

Soviets, OSI push 'Nazi war criminals' hoax in Britain

by Mark Burdman

During late January-early February period, the Soviet government and its collaborators in the U.S. Justice Department's Office of Special Investigations (OSI) mounted a serious campaign against alleged "Nazi war criminals" now living in Great Britain.

From Jan. 28 to Feb. 10, the Soviet Union's leading "Nazi-hunter," Natalia Pavlovna Kolesnikova of the Procurator General's office in Moscow, paid a visit to Great Britain. Madame Kolesnikova met with members of the All-Party War Crimes Group—approximately 80 parliamentarians—and watched British courts in action in Scotland and England. Her main purpose was to present "evidence" against an emigré Lithuanian, Antanas Gecas, who was with the Lithuanian Twelfth Police Battalion during World War II. Gecas has repeatedly denied Soviet charges that he committed war crimes. Discussion of the "Gecas file" was also the official purpose of a November 1987 visit to Britain by OSI head Neil Sher.

On Feb. 10, the Soviet government newspaper *Izvestia* featured the British visit of Kolesnikova, whom it identified as a "senior Soviet jurist," under the heading, "Nazi War Criminals in the United Kingdom." The paper began by quoting her, on her meeting with the parliamentary group. "The question is the following: Can the Soviet Union present to Great Britain materials, archival documents, witnesses, and other evidence, if, in Britain, there will begin an investigation into the Nazi past" of certain identified individuals? Her "answer": "The Soviet Union is fulfilling its responsibility, and is ready to fully cooperate."

She noted that five years ago, the U.S.S.R. had presented 6,000 letters of documentation to the juridical organizations of various countries, and that 195 Soviet witnesses were sent overseas to various countries to present evidence against "alleged Nazis." She singled out the United States, West Germany, and Canada, as three countries that had begun to "actually do a lot" on the "Nazi war crimes" issue.

She told *Izvestia* that, in late 1986 and early 1987, "international organizations working on exposing Nazi crimes" had told the Soviets that they had presented a list of names of "alleged Nazis" living in Britain, demanding government action against them. British Interior Minister Douglas Hurd had agreed to take such charges into account, but indicated that any deportations "would be out of the question." That,

Kolesnikova claimed, "called forth complaints and protests on our side and in Britain."

The *Independent* reported, on Feb. 3, that Kolesnikova's visit would "increase pressure on ministers to act against resident war criminals."

Obviously, the "increased pressure" paid off handsomely. On Feb. 8, Hurd announced before the British Parliament that the government was undertaking an independent investigation into charges that as many as 17 Nazi war criminals are living in Britain. The inquiry would be headed, said Hurd, by Sir Thomas Hetherington, former Director of Public Prosecutions for England, and William Chalmers, who held the same post for Scotland.

Hurd suggested that the "war crimes" question would eventually require a change of Britain's Criminal Justice Bill, to allow for trials in Britain of alleged Nazis. He said: "Normally, when crimes are committed abroad by British citizens, the remedy we would seek to apply would be extradition. . . . However, given that we have no extradition treaty with the Soviet Union, and the crimes are alleged to have been committed in territory that is now under Russian control, this is not going to be an inquiry in which rules of evidence will apply. It is an inquiry outside the ordinary processes of investigation, in order that Government and Parliament can decide whether there is a strong enough case to change the law."

Hetherington and Chalmers have been given the authorization to travel wherever they feel it necessary in order to gather information. Visits to the Soviet Union and Israel are in the offing. The *Sunday Express* of London Feb. 14 reported that the investigations into the backgrounds of the 17 alleged Nazis "is to be turned into a worldwide inquiry."

Target: Eastern Europe

What are the Russians really up to? It is no coincidence that the vast majority of alleged "Nazis" in Britain are Lithuanians and Latvians, including the most publicized of those targeted, Gecas.

Unrest in "captive nations" of the Soviet empire, and in such satellite nations as Poland, has the Soviets very nervous. Mass demonstrations against Soviet imperialism in Lithuania on Feb. 16, the 70th anniversary of Lithuania's independence, are among the things that has the Kremlin uneasy.

This is complicated, for the Russians, by the continued strength of Catholicism in many areas of Eastern Europe.

What better thing for the Russians to do, than to discredit Eastern European populations as "Nazi" collaborators and/or criminals? Their sensitivity on the point, is underscored by the Feb. 10 *Izvestia* article's reference to the targeted British residents as "so-called fighters for freedom."

In strict legal terms, the Soviets have no grounds to demand extradition, because the republics of Lithuania, Latvia, and Estonia were illegally annexed by the Soviet Union in 1940, under the Hitler-Stalin Pact, and the official position of Western governments remains that the Baltic republics do not constitute part of the Soviet Union. During the 1940-41 period, and immediately after the war, the Soviet Union murdered or forcibly deported to Siberia hundreds of thousands of citizens of the three Baltic republics. How about "war crimes" investigations into the Russians' treatment of these subject populations?

According to the Feb. 14 *Sunday Express* report, several of the East European emigrés in Britain now called "Nazis" are asserting outright that those in the West who are retailing the Soviet charges, such as the Simon Wiesenthal Center in Los Angeles, have "been duped by KGB agents who have manufactured false papers to discredit emigré community leaders in the West."

'A dog angrily attacking a shoe'

Quickly, the "Nazi-hunter" operation is becoming a bottomless pit of accusations, charges, and revelations. The overkill involved here, might backfire against the perpetrators.

As to the "Nazi" lists made available to Hurd, for example, the actual number involved is not only the 17 now publicized, but an additional 34, compiled from lists largely concocted by the Soviets themselves, and filtered into Britain through Scottish Television and the Wiesenthal Center. The Scottish TV crew collaborates closely with Sher and the OSI.

But that is only the beginning of the story.

On Feb. 14, the *Sunday Times* of London reported that, on hearing of the Hurd announcement before Parliament Feb. 8, the Yugoslav government suddenly submitted a list of "hundreds of war criminals" to the British government for investigation into actions in the Serbo-Croatian area during World War II. The Yugoslav dossier is being complemented by information provided to the British authorities by Sir Fitzroy Maclean, a high-level British intelligence operative with longstanding ties to the Russians.

At the same time, underground traders in "Nazi memorabilia" in Britain reportedly have possession of some of the 80,000 documents that, according to the *Berliner Morgenpost* of Feb. 14-15, were stolen from the Berlin Documentation Center in the American Occupation Zone, providing enormous potential for secret services' blackmail of political figures in the West.

Already, many prominent Britons are calling into question Hurd's decision to launch a big "Nazi hunt" in 1988-89.

Commenting on the decision, prominent British Jewish writer Barbara Amiel wrote in her *Times* of London column Feb. 16, "Recently, at a party, I met Zoltan Vas, who was a minister under the vicious Stalinist regime of Matyas Rakosi in Hungary during the 1950s. Vas now lives in the West as well. Does anyone care about his associations? I wonder if

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this single-minded concentration of moral fervor against old Nazis whom we defeated more than 40 years ago may not be in part a moral displacement activity."

Noting that British ministers will gladly meet with Soviet-linked murderers and terrorists at cocktail parties, while "investigating 80-year-old Latvians," she said, "It's like a dog who is mad at another dog or his master but doesn't dare attack either, and so goes angrily for a shoe."

'Messy, divisive, and dangerous'

On Feb. 14, *Sunday Telegraph* chief editor Peregrine Worsthorne, under the title, "Why there must be no show trials in Britain," warned that since there is no chance of "a fair trial" for Nazi war crimes, "one must devoutly hope that the Commission set up last week by the Home Secretary to consider changing British laws . . . will dismiss the idea out of hand."

Arguments against such "show trials," Worsthorne stressed, should not be "construed as an attempt to suggest that Nazi war crimes—at any rate those against the Jews—were not uniquely damnable; still less to suggest that they should now be allowed to fade from living memory. If there is a danger of this happening, it is indeed the duty of humanity to make sure that it does not." "But," he insisted, "agitating for the resignation of Dr. Waldheim, and putting octogenarian Latvians and Lithuanians on trial in Britain, will not have this desired effect; indeed could have exactly the opposite effect. . . . As for having war crimes trials in this country, let them be avoided at all costs. There could be no worse way of perpetuating the memory of Nazi iniquity than by making

this country a party to a protracted and profoundly alien judicial charade.”

On Feb. 3, the *Independent* had reported on the Kolesnikova visit under the heading, “A danger in tracking down Nazis.” Columnist Sarah Helm warned, “But the result of stepping up denazification might not be entirely positive. . . . In the U.S., there have been strong calls for the OSI to be disbanded. It has been accused of operating witch-hunts against East European emigré groups. It has also been accused of collaborating hypocritically with the Soviets, who have been only too willing to assist in the Nazi hunt. Reliance upon Soviet evidence has opened the Nazi-hunters in America to allegations of condoning KGB frameups. Ukrainian, Baltic, and other Soviet satellite emigré and refugee communities are also voicing concern in Canada and Australia about the way they are being tarred with the one Nazi brush. . . .

“In Australia, other serious questions about the denazification process have been raised as the country has moved towards changes in the law to allow prosecutions. Could Australians who took part in blanket Allied bombing raids in the Second World War be deemed guilty of war crimes, a columnist in the *Melbourne Age* newspaper recently asked. And could Jews who cooperated with Soviet puppet regimes which persecuted people opposed to communism in the mid-forties also be caught by the new laws? And what about Jews who themselves collaborated with Nazis?

“The debate in Australia, warns the columnist, Michael Bernard, is ‘shaping up to be messy, divisive, and dangerous.’ It is a warning perhaps to be borne in mind by British legislators.”

A small minority of British legislators have, indeed, mobilized against Hurd’s independent-inquiry announcement. Conservative MP Ivor Stanbrook, for example, charged during the Feb. 8 debate, “This is a bad decision, and one which is quite likely to lead to what others would call a witchhunt. British courts have never sought to try alleged crimes committed long ago, by foreigners in foreign countries. This has been for the very good reason that such evidence would be inadmissible by ordinary, normal standards, and therefore it is very wrong for the government to attempt to make such arrangements for a special class of accused people, who are alleged to have committed offenses a long, long time ago.” Conservative MPs Tom Sackville and Tony Marlow warned that Soviet evidence comes from a polluted source.

The *Daily Mail*’s parliament correspondent, Colin Welch, reporting Feb. 9, challenged Hurd’s contention that the Soviets were as keen on “justice” as anyone in the British Parliament: “The Soviet Union is keen, not perhaps on justice, but to discredit Poles, Ukrainians, and Balts who have fled from Soviet tyranny. Naturally, it would prefer them to be handed over to its own tender mercies. Short of that, in order to make trouble for its enemies, it is more likely to fabricate evidence than to withhold it.”

Colombian Church battles over drugs

by Valerie Rush

Colombia’s Catholic bishops convoked an extraordinary assembly starting Feb. 8, to respond to the crisis of authority afflicting their nation. Their official statement called on the Colombian republic to stand firm against the onslaught of narco-terrorism. This was immediately contradicted by at least two prominent bishops, who held a press conference to declare that “dialogue” with the drug mafia was the only means of avoiding total dissolution of the country.

One week later, Alfonso Cardinal López Trujillo answered the renegade bishops. In a Feb. 16 interview with the Caracas, Venezuela daily *El Nacional*, the Cardinal insisted, “The [Colombian] Church is committed to denunciation of this trade in death, which Pope John Paul II called vile, and the begetter of worse slaveries. Therefore, I think the dialogue of which the bishops spoke refers fundamentally to that between the confessor who demands conversion, and the penitent who recognizes his sin.”

Since last December’s “legal” escape from jail of cocaine kingpin Jorge Luis Ochoa, the institutions of government have been paralyzed with fear. The kidnap/blackmail of Bogotá mayoral candidate Andrés Pastrana and the murder of Attorney General Carlos Mauro Hoyos in January, both actions carried out on orders of Ochoa’s “Medellín Cartel,” were final warnings that anyone who tried to buck the mob could end up dead.

The bishops’ conference’s official statement therefore carried special weight when it appealed to the Colombian population to battle immorality, “one of whose most serious manifestations is the drug trade,” and to “resort to those deep spiritual reserves that God has given us to oppose courage to the intimidation of force that seeks to tear down our capacity to resist.”

However, there some are in the midst of the Church—like the “theologians of liberation”—who gather weapons instead of souls. And then there are those, like Bishop of Pereira and president of the Latin American Bishops’ Council Darío Castrillón, who gather blood-money. Monsignor Castrillón caused a scandal a few years back when he publicly admitted to having accepted donations from cocaine czar Carlos Lehder, who now faces multiple drug-trafficking charges in a Jacksonville, Florida courtroom. Castrillón ar-