Parliamentary Assembly
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COUNCIL OF EUROPE
CONSEIL DE L'EUROPE

Resolution 1495 (2006)[1]

Combating the resurrection of nazi ideology

Parliamentary Assembly

1. In May 1945, the Allied Powers defeated the Nazi German regime and put an end to Hitler's National-Socialism, the most cruel and barbaric regime that Europe had ever known.

2. More than just a defeat of the Nazi armies, the victory of the Allies was a triumph over the Nazi xenophobic doctrine of "natural inequality of races" according to which persons of "German blood" made up a "master race" with a special, heroic destiny and were accordingly entitled, in the quest for "living space", to subjugate, dominate or exterminate other "races" and peoples.

3. The Parliamentary Assembly pays special tribute to the glory of all those who fought in the ranks of the "anti-Hitler coalition" and saved humanity from the Nazi "new order". Grateful Europeans will never forget their courage and sacrifices which delivered Europe from the Nazi rule. It opened the path to developing a community of free, sovereign and peaceful nations in western Europe after the Second World War. Many parts of Europe had to suffer further oppression under communist rule. The changes in eastern Europe opened up the chance for them to join the community of states based on democracy and the rule of law.

4. The Assembly mourns the loss of millions of innocent victims of the Nazi aggression and racial policies. The horrors of the Shoah and the Nazi plans and policies of physical extermination or enslavement of entire nations must never be forgotten.

5. The Assembly regrets the death and suffering of millions of humans, civilian and military, in Nazi Germany and in its satellite countries, hostages of criminal acts and policies of their leaders.

6. The criminal nature of the Nazi policies and actions was overwhelmingly substantiated and irrevocably condemned by the Nuremberg International Military Tribunal in 1945-46. Key figures of the Nazi Party and state apparatus were found guilty of massive crimes against peace, war crimes and crimes against humanity. The main components of the Nazi machinery of mass murder, such as the leadership organs of the Nazi Party, of the Gestapo, the SD (secret service) and the SS, were declared criminal organisations.

7. The rulings of the Nuremberg Tribunal remain of great historical importance. The principles recognised at the Tribunal form a cornerstone of modern international law, and led to the drafting of major international legal instruments such as the United Nations Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide (1948), the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948), the UN Convention on the Non-Applicability of Statutory Limitations to War Crimes and Crimes against Humanity (1968), the Geneva Conventions on the laws and customs of war (1949) and their Additional Protocols (1977) and the European Convention on Human Rights (1949) (ETS No. 5), as well as to the creation of institutions for the effective implementation and adjudication of these rights, such as the United Nations Commission on Human Rights, the European Court of Human Rights, the special criminal tribunals and the International Criminal Court.

8. Modern Europe has been conceived on the basis of a total rejection of the Nazi ideas and principles, to ensure that such horrendous crimes as those committed by the Nazi regime in the name of "racial superiority" will never be repeated. The Council of Europe, as the oldest European political organisation aimed at protecting and furthering democracy, human rights and the rule of law, has a special responsibility in preventing the resurgence of the Nazi ideology.

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1. Assembly debate on 12 April 2006 (13th Sitting) (see Doc.10766, report of the Political Affairs Committee, rapporteur: Mr Margelov). Text adopted by the Assembly on 12 April 2006 (13th Sitting).

9. Against this background, the Assembly is extremely worried about some developments which indicate that the public awareness of the danger of the Nazi ideology and its rejection by society are weakening.

10. The Assembly is particularly concerned as regards:

10.1. cases of desecration of memorials and graves of soldiers of the “anti-Hitler coalition”;

10.2. attempts to rehabilitate, justify and even glorify those who participated in the war on the Nazi side, especially in the ranks of groupings found to be criminal organisations at the Nuremberg Tribunal;

10.3. the increasingly common use of Nazi symbols such as the fascist swastika, flags, uniforms, and others which clearly relate to Naziism;

10.4. denying or minimising the significance of the crimes committed by the Nazi regime, in particular of the Shoah.

11. Furthermore, the Assembly is worried about political and social phenomena which, while making no direct reference to Naziism, should be seen in the light of its ideology, such as:

11.1. the growing number of manifestations of racial, ethnic and religious intolerance in daily life, including, inter alia, the desecration of Jewish cemeteries and attacks on religious sites;

11.2. attempts to create, through the media, a negative perception of some ethnic or religious groups;

11.3. growing support for political parties and movements with a xenophobic agenda.

12. Moreover, the Assembly is worried that such manifestations do not always receive enough attention and response on behalf of the political leaders and that public opinion seems now more receptive to racist, xenophobic and extremist ideas.

13. In this connection, the Assembly deems it necessary to recall that Hitler’s ideas, outrageous as they look today, found sympathy and support in many European countries.

14. The Assembly believes that it is urgent to step up co-ordinated action in order to resist efforts aiming at revitalising Nazi ideology, to fight xenophobia, intolerance and hatred based on racial and ethnic grounds, political and religious extremism, and all forms of totalitarian action. The Council of Europe must play a leading role in this process.

15. In this context, the Assembly welcomes the relevant activities already conducted by various Council of Europe bodies, in particular by the European Commission against Racism and Intolerance (ECRI), but believes that, in order to bring about concrete results, these activities need to be re-oriented to include a wider involvement of society.

16. The Assembly resolves to organise an international conference in order to carefully study the recurrence of racist and nationalist phenomena in European societies, exchange best experiences and develop common approaches in combating the resurgence of Nazi ideas.