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Summary & Links... 1

Reaching Lower Levels ...

Demand for Immediate ...

INTRODUCTION

Demand for Immediate ...

Post 5: Rabbis For...Res...



Post 4: THE BLATANT ...

Post 3: Why the Fighting...



Posts 1 and 2

1

Post 3: Why the Fighting Over Restitution Funds in Lithuania. The Real Story

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WHY THE BLATANT DISCRIMINATION AGAINST CHABAD LITHUANIA IN THE ALLOCATING OF RESTITUTION FUNDS IN LITHUANIA?

To properly respond to this question it is necessary to describe the abuse and attacks which practically every one of our institutions and almost every aspect of our work have been undergoing for the past 22 years...

Preface

The Culture in the Former Soviet Union (further FSU)

To properly grasp what is truly going on with the restitution in Lithuania, it is vital to understand what goes on in countries in the FSU.

Although on the surface life in former Soviet countries seems quire Western, there is an undercurrent of Soviet mentality and corruption that unfortunately still remains.

Leonid Donskis, the recently deceased Lithuanian philosopher, social analyst, and political commentator, put it this way:

...The definition of a professional and true politician ended up meaning those who are most capable of mechanically seizing and maintaining power, basically the intriguers of parties and palaces, who know very well how to overthrow, isolate or discredit their opponents. We have plenty of such government mechanics, social engineers and power technologists. Many had come out of the famous “universities” of the Komsomol, the Communist party, and the various schools of party and censorship.

They are almost perfect “gray eminences,” but there is something they will never be capable of producing: succession and continuity. Everything sinks down as if into a swamp. Their technique of compromising, removing, or discrediting any “alien

Must confess that as American's, despite being on the receiving end of numerous such attacks, it still took my wife and I MANY years to realize who was behind the attacks and why.

A Few Examples

1. When trying to rent city-owned premises to begin our kindergarten in 1995 (and then again for our school in 1996), we were constantly being thwarted by the head of the Vilnius Department of Education - whose approval was needed to finalize such premises rental.

We would spend days searching for a state kindergarten that agreed to rent vacant premises, only to have this city official finally tell our people that he will NOT give his approval to rent any premises to us for the kindergarten!

Thank G-d through the personal involvement of the Lithuanian Parliament Chairman this issue was resolved positively at the last moment.

But who was behind these actions and why, we honestly didn't know.

2. In 1995, our kindergarten was closed for a month by the Health Department, our first experience with this office which was often used to harass over the years. It only opened again after the intervention of the US Embassy here.

Turned out that the 'violation' for which they closed our doors was prevalent in EVERY kindergarten in the country!

3. Just before starting the school in September 1996, I was summoned for questioning by the prosecutor's office. During the threatening and outright belligerent questioning - about our work and future plans - I discovered that the prosecutor was taping the "investigation" on a tape recorder hidden in his drawer! Never learned what it was that they wanted to investigate...but the 'case' was dismissed.

But the taping of the prosecutors hostile questioning made it obvious that he was doing this for someone...but for whom, and why?

We were honestly quite clueless.

It didn't matter what we responded to the TV or newspaper reporters, all the reports were damning and one sided against us...

It was beginning to dawn on us that someone was threatened by our work and was orchestrating these hindrances from behind the scene. My wife and I agonized about this for years. Who could possibly be the behind this and what motive could there be for these (and numerous other) underhanded attacks?

At that time numerous people in the community here told us that the Lithuanian Jewish Community (further LJC) leadership was behind the above. We found this surprising.

Lightbulb moment

But then it finally began to dawn on us! We had 'challenged' the LJC by requesting funds for welfare programming (soup kitchen) from the Claims Conference, which the LJC had also requested.

Any wonder then that the food containers from the USA which were helping support the kitchen were attacked?

But the give-away was the completely slanted TV/newspaper coverage.

(Still remember the discussion with a reporter who did a large article about the food we were giving out which they claimed has bugs in it...the reporter told me that someone brought it to him and showed it to him...anonymously of course...but he could not answer as to why he wrote such an article, despite the fact that he received the package unsealed!

No, he had no response to my question as to how easy it is to bugs into or anything for that matter in any OPEN food package...no, he had not received any of food items sealed in their original packages as we had distributed them...).

Do you think that reporters in this country do such things free of charge? So then the question is: which funds were used to influence this obviously biased reporting?

The result: A few container shipments were stopped and we were charged to have them destroyed. In the end we were forced to stop the shipments...and less I forget, the LJC - which did not have a soup kitchen or ANY welfare

opportunity to negotiate a much more significant restitution package from the Lithuanian government.

If the above examples are not enough to prove the source of the devious, Soviet style attacks against us, then the subversive attempt to close down our institutions - especially the school - is crystal clear evidence.

The goal? To completely uproot our work, G-d forbid, so that we will simply not have any activities and institutions for which to claim restitution funds!

A few examples of this:

1. In about 2007 or so, a letter was written by the then LJC chairman to the Lithuanian Government to the Lithuanian Government (who had given us a 5 year rent-free lease on this building) to try to get them to take away a government owned building in which our school, kindergarten and dormitories for needy children were then functioning.

This disaster was averted at the last minute only due to the intervention of the US Ambassador.

2. Soon after the above, the attacks on the school intensified. A group of teachers tried to stop the functioning of the school. From past experience, we were quite certain as to who was behind this.

In a surprise meeting with the LJC, we confronted them by accusing them of being behind these efforts. Their response: we only met your teachers due to their request for help...after years of familiarization with their tactics we understood this to be an open admission of culpability.

There are **numerous** additional examples of the above from the past few years as well.

To summarize: The leadership of the Lithuanian Jewish Community sees us as competition for restitution funds, which they planned on monopolizing and controlling completely from the start.

Behind the veneer of modernization and the seeming adoption of Western style values, the reality of life in the former Soviet Union is that it is absolutely 'normal' to clandestinely use underhanded and illegal tactics to undermine a

Kickbacks.

How do we know this? When arranging many of the multi-faceted activities of Chabad here, we have received such 'offers':

Let us artificially increase the cost of a service, rental or purchase, and part of that increase we will give back to you in cash...

Summary: Is it any wonder that the Good Will Foundation has not given Chabad Lithuania ANY funds over the past three years?

Of course not!

The GWF is co-chaired by

a. the chairwoman of the LJC who has hampered, bloodied and harmed the success of our singular religious work for years, in attempts to wipe out our work - which is considered restitution funds 'competition'.

b. Andrew Baker of the AJC who: 1. was involved in our removal from the ad hoc committee, the first incarnation of the GWF. 2. Has refused to date not only to right this wrong, but has refused to even respond to numerous emails about this subject! 3. Has refused to share straightforward numbers regarding GWF allocations, also in numerous emails...

IMPORTANT: The result of the above mentioned attacks and sabotage, especially on the school, has been a concrete and identifiable harming of Jewish education in this country...including numerous youngsters who left the school due to these machinations!

To put it bluntly: The GWF - a fund created to retribute communal Religious property - is co-chaired by people who have been harming and snuffing out Jewish religious life for years...

In closing: The above is but an overview of the full truth of what has been going on here, for the past 22 years.

It is high time that morality, fairness, democracy and true good will be used in the distribution of the restitution funds.

Such activities for control and gain from restitution funds are a stain on the memories of our brethren murdered during World War II in Lithuania.

Posted 14th November 2016 by Rabbi Sholom Ber Krinsky

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