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Extract of the Meeting of the World Coordinating Council of Russian Compatriots, Answers to media questions:

The situation involving a monument to Waffen SS' Latvian Legion soldiers in Flanders

We have noted a Belgian public discussion concerning a monument to Waffen SS' Latvian Legion soldiers, unveiled in 2018 in the Zedelgem Municipality, West Flanders.

I would just like to remind you that, for more than two years now, despite the repeated protests coming from Belgian citizens and public organizations, including veterans' associations, a monument to Waffen SS' Latvian Legion soldiers who were incarcerated in a local POW camp in 1945 and 1946 is still standing in the Zedelgem Municipality, in West Flanders. The monument was erected by the Zedelgem municipal authorities in cooperation with Latvia's Occupation Museum. Today, the public continues to focus their attention on this scandalous fact of glorifying Nazi accomplices, and members of the Flemish Parliament will have to decide on the monument's future. Calls for immediately dismantling this man-hating structure are absolutely justified.

At the same time, some people claim that the monument perpetuates the Baltic nation's striving for independence and democracy and has nothing to do with the glorification of Nazism. This is fraught with dire consequences. Some European states tend to revise the works of Adolf Hitler, but then there is also the decision of the Nuremberg International Military Tribunal to take into consideration.

We condemn any forms of glorifying Nazi accomplices and all kinds of collaborationists, whitewashing and defending former Waffen SS members who are blasphemously elevated to the rank of members of the national liberation movement. We should not forget the true nature of Waffen SS' Latvian Legion soldiers: They were direct accomplices of Nazi war criminals, who swore their allegiance to the Nazi regime that had perpetrated the greatest genocide in history. The authorities of Belgium's Zedelgem Municipality could not have been ignorant about the real nature of Waffen SS' Latvian Legion activities, and they clumsily explain this by a desire to merely praise universal freedom, without allegedly singling out any group or POWs. This logic is monstrous.

Riga promotes different concepts. The website of the Occupation Museum, Zedelgem's partner in unveiling the monument, notes directly that this freedom monument is dedicated to members of the Latvian Legion. Consequently, this is a monument to collaborationists who once who once served with Axis and Nazi forces, and it does not symbolize any abstract freedom.

We hope that the local Belgian authorities will make a historically correct and justified decision with regard to WWII victims that would respect the memory of millions of those killed during the war.