

Court rules to rank swastika-bearing posters Lithuania's historical heritage

VILNIUS, May 19, BNS - A court of Lithuania's port city Klaipeda ruled to consider posters with swastikas, which four young locals brought to the Independence Day parade on Feb. 16, as Lithuania's historical heritage rather than symbols of Nazi Germany.

The court on Tuesday ruled to discontinue an administrative case against the young men. The verdict found that swastikas - which initially were the sign of the sun and appear in archaeological findings and monuments - are not prohibited.

"Justice exists in Lithuania. You see, it so turns out we don't know our own history," one of the defendants, Linas Zeniauskis said at the court hearing.

The men showed up for this year's Independence Day parade with swastika-bearing shields. Not all demonstrators appreciated the move and somebody called the police, which took the case to court.

The men in the first court hearing in April brought the shields in as evidence, arguing that the objects are heritage of the times past.

"These are no Nazi attributes, but valuable symbols of the Baltic culture. The symbols of our forefathers, which were taken away, fabricated and crippled by other nations. It is not fascism, but the architecture of the universe that they represent," Milvydas Jusauskas, the defense counsel's witness from Vilnius said.

Jusauskas brought the Culture Ministry's records about ancient rings and bracelets dug out in Kernave and monuments with swastikas that were erected in Lithuania and Latvia during the interwar period.