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## World News

# Has Latvia turned a corner?

Source:DefendingHistory.com | Wednesday, 12 March 2014

**By Monica Lowenberg Defendinghistory.com**

Since 1998 on the 16 March and every year, in the very centre of Riga, Latvia, marches have been regularly held to praise the 'heroism' of the former Latvian Legion, i.e. Waffen SS veterans in their combat against the allies during the Second World War.

Each year these events have received tacit (and sometimes very explicit and public) support from state authorities, in 2012 by Latvian president Andris Berzins himself who stated we should 'bow

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*our heads' down to the SS.*

The march has even been condoned by senior British Tories in alliance with the Latvian MEP Robert Zile who is connected with the 'Fatherland and Freedom party' / LNNK, LNNK being a party that actively supports the marches.

Over the years the marches have been attended in increasing numbers by deputies of the Latvian Parliament, members of the Riga City Council and officials of the Ministry of Defence but perhaps not this year.

At the beginning of February, the Latvian Environmental Protection and Regional Development Minister Einars Cilninskis (VL-TB/LNNK) announced that he would be attending the march.

This despite the ongoing tensions in Ukraine and belief that this year's march could possibly be a powder keg situation ready to erupt; provoking ethnic Russians living in Riga and attracting high profile anti-fascist protesters such as the eminent historians Dr Hans Coppi from Germany and the Nazi hunter Dr Efraim Zuroff from Israel.

On 7 March, Riga announced the march was to take place. Clearly, the Russian mayor who always allows the wreath to the victims of Nazism be placed at the Monument of Freedom and who last year, was told by the high court that the march must take place and that he must apologise for all the years he had banned it, now has felt forced to allow it. However, the Latvian government suddenly voted on the 11 March 2014 to forbid government ministers from attending the march.

This is certainly a step in the right direction and the parliamentarians who have made this decision are to be commended.

Yet, the question remains, why have a march that glorifies the SS in the centre of an EU capital, the current European capital for culture, in the first place?

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