



Doc. 11711

17 September 2008

Chinese intimidation in Europe

Reply to Written question¹: Written question No. 546 (Doc. 11607)
Committee of Ministers

1. Question from Mr Lindblad

I wish to draw your attention to the following incidents in some Council of Europe member states.

Shen Yun is a troupe from New York City. Their show revives ancient Chinese culture and traditions which are different from communist party culture. Maybe that is the reason why the show has faced so many obstacles in holding a concert in Russia. The problem in St. Petersburg was not the theatre but requests by the security police that all information or objects of any kind that could point in the directions of Falun Gong or anything or anyone inside this movement must be removed from the show.

Also recently, the Chinese New Year Spectacular, performed by the Divine Performing Arts company on tour in Copenhagen, Denmark, was suddenly cancelled by the Danish Royal Theatre. At about the same time, another performance from mainland China appeared on the theatre's schedule. According to reliable resources, invitations to this one, called "Chinese New Year Concert", were sent directly to politicians and VIPs in Denmark by the Chinese ambassador to Denmark. The concert was to be presented at the "Old Stage" theatre, which also belongs to the Danish Royal Theatre. Although only two days were left before the concert, one could not find any information about it in the media or on the Internet. A reporter from *The Epoch Times* asked about the concert at the theatre ticket office. The employee at the ticket office searched for information about the concert on the internal Web site without result. It is very likely that the concert is sponsored and hosted by the Chinese communist regime and is offered only to a limited public of high-ranking Danes.

In Sweden, an officer from the Chinese Embassy called local government officials in Stockholm and Linköping and threatened them if they would not cancel the planned Divine Performing Arts shows.

Through this question I wish to draw the attention of the Committee of Ministers to these incidents and wonder whether there are ways within the Council of Europe to take joint action to prevent that similar things happen again.

Reply by the Committee of Ministers

The holding or otherwise of cultural events in a given country is not an issue which falls within the competence of the Committee of Ministers, as long as it is solely a matter of commercial relations between parties and does not concern the member states' obligation to comply with their statutory or convention-based commitments at the Council of Europe, in particular those relating to the protection of freedom of expression and assembly. The Committee of Ministers therefore has no authority to take steps in the cases referred to.

1. adopted at the 1033rd meeting of the Ministers' Deputies (4 September 2008)

