# Czech authorities use COVID-19 as excuse to tear down monument to Soviet liberator



Prague, April 5 (RHC)-- A monument to Soviet Marshal Ivan Konev, who commanded the forces that liberated Prague from the Nazis in 1945, has been removed and mocked for 'not having a mask' by one local official, in what Russia has condemned as an insult.

Konev is one of the most celebrated Red Army generals, who commanded the 1st Ukrainian Front rmy group that liberated the Auschwitz death camp in January 1945 and the Czech capital several months later, putting an end to six years of Nazi occupation.

Yet on Friday, the authorities in Prague's District Six dismantled his statue, using the fact that stay-at-home orders imposed to combat the spread of COVID-19 prevented any protesters from showing up.

"He didn't have a mask on.  Those rules apply to everybody.  You can only be outside if your mouth and nose are covered," district mayor Ondrej Kolar joked on Facebook, prompting a multitude of angry responses.

Some commenters suggested that Kolar had "his brain affected by the coronavirus" and reminded him that he would have never been born, much less a mayor, had Konev's troops not liberated the city from the Nazis. The monument actually predates Kolar, who was born in 1984, by four years.

Others pointed out the cowardly act of removing Konev during the coronavirus lockdown to avoid protests, such as had occurred last September when the decision about the monument was made. The Russian mission to OSCE called it a "dark day" in Prague's history, and Moscow's embassy in Prague blasted Kolar for his "cynical" joke, calling the removal of the statue a "provocation" aimed at harming ties between Russia and Czechia.

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