ‘bandit’, the deporters grab the first girl they see – Mikalauskaitė (Svirskis’ neighbor, by the way), and take her away. Just to be sure about all this they decide to show the girl to interrogators and, as luck would have it, stumble into Svirskis.

He recognizes Mikalauskaitė – they live in opposite houses! – and surlily turns the pages of her passport for quite a while. Finally he decides: “The wrong one.” Mikalauskaitė is set free.

MARIJAMPOLĖ

Ališauskas superintended Marijampolė’s *strib*s. One night the squad was informed about the ‘bandits’ who were noticed in the suburbs. The chief woke his fighters and quickly moved to the address indicated, but the homestead was empty and they turned to go home. In the yard one of the ‘people’s defenders’ felt thirsty and remembered seeing a bucket of water in the porch.

He came back, groped a mug, plunged it into the bucket, raised it to his mouth... O my goodness, hooch*!

The happy *strib* hurriedly drank the mug, grabbed the bucket and made after his friends. When they approached one more suspicious ‘object’ and Ališauskas ordered his troops to spread, they were about to sing already. Cursing and pushing the ‘fighters’, he tried to discipline them, but soon desisted and just waved his hand:

“Give me too!”

As the ‘fighters’ had already lost the mug, the chief drank straight from the bucket.

MARIJAMPOLĖ

Chekists arrested Valaitytė from Trakiškiai and tried to make her sign to collaborate. Three men grabbed her hand, squeezed a pen between her fingers. The twenty-year-old spared no effort to thrust the pen into the paper, broke it, but didn’t sign.

Despite that, no one beat her. She had gotten her punishment before.

GELEŽINIAI

In the fields of this village, Sasnava’s *strib*s organized an ambush. Uranas, Žilvitis and Arūnas fell into it.

“Hold on!” shouted Arūnas, but he was soon shot to death by the enemies. The *strib*s were hiding behind two mighty trees, whereas the three young men walked across the field.

Žilvitis managed to hide in the darkness. Uranas blew himself up. The ambushers took the bodies of the dead to Marijampolė, to

* homemade alcoholic drink, *moonshine*

the yard of Bagdonas' house. Only a half of the blown up partisan's head was left in the battle field.

What *stribas* didn't do, a dog finished – it dragged the human's head to the village under the Žolynai barn.

MARIJAMPOLĖ

Stribas load the dead bodies of Arūnas and Uranas, who were killed near Sasnava, to the cart and take them to Marijampolė. Having reached the town's stadium, the cart turns aside and stops. The 'defenders' jump out the wheels and start to tear clothes and boots off the dead.

The sharing of the loot took a while: the two fighters scuffled about Arūnas' boots.

MARIJAMPOLĖ

In winter of 1948, a dead body of Arūnas, killed near Sasnava, is dumped in the yard of Bagdonas' house. His brother fights fires in Marijampolė at that time.

The chief firefighter, Sinkevičius, says to the partisan's brother:

“Go, have a look at your little brother!”

“And where do have that little brother?” finds strength to oppose Sližauskas and does not go.

MARIJAMPOLĖ

Having found out from familiar *chekists* that one of his workers' brother – a partisan – is shot, chief firefighter hurries to find Sližauskas: your brother is shot, brought back, go and have a look...

“I wanted to look into Sližauskas' eyes when he sees his dead brother so badly,” Sinkevičius will comment on his obligingness to his class enemy later.

MARIJAMPOLĖ

The Postwar. A teenage Gudaitis moseys at the beginning of Jablonskis street and sees a cart full of armed men coming from Kalvarija side. Uptown, near the Orthodox church, the cart stops. *Stribas* – these were the 'people's defenders', who else? – leap out of the wheels and pull down two bodies from the back of the cart. The 'fighters' tie their feet to the cart's axle, squeeze back on the cart and roll on – down to the covered market, to the market square.

The rules of transportation in Marijampolė are very strict.

RAMONIŠKIAI

An only child Barniškaitė was on good terms with her maid, and in the village dances she even danced with her brother, serving in a neighboring farm. He was highly honored! All the village witnessed as he, Viktoravičius – one-two-three, one-two-three – pranced with a beautiful farmer's daughter.

After the war both of them left their village and their acquaintance ceased. It didn't matter that they both later landed in the same Marijampolė and even in the same street. People's defender Viktoravičius had forgotten the village and its kulaks* long before.

Or – hadn't he?

“Magdė, pour me schnapps, big troubles have eluded you,” he burst once to his former dance-partner. “I have spoken well of you!”

The thing was, that the town's authorities were forming a new list of the candidates to have a free ride to the East and let activists to the streets to collect information about them. One worker, who

* a kulak – (in Russia) a villager wealthy enough to own a farm and hire labor. The Communists treated such farmers as oppressors and enemies, millions of them were arrested, exiled or killed.

had to find out the preferences of the Barniškiei, stepped into people's defender Viktoravičius and the latter exalted the kulaks.

He was thirsty for schnapps, there's no other explanation.

MARIJAMPOLĖ

Viktoravičius got himself employed as a janitor in the Cheka, but from time to time he was assigned a more serious task – he worked for the ‘organs’ after all! His family members knew about this dangerous habit of his to hunt *forestmen*** and did their best to bring him to reason, but without any luck.

“If I get shot, at least I’ll have a decent funeral!” used to joke (or maybe not) Viktoravičius.

He repeated so for quite a long time, until one day from Šunskai he got back not on his two feet, but on four wheels, actually.

... it was a nice funeral, with gun salutes even.

* in *Russian*, a synonym for the Cheka organization

** *forestmen* – another word for Lithuanian partisans, who used to hide in forests

BARŠTINĖ

The young Stanevičius writes a letter to someone in the Broad Fatherland* - people have acquaintances in various places.

“It’s not calm in Lithuania,” he reports.

A couple of days later, carrying the letter cut open, Marijampolė’s *chekists* muddle the Stanevičiai’s home.

“We will calm you down,” they promise the sharp-eyed youngster and send him to Kirov concentration camps for ten years.

TRAKIŠKIAI

Someone ratted on the brothers Unguraičiai while they were home visiting their mother. The soldiers surrounded the farmstead and ordered everyone to come out. Mother came out; her sons climbed to the attic and blew themselves up.

TRAKIŠKIAI

Must be the first postwar year – four partisans, the Mykolaičiai brothers, were surrounded in this village. One of them was tipsy that day, lost control over his gun, was imprisoned and sent to the concentration camps. Other three brothers fought with fortitude and managed to break away from the roundup.

The prisoner survived till the days of National Revival**, the decent brothers were killed later.

* *here*: Russia

** the period of National Revival, also known as *Atgimimas* or National Rebirth (1986-1992)

TRAKIŠKIAI

The Vaškėliai and the Petkai were partisan Čempionas' neighbors, thus they were often visited by the partisan after he had joined the 'forest forces'. He would come, sit for a while, get warm and leave.

One evening it was Petkus' turn to welcome the guest. Čempionas sprawled on the bench, talking this and that. In the end he said:

"I came to shoot you, uncle."

"For what?" the man grew numb.

"I don't know. Vaškėlis asked."

He sat for a while and left.

TRAKIŠKIAI

Having spent the night in Kuktai, in the morning Čempionas came home carrying a scythe on his shoulder. He leaned on the gates and stood looking around. Two *strib*s approached.

"Why are you so sad? Why are you so pale?"

"Two of my calves got sick, I don't know what to do."

The *strib*s turned around and scuttled to Marijampolė. Only there they blurted about seeing a bandit. They kept to themselves the fact that they didn't dare to attack him.

TRAKIŠKIAI

*Strib*s deluged the farmstead of partisan Čempionas' relatives. At the moment Čempionas himself and his friends were having a rest at his aunt's place. They retreated to the attic.

The *strib*s didn't notice the lurking partisans. They went to the yard and clustered in one place. Seeing them in an open space, the housewife started to pray: she knew Čempionas would never miss such an opportunity. But not this time. He waited till the "destroyers" moved over and then hustled down from the attic.

"I could hardly stay still not shooting them all down," he said to his aunt. "I felt sorry for you, auntie."

And for himself too: where would he hide, if his protectors were sent to Siberia?

PATAŠINĖ

Men from Palios flood-lands ousted a colonist from the East, who had occupied a deportee's farmstead. The army immediately organized a chase. The men scattered and hid wherever they could. Pantera and Žaibas lay down in a wheat field. It was hot and suffocating... As the dusk fell, they heard footsteps and yellow wheat stems breaking, then suddenly in front of the men two Russians appeared. They were also sweaty, their caps rolled into tubes and tucked under epaulettes. Their hands rested on their rifles, but these hung on their necks – not so easy to shoot quickly. The soldiers saw partisans' guns pointed at them and halted for a second. Then stepped again. Their hands holding StG 44 didn't move a bit. The two troops parted in front of the tense men, as the stream parts before a stone, rounded them and disappeared in the end of the field.

BARAGINĖ

Not far from Barginė school, in the spot where partisan Sanitaras died, red rye sprouted. Teacher Lapukienė noticed that and cut the dangerous rye. It sprouted again, and again – bloody.

RAIŠUPYS

Bagdonavičiai celebrated their wedding in the village, at the relatives. Among their guests was a friend of the groom – Jurkša, a man in his early forties. On and on the man celebrated, but when the guests started to talk about the killed

partisans – he began to weep.

Nice time to weep – during a wedding.

RAIŠUPYS

At daybreak six *nightmen** gathered in the Karčiauskai's yard: it's dawning already, and the forest is far away.

They'll stay here for the day.

A couple of hours later, when the housewife was frying pancakes, a Russian officer stepped into the kitchen.

"Fry some more, don't forget your guests," mumbled he, as he was passing the woman. Then he checked the empty living room and left.

He has no reason to be shy. The signal was correct, the farmstead is being surrounded... Let the *banditka*** tremble till the attack begins!

RAIŠUPYS

Rimskis Putriškis was one of the *chekists* who attacked the Karčiauskai farmstead in 1947. Fifty years later the former *strib* was again seen in Raišupys – commemorating the victims.

KUKTAI

When his parents went to the market, a teenage Kisielius stayed home alone. On the other hand – not totally alone: there were *nightmen* resting in the barn.

After some time two *strib*s with a dog burst into the yard. They see a kid and offer him a candy.

"Are here any bandits?"

"No."

The same *strib* from his pocket takes out a coin.

* another word for *partisans*

** *Russian*: a female bandit

"Do they come here?"

"No."

Good manners are over, the *strib* unleashes his dog. The predator sinks its teeth into the boy's leg and tears a piece of flesh off. Kisielius starts to scream and tries to hide behind the table, but the dog jumps after him.

Finally another *strib* stops the chase.

"Quit torturing the kid and let's go."

So they left.

"If they had hounded me a bit longer, I would have told them everything," many years later recalls Kisielius.

MEŠKĖNAI

Igliauka's chief *strib* used to visit Meškėnai with some service matters. There he grew fond of one farmer's daughter.

"Pretty girl she was, but didn't love me," the ex-'people's defender' will remember his combat youth later. "Yet I had a gun, so she married me!"

So whom did you marry, Aldutė: a gun or Fedia*?

KIŽIAI

The Natkevičiai were visited by three *chekists* disguised as partisans.

"We had our type-writer hidden here!"

The owner realized what kind of 'partisans' these were. "If you had it, so just take it!" retorted he.

The provocateurs had to leave without accomplishing anything, but at short notice the farmstead was surrounded by the army. How else: the bandits were here!

* a short form of the Russian name *Fiodor*

KIŽIAI

Winter of 1947. Hiding in the straws in Natkevičiai's barn, *forestmen* sleep. Suddenly, the army comes and makes a search. With their rifle daggers they poke the straw in the barn.

"Whenever they poke – just close, poke again – close again," the young men told about the night's event later.

Indescribable luck.

KIŽIAI

During the blizzard of 1950, four partisans dropped in the farmhouse to warm up. Just as they came in, the owner noticed that the farmstead was being surrounded.

The men grabbed their guns and jumped back to the freezing cold. Dédé and Gegužis managed to reach the forest, but Vėjelis and Balandis, who had brushed their boots, got delayed and had to fight back. Vėjelis got killed in the yard near the pond. Balandis didn't want to give his friend's dead body to the enemies, so he plunged it into an ice hole.

KIŽIAI

Paplauskaitė, persecuted by the Cheka, lived without home for a long time now. One night, when she was staying at her acquaintances in Kižiai, a skirmish broke out near the village. Soldiers and *strib*s started to search the village – all homesteads one by one. In the house where the signalwoman sheltered, only an eleven-year old girl and one more night guest – partisan Dobilas – were left. What could be done? The girls saw the soldiers coming closer and decided to stage a search: they turned tables and benches upside down, scattered the beddings... The partisan hid in a tiny basement. Paplauskaitė retreated to the fields.

The searchers were met by the teenage girl.

"It's been searched already," she uttered.
The *strib*s looked around and left.

UŽUPIAI

For helping partisans the Paplauskai were put on the deportation list and had to leave their home. They wandered around the localities in their cart.

"Where are you going now?" asks Narijauskas, seeing off his secret guest after the night.

"I go, then I come back to check how far I've travelled, and go again," answers Paplauskas.

UŽUPIAI

The Paplauskai are being deported. As a matter of routine, the process is accompanied by confusion and despair. Bundles fly to the cart.

When the time comes for people to get on the cart, Paplauskaitė falls down on the ground and doesn't get up. The soldiers persuade her, her mother tries to convince, but she stays down and that's it. Having lost their temper, two soldiers grab the recalcitrant and topple her into the cart.

"No one will ever say that I *went*. They *made* me go!" It's been fifty years already as the woman repeats these words every time she remembers the spring of 1948.

PUTRIŠKIAI

Winter. *Strib*s visit the dead partisan Šnapsas' homeplace to have a look. Seeing such guests, the partisan's sister dives through the door and scuds forth across the snow only in socks. The *strib*s grab their guns. After the third shot the fugitive halts.

"Why did you run?" the 'defenders' attack her.

“I thought it was bandits.”

The argument seems to be very ponderable even for the *strib*s. The girl was interrogated, but not beaten.

LIUDVINAVAS

Strib tailor Raudonaitis visited partisan Šalmas' sister.

“Oh, so you have three cows!” he noticed. “And I have none!”

So he picked the most beautiful one and took it away.

PADOVINYS

Partisan Giedris used to make combs from aluminum tin. He gave one of these to his friend Stasiulevičiūtė.

“Next time I'll make a more beautiful one,” he promised.

But there was no next time.

PADOVINYS

During his short resting pauses, partisan Giedris made a wooden box for photographs and gave it to his mother.

“When I die, you will have a memory of me, Mummy!”

Children are their parents' joy.

VYŠNIALAUKIS

On the night of the 16th of February*, Giedris was trying to raise the national tricolor flag on the chimney of Marijampolė sugar factory. He was noticed and wounded by the enemy. With a huge difficulty he reached the ground and started to run across the fields towards Padovinys, where his friends were waiting. In Nartas village he burst in some farmer's house and

* the Day of Restoration of Lithuania's Independence, the national holiday of Lithuania

asked for a horse, but was refused. He fell into snowdrifts again, but in the next farmstead, at Uleckas, the persecutors ran him down. A fight started and he was killed.

Yet it was Vyšnialaukis, not Nartas. A few steps closer to his friends.

KROSNA

The time of National Revival. Families are looking for the remains of three fighters. The youngest sister of partisan Navickas has a dream at night about her dead brother.

“My head is not here, you're looking in the wrong place,” he says and explains where to look for.

When they found the remains, one body was really missing its head.

PALIOS OF LAKE ŽUVINTAS

A war prisoner Hans escaped from Marijampolė sugar factory construction site and ran to Palios*. He was given a machine gun there.

“Hans, what will you say when you come back home?” one day his friends, floodland partisans, asked.

“I'll come at night, knock at the window. They'll ask: who's there? I'll say: a Lithuanian partisan has come!”

DARŽININKAI

A signalman Švyturys brought some medicine to Karvelis, who had frozen his feet, and immediately turned back to the door.

“Jurgis, stay!” asks him Stumbras, the chief.

“It's not the last time, we'll meet again!” as if suspecting something,

* floodlands, a marshy place near Lake Žuvintas

Švyturys refuses and disappears.

Soon after - the *strib*s and their bullets. Jumping through the window, Hans dies.

SŪKURIAI

Litas was an optimist.

“We fight, but we won’t see the Tricolor*. Yet you, the young ones, will definitely see it,” said he to a twenty-year-old signalman once.

VARNUPIAI

Giedraitytė from Varnupiai must have been five years old, when one time partisans visited their house. One of them – a stout, tall, auburn-haired man, whom his friends called ‘Marytė’, took of his boots and tumbled with all his clothes into the child’s bed – to warm his feet.

VARNUPIAI

A few hours before the 1948, a battle between *forestmen* and soldiers broke out in the village. Hiding behind the well, partisan Marytė fired back for quite a while, but in the end he was hurt and thrown into the cart. On the way to Liudvinavas he started to angrily curse the soldiers and annoyed them so much, that they finally shut him up with a machine-gun salvo.

Maybe that was his point?

LIŪLIŠKIS

Partisan Pūkas managed to escape to Liūliškis when the floodlands were being combed. He hid his gun, put on an old

* the national flag of Lithuania (1918-1940, and again since 1989)

overcoat, sat at the firewood pile and started to hew clogs.

And survived.

LIŪLIŠKIS

Leaving the village, the partisans fell into an ambush. Dereškevičius was wounded. He fell down, prepared his gun and waited till some Russian came to him. The soldiers penetrated his intentions and made civilians go first. Dereškevičius shot himself.

LIŪLIŠKIS

After the wounded Dereškevičius shot himself, a Russian officer approached him.

“Here, a real bandit! Didn’t give up!”

PADOVINYS

A sozzled *strib* from Liudvinavas lost his gun somewhere in Padovinys.

“Where did I lose my barrel?” totters he around the Liutkevičiai homestead.

In the morning the owner’s son decided to look for the gun too and found it on the stubblefield. He wanted to throw it into the pond, but his father forbade.

“Put it in the corner!” he told.

Soon the *strib* came back, a bit soberer this time. He stepped into the house, saw his gun, and cheered. As if even tried to thank – but how does a *strib*’s gratitude look like? – and left.

It was meant for the family to meet this cuss again. In 1949, on the day of the mass deportation, they saw a familiar *strib* looming among the guards surrounding their homestead. He was carrying a gun, most probably the same one.

THE ŽALIOJI (BUKTA) FOREST

In the Žalioji forest, Kalvarija's *stribs* found and surrounded partisan Vaičiulaitis-Stalinas' bunker. The host himself was absent from the bunker, but the *stribs* found several documents signed in the name of the Father of the Nations.

“Мать, мать*, even Stalin is a bandit now!” having scattered the papers, cursed chief *strib* Žemaitaitis.

STANKAUSKAS' STONE

Partisans from the Palios marshes reported their chief to have seen a man waving a stick with a white napkin and rushing about in the clearings.

“Must be some parliament member,” decided Sakalas and ordered to bring him.

It was a farmer, called Pūkas from Salos, who lived in a neighboring village. Russians thought that Pūkas – a former volunteer – knew where the partisans were hiding, so they stuffed a pole with a white rag into his hands, commanded to find the ‘bandits’ by all means and pushed him into the marshes. Pūkas conveyed Sakalas the Cheka's offer to make a CONFERENCE.

The strange meeting was held at the beginning of summer, 1945, in Liūlišķiai village, near Stankauskas' stone. The partisans – around fifty men – lay with their machine guns at one side of the stone, along the trench, the *chekists* – on the other side. The unarmed chiefs went to the stone.

The Cheka: Leave the forests, abandon your weapons and your lives will be spared.

The partisans: Let Russians leave Lithuania and bring our independence back.

* Russian curse word

The Cheka: Only comrade Stalin can decide that!

That was the end of the CONFERENCE. Soon after, the bloody ‘cleaning’ of the Palios marshes followed.

STANKAUSKAS' STONE

After the CONFERENCE, the Russians moved towards Marijampolė. The partisans left their positions as well: they stepped into the open meadow, lined up and marched a circle. Fearless.

STANKAUSKAS' STONE

During the CONFERENCE near Stankauskas' stone, chief officer of Marijampolė NKGB insisted on meeting the next day. Sakalas agreed, but later he discussed this with his men and decided that another meeting would be as useless as the first one. They wrote a note and asked the village elder Rimavičius to give it to the ones who'd come the next day and retreated away to Palios.

The next day, several trucks full of *chekists* speeded up to the second round of the CONFERENCE. With no sight of the partisans, they combed a huge area of Palios, lashed the ‘messenger’ and rushed back to Marijampolė.

LAUNICA

Winter. Five *forestmen* shelter on the loft of Astrauskai's barn. The farmer's son is taking a bucket of soup to them. As he climbs the ladder, he hears a sledge squeaking outside. The *stribs*.

The boy grabs an armful of hay and slides down. Liudvinavas' chief *strib* Žemaitaitis tumbles out of the sledge and, as usual, mumbles: “Got schnapps?”

The teenager opens his mouth, but his father is already calling the 'guests' from the house:

"Please, please, come inside..."

The man sensed danger early enough and went to the yard just in time. That night the 'defenders' drank till they were cork high and bottle deep, but the partisans didn't touch them: they warded their protectors.

DAUKŠIAI

Zubavičius, a former partisan of Eastern Lithuania, came to visit his brother. His nephew gave him a very rare, expensive and banned book at that time to read: "Vytautas the Great". Three-four Russian soldiers appeared nearby.

"What are you reading? Vytoft? Ah, Vytoft!"

The officer grabbed the book, tore it, threw it into the furnace and asked for the reader's passport.

DAUKŠIAI

Kielius from Varnupiai delated the director of the reservation, Zubavičius, to the partisans – as if he holds contact with *strib*s.

Chief *forestman* Litas calls Zubavičius to the squad to talk. Leaving his home, the latter utters:

"I don't know if I come back from the meeting or not, but I have to go. If I don't go – I'll be guilty. If I go – I'll be honest forever."

The most important place in his goodbye – it's the pause in his last sentence.

* Vytautas the Great was one of the most famous rulers (1392-1430) of medieval Lithuania: the Grand Duchy of Lithuania. He is revered as a national hero and took an important place among other figures in the national rebirth in the 19th century and later

DAUKŠIAI

Having sensed the enemy outside, three hiders jumped out of the house and fled to the Palios marsh. Two of them managed to escape, but the third one, Burdulis, got caught. Failing to pry out the names of the other two runaways, a Russian officer took a pistol – look! – put a bullet and held the gun at the face of the detainee.

"I'll count to three – один, два, три* - if you don't give me the names, I'll shoot you! Один," he started, "два ..."

The young man's fingers went numb. "I'd rather die than betray them," he said and closed his eyes, surprised by his own stubbornness.

"Три!" cried the officer.

As the doomed still kept his mouth shut, the officer pulled back his gun, swore like a trooper and gave his way to another interrogator.

DAUKŠIAI

Russians caught the hiding Burdulis, but couldn't make him talk, so they forced him to the outlying fields, shot him down and, thinking that he was dead, went their own ways. The young man, however, came to life and with great difficulty managed to reach the nearest homestead. It took a long while to get him on his feet again.

Once, as he was languishing in bed – all blackened, holey lungs gurgling – his brother-in-law with an MP 44 stopped in the doorway.

"Can't look at you like this, I want to finish you off," he grumbled.

* Russian: one, two, three

But he held back and didn't shoot then. Soon after, the injured started to get better. Maybe out of the fear to really be finished off?

PANAUSUPYS BIRCH GROVE

Brizgutis is not little Brizgutis anymore, he is big Brizgys now. He has a girl in the village and not only lifts his elbow sometimes, but knows how to make hooch too.

Just as he was making this hooch once, the *forestmen* came across. They sat down, talked.

"Man, I forgot cumin at home!" suddenly remembered Brizgys. "Have to fetch it!"

The men let the moonshiner go: good hooch needs cumin.

But Brizgys caught a horse in the fields, rode to the Gudeliai *stribs* and reported:

"The bandits are stealing my schnapps!"

The 'bandits' were surrounded and shot dead after such report, and the shrewd moonshiner was awarded with another trip – into the river Dovinė, into his watery grave.

GUDELIAI

After killing Dūlys, Vėjas and Ulonas in Panausupys birch grove, the *stribs* dragged them to Gudeliai and hurled in the middle of the parish square. A while later, a girl from Gudupiai – Vėjas' girlfriend – was interrogated in the same square.

As the *stribs* weren't lucky to get any information from her, they shoved the girl a bucket of water, a dishcloth and told her to wash the dead. So she did.

"What I was most afraid of was not to faint," still holds the despair of that morning in her heart Žukauskienė.

DAUKŠIAI

Gudeliai *partorg** Rudvalis stopped by the director of reservation, Zubavičius, to have a meal. With a Nagant revolver at his side, Rudvalis sprawled on the bench.

Zubavičienė started to lay the table and saw their neighbor, partisan Žvirgždas, coming back home. She grabbed a bottle and heartily hugged the comrade *partorg*, poured vodka to him...

Žvirgždas passed unnoticed.

PALIOS OF LAKE ŽUVINTAS

The battle. Žvirgždas and Vyturys run, hunted by the *stribs*.

"You know," turned to his friend Žvirgždas, "it feels so hard today, so painful... Maybe it's my last day."

"Come on, Antanas, what're you talking about!"

Suddenly *bratatat!* gunshots. Vyturys went nonstop, but Žvirgždas stayed.

PALIOS OF LAKE ŽUVINTAS

During the second 'cleaning' of Palios, *strib* Kasparavičius killed Žvirgždas and, in order not to drag all the body, he cut the partisan's head off and took it to his superiors.

The body deteriorated in Palios.

GUDELIAI

The last days of the 20th century. A woman tidies a grave of her relatives in the cemetery. Next to it another grave lies, all overgrown with burdocks. The woman loses her temper and

* a Russian word for a person appointed by the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union to work at any important place (such as school, factory, kolkhoz, etc.)

starts to weed out the grave.

“Leave it!” some local man stops her. “It’s good for him as it is.”

It was the grave of ‘people’s defender’ Kasparavičius.

THE VARNABŪDĖ FOREST

The last days of the war. Having trapped a fascist beast in its own lair, the vanguishers spread across the conquered lands and started to introduce the new order in Europe. The ‘Unbeatable’ were especially busy in Lithuania, who had just overcome the fear of 1940. Mission after mission.

April 12, 1945. Together with *strib*s, Gudeliai garrison arranged an ambush in the Varnabūdė forest, not far from Stuomenai. They knew there were village men hiding in the forest marshes, so they decided to hunt them down. They divided into two troops and camouflaged themselves. One troop lurked at Dambava, the other – on the Prienai side, near Mikališkė school.

At dusk Alaburdienė from Stuomenai managed to find her way to the hidiers.

“Men, Mikališkė’s *strib*s have gone to Jiestrakis, I think. Go home, don’t be afraid.”

The encouraged men went into the line – into the open air. The gunshots poured. Many men were killed: Kuklierius, two Navikauskai brothers, Marcinkevičius, Kazakevičius, two Grimalauskai brothers, Gergelis, Brundza, Alaburda, two more from Jiestrakis... How many more men were hiding in the woods that day? Balaika was the only one to survive from all the squad. With his hands held up and from time to time being harassed with dogs, he was marched off to Gudeliai.

* the Red Army as it was called by the Soviet propaganda

THE VARNABŪDĖ FOREST

When the army started to shoot at the men hiding in the outskirts of the forest swamp, Kuklierius, Gergelis and Balaika sprinted from the bullets as far as they could, but they were noticed and captured by the soldiers. Kuklierius was killed at once. After the shot, Balaika witnessed his friend to fall down under a tree. When he was marched to the outskirts, the young man glanced to his friend one more time. A ‘mongol’ trod down on the victim’s back and raised his rifle bayonet.

THE VARNABŪDĖ FOREST

During the Varnabūdė forest’s hecatomb*, one more partisan escaped death – it was Matas Gergelis, the one whom the soldiers took to the forest outskirts together with Balaika. One of the ‘liberators’ released the dog, which immediately clang to Gergelis’ chest. The man swept his elbow and the beast thwacked into a puddle.

The officer seemed to be waiting for the right moment. A gun banged and Gergelis fell into the same puddle the dog had just gotten out.

KAZLŲ RŪDA

After a qualified interrogation, Marijampolė’s *chekists* made conclusions that a 16-year-old Balaika’s place was in Magadan or at least in its suburbs. Not a minute was wasted: they dragged the beaten prisoner into a truck and, together with other detainees, drove him to Kazlų Rūda, where another echelon to the East was being formed at that time.

The railway station is crowded. People look around, whisper, bite

* Greek: mass killing

their lips anxiously... The detainees are brought to the platform and one by one pounded into a wagon. Balaika stands and waits for his turn. Someone pulls his sleeve. The young man turns his head and sees an unfamiliar woman.

“You could escape now,” she says and pulls the prisoner one more time. No-one notices anything. The arrested boy steps backwards and finds himself in the crowd. Then – to the trench and – to the forest.

You are a lucky dog, Juozas! Not one or two were filled with lead in such trenches.

IGLIŠKĖLIAI

Two girls from Grabava came to the Isodai in Igliškėliai. In the neighborhood, in the ‘headquarter’s’ yard, their killed brother was lying and the sisters put their heads together how to say goodbye.

“I can’t go there,” says one of them. “I won’t hold myself, start crying and the *strib*s will know who I am.”

“I will go,” says the other. “I won’t cry.”

And she went. Stopped at her brother’s feet.

“Brother?” a *strib* immediately sprang to her.

“Not brother!” she answered, looking at the shattered body with her eyes dry.

She’ll weep out when she gets home.

IGLIŠKĖLIAI

A local *strib* tied some wire around the feet of the dead and desecrated Raišupys’ partisans and dragged them into a pit. During the days of National Revival the ‘mighty’ man was called to the prosecutor’s office, where he sniveled:

“How could I know that the government would change?”

DAMBAVA

In the middle of fields, an injured *forestman* fell on his knees. The first to run to him was *strib* Saldukas. The injured man asked for water.

“Here!” a PPD* fired.

The *strib* used to brag about this shot later.

PATILČIAI

Paplauskas’ profession was very rare after the war – he was a driver. He used to drive everyone and everywhere.

Once he had to take a bunch of *strib*s to Patilčiai. Behind them their chief officer – a border colonel – was being driven in a Russian motorcycle sidecar. On the crossroads the troops got off and went towards Sasnava on foot, the two drivers sat down on the edge of the ditch to have a smoke.

On Marijampolė’s side an armed man appeared moving towards them in the ditch.

“Look, a partisan,” Paplauskas said to the Russian.

The latter cast the cigarette and jumped to his motorcycle, but in the rush he forgot to open the petrol valve, thus the motorcycle sputtered and shut off. Wasting no time, the cyclist jumped over his bike and scuttled to hide behind the smithery.

When the partisan had gone away – and that indeed was one of the Palios men – the Russian came back from his shelter and declared that he wouldn’t stay here any day longer, that he’d suffered enough on the Front where he was hurt several times, and that he didn’t want to get a bullet in Lithuania.

Fear is eloquent.

* a Soviet submachine gun

DAMBAVA

After having a short rest in the homestead of a familiar family, *forestman* Meška left: the chief was waiting. Soon – a gunshot banged. At the edge of the forest he was ambushed by *strib*s and was badly hurt. The ‘defenders’ started to interrogate the injured man.

“Butchers, my blood is too thick to talk to you,” he murmured vaguely and locked his lips.

The *strib*s though understood him, and then shot him down.

IGLIŠKĖLIAI

One could always find a reason to mock *strib* Jurgis from Iglīškėliai. As the villagers called him – a patsy.

One night Jurgis and his buddies kept watch in the *strib*-house. It was winter, freezing-cold. The *strib*s were skulking inside, as several bodies of the killed partisans were slowly turning to ice outside the window. In short – a daily routine.

At midnight Jurgis jumps and runs outside for some reason. His ‘battle comrades’ conspire and just as their buddy vanishes round the corner, pull the nearest corpse inside, lean it at the door and wait.

Some moments later, their colleague comes back. When he opens the door, the frozen body falls on him and Jurgis, squeaking with fear, jumps back to the yard. There he comes back to his sound mind and swiftly returns to the *strib*-house for his gun.

The teasers jumped out through the windows.

MARIJAMPOLĖ

The post-war period, hospital. The men of the auxiliary staff gathered in some nook to have a drink. As one knows, class differences diminish in the process of drinking, thus people feel free to open up a bit.

“*Strib*, have you shot many people?” someone asks Jurgis, a former ‘people’s defender’ from Iglīškėliai, now – a watchman.

“Just two young men,” babbles Jurgis.

“It wasn’t two you shot, not two...” glooms Perliba, a former partisan signalman.

MARIJAMPOLĖ

At night in the town hospital. Three surgery nurses wait for the morning in a spare ward.

“Girls, they’re going to arrest me any day now,” blurts one of them, Aldutė.

She was wrong – not any day, but any hour. Just before the dawn two strange men stop at the door. Aldutė goes down to open it and her friends hear her surname, pronounced by an unfamiliar voice.

“It’s me,” says Aldutė.

All ears, the girls are waiting for the nightbirds to say something else, but there’s silence. They are waiting for Aldutė to come back, but she doesn’t return. Neither that night, nor the following. Never.

IGLIŠKĖLIAI

With his lungs injured, partisan Butana was hurled “under those maple-trees” in Iglīškėliai. Blood sputtered from the wound in his chest.

*Strib*s brought the partisan’s parents from the nearby Kermošinė – to identify. When mother saw her injured son, she fainted.

“Son,” said the father.

No-one knows where the partisan’s body was mislaid, but the parents were put into an animal wagon very quickly.

KERMOŠINĖ

When Butanienė lost her partisan son, she walked

neither dead nor alive for a long time. Eventually she came to herself, regained the gift of speech.

“Vaciukas died, but – for Lithuania!” she used to say.

PALAITĖS

When partisans got into an ambush, Erelis was injured and fell on the ground. He waited for a soldier to draw near him and pulled the pin of the grenade. The explosion tore half of Erelis' head away, the enemy was barely wounded.

VIZIAJUS (RUSSIA)

The exiles of 1945, parents and their daughter Prajeros, were deported to the forests of Molotov. After several years of hunger and diseases, the devastated family decided rather to die than to slowly starve to death.

Father went to the commandant – the chief authority for the exiles – and asked to shoot the three of them. The commandant refused.

“I'll get jailed because of you.”

Disappointed Prajera tried asking for a gun and some bullets, but was refused again.

Who said that Lithuanians were deported to the North to die? Live and enjoy your life!

OPŠRŪTAI

Winter. After a tiring trudge, four fighters from the Apynys unit dropped in to have a rest at a farmer's. They asked the housewife to watch over them and lay on the benches and beds.

The housewife decided that there's no danger for the men in the house and went to milk the cow, but the very moment Igliškėliai *strib*s flocked in the yard.

The *forestmen* lost their friend in the skirmish and had to scamper

angry and without any rest. In the evening of the same day the three men reached Opšrūtai and visited Kriščiūnas, where a feast was taking place. A woozy man tumbled out and started to whoop something in Russian. Maybe he was singing, who can say that now.

Still shocked by the death of their friend, the partisans shot the Russian-speaking man and only then they noticed it was not a *strib*, but a Bartninkas from a neighboring village.

STUOMENAI (MIKALIŠKĖ)

When partisans were burying their fallen friends in the village cemetery, they used to “mine” the graves demonstratively with pieces of cord stuck in the ground. *Strib*s used to whip away all the cords and uproot the crosses immediately. Once, seeing that the dead wouldn't have peace anyway, the partisans put a real land mine under the cross.

STUOMENAI (MIKALIŠKĖ)

Once again the *strib*s were wending their way to demolish the partisan cemetery and called garrison soldiers, who'd helped them to search the outskirts of Mikališkė earlier that day, to come together. The Russians refused,

“These are no longer our enemies!”

The *strib*s went alone – and reached for the skies due to the land mine left by the partisans.

ŽIVAVODĖ

In December of 1945, partisans prepared such a rifle-feast to the punishers, loitering around Živavodė village, that lieutenant Ivanov gave up his squad and hid in a neglected bunker. After the battle, when NKGB authorities found out about his ‘maneuver’, the lieutenant once again found himself in more or less the same situation.

ŽIVAVODĖ

Four partisans borrowed a sledge from one farmer, but were ratted by another and got killed in an ambush. The *strib*s dragged one body to Šilavotas and dumped it near their headquarters.

While the wardens were boozing, the shot man came to life and waded to the farmer, living at the edge of the forest.

“Be a man, give me a lift,” he asked the host.

After the partisan’s resurrection, the snitch answered his final summons.

STUOMENAI (MIKALIŠKĖ)

The *forestmen* visited snitch Alaburda.

“Children, go to the room,” the kids and their mother were told to go to another part of the house, the father stayed in the parlor.

Moments after a shot banged there.

ŽIRNIŠKIAI

Squad chief Vėjelis is selecting an alias for a new signalman.

“We have lost thirteen friends already,” says the partisan. “Be Fourteenth!”

Together with the signalman’s chosen alias, Vydūnas the Fourteenth came to be.

GUDIŠKIAI

The night. Signalman Vydūnas XIV and partisan Vėjelis are marching along a dark alley.

“Hide your shotgun at your side,” the signalman advises his friend. “Or someone might see you.”

“If you’re meant to get hanged, you won’t drown,” responds Vėjelis. A fatalist...

PAVASAKĖ

The early Postwar. Igliauka’s ‘destroyers’ seized *forestman* Kamičaitis. Stočkus shot the arrested man’s hand.

“Does it hurt?”

Then he shot his leg and asked again,

“Does *it* hurt?”

Kamičaitis was killed only with the fifth shot.

MENČTRAKIS

*Strib*s caught signalwoman Kregždė delivering proclamations and brought her to the Plikynai farm in Menčtrakis. They beat her and demanded to show where in the barn the partisans were hiding; Kregždė cried, but denied knowing anything about the hideout.

Neither did Plikynienė betray the partisans. The soldiers then pulled all the men from the neighborhood together, shoved pitchforks into their hands and ordered them to rummage the hay in the barn.

The men turned one mow upside down – empty, turned another one – nothing again. Under the third mow three *forestmen* hushed, pressing their guns closer. And then – a surprise! A milk can with homebrew emerged from the hay!

And so the search was over.

KAMPINIAI

Leimonas became a partisan due to his relatives’ persuasion more than of his own will. His niece remembers:

It was Sunday morning. He rode back from the forest after his oath ceremony, sat down on the bench and said, “Now it seems to me that as if I don’t exist anymore.”

Not true yet, but neither is it a lie anymore.

RUDĖNAI

The *forestmen* agreed to have Christmas Eve's supper in the village, at some farmer's place. As he was walking to the meeting, Stagniūnas heard footsteps.

"Is it you, men?" he asked aloud, without any idea of bumping into an enemy.

The *strib* recognized the partisan and used his tommy-gun.

Then he and other *strib*s dragged the wounded man to the nearest farmstead and flung him on a dirt floor. There was a hole in the floor near the threshold. It was soon filled with the partisan's blood. The *strib*s noticed that, jumped to the man and plunged his face into his own blood – drink!

MIKNONYS

After having killed all the Aidas squad at Stadaliai, Babarskis received not only a lot of money, but also a permission to get a girl he knew back from the concentration camp.

This was a happening never heard before.

MEDINOS

The distinguished gunman from Miknonys, Babarskis, was allowed to redeem his convicted friend from Medinos. But the Miknonys shooter was as destructive in the family as he was in the resistance, and soon in Klaipėda, where the newly wed Babarskiai moved, there were two more divorced persons.

"I'd rather have rotten in the concentration camp than married a bandit!" used to grumble the new grass widow, a former signalwoman of the Geležinis Vilkas corps.

SENAŪTIS

Lieutenant Ausenas graduated from the War

Academy just before 1940, and as he wasn't willing to serve any of the occupants, he started to hide. He kept himself safe during the first Russian occupation, avoided being placed to the barracks during the Nazi times. But when the "liberators" returned, he got caught.

He had a nice beginning: dug a hideout in the forest near the village, started to mobilize other such know-nothings as himself, but very soon his retreat was discovered.

Having sensed the enemy, the unarmed man started to run towards the forest, but was shot down near the lake. Realizing he won't be able to escape, Ausenas jumped into the water and drowned himself.

MACIULIŠKIAI

Petraška favored *strib*s. One proper time, partisans saw this sprat walking in the yard and decided to send him to eternity. Petraška sensed danger and rapidly hid somewhere in the house – as if vanished into thin air. The house was turned upside down, but he wasn't found.

Later the men found out what happened: at the time there was an old woman rocking a baby in the cradle. She saw Petraška tossing around and pushed him into the cradle – he wasn't anything like a giant or something – then put her grandchild on the top and continued rocking.

GUDUPIAI

The Vyšniauskai lived at the edge of the forest. Once they made dinner for the partisans and were waiting for them to come, but suddenly they saw a flock of soldiers and *strib*s arriving. What can be done?

Vyšniauskienė, a young mother, hurries to the pasture and unleashes their cow.

The soldiers surround the house and organize a set up – whoever comes, stays inside and can't leave. This way they arrested all the Burduliai family from the neighborhood.

The dusk fell, the little baby-girl started to cry and her mother just couldn't calm her down.

“What does she want?” asks one of the Russians.

“To eat.”

“So give her something!”

“There's no milk – the cow is there, in the forest!”

“Go, fetch it,” gives permission a soldier, lurking at the barn corner.

The woman strides off the yard, searching with her eyes for someone and sees Dabašinskienė, who's herding the villagers' cows.

“Did you see?” she asks.

“Yes,” nods the other woman.

The men did not come.

NORVERTAVAS

A *strib* says,

“A beautiful morning, birds are singing – so beautiful! Two men are coming from the village and singing – and we are sitting here in an ambush and waiting...”

The two men, who sang that Corpus Christi morning, were Dagilis and Sakalas.

LIUDVINAVAS

The bodies of the killed Dagilis and Sakalas on the morning of Corpus Christi were brought to Liudvinavas and “seated” in the street, leaned at the wall of a house. The *strib*s waited till people started to come from the church and strafed the ‘bandits’ from the machine guns.

ŠIAULIAI

In order to escape arrest, Stasiulevičiūtė retreated to another side of Lithuania. There she had a dream about her neighbor's from Gudupiai yard. It was all covered with logs.

“Dear God, what will happen now?” she wakes up and brushes away cold drops of perspiration. To see logs in a dream means death.

She falls asleep - the logs again.

She'll find out later that Dagilis and Sakalas were killed that morning.

GUDELIAI

Soldiers and *strib*s arrive to the village: they've been informed. All the villagers flee but Grinkevičius, at whose place the district partisan chiefs are hiding. He stays home, waiting for the destiny.

It might be the punishers were too lazy to search barns, or maybe they decided that the *forestmen* would have escaped by the time anyway, so they left the barns undisturbed and went straight into the house.

“Swear there are no bandits at your place!” they demand.

The host kneels down and crosses himself – no bandits!

His teenage daughter freezes in fear hearing her father's crooked oath, but it works very well for the *strib*s – they eat, sleep, and leave.

GUDELIAI

Four partisan chiefs from the surroundings gathered at Grinkevičius' place to talk things over. One of them brought a table-sized dog with him.

Thanks to a snitch, a garrison rushed to the village, but the partisans were lucky to escape the collision that day. When the

soldiers left, the partisans also retreated from their shelter.

First stop – at the snitch's. The men went inside the house and put the dog on the dining table.

“Only a dog can eat at such a host,” they said. Then they fed the animal and left.

PALIOS OF LAKE ŽUVINTAS

Having sworn to God and Fatherland fifty years ago, Spyglys from Daukšiai remembers:

“The very beginning of summer, 1945. A man arrived from the Centre, from the Joint Kęstutis Command, and called us to the formation. Many partisans were there, from all Palios marshes. The officer stepped to the front and said, “You all know what awaits us, you must decide. If you feel you're not up to this – make three steps ahead!” One stepped out, you know Kazys. “It's all correct, - said the officer, - the man feels he won't be able to bear all this... Good luck to you, man!” Kazys collected his fur coat and left. And we took an oath – we kissed the flag and the Walther gun. After the oath the brand new pistol was given to Šarūnas, our signalman.”

DAUKŠIAI

Signalman Šarūnas was carrying a message and hurrying from Daukšiai, when he was shot near the mill at the Liepakojai crossroads by the lurking *strib*s. The partisan was being buried without any coffin, so his mother took her kerchief off and covered her son's face with it.

The *strib*s ripped the kerchief away.

PALIOS OF LAKE ŽUVINTAS

During the first attack on Palios marshes, the squad

chief Tarzanas was hiding behind a stump of a tree and shooting from his Czechoslovenian machine gun. He aimed well till the enemy's bullets cut his own hand off.

“Brothers, kill me!” not being able to fight Tarzanas turned to his friends, but his men didn't dare to fulfill the chief's request.

The enemy dared.

MARIJAMPOLĖ

After the death of one of his sons, father Gavėnas used to sometimes visit his cousin Plečkaitis, who lived in Marijampolė. Usually he wore a black, shining with abrasion leather jacket.

“If you only knew how much this jacket has seen...” he used to say.

But that's not a secret – the jacket has seen as much, as its previous owner, Gavėnas' partisan son had.

PALIOS OF LAKE ŽUVINTAS

The army surrounded Palios marshes and started to percolate them. In the middle of the marsh a partisan tries to hide among mosses and sees: a dog is dragging a soldier straight towards him. Suddenly a roebuck jumped between the *forestman* and the tracker. The Russian's dog pounced after the wild prey, and the partisan survived.

LAKE AMALVA

Partisan Strausas was killed at lake Žuvintas, his friends rowed him along the river Dovinė down to lake Amalva and, as once Mose's mother did, watching what would happen next, let him loose into the waves.

The floating body was noticed by a fisherman, who called the

militia. They came, investigated the body, recognized him – and returned to the relatives.

Then the partisan had a proper burial, not simply being dug down.

GELČIAI

Motūza came to Gurskis to have supper.

“You know, my brother-in-law’s been put to custody in Gudeliai, we should be more careful.”

Motūza turned around and marched along the street. He passed one homestead, another, one more... He stopped at the fifth, where Čižikas lived – and stumbled upon Russians and *strib*s lurking there.

As they noticed the partisan, the *strib*s ordered the housewife to let the man in: they decided to take him alive.

Čižikienė half-opened the door and with fear and pain watched the young man going to his death. Finally she lost control: “Son!.. Son!..” she screamed.

The partisan heard her, sensed danger and bounded backwards. Yet he’d already crossed the edge between life and death.

GELČIAI

The days of National Revival. A partisan’s relatives are looking for his tomb. They come to the killer’s brother’s children, ask them various questions, but these then were too little to remember anything.

Their father finds out about the search – grabs at his chest and dies.

LIEPAKOJAI

A signalwoman remembers:

“A partisan named Stasys – I called him ‘sweetheart’ – dropped by

on the battle day and asked to be allowed to wash and shave himself. “When they shoot me down, I’ll be more handsome,” he said.

He left at 6:30 and was indeed shot.”

LIEPAKOJAI

Before attacking the village, *strib* Buzas and his comrades were lying in wait behind a haystack, there they saw and killed with a rifle butt an unarmed man, Stadalius, who’d been hiding from the army. Later that evening, the *strib*s loaded their sledge with the bodies of the killed partisans and drank to success. When the squad was about to leave back to Simnas, Buzas noticed that his ‘bandit’ was missing. He searched the sledge, then called his pal and both of them turned back to Liepakojai. How can you brag without a material evidence?

Soon they found what they’re looking for: nicely dressed and with his shoes on, the young man was lying in a candle-lit room. The *strib*s chased away the mourning relatives, pulled the body from the bier, tried on his shoes and jacket – it was as if sewn for Buzas personally – and, dragging the body by its hands, clattered to their sledge.

And yet, the ‘defender’ had little time to enjoy his felicitous hand and a new jacket: several days later, drunk and trying to get on the sledge, he lost his grip on the tommy-gun and shot his own guts.

LIEPAKOJAI

Before joining the men in Palios marshes, warrant officer Vaičiulionis had fought against the red partisans in Naujoji Vilnia during the war. Maybe that was the reason he didn’t get lost when his squad got into the siege in Liepakojai.

“Follow me, men!” he rose.

He turned back – there were no men anymore, he was fighting alone.

SIMNAS

Partisans, killed in Liepakojai, were brought to Simnas. At that time two Jews, nicknamed *Ruskeliai* (a diminishing form of ‘Russians’) lived in the town. They used to hide at the Berčiūnai’s during the war.

Seeing that the *strib*s are at a loss and don’t know where to dig the bodies of the partisans and also noticing two of the Berčiūnai sons among them, one of the *Ruskeliai* joins the *strib*s and says,

“Men, what’s the problem? Their belief – their offerings! There’s cemetery, so bring them to the cemetery!”

So the *strib*s did. It was the first, and maybe the last time when *strib*s allowed partisan bodies to be buried in the cemetery.

KUMEČIAI

Signalwoman Pušėlė received a packet and hurried to Padovynys. It was winter, the roads were all covered with snow... So she took her way across the fields and met some *strib*s.

“Stop! Where’re you going?”

“To the shoemaker’s,” explained the girl.

Oh, how useful that old shoe was, grabbed by the girl before leaving home!

GORKY (RUSSIA)

1945. For telling a joke Stasiulevičius was sent to a concentration camp. As he was badly beaten in Lithuania, he managed to endure the trip on the train only to the birthplace of the herald of the revolution, where he felt ill and was taken to prison.

When he lost his consciousness there, the inmates of the prison cell (criminals, obviously) started to tear his clothes off.

“Don’t take my clothes off, I’m still alive,” the dying man opened his eyes one more time.

BAMBININKAI

The signalwoman of the Simnas squad, Albina, lived in such a poor shack that no one could ever think it was an important meeting place for forest brothers. To make the image of a poor woman even stronger, she used to go around the district with a bag on her shoulder and beg for bread. She was one of the most important signalwomen of the Simnas squad.

The Cheka suspected the young beggar, several times she was interrogated, but it was hard to get any information from the girl so clever and brave.

Once – Albina told this story herself – she poured a bag full of bullets and was carrying it to the partisans in Palios, when she met *strib*s on her way – a horse and on foot. One of them knew the signalwoman.

“Where are you going, you bandit harlot?” assaulted he the ragged mendicant. “You have bandits at your place!”

“So go, harlot, and take them!” rebuffed the signalwoman.

What she meant was: what goes around, comes around, and I’m not afraid of you.

So they parted.

UTALINA

In midsummer Sakalas dropped in at his relative Žioba to eat something. While dining, he was surrounded, tried to retreat and was killed.

The household concealed the torment of her brother from the sister, who worked in Marijampolė.

A few days later Marytė takes her bike and rides home to her Utalina. There she abruptly stops: in the meadow near the house her brother lies in a puddle of blood. All is so green around...

The household kept silent, but her brother didn’t.

GRIGALIŪNAI

Kurtas and his friends are hurrying to Guobai to visit their signalman Bašinskas: he had troubles, so they've heard. In Grigaliūnai, not far from Norvelaitis' homestead, the squad meets Kurtas' ex-classmate.

"Is there an ambush at Bašinskas' place?" asks Kurtas without any suspicion that his ex-classmate has acquired new friends and new masters long time ago.

"No, there isn't!" tells lies the 'friend'. "I'm just going from there."
No more Kurtas, no more his squad.

SELEMA

Having jumped off the animal wagon, Šimanauskas found his way home and made a hideout on the overlay in the barn. To make it safer, he put very thin lumbers in front of it.

Shortly after searches followed. At least thirty soldiers, lead by a military officer, turned up and brought a dog.

The for-legged animal went straight forward to the barn.

A soldier raised the ladder and together with his dog clambered up. The lumbers shattered and both of the climbers – the man and the dog – tumbled down.

The cursing man jumped off the barn, the dog shook itself off and turned to the barn again.

Punched by the officer, the soldiers surrounded the suspicious building again, but no one dared to check the ceiling again. They pushed each other, cursed several times and, after kicking the persistent animal, left.

SELEMA

Sasnava district's chief's family and *strib* Andriukaitis moved into the house of the exiled Anskaitis. The

new settlers were well armed: they had two machine guns and a tommy-gun, they were brave, but despite all that one evening they were visited by *forestmen*.

The chief was shot when he inadvertently entered the porch, the other men were laid on the floor in the room. Together with them a six-year-old son of the chief dipped his nose in the dust.

One of the *forestmen* bent and stood the kid up.

"You're not a man yet, go to the bed!" he told.

The rest were taken outside and gunned down.

SELEMA

In a newly-settled farm of an exiler, the partisans cornered a couple of Sasnava activists and were taking them out. One of the *forestmen* – a childhood friend of the caught *strib* Andriukaitis. The two friends had a short talk before finding a quiet corner.

"Vyta, I've got to shoot you," told one friend to another.

GUDELIAI

The unit chief Kazokas asked signalman Šileika to get boots for Daumantas.

Seek and ye shall find. Not long after, several soldiers - obviously very thirsty - dropped in at the Šileikos and offered to buy boots.

The boots were exactly as needed: military, new. They made a deal for two bottles of vodka.

Satisfied with the fulfilled task, the man buried the purchase behind the barn.

Three days later Šileika had guests again, but this time the soldiers were accompanied by their officer, who jumped to the host as soon as he saw him.

“Give back the boots!”

The young man denied having any boots – and was afraid of getting shot.

The soldiers searched the homestead for three hours, not finding anything. They left, but not before scaring Šileika and his mother to death.

Šileika was rewarded two weeks later, when partisans came to visit. The young supporter took them behind the barn and, saying “Waders for Lukša,” proudly handed in the boots.

SELEMA

1950. Accompanied by a *strib*, a tax inspector came by to Skučas, the chairman of the kolkhoz* Švyturys. Though he wasn't an officer of the highest rank, he was worth a bottle anyway. The chairman asked the guests to wait and scooted to the village to look for some homebrew.

While Skučas was tossing from neighbor to neighbor, Lukša and his men stopped at the same door and knocked.

“Who's there?”

“Friends.”

The door opened. The *strib* saw Lithuanian uniforms and fired, but he missed. The partisans retreated back and threw some granades to the room, the *strib* was killed and the tax inspector – injured. The partisans made sure the wounded man was unarmed and went to the other side of the house to talk to President Grinius' brother, who lived there.

Meanwhile in the alder grove, hiding in nettles and grasping a bottle of hooch, the kolkhoz chairman lay shaking.

* a collective farm

SERBENTIŠKĖS

Partisan Žaibas was killed while swimming in a pond near his home. Several people were forced to come to identify him, his mother amongst them.

“It's not my child!” the woman shakes. “I don't lock that ‘waterhole’, everybody comes to swim there.”

The killed man was taken away the same day. His mother was deported in spring.

ŠILAVOTAS

The future partisan Vilija, a mathematician of Šilavotas progymnasium, examines students. A *strib* storms into the classroom.

“Teacher, you're being called to the ‘Masonry,’” he announces.

This is how people call the *strib* house in the village.

“I'll come later. It's an exam now.”

“I'll wait...”

The ‘defender’ keeps his promise: waits till the end of the exam and follows the teacher to the headquarters.

During the interrogation, another *strib*, Viščiulis, chuffs in.

“There's a skirmish in Prienai! Let's go!” – “We don't have fuel!”

The interrogee quickly evaluates the situation: be it a luck or a misfortune – at least she'll get to see her mother:

“I've got fuel!” – “Where?” – “At home.”

Leading the arrested woman, urging her and hurrying themselves, the *strib*s ran to her home, grabbed the fuel and fled to Prienai.

By accident or on purpose, they left Vilija in the barn. When they came back, the woman had left to the forest.

INGAVANGIS

When the first men went to hide in the forests, one dweller of Ingavangis suddenly took a liking to mushrooms. He started to go for long walks in the forest, even in distant places, where no mushroom grew.

The *forestmen* decided to check the mushroom-picker. They disguised as militia officers and visited the man's house, where they found him in sickbed.

It wasn't a lethal disease, however. The patient was conscious and able to speak. When he was asked to give a reason for not coming to the "Masonry" with news, the volunteer snitch promised to come in no time. He had even found a bunker and was willing to show it, but, alas, got sick.

One could tell the cuss wasn't lying – if not the sickness, he'd have jumped out of bed and run to the headquarters with information.

That's how he breathed his last – being benevolent.

PAPIEVIAI

Partisan Kolumbas was lucky to escape the enemy's bullets for a long time.

"I'm wearing armour," used to joke the young man, "that's why I'm bulletproof."

The joking stopped in spring of 1946, in the forest near Papieviai.

KAMPINIAI

Trying to avoid exile, Tamaliūnas went to join partisans, but he met another trouble – could find no place

* here: the Cheka headquarters

where to stay. The partisan bunkers were all full, acquaintances were afraid to take one more in. Even his sister refused him.

"What if they find us?" she explained.

BILEVIČIAI

Having surrounded the Daunorai homestead, the soldiers looked for a bunker long and without any luck. The officer lost his patience and went to a neighboring village of Bilevičiai. When he came back, he pointed to the outdoor kitchen, where underneath its floor the partisans were hiding:

"Здесь – here!"

In Bilevičiai, at Saldaitis' place, Katinas was standing among soldiers.

KAMPINIAI

After explosions in the bunker, Russians ordered Daunoriukai – the children of the hosts – to get the killed out to the light.

Stepas survived the explosion, but pretended to be dead and was raised to the surface with the others. He waited until two Russian officers approached him, shot them down from his pistol and started to run.

He escaped from the officers, but not from a machine gun.

VEIVERIAI

Daunoras was arrested and brought to the Veiveriai *strib*-house, where *chekist* Puniškis visited him.

"I can't help you anymore, Vytautas. Now you must save yourself."

Puniškis did his best the previous evening, when soldiers surrounded the hideout: he read the decree for amnesty aloud for three times, offered the men to give up, but he couldn't

persuade anyone.

To tell the truth, he himself didn't believe in anything he was reading.

VEIVERIAI

The town's *chekist* Puniškis sympathized with partisans and used to help them secretly, but in the end he started drinking and one sunny day shot himself in the rye field. What else could he do – all the amnesties, which he used to proclaim so solemnly in the name of authorities, used to end with arrest and concentration camps.

THE SMAILIAI GROVE

The night shift – Kovas, Klemensas and Ožys – walk across the fields. The full moon shines, dogs bark somewhere. The three feel grim and dreary.

As they come close to a forest, Kovas says:

“I'll lie down here,” and falls on the grass.

The other two also take a rest.

In the morning Ožys wakes up and sees: Klemensas has already made a feeble fire to warm his hands, Kovas peeks from a tent.

“What did you dream about, men?” asks Klemensas.

Ožys merely shrugs – he slept tight and saw no dreams.

Kovas says:

“We were carting hornbeam wood, and it was dirty. They accepted the wood from the others, but mine was no good.”

Before Kovas finished his sentence, they heard a train rumbling in a distance – it was not more than 3 kilometers from the forest to the Pabališkiai railway station. But the rumble was weird.

Ožys:

“Our men are being shot!”

And he was right. That morning someone betrayed the Birutė corps' headquarters and everyone was killed.

THE EGLYNĖLIS FOREST

In July of 1945, scouts of one squad of the Birutė corps stopped Katinas and two German soldiers in uniforms. The Germans said they were going to ‘East Prussia’ and asked for help, they promised to give partisans their favorite weapons – Sturmgewehr 44 rifles for that.

The Germans set up their camp just a few dozen meters away from the partisan camp. Partisans Daktaras and Vargonininkas visited the new neighbors and were treated to coffee.

“So nice are those bosses! Majors, lieutenant-colonels...” strokes his beard Vargonininkas, after coming back from the quests. “They say they'll help us to take Kazlai and then travel further. They come from Liepoja.”

Ožys began to listen: from as far as Liepoja? How did such a numerous squad manage to reach Kazlų Rūda without being noticed? And with horses! How did they cross the Neman? “Use your sound mind or your dum mind – there's no logics,” he would explain later. Then he decided not to get close friends with the newcomers.

After a while, the ‘Germans’ shot two seventeen-year-olds who were straggling behind their squad, and came to invite other partisans to their camp. Somehow it happened that next to each one who agreed to go a gunned companion appeared.

One third of the squad left. Maybe they sensed something wrong

* historical ethnographical region, a part of Prussia – the country, no longer in existence. The place of Lithuania Minor, nowadays' Kaliningrad region

then? Ožys was standing stock-still on their way and saw their faces, their different faces. The men had to be not that far away when signalman Paškevičius hurried in and told straight away: these were not Germans but Russians in disguise. There were some men who couldn't believe it, but Ožys didn't linger anymore. He grabbed his machine gun:

"Let's go who goes! Who doesn't go – stay," and together with the signalman first waded into the swamp.

Willy-nilly other twenty men followed them and when, after killing 10 'guests', the disguisers stormed into the camp, it was already empty. It was the squad's first loss so painful and first big Katinas' treachery.

ŠILĖNAI

There was a hideout for three people made under the furnace at Baltrušaitis'. The exit was made through the furnace rings.

Once, as Ožys was trying to get out of the hideout, a tree-year-old daughter of the hosts was playing in the room.

"Lussians!" shouted the little one.

"Men, Russians!" repeated the housewife with haste.

Ožys, hurting his elbows badly, slid back to the bunker. The woman hurried to fix the furnace rings, but wasn't able to put them in the right place.

A KGB-officer appeared in the doorway.

"Got bandits?"

"Where could I get them from?" retorted the woman, still fighting with the pieces of iron.

The KGB-ist turned round and left to the yard, but the woman's anxiety didn't elude his eyes.

"What is she afraid of so much?" he pondered.

Fortunately, the soldiers found some home-brew in the barn, so

the officer decided that Baltrušaitienė was nervous about the vodka and left her alone.

TVARKIŠKIAI

The household were afraid that a five-year-old son might blurt to the wrong ear about his father being a *forestman* and thought him not to call his father 'father'.

"Was it my daddy?" asked the boy after one visit of partisans.

"No, not daddy."

"Then who?"

"A man!" the boy's mother couldn't think of a better answer.

Soon there was a threshing in the neighborhood. Sendzikienė with her five-year-old son is also toiling together. During the threshing the kid slips away from the yard and strolls to the outskirts. He's not brave enough to go to the forest, though. Kneeling behind the tree, he peeks around one side, then around another.

"What are looking here for, Algirdukas?" comes the neighbor after the child.

"Maybe I'll see *a man*," turns his head Algirdukas.

TVARKIŠKIAI

The exile of 1949. It happened so, that only Sendzikienė from all the Sendzikai family had to climb into the cart. Grim.

During the verdict, the operative group brought her neighbor Kazlauskienė.

"B***es, they deport me!" couldn't hold her resentment the second exiler.

"I won't be alone," Sendzikienė eased.

KUDIRKAI

In 1945, before being sent to the unit, a rookie deserts the Red Army and hides at his cousin Pyragas' place. The fugitive's father is a *strib* in Pakuonis. One time he and his comrades were passing Kudirkai.

"Pyragas, give me back my son!" father stops near his relative's home and shouts.

KUDIRKAI

The *strib*'s wheels creak across the village. A partisan signalwoman is tied to the cart by her plaits.

She sees a familiar girl in one of the homesteads, and asks for water. The cart stops. The girl quickly brings water and helps the detainee.

After the 'caravan' leaves, the 'good Samaritan' finds a ring decorated with the Columns of Gediminas*.

THE JOKYMIŠKIS ESTATE

With a German machine gun on his shoulder, private Žydrulis from the Žalvis squad marched to the Jokymiškis Estate, where the authorities prodded villagers to pay taxes more willingly that day. The partisan hid behind the door and waited till the last farmer left the hall, then he stepped inside and gunned down all the activists at the table.

Due to this deed, the private's head was evaluated as much as twenty-four thousand roubles – like a real general's.

* one of the earliest symbols of Lithuania and one of its historical coats of arms

LAUKIŠKĖS

Following the painful incident at the Jokymiškis Estate, an intensive hunt of partisan Žydrulis started. No one knows how it might have ended, if not the incredible amount of money promised for the daredevil's head.

On March 25th, 1949, the day of the great exile, the previously mentioned sum brought punishers to the Misiūnai homestead. The owners lived in one side of the house, while in another one – in the bunker – Žydrulis and his friends sheltered. The soldiers booted the residents out and started to think how to barge into the partisan side safely. They decided to tie a rope on the door handle and pull it. The partisans pulled as well – from their tommy-guns.

The rope suffered no damage.

LAUKIŠKĖS

The Misiūnai homestead skirmish lasted for ten hours. All that time the punishers trampled around the surrounded house, not being able to come to it closer than a shooting distance. Finally, as the dusk fell, they managed to catch a schoolboy coming back from Išlaužai and made him go and set the house on fire.

The partisans didn't shoot at the kid and the house flamed up.

One after another the men jumped out through the window and one after another were shot down by the enemy or – if wounded – blew themselves up with grenades.

LAUKIŠKĖS

Soldiers had a feeling that the partisans, surrounded at the Misiūnai place, would try to break through when the night came, so they patrolled around the homestead not only on foot, but on horses too – try to run away from a horseman!

The following morning, a neighbor Pyragas went to the battle

place to have a look and saw that the area around the site of the fire was all trampled by horses.

The hoofprints were full of blood.

LAUKIŠKĖS

The day after the battle, at midday, Laukiškės were once again stormed by the army. Maneuvers were announced, but in reality the enemy officers barely wanted to make sure that such great toll on the 'Unbeatable' was taken by only four 'bandits'.

The villagers around witnessed as the Russians, who found some unrecognizably burned bodies of their comrades nearby, kicked them and shouted:

"A bandit!"

At least they increased the number of the dead enemies.

LAUKIŠKĖS

In 1949, the young Misiūnas delated Švyturys, Aidas, Žydruoelis and Aras, who had built a bunker at his place. On the day of the great exile his house was surrounded by Veiveriai *strib*s. Shortly they required help from the nearby garrisons, as well-armed and brave men met the enemy properly. Late in the evening, the wooden house was set on fire. When the last partisan's gun hushed away, there were approximately sixty dead bodies lying around the site.

That evening Veiveriai was shuddered by lamenting enemies' wives, not Lithuanian.

GYVIAI

Veiveriai's *strib*s surrounded the Petkevičiai farmstead and were lurking for partisan Švyturys to come back. As usually, no one was allowed to leave the house.

A little girl asked to go outside. When she was in the yard she

started to run. *Strib* Dovydonis raised his rifle. A soldier, standing next to him, tried to interrupt the fire, but it was too late and the girl fell dead.

"You are a *svoloch*!" blurted the soldier to his 'mission mate'.

ŠILĖNAI

In autumn of 1947, the homestead of a killed partisan Kabišius was surrounded by the army and *strib*s – ready to deport. Mother managed to hide and only the children were overtaken by the soldiers. While the others were loading the cart, one of Kabišius' daughters went to the porch to get some sauerkraut and decided to run. The soldiers saw her and didn't shoot, but *strib* Dovydonis, who was hiding behind the barn, knelt down, aimed and fired.

Screams and despair of the children. Not knowing what else to do, other sisters started looking for their mother. Dovydonis followed them everywhere and kept forbidding:

"Don't shout, don't shout, it's not polite."

A neighbor ran towards them.

"Did they really shoot Onutė?"

"An accident," explained Dovydonis.

VEIVERIAI

A bad news reached a house in the village: Ožys has been killed. Speechless and breathless Sendzikienė runs to Veiveriai, where *strib*s got used to 'lay out' the killed partisans in the hospital yard. "I will see, now I will see!" stumbles she across the glazed frost.

She came running. The *strib* house was empty, three corpses laid

* a Russian curse word meaning 'bastard'

in front of it. The two bodies on the sides were not familiar, and the face of the middle one was covered with a scarf... The woman flung herself to the dead and, with her heart barely beating, pulled the scarf.

Not Jonas...

That night the heart of another partisan's – Liepsnabarzdīs – wife stopped.

VEIVERIAI

Marijampolė's *chekists* long and persistently interrogate partisan Kirstukas' sister. Eventually they give up. "Can't make a file on you," they admit.

"You can go home."

The young woman scuttles from the basement and the very same evening strides home to Veiveriai. In the morning she opens her eyes just to see that her homestead is surrounded – deportation.

You've said good bye to the *chekists* just in time, Aldutė! A little longer and you'd have missed the train.

THE ŽIEMKELIS FOREST

While camping deep in the forest, in so called 'Rievutės', Arlauskas' squad heard about *strib*s who appeared in the outskirts. There were many of them, close to seventy. Should they retreat or wait till morning? The squad decided to wait.

As the morning came, another news arrived: the *strib*s and soldiers moved towards the Žiemkelis side, and soon after there was a fierce shooting. The Rievutės squad decided to come closer to another partisan camp that was attacked.

On their way they met two wounded fighters.

"Don't go!" the men tried to hold back Arlauskas, but he didn't listen.

When they reached the camping place, the bunkers were already on fire. The men hid behind tufts and saw four soldiers bustling around a machine gun. Kabišius opened fire from his own machine gun and the four men dropped down.

Alas, the enemies had more weapons and the squad was soon befallen by a severe machine gun and tommy-gun fire. Arlauskas' gun fell down; jerking his hands aside, Vilemas fell on his back.

"I'm already..." only uttered.

From a dozen of men only two survived that day.

THE EGLYNĒLIS FOREST

From the train going east a Hungarian war prisoner jumped off in Suvalkija. The fugitive found his home with the men of the Birutė corps.

"Where'd you rather be – at the front or here?" in order to cheer up, the men used to ask the emotional Hungarian.

"*Scheise, scheise!*" Pijus would start swearing then, stamping with one foot around himself. "When at the front, you know – that Russians are here, and on this side or that side there's nothing. And what life do I have here? A descent's life! Enemy is everywhere around!"

He died one year later near Antanavas.

VEIVERIAI

Partisan Kazokas is getting ready to go to Veiveriai to register his marriage with Liepa. Before leaving he instructs his fiancée:

"Come to Veiveriai tomorrow. If I'll be lying on the street, come all the same."

* German: manure

BAGOTIŠKĖS

Signalwoman Liepa:

“When Kazokas got killed, I cried a lot. Then I fell asleep and had a dream: I was wearing a black dress and walking across a flower garden. The flowers were very high. White blossoms. And all frozen, stiff.”

BAGOTIŠKĖS

A provocateur Markulis called a conference for all the chiefs of partisan military districts. Žvejys says to signalwoman Liepa: “I’ll go! I know for sure they’re spies, but I’ll go. I’ll leave Kunas, my adjutant, in my place. Otherwise – dishonor!” Until he was ready to go, Markulis was exposed and Fisher had to find other ways to defend his honor.

SARGINĖ

Serbentienė’s eldest son was a *strib* in Šilavotas. From time to time one could see the woman rushing to the “headquarters” with news – *I saw... I heard...*

“Mother, don’t come here and don’t tell anything,” hushes his fidget mother the son, who prefers sitting in the village to roaming forests in search for the ‘bandits’, reported by his mother.

Two times the *forestmen* tried to discipline Serbentienė too, but the woman was very persistent and summoned for the hapless third time.

SARGINĖ

Eight partisans were spending day at the Staropolskiai. When the evening came, they fetched an accordion and danced and pranced all night long.

Next evening one of the Staropolskiai daughters went outside and

saw a garrison marching past the house. “If they’d walked like that yesterday...” the girl grew numb.

These would’ve pranced them too.

PRIENAI

Chekist Bakurov interrogates only just arrested Staropolskytė. He asks about partisan Klajūnas.

“We have him. And he has told us everything,” lies Bakurov.

“When could he’ve told them everything? I talked with him at midnight, and I was arrested in the morning,” ponders the girl. “They can’t have managed to hold an inquest!”

Logic helped.

SARGINĖ

In 1952, at the Staropolskiai place, *strib*s ran into partisans. Two against three. All fired several shots and ran away in opposite directions.

Half an hour later the old housewife was being interrogated by the Cheka.

“But these were the *strib*s shooting among themselves!” defended herself the woman. “Maybe they quarrelled or something. Bandits don’t go to people during the daytime.”

She kept to this version for three nights and three days, then she was released.

PRIENAI

Before the end of the war, there’s a get-together going on in Prienai gymnasium.

But Lithuania Will finally wake up: She’s suffered so much not in vain! – a student recites Maironis with greatest empathy and doesn’t notice two *chekists* standing at the wall.

After the evening party, its organizer teacher Stravinskas ended up in the Cheka and got home only after midnight.

Got home, changed his clothes and went out to the forest.

PAKIAULIŠKIS

On February 16 of 1945, in Pakiauliškis village, in the Senavaičiai's hut, a numerous family of Senavaičiai and youth from the surrounding villages sat down at the table. They talked about occupation and decided to resist.

Their will was signed in blood: one of the household, Vincas, took a knife and cut the Cross of Vytis on his left side. This was the first, but, alas, not the last blood shed in the territory of the future Geležinis Vilkas corps, Tauras military district.

PLUTIŠKĖS

Stribs dropped by Paltanavičiai and, as usually, demanded vodka. Their son ran to the village and came back carrying a bottle. The *stribs* quickly turned it empty – too little. Paltanavičius, make another visit to the village!

The young man balks – won't go, have no money... the *strib* pulled out a bunch of banknotes and counted several for one bottle. Under such circumstances you can't jib, you must go.

Only when the *stribs* bugged off, Paltanavičiai noticed to have treated 'guests' for their own money: the pockets of a coat hanging on the wall had been emptied. Herewith the 'people's defenders' stole a violin from under the bed and a hair clipper left in a visible place inadvertently.

PAKUONIS

The night. Together with his friends, partisan Anglas comes to visit his home place and carefully crawls to the nearest

window. At the table a very well known, but not very much liked district officer sits, accompanied by a soldier never seen before. They drink and court the partisan's sisters. Their guns are rested at the door.

Anglas slid to another window and called his mother to the yard. Very shortly the housewife herself came to talk to the very important guest, and one of the daughters noticed that buckets were empty and asked another guest, the soldier, to walk her to the well.

The soldier, who'd been waiting for such an occasion, jumped through the door after the girl with eagerness – and collapsed from Anglas' stroke.

The second drunkard ended his feast with a bullet in his chest.

ŽUVINTA

On the Juodžiai land, a *forestmans* bunker successfully existed for a long time. There were neither firefights nor ambushes, though in the same village, in the house of the killed partisan Čepulionis, *stribs* lived. "This is the cross keeping us safe," – used to say Juodienė, nodding towards the road.

The situation changed when the deceased's sister fell in love with a *strib* Šlamiškis. This love was followed by a mental turning point; reporting and raiding the killed partisan's friends started. The troubled bunker dwellers soon realized what was to come and left the Juodžiai place.

Onutė was hanged.

PAČIUDIŠKIAI

Student Meškiukas was brought to the squad by partisan Vilija. As he was good at languages, the young man used to listen to the radio and translate the news from the West.

One month later, a drunk Rickus shot Meškiukas down and tried to escape, but partisans caught him and Rickus was immediately

sentenced to be executed by court martial.

In order to fulfill the verdict, the chief lined up all the squad. Vilija also joined the line, but – women are women! – while shooting she closed her eyes and even prayed God not to hit.

ČIUDIŠKIAI

In the spring of 1948, six fighters from the Geležinis Vilkas corps were waylaid at the Mačiūtos. Not wanting to cause harm to the hosts, the men ran to the Šventupė meadows and one after another were killed there.

Antanas Pranka was barely injured in the beginning.

“Water,” he asked the soldier.

“Here, drink!” answered the latter and open fire from his tommy-gun.

THE PRIENAI PINWOOD

Partisan Beržas gets badly hurt. Having no wish to get into the enemy’s hands alive, he begs his friends to shoot him, but none of the men can raise their guns against their friend. Then the wounded asks to at least load a gun. This request is fulfilled and Beržas shoots himself.

At the second attempt.

PRIENAI

A Russian interrogator pries out priest Juškevičius, who is accused in accordance with Article 10 (regime defamation).

The interrogator: Where were you born?

The accused: In Lithuania.

“There’s no such country!”

“Then – in America.”

To a *chekist* – be him Russian or Lithuanian – humour is as

mysterious as Greek writing. “Born in America” scribbles he into the interrogation report. Alas, even America couldn’t protect from a concentration camp.

THE ALKSNIAKIEMIS FOREST

The girlfriend of Anupras, chief of the Tėvonija squad, got tempted by the big money offered by authorities and started to poison the partisan. Having realized the treason, Anupras shot his sweetheart.

RINGĖNAI

A garrison flooded Laukaitis’ farm and started to search for something they had never left there. Overtaken with curiosity, a neighbor shuffles along the road. The soldiers stop her.

“Where to?”

“To borrow salt...”

The reason didn’t convince the troop. They turned the nose round and ordered to go home – they’d check if she was really short of salt. Realizing that she’d be exposed in a minute, the woman plunged into the marshes. The soldiers grabbed their guns – but all missed, no matter how much they tried.

So many men they’d killed, but made fun of themselves with a woman.

NAUJOJI ŪTA

“Oh misery, misery, my dear misery,” used to wail one fighter of the Balbieriškis squad. “Damn, it’s misery!” he would finish.

Having caught this phrase, his friends started to call him Vargas (Misery). It’s good they used the first part of wailing, not the ending!

THE PRIENAI PINWOOD

The carrier of a 'people's defender' Jukelis was swift and intoxicating: from a rifle to the district chairman. Of course, in his heart comrade Jukelis was expecting changes: after all, the other day he shot not an ordinary bandit, but his own partisan son!

Sooth to say, from his first marriage only.

PRIENAI

Filled with curiosity, a teenage girl sneaked in the funeral of an important officer, killed by partisans. She received a purely red impression: walls covered with red cloth, a red coffin...

It was a popular color during the Post-war.

THE PRIENAI PINWOOD

A summer evening. In a bunker near Navarai village, six partisans and their signalwoman Medinukė had just finished their evening prayers. The signalwoman was about to leave, when the squad chief, Spyruoklis, stopped her:

"You can't go, you'll stay with us. The forest is surrounded."

So it is. The girl sat on the bunk, leaned her shoulders at the wall and fell silent. She's used to waiting.

Telling friendly jokes, the partisans are also getting ready for the night. For them it's even more dangerous to get out of the bunker in the surrounded forest.

The trifle was interrupted by a blast. It hit not far away, on the side of another *forestmen* bunker. It means Plaukas and Voldemaras are gone.

Half an hour later they heard steps, curses, dogs barking. The men all raised their eyes up: sand started to fall from the ceiling. It's their turn now, obviously.

The bunker hushed, but not because of fear: among other possible cases they'd prepared for such an end too. Spyruoklis tore off the newspapers glued on the hideout's ceiling. He found and clasped a wire fastened to a powerful mine. It should make a hole at least 20 square meters wide.

Seeing where it's all going, Medinukė touched Spyruoklis' elbow. "Jonas, we'll have time to die yet. Let's wait a bit."

The chief silently looked at the signalwoman and relaxed his fingers. The noise over their heads became fainter and fainter, till it died away.

DŪMIŠKĖS

Signalwoman Medinukė gets home and notices she's being waited for. Before entering the house, she grabs a bucket and hurries to the meadows to move the cows to another pasture place.

There's total silence in the house. Medinukė unleashes one cow and leads it towards the forest. Then she does the same with another animal and – dives into the depth of the forest herself.

When the soldiers understood they were deceived, they opened fire from a machine gun, but all they managed to do was hack some leaves above Medinukė's head.

KAUNAS

At last signalwoman Medinukė got arrested.

"How did you manage to dodge us? So many times we were informed about your whereabouts, but when we went there – you're never there!" asked interrogators.

"You've been served, and I've been served," answered the detainee. Short and sweet.

BRATSK (RUSSIA)

As it is widely known, the Soviet Union was the most intelligent country in the world. Prisoners of Bratsk concentration camp learned this to be a sacred truth the hard way. After coming back from work in mica mines – tired, wet, cold and hungry – they had to sit in lectures about culture in a frosted barrack.

The lecture about the culture of *Pribaltics*, as Russians used to call the three Baltic states, was fatal for prisoner Medinukė. Those listeners, who managed to stay “on”, were being mesmerized about absence of culture in *Pribaltics*.

“Have you ever lived in Lithuania?” Medinukė, a partisan signalwoman from Suvalkija, interrupted the speaker, not being able to listen to him anymore.

“Well, no...”

“So how do you know all this what you say?”

“I read about it.”

“Half of what you read should go to the garbage bin!” resumed the partisan and very suggestively continued with a popular at that time in Lithuania story about a Russian officer’s wife who, in 1940, appeared in public wearing only her nightdress, as the representative of the world’s most intelligent nation believed it to be a banquet dress.

For being so active and demonstrating knowledge, the listener was “motivated” with two extra years at the concentration camp.

BRATSK (RUSSIA)

After criticizing the lecturer, who’d slandered Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia, the prisoner of Bratsk, ex-partisan signalwoman Medinukė is summoned to the assignee.

“What happened there?”

“Nothing. I can tell you, if you allow me.”

The assignee allowed.

“Do you know where you are?” he asked, after hearing the prisoner’s story.

Medinukė gave a polite acknowledgement and was allowed to leave.

“Irreparable” – entered the *chekist* to the prisoner’s personal file, after she’d left.

The irreparables used to leave the camps last.

PRIENAI

An arrested signalwoman is being pushed from one Cheka room to another. She notices a familiar villager in one of the rooms, but one can say he came here of his own free will. When the signalwoman entered the room, the *chekist* said good bye to his interlocutor and offered to drop into another room to get travel allowances.

“Dear sir, where shall I go? I’ve got a poor eyesight, it’s hard to read...” jibs the villager.

“Ok,” agrees the ‘dear sir’. “Your daughter Marytė is a frequent guest here, we’ll hand in the money to her.

Then he glanced at the arrested – and shut his mouth up. Too late – the cat was out of the bag.

Sooner or later the cat always gets out of the bag – no matter how often or barely seldom you, Marytė, report to the Cheka.

THE PRIENAI PINWOOD

A military truck rumbles along the sandy byways of the pinewood. Surrounded by soldiers, an arrested partisan signalman Baubonis shakes inside the truck. Suddenly explosions and cries mess up the trip: the truck bumps into the tree and stops. Shooting to all sides, the guards fall out over the sides.

A moment later Baubonis finds himself among wrathful forest brothers. Hurrying and shooting back, they drag the man to a bunker and start to interrogate; the first question being if Baubonis really is a partisan signalman.

“Tell us where and what partisans are, we’ll see if you tell the truth. If not – we’ll shoot you!” the hosts of the hideout aren’t picky.

The captive carefully looks around. The bunker is made to a turn: with tricolor flags, partisan slogans, all fighters wearing identical Lithuanian uniforms... In that case he will easily prove to be one of them, not some *strib*.

After interrogation, the partisans lead the man outside. And again – explosions, gunfire... Together with the brave knights of Dzerzhinsky, who successfully managed to retrieve Baubonis back.

But this attack did not surprise the partisan signalman. He realized to have been provoked by the *chekists* the moment he saw the ‘partisans’ leaving their bunker without covering it up.

NARAVAI

After intrusion to one of the Naravai village homesteads, soldiers started to beat its host and demanded to disclose the place of the bunker. Then they pointed towards a clock.

“Old man, when one hand shows seven and another – twelve, we’ll take you out and shoot you!”

And so they did. To tell the truth, their bullets flew only past his ears, he was cut only with a blunt side of the blade, but that was enough to make the old man breathe his last.

ASIŪKLĖ

In the Janušauskai’s barn partisan Neris was surrounded and badly wounded during the shooting. The soldiers caught Janušauskaitė, his girlfriend, dragged her to the

barn, made her climb on the hayloft and told to push the partisan and his gun down.

The girl found Neris still alive. She kissed him and pushed him down.

ASIŪKLĖ

Having waylaid a partisan in the Janušauskai homestead, the soldiers beat all the people living there. After such a ‘lesson’, the son was left handicapped, and their mother soon died.

SKIRPTIŠKĖ

When Mažeikaitė left to school, four *forestmen* stayed at her home. When she came back, she found a full yard of Russians – the Gudeliai garrison stormed in.

Germanas, the village KGB chief, left his troop outside and marched into the house. He stepped over the threshold and found himself facing the pistols of partisans Dešinys and Anbas.

He was ordered to raise his hands up.

The men took away his gun and cartridge pouch.

Dešinys said,

“Now you have two options: either you get killed right away here, or you swear and lead your soldiers away.”

“You shoot me, and my soldiers will shoot you.”

“We’ll shoot you, that’s for sure. What’ll happen to us – it’s not set yet. Perhaps we’ll escape. Perhaps the troop will scatter without its chief and won’t fight at all.”

Germanas was persuaded. He was released, went to the yard, whistled to his soldiers and left.

SKIRPTIŠKĖ

Winter, snow. Two *nightmen* came back to the

Mažeikos place, not realizing that in the neighborhood, at Margulevičius, the enemy had taken positions. The Russians observed the partisans through binoculars and tumbled in, but even after rummaging the Mažeikos homestead all night long, they couldn't find the 'bandits'.

This time the checkists were outwitted by the housewife: she asked to be allowed to feed her cow and when she was given permission, the woman went to the barn to fetch some straw. There she saw the wall at the bunker's vent-hole sparkling with frost.

"Oh God, what did I stumble here on?" Mažeikienė fell into the hay and, while complaining and trying to get up, she covered the treacherous glint with straws.

Six men were saved.

SKIRPTIŠKĖ

Partisan Dešinys had a beautiful voice and an even more beautiful repertoire.

It's all the same to me. I fight for you, my Fatherland.

It's all the same to me. I suffer just for you.

For you I put my life in danger,

For you, for you, my dear Lithuania.

And when the nation becomes free from dangers,

There'll be neither misery nor troubles -

Then many honorable heroes will emerge,

With the desire for money and estates, -

he liked to croon.

Maybe it's for the better that you didn't live till these days, partisan. What would you sing now, when the prophecy of your favorite song has come true?

NAUJOJI ŪTA

Forestmen Tetervinas and Balandis came to the village to visit Dešinys, whose leg was injured. An incredible sum of ten thousand rubles was promised for his head, so his friends decided to take their chief to a safer hideout.

Dešinys managed to walk only to the Januliai farm.

In the same village a Bražinskaitė lived. She desperately wanted to marry Žilinskas, but had no money for a wedding. As if intentionally, that night the couple was strolling along the fields and noticed the partisans. Bražinskaitė stayed to dog them, and her fiancé curbed a horse found in the pasture and galloped to Šilavotas.

Money sprang up like mushrooms.

SKIRPTIŠKĖ

Summer. At daybreak, Venskūnas goes to the pasture for his horse and finds the animal lathering with weariness. "What kind of night-hags poisoned my horsy?" guesses the man as he walks around the dewy pasture.

When he notices a fresh trail, Venskūnas forgets mythic creatures and remembers a rumble of tommy-guns that he heard just one or two hours ago, in this very area. "Isn't it possible the night rider has something to do with this?" he tries to find the connection between the shooting, the exhausted horse and the trail.

Not daring to even think where it will lead him, the villager starts to follow the trail and goes till he bumps into the Žilinskai's fence.

Oh, there will be funeral in the village, definitely! And it won't be the only funeral.

NAUJOJI ŪTA

When the *strib*s had gone away, Dešinys' friends came to the place he was killed. The grass and bushes were red with

the chief's blood.

While Tetervinas was carving a cross in the nearest alder tree, signalwoman Mažytė covered the bloodstained paddock with wild daisies.

THE IGLIAUKA CROSSROADS

*Forestm*en told Mažeikienė to go to Igliskėliai and bring back weapons. The woman harnessed her horse, spread some straw into the cart, laid some cloth, an eiderdown, then she laid her teenager daughter into the cart and grided to Igliskėliai. There she collected the guns, hid them at her daughter's side and turned back.

At the Igliauka crossroads they were stopped by *stribs*.

"Where are you going?"

"Here, I'm taking a sick girl home from Marijampolė."

"Why from as far as Marijampolė?"

"There are no doctors closer..."

The *stribs* glanced at the pale 'patient' and permitted to go.

How could they know that that paleness was out of fear.

SKIRPTIŠKĖ

Stribs came to arrest Mažeikienė, who was suspected to keep contact with partisans, and saw a military binocular left on the bench.

Partisan Tetervinas got one step closer to death.

SKIRPTIŠKĖ

Foreboding where her son might be hiding, Tetervinas' mother stayed nearby. Maybe she'd see him passing by, maybe she'd hear his steps.

She was lucky. She witnessed her son's last fight from the beginning

to the end, heard the fatal grenade explosion, and – when the punishers rumbled out – she was able to wade in the blood of the killed Petrukas to her heart's content.

SKIRPTIŠKĖ

After Tetervinas' slaughter, Mažeikaitė sneaks into the wrecked home. The stench of gunpowder, the bullet-riddled walls. In one of the rooms, the hideout cover lies in the middle and the partisan's mother walks around gathering pieces of her son's head to her apron. There's blood on her hands, blood on her face, blood on the white corners of her kerchief.

The young Mažeikos made a little box, collected the partisan's remains into it and buried it in the grave of their relatives.

PILOTIŠKĖS

Having misunderstood privileges granted to him by the new government, a village *strib* Marčiukaitis pilfered boots and a gun from his boss, but soon got caught.

Kicked out from the 'defenders', not welcomed by the *forestm*en... Bad luck!

PILOTIŠKĖS

One squad from the Balbieriškis forest was lead by an ex-Wehrmacht soldier, an Austrian. He was fond of Pilotiškės, and the village loved the chief of their children.

"If I stay alive, I'll bring wine from home, and the village will celebrate for a week!" once promised the chief.

Just one trifle – he had to stay alive.

PILOTIŠKĖS

Both Janiūnai men are at war: father – with *stribs*,

son – in the forest. Neither of them hides their determination to shoot another on sight. Janiūnienė's become so exhausted tuning the ways of her husband and son – God forbid they will cross one day!

Only when her son got killed at Skuigė one day, the woman was finally able to catch her breath.

VARTAI

During the very first days of the war Kurapka started to serve in the Red Army. The man appeared to be very bellicose, as he came back to his native Vartai wearing several medals. Yet one day he got arrested.

“If you arrest me, you arrest Stalin too!” declared the veteran to the *chekists*.

It's hard to say what he meant saying that – his war certificate or the Chief's moustache engraved in bronze, but he was released.

TARTUPIS

That night partisan Lapinas was staying home. When the morning came, his friends knocked on the door.

“Onutė, where's Stasys?” they asked his sister.

“I don't know. I walked him to the crossroads,” still half-asleep lies Onutė.

Only after the men had left, she realized to have deluded them like some *stribs*.

As they say: habit is stronger than nature.

TARTUPIS

Forestmans visited the Marčiulynai family and reported that their son Vincas had been arrested. Marčiulynaitės fell on their knees and started crying.

“It's so good I have no one left!” rejoiced Tigras, watching the mourning sisters. “There won't be anyone to weep for me.”

His joy was sincere: his brother, partisan Kurtas, had been killed long before.

TARTUPIS

Late in the afternoon, without being noticed, soldiers surrounded the Viršučiai homestead, and then, not hiding anymore, stormed into the yard. Partisan Žaibas was talking with the hosts at that time.

“Jesus Christ, Russians!” petrified Viršutienė, after noticing them through the window.

Žaibas dived into the corridor, where a bunker was dug under the smokery; Viršutienė sprang right behind him. Just before the soldiers broke into the house, she managed to hide the hideout's hole.

Having searched the house and not able to find anything, the soldiers prodded the hostess and her children into the cellar and took the host outside.

“Where's the bunker under the manege?”

“There's nothing at my place!”

Viršutis was beaten and brought back to the house, and Leopardas, a partisan deserter, was taken out the truck. That one showed where to dig. Fortunately, the traitor knew nothing about another bunker, hid in the corridor.

TARTUPIS

Deserter Leopardas disclosed the place of the hideout at the Viršučiai place. The traitor was brought back to the truck, the host taken out of the house and given a spade.

“Dig!”

Viršutis, being perfectly aware where the entrance to the hideout is, digs and heaps the soil up on it.

“Wrong place. Dig here!” he hears.

When the bunker’s door was unearthed, the officer took away the spade and told Viršutis to get in there first.

“Let everyone who’s in there get out!”

The host pushed himself through the hole, tramped there for a while and came back to the daylight.

“There’s no one in there,” he reported.

The Russian didn’t believe the man and sent one of his soldiers underground.

“If anything – the first shot is for you!” he warned Viršutis and aimed a pistol at his temple.

An order must be obeyed. Pale and dumbstruck the soldier gets down into the hole.

As there are no gunshots, the officer demands to find at least one cartridge, but the soldier fails again. All he finds is a moldy piece of bread.

Viršutis starts explaining it’s not a bunker, but a shelter from the war times, and the bread is as old as those days. Man, stop talking in vain! Can’t you see Lithuanian farmers are being sentenced to labor camps for much pettier finds?

SKIRPTIŠKĖ

Condemned to death by Dešinys for the desertion, Leopardas was generous and betrayed whomever he could. He also exposed two hideouts in the neighborhood.

The bunker at the Viršučiai place was soon discovered and ferreted out, but the *chekists* were unable to find the second one, hid in the Babravičiai house. Neither were they able to leave it – they blew it out together with the house.

VARTAI

The *chekists* stormed into the village and tore the door of village elder Žukauskas’ open.

“Lead us to where the men are!” they demanded.

Žukauskas is a reasonable person, he understands what the soldiers are looking for and takes them to Mickus from Tartupys, whose son is hiding without documents. The *chekists* shoot the young man down. Then they go to Joniūnas – and bring death there too.

The third salvo in the village was fired by the partisans – at Žukauskas.

VARTAI

Junior Žukauskas invites partisan supporter Sinkevičius to the Christmas feast. He hugs and kisses him,

“You are my best neighbor! Let’s go and have a drink!”

Sinkevičius went and *ad libitum* drank *Kauno karčioji*. He sobered up in an MGB lock up.

VARTAI

The young Žukauskas comes to take to his feast Sinkevičienė and her daughter too, but the two of them refuse.

“Be it fire, be it flood, but today the young Žukauskas will carouse!” full of excitement, the inviter is unable to keep his face straight.

You will carouse, bro, you will. But not for long.

* a brand of Lithuanian vodka

VARTAI

When partisan Rytis, who had come to visit, refused to drink, Žukauskienė had a stroke of hospitability.

“From me, but from me!” holding a pony of vodka she snuggles around the guest.

She was doing her best – she was the last *chekists*’ hope to rescue the operation.

VARTAI

Having helped partisans Rytis, Žaibas and Lapinas with the poisoned vodka and then handed them in to the KGB, Žukauskai moved to Prienai and never showed their faces in the village again. Only their son was brave enough to visit his drinking buddies from time to time, but he’d rather have looked for a new company as well.

Pretending to be soviets, friends of the betrayed partisans found a way to talk to him during one of such carousals. A drunken Žukauskutis felt no danger and couldn’t stop himself opening up, till he was finally silenced. For good and ever.

LINKSMAKALNIS

Long long ago, in the Postwar, one farmer betrayed three partisans dwelling nearby. The friends of the killed fighters doomed the sprat.

Many years passed, the time of National Revival started. The traitor’s sister searched out one partisan’s sister.

“Where’s Juozas’ grave? I want to re-bury him.”

“So maybe you’ll tell me where my brothers are now? I also want to have their grave!”

Both suffer.

SAPATIŠKĖS

After being attacked in the Aniškis forest, Būkas jumped on his horse and galloped towards home, to Sapatiškės. There, in the native fields, he was wounded, tumbled into the cart and transported to Miroslavas. There was nothing else left for his mother to do but to scoop up and bury his blood.

ČIŽIKAI

Būkas was injured not far from Sapatiškės and, being still alive, was thrown into the *chekists*’ cart. The news was delivered to his sister, living in a neighboring village of Čižikai. “What will happen now? He’ll be tortured!” – the woman gadded around the room in turmoil.

Only when she learned that her brother was already lying on the ground in Miroslavas, she eased up a tiny bit.

BALKŪNAI

The time came when partisan Ažuolas’ family had to leave their home. That time they were staying in Balkūnai.

The host, Kurpaviesas, spoke to the partisan’s wife:

“They say Ažuolas’s been killed.”

“Daddy *has* or has *not* been killed?” overheard and got interested Ažuolas’ three-year-old daughter.

BALKŪNAI

The KGB sent for the partisan Ažuolas’ wife and checked her documents. The woman showed someone else’s papers – she didn’t have her own ones.

At night Kuzmickienė had a dream about the same *chekists* and in her dream she condemned herself: “Why did I show those papers? My daughter will betray me anyway!”

The exact thing happened, she was betrayed.
The new Drebulė* was only three years old.

INTA (RUSSIA)

1950. The prisoners of the concentration camp are being checked against the list.

“So your husband wanted to be a minister?” the *chekist* lashed Kuzmickienė. “We’ll get him anyway!”

The echo of the council in Mėnaičiai? The prisoner’s husband partisan Ažuolas accompanied Ramanauskas-Vanagas to the Congress of the partisan leaders, where an underground government of Lithuania was formed.

INTA (RUSSIA)

After one and a half year of hard labor, Kuzmickienė received a parcel from Lithuania. Among other meager presents, there was a ball of yarn squeezed in the corner.

Together with her friend, she quickly rewound the yarn and was immediately rewarded for her insight: in the middle of the ball she found a message. About her husband. That he was killed.

TAUČIONYS

Marytė, who sympathized with partisans, was a primary school teacher in Taučionys. She lived in an empty farm of Siberian deportees, and she also had her classes there. During the day she used to hang portraits of the “chiefs” on the classroom walls, but when she stayed alone, she did it her way - she used to

*Drebulė (*Weeping willow*) - a character from one of the most archaic and best-known Lithuanian fairy-tales *Eglė the Queen of Serpents*, where a little girl being threatened and frightened discloses her father’s secret

replace them with a huge painting of the Blessed Virgin Mary of *Aušros Vartai* (the Gate of Dawn)*.

TAUČIONYS

The young teacher of Taučionys primary school was visited by some *forestmen*, who wanted to take a rest. Some fell asleep, some talked, some had a smoke. They left only at dawn.

Shortly after, Russians burst into the room. They were hunting ‘bandits.’ Needless to say, they smelled a cigarette smoke.

“Say what, bandits were here?” they attacked the girl.

“Not bandits, just my friends – I had a birthday party.”

“Show your passport!”

You remembered your birthday just on time, Marytė.

ALŠININKAI

When a skirmish broke out, the night shift partisan Lydeka had no time to even put on his boots and fought wearing his socks only. After the fight he hid in the forest, but didn’t stay there long.

“I’ll go home. Or else I’ll get my feet frostbitten,” he explained to his friends.

He went and never came back.

NIBRIAI

At night, partisans pattered on one door. Rakauskaitė-Pugačiauskaitė noticed them. She crouched at the window and listened to the conversation that wasn’t meant for her. In the morning

* The painting is situated in Vilnius and is widely known for miraculous recoveries and other graces and visited by pilgrims from many surrounding countries. It is considered a guardian of Lithuania and the symbol of concord.

she came to the same house and threatened the housewife to report her night guests to the authorities. She had no idea that in doing so she was shortening not only the neighbor's, but her own life too.

Especially her own: by up to two days.

JIEZNAS

Jieznas' *strib*s improved the Passion of Christ: they caught a *forestman* Aitvaras and not only did they crucify him on the barn, but they also set his body on fire.

PILIUONA

There was a threshing bee* at one farmstead. On purpose or by accident, *strib*s tumbled in. They mooched for vodka and sat at the table, drinking. A guard was singing in the yard. The 'defenders' were followed by partisan Saulė. He knocked the guard out with his rifle butt and entered the room.

"Honor to Jesus Christ!" he greeted the carousers.

When the stupefied company came to their senses, Saulė, together with their guns, was far far away.

DAUGAI

A very crapulous *strib* stops a neighboring village's teacher near an electoral district.

"You know what, teacher, you wet on me!" (The *strib*, of course, used a stronger word for that.)

"When?" the man was taken aback.

"The other night, you came back with the host and stopped at the potato field. I was lying there!"

* a social gathering, when neighbors or all the village come to help to do some work

We can only laugh at such a happening, but it wasn't that funny for the *strib* ambuscading in a potato bed. And it was even worse for the teacher, who was at the total 'victim's' mercy in those times.

PIEVOS

Duliūnas, a young teacher of this little village in Dzūkija*, chose forest. During his last lesson he taught his pupils to sing the National Anthem.

VANAGĖLIAI

Not far from this village, squad chief Duliūnas was wounded in the leg.

"We'll carry you on the sledge and take you away," his friends pothered.

"No. You won't take me anywhere," refused the injured man. "You'll get into trouble yourselves and you'll make trouble for other people."

He pretended to be dead, waited till a Russian officer approached, shot him down and then shot himself.

SKRAIČIONYS

In the skirmish at Tabalenka village, nine *forestmen* were killed. The tenth fighter, though being injured, managed to get home, but soon he died.

The late man was already laid out, when *strib*s from Butrimonys turned up. Their chief, Klimkovich, went straight to the host.

"I heard your son died?"

"Died..."

"What illness was it?"

* an ethnographic region of Lithuania, the Southeast

“I don’t know. It could be pneumonia.”

“You don’t know? I’ll show you!” Klimkovich snapped. Then he stomped to the late and ripped off his shirt, baring a bullet hole in his chest.

BUTRIMONYS

The postwar winter. The ‘defenders’ dragged the men, killed in the battle at Tabalenka, to Butrimonys and laid them just outside the windows of their headquarters. Having no more fantasy how to condemn the ‘bandits’, they drove hungry pigs on them.

A woman from a nearby village of Vanagėliai was passing by. She had recently lost her child. She saw the dead bodies, the animals grunting among them, and everything blurred around her. “I must get home...” she reached for a support, “I must get home...”

A *strib* peeked out through the headquarters’ door.

“Look, how they chomp!” he stopped with admiration. “It all even stirs!”

PENZA (RUSSIA)

Right after the war, a secondary school pupil Milutis was deported to a juvenile labor camp in Bobruisk (Belarus). Three months later a rebellion broke out there.

Together with other prisoners, a sixteen-year-old Milutis was accused of organizing the outbreak. Such belong in a more serious concentration camp, but a problem – they are underaged, it’s against the law! Yet the authorities are meant to think. They boarded the juvenile rebels on the train and sent them to Penza (Russia), where in a hospital they all were declared to be grown up men, not children anymore.

The “real” age of the teenagers was determined by looking at their teeth.

SIVAYA MASKA (RUSSIA)

After several years of imprisonment, Milutis – a secondary school student from Suvalkija – was placed in a concentration camp for *dochodiagas* in Sivaya Maska (Russia). A *dochodiaga* was a name given for very weak, ailing prisoners in the land of the labor camps. One time the camp’s electrician stopped Milutis for a friendly chat. He was wearing a very special neat uniform, never seen before. He said he was an Englishman captured by the Russians.

“An Englishman?” the young man ponders. “The English and the Russians are allies!”

Moreover, he’s already seen this friend-to-be somewhere.

“You remind me of an English teacher from Marijampolė gymnasium,” remembers Milutis.

His companion was very quick to finish their conversation and disappeared somewhere. He vanished not only from Milutis’ sight, but out of the camp too.

VORKUTA (RUSSIA)

A starving concentration camp prisoner is at death’s door.

“If I was released now, I’d dry a bag of rusks* first,” he dreams.

ZALOG (RUSSIA)

Two new deportees step into a village shop in the Zabaikal region and discuss the shelf contents there. One is from Simnas, another seems to be from Miroslavas. Their conversation is closely followed by an elderly local Russian.

As the customers turn to the door, the listener utters: “I’m from

* slices of bread baked/dried until they are hard and crisp

Lithuania too,” though he can barely pronounce the Lithuanian words.
“From the times of the revolution.”

His wife is a Russian, his son died for the Great Fatherland...
Only his surname still bears something western: Nevidomskis.

ALEXANDROVSK-SAKHALINSKY (RUSSIA)

In 1948, a bunch of Lithuanian prisoners reached this concentration camp on the Sakhalin Island and soon they spread among its old-timers: the camp was far from being small. There were new friends and acquaintances.

A signalwoman of Zanavykai partisans, Gerulaitytė, made friends with an amiable Ukrainian Bobior. The very first question was ‘*For what?*’, because you simply can’t be friends with a criminal.

“Once in the market I bought a Stalin’s bust and a coat of arms, both made of plaster,” starts telling the Ukrainian beauty. “I go home carrying them and someone asks how much I paid. For Stalin, I say, 75 kopeks, and for this *chrenovina** - I nodded to the coat of arms - 15 rubles!

Some officer heard me, dragged me to the KGB and scribbled 10 years... I wish at least there was a reason!”

But there is a reason, lassie, there is - you just don’t see it yet! And if you don’t die of tuberculosis (which you have seized already) during these 10 years, you’ll learn not only the Criminal Code of the RSFSR**, but also the economic policy of the state.

ALEXANDROVSK-SAKHALINSKY (RUSSIA)

Prisoner Gerulaitytė and her friends pull down

* Here: a trifle, a knickknack

** Russian Soviet Federative Socialist Republic

gigantic trees, which are over 20 meters high. One of the trees takes a sudden turn and plummets straight onto the girl. Yet, no harm was done - it hit the stump of another tree.

So it fell on you but didn’t kill? You weren’t even hurt? This means you’ll live long, Elena! Maybe even - till Lithuania.

YUZHAKOVO (RUSSIA)

Alone with little kids in the wilds of Altay - Rozmanienė realized they won’t be lasting long: no money, no work, and the German language, which earned her a living in Lithuania, just couldn’t be cooked. Yet the teacher found a solution: she declared herself to be able to read palms. This meant some income. She used to seat some woman in front of her and trace her finger across the client’s palm, murmuring in Lithuanian, “Today we’ll have tea with sugar... today we’ll stew potatoes...”

No one knows if her insight helped the other women, but the specter of famine moved away.

AN UNKNOWN VILLAGE IN SIBERIA

Together with the first deportees, Kižys and his wife were exiled to the far taiga. There he made friends with a commandant - a *chekist* supervising the prisoners. They must have had a common hobby, no other explanation.

Once as they were spending time together, the commandant asked, if Kižys knew who had ratted on him. “No,” said Kižys, “I don’t know.” Then he heard his closest neighbor’s name. The *chekist* immediately offered to call his colleague in Lithuania and ask to shoot the traitor - why does he tattle on good people?

It was a news to be digested and the exiler asked for some time to think. While thinking, he blurted about this concern to his wife and then all the manly offers and agreements ended.

III. THE **S**OUTH

PATAŠINĖ

A fighter of the Liepynai squad, Leninas, visited his family. He talked with his wife, tossed his 3-year-old daughter into the air, and left.

His wife walked him till the end of the garden.

“You’ll pluck these beans without me,” Leninas said as he was passing a bed full of young green bean leaves.

It doesn’t matter that Vaitkevičius hasn’t started to have dreams about Julytė Gumauskaitė and hasn’t betrayed her together with the partisans hiding at the Gumauskai place yet. One day he’ll lose his heart, make up his mind and betray. Love is omnipotent!

LIEPYNAI

1947.

“Our Kęstas has fallen in love with your Julytė,” once laughed Vaitkevičienė as she met her neighbor Gumauskienė. “He says there’s no other like her, she’s the only one he’ll marry.”

Julytė, a young lecturer at Kvietiškis Agricultural technical school, also laughed at the feelings of a considerably elder neighbor. If she had only foreboded what was about to come, she might have shown a little more diplomacy.

Rejected and heartbroken, Vaitkevičius went to his aunt, who lived in Marijampolė and used to sell moonshine. It doesn’t matter that Kastulis*, as he was called in the village, was already accepted to a reserve partisan squad, recruited congenial fellows and had a partisan alias. Fight can wait. Now he needed consolation!

* a diminutive form of the name *Kęstas*

Marijampolė *chekists* used to visit the same “point” – a drunkards’ inn. The first joint binge finished with a scrimmage, so did the second one. Then the *chekists* got interested in what the drunk villager was gabbling and the fighting seized. They started working.

Soon Vaitkevičius realized that he knew how to gain Julytė over, and was surprised not to have understood that earlier.

It was so easy: he would hand in the partisans hiding at her place and they would be arrested together with Julytė’s relatives, who had sheltered them. Then Kostas’ time would come: with the help of his new friends, he would rescue the arrested from the prison and Julytė’d forever be his! Together with her father’s gravel-pit.

This idea was implemented right in the midsummer. Vaitkevičius waited till the homestead’s owner became ill and offered himself to guard the partisans, who were resting in the barn on the hay. While guarding, he managed to get home and send a message to the town through his brother-in-law.

During the siege in the homestead, Šarūnas, Delfinas and Leninas were killed and the guardian family, as planned, were put into the basement of Bagdonas’ house. Soon the operation of liberation had to start, but – what a surprise! The *strib*s pushed Kostas to the same basement. Maybe it’s because as many as six NKVD men lost their lives in the Liepynai skirmish?

Having roamed all day long in the damp basement, Vaitkevičius calmed down and stopped at Julytė’s father, languishing in the same room.

“Soon I’ll get home,” he declared. “My aunt has connections with Cheka, she has plenty of vodka – she’ll pay me off. And it’s really bad for you, there’s no one who could pay *you* off!”

While he was waiting for the ransom, the night came. The prisoners were about to fall asleep when they heard keys jingling and the door of the cell opened.

“Vaitkevičius, stand up!”

Vaitkevičius got up and was taken out. Late in the morning he was brought back, looking nothing like a human being – his hair was pulled out, face all beaten and bruised, his legs and arms swollen.

In the evening – another interrogation. Not so long this time, just a couple of hours. Then in the morning a truck came and Vaitkevičius left his cell for the third time – just to be taken to the village to show where he, together with his friends, buried guns.

Soon people’s turn followed. Betrayed by Vaitkevičius, all found their way to the Cheka basement: young men from the reserve squad, his neighbors, simply acquaintances. Kastulis didn’t think about Julytė anymore, he had only one thing on his mind: how to survive.

When finally there was a trial in December, at least 20 people handed in by him were brought to the court: Klimas, Steponavičius, Kurtinaitis, Ambrazevičius, Papartis, Inkrata, Kyguolis with his daughter... After the trial they were sent to the concentration camps for a long time.

Julytė, who aroused such a destructive feeling in a weak-willed neighbor, was also deported to the North.

LIEPYNAI

After shooting, the Gumauskai family was collected and seated on the grass in the yard. A Russian, wearing a black leather jacket, was going past.

“Mister, let me bake the bread – the oven is heated,” Gumauskienė addressed him.

“Что? Что?”

Gumauskas, who knew the Russian language very well from the

* *Russian*: What? What?

times of the Independence battles, started to translate his wife's request. The man in black kicked the unsolicited interpreter to the face. Gumauskas spurt blood.

“Таких хороших наших людей застрелили, а тут - хлеба!” grouched the Russian.

LIEPYNAI

The enemy attacks Ramovė – a partisan hideout at the Gumauskai place. The daughter of the hosts leans to the wounded Delfinas.

“Just don't say my surname to the *strib*s,” the dying man warns her. Gumauskaitė did as she was asked and that year one family less was deported to Siberia.

AVIKILAI

One spring morning an unfamiliar night-shift partisan knocked on the Mačiunskai's door.

“I've come to spend the day here.”

“My child, what were you thinking of?” gasped Mačiunskienė. “Everyone has seen you!”

“Then give me some flitch of bacon.”

He was given what he asked for and left.

TARAŠIŠKIAI

Teenager Brundza agreed with his friend to go fishing near the mill – at night. They stayed in till nightfall, went to the river Šešupė, cast their rods into the water and sat waiting.

They waited till they saw someone coming. From the darkness,

* *Russian*: Such good our people were killed, and they speak about bread!

following each other's footsteps, with their rifles pointing downwards – the night-shift partisans appeared. The first one – tall and bearded, wearing binoculars on his neck – approached Brundza.

“Do you know your prayers?” he asked.

“I do, I do!”

The chief stroked the kid's head, looked around... Then he said something to another ‘fisherman’, turned back to his men, and the row disappeared in the night of the history.

PASŪDUONĖ

The old Borutienė died. Partisan Boruta came to the funeral, heard that the homestead is being surrounded and hid under the bier.

He was tired and fell asleep there. In his dream he saw the deceased.

“My child, I'm saving you for the last time,” spoke the woman. “You'll have to save yourself from now on.”

This was told by the partisan himself.

PASŪDUONĖ

The partisans Borutos' grandmother, who died in 1946, was laid out at another partisan's, Traskauskas, home in Pasūduonė. When Liudvinavas *strib*s found out about that, they surrounded the Traskauskai place and started to search it. To feel more secure, they called a garrison.

“It's funeral here!” stopped at the door the Russian officer and broke off the search.

LIUDVINAVAS

Merkevičius has a dream about his killed brother – partisan Dragūnas.

“I’m lying in the trench near Bagdonas’ house. They threw me here in that mud,” the dead sends a word to the living.

PASŪDUONĖ

Some partisans gathered at Merkevičienė’s place. Ambrazevičienė, who was milking the neighbor’s cow, saw that.

“Oh, bandits!” she bellowed out.

“What?” Merkevičienė rushed to her. “Do you have a head on your shoulders? Soon you’ll lose it! You just wait...”

The milkmaid hushed and kept silent.

STEBULIŠKĖS

Žilionienė observed as Liukaitė hid the bikes of partisans Grinevičiai and reported it to the right ears. Having sensed the danger, Liukaitė threw the evidence to the lupines. Nevertheless, she was driven off to Liudvinavas and beaten without mercy.

The girl felt a little bit better when the *forestmen* found out about her ‘adventure’ and a few days later they visited Žilionienė, bringing her the deserved payback.

PASŪDUONĖ

For keeping a hideout, Traskauskienė was granted a ticket to Siberia.

In order to have an eye on the future deportee, the soldiers moved into the homestead overnight. They found freshly baked bread, someone ran for vodka – and so they sat quaffing till they fell asleep, and Traskauskienė slipped away.

When some superiors– a Russian officer and some woman – came the next day, they found only dimmed guards and a toddler granddaughter of the escapee. Traskauskienė had to leave the girl

home not to wake the soldiers up. The woman officer went mad.

“Deport her with the rest! Or – to the orphanage!”

The Russian took out his gun and held it out to his hot-tempered colleague: take it!

“If you can’t the other way, shoot her!”

The girl survived.

VAZNIŠKIAI

A village sluggard Giebas bought a rifle and pretended to be a partisan. *Forestmen* wouldn’t even shake hands with him, but once you have a gun – you have a gun. Especially in the postwar period.

One day Liudvinavas’ *stribs* waylaid Giebas, took his rifle away, put him into the cart and clattered to Liudvinavas. In the middle of the fields the cart stopped.

“Jonas, jump and run away!” a namesake *strib*, Skiedrų Jonas, advised him. “Now you can escape.”

Giebas rolled out of the cart and Skiedrų Jonas shot him down instantly.

LIUDVINAVAS

Bribed by the family of the killed Meldas, Liudvinavas’ *strib* Jakunskas, nicknamed as Skiedrų Jonas, is downing a bottle together with a fellow-*strib* Stankūnas and interrogating him at the same time. Word by word, and the latter not only described in which foxhole he’d left the partisan killed in the Palios marshes, but he also expressed a great wish to put on the dead man’s uniform.

He was offered oodles of vodka, but not a uniform.

LIUDVINAVAS

Liudvinavas’ ‘defender’, nicknamed Skiedrų

Jonas, lost his employment because of the trade: he sold a killed partisan to the relatives. Simply took the body from the street and encashed it.

TRIOBIŠKIAI

In 1945, when partisan Miškinis' family were being deported, a military officer was making a vow, "Just bring your brother here and you won't be deported!"

Miškinytės went to consult with the more experienced people, who advised not to believe the Russian, as they already knew the value of the "liberators'" promises.

They were right. Although later the partisan gave himself in to save his sisters, they saw Lithuania only a couple decades later.

TRIOBIŠKIAI

After the war, farmer Žadeika enrolled himself in the 'people's defenders'. He must have been very active, as shortly he found a note pinned on his door: "Quit *stribbing*." One or two weeks later, again: "Quit." Together with the third urge his dog was hanged on the fence picket.

Žadeika was right to foresee that he was next to end his days in a noose, so he didn't wait for the fourth inducement and moved to Marijampolė.

LIUDVINAVAS

The punishers brought partisan Ažuolas' body to Liudvinavas and threw it into the barn. They also pushed the arrested Zavistauskaitė there.

"You were with the bandit when he was alive, so stay now with the dead too!"

So she stayed. Later, in the concentration camp in Inta, she told

her friends: "I took out my comb, neatened his hair and sat with him all night..."

LIUDVINAVAS

The 1st of September* in Liudvinavas secondary school. The class mentor tries to identify the social status of each pupil.

"Who's your father?" she asks Šteinytė.

"Defender of the Fatherland!" proudly states a teenager.

"*Strib!*" remarks some ignorant voice from the class.

It wreaked havoc on all the staff.

TŪRUPIS

A Liudvinavas *strib* Strolys brought his bullock to Bagdonas, to feed it up. The *forestmen* found out about that and visited the farmer.

"Give us Strolys' bull!"

"Take mine," the man startled, "Strolys can shoot me down!"

The men barely laughed, "We need Strolys' bull, not yours."

To check what the quarrel was about, the farmer's nephew – a partisan signalman – stepped out of the house.

"If you live here, we need no bull," the partisans recognized him and left.

KŪLOKAI

Fighting on the Front, Vencius reached Berlin, was awarded a handful of medals and came back home. He had little time to enjoy his stay at home – the authorities found a bunker on

* National Day of Knowledge and Science, the school year always begins on September 1st in Lithuania.

his land and the veteran was given a ticket to Siberia.

On the day of exile the farm is surrounded. As the operatives do their job, the front-line soldier, wearing a bunch of medals, steps out towards them. “F***, I thought for Stalin, and you deport me to Siberia?!” – snipes he at his deporters.

The soldiers hide their faces. They see that they wrong their own man, but an order must not be discussed, it must be fulfilled. They help their colleague to pack his stuff, even slaughter a pig, and tote him to the railway station.

The clang of the medals was even more impressive in the East, and six months later the veteran came back to Lithuania again.

DALGINĖ

Partisans Simukas and Jūreivis snatched Leskevičius’ horse and were galloping across the fields, covered with white snow. Soldiers, shouting “Ura!” and waving their rifles gabbled after them but did not shoot, because just before crossing their ways with the partisans, the punishers one after another crept into the Bujauskai’s house to warm up, their frozen guns thawed off and dampened in the heated room, and choked. All as one.

DALGINĖ

Jūreivis and his friend pounce on horseback and try to escape the soldiers. Holding on to the rider, Jūreivis keeps turning back and jangles the persecutors from his tommy-gun.

He didn’t shoot anyone. Instead, he got the fingers of both his hands frozen, incurably.

THE ŽALIOJI (BUKTA) FOREST

In the partisan camp Juknelytė couldn’t help observing Jūreivis’ hands, each and every finger bandaged – got

frozen during the fight.

“How will you fight now with your hands being this?” the girl was terrified.

“Oh, but I’ll finish off quite a few Russians with these hands yet,” rejected the young man, “and if I have to – I’ll shoot myself.”

No one knows if he managed to carry out the first part of his promise, but the second one was definitely fulfilled.

DALGINĖ

While ambuscading, some *stribs* by accident – yes, it happens! – set on fire Bujauskai’s homestead. In exchange for their burnt home, the authorities offered the unfortunate family the homestead of the exiled neighbors Siručiai. The Bujauskai were encouraged not to hesitate: everyone knows that people’s enemies are deported for good and ever.

But the Bujauskai weren’t tempted to their neighbors’ good and built their new shelter out of thin air.

All of a sudden, quite unexpectedly, the Siručiai came back two years later. It was so good *not* to have messed it up!

PAŠEŠUPIAI

Having jumped with a parachute and finally feeling the Lithuanian ground under his feet, paratrooper Brazaitis wrote a letter to his mother: “Mom, I’m safe and sound, I’ll get home, but now I dropped in at my friend’s.”

The friend must have given him a very strong, deathly welcome, because Brazaitis’ mother never got to see her son again.

TŪRUPĒLIS

Signalwoman Kunigaikštienė is delivering food to the partisans, concentrating at Šarvas’ home place. She’s loaded a

full cart and clatters on. Two soldiers stand on the roadside and ask for a lift.

“Come up and sit down!” the woman stops her cart.

One soldier takes a seat next to her, another – on the hay, near the food. Kunigaikštienė petrifies: that is the way the drivers are enclosed when they are being arrested.

It’s been fifty years since the soldiers got off in Kalvarija and went their ways, but the woman still bears the shock experienced during that ride.

BARTNINKAI

When *chekists* arrested signalwoman Kunigaikštienė for the first time, they beat her legs with their rifle butts so badly, that when the woman needed to climb somewhere even a little bit, she had to lift her legs with her hands.

LIUDVINAVAS

A celebrity from Kalvarija – shoemaker Žemaitaitis – retrained himself to be an interrogator. After the war he moved to Kalvarija and got caught by the *nightmen* there.

“You can shoot me down, men, but I’m not guilty! They come to me and report, that’s why I interrogate.”

He exposed all the snitchers and was released.

BALAIKAI

At dawn, Žemaitaitis was coming back from the ambush. Together with all his assemblage, he burst in at the Jakimavičiai and demanded tea in order to get warm.

The host checked the hearth – still warm from the previous evening, then he felt the teapot – also warmish, and decided that the tea would also be warm enough.

“You a***hole, I am cold and tired, and you give me such tea?!” Žemaitaitis cried out in fury and left, banging the door. “You’ll remember me!”

Jakimavičius remembered him in Siberia – ten long years. For a cup of tea.

BALAIKAI

Jakimavičius is in prison. His wife, together with some relative, takes care of the farm.

Before elections, carrying a thin file case over his shoulder, a parish’s proxy came into the yard. He sat down at the kitchen table and started to leaf through his papers. “You bastard, what could I do to you?” Jakimavičienė thought at the opposite side of the table.

A fly perched on her apron. The woman had an idea. She swung her hand, caught a pesky insect, thrust it into her mouth and started to chew. The officer was busy with his papers and paid no attention to the village woman’s manipulations. But he should have! The woman threw up not only on the table, but on the proxy’s papers too.

LIUDVINAVAS

Strib Gelbūda worked for the partisans. He used to inform a partisan’s sister Merkevičienė about the planned trips of the ‘defenders’, and the woman used to forward the message.

Once Gelbūda, together with *strib*s Straleckutis and Zabelukas, was sent to arrest Rašytinis and found him harnessing the horse.

“Please, men, be so kind, he’ll come by himself,” started to beg Rašytinis’ mother. “I’ll just knit him socks and he’ll come.”

Gelbūda agreed to wait, but his comrades immediately reported that their chief had released the bandit.

The chief was awarded with 25 years.

LIUDVINAVAS

Kilnienė, with bruises under her eyes, went to her relative Brazys to complain about her son. She said he had totally degenerated: wouldn't come back home at night, and when chided - he would beat her, his own mother. Just like this time.

The conversation was witnessed by the junior Brazys, the upstart's peer and friend.

Not long after, the young men had to go to the Tarašiškiai mill to grind wheat. They loaded their cart with sacks and rattle to the mill.

"Why do you beat your mother?" asked Brazys, remembering Kilnienė's complaints.

Kilna kept silent for a while...

"I beat, because I want to," he finally answered.

Juozas felt how blood rushed to his head and, without a second thought, he attacked his friend. The latter paid it back and the cart suddenly became too cramped, they rolled onto the roadside. They scuffled for some time and then climbed back to the cart.

Kilna touched his injured lip and said:

"I'll make you go to prison for 25 years for this."

Brazys didn't pay any attention to this promise. That was most unwise.

1950 was going to an end. Just before the New Year, Kilna got arrested and taken to Marijampolė for interrogation. While he was clarifying himself to the *chekists*, he remembered the scuffle in the cart and declared to have gotten proclamations to spread from Brazys.

The lie was enough for a man to be butchered in Bagdonas' house for two months, then sentenced for 25 years in the concentration camp, for 5 years of exile and for 5 more years to live without any civil rights.

The only joy was that 'the dear government' jolted the same punishment to the revengeful Kilna too.

TARAŠIŠKIAI

Signalman Balyta is waiting for the *forestmen* – they promised to come in the evening. But, when the sun was just halfway to the horizon, *strib*s burst into the homestead. They sat around the table and loom – one hour, another hour...

Balyta fidgets, moves restlessly from one corner to another – he can't even think what'll happen when the partisans come to the yard, but has no idea how to warn them.

It was already growing dark, when the host came closer to the late guests. "Men, there's a crow hatching in the maple. Can you shoot it? Last spring it hawked all my chickens."

Two *strib*s agreed to help, went out to the yard and stuttered at the crow's nest. The shots of the 'defenders' were accurate. And more importantly – loud.

GYVIŠKIAI

The exile of 1949 laid a finger on Gyviškiai too.

Paliokienė:

"The *strib*s came: get dressed, you'll be taken away!"

Mother was old already, she heard the order and fainted. *Strib* Rimavičius came to her, kicked several times...

"This one is finished! No need to take her," he diagnosed.

THE ŽALIOJI (BUKTA) FOREST

The partisans were camping in the depth of the forest, only Sigolis with two of his friends was on duty at the edges: the post. They saw a truck full of soldiers arriving and decided to attack it. The garrison was about to make the "cleansing" of the forest; and the partisans, being aware of that, were worried they'd be short of guns. And suddenly so much ammunition was passing by – one just had to beat down several dozens of Russians.

They let the truck approach them, machine-gunned at the soldiers, but didn't manage to shoot them all and instead were killed themselves.

The enemy was plentiful, yet no friends to support them.

KROSNA

A *strib* is kicking bodies of three dead partisans, Sigolis among them. They are all thrown under the oak near the church. He kicks several times, turns a body over and then kicks again. This macabre act is silently witnessed by Buzas from Krosna.

“What are you looking at? Which one is a friend of yours here?” tired after kicking, the *strib* attacked Buzas.

“There are no friends of mine here, but maybe there are yours – you keep looking for something,” rebuffed the man and walked away.

THE ŽALIOJI (BUKTA) FOREST

The *strib*s surrounded a squad of partisan-volunteers, as they used to call themselves, and *strib* Omerca was about to shoot one ‘bandit’, but recognized Miškinis from a neighboring village and hesitated for a second. The partisan escaped.

“Why didn't you shoot?” the *strib* was scolded by his chief after the skirmish.

“My gun got jammed,” lied Omerca.

Later he found out: he could've pulled the trigger. It was not Miškinis at his rear sight, but another villager from Triobiškiai, the chief of the partisan-volunteers, Ažys.

THE ŽALIOJI (BUKTA) FOREST

In the outskirts, at the signalman Grinis' place, garrison soldiers circled five partisans of the Ainis unit. When

cartridges were over, the partisans started to break out of the round-up. Apynys was lucky: even being wounded, he managed to escape and found his way to the hideout in the forest. Strange luck it was, though: the soldiers released the dog after him and, when they found the enervated partisan, stabbed him with their bayonets.

THE ŽALIOJI (BUKTA) FOREST

Signal-couple Liutviničiai went out to the forest to take clothes and food to their men. They entered the forest and hear: *pid-pad, snip-snap*.

“It's a hunter, going after some boars,” explained the husband.

The wife slowed down, sensing something ominous.

As they stepped into the forest clearing, they saw there were military boot prints all over the snow, and soon they heard Russians talking – somewhere around the bunker place.

Dispirited and scared Liutviničiai hid themselves among fir-trees and stuck there listening to the Russian commands, squeaking sleds, arguing drivers... Until they heard a strong, penetrating, man's voice:

“So now I will go, good bye!”

It was the voice of the traitor.

BUKTA

The Palios men decided to coax Liudvinavas *strib*s out of the town. Baritonas, who was good at Russian, disguised as a frontier-guard and together with two civil friends marched to Bukta alcohol factory, situated near Liudvinavas. They disarmed the guard, provided themselves with spirits, made the guard repeat “Долой Сталина!”* for several times and left.

* *Russian*: Stalin away!

Took the spirits away, insulted the Chief... What can be more painful?

PASŪDUONĖ

St. Joseph's morning, 1947. The partisans of Traskauskai bunker are vigorously getting ready for the fight – they know that Liudvinavas' *strib*s can't help checking the ravaged Bukta alcohol factory.

"What's the rush, men?" Šarvas tries to stop his friends. "Come on, easy..."

Maybe he felt something?

PASŪDUONĖ

Early in the morning, the partisans leave from Traskauskai to Šimuliai – the place of the soon-to-take-place Bukta skirmish. As he gets on the sledge, Šarvas talks to the signalwomen again,

"Girls, come, you'll help to collect the weapons. After we kill the *strib*s."

Traskauskaitė answers, "No one knows, who might be killed."

Šarvas: "You can never cut down a tree and make no chips. And you never will."

A villager's eloquence or foreboding?

ŠIMULIAI

Žemaitaitis, the chief *chekist* of Liudvinavas, was substituted by captain Gotovianik. On Saint Joseph's Day, 1947, partisans sent a note to Žemaitaitis: "Come to celebrate St. Joseph's day." As Žemaitaitis was away, Gotovianik had to lead the parade: he called his *strib*s, took some carts from the mill and moved towards Bukta to beat the 'bandits'.

In Šimuliai, not far from Bartusevičius' smithery, the troops fell under the partisan crossfire and were all wiped out; Golovianik had his heel wounded. The captain fell down, pretended to be dead and then shot partisan Šarvas, who came to collect weapons.

SKARDUPIAI

The partisans mowed down Liudvinavas' *strib*s in Šimuliai, but they also lost two of their own men: Šarvas and Tranvilis. Šarvas was taken by the *strib*s and "buried" in Liudvinavas dump, while Tranvilis was taken care by the partisans: they took his body to Skardupiai, unearthed the grave of the Avizieniai grandmother, who was buried there two days before, and hid their friend's remains there.

LIUDVINAVAS

The remains of Šarvas were thrown from one hedge to another. *Strib* Liepinaitis also amused himself: he roped the dead body to his horse and towed it across the town.

BUKTA

Lyras, a young member of the passive resistance, was admitted to the partisans and soon after took part in his first battle in Bukta. The young man's task was to look after the fighters' horses.

While the partisans were at their bloody meeting with the *strib*s, Lyras was hiding behind the sledges and cried out of fear. After the battle, the seventeen-year-old asked to be allowed to come back to the passive ones – and got the permission.

This is the only known case of the secession from the partisans.

THE ŽALIOJI (BUKTA) FOREST

Saint Joseph's Day. Ranger Astrauskas senior gets

on his sled and rides from Launica to Bukta to congratulate his friend Juozas.

In the forest he meets two sledges full of partisans – the fighters of the Bukta battle are coming back. Two of them are badly wounded.

The chief *forestman* joins Astrauskas on his sled and tells to get them out of the forest as soon as possible, as the wounded are severely bleeding.

The ranger forgets his friend and entertainment and bustles along the forest paths, which are anything but tangly for him. He was lucky: not only did he manage to avoid the soldiers, who were surrounding the forest, but he also found a place where to leave the wounded.

THE ŽALIOJI (BUKTA) FOREST

After the partisans took care of their injured comrades, they didn't let their pathfinder Astrauskas go, but asked him to show the way to Kalniškė, the native place of many fighters. What else can he do? Astrauskas fulfills the request.

As they go, they notice someone in front of them picking firewood just next to the path. As the sledge comes closer, Astrauskas recognizes a man from Liudvinavas, the one he's never felt the need to meet. Not to mention being in such a company.

"Is it a good or a bad man?" asks the *forestman*, sitting near the driver.

"Goo-ood..." wheezes Astrauskas, suddenly realizing the true meaning of this ordinary question.

The three sleds pass the petrified wood-picker.

The next day everybody from the parish swarms to the funeral of the soldiers and *stribs*. Astrauskas goes there too.

He steps over the threshold and sees the yesterday's wood-picker sitting at the coffins. The two men glance at each other and once

again the Grim Reaper* appears among them. This time it takes a very close look at Astrauskas' neck.

ŽELŠVA

Disguised as *chekists*, *forestmen* visited an authority informant, or simply – a rat Kilinskas.

"Can you show us who supports the bandits?" – "I can."

Kilinskas quickly got dressed and went outside.

"Let's not go to the road, we'll go to the forest," adjusted the route the '*chekists*', as they followed him out.

Kilinskienė and Kilinskučiai stayed alone.

ATESNINKAI

In the middle of the night, a brigade of deporters burst into Paršeliūnai's house. These had made their fortune from other people's sweat. The *stribs* toppled the family out of their beds and ordered: "Move out!"

Some started to tamp the beddings into pillow covers, some grabbed flitches of bacon from the perch, but Paršeliūnienė – the housewife – jumped to the buffet, grabbed a pile of expensive plates with golden edges and smashed them to the ground one after another.

"Why have you done that?" the *stribs* finally got a grip.

"Did you think *you*'ll get it?" looking straight into the eyes of the 'defenders', retorted the woman.

A kulak, what can one expect from such!

* the goddess of death in Lithuanian mythology (*Lithuanian: Giltinė*)

KROSNA

Wife says to Rėkus, who is about to leave to the forest:

“What are you doing, men?! You go against such might! Germany couldn’t stand against, you won’t be able either!”

“If everyone thinks like you do, Lithuania will never be free,” countered her husband.

He got killed three weeks later.

KROSNA

When partisan Pauža and his friends were killed in the Bukta forest, his father, who was imprisoned in the guard-house at that time, was ordered to bury the remains of the ‘bandits’. Father didn’t want to shovel the soil onto his son’s eyes, so he threw his fur coat on the dead.

SALTININKAI

Stribs swarmed to search one villager’s homestead. They turned his house upside down, poked all barn, snooped the cattle-shed. Only the upper floor of the shed was left unsearched, as there was no ladder around. The grey-headed host, always within the *stribs*’ eyeshot, bent down holding his hands on his knees and offered:

“What’s it here to think about, men? Climb on my shoulders – and jump!”

Much as the old man hoped, such ‘ladder’ was no good for the *stribs*, and, having pushed themselves around for a few more minutes, they bugged off.

The old man was not mad about that. Neither were the partisans, lurking at the machine-gun up there.

SALTININKAI

The Post-war. A wedding at Vievešis’. Friends of

the family, the *forestmen* from the Liepa division, are also invited to the feast and – it goes without saying – are seated in a separate room. But how can one stay locked, when just behind the wall a harmonica is crying so subtly. The men had an idea: they dressed the bridesmaids’ ethnic garments, put on veils over their faces and rolled in to the musician. As they were swirling in a second or third dance, reserve agents Anskiūtė and Dulskis, the *strib* of *stribs*, accompanied by the Krosna ‘defenders’, were lured in by the same harmonica. Dulskis gulped some schnapps and fancied to dance with a ‘Lithuanian girl’. He happened to invite Liūtas – one of the bravest men of the squad.

“His hand itself was sliding for a pistol under my skirt,” after the sudden end of the feast Liūtas, full of anger, complained to his friends.

Only it was never heard before – to kill your dance partner!

KROSNA

Spring. Three girls are passing the town’s *strib* house and see four *forestmen* lying on the street. Barefoot, with their clothes torn off.

Vievesytė, the middle of the friends, lost her balance. Her friends grabbed her by the arms.

“What? A friend?” noticing the girl’s faintness a *strib* jumped to her.

“She just can’t look at corpses,” quickly worked out the girls and pulled their stumbling friend away.

MOSCOW (RUSSIA)

Exiled Matjošaitienė, an old illiterate woman, runs away from the Molotov forests to Lithuania. The train rattled to Moscow and people cleared off. Matjošaitienė got off on the platform, stopped the first woman and started to ask how to get

home. She wouldn't hide being a fugitive.

The woman explained everything in details.

"You told me who you are, but don't mention it again to anyone else!" she also advised before saying good bye.

The fugitive listened to her and reached her home safely.

KIEV (UKRAINE)

Army barracks. The unit's commander calls in Matjošaitis from Marijampolė and gives him a notebook with several partisan songs and some strong anti-soviet slogans.

"Read and translate!"

"What shall I do?" turns pages the soldier. "If I translate – the one who wrote it will get 25 years. If I don't translate – I'll suffer."

The chief comes back.

"What's written here?" – "Nothing. Obscenities." (This word is much lusher in the great Russian language.) "I don't do such things!"

The soldier laid the notebook on the table and drew back.

The officer tried to have it out anyway, but he realized this was the same like trying to herd cats, and left the soldier alone.

PELUTSMURGIAI

Liūtas decided to finish off the Mėšliai and called the squad. At the agreed time men gathered in Pelutsmurgiai – some came on foot, the others took wheels. They surrounded the homestead and collected all the dwellers inside the house. Then they noticed that one of the daughters was missing – Stefa hadn't come home from school in Kalvarija yet. Partisans left guards to watch over the seized, pushed their cart behind the barn, hid themselves in all corners and started to wait.

Separated from the squad, Pempė went to the pond and walked around grim and dreary.

The schoolgirl came back at dusk. She saw the armed men, recognized Pempė, who was hiding his eyes, and understood everything. She ran to the young man, hugged him and started to cry, but the other two approached, tore her off and led her to the rest of the family in the house.

And then – gunfire.

KIVMYLI (ESTONIA)

Liūtas heard that the partisan court-martial awaits him for shooting down all the Mėšliai family arbitrarily, so he dashed from his native area as far as he could. He stopped only in Estonia.

He was safe there for a month or two, but he wasn't able to escape justice anyway. The Soviet justice, truth to tell.

VALAVIČIAI

Not long after the Pelutsmurgiai nightmare, one of the partisans – Pempė – met his signalwoman.

"I didn't want to go to that village so much, so much!" he complained. "Stefa was my first love. But it was an order. Try not to obey!"

PELUTSMURGIAI

On Christmas Eve of 1946, the *forestmen* killed all the Mėšliai family, thus on the holy Christmas morning all people from the surrounding area went not to church, but to Pelutsmurgiai. Miliauskas from the nearby village of Asava went there as well.

After his father, a seven-year old son tittuped across the fields. He went there and jostled in the yard among the downhearted villagers. As he was not allowed to enter the house, the most interesting thing the nosy kid saw that morning was blood oozing out through the farmhouse foundations.

KALVARIJA

The story of signalwoman Vyšnia:

“After three weeks of interrogation they gave me a sheet of paper: “Sign that you won’t be telling anyone what you saw here and that you weren’t beaten!” I signed, even if my fingers couldn’t hold a grip on the pen because of the beating.

It was nine o’clock in the evening, when I was released to the street. It was a cold night. One streetlamp was shining.

I saw a couple standing and talking nearby. I asked where the road to Krosna was. The girl showed and explained the way to me, but I stood there like a dummy and couldn’t understand anything. So she said good-bye to the man and told me, “Let’s go, you’ll stay overnight at my place.”

She was brave. She saw I was pushed out of the Cheka building, but she took me home anyway. She was some teacher, a few years younger than me.

She brought me into her room, made the bed and asked, “Did they beat you?” – “No,” I said. After all, I signed!”

STEBULIAI

Released from the Cheka cellar in Kalvarija, signalwoman Vyšnia reached her home in the village the following day only. She poured some water and was washing herself.

Her friend came by, who was also being searched for by Cheka. “If they’ve let you out, I have nothing to fear about that Cheka,” pondered the girl aloud.

Vyšnia barely raised one side of her skirt up in silence. Her friend, seeing Vyšnia’s thigh that had turned into one enormous bruise, shut her mouth.

She continued hiding and was never caught.

RAMANAVAS

Exhausted Liūtis came back home.

“Mamma, I go to the rye to have a good sleep.”

He had no idea he’d been followed by enemies.

The *chekists* tried to take him alive, but they saw Liūtis reach for a grenade and shot him down.

Before the eyes of his mother.

SIMNAS

Pašukevičius was recruited and started to cooperate. Partisans found it out and decided to eliminate the snitch.

After a while a familiar *forestman* visited the Pašukevičiai family. The host and his son were sitting on the heated bench, his wife’s nearby.

“Are there any strangers?” – “No.”

The guest pulled out his pistol and shot at the informer. Before his wife’s and son’s very eyes.

KROSNĖNAI

There was a rather big bunker set up at village elder Petrauskas’ place. On the day of the battle, many men left this bunker for the Kalniškė forest: Augustinas, Lapas, Samsonas, Uosis, Ramonas, Stipruolis...

“Maybe all they need to win is us,” they supposed.

KALNIŠKĖ

Pušelė is getting ready for the battle: she finds a robust spruce and hoists two light machine guns up into it. In case one gets jammed...

The machine guns didn’t jam. The cartridges, passed up from the ground by the friends, were also plentiful. It was enough for the rest of her life.

KALNIŠKĖ

The battle is going to an end. The partisans, who are still alive, rise to the last attack.

Among branches the injured Ramonas is lying and asks to be shot down, but none of his friends hears him. Only Ateitis, running past him, throws a gun to the wounded one.

“Here! Defend yourself to the last bullet!”

And be conscious about how to use that last one.

KALNIŠKĖ

After they had broken out from the battle, the men were so tired, that when they reached a neighboring forest, they dropped on the ground and fell asleep instantly. They woke up at midnight – because of the silence.

KALNIŠKĖ

When the gunfire ceased, the elder of the Marčiukinis village ordered his villagers to go to the forest to gather the dead. There were lots of pieces of wood and much blood in the place of the battle. In fact, there was so much blood that while working Matukaitis got his shoes full of it.

VYTAUTIŠKĖS

Serving for farmer Abromaitis, a partisan-to-be Gruodis earned a checked brown rough cloth suit. In that suit he fought in the Kalniškė battle, in the same garment he was thrown on the paving in Simnas.

His family in Vytautiškės knew that the young man was killed, but were afraid to get even close to the town. There were rumors that *strib*s, guarding the remains of the dead partisans, not only interrogated the visitors, but also compared their garments to

the clothes of the fighters, whose bodies were desecrated in the square.

At that time Gruodis’ mother saw Abromaitytė, who was going across the village to the town. The girl was wearing a skirt made of the same rough cloth as the suit of the partisan lying in the square. Realizing the threat to the girl and to herself, the partisan’s mother stopped Abromaitytė and dressed her with a long coat below the knee.

STEBULIAI

After taking men to the camp, signalwoman Lukoševičiūtė sat at the bonfire to chat. Now it’s hard to remember which partisan said so:

“You know, every evening I become so anxious, I want to go to the village, to the people so much! It seems you aren’t afraid of dying or anything.”

In the language of poetry:

The evening has come to the forest,

The yearning has visited us.

ATESNINKĖLIAI

*Strib*s roped the body of the dead partisan Lakūnas to the horse and dragged it to Atesninkėliai, where his step-son lived.

The *strib* said to the kid:

“Look! If you are like him, I will drag you in the same way too!”

STEBULIAI

Wounded to his heel, Patrimpas was hiding at Lukoševičiai’s place. His children lived in the same village. When a

sixteen-year-old son of the partisan was in Roliai, he was arrested and recruited by the Merkinė *stribos*. The teenager came back to Stebuliai as if nothing had happened.

Soon Neifalta and Senkus rode to the village – to shoot the new Cheka agent. Sisters Lukoševičiūtės, both signalwomen, with tears in their eyes asked to leave the kid alive.

“Let it be as you say,” finally gave in Neifalta. “But keep a close eye on him!”

So it was for a few days. The girls go to milk cows – and take Vytas with them. They go to launder – three of them again.

Finally Patrimpas found out about his son’s move. Still limping, he rose from his sick bed and together with all his family disappeared from the village.

That was the end of walking in threes.

VYTAUTIŠKĖ

Looking for a young man, who’s gone into hiding, some *stribos* rummage a farmer’s place. Together with them, the district’s proxy comes – a man neither too bad, nor too good, but especially fond of schnapps*.

The *stribos* enter one room, the militiaman enters another, and sees: two feet stick out from under the bed.

“Oh you, fool, hide your feet,” with his voice down truncheons on the man’s feet the militiaman and goes to the *stribos*.

He knows what will happen next: he’ll come here alone and drink like a fish.

STEBULIAI

Partisans tamed dogs of the supporters. If the dogs

* alcohol

heard a special finger snap, they wouldn’t bark, but they would attack soldiers or *stribos* with rage.

One night the hosts heard the dogs barking, but didn’t go to check the reason why. In the morning, when the farmer was leading his sheep to the pasture, he saw a cheese lying on the grass and some steps further – a Lithuanian military overcoat. He hid the findings, came back to the house and, with the help of his step-daughter signalwoman, recreated the previous night’s events.

The dogs were startled by garrison soldiers, who got into the barn without being noticed by the household and organized a set up for partisans. The enemy was aware that partisans, in order to avoid the highroad, often used to take a shortcut across the Valentukoniai’s yard, and decided to try their luck that night. They almost succeeded.

That night three or four men of the Kalniškė squad went to the village for food. As a habit, they took a path under the Valentukoniai’s windows.

The dogs heard the signal and kept silent. They stirred later, when the homestead was visited by soldiers, who took the same path as the partisans. Going back, the partisans “greeted” the dogs again, but those stepping first noticed the barn door to be half-opened. It was closed when they earlier went to the village. Moreover, something moved in the doorway.

They dropped whatever they were carrying: somebody let go a cheese wrapped into a bur leaf, another tossed his coat – the men grabbed their guns and retreated swiftly.

The soldiers noticed them, but until they worked out what to do, in another side of the barn a nineteen-year-old son of the hosts started to scrape around. He was late to come home from the village and decided that he would sleep in the hay. The Russians fell upon the teenager and nagged him for a long while why he came to the barn from one side first, then ran and got into the building

from another side. Fortunately, they didn't think about any fatal coincidences.

If they had, they would have set on fire not only the barn, but all the homestead.

STEBULIAI

A schoolgirl hung a map of Asia on the wall in her room. *Stribs* saw it.

"You want to run to America?"

"This is Asia..."

"What Asia? It's America!"

The map was torn off and destroyed.

STEBULIAI

All day *stribs* roamed around the Valentukoniai's homestead, by evening they left and hid among young fir trees at the edge of the forest. When dusk fell, the same farmer was visited by Jūreivis and Tigras.

They sat and talked. Then Jūreivis said to Valentukonis:

"You go to bed, good man, and we will go now."

Valentukonis saw the *nightmen* out, stayed for a few minutes in the house and then sneaked behind the barn to watch the two men moving away in the moonshine. Tigras goes on the right, Jūreivis – lagging some steps behind – on the left. As Valentukonis watches, Jūreivis pulls his hand with a gun from his pocket, aims at Tigras' head, and shoots. The partisan collapses.

Gunfire bursts from the fir grove, but the bullets miss the target by a mile.

Some days later Jūreivis comes to Stebuliai again, sits at the same table.

"You see, a misfortune. Tigras is dead. The other night, when we

left your place, we got ambushed. He was shot down, I managed to escape," he says and looks his companion in the eye.

"It's so good I stayed in when I saw you out," rejoices the farmer. "Otherwise I'd have been wiped out too."

It was hard for the man to live with such a secret, but fear helped him. Only in his deathbed he managed to overcome it.

ATESNINKĖLIAI

Summer. Having gathered in a neglected village homestead, the *forestmen* climbed on the upper floor and lifted the ladder a little bit, as if it wasn't being used. After some time the oddly lifted ladder was inspected by some Krosna *stribs*, who found their way to the same place.

These were too lazy to climb up, so they barely drank a bowl of milk, which was left near the wall, and moved on.

Through the gaps in the roof, the partisans closely followed each step of the 'defenders'. They took a photograph of those drinking milk – for the partisan archive.

The same summer one of the 'photographers' – Karys – was killed. As the *strib* was searching the partisan's pockets, he suddenly found his own photo there.

One can only curse after such findings. And, of course, kick the 'bandit'.

KAMŠAI

Valentukonis heard gunshots in the outskirts and told his daughters to run and bring their cattle home:

"Run to the forest or they'll shoot our cows!"

The girls were caught by the *stribs* and beaten mercilessly like partisan signalwomen.

The cattle weren't injured.

KAMŠAI

Klevas, Vyturys and Žilinskas decided to sort things out with the village's activist Rimavičius. Their signalman warned other partisans in the district not to show up in Kamšai on the given day.

The same benefactor visited Rimavičius as well. Armed with a tommy gun, he climbed on the upper floor, waited for the partisans to come and injured all three of them through a little window. All the soldiers had to do then was to catch them up, to surround and to shoot them.

KAMŠAI

Injured in the ambush, Klevas managed to reach the Bobinai's house. Together with Vyturys, he hid in the hayloft. Vyturys' girlfriend came by a cart and wanted to take him with her away, but Klevas didn't go and Vyturys wasn't willing to leave his hurt friend alone. They both waited for the Russians and were killed.

DELNICA

At dawn, when people started to go the early Mass, several partisans were surrounded in the village of Delnica. After machine-gunner Aušra, who was wounded in the skirmish, shot himself, Žilvitis took over his position at the weapon, and – became short of cartridges.

The enemies had no idea why the "bandits" machine-gun hushed away and released their dogs. Žilvitis covered the useless weapon with his coat and, while dogs were tearing it into pieces, retreated.

VERSTAMINAI

In a bunker nearby a village, three partisans settled down. One of them was Gintaras, a tall handsome blond.

One evening signalman Juozas carefully camouflaged the bunker and returned to the village, but at early dawn, when he was feeding his cattle, he heard gunshots and an explosion from the bunker's side. Three more men were gone.

Nevertheless, only two bodies were unearthed. Realizing what it meant, the partisans waited till Gintaras summoned up his courage to come back to the village and sent him after his bunker friends.

SŪSNINKAI

1950. Near the village of Sūsninkai, the ways of partisans and *strib*s crossed. Sakalas was killed, another partisan was injured and he loudly asked to be shot down. The partisans fulfilled their friend's request, hid his body, and pulled back.

SŪSNINKAI

Sopranas' military leave was over, but instead of coming back to the unit, he went out to the forest and kept close to his home place.

Once the son with his friend came home to have breakfast. First the parents fed the two men, then sat at the table themselves. As they were eating, their tom-cat came home: stepped across the threshold, sprawled on the ground as long and started to mew tearfully. The very minute gunshots poured out in the moor, where their son with his friend went.

It was their death that the four-legged home spirit sensed.

THE ZELENKA FOREST

Signalwoman Papeikienė must carry a letter to Papartėliai. To keep it safer, she sewed it into her coat's lap.

The forest is cut by the railway. The woman approached the mound and – here! A regiment of Russians appeared in front of

her eyes. They stopped her and started to search.

One soldier got suspicious about her coat's lap – as if something cracked there. The soldier called his friend, who felt the sewn inside paper once, felt it twice...

"It's nothing, just oilcloth," he stated.

"He must have been Ukrainian to say so," many years later the woman remembers as the deadly danger slid away from her. "There were also rebels like ours."

SŪSNINKAI

"We'll get killed," said once partisan Ažuolas to signalman Lazdynas. "I wish at least you held out – to tell everything as it was here."

SŪSNINKAI

Jurgis, the youngest brother of four partisans Račiai, greets Dubinskaitė, working in the fields near the woods.

"I go to my brothers."

"What a pity you'll die."

"But what can I do?"

And he went.

And he died.

KALNĖNAI

A little five-year-old sister of the five partisans Račiai was sheltered by the Kailiukaičiai from Kalnėnai. The authorities found it out and started to set up one ambush after another.

Once a chief *strib* was idling at the table, when the door opened and one of the partisan brothers – Alfonsas, entered the room. The *strib* reacted quickly and jumped at him. The two men grappled, holding guns in their hands.

The *strib* was first to decide: "Get out of here!" he wheezed. "You never saw me, I never saw you!"

It would be good to kill a bandit, but what if he's quicker?

ŠEŠTOKAI

A few days after the Kalniškė battle, Malinauskai from Išlandžiai were visited by some partisans.

"Jonukas," they addressed to the 19-year-old son of the hosts. "There's so few of us. Help, come and stand on patrol at least."

The young man agreed, went with them to the neighboring Šeštokai and got killed there.

It was his first partisan act.

ŠEŠTOKAI

A crew of *forestmen* set out to Šeštokai to get square with *strib* Vyšniauskas: they found out he'd be staying overnight at the Milukai's.

When the men reached Milukai's home, they stopped.

"You go," they turned to Patackas. "You'll finish it."

Accompanied by several fighters, Patackas bravely entered the house. The *strib* was dozing on the table. His tommy-gun was laid in front of him.

"Are you asleep, Vyšniauskas?" Patackas thundered.

Vyšniauskas opened his eyes to see who woke him up and opened fire.

Patackas tumbled down under the table and survived. Those who didn't survive were Liutvinas, Vilkelis, Malinauskas... and a little shepherd, who was drowsing on the heated bench.

IŠLANDŽIAI

Malinauskaitė, whose brother went with the partisans to Šeštokai, just can't get any sleep. Someone knocks on

the southern window. The girl jumps to it, but there's no one on the other side. The eastern glass tinkles, but it's empty there too.

She was just getting to her bed again, when she heard a knock on the door.

The girl finally realized what was troubling her and opened the door.

"Jonukas, is it you?"

"It's me," she hears.

"I can't see you."

"You won't see me, I'm leaving."

"Wait!"

The footsteps faded away.

Not long after, a neighbor came to report something that the sister already knew. What she didn't understand then, neither does she know today, if the killed partisan's last look at the blood soaked earth was a punishment, or a grace.

IŠLANDŽIAI

There was a suspicion that freedom-fighter Gegutė was not what he pretended to be, so his comrades decided to test him. When the time came to send one more authority informant to eternity, partisans made sure Gegutė wouldn't stay in the camp.

Having cornered the rat, they faced Gegutė up to him.

"Shoot!" he was ordered.

Maybe the suspicion was right, or maybe the choice was too painful, but Gegutė didn't raise his gun and got himself killed right away.

IŠLANDŽIAI

The young Kryžanauskas, neighbor of the Butanavičiai, was a *strib*. One night a cart rolled out of the

Kryžanauskai yard and clattered towards the Palios marshes. Butanavičius heard the wheels rattling, but didn't pay any attention – one might need various things in the farm. Be it from the Palios.

In the early morning another cart clanks on the village road. The horses give a long neigh at the Butanavičiai's place.

"What's happening here?" surprised Butanavičius peeks out to the yard. "The cart goes, the horses neigh, and there's no driver?"

Soon after he found out: it was the same cart he heard clattering from the neighbor's yard the night before. With his parents fainting, the young 'people's defender' was taken away on it.

Taken away for good and ever.

THE SŪSNINKAI FOREST

The Postwar, winter. Squad chief Vilkas sends his men to the village to get some food. Some time later the fighters come back.

"Have you got any?" the chief asks.

"We have. Some food and something beside the food," he hears. "Let's come out."

Vilkas comes out and sees two Russian soldiers encircled by the guards. The story is, the soldiers were sent from Kalvarija garrison to the forest for wood, but as they were starving – after the war the "Unbeatable" army wasn't generous to its soldiers – they sneaked to the village to ask for bread. That's where they collided with the partisans.

The *forestmen* gave food and drink to the pitiable. *But what's next?* – they thought. – *They'll report!*

"Take them to the outskirt," decided Vilkas, "and let them go. If they turn to Kalvarija – they're going to report the camp. You know what to do in that case. If they turn to their firewood – let them go."

The starvelings chose firewood.

JONAI

When Baritonas became a partisan, he searched out Sinkevičius, who taught him how to build brick ovens before the war. Baritonas came disguised as a Russian officer and settled down in the barn.

Neighbor Petrauskas reported to the authorities where the partisan was hiding, where he kept his gun. Soldiers came and took the gun, but they didn't find Baritonas: he was away.

At night Baritonas crept into Petrauskas' yard and grasped his dog by the chain. The dog started to bark. The host went out to check why Buddy was so fierce and saw the partisan he'd snitched just a few hours before.

"You see, Petrauskas," released the chain Baritonas, "your dog barks but doesn't bite, and you – bite. Go to the dog!"

Petrauskas went where he was ordered to and was shot down.

KAUNAS

Disguised as a Soviet officer, Baritonas went to Kaunas. He did what he was supposed to and was about to go back, but – danger! Having surrounded the train station, soldiers inspect documents of the passengers. Baritonas hasn't got any paper.

A minute later a military officer sidles to the inspectors, greets them in the great Russian language, offers a smoke... and proceeds without being stopped.

How could the soldiers know that they'd been addressed by a Lithuanian partisan, who learned Russian in the Intelligence School in Germany.

VAZNIŠKIAI

Baritonas had been successfully hiding for a year or more at the Sinkevičiai. Then he left and went God only knows where.

Sinkevičius often used to go to Marijampolė. One time in spring he came back silent, sad. He sat at the supper table.

"Mamma, I had a dream tonight," loudly, as always, he turned to his wife. "I dreamt about Antanas. He died!"

"Where did he die?" bewildered the woman.

"In Gulbiniškiai. He blew himself up..."

His wife and children understood – it was no dream.

PAKIRSNIAI

The summer of 1944. 'Liberators' defeated the fascist beast and returned to Lithuania. They flooded all the roads.

You can't fight such great numbers, so lieutenant Navickas, who was dreaming about fighting for freedom, made a hideout in his barn.

Just some time later, a string of carts full of Russian soldiers appeared on the road. Navickas dashed to the hideout together with his neighbor. They managed just on time: the army turned to the yard of the farmstead, standing close to the road. The soldiers found hay in the barn and started to take it out to their horses.

Navickienė, who kept close watch on the barn, petrified – she knew what the soldiers would find under the hay. Yet she pulled together, grabbed her baby, ran to the chief officer and started to sob: that hay is her only possession, if she loses it, she and her baby will have to starve.

The chief understood the woman's troubles and ordered his soldiers not to touch the hay. To make sure his order was obeyed, he put one soldier on guard.

The guard appeared to be very sedulous: he watched the barn till the night came. At the same time he was guarding the future chief of a partisan corps – Vaclovas Navickas, alias Perkūnas.

JAKIMAVIČIAI

Auksutis, the chief of Perkūnas corps, lived in Pakirsniai. Farmer Gurevičius lived on the other side of the river, in Jakimavičiai. Gurevičius became fond of cooking hooch and drinking it with partisans; while making the hooch he used barrels, borrowed from his neighbor Auksutis.

The corps chief began to dislike this merry-making. Once, when he met his neighbor in Jakimavičiai, at the porch of Tekorius' house, Auksutis rebuked him:

"Stop making that hooch! And bring back the barrels."

"Why do you need them?" snarled out Gurevičius, who used to open his mouth first and think afterwards. "Your days are counted anyway!"

This was the last half-baked sentence of the man.

JAKIMAVIČIAI

When enemy's machine guns started to fusillade partisans, assailed near the village, one of the partisans' sister jumped on the horse and galloped to the skirmish place. Her brother and his friends were already killed, only the injured Balkutis was trying to escape.

"So strange," listening to the swishing leaves murmured the girl, "even the birds go hiding to bushes!"

The birds appeared to be made of lead.

LAKE ORIJA

The body of partisan Lubinas, killed in Jakimavičiai in Tekorius' birch grove, was desecrated in Kalvarija. His mother saw him there. Being afraid to give herself away, the woman slinked to the Vaitkevičiai, who lived near the lake, and there she cried her eyes out.

JONAI

Accompanied by two *strib*s, levy collector Trukšlinas came to Mitrikevičius and ordered to harness the horse. As the man did what he was told and turned to go, he was told to get on the cart and drive the brigade to Trakiškiai: they were going to collect the grain tribute there. They didn't know the partisans were clustering nearby, in Kupstynė.

What's left for the man to do – he got on the cart and rattles.

"Halt!" a voice from the bushes called out.

It might have been the driver misheard, or possibly the government's props grumbled something out, but the cart dived into the forest without pausing. A rain of bullets went after them.

Mitrikevičius lost his arm. The *strib*s lost their heads.

KALVARIJA

A signalman of Valenta – Ožys (Goat) squad is being interrogated in the town's Cheka.

The interrogator:

"Did you see Goat?"

The arrested man decided to play the fool.

"I did."

"When? Where?" grabbed his pen the interrogator.

"The other day, crossed my way when I was going to the town from Jungėnai."

"You, f***, you'll mock me here?" the *chekist* dropped his pen and attacked the man with his bare fists.

TURGALAIKIS

*Strib*s are trying to heave partisan Kalinauskas, whom they killed at the Radzvinauskai's place, to the cart, but the man used to be quite stout – they can't lift him.

One of the Radzvinauskai's neighbors is watching all the procedure and can't stop laughing.

SMALININKAI

In 1949, when ordinary lists of people to be deported were being made, a Kalvarija *strib* Kundzelevičius offered to enroll the name of a woman he knew, whose husband was imprisoned for the relations with partisans. This politically mature offer was heard and the woman, together with a bunch of little kids, was taken to an animal wagon.

The years passed, exiles started to come back home. The sunny morning dawned for the woman from Smalininkai too, her much grown kids returned together with her. When they came back, they received a visit from not a very pleasant guest – Kundzelevičius.

“Are you mad on me?” asked the man, trampling behind the threshold. “Don't be, I'll get you a goose.”

This is how the *strib* evaluated long years of exile of 5 people.

KALVARIJA

1947. In the town's Cheka, Kazlauskas from Juodeliai is being interrogated. During the firefight at his place one 'people's defender' was killed. While he was questioned, the dead man was brought, his mother and sister came panting after him. Sorrowful screams and grieving tears.

“Don't interrupt!” yelled the interrogator at the women. “The bandits shot down two of our horses, took a tommy gun, and you here – cry for some *strib*?!”

“I could hardly keep my face straight,” – when Kazlauskas got out from the cellar, he commented on the *chekist*'s irritation.

KALVARIJA

Liutkevičius signs his alias under the partisan oath:

Naktinis.

Squad chief Valenta frowns:

“You should've signed your surname!”

Liutkevičius disagrees:

“Let's not write our surnames, because if they get our documents – it's over. If we stay alive, then we'll reveal our names.”

TRAKĖNAI

Russian soldiers go after partisan Lokys. He breaks loose, gets into Prūsaitis' homestead and hides. The military boots chunk by.

Soon after the troop comes back. Prūsaitis stands at the fence and watches the passers-by.

“Have you caught him?” he enquires.

“We killed him,” lie the soldiers.

TRAKĖNAI

Serving for the Red Army, Šukaitis became very courageous and when he returned to his native village, he decided he'd help the authorities to exterminate the 'bandits'. He called Jančiauskas and together they went to the Tabalauskai estate, where they supposed some *forestmen* to be hiding.

Their guess was correct, but these volunteer scouts had little time to enjoy their moment. They were left floating in the same estate's peat bogs.

THE TABALAUŠKAI ESTATE

Freedom fighter Basanavičius was the eldest of the squad, he'd been married for 9 years, so he spared real-life wisdom

to the surrounding youth.

“Don’t you look at these dare-devils, don’t fall in love with them,” seizing the opportunity, warns he a seventeen-year-old signalgirl. “They are all single-use, soon they’ll die. And you will cry.”

KAMPINIAI

That summer robbers started to plunder neighboring villages. They robbed several farmsteads, people became cautious.

During that time partisans knocked on Čiuplys’ door. At night, in the darkness.

“Who?” the host rested against the door.

“Let us in.”

“Men, say who.”

“Let us in.”

Čiuplys wouldn’t unlock the door, so the *nightmen* broke a couple of windows, got into the house, had supper – they all knew each other very well – and retreated to the nearby homestead of Viskačkos.

“We broke Čiuplys’ windows,” they laughed when they got there.

KAMPINIAI

Blacksmith Čiuplys was visited by partisans one night. His teenage daughter saw as he brought old boots with patchy counters to them.

A week or two passed. Kalvarija gymnasium students ran to look at the bodies of the killed fighters, thrown at the hedges. Čiuplytė hustled together with them.

One unfortunate was wearing boots with patched counters.

KAMPINIAI

Svitojus, a train-driver-to-be, is going to Jungėnai

– then he will take train to Kaunas. He is stopped by several partisans, among them – Balinis from a nearby village of Gintautai.

“Stop. Who are you? Where’re you going? What do you have here?”

Svitojus opens his suitcase with bread and bacon flich. The partisans take a look but don’t touch anything.

“Do you know me?” asks Balinis.

“So many people, how can I know everyone,” gulps the student. He senses: it’s better not to know, but he’s not good at lying.

“I don’t know you either,” looking in the eyes of Svitojus, Balinis says.

The peers understand each other and their ways part.

TRAKIŠKIAI

A few days prior his death, Balinis visited the Bukevičiai. He washed himself, had supper. As he was leaving, he lumbered a machine gun on his shoulder.

“Dear, you’ll overstrain yourself!” pities him the hostess.

“Auntie, it’s not heavy for the Fatherland.”

GINTAUTAI

Kaributas and Balinis dug under the ground in Degučiai’s barn. Someone snitched them, someone came searching. After a dozen of labor hours the soldiers retreated. One Russian, no one knows why, returned to the barn already from the gates. Something moved in the hay. The Russian took a closer look and saw an end of the wire wobbling. It was the hiding men who started to suffocate and wanted to let some air into their hideout.

Realizing that they’d juttet out, the men killed themselves.

MARIJAMPOLĖ

When Kaributas and Balinis got killed in Gintautai, the *strib*s made Grigutis take the dead to Marijampolė. In the town their bodies were thrown out near the feeding place of the garrison dogs.

“Fed to the dogs,” the rumor rippled back to the village. But when you know the *strib*s’ ways – it’s very convincing.

GINTAUTAI

In Zaveckas’ bunker, two men are waiting for a nurse: Špokas, with his wounded arm, and Lubinas, who came to visit him. At night the men are woken up by the noise above them. Russians?

A minute later somebody starts to tear the top of the bunker away. Friends don’t do that. Špokas fusillades the ceiling from his tommy gun. The enemy answers with a grenade, making a hole in the bunker’s cover.

“Throw a grenade up through that hole!” orders Špokas to his friend, whose hands aren’t injured.

Lubinas does as he is ordered. The enemy responds with one more grenade, which kills Špokas and contuses Lubinas.

THE VINKŠNUPIAI ESTATE

In the marshes, Valius was hit with seven bullets and arrested. His friends stole him from Marijampolė hospital and hid him in the Vinkšnupiai estate’s area. His sister came to see him and almost immediately asked:

“Why didn’t you shoot yourself? Didn’t you have a gun?”

“I did,” made excuses her brother, “but first I was hit to my right hand and the gun was simply knocked out from my palm. Straight to the peat bog.”

GULBINIŠKIAI

Benius Žaldaris, a partisan and shoemaker, was sewing at Štreimikienė’s place. Other partisans dropped in, the village’s elder Paliokas also happened to come. No one was too happy to see him.

The partisans say to the housewife:

“What shall we do? We will die anyway, today or tomorrow. But you will suffer, when you’re betrayed.”

Paliokas swears he’d never betray anyone. Žaldaris also pleads for him:

“Men, he’s got three children! Let him go.”

They let. Already the next morning in Kalvarija’s Cheka Paliokas is telling that Žaldaris keeps in touch with the bandits who almost shot him, Paliokas...

Žaldaris perished. Juodzevičienė, who was together with him, was killed too.

PASŪDUONYS

The Sadauskai were neighbors of the first chief of the Tauras military district Taunys’ parents-in-law. When Lithuania was occupied, Taunys moved to live there too, his wife stayed in Marijampolė and seldom visited her childhood home.

The neighbors were on good terms, even though Sadauskai had rejected Taunys’ proposal to flee to Germany during the war. Taunys didn’t run away either, and soon after the war he was arrested and taken away – to Marijampolė, to Vilnius, to Tuskulėnai.

The last time Sadauskas was seen by his neighbor, junior Sadauskas, in the autumn of 1946, when the school year had already started. Taunys was led arrested and kept asking people to give him a smoke and to at least a little bit loosen his tightly tied hands.

PAVYŽUPYS

In the village of Pavyžupys, at the Sakalauskai's, freedom fighter Čigonas was hiding. He was bad at hiding: he got surrounded, injured and – on the way to Kalvarija – killed. The injured partisan got a bullet into his head from one of the *strib*s, his own cousin.

“I saw that the *strib*s were going to pull him apart, so I shot him,” the very same day the benefactor found Čigonas' brother and explained everything.

One simply must help his relatives.

PAVYŽUPYS

The *strib*s shot partisan Čigonas in Sakalauskas' field and buried him straight away, in the same field. Then they mined the grave – a mine at the feet, a mine at the head.

Alas, the trap wouldn't work – one of the miners, Kalinauskas, was a partisan man.

MENKUPIAI

Early in March, squad chief Ožys and two of his friends decided to go to miller Slavickas for flour.

“Be careful with him,” his signalwoman warns the partisan. “I don't know anything suspicious, but be careful.”

Ožys sent his friends for a sledge and went to the mill alone, knocked on the door. Through the gap in the door the miller recognized the partisan, all dressed in white, and shot at him from his tommy gun. Then he jumped on his horses and galloped to Kalvarija.

Soon Ožys' friends came back on the sledge. They see: their chief sits on the threshold, resting his head against the doorpost. A tommy gun in his hands, empty cartridge cases all around.

“Hei, Old Man, why're you sitting here?” his men get off the sledge (they used to call their chief “Old Man” among themselves).

They came closer and saw him dead.

MENKUPIAI

Coming back from Kalvarija and bringing cigarettes to the partisans, Pupkaitė and the miller, who had just killed partisan Ožys, passed each other in the pinewood.

“Men, give me some light chopper, maybe I'll meet Slavickas again some day,” she asked partisans, when she got home.

“Would you shoot?”

“Yes, I'd turn and shoot him!”

Everyone laughed.

MENKUPIAI. LAPEKALNIS. ZOVODA

The remains of chief Ožys, who was killed in Menkupiai, were buried in a farmer's barn. Some days later Pašvaistė, the sister of the dead, unearthed her brother, wrapped him in a piece of linen and took him to the forest of Trakėnai. There she hid the remains under a narrow layer of earth and twigs on Lapekalis, a small hill. This was the partisan's resting place until summer. In summer the same Pašvaistė and two her friends came, they dug up the shallow grave, put the remains into a coffin, carried it to the fields and buried again near another hill – just in front of the window of their native homestead.

TRAKĖNAI

“At least Adolfas sees his home,” after burying her brother within the eyeshot from her windows, Pašvaistė sobbed to her friend. “And I don't know where I'll breathe my last.”

Dream, Petronė, of the capital. Or of Tuskulėnai right away.

VARTAI

A four-year-old daughter of Pašvaistė grew in another family. When her mother visited her, people used to call her by the name of Teresė.

The partisan was arrested in the same village.

“Is it your mummy?” pointing to the arrested, a *chekist* asked the girl, running past.

“No, it’s Teresė!”

They both saw each other for the last time.

KALVARIJA

When the detained Pašvaistė was taken to the Cheka crypts in Vilnius, the Kalvarija *chekists* called for her sister and nicely communicated with her on the second floor of the building.

“Do you get letters from your sister?” being perfectly aware in what hell the partisan was being held then, the *chekists* asked.

Valentaitė grasped the hidden game.

“I do.”

The interrogators exchanged glances.

“How is she?”

“Good! Neither at day, nor at night is she beaten, no one asks her anything.”

“Oh, you...”

The girl didn’t even realize how she landed at the bottom of the stairs.

VILNIUS

Pašvaistė was being led from the camera, when she met her sister in the corridor. The latter didn’t recognize the arrested.

“It’s me, your sister!” swollen from thwacks, couldn’t keep calm Pašvaistė.

RŪDNINKAI

Partisan signalwoman Rutkauskaitė ran away from the exile to her home place, but twelve or eighteen months later bumped into acquainted *strib* Burdulis and got arrested again.

“So where are your brothers?” as if casually Burdulis asked, leading her across the yard.

“Don’t you ask God for my brothers to show up here!” Rutkauskaitė muzzled the amateur interrogator.

AUKŠTAKALNIAI

It was flax breaking at Virbickas’, when soldiers, having checked Mikulionis’ house, turned to his homestead. The gunfire started.

“Men, unharness a horse for me!” partisan Basanavičius jumped to the helpers.

The men refused, so the partisan turned to run towards a little bog nearby, but the soldiers had already entered the yard.

The death had also come to the yard.

NEMUNAIČIAI

Under the stairs in the school, there was a hole dug out, where Paukštelis and Žvalgas used to hide. When the partisans left, Čeponiai covered the hole with grain.

That grain caught attention of the *chekist*, who was ferreting the school. He looked at it again and again...

“Shovel away that grain!” ordered he to a soldier.

The soldier did as he was told. A cover appeared underneath the grain.

“What’s there?” asked the *chekist*.

“A hideout. We used to hide meet in here during the Nazi times.”

The *chekist* told the soldier to get into the hole and have a look. The soldier obeyed, though very unwillingly. He lighted a match, grabbed some oily piece of newspaper from the ground and got out quickly.

If it wasn’t for his fear, he might have found there grenade capsules fastened to the ceiling – floor.

SUVALKĖLIAI

Winter, the ground was frozen. Miškinis took his men to a farmer to get their feet warm.

“I’ll go to get you some beer,” found an excuse to get out the host.

He was out long getting that beer. The chief peeked out to the yard and heard footsteps of soldiers surrounding the homestead.

The chief survived. His squad – perished.

THE KUŠLIŠKIAI GROVE

The remains of partisans Paukštelis and Žvalgas, who were killed in Vicentiškės, first were taken to a former Kalvarija winery, and after the desecration – to the Kušliškiai grove. There they were thrown into an old trench.

People found the partisan bodies and notified Čeponiai. Lubinas, who was still at home at that time, borrowed a camera, went to the grove and took a picture of his brother’s and friend’s bodies, soaking in water.

A photo for a long memory.

JUODELIAI

Aleksa from Juodeliai was fed up with frequent stay-overs of partisans, so one time, when his night guests came,

he went straight to the Cheka. The partisans were cornered and shot down, only Miškinis managed to escape.

Some days after he messed up, Aleksa was hoeing potatoes not far from his home. He saw some armed men coming towards him, Miškinis among them.

“Men, I know why you are here...” the farmer lowered his arms.

“We know it too,” said the men. “So let’s go!”

They took him to the garden and hanged.

JUODELIAI

After Aleksa’s treachery, Miškinis managed to escape and ran across the fields to Kalvarija. He was carrying a German tommy gun in his hands.

He was halfway to his goal, when he met three soldiers.

“Drop your weapon!” these ordered.

Miškinis released his tommy gun. The three soldiers all bent down to get it. The partisan ripped a pistol out of his pocket, banged one Russian, banged another and ran away.

JUODELIAI

Autumn of 1949. Partisans collided with the army and Dagilis was wounded into the leg.

Miškinis was running past him.

“Algis, shoot me!”

“You know, Antanas, you’ve got a gun – do as you think you need.”

While “thinking” Dagilis lost his consciousness and got arrested.

VILNIUS

Freedom fighter Dagilis from Radiškė is being interrogated. The interrogator calls an interpreter and warns him about his responsibility in case of an inaccurate translation from

Lithuanian to Russian and vice versa.

All three: the arrested, the interrogator and the interpreter are Lithuanians.

BRAZAVAS

Kemeraitis deserted the Russian army and visited his relatives Brazaičiai. As they were talking, they saw captain Golovenka and his squad coming from Liubavas side. Where to hide?

Kemeraitis checked the furnace – hot, bread was baked there not long ago. He flung to the left, flung to the right, finally slid behind the table, opened a photo album and goes through the pages with the housewife.

Golovenka, naturally, dropped in. He greeted the soldier – Kemeraitis was still wearing his Russian uniform – stayed for a while and got out. A good hour later he panted back:

“Where’s that soldier, who was watching an album here? It’s a bandit!”

It turned out, that Golovenka had the photo of the soldier, who withdrew from the unit, before coming to the place, but he had forgotten about it.

TABARAUSKAI

Every year after the International Workers’ Day, the government got accustomed to announce the campaign for repurchasing bonds. The essence of this new tradition was to make people buy some papers – bonds, whose cost was equal to one’s salary or more, and government promised to redeem them maybe a century later, or maybe after the final victory of Communism, i.e. – never. It goes without saying, people were not happy to be robbed in one more way.

As one more May 1st was approaching, Aleksa of Tabarauskai

climbed up to his attic and found an old placard from 1940, in which a zippy supporter of the new regime was pledging candy mountains to the labor people. He blew off the dust, nailed the placard on the wall in his room, and started to wait.

He who searches – finds, he who waits – is rewarded. Wheels full of activists rolled into Aleksa’s yard.

Wasting not a minute, the agitators thronged into the house, spread lists on the table and asked how many bonds Aleksa was going to buy.

Nodding at the placard, the villager explained that he himself was waiting for the favors promised by the government earlier and had no money to buy those bonds.

“Hush, kulak!”

Aleksa shrank and stuck in the corner.

Having disciplined the upstart, the activists continue to urge him to buy the bonds, but the villager barely sits with his mouth shut and says no more. Word after word, the guests became heated.

“If you don’t sign on your own will, we’ll go to the barn, count your cattle, maybe you’re hiding something and pay too little taxes,” they threatened.

“Leave him alone,” Aleksienė was alarmed. “Talk to me.”

As she said so, Aleksa stood up, made a stride towards his wife and gave her a swift smack on the cheek.

“It’s not some younglings speaking: hush!” he explained and returned to his place.

With such a mesmerizing encouragement, his spouse also became silent; agitate walls, if you wish.

The activists soon got bored agitating the walls, so they left, but it was obvious: they would come back. We will make things clear, Aleksa!

The farmer made sure the company had left and hurried to his neighbor to ask if he could take care of his farm. Then he came back, pushed his buggy out of the shed and went for a long visit to his daughter in Kybartai.

PAGRAUŽIAI

Midsummer of 1940. First invaders march along a village street to the side of the border. Some run to meet them with flowers, some hide.

Terrified Murauskienė stands at the window and tries not to cry.

“Mamma, why are you crying?” her children fidget.

“Now Stalin will eat us all...”

Not all, not all, just three of you! It’s time for you to understand, woman, that comrade Stalin is strict, but fair.

LIUBAVAS

Before becoming a freedom fighter, Kubelda worked in the parish’s militia, he even flaunted two stars. Earlier before that, during the Nazi times, he used to hide in the village of Šarkis at the Radzevičiai’s.

One time Kubelda called Miliauskas, the elder of Liubavas, to the parish and decided to interrogate him. When the latter entered, the owner of the two stars grasped a Nagant from the drawer and demonstratively thumped it on the table.

“So how many bandits are you hiding, Miliauskas?” he began.

“You know, Stasiukas, if during the war I had known how many communists I was hiding, you wouldn’t be sitting here now,” rebuffed Miliauskas. “You used to eat not only Radzevičius’, by my flitch too!”

Kubelda shut his mouth and, after hesitating for a short while, hid his Nagant back in the drawer.

LIUBAVAS

Liubavas militiaman Kubelda renegaded to partisans. The Cheka suspects something, but has no evidence. They’ll have to look for it.

Not long after, some *stribs* were coming back from an assignment and dropped in at the Kubeldos’ place. They waited till the hosts went to the kitchen leaving their little son with the troop. One of the ‘defenders’ leaned towards the kid.

“Do men come to your mamma at night, when dad is out?”

“They do.”

“Armed?”

“Armed.”

That was enough to talk about. One just can’t ask a child questions about concentration camps, where the child, not realizing anything, had just sent his parents to.

ŠARKIS

At the Staskevičiai’s place, border-guards trapped partisans, but these managed to escape. Whilst the soldiers reached the cordon and came back with reinforcement, the partisans removed their weapons that had been hidden under the hay in the barn; only some cartridges and grenades were left.

In revenge the soldiers set the farmstead on fire, they also burnt all the cattle kept in the sheds.

There were so many of those poor animals, sheep alone numbered forty. Until they finished sizzling, all the village was woken up. Not to mention the crackling of the partisan ammunition.

“Why didn’t you let the cattle out?” the shaken villagers asked punishers, as they were leaving.

“Bandits were shooting!” explain the Russians.

RŪDELĖ

Muckai from Rūdelė kept contact with partisans. Not being able to catch them, a Russian interrogator summoned a sixteen-year-old Muckai's foster-child Miškinytė to Kalvarija. Augustinavičius was called to translate.

"When did you last see the bandits?" asks the interrogator.

"I never saw them."

"I haven't seen them now. Before," translates Augustinavičius.

Miškinytė, who knows Russian very well, gets indignant.

"I didn't say that! I won't tell anything to him anymore!" she points to the translator.

"Can you speak Russian?"

"I can! And he -," she points to Augustinavičius, "is lying."

The interrogator kicks out his translator and closes the door.

"Where did you learn Russian?"

"At home. There were three captives who worked at our place during the war, so they taught me. I even know a song."

"What song?"

"That one, *Volga, Volga*."

"Sing it."

"I'm not in the mood."

"That's not a request. That's an order!"

Miškinytė, very unwillingly, sings one stanza.

"Now I believe you," says the Russian and releases the teenager home.

THE EAST

Partisan supporter Muckus became gravely ill in exile. Then he could only speak about going home.

"I go home," the man used to repeat over and over. "It's not that long to walk – across the meadows of Turlojiškė – and you

are in Rūdelė."

So wide you are, the meadows of Turlojiškė! Wider than Siberia itself.

RŪDELĖ

Autumn. Audrūnas and Vyturys dropped in at their signalman Miliauskas to get warm and asked him to buy something to smoke. Miliauskas went to the shop – had no idea that he, a non-smoker, will look suspicious when buying cigarettes. Maybe for a seller, maybe for somebody else.

One hour later the homestead was surrounded. The men tried to shoot back and retreat, but they saw there was little chance left.

"You run, I'll cover you," Audrūnas, armed with a machine gun, told to Vyturys. Then he turned to the enemy and fell on the ground.

He gave his friend six more months of life.

RŪDELĖ

Vytautas corps partisan Rapolas had a dark birthmark that he never shaved on his chin.

When somebody asked him about this strange appearance, he used to answer:

"I will be identified due to these beard-bristles, when I get killed."

His identification hour was chimed in spring of 1949.

RŪDELĖ

In the place, where Rapolas' and Akuotas' bodies were thrown on the street, lots of blood clotted. When they were taken away, Miškinytė collected the blood, buried it in the flowerbed and planted a peony on top.

The years passed, but the flower wouldn't blossom. Not even once! Only half a century later, during the Revival times, when it was

replanted on the partisan's grave in Rudamina, the peony finally opened up in its bloody beauty.

RŪDELĖ

One official gave Miškinytė permission to cut some grass, another official, the chairman of the district, came to take the hay away. Miškinytė was suspected of having relations with the forest, so the chairman didn't go into details.

"You stay here only until the first deportation!" he explained.

Miškinytė snapped back,

"If you want to live, you'd better not touch me!"

"Did you hear? Did everyone hear what she said?" sprang for witnesses the official.

The audience scattered, only one old man stayed to stand.

"What she said – I didn't hear anything, but what you said – I won't forget."

One must assume it was as he said - he didn't forget, and if he *did* forget – the government reminded. On the deportation day they found the bold man and thrust him into a wagon.

Miškinytė wasn't touched, though.

RŪDELĖ

Apuokas was going on seventeen when his squad was attacked by the punishers in his native Rūdelė. When the youth noticed soldiers in the neighbor's garden, he ran across the field to warn his friends.

The partisan's parents were hiding in the next house. They saw their only son run outside, saw him fall down struck by a bullet; he tried to cross himself – and calmed down, laying a heavy burden of the recent horror on his parents' shoulders.

Mother carried it for eight years, father – for two months.

LOPIŠKIAI

With Vikeris and Visvydas (Šalaševičius' brother) seated in the sledge, signalman Šalaševičius rides across the yard. As they are passing Maskelis' farm, they hear:

"Stoj – stop!"

Only the enemy stops you like that. The partisans rolled into the snow and aimed their weapons. Some moments later they sorted out that it was neither soldiers nor *strib*s, but a heavily drunk chairman of the collective farm, who felt a desire to demonstrate his power in such a way.

Visvydas, a stout man, jumped to the joker and slapped him a couple of times.

"Don't you know how to stop people?" the partisan was enraged. "Don't you know you could've been killed?"

The chairman promised to draw conclusions.

That he did. The sledge driver was met by *strib*s, when he got home.

LOPIŠKIAI

A few months after the *green men** shot KGB volunteer Baliūnukas, they caught his sister.

Hey Miss, get ready to meet your brother.

Visvydas peeked in during the interrogation.

"I know her. She's a good girl. Let her go," vouched Visvydas.

Baliūnaitė survived. Visvydas also survived – in her prayers.

LOPIŠKIAI

Žilvitis says to his signalman:

"I lack only a few dead little *strib*s to reach one hundred. If I only got a few more, it could be my turn already..."

* a green man - a synonym of the forestman, a partisan

Not long after, the squad chief moved to another part of Dzūkija* and Vaitkevičius never found out if the partisan's dream did or did not come true.

LOPIŠKIAI

The *forestmen* noticed that villages, where they met the beautiful Maskelytė, were immediately surrounded and searched by the Russian army. They decided to have a more serious talk with the beauty.

They came to Lopiškiai and cornered the suspect in her own home. The informant's sister was trapped together.

Maskelytė swore she hadn't reported on anyone, but one of the partisans, Vikeris, lost his patience.

"Get dressed and let's go!" he ordered.

"Oh, Mildutė, confess it!" yelled her sister.

"I don't want to talk in front of everybody. Let's go!" Mildutė turned to Vikeris and took him to the barn.

The partisans waited till they came back and found out, that the snitch got 80 rubles for the first report, 100 - for the second and 130 rubles for the third. They decided that Mildutė had repented enough and didn't shoot her. Nonetheless they banished her from their area as far as possible.

LOPIŠKIAI

Rudamina *strib*s butchered Cikanavičius' bull, but have no bread.

"We baked bread yesterday," remembered Seredas, "there should be some left."

* one of the ethnic regions of Lithuania (the south-eastern Lithuania on both sides of the Neman (Nemunas) river)

So he and his friend got on to the cart and rattled to his native village of Lopiškiai. The mendicants didn't know that a rather big squad of Lakūnas had arrived to the same village just the night before – 27 double carriages. There was not enough place for them in the village barns.

Sereda was met by his father in the yard.

"Don't get scared, son, we have guests."

The son – what else can he do? – goes into the house. However his friend – no one keeps him there – scuttles back to Rudamina and announces that fighter Sereda has been seized by the bandits.

The *strib*s left the beef, grabbed their guns and hurried to Lopiškiai to restore the order.

The 'defenders' sneak to the Seredos' house without noticing, that they themselves are already surrounded. Each and every one was left lying by the fences, except Leskevičius – he gave up.

LOPIŠKIAI

While staying in this little Dzūkija's village, Lakūnas' squad gained two new fighters – former 'people's defenders'. When one of them – Leskevičius – became a partisan, he called himself Bajoras. Another one – Seredas – must've been short of imagination and stayed what he was before – *Stribukas* (Little *Strib*).

MIKNIŠKIAI

Keršulis loved a girl and ditched her. Persuaded by the girl's family, Pasvenskas shot Keršulis down.

In the eyes of partisans, murder without a trial is more, much more terrible than the tears of a scorned girl. The officers came from the district headquarters. They disarmed the culprit, beat him and eliminated from the partisans.

He stayed alone and he got killed alone.

MIKNIŠKIAI

Signalman Greitas reached his conscript age. When he was called up for military service, Greitas went to his forest friends for advice.

Vikeris said, "Don't go! Fight to the end!"

Žilvitis contradicted, "No, men, there's no other way for him, just the army. We are over, the partisan fight is going to an end, we have lost. But he..."

The word of Žilvitis, the chief, was determinant and Greitas lived to see March 11th.

NAUJOJI KIRSNA

Nightmen found a shelter in the Cigelskai's barn. The delation and rummage. The partisans all got into the hay and the soldiers, no matter how thoroughly they flung their rifle bayonets, didn't find anything: the blade brushed along the temple of one partisan in hiding, touched the shoulder of another...

When the soldiers left, the hostess fried a lot of pancakes, hid them into a bucket and took it to the barn. The men though couldn't even look at the food.

"After such a shock..." they only uttered.

The woman was about to bring the bucket back to the house, when she saw new 'guests' squeezing through the gates – the chief of Lazdijai militia with his guards.

The partisan pancakes were just what these visitors needed.

* On 11th of March 1990, Lithuania declared the restoration of an independent State of Lithuania and was the first Soviet republic to do so. 11 March now is a national holiday: the Day of Restoration of Independence of Lithuania

NAUJOJI KIRSNA

At the Karauskai's place Žilvitis' squad gets surrounded. That evening the sun set down for the last time not only to the partisans, but also to the homestead's host, who managed to hide the *forestmen* for three long years.

The vanquishers popped in the neighboring yard, took Pasiukevičius with them and ordered to load the bodies of the killed onto the sledge – these would be taken to Lazdijai. Knowing that the men will be left to rot near fences in the town, Pasiukevičius tried to save at least his neighbor from such fate.

"Should I leave the host here?" pointing to the only man in casual clothes, he asks the chief punisher.

"Oh, he is much more a bandit than the others!" retorts the Russian.

Lazdijai, so it is.

MIKNIŠKIAI

At dawn, the garrison and *stribs* storm into Vaitkevičius' house and start searching the place all over. The *stribs* take the host to the shed and push him:

"Climb up the ladder!"

"I won't. You climb."

"What if I get shot?"

"Let it be. You deserve it," the farmer continues.

A Russian lieutenant stops at the door.

"What's the fuss about?"

"This one makes me climb on the upper floor. How can I know, maybe *they* are there?"

The lieutenant – to the *strib*:

"You climb!"

The grumpy *strib* pads along to the ladder. He starts climbing up

and keeps turning back to the militant, who lingers at the doorstep. As soon as the latter went away, the *strib* plopped down and also darted out.

AŠTRIOJI KIRSNA

In April 1952, Černelis decided to get rid of probably the last village ‘bandits’. He tolerated their hiding in his barn long enough.

No sooner said than done. The farmer hoofed to Rudamina, from Rudamina – to Lazdijai and, having done what he’d planned, turned back. He met his acquaintance on his way back – so they walk together.

They had just reached Aštrioji Kirsna, when they saw a pillar of smoke rising high on Bilvyčiai side.

“Jesus Christ, my house is on fire!” gasped Černelis.

“How do you know it’s yours?” objects his companion, but Černelis doesn’t hear him: “Mine!” he loses control and rambles on the road.

Calm down, Černelis! Wasn’t it you yourself, who started to play with fire?

BILVYČIAI

Macionis was ploughing close at the Černeliai’s place, when Vikeris’ squad was surrounded in the farmstead.

“They held out for two hours,” tilling, the ploughman registered the time.

As the third hour started, the gunshots were snuffed out by the flames.

LAZDIJAI

The bodies of the partisans, killed in Bilvyčiai, were

taken to Lazdijai and, in accordance with an old Asian custom, thrown on the ground in the town square: tremble, the land of the bandits!

One of the partisans, Vikeris, was still alive when thrown out of the cart. A *strib* noticed that – he jumped to the dying man and crushed a stick into his mouth, shouting “Vikeris! Vikeris!”

Vikeris blinked once and closed his eyes. This time – for good and ever.

MOCKAI

Two *green men* were trapped in Tarutienė’s house. A siege and a fight. In the middle of the fight one of the partisans, Šiupšinskas, tumbles out to the yard and sees a Russian officer lying straight in front of him and blasting to the house from behind the well curb. Šiupšinskas leapt to him and positioned his gun against the shooter’s head.

The Russian froze.

“I’m sorry,” he said, “I want to live.”

Šiupšinskas pulled back his tommy gun and ran off the yard. He heard gunshots just behind his shoulders, but the bullets whizzed over his head.

MOCKAI

The harvest was plentiful this year. The railway worker Sakalauskas asked Tarutienė to keep his crops in her garner.

The woman refused – there was no place. Sakalauskas got angry, waited till partisans visited him and stated that Tarutienė reports on them in the rural district.

Varnas invited Tarutienė’s son – a sailor, who came home for holidays, - and warned the woman through him. He didn’t know that no one else in the village took such care of the *forestmen*

as Tarutienė, who was left alone with five kids; neither did he forebode that he himself will be taken care of by her.

For a long time – till the fatal gunshot from behind the well curb.

MOCKAI

When partisan Varnas died at the Taručiai's, the family moved away from their native homestead for a long time.

When three years later one of the daughters, Eleonora, finally returned to the village, she heard a song about that winter's happenings:

Near the highroad, near the path,

Among gigantic willows

There was an ancient homestead

For long and many years.

And so forth, eight stanzas all in all.

MOCKAVA

Limping Beržas visited Buckūnai and asked for some food. He snacked and felt like resting.

“Get on the barn,” gestured the young master, “you’ll find some straw there and can have a rest.”

The old Buckūnienė overheard their talk, slipped out through the door and trudged to the Mockai *strib*s. She'd forgotten that partisans hardly ever leave such 'strolls' un-remunerated.

Soon the old woman was reminded about that.

And she wasn't the only one.

MOCKAI

The corpse of the killed Beržas was dropped in front of the border guards' cordon, which was settled in an old

manor house. It was left to lie there for a long time, even started to decay. Only then Ažuolas found out about his brother's death and came to the village elder Kavaliauskas, who was easily persuaded to bury Beržas in the local cemetery.

After the funeral Ažuolas visited the traitor too.

MOCKAVA

Disguised as a Russian officer and accompanied by another of the same kind, brother of the betrayed Beržas came to the Buckūnai.

“Tell us, who here was so clever and kind to report about the bandit? We came to reward the person.”

Buckūnienė answered, “It was me! I say – let's finish them off and have order finally.”

Ažuolas grasped *gymnasterka** with both his hands and tore it to the sides. Underneath the foreign garment there was a Lithuanian military uniform.

Seeing her failure, Buckūnienė tried to find a place to hide, but so much was already said and done – you can run, but you can't hide.

TABARAUSKAI

Captain Kirvis had a hideout in Tabaruskai at Bielis' place, but in spring 1946 he was ambushed, killed and taken to Pakirsniai, where a border guards' squad was in charge at that time.

The *strib*s dragged the unidentified partisan further behind the fence. He was left there till the snow covered his body.

The days passed. No one was going to arrange a wake or funeral for him. Only when the snow had melted, in spring, the men

* a Russian military shirt-tunic

succeeded to steal his body and bury it.

Antigone* had it easier.

BEREZNINKAI

A brother of two partisans, priest Marčiukonis, was severely beaten by the *stribs*. He sheltered in Berezninkai at the Knyzai family and died after several long months of hiding.

The men didn't dare to take a coffin to the cemetery – the border, viewing towers – so sisters Knyzaitės buried their 'tenant' under the windows of their house. When spring came, they planted flowers on the grave.

A new realia: a flowerbed of a postwar Lithuanian girl.

BEVARDIŠKIAI

According to a legend, several centuries ago this village was called Bavardai – after the name of Bavarda, whose four sons died fighting against Crusaders. Times changed, enemies changed. One evening a Bevardiškiai farmer Vokietaitis was stormed not by the Crusaders, but by the heavily drunken *stribs*.

“Harness your horse, take us to Liudvinavas!” they demanded.

Vokietaitis pushes out his cart, brings his horse... But it seems that the spirit of the courageous Suduvian** hadn't left the village and its people. As he was riding across Tarašiškės, Vokietaitis aimed and tossed to the bushes one machine-gun of a well-oiled *strib*.

* Antigone – in Greek mythology, a woman who fought for the right to bury her dead brother

** *Lithuanian*: Sūduva or Suvalkija – one of the ethnic regions of Lithuania, located south of the Neman river

SANTAKA

Citavičius betrayed partisans who visited him and was paid off with the belongings of the dead – clothes.

When garrison left, Citavičius once again, more thoroughly this time, checked the riches he'd earned and was highly disappointed. Only Dobilas' jacket was barely fitting to Citavičius' farmhand. Another partisan, Sopranas appeared to have been even thinner, nothing more could be done just to hang his jacket in the darkest corner in the garner. The *chekists* could have kept the third partisan Aras' outfit to themselves – the young man died when a grenade exploded in his backpack, there was hardly anything left of his uniform.

SANTAKA

Soon after the treason Citavičius was visited by the friends of the killed *forestmen*. The traitor was found being not alone, but with his tart, as villagers used to call women with such moral norms at those times.

“If you shoot him, shoot me too!” burst the woman, as she understood what was about to happen.

The men happened to be tractable: they shot her.

MERGUTRAKIS

Mielkus, who was hiding from the army, met his friend, already armed with a tommy gun. The latter invited Mielkus to go to the forest and the 20-year-old agreed.

“What can you do against the Russian army...” after finding out about her son's choice, his mother burst into tears.

Only when her son explained that if he didn't go to the forest, he would have to go to the army, i.e. – to the battlefield, the woman calmed down and even prepared a bundle of food as he was leaving.

SANGRŪDA

Ožys and Lubinas, two partisans of the squad located in the Trakėnai forest, started out to Sangrūda for food. That time they decided to feed the squad at the government's expense and turned straight to Brogis, where a food collection station was set up.

Lubinas stood on guard, and Ožys pushed the door open. He found the host home and asked to show products, delivered by the villagers. He took as much butter as he could carry and decided to pinch the dear government to another side too – he told Brogis to open the box of eggs.

RŪDNINKAI

People's enemy Stankevičius fell into the hands of vigilant *chekists*. Soon after two carriages rattled to his home – to collect his share. Officers, muffled up in fur-coats, started to scurry back and forth from the house to the carts.

Strange though the bandit's share was: female kerchiefs, pillows, rolls of canvas, but the 'dowry carriers' weren't particularly choosy: they took it all.

RŪDNINKAI

Having arrested Stankevičius, the Russians came to collect his 'share' in two carriages. As if robbing was not enough, they demanded to name each embroidery that was being carried to the cart. They said it was stock-taking.

One of the carriers, a Lithuanian, instructed the arrested man's sister, "They don't understand a thing anyway, you just take a bundle and say 'a towel!'"

Two carts full of towels left the homestead that day.

ALKSNĖNAI

In a homestead near Būdvietis, Klevas' squad clashed with Russians. The chief grabbed a machine gun, hurried out to the yard and was killed.

Firing back, the men left the place. Some of them hid in the Gura forest, the others retreated towards the Polish border.

"They drove us to the fields. No way we'll escape," lowered Liūtas, the chief of this troop.

As if he foreboded something. Hiding in hollows and firing back, one after another his friends managed to disappear from the eyes of their persecutors. Only Pelėda was left behind, but, as he was crossing the railroad, he managed to escape too: without getting noticed by the soldiers he climbed up into a dense fir-tree.

There was no such tree on the way of Liūtas, who had all the persecutors' attention concentrated on him, and he got killed not far from Alksnėnai.

There were only a couple of kilometers left to the border.

TRUMPALIAI

Poland. Sniževičius, Marcinionis and somebody else from the squad went to village dances. The girls were as plentiful as blackberries – you could dance with any of them. The problem was, the young Poles from Suvalkai also arrived to the same party. Contenders!

Without further consideration, the *forestmen* pulled out their guns and their contenders ran away in all directions.

During another party, the three of them waved their guns again and their competitors scattered again, but this time, before coming back to their village, they visited the Polish Cheka. The enthusiasts to dance were surrounded and arrested.

TRUMPALIAI

Sniževičius, a partisan machine-gunner from Rūdninkai, went to dances with his friends in Poland, where he was given into the hands of *chekists* by the jealous local youth. The Poles handed the partisan over to their Soviet colleagues, which were more interested in the arrested man's friends than in his dancing partners. Sniževičius jibbed, but not for long.

Having realized whose fault it was that the former partisans – present coal mine-workers – were buried underground alive, the convicts pushed a wagon onto Sniževičius.

TRUMPALIAI

When Ožys was leading the Polish squad, he asked Lazdynas if he could mine the Russian border cordon at Trumpalis. He also asked how many men Lazdynas would need for this job. Lazdynas pondered for some time and decided to go alone.

As the night fell, he sneaked to the cordon. It was full of soldiers. How to wheedle them out?

He had six incendiary bullets in his pocket. The partisan slid to the border-guards' garages and fired the bullets to the vehicles standing there. The gunshots and fire raised a general alarm.

Glued to the ground, the shooter waited till all the soldiers stormed past him, then he climbed over the wire fence that was not too high, set a mine and retreated.

He enjoyed the explosion of the mine together with his friends.

TRUMPALIAI

Lazdynas is running away from the soldiers. A bullet comes after him and pierces his wrist.

Only an hour later the partisan feels himself safe. Only an hour later his wound starts to bleed.

WARSAW (POLAND)

Marija Briliūtė lived at a Polish engineer's on Przytyk street, she was taking care of his daughters. The engineer sympathized with the Resistance, due to this quite often in the maids' basement room local or Lithuanian people, persecuted by the government, found their refuge.

Waiting for their tickets to further West, Lukša and Krikščiūnas spent two weeks in that basement.

One day Briliūtė looked through the window and saw *ubists* – the Polish Cheka men – getting into the yard.

“Quickly on the roof, men!” she turned to the partisans; there was no time to explain.

The refugees scuttled to the attic, from the attic – onto the roof, and lay there as long till the NKGB-ists finished their *stribish* deal – turning upside down beddings and wardrobes.

Don't relax, men! Poland – not Western yet, and it's not going to become one soon.

WOJPONIE (POLAND)

In 1946 or 1947 Briliūtė-Janušauskienė from Punks had to accompany some fighters, who managed to break through the border and stopped at Poznėkas in Wojponie. They introduced themselves: Juozas... Jonas... Natalija.

They took a train to Warsaw. Their companion didn't like Jonas, a black-haired man wearing eye-glasses, so when she got tired of tarrying in the corridor at the window and got back to the compartment, she took a seat near the intelligent Juozas. As she was sitting there, she fell asleep; and when she opened her eyes after some time, she found herself resting on her neighbor's shoulder.

So she took a nap at the legend's side! When she got back to her Punks, she found out to have accompanied the famous Lukša.

PUNSK (POLAND)

With the memories from the Warsaw trip still fresh, Janušauskienė through her relative living on the border got several verses written by Lukša. These were beautiful pieces of poetry!

The woman relished the poems for some time and then destroyed them – she was afraid of her husband.

PUNSK (POLAND)

Jakimavičius:

“In olden days, the first things a Lithuanian did when moving to a new place to live were these: to dig a well – in order to have water, to plant a garden – so the children wouldn’t steal neighbors’ apples, and to put up a cross.”

The olden days were over in 1949. That year the first thing Rimvydas and Žaibas did, before settling down on Jakimavičius’ land, was to dig out a bunker.

ŠLYNAKIEMIS (POLAND)

With the consent of the hosts, Rimvydas and Žaibas dig out a hideout in the Jakimavičiai’s pinewood. The host memorized its dimensions: 2.75x1.25x2.00 meters.

A decent grave for two.

ŠLYNAKIEMIS (POLAND)

Jakimavičius noticed a horseman, inspecting the partisan pinewood from afar, and got nervous. He waited till the dusk fell and hurried to the bunker.

“Men, you have to leave. It’s not safe anymore.”

“We aren’t ready to leave today, but tomorrow you won’t find us here,” promised the men.

They knew what they were saying: the following day, well before

the dawn, their bodies were already scattered in the yard of Bialystok Cheka.

VIRBALAI

As the war was coming to an end, in this little village in Dzūkija a Lithuanian military officer Čėpla sheltered. One morning, as the hider went to the yard for a smoke, he saw several Russians, with their officer in front, stepping out of the forest.

Čėpla, who managed to escape the SS-officer’s bullet not that long ago, tensed up.

The officer waved for the smoker to approach.

“Did you see Matulevičius and Čėpla?” he asked.

“None of such live here.”

“And who are you?”

“A farmhand. From this farm over there,” nodded towards the house Čėpla.

“Where is the host now?”

“Having breakfast.”

“Call him!”

Čėpla dropped the cigarette, returned to the house, explained the situation to the host in two words and slipped away through the back door to the forest.

There he stayed, in the forest.

KALNIŠKĖ

Partisan Liepa told this story himself.

In the homestead near Kalniškė Vilkas, his brother Uosis and one more fighter were surrounded. As usually, first the enemy shouted out a proposal to give up.

Seeing that his brother and friend hesitated, Vilkas got chafed and

aimed his tommy gun at them.

“If you give up, I’ll shoot you first!”

Being urged like that, the men took up their guns, fought back and survived.

VIRBALAI

One night Vilkas’ squad was searching for food and visited one familiar farmer in this village in Dzūkija. The chief sent his men to the house and hid himself behind the barn in the other side of the yard – he would watch things over.

Some minutes later the hostess, carrying a candle and a knife, showed up in the yard. She waddled to the barn and squeezed inside. The chief was silently watching her through a hole in the wall.

The woman put the candle on a barrel and stepped to the fitch of bacon.

“They come and come, darling, give and give something to them,” cutting the fitch the woman murmured to herself. “When are they going to get shot, damn it?!”

The hostess went back to the house and soon the men returned.

“Well, did you get anything?” asked Vilkas.

“We did, we did! These people are so sincere. They invited us to come again if we need, they said they’ll pray for us.”

Sure they will! But – to whose God?

VIDZGAILAI

Vilkas and German Karolis went to Pasvenskas to get their repaired shoes back. When they left the yard, Vilkas felt someone else walking together, not Karolis.

“Who’s there?” he turned back.

The unexpected companion jumped to the tillage, a gun flashed.

Vilkas was quicker. He calmed the stranger down with a volley from his tommy gun and retreated with his friend. Rockets were flying around feverishly.

As it turned out, the homestead the men visited was surrounded, one of the punishers mistook the partisans for his comrades – and was left to lie in the strange tillage of the strange land.

IŠLANDŽIAI

Greblikas, host of the farmstead, waited till partisans Vilkas and Boksas came to him and asked them to help to slaughter a pig. As soon as the men left their guns in the pigsty and came out to the yard, from all sides they were attacked by the soldiers and *strib*s called by the host.

Vilkas was arrested, Boksas was killed.

IŠLANDŽIAI

The director of machinery and tractor station, Bubnys, felt a sincere hatred for his brother, *forester* Boksas, and dreamt of killing him by himself, but was outrun by his fellow *chekists*. Boksas was killed in Išlandžiai.

After the operation the *chekists* found Bubnys.

“We shot your brother,” they reported. “You can take him now.”

“You didn’t allow me to get him alive, neither do I need him dead!” the director retorted with resentment.

KARUŽAI

In the thickets near a path one Vilkas’ squad fighter sits in an ambush and sees two activists, Tarutytė and Vabuoliūtė, coming by. Such ladies to the partisan are like a red rag to a bull – he just can’t help doing something. Shooting, though, is dangerous – Rudamina is so close.

The young man aims and grabs the girl closer to him, the other one swerves to the bushes and escapes. The one to get caught by the partisan was Vabuoliūtė, the one to escape – Tarutytė. She lost her eye while furrowing the thickets, but stayed alive.

BABRAUNINKAI

Not being able to pay the taxes imposed by the government, the villagers of Babrauninkai enrolled themselves to the kolkhoz and elected a chairperson. The partisans immediately shot the chairman's family down and set all the village on fire.

Shortly after it was Stebuliai's turn to make a kolkhoz; this was the village that strongly supported *forestmen*. The villagers called for partisans to talk.

"What shall we do, men? If we don't join the kolkhoz, neither we nor you will have food because of the levies. If we do join – you'll shoot us..."

Partisans:

"Go join that kolkhoz! We'll simply be treading water if we kill people. We've learned our lesson."

And they didn't shoot.

DRAPALIAI

The Cheka took to calling partisans' brother Mockevičius and beating him. Realizing that communicating with Dzerzhinsky experts would sooner or later end in an animal wagon, Mockevičius bought a train ticket himself and fled behind the Ural Mountains.

"Freedom is the recognition of necessity" as a bearded philosopher once contemplated.

DRAPALIAI

A strange deaf-mute wandered into a village. Pried out by the men, he hardly managed to explain that he wanted to join the partisans.

The villagers are people kind and helpful. The rover asks to be introduced to the forest. So he will be! If not today – so tomorrow, if not tomorrow – so another day.

As they are waiting for the partisans to appear, everyone keeps an eye on the stranger. He looks just like anyone else – he's got two arms and two legs... Only he is extremely fond of children gaggling, neither does he avoid a grown-up company.

The *green men* came in a few days' time and once more, this time – with their own ears, listened to the wish of the stranger.

"All right," they say, "we'll accept you. But first you must prove that you know how to walk carrying a gun."

They handed him an empty gun, pointed the direction and – go!

The applicant slung the gun over his shoulder and firmly strode across the meadow.

"Go back!"

The deaf-mute stopped and turned back... Only when he saw the stern faces of the partisans he understood to have given away: the deaf-mutes hear with their eyes, not with their ears.

Before getting shot down, the impostor invalid told who and why had sent him to the forest.

KOMENKA

When a partisan who lived in the Krasauskai's farm was arrested, the hosts filled the bunker with soil during the night, leaving only the entrance hole. At dawn soldiers came and brought some man, hiding him under the tent, to the barn. They found the entrance hole there.

“What’s here?” they ask the host.

“A pit.”

“For what?”

“We used to hide things here during the war.”

And so they slipped away.

KOMENKA

As they were filling up the dangerous bunker, Krasauskai found a typing machine there. Where should they hide it? The host went to the garden, walked back and forth along the path and then buried it right at the gateway.

One or two weeks later at least thirty soldiers, armed with bayonets, presented themselves in the morning. Krasauskas was just about to leave to work.

“Where are you going?” an officer stopped him.

“To work.”

“Where do you work?”

“In Lazdijai.”

“It’s over, you’ve worked enough!” announced the officer, seated the ‘master’ at the window and plonked himself nearby.

On the other side of the window soldiers shoulder to shoulder plunge the garden grass. They checked all area – from one side to another.

“Have you found it?” inquires the officer from the bench.

“No.”

“One more time!”

The soldiers grab the bayonets again. And one more time – later, without any success again, because no one was clever enough to stab in the gateway.

Someone heard something.

KOMENKA

When partisan signalgirl Markevičiūtė was arrested, Valentukonis visited Minkevičius, who lived in the same village.

“The Lithuanian girl of Markevičiai is stitched up!” he mocked.

ROLIAI

Autumn, morning. Waiting for their friends to come back from the mission, three *green men* try to get warm by a little bonfire.

Someone harshly whistled in the forest.

“Like some teenagers...” grunted chief Ateitis, and was killed by a bullet hitting him in the face.

VILKIAUTINIS

Having taken Rudamina and defeated Lazdijai garrison near Roliai, the Karvelis squad got on the sleighs and stopped only when they reached Vilkiutinis. There some men of the Merkinė squad sought them and asked for help.

The men didn’t deny the request and went where they were asked to, but until they reached the place, the Merkinė squad partisans were beaten: one ran to them without his cap, another – without shoes... Karvelis sent his sleigh to the nearby Žaliamiškis and jumped on the horse.

“Whoever runs – I’ll shoot!” he announced. “Everyone attack!”

There was no need for the chief to shoot his own men in Vilkiutinis battle, as there were enough enemies. His hands even began to sore until he sent everyone to eternity.

KOMENKA

Karvelis had five children. One of them, must have been the youngest one, was recruited by the Cheka of Lazdijai.

How they managed to do that – remains a secret, but soon the 17-year-old started to walk around villages and ask questions: who, when, at whose place.... These inquiries weren't left unnoticed in a split and scared post-war village, and the *forestmen* were quick to eliminate the inquisitive.

Partisans killing a partisan's son.

LAZDIJAI

"A parasite *strib!*" snorted signalwoman Gražulevičiūtė when she saw a 'people's defender' Lukošius in Lazdijai.

"Don't say a word about him," reproached another signalman. "He's saved many men!"

It was a partisan in a *strib's* shoes.

KARUŽAI

Ordered by the partisans, their signalman Steniukynas agreed to be the district chairman. The 'first one' of Lazdijai, Žėčius, kept offering a gun to the new officer and kept wondering, "How come they don't shoot you?"

RUDAMINA

Stribs brought the body of partisan Lapinas, who was shot down in the Trakiškiai forest, to Rudamina and dropped it on the pavement. *Strib* Tarutis took a sugar beet knife and cut the partisan's nose off. For that he was granted with five days in a guardhouse.

"Fight against a live enemy, not against a dead one, you hero," said the Russian officer.

* the chief of the Communist party in that area

STRUMBAGALVĖ

As early as in Brezhnev times, the *kolkhoz* used to celebrate a very important festival – the first ride of harvesters into the fields. Beyond comparison if you think, for example, of some minor day of driving the cattle out to the summer pastures.

A well-drunken *kolkhoznik** pestered to Krienas – a former partisan, political prisoner and a deportee.

"Juozas, so let's get even!"

"For what?" inquired Juozas. "I have no blame against you, neither do you have anything against me!"

"You *are* to be blamed," his collocutor disagrees. "You killed my father!"

Krienas eyes the annoying truth-searcher for a moment and then acknowledges, "Well, it must be I really made a mistake once. Your father was a traitor, people died because of him, the decision to eliminate all your family was made. Yet I persuaded men to change their minds, I said '*Men, let's shoot only the guilty one.*' If I hadn't made that mistake then, I wouldn't have to listen to you reproaching now."

After that, the drunkard's tears and apologies followed.

A VILLAGE NEAR SANGRŪDA

The Postwar. Having gathered at the Nevuliai's, *kolkhozniki*** celebrate the end of the rye harvesting. As usual, people tend to 'open up' at the feast table.

Tractor driver Moliušis, a former *strib*, remembered the fight between 'people's defenders' and *forestmen* that took place in the localities ages ago.

* *Russian*: a member of a collective farm

**plural form of a *kolkhoznik*, i.e. members of a collective farm

“When the skirmish started, I saw you lying in the bushes, but didn’t shoot,” Moliušis bent towards the host.

“And my gun sight was following you all the time,” Nevulis, a former partisan (alias Ožys) of the Vytautas corps, recalled the encounter as well.

ŠULNELIAI

A partisan-to-be Vytautas, but so far – a free citizen of a free country, used to amaze his family by his extraordinary skill to find things that others weren’t able to.

“Vyta^s, where is the awl (matches, scarf, beetle^{*)}?” tired after searching for something, they used to ask the boy, who would think for a while and always have an answer where the thing was or went and brought the object by himself.

“This kid won’t die a natural death,” used to shake her head his mother. She was right. Partisan Jaunutis was killed when soldiers brushed the forest of Kalniškė once again.

ŠULNELIAI

Neimaniėnė was not allowed to return to Lithuania after the exile. She went to Moldavia, but couldn’t bear living there and seized the first opportunity to secretly come home.

She came and she saw. All that was left from the homestead was a few trees and a concrete cellar, which was too hard to be destroy by the *stribs*. The deportee walked around the remains for some time and returned to the neighboring village, where her sister lived – there she collapsed and died from a heart attack.

She enjoyed Lithuania and life barely for a few days.

* a short form of the name *Vytautas*

** a wooden instrument used for doing laundry

VYTAUTAI

The night. Partisan Žygūnas comes to the Stučk^os’ place and, without waking the host up, sneaks into the barn and digs himself down into hay. Before he falls asleep, he hears somebody riding into the yard. Not one, several people.

There is a pond near the barn. The riders halt their horses near water and one after another jump down on the ground. There’s no need to explain what’s going to happen next. The partisan loads his tommy gun, prepares his pistol (in order to be ready to shoot himself down if wounded) and waits.

Four men come in. Their torches flash. In the flashlight, the partisan sees soldiers and Jočys, the infamous *chekist* of Marijampolė. After short instructions, the soldiers leave and soon come back with the host. They let Stučka in and leave him with Jočys, soldiers themselves stay outside.

Holding his breath, the partisan listens as the *chekist* gives orders to the farmer: when *forestmen* come, you will take them to the Spanguolinė (some marshy place), leave them there, write a note to us and put it under the stone in such and such place.

Stučka is taken away. A while later Šoliūnas is brought to the barn. The same instructions again: the Spanguolinė, the note, the stone...

After teaching their second ‘colleague’, the *chekists* jump on their horses and leave.

“What shall I do now?” the partisan lowers his tommy gun. It would’ve been better to be attacked!

Making sure the enemy has retreated, Žygūnas slides down from the hayloft and goes for his friends.

The partisans discuss and decide to acquire more serious evidence – we are talking about patrons, about supporters! Maybe they just pretended to agree to betray partisans?

The same Žygūnas visits one ‘colleague’ of Jočys, then another –

and gets taken to the Spanguolinė. The two farmers, not knowing to be followed, having no idea about each other's intentions and hurrying to attain the government's favor, the very same evening write the ill-fated notes. The partisans only had to collect the notes and do what's got to be done in such cases.

The episode wasn't over after the old men's blood was shed, though. They had sent the reports to the 'employers' through their children, so they took two 18-year-olds together with them.

VYTAUTAI

Having picked the farmer's note to the *chekists* from underneath the stone, the partisans thronged the rat's house.

"Read! Read it aloud!" they thrust a piece of paper to the sprat, but it was not the writing he saw, only a gun, quivering in another hand of the intruder – and he forgot he knew how to read.

GALSTAI

When Žygūnas was wounded in an ambush, he shot 7 times to the *strib*, galloping towards him, but barely scratched the rider and his horse.

His eighth shot was a bull's-eye though – right to his own temple.

ZIZĖNAI

In the village of Zizėnai – it's already Dainava's* region – people were waiting for the partisans to come. In the barn, on the wooden desks (like in the fairytale about lost brothers) five plates, five mugs, five spoons, five forks were laid... and a bottle.

When the hosts noticed that their homestead was being surrounded, it was too late to hide. A tall – as tall as he didn't fit through the door

* South Lithuania

– narrow-eyed Red Army soldier entered the barn. Must have been from Central Asia. He glanced over the laid table and the hosts, pale as a sheet, took the bottle and asked if there was more vodka in the house. The host nodded his head and they went to the house together. The narrow-eyed soldier collected as much hooch as he wanted. He also said that he knew this war, that it was the same in his land, and left, taking away all his troops together.

ZIZĖNAI

A *strib* from Pariečėnai village, whom people used to call *Kyguolio Bernas*, called one of his 'comrades' and went to Zizėnai village to ask for flicht. He was wearing a cap with a red star* - as a real fighter.

At that time a partisan squad was resting in the wood near the village. Jūra, Klajūnas and Naikintuvas were sleeping, and Negras was reading an old newspaper. When he saw a head with a Russian cap on emerging from the bushes, he fired at it from his Tommy gun without further thinking.

Kyguolio Bernas dropped dead and his companion, deranged with fear, scurried back to the woods, while the drowsy partisans took their way through Zizėnai to the opposite side.

Later they found out, on whom Negras wasted his ammunition.

AN UNKNOWN VILLAGE IN DZŪKIJA

Nedzinskas' squad collided with punishers on a village street. Gunfire, havoc. Nedzinskas slips into the first cattle shed, squeezes into the manger and, petrified from fear, listens as military boots clump right after him, as the door opens and after a long, long pause it slams.

* a red star – one of the Soviet emblems, a symbol of Communism

“Никого нету!” he hears in the yard.

The young man was still lying in the manger, when the door creaked again.

“Мой сын тоже такой**,” said the voice, who had just directed the persecutors away from the shed.

AN UNKNOWN VILLAGE IN DZŪKIJA

Nedzinskas:

“There was a *strib* in a neighboring village. He used to drink like a fish! Then he would raise all the village: “There is a bunker at Jonas’ (Petras’, Simas’) place! But we’ve already been informed by Mikas (Jurgis)! We’ll finish off with those bandits! Tonight!”

Only seeing a neighbor to put on a kerchief – as she was getting ready to take the path she was the only one aware of – he would calm down and disappear behind the door, as if nothing had happened.”

THE TRAKAS FOREST

“Whenever we encounter bandits, Blaževičius’ gun gets jammed,” watching a well-built machine-gunner of their troop, whispered Seirijai *strib*s.

It’s impossible to check now, if the authorities were aware of these suspicions or not, but when after one skirmish in the Trakas forest only one of the twenty-nine ‘defenders’ – Blaževičius, who else! – barged to the clearing with his cheek shot through, the chief Seirijai *chekist* gave him a warm hug and even kissed him.

* *Russian*: There’s no one in here!

** *Russian*: My son is also like you.

PATRAKĖ

Late at night partisans ride to the village to punish a snitch. One of them moans:

“Men, but it’s my neighbor!”

The men stay silent. They neither oppose, nor agree. After a while, again:

“But my neighbor!”

The informant remained unpunished.

KLEPOČIAI

The *green men* taught their supporters not to converse with strange fighters. If there’s no familiar face among them...

A troop of exactly such fighters – unfamiliar – stormed Plytninkai’s house one day. The men were neat, friendly. One simply must communicate with such. The young Plytninkas even pulled out his tobacco pouch.

“What, don’t you know what to do with your tobacco?” his sister smote him on the hands.

Oh, it was a big trouble the fast girl saved her family from!

KLEPOČIAI. ČIVONYS. KALVELIAI. PETROŠKAI

On July 6th, 1946, Mindaugas’ and Lapinas’ squads executed a *partorg* with five or six *chekists* in the Kriviškis forest.

The same day punishers surrounded a wide area and sixteen homesteads of Kalveliai, Čivonys, Klepočiai and Petroškai villages were set on fire. The women and children were allowed to escape fire, but the men – like the men: were shot down or arrested.

ALOVĖ

A *strib* tore a ring from the killed partisan’s finger

and bent down to rub it in the snow.

“Does it shine?” another *strib* got interested.

THE VARČIA FOREST

Wounded in the battle, partisan Baranauskas with great difficulty staggered to the nearest tree, clambered up on the first branch and hushed there. Soon another combatant – a *strib* – flopped to have a rest under the same tree.

A drop of blood fell from the tree and splashed on the reposer. The *strib* squirmed, raised his eyes... and grabbed his gun.

MACEVIČIAI

Two *forestmen* got into the Janušauskai's house at night. They ordered to keep the lights off and unlock all doors – more of them were coming. They hid themselves deeper in the house.

Not much time later, several armed men indeed approached the house and knocked on the kitchen door with their rifle butts.

The house kept silent. The men crossed the kitchen and knocked on the room's door. This time they were heard.

A partisan conspiracy?

MENCIŠKĖ

One summer afternoon sisters Janušauskaitės happened to visit Varžaičiai in the village of Menciškė, where a partisan celebration was held at that time. The men were merry, young, in uniforms. They invited the girls to sit at the table and continued celebrating.

As the dusk fell, the sisters became anxious and sidled to a familiar *forestman* Treigys.

“Juožas, we'll go home now...”

“Go...”

The girls slunk off the house and scurried across the forest. As soon as they entered their room, several men from Varžaičiai came after them: to check if the guests really rushed home.

MACEVIČIAI

In winter of 1945, a lot of partisans gathered in this village. There were as many as fifty men, they came on sleighs. The men were getting ready to attack Kapčiamiestis the next day.

Half of the men went to Suchanka, the other half – to Janušauskas' place. They posted guards and started to carry sacks of groats and meat inside the house.

“Men, do you know where you're staying?” Janušauskas put himself on his guard. “This is a cunning place – Russians come here, *strib*s come here...”

“So it's good,” the men laughed. “There'll be plenty of spare boots.”

They didn't think they were wearing such boots themselves.

MACEVIČIAI

Informed by the rats, soldiers and *strib*s surrounded the partisans, staying in the village. Gunfire and deaths.

As bullets started to batter the walls, all the Janušauskai family fell down on the floor in the corridor. Mother hid her teenage daughters under the wooden trough and threw a random coat on them.

When gunfire ceased, it was time for grenades. One of them fell on the coat, but didn't explode.

When everything hushed and the girls were getting out underneath the coat, the grenade rolled on the ground, but didn't explode anyway... Was the Grim Reaper over-glut already?

MACEVIČIAI

It happened in 1945. Near Kapčiamiestis, in

Macevičiai village, Šarūnas' squad found overnight shelter. Russians came, a battle started.

After the first shots, Šarūnas jumped through the window to have a look. A Russian military officer was watching the fight from a neighbor's window. The men saw each other at the same time, raised their guns at the same time and pulled the triggers... And both fell dead.

GALSTAI

Karaliūnas was building a barn. Among other helpers – two local *forestmen* – Aidas and Titnagas, and a foreman from another village.

On Saturday the foreman left to his village. The host though had an ominous presentiment.

“Men, you'd rather leave now!” he asked the partisans.

The men left.

In the very beginning of the second construction week, the helpers were surrounded and inspected. The chief inspector, lieutenant Jočys, took the foreman to the garden for a word.

A while after, another farmer Pečiulionis decided to build a new barn. Again the same foreman was in charge for construction and again a raid followed.

The *forestmen* became suspicious. They followed the foreman's son galloping on his black horse to Veisiejai and found out whom he was visiting there. Their suspicion turned to conviction and the third construction in the village was conducted by a new foreman.

UCHUM (RUSSIA)

In the course of the eight years of exile many Lithuanian crosses were put up on the hills of Uchum: for Tarasevičius, Venclovas, Petruškevičius, Gudas, the Žukauskai,

Vaičiulienė, Bakulis... During the days of the National Revival, former deportees once again went to the reaches of Siberia – to bring the remains of the loved ones back.

“What kind of people are you to collect even the bones?” seeing the former exiles, wondered Russians.

LAKE GALSTAS

When signalman Ramutis returned from the Sayan Mountains, he rowed a boat to the lake with the one who snitched on him. In the middle of the lake he asked to tell why and how.

“I know you're a good swimmer, you'll swim to the shore,” his collocator evaluated the situation. “But me...”

“So tell me...” Ramutis urged him.

He heard everything what he wanted to find out.

BUCKŪNAI

Two carts of *green men* burst into the Packevičiai's yard, dragged a slaughtered pig into the house and started to while away the time there. For a day, and one more. Together with them a thirty-year-old son of the hosts had to loiter around.

Eventually the young man lost his patience.

“Maybe you don't need me here?” he sidled up to the elder one.

“Maybe I can leave?”

“You can. But if, when you leave, whoever attacks us – we'll shoot you,” the partisan explained to the fidget.

BUCKŪNAI

Late winter night. Packevičiai are visited by several *forestmen* wearing Russian military uniforms.

“You will take us to Seirijai,” the chief stranger orders in Russian.

“I am tired, I carted logs to a saw mill in Ūdrija,” the young

Packevičius is unwilling to harness his horses again.

“If you don’t take us, we’ll harness your horses ourselves and go anyway,” the ‘*chekist*’ explains, still talking Russian. “We’ll let the horses go where it’s convenient to us, but we can’t promise they’ll find the way home.”

The rest of the *forestmen* keep silent.

The argument is witnessed by the farmer’s ailing father.

“Son, go,” interferences the old man. “How will we live without horses?”

The son goes to the stable and soon a sledge slides out of the yard.

Just before reaching Seirijai, the road turns to the Trakas forest. There’s so much snow as to one’s waist. With great difficulty the riders reach the required farm, go up the hill and see: the yard is full of Russians. Rows of UAZ-469*, so called *viliukai*, standing along all fences, horses harnessed to sleighs... And four armed soldiers guarding the gate.

The chief bent down to the driver and asked, this time in Lithuanian:

“Stay calm, don’t give us away. Men, you get ready. Maybe I’ll manage to save us all.”

The partisan sledge comes to the guards and the chief asks to open the gate.

“Who are you?” the guards ask.

“Friends, from Russia. We’ve come to help.”

Once in the yard, the partisan asks where to find the commanding officer and turns to the door, pointed by a soldier.

The Russian officer comes escorted by as many as eight armed soldiers. He listens to the partisans’ tale about help and asks where this support comes from. The partisan says a place and a number.

* Soviet military off-road vehicle

Later, rethinking the situation over, Packevičius would understand it was the number of the military unit the chief had served in before. But at that moment he felt standing at the abyss. The same as the other sleigh passengers, by the way.

As one soldier holds the flashlight, the officer opens his file case and goes through the papers, looking for the number mentioned. And he finds it!

The officer, overjoyed that these were really ‘own people’, runs down the stairs to greet the newcomers. The men barely silently shake his hand.

“Where can we stay overnight?” asks the partisan, when the greeting ceremony finally finishes.

The officer tells to call the host, who came, recognized the disguisers and started to shout: “Where will I put them? The rooms, the barn and the cattle sheds are all full... We ourselves have a tight place just in the kitchen.”

“So what shall we do?”

“Go south, you’ll find a big farm just a kilometer away,” explains the host.

Without saying a word, the men climb back on the sledge. The Russian decided to give six soldiers to escort them. The company was again saved by the chief partisan’s wit.

“How long have you been here?” he asks his ‘colleague’.

“Since one o’clock.”

“Are there many of you?”

“Around five hundred.”

“So there’s no point in escorting us! The villagers would have noticed such troops long before and reported to the bandits. Now you won’t find any of them 20 km around. You know their connections.”

He made his point. The officer repeated directions one more time and returned to the house.

When the sledge was behind the gate, the chief bent to the driver again.

“Just hold your horses! Barely jog trot, barely jog trot...”

The driver loosened the reins – and emotions – when they were over the hill.

AN UNKNOWN VILLAGE IN DZŪKIJA

The Tubelevičiai were deported behind the Ural Mountains and returned home only ten years later.

“That was some rest I had – for all my life!” walking in her native village, shares her impressions the old Tubulevičienė. “When I was here it was like: some people come during the daytime, others come at night, some – during the day, others – at night...”

PERLOJA

The Postwar. A train rumbles from Dzūkija to Vilnius. Just before Perloja, a young man scrambled on the moving train and fixed the Tricolor on the top of the wagon. For three stops the flag gladdened the eyes and hearts of the people living close to the railroad, till it was finally noticed and ripped by the officers.

The young man disappeared.

JONAI

The days of National Revival. A farmer asks Sadauskienė to bring home his helpers: the field is far away and he is busy with other things. Sadauskienė agrees and, when the time comes, collects the diligent women from around the field to her car.

Women are women – they can't ride in silence. This time the conversation veered about exile, or to be exact – about one family everyone knew, who were flung at the Arctic Ocean during the

first occupation and all died there. *For what?* – the women try to figure out.

“There was a reason, obviously,” expressed her ponderable support to the People's government's fight against its class enemy one of the helpers.

Sadauskienė, the wife of a deportee, hit on the brakes.

“Get out, you toad!” she jumped off the car and abruptly tore the door open to the red helper. “You can go home on foot,” she added, watching the latter squirming off to the evening mist. Then she returned to the wheel and drove away, from time to time looking at the 1940s, twinkling by the roadside.

SKAISČIŪNAI

The first postwar winter. In the morning, on her way to school, Jarumbavičiūtė met soldiers. They jumped off the trucks and puffed towards the girl's home.

The schoolgirl knew, that there was someone resting, who all night long worked as a rotator. It was Žvejys. Knowing that made the girl feel hot and cold at the same time, but there was nothing she could do – no way to warn him.

The partisan was saved by the host, who was in the yard and saw the soldiers coming. He stormed into the room: “Antanas, hurry, we're being surrounded!”

Half-naked, Žvejys grabbed his shoes, some thin jacket, dived under the porch and stayed unbound.

SKAISČIŪNAI

When Jarumbavičiūtė came home from gymnasium, the secret printing press was not discovered yet, even though soldiers had been toiling from the early morning. The girl had a word or two with her father and slunk to the porch, where Žvejys, the editor of a partisan newspaper, was hiding under the floor boards. She discreetly readjusted the hideout's cover, straightened the ridge on the rug. And said to herself,

“It's alright. Cold as it is – nothing can be done, one must be patient.”

In the evening she received heartfelt thanks for the encouragement.

UKHTA* (RUSSIA)

On December 18, 1945, the printing press of “Scout of Freedom” was discovered at the Jarumbavičiai’s place in Skaisčiūnai. The host was sentenced to a concentration camp immediately, his wife and children were deported to Siberia, their home was ransacked. Only one daughter managed to escape the ‘exile team’ and had to hide at acquaintances.

Some time passed. In roundabout ways, following the strictest conspiracy, a letter reached the twenty-year-old girl. Must have been from Ukhta. “Send me some potato peels,” knowing her capabilities and his own hunger, asked father.

BALSUPIAI

Partisan Bitė made himself a hideout near the old village cemetery. The bunker was dug under such a shack that long time no one even suspected it to be there.

Yet its turn came anyway: brother and sister felt thirsty for the government’s grace. The soldiers came and started to prod the ground with long iron rods, but after long hours of work they found nothing and went back to their ‘*polutorka*’**.

“Men, go back!” sister stopped them. “There is a bunker, really!”

The soldiers turned back and made holes in the ground until one of them hit a board.

“A chest or a bunker!” overjoyed the soldiers.

It was a bunker, where Bitė and a fifteen-year-old sister of his wife had been hiding. When the hideout was unearthed, Bitė shot

* Ukhta – an industrial town in the northwest Russia, built mainly by the prisoners of the concentration camps

** Russian truck GAZ-AA

himself and the teenager was given a tour to Vorkuta*.

BALSUPIAI

Ramis and his friend found out where Pilota, who betrayed his own brother, was hiding, and came for revenge. Pilota zipped to the attic, where women were sleeping, and hid behind an old chest. The partisans followed him upstairs. Ramis was going along on side of the attic, his friend – checking the other one, both flashing their torches. They didn’t find what they were looking for and left.

“Dulbys had to see me!” numb out of fear, Pilota told to the women later. “I don’t know how he missed me, he flashed me straight in the eyes!”

It must be difficult to kill a man, be it a traitor or not.

BALSUPIAI

After one skirmish, the underage Jurgelaitytės were left alone. They stick around the empty homestead for one day, then for another, but their parents just wouldn’t come back. Finally, not able to overcome their hunger, the two teenagers started to wander around the district and ask for bread.

They timidly entered some yard, waited till the hosts noticed them.

“Girls, where are you from?”

“From the Butanavičiai’s place.”

“Ah, from the place a bandits’ bunker was found!” And the door slammed in front of them.

*another place in the North-West of Russia, right north of the Arctic Circle, where many Lithuanian people were deported and where one of the major Soviet concentration camps was situated

BALSUPIAI

Nightmen Kardas, Vytis, Pēteris and somebody else are taking a break at the Jurgelaičiai's. Sensing the presence of guests, *strib* Birštonas – a cousin of *forestman* Kardas – crept 'for a chat'.

The partisans held the spy and took him to the bee house to interrogate. After a couple of 'questions' Birštonas fell on the ground and pretended to be dead. The *forestmen* left Pēteris to watch over the 'dead body' and went out.

Waiting for the night to come, the guard dozed off. The pretender then jumped on his feet, knocked the sleeping guard down, swam across the rivulet and started to run as fast as he could. When Pēteris came to his senses, he jumped after him.

Only near Jaudagiai did he manage to run down the *strib*.

THE BALSUPIAI LOCALITIES

When partisans finished off spy Birštonas, no place was left at home for Jurgelaitienė. Well before the dawn the woman, her kids and their cow went to the forest.

The *forestmen* helped them to the cart and set off to the neighboring villages.

The first stop was in the yard of a farmer, living by the forest. A bunch of visitors entered the house.

"Good man, have a look and keep one!"

"Let it be not me..." cowered teenager Onutė.

The farmer glanced over the new 'people's enemies', silently crouching on the bench.

"This girl," he pointed to Onutė.

SKAISČIŪNAI

There is a bunker under the floor in the Vosyliai's homestead. Soldiers are not aware of it, but they suspect something

and one evening they set up an ambush.

At night Ožys and Vampyras sneak into the yard.

"Who's there?" a Russian guard gets alarmed.

Both men as one tommy-gunned and retreated, leaving the 'savior' lying dead on the grass.

When morning came, the homestead was ravaged especially severely, as the killed Russian was a veteran, who had fought in every line of the previous war. He might have even signed on the foundations of the Reichstag*.

SKAISČIŪNAI

One can get into the Vosyliai's bunker once the threshold of the guest room is lifted. One day, when a *nightman* Tetėnas was hiding under the floor, the house was stormed by 'punishers', who brought a dog.

The dog got interested in the threshold.

The first to notice that was the hostess. She invited the Russians to sit at the table, brought some fitch to them, made an omelet, and the dog was several times offered to sniff some tobacco leaves, that were drying in the porch.

She ruined the poor dog's sense of smell, but saved the bunker.

ŽYDRONIAI

With the help of an informer, soldiers burst into a homestead where two male partisans and partisan Meškutytė – Vaidilutė – were hiding. Having searched for a long time but not being lucky to find the hideout that was ably concealed in the wall, the soldiers left. The informer stopped them.

"There is a hideout!"

*German Parliament 1871-1945

The soldiers returned and started to prong walls with their bayonets anew. After one of the stabs the blade pierced Vaidilutė's temple and the girl cried out of the pain.

The overjoyed soldiers started to rip the hideout open, and the men shot themselves down.

JUODUPIAI

Juozas Kulboka from Juodupiai got involved into the resistance movement from the very first days of the occupation. He used to print 'Scout of Freedom'. For security reasons, his congenial district's chairman Rimša named the underground as a sculptor and ordered him to gouge a gigantic coat of arms of the Soviet Lithuania, that was needed for some series of events.

When the first command of Tauras military district partisans was arrested, Kulboka also fell into the traps of the Cheka. Rimša immediately went to Vilnius to see Paleckis: the work has stopped, organization of the events is failing!

Paleckis: Find someone else!

Rimša: No one else will do this job!

So had the Chairman of the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet save the bandit. It's not funny: the 'means' was falling flat!

MEŠKUČIAI

After the men had had supper, Mažytis used to bring dishes to the kitchen and always found a good word for the hostess.

"Oh, ma'am, that was a delicious supper!"

"When you have what to use, anyone can make it delicious!"

"Oh no, we have tried meals of many housewives, we know. The bread was delicious too."

Mažytis must have sensed that, as the woman used even to deprive her children of a better food because of the partisans.

MEŠKUČIAI

A neighbor decided to earn thirty pieces of silver and began to follow the Garnatkevičiai: he looked through the windows, circled the house at midnight, or hid behind a tree for an hour or two – perhaps he would see *forestmen* coming...

The people suspected being dogged.

One early morning Garnatkevičienė was toiling in her yard when she saw her neighbor leading her horse to water.

"Why you and not your husband water your horse?" the woman was surprised.

"My husband comes home and goes to sleep at once," without any consideration, the neighbor blurted out.

It's tough working the night shift.

ŽYDRONIAI

At the edge of the village, in a bunker made in a farmer's house, three *forestmen* were staying overnight. Early in the morning, as the men in hiding were about to leave, the farmer's daughter came running from the yard.

"Men, hide! Russians in the yard!"

Two partisans whipped towards the chimney, where entrance to the bunker was, and hunkered down there. The third one stepped out to the yard and started to shake hands with each and every punisher, who had surrounded the house.

Seeing the treason of their friend, the hideout men blew themselves up, and Bervingė – he was the one to invite the punishers – gave up the partisan uniform and started to walk with the *green hats** in public.

* border guards

MEŠKUČIAI

Žukauskaitė, a student of Marijampolė gymnasium, was waiting for her father to bring food, but did not receive any message from him. Together with her cousin, the girl got on a bike and rode home – to clear things out.

A high road, a country road, familiar roofs.

The girl glanced at the roofs and fell off the bike.

“It’s over, I won’t go further! Something bad has happened at home...”

Near the barn, at the side where a partisan hideout was made, the toppled straw was lying all around.

SKARDUPIAI

Midwinter. While soldiers were threshing grain at the Žiliai’s place, turned to an auxiliary farm, another squad came chasing Žaibas and Teras from Žydroniai.

“We’ve got to get them!” the sergeant grabbed his gun. “Let’s go!”

“It’s not our business,” disagreed privates. “Let them, who must catch them, do their job. We weren’t ordered to go after them.”

Leaving his ignorant comrades in the barn, the sergeant attacked the partisans alone. One man, Žaibas, used the moment, took away the sergeant’s gun and continued walking. The disarmed soldier minced after them and implored to give his gun back. Like, he would be severely punished if he didn’t get it back.

Žaibas felt sorry for the hapless enemy, so he removed cartridges from the gun and threw it at the Russian’s feet. The latter grabbed his gun, pulled out a new magazine from his pocket and discharged it to the kind-hearted man.

As Teras heard the shots, he turned back and killed the sly snake, but this didn’t help Žaibas anymore.

SKARDUPIAI

Having suffered a year in exile, Žaldarienė made off and came back to her native village.

“Can it be you were released?” her neighbors continued to ask.

“I’ll just make some rusk and go there again,” used to explain the fugitive.

The Cheka though didn’t wait so long and deported the poor woman back to Tyumen sooner than the bread went dry.

MARIJAMPOLĖ

Ramis, Neris and Demonas went to Kaunas to fulfill a partisan command. Demonas was already recruited by the Cheka at that time, and partisans suspected that, but Ramis, a member of the partisan court martial, refused to believe that. The fact that Demonas separated from his fellow partisans in Kaunas and went home alone didn’t appear suspicious to him either.

Having carried out the task, the men agreed to meet in Marijampolė, at the Valavickai’s place. On the agreed time Ramis and Neris came to the Pionierių Street and knocked on the door.

“Where is Antanas?” they asked Valavickienė, who opened the door.

“He’ll soon be back. Sit down and wait.”

It didn’t take long. The guests were still looking for a place to sit, when the room was crammed with *chekists*.

“We didn’t even manage to touch our guns, they attacked from all sides,” Neris would recollect the arrest later.

Such is the price of credulity.

RIGA (LATVIA)

Having extracted everything, what the recruited Demonas knew about the underground, Marijampolė *chekists* sent

him to kill his former battle comrades. When you have betrayed so many, you can't expect to be forgiven.

Jankauskas managed to disappoint his masters – he plundered more than he fought. He would come to a farmer, set his pistol against the latter's side and ask:

“Have you got a pig?”

“I have.”

“Get it to my cart!”

A sheep or another minor animal would also do.

The robbed people began to complain to the authorities and they – authorities, yet! – arrested Jankauskas one more time. Then there was a dilemma: what to do next? To shoot their own gunman was somehow impolite, to interrogate after a very recent interrogation – also not very logical. Finally the solution to transfer the inconvenient prisoner to the Riga colleagues was reached.

These appeared to be not so scrupulous and croaked Demonas after a short interrogation.

RAKAUSKAI

Thirteen-year-old Sakalauskaitė visited her aunt in a village and was given a place to sleep in a lumber room. She woke up at night and saw her aunt talking with men in, as it seemed to her, very beautiful uniforms.

In the morning Sakalauskaitė went to the yard. She glimpsed something behind the barn. “Can it be the same men I saw yesterday?” thought the girl and found herself surrounded by *strib*s.

“Where are the bandits?” the ‘people's defenders’ attacked her.

“I didn't see them.”

“You ...”

The epithet spat by the *strib* shocked the teenage girl.

“And your place is there!” having lost control, she waved her hand to the side of Keturvalakiai *strib* house, and at the same time – to the side of the graveyard.

“What? This fidget dares to send us to the graves?” burst out another *strib*.

They chased the girl to the cart and took her to the same Keturvalakiai for interrogation.

KETURVALAKIAI

In the headquarters, *strib* Vosylius was guarding the arrested signalwoman Pumputis.

“So you won't be seeing your dear Lithuania anymore,” he stung.

Half a century later, after the days of National Revival, Pumputis was passing a neglected shack of the former ‘defender’ and – what a surprise! – saw Vosylius, as slumped as his own shack. The woman unleashed her tongue.

“Hello, Kostas!” said the woman, fitting her kerchief. “Do you remember what you once said to me? So get this: I *see* my Lithuania, and you really will never see your Lenin and Stalin!”

ŠIRVYDAI

The spring of 1946. Vaidotas was hiding at the Bubniai's in Širvydai. The family was digging peat nearby, when they saw their neighbor's house set on fire and the ill-will arsonists going towards the Bubniai's homestead.

Daughter grabbed a jug – as if hurrying for water – and ran home to warn the partisan. On her run home, she decided to imitate the search.

So she did – she burst into the guest room, turned over the benches, opened the wardrobes, removed and flipped over drawers on the floor...

“The others searched here,” seeing a familiar view, said the soldiers and went away.

ŽYDRONIAI

A country boy Miliauskas reached his conscription age and, not waiting for the official calling up, got ready to go to the Soviet Army. The news was quick to go around the village.

Touched by such dutifulness, the village elder visited the warrior’s parents and gave two beautiful flower-patterned kerchiefs to them.

A couple of weeks later another news about the village hero reached Žydroniai: that he bore arms not in the army, but in the forest. In this case – you two, the old Miliauskai, get to go to Siberia!

With all your kerchiefs.

ŽYDRONIAI

There is a search going on at the Arlauskai’s. Partisan Miliauskas is hiding under the threshold. Looking for the bunker, the soldiers move a small chest aside and some rays of sun penetrate through a hole underground.

“I already wanted to tommy-gun them,” the partisan told later, “but decided to wait till some soldier peeked in. Then they just creaked away and away...”

VIDGIRIAI

Farmers are called to the meeting organized in a school. Medelytė decides to go there, she is fed up with being called a ‘bandit henchwoman’.

Spring, it was all muddy around. After the sermon, Medelytė slopped to the Žiginskai, who hosted the village school in their house. Not a single body in the yard. The girl pulled the door and face to face collided with an armed man. “A *strib*,” Medelytė

thought, but then she stepped inside and saw familiar faces. She understood, that they were all waiting for the *strib*s yet to come. She moved further in a half-full class and sat down on the bench.

Behind the wall, the farm host lied bedridden. Partisans prowled around the rooms and kept looking through the windows – everyone waited till activists, accompanied by the garrison, came in sight from the Karkliniai side.

They came at dusk. The partisans took off short white fur-coats from their shoulders, lay the people on the floor. Medelytė crawled under the bench close to the threshold.

The first to enter the class was the chief militia officer, a Russian. A partisan tore a tommy-gun off the man’s neck. The militiaman grabbed his pistol and fired at Granitas, who glimpsed in another doorway. He missed the partisan, but shot the diseased man. The Russian had no chance to shoot another bullet.

The clash was fierce, but short. The windows shattered, the plaster fell down on the people’s heads.

“Is anyone hurt?” the partisans asked, when the shooting stopped. People were allowed to stand up.

The chief militiaman was lying face-down at the wall. The partisans rolled him face-up and saw that he was alive.

“Don’t be scared, we’ll shoot,” they warned the villagers and banged the injured man in the chest.

Having brushed up and snacked – as the *strib*s had planned to have a feast after the meeting – the men jumped into the activists’ cart and rattled away. Before doing that, they told people to stay in the place for two hours, but who could wait so long? As soon as the cart left the yard, people rushed out of the house, some even jumped through the windows.

There were six more dead bodies in the yard.

BŪDVIEČIAI

Signal couple Pumputis and Samulaitis collected a parcel of buttons, stripes and ensigns for partisans from the supporter and left for Valavičiai. Soon after the couple walked off the yard, the army started to surround the homestead.

“We left just in time,” overjoyed the signal couple, “they would’ve found everything.” Yet they see one more Russian squad coming from Keturvalakiai in front of them. Samulaitis pulled the parcel of the Lithuanian uniform accessories from the girl’s hands and crammed everything into his pockets.

“If they stop us – you don’t know me,” he instructed the girl rapidly. “I caught you up on the road.”

Soon they met the soldiers.

“Where were you?” was the first question of the chief Russian.

“Ходили жениться!” the young man (an ex-soldier of the ‘Unbeatable’ army) darted, before Pumputis even opened her lips.

The meadow waved with the laugh of the fascinated soldiers.

“Ну и как, поженились?”

“No,” Jonas kept answering in Russian. “She,” he nodded to the signalwoman, “forgot her passport.”

One more attack of laugh.

“You fool, don’t you forget your passport again, or you’ll never marry,” the officer taught the girl and led his cheerful soldiers towards the half-encircled homestead: they would close the circle.

The signal couple said no word to each other till Valavičiai.

Because of fear.

* *Russian:* We went to get married!

** *Russian:* So, did you marry?

VALAVIČIAI

After the clash with Russians, three *forestpeople* escaped from the Brazaičiai’s house. One of them was Našlaitė. “Geležiuūtė,” decided the Brazaičiai’s neighbors.

Hearing this, signalman Samulaitis hurried to the Geležiai. As soon as he stepped over the threshold, he saw his fellow signalwoman, sitting on the heated bench – and raised his eyebrows.

“Why are you looking at me like that? Do I look different to you today?” grumbled Pumputis.

“All the villagers in accord claim that you’ve run away with partisans. Get dressed and let’s go!”

“Where?”

“To the village! We’ll walk across it and come back, so people will see that you didn’t run anywhere.”

And so they went out, hand in hand.

The ones who knew the real occupation of Jonas and Julė, used to call such couple’s appearances as ‘political love’.

VALAVIČIAI

Staff chief of the Vytautas corps Algimantas met with signalwoman Pumputis. As they were talking, the partisan – the head of the family – took off his ring and squeezed it into the hand of the girl.

“Take it. Maybe you’ll see Mikasė one day, give it back to her. If I keep it, some *strib* will cut it off together with my finger.”

He was killed one month later.

VIDGIRIAI

Signalman Spindulys was arrested, recruited and released. Having explained the situation to the partisans, he continued to buzz around his native Valavičiai – tested the patience of the

authorities. Only when he found out that they were going to come and arrest him again the next day, the young man scurried to the *nightmen*.

The partisans led the rookie to the neighboring Vidgiriai, locked him in Jokūbynienė's bunker, and left.

The very night there was a search conducted at the Jokūbynienė's place. Looking for the bunker, soldiers and *strib*s ferreted each and every corner in the homestead.

"If they had opened the bunker, I wouldn't even have managed to shoot myself – I was so scared," once out of danger, Spindulys told about his first partisan night.

SIBERIJA

Rimšienė called soldiers, who surrounded the family's house. Squeezed into a corner, the little Rimšiukas watches as they storm into the kitchen and tear the partisan hideout's cover off. Then soldiers jump back from the hole in the ground and shout for the hiding men to give up.

"Men, let me go!" a woman's voice exclaimed from underground.

Then – a bang and a blast, that shook all the house.

When the bodies of the killed were elevated – three men and a woman – they saw a black mark of a bullet in the woman's temple.

SIBERIJA

The spring of 1950. *Strib* Sinkevičius' cart creaked into the yard of the former presbytery in Kalvarija.

"Help me unload this crap!" the *strib* called to Levandauskas, who was loitering not far away.

The man came closer. There were bodies, torn by the explosion, lying in the cart. These were the remains of the *forestmen*, who killed themselves in Rimšienė's house in the village of Siberija:

Šešėlis, Spindulys and Šalaševičius.

And the nineteen-year-old Tilvikienė.

KUMEČIAI

In the hut of Kregždžiai, who owned some land, a priest sheltered. He was wanted by the authorities, who suspected where a people's enemy was hiding – 'defenders' came and came to have a look.

Whenever she saw *strib*s coming, Kregždienė used to turn pale and started shivering even on the hottest summer day.

"What's wrong with you?" the *strib*s used to squint at the sick woman. "Why are you shivering?"

"It's tremor..."

A treacherous illness, that tremor! One can be sick with it for a week, or a year. It depends on when the man in hiding is caught.

KUMEČIAI

Priest Baltramonaitis, who has a spare place left for him in Kasachstan, is hiding at the Kregždžiai's. His time will come: Asia is patient. Meanwhile, the little house in Kumečiai is once again rummaged by the Vilkaviškis *strib*s.

The dwellers notice *strib*s coming only the last moment. The priest dashes to the attic, where he's made himself a hideout at the side of the roof. The *strib* goes after him. Likewise, he is being followed by a nine-year-old Kregždytė, who can't resist curiosity.

As the pursuer was on the fugitive's heels, the latter had no time to hide and froze in the doorway of his hideout. With his gun ready, the *strib* walked around the attic, passed the man – like a sort of a post – warped in the opening and climbed down.

KARKLINIAI

When priest Baltramonaitis came back from the Kasachstan concentration camp, he found his protectors and knocked on their door. He sat at a shaky table and started to unpack presents: a kerchief for the hostess, candies for children.

“And here is my biggest treasure,” says the ex-prisoner, unwrapping a scuffed handkerchief with a pinch of soil in it. “I took it when I was deported from Lithuania. Now I can pour it back.”

He treasured the soil for eight years.

RUDŽIAI

Feeling a strong wish to curry favor with the authorities, Vižainiškis rode to Gavėnas, tied the old man to the horse and dragged him back and forth the yard, demanding to disclose the location of his sons – partisans.

Father endured it all and told nothing. His sons were not as patient as their father – the very same night they found Vižainiškis and shot him down.

OŽKASVILIAI

Every time when *strib*s went to this village, their chief northerner Demidov used to outpace his clique and first entered the Valentai's yard. Then, passing Valentaitė, he used to mutter, “You leave!”

The girl would vanish and the ‘team’ never found whom to arrest. So she survived, though her neighbors and family members were sent to the place where frogs don't breed.

OŽKASVILIAI

An early spring. In a homestead of this village, a small squad led by Putinas gets ambushed. The chief ordered his

friends to retreat to the forest and, carrying a machine gun, ran to the unbroken soil and held the attackers away for a long while. In the end he blew himself up.

“He loved his homeland very much,” as if a Russian officer uttered standing at the dead.

GURBŠILIS

Partisans were spending a day at the Žalnierukai's. They saw some *strib*s getting out of the forest, rushed to the yard, tried to jump over planks of wood piled near the fence – and died in the bullet trap of the enemy.

Only Gerutis, who was injured in the leg, fell between the planks and the fence – and survived. While lying in the snowdrift, he saw the *strib*s gather the bodies of his dead friends, load them to the cart, and heard how they thanked Žalnierukaitės for help as they were leaving.

GURBŠILIS

After shooting, the Žalnierukai's home was once more visited by partisans and the host's son was shot.

The partisan massacre was planned by his sisters.

NAUJIENĖLĖ

Having locked their kid in the house, parents were busy with rye behind the garden. There was a barn with a bunker and partisans separating them from the house.

Suddenly they saw a flock of *strib*s striding from their neighbors Karveliai and passing their barn.

“Let's run!” breathed the host.

“I won't!” returned his wife. “I won't leave my child!”

It's good, they didn't run. The *strib*s went and didn't stop at their

place – that time they had some other business to do. It's easy to imagine how their business would've changed, if the couple had started to run.

NAUJIENĖLĖ

Some partisans were visiting Jurgelaičiai at day-time. They sent a teenager on guard and were cleaning their guns. The kid overlooked *strib*s, and when the men saw them – it was too late to hide or to engage in fight. So they dashed to the barn and hid in all corners.

The *strib*s infested the yard and started to snoop each centimeter, as it was common for them. One of them turned towards the barn.

One of the partisans – a stout man – stood behind the barn door with his gun ready. The *strib* opened the door and found himself facing the loaded gun. Still in the doorway, he turned to his comrades and said,

“Бандитов нету!”

And cleared off.

NAUJIENĖLĖ – ADAMARINA

Summer. June. Seven partisans rest in the Vizgirdai's barn. The young Vizgirda is repairing some motor in the yard and talking to the men through the half-open barn door. Suddenly the talks stop – on the Gižai – Baltrakis road a flock of *strib*s appears. The men close the door, lift the machine gun on the threshing-machine, prepare their weapons... Vizgirda continues working.

The *strib*s turn off the road to the homestead. One of them comes closer to the mechanic and asks for a smoke.

* *Russian*: No bandits here!

“It seems you never have what to smoke,” laughs the young man and offers his tobacco pouch to the *strib*. “Here, have some!”

The *strib* pinched some tobacco and the troop went their way without even looking at the barn.

NAUJIENĖLĖ

The night partisans Ališauskai met their former neighbors – now: *strib*s – in the village and all agreed to have a chat as in good old times. Soon there was a bottle standing on the table.

While the men were involved in discussions, a teenage son of the hosts sidled to the heated bench, where somebody's gun was lying, and started to stroke it. The gun fired.

The partisans jumped out through one window, the *strib*s – through another, and the yard suddenly became full of soldiers. These happened to be surrounding the homestead without being noticed by anybody, they knew there were ‘bandits’, but the child's shot ruined everything.

As they were clearing things out, the soldiers pulled the ‘shooter’ from underneath the heated bench and gave him a good thrashing.

That was all they won that night.

NAUJIENĖLĖ

Artojas, a fighter of the Vytautas corps, visited his daughter, who was hiding out in the localities of Naujienėlė village, at the Urnevičiai.

“Genutė, while I am alive, I'll watch over you, but when they shoot me – you'll be on your own,” he told to his nineteen-year-old daughter.

He was killed the following day.

NAUJIENĖLĖ – ADAMARINA

Artojas, Arabas and Pinavijas were trapped in Bliūdžius' homestead. The battle.

Arabas first jumped off the flaming house, hid behind the foundations of an old shed and, seeing two Russians near the barn, started to machine-gun at them. Busy with firing, he didn't notice a third Russian, who threw a grenade on him.

The soldiers made a neighbor's son to go to the other two partisans and urge them to give up. Not knowing who was trapped in the house, the boy walked across the yard and shouted,

"Don't shoot, men, they've made me go!"

The men did not shoot, neither did they allow to get persuaded.

"Get out of here!" they yelled at the messenger. "We won't give up!"

And they didn't. When he was out of bullets, Artojas blew himself up and burned, Peony was injured and then killed.

GIŽAI

In 1946, partisans took control over the Gižai district's office and killed all to the last 'people's defenders' they could find there. The same hour and the same minute off-duty *strib*s received some guests too.

Partisans came to the fierce Juzelėnas.

"Get dressed and let's go!"

He refused, "Shoot me here!"

The activist's forehead simply happened to be the nearest thing to the gun muzzle.

GIŽAI

Mickevičius enrolled himself to the *strib*s, went to work for one day, saw the company he got involved into and ran away from it as far as he managed.

He got enough impressions for all his life.

GIŽAI

During one period, *strib*s of this village settled in the brick house of the Rudvaliai, who lived near the road. One early spring night, the house together with all its inhabitants was attacked by *forestmen*: first they fired at the building, then poured fuel and set it on fire.

In order to hide from the bullets and fire, the *strib*s got down into the cellars of the house, full of frozen water. The ice cracked, they fell into the water, but survived.

VILKAVIŠKIS

After school, teenager Sakalauskaitė was going home to Vilniaus Street. When she was passing the *strib* headquarters, she saw a not too tall, fair-haired man running out of the house, who reached the well and fell down hit by a bullet. The girl got scared and started to cry.

"Why is this one sobbing here?" a *strib* leaped towards her.

"Leave her," another *strib* stopped him, as he recognized the girl, living on the other side of the fence.

Only after the days of the National Revival the former schoolgirl found out to have witnessed the last steps of Skatikas, a teacher of the Starkai village.

VILKAVIŠKIS

After coming back from prison, Grinkevičius bumps into a familiar ditchdigger, an ex-*strib*.

"So what were you fighting for?" mocks the ditcher the ex-prisoner.

"What were *you* fighting for?" retorts Grinkevičius. "You *stribbed* and *stribbed*, and now you dig ditches again!"

BŪDEŽERIAI

One misty morning Dulskis was padding along his village street. He saw a drunk as a skunk *strib* staggering towards him.

“Documents!” the ‘defender’ pointed his gun.

I’ll soon show you my documents, - the man carefully looked around. – *Just a second*.

One dash – and the government’s support sprawled along the road, lost the grip of his rifle. The *green man* Dulskis grabbed the gun, dashed it in two and ran away.

Later some suspects, with Dulskis among them, were being interrogated about the incident, but he managed to repudiate the charges.

SERDOKAI

Jaunutis, Žiedas, Pinavijas, Durtuvas, Genys, Vampyras and Klajūnas were staying overnight at their protectors Juraičiai.

Durtuvas: I had a strange dream. I climbed up and up to a very steep mountain and fell off.

He ‘fell off’ one week later. From a bullet.

JELEKČIAI

The *chekists* were informed that at night Slapukas’ squad would come to the village for food. They made two ambushes: one – near Žilionis’ homestead, another – in the fields. The information appeared to be correct. As the night fell, several *nightmen* actually sneaked into Žilionis’ yard, but before the ‘operative team’ managed to make a move, Aleksa – a drunk farmer, singing a popular Russian song – roistered towards the house.

Hearing Russian whoops, the food-seekers decided not to risk and

retreated, in this way escaping the ambush and bullets.

That’s a man, Aleksa! You sang *Katyusha** from the depth of your heart!

UNGURINĖ

Once Vampyras was telling his friends how he, lost in despair, tried to commit a suicide. The chief told how difficult it was at that time, when his children were killed (they were fighters as well), some other troubles... Then he had an assignment to go to the Kingdom of Mice – a hideout in Ungurinė. He reached the peat bogs. Looked for a deeper one, tangled his hands, took a few steps back and – here we go! He stopped at the edge of the shore. To quote his own words – he ‘lacked the willpower’. He came back, gained momentum and – the same again.

He didn’t try for the third time.

VIŽAIDAI

Three partisans came to the Saukos to stay overnight. They were shown upstairs and told were to sleep. Downstairs, the hosts with a piece of chalk marked the places where the men were lying. When soldiers came, they tommy-gunned across the markings and killed two of the partisans.

Vampyras, their leader, was careful and had moved his beddings to another side of the attic. Maybe he suspected something. After shooting, he managed to burn some documents, fired at the soldier, who was climbing upstairs, then ripped a hole in the roof and squeezed out.

There he got killed.

* *Katyusha* – a popular Russian postwar song

ŠIRVYDAI

Accompanied by two *forestmen*, corps chief Slapukas is going to spend night at the Bubniai's. At midnight the homestead is stormed by soldiers of the Liudvinavas garrison. The squad chief, lieutenant Radvilov, knocks on the window and when asked, who's there, makes a joke:

"Slapukas."

The hosts of the homestead are crestfallen: betrayed!

The real Slapukas told to unlock the door and retreated upstairs. The room was soon filled with a pie-eyed army of Radvilov. They circled around, asked Bubnytė to play the bayan, and left. No word about Slapukas.

The punishers from Liudvinavas appeared to have searched Bubniai's neighbor Mykolaitis and found some hooch there; while drinking it they felt like listening to the music. As musician Bubnytė lived nearby, they decided to drop in.

VILKABALIAI

Wounded in the battle, Vikerta managed to reach Alksninė's churchyard and shot himself there. A few days later, his friends who fought in the battle and stayed alive visited Vikertos' home, as they were used to.

"And where is Antanas?" asked Vikertienė, eyeing the night guests.

"This time he couldn't come," prevaricate the men. "But he will come."

A couple of nights later, the same people met again.

"How come Antanas doesn't show up? He used to come back every two-three days, and now..."

"We'll tell you. You'll find out anyway. He died..." the men were unable to tell one more lie.

POSVIETIS

"They won't take me away alive," used to repeat Kemerzūnas, the lonely farmer from the Posvietis village.

No one paid attention to his talks – in the postwar Lithuania death was being mentioned as often as a waded clover field, and much as that clover field it was quickly forgotten.

In the spring of 1948, betrayed by a neighbor, Smauglys, Žaibas and Kovas got into a fight and were burned in Kemerzūnas' yard. Two weeks later, the farmer and his mother were offered a lift to the echelon.

Only then the villagers remembered the man's threat and realized its seriousness: once in an animal wagon, Kemerzūnas found a razor and cut his own throat.

LAKŠTUČIAI

The district chairman Virbickas, like all other nobs, had a right to own a gun. Honor! Some time later father took care that his son would get the same gun too. So soon there were two government's supports in the village. They would walk around carrying those 'pokers' and threaten to exterminate all bandits.

One evening Virbickutis, together with his friend, went to the village dances in Galioriškės manor-house. Of course, he brought his rifle too – let the young ladies see what kind of man is asking them to dance! After the party, when the 'cavaliers' were going home and shooting at the stars, they were met by *nightmen*, waiting in the bushes.

Father, who was spending the night in the neighbor's hay (despite the fact he had a gun), heard the gunshots that killed his son. The young man's mother also said to have heard the shots, but most probably it was her imagination only. We know those postwar mothers: they feel some mild chest discomfort – and start talking at once.

LAKŠTUČIAI

1949. The Kęstutis and Vytautas corps are joined. Klajūnas, the chief of the corps that is being liquidated, visits his signalman and pulls out two bunches of documents from his pocket.

“Burn these,” – he holds out one bunch of papers, “and bury these,” hands in another one. “Either you, or we will need them later.”

Perliba follows the orders. He burns half of the papers and put the rest of the documents into a bottle, seals it and goes to Lankeliškės graveyard. There he shoves the bottle into the grave of his recently buried father.

Watch over it, father.

LIUKIAI

Partisan Garnys, a German pilot, at the end of the war was wounded somewhere around Leningrad and barely managed to find his way to Lithuania. Here he found *forestmen*, learned their language and learned even how to croon some partisan melodies. He didn't have to learn anything about bellicosity, though.

Once Garnys, Kovas and Trimitas were spending a day in Liukiai near the Drausgiris forest. Suddenly Russians came into the yard.

“You stay here, I go,” said Garnys, grabbed his machine gun and burst outside.

His gun got jammed after several shots. The shooter threw it away and pulled out his pistol. His friends in the house also took out their guns and soon one of the punishers fell down. The others were shooting back and retreating.

Garnys thought that the killed enemy was still alive. He jumped towards him and fired from his TT. The dead man's head jerked.

“You bastard, stop jerking your head!” and he raised his gun one more time.

PAŠEIMENIAI

One evening, just before his own death, partisan German Garnys doesn't eat anything, barely stands at the window and sadly watches the fields covered with snow.

“Garnys, what's the matter?”

“Bad! My heart aches.”

“It aches to me too,” his friend tries to console the brave machine-gunner.

Yet, several hours later, it was Garnys who was killed.

PAŠEIMENIAI

In the village, four partisans were spending a day: Garnys, Durtuvas, Savanoris and one more, whose name now no one remembers. The host's brother dropped in the yard and asked thorough questions about who these people were and where they were going afterwards.

When the time to leave came, three ambushes were set around the homestead. It was the horses who sensed danger, and just after leaving the yard they turned into fields. Machine-gunner Garnys forced his horses to come back to the road, reached the ambushade and was killed first.

BARTNINKAI

In 1945 Matusėvičius from Geisteriškės, together with other farmers from the localities, was called in to Bartninkai to account for the taxes unpaid. They were drawn up into a line in front of the table and were asked a question,

“What are you: a farmer? A carpenter? A blacksmith?”

Matusėvičius:

“I'm all: a farmer, a carpenter and a blacksmith.”

“Step aside!”

After the questioning, the rest of the not so versatile debtors were taken to Vilkaviškis and they disappeared from the surface of this sinful Earth for good and ever. And the farmer, carpenter and blacksmith in one person returned to his home and kept rebuilding Bartninkai, demolished by war, for three years.

GEISTERIŠKIAI

1948. The senior Mausevičius comes home from his work in Bartninkai.

“If you only knew, what I saw!” he sighed. He had to come to himself to be able to tell what had shocked him so much.

Stribs brought a wounded partisan to the town. He was in uniform, armed. When they reached the *strib* house, he asked to be allowed to sit and got the permission. The partisan sat down on the entrance stairs, unbuttoned his uniform, scooped the clot of blood from his chest and threw it out. “It’s better now,” he stood up.

Twenty-four hours later this man was dug into the peat in the place where a shop stands now. Other twenty-four hours later the body was unearthed, but who did so – remains a secret. People only know the name of the killed partisan: Karsoka.

BARTNINKAI

The exile of 1949. Whipped in the ruins of Stemplys’ house, the soon-to-be-deported people from neighboring villages are waiting for their destiny.

Mausevičienė: Gelgotienė, why you?!

Gelgotienė: And why you – with children?... But it’s nothing! My son has escaped!

As the two women are comforting each other, a cart rattles down the road. It reaches the house and turns round. A *strib* jumps off

the wheels and pulls someone by the leg. A dead body of an only child of Gelgotienė falls on the ground.

GEISTERIŠKIAI

When the Mausevičiai were deported, *strib* Vainavičius prophesied to the villagers:

“They will never come back! They will rot there! You’ll see, hair will start growing on my palms, if they get back!”

Vainavičius is six feet under for a long time now. The Mausevičiai are for a long time in Lithuania.

TRILAUKYS

District chairman Janulis burst into a farmer’s house with a horde of forever hungry *stribs*.

“Food!” they demanded.

You will feed such a company using your last reserves and you will be happy that they eat your food. When the *stribs* stuffed themselves to the fullest and rose on their feet, Janulis turned to the host one more time.

“You are a good man, Raudonaitis, but you are still a kulak!”

SODĖNAI

During the German times, the Griniai family were evacuated to a little town of Traisen in Austria. There a fifteen-year-old Griniukas acquired a very brisk whip with a collapsible handle; must have stolen it from some gendarme.

As the war was going to an end, the exiles returned to their native Sodėnai. The teenager started to assist the *nightmen* there. When partisans noticed his unusual weapon, they “requisitioned” it and employed immediately.

The *nightmen* would come to some activist, corner him and ask

how many Soviet republics there are. If the trapped one answered fifteen or less, he was released. If someone knew sixteen sisters to exist, they would explain that Lithuania – is Lithuania, not some LSSR*, and in order to consolidate the lesson they would punish the know-nothing with sixteen blows of the whip.

Knowledge has bitter roots.

STOLAUKIS

In the shooting between partisans and *stribs* in Stolaukis, Savanoris was wounded. The partisan managed to reach the Marčiulaičiai's barn in Būdvielis and hid himself there. Marčiulaitienė came and bandaged his injuries, in the meantime her husband saddled the horse and, hiding from his wife, galloped to the Pajevonys *stribs*. These were quick: hurried to Būdvielis and shot Savanoris down.

KARALKRĖSLIS

In a village school a skirmish between *forestmen* and the army began. Everyone got killed – some sooner, some later. As he stayed alone, Kardas climbed up to the school's attic and looked around... Seeing that there was no chance for him to escape alive, he shot himself to the head and half-dead half-alive was taken to Kybartai – to die there.

Such a pity he missed – he would have died free.

PILKALNIS (RUSSIA)

An early postwar. Vitkauskas from Kybartai had to go to the market in Pilkalnis. It was around 20 kilometers to the town, so he set off the night before in order to get there in time.

* LSSR – short form of *Lithuanian Soviet Socialist Republic*

It was dark, one could see neither road nor buildings on the way. “Is it far to that Pilkalnis?” finally seeing an undemolished homestead, goes to ask for directions Vitkauskas. “Did I get lost?” “Follow the telephone lines,” the host explains. “When you see them all cut off – there’ll be the beginning of the town.”

EITKŪNAI – STALUPĖNAI (RUSSIA)

On the right side of the road Eitkūnai-Stalupėnai, even today a solid brick house stands – a former Road Traffic Control. After the war some Russian used to live there, he was an acquaintance of Abraitis from Kybartai. He lived there short though: once Abraitis met his friend in Eitkūnai and found out he had moved to another town.

“Why?” Abraitis asked.

The Russian was open-hearted. He told that when *chekists* arrested some partisan, they would bring him to the secluded building off the road, kill him there and come to another side of the house to wash their hands...

Questioned further, the volunteer fugitive told that the killed partisans were ‘buried’ in empty wells of the surrounding homesteads.

VIRBALGIRIS

Veterans Baltrušaitis and Širvaitis sneaked to the Virbalgiris forest to make traps for roe deer – many people used to get meat in such a way in the postwar period. Alas, a clash between the garrison and the men of the Vytautas corps broke out in the forest that day. When Russians saw the two men – they shot them at once, despite the fact that they weren't carrying any guns. The Russians also killed Pajevonys' mailman Štrimaitis, who was carrying letters.

The postman's relatives with great difficulty managed to retrieve

the dead body, but the ex-front-line soldiers were treated like 'bandits': their remains were towed to Kybartai and hurled to lie on the paving.

AGUONIS

The summer of 1944. The Nazis retreat, but new 'liberators' crawl instead of them. Two Russian scouts, armed with one rifle, were the first to come to the village. They decided to come into the Kajokai's house.

The host, who knew the Russian language a little bit, asked why the soldiers had only one weapon.

One of the scouts answered, "Scouts don't live long at the Front, so when one dies – another stays with the gun."

Then he philosophized about the bright future.

GRAJAUSKAI

Agent hitman Variagas persistently hunts Litas' signalwoman Nykštukas. After one more unproductive 'chase', Variagas' safety is jeopardized and the MGB-ists make a plan how to prove him not to be a provocateur.

The essence of the plan is as follows: Variagas has to 'fight' a soldier near Čiuprinskas' – the partisan supporter's – homestead. In order not to raise any suspicions, there must be blood on the ground in the place of 'death' and on the sleigh in which the corpse will be taken to Bartninkai. The executors must be ready with this 'product' in advance.

Bloody craft, bloody preparations.

LANKELIŠKIAI

Sometime around 1946, the government started to collect signatures under the letter of the Lithuanian people to

comrade Stalin. Some people signed, others waited for what the forest would say.

Partisan Grafas to a villager:

"You were in prison so you don't know anything. There's a conference taking place now, which will take up the issue of the Lithuanian independence. There was a suggestion made for Russians: to question Lithuanians if they want the Soviet government or no. If only 40 percent of the Lithuanians sign under the letter to Stalin – Lithuania will become independent and we will drive the Russians away, but if 60 percent sign – everything stays as it is now."

It's all clear. But who will count the percentage?

VORKUTA (RUSSIA)

A double agent – ex-partisan and agent gunman Kabelis – got drunk and shot a soldier. He was sent to Vorkuta's coal mine No.40. There he was noticed by partisan Guzikas' sister.

"Is it you, Albinas?"

"Me."

"How many years did they give you?"

"Ten."

"I, barely a sister of a partisan, got twenty-five years, and you were you know what..." Guzikaitė was astounded.

"You see, dead men talk..." the new prisoner answered mysteriously, but which dead he had on his mind – he never explained.

MENKUPIAI

Stribs liked to visit the Pupkos family, who had a hideout on their land. The *stribs* would stack their guns in the corner and get down at the table. Meanwhile in the shed, the men

would hush silent and keep watch.

During one of such razzle-dazzle of the 'defenders', Pupkaitė sneaked out to the hideout.

"If you only knew, what fine tommy guns are stacked in the corner! What nice fur-coats are thrown into a heap!"

The men bit their lips, "Shame for this place... Otherwise, we'd easily get those tommy guns!"

MENKUPIAI

In the beginning men used to believe in America, later they realized that the Americans were also telling lies. Yet Nykštukas kept delivering flyers to the people.

The signalwoman: Stasys, why are you lying? No one will come here, no one will set us free!

Nykštukas: We have to tell people something! Otherwise, no one will let us in and no one will let us stay!

MISGIRIS

Gražiškiai garrison came to the Misgiris forest to hunt boars and collided with partisans there. The soldiers called for help and all day long chased the three men across the forest. Finally, when the evening came, they managed to drive the partisans out to the open field near Lankupėnai. Here Okas' leg got shortened by a bullet.

"We'll carry you away!" turned his friends to the wounded man.

"So you will get killed too. Run!" ordered Okas, the elder of the troop.

The men obeyed. When they reached another wood, they heard an explosion.

In order not to get identified – for the sake of his family – the partisan detonated a grenade at his temple.

BERŽINIAI

Petrauskaitė was snatched on. In order to escape the arrest, she went to the Gumauskai in Beržiniai village, where four partisans were already hiding (the fact she wasn't aware of). The girl grasped that when soldiers failed to find her at home, they would begin ferreting all houses and, most probably, would find the men. So she stopped running, met her pursuers and was arrested.

DABRAVOLĖ

Informed by a rat, soldiers and *stribs* were ravaging partisan Kranklys' house in the search for a bunker for two days. They pulled down the walls, hoisted up the floors, but found no bunker anywhere.

Kranklys' wife was a clever one.

"If you don't believe me – get the one who sent you here," she kept repeating. "Let *him* show the place!"

The *stribs* finally lost their patience and did as they were advised: trotted to the village and came back with Veselka. When the rat proved to be of no help in the search, he was well thrashed right in the house.

LIUBIŠKIAI

Durtuvas and Žentas were shot down at Balčiūnai's. For hiding them, the senior family members were sentenced with fifteen or twenty-five years in concentration camps, and the sixteen-year-old Balčiūnaitė, who tenaciously kept her mouth shut, was taken to Kybartai and beaten so severely, that her own father didn't recognize her.

"Is it you here, my child?" he asked, when confronted with his daughter.

“Well... yes!”

The woman still keeps having burning pains in her bones.

JURGIŠKIAI

Before the Easter of 1947, Kovas, Ledas and Uošvis were ordered to block the Vištytis–Pajevonys road and stop anyone who would want to use it. Before the dawn, having fulfilled the task, the partisans were coming back to the forest, when they stepped into a minefield near Jurgiškiai. One after another three explosions thundered. The men fell on the ground.

The first to say a word was Ledas.

“Are you alive?” he asked. “I’ve lost my leg.”

Uošvis got up and moved Kovas, who was lying nearby. Kovas also stood up. They both went to Ledas, whose leg was really torn away. High, above the knee.

Ledas asked his friends to be shot. These did their best to fasten the stump with a belt.

Then Kovas told to Uošvis,

“Take his gun and go. You know the direction.”

Uošvis retreated. After a short while Kovas caught up with him.

“He is not amongst us anymore,” he uttered.

After the dawn broke, the men came back and carried their friend out of the minefield.

KREGŽDŽIAI

A *strib* ‘expropriated’ a farmer’s ram and was taking it away. In order to have free hands – he was carrying a rifle, all in all! – he looped the end of the rope and put it on his own neck. As he was crossing a bridge, the *strib* stopped to adjust the leash. Exactly then the ram wriggled, the wrongdoer lost his balance and

fell over the bridge railing.

“A ram hanged a *strib*!” the news rustled across the district.

KYBARTAI

The arrested Bubnys is drowsing in his cell and suddenly he hears: “Leave the place!”

The prisoner raises his head, looks around – nothing. He closes his eyes again and in his dream he sees an unfamiliar girl.

“Run now, till it’s not too late!” urges she again.

Bubnys wakes up and sees, that his guard has fallen asleep and the key is left in the door, - and escapes.

VILTRAKIAI

A troop of partisans came to Kulingauskas overnight, and in the morning the homestead was surrounded by soldiers, who crossed the river Šešupė. A battle arose. Some partisans died from bullets, others were burned alive when the house was set on fire.

At night, when the punishers drew back to Rumokai, the fire site was circled by villagers, who collected the remains of the killed and buried them in the village’s old cemetery.

As Baškevičiūtė recalls, one of them – Čiaučonas – had only half of his face and a hand burned. The fire didn’t touch another hand.

The right one, clutching the gun.

SŪDAVA

A family of some Legotos used to live in the village of Sūdava. The man was an ordinary man, the children were also ordinary, but Legotienė’s heart was filled with implacable hatred to the ‘people’s enemies’ and their supporters. When in winter of

1946 a column of detainees was led from Kybartai to Marijampolė, Legotienė was standing at the roadside and rejoicing,

“Bandits are being taken away!”

Later she testified against them in court.

Many were deported, some were imprisoned, and comrade Legotienė suddenly found herself living alone amongst enemies. Without further consideration, she moved to Marijampolė, to Montvilos street.

One day two lads knocked on her door – might have been schoolboys or students, as they looked rather young. They greeted her politely and asked if it was possible to rent a room in her house. The answer was ‘no’, so they asked for a cup of water then. Legotienė reached for the cup – and fell hit by a bullet.

The young men disappeared.

KUDIRKOS NAUMIESTIS

Partisan signalwoman Kurtilė is called to the Cheka. To get recruited, obviously.

“Do bandits come to you?” a *chekist* asks, having seated Kurtilė in front of him.

“Bandits don’t come, but *strib*s go on and on!”

“How can you call people’s defenders ‘*strib*s?’” resents the *chekist*. “They defend people!”

If you say so, but it’s not likely to make good friends after such preamble. Thus the number of the warriors of the invisible front is very unlikely to increase either.

KUBILĖLIAI

There was a skirmish at Tarnauskai’s. Two partisans got arrested, but the third one, Talutis, managed to escape. The clash was witnessed by Bačėnienė.

When the *strib*s lost the track and pattered in confusion at the edge of the homestead, Bačėnienė rushed to help.

“Here, here the devil went!” she showed.

The same night a cart rattled from the side of Pusiauskiliai. Neighbors heard a gale of a machine-gun on the Bačėnai side – that was the end of the old wife.

GRIŠKABŪDIS

Having lost his wife, who did such a nice favor to the *strib*s, Bačėnas succeeded to run away from the *forestmen* and reached Griškabūdis.

“Give me a tommy gun!” he demanded at the headquarters. “The bandits are taking all my possessions away. I’ll go after them and shoot them all!”

With the help of the government supports, the man actually managed to chase the partisans down and gunned at them till they disappeared in the depth of the forest.

PUSKELNIAI

Šakūnas housed the district's office. One side of the building was occupied by the host, another – by chairman Grimalauskas.

One morning partisans came. They entered Šakūnas' side of the house, stationed their machine gun facing the door and lied down to have some rest. Having no idea what to do with such a company, Šakūnas fastened a lock on the door and disappeared.

Without more ado, *strib*s showed up. In the search after 'bandits', of course. First they turned upside down Grimalauskas' office, then they stopped in front of the lock.

"Who lives here?"

"Šakūnas, but I haven't seen him today."

The *strib*s shook the lock and then decided to go round the house to peek through the window at least. Grimalauskas knows, what they are about to see there.

"Maybe you would accept a little treat, men?" he calls. "I have some leftovers."

The men were willing to treat themselves to a drink, and while partaking they forgot both the door unopened and the windows unchecked.

NENDRINIAI

Luckus' wife started to cohabitate with Dzenkutis and Luckus came from the forest to put things in order. As luck would have it, he found his wife at the Dzenkai's family home. Dzenkus – the father – grabbed an ax and wanted to defend the woman, but was shot dead. With the same sway of the gun Dzenkus'

wife, also the culprit of the execution, and someone else fell down ...

The vigorous grass widow was killed too.

NENDRINIAI

Two fighters of freedom – Klaidas and somebody else – fiercely resisted in the surrounded homestead of the deported Bosikiai family.

A year passed. Bosikytė had just returned to her native place, when the district's chairman blocked her way and started to reproach that during that battle many 'people's defenders' were killed.

"You shouldn't have taken me away – there would've been zero dead," snapped out the girl, who used to cleverly hide *forestmen* from the constantly ferreting *stribs*, before she was deported.

PUSKELNIAI

Partisan Kižys was sitting at Kunigonis' and noticed three *stribs* stepping along the road and carrying a jar of homemade vodka; one of them was a renegade Mėnulis. Kižys scampered to the garden and preempted the passengers without being noticed by anyone.

"God bless you!" he jumped on the road and greeted them. Then, not waiting for any answer, he raised his Walther and with several shots laid Mėnulis down to the dust of the road.

AUKŠTOJI

Stribs were searching the Valentai's homestead – looking for partisan Lubinas. Unable to find him, they caught the partisan's seventeen-year-old brother, dragged him to a neighbor's yard and pushed him near the well. *Strib* Pauliukonis raised his gun: "I'll shoot you! Tell where your brother is."

"What're you doing!" another *strib* tumbled out through the door. "You'll pollute the man's water supply!"

As they were looking for the place more suitable to the execution, the shooting moved away.

AUKŠTOJI

On June 10th of 1945, several carts full of partisans were going down the road. When they reached a forest, gunfire started – the army happened to be hiding there. The men returned fire, beat more than twenty enemies, but had to retreat anyway, as they were in an open field.

The wounded Lubinas and two his friends were chased by some cavalry Russians. When Lubinas had no ammunition left, he got into Kubilius' brick kiln, but got noticed. Seeing that there was no way out, the partisan lifted a grenade to his head. It didn't explode. Fortunately, he had another one, of a better quality.

THE SASNAVA FOREST

When going to more dangerous operations, Eumas used to leave the squad's seventeen-years-old machine-gunner in the camp.

"Why aren't you taking me together?" Šermukšnis was angry.

"I'm saving you. You will be useful here later," used to answer the squad's chief, a former teacher.

He repeated the same words as he was getting into the sleigh, which took him to the fields of the Puziškiei village, where he got into the bullet hail of the ambuscading soldiers.

PUZIŠKĖS

Chekists brought two wounded partisans to the Šiugždiniai's homestead and laid an ambush there. They already

knew that the unit's chief Eumas would come for his men himself.

The homestead owners were watching the snowy road too, and when they noticed the partisans' sleigh rapidly coming closer, they tried to warn them. Unfortunately, the warning signs were noticed not by the partisans, but by the ambushers. They fusilladed the 'bandits' in the open place and then decided to liquidate the Šiugždiniai family too. The *chekists* chose a remote place, dug a quite wide – wide enough for two – hole there... And when the only thing left to do was to stand the 'bandit' helpers at the edge of the hole and push the trigger, a never-seen-before officer unexpectedly showed up in the yard and interrupted the execution.

So much work in vain!

MARIJAMPOLE

In early spring of 1946, at the end of the present day Kauno Street, the garrison belched out a dozen and one dead bodies with bullet wounds into an old trench and thundered away. The next day the owner of the land was ordered to bury the bodies.

Dumčius pulled a spade out of the barn and did what he was told to. Then he looked around and plunged 13 willow twigs into the ground.

Years passed by. As the time to rebury the fighters came, all these 13 twigs were grown together into one multi-stem tree.

A joint grave marked by a joint sign.

KUŠLIŠKIAI

The first post-war summer. The eldest son of the Jankauskai was hiding from the army on the upper floor of his house.

One afternoon his father hurried home pale as a sheet.

"Some ten Russians are coming towards us, on the road".

"Are they carrying their tommy guns on the shoulders or in their

arms?" inquired the man in hiding. "If they're carrying them on the shoulders and coming without dogs – don't worry. They'll stay for a while and go out."

Having calmed down his parents, the young man ascended upstairs and hid there. Father went to another room and mother dragged and put a big rustic kneading-tub at the door leading to the upper floor and quickly poured two buckets of cold well water into it. Then she turned around, grabbed her toddler twins, fidgeting around, and like a stepmother from a fairy tale tore their clothes off and hustled both youngsters into the tub.

The children could only squeal and cry, but the woman was laughing and joyfully sprinkling the twins with the freezing water.

A senior *chekist* peeked through the door and asked if there are any bandits. The laughing woman showed him the two kids wriggling in the kneading-tub.

The *chekist* took off his file case, sat at the table and started to write something. The children were still crying. The other soldiers were hanging around in the yard.

Some ten minutes later the officer swept his papers back into the file case and left, taking away his soldiers together.

The women drooped her hands.

The twins rolled out of the tub and were wiped and dressed up by their elder sister.

SASNAVA

Seeing that he wouldn't be able to hide any longer, Jankauskas from Kalvarija sought the Sasnava partisans. The first task for the guy new in the district was to become *a srib*.

"Men, but the bullet won't bypass me if I go together with *sribs*."

"Don't be afraid, our bullets will not touch you," the men calmed the rookie down.

They didn't lie – they didn't shoot him. But who can tell, which is the easier way to die: from a friend's bullet or from a furious activist's fork?

ŽALIAI

Pavasaris was wounded near Žaliai, his leg was shot through. *Stribs* carried him to Sasnava, dropped him in the yard by the barns and were beating him there for two days – it was the *stribs'* way of interrogation. These 'interrogations' were ceased by Mikalavičiūtė. She did it in one blow. With a fork to the neck.

SURGUČIAI

After the partisans wiped out a *strib*-like collector of food levy Dūdonis, no one from the villagers wanted to bid farewell to him. Not even one! However, there was one teenage girl who, secretly from her parents, went to look at him and there she saw only the dead man's wife and his two children leaning by the laid out body.

He was buried by the local activists.

MARIJAMPOLĖ

The interrogator's room. Skystimaitė is trying to persuade that she has never seen any partisans.

"There is none corner in Lithuania without them!" retorts the Russian interrogator.

KAZLŲ RŪDA

Brought by truck to Kazlų Rūda, wounded Vaidilutė kept asking for water.

"You will croak anyway, without water!" snapped the soldier who was guarding her.

"One must fulfill the will of the dying," another Russian – a medic, interrupted him. He scooped some water and brought it to the girl. Only Vaidilutė was too weak to drink it anymore.

PUSKEPURIAI

The Postwar. A schoolgirl Grybauskaitė is going to her aunt in the village to get back on her feet. It's almost impossible to get any food in town.

She has to cross the Šunskai wood. She gets lucky: a villager takes her to his cart. They clatter over the tree roots and chat.

"You are going alone through the forest. Aren't you afraid of wolves?" inquires the driver.

"There aren't any wolves in the Šunskai forest, are there?!"

"Well, well," purrs the man. "There are different kinds of wolves."

He helped the passenger out and drove his way. And at once, four 'wolves' appeared. Young, in uniforms. Their clean shirts unbuttoned.

They sidled next to her and travelled together, asking her questions about this and that. They left her alone only at her aunt's doorstep.

The aunt didn't want to keep the 'vacationer' for a longer time.

"You'd better go home," she suggested. "It will come to no good."

The girl obeyed and soon she again idled in a hungry Marijampolė. A few months later, some gymnasium schoolgirls were cautiously sneaking to one of many Cheka buildings to look at the dead bodies of the recently killed partisans. Grybauskaitė also went there and saw the two 'wolves' from the Šunskai wood one more time.

ŠLEKYNĖ

Partisans buried Ulonas and Smauglys, killed in the Paklaniai marsh, in the forest near the village. They put up a birch cross and planted some flowers. The new cross drew the attention

of the Lekėčiai *strib*s and it was immediately destroyed. Later it was pulled down once again. There was also a third ‘fighters’ mission against the grave of the ‘bandits’, constantly restored by the ‘people’s enemies’. It finished in an awkward manner though. To tell the truth, the grave was muddled again, but together with the smoke of the partisans’ mine, the grave profaners also sailed away to the skies.

JAIŠIŪNAI

In 1944, Seklys, a future partisan of Suvalkija, was taken to the Red Army and positioned in Jašiūnai. Half a year later the unit was surrounded and disarmed by the Polish partisans.

“Those who don’t go with us, will be shot down!” the winners announced.

They knew that there were many Lithuanians mobilized forcibly in the unit and they hoped to increase their ranks. There was one thing they didn’t consider though: no matter who you are – a Russian or a Pole – you can’t force people to love you.

KARKLINIAI

Having stopped at Kraptavičienė to have a rest, the partisans washed and hanged their footwraps on the fence. The Cheka informers quickly realized whom the laundry belonged to. They knew that there were no men on this farm and gave a sign to the Keturvalakiai garrison. Then a routine followed: the siege, the fight, and the death.

Seklys was killed.

PARŠELIAI

Two *kolkhozniki*, Labanauskas and Mackevičius, are boozing. One used to be a soldier once, another was a *strib*, so

now they have a lot of things to talk about. Once slightly buzzed, Labanauskas again wanted to hear the story about Berlin, where his co-drinker had been before.

Mackevičius thoughtfully twirled the glass among his fingers.

“While I was taking Berlin, you were looting my bacon-fitches,” remembered the man.

GRYBINĖ

Karijotas’ squad planned an ambush and started to think which sinful soul should carry the news to the enemy. The best options seemed to be the district’s chairman Nemura and Karužienė from the same Šunskai neighborhood.

One of them was selected for his works and the other – for her tongue.

GRYBINĖ

Summer time. A Šunskai villager Jurkša set off to Marijampolė. He started early in the morning. Near the forest outside Grybinė village, he met some armed *strib*s, sneaking behind a truck. Laukaitytė, an activist girl, was among them. She laughed and waved at him – as she knew him, when they passed each other.

They reached the village in no time. Having a false impression to be save, the ‘defenders’ jumped into the truck and the moment they drew near the first house they were all killed by partisans.

Until these days, the man keeps remembering the forest fringe, where he had so closely passed with the Grim Reaper.

GRYBINĖ

Vanagas, fatally wounded in the famous battle, was carried into the cart and taken to the woods of Kazlų Rūda. Next to

the cart, Teras was striding and singing soundly:
You were killed for freedom in an honorable fight,
The native country's falcons.

GRYBINĖ

After the battle of Grybinė, partisans moved their wounded man into the wheels and got to the river Šešupė. They crossed it by the Kazliškiai village and disappeared in the woods of Kazlų Rūda. Some hours later, soldiers were already moving in the same direction. Tanks went, one by one, in every twenty meters. When the soldiers met a teenage boy, who was sent to retie a cow, they interrogated him: who he was, where he was going, and then calmed him down:

“Don't be afraid! We have already driven off the bandits.”

GIŽAI

Partisans attack *strib*s, hiding in the Radušiai's homestead. Having sneaked to the brick house, Giedrulis flashed a grenade through the window, but it bumped to the frame and fell back at the feet of the partisan.

Namely for this death Marijampolė's officers were awarded with the Pancake Ball. Giedrulis was the brother of Pušėlė, the hostess of the ball.

KAZLIŠKIAI

After the Pancake Ball, there was only one way left to Pušėlė's parents – the way to Siberia. On the nearest day of deportation, following all the instructions, the homestead was surrounded by *strib*s, the order was read aloud and whatever object was grasped, it flew to the cart. The soon-to-be-deported were rushing about, the *strib*s were toiling.

While working so hard, one of the *strib*s shoots his own hand and sprawls on the bench. One soldier grabs a towel from the hook and tries to tie up the *strib*s' wound, but Senkuvienė catches another end of the towel.

“A towel for this creep? Bind him up with your footwraps!”

As they were tugging the towel each to their own side, it tore along. One side of it was used to bandage the scallywag *strib* and the other side travelled beyond the Urals.

Just like the Lithuanian people.

DOVYDAI

In 1944, when the first partisans appeared, the *strib*s of Bagotoji thought to organize night ambushes. The first ambush was staged in Dovydai, they lied down by the road and waited.

Their waiting was not in vain. A man appeared in the duskiness. The company allowed him to come closer, killed him and joyfully carried him to Kazlų Rūda. Only there they saw that their first pancake was burnt: they had shot not a commander of 'bandits', but a silly beggar.

BAGOTOJI

On the New Year's night someone knocked on the Vosyliai's window and demanded to be let in. The women, who were left alone without any men, did not open the door to the stranger.

Soon there was another knocking. This time it was the partisans of the Bagotšilis forest, who brought a shaggy man together with them, must have been the same who tried to force himself in the house half an hour earlier. A short examination was organized for the stranger.

“Where are you going?” the partisans ask.

“To Vilkaviškis.”

“Why?”

“To see the doctor.”

“What happened?”

“My foot hurts,” he showed his foot to the men, but all the men could see was a healthy limb. “Oh, not this one,” the patient corrected himself and unwrapped his other foot. This didn’t bear any defects either.

You might as well bite it yourself.

BAGOTŠILIS

It was the summer of 1947. The Bagotšilis *forestmen* got suspicious about one beggar. He was a bit strange: young, strong – but shambled with a bag on his shoulder... As they found out later, the Griškabūdis Cheka had sent their *strib*s disguised like that to scout in the forest.

Nine men were sent, only one returned.

ARMALIŠKĖS

Blažys from Armališkės, an illiterate man in years, wished to become a member of ‘people’s defenders.’ There he got a gun.

Soon he had to go to the forest. He went there, propped his gun against his cart, and started to collect firewood. He didn’t even notice when *forestmen* appeared in between him and his rifle.

“Name?”

“Blažys.”

“*Strib*?”

“No, I’m not a *strib*! But you see, the authorities foisted me the gun!”

Some time later neighbors found a horse stuck in the birch grove and the dead body of Blažys nearby.

BŪDVIEČIAI

Signalwoman Rūta is talking with her brother, partisan Vėtra. Turned to the window, Vytenis is wincing nearby.

“Why is he so upset?” asks Rūta.

“He’s tired,” says Vėtra. “He gave me a headache! If a battle starts now, he asked me to shoot him at once. He says he won’t manage to shoot himself.”

Vytenis asked for the right thing. When he was caught in Nendriniai, he wasn’t able to do any of the two things: he could neither shoot himself nor to keep silent.

NENDRINIAI

Being ratted by a neighbors’ farmhand, Žilvitis, Gintaras and Vytenis were surrounded in Dominaitienė’s hut. In the course of the battle they found themselves on the upper floor of the house, but it was obvious that this was their last battle. When their bullets were over and his friends were tearing grenades from their belts, Vytenis slipped into the smoking place by the chimney.

The explosion made a hole in the ceiling of the little house and two of the fighters dropped down. Soon the third one came out as well – with his hands held up.

NENDRINIAI

Surrounded in a hut, Žilvitis and Gintaras blew themselves up. Their dead bodies were taken by the soldiers, and their family members – some sooner, some later – were sent to the East.

Dominaitienė, the last protectress of the two men, found out where Žilvitis’ mother was deported and wrote her a letter, where she described what happened one midday in June in such detail as she only could. In order to draw a better picture, she slipped a

piece of linen cloth, all soaked with the woman's son's blood, into the envelope... Those postwar letters – something you can never forget!

MARIJAMPOLĖ

When Vytenis surrendered and started to one by one betray partisans and whomever sympathized with them, the youth of the town were quick to create a song:

Budrys,

Budrys

Is going to make an echelon.*

It's a scurvy honor to be included in such a song.

KAUNAS

Rūta, a signalwoman from Marijampolė, is being interrogated by the Cheka. The interrogator is asking questions and playing with an awl at the same time. Rūta is sitting at the other side of the table and waiting when he starts pricking it under her nails.

That time he didn't torture her, but the fear remained. Later the prisoner found a pin in her cell and decided to try how painful it is. As a bolt from the blue, the needle crossed the quick of her nail and – nothing!

She had lost her sensitivity because of hunger.

THE AGURKIŠKĖS WOOD

Four partisans are going along the edge of the forest. Suddenly four Russians appear on their path. The soldiers' guns dangle on their shoulders, the guns of the *forestmen* are ready

* a train carrying deportees to the concentration camps

in their arms. Given such a case, the victory is theirs.

They disarmed the four Russians and let them go.

Left without guns, the 'liberators' were dragging themselves to the barracks and trying to think what tale to tell to get themselves out of this disgrace. On their way they met Tamaliūnienė, who was going home from Kampiniai and carrying some honey in her cart. The woman wasn't willing to give up her delicacy, so she urged her horse and quickly disappeared from the soldiers' sight.

The next day, the same four – lead by their lieutenant – repeated the route and noticed a farmer, harrowing soil with a familiar horse.

"Here! The woman was driving this horse. Some bandits jumped out of her cart and took our guns away!" the soldiers perked up.

It was a lie, certainly, but Tamaliūnienė ended up in Siberia because of it.

THE GERDŽIAI FOREST

Partisans are resting in the thickets of the wood, only Valaitytė tramples at the edge – she is standing guard. Then – a gunshot, a signal of danger.

"Don't go away far from me," when she finally comes, her brother – a partisan – teaches her. "So that I can shoot you in case of necessity... And then I'd shoot myself," he adds.

SPASSK-DALNY (RUSSIA)

On January 16th, 1948, a labor camp prisoner Valaitytė has a dream about her homeland, which is 8000 kilometers away. An impressive monument is standing in her native fields. It looks like a pyramid she once saw in Kaunas, a monument put up to honor soldiers killed at war.

"Whose monument is it, so nice?" Valaitytė asks her neighbor, who has just emerged next to her.

“Your brother’s,” he answers.

Her brother was killed when Valaitytė was talking to her neighbor in the dream.

SPASSK-DALNY (RUSSIA)

During the potato digging two labor camp prisoners – Lithuanians – hid a few potatoes and brought them to the barrack. The fact was noticed by a Russian woman, also a prisoner, and she reported the ‘offenders’ to the authority. The search and punishments followed.

When the Lithuanian women found out who betrayed them, they waited for the right moment, trapped the rat in the corner and gave her a nice ‘lesson.’ The very same evening interrogations started.

After interrogation, the following morning, Baronaitytė comes to Valaitytė and stands next to her in the washroom. She opens the tap, washes herself and sings in Lithuanian:

They asked me who started beating.

I said: I don’t know.

All were beating, so was I.

“What kind of people are these,” rolls his eyes a guard, listening to the mysterious lyrics. “They are being interrogated and beaten, yet they keep singing!”

CHAZAN* (RUSSIA)

Augaitis, a prisoner at a concentration camp, had a dream about the Leader and Teacher of the Nations - just two days before Stalin’s death. Stalin was lying in some sort of a trough and bloody pieces of meat were boiling and turning over around him.

* a labor camp somewhere in Russia

*Zek** had just started to tell this strange dream to his friends, when he was called to the authority.

“What did they say? What did they say?” as soon as he went out, other prisoners rushed asking.

“They forbade me to dream,” mumbled Augaitis.

SPASSK-DALNY (RUSSIA)

March of 1953. Stalin fell down. A commotion starts in Spassk’s labor camp – some are sad, some are happy. Naturally, the officials are all walking with puffy eyes.

An inmate Ukrainian woman is also rubbing her eyes.

“Why are *you* crying?” she gets encircled by the Lithuanian women. “If not Stalin, you would be living free now!”

“Still one of us,” Marinka keeps crying and rejects all consolations.

Like the song says: the heart of a slave is unable to understand the waves of blue freedom.

GRIEŠIAI

Relatives of Baltramonaitis, who was killed in the bunker at Skuciškė, stole his body and buried it in the cemetery of Griešiai village. Soon after *strib*s stormed their home.

“Who gave you permission to bury a bandit in the cemetery?” thundered the chief *strib*, Vaišnora.

He straddled to the cemetery and razed the grave to the ground.

The partisan’s wife and daughter fixed the grave. *Strib*s trampled it again. This happened three times, until the harriers were eliminated by the *forestmen*.

* *Russian slang term*: a prisoner or a labor camp inmate

KRŪVELIAI

Signalman Klimas was waiting for partisans, when soldiers started to circle his homestead. Klimas jumped through the window and, cursing out loud – in order to be heard by the partisans – hurried towards the forest.

He was caught up by a *strib* and stabbed to death.

KAZLŲ RŪDA

In winter of 1947, three bodies of partisans, killed in Garankščiai, were thrown on the pavement in the town. For educational reasons, school pupils were brought to the *strib* house. When the children crowded near the wall, *strib* Agliniškis, a stableman, brought a horse and started to lead it on the lying bodies back and forth. The children remember, that the horse straddled among the remains, but never laid a hoof on them – it kept stepping over the bodies.

Unlike Angliniškis.

KAZLŲ RŪDA

As the power was returned to the firm hands of ‘the people’, the town’s shoemaker, a habitual drunkard, agreed to assist the ‘organs’. The day of delivering the information was quick to come, but all the man had could’ve been written on the head of a pin. The town dwellers knew their cobbler very well and were not in a hurry to discuss the general line of the party with him. And how much can you fantasize without any discussions?

Highly disappointed, the informer plods to his friend, another of the same kind. Unfortunately, this one is also down in the dumps.

“They recruited me too,” acknowledges he, “and I don’t have any information either... You know what,” he suddenly got an idea, “let’s tell on each other! They won’t be doing anything for us – after all, we are their people now! And we will have fulfilled the task too.”

Their plan worked once, then one more time... As the drunkard started to tell the same fairytale for the third time, his employer slammed his hand on the table and bellowed:

“Enough about that cobbler! Now tell me about others!”

Yet the snitch kept talking about the shoemaker...

It’s an honor, but at the same time so hard to be a soldier of the invisible front.

PLIOPLIAI

The old Čižauskienė was enrolled into the black list. There were more than enough people of the same destiny in the surroundings, so there was no place for the woman in the truck on the day of exile and she was taken to Kazlų Rūda railway station by a cart that followed the truck.

VILNIUS

When Čižauskienė from Pliopliai village was deported, her daughter – a student of the Medicine Faculty – was also immediately expelled from the University. The girl would like to come back, the diploma is just one step ahead – and here, have it!

In the search for intercession, the girl found her way to Paleckis* himself.

“You can’t! There’s a class struggle going on,” comrade Paleckis explained the visitor.

JUODBARIŠKĖ

Klanauskienė, a partisan’s mother, was deported

* Justas Paleckis (1899-1980) – a journalist. After the Soviet invasion to Lithuania in 1940, he was the leader of the puppet ‘people’s government’ and actively collaborated with the occupants till his own death.

to the East. In confusion, her husband was left behind. He grass-widowed for a year, but then decided to buy a ticket and go after his wife.

No one can tell now what wrongs – real or imaginary – did the old man carry in his heart, but before setting off he started to openly threaten to revenge the *forestmen* – his dead son's friends in struggle. The partisans heard his threats, came to the old man and took him far far away... Further than Siberia, where he was about to go.

ANTANAVAS

When partisans and *strib*s clashed at the Šiaudiniškė-Antanavas crossroads, an exploding bullet tore off *forestman* Krapavičius' chin. Bleeding heavily, the young man staggered along the river Pilvė and stopped only when he reached someone's yard. He saw a girl there and scribbled a note to her, as he was unable to speak anymore. *Hide me.*

The girl looked around and walked Vytas to a clay storehouse.

Unfortunately, Jankauskienė happened to drive past the yard at the moment. She saw a man with a bloody face and turned her horse to Antanavas' *strib*s.

The storehouse was surrounded and fusilladed. The *strib*s decided that was enough for the bandit and two of them tore the door open. They dropped dead from Krapavičius' bullets. A new hail of bullets battered the clay walls. The storehouse didn't answer. The *strib*s dragged the merciful girl and pushed her inside.

"He's lying on the floor, all curled up," reported she.

Plucking all his courage up, one more *strib* peeked inside. The wounded partisan found the strength to shoot this one too and then died.

Revening for the death of their accomplices, the *strib*s dragged

the dead partisan's body back to the river and hurled it next to the dead horses.

OPŠRŪTAI

Getting ready for the operation *Opšrūtai*, partisans told Vizgirda to harness the horse and go together – in order to have a means to retreat.

They left the cart in Paežeriai, and Vizgirda went together with the machine-gunner.

"I'll call you, if I need you," the latter said. He had recently come back from the Soviet Army and was very well aware how to operate this Degtyaryov machine gun.

Yet there was no need for the volunteer's help. The armed colonists were surrounded and vanquished in twenty minutes.

OPŠRŪTAI

After the partisan attack, colonists needed thirty-four coffins. The killed were being escorted by all the village, both Russians and terrorized Lithuanians. A loser Golubovskiy, the chairman, took care of that: he brought along his tommy gun, went to all Lithuanian homesteads and drove all people to the funeral by waving his gun at everyone.

That's how he showed respect for his compatriots...

THE MARSHES OF TALKIŠKĖS

Fed up with hiding at his own homestead, Vygantas decided to look for shelter at his brother's, partisan Neptūnas. He found both – his brother and shelter. Four days later the squad was surrounded in the marshes of Talkiškės and they were all killed. The only one to survive was Aleksa, who saw how Neptūnas shot his still unarmed younger brother first and then pointed the gun at himself.

BARZDAI

The war is going to an end. Having escaped the bullet of Polish partisans in the forests of Poland by a whisker, Baltūsis left the convalescent unit of the Lithuanian Territorial Defense Force*, which was retreating to the West, and knocked on his sister's door.

“Why did you come back?” gloomed Anelė, who had already believed her brother to have successfully escaped.

“Who will defend Lithuania, if we all leave?” her brother, future partisan Žvejys, purportedly answered.

GULBINIŠKIAI

Deep midwinter. Evening. Partisans come to the Baltrušaičiai. After supper, the men stay at the table, draw out the cards.

At the same table, the hosts' daughter Adelė is rewriting a partisan song.

“Antanėlis!” stirred by the song lyrics, she suddenly raised her eyes to one of the players. “If you had only left...”

“So who would have combated here?” turned Antanas.

For him – for district commander Žvejas – only a few more hours were left to combat.

JUODUPIAI

A troop of partisans came to Žvejas' mother. Right after them – another troop followed, of *strib*s. The partisans hushed in one side of the house, the *strib*s – having no suspicions

* The Lithuanian Territorial Defense Force (or LTDF) – a short-lived, Lithuanian volunteer armed force, created and disbanded in 1944 during the German occupation in Lithuania. It was subordinate to the authorities of Nazi Germany.

– thronged into another.

“Men, just don't shoot in the house!” the hostess darted to the partisans. “You know – it's Siberia!”

The men obeyed and left the house through the window.

GARANKŠČIAI

Erelis was surrounded while visiting his tailor in Garankščiai. He happened to be disguised as a Red Army soldier at the moment. When the homestead was encircled, he sneaked outside, mixed among the punishers and started to wag his gun to all sides. Then he grasped a chance and tried to run to the forest, but was unraveled by the enemy, injured and finally shot himself down.

PAEŽERIAI

Andziulis, a former editor of *Guardian of the Homeland*, lived in Paežeriai. In the late years of his life he made good friends with an ideological enemy – the chairman of the Pilviškiai district, Petrošius. One day the chairman and his twelve-year-old son visited Paežeriai, they were delayed there and had to stay overnight.

As soon as they fell asleep, *forestmen* came. They circled the house, noticed an unfamiliar cart and woke the host up.

“Who is here staying at your place?”

Andziulis felt numb.

“A carpenter from Vilkaviškis.”

“Take us to him!”

One glance at the bed was enough for the *nightmen* to recognize their fierce persecutor. They tied him up, lead to the lake, pushed on the footbridge and shot down. Then they returned to the house, scolded the hosts, but didn't touch the teenager.

VARAKIŠKĖ

Forestman Barzda was going his own ways, when he was ambuscaded at the Lenkčiai's and fell prone on the ground.

A *chekist* sprang to him:

“Have you killed many people?”

Barzda raised his gun. The bullet shortened the pry's jaw.

NAIKAI

Farmer Čebanauskaitė had some business with Pavalkienė in Raninė. Expecting nothing bad to happen, she sent her protégée partisan Rūta to the village.

Pavalkienė was immensely helpful: she even gave a lift to the messenger right to Čebanauskaitė's door. The following day she came to the same door again – in a Russian truck.

NAIKAI

When soldiers found a bunker under the floor in Čebanauskaitė's kitchen, there were two *nightpeople* hiding in it: Rūta and Paukštys. When Rūta heard the demand to give up, she lifted her gun to her temple.

“Good bye, Jonukas!” she said to her friend.

After the shot, Jonukas raised his hands up.

ŠLIURPIŠKĖ

Stribs buried the bodies of partisans, killed near the Jūrė creek, in Martinaitis' pinewood and did their best to even the ground so well that there was no sign of a grave. Despite that, the following morning there was a cross and a birch fence around the grave. Hearing that, Antanavas' *strib* Čirvinskas lumped along and trampled the fence. Some days ago he trampled it again.

When he was ravaging the grave for the third time, an explosion

burst out and comrade Čirvinskas had to be crossed out from the defenders' list for good and ever.

PILVIŠKIAI

During the Nazi times, Petraitukas from Pilviškiai opened a shop. He wouldn't have managed to do it alone, so his neighbors helped him.

There are no data about how successful he was at trading, but when the government changed, his benefactors visited him again.

“We helped you to open the shop, now you must help us to make a place for printing.” Petraitis agreed and allowed the underground press to be printed in his house. It was the very beginning of the second occupation and no one dreamed about labor camps yet.

JANKAI

In 1946, the garages in this village were turned to a prison. No matter how much the prisoners were being terrorized, they used to find strength to sing.

The guarding *stribs* would listen to their songs open-mouthed. When the song was over, they would go and curse the prisoners.

JANKAI

Briedis stopped a cart at night, thinking these were his friends, but he was wrong: the cart was full of enemies. The *stribs* dragged the killed partisan to Jankai, spread his body across the road and ordered the farmers to drive their carts over the body. The men shrugged, pretended to misunderstand the orders and turned off the road.

But not everyone.

DAMBAVA

In 1940, an eleven-year-old Ruočkus was taken from this village to Leningrad Military school. Some time later the village rumored that his name was changed there.

If there were any people who doubted that, they had a chance to find the truth out when the war ended: lieutenant Ruočkus, who was positioned in the localities of Dambava, conducted himself not as Vytautas*, but as Aleksej**.

MARIJAMPOLĖ

Lieutenant Aleksej Ruočkus is getting ready to be repositioned. He can't tell if it's a promotion or demotion – things happen in service. But the lieutenant is willing to remember only the good things.

“I've shot three bandits!” he bragged every time, whenever he had a buzz on.

THE LAPKALNIS – BIČIULIS FOREST

In this forest near Žvirgždaičiai Jūrininkas and his friends were betrayed and blew themselves up. Before leaving to their forever home, the men sang *Marija, Marija**** and the National Anthem.

UZARAI

After the ‘liberators’ invaded Lithuania and were faced with the fact that local men weren't tussling into the army, they started to hunt them. If they caught one – they would stick a gun into his hands

* a common Lithuanian name

** a common Russian name

*** a popular Lithuanian church song

and send straight to the front or to the training first. If someone tried to escape – they were shot down. No matter you were too old or had a ‘white ticket’ for some reason. You're an enemy and that's it.

During several days of such SMERSH* agents rampaging, barely three old men were left in Uzarai from all the menfolk.

The dreariest thing was that the men, once they were in the hands of SMERSH, were not allowed to say good bye to their families. No message to leave, no bundle to take. Only a ploughshare sticking out in the field, only the barn or the smithery door flung open. And a bunch of men in the distance.

Seeing no other way to get in touch with their families, the detainees started to sing. They would go, prodded by guns, and sing *Vai, ko nusižvengei, Ulonai* or *Ant kalno mūrai***.

When the women and children from the surrounding homesteads heard the song, they would dash headlong to the road: maybe they'd manage to pass a slice of bread on, maybe they'd at least have a chance to see their husbands or brothers being driven away to an unknown abyss for the last time.

Lithuania – the land of songs.

DEGUČIAI

The Stirna squad chief Spyglys is showing the district's staff officer around the homestead of Tamaliūnas, partisan supporter. The visitant is taken to the bunkers too.

He speaks to the hostess:

“Is it hard to keep those men?”

“No, it's not. The most important thing is that I can see my husband every day.”

* a special Cheka unit in the army

** popular and beloved Lithuanian songs

“What if you are attacked now?”

“It’s summer now, Russians wouldn’t find anyone here now. But in winter I’ll be keeping some fifteen men,” opens up the woman.

Winter came very quickly. Soldiers surrounded Tamaliūnas’ house and shot five partisans who were hiding there. Then they stormed to the neighbor and strangled him, demanding to show where the rest ten ‘bandits’ were hiding.

DEGUČIAI

Five partisans were hiding at the Tamaliūnai’s in Degučiai. On November 20th, 1945, the homestead was flooded with Russians.

Tamaliūnienė recollects:

“It was havoc! My husband’s brother came running and tried to unlock the top of the window – he wanted to jump out. But it’s all Russians around, where can you run? I unlocked the bottom and said, “Jonas, don’t jump, let me first.” I opened the window, jumped out and go bent down along the wall. The guns rattle all around, the soldiers shout something in Russian, but I don’t understand what. Suddenly a voice: “Can’t you hear they tell you not to run?” someone said in Lithuanian. The voice sounded familiar to me. I turned round and saw Vygaudas, standing some three meters away from me. He was wrapped in a Russian groundsheet*, but the hood was off. The same hair, the same face, everything...”

In summer the same ‘everything’ was sniffing around the Tamaliūnai’s homestead. Only he was wearing a Lithuanian military uniform then.

* a Soviet Army item used as a raincoat and a tent

UZARAI

Immediately after the New Year, Bliuvienė had a dream about her son – a partisan.

“Give me something to eat,” rapping on the window, asked Vincas, but he disappeared as soon as she opened the door.

He was killed that night. The third son in two years’ time.

PALUOBIAI

Three brothers Mockevičiai from Paluobiai were taken to the Red Army in 1944. All three of them deserted the army. The first to do it was Juozas, the eldest brother.

“I won’t serve them! If I must die – I’ll die in Lithuania,” he said to his fellow partisans when he came back to his native land.

When the Šakiai *strib*s found out about the getaway, they scurried to the fugitive’s mother and had some fun: they took the woman to be executed.

PALUOBIAI

Mockevičius from Paluobiai had a dream about his dead brother, a partisan.

“Antanas, be as I am,” he urged.

Antanas obeyed and went to the forest. He was also killed a year later.

GRIŠKABŪDIS

As the new government came to power, the Rudzevičiai brothers lost their will to earn their living by tailoring or smithing, though both of them had good crafting skills. Neither did they want to go to the Soviet Army – as soon as they felt that the time to put on military boots was coming, they enrolled themselves into *strib*s. One good news was followed by another: the

Rudzevičiukai entered the MGB! The ex-tailor and ex-blacksmith became wardens of Griškabūdis prison and started to accompany prisoners of state to interrogations. They never beat the detainees – but used to curse at them till the air turned blue.

On the first day of peace, the brothers collected any weapon they could lay a hand on in prison, unlocked the cameras, lined the prisoners – there was a dozen of them – and took them out. They met an MGB lieutenant on their way to the town.

“Where are you going?”

“To stack hay!”

When the lieutenant went away, they let the prisoners free and turned to the forest.

VIERČIŠKĖ

1946. The year when the *forestmen* still acted in big troops. One day a troop of some fifty men was staying at a farmer in Barzdai. As the evening came, they got ready to leave to the forest.

It was an early spring, the snow had just melted away. When a horde of such size passes, it's not a trail that's left, but a road.

The farmer:

“Now everyone will know you were here. I have to report on you, or else I'll be in trouble.”

“Do it,” the men allowed.

Until the farmer arrived in the headquarters, until the *strib*s gathered themselves and started out – the partisans reached Vierčiškė, situated some five kilometers from Barzdai, and picked the best positions there. When the persecutors puffed to the place, the partisans pretended to be the “people's defenders” too.

The *strib*s believed they met their colleagues from Jankai and came closer, then the tone of the dialogue changed.

“Give up, you Barzdai ragamuffins!”

“Вперёд!” chief *strib* Pirogovas finally found his bearings.

The *strib*s were in an open field and the partisans held their positions in a homestead, behind the brick wall. The ‘people's defenders’ were killed all to the last.

VIERČIŠKĖ

The only *strib* to survive the battle of Vierčiškė was Muraškutis, who was saved by a pond – he plopped into the icy water and remained there.

He died a bit later – from pneumonia.

THE TRANS-SIBERIAN RAILWAY

Having saved the Lithuanian people from the Nazi Germany, the Unbeatable didn't stop and continued saving Lithuanians – this time from Lithuania herself. Some of the first people to be deported to the taiga were the wealthy family of Kudirkos from Skarbūdis.

When the train reached Siberia, the eighteen-year-old son of the farmers managed to escape from the wagon, in the nearest station bought a ticket back to the West, jumped on the train and – was immediately noticed by the eyes of the thieves and vagabonds of the Postwar. Those eyes said: “Good-looking – means rich, rich – means your trip will be short.”

The fugitive was quick to grasp it. He went behind the partition, tied a dirty rag over his eye, swathed his head, smirched his face – and successfully reached his home. What can you get from a *trofeichik***!

* Russian battle cry, calling to attack

** a tramp, vagabond (the Postwar jargon)

SKARBŪDIS

Trimitas became a partisan the moment he returned from Siberia, where his parents stayed. When he came back, two or three families were already living in his fairly large house. He paid a visit to each of them.

“Every week my parents must receive a parcel,” he told. “I don’t know, when I visit you next time, but parcels must be shipped... One week you’ll do it, next – you,” he explained to the intruders and left.

There were just a few exiles who received parcels as regularly as the kulaks Kudirkos that year.

LIEPALOTAI

On Christmas day, 1947, a squad of partisans was assailed in a former Bekėrė’s homestead. Five men were killed, but Aidas escaped and hid himself in the woods of East Prussia. He stayed in hiding there for quite a long time, until one day he set off home and was shot in the stomach when he was crossing the river.

He died three days later, but – on *this* bank of the river.

STOŠKAI

Unable to pay all the levies to the state, the Blaškevičiai women concealed a cow from the authorities. Once, when one of the daughters was leading the cow to drink, she met a levy collector riding a bike from Pilviškiai side. The man was thrilled to see an unregistered animal.

“I got it!” boasted he to a familiar villager. “The cow was hidden, but now they’ll give me everything!”

He was going home happy via Balsynė. At one point, the road crosses a tiny alder grove, some three meters wide. As the cyclist was rattling across the grove, a *nightman* stepped out of the bushes.

They used to be colleague once, in better times. There’s no chance such two would give each other way in such a case.

The levy collection drifted away.

STOŠKAI

One morning the colonists of the Miknaičiai village – Russians – set off to the neighboring villages for food and feed. First they came to Stoškai.

That night a troop of *forestmen* was resting in Žemaitis’ house. When the men saw unfamiliar people getting into the yard, they hurried to get dressed. It might’ve been one of the strangers heard something, so he went to the window to have a look and pressed his head against the glass. On the other side of the glass someone raised a gun. One shot – and no more glass.

No more a watcher either.

VILTRAKIAI

Having shot down a colonist, the *forestmen* ran away from the village. That morning an NKVD lieutenant and his wife were going from Pilviškiai station to the village. They were accompanied by a local *strib*.

They saw some men going up the hill near Viltrakiai.

“Activists are going,” the lieutenant noticed with content.

The *strib* disagreed, “Albinėlis*”, these are bandits, these are not our people.”

They jumped of the cart, slid into the ditch and greeted the ‘bandits’ with gunfire. These yet weren’t scared and returned the fire. Having a bad feeling that this shooting wouldn’t end well, the *strib* dropped his overcoat, the gun and ran away.

* a diminutive form of name *Albinas*

The lieutenant was not so quick, he hesitated for a moment – and quit his service in ‘the organs’ sooner than he’d expected.

ŠAKIAI

Betrayed by a farmer, a squad of partisans was killed in Liepalotai; only heavily wounded Žvalgas was taken alive by the punishers. Interrogations started immediately. The interrogators were very good at their job and used to beat the captive on the neck – until the wound in his head started to bleed and his mouth was filled with blood. Then they would cease the ‘interview’.

The young man quickly grasped the advantages of such interrogations and used to wait for one thing only: to get bloodied as soon as possible.

LUKŠIAI

Jovaras legalized himself, but was arrested and locked in a guard-house anyways. His former classmate, *strib* Kuršius was placed to guard him.

“Vincas, have you got a smoke?” seeing that they are left alone, Jovaras starts to converse.

“I’ve got some Machorka*.”

He rolled a cigarette from a piece of newspaper and handed to Jovaras.

“Vincas, let me go!” tries his luck the prisoner.

“I can’t. They’ll shoot us both.”

A solid argument, nothing to add.

THE FOREST OF VALKAI

Mozūraitytė:

* Russian tobacco of very poor quality

“Before the battle, Valtys was warned: ‘Men, go back! You are surrounded!’ ‘We’ll stay!’ he answered.

You know, a hundred and fifty men, the first battle... Twenty-one lives were lost then. They hadn’t had the experience to keep in groups of three or four yet.”

MILIŠKIAI

After legalization, Jovaras lived free for a month or two. One day he had visitors – chiefs of the squad scattered in the battle of Valkai. “Now they’ll shoot me,” realized the man. “We swore to fight till the end.”

Yet the guests didn’t shoot – they were also looking for a way to survive.

PŪSTAUNIŠKIAI

In the house of Valčiai the authorities accommodated activist Jakštys, who used to spend nights in the neighboring house. Lokys, a son of the hosts, decided to get rid of the unwelcome resident and one night he called Putinas for help. They found a shadowy spot in the garden and lay there doggo until the dawn broke.

Coming back from his sleeping place, Jakštys noticed the lurking partisans and, keeping the same pace, went straight to the Lukšiai *strib*s. Lokys didn’t recognize the passer-by.

Soon a cart carrying seven ‘people’s defenders’ appeared on the road to Lukšiai.

“Let’s run!” offered Putinas. “We’ll use home as a cover and then – to the forest!”

“What does it take to wipe some *strib*s out?” disagreed Lokys, turning an Italian tommy gun in his hands.

Putinas was armed with a Russian ten-shot machine pistol, so he wasn’t feeling powerless either. The two men went to the barn.

When the *strib* cart entered the yard, Lokys fired out. His gun got jammed. The same happened to Putinas' 'ten-shot'. The men dropped their guns, jumped out of their shelter and collapsed, hit by the bullets of the *strib*s.

Putinas was also carrying a hand grenade. He pressed it to his head and pulled by the pin. But that day was not partisans' day: the grenade didn't explode either.

The *strib*s killed Lokys with their rifle butts, but Putinas was thrown into the cart alive – saved for the labor camps.

ŠUNKARIAI

Valaitis, the future partisan Briedis, hadn't been called to the army yet. Despite that, when Russians came, they arrested him, took to Lukšiai and beat him severely. When the young man was released, he was so weak that he collapsed half-way home.

A neighbor came to Valaitienė:

“Can it be it's your Antanas lying in the alder grove? Beaten badly – impossible to recognize!”

The parents harnessed their horse, went to the grove and recognized: it was their son.

OŽKINIAI

When Valaitienė heard gun shots at Varanauskas' side, she moaned to her daughter:

“It's our kids they are shooting!”

She started to ramble from one room to another, praying for her sons not to be taken alive.

God heard the Lithuanian's prayer and both of her sons eluded captivity.

One managed to break out, another was killed.

LAUKINIAI ŠUNKARIAI

Forestman Genys was staying at the Naujokai's as they were treating his injured hand. When he felt better, he and the daughters of the hosts went to a nearby village of Žaliablėkiai to cheer up a bit. As it was only 10 minute distance, they weren't in a rush to go home and got ready to leave only at dusk.

They reached home in no time. But here they see: the shutters, which they had closed before leaving, are flung open.

The postwar youth is cautious. “Why open the shutters before the night?” they wonder. Having no better idea, they start to sing *Subatos vakarėlį** out loud.

Suddenly one more sister appeared in the doorway (not all of them had gone to Žaliablėkiai) and rebuked them:

“Where have you been so long? The Jankai men are waiting for you!”

While she was scolding her sisters, the 'men' – the Jankai *strib*s – also rolled out to the yard, but Genys had already disappeared.

GELGAUDIŠKIS

After graduating from the Teachers' Seminary, Karčiauskaitė was appointed to Gelgaudiškis. It was postwar, the partisan war was at its highest peak. The fresh teacher settles at her new colleague, who is a bit older, and gets immediately called to the Cheka, where she is forced to spy on her roommate. The arguments used by the *chekists* were as follows: her father, who is withering away in the labor camps, feels remorse and asks the Cheka to help his daughter to become a proper person.

Daughter didn't believe her father might have chosen such helpers and managed to evade the cooperation.

* a Lithuanian folk song

GELGAUDIŠKIS

The town's *chekist* is trying to recruit a rookie teacher. Karčiauskaitė is weaseling out. The *chekist* loses his temper and hits his fist on the table:

“You are the clay that is useless – nothing can be made out of you!”

KIDULIAI

The *chekists* foresaw that *forestmen* quite often visited Kiduliai near the Neman – easy to come without being noticed, easy to disappear - and started to terrorize the village vicar for information.

“I can't disclose you the secrecy of confession, our religion does not allow that,” tries to shake them off Rusinas.

“We allow that!” the *chekists* retort. As the priest expresses doubts about their competence to do so, he is sent where polar bears live.

THE FORESTS OF TAURAGĖ

Across the thickets near the river Neman three fighters, who have just jumped from the plane, are making their way: Skirmantas, Rytis and Sakalas. Two men are carrying their guns on their necks and their chief – on the shoulder.

Skirmantas is leading the way. Following his chief's footsteps, Sakalas goes right behind him. After some time he asks,

“Juožas, have you got everything?”

“Nothing is missing,” says Juožas. “I have it all.”

“There was something dangling at your side...”

Skirmantas grabbed his side – his tommy gun was missing! Must have lost it somewhere in the brushwood.

As the leader can't be armed only with a pistol, the sharp-eyed Sakalas had to give up his gun.

SIAUSTUVĖLIAI – BARTUPIS

Dobilas was the first to attack Gelgaudiškis, but he also was the first to get wounded and fall. Another partisan, Vincas Ulinskas, shared the same fate.

Not knowing how to help their friends, the men hurried to the town vicar, who called his worker Kvietkauskas (called by people as Vicar's Jonas) and asked him to hide the injured partisans.

Jonas was quick to help: he harnessed a horse to the cart, raised the men into it and drove off. He left Ulinskas in Ropiena, and another Vincas (alias Dobilas), who died on the way – near the cemetery in Bartupis.

As soon as he turned back, he met *stribs*. The *stribs* checked the cart, found some blood in it and started to beat the driver, demanding to tell where he'd left the bandits.

Vicar's Jonas didn't betray the men and was killed.

JANKŪNAI

Driven away from their hideout in the forest, the Aštrauskai brothers hid in the willow thickets at the river Neman, not far from Jankūnai. Their cousin wants to bring them some bread, but she doubts if she is able to find them there.

“We'll shave some willows,” the brothers promise. “Follow those shavings and you'll find us.”

And she followed – just like in a fairytale. Only it's the way home that is being marked like that in fairytales.

THE PAJOTIJAI FOREST

In the outskirts the soldiers surrounded Aušrinis and Plutonas. The two men refused to give up, a battle started. A bullet hit to Plutonas' machine gun and ruined its disc. Having no other gun, the young man left his position and managed to back out successfully.

No one hit the gun off Aušrinis' hands though, and the partisan fought until he lost his life.

THE PAJOTIJAI FOREST

With Aušrinis killed and his own gun ruined, Plutonas hid the dead tommy gun under a bush, threw his uniform jacket on it and left. "Maybe the Russians will think I am a villager and won't stop me if I'm wearing only my shirt," he thought, pacing across the forest.

He was wrong: they stopped him. As he reached the edge of the forest, he heard "Руки вверх!", but he shot the Russian officer from his pistol and reached another forest successfully.

A couple of weeks later, the partisan called his signalwoman Radasta and asked her to fetch the broken gun: might be he'd be able to fix it. The girl agreed, as she knew the forest and the fight took place not far from her school. Yet when she got home, she started to doubt if she'd be able to find the gun and the jacket, if her efforts would be useful.

At night she had a dream, where Aušrinis encouraged her to go and bring back the items.

"I'll show you," he said.

The girl went, found the things and brought them to Putinas. Now it's fifty years as she wonders how she did it: was it her will or the dead partisan's.

PAJOTIJAI

In the midwinter of 1948, nearly twenty men came on sleds, used to carry firewood, to the Vidrižinskai. The men were young, in uniforms. They pulled the sleds into the barn and went

* *Russian*: Hands up!

to the house to wash themselves and to rest.

The guests lingered for a while. When a neighbor dropped in with some casual matter, she had to stay there too. The host became anxious. "Can it be these are *strib*s, disguised as *forestmen*? Can it be it's a provocation?" he thought.

His doubts were dispelled only the following evening, when all the squad knelt down for a prayer before leaving. "Dear Lord, you created nations and put the desire to be free in their hearts. Bless Lithuania, our homeland," the men sent their greatest desire to heaven.

No *strib* would ever say such words, even if he were to be hanged.

PAJOTIJAI

Balčius, a partisan of the Žalgiris corps, was hiding in Mozūriškiai near Griškabūdis for four years. It was the fifties, one after another the deportees were coming back home, and Balčius was eagerly waiting for his mother to come back from Siberia.

Alas, there were two families living in the homestead where he was hiding. Once a neighbor noticed the hider and 'fulfilled his civic duty'. When surrounded, the partisan shot himself down.

Three months later his mother came back. Her only joy was her son's grave, grubbed by foxes near the forest... This was the grave of the last armed partisan killed in Suvalkija.

SLAVIKAI

Kuncaitytė keeps looking at a flaking mirror and braids her hair.

"Auntie, you've got so thin plaits!" observes her niece.

"I used to have thick ones, but when they pulled my hair out in Marijampolė prison – it never grew again," explained Kuncaitytė, an ex-prisoner.

VONIŠKIAI

For almost four years Stelmokas was the chairman of the biggest kolkhoz of the Plokščiai district. He was a good, prudent leader. But: not a party member!

Šuopys, the chairman of the District Committee, put personal efforts to bring the know-nothing to the right way. To have the crucial word with Stelmokas, his superior comrade came to Voniškiai in autumn of 1953, right after the levy collection. First, like an attentive leader, he inquired about the man's health and work, then he went straight to the most important topic – the chairman's political attitude, and assuredly proved that there was one way left – to join the Communist Party.

“If you don't join the party, I'll fire you!” Šuopys threatened.

“Thank God then,” slipped out of Stelmokas' mouth.

“Причём God? Причём God?” burst the officer and immediately scooted out of the village.

Stelmokas also scooted out – of the chairman's chair.

VONIŠKIAI

Šuolys, the party head of the Šakiai district, is passing the village in his car and sees Stelmokas, a former kolkhoz chairperson, digging soil at the Obeliškiai hill. “He was a good leader,” sighs Šuopys, “but not matured for progressive ideas. I had to fire him...”

As the car reached the digger, it stopped.

“Join the party and you'll be living as a nob,” Šuopys opened the door. “There'll be no need to dig soil.”

“I'm good with it as is,” countered the ex-chairman.

Šuopys pressed his lips, shut the door and skedaddled away.

* *Russian*: What does God have to do with it?

PAJOTIJAI

The election day. Jančius and two other *strib*s were sent to Bunikėliai, as two women from this village didn't come to vote. Grab the ballot box, men, and get those precious people's votes!

It was cold and wet, the horse could hardly pull the cart. Half way to Bunikėliai, the agitators pushed the ballot papers into the box and turned back.

The zealous Avinėlis grasped that the three of them came back just too early. He sprang on the horse and galloped to Bunikėliai. He came back trembling with fury.

“Arrest them! Disarm them! Take them to Plokščiai, with guards! If they try to run – shoot!” he ordered.

“Дурак!” spit the chief *chekist* of Plokščiai Cirkovas, seeing whom Avinėlis had arrested and released all three of them.

PLOKŠČIAI

“The sun can rise from another side too,” philosophized Grybas, the blacksmith of Plokščiai.

It wasn't the first time when Grybas attracted unnecessary attention to himself – some time ago he had refused to chop wood for the director of Pajotijai MTS**, so the officer did his best to give the squirt a chance to improve his geographical knowledge in a concentration camp.

JOTIJA

*Forestm*en had unfinished business with district chairman Latvys.

One day Latvys saw Valuckas, who had just come back from the

* *Russian*: Moron!

** a machine and tractor station

fields, and stopped to have a chat with him. As they were loitering there, two young men approached – one from the left and one from the right side of the house – and held their guns to Latvys’ sides.

“Hands up!”

“Jesus Christ...” Latvys flinched.

“Call for Stalin, not for God,” retorted the attackers and took the seized to Žalgiris – the closest forest.

ROPIENA

The deportees of the 1948 are gathered into the village. Their next stop – the railroad station. The Skėraičiai, who were scooped instead of the hiding Šidovskiai, were also brought to Ropiena.

Not finding their names on the list, the commandant decided to let them go.

“Don’t do that! Whom will we take instead of them?” Jokymaitytė, a collaborating teacher of a seven-year school, jumped to the officer.

The Skėraičiai family had given shelter to the Jokymaičiai, when they were left homeless after the front.

ŠILSODIS

Two partisan signalpeople from Šilsodis are being interrogated: mother and son. There’s only one question: how many times did the partisans come to you?

The son sits tight: none! Seeing that they won’t get anything from the man, the *chekists* bespoke with his mother.

“If your son confesses, we’ll let you both go,” they promise. “Now he distresses both himself and us.”

Mother and son are being interrogated together.

“So how many times did the partisans come to you?” the *chekists* grill the son again. “Tell the truth!”

Having no idea about mother’s and *chekists*’ deal, the young man insists on not knowing anything, but mother interrupts him.

“Dear, you know it was five!”

“Here, what an honest woman!” the *chekists*’ faces lit up. “Like going to confession!”

And you take your ten years, bandit, and go to the concentration camps!

JANČIAI

Povilaitis and Valavičius from Lekėčiai were both neighbors and classmates. So ‘good day’ every day. In summer of 1944 their ways separated: Povilaitis went to the forest and Valavičius joined *strib*s. They met each other only five years later, in the battle of Jančiai.

When Povilaitis’ ammunition ran out, he was badly wounded in the battle. Valavičius jumped to him and crushed his head with a rifle butt.

JANČIAI

Having killed partisan Riešutas in the battle near Guogaitė’s homestead, *strib* Valavičius buried the body in his own garden (he lived near the *strib*house) and planted a cherry-tree on top. When the tree started to yield berries, the *strib* boasted of a good harvest.

Yet the villagers did not forget the killed partisan, and during the days of the National Revival they picked their spades and gathered around the cherry-tree. Entangled by roots, the human bones lay hidden in the soil.

KRIŪKAI

*Strib*s brought to the village a severely injured

partisan, with a gunshot wound in his side. People told that before dying Dima Valuckas (that was the partisan's name) filled a cup with his blood and offered the *strib*s to drink.

THE ALTONIŠKĖS FOREST

Accompanied by three of his fighters, district chief Faustas is going to meet somebody. The forest, night. A twig snaps somewhere in front.

“Men, be careful not to shoot our people,” the chief warns his guards. “Some of my men should be waiting here.”

They sneak forward.

“Кто идёт?” they heard.

“Свои!”^{***} answered Faustas and the four partisans in unison fusilladed at the ambushers.

Faustas changed the disc and continued to fire, when he got shot in both legs. His friends scattered in the darkness. He tore his shirt and tried to stop the bleeding, but was unable to walk anymore.

In the morning, the enemy received reinforcement and attacked the injured partisan chief. His men, who'd been hiding not far away, heard the last salvo of his tommy gun and then – a pistol's bang.

The tommy gun – for the enemy, the pistol – for himself.

VINCENTAVAS

In the last spring of war, Mejeris from Vincentavas was ordered to give a lift to the chief *chekist* of the Šakiai district Petrov. The men from the Valkai forest found out about the trip and set up an ambush, which was fatal to Petrov. When his passenger

* *Russian*: Who's going?

** *Russian*: Friends!

collapsed, the driver grabbed the *chekist*'s bag and fled away as soon as he could.

When he came home, he checked the contents of the catch – and swallowed his tongue for fifty years. Only before his death the man took the shabby bag to his son-in-law.

“Look what I found in the cart after the fight!”

There was a tiny neat clamp – just the right size to press a man's finger – and an awl in the bag. The officer's work tools.

THE LEKĖČIAI FOREST

It happened in 1945 or so. Partisans caught a woman, snooping around their hideout for several days in a row, in the Lekėčiai forest. As there were no mushrooms in the localities, the men were quick to grasp what kind of creature crawled into their dominion. Such should be put between your nails and crushed till it pops.

But suddenly the *forestmen* were overcome by curiosity: how much is enough to put your head on the block? No one can be so naïve not to understand they risk life and limbs if looking for such mushrooms!

They came back to the petrified woman and agreed with ease: we give you life, you give us the price.

It was one hundred rubles.

EŽERĖLIS

In the forest near Ežerėlis, *strib*s attack partisans from the Birutė corps. Lying on the hill, the partisans observe the aggressors and notice someone they know – father of a youth squeezing his gun nearby.

The partisans say to their friend: Look, your father is coming! You'll have to shoot him.

The partisan: You do that. I won't.
The partisans: He would shoot you!
But they couldn't persuade their friend.

THE ŠLAPAKŠNA CREEK

Carrying his wounded brother, Jonas Drulia was running away from the soldiers. Seeing that he wouldn't manage to escape, he didn't leave his brother, but blew himself together with his brother up near the creek under the trees.

KAUNAS

August 14th, 1946. A military tribunal is trying several partisans of the Birutė corps. They are all sentenced to death.

After the verdict was read, the public prosecutor turned to the young men (one of them was Medžiotojas) and said,

“Fill a mercy petition! Maybe the court will consider it.”

The convicted refused to write the petition. They had agreed upon it in advance.

The court left to another room and returned in 20 minutes.

“Taking into consideration your early age, the capital punishment is changed to ten years in prison and five years of exile.”

Alas, they weren't intimidated.

KAUNAS. ALEKSOTAS

Winter. Baltrušaitis, an ex-prisoner of Inta, is standing at the window and looking into the yard.

“Marytė,” he turns to his wife, “what a strange, big bird has come to our yard! I haven't seen anything like it – neither in Lithuania, nor in the North.”

“I don't see anything,” says Marytė, having glanced over the same

yard; yet she goes out to check it together with her man.

“Be careful not to scare it away!” halts in the doorway Baltrušaitis and collapses from heart attack.

KAUNAS. PANEMUNĖ

Another deportation. This time the Patumsiai family were down on luck. Urged by the soldiers and activists, Patumsienė hurries to bundle whatever she finds at home – one can never know what they might need in the wild out there.

One of the activists got bored.

“Why do you need so many bundles?” he frowned. “One is enough!”

Intentionally or accidentally, a bundle with the Tricolor inside travelled to Siberia.

The flag appeared to be long-lived. She outlived the biting Siberian frosts and not only returned to Lithuania, but lived to see the Freedom too.

SUPPLEMENTS

South Lithuania (Nemunas) Military Region

'...This is the company [the Ožys ['Goat'] Company of the Geležinis Vilkas ['Iron Wolf'] Brigade] that is called the mysterious company. Their tactics are truly partisan-like: they perform an offensive and disappear. Russians search in vain for them – they have disappeared as though the Earth has swallowed them. Russians know that there are partisans somewhere around, but they cannot find them or track them down in any way whatsoever. This tactics of theirs is the best: on the one hand, they inspire terror in the Russians and their spies, while on the other hand, they have no losses themselves and preserve their connections.'

*JUSTINAS LELEŠIUS-GRAFAS [‘THE COUNT’]
Partisan Chaplain of the Tauras Military District*

TAURAS MILITARY DISTRICT

The military district was established on 15 August 1945 in the rectory of Skardupiai, administrative district of Marijampolė. The parish priest of Skardupiai Fr. Antanas Ylius was one of the most active initiators of the establishment of the headquarters, which would command all the armed units of partisans active in the administrative districts of Marijampolė, Šakiai, Vilkaviškis, and

Lazdijai. The founding assembly emphasized both the problems of military structure in general and the questions of subordination and discipline related to it.

The latter, especially, were becoming increasingly pertinent.

The person entrusted with the formation of the military district was an officer of the former Lithuanian Army Capt. Leonas Taunys-Kovas. This was not an exception, as the professional soldiers who stayed in the country were sought after all over Lithuania, especially when it came to the formation of partisan military districts. The officers of the former Lithuanian Army were not only authoritative but also had knowledge and experience in the creation of military structures as well as in the promulgation of military normative documents. Even though Kovas was captured a few months later, Maj. Mykolas Drunga-Mykolas Jonas became the commander of the military district, and the period of 1945–1946 saw the formation of the structure of the military district (the brigades of Geležinis Vilkas, Žalgiris and Vytautas), its headquarters and the principles of their activities, systems of communication, support, and material assistance. It was then that the official paper of the military district *Laisvės žvalgas* [‘The Scout of Freedom’] was launched. It was one of the earliest underground newspapers, which along with other

publications of similar nature spread free thought in occupied Lithuania throughout the whole duration of the partisan warfare.

In the spring of 1946, the processes were taking place in the South of Lithuania, which were important for the development of the partisan resistance as a whole: two military districts – Tauras and Dainava – announced the formation of the headquarters of South Lithuania partisans. This meant that the ideas of centralisation acquired concrete and promising forms. Despite the danger of irreparable damage that the enemy agents infiltrated into a centralised structure were capable of wreaking (see chapter *Didžioji Kova Military District*), the move towards centralisation was justified by the principle that this was the only way to fight and speak in the name of the occupied Lithuanian state. It was also the only way in which fighting spirit and discipline of partisans could be sustained, and the lawlessness, which usually characterises partisan warfare, avoided. The leaders of the South Lithuania partisan headquarters failed to avoid the attention of the MGB: as early as May 1946 they had a meeting with Juozas Markulis-Erelis [‘Eagle’] (MGB agent Noreika). Thus, acting through the supreme headquarters, the MGB intended to liquidate lower level structures offering, for example, to legalise partisans using false documents fabricated by the MGB (which could then easily keep track of partisan movements). Due to the

partisans’ reservations concerning such proposals and their effective system of communications, the MGB operation in the Southern Lithuania failed, and in January 1947 a congress of partisan leaders took place in Suvalkija. Owing to practical factors, the partisans of Žemaitija region could not take part in that meeting, but they were informed of it and found a way of conveying their opinion: the Commander of Kęstutis Joint Military District Juozas Kasperavičius-Visvydas analysed the fundamentals of the situation and outlined the guidelines for centralisation as well as the principles of the partisan supreme command. Thus, until the end of 1947, the partisans of Tauras Military District were the most active in the Southern Lithuania. This was also the result of the purposeful and resolute activity of the new district Commander Antanas Baltūsis-Žvejys [‘Fisherman’]. He finally implemented the military notion of organisation (military discipline, subordination, uniforms and recognition signs), and in the summer of 1947 organised the first instruction courses for the partisans.

Antanas Baltūsis-Žvejys also finished sorting out the district’s organisational structure. Due to its geographic position close to the Polish border, Tauras Military District had for a while (1946–1947) become the executor and coordinator of communications with the West. In May and December of 1947, two groups of emissaries were

organised and sent to Poland. It was through here that Juozas Lukša-Skirmantas, Daumantas had come back who had earlier gone from Poland to the West. In February 1948, after Žvejys died and the district sustained several other distressing blows, the solution of internal problems was delayed, and the active centre of the partisan movement moved into Kęstutis Military District in Žemaitija.

In February of 1949, the Commander of Tauras Military District Aleksandras Grybinas-Faustas participated in the assembly of all the partisan commanders of Lithuania and signed the founding documents of LLKS and its political Declaration, thus contributing to the completion of the work started by his predecessors.

In the period of 1950–1953, the military district was weakening. In 1951, communications between brigades ceased and at that time there were only ca. 50 partisans in the territory of the district. The last Commander of Tauras Military District Juozas Jankauskas-Demonas [‘Demon’] was captured and recruited as a double agent in 1952. This basically meant the end of the district existence as the last remaining fighters were betrayed and died within a few months. The last partisan of the district Justinas Balčius-Plutonas [‘Pluto’] was killed in 1957.

COMMANDERS OF THE TAURAS MILITARY DISTRICT



LEONAS TAUNYS-KOVAS
[‘ROOK’]

August 1945–October 1945

Officer Leonas Taunys.
*Archives of the Museum of
Genocide Victims*



ZIGMAS DRUNGA-
MYKOLAS JONAS

October 1945–June 1946

Aviation Major Zigmąs
Drunga. *Archives of the
Museum of Genocide Victims*



ANTANAS BALTŪSIS-ŽVEJYS
[‘FISHERMAN’]

July 1946–February 1948

Retired Lieutenant Antanas Baltūsis. *Archives of the Museum of Genocide Victims*



VIKTORAS VITKAUSKAS-
SAIDOKAS [‘QUIVER’]

October 1949–February 1951

Viktoras Vitkauskas-Saidokas, Chief of the *Tauras* military district. *Archives of the Museum of Genocide Victims*



JONAS ALEŠČIKAS-
RYMANTAS

April 1948–August 1948

Jonas Aleščikas-Rymantas, Chief of the Division of Formation, Headquarters of the *Tauras* military district and future chief of the district. Circa 1947. *Archives of the Museum of Genocide Victims*



ALEKSANDRAS GRYBINAS-
FAUSTAS

October 1948–September 1949

Aleksandras Grybinas-Faustas, Chief of the *Tauras* military district, on the way to the meeting of partisan chiefs. February, 1949. *Archives of the Museum of Genocide Victims*

Glossary

Activist – a collaborant, the ‘red’ activist.

Chekist – a member of Cheka, the first Soviet secret police organization that controlled everything in the society in the Soviet Union.

Forestman – an equivalent of ‘partisan’ in the postwar Lithuanian village. The word came to use in summer of 1944 when men went to hide in forests. At the same time there were other words used to denote partisans, such as *forest brothers*, *forest people*, *green men*, *nightmen*, or simply – *men*.

Komsorgè, *komsorg* – leaders of the Komsomol section (Russian abbreviation of ‘Vsesoyuzny Leninsky Kommunistichesky Soyuz Molodyozhi’, English ‘All-Union Leninist Communist League of Youth’).

Operativniki – Russian word for a group of people responsible for fulfilling orders, e.g. arresting people. It could consist of *strib*s, militia men or other people.

Strib – Lithuanian abbreviation of the Russian word *istrebitel* (‘destroyer’). The plural of this term was applied to the members of the so-called ‘people’s defenders,’ who had been recruited ostensibly to protect the Lithuanian people from ‘bandits’. In actual fact, these were collaborators of the lowest case, brutally tramping the signs of any patriotism or armed resistance among Lithuanians themselves.

Tricolor – the national flag of Lithuania of the period of 1918–1940, and again since 1989.

History of the Cheka

The first Soviet Union security organization Cheka was established on December 20th, 1917. Its name was an acronym for the All-Russian Extraordinary Commission for Combating Counter-Revolution and Sabotage. In 1918, another organization to control the police department, criminal investigation departments, fire brigades, internal troops, and prison guards was formed, it was called the NKVD (People's Commissariat of Internal Affairs). In the course of the history the Cheka was known under such names:

1922: the GPU (State Political Directorate), which was subordinated to the NKVD,

1923: the OGPU (Unified State Political Directorate),

1934–1946: the NKVD,

1941: the NKGB (People's Commissariat of State Security),

1942–1943: SMERSH ('Death to spies' – a special counter-intelligence unit in the Red Army),

1946–1954: MVD (Ministry of the Interior),

1946–1953: MGB (Ministry for State Security),

1954–1991: KGB (Committee for State Security).

Translator's Word

In order to keep the authenticity of names and surnames, these are left in the text as they are originally spelled in Lithuanian, both in singular and plural forms. Lithuanian surnames have specific masculine and feminine forms. Traditionally, there are different endings added to the root of the name to denote the social/marital status of a person,

e.g. ending -ienė is added to the surname of a married woman (or a widow):

Klanauskienė – the wife of Klanauskas, Žaldarienė – the wife of Žaldaris.

Masculine surnames ending in -as, -us have their plural form ending in -ai,

e.g. Gumauskas – the Gumauskai brothers.

Masculine surnames ending in -ius, -is, -ys have plural form ending in -iai,

such as Grinkevičius (one man) – the Grinkevičiai family.

Masculine surnames ending in -a (rare) have the plural form ending in -os:

Stučka – the Stučkos family, Pupka – Pupkos, etc.

Suffixes -aitė, -iūtė, -ytė and -utė are added to maiden surnames of girls or unmarried woman, e.g. Valentaitė – a daughter of Valenta, Briliūtė – a daughter of Briilius.

Names ending in -ukas, -iukas, -utis are diminutive forms of a male surname, informal. Used when speaking about boys/young men in a family:

Brizgutis – a son of Brizgys (informal)

A Note on Lithuanian Alphabet

Phonetic transcription of some Lithuanian letters/sounds

Č is pronounced /tʃ/ like in *check*

Š is pronounced /ʃ/ like in *she*
Ž is pronounced /ʒ/ like in *vision*

È is pronounced /ē/ like in German *mehr*
Ū is pronounced /u:/ like in *blue*

The Most Common Partisan Aliases

Aidas (Echo)
Aras (Eagle)
Audra (Storm)
Ąžuolas (Oak)
Balandis (April)
Beržas (Birch)
Bijūnas (Peony)
Briedis (Elk)
Dobilas (Clover)
Garnys (Heron)
Gintaras (Amber)
Jaunutis (the Young one)
Jūreivis (Sailor)
Kardas (Sword)
Karys (Warrior)
Karklas (Willow)
Katinas (Tom-cat)
Kęstutis – a Grand Duke of Lithuania
Klajūnas (Wanderer)
Klevas (Maple)
Kovas - the God of War in Lithuanian mythology

Lapė (Fox)
Liepa (Linden)
Litas – Lithuanian currency of the period of 1922-1940 and 1993-2015
Liūtas (Lion)
Lokys (Bear)
Medžiotojas (Hunter)
Mindaugas – a Grand Duke of Lithuania and the only King of Lithuania
Miškinis (the one from the forest)
Naktis (Night)
Ožys (Goat)
Papartis (Fern)
Perkūnas (Thunder)
Pušėlė (Little Pine)
Rūta (Rue)
Sakalas (Falcon)
Savanoris (Volunteer)
Siaubas (Horror)
Slapukas (the Hiding one)
Strazdas (Thrush)
Šarūnas – a Lithuanian name
Šarvas (Shield)
Vanagas (Hawk)
Varnas (Crow)
Vėtra (Storm)
Vilkas (Wolf)
Vytautas – a Grand Duke of Lithuania
Vyturys (Lark)
Žaibas (Lightning)
Žilvitis (Willow)

Photographs



Partisans having lunch



The seventh class of Marijampolė Secondary School. Two students were shot by occupants, two perished as partisans and two died in Magadan labor camps.



Partisan P. Jurgilas-Žvalgas' photo with a bullet hole



Students of Prienai – future partisans



J. Lapata-Giedris, a fighter of the *Geležinis Vilkas* corps; perished while raising the national flag of Lithuania in Marijampolė



J. Traskauskas-Jūreivis and S. Ūkelis-Simukas, partisans of the *Vytautas* corps



A group of partisans in the forests of Kazlų Rūda, 1950



The Musketeers squad, one of the first partisan squads in Suvalkija region, 1945



V. Naginionis-Tauras, the
illustrator of the partisan
newspaper '*Laisvės žvalgas*'
(*'Scout of Freedom'*)



V. Radzevičius-Vaidila, the
first editor of the partisan
newspaper '*Laisvės žvalgas*'
(*'Scout of Freedom'*)



Partisans on guard, 1947



Perished partisans of the *Žalgiris* corps, 1947



The six sisters Antanynaitės, all partisan signalwomen, after the labor camps in 1972



Partisan chiefs in the forest of Šunskai, 1947



Seeing off H. Rosmanas-Povas, a future German partisan of the *Geležinis Vilkas* corps, to the front. Essen, Darmstadt region, Traisa village, 1943-1944



Partisan nurse A. Senkutė-Aušrelė with her brother Jonas



Signalwoman A. Lukevičiūtė-Kajackienė-Laimė with her husband partisan A. Kajackas-Kupstas. A concentration camp in Kazakhstan, 1956



On the right: J. Balčius-Plutonas, the last partisan of the *Tauras* military district to perish with a weapon in his hands and partisan V. Sederevičius-Strakauskas



Meeting of partisan chiefs. Standing in the centre:
S. Staniškis-Litas, Chief of the Southern Lithuania's region



Partisans of the *Vytautas* corps



On the left: V. Navickas-Auksutis, Chief of the *Perkūnas*
corps and fighter K. Puodžiūnas-Kirvis, 1930



Partisans Šalmas, Klaidas and Vyturys, 1947



V. Gavėnas-Vampyras and J. Ališauskas-Klaidas, partisans of the *Vytautas* corps



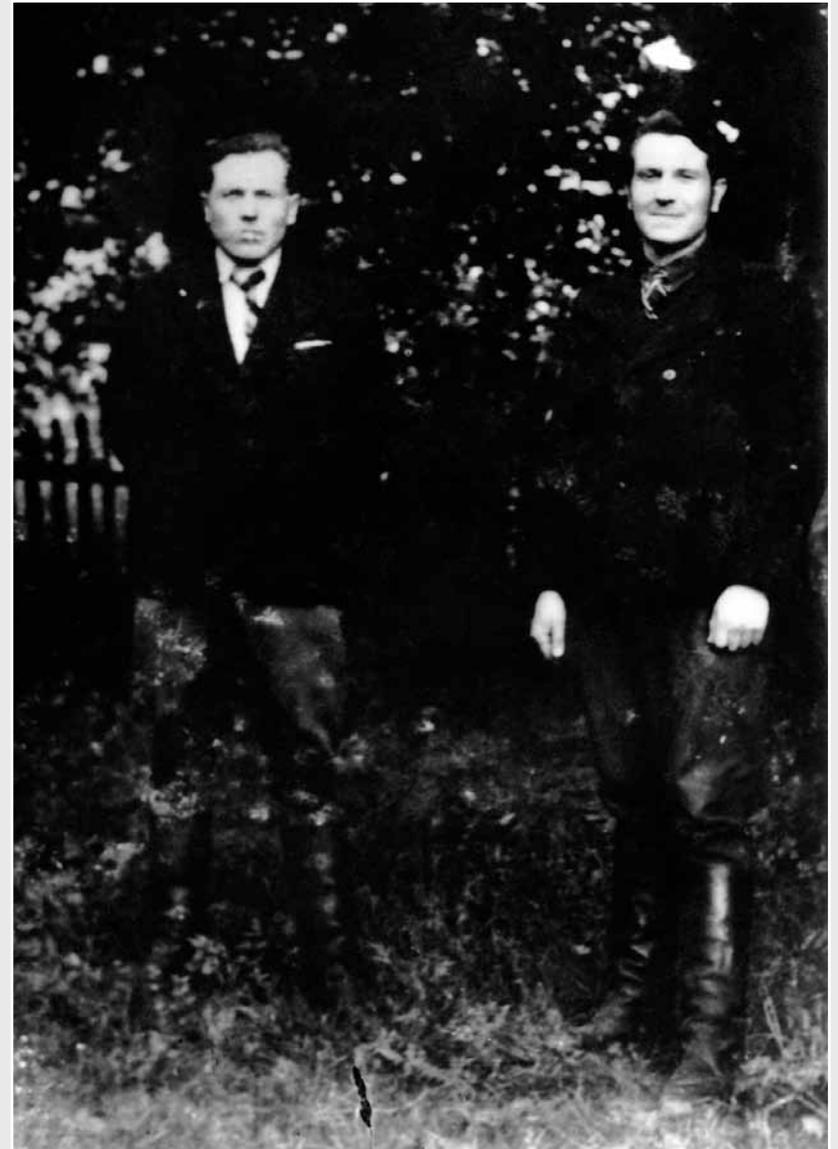
The photo archive of partisan A. Karpauskas-Kurtas



The beginning of a partisan war. The *Varnupiai* squad.
April, 1945



Partisans of A. Karpauskas-Kurtas' squad in winter



Two of five Račai partisan brothers, who were all killed,
Jonas and Vytautas. The *Vytautas* corps



The Stačiokai partisan brothers – Jonas, Algirdas and Klemensas. The *Birutė* corps



The oath of the *Taurus* military district headquarters in Skardupiai. July, 1945



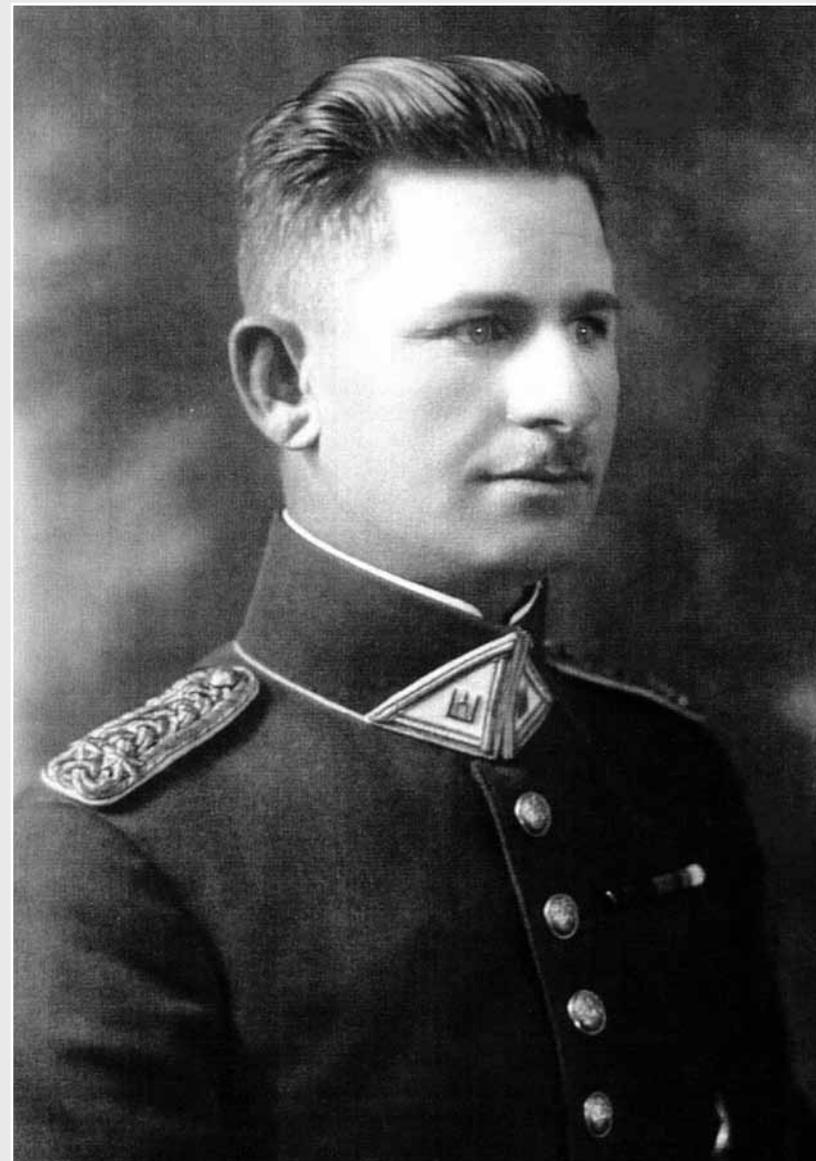
A. Grybinas-Faustas, Chief of the *Taurus* military district



Chiefs of the *Tauras* military district and *Vytautas* corps.
Second from the left: A. Baltūsis-Žvejys, Chief of the
Tauras military district



Fighters of the *Vytautas* corps: third from the left –
Helmutas Greseris-Garnys, fourth – Algirdas Leonavič-Vytis



S. Staniškis-Antanaitis-Litas, Chief of the Southern
Lithuania's region



From left to right: J. Ališauskas-Klaidas, A. Pužas-Gintaras and A. Švedas-Radastas – partisans of the *Vytautas* corps



On the right: A. Juodis-Šturmas, one of six partisan brothers. After coming back from the Soviet concentration camps, he joined partisans and was killed



Partisan V. Naujokas-Jupiteris with a German machine gun MG-34



Partisans of the *Kurtas* squad: K. Popiera-Gegužis and A. Gumauskas-Šturmas



From left to right: the *Tauras* military district partisans Kregždė, Mindaugas, unknown, Kovas, unknown and Rymantas



V. Grikielis-Slapukas, Chief of the *Vytautas* corps



The family of Magdalena Popierienė (in the centre), mother of six partisans. Siberia, 1957

SAJAUSKAS, Justinas

Sa79 Unforgettable names of Lithuania: Novel of miniatures / Justinas Sajauskas; The General Jonas Žemaitis Military Academy of Lithuania, Genocide and Resistance Research Centre of Lithuania; [translation into English Neringa Sajauskaitė-Juknevičienė]. – Vilnius: Lietuvos gyventojų genocido ir rezistencijos tyrimo centras, 2015. – 360 p.: iliustr.
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The literary miniatures vividly depict the life of Lithuanian partisans, signalmen, supporters of the resistance struggle and post-war reality in Lithuania. Resolute courage and cowardice, loyalty to the ideals of freedom and betrayals, serious considerations and mischievous smile, reality and artistic artifice – all are linked and intertwined, or maybe deliberately twisted, for us to compare and conceive. The author of the book strives neither to embellish nor to belittle the events of that time. He barely sensitively and creatively witnesses.

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Justinas SAJAUSKAS

Unforgettable Names of Lithuania

Novel of miniatures

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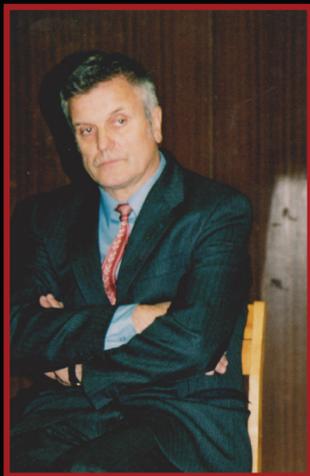
LT-03153 Vilnius



TAURAS PARTISAN MILITARY DISTRICT 1949-1957

X⁴⁹⁻¹ Battle site, year, description number

M 1: 350 000



Justinas SAJAUSKAS

Justinas Sajauskas was born in a little Lithuanian border town of Kalvarija in 1944. In 1949, all his family was deported to Siberia. Eight years later, the Sajauskai came back to Lithuania and stayed in Marijampolė where Justinas attended a secondary school. Later he graduated from Vilnius State University with a degree in Lithuanian Philology.

Justinas Sajauskas writes books on historical topics. *Unforgettable Names of Lithuania* is his last book of this kind. In 2015, the book was awarded the Patriots' Prize founded by the Ministry of National Defence of the Republic of Lithuania.