

The Intersection of Different Narratives: the Holocaust, the June Uprising and the Partisan War

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PROBLEM

The Holocaust, the Lithuanian anti-soviet uprising of June, 1941 (further on, the Uprising), and the Lithuanian partisan war of 1944-1953 are three events caused by different circumstances. They have no direct causal relationship and represent very different phenomena. The Holocaust is a case of the most brutal crime against humanity. The initiator and organizer of the Holocaust, the National Socialist regime, is the case of a political system that mobilized significant state and society resources for the implementation of totalitarian goals based on racist ideology. Inhabitants of the occupied countries (including Lithuanians) who collaborated with the Nazis reflect the image of cooperation with the occupants typical of all wars and armed conflicts. The Uprising and the partisan war represent the phenomena of a different nature: both of them were individual processes of the struggles for independence from the totalitarian soviet regime, whereas the people involved were freedom fighters.

Unfortunately, the historical reality scenes of Lithuania during the Second World War linking the Holocaust, the Uprising and the partisan war ruthlessly twisted these differently treated phenomena – collaboration with the occupants and resistance to them. The occupation of Lithuania in June 1940, and the initiated annexation processes created a favorable environment for various forms of collaboration and resistance. The intensity scales of both phenomena encompassed various conditions ranging from voluntary collaborative initiative to passive reconciliation with the new reality; from patient attitudes of internal opposition to open armed resistance. Between the poles of extreme choices there was also a space in which actions contradicted beliefs and beliefs contradicted actions. Collaboration and resistance was often interrelated, sometimes even in the activities of the same person. During the Uprising, the restoration of Lithuanian statehood was announced; however, after the German occupation, the Lithuanian efforts to restore local government, ensure its protection, and to establish the Lithuanian military force once again began to overlap with collaboration. Collaboration manifested not only in establishment the Nazi occupational administration and the economic exploitation of the land, but also in participation in the crimes of the regime, including the Holocaust.

Professional historical research of the last two decades¹ has confirmed Raul Hilberg's claim that there were no genuinely spontaneous pogroms free from Einsatzgruppen's (Operational groups (D.N.) of German Security Police and Security Service (SD)) influence² in Lithuania and other territories of Eastern Europe occupied by the Wehrmacht. However, anti-Semitic attacks and mass killings were mostly preformed by Lith-

¹ A. Bubnys, *Vokiečių okupuota Lietuva (1941-1944)*, Vilnius, 1998, p. 190-208; Ch. Dieckman, S. Sužiedėlis, *Lietuvos žydų persekiojimas ir masinės žudynės 1941 m. vasarą ir rudenį = The Persecution and Mass Murder of Lithuanian Jews During Summer and Fall of 1941*, Vilnius, 2006, p. 14, 44.

² R. Hilberg, *The Destruction of the European Jews*, 1985, vol. 1, p. 312.

uanians, some of whom were former or future fighters against the soviet occupation, i.e. the members of the Uprising and/ or partisans.

The fact that some anti-soviet fighting units which formed during the Uprising were involved in the mass killings by the Nazis is not new³. However, this does not mean that all former rebels were murderers. The partisan unit of Salakas County in Zarasai district which was founded on June 22 and participated in the Uprising until the end of August consisted of 155 members⁴. However, in August, when the unit was used for the killing of civilians (victims: “3 Lithuanians, 26 Russians, and 110 Jews”⁵), it consisted of 53 members⁶. Only a group of approximately 10 people, referred to as the “striking force”, carried out arrests and shootings⁷. For comparison, out of 22 partisans⁸ of the Stelmužė unit, only 4 were shooting people⁹. There were 10 members¹⁰ in the Kiviškiai unit, 7 of whom were involved in the massacre¹¹.

In August-September 1941, the Lithuanian units of self-defence were reformed into police structures subordinate to the occupational regime. After 1944, part of the former members of self-defence units and policemen who worked for the occupational Nazi regime became partisans. It is estimated that about 35% of all partisan commanders (members of the Council of the Lithuanian Freedom Fight Movement, heads of regions and districts) served in the Nazi-dependent police structures¹². In 1944-1945, 18-21% of all members in partisan formations of Northeast Lithuania (Zarasai, Rokiškis, and Utena districts) came from the former Nazi dependant self-defence units, municipal and auxiliary police¹³. Some partisans who in the years of the Nazi occupation served in the police structures not only maintained public order or fought against the soviet partisans, but also participated in the Holocaust process. For example, it was found that in 1941, chief of the partisan military district Juozas Krištaponis, chief of the partisan company Stasys Čėpla-Vilkas, chiefs of partisan units Juozas Ūselis-Pakalnis and Edvardas Guoga-Glaudys arrested civilians, mostly Jews, and transported them to the places of killing when serving in the 2nd police battalion¹⁴.

The situation described shows several tendencies: a) part of the rebels and partisans who fought for Lithuania's freedom collaborated with the Nazi regime (served in the security forces and the police subordinate to the Nazi command); some of them participated in mass massacres initiated by the regime; b) on the other hand, the Nazi collaborators, in particular the ones who murdered people, constituted a small part of all rebels and even a smaller proportion of partisans; c) participation of the same person in the Holocaust, the Uprising and the partisan war are separate phenomena of a different nature, revealing the complexity of the processes of the time, as well as showing that the same person at different times could acquire the roles of collaborator and freedom fighter.

Unfortunately, such facts and considerations are largely alien to both the Holocaust research and the writings on the Lithuanian armed anti-soviet resistance. Discussions on the involvement of rebels and partisans in the massacre of the Jews and collaboration with the Nazis are often affected by ideological evaluation. For example, in different texts, anti-communist fighters are either identified with the murderers of the Jews or are completely isolated from this problematic context. In both cases, the facts do not really play a decisive role.

³ A. Bubnys, *Holokaustas Lietuvos provincijoje 1941 m.: žydu žudynės Kauno apskrityje*, *Genocidas ir rezistencija*, 2002, Nr. 2(12), p. 81–103; A. Bubnys, *Holokaustas Alytaus apskrityje*, *Genocidas ir rezistencija*, 2012, No. 1(31), p. 32–62.

⁴ D. Noreika, Šauliai, Birželio sukilimas ir partizaninis karas: Šiaurės rytų Lietuvos atvejis, *Lituanistica*, 2015, T. 16, No. 3(101), p. 234.

⁵ 1941 08 18 Rapport of chief of Salakas defence unit No. 9, *Lithuanian Central State Archives* (further on, *LCVA*), f. R-1106, ap. 2, b. 14, l. 4.

⁶ 1941 08 List of Salakas defence unit members, *LCVA*, f. R-1106, ap. 2, b. 1, l. 15–17.

⁷ 1948 06 22 Evidence of Stasys Narkūnas, *Lithuanian Special Archives* (further on, *LYA*), f. K-1, ap. 58, b. 11283/3, l. 23–24.

⁸ 1941 08 List of Stelmužė defence unit members, *LCVA*, f. R-1106, ap. 2, b. 1, l. 15.

⁹ 1941 08 Act of used ammunition by Stelmužė defence unit, *LCVA*, f. R-1106, ap. 2, b. 2, l. 5.

¹⁰ 1941 08 List of Kiviškiai defence unit members, *LCVA*, f. R-1106, ap. 2, b. 1, l. 9.

¹¹ 1941 09 14 A list of Kiviškiai defence unit members who participated in the extermination of the Jews, *LCVA*, f. R-1106, ap. 2, b. 2, l. 3.

¹² E. Žilytė, *Partizanų vadų kolektyvinė biografija*, *Lietuvos istorijos studijos*, 2016, T. 38, p. 84–112.

¹³ D. Noreika, Nuo Lietuvos šaulių iki miško brolių: lokaliai ginkluotos struktūros raidos tyrimas, *Genocidas ir rezistencija*, 2012, No. 2(32), p. 50; D. Noreika, Šauliai, Birželio sukilimas ir partizaninis karas: Šiaurės rytų Lietuvos atvejis, *Lituanistica*, 2015, T. 16, Nr. 3(101), p. 228.

¹⁴ A. Rukšėnas, *Kauno tautinio darbo apsaugos, 2-ojo pagalbinės policijos tarnybos batalionų karių kolektyvinė biografija, daktaro disertacija, Klaipėda–Vilnius*, 2013, p. 217, 359, 362, 373.

An additional obstacle to the critical and objective consideration of participation in the Holocaust and the anti-soviet struggle is an assumption accepted by both mentioned ideologized perspectives that the murderers of the Jews were dehumanized individuals from the margins of society of those times¹⁵. Was it really so and what are the possibilities of overcoming the divide proposed by the two perspectives?

HOW DID PARTISANS BECOME KILLERS?

“The “Death Dealer” of Kaunas: Juozas Lukša” is the title of one of the chapters of the doctoral dissertation defended last year in the United States of America¹⁶. Juozas Lukša, a well known Lithuanian partisan leader under the code names of Daumantas, Skirmantas and others, has become one of the main heroes of this research, which analyzes how the Western states, especially their intelligence, used ex-Nazis and their collaborators in the confrontation with the USSR during the Cold War. The author David Albanese claims that Lukša, a Nazi collaborator, a member of the Lithuanian Activist Front which organized the Uprising, a participant of the mass killing of the Jews in the yard of the Lietūkis garage in Kaunas on June 27, 1941, became an important figure in anti-soviet resistance during the after-war period, a very convenient collaborator with the US Central Intelligence Agency (CIA), and today is seen as a model hero for Lithuanians who strengthen their national identity. As Albanese claims, the CIA decision to choose “lesser evil”, i.e. collaboration with the criminal Lukša was conditioned by the circumstances of the Cold War. However, according to the author, the heroisation of Lukša in present-day Lithuania demonstrates the problem of value prioritization, probably determined by the “post-communist country’s baggage”¹⁷.

Albanese is right. Personal patriotism, efforts to achieve political independence of the nation or any other merit cannot become indulgence for the crimes committed against humanity, and biography cannot be constructed by selectively removing unpleasant records. Thus, particularly these author’s statements should be given a considerable attention. However, the discussion of Lukša’s collaboration with the Nazis and his participation in the massacres of the Jews is not grounded. The evidence used to support these claims actually discredits them. The author refers to a book edited by Russian propagandist Alexander Dyukov¹⁸ and a photo of an unidentified person with a bar or a club posing in the background of the murdered victims¹⁹. First, the informational source is of doubtful quality, second, there are evident anatomical differences between the killer of the Jews in the photo and Lukša. These fallacies may result because of the lack of professionalism or a tendentious approach. However, it is more likely that the author simply followed an established historiographical tradition, which emphasizes a strong association of the Lithuanian partisans with the killers of the Jews; thus authors conducting new research do not even try to verify this paradigm²⁰.

Similar tendencies are also seen in publicistic and popular science texts which have a significantly wider dissemination in comparison to academic research. Robert van Voren’s book published in the Netherlands and Lithuania several years ago is one of the best examples of indifference to the credibility of the facts. The author identifies the anti-soviet activities of Lithuanians with the Nazi attitudes, the post-war partisans are mentioned only in the context of the murdering of the Jews, the Uprising of June 1941 is associated with the Lithuanian Activist Front, whereas the latter – with the Nazis²¹. In addition, the post-war partisans are attributed the blame not only for the participation in the Holocaust, but also for forgetting this fact. It is claimed that because of the threatening of the “forest brothers” even those people who were saving the Jews from repressions were afraid to

¹⁵ D. Noreika, Apie partizanus ir Holokaustą, *Naujasis Židinys-Aidai*, 2017, Nr. 4, p. 39–40.

¹⁶ D. Albanese, *In Search of a Lesser Evil: Anti-Soviet Nationalism and the Cold War* [doctoral dissertation]. Boston: Northeastern University, 2016, p. 222–252.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 251.

¹⁸ Великая обогнанная война-2. Нам не за что каяться! ред. Александр Дюков, Москва: Яуза, Эксмо, 2008.

¹⁹ D. Albanese, *In Search of a Lesser Evil: Anti-Soviet Nationalism and the Cold War* [doctoral dissertation]. Boston: Northeastern University, 2016, p. 222–252.

²⁰ D. Noreika, Apie partizanus ir Holokaustą, *Naujasis Židinys-Aidai*, 2017, Nr. 4, p. 39–46.

²¹ R. van Voren, *Undigested past: the Holocaust in Lithuania*, Amsterdam, 2011, p. 66–72; R. van Voren, *Neįsisavinta praeitis: Holokaustas Lietuvoje*. Kaunas, 2011, p. 66–72.

admit what they did²². Other factual problems are seen in the description of the liquidation of the Local Force (*Vietinė rinktinė*): “Of the 13,000 troops that were to be demobilized, only some 3,500 did so. Most of the others fled to the forest with their arms and many of these formed the core of the partisan forces fighting the Soviets until well into the 1950s. The tragedy is that among those who bravely fought against the Soviet oppressor, were those who also actively participated in the killing of Jews”²³. It is questioned why the murdering of the Jews is attributed to the Local Force, which had nothing to do with it? Probably these accusations are made only because of the fact that the Local Force was formed during the Nazi occupation. It is interesting why the fact that the period of existence of the Local Force and the peak of the massacre of the Jews did not coincide chronologically does not receive the author’s attention. Obviously, there were people in the Local Force who formerly participated in the massacres or pogroms of the Jews and later became partisans, however, this nuanced interpretation is not reflected in the text.

An analogous pathway of factual errors is seen in the book of Rūta Vanagaitė and Efraim Zuroff, which has received significant media and public attention²⁴. Despite the loud announcement of the *new* approach to the problem in question, the authors traditionally do not make a distinction between the Lithuanian anti-soviet resistance, aspirations for the restoration of independence and crimes against humanity. The Lithuanian Activist Front, the Lithuanian National Socialist Party, the Uprising, the Provisional Government, the Lithuanian administration, the Catholic Church, the Laymen Council, the units of Defence of National Work and Rollkommando Hamann, and the Special Squad of Vilnius are all treated equally as criminal structures. The attention of the reader is captured not by the details of historical context, but by emotionally stirring excerpts from interrogation protocols or testimonies of contemporary witnesses²⁵.

The basic idea of one of the most recent works on the discussed topic by Arkadijus Vinokūras that “the children of executioners are not guilty of their parents’ crimes”²⁶ has been realized in an actually innovative way (by publishing thirty five conversations with the children and relatives of the murders of the Jews or others involved in the genocide). The author’s introduction to the book reflects sensitive and profound thoughts. However, when discussing the question of unreasonable “worshiping of post-war ‘heroes’”²⁷, the author recalls the biography of one of the organizers of the anti-soviet underground, Jonas Noreika-General and expresses his personal view on the topic by using a quote from an internet portal: “(Y)es, Jonas Noreika fought against the Russians. Did not we all fight against the Russians? Jonas Noreika did what many Lithuanians did, but he also organized the Jewish ghetto which led to the killing of thousands of our Lithuanian citizens. He arrested the unsuspecting Lithuanian citizens who were busy with their daily work. He ordered the confiscation of their property, he robbed them and prepared for destruction. Stalin behaved likewise”²⁸. However, it is interesting why the author himself does not discuss the topic of the former cooperation of Lithuanian partisans with the Nazi. There are no attempts to discuss the historical context or critically evaluate the sources. Instead, an incompetent opinion devoid of the mentioned elements is chosen as evidence. To illustrate, a professional research of Alfredas Rukšėnas has revealed that Noreika was not an initiator or organizer of the mass killings, which were performed by the operational groups of the Nazi Security Police. Noreika did not arrest the victims, because this was done by the members of Lithuanian police. When Noreika received a post in the administration of Šiauliai district, the ghetto of Žagarė was already established. On August 22, 1941, being the head of Šiauliai district, Noreika passed an order of Šiauliai Region Commissioner Hans Gewecke for the chiefs of rural districts and small town burgomasters on the transfer of the district’s Jews to the Žagarė ghetto. He also organized the expropriation of the Jewish property to the county’s administration²⁹. Noreika was a Nazi

²² *Ibid.*, p. 173.

²³ *Ibid.*, p. 113.

²⁴ R. Vanagaitė, *Mūsiškiai*, Vilnius: Alma litera, 2016, p. 48–103.

²⁵ For more details see: N. Šepetyš, *Jūsiškiai – mums ne mūsiškiai*, *Naujasis Židinys-Aidai*, 2016, No. 2, p. 10–16.

²⁶ A. Vinokūras, *Mes nežudėme*, Vilnius, 2017, p. 11.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 29.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 30.

²⁹ A. Rukšėnas, *Jono Noreikos-Generolo Vėtros biografijos kontroversijos*, *Genocidas ir rezistencija*, 2016, No. 1(39), p. 39–64.

collaborator and participant of the part of the Holocaust process; however, a collaborator and a murderer is not one and the same.

Where does this tradition of historical texts represented by these works come from? There are two possible sources. First, during the Second World War, a viewpoint was formed which divided the world into two blocs: the Axis powers and the anti-Hitler coalition. In this two-pillar structure, a certain place was given for various partisans: the soviet-communist partisans were perceived as an appendage of the anti-Hitler coalition, whereas the Lithuanian partisans, the participants of the Uprising, the members of the Local Force and the Fatherland Defence Force, and the scouts of the Lithuanian Freedom Army who were trained in Germany were categorized as pro-Nazi subjects. This perspective became established in the post-war period, and, for a long time, there was neither academic interest nor favorable political situation for more explicit exploration of the above-mentioned phenomena³⁰.

The historical context of post-war and Cold War periods influenced the politically motivated evaluation of the Nazis and their collaborators as well as directions of Holocaust research³¹. This situation was especially convenient for the purposeful soviet activities, the second source of historiographic paradigm which identified the Lithuanian partisans with the killers of the Jews. The soviets highlighted the ideological similarity of Lithuanian anti-soviet fighters and the Nazis arguing that Lithuanians, working together with the Nazis, carried out massive massacres of civilians, and later applied the same methods in partisan activities. According to Mingailė Jurkutė, the soviet regime “presented the mass killings carried out by the Nazis in parallel with the “crimes of the bandits”; in this way, their status and weight of crimes were shown as equal i.e. the National Socialist crimes against humanity condemned by the whole free world and crimes against the peaceful inhabitants committed by “bandit gangs” which operated in Lithuania”³². These narratives reached western societies because of the systematic efforts of the KGB which aimed to discredit the Lithuanian aspirations for freedom and to set the Jewish community against the Lithuanians³³. Later, publications arguing that Jonas Žemaitis-Vytautas, Adolfas Ramanauskas-Vanagas, Lukša, Noreika and other prominent partisan leaders and fighters against the soviet regime were the murderers of the Jews appeared³⁴. The myth of identification of Lithuanian partisans with the Nazis still prevails not only in Russia, but also in the West and in Lithuania. In addition, it continues to be embedded in new texts, even academic ones. If historical texts support this narrative, there will be no need of source criticism, factual verification, and sensitivity to the uniqueness of local processes, or the assessment of the historical context.

THE PRICE OF IDEALIZATION

The processes of the Uprising and the partisan war have received a considerable scientific attention. The monograph of Kęstutis Girnius published 30 years ago both in the United States and Lithuania³⁵ is an example of an in-depth study of Lithuanian social reality during WWII which combines the theoretical perspective of social sciences and historical research. The author has shown that by investigating the available resources professionally, the fragmentary nature of the data or its questionable reliability can be objectively dealt with. However, what is the most important, he realized the principle that “one myth (the Soviet history – D.N.) should not be replaced by another”³⁶. Drawing on this principle, Girnius’s research has shown that discussion about the armed Lithuanian anti-soviet struggle may not be a pillar of ideologized or politicized paradigm, but reveal the objective representation of the various processes in the occupied country, introduce the variations in human behavior in certain historical circumstances, develop critical thinking, etc.

³⁰ D. Noreika, Apie partizanus ir Holokaustą, *Naujasis Židinys-Aidai*, 2017, Nr. 4, p. 39–46.

³¹ N. Šepetytis, Lietuvos santykiai su žydais? Holokausto istoriografijos analitika, *Naujasis Židinys-Aidai*, 2005, No. 6, p. 246–254.

³² M. Jurkutė, *Lietuvos partizanų karo atmintis: sovietinis, vietinis ir išėivijos pasakojimai* [daktaro disertacija], Vilnius, 2016, p. 71.

³³ D. Juodis, Šiapus ir anapus kordono: sovietų saugumo veikla prieš lietuvių išėiviją 1945–1991 m., Vilnius, 2016, p. 242–267.

³⁴ *Lithuania. Crime and Punishment*, 1999, January, No. 6.

³⁵ K. Girnius, *Partizanų kovos Lietuvoje*, Vilnius, 1990.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, p. III.

Thus, this work stands as an outstanding example of historical research, which was understood differently in the occupied Lithuania.

Girnius provides an in-depth discussion of the topic relevant for this research: the evaluation of the rebels who fought for the Lithuanian independence, partisans who collaborated with the Nazis and their participation in the murdering of the Jews. The author formulated several well-grounded theses (based on the analysis of available sources at that time), which laid the foundation for a deeper understanding of historical phenomena: a) part of the former Nazi collaborators, even those who participated in the massive massacres of civilians, mainly Jews, became partisans at the beginning of the second Soviet occupation: “even those who became used to killing in the years of the Nazi occupation went to the forests”³⁷; b) the former Nazi collaborators (most of whom were secretly hiding during the inter-war period or emigrated to the West) constituted only a small part of partisans, who predominantly were younger people fighting against the repressive soviet regime; c) without a comprehensive empirical study, the generalizations of this problem are conditional. Only a detailed empirical investigation would enable to answer the question of relationship between the Lithuanian partisan war and the former Lithuanian cooperation with the Nazis³⁸. It could be assumed that with the free access to the soviet archives, with the increasing numbers of authentic sources, and with the newly discovered hidden documents of partisan actions, the conceptual framework proposed by Girnius was further developed.

However, the situation did not change. Research published on the Uprising and partisan war after the mentioned study of Girnius have not succeeded in dealing with all the necessary issues. Even before March 11, 1990, when Lithuania was still occupied, the Lithuanian partisans and the participants of the Uprising began to be referred to as freedom fighters. In the context of statehood restoration, historical images revived as a source of formation of the nation's identity and patriotism; the narrative of armed struggle against the USSR became topical once again. It was formed primarily as a contrast to the soviet propaganda, which was not acceptable to those who possessed the knowledge of the anti-soviet struggle from the immediate social environment, and to those who linked the soviet propaganda to other disclosed propagandist images. Consequently, the conception of anti-soviet resistance began to be based on the idealized narrative which was heavily influenced by the work of the Lithuanian émigré – the writings of Juozas Lukša-Daumantas³⁹ and Juozas Brazaitis-Ambrazevičius⁴⁰, which portrayed the image of rebels and partisans as freedom fighters, victims of soviet repressions and, at the same time, defenders of civilians.

The idealized narrative created by émigré Lithuanians was heavily influenced by history writing tradition of inter-war Lithuania as well as the situational circumstances of the war and post-war period. The authors of the first writings on resistance were especially sensitive about the controversies of the Lithuanian cooperation with the Nazis and Lithuanian aspirations for freedom. Thus, it is not surprising that they tried to avoid identification of freedom fighters with the killers. As a result, for Brazaitis-Ambrazevičius, whose activities during the Nazi occupation were also investigated by the expert commission of US Congress (as a consequence, he was removed from the list of the Nazi war crimes suspects living in US), June uprising was “an existential decision” and the partisan war “the most heroic (...) action of armed resistance”⁴¹. The concentration of the rebels was explained using figurative expressions as “the selection of nation's knights” and “the motives of duty and heart”⁴².

The topic of involvement of rebels and partisans in the massacre of the Jews (or collaboration with the Nazis in general) has been rather neglected by Lithuanian researchers. It was suggested that the majority of the Uprising participants went back to their farms after the retreat of the Soviet Union and did not participate in criminal activities. In 1944, most killers and collaborators fled to the West, were hiding or worked for the

³⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 369.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 97–99.

³⁹ J. Lukša, *Partizanai už geležinės uždangos*, Chicago, 1950.

⁴⁰ J. Brazaitis, *Vienų vieni: dvidešimt penkerių metų rezistencijoje*, Chicago, 1964.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, p. 190.

⁴² *Ibid.*, p. 221–227.

soviets. Tomas Remeikis only briefly mentions this topic⁴³, whereas a more detailed discussion is given by Romualdas Misiūnas and Rein Taagepera who claim that the Nazi collaborators fled to Germany or started to cooperate with Moscow; often they changed their names and surnames⁴⁴. This statement shows the choices made by some Nazi collaborators, however, it is too narrow and does not reflect the actual situation. It is wrong to assume that a person who collaborated with the occupants was just an opportunist who could only behave in two ways, that is if the occupational regime changed, this type of person either fled with the old master or started serving for the new one. However, similarly to the pre-war and post-war Lithuania, the historical reality of the Second World War was favorable for various forms of cooperation and resistance: opportunistic double⁴⁵ or even triple collaboration⁴⁶; cooperation with one occupant in order to defend oneself from another occupant. Today, it is clear that the Nazi collaborators did not just rush to the West or began to work for Moscow. Many of them continued to fight against the soviets. However, these issues were not considered by the Lithuania émigré at that time.

In 1990, when the Lithuanian independence was restored, the collision of new national and old soviet narratives did not result in the construction of a novel perspective. On the contrary, the local authors continued to develop the idealized narrative created by émigré Lithuanians. Objective, but inconvenient evidence and facts were ignored. Being the core of the previous soviet propaganda, they became associated with the all the lies of the fallen soviet regime. In this way, the facts about the possible links between partisans and the Nazi occupation were not mentioned or superficially denied by giving a reference to convenient sources. For example, Nijolė Gaškaitė's et al., claim that only 8% of the partisans were accused of collaborating with the Nazis is based on the statistics of biographical data of partisans who died from August 1951 to January 1953. However, the data of 1944–1946 would represent the actual situation more objectively and accurately⁴⁷.

In summary, an idealized approach focused exclusively on Lithuanian victimization and suffering perspective, whereas the partisan war became isolated from the problematic relationship with the Second World War. In this way, the formation of a new approach based on objective interpretation of events and critical thinking was not encouraged⁴⁸. As a result, writings which idealize the partisan war are viewed by some historians not as academic research, but as historical perspective of the past which was born “after the long years of prohibition to talk”⁴⁹; others perceive these texts as attempts of certain political forces to monopolize the “martyrological discourse” in order to please the “specific electorate”⁵⁰ (it should be noted that such perspective is often as ideological as the one previously discussed). Despite this criticism, the lack of critical and analytical approaches can be seen in today's research as well⁵¹. For example, particularly strange are considerations that a person who participated in anti-soviet resistance and suffered repressions becomes not guilty of the previously committed crimes against humanity by claiming that “only a mean-spirited person would dare to call him a collaborator or the killer of the Jews”⁵².

⁴³ T. Remeikis, *Opposition to Soviet Rule in Lithuania 1945–1980*, Chicago, 1980, p. 58–59.

⁴⁴ R. Misiūnas, R. Taagepera, *Baltijos valstybės: priklausomybės metai 1940–1980*, Vilnius, 1992, p. 94–96.

⁴⁵ A part of the former soviet collaborators (communists, Komsomol activists, militiamen, collaborators with security services, etc.) helped the Nazis during the period of the German occupation in order to save their lives. L. Rein, *Local Collaboration in the Execution of the “Final Solution”*, *Holocaust and Genocide Studies*, 2006, Vol. 20, No. 3, p. 381–409.

⁴⁶ Some of the murderers in the “Lietūkis” massacre (for example, Juozas Surmas) worked as the Nazi agents until 1940. In 1940–1941, they collaborated with the soviets, whereas by conducting murders in June 1941 they tried to show their loyalty for the Nazis. A. Anušauskas, G. Sviderskytė, *XX amžiaus slaptieji archyvai: Dvylika istorijos detektyvų*, Vilnius: Alma littera, 2008, p. 58–101.

⁴⁷ N. Gaškaitė, D. Kuodytė, A. Kašėta, B. Ulevičius, *Lietuvos partizanai 1944–1953*, Kaunas, 1996, p. 14.

⁴⁸ D. Noreika, *Apie partizanus ir Holokaustą, Naujasis Židinys-Aidai*, 2017, Nr. 4, p. 39–46.

⁴⁹ E. Aleksandravičius, *Atviros atminties visuomenei, Pasipriešinimo istorija 1944–1953 metai*, Vilnius: Aidai, 1997, p. 5–6.

⁵⁰ V. Safronovas, *Lietuvos atminimo politikos tendencijos po 1990 metų, Nuo Basanavičiaus, Vytauto Didžiojo iki Molotovo ir Ribbentropo: atminties ir atminimo kultūrų transformacijos XX–XXI amžiuje*, ed. Alvydas Nikžentaitis, Vilnius, 2011, p. 337–378.

⁵¹ E. Jančauskienė, “1944–1953 m. Lietuvos partizaninis karas su Sovietų Sąjunga”, in: *Lietuvos karai: Lietuvos XIX–XX a. nacionalinių karų sisteminė-kiekybinė analizė*, Vilnius, 2014, p. 211–270.

⁵² V. Sinica, A. Terleckas – KGB'istas, valstybės kūrėjai – balvonai, J. Noreika – tautos gėda, <<https://www.delfi.lt/news/ringas/lit/v-sinica-a-terleckas-kgbistas-valstybes-kurejai-balvonai-j-noreika-tautos-geda.d?id=68629510>>, [accessed: 2017 05 28].

ARE ALL COLLABORATORS THE SAME?

The authors of historical texts who support the paradigm of idealized partisan war *a priori* tend to reject (or at least to marginalize) the relations of the freedom fighters with the Nazi collaborators, and killers especially because of the prevailing tendency to dehumanize them i.e. to treat them as racists, sadists and criminals. However, is this a well-grounded approach?

Collaboration or cooperation with the occupant or enemy is typical of the history of all wars and conflicts of humanity. Most attention has been given specifically to collaboration with the Nazi Germany⁵³. This historical period gave rise to a number of definitions of contemporary approach to collaboration and synonyms used to refer to this phenomenon as, for example, *kvizling*. Collaboration is most commonly seen as a synonym of treason or as an antonym of patriotism; however, this superficial view does not reflect the complexity and ambiguity of historical reality⁵⁴.

In Lithuania, the concept of collaboration is strongly influenced by the strict evaluation of collaboration with the soviets, although the definitions are rather universal. For example, in Vytautas Tininis's research, a collaborator is predominantly the "traitor of homeland". According to Tininis, "collaborators are people who betrayed their homeland and its independence due to political or ideological beliefs and voluntarily cooperated with the occupants"⁵⁵. This is a rather straightforward and superficial definition in comparison to the one given by Vincas Trumpa in 1989, who claims that sometimes "it is difficult to draw the line between the freedom fighter and collaborator", because in different historical circumstances, the same person could be both a traitor and a hero⁵⁶. However, a number of historians could not accept that the two images – the heroic freedom fighter's and dehumanized traitor's – could be compatible in one person, which is why, according to Joachim Tauber, the related discussions have been suffocated by "the categorical clichés of *either-or*"⁵⁷.

During the post-war period, the writings of Lithuanian émigré about the collaboration with the Nazis or the Holocaust mostly protectively neglected the collaboration of Lithuanians with the occupants or their participation in the crimes against humanity. Some of them blamed people of other nationalities⁵⁸, others claimed that although there were some Lithuanians among the collaborators, they mostly came from the margins of society⁵⁹ and, in this way, were aliens. This viewpoint merged with the liberal intellectuals' perspective to look at the problem in a direct way and influenced the Lithuanian academic texts. This trend is visible in Romualdas Misiūnas's and Rein Taagerera's claim that collaborating Lithuanian were a "handful of scums"⁶⁰, or a statement of Vygintas Vareikis that "the majority of Lithuanian collaborators were people from the margins of society"⁶¹. This type of discourse showed the Nazi collaborators as distant, alien, dehumanized, and pushed to the margins of society, which, in a way, explained the reasons of their actions.

These historiographic tendencies confused the phenomena of collaboration with the Germans (in general) and participation in the massacre of the Jews (in particular). For example, one of the most prominent researchers of the Holocaust, Saulius Sužiedėlis, enumerates the reasons which made Lithuanians to participate in the killing of the Jews: 1) opportunistic outbreak of the criminal element; 2) wish to revenge for the crimes of some Jews committed to Lithuanians during the first Bolshevik period; 3) sudden formation of op-

⁵³ J. A. Armstrong, Collaborationism in World War II: The Integral Nationalist Variant in Eastern Europe, *The Journal of Modern History*, 1968, Vol. 40, No. 3, p. 396–410.

⁵⁴ Leonid Rein, *The Kings and the Pawns: Collaboration in Byelorussia during World War II*, New York: Berghahn Books, 2011, p. 11–18.

⁵⁵ V. Tininis, Kolaboravimo sąvoka Lietuvos istorijos kontekste, *Genocidas ir rezistencija*, 2001, No. 1(9), p. 71–78.

⁵⁶ V. Trumpa, Kovotojai ir kolaborantai, *Lietuva XIX amžiuje*, Chicago, 1989, p. 62–77.

⁵⁷ J. Tauberis, Tarp laisvės kovos ir masinių žudynių: 1940–1944 metų fiktyvios lietuviškos biografijos įvadas, *Lietuvos istorijos metraštis*, 2002, No. 1, p. 99–120.

⁵⁸ Mykolas Biržiška attempts to prove the innocence of the killers by describing the unit of German collaborators: "all armed young men talked in Polish, although this unit (...) was known as "Lithuanian"; this is how it was referred to by the Germans". M. Biržiška, *Lietuvių tautos kelias į naują gyvenimą*, Los Angeles, 1952, T. 1, p. 48.

⁵⁹ Juozas Prunskis claimed that only Lithuanians "inclined to criminal activities" participated in the killing of the Jews. J. Prunskis, *Lithuanian's Jews and the Holocaust*, Chicago, 1979, p. 13.

⁶⁰ R. Misiūnas, R. Taagepera, *Baltijos valstybės priklausomybės metai 1940–1990*, Vilnius, 1992, p. 67–68.

⁶¹ V. Vareikis, Kontraversiniai antrojo pasaulinio karo vertinimai, *Acta Historica Universitatis Klaipedensis. Antrojo pasaulinio karo pabaiga Rytų Prūsijoje: faktai ir istorinės įžvalgos*, 2009, T. 18, p. 11–34.

posing geopolitical interests of two communities; 4) traditional anti-Semitism, which unfolded at the peak of war and occupation; 5) fascist and nationalist moods encouraging anti-Jewish actions which appeared among Lithuanians before the war⁶².

Sužiedėlis applies a similar scheme not only for the explanation of the Lithuanian participation in the killing of the Jews, but also for collaboration in general. In this case, the author distinguishes: 1) nationalist idealism; 2) political naivete; 3) ideological contamination; 4) obsequious opportunism; 5) criminal intent⁶³.

It is evident that both definitions of collaboration are interrelated and that the second explanation is largely influenced by the first one i.e. the reasons of the killing of the Jews affect the conception of collaboration in general. It can be agreed that Lithuanian intentions to collaborate with the Nazis (before the outbreak and at the very beginning of the German-soviet war) were dictated by geopolitical interests, political or social opportunism, but it is difficult to estimate the role of the “criminal intentions”. Of course, during the military actions and the Uprising, there were favourable conditions for robbery, property confiscation, violence, killing and other criminal activities; however, it is doubtful whether they were related with collaboration. The activities of the provisional government of Lithuania which collaborated with the Germans for strategic reasons as well as the actions of police or self-defence units which cooperated because of the tactical or social motives were primarily directed at prevention of criminal events rather than their initiation. The reason of the first brutal murdering and pogroms was not criminal intentions, but opportunism of collaborators, their attempts to show loyalty to the new regime or to avoid punishment for cooperation with the soviets. These factors could also be applied to the re-established Lithuanian security and criminal police and other institutions. Criminal action was not a primary purpose, but rather an outcome or a price paid for the achievement of certain goals⁶⁴.

Moreover, the words “naivete”, “contamination” and “obsequious” used by Sužiedėlis imply a preconceived attitude with respect to the Nazi collaborators, projecting the knowledge of the outcome of WWII and the resulting evaluation of collaboration and the National Socialism. Narrative which merged various phenomena of those times (criminal intentions, racist anti-Semitism, and immoral opportunism) contributed to the formation of the premise that cooperation with the Nazis was equal to crimes against humanity and betrayal of the interests of Lithuanian people. On the other hand, emotionally neutral words could be used to describe the motives and factors of collaboration. For example, Stathis Kalyvas who conducted a research on the Greek service in the Nazi auxiliary police in 1941-1944 explains that this choice of the Greek people was determined by strategic political orientation, the choice of the “lesser evil”, material interests and avoidance of the Nazi violence⁶⁵.

CONCLUSIONS

Due to the particular circumstances of the Second World War and the related processes, the same person could be both a collaborator and a freedom fighter. This fact neither condemns nor justifies this group of people, but rather reflects the complexity of the particular period of time. The usage of the bipolar formula “patriots or killers” simplifies the historic reality, which could be revealed only by a multi-layered and multi-perspective evaluation of the Uprising, the period of the Nazi occupation and the partisan war. This academic approach would allow to objectively portray the facts representing a different perspective of the same historical phenomenon and construct a coherent and critical narrative. The reconstruction of the factual rather than simplified social reality would help to create the preconditions for knowing the past with its all light and dark undertones instead of painting it black-and-white.

⁶² S. Sužiedėlis, Penkiasdešimčiai metų praėjus: Lietuvių tautos sukilimo ir Laikinosios vyriausybės istorijos interpretacijų disonansai, *Metmenys*, 1991, No. 61, p. 149–172.

⁶³ S. Sužiedėlis, Lithuanian Collaboration during the Second World War: Past Realities, Present Perceptions, “*Kollaboration*” in *Nordosteuropa: Erscheinungsformen und Deutungen im 20. Jahrhundert*, Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2006. p. 164–173.

⁶⁴ D. Noreika, Apie partizanus ir Holokaustą, *Naujasis Židinys-Aidai*, 2017, Nr. 4, p. 39–46.

⁶⁵ S. N. Kalyvas, Armed Collaboration in Greece, 1941–1944, *European Review of History—Revue europeenne d’histoire*, 2008, Vol. 15, No. 2, p. 129–142.

From this point of view, the discussion of the facts of the collaboration with the Nazis (or even participation in the mass killings) in the biographies of the participants of the Uprising or the partisan war would not destroy the image of the anti-soviet resistance as a fight for Lithuanian freedom as both facts represent a historical reality. Crimes against humanity were performed not by fanatical dehumanized individuals, but by *normal* members of the societies of those times. The Lithuanian choices were largely determined by objectively and subjectively rational models of actions tested by historical experience as well as the perception of forms of collective action prevalent in the society of those times. People had to obey the orders enforced by the leadership and conform to the social pressure. An important role was played by the Nazi government (which was real and absolute at that time), which initiated and legitimized the mass killings and the intensifying war phenomena as active anti-Semitic propaganda, deepening polarization and brutalization of society, routinization and development of tolerance to the killings. Part of the former Nazi collaborators or participants of the Holocaust participated in the Uprising and became partisans after 1944 who fought against the soviet occupation. The fighting for freedom does not deny any of their previous social roles and does not redeem their crimes, whereas the latter do not take away the status of freedom fighters. This perspective enables the modern society to better understand the totality of the past events as well as allows the academic research to realize its didactic function, that is, to reflect the nature of war and the processes happening in the country occupied by a totalitarian regime.