Recommendation 963 (1983)[1]

Cultural and educational means of reducing violence

Parliamentary Assembly

The Assembly,

A. Introduction

1. Having noted the report of its Committee on Culture and Education (Doc. 5013) ;

2. Taking note of the Hearing on violence held by that Committee in Assisi from 1 to 3 September 1982 on the occasion of the 800th anniversary of the birth of St. Francis ;

3. Gravely concerned at the occurrence of violence in modern society, in particular terrorism, but also delinquency, vandalism and rape ;

4. Suspicious in principle of some of the justifications advanced for direct physical violence, but recognising that those in authority on certain occasions have to use varying acceptable degrees of force for the protection of society, of lives and of property ;

5. Believing that violence in modern society is related to the stresses exercised on human nature by external factors of a social, economic and cultural character ;

6. Recalling the report of its Committee on Culture and Education on war toys (Doc. 4742) and the resolution adopted on this subject by the European Parliament on 13 September 1982 ;

B. Regarding terrorism

7. Recalling its Recommendations 916 (1981) and 941 (1982) on the defence of democracy against terrorism in Europe ;

8. Considering that terrorism is a permanent challenge to fundamental democratic values, and may well prompt states to take legislative, judicial or administrative measures (such as keeping records on individuals for the purposes of prevention, restrictions on personal freedoms, etc.) that may pervert the very character of democracy ;

9. Aware of the fact that combating terrorism may, because of the growth of politically motivated crimes and offences, create imbalances in the arsenal of penalties, and disrupt prison systems ;

10. Convinced that the symbolic, spectacular or revolting nature of terrorism and the exaggerated reflection sometimes given of it by the media helps it achieve a social impact out of all proportion to the resources it deploys and even to its ultimate goal, something which distinguishes it from ordinary violence ;

11. Noting that terrorism imitates the methods, means and language of warfare without triggering off the usual collective defence mechanisms ;

12. Conscious that terrorism is moreover a factor of major cultural destabilisation and can undermine the individual's confidence in the values, interests or institutions under attack ;

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1. Assembly debate on 28 January 1983 (28th Sitting) (see Doc. 5013. report of the Committee on Culture and Education). Text adopted by the Assembly on 28 January 1983 (28th Sitting).

13. Considering that measures to suppress terrorism must be based on an analysis of its causes,

14. Recommends that the Committee of Ministers invite member governements :

a. to take the necessary steps to alert communities in which terrorism is breeding to the serious threat it presents to democracy and freedoms ;

b. to make available in all member countries a "White Paper on democracy and terrorism", a work which would be prepared by the Council of Europe and based on the European Convention on Human Rights, international agreements and member states' constitutions, and whose purpose would be to demonstrate the fact that terrorism is a major European problem imperilling democracy and to proclaim Europe's determination to combat political violence ;

c. to foster studies of the cultural and social causes of the growth of terrorism by giving thought to the setting up of an independent European Foundation for the study of terrorism ;

C. Regarding the media

15. Concerned at the increasing tendency towards emphasis on violence in the media, and in particular on its portrayal in the visual media (television, video, film, advertising, comics, or still photography) ;

16. Conscious that prolonged exposure to such media violence can have a direct cumulative effect on young children and a minority of adults, and a growing effect on the accepted values of society ;

17. Welcoming the recent Declaration by the Committee of Ministers on freedom of expression (1982), and recalling Article 10 of the European Convention on Human Rights (1950) and the United Nations Convention for the Repression of Obscene Publications (1947) ;

18. Concerned that artistic freedom should not be used as an alibi for purely commercial interests ;

19. Believing that national legislative or voluntary restrictions are becoming increasingly impracticable in the light of direct broadcasting by satellite and other technological developments, and drawing attention to the fact that the production, distribution and sale of media software has already progressed beyond the control of individual states ;

20. Stressing the urgency of co-ordinated action involving European states, broadcasting institutions and commercial audio-visual concerns,

21. Recommends that the Committee of Ministers :

a. request the broadcasting organisations to co-operate on the elaboration of codes of conduct or guidelines covering the portrayal of violence, including terrorism, that can apply to as broad an area in Europe as possible, and where necessary provide autonomous supplementary structures to enable the effective elaboration of such common codes ;

b. encourage the elaboration of similar guidelines for other media such as films, written material, video and new forms of visual media that may be developed ;

c. encourage the establishment in each member state of a. independent monitoring of broadcast and other visual media through viewer associations and other bodies, b. closer consultation between the public and the programme makers, and c. public accountability for media content whether to parliament, to the courts or to public opinion, and envisage at a subsequent stage closer co-ordination between member states on these aspects ;

d. arrange for the regular publication of an up-to-date survey of existing guidelines, legislation and administrative structures regarding the media in all member states ;

e. ask member governments :

1. to sponsor further independent research into the effects of the media ;

2. to consider introducing legislation to ensure that media violence involving individuals is condemned alongside incitement to racial hatred or obscenity ;

3. to take the appropriate measures to ensure that broadcasting companies give particular attention to means of protecting sensitive people, especially children, from prolonged exposure to media violence ;

4. to make clear to the press and to the audio-visual media their special responsibility as regards the dissemination of models of political violence, and therefore make proper understanding of the effects of the media a necessary part of the qualification of all personnel employed in the media field ;

D. Regarding sport

22. Concerned with the continued presence of violence in sport and with the growth of violence associated with sport on local, national and international levels ;

23. Welcoming the action already taken by the sports federations to reduce violence in sport by modifying the rules of individual and team games, with special reference to violent sports such as boxing, and by increasing the authority of refereeing ;

24. Questioning, however, the efficacity of existing sanctions, in particular in top-level professional sport, and believing that responsibility lies as much with trainers and management as with individual players ;

25. Believing that concerted action by the public authorities and the sporting bodies is necessary to control violence associated with sport, and that the media could help in this action, and stressing the positive role to be played by responsible supporters' clubs ;

26. Welcoming the activity of the International Alliance for Non-Violent Sport and for Fair Play, and noting the results of the symposium organised by the Alliance in Monte-Carlo on 16 and 17 November 1982 ;

27. Recalling the Council of Europe's European Sport for All Charter, and reaffirming its belief in the ideals and values of sport, especially Olympic sport as expressed in its Resolution 738 (1980), on the Olympic Games and the outlook for their future ;

28. Believing that it is necessary to reaffirm and re-establish these positive values of sport and fair play as a direct contribution to solving the problem of violence in modern society ;

29. Recalling the resolution on violence associated with sport, adopted by the Conference of European Ministers responsible for Sport in London 1978, and hoping that the ministers concerned will reconsider urgently the question of violence and sport,

30. Recommends that the Committee of Ministers :

a. ask the Steering Committee for the Development of Sport to give consideration to effective European Intergovernmental co-operation on violence and sport, including the elaboration of a European convention, or other forms of European agreement on the introduction of specific legislation in member states ;

b. co-ordinate such activity with other sectors through the steering committees responsible for mass media, culture and education, and criminal matters ;

c. support the Campaign of the International Alliance for Non-Violent Sport and for Fair Play ;

Positive approaches, and in particular education

31. Stressing the power of example of parent, teacher or state, and noting also the role played by the churches, youth organisations and other disinterested institutions in encouraging young people to participate in social goals ;

32. Underlining the need for schools constantly to readjust to the changing patterns of modern society, and noting the conclusions reached by the Council for Cultural Co-operation project on "Preparation for life" ;

33. Insisting on the importance of the proper preparation of children to understand the messages put across by the media, and noting the positive contribution of the media in presenting society as condemning and rejecting violence ;

34. Wishing to ensure that the systematic teaching of non-violent behaviour is an integral part of all compulsory education, and welcoming the proposal by the Quaker Council for European Affairs to conduct a study on existing models in Europe of such education ;

35. Hoping that the Standing Conference of European Ministers of Education will pay close attention to the contribution education can make to encouraging constructive, non-violent behaviour,

36. Recommends that the Committee of Ministers :

a. associate the Council for Cultural Cooperation with study of models of education for non-violent behaviour and co-operation ;

b. invite member governments or, through them, the local or regional authorities responsible for education :

1. to review the content of existing school and university curricula in order to avoid thoughtless glorification of conflict and violence, and to introduce in schools the systematic teaching of non-violent behaviour ;
2. to encourage the introduction in certain European universities of the study of terrorism ;
3. to make available for use in schools, for example in the context of history lessons, material highlighting the odious and regressive nature of political violence and denouncing the ideologies that provoke and manipulate such violence ;
4. to make it possible for young people to opt out of experiments involving violence to living animals should they object to these on grounds of conscience, without prejudice to their subsequent careers ;
5. to ensure that schools adhere to non-violent approaches with regard to their own internal problems and that they avoid any recourse to violent punishment ;
6. to encourage real participation in school life by allowing the gradual development of pupil responsibility and the continued involvement of parents, and by permitting the school and its community to fulfil its indispensable educational role ;
7. to introduce into the school curriculum the critical understanding of the media, and to provide the necessary in-service and preparatory training of teachers ;
8. to ensure a proper place for sport (both individual and team sports) in schools, with particular stress on the principles of fair play.