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Coming to the Aid of the Prime Minister on Hardtalk's Historical Questions

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Right away I'd like to express honor for the Prime Minister who dared take part in what was really "hard talk." On the show which, according to its title, is really difficult for the interviewee. Things can always be done better, but, I believe, the hard questions were answered sufficiently accurately, competently and compellingly.

Of course, the questions about home renovation were pressing, but what can you do, if we really have this problem?

I'd like to offer aid to the Prime Minister on questions which we always stumble over as if upon a rake, and for which we do not have understandable arguments for everyone (especially foreigners).

These are accusations that Lithuania collaborated with the Nazis, that the aspiration to appropriately condemn not just the crimes of the National Socialists but also of the Communists, is merely an exotic cover for this collaboration.

I believe that all of us (and especially politicians) are capable of telling at least several facts that would help to defend Lithuania's honor and interests in response to such questions.

First, that many Jews were murdered in Lithuania does not mean that Lithuanians are a nation of Jew-shooters. On the contrary, Lithuania was of old a place where Jews lived securely and peacefully.

Until the Nazis came. If Lithuanians had been anti-Jewish, Lithuania would not have become a sanctuary for Jews, and Vilnius would not have been "Jerusalem of the North."

One doesn't wish to recall [such things], but we can keep in mind that unlike the US, which initially didn't want to admit German Jews fleeing from Hitler, and the Soviet Union, which returned Jews fleeing Hitler to the Nazis, or even the United Kingdom, where there was no lack of pseudo-Aryan gibberish, there might have been little jokes on the topic of Jews in Lithuania, but there was not persecution or oppression of Jews.

Second, accusing Lithuania of anti-Semitism or collaboration is an insult to the memory of hundreds of people of Lithuania who saved Jews.

Third, how is it possible to accuse Lithuania of collaboration with the Nazis when this collaboration didn't occur in any official formal manner?

Moreover, despite the efforts made the Nazis in Lithuania were unable to form their own SS legion. Unlike, incidentally, in Latvia or Estonia and many other occupied countries.

I believe that we should answer questions of history with head held high, especially since we have clear answers. I understand that these arguments I have presented on the theme of history might possibly appear those of dilettante to serious historians. In that case I await the help of historians.

[end]

Prime Minister of Lithuania Andrius Kubilius appeared on the BBC World Service television interview program HARDtalk and was interviewed by Jonathan Charles; the program was broadcasted on November 30, 2009. For video and audio clips, see:

http://www.bbc.co.uk/iplayer/episode/b00p930b/HARDtalk_Andrius_Kubilius_Prime_Minister_of_Lithuania/
http://www.bbc.co.uk/worldservice/business/2009/11/091126_kubilius_audio.shtml