Resolution on European conscience and totalitarianism

2009/2557(RSP) - 02/04/2009 - Text adopted by Parliament, single reading

Following the debate which took place during the sitting of 25 March 2009, European Parliament adopted by 553 votes to 44 with 33 abstentions, a resolution on European conscience and totalitarianism. The resolution had been tabled by the EPP-ED, ALDE, UEN and Green/ALE groups.

It recalls that from the outset, European integration has been a response to the suffering inflicted by two world wars and the Nazi tyranny that led to the Holocaust and to the expansion of totalitarian and undemocratic Communist regimes in Central and Eastern Europe. The process of European integration has been successful and has now led to an EU that encompasses the countries of Central and Eastern Europe which lived under Communist regimes from the end of World War II until the early 1990s. The earlier accessions of Greece, Spain and Portugal, which suffered under long-lasting fascist regimes, helped secure democracy in the south of Europe.

Parliament expresses respect for all victims of totalitarian and undemocratic regimes in Europe and pays tribute to those who fought against tyranny and oppression. It renews its commitment to a peaceful and prosperous Europe founded on the values of respect for human dignity, freedom, democracy, equality, the rule of law and respect for human rights. Members underlines the importance of keeping the memories of the past alive, because there can be no reconciliation without truth and remembrance. They reconfirm their united stand against all totalitarian rule from whatever ideological background, and condemn unequivocally all crimes against humanity committed by all totalitarian and authoritarian regimes.

Stressing that there can be no reconciliation without remembrance, Parliament regrets that, 20 years after the collapse of the Communist dictatorships in Central and Eastern Europe, access to documents that are of personal relevance or needed for scientific research is still unduly restricted in some Member States. There must be a genuine effort in all Member States towards opening up archives, including those of the former internal security services, secret police and intelligence agencies, although steps must be taken to ensure that this process is not abused for political purposes.

Parliament calls on the Commission, Member States and Council, as appropriate:

- to make further efforts to strengthen the teaching of European history and to underline the historic achievement of European integration and the stark contrast between the tragic past and the peaceful and democratic social order in today's European Union;
- to support the activities of non-governmental organisations, such as Memorial in the Russian Federation, that are actively engaged in researching and collecting documents related to the crimes committed during the Stalinist period;
- to establish a Platform of European Memory and Conscience to provide support for networking and cooperation among national research institutes specialising in the subject of totalitarian history, and for the creation of a pan-European documentation centre/memorial for the victims of all totalitarian regimes;
- to strengthen the existing relevant financial instruments with a view to providing support for professional historical research on the issues outlined above;
- to proclaim 23 August as a Europe-wide Day of Remembrance for the victims of all totalitarian and authoritarian regimes, to be commemorated with dignity and impartiality.

Lastly, Parliament is convinced that the ultimate goal of disclosure and assessment of the crimes committed by the Communist totalitarian regimes is reconciliation, which can be achieved by admitting responsibility, asking for forgiveness and fostering moral renewal.