**The Address of Michal Klíma, the Chairman of the Board of Directors**

**of the Foundation for Holocaust Victims,**

**On the Occasion of**

**The Day of Commemoration in Memory of Victims of the Holocaust**

**And Prevention of Crimes Against Humanity**

**Senate of the Czech Parliament**

**27th January 2020**

The Foundation for Holocaust Victims helps the survivors of Holocaust, reminds of the Shoa atrocities and, among other activities, also supports the fight against racism and xenophobia. Therefore, dear audience, allow me to focus my speech not only on the past, but also to mention, on the grounds of one of the chambers of the Czech Parliament, a serious fact I consider scandalous. The matter I would like to mention concerns the sales of merchandise portraying war criminals. In November last year, his excellency, the ambassador of Germany, Christoph Israng, raised the awareness of public in relation to this matter. He was walking around Prague and he saw the masks of Adolf Hitler being sold to tourists. He tweeted on his Twitter account: “Czech people suffered a lot during the Nazi regime, why do they allow the sales of such rubbish?”

The response to his tweet was no different from other reactions of Czech public: media informed about the matter, several politicians called it scandalous, the police announced to be investigating into this matter and the merchandise continues to be sold. Not only masks of Hitler, but also T-shirts and cups portraying the Nazi criminals are being sold. The visitors can fill their cupboards with cups featuring Adolf Eichmann, Heinrich Himmler, Reinhard Heidrich or Adolf Hitler (portrait of Hitler is also sold embedded into an Easter egg). Such assortment of merchandise, dear audience, is on offer from “Nase vojsko” publishers. This matter does not come as a surprise. The media have been informing on this merchandise on regular basis for longer period of time. The management of the publishing house openly demonstrates their pride to be selling such merchandise and are happy for the goods to sell well.

Allow me to quote from the Article 260 of the Czech Penal Code:

(1) Whoever establishes, promotes or supports movement that is provably aimed at suppression of human rights or that proclaims racial, ethnic, national, and religious or class hatred or hatred against another group of people, shall be sentenced to imprisonment for one year to five years.

(2) An offender shall be sentenced to imprisonment for three to eight years, if he/she

a) commits the act referred to in Sub-section (1) by press, film, radio, television,

publically accessible computer network or in another similarly effective way,

b)  commits such an act as a member of an organised group,

c)  commits such an act during a state of national peril or a state of war.

How is it possible that the merchandise portraying the Nazi leaders is sold while such conduct is subject to criminal proceedings? The merchants claim they do not intend to promote the Nazism, for them selling such merchandise is a mere business. This proclamation, as seen from the point of view of Czech justice, does not make them guilty. Following the same approach, we can soon expect the museum of Adolf Hitler to open its doors in Prague. If they sell entrance tickets, they would be fine, because that would mean they would be doing business, not promoting the Nazism. It is very hard to understand that argument as such, can stand. The promotion of any product can have and, in reality, has a commercial character. All museums around the world sell cups and T-shirts promoting the given museum. Sport clubs sell jerseys of their players. Nobody would doubt that alongside the profit they make on the merchandise, the merchandise is also a way of promoting the given institution or club.

The reasoning “if the business is concerned, the law is not being breached” is outrageous, because what we can derive from that reasoning is: if someone promotes racism from a belief, such act is considered a crime while if it is done in order to make profit, such deed is considered legal. One would like to believe that in case when someone breaks law due to their ignorance or inbred stupidity it is less serious social risk than in situations when such act is committed consciously, in an organised way, and for money. Unfortunately, such belief clearly does not apply to our country and merchandise promoting Nazism has long been produced and sold with impunity. And things would supposedly not turn to better if the law explicitly does not consider “the sale” as a “promotion”.

I would like to address you, honorable lawmakers present at our commemorative meeting, to issue an amendment to an Act 260, in particular amending point (2) where the wording says: “An offender shall be sentenced to imprisonment for three to eight years...“ by letter d) extending the wording by six words: “should the offender commit a crime through sales of goods“.

Ladies and gentlemen, every year we meet on these premises to commemorate the victims of the Nazi terror. Couple of hundred meters away from this place, shops sell merchandise portraying the Nazi leaders. Let us ensure that our society finally deals with this shame once and for all. I believe that this would be the best way to honor all those innocent murdered people.

Thank you for your attention.