



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

ENGLISH only

**Statement by Ambassador Gints Apals, Permanent Representative of
the Republic of Latvia, delivered in response to the statement by the
Delegation of the Russian Federation**

Permanent Council No.945,
Vienna, 21st March, 2013

Madam Chairperson,

Latvian delegation fully rejects the interpretations of the Russian delegation. Latvian Government has clearly and repeatedly stated that it condemns both totalitarian ideologies – Nazism and Communism that formed the ideological foundation of the crimes against humanity committed during World War II. Latvia categorically denounces the Holocaust, mourns its victims and remains strongly committed to education, remembrance and research of it.

The world during World War II was not as black and white as it is often portrayed. Repressions and terror forced many people to join military units on one or other side of the battle-front. Today it is important to separate the past from the present and counter the contemporary forms of extremism.

March 16 is not an official day of commemoration in Latvia. However, a number of former soldiers choose to pay their respects to their fallen comrades. Church services are held and people gather in cemeteries and lay flowers at the Monument to Freedom in Riga without any ideological pretext. No Nazi uniforms, symbols or slogans appear.

It is unfortunate that the events of March 16 have generated political controversy, protests and international media attention. In recent years some radical groups have tried to hijack or disrupt the peaceful commemoration events to call attention to their cause, sometimes deliberately misrepresenting historical facts.

Any accusation of glorification of Nazism in Latvia is totally baseless. Latvia is a democratic country and its Constitution ensures all fundamental human rights and freedoms, including the freedom of assembly. This, however, should be done in compliance with the existing legislation and must not present a threat to public order.

Thank you very much.