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International Commando Unit Arrives to Support A. Paleckis

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Algirdas Paleckis, the leader of the Socialist People's Front, who is on trial for saying that Lithuanians shot Lithuanians during the bloody events of January, 1991, saw the arrival Tuesday of an international support team, made up of representatives of an organization combining antifascist organizations and organizations of Latvian Russians and Russian Jews.

Several dozen protestors with permission to protest assembled at the Vilnius district court before the court began proceedings, most of them carrying the party symbol. A quartet of foreigners arrived just before the court came into session.

These were the journalist and human rights defender from America Carla Stea who allows herself to come to the conclusion in the alternative-press newspaper *Rock Creek Free Press* that Lithuanians themselves shot at people who came to protect the television tower during the events of January 13th [1991].

Valeriy Engel, deputy president of the World Without Nazism movement, who also heads the Federation of Russian Jewish Communities and whose company represents Russian business, often state businesses, in Britain, also arrived.

The chairman of the Latvian Antifascist Committee Josif Koren and a member of an organization uniting Latvian Russians, Alexander Gaponenko, also showed up to observe the trial.

Engel: It's Different from Holocaust Denial Because the Occupation of Lithuania Hasn't Been Proven

After the court proceedings the guests from abroad explained to reporters at the court that Lithuania is by this trial violating the constitutional human right to freedom to hold one's own opinion and is discrediting itself in the international arena in this way.

Koren told reporters that they came to observe the trial because it "extraordinarily violates international human rights such as the right to free speech and freedom of thought." He believes that the circumstances of the events more than twenty years ago can be interpreted in different ways.

"Personally, I'm glad the Lithuanian people won independence. How that happened—there are different sources and differing opinions. Paleckis expressed his opinion and for that they want to convict him. As an organization defending rights, we are here to observe which path Lithuania will take: the democratic one, where one is allowed to have one's own opinion, or that one which fifty years of totalitarianism inculcated," he said.

Asked what he would think if opinions denying the Holocaust were publicly presented, Koren gave the floor to World Without Nazism deputy president and head of the Federation of Russian Jewish Communities Engel. "To speak about whether there was an occupation in Lithuania or not will be possible when this is investigated, proved and legally formulated by an international court. In the same way that the Holocaust was proved at Nuremberg. So far an international court has not confirmed the fact of Lithuania's occupation. So all talk, there was or there wasn't, is an historical argument and a discussion by historians. It's different with the Holocaust because it has been proved that six million were murdered. In Lithuania's case there is no international decision. I would be very glad if there were," he said.

American Journalist Also Supports Holocaust Deniers

American journalist Stea said there should be no limitation on the right to say what one wants in any case. Asked whether a public expression of sympathies with Nazi German leader Adolf Hitler shouldn't be limited either, she said she was in favor of that. "That's your right. I don't have to agree

with what you say, but yes, that's your right," she said. Paleckis interjected that he able to freely purchase Hitler's *Mein Kampf* in America, which isn't freely available in Europe. [He said, however, that] one must not forget that a much more liberal policy of freedom of speech is in operation in the USA, that Holocaust denial is not punished, unlike in most European countries [sic].

"What is happening here is nothing other than totalitarianism. Lithuania calls itself democratic, but this is no longer democracy. Infringing Paleckis's right to freedom of speech is a violation of the basic principles of the human rights declaration and the United Nations. For doing what it's doing against Algirdas [Paleckis], Lithuania ought to be thrown out of the UN," she said, noting that in America people have the right to criticize the government, have their own opinion about everything and speak about it openly. Stea made numerous compliments to Paleckis and was indignant that there was an attempt to discredit him and harm his political work and party through the trial.

This journalist also cursed the media, and called the news website *Baltictimes.com* which operates in the Baltic states rubbish. Furthermore, the journalist said she was very well informed about the history of the Paleckis case, and that she wrote about it back in February an American newspaper which presents itself as unafraid to present "a different truth." The article begins not as a possible version of events but as facts: "In Vilnius, Lithuania on January 13, 1991, Lithuanian provocateurs collided with Soviet forces and killed 14 people. They were buried quickly and without investigation, while Soviet soldiers who hadn't killed anyone were accused. Later they admitted that they contrived these events in order to lend support to Lithuanian independence proclaimed a year prior." It continues by saying Paleckis is being tried because he attempted to unveil this secret. An interview with then-general director of the Defense Department Audrius Butkevicius is then presented, in which he denies and denounces such an interpretation. The journalist who continually stresses her professionalism didn't bother to include the other side of the conflict in her article.

Party Members' Protest Before Court

Algirdas Paleckis, wandering around outside before the trial, protested together with the "frontists" supporting him, who bore party flags and waved

signs with the words “Stalin is no more, but his cult remains,” “Who shot from above?” and “The constitution forbids persecution based on views.”

Paleckis explained to a Russian television reporter arriving from Riga at length and in detail that he is persecuted, called conservative/Christian democrat trial witness Kestutis Masiulis a fascist, and reminded the reporter that there are marches in Lithuania where they chant “Lithuania for Lithuanians.” He said he did not retract his claim that Lithuanians shot Lithuanians and is even more convinced of its truth.

Paleckis thanked his supporters before the trial outside: “Colleagues, friends, the battle continues! We will win!” On this note he invited as many protestors as possible to try to get into the courtroom in order to “observe the farce.”

One fellow female party member pounced to the support of Paleckis’s fiery speech: “Do we have democracy in Lithuania? As love letters, and that’s like licking honey through glass. That’s the kind of democracy we have!” she shouted and then went on to complain that retirement payments are too low in Lithuania.

Another woman, who had it explained to her that the protest was over the trial and wasn’t about pensions and then asked who she thought shot at that time, shouted, “Lithuanians murdered us!”

There were then heard retorts that one shouldn’t confine one’s reading to Communist versions [of the events], followed by angry questions: “What are you saying, that Communism is bad? You know nothing about Communism!”

An automobile trying to drive through the crowd put a stop to the loud talk. Actually the automobile didn’t hurry on, and used its turn signal. Paleckis tried to determine why the automobile had stopped, but apparently not receiving a clear answer, he proclaimed: “Fascism will not get through!” Other people beat on the automobile with their fists, a woman applied chewing gum, and others yelled that the provocateurs would not attain their goal and that they, the protestors, would not jump at the chance to break windows or go berserk in some other way.

A pre-trial investigation was opened against Paleckis by the Vilnius district prosecutor's office on December 28, 2010, over his statements that on January 13, 1991, when Soviet soldiers attempted to overturn the legitimate government of Lithuania, Lithuanians had shot at Lithuanians.

Initiative by Russian Senator Unites Paleckis Supporters

DELFI notes that people who have arrived, not for the first time, to support Paleckis are united by the international human rights movement World Without Nazism. The party Socialist People's Front was established last year by a female member of that movement. The movement has an office in Moscow. World Without Nazism was established on the initiative of Russian senator and president of the World Congress of Russian-Speaking Jewry Boris Shligel. Currently Shligel heads the presidium of World Without Nazism and his deputy, Engel, is visiting Lithuania.

Paleckis is also a participant in the presidium, as is head of the Simon Wiesenthal Center in Jerusalem Efraim Zuroff, who has often bristled with criticism for the Baltic states.

According to what is written on the movement's webpage, the organization observes expression of neo-Nazism in countries and reports on them to the OSCE, the Council of Europe and the UN.

The organization also initiates legal measures against people who committed crimes during World War II and who have participated in the propagation of Nazi ideas.

The movement actively speaks out against the equation of crimes committed by the Nazi and Communist regimes and accuses the governments of the Baltic states of trying to rewrite history and of supporting the spread of the ideology of neo-fascism, extremism and xenophobia, which is directed against common European values.