



Brussels, 4th December 2008

His Excellency
Prof. dr. Hans-Gert PÖTTERING
President of the European Parliament

Dear Mr President,

Whereas the idea of a museum of European history should be appreciated and whereas "academic independence and the objective portrayal of history", as well as "institutional independence of the body responsible for running the House of European History" should be a top priority, the "Conceptual Basis for a House of European History" (HEH) provokes a number of questions and remarks which should be taken into consideration.

The most serious omissions and misinterpretations of the said document include:

1. It is not clear enough what sources of funding of the HEH will be,
2. It is difficult to disentangle individual histories of European nations from events of a European scale. Therefore the HEH should pay a special attention to the historical sensitivity of smaller nations of Europe;
3. While discussing the roots of European identity one must stress the role of critical Greek philosophy, Roman law and Christianity. Factors mentioned in paragraphs 27-30 should remain as secondary circumstances;
4. For hundreds of millions of European Christians (and probably for many Jews as well) it is unacceptable to agree that "starting from the 4th Century AD the Christian religion developed as a combination of Jewish tradition and organized church" (paragraph 34). Christianity was founded by Jesus Christ in early 1st Century AD. The division of Eastern and Western Christianity was sealed in 1054 and not "before 1000";
5. While discussing the religious composition of European nations in modern times (paragraph 40) the authors ignored Roman Catholicism in Austria, Ireland, Portugal and Spain. The Bible was translated into national languages in Catholic countries as well (paragraph 41);
6. As to paragraph 42 - Hungary was also influenced by a culture of nobility;
7. In paragraph 44 the presentation of "Austria and Hungary's wars against Turkey" must include the Battle of Vienna (1683) and the contribution of Poland-Lithuania which had also fought against Turkey for two centuries.
8. The principle of nationhood developed prior to the 19th Century (paragraph 48). There is an ongoing debate on the beginnings of nation-states in Europe that should not be ignored;
9. While 1917 is important as a start of the Bolshevik era (paragraph 51), Bolshevik atrocities and Soviet policies of mass murder (e.g. the Gulag and the Ukrainian Holodomor) must not be omitted. In this context one must mention the Polish-Soviet War that started with the Red Army westward drive in late 1918 and ended up with the Battle of Warsaw in August 1920;
10. It is unfair to attach ethnic diversity and all problems connected with it to post-918 Eastern Europe only (paragraphs 54). One must remember that in the 19th century Austria-Hungary, Prussia, Russia, Turkey and also Great Britain, were multi-ethnic states and that they suppressed national movements. National independence aspirations of the Irish, Fins, Hungarians, Poles, Czechs, Slovaks, as well as Baltic and Balkan nations must not be ignored;
11. The road to the Spanish Civil War was more complicated than it is presented in paragraph 59. General Franco's putsch was preceded by Republican atrocities;
12. The appeasement policy was followed not only by Great Britain (paragraph 60), but also by France (cf. the famous question *mourir pour Danzig?*);

13. From paragraph 61 it looks like the outbreak of World War Two was Hitler's success. While the "fourth partition of Poland" is mentioned in this context one should know when and by whom its first three partitions (1772, 1791 and 1795) took place;

14. From the phrase "The last Polish resistance was finally snuffed out in early October 1939" (paragraph 62) one may conclude that after that the Poles discontinued struggle against the Third Reich. This is not true. The Polish soldiers fought in France in 1940, in the Battle of Britain, in the Middle East, Italy, Belgium and the Netherlands, as well as alongside the Soviet army on the eastern front. Moreover the Polish underground resistance continued from 1939 to 1945, its major operation being the Warsaw Rising of 1944. The overall number of Polish troops mobilized during World War Two was comparable to that of France;

15. It would be more logical to put paragraph 72, presenting the impact of the Soviet armies on Eastern and Central Europe, before paragraph 70. The "euphoria" connected with liberation was not mixed with "fear of a new dictatorship" but from 1944 with actual Soviet terror;

16. There is no reason to point out German refugees (paragraph 73) if mass German Nazi and Soviet deportations of other nations, both during and after World War Two, are not mentioned;

17. The post-war shift of European societies to the left should not be illustrated by the defeat of Winston Churchill (paragraph 74) but rather by the growth of Communist parties, also or mainly in Western Europe;

18. The Cold War started because of many factors, also because of the debates over the future of Germany which is right in the middle of Europe and not "on its periphery" (paragraph 75);

19. The Soviet Union exerted both external and internal (Communist parties) pressure on the West (paragraph 80);

20. In paragraph 83 one should mention the neutralization of Austria in 1955;

21. A well edited paragraph 101, including the mention of "Solidarity", the Polish Pope and the martial law should be completed with a remark that all these factors paved the way for the fall of the Berlin Wall;

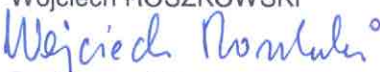
22. In paragraph 106 a mention of the Polish Round Table and of the Hungarian open door policy of 1989 must be made.

By no means is it a complete list of amendments suggested by colleagues from various countries. The undersigned MEPs wish to organize a public debate on the HEH project inviting professional historians to the European Parliament premises.

These remarks are not aimed at derailing the House of European History project but, on the contrary, at making it a fulfilment of the demand for an institution that would shape a well balanced common historical memory of the Europeans.

On behalf of the undersigned,

We remain Sincerely Yours,

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