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<http://www.balsas.lt/naujiena/391868/kregzdutes-ir-svastikos-lietuvos-talibai-pasitarnavo-kremliu>

## Swallows and Swastikas: Lithuania's "Taliban" Served the Kremlin

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by Arūnas Brazauskas



Only a suspicious looking pile remains of Lithuania's foreign policy. No one wants to sniff it. Although it is monochrome, it is a collective work. The Presidency and the Homeland Union have done some work.

There's a "rabbit turd" stuck inside the pile:

*Nashi, a youth movement supporting the Kremlin, has called for beginning a **boycott of products produced by Lithuanian manufacturers**, the Russian media report. Organization representative Kristina Potupchik said the measures were taken in response to a Klaipeda, Lithuania court recognizing the swastika as the **historical heritage of the country** rather than a symbol of Nazi Germany. Potupchik said the international community should condemn the verdict by the Lithuanian court.*



Who knows whether the “Taliban” of Lithuania foresaw that under the law that was adopted through their efforts one cannot be punished for archaeological discoveries. Or that namely this legal demonstration would become a pretext for the Russian “Taliban” to agitate for a boycott of Lithuanian goods?

And who could deny that the Russian secret services inspired amendments to the law in order to create certain conflicts?

Propaganda is extinguished by counter-propaganda. [We could] buy advertising space in Russian newspapers and publish reports there that the swastika is also the historical heritage of Russia, in reply to the boycott of Lithuanian goods. Except that the knees of the Lithuanian government are too weak for such a rather adventurous act. Neither is there much imagination in the heads of the men and women of government.

A double headed eagle with swastika was printed on the banknotes issued by the provisional Russian government (1917).



The Lithuanian court considered the possible violation of Administrative Law. Likely Nashi is unconcerned with this. The Law says:

**Article 188.18** Distribution or demonstration of Nazi or Communist symbols

*The distribution, use at assemblies or other mass meetings or other demonstrations of flags or symbols based on the Nazi German, USSR or Lithuanian SSR flags or coats of arms, or flags, symbols or uniforms whose components include the Nazi German, USSR or Lithuanian SSR flag or coat of arms, Nazi or Communist organization symbols or uniforms or Nazi German, USSR or Lithuanian SSR flags or coats of arms, the Nazi swastika, the Nazi SS symbol, the Soviet hammer and sickle symbol, Soviet five-pointed red stars, and also including the public performance of the anthem of Nazi Germany, the USSR or the Lithuanian SSR, results in a fine from 500 to 1,000 litas, along with confiscation of the object which was the means for the violation of administrative law.*

*Under this article, the person who performs the acts indicated in the first section of this article for reasons of museum activity, for informing society about historical and current events as well as totalitarian regimes, and for educational, scientific, artistic and the antiquarian trade, and also the person who uses officially extant state symbolism, as well as World War II participants wearing their uniforms, are exempt.*

I have said numerous times in public that this law seems absurd to me. In applying the law it's possible for the police to arrest a person for playing the Russian anthem on the accordion. In court he must explain that this was not the anthem of the USSR, because the current anthem of Russia differs only in lyrics, not in melody. It's obvious that this sort of incident would attract greatly the attention of the Russian media and would be used as propaganda against Lithuania.

In the article Swallows and Swastikas

<http://www.lrt.lt/news.php?strid=2838146&id=4749664>

I wrote (2008):

*I will present several questions which occurred to me as I was trying to understand what the new redaction of the law bans.*

*I understood I would not be punished if I sell pins from the Soviet Young Octobrists and Young Pioneers organizations, but it's not clear whether or not I'd be detained by police if I appear on the street with such pins in my lapel. Neither is it clear what a police officer is required to do if he sees a woman wearing a red scarf. Under the letter of the law, the police officer should determine whether this is a three-cornered Pioneer neck-tie. If it is, the neck-tie needs to be confiscated and a citation issued for violating administrative law.*

*It needs to be clearly enumerated which portraits cannot be displayed publicly. The current redaction of the law does not seem to ban sticking a portrait of Lenin on an automobile, while the status of Henrik Ziman, if anyone remembers him, is unclear.*

*One of the authors of the law, conservative MP Vilija Aleknaite-Abramikiene, also struggled to understand her own creation. At a meeting of Lithuanian Freedom Struggle participants, former political prisoners and exiles on August 8, 2008, in Ariogala, Lithuania, an incident occurred. Neo-Nazi followers of Mindaugas Murza, so-called national laborists, appeared at the event with black crosses on red flags.*

*According to the Delfi.lt web page, when Aleknaite-Abramikiene saw the flags with the drawings [of black crosses], they reminded her of Nazi symbols, and she called the chief of the Lithuanian police. He allegedly promised to issue an order so that these people would not remain at the assembly. After police failed to ask them to leave, the MP called the general commissar again, but this phone conversation also failed to yield results.*

*Member of parliament Algimantas Salamakinas has said Aleknaite-Abramikiene's behavior should be considered in the parliament's Ethics and Procedures Commission. It seems even an MP should report violations of public order through normal police channels, rather than calling the chief. On the other hand, which law is it that requires the police take action against a citizen for wearing clothes of a certain fashion and waving a flag with a cross, called by heraldry experts crux potent? Yes, it's possible to fantasize that this cross is made of left-handed and right-handed swastikas—like, incidentally, the NATO symbol is—but please prove that the crux potent is a Nazi symbol.*

*And the list of mysteries needs to be lengthened with further questions: is it allowed to display publicly the swastika of the pre-war Lithuanian Nationalists Union, or the contemporary Finnish Air Force flag with the swastika? The law apparently doesn't forbid this, so it would be good if police knew this.*

*Vytautas Landsbergis acted creatively during the Ariogala incident. According to Delfi.lt, he said: "There shouldn't be any little pretend fascists here with hakenkreuzes who have managed to infiltrate the procession. Partisans, once upon a time you fought for freedom. Go off now and let them disappear, such that their heels smoke."*

*The circumspect partisans didn't burn the heels of the "little fascists" with heated pokers, so it's not possible to charge Mr. Landsbergis with autocracy and inciting a riot—in other words, trying to impose order through illegitimate means. The managed shame the national laborists by non-violent means instead, so that they rolled up their flags and disappeared.*

*An explanation of the new bans is really really needed! Otherwise all sorts of misunderstandings can occur. For example, the conservatives might raise their flag at some meeting unsympathetic to them, and someone will begin screaming: "There shouldn't be any 'conserves' here with their swallows which are similar to 'hakenkreuzes'! May they vanish so that even the feathers would become dusty!"*

[note: the Lithuanian Conservative Party, aka Homeland Union, uses a flag with stylized wings of birds on it. "Becoming dusty" has a pejorative meaning of sexual intercourse.]