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Latvian state dance troupe displays Nazi swastika - Exclusive !

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By Graeme Atkinson (Hnh) and Monica Lowenberg, defendinghistory.com

A dance ensemble of the Latvian armed forces displayed a Nazi swastika, composed of Latvian national flags, on 17 November, before an ice hockey match at the Riga Arena between Dinamo Riga and Jugra from Khanty-Mansiysk in western Siberia in the Continental Hockey League.

This unsavoury performance was designed to celebrate the 95th anniversary of the Republic of Latvia celebration. In recent years, there has been an ongoing worldwide struggle, backed by state and sports authorities, NGOs and sports fan clubs to expunge nazi and fascist symbols and racist and fascist behaviour from stadia.

In this particular case in Riga, however, the swastika – a symbol of mass murder – was shown not by the fans or by the participants but by the host of the event and by a State Dancing Group, an act without postwar precedent and an insult to the guest team from Russia, twenty million of whose citizens were killed as a result of Nazi aggression and terror.

At a time when right-wing extremists and fascists are emerging to challenge society and to foster hatreds and social disorder in Europe, the flaunting of the swastika in Riga denigrates the memory of all those who valiantly defended the world from the Nazi hordes during the Second World War, sacrificing their lives in millions for the sake of future generations.

Events, like annual marches of Waffen SS veterans – tacitly supported by the Latvian state – and the

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dedication of monuments to collaborationists from Nazi SS units and Hitler’s auxiliary police, which strongly suggest a slow but determined rehabilitation of Nazism in Latvia are not new. The Riga Arena spectacle is just the latest.

Incredibly, Riga will be European Capital for Culture next year from January 2014. We cannot help but wonder if the swastika will decorate venues?

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