



PERMANENT MISSION OF THE REPUBLIC OF LATVIA TO THE UN,
OSCE AND OTHER INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS IN VIENNA

**Statement by Ambassador Nils Jansons, Permanent
Representative of the Republic of Latvia, delivered in response to
the statement by the Russian Federation**

Permanent Council No 756,
Vienna, March 26, 2009

Madam Chairperson,

I explained exhaustively in our meeting last week the situation around the 16th of March, and how it was handled by the authorities, as well as the historical background, time and circumstances of formation of the Latvian Legion, as well as the view taken by the Nuremberg Tribunal on this unit. I have no intention to repeat that, but would like to refer colleagues back to my last week's statement.

But I would just like to recall that Latvia rejects any attempts to implicate the Latvian State in supporting or cultivating totalitarian or extremist ideologies, and we have called upon others to refrain from supporting extremists. Private remembrance of the war-dead does not mean cultivation of ideology. Those who do not remember the dead, rarely respect the living.

Madam Chairperson,

Totalitarian regimes have left deep scars in Latvia. Yesterday, on March 25th, people in Latvia paid tribute to those 45 000, including 10 000 children, who 60 years ago on 25 March, 1949, in the middle of night, were deported by the Soviet regime to Siberia with their families, and most of them never returned. This was another wave of mass deportations to the Soviet gulag, which began during the first Soviet occupation in 1941.

In the words of the President of the European Parliament Hans-Gert Pöttering „it is our moral obligation and a fundamental duty as Europeans, rooted in our common values, in honouring the memory of those many victims, to reiterate our strong and clear condemnation of those horrific crimes committed by the totalitarian communist regime in the Soviet Union. Moreover, the victims deserve nothing less than an objective, in-depth and thorough evaluation of the past, because there cannot be reconciliation without truth and remembrance."

History is a delicate matter. Evidently, considerable differences exist in understanding of it. We try to address this issue in our bilateral dialogue with Russia, where we have been discussing access to the archives. Opening of archives, facing the facts in an open discussion among historians should help move forward towards fewer controversies.

Thank you, Madam Chairperson.