

How for Hitler to Become Chapayev. Along the Traces of One Propaganda Action

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In 2006, the Europa Publishers in Moscow published the document collections “Tragedy of Lithuania: the Years 1941–1944“ (Трагедия Литвы: 1941–1944 годы), “Estonia. The Bloody Trace of Nazism: the Years 1941–1944” (Эстония. Кровавый след нацизма: 1941–1944 годы), “Latvia under a Yoke of Nazism: Collection of Archival Documents” (Латвия под игом нацизма: сборник архивных документов, of the Free Europe Foundation (here is already a real style of the FSB – to hide their horns under the stolen signboards), prepared by anonymous authors. Each collection of documents has the subtitle “Collection of Archival Documents on the Crimes of Lithuanian [Latvian or Estonian] Collaborators in the Years of the Second World War”. Since the “authors” express their very warm gratitude to the management and the staff of the Central Archives of the Russian Federal Security Service (FSB) for selection of archival documents, there was a desire to turn over the said publications more attentively.

I think that I will be right saying that the idea of that publication occurred in 2005 when the leaders of the Baltic States discussed actively whether to go to Moscow for the celebration of the victory over Germany. The bloody traces of Stalinism under the cover of the victory and the subjugation of the Baltic States did not allow the majority of the society to approve such a visit unless the Russian leaders condemned the Soviet Union expansion. Thus, in 2005, a plan was nurtured to publish publications where an introduction rather than investigation and documents would be of special importance. The publications in actual fact remind the literature of the KGB times, which in small printings were published for a foreign market. Otherwise, such printings have no explanation: a publication for Estonians was published in 1000 copies, and for Lithuanians 500 copies.

Introductions to the publications are written by the same hand and are very similar. So that is “attempts are made on the part of the Estonian State to revise the consequences of World War II”, because in Estonia the “Nazi criminals” are “heroized.” And the fighters for the independence of Lithuania “became the basis of the police battalions,” in the ninth decade the Lithuanian national self-consciousness absorbed “the notes of Russophobia and anti-Semitism.” “The Ship of Fools” by V. Petkevičius (as a matter of fact, that book has become the most favourite publication of anti-Lithuanian propaganda knee-benders) is not forgotten to be quoted: “In the Third Congress of the Sajūdis (Reform Movement) it (the first declared document – the political restructuring declaration) fit into one most despicable phrase “In Lithuania 200,000 Communists should be put to the wall [...], and the order will be” (p. 5–6). It turns out that “Lithuania in the years 1941–1944 in such a way would restore its independence.” If somebody did not understand the logical relationship of sentences, it is possible to explain – in the years of the Nazi occupation, Lithuania was not occupied but recreated its independence by killing 200,000 people. It is understandable that such nonsense could be written by a conscious idiot. In the book, designed for Lithuania, the authors consciously take the position of double genocide defenders. So that is they perceived the reasons for the participation of Lithuanians in the Nazi crimes only due to repressions, arrests and deportations carried out by the Soviet power. As if only revenge has led to crimes. According to such understanding,

there were neither ideologists for the annihilation of Jews nor the plan for the extermination of Jews, blessed by Hitler, nor its executors Walter Stahlecker's operational squad, nor Joachim Hamann flying squad (Rollkommando Hamann)... Or, probably, they just did not fit in the drawn-up history frame?

In comparing the publications, some differences may be noticed – the more propaganda charge goes to Estonians. Here “fighters for the independence of Estonia” (quotation marks are by the book authors – A. A.) – are the veterans of the formations of the Estonian SS volunteer 20th division and “forest brothers” bandits.” The readers are made understand that both of these are scoundrels all the same. Like the President of Georgia Mikhail Saakashvili. And what the Georgians with their Presidents have to do with this? Did they also serve in the German police battalions? No, but the adviser of the Georgian President, the Estonian politician Mart Laar said something or did not say (it is not so important) “For SS veterans and bandits.” It worked out as expected – if a bullet misses the target, its hitting on the rebound is welcome. In this case the echo of a shot went to the insubordinate Georgians and their President.

And what was declassified by the FSB that even three books appeared at the same time. The first document in the Lithuanian book – testimony given by the Lithuanian “Major Pashkov” not earlier than in 1942. The Major “Pashkov” as such does not exist, but let's take it just as distortion of his surname, which is characteristic of all hastily prepared publications. Further, the reports by operational groups are provided, which, as a matter of fact, are successfully abbreviated and cut in a KGB style. The Lithuanian historians have known them already for a long time and use them. Probably, the activity of the 13th Lithuanian self-defence battalion is not known to us? It is known and investigated actively further on. In addition to the attempts of the “Smersh” to make its own activity more important in liquidating the alleged Riflemen (Šaulių) Organization, which ostensibly operated in the years of the Nazi occupation, and efforts to connect the participants of the Jewish massacre with the “organized activity of the riflemen,” in Document No. 38, one page in the 1944 autumn terror backstage is, nevertheless, revealed. Lt-Gen Zelenin, Commander of the Smersh Directorate of the Third Byelorussian Front, offered the Smersh Commander Abakumov on September 3, 1944 (P. 179) “to carry out the mass operation simultaneously in the territory of the Lithuanian SSR by detaining all the members of the Riflemen Organization and deporting them to the special camps for further filtration and repressions.” No doubt, the proposal was accepted and carried out. Some 20,000 Lithuanians, against whom no cases were brought, very soon found themselves in the camps. Lt-Gen Bystrov, Commander of the Smersh Directorate of the Leningrad Front, on October 5, 1944 offered Abakumov to adapt an analogous plan to Estonians as well: “To detain massively the members of the “Omakaitse” Organization, arresting their most active part, and to deport the remaining part in the administrative procedure outside the borders of the Estonian SSR” (P. 249–250).

Evidently, from the investigation case of Alexander Krzyzanowski-Wilk the FSB took out his “Proclamation to Lithuanians” of May 20, 1944 (actually, the proclamation was published for more than ten years ago, thus it was not needed to be “declassified”), where Lithuanians were accused of anti-Polanism, and all the blame was laid on the Lithuanian public, promising to start the Lithuanian “pacification” campaign. At that time, the NKVD accused the Polish underground leader of that, and now the inheritors of the methods already use it for other purposes. Certainly, it is possible to mislead many by the 1943 information about the oath of the Lithuanian

police battalions to Hitler or the call of the former political prisoner Col. Saladžius to fight against Bolshevism. Especially, if an impact of Lithuanian anti-Nazi resistance on the public, the frustrated creation of the SS legion, repressions against the Lithuanian intellectuals, and other facts, which do not correspond to the scheme, written by the FSB propagandists, are passed over in silence. Of the 114 presented documents, the major part is devoted to the theme of the Holocaust, and it seems that the FSB did not give up the plans of its forerunner KGB to turn the Holocaust history into the usual tool for opposing the nations while ignoring the investigation.

But here they face a great surprise. The compilers of the collection deceived the organizers of the action – yes, documents were “declassified” in Russia, but they were neither new nor unique. Even not secret! They have been researched by Lithuanian and foreign historians long ago; they were used in scientific works, which reveal the Nazi crimes and a scale of Lithuanians’ involvement into them. For us this is not a secret, therefore we do not intend to hide ourselves from it.

At the end – the first task of the first lesson for the illiterate compilers of the publication. The International Commission for evaluation of the crimes of Nazi and Soviet occupations prepared and published several publications, intended for the Nazi occupation history. Researchers and experts of that International Commission, basing on the rare authentic documents, actually not known in Russia, analyze the manifestations of anti-Semitism, show their transformation in the years of the dramatic political changes, and disclose the backstage of extermination of Jews and other civil residents. Thus, at first I propose to read the book “Murders of Prisoners of War and of Civilian Population in Lithuania, 1941-1944” by Christoph Dieckmann, Vytautas Toleikis and Rimantas Zizas, as well as the book “The Persecution and Mass Murder of Lithuanian Jews in 1941–1944” by Christoph Dieckmann and Saulius Sužiedėlis. It is possible to show an interest in research, conducted by the historians Arūnas Bubnys or Valentinas Brandišauskas in 2005–2006: The Kaunas Ghetto (1941–1944), The Jew Police in Kaunas and Vilnius Ghettos (1941–1944), The Lithuanian Police 1st (13th) Battalion and Massacre of Jews in 1941, Fate of the Property of Lithuanian Jews during the Years of WWII, The Holocaust in the Kėdainiai District, The Fate of Jews of the Mažeikiai District during the Years of WWII, etc. But, I think that the first lesson for the ostensible founders of “Free Europe” will be also the last. The categories of moral responsibility are beyond their reach, they feel pleasure in sneering at national feelings and turning the genocide history of one nation into the already blunt tool for poking at not healing wounds.

Instead of Post Scriptum

When walking along Arbat Street in Moscow, a bust of Hitler standing in the shop-window caught my eye. It was something unexpected in Russia, which suffered most significantly from Nazism. But after coming to the shop to ask why such “souvenirs” are on sale, it turned out that Hitler is not Hitler at all. The affixed note said it was Chapayev! Such metamorphosis was hardly convincing, the more so that “Chapayev” evidently possessed the traits of the “first Aryan” and he wore the SA uniform. All that just shows that Russia while fighting with disobedient “Baltic” people, who do not use the history written in the alien country, should look around more attentively in its own yard – where the contempt for the history of other nations leads to. Hitler may turn into Chapayev.