



# Lithuania's lies and deception exposed

## PICK OF THE DAY

Rewriting History  
9.30pm, SBS One

GRAEME BLUNDELL



THIS is one of those documentaries that is so compelling and so confronting it leaves you stunned, a little breathless. It's both a kind of contemporary international political thriller and a rigorously researched investigation into a piece of the past and the way it is remembered in the present. Or not remembered, when the truth of that past becomes politically problematic.

The film follows two slightly eccentric professors, the Australian Danny Ben-Moshe

from the Centre for Citizenship and Globalisation at Deakin University and Dovid Kotz who teaches Yiddish at Vilnius University, the oldest in Lithuania, as they confront the Lithuanian government.

Their cause is to try to prevent an inconvenient World War II historical truth from being obliterated — the fact that Jews were killed in their tens of thousands by Lithuanian militia independent of the Nazis. And before they invaded in 1941.

The film, discretely directed

and written by multi-award-winning director Marc Radomsky, who won a Logie for his film *Law and Disorder* in 2010, persuasively suggests present-day Lithuania is a laboratory for the campaign to rewrite the history of terrible events. The right-wing government's plan is to turn victims into perpetrators by accusing Holocaust survivors of war crimes as a central part of Europe's new politics of intolerance.

In an economically vulnerable Europe, where the rise of ultra-

nationalism and anti-Semitism is a sobering reminder of the social conditions that gave rise to World War II, the Lithuanian agenda is gaining traction.

The genesis of the film lies in Ben-Moshe's personal need to trace his family's genealogical roots. He was unaware of the dark history that would soon rise and envelop him, put his livelihood and reputation on the line and see him and his friend Katz risking criminal prosecution for seeking truth.



SBS

Holocaust survivor Fania Branstovsky in a scene from SBS One's *Rewriting History*