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REPORT 1

on history and the learning of history in Europe

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[Link to the Addendum](#)

Summary

The colloquy on history learning in Europe, organised by the Committee on Culture and Education on December 1994 in Paris, showed that history has a key political role to play in today's Europe. It can either contribute to greater understanding, tolerance and confidence between individuals and between the peoples of Europe or become a force for division, violence and intolerance.

Schools are not the sole source of historical influence and opinion. Other sources include the mass media, films, literature and tourism. Influence is also exercised by the family, peer groups, local and national communities, and by religious and political circles.

Several forms of history play different roles: tradition, memories and analytical history. Facts are selected on the basis of different criteria in each.

Without historical awareness the individual is more vulnerable to political and other manipulation. The Assembly therefore supports ongoing Council for Cultural Co-operation (CDCC) work on the teaching of history in Europe so that it becomes an essential part of the education of all young people. Such teaching should enable pupils to acquire critical thinking skills to analyse and interpret information effectively and responsibly, to recognise the complexity of issues and to appreciate cultural diversity. The state should encourage an appropriate scientific approach, without religious or political bias.

I. Draft recommendation

1. People have a right to their past, just as they have a right to disown it. History is one of several ways of retrieving this past and creating a cultural identity. It is also a gateway to the experiences and richness of the past and of other cultures. It is a discipline concerned with the development of a critical approach to information and of controlled imagination.
2. History also has a key political role to play in today's Europe. It can contribute to greater understanding, tolerance and confidence between individuals and between the peoples of Europe. Or it can become a force for division, violence and intolerance.
3. Historical awareness is an important civic skill. Without it the individual is more vulnerable to political and other manipulation.
4. For most young people, history begins in school. This should not simply be the learning by heart of haphazard historical facts; it should be an initiation into how historical knowledge is arrived at, a matter of developing the critical mind and the development of a democratic, tolerant and responsible civic attitude.
5. Schools are not the sole source of historical influence and opinion. Other sources include the mass media,

films, literature and tourism. Influence is also exercised by the family, peer groups, local and national communities, and by religious and political circles.

6. The new communication technologies (CD-I, CD-ROM, Internet, virtual reality etc) are gradually extending the range and impact of historical subjects.

7. A distinction may be made between several forms of history: tradition, memories and analytical history. Facts are selected on the basis of different criteria in each. And these various forms of history play different roles.

8. Politicians have their own interpretations of history, and some are tempted to manipulate it. Virtually all political systems have used history for their own ends and have imposed both their version of historical facts and their definition of the good and bad figures of history.

9. Even if their constant aim may be to get as close to objectivity as possible, historians are also well aware of the essential subjectivity of history and of the various ways in which it can be reconstructed and interpreted.

10. Citizens have a right to learning history that has not been manipulated. The state should uphold this right and encourage an appropriate scientific approach, without religious or political bias, in all that is taught.

11. As regards the substance of history, teachers and research workers should be in close contact to assure the continued updating and renewal of the content of history teaching. It is important that history keeps pace with the present.

12. There should also be transparency between those working in all areas of history, whether the school classroom, TV studio or university library.

13. Particular attention should be given to the problems in central and eastern Europe which has suffered from manipulation of history up to recent times, and continues in certain cases to be subject to political censorship.

14. The Assembly recommends that the Committee of Ministers encourage the teaching of history in Europe with regard to the following proposals:

i. Historical awareness should be an essential part of the education of all young people. The teaching of history should enable pupils to acquire critical thinking skills to analyse and interpret information effectively and responsibly, to recognise the complexity of issues and to appreciate cultural diversity. Stereotypes should be identified and any other distortions based on national or racial prejudice.

ii. The subject matter of history teaching should be very open. It should include all aspects of societies (social and cultural history as well as political). The role of women should be given proper recognition. Local and national (but not nationalist) history should be taught and the history of minorities. Controversial, sensitive and tragic events should be balanced by positive mutual influences.

iii. Greater efforts should be made in member states to teach about the history of all Europe.

iv. Schools should recognise the different ways in which the same subjects are handled in different countries and this could be developed as a basis for inter-school exchanges.

v. Support should be given to the Georg Eckert Institute for International Textbook Research and Ministries of Education and educational publishers in member states should be asked to ensure that the Institute's collection of textbooks is kept up-to-date.

vi. The different forms of history learning (textbook study, television, project work, museum visits, etc) should be combined, without exclusive preference to any of them. The new information technologies should be fully integrated. Proper educational (and academic) standards must be ensured for the material used.

vii. Greater interaction should be fostered between school and out-of-school influences on young people's appreciation of history, for example by museums (and in particular history museums), cultural routes and tourism in general.

viii. Innovatory approaches should be encouraged as well as continued in-service training especially with regard to the new technologies. An interactive network of history teachers should be encouraged. History should be a priority subject for European Teachers' Courses organised within the framework of the Council for Cultural Co-operation in-service training programme for teachers.

ix. Co-operation should be encouraged between teachers and historians, for example by means of the new project of the Education Committee of the Council for Cultural Co-operation on learning and teaching about the

history of Europe in the 20th Century.

x. Government support should be given to the setting up of independent national associations of history teachers. Their active involvement in the European history teachers association *Euroclio* should be welcomed.

xi. A Code of Practice for history teaching should be drawn up in collaboration with history teachers and a European Charter to protect them from political manipulation.

15. The Assembly supports freedom of academic research but would also expect professional responsibility as in the parallel field of broadcasting. The Assembly therefore recommends that the Committee of Ministers:

i. ask Governments to assure continued financial support for history research and the work of multilateral and bilateral commissions on contemporary history;

ii. promote co-operation between historians so as to help encourage the development of more open and more tolerant attitudes in Europe by taking account of different experiences and opinions;

iii. ensure that the right of historians to freedom of expression is protected.

16. European collaboration should be encouraged in the field of history. The Assembly recommends that the Committee of Ministers:

i. examine ways in which a chapter of the agreed basics of the various histories of European peoples might be included in all European school textbooks;

ii. consider the possibility of establishing in member states an on-line library of history;

iii. encourage member states to establish national history museums on the lines of the German "House of History" in Bonn;

iv. promote multilateral and bilateral projects on history and history teaching and in particular regional projects between neighbouring countries.

II. Explanatory memorandum

by Mr de PUIG

Introduction

1. In December 1992 I tabled a motion for a recommendation on "history in Europe" ([Doc. 6723](#)), with a view to initiating an examination within the Parliamentary Assembly of the role of history in our century as well as the learning and study of history and the use — and sometimes manipulation — of history by our media-influenced society. The intention was not to study this or that aspect of teaching or research, for that was done long ago. I am convinced that history as learnt by us at school and university represents only a part of our historical knowledge. History is also learnt outside the education system, and very often we pick up bits and pieces of history from political life, literature or art. It is not only real historians who can tell us about history.

2. I should therefore like to expand the concept of history teaching into the wider, more comprehensive concept of history learning. It is a concept covering all the historical knowledge a citizen acquires in the course of his or her education and life. On that basis we may consider what kind of history is learnt, how it is learnt and why.

3. Over and beyond problems specific to the teaching of history, I have endeavoured to reflect on the treatment of history by and on television, which is itself a historical document. This involves seeing how history is treated in newspapers and magazines, on radio, in museums and by the cinema (both a historical document and an interpretation of history) as well as in political discussions. Only these aspects will be investigated, as the subject is inexhaustible.

4. In any event, this is not a debate about the history of Europe but about history in Europe. It is impossible to write a single European history because one comes up against different interpretations, contrasting ideas and probably insurmountable methodological and ideological disagreements. And it is only right that this should be so, otherwise history would be dogmatic. If the choice lay between dogmatic or pluralistic history, it would be better to opt for the latter.

5. In an information society the diversity of sources of historical evaluation is becoming increasingly obvious. Moreover, the concern to encourage tolerance and acceptance of others has intensified. Thus the Council of Europe

wishes to embark on a further process of thinking with a view to reminding governments and public opinion how important, indeed fundamental, history learning is. We can no longer accept that history as it is taught today and tomorrow should be false, manipulated or trivialised.

6. In the present European context it is increasingly necessary to denounce manipulations of history, the frivolous and superficial way in which history is often treated and, of course, the exploitation of history for obnoxious causes, as is being done in the Balkans.

Politics and history

7. History has an inescapable function of enhancement, judgment, contrast and reference. We look at the past with our present-day mentality, our own problems, our own view of the world and of society and our own ideas. That is why the interpretation of each historical period contains new meanings. This is all to the good, as an aseptic, timeless history unrelated to our immediate present would be nothing more than a literary exercise. History concerns our present, and we should be aware of this.

8. Although the role of history may be regarded as a minor problem, it is, in my view, a priority matter in view of history's direct relationship with ideology, nationalism, tolerance (or intolerance), racism (anti-racism), social attitudes and, in general, a society's forms of understanding and functioning.

9. History is therefore a political issue. Any investigation or analysis of the past is naturally conditioned by the historian, who will declare positive anything that is positive in his own opinion. The very choice of topics, sources, methods and bibliography involves subjective, ideological and political elements. Here lies one of the primary political factors of history: the political awareness of the person studying it.

10. I should not like to give the impression that the use of history is in itself negative. No; history renders, and has always rendered, considerable services to the progress of humanity. Historical experience, a knowledge of the past, the collective memory, the evaluation of previous successes and mistakes, the heritage bequeathed to us by past ages, mankind's progress, its technological, cultural, humanistic and social achievements — all this influences politics, and therefore history has often been the weapon and emblem of positive movements and changes. History invests politics with arguments and reasons. It can legitimise politics provided that it is not misused and does not serve despotic, antidemocratic or antisocial interests.

11. Consequently, it is, in my view, legitimate to make use of history and historical references in politics on two conditions:—

i. What is used must really be history; that is to say, we should be capable of adopting a critical approach to the analysis of historical facts and any possible interpretations. We should proceed from history to politics, not vice versa, as the usual process is that on the basis of a political proposition one tries to find historical references, whether relevant or not, whether reliable and consistent or not.

ii. History should be used for worthy and just causes. It is so vast, diverse and terrible that it can provide all kinds of examples for unscrupulous people. The worst horrors, wars, dominations, authoritarianisms and exploitations of humanity have been justified by means of theories and arguments deriving from historical facts. It is unacceptable to resort to history for the purpose of building an unjust future.

12. If some examples needed to be given of the legitimate use of history, it would be sufficient to point out how widespread the principles underlying the French Revolution have become or to refer to the Nazi regime and the Holocaust as the kinds of aberrations that should be avoided in future. On the other hand, one only has to observe how history is being used by the National Front in France to realise that here is an example of a perverse interpretation of history. Let us not forget either the gigantic manipulation of history by the Soviet regime, which succeeded not only in inventing a history consistent with its doctrinal postulates but also, by dogmatising theories of Hegel and Marx, in creating the "infallible" method of historical analysis and squandering the fundamental contribution of historical materialism, transformed into an instrument of a political doctrine which, by definition, it had to serve.

13. The two main trends in the use and misuse of history for political purposes have been concentrated on the national question or the social question: in the first instance, for the identification of the group or the emancipation of man; then, as national or social history which, in its extreme or extremist forms, has been patriotic — and even chauvinistic — history and revolutionary or reactionary history.

14. There is nothing reprehensible about the fact that peoples seek signs of their identity in history, especially as it is obvious that a national human community has necessarily been created throughout a historical process of a specific and individual kind. The national history of each people thus has a meaning of its own. The same is not true of nationalistic or chauvinistic history, which aspires not to explain the national characteristics of a group but to create nationalistic attitudes by means of indoctrination against external enemies. As I pointed out at the Paris colloquy, whereas national history is an element inherent in the human condition, in the identification of the individual with his own group, in the very existence of the nation and in the discourse of world history, history of a

nationalistic and patriotic kind, on the other hand, fosters confrontation and exclusion. It seeks to subject the whole future to the mythical idea of the nation, while justifying everything in this way.

15. The same applies to the social question. It is quite logical and even desirable that a critical history should be an instrument of emancipation for individuals and social classes. Historical analysis has undoubtedly made a decisive contribution in the past to remedying injustices, exploitation, slavery and subservience. The concepts of freedom, democracy, equality, social justice and solidarity, as well as their advancement, are - although limited and precarious - partly due to historical experience. History harbours the seed of social progress, as it shows what should change and be altered if man is to live in fairer and more equitable conditions. Accordingly, history is a catalyst of social change and of human and humanistic progress.

16. However, its use as an instrument of revolution, ie of radical transformation or sudden acceleration of historical processes, has not always been accompanied by rigour and circumspection. Sometimes historical analysis and its forced, manipulated theories have served as a pretext for changes that have been retrograde rather than progressive.

17. The versions of history that emphasised the innate superiority of our forebears promoted the nationalism of the 19th century. "History is above all the science of national consciousness", one Russian historian bluntly stated. Education for all has helped to fulfil this sacred mission. A century ago, 80% of holders of the French "baccalauréat" believed that the aim of history was to exalt patriotism. Civic objectives and erudition are not necessarily compatible. "An accurate history can teach us to agree amongst ourselves, as well as not to do so", one critic wrote.

18. "Rewriting the past to accommodate group pride is too human to be viewed as part of a conspiracy" one expert said at the colloquy. And he added: "Nor is it necessarily sinister to manipulate national history, as each of us always does with our personal life story. The fact is that such manipulations cannot be avoided, and the real questions for historians is how profoundly subjective people can arrive at an objective truth. Chroniclers used to invent histories in order to please their protectors, justify their compatriots and enhance their own reputation. The early analysts would unashamedly praise their patrons to the skies; subsequently, historians lauded the very patriotism that

is still influencing the teaching of history today". My own view, however, is that manipulations can and should be avoided. A historian is human and therefore subjective, but objectivity can be achieved through a comparison of several subjective versions.

The work of the Council of Europe

19. History and the teaching of history have always occupied a special place in the Council of Europe's work as they do much to shape young people's attitudes towards other countries, cultures and races.

20. Between 1953 and 1958 the Council of Europe held six major international conferences on the treatment of European history in some 900 school textbooks out of the 2 000 then in use in its member states. This series was followed by two other conferences on "religion in school history textbooks in Europe" (Louvain, 1972) and "co-operation in Europe since 1945, as presented in resources for the teaching of history, geography and civics in secondary schools" (Brunswick, 1979).

21. From 1965 to 1983 the Council for Cultural Co-operation (CDCC) held four intergovernmental symposia on history teaching: "History teaching in secondary education" (Elsinor, 1965), "History teaching in lower secondary education" (Brunswick, 1969), "History teaching in upper secondary education" (Strasbourg, 1971) and "Teaching about the Portuguese discoveries in secondary schools in Western Europe" (Lisbon, 1983). The last-named symposium was held in connection with the Council of Europe's 17th art exhibition.

22. A useful byproduct of the Elsinor symposium was the compilation of a list of twenty-five elements which are common to the history of part or the whole of Europe and which thus lend themselves to European treatment.

23. An important partner in the Council of Europe's work on history has been the Georg Eckert Institute for International Textbook Research, which possesses the largest international library of history and geography textbooks in Europe. In 1965 the Institute accepted an invitation from the Council of Europe to act as a European clearing house for the exchange of information on history and geography textbooks. In 1988, following an initiative by the CDCC, the Committee of Ministers adopted Recommendation No. R (88) 17 on "co-operation with the Georg Eckert Institute for International Textbook Research", which asked member states to help to make textbook authors and teachers aware of the Institute's work and encourage publishers of educational material as well as publishers' associations to send, free of charge, copies of their main history, geography and social studies textbooks to the Institute's library.

24. In the second half of the 1970s, the CDCC gathered information on the ways in which schools in member states were trying to establish links between subjects in two areas of the curriculum: "human sciences" (usually involving history, geography, economics, sociology and political education) and "natural sciences" (generally covering physics, chemistry and biology). The results of this work were published in "Innovation in Secondary

Education in Europe" (Council of Europe, Strasbourg, 1979).

25. Since the beginning of the 1980s, the importance of history has been emphasised in the CDCC's work on primary and secondary education as well as in its activities on wider topics such as: the European dimension of school curricula; human rights education in schools; intercultural education; preparation for life in an interdependent world.

26. The importance of history has also been acknowledged in several other recommendations of the Committee of Ministers. For example, in Recommendation No. R (83) 13 on "the role of the secondary school in preparing young people for life", the Committee of Ministers stated that education systems should provide all young people with "an introduction to the cultural, spiritual, historical and scientific heritage ...".

27. Since the early 1980s the CDCC has been holding a series of seminars for history teachers in connection with its teacher bursaries scheme. These seminars focus on movements or encounters of peoples or ideas that have marked the history of Europe. Their subjects have included: "The Viking Age in Europe", "Europe and the US Constitution" and "Teaching about the French Revolution in schools in Europe".

28. In the late 1980s a marked renewal of interest in history teaching occurred in member states, and in September 1990 the CDCC held in Brunswick, in co-operation with the Georg Eckert Institute, a European educational research workshop on "history and social studies — methodologies of textbook analysis".

29. The upheavals that began in Europe in 1989 have been reflected in several recent CDCC history symposia, namely:

- "History teaching in the new Europe" (Bruges, December 1991);
- "The teaching of history since 1815, with special reference to changing borders" (Leeuwarden, April 1993);
- "History teaching and European awareness" (Delphi, May 1994);
- "History, democratic values and tolerance in Europe: the experience of countries in democratic transition" (Sofia, October 1994);
- "The reform of history teaching in schools in European countries in democratic transition" (Graz, November 1994).

30. In October 1993 the heads of state and government of the Council of Europe's member states held a summit meeting in Vienna. Their final declaration stressed the urgent need to strengthen "programmes aimed at eliminating prejudice in the teaching of history by emphasising positive mutual influences between countries, religions and ideas in the historical development of Europe". In response to the Vienna declaration, a two-year activity on history teaching (1994-95) was launched by the Council of Europe's Committee of Ministers. The final conclusions of this activity were presented at a symposium on "mutual understanding and the teaching of European history: challenges, problems and approaches" (Prague, October 1995).

31. In 1991 the Standing Conference (now Congress) of Local and Regional Authorities of Europe initiated a project entitled "School training and local history", aimed at pupils aged between 9 and 15. The project involved twenty-five schools in fifteen member states. The pupils produced studies on their localities and their history, which they then exchanged with those produced by their counterparts in the other participating countries.

32. The Parliamentary Assembly, for its part, has never adopted a specific text on history, but it has made several references to the subject. In 1980, for example, it urged that education should "include adequate teaching of modern history, so that young people will be better prepared to promote democracy" (Resolution 743 on the need to combat resurgent fascist propaganda and its racist aspects).

33. Other references to the importance of history and the study of history may be found in the Assembly's recommendations on university co-operation between Europe and Latin America (1985), the European dimension of education (1989), the preservation of libraries and archives in central and eastern Europe (1992) and religious tolerance in a democratic society (1993).

The Paris colloquy

34. In Paris in December 1994 the Assembly held a colloquy entitled "The learning of history in Europe" in which invited experts and the members of the Committee of Culture and Education participated.

35. Without wishing to detail here the contents of the colloquy, which are appended hereto, I shall simply comment on the colloquy and its results as well as set out my own conclusions.

36. The purpose of the colloquy was to reflect on the learning of history and to try to gather information on the various aspects of such learning. The idea was to ascertain how our countries' citizens learn history, from their early school days to their mature adulthood, and understand how history influences our thinking about values, society and the future.

37. It was obvious that the discussions would focus not only on teaching — which also has its importance — but also on learning and the various means of learning: the mass media, art, museums, cinema, tourism, political messages, books, family, cultural events. The aim of the colloquy was to throw up some ideas on these forms of learning and on their problems and virtues, as well as to place thinking about the topic in the concrete framework of a political will, the will to make history a useful instrument for protecting the values of democracy, human rights, tolerance and respect for others; in other words, using history as a tool for a more peaceful, just and cohesive future.

38. In my opinion, the colloquy provided us with some very interesting information and revealed the views of experts on a large number of subjects. It is true that there was more discussion about education than the other aspects, but it is important to note the great value of certain contributions which came as a revelation to most of the participants. For example, the Catholic Church's approach to history, history teaching by museums and history on television were much appreciated subjects. Unfortunately, the colloquy did not deal with the various aspects of the learning of history. It was perhaps unrealistic to think that one and a half days would be enough for a thorough study of the whole range of factors connected with the learning of history, the political use of history and the sources of our historical knowledge.

39. In any event, the discussions helped to supplement the existing texts on the Council of Europe's activities in this field, including the earlier mentioned Committee of Ministers resolutions and Parliamentary Assembly recommendations. I will set out below my own ideas on the aspects not covered.

40. From the various oral or written contributions as well as the colloquy's discussions certain conclusions of a political nature may be drawn:

— The influence of history on ways of thinking is enormous; it is a fundamental factor in politics and social attitudes.

— Authorities of all kinds have made political use of history in order to legitimise themselves. However, history should serve citizens, not authorities.

— History has often played a negative role because it has been used to justify tyrannies, injustices and abuses.

— On the other hand, history may be very positive as an element of culture and human experience conducive to understanding, tolerance, respect for diversity, freedom, democracy, economic progress and social justice.

— Any abuse of history should be combated and avoided.

41. In my view, the colloquy also revealed a general consensus on the way in which history should be perceived. Above all, history should have a moral message serving to denounce injustice and uphold human rights; it should be authentic and free from any manipulation. It should also be free from lies and false data as well as taboos; in a word, it should be clear and honest.

42. History of an objective and scientific kind is rigorous and amenable to several interpretations; it is therefore undogmatic. As far as the history of a country is concerned, it should be national but not nationalistic, as the latter implies some adjustment to patriotic sentiments that is incompatible with truthful history. It should therefore be a history of a contrastive, comparative, pluralistic kind, systematically confronting the various interpretations with the relevant sources.

43. But while history is closely linked to the present, it should remain free from ideologies and even national connotations. Admittedly, the discrediting of official history may do much to reconstruct history, but it must not fall under the sway of other political discourses of varying degrees of prevalence in society. It should be borne in mind that sometimes even popular memory — albeit often considered sacred — is no more rigorous or less illusory than the official version of the past.

44. For that reason it is necessary to write, present and teach a critical history that fosters an objective understanding of history and its various interpretations by developing a critical sense. History, as we know, must be constantly revised because of each period's interests, as well as on account of great uncertainties, for historical interpretations often result from a hierarchy of sources, a selection of information and the use of a particular method of analysis. The emergence of new sources, or a change of method, may give rise to a different, even contradictory interpretation.

45. The participants in the colloquy reached a broad consensus on the general conception of history and its role

in terms of human rights, as well as on aspects of a more concrete and practical kind.

The learning of history

46. An analysis of the factors contributing to the perception of history shows that the leading one is the teaching of history in schools. Then, by way of not insignificant complementary factors, come the historical concepts transmitted by the media (printed and audiovisual), literature, cinema and museums. Next come the influences of religion, politicians, local communities, personal contacts etc, which may increase, contradict or supplement knowledge acquired in the classroom.

47. The learning of history is a diversified process: individual reconstruction of the past; visits to museums or castles; mass media; comparison of personal experience with observations made by others.

48. A research project carried out in England on the historical knowledge and understanding of schoolchildren aged between 7 and 9 showed that they had derived about 85% of their knowledge of the past from sources other than school. We should not therefore underestimate the ideas, knowledge and experience acquired by schoolchildren outside the classroom.

49. Three ideas are essential to an understanding of history: history is never fully or definitively known; its witnesses are never impartial; any anachronism should be avoided as far as possible.

50. It is helpful, in my view, to ponder the origins of our historical concepts and try to ascertain what can be proposed in each field in order to establish positive, effective criteria on the learning of history in a democratic, pluriethnic and multicultural society.

The teaching of history

51. History teaching should be aimed not so much at imparting specific contents as to enable pupils to work out their own interpretations. It should not only focus on facts but also be aimed at developing certain skills. It should be vivid and, as 85% of the information acquired comes from out-of-school sources, these should be accorded much greater attention. Similarly, interaction between these sources should be fostered.

52. The amount of classroom time allocated to history teaching varies enormously from one country to another, but the aims of such teaching are largely identical, viz giving people a taste for history, making them active, responsible and critical citizens and showing them that historical truth cannot be reduced to one particular point of view. It is essential to find a way of talking to them about various historical events while comparing several sources of information and opinion, encouraging them to question their preconceived ideas and subjecting any event to a critical historical analysis. The role of politicians is to create conditions enabling history teachers to do their work more easily. There is an acute need for in-service training of teachers.

53. Improving school textbooks was the theme of the Council of Europe's first activity in the field of education, and the importance of history was emphasised by the European Cultural Convention as long ago as 1954. By this convention, each contracting party promises to "encourage the study by its own nationals of the languages, history and civilisation of the other contracting parties and grant facilities to those parties to promote such studies in its territory, and endeavour to promote the study of its ... history and civilisation in the territory of the other contracting parties and grant facilities to the nationals of those parties to pursue such studies in its territory."

54. For some time it has been clear that teaching, especially history teaching, should continually reform its methods in order to be more effective. History is at the centre of the education system on account of its close links with the human sciences, which used to be called the "humanities" and are now called the "social sciences". History is, broadly speaking, central to culture in general, knowledge of the world, civic education, the organisation of societies and information about human beings and their virtues and defects. Lastly, history is the key element in education for children and young people, their knowledge and their ability to understand and criticise. A teacher whom I greatly value, Joan Reglá, wrote an introduction to history which he entitled "Understanding the world".

55. An education in history is therefore very important and requires continuous methodological and political thinking. If pupils are to be offered a perfectly sound, intelligible history in tune with the problems of our age - as would be desirable - it is important that syllabuses, learning methods and teaching staff should be routinely overhauled. This is a great challenge for public authorities, who need to ensure that the content of history syllabuses is as rigorous as possible and guarantee full freedom for historians. They must also make an effort to adjust teaching to present-day requirements and provide it with the latest audiovisual techniques.

56. The new information and communication tools (video, computers, CD-I, CD-Rom, etc.) offer a wide range of possibilities for facilitating the learning of history at school and elsewhere, provided that the intellectual quality is ensured. Educational methods should be differentiated, as they cannot be the same in primary education as in upper secondary education, where the content can be more sophisticated. As for universities, they can take advantage of an even more advanced technological potential. This learning should in any event be supplemented by other media, such as museums, television, cinema, visits to historic places and study of the arts.

57. As mentioned by Professor Prats at the Paris colloquy, it is not a question for pupils of memorising historical facts but of learning through discovery. They should be given an opportunity to develop their understanding and critical sense by emphasising human behaviour in the past. The quality of education should take precedence over the quantity of information provided. In this way history can become a tool for dealing with the complexity of our age and planning the future. As Braudel stated, "history is a study of the origin of present-day problems".

Research

58. Teaching and research are interdependent. The former could not evolve without the findings of the latter. However, historical errors result from interpretations by historians, researchers and teachers — who are often incidentally, one and the same person. Every year an enormous quantity of history books are published in all our countries. This may be good for the publishing trade, but the value and reliability of these short anecdotal histories or long wide-ranging theses is very varied. There is no planning of research or co-ordination between research, publishing and university teaching.

59. Public authorities should try to create conditions favourable to history research, provided that the research is independent of official policies.

60. Consideration could be given to encouraging a study of major topics that are currently controversial, such as foreign participation in the Spanish civil war, Stalinism, fascism, racism, minorities and national identities. Research should be carried out into concrete subjects capable of throwing light on our present.

61. Research (and the publication of its results) is the best remedy to manipulation and ignorance. It is the only means of restoring historical rigour. It is therefore valuable to teaching, but researchers should remember that their findings will be presented by educationists.

The media

62. These are a mass phenomenon capable of informing — or misinforming — hundreds of thousands of readers, listeners or viewers. History is both a beneficiary and a victim of this phenomenon. The media fulfil two functions: they disseminate information and analyses concerning the historical past and, at the same time, they produce documents on current events that will be the history of tomorrow.

63. The traditional means of disseminating historical knowledge - books, lectures, studies — reached only a limited section of society. Nowadays, thanks to written publications and audiovisual broadcasts, the average citizen has easier access to history. He also finds references to the past and historical analyses in the utterances of politicians.

64. Because of the immense power of images, television is undoubtedly the most effective communication medium for reaching the maximum number of people. It is therefore the ideal instrument for disseminating and learning all kinds of knowledge, especially history whenever it treats it in a respectful manner.

65. For television, history has become a useful theme as it interests the general public. Some channels have scheduled historical series at peak viewing times on account of their success. There is even talk of establishing a channel entirely devoted to history.

66. However, the media are not always rigorous and are liable to trivialise historical facts and manipulate opinion. For technical, budgetary and audience-rating reasons, they cannot present the pros and cons that are essential to any historical analysis. The message is therefore curtailed. Some ethical rules should be observed by programme-makers, who should also secure the assistance of a historian.

67. An ethical code might provide a yardstick for the treatment of history by the media.

Art and museums

68. Art is history, and museums are the repositories of history. Art, even in its contemporary form, translates the aesthetic and social thoughts and concerns of an age. Art is representative of its period and, in order to understand and interpret it, we need a knowledge of history, which, in return, is enhanced through artistic experience.

69. Museums are the partners of schools, in the same way as the planning of our cities or a visit to a castle. Fresh impetus has been given to artistic exhibitions, which are now more educational and historical. Interpretation of works is becoming more subtle and sensitive as a result.

70. If they are to be essential adjuncts to education, museums must, in order to be understandable, set off their collections to the best advantage by providing interpretations of them. The number of history museums should be

increased at all levels — national, regional and local — on the pattern of the German "House of History" in Bonn. Professional historians can help to enhance these museums, which are pages of history, and transform them into documentary evidence of the past.

Theatre and cinema

71. These two artistic disciplines are closely linked to history as they are wonderful instruments of historical dissemination. Although fictional, they sometimes give very accurate insights into history (French Revolution, fall of the Roman Empire, second world war etc.) and invariably contain an explicit or implicit message.

72. When its historical analysis is accurate, even a fiction devoid of substance may provide us with knowledge of another age or an earlier way of life. And this can provide us with a better understanding than a serious history book by a well-known historian.

73. But we should be aware of confusing history-cinema (such as "A Man for All Seasons" or "Schindler's List") with entertainment-cinema (such as "Cleopatra" or "Braveheart"). Their messages are very different for, while the former gives us a good insight into history, the latter is sadly lacking in historical rigour.

74. The cinema is also responsible for many erroneous historical ideas, but as it is constantly evolving, it can for instance, enable shifts in the American public's attitudes towards its own past to be detected through Hollywood westerns.

Literature

75. Literature, the whole of literature, is impregnated with history, as the historical element is very often present even in poetry: Brecht, Hugo, Lorca and many others, not forgetting the epic poems.

76. Similarly, history belongs to literature. The historical approach is commonly introduced into novels, essays or other narrations. History is also a literary genre: history books, memoirs, biographies, travel books, chronicles, diaries (for example, Jack Attali's "Verbatim"), specialised review articles, encyclopaedias etc. Lastly, written history is literature.

77. Some literary works have a very rich historical content. "The Name of the Rose", "The Grapes of Wrath" and "Don Quixotte" have provided us with more historical information and knowledge than many history books. The reconstruction of a historical period with full creative freedom sometimes offers a clearer overall picture than a doctoral thesis.

78. At the same time, the compulsory reading of such authors as Tolstoy, Yourcenar or Greaves serves to complement the educational process thanks to the historical approach underlying their novels. In the case of fiction, it is impossible to demand rigour and truth. But it is for teachers to restore the accuracy of the historical message in order to avoid any possible deviation.

The entourage: family, friends, community

79. Parents' opinions and whatever is recounted in the family setting are the earliest influences to which a child is subjected. Each family inherits an ancestral memory and expresses its views on the past and on politics and history. It provides a wealth of information about places, people and historical events, and prompts us to read this or that book. Children's entourage instils in them certain tastes, fashions and ideologies that will shape their idea of history.

80. A child will acquire a wider view of history from journeys and meetings with different people.

81. On the other hand, history learning is nowadays a very complex process of accumulating information and absorbing interpretations, discourses and reconstructions, and it is constantly renewed as each day brings new historical references.

Related problems

National history

82. No one can deny a national community's right to its history. The very existence of a group presupposes a historical evolution that determines its cohesion. It is therefore normal that each nation should have a national history and that historical awareness should underlie national political awareness. A coherent explanation — whether triumphant or tragic — of the nation's continuity becomes a patriotic necessity.

83. A problem arises when we move from national history to nationalistic history, as very often happens.

History is then used for propaganda and indoctrination purposes. Whereas national history seeks unifying elements to explain its existence, nationalistic history tries to justify patriotic values by exacerbating the epic and mythical aspects and "national" characteristics. It emphasises differences in relation to neighbouring countries, exalts uniformism, conceals the history of regions and minorities and always defines itself in relation to external enemies. It is the cause of ethnic conflicts. The case of former Yugoslavia is a telling example. In Serb and Croat history textbooks the "historical" descriptions are totally distorted by the nationalistic spirit.

84. In Europe, the dominant idea since the 19th century has been that a nation should be compact, uniform, monocultural, monolingual, standardised, equalised and centralised. To support this conception, it was necessary to produce a compact, uniform, mono-cultural history. Differences, diversities, external influences and crossbreeding were therefore denied. And yet the history of our countries is basically diverse, pluricultural and pluriethnic, with external influences that are so decisive that it is sometimes difficult to tell whether more is owed to "foreigners" or to nationals.

History of Europe

85. Europe is the history of an immense accumulation of diversities, a blend of ideas and races. Under the colours of national histories there emerges a Europe that is more mixed and uniform than the one we were told about. It is not homogeneous, but it has many shared elements, including a largely common history.

86. There is no *single* history of Europe, even though Europe's past was necessarily single. The existence of many books entitled *History of Europe* shows that there is a multiplicity of interpretations of facts. What one country may cherish as a positive, even glorious memory (a military victory, the achievement of independence) may be regarded as a disaster by a neighbouring country. The past was what it was, and its enhancement no doubt depends on the present. It is wrong to manipulate history, but it is not necessary to have only one view of the past either.

87. On the other hand, if Europe exists as a differentiated, identifiable reality, if there is a global conception of Europe, it should be possible to write the history of that reality, of its origins and contradictions, of the various kinds of experiences that led up to the present-day plan for Europe's integration.

88. We should not lose hope but try to foster a coherent explanation of our past. To begin with, we might study how a chapter containing the generally accepted basic facts about the various histories of Europe's peoples might be incorporated in all European history textbooks. Then, after thorough investigations, it might be possible to write a history of Europe that is not completely contemptible.

History in central and eastern Europe

89. Although there has been talk of manipulations of history in western Europe, this bears no comparison with what has happened in the countries of central and eastern Europe. The dogmatic political tendentiousness of history teaching has left these countries faced with the urgent and difficult necessity of rediscovering their true history.

90. They need history textbooks, retraining courses for teachers, new research methods and reformed educational plans and systems. The need is urgent, as the dissemination of a critical, rigorous history can help those countries to recapture their true identities, without lapsing into some other dogmatism.

91. The totalitarian systems of this part of Europe manipulated history to such an extent that it will take decades to restore historical normality. It is important to rehabilitate the history flaunted by the Soviet regime, together with the various symbols, artistic works, books, archives, libraries and names of things, streets, cities and places. This has been observed in the Baltic states.

92. In this connection it is worth mentioning the "Black Book on the Heinous Extermination of Jews by the German Fascist Invaders in the Temporarily occupied Regions of the USSR and in the Extermination Camps in Poland during the 1941-45 War"². At the time of the invasion of the USSR by Hitler's armies in 1941, Stalin supported the creation of a Jewish antifascist committee with a view to mobilising world opinion. At the suggestion of Albert Einstein, some members of the committee wrote the Black Book on the basis of the accounts, notes and diaries of survivors, witnesses or torturers. However, priorities changed and the book was never published. First of all, Stalin ordered the removal of references to participation by Ukrainians, Lithuanians, Russians and others in Nazi crimes; then he ordered the deletion of accounts concerning the Jewish resistance in the ghettos "to avoid encouraging Jewish nationalism". In 1947 the book was banned when it was about to be printed as it contained "serious political errors". The chairman of the Jewish antifascist committee was murdered in 1948, and some of its members, including several of the authors of the Black Book, were arrested, tortured, convicted and executed in 1952. In 1989 the original version of the Black Book was discovered in the archives of the KGB, but it was not until 1993 that the book was finally published in Russian (!) at Vilnius.

Problems of place names

93. Alongside the linguistic evolution that resulted in *Caesar Augusta* being transformed into Zaragossa and *Djebel Tariq* into Gibraltar, historical upheavals often lead to changes in place names. Thus the city of Byzantium

became Constantinople in the 4th century, then Istanbul as from the 15th century, while the city which the Germans called Pressburg in the middle ages was the capital of Hungary for than 300 years with the name Poszonyi and is today the capital of Slovakia with the name Bratislava. There are also cities which, after two or three changes, revert to their former or original names. This was the case, for example, with Chemnitz > Karl Marx Stadt > Chemnitz and with St Petersburg > Petrograd > Leningrad > St Petersburg.

94. These place-name changes, even though not always peaceful, have been the consequence of historical modifications. Above all (but not only) in central and eastern Europe, one also often comes across towns and villages that have two or three different names, even though only one name is official. Usually it is the same name in different languages, owing to a mixed population, as is the case with Nicosia/Lefkosa in Cyprus and/or to border changes, as is the case with Caporetto/Karfeit/Kobarid in Slovenia.

95. There is also the particular instance — referred to in the motion for a resolution on the preservation of toponymical traces of the European cultural heritage (Doc. 7185), presented by our colleague Mr Landsbergis — of the Baltic region once inhabited by Prussians. Wedged between the Lithuanians and the Poles, it was conquered in the 13th century by the Teuton knights, decimated by plague in 1709, heavily Germanised by Bismarck in the 19th century and, finally, systematically Russified by the Soviet Union after 1945. This last "operation" removed from the map of Europe a people that had itself already disappeared, as a result of amalgamation with the Lithuanians, Poles and Germans, but whose memory remained in the toponymics and hydronymics of the region it had inhabited.

96. Such curtailment of our memory and of the European historical heritage is highly regrettable, and it is to be hoped that it will not be permanent. While the Council of Europe cannot advocate any changes for the purpose of restoring some kind of "historical truth", it should draw attention to the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages, which (in paragraph 2.g of Article 10) seeks to encourage "the use or adoption, if necessary in conjunction with the name in the official language(s), of traditional and correct forms of place-names in regional or minority languages", even (or especially?) if these are no longer spoken.

97. History often repeats itself, but it never goes backwards, and decisions in this matter should lie in the first instance with the populations concerned. In this context we feel gratified by the open-mindedness demonstrated by the City of Strasbourg, which recently decided to add the old names of several streets in the city centre to their present names on the nameplates.

Conclusion: a history for progress, democracy, human rights and solidarity

98. "Is it possible to teach a historical method without content? To initiate someone in history without any preconceived ideas? Is there a basic minimum? If so, what is it? What is the prerequisite for a critical approach? Is it possible to define a European framework for history teaching (relevance of the context; importance of sources; diversity of points of view; effect of selection and conditioning etc.)? To what extent is this approach applied in Europe?" These questions, which we asked ourselves at the Paris colloquy, have guided our thinking about history teaching.

99. Historians know that history is necessarily biased, but the public is generally unaware of this and is usually credulous. The main aim of history teaching and learning is to show young people that there is no perfect version and that history cannot be approached like mathematics.

100. It is important to correct the perversions of earlier education systems that are still all too apparent in our present systems.

101. Schools should pay greater attention to preparation for history learning than to the teaching of historical facts: in the case of history, the emphasis should be on teaching how to learn rather than on imparting facts. Here are some simple exercises for developing historical criticism: how can we ascertain our date of birth? From what point of view are data presented (importance of witnesses and role of the context)? There is also the problem of anachronisms as well as the mistake of presenting the past as if it were the present.

102. History has a key political role to play in contemporary Europe. It can foster understanding, tolerance and trust between individuals and between the peoples of Europe. It can also be a factor for division, violence and intolerance. Knowledge of history is of paramount importance for civic life: without it, we are much more vulnerable to manipulation, whether political or otherwise.

103. Reference should also be made to the conclusions of the CDCC's symposium on "mutual understanding and the teaching of European history: challenges, problems and approaches" which was held in Prague in October 1995. The XXIIIrd Council of Europe Art Exhibition, entitled "Art and Power: Europe under the Dictators, 1930-45", is also relevant to this subject by which I set such store. It is essential, at any rate, that the Council of Europe should carry on its activities in the field of history, especially the new project of the Council for Cultural Co-operation's Education Committee on the learning and teaching of the history of Europe in the 20th century.

III. COLLOQUY PAPERS (Paris, December 1994)

See addendum

Reporting committee: Committee on Culture and Education

Budgetary implications for the Assembly: None.

Reference to the committee: [Doc. 6723](#) and Reference No. 1835 of 1 February 1993.

Draft recommendation: adopted unanimously by the committee on 21 December 1995.

Members of the committee: Mrs Fischer (Chairperson), Sir Russell Johnston, Mr de Puig (Vice-Chairpersons), MM. Alegre, Arnasson, Bartumeu Cassany, Bauer, Baumel, Berg, Berti, Decagny, De Decker, Elo, Mrs Fleetwood, MM. Galanos (Alternate: *Christodoulides*), Gellért Kis (Alternate: *Eörsi*), Baroness Gould, Mrs Groenver (Alternate: Mrs Severinsen), Mr Gül (Alternate: Mrs Özver), Baroness Hooper, MM. Jurkāns, Karas, Kollwelter, Koucký (Alternate: *Spacek*), Legendre, Lopez Henares, Mme Machaira, MM. Małachowski, Maloney, Maruflu (Alternate: *Mimaroglu*), Mrs Maximus (Alternate: *Staes*), Mrs Mihaylova, MM. Mocanu, *Mocioi*, Muehlemann, Mrs Naoumova, Mrs Ojuland (Alternate: Mrs *Veidemann*), MM. Paunescu, *Probst*, Pulaha, Rivelli, Rizzo Naudi, Mrs Robert, Mr Roseta, Mrs Schicker, MM. Serra, Siwec, Školč, Slobodnik, Sofoulis, Szakà, Mrs Terborg (Alternate: *Antretter*), Mr Verbeek, Mrs Verspaget, Mr Vogt, Mrs Wärnersson, MM. Widmann, *Zingeris*,

NB: The names of those who took part in the vote are in italics.

Secretaries to the committee: MM. Grayson, Ary and Gruden.

¹ by the Committee on Culture and Education

² ¹ This paragraph is based on an article by Annette Lévy-Willard which appeared in the 16 November 1995 issue of the French newspaper "Libération".