

Things that are not, but should be discussed

(What's next for the Latvian dream: death or transformation?)

How are things going for your new magazine *Ir*?

They're going well. Subscriptions and advertising are going up, so I think we've found a readership. People are still coming up to me and saying how much they like it and I'm especially pleased that young people seem to like it. There's still a long way to go, but I think all the trends are good.

When you and your fellow journalists left *Diena* there was an apprehensive feeling that the media in Latvia was becoming more controlled by politicians and business interests. Is this a worrying trend in Latvia?

I think it is. Public television has become increasingly tame in its coverage of politics; all the major newspapers are now owned by business interests with political agendas, so this is a problem. At the same time, a significant part of the journalistic community has a real commitment to covering the news and does not simply accept having someone say, "now you're going to write a nice article about this guy or that guy." So there are limits to how much this kind of political influence can achieve. Also, despite this increasing control, it doesn't seem to be moving the polls. It's possible that people have become smart enough to separate the wheat from the chaff, and they get what they need from the media. But a problem I see, especially with the newspapers, partly because of the owners and partly because the newspaper business is so troubled due to the crisis, is that we're not seeing investigative journalism anymore. It used to be that *Diena* broke stories about the world of power that you couldn't get anywhere else, but that's not happening any more. The real danger isn't overt propaganda – the real danger is that you only get to know what the politicians want you to know. □

Interview by Philip Birzulis

At first there was an idea to make a list of facts that would have to be considered before Latvian parliamentary elections on October 2, 2010, but then it seemed a useless repetition. Everybody knows those responsible for the misery of this state – Skele, Kalvītis, Slesers, Godmanis, Demakova, Vike-Freiberga, Kalniete... and many others from the past like Gailis, Cevers, Kristopans, Jurkans... This list is very long and may take up the whole page.

In any other time they would be jailed or guillotined by now. We are now waiting for them to commit a mass suicide, which they understandably do not want to do. By no means is this a call for violence. It is rather a call to use the existing legal system – the same way Latvia regained independence. It would mean a thorough investigation, most likely initiated by the current president of Latvia, to determine those responsible for the meltdown of the country and

then to press charges, so that the Time of Great Irresponsibility can stop.

Yes, we can find facts, like black on white, and list all the empty promises. We can create an alternative personal philosophy wondering if all is not lost... yet. We can ask what motivates those who are supposed to serve the nation? And we can answer it as - thirst for power, money, benefits, greed, popularity... Then we are left to wonder what is left of true statesmanship and love – not only loving our land and people but also our country that we wanted to be free and independent.

Do our politicians love this land, this state, and people? And themselves? Can they sleep at night? Or do they believe that they can do what they want and never get caught?

Lucky are Latvian forefathers, who are no longer here to witness this travesty that has befallen the second Republic of Latvia. In Latvian there is a word - kangars - a tribute to

a tribal chief who betrayed his nation many centuries ago. At this moment in time it is quite appropriate to describe in this way those who have sold their conscience to the greedy excesses that they have made, and still want to make, in spite of the crisis and people's misery.

Of course, the ethnic Russian politicians of Latvia have also helped to bring the country down by using the weakness of the existing authority and using Russian financial resources, which some Latvians have also probably been using. Then let's uncover it all, to the very core.

Because of the aforementioned loss of dignity and honor, people have resorted to the saying "I love this land but I hate this state." It is not so easy to accept that the responsibility for the state lies in their own hands. However, it is probably a mission impossible for any honest man to go through the thick and dark layers of the corruption web.

Thus, the true principles of humanity valued by the people are not reflected in Latvia's leadership right now.

Gone are the times when we had trust. Luckily, we still understand what goes on and can see through the strategically presented lies. Money is not everything and it will never be. There are things one cannot buy, and it applies also to the state values, which are not represented by politicians at this time. Now is the time to lead the society back to its roots of moral values and examine the past 20 years.

Justice must prevail. Crimes must be uncovered and those who committed them against this country must be tried and convicted. Hopefully this is what Dombrovskis, the outgoing Latvian prime minister, had in mind when he initiated a case against Slesers at the State General Prosecutor's office, and hopefully this is what will transpire after the cases of Lembergs and Skele are finally resolved.

The week in weather



	Thu Sep 30	Fri Oct 1	Sat Oct 2	Sun Oct 3	Mon Oct 4	Tue Oct 5
Estonia	13°/5°	14°/8°	13°/9°	12°/6°	11°/3°	9°/3°
Latvia	10°/4°	11°/6°	11°/7°	11°/4°	10°/3°	9°/3°
Lithuania	17°/7°	20°/10°	20°/10°	21°/10°	21°/14°	15°/11°

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Dear *TBT*,

As a long-time reader of the *TBT*, I have been saddened by the decline of the quality of the coverage of events in Lithuania. Most painfully, far-right ultranationalist politics, with the usual racist and anti-semitic undertones have not only come to dominate; they are routinely misrepresented as impartial news. The most recent and shocking example came in the Sept. 2 issue where an unsigned editorial (!) on the Opinion page describes Dr. Efraim Zuroff, the celebrated historian, Nazi hunter, and director of the Wiesenthal Center's Israel office, as "playing Moscow's political games."

Dr. Zuroff is a New York-born modern Orthodox Jewish historian who lives in Efrat, on the West Bank near Jerusalem. He was a dedicated Soviet Jewry activist who has condemned communist totalitarianism throughout his career. The attacks on Dr. Zuroff from the far right ultranationalist Lithuanian media are despicable, but one had come to expect better of *The Baltic Times*. Those in high places (govern-

ment, media, academia) who are working overtime to hide or minimize the highly-significant role of Lithuanian Nazi collaborators in the mass murder of Jews during the Holocaust, during which around 95 percent of Lithuanian Jewry was massacred, and who seek to rewrite history in a spirit of ultra-nationalism, are naturally unhappy with anyone who exposes their ruses; alas they often go in for personal slander and calumny. Your readers are respectfully invited to visit my Web site, www.HolocaustInTheBaltics.com, to become acquainted with the fascinating and complex issues in play.

Many years ago at a press conference in Vilnius, Dr. Zuroff was asked why he is against Lithuania. His reply, as I remember it, was: "I am not at all against Lithuania. On the contrary, by asking that someone accused of murdering many innocent Lithuanian citizens be given a fair trial in a Lithuanian court, with a Lithuanian judge, in the Lithuanian language, under the flag of independent, democratic Lithuania, I am acting as your true

friend. That will one day be obvious when the country does finally come to terms with its Holocaust history."

His recent book, 'Operation Last Chance: One Man's Quest to Bring Nazi Criminals to Justice,' has a chapter on Lithuania that is full of warm appreciation for the numerous Lithuanians from all across the country who came forward to submit evidence regarding Holocaust crimes because they wanted to bear witness on the tragic fate of their Jewish neighbors in the hope that those responsible would finally be held accountable. This in a country whose once prominent Jewish population lies in over 200 mass graves in every part of what was once their native land.

Yours sincerely,
Dovid Katz

Dovid Katz was professor of Yiddish at Vilnius University for eleven years. The revised edition of his book 'Lithuanian Jewish Culture' has just appeared in Vilnius. He is currently chief analyst at the Litvak Studies Institute. www.litvakstudiesinstitute.org. Web site: www.DovidKatz.net

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