

Thursday 19 September 2019

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Importance of European remembrance for the future of Europe**European Parliament resolution of 19 September 2019 on the importance of European remembrance for the future of Europe (2019/2819(RSP))**

(2021/C 171/06)

The European Parliament,

- having regard to the universal principles of human rights and the fundamental principles of the European Union as a community based on common values,
- having regard to the statement issued on 22 August 2019 by First Vice-President Timmermans and Commissioner Jourová ahead of the Europe-Wide Day of Remembrance for the victims of all totalitarian and authoritarian regimes,
- having regard to the United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights adopted on 10 December 1948,
- having regard to its resolution of 12 May 2005 on the 60th anniversary of the end of the Second World War in Europe on 8 May 1945 ⁽¹⁾,
- having regard to Resolution 1481 of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe of 26 January 2006 on the need for international condemnation of crimes of totalitarian Communist regimes,
- having regard to Council Framework Decision 2008/913/JHA of 28 November 2008 on combating certain forms and expressions of racism and xenophobia by means of criminal law ⁽²⁾,
- having regard to the Prague Declaration on European Conscience and Communism adopted on 3 June 2008,
- having regard to its declaration on the proclamation of 23 August as European Day of Remembrance for the Victims of Stalinism and Nazism adopted on 23 September 2008 ⁽³⁾,
- having regard to its resolution of 2 April 2009 on European conscience and totalitarianism ⁽⁴⁾,
- having regard to the Commission report of 22 December 2010 on the memory of the crimes committed by totalitarian regimes in Europe (COM(2010)0783),
- having regard to the Council Conclusions of 9-10 June 2011 on the memory of the crimes committed by totalitarian regimes in Europe,
- having regard to the Warsaw Declaration of 23 August 2011 on the European Day of Remembrance for Victims of Totalitarian Regimes,
- having regard to the joint statement of 23 August 2018 of the government representatives of the EU Member States to commemorate the victims of communism,
- having regard to its historic resolution on the situation in Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania, adopted on 13 January 1983 in reaction to the 'Baltic Appeal' of 45 nationals from these countries,

⁽¹⁾ OJ C 92 E, 20.4.2006, p. 392.

⁽²⁾ OJ L 328, 6.12.2008, p. 55.

⁽³⁾ OJ C 8 E, 14.1.2010, p. 57.

⁽⁴⁾ OJ C 137 E, 27.5.2010, p. 25.

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- having regard to the resolutions and declarations on the crimes of totalitarian communist regimes adopted by a number of national parliaments,
 - having regard to Rule 132(2) and (4) of its Rules of Procedure,
- A. whereas this year marks the 80th anniversary of the outbreak of the Second World War, which led to unprecedented levels of human suffering and the occupation of countries in Europe for many decades to come;
- B. whereas 80 years ago on 23 August 1939, the communist Soviet Union and Nazi Germany signed a Treaty of Non-Aggression, known as the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact, and its secret protocols, dividing Europe and the territories of independent states between the two totalitarian regimes and grouping them into spheres of interest, which paved the way for the outbreak of the Second World War;
- C. whereas, as a direct consequence of the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact, followed by the Nazi-Soviet Boundary and Friendship Treaty of 28 September 1939, the Polish Republic was invaded first by Hitler and two weeks later by Stalin — which stripped the country of its independence and was an unprecedented tragedy for the Polish people — the communist Soviet Union started an aggressive war against Finland on 30 November 1939, and in June 1940 it occupied and annexed parts of Romania — territories that were never returned — and annexed the independent republics of Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia;
- D. whereas after the defeat of the Nazi regime and the end of the Second World War, some European countries were able to rebuild and embark on a process of reconciliation, while other European countries remained under dictatorships — some under direct Soviet occupation or influence — for half a century and continued to be deprived of freedom, sovereignty, dignity, human rights and socio-economic development;
- E. whereas although the crimes of the Nazi regime were evaluated and punished by means of the Nuremberg trials, there is still an urgent need to raise awareness, carry out moral assessments and conduct legal inquiries into the crimes of Stalinism and other dictatorships;
- F. whereas in some Member States, communist and Nazi ideologies are prohibited by law;
- G. whereas European integration has, from the start, been a response to the suffering inflicted by two world wars and by the Nazi tyranny that led to the Holocaust, and to the expansion of totalitarian and undemocratic communist regimes in central and eastern Europe, and a way to overcome deep divisions and hostility in Europe by cooperation and integration and to end war and secure democracy in Europe; whereas for the European countries that suffered under Soviet occupation and communist dictatorships, the enlargement of the EU, beginning in 2004, signifies their return to the European family to which they belong;
- H. whereas the memories of Europe's tragic past must be kept alive, in order to honour the victims, condemn the perpetrators and lay the ground for a reconciliation based on truth and remembrance;
- I. whereas remembering the victims of totalitarian regimes and recognising and raising awareness of the shared European legacy of crimes committed by communist, Nazi and other dictatorships is of vital importance for the unity of Europe and its people and for building European resilience to modern external threats;
- J. whereas 30 years ago, on 23 August 1989, the 50th anniversary of the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact was marked and the victims of totalitarian regimes remembered during the Baltic Way, an unprecedented demonstration by two million Lithuanians, Latvians and Estonians who joined hands to form a living chain spanning from Vilnius to Tallinn through Riga;
- K. whereas despite the fact that on 24 December 1989 the Congress of People's Deputies of the USSR condemned the signing of the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact, in addition to other agreements made with Nazi Germany, the Russian authorities denied responsibility for this agreement and its consequences in August 2019 and are currently promoting the view that Poland, the Baltic States and the West are the true instigators of WWII;

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- L. whereas remembering the victims of totalitarian and authoritarian regimes and recognising and raising awareness of the shared European legacy of crimes committed by Stalinist, Nazi and other dictatorships is of vital importance for the unity of Europe and its people and for building European resilience to modern external threats;
- M. whereas openly radical, racist and xenophobic groups and political parties have been inciting hatred and violence in society, for example through the online dissemination of hate speech, which often leads to a rise in violence, xenophobia and intolerance;
1. Recalls that, as enshrined in Article 2 of the TEU, the Union is founded on the values of respect for human dignity, freedom, democracy, equality, the rule of law and respect for human rights, including the rights of persons belonging to minorities; recalls that these values are common to all Member States;
 2. Stresses that the Second World War, the most devastating war in Europe's history, was started as an immediate result of the notorious Nazi-Soviet Treaty on Non-Aggression of 23 August 1939, also known as the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact, and its secret protocols, whereby two totalitarian regimes that shared the goal of world conquest divided Europe into two zones of influence;
 3. Recalls that the Nazi and communist regimes carried out mass murders, genocide and deportations and caused a loss of life and freedom in the 20th century on a scale unseen in human history, and recalls the horrific crime of the Holocaust perpetrated by the Nazi regime; condemns in the strongest terms the acts of aggression, crimes against humanity and mass human rights violations perpetrated by the Nazi, communist and other totalitarian regimes;
 4. Expresses its deep respect for each victim of these totalitarian regimes and calls on all EU institutions and actors to do their utmost to ensure that horrific totalitarian crimes against humanity and systemic gross human rights violations are remembered and brought before courts of law, and to guarantee that such crimes will never be repeated; stresses the importance of keeping the memories of the past alive, because there can be no reconciliation without remembrance, and reiterates its united stand against all totalitarian rule from whatever ideological background;
 5. Calls on all Member States of the EU to make a clear and principled assessment of the crimes and acts of aggression perpetrated by the totalitarian communist regimes and the Nazi regime;
 6. Condemns all manifestations and propagation of totalitarian ideologies, such as Nazism and Stalinism, in the EU;
 7. Condemns historical revisionism and the glorification of Nazi collaborators in some EU Member States; is deeply concerned about the increasing acceptance of radical ideologies and the reversion to fascism, racism, xenophobia and other forms of intolerance in the European Union, and is troubled by reports in some Member States of collusion between political leaders, political parties and law enforcement bodies and the radical, racist and xenophobic movements of different political denominations; calls on the Member States to condemn such acts in the strongest way possible as they undermine the EU values, of peace, freedom and democracy;
 8. Calls on all Member States to commemorate 23 August as the European Day of Remembrance for the victims of totalitarian regimes at both EU and national level, and to raise the younger generation's awareness of these issues by including the history and analysis of the consequences of totalitarian regimes in the curricula and textbooks of all schools in the EU; calls on the Member States to support the documentation of Europe's troubled past, for example through the translation of the proceedings of the Nuremberg trials into all EU languages;
 9. Calls on the Member States to condemn and counteract all forms of Holocaust denial, including the trivialisation and minimisation of the crimes perpetrated by the Nazis and their collaborators, and to prevent trivialisation in political and media discourse;

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10. Calls for a common culture of remembrance that rejects the crimes of fascist, Stalinist, and other totalitarian and authoritarian regimes of the past as a way of fostering resilience against modern threats to democracy, particularly among the younger generation; encourages the Member States to promote education through mainstream culture on the diversity of our society and on our common history, including education on the atrocities of World War II, such as the Holocaust, and the systematic dehumanisation of its victims over a number of years;

11. Calls, furthermore, for 25 May (the anniversary of the execution of the Auschwitz hero Rotamaster Witold Pilecki) to be established as International Day of Heroes of the Fight against Totalitarianism, which will be an expression of respect and a tribute to all those who, by fighting tyranny, demonstrated their heroism and true love for humankind, and will also provide future generations with a clear example of the correct attitude to take in the face of the threat of totalitarian enslavement;

12. Calls on the Commission to provide effective support for projects of historic memory and remembrance in the Member States and for the activities of the Platform of European Memory and Conscience, and to allocate adequate financial resources under the 'Europe for Citizens' programme to support commemoration and remembrance of the victims of totalitarianism, as set out in Parliament's position on the 2021-2027 Rights and Values Programme;

13. Declares that European integration as a model of peace and reconciliation has been a free choice by the peoples of Europe to commit to a shared future, and that the European Union has a particular responsibility to promote and safeguard democracy, respect for human rights and the rule of law, not only within but also outside the European Union;

14. Points out that in the light of their accession to the EU and NATO, the countries of Eastern and Central European have not only returned to the European family of free democratic countries, but also demonstrated success, with the EU's assistance, in reforms and socio-economic development; stresses, however, that this option should remain open to other European countries as stipulated in Article 49 TEU;

15. Maintains that Russia remains the greatest victim of communist totalitarianism and that its development into a democratic state will be impeded as long as the government, the political elite and political propaganda continue to whitewash communist crimes and glorify the Soviet totalitarian regime; calls, therefore, on Russian society to come to terms with its tragic past;

16. Is deeply concerned about the efforts of the current Russian leadership to distort historical facts and whitewash crimes committed by the Soviet totalitarian regime and considers them a dangerous component of the information war waged against democratic Europe that aims to divide Europe, and therefore calls on the Commission to decisively counteract these efforts;

17. Expresses concern at the continued use of symbols of totalitarian regimes in the public sphere and for commercial purposes, and recalls that a number of European countries have banned the use of both Nazi and communist symbols;

18. Notes that the continued existence in public spaces in some Member States of monuments and memorials (parks, squares, streets etc.) glorifying totalitarian regimes, which paves the way for the distortion of historical facts about the consequences of the Second World War and for the propagation of the totalitarian political system;

19. Condemns the fact that extremist and xenophobic political forces in Europe are increasingly resorting to distortion of historical facts, and employ symbolism and rhetoric that echoes aspects of totalitarian propaganda, including racism, anti-Semitism and hatred towards sexual and other minorities;

20. Urges the Member States to ensure compliance with the provisions of the Council Framework Decision, so as to counter organisations that spread hate speech and violence in public spaces and online, and to effectively ban neo-fascist and neo-Nazi groups and any other foundation or association that exalts and glorifies Nazism and fascism or any other form of totalitarianism, while respecting domestic legal order and jurisdiction;

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21. Stresses that Europe's tragic past should continue to serve as a moral and political inspiration to face the challenges of today's world, including the fight for a fairer world, creating open and tolerant societies and communities embracing ethnic, religious and sexual minorities, and making European values work for everyone;
 22. Instructs its President to forward this resolution to the Council, the Commission, the governments and parliaments of the Member States, the Russian Duma and the parliaments of the Eastern Partnership countries.
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