

ORAL QUESTION H-0711/03
for Question Time at the part-session in November 2003
pursuant to Rule 43 of the Rules of Procedure
by Efstratios Korakas
to the Commission

Subject: Violation of social and civil rights in Latvia and Estonia

Latvia and Estonia, where 45% and 35% respectively of the population are Russian-speakers, are in flagrant violation of fundamental human rights. For example, Russian-speakers do not have the right to acquire citizenship of the country in which they and their forefathers were born or in which they have lived for decades, even though all of them wish to do so. These people are also deprived of the right to take part in the political affairs of their country. The means and the pretext used to deprive them of that right are humiliating and exceptionally difficult specialised examinations in knowledge of the language, the constitution and history as interpreted by the powers that be. Communist parties are banned in the Baltic States and party activists are prosecuted on trumped-up charges. The leaders of the Lithuanian Communist Party, Mykolas Burokevicius and Juozas Kuolelis, have spent the last ten years in prison on the basis of such charges and a law which was passed long after they were arrested. In Estonia, it is prohibited to stand as a coalition candidate in elections (including the European elections) and to form a party a list of 1000 names must be submitted.

Does the Commission take the view that this state of affairs is consistent with the declarations concerning respect for social and civil rights, regardless of the personal opinion of Mr Verheugen, and, if not, how will it respond?

Tabled: 06.11.2003
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