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<http://www.lzinios.lt/Lietuvoje/A.Azubalis-apgailėtina-pasirasyti-deklaracija-atmetancia-naciu-ir-sovietu-nusikaltimu-sulyginima>

History

Decision by Group of Social Democrats to Sign Declaration Against Equating Nazi and Soviet Crimes is Pathetic

BNS

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Lithuanian foreign minister Audronius Ažubalis speaking through press representative Margarita Butkienė said the decision by a group of Social Democratic MPs and MEPs to sign a declaration rejecting the equating of Soviet and Nazi crimes is pathetic.

“It is pathetic that Lithuania’s Social Democrats are taking political steps in a direction opposite to that being taken by all of Europe,” the minister’s representative said in a press release.

The declaration on the 70th anniversary of the Wannsee Conference in 1942, where Nazi leaders “definitively solved the Jewish problem,” was signed by eight politicians from the Lithuanian Social Democratic Party. These were MPs Vytenis Andriukaitis, Justinas Karosas, Marija Pavilionienė, Julius Sabatauskas, Algirdas Sysas and Birutė Vėsaitė and MEPs Vilija Blinkevičiūtė and Justas Paleckis.

The declaration rejects attempts to “diminish” the Holocaust in the belief that it “is equal to, similar to or equivalent to” Communism.

The ministry’s press release said this statement contradicts a 2009 European Parliament resolution on conscience and totalitarianism for declaring a common European day of commemoration of all victims of totalitarian and

authoritarian regimes, as well as a 2009 resolution by the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly on unification of a divided Europe through condemnation of both totalitarian regimes of the 20th century, those of the Nazis and the Soviets.

“In essence this sort of rhetoric by the Social Democrats repeats the Kremlin’s ideological positions, that Stalin is good and Hitler bad. It isn’t possible to find differences between Hitler and Stalin except in their moustaches (Hitler’s was shorter). Those professing both totalitarian ideologies are united in hatred for democracy. The legal status of the crimes they committed are totally the same: war crimes, genocide and crimes against humanity,” Butkienė said on the minister’s behalf.

Those who signed the document oppose equating Nazi and Soviet crimes in books on European history and efforts to legalize public displays of the swastika which, they say, is something fascist and racist groups are attempting. They also oppose the aspiration to honor victims of the Holocaust and the Soviet regime on the same day.

“The glorification of Holocaust allies, perpetrators, collaborators is not acceptable, including the Waffen-SS in Estonia and Latvia and the Lithuanian Activist Front (LAF),” the declaration says.

Social democrats Karosas and Sysas told BNS they think Nazi crimes are different from Soviet ones because they were directed exceptionally against one race, and that their equation, an idea by conservatives, is unacceptable to the left and to Jews who experienced the Holocaust.

“Hitler’s doctrine itself was to exterminate another people. Communist ideology was more against social strata. (...) There are many places where they coincide, the destruction of people, murder united them, but these are slightly different things, and I support this position (formulated in the declaration – BNS) because they (Jews – BNS) react emotionally to this, and, I believe, with good foundation. It appears different to us, but I empathize with the Jewish situation,” Karosas said.

“Both one and the other, both crimes are uniformly horrible, but one may not equate these matters somewhat and then place an equal sign, because the Holocaust was the racial persecution of people of one ethnicity, the blood-curdling persecution and destruction. There wasn’t a racial principle in

Stalinism, although perhaps it is placed at the feet of the Russian people, but one may not really say that, since people of different ethnicities carried out the repressions of Stalinism, and probably one could say the same thing of certain Lithuanians,” Sysas agreed.

He said the crimes of each regime need to be considered separately because “the equal sign offends the Jewish people somewhat.”

“If we’re discussing painful matters, gas chambers and deportation, these are somewhat different things. People still used to come back from deportation, but usually not from the gas chambers,” Sysas said.

Social democrats say the equalization of these crimes is a political position taken by the conservatives with which they do not agree.

“The conservatives pushed this position, but it’s not one universally accepted in Lithuania. This is a kind of political punch by the conservatives, this is their kind of battle. But Social Democrats have always seen it differently,” Karosas said.

Lithuania contributed actively in planning the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly resolution adopted in Vilnius in 2009 that does, unlike the “Declaration of 70 Years,” equate Nazi and Soviet crimes.

This resolution initiated by Lithuanian and Slovenian parliamentarians gives approval to the initiative to make August 23, the day the Ribbentrop-Molotov pact was signed, a common day of commemoration for victims of Stalinism and Nazism.