

The OSCE Secretariat bears no responsibility for the content of this document and circulates it without altering its content. The distribution by OSCE Conference Services of this document is without prejudice to OSCE decisions, as set out in documents agreed by OSCE participating States.

PC.DEL/1738/22  
18 November 2022

ENGLISH  
Original: RUSSIAN

Delegation of the Russian Federation

**STATEMENT BY  
THE REPRESENTATIVE OF THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION AT THE  
1399th MEETING OF THE OSCE PERMANENT COUNCIL**

17 November 2022

**On violations of OSCE commitments related to historical and cultural heritage by  
several participating States**

Mr. Chairperson,

The “war” on Soviet monuments and memorials continues in the OSCE area. In some countries this barbaric attitude towards culture and historical heritage has taken on menacing proportions.

Such a policy is contrary to the relevant CSCE/OSCE commitments on the protection of cultural rights – in particular to the 1991 Document of the Cracow Symposium on the Cultural Heritage of the CSCE Participating States, where it is stressed, in paragraph 12, that “the complete and lasting documentation of sites, structures, cultural landscapes, objects and cultural systems, including historical, religious and cultural monuments, as they presently exist, is one of the most important legacies to the cultural heritage that can be provided for future generations.” That commitment was later reconfirmed by the participating States in the 1991 Moscow Document on the Human Dimension. It is stated there that “the participating States ... will implement their commitments in the cultural field, as laid down in the Document of the Cracow Symposium on the Cultural Heritage.” Not to mention the principles of the UNESCO Declaration that condemns the intentional destruction of cultural heritage or existing bilateral treaties, including treaties on the protection of war memorials.

One gets the impression that in Ukraine the eradication of all things Russian has become the principal if not sole *raison d'être* of the Kyiv regime at the instigation of its Western handlers. How can one otherwise explain the brutal and mindless policy of destroying dozens of memorials erected in honour of the Red Army soldiers who liberated Ukraine from Nazi occupation? The same applies to the renaming of streets and squares in honour of Nazi accomplices and murderers.

We have already cited some recent examples, namely, how on 9 November a monument to a soldier-liberator was destroyed in the city of Uzhhorod, while on 3 November the Grieving Motherland obelisk in the city of Mykolaiv was blown up. A few days ago in Kyiv, the decision was taken to dismantle the monument to General Nikolay Vatutin, who made a huge contribution to the city’s liberation from the Nazis and their accomplices drawn from among local nationalists. It would seem that in this way the admirers of Stepan Bandera intend to foist on the citizens of Kyiv an ideology that is alien to them and to erase from popular memory General Vatutin’s contribution to the peaceful life of post-war generations.

The Ukrainian authorities are also trying to rewrite history that does not have to do with the Soviet past. For example, in Odessa they intend to dismantle the monument to the founders of the city, including the Empress Catherine the Great. There have also been numerous attacks by Ukrainian vandals on the monument to Russian military commander Alexander Suvorov, the most recent occurring on 7 November. Monuments erected in honour of the great Russian writer Alexander Pushkin are being torn down or vandalized throughout the country, including the cities of Kyiv, Zhytomyr, Kharkiv and Odessa.

The destruction of monuments is in “continuous operation mode” in the Baltics. As before, Latvia has the dubious honour of leading the field. The Latvian authorities will stop at nothing in their attempts to settle scores with historical remembrance. And this despite the recommendations made in August 2022 by the United Nations Human Rights Committee, whose experts called upon the country’s authorities to stop the dismantling of Soviet monuments and to ensure that the parts of already demolished monuments are preserved.

In late October, part of the memorial slabs at the monument known as the Mound of Friendship were dismantled. This is a three-sided complex raised at the intersection of the Russian, Belarusian and Latvian borders in honour of the partisans. Two monuments to Soviet soldiers have been torn down in Daugavpils. Large protests by the city’s inhabitants against the actions of the authorities were suppressed with particular brutality.

No less despicable was the destruction of the Monument to the Liberators in the city of Rēzekne on 9 November, despite the mayor’s active attempts to preserve the monument. The options that he proposed for saving it – in particular, by relocating it to a cemetery – were rejected by the central authorities. Demolition crews also descended on a monument to Soviet partisans and memorial slabs in the village of Šķaune, in Krāslava municipality, and on a monument to the defenders of the city of Liepāja.

All in all, more than 100 monuments have been eliminated as part of the abominable campaign launched in June to dismantle Soviet memorials in that country. It is quite obvious that the barbaric policy of State vandalism to demolish Soviet memorials is one of the components of the Latvian authorities’ general policy of glorification of Nazism and their attempts to rewrite the history of the Second World War.

Nor does Estonia lag behind Latvia when it comes to combating the Soviet historical and memorial heritage. According to Estonian media reports, more than 40 instances of desecration of monuments have occurred since the start of the year. The country’s leadership makes no secret of its intention to rid itself of all monuments to those who vanquished Nazism. Here are a few examples. In August, notwithstanding the opposition of the local inhabitants, the monument to the T-34 tank in the city of Narva was dismantled. On 12 September, the destruction of the Soviet monument to the soldier-liberators in the city of Tartu got under way. On 6 October, at the Maarjamäe Memorial complex, the plaques commemorating the Soviet Army units that liberated Tallinn from the German fascist invaders were removed.

In early November, the country’s Government approved amendments to the relevant legislation so as to enable any Soviet monuments to be torn down. These legislative innovations have already been described by local experts as “State vandalism”. However, the opinion of a majority of professionals – members of academia, creative associations and the media – is simply disregarded.

The situation is no better in Lithuania. According to open-source data, more than a dozen instances of attacks on memorial sites have been recorded in the country. Only following the intervention of the United Nations Human Rights Committee did it prove possible to halt the destruction of the memorial honouring fallen Soviet soldiers at the Antakalnis Cemetery in Vilnius. In early October, that body issued a

decision on temporary protection measures for the monument. At the same time, though, memorials that are little known but no less valuable from a historical point of view are being dismantled throughout the country. For example, in early November, work began on the elimination of all Soviet monuments and plaques in the city of Jurbarkas.

The war on cultural and historical heritage continues in Poland. According to the Polish Press Agency, eight memorials have been torn down in the country since the start of 2022. No fewer than four monuments to Red Army soldiers were simultaneously destroyed on 27 October in the towns of Głubczyce, Byczyna, Bobolice and Staszów. We are amazed by the cynicism of the authorities, who turned these shameful events into a political show of sorts by arranging for them to be live-streamed.

Similar tendencies are afoot in Moldova. On 5 November, swastikas were sprayed on the Grieving Mother monument and the memorial dedicated to Red Army soldiers in the town of Edineț.

Mr. Chairperson,

The incidents we have enumerated are the most recent examples illustrating not only the violation of relevant OSCE commitments but also the systematic rewriting of history in some participating States.

It is telling in this regard that all the countries mentioned by us voted against the draft resolution of the Third Committee of the United Nations General Assembly on “Combating glorification of Nazism, neo-Nazism and other practices that contribute to fuelling contemporary forms of racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance” submitted by Russia and co-sponsors. In that thematic document concern is expressed over the “increased frequency of attempts and activities intended to desecrate or demolish monuments erected in remembrance of those who fought against Nazism during the Second World War, as well as to unlawfully exhume or remove the remains of such persons”. Such an unequivocal attitude on the part of those who voted against the draft can be explained by their governments’ intention to continue battling against monuments and turning a blind eye to neo-Nazism as it rears its ugly head.

Thank you for your attention.