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## **Rifleman's sign on the uniform: the members of Lithuanian Riflemen's Union in the lithuanian partisan war (1944–1953)**

**Słowa kluczowe:** Litewski Związek Strzelców; mundur partyzancki; partyzancka prasa; wojsko litewskie; wojna partyzancka

**Keywords:** Lithuanian Riflemen's Union; partisans' uniform; partisans' press; Lithuanian army; partisan war

### **Introduction\***

**In** the discussion of the paramilitary public organization of the Lithuanian riflemen which was active in the First Republic of Lithuania and its relation to the resistance movement of 1944–1953, it is important to analyze the visual signs of the process. This article discusses the riflemen participation in guerilla fights and their role in the Lithuanian partisan units by focusing on the partisan uniforms, their details and signs. A specific attention is given to the partisan press, which was also rich with various symbolic elements. It is assumed that partisan press helped to form

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partisan identity and reflected their relation with the Lithuanian Riflemen's Union. The data of the research consists of the partisan clothing, uniform elements and insignia stored in different Lithuanian museums. The majority of the material is stored in the Vytautas the Great War Museum in Kaunas and in the National Museum of Lithuania in Vilnius. Another important source of research is the iconographic and documentary data of partisan war stored in the Museum of Genocide Victims and the Genocide and Resistance Research Center of Lithuania.

### **Riflemen's signs in partisan uniforms in 1944–1948**

Uniform in the partisan war of Lithuania in 1944–1953 had an exceptional significance. For the fighters and their environment it symbolized the continuity of the Lithuanian statehood, and helped to maintain order and discipline in partisan corps. Moreover, the uniform and its details are among the necessary conditions defined by the international law when discussing the features of partisans as lawful participants of the military actions.

Partisans identified themselves as the successors of the Army of the Lithuanian Republic fighting for the independence of the state. For this specific reason, the fighters were dressed in uniforms which were either Lithuanian or reflected the Lithuanian tradition. The wearing of uniform of any military institution of the state marked not only the continuation of the Lithuanian statehood, but also the aim to enhance discipline and order among the partisan units. Apart from the military uniform, additional uniform elements which emphasized the national dependency and helped to identify one or another structural unit appeared in partisan outfit. Various bands and patches were used as additional uniform elements. Also, other special marks symbolized courage in fights, performance of duties and injuries<sup>1</sup>.

The available iconographical material of fights and exhibits of uniforms and their details in museums evidence that the development of the Lithuanian partisan uniforms was influenced by the fighters who were members of the former Lithuanian Riflemen's Union. To compare, there were even seven riflemen among the leadership of partisans which included the commanders of districts and regions and members of the Union of Lithuanian Freedom

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<sup>1</sup> J. Vaičėnonis, *Lietuvos partizanų uniforma ir ekipuotė*, [in:] *Už laisvę ir Tėvynę*, eds. D. Kuodytė, E. Peikšėnis, D. Žygelis, Valstybės žinios, Vilnius 2004, s.149.

Fighters – signatories of the declaration of February 16, 1949<sup>2</sup>. Among the lower leadership, the commanders of companies, platoons and squads, the numbers of riflemen were significantly higher<sup>3</sup>. Thus there was a solid foundation for the development of riflemen's ideology as every commander, former rifleman, would naturally lead and pass knowledge on the basis of his own experience.

In the initial stage of the fights in 1944–1946, partisans did not strive for the maximal uniformity in their clothing, thus it is rather difficult to detect the riflemen symbolism in their uniforms. This situation was also conditioned by the costs and limited possibilities to acquire the necessary amount of the uniforms or organization of their production. There was a constant lack of uniforms and a large part of the fighters had to wear civilian clothing. At the beginning of the partisan war, partisan clothing consisted of various uniform elements which men had with themselves when they went into the woods. Most of the partisans were Lithuanian military officers, sergeants, private soldiers and riflemen who had preserved their uniforms. Besides the Lithuanian uniforms, German uniform elements brought by the soldiers of the *Vietinė Rinktinė* can also be found. Additionally, partisans collected uniform clothing from the families who were deported or did not join the partisan war, but whose members had formerly served in the army, police, the Riflemen's Union or had served as firefighters. The photograph of the partisans from the *Žalioji* corps which captured the moment of July, 1946, illustrates this diversity. In this specific photograph, partisans wear various uniform models and uniform elements taken from the Lithuanian army, police and riflemen clothing. Trophies taken from the soviet army can also be seen<sup>4</sup>. On the other hand, individual uniform elements as patches, rank insignia or other details evidence the relation with the Lithuanian Riflemen's Union.

The first patches and bands in partisan uniforms appeared at the very beginning of the partisan movement. In 1944–1945, *Lietuvos Laisvės Armija* (LLA), *Vanagai* (the Lithuanian Freedom Army, Hawks) which

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<sup>2</sup> E. Žilytė, *Lietuvos partizanų vadovybės kolektyvinė biografija*, Bachelor thesis, Vilnius University, Vilnius 2014, s. 5, 27.

<sup>3</sup> K. Strazdas, *Ukmergės krašto laisvės kovų keliais*, Kaunas 2011, s. 118–119, 123–124, 129–130; E. Maruckytė, D. Pilkauskas, *Kovoje už brangią tėvynę: Vycio apygardos partizanų istorija*, Panevėžys 2012, s. 38; E. Maruckytė, D. Pilkauskas, *Kovoje už brangią tėvynę: Algimanto apygardos partizanų istorija*, Panevėžys 2008, s. 19; O. Dapšytė-Kriukelienė, *Kupiškio krašto partizanai*, Vilnius 2013, s. 29, 44, 101, 127, 130; *Už laisvę ir tėvynę*, s. 213–236.

<sup>4</sup> *Kovojanti Lietuva 1944–1953*, Vilnius 1996, s. 27.

was active in a large territory of Lithuania wore tricolour bands embroidered with the Columns of Gediminas or letters and words as *LLA Vanagai* or *Vanagai*. Besides these marks of distinction, the first patches appear. Similarly to the bands, they were worn on the left sleeve of the uniform. Even in 1944, the influence of the Lithuanian Freedom Army covered the whole territory of Lithuania. The structure which appeared in December of 1944 was based on the structural and organizational elements of the former Lithuanian Riflemen's Union. In August, 1944, *Didžiosios kovos rinktinė, DKR* (the Great Battle Special Corps) was formed from the partisans of Trakai and Ukmergė districts, which gradually developed into a military district. The partisans of this unit wore the dark coloured patches of equilateral triangle shape which had an embroidered national flag in the centre and an inscription around the patch *Mano jėgos ir darbas / Tėvynės laisvei ir garbei / L.L.A. D.K.R* (My force and work/ for the Honour and Freedom of the Treason/ L.L.A. D.K.R [the Lithuanian Freedom Army, the Great Battle Special Corps]). Similar patches were worn by the *Lietuvos Laisvės Armija, Vanagai* active in the northwest Lithuania. Their patch was practically identical to the described above with a minor difference in inscription content: *Mano jėgos ir darbas / Tėvynės laisvei ir garbei! / L.L.A. Vanagai* (My force and work / for the honour and freedom of the treason/ L.L.A. Vanagai). Other patches of similar style have also been found, for example: *MŪŠŲ JĖGOS. ir DARBAI / TĖVINĖS LAISVĖI ir GERŪVĖ. / LIETUVA* (OUR FORCE AND WORKS/ FOR THE FREEDOM AND PROSPERITY OF THE TREASON. / LITHUANIA). Another example could be the patch of *Vytautas* district partisan, Antanas Kraujelis (alias Siaubūnas) which had the following inscription: *Mano darbas ir / jėgos Tėvynės / gerovei Lietuvai* (My work and forces for the prosperity of the treason Lithuania). These facts show that in 1944–1945, attempts were made to establish the system of distinction marks among the fighters. Apart from the distinction function, the patches and their content also symbolized the national dependency<sup>5</sup>.

During the period of 1946–1947, there was an attempt to introduce a uniform in partisan units equivalent to the uniform of the former Lithuanian army. Different partisan leaders took the initiative to standardize the uniform wearing. For example, when Zigmąs Drunga (alias Mykolas Jonas), the leader of the *Tauras* district, was killed, the new leader of the district Antanas Baltūsis (alias Žvejys) in July 5, 1946, issued an order No 23 ac-

<sup>5</sup> J. Vaičėnonis, *Lietuvos karių uniformų antsiuvai 1918–2008 m.*, „Karo archyvas“ 2009, t. 24, s. 284–285.

ording to which partisans had to wear the uniform of the Lithuanian army. Another example could be Jonas Kamarauskas (alias Karijotas), the leader of the *Tigras* corps, in the *Vytautas* military district, who standardized partisan uniforms and rank insignia. In 1947, the leader of the *Dainava* district, Dominykas Jėčys (alias Ažuolas) (b. 20 10 1896) also confirmed the wearing of uniform and rank insignia by issuing an order. The personality of this leader should be discussed in greater detail. During the period of the First Republic of Lithuania, Dominykas Jėčys joined the Lithuanian Army in 1919, and participated in the Wars of Independence against the Polish. In 1920, he graduated military school and in 1925, higher military courses (*Aukštųjų karininkų kursų Bendrasis skyrius*) and performed service in infantry units. In December of 1925, Jėčys was transferred to the Lithuanian Riflemen's Union and became a riflemen commander of the *Tauragė* and the *Zarasai* military districts. On the 3<sup>rd</sup> of November, 1928 Dominykas Jėčys was awarded a captain's rank. In 1932–1935, he commanded the fire-fighters of Utena and Zarasai. In September of 1935, he was transferred to the military commandant's office in Utena to become the assistant chief officer of the 2<sup>nd</sup> riflemen's corps. Later, Jėčys was transferred to the 19<sup>th</sup> riflemen's corps in Alytus. During the years of the first soviet occupation, he withdrew from service and was hiding. During the years of the German occupation, he was the chief of the *Vietinė Rinktinė* of the *Alytus* district. During the second soviet occupation, Jėčys was hiding and became involved in guerrilla movement. In Punia forest, he organized and commanded the *Dzūkija* corps. In May, 1964, he became a commander of the newly formed *Dainava* district<sup>6</sup>. Thus by being a rifleman himself and commanding the district, Dominykas Jėčys introduced separate elements of riflemen symbolism in partisans' uniforms. The approved uniform description included a new model of green triangle cap badge which had the Vytis (Jagiellonian) Cross in the centre<sup>7</sup>. Eventually, during the unification process of partisan uniform in 1949, this cap badge model became a uniform cap sign for all Lithuanian partisans. The order of the district commander also regulated the marking of specific partisan duties. Specifically, equi-

<sup>6</sup> J. Domininkas, *Lietuvos kariuomenės karininkai 1918–1953*, t. 4, Vilnius 2004, s. 74; D. Kuodytė, *Dainavos apygarda*, [in:] *Už laisvę ir Tėvyne*, s. 28–29.

<sup>7</sup> The order No 57 of the commander of the *Dainava* district Dominykas-Jėčys (alias Ažuolas) on the introduction of the partisan insignia of rank and uniform, *Lietuvos partizanų Dainavos apygarda (1945–1952 m.)*, Lietuvos archyvų departamentas, Vilnius 2003, s. 197–199. „[...] 3. Cap sign – cockade – equilateral, green triangle 3½, 3½, 3½ cm. The metal brass coloured Vytis Cross on the triangle is 2 ½ cm in height and 1½ cm in width. [...]”.

lateral triangles with 2½ cm sides had to be worn on the left side of the uniform over the pocket. The form and colour decisions of these signs, similarly to the tricolor triangle patches worn by the district partisans, were visibly related to the insignia (i.e., tricolor triangles) of the volunteers of the Lithuanian Wars of Independence. Apart from the regulation of the uniform insignia, the order stated that a partisan could wear specific organizations' symbols only if he had been their member in independent Lithuania. As an example, the former dependency to the Riflemen's Union was given. Since the issuing of the order, the wearing of unregulated insignia was banned<sup>8</sup>. In the remaining abundant iconographic material of the district, numerous examples of partisans wearing the rifleman's sign can be found (see illustration 1). Thus it can be assumed that these particular partisans could have been former members of the Riflemen's Union (see illustration 2).



Illustration 1. Lithuanian Riflemen's Union sign, 1939; Lithuanian Central State Archives (Lietuvos centrinis valstybės archyvas), f.561, ap.2, b.3704, l.81

<sup>8</sup> The order No 57 of the commander of the *Dainava* district Dominykas-Jėčys (alias Ažuolas) on the introduction of the partisan insignia of rank and uniform, *Lietuvos partizanų Dainavos apygarda (1945–1952 m.)*, Lietuvos archyvų departamentas, Vilnius 2003, p. 199; D. Žygelis, *Lietuvos partizanų uniforma ir jos detalės*, „Karys“ 2013, nr 11, s. 49–50, 52.



Illustration 2. Commander of the *Vytautas* group, the *Kazimieraitis* corps, the *Dainava* district: Adolfas Baublys (alias Merkys), (approx., 1948); collections of the Museum of Genocide Victims (Genocido aukų muziejaus rinkiniai) PF3005

The role of the uniform increased significantly. It helped to achieve discipline, committed partisans to follow orders and became a mandatory attribute of the freedom fighter. Partisans often risked their safety in order to obtain a uniform tailored by the village sewers. Signallers would be looking for the uniforms in town markets or would buy them from the families of the former military officers or riflemen. At the same time, the production of various patches and badges was organized. They were often hand-made, mostly embroidered, triangle, oval, rhombus or round shaped. Over the time, partisans of all districts acquired their own patches. These signs, worn on the left sleeve of the uniform, showed dependency to one or another district or corps (see illustration 3). Apart from the patches, partisans wore bands with the inscription *Lietuvos partizanas* (Lithuanian partisan) which

had an embroidered symbol of the patch in the middle. Despite the intensive fights and difficult conditions, partisan symbols represented national and state symbols and declared slogans of self-sacrifice. Moreover, every district aimed at retaining their own system of symbols which was partially influenced by the symbols of the former Lithuanian Riflemen's Union.

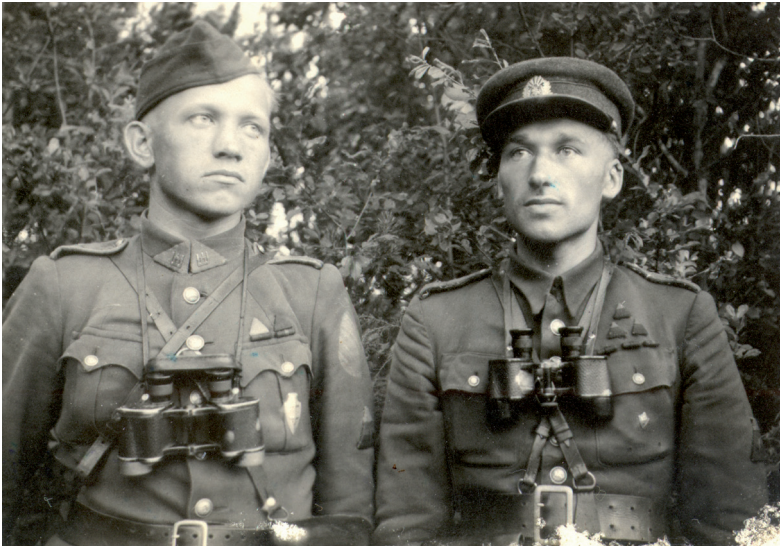


Illustration 3. Partisans of the *Vytautas* group, the *Kazimieraitis* corps, the *Dainava* district: Jonas Budėnas (alias Klebonas) on the left side and Teofilis Valickas (alias Balys) on the right side (approx., 1949); collections of the Museum of Genocide Victims PF914

The partisans of the *Tauras* district had an oval shaped patch with the symbol of Taurus. One of its units, *Geležinio Vilko Rinktinė* (the Iron Wolf Corps), wore an inverted triangle shaped insignia with truncated upper ends. The sign had a rising red sun in the yellow background and the green Columns of Gediminaičiai with embroidered letters G.V.R. (*Geležinio Vilko Rinktinė*) on top of them. In the centre of the sign, a black howling iron wolf was represented. Two other patch versions of this specific corps have also been found. In one shield shaped sign, the wolf framed with oak branches is in the centre. Below, the GVR letters are embroidered. Another green rhombus shaped sign depicts a grey wolf framed with the national colours (yellow-green-red). A round shaped patch of this corps has also been found. The centre of the sign depicts a brown wolf and the symbols of the Gediminas castle and the Three Crosses. At the bottom, there are green letters G.V.R. in the white background, surrounded by oak leaves



and acorns. The patches of the *Kęstutis* district were also shield shaped. In the centre of the white sign, a three coloured triangle with the tip directed downwards can be seen. Above the triangle, an embroidered inscription says: *Mūsu jėgos ir gyvybė tau Tėvyne Lietuva! LLAŠ* (Our strength and life for you Treason Lithuania! LLAŠ). The *Vytis* district partisans also had a shield shaped patch. In the green background, the sign depicted a yellow Vytis (Jagiellonian) Cross. The partisans of the *Vytautas* district wore a red shield shaped patch with the truncated upper corners and diagonally tied with a tricolour strip from left to right. At the edges of the shield, symbolic shield rivets were embroidered. Some patches had an additionally embroidered or sewed white Jagiellonian Cross. These signs are very similar to the sign of the Lithuanian Riflemen's Union: a shield decorated with rivets depicting the Vytis (Jagiellonian) Cross<sup>9</sup>. It is likely that the appearance of the above described signs in the corps was influenced by the fact that their leaders were the former members of the Lithuanian Riflemen's Union. For example, in 1946, the platoon leader of one of the *Panevėžys* district units, Antanas Užkuraitis had been a former rifleman; Alfonsas Smetona (alias Žygaudas) who became a commander of the *Vytis* district in June 16, 1948, had been a member of the Lithuanian Riflemen's Union until the soviet occupation and a commander of the *Vadokliai* platoon<sup>10</sup>. The symbol of the Jagiellonian Cross was also used by the partisans of the *Prisikėlimo* district. The partisans of this district wore dark green rhombus shaped signs with the black, red sided Jagiellonian Crosses in the centre. This symbol is similar to the Vytis Cross award which existed in the times of independence (see illustration 4). On the other hand, it is most likely that this form of the Vytis Cross could have been borrowed from the Lithuanian military aviation<sup>11</sup>. Specifically, this symbol marked the warplanes in the third decade of the twentieth century. The use of the riflemen's symbols could also be a result of the activity of the commander of the former riflemen unit *Sėlynė*, Leonardas (Vilhelmas) Grigonis (b. 31.07.1905) (alias Užpalis, Šarūnas, Žvainys, Krivis)<sup>12</sup>. The patches of partisans of the *Dainava* district had

<sup>9</sup> J. Vaičenonis, *Lietuvos karių uniformų antsiuvai 1918–2008 m.*, s. 287.

<sup>10</sup> E. Maruckytė, D. Pilkauskas, *Kovoje už brangią tėvynę: Vyčio*, s. 17, 38.

<sup>11</sup> V. Statkus, *Lietuvos ginkluotos pajėgos 1918–1940 m.*, Chicago 1986, s. 236–236a.

<sup>12</sup> Grigonis Leonardas – *Lietuvos kariuomenės karininkai 1918–1953*, t. 3, Vilnius 2003, s. 222, Grigonis (alias Žvainys) was the head of the information department of the *Vytauto Didžiojo* corps headquarters in the *Kęstutis* military district during the period of 16.02.1947–15.03.1948, from 15.03.1948 to 26.07.1948, the commander of the headquarters of the *Prisikėlimo* district (alias Krivis), until 31 07 1949, the head of the *Prisikėlimo* district (alias Užpalis).

a form of an equilateral triangle with the horizontally laid national colours (yellow-green-red). In the centre, an embroidered black letter “K” stood for the partisans of the *Kazimieraitis* corps (see illustrations 5, 6), letter “D” symbolised the *Dzūkai* corps partisans (see illustration 7) and letter “Š” – the *Šarūnas* corps partisans. The partisans of the *Šarūnas* corps also wore white bands with the inscription “Lithuanian partisan” and an embroidered sign of self-defence battalions with the letter “Š” in the centre<sup>13</sup>.



Illustration 4. Patch of the *Prisikėlimas* district’s partisans; collections of the Museum of Genocide Victims DH33

<sup>13</sup> J. Vaičėnonis, *Lietuvos karių uniformų antsiuvai 1918–2008 m.*, s. 288.



Illustration 5. Partisans of the *Kazimieraitis* corps, the *Dainava* district: Antanas Subačius (alias Tauras) on the left and Petras Kasiulevičius (alias Tigras) on the right; collections of the Museum of Genocide Victims PF983



Illustration 6. Partisans of the *Vytautas* group, the *Kazimieraitis* corps, the *Dainava* district: Julius Karpis (alias Vieversys) on the left (approx., 1948); collections of the Museum of Genocide Victims PF1784



Illustration 7. Partisans of the *Kazimieraitis* and the *Dzūkų* corps, the *Dainava* district. In the first row: Lionginas Baliukevičius (alias – Dzūkas) on the left and Vaclovas Voveris (alias Žaibas) on the right side; collections of the Museum of Genocide Victims PF981

### The riflemen's signs in partisan uniforms in 1949–1953

In 1949, partisan structures were undergoing centralization processes promoted by the adopted Geneva Convention in the same year. In February, during the meeting of the commanders of the Lithuanian partisans, decisions were made on the wearing of uniform and its elements. An order No 13 issued by the council of the Union of Lithuanian Freedom Fighters in May 19, 1949, changed the rules of signs and rank symbols and introduced the uniforms of the Lithuanian Republic. The partisans were allowed to wear only those rank insignia which had been acquired in the Lithuanian army or awarded by the Union of Lithuanian Freedom Fighters. At the bottom of the strap, an 8 mm wide green strip had to be stitched across. For all officers and privates, the wearing of uniforms and rank insignia became obligatory during the service. The documents adopted by partisan leadership aimed at consolidating the wearing of military uniforms in order to emphasize the continuity of the Lithuanian army. It should be noted that the selected colour for the insertions of uniforms, straps, trousers and caps was green<sup>14</sup>. In the second half of the third decade of the 20th century, this spe-

<sup>14</sup> The *Kalnų* district's (or *Karaliaus Mindaugo* district's) of the Union of Lithuanian Freedom Fighters project of uniforms prepared by the *Algimantas* district headquarter's

cific colour was used for the insertions of riflemen's uniforms and caps<sup>15</sup>. During the meetings, the chief of the headquarters of the *Prisikėlimo* district, Bronius Liesys (alias Naktis) was given an order to prepare the project of partisan sleeve patches, cap signs and other rank insignia. Also, a contest of partisan patches and cap cockade was announced. Several projects prepared for the contest have survived to this day. One of the projects was offered by a partisan of the *Algimantas* district, Joana Railaitė-Sluškienė (alias Neringa), the only known authoress of the projects. The project offered the symbols of rank insignia and a patch of the Union of Lithuanian Freedom Fighters: a tricoloured shield with trimmed edges which had a white coloured Vytis with two crossed swords in the centre. Number 5 was written between the handles of the swords (Vytis was intended to be made from iron, whereas the number symbolized the years of mourning and sufferings in struggle for freedom). Around the shield, a circle of yellow letters in the black background could be read as *LLKS / PER KRAUJĄ IR / / KANČIAS Į LAISVĘ* (LLKS / THROUGH BLOOD AND / SUFFERING TO FREEDOM). In June 29, 1949, the project was approved by the East region commander Antanas Sluška (alias Šarūnas) (see illustration 8). However, there is no exact data about the implementation of this specific project. Sluška (alias Šarūnas) described the patch as corresponding to the partisan spirit<sup>16</sup>. Another survived patch project is also associated with the partisans of the *Algimantas* district, however, the authorship of the project is not known. The red patch is shield shaped with yellow oak leaves in the centre. Above the leaves, there is a white Vytis and green rectangle with the letters or yellow acorns symbolising ranks. At the bottom of the patch, one can see number 3 (the years of mourning and suffering in the struggle for freedom). Around the patch, there is an inscription of black letters in the yellow background: *VICTORIA / KRAUJU ATPIRKOM / LIETUVOS LAISVĘ* (VICTORIA / WITH BLOOD WE REDEEMED / FREEDOM OF LITUANIA). There exists another stylistically very similar project. The patch does not have the surrounding inscription, whereas the number below is 4 (the years of mourning and suffering for freedom). The authorship of the project is unknown. The remaining fragmentary iconographic material allows us to make an assumption that similar patches were pro-

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member Julijonas Burneika (alias Tardytojas), [in:] E. Maruckytė, D. Pilkauskas, *Kovoje už brangią tėvynę: Algimanto*, s. 77.

<sup>15</sup> J. Rutkiewicz, *Wojsko litewskie 1918–1940*, Warszawa 2002, s. 161.

<sup>16</sup> 29.06.1949 The project of the rank marking system and uniform signs of the *Algimantas* district, The Museum of Genocide Victims, PDK-1658/36.



men's uniform and a project of women uniforms adopted by the Central Board. On November 30<sup>th</sup>, according to the resolution of the lieutenant general Petras Kubiliūnas, the letter was directed for further review to uniform commission. Soon, at the beginning of 1930, the new uniform changes and projects came into effect. As a result, the rank insignia approved for wear on uniform collars became as follows: platoon commander – one strip angle and one acorn; company commander and assistant corps commander – one strip angle and two acorns; corps commander – one strip angle and three acorns; Board members – one oak leaf; corps and platoon Board commanders – two oak leaves; the Central Board Chairman – two oak leaves with riflemen's sign in the middle<sup>17</sup> (see illustrations 9 and 10). It is assumed that on the basis of this system, partisans borrowed the motives of oak leaves and acorns by adapting the rank system to their needs.

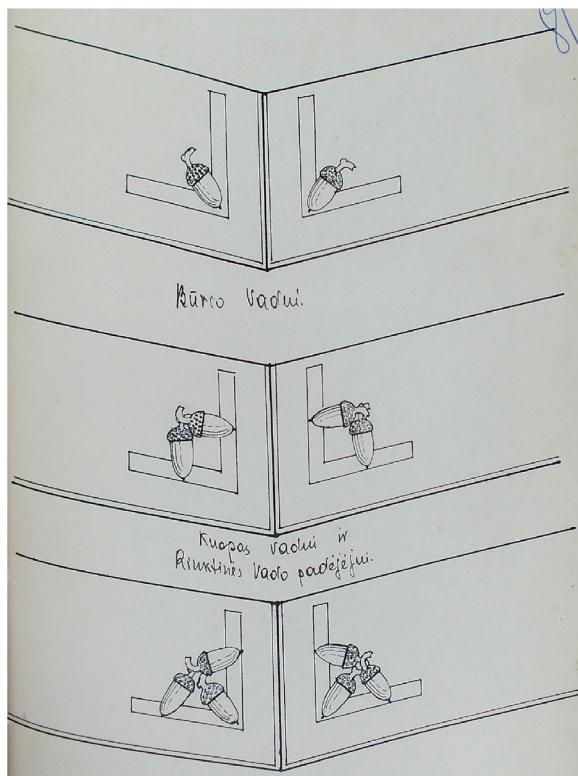


Illustration 9. Rank signs of the Lithuanian Rifleman's Union, 1930; Lithuanian Central State Archives, f.561, ap.2, b.661, l.81

<sup>17</sup> [1930] Rifleman's rank insignia project, LCVA f. 561, ap. 2, b. 661, l.73–86.

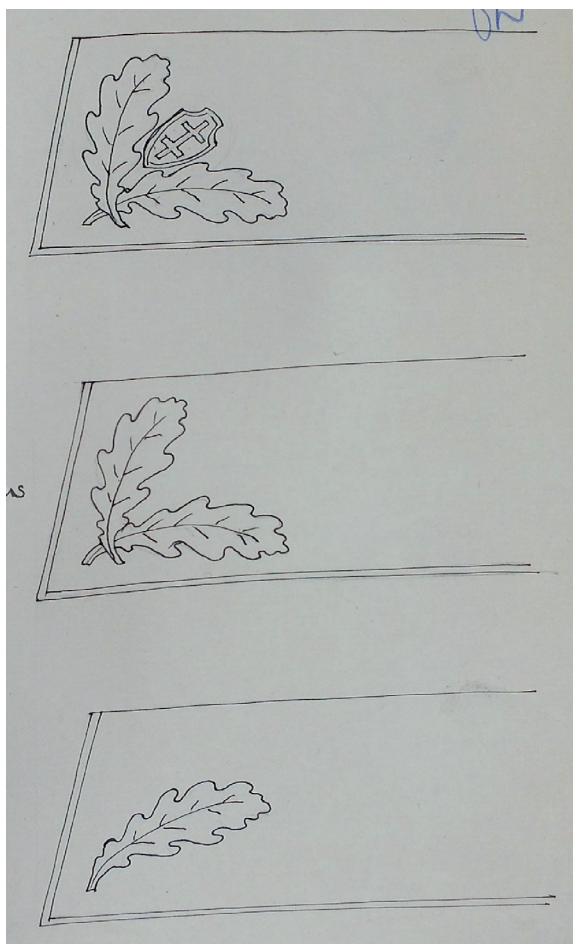


Illustration 10. Rank signs of the Lithuanian Riflemen's Union; 1930; Lithuanian Central State Archives, f.561, ap.2, b.661, l.82

In October, 1949, the partisan rank insignia came into effect. It had the motives of oak leaves, acorns and state heraldic symbols (the Columns of Gediminas and the Vytis) which were embroidered on the khaki material and worn on the right side above the upper pocket (or its place) of the uniform or other upper garment: privates – one oak leaf; machine-gunner – one oak leaf with an acorn; group commander – one oak leaf with two acorns; squad commander – one oak leaf with three acorns; platoon commander – one oak leaf with three acorns and the Vytis (Jagiellonian Cross) above; company commander – two oak leaves; batallion (*tėvonija*) commander – two oak leaves with an acorn; corps commander – two oak leaves



with two acorns; district commander – two oak leaves with the Columns of Gediminas above; region commander – two oak leaves with one acorn and the Columns of Gediminas above; the commander of the LLKS Defence Forces and the commander of the LLKS Public Sector – two oak leaves with two acorns and the Columns of Gediminas above; the chairman of the presidium of the Council of the LLKS – two oak leaves with the Vytis in a three-colour shield<sup>18</sup>. In some cases, the realization of this idea can be seen: the leader of the *Gediminas* corps, the *Vytis* military district, Edvardas Daučiūnas (alias Jokeris) wore a symbol of two oak leaves and one acorn to mark the rank<sup>19</sup>.

The remaining iconographic material and various documentary sources evidence that projects and ideas were uniformly and effectively implemented (see illustration 11). For example, the dark green rhombus shaped patches with the black Jagiellonian Cross with red edges in the center similar to the former Vytis Cross Award which existed during the independence period were worn only by the partisans of the *Prisikėlimas* district until 1949. Eventually, this sign became a unanimous symbol of the Lithuanian partisans (see illustration 12).

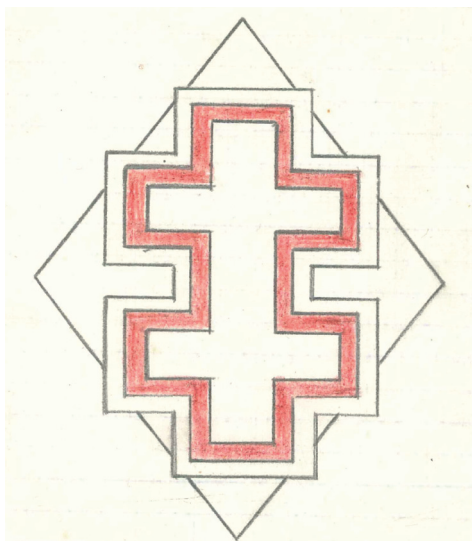


Illustration 11. Patch project of the *Prisikėlimas* district, 1949; rank signs PDK49

<sup>18</sup> A project of partisan rank insignia descriptions and wearing rules: *P laipsnių žymių ir P užimamųjų vietų žymių aprašymas bei jų dėvėjimo taisyklės, Nuorašo priedėlis prie IV 49.10.11. rašto nr. 205*, the Museum of Genocide Victims.

<sup>19</sup> E. Maruckytė, D. Pilkauskas, *Kovoję už brangią tėvynę: Vyčio*, s. 58.



uniforms. For example, the graphical drawings depicted partisan patches. On the other hand, press provided partisans with freedom of creativity and expression. The analysis of the publications reveals the use of a wide range of symbols and images which show the relation with the Lithuanian Riflemen's Union. Newspapers issued by the *Algimantas* district could stand as an example. Even the cover of the first number of the *Partizanų kova* issued in May 31, 1947, has a symbol of shield with truncated edges and the Jagiellonian Cross in the center, placed near the cover title, which is very similar to the partisan patch projects of the district. On the other hand, the inscription around the symbol differs from the one in the project patches: *VICTORIA / SIELA – DIEVUI / GYVENIMAS TĖVYNEI* (VICTORIA / SOUL FOR GOD / LIFE FOR TREASON). The remaining iconography shows that similar patches were worn by the district commander Antanas Sluška (alias Šarūnas) and the district headquarters commander of the public sector Jurgis Urbonas (alias Lakštutis). The bottom part of symbol in the newspaper is wrapped by the oak twigs tied with a ribbon. The shield with the Vytis (Jagiellonian) Cross reminds of the main sign of the former Lithuanian Riflemen's Union. The same publication (No 21) issued in July 21, 1949 has an illustration which shows a direct connection with the former riflemen. On the cover, near the symbol of the fighting warrior, there is a picture identical to the one in the *Trimitas* newspaper published by the Lithuanian Riflemen's Union during the second decade of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The picture depicts a crossed gun and a trumpet with the sign of the Riflemen's Union surrounded with oak leaves in the center<sup>21</sup> (see illustrations 13 and 14). Similar analogies can be found in other publications of different partisan districts. As has been mentioned, since 1949, a unified LLKS symbolism began to dominate in partisan press and publications. The major symbol both in press and uniform, the rhombus shaped sign with the Vytis (Jagiellonian) Cross reminds the Vytis Cross Award which existed during the interwar period. Apart from the press, this specific symbol appears on other partisan publications: *Ženkime su malda, LLKS partizano maldos ir apmąstymai*, PRR [*Prisikėlimo* district] publication, 1952 (see illustration 15); *Partizanų šūviams aidint*, No.2, 1953.

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<sup>21</sup> E. Maruckytė, D. Pilkauskas, *Kovoje už brangią tėvynę: Algimanto*, s. 69.

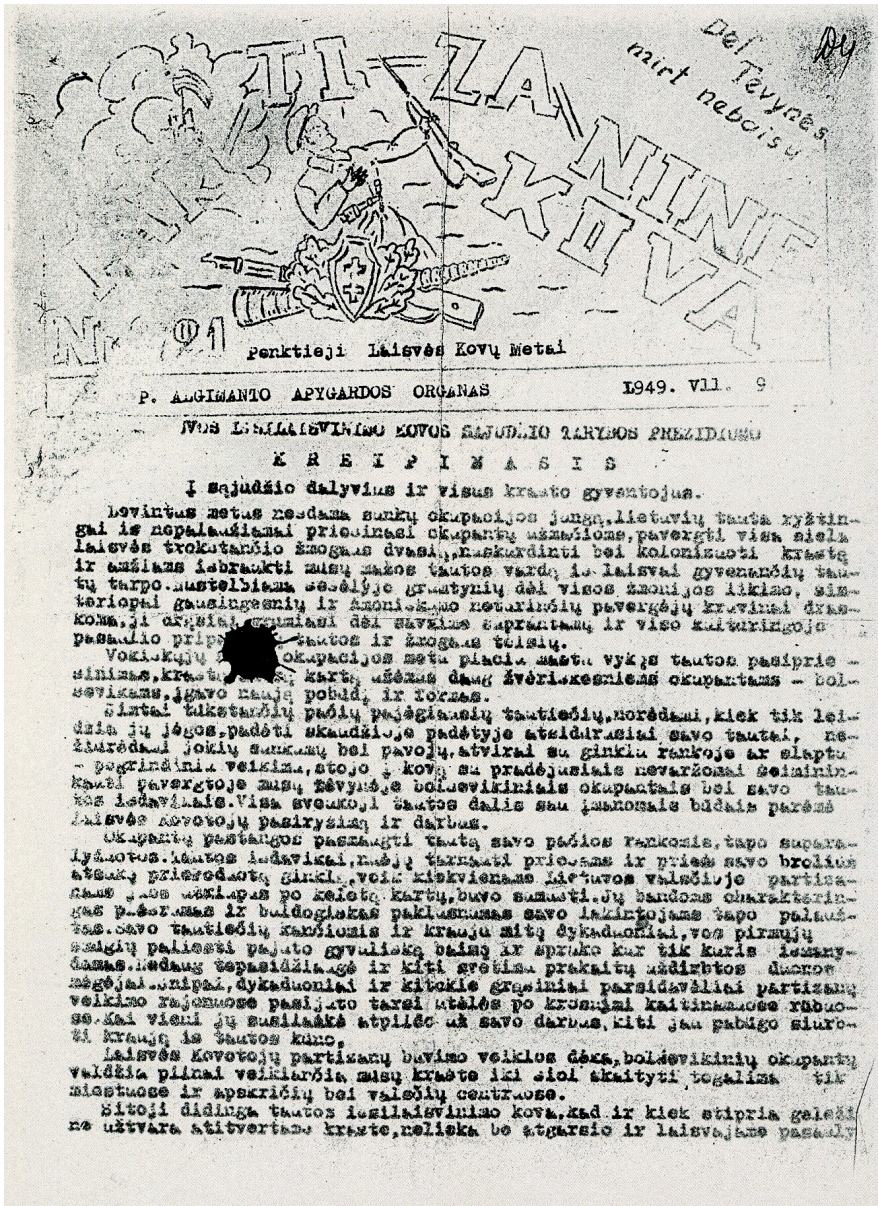


Illustration 13. Newspaper *Partizaninė kova* No 21, issued in July 21, 1949, by the *Algimantas* district; collections of the Museum of Genocide Victims

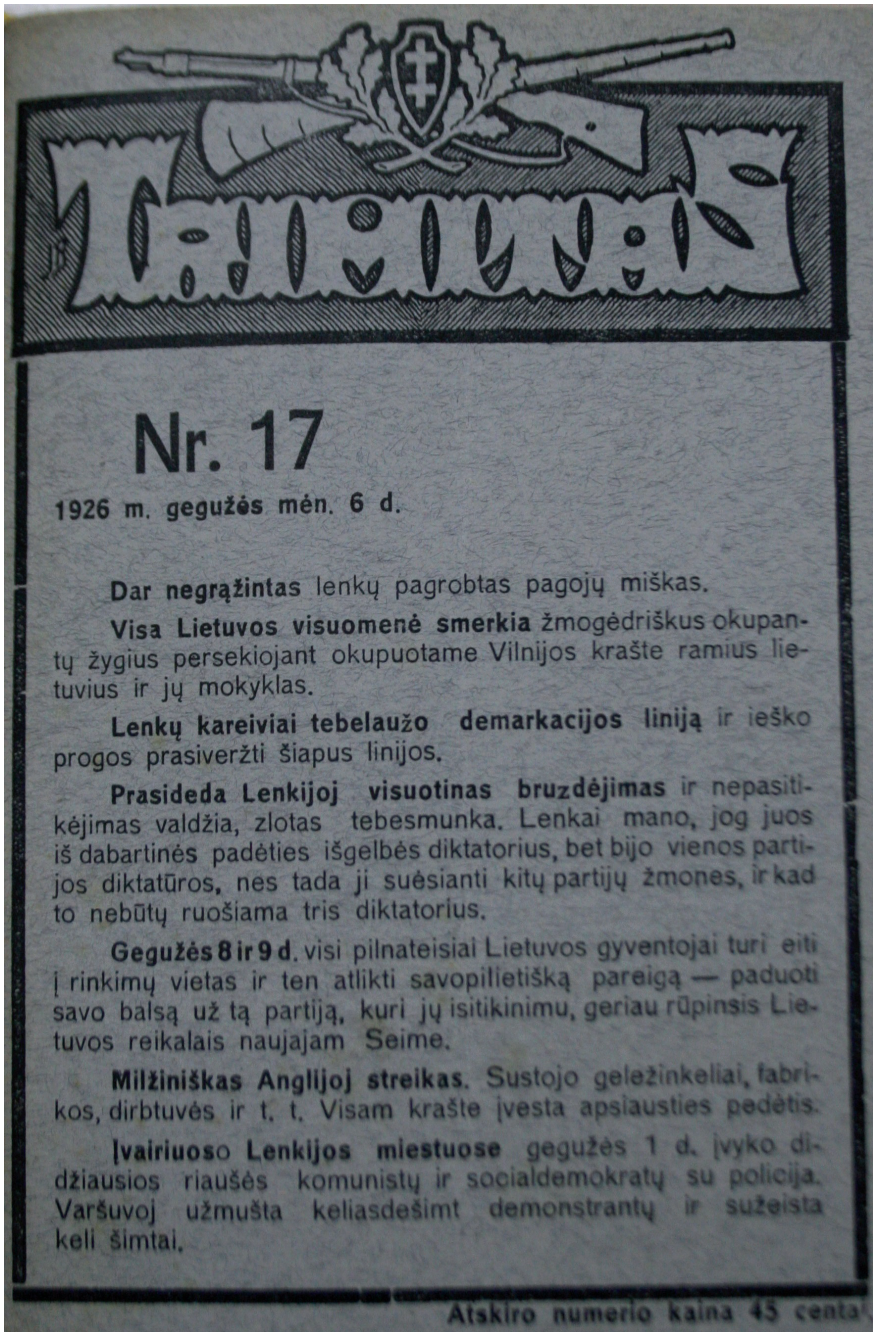


Illustration 14. The *Trimitas* newspaper published by the Lithuanian Rifleman's Union

PRR leidinys

▼  
**ŽENKIME  
SU  
MALDA**

LLKS partizano  
maldos ir apmąstymai



Pa da u g i n o  
LLKS ŽALIOSIOS Rinktinė

1 9 5 2

Illustration 15. Partisan publication: *Ženkime su malda, LLKS partizano maldos ir apmąstymai*, PRR [Prisikėlimo district] publication, 1952; collections of the Museum of Genocide Victims PR186(2)

## Conclusions

To summarize the conducted research on the riflemen's symbols in partisan uniforms and press, the following conclusions can be made:

In view of the evolution of the partisan uniform during the period of 1944–1956, it is evident that the dependency to the Lithuanian Riflemen's Union was reflected to a certain extent in uniforms (or their elements) of different partisan units. The most evident example is uniform patches of different partisan corps which were similar to the sign of the former Lithuanian Riflemen's Union. It is assumed that in 1949, the newly created unified partisan rank system borrowed ideas from the rank system used by the Lithuanian Riflemen's Union in the third decade of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. This could be influenced by the fact that a certain part of high and low rank partisan leaders had been the members of the former Lithuanian Riflemen's Union. These assumptions show an indirect link between the riflemen of interwar period and post-war partisans.

A certain part of the symbolism used by the Lithuanian Riflemen's Union during the interwar period was transferred to partisan publications. This helped to form and reflect the partisan identity as well as to show the continuation of the relation with the former organization.

Despite the fact that the partisans identified themselves with the successors of the army of the Lithuanian Republic who fought for the independence of the state, the uniform and its insignia (patches, cockades, and rank signs) as well as partisan publications show a direct connection with the Lithuanian Riflemen's Union which existed until the summer of 1940 and which became an integral part of the army since 1935 as a result of the conducted military reforms, modernization and restructuring.

## Streszczenie

### **Znak strzelca na mundurze: członkowie Związku Strzelców Litwy w litewskiej wojnie partyzanckiej lat 1944–1953**

W artykule analizowana jest symbolika strzelecka używana na mundurach partyzanckich. Autor pokazuje rozwój tej symboliki na podstawie partyzanckich publikacji i dąży do ustalenia przyczyn pojawienia się tej symboliki na mundurach. Z analizy wynika, że ruch strzelecki czy przynależność do Litewskiego Związku Strzelców w pewnym stopniu były reprezentowane w uniformach poszczególnych oddziałów i ich elementach. Najwyraźniej symbolika była obecna na naszywkach,

które swojĄ formĄ przypominały oznakowanie ZwiĄzku Strzelców. Widzimy, że w 1949 r., podczas tworzenia jednolitego systemu oznakowania stopni partyzantkich, został uŹyty sposób podobny do tego, jaki był uŹywany w latach trzydziestych w Litewskim ZwiĄzku Strzelców. Przejęcie takiej tradycji mogło być uwarunkowane członkostwem wielu dowódców oddziałów, a takŹe najwyŹszego dowódtwa w przedwojennym ZwiĄzku. Te refleksje pośrednio pokazujĄ zwiĄzek pomiędy międzywojennymi strzelcami a powojennymi partyzantami. Część symboliki Litewskiego ZwiĄzku Strzelców uŹywana w okresie międzywojennym została przeniesiona równieŹ do wydawnictw, ujawniajĄc oraz formujĄc w ten sposób toŹsamość partyzantów. Jednocześnie próbowano pokazać i zaznaczyć nieprzerwany zwiĄzek z nieistniejĄcĄ juŹ organizacjĄ. StajĄc do walki z okupantem, partyzanci identyfikowali się jako kontynuatorzy wojska Republiki Litewskiej walczĄcego o niepodległość kraju. Noszone uniformy i ich odznaki (naszywki, kokardy, oznaki stopni i funkcji), a takŹe wydawnictwa ukazujĄ bezpośredni zwiĄzek z istniejĄcym do lata 1940 r. Litewskim ZwiĄzkiem Strzelców, ktory od czasu reform wojska w 1935 r. stał się jego integralnĄ częsciĄ.

## Summary

### **Rifleman's sign on the uniform: the members of Lithuanian Riflemen's Union in the lithuanian partisan war (1944–1953)**

The article analyses the riflemen symbolism used in partisan uniforms. The aim is to identify the reasons and discuss the development of the use of riflemen symbols in partisan uniforms and in partisan press. The research has shown that the membership of the Lithuanian Riflemen's Union was reflected to a certain extent in the uniforms (or their elements) of different partisan units. This is mostly visible in the uniform patches of different partisan districts which were similar to the sign of the Lithuanian Riflemen's Union. It is assumed that in 1949, the newly created unified partisan rank system borrowed ideas from the rank system used by the Lithuanian Riflemen's Union in the third decade of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. This could be influenced by the fact that a certain part of high and low rank partisan leaders had been the members of the former Lithuanian Riflemen's Union. These assumptions show an indirect link between the riflemen of interwar period and post-war partisans. A certain part of the symbolism used by the Lithuanian Riflemen's Union during the interwar period was transferred to partisan publications. This helped to form and reflect the partisan identity as well as to show the continuation of the relation with the former organization. Despite the fact that the partisans identified themselves with the successors of the army of the Lithuanian Republic who fought for the independence of the state, the uniform and its insignia (patches, cockades, and rank signs) as well as partisan publications show a direct connection with the Lithuanian Riflemen's Union which existed until the summer of 1940 and which became an



integral part of the army since 1935 as a result of the conducted military reforms, modernization and restructuring.

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