



## Latvijas Republikas Valsts prezidenta kanceleja Prezidenta preses dienests

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### **Address of the State President at the International meeting of the Committee of Historians**

Mr Chairman,

Respected Members of the Committee,

I would like to meet you once again in this Castle of Riga for your meeting which I am sure will be as fruitful and as important as all the ones you have had before.

I think the importance of the past years and the work accomplished by this Commission lies in tackling very difficult and painful questions, which simply had not received the attention they need and deserve under the very totalitarian regimes under which they were committed. History cannot be written under tyranny in any meaningful way. Every totalitarian regime distorts history and prevents an objective gathering of information, prevents an objective interpretation of facts.

History is never totally objective, there is always a point of view, there is always the question of interpretation, there is a question of debate. This is why it is a serious profession, it needs a long training and I think it needs international collaboration so that viewpoints can be confronted, compared and data evaluated from a variety of points of view. This is what this Commission has been doing by asking for the input of people from different countries with different experiences, both personal and professional.

I think this Commission is a unique institution. I am truly as President personally grateful to you for your investment because it has been of tremendous benefit to the country as a whole in terms of being able to come to grips and to terms with this past that has damaged and destroyed so many lives on our soil. The work you do is an investment into a future that should be different from what we have had before. I think that is its fundamental importance. And in that sense the investment in the future must start with education. But education can only happen on the basis of proper scientific and scholarly evidence.

I think there is still an awful lot to be done in documenting what has happened in Latvia under these occupation regimes and I think there is an awful lot to be done in interpreting what happened and how. We have, for instance, the question of the Soviet occupation and how it is interpreted. We still have people who came to Latvia under the red banner of the Soviet Union with a full conviction that they were fighting for their country and against fascism. But a fact remains that under that banner and in their fight against fascism they invaded a neutral independent country and destroyed its institutions and its independence. This has to be acknowledged and has not been acknowledged so far publicly.

There is still a lot to be done, I think, in simple facts of history and their acceptance and their interpretation in the widest possible circles. A lot has been done on the Holocaust and I am very grateful for the accomplishments of this committee and all the scholars involved in it, all the teachers of history, all the governmental and non-governmental institutions who have helped and contributed to this extremely important work to this extremely important work of both research and education and education of the wide republic. But a lot remains to be done both in the study of the Holocaust and in the study of the crimes committed under communism so that my hope is that this Commission can

continue working for still some years because the harm done has been immense, the decades lost have been very long and the work to be accomplished is enormous. So thank you for your work, thank you for your courage, thank you for your commitment to the cause of history, the history that is as just and as fair and as objective as it is humanly possible to make it. We need such a history in Latvia and we need your help and your input. And I as President am extremely grateful for everything that you do and I am sure the country, the country as a whole will remember your work forever in history because your contribution to will become part of our history and in a very positive way for a change through it of something in our history that will be extremely positive.