

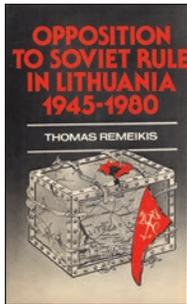
BOOK REVIEW

Opposition to Soviet Rule in Lithuania, 1945–1980

Remeiki, Thomas. *Opposition to Soviet Rule in Lithuania, 1945–1980*. Chicago, IL: Institute of Lithuanian Studies Press; 1980. Hardback, 680 pages. ASIN: B0006COSGE.

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

As US and other NATO forces stream into the Baltic States on maneuvers, while looking over their shoulder at the Ukraine, the Baltic States, now proud NATO Alliance members, feel encouraged and this book is again timely. It is an analysis of dissent and rebellion in Lithuania from the outset of Soviet aggression and occupation in World War II to the time of the book’s publication in 1980. It focuses on national and religious concerns, written 10 years before Lithuania became the first Soviet republic to declare independence from the then decaying, soon to be former Soviet Union. The author, a Lithuanian native with a PhD from the University of Illinois, has been a prolific author ever since this book was published, now concentrating on Soviet human right violations in the Baltic States.



When World War II began, the three independent Baltic States—Lithuania, Latvia, and Estonia—first fought the invading Soviet army from the east, then the invading Nazi army from the west, and then the reinventing Soviet army again from the east. This spirited resistance did not stop in 1945 but continued into the 1950s or later as a resistance movement with guerrilla forces (called the “The Forest Brothers,”), an auxiliary, and an underground. The resistance forces were actually encouraged by the Germans, who let many Baltic soldiers fade away to join the resistance at the end of the war and the Allies drew a distinction between SS and Baltic SS: “The Baltic Waffen SS Units are to be considered as separate and distinct in purpose, ideology, activities, and qualifications for membership from the German SS, and therefore the Commission holds them not to be a movement hostile to the Government of the United States under Section 13 of the Displaced Persons Act, as amended.”¹ As time went on, the expected help from the Central Intelligence Agency did not materialize and the resistance slowly shifted from guerrilla warfare to propaganda, sabotage, and covert political activity. For a good overview of all CIA plans concerning penetrating the Warsaw Pact countries and helping surviving World War II guerrilla

bands, see *Operation Rollback. America’s Secret War Behind the Iron Curtain*.² One huge limiting factor was ammunition, which slowly decayed. Some members of these resistance movements and others originating from the Baltic States left and migrated to America. Like the Finns, some left their mark on American Special Forces, see MG Shachnow’s book, *Hope and Honor*.³ For a book on the resistance in Estonia, see Mart Laar’s book, *War in the Woods*.⁴ He later became prime minister of an independent Estonia. The very last Forest Brother did not give up the fight until 1995!⁵

The book is a tome, 680 pages. The first section covers the partisan war from World War II to 1952, followed by “covert nationalism” from 1953 to 1970, and then the more public opposition of the 1970s. The last 500 or so pages are a collection of documents from and about the guerrilla forces. It includes orders, bulletins, propaganda, declarations, directives, and “Bulletin of a Passive Resistance Center.” It shows their transition from fighters to underground resisters. Also included is a section on the help provided by the Catholic church, similar to the church helping the Polish labor union, Solidarity.

This hardcover book, 680 pages, cost me \$10.00 on the Internet. Cheap at half the price! As guerrilla/unconventional warfare continues to rise again in importance, it is time to start your own library.

References

1. Letter from Harry N. Rosenfield, Acting Chairman of United States Displaced Persons Commission, to Mr. Johannes Kaiv, Acting Consul General of Estonia, in re memorandum from the Estonian Committee in the United States zone of Germany on the question of former Estonian Legionnaires seeking admission to the United States under the Displaced Persons Act, as amended. September 13, 1950. Downloaded 19 February 2017: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Forest_Brothers
2. Grose, Peter. *Operation Rollback. America’s Secret War Behind the Iron Curtain*. Houghton Mifflin Company: Boston, 2000.
3. Shachnow, Sid and Robbins, Jann. *Hope and Honor*. A Tom Doherty Associates Book: New York, 2004.
4. Laar, Mart. *War in the Woods*. Howells House: London, 1992.
5. Downloaded 19 February: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Forest_Brothers.



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