Balys Sruoga (February 2, 1896 - October 16, 1947) was a Lithuanian poet, playwright, critic, and literary theorist.

B.Sruoga was born and grew up in a family of wealthy farmers.

In 1903 studied at the parish school in Vabalninkas. From 1906 to 1914 studied at Panevežys Realschule, where belonged to the Society of left-wing students – “Aušra " and became their leader.

He contributed to cultural journals from his early youth. His works were published by the liberal wing of the Lithuanian cultural movement, and also in various Lithuanian newspapers and other outlets (such as Aušrinė, Rygos Naujienos, etc.). In 1914 he began studying literature in St. Petersburg, Russia, and later in Moscow, due to World War I and the Russian Revolution. In 1921 he enrolled in the University of Munich, where in 1924 he received his Ph.D for a doctoral thesis on Lithuanian folklore.

After returning to Lithuania, Sruoga taught at the University of Lithuania, and established a theatre seminar that eventually became a course of study. He also wrote various articles on literature. From 1930 he began writing dramas, first Milžino paunksmė, later Radvila Perkūnas, Baisioji naktis and Aitvaras teisėjas. In 1939 he moved to Vilnius and began teaching at Vilnius University. Vilnius fascinated B.Sruoga; his admiration writer expressed in poetry. The legend of Vilnius’ founding legend is narrated in B.Sruoga poem "Song of Gediminas" (1938).

Since the beginning of World War II B.Sruoga was being blamed for his work in the field of Russian language and literature. In 1943 he was deported to the Stutthof concentration camp near Gdansk. "I'm collateral for our people ..." the letter his wife wrote B.Sruoga. Here, in the camp which B.Sruoga called ‘the seaside resort’, were written some of his best works. In this seaside resort, the writer completely lost his health.

After the Soviets recaptured the Nazi camps, B.Sruoga continued to be held in the same camp. However, in 1945, he returned to Vilnius and continued teaching at Vilnius University, where he wrote the dramas ‘Pajūrio kurortas’ ( The Seaside Resort’) and Barbora Radvilaitė.

The authorities' refusal to publish The Forest of Gods and weak health resulting from his time in concentration camps led to his death in October 16, 1947. The 2005 film Forest of the Gods was based on the book.

The Forest of the Gods

Sruoga's best known work is the novel “The Forest of the Gods” (“Dievų miškas’), based on his own life experiences as a prisoner in Nazi concentration camps, where he was sent in March 1943 together with forty-seven other Lithuanian intellectuals, after the Nazis started a campaign against possible anti-Nazi agitation in occupied Lithuania.

In the book, Sruoga revealed life in a concentration camp through the eyes of a man whose only way to save his life and maintain his dignity was to view everything through a veil of irony and humor, where torturers and their victims are exposed as imperfect human beings, being far removed from the false ideals of their political leaders. For example, he wrote "Human - is not a machine. Gets tired.", referring to the guards beating prisoners.

Originally the novel was suppressed by the Soviet officials; it was ultimately published in 1957, ten years after the author's death.

Forest of the Gods (Lithuanian: Dievų miškas) is a 2005 film, directed by Algimantas Puipa, based on the Balys Sruoga novel of the same name.

The story is about one man — who is an artist and an intellectual — he was imprisoned by two brutal regimes, the Nazis and the Soviets. 'The Professor' is a man who lives by his own personal version of the Ten Commandments. After miraculously surviving imprisonment in a Nazi concentration camp through a bit of ironic fate, he writes a memoir of his life, which becomes the target of the Soviet censors. The so-called "freedom" of Communism becomes just as oppressive as the German concentration camp.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vwrAb9FGL6E>