

'Genocide industry' has hidden agenda

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PAUL GILLESPIE'S fine report (May 16th) on a recent conference in Vilnius, Lithuania, about the history of Europe, touches on a part of the agenda that is often left unreported. That agenda is, in short, "Holocaust obfuscation". Not a single death is denied. Instead, an array of ruses is used to talk away the

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redefinitions of the word genocide ; tacit encouragement of antisemitic and racist public moods.

The effort is now concentrated on the "Prague Declaration" proclaimed last June. At first sight, this declaration "on European Conscience and Communism" seems innocuous. After all, when the grand Western party of freedom and prosperity got under way in 1945, the nations of Eastern Europe were enslaved for around half a century to the totalitarian Soviet regime. Soviet crimes must be exposed, and the victims honoured.

But history, just like life, tends to get complicated. The Baltic states have dismal Holocaust-era records: the highest percentages in Europe (in the mid to high nineties) of their Jewish citizens were murdered. This resulted from vast numbers of actual volunteer killers coming forward, far beyond the usual forms of collaboration. One must at the same time never forget the magnificent inspired heroism of those Lithuanians, Latvians and Estonians who just did the right thing, and saved a neighbour.

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Let there be no mistake. All our nations' histories have stains. It is a sign of maturity and patriotism to own up and move forward. In Lithuania, where I have lived for much of the last decade, I have been treated with exceptional kindness and have come to have high affection, and the highest aspirations, for the country. The Baltics are dynamic democracies that deserve our staunch support, for continued growth and against future threats from a certain unpredictable bear to the east.

Bold non-Jewish Lithuanian scholars have worked tirelessly to tell the simple truth about the Holocaust. One of them, historian Ruta Puisyte, whose pioneering thesis is on the web, is in Dublin this week as part of an exhibition on Holocaust survivors. She is a true hero of modern Lithuania. Catch her lectures!

But the work of these truth-telling patriots is undermined by government agencies that misuse strapped resources to try to replace the notion of the Holocaust with a theory of equal genocides where everybody was killing everybody.

The catalogue is not pretty. The state funds a veritable "genocide industry". There is (this one is for you, George Orwell) an "International Commission for the Evaluation of the Crimes of the Nazi and Soviet Occupation Regimes in Lithuania" (similar contraptions were set up in the other two Baltic states). It is cosily housed in the prime ministers office, eliminating any distancing from politics. Moreover, the inquiry's name implicitly suggests the foregone conclusion – equality; and, the name conveniently excludes the mass murder committed by local (rather than "occupation") forces.

To give "the Red-Brown Commission", as it is commonly called, international legitimacy, a leading Holocaust scholar, himself a survivor who moved to Israel after the war, was coaxed into joining. He is Yitzhak Arad. After he joined, prosecutors here started a kangaroo war-crimes investigation against him. The only real charge was that he escaped certain death by joining the anti-Nazi partisans in the forests.

When the Arad "investigation" was losing steam amid international protests, prosecutors, spurred on by the antisemitic right-wing press, found two new "objects" for a new and more vicious witch-hunt: Fania Yocheles Brantsovsky, librarian of the Vilnius Yiddish Institute, and Dr Rachel Margolis. Both amazing

women, now 87, are Holocaust survivors who escaped the Vilna Ghetto before its liquidation in September of 1943 to join the partisans in the forests.

A little over a year ago, on May 5th, 2008, armed plainclothes police came “looking” for both women. And a lamentable low point in modern Lithuanian history that was. Later, prosecutors told the press that the women “cannot be found” implying that they are fugitives. To this day, the calumny stays uncorrected. Verily this has been not about prosecution (no charges, no subpoenas) but about defamation (just last week the director of Baltic News Service called for war crimes trials of these heroic Holocaust survivors). Last August, the Economist wisely commented: “Lithuania must stop blaming the victims”.

DR RACHEL Margolis, a co-founder of Lithuania's only Holocaust exhibit of integrity, has been unable to return to Lithuania since the sordid affair started. She has since been honoured by members of the US Congress and the British House of Lords.

Fania Yocheles Brantsovsky, still resident in Vilnius, has been feted here by the Irish, American, British, Austrian and other embassies. Ireland proudly led the way!

Sad to have to note that it is the first time since Soviet days that the Western powers saw fit to honour a person being trashed by an East European state's judicial organs.

A recent exhibit in a downtown state-sponsored “genocide” museum compared Auschwitz with the Ukrainian famine of the 1930s. An elderly woman is shown telling visitors from around the world, in English translation: “In Auschwitz we were given some spinach and a little bread. War is terrible, but famine is even worse.” The same museum houses blatantly antisemitic exhibits.

So much for “equality” back at home.

“Red-equals-Brown” started big-time at the European Parliament in January 2008, with the “Common Europe – Common History” group. Their press release complained bitterly that “Never Again” is unfairly monopolised by Holocaust survivors. It took a member of the British Parliament to see right through it all. John Mann, valiant chairman of the All-Party Parliamentary Group against Antisemitism, told the Commons where this is coming from: “In Tallinn, Estonia, five MEPs from five different countries met to launch a group called Common Europe – Common History. It has the same theme – the need for an equal evaluation of history. It is just a traditional form of prejudice, rewritten in a modern context. In essence, it is trying to equate communism and Judaism as

one conspiracy and rewrite history from a nationalist point of view. Those are elected MEPs!”

Repeatedly pressed to assent during her Baltic trip last August, German Chancellor Angela Merkel refused, simply saying: “National Socialism was a unique phenomenon.” Good for her.

Alas, Red-Equals-Brown is sometimes underpinned by wheeling out ambitious local Jewish politicians whose political careers depend on being “more ultranationalist and more anti-Russian” than anybody else. These “show Jews” (once upon a time called “court Jews”) regularly betray Holocaust victims and survivors alike. Similarly, unsuspecting foreign academics enjoy junkets without realising they are being abused for the “obfuscation” agenda.

One proposed new Euro-law in the Prague Declaration would force the “overhaul of European history textbooks so that children could learn and be warned about Communism and its crimes in the same way as they have been taught to assess Nazi crimes”. Another would insist that Soviet misdeeds be judged “in the same way Nazi crimes were assessed by the Nuremberg Tribunal”. The hard-working Baltic peoples deserve better than this massive misguided expenditure on a shambolic “equals sign”.

Lithuania has just elected a dynamic new president, Dalia Grybauskaite, an economist born after the war. And what a grand opportunity she has to rapidly dismantle the ultranationalist, history-distorting, antisemitic, and racist “genocide industry” that is a blot on her fine country, from the commissions to the devious resolutions before the European Parliament. What an opportunity to recreate the majesty of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania and to attract talent from every corner of the planet.

As for the Prague Declaration, all of Europe should unite to rapidly relegate it to the junk heap. It should be replaced by a new project to deal with the legacy of Soviet totalitarianism.

Without the “equals sign”.

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