

## Memory can't fade away

It is a well-known fact that each country has inspiring events in history, which foster a sense of unity between people. One of these meaningful moments in Lithuania's history was the partisan war. But what people tend to forget when talking about the resistance movement, is an active participation of women, whose struggle has yet to be acknowledged. Not only they acted as nurses, fighters and liaison agents but also supported partisans wholeheartedly. Therefore, their input and sacrifice for Lithuania's sovereignty should not be forgotten.

It is important to remember that women were responsible for communication between different partisan districts. They would pass messages and accomplish other tasks as liaison agents. Often they had to travel long distances and spend many sleepless nights walking in unfavourable weather conditions. Even more, their life was always at risk. Many female supporters of the partisan war were persecuted by MGB. Even after they had been arrested, women faithfully kept the secrets of partisans. Some even committed suicide, because death was considered to be a better fate than betrayal of their own country. An example of one of these loyal acts is the story of a liaison agent Monika Plytnikaite-Turskiene. Surrounded by soviets, she tried to shoot herself, but the attempt was a failure. However, later in hospital, after the guards had left her, she drank mercury from a thermometer and embraced her death. Such actions show an extraordinary dedication of women to the resistance movement.

What is more, there were women, who took an active part in the partisan movement and fought battles together with men. Being aware of the fact that a horrible fate hung over their heads, many women retreated to the forests and bunkers with a hope for freedom. A desire to help their brothers, fathers and husbands also led them to the active side of partisan war. Bravely, female participants chose to take a gun and stand their ground against soviets alongside their loved ones. A good example could be Albina Neifaltiene, who was the wife of the Kalniskes partisan leader Jonas Neifalta-Lakunas, retreated to the forest with her husband. She fearlessly fought soviets during the biggest partisan battle of Kalniskes against the Red army in 1945. Sadly, partisans lost the battle and during their defeat Albina was brutally killed. Many women felt it as their duty to join the active part of the resistance, because Lithuanians cherished their nationality.

Women, whether mothers, sisters or wives fostered hope of freedom and strength of the forest brothers. They were a symbol of home and a source of emotional stability to partisans. Women took care of injured fighters, treated their wounds and brought medication. In spite of the hardships of partisan life, partisan marriages were common. Love was so powerful that no war or army could stop it from blooming. These marriages were performed in secret, usually by a trustworthy pastor or a liaison agent. For instance, a liaison agent performed the marriage between the partisan leader of South Lithuania Adolfas Ramanauskas-Vanagas and Birute Mazeikaite. According to their daughter, during her parents' arrest Adolfas still managed to tell Birute that he loved her. Even facing death, women still provided moral support to partisans.

Unfortunately, the partisan movement was extinguished in 1953. The whole movement had lasted for nine years and it would not have survived as long as it did without the input of women. They united the forest brothers as well as inspired them to fight. Their remarkable dedication and bravery played a big role in the partisan war. That is why the memory of women's sacrifice and their exceptional performance in the resistance movement cannot fade away.

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