WORLD NEWS

Lithuania attacked over Shoah retort

JC REPORTER

The Lithuanian government has met intense opposition after its Foreign Minister criticised eight of his country’s parliamentarians for signing a declaration which rejects the “Double Genocide” theory—that Jews were as culpable for atrocities during the Second World War as the Nazis.

On January 20, the 70th anniversary of the Wannsee Conference that codified the “Final Solution”, 70 European parliamentarians from 19 EU states signed the Seventy Years Declaration, which explicitly rejects attempts to “obfuscate” the Holocaust.

Lithuania’s Foreign Minister, a member of the right-wing nationalist government, called the eight Lithuanians who signed the document “pathetic”. He went on to say that “Hitler’s moustache was shorter”, implying that there was no other difference between the two dictators.

This week, British MP Denis MacShane sent letters of support to the eight parliamentarians. He says in the letter: “I know it must be lonely to take a stand on such a controversial subject but wanted to write to you to say you are not alone and every decent British and European citizen stands with you.”

And Dr Shimon Alperovich, the 83-year-old head of the Jewish Community of Lithuania said at a Holocaust Remembrance Day event last week: “Even today there are people who adhere to the Double Genocide theory, that Jews murdered Lithuanians, and so Lithuanians therefore murdered Jews. An absurdity. One should not even have entered into discussion with such people.”

The Seventy Years Declaration rejects the “Double Genocide” theory inherent in the 2008 Prague Declaration championed by East European nationalists. It also attacks the policy in a number of East European states of using state resources to honour Hitler’s local collaborators and, in some cases, actual Holocaust murderers, for being “anti-Soviet” heroes.

The declaration also rejects the Prague Declaration demand to have European textbooks rewritten to treat Nazi and Soviet crimes “the same way”. It also praises the “nobility of Jewish partisans who survived ghettos or camps and went on to fight the Nazis and their allies”.

No date for new talks

A MONTH after Israel and the Palestinian Authority resumed direct negotiations, they already seem to have reached an impasse.

The talks, that took place in a series of five meetings under Jordanian auspices in Amman with the participation of representatives of the Quartet, (the US, Russia, the EU and the UN), have foundered over the Palestinian demand for a more detailed proposal from Israel on the future borders of a Palestinian state.

In the final meeting, last Wednesday, Prime Minister Netanyahu’s representative, Yitzhak Molcho, presented a summary of Israel’s position that included the principles of security arrangements and territorial exchanges that would allow most Israelis living across the Green Line to remain in their homes.

No new date has been set for further talks. UN Secretary General, Ban ki-Moon, who is visiting this Israel this week, urged the two sides to return immediately to negotiations.

The Israeli Embassy refused a request for comment.

Anti-gay rabbi back

Amsterdam’s Orthodox Ashkenazi community has reinstated its Chief Rabbi, Aryeh Ralbag, who was suspended two weeks ago for signing an online declaration calling on homosexuals to try to overcome their inclinations.

The community’s action against the New York-based rabbi, who travels to the Netherlands several times a year, had prompted a torrent of protests from across the Orthodox rabbinic world.

On Monday the strictly Orthodox Agudath Israel of America wrote to the community to say that it was “troubling” to suspend a rabbi for “expressing his religious conviction”.

The Conference of European Rabbis welcomed Rabbi Ralbag’s reinstatement on Wednesday as “a wise step in the interests of the Amsterdam community”. A CER spokesman said: “We believe the summary suspension of Rabbi Ralbag for stating his halachic viewpoint was premature and misguided and we are very pleased that the community has decided now to work through these issues in a positive and consultative manner.”

A fight over history’s tragic truth

ANALYSIS

DOVID KATZ

SEVENTY YEARS is the lifespan for latterday humans. It is also the years that have passed since Hitler’s “Final Solution” Wannsee Conference. In the half year beforehand, the Nazis saw how easy it was to find enthusiastic local killers in the parts of Eastern Europe they invaded in June 1941.

Around a million Jews perished by bullets there. Here in Eastern Europe, denial, never viable, has been replaced by a new ruse: Holocaust obfuscation. Deline Nazi crimes, inflate Soviet crimes, redefine “genocide” by law, and find ways to turn local killers into heroes to fault Jewish survivors. In 2008, a group of East European members of the European Parliament proclaimed the “Prague Declaration”. It has the word “same” five times, equating Nazi and Soviet rule. Its demands: overhaul of textbooks, a single commemoration day, and a “Nuremberg” process for communists.

But 70 parliamentarians from 19 EU states have now signed the Seventy Years Declaration. A bold new reaffirmation. The legacy of the Holocaust shall not be undermined.

The writer is editor of defendinghistory.com.

PHOTO: AP

Suffering in the Jewish ghetto of Slobodka in a suburb of Kovno, Lithuania, taken between 1941 and 1945.