



THE WEEKLY OF VILNIUS

Issue # 265

Monday - Week of October 30 - November 5, 2017

Vilnius, Lithuania



Week in Review

“THE WEEKLY OF VILNIUS” is a weekly analytical & balanced news digest on Lithuania & Baltics for a professional foreign audience, covering: internal politics, foreign affairs, economics & business, and societal development.



“If a news story is not here ... then it is not important or has no impact”

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03/11/2017: EXCLUSIVE: THE WEEKLY OF VILNIUS's report on the week-long ordeal of Lithuania's writer, Ruta Vanagaite

THE WEEKLY OF VILNIUS' did not report, on purpose, on this week-long ordeal news story of Lithuania's famous writer Ms. Ruta Vanagaite with regard to her negative statements on Lithuania's partisan leader Adolfas Ramanauskas-Vanagas, because the news was travelling fast, and stories were piling-up by the minute until this Thursday. There was a frenzy of press and media coverages of who said what to whom, or more like who insulted or accused whom. We have decided to do our research during that week, and wait it out until the dust settles, as it did by Friday... "So far"!

THE WEEKLY OF VILNIUS Research Team should highlight to its readers that the information gathered in the provided brief report below on Ms. Ruta Vanagaite's ordeal has been researched by using many leading and credible Lithuanian press & media sources, as well as social media sites such as Facebook. We have tried to do our best with regard to covering this news story by including all different views, the good, the bad, and the ugly – noting that, unlike many Lithuanian press & media outlets, we have no axe to grind!

The report is composed of the following separate five parts: 1) A famous Lithuanian writer's negative views of a "State" national hero lead to the removing of all her books from bookstores, 2) Reactions by Lithuania's leading politicians, journalists, and public figures to Ms. Vanagaite's statements on Lithuania's partisan leader Adolfas Ramanauskas-Vanagas, 3) The European Jewish Congress, the sole political representative of European Jewry, issues a statement condemning attacks on Lithuania's "Ruta Vanagaite", and the decision to prevent the

publication & distribution of her books in Lithuania, 4) Reactions by Lithuanian officials, politicians, and public figures to the issued statement by the European Jews Congress in support of Lithuania's *Ruta Vanagaite*", 5) Ruta Vanagaite issues an open letter of apology on her statement about Adolfas Ramanauskas-Vanagas, and 6) THE WEEKLY OF VILNIUS commentary. Here they are:

(1) A famous Lithuanian writer's negative views of a "State" national hero lead to the removing of all her books from bookstores

Ms. Ruta Vanagaite, a 62-year old Lithuanian novelist and P.R. specialist, (*famous for publishing a controversial book "Mūsiškiai" ["Our People"] about the Jewish genocide in Lithuania in 1941 and the history of the Holocaust*



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in Lithuania during WWII – a book that was praised and translated into English and became known internationally) who last week announced to the press & media in Lithuania that she has doubts about Lithuania’s Seimas draft decision to announce the year 2018 as “The Year of Lithuania’s partisan leader Adolfas Ramanauskas-Vanagas”, and said that “he was not such a big hero.”

Note that Adolfas Ramanauskas-Vanagas (March 6, 1918 – November 29, 1957) was a prominent leader of the Lithuanian partisans who fought against the Soviet Union during its early occupation after WWII. He served as the Chairman of the Union of Lithuanian Freedom Fighters, with militarized forces numbering about 30,000 who were hiding in the woods in underground bunkers, and who carried out their attacks against Soviet forces. However, he was later captured by the Soviet Union military (through betrayal), then tortured, and executed in 1957. However, his death was announced as that he hung himself. After Lithuania regained its independence in 1990, Ramanauskas was awarded “the Order of the Cross of Vytis”, which is a Lithuanian Presidential award conferred for the heroic defence of Lithuania's freedom and independence, and was promoted to Brigadier General. (Sources used include Wikipedia).

It should be noted that today, Adolfas Ramanauskas-Vanagasis is considered to be a national hero in the Lithuanian State, and is “only” famous among Lithuania’s “nationalists” (Such as members of the Union of Nationalist Youth of Lithuania, many members of Lithuania’s conservative political parties, Lithuania’s leading conservative news portals, far-right newspapers, and other similar organizations), noting that most ordinary Lithuanians (your average Joe Schmo) have not heard of or know much about Adolfas Ramanauskas-Vanagas - however, all Lithuanians know and revere the heroic role and memory of the partisans who fought the Soviet Union forces for many years after WWII. (Source: THE WEEKLY OF VILNIUS Research Team),

It should be also highlighted that “a number of” Jewish communities and groups in the United States, Israel, and globally “consider” that some high-ranking Lithuanian partisans who were fighting the Soviet Union military in Lithuania, such as Adolfas Ramanauskas-Vanagasis (and Jonas Noreika, Juozas Ambrasevicius-Brazaitis, Povilas Plechavičius, Kazys Skirpa, and Antanas Baltusis-Zvejas, among other partisan) were complicit with the Nazi and are “believed to have helped murder Jews”, and/or collaborated with Nazi during Nazi occupation of Lithuania in WWII, where about an estimated 200,000 Lithuanian Jews were murdered. (Sources: “Haaretz”, one of Israel’s leading newspaper, “Defendinghistory.com” a portal that defends the history of the holocaust in Eastern Europe, “The National Coalition Supporting Eurasian Jewry” news brief, “The Times of Israel”, a leading newspaper in Israel, among others)

In response to Ms. Ruta Vanagaite’s statement above about Lithuania’s partisan leader Adolfas Ramanauskas-Vanagas “not” being “such a big hero”, Ms. Vanagaite was interviewed on TV this past week and was asked to explain herself. During that TV interview, Ms. Ruta Vanagaite elaborated by expressing her doubts about the story of Lithuania’s partisan leader Adolfas Ramanauskas-Vanagas being tortured, and about him betraying his brothers-in-arms, and revealing their names to the KGB, and that he may have been collaborating with the KGB. Ms. Vanagaite noted that she saw documents that contradict the stories that are being told about Adolfas

Ramanauskas-Vanagas in Lithuania today as being a national hero, etc... *(It should be noted that Lithuanian historians stated that the documents Ms. Ruta Vanagaite had seen “may” have been made-up by the KGB and are faked documents)*

Ms. Vanagaite also added during her TV interview that she did not find any evidence in the archives that the partisan leader Vanagas had participated by himself in any killings of Jews in Lithuania... She questioned Ramanauskas-Vanagas’ heroism and questioned the Seimas plan to call the year of 2018 in his name, saying that there are many questions about him that have not been answered...



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The statements made above by Ms. Vanagaite have created waves of angry responses in Lithuania's social media, as well as on TV stations and other press & media outlets (noting the fact that Lithuania's press & media are known to be mostly and predominately conservative in their political orientation, with minimal Western liberal contents and views).

The first to react to Ms. Vanagaite's statements was the famous Lithuanian journalist, writer, TV host, and public figure, Mr. A. Tapinas, who in his Facebook page issued a statement on October 27, saying: *"She (Ms. Ruta Vanagaite) is applying a brutal and cynical advertisement campaign of her newly published book by climbing on the bones of and by smearing those who cannot defend themselves (meaning the partisans who died in defense of their country) Mr. Tapinas proposed to his followers on Facebook to put on their Facebook profile the sign "#IamVanagas" and announced that he asked, in a written form, "Alma Littera" (a leading Lithuanian publishing house which is publishing all the books of Ms. Vanagaite) its position on Ms. Vanagaite's statements on TV, and stated that he will not publish his own books with this publishing house if the publishing house choses to do nothing about Ms. Vanagaite. He also stated: "If they are OK with this and there will be no reaction from 'Alma Littera', then I state clearly that you ('Alma Littera') already have lost one author (himself), and that 'Alma Littera' will not publish my books anymore".*

One hour later, the publishing house "Alma Littera" announced that it is terminating its cooperation with Ms. R. Vanagaite and is removing all her books from sales, including the publishing house's online stores, and stated that this is because Ms. Vanagaite's TV statements are against the values of "Alma Littera". In addition, Lithuania's number one retail supermarket chain, "Maxima", also followed suit and announced that it is also removing all Ms. R. Vanagaite's books from its stores.

It was noted that all the books of Ms. Vanagaite were removed including the well-known her controversial book "Musiskiai" (Our People), which also raised heated discussions in Lithuania, because the book examined the possibility of having a "part-of-Lithuania" that was complicit and may have participated in the Holocaust during the Nazi's occupation period of Lithuania. This book of Ms. Vanagaite made people in Lithuania discuss the Holocaust in Lithuania for the first time, openly, and in a different way from before.

This statement made by Mr. Tapinas (the mentioned above famous journalist), and the actions taken by "Alma Littera", the publishing house, and by "Maxima", the supermarket chain, have generated an avalanche of press & media articles and commentaries by "mostly" angry and too emotional politicians, journalists and public figures: some of which were "very insulting", some calling Ms. Vanagaite a "traitor", some accused her of defaming Lithuanian heroes, some requested to have her "exiled", some have requested to have the State strip her of her Lithuanian citizenship and/or leave the country voluntarily, and some even have gone as far as eluding, metaphorically, that she should go and hang herself on an aspen tree in the forests of Lithuania (this was Lithuania's statesman and first head of State, Mr. Vytautas Landsbergis, in his published article in "Delfi", Lithuania's leading news portal that is read by about 70% of the population). While still on the other hand, there

were others in Lithuania who wrote articles and commentaries that were in-support of Ms. Vanagaite's position, some said that she has the freedom of speech, some said that this is a free & democratic country and Lithuania should let her say whatever she wants to say, etc...! (Aspen tree in Lithuanian mythology symbolizes pain and betrayal)

After few days and in reaction to this avalanche of angry press & media commentaries against Ms. Vanagaite that were too-emotional and borderline hysterical, Ms. Vanagaite sent a letter statement to the Lithuanian press & media explaining herself, where she stated: *"If the questions I had raised regarding Adolfas Ramanauskas-*

Vanagas sounded as if they were accusations against this tragic personality, I really did not mean to do so... I am a writer and a journalist. My duty is to question things as deeply as possible. I have no answers to my questions; let Lithuanian historians do their investigation of this period of time, and answer these questions objectively..." and she added much more explanation of her position, but she did not apologize nor take her words back.

(2) THE WEEKLY OF VILNIUS' gathered reactions by Lithuania's leading politicians, journalists, and public figures to Ms. Vanagaite's statements on Lithuania's partisan leader Adolfas Ramanauskas-Vanagas:

Here are THE WEEKLY OF VILNIUS' researched and selected reactions by leading politicians, journalists, and public figures in Lithuania to the public statement of Ms. R. Vanagaite about Lithuania's partisan leader Adolfas Ramanauskas-Vanagas, the State's national hero who was awarded after Lithuania's independence by the Lithuanian president "the Order of the Cross of Vytis":

- Mr. Vytautas Landsbergis, who is a Professor, Honorary Chairman of the Homeland Union-Lithuania's Christian Democrats Party and the first Head of independent Lithuania (March 1990 – November 1992), wrote an opinion piece in "Delfi.lt", Lithuania's leading news portal, titled "Dusanskiene", where he wrote about the sufferings endured by the Lithuanian partisan's leader Adolfas Ramanauskas-Vanagas when he was tortured by Soviet forces for defending his country, and at the end of his article he stated while directing his words to Ms. R. Vanagaite: *"An you, Ms. Dusanskiene, Comrade Dusanskiene, who some people even call you a 'writer', turn on your literary imagination, comprehend what you are talking about, then go to the woods where the aspen trees are, pray, and punish yourself"* (this could only mean that she should "hang herself" from the Aspen tree?)

It should be noted that "Dusanskiene" is the last name of the wife of Mr. Nachman Dushanski, *"who was a Jewish officer of the Soviet security agencies (NKVD, NKGB, MGB, and KGB) in the Lithuanian SSR for over thirty years. He was heavily involved in the suppression of the Lithuanian partisans who fought against Soviet occupation of Lithuania. In Russia he was regarded as a war hero and was awarded the Medal for Courage Order of the Patriotic War, and Order of Lenin, while the Lithuanians perceived him as a war criminal. In 1989, Dushanski immigrated to Israel. After Lithuania declared independence in 1990, Lithuanian prosecutors began a criminal case, but Israel refused to extradite him"* (Source: Wikipedia).

Also note that the Aspen tree mentioned in the quote of Mr. V. Landsbergis in Lithuanian mythology is "the tree of justice", and it symbolizes pain and betrayal (Source: THE WEEKLY OF VILNIUS Research Team).

- Mr. T. Venclova – *(the famous Lithuanian poet, prose writer, scholar, philologist and translator of literature, who is one of the five founding members of the Lithuanian Helsinki Group. In 1977, following his dissident activities, he was forced to emigrate and was deprived of his Soviet citizenship. Since 1980 he has taught Russian and Polish literature at Yale University. Considered to be a major figure in the world of literature, and he has received many awards, including the Prize of Two Nations [received jointly with Czesław Miłosz], and The Person of Tolerance of the Year Award from the Sugihara Foundation, among other honors - Source: Wikipedia)* - wrote an opinion letter which was published this week in "Delfi", Lithuania's leading news portal, and stated the followings: *"It is possible that some of Ms. Ruta Vanagaite's statements are false. However the haunting attack waged against her reminds me of Soviet Union times. This attack effectively serves Vladimir Putin's propaganda than the statements by Ruta Vanagaite do... The people who publically and ruthlessly attack Ruta Vanagaite, destroying her books and etc., are providing a great source of material*



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for Putin, who has been trying to prove to the world that the public opinion in Lithuania shows the appearance of fascism in Lithuania.”

- Mr. S. Skvernelis, Lithuania’s Prime Minister, was interviewed on “LRT-Radio” program “Ryto Garsai” (Morning Voices) and he was asked to comment on this ongoing scandal and stated: *“Such statements come out sometimes, and we have to understand that they are clearly being used by our big neighbor. Of course, every person has the right to his own opinion, and can express it, but then various interpretations come out and they are being used incorrectly. It is sad that there are such people, who are quite educated, but are trying to negate historical facts, or those who are not historians and are trying to look in one way or another of historical facts, purely from fictional/literature point of view... But we are a democratic state, people expressed their opinion, and our job is to asses and to negate false statements.”*
- Mr. R. Valatka, a well-known and respected journalist who now has his own radio & TV programs, wrote an opinion article in “Delfi”, Lithuania’s leading news portal that is becoming more conservative every day!), where he stated: *“one cannot win a war with propaganda... The propaganda has to be named, clear, accurate and without hysteria; it is better with humor; name it and bypass it; (Let’s) bypass it as we would bypass dog’s poop (in the street); exactly this way, to name it and bypass it. And not to discuss (such things) on TV programs – if this were a (dog’s) poop or not... (Otherwise) This way we would be partly legitimizing propaganda... By discussing such things (on TV programs) for those people who are not critical and who do not understand politics and history, we create the illusion that these things can actually be that way or the other way, and who knows“.*
- Mr. G. Paluckas, the Chairman of the Social Democrats Party: *“Ms. R. Vanagaite has absolutely disregarded the common historical, moral values and historical facts. Her statements are absolutely wrong; however the reaction to Vanagaite’s statement, and the calling of her being lynched, are absolutely absurd – The whole situation and the exaggerations are not normal. Everybody needs to calm down a little bit”.*
- Mr. G. Landsbergis, the young Chairman of the Homeland Union-Lithuania’s Christian Democrats Party, published his views in his Facebook page and stated: *“I am also Vanagas (Adolfas Ramanauskas-Vanagas). I was Vanagas as long as I remember myself. I never doubted that and clearly understood that without the partisans’ resistance there would be no Lithuania. Lithuania’s pride is written with their blood... In Washington DC there is a memorial to honor Korea’s war participants... there are no doubts that these people are American heroes. I would like for us to have no doubts about who our heroes are... I will confess that I would like to see instead of an abstract monument of Vytytis (the Lithuanian coat of arms) being erected in Lukiskiu Square (in Gediminas avenue in Vilnius) to have a monument erected for the real partisans, maybe for Vanagas too. So it would be clear in which side we are: the Soviet side or the side of freedom.”*
- Mr. V. Bruveris, a famous journalist and political analyst who wrote in his Facebook page the following commentary: *“The worst of what Vanagaite and Zuroff (Her American-Israeli boyfriend famous Nazi hunter) did is that they even further compromised the real -problem, which some day it is necessary for it to be solved.*

That is the scale of Lithuanian society’s involvement in the Holocaust and the patches placed on some of our partisans’ leaders’ uniforms. How many and who killed the Jews, and who helped the killers and stole the victims’ wealth - until now there have not been any clear and serious accounts...



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Some of our partisans, also the leaders, really might not deserve to have a place in our national pantheon... there are no answers to these questions - most likely because of a vulgar understanding of patriotism; Our ‘pouring water on a Russian mill’ (to mean as in feeding into Russian propaganda) will portray ourselves as weak and weaken ourselves - so it would seem self-evident that the clearer and more open we put everything into its place, then patriotism and its pantheon are clearer and more resilient. Until such time, such people as Vanagaitė, will continue to work hard on keeping the whole issue upright in the ideological, political and emotional struggles arenas, and thus (continue on) directing to an audience that she has been riding successfully – (which is made-up of that) class of people in the West and Israel for whom Lithuanians are genetically anti-Semites, partisans are Nazi collaborators and killers of Jews”.

(3) The European Jewish Congress, the sole political representative of European Jewry, issues a statement condemning attacks on Lithuania’s “Ruta Vanagaite”, and the decision to prevent the publication & distribution of her books in Lithuania

The European Jewish Congress, the sole political organizational representative of European Jewry, issued a statement on Wednesday condemning the “attacks on Ruta Vanagaite, and decision to prevent publication and distribution of her books in Lithuania”, which read as follows:

“The European Jewish Congress (EJC) strongly condemns the outrageous attacks on Ruta Vanagaite, a Lithuanian author, who has written about Lithuanian complicity in the Holocaust, and which have included threats made against her and a decision to prevent the publication and distribution of her works.

It should be unthinkable that in 2017, books with views that some disagree with are prevented from publication on purely political grounds and is reminiscent of far darker times - Dr. Moshe Kantor, President of the EJC, said... Ruta is a brave woman whose voice is necessary for Lithuanians to face their past, especially during the Holocaust, and she should be praised instead of being attacked...

The EJC calls on the government and political class in Lithuania to seriously examine the role of Lithuanians during the Nazi occupation, to cease honoring who took part in role in collaborating with the Nazi occupation and who played an active role in the murders of Lithuanian Jews. Such an internal national soul searching should obviously also include the positive role played by those Lithuanians who risked their lives to save Jews.

The EJC also calls on the publisher to deeply reflect on its decision to prevent the writings of a leading Lithuanian author on such pertinent issues as the country’s role during the annihilation of the country’s Jews in WWII. The line between the prevention of material reaching the general public and de facto censorship and banning is a thin one and the destruction of books reminds us of far darker periods in European history.”

Here is a link to the full statement in English:

<http://www.eurojewcong.org/ejc-news/17337-european-jewish-congress-condemns-attacks-on-ruta-vanagaite-and-decision-to-prevent-publication-and-distribution-of-her-books-in-lithuania.html>

THE WEEKLYOF VILNIUS NOTE:

Note that Lithuanian press and media highlighted in their reporting on the statement issued by the European Jews Congress, that the Congress’s President, Mr. M. Kantor, is a Russian-oligarch with close ties to the Kremlin.

In addition, many of the Lithuanian press and media outlets on the net have attached a link to an article that was published by “Haaretz.com” which is the online edition of one of Israel’s leading newspaper, “Haaretz” on

February 1, 2016, authored by Anshel Pfeffer (who is a British journalist writing for Israeli's "Haaretz", covering military, Jewish and international affairs). The article is titled: "How Putin's Man Made His Way to the Top of European Jewry". Here is a link for those who may be interested in reading the article in full:

<https://www.haaretz.com/jewish/features/1.699655>

(4) THE WEEKLY OF VILNIUS's gathered reactions by Lithuanian officials, politicians, and public figures to the issued statement by the European Jews Congress in support of Lithuania's *Ruta Vanagaite*"

THE WEEKLY OF VILNIUS researched the Lithuanian press & media outlet, and identified reactions by leading Lithuanian officials, politicians, and public figures on the statement that was issued on Wednesday by the European Jews Congress in support of Lithuania's Ruta Vanagaite case. The identified reactions by Lithuania's leading officials, politicians, and public figures include the followings: 1) Lithuania's Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2) Lithuania's Jews Community (LJC), 3) Lithuania's Prime Minister, Mr. S. Skvernelis, 4) Lithuania's former Prime Minister & former Chairman of the Homeland Union-Lithuania's Christian Democrats Party, Mr. A. Kubilius, 5) A Seimas Member and Member of the Seimas' Nationals Security Committee, Mr. L. Kasciunas, and 6) former Editor-In-Chief of "Delfi.lt", Lithuania's leading news portal, Ms. Monika Garbaciauskaite Budriene.

- LITHUANIA'S MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS issued a commentary on the statement by the European Jews Congress, which read as follows: *"Lithuania for many years is working in the area of Holocaust research and education, in consultations with international Jews organizations, and also with the World Jews Congress and the European Jews Congress. The hostility between the Jewish genocide and Lithuanian anti-Soviet resistance in this context is completely unacceptable and serves only the distortion of the history. It is regrettable such statement made by the European Jewish Congress."*
- LITHUANIA'S JEWS COMMUNITY, the Vilnius-based organization representing Lithuania's over 3,000 Jewish populations, issued the following statement: *"Lithuania's Jews Community (LJC) expresses its concern regarding the discussions in the public sphere, related to writer's Ms. R. Vanagaite statements regarding the leader of Lithuania's partisan movement Adolfas Ramanauskas- Vanagas activities. At this moment LJC has no knowledge of trustworthy, based on historical data accusations on Ramanauskas-Vanagas contribution to the Lithuania's Jews Holocaust..."*

... By appealing to all parties to refrain from any hasty statements encouraging social unrest, the LJC emphasizes that the discussion on the complex issues of Lithuanian-Jewish history must be guided by the principles of respect, openness and honesty. The LJC respects the private publishing house 'Alma littera' right to carry out and develop its business strategy. However, the LJC considers the publishing house's decisions to utilize the works of R. Vanagaitė as disproportionate, and potentially creating preconditions for a public opposition. Taking the view that historical justice and its restoration should be based on substantiated research by professional historians on authentic documents; the LJC invites the public, professional historians and national leaders to take measures to prevent further social fragmentation and the spread of intolerance."

- LITHUANIA'S PRIME MINISTER, Mr. S. Skvernelis, stated on "Ziniu Radijas" (News Radio) on Thursday morning the followings: *"We do not have what to examine; we have done all the actions as a State and we continue to have a good dialogue with the Lithuanian Jewish community and with the world community. We are not saying that these painful questions are not debatable, and those discussions are taking place within the government and their representatives. Yes, there is nothing to re-examine... If anyone wants to re-examine anything, this is the job of historians, and historians have to use very clear systemic historical information, facts, and not interpret the facts... then we can discuss and talk... I believe that Lithuania as a State has done*



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everything it can and continues doing everything in order to have good relations with the Jewish community, a part of Lithuania's society and our nation at such high level that other nations can even be jealous of"

- LITHUANIA'S FORMER PRIME MINISTER & FORMER CHAIRMAN OF THE HOMELAND UNION-LITHUANIA'S CHRISTIAN DEMOCRATS PARTY, Mr. A. Kubilius commented on his Facebook page by saying: *"As it was expected, all this historical passion of the past days led to Lithuania, once again being accused of anti-Semitism and of the Jewish Holocaust. And it does not matter that it is done by the European Jews Congress, which is led by a Russian oligarch who is close to Putin and who is known in Lithuania as a fertilizer producer - once again we are accused... even though we do not feel being anti-Semites, and we are not running away from the historical responsibility... Maybe even it is the opposite... that is why we proposed in the Seimas to announce 2019 as "The Year of Jews", and this is in order to respond with open heart and honesty to all painful historic questions"*.

It should be noted that with regard to Mr. Kubilius' describing the President of the European Jews Congress, Mr. M. Kantor, as someone "who is known in Lithuania as a fertilizer producer" is attempting to tarnish the image and reputation of the Chairman of Lithuania's Presents & Green Union Party, Mr. R. Karbauskis, by reminding the people that Mr. Karbauskis' agriculture company in the past has had business dealings with "Acron", the Swiss-based fertilizer company that is owned by Mr. M. Kantor. Hence, after this past Seimas election of 2016, Mr. Karbauskis was accused by the conservatives of having business ties with Russia, meaning with the President of the European Jews Congress, Mr. M. Kantor (Source: THE WEEKLY OF VILNIUS Research Team).

- A SEIMAS MEMBER AND MEMBER OF THE SEIMAS' NATIONALS SECURITY COMMITTEE, Mr. L. Kasciunas, stated in his Facebook page the followings: *"The statement issued by the organization that is managed by the oligarch V. Kantor who is close to Putin's regime (referring to The European Jewish Congress is one more strong prove that Dusanskiene attack (referring to Ms. R. Vanagaite) against our partisans' leader was not a search of sensationalism, nor a wish to make money, or just to be different - but the opposite; it was a systemic anti-Lithuanian action by Kremlin's elements that has been continuing for decades, with the goal of putting together Lithuania's freedom fighters with the largest tragedy in humanity, and to discredit the idea of our Statehoods, to turn us into the pariah in the Western world. That is why this discussion should not be about the freedom of speech, on what is allowed or not allowed, the decision of publishers, but rather about the geopolitical goals of these systemic attacks (by Russia)."*
- THE FORMER EDITOR-IN-CHIEF OF "DELFI.LT", Lithuania's leading news portal, Ms. Monika Garbaciauskaite Budriene, wrote in her Facebook page the followings: *"R. Vanagaite made her choice. It is not known whether she planned it or not, but instead of just apologizing and acknowledging that she miss-identified sources, she chose to burn bridges with Lithuania. Because she has a much bigger role now, as an international victim whom she successfully is playing that role, not without the help of Zuroff (her boyfriend) and while lying she is pushing Lithuania into an international scandal. Thank you Ruta, the nation will not forget that..."* Note that Mr. Efraim Zuroff is a world-famous "American-born Israeli historian and Nazi hunter who has played a key role in bringing indicted Nazi and fascist war criminals to trial"
- ACCUSATION OF WORKING FOR THE BENEFITS OF RUSSIA'S KREMLIN. Many public figures in Lithuania have accused Ms. Vanagaite of working for the benefits of Russia's Kremlin by trying to smear the image of Lithuania's partisans and calling Lithuania as a country of Jews killers. A military analyst of the Strategic Communication Department, Ms. A. Usiene, stated during a TV Interview this past week that part of the information war is to smear *"Our highest partisan leadership and discredit partisan war. And in our opinion Ms. R. Vanagaite is one*

of those standing in front of the information war frontier... it is publically known that Russia has agents not only among Russian, but it always is looking for those who would be speaking in its name, those who would implement the destroying activities in a chosen country; In my opinion this is that case.” Similar opinion was expressed by Lithuania’s Mr. M. Laurinavicius who is a Fellow at the Hudson Institute, BAFF Security Research Scholar, Mr. M. Garbaciauskaite Budriene, former “Delfi.lt” Editor-in-Chief, Mr. V. Kersanskas, Deputy Director & Policy Analyst at “Eastern Europe Studies Center , among many others.

In the Lithuanian press & media the accusations of Ms. Vanagaite working for the benefits of Russia were heightened especially after the European Jews Congress had issued its statement in support of Ms. Vanagaite. This is because in Lithuania it is known that Mr. Kantor, the President of European Jews Congress is a Russian oligarch, and is a close person to Russia’s President Putin and he supports Ms. R. Vanagaite.

(5) Lithuania’s writer, Ruta Vanagaite, issues an open letter of apology on her statement about Lithuania’s partisan leader Adolfas Ramanauskas-Vanagas

It should be noted that Ms. Ruta Vanagaite on this past Friday had issued an open letter of apology on her statement about Lithuania’s partisan leader Adolfas Ramanauskas-Vanagas, which reads as follows:

“I did not want a scandal. I did not want to hurt the daughter of the famous leader of partisans and her father’s memory. She suffered more than one could imagine. I did not want to lose my and my family’s peace. I did not want to lose all of my books. But I did lose it....

My commentary came out at the worst time possible, on the day of the presentation of my happy autobiography book. In contrary to what is announced by conspiracy theories, that was a random coincidence and a big mistake of mine. It did cost me a lot. Questions, which I raised rashly and at the wrong time about the partisan leader’s Adolfas Ramanauskas – Vanagas biography facts sounded like accusations to the Lithuanian hero and that created a huge societal dissatisfaction. My words were taken as an attack initiated by harmful powers against Lithuania. I did not expect such reaction in any way and I am disturbed.

I am also disturbed by the facts which were raised today by historian Mr. D. Juodis in his interview, who examined documents. I really knew neither about the partisan leader’s relations with the KGB or his motives, nor about the horrific and long torturing of him. Today I openly admit that my stated opinion - that Adolfas Ramanauskas- Vanagas was not tortured and that he has hurt himself - was absolutely wrong and based on lies written in the files, by trying to hide the footprints of torture. I am very sorry for my hasty and arrogant statements in public.

And yet, in the face of this scandal, I continue to believe that a mature and open democratic society is the one that can open all pages of its history without censoring them, without applying the criterion of usefulness of truth. I believe that there will be historians in Lithuania who will reveal for Lithuania’s society the whole historical truth without fears and without self-censorship. I believe that only an open to the truth society can be free and resistant to hostile propaganda.

Famous semiotic Algirdas Julius Greimas when asked what Lithuanian nation needs to learn, to get rid of, he stated: ‘it needs to learn to look at itself critically and most importantly to be able to withstand its own critical view.’ I am doing exactly this now.”



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THE WEEKLY OF VILNIUS NOTE:

It should be noted that “Delfi-English” news portal had erroneously reported in its headline on Friday early evening that Ms. Ruta Vanagaite apologized for “lying” with regard to her statement about Lithuania’s partisan leader Adolfas Ramanauskas-Vanagas. The misleading headline read as follows: *“Vanagaite apologizes for lying about Lithuania’s guerrilla leader”*. However, as is clear from her statement above, Ms. Vanagaite did “not” write/say anything related to her “lying” about anything, but rather using falsified files, and she stated: *“I openly admit that my stated opinion - that Adolfas Ramanauskas- Vanagas was not tortured and that he has hurt himself - was absolutely wrong and based on lies written in the files, by trying to hide the footprints of torture. I am very sorry for my hasty and arrogant statements in public”!*

(6) THE WEEKLY OF VILNIUS Commentary:

THE WEEKLY OF VILNIUS Research Team, based on its research on this news story, would like to share the following “observations” with its readers, as food for thought:

- As in most such cases, it is good to see that the Lithuanian government did “not” get involved in this travesty. Though, we disagree somewhat with the message of Lithuania’s foreign ministry (kind of wishy-washy?), but we find it composed as it ought to be in such circumstances. We find the Prime Minister’s comments to be nearly the only “Statesman-like” in the whole ordeal of this past week. Best of all, we are impressed that the Lithuanian president was away in the UAE, and as of the writing of this commentary did “not” say anything about it, which is great.
- It should be made clear to all that Lithuania’s Jewish Community (LJC), the organization that represents the interests of only over 3,000 Lithuanian Jews, does “not” represent the Jewish people worldwide, and hence its scope of authority should “not” exceed its mandate! Also this ordeal shows that there is an ongoing conflict over the history of the Holocaust in Lithuania between the State of Israel (the government’s political & diplomatic interests at the UN, EU, etc...) and some religious Jewish groups outside of Lithuania that only want to know the truth.
- Regardless whether Ms. Ruta Vanagaite’s views are right or wrong on Lithuania’s partisan leader Adolfas Ramanauskas-Vanagas, the outrageous & authoritarian-type responses expressed against Ms. Vanagaite should never be happening in a free democratic Lithuania – a Lithuania that is a member of the EU, Eurozone, and NATO... and that is and has been a respectable voice in the world today. No one in any country, especially in an EU country, should ever be told by anyone to go and hang himself/herself for the guilt of their beliefs or for making a mistake! After 25 years of independence and progress in many fronts, there must be no room for Soviet Union-type mentality and mindset in today’s Lithuania (as the Lithuanian president always says on many occasions in many different contexts).
- It should be noted that the state of Lithuania/government has been doing what it can do to have the best of relations with Lithuania’s Jewish community and have the best of relations with the State of Israel, but this does not seem to be enough to many Jewish people! As many leading patriotic Lithuanians have already expressed their beliefs this past week that the issues raised by Ms. Vanagaite in her 2016 book on the holocaust in Lithuania (Our people) must be dealt with in a societal format, where everything can be discussed and shared in the open, without any taboos, as Ms. Vanagaite wrote herself in her apology letter.



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The whole commotion should “not” be about Lithuania’s partisan leader Adolfas Ramanauskas-Vanagas as it had been; instead, it should be about the need for the Lithuanian nation and people to open-up and deal with this painful chapter of the holocaust in Lithuania.

- The ferocity & undemocratic responses expressed at Ms. Vanagaite’s statement seem to reveal that the nationalist forces are gaining strength every day in Lithuania - as is the case in many countries (USA, Hungary, Poland, Slovakia, etc...) - and they seem now to be everywhere, especially lodged in Lithuania’s conservative parties and in Lithuania’s influential press & media outlets, disguised under the slogan of “Conservatism”, just like US President’s Trump is disguised under Republicanism. Because of this, this whole ordeal can be summed-up as a tug of war between Lithuania’s “nationalists” (not the State or people per se) verses Ms. Ruta Vanagaite.

EXCLUSIVE COVERAGE IN ENGLISH:

NOTE: Not a single “Lithuanian” newswire service, newspaper, or news portal provides such exclusive detailed coverage of important developments on Lithuania, in the English language, but THE WEEKLY OF VILNIUS.