

The speech of the Deputy Chairman of the initiative group
“Lithuania without Nazism”, Chairman of the Socialist People's
Front Algirdas Paleckis in the conference “World without Nazism
– Global Aim of Humanity” on the 17th of December, 2010

Nazism arrives quietly, under the disguise of nationalism and patriotism. In Lithuania of today it can even have its beginning in school textbooks. I will give you one single quote from a chapter on the Second World War from a school textbook: “On the 22nd of June, 1941 the war between Germany and the USSR broke out. For the inhabitants of Lithuania it meant the end of the first Soviet Occupation and a fresh new hope.”

This is, as psychologists call it, a meta-message. It is a statement with a deeper meaning for our youth, who might well understand that Nazism “brings hope”.

Let’s go a bit further. This past summer a court in Lithuania decided that the swastika is an ancient Baltic symbol, and therefore that those demonstrating it in public do not break the law. The court made this ruling in spite of the existing law, which forbids the exhibition of the Nazi (as well as Soviet) symbolism. (The prohibition against Soviet symbolism is absurd, since it was actually the Soviet army that crushed Nazism). It is a weird situation: the Communist Party in Lithuania is prohibited, however the Lithuanian National Workers movement which advocates Lithuanian fascism freely participates in the local elections of the Šiauliai municipality.

Furthermore, in the Baltic states and specifically in Lithuania the equalization of Nazism and Communism, as well as of the Vehrmacht and the Red Army, is considered to be a sign of a good taste, even though, as my colleague, the chairman of the Latvian anti-fascist committee Josif Koren says, ones of them constructed the gas chambers, and the other demolished them... The standard youngster today contemplates it like this: if at school I am being told that Nazism is equal to Communism, and if my parents, when asked about how they lived in the Soviet times, say that their lives were quite decent, it means that under Nazism people also had decent lives...

The governments in Latvia and Estonia are moreover patronizing the marches of the SS legionnaires, even though the SS was recognized as a criminal organization by the Nuremberg Tribunal 65 years ago.

From this past summer onward in Lithuania one can end up in jail simply for the denial of the “Soviet occupation”. One of the main weeklies in Lithuania “Veidas” decided to commemorate the 65th anniversary of the Nuremberg Tribunal in an original way. By publishing an article with the headline: “Nuremberg Tribunal – the greatest juridical farce in history”. There is a statement in the article that it was actually during the tribunal that the “legend of the purportedly six million murdered

Jews was institutionalized”. After a scandal followed, the editorial office proclaimed in an infantile way that the word “purportedly” had been put in the “wrong” place of the sentence. As if “purportedly” should have come not before the word “murdered”, but before “6 million”. Claiming, in other words, that it was the number of the victims that was questioned, and not the fact itself. The “argument” on the number of the victims was grounded there on the argument that nobody has ever seen the signatures of Hitler on the documents concerning the extermination of the Jews...

Moreover, former Soviet partisans, like members of the state organs who during and after the war eliminated the so-called “Forest Brothers” — most of whom had been well-trained by the Nazis and had helped them execute peaceful inhabitants not just in Lithuania, but also during their “visits” to neighboring republics — are legally persecuted in Lithuania. Especially the Jews, their children and mothers and the aged suffered from these “heroes” and “fighters for freedom”.

Ninety-five percent of Jews (around 200,000 people) were murdered in Lithuania by the Nazis and their local “policemen”. The Soviet partisan Fania Brancovskaja (Brantsovsky), who fought against them, was persecuted by the prosecution service of Lithuania despite the fact that she had been a prisoner in the Vilna Ghetto and only escaped from there by miracle.

By contrast, the “Forest Brothers” are glorified in Lithuania, even though most of them were thugs and during the whole period of their being “partisans” in post-war Lithuania they did not enact a single serious military operation against Soviet combatants; they only had the “courage” to kill unarmed children and the old.

Therefore, let us be clear — the ground for neo-Nazism in Lithuania and not only here is getting prepared. Twenty years ago those who demolished the ideas of social justice, of people equality, of socialism, did not offer anything in exchange — and they could not do so, since some of the most aware of the demolishers were disguised neo-Nazis, some of whom were direct posterity, or admirers, of the Nazis and their henchmen.

“Those who avoid criticizing capitalism, those lose the right to resent Nazism.” That was the wisecrack of the Italian anti-fascist Juliette Cieza. This vacuum of ideas is now naturally filled by neo-Nazism — this can clearly be seen by the events of the 11th of December this year in Moscow, in the already mentioned tendencies in the Baltic states, and in the overall strengthening of right-wing extremism in the whole of Europe.

Add here into the mix poverty, inequality, youth unemployment — and you will get an explosive mixture. The aim of our international “World without Nazism” movement is to stop the combustion right now, not just to be anti-fascists, not just “anti-” but also to offer an ideology of social justice — and to back it up with action.