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JUOZAS DAUMANTAS

FIGHTERS FOR FREEDOM



**Lithuanian Partisans
Versus the U.S.S.R.**

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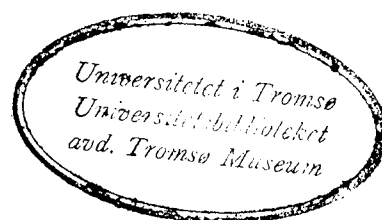
LITHUANIAN PARTISANS

VERSUS THE U.S.S.R.

(1944-1947)

*Translated from the Lithuanian
by E. J. Harrison and Manyland Books*

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SECOND EDITION FIGHTERS FOR FREEDOM

Copyright © 1975 by Nijole Brazenas-Paronetto
Published by The Lithuanian Canadian Committee for Human Rights, 1988
1011 College Street, Toronto, Ontario, M6H 1A8

Library of Congress Catalog Card No.: 74-33547
ISBN 0-87141-049-4

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PRELUDE: JULY, 1944

It is dinner time on a muggy Sunday afternoon in late July, and we are gathered around the table as usual. Father sits at the head, with mother on his right and our maid-servant, Ona, beside her. My four brothers and I are seated around them, filling up whatever places are left.

Wordlessly, father picks up a spoon and starts sipping his cold buttermilk-beet soup. We imitate his example without really wanting to do so. It is too hot and too noisy. Mortar shells destined for distant targets whine and whistle high in the air above our roof. Sometimes their targets are not so distant, and then the resulting explosions shake the walls and rattle the windowpanes. We are anxious and tense as we wait for the inevitable to happen. And we dread it so much the more because we know that it *is* inevitable. We can sense its presence in each other's eyes, feel it all around us in the room, in the house, everywhere. . . .

Half-way through dinner we are startled by the tread of heavy military boots nearby, and look up to see a handful of German soldiers striding into our dining room. Hunger, fatigue, and the same kind of anxiety which has been plaguing us all day are written on their faces. "Essen," one of them whispers and starts to push his way towards the table. His comrades crowd in close beside him, leaving us little choice. We get up and let the Germans finish what remains of our meal. There is not nearly enough to satisfy the hunger of a tow-headed young private, who pulls out his automatic and orders mother to show him the way to the larder. A few minutes later he returns with a huge chunk of smoked bacon which he starts to devour as though it were some kind of prize.

The highest ranking of our uninvited guests has usurped father's place at the head of the table. We cannot help staring at him: for some reason, he has shaved only one half of his chin.

"Those damned Russians!" he grumbles. "They've been hot on our heels all day. The devils didn't even give me time to



We also see them gradually becoming aware of how little the free world cares about their plight, and we cannot help but admire their determination to go on fighting just the same. Unheralded, unknown, and abandoned by the Western Democracies in which they had placed so much faith, these young people were destined to share the fate of the Hungarian freedom fighters who came after them—a fate which the author of this book also shared. After having broken through the Iron Curtain in 1947 to plead his cause before the West, he returned to Lithuania in 1950 and was killed by the Soviets a few months later.



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FIGHTERS FOR FREEDOM

Lithuanian Partisans Versus the U.S.S.R.

by Juozas Daumantas

This is a factual, first-hand account of the activities of the armed resistance movement in Lithuania during the first three years of Russian occupation (1944-47) and of the desperate conditions which brought it about.

The author, a leading figure in the movement, vividly describes how he and countless other young Lithuanian men and women were forced by relentless Soviet persecutions to abandon their everyday activities and take up arms against their nation's oppressors.

Living as virtual outlaws, hiding in forests, knowing that at any moment they might be hunted down and killed like so many wild animals, these young freedom fighters were nonetheless determined to strike back with every resource at their command.

We see them risking their lives to protect Lithuanian farmers against Red Army marauders, publishing underground newspapers to combat the vast Communist propaganda machine, even pitting their meager forces against the dreaded NKVD and MGB.