

**Workshop “Towards a Strategy for Reconciliation in the OSCE Area”
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Remarks for Debates, Panel 3
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I also hope for successful work of the bilateral Latvian – Russian Joint Historians' Commission which was mentioned previously today.

It must be taken into account that during the 20th century, Latvia as well as many other Central and East European countries have suffered from two totalitarian regimes – both Nazism and Communism, which brought many sufferings to the peoples.

We cannot accept the position that the victory over Nazism is used for the purposes of justifying the crimes of Soviet totalitarian regime. The victory over Nazism also brought a second Soviet occupation in the Baltic States.

For historical reconciliation to take place, there must be willingness on both sides, and it should be an ongoing process. Reconciliation is not possible without difficult and complicated process of measures: recognition of the very facts of crimes, their investigation and evaluation and, finally, repentance for them.

Since the end of the Second World War, and especially since the 1990s, the more or less successful historical reconciliation processes in the world have been dealing with war crimes and crimes of totalitarian regimes and other crimes against humanity consisted of the following necessary procedures: investigation and prosecution, followed by the offender adjudication and punishment of perpetrators, and admission of guilt. After going public in crimes repentance, it is taken to the public “recovery”, but at the national level a political dialogue is initiated on issues of history and, possibly, compensations.

Mostly for the interests of next generations, the politicians and experts from mostly ex-Communist countries have started to speak on the political and legal responsibility for the crimes of Communism only during the last 20 years. Therefore, it is still a situation that many of the victims of Communism (a large part of them – until the end of their lives) have not benefited at least some satisfaction, or at least admission of guilt and regret. It is necessary to provide victims, who are alive, with the opportunity to have their voices heard and to obtain some form of reparation for their sufferings. Also, many of the alleged crimes participants are dead and they can no longer be prosecuted. Societies are still faced with the cases of totalitarian Communist crimes acquittal, even praising. Some media promotes reconciliation, while others reproduce myths glorifying crimes of Communist totalitarian regime. The consequences of it are still not overcome, many of Communist crimes are not recognized in some ex-Communist countries, the perpetrators have not been identified, the victims have not received even a moral satisfaction, their memory is often marginalized.

If the crimes of totalitarian regimes are not understood and repent, then in the society some feelings of impunity remain, and there can be no assurance that such crimes would not occur again in the future. Historical reconciliation process must be guided by the principle “There can be no reconciliation without justice”.

It is important to emphasize that during the processes of historical reconciliation among the peoples of different countries establishing the facts of history and a common assessment is essential. It is therefore important that historical archives are available to enable historians to find out the tragic facts of history. Openness of archives is an important precondition for historical reconciliation. It is unacceptable situation in which a history of some countries is being written by politically engaged historians, who have access to restricted documents, “pulling out of context” certain documents, but other researchers may not be acquainted with these historical sources. There must be no cases in which separate documents are being “dragged out” from the closed archives and are being used for propaganda and informative confrontation purposes. History should be left to historians.

Cause of the fact that there is no reconciliation in some cases in ex-Communist countries, is not so far because of the lack of desire, but because of the differences of proposed values and the fact that there have been expressed half-truths. For example – if it is underlined and highlighted only one totalitarian regime's fault and the other totalitarian regime is not condemned, such approach automatically creates a public confrontation in society as to the evaluation of the legacy of the other totalitarian regime. The condemnation of two totalitarian regimes – not only Nazism, but also Communism – is necessary.

Political will is not the only determining factor for successful reconciliation process. Both politicians and international organizations cannot reconcile the victims with the criminals. It is vitally necessary to research the experience of the victims, to identify and condemn Communist crimes. It is not acceptable to relativize Communist atrocities, referring to the Nazi crimes. The conclusion is that: “Reconciliation cannot be achieved through denial or relativization of past crimes”.

Mass media can play not a minor role in the process of historical reconciliation.

The historical reconciliation is possible only on the truth and the two totalitarian regimes condemnation basis. In this case, it would be a strong basis for stable international relations in the future.