Salvijus Kulevičius

ORCID: 0000-0002-1511-7290

Vilnius University Faculty of History, (Post)Authoritarian Landscapes Research Centre, Lithuania

E-mail: salvijus.kulevicius@if.vu.lt

In the Traps of the Soviets: Soviet World War II Military Burial Sites in Lithuania. The Genesis

Abstract

The myth of the *Great Patriotic War* (1941–1945) lost its power and significance in Lithuania shortly after the restoration of the country's independence in 1990. The concept of the *Great Patriotic War* was hastily abandoned, with part of the Soviet monuments meant to promote this myth being dismantled and *Victory Day* (May 9) no longer being celebrated. However, the Soviet military cemeteries remained. Being behind the horizons of the great Lithuanian narratives, they did not attract much attention until the 21st century, when the neighbouring state began taking an interest in them and using them for their benefit. They started getting suspicious looks from Lithuanians after the beginning of the Russian invasions of Ukraine in 2014 and 2022. Then, the cemeteries began to be seen as relics of the Soviet occupation regime and exposed as instruments of Russia's current soft power. So they are not the past. These are places that have not lost their ideological charge and potential, spreading stories that are inconsistent with national Lithuanian narratives, masking the occupation, and suggesting that we remember the *liberation*.

The publication looks back at the origins of the *Soviet Great Patriotic War military cemeteries* and the main moments of their formation, first and foremost perceiving them from the perspectives of politics of memory and using appropriate research instruments. These sites have little in common with the original burial sites and were essentially created as propaganda tools in keeping with best practices in memorial design. In addition to being burial sites, they were constructed to spread the myth of the *Great Patriotic War* and other great Soviet narratives. The work examines what makes these places so special and convenient, and what meanings and narratives they were created to convey.

Keywords

Great Patriotic War; Soviet World War II military burial sites in Lithuania; Soviet propaganda; remembrance policy; Lithuania.

At one time, the myth of the *Great Patriotic War* was mandatory in Lithuania, as it was throughout the entire Soviet Union. And as was characteristic of such creations and Soviet propaganda in general – it had to be believed unconditionally. The situation changed quickly and significantly after Lithuania regained its independence in 1990. Acts of the Government of the Republic of Lithuania abandoned the concept of the *Great Patriotic War* as early as 1991. In 1990–1993, part of the monuments disappeared as well, with ones to commemorate the *Victory*, the *liberating* army and the Soviet partisans being dismantled. Looking at it today, the myth of the *Great Patriotic War* is in dissonance with the great Lithuanian narrative. The myth told/tells about the victory in the war and the liberation of Lithuania from the German fascists, while the Lithuanian perspective associates the official end of World War II not with victory or the end of evil, but with the beginning of something no less cruel and painful – the Soviet occupation. It is the fight of the Lithuanian partisans against the Soviets in 1944–1953 that is the great Lithuanian narrative, which begins with the *liberation*/occupation and is fundamentally incompatible with the myth of the *Great Patriotic War*. While for one narrative the

central focus is *victory*, for the other it is *occupation*; thus, *liberation* is *occupation* and the *liberators* are the *occupants*.

However, not all manifestations of the *Great Patriotic War* disappeared from the Lithuanian landscape in 1990–1993. Soviet military cemeteries became the exception. Called *Soviet Great Patriotic War military cemeteries* by the Soviets, in independent Lithuania (at least in the context of the cultural heritage protection system) they eventually began to be called *Soviet World War II military burial sites*. It was the bodies – a distinctive component of these places – that helped them survive. However, they did not become refuges of tranquillity. For one group, which we can conditionally call agents of the Russian Federation, they became a place of action around 2000. Reconstruction of these sites was started, the essential subtext of which was the desire to preserve the myth of the *Great Patriotic War*, adapting to the new circumstances and further consolidating it in the Lithuanian landscape. This intervention lasted at least a decade before it was blocked by Lithuanian institutions (for more details, see: *Arlauskaitė-Zakšauskienė et al.*, 2016). When the Russian invasion of Ukraine began in 2022, they again became a place of action, only this time it was the pro-Lithuanian side that was on the giving end. Soviet symbols and monuments representing Soviet soldiers began to be removed from these sites. In order to better understand these processes that took place in independent Lithuania in the 21st century, one must look for the reasons in the very nature of these places, going back to the years of their appearance and development in the Soviet era – bearing in mind that what was created then remained essentially unchanged until 2000 or 2022. These places are viewed through the prism of sites of memory (in the sense of the concept popularised by Pierre Nora), deconstructing their network, their features compared to other monuments, and their mechanisms of creating significance and meanings. The sources used are presented and critical comments about them are published in the text itself.

Secondary burial sites

Let's start with the statement that the *Soviet Great Patriotic War military cemeteries* (hereinafter – *gpwcs*) were not only cemeteries, but

also memorials – or perhaps even memorials before cemeteries. The history of their development, the material form given, the functioning in the Soviet propaganda system and other factors point precisely to this nature of these places. The Soviet soldiers who died were already buried once. They were usually buried wherever circumstances allowed – in the fields, in the woods, at the approaches of railway stations, in backyards, in local cemeteries, or in the squares of cities and towns. There were cases when the bodies were simply thrown into one large pit dug on the outskirts of a village (Žardinskas & Rusevičius, 2011–2016). Such were the realities of wartime. In Soviet-occupied Lithuania, secondary burial sites for these soldiers began to be established in 1945. Their appearance was fuelled by two reasons. The first was utilitarian. The issue of optimising the number of graveyards and their maintenance had to be resolved, and this was done by consolidating several, a dozen or more graveyards into one. The second was ideological. The myth of the *Great Patriotic War* that emerged during World War II had not faded away – it had undergone transformations and was not always received with equal enthusiasm by the blacksmiths forging the Soviet ideology and propaganda in Moscow, but it continued to take root and established itself as one of the main memories of Soviet society. Manifestations of this myth were needed, and not only ones spoken or written down in words or performed in ceremonies, but also ones that were materially expressed in the landscape. *Victory* and GPWC memorials were created for this purpose. The former relied solely on the idea, while the latter needed the bodies of the dead.

The secondary burial places were no longer created spontaneously, but in keeping with the best traditions of memorial construction. They were usually built at the primary military burial sites, choosing the ones that were the most suitable for memorial practices in terms of location. Remains from the other "inauspicious" graveyards were moved to the newly revamped ones. Here are a few cases to form a more general picture of the process. Remains were transported to the memorial that was built in Ginkūnai, on the outskirts of the city of Šiauliai (c. 1946) from 12 surrounding areas, while remains from six surrounding villages were moved to the memorial in Meškuičiai town square, which was built in 1946 (Urbonavičiūtė,

2013). In the case of Ginkūnai, the farthest place that the remains were brought in from was 16 kilometres away. Bodies were brought to the memorial in Jonava from places 5–16 kilometres away. The main relocation process lasted until 1956. Thus, a new formation appeared in Lithuania – secondary burial places, or GPWCs. The reburial of remains and the changes in the network of sites continued later as well – throughout the entire Soviet era – but the scale was much more modest. It was no longer a general campaign, but individual and local administration initiatives. So around 1956, the most definitive full stop was placed in the history of these sites – at least in the part that had to do with the bodies and the location of the sites. What was above the ground had another story and dates of its own.

How many bodies were appropriate for one site? There was no standard. A GPWC could have had anywhere from four bodies to 5,000.[1] Perhaps only a few trends are discernible. Pilots and border guards – that is, representatives of rarer types of troops or soldiers who were killed in more special circumstances – were buried in the smallest graveyards in terms of the number of remains. Examples of this are the cemetery on Polocko Street in the city of Vilnius (where four people are buried), the cemetery in Galiniai Village in the district of Lazdijai (five), and the cemeteries in the villages of Voverynė and Šiliuškiai in Rokiškis District (12)[2]. These distinctions were probably enough for the sites to remain intact. Moving from the minimum to the maximum, the largest number of bodies were concentrated in the Aukštieji Šančiai Cemetery in the city of Kaunas (5,056) and the Antakalnis Cemetery in the city of Vilnius (where

---

1 How many bodies are lying underground in a particular place, who do they belong to, and what were the circumstances of their death? Due to confusion in the sources or a lack of them altogether, the answers to these questions are often a mystery. As a result, statistics are presented here by combining information from the different available sources, indicating discrepancies wherever possible (with a slash between the different numbers), or relying on existing gravestone inscriptions, while acknowledging the unreliability of this source.

2 Relevant information here and elsewhere is provided on the basis of the *Tarybinių karių kapinės. Sovietų kareivių kapavietės Lietuvos Respublikoje* ("Soviet Military Cemeteries. Graveyards of Soviet Soldiers in the Republic of Lithuania") database (now defunct, data checked in 2016), the *Register of Cultural Property*, and the *certificates of historical and cultural monuments of the USSR*. In other cases, the specific sources are cited.

the number increased from 2,906 to 3,460 to 3,573), as well as in the cities in the southern and south-western parts of Lithuania bordering with historical Prussia – Alytus, Kalvarija, Kybartai, Kudirkos Naumiestis, Marijampolė and Vilkaviškis (1,900–2,900 at each burial site). These concentrations were conditioned by historical realities (major battles were fought there and many soldiers died) rather than propagandistic hype (artificial exaggeration). Bodies were gathered here, but only from the territory of the same city and its immediate surroundings. On the other hand, there were different practices with the remains of Soviet partisans – in 1954–1955, their bodies were brought to Vilnius's Antakalnis Cemetery not only from Vilnius, but also from the districts of Alytus, Švenčionys and Trakai (Girininkienė, 2000, p. 24; also see Zizas, 2014, pp. 533–534). Vilnius and Alytus are 85 kilometres apart.

Inclusion of bodies

The physical bodies of the dead were a fundamental component of the GPWCS. However, symbolic bodies were also "moved" to the secondary burial sites. Names of people whose remains were not found or did not survive appeared on tombstones and the lists of the buried. This might have been a soldier who died in the area of the cemetery, or a more distinguished person who died further away ("more distinguished" in this case meant military rank or real or alleged heroic military merits). Thus, the GPWC was not only a cemetery, but also a cenotaph. However, physical and symbolic bodies tended not to be decoupled at these sites – they were treated the same, as everyone else there. The bringing in of bodies at different times (for example, in 1970, bodies were moved from one graveyard to another in Panevėžys, and then in Alytus in the early 1970s), the fact that bodies of different people – not just soldiers and not just those who were killed during World War II – were brought to the sites, distortion (both up and down) of the number of bodies for ideological reasons, and the lack of distinction between physical and symbolic bodies all make the GPWCS a complicated subject when it comes to the number of those buried or their origin. Precision is an uphill battle. One site, three sources, three different sets of statistics: The 1956 inventory

file of the Joniškis cemetery states that 29 persons were buried there (of whom 18 were soldiers who died in 1944 and 11 were soldiers and *istrebki* who died after the war); a certificate of historical and cultural monuments drawn up in the 1980s talks about 59 people who died (43 soldiers who were killed in 1943 and 1944, 12 soldiers and *istrebki* who were killed in the post-war period and four soldiers who were killed in 1941); meanwhile, judging by the existing inscriptions on the tombstones, there should be 65 (46 soldiers who were killed in 1944, 10 soldiers and *istrebki* who were killed in the post-war period, and nine soldiers who were killed in 1941). It should be kept in mind that in 1944–1945, the Soviet re-occupation of Lithuania took place, and with it, the fight of the Lithuanian partisans against the Soviets began. So any mentions of soldiers, *istrebki*[3] and other persons who died after 1944 and were buried in a GPWC usually refer to those who died in this Lithuanian war of resistance against the Soviets, or, as it is now customary to say in Lithuania – *the war after the war*.

The GPWCs were a specific type of memorial, the distinctive feature of which was the bodies. It was the bodies that gave them weight. They were needed here as a fact, as an emotion, as a mass. However, at these sites, the bodies themselves, in a certain sense and to a certain extent, lost their individuality and became depersonalised – they were simply needed as "building material" for the memorials. A resource for propaganda – such was their fate in the memorials. (It should be emphasised that this is being viewed from the perspectives of politics of memory and collective memory, though when it comes to individual and family memories, these bodies are treated differently – individually, in a personalised and intimate manner.) In order to understand the logic behind the redistribution of the remains (perhaps not even logic, but just more frequent coincidences), more detailed studies are needed. However, it can be seen from several cases that the decisions were not only influenced by utilitarian matters (distances, capacity). The bodies were moved due to the greater significance of the site or the creation of additional meanings

---

3 "Stribai", *lit.* (as Russian: *истребители* / istrebiteli) is a term that was colloquially used for members of the "destruction battalions" (Russian: *Истребительный батальон*) – paramilitary units that existed in 1944–1955 to fight against anti-Soviet partisans and others who opposed the Soviet government.

for it. In 1945, the bodies of those killed near Klaipėda and in Cour-land were brought to Kartena in order to create a new site. The long journey from Courland was necessary because the remains were special – those of soldiers of the 16th Lithuanian Division. This division of the Red Army was formed on a national basis, and a considerable part of it was made up of Lithuanians or persons originating from Lithuania. This was part of the Soviet propaganda game, which was supposed to bear witness to the contribution of Lithuanians to the common struggle of the *fraternal* Soviet nations against the German fascists and to show how Lithuanians *supported* (defended) the Soviet government. This motif was used during the war, and even more actively after the war ended. Bodies were also moved for Soviet anniversaries. In 1954, to mark the 10th anniversary of the liberation of Vilnius, and in 1955, to mark the 15th anniversary of the founding of the Lithuanian SSR, the remains of Soviet partisans were ceremoniously brought to the Vilnius and Kaunas memorials. The site, its significance in terms of propaganda, and the ceremonies themselves came before the peace of the dead. Bodies were also buried in GPWCs in an effort to veil their identities and submerge them in the mass of other bodies and other meanings. These were the remains of those who died in the post-war period and other remains that were not always politically convenient, which we will talk about later.

The bodies in the GPWCs were not a fact, but a labile statistic – their number could be pushed up or down not by changing the physical quantity of the bodies themselves, but based on what the propaganda required. One reburial after another, indifference, the monopoly on memory and the land hid everything (for more details, see: *Arlauskaitė-Zakšauskienė et al.*, 2016, pp. 20–54). Below are a few cases. The history of the military burial sites in Keturvalakiai and Gižai (Vilkaviškis District) is a muddy one: In 1944, 40 Soviet soldiers were buried in Keturvalakiai, with their names mentioned in the documents; after the war, the bodies were moved to Gižai, but only a quarter of them are mentioned on the memorial plaques there (Žardinskas & Rusevičius, 2016). The reverse case: When cleaning up a secondary burial site in Druskininkai in 1962, approximately 20 fewer bodies were found than should have been

(Valentukevičius, 2007). For propaganda purposes, it was enough to declare that a *soldier of the Soviet Union* was lying there. It was about categories, not individuals. Bodies did not need names, and names did not need bodies. The name only gained value if it was a *hero of the Soviet Union* or – less frequently – a hero of the creation of socialism and the Soviet system, such as a *revolutionary*. This was a separate category and a separate cult, which was distinguished by an individual monument or mention at the military burial sites and in their descriptions. Of course, the individuals were not forgotten. Relatives searched for their loved ones and placed flowers at their graves and next to their names. And local media presented heroic stories of soldiers that taught a lesson. Nevertheless, the memorials, with their identical monuments, inscriptions in the same fonts, and superabundance of names remained indifferently cold.

Location – all for the sake of the memorial

The transformation from primary burial sites to secondary ones significantly changed them. The sites became less dependent on historical circumstances and came closer to what might be called an ideal memorial site. First of all, they changed their locale, and from sites in fields, forests and villages became the sites of cities and towns. If we were to say that there were 176 GPWCS in Lithuania during the Soviet era (the situation in 1973)[4], then 88 of them (approximately 50 per cent) were in cities or their outskirts, 68 (38 per cent) were in towns, 19 (11 per cent) were in villages, and one was in a forest. This ties in with another obvious trend – erecting them in national, regional and district centres, in gathering places and places of interest. The locale of the secondary sites was perfectly aligned with the administrative/territorial division of Lithuania. In 1949, there were 41 counties in Lithuania, and all (100 per cent) of the county centres

---

4 Data are based on the *Lietuvos SSR kultūros paminklų sąrašas* ("List of Cultural Monuments of the Lithuanian SSR"). The real number of GPWCS does not completely line up with these data. Not all GPWCS had heritage status (which was a prerequisite for being included in this list), so there were actually a bit more of them than are presented in this list. However, of all the possible sources, this should be considered the most accurate, causing the least doubts and confusion.

(the central settlements of the counties) had GPWCs. Or, looking at it from another angle, there were 54 cities, of which 49 (91 per cent) had graveyards. With the introduction of a new administrative division in 1950, 92 districts appeared in Lithuania, where 82 (89 per cent) of the district centres had their own military burial sites, while six districts either had these sites outside of the central settlement or were themselves adjacent to large cities and, at the same time, large memorials of the *Great Patriotic War*, leaving maybe only three districts (Daugai, Simnas and Veisieji) without a GPWC. The secondary burial sites concentrated the bodies from the primary ones, and this significantly reduced the number of Soviet military cemeteries in Lithuania to no more than 200 sites. However, this number was completely sufficient to cover all of Lithuania through the administrative points and the territories included in them. A territorial and propaganda network was formed from the chaotically scattered graveyards. The process of establishing secondary sites and its results should be treated as concentration and optimisation for the sake of even greater impact. For memorial practices, it is not only their accessibility and availability that is important – the aura of celebration is as well. These sites are not intended for daily visits, but for celebrating and holding ceremonies, so being in the places of memorial practices is also meant to lift the public to a different dimension and create different emotions than we encounter in everyday life. In general, only then does the practice or place begin to function as a memorial. Therefore, the memorial site had to balance between being too frequent, so as not to become an everyday sight and dissolve in everyday life, and being too rare, so as not to make it difficult to attract the masses.

Another feature was that the secondary burial sites were concentrated in the most representative or aesthetically attractive areas of the settlements – in the squares of cities and towns, often next to monuments dedicated to Lithuanian statehood. In the latter case, this means monuments that were erected while Lithuania was still independent (before 1940), which, ideologically speaking, were completely unacceptable to the Soviet occupation authorities and therefore were for the most part destroyed. It did not take long for Soviet monuments and burials of Soviet soldiers to take their place: In Alytus, *Angel of Freedom*, a monument that was built in

1929 to commemorate the first decade of independence of the state of Lithuania and had a bas-relief depicting the Lithuanian fight against the "Red Dragon", was demolished in 1951 (Soviet soldiers began to be buried in its pedestal in 1944), while the monument in Biržai (which soldiers began to be buried around in 1945) was taken down in 1946 and the one in Kurkliai was dismantled 1952. The monument that stood in Meškuičiai was reconstructed around 1946 into a Soviet memorial, with the Freedom sculpture replaced by a Soviet star, and the inscriptions glorifying the independence of Lithuania as well as the symbols of Lithuanian statehood replaced by inscriptions in Lithuanian and Russian reading "Eternal glory to the heroes / 1941–1945". The monument in Joniškis was also reconstructed, only to be torn down in 1961. In 1944, soldiers began to be buried in Kudirkos Naumiestis next to the monument to Vincas Kudirka, the author of the Lithuanian national anthem and a national hero; soon after, an obelisk with a star was erected there. Even though there were initiatives to demolish it in 1945–1948, the monument was not destroyed. The monument in Plokščiai to honour Lithuanian volunteers and the 20-year anniversary of independence was not demolished either – it was left to stand on the other side of the *gpwc* fence (Nukentėję paminklai, 1994; Kurkliai, 2023; Treideris). Secondary burial sites were also created at the foot of churches (11 such cases were identified). The historical peculiarities of Lithuanian urban planning led to the fact that churches were the main shapers of the spaces of cities and towns or their integral components, so this was the vicinity that had to be accommodated. The grounds of former estates that were distinguished by beautiful manor houses and parks were also suitable (seven such cases have been identified).

Already existing local cemeteries that appeared even before the beginning of the war were also considered suitable for secondary burial sites. Approximately 30 such cases can be singled out. Compared to the squares of cities and towns, these territories were less restricted by already existing structures (buildings, street networks, etc.) or burdened with urban functions, so it was possible to create larger and more capacious complexes. This is precisely the practice that was used in Lithuania's major cities. In 1945, the square in Vilnius named after the Polish novelist Eliza Orzeszkowa and

the Šiauliai Market Square were turned into military cemeteries, with the former being named Ivan Chernyakhovsky Square and the latter – Victory Square. During the second reburial in Vilnius (circa 1951), the remains were moved from the square to the memorial being formed in Antakalnis Cemetery (Girininkienė, 2000, p. 24), leaving only the body of Red Army General Ivan Chernyakhovsky in the square named after him. This is how the concept of the square itself was fundamentally changed from a *GPWC* site to a place for glorification of the *Victory*. Hence, the status of the square was restored. In the case of Šiauliai, the remains were left to lie in the square. However, it did not become a place for the accumulation of bodies, as was typical of secondary burial sites. The bodies found in the district of Šiauliai were sent to nearby Ginkūniai, where two graveyards were formed (1945–1947). The situation in the city of Panevėžys was likely similar – in 1946, remains were moved from Berčiūnai to the more distant Smilgiai (15 km away, even though Panevėžys was closer, just 8 km away), and then in 1950 from Velžys to Raguva (19 km and 6 km away, respectively). The secondary burial site in the city itself appeared later, in 1953, after establishing it on the grounds of the Eastern Orthodox cemetery in the central part of Panevėžys and moving the remains to it from two other graveyards within the city limits. Why were suburbs and neighbouring towns chosen for reburial instead of city centres? Why were they farther away? The reason was probably the limited area and capacity of the cities. The cemetery in Šiauliai, which was wedged between the church and the streets, was 0.14 ha in size (53 burial plots), while the graveyard in Panevėžys, which was bordered by cemeteries and city blocks, was 0.19 ha (579/870 burial plots). Unlike in Šiauliai and Panevėžys, which had one *GPWC* each, a different practice was applied in Alytus and Marijampolė, where several such sites were formed at once, distributing the masses of the remains. In Vilnius and Kaunas, memorials were established outside of the city centres, in cemeteries, and they became the largest in Lithuania in terms of territory and the number of people buried there – today, the memorial in Vilnius's Antakalnis Cemetery occupies about 1.2 ha, while the one in Kaunas's Aukštieji Šančiai Cemetery takes up 1.46 ha. And their development continued throughout the Soviet era, right

up to the 1980s. For example, one of the reconstructions in Kaunas took place in 1983–1985, during which two squares connected by a "parade" path were formed with sculptural accents, and the area of the entire memorial was visually expanded accordingly (Migonytė; Girininkienė, 2000, p. 24).

Taking over squares in city or town centres and burial in cemeteries were two different practices. In one case, the historically developed urban situation was exploited – what had been created before the Soviets and was already common or simply adapted as memorial spaces. In the other, there were attempts to establish new spaces in the hope that they would take root as memorials. However, both of them had a common goal – to turn them into memorial sites.

Best of the themes

The epic of the *Great Patriotic War* could have various thematic expressions and accents. Yet as with any other politicised memory, the most favourable ones tended to be selected and developed. The government had a monopoly on this memory.[5] The official image of the *Great Patriotic War* was not a constant, and varied according to the politics in Moscow (Riley, 2012; Tumarkin, 1994; Zilberman, 2012). In general, the blacksmiths of Soviet ideology always made sure it was possible to easily change interpretations and accents when needed, and perhaps this was one of the reasons for avoiding official fixed and clearly formulated interpretations. Such directives could become testimonies to how what was stated and declared yesterday could be reversed (discrepancies between what was said yesterday and what was said today could cause doubts about the infallibility and decisions of the government, but when there were not any clear testimonies from yesterday, then the government seemed never to be mistaken and always right). Nevertheless, some expressions allow us to grasp the thematic contours or clusters of the myth of the *Great Patriotic War*. For example, the *List of Cultural Monuments of the Lithuanian*

---

5 Variations of this memory that deviate from the main narrative or more peculiar manifestations of it can be found, but this is beyond the scope of this study.

SSR that was published in 1973. To be included on this register of cultural property, a monument had to meet the norms of memory and ideology – then they were in the compendium of values that were basically officially recognised. The list included 381 sites related to the theme of the *Great Patriotic War* (see Table 1). Their selection (what was selected in general, how many were selected, what significance was given), naming (which concepts were chosen, what was emphasised) and description (in the list, each site is described in a few words) become exaggerations, omissions or distortions, behind which a more general picture can be made out and an implicit map of images and memories of the *Great Patriotic War* can be formed (presented in Table 2)[6].

In the case of our topic, it is important that most heritage and memorial sites could embody only one or two themes, so individual episodes from the epic of the *Great Patriotic War*. However, it was different with the GPWCS – the bodies of soldiers allowed for the immediate and simultaneous escalation of several themes:

- heroism,
- *the Victory*,
- *the liberators*,
- the treachery and cruelty of the enemy,
- the contribution of Lithuanians.

The broad thematic spectrum (the variety of convenient themes that were embodied and disseminated) and, at the same time, their concentration all in one, made this site the best of all existing or possible, historical/authentic or newly created manifestations of the memory of the *Great Patriotic War*. As for the other sites, some of them were too rare – one could go through life without ever visiting them or experiencing their effects. Some of them were too narrow thematically – conveying the desired meanings and the scale of the war was difficult with them, and when the politics of memory (the

---

6 The *Lietuvos SSR kultūros paminklų sąrašas* was not exhaustive. Even after 1973, new objects were added to it while others were deleted. However, the thematic field of the *Great Patriotic War* itself did not seem to change at that time, and remained as such right up until 1990. This stability can be explained by the fact that Brezhnev's treatment of the *Great Patriotic War* had already been established and was no longer revised by subsequent leaders of the USSR.

aspects or accents of the image of war) changed, they could lose their significance altogether. Secondary military burial sites did not have these flaws. The optimality of their network was already discussed and praised. And the array of themes concentrated in them was basically capable of conveying the necessary image of the *Great Patriotic War*. It was difficult for them to integrate the theme of civilian casualties, but separate networks and memorials of places where Soviet *citizens* were killed were created for this purpose. It was also convenient that this array made it possible to stifle themes that were no longer relevant and raise new ones that were needed without causing any damage to the site itself – it always remained significant. This protected it from fluctuations in politics of memory. The *Victory* memorials were perhaps the only other ones that had this advantage.

The "Red Corner"

The first and largest wave of burials subsided in 1956. However, the bodies continued to travel to the selected locations. And these were not only the bodies of soldiers and not only those who died during World War II. Around 1954, the transfer of the remains of the so-called Soviet partisans to GPWCs became more intense. For example, the remains of partisan squad commander Kazimieras Štaras and partisan Stasys Vilčinskas were moved to the GPWC in Anykščiai, while the remains of 103 partisans were moved to the one in Vilnius and of 30 partisans – to the one in Kaunas. In 1955, with the realisation that there were not many Lithuanians in the Kaunas GPWC and it was therefore "not visible that the Lithuanian people fought against the occupants", Lithuanian Soviet activists were included on the list of those buried there, although their remains were not found (Zizas, 2014, p. 534). From the 1960s to the 1990s, Soviet soldiers who died under various circumstances and who no longer belonged to the generations that could have participated in World War II were buried in the GPWCs (in Ginkūnai, Kalvarijos, Širvintos, etc.). This could have been members of the crew that was tragically killed in 1977, victims of the 1979–1989 Afghanistan War, or someone else. Veterans of the *Great Patriotic War* who died after 1945 were also buried (in Prienai). Just a few of these types of different bodies next to the hundreds

that were there were enough to enrich the place with new aspects. Those different bodies had their own stories[7]:

- not only World War II, but also:
- (1) the 1918–1920 war with the Bolsheviks,
- (2) the 1941 June Uprising,
- (3) the 1944–1953 Lithuanian Partisan War,
- (4) the 1945–1990 cult of veterans of the *Great Patriotic War*,
- (5) the 1945–1990 cult of the Soviet Union military;
- not only soldiers of the armed forces of the USSR, but also:
- (1) Soviet activists/collaborators (Komsomol members, communists, officials) / 1941–1953,
- (2) Soviet partisans / 1941–1944,
- (3) members of forces that fought against Lithuanian partisans / 1944–1953;
- not only soldiers of the armed forces of the USSR who died in battle during World War II, but also:
- (1) war veterans who died of natural causes / 1945–1990,
- (2) soldiers killed in military actions and accidents / 1945–1990.

In its actual content, the GPWC became a more complex entity than the place name implies (in this case, the actual content refers to the supposed remains buried at the site or attributed to it). The bodies of soldiers are not the only ones lying there, and they are not the only prerequisites for creating the significance and meanings of the site. People who died after the war in the vortices of the subsequent Lithuanian partisan war (1945–1953) – Soviet soldiers, *istrebki*, Soviet activists/collaborators, members of their families – were also buried in at least 36 of the 176 sites (17 per cent).[8] In one place, there could have

---

7 The groups are distinguished and named from the current perspective of independent Lithuania, based on today's assessments and concepts. The 1918–1920 war with Bolsheviks, the 1941 June Uprising and the 1944–1953 Lithuanian Partisan War are the stories of Lithuanian resistance to the Bolsheviks and the Soviets.

8 Here and elsewhere, the numbers are determined based on the inscriptions on the GPWC memorial plaques (or more precisely, the photographs thereof in the *Soviet Military Cemeteries* and *Register of Cultural Property* databases). These inscriptions appeared in various periods, both during the Soviet years and during the reconstructions that took place after 1990. Such inscriptions are not a reliable source, but one might expect that they still reflect the general proportions.

been some 10 such bodies/surnames (in Joniškis), while in another
there could have been 70–100 (in Biržai). However, their number
in specific cemeteries seems to have never exceeded 15 per cent of
all those buried. This theme and the remains associated with it also
formed separate self-contained complexes. In Vilnius, approximately
190 Soviet soldiers who were killed between 1942 and 1962 "in the
course of official duties" are buried in one part of the Antakalnis
Cemetery. Meanwhile, "48 members of Karolis Požela's anti-fascist
underground organisation and 24 Soviet activists who died in the
fight against the German occupants and bourgeois nationalists in
1942–1949" (this is the inscription on the main monument) are buried
on a separate plot in the Panevėžys cemetery, and in Šeduva, 33 people
are buried in a separate memorial, of whom two were killed in 1919,
17 were killed in 1941, and 12 were killed in 1945–1953. It is noteworthy
that unlike in the case of the GPWCs, the Soviets avoided escalating or
highlighting these sites. For example, not a single one of them was
given the status of a *cultural monument*. This was only conferred upon
about eight places associated with the death of Soviet activists in the
post-war years, but not with their burials (as per: *Lietuvos SSR kultūros
paminklų sąrašas, 1973*). They were related to the deaths of individuals
or small groups, had abstract inscriptions or descriptions, and did
not reflect the scale of the phenomenon or form a denser or more
coherent network of such sites. There was a tendency for the nature of
"the people's" post-war struggles to be shaped by them (inscriptions
and locale), obscuring the role of the state structures. The post-war
struggles were a tricky but necessary theme, or rather – one that was
inevitable or hard to keep quiet. In any case, there was a need for
places that commemorated the theme, through which the necessary
explanations could be given and individual memories could be ousted
or distorted. The GPWCs became a convenient space for fitting in this
theme – the bodies/themes were simultaneously both there and not,
as if they had drowned among the bodies of hundreds of soldiers.

   In at least 22 GPWCs (13 per cent), Soviet partisans were buried
alongside soldiers or at least mentioned on the memorial plaques
of the cemeteries. There were usually only a few burials. Higher
concentrations of partisans' remains/surnames were only formed
in Rūdiškės (21 people, or 21 per cent of all those buried), Cirkliškis

(28/42 people or 6/13 per cent), and the memorials in Vilnius and Kaunas. The Soviet partisan together with the Soviet soldier – the most important characters of the *Great Patriotic War* became heroes. When forming the secondary burial sites, the bodies of prominent partisans were viewed as significant components of memory, with the remains of partisans/*heroes of the Soviet Union* Juozas Aleksonis, Hubertas Borisa and Alfonsas Čeponis being moved to the Kaunas *GPWC*, and those of partisan Icikas Meskupas (nom de guerre: Adomas) and member of the underground/*hero of the Soviet Union* Juozas Vitas – to the Vilnius *GPWC*. Monuments glorifying the partisans were erected in the cities: To partisan Marija Melnikaitė in Druskininkai in 1952; again to Melnikaitė in Zarasai in 1955; to Meskupas in Ukmergė in 1976; to Vitas in Alytus in 1977; and "to Soviet partisans and members of the underground" in Vilnius in 1983. Historical places associated with the partisans were memorialised and recognised as heritage sites – memorial stones were erected, memorial plaques were hung, and they were declared *cultural monuments*. In the 1970s, a campaign to preserve partisan dugouts began, with three such complexes in the forests of Rūdiškės, Rūdninkai and Antanai being restored in 1973–1975. Despite the fact that the remains/surnames of partisans in the *GPWCs* were significantly fewer in number than those of soldiers, for some time these sites were called by the double name of *Soviet Great Patriotic War military and partisan cemeteries* (In: Типовые проекты памятников, 1947).

The *GPWCs* became a haven for other bodies and themes. We have highlighted only a few cases. They made this place more than just a historical site honouring the *Great Patriotic War*. At these sites, the bodies of people who died at different times and under different circumstances became intertwined into one idea raised above history, which testified to the immortality of the revolutionary thought (i.e. another great Soviet narrative and propaganda staple) and to the victory of the Soviet system. It was a Soviet "red corner"[9] in the landscape – the materialisation of specific histories

---

9 The "red corner" was the name given to the place at institutions, organisations and companies that was equipped to provide Sovietisation information and propaganda.

and "universal" Soviet cosmogonic myths through bodies and the shapes and inscriptions of the memorials.

Fabrication as the norm

If we were to rely on the image of the past created through the GPWCs and other Soviet memorial sites, it should have seemed that Lithuanian Soviet partisans played a significant role in the *Great Patriotic War*. They were emphasised because there were subtexts. This character was supposed to testify to the involvement of Lithuanians in the *common struggle of the Soviet people as a whole*, but more importantly, the actions of the Soviet partisans in the territory occupied by the Nazis was supposed to demonstrate that this territory belonged and continued to belong to the Soviets – that their institutions continued to operate there and Lithuanians participated enthusiastically in all of these activities. In other words, this is how the Soviet occupation and dependence on the Soviets were established. However, the facts testify that Lithuanians made up 7 per cent of all the people concentrated in the partisan hideout in Rūdninkai Forest (a place made legendary by Soviet propaganda), and, respectively, 36 per cent throughout Lithuania (Zizas, 2004, pp. 142–144; Zizas, 2014, pp. 545–546).

Another theme. The facts testify that not all of the deaths of Soviet soldiers in Lithuania were heroic, because they died not only while fighting on the battlefields, but also in prison camps. This fact was not concealed, because it revealed just how blood-thirsty the enemy was – entries in the memorials claimed tens of thousands or murdered soldiers. This suited Soviet propaganda. There were at least nine such places on the list of *cultural monuments*. However, this theme is exhibited in a more reserved manner than the GPWC sites. Graveyards of prisoners of war were not registered very scrupulously – at least nine such sites were not included on the lists of *cultural monuments* (according to the *Soviet Military Cemeteries* database), and several places where prisoners of war were also buried were collectively called the burial sites of Soviet *citizens*, without mentioning the soldiers lying there (three such cases have been identified). The monuments erected in them did not have the pomp quality of military burial sites – they looked rather modest. And what was written

on those monuments was not entirely in line with the truth – the emphasis was on murder (with the typical phrases being "killed by the Nazi occupants", "tortured by German fascists"), even though the prisoners also died from diseases and starvation. For example, an eyewitness said that at Soviet prisoner-of-war camp No 133 in Alytus, 14,500 prisoners died of starvation, 2,000 died of an epidemic, and 500 were shot from August 1941 to February 1942 (Dieckmann, Toleikis & Zizas, 2005).

The genocide of the Jews and the sites where they were killed and buried were also used to demonise the enemy. Propaganda benefited from denationalising Jews and converting them into *Soviet citizens*. Lithuania was littered with burial sites of *Soviet citizens* killed by the Nazi occupants and their henchmen (an estimated 119 in all). This renaming helped to argue that the target of the mass killings was Soviet society as a whole, rather than a specific population group. At the same time, it also made it possible to create an illusion that society had come close to the Soviet ideal of a nationless state. Mentioning or not mentioning the number of dead also had subtexts. Terrifying figures were almost always cited at places connected with the deaths of *citizens* and prisoners of war, but never at the burial sites of Soviet soldiers. In one case, there was probably a need to emphasise the shocking brutality, while in the other – to keep silent about the enormous losses. The history of the bombing of the pioneer camp in Palanga and the place that commemorates it were also to testify to just how blood-thirsty the enemy was. The event was turned into a myth, with one incoming shell or bomb turned into a bombing, and one victim – the famous 1941 tragedy (*Balikienė*, 2008). Emotions were also supposed to be heightened by "Mum! Where are you?", a poem by Salomėja Nėris, a poet who was lauded by the Soviets, as well as *Pioneer*, an expressive sculpture that was erected at the scene of the event. In this context, a wartime practice should be remembered: In 1942, Soviet propagandists were required to "give the workers a fuller picture of all the horrors of the terrible mockery and abuse that our brothers experience from the fascist degenerates in the temporarily occupied regions of our country, and develop in the people a feeling of burning hatred for the fascist thugs and readiness to mercilessly take revenge on them"

(cited according to: Назаров, 2009, p. 129). The desire to expose the treachery and brutality of the former enemy (which was often presented by the Soviets as an eternal and current enemy, only now existing in the form of *Western capitalists* and NATO) and to incite hatred for them did not fade in all the years of the existence of the Soviet Union.

We could go on and on with this list of cases illustrating the flaws in the narrative of the *Great Patriotic War*. We are dealing with the phenomenon of *fabricating heritage* that David Lowenthal has described. Heritage provides us with an actualised history construct adapted to the needs of the present. In updating history, it has to be fabricated, but such a history acquires a distinctive value or quality – consolidating society by providing it with value and other vectors (Lowenthal, 1998, pp. 5–24). The GPWCs existed according to the law that, having emerged from the needs of Soviet propaganda, they embodied and disseminated images and values useful to the Soviets.

Conclusions

By their nature, the GPWCs were secondary burial sites that were created by the occupying power in Lithuania without adhering to historical conditionality (for example, the authentic location), and that were designed according to the best practices of memorial construction. First, at least in the case of Soviet Lithuania, a network of them was formed that was optimal from a propaganda and utilitarian point of view, both in terms of the number of sites, their distribution throughout the territory, and the selection of specific spaces for them. Second, they were constructed from bodies, moving them and distributing them as needed. By reburying one body or another, the desired meanings were created, for example – demonstrating the involvement of Lithuanians in the war for the Soviet *Motherland*. When the bodies that were needed were not available, they could be replaced by inscriptions on memorial plaques. Concrete and earth hid inaccuracies and embellishments.

Although the sites were titled as *military cemeteries*, thematically they were much more capacious. Few other memorials or

monuments could encompass such a wide variety of themes of the myth of the *Great Patriotic War* while simultaneously talking about the heroism of Soviet soldiers, the *liberation* of individual nations or the contribution of its members to the *fraternal* struggle, and inciting the cult of *Victory*. In addition, they could be manifestations not only of the *Great Patriotic War*, but also of revolutionary struggles and the achievements of the Soviet system in general, thus embodying other grand narratives of Soviet propaganda. They were useful both for exalting such themes and for consigning them to oblivion, when a topic that had lost its relevance could be "lost" in this knot of themes and meanings without changing the material expression of the memorial itself. These sites were not subject to history – they created history in the form of narratives that were favourable to the regime and ideologically correct.

All this made and make the GPWCS perfect propaganda tools that were used by the Soviets at the relevant time, and now suit the needs of Putin's Russia, which revived the myth of the *Great Patriotic War*.

Bibliography

Monographs

Arlauskaitė-Zakšauskienė, I., Černiauskas, N., Jakubčionis, A., Kulevičius, S., Poškienė, J., Vaiseta, T. and Zikaras, K. (2016). *Kariai. Betonas. Mitas. Antrojo pasaulinio karo Sovietų Sąjungos karių palaidojimo vietos Lietuvoje*. Vilnius: Vilnius University Press.

Dieckmann, C., Toleikis, V. and Zizas, R. (2005). *Karo belaisvių ir civilių gyventojų žudynės Lietuvoje 1941–1944 / Murders of Prisoners of War and of Civilian Population in Lithuania, 1941–1944*. Vilnius: Margi raštai.

Tumarkin, N. (1994). *The Living and the Dead: The Rise and Fall of the Cult of World War II in Russia*. New York: Basic Books.

Zizas, R. (2014). *Sovietiniai partizanai Lietuvoje 1941–1944 m.* Vilnius: Lithuanian Institute of History Publishing House.

Journal articles without a DOI

Girininkienė, V. (2000). Antakalnio kapinės. *Liaudies kultūra*. 5(74), 18–26.

Nora, P. (1997). General Introduction: Between Memory and History. *The Realms of Memory: the Construction of the French Past*. New York: Columbia University Press. Vol. II, 1–20.

Lowenthal, D. (1998). Fabricating Heritage. *History and Memory*. 1(10), 5–24.

Riley, M. (2012). Stolen Victories: Evaluating the War Cult in Soviet Russia. *Oklahoma University Historical Journal*. 2012. 1. Retrieved from https://www.ou.edu/cas/history/ou-historical-journal/history-journal-2012 (accessed: 7.11.2023).

Zilberman, Y. (2012). *No One is Forgotten, Nothing is Forgotten: War Memory Under the Leonid Brezhnev Regime 1965–1974*. Retrieved from https://history.rutgers.edu/docman-docs/undergraduate/honors-papers-2012/414-no-one-is-forgotten-nothing-is-forgotten-war-memory-under-the-leonid-brezhnev-regime-1965–1974/file (accessed: 7.11.2023).

Zizas, R. (2004). Raudonųjų partizanų ir Pietryčių Lietuvos kaimų savisaugos ginkluoti konfliktai 1943 m. *Genocidas ir rezistencija*. 1(15), 138–161.

Назаров, А. И. (2009). Эволюция информационно-пропагандистской работы в среде молодёжи на начальном этапе Великой Отечественной войны. *Исторические, философские, политические и юридические науки, культурология и искусствоведение. Вопросы теории и практики*. 3(4), 128–131.

Online sources

Balikienė, B. (2008), Palangos ir Debiosų angelai, velniai ir kita mitologija. *Istorijos*. 2008. 6(33). Retrieved from https://rytufrontas.net/?page_id=552 (accessed: 7.11.2023).

Kurkliai. (2023). *Anykščių krašto vietovių žinynas*. Retrieved from http://www.anykstenai.lt/vietoves/vietove_print.php?id=805 (accessed: 7.11.2023).

Migonytė, V. Kauno Aukštųjų Šančių Lietuvos karių kapai. *Architek-tūros ir urbanistikos tyrimų centras*. Retrieved from https://autc.lt/architekturos-objektas/?id=1161&oe=4 (accessed: 7.11.2023).

Treideris, R. Vincas Kudirka I. *Paminklai Lietuvos knygnešiams ir da-raktoriams*. Retrieved from http://www.spaudos.lt/knygnesiu_pa-minklai/knygnesiai/vincas_kudirka i2.html (accessed: 7.11.2023).

Urbonavičiūtė, R. (2013). Roma Baristaitė apie Pirmojo ir Antrojo pasaulinių karų kapines. *Šiaulių naujienos*. Retrieved from http://www.snaujienos.lt/index.php/archyvas/54-siauliu-kapai-senka-piai-kapinynai/22644-roma-baristait-apie-pirmojo-ir-antrojo-pa-saulini-kar-kapines (accessed: 7.11.2023).

Valentukevičius, V. (2007). Karių perlaidojimo Druskininkuose kaina. *Druskonis*. Retrieved from http://www.druskonis.lt/beta/2007–06–29/index.php?id=miesto_zinios (accessed: 11.10.2016).

Žardinskas, A., Rusevičius, M. (2016). *Rytų frontas 1941–1945*. Re-trieved from http://rytufrontas.net/?page_id=1288 (accessed: 7.11.2023).

Historical sources

Типовые проекты памятников братских и индивидуальных могил воинов Советской Армии, Военно-Морского Флота и партизан, погибших в боях с немецко-фашистскими захватчиками в годы Великой Отечественной войны. (1947). Москва: Военное изда-тельство Министерства вооруженных сил Союза ССР.

Printed and online data bases

Kultūros vertybių registras. Retrieved from https://kvr.kpd.lt/#/sta-tic-heritage-search (accessed: 7.11.2023).

Lietuvos Respublikos istorijos ir kultūros paminklų sąrašas (1978–1990 m.). (1993). Vilnius: Savastis, Parts I and II.

Lietuvos TSR kultūros paminklų sąrašas. (1973). Vilnius: Pergalė.

Lietuvos TSR kultūros paminklų sąrašas (tęsinys). (1977). Vilnius: Moks-linė-metodinė kultūros paminklų apsaugos taryba.

Skirmantienė, M. and Varnauskas, J. (Eds.). (1994). *Nukentėję pamin-klai*. Vilnius: Science and Encyclopaedia Publishing Centre.

Tarybinių karių kapinės. *Sovietų kareivių kapavietės Lietuvos Respublikoje*. Retrieved from http://db.militaryheritage.eu (accessed: 11.10.2016).

Salvijus Kulevičius – a Doctor of Humanities who has been working at the Vilnius University Faculty of History since 2009. He was appointed associate professor of this faculty in 2016, and is a senior researcher for the (Post)Authoritarian Landscapes Research Centre. His areas of research interest are theory of cultural heritage, history of heritage conservation, and cultural heritage and memory. He is the co-author of three collective monographs, and he participates in and heads various heritage research, dissemination and critical studies projects.

Table 1. Representation of the *Great Patriotic War* in the Lithuanian SSR through cultural heritage: Thematic and statistical aspects.

Prepared on the basis of the 1973 lists of historical monuments and art monuments ((Lietuvos TSR kultūros paminklų sąrašas. Vilnius: Pergalė, 1973, p. 5–94, 441–82 [*List of Cultural Monuments of the Lithuanian SSR*]. Vilnius: Pergalė, 1973, pp. 5–94, 441–823).

THEME	Number of sites		Accents in the description of the site
	Total	**Of which of national significance (percentage of total number)**	
SOLDIERS OF THE SOVIET UNION:			
burial site	176	2 (1)	• buried: *Heroes of the Soviet Union* (33), border guards (2), pilots (1)
place of death	9	–	• buried: Soviet border guards and soldiers who died in 1941 (5), *Heroes of the Soviet Union* (3), pilots (1)
battle site	3	3 (100)	• fought: 16th Lithuanian Rifle Division of the Red Army (3)
total:	188	5 (3)	
SOVIET CITIZENS:			
burial site	114	3 (3)	• circumstances of death: killed during the *Nazi occupation* or as victims of the Nazi occupants (113), victims of the *Nazi occupants and the bourgeois nationalists* (1); • victim mentioned: V. Grybas (1)
place of death	5	2 (40)	• Soviet citizens: *Soviet citizens* (2), *Jewish intelligentsia* (1), *people* (1); • circumstances of death: killed *during the Nazi occupation* or as victims of the *Nazi occupants* (5)
total:	119	5 (4)	

SOVIET CITIZENS – EXCEPTIONAL CASES:			
villages burned and massacred by the *Nazi occupants*	6	1 (17)	• killed at the hands of: the *Nazi occupants* (5), the *Nazi occupants* and the *bourgeois nationalists* (1)
pioneer camp bombed by the *Nazi occupants*	1	-	• time and circumstances of the event: 1941
total:	7	1 (14)	
SOVIET PARTISANS:			
underground sites, dug-outs, headquarters	20	13 (65)	• partisans mentioned: H. Borisa (2), J. Vitas (1)
place of death	7	4 (57)	• partisans mentioned: J. Aleksonis (1), A. Čeponis (1), M. Melnikaitė (1), I. Meskupas-Adomas (1), other partisans (2)
burial place	6	1 (17)	• partisans mentioned: M. Melnikaitė (1), I. Meskupas-Adomas (1)
total:	33	18 (55)	
SOVIET ACTIVISTS:			
place of death	16	-	• Soviet activists: *who died for Soviet rule* (7), *Soviet activists* (3), *Komsomol members* (2), *Soviet citizens* (2), *fighters for Soviet rule* (1), *party and soviet workers* (1); • time and circumstances of death: not given (9), 1941 (4), killed by the Nazis (1), killed during the *Nazi occupation* (1), killed during the *Nazi occupation* and post-war years (1); • killed at the hands of: not given (14), the *Nazis* (1), the *Nazi occupants* (1)

burial place	5	–	• Soviet activists: *Soviet activists* (1), *who died for Soviet rule* (1), *Komsomol members* (1), *Soviet activists and Komsomol members* (1), *soviet workers* (1); • time and circumstances of death: 1941 (2) 1918-1919, 1941 (1), 1941-1949 (1), *during the Nazi occupation* (1); • killed at the hands of: not given (3), *the Nazi occupants* (1), *the bourgeois nationalists* (1)
place of detention	2	2 (100)	• Soviet activists: *participants in the revolutionary movement* (all sites)
total:	23	2 (9)	
CULT OF WAR HEROES:			
Marija Melnikaitė – partisan. *Hero of the Soviet Union*	5	1 (100) 1 (50) 1 (100) –	• birthplace (1); • place of torture and death (2); • burial place (1); • monument (1)
Hubertas Borisa – partisan, *Hero of the Soviet Union*	4	– 1 (50) –	• birthplace (1); • underground site (2); • burial place (1)
Icikas Meskupas-Adomas – partisan	2	1 (100) –	• place of death (1); • burial place (1)
Juozas Vitas – partisan, *Hero of the Soviet Union*	3	1 (100) 1 (100) –	• birthplace (1); • underground site (1); • burial place (1)
Juozas Aleksonis – partisan. *Hero of the Soviet Union*	2	1 (100) –	• place of death (1); • burial place (1)

Alfonsas Čeponis – partisan, *Hero of the Soviet Union*	2	1 (100)	• place of death (1); • burial place (1)
Ivan Chernyakhovsky – general, *Hero of the Soviet Union*	1	1 (100)	• burial place (1)
Tomas Tamulevičius – partisan, *Hero of the Soviet Union*	1	-	• burial place (1)
total:	20	10 (50)	
SOVIET PRISONERS OF WAR:			
burial place	7	-	
place of death	2	1 (50)	
total:	9	1 (11)	
MONUMENTS:			
Victory	3	2 (67)	
To the Liberators	1	-	
To the Heroes	1	-	• mentioned: partisan M. Melnikaitė (1)
total:	5	2 (40)	
TOTAL:	381	35 (9)	

Notes and explanations:

1.   What today is understood as cultural heritage was called *cultural monuments* in the Soviet Union (or later – *historical and cultural monuments*). They were divided into monuments of archaeology, architecture, history and art. The theme of the *Great Patriotic War* is represented through two of them – monuments of history and art. According to their significance, cultural monuments are divided into monuments of national and local significance, with monuments of national significance considered more significant, respectively.

2.   The list and table includes the scenes of events (where something actually happened) and event memory sites (memorials dedicated to events, but not standing at the scene of the event).

3.   Some sites belong to several thematic groups (for example, one place related to the death of a particular Soviet partisan is listed under both the Soviet Partisan and the War Hero Cult thematic groups). **As a result, the total number of all sites/cultural monuments (381) does not match the sum of the numbers of the thematic groups (if, instead of specific sites, we were to count their thematic expressions, then the number would be 404).**

4.   Notes on specific thematic groups. (1) The places of death of Soviet *citizens* and prisoners of war (as they are named in the (see: Lietuvos тѕʀ kultūros paminklų sąrašas. Vilnius: Pergalė, 1973, p. 5–94, 441–82) [*List of Cultural Monuments of the Lithuanian ѕѕʀ*] are often also their burial places. In the table, they are listed according to the names given in the list. (2) In the case of the death and burial places of Soviet activists, there are not always enough data to distinguish between events that occurred during the *Great Patriotic War* and after the war. As a result, the number of sites presented may be inaccurate. (3) In 1973, memorial monuments also stood at many scenes of events. The monument group in the table only includes sites where there were monuments not related to specific war events and scenes of specific events.

Table 2. Representation of the *Great Patriotic War* in the Lithuanian ssr through cultural heritage: Images.

Images/suggestion and tools for their creation	Themes invoked	Image resolution/construction
EXAGGERATION		
The *Great Patriotic War* is also a **Lithuanian war** – hyperbolisation of the role of Lithuanians in the war	Soviet partisans from Lithuania	• the list (see Table 1) contains 16 sites associated with specific Soviet partisans (giving their names and surnames) – in all cases (100 per cent), these are individuals from Lithuania; nine of these sites (56 per cent) were granted the higher status of a monument of national significance; in comparison, only 4 per cent of the sites associated with Soviet citizens who had been murdered and 3 per cent of the sites associated with Soviet soldiers hold this status; • of all the characters of the *Great Patriotic War*, only Soviet partisans (a specific person) were allocated more than one site, thus creating something of a story about their *feats*; the memory of them is "expanded" by adding to the list not only places related to the struggle, but also places related to life, for example, hometowns. The leader is Marija Melnikaitė (born: Marija Melnik), who has five sites dedicated to her.
	16th Lithuanian Rifle Division of the Red Army	• the list includes three Red Army battle sites – all of them (100 per cent) are related to the 16th Division; • all of these sites (100 per cent) were granted the status of a monument of national significance; in comparison, only 1 per cent of the other sites associated with soldiers of the Soviet Union (burials, places of death) hold this status.

Soviet public authorities operated in Lithuania during the *Great Patriotic War* **(Nazi occupation)** – hyperbolisation of the spread of Soviet activists and partisan institutions	Underground sites of Lithuanian Communist Party (Bolsheviks) and Soviet partisans	• according to the descriptions presented in the list, the respective places are identified with the territorial/administrative units of Lithuania (cities, counties) or the territorial squads of the Soviet partisans – a territorial image is also created next to the site/point; • a relatively large number of such sites (20) were included on the list, creating the image that they covered Lithuania "administratively"; • 13 of these sites (65 per cent) were granted the status of a monument of national significance.
	Soldiers of the Soviet Union – *Heroes of the Soviet Union*	• the only time Soviet soldiers are personified (their names and surnames are given) is if they had been given the title of *Hero of the Soviet Union*; all other soldiers remain nameless.
The *Great Patriotic War* **is a war of heroes** – hyperbolisation of the role of heroes in war	Soviet partisans – *Heroes of the Soviet Union*	• of all the characters of the *Great Patriotic War*, only Soviet partisans (a specific person) and *Heroes of the Soviet Union* from Lithuania were allocated more than one site; almost all of the partisans mentioned on the list (6 out of 7) had the title of *Hero of the Soviet Union*; • of the 12 sites associated with partisans/*Heroes of the Soviet Union*, 8 (67 per cent) were granted the status of a monument of national significance.

The Nazi occupants were treacherous and brutal criminals – demonisation of the enemy	1941 treacherous intervention – the death of Soviet border guards	• the list includes 9 sites associated with the deaths of Soviet soldiers, of which 5 (56 per cent) are related to 1941 events – mostly the death of border guards; the rest are related to *Heroes of the Soviet Union* (3 sites) and pilots (1). The theme of treacherous attacks is emphasised no less than the feats of the heroes themselves; • the scene of the pioneer camp in Palanga that was bombed by the *Nazi* occupants in 1941 belongs to the group of special sites.
	mass atrocities – killing of civilians	• on the list, 119 sites are dedicated to this theme – this is one of the largest groups, with just slightly fewer sites than those marking the burial and death of Soviet soldiers (185); • the description of the specific site often included the number of victims buried there – the massiveness was emphasised with shocking numbers. Such detail was unusual for the descriptions of other sites; • the victims are collectively referred to as *Soviet citizens* – emphasis on the dependence of the territory and population.
	mass atrocities – the killing of prisoners of war	• the list includes 9 sites related to this theme; • the description of the specific site often included the number of victims buried here – the massiveness was emphasised with shocking numbers. Such detail was unusual for the descriptions of other sites.
	special victims – talents and member of the intelligentsia who were killed	• the only case where a specific victim was singled out from the mass of *Soviet citizens* was the sculptor Vincas Grybas; all others were left unnamed; • in another case, it is detailed that the victims were members of the *Jewish intelligentsia*.
	cases of exceptional cruelty – the burning and massacre of villages	• the list includes 6 sites related to this theme.

SILENCING/LEVELLING		
The *Great Patriotic War* **is a war of heroes** – the Soviet soldiers who did not die "nobly" are ignored	Soviet prisoners of war	• nine sites are described as being related to the death of Soviet prisoners of war – even though there were more sites like this in Lithuania, they were not included on the list (at least 9 other such sites can be found) or were included while concealing their connections with prisoners of war (given as the burial places of Soviet *citizens* who were killed, 3 cases); • in all 9 cases, the prisoners were recorded as killed, even though some of them died under other circumstances, such as from disease or starvation.
The *Great Patriotic War* **is a war of heroes** – downplaying Soviet military losses	Border guards who died in 1941 Soviet soldiers	• the descriptions of 4 sites indicate that they are related to the death of Soviet border guards in 1941 – even though there were more places like this in Lithuania, they were not included on the list (at least 5 more such sites can be found). • the descriptions of sites related to Soviet *citizens* and prisoners of war usually indicate the number of dead, but in the case of Soviet military burial sites, these numbers were not given.
The *Great Patriotic War* **is also a war against the Soviet system** – abstraction of the circumstances of the death of Soviet activists	Soviet activists	• the list includes 23 sites related to the death and suffering of Soviet activists (places of imprisonment, death, burial) that are associated with the *Great Patriotic War* or abstract circumstances ("Died for Soviet rule", etc.); • their descriptions do not clearly indicate the time of death, with pre-war, wartime and post-war merged into one era (11 cases do not give any precise circumstances in general or give broader chronological frames (for example, "1941–1949")); • the killer is not clearly specified – *Nazis, bourgeois nationalists* and others are merged into a single entity (17 cases).

The residents of the Soviet Union are a single (_having solved the national question_**) Soviet people** – ignoring the ethnic differences in the population of the Soviet Union	civilians – victims of war	• the list contains 119 sites where the majority are Holocaust sites (related to the killing and burial of Jews) – in their descriptions, this circumstance is omitted, replacing the word _Jews_ with the concept of a _Soviet citizen_ (only in one case is it mentioned that the victims were Jews).