



## VARIOUS COLOURED SWASTIKAS

# WHERE ARE THE ULTRANATIONALISTS HEADING?

The Jews of Lithuania have good reason to take particular note of all organisations and individuals expressing goodwill to everything related to Nazism, to everything whose roots reach out in the direction of ultranationalism and nationalism.

On March 11, the Day of the Restoration of Lithuania's Independence, approximately 500 young people - ultranationalists, skinheads, and like-minded groups, mildly referred to in Lithuania as "nationalists" - celebrated the state holiday with their traditional annual procession.

Everything happened as in earlier years, and with the same contingent - the same enraged faces, the same grim clothing, the same thrusting step, severity, unfriendliness, aggressivity. The demonstrators looked like they were going not to a celebration but to a last-stand battle. Apparently that's their understanding of a celebration.

Compared to earlier processions, this one had a different look: the banners with the four-pronged Nazi swastikas, with skulls and crossbones - attributes of the Nazi "Death's Head" division - and other Nazi requisites so favoured by this skinhead Nazi contingent, had disappeared.

The repertoire of slogans had also diminished. The demonstrators didn't yell "Juden, raus!", or the Lithuanian equivalent, "Žydai, lauk!", as they had last year; they didn't chant "Beautiful Lithuania without Russians!"; they didn't sing the child's numeration verse urging one "to take a stick and kill a Jew". Of their chants, only "Lietuva! Lietuva!", "Lithuania for Lithuanians", and "Honour and Defend Lithuania!" remained.

One had the impression that some censor had clearly erased all the frills, and left just the essentials - the nationalistic character of the organisation itself.

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There is reason to think that all of these reforms came about as the result of a Parliamentary decision to forbid the display of Soviet and Nazi symbolism, and that they were made with the desire to unite young nationalist Lithuanians. Such a union - the Lithuanian National Centre - was presented on August 20, 2008 at a press conference at the ELTA news agency auditorium.

It was announced at the press conference that in August 2008, individual neo-Nazi and skinhead groups, the Union of Lithuanian National Youth, participants in histori-

cal marches (imitators of Soviet "red trackers"), representatives of the Lithuanian Centre Party and of the Lithuanian Freedom League, other "alternative" movements and "public representatives" had united to form a new organisation. Several interviews over the television, in the press, and on certain internet websites lauded Marius Kundrotas as the head of the new Lithuanian National Centre (LNC).

M.Kundrotas is a graduate of the department of history at Vilnius University, and of the Institute of International Relations and Political Science. He took up political activity in 1997 and worked to attract the interest of the nationalist strata: he wrote articles on politics, culture and religion, took part in a nationalist publication called "Fire", collaborated with various nationalist parties, groups and press organisations, formed the National Youth League, and ran for the Lithuanian Parliament as a representative of the Lithuanian Nationalist Union.

In 2009, after becoming leader of the LNC, he authored a 636 page book entitled "The nation on the road of ages", which was published by the Vilnius Pedagogical University (VPU) Press. According to him, the aim of the book is "to nur-

one day plant this "point of view" into the immature brains of teenagers.

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The Lithuanian National Centre demonstrated the organisation's new symbols during the March 11 procession this year.

The participants in the procession carried a flag that is different in colour from the Hitlerite one: not red, but white. But the composition is the same as the Hitlerite one: in the centre of both flags there is a circle with vertical and horizontal lines; the Nazi ones are black, the Lithuanian nationalist ones are the same as the national tri-colour horizontally, and the colour of the flag of Lithuania Minor vertically. Both flags have a swastika in the circle. The Nazi swastika is black and four-pronged, the Lithuanian nationalist one is red and three-pronged. The branches of the red swastika are reminiscent of tongues of fire.

And yet another innovation: some of the LNC members wore white ribbons with the red three-pronged swastika on their sleeves, the organisation's symbolic tie with its flag. The SS also wore ribbons that were copies of their flag.

The people who had experienced the horror of the first days of the

Nazi invasion of Lithuania were stunned when they saw the white ribbons on March 11, 2010. Armed "white ribboners", members of the Lithuanian Activist Front (LAF) had gone out into the streets of the cities and towns, with white ribbons on their sleeves, on June 23, 1941, before the Nazi army had even appeared, to terrorise and ravage Jewish homes, stores, and small shops,

to chase and violently and sadistically kill Jews. From 1941 to 1944, the white ribboners and other Nazi collaborators killed unarmed and helpless peaceful people - the Jews of Lithuania, Ukraine, Byelorussia, and Poland - and went unpunished. Under the leadership of the Nazi authorities, they flooded Lithuania with the blood of their murdered victims, and turned the country into a huge Jewish cemetery, with over 200 gravesites holding the remains of 200,000 Jews. No wonder that the Lithuanian people contemptuously called them "Jew shooters". In 1944 the LAF participants mysteriously disappeared - evaporated. There is reason to think that those

who didn't manage to flee with the retreating Nazis took part in the activities of the Lithuanian partisans during 1944 to 1953.

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This year on March 11, M.Kundrotas' followers gathered at the monument to Adam Mickiewicz, and marched, under police guard, to the former Sports Palace, which stands on the site of the old Jewish cemetery in Šnipiškės.

We remind you that on August 26, 2009, the Lithuanian Department of Cultural Heritage (LKPD) signed an agreement with the Committee to Preserve the Cemeteries of European Jews. The agreement defines the preservation zone for the Šnipiškės cemetery, and includes a promise by Lithuania not to organise mass events in the territory of former cemeteries.

The Vilnius municipality rejected a protest by the LKPD and the Lithuanian Jewish Community against the planned procession in the Šnipiškės cemetery territory. Kazimieras Uoka, a signatory of the Lithuanian Act of Independence, and a member of the Homeland Union-Christian Democrat faction, was granted his demand that the municipality allow the ultranationalists to organise the march.

K.Uoka, a former leader of the radical National Democrat Party, openly expresses his goodwill to the "nationalists". He marched part of the way to Šnipiškės with them, as did signatory of the Act of Independence, R.Ozolas, also a reviewer of M.Kundrotas' book.

The procession by the Lithuanian National Centre in essence advertised the reformed nationalist organisation, including its ability to act harmoniously and without violating a Parliamentary decision forbidding the public demonstration of Nazi and Soviet symbols. The LNC is now an organisation able not only to play the role of a nationalist bogey man, to carry out hooligan-like acts, to encourage racial and national intolerance, but also to take on more serious goals as outlined by the authorities.

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For eight days there was absolutely no reaction to the LNC procession.

The silence was broken... by the Norwegian ambassador in Lithuania, Steinar Gil. At a conference entitled "European and Lithuanian Values" that took place at the Parliament on March 19, he said: "All foreigners in Lithuania took note of this procession, in which the participants yelled 'Lithuania for Lithuanians!' We were stunned. [...] We are aware of Lithuania's history during the period of the Second World



Ribbon on the sleeve of a member of the Lithuanian National Centre.

War... My question is: how many Parliamentarians spoke out against such demonstrations?"

The response was silence in the hall.

Three days later, S.Gil received a reply from chairman of the HU-CD party, Lithuanian prime minister Andrius Kubilius: "Lithuania is as tolerant a state as the northern countries of Norway and Denmark." According to A.Kubilius, he cannot claim that he likes the slogan "Lithuania for Lithuanians", but he doesn't know "whether it was chanted by the whole procession or by several of its participants". The leader of the HU-CD party confirmed that permission from the Vilnius municipality to organise the procession was obtained by HU-CD Parliament faction member K.Uoka, but - said A.Kubilius, - "that was Uoka's personal affair".

Five members of the Union of National Youth - an LNC daughter organisation - picketed near the Norwegian embassy and presented the ambassador with a note that said: "We want to remind the ambassador that his role is to represent his own state, and not to stoop to petty politicisation". A lesson from the "national youth" to the Norwegian ambassador.

Such an insolent demarche regarding the official representative of a friendly country gives one reason to worry. It is a serious sign to those who hope to rule the country with the help of the ultranationalists. With young people of that bent in mind, K.Uoka has stated that, "in general, a stricter socialism will not harm a small nation". Stricter "socialism" has a more accurate name - national socialism. Or even shorter - Nazism.

The ultranationalist procession did not end on March 11. The activities continue to this day, though not in that format. History already knows where they lead: to where the exponents of a national superiority have already gone. The lives of 57 million people, and ruins throughout Europe were the price of an indulgent and encouraging position regarding such processions. Are there really no forces in Lithuania capable of stopping such a movement?

Milan CHERSONSKIJ



Lithuanian National Centre flag.

ture a clear and consistent point of view based on arguments and facts, and to unveil the path for its implementation". The official reviewer of this work, correspondent R.Grigas, called M.Kundrotas a prophet of the nation. Author of nationalist writings in the press, professor O.Voverienė, also a reviewer of the book, declared that M.Kundrotas is a hero, and that his book is "a sign-post for future generations, a foundation for new ethnology schools. It is a book which must be in the home of every true Lithuanian". It is noteworthy that the book's reviewers, publishers and sponsors all work in the history department of the VPU, which trains the young people who will