

**Statement by the Permanent Representative of the Republic of Lithuania
Ambassador Renatas Norkus
at the session of the OSCE Permanent Council on 27 May 2010
(in response to the statement by the Permanent Representative of the Russian Federation)**

Mr. Chairperson,

On February 16, 2010 on the occasion of National Day festivities a public manifestation took place in the Lithuanian town of Klaipėda. The event was also attended by a group of history enthusiasts carrying historic Lithuanian flags and heraldic signs as well as ancient Baltic ethno-cultural symbols.

Three of the group were bearing a poster with photographs of the findings from The Kernavė Archaeological site, about 35 km north-west of Vilnius in eastern Lithuania, which is on UNESCO World Heritage List. Photographs of the archaeological artifacts dating from 13th century were exhibited on the poster. The artifacts are currently in safekeeping at the Kernavė Archaeology and History Museum and are marked by or represent by themselves symbolic signs including those of “swastika”.

As public exhibit of Nazi and Communist symbols or propagation of Nazi and Communist ideology is forbidden under the Lithuanian law, the persons carrying the poster were apprehended by police on the grounds of suspicion of a possible violation of the law. One of them, Mr. Linas Zeniauskis later on was brought to the court. After legal hearing in the Administrative court Mr. Zeniauskis was acquitted for lack of evidence for his involvement in activities directly relating to propagation of Nazi symbols or ideology.

Although on 18 May 2010 the court decided to terminate the case for absence of administrative offense, the ruling can be appealed to the Lithuanian Supreme Administrative Court within 10 days from the date of decision.

I regret that my Russian colleague has misquoted the Klaipėda court ruling in this matter. The court did not make the Nazi swastika part of Lithuanian cultural heritage. The public use of Nazi swastika and other Nazi symbols remains, as previously, forbidden by law and incurs punishment under the Lithuanian Administrative Violations Code. But the court found that in this particular case the display of swastika-shaped symbols was legal because it had no relation to Nazi propaganda or ideology.

And one final remark, Mr. Chairperson:

The aforementioned law prohibiting the public use of Nazi and Communist symbols includes, however, an exception for veterans of the Second World War. They are not responsible under this law for publicly wearing their uniforms that include appropriate decorations.

Therefore, there is no reason for concern expressed by my distinguished Russian Colleague in his intervention on this particular matter.

I thank you, Mr. Chairperson.