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**STATEMENT BY MR. ALEXANDER LUKASHEVICH,  
PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION,  
AT THE 1265th MEETING OF THE OSCE PERMANENT COUNCIL  
VIA VIDEO TELECONFERENCE**

30 April 2020

**On the dismantling in Prague of the monument to Ivan Konev,  
Marshal of the Soviet Union**

Mr. Chairperson,

On 3 April, the municipal authorities of Prague's sixth district dismantled the monument to Ivan Konev, Marshal of the Soviet Union, that had been erected there in 1980 at the initiative of the city's inhabitants themselves. As is well known, it was under Konev's command that the troops of the First Ukrainian Front liberated the Czech capital from Nazi occupation in May 1945. Moreover, the fact that heavy artillery was not deployed meant that the city's distinctive architecture was preserved.

The instigators appear to have exploited the coronavirus epidemic to carry out this barbarous act. This is confirmed by the derisive remarks made by the mayor of the district, Ondřej Kolář, who initiated the monument's removal. As he put it, Ivan Konev "didn't have a mask on. The rules, however, are the same for everyone. A mask must be worn when going out on the street."

Moreover, an interesting detail has come to light. Mr. Kolář's father held various posts in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Czech Republic and was ambassador in the United States of America and Russia. He is currently a senior adviser at the US consultancy firm Squire Patton Boggs, which prepared the expert opinion invoked to justify the dismantling of the monument. A fine father-and-son team!

Significantly, in an interview with the Prague-based television channel Prima, the President of the Czech Republic, Miloš Zeman, called the dismantling of the monument a "stupid act". He also pointed out that Marshal Konev, who liberated not only Prague from the Nazis but also the Auschwitz death camp, deserved a place in Prague.

Former Czech President Václav Klaus also expressed his indignation. As he argued, "the removal of the monument to Marshal Ivan Konev – which was carried out secretly and without warning under cover of the state of emergency that is in place because of the coronavirus crisis – is an initiative of the mayor of the municipal district Prague 6 demonstrating an almost immeasurable degree of effrontery and cowardice".

This act clearly violates a number of international commitments made by the Czech Government, including the provisions of the Document of the Cracow Symposium on the Cultural Heritage of the CSCE Participating States, which, among other things, emphasizes: “The participating States bear in mind that the preservation of the status of monuments and sites related to their history and culture, wherever they are located, constitutes an integral part of the overall efforts within the CSCE for the preservation and protection of the common cultural heritage.”

As we approach the 75th anniversary of the end of the Second World War, which in Europe was brought to a conclusion by the Red Army precisely in Prague, the participating States should – I quote again from the text of the Cracow Document – strive as never before “to preserve and protect those monuments and sites of remembrance ... which are themselves testimonials to tragic experiences in their common past”. Unfortunately, what we are seeing in practice is something quite different.

Such actions by the authorities of the Czech capital merely serve to foster manifestations of chauvinism, aggressive nationalism and neo-Nazism – in that country and in Europe as a whole. All this is especially lamentable considering that the Czech Republic currently chairs the Human Dimension Committee of the OSCE Permanent Council, whose agenda includes these topics, which are of relevance for the entire OSCE area.

We call on the Czech Republic to honour its international commitments and also the provisions contained in Articles 18 and 21 of the 1993 Czech-Russian bilateral agreement on friendly relations and co-operation.

The obligation to comply properly with the aforementioned instrument, which was ratified by the Czech Republic, rests with the country’s Government. In accordance with the Vienna Convention on the Law of Treaties, “every treaty in force is binding upon the parties to it and must be performed by them in good faith”. Neither the provisions of internal law, nor the decisions of local authorities may be invoked to justify failure to perform a treaty.

Not only did the Czech Government fail to take any steps to prevent the unlawful actions of the authorities in charge of Prague’s sixth district; it even tolerated them. In this context, the question as to who actually owns the monument is irrelevant.

The arbitrary dismantling of the monument to Ivan Konev is clearly at odds with the observance, in good faith, of commitments to the care and preservation of monuments. In view of the need to ensure access to a monument, its location should not be decided unilaterally. Article 5 of the 1993 bilateral treaty provides for a broad consultation mechanism at various levels. This could and indeed should have been brought into play here.

Thank you for your attention.