

Who would we be but for them

Today is March 11th Lithuanian Independence Day. The twenty-sixth time we will celebrate this prominent moment. I am glad that every year I am taking part in various events, increasingly aware of the price of freedom. This year is no exception. I just have returned home from the traditional March 11th running “Good news”, its purpose to commemorate prominent dates, promote citizenship and healthy lifestyle. For the fourth year runners run a three kilometres track. Filled with the spirit of patriotism, I thought, what I would do at this time if I did not live in the Independent Lithuania? What life would Lithuanian nation have if not freedom fighters who fought for the happiness of all of us? I decided to consult resistance fighters’ time and share interesting things with those, who are interested in the Lithuanian extremely difficult road to independence. In addition, I am a student of Alytus Adolfas Ramanauskas – Vanagas Gymnasium. It is named after one of the most famous partisan’s honour. It also requires to know something about the partisans.

Resistance battles period covers the years 1944-1956. Unwilling to serve the enemy government, men began to retreat into the woods, form teams of fighters and resist. Partisan fate mostly chose ordinary civilians, but they are characterized by great courage, determination, infinite desire for freedom and love for Lithuania. Freedom fighters embrace the spirit of patriotism, in spite of everything what they cherished, such as family, property, health, life, they went into the woods. Their hideouts were usually created in woody or swampy areas. Food, clothing and other essential items were provided to partisans by loyal local villagers. It is sad, but due to intimidation and fear traitors appeared. Identified partisans were immediately shot or experienced miserable fate of exile in remote Siberian areas.

The most important person for partisans was their leader Jonas Žemaitis – Vytautas. He travelled around all Lithuanian partisans’ areas and counties in Lithuania, to strengthen the militant spirit, inspire courage. As an excellent example of patriotism, Jonas Žemaitis brought together nearly a thousand of Lithuanian partisans. Deputy Commander was Adolfas Ramanauskas – Vanagas. It is stated that he was a partisan dreamer, one of the brightest personalities of the post-war armed resistance. In my wing Lionginas Baliukevičius- Dzūkas is well known. He is the Commander of Dainava district. Lionginas was one the youngest partisans. I mentioned just a few partisans, they all knew their fate, but they did not give up and stayed true to themselves and the oath. Their lives and sacrifice to the motherland is a true example of patriotism.

For me the most interesting and, in my opinion, the most important thing in freedom fighters life was an oath. Soldier’s oath is the most expensive because he gives the word to sacrifice his life for the benefit of homeland and the nation. Everyone who wants to stand up to the teams of the militants was required to give an unbreakable oath. Breaking it would have resulted in the death penalty. Statute emphasizes that the freedom fighters could become determined, brave, high moral character with clear past. A partisan who had given an oath could not withdraw from the organisation’s activities until independence will be restored. The oath was solemn, it made the relationship closer. Faithful fighters swore in front of the cross. After taking the oath, they kissed the cross and all sang Vincas Kudirka’s “Tautiška giesmė”. They signed their pseudonyms after the text of the oath. The oath could be renewed, this consolidated mutual relationships and lifted the spirit of the patriotism. Lithuanian armed resistance continued independent Lithuanian army traditions, but the enemy provocations posed a danger to become a traitor. According to partisans, the worst was not to die but

to betray. Many fighters remained true to themselves and to the people to the last breath. They successfully followed the slogan “Give what you have to your Homeland”

Partisans are remembered and considered to be heroes and models of patriotism not in vain. Their contribution to our freedom and rights is very high. They will never be forgotten because without them there are no us. They unconditionally devoted themselves to homeland, always remained faithful to it and all the people, sacrificed for our happiness. Freedom fighters are an example for the younger generation, that in a case of necessity – love for motherland and unity can be achieved. I would like this essay to be a sign of respect and gratitude for fighters who died for the freedom of Lithuania. No one will delete their memory.

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