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Hysteria over "Holocaust denial." Enough already?

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Because I have contributed somewhat in the past, I want to say something now too.

This desire arose today after I read an average comment connected with "Holocaust denial."

A. Bielskis commented:

"Today, when a Lithuanian magazine that considers itself serious publishes an opinion denying the Holocaust, and the most important media outlets avoid categorically condemning such an action by colleagues, when commentators who defend the classical ethic of decency in politics attack those who demand responsibility from the editorial staff trivializing the Holocaust, I am forced to stop and take stock."

I am reading this and I am becoming—how do I say this nicely...

Disgusted.

Disgusted, because I'm getting the impression that there are still a lot of people in Lithuania who don't want to see the facts, who don't hear the arguments and who don't understand that if you bend the stick it breaks. And sometimes when it breaks, look, one end or another hits the nose or forehead. Of those who so like to bend it... [reference to a Lithuanian idiom concerning the consequences of exaggeration]

Yes, *Veidas* made a mistake. In printing a commentary on a topic which Lithuania is very sensitive about by an author who wasn't one of their journalists, by not reading over that commentary twice and allowing it to be published with one sentence capable of a double meaning.

Yes, the *Veidas* editor and publisher perhaps were a little late in coming out with their explanations for this mistake.

Yes, the senior editor of *Veidas* did not convince journalist A. Baciulis to abstain from comments in a style one might use sitting around a table drinking with friends.

But at least the *Veidas* publisher as well as the senior editor admitted a mistake. And besides that, the author P. Stankeras very clearly and without evasion said that they do not deny the Holocaust.

So why is the hysteria continuing?

Is it perhaps because the hysteria was started by interior minister R. Palaitis who ran Stankeras out of his job over an error in style?
Or perhaps because the seven foreign ambassadors acted rather hysterically?

Or perhaps the prosecutor general of Lithuania should be thanked for the encouragement of hysteria, having grandly begun a pre-trial investigation which undoubtedly will end in nothing, except in the further compromise of this institution?

Should we all become hysterical people now and yell that the sky is falling?!!

It's not falling and it won't fall.

When I commented on this story for BBC radio, I said that I see a very positive aspect to this hysteria: it's a very good thing that the first to respond to the *Veidas* mistake were members of society, including journalists, rather than the Lithuanian Jewish community, the Israeli embassy, E. Zuroff or our politicians.

I said this shows Lithuanian society is maturing and coming to terms with its history. I said that it was also very important that reaction is being heard, and this demonstrates that public opinion is important and that society, when needed, can mobilize.

Today I would say essentially the same thing, but I must also note that mobilizations doesn't necessarily mean war. It can also be used as a preventive measure.

Unfortunately, reading over and over again about how "Veidas denies the

Holocaust" I get the impression that this isn't enough for some. And that some, not allowed to fire guns, want at least to wave the red flags.

Have they really forgotten so soon those times when they waved those flags, and do they really want those times to return?

But then in that case it won't be permitted to discuss things other than the Nuremberg tribunal and the number of Jews murdered during the Holocaust.

One truth that can't be discussed holds true in all other cases [possible meaning: "If this is forbidden, then it's possible to forbid free speech on any topic." — *Trans.*].

I really don't want to believe that those encouraging hysteria are really trying to achieve this.

I'd rather like to think that they were simply offended. And they didn't notice that they were kicking the ball into their own goal post.