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MORE ABOUT PROFESSOR JONAS KAZLAUSKAS

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I had my first contact with Prof. Jonas Kazlauskas in the sixties when I received a kind letter from him asking that I send an article for the newly founded Baltic linguistics periodical *Baltistica*. I submitted an article which was later published and from that time to this day I have frequently published articles in *Baltistica* which is undoubtedly the leading journal in the field of Baltic linguistics.

I met Prof. Kazlauskas personally on my first visit to Lithuania in 1968. I had already read much of his linguistic work and was prepared to meet a man of high intelligence and originality. At that time I asked him if he would be interested in coming to Penn State and giving an introductory course in Lithuanian linguistics for our students. These were in the days when contact between the Soviet Union and the United States were not as well developed as they are now under the regimes of 'glasnost' and 'perestroika.' Somehow I still remember Kazlauskas' exact words when I asked him about coming once more prior to my departure from Lithuania in September of 1968. He said: 'Pasisengsiu (I shall try).' Our correspondence continued and I arranged an invitation from the vice-president of Penn State, at that time a gentleman by the name of Prof. Paul Althouse. We had arranged for a one-term visit for the spring of 1970.

Having received no information as to whether Prof. Kazlauskas was coming on January 26 of 1970, I sent the following letter (in Russian) to V.P. Elyutin, Minister of Higher and Intermediate Special Education of the USSR: 'The Department of Slavic Languages of the Pennsylvania State University would like to invite Prof. Jonas Kazlauskas, the dean of the humanities faculty of the University of Vilnius as a distinguished visiting professor for the period of 20 March through 11 June of 1970. We should like Prof. Kazlauskas to give lectures on two subjects: The Structure of the Lithuanian Language and The Theory and Methods of Slavic Linguistics. Prof. Kazlauskas' salary for this period would be 5,000 U.S. dollars. We hope that you, on your part, will not object to the visit of Prof. Kazlauskas to Penn State University. We inform you also that in January of this year we have sent similar invitations personally to Prof. Kazlauskas, to the rector of the University of Vilnius, Prof. J. Kubilius, and to the minister of culture of the Lithuanian SSR.' The only communication which we received in answer was a letter addressed to Prof. Paul Althouse of our university and dated 10 March 1970:

'Dear Prof. Althouse, Because of Prof. Jones Kozlauskas' (sic) academic duties at the University of Vilnius, he will not be able to go in the near future to Pennsylvania State University to give lectures for a course on the Lithuanian language. Respectfully, L. Bazanov, Head of the Administration of Foreign Relations of the Ministry of Higher and Intermediate Special Education of the U.S.S.R.' (One notes that he couldn't even spell Prof. Jonas Kazlauskas' name correctly.) Needless to say, Prof. Kazlauskas did not come.

On the other hand I was invited to the Second All-Union Congress on Baltic Linguistics to be held at the University of Vilnius in June of 1970. Naturally I wanted to take advantage of this opportunity so I went to Vilnius then. Prof. Kazlauskas came alone to meet me at the Vilnius airport. After going through the customary formalities we were standing at the street-car stop to wait for a street-car and Prof. Kazlauskas began to apologize to me for not coming to Penn State. I told him that I knew that he couldn't come because of the letter from Bazanov, a copy of which I had brought with me. I showed him the copy of the letter and he told me that he was learning about this letter for the first time. Furthermore he asked me if he could keep the copy as a 'souvenir.' I gladly let him keep the copy since we had other copies in the files of the Department of Slavic Languages at Penn State. The conference went off beautifully and I benefited greatly from it, because I was able to meet personally many of the important linguists in the field of Baltic studies and I was able to attend their lectures. I returned to the United States and to my duties and thought no more about the matter until a friend of mine called my attention to Prof. Kazlauskas' obituary in *Literatūra ir menas*. This explains somewhat my involvement in the affair. One

hopes that the article by Zaikauskas translated below and one later article by B. Savukynas which appeared later in *Literatūra ir menas* might evoke an investigation.

The following is an English translation of an article by Vitalijus Zaikauskas that appeared in a recent issue of the Lithuanian newspaper Atgimimas (Nr. 28 [90], 1990 July 18-25)

The Riddle of Prof. J. Kazlauskas' Death

By Vitalijus Zaikauskas

Twenty years ago, in October of 1970, rumors went about Vilnius that Jonas Kazlauskas, a Vilnius university professor and one of the founders of the journal *Baltistica* had disappeared under mysterious circumstances. It was whispered about that 'An extraordinary Lithuanian citizen and person had become an ordinary victim of the KGB.'

Jonas Kazlauskas was born in the Prienai region in Matiešionys on the first of August, 1930, the oldest son in the family. He attended the Dzingeliškiai elementary school, the Nemajūnai seven-year school and the Prienai gymnasium (high school).

In the Prienai middle school Jonas was the best student of mathematics and Lithuanian studies. He was glad to help others. He made friends with Justinas Marcinkevičius who came from the opposite end of Prienai.

"If I just start to think about Jonas," remembers Justinas Marcinkevičius (probably the most famous contemporary Lithuanian playwright—WRS), "Immediately I hear:

'Who will cover my bed,
Who will comfort the tired one . . . "(From a Lithuanian folk song—WRS).

It turned out well: Here was a man who perhaps could best be characterized by the word 'reliability.' If he said something, then you knew that it was so; if he did something, then he did it confident that it must be done thus. When you were with him you felt more certainty yourself. He was bolder. It was just as if you knew more. Or wanted to know more. (It is strange, but the first thing that I remember is Jonas' way of walking. He walked firmly and with confidence. A man who knows what he is doing walks this way. And he goes somewhere to say that he knows. I had forgotten it, but now I remember how he went up to the rostrum to answer his examiners when he defended his doctoral dissertation in the university hall of columns. I remembered how I had tried to imitate him and how I had failed.)

Not the slightest pomposity nor conceit. A profound feeling of justice and human worth kept him from putting himself above others and from deprecating others. The unwritten laws of human morality and ethics seemed to dictate the benevolent, open, just, and somewhat severe way of life and behavior. I remember how, as a university professor, he was amazed and angered by careerism, envy, lack of consideration of means, as they say, climbing over others' heads.

His view of himself and the world was serious and meaningful. It seems that the corner stone of his ethics might be duty which was understood and conscientiously fulfilled. For human beings, science and his people.

And work. What a hunger and thirst drove him. It was as though he knew that only forty years were allotted to him.

"... I shall not return, mother,
By the path through the garden ..."

He entered the University of Vilnius and he was graduated in 1954. He was appointed assistant dean of the History and Philology Faculty and in 1968 the 38-year-old doctor of science Jonas Kazlauskas became the dean of the Philology Faculty.

At that time at least one security officer was assigned to each faculty of the upper-level schools. When he undertook the duties of dean, the doctor (Kazlauskas) also took on a security officer. One day a young fellow, probably less than 30-years-old, presented himself. Up to the spring of 1970 they got along together quite well. In 1970 Professor Kazlauskas was invited by his colleague W. Schmalstieg to give a course in Baltic linguistics at Penn State University. The relationships between Jonas Kazlauskas and J(eftejevas?) changed. J. began to 'educate' Professor Kazlauskas in the light of the social, political and personal life of the emigre community. As the day of departure approached Jonas Kazlauskas gave up the dean's duties. It was no longer 'convenient' to meet with J. in the faculty offices. They exchanged telephone numbers and J., wishing to continue the course of instruction began to telephone home (i.e., to Kazlauskas' apartment). He gave his telephone number also. Professor Kazlauskas wrote it down in his small notebook which he

always carried in his coat pocket. Professor Kazlauskas called this telephone number 'secret.' The deceased person's widow, Mrs. Kazlauskas, understood who he was telephoning.

Before leaving the 'instructor' suddenly warned, that the trip either would not take place, or else would be delayed. Just a few days before the planned departure date Professor Kazlauskas learned that the political situation at Penn State University was 'unfavorable,' and that in general the political climate was 'rather bad,' therefore the trip would not take place.

On the 16-18 of June of 1970 the 2nd ALL-Union Conference on Baltic Linguistics took place at the University of Vilnius. In addition to Soviet scholars there were guests from the United States, the German Federal Republic and the German Democratic Republic. (Actually there were three, viz., Wolfgang Paul Schmid from the University of Gottingen, Rainer Eckert, then from Leipzig, and William R. Schmalstieg from Penn State—WRS.) One of these brought a copy of a document received from the ministry of higher education with the information that because of his heavy duties Jonas Kazlauskas could not go abroad. But Professor Kazlauskas himself learned of this document for the first time then. (A copy of this letter remains in the files of the Department of Slavic Languages at Penn State—WRS.)

After this conference Kazlauskas took a vacation and J.'s 'guardianship' was interrupted. He (Kazlauskas) vacationed at Nida with his family. In August he went to a small and out-of-the-way Latvian village to improve his knowledge of the Latvian language. From the 17th to the 24th of August he attended the 3rd International Congress of Finno-Ugricists in Tallinn and then he returned to Vilnius.

At the end of August the 'guardian' again telephoned. Mrs. Kazlauskas answered. The familiar voice asked for Professor Kazlauskas. The latter explained that he couldn't meet now, because he was preparing to spend some more time in the village. J. promised to telephone later. And he telephoned at the end of September.

"Where can we meet?"

"Come to my apartment."

"The first of October at 1:00 p.m."

On the first of October at about 12:30 the phone rang. J. refused to meet Prof. Kazlauskas at the apartment because he thought that Prof. Kazlauskas' wife would be in the way. He suggested that Prof. Kazlauskas come to the house of political education on Z. Angarietis street.

Soon they met — Prof. Kazlauskas lived on the other side of Lenin Square. They talked about this and that. J. announced that Prof. Kazlauskas nevertheless would be able to go to the United States. Prof. Kazlauskas was surprised: How could he go if he no longer had an invitation?

"No matter. You will go!"

After this meeting J. Kazlauskas told his wife that at the end of the conversation J. asked for three things. First of all, if he noticed any changes in the letters of a certain professor (presumably W. Schmalstieg — WRS he should tell him, J. "But all of the correspondence is checked, I get the letters already torn open — what more can I add — you yourselves know everything."

His interlocutor (J.) was insulted: "The Constitution (of the U.S.S.R. — WRS) does not allow that. We do nothing of the kind." And he continued further, "In the second place, write a description of everything that we have talked about here today." Professor Kazlauskas refused to do that. The security officer became enraged and he didn't even mention the third request, although he allowed a week for consideration and on the following Thursday Prof. Kazlauskas was to answer whether he would write the description or not.

With the completion of the writing of the first 'composition' more would be asked for. The KGB wants to make me its agent, thought Prof. Kazlauskas. He refused. Let them find some more reliable people.

On the 8th of October after breakfast, having read the morning newspapers about 9:30 in the morning he got dressed, approached the telephone prior to leaving. But hesitating, he put off the conversation — he would call after lunch. He went to the card catalogue of the library of the Academy of Sciences. Having worked there a little bit he went to the library of the Academy of Sciences. Here he ordered some books but he decided to take them the following day, since he would have had to wait a few hours. He went home by Lenin (now Gediminas) Prospect. At about 12:30 a certain woman medical doctor (the name is known—V.Z.) saw him across from Cherniakhovsky Square. But his family waited in vain for him to come home to lunch at 1:00 p.m. They waited in vain also at the meeting of the editorial board of the journal *Baltistica* which began at 3:00 p.m. The departmental assistant, Vida called home, to the Institute of Lithuanian Language and to the library: "He was here, but before lunch."

Thus Professor Kazlauskas disappeared.

Rumors went around in Vilnius that he was held in the basement of the KGB. Aldona Kazlauskas tried to get through to the then head of the Lithuanian republic KGB, J. Petkevičius.

In the morning about 10 minutes after 9:00 Mrs. Kazlauskas went to the KBG and addressed herself to the watchman. The latter asked her to wait a little bit. After a few minutes: "Comrade Petkevičius will receive you." Near the office door stood a heavy-set man, who introduced himself: "Colonel Česnavičius." (Well known to N. Sadūnaitė, A. Terleckas, V. Bogušis and others).

"Not comrade Petkevičius?"

"No, he is now at the Central Committee."

Aldona Kazlauskas became upset.

"Petkevičius authorized me to receive you," explained Julius Česnavičius. When could he authorize, if he hadn't noted down the appointment the preceding day? But this was not explained and she only asked permission to publish in the press about Prof. Kazlauskas' disappearance. The public prosecutor's office did not give it: "Only the security forces."

"We will discuss it," said Colonel J. Česnavičius on taking leave of her.

And after about a half an hour the phone rang: "We have discussed it here—the Evening News will publish an announcement."

The search by newspaper and TV (it was announced late in the evening at the end of programming) gave no results.

Two days after Prof. Kazlauskas' disappearance in the house of certain respected Vilnius citizens the following conversation took place (the names are known—V.Z.) "Somebody saw Jonas Kazlauskas riding in a new 'Volga' car."

Three weeks passed.

On the 16th of November Aldona Kazlauskas spoke with the rector (president) of the University of Vilnius, J. Kubilius. The latter telephoned the head of the KGB, J. Petkevičius. Petkevičius promised to receive Aldona Kazlauskas after a few days, on Wednesday. The day before the meeting, on the 17th of November around lunch time Prof. Kazlauskas' body was discovered in the river Neris, not far from the Žvėrynas bridge.

Suicide? An accident? Perhaps. But then why didn't they want to allow Prof. Kazlauskas to be buried in the Antakalnis Cemetery? (He rests in the Saulė cemetery.)

"I no longer remember why, but I could not wait until the end of the burial ceremony, I left the cemetery earlier," said one witness (the name is known — V.Z.). I was amazed at seeing that the cemetery was surrounded from the outside by a number of policemen and officers in civilian clothing."

The public prosecutor of the Lenin region of the city of Vilnius began an investigation. After some time the case was turned over to the Republic public prosecutor's office, the investigator, J. Dėdinas.

Interrogations revealed nothing. The forensic examination was performed. As far as the experts who investigated this case remember there were no signs of violence. But after many years the forensic medical conclusions about Romas Kalanta's (a famous Lithuanian dissident — WRS) death were revised.

Professor J.V. said: "On the 8th of October, before lunch, I was hurrying from Gediminas Square towards the Conservatory. Near a small square between the Security and the Conservatory I met Prof. Jonas Kazlauskas coming towards me. A young man of about 28-30 (Aldona Kazlauskas described J. just that way) was going with him. We greeted each other. I wanted to talk to him, but I saw that he was very intent on something ..."

To the question put by the editorial staff of *Atgimimas* to the Republic public prosecutor's office the answer was given: "We state that on the 30th of June 1987 the discontinued criminal case concerning Prof. Jonas Kazlauskas' death at the expiration of the storage time was destroyed. Government public prosecutor of investigation, legal counselor, J. Dėdinas." (90 03 12 Nr. 16r). It was done carefully just as the instructions for the retention of archives require!

We addressed ourselves to the KGB. We received a document (1990 07 03 S-1636): "...we state that the KGB did not investigate the circumstances of the death of Professor Jonas Kazlauskas. We suggest that you address yourselves to the Republic public prosecutor's office. Chief of the KGB secretariat S. Jakštas."

Is there any hope of learning the truth? A myriad of questions, suspicions. Did the Republic prosecutor's office do everything? Is the conclusion of the forensic investigation objective? What happened to Prof. Kazlauskas' notebook with the 'secret' telephone number?

Can Security answer these questions? Why did the representatives of the Security act so strangely when they received Aldona Kazlauskas? What could the tall young man Jeftejevas say? The KGB did not answer this question: "We say nothing about our employees." According to my data, Jeftejevas still works in this organization. There are live witnesses. Finally, wouldn't it be interesting to hear the security officer Jeftejevas' version? Perhaps it would give the final answer to this tragic story.