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**STATEMENT BY MR. ALEXANDER LUKASHEVICH,  
PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION,  
AT THE 1273rd MEETING OF THE OSCE PERMANENT COUNCIL**

2 July 2020

**On manifestations of neo-Nazism in the Czech Republic**

Mr. Chairperson,

We are obliged once again to draw attention to the situation in the Czech Republic, where in recent years there has been a rise in the number of instances of manifestation of neo-Nazism, and a tendency has emerged towards belittling the Red Army's role as a liberating force while glorifying accomplices of the Nazis, specifically the "Vlasovites".

One of the first steps in this direction was taken in Prague in 2017, when renovation works were used as a pretext to remove the memorial plaque on the Old Town Hall commemorating the city's liberation from its Nazi occupiers by troops from the First Ukrainian Front. In August 2019, there was an official announcement about the municipal authorities' decision not to keep that plaque on the Town Hall building.

A campaign then ensued to blacken the reputation of Ivan Konev, Marshal of the Soviet Union, who was twice honoured with the title of Hero of the USSR and under whose command Prague was liberated from Nazi rule. The monument to Marshal Konev, which had been defiled on several occasions (notably in April and December 2019), was dismantled on 3 April this year. The moment for this unlawful action was chosen deliberately. The mayor of Prague's sixth district, Ondřej Kolář, cynically exploited the restrictions introduced to combat the coronavirus pandemic for the purpose of taking a decision on the monument. This, as we must stress, was done in violation of the relevant agreement between the Russian Federation and the Czech Republic. As for that same official's recent statement claiming that Russia was to blame for the dismantling of the monument, that simply does not stand up to criticism.

Here are a few more recent examples of unlawful actions concerning memorials. In March 2019, the monument to Soviet soldiers near Prague Castle was damaged for a sixth time. In the early hours of 2 April 2019, the headstones on the graves of Soviet soldiers in the central graveyard of the Olšany Cemeteries were desecrated.

That being said, the geographical scope of this vandalism is by no means restricted to the capital. For instance, on 23 October 2019, paint was poured over a memorial that had been erected in the city of Ostrava in 1946. A memorial to 328 fallen Red Army soldiers in the city of Brno was subjected to similar treatment on 24 October 2019. The National and Social Front, one of the most active organizations in the

Czech neo-Nazi movement, claimed responsibility for both these actions. Communications to that effect were posted on its Facebook page.

Moreover, on the initiative of the National and Social Front, a neo-Nazi march was – not for the first time – held in Brno on May Day, with the police providing an escort.

It is noteworthy that, while monuments to Red Army soldiers in the Czech Republic are suffering acts of vandalism, a tolerant attitude towards manifestations of neo-Nazism in that country has been displayed in a number of cases and attempts are being made to whitewash Third Reich troops and Nazi collaborators.

In October 2011, a history society restored a monument in the village of Kořenov (Liberec region) to Czechs who had fought in the ranks of the Wehrmacht and the Waffen SS. In response to the local community's criticism of the memorial, the authorities made promises about setting up "panels with explanatory text", but this has yet to be put into effect.

An initiative to glorify the Nazis' accomplices was launched by the mayor of Prague's Řeporyje district, Pavel Novotný, who has proposed erecting a monument to soldiers who fought alongside the Russian Liberation Army, a collaborationist formation commanded by General Andrey Vlasov.

By the start of May, a memorial plaque had already been installed at the designated site of the future monument; it explains that "300 soldiers of the Russian Liberation Army were killed fighting for the liberation of Prague". Mr. Novotný described the adoption of this decision as pertaining to the "internal affairs of a sovereign district", but he is deliberately forgetting that, according to the Charter of the International Military Tribunal established at Nuremberg, the actions of the "Vlasovites" count as participation and complicity in Nazi war crimes and crimes against humanity.

It is also alarming that the sale of items displaying Nazi symbols is not a criminal offence in the Czech Republic as long as it is conducted solely for profit. Under this pretext, the Czech publishing house "Naše Wojsko" ("Our Army") recently brought out a calendar for 2021 featuring various high-ranking Nazis. We would remind you that this publishing house already made quite a splash two years ago with its plans to sell souvenir items graced by the portraits of Nazi grandees. An earlier attempt to issue a new edition of Adolf Hitler's *Mein Kampf* likewise ended in a scandal for the Czech Republic.

Another local publisher, Guidemedia, is involved in republishing writings from the Third Reich era, including anti-Semitic writings – for example, *Der Giftpilz (The Toadstool)*, a book from the publishing house "Der Stürmer", and *Mírové dílo Adolfa Hitlera (Adolf Hitler's Work for Peace)*, both of which contain openly anti-Semitic propaganda.

We once again stress that any form of glorification of the Nazi movement and of former members of the Waffen SS is unacceptable – this includes the erection of monuments to such figures and the organization of public demonstrations. The aforementioned actions cannot be justified by referring to gaps in the existing legislation or by invoking the allegedly absolute nature of certain rights and freedoms. It is essential to avert incitement to discrimination, hostility or violence: indeed, such incitement should be prohibited by law. We would remind you that the lack of an effective response to such practices is incompatible with the obligations of United Nations Member States under the Charter of the United Nations, not to mention the corresponding OSCE commitments.

Manifestations of hatred in the Czech Republic have also been registered by the relevant human rights bodies of the United Nations, including the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination.

Thus, in August 2019, in its concluding observations on the combined 12th and 13th periodic reports of the Czech Republic under the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination, the Committee expressed its concern about “[t]he dissemination among the general population, principally through the Internet and social media, of racist hate speech, prejudices and stereotypes directed towards minority groups, in particular asylum seekers, refugees, Roma and Jews”.

Moreover, the Committee drew attention to “[t]he use of racist hate speech, anti-migrant and anti-Roma rhetoric by politicians and public figures, including members of the parliament, mayors and members of the Government”. It further raised concerns about “[t]he role of the media in the propagation of racist stereotypes and prejudices regarding minority groups and a fear of migrants”. The observations just quoted confirm that the situation in this OSCE participating State is becoming worse.

The lack of a proper response by the Czech authorities to manifestations of neo-Nazism and aggressive nationalism also does not tally with the commitments they have undertaken within the framework of our Organization.

For example, in accordance with OSCE Ministerial Council Decision No. 10/07 on tolerance and non-discrimination: promoting mutual respect and understanding, States should “strongly [...] reject and condemn manifestations of racism, xenophobia, anti-Semitism, discrimination and intolerance, including against Christians, Jews, Muslims and members of other religions, as well as violent manifestations of extremism associated with aggressive nationalism and neo-Nazism, while continuing to respect freedom of expression”.

We call on the Czech authorities to honour their international obligations, including those related to combating racism and neo-Nazism. We are no longer surprised at the fact that the European Union’s leadership is keeping silent about such violations, as it is also doing in the case of several other European Union Member States. We urge the OSCE and its specialist bodies to give a principled assessment of what is going on in the Czech Republic.

Thank you for your attention.