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<http://www.lrytas.lt/-12995610621297582122-auka-vaizduojantis-valdininkas-ir-už-jo-kyšančios-m-murzios-retorikos-ausys.htm>

The Bureaucrat Who Thought He Was a Victim, and His Neo-Nazi Ears Sticking Up

by Monika Bonckute

Lietuvos rytas

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Information finally found its way into the press last week that the Prosecutor General's office had quietly stopped a pre-trial investigation in mid-February into an article written by Petras Stankeras, an historian who denies the Holocaust and formerly worked at the Interior Ministry.

That same week the world media from Israel to India announced that three African states—Gambia, Liberia and Sierra Leone—had in concert released a collection of postage stamps in honor of twelve Litvaks who had fought racism and apartheid.

Among those honored was the famous South African dissident and comrade-in-arms of Nobel Peace Prize recipient Nelson Mandela, Esther Barsel, born in Raguva.

The Lithuanian Migration Department has called a testimonial she wrote “not credible” and has rejected it as unworthy of consideration. Is it just a coincidence that this was decision was made in the case of Grant Gochin, a descendant of Lithuanian Jews who has tried to obtain Lithuanian citizenship? Do the different Lithuanian institutions of power simply work under a unified policy that being a Jew and being a Lithuanian citizen are irreconcilable things?

I was interested to hear what Barsel's nephew, Los Angeles-based Grant Gochin, made of Stankeras's vindication. The Migration Department repeatedly refused to grant him Lithuanian citizenship despite the service by his grandfather, a Lithuanian citizen, in the Lithuanian military.

“Lithuania has now fully established itself as a state that hates Jews. When they need to justify the use of swastikas, the courts work perfectly and find ‘historical’ justifications for that. In every instance where the rights of Jews are involved, cases are incredibly ‘protracted,’” Gochin said by telephone from Los Angeles.

The rapid and secret vindication of Stankeras is worthy of attention. Vilnius district prosecutor press representative Gintautas Stalnionis said there is no law obligating the prosecutor to announce to the media the result of every investigation. Undoubtedly, there is no such law. It would be illogical and uneconomic if the prosecutor’s office had to spend its time reporting to journalists on every investigation, especially those that are dropped.

But isn’t the Stankeras case exceptional? After all, it’s not every article that compels seven EU representatives to express concern over Holocaust denial in Lithuania.

Among the countries expressing that concern was Estonia. Yes, we make fun of Estonians in jokes, but Estonians really are our own, neighbors, and would they raise an international stink over nothing at all? Meanwhile, there are more articles and comments on Stankeras in English on the internet than about most Lithuanian politicians combined.

It seems the Stankeras case isn’t such an average one after all. So why the secrecy? In this instance transparency on the part of law enforcement wouldn’t have harmed the case at all. As it happened, not only was notice of the dropped investigation given too late, but it was disclosed in a very controversial context: the official who submitted his letter of resignation is now demanding he be returned to his post.

The reasons? Allegedly the man experienced pressure from his superiors and wrote the resignation letter consumed by stress. The official who accused the Nuremberg tribunal, those who convicted the Nazi vampires, of hypocrisy and cynicism, has gone beyond the bounds of all human decency. He is asking to be considered a victim, because his boss got mad at him? The man living the cozy life of a bureaucrat experienced stress, wrote a letter of resignation and the same day changed his mind. Did someone point a pistol

at his head? Did someone threaten to send him to the gas chamber? Deport his family for execution?

In the private sector people are often fired, and often without warning. Employees of large corporations fight daily for their jobs by demonstrating they are better than others and by abiding the deserved and undeserved complaints of their superiors. But here the bureaucrat sitting in his office in front of the computer thinks he's better than all others. If an example of cynicism and double standards is needed, Mr. Stankeras ought to be presented as the prototype of such behavior.

I'll repeat the accusations dropped prematurely against Stankeras. The Prosecutor General's Office initiated pre-trial investigation of the article published in the magazine Veidas under an article of the criminal code punishing public approval of international crimes, crimes by the USSR and/or Nazi Germany against the Republic of Lithuania or residents of Lithuania, denying such crimes or grossly belittling them.

Much too late, however, it was announced the experts had stated the article did not even contain the word "Holocaust," and the publication was dedicated to discussing the Nuremberg Trials.

First of all, it's obvious even to a high school student that there wouldn't have been a Nuremberg Trial if there hadn't been the Holocaust, and so the historian wouldn't have had anything to write about. Second, the fact that Stankeras did not, even once, mention the Holocaust in an article about the Nuremberg Trials is a detail that should raise alarm rather than automatically vindicate him.

Finally, wasn't it the public servant's attorney and his supporters who said that a man was being "crucified" over one sentence? So it's not nice for prosecutors to get worked up about one sentence, but for the defense to seek acquittal over one word that was not used— is that standard practice?

I won't quote that well-known sentence where the author wrote about "allegedly" murdered Jews. Enough has been written about it already, including that a PhD ought probably to know that word "buktai" ["as if"] isn't supposed to be used [in proper grammar]. It seems Stankeras tried to exculpate himself by saying the grammar editors at the magazine corrected

“buktai” to “neva” [“allegedly”], placed the word in a different position and supposedly changed the true meaning of the sentence.

Neither does it say anything good about the work of this doctor of history that, according to Gediminas Jankus, P. Stankeras the writer based his piece on the fantasies about the manufactured crimes of the Nazis by Ernst Zundel, who has been convicted and imprisoned in Canada and Germany. Other internet commentators soon demonstrated that this “academic” article failed to include any of the author’s sources, many of which are of very dubious reliability. Besides which, by getting dragged down into disputes over a single sentence, it seems everyone has overlooked the very title of the article: “The Nuremberg War Crimes Trial: The Biggest Legal Farce in History.”

Even if we allow that an error cropped up in Stankeras’s article about “allegedly” murdered Jews, isn’t the title enough for us to understand where the historian is headed? This is a clear attempt, after all, to diminish Nazi crimes and to portray the murderers as the victims.

An historian is not an expert in international law. Why should we believe the far-reaching conclusions he reaches about the “biggest legal farce” if the author is not able to provide sources, and the entire text sounds as if it were a paper written by a freshman?

You don’t have to be an expert to understand the horror of the Holocaust. It’s enough to view one documentary film on the topic, for instance, the BBC series “Auschwitz.” I can’t conceive of how a person who has seen this type of film who has even a modicum of humanity could harbor the desire to write articles about how the rights of the Nazis were violated.

Is it perhaps that Stankeras read too much Holocaust Denial literature and he never thought to take a look at reliable sources?

Stankeras’s acquittal only confirms what was clear long ago: Lithuanian institutions of power and Lithuanian society are permeated with antisemitic sentiments and this looks very bad in the international sphere. From foreign minister A. Azubalis’s comments about “Jewish lobbyists” in connection with the citizenship law to the internet polluted by antisemitic rhetoric, Lithuania is doing all she can to established herself in the world as a country that hates Jews.

We are already infamous as the European Mecca of homophobes. Behind Stankeras's "scholarship" protrude the ears of the rhetoric of Mindaugas Murza [a Lithuanian neo-Nazi]. Is this really the true face of Lithuania, a member of the club of civilized countries in the European Union?

**TRANSLATED BY GEOFF VASIL / AUTHORIZED BY THE
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